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“She was a disgrace to her sex” : Prostitution and Moral Panic in London, Ontario, 1880-1885

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Graduate Program in History

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Abstract

This thesis examines the lives and work of prostitutes in London, Ontario, from 1880 to 1885. The city's sex trade was shaped by class, and women worked in upscale houses of ill-fame, disorderly houses, or on the streets. Prostitutes performed domestic and sexual labour in the same spaces, and their daughters often entered the sex trade, creating a multi-generational profession. In addition to class, a woman's race and age shaped her experience in sex work and ability to protect her labour interests from local authorities. Sex workers increasingly became the target of repressive reform efforts from the city's elites. Late-nineteenth century London witnessed a moral panic about vice. Believing that their ways of life were under threat from women who did not conform to Victorian standards of morality, they demonized prostitutes. Despite their victimization and abuse, women of various backgrounds responded to their oppression with resilience.

Lay Summary

This thesis examines the lives of prostitutes in London, Ontario, from 1880 to 1885. The experiences of women in London's sex trade were shaped by their class, race, and age.

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The Landscape of Prostitution in London, Ontario

In late August 1985, residents of London, Ontario complained to police about sex workers soliciting on Dundas Street between Elizabeth and English Streets.¹ The London Police Service responded by directing forces to the area east of Adelaide, and promised the public that it was committed to cracking down on both “prostitutes and their customers.”² That month, police caught two women on different occasions approaching men in vehicles to proposition sex. Both pleaded guilty to being “inmates of a bawdy house” and the court fined them \$500 each. One woman was nearly fifty and relied on disability pensions due to her epilepsy and diabetes. The other, aged thirty, also received government welfare payments. The women told the courthouse that they turned to prostitution because it was a viable way to increase their incomes and pay off debts. London authorities were unsympathetic to their circumstances. County Crown Attorney Mike Martin stated that the “problem of prostitutes plying their trade on Dundas and Elizabeth streets is constituting an embarrassment to decent women who walk there.”³

In an era of neo-conservatism in the 1980s, Londoners seemed increasingly concerned about vice in their city. These fears ranged from indecent exposure in the downtown strip clubs, particularly among “male hookers” and “transsexuals,” to teenage prostitution rings, and explicit videotapes reportedly smuggled in from the West coast.⁴ The public panic, however, was largely focused on prostitution. Local residents expressed support for police patrols in the city’s east end

¹ “Prostitution Charges Rise in One Area,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 1, 1986.

² “London Police Crack Down on Prostitutes, Customers,” *London Free Press*, Aug. 23, 1985.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ For a few examples, see: “‘Obscenity’ of Cassettes to be Tested,” *London Free Press*, Nov. 5, 1981; “Nude Dancer Fined For Indecent Act,” *London Free Press*, Nov. 8, 1983; “A History of Sexual Facsimiles Plays at the London Courthouse,” *London Free Press*, May 24, 1984; “Stripper Kept His G-String in Place, Judge Rules Stage Act Not Indecent,” *London Free Press*, Dec. 14, 1985; “Transsexual Sentenced to 45 Days for Soliciting, Violating Court Order,” *London Free Press*, Nov. 26, 1986; “Strip Club Patrons Have Jail in Common,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 10, 1987; “Male Hookers Bigger Worry Than Females,” *London Free Press*, Nov. 26, 1988.

to combat streetwalking, particularly after reports about sex trafficking among London girls emerged later that fall.⁵ The police initiative continued through the following year, resulting in thirty-one prostitution-related charges in the first half of 1986, in contrast to merely seven charges in 1985.⁶ London's moral panic in the mid-1980s resulted in material consequences for sex workers, many of whom were poor, queer, racialized, or disabled. Marginalized people were subjected to repeated incarceration, public attention in the press, and blame from the city's more conservative elements for choosing an inherently immoral trade.

This was not the first time that a moral panic in London resulted in a crusade against prostitution. One hundred years earlier, London residents embarked on a campaign to eradicate brothels and streetwalking as a result of their broader concerns about vice in the 1880s. Urbanization and industrialization in the Victorian period transformed London from a mid-sized town to a large regional service centre, and the city was ill-equipped to address the problems that came with the population increase. Local elites were concerned that alleged working-class vices, including alcoholism, gambling, and prostitution, were scarring London. Their main worries centred on the sex trade. As in the 1980s, complaints from middle- and upper-class Londoners spurred city leaders to increase police patrols in the low-income neighbourhoods of the east end, resulting in frequent jailtime for the city's many sex workers. Brothel-owners sparred with municipal officials in the courts, while police rounded up homeless street-walkers on charges of vagrancy and offenses against public morality. Despite their best intentions, the crusade to save the working-class from sexual vice further marginalized the most oppressed in their society: female sex workers.

⁵ "Teenaged London Girls in Child Prostitute Ring." *London Free Press*, Oct. 17, 1985.

⁶ "Prostitution Charges Rise in One Area," *London Free Press*, Oct. 1, 1986.

This thesis examines the history of prostitution in London from 1880 to 1885.⁷ Ontario witnessed significant social change in the late nineteenth century. As a result of industrialization, people who previously lived in rural communities flocked to metropolises seeking employment in the new economy. Working-class women and girls worked in factories or as domestic servants. Many needed to supplement their meagre income by other means. London women sold themselves in brothels, on the streets, or out of their own homes. Others chose sex work to sustain alcohol addictions, or operated lucrative brothels catering to elite men in the city. Despite the risks of disease, violence, and incarceration, many women sustained themselves by selling sex, thereby contributing to London's black-market economy.

This dissertation seeks to recover stories about female prostitutes during London's moral panic in the 1880s, paying particular attention to their lived experiences.⁸ It examines how sex workers negotiated complex relationships with their communities, families, and other women in the same line of work during a particularly repressive era. Although legislators, magistrates, and other city elites regulated the sexual labour of prostitutes, interactions with authorities were only one facet of their lives. In contrast to other historians who focus on women's criminalization, this thesis asks questions about women's experiences in prostitution, exploring how they raised families while labouring in the sex trade.

⁷ This time period was chosen due to the availability of sources, and because the town of London East, a suburb and the site of the local sex trade, was annexed to London as a city ward in 1885.

⁸ Like other scholarship on the history of prostitution in Canada, this thesis uses the term "prostitute" to describe women who sold sexual services for money in the late nineteenth century. Despite its degrading connotation, "prostitute" was the least-offensive word used at the time and situates this study in the 1880s. Although this dissertation uses the term "sex worker" to describe the women who sold sexual services, it does so sparingly. "Sex worker" implies contemporary concepts that would have been foreign to women in the sex trade, including unionization and decriminalization. Some sex workers today have reclaimed the word "prostitute," employing it as a form of empowerment rather than a slur.

Women of different backgrounds worked in London's sex trade. Their class, race, and age were essential determinants of their labour. Some Anglo-Christian women earned fortunes in the sex trade by operating houses of ill-fame. Affluent brothel-owners shared little in common with lower-class prostitutes, many of whom were women of colour, suffered from alcohol addictions, or were middle-aged. These categories of difference shaped a woman's ability to defend her interests against police, legal authorities, and moral reformers. Although upper-class madams used their wealth to pay police and legal representatives to protect their businesses, these relationships were inaccessible to poor or racialized street-walkers, who were imprisoned more frequently as a result.

Women in prostitution had few opportunities to tell their own stories due to the taboo nature of their work and a preoccupation with daily survival in circumstances that were often violent and degrading. Marginalized lives translate into marginalized histories. Despite growing public interest in Canadian sex workers' experiences, particularly after Bill C-36 was passed in 2014 to decriminalize sex work, and in light of inquiries into Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous women, surprisingly few academic works discuss the history of prostitution in Canada. The historical literature on Canadian sex work is narrow in scope. Although some historians have studied how moral reformers, police, and other authority figures criminalized sex workers in the late nineteenth-century, few examine the lives of women in prostitution. Historians have been unable to answer basic questions about women's experiences in the sex trade, including why they entered prostitution, how they survived frequent imprisonment and violence, and the ways in which their race and age shaped their labour. Many studies imply that sex workers were passive victims of oppression who rarely experienced moments of agency and control over their lives.

The first histories of Canadian women were written in the late 1950s and 1960s, and, similar to histories of great men, focused on prominent women and their political action in the public sphere.⁹ Early women's historians examine suffragettes, leaders of the moral reform/social gospel movement, and other elites who believed that prostitution was a social problem that had to be regulated.¹⁰

While these scholars prioritized the social reform movement, popular historians did write about prostitution. Their work downplayed the oppression that sex workers faced in order to promote nostalgia for a freer and less sexually repressive era. The best example is James Gray's 1971 book, *Red Lights on the Prairies*.¹¹ Rather than describe the economic situations that forced women into the sex trade, Gray focuses on how prostitution enabled women to express their sexuality, which was apparently as untamed as Canada's frontier in an age of expansion and settlement. Gray's narrative ends when reformers, police, and government authorities began to regulate the lawless nature of Prairie communities. Despite their stereotypical portrayals of sex workers, these popular works were the only available sources on the history of prostitution in Canada.

⁹ Catherine Carstairs and Nancy Janovicek, "The Dangers of Complacency: Women's History/Gender History in Canada in the Twenty-First Century," *Women's History Review* 27.1 (2018): 30.

¹⁰ Catherine L. Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto, 1950); Elsie Gregory MacGill, *My Mother The Judge* (Toronto, Peter Martin Associates, 1955); Byrne Hope Sanders, *Famous Women: Carr, Hind, Gullen, Murphy* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1958); Rosa L. Shaw, *Proud Heritage: A History of the National Council of Women of Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1957); Margaret Stewart and Doris French Shackleton, *Ask No Quarter: A Biography of Agnes MacPhail* (Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1959); Mary Quayle Innis, *The Clear Spirit: Twenty Canadian Women and their Times* (Toronto: Canadian Federation of University Women, 1966).

¹¹ James H. Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971). A number of books were also published prior to the centenary of the Klondike gold rush. Frances Backhouse, *Women of the Klondike* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1995); Charlene Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers: Women, Men, and Community in the Klondike* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998); Lael Morgan, *Good Time Girls of the Alaska-Yukon Gold Rush* (Fairbanks: Epicenter Press, 1998).

By the 1970s, women's historians shifted their focus to the lives of *average* women, whether in the workforce as labourers, in organized reform groups as volunteers, or in their youth and old age.¹² Their research was informed by the emerging discipline of social history, which foregrounded lived experiences from the bottom up, and sought to include previously ignored groups, such as the working-class.¹³ Women's historians were also influenced by the second wave feminist movement, which aimed to liberate women from unpaid domestic work and identify the reasons behind their historical oppression.¹⁴ Combining elements of radical feminism and Marxism, socialist feminists argued that patriarchal and capitalist structures perpetuated women's financial dependence on men by devaluing their labour.¹⁵ Historians such as Bettina Bradbury and Wayne Roberts explored women's paid and unpaid work in a patriarchal-capitalist society.¹⁶

Historian Lori Rotenberg was influenced by this scholarship and explored prostitution as a category of female labour in *Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930*. In her chapter, "The Wayward Worker: Toronto's Prostitute at the Turn of the Century," Rotenberg suggests that patriarchy and capitalism created both the male psychological desire for extra-marital affairs and the material

¹² Sue Morgan, "Introduction: Writing Feminist History: Theoretical Debates and Critical Practices," in Sue Morgan ed. *The Feminist History Reader* (New York: Oxford, 2006), 8.

¹³ Bryan Palmer, "The Poverty of Theory Revisited: Or, Critical Theory, Historical Materialism, and the Ostensible End of Marxism," *Left History* 1.1 (1993): 72.

¹⁴ Bettina Bradbury, "Women and the History of Their Work in Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28.3 (Fall 1993), 3.

¹⁵ Joan Sangster, "Beyond Dichotomies: Re-Assessing Gender History and Women's History in Canada," *Left History* 3.1 (Spring/Summer 1995), 113.

¹⁶ Janice Acton, Penny Goldsmith and Bonnie Shepard, ed, *Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930* (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974); Wayne Roberts, *Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women, 1893-1914* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1976); Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, "One Hundred and Two Muffled Voices: Canada's Industrial Women in the 1880s," *Atlantis* 3.1 (Autumn 1977): 67-82; Bettina Bradbury, "The Family Economy and Work in an Industrializing City: Montreal in the 1870s," *Historical Papers* (1979): 71-96; Meg Luxton, *More Than A Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1980); Bonnie Fox, ed, *Hidden in the Household: Women's Domestic Labour Under Capitalism* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1980); Graham S. Lowe, "Women, Work and the Office: The Feminization of Clerical Occupations in Canada, 1901-1931," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 5 (1980): 361-381.

conditions that forced women into the sex trade to feed this demand. Employers set deliberately low wages for women based on the patriarchal assumption that their labour supplemented a parent or husband's primary income.¹⁷ The gendered system of capitalism devalued female work in order to exploit it, leading many underpaid women with no choice but to turn to prostitution. Men's demand for sex with prostitutes was encouraged by a patriarchal double standard that allowed male expressions of sexuality while denying those rights to women.¹⁸ According to Rotenberg and other feminist historians, gender and class were two essential categories for understanding the "necessary social function" that prostitution served in the early twentieth century.¹⁹

Although a Marxist feminist reading of prostitution explained its proliferation in society, it painted sex workers as victims without exploring how their experiences in the sex trade varied. Marxist feminist histories suggest that female agency occurs through collective bargaining power, rather than individual self-will or determination.²⁰ According to Rotenberg, prostitutes were unlikely to feel solidarity with one another due to the contractual style of attaining customers through competition, while their emotional dependence on madams and pimps "obscured the exploitative nature of the relationship between supervisor and worker."²¹ Although this argument explains why sex workers did not form a sense of class-consciousness, it suggests that prostitutes did not resist oppressive institutions or experience moments of agency.

¹⁷ Lori Rotenberg, "The Wayward Worker: Toronto's Prostitute at the Turn of the Century," in *Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930*, edited by Janice Acton, Penny Goldsmith, and Bonnie Shepard, 33-69, (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974), 47. Their wages were referred to as "pin money."

¹⁸ Rotenberg, "The Wayward Worker," 62.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

²⁰ Margaret Conrad, "The Re-Birth of Canada's Past: A Decade of Women's History," *Acadiensis* 12.2 (Spring 1983): 147. Feminist historians like Wayne Roberts argue that working-class women were historically marginalized because their exploitation rendered them unable to unionize or collectively protest against unfair working conditions. Wayne Roberts, *Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women, 1893-1914* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1976), 11.

²¹ Rotenberg, "The Wayward Worker," 54.

Furthermore, Marxist feminist histories at the time did not explore how status indicators like race or age marginalized women in different ways. Rotenberg argues that immigrants were more likely to become prostitutes because of their “material and psychological vulnerability” in unfamiliar surroundings, suggesting that racialized women were more susceptible to the luring of pimps because they lacked the necessities of life, and *not* because they were structurally oppressed in society.²² Although Rotenberg conceded that being of a different race could potentially result in material differences between women, race itself was not considered a category of differentiation like gender and class.

Women’s historians in the 1970s and 1980s shifted their emphasis to the social reform/gospel movement, abandoning biographies of reform leaders in favour of examining the involvement of middle-class women. Historians such as Wendy Mitchinson, Diana Pedersen, and Veronica Strong-Boag studied female-controlled institutions, including reform groups and suffrage collectives.²³ Although they demonstrated that average women were engaged in politics and social outreach, they did not examine how lower-class women responded to these attempts to

²² *Ibid.*, 38.

²³ Veronica Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women in Canada, 1893-1929* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1976); Wendy Mitchinson, “Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century: A Step Toward Independence,” *Atlantis* 2 (Spring 1977): 57-75; Carol Bacchi, “Race Regeneration and Social Purity: A Study of the Social Attitudes of Canada’s English-Speaking Suffragists,” *Social History* 11 (Nov. 1978): 460-74; Linda Kealey, ed, *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880-1920* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1979); Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Diana Pedersen, “‘Building Today for the Womanhood of Tomorrow’: Businessmen, Boosters, and the YWCA, 1890-1930,” *Urban History Review* 15.3 (1987): 225-42. Some historians still wrote biographies of reform individuals, for instance: Veronica Strong-Boag, “Canadian Feminism in the 1920s: The Case of Nellie McClung,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 12.4 (1977): 58-68; Mary E. Hallett, “Nellie McClung and the Fight for the Ordination of Women in the United Church of Canada,” *Atlantis* 4 (Spring 1979): 2-19; Rudy C. Marchildon, “The ‘Persons’ Controversy: The Legal Aspects of the Fight for Women Senators,” *Atlantis* 6 (Spring 1981): 99-113; James Struthers, “A Profession in Crisis: Charlotte Whitton and Canadian Social Work in the 1930s,” *Canadian Historical Review* 62.2 (June 1981): 169-85; Patricia Rooke and R. L. Schnell, “‘An Idiot’s Flowerbed’: A Study of Charlotte Whitton’s Feminist Thought, 1941-1950,” *International Journal of Women’s Studies* 1 (Jan. 1982): 29-46.

improve their lives. By 1982, historians Eliane Leslau Silverman and Margaret Conrad were aware that scholarship on the reform movement suffered from this limitation and urged historians to consider less privileged perspectives.²⁴ Despite calls to study the lives of lower-class women who received charity, historians did not explore prostitution from the bottom up.

Women's historians continued to focus on labour in the 1980s, but they shifted their emphasis from considering oppressive structural forces to criticizing the notion of separate spheres which relegated women to the private sphere of family, and men to the public sphere of work.²⁵ Historians like Marjorie Griffith Cohen and Joy Parr demonstrated that the economy depended on both paid and unpaid female labour which was more varied than men's, and often blurred the distinction between the home and workplace.²⁶ Although inquiries about women's private and public labour could have major implications for understanding the sex trade because it blends the private realm of sexual relations, reproduction, and intimacy with the public world of economic labour, historians did not examine prostitution. Similar to women's non-wage work that Bettina

²⁴ Eliane Leslau Silverman wrote in 1982 that "close examination of the institutions of and ideas about private charity and public welfare will yield insights into the lives of women. Much creative scholarship is still needed to illuminate its recipients—widows, prostitutes, orphans, abandoned wives, the insane, and prisoners." Eliane Leslau Silverman, "Writing Canadian Women's History, 1970-82: An Historiographical Analysis," *Canadian Historical Review* 63.4 (Dec. 1982): 518-9. Margaret Conrad pointed out a year later that despite new scholarship on elites' efforts to regulate lower-class women's reproductive health, "we still await an analysis of women's perspective on the changing contours of the family." Margaret Conrad, "The Re-Birth of Canada's Past: A Decade of Women's History," *Acadiensis* 12.2 (Spring 1983): 140-62.

²⁵ Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "Postmodern Patchwork: Some Recent Trends in the Writing of Women's History in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 72.4 (Dec. 1991): 446.

²⁶ Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "'Weaving It Together': Life Cycle and the Industrial Experience of Female Cotton Workers in Quebec, 1910-1950," *Labour/Le Travailleur* 7 (Spring 1981): 113-25; Bettina Bradbury, "Pigs, Cows and Boarders: Non-Wage Forms of Survival Among Montreal Families, 1861-1891," *Labour/Le Travail* 14 (Fall 1984): 9-46; Marjorie Griffith Cohen, *Women's Work, Markets and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988); Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993).

Bradbury describes, such as raising animals or taking in boarders, prostitution is another form of labour that occurs in the domestic sphere and has been historically overlooked.²⁷

Women's historians in the late 1980s and 1990s were increasingly interested in female criminality. Scholars examined how urban elites became concerned about working-class women's sexuality in the late nineteenth century. This moral panic gave rise to numerous laws that regulated lower-class women's activities, including vagrancy and seduction laws. Constance Backhouse, John McLaren, Carolyn Strange, and Tina Loo examined prostitution from a legal standpoint and argue that Canada witnessed a "veritable explosion" of legislation that aimed to incarcerate sex workers whose behaviour clashed with Anglo-Canadian morality.²⁸ Their work, however, did not explain how women's lives were affected by the application of laws by police and magistrates. Furthermore, these histories highlighted how prostitutes interacted with institutional forms of power, such as police and judges. They did not examine whether women in the sex trade had meaningful relationships with their communities and families, or concerns other than avoiding arrest and incarceration.

²⁷ Bettina Bradbury, "Pigs, Cows and Boarders," 12.

²⁸ Constance Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law: Reflection of a Discriminatory Society," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 36 (November 1985), 395. For other examples of the many works that examine the history of prostitution law, see: Constance Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Judicial Attitudes toward Child Custody, Rape, and Prostitution," in *Equality and Judicial Neutrality*, edited by Sheilah L. Martin and Kathleen E. Mahoney, 271-81, (Calgary: Carswell, 1987); John McLaren, "Chasing the Social Evil: Moral Fervour and the Evolution of Canada's Prostitution Laws, 1867-1917," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 1 (1986): 125-165; "White Slavers: The Reform of Canada's Prostitution Laws and Patterns of Enforcement, 1900-1920," *Criminal Justice History* 8 (1987): 53-119; "The Canadian Magistracy and the Anti-White Slavery Campaign, 1900-1920," in *Canadian Perspectives on Law and Society*, ed. W. Pue and B. Wright, 329-53, (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988); *Recalculating the Wages of Sin: The Social and Legal Construction of Prostitution in Canada, 1850-1920* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1992); Nick. E. Larsen, "Canadian Prostitution Control between 1914 and 1970: An Exercise in Chauvinist Reasoning," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 7 (Fall 1992): 137-56; Carolyn Strange and Tina Loo, *Making Good: Law and Moral Regulation in Canada, 1867-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

By the 1990s, the attention of women's historians shifted to the "girl problem," which was a moral panic about young women who did not follow late-nineteenth century prescriptive norms of feminine behaviour. Carolyn Strange, Andrée Lévesque, and Tamara Myers examined how religious leaders, women's groups, and other urban elites attempted to reform young women.²⁹ These works explored how elites problematized girls in all areas of their lives, from their leisure activities to their labour.

A major theoretical shift in the 1990s led historians to change their search for lived experience and truth to inquire how meaning is articulated and shaped through language. Gender historians sought to understand "how power works through various discourses that set limits, draw boundaries and make hierarchies seem 'natural.'"³⁰ Historians were encouraged to think critically about definitions of gender, class, and race, and recognize that these distinctions were created through relationships, and not permanently defined in all times and places.³¹ This "linguistic turn" problematized how identities were understood by suggesting that they were socially constructed through various discourses.³² These developments led critics like Mariana Valverde and Joy Parr to argue that earlier feminist works presupposed what it meant to be a woman, and "isolated woman from the social relationships which created her" in various contexts.³³

²⁹ Andrée Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules: Women in Quebec, 1919-1939* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994); Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Joan Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women: Sexuality, Family, and the Law in Ontario, 1920-1960* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2001); *Girl Trouble: Female Delinquency in English Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002); Tamara Myers, *Caught: Montreal's Modern Girls and the Law, 1869-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

³⁰ Franca Iacovetta and Linda Kealey, "Women's History, Gender History and Debating Dichotomies," *Left History* (1996), 229.

³¹ Joy Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," *Canadian Historical Review* 76.3 (September 1995), 362. Notions of masculinity and femininity, for example, were taken to be mutually constituted in historical contexts, and rarely in isolation from understandings of race and class.

³² Iacovetta and Kealey, "Women's History," 229.

³³ Parr, "Gender History," 362.

Mariana Valverde's post-structuralist analysis, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, examined the language and imagery of the moral reform movement. Valverde argues that its leaders used specific discourses, or "signifying practices," to define "fallen" women in contrast to Anglo-Christian society, therefore legitimizing the necessity of reforming such people.³⁴ Although Valverde's discursive analysis highlights what social gospel leaders thought about the sex trade, it does not explain how prostitutes interpreted stereotypes about their labour. Unlike reform advocates, who voiced their opinions about prostitution in the press and through speeches, sex workers played no role in shaping public discourses surrounding morality, and therefore had no agency to influence how others viewed them or their positions in society. They were passive victims because they lacked a collective voice to challenge accepted discourses about their work.

Little is known about the lives of prostitutes or how they resisted increasing surveillance and incarceration in the late nineteenth century. Historians such as Constance Backhouse and Judith Fingard attempted to mitigate this issue in the late 1980s and early 1990s by employing case studies of sex workers to make broader claims about their lives and work. Backhouse examines two impoverished prostitutes and one wealthy madam to highlight how class affected women's status in Ontario's sex trade.³⁵ But examining women at extreme ends of the economic bracket

³⁴ Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), 10. For more works on the moral reform movement, see: Richard Allen, "The Social Gospel and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890-1928," in *Prophecy and Protest: Social Movements in Twentieth Century Canada* Ed. Samuel D. Clark, J. Paul Grayson and Linda M. Grayson, 45-61, (Toronto: Gage Educational, 1975); Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Linda Kealey, *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880-1920* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1979); Wendy Mitchinson, "The YWCA and Reform in the Nineteenth Century," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 12.24 (1979): 368-384; Janice Newton, "From Wage Slave to White Slave: The Prostitution Controversy and the Early Canadian Left," in *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*, ed. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, 205-28, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

³⁵ Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice: Women and Law in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: Women's Press for the Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 1991).

fails to account for sex workers who were neither affluent nor poor, including occasional prostitutes who only performed sex work when it was necessary to supplement other forms of income. Judith Fingard employs case studies of Afro-Nova Scotian sex workers to argue that Halifax did not have a widespread moral reform movement because elites were not concerned about protecting black women.³⁶ These works, however, examine only a few individuals in two cities, and more research is needed to make broader conclusions about women's lives in the Victorian sex trade.

By the turn of the twenty-first century, gender historians became interested in sexuality. Steven Maynard, Valerie Korinek, Elise Rose Chenier, and Sarah Carter examined gay and lesbian history, attitudes toward sexual deviancy, and the interplay between ideas about sexuality, marriage, and nation-building.³⁷ In particular, Becki Ross contributed to queer sexuality research through her work on gay sex workers and the history of sexual services such as erotic dancing.³⁸

³⁶ Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax* (Porter's Lake, NS: Pottersfield Press, 1989), 97.

³⁷ Steven Maynard, "Through a Hole in the Lavatory Wall: Homosexual Subcultures, Surveillance, and the Dialectics of Discovery, Toronto, 1890-1930," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5.2 (October 1994): 207-242; Karen Dubinsky, *The Second Greatest Disappointment: Honeymooning and Tourism at Niagara Falls* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1999); Joan Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women: Sexuality, Family, and the Law in Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001); Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale, eds. *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005); Jeffrey Vacante, "Writing the History of Sexuality and 'National' History in Quebec," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* 39.2 (Spring 2005): 31-55; Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008); Elise Rose Chenier, *Strangers in Our Midst: Sexual Deviancy in Postwar Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Cameron Duder, *Awfully Devoted Women: Lesbian Lives in Canada, 1900-65* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); Valerie J. Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

³⁸ Becki L. Ross, "Bumping and Grinding on the Line: Making Nudity Pay," *Labour/Le Travail* 46 (2000): 221-250; *Burlesque West: Showgirls, Sex, and Sin in Postwar Vancouver* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); "Sex and (Evacuation From) the City: The Moral and Legal Regulation of Sex Workers in Vancouver's West End, 1975-1985," *Sexualities* 13.2 (2010): 197-218; Holly Karibo, "Detroit's Border Brothel: Sex Tourism in Windsor, Ontario, 1945-1960," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 40.3 (September 2010): 362-378; Becki Ross and Rachel Sullivan. "Tracing Lines of Horizontal Hostility: How Sex Workers and Gay Activists Battled for Space, Voice, and Belonging in Vancouver, 1975-1985."

Histories of sexuality provide insight into how certain minorities, including LGBTQ+ Canadians, have been involved in the sex trade in the postwar period.

Although recent works often examine queer sex workers, one exception is Mary Anne Poutanen's *Beyond Brutal Passions: Prostitution in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal*. In contrast to literature that focuses on how police and judges criminalized women, Poutanen decenters stereotypes about power dynamics between prostitutes and authority figures. Her work responds to British historian Tony Henderson's call for scholarship on prostitution that "escapes from the domination of those who placed themselves in authority over prostitutes—the agents of the law and the moralisers."³⁹ Poutanen argues that sex workers experienced "multifaceted" relationships with members of Montreal's criminal justice system, who often appeared as clients, neighbours, or commercial investors.⁴⁰ Even in cases when prostitutes interacted with the state, power dynamics between women and elites could not be distilled into a binary of victim versus oppressor.

Although Poutanen concedes that conservative members of Montreal's establishment regulated prostitutes' sexuality and labour, she contends that they "touched only a part of women's lives."⁴¹ Her work shifts the focus from institutional control to the women who were accused of sexual immorality, and presents compelling accounts of their daily experiences in the city, such as searching for food or dealing with venereal diseases. Concerned about scholarship that victimizes women in the past, Poutanen defines agency as a "self-directed, autonomous act of will."⁴² This

Sexualities 15 (2012): 604-621; Becki Ross, "Outdoor Brothel Culture: The Un/Making of a Transsexual Stroll in Vancouver's West End, 1975-1984," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 25.1 (2012): 126-150.

³⁹ Mary Anne Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions: Prostitution in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 6.

⁴⁰ Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*, 10.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 12.

definition allows her to contend that women in the sex trade exerted forms of control over their lives despite their marginalization. Poutanen points to specific moments in which prostitutes resisted oppressive state institutions or negotiated with them to gain the necessities of life.⁴³ Her work presents women as individuals with specific histories and contexts, rather than a group to be imprisoned or reformed.

Few historical works examine the history of the sex trade in Canada. Historians have shed light on how nineteenth-century prostitution laws disproportionately targeted women instead of their male customers and explored the moral reform movement's anxieties about working-class women in an era when cities were transformed by urbanization and industrialization. But historians have not provided critical histories about the women who worked as prostitutes. It is uncertain how sex workers negotiated the unique demands of their labour amid a culture of increasing criminalization and discrimination in the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, scholars have not accounted for how a woman's age, class, and race informed her experiences in the sex trade.⁴⁴ Questions about the lives of prostitutes can only be answered if historians explore the sex trade from the ground up. This thesis seeks to address these gaps by centering sex workers' perspectives and examining how women of various backgrounds responded to increasingly repressive reform efforts in London, Ontario.

London's History and the Landscape of Prostitution

⁴³ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁴ Cynthia Comacchio argues that age and generation continues to be an "under-studied status marker" in Canadian social history, despite the fact that age fundamentally shapes one's experience of historical events. Cynthia Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of Modern Canada, 1920-1950* (Waterloo: Wildfid Laurier Press, 2006), 6.

Historians have long argued that London was a centre for political and social conservatism in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁵ The city's conservative roots date back to its establishment. In the 1790s, Lieutenant-Colonel John Graves Simcoe founded a crown reserve of land in an area he called "London." Simcoe believed that it was an ideal location for the capital of Upper Canada because it was situated near the United States in southern Ontario's western peninsula, at the forks of the Thames River between Toronto and Detroit.⁴⁶ Although London never became the capital, the colonial government designated it as the administrative centre of the London District in 1826.⁴⁷ While nearby villages like Delaware and St. Thomas had a greater number of residents, tory-minded Family Compact officials were concerned about political radicalism amongst their American settlers.⁴⁸ London had fewer inhabitants and administrators hoped to influence the political loyalties of its future residents. Historian Frederick H. Armstrong notes that "it was anticipated that the heavy influx of immigrants, which was beginning to flow from the British Isles to Upper Canada, would make the forks a strong centre of conservatism, thus

⁴⁵ For London's social conservatism, see: Violet M. Cunningham, *London in the Bush, 1826-1976: A Resume of the History of London, Ontario* (London, Ontario: London Historical Museums, 1976), 6; Frederick H. Armstrong, "Obscenity in Victorian London: The Lotto Davene Poster Trial," in *Simcoe's Choice: Celebrating London's Bicentennial*, ed. Guy St-Denis, 175-192, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992), 189-190; Orlo Miller, *This Was London: The First Two Centuries* (Westport, Ontario: Butternut Press Inc., 1988), 157. For London's political conservatism in the late nineteenth century, see Frederick H. Armstrong, *The Forest City: An Illustrated History of London, Canada* (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, 1986), 102-5.

⁴⁶ Frederick H. Armstrong and Daniel J. Brock, *London, Ontario: A Case Study in Metropolitan Evolution* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1979), 2-3.

⁴⁷ The London District was within Middlesex County, and comprised of the eastern half of Ontario's western peninsula.

⁴⁸ C. F. J. Whebell, "The London Strategem: From Concept to Consummation, 1791-1855," in *Simcoe's Choice: Celebrating London's Bicentennial*, ed. Guy St-Denis, 31-66, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992), 47; Frederick H. Armstrong and Daniel J. Brock, "The Rise of London: A Study of Urban Evolution in Nineteenth-Century Southwestern Ontario," in *Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 88.

balancing the radicalism of the region.”⁴⁹ The British government stationed a garrison in London in 1838, and the imperial military presence solidified the city’s reputation for conservatism.⁵⁰

London became the centre for services in southwestern Ontario. In the 1850s, a Great Western Railway (GWR) line connected the town to Hamilton, Windsor, and Sarnia, facilitating companies to ship manufactured goods across the region, and encouraging investors to found new businesses.⁵¹ An insurance industry developed in the 1860s when residents established London Life and the Royal Standard Loan Co.⁵² London also provided ecclesiastical services to the surrounding area, and was a Methodist centre since the 1830s. The Roman Catholic Diocese of London, the Anglican Diocese of Huron, and the Kirk of Scotland Presbyterians relocated their headquarters to the city in the 1850s, bringing with them plans to establish schools, hospitals, and refuges.⁵³ London’s economic growth encouraged urbanization in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the population increased from five thousand in 1851, to over twenty thousand residents by 1881.⁵⁴ As an urban centre surrounded by a large rural hinterland, the city catered to most of southwestern Ontario by providing financial, insurance, legal, military, religious, educational, and other professional services to the region.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Armstrong and Brock, “The Rise of London,” 88. By 1827, London only had 133 residents. Ian Christopher Ross, “London East, 1854-1885: The Evolution, Incorporation, and Annexation of a Satellite Municipality,” MA Thesis (London: University of Western Ontario, 1977), 4.

⁵⁰ Armstrong and Brock, “The Rise of London,” 90; Armstrong and Brock, *London, Ontario*, 4.

⁵¹ Armstrong and Brock, *London, Ontario*, 4.

⁵² Daniel J. Brock, *Fragments from the Forks: London Ontario’s Legacy* (London, Ontario: The London & Middlesex Historical Society, 2011), 105.

⁵³ Armstrong and Brock, “The Rise of London,” 90.

⁵⁴ Havi Echenberg, “Sport as a Social Response to Urbanization: A Case Study, London, Ontario, 1850-1900,” MA Thesis (London: University of Western Ontario, 1979), 49; Brock, *Fragments from the Forks*, 399; Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, page 406, “Population of Cities and Towns having over 5,000 inhabitants compared.” Although Echenberg suggests that London’s population was over twenty-seven thousand residents in 1881, the 1881 Census indicates that it was twenty thousand.

⁵⁵ Frederick H. Armstrong and Daniel J. Brock, *Reflections on London’s Past* (London: The Architectural and Historic Sites Preservation Committee of the City of London, 1975), 11.

Adelaide Street marked the city's eastern limits. In contrast to London's affluence, the region of London Township east of Adelaide was a working-class suburb, with industry centered on oil refinement. London East's development started in 1851 when Murray Anderson, a tinsmith, opened an iron foundry on the corner of Dundas and Adelaide Street, which eventually employed over a hundred men.⁵⁶ The labourers chose to live near the factory, residing in small cottages in the area that became known as London East. The neighbourhood grew in the early 1860s after crude oil was struck in Lambton County. Investors established refineries in London East because of its cheap land, low township taxes, and access to the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) and GWR lines for shipping.⁵⁷ This growth gave rise to numerous industries surrounding oil production, including chemical manufacture, barrel making, and railcar construction, and entrenched a distinct working-class culture among the labourers.⁵⁸ By the early 1880s, the town of London East had just under five thousand residents.⁵⁹ Murray Anderson was its mayor for three years until 1884, when he was succeeded by Charles Lilley, a grocer who had been involved in local politics since the 1870s.⁶⁰

The two centres were divided along economic lines. Middle- and upper-class residents lived in London, while working-class labourers settled in inexpensive lodgings near the industry east of Adelaide. London East was home to numerous manufacturing companies, but the bulk of their profits left the working-class area because investors preferred to live in upscale London neighbourhoods.⁶¹ The town bordered on downtown London and was seen as an extension of the

⁵⁶ Ross, "London East, 1854-1885," 5.

⁵⁷ John H. Lutman and Christopher L. Hives, *The North and the East of London: An Historical and Architectural Guide* (London: Corporation of the City of London, 1982), 55.

⁵⁸ For more information about the oil companies in London East, see Lutman and Hives, *The North and the East of London*, 55-7.

⁵⁹ Miller, *This Was London*, 150. London East became a town in 1881.

⁶⁰ Ross, "London East, 1854-1885," 124.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

city. This was further entrenched in 1875 when the two municipalities became linked by streetcars, which conveyed city residents to their managerial positions east of Adelaide, and enabled London Easters to access basic services in London.⁶²

Although London East enjoyed municipal independence, it relied on London for industrial investment, water services, and fire protection. Disputes within the London East council in the early 1880s impeded the town from supplying its industry with water. City councillors were unable to reach a consensus about whether to build their own waterworks or, in the interest of economy and practicality, attach pipes to London's larger waterlines, a move that some believed linked the municipalities too close together and would reduce the ability of the town council to make decisions about their water access.⁶³ As a result, factories had to rely on London's fire brigade to assist them in the case of fire. City firemen were slow to respond in emergencies because they needed to obtain permission from the London East mayor before crossing the municipal border.⁶⁴ Oil refineries were flammable, and thirteen were destroyed by fire between the late 1860s and early 1880s.⁶⁵

By 1884, investors were wary of reconstructing factories in an area without water or fire protection, which threatened local employment. The Imperial Oil Company's refinery suffered a major fire in 1883 and subsequently relocated its operations to Petrolia, resulting in the loss of seventy-five jobs.⁶⁶ On September 21st, 1884, the town witnessed the largest fire in its history at the GWR car works, London East's main employer.⁶⁷ Over four hundred men lost their jobs, a considerable number for a town of a few thousand people. Residents were concerned that unless

⁶² Ibid., 38.

⁶³ Ibid., 62-4.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 58.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Miller, *This Was London*, 149.

⁶⁷ Ross, "London East, 1854-1885," 58.

London East assured future water protection, the GWR would rebuild the car works west of Adelaide, and other companies would also be encouraged to move operations away from the town.⁶⁸

London Easters began debating amalgamating the suburb with London after the GWR fire. Becoming a city ward would allow the town to connect lines to London's waterworks and provide factories with water access. Proponents such as Mayor Charles Lilley argued that solving the water problem would encourage the GWR and other industry to rebuild their factories in London East, thereby alleviating the unemployment crisis. Although many prominent London Easters publicly advocated for annexation, others, including ex-Mayor Murray Anderson, were opposed. They believed that the town would pay high taxes to London in exchange for water services and police protection but find itself ignored and neglected on the city's periphery. Anderson ran against Lilley for mayor later that year in a "sharp contest" for the seat, campaigning to protect London East as a distinct municipality.⁶⁹ Lilley won the election, and London East officially became No. Ward 5 on August 20th, 1885, when it was formally integrated into the city of London.⁷⁰

London East was the main site for the local sex trade. The area was home to lower-class women who needed to work to support themselves or supplement their husbands' low wages, as well as working-class men looking to purchase sex after their shifts, and wealthier Londoners from next door seeking entertainment. Most prostitutes sold sex in brothels or on the streets. As in other Canadian cities, London East's upscale brothels were located near institutions of commerce and politics, while inexpensive establishments and street-walkers were found close to the places of

⁶⁸ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 23, 1884, 8.

⁶⁹ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Dec. 3, 1884, 8; "London East," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 20, 1884, 8.

⁷⁰ "No. 5 Ward," *London Free Press*, Aug. 20, 1885, 3. Negotiations took place between Lilley and Mayor Henry Becher of London.

industry.⁷¹ The higher-class “houses of ill-fame” were on Rectory Street near the London East town hall and court house.⁷² In contrast, the lower-class brothels, or “disorderly houses,” as the police referred to them, were located close to the factories and rail-lines east of Adelaide Street.⁷³ The poorest women solicited sex near the GTR car works and along the train tracks.⁷⁴ There were approximately twenty brothels that were known to London police, although they were aware that sex workers also serviced clients in less-formal settings, including their homes and shanty houses.⁷⁵ There was estimated to be one brothel per thousand residents of the city, which was comparable to Toronto’s sex trade at the time.⁷⁶

Unlike larger cities such as Toronto and Montreal, London and London East witnessed few changes to their ethnic composition throughout the nineteenth century, which is reflected in the demographics of their sex workers.⁷⁷ The first settlers in the early nineteenth-century were

⁷¹ In Victoria, British Columbia, lower-class brothels were found near the wharves where men laboured in warehouses. Patrick A. Dunae, “Geographies of Sexual Commerce and the Production of Prostitutional Space, Victoria, British Columbia, 1860-1914,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 19.1 (2008): 125. Similarly, Judith Fingard found that Halifax’s houses of ill-fame were located in the city’s north end, near the military barracks and the harbour, and saw a stream of sailors and soldiers looking to buy sex in the late-nineteenth-century. Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*, 17-8.

⁷² The police court proceedings reported in the *London Free Press* and *London Advertiser* indicate that there were five brothels on Rectory Street and one around the corner on Elm Street in the 1880s. They were operated by Susan Hall, Esther Arscott, Maud McPhee, Maud Henville and one unnamed madam. Hattie Outram’s brothel was on Elm. Police tended to refer to high-class brothels as “houses of ill-fame.”

⁷³ There are some exceptions because a few disorderly houses were dispersed throughout London’s downtown core. However, the majority were in working-class neighbourhoods near the rail-lines.

⁷⁴ See Appendix A for a map of the sex trade in London.

⁷⁵ These houses of ill-fame were mentioned in reports about London’s police court proceedings from 1880 to 1885 in the *London Free Press* and the *London Advertiser*.

⁷⁶ The combined population of London and London East was over 25,000 in 1881, and there were about twenty brothels in the area. Toronto’s population was 86,000 in 1881. The Toronto Police Commissioners estimated that there were between fifty and one hundred brothels in the city, suggesting that there was about one house of ill-fame per thousand or fifteen-hundred residents. The Police Commissioners presented these estimates to the Committee for the Suppression of Vice in 1881. “The City’s Shame: Conference with the Police Commissioners Yesterday.” *The Globe*, Nov. 30, 1881. 9; Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, page 406, “Population of Cities and Towns having over 5,000 inhabitants compared.”

⁷⁷ Armstrong and Brock, *London, Ontario*, 1.

Loyalists of Scottish and Irish Protestant descent.⁷⁸ London experienced high immigration in the 1840s and 1850s, but most of the new residents were English-born, and did not substantially alter the Anglo-Protestant makeup of the city.⁷⁹ The city's Irish population increased after the Famine in the 1840s. In contrast to Hamilton, which relegated its famine survivors to a shantytown, London's Irish immigrants integrated into the community.⁸⁰ By the late nineteenth century, London's population was overwhelmingly English in origin compared to other Ontario towns and cities.⁸¹

London's prostitutes largely reflected the city's Anglo-Protestant demographic makeup in the early 1880s.⁸² From 1880 to 1885, 56% of the sex workers were Canadian-born and white, which mirrored the population at the time. Over half of Londoners were born in Canada by the late

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁹ Kevin Burley, "Occupational Structure and Ethnicity in London, Ontario, 1871," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 11 (November 1978), 394. Burley notes that other Ontario cities, in contrast, tended to have higher Irish and Scottish immigration.

