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Author(s): Sophonisba P. Breckinridge and Edith Abbott
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CHICAGO'S HOUSING PROBLEM: FAMILIES IN FURNISHED ROOMS[1]

SOPHONISBA P. BRECKINRIDGE AND EDITH ABBOTT
The Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy

In each of the three sections into which Chicago is divided by the Chicago River, there has grown up a district in which family life has been transferred from normal homes to a wasteful existence in furnished rooms. In each case, as is entirely natural, this district lies between the portion devoted to business or manufacturing on the one side and the usual residential section on the other. The peculiarity of the areas under discussion is that here, for reasonably long periods and with fairly permanent arrangements, families live in cramped quarters where they rent by weekly payments not only the room or rooms in which they live, but even the furniture they use. In these districts, which have been invaded by business or industry but in which large numbers of people still live, are found the commodious homes of an earlier period. The probable course of development of the neighborhood is too uncertain to admit of reconstruction at once and they are therefore put, in their original form, to the most profitable use which, for the time, suggests

[1] This is the second article in a series dealing with housing conditions in Chicago. The first article "Housing of Non-Family Groups of Working Men" appeared in the September number of this journal. The present study is based upon a report on this subject by Jessie F. Bell and Caro B. MacArthur, research students, 1909–10.

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itself. The rooms are too large to admit of their separate enjoyment by individuals, and they are, therefore, let to family groups. Only the very poor, or those who are less than ordinarily competent, will consent to live in this manner, and for such there seem peculiar advantages in renting by the week a furnished room which will make possible the most transient and irresponsible kind of family life. These people live under conditions of crowding and lack of privacy obviously demoralizing, and fail to secure any of the self-esteem or educative restraining effect which comes from handling their own property or embodying their earnings and taste in the objects by which they are surrounded. Many families which apply to the charitable agencies of the city for assistance come from such homes. The application for relief is the last step in a downfall which began when they either sold their furniture, or stored it to move into smaller quarters. They were soon unable to pay the storage charges and they became permanently fixed in furnished rooms, living from hand to mouth, with no resources to fall back upon.

Booth mentions among the causes which give rise to a housing problem the use of houses "by families of a class for which they were not designed and are not suited."[2] In Chicago, there are now large sections of the city in which houses intended for families of one type have been taken over by families of another, and serious evils have arisen through the attempted adaptation of houses which were, in the sixties, seventies, and eighties, the dwellings of well-to-do and dignified families, to the present uses of families that are unfortunate, incompetent, poverty-stricken, and often degraded.

While it is not possible to set exact boundaries to any of these rooming-house districts, the territory occupied may be roughly

[2] *Life and Labour of the People of London,* final vol., 158. Mr. Booth's comment is, "For such homes a well-thought-out scheme of adaptation is essential, the santitary and other difficulties being great. Moreover, the scheme ought to be of general application, as suited to the needs of the neighborhood . . . . and it is only by a successful alteration, so that the houses may be made into healthy and convenient homes for whatsoever class of occupancy may be in view that the evils of non-adaptation and mal-adaptation may be obviated" (pp. 165–66). See also the discussion by Mrs. Bosanquet in the *Economic Journal,* XIII, 412.

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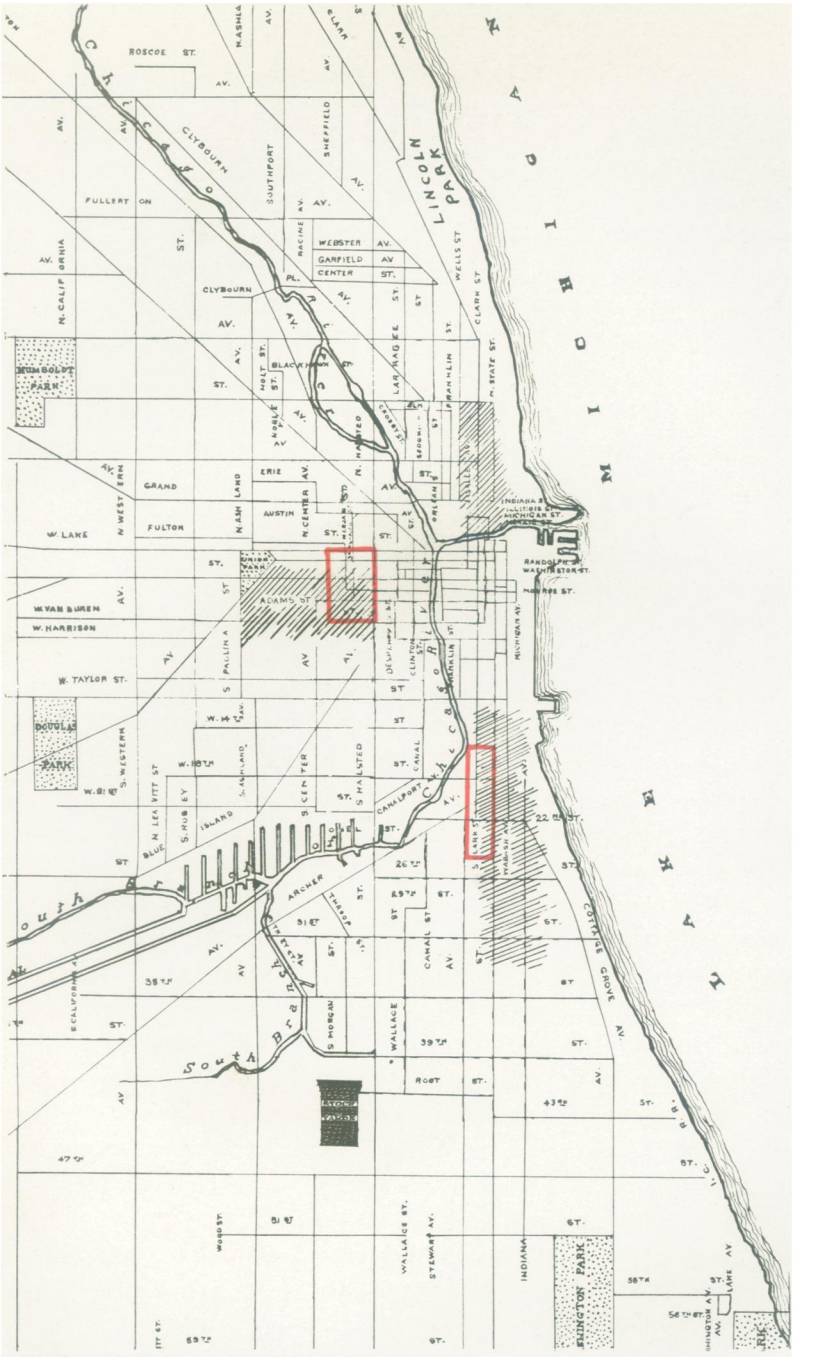

