Progressive Plans and Urban Realities in St. Louis, 1890-1918

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## Contents

Abstract .......................................................... 3  
Declaration ......................................................... 4  
Copyright Statement ............................................ 5  
Acknowledgements ............................................... 6  
Introduction ........................................................ 8  
Chapter One - Inspiration, Instruction, and Imperialism: Constructing Racial and Gendered Knowledge at the World’s Fair ................................................................. 39  
Chapter Two - Private and Public Interests in the Progressive Projects of the St. Louis Civic League, 1901-1916 ............................................................................. 79  
Chapter Three - The Expansion and Contraction of the Female Dominion in St. Louis’s Public Space, 1890-1916 .......................................................... 120  
Chapter Four - Clubs, Committees, and Commercial Practices: How African American Women in St. Louis Attempted to Rework Race and Respectability .......................................................... 151  
Chapter Five - Silent Films, Swimming Pools, and Segregated Housing: Enforcing and Protecting White Space in St. Louis, 1913-1916 ............................................. 183  
Conclusion - ‘In Order That the City Might Become Something of a Satisfactory Economic and Social Entity’: Zoning and Further Attempts to Determine City Space .......................................................... 225  
Bibliography ............................................................... 238  

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Abstract

A synergy of spatial and social analyses of the city of St. Louis is made in this thesis. It provides an interrogation of the built environment and how people perceived urban space, what they wanted it to look like, what they imagined it represented, and who they thought belonged there. In this way, both the description and the experience of the city is considered. Issues of belonging and exclusion, the public good and private interests, and real and imagined geographies are of central concern.

This thesis argues that women’s activism and reform activity in the city increased as their private concerns about the household and child welfare expanded into the public domain. However, female influence and authority was quickly usurped by male reformers and city boosters, who claimed expertise and professionalism in the urban environment. The experience of curtailment differed according to race, because African American women created opportunities to direct racial uplift and develop notions of respectability in their community. Hence, African American women used the marked and increasingly segregated racial space of the city to their advantage. They were, however, still contained by racial and gendered prejudice.

Race, and how it was enacted in city space, is further investigated and this thesis argues that certain types of segregation happened in the city due to the particularity of St. Louis and the places within it. New leisure spaces, an increased concern about property prices, and civic celebrations of white successes and superiority contributed to the imposition of segregation measures. Contentions around ethnicity continued throughout this period. By supporting segregation measures the small, but not insignificant, ethnic population of St. Louis chose to be white. The description of whiteness is both made, and further complicated, through the occupation and claim to certain spaces and activities.

By investigating the relatively under-studied city of St. Louis this thesis offers new approaches to how space was perceived and how it was used to underscore or change social categories. Cultural geographers have been interested in how definitions of place and space are made, how they change over time, and how they are related to and help enforce concepts of race, gender, ethnicity, and class. This thesis provides concrete examples of how such processes happened in an American city during the Progressive period.
Declaration

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has been walked (well nearly), and the one constant has been your love and support. Thank you for the proof reading, the emotional support, the motivation, and the distraction. I literally could not have done this without you. I love you.
**Introduction**

Floating in a hot air balloon high above the Mississippi River, Camille Dry quickly sketched the cityscape before him. He was looking at St. Louis in 1875. The cartographer was in the process of creating the monumental *Pictorial St. Louis*, a precise and detailed perspective drawing of the city. The inland city Dry looked down upon was situated at the confluence of major natural waterways and was a hubbub of activity. He drew the waterfront which was jammed with steamboats carrying passengers and cargo, the customers huddled outside store fronts, and the horse-drawn carriages and trolleys which trundled up and down the wide city streets. In the distance Dry could see the vast expanse of Forest Park, which was to be dedicated to the city the following year.

![Image](image.png)

*Figure 1. Richard J. Compton and Camille N. Dry, *Pictorial St. Louis – 1875: A Topographical Survey Drawn in Perspective* (St. Louis: Compton & Company, 1876), 21. This is a small downtown section from the map. In the bottom left hand-side is the Court House, the site where the Dred Scott petition originally came to trial in 1847. The city’s long and complicated racial history is inscribed on to the built environment.*

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The map, which was sponsored by businesses and institutions who then featured prominently in the finished document, consisted of 110 individual drawings or ‘plates’ and 112 pages of descriptions. Mapping is a process of knowledge production, because maps are not just reflective of knowledge but actively create it; as Michel Foucault stated, maps are ‘thought out space’. Maps can be both practice and performance, they have a significant role in the categorisation and placing of objects of inquiry into a structured and visible framework, and can have political, economic, and cultural consequences. The mode of production of Pictorial St. Louis helped to create knowledge of a city that was apparently thriving. In Dry’s optimistic vision the future prosperity of the city was assured, while busy and bustling the space he drew was well ordered and the people in it harmonious; the areas he identified as under development were becoming part of the visual unity of the perspective piece and the city itself.

However, the space Dry surveyed was in the process of being marked and delineated. The city’s final limits were set in 1876 when the ‘Great Divorce’ between St. Louis county and the city was agreed. City dwellers had disapproved of county residents’ influence on urban matters, especially when the Missouri legislature gave the St. Louis County Court the power to assess and collect city taxes, because, at the time, the city paid nearly half of Missouri’s total taxes. The “scheme” (initiating separation) and “charter” (creating St. Louis’s city government) passed narrowly in a vote held on August 22, 1876. Dry’s Pictorial St. Louis was published in the same year. Under the new arrangement the city’s boundary was made consistent with the outer boundaries of Forest Park in the west, O’Fallon Park in the north, and a northern extension along the river to accommodate the Chain of Rocks area where the city expected to build a new reservoir to serve its growing population. The divide between city and county meant that the city’s area more than tripled to 61.37 square miles. For supporters of the Great Divorce’s it seemed like more than enough space in 1876. However, the inability to expand the city limits proved to be a crippling deterrent to St. Louis’s development.

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6 Primm, Lion of the Valley, 307.
city became crushed between the physical barrier, of the Mississippi River, in the east, and the political barrier, the county-city dividing line, in the west. The containment of St. Louis also had a tangible impact on how its inhabitants thought about the urban space available, how it could and should be used, what it should look like, and who belonged there.

In 1909 more hot-air balloons filled the St. Louis sky. They were part of a balloon race which had been organised to celebrate the city’s past, present, and future. The city the balloonists looked down upon was much changed since Dry had recorded it 34 years earlier. Many of the downtown four storey buildings which had surrounded the Court House in 1875 (Figure 1) had been replaced by the grand, imposing, architecture of banks, trusts, and large companies. These new buildings covered downtown Market, Chestnut, Pine, Olive, and Locust Streets up to the 12th Street intersection. This arrangement formed the beating heart of St. Louis’s central business district. Further developments in the area included the monumental St. Louis Union Railway Station, which had opened in 1894 and occupied 11.1 acres of land on Market Street. City Hall, which was also situated on Market Street, had finally been completed in 1904 after a 14 year struggle by the municipal government to collect on enough bond issues. Such difficulties show how the image of the prosperous downtown area replete with new civic and commercial landmarks conveyed in another perspective map, The Heart of St. Louis (Figure 2), belied the hesitance of St. Louis voters to support and fund such a vision. Clearly, there was a disconnect between what city boosters thought was right for the city’s future and what voters demanded. The disparity in civic vision, which related to both its purpose and execution, would continue in St. Louis throughout the period of this thesis.

8 Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis, The St. Louis Union Station: A Monograph (St. Louis: National Chemigraph Company, 1895), 17.
Moving away from the commercial downtown area, the 1909 balloonists surveyed a city marked by residential differences. The Soulard neighbourhood in the south was mainly occupied by poor eastern Europeans; to the southwest Italian immigrants occupied the neighbourhood known as The Hill; the Ville towards the north of the city was home to the city’s large, and growing, African American population; and further north of that was an area commonly known as Kerry Patch where Irish immigrants resided. These poor built-up areas stood in contrast to the affluent residencies in the Central West End, the neighbourhood which was marked and protected by the boundary created by Vandeventer Avenue and the recently built Kingshighway Boulevard. The Central West End was occupied by well-established white St. Louisans, and so too was the secluded ‘Private Places’ of the Skinker DeBaliviere and DeBaliviere Place neighbourhoods which lined Lindell Boulevard found opposite Forest Park in the west.
The city of St. Louis, ever aware of the boundary around it created by the Great Divorce, maintained its own boundaries by physically marking space deemed to be exclusive and private. The ‘Private Places’ of St. Louis had been a fixture of the urban environment since the mid-nineteenth century. They were closed streets, which were not public thoroughfares, marked by fancy gates and ornate gatehouses. Over time these ‘Private Places’ were created by the design of the actual physical space combined with indentures and agreements between residents to keep business and working interests separate from their residential space. This had the consequence of excluding ethnic and racial populations, and indeed this was the intention. Contentions around private and public interests and spaces, and what constitutes the public good in that space, are central to this thesis. Progressives in St. Louis often laid claim to prescriptions of the public good, but they found that voters in the poorer, ethnic wards often rejected this because they felt that the proposed schemes benefitted only the affluent areas and the citizens who lived there.

Each of the neighbourhoods the balloonists looked down upon were marked by both visible and invisible barriers of socio-economic, ethnic, and racial belonging and exclusion. Crucially, the neighbourhoods were incredibly close to one another. The city space of St. Louis was finite because the outer limits of Dry’s *Pictorial St. Louis* had been fixed by the Great Divorce. The balloonists may have observed trolley cars travelling through the city which seemed to connect those different neighbourhoods, but this movement disguised the fact that the urban space beneath them was becoming more fractured and increasingly marked by differences among the inhabitants who lived in the segregated city of St. Louis. The colour line was becoming more distinct as members of the city’s ethnic population set about determining that they were white, in part by claiming belonging to certain residential and leisure spaces in the city. This thesis looks at how this process took place in the opening decades of the twentieth century.

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Figure 3. Rand, McNally and Company, *Map of St. Louis and Vicinity* (Chicago: Rand, McNally and Company, 1903). The huge expanse of Forest Park (in the west of the city) is divided in this map to show the section of the park which was going to be used for the 1904 World's Fair. The blue box denotes the area around Carr Square and the Near North St. Louis neighbourhoods upon which many urban reformers focused their attention. This area was densely populated with a mixed ethnic population. Chain of Rocks in the far north is not pictured. East St. Louis on the opposite side of the Mississippi (pictured in orange) is in the state of Illinois.

The 1909 balloon race was sponsored by the One Million Population Club. The club was an organisation established in December 1904 by some of the city’s leading businessmen. Encouraged by the attention the recent World’s Fair had given St. Louis, the Million Club’s members wanted to preserve and encourage public enthusiasm for the city and its potential. Many members of the club became further involved in civic organisations, prominent lawyers John Gundlach and Luther Ely Smith also joined and
directed the St. Louis Civic League, as did Cyrus P. Walbridge who went on to become President of both the Civic League and later the City Plan Commission. The Million Club, and other similar civic and business leagues, aimed to stimulate the growth of the city by attracting new industry through ‘scientific’ honest government and the reduction of business taxes; they also sought to encourage public improvements such as the development of a central parkway and a boulevard system, which was apparently for the benefit of all citizens. However, the image of the city that the Million Club sought to promote and encourage was the one expressed in *The Heart of St. Louis*, a thriving collection of downtown business and civic interests.

The One Million Population Club, as its name suggests, was also concerned with increasing the population of St. Louis to 1,000,000 within half a decade.¹⁰ St. Louis had grown substantially in population and wealth during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. From 350,518 in 1880, the city’s population grew by 29 percent to 451,770 in 1890, and by an additional 27 percent to 575,238 in 1900, to rank fourth in the nation behind New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. By 1890 St. Louis was also fourth in the gross value of its manufactured products and fifth in the amount of capital invested in manufacturing.¹¹ However, the economic depression of 1893-97 greatly hampered the city’s industrial development; between 1890 and 1900 the gross value of St. Louis’s manufactures grew by only two percent, from $229.1 million to $233.6 million.¹² Flour and grist milling, men’s clothing, construction, fruit and vegetable canning, agricultural machinery, and lumber production declined in this decade, and so too did the city’s largest industry – brewing. Wholesale trading, particularly in dry goods, which had been a staple of St. Louis’s prosperity and national prominence, reduced as the railroad interconnections from Chicago’s hub were further exploited. In 1900 it seemed that St. Louis stood on a precipice, while it was still one of the largest cities in the country its continued progress seemed to be stalling.

The stated purpose of increasing the city’s population underscores the pessimism that the Million Club felt about the future of St. Louis, for without the express direction of civically minded businessmen they claimed the city was doomed to recede into further

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¹¹ Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 327.
¹² Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 328.
national obscurity. There was a sense, which was backed by census data, that the city could no longer attract new arrivals to the United States, and there was a growing despondency that St. Louis’s period of continued prosperity and economic progress was over. The Million Club was interested in encouraging adults into the city rather than creating a population surge via an increased birth rate. They wanted the working population of St. Louis to increase quickly. Million Club member James A. Reardon, of Reardon Manufacturing Company, had suggested that the organisation promote St. Louis as a place for young married couples to move to in order to start large families. Reardon favoured Irish and Germans, because he argued that they usually have large families, and there was already a long-established German and Irish population in the city. His suggestion, which the press dubbed the “Stork Resolution” was soundly rejected by the Million Club, who preferred “to augment the population from among adult residents of other and less favoured localities rather than boom the infant industry.”

Apparently, one or two members had initiated that the subject of raising children was “too indelicate” to be taken up by the club. Rather, issues of childcare and child welfare were, during this period, taken up by female reformers in St. Louis in an attempt to expand their involvement in city space and urban reform.

In 1910 business leader Cyrus F. Blanke became the new President of the Million Club, and he suggested that the organisation appeal to successful farmers who had made enough money to be self-supporting to return to St. Louis. Blanke’s “Back from the Farm” scheme was designed to encourage and augment an established and wealthy white population in the city. The Million Club’s civic boosterism, which favoured lessening the burden of taxes to encourage industrial growth and city beautification to make the city more attractive to potential newcomers, was combined with ethnic and racial considerations. Indeed, these were the mainstays of civic considerations throughout the period of this thesis, and only became more pronounced as the influx of white immigrants into the city failed to materialise. There was a growing concern, expressed by white supremacists in the 1915-16 referendum on segregation measures, that the

13 “Million Club Won’t Rise to Stork Scheme,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 27, 1906, 9.
14 “Million Club Won’t Rise to Stork Scheme,” 9.
15 “Back from the Farm, is Slogan of New Million Club President,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 6, 1910, 12.
number of white citizens remaining in the city needed to be bolstered against the growing number of African Americans who had left the South to make St. Louis their home.

In 1900, St. Louis was still a place of ethnic diversity, though it no longer led the nation in the proportion of its foreign-born, as it had done on the eve of the Civil War. Of its 575,238 people, 11,356 (19.7 percent) were foreign-born, and another 239,170 (41.6 percent) had foreign-born parents. Only 189,249 (32.3 percent) were native whites with native parents. The remaining 6.4 percent of the population were African Americans. Over half of the population classified as white in 1900 were either foreign born or born to foreign parents. A reworking of whiteness occurred in the opening decades of the twentieth century and this was protected as the black population in the city increased exponentially, a consequence of the Great Migration. However, the process by which the ethnic population became white was fraught with contention, some of which is discussed in this thesis.

Racial considerations in the Jim Crow city, and how conversations about urban space reflected and encouraged the imposition of racial difference are central to this thesis. It argues that the process by which the ethnic populations of St. Louis became white was enacted via occupation and claims to space. This adds to whiteness studies. The intersection of gender and class which was enacted in new leisure and residential spaces highlights how segregation worked and was enforced in the period. The concept of race was created and negotiated by social circumstances. These social circumstances and contexts can be analysed through the material and ideological constructions of space. The psychology of whiteness, which worried critics of whiteness studies such as Eric Arnesen, can be tracked in the concrete space and structure of the city. The particularities of place should be considered when thinking about probationary whiteness, and the context in which it could be found. In St. Louis the colour line was

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16 Primm, Lion of the Valley, 338.
more defined and was implemented earlier in residential and leisure spaces than in many cities in the North. A consideration of the different times and places in which people were deemed white shows the ways in which the terms of whiteness have always been in flux.

In *Whiteness of a Different Color*, Matthew Frye Jacobson discussed America’s ethnic population, and how ‘their probationary whiteness’ changed over time. Jacobson was concerned with the moments when the whiteness of particular groups was fractured, and when and how that whiteness was reformed. He contended that the period between 1840 and 1924 saw a proliferation of perceptions of different races, as American ‘natives’ feared the influx of immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe and Ireland. Following the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924, which set quotas on the number of immigrants entering the United States from certain countries, whiteness was reworked. With America’s doors shut, the fear of populations that could complicate racial categorisation decreased, and whiteness was expanded. Jacobson’s concept of probationary whiteness is useful when considering how ethnic groups such as Poles, Russians, Germans, Irish and Italians in St. Louis came to be considered white in certain contexts. As the colour line solidified under the Jim Crow system of segregation, the context in which people could be seen to be white was expanded. Leisure spaces helped to further expand that context, and the colour line was duly marked in such places. In St. Louis this process happened earlier than the dates set out by Jacobson. This was because of the long history of black-white contentions in the city, alongside the more immediate consequences of the Great Migration on a city of finite space. Whiteness was expanded and protected in St. Louis in relation to its city space and its changing demography. St. Louis’s race relations had long been played out over controversies around space and belonging. Two landmark legal cases, *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1846-1857) and *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948) had proved to be a focal point for national debates around race. These

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cases centred around belonging, citizenship or lack thereof, and ownership (of human and residential property) which were contested in St. Louis but had national implications.

Alongside the consideration of how whiteness was created via claims to and occupation of city spaces, this thesis investigates some of the attempts to improve St. Louis during the Progressive Era. It looks at the efforts which were made to try to re-discover the cohesive city Dry had presented in *Pictorial St. Louis* along with the continued promotion of the civic and commercial bravado of *The Heart of St. Louis*. In doing so, this thesis looks at the longer-term inspirations and motivations behind nascent city planning in St. Louis. Documents such as city plans, share a similarity with maps, in that they sought to frame and re-frame narratives about the city and the inhabitants who lived there. This is not solely an account of professional planning and urban management however, because the ways in which grass-root activists, clubwomen, urban and social reformers, and neighbourhood associations thought about and used city space is also considered.

The Million Club made clear in its continued self-aggrandisement that what was necessary for the future success of St. Louis was the actions and perseverance of ‘several hundred’ leading men. Men ‘who will not hesitate, who will not tarry, who will not wait for nods, but who will act upon their own initiative and will not be deterred from success’ were, apparently, of paramount importance to the progress of the city.²² Civic boosterism combined with notions of modern masculinity which was based on economic and political prominence. However, in such statements of self-promotion the work carried out by reform-minded women was ignored. Indeed, in the ongoing civic boosterism of St. Louis women’s reform work in the city space was usurped by men of organisations such as the Million Club and the Civic League, and later by the professional city planner Harland Bartholomew. This thesis argues that female authority over particular parts of the city, and certain citizens, was taken over by male reformers and city boosters who increasingly claimed expertise of the urban environment. In the drive towards professionalisation women were left out of conversations and activities related to city planning and management. However, not all women faced the same level of scrutiny and curtailment of their reform activities. In the segregated city of St. Louis

²² “The Million Club,” 6
African American women created their own opportunities to re-work notions of race and respectability and they did this through their community work and their commercial practices. The intersection of gender, race, and class created opportunities and restrictions within the city at different times and in disparate places.

In St. Louis there was a tangle of reform efforts, many of which also took place in other Progressive Era cities. Discerning among these efforts were themes such as the struggle for rational systems of governance, middle-class status anxiety, shifting coalitions of interest groups, elite attempts at social control, efforts to end class conflict, attempts to segregate society, and women’s battles to save the city from misery and chaos. This thesis argues that while women’s work was essential to an understanding of Progressivism the way in which their efforts and authority was usurped in St. Louis offers an alternative process than that which had been articulated by scholars of women’s work in Chicago and New York. Once women were excluded from further urban reform, by the denial of their expertise and crucially that they could not vote for urban changes, women turned their attention to campaigns for suffrage and for prohibition in order to continue their quest to shape the city space and the citizens within it. The work carried out by African American women in their neighbourhoods would prove to be an essential part of early civil rights activism in the Urban League and its efforts towards neighbourhood community cohesion. Therefore, women’s exclusion from particular city spaces and from reform work allowed for their gender specific campaigns to continue in the period which extends beyond the remit of this thesis.

Elisabeth Israels Perry has argued that women and ‘women’s concerns’ should be central to an understanding of Progressivism and she sought to complicate definitions of Progressives and Progressivism by urging scholars to reconsider, or at the very least consider, women’s role in the reform efforts of the era.23 Her call was not merely to add gender and stir, as Joan Scott had so memorably advised scholars to avoid, but to deploy gender to reconfigure definitions of politics in the Progressive Era, and indeed to expand upon and reformulate its periodisation.24 By thinking about the centrality of moral

reforms which were undertaken by women, some of the strange theoretical combinations and partnerships formed within a loosely described ‘movement’ may be better understood. Women did not have only ‘women’s concerns’ when thinking about and acting within the city space; rather, those concerns which were expressed as traditionally feminine proposed restructuring the basis of the entire society of the United States. Linda Gordon has pointed out that many women in the Progressive Era believed that a distinction between politics and social reform was artificial. By broadening the meaning of politics to incorporate the entire spectrum of women’s activism as part and parcel of the political story of Progressivism, a more capacious definition of the term ‘politics’ would quite rightly encourage scholars to consider women’s activism as the keystone of Progressivism. However, as women in St. Louis found, municipal politics was marked and protected by men and this meant that women’s expanded version of politics could only go so far.

In part, this thesis investigates what women were doing in urban space and the interconnection between that work, their homes, and their communities. Paula Baker referred to women’s activism and voluntary work as ‘municipal housekeeping’. This concept has proven to be useful because it suggests the ways by which female reformers described their engagement in and with the urban world. The male domain was inaccessible to them, so women could observe it (apparently objectively) and seek to change it from the outside. Indeed, their female dominion, reliant on voluntarism, was at odds with the capitalist male world. Barbara Welter has argued that such a contrast was one of the mainstays of True Womanhood. For sociologist Lyn Lofland, women’s voluntarism occupied the ‘parochial’ world of the neighbourhood rather than the private world of the household or the public realm of strangers, and the labour of volunteers in that parochial world, while not paid, was relied upon in the city to maintain social order.

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27 Perry, “Men Are from the Gilded Age,” 35-40.
in urban space. In the late nineteenth century, the boundaries between domestic, community, and paid work became increasingly porous, and blurred further when in combination with the flexible and changing notions of the private, parochial, and public spaces that urban life seemed to create. However, this thesis argues that women were still trapped by assumptions which rested on essential gender difference. Visions of masculine municipal management became prominent and were perceived as essential for the future of St. Louis which stood on the brink of economic, social, and political regression. The great future of a prosperous St. Louis was to be secured by the city’s leading men. Of course, this prospect also had a racial dimension.

The conclusions drawn in this thesis differ from those made by key scholars of women’s’ activities in the urban sphere during the Progressive Era. Daphne Spain stated that women were instrumental in ‘saving’ American cities by creating ‘redemptive spaces’. These were sites of assimilation; they were properties and areas often modified from their original use, and they occupied marginal physical spaces in the city. These sites of assimilation provided temporary refuges for immigrants, unmarried working women, and children. Redemptive spaces represented organised attempts to construct the social order in a time of intense demographic, technological, and cultural change. Spain’s work is useful in understanding how women shaped real and perceived city space in American cities at the end of the nineteenth century. However, in St. Louis that space proved to be more contentious than Spain has suggested.

Spain also argued that redemptive spaces were created by an army of dedicated female reformers, who developed what she has called a ‘voluntary vernacular’. Spain used this concept to describe the built environment created by women, which was not necessarily made by professionals for paying clients, but was often adapted by volunteers to serve new purposes. Those female volunteers used the same terminologies when explaining their shared and specialised activities, and they used space in the

32 Daphne Spain, *How Women Saved the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), xii.
33 Spain, *How Women Saved the City*, 24
34 Spain, *How Women Saved the City*, 20.
35 Spain, *How Women Saved the City*, xii-xiii.
vernacular architecture which was concerned with the domestic and functional rather than the monumental. Spain’s concept of the voluntary vernacular suggests ways in which women in the late nineteenth century redefined their own place in the urban environment while helping to re-draw the boundaries between charitable and municipal responsibilities for the poor, immigrants, and children. By engaging in aspects of the voluntary vernacular, female volunteers filled the gap between the private and public worlds, and the void between private philanthropy and the formation of a welfare state. In St. Louis, the vernacular architecture both of reform work and the planning of those spaces became controlled by male experts and professionals.

Taking a similar approach to Spain, Robyn Muncy’s work has focused on the creation of a female dominion in American reform. This female dominion was a sphere of influence over social welfare that had been created by middle-class women through their reform activism. In the dominion, an interlocking set of organisations and agencies existed within the male empire of policy-making. Child welfare, the regulation of female workers, the Consumers’ League, and the Child Bureau were all important elements of the dominion. Muncy has argued that middle-class women exercised considerable control over the dominion, even though their power was always limited by the greater authority vested in male legislation. For Muncy the existence of the dominion constitutes evidence that women (and men) of the social justice wing of Progressivism viewed their work as closely connected to each other’s efforts and aimed to determine government policy and legislation. In Muncy’s work women remain central to policy making in the 1920s and 1930s, however this did not happen in St. Louis.

Not all women in St. Louis were affected by the usurpation of their reform efforts in the same way. African American women found that they could create opportunities for their own gender specific work in the Jim Crow city which they enacted through clubwork, committees, and later in commercial practices. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham developed the notion of the politics of respectability, which emphasised manners and

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38 Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*, 159.
morals as the product and process of African American women’s collective self-construction and self-representation. It was an essential part of African American club work and associations. The politics of respectability was not just a mimicry of white behaviour; ‘it was a goal in itself and a strategy for reform of the entire structural system of American race relations.’ African American women who adhered to it believed that the manners and morals of African Americans, perfected under their tutelage, would subvert and transform the logics of race and gender subordination.

The politics of respectability could be used by African American women as a means of expressing their female identity and could promote an agenda for social change; however, it often trapped African American women in a contradictory position. Alongside the possibilities of female involvement in and authority over uplifting the race was a means to contain women in traditional gendered roles. In this way, like white women, African American women were trapped by notions of fixed gender and how far that could be tested in urban space. Furthermore, the authority middle-class African American women had over the social body of the community was never complete; it was subject to curtailment by African American men and by white men and women. Middle-class African American men and women found that they could reject the culture of the masses and promote bourgeois respectability, but they still could, and would, remain ostracized and held in contempt by whites.

Recent scholarship has expanded on the notion of respectability and on African American women’s agency in developing an ideology separate to that espoused by men such as W.E.B Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. Brittney Cooper has described the work of Washington and Du Bois as ‘hetero-masculinist theories’ of respectability. She has argued that African American women’s involvement in the project of respectability should change our understanding of existing traditions of black intellectual production. Cooper’s work has attempted to go beyond what Darlene Clark Hine called dissemblance,

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an influential theory which described how African American women sought to move the unwanted male (and female) gaze, and accompanying physical attention, away from their bodies, which were all too often viewed as hypersexualised and available, in order to retain some sense of privacy and agency.\(^{44}\) They did so by forming organisations like the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC).\(^{45}\) The promotion of African American female super-morality was connected to this idea of dissemblance. It allowed African American women agency over their bodies precisely because they avoided any undue attention to, or discussion of them, in what Hine termed a ‘cult of secrecy’.\(^{46}\) Conversely, Cooper has argued, that rather than avoid attention to their bodies, African American women encouraged it, and used it to promote a different ideological strain of respectability. They achieved this by linking their actual bodies to the social body of the race and the nation.

Similarly, Treva Lindsey’s recent work has considered how the appearance of and discussions about their bodies could encourage the agency of African American women, particularly in the flourishing black beauty culture. Beauty culture was the term used for an urban consumer culture based on bodily aesthetics, and covered products, services, and information about cosmetics and beauty. In St. Louis beauty culture thrived and was directed by energetic African American women, and it had important implications on how the community presented and supported itself and newly arrived southern migrants. However, the discussion of bodies, particularly those of poor southern migrants, allowed African American women to develop an ideological stance which bolstered their own socio-economic position, and in doing so echoed Du Bois’ elitism and belief that the middle class were the race’s natural cultural and moral arbitrators. Cooper acknowledges some of the class elitism within women’s clubs and in the uplift work they attempted, like Kevin Gaines she agrees that a moral stigma was placed on poverty within the uplift tradition.\(^{47}\) Cooper’s analysis does not go far enough in considering how class difference played out in discussions about the bodies of African American migrants

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arriving in the North, and about the social body of the expanding African American community. Furthermore, a reliance on beauty culture, despite its many possibilities for female economic and ideological independence, could mean that a developing alternative female version of respectability was still mired in traditional notions of femininity and beauty.

St. Louis had a well-established African American community, and this was one of the reasons why African American women’s involvement in the city space evolved in the way that it did. Cyprian Clamorgan documented ‘the colored aristocracy of St. Louis’ in 1858. Many African Americans lived in the Ville, and what became the surrounding Greater Ville. The Great Migration, and its consequences, complicated the perception and self-perception of the established, relatively affluent, parts of the African American community. Crucially, however, African American men never lost the elective franchise in St. Louis, so their votes had to be won; this meant that the African American community could eke out concessions from the Municipal Assembly. The African American community, with its male voters and female activists, did have a hand in shaping the city’s public and political culture.

This is not to say, however, that race relations in the city were cordial and without discrimination. It was the opposite. The situation only worsened throughout the period of this thesis. The city was a ‘northern city with southern exposure’, which is to suggest that in its economic outlook and ambitions to compete with the cities on the Eastern seaboard and Midwest St. Louis presented a northern attitude, but this was tempered by southern mentalities concerning race. To add further complication, the city was also promoted as the Gateway to the West, to a new frontier where anything might be possible, and so established patterns of behaviour seemed to be on a precipice and could fall into flux at any time. This sense of being outside of established modes of race relations, not quite in sync with the South or the North, meant that conversations about

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49 A prime example of this is the 1923 charter. In return for their support of the charter African Americans were granted the (segregated) Homer G. Phillips Hospital, see Priscilla Dowden-White, *Groping Toward Democracy: African American Social Welfare Reform in St. Louis, 1910-1949* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 167-69.
50 Dowden-White, *Groping Toward Democracy*, 5.
race and how it was to be conveyed and enacted in space became more contentious in St. Louis than in other large cities in the North and Midwest. In his analysis of St. Louis Joseph Heathcott has called it a border city due to its inconsistent patterns of segregation. St. Louis was also a border city in a border state, during the Civil War Missouri was a hotly contested space which was populated by both Union and Confederate sympathisers. As Adam Arenson has argued, Missouri, and in particular St. Louis, was at the epicentre of ‘three sides of the Civil War’, the North, South, and West. Situated on so many regional borders, the city was home to complex political and cultural allegiances. These allegiances and divergencies were played out in conversations about, and activity in, the city space.

St. Louis was, indeed, characterised by inconsistent patterns of segregation. African Americans rode unsegregated streetcars and could use the public library or visit the city’s grand municipal parks. However, once built, the municipal swimming pools were segregated and at local ‘five and dime’ restaurants African Americans customers were forced to eat at separate lunch counters. The city also consistently maintained segregated schools and public and private hospitals. Of course, Jim Crowism has been revealed as inconsistent and unstable, characterised by geographical differences which change over time and according to context. This meant that at times segregation in St. Louis was enforced more rigidly than in other places in the North and West, and at other times its inconsistency, particularly when combined with the pretensions of southern civility prevalent in the city, gave the African American community opportunities to develop arguments about justice and fairness for all.

The particularity of place, and distinction of the events that took place in St. Louis, should not be ignored. Due to a set of circumstances and attitudes which were distinct to

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55 Dowden-White, Groping Toward Democracy, 1-21.
St. Louis at the time, ideas about space, place, and appropriate behaviours became more contentious. Surprisingly, St. Louis is an understudied city, as urban historians have tended to focus upon bigger, more cosmopolitan, cities such as New York City and Chicago. Considering population size and diversity, as well as economic prospects, St. Louis pales in comparison with these cities, and it is precisely this that made the city’s plans and future development seem even more urgent. City boosters, planners, and politicians feared St. Louis was not comparable to cities on the Eastern seaboard, and its long-standing Midwestern rival Chicago. The terminal decline of the riverboat transportation that had been so important to St. Louis seemed to be prophetic of the rest of St. Louis’s future. St. Louis city boosters tried to promote the idea that the city could still be a powerful force in the nation’s development and sought to encourage the idea that they were promoting productive citizens of tomorrow via their urban design and management. However, try as they might the city was still anchored to the past glory of Mississippi river traffic; for example, The Heart of St. Louis suggested a thriving downtown, but the buildings still faced the river which dominates the lower section of the map. While the river depicted was resplendent with large boats the main trading routes had long shifted to the rail routes of Chicago.

City boosters were not only concerned about St. Louis’s relative position in the hierarchy of American cities, they worried about the ill-effects of a modern city on its inhabitants. The concern for the inhabitants of the rapidly changing city was not unique to St. Louis, social commentators and urban reformers in America, Great Britain, and on the European continent, had long warned of the corrupting condition of the city. Josiah Strong, a popular nineteenth-century commentator cautioned his readers that ‘we must face the inevitable. The new civilisation is certain to be urban, and the problem of the twentieth century will be the city’. The solutions St. Louis sought to rectify the perceived problems of the city were also not unique. The development of sanitary reform, the desire for City Beautiful and City Practical designs, changes in municipal management, and the creation of a female dominion in the urban environment, did not occur in isolation, rather in this period there was a flourishing of national alliances and associations. These organisations crossed city and state boundaries, and many reformers

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in St. Louis were members of such organisations. As such, they were part of a larger conversation about the condition of the city.\textsuperscript{57} Of principal interest to St. Louis’s city boosters and reformers was the City Beautiful.

The City Beautiful defies neat definition; as a movement, it stood for a host of practical goals drawn from urban Progressivism and rested upon a myriad of justifications and cultural assumptions. As a lobbying group and a design trend, it was tied up in the fervour to upgrade the city in the public interest.\textsuperscript{58} Early city planners such as George Ford and John Nolen further advanced the idea that ‘civic beauty’ could also be derived from the functional arrangements of elements of the city, from street paving and sidewalks, to the distribution of utilities and the location of factories.\textsuperscript{59} William Wilson has argued that the City Beautiful movement was political because it demanded a reorientation of public thought and action towards urban beauty.\textsuperscript{60} Wilson’s contention is valid, City Beautiful was mired in concerns about the urban environment and the effect it was having on the city’s inhabitants. City Beautiful was ‘a complex historical force rooted in local life and linked to the broader sweep of urban reform in the United States.’\textsuperscript{61} In St. Louis it became entangled in political debates about corruption, ethnic belonging, racial segregation, and the promotion of masculine municipal management. The City Beautiful suggested that urban beauty would be an intrinsic part of the development and dissemination of civic harmony, in which citizens would be encouraged to support their cities and the socio-economic arbiters who determined what was beautiful. To create this kind of civic beauty was a common cause for City Beautiful advocates, who argued that the city was to be understood as made up of interrelated elements, and beautification would be a way of defining the public interest in all of them and uniting them in a shared quest. However, ideas about the common good were contentious, and in St. Louis debates about it exposed fractures according to gender, race, ethnicity, and class.

\textsuperscript{57} Organisations such as: the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs; the National Association of Advancement of Colored People; the American League for Civic Improvement.
\textsuperscript{60} William Wilson, \textit{The City Beautiful Movement} (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 1.
\textsuperscript{61} Jon A. Peterson, \textit{The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840 -1917} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 98.
Despite the controvertible nature of the City Beautiful, it did hold a particular appeal in St. Louis and was taken up by many city boosters and Progressives in the city at the turn of the twentieth century. This happened for several reasons. The belief that the City Beautiful would improve the moral character of the people who lived amongst it appealed in a city which had been exposed on the national stage as corrupt and inept. The ‘boodle’, meaning bribery, had become synonymous with St. Louis. Local circuit attorney and future Missouri Governor, Joseph W. Folk – popularly known as ‘Holy Joe’ – went after ‘boodlers’ in cases involving election fraud, contracts for transit companies, and gambling licences. However, the practice was rife, and bribery had led to crippling monopolies of the city’s services and facilities and was brought to national attention by Lincoln Steffens in The Shame of the Cities.62 The term ‘The Big Cinch’ was coined by an anonymous writer in 1900 to describe the ‘local nobility’, which controlled ‘everything worth owning’, especially the banks, transit companies, and the gas, telephone, and electric franchises. They bought aldermen ‘like cattle’ and the city was ‘at its mercy’.63 One of the reasons why a renewed masculine municipal vision was pursued by civic and business leagues in Progressive Era St. Louis was to counter claims that the shadowy ‘Big Cinch’ and other boodlers controlled the city, and were responsible for its economic and political stagnation. In this way the City Beautiful did become tied to city boosterism and its gendered presentation of strong new men for a new city.

The belief that wholesale improvement of the environs would have a positive economic impact through greater investment, business opportunities, and (as the Million Club believed) an increase in productive citizens was appealing to reformers and commentators who felt a sense of St. Louis’s under-development. In this case, urban design could potentially counter the growing concern expressed by politicians, city boosters, journalists, and voters, that St. Louis had lost the race to become ‘the future great city of the world’.64 The City Beautiful was also enthusiastically taken up in St. Louis because the city had won the competition to host the 1904 World’s Fair. The fair would be a showcase of ideal city design which would be complemented by developments in

63 Primm, Lion of the Valley, 358; “What is the Big Cinch? Does it Rule St. Louis?,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 29, 1908, 1.  
the actual city of St. Louis.\textsuperscript{65} It seemed to many commentators and promoters that the fair offered a chance for the city to re-establish its national importance and achieve international prominence.

In 1901, Democratic Mayor Rolla Wells struggled against criticism levelled at municipal mismanagement and the immoral business practices of the ‘Big Cinch’. To galvanise support for reform measures Rolls announced ‘a New St. Louis’.\textsuperscript{66} Plans were hastily drawn up which sought to make this a reality, and the idea of ‘New St. Louis’ became associated with preparations for the World’s Fair. Prior to the commencement of the event there was several city-wide clean-ups, the water treatment centre at the Chain of Rocks was developed (which became a site for fair-goers to visit), and proposals were made to extend the statuary of the fair to downtown St. Louis. Furthermore, official images of the fair which were created before construction was completed, showed the beautiful White City and accompanying building ensemble emerging out of Forest Park; the unsanitary city space of the crowded ethnic slums near the Mississippi river had been usurped in the city’s imagination (and once the fair began, it seemed in reality) by an elegant, clean, and well-ordered city in the western reaches of St. Louis (Figure 4). The mirage of the fair and the harmonious relationship between urban design and the natural environs, proved to be constructed, unsustainable, and temporary. The monumental buildings of the White City were built from wood and a jute and plaster material known as staff, which due to its plasticity could be moulded and used as exterior covering and painted a uniform white. Nothing was solid in the White City, which had appeared in Forest Park, from May to December, like an apparition. It disappeared just as quickly.


\textsuperscript{66} Primm, \textit{Lion of the Valley}, 380-81; Rolla Wells, \textit{Episodes in My Life} (St. Louis: W.J McCarthy, 1933), 103-105.
The ideal of the White City was long remembered, but it was impossible to completely replicate outside of the fair’s fantasised space, as city planners and reformers came to realise.\(^7\) The idea and memory of the buildings and the White City layout became more tantalising because so few remnants of them survived.\(^8\) However, ideas of how a great city might ideally look, especially at its developed core, had been impressed on the collective memory of the citizens of St. Louis.\(^9\) The 1904 event had galvanised the efforts of urban reformers, firstly to prepare the city for its moment on the world stage, and secondly to keep the ideals of the White City alive once the fair had ended.

\(^8\) There are few remaining landmarks in St. Louis left from the fair: there is a statue of St. Louis in Forest Park, the remnants of a giant birdcage, and the only brick building that was part of the fair belongs to the University of Washington in St. Louis complex. Other world’s fairs were just as ephemeral, leaving few landmarks among the most famous are the Eiffel Tower in Paris (1889) and the Space Needle in Seattle (1962).
\(^9\) “ Beautify St. Louis with World’s Fair Statuary,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 04, 1904, 51.
Urban reformers found that their efforts were often rejected by voters when they were asked to decide on both charter reform and bond issues which would have paid for the proposed improvements. A prime example of this is the 1911 vote to reform the city charter; included in the proposed new charter were suggestions made by the Civic League for the extension of the Board of Public Improvements and the implementation of the civic centers outlined in their 1907 *City Plan*.\(^70\) Pitched as empowering the city to ‘compel good public utility service at reasonable rates’ and to eliminate the ‘spoilsmen, the grafters, the boodlers, the henchmen of the greedy interests’, the principal political change advocated in the proposed charter was the elimination of the House of Delegates.\(^71\) This would further centralise the city government, a process which had begun in 1876 in the Great Divorce. The House of Delegates was elected by ward and it was suggested that this would be replaced by a ‘plutocratic’ fifteen-member council elected at large, which would deny citizens in the wards access to their government.\(^72\) This, proponents claimed, was meant to be for the benefit of the city as a whole. The charter debate also got caught up in long-standing controversies around the ‘bridge arbitrary’ through which the Terminal Railroad Association levied tribute upon railroad freight, passengers, and waggon traffic.\(^73\) Not only did the arbitrary raise the cost of goods, it diverted some traffic away from the city. Opponents of the charter set about a campaign for a ‘Free Bridge’ which would allow greater and cheaper access to the city and, in its way, attack the ‘Big Cinch’ that operated the railways in St. Louis. The charter reform was resoundingly defeated in 1911 with only the affluent 23\(^{rd}\), 25\(^{th}\), and 28\(^{th}\) wards in the west end voting in favour.\(^74\) Clearly, the concept of a united city was contentious, there was the continued weariness of self-interested businesses and politicians. Notions of the common good, and how they should and could be addressed in St. Louis continued to be problematic throughout the period that this thesis addresses.

Chapter One of this thesis examines the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition, known as the 1904 World’s Fair, and looks at how the event was both described and experienced. Some parts of the built environment of the fair conveyed ideas about ideal

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\(^{71}\) “Vote for St. Louis,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 30, 1911, 8.

\(^{72}\) Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 402.

\(^{73}\) Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 400-1.

\(^{74}\) “Charter Vote by Wards,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 1, 1911, 9.
cities and the expected ideal behaviours of the citizens who occupied them. Exhibits like the Model City encouraged conversations about healthy and helpful environments and how they could influence citizens. However, as the Board of Lady Managers and the African American women of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs found, prescriptions of belonging in those ideal places was based on a gendered and racial vision of white (largely masculine) superiority. Women worked to try to change the types of behaviours and attitudes that were expected of them in the White City, and by extension in the city space more generally, however this was continually underpinned by fixed notions of eternal white femininity that was to be deferential to masculine visions of civic boosterism and imperial pretentions. This was conveyed in the fair’s space and how interactions within it were reported. African American women found that by choosing to remove themselves from this forum they found an alternative space in which they could shape their own activities and visions for their future and that of their community and their race.

The buildings of the fair and the arrangement of them worked to convey ideas about racial superiority and inferiority, so too did the bodies of the fair-goers and the performers who interacted with each other in the fair space. Chapter One investigates how movement, activities, and interactions between fair-goers and performers were reported and repeated in newspaper articles, souvenir booklets, and photography. American technological, intellectual, and racial superiority was conveyed at the fair and this was fortified by fixed gender assumptions and the imposition of a colour line. Female fair-goers, while contained within the precepts of white femininity, could move around the fair and observe the performers; conversely those performers were expected to enact a kind of ‘fixed’ behaviour according to their race, ethnicity, and gender.

Chapter Two provides an account of the Civic League of St. Louis, which was a reform-minded voluntary organisation active in the city between 1901 and 1916. Membership of the Civic League was dominated by prominent men of the city, who were involved in politics, business, and civic boosterism, and they sought to implement their version of civic morality through their activities in the organisation. Civic morality was a commitment to keeping the city clean, liveable, and beautiful. Self-interested individuals in St. Louis were encouraged to accept civic morality for the good of the city’s present
and future inhabitants, which meant they were to embrace the Progressive reforms and ideas of the League and vote for bond issues to pay for improvements to the city. The League believed certain inhabitants of the city, specifically those who lived in the poor ethnic areas in the south and the central corridor of the city, needed to learn and express public spiritedness. The Civic League monitored and measured the municipal activities, or lack thereof, of the city’s governing agencies to demonstrate that greater civic morality in business and the municipal government was also needed.

Adherence to this ethos could, and would, lead to further regulation, restriction, and re-education of certain parts of the city. The paramount importance of civic morality for both the present and future St. Louis was used as justification for this encroachment into citizens’ lives. Furthermore, acting as instructors, providers, and adjudicators of public spiritedness would ensure that Civic League members retained positions of importance in the cultural and political life of the city. However, the Civic League’s most ambitious plans failed to come to fruition because the organisation was unable to garner enough support from voters in ethnic wards, who rejected the League’s claims that their proposals were for the benefit of the whole city. Of greater success were small-scale efforts to beautify parts of the city through tree-planting and billboard regulation, this was because this sort of activity did not impact on peoples’ lives to a great extent. By looking at these failures and the successes the nature of Progressivism in the city is exposed, and it becomes clear that in this period there was a tussle around the nature of the common good in both who could determine its meaning and who could enact it. Progressivism in St. Louis should be considered as a contention around the ownership and direction of civic morality and the common good it supposedly encouraged; this adds further understanding to Progressive reform as a battleground in which definitions of class, ethnicity and gender came to the fore.

Considering gender difference and how that was enacted in activities within the city space of St. Louis is essential to Chapter Three. Middle-class white women engaged in voluntary work through their membership of social clubs to improve the city environs, help poor and immigrant families, and push a Progressive agenda that was concerned with social welfare. Women worked to expand their influence by criticising the traditionally male arenas of business and politics. Chapter Three pays close attention to
one female reformer’s Housing Report, which was written for the Civic League but included several critiques of male spheres of influence. This close reading provides insights into the creative ways female reformers spoke about urban space and the solutions they suggested to reform it.

The female dominion was created by reform-minded women to assist city inhabitants in times of need, and it acted as a counterweight to male-dominated planning and social control. However, it was complicated by issues of elitism based on class and ethnic and racial identities. Professional expertise in the areas of city planning and social reform was eventually monopolised by men, which served to curtail female voluntary efforts. A close examination of the gender politics of the Civic League reveals how women’s club work was adapted by men and used to curtail female influence and involvement in Progressive reform in the city.

Chapter Four deals with how middle-class African American women in St. Louis used and adapted notions of respectability in their social clubs, inter-racial committees, and commercial practices. They did so to bolster their own position in society, and to gain improvements to the facilities and services available to their community. The tactic of respectability also allowed African American women some authority over their self-presentation. They worked and re-worked notions of respectability, and by doing so became an essential part of a larger, longer-term project of uplifting the race.

Despite its possibilities, respectability was a problematic project, one which bolstered assumptions of class difference and was mired in gender politics. Many African American women who were dedicated to racial uplift saw themselves as bourgeois agents of civilisation, and they garnered moral and social authority from this position of privilege. However, African American women in St. Louis were still subject to criticism from both African American men and white men and women. The judgements made about these women were anchored by discrimination based on race, gender, and class.

In St. Louis, as elsewhere, an alternative (but connected) version of respectability was developed by African American women. This version of respectability was found in African American beauty culture, which provided African American women opportunities

75 Gaines, Uplifting the Race, 1.
for further charitable and community work. It also allowed them to include notions of self-care and health, which were specific to their gender, in the project of respectability. Like women’s involvement in clubs and committees, the remit of beauty culture could be contained by racial and gender-based prejudice, however Chapter Four argues that due to prescriptions of gender enacted in the increasingly segregated space of St. Louis African American women developed the means of political activity which was not available to white women.

The final chapter is concerned with the creation, maintenance, and policing of white space in St. Louis. The development of new leisure spaces saw the blurring of class distinctions, while a division based on skin colour became clearer. In the reconfiguration and re-appropriation of leisure spaces as racially exclusive, concerns about gender and sexuality remained significant. Between 1913 and 1916 the city implemented new segregation measures in leisure spaces, such as the Fairgrounds Pool, and residential spaces through the introduction of segregation ordinances. These were proposed measures that would legislate against black people moving into blocks which were already occupied by whites. In the debates leading to the popular referendum over this issue, a white supremacist group called the United Welfare Association (UWA) scared whites into supporting residential segregation by using strategies such as invoking property rights, arguing that segregation was for the benefit of African Americans, intimidating alderman and councillors who did not support them, and claiming that the press told lies. Another ploy was stoking fears of inter-racial sex and miscegenation. A close reading of the organisation’s pro-segregation magazine, *The Home Defender*, reveals that the fear of inter-racial sex drove demands for residential segregation.

