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Open Tables: Restaurants and Reform in Progressive Chicago

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Abstract

“Open Tables: Restaurants and Reform in Progressive Chicago” considers restaurants as contentious spaces where larger debates about gender, class, race and ethnicity, public health, and the role of the state were carried out between the end of the Civil War and the ratification of the 18th Amendment. Using Chicago as a case study because of its unique position as a laboratory of urban modernity during this period, it considers the city’s restaurants as sites of labor and statebuilding, as well as sites of consumption. Using sources including press coverage, trade publications, novels and memoirs, court cases, and municipal and state records, this dissertation traces the attempts made to sharpen the liminal legal and cultural space that existed between the saloon and the restaurant during the early decades of the twentieth century. Though restaurant dining had become increasingly popular in Chicago, debates continued to rage between lawmakers and citizens alike about what a restaurant was, who could work in these spaces and under what conditions, what their physical environments should look like, and who could patronize them during what times of day.

By combining cultural, labor, and policy/legal history, “Open Tables” argues that the restaurant provides insight into the multifaceted efforts made to refashion American cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As saloons began to fall into disrepute and dining out became popular among a wider swathe of people, state and municipal officials—alongside extralegal actors working across class, gender, and ethnic and racial lines—created systems and procedures to make restaurants conform to their standards for safety and respectability. Examining these efforts more closely reveals that these systems and procedures rarely worked smoothly, and that it was (and remains) near-impossible to achieve a singular vision of orderliness in Chicago.

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Introduction

“If you think that Chicago, from a gourmet’s point of view, is nothing more than a maze of red-hot stands, chili parlors, cafeterias, barbecue stalls, one-arm joints, chop suey restaurants, counter lunch rooms and all other such human filling stations, artistically embellished with bullet holes, you’re as mistaken as Columbus was when he started out on his trip to India the wrong way. Engage in an earnest trip of exploration about the town and you will find, as with Old Chris, a whole new world—a world of epicurean delights that you never thought existed in the City of Winds.”¹

Chicago has long been more than a little insecure about its status as a restaurant capital. No wonder—in the early twentieth century, it was not uncommon to read accounts from outsiders that described it as a “city with no real restaurants,” and it was constantly compared to places like London, Paris, and most of all, New York, home to what many consider the first French-inspired fine-dining establishment in the United States.² “Plenty of people, of course, patronize [Chicago’s] public eating places,” observed a *Tribune* columnist writing under the pseudonym Madame X. “But it is not the well-confirmed custom here among the *beau monde* that it is in other big cities.”³ Perhaps the city’s “deep-rooted domesticity” kept its residents socializing at home, she speculated. Or, in the words of an unnamed New Yorker who critiqued the city in 1906, “the desolation of industrialism” might be what kept its dining options so limited. Describing Chicago’s omnipresent smoke, soot, and dirt, this writer took note of the masses of poorly-dressed “toilers” bustling around downtown in a hurry to get to work. “It is this toiler with his hands who makes for cosmopolitanism,” the writer noted. “There are cities in which he is incidental and unnoticed. In Chicago he stands out in rugged garb everywhere, the

¹ John Drury, *Dining in Chicago* (New York: The John Day Company, 1931), 5.

² “What I Dislike About Chicago,” *Tribune*, November 18, 1906; Mme. X, “Club, Rather Than Restaurant Life, the Popular Thing in Chicago Society,” May 17, 1914; A. Dick Luckman, “Oh Where, Oh Where is our Loop Night Life? Londoner Says Chicago’s ‘Class’ is Provincial,” *Tribune*, September 24, 1911. The New York restaurant was called Delmonico’s and it was opened in 1837 by a family of Swiss immigrants. For more about the entrenchment of French cuisine on the global stage, see Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Amy B. Trubek, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

³ Mme. X, “Club, Rather Than Restaurant Life, the Popular Thing in Chicago Society,” *Tribune*, May 17, 1914.

holder of the city's keys for the stranger. Let the stranger take his cue from him in the anticipation of the city's life."⁴ According to writers like these, it would be easy to get a cheap meal alongside these toilers, but much more difficult to find a refined place where champagne and evening clothes were *de rigueur*.⁵ In their estimation, the hardworking, blue-collar city of the big shoulders (to borrow from the poet Carl Sandburg) was hardly a mecca for culinary glamour.

It is no wonder that the denizens of America's "Second City" rushed to their city's defense, including Sandburg himself, who noted in 1931 that "cooking skill and kitchen science" from all corners of the world had shaped Chicago's restaurant culture. More importantly, he wrote, most of the city's two million inhabitants weren't looking for *haute cuisine* but rather a change from their daily routines. There were the adventurous diners who wanted to try something new, the people who had come into some extra spending money through methods legal or otherwise, and then there were "the folks who get tired of home cooking, the delicatessen, the kitchenette, and wish an evening of change."⁶ As well, commentators were quick to note that Chicago had "equal cause for self-gratulation" as Parisians about their restaurants. "A man can dine every night for a fortnight in Chicago and never taste or even see the same dish twice," observed a *Tribune* reporter in 1903.⁷ Although diners still tended to favor "the quick-service oyster house and the rapid-firing lunch counter" over the French and Italian-inspired table d'hôte restaurants that had popped up after the 1893 World's Fair, the time had come to acknowledge the city's gustatory pleasures; pleasures that were increasingly democratic in their scope and reach.⁸

⁴ "What I Dislike About Chicago," *Tribune*, November 18, 1906.

⁵ A. Dick Luckman, "Oh Where, Oh Where is our Loop Night Life? Londoner Says Chicago's 'Class' is Provincial," *Tribune*, September 24, 1911.

⁶ Carl Sandburg, forward to Drury, *Dining in Chicago*, ix-x.

⁷ "Eat Around the World in Chicago," *Tribune*, September 27, 1903.

⁸ George Ade, "Since the Frenchman Came," in *Stories of the Streets and of the Town: From the Chicago Record 1893-1900*, ed. Franklin J. Meine (Chicago: The Carton Club, 1941), 8-12.

In other words, Chicago households at the turn of the twentieth century “[were] falling into restaurant life to a degree unknown” ever before.⁹ But while the practice of taking meals outside of ones’ home in the discrete space of the restaurant had become more common during this period, it is important to note that Chicagoans had been able to dine in taverns, inns, and boarding houses from its earliest days as a trading post. The first real tavern was built in 1828 by John Kinzie and Archibald Caldwell at Wolf Point at the confluences of the north, south, and main branches of the Chicago River. First named Caldwell’s Tavern before its owners renamed it Wolf’s Tavern, the establishment served food along with homemade hard liquor. Around the same time, the Sauganash Hotel opened on the east bank of the river and by 1833 it had become the most popular spot for entertainment in Chicago, serving local game and other seasonal offerings. Two years later, the first fine dining restaurant in Chicago opened inside of the Lake House hotel on Kinzie Street, roughly where the Wrigley Building stands today. The Lake House was groundbreaking for the emerging city: it had its own artesian well, and was the first in Chicago to use menu cards, napkins, and toothpicks. It was also the first place in the city to serve oysters.¹⁰ According to a Lake House menu from 1854, the hotel’s restaurant served dishes that were very much in line with the United States’ British culinary heritage and traditions: roasted and boiled meats, liver and kidneys, side dishes like mashed/baked/and boiled potatoes and turnips, and desserts like pies, jelly rolls, and ice cream.¹¹ Another menu from the Lake House from 1858 outlined some of their rules: for example, children who occupied seats at the table

⁹ “Chicago Diners Seek New Dishes,” *Tribune*, November 10, 1901; Paul Freedman, “American Restaurants and Cuisine in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” *The New England Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (March 2011): 8.

¹⁰ Arnold Shircliffe, “The Fascinating History of Early Chicago Restaurants,” *Chicago Restaurant Association Buyers’ Guide 1945* (Chicago: The Chicago Restaurant Association, 1945), 25-30.

¹¹ Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library, “Lake House Dinner Menu,” New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-19fd-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

would be charged full price, room service meals cost extra, and so did dishes that were not listed on the menu.¹²

As the city grew, so did its restaurants, both in number and in scope. Chicago had been incorporated for seven years before the opening of its first standalone restaurant in 1844 (that is, not connected to a hotel, boarding house, inn, or tavern). According to one of their advertisements, the Exchange Coffee House on Clark Street served up “meals on short notice from 6am to 12pm at prices from 12.5 to 25 cents,” which consisted mostly of lighter snacks like ice cream, pies, cakes, and soup, as well as seafood like pickled oysters, sardines, and anchovies.¹³ By the 1880s, one tourist guide listed twenty-five recommended restaurants, most of which were in the Loop district, and newspapers like the *Tribune* boasted of the city’s exemplary ability to “give the best service in the culinary line to be found anywhere in the world.”¹⁴ The options had become seemingly endless, especially after the 1893 World’s Fair had helped expand Chicagoans’ culinary horizons by offering dishes from around the world at its multiple restaurants and concessions.¹⁵ The Fair also opened people’s minds to “continental” practices like drinking wine with dinner, long leisurely meals, and female cigarette smoking.¹⁶ According to the owner of Café Marine inside the fairgrounds, the establishment was the first place in the United States where a woman (Princess Eulalie of Spain) smoked a cigarette in public.¹⁷ The proprietor of Café Marine also owned the famed downtown seafood restaurant Rector’s, and he was boastful of the new tastes he brought to Chicago. In his 1927 memoir, George Rector

¹² Lake House menu (1858), Folder F38JBM52 (1850-1859), Commercial Menus Collection, Chicago History Museum Research Center, Chicago, IL.

¹³ Shircliffe, “The Fascinating History of Early Chicago Restaurants,” 30.

¹⁴ Shircliffe, “The Fascinating History of Early Chicago Restaurants,” 30;

¹⁵ “Food at the Fair,” *Tribune*, February 18 1893; “Chicago Diners Seek New Dishes,” *Tribune*, November 10, 1901; “Feeding the Masses: Sharp Contrasts in the Methods of Chicago Restaurants,” *Tribune*, December 18, 1892.

¹⁶ “Chicago Diners Seek New Dishes,” *Tribune*, November 10, 1901.

¹⁷ George Rector, *The Girl From Rector’s* (New York: Doubleday, 1927), 24.

claimed that his restaurant at Clark and Monroe served the first-ever lobster in the state of Illinois, as well as the first green sea turtle.¹⁸

While restaurants were hypothetically democratic spaces where anyone could enter and order a meal, the reality was that they were anything but egalitarian.¹⁹ A wide range of factors shaped and limited who dined where, including cost, the types of foods served, the etiquette expected of patrons, and the degree of gender, racial, and ethnic diversity a particular venue might allow.²⁰ In other words, the restaurant provides insight into the simultaneous “democratization and hierarchal segmentation” that characterized the American experience during this time period, especially in urban areas.²¹ In the booming Midwestern metropolis, economic and demographic developments were helping to foster a new physically and psychologically distant relationship between social classes. While Chicago rapidly industrialized, work and home became progressively disentangled from one another. As the city grew busier, louder, and more polluted, wealthier Chicagoans began to move farther away from the industrial and commercial concerns that they owned and managed, and the laboring classes continued to live as close as they could to their workplaces.²² The two groups’ daily lives and activities became increasingly separated from one another, and a “spatial scale of class” began to shape the city’s streets.²³ The Loop district in downtown Chicago during this period is a microcosm of this

¹⁸ George Rector, *The Girl From Rector’s*, 22-23.

¹⁹ Though elite restaurants were “theoretically open to all,” their “informal system of discrimination” (inscribed through pricing and knowledge of French culinary practices) made middle-and-working-class diners feel like interlopers; “second-class consumers, imitators of a culture they did not fully understand.” Andrew Haley, *Turning the Tables: Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 49.

²⁰ Kelly Erby, *Restaurant Republic: The Rise of Public Dining in Boston* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), xviii.

²¹ Erby, *Restaurant Republic*, xix.

²² Dominic Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 65. This was made possible in part by introduction of mass transit. By the 1880s, Chicago had a vast cable car system. Electric trolleys became part of the city in the 1890s.

²³ Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography*, 65-66; Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 14.

phenomenon. As historian Margaret Garb outlines, the Loop was distinctive in that “men and women, immigrants and native-born, black and white Chicagoans might come in close contact” in the area, although each was expected to remain in “carefully circumscribed spaces—middle class women shoppers in department stores, white women workers behind store counters, and black janitors in the basements of skyscrapers.”²⁴ With fewer opportunities for members of different social classes to interact with one another, the gulf between them got larger.

This growing disparity in income and power between laborers and owners led the business classes to cloister themselves into, as historian Perry Duis put it in his study of the saloon in Chicago and Boston, “a world of closed carriages, private schools, exclusive clubs, reserved church pews, and opera boxes.”²⁵ This world also included exclusive restaurants, such as the aforementioned Rector’s at Clark and Monroe, and Kinsley’s, first located inside the Crosby Opera House until it was destroyed in the 1871 fire. The latter billed itself a “first class” establishment in which “*L’Art de Diner* should be carried to perfection” with “only the best” food served to guests “in the highest style.”²⁶ At restaurants like these, dishes on the menus were printed in French, with only occasional English translations underneath. This menu style was intended to underscore a restaurants’ gentility and exclusivity, since a reading knowledge of French would be required for a guest to successfully enjoy a meal.²⁷ Lauded by journalists and city guidebooks for their elegant décor, Chicago’s early fine-dining restaurants were, in the words of one writer describing the atmosphere of the Race Brothers Oyster House, “truly

²⁴ Margaret Garb, *Freedom’s Ballot: African American Political Struggles in Chicago from Abolition to the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 129.

²⁵ Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography*, 65, Duis, *The Saloon*, 86.

²⁶ *Kinsley’s* (Chicago: H.M. Kinsley, 1867), 1.

²⁷ *Kinsley’s*, 43, 41. For example, Kinsley’s poultry menu lists dishes such as *canneton à la orange* (spring duck with orange sauce) and *blanquette de volaille* (stewed chicken with white sauce).

[scenes] of enchantment” that “thronged with the *elite* of the city after the close of a popular opera or dramatic entertainment.”²⁸

However, as hinted by the critiques from “Madame X” and the anonymous New Yorker in the *Tribune*, most Chicagoans were not indulging in *Châteaubriand* and *huitres* washed down with Veuve Clicquot champagne at opulent places like these. As I have indicated, *fin de siècle* Chicago could “feed her guests [and residents] well” because a diverse array of eateries popped up to cater to the sensibilities and price ranges of a wider array of patrons.²⁹ In other words, the emergence and popularity of Chicago’s less upscale restaurants was a reaction against marginalization from elite restaurants, as well as an increasing disdain for saloons and taverns among a growing contingent of lower-middle class male and female office and shop employees. The increasing variety and popularity of restaurants in Chicago is part of a wider national trend that saw more and more Americans taking their meals outside of private residences.³⁰ As food historians like Andrew Haley and Harvey Levenstein have demonstrated, the democratization of the restaurant in the United States should be understood as part of the broader “revolution at the table” at the turn of the twentieth century that profoundly changed how Americans—particularly non-elite Americans—ate.³¹ During this period, public dining became an activity than was no

²⁸ Frank Glossop, *Glossop’s Comprehensive Handbook to the Business and Sights of Chicago* (Chicago: Ingersoll Bros. Printers, 1880), 55. Emphasis is original.

²⁹ “Hotels and Restaurants: Where to Eat No Longer a Worry,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 7, 1909.

³⁰ Freedman, “American Restaurants and Cuisine in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” 8.

³¹ Scholars have demonstrated as far back as the late 1980s that restaurants were a crucial part of the shifting bourgeois ideals and desires that changed the ways many urban Americans produced, consumed, and thought about their food. The term “revolution at the table” is a direct reference to Harvey Levenstein’s 1988 book of the same title. According to his argument, this “revolution” came primarily from the middle class. From the mass-produced food products that appeared in the cupboards of bourgeois households to the increasingly influential domestic science movement formed by the work of middle-class home economists who promulgated new ideas about the relationship between food consumption and health, this was noticeably not a top-down or bottom-up revolution. Instead, change was propelled outward from the middle. Dietary reformers from this class expressed concern about both the decadent eating habits of the American upper class who wanted to emulate European aristocrats, and the apparently unhygienic food practices of the urban working class, who at this point were often recent immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. See Harvey Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Other histories that explore middle and working-class

longer reserved for the wealthy. Rather, it was part of an emerging vernacular consumer identity that was reshaping quotidian life.³² In the wake of these larger structural transformations, a plethora of new hotels, boardinghouses, saloons, lunch counters, and cheap restaurants popped up in major cities around the United States to serve the working and middle classes.

In the working world of the early twentieth century, restaurants provided an essential service for many Americans. Short breaks and the increasing likelihood that the average employee lived far away from his or her workplace meant that going home for lunch was often difficult for middle-and-working-class laborers. Many members of the working class lived alone in rooming houses without cooking facilities, especially if they had left their homes and families elsewhere in the United States or abroad before arriving in cities like Chicago. Instead of preparing their own meals, they ate their dinners in cheap neighborhood restaurants and cafés, or purchased precooked foods from bakeries and delis that could be consumed in their rooms.³³ Those who came from afar occasionally opened restaurants where others from their homelands could enjoy familiar tastes. During the workday, male laborers also frequented saloons for lunch—as Chapter Three of this dissertation outlines, many of Chicago’s saloons offered daily free lunches to patrons who spent at least a nickel on a glass of beer.

But the barrooms that had long “offered casual dining for serious drinkers” did not appeal to middle-and-lower middle-class Americans who believed that saloons and taverns, “were too

dietary habits and practices include Haley, *Turning the Tables*; Donna Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Katherine Leonard Turner, *How the Other Half Ate: A History of Working-Class Meals at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

³² Works about this nascent consumer identity include William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993); Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

³³ Duis, *The Saloon*, 194-195. According to a 1912 survey of Chicago’s North Side rooming house district, Duis points out, there were “sixty-two such bakeries and ninety-three restaurants in an area two miles long and half a mile wide.”

working class” for their sensibilities.³⁴ While these people might have desired the fashionable haute cuisine offered by elite restaurants, socioeconomic (and occasionally racial) barriers kept them away. In response, new types of venues began to pop up in major American cities, such as lunch counters and inexpensive “ethnic” eateries that allowed diners to demonstrate their cosmopolitan sensibilities at manageable prices. Dubbed “rival spaces of consumption and power” by Haley in his 2011 history of the middle-class American restaurant, restaurants that were both respectable and accessible proliferated in Chicago’s downtown core in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³⁵ For example, Henrici’s on Randolph Street opened in 1868, and with an à-la-carte-only menu featuring reasonably priced and familiar dishes like club sandwiches and pancakes, it soon became a Chicago institution.³⁶ Chinese restaurants also began to “[drive] out some of the American lunchrooms” in the Loop district as middle and working class diners came to appreciate the merits of Asian cuisine as a way of displaying their worldliness.³⁷

Despite these developments, many of Chicago’s inhabitants—particularly the upper and middle classes—were as anxious about restaurants as they were intrigued by them. They worried about both the decadence of European-style upper class dining and the apparently unhygienic food practices of the urban working classes, who at this point were often recent immigrants from abroad and also from within the United States, as the influx of Black southerners to the city

³⁴ Duis, *The Saloon*, 194-195; Freedman, “American Restaurants and Cuisine in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” 8.

³⁵ Haley, *Turning the Tables*, 5.

³⁶ John Drury, *Dining in Chicago* (New York: The John Day Company, 1931), 58-61; Shircliffe, “The Fascinating History of Early Chicago Restaurants,” 92-93; Henrici’s menu (1917), Folder F38JBM52 (1900-1919), Commercial Menus Collection, Chicago History Museum Research Center, Chicago, IL.

³⁷ Although the nation’s culinary heritage was deeply rooted in British traditions, new foods and practices brought over by immigrants from Europe and Asia started to gain mainstream acceptance. See “Chinese Restaurants Increasing in Popularity,” *Tribune*, January 26, 1902. Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table*, introduction and chapter one; “Hotels and Restaurants: Where to Eat No Longer a Worry,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 7, 1909; “Chicago Diners Seek New Dishes,” *Tribune*, November 10, 1901; “Eat Around the World in Chicago,” *Tribune*, September 27, 1903.

demonstrates. These bourgeois fears about restaurants were rooted in insecurities about the city's rapid expansion—Chicago grew from a settlement of a few hundred people in the 1830s to a booming metropolis of over one million inhabitants by the 1890s. While its residents wanted their city to be considered on the same level as New York and Boston, reform-minded Chicagoans (like their counterparts elsewhere) also fretted that large cities were impersonal, alienating, and a breeding ground for decay and ruin both literal and metaphorical. In spite of the many different ideological currents that existed among the city's politicians, influencers and commentators, and reform organizations, they shared a conviction that the only way to combat these urban risks was to somehow “replicate the moral order of the village.” In their minds, if Chicagoans could learn to see themselves as part of a “cohesive [community] knit together by shared moral and social values,” then they might have a chance at avoiding the many dangers they believed were lurking around them.³⁸

By the late nineteenth century, Chicago was “at the height of its gargantuan [industrial and demographic] growth.” Transforming from a tiny frontier trading post to a booming metropolis in less than half a century, famed environmental historian Bill Cronon perhaps said it best when he observed that “no other city in America had ever grown so large so quickly; none had so rapidly overwhelmed the countryside around it to create so urban a world.”³⁹ The opening of the Illinois and Michigan Canal and the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad in 1848, coupled with the establishment of the Board of Trade, set the city up as an important economic center. Early manufacturers like the McCormick Reaper Works ushered in a new phase of Chicago's economic development as a manufacturer of regional goods: prior to the Civil War, the major

³⁸ Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), viii.

³⁹ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 9.

industries in the city included (but were certainly not limited to) brass foundries, breweries, bricks and other building materials, chemicals, iron works, steam boilers and engines, railroad cars, and furs.⁴⁰ Developments that were already well underway only sped up in the postbellum years. This was especially apparent when looking at the city's famed meatpacking industry. During the Civil War, Chicago overtook Cincinnati as the national center for livestock trading and meatpacking—its advantageous position as a transportation and shipping hub allowed a number of local meat processing companies to become suppliers to the Union Army. By war's end, the Union Stock Yards had opened in the city's south side, irreversibly shifting the Midwestern meatpacking industry away from the boat transport of the Ohio River and toward Chicago's rail lines as it became the largest facility of its kind in the world.⁴¹

This economic expansion could not have happened without the aforementioned population boom.⁴² As industries like meatpacking continued to grow, immigrants from abroad and native-born Americans alike flocked to Chicago in search of new opportunities. By 1870, foreign-born residents made up slightly less than fifty percent of the population, and their influence on the life and culture of the city was profound. Immigrants from the British Isles (particularly Ireland), Germany, Scandinavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Italy—alongside their American-born children—made up nearly eighty percent of the city's population until the First World War.⁴³ These groups created various neighborhoods based on social class, race, and ethnicity, much to the consternation of many native-born whites who desperately wanted to hold on to a romanticized vision of the American past that was unilingually Anglo, and racially and

⁴⁰ Dominic Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 40.

⁴¹ See Mark W. Wilde, "Industrialization of Food Processing in the United States, 1860-1960," (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 1988).

⁴² Pacyga, *Chicago*, 71. The city's population grew from 112,172 in 1860 to 298,977 just ten years later.

⁴³ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 71.

culturally homogenous.⁴⁴ Their anxieties were particularly evident after the Great Chicago Fire in 1871, which started in an immigrant enclave on the Near West Side and became for a symbol of the post-Civil War urban chaos where everything seemed to be in disarray.⁴⁵

At the core of elite Chicagoans' worries were concerns about what went on outside of the home when people of disparate backgrounds and identities were able to meet and mingle with one another. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century American city, there was a "constant tension between public and private, between family and larger society, and between personal and common space," and there was nowhere where this was more obvious than the restaurant, a liminal space that existed "legally [and culturally] somewhere between the parlor and the curbstone."⁴⁶ In an inherently contradictory way, dining out in public, often crowded spaces was a desirable activity for all social classes, yet at the same time one's social mobility was often directly correlated to the degree to which one could separate oneself from the rest of the city and its residents. Theoretically open to all who could afford them, but closed off because of largely implicit rules pertaining to class, gender, and race, restaurants unsettled rigid spatial and class divisions and raised questions about whether or not public dining enhanced the social and cultural lives of Chicagoans.

Above all else, however, anxieties about public dining stemmed from the close ties between restaurants, the consumption of alcohol, the possibility of vice and other illicit sexual encounters, as well as fears of foodborne illnesses. In other words, the restaurant was a space where one might be both morally and physically contaminated, and as such it played a role in

⁴⁴ For more about the deep-rooted ambivalence about the changes wrought by modernity, see T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

⁴⁵ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 70.

⁴⁶ Duis, *The Saloon*, 14.

several of the era's most prominent reform campaigns. As Chicago became "essentially a city of restaurants," as one 1909 *Tribune* article put it, debates continued to rage between lawmakers and citizens alike about what a restaurant was, who could work in these spaces and under what conditions, what their physical environments should look like, and who could patronize them during what times of day.⁴⁷ By looking at how Chicago's restaurant culture developed over time with input from various reformers—including labor unionists, notable Progressives from institutions like Hull House, politicians at local and state levels, business owners, spiritual leaders, medical professionals, and bureaucrats—this dissertation argues that the restaurant provides insight into the multifaceted efforts made to refashion American cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As dining out became popular among a wider swathe of people, government officials—alongside an array of extralegal actors working across class, gender, and ethnic and racial lines—created systems and procedures to make restaurants conform to their standards for safety and respectability. Examining these efforts more closely reveals the inherent disorganization and confusion within, as these systems and procedures rarely worked smoothly and harmoniously with one another. In this sense, my research invites scholars to reconsider the argument that state power grew stronger during this period; rather the interactions between top-down and bottom-up forces shows how difficult it was to achieve a unified vision of orderliness, particularly when considering the exceptional and often antagonistic relationship between Chicago and Illinois's governments.

Because of its very nature, the restaurant is an ideal—yet overlooked—lens through which to explore larger questions about governance in Chicago. As historian Rebecca Spang argues in her study of restaurants in eighteenth century Paris, academics have tended to look at restaurants more

⁴⁷ "Hotels and Restaurants: Where to Eat No Longer a Worry," *Chicago Tribune*, February 7, 1909.

as a “metaphorical public ‘sphere’ than for their role as actual public ‘spaces.’”⁴⁸ Due to the hard-to-categorize liminal space they occupy, she writes that restaurants, “for most historians’ purposes, [seem] to have been neither public nor private but instead nearly invisible.”⁴⁹ Though her book is now twenty years old and food history has since exploded as a subfield, this notion of invisibility still rings true, at least on the question of restaurant regulation. Certainly, as more recent books like Andrew Haley’s *Turning the Tables* (2011), Kelly Erby’s *Restaurant Republic* (2016), and Cindy Lobel’s *Urban Appetites* (2014) demonstrate, historians have become interested in restaurants as actual public spaces, although there is less interest on the mechanisms put in place to license and inspect them.⁵⁰ On the other hand, historians working on statebuilding and law and regulation in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century United States have largely failed to talk about restaurants specifically or in fine detail, although the saloon has been a popular subject.⁵¹

Given the restaurant’s increasing centrality in the cultural life of urban America during this period, it makes sense to incorporate them more firmly into the scholarly discussions on urban reform and governance. Building on William Novak’s argument that nineteenth century American policymaking was shaped by a “vision of a well-regulated society” wherein a “plethora of bylaws, ordinances, statutes, and common law restrictions” governed everyday life, “Open Tables” presents a focused case study that contributes to the body of scholarship that

⁴⁸ Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Modern Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 85.

⁴⁹ Spang, *The Invention of the Modern Restaurant*.

⁵⁰ For example, Spang deals with this topic only briefly as part of her third chapter, “Private Appetites in a Public Space.”

⁵¹ William Novak includes a chapter about alcohol and taverns in his foundational study of nineteenth century law and regulation, but his discussions on food are limited mainly to marketplaces, butchers, and slaughterhouses. William Novak, *The People’s Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Looking at a slightly later time period, Paul Boyer describes tenement reform, the park and playground movements, and city planning as the Progressive Era’s “most important” efforts to reshape urban environments (in terms of what he calls the “coercive crusades,” he focuses on saloons and brothels). Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America*, 234.

pushes against the idea that the American state at various levels was weak between the end of the Civil War and the start of the New Deal era. However, it also highlights how flawed and ineffective these increased attempts at urban reform and governance could be.⁵² By highlighting the varied—and often conflicting and contradictory—roles played by a plethora of advocates who offered their suggestions on how Chicago’s restaurants should be operated, this dissertation also complicates the notion that statebuilding operated “as a rational, linear developmental process” involving only bureaucratic actors operating within formal political channels.⁵³ In this sense, “Open Tables” contributes to the project set out by Carol Nackenoff and Julie Novkov in their 2014 anthology that details a period between Reconstruction and the New Deal when an extraordinary number of Americans became involved in policymaking and enforcement in a process they refer to as “statebuilding from the margins.”⁵⁴ According to Nackenoff and Novkov, it has become increasingly important to “emphasize statebuilding as a dynamic engagement between reformers and policymakers,” and as a “complex and often contradictory process” instead of a “smooth progression of rationalization, legalization, and bureaucratization.”⁵⁵

The debates that surrounded Chicago’s restaurants—how to define them, who should run them and how they should be run—often invoked the two distinct (yet overlapping) strategies

⁵² Novak, *The People’s Welfare*, 1. See also William Novak, “The Myth of the ‘Weak’ American State,” *American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (June 2008): 752-772. The (flawed) notion of the weak American state during this period comes from the work of historians like Louis Hartz, who has argued that statebuilding was significantly hampered by individualist rhetoric and ideals. See Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955). Moreover, as Novak points out, governmental regulatory practice is largely “invisible in “traditional” nineteenth century American historiography in part because American state power is “so widely distributed among an exceedingly complex welter of institutions, jurisdictions, branches, offices, programs, rules, customs, laws, and regulations.” Novak, *The People’s Welfare*, 2; Novak, “The Myth of the ‘Weak’ American State,” 765.

⁵³ Carol Nackenoff and Julie Novkov, eds., introduction to *Statebuilding from the Margins: Between Reconstruction and the New Deal* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 18.

⁵⁴ Nackenoff and Novkov, *Statebuilding from the Margins*, 16.

⁵⁵ Nackenoff and Novkov, *Statebuilding from the Margins*, 29.

used widely by Progressive reformers in American cities. The myriad attempts to dictate how restaurants should operate (and how their patrons should behave) can be understood as part of the coercive approach that aimed to force particular standards onto people and institutions, whereas the introduction of regulatory measures like licensure and inspection was part of a subtler approach that aimed to reshape a city's physical environment to achieve greater social control.⁵⁶

But it is also important to underscore that these debates were not new, nor were they exclusive to Chicago. The restaurant as its own discrete space is a product of elite culture in eighteenth-century France. Initially, restaurants were places where those feeling poorly could go to sip healthful *bouillon* broths, but by the time the French Revolution had ended, restaurants had become sites of a “public, gastronomic sensibility.” In these spaces, one could enjoy luxurious, multi-course dinners that were prepared and served according to guidelines set out by figures like Marie-Antoine Carême, a pioneer of the French style of cooking known as the *grande cuisine*.⁵⁷ Because French restaurateurs considered their work to be so different from that of saloon or tavern owners, a liminal legal and cultural space developed between these types of businesses. In eighteenth century Paris, restaurant owners resented having their businesses lumped in with saloons, inns, taverns, and cookshops, and they disdained a 1775 police ordinance that limited their operating hours before organizing to wage a legal battle against it.⁵⁸ To these restaurateurs, “by definition, restaurants did not pose a possible threat to public order; instead, they remedied private physiological disorder [by providing Parisians with nourishing meals at all hours].”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America*, 175. The overview of these two strategies laid out in Chapter 12 (“The Two Faces of Urban Moral Reform in the 1890s”) of his book has informed the way I have framed this part of my argument.

⁵⁷ Spang, *The Invention of the Modern Restaurant*, 7.

⁵⁸ Spang, *The Invention of the Modern Restaurant*, 66-75.

⁵⁹ Spang, *The Invention of the Modern Restaurant*, 73.

They believed that they offered a necessary service to a “peaceful, genteel, and law-abiding” customer base; in other words they felt that their businesses catered to a class of people unlike the “uncouth clientele that frequented taverns.”⁶⁰ In June 1786, the Paris Parlement agreed ruled in the restaurateurs’ favor, and soon after, restaurants could stay open an hour later than other purveyors of food or drink.

As discussions about dancing, alcohol service, and closing laws for Chicago’s restaurants demonstrate, questions about whether or not to regulate and legislate these spaces as bars or as their own discrete category remained unanswered as restaurants made the transatlantic crossing.⁶¹ But there are numerous historical studies that examine the rise of the modern restaurant as we know it today in the United States. What is it about Chicago’s restaurants that set them apart from other works on restaurants set in cities like Boston and New York?⁶² Beyond a cursory desire to shift the historiographical focus from the East Coast to the Midwest (as well as the trivial anecdotes that reveal that Chicago had a role to play in shaping the way we eat—for example, a Swedish immigrant coined the term “cafeteria” here in the 1890s to describe his “smorgasbord”-style lunch restaurant), this city is a laboratory of urban modernity.⁶³ As former president Barack Obama said in a 2009 effort to bring the Olympics here, Chicago is “the most American of American cities,” a sentiment that has long been expressed by urban historians who have drawn from the large body of contemporary scholarly sources about the city’s migrants to argue that Chicago’s story “is in many senses the story of all America’s cities writ on a more

⁶⁰ Spang, *The Invention of the Modern Restaurant*, 74-75.

⁶¹ Chief Informed 500 Bars Hide as Restaurants,” *Tribune*, January 27, 1917; “Limits Music In Restaurants: Cafés With Bars Must Obey the 11:30 P.M. Order, According to Chief O’Neill,” *Tribune*, August 11, 1904.

⁶² Such works include Kelly Erby, *Restaurant Republic: The Rise of Public Dining in Boston* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016); Cindy Lobel, *Urban Appetites: Food and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

⁶³ Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table*, 186.

manageable scale.”⁶⁴ Although quintessentially urban and gritty, Chicago in its early years was populated largely by a variety of migrant groups who came from rural areas and had a vested interest in maintaining some of the stability of their old lives amidst a world of modern factories and stockyards, which allows for a unique perspective on the rural/urban binary that has so profoundly shaped the American psyche.⁶⁵

Relatedly, Chicago’s rapid industrialization and position as an economic powerhouse during this era is another reason to situate this study here. On one level, it is easy to associate the nineteenth and early twentieth century American industrial revolution with the railroads, steel, and oil, but the food industry was actually the period’s leading manufacturing sector. As historian Donna Gabaccia has argued, we tend to overlook or forget this because we often think of food as a natural resource rather than an industrial commodity.⁶⁶ As an agricultural state whose largest city was a central distribution point for transporting food around the United States, Illinois and Chicago played central roles within this industry. By 1912, state food commissioner Alfred Jones noted that there were seven thousand grocers, five thousand food manufacturers, one hundred thousand dairies, and seven hundred creameries in Illinois, “not taking into account

⁶⁴ Steve Bryant, “Chicago Loses in First Round,” *NBC Chicago*, October 2, 2009, <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/sports/chicago-olympics-2016-copenhagen/1863046/>; Whet Moser, “Chicago: ‘The Most American of American Cities?’” *Chicago Reader*, October 2, 2009, <https://www.chicagoreader.com/Bleader/archives/2009/10/02/chicago-the-most-american-of-american-cities>; Tracy Poe, “Food, Culture, and Entrepreneurship Among African Americans, Italians, and Swedes in Chicago,” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1999), 3-4. In Chapter One of this dissertation, I discuss in more detail the academics at the University of Chicago who pioneered urban sociology, which social science methods to analyze migrant communities and their geographically bounded neighborhoods.

⁶⁵ Poe, “Food, Culture, and Entrepreneurship Among African Americans, Italians, and Swedes in Chicago,” 3. In his 1972 book *People of Paradox*, cultural historian Michael Kammen explores a number of the persistent tensions between the “biformities” that have long shaped American life: authority versus freedom; traditional versus modern; rural versus urban; white versus black; male versus female; producer versus consumer; New World versus Old. See Michael Kammen, *People of Paradox: An Inquiry Considering the Origins of Civilization* (New York: Knopf, 1972).

⁶⁶ Donna Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 55-56.

the cheese factories, booths, restaurants, and other places where foods are sold.”⁶⁷ As Jones’s observation demonstrates, restaurants should be understood as being part of the gargantuan food industry that emerged at this time, not just as part of commercial leisure culture. These spaces were a key part of the United States’ shift toward industrial capitalism and the resulting efforts among working and middle-class reformers to adjust to this shift.

As the “hog butcher of the world,” Chicago became a critical site for the country’s fears about food, particularly after the 1906 publication of Upton Sinclair’s famous polemical novel, *The Jungle*, which aimed to shed light on the terrible working conditions faced by laborers in Chicago’s meatpacking industry, and inadvertently captivated readers nationwide with its grisly descriptions of the city’s filthy slaughterhouses and bloody production processes.⁶⁸ The robust contingent of women’s clubs and famed activists like Jane Addams of Hull House who were involved in causes like the struggle for federal pure food legislation made the city a hotbed of Progressive reform. As the labor disputes involving stockyard workers and hotel and restaurant employees demonstrates, Chicago was also a pivotal site for the battles that raged between labor and capital within the food industry. Finally, the city’s political structure (and the role that restaurants played within Chicago’s political firmament, as they were often hangouts for mayors and aldermen and spaces where deals were made) makes it a unique setting for a case study on the legislative creation of the restaurant interested in exploring questions about statebuilding from the margins. As a former alderman and University of Chicago political scientist argued in 1929, Chicago is a city that is run by governments that are both visible and invisible, formal and

⁶⁷ Alfred H. Jones, *Thirteenth Annual Report of the State Food Commissioner of Illinois for year 1912* (Springfield, IL: Illinois State Journal Co., State Printers, 1913), 24.

⁶⁸ As Sinclair famously remarked several months after *The Jungle*’s publication, “I aimed at the public’s heart and by accident I hit it in the stomach. Upton Sinclair, “What Life Means to Me,” *Cosmopolitan*, October 1906, 594, quoted in Levenstein, *Fear of Food*, 46.

informal. And while members of this informal government included factions like religious groups, the press, and the underworld, in his estimation the most powerful unofficial blocs of all were business and labor.⁶⁹

This dissertation is organized largely thematically rather than chronologically. Chapter One examines race and ethnicity in Chicago's restaurants. By focusing on the way that restaurants acted as spaces of sanctuary, cultural promotion, and labor for members of groups who had been "othered" by the white mainstream, it considers the varied experiences of Black, Chinese, and Greek Chicagoans as they navigated the city's public dining culture. By looking at their experiences with Chicago's restaurant industry, we can uncover intersecting and interrelated stories about marginalization and exploitation as well as tenacity and resistance.

Chapter Two looks at the 1914 strike at Henrici's restaurant led by members of Waitress Union Local 484. Fighting for higher wages and a shorter six-day work week, Chicago's union waitresses were able to wage a nearly-year-long battle against overwhelming financial and legal odds. Faced with police brutality, public scrutiny, and court injunctions intended to stop their sidewalk protest, the working-class women of Local 484 gained support from elite women's organizations like Hull House and forged a sense of solidarity across class lines. Moreover, the largely unsympathetic ways that these women were treated by police, the judicial system, media, and restaurant owners hints at a larger sense of discomfort and doubt about the growing number of women who labored for wages outside the home in urban centers during the early twentieth century.

⁶⁹ In the words of former alderman Charles Edward Merriam, "when they care to act unitedly, the business groups are the real masters of Chicago." Moreover, as a "union town," Chicago's most powerful group in terms of numbers was labor. See Charles Edward Merriam, *Chicago: A More Intimate View of Urban Politics* (New York: MacMillan, 1929), 90-133. As well, a 1945 memoir by a man billing himself as "an old-timer" born in 1871 describes the way that restaurants served as clubhouses for the city's political class as well as business elites and media. See Charles H. Hermann, *Recollections of Life & Doings in Chicago From the Haymarket Riot to the End of World War I* (Chicago: Normandie House, 1945).

Chapter Three considers the push made by Progressive reform organizations—often made up of middle-class women—to improve Chicago’s restaurants. A direct offshoot of the campaign for pure food, anti-vice crusades, and the temperance movement, restaurant reform efforts waged by Progressives were shaped by concerns about physical and moral contamination for those who worked in and frequented these spaces. These efforts also marked the erosion of the alliance that had been forged by working-class and middle-class activists during the waitresses’ strike. Because of the way that the latter long spearheaded the sanitary health, anti-vice, and anti-liquor campaigns that encompassed restaurants, their voices won out over their onetime working-class allies. The middle and upper classes’ dominance as reformers allowed them to set the standards for the policies that would ultimately be enacted to govern public dining in Chicago.

Chapter Four explores the vexing legal and cultural question that surrounded public dining in the city: what constitutes a restaurant and what constitutes a bar or nightclub? With the significant degree of overlap between these spaces, it became nearly impossible for municipal bureaucracy to govern these spaces because they could not define them in precise enough terms. The system that ultimately came into place proved to be unwieldy and it also revealed a crucial limitation on Chicago’s power to make and enforce its own legislation independent of the state of Illinois.

Finally, “Open Tables” concludes by looking at how Chicago’s restaurant world was increasingly shaped by middle-class Progressive interests and desires. Though the measures taken seemed to offer a feasible solution to the concerns raised by bureaucrats, reformers, and the popular press, it was an uneasy one that raised a number of difficult questions about bureaucratic intervention in commerce, discourses on gender, and the role of class in shaping

urban spaces. Not ultimately resolved clearly, these questions still hold weight over a century later.

Chapter 1

The Mixing Bowl: Race and Ethnicity in Chicago's Restaurants

“If you follow the human tides to the great foreign quarters of the city, you may be amazed at the scenes you will suddenly enter; opening scenes in a slow but irresistible process...The Tower of Babel’s drama reversed. Chicago a mixing bowl for nations.”¹

As the Chicago Tribune declared to its readers in 1909, deciding where to enjoy a meal out was “no longer a worry.” According to the city’s most widely circulated newspaper, in just a few years Chicago had transformed from a place where “the question of where to eat was difficult to answer” into a culinary mecca where diners could access “the cookery of every nation” expertly prepared by “skilled chefs” who used ingredients of “the highest grade.”² Boasting of the city’s exemplary ability to “feed her guests well,” the article went on to describe the myriad types of global cuisine available for the discerning diner, from “the spaghetti of Italy” to the “tamales of Mexico.”³ This was in no small part due to the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. In addition to showcasing America’s cultural and industrial might, it helped expand Chicagoans’ gustatory horizons and moved the city’s dining scene away from the primarily French, German, and English influences that had come before. Its thirty-five restaurants and concessions – mainly located on the Midway Plaisance – could serve a plethora of dishes from around the globe and across varied price points to 59,400 people at one time.⁴ Attendees could treat themselves to zelebiah and pita bread from vendors at the “Street in Cairo” exhibit, stuffed cabbage and boiled dumplings at the Polish Café, or tropical fruit drinks and thick coffee at the Persian, Algerian, and Tunisian concessions. If they wanted to explore the exotic while staying within the confines of “American” food, that was also possible: the state pavilions offered up

¹ Ernest Poole, “A Mixing Bowl for Nations,” *Everybody’s Magazine* (October 1910), 554.

² “Hotels and Restaurants: Where to Eat No Longer a Worry,” *Tribune*, February 7, 1909.

³ “Hotels and Restaurants: Where to Eat No Longer a Worry,” *Tribune*, February 7, 1909.

⁴ “Food at the Fair,” *Tribune*, February 18 1893.

delicacies like opossum stew, red beans and rice, and gumbo from Louisiana, and fresh citrus fruits from California, which were then still a rare treat for many Midwesterners.⁵

These restaurants and concessions were apparently quite successful in making “the palate of the Chicagoan more cosmopolitan than it was ever thought to be.” From the way that foreign-made cheese replaced Herkimer County cheese as “the standard” in the city’s restaurants to the growing popularity of mussels and escargot, the World’s Fair reportedly created a demand in the city for foreign food products and previously unfamiliar tastes.⁶ However, it is important to recognize the limitations of this mainstream boosterism of so-called “ethnic” food by publications like the *Tribune* and others at the turn of the twentieth century. First of all, the authenticity of much of the Fair’s “ethnic” food was dubious, having been prepared in central kitchens run by the Wellington Catering Company, a concern who also owned an upmarket downtown restaurant and secured a near-monopoly on food at the event.⁷ Secondly, it was a way for the Fair’s organizers to put forth a whitewashed vision of Chicago’s cosmopolitanism that willfully obscured the people and cultures behind many of these dishes.⁸ In the words of anthropologists Rebecca Graff and Megan Edwards, the Fair’s foreign food and the attention it

⁵ Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition: The Chicago World's Fair of 1893* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 82-83.

⁶ “Chicago Diners Seek New Dishes,” *Tribune*, November 10, 1901.

⁷ Bolotin and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 82; Rebecca S. Graff and Megan E. Edwards, “Fair-as-Foodway: Culinary Worlds and Modernizing Tastes at Chicago’s 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition,” *Historical Archaeology* 52 (2018): 427-428. It is also worth noting here how fraught of a term “authenticity” is, particularly as it pertains to food. Scholars and commentators who have explored the notion of authenticity include T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture* (Pantheon Books: New York: 1981); Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax: How We Get Lost Finding Ourselves* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010); Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA; London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1972).

⁸ Graff and Edwards, “Fair-as-Foodway: Culinary Worlds and Modernizing Tastes at Chicago’s 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition,” 429.

received was a carefully curated “political statement designed to promote the power of America’s ‘Second City’ on a global stage.”⁹

In other words, the food at the Fair embodied a specific type of culinary imaginary that held (and continues to hold) tremendous sway in American culture.¹⁰ While outlets like the *Tribune* promulgated culinary pluralism, the city’s ruling class (and those who wanted to be part of it) were rampantly xenophobic, advocating for broader reform efforts that were focused largely on the assimilation of immigrants and the creation of rigid boundaries against Chicago’s growing Black population.¹¹ The calls to enjoy the “baclava of Greece” and chicken-stuffed Syrian waffles existed quite comfortably along reports of, for example, African Americans being denied service in downtown cafés, or the way that Chinese restaurateurs apparently regularly flouted “laws of morality and health” and corrupted their young white customers.¹² In this regard, the imagined diversity so cursorily fêted in the press coverage of dining options at the Fair is tied to the phenomenon explored by historian Kristin Hoganson. In her 2007 study on

⁹ Graff and Edwards, “Fair-as-Foodway: Culinary Worlds and Modernizing Tastes at Chicago’s 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition,” 429.

¹⁰ Press coverage of Chicago’s multicultural culinary scene during this period parallels our current moment, where anti-immigrant sentiments run high alongside fawning coverage of trendy “new” ingredients and dishes like pho, ghee, empanadas, matcha, and ube. After a 2019 survey of Americans and Europeans revealed that food is the most commonly agreed benefit of immigration, food writer Jaya Saxena made the provocative observation that “every time white Americans “discover” gochujang, or rave about an Instagram-friendly stew that is essentially chana dal, or talk about taco authenticity, what they’re perhaps unintentionally saying is they prefer the products of immigration rather than the immigrants themselves.” See Jaya Saxena, “Americans Just Want Immigrants for the Food,” *Eater*, June 19, 2019, <https://www.eater.com/2019/6/19/18691293/americans-want-immigrants-for-food-yougov-survey>. Other examples that discuss this phenomenon (but characterize it as a byproduct of the contemporary era, particularly post-Trump) include Tim Carman, “The Humble Power of Immigrant Restaurants,” *Washington Post*, May 18, 2017; Helen Rosner, “The Absurdity of Trump Officials Eating at Mexican Restaurants During an Immigration Crisis,” *New Yorker*, June 22, 2018; Anthony Bourdain, “Under the Volcano,” *Anthony Bourdain Tumblr*, May 3, 2014, <https://anthonybourdain.tumblr.com/post/84641290831/under-the-volcano>.

¹¹ See Thomas Lee Philpott, *The Slum and the Ghetto: Immigrants, Blacks, and Reformers in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1991). Many of the people behind these efforts were white, native-born Americans who came from (or looked up to) the “old-stock Protestant...leaders of the WASP bourgeoisie” that historian Jackson Lears describes in *No Place of Grace*.