Map by Estelle B. Hunter, Research Student, 1908–9, 1909–10

MAP SHOWING (BY HATCHED LINES) THE LOCATION OF DISTRICTS IN WHICH LARGE NUMBERS OF "LIGHT-HOUSEKEEPING" ROOMS ARE FOUND

The red lines show the districts in which vice is segregated and tolerated on the south and west sides.

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defined. For although many houses and even a large portion of some streets within the limits indicated may be used for normal residence life, yet the district as a whole is largely given over to furnished rooms. That on the North Side, which is the smallest of the three, lies between Division Street and the river on the north and south, Wells Street on the west, and Rush Street on the east. This district is steadily pushing north, and in that portion near Chicago Avenue, there are now a good many "rooms" and "light-housekeeping" signs to be seen. Few of the furnished rooms for families are found, however, anywhere except within the boundaries given. North Clark Street, which is sometimes, and probably with some justice, called the "toughest street in Chicago," gives an undesirable distinction to this North Side district.

On the South Side, the furnished rooming-house district lies between Sixteenth Street on the north and Thirty-third Street on the south, Prairie Avenue on the east, and Clark Street on the west. On Sixteenth Street and on Wabash Avenue northward toward Eldredge Court the most dilapidated houses and the poorest families in the district are found. In this section the "light housekeeper" is gradually pushing farther and farther toward the south, but the northern end remains much poorer than the southern. Sharp contrasts are found in this South Side district. Dingy, black dwellings with dirty back yards, rickety sheds, and junk heaps are not far from Prairie Avenue which is one of the most beautiful and fashionable residence streets in the city.

The West Side "furnished-rooms" district is not only larger than the other two, but its houses are older and have had longer and more "checkered" histories. It is more interesting, too, for a study of this kind since it contains a larger proportion of families, and the number of applicants for charity is probably greater than in either of the other two. Moreover, while on the West Side vice is openly tolerated in one section of the district, there is no segregated territory given over to its commercialized forms such as is found on the South Side, and the rooming district is more sharply defined than on the North Side. It may

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be said roughly to extend from Harrison Street on the south to Washington Boulevard on the north, and from Halsted Street on the east to Ashland Boulevard on the west. There are, however, many houses just outside the limits set by these boundaries. In this section the north-and-south streets are less important than those going east and west, with of course the single exception of Halsted Street which serves as a kind of lurid boundary line, making a constant appeal to those who live either east or west of it. Here are the great West Side theaters, the big, showy saloons, dance halls, "nickel shows," hotels, peddler's carts, the rush of "through cars," and the ever-present possibility of excitement furnished by the city street on which life and business begin early and seemingly never cease. Traffic is greater on the east-and-west streets and the houses are in general better than those on the north-and-south streets. On Washington Boulevard, for example, most of the buildings are either large stone-front blocks, extending sometimes half the way from one street to another, or old and rather elegant residences, with imposing French windows, porches with iron railings, yards, and carriage sheds. Some of the houses are left much as they were in their better days, while others are patched and made over grotesquely. On the other hand, there are few houses which were homes of comfort in the past to be found on the north-and-south streets. Of these streets, Morgan and Sangamon perhaps rank first in dingy, unrelieved poverty; Peoria and Green streets which are parallel are also dingy and forlorn, but here vice is mixed with poverty.