Definitions of public space, and of who belonged in that space, changed over time. Urban space was re-worked and re-defined for people according to their class status and their racial identities, and in turn that re-defined space contributed to changing definitions of class, race and ethnicity. Against the backdrop of fears about sexual contact between the races what it meant to be white was reworked and demonstrated by visiting segregated leisure spaces and voting for, and benefitting from, residential segregation ordinances. The recourse to property values, which was related to the kind of civic boosterism deployed by the Civic League, was adopted by the UWA and
was designed to appeal to the aspirant ethnic population. By voting for segregation measures and attending segregated leisure spaces this small, but not insignificant, population ensured that it would be considered white in the Jim Crow city of St. Louis.

This thesis starts in 1890 and ends in 1918. The dates chosen are only loosely assigned because firstly the periodization of the Progressive Era is complicated and contentious, and secondly because city planning, or a version of it, began before 1890 and continued well beyond 1918. However, these dates do correspond with some specifically gendered interventions in city reform and planning in St. Louis. These dates provide a framework to look at the ‘contested political and cultural processes rather than simply policy imperatives or singular visions.’ In the 1890s women’s social clubs were beginning their involvement in the urban environment; they exercised their influence in parks and playgrounds and began to critique traditionally male spheres such as the saloon in an effort to replace the morally corrupt and unsanitary city with their maternalist vision. Their concerns and solutions were based on their observations, personal involvement, and emotional connections. This is what Elizabeth Belanger called micro planning, and Susan Marie Wirka termed the ‘City Social movement’, and this was an alternative and largely more successful endeavour than city planning envisioned on a grand scale. In 1918 Harland Bartholomew produced his *Zoning for St. Louis* for the City Plan Commission, which was an off-shoot of the Civic League’s City Plan Committee formed over a decade earlier. Zoning marked the culmination of thinking about private land in a public sense, which had been obvious in the Civic League’s approach to creating and managing space apparently for the greater public good. The process recommended by Bartholomew would attempt to earmark land for specific purposes, and both the marking of that space and the determination of what could and could not be done there would fall to the professional male city planner and the municipal machinery. Zoned areas would be integral to Bartholomew’s centralised city plan, the epitome of macro

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78 Harland Bartholomew, *Zoning for St. Louis: A Fundamental Part of the City Plan* (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1918).
planning. Zoning was also a racialised process and would go on to have a huge impact on opportunities and restrictions in the lives of the people who lived there. It is appropriate that a study which looks at both official and unofficial groups and agencies, and which considers how emotional attachments to place and disinterested bureaucracy can contribute to changing both the urban environment and descriptions of race and racialised space, should be bookended in this way.
Chapter One

Inspiration, Instruction, and Imperialism:

Constructing Racial and Gendered Knowledge at the World’s Fair

Figure 5. ‘Mr Lazarnick and Mrs Jessie Tarbox Beals about to ascend in a captive balloon to take mid-air photos at the 1904 World’s Fair,’ Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Missouri Historical Society Photographs and Prints Collection.

Jessie Tarbox Beals, a pioneering female photographer, left her home in Greenfield, Massachusetts and arrived in St. Louis intent on documenting the 1904 World’s Fair. Beals’ photography became incredibly popular, and as a freelance photographer she sold her work to newspapers throughout the United States. The President of the World’s Fair and Director of the associated Louisiana Purchase Exposition company (the LPE), David R. Francis, recommended Beals to the fair’s Superior Jury for a grand prize for distinguished services.¹ Her work was also applauded by the International Congress of Arts and Sciences, and she was the only woman at the World’s Fair to be shown this honour.² Beals was described as ‘the best-known woman at the World’s Fair...[who] sees everything and is seen by everybody.’³ She stated that her ‘experiences have been novel and exciting’ and indeed she did push the boundaries of the technology available, the

¹ “Prize for Photographer,” St. Louis Republic, December 9, 1904, 5.
² “How I Photographed the World’s Fair,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 23, 1904, 52.
³ “How I Photographed the World’s Fair,” 52.
medium of photography, and the expectations of feminine behaviour at the fair. She ascended the St. Louis sky in a captive balloon (Figure 5) in order to take aerial photographs of the site, and she ‘told distinguished and handsome gentlemen to “Now look happy, please, like this!”’ and set about ensuring that they were arranged in a pleasing and artistic manner.⁴ The opportunity for a woman to arrange the image of leading men of the city, nation, and the world was unusual especially in the context of the fair which was itself arranged around notions of decorum and acquiesce to a belief in the fixed nature of white femininity as subservient to white masculinity. Beals could occupy ‘a place exclusively of her own’ via her work and involvement in the event partly because her ground-breaking experiences became an attraction at the fair.⁵ She capitalised on this public interest, and she produced many self-portraits and appeared in other photographers’ work demonstrating her bravery by scaling ladders, riding in balloons, and leaning over the Olympic lake to take photographs of the swimmers.⁶ These images were reproduced in the city’s leading newspapers. The freedom Beals enjoyed tested the remit of women’s employment and engagement at the fair and by extension in the city and nation. However, Beals proved to be an outlier, women at the fair found that their contributions to the progress and prosperity of the nation were largely ignored or usurped.

When Beals had first arrived in St. Louis she had struggled to find employment. She attributed her eventual success to a ‘picture scoop’ involving the giant Patagonians who were among many human performers at the fair. Beals explained that when the Patagonians arrived at the fair to take up residence on Anthropology Hill, an area dedicated to the supposedly scientific study of different peoples managed by the Smithsonian Institute’s Bureau of American Ethnology, she took the opportunity to quickly take their photographs. The Patagonians then refused to have their photographs taken by some of the male photographers, and one of the Patagonian Chiefs destroyed a camera and ‘retired to a dark cave’.⁷ Thus, Beals had found and used an opportunity created by her gender difference. This story was often repeated as it appealed to the

⁴ “How I Photographed the World’s Fair,” 52.
⁵ “How I Photographed the World’s Fair,” 52.
⁶ The Olympic Games, the first to be held outside Europe, was part of the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair.
⁷ “How I Photographed the World’s Fair,” 52.
belief that white Anglo-Saxon American men were superior, because it insinuated that the reason the Patagonians had rejected the male photographers was because they did not understand the technology or the motives behind the photographs. The Patagonians, like the other human performers, were described as childlike and inferior in ability and understanding when compared to modern white men. The opportunity Beals took highlighted her racial superiority over the Patagonians but it also served to mark the difference between herself and the other photographers.

Beals was not the only female photographer involved in the fair. The Gerhard Sisters, Emme and Mayme, owned a successful portrait studio on Olive Street in midtown St. Louis, also took many photographs of the human performers. The Gerhards were the first female photographers to establish a studio the city. They took their photographs of the human performers either in situ, principally of the performers on the Pike, or at their studio. The Gerhard Sisters described their studio photographs as ‘Aboriginal Portraits’, and while they strove to take naturalistic images their subjects were arranged to show their supposedly inferiority through the use of props such as primitive weapons and crafts, by wearing revealing costumes, or via the focus on particular features on their bodies (Figure 6). The Gerhard sisters, like Beals, were involved in the depiction and dissemination of images and ideas which related to notions of racial and ethnic inferiority.

American world’s fairs were a response to the late nineteenth-century technological and scientific changes which permeated everyday life. Mass culture and consumption combined with the decline of traditional social orders to transform increasingly urbanised American lives.\(^9\) This was the phenomenon of modernity.\(^10\)

Modernity disrupted notions of permanency and produced a feeling of perpetual movement that, in the words of Stuart Hall ‘speeded up, dissolved, displaced, transformed, and reshaped’ the present, destroyed the past, and transformed the future.\(^11\) In the process of ‘becoming’ and comprehending how racial knowledge should be interpreted and enacted, fair-goers were involved in the process of ‘making’ themselves modern, as opposed to being ‘made’ modern by alien and impersonal forces.\(^12\) They did this by comparing themselves with the timeless types of the human racial and ethnic performers, many of whom lived at the fair. These comparisons were laid out in newspaper reports and the monthly *World’s Fair Bulletin*, the production of

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which began several years before the actual event commenced. The process of reading about the different types of African and Philippine tribes that were scheduled to visit St. Louis allowed potential fair-goers to learn that they were apparently distinctly different from them. This difference was then enacted in the actual space of the fair’s grounds. Government agencies, scientific boards, diplomatic departments, local and national organisations, and the LPE Company were all involved in communicating this racial difference.

At the fair visitors enacted an identity and a destiny which was tied up with the fate of the American imperial project. First generation immigrants could visit representations of their homeland at the fair, but crucially they attended as visitors, they were then free to move around the fair’s site, to sign the visitors’ book in their home state building to mark their new allegiances, and to visit the great exhibition halls and marvel at the technological developments of the day. Set against the disorientating act of becoming modern, the performers were displayed as ‘timeless’ native ‘types’ presented in a living diorama. Becoming a modern white American citizen happened at the fair via the appreciation of, and movement through, the built environment and through interactions with ethnic and racial performers.

Female fairgoers were in a more complex position. As modern Americans they were expected to be consumers of the new imperial project, and in many ways the exhibition halls looked like, and represented, the developing Department Stores found in many downtown cities including St. Louis. In line with changing attitudes about the ‘New Women’ in the urban environment, white women’s behaviour, dress, interests and aspirations at the fair were widely reported. However, white women could not be seen to have changed beyond recognition. This was because the foundations of racial and ethnic divisions were based on notions of unchanging white womanhood. The LPE Company (set up to organise the event, ensure its profitability, and later preserve its memory), private concessions, government agencies, diplomatic relations, and scientific organisations each relied on a sense of readily identifiable white womanhood. White women in turn could test the boundaries that new commercial practices allowed them,

but they were still contained by a narrow focus on femininity. African American women were excluded from this focus and as part of a larger protest over race relations at the fair chose to disengage from the event.

Any consideration of the St. Louis World’s Fair should encompass both the built environment and the way that human bodies engaged with it, because each in different ways contributed to the presentation of womanhood to be understood in the American imperial project. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part looks at the fair’s Board of Lady Managers and the protest made by the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs. Part two looks at some aspects of the built environment and what that suggests about new ideas of municipal management and design, and how women represented by the Board of Lady Managers were side-lined in this project. Nascent city planning, urban management, and world’s fair design were interlinked and how the built environment of the fair reflected and fed into ideals about the City Beautiful has been considered by scholars such as Jon A. Peterson and William Wilson.\(^{15}\) The case study of the Model City highlights some of the problems encountered by the American League for Civic Improvement at the fair. The fair’s composition, particularly the White City and its central ensemble of administrative buildings, served as an inspiration to national and local city planners and had done so since its introduction at Chicago’s Columbian Exposition (World’s Fair) in 1893. However, conversations about the Model City, and how it related to the wider city space of St. Louis highlight particular racial and gendered concerns of the city which came to the fore in the controversy about a proposed ‘Negro Clubhouse’ firstly in the surrounding Cabanne neighbourhood and finally in the Model City itself.\(^{16}\) The reports and the response by white homeowners are instructive of later battles concerning race, space, and belonging. The third part of this chapter investigates how comparisons between white men and white women and the ethnic performers at the fair were made to suggest that the American imperial project was inevitable due to racial difference marked by the colour line. Several case studies of the human exhibits at the fair are included in this chapter to show how the performers were used to convey


\(^{16}\) “Negro Headquarters at Fair,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 10, 1904, 15.
ideas about white racial superiority via reference to gender. These case studies – the female performers found in the entertainment area called the Pike, the Filipinos who lived on the Philippine Reservation, and the Pygmies who apparently represented ‘Darkest Africa’ – are important, in part, because they point to the construction of racial knowledge and the maintenance of an overarching system of white supremacy at the fair that used white womanhood as its cornerstone.

Part I – The Board of Lady Managers and National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs at the Fair

Figure 7. Jessie Tarbox Beals, ‘View of the Fair,’ Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Missouri Historical Society Photographs and Prints Collection. Like Camille Dry in 1875 and the 1909 balloonists of the Million Population Club, Beals looked down on the space below her. One of the few stone structures of the fair is pictured in the background (marked with a red arrow). This building was part of the University of Washington and was lent to the LPE Company for the duration of the event. It was the Administration Building and behind it (just visible) was the building of the Board of Lady Managers. The landscaped space that ran alongside this ensemble was the barracks and parade grounds from which African American veterans were barred.

The Board of Lady Managers had been a part of the Columbian World’s Fair, where there had been a Women’s Building in which women’s achievements and contributions were displayed. The reception of this had been fairly disappointing for the female organisers as many commentators argued that the displays proved the inferior abilities of women in comparison to men. In St. Louis the arrangement was different. There was still a Board of Lady Managers Building (Figure 7), but the artistic, technological, scientific, cultural, and political contributions made by women across the
cities, states, and nations involved in the World’s Fair were to be infused throughout the
exhibition and in its great display halls. This meant that the Board of Lady Managers
Building served as a place of refinement and hospitality, rather than of display. The
building had been ‘fitted and furnished with the comfort of women always in view.’ However, the space was still educational because the supposed true essence of white
womanhood and femininity was enacted there.

The decision to arrange the Board of Lady Managers Building and women’s
contributions in this way was reached through discussions between the Executive Boards
of the (temporary) Lady Managers and the LPE Company; the recommendation was then
passed to the United States Congress who agreed to fund the building and to cover the
costs of the hosting duties which would go on there. On March 3, 1901 an Act of
Congress was passed which gave the Louisiana Purchase Exposition the official
recognition of the United States government. In this Act there was a provision to ensure
that the LPE Company appointed a Board of Lady Managers for the entire duration of the
fair. The final appropriations award to the Lady Managers by Congress was $100,000.
This funding came with the expectation that the Board of Lady Managers would serve as
part of the diplomatic contingent of the fair and help to promote the idea of the right
and the might of the American imperial project. They would do this through playing the
role of refined hostesses.

The Board of Lady Managers had sought exhibits produced in whole or in part by
women, and rather than displaying women’s contributions as separate to that of men
they would be included in the story of national progress to ‘prove the rapid advancement
and increased usefulness of women’. It was believed that the influence of women
would not be merely confined within the walls of a single building but would be
celebrated throughout the fair. In the reports written after the event had ended the
Board of Lady Managers bemoaned the fact that because women’s contributions were
spread across the site their involvement and achievement had gone largely
unacknowledged. The decision to include women’s work in any appropriate exhibition

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17 Board of Lady Managers, Report to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (St. Louis: LPE Company, 1905), 48.
18 Board of Lady Managers, Report, 46.
19 Board of Lady Managers, Report, 87.
20 Board of Lady Managers, Report, 24.
hall had been made to show that women’s work covered every aspect on display, however in the descriptions of those exhibits women’s names were often excluded. The only state exhibit that was managed by a woman was that of Alaska, and no female contributions were identified by the Lady Manager’s Jury in machinery, electricity, transportation, livestock, forestry, mines and metallurgy, fish and game, anthropology, and physical culture. Furthermore, there was no Hall of Philanthropy at the fair so women’s long-standing and increasing involvement in this field was not recorded.21

The Board of Lady Managers was made up of nationally renown women, which meant that women from St. Louis did not dominate. Miss Daniel Manning was the President and she was from Albany, New York; the other seven Vice Presidents were from Ohio, Colorado, California, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Kansas, and Georgia. There were barely any women from Missouri included in the final roll call. The application for President which was made by Mrs Philip N. Moore (a prominent urban reformer, clubwoman, and socialite) had been mysteriously lost, much to the consternation of her social club and the city’s press who keenly made the connection between the involvement of prominent St. Louisans in the fair and ongoing city boosterism.23

There was further speculation in the press regarding the expectations and standards of the Board of Lady Managers. They were meant to be the epitome of femininity, refinement, and the unchanging nature of white womanhood. If they did make any advances the press suggested that it was down to their feminine charms. A ‘newspaper man’ had an apparently ‘pertinent query’ which questioned whether clubwomen flirted, ‘or, rather, WILL they flirt?’ (capitals in original), and he went on to wonder what will be ‘the consequent effect on municipal reform?’24 Women’s expertise and authority on philanthropy and urban improvements was derided and explained away by their sexuality.

The Board of Lady Managers desired to bring ‘representative women’ from the United States and foreign countries for discussion and comparison of all educational,

21 Board of Lady Managers, Report, 240.
22 “No Hall of Philanthropy,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 21, 1902, 5.
charitable, and industrial aspirations... (in order to) strengthen their common cause and making possible uniformity of action, (to) promote the advancement of women everywhere. However, the plans ‘were doomed’ as there was no means for carrying out this work provided by the LPE Company and the Board’s own appropriation from Congress was not received in time to make this possible. Therefore, larger organisations and national associations held their own meetings throughout 1904 at the fair and there was no sense of a unified Women’s Congress. It served the needs of the LPE Company and the United States government that the Board of Lady Managers stayed apolitical, and tended to their hosting duties, and when they were celebrated it was for contributions in traditional feminine fields like art and education and for their refinement.

The Board of Lady Managers expressed dismay that the full weight of their contributions to the fair and to national progress went unacknowledged, for African American women the situation was even worse. The absence of African Americans in American World Fairs had always been controversial. In 1893 African American leaders throughout the United States had protested their exclusion from planning the Chicago World’s Fair. Ida B. Wells, Frederick Douglass, educator Irvine Garland Penn, and lawyer and newspaper publisher Ferdinand L. Barnett directly addressed the lack of a substantial African American presence at the fair in The Reason Why the Colored American is Not at the Columbian Exposition. Wells was the primary author, and in the volume’s preface she undercut the idea that American progress was being shown to the world by reminding her readers of who had supported, even created, that progress, ‘the first credit this country had in its commerce with foreign nations was created by productions resulting from their [slave] labor. The wealth created by their industry has afforded to the white people of this country the leisure essential to their great progress in education, art, science, industry and invention.’ Wells refused the erasure of African American voices, and stressed that their experiences and histories were an essential element of American

25 Board of Lady Managers, Report, 129-133.
26 Board of Lady Managers, Report, 130-131.
Many African Americans boycotted Chicago’s World Fair in protest over their erasure from the story of the nation’s past, present, and future. Such protests continued in St. Louis and, taking inspiration from Ida B. Wells, they were led by women.

Negotiations had been held to establish a Negro Day (or Emancipation Day) at St. Louis’s World’s Fair. Hopes were dashed when unfavourable publicity about segregation on the grounds reached the national press. African American newspapers across the country repeated the story of the black Eighth Illinois Regiment, which had planned an encampment on the fair grounds but had cancelled when the fair officials demanded that they set up on separate grounds (Figure 7). The official stance was the result of the insistence by southern-state military groups, who refused to share space with African American soldiers. The manhood of the Eighth Illinois Regiment was deemed to not be equal to that of other soldiers, so they were prevented from sharing the same space in the fair.

The National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC), of which Ida B. Wells had been an energetic founding member, also boycotted their planned biannual convention which was to be held on the fairgrounds. Instead, they held their meeting at a church in the Ville. The NACWC had arranged to hold their session in the Hall of Congresses at the fair, however, they cancelled and gave the reason for doing this as the ‘alleged discrimination against negroes at the fair.’ It was reported that Mrs Hallie Brown of St. Louis had been refused service by waiters at a fair restaurant ‘when she was accompanied by a negro man.’ This case shows how African American women had access to some of the benefits enjoyed by white women, they could be treated courteously in the refined restaurants of the fair. However, it seems that the presence of an African American man with Mrs Brown effected how she was treated, and so the benefits related to her femininity were denied.

32 “Coloured Women Stay Away from Fair,” St. Louis Globe-Democrat, July 13, 1904, 3. For more on this organisation and African American women’s clubs, see Chapter Four.
33 “Colored Women Feel Offended,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 13, 1904, 7.
34 “Colored Women Feel Offended,” 7.
In the discussion of the boycott, a local member of the NACW, Mrs M.F Pitts, was keen to stress that African American fair-goers had been treated ‘very courteously by the fair management’, and it had been the concessionaries that had shown discrimination based on race. The fair management could thus avoid becoming embroiled in debates about race relations at the fair because they could simply say that as private, separate, businesses the concessions had the right to refuse service to whomever they chose. Interestingly, in the vote to decide the boycott the Missouri delegates had objected to the action and were keen to continue with the arrangements already made. They probably did this to support their home state and the city of St. Louis, because they would have been well aware of how much the fair had become associated with civic pride and the future prosperity of the city. The Missouri delegates were outvoted. The women of the NACWC chose to show solidarity with African American men.

Due to the boycotts there was very little representation of African American contributions to the nation’s past, present, or predicted future. The white women of the Board of Lady Managers had been exasperated that women’s contributions had been swallowed up in the presentation of the great male leaders, inventors, diplomats, and artists, and African American women were further frustrated by the erasure of the contributions made by their race for the nation. The only exhibit that featured African Americans was the Old Plantation. It was a dilapidated structure which represented an old slave shack and it could be found on the Pike, which was the entertainment strip on the fair. An African American family ‘lived’ in the shack, although there is little evidence that the performers permanently stayed on site like the Filipinos, Pygmies, and Native Americans did. The family were referred to as ‘negroes’ rather than slaves. For an entrance fee fair-goers were entertained by ‘Laughing Ben’ who acted as the epitome of the ‘happy slave.’ The exhibit was, in part, designed to be educational in that it offered a nostalgic mis-remembering of slavery for contemporary Americans. The shack was removed from any depictions of forced labour, rather it was presented as a domestic scene which served to underline the idea that African Americans belonged in domestic service.

35 Gilbert, Whose Fair?, 192.
36 ‘Negroe, Old Plantation on the Pike (also called “Laughing Ben”),’ Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Missouri Historical Society Photographs and Prints Collection.
The women of the NACWC had voted to boycott the fair and Negro Day had been cancelled. By choosing to remove themselves from a venue which tolerated discrimination they laid claim to a higher morality, which was essential in the shaping of African American respectability as it was understood in this era. The vote to boycott had not been without controversy among the local members, which suggests that they were conscious of the difficult terrain they were trying to navigate; clearly, racial solidarity was not compatible with civic pride in the fair and the city of St. Louis.

**Part II – St. Louis: A Fair and Beautiful City?**

Of all the sights at the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the most memorable was the White City. Author James W. Buel, in one of several officially sanctioned records of the fair, described the White City ‘upon the brow of a hill of emerald, outlined against the sky, an exquisite creation realizing the most extravagant fancy, gleaming with a wondrous beauty during the day and scintillating like a massive moonstone under festoons of illumination at night, a dominant gem in a priceless cluster.’\(^{37}\) Such hyperbole was typical of the way visitors described the White City.\(^{38}\) ‘The first impression’ of the White City, said *Harper’s Weekly*, ‘takes possession of the beholder.’\(^{39}\) The widely reported emotional responses to the place focused on how the fair-goer, as a temporary inhabitant of the White City, was both struck by its beauty (to the extent that some women reportedly fainted upon arrival) and driven (or even shocked) into a change in behaviour and outlook, however temporary.\(^{40}\) The White City seemed like a physical manifestation of City Beautiful theories, which centred on the belief that an elegant and well-ordered physical environment would result in an improved citizenry.

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Figure 8. ‘Festival Hall and Cascades,’ Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Missouri Historical Society Photographs and Prints Collection. This view was often described as the ‘Main Picture’, it was a particular ensemble of buildings, sculptures, and water features that were best viewed from a specific angle. Fair-goers were directed to look at this in a certain way, and hopefully have similar reactions to the beauty of the view. The Main Picture was reproduced on postcards, in souvenir books, and in stereographs which produced a three-dimensional effect. The constructed nature of the place was therefore reproduced many times over, but in the still images the fair-goers' behaviours and movements were never captured or considered. This means that these kinds of images acted in tandem with descriptions of fairgoers in newspapers and official souvenir books.

The White City was made up of huge exhibition buildings, the exteriors of which were uniformly white, decorated in Beaux Arts motifs, and designed to evoke Renaissance traditions; these buildings were crammed with endless displays of new technologies, scientific innovations, and examples of 'high' culture and achievement. The most stunning part of the enormous White City was the Court of Honor: an elongated space framed by white neo-classical buildings and colonnades and overlooking a great oblong water basin. Against the sweeping views of this vast scene rose the Festival Hall (Figure 8), with its decorative dome towering tier upon tier above the rest.
The standard way that World’s Fair buildings were designed was set when it was first unveiled as an integral part of Chicago’s Columbian Exposition in 1893. Daniel Burnham, famed Chicago architect and the Director of Works and Chief of Construction for the Columbian Exposition, introduced the White City paradigm to fair design; prior to this, fairs in the United States had lacked coherence, elegance, and an overall plan. Henry Van Brunt, one of the architects of the Columbian Exposition, stated that he and his colleagues had sought ‘a memorable impression of architectural harmony on a vast scale’, and had studied ‘the forums, basilicas, and baths of the Roman Empire, the villas and gardens of the princes of the Italian Renaissance, [and] the royal courtyards of the palaces of France and Spain’, and in doing so they had recalled ‘the most brilliant era in the history of the world – the new birth of the mind, the revival of learning, the reformation in religious, political, and social life which made modern civilization possible.’ The architects of the Columbian Exposition believed that architectural classicism expressed a civilising mission, and this was premised on their nineteenth-century belief in the morally uplifting influence of art. Crucially, the best of European design and the enlightened thought it apparently reflected had been transported to the United States, where, underpinned by the technological and commercial marvels of the day, the Renaissance had seemingly reached its pinnacle.

Writing in 1903, famed City Beautiful advocate Charles Zueblin declared the White City ‘a miniature of the ideal city’ and a ‘prophecy’ of what the nation could be. The White City reflected the thinking of many City Beautiful supporters, who argued that ‘not only did civic beauty betoken civic spirit, it also suggested cleanliness, social caring, good government, and moral purity.’ Urban reformers’ concerns about a populace that could not be properly monitored and controlled, and environments that encouraged the presence of transient workers and strangers, were absent from the White City. The dangers which preoccupied city-dwellers were no longer apparent,

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44 Peterson, *Birth of City Planning*, 147.
45 Peterson, *Birth of City Planning*, 146.
their usual concerns could be overcome. Worries about night-time space dissipated, for visitors could linger ‘till the last lamp was extinguished, watching the weird effects of the grand illumination scheme and the gondolas and other picturesque water craft gliding along the lagoons and under the bridges.’

Fair-goers were safe during the day and at night in the sanitised and policed environment of the White City. The ways in which the fair was policed by authorities was largely forgotten by promoters of the City Beautiful, who chose to see the change in the behaviour of fair-goers as evidence of the positive moral effects of the beautiful designs.

Fair-goers learnt behaviours and the expected attitudes to present in a modern American city at the fair and they could then try to enact this in the real city of St. Louis. They could visit new municipal marvels such as the water treatment plant at Chain of Rocks in the north of the city, and they could read about and go and see the exclusive spaces of the ‘Private Places’ of St. Louis which framed Forest Park. Progressive reformers, particularly when creating the Civic League’s City Plan in 1907 attempted to revisit the social cohesion and municipal management that they thought was evident in exhibits like the Model City/Street, in images of the ordered White City, and in the way that St. Louis was celebrated during the fair. The LPE Company claimed that ‘whatever the fair can do towards exhibiting the best models of municipal effort, the best appliances and methods of municipal service, the best guides toward municipal growth and improvement, will be in discharge of its most important duty as a public educator’.

Despite its complications and contradictions, City Beautiful advocates and urban reformers and planners across the country continued to be inspired by the design and aesthetics of the White City and the exhibits of social economy and municipal management. The coherence of the White City, however ephemeral and illusionary, was a central part of the proposed City Plan which was concerned with public building groupings, civic centers, landscaped vistas, and the municipal management and leadership of the great men of the city, including the fair’s President former Governor of St. Louis, Mark Bennitt and Frank Parker Stockbridge.

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Missouri David R. Francis who became involved in the Civic League’s Inner and Outer Park Committee.

The longstanding belief, expressed by a variety of scholars and urban planners, that the Chicago World’s Fair marked the beginning of the city planning movement in the United States testifies to the influence of the White City’s Court of Honor, especially as it was recollected during the Progressive Era.\footnote{Roy Lubove, The Progressives and the Slums: Tenement House Reform in New York City, 1890-1917 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962); William I. Goodman and Eric C. Freund, Principle and Practice of Urban Planning (Washington DC: International City Managers Association, 1968).} Peterson has persuasively argued that, although this belief is often repeated, it is a myth.\footnote{Peterson, Birth of City Planning, 57.} This myth obscures antecedents to city planning, such as the American tradition of the veneration of rural life and concern about any threat to it, sanitary reform, and landscape values which developed between 1840 and 1900, alongside the introduction of civic art in the early 1890s.\footnote{Peterson, Birth of City Planning, 29-55.} However, it should be argued that like many such beliefs the myth contains some truth. The Court of Honor and the rest of the White City did offer an image of an ideal city. Unfortunately, the ensemble did not present a usable model of comprehensive city planning from which all designs and activities would readily follow.

Attempts to give the City Beautiful a tangible and municipal context came of age in 1901, this was when five key organisations of national stature – the Municipal Art Society, the American Architectural League, the Scenic Society, the National Municipal League, and the American Park and Outdoor Association – joined forces within the American League for Civic Improvement to propose the ambitious ‘Model City’ exhibit for the upcoming St. Louis World’s Fair. In St. Louis there was, therefore, an important intervention in the development of usable city planning found in the form of the Model City exhibit. Charles Mulford Robinson, the nationally renowned spokesperson for the City Beautiful, wrote that ‘all will be orderly, cleanly, and dignified’ in the Model City, however there were continued controversies surrounding...
the space, who belonged there, and who should manage the activities that took place in this mini idealised city.\textsuperscript{53}

World’s fairs were places where visitors were asked to act ‘modern’ within the gaze of one’s peers, as Tony Bennett noted ‘new technologies of vision’ made the masses visible to themselves.\textsuperscript{54} At the St. Louis World’s Fair there was no greater opportunity for the fair-goers to be part of the spectacle, and to experience the means by which modern behaviour would be regulated in an ideal city than at the Model City exhibition. This showcase for City Beautiful ideals has only briefly appeared in scholarly handling of the development of urban planning in America, and little discussion has been dedicated to it in fair scholarship.\textsuperscript{55} The reason for this may be that the Model City largely failed in its original objective, for budgetary reasons the city was downgraded to a street (although it was still always referred to as a city).\textsuperscript{56} However, in its conception and execution the Model City/Street reveals some of the ways that racial and gendered knowledge was constructed through the very buildings of the World’s Fair.

The American League for Civic Improvement initiated the idea for the Model City in August 1901. Philadelphian architect Albert Kelsey, with the assistance of Robinson, devised a radial-concentric design for a ten-acre site. It was meant to portray an ideal city, as it was an abstract rendering of what could be achieved in any urban centre. Visitors, urban planners, and municipal managers were meant to be inspired, and the act of walking around the exhibit was meant to be educational with further information about city planning dotted around the Model City for visitors to read and digest. In the original plan, at the centre of the Model City, was an architectural ensemble which included a town hall and post office. The arrangement would also feature a ‘Court of

\textsuperscript{56} The street eventually produced was a 1,200ft linear corridor which was approximately the length of four city blocks.
Honor’ for ‘civic pageants’. While the Model City’s Court of Honor mirrored that of the White City the League was keen to show the kind of real-life activity that could, and would, go on in their idealised space; within the building ensemble there was a model schoolhouse, a tenement, and a bath house. The Model City’s library was filled with books about municipal management, and the town hall displayed data from various cities, making ‘the Model City a kind of inter-textual experience, where the various parts formed a web of connected and reinforcing references.’

Some of the initial proposals made by Kelsey were published in a World’s Fair Bulletin (Figure 9). Kelsey’s ideal city was pictured as ‘a county seat’ which should not have more than 30,000 inhabitants. From the very beginning, in the designs of the Model

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City there was a disconnect between reflecting parochial pretentions and the attempts to deal with the reality of ever-growing American cities and other urban centres across the world. Some Progressive concerns such as garbage disposal and the positioning and availability of fire houses and police stations were addressed in the original designs. The official buildings were to be at the centre of the ensemble with recreational, educational, and commercial areas surrounding it. In the original plan there was a selection of different types of street design: cross streets, grid pattern, and circular. Part of the instruction and education of the proposed exhibit was that people could see the type of options available. Furthermore, it was mooted that samples of the leading thoroughfares of the world would also be exhibited. This proposal, which sought to take the best of what already existed in successful cities and utilise this in an American context, was later disregarded as too ambitious in consideration of the budgetary requirements and the space available at the fair.

Education and instruction were to be paramount and would be encouraged by both the design of and activities in the Model City. In the Model City, there would be ‘no overhead wires’, ‘no chimneys belching black smoke’, ‘no statues surrounded by mud’, and ‘no vistas closed by screaming billboards’. The exhibit, Kelsey suggested, might be called ‘Spotless Town.’ In the proposed Model City, alongside the scientific and practical approaches to managing thoroughfares, there would continue to be a great concern for the aesthetic possibilities of future cities. Advocates of the City Beautiful and Progressive reformers often spoke of the appearance of the urban environment, but this did not mean that they were only concerned with the aesthetic of the city space, rather they believed that urban design could influence civic behaviour. In the Model City many different designs of streetlights, advertisement booths, and water fountains were presented, indeed the ornate lights were extended to the Lindell Boulevard entrance of the fair (Figure 10). These streetlights remained a permanent feature at the edge of Forest Park and were reproduced in the Central West End once the fair was over. This kind of beautification was meant to encourage civic pride and a feeling of good will

61 “Brilliant New Illumination for Forest Park Entrance,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, April 17, 1904, 2. The streetlights are still a famous feature of the Central West End neighbourhood.
towards municipal management, but after the fair was over it was only the affluent areas in the west of the city which benefitted.

Figure 10. St. Louis World's Fair Map (St Louis: Woodward & Tiernan Print Company, 1903). The Model City's original circular design which had thoroughfares of the world intersecting through it was abandoned due to budgetary and time constraints. The Model City became a long street (indicated by the blue arrow). Lindell Boulevard entrance and Wabash Station are visible in the lower left-hand corner.

The Model City’s placement underlines the relationship City Beautiful advocates and urban reformers had with the aesthetic and political aspects of their planning ethos, the exhibit was intended to be separate from the White City but it still was placed behind the Court of Honor. If the White City was set to be a demonstration of virtue and abstractions, then the Model City was about urban reality, or a very particular version thereof. Any visitor requiring first aid would be taken to the Model City to receive treatment, and if the Jefferson Guard (who patrolled and policed the Fair) found any lost children they would take them there. In this way the Model City was an integral part of the workings of the fair. Significantly, the intramural railway, which circumnavigated the whole of the fair, terminated at the Model City (station 17 pictured in Figure 10). This meant that most fair-goers would see and experience the Model City. Visitors could then walk a short distance to Wabash Station, which was outside of the fairgrounds, and they
could visit the rest of the city via street car (Figure 11). If visitors entered the fair via the Lindell Boulevard entrance the Model City was the first exhibit they would see, and this arrangement had been carefully planned, with the connection between the Model City and ‘New St. Louis’ stressed in many guidebooks and maps.\(^6^2\)

![Figure 11. Alex E. Jacobs, ed., World’s Fair Manual: The Guide Book of The Louisiana Purchase Exposition (St. Louis: Ivory City Publishing Company, 1904), 3. The red arrow demotes Wabash Station and the entrance closest to the Model City. The blue arrow shows the street car line and rail track which would take visitors to the newly developed water treatment centre at Chain of Rocks. It was designed to be beautiful and there were landscaped gardens in which to picnic. Guidebooks advised visitors who had several days in the city to visit the city’s municipal parks and chain of Rocks.](image-url)

Designs such as the Model City reflect efforts to shape the behaviour of the urban masses in the developed and developing cities of the United States. The designs conveyed the presumed cultural and racial superiority of the designers and leaders of the Model City, who were to be custodians of this miniature American society, and by extension, the wider society it represented. Paul Boyer has argued that this kind of public interest ideal embodied the dream of a morally cohesive social order held by middle-class reformers.\(^6^3\) As a counterpoint to Boyer’s argument, Peterson has argued that the public interest ideal envisioned the good of the whole society, and praised the upgrading

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of national life, especially in its urban expression.\textsuperscript{64} Considering the eventual Model City caution is needed when analysing grand plans and hyperbole in urban planning and reform, the boosterism of the planners of the St. Louis World’s Fair, and the descriptions in fair guidebooks which directed attention to the grandiose dreams of high culture, architecture, and art.\textsuperscript{65} Rather than conveying a unified vision of a beautiful city the actual exhibit developed according to budgetary and time restraints. The failure of the Model City exhibit to materialise as intended, and the fact that it was downsized to street size shows that the ambitions of urban planners and early city architects could exceed their grasp. There is a confusion apparent in the Model City exhibit regarding social objectives and the pure aestheticism of city plans, the confluence of urban planning, social reform, and Progressivism within the broad description of the City Beautiful which created a compromised space in terms of size, execution, and outcome.\textsuperscript{66}

There had been plans to include a model tenement in the Model City. Eventually only a bungalow was built. The suggestions for future living spaces for the poor and migrant population had given way to a middle-class vision of single-family occupancy of an elegant, modern home. Some of the spaces on the Model City were given to official city buildings, New York City, Kansas City, and San Francisco were all presented in an effort to cover the eastern, western and Midwest areas of the country. Kansas City’s building was, on the outside at least, testament to City Beautiful ideals, however, inside it housed a casino which was somewhat at odds with the moral purity which was meant to be encouraged by good civic design. Significantly, no cities from the southern states were invited into the Model City, perhaps because issues over who could use water fountains and other facilities would prove to be contentious in a transposed southern space. Fair organisers were keen to distance themselves from any controversy regarding African American visitors.

The Model City did get caught up in controversies around race, belonging, and the wider city space. Just under two months before the fair commenced it was widely reported that an African American ‘Egyptian Club’, located in the downtown slum area near the Mississippi river, had plans to build ‘a proposed negro theatre and clubhouse on

\textsuperscript{64} Peterson, \textit{Birth of City Planning}, 147
\textsuperscript{65} Gilbert, \textit{Perfect Cities}, 80.
\textsuperscript{66} Heathcott, “The Science and Art of City Making,” 36.
Delmar Boulevard between Goodfellow and Hamilton Avenues, with the especial object of entertaining the negro World’s Fair visitors.\textsuperscript{67} This area was part of the affluent west end Cabanne neighbourhood, and was socially marked as exclusively white. Residents and their Clemens Place Protective Association ‘declared active war on the Egyptian Club’ upon hearing these rumours.\textsuperscript{68} Purportedly, there was a white go-between called Mr Lang who was seeking to bypass some of the gentleman’s agreements in effect at Clemens Place in order to buy a property for ‘negroes of wealth from the South.’\textsuperscript{69} The residents were incensed that the proposal put all notions of class, race, and ownership of place into flux, as Professor Arthur D. Langston explained in the circuit court injunction to stop any potential sale that he believed the purpose of the clubhouse was to establish ‘a negro aristocracy...a separation, a segregation from the other classes of the negro population.’\textsuperscript{70} The forthcoming fair offered up the potential for dangerous racial mixing, and in many ways this was tolerated in the fairgrounds but when it threatened to spill out into the surrounding residential areas it was quickly attacked through reports of potential ‘invasions’, the mass meetings of neighbourhood protective associations, and recourse to law. The Clemens Place Protective Association quickly raised $2800 to fight the Egyptian Club, and they sought to invoke a provision (common among ‘Private Places’) of Clemens heirs that no stores or business houses should be erected within its bounds. The sale was stopped not by segregation measures (which were not legally in place at the time) but by using a law against potential ‘vice and lawlessness in the West End’ which clearly underlined the way that race was inscribed with certain illegal and immoral activities and actions.\textsuperscript{71}

Once the fair began the ‘negro clubhouse’ controversy began again, and this time it was claimed that African Americans were proposing that they should have a clubhouse in the Model City.\textsuperscript{72} Apparently the clubhouse was to be designed and built for ‘the national organization of negro women’s clubs.’\textsuperscript{73} It was an unsubstantiated rumour and a clubhouse was never built. However, it is interesting that the reported reactions of the

\textsuperscript{67}{"Cabanne will Fight Negro Club," \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, March 19, 1904, 3.} \textsuperscript{68}{"Cabanne will Fight Negro Club," 3.} \textsuperscript{69}{"Cabanne in Arms Over the Proposed Club for Negroses," \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, March 20, 1904, 10.} \textsuperscript{70}{"Egyptian Club Negro Aristocracy," \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, March 26, 1904, 5.} \textsuperscript{71}{"Cabanne Residents Protest," \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, April 3, 1904, 17.} \textsuperscript{72}{"Negro Headquarters at Fair," \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, June 10, 1904, 15.} \textsuperscript{73}{"Negro Headquarters at Fair," 15.
‘tenants’ of the Model City mirrored that of the Cabanne residents, in that they were ‘startled’ by the proposed changes to their ‘exclusive confines.’ Furthermore, African American women were, once again, denied the status and refinement afforded to their white counterparts, and the reaction of the tenants suggested that they did not belong in an idealised Model City or by implication in the city at large.

**Part III – Gendered Comparisons and the Colour Line**

The St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition was held to mark the centenary of the acquisition of a vast amount of land by the United States from France, albeit it was a year late due to budgetary issues. President Francis stated that the fair ‘impressed upon the minds and hearts of the people of the Louisiana Territory and the entire country...what the acquisition of this Trans-Mississippi country meant to our material welfare, to the perpetuity of our government, to the promotion of republican institutions throughout the world, to the uplifting and happiness of humanity.’ Francis and his fellow organisers sought to show fair-goers how the territory acquired by the Louisiana Purchase had been brought from barbarism to civilisation in the course of a hundred years, and they tried to connect this idea with notions of Manifest Destiny for white Anglo-Saxon Americans. They did this through the promotion of certain exhibits and performances, such as the Indian School which showed the benefits of instruction and education for the ‘New Indian’.

The Louisiana Purchase had vastly increased the territory of the United States, however the St. Louis World’s Fair was not merely a celebration of the past expansion of the nation, it was a reflection and promotion of recent American overseas imperial pretensions in Cuba and the Philippines. The St. Louis World’s Fair promoted the ideal conduct expected of American citizens, and the correct behaviour for the growing number of America’s wards who were to accept American influence and conform to

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74 “Negro Headquarters at Fair,” 15.
its presentation of racial difference marked by the colour line. Instruction and cultural imperialism were therefore the cornerstones of the fair and this was often done through the comparison of bodies, particularly female ones.

The actual design of the White City was significant, and the positioning of its buildings and those that were excluded from it has led Robert Rydell to consider the ways in which schema of racial, class, and gendered knowledge were conveyed through the space of the White City and the rest of the fair. Rydell, has analysed several American World’s Fairs to suggest that they were connected by a shared consensus among the organisers, because each fair represented, and contributed to, a ‘hegemonic assertion of ruling-class authority’ of white Americans.\(^78\) In his seminal text, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*, Rydell moved beyond celebratory narratives of World’s Fairs and argued that these events deserve greater scholarly attention because of their role in reflecting and shaping American culture. He was particularly interested in how government anthropologists and ethnologists, particularly those from the Smithsonian Institution’s Bureau of American Ethnology, designed exhibits that conveyed theories of racial evolution and gave authority to racial classifications and discriminations. Scientific attractions at the St. Louis World’s Fair were complemented by pseudo-scientific and commercial displays of Native Americans, Africans, Filipinos, and other non-white groups in order to communicate support for white superiority and the righteousness of American imperial pretensions. For Rydell, just as the White City was organised in accordance with a strict racial and ethnic hierarchy, so too was the Midway. Rydell suggested that the western nations represented in the Midway occupied the closest position to the White City, while the supposedly least civilised occupied the space furthest away; this distance was designed to reflect how far these nations and cultures were from Anglo-American whiteness and the privileges it brought.

Rydell’s ground-breaking work sought to highlight the intersection of American expositions and empire. A key component of the manipulation and management of the fair’s message of the superiority of Anglo-American whiteness was the arrangement of

\(^78\) Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, 41.
the physical space of the fairs. However, Rydell’s theory, that the message of the fair was easily understood through its layout, is dependent on fair-goers fully comprehending the overall plan of the fair and moving though it in a predetermined way. This did not always happen, as James Gilbert has pointed out there were several entrances to each fair so visitors were likely to move around in different ways than the designers had intended. Due to a reliance on official accounts and plans of the fairs, scholars following Rydell’s approach have placed too much emphasis on the formal message of the events and have, at times, served to reiterate it. Furthermore, Rydell suggests a sustained message of the might and right of Anglo-American whiteness which was stressed in World’s Fairs over many decades and locations across the United States of America. This is problematic. Therefore, rather than solely analysing the fixed space of the fair it is beneficial to look at some of the interactions and how they were reported. Reading about interactions between visitors and performers was a way for St. Louisans and visitors from around the country to learn about the expected behaviours and appropriate attitudes they should display.

Entertainments, food concessions, human exhibits, conferences, and scientific (and pseudo-scientific) demonstrations formed key parts of the fair-goers’ experience. Such things could be found at the Pike, which was a strip of fair space dedicated to commercial culture and was St. Louis’s version of the Midway. The Midway, like the White City, was a repeated and expected part of America’s world’s fairs. While the White City had seemed to bring to life City Beautiful ideals, for many reformers and critics the Midway suggested the opposite in equal measure; there were concerns that the worst elements of the increasingly commercialised city, complete with close, and therefore dangerous, interactions with ethnic performers and members of the lower classes, could be found there. It is impossible, however, to think about the White City and its impact without considering the opposing elements of the Midway.

John F. Kasson has stressed the historic importance of the Midway, and in doing so has inverted the standard interpretation that the grandiose architecture and planning of the White City was the most important part of the fair experience and had

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the greatest long-term impact. For Kasson, the Midway produced recreational spaces that encouraged an intermingling of social classes, which evolved into new public spaces for entertainment. The Midway’s titillation, fun, and potential danger offered a different conception of cultural cosmopolitanism than the White City’s Court of Honor, and was one which was orientated not to the ordered and refined past, but to the heterogeneous and boisterous present.

St. Louis’s Pike included contortionists, re-enactments of the Boer War, babies in incubators, the ‘Dancing Girls of Madrid’, Jim Key the Educated Horse, and Hegenbeck’s Zoological Paradise and Animal Circus, which included an elephant waterslide. The Pike was typical of the Midway form, it presented racialized, ethnic, and gendered performances, which were enacted not only by paid performers, but by the fair-goers themselves. The artificial nature of the place and its atmosphere of ‘unreality’ created a space in which transgressions could be committed in public. The overt way these transgressions were experienced may well have been what made them so pleasurable. However, these transgressions became ritualised rather than a true rebellion against the messages of white superiority, because the unreality was still highly controlled and sanitised. Perhaps the true appeal of the Pike lay in the way fears of the growing urban environment, the seething masses, and the inevitable close contact between different classes and ethnicities, could be played out and exorcised in that space. In St. Louis, it had been crucial for the Clemens Place Protective Association to enforce white space in the residential areas which surrounded Forest Park because dangerous transgressions were possible in the fair grounds; such opportunities needed to be contained so they could be enjoyed as part of the fair experience without changing the long-established occupation of space and place according to race and class.

Prior to the commencement of the fair it became a diverting fashion for women to visit the Gerhard Sisters photographic studio and have their ‘character portraits’ taken while dressed in the national and ethnic garb of some of the performers who would be

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82 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, *Sights, Scenes and Wonders at the World’s Fair* (St. Louis: Official Photographic Company, 1904), 87-129.
arriving in St. Louis for the fair. Women could dress as a ‘Syrian Girl’, ‘an Oriental Beauty’ or ‘an Italian peasant’. Dressing up and posing for photographs was a way by which white women could practice their cultural and social superiority over different ethnic ‘types’. This was because the women could play at being these characters or ‘types’ and they could then cast off the costumes and return to their status as white citizens of St. Louis and the United States. Interestingly, there was a large population of Italians in St. Louis, who lived in the area known as ‘The Hill’ in the southwest of the city, it is unlikely that they would have played at dressing up like Italian peasants while their racial and ethnic status was not fully secure. Once the fair began fairgoers ceased to dress in these kinds of costumes, as these were marked for the performers who were deemed to be inferior. Fashion features in the Sunday supplements went on to concentrate on outfits that fairgoers should wear when visiting the White City and when picnicking at the fair. These outfits were refined and fashionable, suitable for walking around and for being admired. Women could read about these designs and look at the sketches as instruction in how to behave and dress at the fair, and this in conjunction with descriptions of the ‘strange outfits’ the female performers wore, was one way that white women learnt how to enact Anglo-American superiority in the fair space.