¹² Hotels and Restaurants: Where to Eat No Longer a Worry,” *Tribune*, February 7, 1909; “Eat Around the World in Chicago,” *Tribune*, September 27, 1903; “Chinese Mix Sin with Chop Suey,” *Tribune*, March 27, 1910; “United States Mail Carrier Refused in Restaurant,” *Chicago Defender*, July 22, 1911; “Negro Denied Food Gets \$100,” *Tribune*, November 5, 1907.

American empire-building and consumption, she suggests that the nation's economic expansion during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era had an impact on the everyday lives of the white middle class in the continental United States. In short, the American middle class was able to bring the world at large into their homes through consumption: purchasing imported clothing and household furnishings, eating "ethnic" foods, and so on. These practices did not, however, result in any great degree of racial equality or harmony. Rather, it was a form of consumption that was "premised on unequal economic and political relations" between Americans and citizens of other countries, wherein American consumers acted as "a privileged, purchasing class" that "only superficially and in some cases only imaginatively engaged with distant producers."¹³ By focusing on ethnic food in a seemingly positive fashion while simultaneously harboring nativist beliefs that would go on to shape later efforts to reform restaurants according to their ideals about morality and sanitary health, Chicago's cultural elites were able to elevate the city's profile while continuing to marginalize many of its residents.

In addition to their rampant xenophobia, these cultural leaders and commentators were behind the curve when it came to understanding their own city's foodways. Despite the coverage offered by the press and tourist guides, the culinary offerings at the World's Fair were not as new or innovative as they might seem. For many Chicagoans, foods like pita bread and dumplings were commonplace in their homes and on the tables of their neighborhoods' restaurants. This was, after all, a time when immigrants made up the majority of the city's population – around forty percent were foreign-born, or were the children of foreign-born parents, and hailed primarily from the British Isles (particularly Ireland), Germany, Scandinavia, Poland,

¹³ Kristin Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). 12, 55.

Czechoslovakia, Greece, and Italy.¹⁴ As well, the city's Black population more than tripled between 1900 and 1920 with the Great Migration northward from the South.¹⁵ While it may have taken the World's Fair to make the Anglo-American mainstream pay attention, the demographic changes that were reshaping Chicago at the turn of the twentieth century had an impact on public dining prior to this event and beyond it. For members of the city's marginalized "ethnic" communities, restaurants played three crucial roles that intersected and occasionally conflicted with one another: they were sites of sustenance and labor for the people in their communities, and they often became spaces for entrepreneurs to commodify their ethnicities in order to appeal to the white Anglo-American mainstream. Restaurants were also a way for marginalized communities to create their own "rival spaces of consumption and power" that would allow their members to partake in culinary pleasures they might be denied elsewhere.¹⁶

By looking more closely at these functions that restaurants played in marginalized communities, this chapter considers the production and consumption of food by people who have been "othered" by the white mainstream as a story of marginalization and exploitation as well as a story about tenacity and resistance. As the case of the centrally catered food at the World's Fair indicates, this narrative about migrant foodways is linked to a larger unresolved tension at the core of the United States' long-standing ambivalence about race, movement, and cultural

¹⁴ By 1870, foreign-born residents made up slightly less than fifty percent of the population, and their influence on the life and culture of the city was profound. In the words of historian Dominic Pacyga, immigrants "continued to dominate Chicago well into the twentieth century, making up nearly 80 percent of the city's population until World War I." Dominic Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 71. See also James Burkhart Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 28.

¹⁵ Thomas Lee Philpott, *The Slum and the Ghetto: Immigrants, Blacks, and Reformers in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1991), 120-121. In 1967, Allan Spear noted in his sociological work that Chicago's Black population rose from less than 15,000 in 1895 to over 50,000 by 1915, with another "massive influx of Negroes" during and after World War I. Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 11.

¹⁶ This turn of phrase is taken from Andrew Haley's description of the middle-class restaurants that emerged in response to their exclusion from elite dining culture. Andrew Haley, *Turning the Tables: Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 5.

exchange: the sense of pride in the idea of looking at American society as a multicultural “melting pot” exists alongside a belief that marginalized people must produce something of value under capitalism in order to be considered valuable by the Anglo-American, white, and usually native-born population.¹⁷ In turn-of-the-century Chicago, this was no easy feat: the goalposts for what “valuable” meant were constantly shifting. The entrepreneurs and employees who worked in restaurants in and outside of their respective ethnic enclaves were subjected to an array of evolving ideas imposed onto them by an inconsistent elite who venerated their food while disdaining their communities. In other words, the dominant white culture did not consider marginalized ethnic communities and their food to be a part of urban modernity; rather, these people and the goods and services they offered were considered antithetical to Progressive beliefs about efficiency and productivity. Subsequently, these restaurants and their workers were closely scrutinized and surveilled, which reinforces the notion of “foreign” food as a contentious contact zone where race and ethnicity are represented, reinforced, and negotiated on oft-unequal terms.¹⁸

To consider Chicago’s culinary cosmopolitanism solely as a narrative of marginalization and exploitation would paint an inadequate picture of the larger landscape, however. This is also a story about tenacity and resistance among groups who were so often antagonized by their city’s ruling classes. As the voluminous body of scholarly literature on food and race and ethnicity demonstrates, food and eating have historically played crucial roles in identity and community

¹⁷ As food writer Jaya Saxena notes, “the idea that an immigrant, or even a citizen, has to provide an inherent ‘benefit’ to their culture or country is rooted in the capitalist idea that we are only what we produce.” Though she is discussing the present, this point holds historical weight, particularly within the context of *fin-de-siècle* Chicago. Saxena, “Americans Just Want Immigrants for the Food,” *Eater*, June 19, 2019, <https://www.eater.com/2019/6/19/18691293/americans-want-immigrants-for-food-yougov-survey>.

¹⁸ This use of the term “contact zone” is informed by literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt, who describes contact zones as spaces where different cultures meet and interact on unequal terms. See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 4-6.

formation, and they were a way for (im)migrants to find a kind of stability and familiarity amidst the profound changes that they faced.¹⁹ This was especially true for the Chinese, Greek, and Black Chicagoans that this chapter focuses on. Although their experiences on the ground may have looked quite different as they assimilated into urban life, the restaurant was a pivotal site for all three communities as they navigated through some of the upheaval inherent to existence in a modern industrial city. As spaces of leisure and sustenance, of cultural negotiation, and as workspaces, the restaurant was an arena that Chinese, Greek, and Black migrants became involved with in one way or another. Their participation in public dining provides insight into how their journeys are linked, as well as how they diverged.

I chose to focus on these communities primarily because of how they were connected—for each, their apparent backwardness and fixity ostensibly exempted them from the Progressive ethos that permeated city life despite their prominent positions within its consumer culture (which of course was a cornerstone of urban modernity). Relatedly, all three of these groups maintained a substantial (or at least noticeable) presence in the city that could be found in defined geographic areas: the Near West Side was home to the Greeks who had started to arrive in the city beginning in the 1840s, a small stretch of South Clark Street between Van Buren and Harrison became the city's first Chinatown after the 1870s and until 1912 when it was relocated to the South Side, and the African Americans who came to Chicago from the South in the early twentieth century settled on the South Side in an expanding area known as the Black Belt.

¹⁹ The following are just a few examples of the many works that grapple with food, race, and ethnicity: Donna Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Cindy Lobel, *Urban Appetites: Food and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); John Edge, Elizabeth Engelhardt, Ted Ownby, eds., *The Larder: Food Studies from the American South*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2013); Frederick Douglass Opie, *Hog and Hominy: Soul Food From Africa to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Simone Cinotto, ed., *Making Italian America: Consumer Culture and the Production of Ethnic Identities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014); Robert Ji-Song Ku, Martin F. Manalansan IV, Anita Mannur, eds., *Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

However, I also considered these groups' distinctiveness from one another in order to compare how their restaurant cultures looked under different social, economic, and political circumstances. The Chinese, arguably the most obviously and visibly "foreign," faced a surprising degree of tolerance from white, Anglo-European Chicagoans in spite of policies like the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, at least initially. On the other hand, the African Americans who migrated from within the United States experienced a great deal of racism and discrimination from multiple perspectives. Theirs was also a unique position: though American citizens, their food was widely considered foreign and exoticized as such by both the dominant white culture and the city's established Black community.²⁰ For Greeks, finding visibility and success in the city's food businesses was a fairly straightforward process, though this came in no small part for their ability and readiness to purvey more traditionally "American" dishes. Furthermore, the violence they committed against Black diners in their restaurants demonstrates that their assimilation was partly tied to a willingness to accept and participate in American racial ideology.

I also chose to focus on these three discrete communities because of the historical context itself. Because marginalized ethnic communities were considered oppositional (or entirely unrelated) to Progressive order and rationality, they drew the attention of academics at the University of Chicago who wanted to know more about "the social and economic forces at work in the slums and their effect in influencing the social and personal organization of those who lived there."²¹ The scholars who pioneered the "Chicago School" of urban sociology used social

²⁰ For example, the *Times-Herald* talked about the kinds of South Side restaurants "where Auntie presides" in an article titled "Chicago's Foreign Restaurants." See "Chicago's Foreign Restaurants," *Times-Herald*, September 22, 1895.

²¹ Ernest Burgess and Donald Bogue, eds., *Contributions to Urban Sociology: A History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 5.

scientific methods to analyze urban development, particularly as it pertained to (im)migrants and their geographically bounded neighborhoods. Their work was informed by sociologist and onetime Urban League president Robert Park's theory of assimilation, which posited "a process of eventual cultural assimilation among different races" that would counter prevalent Social Darwinist theories that espoused biologically inherent racial differences that fostered conflict. By positioning the city as "a liberating force of natural growth," Park argued that social relationships would progress organically in a setting that had shifted from primitive rural to civilized urban.²² Figures like Park and Ernest Burgess and their students were actively involved in studies on ethnic communities and settlement houses, and their work was frequently tied to reform efforts like the ones that took place at Hull House. Their findings have proven to be invaluable for further scholarship, as were the later studies carried out jointly by the University of Chicago and the Works Progress Administration.²³

In the ensuing decades, academics have drawn on these primary sources they produced to write excellent studies about race, ethnicity and quotidian life in Chicago. For example, Lizabeth Cohen's masterful 1990 study of the city's industrial workers plays close attention to ethnic neighborhoods, particularly their local, community-focused institutions like churches, banks, and stores. Similarly, Davarian Baldwin maps the "Black Metropolis" of the South Side through a

²² Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 26-27.

²³ Works from the Chicago School of sociology and the WPA that have proven particularly helpful for my study include Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925); Ching Chao Wu, "Chinatowns: A Study of Symbiosis and Assimilation," (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1928); St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945); Brian Dolinar, ed., *The Negro in Illinois: The WPA Papers* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013). The work edited by Dolinar is a compilation of papers and archival documents at the Vivian Harsh Collection of Afro-American History and Literature at the Carter G. Woodson Library on the south side of Chicago. These documents are from the *The Negro in Illinois* project, which was an initiative of the Illinois Writers' Project in the 1930s under the WPA. The archival collection itself – particularly its materials on business, work, and social life – have also shaped this chapter.

cultural geography of “The Stroll,” the African American community’s thriving leisure district that was located along State Street from 26th to 39th Street.²⁴ Although restaurants are present in many of these narratives, they are nowhere near the primary focus of analysis.²⁵ For a food historian interested in the history of public dining, this is a significant oversight, given how much these primary sources have to offer on the topic. Because food and foodways were so closely scrutinized by the Chicago School’s reformers and academics who were driven by a belief in their own cultural superiority, restaurants come up often in this literature, in discussions about everything from labor to public health. In short, these sources reveal much about what the city’s increasingly diverse restaurant scene looked like and why the dominant white culture was afraid of it.

The ambivalence that Chicagoans of western and northern European descent felt toward these three communities (and others) is tied to the period’s firmly entrenched eugenic ideology.²⁶ A product of the country’s rapid urban and industrial growth, higher rates of immigration, the expansion of rights and freedoms for Blacks, and shifting gender roles that apparently led to falling birth rates among “native-born” citizens, eugenic ideology was a response to the rampant

²⁴ Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

²⁵ Furthermore, quite a few of these works are discrete studies of a specific community. Consider, for example, Huping Ling’s work on the Chinese in Chicago, which traces their migration and settlement from the 1870s onward. Huping Ling, *Chinese Chicago: Race, Transnational Migration, and Community since 1870* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

²⁶ An overview of the historiography of eugenics and eugenic ideology in the U.S. can be found in Wendy Kline, “Eugenics in the United States,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, eds. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 511-522. Kline has argued elsewhere that in the United States, eugenic ideology’s overarching emphasis on social reform and state regulation tie in well with Progressive ideology. As she writes, eugenic ideology “comprised a complex combination of popular scientific beliefs and interests,” which thereby appealed to an array of reformers representing “a wide range of interests and politics, who applied their own varied definitions of eugenics.” See Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). See also Laura Lovett, *Conceiving the Future: Pronatalism, Reproduction, and the Family in the United States, 1890-1938* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

anxiety among the middle and upper class about both their cultural hegemony and their very survival itself.²⁷ They feared that ostensibly “American” values would be lost as newcomers arrived and failed to adopt their established genteel traditions.²⁸ Their fears were particularly strong when it came to people who hailed from locations considered undesirable under the period’s “scientific” taxonomy of races and ethnicities.²⁹ This taxonomy was also tied to a belief that foreigners—and when I refer to foreigners here, I mean anyone who did not fit into the established standards for respectability set out for them—could either be helped along a path to Americanization, or were so unassimilable that the dominant middle and upper class denizens of the United States could not be expected to treat them as equals.³⁰ In Chicago and the United States as a whole, questions swirled about who—or what—could be considered authentically “American,” and whether it was possible to preserve an idealized and hierarchal racial order. At the same time, newcomers to the city (and elsewhere across the nation) fought back against this dominant culture and its prescriptivist ideals in order to carve out spaces for themselves where they would be safe to eat comforting, familiar foods around people they were highly likely to share a language, a region, spiritual beliefs, and kinship networks with.

For Us, By Us: The Restaurant as a Space of Leisure and Sustenance for Migrant

Communities

²⁷ These discussions among reformers, politicians, and other social commentators often referred to the survival of the “American race,” which historians have pointed out refers to the white population of the United States, particularly those who were of western and northern European and Anglo descent; Lovett, *Conceiving the Future*, 7. It is also helpful here to think about president Theodore Roosevelt’s fears that white Americans’ seeming reluctance to reproduce would lead to “race suicide.” A term coined in 1901 by sociologist Edward A. Ross, “race suicide” was also linked to “broader fears about effeminacy, overcivilization, and racial decadence.” See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 199-206.

²⁸ Lovett, *Conceiving the Future*, 7.

²⁹ Much of the era’s scientific literature tackled these anxieties head-on. For example, see Paul Popenoe and Roswell Hill Johnson, *Applied Eugenics* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1918).

³⁰ Matthew Frye Jacobson discusses this belief in his study on the United States’ corporate civilizing mission. See Matthew Frye Jacobson *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 50.

For new Chicagoans, the restaurant was a way to build—and find—community in a place long known for its distinct racial geography. In other words, the city was (and continues to be) a deeply segregated city despite its status as a multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural center. As Greeks, Chinese, and Southern Blacks flowed into Chicago and settled into the unofficially demarcated enclaves available to them, it was not long before they became involved in various food-related businesses, as owners, employees, or patrons (or some combination of the above). Spaces like restaurants became especially significant because of the function they served to new arrivals. These were places where someone new to the city (or the country itself) could eat familiar dishes, purchase goods and catch up on news from “back home,” and make connections with people who came from a similar background and were also trying to make their way in Chicago.

Greek, Chinese, and Black Enclaves

Chicago was home to the largest Greek settlement in the United States until World War II, but the community’s beginnings were modest and slow-moving.³¹ The first Greeks to arrive in the city came in small numbers during the 1840s by way of New Orleans. Mostly seamen, they arrived via the Mississippi and Illinois rivers in search of work on the Great Lakes. Many did not intend to stay permanently; their goal was to earn enough money to return home and establish themselves in business, buy land, pay off debts, and get married and start families. It was only in the 1870s, when tales of the opportunities to be found in Midwest returned home to Greece, that Chicago became a more prominent destination for Greek immigrants. Greeks who had been to the city would often return again with family and friends in tow, and were sometimes paid by

³¹ In 1911, one sociologist claimed that Chicago’s Greek neighborhood was “probably the oldest and most important Greek colony in the United States.” See Henry Pratt Fairchild, *Greek Immigration to the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911), 123.

American employers for their recruitment efforts.³² Like the earliest Greek immigrants, most saw Chicago only as a means to an end, and intended to stay only for a year or two.

The Greeks who settled in Chicago were primarily rural folk from villages in the Peloponnesus in southern Greece who were drawn to the city for jobs on the railroads and in construction. More still worked as merchants and pushcart peddlers (especially as fruit and candy vendors) at the markets on South Water Street and on Fulton. Though they settled nearby these marketplaces initially, by the turn of the twentieth century Chicago's Greeks had migrated to the Near West Side and established an enclave at the triangle formed by Harrison, Halsted, Polk, and Blue Island streets. Known as the "Greek Delta," it was located near Hull House and alongside other eastern and southern European immigrant communities, most notably Italians and Russian Jews. The community became home to a network of ethnic institutions, like Greek Orthodox churches and affiliated schools, Greek-owned businesses and shops, Greek professionals like lawyers and doctors, benefit societies, and newspapers like the *Greek Star*, which was founded in 1904 and ran for more than a century before it shut down in 2015. According to Grace Abbott, the director of the League for the Protection of Immigrants, the neighborhood stood out for its distinctiveness: "If an American was to visit this neighborhood on the night of Good Friday when the stores are draped with purple and black and watch at midnight the solemn procession of Greek men march down the street carrying their burning candles and chanting hymns, he would probably feel as though he was no longer in America," she observed. "But after a moment's reflection, he would say that this could be no place but America for the procession was headed

³² These "word of mouth" communication networks led to significant migration. One Greek Chicagoan, Christ Chakonas, became known as the "Columbus of Sparta" and was responsible for recruiting many others on his frequent trips back to Greece after he left for the first time in 1873. Andrew T. Kopan, "Greek Survival in Chicago," in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, eds. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 263.

by eight burly Irish American policemen and along the walks were ‘Americans’ of Polish, Italian, Russian Jewish, Lithuanian, and Puritan ancestry watching with mingled reverence and curiosity.”³³

As this anecdote shows, the Greek community was an oddity in many Chicagoans’ eyes. Abbott noted in her 1909 study that Greeks were “little known or understood” despite their increasingly widespread presence in the city and in the United States more broadly. According to her, the community faced a struggle that was two-fold: they suffered from both “extravagant praise” and “unreasonable criticism” because the rampant xenophobia directed at southern and eastern European immigrants was coupled with an adoration of classical Greek civilization:

The average American expecting every Greek to have the beauty of an Apollo and the ability of a Pericles, and reading only sensational newspaper accounts of some crime he may or may not have committed, concludes that the race has degenerated and constitutes a most undesirable addition to our population.³⁴

For Abbott, “the Greek immigrant should be accepted for what he is worth in modern society,” which to her encompassed three factors: “moral standards, capacity for self-government, and economic value.”³⁵ Under these terms, she felt Greeks were doing better than some and not as well as others, and she concluded that despite their “hot-headed” nature and propensity to be “drawn into disputes,” they were “bright, industrious, and capable” and with time would be an asset to Chicago.³⁶ Other similar sociological studies painted the city’s Greek Americans as “sturdy” and “keenly intelligent,” but took note of their apparent lack of “vivacity and responsive friendliness,” alongside an inclination to be “clannish” and “suspicious of those of other

³³ Abbott, “A Study of the Greeks in Chicago,” 381.

³⁴ Abbott, “A Study of the Greeks in Chicago,” 381-382. She described this judgement on Greek immigrants as “manifestly unfair.”

³⁵ Abbott, “A Study of the Greeks in Chicago,” 382. She believed that morality could be measured through criminality, and she attempted to measure this among Chicago’s Greeks by looking at statistics gleaned from court records, police departments, and penal institutions.

³⁶ Abbott, “A Study of the Greeks in Chicago,” 393.

nationalities.”³⁷ Moreover, their majority-male enclave was “not regarded as the safest for unprotected women.”³⁸

Chinese (im)migrants to Chicago were much less closely scrutinized than the Greeks. As historian Adam McKeown points out in his study of Chinese migrant networks in Chicago, Peru, and Hawaii, the Chinese who settled in the city “were rarely taken into account in the formulation of issues involving reform, hostility, and distinction.” Because “the bulk of the attention went to investigating, categorizing, and assimilating” white European immigrants, as well as upholding and enforcing the color line between blacks and whites, the Chinese, at least initially, “seemed to live in the cracks.”³⁹ Not involved with the settlement movement or initiatives carried out by groups like the League for the Protection of Immigrants, they also escaped the analysis of urban sociologists until the 1920s when the University of Chicago began to recruit students of Chinese ancestry, who produced the earliest academic studies of the community.⁴⁰ Part of this was geographic: while the city’s first Chinatown took up a relatively small area of town (just a block of South Clark Street between Van Buren and Harrison south of the Loop), it was overlooked as a whole because it existed within the confines of the notorious “Levee” vice district, a renowned and reviled spot for prostitution, drinking, and gambling.⁴¹ As well, this tiny Chinatown was more of a business district than a residential area for the small

³⁷ Natalie Walker, “Chicago Housing Conditions: Greeks and Italians in the Neighborhood of Hull House,” *American Journal of Sociology* 21, no. 3 (November 1915): 286.

³⁸ Edward A. Steiner, *On the Trail of the Immigrant* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906), 286.

³⁹ Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 192-193.

⁴⁰ Two examples that have shaped this chapter are Tin-Chiu Fan, “Chinese Residents in Chicago” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1926), and Ching Chao Wu, “Chinatowns: A Study of Symbiosis and Assimilation,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1928). As well, Huping Ling writes about Chinese students and intellectuals in Chicago from the 1920s to the 2010s in chapter six of his book, *Chinese Chicago: Race, Transnational Migration, and Community since 1870* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

⁴¹ McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change*, 193.

community, who lived throughout the city – it contained grocery stores, laundries, and restaurants, as well as the headquarters for community, political, and religious associations.

This initial failure of city residents to notice them came as a relief. The Chinese had started to arrive in Chicago during the 1870s from California, and they were seeking refuge from attention. Anti-Chinese sentiments and racial violence had become increasingly pervasive on the west coast, as were calls for anti-Chinese legislation and exclusion laws rooted in the belief that they were “heathens who would not assimilate and acculturate into American society.”⁴² The Chinese had also become the scapegoat for an economic downturn in California: their willingness to take low-paying jobs apparently took work away from native-born Americans. Of course, this was patently false. By accepting work that others did not want (in laundries, sweatshops, and as railroad laborers), the Chinese were largely not competing with white workers, but they drew their ire because “they continued to wear traditional clothing and long queues and had their obvious distinct racial features.”⁴³ Under these circumstances, members of California’s Chinese communities began to look eastward to cities like Chicago, Boston, and New York. In 1880, there were just 172 Chinese people in Chicago, and by 1910 this number had grown to 1,348.⁴⁴

At the same time Chicago’s Chinese community grew, however, so did anti-Chinese sentiment. Although historian Adam McKeown points out that “no legislation was ever passed against the Chinese in Chicago,” the xenophobia directed toward them had seemingly made its

⁴² Susan Moy, “The Chinese in Chicago: The First One Hundred Years,” in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, eds. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d’A. Jones (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 379.

⁴³ Moy, “The Chinese in Chicago,” 379.

⁴⁴ Tin-Chiu Fan, “Chinese Residents in Chicago,” 18. He obtained these numbers from U.S. census data, but they were likely lower than the reality. As McKeown, Ling, and Moy have all pointed out in their work on Chicago’s Chinatown, it was hard to get a precise number on the enclave’s population. Illegal immigration, falsified family information, and low English literacy rates among Chinese immigrants during this period make it likely that the population was higher than census indicates.

way east from California and fermented over time, first with the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and then by the 1892 Geary Act that strengthened it by requiring all Chinese immigrants to carry certificates to prove their lawful residency.⁴⁵ In 1905 when news of China's boycott on trade with the United States reached Chicago, feelings of "suspicion and opposition" to the city's Chinese community arose, and the flames were fanned by racist local politicians and sensationalized press accounts.⁴⁶ Building owners in the first Chinatown on Clark between Harrison and Van Buren imposed economic sanctions on the Chinese in effort to drive them out. By significantly raising the rents on South Clark Street, they were able to displace many of the first Chinatown's businesses and tenants. Forced to move to the South Side in search of cheaper rents, by 1912 half of the city's Chinese population "was dumped out" to a stretch of Twenty-Second Street in Armour Square, an area of Chicago that graduate student Tin-Chiu Fan described as "the dirtiest spot of Chicago at that time" as well as the poorest.⁴⁷

This second Chinatown on the South Side brought its residents into contact with multiple ethnic communities, most notably the more established Italian and African American neighborhoods that surrounded it. Unlike in the first Chinatown, this did not always go smoothly. The Italians called the Chinese names and made fun of those who still wore traditional garments and the queue hairstyle. As well, the Chinese and the Black residents of the South Side generally stayed away from each other in segregated residential areas and tended not to mix socially.⁴⁸ These two communities apparently had a history of friction between them: a 1906 *Tribune* article claimed that the "Chinese and Negroes hate each other," and in 1904 two Black men took a

⁴⁵ McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change*, 192. Not even elite Chinese Chicagoans were exempt from xenophobia. When wealthy businessman and restaurateur Chin F. Foin bought a house in Calumet for his family in 1912, the city's major newspaper described his move to the affluent white suburb with the subheading "Invades Calumet Avenue." See "Chinese Family Takes a Fine Home," *Tribune*, August 28, 1912.

⁴⁶ Tin-Chiu Fan, "Chinese Residents in Chicago," 15.

⁴⁷ Tin-Chiu Fan, "Chinese Residents in Chicago," 15-16; Ling, *Chinese Chicago*, 51-52.

⁴⁸ Ling, *Chinese Chicago*, 55-56.

group of four Chinese restaurant owners to court for refusing to serve them inside the Wee Ying Lo café on South Clark Street.⁴⁹

The Wee Ying Lo case is interesting for the way that it complicates historical arguments that Chinese restaurants were a refuge for marginalized groups like poor whites, Jews, and African Americans during this period.⁵⁰ The court proceedings themselves are also notable in how the plaintiffs' lawyer invoked questions about the nature of American citizenship and belonging in his arguments: "[My clients] were refused service because they were not white. It is high time that these defendants were impressed with the equality of colored with black men in this country," W.G. Anderson told the courtroom before continuing his argument:

Perhaps [the Chinese] are not aware that negroes helped free this great and noble country from the tyrant England; perhaps they do not know that the first blood shed in the awful conflict of the civil war was the blood of a negro; perhaps they are ignorant of the fact that negroes saved the life of Theodore Roosevelt at San Juan Hill. This is the majestic place which the negro has occupied in this glorious nation's history. Then why, gentlemen of the jury, should these strangers from a far land undertake to bar them from the privileges they accord the white man?⁵¹

Finally, the outcome of this case—the jury delivered a verdict exonerating the Chinese restaurateurs—hints at a much larger issue that vexed Chicago's Black residents, many of whom had newly arrived from the South in search of work in the urban North and an escape from Southern oppression: how to navigate the color line in a place where it ostensibly did not exist (at least legally speaking).

Part of the way that Black Chicagoans on the South Side did this was by following the dictates of the community leaders who frequently called for self-help and self-reliance as a

⁴⁹ "Why 200 Chicago Women," *Tribune*, September 30, 1906; "Human Colors Clash," *Tribune*, April 13, 1904.

⁵⁰ In his study of Chinese food in the United States, historian Yong Chen observes that Chinese restaurants were "one of the few public places that welcomed" Black customers at the turn of the twentieth century. Yong Chen, *Chop Suey USA: The Story of Chinese Food in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 107.

⁵¹ "Human Colors Clash," *Tribune*, April 13, 1904.

means of sociocultural and economic uplift. Although the move of African Americans northward from the South had begun in the late nineteenth century, the Great Migration in the 1910s and beyond rapidly expanded Chicago's Black community in terms of both population and spatial area. By the 1910s, the Black Belt was in the process of transforming from its late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century beginnings as a "narrow finger of land" from 18th to 39th streets into a sizable expanse that was expanding steadily southward, west to Wentworth, and as far east as Cottage Grove.⁵² To accommodate this growth, a plethora of new businesses opened in the Black Belt's neighborhoods, many of which were Black-owned.⁵³

In order to encourage the Black community to support these entrepreneurs, African American activists and newspaper editors engaged in a form of boosterism that promoted these businesses while simultaneously lamenting the way that Black Belt residents frequented places owned by whites who had set up shop in the neighborhood. A 1915 *Defender* columnist known only as "The Wise Old Owl" was highly critical of the "Caucasians who are getting rich through the patronage of a people whom they shun as absolutely inferior outside of the places where they are surrounding their dimes."⁵⁴ To counteract this phenomenon, Black media outlets published articles extolling the work of people like restaurant chef and owner E.L. Harrison, a successful "Afro-American business man" known for his "toothsome" cooking, as well as announcing with "great pleasure" new Black-owned businesses like lunchroom owner Mrs. George Foreman's 35th Street venture, a "first class restaurant" called The Ideal.⁵⁵ But this was a narrow type of

⁵² Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes*, 23-26; Spear, *Black Chicago*, 12-20.

⁵³ Some types of businesses in the Black Belt, including haberdasheries, variety stores, fruit stores, furniture stores, and dry goods stores were predominately run by whites. However, African Americans had "more than its share of representatives in the professions, real estate, millinery, and beauty parlors." They also maintained a strong presence in the restaurant business, undertaking, and in barber shops. Howard Phelps, "The Negro in Chicago," *Half-Century Magazine* (May 1919), 14.

⁵⁴ "Patronize Worthy Race Enterprises Along 'The Stroll,'" *Defender*, May 8, 1915.

⁵⁵ "Business Men of Ability Can 'Come Back,'" *Defender*, August 1, 1914; "Meet Me Sunday Night at Mrs. Foreman's," *Defender*, July 29, 1911.

boosterism predicated on middle-class ideals about respectability that ultimately helped foster divisiveness within the city's Black community. By encouraging Black Chicagoans only to patronize "worthy race enterprises" that they defined as "high-class," publications like the *Defender* played a role in marginalizing the Black-owned restaurants that served rustic Southern-style food catering to migrants' tastes.⁵⁶

Demographic growth and community development meant that it wasn't long before the Black Belt developed its own thriving commercial leisure district. Widely known as "The Stroll," this area was located on the stretch of State Street between 26th and 39th streets in the oldest part of the Black Belt. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the Stroll became home to a number of popular theaters, movie houses, nightclubs, and restaurants in a way that mirrored the broader commercialization of leisure culture that was taking place throughout the city (and the United States as a whole). Its bustling streets and dynamism proved alluring for Black Chicagoans. When a teenaged Langston Hughes spent a summer during the wartime years living with his mother in the city, he described South State Street "in its glory...teeming...with crowded theatres, restaurants, and cabarets. And excitement from noon to noon." In his recollection, "midnight was like day. The street was full of workers and gamblers, prostitutes and pimps, church folks and sinners."⁵⁷ Similarly, the press lauded the Stroll as "the Bohemia of Colored Folks" and "the Gay White Way"; a dazzling space where "the street is ablaze with light, the sidewalks are crowded, and there is music and laughter everywhere."⁵⁸

Restaurants as a Sanctuary for Black Chicagoans

⁵⁶ "Patronize Worthy Race Enterprises Along 'The Stroll,'" *Defender*, May 8, 1915.

⁵⁷ Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea: An Autobiography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940), 32-33.

⁵⁸ "The Bohemia of Colored Folk," *Chicago Whip*, August 15, 1919; "State Street: Its Pains, Pleasures and Possibilities," *Defender*, May 2, 1914; "State Street: 'The Great White Way,'" *Defender*, May 11, 1912.

The restaurants on the Stroll are an example of how dining spaces functioned as havens for the people in a particular ethnic or racial community. In the Black Belt, they were particularly essential, given the overt racism Black consumers experienced while trying to dine out in Chicago. In 1885, the Illinois Civil Rights Act was passed by the state legislature, and it guaranteed all persons “full and equal enjoyment” of “inns, restaurants, eating houses, barber shops, public conveyances on land or water, theatres, and all other places of public accommodation and amusement.” Those who violated this legislation by denying the rights of anyone “on account of race or color” would be subject to fines up to five hundred dollars and possible jail time.⁵⁹ Despite the existence of this legislation, however, the color line remained firmly drawn. Efforts made to enforce the Civil Rights Act were minimal, despite efforts like Black alderman Oscar De Priest’s proposed municipal ordinance that would give the mayor the right to revoke the license of any business discriminating on the basis of race.⁶⁰ The case involving the two Black diners and Wee Ying Lo employees was by no means unusual: instances of restaurant staff and owners denying service to Black Chicagoans were commonplace, and similarly, Black consumers who brought forth lawsuits against these businesses were usually unsuccessful, even for wealthier plaintiffs with social standing.⁶¹ In 1905, for example, the wife of a prominent Black lawyer brought charges against Berry’s Candy downtown for seating her

⁵⁹ Merritt Starr and Russell Curtis, eds., *Annotated Statutes of the State of Illinois: Supplement Embracing Sessions of Laws of 1885–1892, with Digested Notes of Decisions on the General Statutes of the State* (Chicago, 1892), 344.

⁶⁰ City of Chicago, *Journal of the Proceedings of the City Council, 1916-1917*, 648. However, there were at least a few instances where the legislation was enforced. The *Tribune* noted that a jury awarded \$100 to a Black diner who had been refused service at a State Street restaurant in 1907, and in 1918 the *Defender* reported that two Black men who were turned away from the Minervia restaurant on E. 47th Street were helped by a white police officer who ensured that waitstaff accommodated them.

⁶¹ “Negroes Get No Damages,” *Tribune*, February 3, 1893; “Refuses to Serve Negro with Dinner,” *Tribune*, August 30, 1893; “United States Mail Carrier Refused in Restaurant,” *Chicago Defender*, July 22, 1911. More examples of discrimination against Black diners can also be found in The Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922).

party and then ignoring them. She lost the case, and the restaurant's owners and managers faced no consequences for their actions.⁶²

Black Chicagoans found that the “unofficial Jim Crow laws” they lived under were bolstered by “underhanded and indirect methods” used by whites to inhibit their ability to freely navigate the city.⁶³ When it came to eating in restaurants, some of these tactics were particularly devious. A Black man who went to the same restaurant three days in a row to enjoy its apple pie and cheese found that the serving size he received got progressively smaller, reaching “microscopic proportions” by the third day. Similarly, Billy Boyle would give customers to his chophouse in the Levee a “special menu card” with outrageously high prices if he disapproved of them: an order of pig’s feet for \$4.30, a rum omelet for \$4.50, ham and eggs for \$4.40, raw oysters for \$5.40, French peas for 1.25, and potatoes for \$1.10. To drink, cups of coffee at fifty cents each. One day, Boyle handed this menu to two Black patrons who “gazed at it without flinching,” ordered a full meal, and paid the \$32 check, much to the restaurant keeper’s “astonished gurgling.”⁶⁴

Indeed, the racial discrimination that Black Chicagoans faced at the hands of restaurant owners and workers was palpable, and as the case involving Wee Ying Lo indicates, it did not always come from whites. During the migration years, restaurant owners and managers frequently told waiters to ignore Black customers, give them spoiled food, or overcharge them.⁶⁵

⁶² Emily Remus, “Tippling Ladies and the Making of Consumer Culture: Gender and Public Space in Fin-de-Siècle Chicago,” *Journal of American History* (December 2014): 761-762.

⁶³ “Unofficial ‘Jim Crow’ Laws,” *Tribune*, March 16, 1904; “Is Jim Crowism Growing in Chicago?” *Broad Ax*, December 31, 1910.

⁶⁴ Lloyd Wendt and Herman Kogan, *Lords of the Levee: The Story of Bathhouse John and Hinky Dink* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1943), 31. This seems to have been a common practice among white restaurant keepers who encountered Black patrons. An 1893 account of a civil rights lawsuit brought against a Chicago restaurant keeper alleged that he gave a Black man an “‘emergency’ bill of fare” that charged similarly outrageous prices like \$4 for three eggs: “Negroes Get No Damages,” *Tribune*, February 3, 1893.

⁶⁵ Spear, *Black Chicago*, 206.

This discrimination also involved verbal and physical abuse, exemplified by African Americans' clashes with Greek restaurant employees. In a 1914 letter to the *Defender*, prominent civil rights activist and Black clubwoman Ida B. Wells-Barnett spoke of the "alarming frequency" of instances where Black patrons were beaten, shot at, and sometimes killed by Greek restaurant workers.⁶⁶ She also noted that the Greeks who committed these crimes rarely faced consequences, citing several cases including one involving a Greek man who "whipped out his revolver" and fired at a Black patron at a restaurant on 29th and State after a dispute involving the bill: "This Greek was arrested, locked up overnight, and appeared the next morning at the Harrison Street station, but, nobody appearing to prosecute him, we understand he was discharged." Her incredulity and outrage was not directed at these incidents themselves. In her mind, it was unfathomable that Black people would continue to spend their money in restaurants operated by "quick-tempered people who would just as soon shoot them down as to serve them." She called on the Black community to stop Greeks from "[making] money off our race," and suggested a boycott that would make "every Greek restaurant in the black belt...pull up stakes and go over in their own colony among their own people."⁶⁷ To replace the service they offered, she felt that the best solution would be for Black entrepreneurs to open restaurants in the neighborhood that the community could support with their wallets.

Greek Restaurants for Greek People

At first glance, it might seem unusual that Greek restaurants existed in the Black Belt, given that most lived in the Greek Delta and were thought of as clannish temporary residents.

⁶⁶ There are also noted instances of Greek restaurant employees verbally assaulting Black diners. For example, in 1919, staff at the Edgewater Restaurant at Berwyn and Broadway refused to serve Black World War I veteran Peter Francis. "You must be one of those n---- soldiers that the army is turned into a fool, and any of you n---- who served in the army will never eat in here," they told him. "Greeks Hurl Insults at Returned Soldier," *Defender*, June 14, 1919.

⁶⁷ Ida B. Wells Barnett, "Will Afro-American Ever Learn to Support His Own Enterprises?" *Defender*, July 25, 1914.

The majority of the Greeks who came to Chicago were single men, which led them to form a community that had an unsettled feel; a community of rooming houses and very few single-family homes or even duplexes/two-flats. As one Greek immigrant remarked in 1909, these men considered themselves “a sort of soldier of fortune; a hunter or fisherman going out to ply his vocation.” A Greek man “could not” have his wife with him under such conditions; she would be “a burden” who “would hinder him in his pursuit of money.” This same immigrant, apparently one of the city’s “leading Greeks,” went on to further emphasize his countrymen’s collective desire to return home after experiencing life in Chicago. “The Greek cannot forget the raisin and fig fields of his native land,” he said. “He comes to America because his own country is impoverished. After he has saved some money here he goes back and lives like a king.”⁶⁸

Despite significant repatriation rates, growth was steady if not initially fast-paced: in 1882, about 1,000 Greeks had settled in the city, and by 1908 that number had grown to 4,218.⁶⁹ By 1909, however, another figure indicated that there was about 15,000 Greek people living in Chicago, 12,000 of whom could be “considered permanent residents, and the balance transients, who come and go.”⁷⁰ As time passed, Greek men had started to bring the wives and children they had left behind (sometimes for long stretches of years), or they returned to Greece to marry

⁶⁸ “A Country Without Women,” *Tribune*, June 6, 1909.

⁶⁹ These population statistics are from Abbott, “A Study of the Greeks in Chicago,” 379. However, she notes that it was hard to get a precise number, because of their back and forth migration patterns: beyond the travels to and from Greece, many would work in Chicago during the winters and leave during the summer to work on railroads elsewhere in the U.S. Though her figures come from census data and data compiled by Hull House workers, they differ from the data collected by sociologist Henry Pratt Fairchild in his 1911 study on Greek immigration to the United States. He reported 1,493 Greeks living in Chicago in 1900, 7,500 in 1904, and about 15,000 in 1909. Despite this inconsistency, growth in Chicago’s Greek community fits in roughly with the national patterns, albeit on a smaller scale: in 1900, there were only 8,655 Greeks in the entire country, and in 1907 the United States admitted 46,283 Greek immigrants.

⁷⁰ Fairchild, *Greek Immigration to the United States*, 123. Additionally, on at least one occasion, outmigration/transience happened because of European political affairs. The *Tribune* reported in 1913 that three thousand Greeks had left the city to fight against Turkey in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. See Henry M. Hyde, “Handicaps Fail to Retard Greeks in Chicago Life,” *Tribune*, September 28, 1913.

before coming back to Chicago with their new spouse.⁷¹ One of the city's Greek Orthodox priests explained these patterns by sharing his experience. Rev. Ambrose Mandilaris told a *Tribune* reporter that he came to America thinking he would stay only a year. However, after five years in Chicago, he had "no thought of leaving the country." Mandilaris' initial unwillingness to entertain the idea of permanently settling in the United States was apparently not unusual. In fact, it was "characteristic of every Greek," he said. "We are, however, beginning to notice how America is changing all the plans of the immigrant."⁷² American commentators had an even more overtly patriotic take. As one saw it, Greeks had "filled their lungs with the freer air" of the United States, which made it increasingly hard for them to return home "and live again under the old conditions."⁷³

As scholarship and literature produced by people from the Chicago School of urban sociology and organizations like Hull House shows, the Greek community was considered an oddity. In the Greek Delta, descriptions of everyday life in neighborhood by white interlocutors like Grace Abbott of the League for the Protection of Immigrants frequently cast the enclave as unfamiliar, alien, and exotic. As she reported, almost every store on Halsted Street south of Harrison had Greek characters on the windows, a sentiment that was echoed by a reporter's 1911 observation that these "strange" names and letters put him in mind of "the dear old fraternity house."⁷⁴ Similarly, recalling her "long-forgotten college Greek," Abbott was able to realize that the street was home to the Café Appolyon coffeehouse and the *Hellas* newspaper office. A block over on Blue Island Avenue, she found a Greek drug store and a barber shop named The

⁷¹ "A Country Without Women," *Tribune*, June 6, 1909.

⁷² "A Country Without Women," *Tribune*, June 6, 1909.

⁷³ Henry M. Hyde, "Handicaps Fail to Retard Greeks in Chicago Life," *Tribune*, September 28, 1913.

⁷⁴ Stanley R. Osborn, "In 30 Different Languages Halsted Street Proclaims the Wonder of Its 21 Miles of Length and the Fortunes It Has Earned Its People," *Tribune*, April 9, 1911.

Parthenon. In the words of sociologist Henry Pratt Fairchild, the neighborhood had developed in such a way that “the district around Blue Island Avenue, Polk, and South Halsted streets is today more typically Greek than some sections of Athens.” He described the area’s businesses in much the same way as Abbott, and took note of its “dark little grocery stores,” where one could see “black olives, dried ink-fish, tomato paste, and all the queer, nameless roots and condiments which are so familiar in Greece.” It was a “self-sufficing colony,” he added, where efforts were made “to supply all the wants of the Greek immigrant in as near as possible to the Greek way,” and the English language was in short supply.⁷⁵

As commentators and scholars like Fairchild noted, a cornerstone of the Greek Delta were its coffeehouses and saloons, which “flourish[ed] on every corner.”⁷⁶ Beyond their obvious purpose as spaces to consume coffee and liquors like raki and ouzo, men gathered here to play cards and pool, smoke cigarettes and water pipes, socialize and make connections, receive news from home, and sing along either to live music or recordings on the phonograph. Given the Greek Delta’s position as “essentially a country without women and without homes,” they were also spaces for immigrants to take their meals.⁷⁷ Most men here lived alone in rooming houses or in groups with other men in apartments with minimal or no cooking facilities, which made these businesses a necessity. In the words of an unnamed but “prominent” resident of the neighborhood, Greeks had to “get their meals in restaurants among their own people.” Their widespread aversion to “American” food (particularly the bread) fostered a booming import business that brought in things like pickled vegetables, salted fish, and olive oil, so it was unsurprising that traditional dishes from home were on offer at most saloons and coffeehouses.

⁷⁵ Fairchild, *Greek Immigration to the United States*, 123-124.

⁷⁶ Fairchild, *Greek Immigration to the United States*, 123.

⁷⁷ “A Country Without Women,” *Tribune*, June 6, 1909.

For example, leftist journalist and former settlement house worker Ernest Poole described a dinner in the back room of a Greek saloon that consisted of egg and lemon soup, spiced stewed goat, rice, potatoes, and a cream-based dessert, which he washed down with “a pony of delicious Greek brandy.”⁷⁸

A Closed Community with an Exotic Allure

The earliest Chinese restaurants in Chicago served a similar function. Like the Greeks, the city’s first Chinese restaurateurs opened spaces that were meant for members of their community to take their meals in. The early settlers to the first Chinatown on Clark Street were also mainly single men who lived in small flats and rooms with minimal cooking facilities. While they attracted curious non-Chinese customers from time to time in the same manner as the Greek coffeehouses and saloons did, these restaurants did not largely cater to American trade. As I alluded, this suited Chinese Chicagoans just fine. With a desire to be left alone, they blended into the teeming multicultural city; as historian Adam McKeown put it, they were just “one of many struggling immigrant groups.”⁷⁹ One exception to this was Christian missionaries, who targeted the Chinese almost as soon as they arrived – in 1878, for example, the *Tribune* reported about a Sunday school for Chinese immigrants that had been founded by David Jones, an “itinerant missionary” with a “queer history” who had learned Chinese from a time he spent living in one of their settlements in Wyoming Territory.⁸⁰ However, Chicagoans mostly left them go about their daily lives undisturbed. T.C. Moy, whom urban sociologists describe as the first recorded Chinese settler in the city, said that after arriving from California in 1876, he found the city to be much more agreeable than the west coast. In a 1926 interview with graduate student

⁷⁸ Ernest Poole, “A Mixing Bowl for Nations,” *Everybody’s Magazine* (October 1910), 556.

⁷⁹ McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change*, 179.

⁸⁰ “Chinese Sunday-School,” *Tribune*, August 5, 1878.

Tin-Chiu Fan, Moy remarked that almost everyone that he met on the streets of Chicago in the early days was also a foreigner, or the child of one. “They never asked me whether or not I ate rats and snakes,” he said. “They seemed to believe that we also had souls to save and these souls were worth saving. The Chicagoans found us a peculiar people to be sure, but they liked to mix with us.”⁸¹

The Clark Street location of the first Chinatown made mixing an inevitability, which is what eventually led to its 1912 demise. Here, Chinese businesses and association halls shared buildings with the Salvation Army, bars, flophouses, pawn shops, barbers, dime museums, and oyster bars. A variety of ethnic groups had a presence in this area. For example, The Hip Sing Tong [a Chinese-American criminal organization/gang formed as a labor organization] shared a building with a German inn, an Italian grocery shop, and an American-owned lunchroom. One of the city’s first Chinese restaurants, the Bow Wo Fung, was next door to a gambling house run by infamous Black gambling tycoon John “Mushmouth” Johnson, and a saloon owned by ward boss Michael “Hinky Dink” Kenna was one story beneath the upscale King Yen Lo restaurant.⁸² Their neighborhood’s position proved to be somewhat fortuitous for the Chinese; in spite (or perhaps because) of the Levee’s nefarious reputation, it attracted frequent visitors who came in search of “celestial” exotica.⁸³

Commodifying Ethnicity Through Restaurant Dining

Chinatown’s growing business community found that they were able to take advantage of this curiosity. As McKeown argues, by “manipulating images of the exotic Oriental,” the

⁸¹ Tin-Chiu Fan, “Chinese Residents in Chicago,” 13-14.

⁸² McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change*, 194.

⁸³ See, for example, reports like “Where Orient and Occident Meet,” *Graphic*, February 17, 1894, and the *Tribune*’s 1890 account of the community’s Chinese New Year revelry (“Gleeful Celestials: Chicago Chinamen Celebrate Their New-Years’ Festival,” *Tribune*, January 20, 1890). The term “celestial” appeared frequently as a term for the Chinese people during this period. It comes from the Celestial Empire, an antiquated name for China.

