

The GOLD COAST
AND THE SLUM

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY *of* CHICAGO'S
NEAR NORTH SIDE

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO & LONDON

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637
The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London

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Midway reprint 1983
Printed in the United States of America

International Standard Book Number: 0-226-98945-3
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 76-19218

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in the city of Chicago.¹ The police court of Chicago Avenue, like all other police courts in the slum, is the stage upon which the drama of slum life is enacted. In the police court all the troubles and conflicts of the slum are brought to light. In the police court the slum's strangely divergent patterns come into uncompromising conflict with the patterns of the conventional world.²

¹ The map facing p. 157 shows the distribution of residence of 674 persons arrested August 13-September 15, 1924, in the district bounded by the river, the lake, and North Avenue. It clearly shows the correlation between crime and the life of the slum. It is interesting to note that the world of furnished rooms, unconventional though it is, comes into relatively little conflict with the law, as compared with the slum. The population of the world of furnished rooms, largely from small towns and suburban communities, does not bring to the rooming-house conflict patterns. Its unconventionality lies rather in the realm of the private life, centering about the rise of a new code of sex relationships.

² Document 38: a police court journal.

CHAPTER VIII LITTLE HELL

West of the rumble and roar of the elevated, bounded on the south by "Smoky Hollow" and on the west by the river, notorious Goose Island, and a brick and steel barrier of railroad and industry, looking toward the German slums to the north, lies that tract known variously to the police, the newspapers, and the world at large as Tenement Town, Little Sicily, and Little Hell. Standing on sinister "Death Corner,"¹ in the heart of Little Hell, one can see, beyond the elevated structure and less than a mile to the east, the fashionable Drake Hotel and the tall apartments of Streeter-ville; while less than a mile to the south loom the Wrigley Tower and the broken skyline of the Loop. Yet Little Hell, or Little Sicily, is a world to itself. Dirty and narrow streets, alleys piled with refuse and alive with dogs and rats, goats hitched to carts, bleak tenements, the smoke of industry hanging in a haze, the market along the curb, foreign names on shops, and foreign faces on the streets, the dissonant cry of the huckster and peddler, the clanging and rattling of railroads and the elevated, the pealing of the bells of the great Catholic churches, the music of marching bands and the crackling of fireworks on feast days, the occasional dull boom of a bomb or the bark of a revolver, the shouts of children at play in the street, a strange staccato speech, the taste of soot, and the smell of gas from the huge "gas house"

¹ The corner of Oak and Cambridge streets, at the very steps of the church of St. Philip Benizi.

by the river, whose belching flames make the skies lurid at night and long ago earned for the district the name Little Hell—on every hand one is met by sights and sounds and smells that are peculiar to this area, that are "foreign" and of the slum.

Two generations ago this district was an Irish shantytown called Kilgubbin. A generation ago it was almost equally Irish and Swedish. Then the "dark people" began to come. At first they came slowly, meeting no little resistance.

Interview Pastor _____, of Chicago's largest Swedish church, at the corner of Elm and Sedgewick, to learn why he opposes the intention of the Lincoln Park Commission to put a playground there. "This is *our* neighborhood, a *Swedish* neighborhood," he explains. "The dark people have come in farther south in the ward. If a playground is put in our neighborhood we fear these people will come with their children to live in our neighborhood. . . ."

The Sicilian girls, timid and shy, come to Seward Park. They run to an empty swing. Two Swedish girls jump in, pushing them away. "Get out! Dagoes! Dagoes! You can't play here!" It is the same at the sandpiles and the "shoots." It is the same on the beaches. After the playground has been opened several months I pass one day and see a colored girl at the gate. She is talking earnestly to the Sicilians. "Sure you can go in. You got as much right to dem swings as anybody. I'm gwine in right now and show you—you come along." They follow Marie, the colored girl, who seizes the first empty swing in spite of protesting pushes from Swedish girls. The Sicilians look scared and defiant, but they get into a swing. Their Americanization has begun. . . .

The boys fight over the playground, too, but mostly outside. These fights are only partly for Seward Park; they are chiefly nationality gang-fights. The Swedish and Irish always win against the Sicilians. Even an onslaught led by a Sicilian boy on a horse ended in a rout for the Sicilians. . . .

¹ Document 36: "The Dark People Come."

But the Sicilians pushed slowly into the district. Industry was demanding cheap labor. Sicilians came in great numbers, especially in 1903-4, the tremendous Italian immigration year. In this river district of the Near North Side they found cheap living quarters. It was the old story of a competition of standards of living, colored somewhat by national antagonisms. The Irish and Swedish, more prosperous, moved out of the district and northward. And by 1910 Kilgubbin and Swede Town had become Little Sicily.¹

Little Sicily this district has remained. It now has a population of about 15,000 Italians of the first and second generations. Save for a few Genoese in the south of the district, this population is almost solidly Sicilian.² The heart of the colony lies in the area from Sedgewick Street west to the river, and from Chicago Avenue north to Division, though there is a considerable movement of the more well-to-do north among the Germans along Cleveland, Clybourn, and Blackhawk streets, and even north of North Avenue.

¹ Documents 37, 38, 39, and 40. In 1910, according to the United States census, there was in the Twenty-second Ward a population of 65,231 persons. Of these, 18,639 were Italian, and 14,709 German. The Germans formed a distinct colony between Division and Center streets; and the district in question, from Division Street south, had become almost solidly Sicilian. There were in 1910 but 1,716 Irish and 4,313 Swedish persons left in the entire ward. The Sicilian population has declined since 1910, with the general decline in population of the district as industry has moved in and as the Negroes have come in.

² How solidly Sicilian the population is, is revealed by a study of six blocks in the heart of the district. The schedules yield the following figures:

United States	43	Jewish	10
U.S. Colored	100	Polish	95
German	54	Swedish	90
Greek	5	Swiss	4
Irish	40	Russian (Jew)	5
Italian (Sicilian)	2,300		

OLD-WORLD TRAITS

Little Hell is an area of first settlement, an area into which immigrants have come directly from Europe, bringing with them their Old World tongue, and dress, and customs—persistent and divergent social patterns that condition the Sicilian's participation in American life.