Like all world’s fairs, the event held in St. Louis offered an amalgamation of time and place. It seemed as if everything and anything was possible at the fair. The fair consisted of foreign exhibits and replicas of buildings and famous sites found across the world; the Tivoli Mountains of Italy could be found alongside ‘the streets of Constantinople’, ‘authentic’ Japanese pagodas sat alongside Ireland’s Blarney Castle, all of which had been magically transported to St. Louis. Fair-goers could view and experience what was reported to be the equivalent of a six-month journey around the world in a matter of days. It was even possible to travel to the Underworld in a concession called the Hereafter. White fairgoers figuratively travelled the world and

83 “Hail the World’s Fair Girl!,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 31, 1904, 45.
84 “Hail the World’s Fair Girl!,” 45.
85 “Dress Designed for World’s Fair Wear,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 6, 1904, 58.
86 “Feminine Fashions of Strange Peoples to be Shown at Fair,” St. Louis Republic, August 28, 1904, 26.
87 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, 1904 (St. Louis: Woodward and Tiernan Printing Company, 1904), 3–54; World’s Fair, 1904: Guide Around the World on the Pike (St. Louis: n.p., 1904), 1-45.
confirmed their supposed racial superiority in those places, and they did this through movement and moving through space, and through comparison and observation.\textsuperscript{89}

Many newspapers reported on the activities young female fair-goers engaged in. These women were active and joyful and took advantage of the opportunity to travel around the fair, and this was in direct opposition to the female (and male) performers who were expected to stay in situ as a fixed ethnic ‘types’ repeatedly taking part in prescribed activities. New activities were available for white women to try at the fair and indeed it was encouraged in the safe, monitored, space. One example of this would be the popularity of riding the gondolas on the Grand Basin in the White City. ‘The Gondola Girl’ was described as a new figure on the fair scene, one who was experimenting with different kinds of physical activities which would also require newly designed outfits. Riding the gondolas may even give the Gondola Girl ‘athletic shoulders and calloused hands’, however the description of her and the activity in which she partook was still couched in gendered and sexualised terms, for the Gondola Girl would still need a male chaperone who may want to take advantage of the romantic features of the water lit by moonlight. In these descriptions it was also made clear that this type of activity was distinct from that of ‘foreign’ gondoliers.\textsuperscript{90}

The classification of races and ethnicities according to observations of active bodies continued in descriptions of the Pike. Many people from different nations were displayed on the Pike and in some of the official national pavilions. None of these displays held as much importance, or had the same impact, as the Philippine Reservation. This was a space which was purposely created to justify American imperial ambitions in the Philippines. The space of the Philippine Reservation was used to enact and enforce racial division and difference, and this was done by the fair organisers and federal sponsors who divided the Filipino tribes into different ‘types’ along racial lines to argue that some were eligible for education and improvement, while others were deemed to be beyond help. The complications and contentions around the Philippine Reservation, the performers who lived in the space, and the interactions and responses between the

\textsuperscript{89} Rydell, \textit{All the World’s a Fair}, 5-8, 235.
performers and the fair-goers highlight how overseas imperialism was inseparable from the social relationships and cultural discourses of race and ethnicity at home.

The racial hierarchy on display at the fair contributed to new definitions of both America’s national identity and its imperial mission. Paul Kramer has argued that not only did race matter for empire, empire also mattered for race; domestic racial identities were forged (and re-forged) alongside the imperial dynamics of race-making, and debates over empire in the United States and the forces at work in colonial settings had a decisive impact on American racial ideology. Amy Kaplan has similarly argued that domestic conflicts ‘spill over national boundaries to be re-enacted, challenged, or transformed’ and foreign conflicts similarly shape relations at home, and this is apparent at the Philippine Reservation. How this was to be understood was intertwined with assumptions of fixed gender difference, in combination with racial hierarchies.

Responding to both a new wave of European imperialism and domestic problems caused by rapid industrialization, the United States had declared war on Spain after the explosion on the battleship Maine in Havana Harbour in 1898. Although the war was ostensibly fought to ‘free Cuba’, the first battle took place in Manila Bay. The American decision to annex the Philippines and the resulting three-year Philippine-American War (1899-1902) followed. A re-enactment of a famous battle of the Spanish-American War, the Battle of Santiago, was on display at the fair and used a mechanised miniature navy. This recreation, combined with the Filipino performers, was key to demonstrating that it was the destiny of Americans to take over supposedly lesser nations and rule them as colonial possessions. The ‘splendid little war’ with Spain created heroes and symbols of national power and greatness, while the war in the Philippines divided the nation, as the new policy of ‘imperialism’ was debated by citizens’ groups, politicians, and soldiers. To justify intervention by the United States, President McKinley famously accounted for his decision to annex the Philippines in order ‘to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize

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93 Alicia Walker, Savage to Civilized. The Imperial Agenda on Display at the St. Louis World Fair of 1904 (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM, 2008), 41.  
94 Mark Twain, “To the Person Sitting in Darkness,” North American Review 172 (February 1901): 161-76.
and Christianize them’. It was therefore important to federal policy and future designs for American imperialism that the uplift of the Filipinos was demonstrated at the St. Louis World’s Fair. William J. McGee, the first President of the American Anthropological Association, curated and ran the Philippine Reservation. He stated that the goal of the Philippine Reservation was to ‘represent human progress from the dark time to the highest enlightenment, from savagery to civic organization, from egoism to altruism.’ In newspaper reports, souvenir booklets, postcards, and in official government documents the difference among the Filipino tribes was shown via recourse to presentations of gender.

Interestingly, the space allocated to the Philippines was called the Reservation; this was an allusion to the ways Native Americans had been, and continued to be, dealt with by the federal government. The Philippine Reservation was in its own area of the fair, separated from the White City by a body of water called the Arrowhead Lake, which visitors crossed via a bridge, symbolising a crossing of the geographical (and racial) divide between the United States and the Philippines. The Philippine Reservation was also distinct from the Pike, as it was intended to be educational rather than titillating. Located along the shores of the Arrowhead Lake were five villages – belonging to the Negrito, Igorot, Bagobo, Moro and Visayan tribes – and they were arranged to simulate their supposedly typical communities in the Philippines. The houses, inhabited by over 1,100 performers, were made of bamboo and other traditional Philippine building materials. Each village had its own theatre, in which the performers entertained the fairgoers with their own culture, via songs, dances, and other tribal ceremonies. When not performing they pretended to live just as they did at home, doing household chores, blacksmithing, weaving, and pursuing other arts and crafts. Of course, these activities were just as much of a performance as the songs and dances; the rituals relating to the

95 James Rusling, “Interview with President William McKinley,” Christian Advocate, January 22, 1903, 17. The interview had occurred on November 21, 1899.
96 Servando D. Halili, Iconography of the New Empire: Race and Gender Images and the American Colonization of the Philippines (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2006), 34.
election of chiefs and memorials to deceased ancestors, performed only infrequently in the Philippines, were compressed and presented at the fair as if they happened daily.  

From the beginning, Filipinos had strongly objected to the presence of such performers at the fair as a representation of the entire nation. Vicente Nepomuceno, a visiting member of the Philippine Honorary Commission, declared that the exhibit failed to portray honestly the Filipino peoples, their everyday lives, and the true state of the advancement of their nation and he accused the American administration of gathering the ‘lowest types’ of Filipinos ‘in an attempt to justify their paternal grip on the islands.’ Filipino nationalists such as Maximo Kalaw feared that the display of half-naked natives would ‘create in the minds of hundreds of thousands of Americans the indelible impression that the Filipinos have not yet emerged from savagery’, and this would undermine the demand for Philippine independence.

At the St. Louis World’s Fair, the exposition authorities relied on the deployment of members of the Philippine constabulary and Scouts, who were the local police and paramilitary forces that had assisted the United States in the suppression of the Philippine insurrection. The constabulary had been trained by the United States military and was used to control the other Filipino performers. There was another reason for their presence; the constabulary, like the young Native Americans in the Indian School, were meant to demonstrate the positive influence American education and authority could have over the growing number of wards of the nation. The constabulary performed drills and manoeuvres to show the positive effects of American instruction and discipline.

Despite the praise for the constabulary offered in official catalogues of the fair and in the World’s Fair Bulletin, the constabulary and their presence at the event were not without controversy. Kramer has highlighted that, when members of the constabulary were seen outside of the Philippine Reservation, accompanying white American women around the White City and the Pike, members of southern voluntary military groups threatened to lynch them. Members of the constabulary, by mixing with white women, had disrupted the colour line; they also had an anomalous racial status.

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99 Fermin, 1904 World’s Fair, 141.
100 “Filipinos as Preposterously Misrepresented,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 19, 1904, 1.
101 Fermin, 1904 World’s Fair, 158.
and appearance. Unable to give these men a fixed position in the racial hierarchy, due to their elevated status in the Philippine Reservation, and by extension in international relations, white southerners labelled them as ‘niggers’, and sought to punish them.\textsuperscript{102} Any attempt to create new racial knowledge, which would allow physical contact between the racially undetermined and white women, was denied. This was because such an attempt was a danger to the project of racial classification and accompanying discrimination at home and abroad. Deviation from racial codes of conduct could, and would, be punished with violence.

However, the message of the righteousness of American imperialism was not entirely accepted, either by the performers or by the fair-goers who observed and interacted with them. Visitors did not blindly accept the prescriptions of the expositions. The appeal of gawking at the tribes was too great, which meant that the supposed educational aspects of the exhibit were disregarded in favour of more salacious ones, such as dog-eating.\textsuperscript{103} One reporter for the \textit{St. Louis Republic} was concerned that the more titillating elements of the exhibit received ‘undue attention at the expense of the civilised tribes of Filipinos at the Fair’, and thus ‘many persons who were ignorant of conditions in the Island went away with the opinion that the savage, head-hunter, dog-eating Igorrotes represented the rank and file inhabitants of the Philippines.’\textsuperscript{104} The \textit{Christian Advocate} also reported with concern that ‘many visitors are so dazed by this shocking barbaric exhibit that they forget the fine deportment, drill and elegant military manoeuvres of our island soldiers [the constabulary and the Scouts], and go away disgusted with the memory of the barbarians, more crude and benighted than any we have seen in Dark Africa.’\textsuperscript{105}

The reference to ‘Dark Africa’ in the \textit{Christian Advocate} is important, because the fair organisers believed that they had to make a connection between some of the Filipinos and African Americans in order to enforce the colour line upon which race relations in the United States were based. In trying to establish imperial pretensions the


\textsuperscript{104} “At the Fair,” \textit{St. Louis Republic}, July 3, 1904, 4.

\textsuperscript{105} “Philippine Reservation,” \textit{Christian Advocate}, June 29, 1904, 4.
Philippine exhibit stressed that the Filipinos could improve through education, but within this message there was an inherent problem because if the uplift philosophy was accepted to its logical conclusion it was predetermined that the wards of the United States would be able to reach the colour line and cross it. This was why, within the Philippine Reservation, there was overt reference to a supposed racial hierarchy among the various Filipino tribes, which was underscored by the enforcement of the colour line, understood in American terms. To resolve the theoretical complication a colour line within the colour line had been created, in which some tribes were deemed to be beyond improvement and would apparently die out because they were incapable of amelioration via instruction and education. The tribe that was marked as such were the Negrito, who despite the promise of a dollar for each one, had refused to allow casts to be made of their heads by the New York Natural History Institute.\(^{106}\) Their physical appearance was often commented upon, and it was stressed that they were little and monkey-like with very dark skin.\(^{107}\)

![Figure 12. Manila Review of Trade, Souvenir of the Philippine Exposition (St. Louis: Manila Review of Trade, 1904), 71. The men are wearing the uniform of the Philippine Scout Band and the women wear elegant white dresses and style their hair.](image)


\(^{107}\) Souvenir of the Philippine Exposition (St. Louis: Manila Review of Trade, 1904), 1.
The tribe which stood in the greatest contrast to the Negrito were the Visayans, who were described as graceful and civilised, and this was often backed up with photographs of elegant Visayan women (Figure 12). However, in accordance with United States imperial and racial pretentions these women could not fully attain white womanhood and were deemed ‘little brown sisters.’\(^\text{108}\) The refinement, education, and beauty of the Visayan women was often reported, as they served as the pinnacle of femininity which could be achieved by the Filipinos, however they could not and were not allowed to meet or surpass that of white women.\(^\text{109}\) In order to ensure the persistence of a colour line, and crucially one that could be understood in American terms, fair organisers marked ‘racial’ differences among the Filipino tribes that had not been previously apparent in the Philippines, showing how race and racial differences could be created in different times, places and contexts. Gender was significant in this presentation.

![Figure 13. Jessie Tarbox Beals, ‘Mrs Wilkins gives Singing Lessons to Igorot Children,’ Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Missouri Historical Society Photographs and Prints Collection. White women of prominent social standing (clubwomen) or of national and international repute would often visit the Philippine Reservation to meet and instruct the children. Here, Mrs Wilkins, who was an opera singer from Vienna, gives the children a two-hour singing lesson. Instruction and education by example could only be enacted by Visayan women up to a point, because their femininity was contained within the racial hierarchy of the American imperial empire.](image)


\(^\text{109}\) “Savage Tribes to Join in Parade,” *St. Louis Republic*, June 12, 1904, 24.
White superiority was established and protected by the colour line, which was supposedly impermeable and timeless. The presentation of Pygmies at the fair, along with the skewed mis-remembrance of an Old Plantation worked to further underpin this racial comprehension at the fair. In a similar way to how the Negrito were described, blackness was marked as the lowest common denominator. The Pygmies in St. Louis proved to be a cornerstone in the display of savage and primitive people. The Pygmies were brought to the fair through the efforts of the Reverend S. P. Verner, and they were ‘gifts’ of King Leopold of Belgium, the ruler of the African colony of the Congo. Only eight Pygmy men travelled to St. Louis, because the women and children ‘proved too timid to trust themselves to travel’, and the ways in which Reverend Verner had been required to chaperone the male performers was often reported to underscore the allegedly unsophisticated and childish nature of the group. There was a further gendered dynamic demonstrated in the Pygmy exhibit. In describing the childish needs of the group a clear opposition was set up between the Pygmy men and the virulent manhood of the (white) Olympic strongmen competing at the fair grounds, or the brave pioneers who had battled the Native Americans and ‘won’ the West. There was no need for Pygmy women to attend the event because the fair organisers and federal sponsors did not need to demonstrate that the Pygmies were capable of improvement through instruction, education, and refinement.

The members of the Pygmy group were not, in fact, all from the same tribe, but were instead a mixture of people from the Batwa, Batetela, Bakuba, Baluba, and Badinga cultures. Unlike the Filipino tribes, there was no division made between the Pygmies at the fair; they were not divided by tribe or by a supposed colour line within those tribes. In this way the classification of the Pygmies preserved the colour line which divided black and white. Blackness was presented as undifferentiated and was apparently applicable to all the Pygmies. The imperial project of the United States was not interested in African colonies or territories, so there was no reason to suggest that the performers had been,

110 Walker, Savage to Civilized, 30.
113 Walker, Savage to Civilized, 30.
or at the very least could be, improved under American tutelage so they did not need to be divided by further colour lines within the colour line as the Filipinos had been.

In direct opposition to the official handling of the Philippine Reservation, salaciousness and titillation were encouraged for the fair-goers observing and interacting with the Pygmies. Fair officials claimed the Pygmies were cannibals, as demonstrated by their practice of sharpening their teeth into points. None of the Pygmies were actually man-eaters, and it was only one African, the sole Badenga tribesman, Ota Benga, who possessed sharpened teeth (Figure 6). Much was made about the physical attributes of the Pygmies who wore few clothes and were constantly observed.

As the weather turned colder in St. Louis, the Pygmies tried to increase the number of garments they wore, only to be restricted by fair anthropologists, who argued that not only would additional clothes take away from the authenticity of the exhibit, but they ‘would have interfered with the functions normal to naked skins and brought serious if not fatal results.’ The supposedly scientific observations of the bodies of the performers served as entertainment and sought to underscore the racial differences between the observed and the observers, the semi-clad and the fully-clad. To solve the problem of the Pygmies’ request, and need, for warmer clothes, fair officials decided to heat the insides of their huts. Once the huts were warm, it proved very difficult to coax the still semi-clad performers out of their shelters once winter set in. In this way the Pygmies were resistant to the manipulations made by the fair officials and enacted some dissent.

The Pygmies quickly gained the reputation of being the most troublesome group at the fair, in a similar way to the Negrito. They performed pranks on others, misbehaved, and refused to follow instructions. It was suggested that it was because of their ‘intimate association with parrots and monkeys’ that they could not behave in a

114 Mark Bennitt and Frank Parker Stockbridge, History, 676. The reports of cannibalism alternated around different foods in order to provide more salacious material and continue to mark the Pygmies as Others via their diets, see “Pygmies Demand a Monkey Diet,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 2, 1904, 1.
118 “Pygmy Dance Starts Panic in Fair Plaza,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 22, 1904, 3.
119 Dorothy Daniels Birk, The World Came to St. Louis: A Visit to the 1904 World’s Fair (St. Louis: CBP Press, 1979), 92.
civilised manner. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* featured an article about them which included a list of ‘ninety-three queer facts about African Pygmies’ such as, ‘they have a snout-like projection of the jaw...They are extremely cunning and dextrous...If caught young, they are said to make excellent servants...They were at one time thought to be more nearly related to the ape than to the human race.’ The reference to making excellent servants if caught young brings to mind the establishment of slavery in the United States, and the continued domestic servitude for many African Americans. Certain traits and behaviours were assigned as natural to blackness, and that many of these apparent traits were in direct opposition to each other (that the Pygmies lived on impulse and could not follow instruction, but conversely they could make excellent servants) did not matter in the illogic of the colour line and corresponding racial categorisation.

President Francis had declared in his opening ceremony address that, ‘so thoroughly does [the fair] represent the world’s civilization that if all man’s other works were by some unspeakable catastrophe blotted out, the records here established by the assembled nations would afford all necessary standards for the rebuilding of our entire civilization.’ For African Americans, there was little representation of their achievements at the fair, but instead a repeated message of blackness as the lowest form of humanity. Sites of racial exhibition such as the Philippine Reservation, the Pygmy Village, and the Old Plantation were also sites of the production and dissemination of racial knowledge which relied in part on an understanding of gender. Set against Olympic strong men, male municipal leaders, and the eternal white femininity of the Board of Lady Managers the performers at the fair were placed in a hierarchy of racial and gendered categorisation. In spaces, such as the Philippine Reservation and the Indian School, messages about moral education and the importance and enforcement of racial hierarchies within the American nation and its overseas interests were made and stressed.

**Conclusion**

120 Mark Bennitt and Frank Parker Stockbridge, *History*, 676.
Nathan Cardon has recently, and eloquently, described the way that world fairs strove to officially operate because American 'expositions functioned as shrines to the growing belief in material and cultural progress...They were conceived of and perceived as spaces of representation, spaces in which the dominant order demonstrated, in a spectacular and grand fashion, its manufacturing, cultural, and racial superiority.' This is all true of the event held in St. Louis. World’s fairs operated as spaces to rehearse the ‘codes of urban life’. Local fundraisers, federal sponsors, institutions like the Smithsonian, and national and regional city planners and reformers, worked to present a message of white racial superiority which was framed by gendered conventions. Racial understanding at the fair rested on the supposed superior femininity of white Anglo-American women and the strong white masculinity of the city’s and the nation’s leading men. This was the dominant order of the fair.

World’s fairs were, in many ways, ephemeral events, the buildings were only temporary structures which meant that very few reminders were preserved. However, the impact of the fairs upon the attitudes of their visitors was long-lasting. The idea of the World’s Fair in St. Louis, and what it officially stood for and represented, was significant in shaping collective memories about the golden days of St. Louis. The fair apparently reflected a time when St. Louis was still considered a prominent and important city of the United States. City planners and reformers often referred to the beauty they have witnessed and the civic harmony they believe had been apparent at the event. Such reminiscences required a wilful forgetting or ignorance of the way that racial knowledge was constructed and enforced in the fair space and in how it was reported.

123 Cardon, A Dream of the Future, 4.
124 Bennett, Birth of the Museum, 227.
Chapter Two
Private and Public Interests in the Progressive Projects of the St. Louis Civic League, 1901-1916

The Civic Bulletin was a bi-weekly pamphlet first published in 1910, which was written and issued by the Civic League of St. Louis, with the intention of keeping its 1,600 members informed of the work carried out by the League, and of further ‘matters of public interest’.¹ The League was concerned with encouraging good governance, public health, the City Beautiful movement, and social service.² Via the Civic Bulletin, the League hoped ‘to acquaint its members better with its work, and so arouse a greater interest in civic betterment.’³ In the first issue, the long-running campaign against ‘the smoke nuisance’ was addressed; city reformers had campaigned for smoke abatement since the late 1880s, and despite an ordinance passed in 1891 which declared smoke to be a nuisance, the problem persisted.⁴ This was, in part, because the state Supreme Court in 1896 held the first ordinance to be invalid, arguing that the St. Louis Municipal Assembly had exceeded its authority ‘in declaring smoke a nuisance per se.’⁵ The decision, which reflected the long-held laissez-faire attitude of the state legislature to the consequences of burning fuels, favoured industrial interests. The lack of regulation of Gilded Age excesses had been one of the reasons reform-minded individuals had developed a distrust of established channels of governance, an activist agenda, and a desire to improve the environment, all of which marked the Progressive outlook in the opening decades of the twentieth century.

Progressives in St. Louis continued their battle for smoke abatement, and as a result several ordinances were passed which established the validity of their claim that

³ “Announcement,” 2.
⁵ “Announcement,” 2.
smoke was a nuisance, and a Smoke Abatement Department was established by the Municipal Assembly in 1901. The chief inspector and five deputies working in the new department were given the overwhelming task of reducing the smoke nuisance via the prosecution of repeat offenders. However, few cases of smoke violation were ever brought to court, and the Smoke Abatement Department was dismantled in 1910. This was a blow to the Civic League. Without an officially sanctioned investigative body, the Civic League argued that the smoke nuisance would continue unobstructed by legislation or prosecution. The League stated in its newly launched Civic Bulletin that it was imperative that the campaign for smoke abatement must, once again, be revived.

The campaign the Civic League went on to devise and document in their Civic Bulletin highlights how ingenious the League’s grassroots activism could be, and how ideas about private and public concerns were manipulated by the organisation to push its Progressive agenda. Essentially, the League presented both carrot and stick solutions to the smoke nuisance, which shows how intertwined optimism and pessimism were in much of their Progressive thinking. The League proposed to assist Mr E. C. Parker, who had been given the role of Inspector of Boilers and Elevators by Mayor Frederick H. Kreismann, after the demise of the Smoke Abatement Department. Mr Parker was quoted in the Civic Bulletin, stating that ‘he must rely on citizens and the Police Department to aid him’ in reporting violations, ‘on account of the time he must give to boiler and elevator inspection’. Although the Police Department had issued an order on November 5, 1910 requiring patrolmen, in lieu of the defunct Smoke Abatement Department, to report all violations, no more prosecutions were made under that system than the previous one. Therefore, the Civic League expected that proactive individual League members and those who supported their organisation would, and should, volunteer information which would assist in the prosecution of smoke violators; if the Police Department and boiler inspectors could not gather evidence of smoke nuisances and identify those who perpetrated it, the Civic League would.

The League also devised another process to deal with the nuisance, which was ‘to publish every other week a list of the chief violators of the law, with a memorandum as

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6 “Announcement,” 2.
to what steps have been taken in each case to comply with the law’. This, they believed, was the only way ‘of getting at the evil’, and they urged members ‘to assist in reporting violations to the League’s office.’ The proposed naming and shaming of perpetrators in the Civic Bulletin, alongside further vigilance and observation by the League’s membership, spoke to the organisation’s sense of itself as a defender of the public good. The League sought to limit the actions of businesses, which had been previously protected by the state Supreme Court. While the mandate of the Municipal Assembly over businesses had been slowly expanding, the League felt frustrated with the pace of prosecutions and sought to complete the work of observing and reporting violations in the city.

The enthusiasm which the League lent to the smoke abatement campaign was typical of Progressive Era reform groups, and its solution to identifying perpetrators reveals how Progressives in the League thought about privacy. To protect the public good, individuals and businesses that were having a detrimental effect on the well-being of the city’s polity would be identified in a very public manner. Despite this, the lists of violators in the Civic Bulletin only materialised in several early issues of the Bulletin. The League’s plan was eventually amended so that the violators would be exposed at a monthly rather than bi-weekly rate, due to the ‘difficulty in getting an absolutely accurate list of violations at this time’. The list was quietly dropped from the Civic Bulletin after two months. The League’s solution had been no more effective than previous ones.

The combination of grassroots activism with the recourse to prosecution, and the desire for further legislation and prosecution while fearing its ineffectuality, highlights some of the competing and conflicting Progressive mentalities. In their actions over smoke abatement, and in many other campaigns, the League attempted to speak and act for the public good. It prescribed draconian measures to instil what it believed was

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7 “Announcement,” 2.
8 “Announcement,” 2.
9 “Abating the Smoke Nuisance,” St. Louis Republic, January 26, 1893, 2.
12 Ernest Kirschten, Catfish and Crystal (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965), 430-434. The problem with smoke and smog continued until the burning of soft coal was outlawed in 1939.
appropriate public behaviour, but League members were often oblivious to their own
double standards. In their 1906 Report of the Smoke Abatement Committee of the Civic
League they detailed the financial burdens borne by St. Louisans because of the ‘smoke
menace’, and heavily criticised the Smoke Inspector at the time, Charles H. Jones. The
League’s committee pointed to expenses to the public, such as $10,000 spent by the
Public Library to clean up the soot and dirt which accumulated on and ruined books, and
the loss of 5.4 percent of the trees in Forest Park, which they attributed ‘wholly to the
effects of sulphuric gasses from smoke.’

Jones, stung by the criticism, published a report of his own. He clearly meant to draw attention to the League’s hypocrisy when he
stated that ‘it has been our idea that while dealing with violators of the smoke ordinance,
we were dealing with men who might be considered, technically, “criminal,” we at the
same time had to do with the best citizens of St. Louis, the makers of the city and its
prosperity, the manufacturers and businessmen whose money was invested here, and
whose interests were identical to the best interests of the whole city.’

Jones was suggesting that some of the worst offenders were members of the Civic League, and that
not only was the push for clean air running up against the ‘best citizens’, but it
threatened the progress of the city and its citizens because increased smoke had meant
increased work and a higher standard of living for more citizens, and any reduction in
smoke could have a detrimental effect on both. League members clung to the idea of
smoke abatement, while many of them continued to profit from its continuation.

Jones had correctly identified that the upper echelons of the Civic League’s
members were leading men of the city; their interests spanned business, industry, the
justice system, and city government. The President of the Civic League in 1906 was Cyrus
Packard Walbridge, who was described as ‘a St. Louis wholesale druggist’ in a
biographical dictionary of leading men of the city of St. Louis.

Walbridge had also served in the House of Delegates, he had been President of the City Council, and he was
the ex-Mayor of St. Louis. The Vice-President of the Civic League at this time was Charles

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15 Oglesby, “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes,” 188.
Aaron Stix, of the Stix, Baer and Fuller Dry Good Company which was one of the largest department stores in St. Louis. Alongside leading businessmen were those who were involved in traffic and transport management: Osborn Van Brunt, was a manager of the traffic department for Simmons Hardware Company; William Taussig was the President of the St. Louis Bridge Company, and had been President of the Terminal Railroad Association until his retirement in 1896. Some of the League’s members had been involved in organising and designing the St. Louis World’s Fair: William Steigers was a business manager of one of the city’s leading newspapers, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and he had been a Director of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition; George Edward Kessler, a pioneering landscape architect, had designed and landscaped the grounds at the Exposition.

Younger men like John Gundlach and Luther Ely Smith became more prominent Civic League leaders in the organisation’s second decade, and they too had experience of municipal roles and were both lawyers and strong advocates for further civic boosterism having been, at one time, members of the One Million Population Club.

In 1907 the League put together their key piece of city planning, the *City Plan for St. Louis*. The members of the various committees who worked on its creation and promotion were men who were leaders in business, law, architecture, and recreation. David R. Francis, President of the World’s Fair and Director of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition Company, was involved in the Inner and Outer Park Committee alongside George Edward Kessler and Julius Pitzman, the man who had been instrumental in creating and maintained St. Louis’s ‘Private Places’. The General Committee of the *City Plan* was made up of the Chairman of the Missouri Botanical Gardens, the Vice-President of the Mississippi Valley Trust Company, the President of the St. Louis Bar Association, and the President of the St. Louis Dairy Company. Members of the St. Louis Real Estate Company were involved in the Street Improvements Committee and the Civic Centers Committee. Only one woman was involved in any of the committees, Mrs Philip N. Moore sat on the Civic Centers Committee; Moore was a former President of the

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Wednesday Club and would go on to be President of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs.  

The Civic League’s Executive Board and the men who ran the committees listed in the organisation’s City Plan do not accurately reflect the general membership of the League. The early efforts made by women concerning smoke abatement, vacation playgrounds, and the Sanitary Commission, were important. There was a large number of female members in the League. Much of their early work regarding summer schools, playgrounds, and ensuring that the city’s milk supply was untainted, was usurped in a vision of masculine municipal management headed by leading men of the city keen to promote St. Louis and avoid accusations of being part of the self-interested ‘Big Cinch’. Female activity and rhetoric is explored in greater depth in Chapters Three and Four: Chapter Three traces some of the ways that women’s work was either ignored or co-opted by civic organisations and eventually placed under municipal management; Chapter Four looks at some of the alternative political activity available to African American women. There were tensions between female and male Progressives in St. Louis, and this was often played out over claims of expertise and professionalism. The study of Progressivism in St. Louis reveals how arguments made for the common good, and the proposed improvements to the city space that aimed to ensure it, were tied up in contentions around women’s place in the developing modern city. Rather than driving Progressive urban reform into the 1920s and 1930s, white women’s efforts in St. Louis were curtailed, while African American women created an arena for their work regarding community assistance in the segregated city.

The Civic League believed that the encouragement of appropriate public-spiritedness would promote the demonstration of useful public behaviour, which in turn would lead to a more productive, healthful, city. Public spiritedness could be demonstrated by supporting the Civic League’s proposals when they were put to the vote in various charter renewals, and positive public behaviour could be shown through the involvement in reporting smoke and billboard violations and by accepting the instructions of the Civic League on issues regarding street cleaning and clearance.

22 Andre-Johnson, Notable Women, 161.
welfare, and disease prevention. Public-spiritedness or civic pride was understood to be generative, because the citizens of a beautiful and well-managed city would, the League believed, work towards its continued growth. The League developed and pushed the notion of what can be termed civic morality in a variety of different projects, and in each of those projects the League stressed that they were the promoters and adjudicators of this type of morality. The ways by which they sought to instil and enforce civic morality and the common good, along with how they measured and monitored it, is explored in this chapter.

The use of the term ‘civic morality’ to describe what the Progressive members of the St. Louis Civic League were trying to address and encourage takes inspiration from Daniel Rodgers’s suggested methodology for dealing with the rich variety of methods and motivations within Progressivism. The term civic morality does not imply a static ideological framework, the sort that Peter Filene tried to put to rest in his *Obituary for the Progressive Movement*; rather, it was used, at various times and over different issues, to justify the privileges and prejudices of the Civic League and its members. The concept of civic morality also provided the motivation to implement increasingly technocratic and bureaucratic measures into city management and planning. In the Civic League, the trend towards coercive strategies, which purported to be about the prevention of government corruption and monopolies of businesses, and optimism regarding the impact of an improved environment on the moral condition of the citizenry co-existed within the language of civic morality. The combination of instruction and motivation and pessimism and optimism suggests that the contradictions often present within Progressivism could also be found in the Civic League. Conservativism and radicalism were apparent in the various incarnations of the Civic League of St. Louis.

In order to understand the composition of the Civic League, and its gendered dynamic, Part I of this chapter addresses the formation of the Civic League, its membership, and their motivations. Part II and III examine two of the League’s more successful campaigns, tree-planting and billboard regulation, and considers what that

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reveals about Progressive mentalities, how civic morality was understood, and how its application led to the increase in the measurement and monitoring of the urban space and the city’s population. The way in which these small encroachments on the private interests of only a few people were accepted while later grander and more expensive schemes were rejected is important because it shows how the poor and ethnic wards in the south side of the city viewed Progressive plans and activities, and how they had different views about city space and who it should serve. Part IV looks at specific details of the City Plan of St. Louis, which was the accumulation of years of work by the League. The City Plan highlights the ways that the League believed that civic morality could be created and enforced via the built environment and identifies the citizens they thought would benefit from instruction in civic morality. These prescriptions were rejected by voters at large. The concluding part of this chapter briefly looks at how the Civic League’s influence and impact on the urban environment dwindled when the City Plan Commission was formed in 1911 (made up of some of the prominent members of the Civic League’s Executive Board) and when they recommended that the city employ a City Engineer, Harland Bartholomew. His arrival marked a new phase in Progressive planning, one which relied on professionalism and expertise. Bartholomew retained much of the League’s focus on improvement and protection of space for the city’s residents who lived in the Central West End and west of Forest Park. The concept of civic morality would remain appealing to the city boosters and reformers of St. Louis during Bartholomew’s tenure, and the measuring and monitoring of the city environs and its inhabitants continued to grow and became more sophisticated in the City Practical Era of urban planning.25

Part I – The Membership and History of the St. Louis Civic League

An early version of the Civic League of St. Louis was the Civic Improvement League. Formed in 1901, the voluntary organisation was created by a group of downtown businessmen who decided to take up the idea of designing a comprehensive plan of the

25 Richard E. Foglesong, Planning the Capitalist City: The Colonial Era to the 1920s (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 199-232. City Practical sought to create a more economical and efficient system of land use and transportation and differed from the City Beautiful because it was not necessarily orientated towards the aesthetic.
city, after this long-held dream of city boosters was abandoned by the city’s Board of Public Improvements who were overwhelmed with planning the Louisiana Purchase World’s Fair. The Civic Improvement League sought to capitalise on the new general civic-mindedness expressed by politicians, city boosters, and businessmen in the run-up to the Fair. In this spirit, a list of suggestions for activities and ‘work for everybody and to their own liking’ was circulated by the League, and it included children’s improvement associations; civic improvement reading courses; Junior Civic Leagues; lectures on nature and outdoor topics; prizes for home tree-planting and popular instruction in landscape gardening; school gardens and school yard tree-planting; and town and neighbourhood lectures. These suggestions were added to the long-standing concerns of urban reformers, which included smoke abatement; billboard regulation; care of railroad and traction right of way; and improved public sanitation. The League’s concerns and its proposed solutions reveal how a piecemeal, local approach could combine with the types of issues shared by other Progressive groups across the country such as the critique of unrestrained big business and proposals to change the national legislative agenda. From its very beginning, there were a variety of motivations and methods present in the League’s thinking and activities.

From its conception, the Civic Improvement League became an organisation dedicated to the systematic beautification of the city. Three months after its first meeting, the Civic Improvement League was officially chartered, and by the end of 1902 it had more than nine hundred members. According to its first constitution, however, the Civic Improvement League vowed to stay away from political issues, and stressed that the goals to which it adhered were ‘not chiefly aesthetic, though they all be in the direction of cultivating a taste for municipal beauty.’ There may have been some political forethought in this apparently apolitical stance, because the criticism levied at


28 Civic Improvement League, Minutes of the Executive Board, September 18, 1902, Civic Improvement League Papers, Missouri Historical Society Archives, St. Louis. (Hereafter cited as Minutes of the Executive Board, Missouri Historical Society).

city officials by Lincoln Steffens in *The Shame of the Cities* had encouraged the belief that St. Louis politicians and business leaders were morally corrupt. A quiet, apparently non-political stance was advisable for the Civic League, because it would allow it to voice opposition to the municipality and its business interests whenever it suited it to do so.

Despite the organisation’s claim that it stayed away from politics, the concerns of the Civic Improvement League were aesthetic and political; the two things were not mutually exclusive, as an early campaign in 1902 to ‘stir up the citizens to the necessity of maintaining a clean condition of streets and alleys’ demonstrates. Campaigns to clear streets and alleys could, and did, spearhead criticism of businesses and of city officials who were not prepared to follow the prescriptions of the League. Furthermore, highlighting streets and alleys which were visibly inferior to the rest of the city, and by implication did not belong in the Progressive vision of St. Louis, suggested that the present condition of that part of the city, and the behaviour of the people who lived there would not be tolerated and should, under instruction from the League, be induced to change.

Mrs. Louis Marion McCall, one of the first Vice-Presidents of the Civic Improvement League, suggested that the League ‘had been not a little instrumental in causing a moral awakening’ (emphasis in original source), which had ‘resulted in the indictment, trial and sentence of three allegedly official corruptionists [sic] and the flight of several others to parts unknown.’ However, it was not only politicians who were forced to change their behaviour through the imposition of civic morality in the city. McCall explained that, due to the street clean-ups, ‘householders actually began to see that they had better keep their own premises in order, if they would not be criticized as backward by their neighbors.’ The moral awakening, or civic morality, spearheaded by the League encouraged a clean-up of both the city streets and the city’s government. Such self-regulation, and the continued civic morality in politics and St. Louis society, was, the League members believed, to be assured due to their continued guidance.

31 Minutes of the Executive Board, Missouri Historical Society, September 18, 1902.
A new constitution of the Civic Improvement League was launched in 1905. The goals of the League were listed in this constitution as the creation of ‘better civic conditions; to promote local municipal improvements; to further wholesome legislation, and to stimulate public sentiment in favour of making St. Louis a better place in which to live.’ The simple emphasis on beautification, together with a self-appointed responsibility to the city, had characterised the Civic Improvement League’s first years, giving its members an uncomplicated common goal that flattered their own sense of importance, because it apparently aided their city. The first constitution had been far more explicit in its vow to stay away from political issues, whereas the later version acknowledged that some political involvement would be necessary, and even positive. Stimulating public sentiment was innately political because it meant identifying those who apparently lacked this virtue. In 1905, galvanised by its new focus, the League formed committees on parks and boulevards, tenement houses, and charter reform. In 1907 the Civic Improvement League officially became known as the Civic League.

The basic organisational structure of the Civic Improvement League, outlined in its first constitution, remained largely unchanged as the organisation morphed into the Civic League. There was an Advisory Council, an Executive Board, and a President, the terms for all of which were two years. The Advisory Council consisted of fifty members, whose duties were to ‘advise and co-operate with the Executive Board in furthering the objects of the League’. Clearly, the League favoured bureaucracy. The Executive Board (made up of the President, six Vice-Presidents, Secretary, and Treasurer) ‘shall have power to organize, in the different wards and sections of the city auxiliary associations, whose object shall be to work for civic betterment in their respective localities and to co-operate with the League’. Over several years, the Executive Board created many committees to direct the work of the League. The office of the Civic Improvement League had stated that ‘there is a wide field capable of being covered by such an organization as

34 Civic Improvement League, “Constitution of the Civic Improvement League,” 1905, Civic Improvement League Papers, Missouri Historical Society Archives, St. Louis, 1.
35 Sandweiss, St. Louis: The Evolution, 196.
36 Minutes of the Executive Board, Missouri Historical Society, March 22, 1905.
this, and while it may not be possible for us to take up all the lines of work that may be suggested, still we would like to hear from the members, so that we may clarify them, and when an opportune time arrives we may be able to select committees for any work that we may desire to have done’, in a clear attempt to appeal to and appease grassroot activists.\(^{40}\) However, this call for involvement and engagement belied the centralising decision-making which came from the Executive Board, and this was to remain a fixture in the League’s decision-making and policy development.\(^{41}\)

The *Civic Bulletin* frequently mentions the links between the Civic League and the City Club, a gentleman’s club in downtown St. Louis, many of those members were also members of the League.\(^{42}\) The ‘City Club was the outgrowth of the luncheon discussions held so successfully by the League’ and, according to the *Civic Bulletin*, the club’s ‘civic value’ lay in ‘the acquaintance and fellowship of men around the daily luncheon table, most of whom are actively interested in some form of public service or civic work.’\(^{43}\) The City Club had only been founded in the summer of 1910, and was led by Civic League members Luther Ely Smith and John Gundlach.\(^{44}\) In 1911 the Civic League and the City Club worked with ‘conscious and well-directed co-operation’, and it was for this reason that ‘the boards of the two organizations held a joint meeting, the result of which was the appointment of a joint committee – three from each – to be a permanent committee on co-operation, that both organizations may be of maximum service to the community.’\(^{45}\) Three months later, it was announced that the League’s office was to move to the sixth floor of the Board of Education Building, which was a floor beneath that occupied by the City Club; one of the apparent benefits of this move reported in the *Civic Bulletin* was the closer proximity between the two organisations.\(^{46}\) The City Club was a space specifically designed for and monitored by white privileged men; and it was racially exclusive.\(^{47}\) Many of the Civic League’s exhibitions and lectures took place in the

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\(^{40}\) “Constitution of the Civic Improvement League,” 7.

\(^{41}\) “Office of Civic Improvement League,” 1.


\(^{43}\) “The Civic League and the City Club,” 3.

\(^{44}\) “City Club Strongly Endorsed,” *St. Louis Star and Times*, July 23, 1910, 3.

\(^{45}\) “The Civic League and the City Club,” 4.


\(^{47}\) “The Crisis in Error,” *Argus*, May 7, 1915, 5. This editorial piece stated that *The Crisis* had reported in error that during a ‘recent visit to St. Louis in the interest of the Hampton Institute, Major Moton “had been petitioned by his own race not to dine with whites” at the City Club’, and thereafter he apparently
City Club, and in many ways the club could be seen as an extension of the Civic League’s office.

Some of the members of the City Club and the Civic League’s Executive Board had begun to bypass the Civic League even before the League moved the location of its office. Some of the Civic League’s suggestions which had been outlined in their 1907 City Plan had been included in the 1911 charter renewal vote. This had been defeated. To ensure that parts of the City Plan would be addressed in the future, some of the Executive Board of the Civic League had introduced an ordinance into the Municipal Assembly to establish a City Plan Commission. The City Plan Commission ordinance was passed in the Municipal Assembly on March 27, 1911.\(^48\) This new government body consisted of nine citizens, together with members of the Board of Public Service, the Commissioners of Parks, Buildings, and Streets, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, and the President of the City Council. The nine citizens were long-term members of the Civic League and the more recently established City Club, among them were Walter B. Stevens (journalist and one-time secretary of the Civic League), William Trelease (Director of the Botanical Gardens), Thomas C. Young (an architect who had served on the Board of Architects for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and had designed the Lincoln Trust Building and the Third National Bank in downtown St. Louis), George Edward Kessler (landscape architect), and former Presidents of the Civic League Charles A. Stix and Cyrus P. Walbridge. No women were elected to the City Plan Commission. The new Commission claimed to continue the work set out in the City Plan, to ‘harmonize and beautify the city – smooth out the rough, uneven places, as it were’ and to make the city a ‘symmetrical whole’, but its attention was focused upon improving the riverfront, traffic congestion, and the grouping of public buildings, and its priority was the creation of the Central Parkway which, if passed, would require the razing of several blocks of housing in the central corridor of the city.\(^49\) Central to the City Plan Commission was its work in St. Louis to ‘facilitate the handling of its great industrial, financial and commercial businesses.’\(^50\) The Progressive rhetoric in St. Louis

\(^48\) Sandweiss, St. Louis: The Evolution, 205. This was ordinance number 25,745.
\(^49\) “What Can be Done to Improve St. Louis in 1912?,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, December 31, 1911, 17.
\(^50\) “What Can be Done to Improve St. Louis,” 17.
used by both the Civic League and the City Plan Commission was tied up with the financial prospects and continued boosterism of the city.

It would, however, be too easy to view the Civic League as an all-boys club designed to bolster the socio-political power of its members, even following the changes in 1911 and the formation of the City Plan Commission. Many of its leaders realised that it was necessary to secure a range of members for the League ‘in order that a large representative group of men and women may be in touch with the active work the League is doing.’ This would have encouraged wider support for their aims and objectives. Membership was paid as part of annual dues, the rate of which was in accordance with the willingness and ability of each member to give to the organisation, and there was supposedly no distinction in membership privileges, a ‘$2 member and the $100 member share alike.’ There was a desire of the membership to see more women in leadership roles; in 1912 the Civic Bulletin reported that ‘the returns showed beyond a doubt that a large majority of the members interested enough to vote desires to see our large membership of women represented on the Executive Board.’ Of the two female nominees who were then put forward for the Board, Mrs Mary E. Bulkley was elected.

The fluctuating membership, the appeal to women to stand for office, and the recourse to grassroots activism and ambition suggests that within the League there was actually a combination of boosterism, business opportunity, civic pride, concerns and criticisms. Sometimes, as in the case of smoke abatement, this combination of innovation and ideals could be at odds with the long-standing business interests of some (male) members of the League and the boosterism made for the city of St. Louis.

The public good proved to be a slippery concept which League members clung to in an attempt to gain control of and direct public order as they saw fit. The rhetoric of the public good was not without its problems. The Civic League, and later the City Plan Commission, sought to suggest that their work was designed to make the space of the city more harmonious and beautiful. This did not always translate in their plans, and in how they spoke about the space under their study. If the Civic League was aiming to

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52 “Civic League Plans Work to Change Charter,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 6, 1911, 10.
54 The other female nominee was Charlotte Rumbold, who appears in later chapters of this thesis.
weaken divisions across the city space it was not always apparent, rather they relied on piecemeal projects and suggestions for improvements in very particular parts of the city. They wanted to improve the central corridor of the city, apparently for the benefit of all, however when this was put to the vote in 1911, and again in 1915, most wards rejected it because they thought it would be only for the benefit of the rich who lived in the Central West End and to the west of Forest Park who would then be able to travel from the downtown to their residences more swiftly.

The Civic League was not always successful in its endeavours. Some of the League’s campaigns reveal that notions of the public and private good as understood by the citizens of St. Louis and the League members could often be at odds, and when this was the case the League’s efforts failed. A consideration of the reforms tolerated shows that only piecemeal projects which did not have a great amount of impact on citizens lives and wallets were acceptable to voters. The most successful campaigns were tree-planting and billboard regulation, while the suggested imposition of expensive and intrusive civic centres outlined in the City Plan faltered.

**Part II – The Civic Improvement League’s Tree-Planting Competition, 1905**

One of the most popular individual issues with which the Civic Improvement League engaged was tree-planting. This was an activity which many Progressive groups across the country embraced enthusiastically. There were a number of reasons tree-planting was popular: it was something in which grass-roots activists could easily get involved; the initial financial outlay promised annual returns each spring; the city could be quickly beautified without protracted building works; and the planting of trees was not objectionable to business owners, who might have been inconvenienced by other urban improvements. In a cost-benefit analysis the long-term benefit of tree-planting far outweighed the original effort of planting. The planting of trees was also appealing to Progressive groups because it suggested a way of restoring something which many Progressives believed was quickly being eliminated from cities, a connection with the natural environment. In this manner, tree-planting was a variant on the Village Improvement Societies and the Parks and Boulevards Movement that had sprung up
across the country in the late nineteenth century and stressed the moral benefits of increased interaction between the city’s growing population and natural surroundings.\textsuperscript{55} 

In 1905 a report of the Tree Planting Committee of the St. Louis Civic Improvement League was issued in ‘connection with the $500.00 Tree Planting Prize Contest which has been inaugurated by the League among the school children of the city.’\textsuperscript{56} The report contained the ‘recommendations of the planting committees’, and suggests some of the reasons why tree-planting was so popular among Progressives.\textsuperscript{57} The contest was also appealing because it encouraged the engagement of the next generation of citizens in good morals and civic virtue. The Civic Improvement League made its intentions clear, stating in the report that, ‘we believe the planting of a tree is a true expression of altruism’, and that it will ‘add to the comfort, beauty, and attractiveness of our streets and homes.’\textsuperscript{58} The League was ‘firmly convinced that what is for the permanent good of the city can and should be introduced into the public schools.’\textsuperscript{59} League members sought to instil civic-mindedness in the young for the future benefit of the city. Clearly, tree-planting was deemed to be beneficial and important because it continued for over a decade, the Tree Planting Committee became a permanent standing committee of the Civic League and various competitions throughout schools in the city were held.\textsuperscript{60}

Expressions of altruism were not the only reasons listed in the \textit{Tree Planting in St. Louis} report. In answer to the question ‘Why Plant Trees?’ the Tree Planting Committee stated that the first and primary reason to do so was because ‘they increase the value of surrounding property’ in St. Louis.\textsuperscript{61} Clearly, the League’s members were concerned with long-term investments in the city, and for themselves. Traditionally, properties near parks and attractive ‘triangles’ (bits of land dedicated to plants, trees, and landscaping) gained in value. One of the ways the ‘Private Places’ of St. Louis had retained their

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\textsuperscript{55} Jon A. Peterson, \textit{The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840 -1917} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 33.
\textsuperscript{56} Civic League, \textit{Tree Planting in St. Louis: Recommendations of the Tree Planting Committees of The Civic Improvement League and the Englemann Botanical Club} (November 1905) 1.
\textsuperscript{57} Civic League, \textit{Tree Planting}, 2.
\textsuperscript{58} Civic League, \textit{Tree Planting}, 1.
\textsuperscript{59} Civic League, \textit{Tree Planting}, 1.
\textsuperscript{60} “Children Urged to Plant 5,000 Trees,” \textit{St. Louis Star and Times}, October 10, 1913, 12; “Civic League Will Give Prizes for Trees,” \textit{St. Louis Star and Times}, November 7, 1913, 6.
\textsuperscript{61} Civic League, \textit{Tree Planting}, 2.
financial value was through either the deeding of land to be used as surrounding parks or by the purchase of adjacent land by neighbourhood associations to ensure the uses of that space.\textsuperscript{62} Closed streets like those in Westmoreland and Vandeventer in the west end of the city further ensured the containment and monitoring of such ‘Private Places’ via agreements between the residents. Later, these types of exclusive arrangements would be developed into residential restrictions based on race. League members sought to ensure the replication of the type of neighbourhood agreements and restrictions that they had utilised in their own residential areas through conversations about shared space and the common good. This shows their lack of awareness of the long-term social, financial, and cultural patterns which ensured the exclusivity of the ‘Private Places’.