Chinese in Chicago were able to consciously commodify “Chineseness in and of itself as salable product” to find a clientele for their restaurants and curio shops.⁸⁴ This was not a phenomenon unique to Chicago’s Chinatown, however. As multiple food historians have detailed, the chop suey craze took hold among non-Chinese diners in many major American cities in the early the twentieth century.⁸⁵ What was unique about Chicago was the location of the first Chinese restaurant to draw in these types of diners. Reportedly, the first Chinese restaurant in Chicago meant to appeal to the American palate was the café inside the Chinese Village at the World’s Columbian Exposition.⁸⁶ It was part of a deliberate attempt by a consortium of Chinese-American businessmen to introduce Americans to Chinese culture on their own terms at a time when the community faced widespread discrimination and exclusion. These businessmen took matters into their own hands because they felt they had to.

The Chinese government refused to participate in the World’s Fair due to the U.S.’s 1882 and 1892 restrictions on immigration, and these men did not want to let an opportunity like this pass them by. Three prominent Chinese-Americans – Dr. Gee Woo Chan, Sling Hong, and Wong Kee of San Francisco, Omaha, and Chicago, respectively – formed a private company called the Wah Mee Corporation solely so the Chinese could participate in the fair.⁸⁷ With fortunes made through entrepreneurship and investments in real estate and other businesses, the three Wah Mee

⁸⁴ McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change*, 178, 218-220.

⁸⁵ Histories of Chinese food in the United States include Yong Chen, *Chop Suey, USA*; Anne Mendelson, *Chow Chop Suey: Food and the Chinese American Journey* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Andrew Coe, *Chop Suey: A Cultural History of Chinese Food in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁸⁶ Huping Ling, *Chinese Chicago*, 76-77. Ling does not cite a source, but remarks that the Chinese café at the World’s Fair “was believed to be one of the first Chinese restaurants in the Midwest to cater to non-Chinese diners.”

⁸⁷ The Chicagoan, Wong Kee, owned a Chinese grocery store on Clark Street. As the *Chinese American* newspaper reported, he was “the richest Chinaman in Chicago, but he does not want people to know he has a dollar.” *Chinese American* vol. 1, no. 1 (1893), quoted in “The Wah Mee Corporation,” *Chinese American Museum of Chicago*, April 28, 2018, <https://ccamuseum.org/2018/04/28/the-wah-mee-corporation/>.

leaders were easily able to put together enough capital to finance the expansive exhibit.⁸⁸ The economic successes that allowed them to do this was unsurprisingly tied to their “Americanization,” which followed the Progressive Era model that considered the “melting pot” metaphor as a symbol for “the desire to forge unity from diversity by eliminating difference.”⁸⁹ For example, the *Chinese American* newspaper described Chan’s impeccable spoken English and the love he had for “[the United States] and its people,” as well as Hong Sling’s penchant for wearing tailor-made Western-style suits and desire to become a “bonafide citizen of the United States.”⁹⁰ In this way, the Wah Mee Corporation’s mission and approach also dovetailed with other Chinatown boosters who saw the Fair as a political opportunity for the Chinese immigrant community to agitate for their rights as Americans.⁹¹

The café that these men built was an Orientalist fantasy intended to appeal to the white gaze, furnished with ebony tables and stools inlaid with pearls. A chef, purported by Dr. Chan to be “the best cook in Hong Kong,” was brought in to serve up “Celestial food products” like Chinese fruits, preserves, rice, sharks’ fins, and birds-nest soup.⁹² Chan and some of the guidebooks to the Fair also emphasized the availability of Chinese tea at the café, which was “very expensive” (with some varieties priced at one hundred dollars a pound) and “not much used” in the United States.⁹³ Although the Chinese community offered the Fair’s majority-white

⁸⁸ As the Chinese American Museum of Chicago notes, it was “a surprising fact that private individuals in the Chinese-American community” could pull this off. As they put it, “evidently there was wealth in the community even then.” See “The Wah Mee Corporation,” *Chinese American Museum of Chicago*.

⁸⁹ This characterization of the melting pot metaphor comes from Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, 211.

⁹⁰ *Chinese American* vol. 1, no. 1 (1893), quoted in “The Wah Mee Corporation,” *Chinese American Museum of Chicago*.

⁹¹ An 1893 notice in the *Chinese American* called upon Chinese American visitors to the fair to come “with a double purpose”: to see “one of the grandest sights of your life” and also to “[inaugurate] one of the greatest movements the Chinese ever had in this or any other country.”

⁹² “Low Luck Will Be Head Cook” *Tribune*, February 18, 1893; Trumbull White, *The World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893* (Boston: J.W. Ziegler, 1893), 580.

⁹³ “Low Luck Will Be Head Cook” *Tribune*, February 18, 1893; White, *The World’s Columbian Exposition*, 580.

visitors a selection of their traditional cuisine, they also felt compelled to serve reasonably priced “American” meals. As one *Tribune* article noted (presumably with the reporter’s tongue placed firmly in cheek), the café sold “other characteristic Chinese delicacies as ham sandwiches, corned beef, potato salad, and oatmeal and milk.”⁹⁴ Another way the space catered to white preferences was to offer diners knives and forks alongside the option of imported ivory chopsticks.⁹⁵

In the years after the World’s Fair, Chinese restaurants became even more popular in Chicago, despite the racism the community itself faced. Despite the role this event undoubtedly played in stimulating local tastes, the city was not unique in this regard. Historian Andrew Haley ties this to a growing middle-class “culinary adventurism.” Without the economic and cultural capital needed to dine in the most expensive restaurants frequented by the wealthy, these consumers sought alternatives like Chinese restaurants and other ethnic eateries that would allow them to demonstrate their cosmopolitan sensibilities at a manageable cost.⁹⁶ Chinese entrepreneurs in Chicago seemed keenly aware of this, and began to open new restaurants both in and outside of the Levee district that catered to non-Chinese diners. By 1902 there were Chinese restaurants on stretches of Randolph Street, north of Adams and south of Van Buren, on Harrison Street, and on State Street, where they were apparently so popular that they had started to drive out some of the American lunchrooms. Beyond the lunch crowd, the customer base in these restaurants tended to be a mix of hip urbanites and night-shift workers: in addition to the usual “slumming parties” seeking adventure, stage actresses and actors would drop by for a cup of

⁹⁴ “Freaks of Chinese Fancy at the Fair,” *Tribune*, September 24, 1893. Trumbull White’s tourist guide also mentions fried chicken.

⁹⁵ Dr. Chan (who is referred to in this article as “Dr. Chien”) remarked that these forks and knives were a necessity. Regarding the chopsticks, he remarked that “only Chinamen know how to use them.” *Low Luck Will Be Head Cook* *Tribune*, February 18, 1893.

⁹⁶ Haley, *Turning the Tables*, 5, 97.

Chinese tea and a bowl of chop suey after a performance, along with a contingent of cab drivers, policemen, and reporters working overnights.⁹⁷

Soon, Chinese entrepreneurs began opening more upscale venues. Though it was possible to dine out in a Chinese restaurant for as little as fifteen cents, in these new spots, prices could run as high as eight dollars or more for an entrée.⁹⁸ Places like King Joy Lo at the corner of South Clark Street and Van Buren best exemplified this trend. Opened in December 1906, this grand restaurant was the brainchild of Chin F. Foin, who scholar Huping Ling describes as the “first and best example of a modern Chinese restaurateur in Chicago”; a flashy entrepreneur who got his start in the grocery business and “lived a life rivaling that of wealthy and trendy American businessmen.”⁹⁹ Billed as “finest Chinese-American restaurant in the world,” King Joy Lo’s extravagance was unparalleled. With three floors of dining space, plus a lobby that featured pagodas, a mosaic fountain, teakwood wall carvings inlaid with mother of pearl, framed embroideries, and a “magnificent Chinese chandelier lit with a thousand lights,” Foin had spent \$150,000 on the space.¹⁰⁰ Like its precursor at the World’s Fair, King Joy Lo also served American food alongside its Chinese fare, and it played up its Western-style amenities like the “perfectly modern” kitchens outfitted with “ranges and refrigerators built in tile after the most

⁹⁷ “Chinese Restaurants Increasing in Popularity,” *Tribune*, January 26, 1902.

⁹⁸ The *Tribune* remarked that whatever the eight-dollar dish might be, perhaps it is “salted with gold dust and peppered with radium.” See “Secrets of the Chinese Viands,” *Tribune*, September 6, 1903. The *Defender* also reported on a twenty-five-dollar dish at one of the city’s big Chinese restaurants that had to be ordered twenty-four hours in advance: “Chop Suey \$25 a Dish,” *Chicago Defender*, June 7, 1913.

⁹⁹ Ling, *Chinese Chicago*, 71-72; “Chinese Family Takes a Fine Home,” *Tribune*, August 28, 1912. Chin F. Foin spoke English and German, rode horseback, owned an automobile long before they were widespread, belonged to the Chicago Association of Commerce, and had connections to Chinese diplomats as well as influential Chicagoans. At thirty-five, he had an estimated personal net worth of \$200,000, which he made entirely in Chicago where he had lived since the age of eighteen.

¹⁰⁰ “King Joy Lo” advertorial, *Tribune*, December 22, 1906. Foin also owned and operated the Mandarin Inn Café, which opened in 1911 on South Wabash Avenue with “fine linen on the table, fountains playing, birds singing, flowers adding their glory to the scene.” Mandarin Inn Café advertisement, *Tribune*, August 16, 1911.

approved sanitary methods.”¹⁰¹ In doing so, these restaurants and others like it offered the same kind of highly curated experience that made non-Chinese patrons feel daring and safe at the same time. It was also a deliberate attempt to present a counternarrative to the one filled with tales of these restaurants’ dirty and improperly ventilated kitchens, a source of the “sickening odor” that was so often present in descriptions of American Chinatowns during this period.¹⁰²



Figure 1: This advertisement for Chinese-American businessman Chin Foin’s Mandarin Inn restaurant boasted of its luxurious amenities and “Chinese and American Dishes,” and it displayed the space’s ersatz “Oriental” décor. Display Ad, *Tribune*, August 16, 1911.

¹⁰¹ “King Joy Lo,” *Tribune*, December 22, 1906. However, there was at least one that did not. The Joy Hing Lo restaurant on the southwest corner of State and Adams streets promised to give Chicago “a real Chinese restaurant in which everything is typically Chinese,” because most of the others did not, at least according to their management. “In many of the Chicago Chinese restaurants, the famous dishes of the Orient are not prepared as they are in the kitchens of the empire,” one of the advertorials scoffed. “They are prepared in the American way to meet the American demand. Cheaper ingredients are used and less time is consumed in their preparation.” “Joy Hing Lo” advertisement, *Tribune*, July 31, 1908.

¹⁰² For example, a 1910 *Tribune* report mentions a chop suey restaurant that was “covered with filth and vermin,” and had a kitchen “littered with barrels and cans containing the entrails and heads of chickens, decayed vegetables, and other refuse.” A thorough discussion of the omnipresent “odor” discourse surrounding American Chinatowns can be found in Chen, *Chop Suey USA*, 82-85.

The Greeks took this even further in their attempts to assure Anglo-American diners of their food's safety. Indeed, the considerable success that Greeks found in Chicago's restaurant business came not from their ability to serve up dishes from their homeland, but rather from their ability to adapt to the city's mainstream tastes. Experiences like the one that Ernest Poole detailed in his 1910 account of spiced goat at a Greek saloon were not the norm for most diners in Chicago, nor was Elias Tobenkin's description of a similar space festooned with vines of "strangely un-American" plants and flowers.¹⁰³ While these "authentic" spaces that served traditional Greek delicacies may have drawn in a curious minority of "bohemians" and "slummers" looking for an offbeat experience that would make them feel daring, most Chicagoans came to experience an altogether different type of Greek restaurant.¹⁰⁴

Unlike the "artistic cafés" ran by Italians and the "fancy trade of chop suey eaters" that the Chinese community catered to, Greek immigrants became known for their "invasion" of what the *Tribune* referred to as "genuine American restaurants."¹⁰⁵ By 1909, the paper estimated that there were 400 Greek restaurants in Chicago "serving American meals and catering to American trade," presumably a reference to people whose culinary heritage and preferences were rooted in Anglo-European traditions. There was an assumption that in order to make money in the restaurant business, a Greek proprietor would have to go "out of his own colony" and set up shop in "an American neighborhood," ideally a busy commercial district frequented by working people, like stretches of West Madison, Halsted, and South State streets. These businesses catered to "the American workman," and served up meals that were "not fancy," but rather

¹⁰³ Elias Tobenkin, "How European Chicago Amuses Itself on South Halsted Street," *Tribune*, August 9, 1908.

¹⁰⁴ As Chad Heap's work demonstrates, "slumming" was a practice that involved middle and upper class white Americans crossing geographic and social boundaries to gape at and socialize with people that they considered their social and often racial/ethnic inferiors. See Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife 1885-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). George Chauncey also discusses slumming in his work on urban life and the making of the gay male world in New York City during the early twentieth century.

¹⁰⁵ Herman Miller, "Greeks Invade Cheap Restaurant Field," *Tribune*, May 2, 1909.

“plain and wholesome” and intended to give a customer “his money’s worth.”¹⁰⁶ In spite of the Greek distaste for “American” food, they found it easy to cook—it did not require elaborate prep work, and American customers tended to want “his meat cooked while he is waiting for it.” In order to learn how to do it, Greek restaurant keepers would frequently hire an American cook for about two months before opening their businesses so they could study their methods and copy them.¹⁰⁷ They were very successful in doing so. By the 1920s Greeks had become the foremost group of restaurant owners in the city.¹⁰⁸

One way to explain the Greeks’ success in the “American” restaurant business is to connect it with their broader relationships to the myriad reform efforts directed at Chicago’s immigrants. Alongside the Italian, Polish, Jewish, Lithuanian, and Czech immigrant communities that they shared the Near West Side with, Greeks were firmly on the radar of organizations like Hull House, whose overarching goals were to assimilate these groups into the mass of native-born Anglo-Americans so effectively that their foreignness would be undetectable. In this regard, the community’s shift toward the world of lunchrooms and diners that served up sandwiches and bacon and egg breakfasts rather than baklava and dolmades can be understood as the sort of thing likely to have validated these reformers, and helped them to believe that their persistent efforts were becoming successful.

When looking at the growth of American-style Greek restaurants in Chicago, these reformers would be correct to assume that their efforts at “Americanizing” this community were paying off. These restaurants represented a move away from the Greek Delta and towards a geographic and symbolic assimilation into the city’s cultural mainstream. The success of these

¹⁰⁶ Herman Miller, “Greeks Invade Cheap Restaurant Field,” *Tribune*, May 2, 1909.

¹⁰⁷ Herman Miller, “Greeks Invade Cheap Restaurant Field,” *Tribune*, May 2, 1909.

¹⁰⁸ Kopan, “Greek Survival in Chicago,” 280. They also stood out as ice cream manufacturers, florists, and fruit and vegetable merchants.

businesses assuaged some of the wider fears about Greeks' ability to integrate into American life, not to mention their ability to participate in American commerce. In the case of the lunchroom and diner sector of the restaurant business, Greek immigrants did not just participate, they dominated. Some, like John Raklios, even achieved the kind of Horatio Alger-esque success that was a hallmark of American capitalism and a deeply embedded part of the nation's collective psyche. Arriving in Chicago from Greece in 1897, the twenty-year-old had just six dollars to his name. He soon got a job scrubbing floors, and by 1905 he had opened his first lunchroom. Just fourteen years later in 1919, Raklios had built a chain of "luncheonettes" with nineteen locations throughout Chicago.¹⁰⁹ A great source of pride for the community, a local Greek American newspaper described his business in 1923 as "an indication of the success of Greek enterprise" that was more than able to hold its own alongside "the large American companies in its field."¹¹⁰

As this example shows, food can be a powerful tool in a marginalized group's quest for cultural, economic, and political legitimacy. In the case of the Black Southern migrants who moved to Chicago in the early twentieth century, their fight for a similar sort of culinary legitimacy was two-pronged. As these migrants arrived in the city in search of new opportunities, they brought with them their Southern rural culture, which was expressed through blues and jazz music, certain language idioms, and of course, the cuisine rooted in a fusion of African, Indigenous and European traditions that we have since come to call "Soul Food."¹¹¹ This culture

¹⁰⁹ "Former Wealthy Chain Restaurant Owner Dies," *Janesville Daily Gazette*, November 20, 1957. In a stunning reversal of fortune that reflects the dark side of the American dream, Raklios went bankrupt in 1937 and spent the remainder of his life with his wife "in a dingy three-room apartment with a \$122 monthly old-age pension as their only income."

¹¹⁰ "John Raklios and George Chiagouris," *Saloniki-Greek Press*, September 1, 1923. See also John Raklios, "How I Built a Restaurant Business," *The American Restaurant* (December 1919): 19, quoted in Harvey Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 186.

¹¹¹ Histories of soul food and its role in Black American culture and identity formation include Frederick Douglass Opie, *Hog and Hominy: Soul Food From Africa to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Kelley

and its foodways were a pivotal part of their identity, but it was also something that othered them from both the city's white majority and the established Black middle class in Chicago who was focused on integration.¹¹² Ultimately, however, by establishing successful food businesses and participating in the urban consumer economy, Black migrants from the South were ultimately able to force the city's Black middle-class to appreciate and accept rural Southern culture, as well as draw in some attention from curious white Chicagoans. This was inherently paradoxical. As Tracy Poe argues in her 1999 dissertation, the process of becoming entrepreneurs and consumers represented "submission to the idea of individualism that dominated American society *and* an expression of ethnic group pride." With food acting as "a vehicle for displaying Southern identity" as well as "a symbolic battleground for the public image of the race," she argues that Black migrants to Chicago were able to work within the structures of capitalism without becoming entirely subordinate to it, and in the process forged "a new urban black culture in which all African Americans had a stake."¹¹³

As I noted in the first section of this chapter, the Great Migration from the South brought Chicago's Black population from 30,000 in 1900 to more than 100,000 in 1920. This demographic shift was accompanied by a geographic one: during this first wave of migration, nearly all of the Black Southerners who came to Chicago settled in the area south of downtown known as the "Black Belt," "Bronzeville," or the "Black Metropolis." This community was geographically and racially isolated, bordered to the north and east by whites, and to the south

Fanto Deetz, *Bound to the Fire: How Virginia's Enslaved Cooks Helped Invent American Cuisine* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2017); Adrian Miller, *Soul Food: The Surprising Story of an American Cuisine, One Plate at a Time* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

¹¹² Tracy Poe notes in her 1999 dissertation that food became "a symbol of the ways in which black Southerners were initially barred from full membership in Chicago's urban black community." Tracy Poe, "Food, Culture, and Entrepreneurship Among African Americans, Italians, and Swedes in Chicago," (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1999), 35-36.

¹¹³ Poe, "Food, Culture, and Entrepreneurship Among African Americans, Italians, and Swedes in Chicago," 36-37, 41.

and west by industrial sites and immigrant neighborhoods. The Black Belt's commercial leisure district, known as "the Stroll," was well-established by this point, home to dozens of theaters, movie houses, dancehalls, saloons, and taverns and described by one Black newspaper as the "Bohemia of the colored folks."¹¹⁴ In addition to the migrants who opened up new businesses here, established businesses started catering to migrants. Soon, it was not uncommon to see chicken shacks, barbecue stands, and dine-in spots like the Southern Home Cooking and Southern Lunch Room restaurants on the Stroll.¹¹⁵ As well, Black newspapers ran advertisements for neighborhood restaurants that deliberately appealed to Southern migrants: "Freshest Fish Received Daily, Live Shrimp and Crabs," one ad declared. "Hot Biscuits," "Barbecued Chicken-Barbecued Fish," and "Watermelon," another announced.¹¹⁶

As Davarian Baldwin writes in his study on the Great Migration and black urban life in Chicago, the Stroll was a pivotal site for African American identity formation and "New Negro" consciousness. In calling for "a serious rethinking of the relationship between consumer culture and intellectual life," Baldwin puts forth a compelling argument about how the mass consumer marketplace exemplified by the Stroll was a space where Chicago's "New Negroes sought race-based cooperative and capitalist strategies as possible solutions toward autonomy and self-control."¹¹⁷ In this sense, it is also helpful to think about the Stroll through a framework like Stephanie Camp's concept of rival geography. Camp's book on enslaved women in the plantation south uses rival geography, a term originally coined by postcolonial theorist Edward

¹¹⁴ *Chicago Whip*, August 15, 1919.

¹¹⁵ James R. Grossman, "African-American Migration to Chicago," in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, eds. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 337. See also Poe, "Food, Culture, and Entrepreneurship Among African Americans, Italians, and Swedes in Chicago," 23, 53.

¹¹⁶ These examples are drawn from Poe, "Food, Culture, and Entrepreneurship Among African Americans, Italians, and Swedes in Chicago," 52.

¹¹⁷ Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes*, 5-7.

Said, to explore how enslaved people came up with “alternative ways of knowing and using” physical space in a way that “conflicted with planters’ ideals and demands.” Though not a tactic intended to overthrow slavery, rival geography provided “space for private and public creative expression, rest and recreation, alternative communication, and importantly, resistance to planters’ domination of slaves’ every move.”¹¹⁸ The denizens of Chicago’s Black Belt had similar aims to build the kinds of spaces outside of the dominant white culture where they could feel safe and comfortable, earn a living, and enjoy themselves in the burgeoning commercial leisure culture that was becoming a hallmark of urban modernity.

However, the arrival of so many poor Black migrants to the neighborhood was a cause for concern among the established Black community, who worried about a disruption to their status quo. In the twenty-five years prior to the Great Migration, this community had developed its own churches, institutions, political base, and class structure. One’s status within it was linked in part—but not entirely—to income level. As Poe notes, “status was based on carefully cultivated notion of ‘respectability’ that took its cues from Booker T. Washington’s integrationist philosophy.” One could demonstrate their status, she explains, “by going to sober, moderate churches, supporting appropriate organizations, and exhibiting refined behavior in public.”¹¹⁹ The established members of the city’s Black community—often working through reform organizations and women’s clubs—utilized a “politics of respectability” to instill what they believed was proper conduct for African Americans who were not yet used to life in a large

¹¹⁸ Stephanie Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 6-8. It is also possible to look at the Stroll through similar frameworks and lenses as LGBT historians. One that comes to mind is George Chauncey, *Gay New York* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), which examines how queer men in New York during the early twentieth century used public spaces to “construct a gay city in the midst of, yet invisible to, the dominant city.”

¹¹⁹ Poe, “Food, Culture, and Entrepreneurship Among African Americans, Italians, and Swedes in Chicago,” 38-39.

northern city.¹²⁰ Supplementing these organizations' efforts, Chicago's Black newspapers frequently offered their readers guidelines for how to behave appropriately in public, often in list form: "don't use vile language in public/don't act discourteously to other people in public places/don't use liberty as a license to do as you please/don't congregate in crowds on the streets to the disadvantage of others passing along/don't violate city ordinances, relative to health conditions/don't live in unsanitary houses, or sleep in rooms without proper ventilation," and so on.¹²¹

A significant part of this "politics of respectability" involved food and eating habits. This was, after all, a time when one's familiarity with food—the ability to know what to eat and where and how to properly consume it—was a particularly strong marker of status.¹²² One of the things the established Black middle class prided themselves on was that they had a higher level of integration into Chicago's restaurants before the Great Migration happened, which they attributed to their good manners and sophisticated tastes.¹²³ In their seminal *Black Metropolis*, St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton outline some of the bitterness and resentment these Black Chicagoans harbored toward newly-arrived migrants from the South: rhetoric involving "the

¹²⁰ The term "respectability politics"/politics of respectability is borrowed from African American historiography and was initially identified by historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in her 1994 book *Righteous Discontent*, which looks at women in the Black Baptist church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and traces the development of Black middle-class ideology. At a basic level, "respectability politics" refers to the ways in which marginalized groups actively work to show that their values and interests are not incongruous with the dominant political and cultural system, which thereby gives them space to refashion an identity that exists outside of a prevailing (and usually racist) discourse. Furthermore, historians who have written about Black-led organizations in Chicago committed to fostering a class-specific type of racial uplift geared at Black Southern migrants include Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes*, 30-34; Cynthia M. Blair, *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

¹²¹ This example is from the *Defender*, quoted in James R. Grossman, "African-American Migration to Chicago," in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, eds. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 331.

¹²² Poe, "Food, Culture, and Entrepreneurship Among African Americans, Italians, and Swedes in Chicago," 39. See also Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table*; Helen Zoe Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

¹²³ Poe, "Food, Culture, and Entrepreneurship Among African Americans, Italians, and Swedes in Chicago," 39.

good old days” before they arrived was common among the “old settlers” they interviewed. Migrants, the old settlers alleged, “made it hard for all of us” because they “didn’t know how to act.”¹²⁴ Certainly these members of the Black community would not be caught dead in the restaurants on the Stroll that catered to newcomers’ affinity for Southern dishes: they disdained the “unsightly and unsanitary little eating places and wagons” on State Street, instead encouraging the community to “patronize worthy race enterprises” where everything was “clean,” “orderly,” and “up to date.”¹²⁵

It was likely that these Black Belt residents would have vastly preferred the more sophisticated restaurants on the Stroll that would allow Black patrons to indulge in the same dishes offered at the major downtown restaurants that might refuse them service. While the neighborhood was “plentifully interspersed” with urban standbys like “gaudy chili, chop suey, and ice cream parlors,” it was also home to restaurants like Mrs. Foreman’s The Ideal, which had “everything that goes to make a pleasing place and a desirable place to eat...just as you get in the white restaurants all over the city.”¹²⁶ In 1915, the neighborhood welcomed the Elite No. 2 restaurant, which was billed as a “mecca for high-class amusement” that would be the “most beautiful and perfectly appointed of any café and buffet of the race in the country.” Located on State Street near the corner of 35th, the owners of Elite No. 2 wanted to give black Chicagoans “a Rector’s or Vogelsang’s of [their] own,” and pledged to serve “fine Chinese and American dishes” made by a Chinese cook and hire the best musicians the city had to offer.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 73-74.

¹²⁵ Grossman, “African-American Migration to Chicago, 337, “Pig Ankle Joints,” *Defender*, May 29, 1915; “Patronize Worthy Race Enterprises Along ‘The Stroll,’” *Defender*, May 8, 1915.

¹²⁶ “State Street: Its Pains, Pleasures and Possibilities,” *Defender*, May 2, 1914; Meet Me Sunday Night at Mrs. Foreman’s,” *Defender*, July 29, 1911.

¹²⁷ “Elite No. 2 Opens Thursday, Jan. 28: Palatial Café,” *Defender*, January 23, 1915. Rector’s and Vogelsang’s were two of Chicago’s most elite downtown restaurants.

But these more glamorous restaurants presented a new problem for the Black Belt. Because they fit into standards of respectability dictated from the top-down by the white middle classes, these establishments attracted the same bourgeois white slummers who were drawn to the Greek Delta and Chinatown in search of the exotic. Drawn by the rising popularity of jazz and blues music, these visitors started to venture southward. Apparently oblivious to the community's "New Negro" consciousness, these whites imagined African Americans in the Stroll as backward and clinging to their Southern pasts, as George Ade's newspaper tale of a dinner of "chidlins," cornbread, and sweet potatoes at a basement restaurant reveals.¹²⁸ The famous raconteur and man-about-town eagerly described for his readers the rustic space, run by a Black woman known as "Aunt Mary," who he describes in terms that epitomize the racist "Mammy" archetype. Aunt Mary was "short and very fat," and wore an apron tied tightly around her waist, Ade wrote. "She had a face of ebony, eyeballs as white as the outside snow and a close growth of kinky hair. She laughed so hard that she had to go back through the side door into the kitchen before she could recover sufficiently to say 'Ev'thing's ready.'"¹²⁹ According to Baldwin, white visitors like Ade saw the neighborhood's businesses as sites of "urban primitivism and pleasure." To adventure-seeking whites like the turn-of-the-century journalist, the Black Belt was, akin to the city's other ethnic communities, the "antithesis of Progressive Era industriousness and productivity."¹³⁰

For many of these white visitors, the Stroll was a source of simultaneous desire and disgust. Their forays into the neighborhood's cafés, nightspots, and restaurants, the *Defender*

¹²⁸ George Ade, "A Plantation Dinner at Aunt Mary's," in *Stories of the Streets and of the Town: From the Chicago Record 1893-1900*, ed. Franklin J. Meine (Chicago: The Carton Club, 1941), 119-123. See also *Times-Herald*, September 22, 1895.

¹²⁹ Ade, "A Plantation Dinner at Aunt Mary's," 120.

¹³⁰ Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes*, 25.

alleged, led them to “commit all manner of vice and immorality.” In their nightly “infestations” of the Stroll, these “white debauchees” sexually pursued Black women and “[did] as they pleased” on the streets and inside of businesses. Echoing this, a *Whip* editorial disdainfully noted that with the growing popularity of the district, its business owners were being forced to make space for “the increased white patrons who come ‘first to scoff and then remain to pray.’”¹³¹ Given this, it’s not surprising that the neighborhood became a focus for a variety of reform organizations and the University of Chicago’s sociologists. In their 1911 report, the Vice Commission of Chicago made it clear that the city’s red-light district was located in the Black Belt and concluded from that that vice was inherent to the Black community. The district was indeed located in the enclave but as Baldwin notes, this was part of a larger pattern in American cities during this period wherein a growing Black population, in conjunction with “residential and employment segregation, racist zoning practices, and white violence, confined all black classes, leisure, vice, religion, and so on to the same racially confined space.” As he writes, this made the Stroll “a perceived model for urban dysfunction and disorganization.” Because a multitude of amusement places were located within this section of this segregated community, the white majority conflated debauchery with Blackness. Furthermore, the white slummers and cultural tourists “could enter, partake of, and enjoy the ‘vitality’ and ‘spirit’ of the African safari in the city, as both a threat and balm that existed outside of and away from their own overindustrialized ‘white’ civilization.”¹³² Meanwhile, the urban sociologists pontificated endlessly about Black migrants’ ability to assimilate to life in the urban North as they conducted

¹³¹ “Black and Tan,” *Whip*, April 24, 1920.

¹³² Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes*, 26.

their studies in the Black Belt, most notably in Robert Park and Ernest Burgess's classic 1925 text *The City*, which described the neighborhood's "free and disorderly life."¹³³

Restaurants as Spaces of Labor

For people like these scholars and visitors—as well as for many members of the established Black middle class—it did not seem to matter that Southern restaurants played an important role in keeping Black migrants connected to their past in a context where they did not want to shed their customs and identity. Nor did it seem to matter that that entrepreneurship was an increasingly prominent avenue for newly-arrived Black migrants. Historian James Grossman observes that by 1919, "two-thirds of all black-owned businesses in Chicago were operated by what the *Whip* called 'newcomers,' and an Urban League spokesman called 'migrants.'" ¹³⁴ Black women were also represented in this demographic. In 1912, a directory of Black-owned businesses in Chicago listed a number of women as sole proprietors or partners in restaurants that sometimes pointed directly to their gender: "Minnie Turner's Restaurant and Lunch Room," and the "Three Sisters La Creole Kitchen," are two examples.¹³⁵ Part of the reason why food-related businesses became so popular was how easy it was for Black migrants to get started with one. Coming from the rural and agricultural South, many already had experience producing and preparing food, which in Poe's words, meant that "selling it didn't seem like too much of a leap."¹³⁶ Moreover, businesses like restaurants did not require as much training, specialized education or start-up capital as, say, a beauty parlor, which was another popular non-industrial profession for Black Chicagoans.

¹³³ Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925), 54.

¹³⁴ Grossman, "African-American Migration to Chicago, 337.

¹³⁵ *Chicago Negro Business Men and Women and Where They are Located* (1912), quoted in Poe, "Food, Culture, and Entrepreneurship Among African Americans, Italians, and Swedes in Chicago," 53.

¹³⁶ Poe, "Food, Culture, and Entrepreneurship Among African Americans, Italians, and Swedes in Chicago," 54-55.

The issue of start-up capital has long vexed entrepreneurs from marginalized communities. The city's Greeks achieved their success in the restaurant industry after spending their earlier years as pushcart vendors. In a 1909 Hull House survey of 956 Greek men in the Delta, 473 were employed in areas related to food: this included waiters and cooks, restaurant keepers and ice cream parlor owners, saloon-keepers and bartenders, and jobs in fruit stores and candy factories.¹³⁷ A common trajectory for a Greek man in Chicago was to start out as, say, a laborer on the railroads before saving up money, learning a bit of English, and then “graduating” to ownership of a fruit stand, candy kitchen, ice cream parlor, or restaurant. The ability to do this was largely contingent on their being established enough to bring over a wife from Greece and start a family in the United States. Sixty-five percent of the eighty-three ice cream parlor owners surveyed by Hull House workers lived within a traditional family group structure, as did seventy-five percent of the fifty-five restaurant keepers.¹³⁸ Establishing these types of small businesses (and sometimes purchasing the property they stood on) had obvious benefits. In addition to the income they generated, food service businesses in and outside of the Delta allowed Greek immigrants to form a more permanent connection to Chicago, which in turn solidified their ties to the United States and contributed to their process of “Americanization” (as did their willingness to accept and participate in American racial ideology, evidenced by the numerous instances of violence they subjected Black diners to).

Indeed, commentators often remarked on the Greeks' business savvy, an indication they had begun to fit in quite nicely to the city's urban capitalist economy. For some it was surprising—how did people from mostly agrarian backgrounds merge so seamlessly into

¹³⁷ Abbott, “A Study of the Greeks in Chicago,” 386.

¹³⁸ To contrast, seventy-one percent of the men surveyed who worked as laborers and eighty-four percent of the peddlers lived in all-male “non-family groups.” Abbott, “A Study of the Greeks in Chicago,” 385-386.

mercantile activities? “Why the Halsted Street Greeks should feel it laid upon them to feed and polish and confection is a mystery,” mused *Tribune* writer Stanley Osborn. “Greeks are not restaurant men and confectioners and shoe polishers in the isles of Greece. It is something they learn in Halsted street.”¹³⁹ However, praise of their ability was often tinged with racist disdain. For example, Abbott reported that a common refrain in the Halsted street business district was that “it takes a Greek to beat a Jew,” which invokes the ugly stereotype about the Jewish peoples’ supposed greed and affinity for profit-earning, while at the same time casting the Greeks in the same light.¹⁴⁰ Another complained that he couldn’t understand the draw of Chicago’s Greek restaurants because of their apparent lack of adherence to standards of sanitation and cleanliness. “They do not appeal to the fastidious,” grumbled an anonymously quoted man who frequently dined out. “Their goods are, to a great extent, exposed to dust and insects. But they thrive.”¹⁴¹

Greek restaurant owners were also tough on their employees, although their establishments were hard and exploitative workplaces for both. Owners toiled for sixteen to eighteen hours a day alongside staff who worked equally grueling schedules. Mostly young men newly arrived from Greece, these employees started as dishwashers and could be promoted to waiters if they demonstrated the necessary prowess. Initially very poorly paid (or not paid at all), these workers were subjected to what the *Tribune* called a “form of peonage” that required police intervention to curb it.¹⁴² As well, the Greek consul and prominent members of the local Greek community kept a close eye on restaurant owners to ensure they were treating staff fairly. Still,

¹³⁹ Stanley R. Osborn, “In 30 Different Languages Halsted Street Proclaims the Wonder of Its 21 Miles of Length and the Fortunes It Has Earned Its People,” *Tribune*, April 9, 1911.

¹⁴⁰ Abbott, “A Study of the Greeks in Chicago,” 386.

¹⁴¹ *Ideas for Refreshment Rooms* (Chicago: The Hotel Monthly Press, 1923), 116. This unnamed man’s ire seemed to come at least partially from jealousy. Alongside the complaint about cleanliness, he wondered why Americans did not see the same opportunity for profit in the restaurant business that Greeks did.

¹⁴² Herman Miller, “Greeks Invade Cheap Restaurant Field,” *Tribune*, May 2, 1909.

the lives of these restaurant employees remained difficult: they had very little separation between home and work, often living in the same building as the restaurant or in a flat owned by their boss, who furnished their room and board.¹⁴³

Conditions were as rough for Chinese restaurant workers. Statistics compiled by Tin-Chiu Fan in his 1926 dissertation indicate that the majority of Chicago's Chinese population worked in the domestic and service sector, especially in laundries or in the restaurant business as cooks and waiters.¹⁴⁴ In the 1910s, Chinese restaurant employees in Chicago worked seven days a week and up to fourteen hours a day, only to earn an average yearly wage less than five hundred dollars. This kept many restaurant workers mired in poverty and unable to go back to China for their wives and other family members. Fed up, a number of these workers responded to their unfair working conditions and low pay by forming the Mon Sang Association in 1918. The labor union's first demand was to put an end to the long work week, a request granted by "about one-fourth" of restaurant owners. They also called for a minimum wage of forty cents per hour, and they created a wellness initiative for their members that called for things like English language lessons, insurance and benefits, and social gatherings.¹⁴⁵

The owners of the restaurants that these Chinese Chicagoans worked in used them as a selling point while privately taking advantage of them. In their advertising, the Joy Hing Lo restaurant at the corner of Adams and State boasted of its "Chinese kitchen" staffed by "native chefs" who cooked "native dishes just as they are prepared in the great kitchens of the walled empire," as well as its "Chinese waiters" who moved "hither and thither" as they served dishes

¹⁴³ Abbott, "A Study of the Greeks in Chicago," 390.

¹⁴⁴ Tin-Chiu Fan, "Chinese Residents in Chicago," 34.

¹⁴⁵ Tin-Chiu Fan, "Chinese Residents in Chicago," 79-81. Although the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) tried as early as 1903 to organize Chinese restaurant workers, it seems like nothing came of it: Fan noted in 1926 that the Mon Sang Association was not affiliated with the CFL or the local branch of the Waiters' Union. See also "Now for a Chop Suey Union," *Tribune*, July 6, 1903.

“just as they are served in China.” Over at the Mandarin Inn Café on Wabash, Chin F. Foin recruited “the best Chinese cooks in America” from San Francisco to work in his kitchen.¹⁴⁶ But restaurant workers were far more than just a convenient marketing tool for owners who wanted to gesture toward the authenticity of their establishments. As Yong Chen delineates, the Chinese restaurant was as important as space of labor as it was a space of consumption. In his words, the Chinese food industry has long been a “vital lifeline” for Chinese America, “generating revenue for the community and employment for individual Chinese Americans.”¹⁴⁷ Moreover, while it might be easy to dismiss the work of Chinese restaurant staffers for being low-status or for playing into racist stereotypes about their apparent servility, doing so would overlook the strength and determination of these workers.

As the American public dining experience became increasingly democratized, Chinese, Greek, and Black entrepreneurs and their employees acted as stewards of the period’s emergent consumer culture, but overall it was largely because of their labor rather than a growing affinity for their foodways and communities. As it became commonplace for a wider swathe of the population to eat meals outside of the home and partake in the city’s commercial leisure culture, ethnic Chicagoans helped satisfy a mounting demand among consumers for a more convenient and comfortable lifestyle by working as restaurateurs, cooks, and waiters. Writing about the development of America’s Chinese food, historian Yong Chen astutely observes that understanding ethnic cuisine is key to understanding the division of labor along the lines of culture and race in the United States. As he points out, “the lowly position of Chinese food in mainstream America’s restaurant-market hierarchy has mirrored the inferior status of China both

¹⁴⁶ “Joy Hing Lo” advertisement, *Tribune*, July 31, 1908; Mandarin Inn Café advertisement, *Tribune*, August 16, 1911.

¹⁴⁷ Chen, *Chop Suey USA*, 4.

as a culture and as a supplier of cheap labor in the economy,” a statement that can just as easily be applied to Black and Greek immigrant restaurant cultures.¹⁴⁸

Indeed, one of the best examples of the way that racial discrimination worked in Chicago at the turn of the twentieth century can be found when looking at the way that Black restaurant employees were treated. Beyond the “race enterprises” of the Stroll, African Americans found employment in the dining rooms and kitchens of the Loop’s restaurants, which were spaces where racial divisions could be transcended, at least partially and in a limited manner. While jobs as cooks, dishwashers, and waiters in the South were typically held exclusively by Black men, this was not the case in Chicago. Though it was undoubtedly apparent, the color line among the city’s restaurant workers was fairly flexible. Historian Margaret Garb has pointed out that the more exclusive oyster houses and hotel dining rooms tended to hire German waiters while African Americans typically worked within Loop lunchrooms and counters. However, working conditions were not strictly segregated: Black and white waiters worked side by side in some downtown restaurants, and they banded together to form the Culinary Alliance, a biracial labor organization made up of hotel and restaurant waiters that successfully challenged their employers by striking in the 1890s.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Chen, *Chop Suey, USA*, 3.

¹⁴⁹ Margaret Garb, *Freedom’s Ballot: African American Political Struggles in Chicago from Abolition to the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 143. For more detailed accounts of the 1903 waiters’ strike, see Garb, “The Great Chicago Waiters’ Strike: Producing Urban Space, Organizing Labor, Challenging Racial Divides in 1890s Chicago,” *Journal of Urban History* 40, no. 6 (2014): 1079-1098; Garb, “Challenging Urban Space, Organizing Labor,” in *Freedom’s Ballot*, 117-146; Michael Lesy and Lisa Stoffer, *Repast: Dining Out at the Dawn of the New American Century, 1900-1910* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), 76-83. See also “Waiters’ Demands Held Exorbitant,” *Tribune*, May 29, 1903; “Waiters’ Strike Nears a Finish,” *Tribune*, June 17, 1903. “Waiters Beaten; Negroes to Go,” *Tribune*, August 27, 1903. Furthermore, an August 1903 editorial in the *Tribune* declared that it was “a great mistake” for black waiters and cooks to take part in the strike, and that they must have been “seduced into it by the white employees, who knew that their chance of winning would be much smaller if the negroes remained at work. “Foolish Colored Men,” *Tribune*, August 25, 1903.

It was an uneasy coalition that did not last. After a bitter 1903 waiters strike effectively ended the organization's work, restaurant owners became reluctant to hire black men to work as waiters, and instead turned to a group that they felt they could get away with paying even lower wages: white women.¹⁵⁰ Seeing nothing but dollar signs ahead, restaurant owners made a concerted effort to hire women to work as waitresses in the city. In a solidly anti-union move, a group of close to one hundred business owners formed the Chicago Restaurant Keepers' Association (RKA) and sent agents to other Midwestern cities like Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Indianapolis to recruit young white women to work as waitresses in Chicago, a move that supplemented the number of women in Chicago who were interested in this line of work.¹⁵¹

It soon became disreputable for white women to take these jobs. This was especially apparent in discussions about waitresses who worked in restaurants run by members of marginalized communities. For example, consider the reaction to white women who took jobs in Chinese restaurants. Just as elsewhere in the United States, Chicago's anti-Chinese sentiments were tied to fears of miscegenation and contamination both moral and physical, particularly as they concerned the less-upscale chop suey houses. Because these restaurants occasionally employed working-class white women as waitresses or kitchen staff (or were a preferred hangout for women who fell into this category), downmarket chop suey houses were seen as hotbeds of vice. Here, reporters alleged, young white women were "being introduced to cigaret [sic]

¹⁵⁰ Hiring women to work as waitresses was also seemingly advantageous for customers, who felt like they could tip women less, or not at all. For more detailed accounts of the 1903 waiters' strike, see Garb, "The Great Chicago Waiters' Strike," 1079-1098; Garb, "Challenging Urban Space, Organizing Labor," in *Freedom's Ballot*, 117-146; Lesy and Stoffer, *Repast*, 76-83. See also "Waiters' Demands Held Exorbitant," *Tribune*, May 29, 1903; "Waiters' Strike Nears a Finish," *Tribune*, June 17, 1903. "Waiters Beaten; Negroes to Go," *Tribune*, August 27, 1903. Furthermore, an August 1903 editorial in the *Tribune* declared that it was "a great mistake" for black waiters and cooks to take part in the strike, and that they must have been "seduced into it by the white employees, who knew that their chance of winning would be much smaller if the negroes remained at work. "Foolish Colored Men," *Tribune*, August 25, 1903.

¹⁵¹ "Waiters Beaten; Negroes to Go," *Tribune*, August 27, 1903.

smoking, drinking, and other evils destined to make them the slave wives of Chinamen, or drag them down to lives of more open shame.”¹⁵² In one particularly notorious incident, nine Chinese restaurant workers were arrested for allegedly attacking an eighteen-year-old Polish woman who worked alongside them.¹⁵³ It was against this backdrop that these pioneering women entered waitressing, and they soon became just as sick of their working conditions as the Black and white men of the Culinary Alliance did of theirs.

¹⁵² “Chinese Mix Sin with Chop Suey,” *Tribune*, March 27, 1910; Girls Drink Beer at all Hours in Chop Suey Houses,” *Tribune*, May 16, 1914. See also “Why 200 Chicago Women,” *Tribune*, September 30, 1906 for a discussion of the mixed-race marriages between Chinese men and white women in the city.

¹⁵³ “Girl Attacked; Nab Chinese,” *Tribune*, March 25, 1910.

Chapter 2

Women Waiting: Gender, Labor, and Public Space in the 1914 Waitresses' Strike

“Just as in the Middle Ages the serf got his freedom with the development of the city, the woman is getting her freedom under the conditions which prevail in the modern city. This movement must be regarded inevitable.”¹

Shortly before noon on a chilly early February afternoon in the busy downtown Loop district in 1914, diners heading to lunch at Henrici's restaurant on Randolph Street were accosted by five women who had formed a picket line a few feet from the front door. Members of the city's Waitress Union Local 484, these women approached each prospective customer to explain why they were boycotting the establishment and to ask them to demonstrate support by not patronizing the restaurant. As the lunch rush picked up and it became more difficult for the five waitresses to address each diner individually, they began to shout their grievances to all who passed by: the city's waitresses should have a six-day work week and a minimum wage of eight dollars a week, and establishments like Henrici's should employ only unionized labor.

Unsurprisingly, their efforts soon drew the ire of Henrici's manager William Collins, who called city police in an effort to quell any potential trouble, but his actions failed to have their intended effect. When officers arrived on the scene, they were met with defiance, particularly from union president Carrie Alexander, who refused to move from her spot in front of the restaurant before she was arrested. “You have no right to make me leave this sidewalk,” she told a Chicago Police Department (CPD) officer. “Oh yes,” he replied. “If you're creating a disturbance, I have.” She responded by telling him that she was not making a disturbance and that if he wanted her to go, he'd have to “take [her] in the wagon, because [she] wouldn't walk a step.”² She resisted the

¹ Frances Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1920), 228.

² “Waitress Pickets Taken by Police Despite Defiance,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 7, 1914.

efforts of “two big policemen” to pull her along and force her to begin walking to jail, and sat down on the slushy sidewalk.

By this point, a sizable crowd had gathered, their attention piqued by the curious sight of female picketers. Urging Alexander to “stand her ground,” spectators laughed and jeered, seeming particularly amused when officers lifted the defiant and kicking woman off the sidewalk in order to carry her to the station alongside the four other protestors. Though the excitement faltered briefly after the waitresses were detained and taken away, it quickly returned when they came back to Henrici’s later that afternoon after being released on bond. Now, there were more waitresses on the scene to support them, and according to the *Chicago Tribune*, a “riot appeared imminent” as traffic was stopped and close to five thousand people had since gathered to watch the conflict unfold. “We’ll have to take all you girls,” CPD detective Mark Sullivan warned the waitresses. “Go ahead and take us,” replied striker Sophie Dreisen. Alexander echoed these sentiments, telling police that it was part of their “constitutional rights” to protest Henrici’s, and she threatened that the women would “cause a scene” if officers tried to forcibly removed them: “If you try to make [us] go away it is tyranny.”³ Their bombast went unheeded however, as more officers were called from police headquarters. An extra squad – along with the patrol wagon – was soon sent to Randolph Street and fifteen women were arrested for disorderly conduct as spectators laughed and cheered.

The Chicagoans who had gathered to watch the clash between union waitresses and police were, according to the *Tribune*, “amused by the queer sight” of young women publicly protesting their working conditions.⁴ Only the second women-led strike in the city’s history – it was preceded by a garment-workers’ strike in 1910 – the sight of female picketers was still a

³ “Waitress Pickets Taken by Police Despite Defiance,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 7, 1914.

⁴ “Waitress Pickets Taken by Police Despite Defiance,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 7, 1914.

novelty. These initial reactions to the waitresses' efforts by quizzical onlookers, police officers, restaurant owners, and the press – confusion, amusement, contempt, and even outright violence – continued as the strike grew and dragged on over the next eleven months. The public's perception of these women and their cause as a largely frivolous and perhaps even dangerous spectacle ultimately played a key role in undermining the waitress union's efforts amidst a backdrop of rising costs, intensifying pressure from Henrici's management, and court injunctions against picketing on public streets. Moreover, the largely unsympathetic ways that these women were treated by police, the media, and employers demonstrate a larger sense of discomfort with the growing number of women who labored for wages outside the home in urban centers during the early twentieth century.