"We are *contadini*." This phrase from the lips of the immigrant Sicilian is most revealing as to his social attitudes. The Chicago Sicilians have come largely from the villages and open country of Sicily, where they were poor, illiterate peasants, held down by the *gabellati* or landlords in a state little better than serfdom. Generations of this condition have led them to look upon this status as fixed, and as the horizon of their ambitions. Why should *contadini* send their children to schools to bother their heads with letters? And besides, in Sicily the boys go to work in the fields at fourteen. Why should they not go to work here? The peasant attitudes and devices that sufficed for the primitive agriculture of Sicily, moreover, are utterly inadequate to adjust the Sicilian to the laboring conditions of the industrial city.

The spirit of *campanilismo*, of loyalty to *paesani*, is another trait of the Sicilian significant for his attempts to adjust to city life. The Sicilian peasants' interests are literally limited by the skyline. His only interests are the local interests of his village. The man from even the adjoining town is a foreigner. The government is a vague something that collects taxes. The spirit of *campanilismo*, of dwelling under one's own church tower, of jealous loyalty to *Paesani*, to his fellow villagers, circumscribes the Sicilian's social, religious, and business life. Social control in the village is largely in terms of gossip; one must not be *sparlato*—spoken badly of. The old men, too, occupy a respected and influential position in the life of the family and the village.

But the family is the center of the Sicilian's life and interests. The Sicilian's virtues are domestic virtues. The events of his life center about the birth, christening, marriage, and death of members of his family. The man is head of the house, and exacts obedience from his wife and children. He even has a say in the affairs of his grown-up sons and grandchildren; it is a custom with force of law that the first child be named for the paternal grandfather or grandmother. The family becomes almost a clan. Even the godfather and godmother are

looked upon as blood relations. The interests of the family take precedence over those of the village. Its honor is jealously guarded, and upheld by feuds that endure for generations. Within the family the status of each member is fixed. The women and daughters are carefully protected and much secluded. The young girl is kept in the home until her marriage. The marriage and dowry are arranged by the parents. Grief over a death in the family is genuine and violent. But the funeral must have the proper degree of pomp to maintain the family's status in the community.

The attitude of the peasant toward the church is interesting. He is nominally Roman Catholic. A vein of superstition holds him to the church, but not to the point where it clashes with his own interests. His attitude toward the saints is proprietous and patronizing rather than reverent. His support of the church is part of his spirit of *campanilismo*. For generations he has been part of a community which centered about the parish church. He knows the advantages that may come from standing in with the church and the priest, who in Sicily is often a peasant like himself. While he harbors a skepticism as to the power of his local madonna, and has no illusions as to her, he would violently resent her being held up as a fraud by any other village. He goes little to church, yet there lurks in his mind the ghost of a fear that things might turn out, after all, to be as the priest pretends. The peasant woman, however, is very close to the church. It has been for generations the church of her family. Its colors, lights, miracles, and relics are an escape from her everyday life. It serves as a social meeting place for herself and her friends. The priest often acquires considerable power over the women, and every devout mother hopes to see one of her sons enter the priesthood. And yet the priest or friar is often enough jeered at. As in the time of Boccaccio, he is still the subject of jokes with double meaning.

Truth-telling is not counted among the virtues in Sicily. It has been remarked that there are liars, expert liars, and Sicilians. The Sicilian's attitude is well expressed in the proverb *La verità si dice a lu confessari* (one tells the truth to his confessor). The truth is a distressing curb to the vivid Sicilian imagination. Moreover, hospitality is counted among the greatest virtues; the host never distresses a guest or friend; and the truth is so frequently unpleasant.

Gambling is the great national Sicilian pastime. Lotto banks are

as frequent as wine and tobacco shops. Government lotteries are patronized even by the very poor, who thus squander most of their small earnings. Gambling contributes to the devastating poverty so characteristic of Sicilian life. If you ask a Sicilian in New York or Chicago, Why did you come to America? the answer is always the same, "We came for bread." Begging is a well-nigh universal practice seemingly attended by no disgrace. One is accosted every hour in the day, "*Eccellenza, morto di fame!*" (Kind sir, I am dying of hunger).

The *Mafia* is another significant Sicilian tradition. It has its roots in the long history of political oppressions and is purely political in nature. But its pattern of swift, violent, and secret vengeance has become a part of Sicilian life. The characteristic Sicilian attitudes of reserve and suspicion are bound up with it.

The net result of these Sicilian patterns is the "individualism" which is the Sicilian's outstanding characteristic from the point of view of the American community.¹

THE COLONY

From the various towns of western Sicily they have come, settling down again with their kin and townspeople here, until the colony is a mosaic of Sicilian towns. Larrabee Street is a little Altavilla; the people along Cambridge have come from Alimena and Chiusa Sclafani; the people on Townsend from Bagheria; and the people on Milton from Sanbuca-Zabut.² The entire colony has been settled in like fashion.

The colony centers about the church of St. Philip Benizi, and Jenner School, which is jealously spoken of as "our school."³ It has appropriated a "movie," which it has

¹ Document 41: "Sicilian Traits," by Helen A. Day, head resident of Eli Bates House, a social settlement in Little Sicily, who lived for a number of years in Sicily. (See Monroe, *The Spell of Sicily*; Rose, *The Italians in America*; and Park and Miller, *Old World Traits Transplanted*, for similar descriptions of Sicilian traits.)

² Document 41.

³ By an almost imperceptible pressure the Italians are forcing the Negro children out of Jenner school. See Document 41.

rechristened the "Garlic Opera House." West Division Street, the colony's principal street, is lined with Italian businesses and shops: numerous grocery stores and markets, florist shops, the Sicilian pharmacy, undertaking establishments, cobblers' shops, macaroni factories, cheap restaurants, pool rooms and soft drink parlors which are the lounging places of the second generation, and the barber shops which have replaced the saloon as the center of gossip for the older people. On the corner of Elm and Larrabee is a curb market. Along Oak Street are numerous stalls where fruit, vegetables, coal and wood, and oysters on the half-shell are sold. The shingles of the doctor and midwife are frequently seen. The vicinity of Oak and Townsend is the center of the colony's population. Many of the influential Sicilians live along Sedgewick however, the colony's eastern boundary and more prosperous and fashionable street.