⁸⁰ Carmen J. Nielson argues that Irish Roman Catholic immigrants in Hamilton faced discrimination in the 1840s and 1850s. Carmen J. Nielson, *Private Women and the Public Good: Charity and State Formation in Hamilton, Ontario, 1846-93* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 53; Willard Francis Dillon, "The Irish in London, Ontario, 1826-1861," MA Thesis, (London: University of Western Ontario, 1963), 36. Dillon notes that the Irish population increased in London by 1,500 between 1842 and 1852.

⁸¹ Burley, "Occupational Structure and Ethnicity," 404; Michael F. Murphy, "School and Society in London, Canada, 1826-1871: The Evolution of a System of Public Education," (PhD Dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 1995), 14. Murphy suggests that around eighty percent of Londoners were of British descent.

⁸² These statistics were taken from the General Register of the London jail, which documents women arrested for "keeping" or being "inmates" in "houses of ill-fame," or brothels, from 1880 to 1885. Clerks recorded an imprisoned woman's age, occupation, residence, birth place, level of education, religion, marital status, and other relevant details. Because clerks only recorded a woman's place of birth, rather than her ethnic background, it is uncertain to which ethnic groups the Canadian-born sex workers belonged. It is also important to note that women arrested for keeping or being inmates in houses of ill-fame represented only a small subsection of the total women working in the sex trade. Street-walkers were jailed under "vagrancy" or "drunk and disorderly" charges, while women in lower-class brothels were often arrested for "keeping" or being "inmates" in "disorderly houses." Incorporating that data was outside the scope of this thesis. Had those charges been included, the demographic makeup of London's sex workers may have looked slightly different because lower-class prostitutes (on the streets or in disorderly houses) were more likely to be racialized, foreign-born, older, or suffer from alcohol addiction. Western Archives, Western University, London, Ontario. *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

nineteenth century.⁸³ Immigrants were also involved in the sex trade, and 12% of London's prostitutes were born in England, 3% were Scottish-born, 1% were German, and 3% were white Americans, predominantly from Detroit.⁸⁴ There is no evidence of Jewish women working in prostitution in the city.⁸⁵ Constance Backhouse and Judith Fingard note that the sex trades in Toronto and Halifax were mainly comprised of Irish immigrants.⁸⁶ In contrast, only 7% of London women working in houses of ill-fame were Irish-born.⁸⁷ This low figure is likely because Irish immigrants were better-integrated into London compared to other Ontario cities. By the 1880s, Irish-born residents were represented in all labour classes and were not of a lower social standing than other immigrants or Canadian-born residents in London.⁸⁸

⁸³ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*. 56% of the 66 women arrested for "keeping" or being "inmates" in a house of ill-fame from 1885 to 1886 were Anglo-Canadians. Burley, "Occupational Structure and Ethnicity," 403.

⁸⁴ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

⁸⁵ Although Jewish women were present in Toronto and Montreal's sex trades in the early twentieth centuries because of their involvement in low-wage labour such as clothing manufacture, there is no evidence that Jewish women worked in prostitution in London in the early 1880s. There were only a few Jewish families in the city at the time, and most worked in trades, as merchants, or occasionally in farming. Constance Backhouse also found that Jewish women were not yet represented in Toronto's sex trade in the 1880s. Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law," 400. For Jewish women's factory work, see Robert McIntosh, "Sweated Labour: Female Needleworkers in Industrializing Canada," *Labour/Le Travail* 32 (Fall 1993), 105-38. For Jewish involvement in prostitution and concerns about the sex trade in Toronto and Montreal, see: Elise Chenier, "Sex, Intimacy, and Desire among Men of Chinese Heritage and Women of Non-Asian Heritage in Toronto, 1910-1950," *Urban History Review* 42.2 (2014): 29-43; Gerald J. J. Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester Pub., 1992), 175. For more information about the history of the city's Jewish community, see: Bill Gladstone, *A History of the Jewish Community of London Ontario: From the 1850s to the Present Day* (Toronto: Now and Then Books, 2011); Monda Halpern, "'This Ambitious Polish Jew': Rethinking the Conversion and Career of Bishop Isaac Hellmuth," *Ontario History* 99.2 (Autumn 2007): 221-220. Orlo Miller briefly notes that Jewish men founded a number of London's oil companies. Miller, *This Was London*, 163.

⁸⁶ Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law," 399. Backhouse has noted that most women in prostitution in Toronto were born in Ireland. London was far more culturally homogeneous than other Canadian cities like Halifax, whose population was comprised of over forty percent Irish immigrants, and three percent Afro-Nova Scotians. Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*, 19.

⁸⁷ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*. It is uncertain how many women were of Irish heritage.

⁸⁸ Burley, "Occupational Structure and Ethnicity," 409.

London's racial discrimination towards residents of African descent was reflected in the sex trade. The sole demographic group that was significantly over-represented in prostitution were women of colour. Although there were only 343 black people in the city in 1881, making them less than 1% of the population, black women made up 17% of sex workers in London.⁸⁹ Black residents had roots in London since the first slave refugees arrived from the United States in the 1830s. Their opportunities deteriorated from the mid to late nineteenth century.⁹⁰ The economic recession in the late 1850s, paired with an influx of people of colour fleeing persecution across the border, led to their increasing discrimination in London and segregation in schools.⁹¹ Tracey Adams notes although black men were represented across all occupational levels in the 1860s, by 1881 very few were employed in elite or professional positions in the city.⁹² Compared to white men in London, men of colour were significantly over-represented in semi- and unskilled labour occupations by the late nineteenth century.⁹³ Black women were typically employed as washerwomen or servants.⁹⁴

Although Indigenous women were over-represented in prostitution in cities such as Calgary and Victoria, there is no evidence that First Nations women played a role in London's sex trade in

⁸⁹ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*. Tracey Adams, "Making a Living: African Canadian Workers in London, Ontario, 1861-1901," *Labour/Le Travail* 67 (Spring 2011), 22.

⁹⁰ Daniel G. Hill, *The Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada* (Agincourt: The Book Society of Canada Limited, 1981), 54; Jason H. Silverman and Donna J. Gillie, "'The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties': Education and the Fugitive Slave in Canada," *Ontario History* 74.2 (June 1982), 98.

⁹¹ Hill, *The Freedom Seekers*, 100, 153; Adams, "Making a Living," 17. For a description of the recession, see Robert Bothwell, *A Short History of Ontario* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 1986), 58-9.

⁹² Adams, "Making a Living," 27.

⁹³ Burley, "Occupational Structure and Ethnicity," 404; Adams, "Making a Living," 31, 27. Tracey Adams found that in 1881, over 70% of London's black male community worked in "lower-skill manual and services jobs" or as "low skill labourers."

⁹⁴ Burley, "Occupational Structure and Ethnicity," 404. For a breakdown of African Canadian women's work in London in 1881, see Adams, "Making a Living," 39.

the 1880s, nor that Indigenous men frequented brothels.⁹⁵ The city's land was obtained from Indigenous people through the McKee Purchase and the London Township Purchase, both signed in the 1790s.⁹⁶ Middlesex County had three reserves that were long-established by the late-nineteenth century, including Chippewas of the Thames, Munsee-Delaware, Oneida.⁹⁷ The Six Nations reserve was the largest in southwestern Ontario and was located outside of Brantford.⁹⁸ In 1881 only one "Indian" family was recorded as permanently residing in London.⁹⁹ Surprisingly, historians have ignored First Nations peoples in London and throughout southwestern Ontario in the late nineteenth century. London's lack of an Indigenous population, however, indicates that an unofficial policy of segregation was functioning in the city. Unlike later periods when First Nations people came to London, they were not represented in the early 1880s.

London's late-nineteenth century sex workers can be divided into three groups along socio-economic lines: wealthy women who owned brothels, lower-class prostitutes who sold sex in

⁹⁵ For a few examples of works that discuss the involvement of Indigenous women in the sex trades of western cities, see: Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Lesley Erickson, *Westward Bound: Sex, Violence, the Law, and the Making of a Settler Society* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale, eds, *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005); Rhonda L. Hinder, "The Oldest Profession in Winnipeg: The Culture of Prostitution in the Point Douglas Segregated District, 1909-1912," *Manitoba History* 41 (Spring/Summer 2001): 2-13; Jennifer Windecker, "The Prostitution of Native Women of the North Coast of British Columbia," *B.C. Historical News* 30.3 (Summer 1997): 29-38; Lisa Helps, "Bodies Public, City Spaces: Becoming Modern Victoria, British Columbia, 1871-1901," MA Thesis, (Victoria: University of Victoria, 2002).

⁹⁶ Edward S. Rogers and Donald B. Smith, eds, *Aboriginal Ontario: Historical Perspectives on the First Nations* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 103.

⁹⁷ Elizabeth Graham, *Medicine Man to Missionary: Missionaries as Agents of Change among the Indians of Southern Ontario, 1784-1867* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1975), 91.

⁹⁸ For more information about the Six Nations, see Susan M. Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on The Grand River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017).

⁹⁹ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 170 (London City), sub-district E2 (Ward 5), page 47, line 10-14, family no. 229, Oronyeteka family. For information about how the First Nations' "colonial relationship with the state" affected census enumeration, see Michelle A. Hamilton, "'Anyone not on the list might as well be dead': Aboriginal Peoples and the Censuses of Canada, 1851-1916," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 18.1 (2007): 57-79.

disorderly houses, and streetwalkers, many of whom were homeless. The most successful women in London's sex trade were the madams who operated expensive houses of ill-fame on Rectory and Elm Streets in London East.¹⁰⁰ Affluent brothel-keepers like Esther Arscott and Hattie Outram worked as prostitutes when they were teenagers, then eventually accumulated wealth and purchased houses.¹⁰¹ Madams ranged in age from seventeen to fifty-two, and they were more likely to be married or widowed than the women they employed, who were usually younger and single.¹⁰² Women such as Maud McPhee and Maud Henville charged higher fees for sexual services than the lower-class disorderly houses, and their establishments also sold alcohol to the men who frequented their brothels.¹⁰³ Some madams, including Esther Arscott, paid American prostitutes from Detroit to perform short contracts of work in their brothels, realizing that men would lose interest if they did not vary the "selection" of women.¹⁰⁴ Her brothel was particularly successful, and she amassed a small fortune after running a house of ill-fame for thirty years on Rectory Street,

¹⁰⁰ There is no evidence that procurers, or "pimps" existed in London in the early 1880s. Brothels were operated by single women, or women and their husbands.

¹⁰¹ This was also the case for madams in other Ontario cities. Lori Rotenberg notes that most keepers of houses of ill-fame in Toronto were middle-aged and had previously worked as prostitutes themselves. See Rotenberg, "The Wayward Worker," 34.

¹⁰² The average age of a madam was twenty-six, although this might be slightly low because most of the women named in press reports for operating brothels were in their thirties or early forties. Officers and jail administrators occasionally recorded women incorrectly because they were sometimes unable to determine which woman "kept" a house. The ages of the prostitutes who worked in houses of ill-fame ranged from fifteen to forty-two, and the average age was twenty-four in the 1880s. Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

¹⁰³ Upper-class brothel owners, including Maud McPhee, Esther Arscott, Susan Hall, and Hattie Outram, were often charged with illegally selling liquor without a license. It is clear that madams charged higher fees than lower-class brothels because they could afford to pay high fines when they were charged by magistrates. See: "London East," *London Advertiser*, June 23, 1884, 5; "London East," *London Advertiser*, May 25, 1880, 1; "London East," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 10, 1880, 4; "A Little Too Sudden," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 4, 1881, 4. Historian Helen Boritch has also noted that "women arrested for being a keeper or inmate in a 'house of ill-fame' were both presumably of a somewhat higher social standing and more protected from continual prosecution." Helen Boritch, "Crime and Punishment in Middlesex County, Ontario, 1871-1920," in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law* (Volume V. Crime and Criminal Justice), 387-438, ed. Jim Philips, Tina Loo and Susan Lewthwait (Toronto: The Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 1994), 437.

¹⁰⁴ Fred H. Armstrong, "East London Madam Had Moxy, Money," *London Free Press*, Dec. 1, 2003, C4.

including several thousand dollars, horses and carriages, and three houses.¹⁰⁵ The unmarried madams who owned property, including Esther Arscott and Hattie Outram, were even eligible to vote in municipal elections, a right denied to most London women who only owned property in their husbands' names.¹⁰⁶

London East city officials were aware that the majority of upscale brothels were found on Rectory Street, near their town hall. As one councilman stated in a meeting in 1884, "Rectory Street is known far and wide for its bad characters."¹⁰⁷ The madams' wealth and taboo profession also brought them notoriety in the local press. As historian Keith Walden has noted, regular theatre columns in the 1880s encouraged a cult of celebrity surrounding travelling stage performers and actresses.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, daily reports of the local police court proceedings in the *London Advertiser* and *London Free Press* enabled city residents to follow stories about the madams' wealthy lifestyles and romances with prominent London men. For instance, the local press reported on Hattie Outram's affair with a married hotel-keeper for most of 1884.¹⁰⁹ It was reported that Edward Grant was "faithful to his marital vows, until he became enamored of Hattie Outram, a well-known character, who is the reputed mistress of a house of unsavory reputation a short distance from the hotel."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, 258.

¹⁰⁶ Western Archives, Western University, London, Ontario, *Voters Lists for London Township, 1877-89*, 1886, 1887, 1888, Esther Arscott; 1885, 1886, Hattie Outram.

¹⁰⁷ "London East: The Social Evil Discussed," *London Advertiser*, Nov. 5, 1884, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Keith Walden, "Toronto Society's Response to Celebrity Performers, 1887-1914," *Canadian Historical Review* 89.3 (Sept. 2008), 377.

¹⁰⁹ See: "London East: Midnight Arrests," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 13, 1884, 1; "The Social Evil: Another Installment of Its Votaries Before the Bureau," *London Free Press*, March 14, 1884, 5; "London East," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 18, 1884, 2; "London and Precincts," *London Advertiser*, Apr. 29, 1884, 8; "London East," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 22, 1884, 8.

¹¹⁰ "A Wife Deserter," *London Free Press*, March 14, 1884, 8.

Although London councilmen and other voices in the press demonized upper-class brothel-owners, the madams' affluence and status meant they faced fewer repercussions for their illegal labour than lower-class prostitutes or street-walkers. In addition to purchasing residences and carriages, wealthy brothel-owners used their wealth to buy protection from the law. Madams bribed police officers to warn them before they raided brothels in order to provide them and the "inmates," or prostitutes, ample time to escape.¹¹¹ In the few instances when they were arrested, Rectory Street madams like Maud McPhee and Susan Hall were able to pay hundreds of dollars' worth of fines to police magistrates to avoid incarceration, even when they pleaded guilty.¹¹²

Constance Backhouse notes in her study of Toronto that "upper-class prostitutes, who no doubt serviced upper-class men, seem to have had the resources to secure legal representation from upper-class lawyers."¹¹³ Similarly, London's wealthy madams rubbed shoulders with city elites who frequented their houses, and had the money and connections to hire London's eminent criminal lawyers to represent them in court, including Edmund Meredith, George Moorehead, and Warren Rock.¹¹⁴ Edmund Meredith was a former city mayor and came from a prominent London family of lawyers and politicians.¹¹⁵ He represented at least three upper-class madams, appearing

¹¹¹ "Constables in Trouble," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 29, 1881, 4; "Slanders Refuted," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 6, 1881, 1.

¹¹² For information about the fines paid by Rectory Street madams, see: Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*; "London East," *London Advertiser*, May 22, 1880, 1; "London and Precincts," *London Advertiser*, June 20, 1884, 8; "London East," *London Advertiser*, June 23, 1884, 5.

¹¹³ Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law," 414.

¹¹⁴ Warren Rock represented Hattie Outram in 1882. "London East," *London Advertiser*, July 18, 1882, 4. "The Social Evil," *The Globe (1844-1936)*, July 18, 1882, 7. For more information about Warren Rock, see: David John Hughes, *History of the Bar of the County of Middlesex* (London, Ontario, 1912), 31, 50. After Rock's death, George Moorehead represented Outram in 1884. See "London East: Midnight Arrests," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 13, 1884, 1.

¹¹⁵ Edmund Meredith's seven brothers were highly successful. Richard Martin Meredith co-founded the University of Western Ontario, Sir Henry Vincent Meredith was the President of the Bank of Canada, and Sir William Ralph Meredith was Leader of the Ontario Conservative Party.

in court on behalf of Esther Arscott, Maud McPhee and Susan Hall in the early 1880s.¹¹⁶ In 1884, Arscott paid for Meredith to appeal charges pressed against one of her prostitutes, Mary Blow, indicating that madams were willing to pay for legal representation when they were concerned about losing popular women who worked in their establishments.¹¹⁷ Unlike ordinary sex workers, upscale madams had the means to avoid their own incarceration and even protect other women who worked for them.

Lower-class women worked in London's sex trade in the 1880s. Police referred to their brothels as "disorderly houses" to distinguish them from the expensive houses of ill-fame. The city's disorderly houses were found on Adelaide Street, Ridout Street, Bathurst Street, Dundas Street, South Street east, and Queen Street.¹¹⁸ Disorderly houses were often sites of noisy parties and violence, leading neighbours to make repeated complaints to police.¹¹⁹ Lower-class prostitutes were frequently arrested for public drunkenness, assault and abusive language, and other petty crimes like larceny. Because of their inability to maintain positive relationships with police or the broader community, few disorderly houses enjoyed the longevity of institutions like Hattie Outram's or Esther Arscott's brothels, and often disappeared after a few years. Thomas and

¹¹⁶ Edmund Meredith was a respected criminal lawyer in London. For information about his status and work, see: Daniel Brock, *History of the County of Middlesex, Canada* (Belleville, ON: Mika Studio, 1972); Hughes, *History of the Bar of the County of Middlesex*. For proof that Meredith represented Hall and McPhee, see: "London East," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 10, 1880, 4; "A Little Too Sudden," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 4, 1881, 4.

¹¹⁷ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 27, 1884, 3. Mary Blow was released from prison after Meredith appealed against the magistrate's sentence "on the ground of irregularities."

¹¹⁸ These houses are referred to in the police court reports in the *London Free Press* and *London Advertiser*, although there may have been others that operated under the radar or out of private homes. Police typically used the term "disorderly house" to refer to brothels that were decrepit and hosted loud drunken parties, whose inmates could not afford to pay minor fines, while "house of ill-fame" was reserved for upscale establishments operated by madams.

¹¹⁹ "London South," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 8, 1884, 8; "London East," *London Advertiser*, Nov. 27, 1884, 8. Prostitutes of all classes risked contracting venereal disease, but due to a lack of sources in London venereal disease will not be considered in this thesis. There is no indication that municipal officials or physicians were concerned about venereal disease outbreaks in London, or if it was a problem in the city.

Catherine Hastings were forced to close and re-open their disorderly house three times in the early 1880s due to landlord evictions, complaints from residents nearby, and their frequent imprisonment.¹²⁰ Lower-class sex workers were at the mercy of London's local authorities because they could not afford to bribe police officers or secure legal representation. It was beyond the means of most women to pay a fine of \$10, let alone hire a lawyer. As a result, many were forced to default on fines and serve time in prison.¹²¹

Unlike the women in the Rectory Street brothels, lower-class prostitutes did not go on to have profitable careers in the sex trade either because of their alcohol abuse, age, or because they lacked the physical traits necessary for a successful career in prostitution. Many worked in prostitution on an occasional basis in response to homelessness. Annie Devoy, for example, lived in disorderly houses after her mother had police remove her from their home.¹²² Although she briefly worked in the Hastings' brothel in early 1884, Devoy was homeless by Christmas, again as a result of alcohol abuse.¹²³ Inmates in disorderly houses tended to be older than prostitutes in the upper-class houses of ill-fame. Unlike the majority of London's sex workers, who were typically in their mid-twenties, Devoy was still working as a prostitute when she was thirty-three.¹²⁴ When Catherine Hastings and Catherine Gooderham were arrested for prostitution in 1884, they were forty-one and forty-five-years-old.¹²⁵ Mary Smith was a woman of colour who faced charges for

¹²⁰ "Disorderly House Raided," *London Free Press*, April 26, 1884, 8; "London West," *London Advertiser*, June 10, 1884, 8; "London West," *London Advertiser*, June 23, 1884, 5; "Police Court Notes," *London Free Press*, Oct. 5, 1884, 3.

¹²¹ For charges relating to "keeping" or being an "inmate" in a "disorderly house," see Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

¹²² "Police Court," *London Advertiser*, Nov. 11, 1880, 3.

¹²³ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Dec. 17, 1884, 8.

¹²⁴ "Annie Devoy's Tricks," *London Free Press*, Feb. 23, 1886, 3.

¹²⁵ "London West," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 13, 1884, 8; Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

streetwalking in her late-forties.¹²⁶ Many lower-class women worked in the sex trade for long periods of time, but did not experience upward mobility or go on to own brothels themselves.

London's lower-class prostitutes also faced frequent domestic abuse. Mary Lynch, for example, was an Irish woman who was often arrested for drunkenness, vagrancy, and keeping disorderly houses in London East. Her brothels, which she operated with her husband, John, were notorious for loud parties, and neighbours complained that drunk men stumbled in and out at uncommon hours of the day.¹²⁷ Their residences were not profitable endeavours and the couple was rarely able to pay fines to avoid serving jailtime.¹²⁸ Although the Lynches often appeared together in front of police magistrates, their relationship was tumultuous and violent. John subjected Mary to frequent beatings. In 1882, a reporter commented that John Lynch was "no novelty at the Police Court" and noted how Mary had "received an ugly cut in the head, either with a club or by the fist of her brutal husband."¹²⁹ John was sent to prison again six months later for the same offense.¹³⁰ Their last London court appearance took place in 1884 when the pair was accused of keeping a disorderly house. Finding that the burden of proof to convict the pair was too high, the magistrate dropped the charge and instead sentenced the Lynches to six months of hard labour for vagrancy, a charge easier to prove.

The lowest-class of women in London's sex trade were the streetwalkers, many of whom were homeless and lacked family connections. Women had been soliciting sex outside near the railway tracks as early as 1855. At a Coroner's Inquest into the death of an infant that year, a local

¹²⁶ "City and Vicinity," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 5, 1883, 8; "Local and District," *London Free Press*, July 26, 1885, 3; Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

¹²⁷ "City and Vicinity," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 4, 1882, 4.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* The couple may have lived on Pruddis' Lane because it was the setting of one of John's arrests for assault.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ "City and Vicinity," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 27, 1883, 4. Neighbours also charged John with assault and abusive language. See "Indecent Conduct Not to be Tolerated," *London Advertiser*, Nov. 13, 1882, 4.

man named George Percival described how Louisa Armstrong, the young girl's mother, would frequent the rail tracks and workshops looking for men. Percival noted that he too had paid for a "connection with her."¹³¹ Streetwalking alongside the train tracks continued through the 1880s, and police and conductors were suspicious of single women near the trains or car works where train parts were built.¹³² Police arrested women for soliciting sex on charges of "vagrancy" and "drunk and disorderly" offences, which also included women who were drunk, homeless, or out at night without a male companion.¹³³

Public parks also served as illicit rendezvous points between London streetwalkers and men. City officials were aware that women solicited in parks and passed a by-law in 1879 to control their presence. Although the by-law encouraged police and caretakers to remove "prostitutes and notoriously bad characters" from the city's public parks, squares, and gardens, streetwalkers continued to frequent the areas in search of customers.¹³⁴ In 1884 seventeen-year-old Lizzie Carmichael was arrested in Victoria Park on charges of vagrancy: "It is said that she has been hanging around the park and misconducting herself with young men."¹³⁵ Carmichael was an English immigrant "not long out from the old country" who worked as a servant.¹³⁶ It is unknown whether she continued working in the sex trade. By 1886, Carmichael was living in London East

¹³¹ Western Archives, Western University, London, Ontario, *Coroner's Inquests, Middlesex County*, Armstrong, female baby, August 27, 1855.

¹³² Women who were near the rail yet did not seem to be travelling were often questioned by police and conductors. For instance, in 1885 Mary Johnston was charged with vagrancy, "having been found on the platform of the Richmond street depot with no apparent place to go." "Local and District," *London Free Press*, Jan. 15, 1885, 3

¹³³ For more discussion about the link between vagrancy and prostitution, see Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law," 396-7. Judith Fingard also notes that charges of vagrancy or lewd conduct were the "most common ways of locking away a prostitute." Judith Fingard, "Jailbirds in Mid-Victorian Halifax," *Dalhousie Law Journal* 8 (1984): 98.

¹³⁴ *Charter and By-Laws of the City of London* (London, Ont.: The Free Press Printing Office, 1880), 88.

¹³⁵ "London and Precincts," *London Advertiser*, July 4, 1884, 8.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

and listed her occupation as a “domestic.”¹³⁷ Similarly, Maggie Nunn was arrested in 1882 for streetwalking in a public park. The press harped on the fact that she was “one of the girls brought to this country by Miss Rye some years ago, and now bears a questionable character.”¹³⁸ Nunn was placed with an elderly couple in Westminster, a town nearby, in 1881.¹³⁹ Carmichael and Nunn both found that their domestic work was not sufficient to cover costs of living.

When they were not out on the streets, women convicted of streetwalking lived in make-shift shanties or other types of informal housing. Forty-year-old Ellen Collins was charged with drunkenness and vagrancy after police found her “lying in a shanty at the corner of Fullarton street in a beastly state of intoxication.”¹⁴⁰ She was charged \$5 but defaulted and went to jail for a month. Emma Farr and Ellen McEvoy, who were frequently arrested for prostitution-related offenses, were found in 1885 “roistering in a barn near Dundas street.”¹⁴¹ Women who worked out of shanties in London were older than women who sold themselves in brothels, and unable to find work in better establishments, or were suffering from alcohol abuse.¹⁴²

Although prostitution was a constant feature in most Canadian towns, authorities became increasingly less tolerant of the sex trade in the late nineteenth century.¹⁴³ Urbanization and industrialization transformed the landscape of Canadian cities, causing concern and panic over the

¹³⁷ Western Archives, Western University, London, Ontario, *Directories for the City of London and Middlesex County, 1880-1961*, 1886, Lizzie Carmichael, 226 Oxford.

¹³⁸ “City and Vicinity,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 6, 1882, 4.

¹³⁹ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 167 (Middlesex East), sub-district A1 (Westminster), page 8, line 17, family no. 36, Maggie Nunn.

¹⁴⁰ Collins was often also charged with charges relating to keeping disorderly houses. “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Nov. 14, 1885, 3.

¹⁴¹ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Nov. 26, 1885, 3.

¹⁴² Patrick Dunae notes that women who worked in make-shift shanties, or “cribs,” in Victoria were older than prostitutes in brothels. Patrick A. Dunae, “Sex, Charades, and Census Records: Locating Female Sex Trade Workers in a Victorian City,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 42.84 (November 2009): 288.

¹⁴³ In earlier decades, prostitution was accepted as an outlet for male sexuality, particularly in western frontier communities with many single male labourers and few women to cater to their needs. See Richard A. Ball, “Changing Images of Deviance: Nineteenth-Century Canadian Anti-Prostitution Movements,” *Deviant Behavior* 33 (2012), 28; Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies*, 171.

resulting problems. The establishment of new factories and other industry meant that young workers, including unmarried women, relocated to cities in search of employment. The influx of labourers, many of whom were also immigrants, placed material and social strains on Canadian urban centres that were ill-equipped to deal with the pressures of the emerging working-class. Middle- and upper-class citizens believed that poorer neighbourhoods in their cities were falling ruin to increasing crime, alcohol abuse, gambling, and sex-related vices such as prostitution. Many were concerned about unmarried working-class women's sexuality, equating their financial independence and freedom from living with a family with sexual licentiousness that threatened Christian morality.¹⁴⁴ Elites increasingly blamed the lower classes, and in particular, women, for the perceived "problems" of urban life.

Religion shaped how Canadians responded to this moral panic by promoting social outreach. Historians Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau argue that Protestant and Methodist churches became more evangelical in outlook during this time, and changed from emphasizing traditional theology to encouraging "social action designed to address the problems of a nation in the process of transformation."¹⁴⁵ Progressive reformers believed that social service had the potential to reform both individuals and entire communities. Middle-class women were particularly inspired by conservative evangelicalism. Women's groups like the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) argued that women possessed inherently maternal qualities that, beyond guiding families, could lead society to religious purity and away from social vice.¹⁴⁶ While the WCTU advocated for temperance and attempted to reform "fallen" women, religious

¹⁴⁴ Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 10.

¹⁴⁵ Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 3.

¹⁴⁶ Sharon Anne Cook, *"Through Sunshine and Shadow": The Women's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 75.

community leaders, including ministers, politicians, and legal professionals, embarked on a variety of other projects designed to encourage moral behaviour in the working-class.

London's religious and conservative roots made it an epicenter for the late nineteenth century moral panic. The city had strong Methodist and Protestant leadership since the 1830s and 1850s, and religiously-affiliated organizations spearheaded many of London's outreach initiatives to "save" vulnerable women from falling into vice. London's social reform movement in the 1880s focused predominantly on the problem of working-class women's sexuality, and in particular, prostitution. The first chapter explores London elites' fears about urban crime, liquor, race, and sex, highlighting how their moral panic about women's sexuality legitimized them to further marginalize the most oppressed class of people in the city: prostitutes.

Chapter One: Local Opinion about Prostitution

In December of 1884, the Women's Christian Association (WCA) held a meeting at Victoria Hall to reflect on their work at the London Jail. Members reached out to incarcerated female prisoners throughout the year, hoping to impart their religious values on these "fallen" women in order to help them. In addition to holding Sunday church services, the WCA visited female inmates every week to provide moral guidance on topics such as temperance and the importance of religion. Despite their good intentions, the group was disappointed to hear a "discouraging" report about their prison outreach. According to the report, "the average number of female prisoners was eleven, and although the entire number had signed the total abstinence pledge, there was not one of them who did not break it."¹⁴⁷ Although the WCA encouraged the inmates to avoid alcohol, their endeavor to reform their behavior was largely unsuccessful. Because their charitable work was aimed at women, the association members were also disappointed to note that "the male prisoners seemed much more willing to attend the services than those of the opposite sex."¹⁴⁸ Rather than admit defeat, however, the new year of 1885 saw the WCA redouble their efforts to break through to female convicts, adding a second weekly religious service for those charged with vagrancy and streetwalking charges, or in other words, prostitution-related offenses.¹⁴⁹ Commenting on their annual report in May, Reverend D. G. Sutherland pointed out that a Christian woman's sympathy toward an incarcerated inmate "might keep her from falling back into their old courses."¹⁵⁰

The WCA's charity work demonstrates that municipal officials and legal authorities were not the only Londoners with a vested interest in regulating the labour and leisure activity of sex

¹⁴⁷ "W.C.A.: Work Done During the Month," *London Advertiser*, Dec. 5, 1884, 1.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ "Women's Christian Association," *London Free Press*, Mar. 6, 1885, 5.

¹⁵⁰ "Women's Christian Association: The Annual Meeting," *London Free Press*, May 27, 1885, 8.

workers in the mid-1880s. Women's volunteer and charity groups reached out to working-class women by founding girls' societies, operating industrial schools, and visiting the local jail. Their initiatives illustrate the influence of the social reform movement in London, the degree of the moral panic, the WCA's opinions on prostitution, and provide insight into the views of the London community. Rather than address urban poverty or the lack of a minimum working wage for women, which may have lifted some prostitutes out of the sex trade, the association sought to impart moral guidance. Like many of London's elites, the WCA believed that women who prostituted themselves for money suffered from ethical corruption, leading them to choose vice over Christian virtue. Because women's groups did not address the economic roots of prostitution, their progressive reform efforts largely failed to deter desperate London women from selling sex.

This chapter illustrates how dominant popular opinions about prostitution and female sexuality legitimized a variety of interventions into the lives of lower-class women and prostitutes in late-nineteenth century London, Ontario. Eminent clergymen, female reformers, temperance advocates, and other city leaders voiced their concerns about London's crime rates, apparent liquor abuse among lower-class communities and people of colour, working-class women's sexuality, and youth leisure culture. The issue of prostitution was at the centre of the moral panic because it included concerns over alcohol, poverty, race, youth, and sexuality. London's elites were particularly concerned about the seeming proliferation of sexual vice, leading them to target the perceived culprits: female prostitutes. This atmosphere paradoxically portrayed young women in the sex trade as victims of male abuse and seduction, while at the same time legitimizing the day-to-day policing practices that disproportionately targeted and criminalized prostitutes.

This chapter also contributes to the scholarship on Canada's late-nineteenth century moral reform movement in southwestern Ontario, highlighting how the voluntary societies, police, and

municipal authorities interacted with women in the sex trade. It analyzes opinion about crime in London, demonstrating how public anxieties encouraged police to crackdown on public morality infractions. The chapter explores the perceived “fall” of girls into sexual danger, arguing that reformers and other authority figures used these stereotypes to justify intervening in working-class women’s personal lives. London’s aggressive public campaign against vice occurred in response to the moral panic about prostitution and sexual immorality.

Reform-minded Londoners panicked about a variety of ‘urban’ vices in the mid-1880s, from public drunkenness and alcohol intemperance, to prostitution and sexual deviancy. Their concerns were heightened in 1884 when emerging reports suggested that Ontario’s crime rates were increasing. The Inspector of Prisons published statistics in March indicating that 280 more people were committed to jail in 1883 than the previous year.¹⁵¹ Although Middlesex County was commended for committing fewer “crimes of a serious nature,” there was an increase in disorderly conduct. In particular, the inspector pointed to more “offenses against public order and peace,” from 5,381 in 1882, to 6,668 the following year. The report noted that “drunk and disorderly” and “vagrancy” offenses were particular problems.¹⁵² Despite restrictions on liquor licenses and numerous by-laws against prostitution and gambling, Ontarians were apparently causing more drunken havoc than ever.¹⁵³

Residents of London believed that their region was partially to blame for the high figures when the County Jail released statistics the following month that were published in the *London*

¹⁵¹ “Prison Population,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 15, 1884, 2. The Prison Inspector’s “year” always started on October 1st and ended on September 30th. The increase took place from October 1st, 1882 to September 30th, 1883.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* The *Advertiser* stated that “among these offences, ‘drunk and disorderly’ had risen from 3,497 to 3,895; and ‘vagrancy’ from 1,449 to 1,534.”

¹⁵³ *Charter and By-Laws of the City of London*. London’s by-laws included sixteen possible infractions against “public morality.”

Free Press: “During the six months ending March 31st there were 465 persons committed to the county jail—an increase of 128 over the number for the same period of the preceding year.”¹⁵⁴ In October, Jailor Patrick Kelly’s annual report of the Middlesex County Jail confirmed that crime was at an all-time high. His study showed that nearly two hundred additional people were committed to the jail that year. The rates “would seem to indicate a large increase of crime in the County.”¹⁵⁵ The city was also concerned about recidivism, as 150 people were arrested twice from 1882 to 1883, and some recidivists saw the magistrate up to six times.¹⁵⁶

London’s moral panic increased a few weeks later when Chief Justice Wilson delivered a lengthy and “pointed” address to open the fall assizes, a court that was held several times a year to hear more serious criminal cases. City residents read headlines such as “The Crime in Middlesex County Quite Inexplicable to Him,” and “The Largest Calendar Ever Presented Him in Canada.”¹⁵⁷ As the opening speech noted, “the calendar of criminal cases for trial at the present assizes is the largest I have known for any county in the province since I have been upon the bench—if not the greatest in point of number it is the most weighty in the character of the crimes.”¹⁵⁸ Justice Wilson was at a loss when it came to explaining the proliferation of crime. He conceded that “the people are in general wealthy and prosperous. This, too, is not a locality which is the haunt or resort of vagrants or of foreign disreputable characters. Yet all but two of the cases which I have enumerated are for charges against a settled resident of this county.”¹⁵⁹ At the close of his speech, Justice Wilson implored London to resolve its “inexplicable state” of criminality in the future.

¹⁵⁴ “Local and District Brevities,” *London Free Press*, April 5, 1884, 8.

¹⁵⁵ “The County Gaol: True Inwardness of the Apparent Increase in Offenders Committed,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 5, 1884, 6.

¹⁵⁶ “Jail Statistics: Gleaned from the Governor’s Annual Report to the Government,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 7, 1884, 5.

¹⁵⁷ “The Fall Assizes,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 25, 1884, 3.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Although Justice Wilson was unable to account for the high crime, residents of London found their own explanations for the apparent increase. Some argued that the increase in drunkenness charges was blown out of proportion. One letter to the editor pointed out that drunkenness was actually decreasing if population increases were taken into account: “It is when loud platform utterances and heated appeals are brought to the test of actual fact that so many of them are found to be mere exaggerations.”¹⁶⁰ Other Londoners blamed the current economic recession for the rise in “drunk and disorderly” behaviour. The *London Advertiser* noted that “large numbers of men have been thrown out of employment, and as a consequence more people have been idling about the streets, drinking whiskey whenever they could procure it, and becoming tramps and vagrants.” Unemployed men amused themselves with alcohol-fueled acts of vagrancy when times were tough.¹⁶¹

Others held the regional police accountable for the increased detentions, suggesting that the police were either too harsh or too lax on criminals. Some Londoners believed that police constables inflated the number of arrests by issuing warrants without discretion. One angry resident claimed that “the Magistrate and the two constables are working together on the co-operative system, the constables doing the swearing and prevailing upon the boys to plead guilty to save costs, and the Magistrate pronouncing judgement, which is always small fines to go into the county treasury and large costs to be divided between the Magistrate and the constables.”¹⁶² In

¹⁶⁰ “Drunkenness in Middlesex,” *London Free Press*, April 18, 1884, 2.

¹⁶¹ The reporter compared the crime in 1884 to increased crime in 1877. He continued: “It was so in 1877; when the number of drunks increased to 4,032, and the vagrants to 3,888, and it has been so in every period of commercial distress. We conclude, therefore, that if the times had been as prosperous last year as the year previous, the prison population of the Province would have been very materially decreased.” “Prison Population,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 15, 1884, 2.

¹⁶² “London West ‘Bad Boys,’” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 5, 1884, 6.

his opinion, petty charges were geared toward improving the county's financial standing.¹⁶³ Other Londoners suggested that the police did not go far enough to secure arrests, blaming lazy policing for the increase in criminal activity: "Is it not because the guilty have gone unpunished, and so long as this continues crime will be upon the increase. Let Judge Wilson's address be impressed upon the petite jury, and the law dealt out to the guilty as they deserve, and not allow influence to interfere."¹⁶⁴ Although some Londoners held the police force responsible for Middlesex County's crime statistics, many believed that the working-class held inherently criminal traits and an inclination for alcohol abuse and violence.

Members of the ongoing temperance movement were also concerned about the arrest rates. Prominent Londoners blamed the lower classes and urban poor for abusing liquor and increasing criminality. In particular, they believed that the liquor traffic spread "immorality, vice, and irreligion among people."¹⁶⁵ As one city doctor claimed, "if it induces crime, it should not be supported."¹⁶⁶ Similar concerns led the federal government in Ottawa to pass the Canada Temperance Act in 1878. The Scott Act allowed municipalities to hold referendums asking their voters whether or not the region should be "dry."¹⁶⁷ Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, London residents established religiously-affiliated, pro-temperance groups which encouraged municipalities to restrict tavern licenses and educated the public through speaking tours on the

¹⁶³ London judges, including County Crown Attorney Charles Hutchinson and Judge William Elliot, had long been complaining about the fact that their constables were paid based on fees, rather than a yearly salary. See *Ontario Sessional Papers*, 1884, No. 91, 56-9.

¹⁶⁴ "Crime in Middlesex," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 28, 1884, 3.

¹⁶⁵ "Scott Act Convention: The Work Being Done in Middlesex," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 9, 1884, 5.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Although the Scott Act advocates in Middlesex were largely middle and upper-class Anglo-Christians, other parts of the province witnessed involvement in temperance campaigns from minority groups. See Lorene Bridgen, "On their Own Terms: Temperance in Southern Ontario's Black Community (1830-1860)," *Ontario History* 101.1 (Spring 2009), 64-82.

evils of liquor.¹⁶⁸ London papers produced headlines such as “The Temperance War,” “Diminishing the Number of Saloons,” and “Why I Vote No License.”¹⁶⁹ Hotel-keepers and pub-owners were seen to profit by tempting vulnerable people to drink, and reformers compared them to “ravenous wolves licensed by the Government to prey upon other men’s sheep.”¹⁷⁰ Despite some calls to view alcoholism as a disease that ought to be treated in hospitals and asylums, the authorities and elites blamed people accused of public drunkenness. Alcohol-related offenses comprised the largest group of convictions in London throughout the 1880s.¹⁷¹

Temperance advocates were sympathetic towards criminals who blamed their alcohol addictions for inducing them to commit offenses. In 1885, a local man named Ben Simmons brutally stabbed his girlfriend Mary Ann Stokes, an ex-prostitute who lived with him in their Dundas flat. Londoners were initially unsympathetic to Simmons’ death sentence. Opinion changed, however, when the press described his religious conversion, reporting that Simmons delivered speeches in jail that railed against liquor. He argued that alcohol forced him into a maddened state, resulting in Stokes’ murder. In response, temperance campaigners and advocates against the death sentence began petitioning the government for executive clemency, and eventually brought Simmons’ case to the Privy Council.¹⁷² Although they were unsuccessful, their efforts changed how the community viewed Ben Simmons. He went from a murderous vagrant to a victim of the liquor trade. Before his death, the *London Advertiser* published sympathetic

¹⁶⁸ The London Temperance Union voted unanimously for prohibition at its first meeting in 1876. Brock, *Fragments from the Forks*, 100.

¹⁶⁹ “The Temperance War,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 5, 1884, 6; “Ontario Legislature: Liquor Licenses,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 7, 1884, 2; “Why I Vote No License,” *Scott Act Review*, ed. Rev. J. G. Fallis, Jan. 26, 1888, 2.

¹⁷⁰ “London West: Enthusiastic Scott Act Meeting,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 8, 1884, 5.

¹⁷¹ “Inebriate Asylums,” *London Free Press*, March 10, 1884, 8; Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

¹⁷² “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 17, 1885, 3; “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Nov. 12, 1885, 8.

interviews with Simmons about his life story.¹⁷³ Describing his fall from grace, Simmons claimed that “it was not uncommon for me and my comrades to take a bottle of whiskey with us, and probably there was laid the foundation of the course of life that culminated in the dreadful tragedy that brings on me the extreme penalty of the law.”¹⁷⁴ Despite Mary Ann Stokes’ brutal death at the hands of her partner, which the press described in graphic detail, information about her life rarely appeared in newspaper coverage, other than to say she was a prostitute. Londoners were already familiar with Stokes because she was frequently charged with keeping disorderly houses prior to her murder.¹⁷⁵ Only one article about the murder referred to Stokes by name. The others called her a “discernible character,” “the mistress,” “the paramour,” “a prostitute,” or most often, merely “the woman.”¹⁷⁶

Many of the same leaders of London’s temperance campaign were also outspoken critics of brothel culture and prostitution, including County Crown Attorney Charles Hutchinson and London East Mayor Charles Lilley.¹⁷⁷ Scott Act campaigners often made connections between alcohol and prostitution’s tendency to induce sin. Reverend Thomas Middleton, an eminent Methodist in the community, delivered lectures against the liquor traffic as well as the “social evil,” reasoning that both “threatened the welfare of the nation.”¹⁷⁸ Londoners compared Ontario’s liquor licensing laws to France’s legislation to regulate prostitution: “The Liquor License laws of Ontario are regarded by many people now . . . as only better in degree than the European laws for

¹⁷³ “The Last Scene of All, Ben Simmons on the Scaffold,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 27, 1885, 4.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ “Police Court Notes,” *London Advertiser*, June 6, 1883, 4.