By looking more closely at the 1914 waitresses' strike at Henrici's restaurant, this chapter will argue that the strike is a microcosm for broader cultural anxieties and gendered debates about ordering public space. The restaurant in particular was especially fraught in this regard: women's labor and activities in and around these establishments – oft-associated with both prostitution and the alcohol trade – was largely invalidated and looked down upon. And although the waitresses of Local 484 faced numerous obstacles and ultimately failed to achieve their major goals, this chapter makes a conscious effort not to paint this as a simple declensionist narrative or a story of winners and losers. Chicago's union waitresses may not have achieved a shorter work week and higher minimum wage, but they demonstrably altered the correlation of forces between labor and capital in the city. For almost an entire year's time, they were able to sustain their strike against overwhelming financial and legal odds. They won support from elite women's organizations, creating a cross-class sense of female solidarity in the process. As well, they were

able to compel employers to negotiate contracts with union labor, and their efforts struck a major financial blow to several local restaurant owners.

In this sense, the waitresses' strike fits into the larger story about labor unionization among unskilled workers in Chicago: near-simultaneous achievements and failures; gains and losses. Although significant breakthroughs were made by the Knights of Labor (KoL) in the late nineteenth century, the gains labor made had begun to decline at the turn of the new century and it was becoming increasingly difficult to fight back against capital.⁵ In spite of the vibrant and strong interethnic and interoccupational movement the KoL had built, culminating in a 40,000-member strong general strike for an eight-hour workday in 1886, it was quickly destroyed. The KoL's downfall was threefold: a series of crushing defeats among stockyard workers and others, internal ideological conflicts among its members, and the violent clash between strikers and police at Haymarket Square in May 1886. By 1887, the city's labor movement had been significantly weakened – many of the of KoL's radical socialist and anarchist wing had been killed, jailed, or blacklisted, and the organization had shrunk to just 17,000 members from its peak of approximately 40,000 earlier in the decade.

To contrast, many of the craft unions had survived, and new organizations began to integrate skilled and unskilled workers in their efforts. As well, more moderate organizations like the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) were formed in the 1890s, bringing “more planning and coordination and an era of effective sympathy strikes,” which allowed them to survive the decade's economic downturn and the Pullman Boycott's 1894 defeat.⁶ In the early years of the

⁵ See Richard Schneirov, *Labor and Urban Politics: Class Conflict and the Origins of Modern Liberalism in Chicago, 1864-97* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998). For a more detailed version of this story at a national level, see David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁶ Encyclopedia of Chicago, Unionization, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1284.html>

new century, unskilled workers in the stockyards, factories, machine shops, and hotels and restaurants had begun to regroup, and by 1903 more than half of the city's workers were affiliated with the CFL, including 35,000 women in twenty-six different occupations. In spite of their successes, however, these workers faced pushback from employers, who declared their establishments open shops and waged war on Chicago's unions, as demonstrated through the discussions of the efforts to end waiters' strikes in the early years of the twentieth century.⁷ Lockouts became commonplace and new organization was minimal, with limited and varying degrees of success until the First World War.

As this chapter and the previous one indicates, these individuals who helped keep their city fed were not necessarily white and not necessarily male, and derived their incomes from what we now call the service industry. Though the city's status as a manufacturing hub made it a pivotal site for the battles that have raged between labor and capital, historians who have worked on union organizing in Chicago and other American industrial hubs during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have tended to overlook service sector work. I suspect there are two reasons for this lack of historiographic attention: one, the service sector is a phenomenon that many of us think of primarily as a byproduct of late twentieth century deindustrialization, and two, this sector is, and remains to this day, notoriously under-unionized (though certainly not for employees' lack of trying).⁸ By pointing toward the longer history of what we can call the

⁷ This was especially apparent in the building and metal trades, and among transport owners. The clothing and garment industry marked an exception to this trend—strikes in 1909 and 1910 led to the expansion of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and the foundation of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) in 1910. For more about the push to destabilize waiters' efforts to organize, see the previous chapter of this dissertation.

⁸ See, for example, Francisco J. Buera and Joseph P. Kabowski, "The Rise of the Service Economy," *The American Economic Review* 102, no. 6 (October 2012): 2540-2569; Doug Short, "The Epic Rise of America's Services Industry," *Business Insider*, September 1, 2014, <https://www.businessinsider.com/growth-of-us-services-economy-2014-9>; William Finnegan, "Dignity: Fast Food Workers and a New Form of Labor Activism," *The New Yorker*, September 8, 2014.

modern service sector, this project fits into the established body of scholarship that has pushed back against a homogenous understanding of “the worker” as someone who is male, white, and working in a more “traditional” industrial sector like railroads, mining, and steel mills.⁹ Fashioning a more capacious understanding of who is a worker by considering sectors like retail and the restaurant industry has been an important historiographical project among labor historians since the 1980s – as these historians have long noted, work in the often-female-dominated service, leisure, and domestic sectors was often as grueling and exploitative as factory labor.¹⁰ Acknowledging this, my argument builds upon work by Margaret Garb and Michael Lesy and Lisa Stoffer, who have both written about Chicago’s waiters’ strikes at the turn of the twentieth century, and historians like Susan Porter Benson, who have written about female department store workers and waitresses respectively.¹¹ However, even the studies on restaurant workers consider the 1914 waitress strike at Henrici’s only as an afterthought. For example, Dorothy Sue Cobble’s foundational 1991 book on American waitresses and their unions mentions it only briefly over two pages, as does more recent historical scholarship like Garb’s masterful work on biracial labor organizing among Chicago’s waiters.¹² In paying closer

⁹ Some examples of labor histories that fit into this paradigm include James R. Green, *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement and the Bombing that Divided Gilded Age America* (2007); Paul Michel Taillon, *Good, Reliable, White Men: Railroad Brotherhoods, 1877–1917* (University of Illinois Press, 2009); James Ducker, *Men of the Steel Rails: Workers on the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, 1869-1900* (1983).

¹⁰ Other works of American labor history that consider seriously non-industrial labor (including work done by women) include Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing it Out: Waitresses and their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1991).

¹¹ See Margaret Garb, “The Great Chicago Waiters’ Strike: Producing Urban Space, Organizing Labor, Challenging Racial Divides in 1890s Chicago,” *Journal of Urban History* 40, no. 6 (2014): 1079-1098; Michael Lesy and Lisa Stoffer, *Repast: Dining Out at the Dawn of the New American Century, 1900-1910* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013).

¹² Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing it Out: Waitresses and their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1991), 66-67; Margaret Garb, *Freedom’s Ballot: African American Political Struggles in Chicago from Abolition to the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 143.

attention to this largely forgotten strike, this chapter aims to shine a spotlight on the longer history of so-called “pink collar” service work and further contextualize why unionization and labor activism in this sector has long been so difficult.

As the previous chapter demonstrated, the city’s restaurant kitchens and dining rooms were spaces where ethnic and racial divisions could be transcended, at least partially. Chicago’s waiters were also able to look past the color line and find solidarity with each other by forming a union they called the Culinary Alliance. But until a bitter 1903 strike crushed the Culinary Alliance’s efforts and prompted restaurant owners to seek out new options for exploitable labor, the workers in Chicago’s restaurants were predominantly male. When they realized they could pay women even lower wages than men, agents working on behalf of the Chicago Restaurant Keepers’ Association (RKA) set out to recruit them to work in the city’s culinary industry. Hiring women to work as waitresses also seemed advantageous to restaurant customers, who felt like they could tip women employees less, or not at all.¹³ Despite these disadvantages, many of the women who took up waitressing jobs in the city decided that it was an appealing prospect that was preferable to domestic service, then the most common occupation for working class women. In this burgeoning profession, it was possible to work in groups with other likeminded women rather than in “the dreary isolation of private houses,” and it also seemed, at least according to a magazine published by the National Woman’s Trade Union League of America, like the type of thing that could offer “a spice of that freedom and adventure which has a

¹³ For more detailed accounts of the 1903 waiters’ strike, see Garb, “The Great Chicago Waiters’ Strike,” 1079-1098; Garb, “Challenging Urban Space, Organizing Labor,” in *Freedom’s Ballot*, 117-146; Lesy and Stoffer, *Repast*, 76-83. See also “Waiters’ Demands Held Exorbitant,” *Tribune*, May 29, 1903; “Waiters’ Strike Nears a Finish,” *Tribune*, June 17, 1903. “Waiters Beaten; Negroes to Go,” *Tribune*, August 27, 1903. Furthermore, an August 1903 editorial in the *Tribune* declared that it was “a great mistake” for Black waiters and cooks to take part in the strike, and that they must have been “seduced into it by the white employees, who knew that their chance of winning would be much smaller if the negroes remained at work. “Foolish Colored Men,” *Tribune*, August 25, 1903.

deathless appeal to youth and energy.”¹⁴ As well, as women and families started dining out in restaurants (as opposed to largely male clienteles), it became slightly more socially acceptable for a woman to take a waitressing job.

There were limits to the types of jobs they could be offered though. High-end fine dining restaurants were largely out of the question, with management preferring to continue staffing these establishments with white male waiters. Instead, most of Chicago’s waitresses worked at cafés, tea rooms, lunch rooms, or “hash houses.” The latter was the least prestigious and most widespread: as Frances Donovan reported in her 1920 exposé of what it was like to be a waitress in Chicago, hash houses made up “approximately 75 per cent” of the restaurants in the city, and women would “work in one only when she can find no other place.” According to Donovan, the common sentiment among waitresses was that “anything is better than a hash house”—these were the places where a girl would begin her career and quickly move on to something better, or the place where a career would end, since these establishments “[did] not demand youth and physical attractiveness in its waitresses.”¹⁵ Here, the clienteles were primarily male and the hours were long, with ten-hour shifts either split between lunch and dinner or continuous throughout the day being the norm: open at all hours, the hash house served “only short orders and ‘plate dinners’ (meat, potatoes, and one vegetable all on one plate)...to the business man who wishes to swallow the necessary amount of nourishment” in the shortest time for the lowest price.¹⁶ To compare, the lunch room was of similarly low status, offering meagre wages, long shifts, and

¹⁴ S.M. Franklin, “Elizabeth Maloney and the High Calling of the Waitress,” *Life and Labor* 3, nos. 1-12 (January to December 1913), 39.

¹⁵ Frances Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1920), 107. Frances Donovan was a middle-class woman who went “undercover” and took several jobs as a waitress in Chicago in order to conduct research for this book; this type of endeavor was a trend among middle-class reformers and writers during the era. See Mark Pittenger, *Class Unknown: Undercover Investigations of American Work and Poverty from the Progressive Era to the Present* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

¹⁶ Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits*, 108.

either no tips for the women who worked in employee lunch rooms or the lunch rooms of private clubs, or small tips in department store lunch rooms which were frequented by other women rather than by men.

The café and the tea room were the most prestigious and desirable venues for a waitress. The former served three meals a day at tables rather than a counter, and was “the most lucrative place in which the waitress can work,” not because wages were any better but because the tips were far greater than in hash houses or lunch rooms. Here, one might find “the youngest, prettiest, and most efficient girls,” Donovan observed. These waitresses were “the chorus girl type...the girl whose stockings are always silk, whose underwear is pink crepe de chine, and whose street clothes are *la dernière crie* in fashion modes.”¹⁷ Moreover, cafés attracted “a truly cosmopolitan crowd” that included vaudeville and stage actors and actresses, office men, brokers, shop assistants, telephone operators, railroad conductors, out-of-towners from “downstate” and across the Midwest, and even, in Donovan’s words, “greasy Italians with their greasy wives and still greasier babies.”¹⁸ The tea room was perhaps a little more refined than the café, open only during the day time and specializing in “dainty sandwiches and salads, and in desserts that have a little flavor of the homemade about them” that cost about double what a meal at the hash house did.¹⁹ Here, waitresses were usually “neater” and of a “better class,” serving those who wanted “a light repast rather than a square meal.” As one woman who worked at the Park Tea Room told Donovan, this is a nice place to work if you’ve got swell friends and you don’t want them to know that you are working,²⁰ which suggests there was a level of class passing going on among Chicago’s young working-class women. The job was an opportunity for

¹⁷ Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits*, 110-111.

¹⁸ Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits*, 111.

¹⁹ Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits*, 108-110.

²⁰ Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits*, 110.

upward mobility for some, in a narrative that was not unlike Theodore Drieser's famed Chicago novel *Sister Carrie* (1900), about a country girl who moves to the big city in search of her own American Dream. Donovan observed that there was "a certain type of waitress who wishes to be considered refined," who used her tips to buy tasteful clothing and attempted to "speak good English" but "betray[ed] herself by the frequent use of "God" and "Hell" in her conversation."²¹ Waitresses who came from small towns in the Midwest often considered themselves much worldlier than they had been prior to arriving in Chicago, and many wanted nothing more than to "marry up," according to Donovan, who remarked that "the real goal of the waitress is domesticity." One union girl, she reported, believed the best place to work was the Stock Exchange Restaurant because of the glut of wealthy male patrons. Tales like the story of the waitress there who married one of her rich customers and traded her apron for a "grand flat on the North Side" were exchanged with no small amount of envy and aspiration.²²

Stories like this were the exception, not the rule, however. Upon failing to "realize her ideal of domesticity," many waitresses took on "a life of semi-prostitution," where they flirted with male customers for tips and made dates with them outside of work in a practice Donovan priggishly refers to as "the sex game."²³ Noting that waitresses's actions in this regard only "borders upon prostitution," since "the girl earns her own living" while accepting money or gifts during evenings out, Donovan still considered it distasteful, particularly since it was not uncommon for them to do this with several male customers at once. "These women live in a different world from ours," she sniffed after telling an anecdote about a waitress who told her that she "always keeps two or three fellows on the string and I get all I can out of them."²⁴ These

²¹ Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits*, 136.

²² Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits*, 219.

²³ Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits*, 211-220.

²⁴ Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits*, 214, 213.

practices, coupled with the mostly young and mostly unmarried status of Chicago's waitresses, stirred up deep-seated cultural anxieties that the job was indeed a disreputable one for a woman. Around 1912, an investigator from the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago visited seventy-two restaurants to interview waitresses to find out "the number of hours they worked, the wages paid them, the treatment accorded them by employers and customers, and the temptations by which they were surrounded."²⁵ According to these interviews, many of Chicago's waitresses (referred to as "girls" throughout the report) led hard lives and did grueling work at these jobs for low pay. Most did not have a high level of education, and the majority lived away from their families, unsurprising considering the RKA's recruitment across the Midwest. Some had "left their homes because they could not 'get on' with their families," but others had left their small towns to chase big dreams of a more glamorous life in the city and a chance at reaching middle-class respectability.²⁶ Many lived very modestly in furnished rented rooms, and ate their meals at the restaurants that employed them.

In the investigator's opinion, this sense of isolation and relative autonomy waitresses experienced was worrisome enough to cast moral judgement. As they wrote, "many of these girls, coming to know their own limitations and having no hope for a bright future, realize that they can expect but little in the way of wages and are therefore bent on having as good a time as possible while their youth and attractiveness lasts."²⁷ This point of view, the investigator decided, made it easy to understand why "so many of them yield readily to temptation" in the form of male customers who would tip generously after a meal, offer small gifts, take them on

²⁵ Juvenile Protection Association of Chicago, "The Girl Employed in Hotels and Restaurants" (Chicago: Hale-Crossley Printing Co., 1912), n.p.

²⁶ Juvenile Protection Association, "The Girl Employed in Hotels and Restaurants."

²⁷ Juvenile Protection Association, "The Girl Employed in Hotels and Restaurants."

dates, or even lead them into prostitution altogether.²⁸ Though she disdained the practice, Donovan noted that these women did indeed have agency, and were not “exploited nor driven into it,” instead going about it with their “eyes wide open.”²⁹ Jane Addams of Hull House shared the inspector’s viewpoint, writing in 1914 that waitresses were exceptionally susceptible to a life of sex work because of both the job’s low pay and duty to converse and be friendly (likely overly so) with male customers, particularly as the custom of tipping caught on.³⁰ “Some [restaurant patrons] are lonely young men who have few opportunities to speak to women,” she said. “The girl often quite innocently accepts an invitation for an evening, spent either in a theatre or dance hall, with no evil results, but this very lack of social convention exposes her to danger.”³¹ To prove her point, Addams told the story of “an honest, straightforward girl” from a small Michigan town who came to Chicago and got a job in a café in order to support her mother and younger sister back home who was stricken with tuberculosis. Upon receiving word that her sister was near death, the waitress cautiously accepted a customer’s seemingly kind offer to buy her a ticket on a boat back to Michigan. However, when she got back to Chicago a week later “burdened with the debt of an undertaker’s bill, she realized that she had discovered a means of payment.”³² These fears were also often racialized, particularly as it became fashionable for white Americans to frequent – and work in – inexpensive “ethnic” restaurants.³³ For example, the *Tribune* reported in 1910 that city inspections found that “laws of morality” were ignored in

²⁸ Juvenile Protection Association, “The Girl Employed in Hotels and Restaurants.”

²⁹ Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits*, 220.

³⁰ On the custom of tipping, see Chapter 7 “A Tipping Evil” in Andrew Haley, *Turning the Tables: Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), and Drury, *Dining in Chicago*, 267-268.

³¹ Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1914), 68-69.

³² Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil*, 70-71. In Addams’ eyes, it was far better for a girl to take a job in a factory, where they would only encounter “plain people” who were far less likely to open their eyes to temptations like alcohol, nights out at dance halls or theatres, and sex.

³³ Andrew Haley, *Turning the Tables*, 5-6.

chop suey restaurants. Here, the white women who were employed as waitresses and cashiers were apparently corrupted into smoking, drinking alcohol, “and other evils destined to make them slave wives of Chinamen.”³⁴

These feelings gesture at a larger sense of anxiety about the presence of working-class women in heterosocial urban environments like restaurants and other workplaces. They were, in the words of Joanne Meyerowitz, “women adrift.” Though they had diverse motives and backgrounds, they had in common the desire to abandon family and domestic roles for “the impersonal individualism of the city.”³⁵ Like their middle and upper-class counterparts that were widely known as “New Women,” the women adrift challenged the era’s prescribed gender roles by rejecting the notion of separate spheres set out by the “Cult of True Womanhood” and contributed to a moral panic about the future of family life and domesticity in the United States.³⁶ The subject of much public attention and discussion, observers initially saw these women who had moved away from their homes and kin and supported themselves through wage work as “symbols of moral decay” or as “victims of a ruthless urban and industrial society.” As Meyerowitz writes, authors of reform literature and popular romances at the close of the nineteenth century “constructed a discourse that portrayed ‘women adrift’ as pure and passive orphans threatened with sexual danger,” particularly because they worked in low-wage jobs that

³⁴ “Chinese Mix Sin with Chop Suey,” March 27, 1910; “Girls Drink Beer at All Hours in Chop Suey Houses,” *Tribune*, May 16, 1914.

³⁵ Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), xviii.

³⁶ Carolyn Christensen Nelson, introduction to *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles, and Drama of the 1890s*, ed. Carolyn Christensen Nelson (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), ix. See also Barbara Welter’s classic 1966 article, which delineates this ideal in more detail. Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151-174. It is important to note that this domestic ideology had begun to erode as the nineteenth century ended; ironically, women’s participation in social reform causes would ultimately play a significant role in the formation of the so-called “first wave” of feminism and in the suffrage movement of the early twentieth century. See also Wendy Kline, who observes that “Home and family were the cornerstone of society, and if women abdicated their domestic duties, what was to become of moral order?” Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 11.

were thought of as suitable for dependent daughters or wives. However, as the twentieth century unfolded, the discourse about these women shifted into one that viewed them as “self-seeking” symbols of “modern urban individualism” who “shunned the constraints of family.” Like Donovan does in her 1920 book on Chicago’s waitresses, fiction writers, journalists, and urban sociologists started to consider the woman adrift not as a “passive exploited victim,” but rather as an “active opportunistic exploiter” who was open to sexual experimentation and gold-digging.³⁷

This shift in the narrative about “women adrift” was deployed skillfully by the nascent popular culture industries, which “used a newer image of vibrant, sexual ‘women adrift’ to titillate audiences and sell urban vitality.”³⁸ This was certainly the case within the restaurant industry (at least the cafés and tea rooms, if not the hash houses): Donovan observed that “restaurants want women who are young and good looking; the advertisements announce it and most managers insist on it. ‘There ain’t no chance for an old hen, they all want chickens and they want ‘em slender,’ is a remark which defines the situation.”³⁹ However, the job was not a glamorous one, and the city’s waitresses soon grew dissatisfied with their working conditions, much like the male waiters who had come before them. It was a grueling, physically demanding job where a woman could expect to be on her feet for thirteen or fourteen hours a day for a wage of about six dollars per week. A Ph.D. graduate in philosophy from the University of Chicago took a job as waitress because of a “commingled yearning for adventure and philanthropy” and soon found the work to be both physically and mentally painful. “Our arms ached from fingertips to shoulders, and our backs were lame from the strain of lifting the trays. Our feet were sore, swollen, and in some cases blistered, from being on them so many hours day,” Amy Tanner

³⁷ Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, xviii-xix.

³⁸ Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, xviii-xix.

³⁹ Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits*, 211.

wrote in an article about her experience published in a 1907 edition of the *American Journal of Sociology*. This fostered in her a compulsion to do no more “than was absolutely necessary, to sit down at every opportunity...in short to act like the typical shiftless servant.” She and her co-workers “enjoyed taking advantage of” their boss, and did things like order desserts for imaginary guests so that they could eat them themselves.⁴⁰ Another article about “the high calling of the waitress” remarked rather dryly that there was perhaps no other job that was as “surrounded by irritations as serving people with their food...after long wearing hours there can be nothing more liable to fill a person with a sense of revulsion than to see people feeding and feeding, endlessly, one after another.”⁴¹

In response to these tough working conditions, the Chicago Waitresses’ Union Local 484 was founded in 1902. Within six months, it boasted a membership of close to fifteen hundred women who paid fifty cents in dues per month. And like the all-male Culinary Alliance before it, the union included Black and white women of various nationalities and ethnicities.⁴² However, Black women were significantly underrepresented. As the American Federation of Labor’s magazine *American Federationist* noted in 1905, “very few” Black waitresses had been unionized at that point, and there weren’t enough Black waitresses “working steadily to form a union of their own.”⁴³ Located at 35 South Dearborn Street, its headquarters were a convivial space where, in addition to finding out about employment opportunities, waitresses could meet one another “for a little gossip and relaxation.”⁴⁴ After all, the job could be a lonely one, especially for the “women adrift.” The arduous nature of the work combined with the scrutiny

⁴⁰ Amy E. Tanner, “Glimpses at the Mind of a Waitress,” *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 13, no. 1 (July 1907): 49-50.

⁴¹ Franklin, “Elizabeth Maloney and the High Calling of the Waitress, 37.

⁴² Cobble, *Dishing It Out*, 77.

⁴³ Esther Taber, “Women in Unions,” *American Federationist* (December 1905): 927.

⁴⁴ Franklin, “Elizabeth Maloney and the High Calling of the Waitress, 37; Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits*, 138.

and disrespect that Chicago waitresses faced from the general public and their employers and customers alike meant that they soon began to agitate for higher wages, shorter hours, and safer working conditions.

The Chicago Waitresses' Union Local 484 was not the first or the only female or female-led union in Chicago: Elizabeth Rodgers headed the Knights of Labor in the 1880s, and there were a number of efforts made in the 1890s and early 1900s to organize working women, most notably among Irish-born women in the city's meat packing plants.⁴⁵ Nor was it the first waitress union in the United States – a Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE)-affiliated waitress union in Seattle, Local 240, received its charter on March 31, 1900, which made it the nation's first permanent waitress union.⁴⁶ Local 484's origins can be traced to the Chicago Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), one of the national organization's most active branches that aimed to organize women workers, lobby for protective legislation and suffrage, and promote vocational education.⁴⁷ Led by a contingent of upper-middle class social reformers like Jane Addams and trade unionists like Agnes Nestor, the WTUL held its meetings at Hull House from 1904 to 1908 before moving to the Chicago Federation of Labor's offices.⁴⁸ Membership between the WTUL and Local 484 overlapped – Waitresses' Union officers Elizabeth Maloney and Anna Willard belonged to both, and in their capacity in the former organization they played a significant role in pressuring the state legislature to extend the ten-hour workday to women workers in Illinois in 1909. Their efforts were only partially successful: in spite of the fact that waitresses had helped spearhead this initiative, they were not included in

⁴⁵ Australian-American trade unionist Alice Henry described their "unorganized, unprepared for, and unfinanced" 1902 strike in Packingtown as a "splendid but defeated struggle." Alice Henry, *The Trade Union Woman* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1915), 52-58, 43.

⁴⁶ Cobble, *Dishing It Out*, 62.

⁴⁷ Encyclopedia of Chicago, Women's Trade Union League, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1373.html>.

⁴⁸ Encyclopedia of Chicago, Women's Trade Union League.

it. The new ten-hour law only covered women employed in factories, laundries, and mechanical establishments—it was not until 1911 when Maloney and Willard returned to Springfield alongside other members of the WTUL that it was extended to cover workers like themselves.⁴⁹

From here, Maloney embarked on a new campaign to gain a dollar a week raise for the waitresses who were part of her union. Forward-thinking and possessing “the energy of a squirrel and the courage of deep convictions,” she also had a goal for an eight-hour work day and a minimum wage scale for waitresses, as well as suffrage for all American women. “If you don’t look a little ahead, you’ll never get anywhere,” she told a journalist in 1913.⁵⁰ Under Maloney’s leadership as well as the efforts of Waitresses’ Union president Carrie Alexander, the organization’s calls for change grew louder. “Our main object, as an organization, is to get the six-day week for the girls and a minimum wage of eight dollars. We think that is a very reasonable demand, which is demonstrated by the fact that over one hundred restaurants are willing to comply with it,” Maloney remarked to a group from the City Club of Chicago. “In this day and age the six-day week is essential. Everybody knows that. The horses work only six days a week; then why should the men and women in the hotel and restaurant industry work seven days? It is coming, it should be here now, and we believe that the whole public stands with us on that issue.”⁵¹

Beyond the issue with wages, waitresses were annoyed that employers took five cents out of their \$1.00 per day wage for laundering aprons, in addition to having to pay busboys an average of thirty cents per day. They also wanted to end the practice of forcing waitresses to pay for broken dishes and meals that customers sent back to the kitchen, and prevent waitresses from

⁴⁹ Suellen Hoy, “Chicago Working Women’s Struggle for a Shorter Day, 1908-1911,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 107, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 11.

⁵⁰ Franklin, “Elizabeth Maloney and the High Calling of the Waitress,” 40.

⁵¹ “The Henrici Strike,” *The City Club Bulletin* 7, no. 14 (June 13, 1914): 201.

doing the type of work “that should be done by a porter,” like sweeping and moving the “325 chairs and heavy tables” at Henrici’s every day after the busy lunch hour service.⁵² Moreover, as Maloney alluded in her remarks above about the men and women who worked in hotels and restaurants, these women were not just interested in looking out only for themselves. The city’s union waitresses sought to standardize the entire culinary trade. According to a 1914 statement by the WTUL, establishing a uniform standard for wages, hours, and working conditions across the industry was “absolutely necessary to prevent the exploitation of the workers.”⁵³ To achieve this standardization, which was centered around an industry-wide six-day work week and unionization of all the city’s restaurants, they believed solidarity and organization was necessary. Alongside union cooks, bakers, and waiters, the women of Local 484 began in November 1913 to pressure numerous city restaurant owners to sign agreements that they would hire only unionized staff. Unsurprisingly, this raised the hackles of the staunchly anti-union RKA. Although their rules ostensibly forbade them from being overtly for or against organized labor, the city’s unions widely considered the RKA to be hostile and dedicated to squelching their efforts, in large part because of a tense late December meeting between a committee from the group and representatives from the city’s culinary unions and the Chicago Federation of Labor.⁵⁴ At the meeting, CFL representatives indicated that if negotiations were conducted between the unions and individual restaurant keepers, they would back off and let the trades who were directly affected shape the negotiations. However, they added that if the RKA was involved in

⁵² Women’s Trade Union League, “Statement of the Facts Concerning Henrici’s on Randolph Street,” 1914.

⁵³ Women’s Trade Union League, “Statement of the Facts Concerning Henrici’s on Randolph Street,” 1914.

⁵⁴ The RKA’s declaration of principles and rules can be found in “The Henrici Strike,” *The City Club Bulletin* 7, no. 14 (June 13, 1914): 191-194.

the negotiations, then it would “[become] a matter of such general significance” that the CFL would feel forced to participate too.⁵⁵

These tensions escalated in the new year. Although eleven local restaurant chains signed agreements with these unions in January 1914, business owners who belonged to the RKA refused to follow suit, even after a second conference with union representatives. The women of Local 484 remained undaunted, however. The union’s vice president Lena Rushton asserted that “if things continue in the future as they have in the past month, Chicago will be organized.” She also acknowledged that while fighting the RKA would be difficult, they expected to win.⁵⁶ After RKA officials repeatedly refused the unions’ requests to meet, they knew that their next step would have to be dramatic. Though union officials would not publicly announce which RKA member restaurant they planned to initially target in order to be heard, many assumed that it would be Vogelsang’s on Madison Street, which was owned by RKA president John Vogelsang. Their aim, Local 484 president Carrie Alexander told the *Tribune* the night before the strike began, was to disrupt business to a degree severe enough that the RKA would recognize the unions and their demands: “We will make it cost the restaurants so much that they can’t hold out long.”⁵⁷

The next day, the “girl pickets” surprised Chicagoans by targeting Henrici’s rather than Vogelsang’s, a somewhat baffling move because it remains unclear whether or not the non-union waitresses who worked there actually supported these women’s efforts. Perhaps its popularity and status accounts for their choice of it over Vogelsang’s: a café first opened by an Austrian immigrant in 1868, Henrici’s décor was reminiscent of a Viennese coffee house and it was part

⁵⁵ The Henrici Strike,” *The City Club Bulletin* 7, no. 14 (June 13, 1914): 193.

⁵⁶ Hotel and Restaurant Employees’ International Alliance and Bartenders’ International League of America, *Mixer and Server* nos. 1 and 2 (January 1914; February 1914): 55, 62.

⁵⁷ “Labor Opens War on Restaurants,” *Tribune*, February 5, 1914.

of the shift toward restaurants that catered to middling tastes and price ranges. By the turn of the twentieth century, it had become a Chicago institution with an à-la-carte-only menu featuring reasonably priced and familiar dishes like club sandwiches and pancakes.⁵⁸ Despite the protests in front of it on the Randolph Street sidewalk, the restaurant remained open throughout the picket. Furthermore, its management took out full page descriptive advertisements in the city's newspapers that told a very different story than the narrative Local 484 put forth. Claiming to have "received [union members] courteously," Henrici's management claimed that after much respectful and open debate, they could not come to an agreement with Local 484. According to them, they asked their female employees if they wanted to join the union, but their waitresses did not want to: "Among 44 waitresses there was not one who did not express her judgement against the proposition to unionize...In other words, the union tried to use Henrici's as a club with which to batter their way to a condition by which waitresses in this and other restaurants would be forced to join the union against their wills."⁵⁹ Furthermore, the restaurant insisted that its waitresses were "contented loyal people" who were so "well satisfied" with their wages, hours, and working conditions that some had been at Henrici's for over ten years.⁶⁰ In their eyes, this strike was nothing more than the misguided efforts of a discontented few to "force the large army of independent restaurant workers in Chicago to their way of thinking." Making sure that Henrici's message was heard loud and clear was not cheap: because these ads appeared in "all

⁵⁸ John Drury, *Dining in Chicago* (New York: The John Day Company, 1931), 58-61; Arnold Shircliffe, "The Fascinating History of Early Chicago Restaurants," *Chicago Restaurant Association Buyers' Guide 1945* (Chicago: The Chicago Restaurant Association, 1945), 92-93; Henrici's menu (1917), Folder F38JBM52 (1900-1919), Commercial Menus Collection, Chicago History Museum Research Center, Chicago, IL. Henrici's stayed open until 1962.

⁵⁹ "A Brief Explanation of the Situation at Henrici's" advertisement, *Tribune*, February 9, 1914.

⁶⁰ Restaurant manager W.M. Collins emphasized the points made in the Henrici's advertisement when he spoke to a *Tribune* reporter several days earlier: "I asked my employees if they wanted to join the union, but they were unwilling," he said. "The employees here are satisfied, and I don't want to do anything that will cause them to become dissatisfied." See "Girl Pickets Open Boycott Fight on 35 Cafes in Loop: Henrici's First Victim," *Tribune*, February 6, 1914.

the newspapers of the Chicago Publishers' Association," they cost the RKA thousands of dollars.⁶¹

For the restaurant's management, however, the expense was worth it in order to publicly contradict what Local 484 believed to be true. Elizabeth Maloney told reporters that many of Henrici's waitresses did in fact support the strike. She also alleged that the restaurant's manager William Collins intimidated his employees in order to keep them from organizing and that he had a history of firing union waitresses.⁶² He also apparently displayed hostility toward married waitresses. Maloney alleged to a *Day Book* reporter who visited Local 484 headquarters that young married women who got hired at Henrici's were advised by other longer-serving waitresses to keep her relationship status a secret, lest they get fired because of it. "I would like to hear from Mr. Collins why he allows this condition," Maloney told the reporter sardonically. "Is it because he thinks a married woman needs more wages or is it because he thinks an unmarried woman, not tied down to a home, can make extra money better from the guests?"⁶³ In addition, the WTUL took issue with Henrici's claim of long-serving waitresses, alleging that out of forty-two employees, only five had been at the restaurant for a year or more. In a 1914 statement of their grievances, the WTUL claimed that majority of Henrici's waitresses had only been there for one to seven months: "an inspection of the Daily News want ads for the past year will show the constant need for new help at this place."⁶⁴ However, with a dearth of records from these women employees themselves, their feelings about the strike remain unclear.

⁶¹ John Streetman, "Game Young Girl Striker Showed Her Ability to 'Come Back,'" *The Day Book*, February 17, 1914.

⁶² Streetman, "Game Young Girl Striker Showed Her Ability to 'Come Back.'"

⁶³ Streetman, "Game Young Girl Striker Showed Her Ability to 'Come Back.'"

⁶⁴ Women's Trade Union League, "Statement of the Facts Concerning Henrici's on Randolph Street," 1914.

In spite of this unknown, it is clear that there was a strong contingent of union waitresses in Chicago that had grown increasingly radicalized. They were also willing to defy established standards of acceptable public behavior for women in order to achieve their goals, and in doing so were treated harshly by male authorities. It is important to note here that this was not an isolated incident; these “women adrift” working as waitresses in Chicago were part of a larger phenomenon within trade unionism that saw women workers organize and become increasingly militant in doing so, much to the chagrin of those in positions of authority who saw their behavior as both threatening and unsavory. As historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall demonstrates in her seminal analysis of female labor militancy in the Appalachian South, centering gender as an analytical category brings “unexpected dimensions into view.”⁶⁵ In her study of women strikers at a rayon plant in Elizabethton Tennessee during the 1920s, Hall notes the “erotic undercurrents” and “sexual theme” of the strike, and observed that the women workers “embody tensions that are half-conscious or only dimly understood.”⁶⁶ In her narrative, these workers both titillated and horrified observers and authorities for the same reasons the waitresses did in Chicago: young and mostly unmarried, these women “donned the role of ‘disorderly woman’” by transgressing social norms in their public and private lives alike.⁶⁷ By forging “new patterns of heterosociability” through behaviors like flirting with customers or coworkers on the shop floor, as well as pushing back against male managers and police and National Guard soldiers tasked with reining them in when their efforts escalated, women in both of these contexts challenged working-class standards of respectability.

⁶⁵ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South,” *Journal of American History* 73, no. 2 (September 1986): 356.

⁶⁶ Dowd Hall, “Disorderly Women,” 356.

⁶⁷ Dowd Hall, “Disorderly Women,” 374.

The literal policing of striking women workers in the early twentieth century was linked to the metaphorical policing of female behavior. As Hall observes, in Tennessee “the townsmen and the trade unionists were ... united in drawing a line between good women and bad.”⁶⁸ Two of the female ringleaders were charged for violating injunctions that forbid demonstrations against the company, and when their cases were brought to trial, more attention was paid to their comportment than the question of whether or not they had violated the injunction: “Had they cursed? Had they been on the road at odd hours of the day or night?”⁶⁹ Because their behavior might have threatened the community’s “moral tone,” the city council threatened to jail them. Hall notes that this association between women’s labor militancy and sexual immorality is not surprising for two reasons: young women inhabiting a traditionally male public space tends to upset the status quo, and because “female aggressiveness stirs up fears of women’s sexual power.” As well, insinuating that women workers were disreputable made it easier to justify the infliction of violence upon them. In the ads Henrici’s management took out to share their perspective on the strike with Chicagoans, these discourses were certainly apparent. Describing their own employees as “self-respecting level-headed people,” and the union waitresses as “shrewd business agents” and as “zealots” intent on creating disruption, it is easy to see a connection to the perception of these women as opportunistic and exploitative.⁷⁰

Indeed, given the negative attitudes many Chicagoans held about waitresses and waitressing even before the strike, it was almost a foregone conclusion that law enforcement would become as deeply involved as they were. After Carrie Alexander was forcibly picked up off the sidewalk by CPD officers and marched to the police station on the first day of the strike

⁶⁸ Dowd Hall, “Disorderly Women,” 374.

⁶⁹ Dowd Hall, “Disorderly Women,” 374-375.

⁷⁰ “A Brief Explanation of the Situation at Henrici’s” advertisement, *Tribune*, February 9, 1914.

in February 1914, police presence around Henrici's continued to grow. Strike leaders did not understand why. According to Elizabeth Maloney and Frederick Deibler, chairman of the City Club of Chicago's Committee on Labor Conditions, there were no "overt" acts of violence, and "no evidence" that the strikers congregated in large groups or obstructed the sidewalk. In their words, it was "difficult to account for the necessity of 119 or more arrests during the dispute," not to mention the continuous presence of upwards of fifty officers in plainclothes and uniform, alongside "Hunt's detectives," a reference to the men who worked for "sleuth chief" Inspector Nicholas Hunt.⁷¹ For Maloney, the policemen were there to protect "the interest of the Henrici people and of William Collins and they weren't interested in protecting us at all...arrest followed arrest [for disorderly conduct and conspiracy]...and they set the bonds at the highest possible point."⁷² Each woman who was arrested had to pay a \$1,400 bond – an exorbitant sum given that the weekly wage for a waitress was about six dollars. Both Maloney and the WTUL noted that what the waitresses were doing was not illegal – peaceful picketing was a perfectly lawful activity in the state of Illinois, which underscores the point she raised about whose interests law enforcement were interested in protecting.⁷³ It is certainly an important question, and not to mention very telling that Maloney's request to CPD chief Herman Schuettler for one police officer to protect the waitresses was denied.⁷⁴

In the wake of "unlawful" arrests and "trumped up" charges made "without foundation" against the striking waitresses, the WTUL and others spoke out about the "brutality" these

⁷¹ "The Henrici Strike," *The City Club Bulletin* 7, no. 14 (June 13, 1914): 198, 202. For more about Nicholas Hunt and his men, see "Police Seek Bomb Throwers," *Tribune*, July 1, 1911; "Larkin Slated for Hunt's Job as Sleuth Chief," *Tribune*, April 29, 1916.

⁷² "The Henrici Strike," *The City Club Bulletin*, 203. According to Maloney, the waitresses "had to put up \$175,000 worth of bonds."

⁷³ Women's Trade Union League, "Statement of the Facts Concerning Henrici's on Randolph Street," 1914.

⁷⁴ According to Maloney, they asked for "just one policeman to be in our interest, to see that we got fair play." See "The Henrici Strike," *The City Club Bulletin* 7, no. 14 (June 13, 1914): 203.

women faced at the hands of police and private detectives that they allege had been hired by Henrici's management. According to the WTUL's statement of grievances, despite the fact that "not one of these pickets has at any time violated any law or been guilty of doing anything that she has not a perfect right under the law to do," multiple arrests were made by CPD officers and private detectives who conducted themselves in a manner that was "brutal in the extreme." The officers used "foul and profane language in addressing the girls, have tramped on their feet as they were passing along the street, and when arresting them have used the same methods" that they would on a "strong man" who resisted arrest. One officer who was "notorious for such practices" hurt waitress Ora Dupree so badly when he "jerked, pulled, and twisted her arm" that it was "doubtful whether she [would] ever have the full use of it again."⁷⁵

Mabel Wambaugh's story also caught widespread attention: described by *Day Book* reporter John Streetman as a "game woman...one with purpose, ready to fight for her cause, whatever it is, and ready to stand up and take punishment," the young waitress was arrested eleven times and had her hand left "swollen, ugly, and crippled" after an encounter with a CPD officer in front of Henrici's. As she told Streetman, she was walking back and forth in front of the restaurant with a sheaf of papers under her arm, including a trade journal with a picture of "a policeman pinching two waitresses" on the front of it. Although Wambaugh claimed she "wasn't saying a word" and not obstructing traffic, she was grabbed by three officers. "One was on each side and another kept pushing me in the back. I said, 'I won't move, if you're going to arrest me you'll have to carry me,'" she recalled. "Then one of them said: 'We're going to put the fear of God in you girls before we're through with you.'"⁷⁶ He then apparently gave her arm "a hard,

⁷⁵ Women's Trade Union League, "Statement of the Facts Concerning Henrici's on Randolph Street," 1914.

⁷⁶ John Streetman, "Game Young Girl Striker Showed Her Ability to 'Come Back,'" *The Day Book*, February 17, 1914.

quick pull” that left her with the injury to her hand, and her arm in a sling made out of a silk muffler.

Stories like Wambaugh’s and Dupree’s intrigued and shocked Chicagoans, with narratives involving strikers and police brutality detailed in the press almost daily over the spring. Despite – though likely because of – the violence involved, city residents continued to flock to Randolph Street to watch the action in front of Henrici’s, which prompted the CPD to send out mounted police that rode their horses on the sidewalks to disperse the crowd.⁷⁷ Furthermore, there were unconfirmed reports about the restaurant’s use of “gunmen” to keep order on Randolph Street, a reference to the private detectives hired by Henrici’s manager William Collins.⁷⁸ Though Collins believed it was “ridiculous to call them ‘gunmen,’” and downplayed the rumors, City Club labor conditions chairman Deibler warned against their use, calling it “a very questionable policy.” For Deibler, the CPD seemed “amply able” to handle the strike on their own. This type of private detective, he said, should be used only “in extreme cases when the regular police authorities are unable to protect property...to make these private detectives special policemen, and let them operate as plain-clothes men, is clearly without justification.”⁷⁹ The waitresses faced another unexpected obstacle as well – female policewomen. In 1913, the CPD had hired ten women as officers because it was assumed that they would be “more gentle and tactful” with other women (and conversely, that “law-breaking women would yield more peaceably to officers of their own sex”).⁸⁰ Chosen for their “weight and muscle” despite their supposed gentleness, two of Chicago’s policewomen “charged into” a group of waitresses one spring day, and arrested six of them after “a hot fight,” prompting the

⁷⁷ “Flags Fail to Aid Girl Pickets,” *Tribune*, March 5, 1914.

⁷⁸ “The Henrici Strike,” *The City Club Bulletin* 7, no. 14 (June 13, 1914): 197-198.

⁷⁹ “The Henrici Strike,” *The City Club Bulletin* 7, no. 14 (June 13, 1914): 197-198.

⁸⁰ “Why Women Would Rather Be Arrested By Men,” *Washington Post*, March 29, 1914.

strikers to complain that the female officers treated them “a lot worse” than their male counterparts.⁸¹

These allegations of violence became especially offensive to a number of prominent Chicagoans because of the longstanding relationship between the WTUL, Local 484, and middle and upper-class women’s organizations.⁸² Although this cross-class alliance may have seemed odd at first glance (particularly given Jane Addams’ comments on waitressing’s supposed links to sexual immorality and the work the Juvenile Protective Association did to surveil these young women workers), Elizabeth Maloney had from the beginning consciously linked Local 484’s mission to bourgeois ideals about feminine virtue and purity that were infused with her Catholic beliefs. As a 1977 history of women in Illinois describes it, Maloney “demanded that waitresses be treated with the same respect given to ladies,” and she called for union contracts that forbade the use of vulgar language and disallowed managers from reprimanding women in front of customers.⁸³ Maloney also believed that waitresses needed shorter working hours to prevent being lured into temptation while they were “weakened by [their] weariness,” and to partake in cultural forms like books, art, and music.⁸⁴

As historians have pointed out, the relationship between these groups was remarkable, if not entirely smooth and free of tensions. While bourgeois activists may have scorned working-class women for their perceived immorality, who in turn disdained these middle-class women for their condescending maternalism, the way that both were able to transcend class, political, and

⁸¹ “Why Women Would Rather Be Arrested By Men,” *Washington Post*, March 29, 1914. Apparently, this confrontation spurred “a general demand among workingwomen for the abolition of the policewomen.” Soon afterward, the female officers were transferred away from the Henrici’s strike to another work site.

⁸² When the National Women’s Trade Union League was founded in Boston in 1903, Jane Addams was its first vice president, and the first meeting of the city’s branch of the WTUL was held at Hull House and counted Local 484 members like Maloney among its membership.

⁸³ Adade Mitchell Wheeler and Marlene Stein Wortman, *The Roads They Made: Women in Illinois History* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1977), 82.

⁸⁴ Mitchell Wheeler and Stein Wortman, *The Roads They Made*, 82.

ethnic lines (at least partially) in an era when these divisions mattered very much was significant.⁸⁵ Although uneasy bedfellows entangled within a long-standing relationship, their connection deepened after the reports of police brutality against the waitresses emerged. In other words, the increased media spotlight made the strike a cause célèbre and it pushed wealthier activists into taking direct action to support Local 484. Middle and upper-class female activists like Addams and Ellen Gates Starr of Hull House were particularly galled by Henrici's use of private detectives who inflicted violence upon the union waitresses. As Addams put it, private detectives played "a large part in the difficulties between employers and employees. It is as true here as it is in the big coal strikes. The private detective seems to play the larger part in all the disturbances."⁸⁶ The prominent settlement house held a special meeting of citizens at the end of February that resulted in a proposal from Ruth Medill McCormick (wife of prominent businessman and politician Joseph Medill McCormick) that the city's clubwomen would form a "committee of inquiry" to investigate the allegations Local 484 made about the violence they suffered at the hands of CPD officers and private detectives. These clubwomen resolved that their committee would interview the mayor, the chief of police, other city officials, and the heads of Henrici's with the aim of ultimately ending the conflict between the waitresses' union and the restaurant's management.⁸⁷

The clubwomen's actions were not limited to committees and inquiries made from a safe distance, however. They proved they were willing to put their proverbial boots on the ground and stand with the women of Local 484 on the picket line in front of Henrici's in spite of the risk to

⁸⁵ Mitchell Wheeler and Stein Wortman, *The Roads They Made*, 82-84. See also Maureen Flanagan, *Seeing With Their Hearts: Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City, 1871-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁸⁶ "Police Cruelty' Arouses Women," *Tribune*, February 23, 1914.

⁸⁷ "Police Cruelty' Arouses Women," *Tribune*, February 23, 1914.

their personal safety. Moreover, their class privilege did not shield them from facing the same consequences as the waitresses. On the same day that the city council approved a resolution to investigate the strike and the CPD's actions, Hull House co-founder Ellen Gates Starr was arrested on March 2 when she joined the picketers on Randolph Street and stood up to officers after they detained three waitresses. Described by the *Tribune* as "elderly" and "gray haired," Starr told police she was the fifty-four-year-old founder of Hull House after she was loaded into the patrol wagon and taken to the central station on South Clark Street. Galvanized by the reports of the CPD and private detectives' brutality against the waitresses, she told a policeman that it was her duty as an American citizen to "[protest] against the arrest of the young women, who were doing nothing to be arrested for." As she explained to a reporter, the waitresses had not broken any laws by protesting and needed her help to understand their rights: "I believed the girls should have some older person with them to see that no more policemen were brutal in their treatment of them."⁸⁸ Jailed on charges of disorderly conduct – police alleged that by interfering with the arrests of two waitresses, her actions incited a riot – Starr was released several hours later after a fellow clubwoman paid her twenty-five dollar bond.

When she appeared before a municipal judge two days later, Starr requested a jury trial and announced that she would return to picketing as soon as possible. Her strategy was part of a larger effort waged by Chicago's middle-class clubwomen who had sent the city's chief of police James Gleason a letter requesting information about how the waitresses could ensure they were acting within the boundaries of the law during their demonstration in front of the restaurant. They also used the letter as a way to ask Gleason about the instructions that officers had been given to protect Henrici's, and to inquire about why none of the arrested women had been tried.