Because of its isolated situation, due to poor transportation and the barrier of river and industry, Little Hell remained until the war relatively untouched by American custom, a transplantation of Sicilian village life into the heart of a hurrying American city.

Until 1914 the Sicilian colony in Chicago was an absolutely foreign community. The immigrants were mostly from villages near Palermo, though nearly all the Sicilian provinces are represented. The most important of the village groups are those from Alta Villa, Milicia, Bagheria Vicari, Ciminna, Termini-Imarezi, Monreahi, and the city of Palermo. These groups retained their identity, living together as far as possible, intermarrying, and celebrating the traditional feasts. Immigrants who settled in Louisiana came up to join their village colony. Those who had been leaders in Sicily retained their power here and, having greater force and intelligence, made contracts with local politicians, police officials, labor agents, and real estate dealers, and became the go-betweens for their colony and the outside-world labor agents.

Women continued to live as they had in Sicily, never leaving their homes except to make ceremonial visits or to attend mass. The presence of several garment factories in the district made it possible for them to earn by doing finishing at home. In later years hundreds of women went into the garment factories to work, some taking the street cars out of the district; but they went to and from work in groups, their shawls carefully wrapped about them.

In the entire district there was no food for sale that was not distinctly foreign; it was impossible to buy butter, American cheese, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, green corn, etc., but in season artichokes, cactus fruit (*fichi d'India*), pomegranates, cocozella, and various herbs and greens never sold in other parts of town were plentiful. There were no bookstores. Italian newspapers had a limited circulation, and the Chicago daily papers were sold at only two transfer points on the edge of the district. There were no evidences of taste in dress or house decoration. This group seemed to have had no folk music, but took great pleasure in band concerts when spirited marches and melodies from Verdi's operas were played. There was no educational standard; the older people were almost all illiterate; they accepted this as natural, and explained it by saying, "We are *contadini*, and our heads are too thick to learn letters." Some of the younger ones had had a little elementary training, but with very few exceptions no one in the colony had gone beyond the *quarta elementaria*. Few had seen military service or learned trades, except, of course, the tailors, barbers, and shoemakers. One heard of an occasional cabinet maker, harness maker, soldierer, carpenter, or mason, but none followed his trade here, as the training did not fit him to American methods. Many who had worked in the orchards in Sicily found their way to South Water Street and worked as truckers and fruit packers, and, becoming familiar with the way produce was handled, started their friends out as fruit and vegetable peddlers, thus establishing a wholesale business for themselves. Most of the men, however, were sent by their leaders to the railroads and building contractors as laborers. . . .

Individually, Sicilians seem to vary as much in their manner and ideals as Americans, but as a group they have certain very marked characteristics: reserve, suspicion, susceptibility to gossip, timidity, and the desire to *fa figura*. Intense family pride, however, is the outstanding characteristic, and as the family unit not only includes those

related by blood, but those related by ritual bonds as well (the *comune* and *compare*), and as intermarriage in the village groups is a common practice, this family pride becomes really a clan pride.

The extent to which family loyalty goes is almost beyond belief; no matter how disgraced or how disgraceful a member may be, he is never cast off; the unsuccessful are assisted; the selfish are indulged; the erratic patiently borne with. Old age is respected, and babies are objects of adoration. The self-respect of a man can be gauged by the number of his children, and the women seem to accept the yearly bearing of a child as a privilege. Both children and adults seem satisfied with the social opportunities offered within the family itself. The births, baptisms, christenings, betrothals, marriages, and deaths furnish the occasion for ceremonial visits and festivities. Traditional religious forms and superstitions are observed on these occasions, but the church and the priest seem adjuncts rather than the center of the various rites.

The leaders of the village groups organize brotherhoods for the purpose of perpetuating the feast of the patron saint and to arrange the elaborate funerals with which they honor the dead. The societies meet each month, collect dues, have endless and excited discussions over the petty business that is transacted, with, however, most serious regard for rules of order. Some of the *fedeltaenza* have women's auxiliaries, but they are directed entirely by the men, and the women seem to have no voice in the conduct of affairs; they pay dues and march in the processions. The annual feast is the great event of the year, exceeded in importance by Easter only. The group responsible for a feast put up posters announcing the day and the program, and through committees arrange for all the details of the celebration; electric-light festoons are strung across the streets, concessions for street booths are sold, bands are hired, band stands are erected, and the church is paid for a special mass and for the services of the priest who leads the procession. The whole community participates to some extent, but those from the village whose patron is being honored make the most elaborate preparation in their homes. . . . Those who have been ill or suffered physical injury during the year buy wax figures of the part that was affected—legs, hands, breast, etc.—to carry in procession; others carry long candles with ribbon streamers to which money is affixed by a member of the brotherhood who rides on the shrine and exhorts the crowds to make their offering. The shrine is

lowered to the street every hundred feet or so, and little children are undressed, their clothes left as an offering, and they are lifted to kiss the lips of the saint. Sometimes a blind or lame child is carried about on the shrine in the hope of a miraculous cure. The climax is the flight of the angels. The shrine is set in the middle of the street in front of the church, and two children are lowered by strong ropes so that they are suspended just over the figure of the saint, where they sway while chanting a long prayer.

The offerings made during the most important of these feasts amount to from four to six thousand dollars. This money goes into the treasury of the *fratellanza* and is used for the expense incurred by the *festa* and for the death benefit. There are those who say that tribute is paid to certain individuals as well.

These feasts are not approved by the priest, and people say that trouble is started by the jealousy aroused when one village tries to outdo the other. It certainly is true that at these *festas* there is often a shooting.

The position of women in the Sicilian homes in this district is hard to define. The general impression is that women are slaves to their husbands, but this is far from true except in the cases of very ignorant and primitive types. The head of the family takes the responsibility of protecting the women and girls very seriously, and for this reason women have little life outside their homes. It is a mark of good breeding for a man to show *la gelosia* regarding his wife and daughters, and it would be a sign of disrespect to them if he did not guard them carefully. Within the home, however, the wife directs the household, and it is not unusual for her to take the lead in family affairs, such as the expenditure of money, plans for the children, or the choice of friends.