Madison is the great east-and-west street of the West Side. Passing as it does through the heart of the "furnished-rooms" district, it is more inviting even than Halsted Street to the people who live there. East of Halsted Street toward the river is the territory which is given over to miserable, unemployed men. Here are the cheap lodging-houses and restaurants, the labor agencies, and the army recruiting stations which are all alike the resort of the shiftless "casual." Many of these idle and unfortunate men drift into the "furnished-rooms" territory and encourage the cheap theaters, saloons, and more vicious forms

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of amusement that flourish there. West of Halsted, Madison Street is apparently given over to business or commercialized amusements, for the cheap theater and the saloon, the low hotel and the restaurant also flourish there. The buildings there are high, and many of the stores are in three- and four-story buildings in which there are apartments above the first floor. On the parallel streets, south of Madison—Monroe, Adams, VanBuren, and Harrison—stores were numerous in the eastern part near Halsted Street, but westward toward Ashland Boulevard, they decrease in number. There are many types of houses here—frame cottages raised on brick basements, brick blocks built for tenement use, and the old-fashioned residences which have degenerated into furnished rooming-houses. Well over toward Ashland Boulevard are the bona fide apartment houses, more ambitious but scarcely less monotonous than the tenement houses farther east. This commercialization of the old and dignified, the unrelieved monotony of the tenement block, the dilapidated houses of some of the north-and-south streets, and, more than all, the fact that this whole district is known to be honeycombed with vice, makes it extremely depressing.

The problem of furnished rooms has long been connected with the city problems of vice and immorality. Booth points out that in the "city wilderness" the furnished room, especially when let by the day as well as by the week, affords a convenient meeting-place for people of loose habits, and there can be no doubt that furnished rooms in this country are often put to the lowest uses. Very near, often indeed adjoining, the houses which are used by men and women of immoral character are houses in which the rooms furnished with housekeeping necessities are let to poor families. On the South Side a large section from Seventeenth to Twenty-fourth Street, and from State Street to the river, is segregated and devoted to the purposes of organized and commercialized vice. On the West Side from the river to Curtis Street, and between Lake and VanBuren streets is another section of tolerated vice, a considerable part of which, as the map on the opposite page shows, is included in the furnished-rooms district. Because this toleration does not amount

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to thorough segregation as on the South Side, respectability and vice in its worst forms live side by side.[3]

We are not concerned here with the furnished rooming-house in so far as it provides cheap lodgings for single men and women, or with the question of the degeneration of the rooming-house into a place of vice. The purpose of this study is rather a discussion of the problems growing out of the fact that in all of these districts large numbers of families with children also make their home in furnished rooms. Perhaps the most interesting questions that arise are (1) the sanitary condition of households readjusted from their original purpose in the manner described; (2) the probable degradation of the family through the lack of privacy and dignity and the general irresponsibility of their mode of life; and (3) the inevitable familiarity with vice.

Attention has already been called to the fact that what is now the furnished-rooms district on the West Side was once a fashionable neighborhood. On the corner of Adams and Aberdeen streets is the old Schuettler residence, a large, rambling brick house still surrounded by a wide "lawn." This and the once handsome gray-stone residence on the adjoining lot were for some years given over to "light housekeeping," but the

[3] When an attempt at reform was recently being made as a result of an exposure of conditions in the West Side district, the daily papers published orders from the chief of police which were meant to effect an improvement of conditions. The following extracts from these orders illustrate the demoralizing influences to which the families within the district referred to are subjected:

"1. Permit no soliciting, either on the streets, in doorways, from windows, or in saloons.

"2. Permit no signs, lights, colors, or other devices to be anywhere displayed indicative of the character of the premises, occupied as a house of ill repute. . . . .

"4. No person between the ages of three and eighteen years will be permitted in the district, or to enter the premises, under any circumstances, messenger and delivery boys included. . . . .

"8. There shall be no swinging doors or double doors, and doors at all times to be closed.

"9. The establishment of disorderly houses shall not be permitted outside of certain districts, and under no conditions shall they be established within two blocks of a school, church, hospital, or any public institution.

"10. There shall be no disorderly house on any street having a street car line."—*Chicago Tribune,* October 11, 1909.

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difficulty of heating the spacious rooms with their high ceilings was very great, and the Schuettler house was evidently so ill adapted to the needs of poor families seeking "furnished rooms," that it has more recently degenerated into the "Palace Boarding Stable." A few blocks further north a Scandinavian landlady, who told us of tenants "full to the eyes" and her drastic methods of dealing with them, occupied a house which was once the home of the Crane family. Another house near by, also taken over for furnished rooms, is one in which the widow of Abraham Lincoln is said to have made her home for some years. In these houses the high ceilings, walnut stairways, hardwood floors, marble fireplaces, large rooms connected through double doors, are evidences of their luxurious past. In front of the marble fireplace one finds today an air-tight cooking and heating stove, with the stovepipe fitted into the old fireplace chimney. The "double doors" are now permanently closed, and since there are no closets in the room, clothes are hung against them, concealed sometimes by curtains. Not only the old marble fireplace but sometimes old pieces of furniture are left. In a fine old house on Washington Boulevard, in an attic apartment in which the paper was hanging in great pieces from the ceiling, and the stove stood propped on bricks, a large oil painting, an unmistakable relic of former prosperity, was hanging on the wall. In a basement apartment on Peoria Street, where the floors were warped and the furniture cheap and dilapidated, the Polish tenants were using the heavy old walnut bureau which obviously belonged to the early history of the house.

It is unnecessary to point out that these old-fashioned houses can never be properly adapted to tenement use. A single room is often as large as an apartment of two or three rooms in an ordinary tenement, but if this room is made into several, some of them will be windowless. The result is the one-room apartment.[4] Attempts to remodel such houses are sometimes found,

[4] Sixty-one light-housekeeping apartments, occupied by families, were visited; of these, twenty-seven were one-room apartments and twenty-eight two-room apartments; only three apartments had three rooms, one had four rooms, and in two cases no report was made as to the number.