Planting trees, the \textit{Tree Planting in St. Louis} report suggested, would protect the pavements and purify the air, and the League argued that because the trees ‘aid in counteracting the unnatural conditions of city life’ the planting campaign should be embraced.\textsuperscript{63} But, they were never completely clear about what they deemed unnatural and how it was created; the by-products of the modern industrial city were seen as unnatural, but, the expansion of the industrial city from which many League members gained financially, inevitably saw an increase in industrial waste products and the corresponding ill effect on the environment. In this way, a further strange combination of ideas and actions could be found in the League’s mix of boosterism for St. Louis, the desire for its growth, and the wish to curtail the effects of that expansion.

Conversations about natural and unnatural spaces could also refer to the people who lived in them. It was assumed that there was a natural place for certain parts of the population, and this reveals one of the ways in which race, class, gender and ethnicity were conferred and enforced by actual space and conversations about it. To retain the value of their property, some Civic League members sought to prevent the insidious creep of poverty and of the ethnic population into their ‘natural’ environment. Tree-planting would ensure that their city space was well-kept and beautiful, while instructing


\textsuperscript{63} Civic League, \textit{Tree Planting}, 2.
and hopefully inspiring other parts of the city to take such measures would insure the middle-class membership against the influence of the ‘unnatural conditions’ of city life represented by the working classes and the ethnic population. Not only were definitions of private and public under contention in the tree-planting campaign, so too were what was deemed natural and unnatural.

The concern for the beauty that tree-planting would apparently create meant that both the streets and the trees planted on them would be subject to further regulation and standardisation.64 Instructions laid out in the Tree Planting in St. Louis report and given to school children stated that, ‘the beauty of a tree avenue depends much upon the planting of a uniform species the full length, or at least for several blocks of avenue. Trees of different shapes and size give to a tree a ragged, irregular, and unsightly appearance. The Committee urge the residents along any given street to meet and agree upon one kind of tree to be planted the full length of that street.’65 The tree-planting projects were designed to bring uniformity to the city and encourage community cohesion. In the Civic Bulletin, a supplement regarding tree-planting advised that, ‘for the most effective planting, it is wise to be guided by the advice of experts in this work.’66 Clearly, via the tree-planting campaigns the League sought to encourage neighbourhood activism, but also wanted to continue its role as instructors and adjudicators of civic morality.

The tree-planting report reveals the Progressive obsession with urban beautification, instruction, and regulation. It also reveals other aspects of Progressive thought and the ways in which the development of a civic morality in the city would be initiated by the League and its members. The League attempted to hold the city to account and encourage a civic morality in its municipal governance, and thus encourage further urban reform and revitalisation. In the report, specific reference is made about the need for further intervention by the Municipal Assembly. The League wanted the efforts of ‘patriotic’ citizens, who had been supplying the funds for tree-planting, to ‘be supplemented by the establishment of the office of City Forester, as provided for by the

64 “Tree planting Committee,” Civic Bulletin, June 26, 1911, 2.
65 Civic League, Tree Planting, 3.
bill recently introduced into the Municipal Assembly through our efforts’. The League expected that the financial and moral support provided by grass-roots activists for the tree-planting campaign should be met by the establishment of a democratically mandated, paid position in the municipal government. A copy of the proposed City Forester Ordinance was included in the report to underline the League’s actions and its involvement in municipal management and change. The League was not content with voluntarism; it wanted to see changes to the governance of the city. There was, therefore, several strands of Progressive thought and action involved at the same time in the tree-planting project.

The Civic Improvement League suggested that, once created, the office of the City Forester would work towards ‘regulating the planting and preservation of trees in streets, alleys, and public highways, creating certain misdemeanours for violating the provisions hereof and prescribing penalties therefor.’ Among the misdemeanours listed were ‘the planting, pulling up, cutting down, burning, destroying, removing, or trimming [of] trees’, and the report and the proposed ordinance stressed that anyone found to have ‘in any manner injured any tree or shrub standing in any street, alley, or public highway, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour’. If found guilty, offenders would be ‘fined not less than five nor more than fifty dollars’. Evidently, Progressives were taking part in marking public space and criminalising certain behaviours and actions within that space. Furthermore, once the position of City Forrester was established, the League would ‘assist in the prosecution of persons charged with the violation’ of the Forester’s ordinances. As with their advocacy and actions around smoke abatement, League members sought to act as arbitrators of public offences and the violation thereof, and to take appropriate actions to ensure that the violators were properly identified and prosecuted. By aligning itself in this way, the League sought to act for the public good.

The City Forrester was established as a municipal office in 1906, which was apparently due to the ‘presence and influence’ of Civic League members who had

67 Civic League, Tree Planting, 1.
68 Civic League, Tree Planting, 7.
69 Civic League, Tree Planting, 9.
70 Civic League, Tree Planting, 9.
71 Civic League, Tree Planting, 8.
lobbied the House of Delegates.\textsuperscript{72} The League’s proposals designed to implement and enforce civic morality in government and the urban environment would restrict female involvement in tree-planting and beautification. Section III of the City Forester Ordinance stated that ‘the City Forester shall be a man skilled and learned in the science of Forestry and shall have had not less than three years [of] experience as a practical forester.’\textsuperscript{73} Many of the women who had originally been involved in tree-planting were gradually edged out in favour of the technocrats and the drive towards professionalisation. The increase in legislation and apparent professionalisation in monitoring and measuring city space increasingly excluded women. This adds a further dimension to civic morality as a particularly masculine municipal vision.

The various campaigns to encourage tree-planting shows the type of interference in the city space that the citizens of St. Louis and the city’s House of Delegates would and would not accept. A 1906 editorial in the \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch} made clear that while the tree-planting competition undertaken that year was commendable, the League would ‘do well to supplement this work by inducing the city authorities to cease destroying the trees already planted by giving permits to telegraph and telephone companies to place poles on the sidewalks and string wires which interfere with the growth of trees’\textsuperscript{74}. There was still a sense, conveyed in this editorial, that the League’s efforts were small in scale and could not reduce the rampant interference that commercial interests made in the cityscape. Telegraph and telephone wires would help the city’s commercial growth, however there had long been a distrust of self-interested business practices in St. Louis. The League tried to change this perception through references to working for the common good and the future financial prosperity of the whole of the city, but the distrust was too deep. This was one of the reasons why some of the League’s prescriptions were rejected by voters for fear that business trusts would still be able to gain the upper-hand and control the common city space and amenities. The League found that they had to rely on small suggestions of civic improvements which were acceptable to voters.

\textsuperscript{72} Civic League, \textit{A Year of Civic Effort: Addresses and Reports at the Annual Meeting, 1907} (St. Louis: St. Louis Civic League, 1907), 37.
\textsuperscript{73} Civic League, \textit{Tree Planting}, 7.
\textsuperscript{74} “Planting Trees,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, January 11, 1906, 14.
If the League wanted to create a more habitable city for everyone the sense or belief in business interests running rampant, often in cahoots with corrupt government officials, would need to be curtailed. This was why one of the most successful campaigns the League was involved in was the imposition of billboard regulation. Tree-planting and billboard regulation gave the impression of a shared city space, when that space seemed to be without self-interested parties (either businesses or voters who would benefit from it) changes to it were largely accepted by the general population of the city. However, when parts of the League’s plans were deemed to be to the benefit only of the Central West End they were rejected by voters.

Part III – The Civic League’s Billboard Campaign, 1910-11

The Civic League’s billboard campaign, conducted between 1910 and 1911, shows that distinctions between private and public concerns were changing in Progressive thought. By assuming the mantle of defender of the public good the League criticised businesses and their commercial practices, and the tension between the two was played out in disputes about city space. The billboard regulation campaign was an attempt to encourage greater civic morality in business leaders and owners, and the League argued that if businesses could not be induced to be more considerate of civic morality, and to demonstrate this by the curtailment of their advertising practices, then there was a need for further legislation to enforce it. The Civic League’s Committee on Signs and Billboards had been one of the first committees appointed when the organisation was formed, because, like the tree-planting campaign, billboard regulation appealed to City Beautiful ideals and beliefs. The campaign against the proliferation of billboards became one of the Civic League’s most successful projects, and the legislation it created was enforced and copied by other cities.

The proliferation of billboards in American cities was a major concern for Progressives across the United States. Progressive reform periodicals such as The Chautauquan, The Outlook, and The American City were unanimously opposed to the perceived excesses and abuses of billboards, and served as clearinghouses for
information on both the billboard problem and efforts to resolve it. On a national level, the American Park and Outdoor Art Association (APOAA), founded in 1875, and its successor, the American Civic Association (ACA), regularly launched campaigns against billboards. National crusades against the proliferation of billboards created a sense of unity in purpose and activism among Progressive reformers; the Civic League of St. Louis had supported the successful campaign to deter billboards from marring the natural beauty of Niagara Falls. Progressive organisations had argued that visitors would not be able to experience the positive effects of natural wonders such as Niagara Falls if they were hindered by tawdry advertisements which sought to divert their attention and encourage them to spend money. These concerns reflected long-held beliefs about how natural beauty could influence individuals who encountered it and highlighted changing attitudes about the ownership of public lands and spaces. In a similar vein, some of the most successful Progressive agitation and legislation was for the creation and protection of national parks. Progressives argued that the benefits of contact with nature and beauty were so great that they must be protected at all cost.

Progressives believed that it was not only natural areas which were being blighted by billboards. The rapid proliferation of billboards and outdoor advertising seemed to transform the urban streetscape and constituted one of the first and most visible instances of the commercialisation of public space. Outdoor advertising, in the shape of merchants’ signs and point-of-purchase notices, had been evident for centuries, and was tolerated because the signs were mostly small, stylized, and unobtrusive. Changes to the size, the content, and the proliferation of billboards accompanied rapid urbanisation and industrialisation. Furthermore, newer billboards were often portable, which extended their marketing well beyond the marketplace, and this mobility could potentially violate social and class distinctions that had been enacted through specialised land use. Progressive reformers were concerned with the shaping and manipulation of urban space, in adherence with their theories on good and efficient management of city space,

and their belief that a well-ordered environment would encourage and further develop a well-behaved population. Progressives did not appreciate other potentially disruptive influences in the urban environment. This exploitation of the collective resource of city space also disheartened many Progressive reformers. The crux of the billboard problem was that it destabilised architectural and landscape design’s power to properly form cities and, by extension, citizens.  

Figure 14. Civic League, *Billboard Advertising in St. Louis: Report of the Signs and Billboards Committee of the Civic League* (St. Louis: Civic League of St. Louis, 1910), 6. This cartoon, taken from the *Globe-Democrat* was included in *Billboard Advertising in St. Louis*. The City Beautiful is obscured by billboards that advertise an array of products and melodramas.

In 1910 the League’s Signs and Billboard Committee wrote a report which included a wealth of data and statistics designed to show how great the billboard problem had become. The *Billboard Advertising in St. Louis* report revealed that, by February 1, 1909, ‘there was a total of 1,374, 537 square foot of billboard surface in the city of St. Louis under the control of billboard advertising companies and theatres’.  

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miscellaneous advertising and the hand-bills and posters tacked onto sheds and fences were added to this number, the total amount of city space given over to private advertising was approximately ‘1,500,000 square foot of surface area’.\textsuperscript{81} Eighteen per cent of the total area, or ‘approximately 250,000 square foot’, occupied the upper rows of billboards (those which were stacked on top of each other and known as Double Deckers).\textsuperscript{82} Of the total surface area of billboards, approximately forty per cent were made of metal, and sixty percent were made of wood. There was a total number of 293 individual advertisers who made use of the billboards, advertising an array of commercial products and services from crackers and spaghetti to undertakers and water heaters.\textsuperscript{83}

The statistics in the \textit{Billboard Advertising} report highlighted the amount of advertising for certain goods and services to underscore the fact that the promotions for liquor, tobacco and theatres, far outweighed advertisements for other products. Progressives argued that billboard advertisements tempted the ‘youth’, ‘the masses’, and the ‘foreign-born’ to consume a variety of questionable products.\textsuperscript{84} Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., renown landscape architect and city planner, was involved in the national debate about billboards, and wrote that they would ‘obtrude’ into public space ‘all sorts of sordid ideas.’\textsuperscript{85} This attitude is shared in \textit{Billboard Advertising}. In one image included in the report, it is stated that ‘the effect on the boys is the same as that produced by a yellow-back novel.’\textsuperscript{86} This implied the cheap, tawdry, and salacious nature of yellow-back novels could also be found in billboard advertising. Such a strain of moral absolutism ran deep in the Civic League’s work, and the organisation often expressed its concerns about the poor and uneducated in order to stress the apparent natural authority its members should have over the city.

Many photographs of the billboard problem were included in the report, and were used as proof of the negative effects of billboard advertising; in one photograph City Hall, which was the emblem of ‘architectural symmetry and harmony’, and by extension civic cohesion, was obscured and blocked by a ‘triple decker’, and in another, a

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{81} Civic League, \textit{Billboard Advertising}, 11.
\bibitem{82} Civic League, \textit{Billboard Advertising}, 13.
\bibitem{83} Civic League, \textit{Billboard Advertising}, 12.
\bibitem{84} Civic League, \textit{Billboard Advertising}, 17.
\bibitem{85} Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., \textit{Public Advertising} (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill Press, 1900), 6.
\bibitem{86} Civic League, \textit{Billboard Advertising}, 15.
\end{thebibliography}
‘zig-zag billboard’ used ‘a maximum surface area on a minimum space.’

Passers-by could not avoid seeing this type of billboard from some angle. The Civic League was concerned about this type of land use, which was not considered beautiful or helpful to the city’s population.

There were further anxieties about the behaviours that billboards could encourage. Apparently, acts of indecency could take place behind them. Concerned about sexuality in public spaces, the Civic League sought to monitor business and commercial practices in order to curb certain behaviours to which they assumed some citizens would naturally gravitate, given any opportunity. The Civic League positioned itself as a moral arbitrator, keen to enforce its vision of apt uses of city space and the appropriate behaviour which, they believed, would undoubtedly result from contact with a planned and beautiful space. The guise of unbiased statistical analysis adopted by the League in documents such as the Billboard Advertising report and the City Plan of 1907 masked the negative opinions that its members held of the general population of the city.

The billboard campaign would prove to be one of many examples of Progressives seemingly fighting against a tide of consumerism, self-interest, and unregulated business development. It also highlights some of the paradoxes within Progressive thinking:

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87 Civic League, Billboard Advertising, 23, 13.
88 Civic League, Billboard Advertising, 25.
Progressives welcomed legitimate private enterprise, because they did not want to 
destroy the billboard industry or harm advertisers; rather, they hoped to achieve small 
changes to some billboard locations and displays. Despite his concern for the ‘sordid 
ideas’ that the billboards advertised, Olmsted Jr. expressed moderate views about their 
curtailment, stating that ‘the evil to be suppressed is merely the unreasonable extension 
and abuse of a perfectly proper practice.’\textsuperscript{89} The Civic League carefully stressed that it 
supported legitimate promotions and was only opposed to that ‘form of advertising 
which rudely forces itself upon our attention at all hours of the day and night, whether in 
the city or the country, and does this at the expense of the landscape and the 
appearance of the streets.’\textsuperscript{90} Typically, Progressives who opposed billboards sought to 
correct abuses and provide regulation, not stop the practice altogether. This suggests 
one of the reasons why billboard regulation was popular, because even businesses were 
not greatly impacted by restriction because those regulations would be applied to all and 
therefore it was not to the detriment of one particular business or advertiser.

The authors of \textit{Billboard Advertising} asked their readers, whom they safely 
assumed would be moved by the situation, to write to the advertisers and ‘ask them to 
refrain [from using excessive billboards]...to cooperate with the Building Commissioner to 
investigate violations of ordinance’, and finally to support the passage and enforcement 
of further ordinances and statutes taxing and regulating billboards.\textsuperscript{91} Apparently, ‘the 
most effective force for the abolition of the billboard is the force of public opinion.’\textsuperscript{92} 
Similar techniques had been devised in the League’s smoke abatement and tree-planting 
campaigns, in which vigilante League members and other concerned citizens were asked 
to monitor particular parts of the city and identify potential violations of civic beauty and 
harmony. Therefore, the initial measurements made by the League’s billboard 
committee to expose the problem would, they hoped, induce more monitoring by grass-
root activists and, through the enforcement of ordinances and legislation, lead to further 
regulation and prosecution by the municipal government. The people of St. Louis were 
not being asked to do too much and supporting billboard regulation was not going to

\textsuperscript{89} Olmsted Jr., \textit{Public Advertising}, 3-4. 
\textsuperscript{90} Civic League, \textit{Billboard Advertising}, 35. 
\textsuperscript{91} Civic League, \textit{Billboard Advertising}, 17. 
\textsuperscript{92} Civic League, \textit{Billboard Advertising}, 32.
encroach on their lives, unlike the recommendations made in the *City Plan*. So, a further reason to support regulation of billboards, or at the very least not to show down-right hostility towards it, was because there was little cost and effort involved from the general population of the city.

A court ruling made in St. Louis in 1911 proved instrumental in developing regulations for billboards. In *Gunning v. St. Louis*, the municipal government, under much encouragement from the Civic League, challenged the size and placement of the Gunning Company’s billboards.93 Photographic evidence was provided which showed the back of the billboards and the potential hazards present, the rubbish and tinder which piled up behind the billboards was designated an extreme fire risk. Supporting testimony against Gunning’s billboards stressed that the ‘lowest form of prostitution’ and other immoral and criminal acts were concealed or abetted by the billboards.94 The court declared that the billboards were ‘inartistic and unsightly’, and ‘nuisances in character.’95 Although the court cited ordinances from New York City which limited the height of billboards and banned them from trolley cars, it was the St. Louis case which was to have lasting impact and was often used in other billboard regulation cases across the country.96 These ordinances continued to be upheld by courts in other cities, claiming that they were regulatory, the enactment of which was within a city’s franchise power.97 The Civic League oversaw a victory for Progressives and the start of regulations concerning billboards in favour of City Beautiful ideals.

The billboard campaign reveals how members of the Civic League thought about city space and some of the city’s inhabitants. Civic morality and the public good had, once again, been used to criticise business practices and to emphasise the need for a proactive Civic League to protect and enforce correct moral outlooks and behaviours in the city. The League’s use of quantifiable data to make qualifiable statements and judgement laden assumptions about impressionable working classes and foreign-born citizens highlights how technical systems and statistical analysis was used by

Progressives. The increased amount of monitoring, measuring, and legislation encouraged by the billboard campaign also shows how notions of private interest and public good were changing for urban reformers and Progressives in this period.

It is likely that these sorts of Progressive reforms were supported precisely because they did not interfere too much in peoples’ lives, nor did that really shape the space in any dramatic way. Billboard regulation and tree-planting could be viewed as part of the general public good, particularly if it led to the curtailment of self-interested business practices of which St. Louisans had long been suspicious. However, when the League’s suggested reforms were far more focused on an area either for improvement or as a site of concern, and if that improvement was viewed by voters to actually be motivated by the League’s self-interested members, Progressive plans were rejected in St. Louis. In its work encouraging tree-planting and billboard regulation the League not only considered the natural and unnatural environment but the built environment of the urban space. In these kinds of small-scale endeavours, the League was successful. Larger more expensive and expansive plans proved to be far more controversial. The League identified the negative impact that private familial and community concerns and bonds in ethnic neighbourhoods could have on the development and future of the city in its long-formulated City Plan. It then sought to create new city spaces which would reverse this apparent trend. Attempts to extend middle-class control into working class and ethnic spaces in the city were seen, by the proposed recipients, as an encroachment that would not be tolerated and they rejected them when given the opportunity to approve such plans as part of the 1911 charter renewal vote.

Part IV – The City Plan for St. Louis and Civic Centers, 1907

In September 1905, members of the Civic Improvement League had first called for ‘the leading architects, engineers, business and professional men of the city to form a city plan commission, and to consider comprehensively the range of related problems affecting the landscape of the metropolitan area’. Of the forty-three members of the

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98 Minutes of the Executive Board, September 26, 1905, Civic Improvement League Papers, Missouri Historical Society Archives, St. Louis.
League’s various City Plan committees, about a third were business leaders, another third were professionals (principally lawyers and architects), and the rest were municipal and institutional figures. Eighteen months later, on February 2, 1907, at the Jefferson Hotel on Twelfth Street (which had been built in preparation for the World’s Fair), the City Plan for St. Louis was unveiled. Daniel H. Burnham, the famed Chicago architect and the Director of Works at the Columbian World’s Fair, was invited to give the evening’s keynote address. In his speech, Burnham stated that, like the on-going improvements that he was currently engaged in through his redesign of Washington, D.C, the Civic League’s City Plan for St. Louis rested on a shared faith in the combined symbolic and economic value of orderly planning. Burnham sought to place the City Plan of St. Louis in the developing pantheon of City Beautiful design in order to augment the profession of city planning and management. He stressed that the days of single-building design were over, and the era of the comprehensive city plan had arrived.

Two years after introducing the City Plan for St. Louis, Burnham revealed his own Plan of Chicago, which was disseminated in a similar fashion and for similar purposes. The 1909 Plan of Chicago epitomised the symbiosis of capitalism and efficiency that underlay the mainstream Progressive urban agenda. Burnham and his co-author, Edward H. Bennett, had prepared the plan for the Commercial Club of Chicago. The Chicago plan became the pinnacle of monumental planning. By comparison, the earlier City Plan for St. Louis was more limited in ambition, and it was not funded by a particular commercial or business group, nor could it be identified with a single professional planner. Rather, each committee secured its own design and drafting services. The City Plan for St. Louis was not, however, evidence of planning by the community, because it was sponsored and supported by a very selective group of reform-minded businessmen who worked in the Civic League and who encouraged urban and commercial

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100 Civic League, A Year of Civic Effort, 14.
101 Sandweiss, St Louis: The Evolution, 198.
103 Rutherford H. Platt, Reclaiming American Cities: The Struggle for People, Place, and Nature since 1900 (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 36.
boosterism.\textsuperscript{106} In the \textit{Plan for St. Louis}, the commercial focus was made apparent through the inclusion of comments such as ‘a city can not, in the modern sense of the word, maintain a high commercial standing unless it maintains, at the same time, a high civic life’ which underpinned why public spiritedness was attached to the financial future of St. Louis.\textsuperscript{107} The collective authors of the \textit{City Plan} stated that ‘a city, after all, is a great business establishment in which thousands of stockholders are interested.’\textsuperscript{108} The ‘stockholders’ were the established commercial interests of the city, who were to be the leaders of its future development. In the \textit{Plan}, St. Louis’s citizens became, to an extent, commercial interests in the financial predictions for the city. The plans produced for the cities of St. Louis and Chicago may have differed in their scope, but there was evidently a shared focus: the sponsors of both documents sought to preserve and encourage their city’s commercial interests.

Only 2,500 copies of the 113-page \textit{City Plan} were printed, because the document was designed for and distributed to a specific readership.\textsuperscript{109} The target audience of the Plan was prominent city men, and the copies were dispersed among supporters, city aldermen, and business leaders. The preface of the \textit{Plan} was provided by Carl Schurz, the Prussian-born American statesmen and reformer, and read, ‘Ideals are like stars: you will not succeed in touching them with your hands, but choosing them as your guides and following them you will reach your destiny.’\textsuperscript{110} Such hyperbole acknowledged how ambitious the plan was, it also reflected the bluster of the age and the promotion of the developing profession of city planning. The ideals that the Civic League had chosen as guides when formulating the \textit{Plan} were ‘civic orderliness and beauty’, which would steer the city away from the current ‘lack of unity and an absence of dignity and harmony.’\textsuperscript{111} Areas of interest and concern addressed in the \textit{City Plan} were a group plan for municipal buildings; an inner and outer park system; civic centers, which included the grouping of small parks and playgrounds, public baths, branch libraries, schools, model tenements, police stations, fire engine houses, and other public and quasi-public institutions; street

\begin{thebibliography}{111}
\bibitem{Foglesong} Foglesong, \textit{Planning the Capitalist City}, 207-16, 231-32.
\bibitem{CivicLeague_ACityPlan} Civic League, \textit{A City Plan}, 8.
\bibitem{CivicLeague_CityPlan} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 9.
\bibitem{Sandweiss} Sandweiss, \textit{St. Louis: The Evolution}, 270.
\bibitem{CivicLeague_CityPlan9} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 2.
\bibitem{CivicLeague_CityPlan14} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 14.
\end{thebibliography}
improvements; a municipal art commission; and the legislation necessary to carry into effect the plans outlined.\textsuperscript{112} The City Plan Committee warned there would be an increase in the ‘enactment and strict enforcement of laws’ for the civic morality inherent in the plan to have a generative effect on the future citizens of St. Louis.\textsuperscript{113}

It was stressed in the \textit{City Plan} that ‘[t]he Civic League of St. Louis is an independent, non-partisan association designed to unite the efforts of all citizens who are seeking to improve municipal conditions in this city. Its general purposes are: to create public sentiment in favour of a better administration of public affairs; to crystalize enlightened public sentiment into action; to labor for the enactment and strict enforcement of laws which will make the city more healthful, comfortable and attractive, and to serve as a Bureau of Civic Information to the citizens of St. Louis.’\textsuperscript{114} In discussing the grouping of municipal buildings, parks and recreation, riverfront re-development, and the innovative idea of civic centers, the League demonstrated that its radicalism was tempered by conservativism, as it argued for the need for greater civic morality among ethnic and poor St. Louisans. The \textit{City Plan} also highlights that the League manipulated notions of the public and the private to justify the expense to the public purse (which they estimated as an initial outlay of $25,000,000) and the increased monitoring of citizens’ lives which its plans required.

In the introduction, the authors of the plan bemoaned both the lack of planning and the exploitation of the natural beauty of the topographical area of the city. Apparently, ‘only the “Places” were protected from the encroachment of street cars, switch tracks and objectionable buildings’.\textsuperscript{115} Many of the authors lived in such ‘Private Places’, which they obviously favoured; however, they stressed that they wanted to help those in need, because, as Kessler explained, ‘the average citizen...is helpless in the face of this riot of conflicting and selfish interests – the direct results of a lack of plan and insufficient regulations.’\textsuperscript{116} The Civic League, through the imposition of its \textit{City Plan}, sought to act as adjudicators of what made for the most beautiful, and, by extension,\textsuperscript{112} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 7-8.\textsuperscript{113} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 108.\textsuperscript{114} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 108.\textsuperscript{115} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 11.\textsuperscript{116} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 11.
healthful city environs, and they favoured replicas of the places in which they lived. However, these ‘Private Places’ were products of exclusionary practices, designed to keep commercial and ethnic interests out.117

The genuinely new recommendations in the Plan focused not on downtown public buildings or boulevards, but on a few neighbourhoods that had seen little in the way of civic improvement. The Civic Centers Committee introduced its plans, which combined the belief in the benefits of parks and recreation, the stress on City Beautiful ideals, and the desire to enforce centralised planning and authority in poorer areas of the city. The Civic League was concerned not only with the built environment, but with the lives of the people who lived there, and it sought to further the civic education of these citizens. The League argued that this instruction would be vital to the revitalisation and continuation of the commercially driven city. The Civic Centers Committee calculated that the land east of Jefferson Avenue, where nearly half of the city’s population lived, included barely seven percent of the city’s park area. The Committee argued that such environmental inequality was even more apparent when its statistics were framed within comparisons between city neighbourhoods: in the area west of Grand Avenue, there was ‘one acre of parkland for every 96 residents’, but when the same calculation was applied to the city east of Grand it was revealed that in that area there ‘was one acre of parkland for every 1871 people’.118 It was further calculated that, ‘9,285.99 acres of a total of 39,276.25 acres, or 23 per cent of the total acreage of the city, is devoted to parks, streets and alleys, and school grounds and school buildings. When these figures are studied by districts, gross inequalities appear.’119 The Committee used figures such as these to support its call for additional recreational spaces in inner-city neighbourhoods (Figure 16).

118 Civic League, City Plan, 39.
119 Civic League, City Plan, 39.
The Civic Centre Committee identified populations in the city that had the least access to parks and public buildings, and suggested alternative healthful and beneficial urban environments, to be maintained by municipal agencies that were, in turn, to be encouraged and directed by the League. As the League saw it, the education of these populations in civic morality was paramount. One of the areas identified as a cause for concern was the Soulard neighbourhood, which was in the south of the city, and had one of the largest populations of ethnic immigrants. The Committee stated that ‘we can recommend this district especially to institutions working for the broad, constructive, educational up-building of character among the poorer classes. The needs and desires of these people would seem to furnish a soil peculiarly adapted to educational purposes, and the seeds of education sown here would reap a rich harvest in the development of right-minded, high-thinking American citizens.’

The use of agricultural metaphors and the description of the cultivation of the people in the Soulard neighbourhood

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120 Civic League, City Plan, 48.
underscored the value the League placed on the positive connections between nature and people. This was not sufficient, however, in the ‘upbuilding of character’, because it was civic institutions that would ensure the development of citizens, and those institutions would be found in the built environment of civic centers.

The civic centers were directed at the people the League deemed to be in most need of instruction. Such centres, the Committee argued, would ‘give to the immigrant – ignorant of our customs and institutions – a personal contact with the higher forms which the government exercises toward him.’\textsuperscript{121} It went on to state that ‘a civic center would comprise, among other things, a public school, parochial school, public library branch, public park and playground, public bath, model tenement, social settlement, church, homes of athletic or social organizations, police station and fire engine house.’\textsuperscript{122} Civic centers were designed to be more than a way for providing crowded neighbourhoods with additional open and green spaces, rather, they were intended to reproduce in miniature the effect that the public buildings group would exercise on the city at large. The civic centers were a symbolic outpost of the order and authority which would emanate from the new public buildings downtown.\textsuperscript{123} Civic centers were ‘the grouping of the various public, semi-public and private institutions which have for their object and aim the mental, moral or physical improvement of the neighborhood in which they are located.’\textsuperscript{124} The civic centers offered a symbolic union of the sacred and secular, and of local and municipal functions.\textsuperscript{125} The overall effect, and affect, of the built environment and municipal management and contact would, the League hoped, be measured and monitored in the civic centers. The civic centers represented potential all-encompassing interference in the lives of the residents, and this was quite different to campaigns regarding smoke abatement, tree-planting, and billboard regulation which was to be for the benefit of all, either by allowing the City Beautiful to flourish unimpeded by billboards, or that the air would be cleaner by the reduction of pollution and the natural filtration of trees. Central to the idea of civic centers was the identification of particular people who needed instruction in civic morality. Furthermore,

\textsuperscript{121} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 37.
\textsuperscript{122} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 37.
\textsuperscript{123} Sandweiss, \textit{St. Louis: The Evolution}, 199-201.
\textsuperscript{124} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 37.
\textsuperscript{125} Sandweiss, \textit{St. Louis: The Evolution}, 200.
the financial cost of the League’s proposals in the *City Plan* were high. These issues explain why the proposals were rejected when they were included in the charter renewal vote of 1911.

In an attempt to pre-empt possible criticisms about their particular focus and the cost of their proposals, the League suggested that the advantages of civic centers were, apparently, numerous: they were listed in the *Plan* as adding to the intrinsic beauty of each of the various buildings, and that ‘it would foster civic pride in the neighbourhood and would form a model for improvement work’.\(^{126}\) Civic centers would help to develop ‘a neighborhood feeling, which in these days of specialization has grown weak’; by ‘specialization’ the Committee meant the increased number of different nationalities, ethnicities, and races.\(^ {127}\) Interest among the citizens in local politics would be encouraged by contact with the various institutions that were part of the civic center, and the League claimed that this would result in less corruption, because the immigrant would develop ‘his interests in municipal activities by substituting for a feeling of governmental antagonism towards him, as manifested in the only municipal institution with which he is brought in contact – the police station – a feeling that the government is, after all, maintained for his individual well-being as well as for that of the native-born inhabitant.’\(^{128}\)

The League conveyed its assumptions about the type of contacts an immigrant would already have, and argued that the public good would have to be embraced at the expense of any such private associations. Civic centers were designed to encourage a commitment to the polity of the city, its well-being, and its future, all of which were to be directed by the Civic League.

The immigrant neighbourhoods chosen for this experiment in civic instruction, alongside Soulard, were two in the Near North Side, the section of the city which, at the time, housed many of St. Louis’s poor Eastern and Southern European immigrants and which was generally described as home to the city’s worst slums (Figure 3).\(^ {129}\) The Civic Center Committee presented a kind of tempered radicalism because absent from their proposed list of neighbourhoods were any of the poor and increasingly crowded African

\(^{126}\) Civic League, *City Plan*, 37.

\(^{127}\) Civic League, *City Plan*, 37.

\(^{128}\) Civic League, *City Plan*, 37.

\(^{129}\) Civic League, *City Plan*, 49.
American neighbourhoods confined to the blocks of the Mill Creek Valley, west from Twelfth Street toward Grand Avenue. The proposed Central Parkway, first mooted in the City Plan, would actually cut through a large section of the Mill Creek Valley area and would displace many poor African Americans who lived there. There are few specific references to the African American community in St. Louis in the *City Plan*. This meant that, to a certain extent, the African American community was able to develop its own space and a sense of community within it, particularly in the Ville and the developing Greater Ville; African American women created and took opportunities to become involved in this. However, the lack of considerations for African Americans in the city space, and how their circumstances could be improved, meant that arguments were later made by white supremacists who suggested that African Americans did not belong in particular city spaces. These opportunities and restrictions experienced by African Americans in St. Louis during the opening decades of the twentieth century are discussed in more detail in Chapters Four and Five.

The Civic Centers Committee did present its opinions about citizens according to their ethnicity and the perceived traits of each ‘type’ of people. In their exploration of the Near North Side, the Committee stated ‘the population of this district consisted formerly of Germans, Irish and Americans, but within the last five years there has been a large influx of Russian Jews. The waves of immigration would seem to be sweeping the Americans gradually westward to Jefferson Avenue, the Irish and Germans to the north, and the negroes to the south and immediately east to this district. Still further east are the Italians and Poles. To one familiar with Jewish characteristics, it would be unnecessary to say that the people of this district are thrifty, well-to-do and generally law-abiding. A superficial glance at the housing conditions would seem to indicate that there is little over-crowding’. In its assessment of the areas and people in need of their assistance and instruction, the Committee fell back on apparently known characteristics, or, in other words, stereotypes. In its depiction of Jewish characteristics the Committee was not necessarily critical of Jewishness, however it still relied on marking different types of people and judging them by the city space they occupied. The

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131 Civic League, *City Plan*, 44.
Committee also attempted to determine which behaviours and attitudes were acceptable by praising some and criticising others.

The Civic Center Committee not only suggested changes to the built environment, it was also concerned about what went on in these proposed buildings, and to whose benefit. Public lectures and vacation schools were to be encouraged in some of the public and semi-public buildings. A further opportunity to devise a hierarchy of desirable qualities according to ethnicity presented itself in the Committee’s discussion of which wholesome activities should be promoted at the centers; it believed that ‘these would supplement the regular school curriculum and would make school attractive to the Italian child, who lacks the desire for learning which possesses his Jewish neighbour, and whose interest in school matters consequently needs every stimulus.’ The centers were apparently designed to enhance community cohesion; however, discussions of public education provided a further opportunity to compare different groups of immigrants against each other and to offer judgements about their abilities and receptiveness to civic morality. These sorts of extracurricular public lectures would be provided for older people too, because ‘[t]he fact that the children of immigrants rapidly assimilate new customs and manners and grow daily farther and farther away from their parent is a tragedy to the individuals and a serious reflection on the community. The parents should be given a chance to develop with their children, thus binding together the home with a new tie.’ Within the civic center’s built environment and activities, there was a desire to change the familial bonds and associations of immigrants, so that they would be united with the rest of St. Louis citizens in their knowledge of and love for their city and their new country. The Civic League, by proposing to re-orientate the immigrants’ homes, commitments, and associations, once again manipulated notions of public and private concerns according to class and ethnicity.

The Civic League’s ambition was made abundantly clear in the range of proposals made in the City Plan. Yet realistic expectations, and indeed pessimism, about how popular and successful the plan would be runs through the document. The League acknowledged that it was working within the limits of the proposed bond issue.

132 Civic League, City Plan, 43.
133 Civic League, City Plan, 44.
However, the Plan’s authors were careful to state that their proposal was so comprehensive that it could act as a blueprint for future design and spending plans. They estimated that the initial expenditure would not exceed $25,000,000 of public revenue.\textsuperscript{134} Rather than raise taxes, which the League acknowledged would be unpopular, the Civic League favoured the issuance of municipal bonds.\textsuperscript{135} They offered a very gradual plan, which sought to lay out the necessary improvements in accordance with an incremental increase in the amount of bonds which the city could issue within the next twelve or fifteen years, rather than attempting to secure the maximum borrowing limit by constitutional amendment to the city’s charter.\textsuperscript{136}

However, the League’s attempt to change the urban environment of St. Louis as outlined in their Plan failed, due to lack of funding and half-hearted support from the Municipal Assembly and crucially by the rejection of the voters. The League had tried to address some of the inequities in the city, stating that ‘to deprive 48 per cent of its citizens of the full benefit of these institutions is social suicide to a community’, but when parts of their scheme were included in the proposed charter of 1911, it was rejected by the wards they had sought to improve.\textsuperscript{137}

The overall plan was not approved but over time disparate parts of the League’s civic centers were established; several public bath houses and a branch library in the Soulard district and Carr Square were in place by 1910 (Figure 23). However, the kind of ‘centralized complexity’ between the downtown public buildings and their outposts in the neighbourhoods which the League had envisioned did not materialise. A comprehensive city plan remained a dream for many urban reformers in the city. The League had more success with small single-issue campaigns, and the most successful was its billboard regulation campaign. Progressive reform was not wholeheartedly accepted by voters, especially when it was deemed to be in the self-interest of those reformers.

\textsuperscript{134} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 9.
\textsuperscript{135} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 96-99. For further reasons why the city was heavily reliant on bonds and how this was related to the peculiar tax structure of St. Louis’s municipal government, see Joseph Heathcott, “Harland Bartholomew, City Engineer,” in \textit{St. Louis Plans: The Ideal and the Real St. Louis}, ed. Mark Trannel (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2007), 92. It was not until 1956 when the Earnings Tax was approved that the city’s over-reliance on long-term bond indebtedness was eased.
\textsuperscript{136} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 99.
\textsuperscript{137} Civic League, \textit{City Plan}, 42. The campaign for the 1911 charter became caught up in a battle for a free municipal bridge, for further details, see Primm, 399-402.
Harland Bartholomew was also to discover that smaller piecemeal projects were more successful in garnering public and municipal support and getting legislation passed.

**Conclusion – Harland Bartholomew’s ‘Unlimited Patience and Determination’**

In 1916 the city of St. Louis appointed Harland Bartholomew as Civic Engineer, in the hope that he would reenergise the drive for civic betterment through urban planning. Upon his appointment, Bartholomew launched a personal public relations campaign in the city. This campaign sought to justify his newly created role, the first of its kind in the country, and to reignite enthusiasm for city planning, urban reform, and the Progressive agenda in St. Louis. In a speech entitled ‘What is a Citizen?’, Bartholomew reminded his audience that citizenship was a state of ‘reciprocal obligation’ (emphasis Bartholomew’s). In exchange for paying their taxes, citizens received physical and legal protections. As part of this Lockean pact, citizens would ideally find that the institutions which provided their protection would be built ‘in good taste as befitting the city which they represent.’ While Bartholomew underscored his role in providing what was both necessary and desirable in the city through urban design, he acknowledged that some citizens paid their taxes begrudgingly. To discourage this sentiment and promote allegiance to the city and the protections it provided, Bartholomew finished his speech with a declaration that ‘civic consciousness must precede civic pride.’ It was only through civic consciousness, or increased civic morality, that urban design projects would gain public support. Civic pride, which was apparently generative, would then further work to boost the city’s social, political, and economic standing.

Progressives had long been at work in the city, espousing and encouraging that often elusive civic consciousness. City clean-ups and tree-planting were initially much favoured, especially as the opening of the World’s Fair approached. However, Bartholomew’s invitation to direct, and re-direct, Progressive efforts in the city was an

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138 Harland Bartholomew, “Development of a City Plan speech given to American Civic Association 1918,” Harland Bartholomew and Associates Collection, Series 10, Box 1, Folder 1, University Archives, Washington University in St. Louis.

139 Harland Bartholomew, “What is a Citizen?,” Harland Bartholomew and Associates Collection, Series 10, Box 1, Folder 1, University Archives, Washington University in St. Louis.

140 Bartholomew, ‘What is a Citizen?’ 1.

141 Bartholomew, ‘What is a Citizen?’ 3.
acknowledgement that the Civic League had largely failed. In his speech, Bartholomew admitted that there had been some mismanagement in city planning because, he claimed, ‘until recently city building and city administration had been more a matter of course than of science.’

His practical, scientific, and measured approach would, he promised, provide a remedy to this unfortunate situation. Bartholomew’s scientific method would require the further use of population data and statistics about the city space supposedly analysed and adopted by disinterested experts. This, like that collected and used by the League, would be laced with assumptions about certain parts of the city and the people who lived there, and was not objective or judgement-free. By 1917, civic campaigners were defending themselves against claims that they were ‘batty’ and ‘freaky’, which could suggest that the voluntarism which had encouraged more than 900 members of the League in 1907 was being mocked as the turn towards central planning and professionalisation was made. This turn was particularly gendered, as men claimed expertise in city planning and reform. The League continued to limp on into the 1920s, however it became a club more interested in social events for its members than urban reform; the City Plan Commission, and later Bartholomew and Associates, took the League’s place as the initiators of proposals designed to improve the city and by extension its citizens.

The League, as proud advocates of City Beautiful ideals, had hoped for moral improvement through environmental uplift. In Bartholomew’s City Practical, the moralising vision continued, but receded into the background; a concern for the civic, moral, and ethical development of St. Louis’s poor and ethnic inhabitants was still present, but the appeal and style of city planning had changed. ‘Beauty’, Bartholomew wrote, ‘should be an inexpensive adjunct to the primary mode of efficiency in an improvement project’. The plans produced by Bartholomew and the Civic League differed in style, yet their substance remained similar. A desire for the rationalisation, efficiency, and standardisation of city life can be found in both. Bartholomew and the Civic League shared a belief in the superiority of their instruction, and an insistence that a

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142 Bartholomew, ‘What is a Citizen?’ 2.
143 City Plan Commission, A Major Street Plan for St. Louis (St. Louis: Nixon Jones, 1917); Sandweiss, St. Louis: The Evolution, 217-220; Heathcott, “Harland Bartholomew, City Engineer,” 91.
144 “Greater St. Louis,” St. Louis Star and Times, 12 April, 1917, 12.
145 Harland Bartholomew, ‘Publicity and the City Plan,’ American City II, no. 5 (November 1914): 380.
city which worked for business would work for all if those business interests were properly regulated. Such messages were expressed by League reformers and urban planners like Bartholomew in a way which would appeal to the electorate, which was being asked not only to commit to the occasional street-cleaning and tree-planting, but to agree to large bond issues to pay for planned improvements. Both the League and Bartholomew stressed the need for civic morality due to its generative quality; a consciousness of the benefits of urban reform and planning would, they believed, serve to spur on calls for even grander projects. However, civic morality, as the League and Bartholomew understood it, would also generate further measuring and monitoring of the city’s population and the built environment. The sense of how this kind of observation and subsequent policy making would benefit the whole city was never shared by all the voters in St. Louis, as evidenced by the rejection of the 1911 charter renewal. In Progressivism the issue of fairness enacted in city space was far more complicated than reformers understood or wished it to be.

The drive to produce and continually reproduce civic morality, or civic consciousness, in St. Louis reveals ways by which ideas about the public good were changing and could be manipulated by reformers in order to criticise certain business practices and parts of the city’s population. Furthermore, the rejection of the League’s idea of public good should also be considered because it shows the limits of what could be done in the space, how it was to be done, and for whose benefit. The changing notion of public and private concerns cannot be divorced from a growing sense that voters could reject middle-class stewardship when it looked like it would encroach on their lives to an intolerable degree.
Chapter Three

The Expansion and Contraction of the Female Dominion in St. Louis’s Public Space,

1890-1916

The employment of Harland Bartholomew in 1916 marked the end of voluntary urban planning in St. Louis. Bartholomew was given his professional mantle of City Engineer and set about adapting the Civic League’s designs. By doing so, he expanded the remit of city planning in St. Louis. Bartholomew’s focus resulted in the further collation of vast amounts of data about many facets of city living, and in the centralised control of activities and interests related to urban reform.¹ Those who were most affected by this shift were the female members of the Civic League and informal women’s clubs. The drive towards professionalization led to the contraction of female authority on matters such as playgrounds, bathhouses, and parks and in conversations about how the public good would be best served.

The decrease of women’s involvement in and influence over urban policy can be seen in Bartholomew’s Recreation in St. Louis. This report was written in 1917 as part of Bartholomew’s overview of the city’s problems, as he saw them, and the introduction of his proposed solutions. The report highlights the shift in authority over recreation and instruction from women’s groups and clubs to Bartholomew and Associates. In the report, Bartholomew paid little tribute to women’s work in recreation and the creation of playgrounds and parks; instead, he promoted the need for centralised governance in city planning, which would exclude women.² Recreation in St. Louis begins with a description

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¹ Harland Bartholomew, Zoning for St. Louis: A Fundamental Part of the City Plan (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1918); City Plan Commission, The River Des Peres Plan (St. Louis: A.R Fleming Printing Company, 1916); City Plan Commission, Problems of St. Louis (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1917); City Plan Commission, A Major Street Plan for St. Louis (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1917); City Plan Commission, St. Louis After the War (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1918); City Plan Commission, The Zone Plan (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1919); City Plan Commission, A Public Building Group Plan for St. Louis (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1919); City Plan Commission, Twelfth Street, St. Louis’ Most Needed Commercial Thoroughfare (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1919); City Plan Commission, The St. Louis Transit System, Past and Future (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1920); City Plan Commission, Ten Years Progress on the City Plan of St. Louis, 1916-1926 (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1927); City Plan Commission, A Plan for the Central River Front (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1928); City Plan Commission, A Plan for the Northern and Southern River Front (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1929).
² City Plan Commission, Recreation in St. Louis: The City Plan Commission, St. Louis, Missouri (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1917), 1-6.
of playgrounds and swiftly moves on to parkways, boulevards and riverfront plans, and suggests that the playgrounds and neighbourhood parks which were previously autonomously organised should become connected in a grand plan for the benefit of the city as a whole. Bartholomew was especially critical of any ‘overlapping’ of efforts, by which he meant that voluntary agencies organised and led by women often duplicated city government’s reform work and recreational activities and facilities. To stem this apparent waste of time, energy, and resources, Bartholomew argued that all recreational planning and activity should be organised by a central authority. His ascension marked the growing influence and impact of expertise in urban reform, coupled with the drive towards centralised city design, which was to be headed by male professional planners.

