

# “There are Plenty of Women on the Street”: The Landscape of Commercial Sex in Progressive-Era Philadelphia, 1910 - 1918

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In May of 1912, the mayor of Philadelphia appointed a Vice Commission to examine the prevalence of prostitution in the city. Over the course of three months, the commission's three investigators found over 1100 prostitutes in bawdy houses, over 800 in saloons, and 147 in “miscellaneous places” such as furnished rooms and massage parlors. The most common location for prostitution, however, was the street, where the investigators found over 1200 women they believed to be prostitutes.<sup>1</sup>

Among the locations that exemplified the commission's concerns was the block of Noble Street between Ninth and Tenth, in the neighborhood known as the “Tenderloin,” an area just north of Philadelphia's business district and reputed to be the city's center of sexual vice. On this block, the baleful influence of vice appeared at its most shocking. On November 27, 1912, an investigator counted six boys and four girls, “ranging in age from 5 to 12 years,” on the street, “playing about the steps of disorderly houses. The inmates were going in and out of the houses, and the smallest of these children recognized the women and passed slurring remarks about them.”<sup>2</sup>

Less than six years later, however, this street had undergone a remarkable transformation. When another vice investigator patrolled the same neighborhood in April of 1918, he walked along Ninth Street from Callowhill to Buttonwood, right past the block of Noble Street described above. Yet he found “no women sitting at windows and saw no one being called into these houses. The street appeared to be dead, found no unescorted women on this street.” He asked a traffic policeman to point him towards a “sporting house,” but the officer replied that they were “all closed up.”<sup>3</sup>

The transformation of this street during the intervening years might suggest that prostitution reformers were successful in making the city's streets safe from moral danger. Yet the traffic policeman added a telling coda to his advice: although the sporting houses were closed, he told the undercover investigator, you “can find plenty of women up on the street, said it ought to be easy for me to pick them up on Market Street.”<sup>4</sup>

This paper, and the web-based visualization that accompanies it ([http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/viz.php?id=267&project\\_id=0](http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/viz.php?id=267&project_id=0)), attempts to explain some of the patterns in the geography of prostitution in Philadelphia during the early twentieth century, particularly the years from 1912 to 1918, the height of the Progressive Era. I make use of a variety of sources, including, as in the anecdotes above, a Vice Commission report, and the dispatches of undercover investigators sent as part of America's home-front efforts in the First World War.

The source at the heart of this study is a unique and, to my knowledge, never before cited register of over four thousand arrests for disorderly street walking and similar offenses. The register includes a trove of information about each arrest: the name, age, nationality, and “color” of the woman arrested (all arrests for streetwalking recorded here appear to have been of women), the sentence each woman received, and two pieces of geographical information: the location of the arrest and the site of the woman’s residence.<sup>5</sup> I took a 25 percent systematic random sample of these records, and plotted the locations of arrests and homes on a digitized, georeferenced map of Philadelphia from the period.<sup>6</sup> In the spring of 2010, staff at the Stanford Spatial History Project (<http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/index.php>) adapted the GIS data into the interactive, animated visualization.<sup>7</sup>

Inspired by previous Spatial History Project visualizations, such as Zephyr Frank’s “The Slave Market in Rio de Janeiro: Movement, Context, and Social Experience,”<sup>8</sup> the “Mapping Vice in Early Twentieth-Century Philadelphia” visualization enables users to view and manipulate data in a number of ways. On the left side of the window is the georeferenced map of Philadelphia. Two neighborhoods of interest, the Tenderloin and the Seventh Ward, are indicated with perimeters, and three significant streets—South Street, Market Street, and Broad Street—are labeled and outlined in bold. On the right side of the window are a number of controls. “Base map layers” allows the viewer to add public transit routes, or public spaces such as parks, or both, to the map. A “zoom to center” button allows a closer look at the Tenderloin, Seventh Ward and Market Street areas, while “full extent” takes in most of the city.<sup>9</sup>

Each point on the map represents an individual arrest in my sample, and these points can be filtered in various ways to view a selected subset. Demographic filters, for instance, enable the viewer to select arrests based on a characteristic of the woman arrested. Of the two demographic filters, the first enables the user to view arrests for a given ethnicity. For the sake of simplicity, ethnic categories in the filter have been reduced to three—black, white immigrant, and native white—but mousing over a dot will reveal more details, such as the nationality of an immigrant, in the “Personal Information” box. The second demographic filter is for age, which is constructed as a slider. Thus, a user who would like to see how many women arrested were between the ages of forty and sixty can set the slider bar minimum and maximum accordingly. Using this tool together with the ethnicity filter allows the user to break the information down further by race and nativity.

A second type of filter is called “sentence”; this includes information about the legal proceedings against a given woman. Here, the user can filter the arrest data according to the accusation, which was recorded either as “bawdy house” for those arrested in a house of prostitution or “street walker” for those arrested on the street. The user can also filter the data by the length of sentence, and by the type of sentence, which might include being discharged, fined, sentenced to probation, or sent to an institution such as the House of Correction. These can be combined with the demographic filters to visualize the interaction of race, age, and the workings of the justice system in the early twentieth century. To help viewers visualize the areas of greatest concentration of arrests, a “heat map” feature can display arrest sites using shades of yellow and red (yellow is the “hottest”) to indicate areas of greater or lesser concentration.

The map also contains data on the residence locations of the women in the arrest ledger, and these can be displayed in several ways. Another “heat map” feature displays areas of residential concentration (in shades of blue, with light blue the “hottest”), while mousing over an individual arrest will bring up a line that connects the arrest site (which becomes a red dot) to the residence location (a green dot). The two heat map features can be displayed at once, producing a vivid contrast between the concentration of arrests near the center of the city and the more dispersed pattern of the residences.

A final feature is the timeline, located beneath the map. With the timeline on, viewers can break arrest records down by year, month, or week. This produces a bar graph indicating the relative number of arrests for a given unit of time. Clicking on a bar will animate the dots representing the women arrested during that period to move from their residence location to the site of their arrest. Buttons that indicate forward and back enable the viewer to skip ahead or back one time unit, while the play button displays the animation for each time unit in sequence. The arrow on the timeline can also be dragged to any point to display the information for that week, month, or year (depending on the unit of time selected). Again, the timeline can be combined with other filters, so that the viewer can see, for instance, how arrests of black women changed from month to month, or how arrests of women under twenty changed from year to year.

The data, when viewed in the context of other primary and secondary sources, reveal a complex spatial pattern that changes over time, even during this short period. While there are many ways to visualize and interpret the data, I will focus in the paper on a few key points. The "Tenderloin" neighborhood was indeed a very important site for commercial sex, especially for native-born whites. Repression of prostitution in that neighborhood, particularly as part of U.S. military policy during World War I, caused a portion of the prostitution business to migrate to Market Street, Philadelphia's primary department store district, where another heterosexual practice, "treating," provided cover that made prostitution increasingly difficult to distinguish. Finally, a third area of commercial sex activity in the African American neighborhood of the Seventh Ward continued to operate throughout this period, attracting relatively little notice.

As with any attempt to investigate prostitution historically, this study faces important limitations in the sources that are available. Much of what we know about prostitution comes from middle-class moral and hygiene reformers, government officials, journalists, and law enforcement agents, each of whom viewed prostitution through a number of other commitments and prejudices. The arrest register would appear to be a way of moving beyond the moralism or sensationalism of most textual sources, but arrest records bring their own distortions; as Elizabeth Alice Clement has pointed out, they overestimate streetwalking (and miss much brothel activity) as a mode of prostitution, and similarly they overrepresent African Americans and other ethnic and racial minorities.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, by reading these sources "against the grain," and using them with care, we can draw some tentative conclusions about sexuality and space. Commercial sex, it is clear, extended beyond the boundaries of the "red light district." Furthermore, the spaces of prostitution were shaped not merely by reformers and police, but by a complex matrix of race, ethnicity, markets, politics (both local and national), and individual agency by women themselves. Although arrest records might appear to cast prostitutes as passive victims, a careful reading reveals sex workers' active role in shaping space and sexuality in the early twentieth century.