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but the remodeling is not part of a carefully planned scheme to make the house a suitable or convenient living-place for the new class of tenants. It consists instead of some makeshift alterations, which will turn the large rooms into smaller ones and make possible a larger monthly rental. In one house on South Peoria Street, part of a large hall has been made into an additional room, leaving for a hall a totally dark passage twenty inches wide. Through this hall one of the tenant families has the only access to its room, and two other families are obliged to use it to get water from the sink, which is in a dark corner at the end of the passage.

Although the rooms are large and ceilings high, there is very often an insufficient amount of air. In 15 per cent of the sixty-six sleeping rooms visited, there was a violation of the legal requirement of 400 cubic feet of air for adults, and 200 for children.[5] The rooms, however, were usually light. In only 5 per cent of all the rooms visited was the window space not equal to 10 per cent of the floor space.

The plumbing in these houses is sure to be very defective. The ordinance governing new tenements, that is, tenements erected since 1901, requires one water-closet for every apartment of more than two rooms, and one water-closet for every two apartments when the apartments consist of one or two rooms.[6] But the requirement for old houses, that is, those erected before 1901, providing merely that accommodations shall be adequate,[7] is singularly indefinite and, therefore, quite unenforce-

[5] Tolman, Municipal Code, sec. 420: "No room in any tenement house shall be so occupied that the allowance of air to each person living or sleeping in such room shall at any time be less than 400 cubic feet for each such person more than twelve years old, and 200 cubic feet for each such person of the age of twelve years or under."

[6] *Ibid.*, sec. 434: "In every new tenement house there shall be a separate water-closet in a separate compartment within each apartment, accessible to each apartment, without passing through any other apartment, provided that where there are apartments consisting of only one or two rooms there shall be at least one water-closet for every two apartments."

[7] *Ibid.*, sec. 1225: "Every person who shall be the owner, lessee, or keeper or manager of any tenement, boarding-house, lodging-house, or manufactory shall provide or cause to be provided for the accommodation thereof and for

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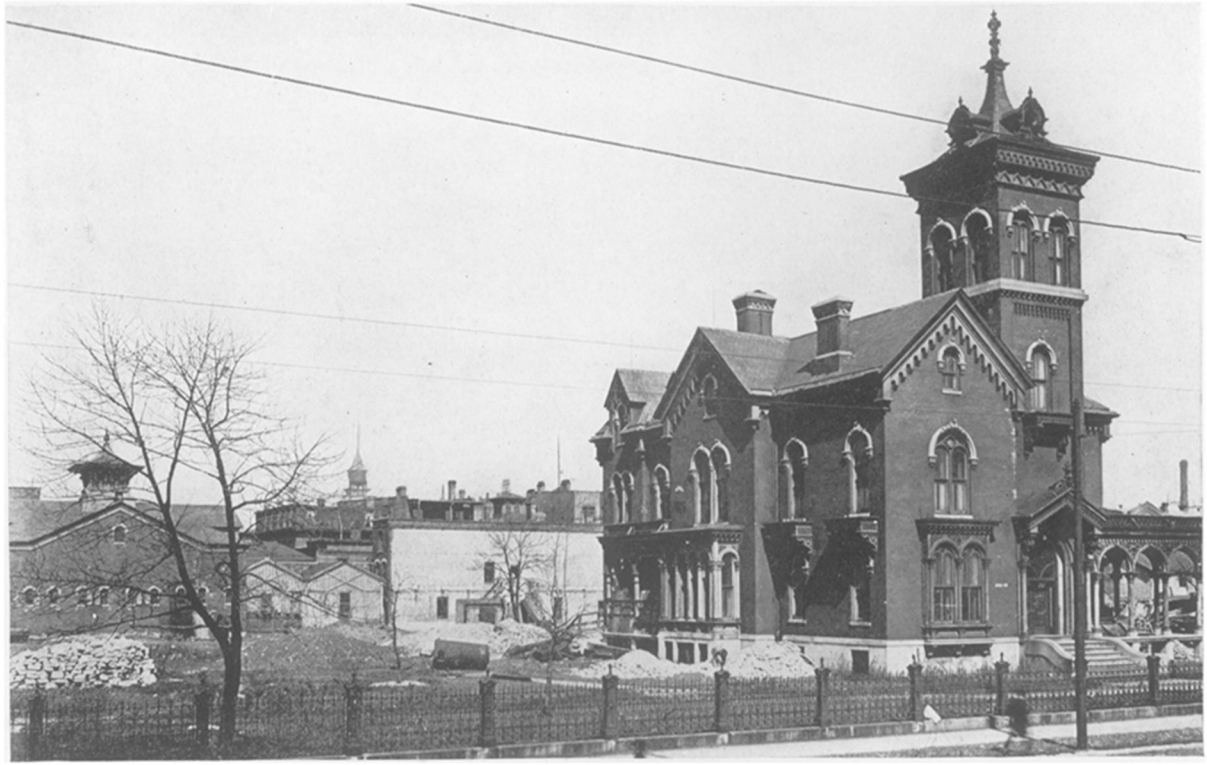