Bartholomew’s critique of the number and scope of voluntary groups in Recreation in St. Louis suggests that female voluntary groups were still prevalent on the urban scene in the second decade of the twentieth century. Women’s club work, carried out in a voluntary capacity, had developed and shaped essential services and facilities. Daphne Spain has suggested that, while city architects and engineers such as Daniel Burnham in Chicago and Harland Bartholomew in St. Louis were ‘busy trying to create cities from whole new cloth, women volunteers were strengthening the urban fabric by focusing not on commerce and large public spaces, but on daily life and the neighbourhood’. Women in St. Louis had fashioned new ideas about the municipal government’s relationship to its citizens, and they pioneered a new understanding of the role of the neighbourhood in urban planning efforts. Elizabeth Belanger has suggested that, through considering women’s voluntary efforts, there should be a shift from focusing on the grand ‘macro’ planning narratives of the ‘great men’ of the profession towards looking at the ‘micro’ narratives led by female volunteers. However, women’s efforts and achievements were usurped by men in the Civic League and City Club, the City Plan Commission, and by Bartholomew and Associates.

3 City Plan Commission, Recreation, 2.
4 Daphne Spain, How Women Saved the City (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 60.
This chapter argues that the contraction of female authority over reform and urban assistance in the city happened as male Progressives claimed expertise over that space and activity. This process began prior to Bartholomew’s arrival and was part of the efforts made by men interested in urban reform and civic boosterism to give their visions of masculine municipal management prominence in discussions about St. Louis’s future prosperity. Bartholomew’s employment completed the process. Part I of this chapter expands upon the topic of women’s clubs in St. Louis and shows how women’s engagement with city space changed in the late-nineteenth century due to the manipulation and expansion of the remit of their private and public concerns. Daniel Rogers termed this social maternalism. The most prominent club in St. Louis was the Wednesday Club, which is examined in greater depth. Women’s clubs developed settlement houses, playgrounds, and bathhouses and engaged in discussions about healthful environments. The female-oriented spaces they created were significant to the larger schema of the city. In this way, their ‘micro’ narratives were important and beneficial to St. Louis. Part II looks at how women attempted to critique the male sphere through their discussions about the cityscape. A case study of clubwoman and reformer, Charlotte Rumbold, and the work she conducted is provided because it is useful when thinking about the creative ways women used to criticise male influence and authority over city space. A close reading of Rumbold’s Housing Conditions of St. Louis reveals some of the complications within the work conducted by women because they were still implicated in class and race-based elitism. Part III shows that, while it was significant and even vital, women’s voluntary work met with resistance from male Progressives, and this tension was played out in the Civic League and the Municipal Assembly. Clubwomen such as Rumbold tried to make roles for themselves in the increasingly professionalized world of urban reform, community building, and social welfare in the early twentieth century, and how this attempt was ultimately curtailed is considered in the conclusion of this chapter.

Part I – Clubs and Committees

Throughout the Gilded Age, white middle-class women bolstered their social status by affiliation to clubs. Across the country, there was an explosion in the number of female clubs and the number of participants involved in them. Clubwomen saw their role within their clubs as an extension of their wifely duties; they were not only promoters and benefactors of their husbands’ status, but they were hostesses holding club gatherings in their homes. The activities of these clubs were largely concerned with discussing books, theatre, art, and European travel. These were the first concerns of the Wednesday Club when it was founded in St. Louis in 1888. Initially, the club had been called the Shelley Club and, its stated purpose was to study the Lake Poets. The club evolved in 1890 into the Wednesday Club, and, as the name change suggests, regular mid-week meetings took place and became a fixed occasion in the clubwomen’s social diaries.8

Affluent white clubwomen used their club affiliation to reproduce relationships of class inequality, cemented by the demonstration of access to the socio-cultural products of the middle class. In St. Louis, the elite Junior League was designed for daughters of affluent residents of the Central West End.9 Young girls of the Junior League were instructed to take up the mantle of the elite taste-makers of the city. The fact that elite status was bolstered by club membership is a reminder that not all clubs were interested in articulating what Spain termed the voluntary vernacular and creating redemptive space through it, but rather in producing, and reproducing, unequal class relations.

However, the concerns of some clubwomen did evolve; their traditional philanthropic drives became combined with their acknowledgement of the growing need for urban reform. Discussions which promoted urban renewal and reform entered the Wednesday Club’s program from the late 1890s. Environmental factors drew the initial interest of clubwomen; the Wednesday Club first addressed air and river pollution, and the collection and disposal of waste, by considering how ‘nuisances’ could have an impact in their own homes and on their streets. By concentrating on the effect the wider city environs had on and in their homes, women were cautiously able to expand the remit of their private concerns, it had not been because they had sought to be critical of the public sphere but simply because the public sphere was beginning to effect their

9 Corbett, In Her Place, 231.
private concerns. The consideration of environmental factors helped clubwomen draw attention to their traditional roles as guardians of the private sphere of the home and family, and how they related to the wider cityscape.\textsuperscript{10} To protect their homes and children, clubwomen engaged in the reform of the urban environment. This shift in the club’s focus would eventually take shape in the voluntary vernacular, as female members sought to protect and improve the homes of others.

The Wednesday Club’s first urban campaign was for smoke abatement in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{11} This campaign allowed for an expansion of the women’s private sphere, but their endeavours were restricted because they had to conduct the work with men of the Engineers Club in order to acquire support and status. Later this work was taken over by the Civic League, as discussed in Chapter Two. The Smoke Abatement Campaign, under the Civic League’s leadership, sought to implement monitoring and measuring of businesses and individuals and it continually recommended official municipal roles for qualified men to ensure legislation and prosecution. In this manner, women’s early efforts were eventually bypassed. The Smoke Abatement campaign reveals that the female dominion relied in part upon male involvement and partnerships, and that male reformers benefitted from their association with female maternal authority on matters such as the environment and its effects on the health and homes of children.

Women were members of the Civic Improvement League from its inception. They formed the prolific Sanitary Committee which was led by the energetic Dr. Mary Tucker. Tucker had observed the model of female Sanitary Inspectors in Chicago and she was keen to implement this in St. Louis. Her account of her time in Chicago was outlined in the Civic Improvement League minutes, and Tucker had spent several days shadowing the inspectors who visited the slums and tenements.\textsuperscript{12} Both Spain and Maureen Flanagan have used the Chicago model to argue that women’s efforts were paramount to the

\textsuperscript{10} Meeting of Women’s Organisation for Smoke Abatement,” Civic Bulletin, December 1, 1911, 1; “Notes from the League’s Committees,” Civic Bulletin, December 26, 1910, 1-2; George D. Markham, “President’s Annual Statement,” Civic League Yearbook 1911, 11-12.


\textsuperscript{12} Civic Improvement League, Minutes of the Executive Board, December 15, 1902, Civic Improvement League Papers, Missouri Historical Society Archives, St. Louis.
continued health and prosperity of the city.\textsuperscript{13} It was not replicated to the same degree in St. Louis. Tucker was appointed as a sanitary inspector and she and other women of the Sanitary Committee did lobby the House of Delegates ‘to legislate against expectorations [spitting] in street cars and in other public places’, but that legislation was never put in place.\textsuperscript{14} Mrs Rice, also of the Sanitary Committee, criticised ‘the inactivity of the police department in sanitary matters’; clearly women gained some authority through their involvement in this strand of the League, and they used this to criticise the behaviours and activities taking place in parts of the city and draw attention to how little the municipal government was involved in resolving matters.\textsuperscript{15} However, Tucker seems to be the only sanitary inspector employed and the Sanitary Committee’s work was eventually subsumed into the Civic League’s centralised structure.

The Civic Improvement League’s secretary Earle Layman wrote a newspaper article about the organisation’s first year in 1902. The by-line, which read ‘among other things, the League is having prepared a Boulevard System suitable to the future St. Louis of millions’, connected the aims of the organisation with the growing calls made by city boosters that a population increase of St. Louis was of paramount importance to the city’s future prosperity.\textsuperscript{16} Such claims would continue to be made upon the Million Population Club’s formation in 1904. The Boulevard System Layman outlined was another large scale scheme that failed to come to fruition, due to voter’s hesitance to pay for a scheme that they felt was of little benefit to them.\textsuperscript{17} This kind of macro-planning appealed to city boosters because it could be promoted as part of the grand future of St. Louis. In Layman’s article the work reported which was of any real success was that conducted by the female-led Sanitary Commission, the Third Ward mothers’ committee (based in the north of the city) which was working ‘hand-in-hand’ with the League, and by Ida Pevey who ran a social settlement at 1220 North Broadway which was close to downtown Carr Square (Figure 3). This micro-planning led by female reformers

\textsuperscript{13} Spain, \textit{How Women Saved the City}, 9-10, 81; Flanagan, “Gender and Urban Political Reform,” 1032-50.
\textsuperscript{14} “Women Petition Delegates,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, January 7, 1903, 12.
\textsuperscript{15} “Women Petition Delegates,” 12.
\textsuperscript{16} “Twelve Hundred St. Louisans in the Civic Improvement League,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, December 7, 1902, 57.
\textsuperscript{17} The Boulevard System would continue to be a dream of the Civic League and it was incorporated in the Central Traffic Parkway scheme which was rejected by voters in 1915.
spanned a greater area of the city than the proposed Boulevard System which would have created routes for pleasure driving, a recreation which few in the city could afford.

In his promotion of the Civic League’s first year of activity Layman laid claim to the establishment of three playgrounds, the first on Ashley and Collins, the second on Eighth and Rutger, and the third on Tenth between Carr and Biddle.  

However, it was actually the Wednesday Club, in association with ‘other women’s clubs’, who had set up these playgrounds. The development of these spaces are further examples of the urban activities in which women of the Wednesday Club became engaged via the club’s new Practical Work Committee. As the name suggests, this group of clubwomen wanted to achieve something tangible; by 1900 they were organising summer playgrounds in slum neighbourhoods found in the east of the city. They also established day nurseries, such as the South Side Day Nursery in Soulard, which enabled poor women to go out to work while their children were cared for and educated. Practical work in the urban environment introduced women to municipal matters before they could vote and direct city government and policy in more formal ways.

The summer playgrounds, otherwise known as Vacation Playgrounds, provide further evidence of the usurpation of female authority and influence by the Civic League and later by the municipal government. They were set up in the summer of 1900 by the loose association of women’s clubs. By 1903 the Civic Improvement League had taken over managing the spaces, and they were promoted as part of Mayor Wells’s New St. Louis – when Wells visited as part of a publicity campaign he endorsed the playgrounds and told the young boys to ‘play fair and obey the law’. The directors of the playgrounds at Mullanphy, Ashley, Fowler, Carr, Rutger, and La Salle were all male members of the League, and their assistants were women. Slowly, clubwomen had been edged out of the roles they had created for themselves. Eventually these playgrounds were turned over to the municipal government to manage.

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18 “Twelve Hundred St. Louisans in the Civic Improvement League,” 57.
19 “Summer Playgrounds for the Children of St. Louis,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 23, 1901, 33.
21 Corbett, In Her Place, 170.
22 “Playgrounds are Open for Children,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 21, 1903, 30.
23 Civic Improvement League, Report of the Open Air Playgrounds Committee, Civic Improvement League, 1903 (St. Louis: Civic Improvement League, 1903), 48.
The charitable zeal of the Wednesday Club and other clubs like it rested upon a long history of female involvement in philanthropy. In St. Louis, four Women’s Christian Home and Training Schools had existed in some form since the 1860s, and at least six other establishments were supported by the Women’s Christian Association (WCA), including a day nursery, the White Cross Home for destitute pregnant women, and the Blind Girls Home. In 1882 the WCA opened the Women’s Exchange, which helped poor women to earn money by providing an outlet in which they could sell their needlework. Immigrant women were seen as particularly skilled in this craft, and their embroidered linens were much in demand. The Women’s Exchange gave poor women space in which they could find some economic independence, but to do so these women had to engage in commercial activity. The establishment of places in which women could engage in commerce and socialise with one another and with potential customers was a means by which poor immigrants were instructed in the American way of life.

Economic changes had encouraged the rise of the New Woman in St. Louis and other cities. This term loosely described an unmarried, white, middle-class woman, educated to a higher degree than her mother, who was able to move more freely through the city than previous generations, often unchaperoned and sometimes even on a bicycle. New Women had greater access to some parts of the city, and they began to formulate notions of how they could fit within the changing urban environment and seek to improve it. Due to their presence in and concern about the cityscape, these women became associated with Progressive reform work in cities, and female clubs changed their program of study and concern, which reflected and was driven by these New Women.

The arrival of the New Woman was not without controversy. There was much consternation in the national press over the presence of women in urban environments which had once been the sole preserve of men. The New Woman occupied a problematic position in society, as her presence and engagement in traditionally masculine arenas threatened the separation of the genders which had been closely monitored and enforced in the Gilded Age. As more young women entered the workforce the separation of genders enacted through the occupation of, and restriction from, certain urban spaces

24 Corbett, In Her Place, 88.
became more tenuous. If the New Woman stepped too far into the masculine world, she could face a barrage of criticism and abuse. Therefore, she had to carefully and cautiously expand the boundaries of the traditional female world to find new opportunities for engagement with the modern city.

Part II – Charlotte Rumbold: The Investigative Reformer

One New Woman who tentatively entered the male professional world, albeit initially on a voluntary basis, was Charlotte Rumbold. She was born in St. Louis and lived there between 1869 and 1916 as a resident of the Central West End area. Rumbold’s family were concerned with health reform; her father, Thomas Frazier Rumbold, was a prosperous doctor. The education of his four daughters had been important to him, and Charlotte continued her father’s interest in reform work. As part of the affluent but reform-minded social set of the Central West End, the Wednesday Club was an obvious fit for her. She joined and became a founder of their Practical Work Committee; she also became an active member of the Civic League. She is mentioned in the Civic Bulletin in 1912 following her nomination for a position on the Executive Board, which was a response to the League’s efforts to be more receptive to women in leadership roles. Rumbold eventually withdrew from this election due to her other commitments, which by that time included a paid position as a Recreation Officer for the city of St. Louis.

In both her club work and her initial involvement in the Civic League, Rumbold’s principal concern was recreation; she believed that ‘if we play together, we will work together.’ She shared this belief in the benefits of play and recreation with Jane Addams, who had established the Hull House settlement and recreational play area in Chicago. Both women were members of the National Playground Association, which

reflected the growing professionalisation of reform work, an essential part of which was recreation.²⁹

Rumbold, like other female reformers in the Wednesday Club and the Civic League, enacted certain aspects of social maternalism through her concern for immigrants and children; she also reflected some of the hierarchies that could be found in social maternalism, as she remained unmarried and childless her whole life, yet believed that, as a member of the affluent Central West End elite, she could instruct working-class women in how to raise and provide for their children.³⁰ Female reformers positioned themselves as judges of what good motherhood should look like. Ellen Ross has argued that the relations between “good” and “bad” mothers could be thorny; for female reformers, the illusion of supplanting their client mothers and becoming the nation’s maternal ideal was linked to finding decently paid professional jobs, and sometimes in the sole desire to help people.³¹ The new urgency of motherhood jarred, however, with working women’s sense of themselves as household providers and managers first, child caretakers second.³² Furthermore, many female reformers would have employed nannies to take care of their own children (if they had any) while they shaped the public world of urban reform; many of these nannies would likely have been African Americans, so against the backdrop of racial and class difference middle-class women were able to expand the remits of their traditional concerns while ensuring they were still assigned to other women.

Rumbold evaluated working-class living conditions and motherhood when she was commissioned by the Civic League to write the *Housing Conditions in St. Louis: Report of the Housing Committee of the Civic League of St. Louis*. This report, published in 1908, followed the League’s *City Plan*; it aimed to provide the Municipal Assembly with some practical suggestions for improving the dire housing situation in the poorest parts of the city. Rumbold was the only woman on the Executive Board of the League’s Housing Committee; the others were architects Ernest J. Russell and J. Hal Lynch, the

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²⁹ Corbett, *In Her Place*, 160-66.
³⁰ “Stork Hides Behind Chimney of St. Louis Women’s Social Clubs,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 16, 1909, 18.
³² Ross, “Good and Bad Mothers,” 201.
former President of the Real Estate Exchange, Albert T. Terry, Rodger Nash Baldwin, who was a social reformer and described as an instructor in sociology, and the attorney J. Lionberger Davis.33 Rumbold wrote the text of the report, which she used to convey some of the ways in which social maternalism should be understood and implemented. The elitism of clubwomen-cum-reformers was also conveyed in this document. Rumbold used the opportunity to criticise certain parts of the population, stating that their poor living conditions were ‘aggravated by the congestion of the population and the lower standards of cleanliness of the newly-arrived immigrants.’34 However, her criticism was not solely levelled at the city’s newcomers; at times she was quite sympathetic to their plight, and she sought to reveal the reasons that the overcrowding was so high and conditions of living were so low. In doing so, she criticised the male spheres of business and politics, which was reflected in self-interested urban management.

Rumbold’s Housing Conditions report proved to be immensely popular both in St. Louis and beyond. Several issues of the Civic League’s Civic Bulletin explained that ‘the League’s office has frequent requests for the report...the office has no more copies, and members who have copies which they are willing to give up are requested to forward them at once to the League’s office...every report located means a real service to the inquiries from other cities, who want to profit by our investigations.’35 Several months later, the Civic League offered to pay fifty cents for each copy that was returned.36 The popularity of the report may have been due to the subject matter; many cities were attempting to find ways to deal with their own housing problems. Rumbold visited the housing under her study, and recorded her observations, which may further account for her report’s popularity; it reflected two tropes that were growing in appeal, the first was female reformist zeal and female-oriented solutions to the problems identified, and the second was the report’s muckraking qualities.37

33 Rodger Nash Baldwin appears in Chapter Four, he is one of the white members of the inter-racial group the CSSCP.
34 Charlotte Rumbold, Housing Conditions in St. Louis: Report of the Housing Committee of the Civic League of St. Louis (St. Louis: Civic League of St. Louis, 1908), 20.
37 Civic League, Unregulated Cheap Lodging Houses: Breeders of Disease, Dangerous to the Lodgers and the Public (St. Louis: Civic League of St. Louis, 1913), 2. Despite its salacious title, this report is rather staid, and was written by the Lodging House Committee, who ‘employed an investigator who visited over 150 lodging and boarding-houses’, rather than visiting themselves, as Rumbold had done.
The *Housing Conditions* report combined maternal concerns and personal judgements with a desire to scientifically measure and observe. The combination of scientific data with personal opinions was typical of the age in which the professionalization of social work and social science was not fully completed, indeed, women like Rumbold were trying to engage with and take ownership of this developing professional vocabulary. Muckraker texts, which were popular at the turn of the twentieth century, and exposés written by Jacob Riis and Annie Daniels had proven successful in raising awareness of the poverty and hardship many people faced, which had in turn encouraged their middle-class readership to push for legislation designed to improve aspects of the urban condition.\(^\text{38}\) In this manner, work produced by muckrakers was novel and garnered a dedicated readership.\(^\text{39}\) When trying to describe the contamination of the water supply with garbage from the slums, Rumbold stated that the results were ‘unspeakable’; however, she attempted to speak for the slums and articulate the conditions in which the occupants lived, just as muckrakers had tried to give voice to the voiceless. Rumbold also described the process of writing, which gave the report an immediacy and apparent authenticity; in describing the crowded rooms, she wrote that ‘in many of those inner rooms there was not light enough to see to fill out the cards used in the investigation, and a flashlight was necessary in determining the proportion of the rooms – this on bright days.’\(^\text{40}\) Rumbold’s adoption of the muckraker style worked to garner public attention and sympathy, and it fed into the canon of Progressive writing which created both cause for concerns and the means by which to resolve them.

The Civic League’s Housing Committee had chosen to focus the *Housing Conditions* report upon forty-eight blocks of the worst slums and this was the area Rumbold investigated, which lay between Seventh and Fourteenth Streets, Lucas Avenue and O’Fallon Street and, Franklin Avenue (Figure 3). In the introduction to her report, Rumbold stated that officers of three prominent charitable societies, the St. Louis Provident Association, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and the United Jewish Charities,

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\(^{39}\) Rumbold, *Housing Conditions*, 19.
\(^{40}\) Rumbold, *Housing Conditions*, 31.
had considered the area under her study to be the city’s worst. Religious organisations and their charitable arms had been working to help the poor and needy in these areas. However, the *Housing Conditions* report was not a religiously sponsored document, civic ideals and urban reform were at its heart.

The report Rumbold produced is made up of many layers. There are layers of tone in the mixture of emotive first-hand accounts and scientific data and analysis. There are also layers of text: the words are supported by photographs which provide visual evidence of the dire and dirty environment Rumbold studied. The layering effect of the text underscored and reflected the layer upon layers of problems under investigation. The space Rumbold studied was broken down; she investigated the spatial layers of the slums from top to bottom and outside to inside; in order to question the very nature of the space under investigation to suggest that, in the slums, the barriers between public and private were extremely porous, if not almost non-existent. Female reformers such as Rumbold, placed themselves in the position of interpreters of this potentially dangerous situation, in which distinctions between public and private were undetermined. They had of course benefitted from the expansion of their private concerns into the public, political arena and now they sought to monitor those distinctions for working-class and immigrant women. Aside from the porous boundaries of space, actual layers are analysed in the text; Rumbold described a children’s game she witnessed, in which the children peeled back old flaking wallpaper from the wall to see what was underneath. In her report, Rumbold attempted to do what the children were doing in their game, to peel back the layers and go beyond the façade of the slums to investigate what lay beneath, to get to the root causes of the problem of housing in St. Louis.

Rumbold’s *Housing Report* called to the reader’s attention the hidden, overcrowded space that passers-by failed to observe. She argued that the reason that the back sides of the tenements were cramped was because of the mixed use of space; businesses encroached upon residential land because there was no regulation to stop them doing so. Landlords had realised that they were sitting on high-value land, and

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42 Rumbold, *Housing Conditions*, 45.
43 Rumbold, *Housing Conditions*, 12.
therefore did little to develop it. Instead, they attempted to squeeze as much value as they could through their tenants, with the view of selling the land later, when the surrounding businesses needed to further development. Rumbold drew attention to how a ‘residential district is gradually eaten into by a business district’. Lack of business regulation was a major concern for Progressives both nationally and in St. Louis. Industrial by-products, waste from slaughterhouses, and the traffic generated by businesses were also identified by City Beautiful advocates as both ugly and dangerous. Zoning measures were proposed by Bartholomew, and zoning laws eventually came into effect in St. Louis in 1925. However, the campaign which was supported and promoted by the Civic League had been a long one. Prior to the imposition of zoning laws, the scenes that Rumbold described were typical.

Without zoning, the divisions between commercial concerns and the homes under Rumbold’s study were unclear. Apart from drawing attention to the blurred lines between private and public concerns in order to critique commercial interests and the effects they were having on the city, Rumbold used this lack of distinction to criticise some of the immigrants’ ways of living. She referenced how washing was done and food prepared in the slums, which served as both households and small businesses. In describing the terrible conditions of the basements, Rumbold wrote, ‘mostly when an old woman lives in a basement she takes in washing. Yours?’ She drew attention to dire conditions and then suggested how her middle-class readership was inculcated in and potentially benefitted from them. Annie Daniel used a similar technique in her muckraking work. By referring to old women, Rumbold underscored her apparent concern for other women, who, due to poor housing conditions, were no longer able to effectively and efficiently carry out household tasks. Business interests were detrimentally effecting the home and the traditional concerns of womanhood, so elite women like Rumbold were required to re-establish order and healthfulness by ensuring that the standards of womanhood did not slip.

Rumbold explained that the food and laundry entering and leaving the slums was dangerous because it could infect the wider city; germs, disease, and dirt could all spread

46 Rumbold, *Housing Conditions*, 35.
quickly, if uncontained and uncontrolled. She described the way that ice cream was being made in the filthy conditions of the slums because the milk had been left to go sour, and the report included a photograph to demonstrate how spaghetti sauce was being made outdoors in filthy unhygienic conditions. Of course, the link between food stuffs and ethnicity were being made clear by Rumbold, in referencing spaghetti sauce and ice cream she was referring to ethnic Italians and trying to mark them as different from native St. Louisans. Once prepared the food was sold across the city. The interconnection made apparent in laundry services and the preparation of food was of particular concern because Rumbold claimed that, among the inhabitants of the slums, there is a ‘tendency to adapt themselves to the standard of the least clean’, and there was a fear that this attitude or tendency might spread and affect the entire city.\footnote{Rumbold, \textit{Housing Conditions}, 13.} Reformers such as Rumbold justified the concentration of their energies and resources partly because of their theory of how the lowest common denominator could spread across the city, and because areas where ethnic populations lived were earmarked as different.\footnote{Rumbold, \textit{Housing Conditions}, 66.}
Due to the overcrowded nature of the slum space, Rumbold claimed that it was often impossible to distinguish between the outside of a home and its inside. Porches spilled out in to the shared space of the slums. For Rumbold, this was problematic and a cause for her concern, because without a clear division between the outside/public and inside/private, correct behaviour for either location would be difficult for the inhabitants to determine and demonstrate. In the slums, Rumbold observed that there was no privacy, stating that ‘everything is visible to every one else, men, women and children. Bathing, washing, changing clothes – no wonder they sleep with their clothes on – births, sickness, death.’ If the boundaries of public and private were not properly contained via female instruction, provided by affluent and appropriate clubwomen who had already passed through those boundaries and therefore knew how to do so properly, traditional female activities such as cooking and cleaning could become a danger to the city at large.

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50 Rumbold, Housing Conditions, 72.
51 Rumbold, Housing Conditions, 64.
Rumbold recognised that the inhabitants of the housing she studied adapted that space in ways for which it had not been planned, which added to the ramshackle nature of the mixed-use business and residential districts. This unpredicted use of space happened partly because of the vagueness of the original plans of the area. Initially, common land had been divided into plats, which were plots of land intended for housing, and these plats were subsequently sub-divided by landowners to maximise their profits. Due to this practice, housing, or what could loosely be described as such, emerged in any available space: Rumbold identified that behind the original streets was ‘practically another street’. This was an alternative city space, one that had not been planned or designed. From the outset, Rumbold aimed to go behind the façade of the slums and explore how people actually lived in that space. In her report, Rumbold demonstrated that she had both knowledge of alternative space and ideas of how to improve it for the benefit of its inhabitants and the greater good of the city.

Rumbold investigated the passageways which linked the tenements, as these areas were further unplanned spaces. Passageways, Rumbold claimed, could be problematic because ‘no one is responsible for the cleanliness of the yard,’ and apparently standards could quickly slip and dirtiness and associated unclean moral behaviours could infect the whole space. Due to the unplanned structures which had been erected in these passageways, the spheres of private and public were even more difficult to identify. This blurring of private and public was a cause for concern for Rumbold because these boundaries could not be controlled, nor could they be properly monitored. The passageways she investigated were described as ‘menacing.’ To emphasise this, Rumbold stated that, ‘it goes almost without saying that it is never lighted at night and it is always dark in the day time. It is a brave police officer that ventures into some of these after nine o’clock at night.’ The absence of authority figures and laws by which the spaces could be controlled, combined with the confusion between the natural

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54 Rumbold, *Housing Conditions*, 11.
order of night and day created the sense of danger. Women’s involvement would make the space ordered and safe.

In drawing attention to these sites (and sights), Rumbold offered a veiled criticism of male endeavours. Planning had failed in the slums, as had business influences, which had served to encourage the ramshackle and dangerous nature of the area. Moral authority and guidance was needed, and this would be provided by Rumbold and other clubwomen. She further criticised male spaces in her report by focusing on the ill-effects of saloons on the well-being of occupants of the slum space, particularly that of children. Saloons were seen as male places of vice and a threat to the traditional home, because in them working-class men could be encouraged to spend their wages on alcohol. Some sympathy for these men was included in the *Housing Conditions* report, however, it was expressed as a means by which to critique previous city planning, or lack thereof. Rumbold acknowledged that some men frequented the saloon in order to use the privy because there were no other toilet facilities available to them. Saloons, like sewerage, spilled over into the housing space of the slums, and this had implications for the morals and health of all slum residents. Such contamination or overflow from the saloons meant that children would inappropriately become part of an adult, masculine world. Rumbold observed that ‘in all public and in many semi-public privies hang placards advertising patent medicines and describing diseases of men. Children live and play in such yards.’

Clearly, the advertisements were for medicines dealing with venereal disease; the criticism of saloon space was a way to depict apparently rampant male sexuality as an assault on public morality, which was to be defended by clubwomen and female reformers. By extending their traditional concern for children, women had become involved in the creation of urban spaces they then wanted to control; recreation areas, kindergartens, and parks all became cornerstones of their club work. Progressive women manipulated their concern for children to mark and protect boundaries around the male world, and to criticise it.

Rumbold’s criticism of unchecked male sexuality combined with a critique of the housing conditions of the slums in her discussion of the lodger problem. Concerns about

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60 Rumbold, *Housing Conditions*, 20.
strangers to the city had long been expressed by urban reformers. Lodging houses and the potential for such places to become potentially unsafe environments and morally ambiguous spaces continued to occupy reformers in the early twentieth century. Rumbold dealt with lodgers by focusing on the negative effects they could have on children, because ‘besides being a serious consideration in the problem of overcrowding, the lodger is another difficulty in the way of keeping the children clean-minded – and clean-bodied.’61 By reporting in this manner, Rumbold made the clear suggestion that lodgers posed a sexual threat to innocent children. She furthered her criticism of lodgers by linking them to particular nationalities which were apparently represented by single men; according to her observations Greeks tended to be unattached men which she contended helped to ‘complicate the lodger problem’, presumably because of the language barriers, ethnic diversity, and supposed unchecked machismo and sexual urges of single men.62

In the Housing Conditions report, Rumbold added criticism of working-class mothers to her vilification of rampant masculine sexual proclivities and behaviours and the urban space that allowed and even encouraged them. She was critical of the cleanliness and the living conditions of the slums, stating ‘the children’s clothes have all been sewed on for the winter, however, and a washing of the visible parts is all the school authorities require.’63 Such a statement was a critique of working-class motherhood, as the children’s clothes would not be changed, and of the low standards of municipal authorities in schools, which the female dominion desired to improve. She used concerns for children to criticise men, working-class women, and the school authorities. A total overhaul of conditions was needed, and it would be clubwomen-cum-female reformers who would manage it.

The Housing Conditions report shows a disconnection between Rumbold’s observations of working-class women and their actions; strangely, at times in her report Rumbold was critical of the attention to cleanliness that the women who lived in the slums made. This was because there was a tension between being dismissive of working-class women and critical of the conditions which they found themselves in through no

61 Rumbold, Housing Conditions, 44.
62 Rumbold, Housing Conditions, 63-64.
63 Rumbold, Housing Conditions, 39.
fault of their own. Rumbold had to bolster womanhood while criticising some of the ways she felt it was failing. Therefore, she wrote, ‘nearly 70 per cent of the 7,458 rooms listed were clean, [which] testifies either to the heroic endurance of the weaker sex or to their lack of economic perception.’64 This is surprising, given that she argued that those in the slums ‘adapt to the standard of the least clean.’65 Rumbold suggests that, instead of pouring their energies into housework, the women she observed should go out and ‘work’, by which of course she meant paid work. She searched for a way to cast aspersions on women and their ‘suicidal mania for cleanliness’ under conditions in which cleaning was not possible, in order to suggest that the re-arrangement and re-structure of male planning and commercial interests was needed, and should be managed by clubwomen-cum-female reformers.66

Rumbold drew attention to laundry done in the slums as paid work, but she did not completely acknowledge or understand the porosity of the boundaries relating to domestic work. Clearly, some of the cleaning and washing conducted in the slums was a source of much-needed income. Her ignorance of this issue suggests that, while clubwomen gradually expanded their involvement in the world of paid work through the blurring of the home and the public world of paid ‘professional’ work, they did not necessarily see this activity as appropriate for working-class women; rather, such women should be subjected to the separate spheres of public and private, of residential homes and commercial interests. Furthermore, by drawing attention to the futility of the women’s efforts to keep their homes and children clean, she furthered her case for complete reform of the area. Working-class women were expected to give up their traditional roles as housekeepers to allow middle-class clubwomen and reformers influence and authority as arbitrators of morals, cleanliness, and standards of living. Clubwomen’s entry into public life was determined in part by working-class women’s willingness to hand over control of their own households, communities, and children.

Rumbold was not wholly ignorant of the lives of young working-class women. Her comments concerning unmarried girls and the situation they faced in the slums reveal a rather modern approach to sexual relationships. She argued that the overcrowded

64 Rumbold, Housing Conditions, 44-45.
65 Rumbold, Housing Conditions, 13.
66 Rumbold, Housing Conditions, 46.
tenements drove young women to seek entertainment away from home, ‘if the daughter of the house wants to see one of her men friends...she must go to a dance hall or a theatre’, or make a trip ‘down the pike, Franklin Avenue from Twenty-second Street east’. These comments were a reference to the similarities between the busy north side artery (Franklin Avenue was a notorious vice district) and the amusement strip at the World’s Fair as places in which young women gathered to meet men. Such amusements suggested frivolity and titillation and the loosening of moral standards and decency. In considering the dancehall issue, Rumbold made some acknowledgement of urban vitality and demonstrated her fears that this environment could corrupt young women and destroy traditional notions of the chastity and sexual innocence which were associated with women. Rumbold’s proposed solutions to the problem she identified were conservative. In 1912 she sought to extend jurisdiction of the Public Recreation Committee to places such as dancehalls in the proposed, but never passed, Rumbold Recreation Bill. Entrepreneurs who promoted the entertainment and supposed frivolity of dancehalls appealed to the desire of city-dwellers for adventure, pleasure, and thrills. By the 1920s, reformers’ earlier image of women adrift, evoking pity rather than excitement, could not compete, and was out of touch with contemporary urban culture. The rejection of the Rumbold Recreation Bill suggests that this shift began earlier. In criticising dancehalls, female reformers such as Rumbold, aimed to critique unbridled sexuality, and sought to curtail elements of working-class culture. The failure of Rumbold’s Bill highlights the limited influence female reformers had in the face of changing moral standards in the growing city, and how judgmental their female dominion could be.

Rumbold’s Housing Conditions report, while certainly influenced by the muckraking tradition and scientific methods of observation and comparison, was the first of its kind - an investigative report written by a woman, conceived of as part of a city plan. For all its innovation, the Housing Conditions report and the accompanying City Plan...
of 1907 were eventually rejected by St. Louisans, who voted against the 1911 Charter, of which the City Plan was an integral part. Rumbold’s criticisms of male spheres had been subsumed into a larger battle played out in city politics, in which the ethnic voters of the South Side refused to accept a charter replete with City Beautiful ideals and which threatened their contact with government via the proposed elimination of the House of Delegates. Furthermore, business speculation continued unabated, which meant that no tangible improvements were made to the land and the housing Rumbold had investigated. The mixture of businesses and housing continued until the introduction of zoning laws in the mid-1920s, and even then most of Bartholomew’s proposals mirrored the industrial development which had already occurred in the spaces he sought to place in zones. Municipal politics had not helped to create the redemptive spaces Rumbold had recommended; rather, city bureaucracy had caused the process to stall and unabated economic growth was exploited in the masculine city boosterism of St. Louis.

Part III – ‘The Eternal Feminine’: Curtailing the Female Dominion

The Civic League adapted many of the redemptive spaces clubwomen had created, and they included them in their vision of an ideal city which was presented in the City Plan of St. Louis; playgrounds, bathhouses, and night schools were an integral part of the League’s proposed civic centers. The City Plan stressed that ‘schools and libraries, playgrounds and public baths, by developing their minds, training their bodies and upbuilding the character of a people, furnish the foundation upon which a nation’s welfare depends’; apparently the future of the city and the nation was at stake, so it was deemed appropriate that male experts should manage these places. Concern for children in the slum areas of the city was expressed in the City Plan, but it differed from the ways it had been articulated by Rumbold in her Housing Conditions report; the League worried about children and their capability to learn civic morality because they were future voters. The League was also concerned that the inequality they observed between slum neighbourhoods and beautiful parks and public buildings could be

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71 Marie R. Garesche, Masque of the Wednesday Club (St. Louis: Carreras Printing Company, 1915), 6. This was written and performed in honour of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the club and took inspiration from Percy Mackaye’s Masque which is discussed in Chapter Five.
72 This is discussed in Chapter Two. The Civic Centers Committee had one woman on it, Mrs. Philip N. Moore
73 Civic League of St. Louis, A City Plan for St. Louis, 1907 (St. Louis: Civic League, 1907), 53.
'healthful for either the physical or moral training of our future voters? Are not conditions such as these at least partly responsible for the “floaters”, whose votes are bought and sold for a glass of beer on election day?' The League assumed that a lack of commitment to civic morality, a tendency towards drinking and vice, and opportunities for unscrupulous politicians, presented itself in the form of immigrant children who did not experience the benefits of moral and physical instruction and education at playgrounds. The elitism expressed in the *City Plan* was, to an extent, shared by clubwomen like Rumbold, but in her work concerns for children and their moral integrity were used as a means to critique male political and social spheres, rather than to uphold them.

Furthermore, female redemptive spaces were co-opted by the Civic League in its drive towards professionalisation and reliance on male experts underwritten by municipal oversight. For example, an ‘elaborate report’ was issued concerning ‘the reorganization of the Industrial School, which was turned over to the Municipal Commission on Delinquent, Dependent and Defective Children, established at the insistence of the League.’ The Industrial School had been run, for the most part, by female volunteers. Therefore, the contraction of the female dominion began almost as soon as it had begun to flourish.

In 1911, following the defeat of the charter proposals, the Civic League, realising that it required a groundswell of support in all wards of the city to ensure its agenda was secured in the future, sought to garner more members. In a rare moment of candour, the League’s President, George Markham, admitted that the organisation must expand its membership and its ambition, stating that ‘the fact must be admitted that the Civic League had not enlisted the interest and co-operation of all sections of the city and men and women in all walks of life. The League desires now to reach, so far as possible, every citizen interested in the progress of St. Louis. The League should be thoroughly democratic in spirit and in fact, and allied, as far as practicable, with every other organization engaged in civic work in the city.’

74 Civic League, *City Plan*, 56.
76 George D. Markham, “President’s Annual Statement,” in *Civic League Yearbook 1911*, ed. Civic League (St. Louis: Civic League, 1912) 18-19.
With an influx of new members, the League proposed to expand the remit of its interest and involvement in parts of the city. The establishment of the League’s ward committees in 1911 was allegedly done to help ‘organize different neighborhoods’ without ‘undue interference’. These committees were deemed necessary because, ‘for instance, two local improvement associations in a ward may be working on the same thing, or one may need building up – new members and a plan of work – or there may be a woman’s organisation working for the same things as the improvement association, when a division of labor would accomplish more for the district. By conferences and suggestion, without in any way interfering with the independence of the organisation, the League’s committee could easily organize the civic work of the ward for the benefit of the ward itself.’ The ward committees took a similar attitude toward women’s work as Harland Bartholomew later expressed in Recreation in St. Louis; the work women had undertaken was increasingly viewed as a poor replica of official civic work. The ward committees proposed a paternalistic management of the activities in the areas they oversaw, which they deemed to be for the wards’ own good. The proposed division of labour or re-ordering of the work clubwomen had engaged in resulted in a takeover of female authority by male ‘directors’.

In the same year that Markham made his appeal for ‘men and women in all walks of life’ to join the League, the organisation was strengthening its ties with the male dining club, the City Club. The Civic Bulletin reported on the benefits of this alliance, and stated that the City Club ‘serves, too, to enlist the interest of men who have not before given their time or thought to any form of public service.’ Within the League, at this time, there was a tension between democratic impulses in neighbourhood organisation (albeit this resulted in a less than democratic re-organisation of the space where women’s clubs had operated) and a desire to maintain the status of its socially elite membership. This tension was in some part a response to female reformers, and neighbourhood reorganisation was an attempt to usurp the authority women had garnered through their activities.

77 “Women Who are Aiding Civic League in 1913 Programme,” St. Louis Star and Times, March 9, 1913, 21.
80 Civic Improvement League, Report of the Open Air Playgrounds Committee, Civic Improvement League, 1903 (St. Louis: Civic Improvement League, 1903; 1904; 1905).
In explaining how and why the League had initially formed, Mrs Louis Marion McCall told the convention of the American League for Civic Improvement that women wanted ‘to make our cities as much a matter of pride as we do our homes’, in a clear allusion to municipal housekeeping.\(^82\) She went on to state that prior to the women’s efforts, the city government had been full of ‘straw men, whose salaries were steadily drawn, but who could never be located in the flesh’; the mismanagement and self-interest of such officials encouraged nascent Progressive reformers, and ‘women, moved by the urgency of the discussion, got out in various neighborhoods and cleaned up streets and alleys themselves. The authorities waked [sic] up.’\(^83\) For McCall, Progressive reform and organisation in St. Louis owed much to women’s initial efforts, and the proceeding struggles within the League concerning its membership and its changing focus continued to be heavily gendered. Unfortunately for female reformers many of the male members in the Civic League and the City Club wanted to establish and ‘boost’ a new masculine vision of city governance which centred on a powerful mayor’s office (which would usurp the influence of the House of Delegates which was elected by wards) and unabashed economic growth and prosperity. This, they hoped, would replace the ‘straw men’ McCall had described.

**Conclusion: ‘The March of Upward Striving’**\(^84\)

In March 1912 the Civic League of St. Louis hosted a one-day civic conference at the City Club. The program of events included viewing a specially designed exhibit which promoted the League’s work and its plans, and a street-car excursion for the attendees ‘to inspect the parks and boulevards’, and to see for themselves some of the sterling work done by the League.\(^85\) Jane Addams was invited as the guest of honour, and she gave the keynote address, entitled ‘The Best Unit in Public Spirit.’\(^86\) Two other women contributed to the conference’s program: Charlotte Rumbold spoke on housing

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conditions, and Mrs Philip N. Moore presented an account of women’s work in civic affairs.\footnote{“Civic Conference and Exhibit,” 1.}

Jane Addams spoke of the bonds of family, community, and the neighbourhood. The \textit{Civic Bulletin} described her address as related and relevant to ‘community cooperation.’\footnote{“Civic Conference,” 2.} Her subject matter reflected the language of social bonds which Daniel Rodgers identified as one of the components of Progressivism.\footnote{Daniel T. Rodgers, “In Search of Progressivism,” \textit{Review in American History} 10, no. 4 (December 1982): 125.} The League, in its \textit{City Plan} and its support for the related, and subsequently defeated 1911 city charter, increasingly wanted to direct those social bonds in its drive for further civic morality and it used the justification of public spiritedness to gain greater influence in municipal institutions, bureaucratic processes, and legislation. The decade following the League’s formation had seen a struggle between female and male urban reformers over the vision of what a Progressive, healthy and healthful city for all would look like, and who would guide it. Women continued to be active members in the Civic League, but by 1911 much of their initial reform work had been co-opted by their male counterparts. Addressing civic conferences shows that women, such as Addams and Rumbold still had influence, but they were increasingly seen as representative of a moral order which was to be directed by professional male leaders, most of whom were members of the socially exclusive City Club.

The perception of the city and of people’s place within it was changing, and the clubwomen of St. Louis had found themselves in a position to engage with the seemingly inevitable interaction between the growing working classes and the established middle classes. They found that they could interpret these interactions, and, most importantly, shape them. This was so because the very public concerns for the education of the seemingly uncultured and radical immigrants could be given over to women to control and contain, and to turn these potential social dangers away from the public arena and into the private sphere. Thus, radical new forces that had the potential to create massive socio-cultural changes in the city could be diffused by the supposed conservativism of women and the traditional nature of their concerns. For who better to communicate, and
potentially control, the porous and interconnected private and public worlds than women, who as wives and mothers or potential mothers occupied the role of gatekeepers of this boundary and acted as adjudicators for appropriate behaviour? The precarious position of clubwomen therefore offered opportunities for their own potential radicalisation, alongside the enforcement of the status quo, based on class elitism and supposed gender differences. Much of the work begun and conducted by women’s clubs such as the Wednesday Club went on to infuse the Civic League’s urban reform agenda. Women were eventually undercut by men in the League, and by a male vision of a city run by professional experts.

Clubwomen and female members of the Civic League did have a clear sense of their authority, experience, and vision. They continued to enact municipal housekeeping and social maternalism in the city through involvement in their clubs, the League’s Ward Committee, and the social settlements they had set up. Even when the City Plan Commission had been established in 1911 and began to work with and influence municipal management women continued their involvement within the remaining structure of the Civic League: in 1913 long-serving members, Mrs Mary E. Bulkley, Mrs. Louis Marion McCall, Mrs Philip N. Moore, and Miss Mary Semple Scott established ‘a special committee of women members of the League in a bid to increase overall membership to 2,500.’

In the same year a newspaper feature directly appealed to women to become involved in the League through reference to their homes, it stated ‘ladies, if anything about your home is needing attention just telephone the Civic League’ and this was linked to the greater public good that female members had ensured for the city because ‘largely due to the efforts of women this organisation has been able to better St. Louis.’ In 1913 however instrumental women had been, and continued to be, in the Civic League, they were still described as ‘aiding’ the League and this was set against the ascendancy of the all-male dining and debating club, the City Club, and its projections of the strong leadership of male municipal managers apparently essential to the future prosperity of St. Louis.

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90 “Women Aid Civic League,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 19, 1913, 14.
91 “Women who are Aiding Civic League in 1913 Programme,” St. Louis Star and Times, March 9, 1913, 21.
92 “City Club Project Strongly Endorsed,” St. Louis Star and Times, July 23, 1910, 3.
The City Club did need some advice and links to the female moral authority that had been established in the city. Marguerite Martyn, a journalist working for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, wrote an account of a luncheon the City Club hosted in 1912 to which they invited female guests, including guest speaker Charlotte Rumbold. Martyn stressed that Rumbold was ‘THE expert’ (capitals in original) on the subject of public recreation in the entire country, and apparently the City Club members were surprised to find that this leading authority ‘lived right here in their own midst.’

If this account is accurate it shows how short-sighted and secluded the City Club was, and that Rumbold and other women were working in separate spheres divorced from the Club’s interests and activities. The invitation for Rumbold to speak and other women to attend was tempered by how the space of the City Club was arranged, because the guests were seated on ‘separate tables behind screens’ and many of the men claimed they ‘didn’t have time to spare from their business offices to hear’ Rumbold’s address and further discussion.

Martyn surmised that men of the City Club would continue to half-heartedly listen to female experts and, as usual, ‘no more action’ would be taken. Even when women like Rumbold were acknowledged as experts they were dismissed or ignored because business and municipal leadership (as understood in masculine terms) took priority in the dining and debating all-male City Club.

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93 “City Club Needed Advice; That is Why it Gave a Luncheon to Women,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 21, 1912, 1.

94 “City Club Needed Advice,” 1.

95 “City Club Needed Advice,” 1.
Charlotte Rumbold had been a respected member of the Wednesday Club and the Civic League. In 1914 she also became an influential member of the St. Louis Pageant and Masque committee. The Pageant and Masque was an event which was designed to promote civic belonging and pride, and as such was part of a bid to push through yet further plans for civic renewal outlined in the 1914 charter. Rumbold was paid for her efforts, but when she asked the city’s aldermen for a pay rise in line with what her male counterparts earnt, the men erupted in indignation. Having been allowed to move from voluntary efforts to paid employment, Rumbold had the gall, it seemed to them, to transgress those boundaries by refusing to conform to gender differences underwritten

96 “Miss Rumbold not a voter, no raise,” St. Louis Republic, June 18, 1915, 2.
by wage inequality. Reportedly, the women of St. Louis were in wholehearted support of Rumbold.\textsuperscript{97} Members of the Ways and Means Committee which were to make the recommendations concerning the pay issue were ‘targets of an aggressive campaign...bombarded with letters and telegrams from prominent club women and are being personally urged to change their stand.’\textsuperscript{98} The reason the aldermen gave for refusing the pay rise was that Rumbold was not a voter. This statement was made to reinforce divisions according to traditional gender roles, and notions of citizenship via participation in voting. Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee Mr Luke E. Hart further derided Rumbold’s involvement in urban reform, stating that ‘the aldermen do not believe she is so indispensable to the city that if she were to quit nobody could be found to carry on her work.’\textsuperscript{99} Female authority and expertise was questioned and this was reflected in the difference in wages, which, if women wanted to remain involved in reform activity they were forced to accept. Men ultimately held sway in how far the female dominion could expand into a professional and paid setting. This controversy led Rumbold to leave St. Louis for good; she moved to Cleveland in 1916.\textsuperscript{100} Her work for the Civic League reveals the precarious position that the New Woman occupied in the urban world, as it was based upon the assumption and expectation of female voluntarism. The voluntary vernacular made it difficult for clubwomen to claim semi-professional and professional roles in the opening decades of the twentieth century; it had allowed them entry into the urban environment, but it also contained them within particular positions.