This study follows a path marked by recent scholars of prostitution, particularly in New York and Chicago. Timothy Gilfoyle, Elizabeth Clement, and Cynthia Blair are among those who have written most perceptively of commercial sex during this period. Gilfoyle's work on New York helped to move the history of prostitution beyond its previous focus on the history of reform and reformers, by exposing the deep connections between the geography of commercial sexuality and the larger stories of economic and real estate development in New York.<sup>11</sup> Clement, like Gilfoyle, focuses on New York City. She examines working-class women's sexuality, including prostitution and "treating," or the exchange of sexual activity for entertainment expenses. She also seeks to avoid a focus on reform, arguing that practices emerging from the working class "should be studied, to the degree possible, from its perspective."<sup>12</sup> Blair's history of black women's sex work in turn-of-the-century Chicago similarly shifts attention away from the words of white reformers, to highlight the social and economic worlds of sex workers themselves.<sup>13</sup>

While this paper makes no pretension of approaching the depth of these works, my goal in focusing on arrest statistics is similar: to move beyond the writings of reformers to a source that, if read with care, can help reveal something of the life and work of Philadelphians who left few other records. In doing so, I am also seeking to move the spotlight away from New York and Chicago to what was then America's third-largest city, which has been relatively neglected by historians of prostitution and sexuality. This neglect is unfortunate, particularly because Philadelphia may have been more typical of American cities than the two larger metropolises. It was not the "shock city" that Chicago was, nor did it attract new immigrants to the same extent as New York. As urban administrator Delos Wilcox remarked in 1910, "Philadelphia is a great city . . . . We might almost call it *the* American city, as distinguished from the world-cities that have grown up on American soil."<sup>14</sup>

I also hope to show the importance of bringing a spatial understanding to the issue of commercial sex. The relatively small volume of scholarship on prostitution in Philadelphia focuses largely on the institutions that regulated and punished prostitution, rather than on the practice of prostitution itself.<sup>15</sup> As a result, little attention has been paid to the spaces of sexuality in the City of Brotherly Love. Even the recent writings on New York and Chicago discussed above, while showing greater attentiveness to the shifting patterns of geography, have too often treated space as a backdrop. This essay, and the web based visualization, hope to contribute to an understanding of what Patrick A. Dunae, following Henri Lefebvre, has called "the production of prostitutional space."<sup>16</sup> In the conclusion, I delve more specifically into the potential advantages and limitations of interactive visualization as a tool for historical and geographical communication.

### **The Regulation of Prostitution in the Progressive-Era City**

The Progressive Era in the United States is notoriously difficult to pin down, yet there is broad agreement that the period from roughly 1890 to 1920 was a distinctive moment in the history of the country, particularly in the relationship among government, the economy, and society. Recent histories of the period emphasize the rise of reform movements advocating the "common good" or the "public interest," and calling for a stronger state to control the perceived disorder in an increasingly urban and industrial society. Progressives sought to address social ills ranging from impure food to child labor to unsightly billboards, and they drew on advances in social science to point out that many problems previously viewed as individual moral failings could more properly be attributed to the social and physical environment.<sup>17</sup>

In the context of such wide-ranging social transformation, the Progressive Era, and particularly its climactic years between 1910 and 1920, became a crucial period in the history of prostitution in cities across the United States, including Philadelphia. Prior to 1910, efforts in Philadelphia to combat prostitution centered mainly on reforming individual prostitutes, and were led by voluntary organizations such as the Magdalen Society.<sup>18</sup> Aside from occasional waves of police surveillance and arrest in the 1870s and 1890s, the government took relatively little interest in fighting prostitution. The city lacked even an ordinance against soliciting. Women could be sentenced for "disorderly streetwalking" to the House of Correction, a city-run facility built in 1874 to house those men and women convicted of "status crimes" such as vagrancy, drunkenness, and pauperism. Yet enforcement of the anti-streetwalking provision was spotty at best--because, many alleged, of widespread bribery of police. Those prostitutes who were arrested were frequently released before the expiration of their brief sentences.<sup>19</sup>

A more repressive attitude toward prostitution, however, began to emerge in Philadelphia and nationwide in the decade after 1910. Emblematic of the new national attitude was the passage that year of the Mann Act, which prohibited the transportation of women across state

lines for “immoral purposes.” This shift was attributable to several factors, including the rising fear of “white slavery” rings that supposedly conducted an international traffic in women, an increasingly vocal women’s movement that saw in prostitution a symbol of the degradation of women, and a social hygiene movement that insisted that the contagion (both literal and figurative) of prostitution could not be confined to certain neighborhoods, and therefore had to be eliminated altogether.<sup>20</sup> As a writer for the Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Social Disease put it in 1912, a man who visits a prostitute “carries his immorality and his physical disease wherever he goes, so pervasive and so infectious are these deadly moral miasms.”<sup>21</sup>

The relative political and economic powerlessness of the prostitutes, however, made them easier targets for enforcement than the men who patronized them. In 1910, Philadelphia’s Director of Public Safety moved to increase the enforcement of antiprostitution laws by entering “detainers” against streetwalkers at the House of Correction, forcing those convicted of this offense to serve their full terms.<sup>22</sup> A year later, reform mayor Rudolph Blankenburg proclaimed street walking and other vices to be “practically eliminated” from the city.<sup>23</sup> The evidence for this was thin, however, and progressive reformers in Philadelphia, as elsewhere, insisted on the careful collection of evidence as the basis for social reform. By the spring of 1912, Chicago and Minneapolis had already undertaken investigations of the vice problem in their cities, and Philadelphia’s City Club, an organization devoted to the study and discussion of municipal affairs, held a meeting to consider launching a similar study of conditions in Philadelphia. At the time, three strategies regarding prostitution battled for dominance among American reformers and government officials. The first, regulation and licensing, was practiced in a few U.S. cities, as well as in much of Europe.<sup>24</sup> The second, referred to by the Philadelphia Vice Commission as “segregation,” meant tolerating prostitution in red light districts such as Philadelphia’s Tenderloin, but not elsewhere in the city. This approach was more common in the United States, where a variety of actors favored it for different reasons: law enforcement officials felt it would confine crime and disorder, public health reformers believed it would restrict the spread of disease, and others argued that it would provide an acceptable outlet for working-class and immigrant male sexuality and thus keep “respectable” women safe.<sup>25</sup> The speaker who was invited to address the City Club, however, advocated the third position: elimination of prostitution throughout the city – or, as its supporters pointedly referred to it, “abolition.”<sup>26</sup> Rev. Walter T. Sumner, the Chairman of the Chicago Vice Commission, asserted that prostitution should not be tolerated in any neighborhood or street. Rather, “constant repression” of vice must be the first step, and “annihilation” of vice the ultimate goal.<sup>27</sup> Although the Blankenburg administration was generally sympathetic with the City Club’s progressive outlook, city officials were not entirely convinced. George Porter, Blankenburg’s Director of Public Safety, told the club that he was “in the middle of the road” between those who favored eliminating vice and those who believed in segregating it within the Tenderloin, while Blankenburg himself was widely rumored to favor segregation of vice (a rumor he denied).<sup>28</sup>

Regardless of his personal preference, in May 1912 Blankenburg appointed a Vice Commission of twenty-two leading citizens, including five clergymen, four attorneys, three medical doctors, two industrialists, and leaders of reform organizations including the House of Refuge for Girls, the Home & School Association, the College Settlement, and the Society to Protect Children from Cruelty. The Commission was largely white, Protestant, and male, but it did include at least one African American, one Jew, one Roman Catholic, and five women. In appointing a vice commission, Blankenburg was engaging in what one scholar has called “a distinctive American sexual purity strategy,” pursued by dozens of U.S. cities in the early twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> John D. Rockefeller, as chairman of the Bureau of Social Hygiene, sponsored several investigations, including “Commercial Prostitution in New York City” and Abraham Flexner’s landmark

"Prostitution in Europe."<sup>30</sup> Philadelphia's commission engaged George J. Kneeland, who a year earlier had completed perhaps the most influential report, *The Social Evil in Chicago*, to head the investigation. After a five-month investigation Kneeland and the commission found that, far from being eliminated, as Blankenburg had claimed, prostitution flourished in Philadelphia: the commission's three investigators spotted over 3,300 women they believed to be prostitutes in the city's streets, homes, saloons, and other places. While they admitted that there was likely some duplication in the counting, they contended that the total was still "largely below" the number of Philadelphia women actually engaged in prostitution. They noted that the total did not include "kept women," nor "the very large number of casual prostitutes."<sup>31</sup>

The strongly worded report, however, led to relatively minor and short-lived changes. The Public Safety Department launched a special squad of investigators to gather evidence against prostitutes; in 1913, however, the squad's work resulted in the arrest of only 192 streetwalkers and 129 bawdy house keepers.<sup>32</sup> The following year saw commitments to the House of Correction for streetwalking rise to 440, and the mayor declared that "To-day the much-heralded 'Tenderloin' does not exist."<sup>33</sup> When Blankenburg's term ended in January 1916, however, his Republican successor Thomas B. Smith eliminated the special investigators, contributing to allegations that Philadelphia was once again becoming a "wide-open town."<sup>34</sup> Smith sought to counter such impressions with highly publicized raids, a tactic that some complained merely displaced vice from the "Tenderloin" to other parts of the city.<sup>35</sup>

The repression of prostitution was thus intimately connected to its perceived and actual spatial distribution. Some felt that containing vice within a given neighborhood was the most effective form of regulation. Others argued for a more homogenized urban space, in which vice was repressed equally everywhere. The underlying assumption in both camps was that vice was concentrated in the Tenderloin, so much so that Blankenburg used "Tenderloin" as a virtual synonym for "vice." In fact, however, the Tenderloin was just one of three significant zones in Philadelphia's geography of vice, which I now take up individually.