⁸⁸ "Council Orders Henrici Inquiry," *Tribune*, March 3, 1914. See also "Ellen G. Starr's Trial Starts Today," *Tribune*, March 4, 1914; "Ellen G. Starr Jurors Sought," *Tribune*, March 19, 1914.

Starr's arrest and subsequent trial became the test case that the clubwomen wanted, and she told reporters on March 5 that she "would bend her efforts to obtain immediate trials for the girls."⁸⁹ Her efforts seem to have been successful; the *Tribune* reported that eleven cases involving striking waitresses would be heard by municipal judges the following day.

Several weeks later when Starr's trial got underway, the courtroom was packed with clubwomen who were there to show the Hull House co-founder their support.⁹⁰ Eight men had been selected as jurors after some complications – several who had been initially chosen were dismissed for their memberships in or sympathies for various labor unions in the city. On March 19, the first witnesses called to the stand were a cavalcade of CPD officers. These men told the court about how Starr declared her support for the women of Local 484 as she marched on Randolph Street and drew the attention of onlookers. "I told her to keep still and not incite the crowd," recalled Officer James Baldwin. "But she wouldn't keep still. So we arrested her." Another officer, Willard Malone, alleged that Starr's vocal assertions that the police had no right to detain the striking waitresses constituted a threat to public order. His testimony was reinforced by Officer Thomas Breen, who remarked that the crowd of 1,500 were spurred by Starr's statements to cry out sentiments like "kill the police. The girls have the right to go free. The police have no right to arrest them." When Starr took the stand afterwards, she argued that rather than provoking the crowd into disorder, she had merely protested against unlawful arrests. "I made my protest in a general way, not to anyone in particular, nor to the bystanders," she told the court. "I said, 'I protest against the arrest of these persons who have done nothing against the law—I protest as an American citizen.'" ⁹¹ The next day, Starr reinforced that she had acted in an

⁸⁹ Ellen G. Starr's Trial Starts Today," *Tribune*, March 4, 1914; "Flags Fail to Aid Girl Pickets," *Tribune*, March 5, 1914.

⁹⁰ According to the *Tribune*, Jane Addams was in the courthouse building, but did not attend the hearing.

⁹¹ "Circuit Judges Near Decision on Henrici Boycott," *Tribune*, March 20, 1914.

orderly and lawful manner, with her attorney invoking her constitutional right to free speech in his defense of her actions. Her purpose on Randolph Street, she told the courtroom, was simply “to aid the striking waitresses, cooks, and bakers in the standardization of the culinary industries of Chicago.” Moreover, she alleged, the CPD officers who had testified the day prior had greatly exaggerated their descriptions of her actions and those of the assembled crowd. Though the jury was deadlocked for eight hours after also hearing from the prosecuting attorney that Starr was “uncontroverted” in her interference with police, they ultimately ruled in her favor and the charges were dropped.⁹²

The questions that Starr’s case gestured toward about whether or not it was lawful to protest publicly shaped much of the controversy and confusion surrounding the Henrici’s strike. More importantly, they intersected with another key court proceeding that took place at the same time. Shortly after Starr was arrested in early March, both Henrici’s and Local 484 sought petitions for injunctions against one another – the restaurant wanted to stop the waitresses from picketing on Randolph Street and interfering with their profitability, and the waitresses wanted circuit court judges to uphold their right to picket and stop the police and restaurant managers from interfering with their protest.⁹³ Although the right to picket peacefully had been repeatedly recognized by this time by both state and federal courts, injunctions could be – and often were – granted in cases where the methods employed by protestors involved intimidation, coercion, violence, or damage to property. There was also the question of whether or not the union waitresses had the right to persuade the public not to patronize the restaurant.

⁹² “Sealed Verdict In: Miss Ellen Starr is Congratulated,” *Tribune*, March 21, 1914.

⁹³ More detail about the injunctions can be found in “Big Business Enters the Fight Against Waitresses,” *The Day Book*, March 6, 1914.

These were complicated questions with no clear answers, which made the joint injunction proceedings fiery right from the start. On March 6, attorneys for both the restaurant company and the waitresses presented counter applications for restraining orders to three Cook County Circuit Court judges in an *en banc* session that was filled with spectators. The first day began with witness testimony from Randolph Street business owners who alleged that the striking waitresses disrupted commercial activity in the area and drew crowds of “very undesirable people” who gathered and stood right “in front of our display windows.”⁹⁴ In addition to testimony from CPD officers and Philip Henrici, who all denied having seen, ordered, or participated in any violence against the waitresses, the session also saw Collins and his attorney present an affidavit to the court signed by all fifty-three of Henrici’s waitresses that promised they were not being suppressed from joining the union by their managers. According to the affidavit, each waitress was “satisfied with working hours and conditions, is well paid and well treated in her present employment, and does not wish to belong to any union...she does not know of any waitress who left the company on account of the boycott established or attempted to be established by the waitresses’ union or others; that she makes all the above statements of her own free will, and was first assured by the management that refusal to make the same would not be counted against her now or at a later time.”⁹⁵ Beyond the affidavit, Collins’s testimony shocked observers because of the corruption it hinted at: as *The Day Book* reported, he revealed that the RKA had plotted against the waitresses to turn down the union’s demands, which underscored the union’s allegations of a conspiracy. Furthermore, the paper alleged, Collins revealed an untoward relationship between Henrici’s and “millionaire butcher” Oscar Mayer, who sold meat to RKA

⁹⁴ These quotes are from the testimonies of a hotel proprietor and an optician who worked on Randolph Street. See “Henrici Picketing Injures Business, Judges Are Told,” *Tribune*, March 7, 1914; “Rank Action of the Police is What Has Attracted Crowds in Waitresses’ Strike,” *The Day Book*, March 7, 1914.

⁹⁵ “Henrici Picketing Injures Business, Judges Are Told,” *Tribune*, March 7, 1914.

restaurants and was a close friend and “financial backer” of Mayor Carter Harrison. According to the reporter, Collins admitted that Mayer had come with him to CPD chief Schuettler’s office “when he went to get a squad of police with which to bully the girls. And possibly as a favor to Oscar Mayer, Schuettler gave Collins some of the men from his own office.”⁹⁶

In an effort to resolve these issues and perhaps foster a truce between all the factions involved, Judges Jesse Baldwin, Thomas Windee, and John McGoorty issued a statement ordering a stop to both picketing and arrests of protestors in front of Henrici’s until the injunction proceedings were completed. However, their efforts went largely unheeded, at least initially. Although the CPD removed their officers from the site by noon on March 7, the waitresses remained on the picket line until close to midnight, which drew the ire of both the court and the police. Judge Baldwin could not say with certainty whether or not continued picketing would be considered in contempt of court, but he told a reporter that “you can quote me as saying it will be close to it.”⁹⁷ Touring Randolph Street that same day, CPD chief Gleason was unimpressed at how the waitresses ignored the court’s statement to stop picketing. He described the waitresses’ actions as anything but demure and alleged that they continued to cause unnecessary chaos on a street that already thronged with activity. “I saw women pickets...shouting to persons that they should not enter the place and acting in a disorderly manner,” Gleason said. “Some of them were waving small flags, and the crowd of spectators was so large that the sidewalk was blocked and traffic tied up.”⁹⁸ All Gleason wanted was “fair play,” he insisted. “I’m willing to carry out the

⁹⁶ “Restaurant Boss Reveals Plot Against the Waitresses,” *The Day Book*, March 7, 1914. Tempers also flared when a contingent of business owners, described by *The Day Book* as “the real government, the hidden government of Chicago,” held a meeting at Vogelsang’s restaurant that same week and issued a resolution asking Jane Addams to withdraw Hull House’s support of the strike. According to the paper, this meeting was attended by unnamed representatives from large State Street and Loop stores, wholesale houses, packing plants, and mail-order companies. See “Big Business Issues Insolent Orders to Jane Addams,” *The Day Book*, March 6, 1914.

⁹⁷ “Judges Admonish Waitress Guard,” *Tribune*, March 8, 1914.

⁹⁸ “Judges Admonish Waitress Guard,” *Tribune*, March 8, 1914.

police end of the truce, but I feel the waitresses should be made to carry out their part of the agreement.” These points of view were also shared by a committee of over a hundred businessmen who were so irritated by the daily disruptions on Randolph Street that they contacted Mayor Carter Harrison Jr. to demand he take action to stop the strike.⁹⁹

On that same day, the court proceedings opened with testimony from Henrici’s manager Collins about how the picketing had caused the business to lose close to two hundred and fifty customers per day. The aforementioned affidavit signed by all of Henrici’s waitresses was also discussed in more detail – the waitress union’s attorney Edgar Masters objected to it being admitted as evidence, and the judges agreed it would be withheld until the following day’s session.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, Collins testified that the restaurant had been open to negotiating with Local 484 but were met instead with hardnosed rigidity. After his first of two meetings with the committees from the culinary industry labor unions, he asked for two weeks to think about what they had proposed, but was rebuffed. Cautious about signing an agreement that would see him order all of his employees to join the union or quit, he asked them what would happen if he refused. In his telling, Collins said that the union representatives told him “that they would not try to fight the entire restaurant keepers’ association, but would come back and get me first.”¹⁰¹

Elizabeth Maloney refuted his claims several days later when she took the stand. On March 9, her testimony contradicted Collins’s narrative as she repeated to the judges points she had made publicly many times prior: there were waitresses at Henrici’s that wanted to join Local

⁹⁹ Mayor Harrison told these men that he could not do anything – because the matter was before the court, he could not take action until the judges’ decision. “Women in Court Blame Police for Henrici Crowds,” *Tribune*, March 10, 1914. For more about how Chicago businesses attempted to stop the strike, see also “Big Business Enters the Fight Against Waitresses,” *The Day Book*, March 6, 1914; “Big Business Issues Insolent Orders to Jane Addams,” *The Day Book*, March 6, 1914.

¹⁰⁰ Collins also told the court that Henrici’s waitresses were so “absolutely” contented with their wages and working conditions that none had quit during the strike. See “Judges Admonish Waitress Guard,” *Tribune*, March 8, 1914.

¹⁰¹ Judges Admonish Waitress Guard,” *Tribune*, March 8, 1914.

484, and the women on the picket line did not “accost” passersby or speak to anyone in anything but an “ordinary tone of voice.” Moreover, several prominent clubwomen appeared as witnesses in support of the waitresses, and alleged that the police were the ones to blame for the mayhem on Randolph Street. According to testimonies from Starr, Anna Ickes, and Elizabeth Updegraff, “the crowds on the streets appeared to be normal until the women were arrested.”¹⁰² In Starr’s words as she recalled her four days on the picket line, “the girls didn’t stop to speak to anyone and everything apparently was peaceful until the police arrested two of the girls. Then the crowds collected.”¹⁰³ She also noted that the waitresses had no intentions to hurt the restaurant’s business.

Although Local 484 and their supporters continually asserted in and outside of court that the strike was peaceful and legal, Henrici attorney Willard McEwen was dogged in his efforts to convince the judges that a nefarious “conspiracy” existed between the waitresses’ union, the cooks’ union, and the Chicago Federation of Labor to hurt the business via a boycott.¹⁰⁴ As the two factions’ applications for injunctions continued over ensuing weeks, he continued to allege that the waitresses were deliberately trying to drive the restaurant’s customers away and damage the business’s bottom line. Citing a 1908 Supreme Court decision involving hatters in Danbury Connecticut where damages were allowed against trade unionists for boycotting a fur hat manufacturer, McEwen criticized the waitresses for what he saw as an attempt to unjustly seize power and bend business to its will.¹⁰⁵ If Local 484 was able to strong-arm a restaurant into

¹⁰² Anna Ickes was active within Hull House and the WTUL and would be elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1929. She was also the wife of Harold Ickes, the lawyer and politician who represented Starr in her disorderly conduct case. Elizabeth Updegraff was an alumnae of Vassar College and University of Chicago. In addition to her involvement with the WTUL, she worked as a teacher and social worker at the University of Chicago Settlement House.

¹⁰³ “Women in Court Blame Police for Henrici Crowds,” *Tribune*, March 10, 1914.

¹⁰⁴ “Women in Court Blame Police for Henrici Crowds,” *Tribune*, March 10, 1914.

¹⁰⁵ The Danbury Hatters’ Case (Loewe v. Lawlor, 208 US 274 - Supreme Court 1908) became famous because it was the first U.S. Supreme Court case to find that the Sherman Antitrust Act applied to organized labor. In other

exclusively hiring its members by ruining (or threatening to ruin) its business if they did not, it would set a dangerous precedent for other organizations to do the same. “It is the power of judgment; it is judicial and it is executive,” he told the courtroom. “Suppose that the waitresses’ union is upheld in its proceedings and that it goes to other places of business—to the Fair, which I understand is the next place selected—it will mean the loss of hundreds of dollars a day.”¹⁰⁶

Invoking the specter of economic damage in a booming city like Chicago, which had a vested interest in displaying its status to the rest of the nation through spaces like the Fair, was a bold – though perhaps obvious – strategy on McEwen’s part. Billed by the press as the “largest store in the world,” the department store at the corner of State and Adams streets had been the pride of the central business district since it opened in 1874; an emblem of the city’s “push, pluck, and energy.” The Fair, as the *Inter Ocean* reported, was a two-million-dollar marvel that spanned over fifteen and a half acres of city blocks when it was rebuilt in 1897.¹⁰⁷ Certainly, a demonstration here would be disastrous from an aesthetic and public relations standpoint for the city’s wealthy business community. Ultimately, the simmering fears of economic unrest in the Loop served to reinforce questions that had been swirling around about the legality of public protest when business interests were at stake. Was the strike, as McEwen alleged, a series of three conspiracies: against trade, toward a monopoly in hiring, and to injure a business via boycott? Or was it, as the union’s attorney argued, a legitimate effort by the waitresses who had the right to use public space to tell Chicagoans about the workplace conditions they wanted to change?

words, the court’s ruling effectively outlawed the secondary boycott as a violation of the Act. It also decided that individual union members could be held personally liable for damages incurred by their organizations. See *Loewe v. Lawlor*, 208 U.S. 274 (1908), 235 U.S. 522 (1915).

¹⁰⁶ “Ellen G. Starr Jurors Sought,” *Tribune*, March 19, 1914. The Fair was a de

¹⁰⁷ “Chicago Now Has The Largest Store In The World,” *Sunday Inter Ocean*, September 12, 1897.

Ultimately McEwen's argument combined with pressure from police and from capital was enough to sway the three judges and the women of Local 484 were (temporarily) halted in their efforts. On April 6, the court granted the restaurant a permanent injunction to restrict picketing outside its doors and dismissed the cross bill filed by the waitresses that alleged the RKA had conspired to destroy the culinary unions. However, the three Circuit judges specified that this was not a total ban on striking on Chicago's public streets – picketing would remain lawful under certain conditions, namely on non-busy thoroughfares where risks of large crowds and interference with business were minimal. When reading the judges' opinion to the courtroom, Judge McGoorty noted that "it is not wrong for members of a union to cease patronizing anyone when they regard it for their interest to do so," but added that "they have no right to compel others to break off business relations with the one from whom they have withdrawn their patronage." Furthermore, the judges dismissed the waitresses' allegation of the anti-union conspiracy for lack of proof, and noted that because it took place on a crowded street, the strike ran afoul of the Supreme Court's decree that all highways and public streets had to be free and open for trade, labor, and commerce.¹⁰⁸

Despite this significant setback, the waitresses were undaunted. Rather than viewing the judges' decision as a crushing defeat, they saw it as a potential victory because it did not bring about a total ban on public protest. Moreover, the judges' unclear and vague language gave the waitresses room to maneuver – after the reading of the opinion, their attorney asked the court to be more specific about what could and could not be done.¹⁰⁹ In particular, the waitresses saw a

¹⁰⁸ "Henrici's Victor in Picket Case," *Tribune*, April 7, 1914. As McGoorty told the courtroom, "the law protects the buyer, the merchant, the manufacturer, and the laborer in the right to walk the streets unmolested. It is no respecter of persons, and it makes no difference, in effect, whether the picketing is done ten or ten hundred feet away." For a detailed transcription of Judge McGoorty's opinion, see also "Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, Philip Henrici Company r. Carrie Alexander et al," *Chicago Legal News*, vol xlvi, no. 36 (April 11, 1914): 281-284.

¹⁰⁹ He did not receive a direct answer, only a promise that the details would follow in a later formal order. See "Waitresses May Lawfully Picket If They Only Picket Lawfully," *The Day Book*, April 6, 1914.

window of opportunity in the judges' ruling on handbills. Although the restaurant owners had asked in their initial restraining order to ban the waitresses from printing out notices about the strike and disseminating them, this request was dismissed and Local 484 used this to their advantage. Three days after the judges handed down their decision, the *Tribune* reported that although the waitresses could circulate notices about the strike, they were prohibited from speaking to anyone in public about it. Consequently, they launched a "printed campaign" against the restaurant," and distributed handbills to passersby at the Fifty-First Street elevated train station: "Strike on at Henrici's," they read. "We want \$8 for six days' work. The order of Judges McGoorty, Windes, and Baldwin PERMITS the waitresses to print these words. WE CAN'T SPEAK THEM."¹¹⁰

In addition to their print campaign, the waitresses also ramped up their collaborations with the city's baker and cook unions, and together they began to target more restaurants. Alongside these other service industry unions, Local 484 proposed new contracts to three of the city's most powerful restaurant owners: George Knab, L. Walter Powers, and B.F. Efting, who together owned twenty restaurants.¹¹¹ Unsurprisingly, all three men refused to sign these contracts, which pulled even more restaurant employees into the fight. On April 30, 1914, four hundred waitresses walked out of the three men's restaurants led by Ellen Gates Starr. Greeted with "mighty cheering" by the noon-hour crowds in the Loop, they handed out cards to the public telling them that Knab's, Powers's, and Efting's restaurants were "scab places."¹¹² Starr, whose arrest and trial had happened less than two months prior, reiterated the points she had

¹¹⁰ "'Dumb Pickets' Hand Out Cards," *Tribune*, April 10, 1914. Emphasis is original. Large text on the right of the handbills also urged Chicagoans not to "eat under police protection." Apparently one union waitress, Annie Timeus, was arrested that day for distributing these handbills, although the CPD denied it. Emphasis is original.

¹¹¹ Knab owned eight lunchrooms, and Efting and Powers each owned six lunchrooms. See "Loop Waitresses Start Big Strike," *Tribune*, May 1, 1914.

¹¹² Girl Waitresses Cheered As They Open Fight Against Knab, Powers, Efting," *Day Book*, April 30, 1914.

made then about the waitresses' right to picket. She told reporters that they were "free born American citizens" who would act within their rights to resist "the blundering policemen who twist girls' arms and make them sit down in the muddy street." The role of the CPD, she insisted, should only be to disperse and control the crowds who congregated around the waitresses.¹¹³ Tensions continued to flare – the *Tribune* reported that George Knab's son Carl accosted the picketers and angered Elizabeth Maloney by sarcastically asking her to have a drink. "You had better get one yourself – you need it more than I do," she replied. In response, he retorted that she "wouldn't know how to handle a bottle of beer," which prompted her to threaten to have him arrested.¹¹⁴

In an attempt to settle the strike, both sides met the next day for a conference between restaurant owners and labor leaders at the city's Masonic temple. Acting as the spokesman for other Chicago restaurateurs, George Knab offered to pay union wages for union hours, but because he refused to stop hiring nonunion waitresses, his proposal was immediately rejected.¹¹⁵ His refusal to sign the union's agreement that called for a closed shop prompted more restaurant workers to get involved – the cook's union president Fred Ebeling appointed fifty men to replace the picketing waitresses at night, which would make the strike a round the clock affair. As well, fourteen bakers and cooks working for Knab at a bakery on Fifty-Second Street and Calumet Avenue walked out during the afternoon, and a number of wagon drivers and delivery men refused to deliver bread to the boycotted restaurants.¹¹⁶ On the picket line the next day, police continued to surveil the situation, with fifty officers sent out to the scene to keep order. Although

¹¹³ "Four Hundred Waitresses Walk Out of Twenty Restaurants," *Day Book*, May 1, 1914.

¹¹⁴ "Loop Waitresses Start Big Strike," *Tribune*, May 1, 1914.

¹¹⁵ "Bakers and Cooks in Café Strike," *Tribune*, May 2, 1914. Just one day later, an informal barroom meeting between Knab and a committee of striking bakers would also end in the same way. See "Two Waitresses Arrested in Loop," *Tribune*, May 3, 1914.

¹¹⁶ "Bakers and Cooks in Café Strike," *Tribune*, May 2, 1914.

officers had been ordered “not to molest the pickets until disorder occurred,” two waitresses – both former Knab employees – were arrested and charged with distributing handbills.¹¹⁷

On the same day that these two women were arrested in front of Knab’s restaurant, the final order was issued to stop Local 484 from picketing on Randolph Street in front of Henrici’s. According the decree filed in the Circuit Court, the waitresses were no longer allowed to “unlawfully [hinder, obstruct, or interfere] with the business of the Philip Henrici company, or its employees, by any act of violence or intimidation, or by picketing or patrolling the street in front of, or in the alley of the rear of the place of business, in such a manner to intimidate, threaten, or coerce any person from entering said premises.”¹¹⁸ Feeling the squeeze, labor leaders called for a general boycott of Knab, Powers’s, and Efting’s businesses (both restaurants and bakeries) as a way of keeping their protest going. Backed by teamsters, laundry drivers, chauffeurs, and all other union members who played a role in delivering supplies to the restaurants, labor hoped that cutting off the supply line to these businesses would force managers and owners to capitulate to their demands.¹¹⁹

An increasingly frustrated Knab began to follow Collins’s lead at Henrici’s and sought to prepare his own bill of injunction to stop picketing in front of his restaurants, which prompted a more violent form of “retaliation” from “either striking waitresses or sympathizers” during the noontime rush on May 8. As customers enjoyed their lunches at Knab-owned restaurants at 26 East Adams, 54 West Washington, 318 South Wabash, and Randolph and Fifth avenues, they were horrified as a series of “odorous balls” were hurled inside the establishments. The noxious “stink balls” – bottles containing hydrogen sulphite – prompted these patrons to “hastily [forget]

¹¹⁷ “Bakers and Cooks in Café Strike,” *Tribune*, May 2, 1914, “Two Waitresses Arrested in Loop,” *Tribune*, May 3, 1914.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in “Two Waitresses Arrested in Loop,” *Tribune*, May 3, 1914.

¹¹⁹ “Waitresses Plan General Boycott,” *Tribune*, May 4, 1914.

their dinners” and rush out the doors to escape a stench so powerful that it lingered inside until late into the night.¹²⁰ Moreover, Knab followed Collins’s lead by filing his own injunction to stop picketing in front of his restaurants, and twelve striking bakers who were affiliated with Powers’s businesses were threatened by the Chicago Bakery Men’s Association (an employers’ group similar to the RKA) that if they did not return to work, employers would implement a much-wider lockout that would affect 1,600 union bakers in the city.¹²¹

Combined, these struggles contributed to the faltering of the waitresses’ protest as the summer unfolded. Though Knab’s failure in mid-July to get an injunction to completely bar picketing in front of his businesses appeared to be a potential turning point for Local 484, their fortunes were thwarted when Knab took matters into his own hands. In a crafty (though petty) move, Knab hired twenty young women in July to “picket” his own cafés in a way that would attempt to recoup lost earnings by conveying to the public that the unions’ boycott was unfair. His logic, according to the *Tribune*, was that if one “hostile” picketer could drive one patron away, “a friendly picket could bring one customer in.”¹²² Each of these women hired by Knab walked beside the women from Local 484 in front of the restaurant at Dearborn and Washington streets, and they wore placards with slogans on them like “Pick The Winner,” “Knab’s Cause Is Right,” and “We’ll Try It.” Knab’s attempt to help offset the union waitresses’ actions only led to more chaos, however. On the second day that his “friendly pickets” were out on the street, sixteen people from both sides were arrested by CPD officers for charges including causing disturbances, obstructing the sidewalk, and interfering with police – twelve union waitresses, one

¹²⁰ “‘Bombs’ Rout Knab Guests,” *Tribune*, May 9, 1914. The *Tribune* reported that it was impossible to see the culprits in two of the attacks, since they dropped the “bottles containing the drug on the floor while the restaurants were crowded.” However, the paper described the suspect at the Washington Street restaurant as a “negro” man who “knocked down two of the guests in making his escape.”

¹²¹ “Bakery Lockout Faces 1,600 Men,” *Tribune*, May 14, 1914.

¹²² “‘Pickets’ His Own Cafes,” *Tribune*, July 17, 1914.

union cook, and four of Knab's own employees, all of whom had their names and addresses published in the press.

According to the waitresses' and cooks' unions, creating this commotion was strategic on Knab's part. Maloney and cooks' union president Ebeling considered Knab's "friendly pickets" to be a blatant attempt to stage the kind of disturbance that would ultimately force authorities to ban picketing altogether, regardless of whether or not protestors aligned themselves with labor or capital. Knab was desperate, they believed, because all of his prior attempts at injunctions against the waitresses had failed. By having his employees loudly and ostentatiously walk up and down the street with placards and "toy balloons," Knab was deliberately using them as bait to draw the ire of police. As Ebeling observed, these workers walked alongside the women from Local 484 "and giggle and attract attention so that a crowd will gather... when a crowd gathers, Knab just snaps his fingers and has both his pickets and ours arrested."¹²³ Ultimately, it came down to money, Maloney added – to her, this was a plot not just to end public picketing, but also to drain Local 484's coffers, since the organization paid the bonds for waitresses who were arrested and had fewer financial resources than restaurant owners.

In addition to mounting legal costs like these, the waitresses continued to face pressure from restaurant bosses and law enforcement as time went on. In late July, a number of key figures from Chicago's business and labor communities assembled at the La Salle Hotel in the Loop to testify before the federal Commission on Industrial Relations, a large-scale study on working conditions in the United States that took place between 1913 and 1915.¹²⁴ Tasked with exploring unionization and wages in the city, people like Knab's attorney Dudley Taylor and

¹²³ "Arrest Pickets Over and Over," *Tribune*, July 19, 1914. Ebeling also alleged that Knab had cooked up this plot with his attorney Dudley Taylor. Exasperated, he pledged to bring the issue to the CFL in the hopes of opening an investigation into the matter.

¹²⁴ Their report was delivered to Congress in 1916.

Local 484's Elizabeth Maloney discussed at length the role of police in strikes, corruption and graft within Chicago's unions, and the power that business was able to wield. Their testimonies revealed the deep schisms that existed between labor and capital in the city with no signs of abating. For labor representatives, although the courts' attitudes toward strikes was "generally fair," police officers were problematic, and frequently assumed arbitrary powers, unjustly arrested strikers, and often helped "incite violence."¹²⁵ To contrast, business interests and their representatives like Taylor blamed the unions for outbreaks of violence and public disturbances, and insisted that the CPD's actions against strikers were largely justified. Neither side could agree on how to solve these issues – both favored legislative and policy reform to curtail the power of the other.¹²⁶

At the same time these testimonies were heard by the commission, the situation on the ground in front of Knab's restaurant had become increasingly confusing as well as steadily chaotic.¹²⁷ The "friendly pickets" had continued, with union officials alleging that because of Knab's cozy relationship with officers (he apparently let them eat at his restaurants free of charge and donated turkeys to uniformed officers at Christmas), his employees were tipped off when arrests were about to be made. This resulted in twelve union waitresses being arrested on one day while Knab's pickets found sanctuary inside the confines of the restaurant.¹²⁸ Moreover, policemen themselves seemed unsure about exactly what they were supposed to be doing. When

¹²⁵ "Chicago Courts Called Fair by Union Leaders," *Tribune*, July 25, 1914. Full transcripts of witnesses' testimony can be found in United States Commission on Industrial Relations, "Industrial Conditions and Relations in Chicago," in *Industrial Relations: Final Report and Testimony Submitted to Congress by the Commission on Industrial Relations, Created by the Act of August 3 1912*, vol. 4 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916): 3173-3457.

¹²⁶ Ways to End Labor Strike Bring Clash," *Tribune*, July 23, 1914.

¹²⁷ And also, increasingly farcical. According to testimony that Maloney gave to the Commission on Industrial Relations, by late July the "friendly pickets" started to carry signs that "read something about a nannie goat," and they carried around actual goats, making them "squeak under the noses of the girls," ostensibly to incite commotion. United States Commission on Industrial Relations, "Industrial Conditions and Relations in Chicago," 3246.

¹²⁸ "Charge Police Aid Knab," *Tribune*, July 23, 1914.

a *Day Book* reporter interviewed a number of CPD officials about the arrests a few days later, it was clear they had run out of steam. The reporter pointed out that the arrests were likely unjust because judges had recently dissolved Knab's injunction and asked why officers had made them. His query was met with a mix of weariness, denial, and confusion: "I've been so busy with other things that I haven't paid much attention to this," said Chief Gleason, referring the reporter to the deputy superintendent for further details. "I am informed that crowds collected in front of Knab's place after Knab put on his own pickets. Complaints came in from business men about crowds. And we did the best we could by arrested the pickets on both sides. The police are criticized by both sides. All we can do is make the arrests and put it up to the courts."¹²⁹

As the months dragged on, business interests continued to "fight tooth and nail" against the waitresses. By November, Knab got his way, with Judge Jesse Baldwin granting him an injunction that stopped picketing in front of his business. Shortly after, the RKA presented the circuit court with an affidavit that alleged that close to seventy other businesses wanted to be included in Knab's injunction because the waitresses were conspiring to force them to hire union members. However, the *Day Book* reported that this was patently false, because "at least fifty" of these establishments "had never been approached by the waitresses, had never exchanged a word with any representative of the waitresses' union and had never been picketed."¹³⁰ Although Local 484 filed a motion to dissolve the injunction, their request for an immediate hearing was denied, which dragged the case out into January of 1915. By this time, their funds had dwindled, and the waitresses were forced to reach out to other city unions for donations of five cents per member, but their efforts fell short by two hundred dollars. Although the Chicago Federation of Labor gave them the money they sought, it was too little too late: the trial was shaped by "legal tricks"

¹²⁹ Police Officials Don't Seem to Know What's Going On In Waitress Strike," *The Day Book*, July 28, 1914.

¹³⁰ "How the Bosses Fight Tooth and Nail Against Decent Conditions for Women," *The Day Book*, April 15, 1915.

waged by the RKA's attorney. He asked "leading questions" and hampered the waitresses' testimonies through "an avalanche of objections to almost every question," many of which were sustained and limited the women "considerably."¹³¹ Ultimately, Baldwin's ruling upheld the injunction and forced each side to file briefs, which further drove up legal costs for the cash-strapped waitresses.

Amidst this legal wrangling, the strike fizzled out not with a bang, but a whimper. Before the year was over, Local 484 ended their protest with little to show for it – the waitresses did not achieve their goal of a six-day work week and weekly eight-dollar wage, and they were unable to have injunctions against picketing loosened or overturned.¹³² As well, employer-sponsored groups (encouraged by the RKA and possibly inspired by Knab's "friendly pickets") emerged to compete with Local 484's work.¹³³ However, all was not lost. There were some tangible gains – most notably, fearing being targeted, a number of restaurants left the RKA and decided to sign contracts with Local 484 to hire union labor.¹³⁴ The strike also drove so many customers away from Knab's business that he was forced to shutter his restaurants.¹³⁵ It is unclear, however, whether or not patrons avoided Knab's restaurants because they were sympathetic to the waitresses' cause. In his testimony to the Industrial Relations Committee, Knab's lawyer suggested that this was not the case. "The public does not investigate this matter and form its own opinion and act according to its convictions. Not at all," Dudley Taylor said in July 1914.

¹³¹ Chicago Federation of Labor, Meeting Minutes, November 15, 1914, "How the Bosses Fight Tooth and Nail Against Decent Conditions for Women," *The Day Book*, April 15, 1915.

¹³² Chicago Federation of Labor. Meeting Minutes. December 6, 1914.

¹³³ These groups were called the Chicago Waitress League and the Chicago Waitress Club and they weakened Local 484 until the 1930s when Local 484 was able to convince them to merge into their union. See Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It Out*, 88.

¹³⁴ Chicago Federation of Labor. Meeting Minutes. February 7, 1915.

¹³⁵ The closure of Knab's restaurants can be understood as a gain if we consider it as a symbol of the growing power of organized labor and the consumer. Chicago Federation of Labor. Meeting Minutes. February 21, 1915.

“They simply avoid those restaurants ... because there is trouble there. It is easy to go to some other restaurant across the street or in the next block.”¹³⁶

One thing was clear, however: these women had established themselves as a force to be reckoned with. As George Knab remarked after the strike, “there was no use fighting women.”¹³⁷ The Henrici’s strike represented a pivotal shift in the perception of waitresses as workers, and of women working in the public sphere more broadly. Like other labor strikes in Chicago during the early twentieth century, it ended through the court system with an injunction against picketing, which demonstrates that the city’s power structures considered the waitresses of Local 484 to be workers in the way that men were. Gendered ideas about punishing these “women adrift” or paternalistically protecting them from police violence were largely absent from court proceedings, which drew instead on precedents set by cases involving other labor disputes across the nation. The waitresses achieved this (limited) sense of legitimacy in no small part because of the coalitions they formed with the city’s clubwomen and with other labor unions. With the support of figures like Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr, who publicly spoke so passionately about the waitresses’ rights and citizenship, Local 484 were granted a new type of respectability that helped them to (temporarily) transcend their dissolute image, and their partnerships with male-dominated unions like the cooks and the bakers helped cement their rightful place among the city’s laborers.

This newfound strength through collectivity proved to be a boon for Local 484 as they forged ahead with other initiatives, which included supporting the battle for an eight-hour work

¹³⁶ Industrial Conditions and Relations in Chicago,” in *Industrial Relations: Final Report and Testimony Submitted to Congress by the Commission on Industrial Relations, Created by the Act of August 3 1912*, vol. 4 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916): 3231.

¹³⁷ Adade Mitchell Wheeler and Marlene Stein Wortman, *The Roads They Made: Women in Illinois History* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1977), 82.

day in the Illinois legislature in 1915, and years later helping Black waitresses organize on the South Side and campaigning to ensure women were able to work in establishments that sold liquor.¹³⁸ But by no means was the Henrici's strike a solution for all of the problems that faced Chicago women who wanted to work in restaurants. As the line between bar and restaurant became increasingly blurry—especially with the rise of the cabaret in the 1910s—the relationship between middle-class reformers and the working-class became shakier as new questions about the legitimacy and safety of public dining arose.



Figure 2: Mabel Burke, a member of Waitresses' Union Local 484, is arrested while a crowd watches during the 1914 strike involving Henrici's restaurant at 67 W. Randolph Street in the Loop district of Chicago (Chicago History Museum)

¹³⁸ "Battle for Eight-Hour Day is on Before Illinois Legislature," *The Day Book*, March 19, 1915, Cobble, *Dishing It Out*, 88, 157.



Figure 3: The waitresses of Local 484 picket on Randolph Street at the beginning of the strike (*Chicago Tribune*, February 6, 1914)

Chapter 3

“Make Your Restaurant a Decent Place to Eat In”: The Push to Reform the City’s Dining Spaces

“We all like a change occasionally, but we must learn to apply the same common sense and good judgement to the selection of dining-halls and restaurants that we use in other less important matters.”¹

As the waitresses’ strike revealed, the solidarity between working-and-middle class reformers in Chicago was fraught with tension. Although the two factions had united to agitate for better working conditions and higher wages among the city’s waitresses, questions about whether or not restaurants were suitable work or leisure spaces remained unanswered, especially as it became increasingly difficult to tell the difference between a bar, a dining space, and a cabaret or dance hall. For years, saloons had had restaurants operating inside of them, either in a back room or in a delineated area, and many of them also had a long history of offering free lunches to their patrons. By the 1910s, these spaces had also started to serve as entertainment venues, much to the chagrin of middle-class reformers from organizations like Hull House and the Juvenile Protective Association, who lamented in 1913 that young peoples’ “natural desire for pleasure has been used by business enterprise, so that commercial undertakings have sprung up everywhere prepared to cater to every foolish demand.”²

The cabaret craze swept Chicago during this period, as owners of larger saloons converted their establishments to add these spaces in an effort to draw in more patrons. Create a performance space and hire professional entertainers, and surely people would come to enjoy live music and dancing. Even owners of smaller saloons wanted in on the action, and would often install a few tables and employ at least one waiter and one young woman who could sing or

¹ Pasquale Russo, *Twelve O’Clock Lunch* (Chicago: Pasquale Russo, 1923), 24.

² Louise de Koven Bowen, *The Juvenile Protective Association* (Chicago: 1913), 2505.

dance. By 1916, more than half of the city's 7,000 saloons reportedly had cabarets connected to them.³ But while these new saloon/restaurant/cabaret hybrids may have attracted revelers, they brought with them a vexing new dimension to the legal and cultural confusion that surrounded entertainment venues in the city. With so many saloons now serving three distinct but interconnected functions, it became more difficult than ever for reformers to grapple with the restaurant question: what exactly was a restaurant, and were they safe and respectable spaces for leisure and employment? Should the regulation of eating establishments fall under the purview of sanitary reformers, or were they the province of anti-vice and temperance reformers? Because of the way that middle-class activists had long spearheaded the sanitary health, anti-vice, and anti-liquor campaigns that were directed at all of these spaces, their voices won out over their sometime-allies among the working class. The middle and upper-class's dominance as reformers allowed them to set the standards for the policies that would ultimately be enacted to govern public dining in Chicago; policies that would underscore the relationship they believed existed between sanitation and morality.⁴

Indeed, it was this class who initially created the strong relationship between hygiene, public health, cleanliness, and morality that had become so deeply entrenched by the turn of the twentieth century.⁵ The struggle to define and regulate restaurants epitomizes this relationship. Because they served food—often alongside alcohol, and occasionally in a venue where young women were encouraged (and often employed) to drink and carouse with men and entertain them—the restaurant is the best example of a space where the relationship between health and

³ This figure is an estimate from the Juvenile Protective Association, who noted that most cabarets employed a staff of around one to ten female performers. Louise de Koven Bowen, *The Road to Destruction Made Easy in Chicago* (Juvenile Protective Association: 1916), 12.

⁴ These policies will be detailed in the next chapter.

⁵ For more about the relationship between hygiene and morality, see Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women and the Microbe in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Katherine Ashenburg, *The Dirt on Clean: An Unsanitized History* (New York: North Point Press, 2007), 169-176.

morality is not just an abstraction, but rather something that is made tangible, vivid, and literal. However, the restaurant's relative newness as a standalone space in major American cities like Chicago meant that discussions about them were often subsumed into discrete discussions about food sanitation more broadly, about temperance, and about vice. As well, scholars have often considered these reform crusades as separate entities. When combined, this has meant the restaurant's unique position in terms of what it can reveal about the intersections between health and morality has been largely overlooked. By examining more closely how restaurants appeared in discussions of all these crusades, this chapter highlights how these often-disparate reform efforts intertwined with one another in a small and liminal space. The interrelationships between public health and moral crusades as they played out on the ground inside of the restaurant led to confusion among the middle-class policymakers tasked with fixing the problems within them. By looking at these interrelationships more closely, this chapter will set the stage to explain how difficult it could be for a variety of interests to work together to achieve a Novakian "vision of a well-regulated society," which in turn has created a problem for Chicagoans that continues to reverberate into our present moment.⁶

The push to reform Chicago's restaurants was rooted in the grassroots political activism that surrounded food, particularly the push for federal pure food legislation. This activist work was primarily—though not exclusively—carried out by middle-and-upper class women activists and centered within the city's settlement houses, women's clubs, and the University of Chicago, where disciplines like home economics and social work were fast becoming professionalized.

⁶ William Novak, *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 1. See also William Novak, "The Myth of the 'Weak' American State," *American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (June 2008): 752-772. As Novak points out, governmental regulatory practice is largely "invisible in "traditional" nineteenth century American historiography in part because American state power is "so widely distributed among an exceedingly complex welter of institutions, jurisdictions, branches, offices, programs, rules, customs, laws, and regulations." Novak, *The People's Welfare*, 2; Novak, "The Myth of the 'Weak' American State," 765.

Marion Talbot, a Bostonian MIT graduate, came to the city in 1892 for a position as an assistant professor in sanitary science at the University of Chicago. In 1899, she became the school's Dean of Women, and along with attorney and academic Sophonisba Breckenridge, founded the Department of Household Administration in 1904. Part of the domestic science movement which aimed to professionalize household management and apply the principles of science to cookery and nutrition, these women advocated for reform in and outside of the classroom. Breckenridge in particular had an activist bent. One of the period's foremost social reformers, she lived part time at Hull House and was involved with immigrant and juvenile protection efforts in addition to her work with the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) as a factory inspector.⁷ In a joint effort with the Illinois Consumers' League and the National Consumers' League (NCL), Breckenridge and NCL Food Investigation Committee member Harriet Van der Vaart were appointed as "special, impartial state agents" to investigate conditions in Illinois's food production facilities.⁸ These women worked in Chicago's stockyards and canneries for over a year collecting information, and the recommendations in the report they compiled for the state legislature and consumers became the basis for regulatory legislation.⁹ Similarly, University of Chicago Settlement House founder Mary McDowell stood with workers during the 1904 stockyard strike (supporting female stockyard workers in particular) and she fought against meat contamination and improper waste disposal in Back of the Yards.¹⁰

The move toward restaurant reform was largely an offshoot of the campaign for pure food. Shortly before the Pure Food and Drug Act was passed in 1906, NCL Pure Food

⁷ Adade Mitchell Wheeler and Marlene Stein Wortman, *The Roads They Made: Women in Illinois History* (Chicago: Charles Kerr Publishing Company, 1977), 94.

⁸ Lorine Swainston Goodwin, *The Pure Food, Drink, and Drug Crusaders, 1879-1914* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1999), 207.

⁹ Goodwin, *The Pure Food, Drink, and Drug Crusaders*, 207.

¹⁰ Mary E. McDowell, "Our Proxies in Industry," *Federation Bulletin* 2, no. 3 (December 1904): 70-74.

Committee chair Alice Lakey proclaimed that “every consumer in this country [should work] for the passage of the Pure Food Bill.”¹¹ Because of the deeply ingrained ideal that women were responsible for purchasing and preparing food for their families, the campaign for federal pure food legislation was gendered female. “We need pure food laws and market inspection,” wrote General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC) Good Sanitation Committee Chair Jane McKibben in an undated memo. “As women are the housekeepers of the world, they make the best food shop housekeepers, i.e., local market inspectors.”¹² Echoing this sentiment, Jane Addams told an audience of more than two hundred people gathered at the Coliseum in the Woodlawn neighborhood that the pure food movement needed women in order to be successful. In her mind, regulatory legislation would not be passed by Congress until American women made it clear to legislators how deeply important it was for them to protect their families from “adulterated and poisonously colored food products.”¹³

Though the federal Pure Food and Drug Act proved difficult to enforce from its outset, women’s clubs, consumers’ leagues, and civic organizations in Chicago and across the United States were “beehives of activity” when it came to expanding the act’s reach, lobbying for stronger and more clearly defined means for enforcement, and keeping consumers abreast of new developments.¹⁴ Consumer agitation at both the group and individual level also intensified. As the National Consumers’ League (NCL) declared in 1909, it was “the duty of consumers to find

¹¹ Alice Lakey, “A Letter to the Delegates – Annual Meeting, National Consumers’ League, March 7, 1905, Philadelphia,” Container A4-A6, Reel 3, National Consumers’ League Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹² Jane McKibben, “Brains and Buying” *General Federation of Women’s Clubs* (undated), Box 207, Harvey Washington Wiley Papers, 1854-1954, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

¹³ “Pure Food Laws Woman’s Affair,” *Tribune*, February 18, 1906.

¹⁴ Goodwin, *The Pure Food, Drink, and Drug Crusaders*, 268.

out under what conditions the articles they purchase are produced and distributed.”¹⁵ Activists had developed a goal to slow down the spread of communicable, food-borne diseases via a demand for sanitary and hygienic practices that would affect food processing and handling at a wider variety of levels. For many of these reformers, this would entail a system of state and local regulations that would work in tandem with one another, and it would go far beyond the slaughterhouse and the stockyard to include anywhere where food, drug, and drink were produced and sold. This could include bakeries, food markets, saloons, and restaurants. As the NCL put it, activists had shifted their focus by 1909 to “spread the doctrine of not only pure food but clean food.”¹⁶ In New York City, for example, clubwomen urged the city’s health commissioner to inspect stores and markets more rigorously, in addition to enforcing the rules about food sold on sidewalks and from pushcarts, and in Chicago, members of the Chicago Women’s Club produced their own inspection and report on dairy products during the National Dairy Show being held in the city.¹⁷

The civic engagement that surrounded food was part of something larger. As historian Maureen Flanagan points out in her study on women’s activism in Chicago at the turn of the twentieth century, those who became involved in community reform efforts like these largely believed that public health and safety was a crucial component of citizenship. For these women, the collective right to public health and safety “transcended business concerns” and should be “safeguarded and promoted by government with the help of an active, participatory citizenry.”¹⁸

¹⁵ “Constitution,” *National Consumers’ League Tenth Annual Report for Two Years Ending March 2, 1909*, 5, Container A4-A6, Reel 3, National Consumers’ League Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁶ Alice Lakey, “Report of the Food Committee,” *National Consumers League Tenth Annual Report for Two Years Ending March 2, 1909*, 53-54, container A4-A6, reel 3, National Consumers League Records.

¹⁷ Goodwin, *The Pure Food, Drink, and Drug Crusaders*, 269; Mary Ritter Beard, *Women’s Work in Municipalities* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1916), 75.

¹⁸ Maureen Flanagan, *Seeing With Their Hearts: Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City, 1871-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 96.

The Women's City Club was at the center of these efforts. Founded in 1910 by a group of 1,250 female activists, ten years later the organization boasted 5,000 members who were a mix of wealthy socialites and blue-and-white collar working women including doctors, lawyers, waitresses, educators, gloveworkers, and journalists. Initially closely tied to the male City Club of Chicago, the WCC was a product of coalitions that had formed earlier during the anti-charter and municipal suffrage crusades. They organized their members according to what political wards they resided in, and created ward-based committees to investigate local issues like the conditions of streets and alleys, smoke pollution, infant mortality rates, juvenile delinquency, garbage collection and disposal, and leisure spaces like parks, playgrounds, beaches, dance halls, hotels, and saloons.¹⁹

Similar to the rhetoric put forth by pure food reformers about women's responsibility to "clean house" on both personal and societal levels, the WCC promulgated women's municipal work as a practice that linked the public to the private. In a 1913 essay, onetime WCC superintendent Anna Nicholes outlined the various ways that Chicago women were working to solve the city's problems in a way that connected "the functions of the home" to municipal concerns and departments. After all, the city and the home "are tied up in the most intimate and important events of life, and the relation between a woman and her city is real and tangible."²⁰ In her mind, women had a different role to play in urban reform than men did, and came at it from a different angle. Whereas men apparently saw Chicago as "primarily a center for business" that should be "[weighed] by a money standard," women had begun to develop what she called a "city sense." This city sense, in her mind, came from "the hearts of women" who believed that

¹⁹ Flanagan, *Seeing With Their Hearts*, 85.

²⁰ Anna E. Nicholes, "How Women Can Help in the Administration of a City," in *The Woman Citizen's Library: A Systematic Course of Reading in Preparation for the Larger Citizenship* vol. 9, ed. Shailer Mathews (Chicago: The Civics Society, 1913), 2143.

Chicago was much more than just a business corporation. Rather, it was “a city of homes, a place in which to rear children to live a joyous life, stimulated to high endeavor by noble environment.”²¹

Women, Nicholes wrote, were building a “new city—a spiritual city, where the watchword is ‘personal welfare,’ calling for high service from its citizens.”²² Although they still did not have the vote, she encouraged women to enact change by first learning as much as they could about Chicago’s municipal government and how it worked: what departments were responsible for which areas, how it was operated and by whom, and what functionalities, limitations, and possibilities it could offer. To do this, the WCC devised what they called the “City Welfare Exhibit” a traveling public education presentation devoted to explaining the city’s bureaucratic structures as well as its spending and budgeting practices, in addition to sharing information about pressing issues like maternal and child health, access to fresh air, and the need for new playgrounds, parks, and beaches. The WCC also launched poster and booklet campaigns, screened Board of Health films with titles like “Chicago’s most dangerous wild animal, the house fly,” and encouraged women to sign up for lecture courses they organized that were focused on answering any “civic questions” one might have about how the city was run.²³

But Nicholes’s vision did not end with using education to shape women’s individual actions in the marketplace. Rather, her focus was on encouraging women to use their newly-acquired knowledge to unite for the collective good. She called for a strategy to “make the city work for human betterment” that would come to fruition only through cooperation between activists and city officials.²⁴ As she pointed out, uninformed citizen activists often had

²¹ Nicholes, “How Women Can Help in the Administration of a City,” 2150-2151.

