

KANSAS CITY

Society for Suppression OF Commercialized Vice

INCORPORATED

GEORGE E. BOWLING, President E. T.
BRIGHAM, Vice-President NAT SPENCER,
Secretary

PRESTON DOBBIN, Treasurer

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY,

DEC. 6, 1921.

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Miss Varina Jackson	J. B. White Edw. C.
	Wright

Headquarters, 510-11 Ridge Building

Harrison 7037; Grand 7037

EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

The Society for Suppression of Commercialized Vice was organized in October, 1913. Of the 24 directors first elected, nine are still members of the board: Henry M. Beardsley, E. T. Brigham, Alfred Gregory, M. C. Long, Leslie J. Lyons, Nat Spencer, C. A. Sumner, Wm. Volker and J. B. White.

In 1913 commercialized vice in Kansas City was an established business institution. There was some attempt to control it, but no attempt to abolish it. The moral situation became intolerable. Our anti-vice organization was formed to close the houses of prostitution. As an illustration of the hold that the business of commercialized vice had on the community our records distinctly state that the names of the subscribers to our funds should not be made public.

The Injunction and Abatement Law

The first work of our organization was to secure about 50 injunctions on properties used for immoral purposes. This was done under the common law principle that a house of prostitution is a nuisance. Later the Missouri Supreme Court in its wisdom decreed that "keeping a bawdy house is not a public nuisance in any sense of the term."

Then followed a struggle with four successive legislatures to get the "Injunction and Abatement Law" which defines houses of prostitution to be nuisances and provides for injunctions on the property. Securing this law from the 1921 legislature marks the most important event in the work of our Society for the past year. Without doubt the influence of the women's vote was a strong factor in the passage of this bill. One of our lady directors, Miss Varina Jackson, is entitled to much credit for her successful presentation of the cause before committees of the legislature. Our Society is also under obligations to Senator Howard Gray for drafting our present law and advocating the bill in the Legislature.

Co-operation with the Law Enforcement Association

In October of last year the Law Enforcement Association was organized. Our Society considered whether this larger and well financed organization should not take over our work. It was finally concluded that we should maintain our organization and closely co-operate with the Law Enforcement Association. This decision was reached upon considering that the purposes of the Law Enforcement Association covered a great variety of crimes, while our Society confined its work to a single issue; and that working in harmony with the Association we might render Kansas City effective service in subduing vice. The results of the last year have demonstrated the continued usefulness of our Society.

The Case of Annie Chambers

The most notorious and persistent bawdy house keeper in Kansas City has been Annie Chambers. For forty years she operated a resort at Third and Wyandotte streets with only occasional interruptions. Hers was a "high class" house. No "rough stuff" was allowed. Formerly she secured immunity from the authorities and was enabled to operate her place almost continuously. She paid some fines, but they were not sufficiently large to interfere with continuing the establishment.

The Injunction and Abatement law was the weapon that put her out of business. She violated the temporary injunction and was given a jail sentence in punishment. The place is now closed. It is understood that Annie Chambers will carry her case to the supreme court to determine the constitutionality of the act. Co-operation of various agencies secured this result. The Society for Suppression of Commercialized Vice is particularly responsible for getting the Injunction and Abatement law; our efficient police department secured most of the evidence and the Law Enforcement Association handled the legal end of the case.

Felony Cases

The law makes it a felony to rent rooms for immoral purposes. Our investigators secured strong evidence against two hotels. Preliminary trials were held before justice courts, and despite the most positive evidence, both cases were dismissed. These cases again illustrated the impracticability of getting convictions for this class of offenders in the criminal courts. The Injunction and Abatement law, giving action against the property in which the offenses occur, is our most effective weapon.

Closed Without Injunction

For many years the two story building at the southeast corner of Fifth and Grand has harbored persistent violators of the law. Our investigators produced evidence repeatedly and gave the information to the police. The police department repeatedly made arrests and occasional small fines were imposed against the offenders in the North Side Police Court.

The evidence at hand was then presented to the agent of the property with the suggestion that an injunction might be placed on the building. The agent assured himself that the evidence was correct and said that an injunction would not be necessary and promptly locked up the place.

It will probably not be necessary to place injunctions on many pieces of property, and in most cases calling attention to the law will be sufficient to remedy the situation. In Chicago, a thousand places have been cleaned up through the Injunction and Abatement law, and only 15 injunctions have been asked for and secured.