### *The "Tenderloin"*

Throughout the 1910s, the Tenderloin remained the primary center of Philadelphia's vice activity, particularly for native-born whites. The area known as the Tenderloin was bounded roughly by Sixth Street on the East and Broad Street on the West, Arch Street on the South and Green Street on the North, according to a report on the "Social Evil in Philadelphia" published in 1896.<sup>36</sup> It had not always been the center of vice in Philadelphia: during the antebellum era, most prostitution had been along South Street, near the waterfront.<sup>37</sup> But, as trains replaced shipping as the city's major transportation linkages, the neighborhood north of the Central Business District, bisected by the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad line, became the city's Tenderloin. This neighborhood was renowned not only for its streetwalkers and bawdy houses, but also for "fake museums, dance halls, gaming booths, and poolrooms."<sup>38</sup> In other words, it was home to the burgeoning culture of commercial leisure, the "cheap amusements" that many progressive reformers blamed for the low morality of working-class urban youth.<sup>39</sup> Chinatown, centered around the block of Race Street from Ninth to Tenth, was also located within the boundaries of this district, which in the public mind exacerbated the neighborhood's reputation as a hotbed of gambling and illicit drugs. Investigators and others frequently encountered cocaine users and dealers in the neighborhood.<sup>40</sup>

Arrest statistics predating the detailed "disorderly street walking" register support the notion that prostitution was concentrated in this neighborhood. For the years 1911 and 1912, Police District Six, which covered the southern part of the red-light district, accounted for just over

one-quarter of the streetwalking arrests for the city. District Eight, which covered the northern part of the Tenderloin, accounted for half the city total for these years. In short, the Tenderloin accounted for between 75 percent and 80 percent of arrests for streetwalking in the city.<sup>41</sup>

The disorderly streetwalking ledger helps us to understand more precisely who were the women engaging in commercial sex in this neighborhood. It reveals that prostitution in the Tenderloin was disproportionately dominated by native-born whites. Some 83 percent of those arrested for prostitution in this neighborhood were native-born whites (compared to approximately 70 percent of the city's total population), while approximately 10 percent of those arrested were white immigrants (compared to approximately 25 percent of the city's population) and 7 percent were African American (very close to their proportion of the total population).<sup>42</sup> Bear in mind that arrest statistics are, if anything, liable to overstate the presence of blacks and immigrants, so it may be that 83 percent is an underestimate of the proportion of native-born whites.

As in other cities, the emergence of a red-light district was one aspect of the differentiation of urban spaces under modernization and industrialization. As geographer Philip Hubbard has argued,

the social marginalization of prostitutes, not only in moral discourse, but also geographically in 'streets of shame,' continued to be an important symbolic and rhetorical means of isolating urban problems in the midst of an otherwise ordered and thoroughly modern city, with the de facto tolerance of prostitution in select red-light districts being enforced through the selective application of vice legislation.<sup>43</sup>

It is important to look closely at the mechanisms by which this differentiation was accomplished. As Hubbard suggests, part of the explanation lies in selective law enforcement. Although there were thousands of arrests here over the years, the presence of so many prostitutes likely reflects, in part, a calculation that they were less likely to be arrested here than elsewhere in the city. Investigators documented their observations of beat cops consorting casually with prostitutes and pimps, and tipping off madams in advance of vice squad raids. Of one officer, investigators said that "he is well known to the street walkers; girls all like him, and Alice, a prostitute, told investigator that the girls give him money and presents, and take up a collection at Christmas for him."<sup>44</sup> Police officers here, as in other cities, were concerned with keeping order rather than eliminating vice, and their friendly contacts with the demimonde were likely very useful in keeping tabs on what they saw as more serious crimes.<sup>45</sup>

Police practices, however, were only a part of what allowed prostitution to thrive in the Tenderloin. A more important consideration was likely the real estate market in this area, which provided conditions conducive to the opening of brothels and other institutions in which prostitution could take place. The Tenderloin was originally a respectable residential neighborhood, settled largely from the 1830s to the 1870s. As the use of space within the city was transformed following the Civil War, the neighborhood began to change. Warehouses and wholesalers serving downtown department stores or riverfront merchants began to appear within the district. At the same time, the well-off residents of the area began to seek out newer neighborhoods, such as West Philadelphia and Chestnut Hill, which were gaining popularity as streetcar suburbs. As they left, the neighborhood they had occupied underwent a dramatic and rapid transformation in population and tenancy.<sup>46</sup> Some homes were bought or rented by immigrants from Italy, China, and Eastern Europe, and by African Americans, all of whom were attracted by the proximity of employment opportunities downtown, on the riverfront, in nearby railroad facilities, or in the growing industrial areas of Northeast Philadelphia. By 1910 the Thirteenth Ward, on the east side of the Tenderloin, was 40 percent foreign-born, with well

over half of that group coming from major sources of Jewish immigration: Austria, Hungary, and Russia. The Fourteenth Ward, on the west side, was about 24 percent foreign-born white and nearly 16 percent African American.<sup>47</sup>

While some of the old houses were sold or rented out to single families, many owners converted their properties to boarding or rooming houses, or subdivided them into a number of small, furnished apartments. The large houses, typically with "double parlors" on the first floor, two bedrooms on the second floor, and two to four rooms on the third floor, proved to be easy for landlords to break up and rent out to many tenants simultaneously, thus maximizing the rental income from the property. Typically these residents were actually sub-tenants, who paid rent to a rooming-house manager or "landlady" who, in turn, paid rent on the entire property to an absentee owner. This arrangement displaced the risk from landowners onto working-class women; the "landladies" were often widows or young married women who faced great pressures in attempting to collect sufficient rents to make their operations turn a modest profit.<sup>48</sup>

In the years around 1910 furnished room houses were becoming especially common in this district, replacing the more traditional but less profitable boarding houses. The tenants of the furnished room houses were drawn from a growing population of single, transient young men and women studying in the city or, more commonly, working as clerks, salespeople, restaurant staff, or factory workers. These workers themselves, like their landladies, lived lives of considerable economic risk, with frequent unemployment and consistently low wages leaving many workers, especially women, at or over the brink of poverty. Wages for sales girls in a department store around 1910 ranged from approximately \$7 to \$10 a week, while a room and meals in the furnished room district averaged \$5 to \$7.<sup>49</sup> Not surprisingly, nearly half of prostitutes surveyed by the investigator for the Philadelphia Vice Commission cited "inadequate support" as their reason for entering prostitution. Among the specific reasons the investigator noted were "Could not live on \$9. Gave half to parents"; "Salary (\$7) too small; often out of work"; "Had to support herself and baby on \$6."<sup>50</sup>

As the furnished-room district grew, it also became a center of a growing commercial culture. Restaurants proliferated to serve visitors to nearby hotels, as well as the rooming-house residents, who had little or no access to cooking facilities in their houses. Movie houses, vaudeville theaters, and other inexpensive entertainment establishments also found a client base among residents and visitors arriving from the nearby train terminals. On April 1, 1910 the block of Eighth Street between Race and Vine contained five movie theaters, five shooting galleries, three vaudeville theaters, two dime museums, plus the "Circle Show," the "Penny Peep," and "Palmistry and Pictures."<sup>51</sup>