¹⁷⁶ “The Last Scene of All, Ben Simmons on the Scaffold,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 27, 1885, 4.

¹⁷⁷ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 1, 1884, 2; “London West: Enthusiastic Scott Act Meeting” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 8, 1884, 5.

¹⁷⁸ “Our Country,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 22, 1885, 8. The “social evil” was a term used to describe prostitution.

the regulation of vice. There is progress in morals as well as in politics and economics, and a thing which is tolerated upon a quarter of a century hence as an abomination.”¹⁷⁹

Residents who advocated *against* temperance also referenced prostitution in their speeches. They argued that banning alcohol would move the liquor trade underground and force innocent men looking for a drink after work to convene in illegal gambling clubs, houses of ill-fame, and other “dens of iniquity.”¹⁸⁰ An anonymous letter sent to the *Free Press* declared that “there are many temperance men like myself opposed to the Scott Act, because we believe it to be an unjust and tyrannical law; that its effect will be to discourage the growing taste for lighter and comparatively innocuous beverages, to close the respectably conducted hotel, and to encourage the drinking of the worst kind of whiskey, in the worst kind of houses.”¹⁸¹ One exasperated community member claimed that “if you desire to drive your sons to the brothel, vote for the Scott Act.”¹⁸²

London elites believed that houses of ill-fame encouraged drunkenness and liquor abuse. The appearance of a disorderly house in London West in early 1884 caused local panic that the area would end up like London East, with a reputation for sexual vice and illicit liquor trafficking. Catherine Hastings and Catherine Gooderham, two women who frequently appeared in court for alcohol and prostitution-related charges in the 1880s and 1890s, were reputed to be renting the house. Neighbours complained that the “drunken carouse” often prevented them from sleeping.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ “The Regulation of Vice,” *London Advertiser*, July 8, 1885, 2. Many made similar arguments about alcohol and slavery, suggesting that like drinking alcohol, slavery was once a common practice that was eventually condemned. See “The Temperance War,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 5, 1884, 6.

¹⁸⁰ “The Scott Act,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 12, 1885, 4; “State of Morals in Maine: Prohibition That Does Not Prohibit,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 14, 1885, 5; “An Experiment in Prohibition,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 23, 1885, 6.

¹⁸¹ “Temperance vs. the Scott Act,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 11, 1885, 2.

¹⁸² “Note and Comment,” *London Advertiser*, Apr. 9, 1881, 4.

¹⁸³ “London West,” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 13, 1884, 8.

Another witness claimed to have heard Hastings tell a police officer that she “she could get all the whiskey she wanted any hour of the night.”¹⁸⁴ The *London Advertiser* stated that “stringent measures will have to be taken by the authorities unless the Council want the village run by a gang of rowdies and drunkards.”¹⁸⁵ Despite efforts to close their house in June, articles in August stated that “the disorderly house nuisance continues to be the chief source of annoyance to the peace-abiding villagers.”¹⁸⁶ Although the press may have exaggerated the extent to which alcohol was a constant presence at their brothel, residents believed that prostitutes were heavily dependent on liquor and catered alcohol to working-class men.

The moral panic about alcohol abuse and urban felony were rarely separated from concerns about race. Londoners held contradictory views about the role that “colored” people played in the city’s reportedly high crime rates, particularly in London East. For example, residents praised Delos R. Davis, “a well-known coloured lawyer of Essex,” for his election as Reeve of Colchester in 1885, describing him as a “man of fine ability, a clever speaker and a thorough gentleman.”¹⁸⁷ Yet stories in the press referred to black men as “wild beasts,” who were typically “loaded with liquor.”¹⁸⁸ A stabbing that took place in London East at the height of public anxieties about crime in 1885 illustrates how the press used isolated events involving black men to explain increasing regional offense rates.

Two black brothers stabbed a white man after an argument escalated on New Year’s Day. Several constables were wounded in the incident, and the pair escaped to St. Thomas. The next day, Londoners read headlines such as “Three Mulattos Brutally Assault a London Easter” and “A

¹⁸⁴ “London West,” *London Advertiser*, June 23, 1884, 5.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ “London West,” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 13, 1884, 8.

¹⁸⁷ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 8, 1885, 3.

¹⁸⁸ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 2, 1884, 3.

Gang of Colored Men Forcibly Resist Arrest by a Constable.”¹⁸⁹ Although this incident was not dissimilar to violence between white people in London East, the press suggested that “coloured men” were responsible for the area’s crime: “Trouble has been provoked through the conduct of coloured men, many of whom are addicted to the dangerous practice of carrying razors, and who, when under the influence of liquor and when excited by passion, do not hesitate to make free use of them and to cut and slash indiscriminately.”¹⁹⁰ Black men “become transformed into veritable demons, delighting in the shedding of gore.”¹⁹¹ When another stabbing occurred two weeks later, journalists were quick to point out that “as before a colored man was the aggressor.”¹⁹² The stabbing served as an outlet for residents to link varied concerns about race, liquor, and London East crime, implying that black men were drunk and possessed inherently violent traits.

Race was also a factor when Londoners confronted prostitution. Londoners were concerned about disorderly houses in which both black and white inmates and frequenters congregated, believing that they were sites of violence and immoral interracial coupling. The racial background of inmates and frequenters of disorderly houses was always described in detail in the 1880s. When police raided a “fearful den” on South Street in 1884, reporters made sure to comment that the people arrested ranged from “coloured” and “negro,” to “quadroon” and “white.”¹⁹³ Interviewees testified that “sometimes there were a dozen women there and 30 or 40 men (black and white mixed) all drunk, fighting and swearing.”¹⁹⁴ In 1885 the *London Free Press* noted: “For a considerable period a gang of white and coloured people have been cohabiting together in the

¹⁸⁹ “Desperate Stabbing Affray,” *London Advertiser*, Jan. 2, 1885, 4; “Desperate, Deadly Deeds,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 2, 1885, 8.

¹⁹⁰ “Desperate, Deadly Deeds,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 2, 1885, 8.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² “Moore’s Murderous Deed,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 23, 1885, 8.

¹⁹³ “Police Court: A Fearful Den,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 20, 1884, 3.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

south eastern part of the city, and their “orgies” have been both frequent and noisy.”¹⁹⁵ After many complaints from neighbours, four police officers visited the house: “They found two white women named Ellen MacEvoy and Emma Fair comfortably ensconced in bed with a brace of coloured individuals, Joseph Lewis and William Smith, and it was discovered that Fair was *enceinte*.”¹⁹⁶ Officers and intrigued reporters were unable to confirm which of the “coloured individuals” caused the young white woman’s pregnancy. Later that week, the magistrate sentenced the men to a month each in jail, while Fair and MacEvoy received terms of two and three months.¹⁹⁷

The interlocking concerns about prostitution, liquor abuse, and other urban vices that reformers voiced in the press and in speeches put pressure on local police to crackdown on crime. According to Helen Boritch, the “visibility of public order offences made their enforcement particularly sensitive to public pressure.”¹⁹⁸ London police responded to campaigns against vice by targeting crimes that typically took place in the city’s most visible places, including the streets, parks, and establishments that sold alcohol. Although violent crime rates in London decreased in the late nineteenth century, vagrancy, prostitution, and drunk and disorderly charges doubled from 1871 to 1920: “Without the requirement of a complaining witness and with vague legal definitions, it was possible to increase greatly the number of these arrests through deliberate proactive enforcement policies.”¹⁹⁹ Vagrancy laws, city by-laws, and other legislation aimed at curbing prostitution placed the burden on women to defend their innocence, rather than on police or magistrates to prove their guilt.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ “A Disgraceful Den Broken Up,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 15, 1885, 3.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. Emma “Fair” also appears in jail and press documents as Emma “Farr.”

¹⁹⁷ “Police Court,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 18, 1885, 3.

¹⁹⁸ Boritch, “Crime and Punishment in Middlesex County,” 400.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 393, 400. In 1920 they represented 61% of all arrests.

²⁰⁰ The federal government passed *An Act respecting Vagrants* in 1869. It outlawed living off of prostitution and keeping, frequenting, or being inmates in houses of ill-fame. Furthermore, Canada’s vagrancy laws

Middlesex County also witnessed higher arrests because the London Police were more vigilant than other forces in southwestern Ontario. In 1879, Police Chief William T. T. Williams complained that criminals typically escaped after leaving London's borders because of the "lax law enforcement" policies in the areas outside of the city.²⁰¹ Williams took a hardline stance against crime in the 1870s and 1880s. Historian Frederick Armstrong argues that his "puritanical outlook" influenced the forces' conduct.²⁰² The city's arrest rates peaked in the mid-1880s because London officers responded to complaints about immoral public behaviour.²⁰³ The County's perceived "increase in crime" resulted from police responding to public pressure to clean the streets of prostitutes, drunks, transients, and other visible groups of the urban poor. Police action inflated arrests, which in turn heightened Londoners' outrage about the levels of criminal activity, repeating the cycle by spurring authorities to crackdown on vagrants.

Londoners also faced more arrests in the 1880s because they were subject to harsher laws. Police regulated public morality by establishing and imposing city by-laws, defined as "largely victimless, minor offenses in which arrests rest principally on police aggressiveness and deliberate enforcement policies."²⁰⁴ The number of infractions in Toronto fluctuated every few years as a result of policing tactics that shifted as the force's leadership and departmental policy changed.²⁰⁵

criminalized "all common prostitutes" who appeared in public without "giving a satisfactory account of themselves." Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law," 394-5.

²⁰¹ Charles Addington, *A History of the London Police Force: 125 Years of Police Service* (London, Ontario: Phelps Publishing Company, 1980), 11.

²⁰² Armstrong, "Obscenity in Victorian London," 179.

²⁰³ Boritch, "Crime and Punishment in Middlesex County," 393.

²⁰⁴ Helen Boritch and John Hagan, "Crime and the Changing Forms of Class Control: Policing Public Order in 'Toronto the Good,' 1859-1955," *Social Forces* 66.2 (December 1987): 315. Constance Backhouse has also noted that municipalities across Canada passed by-laws attempting to prohibit prostitution. Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law," 394. Greg Marquis also argues that by-laws inflated arrests of the lower-classes. Greg Marquis, *The Vigilant Eye: Policing Canada from 1867 to 9/11* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 43. For more examples of municipal prostitution legislation, see John McLaren, "Chasing the Social Evil," 131.

²⁰⁵ Boritch and Hagan, "Crime and the Changing Forms of Class Control," 317.

Municipal approaches to enforcing by-laws were influential in shaping how many people were arrested for offences such as vagrancy, drunkenness, and prostitution. The By-Laws of the City of London, passed by Mayor Robert Lewis in 1879, for example, included sixteen possible infractions against “Public Morals.”²⁰⁶ The by-laws were imprecise in their wording and descriptions, rendering them applicable to a wide range of interpretation. For instance, the sixth by-law prohibited “indecent, immoral or lewd play,” but failed to delineate what constituted such conduct. London police and magistrates had wide power to determine whether someone’s behaviour merited charges.

Most of London’s public morality by-laws related to alcohol, gambling, and sex. By-laws eight through ten were about brothels, prohibiting city residents from keeping, frequenting, leasing, “or in any manner contribut[ing] to the support of such house or any inmate thereof.”²⁰⁷ By-law number ten forbade Londoners from permitting prostitutes “or other persons of bad character” from entering their homes. By-law twenty-three prohibited licensed cabs from driving “notoriously bad characters or women of ill-fame” during the day time, except to convey them to the railway station for the purposes of leaving the city.²⁰⁸ London authorities fined street-walkers under by-law sixteen, which rendered “vagrants” and people found “drunk or disorderly in any street” liable to penalty.²⁰⁹ Local police applied these by-laws strictly in the 1880s. The Middlesex jail registers show numerous people arrested for “breach of by-law,” “drunk and disorderly,” and “abusive language.”²¹⁰ When combined with what Constance Backhouse describes as a “veritable explosion” of federal legislation passed to criminalize prostitution from Confederation to the

²⁰⁶ *Charter and By-Laws of the City of London*, 22.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 251.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

²¹⁰ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

1890s, prostitutes, street-walkers, and madams could be arrested on countless overlapping charges in Middlesex County.²¹¹

Both local and federal laws against sexual vices often targeted women and girls, indicating that a shift was occurring in how authorities viewed female behaviour in urban centres. The city's moral reformers, clergymen, and other elites used the press to vocalize their perceptions and anxieties about the emerging class of working women in London. Women, who would have laboured in rural communities only a generation before, now sought employment in domestic service, manufacturing plants, and stores. Reform-minded individuals were concerned that women gained a measure of independence through their employment. According to historian Carolyn Strange, elites believed that working women enjoyed their off-hours without appropriate guardianship, thereby disrupting "the continuous flow of supervision between families and employers."²¹² The city's anonymity meant that young women were not subject to family or community surveillance to the same degree as girls who labored in rural areas, and might be tempted by the lure of making quick money as prostitutes. Mariana Valverde argues that urban women were "evaluated according to their perceived distance from the paradigmatic female working-class vice, prostitution."²¹³ London editorials expressed anxieties about female labourers such as actresses and domestic servants. Similar to sex workers, both were seen as city-dwellers who profited in various ways off of their beauty and flaunted their freedom from the constraints of living under observation at home.

The press implied that without adequate guidance, working-class women would frequent the wrong places with immoral company. Social reformers were particularly suspicious of

²¹¹ Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law," 395.

²¹² Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 5.

²¹³ Valverde, *The Age of Light*, 78.

actresses.²¹⁴ Their economic success was tied to their physical appearance, and by living independently they disregarded the “conditions held necessary for her social preservation elsewhere.”²¹⁵ One editorial argued that “to hold that one daughter may not go to a ball at a private house without a chaperon, and another may live alone in lodgings, go on the stage without protection, and travel about in mixed company without the flimsiest presence of a caretaker, is a stupidity scarcely worth the trouble of discussing.”²¹⁶ According to the *London Free Press*, women did not have the requisite skills to protect themselves from the dangers of urban life without a male chaperone.

Concerns about working-class women’s sexual vulnerability affected how they were viewed by employers. Housewives were particularly hesitant in granting too much freedom to their hired help. Incompetent domestic servants were already the subject of complaints, and women lamented the difficulty of finding a girl who was at once hard-working, yet not so pretty as to distract their husbands, or allow their “good looks to lead them astray.”²¹⁷ When one woman commented that girls should go home in the evenings to alleviate housewives from providing room and board, another retorted that “many mistresses would prefer to know something as to how those who were inmates of their houses in the daytime spent their nights, and what sort of company they kept.”²¹⁸ The implicit assumption was that a woman running a household was responsible for watching over the moral disposition of her hired help: “Girls have to be protected against their

²¹⁴ Kelly MacDonald notes that elites voiced similar concerns about London’s burlesque industry at the turn of the century. See Kelly MacDonald, “Moral Reform and the Rise of the Burlesque Industry in London, Ontario,” MA Thesis, (Windsor: University of Windsor, 1999), 71-2.

²¹⁵ “Actresses and their Art,” *London Free Press*, June 2, 1885, 3.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ “About Servant Girls: When Beauty Becomes a Serious Inconvenience,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 28, 1884, 8.

²¹⁸ “Domestic Help,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 24, 1880, 2; “Editorial Briefs,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 26, 1880. 2.

own ignorance, their own innocence, their very selves, until they have learned something of life and its dangers.”²¹⁹

The premise that lower-class working women needed moral guidance to prevent them from pursuing questionable leisure activities legitimized a variety of initiatives to prevent London women from entering prostitution.²²⁰ Female reformers established schools and societies aimed at “raising” girls in Christian company and out of idleness. In 1884, London’s branch of the WCTU addressed their concerns about young girls’ education by establishing an industrial school. Although they were involved predominantly with the temperance movement, the WCTU also aimed at broader goals of social improvement for vulnerable communities.²²¹ They believed that without distractions, girls could at best “pass their time in idleness,” and at worst, be lured by men into pre-marital sexual relations and even prostitution.²²² At a meeting that March, the organization’s president described “the advantage that might be gained through girls, who at present lounge around their homes indifferent to education, being induced to attend this school.”²²³ Working quickly, WCTU organizers opened the school the following month. Calls for an industrial school in London date to 1883, when Reverend J. B. Richardson urged the WCA to open an industrial school for youth who “ought to be saved in some manner.”²²⁴ Other Ontario cities followed suit, and Toronto founded an Industrial School for Girls in 1885. Its opening, however, was marked by concern about the chosen location: “Within a stone-throw almost of the school are

²¹⁹ “Actresses and their Art,” *London Free Press*, June 2, 1885, 3.

²²⁰ WCTU and WCA’s attempts to prevent girls from entering the sex trade were not unique to London. Tamara Myers has noted that the Montreal branches also performed outreach work in the early 1880s to intervene before lower-class women entered prostitution. Myers, *Caught*, 45.

²²¹ For more information on the temperance movement’s interest in wider social problems in the 1880s, see Greg Marquis, “Alcohol and the Family in Canada,” *Journal of Family History*, 29.3 (July 2004), 314.

²²² “Local and District Brevities,” *London Free Press*, March 10, 1884, 8.

²²³ “Industrial School,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 4, 1884, 2; W.C.T.U. Business Transacted at the Special Meeting Yesterday Afternoon,” *London Free Press*, March 5, 1884, 8.

²²⁴ “The W.C.A.,” *London Advertiser*, May 30, 1883, 1.

four or five houses of ill-fame, while the portion of the street on which the building is situated is a thoroughfare for fallen women. These may not be material objections, but it is nevertheless to be regretted that some suitable building could not be secured in a more palatable district.”²²⁵

Establishing the Industrial School did not alleviate concerns about the moral upbringing of London women. In the fall of 1884, a meeting was held at the Chapter House to discuss forming a city branch of the Girls’ Friendly Society, which performed benevolent work in England and other parts of Canada. According to Reverend Thomas O’Connell, the group encouraged “purity of life, faithfulness to employers, dutifulness to parents, and thrift.”²²⁶ The society aimed to prevent unmarried working-class women from losing their “purity” and engaging in sexual relations.²²⁷ Londoners were particularly alarmed that young women from the countryside who sought employment and cheap accommodations would be tricked into prostitution. A resident urged the Girls’ Friendly Society to establish supervised female lodgings, claiming that a woman had recently come to the city to work as a domestic, but learned that her landlady actually intended for her to work as an inmate in a house of ill-fame: “In all probability the hellish design would have been accomplished and the poor girl’s character blasted for life . . . but for the timely intervention of a railway official.”²²⁸

Once the Girls’ Friendly Society was established in October, it operated by matching young working girls, such as servants and seamstresses, with “ladies” who held biweekly meetings “of a

²²⁵ “Toronto Industrial School for Girls,” *London Advertiser*, July 16, 1885, 3.

²²⁶ “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 21, 1884, 8.

²²⁷ Brian Harrison, “For Church, Queen and Family: The Girls’ Friendly Society, 1874-1920,” *Past & Present* 61 (Nov. 1973), 117.

²²⁸ “A Crank Crushed,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 25, 1884, 3. It was not unusual for women’s groups to establish supervised boarding-homes for young women in urban centres. Carolyn Strange argues that the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) founded homes as “a means to ensure that working girls would not succumb to the temptations of city life.” Strange, *Toronto’s Girl Problem*, 58.

social character,” which featured readings, music, and moral instruction.²²⁹ It is unclear whether any at-risk girls decided the twenty-five-cent initiation fee was worth the cost. Regardless, the society represented yet another manifestation of middle- and upper-class apprehension about young women spurning Anglo-Christian abstinence and marriage to live off the avails of prostitution. Similar concerns in the early twentieth century spurred reformers and ecclesiastical leaders to establish recreational groups like the Canadian Girls in Training, Girl Scouts, and the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire. Historian Cynthia Comacchio argues that they aimed to impart “Protestant, Euro-Canadian standards of social relations in all their manifestations—domestic, productive, public, recreational, religious, sexual.”²³⁰ Local London women’s charitable initiatives for working girls in the 1880s marked the beginning of a much broader movement aimed at female education and social instruction.

In addition to measures aimed at protecting girls from vice, reformers reached out to incarcerated women who were already “fallen” to convince them to lead Christian lives. The city branch of the WCA offered religious and moral guidance for female convicts throughout the 1880s, believing that inmates would benefit from their example.²³¹ Although imprisoned women often broke their promises to abstain from alcohol, other WCA programs were reportedly more popular. In March of 1885, a member reported optimistically that their religious services were “well attended” by the “sixteen female prisoners in the institution committed for vagrancy,” most of whom were street-walkers.²³² At their annual meeting that May, members reported with pride that

²²⁹ “Local and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 25, 1884, 6.

²³⁰ Cynthia Comacchio, “Dancing to Perdition: Adolescence and Leisure in Interwar English Canada,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32.3 (Fall): 13.

²³¹ Reformers who operated the Infants’ Home and other refuges in Toronto went even further, and actually visited brothels. The *Globe* reported that “the ladies in charge of the Home also visit the houses of ill-fame, and endeavour to persuade the inmates to abandon vicious lives.” “The Social Evil,” *The Globe*, Jan. 14, 1882, 15.

²³² “Women’s Christian Association,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 6, 1885, 5.

“special interest had been taken in the work at the jail,” which now hosted services during the week, in addition to Sundays.²³³ Reform leaders maintained that their volunteer efforts at the prison would help female vagrants from “falling back into their old courses.”²³⁴

The attempts by women’s groups to provide moral counsel for imprisoned women indicate that they were influenced by broader debates in the 1880s about criminal punishment and reform. Some Ontarians advocated for a hardline stance against crime to deter potential offenders, while others concluded that a “Christianized society” ought to rehabilitate criminals.²³⁵ The latter worried that prisons held inmates together in idleness, allowing them to learn the tricks of the trade from more dangerous criminals: “A man goes in the first time a vagrant, the next time a petty thief, the next time and ever after a hardened criminal.”²³⁶ Woman’s groups like the WCA advocated jails to separate young offenders from hardened female criminals who might entice them to commit further crime. Others lamented that prisons lacked education programs to “ameliorate the moral condition” of prisoners.²³⁷ The answer to this problem for female convicts was the Mercer Reformatory, a women’s prison established in Toronto in 1880. It was celebrated for its policy of employing women at domestic labour under “beneficial influence,” as well as for keeping “younger girls separate from those who are more confirmed criminals.”²³⁸ London’s legal authorities believed that female offenders in particular required strong moral guidance to change their ways, and sent a number of the city’s prostitutes to the Mercer Reformatory.

In addition to women’s groups, members of the clergy also guided London youth on issues of morality and monitored public expressions of sexuality. Ecclesiastical leaders voiced their

²³³ “Women’s Christian Association: The Annual Meeting,” *London Free Press*, May 27, 1885, 8.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ “The Reformation of Criminals,” *London Advertiser*, Jan. 29, 1883, 2.

²³⁶ “Prison Life Under Mowat,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 20, 1885, 4.

²³⁷ “Neglected Gaols,” *London Free Press*, Feb. 12, 1885, 4.

²³⁸ “The Reformation of Criminals,” *London Advertiser*, Jan. 29, 1883, 2.

opinions about vice in sermons and the local press, laid complaints about indecent behaviour to municipal representatives, and instructed women's groups on the charity they ought to perform.²³⁹ London's churches espoused relatively uniform views through their involvement in the Ministerial Association, an ecumenical Christian body that met monthly to discuss community concerns. Established in the 1870s, the association encouraged leaders from various denominations to actively address common goals, including promoting prohibition and eradicating "the social evil."²⁴⁰ The association was in close contact with the WCTU and WCA, and often sent speakers to address women's meetings and direct them on their outreach programs.²⁴¹ An oft-repeated question at Ministerial meetings was how to encourage religiosity among young men and women in London. Religious leaders were particularly concerned about the evils of urban life, believing that its new forms of entertainment tempted youth into immoral behaviour. Without their guidance, young women might frequent roller-rinks and dark theatres where predatory men waited to seduce them into acts with unthinkable consequences.

The Ministerial Association shaped representations of sexuality in public spaces by complaining to municipal and legal authorities when popular entertainment crossed the line of respectability. For instance, Association members lost patience with supposedly risqué advertising taking over the streets of London in 1885, expressing their horror at posters that featured women wearing tantalizing outfits to promote performances of a questionably sexual nature.²⁴² Outraged

²³⁹ The preoccupation of London clergymen with regulating residents' behaviour reflects the Protestant Church's sense of responsibility for "creating public morality" in the late nineteenth century. Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *Christian Churches and their Peoples, 1840-1965: A Social History of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 62-3.

²⁴⁰ "Ministerial Association," *London Advertiser*, Jan. 15, 1883, 4; "Our Country," *London Free Press*, Jan. 22, 1885, 8.

²⁴¹ "London and Precincts," *London Advertiser*, May 7, 1885, 8.

²⁴² Members of the Ministerial Association frequently expressed similar concerns about everything from indecent public performances and advertising, to "blasphemous lecture" delivered throughout Ontario. See "Ministerial Association," *London Advertiser*, Apr. 7, 1880, 1.

clergymen pressed city authorities in April to censor bulletins that were “shameful in their indecency,” sending copies of the resolution to the Mayor, County Attorney, and the Chief of Police.²⁴³ In December, members went to court over posters publicizing a variety show called “W. M. Davene’s Allied Attractions.” The signs featured an image of “the wondrous” trapeze artist Lotto Davene, clad in a sleeveless tunic with dark coloured “drawers” peeking out from underneath.²⁴⁴ In response to their complaints, Police Chief Williams charged the distributor with breach of by-laws relating to indecent pictures.²⁴⁵ Three Ministerial Association members attested to the poster’s “lustfulness,” “sensuality,” and clear intention to “promote impure thoughts.”²⁴⁶ The London courthouse became a space where city residents regulated and contested notions of sexual respectability because the trial represented a direct confrontation between elite morality and working-class entertainment.

Although London’s intellectual climate was conservative, some residents resisted the elite-driven war on vice. London youth enjoyed the opening of three roller rinks in 1885. An editor exclaimed that “the craze for skating on wheels has struck the Forest City in earnest.”²⁴⁷ However, not everyone was enthusiastic about the popular leisure activity. Religious leaders believed that roller rinks encouraged co-ed mixing and flirting in unsupervised settings, and one clergyman declared that the “soul endangering institutions” threatened to be “even more sinful and deadly

²⁴³ “W. C. A.” *London Advertiser*, Feb. 4, 1881, 4; “The Ministerial Association,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 16, 1885, 3.

²⁴⁴ Armstrong, “Obscenity in Victorian London,” 177.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ “Trial,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 7, 1886, 3. Testifying as to the poster’s indecency was Reverend Donald George Sutherland, a Methodist minister at the Queen’s Avenue Methodist Church in downtown London, Reverend James Allister Murray, who led the St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, and the Church of England’s Reverend James Banning Richardson, of the Cronyn Memorial Church. For proof that they were active members in the Ministerial Association, see: “Ministerial Association,” *London Advertiser*, Dec. 19, 1881, 5; “Ministerial Association,” *London Advertiser*, Jan. 15, 1883, 4; “The Ministerial Association,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 16, 1885, 3; “Women’s Christian Association: The Annual Meeting,” *London Free Press*, May 27, 1885, 8.

²⁴⁷ “The Wheel of Fortune,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 13, 1885, 1.

than the theatre.”²⁴⁸ In response, a Londoner penned a scathing editorial condemning the Church for its “ensorious spirit” toward “the recreations of the people.”²⁴⁹ In his opinion, “any form of popular amusement is sure, sooner or later, to call down the righteous wrath of some good person of ‘the cloth.’” He contended that roller-skating was welcomed because it was “cheap, easy, and in the main harmless and pleasure-giving,” not because it promoted vice.²⁵⁰ Conservative attitudes about young expressions of sexuality were rarely voiced without some opposition and debate, particularly from younger residents of the city.

These stereotypes about women’s sexual vulnerability influenced press representations of prostitutes. Although most sex workers were driven by economic need, reporters often painted “fallen” women as victims of male abuse and seduction, or as vixens looking to cause other girls’ ruin. The typical image was of a white Anglo-Christian woman giving her innocence to an enchanting yet conniving man, thus entering a life of shame, or alternatively, of a rural girl coming to the city in search of honest domestic work, who was then tricked by an older woman’s promises of room and board into an endless cycle of sex work and debt. Although police rarely confirmed these stories to be true, reporting about young women’s temptation and betrayal contributed to the growing moral panic about prostitution. For instance, a report titled “The Oft-Told” exemplifies anxieties about white, wealthy, Protestant women’s sexual vulnerabilities. It claimed that a young

²⁴⁸ He was likely referring to an incident at the London East “Daisy” roller rink in which a troublemaker turned the gas off, “causing considerable excitement among the merry masqueraders,” and leaving the hall in “total darkness.” “The Roller Rink Next!” *London Free Press*, Apr. 1, 1885, 3. Ecclesiastical leaders in other cities also condemned roller rinks. According to Lynne Marks, ministers in urban centres like New York were concerned about the potential for unsupervised working-class women to mingle with men at roller rinks. By contrast, Marks suggests that ministers in smaller rural communities actually encouraged youth to play at roller rinks, because young women lived at home in those communities, and were thereby “considered safe and pure” and were not at risk of inappropriate sexual mingling. See Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 130.

²⁴⁹ “The Roller Rink Next!” *London Free Press*, Apr. 1, 1885, 3.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Pittsburgh woman, Clara Balph, was discovered in a Toronto brothel by police: “She is the daughter of wealthy parents, and, as it appears by her own story, was led astray by a Pittsburgh young man with whom she consented to elope. The latter, after taking all her money, deserted her at Niagara Falls.”²⁵¹ Clara’s naivety led her to fall in love with the wrong man, of whom her “wealthy parents” likely disapproved. The “tragic” elements of stories like Clara’s were dependent on the women being youthful, middle- to upper-class, and Anglo-Christian, suggesting that age, class, and race were essential categories in determining how society viewed prostitutes. In another exposition titled “Traps for the Unwary,” a journalist argued that the person most at risk of abduction into the sex trade is “a girl whose connections are in every way of a superior class, and whose reputation for modesty and propriety stands very high.”²⁵² London elites only seemed to value a young girl’s virtue if she was white and of an appropriate social standing.

Most narratives reinforced that young women needed to be surrounded by family, and fathers in particular, to protect their sexual purity. A feature in the *London Free Press* in 1885 claimed that “Eva Kennedy, a young Toronto girl, was on Friday night rescued from a disreputable house on Gould street, where she had been lured from the country by a designing scoundrel. Her father traced her to the den and caused her arrest.”²⁵³ Although a male “scoundrel” led Eva astray, her father prevented her otherwise inevitable moral corruption in the brothel.²⁵⁴ Journalists asserted that the only way for a woman who lacked family relations to reclaim some dignity after working in prostitution was to find an appropriate situation with a Christian family. An article describing the “Sad Story and Pitiful Sufferings of Dora Delisle” aimed to scare London women into avoiding

²⁵¹ “The Oft-Told,” *London Advertiser*, Jan. 19, 1883, 1.

²⁵² “Traps for the Unwary,” *The Globe*, Feb. 28, 1881, 8.

²⁵³ “Toronto News,” *London Free Press*, Nov. 2, 1885, 5.

²⁵⁴ Carolyn Strange has examined this story in more detail. See Strange, *Toronto’s Girl Problem*, 62-3.

the sex trade.²⁵⁵ After Dora's family died, she reportedly entered a house of ill-fame, where she was "robbed, abused and turned out to die." The journalist concluded that "the nuns will give her a home until she finds employment in some respectable family."²⁵⁶ Like most stories about "fallen" girls, the article implied that forming kinship ties with an upright family was Dora's only hope to re-establish herself to some degree in Christian society. These stories often cautioned parents to closely monitor their daughters' activity. As one editor put it, "the unfolding of the tale, however, may serve to make others, in all stations of life, more watchful over the safety of their daughters, and still more careful as to their goings out and comings in."²⁵⁷

Other accounts relied on stereotypes about mature women tricking young girls into prostitution. These stories were likely influenced by ongoing House of Commons debates in the mid-1880s to criminalize seduction and procurement of young women to work in houses of ill-fame.²⁵⁸ London girls were warned not to trust older women's employment offers. In 1885 the *Free Press* described "How a Rochester Woman Enticed Girls from Honest Living."²⁵⁹ Hannah Russell was reportedly arrested for keeping a "house of prostitution," in which she "had established a systematic plan of enticing young girls into her house under the pretext of giving them positions as domestics and then endeavoring to persuade them to enter a life of shame by holding out allurements in the way of large rewards." The journalist praised one girl who had "persistently refused to entertain the proposition," and expressed relief that another who had given Russell her consent "to do as she wanted her" was saved by police before performing any acts.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ "Orphan and Friendless," *London Free Press*, Mar. 24, 1885, 2.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ "Traps for the Unwary," *The Globe*, Feb. 28, 1881, 8.

²⁵⁸ For more information on the debates that informed the 1885 *Act Respecting Offences Against the Person*, see McLaren, "Chasing the Social Evil," 132.

²⁵⁹ "How a Rochester Woman Enticed Girls from Honest Living," *London Free Press*, Oct. 16, 1885, 1.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Descriptions of court proceedings were more truthful than most expositions about “fallen” girls, which typically relied on narrative tropes rather than real evidence. Mariana Valverde notes that early twentieth century reports about white slavery often depended on “pseudo-eyewitness” accounts to emphasize validity or employed literary elements that acted as “triggers for mythical beliefs supported by the audience.”²⁶¹ London journalists employed similar reporting styles in their discussions about prostitution in the 1880s. For instance, a *Free Press* story titled “Backwoods Depravity” described “Shocking Immorality in the Lumbering Camps of Michigan.”²⁶² Written entirely in the first person, it claimed to be the result of an interview with an anonymous Detroitier who wintered in the camps. The man described how hordes of single male labourers frequented crudely-erected shanty houses to drink, dance, and pay women for sexual favours. He boasted to have “been around the woods long enough to know that there are fully one thousand of these dance houses in Michigan and in Northern Wisconsin in which there are yearly not less than seven thousand women worn out.”²⁶³ Many girls had been seduced by men in Canada, then brought out to the camps.²⁶⁴ Upon their arrival, the girls boarded with an old “landlady” whose high rent and fees for their “bawdy short dresses” kept them in constant debt.

Similar to other narratives about prostitution, the article insisted that sex work rapidly accelerated a woman’s aging process. One dancer “looked well worn out for 40, but afterwards I learned she was only 26,” and “of the six girls in the place, only one had any of the marks of youth left in her face.” No matter how beautiful a girl was, she was still at risk of becoming like the “old

²⁶¹ Valverde, *The Age of Light*, 95. The white slavery panic began around 1885 when a journalist exposed how young British girls were supposedly bought and sold into prostitution. Fears spread to Canada, and reformers in the Dominion began agitating for increased awareness of the white slave trade in the early twentieth century.

²⁶² “Backwoods Depravity,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 29, 1886, 6.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ A common trope involved young Canadian women being abducted and reportedly transported to the United States. See “Traps for the Unwary,” *The Globe*, Feb. 28, 1881, 8.

woman of the house,” who spent her days serving out “whisky and cigars of the vilest kind,” and ruining countless young girls.²⁶⁵ This trope about age was mirrored in many reports about the sex trade, implying that the same youthful women who were enticed into prostitution would eventually become the beguilers themselves.²⁶⁶ For instance, a man complained in 1884 that city residents were not addressing the serious threat of vulnerable women drifting into prostitution. He stressed that after their fall, “many girls are switched on to the downward line, and from becoming the tempted become the tempter.”²⁶⁷ Every girl who was tricked into the sex trade, he insisted, would become another seducer operating in the future.

Londoners’ concerns about older established prostitutes luring innocent girls into the sex trade reflected the ongoing debates within women’s groups about hardened female criminals residing in the same jails as young offenders with “little or no distinction made as to their grade in crime or vice.”²⁶⁸ These similarities indicate that in addition to other signifiers like gender and race, representations of age also factored into moral panics. Historians have documented how elites responded to the perceived “girl problem” of unsupervised working-class women proliferating in Canadian urban centres in the late nineteenth century.²⁶⁹ However, there also appear to have also been worries about older women in positions of influence over vulnerable girls, and their power to potentially create a class of inured female criminals and sex workers.²⁷⁰ Panic about women’s gender and sexuality was rarely divorced from anxieties about age and how the aging process

²⁶⁵ “Backwoods Depravity,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 29, 1886, 6.

²⁶⁶ For another example, see “Western Ontario,” *London Advertiser*, Jan. 7, 1880, 2.

²⁶⁷ “A Crank Crushed,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 25, 1884, 3.

²⁶⁸ “Prison Life Under Mowat,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 20, 1885, 4.

²⁶⁹ For a few works on the perceived “girl problem” in Canada, see: Strange, *Toronto’s Girl Problem*; Myers, *Caught*; Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules*.

²⁷⁰ Tamara Myers has also noted this distinction between the “older career prostitute and the younger, more salvageable ‘girl,’” but does not indicate how race factored into these narratives of sexual danger. Myers, *Caught*, 46.

affected women. Historians need to determine how representations of the sexual threats posed by older women affected how reformers and those in the justice system treated mature women in prostitution. As Lori Rotenberg has noted, stories about girls tricked into the sex trade obscured the fact that the average prostitute laboured due to “extreme financial need.” By presenting a woman as a “victim of deception and of her own ignorance,” reform advocates made her into “an appropriate object for the reformer’s educational and redemptive efforts.”²⁷¹ These narratives legitimized figures in positions of power to intervene in women’s lives and direct their sexual morality. Stereotypes about older women may have operated in similar ways to justify increased surveillance over their interactions with young girls. Furthermore, stories in the Ontario press about vulnerable Anglo-Christian women, “designing scoundrels,” and older female tempters in the early 1880s suggest that Canadians were concerned about the possibility for young white women to fall into prostitution against their will long before the white slavery panic was consolidated into a broader movement in the early twentieth century.

If prostitutes were to be conceived of as victims, someone needed to be blamed for the proliferation of the sex trade. Reformers and other voices in the London press accused men of both creating demand for prostitution by frequenting brothels, as well as for seducing or tricking naïve women into working in houses of ill-fame. Canadians increasingly advocated for both sexes to be charged equally for prostitution related crimes in the late nineteenth century, and decried the law’s hypocritical nature of only punishing women.²⁷² According to Lori Rotenberg, Toronto’s ecclesiastical leaders and female reformers contended that society’s “double standard of sexual morality” scapegoated women for man’s sexual greed.²⁷³ Londoners expressed similar views in

²⁷¹ Rotenberg, “The Wayward Worker,” 43.

²⁷² Backhouse, “Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law,” 393; Strange, *Toronto’s Girl Problem*, 96; Valverde, *The Age of Light*, 94.

²⁷³ Rotenberg, “The Wayward Worker,” 61-2.

the early 1880s. One resident complained in 1882 about the tendency of magistrates to commit prostitutes to long prison sentences, while letting off “male frequenters” “with a paltry fine of two or three dollars.”²⁷⁴ He complained that “this may be law, but it is not justice.” The problem was that “if a man and woman are caught in an act of robbery, the law makes no distinction of sex, so the law should be in reference to the social evil. The poor victims of seduction are made to suffer misery and death, while the more guilty is allowed to go scot free. There is no even balance in this.”²⁷⁵

Although Canadian elites *imagined* prostitutes as victims of male abuse, London authorities did not impart this same sympathy onto *known* women in the sex trade. People who believed that sex work was an inevitable outcome of urban life viewed specific prostitutes with indifference, while advocates for a hardline stance against prostitution regarded them as criminal vixens who had chosen their immoral lifestyle. Reformers thought that women required religious conversion through stints in refuges and homes of industry.²⁷⁶ Despite their popular representation as victims of seduction, street-walkers and “disorderly” women in London’s sex trade rarely received pity from members of the establishment.²⁷⁷ Police magistrates sent most women to hard labour rather than to the Mercer Reformatory.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, after women were arrested, the press published their names to blame them in a public forum for their labour, whether they were

²⁷⁴ “An Injustice,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 14, 1882, 2. Police reports referred to the men found in brothels as “male frequenters.”

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ This panic about upright women falling into prostitution obscured the realities of prostitutes’ lives, most of whom sold sex out of economic necessity. McLaren, “Chasing the Social Evil,” 138.

²⁷⁷ This was also the case nearby in Hamilton, Ontario. See Shelly Marie Blom, “Prostitutes and Prostitution: A Case Study of ‘Disorderly Women’ in Hamilton, Ontario, 1879-1886,” (MA Thesis, McMaster University, 1994), 29.

²⁷⁸ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*. The jail records indicate that only five women accused of keeping or being inmates in houses of ill-fame were sent to the Mercer Reformatory between 1880 and 1920.

streetwalking, working in or operating brothels, or arrested in disorderly houses. London East Mayor Charles Lilley exemplified the attitude when he told a drunk street-walker that she was a “disgrace to her sex” before sentencing her to six months’ incarceration in 1885.²⁷⁹ The key distinction between symbolic representations of prostitutes and how Canadians actually interacted with them appears to have continued through the early twentieth century. Mariana Valverde notes that reformers also understood women as victims during the white slavery panic. These representations, she argues, “only lasted as long as the narrative,” since in reality, “the practices of rescue work continued to treat all women in rescue homes as requiring conversion and reform, regardless of their guilt or innocence.”²⁸⁰

Although the press blamed men for creating demand for the sex trade and exploiting women, the men who frequented brothels in London and Middlesex County were rarely brought before police court magistrates on prostitution-related charges.²⁸¹ If officers and prosecutors applied the law equally, the number of men charged with frequenting houses of ill-fame would have vastly exceeded that of the female prostitutes because there were always more male customers than the women who provided the services.²⁸² However, between 1880 and 1885, only twenty-six men were tried for frequenting brothels in London.²⁸³ Men were so unafraid of police that they

²⁷⁹ “London East,” *London Free Press*, May 1, 1885, 3.

²⁸⁰ Valverde, *The Age of Light*, 103.

²⁸¹ Constance Backhouse notes that male frequenters in Toronto were rarely charged by police, despite public cries for equal treatment from women’s groups. Backhouse, “Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law,” 408.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 407; Strange and Loo, *Making Good*, 83.