Photograph by R. R. Earle

A TYPE OF RESIDENCE ON THE WEST SIDE

Used for many years as a furnished rooming-house

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able. The condition, therefore, which prevails in most of these houses—a single water-closet for the entire house, however large the number of tenant families, is not illegal because the houses were not built under the new law. These water-closets are, however, almost invariably filthy or in bad repair, or both. The landlord is, of course, not always responsible for this condition, for when there is one water-closet, and that one unlocked, in a public hall, in a house containing half a dozen families and often as many single roomers besides, there is every opportunity for abuse as well as neglect. In one house the water-closet was out of repair because one tenant had emptied her garbage into it. The caretaker's only comment was, "You can't watch them all the time, you know." Only eight of the thirty-seven closets examined were reported clean, nineteen were dirty, ten were filthy, and sixteen were out of repair. It is to be expected that along with such limited toilet accommodations will be found a correspondingly limited water supply.[8] All of the tenants in a single house, therefore, are likewise dependent upon a single sink for the water used for cooking, washing, and all other household purposes. As is to be expected, the conditions of these sinks in general is as bad as that of the closets.

the use of the tenants, lodgers, boarders, and workers therein, adequate privies, urinals, and water-closets, and the same shall be so adequately ventilated, and shall at all times be kept in such cleanly and wholesome condition as not to be offensive or be dangerous or detrimental to health."

[8] Thirteen remodeled houses were visited and eleven of these had only a single water-closet, which was either in the public hall or the yard, for the use of the entire house. To understand what a difficult problem is involved it must be remembered that these are "light-housekeeping" rooms, and that water is needed for cooking and other household purposes. In three cases, this one sink which furnished the whole water supply of the house and the one water-closet were used by five families, numbering in one house more than forty persons. It must of course be remembered that plumbing accommodations are often very inadequate, not only in remodeled houses but in those built for tenement purposes. The A——— Building, for example, a well-known furnished rooming-house on the West Side, is a house containing twenty-eight furnished housekeeping apartments, and was, of course, built for a tenement, and not for the use of a single family. Here each family has two rooms, but although there is a sink in each apartment the water-closets are in the halls and there are only six for twenty-eight apartments. In the winter when the investigators visited the house, they were all filthy, frozen, and vermin infested.

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When there is only one sink for several families, someone is quite sure to use it, not only for dishwater, but for general refuse. The effect on the standards of cleanliness provided by this absence of all facilities for decent living needs no comment.

Dark halls are another bad feature in houses used for furnished rooms. Of twenty-eight houses visited the halls of only four were light. Some were so dark that one groped to find the way. These dark stairways in crowded houses not only involve well-known moral dangers, more especially since there is a constant danger of tenants of bad character, but they are almost invariably dirty and unsanitary. They suggest also the possible danger of fire since most of the houses are old buildings, and many of them frame. It should be explained that there is a stove in nearly every room and in a large number of cases both gasoline and coal stoves were found in the same room. Such conditions in a house used by people of irregular habits make the danger from fire a serious one.

The great evil of the furnished rooming-house, however, is not that of inadequate or filthy sanitary arrangements, dark halls, or danger from fire, but the degradation that comes from living in a one-room tenement, with broken, dilapidated furniture, without responsibility or a sense of ownership. Parlor, bedroom, clothes-closet, dining-room, kitchen, pantry, even coal shed are here combined in one room where the cooking, eating, sleeping, washing, and all of the family life goes on.

The furniture which is found in "light-housekeeping" rooms is uniformly old and dilapidated, for the newly purchased is cheap and poor in quality, and soon goes to pieces. In many cases where a landlady first "goes into the business" she makes her own old furniture, bought many years ago when she was first married, go as far as possible toward furnishing the house. Some second-hand furniture is bought and added to it perhaps, but very little that is new ever goes into furnished rooms. Each apartment is usually supplied with a stove, a bed, a table, two chairs, a bureau, and a few dishes, two plates, two cups and saucers, and a few cooking utensils. Carpets are very rare, but occasionally there is a rug. Curtains for-

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Photograph by R. R. Earle

A TENEMENT ON THE WEST SIDE

Containing twenty-eight families in furnished rooms

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tunately are also rare. The bedding which is always "furnished" is one of the most repulsive features of the room, for it is handed on uncleansed from tenant to tenant. Clean towels, sheets, and pillow cases are supposed to be furnished weekly to each tenant, and when this is done they are washed at a steam laundry and are reasonably clean. But only too often one finds sheets that are as dirty as the rest of the bedding. When tenants have "nothing of their own," the house is inevitably cheerless, and when the home is only a single room in which all the processes of living are carried on, it is necessarily disorderly and confused. In all families with hand-to-mouth methods, coal is bought by the basket or bushel, and little food is ever carried over from one meal to the next; but in "light-housekeeping" apartments such fuel and provisions as are on hand will probably be kept in the same room in which the family sleep.

The business of maintaining or running a furnished rooming-house is sometimes a very profitable one, conducted by women who are thoroughly respectable and make every effort to keep their houses decent. This is, of course, extremely difficult since they cannot require references. For this reason families with children are often preferred, although children "damage the furniture so much," because children offer some guaranty of respectability and some hope of permanence in the arrangements made. The plan of organization varies. In some cases the landlord or landlady owns or leases the house, lives on the premises, and acts as janitor as well as manager. In other cases a single individual, who is a kind of furnished-rooms landlord, maintains several houses of this kind, employing a caretaker at a fixed wage who acts as landlady or janitress for all the establishments.