The large number of houses in the Tenderloin where both landladies and residents struggled to make ends meet, together with the presence of locals and out-of-towners seeking commercial entertainment, proved fertile ground for prostitution to flourish under a spectrum of economic arrangements. On one end of this spectrum were "parlor houses," where the entire building was devoted to prostitution and the operation was managed by a madam. An investigator for the Philadelphia Vice Commission described one such place on Noble Street: "There is a receiving parlor in this house. Investigator counted 8 inmates. Price of house is \$1.00; perversion [oral sex], same price. Girls get half. Price of drinks, \$1.00. Madam sells clothes to inmates. Inmates wear gowns. The girls pay a weekly board of \$5.00. Rent paid for the house, \$45.00."<sup>52</sup> Such a house could gross \$500 or \$600 per week for the madam, but the prostitutes saw little of this, and often were kept in debt to the madam for food, clothing, and other items.<sup>53</sup> When the Navy investigated conditions in Philadelphia in 1918, it found twenty-two such houses in the Thirteenth Ward (the East Tenderloin), and eight in the Fourteenth Ward (the West Tenderloin); no other ward had more than two.<sup>54</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum were otherwise unremarkable rooming houses where a salesgirl or seamstress might engage in occasional prostitution to make ends meet.<sup>55</sup> In between these two extremes were brothels masquerading as massage parlors, “houses of assignation” that rented rooms to couples by the evening or by the hour, and furnished-room houses in which the landlady played a greater or lesser role in encouraging, allowing, or merely overlooking the source of her roomers’ incomes. Landladies could charge more for rooms with “privileges,” that is, the right to receive male visitors in the tenant’s room.<sup>56</sup> The Philadelphia Vice Commission found “disorderly conditions” in seventy-six furnished room houses, and found that “these rooms are used regularly by the street girls for their patrons.”<sup>57</sup>

Along with furnished-room houses and brothels, the commercial institutions in the neighborhood were themselves often sites of solicitation or prostitution. Although Philadelphia’s Tenderloin did not have New York’s infamous “Raines Law” hotels (bars that, in order to obtain the right to sell liquor on Sundays, were converted to “hotels” by adding ten or more beds in an adjoining room), it had plenty of saloons, hotels, and dance halls where prostitutes met clients and sometimes provided their services in back rooms or upstairs. Like the furnished-room houses, these sites enabled women to engage in a more profitable form of prostitution, independent of madams. In a saloon on North Ninth Street, for instance, an investigator in 1912 saw

“33 unescorted women...who, from their language and actions, appeared to be prostitutes, apparently from 19 to 50 years of age. One of these women named Rose solicited investigator to go to a room upstairs for immoral purposes. price, \$1.00 to \$5.00; room, 50 cents to \$1.00. This saloon and hotel caters to sailors...The hotel is conducted in much the same way as a house of prostitution, only the girls get all they make.”<sup>58</sup>

Indoor spaces such as brothels and saloons played a key role in prostitution within the Tenderloin, but arrests for “keeping a bawdy house” were a very small percentage of all arrests for prostitution. These two types of arrest were not really so different, however, as there was no clear division between “street” and “house” prostitution: the moral threat of the street extended into domestic space, and vice versa. A later investigator reported one typical encounter just before midnight on April 16, 1918 at the corner of Tenth and Vine Streets: “was approached by a middle-aged rum soaked bum...later told me her name is Lizzie, had no home, said theres a furnished room house right near corner here...said a friend of hers has a room there and we could use it.” The price for such an encounter might be one to two dollars, with half going for the room and half going to the woman herself; both landlady and sub-tenant profited from the enterprise.<sup>59</sup> The economics of low-wage labor, residential subtenancy, and commercial leisure came together in the Tenderloin to produce many such encounters, and to make the district the major, but not the only, venue for commercial sex in the city.

### **The Seventh Ward and Environs**

While vice activity in the Tenderloin was the subject of frequent comment by reformers and occasional raids by police, there were other parts of town where it went on with much less notice from investigators and government officials. One area that saw a steady vice traffic throughout the 1910s was the neighborhood in, and just south of, the eastern Seventh Ward in South Philadelphia, which accounted for approximately 12 percent of all arrests for disorderly streetwalking between 1912 and 1918. The Seventh Ward in 1910 had the largest concentration of African Americans in the city, and was the center of black society and culture, as W. E. B. Du Bois famously described in his 1896 study, *The Philadelphia Negro*. Du Bois depicted a neighborhood

populated by a diverse black community, encompassing everyone from wealthy entrepreneurs and professionals to criminals, gamblers, and “idlers.” Housing conditions for most residents were poor, crowded, unsanitary, and relatively expensive, as African Americans’ housing options were limited by racial segregation and by the need for those employed in domestic service to live near employment opportunities in the homes of well-to-do whites. As in the Tenderloin, the pressure to pay high rents with low wages produced a variety of living arrangements in which parts of homes were sub-rented to lodgers or to entire families.<sup>60</sup>

Conditions in the ward did not change dramatically in the fifteen years following the publication of Du Bois’s study, although the black population grew from 30 percent of the ward in 1896 to 42 percent in 1910. The representation of African Americans among those arrested for prostitution in the area, however, was a remarkable 97 percent. Police selectivity and racism cannot be dismissed as a possible cause for this statistic. Still, the near complete absence of white women from arrests in this district, when police did not seem to hesitate in arresting white women for prostitution in other parts of town, makes it likely that the prostitutes in this neighborhood were almost exclusively African American.<sup>61</sup>

Among clients or “johns,” however, the population was probably racially mixed in the Seventh Ward, as in African American vice districts in other cities.<sup>62</sup> As early as 1896, Du Bois found fifty-three African American women in the Ward “known on pretty satisfactory evidence to be supported wholly or largely by the proceeds of prostitution.” He added that “the lowest class of street walkers abound in the slums, and ply their trade among Negroes, Italians and Americans. One can see men following them into alleys in broad daylight.”<sup>63</sup> By 1918, prostitutes in this area had found a more specific clientele. A federal government investigation noted that “most of the houses situated in the Negro section of South Philadelphia cater almost exclusively to sailors.”<sup>64</sup>

The African American women arrested as prostitutes were not very different, demographically, from the white women brought in on the same charge. A study of streetwalkers committed to the Philadelphia House of Correction in 1914, one of the most extensive undertaken at the time, found that whites were slightly more likely to have been in the city for more than five years, and were somewhat older than their Black counterparts.<sup>65</sup> Arrest records from 1912 - 1918 confirm that African Americans arrested for streetwalking were a bit younger, at twenty-six years on average, than their white counterparts, whose age averaged twenty-eight. These statistics reflect the overall demographics of a black community that was heavily weighted toward young, new migrants, even in the years before the Great Migration. They may also reflect the fact that economic opportunities open to black women were even more limited than those available to whites. This might have compelled African American women to turn to prostitution at a younger age, when white women would have been entering the legitimate labor market.<sup>66</sup>

What is most remarkable about Black prostitution in Philadelphia is its geographic distinctiveness and, at the same time, the nearly complete silence regarding it in both black and white reform circles. Its concentration in the Seventh Ward seems to have concealed it from those who fought for the moral safety of the streets. Among white reformers, Talcott Williams, a journalist and editor of the *Philadelphia Press*, stood out for his interest in the issue of prostitution among African Americans. In 1911, he formed an association to “clean up the [Seventh] Ward, close speak-easies, gambling houses and houses of prostitution.”<sup>67</sup> He hoped that the Armstrong Association, the forerunner of the Philadelphia branch of the Urban League, would join him in this endeavor, which he spoke of in metaphors that mixed religious salvation, medical cure and military conquest. But the following year, Williams left Philadelphia for New York City to become the first director of the Columbia School of Journalism. The reform effort, if it ever got off the ground, seems to have fizzled with his departure.