The difficulties Rumbold faced in St. Louis mark some of the limitations met by female reformers in the Progressive Era, because entry into the ‘public’ political world was often barred to them. Rumbold tried to navigate difficult terrain; sometimes she was seen as an expert, and yet this position proved perilous because it was not possible to maintain the required expert authority in an increasingly professionalised world marked as masculine. The issue of equal pay, which finally caused Rumbold to leave St. Louis, marks the slow decline of female voluntarism. The difficulties Rumbold encountered reveal the possibilities and limitations of the voluntary vernacular in urban space in St.

\textsuperscript{97} “Increase is denied to Miss Rumbold,” \textit{St. Louis Republic}, June 26, 1915, 1.
\textsuperscript{98} “Women to Attend Hearing to Plead for Miss Rumbold,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, June 22, 1915, 3.
\textsuperscript{99} “Women to Attend Hearing,” 3.
Louis. For clubwomen, their redemptive spaces and micro-narratives of city planning offered an alternative to and a reprieve from male commercial and political interests and grand city plans. In doing so, however, redemptive space served to bolster the system to which it seemed to offer an alternative, and was eventually subsumed within it. This is not to say that the female dominion did not have a lasting influence. It had proved to be of great importance at a time of heightened urban problems, and in this way, women influenced Progressive reform efforts and shaped the city.
Chapter Four

Clubs, Committees, and Commercial Practices:
How African American Women in St. Louis Attempted to Rework Race and
Respectability

In the March 19, 1915 edition of the St. Louis Argus, the city’s African American newspaper, the benefits of Booker T. Washington’s National Health Week were espoused. The National Health Week was a showcase for Washington’s vision of racial uplift. Washington was particularly concerned that the newly migrated African Americans who, borne on the waves of the Great Migration, were arriving in northern industrial cities in large numbers often poorly dressed and malnourished. Washingtonites feared that these new arrivals from the South would have a detrimental effect on how the race was viewed in general, because their appearance and behaviour could be used by racist whites as representative of all African Americans. Washington was keen to improve the perception of African Americans in the North and South, so he promoted programs which focused upon their appearance. In Up From Slavery, he stated that ‘in all my teaching I have watched carefully the influence of the tooth-brush, and I am convinced that there are few single agencies of civilisation that are more far-reaching’. Civilisation, as Washington defined it, would be both demonstrated and encouraged in the African American community by paying close attention to hygiene and appearance. Concerns about appearances went together with anxieties about appropriate behaviour; for Washington and his followers, African Americans had to be seen to be acting in an appropriate manner to be awarded full citizenship by whites. Appearances, attitudes, and actions coalesced in Washington’s version of racial uplift.

The Argus promoted Washington’s National Health Week; one editorial stated that ‘those who live in the midst of dirt will be dirty – physically or morally – or both.


Adversely, those whose surroundings are clean will be clean, even though they may be poor, and the newspaper supplemented its support with ‘a general cleaning up of person, of house, of grounds and of surroundings.’ In the editorial, the benefits of this general clean-up were stressed, because ‘not only will it bring us an epidemic of health; not only will it make us self-respecting; but it will command and win the respect of the white residents. And thus, will be effectively answered their stock argument that neighborhoods run down and property depreciates with the invasion of Negro residents.’ The editorial made clear the connection between the ideal, well-ordered, and tidy environment and the well-nurtured and clean appearances of the people who lived there. Crucially, a healthful environment would, in the words of the editorial, encourage ‘an epidemic of health’ because it would be regenerative. This belief in the power of the environment is similar to that espoused by Progressive groups and urban reformers, who believed that an improvement in civic morality would ensure concomitant improvements to the environment and, by extension, the citizenry. According to Washingtonites and supporters of the National Health Week, African Americans had greater need for an improved environment because it would be a means to counter racist assumptions and ‘stock argument[s]’ about the detrimental effect the African American community had on the urban environment, which were used by white supremacists to justify more stringent segregation measures.

Civic organisations in the St. Louis African American community promoted Washington’s National Health Week and the values of propriety it sought to produce and present. They were concerned with uplifting the poorer and less fortunate in their community; this version of racial uplift emphasised self-help, racial solidarity, thrift, temperance, chastity, social purity, and the accumulation of wealth. Organisations such as the Negro Business League supported National Health Week and related ventures, such as the Street Improvement Campaign, because they were concerned by both the

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4 “National Health Week,” 4.
5 See Chapter Five.
6 Minutes of the Committee for Social Service Among Colored People, Urban League of St. Louis 1910-1916, Urban League of St. Louis Records, 1910-1986, Series 9, Box 1, Folder 1, Washington University, St. Louis. (Hereafter cited as Minutes, CSSCP).
actual bodies and the social body of the growing African American community in St. Louis; their support was motivated by their status anxiety, because they were keen to retain their relatively privileged socio-economic position in the community and continue to act as its moral and cultural arbitrators.\textsuperscript{8} Formal organisations in the city, such as the Committee for Social Service Among Colored People, known as the CSSCP, and then the St. Louis Urban League, worked alongside more informal organisations, such as African American women’s clubs, to improve the appearance and behaviour of the poor in the city’s African American community in order to preserve the social position of the organisations’ members \textit{and} to help those in need. The two processes happened concurrently, in the same social space. This situation generated complications and contradictions around how the community presented itself, how members of the community perceived themselves, and the role of committee and club members in directing the presentation of the community.

The concerns of civic groups in the African American community highlight how ideas about race and class coalesced in city space. The socio-economic position of middle-class African Americans was, however, never completely guaranteed in the Jim Crow city of St. Louis during what Rayford Logan called ‘the nadir of race relations’.\textsuperscript{9} African Americans in St. Louis were subject to segregation in schools, hospitals, and restaurants, but not in public parks and public transportation.\textsuperscript{10} The patchy application of Jim Crow segregation gave impetus to the middle-class African American civic and church leaders who stressed how important appearances, and associated respectable behaviour, were, because they were concerned with winning the respect of whites, whom they assumed would then be more willing to desegregate parts of the city. At the very least, living under the allegedly separate but equal system established by the Supreme Court in the landmark 1896 \textit{Plessy v. Ferguson} decision, middle-class African American reformers were keen to stress that the space they occupied and the behaviours they presented in that space was equal to that of their white counterparts. This was especially significant between 1914 and 1916, when calls for segregation in housing were made by the

neighbourhood associations allied in the United Welfare Association, who used the argument that the ‘colored invasion’ of white areas threatened property values.\textsuperscript{11}

Middle-class African American women had a privileged position in the promotion of African American uplift. They gained social privileges as cultural arbiters because of their demonstration of respectable appearance and behaviour; they were able to do so because, as women, they had apparently innate maternal authority and moral superiority. In this way, they were able to use their established, traditional, roles to expand their public personas. Of course, their position as the voice and living embodiment of African American respectability also came from their economic privilege in the rapidly changing urban landscape. African American women gained authority over the social body of their community by tending, nurturing, and policing the actual bodies of this expanding community throughout the Great Migration and beyond. Middle-class African American women found that there were opportunities for them to expand their social and political activities in the segregated and quasi-segregated city space they occupied; alternatively, their white counterparts had to endure the curtailment and derision of their reform work. Definitions of race, alongside particular economic status, helped African American women to redefine their selfhood and their community work which was underpinned by gendered assumptions. However, the project of respectability and African American women’s central place within it was fraught with problems as well as possibilities, and how this played out in conversations about the community space and the activities that went on there are dealt with in this chapter.

Within the project of African American respectability, there was a tension between patriarchal approaches to racial uplift and a developing female alternative, which was never completely resolved. Part I examines the types of female club work found in St. Louis, and how those clubs expressed aspects of respectability and racial uplift according to gender and class. Part II discusses how and why women’s involvement in the inter-racial committee (the CSSCP) in St. Louis was curtailed, and what that suggests about the intersection of gender and race within notions of respectability. The final part deals with alternative versions of respectability developed by African American

\textsuperscript{11} “Attention Property Owners and Public in General,” Poster, Segregation Scrapbook, Missouri History Museum Archives. For further discussion about the battle to implement segregation measures, see Chapter Five.
women via beauty culture, and were enacted on their bodies and in the social body of the African American community.

**Part I – African American Women and Club Work**

In the female version of racial uplift, promoted nationally by the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC), women’s leadership was vital to race progress.¹² Established as the National Association of Colored Women in 1896, and incorporated as the NACWC in 1904, this was one of the first all-black political organisations, predating the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League by over a decade.¹³ The NACWC mandated a domestic model of racial uplift, making black women responsible for the health, spiritual welfare, and moral elevation of their families and communities.¹⁴ The potential for women within the project of respectability had an impact on how African American women saw themselves and each other, as they found solidarity in groups like the NACWC.¹⁵ Patricia Hill Collins has argued that feminism was part of clubwomen’s self-perception, and such groups offered women a ‘safe space’ for self-definition; as a result, their consciousness of shared gender and race compelled their activism.¹⁶

At the end of the nineteenth century, the NACWC claimed a membership of 15,000 women; in fewer than 20 years that number rose to 100,000.¹⁷ The NACWC demonstrated a desire for the social recognition of African American women as fully human on the one hand and as capable citizens on the other.¹⁸ However, cross-class connections were not the goal for African American clubwomen, and their organisations

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were led by middle-class women at both the national and local levels. Middle-class African American women were often ostracised by the white community, but as part of a female version of Du Bois’s Talented Tenth they felt themselves removed from the majority of the black community, and sometimes showed contempt for the black lower classes. Club leaders did not seem to realise that black women who were impoverished, overworked, and illiterate could not meet the exacting standards associated with the sort of ‘true womanhood’ promoted by African American clubwomen. True womanhood was in itself difficult, if not impossible, for African American women of any class to attain, because, as Barbara Welter has explained, it was apparently essential to white womanhood.

African American women’s clubs in St. Louis sought to convey middle-class aspirations and culture, and an extension of traditional maternal concerns; their clubs developed in a similar way to those of white women. African American clubwomen, like their white counterparts, benefitted from an expansion of their private spheres into the public arena; the female dominion had expanded and was no longer consigned to the home. Josephine Ruffin, editor of Woman’s Era, the national news outlet of African American clubwomen, promoted the idea that a woman’s place was where she was needed and where she fit in.

One of the oldest clubs in St. Louis was called the Informal Dames, formed in 1901. The club was the brainchild of Mattie Anderson, a young middle-class woman who resided in the Ville neighborhood. A run-through of the various name changes of the club reveals the changing aspirations of the clubwomen: it was first called Twentieth Century Dames, then Married Ladies Club, before the final name – Informal Dames – was settled upon. The name changes reflect how the club members struggled to define themselves without reference to their marital status, and their desire to position themselves in the modern world, and therefore have a voice within it; the final name seemed appropriate, as it suggested the club’s informality, the loose set of interests of the members, and their

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21 Cash, African American Women and Social Action, 8.
This soon changed, however, as the Informal Dames took political action in 1907, when members raised $5 to send ‘representative men’ to Jefferson City, the seat of the state government, to help defeat a bill that sought further segregation in Missouri.25

African American women’s clubs often became more overtly political in response to the lack of resources and facilities within their communities, and their political activism took the form of an extension of maternal and feminine concerns. The Colored Old Folks Home opened in 1906 as a direct consequence of the actions of another St. Louis African American club, the Wednesday Afternoon Sewing Club.26 The money for orphanages, schools and the Old Folks Home was raised via charitable collections, and the appeals were often advertised in the Argus.27 Clubwoman established and ran evening schools in which they provided instruction on domestic management, cooking, and sewing as part of a larger project of encouraging respectability via household maintenance. This was an essential part of racial uplift, directed at southern newcomers who were often poor and uneducated. One such school, the Banneker Evening School on Lucas and Ewing Avenues, grew rapidly. Upon its opening in September 1915, within three weeks two additional rooms had to be added. According to its advertisement in the Argus, ‘the cooking and sewing classes are especially attractive. Pupils may join this school at any time.’28 This work continued to improve the appearance of the individuals who attended and that of the community, and by extension that of the race.

Many of the early club names reflected traditionally feminine hobbies and pursuits. Alongside the Wednesday Afternoon Sewing Club, there were several Thimble Clubs and Needle Clubs.29 While there is little historical record of these clubs, which makes it difficult to determine if the activities conducted involved anything other than sewing, these groups do appear in ‘Society and Local Notes’, which was a regular feature

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24 There was an associated group for young girls called the Informal Maids see, “City Federation to meet here,” Argus, June 18, 1915, 1.
26 Minutes of The Informal Dames February 1903 to January 1911, St. Louis Association of Colored Women’s Clubs Collection, 1901-1980, Folder 5, State Historical Society of Missouri, St. Louis.
29 “City Federation to meet here,” 1.
in the Argus. The Married Ladies’ Needle Club was one such club. Members of this club took turns to meet at each other’s homes; in one of several similar reports, it was explained that ‘after a dainty luncheon was served by the hostess the club adjourned to meet at the residence of Mrs E. R. Hollister, 4053a West Belle.’ The residences of the Needle Club members are often described in the reports as elegant and beautiful. These reports reveal the pride the club members felt and expressed at being both a good hostess and a home-owner who looked after her house and admired others like her. These small prescriptions of appropriate and expected behaviour show that the women lived in close proximity — because they visit several homes in one meeting — and that communal bonds were developed in that shared space. These reports offer a small glimpse into how respectability was conveyed and understood by club members, and by the rest of the community. Perhaps race-based activism and social service were never discussed over the needles and thimbles, however the reporting of the club’s activity was inherently political, because it enforced expectations of respectability which other women in the community could read about and replicate.

White women’s clubs, formed in the last decades of the nineteenth century, read books and discussed the theatre and their travel aspirations. African American clubwomen also engaged in this type of activity. For white women, the demonstration of education (and just enough of it to avoid being judged a blue-stock) was a way to highlight their elite socio-economic position. Clubwomen used their knowledge of approved literature (typically the Lake Poets and Shakespeare) as a safety net to rely upon as they worked to expand their private concerns into the public domain. For African American clubwomen there was also a desire to demonstrate knowledge which reflected their elite socio-economic position, because, having had the opportunity to become educated and to have leisure time available in which to discuss novels, plays, and poetry meant that they held relatively privileged positions in their communities. However, their reverence for knowledge also reflected the long-established valorisation of education in African American culture. Clubs such as the Booklovers reflected the middle-class,
educated status of its members, and such clubs stressed personal conduct and intellectual development. A high percentage of the Booklovers were teachers. The respect for education had always been an important feature of respectability and racial uplift, and would remain so.

Another club, the Prudence Crandall Club, whose members were known as the Crandalls, was established in 1915 by Georgina Dickson and Carrie K. Bowles, both of whom had been members of the Booklovers. The Crandalls were committed to and inspired by Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, who sought to establish the value of African American culture by promoting its virtues and achievements, and stressed the need to study and make public the contributions African Americans had made to civic and national history. The motto of the Crandalls was ‘once a student, always a student’, and the club valorised education, instruction, and personal development. Almost as soon as the Prudence Crandall Club was established, events transpired to force its members out of their closeted study group. St. Louis experienced a long, bitter winter in 1914-1915, and the Crandalls worked alongside minister George Stevens to provide bedding and clothes for the less fortunate in the community, as well as helping to run a soup kitchen. Based in the Ville, these clubwomen sought to retain the cultural and social status of the area while helping its newcomers.

The methods by which money was raised by the clubs to fund their evening schools, orphanages, and Old Folks’ Homes highlights how the desire to be positively compared to white middle-class philanthropists ran deep within African American civic clubs. Church collections formed a large part of the income for these charitable efforts, but independent fund-raising also took place. Some of the clubs and organisations used a direct comparison with white women’s clubs and their charitable efforts to galvanise the African American community to give more. In 1915, the Phillis Wheatley Y.W.C.A sent a postcard to ‘interested parties’ asking for donations; the content of this postcard was also reproduced in several editions of the Argus. It stated that,

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During the campaign (for larger quarters and better equipment) a gift of $5000.00 came from an interested white friend, and today we are happy to announce that another gift of $5000.00 comes to the Branch, thus making $10000.00 cash held in trust for the purchase of a suitable building. But the second gift was made with this proviso: that within the next 60 days we collect at least $3,500.00 campaign pledges.

Miss Colt, General Secretary of the St. Louis Y.W.C.A doubly assured the donor that we would measure up to our responsibility. So we cannot fail.... Now it is up to the friends of the Branch and Negro citizens of St. Louis, not only to sustain the dignity of this cause, but provide adequate quarters for the four-fold development of our girls and women of this community, as God has given us the opportunity.³⁴

By referring to the funds already donated by the ‘interested white friend’, the Y.W.C.A hoped that members of the African American community would be encouraged to donate, and by doing so would reflect both dignity and responsibility, to ‘measure up’ to whites. Large donations from whites were potentially problematic to ideas of black self-reliance. Therefore, this call for donations was intended for the ears of aspiring middle-class African Americans in St. Louis, to encourage them to donate to help both their own self-image and that of their community.

There is further evidence that comparisons between black and white clubwomen were utilised by the African American clubwomen to gain prestige and further respectability. In the Argus in March 1915, there was an announcement that ‘the Charity Ball given by the Board of Managers of the St. Louis Colored Orphans’ Home, is to be one of the grandest of the season....putting forth every effort to make a great success...There will also be a number of prominent white ladies, who will witness the dances from the balcony. Don’t fail to attend. Admission, 35 cents.’³⁵ These few sentences are revealing. Expressing concerns over motherless African American children was something that elite white women could engage in to expand the remit of maternalism and female dominion, while demonstrating their racial privilege over African American women. Perhaps working partnerships between the women were formed, while the racial and gendered privilege of the white women was enacted and underwritten in the space itself; white women were positioned above the dancing in the balcony, looking down on the Charity

³⁴ “Another $5000 Gift for the Y.W.C.A,” Argus, January 8, 1915, 1.
³⁵ “Charity Ball,” Argus, March 19, 1915, 1. In a description of another charity event organised by the Young Ladies Reading Club for the benefit of the Orphans’ Home the gendered expectations are clear as ‘a bevy of interesting and attractive young women will attend’, see “Spring Festival and Pageant of Flowers Tonight,” Argus, June 4, 1915, 1.
Ball and its African American attendees. White women could engage in this kind of activity to bolster their own social standing in the presence of those who were apparently inferior due to their race. The African American women who organised and promoted the Ball found themselves in a bind; the presence of white women may have helped their cause financially and conferred further respectability on them by association in sharing their space, but that space was not shared on equal terms, and the respectability of African American women was diminished in comparison to that of white women. This bind was a precursor for some of the prejudices, both racial and gendered, that African American women were to face in the inter-racial committee established in 1910.

**Part II – Are we ‘doing anything along the lines of racial uplift?’ How African American Women Were Criticised and Curtailed in the CSSCP**

An interrogation of the types of activities the Committee of Social Service for Colored People (the CSSCP) conducted in St. Louis between 1910 and 1917 reveals that female activity was central to early social and political work in the African American community, and yet their efforts were curtailed due to the interlocking factors of gender and race discrimination. African American women found themselves in a perilous position in the CSSCP, side-lined by African American men and white men and women in this inter-racial organisation.

In St. Louis, there was a gap between African American expectations, based on the long-established and visible social and economic activity of their community, and the reality of the racial discrimination they faced. African American reform groups such as the CSSCP, which were led by middle-class men and women, attempted to ensure the availability of equal (although still separate) facilities and services. The CSSCP was, in part, a project designed by middle-class African Americans who were concerned with generating an ideology of solidarity and coexistence with whites. For white members and supporters of the CSSCP, their involvement was partly inspired by the social gospel and more general Progressive Era reform-mindedness. Church workers, settlement workers,

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36 Minutes, CSSCP.
and temperance workers became part of a larger movement called the Social Gospel, which worked for social justice. Church congregations helped to organise the National Association of Colored People and the National Urban League in 1909 and 1911, respectively. Ralph Luker states that a half century later, these and allied organisations formed the institutional core of America’s civil rights movement.\textsuperscript{38} The interracial dimension of the CSSSCP was appealing to African American members seeking to uplift the black community in the city because it offered a chance to work with and prove themselves to interested white reformers and social workers. In this unequal partnership, it was African American women who lost some of the authority and influence they had previously gained from their involvement in community club work.

The CSSSCP was established in 1910; it was made up of ten African American and five white members, all of whom were volunteers. Among the African American members, there were five women from the Association of Colored Women’s Clubs – Eliza Armstrong; a probation officer named Sarah C. Young; and three educators, Lavinia Carter, Clara S. Fields, and Caroline C. Helms. There were five African American men, all from the Forum Club, which was an association of African American businessmen; one was a physician, one was the Grand Chancellor of a fraternal organisation called the Knights of Pythias, two school principals, and an undertaker. The CSSSCP had five sub-committees, which were: schools, libraries and recreation; industrial conditions; health and sanitation; neglected and delinquent children; and relief and industrial work. The five female members were active in all these committees and produced reports of their observations and recommendations for social work in St. Louis.

Individuals could become associate members of the CSSSCP for a one-dollar membership fee, and associate membership was open to organisations; the Informal Dames were among the CSSSCP’s seventy-nine associate members. The Elleardsville Civic League, the Finney Avenue League, the Booklovers’ Club, and the Women’s Charity Club were also described in the minutes of the CSSSCP from 1912 as ‘organisations doing civic and social improvement work’.\textsuperscript{39} Clearly, many women’s clubs were known to the CSSSCP, and in the same 1912 minutes their work is described as ‘Col. Women’s charity club. Help


\textsuperscript{39} Minutes, CSSSCP.
all charities among colored people.’

In a letter to Mr Usher, one of the African American school principals who sat on the CSSCP, it was stated that the Booklovers’ Club was ‘studying sociology with a view to doing practical work. Gathering statistics’, which not only suggests that African American clubwomen were engaged in public reform work, but that they were committed to the drive towards data collection and statistical analysis which was quickly becoming a key element of Progressive reforms. The CSSCP’s letterhead stated that it was ‘composed of members of the Forum Club, the Social Service Conference and the Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs’. In the early days of the CSSCP there was a clear effort to unite these various strands of voluntary social support in the African American community, and women’s clubs were essential to those efforts.

In a letter sent to editors of all the city’s newspapers in 1911, the CSSCP secretary was keen to stress that ‘the Committee is the first experiment of its kind in St. Louis.’ The CSSCP was ‘doing pioneer work in getting the facts regarding social and industrial conditions among colored people in St. Louis’, and its ‘chief objects (were) the removal of discrimination against colored people in any public or private agency for social betterment, and the increased efficiency of all agencies working among colored people’. In the CSSCP’s minutes, an unnamed visitor from Washington University stated that every city should have a similar Committee, ‘especially in border cities’. The work of the CSSCP was important in St. Louis because this was a city in which contradictions concerning race, citizenship, and aspirations were exposed most clearly. Border cities were not just representations of an ideological boundary between northern development and southern racial attitudes, but would experience the movement of African Americans from the South to the North in several waves of migration. There was the potential for border cities to tip over into southern attitudes and the enforcement of further Jim Crow segregation measures. The inter-racial efforts and respectful attitudes

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40 Minutes, CSSCP.  
41 Minutes, CSSCP.  
42 Minutes, CSSCP.  
43 Committee to the City Editor of Post-Dispatch, Republic Times, Star, Globe-Democrat and Westliche Post, June 27, 1911, Urban League of St. Louis Records, 1910-1986, Series 9, Box 1, Folder 3, Washington University, St. Louis.  
44 Minutes, CSSCP.  
45 Minutes, CSSCP.
of the CSSCP members was designed to impress whites, and so to ensure that further
discriminations would not be enforced. Therefore, on a practical and a philosophical
level, the CSSCP was needed, and its services could prove to be useful, if not crucial.

The CSSCP attempted not to appear to be too political to ensure the continued
cooperation of its white members, and to avoid the anger of the growing number of
neighbourhood associations who were pushing for further segregation measures.46 The
work of the CSSCP was concerned with the gathering of statistics about the community
so that it could determine which needs were most pressing and could set about trying to
meet them. The CSSCP ventured ‘not to offer a solution for the “race problem”’, other
than ‘by securing for colored people the same forces of relief, employment, medical care,
recreation, education etc, as exist in the rest of the community.’47 It worked to ensure
that, while the ‘separate but equal’ dictates of Plessy versus Ferguson were in place, the
equality of services and provisions for the African American community was ensured.
This, of course, was innately political. However, to avoid conflict and ‘gain the confidence
of both colored and white people’, the CSSCP performed its work ‘quietly, without
publicity of any kind…making every effort to accomplish its purposes by consultation,
correspondence, conferences, and suggestions.’48 In this way, the inter-racial make-up of
the CSSCP contained the organisation and restricted it to polite protest.

In his work on African American protest in Indianapolis in the first half of the
twentieth century, Richard B. Pierce argued that the protracted negotiations, interracial
coalitions, petitions, and legal challenges which he termed the ‘polite protests’ of the
black reform community ‘allow(ed) them greater civic and personal freedoms while not
antagonizing whites and thereby ensure(ing) additional deprivations’.49 This mentality
and methodology can also be seen in the work of the CSSCP of St. Louis. The CSSCP was
‘an organisation composed of the most progressive colored people in St. Louis’, which
cautiously criticised the city’s segregation measures by collating data to highlight discrepancies in services and discrimination determined by racial difference.\textsuperscript{50}

Priscilla Dowden-White is one of few scholars to have analysed the CSSCP, especially its later efforts, when the organisation became the St. Louis Urban League (SLUL) in 1917. Her work has added nuance to the idea of polite protest and why it was essential for the organisation and its aims. According to Dowden-White, the CSSCP engaged in the ‘manipulation of public culture’.\textsuperscript{51} This was the strategy used by African American reformers to wrest concessions from a racially discriminatory power structure, and it was done by using ideas of good and efficient government, democratic citizenship, equitable social welfare services, labour peace and productivity, and community harmony. This manipulation of public culture went beyond the boundaries of racial uplift models because it played upon the idea of the community as a whole; this bound black and white communities and reformers together and used the developing Progressive principle of thinking about and organising society as bound together. African American reformers in the CSSCP hoped that the sense of the common good would prove to be incompatible with racial segregation.

The inter-racial activity and the polite protest of the CSSCP could be problematic. Some committee members acknowledged this; in the minutes of a 1914 meeting, Sarah Young stated that ‘the white people who are interested in civic work do not want colored representatives; they fear it will impede their effort toward negro segregation.’\textsuperscript{52} The CSSCP were working within the parameters set by Jim Crow segregation measures because there was no viable alternative to polite protest. Throughout the Jim Crow era, African American political activism required careful strategizing, and often resulted in measurable, if localised, achievements. This sort of pragmatic approach was evident in the CSSCP, which experienced some victories and some losses. This same type of brokerage is apparent in the “long civil rights movement”; Dowden-White has argued inter-racial groups such as the CSSCP formed part of this long movement because their demands were sometimes secured through cross-class, inter-racial alliances, and

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\textsuperscript{50} Minutes, CSSCP.
\textsuperscript{52} Minutes, CSSCP.
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sometimes through class-based, all-black efforts.\textsuperscript{53} Localised achievements could, in the long term, contribute to national victories. Women were vital to this project, but the perception of their inactivity was also important and underscored by gender norms.

The localised efforts of the CSSCP eventually merged into a national organisation when the CSSCP became the SLUL, a branch of the national Urban League, under the assurance that the SLUL would enjoy full local autonomy, as well as participation in the national affairs of the organisation. Despite the name change, the CSSCP’s work monitoring of vocational training, employment, job placement, and labour unions for African Americans continued in the Urban League. The Urban League also performed field studies to assess the quality of black life, and used this research to guide its uplift programs.\textsuperscript{54} At both a national and a local level, the Urban League continued to accommodate black and white members and affiliates, and the SLUL retained many of the partnerships the CSSCP had fostered. However, inter-racial work in St. Louis was marked by disagreement, prejudice, and the attempt by some whites to enforce their notions of their alleged moral and intellectual superiority over African American volunteers and colleagues, which also became apparent in the Urban League’s national efforts, and was underwritten by discrimination toward African American women.

The female members of the CSSCP had been instrumental in reporting the plight of poor black migrants who were steadily arriving in St. Louis. In 1915 a Social Settlement house was relocated according to the CSSCP’s instruction to where it was most needed. The School for Social Economy had been established by clubwomen; for an enrolment fee of $2, members could go to Pythian Hall on Pine Street and be instructed in cooking, washing, mending clothes, and home economics.\textsuperscript{55} Once established, the Settlement House and the School of Social Economy rarely appear in the CSSCP’s records, apart from a note in the minutes that ‘it was stated that School of Social Economy was to be run on an independent basis’.\textsuperscript{56} Presumably, female volunteers were running such places with little interference, ‘quietly, without publicity of any kind...making every effort to

\textsuperscript{55} Minutes, CSSCP.
\textsuperscript{56} Minutes, CSSCP.
accomplish its purposes’, as the CSSCP had stated as its objectives. In this way, African American women were creating what Daphne Spain described as redemptive spaces and had set about saving the city, the African American community, and attempting to shield the race from criticism.\textsuperscript{57}

The case of the Wayman Clinic further highlights how female reformers and clubwomen were quietly improving the community space and the lives of the people who lived in it. Started in 1909 as part of the Wayman Institutional Church, the Clinic was a large undertaking; there was a social settlement, and further down the street was a free clinic and a dispensary. In an advertisement, the Wayman Clinic was described as ‘a movement for the Social Settlement of the Negroes of this Congested District.’\textsuperscript{58} It also stated ‘to anyone familiar with this part of St. Louis, the urgent need for some such uplifting influence among the residents of this neighborhood is clearly apparent.’\textsuperscript{59} The Clinic had further aims for a day nursery, as ‘it may not be generally known that there is in St. Louis no place where a working mother can leave her children of tender age while away from home and feel assured that they will be well cared for and in wholesome surroundings’.\textsuperscript{60} The clinic and the settlement work had been started by Reverend B. W. Stewart, who ‘presented the matter to a few of our leading citizens who agreed to subscribe a specific sum annually to and in the maintenance of such a dispensary.’\textsuperscript{61} The CSSCP was unwilling to get too involved in the Wayman Clinic, apart from recommending that ‘a suitable man’ should be in charge of it.\textsuperscript{62} The CSSCP’s reluctance suggests that the clinic and the settlement were in good working order, and were operating independently, with care provided by middle-class women on a voluntary basis.

African American clubwomen and the female members of the CSSCP clung to their sense of moral authority through maternalism and ‘super-morality’. Sarah C. Young, one of the female committee members, diligently set about observing and recording the conditions she saw at several institutions and services for neglected and delinquent

\textsuperscript{57} Daphne Spain, \textit{How Women Saved the City}, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 20-27.
\textsuperscript{58} ‘The Wayman Institution Church’, Advertisement, Urban League of St. Louis Records, 1910-1986, Series 9, Box 1, Folder 3, Washington University, St. Louis. (Hereafter cited as Wayman Institution Church.)
\textsuperscript{59} Wayman Institution Church.
\textsuperscript{60} Wayman Institution Church.
\textsuperscript{61} Wayman Institution Church.
\textsuperscript{62} Urban League of St. Louis Records, 1910-1986, Series 9, Box 1, Folder 6, Washington University, St. Louis. (Hereafter cited Correspondence, 1914, CSSCP).
children. She reported on the appalling conditions at the Boonville Institution, which was a facility for delinquents who were termed ‘feeble minded’. Young, like other women, engaged in reform because of and through the extension of maternalism; she focused on children, the traditional concern ascribed to women. Maternalism also gave Young the opportunity to criticise the municipal government. She rallied against the 1914 rejection by the Board of Children’s Guardians of the CSSCP’s proposals to treat African American children equally to white children, because they ‘wanted to sort out white people first’.

The CSSCP minutes of a meeting in 1914 stated that ‘Miss Young inquired as to what had been (done) about col. Children turned over to the Children’s Guardian. Moved that protest to be made against the Board of Guardian that should deal with col. Children just as they do with white. Motion carried. Matter to be taken up.’

Even after this protest, the municipal government did very little, and African American charitable efforts made in their own community continued to bridge the gap in services and facilities for both children and adults.

The process of inter-racial cooperation was, in reality, limited because white social workers and reformers tried to pass on to their interested African American counterparts cases involving African Americans, and there was an expectation that the community would resolve its own issues, and thus segregation would continue and even flourish. Minnie D. Weiss of the Social Service Department of the St. Louis Children’s Hospital wrote to Caroline C. Helms of the CSSCP on September 8, 1911, detailing a case of an African American mother who had been left on her own with three children, as the father had deserted them that summer. The Provident Assistance provided some relief for the family, but could not offer rent payment. The Social Service Department turned this case over to the CSSCP because ‘they might know of some colored people who would be willing to assist them with the rent...The mother also needs friendly visiting and father to be looked up and urged to return to his family.’

Clearly, the CSSCP was expected to provide financial and moral support for the community and to enforce

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63 Minutes, CSSCP.
64 Correspondence, 1914, CSSCP.
65 Minutes, CSSCP.
66 Ruth Crawford, The Immigrant in St. Louis (St. Louis: St. Louis School of Social Economy, 1916), 80-81.
67 Urban League of St. Louis Records, 1910-1986, Series 9, Box 1, Folder 3, Washington University, St. Louis. (Hereafter cited as Correspondence, 1911, CSSCP).
heteronormative family relations and gender norms, underwritten by female involvement in social services. In the letter, there was also a hopeful request made by the Social Service Department that the CSSCP ‘will be able to send us a volunteer in the near future, to work among your people.’ Mrs Weiss stated that she had made several requests of this kind throughout 1911. The Children’s Hospital at that time was not segregated, but such requests suggest that the imposition of segregated services in that shared space was increasingly expected by white social workers, and that they also wanted the CSSCP to help to establish and enforce such an arrangement. This suggests a further problem or tension within inter-racial committees; potentially they unwittingly served to accommodate the continued discrimination against African Americans via their support of segregated facilities. The CSSCP was used by white agencies who capitalised on a morally and professionally defensible procedure for referring African American clients elsewhere.

African American women working in the CSSCP were expected to give over some of their influence to men in the inter-racial committee, to either ensure the uplift of the race or to pander to apparently well-meaning whites. One example of this phenomenon is the active role the CSSCP took in monitoring conditions at the St. Louis Colored Orphan Home, which had been founded in 1888 by African American clubwomen. In 1914 the Negro Business Men’s League, at the CSSCP’s request, investigated the activities and conditions of the Orphan Home. Their detailed study of the facility revealed apparently deplorable conditions and a variety of other problems. The report made seven recommendations, including the ‘complete reorganization of the affairs of the association.’ The Negro Business Men’s League also recommended that men be permitted to serve on the Orphan Home’s Board of Directors, stating that ‘these men should be people who are familiar with the conducting of business and men who will make sure that the affairs of the institution are conducted in the proper manner.’ These recommendations were put into place, and the organisational minutes from the
following year reported that the ‘Orphan Home Board had been reorganized and things were in much better condition.’\textsuperscript{73} In the face of criticism of the St. Louis Colored Orphan Home, Young had stated in the minutes for the CSSCP for October 10, 1914 that the Orphan Home was being ‘kept cleaner’ and that the ‘matron (was) a very good woman.’\textsuperscript{74} Furthermore, ‘Mrs Chubb spoke of speaking to Social Settlement. People much stirred up over condition of Orphan’s Home.’\textsuperscript{75} Clearly, both women were trying to defend the female management of the Orphanage. This was to no avail. Potentially, by 1914 the Orphanage had been improving as reported, and the Negro Business Men’s League would go on to claim credit for the apparent swift turn-around in conditions and services. African American men, under the direction of the inter-racial CSSCP, usurped some of the traditional maternal concerns of African American clubwomen in the apparent interest of professionalisation, regulation, and racial uplift.

The efforts of clubwomen were further derided in a letter to the ‘Committee for Work Among Colored People’ of the CSSCP, written by white female reformer Josephine Poe January in 1914. In it, she states that

Within the last two days two colored women have come to me for help and conference about the work they have misundertaken in organizing a settlement in the old Dumas School Building, 14 & Lucas – I think, is the slums of the colored people, quite as much as some of the Bittle St. region is to us. These men and women are beginning the work which they feel to be acutely needed for their own race, but in scope and character, it seems to me, overwhelmingly beyond their resources except with very wise council, guidance and continued cooperation on the part of white people. They plan to have such extremes as the Day Nursery and the Rescue Work, quite without understanding the physiologic or biologic problems of the matter. The two very earnest and dignified women who came to talk with me asked for no concrete help, except chairs and tables to make – the beginning of a furnishing for a Girls Meeting Place.

I turn the question over to your Committee feeling sure that you will offer to these people in this effort the benefits of your interest and experience.\textsuperscript{76}

The dignity of the two women was explicitly mentioned in the letter and serves as a reminder of how important appearances and behaviour were when African Americans dealt with white reformers. This letter also reveals that white female reformers such as

\textsuperscript{73} Minutes, CSSCP.
\textsuperscript{74} Minutes, CSSCP.
\textsuperscript{75} Minutes, CSSCP.
\textsuperscript{76} Josephine Poe January to the Committee for Work Among Colored People, Urban League of St. Louis Records, 1910-1986, Series 9, Box 1, Folder 6, Washington University, St. Louis.
January judged and attempted to redirect some of the work previously done by African American women. The extent to which services such as settlement houses and rescue work were needed is also called into question by January in her letter, as she calls the work ‘misundertaken’, and states that it is only work that ‘they feel to be acutely needed’, dismissing the women’s plans because they were based on emotion and personal experience, rather than technical analysis and statistics, which were increasingly becoming the apparently natural domain of male professionals and of municipal management. If the two women were acting in a private capacity, then their personal responses and involvement, which had been a hallmark of female clubwork, were potentially going to be subsumed by the CSSCP’s professionalization and the ‘wise counsel’ of white people.

In claiming that the women did not understand the ‘physiological or biological problems of the matter’ of relief work, January firmly placed race as the central determinant of the problems faced in the slum areas in the African American neighbourhoods. Using the term ‘physiology’, which describes a branch of biology that deals with the normal functions of living organisms and their parts, January’s implication is that the conditions which the women were trying to improve were a natural by-product or extension of the population that lived there. January stated that the biological situation could never be overcome, and, ironically, could never truly be understood by the two African American women, because, however ‘earnest and dignified’ they were, they too were marked by the biological condition of race. This is the bind in which African American women and men who engaged in social reform found themselves in; respectability could only take them so far in the eyes of their white counterparts.

African American women were side-lined in the CSSCP, and the efforts of female committee members and clubwomen were further derided. Male privilege and racial prejudice had been united in the attacks against African American female efforts in the CSSCP. However, the female members of the CSSCP and of the various women’s clubs and church groups were sorely needed in 1917, when a deadly race massacre erupted in East St. Louis, across the Mississippi in the neighbouring state of Illinois. African Americans clamoured to escape the violence and crossed the river into St. Louis, as a result the services and facilities available to the black community were tested as they had
never been before. Prior to the massacre, there had been a series of skirmishes in East St. Louis. Throughout 1916 and early 1917, a series of labour disputes occurred at the city’s largest factories, including the Aluminium Ore Company and the meatpacking plant. Local union leaders inflamed white working-class opinion by accusing black migrants of bargaining down wages and providing strikebreaking labour, and many white workers in East St. Louis became convinced that African American migrants were a threat to their job security. Over three days in July 1917 thousands of whites rushed into the African American parts of the city and indiscriminately beat and shot black East St. Louisans. Official estimates later placed the death toll of African Americans at thirty-nine. Aside from the horrific cost to human life, white rioters destroyed over 300 buildings and caused approximately $400,000 worth of damage.77

The CSSCP had amalgamated with the Urban League before the massacre took place, and unfortunately the SLUL archive, which contained details of the early years of its work, was destroyed by a fire, so it is difficult to provide detailed analysis of the initial response of the SLUL, and whether female members and volunteers were subject to criticisms similar to those they had received in the CSSCP.78 The Argus reported on the East St. Louis race massacre and the African American community’s response, and an article of July 1917 is instructive regarding responses to the crisis, and provides some evidence of the efforts made by African American women. It states that ‘if it were possible, we would mention the names of all the noble citizens who have sacrificed everything to comfort the unfortunates’, but the number of people who helped proved too numerous to list.79 This highlights the huge community effort, but by reporting in this manner women’s voluntary work has disappeared from the historical record. One woman is mentioned, because ‘Mrs Malone and a corps of workers have been on duty at the Union Station’, and donations of clothes and money could be made at her beauty college.80 Annie Malone was a significant and influential figure in the African American community of St. Louis, so it is appropriate that she is mentioned by name in the Argus

78 Dowden-White, Groping Toward Democracy, 93-94.
79 “Thousands Leave East St. Louis, Cared for Here,” Argus, July 6, 1917, 1.
80 “Relief Funds Payable to the NAACP,” Argus, July 6, 1917, 1.
Malone was a business woman, clubwoman, and charitable donor who provided an alternative to male-orientated efforts to reform and uplift the community, and her development of beauty culture in the city had an impact on how race and respectability could potentially be re-worked by African American women, despite being contained by a continued emphasis on their appearance.

Part III – ‘To St. Louis she is much – to her race she is more – to womanhood she is all, and we do hope for more good women like her’: Annie Malone and Notions of Personal and Communal Respectability

Malone’s Poro College opened in 1917, three months before the East St. Louis massacre, and it dominated the Ville. The College would go on to become central to the social and cultural life of the African American community in St. Louis, and it provided economic opportunities for countless African American women. By 1920, some 200 employees worked at Poro College. It was a huge complex which consisted of a factory, a store for hair and cosmetic products, a hairdressing school, dormitories, a business office, and a mail-order department. Members of the community could buy stamps and money orders there, and gas bills could be paid at the information desk, all of which underlined the Poro’s stress upon financial independence and community responsibility (Figure 19). Poro College also had a 500-capacity auditorium and dining room that served as a community centre and a meeting place for religious, fraternal, civic, and social organisations.

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81 “At Poro College,” Argus, August 27, 1915, 1.
83 Souvenir of Poro College, St. Louis (St. Louis: n.p., 1922), 11.
Malone was born in Metropolis, Illinois in 1869, and in the 1890s began working with chemicals to find a better method than the application of the oils, soaps, and goose fat that African American women used to care for and to straighten their hair. She developed a successful formula that conditioned hair and helped to encourage its growth. In 1902 she relocated her business to 2223 Market Street in St. Louis to take full advantage of the forthcoming World’s Fair and the increase in business the event would likely bring. The business later moved to larger facilities at 3100 Pine Street in 1910, and finally Poro College was established on Ferdinand Avenue in the Ville. Malone and her assistants sold her Wonderful Hair Grower to salons and by mail order. She was canny enough not to use slogans and names in her products that would suggest that they could straighten hair or whiten the skin. The products proved to be popular, the sales of which made Malone one of the first African American millionaires. She was a true haircare and beauty culture pioneer, who acted as a mentor for her protégé, Madam C.J Walker.

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85 Lake, Blue Veins, 61-62. Madam C.J Walker, who had been an apprentice of Malone’s, appropriated the name of the Wonderful Hair Grower when she developed her own business. Walker would go on to claim that the idea for her hair-restoring ointment came to her in a dream.
Surprisingly, Malone has barely featured in scholarly analysis, which has been dominated by the young C.J Walker.\(^\text{86}\)

In 1906 Malone established the trade name Poro under which all her products were copywritten. The name could be an allusion to the network of secret societies in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, and the Ivory Coast. The Poro secret society was only for males, so in choosing to use this name Malone was redirecting the notion of a powerful, separate male sphere to African American women. The transformative effect of her products and the self-care that came through beauty culture would, like the Poro society, remain a secret to outsiders. Names are significant, and the choice of Poro may also have been calculated to engage with African tradition and imagery which was becoming popular in the developing New Negro movement as part of the effort to recapture and rediscover the power, beauty, and creativity of African ancestors. The association of Poro with something secret supports Hine’s theory of dissemblance, that there was something undisclosed about the African American body and, in this case, this could be related to the female world of beauty culture. The authorship and self-selection of words and images which both Lindsey and Cooper have described in their work on African American female-orientated respectability are important to the development and ownership of new conceptions of race and gender.

Malone’s empire was based on and supported by Poro agents who were trained to sell the Poro products. These products would be sold in homes and in salons, and this business practice created a network of African American women who shared both a physical space and an idealised space in which they dedicated time and effort to self-care and developed new forms of self-presentation.\(^\text{87}\) The business practice, through which the agents earnt commission, meant that more women could become entrepreneurs and gain their financial independence. Beauty culture exemplified the importance of African American participation in the consumer society and can even be seen as part of the

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\(^{86}\) It can only be surmised that this is because following a financially crippling divorce, and feeling the effects of the financial crash of 1929, Malone filed for bankruptcy in the early 1930s. However, to assume this is evidence of failure has meant her achievements and early efforts, particularly those related to her support for the community in St. Louis, have been ignored.

\(^{87}\) This was a national space too, made possible by mail orders, Poro agents, and clubs in each city, see “Poro College Club of Indianapolis,” Argus, June 4, 1915, 1.
developing theory and activism of ‘don’t buy where you can’t work’. This was a further aspect of respectability with which women engaged, and even directed.

African American women could manipulate notions of femininity and associated respectability within beauty culture through the act of creating and re-creating their image, and by extension that of their community. African American women had always been subject to corporeal vulnerability, and their strategies of respectability turned this around, or attempted to, through a combination of dissemblance and embodied discourse. The parts of the women’s bodies which were revealed and discussed were subject to their approval. Through beauty culture, they could trumpet the physical, natural beauty of African American women and the power of black female artifice by engaging in a historical legacy of back women’s creativity, style, and innovation. As Lindsey has argued, notwithstanding the influences of racism and sexism, white manufacturers of beauty products, and white cultural hegemony, African American women attempted to create in beauty culture a place that situated black women’s bodies and voices at the forefront of discussions about competing visions of African American modernity. According to Baldwin, re-creation was used as a term during the New Negro Era to explain ‘how the industrialized leisure space of adornment was central to new and contested meanings of the modern experience.’ Poro College and its business practice of agents in the community gave African American women a distinct financial and cultural space in the rapidly modernising world.

In a commemorative brochure produced in 1922, the respectable appearances which were expected at Poro College were conveyed. Photographs featured the plush and tasteful décor at Poro. Women were pictured working in the administration offices, and photographs of successful agents were also included. It was stated throughout the

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90 Lindsey, *Colored No More*, 54.
brochure that ‘Poro profits bring economic independence.’ Respectability at Poro was a combination of Washington’s ‘genuine and sincere desire to lift up his race and fit them to be useful citizens, efficient and capable, industrially and commercially’ and Du Bois’s uplift philosophies. The Poro brochure is a text which reveals the developing sense of women’s autonomy and authority within their own notions of respectability. This was a type of respectability that had not been available to middle-class white women, who were unlikely to enter business; they demonstrated their cultural position through the purchase of goods, not through the making or selling of them, whereas African American women could engage more freely with commercialism. African American women found that, by engaging in business practices, particularly the one most readily available to them in beauty culture, they could gain authority, financial security, and sometimes even social independence.

Interestingly, on one page of the Poro brochure there is a reference to Poro agents across the world. The caption under a photo in the brochure states that ‘Poro Agencies are now conducted by enthusiastic Agents in every state in the United States, and in Africa, Cuba, the Bahamas, Central America, Nova Scotia, and Canada’. The expanding Poro empire helped in the development of black nationalism and transnationalism and pride based on a shared experience and a shared appearance. The development of a female-driven ideology as an alternative to pan-Africanism and Garveyism supports Cooper’s assertion that African American women were developing a separate ideological stance. The Poro brochure is a useful reflection of this type of knowledge production. The work in St. Louis was, via Poro agents, linked to a larger national and international project of developing black pride and an acceptance of the interconnection between disparate communities and racial identification. The caption goes on to say that ‘the opportunity of the Poro agent to render genuine service is boundless’; that service would be delivered by, and for, African American women, their community, and their race.