When the landlady lives on the premises and uses the common toilet facilities, she tries to maintain a fairly high standard of decency and of cleanliness. But when the care of the halls, closets, and sinks is left to a caretaker who is responsible for several houses and can give only a little of her time each day to any one of them, the place becomes indescribably dirty. A

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further difficulty when one landlord has several establishments is that persons too disreputable to be endured for any length of time by one set of tenants are shifted to another house and then moved again when necessary. In one of these houses, two different tenants told of making such vigorous complaints about a man and woman who had been on a drunken debauch in a room on the floor above that they were to be put out. It developed, however, that this eviction only meant that they were to be moved on to one of the other houses which the same landlord owned, and when they became unendurable there, they would be moved again. They would be kept indefinitely, however, so long as they paid their rent.

The standard of decency set by the landladies must necessarily be a very shifting one. A woman who has had a good deal of experience demands that her tenants shall not drink because "it does not look well to see cans of beer coming into the house." Another, whose husband had died and left her a thousand dollars, at once spent most of it in getting herself established in the furnished-rooms business. But she found it so unprofitable that within a year she would have been glad to sell out even for a hundred dollars. She had found it very easy to get disorderly tenants and very hard to get any other kind. She could not get references and was "pretty nearly always fooled by her intuition." She was formerly a chambermaid in a hotel and was anxious to "sell out" and go back to it. Her case is typical of a large number of women who have made a miserable failure out of "furnished rooms." The business is, of course, precarious. Although a certain amount of risk is avoided by requiring payment in advance, this requirement cannot always be enforced against tenants already admitted, and careless habits of using household goods are inevitably aggravated by the consciousness that they belong to another person. Tenants of this type are sometimes spiteful, and wilful abuse on the part of a few leads the landlady to suspect them all. One landlady kept in the basement a supply of old furniture, and when a family with children moved in, or a couple who drank, she took out her good furniture and brought up the old.

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More interesting, however, than the sanitary problems within the house or the management of "furnished rooms" as a business is the problem of family life under these conditions. It is clear that the presence of families in furnished rooming-houses must be a question of serious interest to the charitable organizations of the city. In the West Side District of the United Charities, a very large proportion of the families relieved are from the furnished-rooms section, and the same thing is true, though in perhaps a lesser degree, in the other districts which have furnished-rooms sections.[9] These families are almost invariably American or Irish, and although a few representatives of other nationalities will be found, their numbers are small in proportion.[10] A study in a single district of the case records for the "furnished-room" families who had become applicants for relief showed an almost unvarying sequence of events. The family through misfortune, however caused, had been obliged to give up their home. In most cases a failure to pay rent had been followed by eviction. They had "stored" their furniture, and then by paying a dollar and a half or two dollars a week they had got a furnished room equipped for "light housekeeping" as a temporary home. But once having gone down it was easier for the family to go on paying the small weekly sum demanded by the "furnished-rooms" landlady than to get enough money together to take the furniture out of storage and pay a monthly rent in advance as they must do to get into a small apartment of their own again. In many cases the storage was soon greater than the value of the "stored" furniture, and the family had then no way of escape from furnished rooms except by saving enough to make a first payment on some new furniture.

[9] Unfortunately the case records have not been so kept that it is always clear whether the family was occupying furnished rooms or not. The testimony of the superintendents, however, was most emphatic on this point. Special acknowledgment may be made here of the kindness of Miss Amelia Sears, superintendent of the West Side District office, who not only gave generously of her time, but from time to time allowed the investigators to use her office.

[10] Out of 62 families, the nationality of whose head was recorded, 31 were Americans, 11 Irish, 7 German, 2 Canadian, 2 English, 2 Polish, 3 Swedish, 1 French, 1 Norwegian, 2 Italian.

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In one case a husband and wife with their three children were living in two rooms meagerly furnished "for light housekeeping" in a basement on Sangamon Street. When the last baby was expected they were in great discouragement, for the man who was a teamster had not had regular work for a year. Before the woman went to the hospital they had stored their furniture and given up their home, as they supposed, temporarily; but the furniture was soon "lost in storage," and they had settled down to a careless hand-to-mouth existence without giving a thought to a troubled future of responsibility with furniture of their own and a month's rent due in advance. In another case the charity visitor found a woman who had applied for relief living with her two children in two very small and miserably furnished rooms in a rear building. The husband was a baker who drank. He had been out of work for four months, and they had sold the furniture and moved into furnished rooms. He had been in Indianapolis for two months looking for work and the family had had "county aid." The woman, who had been working hard to support herself and the children, was sick and discouraged, and had only applied for relief when the landlord threatened eviction. After the district visitor had moved the family out of furnished rooms into a small apartment, where they were buying some furniture again and trying to get re-established, the man reappeared. Within a year his unsteady habits had demoralized them and he retreated to a country town in Illinois from which he wrote, "I could not stay in Chicago; the landlord was after me, and so was the furniture people; so I started out to do something." The woman was then expecting her third baby, and, touched by her forlorn condition, the "furniture man" agreed to wait. But her difficulties were not over, for her Greek landlord continued his threats and her fear of him was so great that she suddenly gave up the struggle and sold the furniture, saying she felt she would be safe if she could only get back into furnished rooms for a time.