African American reformers, too, although clearly aware of the problem of prostitution in the Seventh Ward, were often reticent to speak about it or deal with it head on. The Philadelphia Association for the Protection of Colored Women was concerned about vice, but devoted its resources to prevention. It fought the influence of dance halls and "amusement parlors," met unaccompanied women at the port and railway terminals, and discouraged black women in the South from migrating North at all.<sup>68</sup> The Armstrong Association in 1910 formed a Law and Order League, which endeavored to "do away with conditions tending to vice and disease, especially in the neighborhoods of schools and churches attended by colored people."<sup>69</sup> But the Armstrong League's emphasis was on finding jobs for Philadelphia's black population, rather than on combating vice. As Cynthia Blair has argued, following Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham and Deborah Gray White, black reformers' apparent disregard of prostitution in their community had a purpose. "Silence was central to the politics of respectability through which black women refuted charges of their sexual impropriety and moral laxity and through which urbanizing blacks asserted their claim to political and economic equality in the nation's cities."<sup>70</sup>

While African American reformers may have ignored black prostitution as part of a claim to respectability, white reformers' silence regarding African American prostitution might have been due to indifference and racism.<sup>71</sup> In the minds of many northern whites, black women's sexuality was tainted by association with the supposed licentiousness of the slave South and the imagined aggressiveness of the African "Amazon." To these whites, black women "embodied social backwardness and sexual immorality."<sup>72</sup> They inherently lacked any feminine virtue that might be worth protecting from the threat of commercial vice. Certainly, there is little evidence that white Philadelphia reformers were concerned with the welfare of African American women. There seems to have been one African American on the Vice Commission, the Rev. Henry L. Phillips, Archdeacon of the Colored Episcopal Churches in Philadelphia, but his presence does not appear to have played any role in encouraging the commission or its investigators to notice prostitution in the Seventh Ward.<sup>73</sup> Indifference manifested itself in other ways, too. In the arrest records for 1912 - 1918, most women of both races were sent to the House of Correction or the County Prison, but over 7 percent of white women arrested for streetwalking were sent to a welfare agency such as the Court Aid Society, the House of the Good Shepherd, or the Philadelphia Hospital. Only 3 percent of African Americans received similar dispositions to benevolent organizations or hospitals. The Court Aid Association, in fact, did not accept "colored" girls, while its counterpart, the Colored Women's Protective and Probational Association, appears only once in the police records for these years.<sup>74</sup>

The silence of reformers on the subject of black prostitution makes recovering the history of this subject even more of a challenge than for white prostitution. Cynthia Blair's recent work on Chicago proves that it can be done, but such a thorough investigation is beyond the scope of this paper. The paucity of sources is a helpful reminder, however, that the making of the geography of prostitution was much more than a unilateral action by reformers or government officials, and that the history of prostitution must be much more than a history of moral reform in order to accurately reconstruct this complex social and spatial practice.

## Market Street

Prostitution in Philadelphia became a subject of national as well as local concern following America's entry into World War I in April of 1917. In an effort to keep America's soldiers "fit to fight," the Selective Service Act outlawed prostitution within a five-mile zone around military training camps. With Marine barracks at League Island, just off the southern tip of Philadelphia at the confluence of the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers, and other military facilities in and

around the city, prostitution in Philadelphia became a federal issue. The result was a crackdown in Philadelphia (as well as many other cities) that shuttered the Tenderloin's bawdy houses and made solicitation on the streets of the neighborhood extremely risky. Ironically, sexual commerce did not disappear, but began to emerge in new forms on one of the city's most prominent thoroughfares: Market Street, the east-west axis running through the heart of the city's historic center.

The Commission on Training Camp Activities, headed by reformer, criminologist, and social investigator Raymond Fosdick, was charged with suppressing prostitution and saloons around training camps, preventing and treating venereal disease among the troops, and providing wholesome educational and recreational opportunities for soldiers.<sup>75</sup> In the spring of 1918, Fosdick's men carried out an investigation into conditions in Philadelphia. They concluded that it was the "worst city in the nation," and threatened to close the city to all military personnel except those under orders to be there. Echoing the findings of the Vice Commission investigation of 1912, the Commission on Training Camp Activities found that "women ply the main streets of the city in large numbers, and do so by permission of policemen, who are accused of taking part of their earnings for protection." In response, Philadelphia's leaders declared that the report was inaccurate and politically motivated, an attempt by the Democratic administration of Woodrow Wilson in Washington to embarrass the Philadelphia Republican machine. The Philadelphia politicians also sought to shift at least part of the blame onto the thousands of "young soldiers and sailors, seeking vice and drunkenness." At the same time, though, Mayor Smith ordered his subordinates to clean up the city in forty-eight hours or "lose their heads."<sup>76</sup> A follow-up investigation two weeks later found conditions changed considerably. Even women who "appeared to be professional prostitutes...seemed to be afraid to bother with the men on the street," reported an investigator. "I tried my utmost to get next to some of these women but they wouldn't give me a tumble."<sup>77</sup> Repression of prostitution intensified a few months later, as the Chamberlain-Kahn Act of July 1918 gave local boards of health the authority to detain any woman thought to be a potential carrier of venereal disease for compulsory testing and quarantine. Federal officials raided establishments in the vice district, the downtown, and elsewhere in the city, vowing "we will show people now what the word 'clean' means."<sup>78</sup>

The repression of vice during World War I had a marked effect on the Tenderloin. As a number of men told the undercover investigator in 1918, "The lid is down regarding sporting houses."<sup>79</sup> In other early-twentieth-century cities, the repression of vice in traditional red light districts caused a migration of the sex trade to the black-white "interzones" of sexual commerce. In Philadelphia, however, arrests for vice remained steady in the Seventh Ward; the migration of vice appeared instead to be toward the commercial heart of the city, on Market Street. Market Street was one of the most prominent in the city – a wide corridor stretching from the Delaware to the Schuylkill Rivers, with the enormous Second-Empire style City Hall standing in the historic square where it intersected with Broad Street. Two of the city's major railroad termini – Broad Street Station and Reading Terminal – were located on Market Street, as were a number of major office buildings, department stores, and theaters. Crowds gathered on Market Street for occasions such as holidays, elections, and sporting events, and at night it was lit up with streetlamps that were the envy of other commercial districts.<sup>80</sup> In short, as *Philadelphia* magazine proclaimed in 1910, Market Street had "continued through the passage of two hundred and twenty-seven years the great east and west highway of the City of Philadelphia."<sup>81</sup>

Although part of the Sixth Police District, Market Street was considered to lie just south of the Tenderloin. In the early years of the decade, it was occasionally mentioned as a site of streetwalking, but held no more prominence than fifteen or so other thoroughfares.<sup>82</sup> Reformers listed Chestnut Street, Eighth Street, Broad Street, and Columbia Avenue as streets where

streetwalkers were more likely to be seen.<sup>83</sup> Arrest figures bear out this impression, with Market Street accounting for only 0.25 percent of arrests for disorderly street walking in the sample (one U.S.-born white woman) between 1912 and 1914, rising to 1.3 percent of the sample (six U.S.-born women, one black and five white) in 1915 and 1916.<sup>84</sup>

In 1917 and 1918, however, the proportion of arrests on Market Street more than doubled, to 2.9 percent, all of them of U.S.-born white women. The increase in the street's presence in eyewitness accounts is much more remarkable. An investigator in February 1918 found that "Conditions at Philadelphia seem to be pretty bad, particularly street conditions. Market Street filled with professional street walkers and charity girls, soliciting openly, women mostly after the sailors....All the sailors now hang out on Market Street."<sup>85</sup> As this description suggests, the rise in activity on Market Street was linked with the presence of sailors and soldiers in the city during the war, and with the emergence of a new type of quasi-commercial sex: "charity," also known as "treating." "Treating" was the exchange of sexual favors for entertainment, gifts, or meals, rather than for cash. It emerged as a distinct category of sexual behavior in the first two decades of the twentieth century among young working-class women. As they entered the workforce in increasing numbers, these women enjoyed a greater degree of independence from their families and were able to move about in public spaces without necessarily being thought of as prostitutes. They also were attracted by commercial amusements and consumer goods such as stylish clothes, but lacked the money to obtain these items. "Charity" girls created a new moral category that enabled them to escape both police harassment and the moral opprobrium attached to prostitution, while obtaining many of the material goods and entertainment experiences they desired. The practice gained greater acceptance during the First World War, as repression of prostitution made that a less viable option for women.<sup>86</sup>

In Philadelphia, Market Street's mixture of working-class women, soldiers and sailors on leave, and commercial goods made it the perfect spot for treating arrangements to form. Thus, when an investigator in Philadelphia asked some sailors where they "get" women, they replied "they pick them up on Market street."<sup>87</sup> Because of Market Street's function as a transportation hub of Philadelphia, sailors at a training camp or women from an outlying neighborhood heading for the center of town would have found many of the streetcar lines, railroad lines, and main automobile thoroughfares converging there. The street was home to many types of consumer attractions, such as a number of motion picture houses.<sup>88</sup> Most importantly, perhaps, the street was home to several of Philadelphia's major department stores, which meant that it was both the site of large display windows with their attractively arranged goods for treating couples to admire and perhaps exchange, and the site of work for thousands of salesgirls and store clerks. A traffic policeman told an undercover investigator that there were "plenty of women on the street" who could be "picked up," but he did not advise trying it very late at night. "He said walk along here on Market street any night about 5:30 when the girls working in the stores are going out, said you can pick up all you want, told me most of these store girls are doing it." The policeman added helpfully that "theres [also] a lot of professionals on Market Street that you can pick up," suggesting that prostitutes gravitated toward the sexual traffic generated by the treating girls, probably to find customers while blending in enough to avoid arrest.<sup>89</sup>