²⁸³ This is compared to 66 women who were brought before police magistrates in London from 1885 to 1886 for keeping or being inmates in houses of ill-fame. Countless more women were charged with charges relating to disorderly houses and streetwalking, but those arrests are more difficult to determine because “vagrancy,” “drunk and disorderly,” and “keeping or being an inmate in a disorderly house” occasionally encompassed other behavior like drunkenness, hosting rowdy house parties, and other public morality charges. Incorporating those numbers was outside the scope of this project. Hundreds of women may have been charged with prostitution-related offenses in London during this period. A few men were charged with frequenting “disorderly houses” who also do not appear in these records. Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

would often file reports when they were robbed by women while in houses of ill-fame, knowing that they would not be punished for frequenting a brothel, and that the police would hunt down the prostitute.²⁸⁴

Despite some demands from the public for police and magistrates to apply the law equally, London men rarely faced consequences for buying sex until at least the 1920s. In the forty years from 1880 to 1920, men made up only 22% of arrests for house of ill-fame related charges in the city. When expanded to include the hundreds of women who were arrested for keeping or being inmates in disorderly houses and streetwalking, men made up less than 5% of all prostitution-related offenses in London.²⁸⁵ Even when calls to punish male abusers were at an all-time high during the second white slavery panic in the early twentieth century, men were rarely convicted on prostitution-related charges in Canadian courts until the 1930s.²⁸⁶

Demographic details about the few men who were charged indicate that London police only applied prostitution laws to working-class or racialized men. Although many brothels catered to city elites and affluent men with money to spend, police only arrested men who worked as labourers, machinists, bricklayers, and farmers.²⁸⁷ Eight of the twenty-six men arrested for keeping or frequenting houses of ill-fame were black, and many more black men were convicted for keeping disorderly houses.²⁸⁸ These trends demonstrate that while laws existed to prohibit men

²⁸⁴ This was the case in both Toronto and London. See: “Police Court: Disorderly,” *The Globe*, May 19, 1877, 1; “Police Court,” *The Globe*, Jan 23, 1880, 2; “Toronto,” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 4, 1880, 1; “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 22, 1884, 8.

²⁸⁵ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

²⁸⁶ Nick E. Larsen, “Canadian Prostitution Control between 1914 and 1970: An Exercise in Chauvinist Reasoning,” *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 7 (Fall 1992): 148, 154. For the period from the First World War to 1970, Larsen notes that “although there were sporadic attempts to crackdown on the male participants in the prostitution trade, female prostitutes were the primary targets of the control efforts.”

²⁸⁷ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*. Shelley Marie Blom notes that Hamilton police also typically arrested only lower-class men for frequenting brothels. Blom, “Prostitutes and Prostitution,” 93.

²⁸⁸ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

from paying for sex, London police were reluctant to enforce them for certain people. Magistrates and the local press were content with turning a blind eye to men who were middle- or upper-class and white. Newspaper editors never published the names of the many men of “prominent positions” who were caught at brothels in police raids.²⁸⁹ The few men who were named in press reports were typically lower-class or black, indicating that police and newspaper editors believed that London residents needed to be warned away from men whose race, class, and leisure activities intersected in the wrong ways.

The conflicting views about prostitution, race, vice, and working-class women’s sexuality held by London’s establishment were not without consequence. The concern of reformers that young girls might be lured or tricked into engaging in pre-marital relations or performing sex work legitimized a variety of initiatives aimed at moral education, from establishing girls’ societies and industrial schools, to imparting religious guidance to female convicts in prisons. In order for London reformers to validate these forms of out-reach work, they depended on understanding young women as sexually naïve and vulnerable to male temptation. Although the press circulated tragic warnings about Anglo-Christian women falling into prostitution and suggested that they were victims of male oppression, London authorities rarely extended this pity to the city’s sex workers and blamed them for their fall from grace.

This chapter has explored how late-nineteenth century anxieties about urban vice affected prostitution regulation. Moral panic about London’s supposed increasing crime rates led city police to crackdown on the most visible urban offenders, namely drunks or women who solicited sex on

²⁸⁹ “Stratford,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 25, 1880, 3. Wendy Mitchinson points out that the WCTU eventually protested that men’s names were rarely published, arguing that women would not know which men to avoid unless they also appeared in reports. Wendy Mitchinson “The WCTU: ‘For God, Home and Native Land’: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Feminism,” in *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880-1920*, Ed. Linda Kealey, 151-168, (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1979), 162.

the streets. The burden of proof for magistrates to convict women of breaching London's numerous prostitution by-laws or vagrancy laws was extremely low, and, as a result, hundreds of sex workers spent portions of their lives in the county jail. The next chapter examines how women in the sex trade interacted with a legal system that increasingly operated against their interests.

Chapter Two: Prostitutes' Interactions with the Justice System

In the autumn of 1881, County Constable Harvey Washington Babcock was charged with “aiding and abetting certain houses of ill-fame” in London East.²⁹⁰ Members of the London police force were suspicious of his inability to secure arrests when given warrants to raid brothels, and eventually laid charges against him for “notifying the inmates when their places were to be visited by other officers of the law.”²⁹¹ At Babcock’s trial in October, Middlesex County Crown Attorney Charles Hutchinson opened proceedings by accusing Babcock of “frustrating the ends of Justice’ in giving information to the keepers of disorderly houses.”²⁹² Squire Edwards then laid his case before Judges Elliot and Davis, and described Babcock’s habit of “coughing and sneezing very hard when in the execution of his duty,” thereby warning the inmates to make a hasty escape. Sensing that a bad cough was not sufficient proof of guilt, Edwards added that Babcock typically “came away without making arrests” when sent to houses, and concluded, “in fact, he was not reliable.” Four constables swore to seeing Babcock receive money from the keeper of a house of ill-fame in London East and noted his “loud talking and blowing about his previous exploits.” Despite the damning evidence against Detective Babcock, the charges were dismissed. The judges lectured the officer to “be more circumspect in matters of detail than heretofore” and concluded the trial.²⁹³

²⁹⁰ “Constables in Trouble,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 29, 1881, 4. Constable Babcock was American-born and had briefly served in the Civil War before deserting and moving to Middlesex County in the mid-1860s to begin a career in policing. Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 167 (Middlesex East), sub-district D1 (London East), page 14, line 1, family no. 63, Harvey W. Babcock; New York State Archives, Albany, New York. Ancestry.com, *New York Civil War Muster Roll Abstracts, 1861-1900*; Archive Collection: 13775-83; Box: 481; Roll: 135. *Harvey W. Babcock*.

²⁹¹ “Constables in Trouble,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 29, 1881, 4.

²⁹² “Slanders Refuted,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 6, 1881, 1.

²⁹³ *Ibid.* When Judge Elliot asked Babcock if he had ever given women warning of warrants issued against them, he replied, “I would be a fool to do such a thing. No, your Honor, I never did.”

Constable Babcock's story highlights tensions within London's police force about proper conduct between officers and women in the sex trade. Although many police officers believed they were carrying out the "ends of justice" by arresting keepers and inmates of houses of ill-fame, Babcock was content to allow their operations to continue as long as he was compensated for his duties. Babcock's case also indicates that women accused of prostitution in London experienced complex relationships with men responsible for administering the law. A London East madam, for example, paid certain members of the force to protect her interests, but feared the power of other officers to close her business. Rather than avoid all interactions with police in the face of their increasing criminalization, some women who could afford it formed closer ties with trusted officers who protected their ability to perform sexual labour. Although many police officers enforced Canada's discriminatory prostitution laws, others formed relationships with women as paid informants, knew them as family members, or frequented brothels while off-duty. Furthermore, the transaction of money between the madam and Babcock suggests that economic exchange between sex workers and local men did not necessarily relate to sex. London's black-market economy evidently included favours between prostitutes and the surrounding community.

Despite considerable historical scholarship that documents how police and magistrates demonized "problem" women and regulated their sexuality and labour, few works examine the perspectives of women accused of prostitution.²⁹⁴ Some historians have shed light on how women responded to the law. Judith Fingard, for example, suggests that homeless prostitutes in Halifax sought incarceration for shelter and warmth.²⁹⁵ Constance Backhouse's work reveals how wealthy

²⁹⁴ The majority of works that discuss prostitution law, criminality, and legal enforcement in the nineteenth century focus on the role played by the administrators of justice, rather than how women they targeted responded. For instance, see: Rotenberg, "The Wayward Worker"; Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Judicial Attitudes." For works on London, Ontario, see Michael John Webster, "Crime and the Gael Population in London, Ontario in 1872," (MA Thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1993).

²⁹⁵ Fingard, "Jailbirds," 101.

madams used the appellate courts to fight against charges of criminal wrongdoing.²⁹⁶ Mary Ann Poutanen brings forth the most sustained discussion of women's complex interactions with the law in her work on prostitution in early nineteenth-century Montreal. She contends that "women accused of prostitution reconciled the realities of their lives with the exigencies of the criminal justice system, both to resist authority and to use the courts and prisons for their own needs."²⁹⁷ These historians argue that although women were repressed and criminalized, individuals sought ways to undermine oppressive institutions or use them to their advantage.

Women in London's sex trade responded to surveillance into their work and incarceration with resilience and adaptability. Despite being exploited by laws that rarely served in their favour, women accused of prostitution were not passive victims. Some sex workers protected their labour interests by forming closer ties with police officers and obtained their trust by acting as informants or through bribes. Other prostitutes negotiated with authority figures to avoid serving time in prison by promising to leave town or faking religious conversion. Rather than avoid interactions with magistrates, women of all classes used the justice system to make accusations against police, local men, and other sex workers in courts of law.

Race and class were important categories of difference that influenced women's relationships with city police. Lower-class prostitutes who sold sex in disorderly houses, on the streets, or out of make-shift housing were typically poor, racialized, or suffered from alcohol abuse. They bore the brunt of police brutality and were arrested more often than the "affluent" women who operated high-class establishments. Police at times displayed physical aggression while arresting women in brothel raids or on the streets. Although the majority of women in London's sex trade could not depend on the local force for protection, interactions between police

²⁹⁶ Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, 258.

²⁹⁷ Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*, 9.

and prostitutes were not always characterized by violence and one-sided power dynamics. Upper-class women in prostitution often relied on police for protection from property damage to their brothels and violence from their customers.

Although many of London's court documents have been lost from the time period, the local press covered police court proceedings in considerable detail. As historian Paul Craven notes, "the reporters give detailed information about a substantial proportion of the cases heard by the court, which forms a very useful supplement to the quantitatively exhaustive but qualitatively skeletal information provided by the court's formal records."²⁹⁸ These sources can be cross-referenced with census records and jail administration documents to construct narratives about how sex workers interacted with a legal system that increasingly discriminated against them.

Despite the small number of sources, several cases shed light on the physical violence faced by street-walkers and inmates of brothels.²⁹⁹ In the spring of 1880, Detective Babcock was in the news again for attacking a young woman he was responsible for escorting to jail.³⁰⁰ Annie Clarke grew up in London and appeared frequently at the Police Court on charges relating to prostitution and public drunkenness. In May, a London East brothel-owner, Susan Hall, accused Clarke of using "indecent and insulting language," and "trespassing on her premises."³⁰¹ Although Squires Belton and Peters charged her \$5.10, she "used some very profane language while in the court room for which she was taxed an additional \$2." Clarke's friends attempted to find "the wealth to

²⁹⁸ "Law and Ideology: The Toronto Police Court," in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law*, edited by David H. Flaherty, 2: 248-307 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 248.

²⁹⁹ There is no evidence that brothel-keepers accused police of physical violence, indicating that their wealth and status protected them to a degree from ill-treatment, or women were sceptical that the legal system would take their complaint seriously.

³⁰⁰ This was not Babcock's first accusation of assault. See: "Police Court News," *London Free Press*, July 27, 1868, 2; "Police Court," *London Free Press*, Jan. 4, 1872, 3; "General Sessions," *London Free Press*, Jan. 10, 1880, 3.

³⁰¹ "London East," *London Advertiser*, May 22, 1880, 1.

pay her fine,” but were unsuccessful, and she defaulted on the payment.³⁰² Detective Babcock was responsible for delivering her from the Police Court in London East to the jail. The *Advertiser* reported that “the couple walked as far as the New Arcade, where the girl alleges Babcock knocked her down on the sidewalk and handcuffed her. Another County Constable arrived, and the girl went with him to the jail.”³⁰³ Upon posting bail from her friends, Clarke charged Babcock with using excessive force and assault. She testified before a police magistrate four days later, and Squire Mathers and a man named J. Marsh backed up her claims. Testimony from men of prominence strengthened Clarke’s case because she was seen as a common vagrant. In the end, the magistrate “considered the evidence sufficient to send the prisoner to trial, and accordingly committed him in default of bail.”³⁰⁴ Annie Clarke appeared in the police court again just over a month later for being drunk.³⁰⁵ Despite Clarke’s success in pressing charges against Babcock, he continued to exhibit aggression towards female prisoners, and was accused again two years later for “using undue violence” toward a woman accused of vagrancy.³⁰⁶

Lower-class women accused of prostitution occasionally interacted with police officers in ways that complicate the notion that they were always oppressed by authority figures. Records of the Board of Police Commissioners offer insight into the relationships between police and sex workers. In 1866, Constable Gutteridge was charged by members of his force with “supplying a prostitute with a pipe and tobacco.”³⁰⁷ After he was fired, he requested that the Police Commissioners investigate and reconsider his case. In the end, Gutteridge was allowed back to

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ “A Detective’s Trouble,” *London Advertiser*, May 26, 1880, 4.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ “City News of To-Day,” *London Advertiser*, July 30, 1880, 4.

³⁰⁶ “Babcock Bounced: For Using Undue Violence Towards a Prisoner,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 8, 1882, 4.

³⁰⁷ “Police Court,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 26, 1866. 2.

duty.³⁰⁸ Later in 1884, the Board of Police Commissioners filed a complaint against Sergeant-Major Baskerville for discharging a young “vagrant” brought in to the station by Police Constable Waterman. The chief constable expressed his “entire disapproval of his conduct in discharging a girl without any entry being made respecting her in the proper books.”³⁰⁹ The force fined Baskerville one day’s pay for “not properly attending to his duties.”³¹⁰ It is unclear why he allowed the girl to leave without entering any charges after she was arrested for streetwalking in the village. Regardless, the case suggests that on rare occasions, young women received sympathetic treatment from officers who were expected to arrest and incarcerate them.

Upper-class madams had different relationships with the authorities compared with those of common prostitutes. The day-to-day interactions between wealthy women and members of the London police force indicate that officers were largely willing to allow their houses to operate unhindered, and occasionally even came to their rescue when they faced violence from male frequenters or members of the community. Hattie Outram relied on officers for protection when men misbehaved at her brothel on several occasions in the 1880s. In the summer of 1881 Outram’s brothel was broken into by two “youths,” who were referred to in the press merely by their last names, “Scissily and King.”³¹¹ Upon hearing noise by the door, Outram sent her servant to fetch a constable, who arrested the pair. At their hearing, the police magistrate charged them a relatively steep fine of \$9.50 each or thirty days in jail. Both opted to spend the month in prison.³¹² While covering the trial, an *Advertiser* reporter noted that the punishment “should deter them in future from bursting in either front or back doors.”³¹³ Outram reached out to the police force a second

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ “Police Commissioners,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 6, 1884, 6.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 12, 1881, 4.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

time when men attacked her brothel in mid-February of 1885, smashing the windows with pieces of iron that had been stolen from the GTR car works.³¹⁴ Although it is unclear whether the men were caught, newspapers noted that “Detective Charles Pope received information of the affair, and is after the roughs.”³¹⁵

Ironically, Charles Pope was a member of the force who was responsible for countless prostitution-related arrests throughout the 1880s.³¹⁶ He arrested Hattie Outram on at least one occasion in 1881.³¹⁷ Complaints were made to detectives that summer about two brothels owned by Outram and Maud McPhee in London East. Squire Peters issued warrants and had Detectives Pope and three others raid the houses, arresting the keepers, inmates, and male frequenters. Although Pope upheld the law and arrested women accused of prostitution, he nonetheless occasionally helped to protect the very institutions that at other times he was responsible for regulating. Detective Pope apparently saw no contradiction between arresting Hattie Outram in 1881 and investigating a break-in at her brothel during the peak of her notoriety in 1885. These juxtaposing interactions between police and madams in brothels suggest that houses of ill-fame and the women who operated them were viewed in complex ways by local police forces. On the one hand, brothels were illegal, and police administered justice to women attached to them in due course, yet on the other, the force seemed to understand that houses of ill-fame were components of the community that merited protection from attack like any other building.

Women who operated brothels occasionally acted as informants to police, thus earning their good-will. Mary Anne Poutanen notes in her study of Montreal that “relationships between

³¹⁴ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Feb. 16, 1885, 8.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ Adams, “Making a Living,” 37. Pope was an African American officer. By the 1890s he had exited policing to return to the barber trade.

³¹⁷ “Before Squires Peters and Smyth,” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 3, 1881, 4.

prostitutes and policemen were critical to an effective intelligence network.”³¹⁸ London sex workers rewarded trusted police by informing them about male frequenters who committed crimes. Esther Arscott, for example, told police that a man was hiding stolen goods in her house of ill-fame in early 1884. Walter Walsh, a London native in his early thirties, was well-known to authorities due to his frequent arrests for vagrancy, public drunkenness, and frequenting brothels.³¹⁹ In this case, Walsh stole expensive shawls from Mr. Robinson’s store front. After outrunning men who had witnessed the crime, Walsh brought the goods to the brothel. Upon hearing that the clothing may have been stolen, Arscott gave up both Walter Walsh and the shawls to local police.³²⁰ A similar event took place later that month, when Arscott bought a white wolf robe and bonnet from Thomas Fitzhenry.³²¹ After hearing that a local woman’s Adelaide street house was broken into with high-end clothing stolen, Arscott approached police to ask about her recent purchases. Fitzhenry was charged with theft, and the woman was returned her cloak.³²² Despite Arscott’s many arrests for operating a house of ill-fame, it appears that she did not see herself as a criminal, nor did she believe her house was a natural place to store stolen goods.

London police were often lenient with Esther Arscott even when they carried out arrest warrants at her brothel. In late September 1884, London East Mayor Charles Lilley sent four constables to her house to arrest both male frequenters and prostitutes. To his embarrassment, his officers only arrested Arscott and one other woman, despite it being a busy night at her house. The *London Free Press* noted that “they had all the men handcuffed, but after a little parleying they

³¹⁸ Poutanen also argues that some women may have been coerced into giving information, as officers may have used their status as prostitutes against them. Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*, 244.

³¹⁹ “Capturing a Thief,” *London Free Press*, March 10, 1884, 5. The *Free Press* referred to Walsh as a “well-known character in the city and vicinity.”

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 21, 1884, 2.

³²² “Police Court,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 21, 1884, 2.

were induced to take the handcuffs off and let the prisoners go.”³²³ Lilley was furious to find out that Arscott and her inmates flirted their way out of more arrests, and held an investigation in London East, charging all four constables with failure to fulfill duties. Despite the fact that Arscott was criminalized by the mayor, local police officers viewed her in a different light. Arscott’s brothel rarely received noise complaints, and she and her inmates looked and played the part of upscale women. London police were more concerned about the disorderly houses in town that were sites of violence and alcohol-related abuse than they were about upscale operations that rarely bothered the community.

Although affluent madams used their wealth to protect themselves, police occasionally took advantage of them. County Constable John Snape extorted Hattie Outram, indicating that he would charge her and several other inmates with keeping a brothel if they did not pay an undisclosed sum of money.³²⁴ Outram eventually accused Snape of blackmail and he was tried at the Interim Sessions in August of 1877.³²⁵ Snape was found guilty, sentenced to a month in the London prison, and dismissed from the police force.³²⁶ Although Hattie Outram had the means to seek justice without fearing punishment for openly working in the sex trade, other London women were not so fortunate, and many had little recourse when extorted by police in positions of power.

Like many other men in London, police officers occasionally frequented brothels themselves, and members of the force had sexual relationships with the same women whose behaviour they were responsible for monitoring and regulating. In 1881, an off-duty constable from St. Thomas County was visiting a house of ill-fame in London East when he was robbed of

³²³ “London East Constables’ Difficulty,” *London Free Press*, Sept. 24, 1884, 2.

³²⁴ “Court Trial,” *London Free Press*, Aug. 23, 1877, 3.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ “Interim Sessions,” *London Free Press*, Aug. 30, 1877, 1; “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Sept. 1, 1877, 4.

\$35 by women in the brothel.³²⁷ No arrests were made in connection to the case because local police were unable to determine who carried out the theft. Although the officer was never charged with frequenting a brothel, the *London Advertiser* argued that “the county of Elgin should recall their representative and send in another officer.”³²⁸ In one evening, women at the London East house of ill-fame entertained one constable as a customer but were interrogated by other officers who were on-duty.

Other police constables had their associations with women in the sex trade shaped by family connections. In 1881, alongside Detective Babcock, Constable Smith was accused by members of his own force with “aiding and abetting” houses of ill-fame in London East.³²⁹ Smith’s trial revealed that he was married to the mother of Lou Winters and “lived adjoining her disorderly house.” Lou Winters operated a London East brothel in the 1880s that was known to police.³³⁰ Witnesses testified that Constable Smith “was in the habit of allowing the girls to pass backwards and forwards” between the two residences. They questioned his ability to perform police duties and carry out arrests due to this conflict of interest.³³¹ Although the force did not press specific charges against Smith, they emphasized that this behaviour was “not proper for a constable.”³³² Babcock and Smith’s trials suggest that some women in the sex trade were able to make use of family connections or pay members of London’s police force to protect their interests and provide special treatment for themselves and their inmates.

Despite their taboo labour, some London prostitutes sought police protection, while others used the justice system to charge people in courts of law. Although women were disenfranchised

³²⁷ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 19, 1881, 4.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ “Constables in Trouble,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 29, 1881, 4.

³³⁰ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, June 14, 1880, 4.

³³¹ “Slanders Refuted,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 6, 1881, 1.

³³² *Ibid.*

by legislation in late nineteenth-century Ontario, many attempted to use it where possible to achieve their desired ends. Sex workers made complaints about men who abused them or broke into their brothels, and occasionally even charged each other with prostitution-related offences. However, the extent to which prostitutes were able to seek justice against others was defined by their race and class. Wealthy London madams hired lawyers from Meredith & Meredith to represent them and provide sophisticated legal advice to drop charges, while lower-class or racialized women often had little recourse when accused of crime.

Affluent brothel-owners in London East occasionally had run-ins with members of the justice system and accused them of ill-treating themselves and their inmates. Susan Hall kept a brothel on Rectory street, near Arscott's house, and had been arrested and convicted previously for prostitution-related offenses.³³³ She was already known to Londoners and occasionally appeared in the press. In March of 1881, for example, Hall spent six days in jail after a man at her brothel caught the attention of police and the local community.³³⁴ Edward Watterson was a middle-aged married man from Clinton who recently sold his property, telling his wife that he intended to purchase a farm in Rodney. Rather than drive to see the new farm, however, Watterson asked his driver to find him a house of ill-fame in London. After a few days without contact, his wife began to suspect where Watterson had gone, and traveled to the city in pursuit of her husband. When local lawyers found out that he spent almost \$500 in Susan Hall's brothel, they encouraged police to arrest him. Watterson was charged with deserting his family, while Hall and the women she

³³³ Although Hall is typically mentioned as keeping a house of ill-fame, she occasionally appears as an "inmate" as well. This occurs for several other London women, and suggests that police were not always certain which women kept houses and which were inmates in them. "City News of To-Day," *London Advertiser*, May 8, 1880, 4.

³³⁴ "Spending His Money," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 8, 1880, 1.

employed were sentenced for prostitution-related offenses.³³⁵ The London press covered this story in detail, indicating that local residents were intrigued by the antics that went on at Susan Hall's house of ill-fame.

Although London authorities knew that Susan Hall operated a brothel, she was nonetheless not deterred from using the justice system against other people whom she perceived had wronged her. Later that spring, Hall made a complaint to County Crown Attorney Charles Hutchinson, claiming that Detective Babcock had trespassed on her premises in May. The *London Advertiser* reported: "It appears that Babcock had a warrant to arrest the inmates as keeping or residing in a house of ill-fame. Upon his arrival there someone locked the doors on the inside, and he was unable to get in."³³⁶ Hall and her legal representatives may have believed that Babcock's warrant had expired or was produced in bad faith. Hall was represented by Edmund Meredith, a well-respected member of the legal profession who also worked for Esther Arscott.³³⁷ It is unclear how Charles Hutchinson handled this accusation, or whether Detective Babcock was reprimanded for his actions at Hall's brothel. However, her complaint indicates that despite their "criminal" status, London East madams were willing to stand up for themselves in courts of law and in some instances, believed that complaints against police were worth pursuing.

Edmund Meredith accused Babcock of using illegal tactics to arrest prostitutes on numerous occasions. More drama occurred the following summer on Rectory Street, this time at Maud McPhee's house. The problem began when Detective Pope and County Constable Brooks were serving a landlord's warrant on a man refusing to pay rent. The "skipper-out" lived next door

³³⁵ Ibid. Mary Ann Comers was charged \$20 and costs for keeping a house of ill-fame, as well as further fines for selling liquor without a license.

³³⁶ "City News of To-Day," *London Advertiser*, May 8, 1880, 4.

³³⁷ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 10, 1880, 4.

to Maud McPhee's brothel.³³⁸ While Pope and Brooks were circling the building looking for the tenant, eight people escaped out of McPhee's house, thinking that the police were there to arrest them.³³⁹ A reporter wrote that "Pope says he just stood still and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks, especially at a stout gent from the city who tried to scale the garden fence in three different places, but only to tumble backwards in dismay into the gooseberry bushes. Pope at length took pity on the fellow and went over and offered him 'a leg over.'"³⁴⁰ Since Detective Pope was not dispatched to perform official duties at the brothel, he saw their overdramatic effort to escape in a humorous light.

Babcock, however, worked for a different Detective Bureau in connection with Squire Hannah's office, and was less amused by reports that police helped the prostitutes and customers escape their "arrest."³⁴¹ Later that evening, Babcock and other members of the Dundas Street Detective Bureau arrested the women, who were taken before Squire Hannah and fined. An *Advertiser* journalist reported on the subsequent drama:

Just as he was counting out his fees, however, in stepped Mr. Ed. Meredith, who informed the Magistrate that the whole affair was illegal, as the arrest was made on the strength of a warrant issued several months since by a Magistrate (Squire Belton) since deceased. The fees and costs had, accordingly, to be paid back, and Harvey had all his trouble for naught. He intends, however, prosecuting McPhee for selling liquor without a license.³⁴²

It was illegal for sex workers to be arrested on warrants issued by magistrates who had passed away. Women like Maud McPhee, Susan Hall, and Esther Arscott had the wealth to pay high-profile lawyers like Edmund Meredith to point out expired warrants or other discrepancies. They

³³⁸ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 4, 1881, 4.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ "Nip and Tuck: The Opposition Detective Bureau Have a Circus," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 4, 1881, 4.

³⁴² "A Little Too Sudden," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 4, 1881, 4.

were fortunate. Most London prostitutes were unable to afford legal defense and likely never even knew when procedures used to incarcerate them were outside of the law.

In addition to charging police with improper practices, women with means also brought local men to court on a range of accusations, from trespassing to indecent assault. Both high- and lower-class brothels were at risk of property damage and trespassing from men in the community. Lou Waters, for example, charged a local man named Herman Depper with breaking into her brothel and using threatening language to the inmates in June of 1880. Depper was known to police for abusing prostitutes, and made headlines in 1879 for attacking Hattie Outram in public.³⁴³ In this case, Depper claimed that he was “called upon the constables to assist in making the arrest,” which Waters protested was untrue.³⁴⁴ Similar events took place the following month at Emma Mahaffey’s Adelaide Street house of ill-fame, and led to a lengthy court case at the 1880 Middlesex fall assizes.

Emma Mahaffey (nee Stratton) was born in Manchester, England in 1855. Her family immigrated to Ontario two years later, after the birth of her younger sister, Martha.³⁴⁵ Emma married Robert Mahaffey in Strathroy at the age of eighteen.³⁴⁶ Robert and Emma operated a brothel out of a rented house on Adelaide Street in the early 1880s, and lived there with their two children, several prostitutes, and Emma’s sister, Martha. The Mahaffey’s were victims of a house-

³⁴³ “Latest from London,” *The Globe (1844-1936)*, June 18, 1879, 1. The journalist noted: “It seems that Outram was formerly Depper’s mistress, but ‘shook’ him, and thus called down his vengeance.”

³⁴⁴ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, June 14, 1880, 4. Depper ended up counter-charging one of the arrested inmates, Ada Leslie, with using abusive language. Lou Waters is also referred to as Lou Winters in some reports.

³⁴⁵ The Stratton family moved to Strathroy, Ontario, when Emma was two years old. Note that Emma Stratton’s name also appears in records as “Emma Statton,” and “Emma Staten.” For more information on her life, see: Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; *Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1928*; Reel: 11. Marriage of Emma Statton and Robert Mahaffey, May 16, 1873; Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1871, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 07 (Middlesex West), sub-district F (Strathroy), page 71, line 17, family no. 237, Emma Staten.

³⁴⁶ Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; *Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1928*; Reel: 11. Marriage of Emma Statton and Robert Mahaffey, May 16, 1873.

breaking in July of 1880 when three young men pretended to be police officers and demanded entrance to the house.³⁴⁷ William Hilton, Andrew McGuire, and Walter Smith falsely claimed to be Detectives Murphy, Phair, and Templar, and announced that they were arresting the women for operating a house of ill-fame.³⁴⁸ Sensing that something was amiss, Emma Mahaffey refused to let the men inside, and sent her sister to find a policeman. This incident indicates that in some circumstances, women who lived in upscale brothels turned to the police for protection and support. Her husband Robert went outside to speak with the men, one of whom threatened to shoot him. Emma Mahaffey told the judge and jury at the fall assizes in October that when one man tried climbing through a window, she slammed it down on his fingers and said, “it’s a pity it wasn’t your head.” After leaving the property, two of the men were apprehended by a constable. The third got into an argument with Mr. Wyatt, the landlord of the house, and accused him of “encouraging the keeping of a bad house.”³⁴⁹ The Mahaffey family took refuge with a neighbour next door until the officers could guarantee that they were out of danger.

Emma and Robert Mahaffey accused all three men with trespassing and took the case before a magistrate, who recommended it be heard at the assizes. At the trial, the judge remarked that “it would have been better if the police magistrate had disposed of the case as one of disorderly conduct [rather than housebreaking] and not troubled this court with it.”³⁵⁰ Disorderly conduct was a lesser crime than housebreaking, which indicates the judge’s opinion on the men’s behaviour. Although the jury found them guilty, the judge imposed remarkably lenient sentences of between one and three days in the common jail.³⁵¹ Emma Mahaffey did not stay long in London after the

³⁴⁷ “The Fall Assizes,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 1, 1880, 4.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

court case. She moved to Ohio after her husband's death in 1881. Six years later, Emma married Robert's older brother, Henry Mahaffey, who was a veteran of the Civil War.³⁵² Emma Mahaffey lived a long life, and died at the age of eighty-nine in Branch, Michigan.³⁵³ The Mahaffey housebreaking case suggests that although police officers were willing to intervene in altercations at brothels, judges still typically sentenced in favour of men.

In addition to wealthy madams, lower-class keepers of disorderly houses and street-walkers also used the legal system to press charges against members of the community. Prostitutes' interactions with police and magistrates did not always occur because they had been arrested themselves. This is illustrated through the life of Catherine Hastings, an English immigrant in her mid-forties who was well-known to police for keeping disorderly houses, and occasionally used the courts to press charges against men for assault.³⁵⁴ Hastings was in the public eye throughout 1884 due to a series of high-profile arrests in London West. She was evicted from her house on Ridout Street and arrested in the spring after her landlady, Mary Colman, complained to police that Catherine and her husband, Thomas, were keeping a brothel in the premises.³⁵⁵ The Hastings continued to host alcohol-fuelled parties after moving to a different residence: "Saturday night, which seems to be the unanimous time for getting drunk and kicking up a row, a number of drunken

³⁵² Michigan Department of Community Health, Division of Vital Records and Health Statistics; Lansing, MI, USA; *Michigan, Marriage Records, 1867-1952*; Film: 33; Film Description: *1886 Wayne - 1887 Iosco*, Ancestry.com, Marriage of Emma Mahaffey and Henry Mahaffey. July 2, 1887; National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington, D.C.; Ancestry.com, *Consolidated Lists of Civil War Draft Registration Records (Provost Marshal General's Bureau; Consolidated Enrollment Lists, 1863-1865)*; Record Group: 110, *Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau (Civil War)*; Collection Name: *Consolidated Enrollment Lists, 1863-1865 (Civil War Union Draft Records)*; NAI: 4213514; Archive Volume Number: 2 of 3.

³⁵³ *Branch County, Michigan, Death Index, 1867-2011*. Ancestry.com, Emma Mahaffey. Sept. 13, 1943.

³⁵⁴ See: "London West," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 14, 1884, 5; "Police Court Notes," *London Free Press*, Oct. 5, 1884, 3. Catherine Hastings typically defaulted on fines and went to jail, indicating that the sex trade was not a lucrative business for her, or that she spent money on other things, like alcohol.

³⁵⁵ "Disorderly House Raided," *London Free Press*, April 26, 1884, 8; "London and Precincts," *London Advertiser*, Apr. 26, 1884, 8. Hastings avoided fines or jail time by promising to leave the city. See "Local and District Brevities," *London Free Press*, April 26, 1884, 5.

women, living on Center and Dundas streets, made night hideous with their wild demonical conduct.”³⁵⁶ Their neighbours were fed up with this behaviour and marched to the village constable’s house, despite knowing that he was off-duty. The constable was “forced to go to the brawling scene” and arrested Catherine Hastings and her friend, Catherine Gooderham.³⁵⁷ Although Gooderham and Hastings were fined four dollars and costs, residents believed the sentence was far too lenient for their behaviour.³⁵⁸ Later that summer, the Hastings were in the press again for their house parties: “The drunken carouse and goings on preventing the neighbors from sleeping.”³⁵⁹ Catherine and her husband were arrested by Detectives Hodge and Allen. According to the *Advertiser*, “as they had not recovered from the effects of their evening’s debauch, Squire Hannah remanded them for 24 hours to sober up.”³⁶⁰ Once they were fit for trial, Hannah committed the couple to jail for twenty days.³⁶¹ Catherine Hastings worked in London’s sex trade until at least 1891 when she was arrested at the age of forty-eight for keeping a brothel.³⁶²

Although Catherine Hastings frequently interacted with representatives of the law when she was being arrested or incarcerated, she occasionally approached police on her own terms. Hastings asked local police to arrest and charge two men for various offences in October of 1885. First, Detective Hodge and County Constable Brown arrested John Crockett for “committing an indecent assault upon Catherine Hastings” in London West.³⁶³ Crockett was known to frequent

³⁵⁶ “London West,” *London Advertiser*, June 10, 1884, 8; “London West,” *London Advertiser*, June 23, 1884, 5.

³⁵⁷ “London West,” *London Advertiser*, June 23, 1884, 5.

³⁵⁸ “London West,” *London Advertiser*, June 23, 1884, 5; “London West,” *London Advertiser*, June 24, 1884, 8.

³⁵⁹ “London West,” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 13, 1884, 8.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ “London West,” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 14, 1884, 5.

³⁶² Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

³⁶³ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 16, 1885, 3. For more information on the history of sexual assault in nineteenth-century Canada, see: Backhouse, “Nineteenth-Century Judicial Attitudes,”; Karen Dubinsky, *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880-1929* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993); Carolyn Strange, “Patriarchy Modified: The Criminal Prosecution of

violent circles, as testified by previous convictions.³⁶⁴ He was a twenty-three-year-old carpenter of Scottish ancestry who lived in the same area of London West as the Hastings.³⁶⁵ Ironically, Catherine Hastings knew Detective Hodge because he arrested her in mid-August in 1884. As Mary Ann Poutanen notes in her study of Montreal, “to seek restitution against wrongdoers, sex workers turned to the same courts and encountered the same magistrates who had judged and punished them for prostitution-related offences.”³⁶⁶ This was also the case in London. Women like Catherine Hastings had little choice but to seek out the same authorities who typically punished them for their work in prostitution to charge others.³⁶⁷ Hastings accused a second man, Thomas Daley, of trespassing and damaging her home several days later.³⁶⁸ Squire Hannah, a magistrate who committed Hastings herself to jail on more than one occasion, fined Daley \$1.50 in damages and costs.³⁶⁹

Although most accusations were made against men for assault or trespassing, some prostitutes laid charges against other women in the sex trade. The fact that sex workers shared

Rape in York County, Ontario, 1880-1930,” In *Crime and Criminal Justice: Essays in the History of Canadian Law*, ed. Jim Philips, Tina Loo, and Susan Lewthwaite, 207-51 (Toronto: The Osgoode Society, 1994).

³⁶⁴ “Police Court,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 30, 1877, 5. Crockett charged John Smith and Joshua Sisley in 1877 with “assault and wounding.” In 1883, Crockett was charged with “disturbing the peace of the village” of London West. “A London West Boy,” *London Advertiser*, Apr. 18, 1883, 4.

³⁶⁵ In 1885 Crockett was a part of discussions from the Board of Works in London West when he was contracted to construct a breakwater from wood. “London West,” *London Advertiser*, July 11, 1885, 8. For more information about Crockett, see: Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1871, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 10 (London), sub-district B (London Ward 2), page 57, line 2, family no. 200, John Crockett; Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1911, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 94 (London City), sub-district 15 (London), page 15, line 31, family no. 117, John Crockett; Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; *Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1928*; Reel: 7. Marriage of John Crockett and Elizabeth Hayes. Nov. 13, 1888.

³⁶⁶ Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*, 252.

³⁶⁷ Other women also sought out justice from police magistrates. Mary Smith was also well-known to police and magistrates for her work in the sex trade. In 1885 she approached police claiming that Joseph Marks had picked her pocket and stolen cash. Marks served time in prison until he was eventually bailed out. “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, July 26, 1885, 3.

³⁶⁸ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 20, 1885, 3.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

common labour and working conditions with each other did not mean that they were allies or on the same side in disputes. Poutanen notes that Montreal brothel-keepers occasionally prosecuted each other in court to eliminate competition.³⁷⁰ It was also relatively common for women to use the legal system when relationships broke down, accusing other prostitutes of sex-related crimes. Seventeen-year-old Elizabeth Proctor lived in London East with her English-born parents and four siblings in 1880.³⁷¹ In May, Proctor accused two relatively high-profile madams, Esther Arscott and Susan Hall, with keeping houses of ill-fame in London East. At the Magistrate's Court, Hall and Arscott counter-charged Elizabeth Proctor with being an "inmate of the same."³⁷² Although it is impossible to conclude for certain why Proctor accused Hall and Arscott of keeping brothels when she may have been involved in prostitution herself, they likely had business relationships that broke down. In the end, the case against Hall and Arscott was dropped because the prosecutors did not appear in court.³⁷³ Proctor's criminal charges were also later dismissed.³⁷⁴ Elizabeth Proctor was not associated with London's sex trade for much longer. In 1887 she married Thomas Harrison, a local iron moulder, and they eventually had four children.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁰ Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*, 199, 245-6.

³⁷¹ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 170 (London City), sub-district F1 (Ward 6), page 21, line 8, family no. 92, Elizabeth Proctor.

³⁷² "London East," *London Advertiser*, May 25, 1880, 1. Their accusations likely had some truth to them. Proctor appears in census records as a "dressmaker," suggesting that she was involved in the sex trade. As Patrick Dunae argues, it was common for women in prostitution to employ terms like "dress maker" and "seamstress" as code words for their work in the late nineteenth century. Dunae, "Sex, Charades, and Census Records," 278; Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 170 (London City), sub-district F1 (Ward 6), page 21, line 8, family no. 92, Elizabeth Proctor.

³⁷³ "London East," *London Advertiser*, May 25, 1880, 1.

³⁷⁴ Elizabeth Proctor never appears in jail documents or newspaper records for either serving time or paying fines, which strongly indicates that the charges were dropped.

³⁷⁵ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1891, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 86 (London), sub-district C-7 (London), page 11, line 8, family no. 124, Elizabeth Proctor; Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; *Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1928*; Reel: 57, marriage of Elizabeth Ann Proctor and Thomas George Harrison, Dec. 26, 1887; Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Collection: MS935; Reel: 421. *Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869-1947*. Death of Elizabeth Ann Harrison. Jun. 30, 1931.

Although many prostitutes used the legal system to bring police, local men, and other sex workers to justice, at one point or another in their careers most women were arrested and brought before a police court magistrate against their will. Countless London women were arrested for soliciting sex outdoors and charged for “vagrancy” or being “drunk and disorderly.” Police arrested other women in brothel raids, and accused them of being keepers or inmates in houses of ill-fame.³⁷⁶ Despite being targeted by police and tried in a court that was weighed heavily against their best interests and outcomes, women used a variety of tactics to sway police magistrates’ opinion in their favour.

Sex workers often pleaded their way out of punishment by promising to exit the sex trade and find an upright form of employment. In 1877, a prostitute referred to as “Mrs. Carmen” was accused of keeping a house of ill-fame near London in Woodstock. A man named N. E. Lowes was also charged with being a frequenter of her house. Despite her recidivism, Carmen was charged only \$23.45 in total, which her son paid. A report stated that “she was dealt leniently with on the understanding that she would bounce Lowes and change her life.”³⁷⁷ It is uncertain whether Carman continued to run the brothel after her arrest or if she found other employment.

Another scheme to avoid paying fines or serving time in jail was to promise to leave town. Historian Judith Fingard notes that it was common practice for magistrates in Halifax to drop a woman’s charges in exchange for her word that she would move away.³⁷⁸ This also occurred in London. When a prostitute pledged to move to a different city, police magistrates would sometimes erase her criminal record and hand out a train ticket to facilitate her departure. For example, Squires Peter, Hannah, and Edwards laid charges for seven women accused of brothel-related crimes on

³⁷⁶Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

³⁷⁷ “Police Court,” *Woodstock-Sentinel Review*, Jul. 6, 1887, 1.

³⁷⁸ Fingard, “Jailbirds,” 94, 98.

September 29th, 1881.³⁷⁹ Two brothel-keepers negotiated with Hannah and Edwards, who eventually allowed them one week to leave London. However, Squire Peters insisted that Louisa Lawrence, Stella Graham, Merta Rutherford, Anna Hewett and Frances Brown depart in a mere twenty-four hours to have their fines dropped. Their willingness to negotiate jail sentences with sex workers indicates that authorities were out of options to eliminate the sex trade and did not believe in local charities' or the Mercer Reformatory's ability to rehabilitate "fallen" women.

Almost every woman who vowed to leave London came back sooner or later. Eighteen-year-old Mary Smith was "given a chance to leave the city" by police magistrates at her hearing for vagrancy charges in 1880.³⁸⁰ Smith was arrested for keeping a house of ill-fame the following May, indicating that she broke her promise to London authorities.³⁸¹ Thomas and Catherine Hastings were discharged from jail in the spring of 1884 after promising to leave the city.³⁸² However, the pair was keeping a disorderly house in London West just over a month later, suggesting that their plan to depart was merely a ruse to avoid prison.³⁸³ Women were not inclined to leave their work in London behind. Compared to the surrounding region, the city's large working-class population meant that women had plenty of clients, while the low rent in London East offered housing opportunities. Many sex workers also had kinship ties to family, friends and neighbours. As a result, very few of the women who promised to leave in the early 1880s stayed away for long.

While some women made empty promises to leave, others escaped London before their hearings to avoid incarceration. For instance, Lizzie Byrne and Alice Walton kept a brothel

³⁷⁹ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 29, 1881, 2.

³⁸⁰ "Police Court Briefs," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 1, 1880, 4.

³⁸¹ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

³⁸² "London and Precincts," *London Advertiser*, Apr. 26, 1884, 8; "Local and District Brevities," *London Free Press*, April 26, 1884, 5.