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92 Souvenir of Poro College, 4.
94 Souvenir of Poro College, 43.
95 Souvenir of Poro College, 43.
Poro agents conveyed leadership and instruction within their community of women. Malone reportedly said ‘Poro College is an industrial effort of the Colored people...and the education we have to offer is the education of example.’ This was reminiscent of Du Bois’s Talented Tenth. The example Malone offered was not only industrial and commercial success, but was a demonstration of the best and most appropriate appearances and behaviours. The Poro agents served as both representatives and custodians of Poro respectability. They had to be well-dressed, and they were to behave appropriately. Appearances had always been integral to the notion of respectability and uplift, and went beyond a concern for surface appearance; Washington’s philosophy of the toothbrush was designed to show both African Americans’ willingness and ability to transform, and this was also conveyed in beauty culture. Respectability, shown through appearance, manners, and morals, was both the

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96 “Malone, Annie Turnbo,” by Mary K. Dains.
97 “You will be satisfied if you insist on getting Poro,” (advertisement), Argus, July 9, 1915, 2, Poro is described as the ‘ideal of sanitation and beauty’ linking sanitation to cleanliness. This is another similarity to Washington’s philosophy of the toothbrush.
process and the strategy to resist an ideology which stressed the apparent differences between white and black people.

Poro College went beyond meeting the requirements of the Washington-Du Boisian uplift philosophies and was part of a developing independent female domain which provided alternative uses for city space. The college played an important role in educating the community, and this instruction expanded beyond beauty classes and product knowledge into evening classes in household management and administrative skills for young working-class women. Furthermore, through their business practices, African American women could fund charitable work in their communities. This is evident in Malone’s activities in St. Louis, she gave liberally to a number of local and national African American organisations and institutions, and she established committees to investigate how the sick in the African American community were treated, and another committee was formed ‘to give an unlimited number of girls and women uplifting occupation.’ Further donations and involvement from Malone included the St. Louis YMCA, the Howard University Medical Fund, and the Tuskegee University. This kind of investment and involvement linked the community work done by African American women, and the financial gains generated, to a wider sense of uplifting and helping the race on a national scale. African American women seized opportunities which were not available to their white counterparts. Later, Poro College was used by soldiers preparing to leave for war in Europe. Malone established the Annie Malone Orphan’s Home 1919. She donated $10,000 to purchase land on which to build the orphanage. In 1920 she spearheaded a charitable drive to collect money for the construction of more buildings at the Orphan’s Home. The drive raised $60,000 in nine days. Malone served as board president of the Orphan’s Home until 1943.

In celebration of Malone’s contributions an annual Malone Day Parade was established in 1911. The parade meandered around the streets of the Ville. Malone’s empire not only developed the philosophical or idealised space in the beauty salon in

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98 “Poro College holds open house July 5th,” Argus, July 9, 1915, 1.
99 “Poro College forms St. Louis Organisation,” Argus, June 18, 1915, 1.
100 Lake, Blue Veins, 61.
which an alternative, but related, female respectability would be created and communicated, it also influenced the built environment through the establishment of the Orphan’s Home, Poro College, and the countless affiliated salons. Malone’s business also created a celebratory space for African Americans to convey community cohesion and respectable behaviour at the Malone Day Parade. In celebrating African American achievement, the Malone Day Parade was a counterpoint to the long-established Veiled Prophet event which was used to highlight the social cohesion and cultural power of the city’s white business elites, and its associated Prophet’s Ball which glorified the grace and sexual innocence of the young unmarried white woman who was selected as Veiled Prophet Queen.¹⁰²

Despite the many, and varied, opportunities beauty culture presented, the type of respectability created by Malone, the Poro agents, and their customers, was enmeshed within ideals of white beauty and femininity. Erin Chapman has discussed how New Negro cultural productions were ‘disseminated through the powerful arbitrators of white supremacist understandings and capitalist exploitation.’¹⁰³ The self-image and creation of an alternative business subculture was not simply based on African American women stressing pride in their hair and their skin, but rather beauty culture rested upon a complex combination of different standards and economic interests. There is a tension inherent in relying purely on the body and how it is viewed, as there is a potential for falling into a trap created by long-held assumptions about the physical, exotic and erotic African American body. This means that within beauty culture there was a complex mesh of agency, rejection of, and at time subordination to, a cultural hegemony that stressed ‘white’ standards. These were supposedly unattainable because appearances and associated behaviours were ascribed to the concept of race. African American women did have more authorial control over the portrayal of their self-presentation via beauty culture, but this was not removed from notions of white cultural hegemony, which stressed white as beautiful and virtuous, and African American uplift, which focused on the mimicking of white middle-class virtues and, crucially, appearances.

The profits from Malone’s Poro business empire helped the African American community, and they were based on the actual bodies of African American women. The struggle to transform a pejorative concept of race into an affirming vision of cultural distinctiveness was apparent within African American beauty culture, and it had the potential to undermine white cultural hegemony. It could also be used to debunk some of the assumptions made, by whites, about the ability of African Americans to truly be respectable. In St. Louis beauty culture was significant because it changed the built environment and it had the ability to encourage community cohesion through associated charitable efforts. This was led by Malone and other African American women.

Conclusion

Women’s clubs had acted as a training ground for community assistance, which in turn helped to develop the CSSCP and its inter-racial efforts, and would prove to be foundational for the SLUL, the National Urban League, and the NAACP. Polite protest and community activism developed in the CSSCP which eventually allowed for greater political engagement and dissent.

However, in the criticisms and curtailment of African American women in the inter-racial committee of St. Louis, a tension is revealed between African American women’s perception of themselves as middle class and respectable and the social and cultural forces that denied them that status. African American women were subject to racial and gendered discrimination and prejudice, but they also subjected others in their community to it, principally those who were less privileged and had lower social and economic status. Their concerns about the poor in the African American community, and the need to uplift them, contained unconscious internalised racism. Club work could and did produce a sense of solidarity because of a shared gender, which was the type of racial sociability the NACWC tried to promote. However, the emphasis on and desire to uplift the race as the middle-class membership continued to climb, belied a deep-seated elitism. The interlocking structures of power and of race and class could not be overcome.

104 Lindsey, Colored No More, 55.
105 Dowden-White, Groping Toward Democracy, 2-4, 243-260.
106 Cooper, Beyond Respectability, 52.
in favour of gender solidarity. The work of African American women, and some of the tensions within that work, complicate notions of respectability and suggest that a move away from Du Bois’s and Washington’s ideology is needed to more fully understand the spheres in which respectability and attempts at racial uplift were created and disseminated.

To bypass their marginalisation, some African American women engaged with beauty culture and its business practices. In doing so, they could work within the community and gain a degree of economic independence. Creativity and self-care could be practiced and advertised in beauty culture, and, as in the case of Annie Malone’s business empire, some of the proceeds could go towards improving the city space where African Americans lived. Beauty culture was linked to the appearance of African American women, their community solidarity, and race identification, which could go beyond local and even national borders. However, the process was complex and tied up with the engagement of white beauty standards and some attempts to mirror it.

Despite its tensions and contradictions, the project of respectability allowed African American women to create connections within their own community and their race.107 African American women were also able to generate and use opportunities to shape the space their community shared and the types of activities that went on in that space; these opportunities were not available to their white counterparts who saw a curtailment of their influence, their activity, and their reputation as experts in the city space during the same period. Progressives’ failure to include the African American community in their vision of the common good of the present and future St. Louis meant that there was a way that, in turn, the community could shape their own sense of social justice and solidarity. In this way, African American women played a significant role in the development of racial identification and pride which could, and eventually would, transcend the city’s borders.

107 “Federated Clubs,” Argus, October 8, 1915, 1, reports that Miss Kathryn Johnson Field Agent of NAACP to address the Federation of Women’s Clubs (NACWC) on segregation and that she was meeting all organisations of women in the city during October and November to stress the need for voting registration for segregation bill in February 1916.
Chapter Five
Silent Films, Swimming Pools, and Segregated Housing:
Enforcing and Protecting White Space in St. Louis, 1913-1916

Throughout 1915 members of the African American community of St. Louis mobilized protests against the film The Birth of a Nation. The Argus repeatedly condemned the film, ‘which not only ridicules, but libels, the race! Which not only misrepresents past history, but is based on race prejudice.’¹ The film, which has been called the most controversial motion picture of all time, had been met with protests since it premiered in Los Angeles on February 8, 1915, and its condemnation by local chapters of the NAACP continued as it toured the country.² The film was, in many ways, a response to and a commentary on the state of the nation, and on some of the problems facing American society in the mid-1910s. For audiences of the time, it seemed to offer many contemporary parallels and resonances.³ In St. Louis, the debates around the film, and what it suggested about African Americans and their place in history, were part of a larger schema of exclusion and segregation based on race.

The years 1913 to 1916 saw a concerted effort by white supremacists in St. Louis to designate exclusively white geographies in both leisure and residential spaces. The ways in which this was done included a manipulation of Progressive civic celebrations and legislation, a recourse to racial prejudice underpinned by notions of gender and sexuality, and an appeal to the ethnic population to accept the exclusionary practices which were involved in and essential to the preservation of whiteness. The Birth of a Nation provided an ideological space in which whites could argue for the inferiority of African Americans, and screenings of the film allowed a physical space to exist where appeals for segregation ordinances could be made. In this way, leisure and residential

¹ “Why not protest?,” Argus, September 17, 1915, 4.
³ Stokes, D.W Griffith’s, 127.
spaces were intertwined in the perception of race and how it was communicated via place.4

Despite the protests, the film’s representatives secured a temporary injunction to allow it to be screened in St. Louis.5 A delegation of men from the African American community in St. Louis met with Mayor Henry Kiel and Prosecuting Attorney Anthony Sidner to see what recourse they had to stop the film. Both Kiel and Sidner convinced the group of their inability to do anything under the existing statutes.6 The Argus called on the Chief of Police to stop the showing of The Birth of a Nation, to no avail.7 Charlotte Rumbold, as Recreation Officer, became embroiled in the debates about the film; the Argus stated that ‘every true citizen should do as Miss Charlotte Rumbold: protest against the production in St. Louis of this vicious agitator of race prejudice.’8 In filing an objection to the film Rumbold stated, ‘I understand the second act deals with the Reconstruction Period in the South. I believe that, because St. Louis is a city where the sentiment between the North and the South was narrowly divided, it would be inadvisable to present such a show.’9 Missouri, as a border state during the Civil War, and St. Louis as a border city on the edge of Southern-style segregation, presented a combustible situation concerning race relations.

When the film finally arrived in late August 1915, it was meant to show for five weeks, it actually appeared for many months.10 African American protesters lost the battle against the film’s presentation.11 The temporary injunction granted to the film’s representatives to allow them to show the film was made permanent by Judge Henning; his ‘decision was to the effect, that the best evidence that the play is not objectionable is

4 “East – Kinloch,” Argus, October 29, 1915, 2, shows how the connection between the film, perceptions of history and belonging, and residential space were also understood in the African American community. The advertisement for new homes in a developing African American neighbourhood states, “The Birth of a Nation is a great picture depicting a past history. THE BIRTH OF EAST KINLOCH is the picture of a future history to be written by a Negro historian….Come out and see THE BIRTH OF EAST KINLOCH and forget all about The Birth of a Nation.” Elizabeth Schmidt has argued that East Kinloch was a scam, see Elizabeth Noel Schmidt, “Civic Pride and Prejudice: St. Louis Progressive Reform, 1900-1916” (PhD thesis University of Missouri, 1986), 139-140.
5 “Keep up the protest,” Argus, September 3, 1915, 4.
6 “Keep up the protest,” 4.
8 “Protest against the 'Birth of a Nation',' Argus, May 28, 1915, 1.
10 “'Birth of a Nation' Enters on Second Week at Olympic,” St. Louis Star, September 6, 1915, 2.
that it has been showing several weeks and nothing serious has occurred.’

The Argus printed an editorial in reply, stating that by ‘not prohibiting Dixon’s film because nothing serious has occurred belongs to the same category with locking the stable door after the horse has been stolen.’

The Argus editorial made clear the connection between D.W. Griffith’s film and its source material, Thomas Dixon Jnr’s novel The Clansman. It did so to cut down some of the claims made by Griffith when he argued that the film was a historical epic. Dixon’s original novel was virulently racist and was sub-titled ‘A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan.’ Melvyn Stokes has shown that Judge Henning’s decision was no exception, many of the arguments made across the country to prevent the film’s showing centred around discussions about the potential violence it may encourage, when none could be immediately found the film was presented. In effect, the racist brutality in the film was accepted, and concerns about further violence focused on African American protesters. This was another way that the film and its showing assigned savagery and deviant tendencies to the African American race in general.

The African American community of St. Louis was in a quandary concerning the film. The Argus tried to drum up support for protests and boycotts. This campaign did not receive much traction. At a meeting of the Negro Business League, some members refused to condemn the picture. They finally made ‘resolutions to censor [The] Birth of a Nation favoured by majority, [which] only passes on condition that [such resolutions] not to be made public’, which defeated the object of agreeing to protest the film.

Mr Gordon, a member who refused to condemn the film, ‘is reported to have said that he had seen the play and had found nothing in it which the Negro ought to condemn, but that the reflection was upon the white man. It is said that one member [in opposition to this] became so disgusted that he left the meeting.’ Those who were hostile to protests and boycotts felt that the matter was not for the Negro Business League to handle, but should be taken up by civic organisations. The unease with protesting was, in part, due to the continued polite protests and inter-racial co-operation sought by organisations such as the CSSCP; this eventually meant that African Americans made many concessions to a

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12 “Judge Henning’s Decision,” 5.
13 “Judge Henning’s Decision,” 5.
14 Stokes, D.W Griffith’s, 129-36.
social and political hierarchy that favoured whites in the city. Even following defeat, when the film was shown, the Argus reported the community response in line with notions of respectability. It stated that ‘we feel our protest was justified and dignified.’

Efforts had been made ‘for the uplift and advancement of the entire race – and not only for this day and generation but for posterity.’ Organisations like the Negro Business League and the CSSCP were caught in a bind, because to protest the film’s showing may have proved unpalatable to their inter-racial ‘allies’.

Despite these concessions the use of leisure space in the city remained contentious. In the case of The Birth of a Nation in St. Louis, the film’s showing allowed for a space in which ideas about white supremacy and African American degeneracy, as reflected in D.W Griffith’s (and Dixon’s) version of history, could be discussed and disseminated. The physical space of the movie theatre also became embroiled in a larger debate about residential segregation. In turn, the African American community attempted to create and contain its own leisure space, to stress notions of racial cohesion. In response to the furore around the film, a local African American cinema advertised in the Argus, stating, ‘first, patronize those places that give your race employment…come to the Garden Airdome where you are always welcome. (Blood is thicker than water.) How many white odeons [movie theatres] on Market St. employ colored help? – All of our employees are Colored…If you think you are doing right by spending all of your nickels in white odeons, let your daughter apply for a position as a Cashier at one of them: and please let us know if she gets the position.”

Interestingly, the call for selective patronising of certain movie theatres, reminiscent of later strategies of ‘Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work’, focused on working daughters and wives. This was not only because of the growing number of women in employment, but because those leisure spaces were already heavily gendered. Increasingly, residential and leisure spaces were segregated in St. Louis during the opening decades of the twentieth century, and this chapter shows how this was done via the recourse to gendered racist discourse.

The Birth of a Nation shaped and reflected contemporary concerns about racial intermingling, and so the supposed sexual deviancy of African Americans was

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17 “Keep up the protest,” 4.
18 “Keep up the protest,” 4.
prominently featured. Of the three irredeemably evil characters in the film, two, as mulattos, symbolised the dangers of racial mixing: Lydia, the ‘housekeeper’ of abolitionist Austin Stoneman (who is a fictional stand-in for Radical Republican Thaddeus Stevens) whose passion for her, it is suggested, was the basis for his disastrous attempt to force racial equality on the defeated South; and Silas Lynch (whose surname suggests the violence that he meets), who is a lieutenant-governor who attempts to create a black empire of his own and arrange his ‘forced marriage’ with Stoneman’s daughter, Elsie. The third villain is Gus, a black man, who tells the white Flora Cameron that he would like to marry her.20 Flora runs away; when Gus chases her Flora jumps to her death to escape him. The black man as threatening rapist was a trope developed in the Reconstruction period and used to justify lynching and the imposition of strict racial divisions to protect the sanctity of white womanhood.21 The final act of male protectionism in the film is to save white women from ‘the fate worse than death’ (rape by black men), and this is conveyed in the climactic scene when Lynch’s militiamen are on the point of breaking in to a log cabin. Dr. Cameron (who is a Southern character) and one of the Union veterans (still in the South) – all bullets spent – prepare to beat their daughters to death with their guns rather than let them fall into the hand of the victorious African Americans.22 This fate is averted because, in one of many scenes that justified and encouraged their existence, the Ku Klux Klansmen come to their aid.23 Contemporary assumptions about race and sexuality were clearly apparent in this supposedly historical epic, which also served to depict the eternal innocence of white femininity.24

Concerns about sexual contact between races were prevalent in discussions about leisure and residential space in St. Louis. Public leisure spaces became places in which different classes and ethnicities, unencumbered by geographical restrictions, could

20 Stokes, D.W Griffith’s, 218.
22 Stokes, D.W Griffith’s, 221.
and would intermingle more freely. However, leisure spaces were still closely monitored, precisely because traditional social barriers were increasingly blurred in such places. As discussed in Chapter One, the Pike at the St. Louis World’s Fair was tolerated, and even excitedly sought out, because, despite appearances, the space was not really dangerous because it was underwritten by white superiority and supremacy underpinned by the supposed eternal, and unchanging, sanctity of white womanhood. New leisure spaces, like swimming pools, were complicated and unsettled by the changing presentation of white women in that space – who chose to wear revealing swimwear – in combination with the presence of St. Louis’s not insubstantial ethnic population. Gary Mormino has shown that from 1900 onwards the Italian community in St Louis experienced dynamic growth, there were nearly 3000 inhabitants of ‘The Hill’ at the turn of the century and men continued to outnumber women by a six-to-one margin.

However, until the racial category of Greeks, Italians, and Eastern Europeans was defined exclusively white space was not assured and therefore concerns about how it should be monitored came to the forefront of public debates and newspaper reports. By attending segregated swimming pools and voting for ordinances which would ensure the legal separation of white and black residential spaces the ethnic population could enact whiteness, however their whiteness was not always guaranteed and there were some controversies and concerns around their identification as white.

Gail Bederman has shown, concerns around sexuality were closely linked to racial definitions and racist assumptions and fears about the consequences of racial mixing under Jim Crow segregation. Popular prejudices among whites at the time stigmatized black men in general as sexually undisciplined, and, in some cases, prone to uncontrollable sexual desires for white women. The results of miscegenation would be detrimental to the maintenance of the colour line which is why sexual contact was feared

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and legislated against, particularly in the South where the colour line was legally enforced. In St. Louis, between 1910 and 1920 the white population increased by 12 percent, conversely the black population increased by nearly 60 percent to close to 70,000 inhabitants (Figure 21). This population surge was a consequence of both the Great Migration and the East St. Louis race massacre. Over one decade there was rapid growth in the scale of the African American population as opposed to that of whites in St. Louis, however the land mass of the city did not change at all. St. Louis was hemmed in by its fixed border to the west, which had been created by the Great Divorce of 1876. Available urban space was at a premium and there was a sense that the arrangements of that space were influx as the racial dynamic of the city shifted. Furthermore, black and white neighbourhoods were in close proximity as there no options or opportunities to expand the city space available. As this chapter argues concerns about space and who belonged there became more persistent in this decade – new leisure spaces were designated as white and protected as such precisely because those spaces were so close to areas largely occupied by African Americans. St. Louis did not impose the colour line legally in its leisure facilities, but it did so socially. This process required a reworking of whiteness and gendered norms had to be re-enforced in that space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>% Change</th>
<th>Non-White</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>575,238</td>
<td></td>
<td>35,516</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>687,029</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>43,960</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>772,897</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>69,854</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>821,960</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>93,580</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>816,048</td>
<td>– 1%</td>
<td>108,765</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>856,796</td>
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<td>154,448</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>750,026</td>
<td>–13%</td>
<td>216,022</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, various reports.

Figure 21. Joseph Heathcott, “Black Archipelago: Politics and Civic Life in the Jim Crow City,” Journal of Social History 38, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 707. This shows the population changes in St. Louis which were tracked in U.S censuses.

Part I of this chapter examines the origins of the swimming pool controversy at Fairgrounds Park to explain how the design of the built environment and its designation as leisure space encouraged concerns about inter-racial sexual contact and how this
resulted in the enforcement of racial segregation in that space. Jeff Wiltse has demonstrated how gender integration at the Fairgrounds Pool necessitated racial segregation because sexuality had to be monitored in that space.\textsuperscript{29} Wiltse’s work is useful in thinking about how the built environment of the Fairground’s Pool marked ‘an important step in the emergence of a mixed-gender public’ space.\textsuperscript{30} However, the swimming pool controversy was further complicated by the interplay of ethnicity and class because the description of whiteness in new leisure spaces was still in flux. By voting for residential segregation ethnic voters could prove themselves to be white and assure their belonging in white spaces. Part II begins with a consideration of the Pageant and Masque of 1914, which was an event that took place in the leisure space of Forest Park and was designed to encourage support for yet another new city charter. The event figuratively and literally inscribed Anglo-American white identity on to the past, present, and future of St. Louis. The Civic League was overjoyed when the charter of 1914 was accepted by voters; however, it soon became clear that it had been hijacked by white supremacist neighbourhood associations seeking to enforce segregation measures. The ways this was done will be discussed in Part III, which includes a close reading of the white supremacist magazine, \textit{The Home Defender}. This document provides new ways of thinking about how concerns about sexual contact between races and definitions of whiteness were expressed in conversations about city space and property prices. The concluding section of the chapter reiterates how concerns about sexuality and the enforcement of gender roles were prevalent in the drive for segregated residential and leisure space in the city and how this was coupled with the redefinition of the ethnic population, so that they belonged in the ‘white race’. Whiteness was marked and protected by the solidifying colour line in St. Louis earlier than in northern cities because of the city’s border status and of the proximity of the urban spaces in question. Therefore, in much of the debates about leisure and residential space and how whiteness was to be determined in that space St. Louis was an early adopter.

\textsuperscript{30} Wiltse, \textit{Contested Waters}, 84.
Part I – Fairgrounds Pool: The City Takes a Plunge into Unchartered (Segregated) Waters

Fairgrounds Park became a municipal park in 1908. Prior to this it had been a privately-owned space on which the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association held their annual St. Louis Exposition from 1856 through to 1902. This event was eventually cancelled as the city began to make its preparations for the World’s Fair to be held at the larger Forest Park. In 1901 a conglomerate of racetrack owners had purchased the park and horse racing was further developed on the site. There had long been a racetrack on the site, as evidenced in Camille Dry’s 1875 perspective map. The revival of racing at Fairgrounds Park suffered a blow because of an ordinance which ensured the abolition of gambling on horse racing in Missouri passed in June 1905. This legislation was part of Governor ‘Holy Joe’ Folk’s anti-gambling measures. The site of Fairgrounds Park had therefore been subject to Progressive reforms concerned with corruption and vice and the consequences of World’s Fair city boosterism. In 1908 the abandoned 128.94 acre site was purchased by the city of St. Louis for $700,000 and the park was dedicated on October 9, 1909.

Fairgrounds Park was surrounded by several neighbourhoods: Fairground to the northeast; O’Fallon to the northwest; and the Ville/Greater Ville to the southwest. Upon the city’s purchase of the grounds there had been ‘a considerable advance in values of property on all sides of the park, the influence being felt a distance of several blocks.’ \( ^{32} \) It was estimated that the increase in value of surrounding property ranged from 25 percent to 50 percent. Real estate owners took advantage of the changing conditions and began to improve their property from buildings of frame constructions to residences of brick and stone, many of them favouring the bungalow type which stressed single-family use. Adapting and owning such a building pointed to a particular ethnic make-up, because large immigrant families needed more space, so a bungalow became a preserve of affluent small families. City boosters liked to claim that the increase in values and the money spent on home improvements and development in the residencies around Fairgrounds Park was to the benefit of the city at large. \( ^{33} \) In reality, the purchase of land by the municipality was once again to the benefit of private homeowners. Notions of the

\( ^{32} \) The City Plan Commission, *St. Louis Central Traffic Parkway* (St. Louis: City Plan Commission), 21.

\( ^{33} \) *St. Louis Central Traffic Parkway*, 21.
common good were tied to the personal financial benefit of certain citizens. The financial and social benefits of owning property in this area were so large that the white owners feared any encroachment from the neighbouring African American community. In this way property ownership and its value was combined with maintaining racially exclusive residential and leisure space in Fairgrounds Park.

In 1913 a huge swimming pool in Fairgrounds Park was opened. It was by far the largest swimming pool in the country, and probably the world. The circular pool measured 440 feet in diameter and accommodated thousands of swimmers at a time. The city permitted both sexes to swim together, and the pool’s resort-like character attracted virtually all levels of St. Louis society. But while the working and middle classes, males and females, and children and adults swam together in this gigantic pool, blacks and whites could not.

African Americans had bathed with whites at earlier bath houses and municipal pools. The St. Louis municipal government, following pressure from women’s clubs and the Civic League, had opened its first public bath in 1907, on 10th Street between Carr and Biddle, in what one newspaper described as a ‘ghetto district’ (Figure 23). The bath house catered to the immigrants and the working classes who lived in the neighbourhood, and attracted a racially and ethnically diverse crowd of working-class residents. According to one newspaper, ‘Greek, Italian, negro, Irish, German, French, American – they were all there, sweating, grinning, and scolding at one another in strange tongues.’ This description is a reminder of Matthew Frye Jacobson’s contention that, in the opening decades of the twentieth century, race and ethnicity were in flux, and were not seen as mutually exclusive. The reference to ‘strange tongues’ suggests that many different languages were spoken in the bath house. There were ‘American[s]’ present, but the terms which people had to meet to become ‘American’ are unclear. The

34 Wiltse, Contested Waters, 78; City Plan Commission, Municipal Institutions of St. Louis: Where to Go What to See (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1914), 37.
35 “More Than 12,000 Persons a Day Take the Plunge,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 20, 1913, 6.
36 “All Races and Creeds Flock to Public Bath,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 11, 1907, 6.
37 “Survey of the Park and Public Recreation System of St. Louis,” Civic Bulletin, February 12, 1912, 3. In 1909-10 an additional $45,000 was spent on constructing Public Bath No 2.
38 “All Races and Creeds,” 6.
space was not marked by the colour line as ‘negro’ bathers were also present, but interestingly the reporter makes the distinction between them and the Americans. The description of the bath house suggests the proximity of its visitors and that they were ‘grinning’ and enjoying this closeness. The space provided at the municipal bath house warranted and even encouraged the mixing of races and ethnicities. Despite this description, it was not intended to be a fun leisure space; rather, it was related to health and morals.

Figure 23. The Matthews-Northrup Up-To-Date Map of St. Louis. The red circle denotes the site of Bath House No. 1 opened in 1907; the green circle shows the site for Bath House No. 3 opening in 1910; and the blue circle shows Bath House No. 4 also opened in 1910. These bath houses are within a mile radius because the area covered was densely populated. Note how close these poor neighbourhood are to downtown (grand and notable building are black squares) and to the gigantic Union Station. Bath House No. 2 was the only facility opened in Soulard in the south of the city (which is not shown).

Official attendance statistics confirm the racial diversity of the bathers who visited the 10th Street Bath House. During the Bath House’s first four years of operation, the number of African American bathers increased steadily: 517 in the first year, 1,209 in the second, 3,448 in the third year, and then 4,352 in 1911.40 There were only showers and tubs at the 10th Street Bath House, and, while these facilities accommodated both sexes, arrangements were made to ensure that men and women were kept separate;

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40 Park Department, *Annual Report of the Park Department of the City of St. Louis, 1912-1913* (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1913), 36.
men and women entered the baths via different doors, and they bathed in separate areas.\textsuperscript{41} Racial diversity was tolerated, but gender integration was not. Following the success of the 10\textsuperscript{th} Street Bath House, the city’s first municipal pool was opened in 1909, and operated along the same lines. The pool was called Bath House No. 2, and was situated in the South Side of the city in the Soulard neighbourhood. Bath House No. 2 promoted physical fitness because it included swimming facilities, and it encouraged working-class residents to get clean in the showers and tubs.\textsuperscript{42} In its first year of operation, 357 African Americans used Bath House No. 2.\textsuperscript{43} This was a small but significant number, because it shows that Bath House No. 2, which was intended to function as a bathing and fitness facility for the city’s working classes, was gender segregated and racially integrated.\textsuperscript{44} In counting the attendance of blacks and whites officials were aware that in this space there was the potential to bring different races together who did not normally mix due to the social arrangement of the city. For example, African Americans did not typically live in the South Side of the city rather they lived in the North Side in the Ville and Greater Ville. However, because the facility was designed for the poor working-class, and it was gender segregated African Americans were tolerated. Attendance was still carefully monitored because the new opportunity for racial mixing that the new bathing space created could potentially be dangerous in the combustible border city of St. Louis.

\textsuperscript{41} Wiltse, Contested Waters, 79; Park Department, Annual Report of the Park Department of the City of St. Louis, 1908-1909 (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1909), 39-41.
\textsuperscript{42} Wiltse, Contested Waters, 79.
\textsuperscript{43} Park Department, Annual Report of the Park Department of the City of St. Louis, 1910-1911 (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1911), 30-32.
\textsuperscript{44} Wiltse, Contested Waters, 79.
In contrast to the early Bath Houses, Fairgrounds Pool was designed from the outset as a gender-integrated municipal site. As a large leisure pool, it was the first of its kind in the northern United States, and it was the first municipal pool to officially segregate along racial lines. As Wiltse has argued, the simultaneous occurrence of gender integration and racial segregation was not coincidental. City officials excluded blacks because most whites did not want black men interacting with white women in a space which was both intimate and crowded. This is based on long term racist assumptions, some of which were made obvious in The Birth of a Nation. St. Louis was an early adopter of this kind of restriction of leisure space. The city had a contentious racial history, the scale (according to race) of the population was rapidly changing as more African Americans entered while fewer immigrants chose to establish themselves in St. Louis. The actual city space available was finite and contained by a political and geographical boundary, and innovations in the built space changed how race relations were enacted.

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46 Wiltse, Contested Waters, 78.
There had long been a desire for a leisure-style pool in St. Louis. Unlike many other cities across the country, St. Louis was not close to a body of water for residents to use to cool off in the summer, the Mississippi River being deemed too muddy to swim in. Fairgrounds Pool was innovative because it resembled the seaside resort that St. Louis had previously lacked. The Recreation Commission even contemplated making the pool more like an ocean resort by installing a ‘huge paddle device for making waves’. Advances in technology were providing new ways in which leisure spaces could be transformed into ‘other’ places, free from the class restrictions found in everyday spaces in the city. The design of the pool also determined its definition as a leisure space; the material culture of the space helped to shape its meaning. The circular shape of the pool meant that it could not easily host swim meets or permit lap swimming for exercise. Physical space for non-swimmers was also created; they could lounge by the shallow end and observe the scene. Locals acknowledged the intention of the design and its execution as a leisure space by referring to the pool as ‘the St. Louis Coney Island’.

Fairgrounds Pool proved to be very popular. An emphasis was placed on the pleasure that the pool brought to the public, and the facility was seen as a ‘valuable civic asset’ because it made ‘life bearable to thousands during the excessively hot summer.’ Unlike earlier municipal pools that served a particular neighbourhood, it was a destination resort for the whole city and the surrounding region and it attracted virtually all levels of St. Louis society. In his dedicatory address, Mayor Henry Kiel emphasized that the pool was ‘for rich and poor alike’. The city’s working classes and immigrants visited, as did the city’s fashionable set. One newspaper proclaimed that ‘West End belles and beaux, and many a prosperous looking man from downtown’ came to the pool. The West Enders who would normally be found residing in the ‘Private Places’ of St. Louis visited the pool, and when they did so they entered a different arena in which class and ethnic divides were being reconfigured. As such, this public space was potentially already

47 Park Department, Annual Report of the Park Department of the City of St. Louis, 1912-1913, 29.
48 Wiltse, Contested Waters, 80.
49 “Splash! Jump into Our Big New Pond and Be Cool,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 20, 1913, 4.
50 Park Department, Annual Report of the Park Department of the City of St. Louis, 1913-1914 (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1914), 4.
52 “Splash!,” 4.
‘dangerous.’ New leisure spaces posed a threat to markers of class difference, for it could no longer be expressed through the occupation of particular spaces like the ‘Private Places’ of St. Louis. The sites of the ‘Private Places’ were not a great distance from the Fairgrounds Pool (Figure 22), and property around the site had acquired a greater value (since the purchase of the Fairgrounds Park by the municipality in 1908). The preservation of property value and the corresponding class markers made through racial exclusion can thus be found in conversations about new leisure spaces and the proposals to implement legal racial segregation in residential spaces.

A week before the Fairgrounds Pool opened, the city’s Chief of Police, Charles Young, ordered the officers stationed at Fairgrounds Park to bar all African Americans from entering the pool. After he issued the order, Chief Young checked with a city councillor to verify the legality of his edict. Clearly, he was unsure of his actions, as African Americans had not been excluded from other public facilities, including the city’s first municipal pool at Bath House No. 2. The legality of exclusion and segregation was, at this point, uncertain. The testing of boundaries which marked racial difference, and therefore implemented and upheld segregation, was an ongoing process, particularly in St. Louis, where there were several discrepancies between segregated and unsegregated urban spaces. The councillor confirmed that the city had the right to exclude black citizens, and the Fairgrounds Pool became officially and explicitly for whites only. Interestingly, there was no legislation which enforced this. Rather segregation was monitored and maintained by the pool’s visitors, employees, and the use of the police force. Once marked as ‘white only’ it became extremely difficult for African Americans to change the meaning of that space.

Once the facility had opened rumours circulated that the black residents of St. Louis were going to resist their exclusion. Apparently, a group of young black men

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53 Wiltse, *Contested Waters*, 85.
56 For problems once the Pool was desegregated, see “Race Riot in St. Louis,” *LIFE*, July 4, 1949, 30; “Mayor Restores Old Swim Rules; Disturbances in Fairgrounds Park,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 22, 1949, 1; Wolcott, *Race, Riots, and Roller Coasters*, 76.
plotted to make a rush past the pool attendants and police guards and jump into the water. Chief Young heard about this planned ‘invasion’ and stationed ten additional officers at the pool to repel the ‘attack’. Municipal workers also hurried the construction of a ten-foot-high fence around the perimeter of the leisure space.\textsuperscript{57} The protest never happened. Interestingly, the rumours were concerned with young African American men and stressed the danger and threat they represented. African American women were also excluded from this new municipal pool at Fairgrounds, having previously attended the racially integrated Bath Houses. The presence of African American women would have served to complicate the description of sexualised space because the fears centred around apparently over-sexualised black men, and as a result African American women were ignored in the reporting of potential protests.

Once open, the pool and the swimmers quickly became a public spectacle, and new standards of public decency and visual propriety had to be established in the pool and in the space around the facility.\textsuperscript{58} The \textit{St. Louis Globe-Democrat} reported that, on a single day, the beach-like resort received 50,000 visitors in total, which was made up of an equal division between bathers and spectators.\textsuperscript{59} Contentions quickly arose concerning the boundaries of male-female interaction and observation. These issues were raised once the pool had opened and African Americans had clearly been barred from attending the facility. Fears about the alleged hyper-sexualisation of black men had been emphasised, but concerns about contact between men and women in general continued to be raised. The acceptance of the working classes and immigrants in the new public leisure space frequented by affluent members of St. Louis society was probationary while the rules of propriety were established.

Public decency was seen to be at risk in the pool, and in the wider cityscape as the swimmers were making their way to the Fairgrounds Park. It was widely reported that swimmers were often ignoring traditional conventions of proper dress in public. Swimmers rode on streetcars and walked down sidewalks wearing nothing but their bathing suits, apparently doing so because of their eagerness to plunge into the pool.\textsuperscript{60}

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\textsuperscript{57} “Extra Guards”, 2.
\textsuperscript{58} Wiltse, \textit{Contested Waters}, 82.
\textsuperscript{60} “Bathers Indiscreet Officials Are Told,” \textit{St. Louis Globe-Democrat}, July 20, 1913, 6.
\end{flushleft}
The public veneer of traditional standards of propriety were apparently slipping. The outfits and flesh displayed outside of the leisure space seemed to be more dangerous because the temporary relaxation of class and ethnic distinctions at the pool were continuing in surrounding spaces which had not been designated for leisure. Furthermore, though racial segregation could be ensured in the leisure space, it was not so easily enforced on the city’s sidewalks and public areas; for instance, transportation in St. Louis was not segregated. This was another reason why strict racial segregation had to be implemented at the Fairgrounds Pool.

Of further concern were the ways in which bathers, to get into the pool as quickly as possible, were changing into swimsuits behind trees and shrubs in the park, rather than waiting for dressing rooms. A reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch described the levels of indiscretion she witnessed strolling through Fairgrounds Park one morning:

It isn’t exactly comfortable to know as you are making your way across the park that behind every large tree or bush as many men as it will shelter are likely to be discovered in various stages of dishabillé... It isn’t always comfortable to the innocent bystander, still you can laugh at their greater discomfiture. It is when you come across happy little family parties, disrobing in the open that you really feel like taking to cover. You don’t know which way to run though. If you get on a street car you are likely to encounter bare-limbed men and women.61

According to this reporter, indiscretion was rife and in every public place. Interestingly, the men ‘in various stages of dishabillé’ are not seen as a threat in this description, but rather as a source of amusement. It is in considering the family, and the relaxation of the standards to which parents should ensure that their children adhere, which causes the reporter the greatest shock. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, talking about child welfare allowed women to discuss urban problems and concerns in traditional gendered terms. Using children as a reason for concern meant that other issues, such as public decency and morality, could be addressed by women interested and involved in urban reform.

The nature of the bathing suits worn at the Fairgrounds Pool also became a contentious issue. One newspaper described the ‘loud’ and ‘fancy’ costumes many young women wore, the design of which drew attention to their bodies. Other women wore

61 “More Than 12,000 Persons a Day,” 6.
garments unsuitable for swimming, such as flimsy sundresses that clung to their bodies when wet. Some of the dresses were so light in colour that they revealed patches of skin. Catherine Horwood, writing about the same period and concerns in Britain, has demonstrated that the changes in attitudes to swimwear show the conflicting discourses of glamour and sexual appeal versus health and efficiency, and the clash between patriarchal prudery and changing public opinion and behaviour. Horwood has stated that ‘the activity of swimming was far more than merely a leisure activity and the places where it was performed became testing grounds for issues of dress, sexuality, gender and emancipation.’ This sort of freedom was not granted to everyone; in St. Louis, the contests over changing gendered attitudes and behaviours happened against the background of racial segregation.

Following the furore over the bathing costumes and the behaviour of some of the visitors, lifeguards and pool attendants at the Fairgrounds Pool were instructed by city officials to remove the most immodest swimmers from the facility. For some critics of the behaviours exhibited at the pool and the areas that surrounded it, the ejection of those swimmers was not enough; rather, they argued, all swimmers should be subject to a set standard of decency and propriety. The most vocal and active critics were a group of older women who demanded that explicit regulations should be made and rigidly enforced. Several of these ladies were so offended at the sight of some immigrant female swimmers that they marched down to City Hall to complain in person about the ‘shocking disarray in which some of our little citizens, some of them hardly Americanised, went about.’ The reference to our ‘little citizens’ suggests that the women were attempting to take a maternal, guiding, role and enforce their established position in society by identifying and criticising people who were in need of their instruction and education. Significantly, the ‘little citizens’ they criticised were apparently ‘hardly Americanised’, clearly different ethnicities were mixing in the pool but their presence in

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64 Wiltse, *Contested Waters*, 83.

65 ‘More Than 12,000 Persons a Day,” 6.
this white leisure space was probationary, if they could not accept the prescribed standards of decency and propriety they would be deemed hardly Americanised and unassimilated. This could possibly lead to their ejection and permanent exclusion from the white space of the Fairgrounds Pool.

In response to these complaints, the Recreation Commission designated Charlotte Rumbold as the ‘censor of [bathing] costumes.’ Promoting Rumbold as a monitor of decency was an extension of the social maternalism she had used as a member of the Civic League, and she established fixed regulations at the Fairgrounds Pool. It was agreed that women would not have to wear stockings at the pool, but they would be required to wear swimsuits that were dark in colour and made of thick material. Women older than fourteen were required to wear skirts over their trunks to hide their developed or just developing hips. Such regulations were made to ensure that the bathers and spectators would not be able to see the shape of a woman’s body. The stipulations for men at the Fairgrounds Pool were that their swimming suits cover their torsos and pelvic areas, and that their costumes should not be white. While male costumes were regulated they were not subjected to the same amount of concern as the ones worn by women. The restrictions placed on the age of the bathers were related to puberty and the sexual development of female bathers. This underscores that the concerns about sexual contact in leisure space was gendered and involved the monitoring of female bodies in that space. It is also related to the sense that the protection of women’s modesty in new leisure spaces needed to be protected. Due to the unique space of the Fairgrounds Pool, the facility and the swimmers who attended were a public spectacle, the admittance of ‘spectators’ underpinned the notion of observation and regulation. The dress codes were an attempt to desexualise the new leisure space. Rumbold’s regulation of swimming suits tried to ensure that the mixed-gender leisure space would continue to be possible by making it less titillating and indecent by focusing on the control of women’s clothes and bodies.

As for those travelling to the pool in their swimsuits, or those getting changed in the park, Rumbold encouraged would-be swimmers to cover up with their coats, but

66 Wiltse, Contested Waters, 83.
68 Wiltse, Contested Waters, 84.
stated that she had little power to control them. She tried to establish guidelines concerning permissible interactions between men and women where she could enforce them, which was in the pool itself. Rumbold was quoted as stating that ‘we can’t prevent men speaking with women, but any girl who is offended at being addressed by a stranger has only to call one of the guards. They will escort the man from the pool – it has already been done several times.’ Lifeguards were also instructed to remove men and women touching one another or having too much physical contact while in the water or on the ‘beach’ of Fairgrounds Pool. Boundaries between women and girls, men and women, and strangers and acquaintances had been clearer at the earlier Bath Houses, because not only had there been separation according to gender, but because the Bath Houses had served particular neighbourhoods (Figure 23). In this way some divisions according to class were clear. Class division and ethnic belonging enacted by the occupation of space was no longer the case at the Fairgrounds Pool, so the incidents of dealing with strangers not of identifiable local neighbourhoods were going to be more numerous, and, due to the gender mixing, more threatening.

Wiltse has argued that it was because city officials viewed the pool as a sexually charged public space that they excluded African Americans. When gender separation was ensured, municipal baths had been racially integrated. It was not merely a coincidence that gender integration and racial segregation occurred simultaneously. The thought of black men interacting with white women at a municipal leisure pool – where erotic voyeurism and physical contact were possible – heightened fears based on racial prejudice, and this compelled city officials to exclude African American swimmers. Fairgrounds Pool and Park was surprisingly close to the Ville and the developing Greater Ville neighbourhood, which gave many whites the sense that the leisure and residential space could be invaded or encroached upon.

The continued controversy over bodies in this leisure space suggest that some of those bodies were only provisionally deemed to be white. The debates about the swimsuits happened after segregation based on race was ensured. White space had been

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70 “Thin Bathing Suits Are Barred,” 1.
71 Wiltse, Contested Waters, 85.
72 Wiltse, Contested Waters, 86.
created before the concerns about the swimming costumes and sexualised contact were raised, which suggests that some of the concerns were about the mixing of city elites and the middle classes with the working classes and the ethnic population who were still in the process of becoming white.

Part II — Presenting the Pageant and Masque: To ‘Explain the City to Itself’

Emotional and ‘historically orientated’ stories of white achievement were presented in films such as *The Birth of a Nation*, plays, and civic celebrations.\(^7^4\) One of the narratives presented at the World’s Fair had been the celebration of American progress in a manner that obscured the historical and contemporary violence of expansion and exclusion, and made American advancement appear inevitable because of the supposed inferiority of other races and nations. In 1914 there was an event held at the same site as the World’s Fair which attempted to re-capture the social unity, civic morality, and beauty which had apparently been tangible in 1904. It also provided a narrative of white achievement and the historical inevitability of the rise of St. Louis, its municipal managers, and the prominent families of the city. This event was called the Pageant and Masque.

Following the defeat of the 1911 charter, the Civic League determined to involve as many elements of the community as possible in the drive for yet another proposed charter in 1914. The charter included calls for the municipalisation of all utilities, the introduction of a civil service board, and the districtwide assessment of boulevard improvements.\(^7^5\) Charlotte Rumbold, Luther Ely Smith, John Gundlach, and Rodger Baldwin, were supported by the Missouri Historical Society and the Businessmen’s League in their calls for a civic celebration which would encourage support for the

\(^7^3\) Charlotte Rumbold to John H. Gundlach, Luther Ely Smith and William W LaBeaume, September 16, 1913, Box 7, Saint Louis Pageant and Masque Records approximately 1910-1916, Missouri Historical Society Archives.

\(^7^4\) David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); for how performances and festivities were used to develop a common language that was then put to civic and political uses, see Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); for further types of spectacles, see Susan G. Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985).

proposed charter. The event would involve seven thousand people and it was an ambitious historical drama. The Pageant and Masque proved to be a swansong for Rumbold; after the event she made her request for equal wages as a municipal Recreation Officer which was refused by the Board of Aldermen, this prompted her decision to leave St. Louis.

The St. Louis sesquicentennial Pageant and Masque was held in Forest Park between May 28 – June 1, 1914. It has been estimated that there was 100,000 spectators each night and the production expenses of $125,000 equalled what D. W. Griffith had spent, in the same year, to make The Birth of a Nation. The pageant was paid for by subscriptions made by interested citizens and businesses also patronised the event in exchange for advertising and promotion. The event was huge, and it was presented in the great natural amphitheatre below Art Hill, sharing the same space the World’s Fair occupied a decade earlier. The Pageant and Masque was a celebration of the city’s apparently proud past in which white Anglo-American leadership was paramount. Optimism for the city’s future prosperity, in which the continuation of white racial supremacy was assured, was also stressed at the Pageant and Masque. This was done by presenting the advent of Spanish and French settlers as inevitable in the face of weak and fading Native Americans and in the way that slavery, the Civil War, and the present and future prosperity of the city was addressed.

Percy MacKaye, the New York-born dramatist and poet, was invited to create the Pageant and Masque. He sought to establish a new profession which he called ‘Dramatic Engineering’, which he hoped would implement socially conscious theatre. MacKaye argued that the problem that this new profession was designed to resolve was that ‘a great city seeks to understand itself as a social organism...A great city, in short, seeks for the first time to imagine its own origins and destiny – its life drama.’ MacKaye believed that ‘civic theatre’ would be ‘the substitution of a dynamic for a static ideal in civic

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77 Oster, “Nights of Fantasy,” 175-205; Stokes, D.W. Griffith’s, 97-98.
80 MacKaye, Saint Louis: A Civic Masque, ix-x.
celebrations.\textsuperscript{81} The Pageant and Masque in St. Louis became part of a national movement of historical pageantry, David Glassberg has explained that its ‘fervent advocates viewed it as no less than an instrument of communal transformation, able to forge a renewed sense of citizenship out of the emotional ties generated by the immediate sensation of expressive, playful, social interaction’, and that ‘its combination of elite, popular, and ethnic cultural forms depicting images of a “common” past would break down cultural and social barriers.’\textsuperscript{82} The common past depicted in St. Louis’s Pageant and Masque would be underscored by racial exclusion and the presentation of a dominant and commanding group of the city’s founding fathers and contemporary male leaders.

The masque, written and directed by MacKaye, was accompanied by the pageant, which was written by Thomas Wood Stevens. The pageant presented a potted version of St. Louis’s history. It featured the Osages, LaSalle claiming the valley for France, the city’s founders Chouteau and Laclede, the 1780 Indian attack with the usual erroneous portrayal of de Leyba, Gratiot urging loyalty to the United States, Lewis and Clark, Lafayette’s visit, the Mexican War, and Sanitary Commission nurses caring for the Civil War wounded.\textsuperscript{83} No black characters featured in the pageant’s overview of St. Louis’s past, and significant events in African American history such as the Dred Scott decision of 1857 were not mentioned. In the pageant there was little dialogue in the Civil War scenes; rather, music was played continually as crowd scenes were acted out and an image of Lincoln was presented to the people.\textsuperscript{84} The pageant ended with an exultant crowd greeting the news of peace. The pageant successfully eliminated African American contributions to the past and present city of St. Louis, and while it ensured that the city’s Spanish and French origins were honoured, the violent history of the conquest and displacement of Native Americans was barely alluded to. The central message was one of continuous prosperity made possible via the leadership of city officials and reformers.