As federal and local authorities clamped down tighter on prostitution in the Tenderloin during the war, Market Street became an increasingly vital site of sexual exchange. Two weeks after the Fosdick Report set off a crackdown in the city, a police officer told an undercover investigator that "he did not know of any houses in the town...as he said the government has had them all closed up, but no trouble in getting a woman on Market Street near Pa. and Reading Depot."<sup>90</sup> Women did act somewhat more cautiously, under rumors that undercover detectives were present; an investigator reported shortly after the Fosdick report that "There are plenty

of women on the streets but these women are very careful and seemed to be scared, won't give a stranger a tumble." The migration of prostitution to Market Street, and the increasing prominence of its near-relation, treating, during World War I, points once again to the complex process by which prostitutional space was produced. In particular, it highlights the role of women themselves in shaping the sexual geography of the city. For many women, as for newsboys and other street workers, the streets were sites of economic opportunity. As they navigated the terrain of the city's streets, they strategically balanced this opportunity against the dangers of the street--not the danger of moral ruin, but the danger of being caught by the investigators, police, or reformers themselves. As the fear of such "strangers" increased during the World War I-era investigations, charity women and prostitutes may have actually increased their preference toward men in uniform: "A lot of charity girls on Market Street being picked up by sailors," reported an investigator in April 1918.<sup>91</sup>

## Conclusion

The history and geography of commercial sex in Philadelphia during the 1910s was marked by a number of ironies. Efforts to discourage women from having sex with military personnel seem only to have driven them away from civilians who might be undercover detectives, and thus made them more likely to seek out sailors and soldiers. Furthermore, the emergence of Market Street as a haven for "treating" girls may have also helped to make it an increasingly important street for professional prostitutes, who sought the cover provided by so many other unescorted or "questionable" women. Finally, and most ironically, campaigns to repress "wide open" commercial sexuality in Philadelphia may have reduced activity in the Tenderloin, but increased sexual activity on the city's busiest and most visible street.

These ironies point to the complex and often contradictory process by which sexual geographies are produced. In Progressive-Era Philadelphia, the geography of prostitution was produced by reformers and police, by real estate market forces, and by cultural discourses that varied across race and class. Perhaps most significantly, it was produced by women seeking to use what one author has called the "freedom of the streets" to their own advantage, supplementing their meager wages through an exchange of sexual services for cash. They found numerous ways to do so while evading arrest, whether by prostituting out of an otherwise unremarkable furnished room in the Tenderloin, working in the often overlooked (by whites) Seventh Ward, or creating on Market Street the practice of "treating," a new gray area of heterosocial exchange that would ultimately have a profound impact on American sexuality. As Philip Hubbard remarks, "Sex workers make their own geographies, but not under conditions of their own choosing."<sup>92</sup>

The complex geography of sex work in Philadelphia, as this paper has argued, included three distinct zones of activity, each with its own demographic, economic, and political characteristics. Ultimately, though, this paper is meant not merely to advance our understanding of the sexual geography of Progressive-Era Philadelphia; it is also intended as an exploration of interactive online visualization as a technique for presenting and analyzing historical data. Visualization seems particularly apt as a medium for understanding the history of the Progressive Era, a period in which social scientists and reformers believed fervently in the power of maps, tables, and graphs to explain and persuade. Such works as Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1892 - 1897), Florence Kelley et al.'s *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (1895), and Du Bois' *Philadelphia Negro* (1896) are, in a sense, the forebears of the "Prostitution in Philadelphia" visualization.<sup>93</sup> Those works demonstrated that mapping data can yield new insights into the patterns and trends of urban life. The Hull-House maps, for instance, showed vividly the diversity of national origins in Chicago's "slums," as well as the patterns of ethnic

integration and segregation that characterized the neighborhood. Similarly, plotting the points at which prostitutes were arrested in Philadelphia was essential to helping me understand that prostitution took place in three distinct zones.

This finding suggests the importance of conventional mapping; it supports Mark Monmonier's view that a map, as a two-dimensional representation, may communicate much more effectively (to both researcher and reader) than the one-dimensional medium of prose.<sup>94</sup> But what value is added by incorporating the data into an online and interactive visualization? To build on Monmonier's point, an interactive map presents the promise of adding a third dimension, that of time. Online maps can change over time not only in the sense that the user can alter them by turning layers on and off, but in the more profound sense that the visualization itself can be adapted and improved as new data are added.

This ability of the visualization to change over time through interaction with users and scholars suggests, in turn, two advantages. The first is the possibility of reaching new audiences, and to engage their interest in history in new ways. If my map of prostitution arrests had appeared in a printed academic journal, it might not have been seen by more than a few dozen academics. Placing it on the web in a dynamic format has made it available and attractive to a much broader public: as of July 2012, it had had over one thousand unique visitors since launching in the fall of 2010.<sup>95</sup> Including interactive features not only encourages visitors to spend more time exploring the data, it engages them at multiple levels. Professional historians, geographers, and others can manipulate the data to explore questions of interest to their own research, while members of the broader public are introduced to thinking historically about race, ethnicity, age, gender, and urban geography.

A second advantage of the online visualization is its ability to help scholars reach new analytical insights. As Franco Moretti reminds us, a map is not itself an explanation, and of course the same is true of an interactive visualization. Properly interpreted, however, both can "bring some hidden patterns to the surface"<sup>96</sup> in a way that may answer a question or, even more importantly, suggest new lines of inquiry. The "Prostitution in Philadelphia" visualization has helped me to formulate new questions that I hope to explore in future research. For instance, the heat map of residences is quite distinct from the heat map of arrest sites. Its much more decentralized distribution raises questions about the relationship between home and (sex) work in the Progressive Era. Exploring this topic may open new insights – indeed, it may even bring into question the three-zone argument presented in this paper.

As a tool for both communication and analysis, then, the visualization has significant possibilities. At the same time, it has significant limitations as well. Like any map, it presents a partial and distorted picture of reality.<sup>97</sup> Some of its limitations are the result of conscious tradeoffs, such as the decision to condense all non-U.S. nationalities into a single "immigrant" category for the sake of convenience. Others are a product of technological limitations of the software we chose to use – for example, the availability of only two extents ("full extent" and "zoom to center") rather than multiple levels of zooming and panning.

Finally, there are undoubtedly limitations imposed by my own cultural and historical imagination, which I may not even be aware of. When I teach Du Bois's *Philadelphia Negro*, my students are usually surprised and even offended by the premise underlying his population map of the Seventh Ward: that black residents could be classified into one of four "grades" – the "Middle Classes" and above, the working people, the poor, and the "vicious and criminal classes."<sup>98</sup> My students come to appreciate, though, that the map reflects the limits of its time and place, and that this is part of its value as a historical source. At the same time, they come to see that the map can transcend these limitations, and that it can yield new insights as new scholars bring fresh questions and contextual information to bear on it.<sup>99</sup> While I don't at all imagine that

"Prostitution in Philadelphia" is on a par with Du Bois' study, I hope that it can similarly provide a resource that, despite its limitations, scholars and others will continue to explore.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Vice Commission of Philadelphia, *A Report on Existing Conditions with Recommendations to the Honorable Rudolph Blankenburg, Mayor of Philadelphia* ([Philadelphia]: The Commission, 1913), 10. "Bawdy house" was defined broadly as a "place for the practice of fornication" in Pennsylvania's Act of March 31, 1860 (Ibid., 38). In this paper, the terms "bawdy house," "brothel," "disorderly house," and "house of prostitution" are used interchangeably. More specific terms, such as "parlor house," where prostitutes lived on a full-time basis, or "call house," where a madam called them in, usually by telephone, will be used where sufficient information is available.

<sup>2</sup> Vice Commission of Philadelphia, *Report on Existing Conditions*, 75. "Inmate" was a term reformers often used for a prostitute living in a brothel.

<sup>3</sup> 17 April and 19 April 1918, Investigation Report, File "Philadelphia," Box 24, Committee of 14 Papers, New York Public Library Division of Rare Books and Manuscripts (henceforth NYPL DRBM).

<sup>4</sup> 17 April and 19 April 1918, Investigation Report, File "Philadelphia," Box 24, Committee of 14 Papers, NYPL DRBM.

<sup>5</sup> The source is a large ledger of arrests for "disorderly street walking" (N = 4497); its archival title is "Detective Division Criminal Court Record 1912-1918," Philadelphia City Archives 79.4b.