³⁸³ "London West," *London Advertiser*, June 10, 1884, 8.

together in the 1880s when they were in their early twenties. After they were arrested during a raid in 1884, magistrates were unable to hear their cases as “it was stated that they had left the city.”³⁸⁴ A few months later, another London woman named Sadie Wilkinson reacted to her sentence of one year’s imprisonment in the Mercer Reformatory by departing to England.³⁸⁵ Women who had the means to afford travel avoided long prison sentences by relocating to a different country and starting up business elsewhere. Men also skipped town to avoid sex-related charges. Billy Wall left the city after he was “involved in a difficulty” at Hattie Outram’s house in 1883.³⁸⁶ Both women and men accused of prostitution-related offenses deemed it necessary to abandon their homes and the communities they knew to flee from the legal system.

Although many women were incarcerated against their will, some used the prisons as a form of social service. Police, magistrates, and jailers were aware that in addition to their responsibilities of administering justice and punishment, they played a critical role helping the urban poor. In Greg Marquis’ research on the Toronto police, he notes that “the police were expected to provide limited welfare services not always related to the enforcement of the law.”³⁸⁷ In addition to sentencing hardened criminals, magistrates in both Toronto and London incarcerated people who were not sick enough to be admitted to a hospital, but were otherwise unable to care for themselves. As a result, the London jail frequently housed elderly, disabled, and chronically ill inmates who had been “arrested,” yet committed no crime. Magistrates also delivered jail

³⁸⁴ “Police Court,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 3, 1884, 3; Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

³⁸⁵ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Sept. 28, 1884, 8.

³⁸⁶ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, June 12, 1883, 4.

³⁸⁷ Greg Marquis, “The Police as a Social Service in Early Twentieth-Century Toronto,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 25 (1992): 336. Marquis argues that historians have typically “minimized the social welfare aspects of nineteenth and early twentieth-century municipal policing.”

sentences to the destitute and homeless out of pity and concern for their well-being.³⁸⁸ Members of London's police force even advertised in local newspapers that the homeless could seek shelter at the station in the autumn of 1884: "Destitute strangers coming into the city are given lodgings at the Police Station if they apply for them. The lodgings consist of a bare floor in a room without fire, and applicants get neither supper or breakfast."³⁸⁹ Two lodgers took up the constables' offer and moved in the following Saturday.

At times, prostitutes in early-nineteenth century Montreal sought out prison sentences to gain shelter, food, and medical assistance.³⁹⁰ London sex workers used the jail in a similar fashion, and willfully sought out arrest in difficult times.³⁹¹ The city's prostitutes, for example, turned to the prison system in response to cold winters. Rose Finch and Lydia Peckham were sent from London to the Mercer Reformatory in Toronto after being arrested on vagrancy charges in 1883. Finch and Peckham did not thrive in the institution. They escaped in mid-March of 1884 after serving several months of their sentence, but returned a few days later due to unexpected cold weather.³⁹² Despite the forced labour and strict rules, it was a better option to risk having their term extended as a punishment than to freeze outside. This was not an exceptional case because reports from inspectors of the Middlesex House of Industry also mention the problem of inmates leaving during the spring and summer. D. G. Mackenzie complained in 1881 that female inmates

³⁸⁸ For instance, Police Magistrate Noble sent Mary Brown and Mary Brown Jr. to the County Gaol in Strathroy because they were homeless "with apparently no home or friends." See "Local and District," *London Free Press*, Mar. 4, 1886, 4.

³⁸⁹ "Local and Precincts," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 27, 1884, 8.

³⁹⁰ Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*, 296-7.

³⁹¹ Other historians also argue that women sought out arrest for shelter. Noting the social function of police courts, Greg Marquis points out that many people "asked to be jailed during the harsh winter months when unemployment was the norm for much of the laboring class." Greg Marquis, *Policing Canada's Century: A History of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 36. Judith Fingard's research on Victorian Halifax corroborates that the urban poor used prisons as forms of refuge. Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*, 79.

³⁹² "Local and District Brevities," *London Free Press*, March 17, 1884, 10.

would typically approach the institution in the late fall, stay for the duration of winter, then leave as soon as warmer weather permitted them to sustain themselves elsewhere.³⁹³ Some women in the sex trade spent their summers in shacks and shanty-houses by London East's rail tracks, while others stayed in boarding houses, with friends, or on the streets. In 1885, Emma Farr and Ellen McEvoy, two notorious London prostitutes, were found entertaining men in a barn that belonged to a local farmer near Dundas Street.³⁹⁴ Poor women found shelter throughout the year through a combination of incarceration, or state-sponsored "housing," squatting in local farms and public places, or erecting make-shift shacks in areas where it was tolerated.

While some prostitutes used the jail system for shelter and warmth, women who were incarcerated against their will tried to make the best of long sentences by manipulating their way into more comfortable accommodations. Prostitutes faked religious conversion to gain the pity of sympathetic police magistrates, clergymen, and members of women's groups, who occasionally intervened in their cases. Other women exaggerated or feigned illnesses to be moved to hospitals or asylums and away from harsh prison conditions. Dolly Smith's story illustrates the extent to which women played the justice system to escape confinement and negotiate for more comfortable lodging. Smith was a sixteen-year-old girl from London who began working as a prostitute in Port Huron when she was only fourteen. After being arrested on vagrancy charges, she was sent to a reform school. A reporter summarized: "Hearing the authorities speaking of discharging a girl who was subject to fits, Dolly at once conceived the brilliant idea of having fits too. The first fit was a startling success, and practice so improved the deception that Dolly speedily got her discharge as well."³⁹⁵ Faking or amplifying illnesses was a relatively easy way for a woman to secure release

³⁹³ Western Archives, Western University, London, Ontario. Middlesex County, *Report of the Inspector & Physician of the Middlesex House of Industry and Refuge, 1881.*

³⁹⁴ "Local and District," *London Free Press*, Nov. 26, 1885, 3.

³⁹⁵ "An Incurable Girl," *London Free Press*, Oct. 20, 1884, 8.

from jail, reduce her hard labour sentences, or have herself relocated to comparatively comfortable hospitals and asylums.

Smith moved to Detroit and before long was working as “an inmate of some of the most fashionable bagnios in the city.”³⁹⁶ However, her “unconquerable appetite for whisky” eventually limited her employability at high-class establishments. Smith’s subsequent arrest at Sandwich Springs caused embarrassment for the police force because her friends broke her out of the “Sandwich caboose” with relative ease. Patrolman Burk caught Smith but was uncertain how to administer punishment at the police station after she “tore every stitch of clothing off her.” To their relief, authorities sent Smith to the jail, where she quickly gained the attention of local women’s groups: “Yesterday afternoon Mrs. Godfrey called at the police headquarters, said she had interviewed Dolly and that the latter was willing to go to the House of the Good Shepherd and become a lamb. The officers think the sudden change merely a ruse on Dolly’s part to get into a place from which escape will be easy.”³⁹⁷ Faking or exaggerating a sudden religious conversion was another method that women used to gain sympathy from female reform groups, who occasionally intervened to reduce their sentences. Mary A. Robinson was released from jail in London after the ladies of the Women’s Refuge “interested themselves in her case,” and pleaded for her early release in 1880.³⁹⁸ London women who served prison frequent terms employed various tactics to secure release or improve their situations.

Although these schemes occasionally worked in a woman’s favour, they just as often led to punishment from London’s jail staff for bad behaviour. Reprimands at the prison usually consisted of altered meal plans (often merely bread and water), removal of the mattress from the

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ “City and Vicinity,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 17, 1880, 4.

bed, or extended hours spent in a dark cell.³⁹⁹ Ellen McEvoy, a seventeen-year-old Irish-Catholic “servant,” annoyed the jail staff and other inmates in the summer of 1885 for “making noisily shouting in her cell.”⁴⁰⁰ Patrick Kelly, the jailer, decided that the appropriate punishment was to confine her “for 24 hours in the dark cell.”⁴⁰¹ McEvoy was well-known to Kelly and the other inmates because she served frequent jail sentences for vagrancy and keeping disorderly houses during the 1880s.⁴⁰²

Suicide was a woman’s most extreme response to undesired incarceration. The relationship between sex work and suicide in nineteenth-century Canada has not been explored, despite some existing scholarship on how prostitutes’ suicides were reported on in the press.⁴⁰³ Although no prostitutes are known to have died by suicide during this time period in London, several women attempted to take their own lives in jail.⁴⁰⁴ They may have been reacting to feelings of hopelessness and desperation, or employing another tactic to gain attention and pity from jailers, physicians, and the broader community. For instance, a London woman attempted suicide in the Belleville police station in 1880. Maggie Bell was waiting for trial on prostitution charges when she found

³⁹⁹ L. N. Bronson, “‘Punishment Book’ Tells Tales of London Jail Back in 1800s,” *London Free Press*, Dec. 4, 1974, 14.

⁴⁰⁰ Western Archives, Western University, London, Ontario. Middlesex County, *London Jail Punishment Book, Middlesex County, 1871-1921*.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰² For sources about Ellen McEvoy (also spelled “MacEvoy”) see: “A Disgraceful Den Broken Up,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 15, 1885, 3; “Police Court,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 18, 1885, 3; “Police Court,” *London Free Press*, June 5, 1885, 3; “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Nov. 26, 1885, 3; “Shrimpton Shot,” *London Free Press*, Feb. 25, 1886, 5. Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920; London Jail Punishment Book, Middlesex County, 1871-1921*.

⁴⁰³ Susan J. Johnston, “Twice Slain: Female Sex-Trade Workers and Suicide in British Columbia, 1870-1920,” *Canadian Historical Association Papers* 5 (1994): 148. Johnston examines community responses and public perceptions of sex trade workers’ suicide in British Columbia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She suggests that it was extremely rare for prostitutes to commit suicide on the West coast, although their suicides gained disproportionate public interest and press coverage.

⁴⁰⁴ The lack of suicides by prostitutes during this time period is consistent with Johnston’s findings in British Columbia. Out of 158 suicides in the fifty-year period studied, only eight women were confirmed to work in the sex trade. See Johnston, “Twice Slain,” 148.

herself alone in her cell. Using pieces of cloth ripped from her clothing, Bell attempted to strangle herself four times but was foiled by interventions from the policeman on duty.⁴⁰⁵ Maggie Bell was well-known to Londoners because she lived in the city and worked as a prostitute until just before her term in the Belleville prison. She was a notorious inmate in the local jail, and had a reputation for trying to hang herself every time she got drunk, which, according to the *Advertiser*, “was very frequently.”⁴⁰⁶ In addition to her alcoholism and stints in jail, Bell’s time in London was marked by abuse from local men. Three years previously, in 1877, she was attacked by four men who broke into her house, assaulted her, and stole cash.⁴⁰⁷ Bell moved to Belleville in 1880 after promising police magistrates in London that she would leave the city in exchange for early release from prison.⁴⁰⁸

While some women in the London sex trade responded to their circumstances by attempting suicide, others turned to alcohol, which limited their ability to obtain relief funds. The moral panic surrounding sexual vice and alcohol led relief inspectors to direct the city’s available forms of charity to people who did not abuse liquor or engage in other behaviour that London’s elites deemed to be inappropriate. Clergymen, women’s reform groups, provincial organizations, and local municipalities became increasingly concerned that handing out money to the poor would result in a proliferation of urban crime, including prostitution, excessive drinking, and gambling. Londoners were adamant that funds go to people who would spend them on improving their

⁴⁰⁵ “City and Vicinity,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 10, 1880, 3. Imprisoned women often strangled themselves using their own clothing because most of their other belongings were confiscated. Fanny Spence attempted to strangle herself in Toronto using her own stockings, while Annie Devoy removed her garters for the same purpose. See: “Toronto: Attempted Suicide in Jail,” *London Advertiser*, June 6, 1884, 8; “Annie Devoy’s Tricks,” *London Free Press*, Feb. 23, 1886, 3.

⁴⁰⁶ “City and Vicinity,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 10, 1880, 3.

⁴⁰⁷ “Arrested,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 30, 1877, 2. Bill Nolan, Ronald McDonald, Tom Primrose, and William McGregor were subsequently sent to trial for assault and robbery.

⁴⁰⁸ “City and Vicinity,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 10, 1880, 3.

situations. At the WCA's annual meeting in 1883, Reverend Davis railed against wasting money on furthering the population's bad habits: "In the matter of outdoor relief, he [Rev. Davis] deprecated the miscellaneous giving to everyone who calls. The money should be given to the association. They would investigate the circumstances of the applicant, and if found deserving the relief would be granted. In many cases when money was given without enquiry it went in whiskey and debauchery."⁴⁰⁹ The License and Relief Inspector, William Bell, voiced similar concerns. In the winter of 1884, Bell reportedly looked into every case of destitution in London to see which were the worthiest of receiving relief: "Every applicant for relief receives frequent visits from the Inspector, and should any be found who indulge in drink or other bad habits they are at once struck off the relief list."⁴¹⁰ This paternalistic approach of providing charity to the poor meant that most women in the sex trade were ineligible to receive monetary grants from religious institutions or the municipality. Many prostitutes were dependant on alcohol, and worse, their labour was seen to be unacceptable to Christian-organized charities.

Women who were addicted to alcohol were also turned away from the asylum, hospitals, and various places of refuges due to their intemperance. London women seeking treatment in the local asylum had been unable to access alcohol since 1882. W. J. O'Reilly, the Inspector of the Public Charities for Ontario, praised the city's asylum for its stance on liquor in an 1884 report:

During the year just closed, no alcohol in any form has been prescribed at this asylum either in sickness or health. This is the second year during which our over 900 patients have been total abstainers, and so far the Superintendent has seen no case in which the administration would have been beneficial. He is more and more satisfied that the use of alcohol in either sickness or in health is always a mistake and often a fatal one.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁹ "The W.C.A.," *London Advertiser*, May 30, 1883, 1.

⁴¹⁰ "London and Precincts," *London Advertiser*, Dec. 5, 1884, 8.

⁴¹¹ "London Asylum," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 6, 1884, 3.

The Protestant Orphans' Home was also a dry institution, and temperance was a condition of female inmates' admission. The Home Board's vice president discussed the inmates' health at a meeting in late 1884. She said that all were "convalescent or well," except for one woman who "appeared to be addicted to the use of liquor."⁴¹² The board agreed unanimously that "she must stop the habit or leave the Home."⁴¹³ As a result of the temperance movement, destitute women with alcohol addictions were increasingly barred from seeking refuge in London in the 1880s.

The few prostitutes who received money from local municipalities faced stigma when it became clear that the handouts were being used to fund liquor habits. The *London Free Press* reported on Jane Graham's relief status with a degree of judgement when she was arrested for public drunkenness in the winter of 1885: "Jane Graham, a woman reputed to be of bad character, and frequently in receipt of corporation relief in London East last year, was arrested yesterday for drunkenness and disorderly conduct, and 'smashing everything she could put her hands on,' was remanded till to-day by Mayor Lilley."⁴¹⁴ Graham defaulted on her fines, and served twenty-one days in jail at hard labour.⁴¹⁵

In an atmosphere of moral panic, the press often reported on cases of young "respectable" women becoming addicted to alcohol and, as a result, entering prostitution to fund their habit. According to the *Free Press*, Dolly Smith's "unconquerable appetite for whisky," served to explain why administrators at two different reform schools were unable to curb her inclination for sex work.⁴¹⁶ Coroner's reports and medical autopsies on prostitutes also highlighted elite opinions about the effect of liquor on women's bodies. Londoners were likely both fascinated and horrified

⁴¹² "The Protestant Home: Regular Meeting of the Advisory Board Yesterday Afternoon," *London Free Press*, Oct. 4, 1884, 5.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ "Jane Graham," *London Free Press*, Feb. 6, 1885, 8.

⁴¹⁵ "London East," *London Free Press*, Feb. 6, 1885, 3.

⁴¹⁶ "An Incurable Girl," *London Free Press*, Oct. 20, 1884, 8.

to read an article titled “A Terrible Warning” in the *Advertiser*. It stated that “an autopsy upon the body of Kittie Carroll, the 17-year old wayward girl who died suddenly, revealed the fact that she had absorbed so much whiskey during life that the liver and portions of other internal organs had been entirely eaten away.”⁴¹⁷ The implicit “warning” to young women was clear—avoid alcohol, or suffer Kittie Carroll’s shameful death.

Although the press exaggerated stories about prostitutes’ inability to stay temperate, it is clear that many women in the city’s sex trade struggled with alcohol abuse.⁴¹⁸ A combination of poverty and degrading labour increased a woman’s inclination for alcohol abuse as a coping mechanism. Mary Smith, for example, was a homeless woman of colour in her late-forties who solicited sex outdoors in the 1880s.⁴¹⁹ Smith told a magistrate at her trial for streetwalking and theft that “she had been drinking for a few days on account of the rain.”⁴²⁰ The relationship between prostitution and alcohol in London is also illustrated through a case study of the life of Annie Devoy, a British immigrant who lived in the city’s east end.⁴²¹ Annie was the only child of Andrew

⁴¹⁷ “A Terrible Warning” *London Advertiser*, Dec. 21, 1881, 4.

⁴¹⁸ Judith Fingard illustrates how alcohol affected prostitutes in pre-Confederation Halifax through her biographies of Eliza Munroe and Mary Slattery, women who served countless sentences in jail for prostitution, vagrancy, and drunkenness. Fingard, “Jailbirds,” 90, 98. Constance Backhouse has suggested that alcoholism was “often a common end to a career in prostitution.” Backhouse, “Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law,” 406.

⁴¹⁹ “Police Court Briefs,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 1, 1880, 4; “City and Vicinity,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 5, 1883, 8. Smith occasionally worked in disorderly houses. “City and Vicinity,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 18, 1884, 2; “Police Court,” *London Free Press*, March 18, 1884, 5; “Police Court: A Fearful Den,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 20, 1884, 3.

⁴²⁰ “Police Court,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 11, 1880, 3. Smith was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment at hard labour.

⁴²¹ Other historians of prostitution have found it fruitful to use case studies to illustrate the trajectories of women’s lives in prostitution. See Constance Backhouse’s case studies of Mary Gorman and Mary Ann Gorman. Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice: Women and Law in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: Women’s Press for the Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 1991), 229-244. Judith Fingard also used case studies of prostitutes. Fingard, “Jailbirds,” 81-102.

and Catherine Shaw, who emigrated from England after her birth.⁴²² At age twenty, she married John Devoy, a London-born painter of Irish background.⁴²³ Their marriage took place at her father's house on Adelaide Street in London East. Annie Devoy's appearances in newspaper articles, police court records and jail documents show that she was constantly in trouble with local authorities for prostitution, public drunkenness, and theft.

Annie and John Devoy's relationship was marked by domestic violence and abuse, and the police court was an arena where many of their disputes played out. Annie first accused her husband of assault as early as 1877, two days after he charged her with being excessively "drunk and disorderly in her own house."⁴²⁴ John Devoy blamed her a second time for public drunkenness the following spring, in April 1878.⁴²⁵ As soon as Annie's jail sentence was complete, she was charged with drunkenness by her neighbour, Mrs. Loveless.⁴²⁶ Two weeks later, a magistrate found Annie guilty of attacking her husband in their London East home.⁴²⁷ On New Year's Eve in 1879 John asked police to arrest his wife for keeping a disorderly house.⁴²⁸ Reports claimed that a customer, Michael Cooter, broke into their brothel that evening.⁴²⁹ This appears to have been Annie's first prostitution-related brush with the law. In the spring, John accused his wife of assault.⁴³⁰ He

⁴²² Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; *Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1928*; Reel: 7. Marriage of John Devoy and Anne Shaw. Jan. 8, 1872; Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

⁴²³ Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; *Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1928*; Reel: 7. Marriage of John Devoy and Anne Shaw. Jan. 8, 1872. Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1871, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 10 (London), sub-district F (London Ward 6), page 96, line 17, family no. 335, John Devoy.

⁴²⁴ "Police Court News," *London Free Press*, Mar. 17, 1877, 4. "Arrested," *London Free Press*, Mar. 19, 1877, 2.

⁴²⁵ "Police Court," *London Free Press*, Apr. 9, 1878, 1.

⁴²⁶ "Police Court," *London Free Press*, Apr. 30, 1878, 2.

⁴²⁷ "Police Court," *London Free Press*, Mar. 14, 1878, 1.

⁴²⁸ "Police Court," *London Free Press*, Jan. 3, 1879, 1.

⁴²⁹ "County Court," *London Free Press*, Jan. 3, 1879, 3.

⁴³⁰ "Police Court News," *London Free Press*, Mar. 4, 1879, 1.

approached police again the following April, telling them that Annie was a “common vagrant.”⁴³¹ London’s police force and the local magistracy intervened in their relationship problems throughout the 1870s.⁴³²

Annie Devoy moved back in with her mother, Catherine Shaw, in the late 1870s, but her drinking also strained their relationship. Shaw asked the police magistrate to incarcerate her daughter for her own good in November of 1880. A reporter who was present for the hearing stated that “her mother testified, amid tears, that her daughter had been drunk and disorderly, and dangerous to be at large, and that she was a nuisance to the neighbourhood in which she lived. Going on in this strain she concluded by stating that her life was very unhappy.”⁴³³ Devoy accused her mother of similar drinking habits, telling the magistrate that “she thought the whole of them ought to be sent down, that they were all as bad as she.”⁴³⁴ The fact that Shaw requested that local authorities incarcerate her daughter suggests that her alcoholism had reached a breaking point. She accused Devoy of vagrancy less than a year later, hoping once more to move her daughter from her home to the prison.⁴³⁵ Annie Devoy may have been soliciting sex to pay for liquor, as vagrancy and drunk and disorderly charges were frequently applied to street-walkers.

Devoy’s alcoholism also strained her relationship with police officers in the city. When Constable Calderwood arrested her for public drunkenness in 1880, she threatened to “hurl a rock” at his head.⁴³⁶ He resorted to dragging her to the station in a wood-wagon. City officials and the local populace were accustomed to reading about Devoy’s public disputes, and by 1881 the

⁴³¹ “Police Court,” *London Free Press*, Apr. 5, 1880, 2.

⁴³² For more information on how police served to resolve disputes, see Marquis, “The Police as a Social Service,” 335.

⁴³³ “Police Court,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 11, 1880, 3.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁵ “Police! Police!!” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 5, 1881, 4.

⁴³⁶ “Police Court,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 11, 1880, 3.

Advertiser claimed she was “an old frequenter of the Police Court.”⁴³⁷ That August, Constable Jenkins wheeled Annie to court in a wagon as she was unable to walk due to her “beastly state of intoxication.”⁴³⁸ A magistrate reportedly sent Devoy to the Mercer Institute for a year on vagrancy charges, hoping that the reformatory would effect some change in her habits. But police found Annie working in another London brothel on Palace street less than five months after her term was served. This house was owned by Bill Berry and his wife, Mary Bentley.⁴³⁹

By 1884, Annie Devoy was infamous for her antics in London East. In May, Constable Nichols saw her walking drunk on Hamilton road. Devoy refused to walk to the station, so Nichols procured a horse and buggy. However, he sustained facial wounds from her struggle, and “got badly clawed about the face and whiskers.”⁴⁴⁰ Nichols asked bystanders for “volunteer lifting” to hoist Devoy into the carriage, and brought her to London East Mayor Lilley with “a large crowd following.”⁴⁴¹ Lilley fined Annie \$1 and costs the following morning, which she was unable to cover. Perhaps out of sympathy, a man in the courtroom paid the costs, and Devoy avoided serving time in jail.⁴⁴² She was working in the Hastings’ house of ill-fame by June. Thomas and Catherine Hastings were also well-known to city police because Thomas frequently assaulted his wife, and both served long stints in jail for operating brothels. Devoy was in the press again in December after being arrested by GTR Constable Pope:

The constable had a lively time getting his prisoner to her lodgings. She slid down on the snowy sidewalk about a dozen times on the way, and the constable

⁴³⁷ “On a Tear,” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 5, 1881, 4.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 12, 1881, 4; “A Disreputable House,” *London Advertiser*, Jan. 15, 1883, 4.

⁴⁴⁰ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, May 16, 1884, 1.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.* Paul Craven also suggests that the Toronto Police Court typically had spectators inside the bar to watch proceedings that they were particularly interested in, or, to seek shelter inside a warm building. See Paul Craven, “Law and Ideology: The Toronto Police Court,” in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law*, edited by David H. Flaherty, 2: 248-307 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 272.

⁴⁴² “London East,” *London Advertiser*, May 16, 1884, 8.

had hard work to keep himself from taking a seat too. She refused to get up, and assailed the passers-by with vile abuse and imprecations. On his return Pope declared it was the toughest job he ever had in that line.⁴⁴³

Squire Jarvis noted that “it required a vigorous application of cold water” to revive Annie after she passed out at the station.⁴⁴⁴ Police charged Devoy with “the old offence, drunkenness and vagrancy” again two months later, but a desperate magistrate suspended her sentence after she promised to leave London.⁴⁴⁵

Now in her mid-thirties, Annie’s relationship with local law enforcement come to a head in May of 1885 when she physically attacked London East Mayor Charles Lilley. The *London Free Press* described that Devoy recovered from her “filthy state of intoxication” enough to make a court appearance to receive her sentence: “The Mayor, in sentencing her to six months’ incarceration, dwelt on the bad character she bore in her neighborhood, and stated that she was a disgrace to her sex. The woman, on hearing her sentence, ‘made’ at Mayor Lilley and struck him with her full force on the shoulder. She was immediately removed, shrieking and swearing at the Court in the most revolting language.”⁴⁴⁶ In response to Devoy’s attack, Lilley sent her to Toronto “to serve out her term of six months for drunkenness in the Central Prison for a change.”⁴⁴⁷ Two months after her term was up, owners of the Maker’s Hotel called for London police because Devoy broke their front windows.⁴⁴⁸ Annie was sentenced for a six-month term in the Mercer Reformatory.⁴⁴⁹ Later that night, while waiting to be transferred, she attempted to hang herself in

⁴⁴³ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Dec. 17, 1884, 8.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, Feb. 18, 1885, 8.

⁴⁴⁶ “London East,” *London Free Press*, May 1, 1885, 3. See also, “London East,” *London Advertiser*, May 2, 1885, 8. The *Advertiser* report corroborates the details in the *Free Press*.

⁴⁴⁷ “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, May 11, 1885, 8.

⁴⁴⁸ “Annie Devoy’s Tricks,” *London Free Press*, Feb. 23, 1886, 3.

⁴⁴⁹ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Feb. 23, 1886, 3.

the police station with her garters.⁴⁵⁰ A year after John Devoy's death in 1887, Annie married her second husband, Herman Johnson.⁴⁵¹ He was a forty-five-year-old Swedish-born farmer who worked outside of London.⁴⁵² Their marriage was short-lived. Annie died in April of 1890 likely of chronic alcohol abuse.

Annie Devoy's story is extreme, as few women in London's sex trade received this level of press attention for public drunkenness. Nonetheless, her life illustrates the extent to which alcohol shaped women's experiences in prostitution. Liquor affected Devoy's familial relationships to the point where both her mother and husband requested that legal authorities intervene on several occasions. It is uncertain whether Devoy would have entered prostitution in the first place had she abstained from drinking, since no one else in her or her husband's family worked in the sex trade.⁴⁵³ Her alcohol abuse also influenced how she was perceived by police and the community. Despite operating and working in brothels at various points in her life, Annie Devoy was seen predominantly as a drunk, rather than a prostitute.

Elites in London responded to the moral panic of the 1880s by cracking down on women in the sex trade. Prostitutes were victimized by laws that rarely worked in their favour and double-standards that punished them for work they typically had no choice but to endure. Women responded to their discrimination with resilience, making the best of situations that offered little hope. Prostitutes employed creative tactics to achieve desired ends, whether to avoid incarceration,

⁴⁵⁰ "Annie Devoy's Tricks," *London Free Press*, Feb. 23, 1886, 3.

⁴⁵¹ Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; *Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1928*; Reel: 61. Marriage of Herman Johnson and Annie Shaw. Sept. 23, 1888.

⁴⁵² Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; *Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1928*; Reel: 61. Marriage of Herman Johnson and Annie Shaw. Sept. 23, 1888.

⁴⁵³ Annie's family members and in-laws never appear in jail records or the press for prostitution-related charges. John Devoy's family worked as molders, blacksmiths, and painters in the 1870s. Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1871, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 10 (London), sub-district F (London Ward 6), page 96, line 17, family no. 335, John Devoy.

or use the jail system for shelter and warmth. Sex workers coped with the increasing surveillance and regulation over their sexual labour in a variety of ways, from engaging in prolonged litigation, to physically lashing out against authority figures.

A woman's relationship with the law was often predetermined by her class and race. Affluent, white brothel-owners were deemed to be "respectable" women of the sex trade. Madams faced comparatively better treatment from police and paid for sophisticated legal representation to avoid long prison sentences when they were arrested. On the other hand, police and magistrates were less sympathetic toward lower-class or racialized sex workers. Many of London's prostitutes were dependant on alcohol, which further decreased their chances of obtaining relief funds or admission to homes of refuge. Vulnerable women often experienced police brutality and violence from customers, and some prosecuted members of the community in court after suffering particularly harsh abuse. Although the legal system discriminated against them, prostitutes had no other recourse for justice. The next chapter explores sex workers' relationships with their children, siblings, parents, and husbands during and after their time in prostitution.

Chapter Three: Family Life in the Sex Trade

In the early summer of 1873, twenty-year-old Fanny Betterly was the target of cruel taunts from men attempting to break into her father's Malahide brothel.⁴⁵⁴ The *London Advertiser* reported that "three men named Albert Bradley, John Crosby and Alfred Ryckman, went to the house of Samuel Betterly and endeavored to gain admission, using obscene and threatening language to the inmates, and indulging in disparaging remarks as to the virtue of the daughter Fanny."⁴⁵⁵ After it became clear that the men would not leave, Fanny took her brother's shotgun and fired through the window. Bradley was shot in the stomach and he died later that night. His friends fled to the United States. The jury acquitted Fanny at the murder trial, "expressing their belief that the deceased intention was to violate Miss Betterly's person, and that the shot was fired in defence of her honor."⁴⁵⁶ Although the press emphasized her "slight, graceful form" and "pleasant and rather good-looking face," reporters were far less kind in 1880 when she was arrested in St. Thomas for keeping a house of ill-fame. The *Advertiser* noted that "now she is not only homely and wholly unattractive in face and figure, but she is slovenly in her dress as well. When arraigned before the Magistrate the girl pleaded guilty, and in default of payment of the imposed fine was sent to gaol for two months."⁴⁵⁷ Betterly's moral fall was apparently reflected in her appearance.

Fanny Betterly's story highlights perceptions of female sexuality in the Victorian period. Women who failed to present themselves as virtuous and honorable risked being portrayed as

⁴⁵⁴ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1871, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 06 (Elgin East), sub-district C (Malahide), page 15, line 4, family no. 56, Fanny Betterly.

⁴⁵⁵ "Western Ontario," *London Advertiser*, Jan. 7, 1880. 2. The *Advertiser* quoted material about the shooting from the *St. Thomas Times*' coverage in 1873.

⁴⁵⁶ "Western Ontario," *London Advertiser*, Jan. 7, 1880. 2.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

morally and physically corrupted.⁴⁵⁸ Her case, however, also raises questions for historians of prostitution. The fact that Fanny grew up in a brothel alongside her parents and siblings complicates historical assumptions about houses of ill-fame. Were brothels impersonal sites of labour and economic exchange, or were they domestic spaces for families? Furthermore, Betterly's case indicates that some children were born into careers in prostitution. After growing up in brothels alongside their mothers who worked as prostitutes or madams, women often became involved in sex work themselves. This chapter examines how women in London's sex trade negotiated family relations while supporting themselves through taboo forms of labour.

Newspaper reports, census records, and coroner's inquests can be read "against the grain" in order to question narratives about women's relationships with their children, siblings, parents, and husbands during and after their time in prostitution.⁴⁵⁹ Although the period's reporting style often dehumanized prostitutes and delegitimized their statuses as mothers, these documents can be gleaned, nonetheless, for depictions of family. In contrast to the notion that sex workers rarely enjoyed kinship ties due to the nature of their labour, many women in London performed duties as mothers, wives, and daughters, and there was often little distinction between the brothel and the home. London's houses of ill-fame were usually casual in structure. The lines were blurred between private and public spheres because children were raised in the same space where women performed sexual labour. Madams even organized their brothels as family businesses, with members playing various roles to maintain the operation. Young girls were frequently born into the sex trade, and generations of prostitutes worked alongside one another in the city.

⁴⁵⁸ Mariana Valverde argues that social reformers constructed a dichotomy that characterized themselves as virtuous "saviors" and working-class women as "fallen" and therefore requiring moral guidance. Valverde, *The Age of Light*, 30, 78-79.

⁴⁵⁹ This term was used in Steven Maynard, "'Horrible Temptations': Sex, Men, and Working-Class Male Youth in Urban Ontario, 1890-1935," *The Canadian Historical Review* 78.2 (June 1997): 198.

This chapter also examines women who did not want to become mothers. How did sex workers regulate their reproductive systems through birth control and abortion? What risks were associated with terminating a pregnancy, and where did Londoners turn for illegal abortions? If those methods failed, how did mothers deal with infants for whom they were unable or unwilling to care? Although there were a number of charitable organizations for unmarried mothers in London, they were almost always at full capacity. The lack of social services for low-income women in Middlesex County led some to commit infanticide or abandon young children out of desperation. Victorian society held harsh attitudes toward unmarried mothers and deep social stigmas against “fallen women,” which contributed to decisions to be rid of a child.

A common assumption in the Canadian literature on sex work is that prostitutes were urban “lone wolves,” working in dens of vice without contact with family or friends. James Gray’s *Red Lights on the Prairies*, for example, implies that the prostitutes who catered to single men in the West did so in their youth, then eventually “drifted back into respectability, marriage, and a family.”⁴⁶⁰ Lori Rotenberg’s more academic consideration of prostitution in Toronto argues that most women in the sex trade were immigrants and “arrived in Toronto without family or close friends.”⁴⁶¹ Their downward mobility from employment in domestic service to prostitution was explainable because they lacked support networks to protect them. Although this claim is true for many women, London received fewer immigrants than Toronto in the nineteenth century and most of its prostitutes were born in Canada.

Available sources have led historians to assume that sex workers lacked family ties. Jail documents, for example, are used to conduct statistical analyses of criminalized women accused

⁴⁶⁰ Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies*, 25.

⁴⁶¹ Rotenberg, “The Wayward Worker,” 41. Rotenberg suggests that some of the immigrant women initially worked through private employment agencies, such as the Dr. Bernardo Homes.

of prostitution. Judith Fingard, Constance Backhouse, and Helen Boritch describe how the various status markers of prostitution, including religion, place of residence and birth, level of education, and marital status, indicate broader trends about women's involvement in the sex trade.⁴⁶² Using jail records, however, limits historians to discussing aspects of women's lives that the legal system deemed important. Upon entry into prison, for example, administrators recorded whether or not a woman was married, but that was the extent of their interest in her family. The documents do not mention whether sex workers had children or extended families, and information was gathered during instances when women typically appeared alone, such as during hearings or while in police custody. As a result, many studies that claim to examine the broader aspects of women's lives end up ignoring their family ties and kinship networks. This criticism is raised by Mary Anne Poutanen, who notes in *Beyond Brutal Passions* that the scholarship has "given the impression that family and sex commerce are irreconcilable."⁴⁶³

Although jail records did not disclose whether sex workers were mothers, press reports occasionally mention children when describing court proceedings. Susan Hall, for example, operated a high-class brothel on Rectory Street in London East.⁴⁶⁴ She was called to appear before Squire Anderson in the summer of 1880 to answer the charges of keeping a house of ill-fame and selling liquor without a license. Susan Hall was a mother, however, and her child was so ill at the time that the enquiry was postponed for ten days to allow her more time to care for the infant.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶² Studies that use statistical analyses of jail records include Fingard, "Jailbirds, "; Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law"; Boritch and Hagan, "Crime and the Changing Forms of Class Control, "; Boritch, "Crime and Punishment in Middlesex County."

⁴⁶³ Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*, 77-78.

⁴⁶⁴ "City News of To-Day," *London Advertiser*, May 8, 1880, 4; "London East," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 10, 1880, 4. Hall appeared in the news frequently in early 1880s.

⁴⁶⁵ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 13, 1880, 4. Susan Hall ran a high-class brothel on Rectory street and was able to afford to pay Edmund Meredith, a "prominent member of the legal profession and a well-known resident of the village" to defend her case. Meredith defended many women accused of prostitution in London throughout the 1880s.

Instances like this were not uncommon and some police magistrates requested that women bring doctor's notes before rescheduling trials.⁴⁶⁶ Although delaying court proceedings for prostitutes to care for their children was not unusual, magistrates only had so much patience. Earlier that March in Toronto, Alice Miller's sentence was reserved owing to her child's illness. She failed to show up on her rescheduled date and submitted a doctor's certificate stating that her child was "in such a state of precarious condition that it required its mother's utmost attention."⁴⁶⁷ Instead of sentencing Miller to the typical thirty days in prison, the magistrate inflicted an unusually cruel fine of one hundred dollars without costs, an almost unpayable amount for the average prostitute.⁴⁶⁸

Mothers occasionally brought their children with them to court hearings when they were unable to secure a friend or family member to look after them.⁴⁶⁹ Hannah Fuller, a twenty-seven-year-old black woman, was charged in 1884 with being an inmate in a disorderly house. At her side in the courtroom was her young son, Freddie, who was about eight years old at the time.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁶ "Police News," *Toronto World*, Mar. 7, 1882, 4. Jessie Dalton was remanded several times in 1882 because her doctor claimed that she was too ill to appear in court.

⁴⁶⁷ "Toronto," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 11, 1880, 1.

⁴⁶⁸ The same magistrate sentenced several women to thirty days in jail just the day before Miller's trial. Women were rarely charged over fifty dollars for keeping brothels, and only a few London sex workers at the time were charged more than that amount for prostitution-related offenses in the 1880s. An 1877 report from Hamilton argued that the ninety-dollar fine Margaret McLaren was forced to pay for keeping a house of ill-fame was a "severe sentence." See "Hamilton News," *The Globe*, Aug. 9, 1877, 4. Historian Helen Boritch also found that only keepers of houses of ill-fame in Middlesex County were charged fifty dollars or more by judges, which they were typically able to pay. Boritch, "Crime and Punishment in Middlesex County," 437.

⁴⁶⁹ This occurred in other cities as well. Catherine Curran was charged in Hamilton with keeping a house of ill-fame and sentenced to four months' imprisonment in addition to a fifty-dollar fine. A reporter stated that "The wretched woman had a daughter, about five years old, with her in the dock when sentenced." See "Hamilton News," *The Globe*, Aug. 10, 1877, 4.

⁴⁷⁰ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 165 (Oxford South), sub-district H1 (Ingersoll), page 59, line 19, family no. 321, Hannah Fuller. Fuller was likely the child of Mary Fuller, a prostitute who worked in London in the 1860s. "Court Trial," *London Free Press*, Nov. 8, 1865, 3; Western Archives, *Coroner's Inquests, Middlesex County*, "Infant male of Mary Fuller," 23 Sept. 1867.

That same day Margaret Mills was accused of being the keeper of the house. The report stated that “the woman Mills carried a baby of two or three weeks old in her arms, and looked fitter for the hospital than the jail . . . Mrs. Mills’ mother, an old lady of about 70, was in the court, and as her daughter was led away both commenced to weep.”⁴⁷¹ This report indicates that sex workers’ incarceration imposed challenges for their families. Their children were forced to interact with the justice system from a young age due to their mother’s frequent arrests, hearings, and jail time. Aging parents also suffered because they were often left responsible to care for grandchildren while their daughters served lengthy prison sentences. Mothers in London’s sex trade coped with court appearances in a variety of ways, from bringing their children and other family members with them in front of judges, to securing documentation when their parental duties prohibited them from appearing before magistrates.

The same children who appeared alongside their mothers in court often lived with them in houses of ill-fame. Few historical works, however, have examined brothels as a family setting. Some scholars have focused on higher class establishments whose commercial structures did not allow for inmates’ children or family to live there. Andrée Lévesque examines Montreal’s sex trade during the interwar period, suggesting that “the young women who took up life in a brothel were entering a universe with a clear hierarchy,” featuring a top-down structure involving proprietors, madams, managers, housekeepers, and prostitutes.⁴⁷² These commercial enterprises had no room for children or siblings. More recent studies also imply that women lived and worked without children. Patrick Dunae’s spatial analysis of sexual commerce in Victoria uses census records to highlight the various classes and locations of brothels in the city, but makes no mention

⁴⁷¹ “Police Court: A Fearful Den,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 20, 1884, 3.

⁴⁷² Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules*, 121.

of the women's family members or children.⁴⁷³ Despite a consensus that women in prostitution were separated from their family and friends, Poutanen's work on Montreal indicates that women in the sex trade often worked and lived with their families in the same domestic space. Incorporating the idea that women were essential for the household economies of the nineteenth century, Poutanen suggests that prostitution was a "commercial venture" that some women integrated into their households, producing a space in which female inmates, children, and extended family coexisted.⁴⁷⁴

The notion that prostitution occurred alongside other domestic activities is useful for interpreting sources from London. Although some brothels were similar to that described by Lévesque, many of the disorderly houses were casually structured, and children found themselves very much part of the daily lives of London's prostitutes. Both lower- and higher-class brothels functioned as spaces where family members and children lived alongside working prostitutes. Emma Mahaffey's upscale Adelaide Street brothel was also the home of her younger sister, Martha Stratton, and two children, in addition to the many female inmates.⁴⁷⁵ Mahaffey's children witnessed at least two attempted break-ins to their home during the 1880s.⁴⁷⁶ Lower-class disorderly houses also saw commercial enterprise mix with domestic life. Margaret Mills lived in a brothel on South Street east in the mid-1880s with her children and mother.⁴⁷⁷ Together with several other female inmates and their children, they resided in one room with a "stove, table, trunk and mattress."⁴⁷⁸ Brothel culture in late-Victorian London complicates the notion that people

⁴⁷³ Dunae, "Sex, Charades, and Census Records," 267-297.

⁴⁷⁴ Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*, 77-78.

⁴⁷⁵ "The Fall Assizes," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 1, 1880, 4.

⁴⁷⁶ "Local," *London Free Press*, Jul. 14, 1880, 4.

⁴⁷⁷ There are conflicting reports about where this brothel was. Although the reports from court on March 20th suggest that they lived on South Street east, on March 18th the *Advertiser* reported that they lived on Adelaide Street south. "City and Vicinity," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 18, 1884, 2.

⁴⁷⁸ "Police Court: A Fearful Den," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 20, 1884, 3.

typically worked and lived in separate places, since these working women typically performed labour within their homes.⁴⁷⁹

The children of sex workers experienced the brutality and deprivation that were so characteristic of London's brothels. Newspapers occasionally offer a glimpse into the lives of these children. Not surprisingly, they often became victims of a violent lifestyle. Detective Hodge arrested Ellis Morgan in September of 1884 for keeping a disorderly house and assaulting his family. Hodge was tipped off by a man who informed him that "Morgan got drunk and kicked up an awful row during which he beat his wife and child brutally."⁴⁸⁰

At times, violence followed the children even after their mothers no longer worked in the sex trade. James Leslie was arrested by Constable Hecklin in 1882 after assaulting Mary Collins, with whom he lived in a home on Dufferin Avenue, near Maitland Street.⁴⁸¹ The *Advertiser* claimed that Collins was "said to have been an inmate in a house of prostitution in the city, from which she was removed by Leslie." He was a widower, and Collins raised his children from the previous marriage, in addition to two more to which she gave birth during the several years they lived together.⁴⁸² Widowed men occasionally found new partners in houses of ill-fame to help raise their children. Leslie was convicted in 1882 for slamming a door in Collins' face, causing serious wounds. Mary Collins had been accusing Leslie of assaulting her since the late 1870s, and their children bore witness to their violent relationship for years to come. He was arrested again in 1885 for assaulting Mary and was sentenced to one month's imprisonment at hard labour in the county

⁴⁷⁹ Bettina Bradbury has also discussed women's labour that occurred in the home. See Bettina Bradbury, *Wife to Widow: Lives, Laws and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 20; Mary Anne Poutanen describes similar situations in Montreal in the early 1830s. Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*, 77-131.