In another case, a family with two children were found in a second-floor front room on Washington Boulevard for which

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Photograph by R. R. Earle

A ONE-ROOM FURNISHED APARTMENT

Occupied by a woman and five children

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they were paying $2.25 a week. Although the man had tuberculosis, the whole family slept in one bed. He had been unable to work, and the woman who "worked when she could" and sometimes earned seven or eight dollars a week, had worn herself out and become a heavy drinker. She still has the reputation of being a good worker, but she "gets discouraged" and then drinks. They originally "lost their home" three years ago because the furniture was seized to settle a grocery bill, and they have been going the rounds of furnished rooms ever since. The woman's habits have made them unwelcome tenants, and they were turned out by their last landlady.

Tuberculosis in furnished rooms is one of their serious dangers, and many other cases similar to the last one might be given. A woman and her five children were found in a single fourth-floor room reached by a very dark stairway in a house on Washington Boulevard. The room was extremely dirty and the children very much neglected. The man who had an advanced case of tuberculosis had deserted his family for a second time, and the woman who had incipient tuberculosis was not able to work much. She had sold the furniture, taken a furnished room, and locked the children in during the days when she went out to work. She had made no application for relief, and the condition of the home and children was discovered only by chance. In another case, a family whose furniture had gone for a grocery bill had moved into a single furnished room with their two children and, although the man had tuberculosis, they all slept in one bed.

In one family which was under the care of the United Charities at various times for a period of five years, there was, before the first application for help, a history of illness, irregular work and some drinking on the part of the man. The woman had placed the five children in the Home for the Friendless, stored the furniture, and had then moved with her husband into a furnished room. Her plan was to go out doing housework until they had saved enough money for a month's rent and were ready to "start again." The United Charities record was, "We find ourselves unable to get them to put forth any effort." In

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six months they wanted the children and immediately removed them from the Home for the Friendless, but they refused to make an effort to "get their things together," and took the children with them into furnished rooms. The landlady complained because they "broke up the furniture" and made them move into two other furnished rooms in a rear cottage. In two months the United Charities again made an effort to move the family, but the man had decided that he was going to die soon and that there was therefore no need of "putting forth any effort." The landlady wanted to evict them because they were so dirty. Although they finally got their furniture back, the woman developed tuberculosis and was obliged to go to the County Infirmary at Dunning. The children were again sent to the Home for the Friendless, and this time the furniture was sold and the man left to shift for himself. After a few months he was tired of it and the woman was tired of Dunning, and the two took the children away once more and were found by a district visitor in a rear house in "three miserable, furnished rooms" which were "in a filthy condition." The man had given up dying and was working as a carpenter, earning good wages but giving little to the family. The woman who was in an advanced stage of tuberculosis was being cared for by the Tuberculosis Institute. The children were indescribably neglected, and were finally brought into the Juvenile Court with the father.

In more than half of the cases, drink seems to be the explanation of the family's descent into life "in furnished rooms," and once there, such a life is undoubtedly a constant incentive to drink and other spendthrift, dissolute habits, and we have one of the old vicious circles so familiar to the charity worker. In the case of one family living in a large building given over to furnished rooms in the southern end of the district, a woman who had four children said that because of her husband's drinking habits they were safer living in furnished rooms. Her husband would never save enough to pay the landlord at the end of the month, but he would pay the $2.50 each week when he knew he would be promptly locked out if he failed. Both this woman and her husband had "good family connections" and

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Photograph by R. R. Earle

A ONE-ROCM APARTMENT IN A FURNISHED ROOMING HOUSE ON THE WEST SIDE

Eight families now live in this house which was originally occupied by a single family

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very nice children, and it is encouraging to report that on a second visit to the family it was learned that a cousin had given the man steady work with the agreement that part of his wages were to be "kept back" until there was money enough to get the furniture out of storage. In the same house was another family with three very young children who had been brought to their misfortune because the man gambled. In another case a man with his wife and five children were found living in a single furnished room with an area of 60 square feet. Drink had been the cause of their misfortunes, and the wife thought if they stored their furniture and went into furnished rooms for a time "things might be easier." On the contrary, as she explained to a charity visitor, "he only drank harder in furnished rooms and went steadily down." In a "light-housekeeping" building on the South Side a husband and wife who were both drinking, unreliable people were living in a single room with seven children. The children were singularly attractive and the parents found it very profitable to send them out begging. The United Charities had made persistent efforts to rehabilitate the family in order to save the children; but although they had been taken out of furnished rooms and re-established in a home of their own several times, they always "went back" whenever it seemed easiest to do so.

In addition to these fairly typical cases of families who through illness, irregular employment, drink, or other bad habits, have "lost their homes" and fallen into the hand-to-mouth existence in furnished rooms, there are a large number of miscellaneous ones. A woman who cleaned offices at night said that she liked living in furnished rooms so that her four children might be near other people in the evening when she was away. Some young married women are reluctant to give up earning money of their own, and prefer their old occupations outside the home to isolated, monotonous, unaccustomed work inside the home. One woman who has been married less than a year said she wanted to work because she hated "sitting round home" all the time. A husband and wife who together "did a turn" in the "nickel theaters" found it a conveniently easy and economical method of

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life. A single room entails slight responsibility, and, if equipped for light housekeeping is thought to bear some resemblance to a home. There are, too, many cases in which the woman's slovenly habits, lack of housewifely thrift, as well as of adequate education and training for the responsibilities of married life, are obviously at fault. In general it may be said that uncertainty of employment and irregular habits on the part of the husband interact with bad management on the part of the wife to promote a most disorderly manner of living, obviously demoralizing for the children in the family.