Notices to Other Owners

We have conclusive evidence against a hotel and a rooming house. Notices have been sent to the owners. In one case the owner had given a 99-year lease on the place, which had been assigned to a real estate agency to secure a debt. All the parties interested in the proprietorship of the premises have been notified and we are now awaiting results.

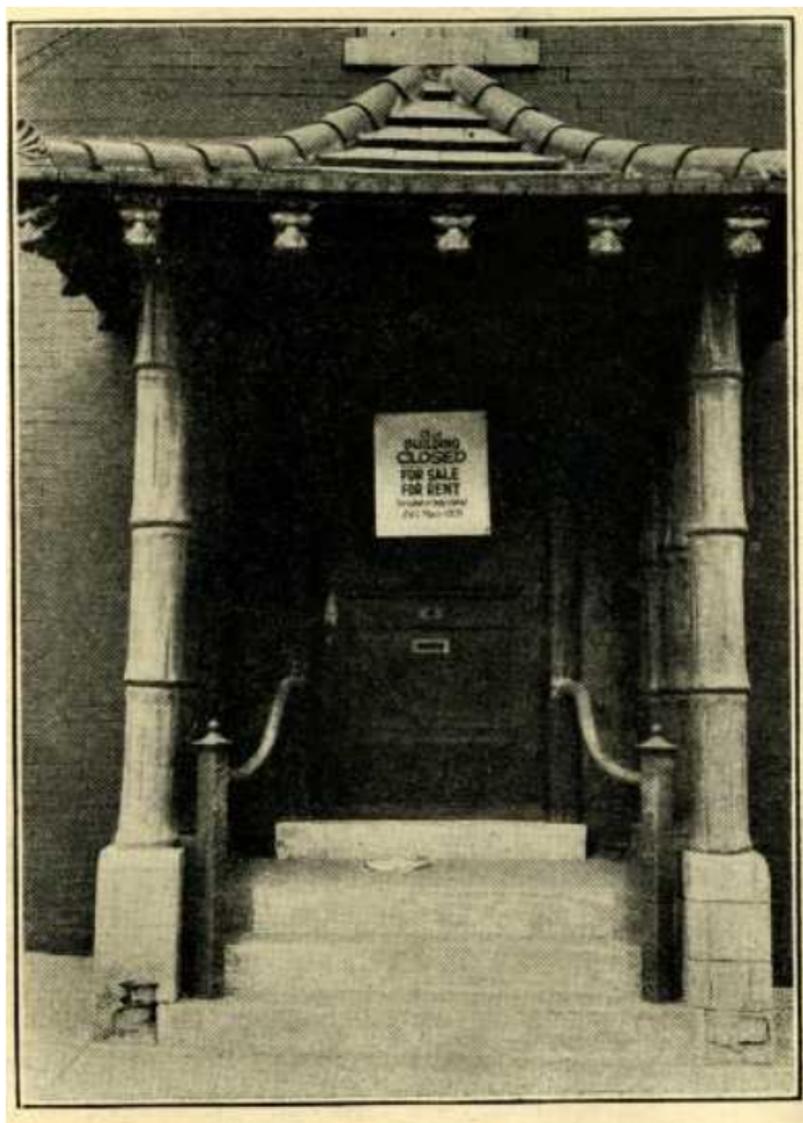
Other places are under surveillance and additional notices to owners are contemplated. We have every reason to believe in the effectiveness of the Injunction and Abatement law.

Fine Police Co-operation

With the advent of the present police commissioners a genuine clean-up has been in progress. Heretofore the man on the beat jeopardized his position if he arrested certain criminals. It is now not only safe for a patrolman to do his full duty, but he is commended for it. Incompetent and unreliable policemen are being weeded out and other men given a fair trial to fill their places. A fine force is being built up. Citizens are getting a square deal.

The results of this regeneration of the police force are apparent in a reduction of all kinds of crime and the development of respect for this branch of our city government. The outlook for continued improvement is very promising. There has been no time in the eight years our Society has been in operation when the moral conditions are in as good shape as at present and the outlook is favorable for increasingly wholesome conditions.

NAT SPENCER,
Secretary.



AFTER FORTY YEARS