²² Nicholes, “How Women Can Help in the Administration of a City,” 2151.

²³ Nicholes, “How Women Can Help in the Administration of a City,” 2178.

²⁴ Nicholes, “How Women Can Help in the Administration of a City,” 2184.

unreasonable expectations that stemmed from not knowing or understanding a bureaucracy's reach and limitations. Instead, proper education would ensure that they would be likelier to have their requests heard and acted upon by those who had the power to enact and enforce policy. In Nicholes's eyes, when extralegal actors presented their ideas "with "sincerity and respect, many more officials welcome the aid of the laity than would be commonly supposed."²⁵ Her optimism throughout the essay is clear. With "limitless" possibilities for women to enact change in Chicago, it was conceivable, she speculated, to achieve results on emerging issues like expanding the city's libraries and museums, improving conditions for the incarcerated, the sick, and the poor, and most crucially for this chapter, enforcement of the laws that were on the books for controlling the conditions under which food was prepared and sold.²⁶ Obtaining this political knowledge and using it to improve their city, Nicholes concluded, would have bigger and more important long-term consequences. Ultimately, she predicted, the activism she and the WCC prescribed would open the doors to suffrage in addition to helping shape a better Chicago.²⁷

Just as this is not a straightforward story about the triumphalism of Progressive order over urban chaos, it is neither a simplistic narrative about middle-class white women imposing their agenda onto others. Rather, the activist women who made up the WCC and other similar organizations in Chicago can be thought of as having a shared—but not identical—urban vision that was rooted in women's similar private experiences.²⁸ As historian Maureen Flanagan has pointed out, women have often united over common causes while acknowledging the differences and tensions among themselves, and in Chicago this was no different. In their work to reorganize

²⁵ Nicholes, "How Women Can Help in the Administration of a City," 2187.

²⁶ Nicholes, "How Women Can Help in the Administration of a City," 2198.

²⁷ Nicholes, "How Women Can Help in the Administration of a City," 2208.

²⁸ Flanagan, *Seeing With Their Hearts*, 119. Here, Flanagan draws from philosopher Nancy Love, who has argued that "women have often functioned from an 'ethic of solidarity' that can represent *feminist* commitments women share and communicate to one another but that does not represent *women* as being and thinking exactly alike" (emphasis is Flanagan's).

the city and its institutions to provide a common welfare, activist women were not a monolithic category (for example, famed civil rights reformer Ida B. Wells often acted jointly with white women while frequently disagreeing with them), and their approaches tended to be distinct from those undertaken by the men of a similar social class.²⁹ As Nicholes's essay demonstrates, activist women's efforts to embed the idea of a common welfare into Chicago's political structures largely saw them pushing back against men's sense of the city as a primarily economic space and advocating for what Frances Willard of the Women's Christian Temperance Union dubbed "the homelike world."³⁰

In spite of the diversity among the members of organizations like the WCC and others, many of their participants shared a general mindset that has been well-documented by historians of the Progressive Era.³¹ By the end of the nineteenth century, a growing sense of discontent began to ferment in the United States as "many of the beneficiaries of modern culture began to feel they were its secret victims."³² In a complex manner, this unease with modern urban life existed comfortably alongside an enthusiasm for the material progress that accompanied it. In what T.J. Jackson Lears labels as a "crisis of cultural authority" in the years after the Civil War, the American bourgeoisie—in other words, precisely the kind of people who became involved in

²⁹ Flanagan, *Seeing With Their Hearts*, 119-120.

³⁰ Gwendolyn Wright, *Modernism and the Model Home* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 105, 108-109.

³¹ When contemplating scholarship on the Progressive Era more generally, academics have long acknowledged the period's inherent complexities, and have even debated whether or not there is enough coherence within "Progressivism" to warrant a distinct periodization (see Introduction for a more detailed overview of this historiography). However, a landmark 1982 article by Daniel Rodgers describes it as a period where Americans advocated for various reforms that represented a widespread and varied response to the multitude of changes brought by industrial capitalism and urban growth. Rodgers acknowledges the elusive nature of Progressivism, describing it as three distinct but overlapping "languages of discontent" that promulgated antimonopolist rhetoric, calls for social harmony, and demands for efficiency. He writes that these three languages "did not add up to a coherent ideology"; rather it is more beneficial to think of them as a flexible – and often fragmented – approach to enacting social change and regulation through state intervention. See Daniel T. Rodgers, "In Search of Progressivism." *Reviews in American History* 10, no. 4 (December 1982): 113-132.

³² Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), xiii.

civic activism—grew dissatisfied and even afraid of all aspects of modern life. These people (many of whom were what Lears describes as the “old-stock Protestant... WASP bourgeoisie” who had the power to shape American cultural life) “began to recognize that the triumph of modern culture had not produced greater autonomy (which was the official claim) but rather had promoted a spreading sense of moral impotence and spiritual sterility—a feeling that life had become not only overcivilized but also curiously unreal.”³³ In turn, these feelings gave rise to xenophobia and racism, eugenic thought, the growing sense that gender roles were in crisis, and broad fears about urban life, physical and mental health, and industrial capitalism.

In addition to revealing much about “the beginnings of present-day values and attitudes,” the “complex blend of accommodation and protest” put forth by the people that Lears has dubbed the “antimodernists” shaped the “official common sense of American life.”³⁴ The “moral and psychic dilemmas” that they experienced and articulated carried powerful weight, as Willard’s concept of the homelike world demonstrates.³⁵ The “social housekeeping” argument clearly linked political economy and the wider community to ideas about the family and the home, echoing the words of prominent Chicago philanthropist and activist Louise de Koven Bowen in a 1913 address to the Friday Club. “If a woman is a good housekeeper in her own home,” Bowen remarked, “she will be able to do well that larger housekeeping.”³⁶ While this application of domestic values to the political and economic sphere was pivotal to the Progressive strategy for urban improvement and uplift more broadly, it was particularly central to reforming the spaces

³³ Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 4-5. Most notably, the people he describes here were dissatisfied with modernity’s fixation on so-called “progress,” its individualistic ethos, and its emphasis on scientific and technological rationality.

³⁴ Lears, *No Place of Grace*, xv.

³⁵ In her 1980 history of the idealized American home at the turn of the twentieth century, Gwendolyn Wright explains how the homelike world “was central in the progressives’ diverse apocalyptic visions for better American cities. See Wright, *Moralism and the Moral Home*, 108-110.

³⁶ *Speeches, Address, and Letters of Louise de Koven Bowen: Reflecting Social Movements in Chicago*, ed. Mary E. Humphrey (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers Inc., 1937), 333.

that people had begun to think of as their homes away from home, like theatres, hotels, trains, and restaurants. As middle-class Americans started to enjoy new interests and pleasures in the Progressive Era city in an unprecedented manner, domestic scientists and hygiene reformers encouraged people to be mindful of their forays into the public worlds of travel and entertainment.³⁷ As affluent people began to venture out of their “cloistered Victorian world of parlor entertainments and private dinner parties,” reformers like Bowen and others continually emphasized that “a properly developed consciousness of disease did not stop at the door of one’s own home.”³⁸ In other words, no one should tolerate in the public sphere what they would not in their own parlor or kitchen.

Because food was widely thought of as particularly insidious in how it allowed germs and bacteria to invade the body, the places where it was prepared, sold, and served were especially contentious. And with the expansion of commercialized leisure and white-collar office work, reformers started to look beyond the bakery, the butcher shop, the dairy, and the grocery store. Although women were heavily involved in the period’s public health crusades, historians have also outlined how men joined the lobby for sanitary uplift in the Progressive Era in both formal and informal capacities. As Nancy Tomes details, the growing ranks of middle managers and salesmen brought with them “a self-consciously modernist outlook” that saw them working consciously to distinguish themselves from their “uncouth, tobacco-spitting predecessors.” Reform organizations—particularly anti-tuberculosis societies—deliberately courted these men by framing germ consciousness as something that was masculine (and therefore desirable). In turn, this helped transform the white-collar male worker into a “powerful force for higher standards of cleanliness.” Along with (and occasionally alongside) their female counterparts,

³⁷ Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs*, 171.

³⁸ Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs*, 171.

these men wandered through the American city in new ways. They took trains, they stayed in hotels, and they dined out in restaurants. Wherever these “microbe-minded ladies and gentlemen” went, they “took their sanitary preoccupations with them,” and anyone who hoped to earn their patronage felt pressured to meet their expectations for health and hygiene.³⁹

In order to lure these men and women into the kinds of public spaces where exposure to germs was a real possibility, the keepers of the era’s “homes away from homes” had to assure wary customers that their establishments were safe to patronize. The process of doing this worked from the top-down: the goods, services, and practices associated with hygiene were transferred from the domestic spheres of upper- and middle-class city dwellers to the public world. As various “emblems of domestic safety” (such as the white china toilet or the individual drinking glass) became widely available and accepted in the venues that these people frequented, working class men and women also had to be “indoctrinated in the new hygienic disciplines.” As the industries devoted to travel, lodging, and dining continued to boom, people like “the Irish maid, the Italian waiter, and the black Pullman-car porter learned to observe the gospel of germs carefully” in order to keep their jobs.⁴⁰ Inside the more self-conscious Progressive Era restaurants, managers and owners invested in things like linen so that staff could change the tablecloths and napkins between diners, and rudimentary dishwashing machines to sterilize china, glassware, and cutlery. In Chicago, one hotel and restaurant owner became so disgusted by waiters’ fingerprints on the parts of spoons and forks that touched diners’ mouths that he created a cutlery brand that he called “Handle-Rite.” Albert Pick’s branded silverware was designed “so that the handle portion of the spoon and fork [was] set off from the bowl or tine portion by a distinct shoulder or bolster.” As the *Hotel Monthly* reported, “this style handle will

³⁹ Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs*, 172.

⁴⁰ Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs*, 176.

be more sanitary, because waiters will handle them as they do knives, picking them up by the handle only, and in this way not touching the bowls or tines with the hand.”⁴¹ Furthermore, waitresses and waiters were “drilled in the niceties of sanitary presentation” and closely scrutinized. Male waiters were encouraged to shave their facial hair, and servers were given careful instructions to do things like refill diners’ water glasses at the table, and to always dry glassware with a clean, dry towel.⁴²

A major reason for this emphasis on hygiene was “the growing awareness of the healthy carrier problem” best exemplified by Mary Mallon. More famously known as “Typhoid Mary,” the Irish-born New York cook was the first person in the United States to be verified as an asymptomatic carrier of typhoid fever, a deadly bacterial illness spread by eating or drinking food or beverages contaminated by the feces of an infected person. While working for a family who lived on Park Avenue in 1907, she was arrested after health authorities realized that she had infected a number of people in the households she had worked in.⁴³ The case of “Typhoid Mary” created a national uproar and prompted reformers and officials across the United States to scrutinize food workers more closely. By the 1920s, many cities had introduced amendments to their sanitary codes that would permit the inspection of restaurant employees in an effort to safeguard public health.⁴⁴

Chicago was no exception. By 1918, the city’s Department of Health required all employees to be “clean in person and in clothing,” and they forbade any person “afflicted with

⁴¹ “Business Notes,” *Hotel Monthly* 32, no. 371 (February 1924): 106.

⁴² Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs*, 176-177.

⁴³ Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs*, 177. Although she was deemed a public health threat and agreed not to work as a cook again, she was responsible for a subsequent typhoid outbreak in 1915 at a maternity hospital where she was employed in the kitchen. Twenty-five people were sickened, and two died. As a punishment, Mallon spent the rest of her life in quarantine.

⁴⁴ Judith Walzer Levitt, *Typhoid Mary: Captive of the Public’s Health* (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 52-54. The amendments to Chicago’s sanitary code will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

any contagious or infectious disease” to be employed in “the preparing, handling, cooking, or serving of foodstuffs, or in the washing of dishes or other utensils.”⁴⁵ In one incident, typhoid went on a “rampage” across the city after a waitress employed at a restaurant in the Loop was found in an “advanced state of convalescence when her condition was discovered by medical scouts sent out by [city health commissioner] Dr. Young.” This unnamed waitress, described by the *Tribune* as a “luckless typhogenic” who had brought the germs with her from her hometown of St. Louis, infected thirty-seven people—her coworkers and her customers. As a precaution, the city ordered the restaurant on South Wabash Street to temporarily shut down. All of the food inside was condemned, and the kitchen and other equipment sterilized.⁴⁶

Because of incidents like this one and the growing general concern with public health, the *Tribune* employed a well-known physician to serve as its health editor. Beginning in 1911, Dr. William Augustus Evans penned a regular column where he answered reader-submitted questions “pertinent to hygiene, sanitation, and prevention of disease.”⁴⁷ The column, which was titled “How to Keep Well,” proved to be so popular that it was reprinted in numerous American and international newspapers, making him the first syndicated health columnist in the United States.⁴⁸ In 1916, Evans used his column to warn readers of the dangers of eating in restaurants while acknowledging their increasing presence and necessity in Chicagoans’ lives. Because “a typhoid carrier cook in a restaurant is in a position to infect a great many people,” he argued, the city’s restaurants must implement protocols to prevent the spread of the disease. Citing an

⁴⁵ John Dill Robertson, M.D., *Report and Handbook of the Department of Health of the City of Chicago for the Years 1911 to 1918 Inclusive* (Chicago: House of Severinghaus, 1919), 882.

⁴⁶ “Gen. Typhoid on Rampage,” *Tribune*, November 9, 1913. This article also discusses a concurrent outbreak involving “a dozen victims” who had contracted the disease from a milkman with a route on the North Side between Fullerton Avenue and Irving Park Boulevard, along North Clark Street.

⁴⁷ W.A. Evans, “How to Keep Well: Contagion in Food,” *Tribune*, September 4, 1916.

⁴⁸ Georges C. Benjamin, Elizabeth Fee, Theodore Brown, “William Augustus Evans (1865-1948): Public Health Leader at a Critical Time,” *American Journal of Public Health* 100, no. 11 (November 2010): 2073.

outbreak of typhoid among the employees of a large department store who frequented a nearby restaurant for lunch, Evans noted that a waitress at this establishment had been diagnosed with the illness. Soon, the restaurant inside of the store itself became a cause for concern: what if some of their two hundred and twenty five employees had also gone to eat at the restaurant down the street? As a precautionary measure, the managers of the store's restaurant forced its cooks, waiters and dishwashers to listen to a lecture on how typhoid was spread, and they brought in a nurse to ensure that workers were washing their hands frequently and thoroughly. As well, the cooks and waiters were tested for typhoid, which revealed there was one carrier among the staff.⁴⁹

But fears about public health in the city's restaurants were not limited to typhoid alone. Memories of the cholera outbreaks that had repeatedly ravaged the city over the nineteenth century were hard to shake, even though the bacterial disease had been largely tamed by the century's end thanks to improvements to the city's sewer system.⁵⁰ As well, tuberculosis continued "lurking in [the] city," notably within the bodies of the people who worked in restaurants and hotels, which prompted Chicago's health commissioner to call for further examination of these employees.⁵¹ As Evans pointed out in his column, diners were also at risk of contracting "venereal disease and some other diseases" from infected cooks and waiters. He also warned about food poisoning, cases of which could range in intensity from "mild diarrhea to violent attacks," and encouraged restaurants to properly use refrigeration, particularly when it involved uncooked meats and fish. Echoing the pure food movement's emphasis on consumer

⁴⁹ W.A. Evans, "How to Keep Well: Contagion in Food," *Tribune*, September 4, 1916.

⁵⁰ In 1854, for example, cholera killed 1,424 Chicago residents, and 116 when it returned in 1873. "Epidemics," *Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago History Museum), <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/432.html>.

⁵¹ Phthisis Cases Among Public Food Servers," *Tribune*, February 4, 1916.

education and individual responsibility, he also placed the onus to eat safely on the consumer.⁵² “For protection against the danger from spoiled food, the patron must depend on his taste and sense of smell,” he wrote, noting that people must also pay attention to “the reputation of the establishment, and the competency of the local health department.”⁵³ It may seem like a somewhat harsh and unsympathetic stance, but when looking at it in light of an 1896 Illinois Supreme Court decision, Evans’s approach makes more sense. Although the Boston Oyster House at the corner of Clark and Madison Streets had served Maggie Sheffer a “brassy-tasting” oyster stew that left her “in great agony and pain,” a judge ruled in the restaurant’s favor, arguing that the establishment was not liable because Sheffer was unable to prove their negligence in preparing or serving her the food.⁵⁴ Clearly, it was at least partially up to diners to safeguard their own health when heading out for a meal in a Chicago restaurant.

Unsurprisingly for the era, fears about foodborne illnesses spread through restaurant dining were also racialized and classed. This was part of a deeply embedded element in middle-class American culture that associated disease germs with poor, immigrant, and non-white citizens.⁵⁵ Earlier cholera outbreaks were blamed on neighborhoods located “where sanitary laws were not observed, especially in the area south of 37th Street and west of State Street, which was “densely populated, principally by foreigners,” and as Chapter One of this dissertation indicates, Chinese restaurants were singled out for their apparently filthy kitchens, as were many of the restaurants frequented by the city’s Black residents.⁵⁶ As Nancy Tomes outlines, the ability to

⁵² I discuss this emphasis on education and individual responsibility within the pure food cause in the *Journal of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era*. See Alana Toulon, “‘Old Methods Not Up to New Ways’: The Strategic Use of Advertising in the Fight for Pure Food After 1906,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 18, vol. 4 (October 2019): 461-479.

⁵³ W.A. Evans, “How to Keep Well: Contagion in Food,” *Tribune*, September 4, 1916.

⁵⁴ *Maggie Sheffer v. Charles Willoughby, et al*, 163 Ill. 518 45 N.E. 253 (1896).

⁵⁵ Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs*, 11.

⁵⁶ *Report of the Board of Health of the City of Chicago for the Years 1870, 1871, 1872, and 1873* (Chicago: Bulletin Printing Company, 1874), 23.

conform to ‘antiseptic’ standards of cleanliness differentiated rich from poor, educated from unschooled, American-born from foreign-born.” Moreover, the association between race, ethnicity, and class and contagion helped stigmatize marginalized groups even further and deepened class prejudice, nativism, and racism in Chicago and other major American cities.⁵⁷

These prejudices were not as evenly divided along the series of ethnic and racial binaries that one might expect, however. As outlined in Chapter One, a number of Black-led reform organizations and women’s clubs committed themselves to fostering a class-specific type of racial uplift geared at migrants from the south.⁵⁸ Wealthier and more established members of the city’s Black community utilized a “politics of respectability” to instill what they believed was proper conduct for southern Blacks who were not yet used to life in a large northern city like Chicago. A significant part of this “politics of respectability” concerned food: not just learning about the “correct” ways to eat, but also establishing familiarity with safe food handling procedures in the home and also in the restaurant as a consumer. “The restaurants as operated by our people are fast becoming meccas for dirt and filth, to say the least,” declared one 1918 *Defender* article that admonished Black restaurant owners to “make [their businesses] a decent place to eat in.” The reporter criticized these spaces for not having properly screened-in windows and doors, which would “too often subject their patrons to diseases communicated by flies and other insects that are attracted by the smell of meats and the intense heat of the kitchen.” They also offered a scathing critique of the employees who worked in these Black-owned businesses,

⁵⁷ Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs*, 11.

⁵⁸ Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 30-34. Cynthia M. Blair also talks about this in her book *I’ve Got to Make My Livin’: Black Women’s Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

describing the cooks as not only “inexperienced,” but also “untidy and unclean in the handling of food,” often wearing dirty aprons and jackets they would openly wipe their faces on.⁵⁹

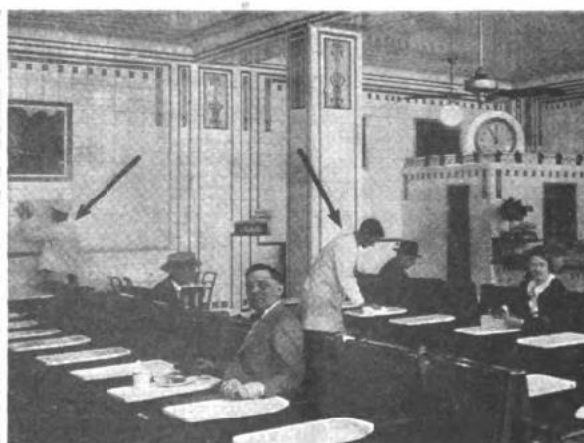
And as a 1913 column by Dr. Albert Wilberforce Williams demonstrates, the paper’s criticisms were not limited to Black-owned and patronized restaurants. The prominent Black physician, who practiced on the South Side and served as the paper’s health editor and weekly public health columnist lambasted the “dirty Greek restaurants” on State Street. He described for readers in unflinching detail the multitude of green-colored flies that covered “the meat [that] was piled in the windows as you would pile old junk, with no cover, exposed to flies and dirt,” as well as the “chief Greek cook” who “seemed to have a cold.” Before preparing the steaks ordered by the “elegant and fastidious gentlemen and ladies of color who were waiting to be served,” this cook blew his nose, and then wiped it off with his forefinger and the back of his hand, which remained unwashed as he picked up pieces of meat from the fly-covered mass and tossed them into a skillet.⁶⁰

With the concept of “the homelike world” so prominent in the middle-class vision of how a city should run, calls for the restaurant to more closely resemble an idealized domestic scene became louder, as did the idea that consumers should not tolerate anything in a restaurant that they would not in their own kitchen or dining room. Intertwined with the campaign for pure food, Americans’ growing hygiene consciousness gave rise to the broader marketing of sanitary reform. For example, entrepreneurs like John Raklios (the Greek immigrant who had built a chain of “luncheonettes” throughout Chicago) opened restaurants that emphasized cleanliness and high-quality ingredients, and they boasted of their new steel utensils, enameled table tops,

⁵⁹ “Make Your Restaurant a Decent Place to Eat In,” *Defender*, September 21, 1918.

⁶⁰ Dr. A. Wilberforce Williams, “Keep Healthy,” *Defender*, June 28, 1913; Dr. A. Wilberforce Williams, “Talks on Preventative Measures, First Aid Remedies, Hygienics and Sanitation,” *Defender*, May 10, 1919.

white tiled floors, and brightly-lit interiors that helped foster “a sparkling-clean, hygienic look” and ambience.⁶¹ In his advertisements, Raklios made sure to mention that he bought all of his meat from the major packing companies, furnished his restaurants solely with name-brand condiments like Heinz (a company that was famously aligned with the pure food movement), and only employed white waiters and waitresses, relegating Black workers to roles in the back of the house.⁶² Similarly, Chicago restaurant magnate John R. Thompson (who owned forty-seven eateries in Chicago and another fifty-six elsewhere in the United States) told business magazine *System* in 1922 that the core principles that undergirded his business practices were “cleanliness, purity of food, and service” that were carefully standardized across all of his locations.⁶³



It pays to keep a restaurant or store meticulously clean, Thompson declares. What goes out in cleaning expense comes back into the cash register

Figure 4: A magazine feature on Chicago restaurant impresario John Thompson highlighted the procedures his staff took to ensure that his restaurant locations were adequately clean. Joseph Mason, “Men and Methods,” *System: The Magazine of Business* (August 1922): 152.

Others called for a turn away from the era’s popular French *haute cuisine* and Chinese chop suey in favor of “the farm restaurant,” envisioned by one writer as spaces that could appeal

⁶¹ Harvey Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 186.

⁶² John Raklios, “How I Built a Restaurant Business,” *The American Restaurant* (December 19, 1919): 19; quoted in Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table*, 186. Raklios notes here that “colored help take care of the dishwashing.”

⁶³ Joseph Mason, “Men and Methods,” *System: The Magazine of Business* (August 1922): 151-153.

to “the erstwhile farmers” who now lived in Chicago and worked as “business men.” A restaurant serving “fresh food” that was designed to look like a farmhouse kitchen—complete with an open fire and the sort of dishware and décor “that would remind the diner of the happy days down on the farms”—would be a balm to the pressures faced by urban dwellers and an oasis from the city’s chaos, as would its “plain, wholesome dishes, such as beefsteak, ham and eggs, corned beef and cabbage, [and] real, genuine pies.”⁶⁴ This desire to return to “the general air and atmosphere of the [good] old days” when life was apparently simpler ties in to one of the age’s most powerful impulses. By exemplifying what historian Laura Lovett has labeled “nostalgic modernism,” a phenomenon in which the era’s reformers “embraced the possibility of social change” while working to build a society “in the image of an idealized past,” this vision of an ideal Chicago restaurant can help us understand more about how business owners tried to assuage consumer anxieties about public dining.⁶⁵ In other words, the idea of the farm restaurant can be understood as a microcosm for a larger cultural phenomenon.⁶⁶ A direct byproduct of an

⁶⁴ Ellis Weed, “Chicago Needs Farm Café, with Old Homestead Cooking,” *Tribune*, June 24, 1906.

⁶⁵ Though her work deals with pronatalism, Lovett’s definition and use of the term “nostalgic modernism” is also useful in other contexts such as this one. In comparison to Jackson Lears, who describes this phenomenon as “antimodernism,” Lovett’s terminology is more precise, as nostalgic modernism is not as staunchly traditional as the term “antimodernism” implies. Lovett observes that although traditionalists and nostalgic modernists both looked backwards to the past, only the latter “always moved forward” to embrace new opportunities, albeit cautiously and occasionally critically. Laura L. Lovett, *Conceiving the Future: Pronatalism, Reproduction, and the Family in the United States, 1890–1938* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 10–12; Lears, *No Place of Grace*. See also the work of Michael Kammen, who has argued that “dramatic or unanticipated alterations” often bring about a fetishizing of nostalgia in a given culture or nation. Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 295.

⁶⁶ If Progressive ideology can at its most basic level be described as response to the era’s profound economic, demographic, technological, and social changes, then it is useful to consider it in relation to the work of cultural historians who have looked at the American tendency toward the “backward glance.” There is a large body of scholarship that explores the ways that American identity and values are inextricably linked with the impulse that prompts Americans to simultaneously embrace and resist change, or to adjust to change by embracing parts of the past in therapeutic ways. A deeply ingrained part of the collective national psyche, this predisposition has long helped Americans “legitimize new political orders, rationalize the adjustment and perpetuation of old social hierarchies, and construct acceptable new systems of thought and values.” Though historians like Michael Kammen have portrayed the nostalgic modernist impulse as a transhistorical phenomenon, the changes that swept across science, culture, and politics in the United States at the turn of the century made it particularly apparent at the turn of the twentieth century. See Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 295.

urge to recapture the fading “realness” of American life amidst industrial capitalism, mass production, and urbanization, the nostalgic modernist impulse present in discussions about restaurants reflects a larger fixation with concepts like “honesty” and “authenticity” that began during a time when fears about contamination, deception, and fraud (whether commercial, social, political, or aesthetic) occurred “routinely.”⁶⁷

As Raklios’ and Thompson’s business strategies reveal, restaurant owners followed a similar path to the one taken by food manufacturers eager to position themselves as the antithesis to the era’s fraudsters by launching large-scale marketing campaigns to repackage themselves not as the problem in the fight for pure food, but as part of the solution.⁶⁸ But the food industry was by no means alone in deploying such tactics. As Nancy Tomes notes in her study on public health, “manufacturers and service providers of all sorts” worked deliberately to convince germ-phobic Americans that they would be protected from harm if they frequented their businesses or purchased their products. Often, these kinds of claims made by business interests were dubious at best, with companies using “doubtful health claims” in their promotions and purporting themselves “to be models of antiseptic cleanliness without necessarily living up to established sanitary standards.” In hotels and restaurants, *appearing* to be clean was often more important than actually *being* clean: though a dining room might be spick and span, employees were all-too-often forced to live and work “under intolerable hygienic conditions.”⁶⁹

This was the world that Pasquale Russo described in a 1923 pamphlet that he published after conducting “years of painstaking research” in Chicago’s restaurants. Here, Russo detailed

⁶⁷ Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), xv. According to Orvell, these frauds were especially common in societies that become “so large that one usually deals with strangers, not neighbors.”

⁶⁸ Toulin, ““Old Methods Not Up to New Ways,”” 462.

⁶⁹ In Tomes’s estimation, “a great deal of chicanery and pretense accompanied American businesses’ claims to be safeguarding consumers against germs.” Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs*, 177-178.

the “unsanitary and filthy conditions” that he alleged existed in every single one of them, from inexpensive lunch counters to the city’s prominent, lavishly decorated restaurants. In his estimation, comfortable surroundings and “high prices have as much relation to culinary sanitation...as a left-handed monkey-wrench to a three-legged kangaroo, and you are deservedly deceived if you permit yourself to be led to think otherwise.”⁷⁰ Anyone who walked into a Chicago restaurant at the turn of the twentieth century and ordered, say, chicken a la king, would likely be served a concoction made from spoiled chicken that had been cut up into small pieces and mixed with sautéed green peppers, mushrooms (and perhaps some wine and an egg yolk if available), all intended to “kill the strong odor of decay and to counteract the obnoxious and repulsive taste of this morbid matter.”⁷¹ Despite the fact that such a dish was revolting and possibly dangerous, a Chicago diner was still expected to pay at least one dollar for it on average. And it wasn’t just the food that was a threat to public health: similar to the observations made by the city’s two prominent health columnists, Russo noted the shortages of clean towels needed to safely wipe off workers’ foreheads and pots and pans, instances of improperly washed dishes, and perhaps most disturbingly, the lack of access to bathrooms for kitchen employees. With restaurant toilets rarely located on the same floor as the kitchen, busy cooks were often forced to urinate in “the same unscoured sink” where they rinsed off poultry and fruits and vegetables.⁷²

A union activist involved with the International Workers of the World and its calls for “One Big Union” to unite workers across various sectors, Russo did not blame the workers for their questionable actions and practices. Instead, he argued, “the food trust”—namely, the

⁷⁰ Pasquale Russo, *Twelve O’Clock Lunch* (Chicago: Pasquale Russo, 1923), 3, 9-10.

⁷¹ Russo, *Twelve O’Clock Lunch*, 16. According to Russo, Sea Food A La Newburg was prepared in “nearly the same manner.”

⁷² Russo, *Twelve O’Clock Lunch*, 19-21.

“owners, managers, and slave-driving food profiteers” behind chain restaurants and hotels, bakeries, canneries, meat packers, and flour mills—were at fault, as was a largely toothless Health Department.⁷³ Not only were restaurant employees overworked and forced to clean up their workspaces far too quickly and haphazardly to kill disease-causing germs, they were also forced by owners and managers to cut costs by saving everything left over by diners for reuse, including table scraps from diners’ plates. Doing so was a “universal” practice in Chicago’s restaurants, Russo noted. “Nothing that can be utilized profitably is thrown away,” he observed. “Bits of lettuce, celery, meat, bread, cakes, potatoes, wafers, butter, cream, fruits and vegetables are all carefully put aside for future use in one way or another.” Workers were in a bind because they were simply being forced to follow orders from above: any potential disapproval or opinion on the practice of “[revamping] swill for the swells” was “not asked for, nor considered.”⁷⁴ The only way to combat these unsavory practices, Russo argued, was for restaurant employees to band together and unionize. In his eyes, politicians and “their corruptible henchmen” in the business world certainly could not be trusted to safeguard diners’ health or the health of restaurant workers. In addition to organizing, he believed it was up to “every cook, waiter, waitress, and bus-boy to tell the truth” to diners about what they were really being served, as well as to slow down and take the necessary precautions to prepare and serve food according to dictates set out by public health experts.⁷⁵

Russo was also disturbed by the vulgarity he observed in Chicago’s restaurants. Similar to the way that these spaces looked professional and clean on the surface while being disorderly and unsanitary upon closer inspection, interactions between staff and management/owners were

⁷³ Russo, *Twelve O’Clock Lunch*, 22-23, 13.

⁷⁴ Russo, *Twelve O’Clock Lunch*, 23.

⁷⁵ Russo, *Twelve O’Clock Lunch*, 27-28.

highly fraught behind closed kitchen doors. He noted that orders from “the tyrannical holy trinity” (managers, stewards, and head chefs) were given “in an autocratic and uncivil manner” intended to stoke fear among their underlings, and by using language that was “profane and immoral.”⁷⁶ His depiction of the city’s public dining establishments again underscores the broader idea that the restaurant was a breeding ground for the kind of physical and moral decay that would equally affect both patrons and employees. In addition to the fears of disease and illness spread through contaminated food and surfaces, low wages were another “significant evil” in the culinary industry, particularly for the women who worked as waitresses and “pantry and vegetable girls” paid so little that they “often [had] to resort to prostitution when off duty.”⁷⁷

But the best example of the linkage in consumers’ minds between moral health and physical health in the culinary industry involved the free saloon lunch. Intended to both drum up business and “mollify the [increasingly prominent] antiliquor sentiment which hoped that food might curb the imbiber’s appetite for drink,” the free saloon lunch became as suspect as it was popular by the early twentieth century when the temperance movement gained more traction.⁷⁸ The *Chicago Herald* reported that around three thousand saloons (approximately half of the estimated six to seven thousand saloons in the city) offered daily free lunches to their patrons, as long as they spent a nickel to buy a glass of beer. According to the paper’s calculations, if about twenty people ate these lunches at each saloon, saloonkeepers fed sixty-thousand Chicagoans per day.⁷⁹ For some, this served an important philanthropic function. In his 1894 exposé on Chicago’s political corruption and underground economy, British journalist William T. Stead

⁷⁶ Russo, *Twelve O’Clock Lunch*, 26.

⁷⁷ Russo, *Twelve O’Clock Lunch*, 26.

⁷⁸ Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston 1880-1920* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 52.

⁷⁹ Data from the *Herald* quoted in William Stead, *If Christ Came to Chicago! A Plea for the Union of All Who Love in the Service of All Who Suffer* (Chicago, 1894), 126.

remarked that saloons “fed more hungry people...than all the other agencies—religious, charitable, and municipal—put together.” Citing a Clark Street saloon owned by a friend of his as an example, Stead reported that in one winter alone, the proprietor had “given away on an average about thirty-six gallons of soup and seventy-two loaves of bread every day.”⁸⁰

Others felt less much less rosy about these lunches. Restaurant owners believed the free saloon lunch undercut their daily trade, as did some saloon owners themselves: the Chicago Liquor Dealers’ Association polled its members and found that the majority of them wanted to shut down the practice (to contrast, the rival Saloonkeepers’ Mutual Benefit and Protective Association fought to keep the free lunch alive).⁸¹ Early on, the debates were mainly economic: the free lunch was a burdensome expense for many saloonkeepers. In his 1983 study of the saloon in Chicago and Boston, historian Perry Duis notes that covering the costs of food “often drove barrooms into bankruptcy.” While some saloonkeepers invested as much as thirty to forty dollars a day on food for their free lunches and even contracted with caterers and employed “lunchmen” to serve it, others cut costs as much as they could by ordering the cheapest cuts of meat they could find, and enlisted their wives to prepare the daily spreads.⁸²

Temperance-minded reformers also disdained the practice. In her memoir, prominent clubwoman Louise de Koven Bowen told readers of a twelve-year-old boy she met during her work with the poor as a member of the Visiting Nurse Association of Chicago. While at school each day, this boy would “sink into a stupor” during afternoon classes. Upon questioning his school nurse, Bowen learned that instead of going home for lunch at noon, he had a part-time job doing errands for a saloon. In lieu of payment, she noted with horror, he was given a free lunch

⁸⁰ William Stead, *If Christ Came to Chicago!*, 125.

⁸¹ Duis, *The Saloon*, 296. See also “Free Lunch Is Not To Be Cut Off,” *Tribune*, January 23, 1894.

⁸² Duis, *The Saloon*, 55.

“consisting of beer and bread, the latter he soaked in whiskey and ate, a situation calculated to produce stupor, if nothing worse, in a child of his age.”⁸³ As an alternative to the free saloon lunch, people like Bishop Samuel Fallows of the Methodist church and the Christian League put forth the idea of the “Home Saloon,” which would offer patrons a complimentary meal with the purchase of coffee or “a non-alcoholic imitation of beer,” a concept that was ridiculed in the national press and by various aldermen and saloonkeepers including a man who fell into both of these categories. First Ward alderman Michael “Hinky Dink” Kenna (and others of his political and cultural leanings) believed the working poor would not be interested in eating food that was served without real beer. Kenna was especially suspicious of Fallows’ plans to create elegantly decorated Home Saloons. “Who will patronize it?” he asked. “The class that live off free lunches down here on Clark Street are not allowed in such high-toned places.”⁸⁴

Beyond the economic concerns and the worries about alcohol abuse, the free lunch soon also caught the ire of sanitary reformers, who saw it as a breeding ground for germs because the food was usually laid out uncovered on a side table inside the barroom and served with a communal fork shared between patrons. Although the city’s various saloonkeepers’ organizations had made efforts to police themselves by doing things like conducting voluntary cleanups of smelly iceboxes, dirty mustache towels, and manure-covered brass footrails, reformers were still not convinced that these were safe spaces to eat in where the dangers of catching a bacteriological illness was low. As Duis’s work demonstrates, people worried about how the swinging front doors would let flies in as customers came and went, and about how impossible it would be to keep clean a frequently-used customer bathroom. As well, in a way

⁸³ Louise de Koven Bowen, *Growing Up With a City* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), 61.

⁸⁴ “Bishop Fallows’ Saloon,” *Tribune*, February 26, 1895; “Not for Soft Drinks: Liquor Dealers Criticise Bishop Fallows’ Scheme,” *Tribune*, Dec 31, 1894. The 1895 *Tribune* article discusses the way that the *New York World* had attacked Fallows’ concept “in a somewhat flippant way.”

that calls to mind the “embalmed beef” scandal that captivated and horrified the nation, rumors started circulating around the city in 1910 that saloonkeepers were serving horsemeat to their patrons, or spoiled beef that they seasoned heavily to disguise the rottenness.⁸⁵ It wasn’t until 1917 that reformers got their way and the free saloon lunch was banned altogether.⁸⁶

Before the practice was banned, there were also fears that the men who partook in the free saloon lunch could easily be led into other sordid activities seen as even more disreputable than drinking. Many social reformers believed that the workingmen who lived outside of the traditional family structure and were forced to turn to the saloon for their noonday meals were likelier to have illicit sex with the prostitutes associated so closely with these spaces.⁸⁷ But even more prominently, as I noted in the previous chapter about the waitresses’ strike, these nebulously defined spaces were seen as particularly dangerous for the women who frequented them, either as patrons or as employees. Regardless of a Chicago woman’s social class, race and ethnicity, or marital status, the restaurant was fraught with imagined (and likely in some cases, authentic) peril in an era characterized by much broader anxiety about women entering and navigating the often-chaotic urban public sphere.⁸⁸

These fears are exemplified in Theodore Dreiser’s 1900 novel, *Sister Carrie*. The tale of a young country girl who moves to the big city from Wisconsin in search of excitement and opportunity, Dreiser’s novel is an unsentimental look at life in Chicago (and later New York) at

⁸⁵ Duis, *The Saloon*, 296.

⁸⁶ By 1917, the free saloon lunch was widely considered an “anachronism” anyhow, largely because of the long-time sanitary concerns alongside the high cost of bread during wartime and federal food conservation programs. Duis, *The Saloon*, 296-297; John Dill Robertson, Commissioner of Health, *Report and Handbook of the Department of Health of the City of Chicago for the Years 1911 to 1918 inclusive* (Chicago, 1919), 979.

⁸⁷ Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 206.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Emily Remus, “Tippling Ladies and the Making of Consumer Culture: Gender and Public Space in *Fin-de-Siècle* Chicago,” *Journal of American History* (December 2014): 751-777.

the turn of the twentieth century. On the train to Chicago, the protagonist Carrie Meeber encounters Charles Drouet, a travelling salesman who is beguiled by her good looks and naivete. They exchange contact information, but lose touch soon after she moves in with her older sister and brother-in-law and takes a job running a machine in a shoe factory. It did not take long for Carrie to become beaten down by the struggle to survive in Chicago: her job is physically demanding, her coworkers are coarse and vulgar, and both her workplace and home are squalid and depressing. She dreams of a life of going to the theatre, dining in fine restaurants, and wearing glamorous fashions, but it seems increasingly out of reach, especially after she loses her factory job.

In a fortuitous turn of events, she runs into Drouet once more while she is downtown looking for work, having “even answered for a waitress in a small restaurant where she saw a card in the window.”⁸⁹ The wealthier older man quickly whisks her off to dine with him in a luxurious restaurant on Monroe Street with “an excellent cuisine and substantial service.” At first Carrie is nervous when she looks over the menu and notices the high prices of the various entrees listed: “‘Half-broiled spring chicken—seventy-five. Sirloin steak with mushrooms—one twenty-five.’ She had dimly heard of these things, but it seemed strange to be called to order from the list.”⁹⁰ Drouet orders for both of them—the sirloin, plus stuffed tomatoes, hashed brown potatoes, asparagus, and a pot of coffee—and boasts about the quality of the restaurant and about himself. Overawed, Carrie listens closely while Drouet adeptly navigates his way around the “white napery and silver platters of the table.” She can scarcely fathom it: “what a thing it was to be able to come in here and dine,” she thinks to herself. “Drouet must be fortunate. He rode on

⁸⁹ Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (New York: Doubleday, 1900), 41.

⁹⁰ Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*, 42.

trains, dressed in such nice clothes, was so strong, and ate in these fine places.”⁹¹ Soon after the dinner, he slips Carrie two ten-dollar bills, and convinces her to move in with him and let him take her shopping for a chic new wardrobe.

Carrie’s journey toward upward mobility scandalized readers because she became a kept woman and engaged in illicit affairs. Although she was able to come closer to achieving her proverbial American Dream, it came at a cost. Indeed, Dreiser portrays her as becoming “the victim of the city’s hypnotic influence,” mesmerized by its food, its fashion, and its spectacle.⁹² In his description, “the great [the rich] create an atmosphere which reacts badly on the small”; in other words, these new commercialized leisure spaces were a bad influence on urban dwellers. Comparing these spaces’ allure to trying opium and becoming hooked and falling into depravity, he writes that anyone who traversed “the magnificent residences, the splendid equipages, the gilded shops, restaurants [and] resorts of all kinds” must beware of “the atmosphere of the high and mighty”:

Little use to argue that of such is not the kingdom of greatness, but so long as the world is attracted by this and the human heart views this as the one desirable realm which it must attain, so long, to that heart, will this remain the realm of greatness. So long, also, will the atmosphere of this realm work its desperate results in the soul of a man. It is like a chemical agent. One day of it, like one drop of the other, will so affect and discolor the views, the aims, the desire of the mind, that it will thereafter remain forever dyed.⁹³

Such an outlook affirms the argument Emily Remus makes in her work about the consumer patterns of Chicago’s “monied women” during this time period. As she has observed, cautionary descriptions of urban life and fears about its impact on peoples’ very being can be understood as reactions to “a crucial moment in the making of consumer society—when urban public space and

⁹¹ Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*, 42-43.

⁹² Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*, 57.

⁹³ Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*, 205.

public culture accommodated the female pleasure-seeker.”⁹⁴ New commercial public spaces like the ones Dreiser mentions were “designed to entice the consuming woman with pleasures that intoxicated,” much to the chagrin of temperance crusaders and moralists.⁹⁵ The city’s restaurants, tearooms, cafés, and candy stores became a threat precisely because they posed an overt challenge to Victorian notions of bourgeois female respectability and hinted at a shift towards a world in which the public pursuit of “sensuous pleasure” was no longer the exclusive province of men.⁹⁶

As the area on and around State Street increasingly drew curious Chicagoans who wanted to take part in all of the burgeoning amusements that the city had to offer, the “wonderful sight” of its restaurants, hotels, and businesses lit up in the evenings was tempered by anxiety about the throngs of people “out for pleasure at night.”⁹⁷ There were particular concerns that women (especially those from “respectable” backgrounds) would become so enchanted by Chicago’s nightlife that they could be lured toward its darker side, namely alcohol consumption and prostitution. Samuel Paynter Wilson was one of the many who commented on the troublesome nature of public dining. Though he noted that middle class women did not tend to frequent barrooms, they did dine out at restaurants where they could easily purchase cocktails or wine. In

⁹⁴ Remus, “Tippling Ladies and the Making of Consumer Culture,” 751-753.

⁹⁵ Remus, “Tippling Ladies and the Making of Consumer Culture,” 752.

⁹⁶ Remus, “Tippling Ladies and the Making of Consumer Culture,” 752-753. As Remus notes, before this era of public dining, Chicago’s “monied women” consumed alcohol only in private and often simply for medicinal purposes (it was an ingredient in many popular patent medicines and tonics).

⁹⁷ Samuel Paynter Wilson, *Chicago and its Cesspools of Infamy* (Chicago: 1915), 19-20. Though it is unclear if Wilson considered himself an investigative journalist or if he was backed by a reform organization, the preface of this book reveals he wrote another book about Chicago’s nocturnal perils called *Chicago by Gas Light*, as well as a work of “concise history.” Moreover, Morton Culver Hartzell (president of an organization called the Douglas Neighborhood Club) praised Wilson in the book’s foreword for “the practical and useful service” that he carried out “in the investigation of vice and the bringing of those responsible for it to justice,” which suggests that Wilson may have had some sort of legal or extralegal role in intervention and enforcement.

his outraged words, “it [was] a common sight to see well-dressed women, married and single, rise from a restaurant table under the influence of intoxicating drink.”⁹⁸

A similar gendered moralism extended toward the working-class girls and women employed as restaurant waitresses and cashiers. While some believed that these jobs were a great way for a young woman to meet eligible men and ensnare a husband, others, like Jane Addams and the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago—vehemently disagreed, as did reformers like Rodney (“Gypsy”) Smith, who led a multi-church-backed nighttime march of nearly twenty thousand people chanting hymns and preaching the gospel through the Levee vice district.⁹⁹ Although the British evangelist was not in Chicago for long, his 1909 march “raised the conscience of the city,” and in 1910, the Church Federation of Chicago (a group composed of more than six hundred religious congregations) passed a resolution urging the mayor to appoint a commission dedicated to ferreting out vice.¹⁰⁰ When it was set up, the Vice Commission of Chicago aimed to investigate and prosecute the transactional sexual goings-on they feared was happening not just in segregated vice districts, but also in public spaces like saloons, dance halls, ice cream parlors, and restaurants. Led by members who were appointed by the mayor and city council, one of the Vice Commission’s first activities was to set up a Morals Commission and a Department of Inspection to surveil these venues.¹⁰¹

The four-hundred-page report the Vice Commission submitted to the city in 1911 reflects their determination to push back against Chicago’s “two standards for morality.” As they saw it, “one standard permits and applauds dances by women almost naked in certain public places

⁹⁸ Wilson, *Chicago and its Cesspools of Infamy*, 146.

⁹⁹ “How to Get a Husband: Get a Place as a Cashier in a Restaurant,” *Tribune*, October 25, 1903.

¹⁰⁰ Robert M. Lombardo, *Organized Crime in Chicago: Beyond the Mafia* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 49.

¹⁰¹ For more detail on the Vice Commission’s work, see Lombardo, *Organized Crime in Chicago*, 49-53.

under the guise of art, and condemns dances no worse before audiences from the less prosperous walks of life. The same hypocritical attitude drives the unfortunate and often poverty-stricken prostitute from the street, and at the same time tolerates and often welcomes the silken clad prostitute in the public drinking places of several of the most pretentious hotels and restaurants of the city.”¹⁰² As such, their report is littered with mentions of women like nineteen-year-old Bessie, who participated in what undercover journalist Frances Donovan referred to as “the sex game” practiced by Chicago waitresses wherein they flirted with male customers and made dates with them outside of their workplaces.¹⁰³ Bessie came from Indiana and lived in a rooming house on Michigan Avenue. “Works in a restaurant on 22nd Street,” the report noted tersely. “Is not a regular prostitute, goes with men for presents or money. Is poorly paid at restaurant.”¹⁰⁴ Other women the Commission encountered were even more overtly involved with the sex trade. For example, nineteen-year-old Jennie “works in one of the lunch rooms and ‘solicits at night,’” and twenty-one-year-old Kentucky native Mag “could not make enough money waiting tables to pay expenses.” The latter “met a fellow who took her out, bought her some clothes, gave her money...he left her...she then went ‘on the turf for the money.’”¹⁰⁵

These types of stories were commonplace in the literature printed and disseminated by social reformers who were alarmed by the “physical conditions and moral surroundings” in the city’s nascent pleasure palaces like theatres, amusement parks, lake boats, dance halls, and most of all, cabarets.¹⁰⁶ “Unless they are properly regulated,” declared Louise de Koven Bowen,

¹⁰² In other words, the commission was displeased that spaces frequented by the lower classes were so heavily monitored and penalized while “the gilded palaces of sin patronized by the wealthy” were not. Vice Commission of Chicago, *The Social Evil in Chicago* (Chicago: Gunthorp-Warren Printing Company, 1911), 31.