From the point of view of the rent paid, living in furnished rooms is an expensive way of living for poor people. The table given below shows the number of rooms occupied, together with the weekly rental. Only nine of the thirty-six families occupy-

No. of Rooms Occupied	Number of Families Who Paid a Weekly Rental of									
	$1.00	$1.25	$1.50	$1.75	$2.00	$2.25	$2.50	$2.75	$3.00	Total
1 room ..	1	1	4	3	10	5	7	0	5	36
2 rooms..	0	0	0	1	4	2	14	1	3	25
3 rooms..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
4 rooms..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total..	1	1	4	4	14	7	21	1	11	64

ing one room paid less than $2.00 a week, while in the same neighborhood an apartment of three or possibly even four rooms may be had for $8.00 or $10.00 a month. And it must be remembered that most of these families, when they first move into furnished rooms, are not only paying a high rent in proportion to the number of rooms but they are paying storage on their furniture at the same time.[11]

For some unexplained reason, rents are higher in the summer than in winter. In one house, rooms that are rented for

[11] It is interesting to note that families pay higher rents relatively than do single "roomers" in the same house. For example, a room for which a family would be obliged to pay $2.00 a week would be let to a man alone for $1.00, although the landlady would also be responsible for the care of the room in the latter case. This is only a further indication of the fact that families are charged high rents for the privilege of "light housekeeping."

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$3.00 a week in summer are offered for $2.00 in the winter. No one seems to be able to give a satisfactory reason for this—one landlady merely said, "You can't get more in winter."

It has already been pointed out that no attempt will be made in the present study to discuss the problem of furnished rooms in so far as they accommodate men and women who wish to live irregularly, and who find it easy to lose their identity in furnished rooms and maintain irregular household establishments. The presence of such people is, however, an important factor contributing to the demoralization of families who give up normal home life for furnished rooms. Charity visitors both on the West and the South sides furnished examples of cases in which young girls in respectable families had gone wrong because the families had been unfortunate enough to have disreputable neighbors in the furnished rooming-house in which they lived, and had not discovered the danger until it was too late.

The purpose of the present study has been to set forth one of the less conspicuous aspects of the housing problem in Chicago, and one that is believed to be important because of its singularly demoralizing effect on family life. It should be pointed out that this is something more than a local problem. In nearly every large city there are sections similar to those described in Chicago in which domestic life is driven out by business or industry or both, and during the period of transition, the houses which were once dignified and comfortable homes are crudely adapted for the use of the poor. Doubtless in many communities, the problem described in this study assumes as serious aspects as in Chicago.[12] With reference to the treatment of such property by the city nothing can be added to the conservative and yet far-seeing statement of Mr. Booth.[13] While, however, a suitable scheme of adaptation is being elaborated, certain obvious requirements in administration may be noted. Reasonably frequent disinfections should be required without special evidence of contagion having spread in these sections. The municipal

[12] See, e.g., Dinwiddie, *Housing Conditions in Philadelphia*, 23: "The filthiest living rooms were found in the furnished room houses." See also p. 19.

[13] Cited above in note 2.

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ordinance[14] requiring adequate toilet facilities should be made more definite. It may be too soon to look for a municipal ordinance which shall outlaw the one-room tenement for families with children, but in so far as the one-room tenement involves a violation of the ordinance requiring a minimum cubic air space in rooms used for living and sleeping purposes, a rigid enforcement of the ordinance may be demanded. It has already been pointed out that 15 per cent of the sleeping-rooms were illegally crowded, and nowhere is this overcrowding so harmful as in cases where a single room is used for all household purposes. The frequent inspection of such establishments for the purpose of enforcing this and the following sections in the health code should be rendered possible by an adequate appropriation and a larger staff of inspectors.

In addition to an enforcement of these ordinances, further improvement could be effected by more intelligent and far-seeing action on the part of the police department. There seems no reason why a territory still recognized as a residence district, though inhabited mostly by the families of the poor, should not be purged of the vicious element with which it is tainted.[15] But whether or not such a scheme of adaptation as suggested by Mr. Booth can be agreed upon, or a reasonable standard of decency, cleanliness, and sanitation enforced by the city, or the disorderly elements expelled by the police, it is clear that any charitable agency attempts the impossible if it attempts the rehabilitation of a family without making a removal from furnished rooms an inexorable condition of assistance.

[14] Tolman's Municipal Code, sec. 1225.

[15] And this means, of course, without transferring them to any other similar residence neighborhood. A request that the business invasion of the West Side be facilitated by the expulsion of these disorderly elements has been lodged with the mayor. (See the *Record-Herald,* October 8, 1910, containing a demand to this effect, signed by business firms.) This request is, however, accompanied informally by the following naïve and shocking statement by a representative of one of the petitioning firms: "The district north of West ——— Street and between the river and North ——— Avenue is ideal for a heavier manufacturing district. *employing only men,* practically, and there are *plenty of obscure* streets near it that *would permit of segregation there of the vicious* elements."—*Daily News.* October 7, 1910. The italics are ours, as is the comment that these "obscure streets" are now inhabited by a respectable tenement population, chiefly immigrants, of course.

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