⁴⁸⁰ "London South," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 8, 1884, 8.

⁴⁸¹ "Brutal and Unsavory," *London Advertiser*, Apr. 5, 1882, 1.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

gaol.⁴⁸³ Mary was charged herself throughout the 1870s and 1880s for using abusive language and threatening assault. In 1879, young Joseph Leslie, one of James' children, accused Collins in the county court with "threatening his life."⁴⁸⁴ Their children viewed their parents' treatment towards them and each other as violent and dangerous.

Women experienced violence both during and after their time working in the sex trade. Like Mary Collins, Mary Ann Stokes struck up a relationship with a man she met in a London brothel. She eventually moved in with Benjamin Simmons in the early 1880s in an apartment on 60 Dundas Street West.⁴⁸⁵ Stokes began working as a washer-woman to supplement his income and continued this occupation until her murder in 1885. Angry that Stokes had refused to buy him more alcohol during an evening of drinking, Simmons stabbed her four times. The *Advertiser* reported that the stabbing was so severe that the blade of Simmons' knife broke off in her arm. There were few incentives for prostitutes to turn to authorities for assistance. Reporting instances of assault risked exposing their taboo labour, while the stigma attached to it often meant that police and magistrates would not take their claims seriously.

While some children experienced violence at the hands of their parents, others were subject to destitute living conditions. Londoners were shocked in the autumn of 1884 to see headlines about children living in a brothel in the same room as the decomposing body of an infant. Harry Barfoot and his wife, Ellen, owned a disorderly house on Bathurst near William Street. Constables were dispatched to the house after receiving numerous noise complaints from residents nearby. Upon seeing the number of people inside, police telephoned the station to request reinforcements, concerned that many were drinking. Four constables and a sergeant entered the building to quell

⁴⁸³ "Local and District," *London Free Press*, July 31, 1885, 3. "Local and District," *London Free Press*, Jan. 11, 1877, 4.

⁴⁸⁴ "County Court," *London Free Press*, Sept. 19, 1879, 3.

⁴⁸⁵ "The Last Scene of All, Ben Simmons on the Scaffold," *London Advertiser*, Nov. 27, 1885, 4.

the row, and immediately noticed a “disgusting” stench within.⁴⁸⁶ “Lying on a table in a corner was the dead body of a child about five weeks old. It was in an advanced stage of decomposition, having been dead four days, and the stench from it was something shocking. In the midst of all were some six or seven children, some crying and others participating in the general fray.”⁴⁸⁷ Emma Farr, a local prostitute, was the mother of the “illegitimate” child.⁴⁸⁸ In response to public outrage, Inspector Bell issued an order to properly inter the child’s body the day after the group was arrested.⁴⁸⁹

Despite these extreme examples, not all children who grew up in brothels lived in deprivation. Esther Arscott’s adopted daughter, Mary, lived in an attractive cottage beside her mother’s upscale Rectory street brothel in London East.⁴⁹⁰ Mary Arscott (née, Howell) was born to one of the prostitutes employed by Arscott.⁴⁹¹ Although her mother was frequently arrested by police and municipal officials, Mary was typically sheltered from this lifestyle, and never appears in reports about her mother’s court cases. Mary was well-provided for by her mother. After Esther’s death in 1902, she received a brick house on Van Street, and her stepfather was bestowed two other houses nearby in London East.⁴⁹²

Young women often entered the sex trade because they were born to prostitutes and were familiar with the community and lifestyle.⁴⁹³ Some children who grew up in brothels eventually

⁴⁸⁶ “Shocking Scenes,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 30, 1884, 4.

⁴⁸⁷ “A Shocking Sight,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 30, 1884, 8. Although the press seemed outraged by the thought of a child lying unburied, it voiced no interest in how the child had died, and no coroner’s inquest was called to inquire into its death.

⁴⁸⁸ “A Shocking Sight,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 30, 1884, 8.

⁴⁸⁹ “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 31, 1884, 8.

⁴⁹⁰ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 167 (Middlesex East), sub-district D1 (London East), page 54, line 12, family no. 263, Mary Arscott.

⁴⁹¹ Arscott had an abortion in 1859, when she was seventeen-years-old and working in her parents’ brothel. Armstrong, “East London Madam,” C4.

⁴⁹² Constance Backhouse, “FORSYTH, ESTHER,” in *Directory of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003.

⁴⁹³ Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, 223.

worked *alongside* their parents, and it was not uncommon to see mothers and daughters operate brothels as family businesses out of their homes. Mrs. McPherson kept a house of ill-fame with her two daughters, Lizzie and Annie, on Ontario street. While the “old lady” managed the books, her adult daughters entertained the many men of “prominent positions” in Stratford who frequented their house.⁴⁹⁴ Widowed women like McPherson often turned to illegal business endeavors to survive in a society that offered few employment opportunities for older women. McPherson and her daughters were finally arrested and fined when their brothel was raided in the autumn of 1880.⁴⁹⁵ London also saw young women work in their parents’ brothels. In the late 1850s, Esther Arscott’s father and mother operated a house of ill-fame, where she worked as a prostitute.⁴⁹⁶ By the mid-1870s, Arscott was keeping her own house in London. Other women solicited sex on the streets with their children. Mary McNorgan was arrested for streetwalking with her daughter, Eliza, in the winter of 1885. Eliza was sent to the Mercer Reformatory for one year, while her mother received a sentence of six months in the county jail.⁴⁹⁷

Some women became involved in the sex trade through their husbands. Because jailors recorded the marital status of women, more is known about the married couples who kept houses of ill-fame together. In Bettina Bradbury’s study of widowhood in nineteenth-century Montreal, she suggests that some women were coerced into the brothel businesses by their husbands. But

⁴⁹⁴ “Stratford,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 25, 1880, 3. Chief Walton’s raid on Mrs. McPherson’s brothel resulted in high fines for the female prostitutes, yet the male frequenters, who were “townsmen, all occupying prominent positions,” were not charged or named in the papers.

⁴⁹⁵ Men of influence were frequently allowed to leave brothels without facing arrest, although it occasionally led to public complaints. For instance, see “Why Did They Let Him Go?” *Toronto World*, Apr. 12, 1882, 3. This resident voiced concern about “an influential gentleman connected with the consular service of a foreign government” who was arrested in a brothel raid in Montreal, but immediately discharged by the Chief of Police.

⁴⁹⁶ Armstrong, “East London Madam,” C4; Armstrong, *The Forest City*, 72. Armstrong notes that in 1859, Ann and Robert Forsyth were “charged with keeping a house of ill-fame and each fined \$2.50 plus costs.”

⁴⁹⁷ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 21, 1885, 3.

Bradbury argues that for other couples, a common inclination for working in the sex trade was at “the heart of the relationship.”⁴⁹⁸ There were at least six couples in London who operated houses of ill-fame together in the 1880s and many more whose businesses were unknown to police.⁴⁹⁹ Some couples like Esther and William Arscott found the sex trade to be a profitable endeavor, and were able to afford to pay their way out of serving time in prison.⁵⁰⁰ Other less fortunate couples faced frequent incarceration, and were surrounded by alcohol abuse and crime in their disorderly houses. Women such as Mary Lynch suffered from assault at the hands of their husbands.

Although some couples operated brothels together, for others the decision to keep a house of ill-fame was a problem. In 1882, London police raided a brothel on Lisle Street after they were tipped off by the sister of the man who operated the house. The press did not report specific names because the story involved a “respectable woman” of considerable wealth in London East and her brother.⁵⁰¹ A few years earlier, the sister was reportedly concerned about her “scapegoat of a brother,” and offered to rent and furnish a house for him in the town if he found a wife and settled down. He married a woman he met in Hamilton and his sister provided the newlyweds with a house. After hearing about noise complaints laid by neighbours of their residence, his sister discovered that “the newly rented and furnished cottage was nothing more or less than a rendezvous for bad characters.”⁵⁰² She instructed County Constable Nichols to shut down the

⁴⁹⁸ Bradbury, *Wife to Widow*, 99.

⁴⁹⁹ Six couples appear in the jail records for keeping houses of ill-fame. It is unknown how many couples operated disorderly houses together. Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

⁵⁰⁰ Although census records indicate that William Arscott worked as a tanner, the couple made their substantial income from his wife’s brothels.

⁵⁰¹ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, June 19, 1882, 2. The reporter wrote that it was on sister’s “account alone the names of the present occasion are suppressed.”

⁵⁰² “London East,” *London Advertiser*, June 19, 1882, 2. The *Advertiser* stated: “During the whole performance a number of the neighbors turned out and encouraged the C.C. in what one of their number called the holy war.”

brothel and retrieve what furniture he could salvage from the house. In an attempt to protect her brother, she reportedly gave Nichols a “clearance order exculpating him from all harm in the eyes of the law.” Her mercy did not extend to her sister-in-law or the inmates of the house, all of whom were arrested.

While some women in the sex trade raised young children in their workplaces, others attempted to regulate their reproductive systems and avoid bearing children through birth control, abortion, infanticide, and abandonment. Prostitutes in London resorted to various practices to terminate unwanted pregnancies. Some sex workers turned to local abortionists, often with disastrous results. Others bribed doctors in the region to induce miscarriages and perform surgical abortions. Unmarried pregnant women faced stigma, and having a child was a visible marker of moral degradation and lost virtue.⁵⁰³ Women who carried to full term were often forced to deliver their infants in jail while serving vagrancy or other prostitution-related sentences. Some resorted to extreme measures of deserting children or committing infanticide to rid themselves of children for whom they were unable or unwilling to care.

Many women in late-nineteenth century Canada were forced to resort to unsafe methods of preventing and aborting pregnancies because it was illegal for medical professionals to provide them with information about safe and effective contraception.⁵⁰⁴ The fact that marriage rates were stable while birth rates declined suggests that most families were using birth control or alternative sexual practices.⁵⁰⁵ Women in the sex trade were knowledgeable about the ways to prevent

⁵⁰³ For more information on the stigma faced by unmarried mothers, see Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 69-70.

⁵⁰⁴ Angus McLaren, “Birth Control and Abortion in Canada, 1870-1920,” *Canadian Historical Review* 59.3 (1978): 340.

⁵⁰⁵ Angus McLaren and Arlene Tiger McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1997* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 18.

unwanted pregnancies. Andrée Lévesque argues that because prostitutes typically worked in brothels with other women, they were better suited to find resources about birth control and abortion compared to other vulnerable women who became pregnant, such as domestic servants.⁵⁰⁶ Although doctors recommended the highly unreliable “rhythm method” to prevent pregnancies, condoms were sold in London by the early 1890s, and douching remedies were popular.⁵⁰⁷ These forms of birth control were ineffective and as a result, women in the sex trade often had to resort to illegal abortions to terminate unwanted pregnancies.

There were a number of known abortionists in London to whom sex workers turned, including other women and certain male physicians. Records indicate that mainly women performed abortions in London and throughout Middlesex County. Madam Lamont, *alias* Demott, was well-known to police for procuring abortions for unmarried pregnant women in Chatham. Lamont had been in operation since at least the late 1870s, and she was charged in 1878 in London with both “concealing the birth of a child,” and “committing an abortion.”⁵⁰⁸ She eventually moved to Chatham but continued to perform abortions. Her clients included London sex workers who travelled there to receive her services, suggesting that abortionists in the city were either inaccessible, expensive, or untrustworthy. Lamont was eventually charged and jailed in 1880 after procuring an abortion for Elizabeth Caldwell, a woman from London.⁵⁰⁹ St. Thomas also had several abortionists. Lydia Jane Collins was a widow who kept a boarding house on St. George

⁵⁰⁶ Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules*, 128.

⁵⁰⁷ McLaren and McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State*, 21.

⁵⁰⁸ “Police Court,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 6, 1878, 4; “Police Court,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 18, 1878, 4; “Middlesex Spring Assizes,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 28, 1878, 4. Lamont also went by the *alias* Esther A. Eaton, and Estelle Emott.

⁵⁰⁹ “Canada,” *London Advertiser*, Apr. 20, 1880, 1. The *London Advertiser* reported: “Chief Baxter, of Chatham, has made another charge against Madame Lamont *alias* Demott for procuring abortion, her victim this time being Elizabeth Caldwell, formerly of London.”

Street. She was arrested and charged with “performing abortion” in 1877.⁵¹⁰ Another St. Thomas woman, Harriet Lancaster, kept a laundry house on Talbot Street. She was also accused of abortion-related offenses that same year.⁵¹¹ Like Collins, Lancaster was a widow and lived in town with five of her children.⁵¹² Widowed women who operated small businesses on their own, such as a laundry or boarding houses, occasionally supplemented that income with proceeds they earned from terminating pregnancies. They also may have used their legitimate operations as fronts to cover the money they made from abortions.

Despite the social taboo and illegal nature of conducting abortions, some doctors performed the operation out of pity or for financial gain.⁵¹³ A few doctors were known to be willing to conduct abortions in London. Although physicians were typically more knowledgeable about how to safely terminate a pregnancy, the operation was still dangerous. Dr. Thomas Neill Cream became one of the Jack the Ripper suspects because of his penchant for offering abortions then murdering prostitutes in Chicago and London, England. The McGill-trained physician, however, likely began killing sex workers in London, Ontario, after establishing a medical practice at Clarence and Dundas Street in the late 1870s. Cream first gained suspicion in 1879 when one of his patients was found dead in an outhouse attached to his downtown office.⁵¹⁴ Twenty-one-year-old Kate “Kitty” Gardner worked as a domestic servant at the Tecumseh House prior to her death. Her bedmate at the hotel suggested that she had been impregnated in nearby Listowel.⁵¹⁵ It is possible that Gardner

⁵¹⁰ “St. Thomas Trial,” *London Free Press*, Nov. 20, 1877, 4.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹² Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 163 (Elgin East), sub-district C2 (St. Thomas), page 61, line 17, family no. 292, Harriet Lancaster. For more information on widowed women’s labour, see Bradbury, *Wife to Widow*.

⁵¹³ McLaren and McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State*, 35.

⁵¹⁴ “An Ottawa Girl’s Fate,” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 23, 1880, 1.

⁵¹⁵ Angus McLaren, *A Prescription for Murder: The Victorian Serial Killings of Dr. Thomas Neill Cream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 37.

was affiliated in some way with the sex trade because all of Cream's subsequent victims were women accused of prostitution. After a brief investigation, the coroner revealed that an abortion had recently been performed on Gardiner, but it was suspected that she died from an over ingestion of chloroform. Cream knew the anesthetic well because it was the topic of his thesis project at McGill.⁵¹⁶ Although the Coroner's Inquest did not prove conclusively that Cream was responsible for her death, public suspicion was so intense that he left London to set up a practice in Chicago not long after.⁵¹⁷

Cream's high-profile case caused a panic in the press, and the London newspapers reported extensively on doctors who were accused of performing abortions on young women for some time after.⁵¹⁸ The panic was heightened a year later when an Ottawa girl named Mary Ann Matilda Faulkner was found dead of an abortion in the home of a "colored woman" named Hattie McKay, near Cream's new office in Chicago.⁵¹⁹ In the year between Gardner and Faulkner's deaths, Cream earned a reputation for frequenting the red-light district and offering abortions to prostitutes in the city.⁵²⁰ In his interview with police, Cream claimed that Hattie McKay was a "professional nurse" who operated on Faulkner and called for him when the operation went bad: "I did what I could, but the girl died, and the nurse threw the blame on me."⁵²¹ The jury found him guilty of murder

⁵¹⁶ W. Stewart Wallace, "The Crimes of Dr. Cream," *MacLean's Magazine*, Sept. 15, 1931, 13.

⁵¹⁷ "An Ottawa Girl's Fate," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 23, 1880, 1.

⁵¹⁸ The most prominent case in 1880 involved Buddie McCrae, a Chatham woman who died of an abortion in Buffalo. "Buddie McCrae," *London Advertiser*, July 23, 1880, 4; "The McCrae Abortion," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 4, 1880, 1. The press was also interested in the case of Dr. Caw of Parkhill, who was charged by Dr. Barclay for seducing a girl, then performing an abortion which caused her death. Dr. Caw later sued Dr. Barclay for libel and slander. "City and Vicinity," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 10, 1880, 3; "Middlesex Spring Assizes," *London Advertiser*, Apr. 8, 1880, 4. Another notable story involved Etta A. Carll, who died after Dr. Charles Earll performed an abortion on her in Chicago. "The Chicago Horror," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 27, 1880, 1.

⁵¹⁹ "An Ottawa Girl's Fate," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 23, 1880, 1.

⁵²⁰ Angus McLaren, *A Prescription for Murder: The Victorian Serial Killings of Dr. Thomas Neill Cream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 38.

⁵²¹ "Alleged Murder: Dr. Cream Arrested at Belle River," *London Advertiser*, July 29, 1881, 2.

but Cream was eventually acquitted for Faulkner's death.⁵²² His luck eventually ran out when he was arrested a year later for poisoning a man with epilepsy.⁵²³ Although Cream's murders and abortions were sensationalized by the press, they nonetheless highlight the dangers that prostitutes and unmarried women faced when they were pregnant and looking for abortions.

Court documents and newspaper records occasionally offer glimpses into how these abortions were carried out. Most records do not mention a method of abortion, but the few that do indicate that people preferred medicines to induce miscarriages.⁵²⁴ John Courey, a "colored man," attempted to abort Mary Waters' foetus by "administering medicine" to her in the early 1870s in London.⁵²⁵ Nathan Cooper and his wife, Phoebe, were also put on trial three years later in 1877 for "administering drugs to procure an abortion," but both were subsequently discharged due to a lack of evidence.⁵²⁶ Although the press appeared to be reluctant to state specific details when a woman had an abortion that involved entering instruments into the cervix, they were willing to publish information when poison or medicine was ingested.

Many abortions did not end successfully. Women often died of sepsis from botched miscarriages involving instruments or were poisoned from the "medicine" they ingested.⁵²⁷ A case in Stratford ended in the death of a young woman, referred to merely as "Williams," who attempted to abort her child using drugs. The Coroner's Inquest was unable to determine who sold her the

⁵²² "Cream's Case," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 25, 1880, 1.

⁵²³ "A Blunt Denial," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 4, 1881, 1.

⁵²⁴ McLaren and McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State*, 34. McLaren suggests that these "traditional abortifacients" included "tansy, quinine, pennyroyal, rue, black hellebore, ergot of rye, savin, or cotton root."

⁵²⁵ "Court Trial," *London Free Press*, Dec. 31, 1874, 1.

⁵²⁶ "Assizes." *London Free Press*, Mar. 30, 1877, 4.

⁵²⁷ McLaren, "Birth Control and Abortion," 337. McLaren suggests that certain forms of abortion became less dangerous over time. He writes "instrument-induced miscarriages declined as women turned to their own purposes the antiseptic lessons of Pasteur." See also, Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules*, 89.

medicine.⁵²⁸ The *London Advertiser* was highly critical of Williams, and frequently referred to her as a “fallen” woman, implying that her sad outcome was deserved: “It was proven that she had been leading an immoral life for years, that the ‘tumor’ story circulated by her friends was all a fiction, that she had been delivered of a full grown child years ago, and that she afterwards accomplished in Detroit what cost her life in Stratford on the next attempt.”⁵²⁹ Williams had apparently concealed her pregnancy by telling those around her that she had a stomach tumor.

Although most unmarried pregnant women were depicted in the press as immoral and deserving of their fate, others were painted as “fallen angels” who were taken advantage of by men. A woman’s best chance at obtaining pity in the press was by presenting herself as a naïve girl who had been seduced. A young Woodstock girl’s suicide in 1885 was reported on in a far different light than Williams’ case. Annie Wallace, a “handsome brunette” of about twenty-three years of age, was travelling on the GTR between Windsor and Woodstock when she met George McKee, son of Detective McKee. She was quickly taken by his advances, and “under promise of marriage,” the pair became “unduly intimate.”⁵³⁰ Finding herself in a “difficult situation” several months later, Wallace travelled to Windsor, as the *London Free Press* reported, “for the purpose of making her destroyer fulfill his promises.”⁵³¹ Penniless and unable to track down McKee, Wallace took shelter with a black woman named Mrs. Fulton on Victoria Avenue. Eventually, in a fit of despair, Annie Wallace took her own life.

This story in the *Free Press* is typical of how journalists reported on seemingly virtuous women who became pregnant: “It is the oft-told story of woman’s trustfulness and man’s

⁵²⁸ “The Abortion Case at Stratford,” *London Advertiser*, July 28, 1883, 1.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁰ “Sad, if True,” *London Free Press*, Feb. 2, 1885, 8.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*

duplicity.”⁵³² Like most stories about “fallen” women, the press used paternalistic language in their descriptions of Annie Wallace, and depicted her as an upright, naïve woman who was taken advantage of by cunning and deceitful men. Wallace was a “poor creature” and a “young girl,” who waited anxiously day-by-day for her lover to return.⁵³³ Except for a few lines of bad press in the papers, the seducers rarely faced any repercussions for their conduct with unmarried girls. As the *Free Press* reported, there was “much indignation in Windsor at McKee’s conduct.”⁵³⁴ Although a man might redeem himself and eventually marry, it was always too late to remedy a woman’s situation. As Rev. Davis exclaimed at a WCA meeting in London: “It must be recognized that a man who has caused a woman’s degradation is as bad as if he had robbed a safe. Worse; for the robbery of the safe can be repaired, but the loss of a woman’s honor, never!”⁵³⁵

The press was usually more sympathetic to men who were arrested for procuring abortions than they were toward women who committed or received abortions. Allan Hammond, a thirty-two-year-old police constable, was arrested in September of 1881 in London for procuring an abortion for his younger sister, Sophia.⁵³⁶ After learning that Sophia had “got into trouble,” Hammond hired a local woman, Mertie Stewart, to terminate the pregnancy.⁵³⁷ Stewart performed the operation in early August at the residence of Mrs. McKenny, Sophia and Allan’s sister who lived in Westminster. According to the *London Advertiser*, Mertie Stewart wanted a larger payment, and eventually complained about it to enough people that the police caught wind of the

⁵³² “St. Thomas Notes,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 30, 1885, 8. In this case, the girl was a domestic servant of “prepossessing appearance” who fell for the advances of a man who eventually left St. Thomas once she was pregnant.

⁵³³ “Sad, if True,” *London Free Press*, Feb. 2, 1885, 8.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁵ “The W.C.A.,” *London Advertiser*, May 30, 1883, 1.

⁵³⁶ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 167 (Middlesex East), sub-district A2 (Westminster), page 61, line 17, family no. 370, Allen Hammond.

⁵³⁷ “A Serious Charge,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 13, 1881, 4.

abortion.⁵³⁸ Hammond was represented by Edmund Meredith, the prominent lawyer (and ex-Mayor of London) who defended many women accused of prostitution in the 1880s, including Esther Arscott. Journalists were sympathetic toward Hammond in their reports and portrayed him as a hero who attempted to “save” his family from disgrace:⁵³⁹

The utmost sympathy was expressed by Hammond’s friends for the unfortunate position in which his foolish action has placed him. The fact that he was endeavoring to hide the disgrace of his sister from the world was, of course, the motive which induced him to assist in the crime for which he is under sentence. Since his accession to the Police Force Hammond has proved himself an efficient officer, and one against whom nothing will be said by the most scrupulous.⁵⁴⁰

In contrast, the press referred to Mertie Stewart, the woman who performed the abortion, as the “female prisoner” before she was even tried in court.”⁵⁴¹

The city’s prostitutes were often forced to give birth in jail while they served sentences for vagrancy or other prostitution-related charges. Mary Fuller was a prostitute who worked in London during the 1860s, and gave birth to a baby boy in late September of 1867 in jail.⁵⁴² The infant died several hours later, and an inquest was held the following day to examine whether the child had died of natural causes or whether his mother had interfered.⁵⁴³ The Coroner’s Inquest records suggest that Fuller may have been alone when she gave birth. One of the witnesses, Mary Grace Griffith, testified that she had been sent to Fuller, and upon seeing her condition, called for Dr. Hobbs, the jail physician: “the Doctor called, and then went away and came back after the child was born.”⁵⁴⁴ It is unclear whether or not Griffith stayed with Fuller while she gave birth. Hobbs

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ “Police Court,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 13, 1881, 4.

⁵⁴¹ “A Serious Charge,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 13, 1881, 4.

⁵⁴² Janet L. McShane Galley, “‘I did it to hide my shame’: Community Responses to Suspicious Infant Deaths in Middlesex County, Ontario, 1850-1900,” (MA Thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1998), 86.

⁵⁴³ Western Archives, *Coroner’s Inquests, Middlesex County*, “Infant male of Mary Fuller,” 23 Sept. 1867.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

claimed that “the child died from a deficiency of vital energy born of a mother of a very immoral character and owing to the previous character of the mother is attributable the cause of death of the child.”⁵⁴⁵ London locals knew Fuller as a woman of “disreputable character” who was frequently in and out of prison for prostitution arrests.⁵⁴⁶ Medical experts at the time often believed that children born to women of “immoral character” inherited their moral and physical weaknesses, leading to a “deficiency of vital energy.”⁵⁴⁷

By the 1880s, pregnant women were at times moved from the jail to the hospital, although many continued to give birth in jail. Seventeen-year-old Lizzie Jane Norton delivered her child in the jail when she was nearing the end of her sentence for streetwalking.⁵⁴⁸ Another woman gave birth in prison a month later, but left town shortly after, leaving her child behind.⁵⁴⁹ Others were sent to the hospital to give birth. According to the *London Free Press* in 1884, “Ellen Roach, a young woman who was committed to the county gaol a short time since, upon a charge of vagrancy, has been removed to the city hospital, being about to become a mother.”⁵⁵⁰

Some prostitutes chose to rid themselves of unwanted children after giving birth by abandoning them or committing infanticide. Many newborn babies were deserted in both urban

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ “Court Trial,” *London Free Press*, Nov. 8, 1865, 3. Ironically, this article mentions Mary Fuller and Mary Hennessey’s arrest. Hennessey gave birth in jail in 1870, five years after this arrest. Her infant girl also died soon after her birth. See Western Archives, *Coroner’s Inquests, Middlesex County*, “Hennessey, female baby,” Apr. 2, 1870.”

⁵⁴⁷ Galley, “‘I did it to hide my shame’,” 86.

⁵⁴⁸ “An Infant’s Death,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 25, 1884, 4. Norton also occasionally worked as a domestic servant in London. Norton’s name appears differently in newspapers and Coroner’s Inquest documents, and sometimes also appears as “Elizabeth Jane McNorgan,” “Elizabeth Jane Morgan,” and “Elizabeth Jane Norgan.” Western Archives, *Coroner’s Inquests, Middlesex County*, “Norton, male baby,” Nov. 26, 1884.”

⁵⁴⁹ “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, Dec. 20, 1884, 8.

⁵⁵⁰ “Local and District Brevities,” *London Free Press*, March 10, 1884, 8.

and rural areas of Middlesex County during the 1880s.⁵⁵¹ In the late summer of 1884, two youths called on County Detective Fred Templar in London, claiming to have found a baby boy in a field on Wharncliffe Road, dressed in “presentable clothing” with a few blankets draped around him.⁵⁵² Templar consulted one of the women on the board of the WCA, and she arranged for the child to be brought to the Women’s Refuge later that night.⁵⁵³ The infant eventually died, “never having recovered from the cold and exposure caught during its stay in the open air.”⁵⁵⁴

A notable case occurred in the spring of 1884 at the Ontario House, a hotel on the corner of Dundas and Talbot Streets. A woman in the front room was approached by a young mother and asked to hold her boy for a moment while she stepped outside.⁵⁵⁵ His mother never returned, and the police insisted that the woman look after the infant until they were able to find him a home with a family in the north end of the city.⁵⁵⁶ Later that year, another child was abandoned at the jail before Christmas and local women arranged for him to be admitted to the Protestant Orphan’s Home.⁵⁵⁷

The high numbers of abandoned infants in London indicate that women were either unable to access religiously affiliated refuges for children or that these homes were too full to admit children when mothers inquired. Historian Karen Bridget Murray argues that there was a lack of institutional support for unwed mothers and their children in the late nineteenth century because

⁵⁵¹ This occurred in other Ontario cities as well, including Hamilton and Brantford. In this case, a couple was arrested for leaving their child in the snow to die. “Hamilton Happenings,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 17, 1885, 4.

⁵⁵² “Deserted Infant,” *The Daily Free Press, London, Ont.*, Sept. 3, 1884, 3.

⁵⁵³ “W.C.A.: Work Done During the Month,” *London Advertiser*, Dec. 5, 1884, 1.

⁵⁵⁴ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 1, 1884, 8.

⁵⁵⁵ “Deserted Her Child,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 7, 1884, 8.

⁵⁵⁶ “A Narrow Escape,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 8, 1884, 2.

⁵⁵⁷ “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, Dec. 20, 1884, 8. The Protestant Orphans’ Home Board decided to admit the young boy into the home later that month. He spent his first Christmas with forty-five other children in the home.

society largely understood illegitimate birth as a private, or “individual problem” that was therefore “separate from a political domain of government intervention.”⁵⁵⁸ London had privately-run institutions of refuge for women and infants which were led by married religious women who hoped to help the urban poor and “rescue some erring ones from the paths of sin.”⁵⁵⁹ The WCA operated both the Protestant Orphans’ Home and the Infants’ Home, which admitted “all such early specimens of suffering humanity, legitimate or otherwise.”⁵⁶⁰ Some women were able to join their babies in the Infants’ Home because it acted as a “refuge for the fallen,” and could house up to twelve “unfortunate girls” at a time.⁵⁶¹ Women were required to help nurse other children in addition to their own, which not all were inclined to do.⁵⁶² Like other major cities, London also had a Magdalen Asylum to shelter women and infants.⁵⁶³ The Sisters of St. Joseph also operated institutions for orphans and unmarried woman in Middlesex, including the Roman Catholic Orphanage and the Roman Catholic House of Refuge.⁵⁶⁴ In total, London had three children’s homes that received government aid.⁵⁶⁵ Despite the numerous charitable institutions in the city, these homes were almost always full to capacity, and were insufficiently funded to respond adequately to community needs.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁵⁸ Karen Bridget Murray, “Governing Unwed Mothers in Toronto at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 85.2 (June 2004): 253-4.

⁵⁵⁹ “Women’s Christian Association: The Annual Meeting,” *London Free Press*, May 27, 1885, 8.

⁵⁶⁰ “An Appeal,” *London Advertiser*, Dec. 15, 1884, 3.

⁵⁶¹ “An Appeal,” *London Advertiser*, Dec. 15, 1884, 3; “The Relief of the Poor,” Apr. 23, 1883, 2.

⁵⁶² Western Archives, *Coroner’s Inquests, Middlesex County*, “Norton, male baby,” November 26, 1884. Elizabeth Jane Norton left the Home because she did not feel comfortable nursing other women’s children.

⁵⁶³ “Provincial Charities,” *London Advertiser*, Jan. 29, 1883, 2.

⁵⁶⁴ “Orphans,” *London Free Press*, March 14, 1884, 5.

⁵⁶⁵ “Care for the Friendless,” *London Advertiser*, Dec. 30, 1884, 2.

⁵⁶⁶ “The Refuge: What the Provincial Inspector Says about It,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 8, 1884, 6. Dr. W. J. O’Reilly, the Provincial Inspector of Public Charities for Ontario, inspected the Infant’s Home and Women’s Refuge on July 18, 1883. His report stated: “This is an excellent charity, doing good work, but struggling with poverty. It is to be hoped that the time will come when there will be sufficient means at the disposal of the managers to greatly increase the capacity of the institution.”

Consequently, pregnant women in the London sex trade had few options to legally deal with unwanted children. The lack of social services and child-care options for single working women in the late nineteenth century led many to resort to infanticide.⁵⁶⁷ Infanticide was a major problem in Middlesex County in the 1880s. Police and doctors were often unable to identify the parents of infants who were found dead in the region, suggesting that the women who committed infanticide faced few repercussions if they were careful about concealing their pregnancies and disposing of the bodies.⁵⁶⁸ One such case where the mother was unknown played out in the summer of 1885. A plumber found the decomposing body of an infant boy while cleaning the water closet behind a house on Ridout Street, and he quickly notified police, who moved the body to the morgue.⁵⁶⁹ The property had been occupied by several different tenants during the past year, which made determining the child's parentage a difficult task.⁵⁷⁰ Although detectives claimed to be "learning further particulars of the residents of the locality," they eventually concluded that it was impossible to pinpoint with any certainty the mother of a child abandoned to die on a street with countless hotels, brothels, and boarding houses nearby.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁷ Constance Backhouse, "Desperate Women and Compassionate Courts: Nineteenth-Century Infanticide in Canada," *University of Toronto Law Journal* 34.4 (1984): 473. Sarah Howe's child died of malnourishment after she had attempted to place her with a wet nurse, then later the Toronto Infants' Home, where she was refused. Backhouse notes that "this sad tale of one woman's futile efforts to place her infant illustrates why so many women may have turned to outright infanticide. There were simply too few alternatives available."

⁵⁶⁸ Galley, "I did it to hide my shame," 86.

⁵⁶⁹ It was not uncommon for infants to be killed and abandoned in water closets during this time period. Another high-profile case in London occurred later that fall, when Bridget Gallagher, an Irish immigrant, was accused of concealing her pregnancy and subsequently drowning her child in a water closet next to the Queen's Hotel on Carling Street. Gallagher laboured as a domestic servant in London but had unstable employment and worked at various places in the city. She may have also been involved in the sex trade. See: "Is it Child Murder?" *London Free Press*, Oct. 5, 1885, 5; "The Infanticide Case," *London Free Press*, Oct. 12, 1885, 2.

⁵⁷⁰ "A Ghastly Find," *London Free Press*, July 10, 1885, 8.

⁵⁷¹ "Coroner's Inquest," *London Free Press*, July 11, 1885, 8. The house where the infant's body was found was situated in between Reid's hotel and Slater's malehouse, and police frequently raided disorderly houses on Ridout Street. Countless women worked in the area, and many more passed through, stopping for a night at the hotel before moving on.

Although most prostitutes who committed infanticide were never discovered, police were able to identify a few. Officers believed that Elizabeth Jane Norton, a teenager who gave birth in jail while serving time for vagrancy charges, deliberately harmed her child in 1884. Norton likely worked as a street-walker in London because she had been arrested for “vagrancy” at least twice before, was inconsistently employed, and lacked close relations in the city. According to John R. Flock, the Coroner assigned to Norton’s case, she deliberately ruptured her infant’s spinal cord while staying at MacFarlane’s Hotel in London.⁵⁷² In the lead-up to her child’s death, Norton was discharged from prison, and she and her child were sent to the Infant’s Home in London. Members of local women’s organizations were aware of Norton’s situation because they regularly visited the jail to hold religious services.⁵⁷³ Norton departed from the home with her child after a few days because she did not feel comfortable nursing other infants, which was one of the requirements of mothers staying at the institution.⁵⁷⁴ She hoped to find assistance or employment in another city.⁵⁷⁵ Norton eventually ended up back in London, and her child died overnight at the MacFarlane’s Hotel. At the Inquest, both the hotel’s proprietor and the matron of the Infant’s Home emphasized that Norton seemed devoted to her infant and was devastated upon its death. Despite the Coroner’s conclusion that the child’s neck ruptured by “unfair means of culpable or negligent conduct,” the jury decided that it must have been “accidentally ruptured,” and Norton was cleared of any wrongdoing.⁵⁷⁶ The jury at the coroner’s inquest was sympathetic to Norton’s plight, and jurors

⁵⁷² Western Archives, *Coroner’s Inquests, Middlesex County*, “Norton, male baby,” Nov. 26, 1884.”

⁵⁷³ “Women’s Christian Association: The Annual Meeting,” *London Free Press*, May 27, 1885, 8.

⁵⁷⁴ Western Archives, *Coroner’s Inquests, Middlesex County*, “Norton, male baby,” Nov. 26, 1884.” At the Coroner’s Inquest, Elizabeth said that “the reason I left the Home was that I did not want to nurse the other children.”

⁵⁷⁵ Other communities did not want to provide for a destitute girl with a baby, and mayors in Hamilton and Mitchell gave her free train tickets, hoping she would leave. Galley, ““I did it to hide my shame’,” 60.

⁵⁷⁵ Western Archives, *Coroner’s Inquests, Middlesex County*, “Norton, male baby,” Nov. 26, 1884.”

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

even collected money to present to her after the inquest.⁵⁷⁷ The *London Advertiser* followed suit, and emphasized Norton's sadness at the loss of her child. A reporter wrote that "she was sobbing bitterly all morning."⁵⁷⁸ Stories like Lizzie Norton's suggest that Londoners responded to stories about prostitution and unmarried mothers in complex ways depending on their view of a woman's virtue, occasionally responding with pity, while at other times villainizing women by blaming them for their fate.

Women accused of prostitution in London were members of communities that included family, madams, and other prostitutes. Their houses of ill-fame were casual in structure and often used the same spaces for both domestic life and sexual labour. Sex workers' children grew up in houses of ill-fame, were exposed to the sex trade, and saw their mothers' criminalization in the justice system. Some children experienced intolerable living conditions or violence at the hands of their parents, while others were raised in relative wealth if their mothers owned higher-class brothels. Many children born to sex workers entered prostitution themselves because were exposed to the community from a young age. Some, like Esther Arscott, went on to work alongside their parents in houses of ill-fame. Not all prostitutes, however, wanted to become mothers due to economic reasons, personal inclination, or the nature of their work. Desperate situations compelled sex workers to seek out abortionists, sometimes at great risk to their health and safety. Women who gave birth at times abandoned their children or committed infanticide to rid themselves of infants for whom they were unable to raise. London women attempted to assert control over their reproductive systems despite the medical and justice systems' harsh stance against allowing women to access knowledge and materials to make decisions about their sexuality. The next

⁵⁷⁷ "An Infant's Death: Circumstances the Subject of a Coroner's Inquest," *London Advertiser*, Nov. 27, 1884, 1.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

chapter returns to the subject of moral panic and examines how London East politicians targeted wealthy madams to gain popular community support during the municipal campaigns of 1884.

Chapter Four: Municipal Politics and the London East Madams

In the winter of 1885, a Toronto judge ordered the local prison to release a wealthy London East madam on a writ of *habeas corpus*. Pleased by his pronouncement, she packed her belongings and made to leave the jail. Esther Arscott stepped outside the Court House and toward her freedom, but was immediately arrested by Detective Hodge “who stood waiting near the door.”⁵⁷⁹ In the hours since receiving the judge’s order, Middlesex County Crown Attorney Charles Hutchinson issued a fresh warrant charging Esther Arscott with keeping a house of ill-fame at 233 Rectory Street. This warrant marked her fourth arrest since Mayor Charles Lilley of London East first imprisoned her the previous September in an attempt to eliminate sexual vice in the town. Lilley bragged to reporters that he would continue to incarcerate Arscott “as long as the game lasts,” baiting her legal counsel to appeal the new sentence. Unfazed by the latest development, she told the officer leading her away that the arrest was a “put up job, but she would soon find a way to settle the question.”⁵⁸⁰

Esther Arscott’s attempts to avoid imprisonment drew her into a legal battle with the Mayor and Crown Attorney that lasted over three years and was heard at the highest Ontario court. Arscott’s trouble, however, began on September 24th, 1884, when Lilley ordered four officers to raid her house on Rectory Street. Targeting a widowed brothel-owner should have been a low priority for Lilley because his town was facing an unemployment crisis amid preparations for a municipal election. Embarking on a war against prostitution, however, served an important role in his campaign for re-election and London East annexation. Publicly villainizing visible women in the sex trade enabled Lilley to ameliorate London East’s reputation as a hot-bed of crime, garner support from conservative elites who were concerned about sexual vice in the town, and paint his

⁵⁷⁹ “Father’s ‘Escape and Recapture,’” *London Free Press*, Feb. 6, 1885, 3.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

opponents as supporting brothel culture. Affluent, unmarried madams like Esther Arscott and Hattie Outram were examples of the financial and political independence women could earn by working in prostitution, thereby rendering them vulnerable to populist campaigns. Municipal politicians responded to the ongoing moral panic about sexuality and vice by publicly denouncing prominent women in London East's sex trade.

London East became increasingly divided over debates about town annexation in the mid-1880s. The GWR car works fire on September 21st, 1884, resulted in the loss of over four hundred jobs for local labourers, and there was no indication that the company would rebuild east of Adelaide unless it was assured fire protection and access to water.⁵⁸¹ Proponents of amalgamation argued that becoming a ward of London would allow London East to connect pipes to the city's waterlines. Annexationists such as London East Mayor Charles Lilley believed that solving the water problem would persuade factories to rebuild and alleviate the town's unemployment problem. Lilley enjoyed considerable political sway in London East because he was both mayor and the police magistrate, and part of the town was named after him. In 1865, Lilley built a block of stores on the south-east corner of Dundas and Adelaide Streets, establishing the intersection, otherwise known as "Lilley's Corners," as the downtown centre.⁵⁸²

Equally influential residents opposed annexation. Ex-London East Mayor Murray Anderson led the movement against town amalgamation. He had long economic ties to the town and was the first to invest in London East after opening a foundry in 1851. Although Anderson was elected as London's first mayor after its incorporation in the 1850s, he lived east of Adelaide to avoid the city's "urban congestion," and was seen as the "founder" of London East.⁵⁸³ He served

⁵⁸¹ Ross, "London East, 1854-1885," 58.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 15. Lilley was working as a grocer at the time.

⁵⁸³ Brock, *Fragments from the Forks*, 47; Ross, "London East, 1854-1885," 6.

as mayor of London East for three years until 1884, when he was succeeded by Charles Lilley.⁵⁸⁴ During amalgamation discussions, Anderson argued that the town would pay high city taxes in the hopes of gaining water and police services, but continue to be neglected because of its location on the outskirts of London. Anderson was also concerned that London East would lack political sway because most of the population was working-class. In late 1884, he campaigned against Lilley for mayor on a platform of protecting London East as a distinct municipality. Other anti-annexationist councilmen such as John Bartlett and Maurice Baldwin also bid for the civic chair.

Pro-amalgamation campaigners, including Middlesex County Crown Attorney Charles Hutchinson, also hoped that annexation would help the town deal with its reputation for sexual vice and crime. While London had a full police force, the suburb lacked police protection at night because it could only afford to employ one daytime officer to patrol its nearly five thousand inhabitants. The press often implicated London East's working-class neighbourhoods in discussions about crime. The *Advertiser* noted that "the town constable was conspicuously absent" when a "disgraceful" knife fight broke out at the corner of Adelaide Street and Dundas in early October.⁵⁸⁵ Shopkeepers complained to local papers that they could not defend their merchandise from theft, and were "at the mercy of the roughs after night."⁵⁸⁶ In addition to violence and theft, city newspapers expressed concern about prostitution in coverage of police court proceedings in London East. Reports indicated that most brothels were located east of Adelaide, and warned young London women to avoid the town: "No lady will feel safe from molestation in walking

⁵⁸⁴ Ross, "London East, 1854-1885," 124.

⁵⁸⁵ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 2, 1884, 3.