¹⁰³ Frances Donovan, *The Woman Who Waits* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1920), 211-220.

¹⁰⁴ Vice Commission of Chicago, *The Social Evil in Chicago* (Chicago: Gunthorp-Warren Printing Company, 1911), 95.

¹⁰⁵ Vice Commission of Chicago, *The Social Evil in Chicago*, 191.

¹⁰⁶ Bowen, *The Road to Destruction Made Easy in Chicago*, 1.

“[such places] easily subject young people to the grossest temptations.”¹⁰⁷ Although the city now offered a plethora of options for the discerning folk who flocked to Chicago eager to experience modern adventure and revelry, the boom in these new entertainment venues (it was estimated that by 1916 over half of the city’s saloons were also cabarets) blurred lines that were already murky at best. For organizations like the Juvenile Protective Association (JPA), this was a major cause for concern: after the first investigation of a cabaret in Chicago in 1910, multitudes of young men and women were “started on the road to ruin.”¹⁰⁸ The people who ran these establishments, they alleged, cared only for their profits and were heavily influenced by “liquor interests.” Although they were licensed under city regulations and monitored by police, these businesses were neither “safe” nor “wholesome” in the eyes of reformers.¹⁰⁹

Because cabarets and dance halls were so commonly attached to saloons, it was easy for young (and often underaged) patrons to purchase alcoholic drinks. Here, “innocent dancing and social enjoyment” turned into “drunkenness, vice, and debauchery,” especially since “the only chaperones” inside these spaces were usually “saloonkeepers and prostitutes.”¹¹⁰ Still worse, these spaces were frequented by the sort of people thought to be too respectable to frequent traditional barrooms. Young men took their dates to cabarets later on in the evening, after, say, going to a cinema or theater. Often, these men felt they “[had] not been gallant unless he takes his girl to a cabaret, where if he buys a few drinks they can hear the singing, dance, and ‘get on’ to the newest steps demonstrated by professionals.”¹¹¹ Once inside these spaces, reformers alleged that young people were easy prey. The waiters were “only too ready to give information

¹⁰⁷ Bowen, *The Road to Destruction Made Easy in Chicago*, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Louise de Koven Bowen, *The Public Dance Halls of Chicago* (Chicago: Juvenile Protective Association, 1917), 3.

¹⁰⁹ Bowen, *The Public Dance Halls of Chicago*, 3.

¹¹⁰ Bowen, *The Public Dance Halls of Chicago*, 4.

¹¹¹ Bowen, *The Road to Destruction Made Easy in Chicago*, 12.

regarding the location of disreputable lodging houses,” and the regular male barflies swarmed around unfamiliar female faces, hoping to charm these new patrons and get them drunk. Their female counterparts (“older women, sometimes prostitutes”) apparently did the same thing, turning their attentions toward naïve young “country boys” who were fresh to the city and ready to part with their newly-earned cash. “Such a youth,” Bowen sniffed, “often thinks it ‘smart’ to say that he has ‘seen life’ in such and such a cabaret and likes to tell of how he knows ‘Jessie and Carrie and Minnie and all the girls.’”¹¹²

Worse still was the fate of the young woman who dared to take a job as a cabaret performer. It did not particularly matter whether or not she was a good singer or a proficient dancer: these positions were filled primarily to draw in male patrons who hoped to drink alongside these women and were willing to spend money to do so. According to the JPA, “the girl who is the most valuable is the one who is able to induce the customer to order the largest number of drinks.” Lured into this field by disreputable male agents who nonetheless were licensed by the State of Illinois, these young women were often “unsophisticated girls” who were roundly impressed by the possibility of earning eighteen to seventy-five dollars per week.¹¹³ One of these girls, a college graduate named Mabel Wheeler, soon became disillusioned with her job as a cabaret hostess. Although her agent assured her that he only sent girls to “safe places,” she found herself singing in a smoky, loud cabaret where the proprietor told her she was required to “drink with the patrons and sell them as much liquor as possible.” A non-drinker, she told him that she could not do this, and was instead permitted to have the waiters bring her “crème de menthe in a glass filled with water, with only a drop or two of the liqueur on top to make it

¹¹² Bowen, *The Public Dance Halls of Chicago*, 7; Louise de Koven Bowen, *The Straight Girl on the Crooked Path: A True Story* (Chicago: Juvenile Protective Association, 1916), 14-15.

¹¹³ Bowen, *The Road to Destruction Made Easy in Chicago*, 13.

appear genuine.” Things soon got worse for Mabel though. After three nights at this establishment, she was sent to “one of the vilest cabarets in the city,” where male waiters sexually harassed and assaulted the female entertainers, drinking hard liquor was required, the hours were long, and the dancing and language “indecent beyond words.”¹¹⁴ Ultimately, she met someone and got married, and left the industry behind her.

The cabaret was also a space where moral health intersected with sanitary health. The JPA observed that by midnights inside of Chicago cabarets, “practically all of the boys and many of the girls” showed signs of intoxication. This was in large part due to the lack of access to water: alcoholic beverages were much more readily available. Although a city ordinance required cabaret and dance hall proprietors to provide drinking water for patrons, very few were equipped with water fountains. Worse still, the majority did not keep “sanitary cups” in stock, which meant that in most instances the water had to be “obtained at the bar or taken from a public drinking cup, too filthy to use and only found in the toilet rooms.” These toilet rooms were another cause for concern. For men, privacy was often non-existent, since many of their toilets were “not properly screened from the observation of dancers,” and for both sexes, toilets were kept in a “most abominable condition.” Furthermore, ventilation was poor because many owners believed that the hotter their establishment was, the more drinks patrons would buy. Combined with the smell of sweaty bodies, spilled liquor, and tobacco smoke fumes, the average Chicago cabaret was cramped, uncomfortable, and often hazardous to public health.¹¹⁵

In Bowen’s words, cabarets and dancehalls were “a disgrace to our city and too often feeders for the underworld.”¹¹⁶ And when so strongly associated with the bars, bordellos,

¹¹⁴ Bowen, *The Straight Girl on the Crooked Path*, 4-7.

¹¹⁵ Bowen, *The Public Dance Halls of Chicago*, 4, 7.

¹¹⁶ Bowen, *The Public Dance Halls of Chicago*, 3.

bathhouses, and massage parlors of the much-maligned Levee vice district, calls to remove these kinds of places from the city got louder, especially after the Vice Commission released its explosive report in 1911 that alleged there were at least 1,880 prostitutes in the area and five thousand people earning their living from the sex trade in various capacities. The report's findings and descriptions of the goings-on in the area were so seemingly sordid that the U.S. Postal Service barred it from the mail.¹¹⁷ More importantly, it pushed Mayor Harrison into action. In 1912, city began to close the area's notorious vice resorts, and its "Moral Division" embarked on raids and mass arrests of prostitutes, pimps, bar owners, drug dealers, and gamblers. By 1915, the Levee was officially closed, but Chicago being what it is and what it has long been, this did not mark the end of debauched nightlife in the city, particularly with the election of a new mayor, William "Big Bill" Thompson, who became widely known for his corrupt practices and ties to the city's underworld.¹¹⁸ Instead, prostitution moved from the brothels to cabarets and nightspots, and downtown business owners took advantage of the blurry lines and confusion that surrounded the city's various amusement places to work their way around the more rigid rules that had been set in place.

¹¹⁷ Lombardo, *Organized Crime in Chicago*, 50-51.

¹¹⁸ For example, the Chicago Public Library describes Big Bill as one of "the most unethical mayors in American history." See "Today in Chicago History: William Hale Thompson Passes Away," *Chicago Public Library*, March 19, 2014, <https://chicagopubliclibrary.tumblr.com/post/80090460150/today-in-chicago-history-william-hale-thompson>.

Chapter 4

Bar or Restaurant? The Struggle to Draw and Enforce a Legal Line

“Chicago is becoming more self-respecting. It is laying aside the wild western practices of its youth and is taking itself more seriously.”¹

The suspicion that restaurants were seamy, sordid places is best epitomized by the controversies that surrounded Colosimo’s café on S. Wabash Avenue. Given the establishment’s ties to organized crime and the general debauchery associated with the downtown First Ward, Colosimo’s became the target of scrutiny practically from the moment it opened its doors in 1913, a year after the Levee’s official closure. The famed “spaghetti palace” (and purported launching pad for Al Capone) was owned and operated by notorious gangster and brothel keeper “Big Jim” Colosimo and his first wife, former madam Victoria Moresco. Before opening his namesake restaurant, “Big Jim” operated three Levee brothels and was ensconced in the city’s political firmament, first earning a position as a precinct captain in the Democratic Party by organizing street sweepers into a voting bloc, and ultimately controlling the vote among the First Ward Italians who lived in the area around Polk and Clark Streets.² In spite of Chicago’s best efforts to crack down on what went on in the city’s entertainment venues, his restaurant was soon renowned for its Italian cuisine, live orchestra, and dancing.³ But while Big Jim was a natural restaurateur who served the city’s best “red ink” and “highly seasoned foods” to a “high-class patronage” made up of “men and women of prominence,” Colosimo’s never quite managed to shed its underworld

¹ This quote is from Reverend M.P. Boynton of the Woodlawn Baptist Church. “Boynton Sure ‘Lid’ Was Tight,” *Tribune*, January 2, 1916.

² Robert M. Lombardo, *Organized Crime in Chicago: Beyond the Mafia* (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 52.

³ Vice Kings and Police at Jim Colosimo’s Banquet Board,” *Tribune*, July 24, 1914; “Mayor Closes Freiberg Hall and Colosimo’s,” *Tribune*, August 25, 1914. See also John Drury, *Dining in Chicago* (New York: The John Day Company, 1931), 245; “Five Cabarets Violate Law, Aldermen Hear,” *Tribune*, February 25, 1916.

reputation, or the scrutiny of reform-minded Chicagoans who were hell-bent on shutting it down for good.⁴

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2126-28 Wabash Avenue Telephone Calumet 1127

Figure 5: This 1917 advertisement for Colosimo's restaurant demonstrates how the space served three separate but interconnected functions: eating place, dance hall, and cabaret.

The perception of Colosimo's restaurant as a seedy—if glamorous—space was part of a larger phenomenon. The Vice Commission's scandalous 1911 report marked the beginning of an inauspicious time for downtown businesses. In August 1914 amidst closures of many of the Levee's notorious vice hotspots, Mayor Carter Harrison launched the first of what would be

⁴ Charles Washburn, *Come Into My Parlor: A Biography of the Aristocratic Everleigh Sisters* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1934), 137, 140-141.

several attempts to revoke Colosimo's restaurant license, alleging that it was instead operating as a saloon and had violated a city ordinance to close at one o'clock a.m.⁵ The restaurant remained shuttered for almost a year, but reopened in 1915 under a new mayor—William “Big Bill” Thompson, a well-known friend to the Levee's licit and illicit businesses— and a new proprietor named Paul Bergamini, who pledged to “conduct a high class Italian restaurant, catering to the best trade.”⁶ However, Bergamini's assertion that there would “be no criticism of the place” proved incorrect. Accused once again of serving drinks after hours in 1916, Colosimo's was one of several restaurants and nightclubs raided in April 1917 as part of “a series of Sunday saloon cleanups.” Big Jim, his restaurant's manager, and ten of his waiters were arrested and Chicago Police Department (CPD) officers confiscated a quantity of liquor. Released on bond soon after his arrest, Colosimo declared that the restaurant had not been selling liquor to patrons after hours, and that police had seized alcohol from the storeroom rather than from the service area.⁷ Regardless, the CPD persisted, with Chief Herman Schuettler recommending in autumn 1917 that Mayor Thompson close it down permanently, alleging that Colosimo's had a long history of selling liquor on Sunday, without a license, between the forbidden hours of 1:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m., and to soldiers in uniform. Moreover, Schuettler asserted, waiters at Colosimo's brought women to tables to drink with men.⁸

As the previous chapter suggests, the questions that had surrounded Colosimo's ever since it opened in 1913—what constitutes a restaurant and what constitutes a nightclub or bar—had

⁵ Mayor Closes Freiberg Hall and Colosimo's,” *Tribune*, August 25, 1914.

⁶ Historians rank Big Bill Thompson among the nation's all-time most unethical mayors, mainly for his ties to organized crime and ultimately an open alliance with Al Capone. See Mark Grossman, *Political Corruption in America: An Encyclopedia of Scandals, Power, and Greed* (New York: Grey House Publishing, 2008), 329. See also “Colosimo's Gets License Back,” *Tribune*, January 28, 1915.

⁷ “Sixty Arrested as Lid Tilters in Sunday Raids,” *Tribune*, April 30, 1917.

⁸ “Chief Dooms Freiberg's and Jim Colosimo's,” *Tribune*, September 29, 1917; “Mass of Charges Hits Freiberg's and Colosimo's,” *Tribune*, October 6, 1917.

vexed Chicagoans ever since the city's public dining culture exploded in popularity at the turn of the twentieth century. But with the significant degree of overlap between the restaurant, the saloon, and the dancehall/cabaret, it became nearly impossible for city bureaucracy to govern these spaces because defining them in precise legal terms proved to be largely unattainable. Facing these uncertainties, lawmakers and citizens alike grappled with questions about how the city's restaurants should be defined, inspected, and regulated, and by whom. As saloons fell increasingly into disrepute and dining out and other leisure activities became more popular, governmental authorities at the state and local levels created and imposed a system to regulate Chicago's restaurants. By identifying a shift over time from a system that was generally ill-defined to one that tried—and largely failed—to encompass all of the subtleties and variations within the city's entertainment venues, the regulatory creation of the restaurant in Chicago is connected to a larger story about Progressive reform movements and the debate over the role of government in directing people's everyday lives and activities.

The struggle for a more firmly articulated system of restaurant regulation in Chicago reflects William Novak's argument that nineteenth century American policymaking was shaped by a "vision of a well-regulated society" wherein a "plethora of bylaws, ordinances, statutes, and common law restrictions" governed everyday life.⁹ But as the interactions on restaurants between different agencies and branches of government as well as varied extralegal actors reveals, a well-regulated society was not easy to achieve, especially given the unique and often contentious relationship that existed between city and the state of Illinois. Shaped by gendered, classed, and

⁹ William Novak, *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 1. See also William Novak, "The Myth of the 'Weak' American State," *American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (June 2008): 752-772. As Novak points out, governmental regulatory practice is largely "invisible in 'traditional' nineteenth century American historiography in part because American state power is 'so widely distributed among an exceedingly complex welter of institutions, jurisdictions, branches, offices, programs, rules, customs, laws, and regulations.'" Novak, *The People's Welfare*, 2; Novak, "The Myth of the 'Weak' American State," 765.

racialized anxieties about public dining, the system of inspection and licensure to oversee restaurants, as well as the series of municipal closing hours for these spaces, reflects the “two faces of urban moral reform” that predominated in this period: coercive policy intended to legislate behavior, and positive environmental reforms aimed to “gently” foster conditions that would allow top-down visions of order and harmony to flourish.¹⁰ Put differently, these strategies were a way for the state to exert control over restaurants in the interest of safeguarding public and moral health, as well as help develop the “right” kinds of spaces for Chicagoans to take their meals. However, this system was unwieldy, confusing, and porous. As the case involving Colosimo’s restaurant ultimately demonstrates, it was also indicative of a crucial limitation on the city’s ability to make and enforce its own legislation.

By far Illinois’s largest city, much of Chicago’s early political history was shaped by questions of whether or not the city had sufficient legal power to determine its own structure of government and municipal policies. As a former city alderman wrote in 1929, the longtime “rivalry between city and state” in Chicago and Illinois began “without specific cause except an ill-defined fear of Chicago domination.”¹¹ Nonetheless, this amorphous fear became institutionalized in 1870 when Illinois passed a constitution with rigid legislation regarding city governance that was tightened even further two years later with the Cities and Villages Act. This legislation prompted many Chicagoans to argue that their city was unfairly constrained, since state laws often lagged behind urban needs. Decisions made at Springfield frequently countered Chicago’s interests, with seemingly little recourse despite the 1904 constitutional amendment

¹⁰ Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 175, 190, 280. Though markedly distinct from one another, these two reformist strategies “shared certain fundamental moral-control purposes: the elevation of character, the inculcation of a ‘higher’ standard of individual behavior, the placing of social duty above private desire, and the re-creation of the urban masses in the reformers’ own image.”

¹¹ Charles Edward Merriam, *Chicago: A More Intimate View of Urban Politics* (New York: MacMillan, 1929), 16.

designed to give Chicago “a complete system of local municipal government.”¹² Further attempts at securing a home rule provision from the state failed, and by the early 1930s questions raged about the city’s ability to secede from Illinois.¹³ With these debates taking shape and the shadow of Prohibition looming, this chapter considers Chicago’s restaurants in this period as both sites of statebuilding and political disorder. Although regulatory legislation helped create the modern restaurant we still know today, in Chicago it was also a fraught, piecemeal system that is tied to the city’s long-standing battle with Illinois for autonomy and control.

Although Chicago’s first eating-houses and taverns appeared in the 1830s when it was a small frontier town, it took several decades for local bureaucrats to take any real notice of them. Instead, they focused on other seemingly more pressing aspects of public health. For example, in 1833 (four years before it was incorporated as a city), Chicago’s authorities enacted its first sanitary regulation when town trustees declared it to be unlawful to ““throw or put into the Chicago River, within limits of the town, any carcass of any dead animal or animals, under a penalty of three dollars for each offence.””¹⁴ One year later, the town’s first board of health was established with a mandate to examine the town’s streets, alleys, and buildings “to remove all of the predisposing causes of disease, [and] abate all nuisances of whatsoever kind,” but it seems soon after its founding, the seven-person board “existed only in name.”¹⁵ There are no records of its meetings or actions, which prompted city health officials to decide in 1871 that “if anything

¹² Albert Lepawsky, *Home Rule for Metropolitan Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), xviii.

¹³ See Lepawsky, *Home Rule for Metropolitan Chicago*; Maureen Flanagan, *Charter Reform in Chicago* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987).

¹⁴ 1833 ordinance quoted in *Report of the Board of Health of the City of Chicago for 1867, 1868, and 1869; and a Sanitary History of Chicago from 1833 to 1870* (Chicago: Lakeside Publishing and Printing Company, 1871), 10. As the authors of the report noted, “even at that early date, our sluggish stream demanded legislation to prevent it from becoming a dangerous public nuisance.”

¹⁵ *Report of the Board of Health of the City of Chicago for 1867, 1868, and 1869; and a Sanitary History of Chicago from 1833 to 1870*, 12-13.

worth preserving was done [during this period], it would have been recorded.”¹⁶ Perhaps, they speculated, there was “no unusual sickness” or epidemics for early officials to have worried about, other than “the ordinary diseases” that regularly befell Americans.

To enforce the Board of Health’s dictates as the city grew—and health scares intensified—the state legislature passed an act in 1861 to establish a Police Board for Chicago, which would, “in addition to its regular duties” safeguard public health, remove nuisances, and “at all times cause the ordinances of the city to be enforced.”¹⁷ Its duties were refined further in 1867 when the Board of Health arranged to hire a team of sanitary inspectors, who would, among their many duties, be responsible for paying “particular attention to the character of meats and other articles of food offered for sale in their respective districts.”¹⁸ Though by the 1870s, there were a number of regulations—and a special police force—set out to deal with nuisance complaints involving distilleries, rendering plants, and slaughterhouses, and eventually meat markets and groceries, there was still no indication that restaurants had appeared on the city’s bureaucratic radar.

Ordinances about food safety were vague and did not reference restaurants specifically even by 1881, when Chicago’s commissioner of health had the power to appoint (with the mayor’s consent) three medical sanitary inspectors, five meat inspectors, and twenty-five sanitary policemen, who were given “full police powers” as set out by laws of the city.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Report of the Board of Health of the City of Chicago for 1867, 1868, and 1869; and a Sanitary History of Chicago from 1833 to 1870*, 13

¹⁷ *Report of the Board of Health of the City of Chicago for 1867, 1868, and 1869; and a Sanitary History of Chicago from 1833 to 1870*, 57-58. Though the Board of Police controlled and managed “sanitary affairs” in the city, records show that it performed only two official acts during its first year: prosecution of an unnamed doctor for violating health ordinances by dumping a human body in Lake Michigan, and auditing a bill for the removal of dead animals. This board of commissioners controlled the Chicago police until 1876.

¹⁸ *Report of the Board of Health of the City of Chicago for 1867, 1868, and 1869; and a Sanitary History of Chicago from 1833 to 1870*, 125.

¹⁹ *Chicago Municipal Code*, 1881, sec. 684, 196-197. Rather than reference restaurants specifically, ordinances about what types of spaces would be inspected by these officials used language such “any room, stall, or place

Although city guidelines for licensing the places where liquor was sold and served dated back to 1839, there were no specific policies for licensing restaurants until 1883, and it took until the turn of the twentieth century for precise rules for restaurant health inspections to be put in place. After years of ambiguity, systematic restaurant inspection began in 1906 when the restaurant business was “put under sanitary supervision” by city authorities for “the first time in the history of the city” under the direction of a Chief Food Inspector.²⁰ Over 1,500 restaurants were inspected, and according to city sanitary inspector Charles Ball, health department personnel found a number of disturbing things. “Our inspectors found rotten meat in the ice boxes, spoiled canned goods in the store rooms, rat runs in the vegetable bins and cockroaches everywhere,” he said. Soon after looking at the quality of the food present in these restaurants, he added, inspectors started focusing on the spaces themselves: were they adequately ventilated? Were kitchen and storeroom temperatures being kept at an adequate temperature? Was garbage being disposed of properly and kept away from fresh food? Were bathrooms and staff locker rooms located far away enough from food preparation areas?²¹

Following these initial inspections, forty restaurants were refused licenses and closed up, and one hundred and twenty-nine restaurant owners were punished for their unhygienic premises and/or methods of food preparation, and for “having unfit food in their possession.”²² According to Chicago’s Department of Health saw this initiative as a success. According to the city’s Commissioner of Health, Dr. Charles Whalen, “all these efforts to improve the food supply and its handling” made it possible that the average Chicagoan “was never before so wholesomely and

where any meat, fish, or vegetables designed or held for human food shall be stored or kept, or shall be held and offered for sale” (sec. 1405, p. 341).

²⁰ Dr. Chas. J. Whalen, Commissioner of Health, *Annual Report of the Department of Health of the City of Chicago for the Year 1906* (Chicago: 1907), xi.

²¹ Charles B. Ball, “Sanitation of Bakeries and Restaurant Kitchens,” *Journal of the American Public Health Association* 1, no. 2 (February 1911): 106-107.

²² Whalen, *Annual Report of the Department of Health of the City of Chicago for the Year 1906*, xi.

nutritiously fed, nor in such a cleanly fashion.”²³ Moreover, he congratulated himself on taking action and using the department’s existing resources and authority, rather than waiting “for any Pure Food Law” or enforcement at the federal or state levels to come about.²⁴ This was a stark difference from his feelings just a year prior when he remarked that although everyone had to “eat a peck of dirt” at some point, those who had to “depend upon public eating-houses” would have to eat “much more than the allotted peck...I doubt very much if we could bring our appetites to meet the occasion if we could but inspect the places where our food was prepared.”²⁵ As well, sanitary inspector Charles Ball expressed confidence that both law and public opinion were on the city’s side. “Judges and juries affected by the current wave of interest in public health will prove sympathetic with the reform,” he said before adding that newspapers (“quick to note the public pulse”) would respond “with hearty endorsement of the movement.”²⁶

However, not everyone was convinced by the city’s initiative (or ability) to inspect and license its restaurants. An editorial in the *Tribune* shortly after the regulations were passed noted that while the policies were admirable, “there is always the danger of whitewashing on one hand and persecution on the other.” As the writer asked, how could the city ensure the inspectors they hired would take their jobs seriously, and be incorruptible as well as thorough? “The inspectors themselves are in a responsible position. They may make the campaign one of graft; or they may prove of real service to the community,” the editorial concluded uncertainly.²⁷ As well, many restaurant owners had been wary about government intervention into their businesses ever since 1883 when City Council passed an ordinance that would require restaurant owners to pay a

²³ Whalen, *Annual Report of the Department of Health of the City of Chicago for the Year 1906*, xi.

²⁴ Whalen, *Annual Report of the Department of Health of the City of Chicago for the Year 1906* xi.

²⁵ Dr. Chas. J. Whalen, Commissioner of Health, *Biennial Report of the Department of Health of the City of Chicago for the Years 1904-1905* (Chicago: Cameron, Amberg & Co, 1906), xxi.

²⁶ Charles B. Ball, “Sanitation of Bakeries and Restaurant Kitchens,” *Journal of the American Public Health Association* 1, no. 2 (February 1911): 108.

²⁷ “The Inspection of Restaurants,” *Tribune*, July 30, 1906.

twenty-five-dollar license fee.²⁸ For them, this was one more bureaucratic hurdle they'd have to jump through to operate their establishments, often at great personal expense. As one unnamed restaurant owner remarked to a *Tribune* reporter at the time:

I can afford to pay \$15 well enough, but it is most unjust that I should have to do so. Why? If I'm to be taxed \$25 those big down-town people who are making fortunes in the restaurant business should be taxed from \$100 to \$1000 as their fair proportion; and those others who are worse off than myself—and there are plenty of them—should pay only \$5 or \$10, and even that would be a heavy burden to them. The effect of this new law will be to prevent the starting of new restaurants of this class, for not one in twenty of those who begin in this way would be able to pay \$25.

In this businessman's eyes, it would be a shame to “[close] out these cheap places” which were a “blessing to the city” because they fed nutritious “square meals” to the poor. Instead, he wondered, why wouldn't the city put a heavier tax on the saloons and taverns that brought such “disgrace” to Chicago?²⁹

This particular restaurant owner's calls went unheeded, however, as restaurant licensing became further enmeshed with restaurant inspection. By 1911 the Chicago Municipal Code outlined a series of detailed ordinances about the licensing requirements needed to operate a restaurant in the city. Prospective restaurant owners would first have to write the commissioner of health and make their case in terms of both morality and sanitation. The commissioner would then submit applications to the mayor for review, and if the mayor was “satisfied that the persons...are of good character and reputation...and that the premises where it is proposed to keep said restaurant are proper and suitable for the purpose from a hygienic and sanitary standpoint,” then the applicant(s) would be issued a license. They then had to pay the city of Chicago a “penal sum of five hundred dollars, with surety to be approved by the mayor,

²⁸ “Cheap Restaurants: They Object to Paying a License,” *Tribune*, March 1, 1883. This article also noted that many of the restaurant owners that the reporter spoke to had no idea that this ordinance had even been passed.

²⁹ “Cheap Restaurants: They Object to Paying a License,” *Tribune*, March 1, 1883.

conditioned that the licensed person, firm, or corporation shall faithfully observe and obey all the laws of the state of Illinois...and all ordinances of the city of Chicago now in force or which may hereafter be adopted relative to the keeping of restaurants.”³⁰ For as long as they stayed in business, licensed restaurant owners were required to pay the city fifteen dollars per year to maintain this status. They also had to ensure their license was posted in “a conspicuous place within the premises,” which in turn had to be kept “clean and in a proper hygienic and sanitary condition.”³¹ Furthermore, anyone who opened a restaurant without first obtaining a license could be fined between twenty-five and two hundred dollars, “and a further sum of twenty-five dollars for each and every day” that they might keep an unlicensed space open after the initial offense. Finally, the city had the power to revoke these licenses if they discovered upon inspection that these ordinances were being violated.

The fact that current or prospective restaurant owners had to plead their case to the city and attest to their moral standards alongside their commitment to public health underscores the deeply entrenched link between hygiene and virtue discussed in the previous chapter. In other words, one’s moral cleanliness was tied to one’s physical cleanliness, and the ambiguities in the policies surrounding the serving of alcohol at restaurants reflected this. As early as 1873, there was a city ordinance on the books that dictated that all saloons and bar rooms must close between the hours of midnight and five a.m. For one keeper of a combination saloon/restaurant, this ordinance proved to be problematic. Convicted by the Criminal Court of Cook County for violating it by serving food (but not liquor) to his patrons after midnight, John Baldwin appealed to the Supreme Court of Illinois in the fall of 1873. As he wondered, what was so wrong about continuing to offer meals in the same space as he poured drinks, so long as the alcohol service

³⁰ *The Chicago Code of 1911* (Chicago: Callaghan & Company, 1911), secs. 1312, 1313, 468.

³¹ *The Chicago Code of 1911* (Chicago: Callaghan & Company, 1911), secs. 1314, 1315, 1316, 487.

was shut down for the night? In Baldwin's mind, the curtained partition he installed to separate the restaurant and saloon sections of his establishment between midnight and five in the morning was more than good enough to remain in compliance with the law, and the city was overreaching by saying that it was not. The state Supreme Court disagreed with him, however, and found that Baldwin and his curtain were in violation of the municipal ordinance. As the court noted, "the mere drawing of a curtain" around the bar area was "too transparent a subterfuge to answer the requirement of the ordinance." In their minds, the ordinance was not just meant to stop people from late-night drinking: it was also a way "to compel those who are inclined to collect and tarry at such places, to then depart."³² Clearly, the party line among Illinois jurists and Chicago bureaucrats was that whether or not there was food service on offer, hanging around in barrooms until all hours of the night was a largely unsavory activity.

The court also noted that liquor-selling was incidental to Baldwin's business, and as such, their decision would more than likely have an impact on other businesses that sold liquor as a sideline but not as the main draw (such as restaurants, hotels, and drug stores). In the jurists' minds, the outcome for these hypothetical businesses did not have to look like Baldwin's, however. When alcoholic beverages were served in one room and "other business" was conducted in another separate room, shutting down the bar at midnight "can be effectually done without interfering in the slightest degree with their other business."³³ Famous last words, as the cliché goes. Although the midnight closing law fell out of favor somewhat in the years after Baldwin's case, it was never officially repealed, and in 1901 Chicago's crackdown on saloons and restaurants reappeared with a vengeance. The *Tribune* reported that the law was "revived" in

³² *John G. Baldwin v. City of Chicago*, 68 Ill. App 418 (September 1873).

³³ *John G. Baldwin v. City of Chicago*, 68 Ill. App 418 (September 1873).

early January after an order from City Hall demanded that owners of downtown saloons “close at midnight or lose your license.”³⁴

According to this order, restaurants would also be scrutinized and punished if they sold alcoholic beverages after midnight. As the *Tribune* noted, the city made sure that it was clear that their measure was aimed at social classes: “not a bottle should be opened [after hours] for patron of high degree or low.” Mayor Carter Harrison Jr. also wanted to expand his own powers on this issue, advocating for a revised closing ordinance that would give him additional authority to revoke restaurant and saloon licenses from negligent proprietors. Relatedly, he wanted to expand the system of restaurant and saloon regulation to protect middle and upper-class women by making it unlawful for restaurants to maintain private dining rooms. In his words, “there is more damage done by the wine rooms and private dining rooms of the restaurants than there is by the dives. The restaurants are open to the best class of women, and none but a woman who had lost self-respect would enter a basement saloon. For that reason, the wine room adjunct to the high-class restaurant is the more dangerous.”³⁵

Harrison’s paternalism on this issue also manifested itself in discussions concerning restaurants operated by marginalized minority communities, notably the Chinese, whose restaurants largely replaced the wine rooms that he abolished before leaving office in 1905.³⁶ Often accused of serving liquor in their restaurants without “[paying] the city for the privilege” of doing so, Chinese restaurateurs allegedly manipulated the municipal rules by transporting alcohol to second-floor dining rooms from first-floor barrooms via dumbwaiter. Doing so in such a fashion, the *Tribune* noted, allowed these proprietors to get away with bending the rules by not

³⁴ “Restaurants in Order to Close,” *Tribune*, January 3, 1901.

³⁵ “Restaurants in Order to Close,” *Tribune*, January 3, 1901.

³⁶ “Ordered to Fight Vice: Patrolmen Warned to Cooperate with the Chief,” *Tribune*, October 1, 1905.

paying licensing fees and claiming their liquor was sold by the bars. “This is an infringement on the 1 o’clock closing ordinance, which may be observed any evening in almost any of the ‘chop suey’ houses,” the paper sniffed. “Liquor is sold even in the downtown places until early hours of the morning.”³⁷ Because of a number of complaints from (presumably white) “residents and parents of young persons” who frequented chop suey houses, Chinese restaurants were put under investigation in 1905 by detectives from the Chicago Police Department as well as the state attorney’s office, with the hopes of shutting them down.³⁸

Their efforts were unsuccessful, and years later it was still commonplace to read newspaper stories about investigations and crackdowns on Chinese restaurants conducted by both city and extralegal actors. In 1914, for example, the Englewood Law and Order League visited twenty-six chop suey restaurants and submitted their findings to Mayor Harrison. According to the League’s report, “nearly all” of these establishments were violating laws “in one way or another,” and they believed it was their organization’s duty to stop “the ruination of young men and the downfall of many innocent girls who seek chop suey restaurants as places of amusement rather than as dining rooms.” These restaurants, their report alleged, attracted a wild late-night clientele who came in search of alcoholic drinks and the opportunity to carouse in their private rooms, stalls, and booths. At Hing Sing Lo on the 6000 block of 63rd Street, for example, each table offered a printed wine and cocktail list from the saloon that existed below it. “The place fairly reeked with the odor of beer and liquors: more like a saloon than a restaurant,” the League’s report noted. “Waiter said big business is done late in the evening.”³⁹ In addition to alcohol sold long after one a.m., Chinese restaurants were also apparently often connected to

³⁷ “Gives New Life to Whisky Row,” *Tribune*, September 10, 1905.

³⁸ “Ordered to Fight Vice: Patrolmen Warned to Cooperate with the Chief,” *Tribune*, October 1, 1905.

³⁹ Girls Drink Beer at all Hours in Chop Suey Houses,” *Tribune*, May 16, 1914.

entrances for dance halls, saloons, and hotels. “In some places,” the League’s report alleged, “prostitutes sat at tables ostensibly as patrons, but in reality they were ‘sitting for company.’”⁴⁰

Ultimately, reform organizations like the Englewood Law and Order League got their way, and in 1914, Chicago’s Law Department enacted a sweeping order banning restaurateurs from serving alcoholic beverages that were purchased in saloons located on the floor below them. Although this measure was directed at restaurateurs of all races and ethnicities, it had a particularly strong impact on Chinese restaurateurs, who had been targeted by CPD chief James Gleason in a campaign against them.⁴¹ All of the chop suey restaurants who offered their patrons illicit alcoholic drinks now had two choices: stop selling liquor altogether, or apply for a dram shop license of their own that would permit the sale of alcohol only within connected quarters that were located on the same floor.⁴² It is not a coincidence that Chinese restaurants were also some of the most maligned in terms of public health. In 1914, Illinois’s state food commissioner singled out inexpensive Chinese restaurants specifically as being the dirtiest after a three-week campaign that more than two hundred Chicago restaurants inspected. As well, he noted they were easily corruptible, with one owner “[slipping] a roll of bills into one of the inspectors’ pockets.”⁴³ In a way that perfectly underlines the relationship between moral and physical cleanliness, a 1910 *Tribune* report observed that many of the city’s chop suey establishments regularly violated “the laws of morality and health, police regulations, and practically all the other protective measures.”⁴⁴ Using language lifted straight from sanitary reform campaigns, the paper described the joint effort between Chicago’s police chief and health commissioner to

⁴⁰ Girls Drink Beer at all Hours in Chop Suey Houses,” *Tribune*, May 16, 1914.

⁴¹ Gleason Limits Saloon Service, *Tribune*, June 6, 1914.

⁴² Gleason Limits Saloon Service, *Tribune*, June 6, 1914.

⁴³ Back Up Boys; Hands Off Food!” *Tribune*, July 2, 1914.

⁴⁴ Chinese Mix Sin with Chop Suey,” *Tribune*, March 27, 1910.

regulate these spaces as an attempt “to check the infection.” In addition to the expected tales of illegal liquor served after hours, this report also described a chop suey restaurant that was “covered with filth and vermin,” and had a kitchen “littered with barrels and cans containing the entrails and heads of chickens, decayed vegetables, and other refuse.”⁴⁵

Beyond the racism and xenophobia that shaped these discourses about Chinese restaurants in Chicago and the United States more broadly, these newspaper accounts reflect the doubts some city residents had in the ability of restaurant inspectors to safeguard public health. In spite of the municipal rules that were introduced in 1906, many remained unconvinced as time went on. Community organizer and home economics instructor Evangeline Downey wrote in 1913 that the city’s inspection and enforcement system employed sixty-nine restaurant inspectors for Chicago’s population of 2.1 million people. In her estimation, enforcement of the municipal rules was “very inadequate” in spite of the extralegal efforts made by volunteer groups like the Chicago Clean Food Club to support the government’s work.⁴⁶ Moreover, labor union activist Pasquale Russo described the Chicago Department of Health’s efforts to regulate sanitary conditions in hotel and restaurant kitchens as “a pitiful farce—a huge joke.”⁴⁷

The Illinois State Food Commission (ISFC) also failed to share the city health department’s 1906 optimism about the system’s efficacy, especially as several years passed following its introduction. As ISFC analyst T.J. Bryan wrote in his 1910 report to the state food commissioner, some of Illinois’s smaller food producing establishments were “conducted in a most insanitary (sic) manner, [with] refuse and decayed vegetable matter being allowed to accumulate in the places where food for consumption is prepared; floors in many cases showing

⁴⁵ Chinese Mix Sin with Chop Suey,” *Tribune*, March 27, 1910.

⁴⁶ Evangeline Downey, “Sanitary Control of Bakeries, Markets, Restaurants, and Groceries” (master’s thesis, University of Chicago, 1913), 40, 46, 43.

⁴⁷ Pasquale Russo, *Twelve O’Clock Lunch* (Chicago: Pasquale Russo, 1923), 13.

an accumulation of filth that has not been removed in months...without a proper and adequate sanitary law, the Food Commission cannot hope to deal properly with such cases.”⁴⁸ The Illinois legislature evidently agreed with Bryan, since a revised and strengthened state food law went into effect on July 1, 1911. Of all the establishments affected by this new legislation, the State Food Commissioner’s office felt that “special attention ought to be paid to bakeries, meat markets, kitchens of hotels and restaurants, and small ice cream factories, where in a good many instances we have found the sanitary conditions very unsatisfactory.”⁴⁹

After this legislation had been in place for about a year, a number of Illinois’s food inspectors offered their perspectives on how the various food-related businesses in Chicago and Illinois (including restaurants) had reacted to it. According to the accounts submitted by a variety of the inspectors working in Chicago and around the state, many merchants and business owners at first greeted the legislation with doubt and suspicion. In the words of food inspector Paul Polzin, some initially “could not understand what right we had to dictate to them on how to keep their places in regard to sanitary conditions, but after we explained matters to them and gave them a copy of the State Sanitary Laws they began to realize and promised to clean up and do better in the future”⁵⁰ Other inspectors were disgusted by the conditions they found. According to William Durant, Chicago’s restaurants were much dirtier and more unhygienic than other establishments that dealt with food: “I found a great many filthy bakeries, groceries and restaurants in Chicago, and [in] many places where food is prepared, stored and manufactured, the sanitary conditions were found to be very bad”⁵¹ Another remarked that many restaurants

⁴⁸ Eleventh Annual Report of the State Food Commissioner of Illinois for Year 1910 (Springfield, IL.: Illinois State Journal Co., State Printers, 1911), 66.

⁴⁹ Thirteenth Annual Report of the State Food Commissioner of Illinois for Year 1912 (Springfield, IL.: Illinois State Journal Co., State Printers, 1913), 315-316.

⁵⁰ Thirteenth Annual Report of the State Food Commissioner of Illinois for Year 1912, 311.

⁵¹ Thirteenth Annual Report of the State Food Commissioner of Illinois for Year 1912, 320.

“were very clean in the front part, but were filthy in the kitchen or basement, and in a few places we have found toilets in the same room where food was prepared”⁵² In spite of these bleak findings, however, restaurant inspectors seemed hopeful that things would change for the better. For instance, one talked about some of the successes he had seen as a result of his work—he mentioned lunch rooms and restaurants that moved their kitchens from dark basements to ground floors, and also about stoves that had been fitted with hoods to protect customers’ food from contamination with dirt.⁵³

These continuing uncertainties about the efficacy of sanitary inspection were coupled with another ongoing issue: the enduring legal and cultural debates over closing laws and the difference between a saloon and a restaurant. In a 1906 case, the Criminal Court of Cook County found saloonkeeper Patrick O’Hare guilty of violating the dram-shop ordinance for keeping a restaurant on the second floor, separate from his saloon. As the detectives who had posed as patrons observed, drinks from O’Hare’s saloon were given to clients of the restaurant, regardless of whether or not they ordered food. He was fined ten dollars for violating the municipal ordinance and turned to the Illinois Supreme Court to appeal the verdict, to no avail. Like the earlier case from 1873, the Supreme Court ruled against O’Hare and affirmed the Cook County Court’s initial judgement.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, in a 1911 trial of five CPD officers against the civil service commission following an investigation into police-protected vice, one officer’s attorney tried to downplay his client’s transgressions by claiming that the South Side nightspots he visited were merely respectable restaurants where minimal drinking took place. As lawyer George Miller claimed in court, Maxim’s—the notorious Wabash Avenue dance hall known as

⁵² Thirteenth Annual Report of the State Food Commissioner of Illinois for Year 1912, 325.

⁵³ Thirteenth Annual Report of the State Food Commissioner of Illinois for Year 1912, 322.

⁵⁴ Like the earlier case from 1873, the Supreme Court ruled against O’Hare and affirmed the Cook County Court’s judgement. *Patrick J. O’Hare v. City of Chicago*, 125 Ill., App. 73 (March 6, 1906).

“the home of the [degenerate] grizzly bear dance”—was “just an old-fashioned German restaurant, where people go to eat and drink a glass of beer or liquor with their food.”⁵⁵ To emphasize his point, Miller then pulled out a menu card from the establishment to show the courtroom that it was “an eating house as well as a drinking place,” much to the annoyance of the civil service commission inspectors present, who countered that they had never seen anyone having a meal there.⁵⁶

It was especially hard for city officials to enforce closing laws when influential members of the political class were themselves deeply enmeshed in the restaurant and bar industry. For example, one of the longtime “Lords of the Levee,” First Ward alderman Michael “Hinky Dink” Kenna, owned the Workingman’s Exchange saloon on Clark Street, located on the ground floor below a Chinese restaurant. Elected to City Council in 1897, he and fellow First Ward alderman “Bathhouse John” Coughlin (who had entered office in 1892) spent around fifty years altogether controlling an area of Chicago that encompassed everything from the Loop’s glamorous hotels, theatres, and restaurants to 29th Street, home to all the debauched Levee brothels, gambling dens, and nightspots.⁵⁷ Their ward has been described by historians as “both the wealthiest and most depraved sections of Chicago,” and the two took full advantage of this, taking in a portion of “every dollar generated in the red-light district.” They also benefited enormously from the

⁵⁵ “Calls Freiburg’s ‘Harmless Café’: Police Attorney Tries to Prove Maxim’s Only a Respectable Restaurant,” *Tribune*, December 30, 1911. According to newspaper accounts from the period, the grizzly bear dance was considered by some to be “sensuous” and “degenerate”; “a favorite in the underworld.” See “‘Grizzly Bear’ and ‘Turkey Trot’ Are Doomed as Degenerate Dances, But the ‘Boston’ Will Live, Says Terpsichorean Expert,” *The Pittsburg Press*, January 11, 1912.

⁵⁶ “Calls Freiburg’s ‘Harmless Café’: Police Attorney Tries to Prove Maxim’s Only a Respectable Restaurant,” *Tribune*, December 30, 1911.

⁵⁷ Kenna served as a First Ward alderman from 1897 to 1923, and again from 1939 to 1943. Coughlin was in office as alderman in the same ward from 1892 to 1938.

political connections they'd built up over their many years in office; Coughlin and Kenna counted figures like Mayor Carter Harrison Jr. as personal friends and professional allies.⁵⁸

In addition to Kenna's staunch opposition to anti-alcohol reformers' attempts to ban the free saloon lunch, he stirred their ire by hosting (along with Coughlin) a decadent annual party called the First Ward Ball. Clergymen described this event as "a Saturnalian orgy," a "vile, dissolute affair," a "bawdy Dionysian festival," and a "black stain on the name of Chicago."⁵⁹ One of its biggest detractors was Arthur Burrage Farwell, a onetime shoe salesman who started the Hyde Park Protective Association in an attempt to keep the neighborhood near the 1893 World's Fair dry before he became president of the Chicago Law and Order League in 1904.⁶⁰ After attending the First Ward Ball in 1907 and seeing its wantonness firsthand, a disgusted Farwell paid a visit to then-Mayor Fred Busse to demand he refuse Kenna and Coughlin a liquor license for the 1908 version of their event. Given the First Ward's voting power and Busse's own fondness for alcohol-fueled debauchery, Farwell's request was denied.⁶¹

Another notable example of the blurred boundaries between city politics and the saloon/restaurant trade is the case involving Second Ward alderman Albert Tearney. Described by the *Tribune* as "a most persistent violator of the laws made by the council of which he is a member," Tearney was also the proprietor of a "saloon and café" called the Auto Inn at Calumet Avenue and Thirty-Fifth Street.⁶² In December of 1912, the newspaper ran a long investigative

⁵⁸ Karen Abbott, *Sin and the Second City: Madams, Ministers, Playboys, and the Battle for America's Soul*, (New York: Random House, 2007), 81.

⁵⁹ Karen Abbott, *Sin and the Second City: Madams, Ministers, Playboys, and the Battle for America's Soul*, (New York: Random House, 2007), 81, 192.

⁶⁰ Thekla Ellen Joiner, *Sin in the City: Chicago and Revivalism 1880-1920* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 129. Joiner describes the Chicago Law and Order League as a "watchdog organization that dedicated its reform efforts toward ending the reign" of Hinky Dink and Bathhouse John.

⁶¹ Abbott, *Sin and the Second City*, 193-195.

⁶² "Ald. Tearney Runs Lawless Saloon; Depends on 'Pull,'" *Tribune*, December 30, 1912. Tearney's obituary in 1934 describes him "King of the Night Clubs. And his rule, through political pull, was regal, utterly disregarding

report to “expose” the café for its myriad violations of the city’s saloon laws, particularly the closing ordinance. “This has been going on ever since Tearney was elected one of the council representatives of the old Third ward,” the paper alleged. “Since that time, he has boasted of his influence with the city administration and has said he did not think much of his aldermanic position, except as it aided him in the saloon business.” Moreover, the reporter noted, Tearney had faced no legal consequences despite the “general knowledge that his café was ‘running wide open.’”⁶³ Just a day after the report appeared in print, however, things shifted. After leading a gang of twenty-five men to savagely beat a *Tribune* photographer, the alderman was arrested for assault as well as for keeping his establishment open after hours and serving alcohol while doing so.⁶⁴ The reporter covering this story quoted a CPD captain named Max Nootbaar, who said that after receiving one hundred and thirty reports of violations in nearly as many days, his officers discovered that drinks were frequently sold after one o’clock in the morning at the spot widely known in Chicago as “a place where persons can get liquor after closing hours.” The Auto Inn was also, according to Nootbaar, a place where “there was apparently was no effort to deprive any one of liquor by Tearney or his employees.” However, the police captain did note that there were a few times when Tearney closed up shop at one a.m. after learning that officers would be paying it a visit.⁶⁵

Despite Tearney’s political pull and overall slipperiness, the law caught up to him eventually—somewhat, at least. He was cleared for the assault case on New Year’s Day of 1913, but he had to face charges for violating the closing laws in court. Because of their personal (and

most of the laws on the statute books in the conduct of his night clubs,” “Al Tearney, ‘King of Night Clubs’ in Dry Days, Dies,” *Tribune*, November 19, 1934.

⁶³ “Ald. Tearney Runs Lawless Saloon; Depends on ‘Pull,’” *Tribune*, December 30, 1912.