When a girl reaches the age of twelve her freedom comes to an end; she is considered old enough to put away childish things. Until she is married she is not supposed to have any interest outside her home, except school or work, and with these two exceptions she is not supposed to be out of her mother's sight. A family that fails to observe this rule is subject to criticism.

A marriage is arranged by the parents as soon as a suitable young man of their village presents himself. The girl is not consulted and often does not even know whom she is to marry until the matter is all

settled. After the girl is promised her fiancé must be consulted before she can go out, and she never appears in public without her mother or father in attendance. It has become the custom to have a civil ceremony performed shortly after betrothal. This does not constitute a marriage, and often it is several months or even a year or two before the actual marriage takes place. Meanwhile the engaged couple meet only in the presence of their parents or attend various family ceremonies together, always suitably chaperoned.

Sometimes a girl is coveted by a man considered undesirable by her parents, or by one who did not know her before she was engaged. In such a case the man may try to force his attentions on her in the hope of attracting her in spite of her parents or her promise. If she does not respond and will not elope voluntarily, it is not unusual for him to try to take her by force, either carrying her off himself or getting his friends to kidnap her and bring her to some secret place. When a girl becomes engaged her family is on the lookout for just such occurrences, and if they have any suspicion that she is being pursued she is kept a prisoner until she is safely married. If the man is known he is dealt with in no uncertain way—told to stop or take the consequences.

If a girl permits herself to be kidnaped the affair is usually ended with the blessings of all concerned, though the jilted one sometimes makes it necessary for the couple to move to another part of town, at least until he consoles himself with another wife. If a girl is carried away entirely against her will there may be bloodshed as a result.

Not all kidnappings occur in this way; often impatient men, tiring of the long and ceremonious period of betrothal and failing to persuade the fiancée to elope, try to carry her away. A well-bred girl will put up a good fight to escape, and if she succeeds, the engagement is broken; but if she is forced to submit, the family accept the situation and all is forgiven. There are, of course, many voluntary elopements by young people who are attracted by one another and who, because of family differences, could never get the consent of their parents.

Seduction is an almost unheard-of thing among this foreign people, and in the few instances where a girl has been wronged it has meant certain death to her betrayer. Not long ago a man seduced a girl and left town when he discovered she was pregnant. Her family moved from the district, and after a few months the man, Piazza, re-

turned. The girl's brothers met him and seemed friendly, so he agreed to visit their new home. Shots were heard by neighbors, and when the police arrived they found Piazza and the girl's oldest brother dead. The bodies were seated on opposite sides of the table, and it is supposed that both drew and fired their revolvers simultaneously.

During the last four years there has been a great change; the colony is slowly disintegrating; old customs are giving way. Contacts with the outside world, through work and school, have given boys and girls a vision of freedom and new opportunity. They are going to night school and making their friends outside the old circle. They are out of patience with the petty interests and quarrels of the older group, and refuse to have their lives ordered by their parents, whom they know to be ignorant and inexperienced. Families are not being broken up; the deep affections still persist; and though the old folks have misgivings, in their indulgent way they are letting the new generation take the lead and are proud of their progressive sons and daughters. Young married couples are making their homes north of the old district, within easy reach of their parents, but away from the old associations. Evidences of refinement are seen in their homes and in their manner, and their children are dressed and fed according to most modern standards.¹

"DEATH CORNER" AND THE BLACK HAND

Before the war, contacts with the outside world were few, and principally those made by the men on the job. But even on the job they worked chiefly in gangs of their countrymen. Such accommodations as had to be made with the larger city were made through the steamship agent, the *padrone*, and the banker, who were powers in the colony in its early days.

Certain of their Sicilian traditions, however, inevitably brought them into conflict with American custom and law. The corner of Oak and Cambridge streets long ago became

¹ Document 42: Report on the Sicilian colony in Chicago (manuscript) by Marie Leavit, quoted by Park and Miller, *Old World Traits Translated*, pp. 153-58.

known throughout the city as Death Corner, because of the frequent feuds that were settled there by shootings or stabbings. Little Hell has been long notorious for its unsolved murders.¹ The American courts and police are powerless to deal with the situation. This is due in part to the nature of the American legal machinery. In Sicily the police worked secretly; an informant's name is never known. But in America an informant must appear in court. And to inform is to invite swift reprisals. Consequently the already reserved and suspicious Sicilian shrugs his shoulders—"And if I knew? Would I tell?"

Taking advantage of this situation has grown up the Black Hand. Weekly bombings are almost a tradition in Little Sicily. The Black Hand is not an organization.² Its outrages are the work of lawless individuals or of criminal gangs. But it trades upon the reputation of the *Mafia*, the fear of which is deeply ingrained in the Sicilian heart.³

¹ Every year for the past eighteen years there have been from twelve to twenty murders in the square half-mile of Little Sicily (Marie Leavit, *loc. cit.*).

² Document 43 and Park and Miller, *Old World Traits Translated*, pp. 238-60.

³ Document 44: "Antonio Moreno versus Tradition." Antonio Moreno lived on Cambridge between Chicago Avenue and Oak. He was a day laborer, but had gotten a little money. He received Black Hand letters stating that his boy would be kidnaped unless he gave a certain sum of money. After much worry he decided to break the Sicilian custom and to tell the police and ask for their help and protection. The boy was kidnaped and no trace could be found of him for several weeks. With advice from the police Moreno answered the next Black Hand letter with marked money. The boy was returned at the place and hour promised. Moreno had told what persons he suspected, and there were arrests and convictions. Two brothers, prominent in politics, were sentenced to the state's prison for a term of years. It was learned, of course, that Moreno had talked to the police. He was furnished protection, one detective with him by day as he worked on the city streets and one by night guarding his home. This protection continued for a

This type of crime has been carried on to such an extent that, though the majority of those in the colony are honest and industrious laborers, nearly everyone seems to feel that he is in constant danger of either becoming the victim of a plot or of being forced to involve himself with the gang.