⁵⁸⁶ "A Burning Question: Reasons why London East Should be Annexed to the City," *London Free Press*, Oct. 29, 1884, 3.

along the Hamilton road at night.”⁵⁸⁷ In 1884, a London East councilman admitted to the *London Advertiser* that “Rectory Street is known far and wide for its bad characters.”⁵⁸⁸

This was not the first time that officials expressed concern about the town’s brothels. In 1875, London East passed a by-law to suppress both disorderly houses and houses of ill-fame.⁵⁸⁹ Their motion, however, did little to dissuade local madams and prostitutes from working in the sex trade because the town did not have any police officers to enforce the by-law. A year later, the council appointed London East’s first constable.⁵⁹⁰ In the late 1870s and early 1880s, magistrates in London and London East typically fined sex workers \$10 to \$55 for keeping brothels, and only if a woman was unable to pay would she be sent to prison, usually for up to three months.⁵⁹¹

Amid the increasing moral panic about sexual vice in 1884, London’s magistracy began debating alternative ways for municipalities to fine prostitutes. Although some police magistrates preferred fining sex workers, others expressed concern that the city was profiting from prostitution by collecting payments from sex workers. Women appeared in court numerous times a year and repeatedly paid fines to the county treasury, thereby improving its financial standing, while resuming work in the sex trade.⁵⁹² Magistrates believed that sentencing prostitutes to long terms in prison was the only way to ensure that they did not continue seeing customers. Many of London East’s councilmen and politicians were involved in this debate because they also held positions at the police court. Mayor Charles Lilley was particularly sensitive to the town’s negative reputation for prostitution and crime because in addition to fulfilling duties as civic chair, he was the police

⁵⁸⁷ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 15, 1884, 5.

⁵⁸⁸ “London East: The Social Evil Discussed,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 5, 1884, 1.

⁵⁸⁹ Ross, “London East, 1854-1885,” 40.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

⁵⁹² “London West ‘Bad Boys,’” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 5, 1884, 6. London residents also blamed police for issuing warrants without discretion in order to fund municipal projects.

magistrate at the Town Hall on Rectory Street in the mid-1880s. Lilley and Crown Attorney Charles Hutchinson increasingly supported imposing long jail sentences without the option of bail, placing themselves in opposition to more lenient legal authorities like ex-Mayor Murray Anderson, who worked as a squire.

Amid this atmosphere of moral panic about prostitution and municipal debates about the town's future, Mayor Charles Lilley and Charles Hutchinson embarked on a war against the sex trade. They began by targeting Hattie Outram, a wealthy brothel owner in London East who was known for her affairs with married men. Although details of her early life are unknown, Outram was born somewhere in Ontario in 1854, and was thirty years old in 1884.⁵⁹³ She was likely related to Elizabeth Outram, another notorious London brothel keeper who appeared in the press in the 1860s for numerous prostitution-related charges.⁵⁹⁴ Hattie Outram was keeping a house of ill-fame by the age of twenty-two, when she was arrested in London East.⁵⁹⁵ It is not clear whether she rented in the early years, but by 1884 she owned a home at 67 Elm Street, near Rectory Street, where other upscale brothels were located.⁵⁹⁶ Unlike most houses of ill-fame in the city's sex trade, Outram's high-class operation employed servant girls in addition to numerous female inmates.⁵⁹⁷ As a single woman and a property-owner, Outram was eligible to vote in municipal elections, a

⁵⁹³ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no.167 (Middlesex East), sub-district D1 (London East), page 75, line 19, family no. 372, Hattie Outram.

⁵⁹⁴ It was not uncommon for women to be born into the sex trade and follow in the footsteps of their mothers. For more information on Elizabeth Outram, see: "Police Court News," *London Free Press*, Oct. 14, 1864, 1; "Police Court News," *London Free Press*, Oct. 15, 1864, 1; "Court Trial," *London Free Press*, Nov. 22, 1865, 2; "Police Court," *London Free Press*, Sept. 17, 1866, 1; "Police Court," *London Free Press*, Sept. 18, 1866, 1.

⁵⁹⁵ "Police Court News," *London Free Press*, Feb. 11, 1876, 1.

⁵⁹⁶ Western Archives, *Directories for the City of London and Middlesex County, 1880-1961*, 1884, 1886, Hattie Outram. Her wealth at a young age indicates that she inherited money.

⁵⁹⁷ Jennie Rankin was arrested after police found her in Outram's brothel, but she was dismissed from court after "showing she was employed there as a servant girl." "London East," *London Advertiser*, July 18, 1882, 4.

right denied to most London women who only owned property in their husbands' names.⁵⁹⁸ By her late twenties, Outram's financial success was such that she could afford to be represented by Warren Rock, a respected criminal defense lawyer in London.⁵⁹⁹ Hattie Outram was arrested at least eight times in the late 1870s and 1880s for keeping houses of ill-fame, and Londoners recognized and followed her court cases closely.⁶⁰⁰

Outram's notoriety spread across southwestern Ontario and she was featured numerous times in Toronto newspapers. Torontonians were intrigued by both Outram's wealth and her many romantic affairs with men. In 1879, the *Globe* reported on an incident when Herman Depper, a man with whom Outram had previously been involved, attacked her in public: "Last night excitement was created on Dundas-street by a cabman named Depper running his vehicle into a buggy driven by Hattie Outram, a courtesan, and a female companion. The buggy was overturned, and the girls were thrown out, but escaped unhurt. It seems that Outram was formerly Depper's mistress, but 'shook' him, and thus called down his vengeance."⁶⁰¹ Outram was in the Toronto news again in 1882 when Isaac B. Couse, a constable from Elgin County, accused Alfred Welsh of robbing him in her brothel after the two men went looking for entertainment in Outram's house.⁶⁰² Hattie Outram made headlines for the second time in the Queen City that summer when several young men from St. Mary's smashed furniture in her "bagnio," forcing police to protect her home.⁶⁰³

⁵⁹⁸ Western Archives, *Voters Lists for London Township, 1877-89, 1885, 1886, Hattie Outram.*

⁵⁹⁹ "London East," *London Advertiser*, July 18, 1882, 4; "The Social Evil," *The Globe (1844-1936)*, July 18, 1882, 7.

⁶⁰⁰ For more detail about Outram's numerous arrests, see: "Arrested," *London Free Press*, Sept. 20, 1877, 3; "Before Squires Peters and Smyth," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 3, 1881, 4; "London East," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 28, 1881, 4; "London East," *London Advertiser*, July 18, 1882, 4.

⁶⁰¹ Latest from London," *The Globe (1844-1936)*, June 18, 1879, 1.

⁶⁰² "Business at London and Renfrew Assizes," *The Globe (1844-1936)*, Mar. 23, 1882, 7.

⁶⁰³ "Spending a Holiday," *The Globe (1844-1936)*, July 4, 1882, 3.

Now familiar to Toronto audiences, Outram was featured in the *Globe* later that month when city authorities arrested her for keeping a house of ill-fame. The prosecution summoned fifty-four witnesses in an attempt to incarcerate her. She responded by hiring London's best legal team. Torontonians were intrigued by the sheer size of the trial and Outram's ability to pay high profile lawyers. The press reported that "the citizens of London East have lately been much scandalized by outcroppings of the social evil, and a determined effort is making to clean out the whole business, root and branch. Hattie Outram, a noted character, was before the Courts this morning. There was quite an array of legal talent, Warren Rock, Q.C., appearing for the defendant, who pleaded guilty to keeping a house of ill-fame, and was fined \$40.70."⁶⁰⁴ Warren Rock was one of London's eminent criminal lawyers until his death in 1883.⁶⁰⁵

Hattie Outram achieved celebrity status in London in the spring of 1884. Rumours had been swirling for some time amongst city residents that Outram was having an affair with Edward Grant, a married man who operated a hotel on the Hamilton road.⁶⁰⁶ Grant was formerly employed as a bartender at the London House, but later bought O'Leary's Hotel and moved there with his wife and young child in 1883. According to reports, Grant "proved at first attentive to business and remained faithful to his marital vows, until he became enamored of Hattie Outram, a well-known character, who is the reputed mistress of a house of unsavory reputation a short distance from the hotel."⁶⁰⁷ In February of 1884, his wife became so distraught from Grant's neglect that she brought a revolver to Outram's brothel and attempted to persuade him to return home. When

⁶⁰⁴ "The Social Evil," *The Globe (1844-1936)*, July 18, 1882, 7.

⁶⁰⁵ For more information about Warren Rock, see: Hughes, *History of the Bar of the County of Middlesex*, 31, 50; Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 170 (London City), sub-district F1 (Ward 6), page 77, line 10, family no. 364, Warren Rock.

⁶⁰⁶ There were twelve hotels in London East at the time. Ross, "London East, 1854-1885," 41.

⁶⁰⁷ "A Wife Deserter," *London Free Press*, March 14, 1884, 8.

her efforts failed, she filed a complaint to police, asking them to lay charges against him on the grounds of failing to support her and frequenting a house of ill-fame.

Outram was an easy target for reformers and magistrates looking to eradicate London's sex trade because she was independently wealthy, unmarried, and had a reputation for enticing married men to her house of ill-fame. The public was fascinated by the love triangle, and press reports painted his wife as a "lawful partner" whose "faithless spouse" Edward was enticed away from his marital vows by the "soiled diva," Hattie Outram.⁶⁰⁸ Municipal politicians and legal representatives soon heard about the story. In response to Grant's wife's complaints, County Crown Attorney Charles Hutchinson publicly vowed to "rid the town of the presence of such a pestilential abode of sin."⁶⁰⁹ He was also Clerk of the Peace for the County of Middlesex and practiced law in London at Hutchinson and McKillop.⁶¹⁰ Hutchinson was known for his "puritanical" outlook on issues of morality, and he and his wife, Annie, were vocal supporters of the temperance movement in southwestern Ontario and members of the Church of England.⁶¹¹ Hutchinson directed Squire Edwards to issue warrants for Grant, Hattie Outram, and anyone else found in her brothel.⁶¹² Charles Lilley followed suit and issued his own statements. Londoners read headlines such as "The Social Evil" and "Mayor Lilley to Rid the Town of the Gang." Lilley told *Free Press* reporters that he was determined to "drive these evil characters from the town

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ "The Social Evil: Another Installment of Its Votaries Before the Bureau," *London Free Press*, March 14, 1884, 5.

⁶¹⁰ Armstrong, "Obscenity in Victorian London," 181.

⁶¹¹ Ibid. Hutchinson was involved in prosecuting for the Lotto Davene case. As Armstrong notes, Hutchinson even advocated against distributing wine at communion in church, suggesting that it might lead to liquor dependencies. His wife was a prominent member of the local branch of the WCA. "W.C.A.: Work Done During the Month," *London Advertiser*, Dec. 5, 1884, 1.

⁶¹² "The Social Evil: Another Installment of Its Votaries Before the Bureau," *London Free Press*, March 14, 1884, 5.

altogether.”⁶¹³ Outram’s image as a home-wrecker who encouraged prostitution made her a worthy target for Lilley, who was gearing up for an important upcoming municipal election and needed popular support.

On the evening of March 12th, Detective Hodge and three constables made their way to Outram’s house of ill-fame. When no one responded to their knocks, the four men burst the door open and immediately arrested Edward Grant, Hattie Outram, and Minnie Baker, a prostitute. The three other women Outram employed escaped out the window and over the back fence and were followed by two men who police declined to name. According to the *London Advertiser*, one woman was caught when she fell into a post hole full of water, and another was out run by Detective Hodge, who also caught the men.⁶¹⁴ The group was brought before Squires Edwards and Hannah, who fined Edward Grant and the other men \$5 and costs for frequenting Outram’s house of ill-fame.⁶¹⁵

The two magistrates had trouble determining what to do with Outram and Minnie Baker, or as the press referred to them, the “two prominent prostitutes.”⁶¹⁶ Their hearing exposed dissonance in the London magistracy’s stance on prostitution, which disputed the proper way to address punishing madams and the women they employed. According to the *Free Press*, “Outram was charged with being the keeper of the house and Baker with being an inmate thereof, but the Magistrates did not agree, Squire Edwards considering that the women should be sentenced to a term of imprisonment, while Hannah favoured the imposition of a fine and costs.” Some magistrates, including Squire Hannah, preferred fining sex workers. Squire Edwards, on the other

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ “London East: Midnight Arrests,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 13, 1884, 1.

⁶¹⁵ “The Social Evil: Another Installment of Its Votaries Before the Bureau,” *London Free Press*, March 14, 1884, 5.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

hand, was concerned that the city was profiting from prostitution and demanded incarceration to prevent Outram and Baker from continuing their operations. The squires failed to reach a compromise, and the women were released on bail to return that afternoon for a decision.⁶¹⁷ Neither Outram nor Baker returned to their hearing. George Moorehead defended the women in their absence. He was a member of Meredith & Meredith's office, a London law firm that represented other wealthy brothel owners, including Susan Hall and Maud McPhee.⁶¹⁸ Moorehead pleaded guilty on their behalf, and the magistrates sentenced Outram in absentia to six months' imprisonment and twenty-five dollars' worth of fines.⁶¹⁹ The press speculated that Grant and Outram left town because city residents claimed to have seen them at a livery stable the next morning.⁶²⁰

Mayor Lilley was furious that the magistrates failed to convict Outram and responded by issuing his own warrant for her arrest. However, Lilley was denied the "opportunity of dispensing justice" at the police court because neither Outram nor Grant appeared at their rescheduled times, thus confirming rumours that the two had skipped town.⁶²¹ Reports later posited that the lovers were in Detroit, just across the US border.⁶²² Charles Hutchinson issued statements denouncing Squires Hannah and Edwards for being indecisive. According to the *Advertiser*, "the County Crown Attorney is making rigid inquiry into the circumstances of the late Outram-Grant case in London East. He strongly disapproves of the course of the Magistrates in releasing on their own

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

⁶¹⁸ "London East: Midnight Arrests," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 13, 1884, 1.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid. Baker was fined \$12 and three months' in jail.

⁶²⁰ "A Wife Deserter," *London Free Press*, March 14, 1884, 8.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² "Local and District Brevities," *London Free Press*, April 1, 1884, 8.

bail Outram and another woman on the night of the arrest, as the pair have taken advantage of the circumstance to escape.”⁶²³

There was a renewed interest in convicting prostitutes and reporting on the sex trade after Hattie Outram’s escape. To compensate for the criticism London East received after the Outram-Grant affair, Lilley and Hutchinson spent the spring and summer sentencing other local women for prostitution-related charges, including Esther Arscott, Mary Blow, Annie Devoy, and Catherine Hastings.⁶²⁴ The Mayor discussed appointing a junior constable to patrol the streets east of Adelaide at night to further curb the sex trade.⁶²⁵ London newspapers also expressed anti-prostitution sentiment after Outram’s escape, and reported on several high-profile brothel raids in London East, describing “fearful dens” of prostitution, “of which few dreamed there existed anything of the kind in this city.”⁶²⁶ The press was sympathetic towards women whose lives had been negatively affected by the town’s brothel culture. The *Advertiser* announced that Edward Grant’s wife intended to apply for a divorce from her husband and hoped to find employment in domestic service while a friend looked after her child.⁶²⁷

In addition to reading about London East’s efforts to rid the town of vice, local residents were interested in hearing from the madams themselves. On one occasion, residents crowded the local barracks to hear an ex-prostitute speak about her experiences keeping a house of ill-fame on Rectory Street for over two decades, right around the corner from Hattie Outram’s brothel. According to the *Advertiser*, she had “lately experienced religion,” and “testified to the change

⁶²³ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 18, 1884, 2.

⁶²⁴ “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, Apr. 26, 1884, 8; “London East,” *London Advertiser*, May 16, 1884, 1; “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, June 20, 1884, 8; “London East,” *London Advertiser*, June 23, 1884, 5.

⁶²⁵ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, July 29, 1884, 8.

⁶²⁶ “Police Court: A Fearful Den,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 20, 1884, 3; “Police Court,” *London Free Press*, March 18, 1884, 5.

⁶²⁷ “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, Apr. 29, 1884, 8.

wrought in her.” The woman reportedly closed her establishment and kicked out all the girls except one who “promised to lead a new life.” Although most attendees were sympathetic to the woman’s plight, others were less affected by the serious nature of the lecture. An “evil-minded youth” set off a fire cracker towards the end of the evening, and a “diligent search was made with a view of discovering the perpetrator.”⁶²⁸

Londoners were reminded of the Outram-Grant drama in late September, when Hattie Outram returned to the city and gave herself up to police. On September 23rd, two days after the GWR car works burned down, Mayor Lilley tried Outram for keeping a house of ill-fame and contempt of court.⁶²⁹ As the *Advertiser* reported, “the information was laid by the wife of a man who is supposed to have frequented the defendant’s house. A summons was issued for the defendant to appear several months ago, but she suddenly left town, and on returning recently was arrested for contempt of court. The old charge could not be proven, owing to the absence of the complainant’s husband and the case was dismissed. The Mayor imposed a fine of \$5 and costs for contempt of court.”⁶³⁰ Outram was advised by her legal counsel that if she waited long enough to return to London and did not bring Grant, the warrant for her arrest would expire and she would not be charged. Lilley lost his chance to finally imprison Hattie Outram on prostitution charges but turned his attention to another prominent brothel-owner later that afternoon.

Embarrassed that his promise to rid London East of Outram and her inmates fell through, Mayor Lilley issued a warrant to arrest Esther Arscott, another famous woman in the sex trade,

⁶²⁸ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Apr. 26, 1884, 1.

⁶²⁹ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 24, 1884, 1. Outram was first tried on September 20th, when Squire Edwards fined her \$1 and costs on a charge of drunkenness and disorderly conduct dating back to February. “London East,” *London Free Press*, Sept. 22, 1884, 3; “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 22, 1884, 8.

⁶³⁰ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 24, 1884, 1.

mere hours after Outram was discharged.⁶³¹ Esther Arscott (nee Forsyth) was a forty-two-year-old widow who operated a high-class brothel in London East, at 233 Rectory Street.⁶³² She and her daughter Mary lived next door.⁶³³ Her late husband, William Arscott, had worked as a tanner until his death of epilepsy the year prior.⁶³⁴ Arscott was a sex worker for most of her life, and her parents had operated a house of ill-fame as early as the late 1850s.⁶³⁵ By the time she was in her early thirties, Arscott was managing her own brothels, and faced frequent charges in the 1870s for keeping houses of ill-fame in London East, as well as selling liquor without licenses.⁶³⁶

Arscott's considerable fortune made her a symbol of the sex trade in southwestern Ontario. By 1878, her fame spread to Toronto, and, like Hattie Outram, Arscott was featured numerous times in Toronto papers. When Arscott and her husband were arrested for vagrancy in 1881, a *Globe* story remarked with surprise that "as a matter of fact they are wealthy, but acquired their money and property through keeping a house of ill-fame."⁶³⁷ By the 1880s, the Arscotts owned at least three houses on Rectory, Van, and Grey Street, and had numerous other assets, including horses and a carriage.⁶³⁸ After William's death in 1883, Esther Arscott became a property owner

⁶³¹ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 25, 1884, 8.

⁶³² This residence was later re-numbered to 201 Rectory Street. Western Archives, *Directories for the City of London and Middlesex County, 1880-1961*, 1886, Esther Arscott, 201 Rectory Street; Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 167 (Middlesex East), sub-district D1 (London East), page 54, line 12, family no. 263, Mary Arscott.

⁶³³ Armstrong, "East London Madam," C4.

⁶³⁴ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 167 (Middlesex East), sub-district D1 (London East), page 54, line 10, family no. 263, William Arscott; Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Collection: *MS935*; Reel: 34. *Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869-1947*. William Arscott, 1883, epilepsy.

⁶³⁵ Armstrong, "East London Madam," C4.

⁶³⁶ "Police Court News," *London Free Press*, Sept. 24, 1877, 3; "Magistrate's Court," *London Free Press*, Dec. 31, 1877, 4.

⁶³⁷ "Wealthy Vagrants," *The Globe (1844-1936)*, Oct. 6, 1881, 3.

⁶³⁸ Western Archives, *Voters Lists for London Township, 1877-89*, 1886, 1887, 1888, Esther Arscott; 1886, London East, William Arscott.

in her own name, and, like Outram, was one of the few female voters in London East municipal elections.

London elites were not pleased with the method by which Arscott earned her fortune, and she was often criticized by police, wives of male frequenters, and magistrates. Constable William Nickle condemned Esther Arscott in the 1870s and accused her of causing the downfall of young men who frequented her establishment, including his own son.⁶³⁹ It did not help that local women were occasionally driven to seek out police assistance to hunt down their husbands in Arscott's house, where they were usually found spending their wages on liquor and women.⁶⁴⁰ In addition to keeping her own house of ill-fame, Arscott was seen to be encouraging other women to keep brothels. In 1880, she was accused of renting a property in her possession to Susan Hall, despite "knowing that it was going to be used for such a purpose."⁶⁴¹ In 1881, Squires Peters and Edwards promised to drop prostitution charges against Arscott and her husband if the couple left the town within two weeks. Neither left London East, and Esther continued her profitable operations throughout the 1880s.⁶⁴²

It is no coincidence that on the same afternoon that Hattie Outram's prostitution-related charges were dismissed at the London East town hall, Mayor Lilley issued a warrant for Esther Arscott's arrest and sent several constables to her house. Although likely intended to create favourable press for London East, the arrest did not go as planned. To Lilley's chagrin, the four police officers failed to detain Arscott's prostitutes, or any of the men found in the brothel at the

⁶³⁹ Armstrong, "East London Madam," C4.

⁶⁴⁰ "Spending His Money," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 8, 1880, 1.

⁶⁴¹ "London East," *London Advertiser*, May 22, 1880, 1.

⁶⁴² "London East," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 4, 1881, 4; "London East," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 26, 1881, 4. Constance Backhouse speculates that Esther may have ceased operations after her marriage to William Arscott. It is clear, however, from press reports in London and Toronto that she was closely involved in the sex trade throughout her marriage, and William may have also participated in keeping brothels, as he was charged several times alongside his wife. Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, 245.

time. Furthermore, press reports the following morning stated that fourteen prostitutes and men were handcuffed and could have been brought to the station, but police were convinced to release all the prisoners “after a little parleying” with Esther Arscott.⁶⁴³ Events like these did nothing for London East’s reputation of being soft on crime and allowing prostitution to proliferate because the police were seen to be sympathetic to Arscott’s interests at the expense of protecting moral residents from sexual vice.

The constables arrested Esther Arscott and a prostitute, Mary Blow.⁶⁴⁴ Mayor Lilley and County Crown Attorney Hutchinson charged Arscott with selling liquor without a license and keeping a house of ill-fame. She pleaded guilty for the first charge and paid the “usual fine” of \$20.⁶⁴⁵ For the latter charge of keeping a brothel, Lilley and Hutchinson sentenced her to six months of hard labour, without the option of a fine or bail.⁶⁴⁶ Lilley and Hutchinson remembered the trouble that local magistrates had determining how to incarcerate Hattie Outram earlier that year, and refused to allow Arscott to avoid serving prison time by paying fines or bail. London magistrates typically fined women \$10 to \$55 for keeping brothels, and only if a woman was unable to pay would she be sent to prison.⁶⁴⁷ Upon hearing her sentence, Arscott asked Edmund Allen Meredith for advice as to how to proceed. Edmund Meredith was one of the leading criminal lawyers in London at the time, particularly for defending vice charges.⁶⁴⁸ Meredith’s family was

⁶⁴³ “London East Constables’ Difficulty,” *London Free Press*, Sept. 24, 1884, 2.

⁶⁴⁴ Mayor Lilley fined Mary Blow \$20 and costs or 21 days in jail. “County Magistrate’s Court,” *London Free Press*, Sept. 25, 1884, 2.

⁶⁴⁵ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 27, 1884, 3.

⁶⁴⁶ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 25, 1884, 8.

⁶⁴⁷ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

⁶⁴⁸ For more information about Edmund Meredith’s other legal work, see Brock, *History of the County of Middlesex*; Hughes, *History of the Bar of the County of Middlesex*.

visible in London society.⁶⁴⁹ Since 1880, Meredith provided legal counsel for at least two other brothel keepers, Susan Hall and Maud McPhee.⁶⁵⁰ In addition to his legal work, Meredith was also a successful politician, having served as the Mayor of London from 1882 to 1883.⁶⁵¹ He was a respectable and prominent resident of the city who knew the major London politicians of the day. There is no evidence that Meredith's reputation suffered when he represented prostitutes in court.

While Meredith spent the following day negotiating with Lilley and Hutchinson to release Esther Arscott, city police raided at least two other brothels, thereby continuing their crusade against prostitution.⁶⁵² In response to Meredith's appeal, Lilley and Hutchinson set Arscott's bail at \$500 with two sureties of \$250 each, a shockingly high rate.⁶⁵³ Meredith decided that further negotiation would be fruitless, and sought out Squire Murray Anderson, another ex-Mayor of London and current justice of the peace.⁶⁵⁴ Anderson accepted Meredith's application for bail set at \$300, with two lowered sureties of \$150 each.⁶⁵⁵ Esther Arscott paid her bail and was released from jail.

⁶⁴⁹ Edmund Meredith's brothers were highly successful. Richard Martin Meredith co-founded the University of Western Ontario, Sir Henry Vincent Meredith was the President of the Bank of Canada, and Sir William Ralph Meredith was Leader of the Ontario Conservative Party.

⁶⁵⁰ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 10, 1880, 4; "A Little Too Sudden," *London Advertiser*, Aug. 4, 1881, 4. In fact, George Moorehead, also of Meredith & Meredith, had represented Hattie Outram earlier that year. See "London East: Midnight Arrests," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 13, 1884, 1.

⁶⁵¹ Brock, *History of the County of Middlesex*, 258.

⁶⁵² One was operated by Mrs. Bryan, with an inmate named Mrs. Walton. They left London before their trial. See: "London and Precincts," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 25, 1884, 8; "Police Court," *London Free Press*, Oct. 3, 1884, 3. Another brothel was raided at 172 Bathurst Street was run by Elizabeth Kenny, and a prostitute named Louise Graham (also referred to as Jennie Graham) was arrested. Three male frequenters were also charged. See: "Police Court," *London Free Press*, Sept. 25, 1884, 2; "London and Precincts," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 26, 1884, 8; "Local and District," *London Free Press*, Sept. 26, 1884, 8.

⁶⁵³ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 27, 1884, 3.

⁶⁵⁴ Murray Anderson was London's first mayor after it was incorporated as a city in 1855. At the time, Anderson worked as a tinsmith. Brock, *Fragments from the Forks*, 47.

⁶⁵⁵ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 27, 1884, 3. Mary Blow was also released from prison after Meredith appealed against Lilley's sentence "on the ground of irregularities."

Meredith was aware that Murray Anderson would likely oppose Lilley's sentence because of his "personal hostility" toward the Mayor.⁶⁵⁶ Anderson and Lilley had a history of competition in municipal politics and both held differing visions for London East's future because Anderson opposed annexation. Murray Anderson was Lilley's main political rival at the time and ran against him for mayor later that year. Anderson enjoyed considerable political sway in London East because he was mayor for the first three years of its incorporation and residents looked up to him as the "founder" of their town.⁶⁵⁷

The day after Arscott was released, Lilley complained to a *Free Press* journalist that Anderson's "unwarrantable interference" only served to ruin "his efforts to free the town from vice."⁶⁵⁸ Later that week, the *Free Press* confirmed its support for Lilley and Hutchinson by publishing an article titled "How Far Spite Will Justify a 'Professing Christian' Magistrate to Thwart the Efforts of Mayor Lilley in Suppressing Crime and Vice."⁶⁵⁹ The report included correspondence from Hutchinson that denounced Murray Anderson as irreligious and envious of Lilley's political success. According to Hutchinson, Anderson's "jealousy of feeling" toward Mayor Lilley induced him to "listen to the voice of the charmer" rather than act for the good of the town.⁶⁶⁰ The two portrayed themselves as crusaders fighting against politicians behold to the "sinister influences" of criminal women with "money and backing" like Esther Arscott.⁶⁶¹ Lilley

⁶⁵⁶ Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, 248.

⁶⁵⁷ Lutman and Hives, *The North and the East of London*, 54.

⁶⁵⁸ "Squire Anderson's Little Game," *London Free Press*, Sept. 25, 1884, 2.

⁶⁵⁹ "Unlawful Interference: A Case Demanding the Attention of the Attorney-General," *London Free Press*, Sept. 27, 1884, 8.

⁶⁶⁰ "Re: Esther Arscott," *London Free Press*, Sept. 27, 1884, 8.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*

ended his letter to the editor with a plea to London Easters: “I hope and trust there are enough good living people to assist me in driving every house of ill-fame from London East.”⁶⁶²

Murray Anderson responded by publishing a letter in the *London Advertiser* that pointed out what he perceived to be Lilley’s true intentions. He argued that Lilley’s war on houses of ill-fame was merely a political maneuver for his upcoming campaign: “Now, as to Mr. Lilley’s observations, I can only say that it looks very much as if his letter, and, perhaps, his conduct throughout this matter, is a ‘ward political scheme.’ It is getting on towards municipal election times, and Mr. Lilley perhaps feels the need of some sensation in his cause.”⁶⁶³ Anderson dismissed Hutchinson and Lilley as acting solely in the interests of pandering to populists for political support while burying legitimate appeals.⁶⁶⁴

Anderson also defended the lawfulness of his role in Arscott’s case, arguing that Lilley was acting against British law by withholding the option of bail. He noted that he could have been criminally prosecuted if he did not allow Arscott to appeal, post bail, and subsequently, be liberated. In response to Hutchinson and Lilley’s claims that he should have considered Arscott’s “vile character” before deciding her case, Anderson argued that “every British subject, no matter what his age, character, or condition in life” had the right to a fair trial.⁶⁶⁵ “But can any man,” he continued, “in his sober senses, say she shall remain in prison three months on the chances of Mr. Lilley being right, when the Act of Parliament says she shall be liberated until the next court

⁶⁶² “Unlawful Interference: A Case Demanding the Attention of the Attorney-General,” *London Free Press*, Sept. 27, 1884, 8.

⁶⁶³ “The London East Case,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 30, 1884, 6.

⁶⁶⁴ Hutchinson responded by claiming that Edmund Meredith actually wrote Anderson’s letter. “Free Press Correspondence: Mr. Hutchinson to Mr. E. Meredith,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 2, 1884, 3; “Mr. Hutchinson Replies,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 3, 1884, 6.

⁶⁶⁵ “The London East Case,” *London Advertiser*, Sept. 30, 1884, 6.

competent to try her case.”⁶⁶⁶ In Anderson’s eyes, it did not matter what Arscott was accused of, so long as she was treated equally under British law.

After securing her release from prison, Esther Arscott and Edmund Meredith immediately appealed Hutchinson and Lilley’s judgement. Arscott pleaded her innocence on the grounds that the conviction was irregular and that Lilley “had no jurisdiction to hear or determine the cases or sentence the appellants.”⁶⁶⁷ The appeal was to be heard at the Court of the General Sessions that December.

In the two months before the sessions, Charles Lilley worked to convince London Easters that he was acting in their best interests by taking a stand against Esther Arscott. Many community members who were fed up with the area’s negative reputation supported his war against prostitution. In early October, a “prominent ratepayer” visited Lilley to congratulate him on his public stance against Esther Arscott and other “disreputable characters” who brought vice to the town.⁶⁶⁸ When he offered to present Lilley with a petition of signatures, Lilley reportedly “begged of the gentlemen and his friends that they would do no such thing,” arguing that “he had only done his duty to the electors and to society at large, and that if he had taken a less pronounced stand he would have been wanting in his duty as the people’s representative, as Mayor of the town, as a magistrate and a moral man.”⁶⁶⁹ The Mayor then directed the gentleman to present the petition to the London East town council, hoping that petitioners would protest “against the existence of notorious and disreputable characters in the town,” and pray for council’s “efforts to suppress all vicious characters.”

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 2, 1884, 3.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

Emboldened by the community support for his recent stand against prostitution, Mayor Lilley also attempted to garner public backing from his fellow London East councilmen. At a council meeting on October 23rd, Lilley asked them to instruct the solicitor to help himself and Hutchinson defend Esther Arscott's appeal.⁶⁷⁰ Although he and the County Crown Attorney already had the jurisdiction to defend the appeal, Lilley wanted official support from the town for his war on vice and decision in the Arscott case. He also hoped that London East would pay his legal costs. However, Lilley's request led to considerable debate in the Town Hall, and only two councilmen endorsed him and Hutchinson in the subsequent vote.

Seven councilmen voted against interfering in the Arscott case, most of whom were concerned about town corruption and financial cost. Representatives were uncomfortable with the idea of the town council interfering with police court proceedings. Councillor Heaman spoke for many when he argued that although he did not support the existence of houses of ill-fame, "he considered the whole matter of the appeal and the Mayor's action in the cases entirely foreign to the duties of a municipal council."⁶⁷¹ Councilmen were also concerned about further jeopardizing the financial standing of London East. Realizing that Esther Arscott had the money to pay for a drawn-out legal battle involving prominent lawyers like Edmund Meredith, six refused to back Lilley out of fear that the town would be forced to pay her costs if the appeal was sustained.

Other councillors disagreed with the basic premise of incarcerating sex workers instead of issuing fines and their debates revealed dissent among municipal officials about the proper way for a municipality to address prostitution. Councilman Maurice Baldwin was an out-spoken critic of Lilley's policy toward Esther Arscott, and, like Anderson, he had a history with Charles Lilley. In the summer of 1884, Lilley charged Baldwin with "disgraceful and disorderly conduct" toward

⁶⁷⁰ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 23, 1884, 8.

⁶⁷¹ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 30, 1884, 8.

him at a city bonfire.⁶⁷² He also campaigned against Lilley for mayor that year on an anti-annexation platform.⁶⁷³ Baldwin argued that “if he had been in the Mayor’s place, he would have fined the women \$50 and costs, and the town would have been so much the richer. This appeal business cost too much money.”⁶⁷⁴ He claimed that it was “not right to pick out this house and impose on it, leaving other houses in the town alone.”⁶⁷⁵ Baldwin knew that incarcerating one woman would do nothing to curb London’s sex trade because there were countless other brothels in the east end that would gladly cater to Arscott’s customers. He also believed that allowing brothels to exist served to protect virtuous women in the town from men’s sexual overtures. When Councillor Gardiner asked for the locations of the other houses, Baldwin responded “O, you go around into as many holes and corners as I do; and bet your sweet life you know all about them.” Gardiner protested that refusing to support Lilley’s efforts to “rid the town of such a standing disgrace” would indicate to London Easters “that the Council favored the existence of disreputable houses.”⁶⁷⁶ Gardiner argued that “the addition of a clause endorsing the Mayor’s action was certainly in the interests of the town morality.”⁶⁷⁷ Reeve Bartlett agreed, and the pair voted to sustain the Mayor’s action out of concern for London East’s reputation of being soft on prostitution.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷² “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Aug. 5, 1884, 8. The *Advertiser* reported: “Mayor Lilley waited until 10 o’clock last night for the written apology from Councillor Baldwin, but no apology, either written or verbal, came from the troublesome Councillor. The Mayor then proceeded to Squire Jarvis’ office, where he laid an information against Baldwin, charging him with disgraceful and disorderly conduct. The Mayor in his official capacity was powerless to defend himself or retaliate, although he felt much inclined to give the burly Baldwin a lesson in the art of self-defence. Baldwin was summoned to appear before Squire Jarvis tomorrow morning at 10 o’clock.”

⁶⁷³ “Civic Nominations: Candidates for the Various City Offices,” *London Advertiser*, Dec. 30, 1884, 3.

⁶⁷⁴ “London East Council: Protracted Discussion on the Social Evil,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 23, 1884, 8.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁶ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 23, 1884, 8.

⁶⁷⁷ “London East Council: Protracted Discussion on the Social Evil,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 23, 1884, 8.

⁶⁷⁸ Bartlett was the only anti-annexationist who supported a tough stance on brothels. He strongly opposed annexation and ran for mayor against Lilley at the end of 1884. After losing the civic chair to Lilley in January, Bartlett helped Murray Anderson organize an anti-amalgamation campaign in February of 1885.

The remaining seven council members refused to even issue a statement in support of Lilley and Hutchinson. Mayor Lilley was furious at the outcome of their vote, threatening that he would “in future dismiss all such cases brought before him, no matter if there were 50 houses of ill-fame in the town.”⁶⁷⁹ News of Lilley’s announcement spread to other surrounding centres, and Hamilton papers reported that “London East may now look for a rapid increase of the population” because brothel keepers would be ensured a “haven of rest.”⁶⁸⁰

Despite the council’s lukewarm response at the meeting, London Easters voiced their support for Lilley’s crusade against prostitution and criticized his fellow councillors for refusing to publicly back Hutchinson and the Mayor. After the council vote, John Dawe read a petition signed by fifty residents pleading the town council to eliminate houses of ill-fame on Rectory Street because they lowered their property value and “disgraced the whole neighborhood.”⁶⁸¹ One of the petitioners condemned the councilmen’s stand to an *Advertiser* reporter the following day: “He expressed the opinion that it reflects anything but credit on the councillors, even if it was not within the province of the Council to take action in the appeals, he thought that it would have done no harm if the Council had expressed their approval of the stand taken by the Mayor and supported him.”⁶⁸²

Councillor Heaman received so much criticism from ratepayers that he was forced to issue a statement to local newspapers explaining that he did not endorse prostitution in London East.⁶⁸³ Councillor Showler also faced backlash for his vote against Lilley and vehemently denied an

“London East: The Nominees Address the Electors,” *London Advertiser*, Dec. 30, 1884, 4; “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Feb. 10, 1885, 8.

⁶⁷⁹ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 23, 1884, 8.

⁶⁸⁰ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 25, 1884, 6.

⁶⁸¹ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 23, 1884, 8. Western Archives, Western University, London, Ontario, *Charles Hutchinson Fonds*, Papers, 1885-88, B4171-001.

⁶⁸² “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 24, 1884, 8.

⁶⁸³ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 30, 1884, 8.

amalgamation meeting in December that he condoned houses of ill-fame.⁶⁸⁴ Showler was also criticized at the gathering for his belief that annexation should be delayed until the car works problem was resolved. Many of Lilley's political opponents, including Baldwin, Showler, and Anderson, were portrayed as allowing brothels to proliferate and preventing amalgamation with London against their better judgement.

Lilley's war on vice had the desired effect of galvanizing populist community support for his campaign and London East annexation, at the expense of local sex workers like Esther Arcott. In addition to criticizing Lilley's councilmen, ratepayers began demanding progress on amalgamation by circulating petitions, holding public rallies in Town Hall, and attending council meetings.⁶⁸⁵ By the end of the month, papers stated that annexation was the "live question of the day" and "becoming daily more and more favorable to the citizens of London East" to solve the town's dire financial situation.⁶⁸⁶ In early November, Mayor Lilley published a manifesto that announced himself to be strongly pro-amalgamation for the good of London East, while Murray Anderson continued to advocate against union with the city.⁶⁸⁷

Reporters often used interviews with magistrates about police protection as opportunities to promote town annexation. One journalist published a scathing interview with Squires Jarvis and McLeod about London East's policing. Jarvis criticized the town for failing to conjure the funds to pay for a night constable. McLeod added that "if London East can't afford to employ two constables for a town of 4,000 inhabitants, one for night and one for day, then the quicker they get

⁶⁸⁴ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Dec. 24, 1884, 4.

⁶⁸⁵ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Nov. 1, 1884, 8.

⁶⁸⁶ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Oct. 30, 1884, 8; "London East," *London Advertiser*, Nov. 4, 1884, 8.

⁶⁸⁷ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Nov. 11, 1884, 8. Western Archives, Western University, London, Ontario. *Seaborne Collection, Charles Lilley Scrapbook*, AFC 20-20.

into the city the better it will be for everybody who has anything to lose in the town.”⁶⁸⁸ The report concluded that “the general opinion seems to be that the present police protection is quite inadequate to the growing necessities of the town, and that a radical change is desirable in that branch of municipal work.”⁶⁸⁹ The press indicated that the only solution to ebb the crime in London East was to amalgamate with London.

Amidst the favourable press coverage of his stand against houses of ill-fame, Mayor Lilley asked the London East council if they would reconsider their vote at the next meeting on November 5th. Lilley read the councilmen a letter from Charles Hutchinson in which the County Crown Attorney threatened that “unless council be instructed to appear in support of the Arscott conviction, it will unquestionably be quashed.”⁶⁹⁰ Hutchinson’s correspondence ended with a scathing critique of Baldwin’s proposition that the town profit by fining brothels: “To fine such an offender as Mrs. Arscott would be simply equivalent to licensing houses of prostitution. If your critics are willing to recommend that such places shall not be suppressed, but rather converted into sources of revenue, well and good, but they will hardly get respectable magistrates to lend themselves to such an iniquitous procedure.” Hutchinson made it clear where he stood in the debate between prostitution regulation and eradication. Having reached the end of Hutchinson’s letter, Lilley asked the council if they would back his action and condemn Esther Arscott.

The meeting took a dramatic turn and several councilmen accused Lilley of trying to “force” them to support him. According to a reporter who attended the meeting, Maurice Baldwin jumped up, hit the table, and protested that he and his fellow councillors would not allow themselves “to be dictated to by either Mr. Hutchinson or the Mayor.” He protested that the pair

⁶⁸⁸ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 15, 1884, 5.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁰ “London East: The Social Evil Discussed,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 5, 1884, 1.

“thought they knew too much, and the rest of the Council, chiefly him, were ignorant.” According to the report, “here followed a scene that baffles description, and the language is totally unfit for publication. For upwards of an hour nothing was done, everyone trying to be heard at once, several of the members again and again threatening to leave the room.” Once calm was restored, the other councilmen concluded that the Esther Arscott affair “was the Mayor’s private matter,” and refused to call another vote. When Gardiner proposed establishing a committee to “devise ways and means to rid the No. 1 Ward of the houses of ill-fame,” the council reaffirmed that “the matter be left in the hands of the constable to lay information about such houses when known in this town.”⁶⁹¹

Lilley closed the meeting with a lament that London East “would have quite a population of this kind in no time, and it would be known that this Council would partly sustain them.”⁶⁹² Lilley’s hopes that London Easters would blame his anti-amalgamation councilmen for the brothels east of Adelaide was realized a few weeks later when ratepayers began complaining to the press about their inaction. One report stated that “complaints are daily being made by prominent citizens of the increase in the number of disreputable houses in the town. The gentlemen assert that houses of this character appeared on nearly all the principal streets after the action of the Council in reference to the social evil.”⁶⁹³ The chances that any new brothels were established in London East that autumn were low because police raids of houses of ill-fame reached a peak in the autumn of 1884. Residents’ fears stemmed from growing moral panic in the community rather than an actual increase in the number of houses of ill-fame.

