

History 22

Re: Thomas Lowry, Sex in the Civil War(1994)

*Pvt. Lowry  
Sex in the  
Civil War  
1894-1915  
(1894)*

Sources largely from the court-martial records of the Union. This work cannot be duplicated with the Confederacy because their records were burned with Richmond in April 1865.

Pornography. There was a flourishing trade in pornographic literature during the Civil War. In the US the first porno books appeared in 1846. Col. Lafayette Baker of the Secret Service was riled at the number of these books and porno prints were mailed to soldiers of the Army of the Potomac.

Advertisement of porno stuff found in a few of the remaining catalogues. The personal effects of Pvt. Edmon Shriver of Company F 42nd Ohio contained a catalogue of G. S. Hoskins and Co. (NY city).

Hoskins offerings included:

Fanny Hill  
The Lustful Turk  
The Libertine Enchantress  
(all for one dollar)

Smaller pamphlet types included:

Prostitution in Paris  
Male Generative Organs  
Aristotle Illustrated  
Venus in Cloister  
The Marriage Bed  
Secret Passions  
Physiology of Love

For only \$3.00 a dozen, a soldier could receive cartes de visite of London and Paris voluptuaries "portraying the mysteries and delights of naked female beauty, male and female together and separate."

Hoskins catalogue also advertised "spicy" song books, marked playing cards water-marked with naked women, French ticklers, love powders, and three types of condoms, etc. .

This kind of erotica was a booming business during the war.

The cheaper porno books were about 3 inches wide and four inches high, ideal size for the pocket or the knapsack. Bound in dark cloth they could easily be mistaken for small Bibles. The publishers obviously were deep into market research.

Despite 150 years of Victorian purging, enough written and graphic material remains to indicate that a large and prosperous industry existed during the Civil War.

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Source: Lowry  
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### Prostitution: East

Most prostitutes were under 30 years of age; 40% were under 20 years. Most of them had died after entering the profession, usually from venereal disease and/or alcoholism. This according to a study by a Dr. Wm. Sanger in 1858. Sanger was with the Venereal Disease Hospital on Blackwell's Island, N>Y>

Sanger did not study wartime Washington or Richmond. Had he done so in 1862 he would have found even more depressing statistics than in prewar New York.

By 1860 the population of WDC was about 61,000. The extent of houses of prostitution in 1862 according to the provost marshal's records showed:

450 registered bawdy houses. The Washington Star estimated that there were about 5,000 prostitutes in the city, along with another 2500 working the skin trade in Georgetown and Alexandria. This did not include kept women of all sorts. (More soiled doves than Methodists in the Union capital).

During the war an effort was made by the city fathers to concentrate this trade in one section of the city. The area chosen was called "Murder Bay." Today Murder Bay would be that stretch of WDC that is now called the Federal Triangle, with the Customs Service, Internal Revenue Service, and Justice Department buildings.

The name Murder bay changed during the war to Hooker's Division. because General Hooker to help the military police contain the trade and the violence and rowdiness that was associated with it helped to concentrate many of the prostitutes in this area that is now the Federal Triangle.

Mention there is a loose connection between Hooker and the designation of "hookers" for prostitutes. Hooker was a known frequenter of prostitutes.

Some of the bordellos carried fanciful names: Fort Sumter, the Ironclad, (Headquarters, USA), the Devil's Own, the Wolf's Den, the Cottage by the Sea, the Blue Goose, Madam Russell's Bake Oven, and Madam Wilton's Private Residence for Ladies (very tony).

As for the Confederate Capitol, Richmond, the sporting life most active in an area of four square blocks sw of Capitol Square.

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Prostitution: West

In the West, especially in Nashville and Memphis, the skin trade was doing a booming business. During the war there were at least 30,000 Federals stationed in Nashville. Where the boys are so were the prostitutes.

In Nashville the hottest district was called Smokey Row, it was eight full blocks of bawdy houses.

It was <sup>guar</sup> at Nashville that the Union made serious efforts to control the trade. The spread of venereal disease was interfering with the war effort. So in 1862/3 Union commanders swooped up prostitutes, 1500 at a time, placed them on ships and sent them to Louisville, Kentucky. The problem was that many soon drifted back to Nashville; and during the months the white prostitutes were gone their places were filled by black colleagues.

Introduced legalized prostitution. Meant that the govt. insisted upon inspection etc ,before granting a lisenca. The same practice was introduced in Memphis.

Results: Nashville/Memphis were the only areas where legalized and government-regulated prostitution was tried during the war. In both cities order was improved and disease was reduced, and both postitutes and their clients appeared to have benefitted at little cost.

Today, the only state that legalizes and regulates prostitution is Navada. So far there has not been a single case of AIDS reported.

Nobody really knows how many soldierys in the Civil War--Blue and Gray--contracted venereal disease.

One researcher at a Civil War Roundtable in 1963 estimatyed that 33% of the men who died in Union and Confederate veterans' homes were killed by the last stages of VD. NO one knows how many Union and Confederate wives and widows suffered the ailments of Venus, ravaged by the pox their men brought home, or how many children were blinded by gonorrhoea or stunted by syphilis.

not covered  
in handbook -  
- drug addicts, etc.