<sup>6</sup> The original base map is the "New Commercial Atlas Map of Philadelphia" (Rand McNally & Co., 1915), with a scale of approximately 1: 20,300. It has been digitized, georeferenced, and modified.

<sup>7</sup> The author would like to thank the staff of the Spatial History Project, especially Kathy Harris, Leigh Hammel, Erik Steiner, and Peter Shannon for their collaboration on this project.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/viz.php?id=143&project\\_id=0](http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/viz.php?id=143&project_id=0)  
See Zephyr Frank and Whitney Berry, "The Slave Market in Rio de Janeiro circa 1869: Context, Movement and Social Experience," *Journal of Latin American Geography*, 9(3), 2010: 85-110.

<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, technology did not allow fully functional zooming and panning.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Alice Clement, *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 78.

<sup>11</sup> Timothy Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1992).

<sup>12</sup> Clement, *Love for Sale*, 10.

<sup>13</sup> Cynthia M. Blair, *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Delos F. Wilcox, *Great Cities in America: Their Problems and Their Government* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1910), 307. Italics in original. The phrase “shock city” originates in Asa Briggs’s *Victorian Cities* (London: Odhams Press, 1963; reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 56.

<sup>15</sup> Rodney Hessinger, “Victim of Seduction or Vicious Woman? Conceptions of the Prostitute at the Philadelphia Magdalen Society, 1800-1850,” *Pennsylvania History* (1999) 66(Supplement): 201-222; Lu Ann DeCunzo, “Reform, Respite, and Ritual: An Archaeology of Institutions: The Magdalen Society of Philadelphia, 1800-1850,” *Historical Archaeology* (1995) 29(3): 1-168; Steven Ruggles, “Fallen Women: The Inmates of the Magdalen Society Asylum in Philadelphia, 1836 – 1908,” *Journal of Social History* (1983) 16(4): 65-82. A partial exception, albeit for an earlier period, is Marcia Carlisle, “Disorderly City, Disorderly Women: Prostitution in Ante-Bellum Philadelphia,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (October, 1986) 110(4): 554-557.

<sup>16</sup> Patrick A. Dunae, “Geographies of Sexual Commerce and the Production of Prostitutional Space: Victoria, British Columbia, 1860-1914,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (2008) 19(1): 115-142.

<sup>17</sup> Recent work on the period includes Maureen A. Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms, 1890s–1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Walter Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870 – 1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> Hessinger, “Victim of Seduction or Vicious Woman?”; DeCunzo, “Reform, Respite, and Ritual”; Ruggles, “Fallen Women.”

<sup>19</sup> Vice Commission, *Report on Existing Conditions*, 40-41.

<sup>20</sup> See Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 14-37; Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 139-164; Mark Thomas Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). On the social hygiene movement, see David J. Pivar, *Purity and Hygiene: Women, Prostitution, and the “American Plan,” 1900-1930* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002). The shift to a “social hygiene” approach that emphasized the elimination of prostitution was international. On colonial India, for example, see Stephen Legg, “Governing Prostitution in Colonial Delhi: From Cantonment Regulations to International Hygiene (1864 – 1939),” *Social History* (2009) 34(4): 447-467; and Legg, “Stimulation, Segregation, and Scandal: Geographies of Prostitution Regulation in British India, Between Registration (1888) and Suppression (1923),” *Modern Asian Studies* (Advance online publication, downloaded at <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8518313&fulltextType=RA&fileId=S0026749X11000503> on 28 June 2012).

<sup>21</sup> Howard Atwood Kelly, “The Influence of Segregation Upon Prostitution and Upon the Public,” ([Philadelphia]: Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Social Disease, 1912), microfilmed in 1977 as part of the History of Women series, #9910.

- <sup>22</sup> *Fourth Annual Message of John Reyburn* (Philadelphia: 1911).
- <sup>23</sup> *First Annual Message of Rudolph Blankenburg* (Philadelphia: 1912), 5.
- <sup>24</sup> For an exploration of regulation in Britain and the British Empire, see Philip Howell, *Geographies of Regulation: Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- <sup>25</sup> Mara L. Keire, *For Business and Pleasure: Red-Light Districts and the Regulation of Vice in the United States, 1890-1933* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Sharon E. Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship, and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 159-169; Neil Larry Shumsky, "Tacit Acceptance: Respectable Americans and Segregated Prostitution, 1870-1910," *Journal of Social History* (1986) 19(4): 665-679; see also Peter C. Baldwin, *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford, 1850-1930* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1999), Chapter 3.
- <sup>26</sup> On the significance of the terminology, see Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals: A Social History of Moral Regulation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 102.
- <sup>27</sup> "A Vice Commission for Philadelphia," *City Club Bulletin* (April 1912) V(13): 134.
- <sup>28</sup> "Vice Commission for Philadelphia," 138-139.
- <sup>29</sup> Hunt, *Governing Morals*, 101.
- <sup>30</sup> See Rockefeller's preface to Flexner, *Prostitution in Europe* (New York: The Century Company [1914] 1920), vii-ix.
- <sup>31</sup> *Report on Existing Conditions*, 9-10.
- <sup>32</sup> *Third Annual Message of Rudolph Blankenburg* (Philadelphia: 1914), 48. The reason for the difference of an order of magnitude between the Commission's alleged number of prostitutes and the Vice Squad's arrest figures is hard to specify. The Vice Squad was likely influenced by a culture of law enforcement that did not view the arrest of prostitutes as a priority. Conversely, the Commission may have exaggerated the number of prostitutes in order to draw attention to the problem.
- <sup>33</sup> *Fourth Annual Message of Rudolph Blankenburg* (Philadelphia: 1915), 41.
- <sup>34</sup> "522 Caught in Vice Raid in Tenderloin: City Clean-Up Begins," *Philadelphia North American*, 17 July 1916.
- <sup>35</sup> "'Segregate Vice,' Judge Davis' Plea," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, 27 September 1916.
- <sup>36</sup> "The Social Evil in Philadelphia," *Arena* (1896) 15: 575.
- <sup>37</sup> Marcia Carlisle, "Disorderly City, Disorderly Women: Prostitution in Ante-Bellum Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (October, 1986) 110(4): 554-557.

<sup>38</sup> "Tenderloin Raid Net Ensnares 73," *Public Ledger* 25 December 1915, 13(1).

<sup>39</sup> See Maude Miner's remarks in "A Vice Commission for Philadelphia," *City Club Bulletin* (April 1912) V(13): 132; more generally, see Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

<sup>40</sup> For encounters with cocaine in and near Chinatown, see Investigation Report, 16 April 1918, File "Philadelphia," Box 24, Committee of 14 Papers, NYPL DRBM; James J. Barry to John B. Taylor, Feb. 9, 1912, Police Letter Books, Philadelphia City Archives 79.27; and letters from Superintendent of Police to Director of Department of Public Health and Charities, April 5 and 12 1913, *Ibid.* Opium smoking, as well as gambling, were important features of life in Philadelphia's Chinatown. See Dongzheng Jin, "The Sojourners' Story: Philadelphia's Chinese Immigrants, 1900-1925" (Ph.D. Diss.: Temple University, 1997), 224-228.

<sup>41</sup> Police Consolidated Monthly Reports of Arrests, 1905-1912, Philadelphia City Archives 79.41.

<sup>42</sup> A 25 percent systematic random sample of a large ledger of arrests for "disorderly street walking" (N = 4497) in Detective Division Criminal Court Record 1912-1918, Philadelphia City Archives 79.4b. The comparisons to the total population are from the US Census; the comparisons are somewhat imprecise because the arrests occurred between census years. In 1910, Philadelphia was 5.5 percent black, 24.7 percent foreign-born white, and 69.8 percent native white; in 1920, 7.4 percent black, 21.8 percent foreign-born white, and 70.7 percent native White.

<sup>43</sup> Philip Hubbard, *Sex and the City: Geographies of Prostitution in the Urban West* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Press, 1999), 31.

<sup>44</sup> Vice Commission of Philadelphia, *Report on Existing Conditions*, 70.

<sup>45</sup> Baldwin, *Domesticating the Street*, chapter 3.

<sup>46</sup> Franklin Kline Fretz, *The Furnished Room Problem in Philadelphia* (n.p., n.d. [1912]), 10.

<sup>47</sup> Bureau of the Census, *13th Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1910, Volume III Population Nebraska-Wyoming* (Washington: GPO, 1913), 606.

<sup>48</sup> Fretz, *Furnished Room Problem*, 10-11. On the role of real estate speculation in the creation of vice districts, see also Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 10.