London Easters channelled these anxieties when they voted in the municipal elections. Neither Anderson, Heaman, Showler, nor Baldwin won their seats. Publicly denouncing women

⁶⁹¹ “London East: The Social Evil Discussed,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 5, 1884, 1.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*

⁶⁹³ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 27, 1884, 8.

in the sex trade broadened Lilley's popular support from Londoners during a critical point in his career when he was negotiating town annexation. In the end, many of the same London Easters who signed petitions supporting Lilley's crackdown on Esther Arscott's Rectory Street brothel also signed in favour of amalgamation. Lilley and the other pro-annexation campaigners won nearly twice as many votes in the London East municipal election in January of 1885.⁶⁹⁴ London East officially became No. Ward 5 on August 20th, 1885, when it was formally integrated into the city of London.⁶⁹⁵

Although Mayor Lilley won his campaign for re-election in January and successfully negotiated London East's amalgamation, Esther Arscott ended up dragging him into a legal battle that lasted over three years. Refusing to allow herself to be a political scapegoat, Arscott fought hard to secure her freedom and sue for damages, bringing her case to the Ontario Court of Appeal. Unlike lower-class street walkers, Esther Arscott had the means to ensure that her voice was heard in Ontario courts that typically discriminated against sex workers and rarely gave their cases adequate scrutiny.⁶⁹⁶ Arscott hired some of the most well-known criminal lawyers of the day, who developed complex appeals based on *habeas corpus* writs that questioned the London force's application of vagrancy laws. Although her legal battle was against considerable odds because few judges were likely to sympathize with a known brothel-keeper, Esther Arscott's sustained determination to clear her name and avoid prison showcases the power of class and money during a time when opportunities for sex workers to secure justice were rare.

The December Sessions of 1884 marked an initial victory for Lilley and Hutchinson. The jury decided that their ruling in September against Arscott was fair. However, they requested that

⁶⁹⁴ "The Elections: A Decided Victory for the 'Free Press' Ticket," *London Free Press*, Jan. 6, 1885, 5.

⁶⁹⁵ "No. 5 Ward," *London Free Press*, Aug. 20, 1885, 3.

⁶⁹⁶ Constance Backhouse indicates that the Toronto police court magistrates spent very little time hearing the cases of prostitutes. Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law," 396.

the Judge change her sentence from six months' imprisonment to a fine. The *Advertiser* reported that "the Judge informed them they had nothing to do with that, and they returned a verdict of guilty against Mrs. Arscott, with a recommendation for mercy. The latter part of the verdict was not recorded."⁶⁹⁷ Despite the jury's best efforts to have Arscott released on bail or having the charges dismissed, the judge refused to record their pleas. Lilley and Hutchinson arrested Esther Arscott on December 18th and she was imprisoned back in the London jail to serve her sentence.⁶⁹⁸ Chairman F. Davis also directed Arscott to pay the Hutchinson and Lilley's legal costs of the appeal.⁶⁹⁹

Arscott refused to accept the judge's decision and consulted Edmund Meredith. In early February, he and William Ralph Meredith, his brother who, in addition to practicing law was also leader of the Ontario Conservative Party, went before Judge Thomas Galt at the High Court in Toronto with a *habeas corpus* action.⁷⁰⁰ They contended that Lilley and Hutchinson sentenced Arscott to six full months imprisonment in December, and did not account for the two days she already served in September. As such, they argued it was an unlawful imprisonment and she ought to be discharged. Meredith and Meredith were successful, and Judge Galt ordered her release under the Habeas Corpus Act.⁷⁰¹

As soon as Hutchinson and Lilley heard about Galt's decision, Hutchinson stalled for two hours, refusing to allow Arscott to leave the jail, while Lilley wrote out a new warrant for her

⁶⁹⁷ "December Sessions," *London Advertiser*, Dec. 10, 1884, 8.

⁶⁹⁸ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

⁶⁹⁹ *The Ontario Reports: Containing Reports of Cases Decided in the Queen's Bench and Chancery Divisions of the High Court of Justice for Ontario*, v. 5 (Toronto: Rowsell & Hutchison, 1885), 544.

⁷⁰⁰ "Local Legal Notes," *London Free Press*, Feb. 4, 1885, 3. For more information about Sir William Ralph Meredith, see: Peter E. Paul Dembski, "Meredith, Sir William Ralph," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-; Peter Dembski, "A Matter of Conscience: The Origins of William Ralph Meredith's Conflict with Archbishop John Joseph Lynch." *Ontario History* 73.3 (September 1981): 131-144.

⁷⁰¹ "Esther Arscott's Case," *London Free Press*, Feb. 21, 1885, 3.

arrest, minus the time she had already served.⁷⁰² Arscott was re-arrested by Detective Hodge even before leaving the jail premises.⁷⁰³ Her defense moved again for her release. Caught between Mayor Lilley and Justice Galt, the local Sheriff eventually followed Galt's order and released Arscott that evening.⁷⁰⁴ Speaking to reporters the next morning, Lilley claimed that Arscott would serve the balance of her prison sentence and "not be long out of jail."⁷⁰⁵

After securing her freedom, Esther Arscott and her lawyers sued Lilley and Hutchinson for wrongful imprisonment, demanding compensation of one thousand dollars each.⁷⁰⁶ There were even whispers that Murray Anderson, who had by now lost the civic seat in London East and the amalgamation vote, was considering suing Lilley and Hutchinson for libel based on the letters they had published in September and October.⁷⁰⁷ Anderson and John Bartlett organized a last attempt to prevent amalgamation in early February, but were unsuccessful.⁷⁰⁸ Later that month, Hutchinson applied to the Court of General Sessions for a warrant to imprison Arscott for the remainder of the six month sentence.⁷⁰⁹ Judges Elliot and Davis refused to interfere on the grounds that they did not want to contradict Judge Galt, deciding that the *habeas corpus* writ should forbid Arscott from serving prison time for the original offense.⁷¹⁰ Despite this setback, the two were committed to sending Arscott back to jail.

⁷⁰² "The Spring Assizes," *London Free Press*, May 12, 1885, 3.

⁷⁰³ "Father's 'Escape and Recapture,'" *London Free Press*, Feb. 6, 1885, 3.

⁷⁰⁴ "Esther Arscott's Case," *London Free Press*, Feb. 21, 1885, 3.

⁷⁰⁵ "London East," *London Free Press*, Feb. 9, 1885, 3.

⁷⁰⁶ "Two Suits for Damages," *London Free Press*, Feb. 16, 1885, 8. According to Constance Backhouse, the old English Habeas Corpus Act entitled payment to people who were wrongfully imprisoned. Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, 252.

⁷⁰⁷ "London East," *London Free Press*, Feb. 16, 1885, 3.

⁷⁰⁸ "London East," *London Advertiser*, Feb. 10, 1885, 8.

⁷⁰⁹ "Esther Arscott's Case," *London Free Press*, Feb. 21, 1885, 3.

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Lilley and Hutchinson spent the spring rounding up witnesses who were willing to testify against Esther Arscott, including men who had previously tipped off police about her house of ill-fame. Michael Dunn was caught and arrested by Detective Allen in mid-February. The previous May, Dunn and Robert Campbell, another Londoner, laid charges against Esther Arscott and Mary Blow for keeping a house of ill-fame. Arscott and Blow were rounded up and brought to the magistrate, but Dunn and Campbell failed to appear in court to testify as witnesses.⁷¹¹ In fact, Arscott may have resolved the issue herself by paying the two men to avoid testifying. As a result, the case was dismissed, and she walked free.⁷¹² After his arrest in February for disobeying summons, Dunn appeared before Squire Hannah and “furnished bonds to appear and prosecute when called upon.”⁷¹³ Charles Lilley also interviewed men who lived near Arscott on Rectory Street, looking for excuses to issue new warrants.⁷¹⁴ Lilley and Hutchinson attempted to gather as many people who could lay information against Esther Arscott as possible.

In March, Lilley received summons to appear at the spring assizes court in May to answer to Esther Arscott’s charges. He told reporters that he regarded Arscott’s action of libel and false imprisonment as a “bluff.”⁷¹⁵ Charles Lilley and Esther Arscott engaged in a war throughout March and April while waiting for the assizes, with constant back and forth arrests and appeals. Acting on a new warrant issued by Lilley, Constables Thomas Nicholls Jr. and Fred Templar arrested Esther Arscott on March 18th in her home, which had continued its operations since her release.⁷¹⁶ Lilley convicted her to serve the balance of her six month term: “Mayor Lilley contends that in all

⁷¹¹ “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, May 23, 1884, 8.

⁷¹² “London East,” *London Advertiser*, June 23, 1884, 5.

⁷¹³ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Feb. 14, 1885, 3.

⁷¹⁴ Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, 252. Western Archives, *Charles Hutchinson Fonds*, Papers, 1885-88, B4171-001.

⁷¹⁵ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 20, 1885, 8.

⁷¹⁶ Nicholls’ name also occasionally appears as Nickle. “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 19, 1885, 8.

the appeals entered by the defendant the original conviction, for being the keeper of a house of ill-fame, was sustained, and that any clerical errors which may be made in the warrant of commitment could be corrected legally by the magistrate.”⁷¹⁷ Although Arscott quickly secured her release, she was arrested again on March 24th by Detective Hodge.⁷¹⁸ Squires Regis and Edwards sentenced her to two months in prison for keeping her brothel open while she was out of jail.⁷¹⁹ On April 2nd Esther Arscott’s attorneys launched an appeal, arguing that there was “no evidence to justify the conviction.”⁷²⁰ Arscott was released on bail pending its result.⁷²¹

In addition to arresting Arscott, Lilley and Hutchinson also targeted women who worked in her brothel. Hattie Robinson, a twenty-eight-year-old American woman, was arrested at Arscott’s house in late March.⁷²² Constable Nicholls also arrested Retta McCormack that day, but she was acquitted because “no one had proved she was an inmate of the house during the two weeks that Esther Arscott was out of gaol.”⁷²³ As a result, police lacked sufficient evidence to incarcerate McCormack. It is unclear whether Robinson avoided prison time.

Esther Arscott had an impressive legal team at the May assizes. Two prominent criminal lawyers from London and Toronto, William Ralph Meredith and Britton Bath Osler, QC, argued before the Judge and jury that Arscott deserved damages for wrongful imprisonment.⁷²⁴ Esther Arscott’s case was well-known by now to audiences in southwestern Ontario, and the *Free Press*

⁷¹⁷ “London East,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 18, 1885, 3; “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Mar. 19, 1885, 8.

⁷¹⁸ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 24, 1885, 3.

⁷¹⁹ “The Arscott Case,” *London Free Press*, Apr. 1, 1885, 3.

⁷²⁰ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Apr. 3, 1885, 3.

⁷²¹ Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

⁷²² “London East,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 24, 1885, 2.

⁷²³ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, Mar. 24, 1885, 3; “The Arscott Case,” *London Free Press*, Apr. 1, 1885, 3.

⁷²⁴ For more information about Meredith and Osler’s achievements, see Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, 252-3.

reported that the case “seemed to excite a great interest, as a number of legal gentlemen attended the trial, and the court room was pretty well filled.”⁷²⁵ Knowing that he was in the spotlight, Osler played up his cross-examinations of Hutchinson and Jailor Kelly. When neither were able to procure paperwork documenting Arscott’s releases, Osler remarked that “verbal orders” reigned supreme in the London Court House, receiving loud laughter from his audience.

According to reports of the trial, Osler “took the ground that the action of Mr. Hutchinson in volunteering advice to Mr. Lilley in the matter, in going out of his way to persecute the woman, and in setting at naught the writ of *habeas corpus* was a shameful administration of justice on the part of the Crown Attorney.”⁷²⁶ The Judge agreed that proceedings were to end under the Habeas Corpus Act, suggesting that Arscott should not have been re-arrested in February. Denying that he was motivated by fees, Hutchinson contended that houses like Arscott’s were “hot-beds of crime,” and “almost any means of stamping them out was justified.”⁷²⁷ After hearing both sides, the Judge concluded that Hutchinson “undoubtedly acted injudiciously and unwisely,” but with “no corrupt motive.” Although the jury decided that Arscott would not receive damages, they refused to give Hutchinson or Lilley costs, suggesting a draw for the two parties.⁷²⁸

Osler and Meredith applied to Osgoode Hall the following week to overturn the two-month conviction from March 24th under the Habeas Corpus Act at the Court of Common Pleas.⁷²⁹ Sometime between then and April 2nd, when she posted bail, Esther Arscott was recommitted to

⁷²⁵ “The Spring Assizes,” *London Free Press*, May 12, 1885, 3.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁸ Although Arscott brought a non-jury action before the Judge two days later to have Hutchinson and Lilley pay a penalty for failing to respect her writ of *habeas corpus*, judgement was reserved. It is uncertain how the second action ended because it was not covered by the press. See: “The Spring Assize.” *London Free Press*, May 14, 1885, 3; “Court Concluded.” *London Advertiser*, May 14, 1885, 8.

⁷²⁹ “Legal Intelligence: Court of Appeal,” *The Globe*, Mar. 4, 1887, 7. “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, May 22, 1885, 8; “Legal Intelligence: Common Pleas Division,” *The Globe*, May 22, 1885, 8.

the London Jail to serve her two-month sentence.⁷³⁰ On May 29th, Osler and Meredith went before Judge John Edward Rose, with Lilley and Hutchinson represented by Allen Bristol Aylesworth.⁷³¹ In contrast to how vagrancy laws had been interpreted previously, Judge Rose conceded that prostitutes were not status criminals, and as such could only be arrested if they were “unable to give a satisfactory account of themselves” when asked.⁷³² Rose bought Osler’s argument that because Arscott had never been asked, her conviction was unfair, and was unconvinced by Aylesworth’s contention that the “satisfactory account” only applied to frequenters of brothels, rather than “common prostitutes” or “night walkers.”⁷³³ The implication of his judgement was that women were not criminals for *being* prostitutes, but rather for their *actions* in a specific time and place.⁷³⁴ Lilley and Hutchinson’s four warrants for her arrest were deemed invalid, and Esther Arscott walked free the following morning, “no attempt being made to obstruct her freedom.”⁷³⁵ This court case revealed that there was debate surrounding how vagrancy laws ought to be interpreted and applied, as some judges saw prostitution as an action that women occasionally engaged in, rather than their entire identity.

⁷³⁰ Arscott does not appear in the *General Register of the Gaol* between those dates, but it often fails to include every woman arrested for prostitution-related charges. Nor are there press accounts of her re-arrest. There are reports, however, that describe her release from jail on May 30th, suggesting that she was imprisoned sometime in late April or early May, perhaps after the spring assizes hearing on May 13th. For descriptions of Arscott’s release, see: “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, May 30, 1885, 3; “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, June 1, 1885, 8.

⁷³¹ “Legal Intelligence: Before Rose, J.,” *The Globe*, May 25, 1885, 7.

⁷³² *The Ontario Reports*, v. 5 (Toronto: Rowsell & Hutchison, 1885), 542.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, 542-3. Rose argued that if the clause only applied to frequenters, it would also change the interpretation of the preceding clause of the Act. This would mean that “all common prostitutes” would be vagrants no matter what their explanation was, while “night walkers,” appearing at the end of the clause, would only be vagrants if police asked for a “satisfactory account” and were denied explanation.

⁷³⁴ For a broader exploration of the legal ramifications of this judgement, see Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, 254-7.

⁷³⁵ “Local and District,” *London Free Press*, May 30, 1885, 3; “London and Precincts,” *London Advertiser*, June 1, 1885, 8.

Having secured her freedom, Esther Arscott and her legal team fought to press Lilley and Hutchinson for damages. Their battle lasted two years. At the fall assizes in September, Chief Justice Cameron decided that Arscott deserved damages after being arrested despite her writ of *habeas corpus*.⁷³⁶ Lilley was by now the ex-Mayor of London East, which had recently amalgamated with London. He and County Crown Attorney Hutchinson were charged \$2,430 and costs.⁷³⁷

Lilley and Hutchinson told reporters that they were ready to carry their appeal to other courts, including the Privy Council, if necessary.⁷³⁸ They moved to overturn Cameron's pronouncement in January. In March, Judge Adam Wilson heard the case at the Ontario Court of Queen's Bench. By this point, one of Osler's partners, D'Alton McCarthy, QC, was also working on Arscott's case.⁷³⁹ Wilson criticized Judge Rose's conclusion from 1885, asking "what satisfactory account are the keepers of bawdy houses and houses of ill-fame or houses for the resort of prostitutes to give of themselves?"⁷⁴⁰ For Wilson, it would be "idle" to ask a keeper of a house of ill-fame to give an account of herself, as "it is the *keeping* of such places which is the offence" in the first place. Judge Wilson judged in favour of Lilley and Hutchinson.

In March of 1887, Esther Arscott made an appeal against Wilson's decision, while Charles Lilley appealed "against the disallowance of his costs" in the last trial.⁷⁴¹ The appeals were heard before Judge Christopher Salmon Patterson at the Ontario Court of Appeal on May 10th.

⁷³⁶ For a detailed account of the proceedings under Chief Justice Cameron, see *The Ontario Reports: Containing Reports of Cases Decided in the Queen's Bench and Chancery Divisions of the High Court of Justice for Ontario*, v. 11 (Toronto: Rowsell & Hutchison, 1886), 155-8.

⁷³⁷ "London: The Ex-Mayor and the County Crown Attorney Held Highly for Heavy Damages," *The Globe*, Sept. 23, 1885, 8.

⁷³⁸ "Local," *London Advertiser*, Sept. 23, 1885, 5. Hutchinson and Lilley had the right to appeal because the judgement was issued by Cameron without a jury.

⁷³⁹ *The Ontario Reports*, v. 11, 160.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁷⁴¹ *Reports of Cases Decided in the Court of Appeal*, V. 14, (Toronto: Rowsell & Hutchison, 1888), 286.

Overviewing the long history of warrants, appeals, and arrests, Patterson commented that “unexpected opportunities for doing things the wrong way seem to have started up at every step.”⁷⁴² Patterson sided with Judge Wilson’s interpretation of the *Act respecting Vagrants*, arguing that a brothel-keeper was not required to give a proper account of herself.⁷⁴³ In his opinion, it was good enough that Arscott “got off without serving her sentence” of six months at hard labour.⁷⁴⁴ Patterson ruled that Lilley and Hutchinson would not pay damages to Esther Arscott, and she would have to pay Lilley’s legal costs.⁷⁴⁵

Esther Arscott did not wait to hear Judge Patterson’s pronouncement and instead fled to the United States. She made her way back to London East in the early 1890s and married Robert Thompson Barnes, a local hotel-keeper twenty years her junior.⁷⁴⁶ It is uncertain whether or not Arscott continued to operate her Rectory Street brothel after her return. She likely never encountered Charles Hutchinson again after the court cases. He died at the age of sixty-six in London on December 30th, 1892.⁷⁴⁷

However, Arscott likely ran into Charles Lilley on a number of occasions because he was a prominent member of the community and owned numerous stores and hotels in the No. 5 Ward.⁷⁴⁸ Once amalgamation took place, Lilley served as an alderman for London, and also acted

⁷⁴² *Reports of Cases*, 286.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*, 290. In regard to Arscott providing an account of herself or not, Patterson said: “I do not doubt she could have found ample protection by other means, but I need say no more on that topic which has been dealt with by Wilson, C. J., whose views I adopt.”

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 287.

⁷⁴⁵ “London Notes,” *The Globe*, May 11, 1887, 1.

⁷⁴⁶ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1881, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 167 (Middlesex East), sub-district C3 (London), page 16, line 1, family no. 70, Robert T. Barnes.

⁷⁴⁷ Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Collection: MS935; Reel: 106. *Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869-1947*. Death of Charles Hutchinson. Dec. 30, 1892.

⁷⁴⁸ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1871, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 09 (Middlesex East), sub-district C6 (London), page 33, line 18, family no. 126, Charles Lilley. Lilley was a successful shop and hotel owner in London East even in the early 1870s.

as postmaster. After his retirement from municipal politics, he opened the Crown Livery on Marshall Street.⁷⁴⁹ Lilley lived in London until the 1920s with his wife, Martha.

Esther Arscott spent the last years of her life in London East with her family. Her adopted daughter, Mary Jane Arscott, married a British-born man named Richard Howell in 1887, just a couple of months after the last appeal hearing.⁷⁵⁰ Mary and her husband followed Esther Arscott to the United States, where their daughter, Margaret Mary Howell, was born in 1892.⁷⁵¹ The family returned to London East in the 1890s. Arscott's granddaughter Margaret eventually married Francis Spencer, and they lived on 121 Horton Street with her mother and son, William.⁷⁵²

Esther Arscott died at her home at 358 Rectory Street at the age of sixty on July 2nd, 1902 and was buried in Woodland Cemetery.⁷⁵³ She distributed her considerable wealth, including three houses, horses and carriages, and at least five thousand dollars, between her husband, daughter, siblings, and friends.⁷⁵⁴ Charles Lilley died at the age of ninety-four on May 11th, 1927.⁷⁵⁵ Although he and Arscott spent years dragging each other through court battles, differences between the ex-Mayor and the career prostitute were erased in death, and both lie in the same section of London's Woodland Cemetery.

⁷⁴⁹ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1901, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 87 (Middlesex East), sub-district D2 (London), page 22, line 5, family no. 240, Charles Lilley.

⁷⁵⁰ Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; *Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1928*; Reel: 57. Marriage of Mary Jane Arscott and Richard Howell. Apr. 23, 1887.

⁷⁵¹ Library and Archives Canada: Census of Canada, 1921, manuscript record, Ontario, district no. 101 (London), sub-district 4 (Ward 1), page 15, line 9, family no. 126, Margaret May Spencer.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*

⁷⁵³ Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Collection: *MS935*; Reel: 106. *Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869-1947*. Death of Esther Barnes. Jul. 2, 1902; *Canada, Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current*. Woodland Cemetery, London, Middlesex County, Ontario, Canada. Esther Barnes, 1842-1902. Ancestry.com.

⁷⁵⁴ Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, 258.

⁷⁵⁵ Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Collection: *MS935*; Reel: 349. *Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869-1947*. Death of Charles Lilley. May 11, 1927.

This chapter explores London East's municipal politics during the 1880s moral panic about prostitution. Targeting prominent brothel-owners like Hattie Outram and Esther Arscott served an important role in Mayor Charles Lilley's campaign for re-election and town annexation. Publicly villainizing visible women in the sex trade enabled Lilley to ameliorate his town's reputation as a hot-bed of crime, garner support in London East, and paint his opponents as supporting brothel culture. Town council meetings that should have seen Lilley explain the intricacies of amalgamation, defend budgets for the waterworks construction, or be interrogated by unemployed London Easters instead served as platforms for him to rail against Esther Arscott for promoting sexual immorality and pander to moral panic about prostitution. Although Lilley and Hutchinson's attempt to "clean up" London East prior to annexation was backed by considerable public support, it drew the pair into lengthy litigation with Esther Arscott, while Hattie Outram escaped to the United States.

Unlike most Victorian women at the time, Outram and Arscott operated businesses and became independently wealthy in their own names, owning property and voting in local elections. They likely would have laboured in the unprofitable careers of domestic service or textile fabrication had they steered clear of the sex trade because they were illiterate, female, and born to working-class immigrant parents. Outram and Arscott's wealth caught the eye of reformers and municipal officials, but their class also allowed them to buy sophisticated legal protection from eminent criminal lawyers in London and Toronto. Although London East's affluent madams faced press scrutiny and public shame for encouraging immorality and vice, they largely floated above the material consequences of the city's war against the sex trade. In contrast to the Rectory Street madams, the majority of London's prostitutes were lower-class and unable to form political connections to protect themselves. Women at the bottom of society were the main victims of

London's moral panic about prostitution in the late nineteenth century, and they suffered intense police surveillance and frequent imprisonment.

Conclusion

In early February of 1885, as Esther Arscott was released from prison, two other prostitutes remained in their cells, unable to pay their fines or hire legal representation.⁷⁵⁶ Thirty-two-year-old Annie Devoy received a two month sentence for vagrancy after she was found streetwalking with an “unsteady gait” on Dundas Street.⁷⁵⁷ Police arrested seventeen-year-old Emma Farr in mid-January for keeping a house of ill-fame on South Street.⁷⁵⁸ Three months earlier, Farr had been charged for a “violent drunken quarrel” that occurred while a child was left to decompose in a bedroom of her brothel.⁷⁵⁹ Arscott possessed the financial means to avoid jail by hiring prominent lawyers and went on to live a life of luxury; Devoy and Farr spent much of their lives behind bars, and continued working in London’s sex trade until they died.

This thesis examines the lives and work of prostitutes in London, Ontario, from 1880 to 1885. As with all aspects of life and labour in an industrial capitalist economy, prostitution was a profession shaped by class. Women worked in upscale houses of ill-fame, disorderly houses, or on the streets. In addition to class, race and age shaped a prostitute’s experience in sex work. Upper-class brothel-owners in London were always white, and they used their wealth and connections to purchase protection from the law. They were able to form associations with members of the police force, hire legal representation, and flee to the United States when sentences were unavoidable. Lower-class prostitutes, in contrast, faced harsh treatment from the police and frequent jailtime because they could not afford to pay fines. Operators of disorderly houses and streetwalkers were often older and more likely to face alcohol abuse and violence. Women of colour were significantly

⁷⁵⁶ “Father’s ‘Escape and Recapture,’” *London Free Press*, Feb. 6, 1885, 3.

⁷⁵⁷ “London East,” *London Advertiser*, Dec. 17, 1884, 8.

⁷⁵⁸ “A Disgraceful Den Broken Up,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 15, 1885, 3; “Police Court,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 18, 1885, 3; Western Archives, *General Register of the Gaol at London, 1867-1920*.

⁷⁵⁹ “A Shocking Sight,” *London Free Press*, Oct. 30, 1884, 8; “Shocking Scenes,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 30, 1884, 4.

over-represented in London's prostitution trade, making up nearly twenty percent of the city's sex workers.

Alcohol fueled London's prostitution underworld. Brothels illegally sold liquor to their male customers, and prostitutes often suffered from alcohol dependency and the violence that accompanied its heavy use. The legal system prosecuted prostitutes for living and working at the intersection of the two vices. London's more "respectable" classes attributed the misuse of booze to lower-class and bawdy behaviour. Women's charitable organizations refused to admit prostitutes who were addicted to alcohol into refuges or shelters, nor assist them with relief funds because they believed the money would be spent on "whiskey and debauchery."⁷⁶⁰ London society steered young Christian women toward temperance by reporting on the deaths of "wayward" prostitutes who they blamed for causing the ruin of their own bodies through years of sex and liquor abuse.⁷⁶¹

Many of the street-walkers who suffered from alcohol addictions were older than the women who lived in houses of ill-fame, who were typically in their mid-twenties. Annie Devoy worked in the sex trade until she died in her late-thirties. Mary Smith solicited sex outdoors at the age of forty-nine. Catherine Hastings and Catherine Gooderham worked as prostitutes in their late-forties. Women who sold sex out of make-shift shanties in the city were unable to find employment in better establishments due to their age or because they suffered from alcohol abuse. Ellen Collins was forty-eight when police found her in a "beastly state of intoxication" while entertaining male customers in a shanty at the corner of Fullarton Street.⁷⁶² Although some women like Esther Arscott enjoyed long careers in the sex trade and operated brothels later in life, most prostitutes

⁷⁶⁰ "The W.C.A.," *London Advertiser*, May 30, 1883, 1.

⁷⁶¹ "A Terrible Warning" *London Advertiser*, Dec. 21, 1881, 4.

⁷⁶² Collins was often also charged with charges relating to keeping disorderly houses. "Local and District," *London Free Press*, Nov. 14, 1885, 3.

worked for decades, but did not experience upward mobility. Women who eventually found themselves too old to live on the streets or continue their labour ended up in the county jail or in poorhouses.

Moral reformers disseminated stereotypes that portrayed older women tricking girls into the sex trade. They presented young prostitutes as victims who required rehabilitation to stop them from becoming the beguilers of other vulnerable women. Although historians have addressed how elites problematized the behaviour of working-class girls in urban centres, they have not examined how concerns about older prostitutes in positions of power affected their treatment by society and the justice system. Aging sex workers were accused of working in prostitution out of a desire to “ruin countless young girls.”⁷⁶³ Narratives about aging women enticing girls into the sex trade obscured the fact that they performed sexual labour to offset their poverty, alcoholism, and homelessness.

Sex work was extremely dangerous. In addition to alcohol abuse, women faced violence from both police and male customers, with little recourse for justice from either. Annie Clarke was physically assaulted by Detective Babcock while he escorted her to prison on charges of trespassing on Susan Hall’s house of ill-fame. Mary Lynch was beaten throughout the 1880s “either with a club or by the fist of her brutal husband.”⁷⁶⁴ Abused prostitutes received little sympathy from the authorities or society in general. When Mary Ann Stokes was stabbed to death by her boyfriend in 1885, authorities indicated that she deserved her fate because she was a “mistress,” a “prostitute,” and a “paramour.”⁷⁶⁵ There were few incentives for women to turn to

⁷⁶³ “Backwoods Depravity,” *London Free Press*, Jan. 29, 1886, 6.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁵ “The Last Scene of All, Ben Simmons on the Scaffold,” *London Advertiser*, Nov. 27, 1885, 4.

authorities for assistance. Reporting instances of assault risked exposing their taboo labour, and its stigma often meant that police and magistrates would not take their claims seriously.

This thesis reveals the misuse, abuse, and manipulation of female bodies in a patriarchal society. Male-controlled systems created prostitution as a sexual outlet, and women suffered as a result. In addition to being used as sexual objects, and abused as sites of violence, prostitutes often found themselves pregnant. These women often went to extreme measures to rid themselves of unwanted pregnancies. Madam Lamont performed abortions throughout the 1870s until she was jailed in 1880 for terminating a pregnancy for a London prostitute. Two widowed women in St. Thomas worked as abortionists in addition to operating laundry and boarding houses. Aborting a foetus, however, came with considerable risk aside from the legal implications. One young woman from Stratford died after ingesting poison in an attempt to end her pregnancy. London society had little sympathy for her or other women who died of abortions, noting that “she had been leading an immoral life for years.”⁷⁶⁶

Prostitutes who carried their children to full term were often forced to give birth in the county jail. Mary Fuller gave birth in prison in the 1860s without the assistance of the jail physician. The doctor was not surprised when her child died, stating that Fuller’s “immoral character” deprived her of the “vital energy” necessary to deliver a healthy infant.⁷⁶⁷ Despite the existence of charitable institutions for orphaned children in London, these “homes” were rarely accessible to prostitutes. They were usually full and were insufficiently funded. Consequently, pregnant women in the London sex trade had few options to legally deal with unwanted children. Some prostitutes chose to rid themselves of infants after giving birth by abandoning them. Children were deserted in both rural and urban areas of Middlesex County during the 1880s. Some London

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁷ Western Archives, *Coroner’s Inquests, Middlesex County*, “Infant male of Mary Fuller,” 23 Sept. 1867.

women resorted to infanticide. Police never determined who drowned a baby boy in a water closet beside a brothel on Ridout Street in 1885. Women who were careful about concealing their pregnancies and disposing of the bodies faced few repercussions because authorities and physicians were often unable to identify the parents of the deceased infants.

Although some prostitutes took extreme measures to avoid raising children, others created a family dynamic within the sex trade. Women often performed domestic and sexual labour in the same spaces. Emma Mahaffey raised several children in her Adelaide Street house of ill-fame, where her husband, sister, and several prostitutes also lived. The experiences of children born to prostitutes varied according to their mothers' class and race. Affluent madams like Susan Hall raised their children in houses of ill-fame on Rectory Street, while infants born to lower-class prostitutes were often subjected to the violence so characteristic of the sex trade.

Girls born into the sex trade often worked alongside their mothers, creating a multi-generational profession and workplace. Women like Fanny Betterly grew up in their parents' brothels and eventually went on to own houses of ill-fame themselves. Esther Arscott was raised in a disorderly house and later lived with her adopted daughter Mary in a brothel, indicating that at least three generations of her family were involved in the sex trade. Establishments were frequently operated as family businesses, with daughters and mothers playing particular roles. Lower-class women such as Mary McNorgan solicited sex on the streets with her daughters when they were unable to find work in disorderly houses.

A prostitute's incarceration strained this family dynamic. As a result of frequent arrests, trials, and imprisonments, the children of sex workers interacted with the legal system from a young age. Hannah Fuller's son, Freddie, appeared in court with his mother when he was only eight years old. Aging parents, on the other hand, were responsible to care for grandchildren while

their daughters served sentences. Margaret Mills' infant was three weeks old when she was sentenced for prostitution. Her seventy-year-old mother took the child and "as her daughter was led away both commenced to weep."⁷⁶⁸ Although prostitutes were marginalized by society, they were at the core of their family units, and London's crusade against prostitution affected entire kinship networks.

A prostitute's ability to defend herself from authorities also depended on her class and race. Lower-class prostitutes who sold sex in disorderly houses, on the streets, or out of make-shift housing were typically poor, racialized, and suffering from alcohol abuse. They bore the brunt of police brutality and were arrested more often than the affluent women who operated high-class establishments. London's by-laws limited the ability of prostitutes to move freely in the city by prohibiting them from entering private residences, public parks, or riding in cabs during the daytime.⁷⁶⁹ Magistrates used both municipal laws and federal legislation against prostitution to arrest sex workers on countless overlapping charges in Middlesex County. Lower-class prostitutes, however, showed some adaptability in the face of increasing criminalization. Many women employed tactics to avoid incarceration, promising to exit the sex trade and lead "virtuous" lives, faking religious conversion, or convincing magistrates that they intended to leave the city. Although prostitutes attempted to avoid detention, others used the jails as a form of protection. For a homeless street-walker, spending a cold night in prison was a better alternative than freezing to death outside.

Despite discrimination, lower-class prostitutes had no choice but to turn to the legal system in the vain hope of obtaining justice. Ironically and hypocritically, many of these women confronted the same men in the legal system and in their professional work. Prostitutes such as

⁷⁶⁸ "Police Court: A Fearful Den," *London Advertiser*, Mar. 20, 1884, 3. It is rare to see accounts like this

⁷⁶⁹ *Charter and By-Laws of the City of London*, 251.

Catherine Hastings knew members of London's police force because officers repeatedly arrested them in brothel raids or on the streets. As a result of enduring many trials before the city's magistrates, sex workers were aware of the procedures to lay complaints against others in courts of law.

Although the majority of women in London's sex trade could not depend on the local authorities for protection, interactions between police and prostitutes were not always characterized by violence and one-sided power dynamics. Women accused of prostitution in London experienced complex relationships with men responsible for administering the law. Although many police officers enforced Canada's discriminatory prostitution laws, others formed relationships with women as paid informants, frequented brothels while off-duty, or knew prostitutes as family members. Constable Smith was married to the mother of Lou Winters and lived next door to her brothel, "allowing the girls to pass backwards and forwards" without facing arrest.⁷⁷⁰ More affluent women often relied on police for protection from property damage to their brothels and violence from their customers. Hattie Outram depended on Detective Pope to remove men who misbehaved in her brothel on several occasions in the 1880s. In the cases when police arrested higher-class prostitutes, women like Maud McPhee, Susan Hall, and Esther Arscott had the wealth to pay high-profile lawyers such as Edmund Meredith to point out expired warrants or other discrepancies to secure their release.

The societal double-standard against prostitutes meant that while the women suffered in a myriad of ways, the men who purchased their services were rarely named by the press, charged, or incarcerated. Although there were far more male customers than women working in the sex trade, men made up a small fraction of the prostitution-related arrests in Middlesex County. Men

⁷⁷⁰ "Constables in Trouble," *London Advertiser*. Sept. 29, 1881, 4. Lou Winters is also referred to as Lou Waters in some reports.

would often file reports when they were robbed by women while frequenting houses of ill-fame, knowing that they would not be punished for entering a brothel, and that the police would instead hunt down the prostitute. Although laws existed to prohibit men from paying for sex, London police were reluctant to enforce them. Magistrates turned a blind eye, particularly to men who were middle- or upper-class and white, and newspapers rarely published the names of the many men of “prominent positions” who were caught at brothels in police raids.⁷⁷¹ The few men who were named in press reports or convicted were typically lower-class or black.

Although the social reform movement of the late nineteenth century often depicted prostitutes as victims of abuse and oppression, moral reformers problematized the behaviour of women. Volunteer and charity organizations led initiatives that were preventative in nature, aiming to identify girls who were at risk of engaging in pre-marital sex and convincing them to lead Christian lives. Women’s groups and ecclesiastical leaders reached out to lower-class women by founding girls’ societies, operating industrial schools and refuges, and visiting the local jail to promote temperance and abstinence. Overall, the associations sought to impart moral guidance instead of addressing urban poverty. Because women’s groups did not address the economic causes of prostitution, their reform efforts failed to deter impoverished women from “falling back into their old courses.”⁷⁷² The moral reform movement hypocritically treated women as objects to be reformed without considering the realities of their lives and labour.

While this dissertation focuses on the lived experiences of prostitutes in London, the time frame is important. The late-nineteenth century was a morally repressive period but the 1880s witnessed a full-blown moral panic in the city. London East Mayor Charles Lilley embarked on a crusade against madams in response to anxieties about sexual vice. Targeting sex workers during

⁷⁷¹ “Stratford,” *London Advertiser*, Oct. 25, 1880, 3.

⁷⁷² “Women’s Christian Association: The Annual Meeting,” *London Free Press*, May 27, 1885, 8.

the moral panic provided local politicians with pragmatic pawns. Villainizing sex workers enabled Lilley to ameliorate London East's reputation for crime, garner support from elites who were concerned about vice, and accuse his political opponents of supporting brothels. Targeting marginalized women proved to be a popular campaigning tactic in London. Residents rewarded municipal leaders such as Charles Lilley who campaigned on promises to eradicate prostitution with their votes, ensuring that politicians remained in positions of power.

This thesis examines how sex workers and elites responded to changing labour conditions and gender relations in the late nineteenth century. London's upper- and middle-class residents were concerned about an apparent proliferation of vice in working-class neighbourhoods. Believing that their traditional ways of life were under threat from women who did not conform to Victorian standards of morality, they demonized prostitutes. Despite police surveillance, frequent incarceration, and shaming in the courts and press, women continued to market sexual services. Prostitutes of various backgrounds responded to increasingly oppressive reform efforts in London with resilience, and when possible, challenged their repression.

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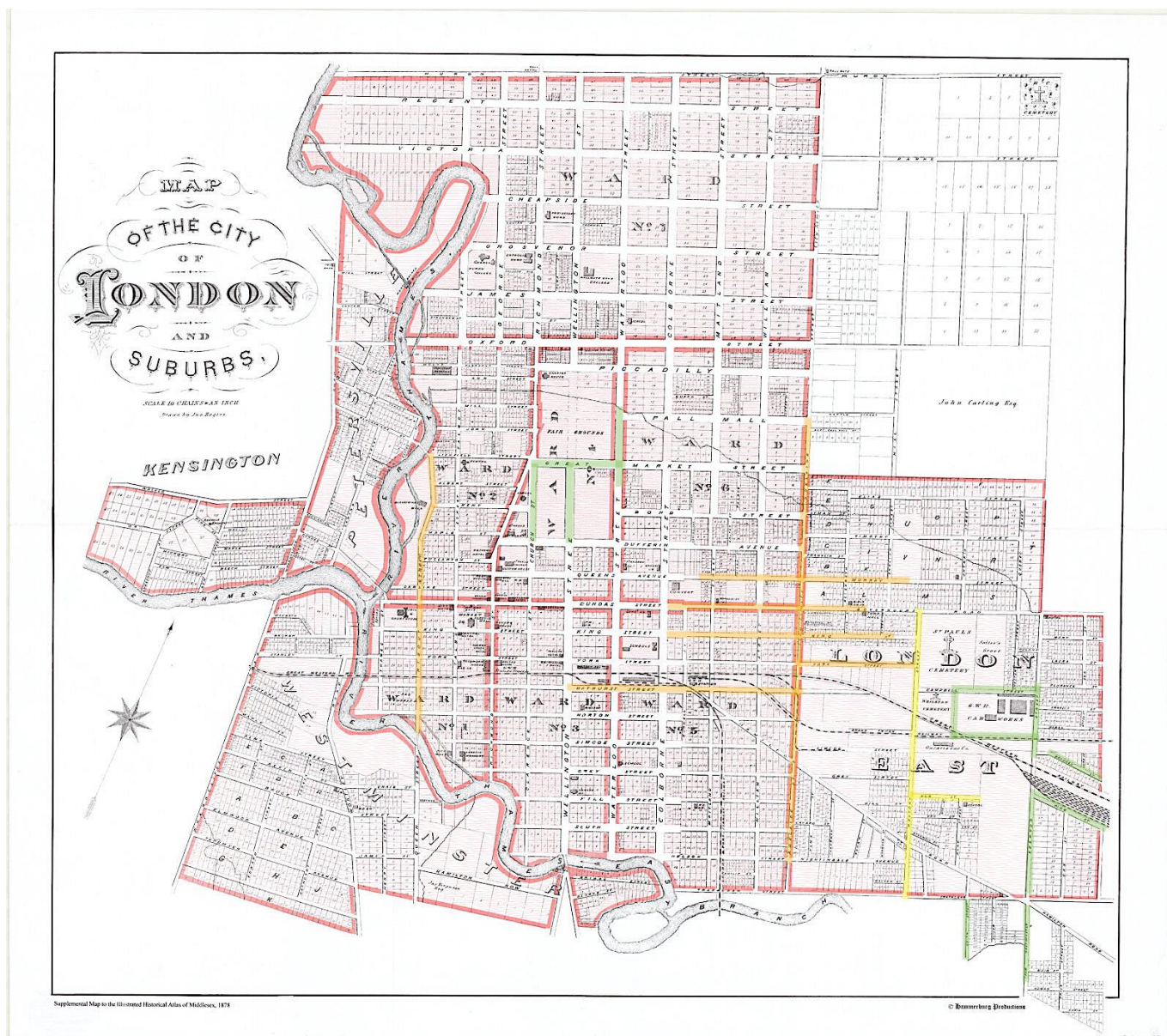
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Appendix A

Map of London's houses of ill-fame, disorderly houses, and areas of streetwalking.⁷⁷³



Yellow: houses of ill-fame.

Orange: disorderly houses.

Green: streetwalking areas.

⁷⁷³ John Rogers, Map of the city of London and suburbs, London, Ontario: Hammerburg Productions, 1878.

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Master of Arts, University of Western Ontario, London, ON, 2017-2019

Bachelor of Arts, University of King's College, Halifax, NS, 2013-2017

Awards and Distinctions

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Canada Graduate Scholarship – Doctoral – SSHRC, Queen's University

The James Robertson Carruthers Memorial Prize in History, Queen's University

The Tri-Agency Recipient Recognition Award, Queen's University

Faculty of Arts and Science Dean's Award for Social Justice, Queen's University

Lynne-Lionel Scott Fellowship in History, University of Western Ontario

2018

William Edgar Travel Award, University of Western Ontario

History Department Research Grant, University of Western Ontario

Ontario Graduate Scholarship, University of Western Ontario

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Canada Graduate Scholarship, Master's – SSHRC, University of Western Ontario

University Medal, Department of History, Dalhousie University

Valedictorian, University of King's College

2016

Dr. George E. Wilson Memorial Scholarship, Dalhousie University

2015

Commonwealth History Prize, Dalhousie University

Paul McIsaac Memorial Prize, Dalhousie University

Margaret and Elwin Malone Memorial Scholarship

Presentations

2019

“She was a disgrace to her sex”: Prostitution and Moral Panic in London, Ontario, 1880-1885,

Master’s Public Lecture, University of Western Ontario

“Families in London Ontario’s Sex Trade, 1880-1885,” “Pathways to the Past” Graduate

History Conference, University of Western Ontario

“A History of Prostitution in London, Ontario, 1880-1885,” The Bruce McCaffrey Memorial

Graduate Seminar Series, University of Western Ontario

2017

“American Interest in the Battle of Vimy Ridge,” 24 Biennial American Association for Canadian

Studies Conference, Las Vegas, Nevada

Journals

2018

“Shooting Nature: Images and Environmental History,” NiCHE: Network in Canadian History &

Environment

2016

“Dr. George Elliott Clarke on Shakespeare,” *Tidings*, University of King’s College Alumni

Magazine