Continental Italians and those of other nationalities who live in the district may own well-stocked stores or acquire a reputation for wealth, but are never molested or threatened, but a Sicilian who shows any sign of prosperity almost invariably begins to receive threatening letters, and, though a love of display is a national characteristic, few have the courage to raise their standard of living as long as they continue to live in the district. The streets lying in the heart of the colony are thought to be centers of danger, so there has been a tendency to move toward the boundaries, or a few blocks beyond, and though they still live within easy walking distance and return daily to visit friends, attend church, patronize the shops, etc.

In the district itself it is considered very bad form to discuss these affairs. No one alludes to them voluntarily, or in plain terms speaks of a murder. A murdered man is spoken of as the "poor disgraced one," and the murders or persecutions as "trouble." Certain men are called *mafiosi*, but this generally means only that they are domineering, swaggering, and fearless, and no one would think of making a direct accusation. There are men who are said to be "unwilling to work for their bread," and certain names are never mentioned without a significant raising of eyebrows. The term Black Hand is never used except jokingly, nor does one hear the words *vendetta*, *omertà*, or *feudo*, though everyone is imbued with the sentiments for which they stand. In the whole colony there is no one so despised as an informer, nor is it thought desirable to show an interest in another's private affairs.

Moreno's wife died—it was said, because of her terror over the whole affair. The house in which he lived was practically deserted because people feared it would be dynamited.

After a short period the two brothers were pardoned, having served practically none of the sentence. When they returned to the city they were met by a brass band. An automobile awaited them, and in this they were driven slowly through Cambridge Avenue to their home, escorted by the band and a good procession of men and boys. This procession was perhaps chiefly political adherents. Moreno lived in constant terror of Black Hand vengeance.

There is a general belief that men who are murdered usually deserve their fate. Murdered men are not buried from the church unless a large sum is paid for a special mass.

The American press and police attribute all these "Italian killings" to the Black Hand, and consider them inevitable. Every so often the newspapers print an interview with a police official in which a certain number of murders are prophesied to occur in this district, and the public is given to understand that the situation is hopeless. When a murder is committed it is either reported as a minor occurrence, in a single paragraph, or absurdly elaborated in highly romantic style. A few years ago the chief of police, on being urged to have a careful study made of the situation, dismissed the matter by saying, "Oh, we've always had trouble up there; they never bother anyone but each other."¹

This attitude of the police, based upon their inability to deal with the situation, dealing harshly with the occasional Sicilian criminal apprehended and ignoring the rest, is reflected in the Sicilian's attitude toward the American law.

There is no respect for law in Little Sicily. The law collects the taxes. It takes your children away when they are old enough to work, and puts them in school. It batters down your door and breaks open your kegs of wine. The Sicilian fails to comprehend all this. Came in the other morning. . . . "No free country, no free country! I pay four policeman \$16 each a month. Then they bring in police from other district and raid me! No free country!"

You can't convince a Sicilian that the police, the courts, or the law are on the square. A gang of Sicilians was arrested recently for stealing butter. One of them skipped. "Police no good. It blow over. New election, I all right. If me know big man, he talk to judge. Judge no want to lose job. He say 'you go home.'" Everyone is supposed to have his price. The "fixer" is one of the colony's most influential men.

But the wife of this man wrung her hands, and tears ran down her cheeks: "Oh, he will go to Joliet, he will go to Joliet, even if he did not do!" There is no faith in justice. They see the innocent "sent up" while the guilty walk the streets of Little Sicily.

¹ Document 42: Report on the Sicilian colony in Chicago, Marie Leavitt.

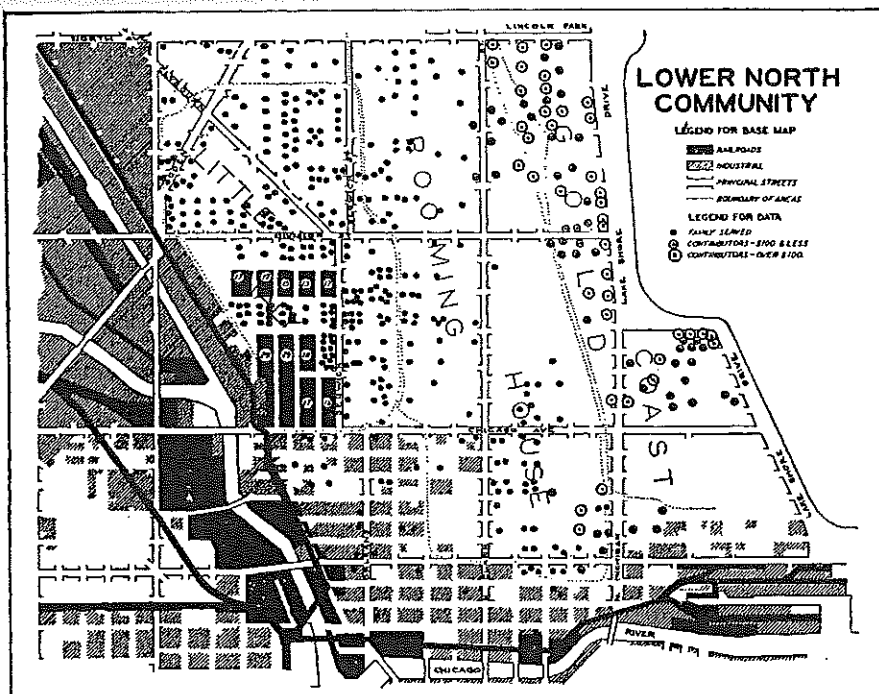
To a large element in the colony the law is a natural enemy. Even to the younger boys, bating the "cop" is a game, and a ride in the "wagon" is a joy ride. Those who successfully defy the police are among the colony's heroes. Young men openly boast of their "hauls" and of their gun-play. When the bands march up Sedgwick during the fiestas, they always stop in front of the house of T_____, the moonshine king, to serenade him. A year ago the whole colony turned out, with white horses, and thousands of dollars' worth of flowers, and blaring bands, to march in Rini's funeral. And who was Rini? Formerly the proprietor of a tough dive on Clark Street, and convicted of murder and hung in New Orleans. The hero of the colony.¹