\textsuperscript{81} MacKaye, \textit{Saint Louis: A Civic Masque}, 86.
\textsuperscript{82} Glassberg, \textit{American Historical Pageantry}, 284.
\textsuperscript{83} Primm, \textit{Lion of the Valley}, 405, Primm offers a detailed overview of all these events.
\textsuperscript{84} Saint Louis Pageant Drama Association, \textit{The Book of Words of The Pageant and Masque of Saint Louis} (St. Louis: Nixon Jones, 1914), 51-2.
One of the appeals of the pageant was that the actors could play their own ancestors. Former Mayor Rolla Wells’s daughters took part in the pageant, as did Jean-Pierre Chouteau’s descendants. This served to underline the rightful place of affluent white elites in the city and in its history. The pageant was a tangible way for citizens to link their physical bodies to a performance of the city’s past. Involvement in the event could be used as supposed evidence that second and third generation Germans, Swedish, French, and Spanish citizens were an essential part of the fabric of the city because they were able to claim, and demonstrate, their ancestors’ connections with the city from its very formation. Through their involvement in the event the terms of whiteness was expanded to include second-generation immigrant families to encompass who belonged in the past, present, and future of the city. This was a cynical attempt to garner emotional connection with the redevelopment of the city and the concept of the common good, to ensure that more people voted in favour of the proposed charter renewal.

There was another way for citizens to inscribe themselves into the city’s past and present made available at the Pageant and Masque. To raise money the organisers established the ‘Sons and Daughters of St. Louis’, which was a roll of native St. Louisans; by paying twenty-five cents St. Louisans could sign and submit histories of their relationship with the local past (Figure 25 and Figure 26). The involvement in the registry required little cost and effort, so it encouraged cross-class involvement. The working class and second-generation ethnic citizens could literally stamp their belonging on the contemporary city and mark it for posterity. The registry became a written record of what the ephemeral event of the Pageant and Masque had tried to convey, the message of which had been the apparent historical inevitability of the belonging of particular people in the city of St. Louis and its future prosperity. The registry offered a

85 Saint Louis Pageant Drama Association, The Book of Words, 30-31. Jean-Pierre Chouteau had been a French Creole fur trader, merchant, politician, and slaveholder. He was an early settler of St. Louis and became one of its most prominent citizens.

86 Saint Louis Pageant Drama Association, The Book of Words, 26-27. For example, local members of the Swedish National Society took part as Swedish settlers, hunters and trappers.

87 In St. Louis there was further ancestor worship in the yearly rite of the Veiled Prophet Parade and Ball, which was attended by the city’s white elite and was dedicated to bizarre origin myths to account for their supremacy. This event had racial and ethnic undertones, as well as being an exercise in class-based power, for more on the history and reception of the Veiled Prophet, see Thomas M. Spencer, The St. Louis Veiled Prophet Celebration: Power on Parade, 1877-1995 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000).

88 Oster, “Nights of Fantasy,” 177.
sense of a long-established chain of occupation of and participation in the city space. Interestingly, after the Pageant and Masque the Sons and Daughters of St. Louis Registry became the property of the Missouri Historical Society and is still used today for genealogical research.

![Sons and Daughters of St. Louis Registration Card for Mrs Clinton Parish Headly, nee Emily Yomes, 1914](image1)

Figure 25. ‘Pageant and Masque of St. Louis Registration Card for Mrs Clinton Parish Headly, nee Emily Yomes, 1914,’ Box 8, Saint Louis Pageant and Masque Records approximately 1910-1916, Missouri Historical Society Archives.

![Figure 26. ‘Registration Card for Mrs Clinton Parish Headly, nee Emily Yomes, 1914,’. Included is detail of her settler grandfather and the journey he took to get there (via the Erie Canal, then stage coach), and that the site where he built a house is now home to the new Municipal Court Building. This inscribes family history into the city’s history and the built environment.](image2)

White performers presented themselves as Indians and as Spanish Slaves. Grace Elizabeth Hale has made the astute argument that crossing boundaries between the
races could be a form of maintaining them, so by ‘containing the mobility of others’, which occurred in St. Louis in leisure and residential spaces, ‘allowed whites to put on black face, to play with and project upon darkness, to let whiteness float free’. Not only could those involved in the pageant play their ancestors, they could also play different ethnicities, and such performances underscored white superiority in St. Louis’s past, present, and presumed future. Safely categorised as white, performers could pretend or play at being Indians. By playing an enslaved Spaniard the apparent ‘natural’ freedom of Anglo-Saxon whiteness could be underscored. Crucially, no African American slaves featured in the historical pageant. This was another way to contribute to the further erasure of African American contribution to the city and its past prosperity.

Figure 27. ‘Pageant and Masque with Male Cast Dressed as Natives,’ Pageant and Masque of St. Louis, Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Prints Collection. The performers in this photograph are semi-clad and used body paint, their long hair further marks the difference between the performers and those they are portraying. They are carrying bows and arrows as a mark of violence but also as primitive tools.

Following the pageant, MacKaye’s masque was a visual and aural spectacular presenting depictions of nature and the human spirit, alongside ‘persons symboliz[ing]

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forces of geography and history past and present.’ MacKaye had been intrigued by St. Louis’s ‘Mound City’ nickname and he had visited the then little-appreciated Cahokia Mounds, the site of a pre-Columbian Native American city, and he was so impressed that he put the mound-builders at the centre of the gigantic masque. Individuals represented Cahokia, Mississippi, Saint Louis, the Pioneer, Gold (who is the villain) and his minions War and Poverty; each character was a kind of essence or spirit. Cahokia began the masque with a reflection on past glory and a premonition of his death, which played into ideas about the inevitability of the Native American surrender and displacement by colonial powers and the formation of the United States of America. The mighty Mississippi enters carrying a small white child, to which Cahokia chanted ‘Old! Old! I am old! But he is young; ah, he is stripling, bold and wildly fair: My dream is a strong child, and shall restore me!’ The wild forces of nature then threaten the child, but he is saved by a host of Frenchmen and Spaniards. The child grows up to become Saint Louis.

Saint Louis then faced the destructive Gold, ‘the master and maker of men’. First, he chooses the Pioneer to wrestle Gold, and then came immigrants singing ‘Give welcome to the World Adventurers, [w]ho come to blend their blood and toil with yours.’ The World Adventurers are garbed in the native costumes of all nations; ‘prominent among them on horseback, ride five masked figures, symbolic of Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Ocean Islands’ and as they take their places ‘Europe towers highest from amongst them.’ The masque clearly ordered ethnicities in a hierarchy which was acted out on stage. Furthermore, the World Adventurers from Africa appear to have come to America by choice, rather than through enslavement. The history of nation and the city were sanitised and purposefully mis-remembered in the masque.

In the masque, the World Adventurers and the Pioneer struggle to battle Gold and his forces of War and Poverty. Saint Louis then calls upon the League of Cities to assist in the struggle. The League comes forward with its battalions of Industry, Science, the Professions, and the Arts, the last including the Playgrounds, Dance, and the Civic

92 Saint Louis Pageant Drama Association, The Book of Words, 68.
93 Saint Louis Pageant Drama Association, The Book of Words, 90-93.
94 Saint Louis Pageant Drama Association, The Book of Words, 90.
Theatre. With Gold, War, and Poverty defeated Saint Louis and the League of Cities closed the Pageant and Masque with the triumphant chorus, ‘Out of the formless void, Beauty and order are born: one for all, all in one. We wheel in the joy of our dance. Brother with brother, sharing our light, Build we new worlds with ancient fire!’ This piece of civic theatre placed the upcoming charter election in the context of a dramatic reiteration of the city’s grand history. Furthermore, such a history was established on a readily understandable set of racial and ethnic hierarchies, with Anglo-American whiteness at its pinnacle.

Progressive activity was tied up with the themes covered in the Pageant and Masque. A Conference of Cities was held in connection with the event at the Wednesday Club auditorium in May 1914. The women of the Wednesday Club were given a traditional role as gentile and refined hostesses. Official envoys from twenty-eight different cities across the United States attended, as did St. Louis’s Mayor Henry Kiel, former Mayor Rolla Wells, President of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition David Francis, chief landscape architect of the World’s Fair George Edward Kessler, the President of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs St. Louis’s own Mrs Philip N. Moore, and various members of the Civic League. In discussing the benefits of pageants, the New York envoy Henry Bruere stressed its ‘humanizing undertaking.’ He went on to state that ‘you cannot humanize government through icy reformers. We have learned that in New York. We have also learned that there is as much in the way you do a thing as in what you do. The art of government in a great city such as St. Louis or New York is to do what you have to do in a friendly, neighborly way.’ Pageants and civic theatre advertised the work of urban reformers and Progressives, and sought to ensure popular support for their projects. New forms of entertainment were used to stress the message of beautification and civic revitalisation and pride.

96 Saint Louis Pageant Drama Association, The Book of Words, 104.
97 Sandweiss, St. Louis: The Evolution, 208.
100 Bruere, “Humanizing City Government,” 35.
Reformers wanted to continue to be visible in these novel forms of entertainment and education, just as they had been in McKaye’s masque. The League of Cities had been represented by those from the Eastern Sea (represented by New York), the Western Sea (San Francisco), the Lakes (Chicago), the Rivers (New Orleans), the Mountains (Denver), the Islands (Honolulu), and the Capitol (Washington), and had gone on to defeat the villain of the piece.\textsuperscript{101} MacKaye had invoked many symbols and ideas in his work: the golden age of the garden (Cahokia); the triumph of good over evil; the doctrine of progress; and the heavenly city of eighteenth-century philosophers.\textsuperscript{102} With love and unity, the League of Cities had helped to establish a just and beautiful society, under the leadership of the figure of St. Louis. In the Pageant and Masque the city’s deep, if little understood, history had been used to create an idealised image of historic unity and paternalistic well-being.\textsuperscript{103}

However, the consequences of the charter vote which took place after the Pageant and Masque reveal how much white citizens clung to and used the mirage of unity and assured historic destiny based on race. This was because the charter allowed residential segregation measures to be introduced in St. Louis.

\textbf{Part III – The 1914 Charter and Segregation Tactics}

The 1914 charter election was delayed until after the civic celebrations were finished. Rodger Baldwin credited the ‘great democratic civic pageant and masque’ with having assured victory in the charter election held a few weeks after the event. Baldwin’s evaluation ignored the fact that the charter had only narrowly passed: thirteen of the city’s twenty-eight wards – concentrated, rather predictably, on the affluent white central and western neighbourhoods – had voted in favour, and the charter was passed with just fifty-one percent of the votes cast.\textsuperscript{104} Some major concessions marked the difference between the 1911 charter and the one passed in 1914; the introduction of initiative was the means by which a petition signed by ten per cent of the registered

\textsuperscript{101} Saint Louis Pageant Drama Association, \textit{The Book of Words}, 100-101.
\textsuperscript{102} Primm, \textit{Lion in the Valley}, 406.
\textsuperscript{103} Sandweiss, \textit{St. Louis: The Evolution}, 208-9.
\textsuperscript{104} “Charter Passed,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, July 1, 1914, 2.
voters could bring about a public vote (referendum) on a proposed statute or constitutional amendment; and recall would allow voters to remove an elected official from office through a direct vote before that official’s term had ended. Possibilities for initiative, referendum and recall appeased some reformers who had been worried about centralised decision-making and the growing and unchecked power of the Mayor’s office. The kind of new features apparent in the 1914 charter were supported and proposed by many Progressives in St. Louis and across other cities in the United States. Mechanisms of initiative and referendum were popular because they were believed to be processes that could check corrupt politicians and ensure that issues reformers and voters in the wards cared about were discussed by the legislative body.

Segregationists quickly realised the implications of the initiative legislation, and mobilised support for the charter to push this through. Progressive policy and practice, alongside the rhetoric of urban reformers, could be hijacked and used by interest groups. Perhaps this is an unintended consequence of Progressive thinking and activity, however in purposefully ignoring African Americans in their plans and their descriptions and prescriptions of the common good Progressives in St. Louis encouraged and (potentially) unwittingly promoted segregationist rhetoric and policies.

Neighbourhood associations had organised into the United Welfare Association (UWA) in 1911. In the letterhead of the UWA a list of organisations that supported the movement was included, among them were: the Central West Improvement Association, Forest Park Residents’ Association, and Tower Grove Heights Improvement Association. These organisations served the affluent neighbourhoods found around the city’s great parks. Furthermore, the North St. Louis Business Men’s Association, the North St. Louis Improvement Association, and the North-West St. Louis Improvement Association also supported the UWA, these organisations served the interests of the Fairgrounds neighbourhood and surrounding areas. They were keen to ensure that the property prices of houses near the recently incorporated Fairgrounds Park and new swimming pool were retained, and they believed this could be done by segregation in both residential and leisure spaces.

Emboldened by the charter’s new initiative, referendum, and recall legislation, the UWA began a persistent campaign for a segregation ordinance. The Municipal Assembly had repeatedly rejected calls for such an legislation to be passed, so the UWA circulated an initiative petition in early 1915.106 The petition was to enact ‘an ordinance to prevent ill feeling, conflict and collision between white and colored races’ by requiring ‘the use of separate blocks for residence’.107 Once a block had been determined as ‘white’ or ‘colored’, through the occupation of 75 percent of the houses by either race, it was to stay that way.108 By the end of the summer 1915, the UWA had obtained the signatures of the ten percent of the registered voters required for the petition, and the referendum which would determine whether the segregationist measures would become law was set for February 29, 1916.

The UWA set out to clearly define who was white and who belonged to the ‘colored race’. These efforts were set against the controversy and contention of the Fairgrounds Pool segregation and the accompanying tensions around the acknowledgment of ethnic differences, and the historical interpretation which promoted Anglo-American stewardship of St. Louis in the Pageant and Masque. Definitions of whiteness became more concrete in the approach taken by the UWA, as it was based on skin colour and the pre-existing occupation of city space. The UWA sought to define racial difference by occupation of city space and by the support of ordinances that would set out legal definitions of that space.

In its campaign for segregation legislation the UWA claimed that it was not prejudiced, for it sought only the greatest good for the greatest number by protecting property values. Not only had the UWA used Progressive legislation in the form of the initiative, it had also captured Progressive rhetoric. By claiming to be concerned with and for the greatest number of people, the UWA adapted the social languages of Progressive

106 “Initiative Petition for Control of Mixed Blocks Occupied by Both White and Colored People, 1915,” Race Relations Collection 1914-1970, Missouri Historical Society Archives. St. Louis’s circumstances were unusual, due to the popular initiative feature.
107 If a person was found to have violated the provisions of the proposed ordinance, they would be guilty of a misdemeanour and be charged not less than $5 and not more than $50 per day of the continued violation, see “An Ordinance for Preserving Peace, Preventing Conflict and Ill Feeling Between the White and Colored Races in the City of St. Louis,” Segregation Scrapbook, Segregation, Missouri Historical Society Library.
groups such as the Civic League, the City Club, and the Million Population club. The UWA was also not beyond hijacking debates over Progressive plans to push its segregationist agenda. Another subject that was up for election following the use of initiative legislation was the long-held Progressive wish for a Central Traffic Parkway, which would create a continuous, landscaped vista from the evolving public buildings group at Twelfth Street and West to a projected plaza at Grand Avenue (Figure 28). In part, it was designed to improve access between downtown and the affluent West End and had been defeated in 1911 due to the sense among South Side and North Side voters that it was only for the benefit of the elite in the Central West End. The City Plan Commission, the Civic League, and the Business Men’s League backed the Central Parkway proposal primarily because of its commercial efficacy, it was designed to give quicker access to downtown, the civic buildings such as city hall, the court house, and the riverfront, which they hoped would one day be redeveloped and beautified. However, South Side residents opposed being made to pay, by means of a public bond issue, for an improvement that held no apparent benefit for their neighbourhoods. The Parkway would also entail selective clearances of land, the width of which extended from Chestnut Street South to Market Street, which was where many poor African Americans lived. The UWA seized the opportunity for fearmongering and warned St. Louisans that ‘some 15,000 negroes who now live in the [Parkway] district will be forced to find other quarters, and some of them may move next to you.’ The Parkway proposal was defeated in June 1915; predictably it was approved by West End wards and crushed on the South Side. The UWA had learnt a valuable lesson, fearmongering worked.

109 St. Louis City Plan Association, St. Louis Central Traffic-Parkway (St. Louis: St. Louis City Plan Association, 1912); for discussion on the debate about this issue, see Sandweiss, St. Louis: The Evolution, 209-212.
110 Wayne Wheeling to William K. Bixby, February 5, 1915; the one-quarter African American ward in which the improvements were scheduled to be made actually voted in favour of the project for fear of the political consequences of being perceived as opposing civic betterment, for further detail, see Edward C. Rafferty, “Orderly City, Orderly Lives: The City Beautiful Movement in St. Louis,” Gateway Heritage 19, no. 4 (Spring 1999): 56-57.
During the campaign for segregation 23 of the 28 aldermen and Mayor Kiel publicly aired their views against segregation. Once the initiative was passed and the referendum set, they also used several delaying tactics. The aldermen refused to appropriate funds to hold the referendum and in return the UWA threatened them with recall. The new provision meant that if 20 percent of the voters agreed then recall could be instigated. Felix P. Lawrence, the President of the UWA, purposely targeted aldermen who were starting new terms of office in order to make opposing the UWA’s demands more of a risk. Although the aldermen claimed they were ‘not “bluffed” by [this] threat’ the ‘measure appropriating $73,285 met no dissenting vote.’ The efforts made by politicians proved half-hearted, and the UWA had successfully utilised some of the Progressive measures included in the 1914 Charter to ensure that the referendum took place.

111 Primm, Lion of the Valley, 412.
The UWA promoted the initiative and the subsequent referendum through the publication and distribution of its magazine, *The Home Defender*. The magazine was aimed at less affluent whites who were seeking more systematic and secure spatial arrangements. *The Home Defender* was a subscription magazine created and edited by local white supremacist and secretary of the UWA, Wayne E. Wheeling, and was circulated throughout 1915. No other authors were listed in the magazine so it may have solely been written by Wheeling. Few advertisements appeared in the magazine and the ones that did related to home maintenance and garbage pails. These worked to underscore the message that *The Home Defender* was purely interested in maintaining and protecting the value of the reader’s property. This was a ruse. Every article, editorial, and ‘letter’ printed served to stress the message that racial segregation was not only desirable but essential for the future prosperity of St. Louis and every citizen whether white or black.

The UWA collected signatures of support for the segregation ordinance outside movie theatres which were showing *The Birth of a Nation*. A puzzle was included in several issues of *The Home Defender* which encouraged readers to cut out the shapes and make the letter ‘H’ (standing for Home). This puzzle was then to be submitted to the theatres’ box offices in the hope of winning a cash prize (Figure 29). It was a means by which to get more people to subscribe to the magazine and to receive propaganda about the forthcoming referendum. The words on the puzzle are also instructive; it states that the UWA, and its supporters, are ‘not oppressors’ but ‘protectors.’ It advised against using ‘abusive language’ or to ‘use race prejudice’ in debates about the segregation ordinances. Clearly, the UWA wanted to appear mild mannered and even handed, even though their racial prejudices were anything but. The leisure space of the movie theatre was co-opted by the UWA to gather support for their residential segregation proposals. Furthermore, they sought to capitalise on the publicity *The Birth of a Nation* had generated and to use the racist messages in the film to underscore their rhetoric.

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From the first issue onwards, Wheeling was at pains to stress that *The Home Defender* was ‘NOT [part of] a campaign of oppression or persecution, but IS a campaign IN DEFENSE OF THE HOME’. The name of the magazine stressed the home, and that it should and would be protected by subscribing to the racist rhetoric within. Wheeling claimed that the home (which, he argued, was the bedrock of stability of both the state and the nation) needed to be defended against the ‘enormous depreciation of home values’ which would occur if African Americans moved into white neighbourhoods, and against the ‘consequent ill feeling, conflicts, violence and riots’ which would also follow changes in residency. The recourse to violence, or the threat thereof, had long been a tactic of white supremacists, and by linking this to financial losses Wheeling’s argument only became more persuasive. In one instalment, he stated ominously, ‘perhaps you do not think that your neighbourhood will be invaded. Neither do you believe you are going to have a fire when you pay fire insurance. While perhaps you have not been affected by this class of people coming into your neighbourhood, you surely want protection against this growing danger which is more menacing than fire or the elements’. Supporting segregation was being likened to a form of insurance for the homeowner’s future financial and physical well-being. The Civic League, in its various city plans, had tried to encourage in charter voters a concern for the city’s future, and they did this to justify the

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expense of those plans on the public purse; the UWA were justifying its recourse to segregation in a similar fashion by stressing that it was for the future benefit of the individual voter and the protection of the city.  

Wheeling attempted to bolster his fearmongering about the financial detriment which would occur if the ordinance was rejected by stating that, due to ‘the reduced assessments of these depreciated properties’, there would follow ‘an enormous loss to ALL tax payers of St. Louis’. This claim was designed to appeal to those who were not yet property-owners, but who wanted to be, and to inhabitants of neighbourhoods which consisted largely of renters who apparently would nonetheless feel the financial burden that continued racial integration would bring. This idea not only appealed to aspiring homeowners, it also helped to create a feeling amongst poorer whites that voting for segregation was the only way to become richer and to have continued access to municipal utilities. Lawrence made clear who the UWA was appealing to in a statement during the referendum campaign, in which he said ‘this is a fight for the white homes of the white people, the plain people, the thrifty, frugal, self-denying and saving class of our population.’ Such appeals to aspiring property owners, and the working class were mired in some of the myths of America – that in the meritocratic land of opportunity anyone (even those who had newly arrived in the country and who currently lived in the poorest parts of the city) could eventually own a home in a nicer part of the city. This is, of course, a particularly white vision, borne of freedom of movement unhindered by de facto or de jure racial restrictions. Whiteness was being inscribed by Wheeling and Lawrence on both the built environment and geographies of the imagination.

A further tactic Wheeling used in *The Home Defender* was to write about the ‘invasion of negroes’ that would be witnessed in neighbourhoods once one family had moved in. *The Home Defender* regularly included the same letter, which was purported to be from ‘a VICTIM of NEGRO Invasion’ but could well have been written by Wheeling himself. In this letter the author states ‘I have heard them say that they know they can

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go into Westminster Place and West Pine Blvd. but they now aim, through a white go-between to purchase homes in Park View etc.'

Park View was an affluent part of the city, and it would have been an aspiration for working-class whites to live there. By claiming that African Americans would soon be living in that area, the social order and long-established patterns of residency according to class and race would appear, to readers of *The Home Defender*, to be under threat. The magazine’s editorial claimed that the only recourse to protect the prospects of aspiring whites was to vote for segregation. The vilification of a white go-between mentioned in the letter (reminiscent of the ‘negro clubhouse’ controversy discussed in Chapter One), whose actions would undermine the patterns and aspirations of residency based on class, further worked to enforce the idea that white homeowners, and aspiring homeowners, should be unified in their discrimination to ensure their continued ‘protection’ and prosperity.

Frustrated lower middle-class and working-class whites sought ways to reassert authority over African Americans through urban geography; having worked to gain access to more affluent areas, white residents would want to keep those parts of the city racially exclusive. In the same letter from ‘a VICTIM of NEGRO Invasion’, the author states that ‘the negro has moved into the West End, but he has not adopted the West End manners or methods of living, but has brought the slum way of living with him’, and went on to state that ‘they are noisy, destructive, improvident, lacking in modesty and indifferent to sanitary rules. In other words, although they have moved among the whites they continue to live like “niggers,” nor do they care to change’.

Middle-class whites could lay claim to ‘manners’ and behaviours which they related to certain parts of the city, which they denied African Americans could have even if they tried to live in those areas. In this way, place becomes race; slums were seen as a creation and reflection of innate behavioural traits and mentalities which were exclusive only to African Americans, rather than a consequence of chronic under-investment based on racial discrimination and segregation.

The author of the letter from ‘a VICTIM of NEGRO Invasion’, claimed that, because the windows were open in the summer and because ‘their voices are naturally
loud’, they had overheard conversations among the ‘negro residents’ who had swiftly
‘invaded’ the street.125 It was in these conversations, the author claimed, that African
Americans stated that equal rights for them meant ‘residence and social rights, even
going as far as INTERMARRIAGE WITH THE WHITE RACE’ (capitals in original).126 Fear of
inter-racial sexual relations had long been a keystone of the white segregationist
mentality. Segregationists used social equality as a cypher for sexual relations, and in this
case capital letters were used to stress the concern around sexual contact. By reporting
this as an overheard conversation, the magazine not only suggested that physical space
was being taken over by African Americans, because they were within hearing distance,
but that they had a secret agenda to equate their occupation of white residential
territory with white sexual preserves. The ‘conversation’ was also being used to spell out
every white supremacist’s belief and fear, that every black man wanted to have sexual
intercourse with white women.

The protection of white women from supposedly predatory black men had long
been touted, particularly in the South, as the justification for white supremacy. It was a
popular trope as evidenced in the handling of sexuality and sexual threat based on race
in The Birth of a Nation. In The Home Defender, it is widows, white women without male
protection, who are discussed. But rather than claiming they were distressed because of
potential physical and sexual assaults, Wheeling related their unhappiness to their
property and financial concerns. He stated that ‘we have the name of one unfortunate
woman who is today a raving maniac in one of our local institutions as a result of the loss
from depreciation due to negro invasion of a considerable fortune that was left her when
she was widowed.’127 The message was clear: segregation would protect property prices,
and the fragile minds of vulnerable white women. The level of involvement of women in
the UWA or in its associated neighbourhood associations is unclear, but the language in
The Home Defender points to how essential assumptions about race combined with
gender were in conversations about residential segregation and the apparent protection
(both sexual and economic) it would offer to white St. Louisans.

125 “A VICTIM,” 5-6.
126 “A VICTIM,” 5-6.
A tortuous logic, or rather illogic, was presented in *The Home Defender*, which claimed that it would be better for African American communities if they were segregated into particular residential areas. A letter purportedly sent by an African American man, entitled ‘A Coloured Man on Segregation’, appeared in *The Home Defender* which described the ‘peaceful resignation’ which would occur because ‘if the majority says in the election we must not move into white blocks we will obey’. The letter also stated that it would be beneficial as segregation would make the black community become more ‘self-reliant and energetic’. This letter played into pre-existing racial stereotypes, from the docile and resigned African American man who would obey white orders, to an African American community which would apparently only thrive under white instruction. In the logic of *The Home Defender*, only whites could save the black community by segregating it.

The referendum took place at the end of February 1916. The segregation ordinances were passed by a two-thirds majority which was a vote of 52,220 to 17,877. These measures were the first segregation laws ever enacted anywhere by popular initiative petition. Only the wards with large African American populations rejected the ordinance. Promises of support to prevent segregation by many white voters and politicians had dissolved and clearly whites had voted in their own self-interest. The creation of whiteness was in part based on the occupation of space, and now it was secured by legislation. Areas on the edge of African Americans neighbourhoods had voted eight to one for segregation, and the elite western wards voted four to one. In those German wards where socialism was strongest, the eighth and 9th, the margins were held to less than two to one. The ‘foreign white races’ as Lawrence had described them, had chosen to enforce their whiteness through their

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128 “Negro Will be Benefited,” *The Home Defender*, August 28, 1915, 3-5. A similar argument was made in the run-up to the election that would decide if the segregation ordinances were to be made law, see “Declares Mingling of Races Socially is Cruel to Negro,” *St. Louis Republic*, February 8, 1916, 2.
130 “A Colored Man on Segregation,” 12
131 It also serves as a reminder of why respectability was of paramount consideration to African American reformers, for further discussion, see Chapter Four.
132 Primm, *Lion in the Valley*, 413.
133 Primm, *Lion in the Valley*, 413.
support for segregation ordinances. Now they were classified as white they would seek to protect and defend it.

Conclusion

The imposition of the segregation ordinances was short-lived. The African American community rallied against them and launched a battle to get the ordinances reversed. Federal Judge D.P Dyer issued a temporary injunction against them in April 1916. After the Supreme Court declared a similar Louisville ordinance unconstitutional, Dyer made the injunction permanent in March 1918. However, the victory over the segregation ordinance rang hollow, because it was of little practical use. The rapid spread of private restrictive covenants against selling houses to African Americans effectively hemmed the community in to certain parts of the city.

Over the following decades, whites in St. Louis and other cities felt the pull to the suburbs created by public subsidies for the development of the urban fringe, and were also propelled by the push generated by their fears of race wars and further ‘invasions’ of ‘their’ space. Real estate sharks leapt at the chance to ‘blockbust’ stable white neighbourhoods through panic-selling. African Americans, meanwhile, were left with devalued and deteriorating property, which perpetuated the perception held by some whites that African Americans depreciated property values and lacked the correct manners and mentalities to create a stable and thriving community. In a market driven by perceptions, African Americans were left with few options (Figure 30).

134 “Denies Segregation May Be Extended to Alien-Born Whites,” newspaper cutting (untitled and undated), Segregation Scrapbook, Segregation, Missouri Historical Society Library, St. Louis.

135 Colin E. Gordon, Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 84-87.
Neighbourhoods so clearly and legally segregated by race had not always been the case in St. Louis. Class and ethnic divisions had been a significant feature of the housing and neighbourhoods which developed in St. Louis in the mid-nineteenth century. The marking and monitoring of class distinctions were reflected in the appropriation and uses of city spaces, as evident in the city’s ‘Private Places’. Race eventually seems to have trumped class as the main, if not the only, consideration in segregated leisure spaces, housing restrictions, and neighbourhood containments. The process had involved a reworking and expansion of whiteness to include the not insignificant ethnic populations as numbers of African American citizens steadily rose throughout the early twentieth century in St. Louis. White leisure and residential spaces were eventually defined and protected in the early decades of the twentieth century by recourse to racial, rather than class and ethnic differences.
Conclusion

‘In Order That the City Might Become Something of a Satisfactory Economic and Social Entity’: Zoning and Further Attempts to Determine City Space

In 1918 Harland Bartholomew produced *Zoning for St. Louis: A Fundamental Part of the City Plan* for the City Plan Commission. The City Plan Commission, an offshoot of the Civic League, had become an officially recognised part of the municipal machinery. In this report Bartholomew explained what zoning would mean for the city. Zoning would determine the types of activity and land use permissible in parts of the city; the zones would therefore officially create specific areas for residential and industrial use. Bartholomew believed that by controlling the height and area of buildings, along with the uses of property in particular districts of St. Louis, the common good of the city would be served. Like the Civic League before him, Bartholomew attempted to capture notions of public benefit to curb what he identified as private interests. In a further similarity to the League, Bartholomew associated that public good with taxable earning power and business expansion. Thus, under Bartholomew, practical Progressive planning in St. Louis continued to face internal contradictions related to the reduction of freedoms enjoyed by businesses combined with the desire for the growth of those businesses to serve the needs and ambitions of the city and its boosters.

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1 Harland Bartholomew, “Zoning. The Best and Cheapest Investment a City Can Make,” September 22, 1920, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Collection, Series 10, Box 1, Folder 1, University Archives, Washington University, St. Louis.

2 Harland Bartholomew, *Zoning for St. Louis: A Fundamental Part of the City Plan* (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1918), 2, 16.
For Bartholomew, zoning had two aims, the first was ‘the deliberate and conscious control of public property such as the streets, parks, playgrounds and the public buildings, and incidentally of all means of transportation and traffic movement’, and the second was ‘the control of private property to such an extent as is necessary to conserve the general welfare of the community.’ He believed that some urban property had to have restrictions placed on its use in order to keep the various functions of land separate, regulated, and predictable. Joseph Heathcott has argued that ‘as a reformer and Progressive civil servant, Bartholomew was intellectually prone to view land in antiliberal terms; that is to perceive land not as infinitely partible and autonomous, but rather as part of a broader moral system.’ So, for Bartholomew and fellow Progressives, ‘a justifiable use of police power’ to zone certain urban areas was acceptable because they believed it was in the interests of the general welfare of the city and its citizens.

Much of the private land Bartholomew studied and admired was already under different kinds of land use agreements; the exclusive ‘Private Places’ of St. Louis in the

3 Bartholomew, Zoning, 5.
5 Bartholomew, Zoning, 17.
Central West End and areas to the west of Forest Park had long relied on agreed terms of
development and restriction among neighbours. Furthermore, as the *Shelley v. Kraemer*
case of 1948 revealed, neighbourhood covenants and gentleman’s agreements had been
in place from at least 1911 in some parts of St. Louis. Federal Judge Dyer’s permanent
injunction against the segregation ordinances of 1916 did not stop the practice of
restrictions of house sales based on race, rather it continued much as it had done before
in an unofficial manner not laid out in law.6

Bartholomew’s zoning proposals largely codified the types of activities that were
already happening in the space he studied. As outlined in Figure 31 the proposed areas
for unrestricted, and therefore industrial use, were placed on top of pre-existing
industrial areas. By zoning in this manner Bartholomew sought to preserve the enclaves
already established for purely residential use, and these areas were mainly found close to
the city’s parks: Forest Park; Tower Grove Park; the Botanical Gardens; and Fairgrounds
Park. Bartholomew’s zoning laws were to the benefit of rich homeowners in the city who,
once again, used Progressive rhetoric about the public good and supported legislation to
ensure and protect the price and seclusion of their private property.

Bartholomew’s zoning plans also took into consideration the rapid rise in car
ownership and what effect that would have on the city and its development. He sought
to improve traffic circulation by widening roads and creating thoroughfares and
parkways. Bartholomew claimed that such improvements would help eliminate
congestion. Concerns about congestion proved to be a way for Bartholomew and
Associates to address both the crowded living conditions in mixed residential and
industrial areas and the busy central roads in the city. The decades-long consequence of
Bartholomew’s insistence that both kinds of congestion could be dealt with via zoning
combined with his emphasis on single-family residential patterns created highly
profitable suburban enclaves. This type of planning when combined with New Deal
funding for the development of St. Louis county in the 1930s had devastating effects on
the city of St. Louis. Bartholomew’s centralised planning assisted the process of white

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6 “Anti-Negro Realty Pacts Held Unenforceable,” *St. Louis Star-Times*, May 5, 1948, 1. The Supreme Court
held that the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits a state from enforcing restrictive covenants, see Jeffrey D.
Gonda, *Unjust Deeds: The Restrictive Covenant Cases and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel
flight which happened once white homeowners moved further west and left the city. The period this thesis has studied pre-dates this process, when city space and the public good (as they understood it) was still fiercely protected and co-opted by white homeowners.

Figure 32. City Plan Commission, Zone Plan, 50. Bartholomew criticised multiple-family tenements. In this criticism there is both class and ethnic prejudice as poor immigrant families often lived in multiple-family homes. Unfortunately, the street featured in the photograph is not named, but along with a collection of other photographs this image was intended to show how rampant unplanned development was to the detriment of whole neighbourhoods. This disorder, Bartholomew argued, was why zoning regulations and restrictions were necessary.

Bartholomew's zoning ordinance number 30,199 was approved by the Municipal Assembly on June 28, 1918. As Bartholomew liked to boast, St. Louis's measure was only the second comprehensive zoning ordinance in the country, coming after that put into place by New York City in 1916. However, ordinance 30,199 was never enacted. It was immediately challenged in court by business interests in the city and was struck down by the state Supreme Court in November 1923. Zoning in St. Louis was eventually put into
place in July 1925, when the state legislature passed an enabling act. Bartholomew, like earlier Progressives in St. Louis, faced long and bitter battles over definitions of private and public space, the interests therein, and what those spaces represented.

Zoning efforts were among many examples of city planners manipulating actual city space and attempting to manage its meaning. Zoning reconceptualised land as a bundle of rights which were shared between owners and the public domain. Through zoning the city could use its regulatory and police powers to shape and control uses of space, the value and values of that space, and the human experience that took place there. Zoning was, apparently, another attempt to manage and maintain the wider social good in St. Louis. This thesis addresses several civic groups, women’s groups, and interest groups that also tried to change and manage the city’s space. They too claimed they wanted to do this for the greater good of the city’s present and future citizens. These groups found that there were many ways to mark the boundaries of space, to determine the activity that goes on within it, and consequently define those places. Those definitions, in turn, marked and influenced the ways that social categories were described, enacted, and put into flux or stasis. Determining who or what belongs in a particular place was, and is, a political act. Place does not necessarily have to be enforced by legislation such as zoning ordinances, because as this thesis has argued, it can be done through the description of that place and the people in it, and through the experience of living there.

The way in which descriptions of places and spaces, and of certain activities that took place there, helped to determine definitions of race, ethnicity, class, and gender has been explored in this thesis to highlight the reciprocal nature of social categories and constructions of space. It has used texts like The Home Defender, the Civic Bulletin, and the Housing Conditions of St. Louis to investigate how white supremacists, Progressives, and reform-minded New Women thought about city space and how they used it to reflect their ideas about ideal cities, what they should look like, and who belonged there.

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Civic celebrations like the Pageant and Masque and the 1904 World’s Fair also expressed notions of ideal spaces and ideal citizens. Built environments such as the Model City exhibit, the White City and the Pike, and the Fairgrounds Park swimming pool conveyed ideas about belonging and exclusion through the design and definition of that space. Yet, human agency could and would shape the meanings of such spaces and places. White clubwomen, African American clubwomen, and beauty culture entrepreneurs attempted to redefine concepts of gender, race, respectability, and the definition of political action through their activities in the city space of St. Louis.

This thesis has argued that the occupation and use of place, and the descriptions of its meaning, intersect with social categories of race, ethnicity, gender and class. It also argues that Progressivism was further divided by gender and race, and that this offered both opportunities and restrictions for white and African American female reformers. The move towards expertise, efficiency, and professionalism in city planning and urban reform required a combination of business and political interests to bolster visions of masculine superiority in municipal management. Women’s involvement had been central to an understanding of the requirements of the changing city, however they were eventually curtailed. The intersection of race with gender meant that some opportunities not available to white women were created by African American women who worked within their segregated space to improve their communities and shape notions of racial uplift and respectability. The curtailment, containment, and continued potential of female visions of city space and activities within it would go on to encourage further gender specific action: white women would eventually turn to battles over suffrage and prohibition and relate that to the need to shape and improve the management and condition of the urban sphere. African American women would also work towards suffrage and the dismantling of segregation in debates about the common good in the city and they would play an essential part of the early civil rights movement.9

Progressive urban reformers found that the argument for the common good of the city was not easily made or won. The Civic League often used calls for making the city more harmonious and symmetrical to garner support for their plans. These plans were

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rejected by voters in 1911 because they were seen to have little to do with the wider city population and were thought by many voters to serve to bolster the spatial and social privileges of wealthy citizens. In effect, the reforms proposed by the Civic League and the later City Plan Commission had little effect on the actual space of the city of St. Louis. Bartholomew too found that large, expensive, plans had little traction among voters, small-scale issues which required little involvement or financial investment from its recipients were much more acceptable. However, segregation ordinances were accepted by a large majority of voters in 1916. The notion of the common good as understood to be for the benefit of white St. Louisans was largely accepted by these voters during the segregation referendum because they chose to support these measures to establish and protect their position as white citizens and potential homeowners. Civic boosterism and self-interest combined in the reforms that voters would accept, and many of these had a distinct racial consideration.

In Chapter One, the study of the St. Louis World’s Fair highlighted how racial knowledge was created and communicated to fair-goers via an engagement with the built environment and the ethnic performers at the fair. Anglo-American whiteness was adapted to suit the changing needs of the growing empire of the United States, but the colour line was still firmly in place and was to be understood in American terms. The human exhibits, or performers, became part of the lesson that fair-goers learnt at the fair, one which was based on American white superiority by comparison with other races and nations. This superiority could be enacted by fair-goers moving around the fair, by observing and comparing ethnic performers, and by reading about such interactions in the many newspaper accounts and guidebooks dedicated to the experience.

Chapter One also argued that understandings of a fixed type of white femininity underscored that racial knowledge. Try as they might, white women of the Board of Lady Managers could not infuse understandings of technological, scientific, and social progress with an appreciation and acknowledgement of women’s involvement in that process. African American women were further restricted from enacting the femininity and respectability associated with the Board of Lady Managers due to the assignment of race. This actually offered African American women a chance to claim their own space outside of the remit of the fair, and they did so as part of a wider protest about how their race
was treated by the organisers. African American women seized alternatives and made their own opportunities. This process of exclusion and the benefits this could bring to African American women continued throughout the early twentieth century in St. Louis.

In Chapter Two some of the Civic League’s efforts, both successful and unsuccessful, were investigated. The League manipulated ideas about the public good through their use of, and desire for more, civic morality. This type of public spiritedness could, and did, lead to an increase in the measuring and monitoring of the city’s population. The League used both quantifiable data and qualifiable assumptions to pronounce judgements on the poor and the immigrants in the city. However, the criticisms the organisation levelled were not only reserved for the least privileged in the city, the League also highlighted the lack of public spiritedness among businesses and self-interested politicians.

Clearly, the League presented a complex, and at times contradictory, set of agendas. The tensions within the membership added to the organisation’s complications; business leaders and middle-class white men formed an integral part of the leadership of the League, but this was infused with the efforts of reform-minded middle-class white women. The competition between male and female League members was played out in campaigns for smoke abatement and tree-planting. The ascendancy of male authority in this public reform group was confirmed by the drive for efficiency and technical expertise which were deemed to be natural masculine sphere of interests. The ascendancy of the City Club and its partnership with the Civic League was one of the ways in which the male sphere of influence and expertise was established and protected. The establishment of the City Plan Commission in 1911 and the employment of Harland Bartholomew as City Engineer in 1916 marked the end of voluntary city planning in St. Louis, and it had further repercussions for female reform work which was increasingly side-lined as unprofessional.

The study of the Civic League is important because it shows some of the ways that Progressives thought and spoke about urban space. Within that space their ideas concerning class conflict, supposed racial and ethnic differences, and marked gender interests and natural abilities came to the fore. The inherent tensions within the League’s ambitions and actions shows how Progressivism can be understood as a set of competing
interests and ideals. This thesis has argued that within Progressivism in St. Louis there was a displacement of women in urban reform. The process by which the female dominion, as described by Muncy, was incorporated into welfare systems and urban management was not guaranteed.10 Women were side-lined in Progressive reform in St. Louis, however their voluntarism continued and their focus changed towards campaigns for the vote and to implement temperance. In this way, they still worked towards providing and enforcing an alternative to masculine municipal visions of the city.

Female reformers were significant in the Civic League particularly in its earlier incarnations, but they had previously created some of their own spheres of interest and activity in the city via their club work. A more capacious definition of politics is needed in this era in order to understand the voluntary work conducted by women’s clubs. The Wednesday Club was discussed in detail in Chapter Three. The club members were white, middle-class women who enacted their socio-economic privilege by talking about and aiming to reform the city space. They expanded the remit of their private interests into the public sphere via their concern about how their households and children were negatively effected and affected by the corrupting city space. The city had been shaped by masculine political visions and business practices and was deemed by these female reformers to be unhelpful and unhealthful. They believed that women should manage and contain the growth of the city. The female led developments in kindergartens, playgrounds, evening schools, and Women’s Exchanges would, apparently, redeem the city.

One female reformer, Charlotte Rumbold, was forced to leave St. Louis when her activities clashed with established political interests. Rumbold did not have an equal share in the urban environment, so she was therefore not paid equally for the work she did in that space. Missouri women had no right to vote and were not considered full citizens and equal employees of the municipal government. Although Rumbold had done sterling work in the Wednesday Club’s Practical Work Committee, in the Civic League, as one of the city’s Recreation Officers, and as a lead organiser of the Pageant and Masque, the remit of her work was still curtailed due to her gender. A close reading of Rumbold’s

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Housing Conditions report shows the creative and complex ways that club women and female reformers spoke about the city space, and what they hoped to do by improving it. Their maternalist vision of the city would require an overhaul of relationships, the built environment, and the operation of business and political interests. However, such a vision was also predicated on the exclusion of African American women and the silencing of working class and poor ethnic voices. Clearly, the female dominion in St. Louis was replete with tensions based on race and class.

White clubwomen saw a contraction of their influence on the city’s space as men in the Civic League, the City Plan Commission, and Harland Bartholomew and Associates took over some of their activities. The experience of African American women was different. Race offered them options not available to their white counterparts. Community space, and how race and respectability was enacted in it, was very important to reform minded African American women. How they communicated and enacted this was discussed in Chapter Four. As members of the established and comparatively affluent African American middle class these women sought to preserve their socio-economic position and help poor newcomers to the city. Like their white counterparts they used their club work to engage with city space. They also used it to convey notions of respectability, which was a concept fraught with class tensions and often echoed racist assumptions of the ‘negro problem.’

African American women found that when they were working in the inter-racial committee, the CSSCP, they were often side-lined in favour of African American men and white men and women. Some of their previous voluntary work was either derided or taken over, and they found that they had to accept this for the good of the race in the project of respectability and racial uplift. The tensions and criticisms levelled at African American women in this committee shows the ways in which race, gender, and class intersected in discussions about, and activities in, the city space.

Involvement in the inter-racial committee was not the only way that African American women could influence and improve their community and the space they shared. They found that they could develop an alternative, if related, female driven version of respectability through their involvement with gender orientated beauty culture. Beauty culture enabled entrepreneurs like Annie Malone to improve the
neighbourhood, to offer services and facilities for the community, and to create celebratory spaces such as parades and graduation ceremonies at Poro College. Black beauty was praised, and individual and communal health expressed on the body and in the neighbourhood was encouraged. Both the containment of space and of gender offered African American women opportunities. Female agents working within beauty culture could develop social and economic independence and belonged to a national, even international, community of Poro agents and customers. However, for all its possibilities beauty culture was still mired in white standards of beauty which were deemed unattainable for African American women, and beauty culture and health continued the long-standing focus on the African American female body. Discussions about how African American women reworked assumptions and judgements about the social body and their own bodies in the shared city space reveal how complex the notion of respectability was and continues to be.

The final chapter of this thesis discussed some of the ways in which the built environment of leisure spaces such as the movie theatre and the swimming pool became racialised due to concerns about sexual contact between white and black patrons. The enforcement of segregated spaces was particularly an issue for St. Louis because city space was limited due to its contained boundary between city and county. Proximity of space, and of people in that space, was an issue in the creation and maintenance of Jim Crow segregation. Belonging to and identifying as a member of the white race was inscribed onto the physical landscape of the city. The combination of space and social relations offers a more detailed understanding of how Jim Crow worked, and how citizens elected to support it to ensure their own prosperity and belonging.

Definitions of whiteness were in flux during the period of this thesis, and the ways by which the ethnic population of St. Louis gradually came to be thought of as white was discussed. The city’s imagined past, present, and future was considered via a close reading of the Pageant and Masque, which was an event tied to the battles for segregation ordinances in residential spaces. Celebratory space was created in the Pageant and Masque at Forest Park, which had been the site of the St. Louis World’s Fair ten years earlier. The Pageant and Masque was an event which was designed to encourage support for yet another charter renewal. This charter had long been desired
by Progressives in the Civic League. In 1914 the charter was narrowly passed, and a white supremacist group called the United Welfare Association (UWA) quickly realised that the changes in municipal governance that this brought could be used to push their segregationist agenda. Public initiative and referendum, the legislation pushed by Progressives in order to reform municipal management, was taken and used by the UWA.

Rhetoric was important in the 1914 charter battle and subsequent referendum. A close reading of The Home Defender, the magazine the UWA created to encourage support for segregation ordinances, showed how gendered language was used to create a sense of the white race (and that white women needed to be protected). The emphasis on property values also revealed further ways to segregate and mark the city and create belonging. It created a sense of a white community based on potential financial gain and stability. Notions of the common good were determined as the white common good.

In trying to introduce zoning, Bartholomew argued that ‘restrictions on the use of private property have usually been imposed in deeds of sale or by private covenant.’ He was correct, gentleman’s agreements had long existed in St. Louis. However, the segregation ordinances of 1916 marked a change because it would become a legal requirement to prevent blacks moving to white neighbourhoods and vice versa. Bartholomew’s lack of concern that previously private covenants had been based on race highlight the ignorance, wilful and otherwise, that Progressives often displayed. In this, the nadir of race relations in America, the category of race eventually trumped that of class and ethnicity as the colour line became more solidified and further restrictions were placed on certain city spaces.

St. Louis, a city with northern ambitions and southern attitudes, a border city in a border state, and a gateway to westward expansion which was contained by a fixed boundary, was a mass of contradictions and controversies. The city also presented opportunities for activism and agency and the means by which to shape definitions of race, ethnicity, class, and gender, and how those concepts could and should be understood in city space. The particularity, and peculiarity, of certain places in St. Louis and of the city space itself during the Progressive Era exposed many fissures, the fault

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11 Bartholomew, Zoning, 30.
lines of which were experienced to a lesser or greater extent across the United States as the twentieth century continued.
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