⁶⁴ “Tearney Arrested for Assault and Breaking A.M. Law,” *Tribune*, December 31, 1912.

⁶⁵ “Tearney Arrested for Assault and Breaking A.M. Law,” *Tribune*, December 31, 1912.

emotional) connection to the case, the *Tribune* reported on the proceedings with barely concealed glee. The paper also attempted to stir up controversy and bend public opinion to their will by highlighting Tearney's ties to other notorious Chicagoans like boxer Jack Johnson, while elevating the voices of people like the Reverend Philip Yarrow of the Chicago Missionary Society.⁶⁶ In a fashion that seems unusual for a big-city daily paper, the *Tribune* sent one of their reporters to Evanston to cover a talk that Yarrow gave to the Current Events club at the First Congregational Church on the topic of "religious conditions in Chicago." In his speech, the reverend roundly condemned the Tearney case as an "evil" that was emblematic of the wider "disregard for law in Chicago." He also, the paper not-at-all humbly noted, praised the *Tribune* for their investigative work, remarking that nothing had been done to stop Tearney from breaking city law until their reporters had stepped in.⁶⁷ In a similar vein a week prior to their coverage of the church talk, the publication had printed a number of fawning letters from readers that extolled the paper for taking a hard line on the case. "The most contemptible people on earth are they who take the oath of office," wrote M.M. Clark from Havana, Illinois, who also pledged to donate what he could to the efforts to prosecute Tearney. "A man who sneaks into a house and robs his fellow men is an angel compared to him." Echoing this sentiment, J.M. Hummel from Sandwich, Illinois wrote that the paper should "never let up on Tearney or any wrongdoer. All glory to THE TRIBUNE for upholding the right. Its fight for righteousness and justice makes THE TRIBUNE the greatest newspaper published."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ For an example of the paper's sensational attempts to draw connections between Tearney and the infamous boxer, see "Tearney Linked with J. Johnson: Lucille Cameron Declared to Have Started Downfall in Aldeman's Place," *Tribune*, January 3, 1913.

⁶⁷ "Sees Tearneyism as City Wide Evil," *Tribune*, January 27, 1913. Throughout his speech at the Evanston church, Reverend Yarrow referred to "Tearneyism," a term that referred to what had been going on at the establishment, as well as the city of Chicago's long record of inaction on dealing with it. This combination, Yarrow alleged, had led to "nothing but privileged anarchy."

⁶⁸ "Voice of the People: Tearney Case Downstate," *Tribune*, January 21, 1913. Emphasis on the paper's name is original.

The paper's dogged fight against the alderman and their breathless coverage of his legal wrangling ultimately paid off. At his trial, the court heard Tearney's attorney make a defense that hinged on the argument that the café was operated under a restaurant license that was separate from the saloon license, and that the saloon shut down nightly at one a.m. while the restaurant remained opened. On the other hand, the city prosecutor assigned to the case maintained that the law covered the entire premises and that a violation of the law in one room constituted the same penalty as a violation in another room, "irrespective of the names they bore."⁶⁹ Soon, the two lawyers became entangled in a debate focused on technicalities about the legal definitions of "saloon" and "restaurant." While Tearney's attorney argued that what happened in one room should have no bearing on what happened in the other, the city prosecutor countered by pointing out the restaurant was connected to the barroom by swinging doors, which in his mind constituted a direct connection between the two. "A barroom or a saloon can be composed of more than one room. It may be a room or rooms," Assistant City Prosecutor Emmicke told the courtroom. "As long as they are connected or contiguous to one another, they are a saloon proper—the entire premise is, and so it has been held [by city ordinance 2157 that specifically covered what a saloon is]."⁷⁰ After presenting the judge with a copy of Tearney's restaurant license certificate, the alderman's lawyer J.W. Sutton pushed back against Emmicke by again highlighting the business's two licenses. "If the saloon is open, we are guilty. If the saloon was closed, we are not guilty," Sutton said. "If the restaurant was open, we had a right to occupy it—keep it open as long as we did not disobey the law. Now, the question is, was that saloon open on that night, and that is the only inquiry before this court."⁷¹

⁶⁹ "Tearney Employe [sic] Tells of Scenes Long After 1 A.M.," *Tribune*, January 29, 1913.

⁷⁰ "Tearney Employe [sic] Tells of Scenes Long After 1 A.M.," *Tribune*, January 29, 1913.

⁷¹ "Tearney Employe [sic] Tells of Scenes Long After 1 A.M.," *Tribune*, January 29, 1913.

After the court heard testimony from, among others, a former employee and a CPD patrolman who both described glasses of liquor and bottles of beer on tables after hours, Tearney was convicted by a jury for violating the ordinance requiring saloons to close at one a.m.. As a punishment, he was fined twenty dollars.⁷² While the fine was small enough to be insignificant to Tearney's bottom line, the impact on his political career was great. On February 1, 1913, Mayor Harrison effectively "disowned" the alderman. As he told a group of reporters, Tearney was not—and had never been—part of his political inner circle. Furthermore, the *Tribune* reported, "word had been passed out" among municipal politicians that Tearney "had definitely not decided to be a candidate for reelection."⁷³ He indeed stepped down, but while the legal battle had effectively ended his political career, it did not have much of an impact on his role within the city's bar and restaurant industry.

The Auto Inn stayed open for business, and in May 1913 the disgraced former alderman had begun to wage another attempt to stop the city from continuing to crack down on his business. Soon after he had paid more than six hundred dollars in fines for violating the closing law, Tearney complained in a petition for an injunction against the city in the circuit court that he was "losing many dollars in profits" by closing at one a.m, and noted that he wanted to avoid waging further legal battles. Moreover, his petition warned of the "endless litigation" that would come if the city continued to fine him. Again, Tearney insisted that he was legally entitled to keep his restaurant opened for as long as he wanted. He also maintained that he was shutting down the saloon at one o'clock, which CPD Captain Nootbaar disputed, alleging that the reports he received nightly from his officers told a different story where people "drinking liquor after 1

⁷² "Tearney Employee [sic] Tells of Scenes Long After 1 A.M.," *Tribune*, January 29, 1913; *City of Chicago, Defendant in Error, v. Albert R. Tearney, Plaintiff in Error*, 187 Ill. App. 441 (July 2, 1914).

⁷³ "Mayor Disowns 'Al' Tearney," *Tribune*, February 1, 1913.

o'clock in what Tearney calls his café." As Nootbaar told a *Tribune* reporter, he believed that "if liquor is sold in a place before 1 o'clock under a saloon license, the same place can't be changed to a restaurant after 1 o'clock." He also said he did not believe that anyone would go to a restaurant from midnight to three or four a.m. "without getting liquor to drink."⁷⁴

Nootbaar's questions were never fully resolved, and about a year later, Tearney was still up to his old tricks. After two undercover policewomen filed a report in May 1914 alleging that they were able to enter the business without male escorts, purchase drinks, and stay until after one a.m., the former alderman again managed to escape significant legal consequences, as no warrant was issued for his arrest. When asked by an incredulous reporter how he kept getting away with it—and by this point, the Auto Inn also featured a cabaret with live music and dancing—Tearney said it was because he had a permit, valued at twenty-five dollars per year. As well, he added slyly, the dancing took place in another room, and he pointed to a "room" that had been created by hanging two feet of curtain from the ceiling, and installing a three-foot-high brass railing along the floor.⁷⁵

The Tearney case laid bare some of the unresolved issues within the municipal legal system surrounding saloons and restaurants, and it was clear that something had to be done to close up the loopholes and uncertainties. Enter the city's corporation counsel Samuel Ettelson, who in late 1915 had to grapple with the question of whether or not to let saloons, cafés, and restaurants stay open for alcohol service on New Year's Eve after the usual one o'clock closing time. In his estimation, this was not a legal question, but rather a question of policy to be determined by the mayor alone, and he placed the issue before "Big Bill" Thompson, who had taken office that April.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ "Tearney Resists City Prosecution," *Tribune*, May 12, 1913.

⁷⁵ "Policewomen Buy Drink in Tearney's After One O'Clock," *Tribune*, May 6, 1914.

⁷⁶ "What About Lid New Year's Eve? Mayor is Asked," *Tribune*, December 23, 1915.

Thompson's election had proven a fortuitous twist for the city's (licit and illicit) hospitality industry—soon after he came to power, he declared that Chicago was once again a wide-open town and he did his part to help revive the Levee's brothels, many of which became hotels, saloons, or cabarets.⁷⁷ It is thus fairly unsurprising that on Christmas Eve 1915, Ettelson announced that the city would be relaxing the one o'clock closing law for New Year's Eve, at least as it applied to "wet" restaurants. "If there is a barroom in connection that can be locked up so it is shut off entirely from the restaurant, the restaurant may be kept open all night," said Ettelson, who noted that his decision had been influenced by the foibles of the Tearney case. "Of course, the sale of liquor must stop at 1 o'clock, but I see no reason why drinks purchased before that hour cannot be consumed after 1. But this must be a reasonable amount."⁷⁸ However, a sense of uncertainty remained ever-present. Ettelson and the Thompson administration did nothing to clarify what a "reasonable" amount of alcohol might be, and hinted that the answer would be handled on an individualized, case-to-case basis.⁷⁹ The ruling also had no clear end date: the corporation counsel told reporters only that it would stand until at least after New Year's.⁸⁰

Ettelson's decision attracted the usual detractors (H.F. Collier of the Anti-Saloon League declared it "a sad blow for our cause"), as well as one unexpected supporter in the Reverend M.P. Boynton of the Woodlawn Baptist Church.⁸¹ In early January 1916, the reverend—a man who had a years-long history of railing against New Year's Eve debauchery—told the *Tribune* he believed the ruling was "correct" and that former Mayor Harrison had been "wrong in closing the restaurants and hotels at one o'clock." Instead, Boynton argued, if a business's primary

⁷⁷ Abbott, *Sin and the Second City*, 321.

⁷⁸ "Ettelson lifts 1 O'Clock Lid," *Tribune*, December 24, 1915.

⁷⁹ "Ettelson lifts 1 O'Clock Lid," *Tribune*, December 24, 1915.

⁸⁰ "Ettelson lifts 1 O'Clock Lid," *Tribune*, December 24, 1915.

⁸¹ "Ettelson lifts 1 O'Clock Lid," *Tribune*, December 24, 1915.

concern was serving or selling alcohol, it should be dealt with under the liquor laws. But while hotels and restaurants might serve liquor, their primary concern was with feeding people, which meant “they should come under a separate law.”⁸² Finally, the reverend urged Chicagoans not to impede city officials with more “unfair criticism,” since in his mind the politicians had been acting “in the interests of decency and good order.”⁸³ It also divided much of the hospitality industry community. Some business owners favored it because they thought that subjecting bars and restaurants to the same rigid closing hours might level the financial playing field. In their minds, the existing system discriminated against saloonkeepers, because restaurants, many alleged, stayed open after one o’clock primarily for the purpose of “sneaking drinks” rather than to sell food. On the other hand, hotel-keepers opposed it, because it meant that they would not be able to serve meals to guests who arrive in the wee hours of the morning.⁸⁴

Despite—or perhaps because of—the corporation counsel’s ruling, the city experienced a boom in new restaurants. This sudden growth was fueled primarily by saloonkeepers who wanted to be able to stay open all night with relative impunity. In February 1916, the *Tribune* reported that two hundred Chicago saloonkeepers took out fifteen-dollar restaurant licenses for the first time over a span of just four months.⁸⁵ This mad rush to convert their establishments into restaurants brought the Health Department into contact with the Law Department and the Chicago Licensing Administration. Vaguely uneasy bedfellows, Commissioner of Health John Dill Robertson told a reporter that the health department had received instructions from Ettelson to “issue restaurant licenses wherever the saloon keeper had a separate room that could be shut off from the bar.” However, he said his department’s job was only to inspect facilities for proper

⁸² “Boynton Sure ‘Lid’ Was Tight,” *Tribune*, January 2, 1916.

⁸³ “Boynton Sure ‘Lid’ Was Tight,” *Tribune*, January 2, 1916.

⁸⁴ “Aldermen Vote to Close Cafés Between 1 and 5,” *Tribune*, March 14, 1916.

⁸⁵ “200 Saloons Take Licenses on Restaurants,” *Tribune*, February 6, 1916.

sanitary conditions: “beyond that, our responsibility ends.”⁸⁶ Indeed, Dill’s sanitary inspectors were kept busy examining hastily (and often-haphazardly) installed kitchens that had been built by saloonkeepers in efforts to convert their back rooms into what the *Tribune* called “what technically may be termed a restaurant.”⁸⁷ This shift was also taking place at the same time as Chicago’s efforts to widen the scope of what could be classified as a restaurant for regulatory purposes—by 1919, every establishment that cooked food to order had been classified by the city as a restaurant.⁸⁸

After city aldermen spent the remainder of the winter debating questions about the closing laws, the City Council’s judiciary committee decided in March 1916 to close “wet” restaurants between the hours of one a.m. to five a.m. It was passed by council nearly unanimously, save for opposition from Bathhouse John Coughlin, who said that because he was a “bohemian” he could not support the measure. “This ordinance curtails personal liberty,” he told reporters.⁸⁹ Coughlin’s complaint certainly does seem to hold credence when looking the way that the debate over closing laws were intertwined with indecision on whether or not to allow dancing in restaurants. In February of that same year, Ettelson had to answer a reporter’s question about an ordinance that Mayor Harrison’s administration had passed to prohibit restaurant patrons from dancing in response to various reform organizations who had “protested that the combination of drinking, eating, and dancing was disastrous to public morals.”⁹⁰ The

⁸⁶ “200 Saloons Take Licenses as Restaurants,” *Tribune*, February 6, 1916.

⁸⁷ “200 Saloons Take Licenses on Restaurants,” *Tribune*, February 6, 1916.

⁸⁸ John Dill Robertson, Commissioner of Health, *Report and Handbook of the Department of Health of the City of Chicago for the Years 1911 to 1918 inclusive* (Chicago, 1919), 880. There was a notable exception to this: though hotel dining rooms were classified as restaurants (since many people who were not overnight guests would frequent them), hotels that conducted a dining room on the European plan were not, as were clubs, boarding houses, and any establishment that prepared food only for members, residents, guests, or employees.

⁸⁹ “Aldermen Vote to Close Cafés Between 1 and 5,” *Tribune*, March 14, 1916.

⁹⁰ “Supreme Court Holds Dancing in Cafés as Legal,” *Tribune*, June 23, 1916. This ordinance also prohibited cabaret entertainers from leaving their “platform” to walk around among patrons’ tables.

corporation counsel confirmed that this ban on dancing was still very much in place, but he took note of a pending case on the issue at the Illinois Supreme Court.⁹¹ Luckily for bohemians like Coughlin, the highest court in the state declared in June 1916 that dancing in cafés was legal. The city ordinance banning it, jurists ruled, was unconstitutional, beyond the charter power of the city, and a clear invasion of the property right of individuals.⁹²

The Illinois Supreme Court case on dancing brought out a certain passion in the people who had lobbied to overturn the city ordinance. As the attorney representing Chicago's hotelkeepers understood it, the Supreme Court's decision made dancing a practice almost as sanctified (legally and culturally speaking) as prayer. "We contended that the right to dance was as sacred as the right to pray, and that city council could no more prevent one than the other," said Levy Mayer. "There is no possible way by which the city can successfully undertake to make dancing illegal."⁹³ But while many Chicagoans were happy about the slight increase in the freedom to dine, drink, and dance in the same place, not everyone celebrated. Another legal controversy had erupted—this time involving the state law requiring Chicago saloons to close on Sundays.

In December 1916, a dispute arose between Cook County State Attorney Maclay Hoyne and Mayor Thompson about enforcement of the Sunday closing law that again highlighted the tension between city and state. When Chicago police officers arrested those who violated this state law, prosecutors from the Cook County State Attorney's office were tasked with trying the cases in municipal court. Although it was Cook County State Attorney Maclay Hoyne's duty to

⁹¹ "Ettelson Café Ruling to be Ready in Week," *Tribune*, February 2, 1916.

⁹² "Supreme Court Holds Dancing in Cafés as Legal," *Tribune*, June 23, 1916. Clearly, the case brought out passion in the people who lobbied to overturn the ordinance. As the attorney representing the hotelkeepers understood it, the decision by the Supreme Court upheld "the assertion that dancing is as sacred as praying."

⁹³ "Supreme Court Holds Dancing in Cafés as Legal," *Tribune*, June 23, 1916.

enforce the Sunday closing law, he insisted that the mayor had the power to close the saloons on Sunday if he wanted to. “He can close the saloons with his revocation power...As I said before, they can’t pass the buck to me,” he told a reporter.⁹⁴ Two days after Hoyne made this remark, about twenty saloonkeepers who had been arrested for violating the Sunday closing law were arraigned, and the state attorney’s office granted continuances or jury trials in practically of their cases.⁹⁵ Hoyne’s objection to trying these cases was rooted in his belief that Thompson had been “partial” and discriminatory in his dealings with the issue, and had been “using his revocation power to build up a machine.” In turn, he said, it was unclear whether or not Thompson had “abandoned the Sunday closing law” altogether.⁹⁶

For the Cook County State Attorney, the best plan would be to designate “any corporation counsel to handle Sunday closing cases if it must be.” But, he added, “the only way, and everybody knows it, to close the saloons on Sunday is to use the revocation power.”⁹⁷ This back-and-forth—combined with a number of disparate municipal court rulings and contentions among law enforcement officials—led to confusion amongst the city police officers tasked with enforcing the law. In one example in late December 1916, a captain from the Shakespeare Avenue police district “was told officially and emphatically that he was wrong” in maintaining that a restaurant that sold alcoholic beverages on weekdays could not remain open on Sundays. Dressed down by CPD Chief Charles Healey, Captain Harry Gorman was reminded that a “wet” restaurant had every right to remain open seven days a week as long as the dining room was shut off from the bar on Sundays, patrons could not purchase alcohol, and the restaurant closed at one

⁹⁴ “Sunday Closing Put Up to Hoyne in Healey Order,” *Tribune*, December 10, 1916.

⁹⁵ “Hoyne Passes Saloon Closing Back to Mayor,” *Tribune*, December 12, 1916.

⁹⁶ “Sunday Closing Put Up to Hoyne in Healey Order,” *Tribune*, December 10, 1916.

⁹⁷ “Sunday Closing Put Up to Hoyne in Healey Order,” *Tribune*, December 10, 1916; “Hoyne Passes Saloon Closing Back to Mayor,” *Tribune*, December 12, 1916.

a.m.⁹⁸ In another case, a municipal judge ruled that after midnight on Saturday, patrons could still consume the alcoholic drinks they had purchased before that hour. As well, a judge from the Superior Court of Cook County indicated an intention to rule that the city could not compel wet restaurants to close at one o'clock in the morning.⁹⁹ By January 1917, the Sunday closing question had become so tangled that CPD Chief Herman Schuettler and the city's Law Department staffers met to confer about the array of inconsistencies and conflicting legal decisions.¹⁰⁰

One of the things that particularly upset the police chief was how hard it had become for his officers to deduce what was a restaurant and what was a saloon. Soon after Mayor Thompson had announced that closing laws would be more rigorously enforced, a multitude of newly licensed restaurants had appeared in Chicago. By January 1917, Chief Schuettler had compiled a list of nearly six hundred saloon back rooms and cabarets that had recently taken out restaurant licenses. As he saw it, many of these businesses—which he called “fake restaurants—did not have proper menus and did not “serve meals such as are served in properly equipped and qualified restaurants.”¹⁰¹ The chief vowed that he and his officers would use their “full authority” to shut these establishments down, and this kicked off the series of crackdowns against them, especially those with long-standing bad reputations and ties to organized crime, like Colosimo's and Freiburg's, which was run by Ike Bloom, a Colosimo associate who also arranged graft payments on behalf of aldermen Kenna and Coughlin.¹⁰² By autumn 1917, Mayor Thompson—in spite of his recent history of supporting businesses like this—indicated that he would “act on

⁹⁸ “Capt. Gorman, Café Nemesis, is Called Off,” *Tribune*, December 23, 1916.

⁹⁹ “Legal Tangle on Lid Rulings Puzzles Chief,” *Tribune*, January 23, 1917.

¹⁰⁰ “Legal Tangle on Lid Rulings Puzzles Chief,” *Tribune*, January 23, 1917.

¹⁰¹ Chief Informed 500 Bars Hide as Restaurants,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 27, 1917

¹⁰² “Chief Informed 500 Bars Hide as Restaurants,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 27, 1917; “Sixty Arrested as Lid Tilters In Sunday Raids,” *Tribune*, April 30, 1917; “Police on Guard at 2 Cabarets; Net 150 in Raids,” *Tribune*, October 1, 1917.

any recommendation made by Schuettler,” and stationed detectives at both establishments to ensure that the closing laws were being followed.¹⁰³

In spite of these crackdown measures, calls for an anti-cabaret ordinance continued to grow, sometimes even from their seeming allies: brewers and saloonkeepers who turned against the cabarets in an effort to bolster their own bottom lines. For example, Illinois Brewer’s Association secretary Austin Doyle said in 1917 that cabarets “lowered the tone” of the various forms of urban public entertainment like the saloon, which he believed had a comparatively “legitimate place and a legitimate function in our community.”¹⁰⁴ Fed up by police raids, constant scrutiny, and the belief that they had been “thrown to the dry wolves as a sacrifice” by other “wets” in Chicago, a consortium of cabaret owners (including none other than Auto Inn proprietor and disgraced former alderman Albert Tearney himself) pushed back in March 1918. On the eve of a decision by city council to abolish cabarets, members of the Chicago Café and Hotel Owners’ Association demanded instead the closures of saloons and alcohol deliveries to businesses and homes. “[The saloons and the brewers] are trying to unload this proposition on the public as a patriotic measure,” Tearney alleged, adding that they also promised aldermen “campaign funds” to get the anti-cabaret measure passed. “We will go further than that...we will ask that every saloon in Chicago be closed for the period of the war. Make Chicago dry, very dry, until the end of the war.”¹⁰⁵

For all of Tearney’s bombast, the cabaret owners’ demands were largely ignored and an anti-cabaret ordinance was passed in April 1918 and went into effect May 1 that same year.

While smaller cabarets were affected (as many of these were nothing more than the tiny back

¹⁰³ “Chief Dooms Freiberg’s and Jim Colosimo’s,” *Tribune*, September 29, 1917; “Mass of Charges Hits Freiberg’s and Colosimo’s,” *Tribune*, October 6, 1917.

¹⁰⁴ “Threat of Dry Town Made by Cabaret Men,” *Tribune*, March 26, 1918.

¹⁰⁵ “Threat of Dry Town Made by Cabaret Men,” *Tribune*, March 26, 1918.

rooms of saloons), larger and wealthier cafés like Colosimo's and Freiberg's were able to get around it and remain open by taking advantage of loopholes in the legal system. As the Café and Hotel Owners' Association's lawyer pointed out, city council was acting under the provisions of the Illinois dram shop law, which defined a dram shop as "a place where spirituous or vinous liquors are retailed by less quantity than one gallon."¹⁰⁶ In his estimation, cabarets were not dram shops. "It has never been held that the cafés in the hotels, in the downtown clubs, and similar establishments were dram shops," said attorney Harry J. Ganey. "The very fact that they are allowed to remain open on Sunday shows this."¹⁰⁷ As well, because Colosimo's and Freiberg's had been the subject of "so many court proceedings on many different angles" in the past, it was "a puzzle" to figure out how and where they fit in under this new ordinance.¹⁰⁸ In Colosimo's case, he claimed the restaurant was his main business, and that his cabaret was located in a separate room from the room that was covered by a dram shop license.

Big Jim could only take advantage of this legal confusion for so long, especially with federal Prohibition looming. The Eighteenth Amendment was proposed by Congress in 1917, and it was ratified by the requisite number of states by January 1919. While the ratification process had been taking place, Congress had passed the Wartime Prohibition Act on November 18, 1918, even though the First World War had officially ended ten days prior. The Act took effect on July 1, 1919, and with it, banned the sale of beverages with an alcohol content over 2.75 percent. In Chicago, drinkers and business owners despaired while planning last parties and strategies to adapt. "We have sold every table in the terrace and almost all in the grill room," reported B.J. Bowman, the manager of the Morrison Hotel and Terrace Gardens. "The carnival

¹⁰⁶ State law quoted in John E. George, "The Saloon Question in Chicago," *Economic Studies* 2, no. 2 (April 1897): 96.

¹⁰⁷ "The Law and the Cabarets," *Tribune*, April 23, 1918.

¹⁰⁸ "The Law and the Cabarets," *Tribune*, April 23, 1918.

of June 30 will never be forgotten in Chicago. We're keeping a great big supply of liquor for the occasion." Some owners of downtown saloons pledged that their businesses would become soda fountains. Others toyed with the idea of becoming dry restaurants. The longtime proprietor of Moran's on Randolph Street said he had been approached by three restaurant owners who offered to buy his space, and the bartender at Righeimer's on Clark Street—a favorite haunt of Mayor Thompson—said a chophouse would replace the saloon.¹⁰⁹ Barely two days after "the biggest, wettest, happiest, yet saddest night Chicago has ever known," the state of Illinois dealt another harsh blow to the city's grieving bon vivants. Illinois Attorney General Edward Brundage sent Chicago Corporation Counsel Ettelson a telegram that stated that because Illinois was dry territory, a search and seizure law was in effect that dictated no beverage containing more than half a percent of alcohol could be sold or given away. As of July 2, 1919, CPD officers were ordered to "enforce [the search bill] to the letter." As the *Tribune* described it, this meant that "the lid, airtight, and backed with all the power of the law, is on, and on to stay, unless a proclamation by the president, demobilizing the army and revoking the wartime dry law, is issued."¹¹⁰

The writing was on the wall for establishments like Colosimo's. After over a half decade of scrutiny and multiple attempted shut-downs—not to mention the broad closure of the Levee altogether between 1912 to 1915—the 1920s were a turning point for Big Jim's notorious eatery and cabaret. In January of 1920, the Eighteenth Amendment went into effect, and soon after, Big Jim himself met an untimely end at the age of forty-two. On May 11, Chicago's famed and feared underworld boss was gunned down in his restaurant's doorway by an unknown

¹⁰⁹ "J. Barleycorn's Wake, Chicago's Biggest Party," *Tribune*, June 9, 1919; Drury, *Dining in Chicago*, 119-120.

¹¹⁰ "Dry Lid Bangs Down on City as Police Act," *Tribune*, July 2, 1919.

assailant.¹¹¹ During the months after the murder, the long-standing legal tensions over how to deal with the mobster's restaurant finally came to a head during a dramatic confrontation on a late October evening. Over a hundred patrons were enjoying dinner at Colosimo's when Chicago Police officers stormed in and tore the restaurant's "dry" cabaret and restaurant licenses off the wall, alleging that the ostensibly dry establishment had been selling liquor and staying open later than city ordinances allowed. Operating under the orders of Mayor Thompson (who evasively told reporters he had decided to take against Colosimo's in response to "certain complaints" from sources he preferred not to name) the officers allowed diners to finish their meals but soon turned off the restaurant's lights and locked its doors. For several days afterward, police guarded Colosimo's front entrance to prevent its owners from reopening the establishment.¹¹² Little did these officers realize, however, that their actions that night would ultimately challenge the city's already-precarious system of restaurant licensing and inspection, as well as open up a new bureaucratic battle for control between city and state.

After Big Jim was slain, control of his restaurant had been given to bookie and gambler Mike "The Greek" Potson.¹¹³ Following the dramatic October evening raid, the mood among Potson and his employees was optimistic at first. "It's only politics," one staffer told a *Tribune* reporter the day after in an unfazed tone. "We'll get the licenses back in a few days."¹¹⁴ When this turned out not to be the case, Potson and the restaurant's other owners sought legal action. They obtained an injunction in the Appellate Court stopping the city from interfering with their

¹¹¹ "James Colosimo Slain at Restaurant Door," *New York Times*, May 12, 1920. The murder was never solved. Some believe Colosimo was slain at the behest of Al Capone (or that Capone was himself the gunman), and some believe the murder was arranged by his ex-wife Victoria, whom he had divorced in March 1920 to marry another woman.

¹¹² "Mayor Closes Bloom's and Colosimo's," *Tribune*, October 28, 1920; *Potson v. City of Chicago*, 222 Ill. App 50 (1921); *Michael Potson et al Appellees v. City of Chicago et al. Appellants.*, 304 Ill. 222 (1922); Albert Lepawsky, *Home Rule for Metropolitan Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 32.

¹¹³ Potson operated the restaurant and shared the ownership with members of Colosimo's family.

¹¹⁴ "Mayor Closes Bloom's and Colosimo's," *Tribune*, October 28, 1920.

ability to run Colosimo's, with the court sustaining their lawyers' argument that the city did not have the power to regulate and license restaurants. The city appealed, and in the ensuing case, *Potson v. City of Chicago*, the Illinois Supreme Court held that the 1870 Cities and Villages Act did not contain a sufficiently specific grant of power to sustain the city's established restaurant licensing system.¹¹⁵ Their logic was largely rooted in semantics—while a section of this state-level act granted Chicago the power to license its “ordinaries and coffeehouses,” it did not specifically mention the word “restaurant.”¹¹⁶ As the court stated, “it is clear that clauses...relating to regulating the inspection and sale of certain food products, have no reference to licensing restaurants.”¹¹⁷ In other words, they ruled that restaurants were legally not the same as ordinaries, and thus Chicago's city council had acted beyond its power, which invalidated the municipal ordinance for restaurant licensing.

The Potson decision kept questions about how to define a Chicago restaurant—and therefore how to legislate one—unanswered for years to come. A “bitter pill” that the city “refused to swallow entirely,” the ruling was later described by University of Chicago political scientist Albert Lepawsky as “an outstanding symbol of municipal uncertainty in the field of public health.”¹¹⁸ Soon after the Supreme Court's decision, Chicago's law department advised city council against attempting to license restaurants: “The only chance of making an ordinance stand in the face of this decision is to prepare one that puts restaurants into a class of coffee houses. Even then it would hang on a very slender thread.”¹¹⁹ The case also raised questions about the city's ability to sustain limited regulatory powers, pointing to the possibility of

¹¹⁵ *Potson v. City of Chicago*, 222 Ill. App 50 (1921); Lepawsky, *Home Rule for Metropolitan Chicago*, 32.

¹¹⁶ *The Statutes of Illinois: 1818 to 1872*, (Springfield: E.L. & W.L. Gross, 1872); Lepawsky, *Home Rule for Metropolitan Chicago*; Malcolm B. Parsons, “The Use of the Licensing Power by the City of Chicago” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1950).

¹¹⁷ *Potson v. City of Chicago*, 222 Ill. App 50 (1921).

¹¹⁸ Lepawsky, *Home Rule for Metropolitan Chicago*, 33.

¹¹⁹ *Opinions, 1923-1924*, opinion of October 9, 1923, 415 (quoted in Parsons' Ph.D. dissertation).

introducing an ordinance about the “installation and maintenance of washrooms and lavatories in restaurants.” Doing so, they argued, “would have to be in the nature of a health regulation independent of the question of license.”¹²⁰ As legal and political scholars have noted, the precedent-setting case stymied municipal officials for years to come. Post-Potson, city officials still inspected restaurants without legal sanction, even though they were unable to license them.¹²¹ In the words of political scientist Malcolm B. Parsons, Chicago was obligated to “protect the health and safety of its restaurant patronizing citizens, [but] there was no practical way in which it could assume that responsibility,” in spite of its repeated attempts to challenge the Potson decision over the 1920s and into the 1930s.¹²²

As for Colosimo’s, the restaurant reopened on February 27, 1921, but even such a short time later, the city’s nightlife and restaurant culture had changed. Federal prohibition laws were by then in full swing, and CPD detectives were on the scene to ensure order, stationing themselves inside the restaurant “by the piano that had once poured out weird jazz strains.” According to the *Tribune*, Colosimo’s was now “a mere shadow of its former gay self.” The officers made sure that the restaurant “offered no amusement for its patrons and served no drinks, and sold no cigarets [sic].”¹²³ In 1922, members of the Colosimo family acquired a half interest in the restaurant and took over its day to day operations while Potson gave up on the business and travelled to Europe.¹²⁴ Newspaper coverage of the one-time hotspot continued to be almost elegiac in tone: the *Tribune* romanticized Jim Colosimo as a “leader” and “one of the big men of the old levee district,” whose business remained “open all night despite efforts of

¹²⁰ *Opinions*, 1923-1924, opinion of November 13, 1923, 467 (quoted in Parsons’ Ph.D. dissertation).

¹²¹ Lepawsky, *Home Rule for Metropolitan Chicago*, 42.

¹²² Parsons, “The Use of the Licensing Power by the City of Chicago,” 106; Lepawsky, *Home Rule for Metropolitan Chicago*, 33-34.

¹²³ “Colosimo’s Open, But Only Ghosts of Jazz Appear,” *Tribune*, February 28, 1921.

¹²⁴ Al Chase, “Colosimo’s Kin to Operate Café He Made Famous,” *Tribune*, July 6, 1922.

reformers and others.”¹²⁵ Another article rhapsodized about the glamorously debauched pasts of places like Colosimo’s, arguing that they “[did] the best they can” in the more staid present: “Ghosts of ‘girlies’ of various ages who ‘worked’ at the beck and call of waiters furnishing their patrons with ‘company’...spirits of the past with its hot nights and soft shoulders, passionate kisses, illicit loves...all that is changed. The courtesan of the all-night cabaret has become the wedded wife.”¹²⁶ By 1935, the restaurant was an elder statesman on Chicago’s nightlife scene, and perhaps even slightly passé, described in one dining guide as “just another night life center.”¹²⁷

Restaurant licensing and inspection was advantageous for the city and for proponents of positive environmental reform because it gave Chicago’s public officials “three potent regulatory tools: powers of selection, condition, and withdrawal.”¹²⁸ When viewed through this lens, municipal bureaucracy profoundly shaped the city’s restaurant culture because it essentially chose the spaces Chicagoans could (or could not) dine at, and what activities could (and could not) take place in establishments where one could get a meal. In other words, the changes to public dining that historians like Andrew Haley and Harvey Levenstein have identified had as much to do with state intervention (often state intervention that was bolstered with the help of extralegal reformers) as they did with shifting consumer preferences.¹²⁹ With licensing making it

¹²⁵ Al Chase, “Colosimo’s Kin to Operate Café He Made Famous,” *Tribune*, July 6, 1922.

¹²⁶ Genevieve Forbes, “Red Light Birds Still Roost in 22D St. Trees,” *Tribune*, July 20, 1922.

¹²⁷ Drury, *Dining in Chicago*, 245-246. In this 1935 guide to Chicago’s restaurants, the author also assured readers that they “wouldn’t be shot” if they went to Colosimo’s, and praised its seven-course table d’hôte dinner that went for \$1.50 and included a whole lobster.

¹²⁸ Novak, *The People’s Welfare*, 173. It was also a nice stream of revenue for the Department of Health. As their annual report for 1904-1905 indicates, a stricter ordinance for restaurant licensing pending before City Council that year would bring in \$50,000 extra for the department if it passed. See Dr. Chas. J. Whalen, Commissioner of Health, *Biennial Report of the Department of Health of the City of Chicago for the Years 1904-1905* (Chicago: Cameron, Amberg & Co, 1906), xxv.

¹²⁹ Both of these historians have explored the emergence and popularity of mid-range restaurants in the early twentieth century as a reaction against both working class dining habits and marginalization from elite restaurants.

more difficult to open and run a restaurant in early twentieth century Chicago, it becomes more apparent that the state had a vested interest in protecting (or boosting) certain types of dining spaces while marginalizing others. After all, one of the cornerstones of Progressive Era urban reform was the re-creation of the city and its residents according to the reformers' own images and visions: given this, it is not surprising that middle class restaurants became popular in this period while more moderately priced restaurants and restaurants associated with "vice" struggled with surveillance and persecution that undermined their bottom lines.¹³⁰

But at the same time, the system that Chicago introduced (bolstered by state legislation) to regulate and inspect its restaurants was profoundly inefficient and easily perverted, whether by corrupt officials and business owners, lax sanitary inspectors, manipulation of loopholes and ambiguities in the ordinances' dictates, or a combination of all of these factors. As cases like Tearney's Auto Inn and Colosimo's indicate, restaurants became hotly contested spaces in the years leading up to federal Prohibition. Because restaurants are neither completely private nor public (not to mention popular amusement spaces, and for many Chicagoans, spaces of necessity) there was no real consensus on how they should be operated and patronized and who should oversee their enforcement. Instead, there was only a multitude of wildly disparate opinions and varying, inconsistent interpretations of policy. And ultimately, these ambiguities would linger for many years to come.

¹³⁰ Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America*, 190; "Cheap Restaurants: They Object to Paying a License," *Tribune*, March 1, 1883.

Conclusion

“And finally, arises the question, Is there a Chicago emerging from this confusion of novel, complex, and shifting elements; a new interest and a new loyalty to a new center?”¹

The character of Chicago’s nightlife changed once again during Prohibition. As a 1945 memoir by a self-proclaimed “old-timer” declared, the “underworld fringe turned to bootlegging and racketeering and thereby crashed into big money,” causing (in his opinion) “the degradation of a considerable percentage of the younger generation both male and female.” In his mind, the Prohibition era “hot spots, speakeasies, and road houses” were a considerable departure from the apparently more genteel evening entertainment that could be found in Chicago between 1890 and 1920, “when conditions were normal.” Back then, he argued, most restaurant patrons “knew how to order a meal and the proper wines to go with.” Once upon a time, one could enjoy a sophisticated dinner out at one of the places that “catered to the better classes,” instead of encountering “the crude ‘splash’ and hurrah [of the Prohibition era].”²

The federal ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages led to a proliferation of criminal activity and illicit consumption of liquor in many restaurants, and it was coupled with the lingering aftereffects of the Potson decision. The 1921 ruling had rendered the municipal system of restaurant licensure largely toothless, and the subsequent attempts to challenge it stirred up some of the animosities that had long-existed between Chicago and the state of Illinois.³ As political scientist Albert Lepawsky observed in 1935, the city health department was still licensing food establishments and inspecting restaurants, though it was “not able to secure its

¹ Merriam, *Chicago: A More Intimate View of Urban Politics*, 299. Grammar is original.

² Charles H. Hermann, *Recollections of Life & Doings in Chicago From the Haymarket Riot to the End of World War I* (Chicago: Normandie House, 1945), 124-125.

³ In fall 2017, the *Chicago Reader* published an excellent overview of the animosity between the city and the state. Edward McClelland, “Downstate Hate: A History of the Bitter, Nearly 200-Year Rivalry Between Chicago and the Rest of Illinois,” *Chicago Reader*, November 15, 2017.

former license revenues for this costly service.” Moreover, he noted, Chicago’s law department in these years continued to hold out hope that a “clear-cut” licensing case would emerge to firmly establish the city’s power over all food establishments, especially as their efforts continued to be rebuffed by the Illinois Supreme Court.⁴ Left with “piece-meal licensing powers,” Chicago was left with a confusing landscape to navigate, which is illustrated by their attempts to license and regulate ice cream parlors during the 1920s and early 1930s. While the Cities and Villages Act explicitly granted Chicago this power, ice cream parlors were often combined with other businesses where the city’s powers had been curtailed, like restaurants and drug stores. What should municipal officials do when, say, attempting to license an ice cream parlor that also sold sandwiches and other snacks? Although the city tried to work out a compromise with ice cream merchants on the basis of the number of seats inside their parlors, it led to what Lepawsky called “the Municipal Run-Around.” Now, such matters were “dragged from the Municipal to the Appellate to the Supreme Court and back again to the Appellate Court” with no clear solution in sight.⁵

It was not until 1938 that the issue was more firmly resolved. The R. and X. restaurant appealed to the Illinois Supreme Court for a fine they had received from the city for conducting their business without a food dispenser’s license. Drawing from the Potson decision, counsel for the restaurant contended that the city had acted beyond its power, and that the municipal commissioner of health was vested with arbitrary authority. The city pushed back by arguing that while previously the restaurant itself had been the subject of regulation, the present ordinance dictated that the health department had the power to regulate *all* types of businesses where food was handled, prepared, sold, and served in order to protect public health. The Supreme Court

⁴ Lepawsky, *Home Rule for Metropolitan Chicago*, 33.

⁵ Lepawsky, *Home Rule for Metropolitan Chicago*, 34.

ruled in favor of the city by deciding that the current municipal ordinance was a lawful health measure to regulate the conditions that surrounded the sale of food. As well, as political scientist Malcolm Parsons observed in his 1950 dissertation on licensing powers in Chicago, the court “distinguished the Potson case, stating that the intention of the earlier ordinance as a health measure had not been clear.”⁶ In the court’s opinion, the R. and X. restaurant case established “the only adequate existing supervisory control over the employees, the food, the establishment, and the handling of food in the thousands of restaurants in metropolitan Chicago.”⁷

Despite this resolution on the public health front, echoes of the Potson decision and the questions it raised about how to legally define a restaurant have continued to resonate. Consider the case of a River North “clubstaurant” that has dominated local headlines since it opened in 2015. The first Midwestern outpost of Arizona-based chain Bottled Blonde, neighborhood residents allege, brought with it to N. Wells Street problems with noise, traffic, and drunken patrons who fight, vomit, and shout outside late into the night. According to complaints made to city, Bottled Blonde—ostensibly a pizzeria and beer garden—had violated its plan to operate as a restaurant, and instead functioned as a nightclub.⁸ At a March 2016 meeting at City Hall organized by 42nd Ward Ald. Brendan Reilly’s office, a group of angry neighborhood residents confronted a contingent of Bottled Blonde’s managers, attorneys, and investors, and aired their main grievance that the establishment should not use the word “restaurant” to describe itself. The thumping bass from the sound system, late hours of operation, and rowdy patrons indicated otherwise, they argued.

⁶ Parsons, “The Use of the Licensing Power by the City of Chicago,” 107-108.

⁷ *Opinions*, (1938), 28, quoted in Parsons, “The Use of the Licensing Power by the City of Chicago,” 108.

⁸ Ashok Selvam, “Bottled Blonde Faces Possible City Shut Down Over Noise and Vomit Complaints,” *Eater*, March 24, 2016, <http://chicago.eater.com/2016/3/24/11298672/bottled-blonde-complaints-city-hall>; “About Bottled Blonde,” *Bottled Blonde Chicago*, <http://bottledblondechi.com/about/>.

Indeed, as the Chicago edition of culinary news site *Eater* reports, when Bottled Blonde submitted their plan of operation to the city, it included a floor layout where tables and seats would be located. Though “it would be a violation if they moved these elements around, say, to make room for a dance floor,” it seems this is exactly what had happened. Although officials from the restaurant claimed at a May 2016 meeting to have spent “a considerable amount of money” on soundproofing, the local residents and city officials remained skeptical. One deputy commissioner with the city remarked that she did not want to shut the business down, but instead wanted it to “be a better neighbor” and stop moving tables around at night to transform it into a nightclub atmosphere.⁹

Following a series of further contentious community meetings and disciplinary hearings, controversy continued to surround Bottled Blonde. The on-going issues about its operating practices and their legalities were coupled with a controversy about the establishment’s lengthy dress code. Many interpreted this dress code, which Bottled Blonde posted on their front window, as a thinly-veiled attempt to discriminate against Black and Latinx patrons. In May 2017, social media users widely slammed Bottled Blonde for its guidelines that specified “No excessively Baggie [sic], Sagging, Ripped, Dirty, Frayed, Overly Flashy, or Bright clothing,” “No plain white tees, long tees, denim, flannel (not even around one’s waist),” “No gang attire...no camouflage,” and “shorts must be no longer than one inch past your knees.”¹⁰ Six months later, the city revoked Bottled Blonde’s liquor license, and the business soon appealed

⁹ Ashok Selvam, “Bottled Blonde Attorney Compares River North Bro Haven to Next and Schwa,” *Eater*, May 16, 2016, <http://chicago.eater.com/2016/5/16/11673836/bottled-blonde-community-meeting-next-schwa>.

¹⁰ Ashok Selvam, “Chicago Bar Slammed for Allegedly Racist Dress Code,” *Eater*, May 31, 2017, <https://chicago.eater.com/2017/5/31/15719332/bottled-blonde-dress-code-racist-reddit>; Stephen Gossett, “Dress Codes Are Often Terrible and Racist, As This One From A River North Bar Shows,” *Chicagoist*, May 31, 2017, https://chicagoist.com/2017/05/31/dress_codes_are_often_terrible_raci.php. These racist dog-whistles are prevalent in the restaurant and hospitality industry nationwide. See Jelisa Castrodale, “Restaurant Dress Codes Have Long Been a Tool for Racist Discrimination,” *Vice*, July 1, 2020, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/pkyk5y/restaurant-dress-codes-have-long-been-a-tool-for-racist-discrimination.

the decision. The appeal triggered another hearing process and the bar remained open. But the saga was far from over: acting on orders of the city, police raided Bottled Blonde in October 2019 and revoked its business license. Although attorneys for the nightclub/restaurant asked the court for an emergency stay, arguing that mercy should be shown for employees who would be without jobs and owners who could lose up to \$4 million in revenue, they were denied by Cook County judge Neil Cohen. “I am not here to save the Bottled Blonde from its own defects, waivers, failures,” he said.¹¹ Again, the business appealed and were able to reopen after the Illinois Appellate Court an emergency motion.¹²

Five years after it opened, the death knell finally sounded for Bottled Blonde’s Chicago outpost. The business’s owners filed another lawsuit against the city in January 2020, alleging that Chicago’s “unconstitutionally vague” noise ordinance was in fact a violation of the state constitution. Moreover, Bottled Blonde’s owners contended, “using the alleged violations of the ordinance as grounds for revoking Bottled Blonde’s liquor license [violated] due process protections under the Illinois constitution.”¹³ Although they asked the Cook County Circuit Court to declare Chicago’s noise ordinance unconstitutional and enter an injunction to stop city officials from revoking Bottled Blonde’s liquor license, it was not enough to save the embattled eatery. In late July 2020, it closed down permanently, and a worker spotted outside the

¹¹ Ashok Selvam, “Bottled Blonde to Stay Closed After Judge Rejects Request From Owners,” *Eater*, October 31, 2019, <https://chicago.eater.com/2019/10/31/20942055/bottled-blonde-shut-down-chicago-license-revoked-river-north-supreme-court>.

¹² Ashok Selvam, “Bottled Blonde Back Open Thanks to Appeals Court,” *Eater*, November 1, 2019, <https://chicago.eater.com/2019/11/1/20943977/bottled-blonde-chicago-back-open-illinois-state-appelate-court>.

¹³ Luke Wilusz, “Bottled Blonde Lawsuit Claims Chicago Noise Ordinance Violates Illinois Constitution,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 15, 2020, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2020/1/15/21068144/bottled-blonde-lawsuit-chicago-noise-ordinance-unconstitutional-liquor-license-river-north>.

establishment told a reporter that the owners made the decision not only in the wake of its lengthy legal battle against the city, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴

The ultimate outcome of Bottled Blonde (and the lengthy, twisting path that it took to get there) speaks to a number of issues that have vexed Chicagoans ever since the city's public dining culture exploded in popularity at the turn of the twentieth century: how should restaurants be operated and patronized, and who should make and uphold the rules that apply to them? With difficult legal and cultural questions about how to define, inspect, and regulate these spaces still holding weight over a century later, it is clear that the restaurant is (and remains) a significant site of both statebuilding and political and cultural disorder.

¹⁴ Ashok Selvam, "Bottled Blonde Permanently Closes In River North After Five Years of Turmoil," *Eater*, July 28, 2020, <https://chicago.eater.com/2020/7/28/21344976/bottled-blonde-closed-chicago-river-north>. Bottled Blonde is not alone in this: the COVID-19 pandemic is profoundly reshaping the restaurant industry. See, for example, Jaya Saxena, "The Livelihoods of Food Service Workers Are Completely Uncertain," *Eater*, March 18, 2020, <https://www.eater.com/2020/3/18/21185097/food-service-workers-coronavirus-livelihoods-layoffs>; Chris Crowley, "Is Anyone Even Listening? The Restaurant Industry is Begging for Help," *Grub Street*, March 17, 2020, <https://www.grubstreet.com/2020/03/is-anyone-listening-to-restaurants-help.html>. As well, in the wake of the summer 2020 protests for racial justice, the restaurant industry (as well as food businesses as a whole) have had to begin to reckon with their rampant marginalization and exploitation of people of color. See Josh Noel, "Chicago Restaurant Workers Take to Social Media to Call Out Industry, Racism, Sexism—And More," *Tribune*, June 18, 2010.

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