This attitude of the Sicilian toward the law, and of the police toward the Sicilian, has made of Little Hell a stamping ground for criminal gangs. Their operations center about the "bootlegging" and "hi-jacking" business. Politics plays its part in the situation; and there have been in the not distant past "understandings" between the "kings" of Little Hell and officialdom.²

The economic status of the Sicilian has involved him in another train of maladjustments. The greatest concentration of poverty in Chicago, as revealed by the giving of relief, is in Little Sicily. The Sicilian, of peasant origin, is inevitably an unskilled laborer. His acceptance of his status as *condemni* makes him difficult to unionize effectively. Seventeen per cent of the incomes of Sicilian families in this district fall short of the dependency budget worked out by the United Charities of Chicago; and 35 per cent fall short of the minimum independence budget. Considering these facts in the light of the prevalence of begging in Sicily, it is

¹ Documents 41 and 64.

² Not long ago Aiello, leader of a North Side beer gang undertook to dispute "Scarface" Al Capone's sovereignty on the South Side. Aiello's bakery shop on Division Street was riddled by machine gun fire from a passing automobile, and Little Hell was precipitated into another gang war.



POVERTY AND PHILANTHROPY.—A map of the relief cases of the United Charities might well serve as a map of the slum. Economic inadequacy is an outstanding characteristic of the slum. The map, with its marked concentration of poverty in Little Sicily, indicates the difficulty faced by the immigrant family in making the economic adjustment to American life. The concentration of contributors along the Gold Coast, and of those receiving aid in Little Hell, brings out clearly the amazing distances which separate the adjacent but highly segregated areas of the inner city.

not surprising to find much pauperism and many professional charity cases.¹

The immigrant is utterly unable to comprehend or to participate in the political life of the American city. The spirit of *campanilismo*, limiting the Sicilian's interests to his village group, paralyzes his political competence. The Sicilian vote, with the immigrant vote at large, is a commodity upon the market. It is controlled by the bosses and kings of the colony, marshaled, if need be, with the aid of gangs and automatons, and traded to the higher-ups for petty political favors. There is no "Italian vote" in Little Hell.²

In spite of these maladjustments which have grown out of the Sicilian's Old World background, there is not the disorganization to be found in Little Hell that is to be found in many other immigrant areas—across the river in Little Poland, for example. This is due to the persistent emotional attitudes that center around the Sicilian family tradition.³ Family control in Little Hell has remained remarkably effective. The map showing divorce and desertion on the Near North Side reveals that Little Sicily is an area practically without divorce, and with relatively little desertion.⁴ And

¹ Document 47: "A Short Study in Poverty in Chicago's Little Sicily," by E. L. Rauber; Document 48, a summary of family schedules on file at the Lower North Community Council; and family schedules of the Lower North District of the United Charities and of Eli Bates House. Less recent studies are "The Concentration of Misery in Chicago," the *First Semiannual Report of the Department of Public Welfare to the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Chicago* (March, 1915); and "The Italian in Chicago," *Bulletin of the Department of Public Welfare of the City of Chicago*, Vol. II, No. 3.

² Documents 49 and 50.

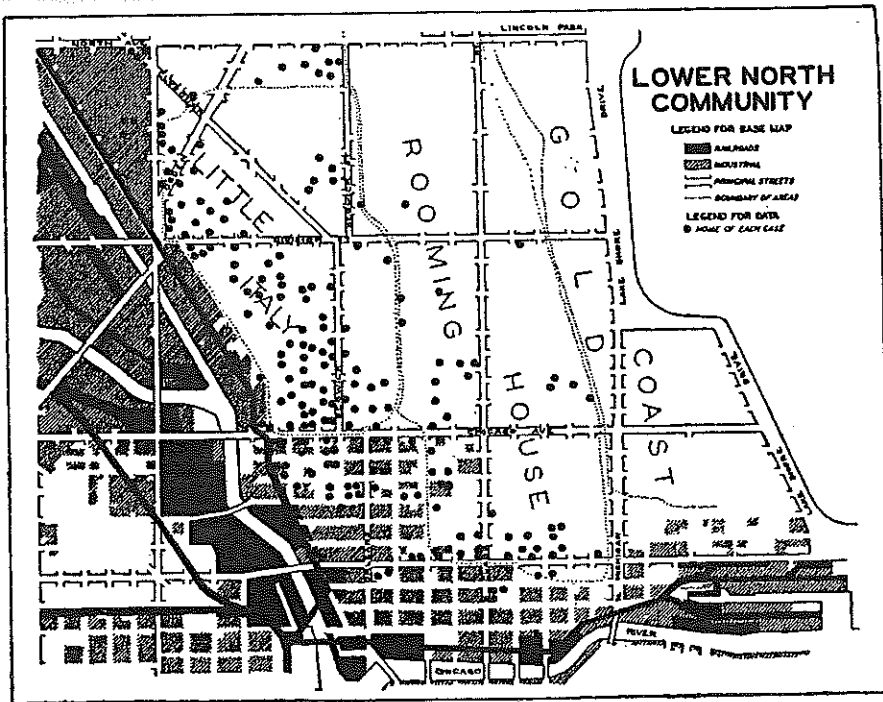
³ Document 51: A group of several hundred papers, written by school children of the Near North Side about their communities and activities, interestingly bring out the persistence of this family organization into the second generation of the Sicilian.

⁴ See p. 129.

this family control has persisted despite economic and cultural tensions within the family, and the family's slum environment.

But even the Sicilian family is slowly disintegrating with the increased contacts of the second generation with American life. These contacts are made on every hand. The school holds up customs and ideals unlike those of the family and the community. The movie, for which Sicilian children have a passion, presents situations wholly outside the definitions of the community. The increasing mobility of the second generation, of the boy driving his truck or taxi, of the girl working in the Loop, takes it out of the old community into situations beyond its controls, into contacts with divergent standards and behavior. And there is an increasing amount of personal disorganization among the American-born. The second generation finds itself trying to live in two social worlds. The same situations are defined in contradictory terms by the school, for example, on the one hand, and by the family on the other. If the child conforms to the American definition he is a delinquent in the eyes of the family; if he conforms to the family definition he is a delinquent in the eyes of the American law.