<sup>49</sup> Fretz, *Furnished Room Problem*, 41, 74. On the hardships faced by the working women who inhabited the furnished-room districts, see Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago 1880-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), Chapter 2.

<sup>50</sup> Vice Commission of Philadelphia, *Report on Existing Conditions*, 19, and 103-106. This finding recalls some of the earliest research on the causes of prostitution. For instance, Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet's conclusion, published in 1836, that "of all the causes of prostitution, particularly in Paris, probably...none is more important than the lack of work, and the poverty that follows inevitably from insufficient wages." *La Prostitution à Paris au XIXième Siècle, Texte Présenté et Annoté par Alain Corbin* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981), 99, my translation. Similarly, William Acton's research in England, published in 1870, led him to conclude that "It is a shameful fact...

that the lowness of wages paid to workwomen in various trades is a fruitful source of prostitution." *Prostitution, Considered in its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects* (London: Frank Cass [1870] 1972), 180.

<sup>51</sup> Fretz, *Furnished Room Problem*, 95.

<sup>52</sup> Vice Commission of Philadelphia, *Report on Existing Conditions*, 53. It is unclear if the 1:1 cost of sex and alcohol was typical. Elizabeth Clement describes a Raines Law hotel in New York City where "prostitution brought in more money through drink sales than it did through bed rents." *Love for Sale*, 96.

<sup>53</sup> Vice Commission of Philadelphia, *Report on Existing Conditions*, 61.

<sup>54</sup> *Public Ledger*, 2 April 1918.

<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth Clement found that furnished-room prostitution "made it possible for women to practice prostitution not just casually but secretly, while passing as respectable women in their neighborhoods." *Love for Sale*, 108.

<sup>56</sup> Fretz, *Furnished Room Problem*, 130; Clement, *Love for Sale*, 109.

<sup>57</sup> Vice Commission of Philadelphia, *Report on Existing Conditions*, 7-8.

<sup>58</sup> Vice Commission of Philadelphia, *Report on Existing Conditions*, 61-62.

<sup>59</sup> Investigation Report, 16 April and 19 April 1918, File "Philadelphia," Box 24, Committee of 14 Papers, NYPL DRBM.

<sup>60</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995 [1899]), chapter 15.

<sup>61</sup> On police bias as a factor in increasing arrest rates of black prostitutes, see Kevin J. Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 38-39. Mumford concludes that, although this factor skews arrest statistics, African Americans were in fact more likely than whites to become prostitutes (p. 101).

<sup>62</sup> Mumford, *Interzones*.

<sup>63</sup> Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, 314.

<sup>64</sup> *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 1 April 1918, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Carol Aronovici, *Unmarried Girls with Sex Experience* (n.p.: Bureau for Social Research of the Seybert Institution, Bulletin I [1915]), 22-23.

<sup>66</sup> Cynthia Blair also links the age profiles of prostitutes to women's alternatives (or the lack of alternatives) in the wage labor market. *Got to Make My Livin'*, 38-39.

<sup>67</sup> Talcott Williams to Owen Wister, 15 November 1911, Correspondence 1909-1911, Rudolph Blankenburg Papers, Collection 1613, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (henceforth HSP).

<sup>68</sup> Philadelphia Association for the Protection of Colored Women, *Report of Fourth Year's Work, 1908*, and *Fifth Year's Work, 1909*, HSP.

<sup>69</sup> Armstrong Association of Philadelphia, *Second Annual Report*.

<sup>70</sup> Blair, *Got to Make My Livin'*, 7.

<sup>71</sup> Mumford, *Interzones*, 43. Eric Olund argues that "the rarity of explicit concern for black prostitution in white reform discourse ... served to underscore the whiteness of the self-governing subject." "Disreputable Life: Race, Sex, and Intimacy," *Environment and Planning D* (2010) 28: 151.

<sup>72</sup> Blair, *Got to Make My Livin'*, 87.

<sup>73</sup> Vice Commission of Philadelphia, *Report on Existing Conditions*, 52.

<sup>74</sup> Aronovici, *Unmarried Girls with Sex Experience*, 40.

<sup>75</sup> Connelly, *Response to Prostitution*, 136-150. See also Edward Frank Allen, *Keeping Our Fighters Fit for War and After* (New York: Century, 1918), esp. 191-205. There is a large literature on the connection between military encampments and prostitution. On the U.S. experience in World War I, see Nancy K. Bristow, *Making Men Moral: Social Engineering During the Great War* (New York: NYU Press, 1996), 99-136; and Pivar, *Purity and Hygiene*. On World War II, see, e.g., Mary Louise Roberts, "The Price of Discretion: Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and the American Military in France, 1944 - 1946," *American Historical Review* (2010) 115(4): 1002-1030. For other contexts, see Katharine H.S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S. Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Sandra Pollock Sturdevant, *Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia* (New York: The New Press, 1992). Stephen Legg has argued that the British Raj's "approach to the problem of prostitution can...be summarized as an attempt to protect the military from the ravages of venereal disease." See his "Stimulation, Segregation and Scandal," 3. On the British context more generally, see Howell, *Geographies of Regulation*, especially 33.

<sup>76</sup> Philadelphia, *Public Ledger*, 1 - 5 April 1918.

<sup>77</sup> Investigation Report, 17 April 1918, File "Philadelphia," Box 24, Committee of 14 Papers, NYPL DRBM.

<sup>78</sup> Philadelphia *Inquirer*, 5 August 1918, 20. Not surprisingly, most historians have found the First World War, with its extensive use of state power to repress commercial sex, to be a major turning point in the history of prostitution. Rosen finds that the "red-light districts shut down by 1918," *Lost Sisterhood* xii; Connelly agrees that red light districts and brothels had declined by 1920, although he adds that this was due to changing technologies, neighborhood patterns, and moral standards as well as to the efforts of reformers, *Response to Prostitution* 26; Gilfoyle finds that the "century of prostitution" in New York ended by 1920, *City of Eros*, 306.

<sup>79</sup> 17 April 1918, Investigation Report, File "Philadelphia," Box 24, Committee of 14 Papers, NYPL DRBM.

<sup>80</sup> "Want New Lights," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8 January 1910, 5.

- <sup>81</sup> "Highways of a Great City," *Philadelphia* (December 1910) 3(6): 4.
- <sup>82</sup> Vice Commission of Philadelphia, *Report on Existing Conditions* 8: 59.
- <sup>83</sup> "Men and Things," *Evening Bulletin* 8 May 1896, 4; Frank M. Goodchild, "The Social Evil in Philadelphia," *The Arena* (March, 1896) 15: 574-586.
- <sup>84</sup> Based on the 25 percent systematic sample of City Archives 79.4B, Detective Division, Criminal Court Record, 1912-1918.
- <sup>85</sup> "Summary of Conditions at Philadelphia, PA," 10 February 1918, File "Philadelphia," Box 24, Committee of 14 Papers, NYPL DRBM.
- <sup>86</sup> Clement, *Love for Sale*, 145-150.
- <sup>87</sup> Investigation Report, 17 April 1918, File "Philadelphia," Box 24, Committee of 14 Papers, NYPL DRBM.
- <sup>88</sup> Fretz, *Furnished Room Problem*, 96.
- <sup>89</sup> Investigation Report, 18 April 1918, File "Philadelphia," Box 24, Committee of 14 Papers, NYPL DRBM.
- <sup>90</sup> Report of JTS, 18 April 1918, File "Philadelphia," Box 24, Committee of 14 Papers, NYPL DRBM.
- <sup>91</sup> "Summary of Conditions, Philadelphia PA, April 16th to 19th 1918 inclusive," File "Philadelphia," Box 24, Committee of 14 Papers, NYPL DRBM.
- <sup>92</sup> Hubbard, *Sex and the City*, 209. Wood, *Freedom of the Streets*.
- <sup>93</sup> Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (New York and London: MacMillan and Co., 1892 - 1897); Residents of Hull-House, *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (New York: Arno Press, 1970 [1895]); Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*.
- <sup>94</sup> Mark Monmonier, *Mapping It Out: Expository Cartography for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), ix.
- <sup>95</sup> Personal email communication from Erik Steiner, Creative Director of the Spatial History Project, 12 July 2012.
- <sup>96</sup> Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005), 53-54.
- <sup>97</sup> Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
- <sup>98</sup> Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, map facing p. 60.
- <sup>99</sup> For an excellent online example of how scholars are continuing to learn from and build on Du Bois's work, see Amy Hillier, Project Director, "Mapping the Du Bois *Philadelphia Negro*," [www.mappingdubois.org](http://www.mappingdubois.org), accessed 13 July 2012.