The child cannot live and conform in both social worlds at the same time. The family and colony are defined for him in his American contacts by such epithets as "dago," "wop," "foreign," and the like. He feels the loss of status attached to his connection with the colony. In his effort to achieve status in the American city he loses his *rapporti* with family and community. Conflicts arise between the child and his family. Yet by virtue of his race, his manner of speech, the necessity of living in the colony, and these same definitive epithets, he is excluded from status and inti-



JUVENILE DELINQUENCY.—Juvenile delinquency is characteristic not of nationality, race, nor intelligence, but of the slum. It is particularly characteristic of the foreign slum, where the second generation is trying to live and adjust in two worlds with conflicting definitions of situations (data after Shaw).

mate participation in American life. Out of this situation, as we have already seen, arises the gang, affording the boy a social world in which he finds his only status and recognition. But it is by conforming to delinquent patterns that he achieves status in the gang. And every boy in Little Hell is a member of a gang. This is substantially the process of disorganization of the Sicilian boy of the second generation. Out of it grows all manner of social disorganization. There is, however, relatively little disorganization among Sicilian girls. The old family controls still seem effectively to define their behavior.

SOCIAL FORCES IN LITTLE HELL

Control in the colony is largely in terms of personal relationships. There are no organizations, nor individuals, that have an effective influence throughout the colony. Rather, control goes back to the spirit of *paesani* and the village neighborhoods. Every village group has its lodge. Each lodge is organized about the most influential man of the village. And it is these men, with their lodges, who are the social forces, the foci of attitudes and collective action, in Little Sicily.¹

The church retains little effective control in the colony. This is not remarkable in the light of the peasant's attitude toward the church in Sicily itself. Moreover, as in nearly every Sicilian colony, the priest is a northern Italian, which makes *rapport* between church and community difficult if not impossible. All things considered, the priest at the church of St. Philip Benizi has remarkable prestige and influence. The immigrant generation still desires to dwell in the shadow of the church's tower. Even the second genera-

¹ Document 52.

tion would not think of letting a christening, a marriage, or a death pass without the traditional sanction of the church. But the church is none the less rapidly losing its control over the second generation. And it has no great influence upon community action.¹

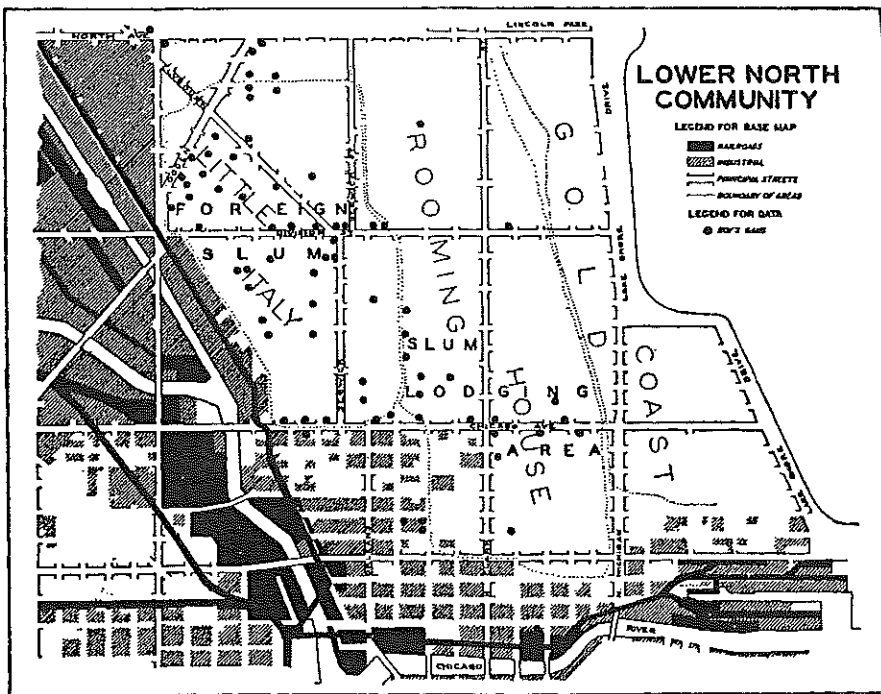
Little Hell, like every immigrant colony, has its settlement. And the settlement aids those whom it reaches in innumerable accommodations. However, the activities of Eli Bates House, following the settlement tradition, are institutional in nature. It does not participate in the currents of community life, and, like the church, has little or no effective influence upon the direction of community action.²

Far more influential in the currents of community life than any social agency is the local politician, the ward boss, and the precinct captain.

These political leaders are not theorists; they are workers who set for themselves an objective, definite and alluring, and then go about organizing all the forces around them to work together for that goal. Their methods may seem crude and unscientific, but they are human; a United States congressman who hails from a ward of foreign-born citizens in a Middle West city seems to have a private key to the mint, so full are his pockets always of half-dollars available for friends in need. A Polish washerwoman in this man's district said to her employer, "I cannot come next Tuesday."

¹ Document 53.

² Out of the settlement grew the Italian Progressive Club. It numbers among its members bankers and attorneys once boys in the colony and the settlement. It is a fraternal organization with educational aims, and takes no part in politics as an organization. It attempts to draw into its membership the more promising of the younger generation. But its influence in the community is limited. Its members, like the progressive members of the second generation of any immigrant group, tend to move out of the colony. It is a fact not without significance, however, that not one in five of the second generation leaves the colony. And the population of Little Sicily is now more of the American-born second generation than of the Sicilian-born immigrant generation. See Document 41.



THE GANG.—The boys' gang, like juvenile delinquency, is characteristic of the life of the slum, particularly of the immigrant slum. It is a juvenile pattern of life that grows up in the interstices between old world cultures and the cultures of the American community, and in those areas of the city where family and community control are disintegrating (data after Thrasher).

"Why not, Maggie?"

"It's election day and I must stand on the corner."

"What do you stand on the corner for?"

"For five dollars."

"But what do you do on the corner?"

"I do nothing—Stanley K. pins a paper on me."

Tangible proof that Stanley is a more generous friend than the employer is found by Maggie in the two dollars' difference in the daily wage, and as adviser in matters of general interest he must be wiser than less generous friends. No hour is too late or too early for this honorable member of Congress to get out of bed to go to the police station to bail out an unfortunate neighbor who has imbibed too much and become too noisy, or by other ways that are dark has found himself in the clutches of the law. Not only Mr. K.'s unflinching willingness to go, but his demonstrated influence with the powers that be when he arrives, makes him a worthy leader in the eyes of his followers. At local weddings and neighborhood funerals he is the outstanding social ornament; his well-cut suit, white spats, top hat, and stick lend dignity and grace to the occasions, and it may be that he has started the subscription paper that has made so grand a ceremony possible. His objective—a seat in the municipal council, or in Congress, or a judgeship, or even a place on the precinct or ward committee—may not seem to us worthy of the coherent, enthusiastic following he is able to acquire, but he has it, and unless we have something better to offer, or take our place at the wire with him, he and his fellows will leave us far behind in the race for neighborhood organization and achievement. . . .

We often wonder at his stock of detailed knowledge; and envy. But it isn't strange; he has visited again and again in every home in the precinct, and each time he goes he has a definite errand: an invitation to a precinct meeting, a visit, and some new family situation is revealed. If in any settlement we had such an aggregation of knowledge of the homes and lives of the neighbors in one precinct as the "boss" of that precinct has, we would be rich indeed. We could acquire it if we would. They are not trained social workers, these precinct leaders; they are just neighborhood people, and perhaps that is one of the secrets of their success.

are employed by Greeks; there are five restaurants to the block in the vicinity, and half of them are owned by Greeks who employ only Greeks. All trading and dealing, so far as possible, is carried on through fellow-countrymen. In many cases a Greek will try to "beat" an American to help one of his countrymen. Consequently he has the reputation of being "tricky" in business. Few poverty cases come to the charities from among the Greeks, the well-to-do helping out their unfortunate countrymen.

Yet with all this clannishness the Greek population is relatively unorganized. It has no lodges and orders. The only Greek organization in America is the Orthodox church, and scarcely a fourth of the Greeks in Chicago belong to the local churches. The Greek laborers do not join labor unions. There are no Greek political organizations of any importance.

The men spend their evenings in coffee houses, moving picture theaters, pool-rooms, and dance halls along Clark Street and Chicago Avenue. A great deal of card-playing and gambling goes on. Turkish coffee is served, and everyone sips it. There is much talk upon a variety of subjects. Socialism is a frequent topic. Many believe they are being abused, yet out of fifteen who were questioned as to whether they would like to return to Greece, not one answered in the affirmative. Politics is sometimes discussed; old-world affairs get their share of attention. There is usually a dominant conversationalist at each table, and his ideas prevail. The talk is largely in Greek. In the pool-rooms the talking is loud and rough. At times it is necessary to warn of the possibility of police raids if the place does not quiet down.

Chicago's Greek newspaper, the *Greek Daily*, is little read by this North Side population. Little interest is taken in local questions or politics. The Greek proceeds about his business of making money, with little regard for the com-

Document 33.

munity about him. Indeed, these North Side Greeks scarcely form a colony of their own. They are merely a part of the lodging-house population of the slum, a shifting population held in temporary equilibrium by common language and economic interest.

A LITTLE BLACK BELT

Into the heart of Little Hell has come, since the war, a fourth invasion which has gradually darkened its streets: the Negro from the rural South. "Shore-croppers" and cotton pickers from rural Georgia, Mississippi, and Arkansas, ignorant and poverty stricken, they have succumbed to the lure of high wages that have prevailed in northern industrial cities since the shutting off of the stream of immigrants from southwestern Europe. Settling first in small numbers along Wells and Franklin streets, as the immigration grew they pushed westward into the tenements of Little Sicily until today on many of the streets of Little Sicily one hears the soft voice and sees the black face of the Negro as frequently as he hears the staccato speech and sees the brown skin of the southern Italian.

The story of this Negro invasion is the old story of the competition of standards of living. Willing to live in dwellings that even the Sicilian had abandoned, willing to pay higher rents than the Sicilian had paid, meeting these rents by overcrowding, the Negro has slowly but steadily pushed his way in among the Sicilians, who, in turn, have begun to move northward toward North Avenue, into the German slum. With the district steadily deteriorating before the encroachment of industry, the ultimate replacement of the Sicilian by the Negro would seem only to depend upon the continuance of the immigration from the South.

They are not only in, but of, the neighborhood. Most of our charity organization society visitors, our school teachers, our visiting teachers, our park and playground staff workers, and certainly most of our boards of directors live miles from the neighborhoods where people they serve live. No matter how kind and friendly and helpful they are, "there are some things about us they cannot understand because they do not live here." Even our settlements, who like to feel that we are a stable and stabilizing element, have an astonishing "labor turnover," and are always having to introduce new workers to our neighbors. The precinct boss has lived, does live, and will live there, and although he may now and then switch from party to party, "for the good of the service," or some other reason, he still is he, and the neighbors know him.¹

The village lodges, the precinct captains, and the kings who have utilized their local followings to secure understandings with the police, the ward leaders, and the politicians higher up, constitute the hierarchy of control in Little Sicily. There is no consciousness in the colony of itself as such, no common sentiment, no common interest. Only twice in the history of the colony has there been anything approaching community feeling: once a dozen or more years ago, when the proselyting activities of Protestant missions resulted in several nights of street fighting; and more recently, in the growing sentiment against the invasion by the Negro. In the last analysis Little Sicily is still a mosaic of Sicilian villages.²

West of the elevated, blackened by the smoke of industry, crowded against the gas house, known to the city at large as Tenement Town and Little Hell, Little Sicily is a different world from the world which parades the Esplanade, a different world from the world which cooks over sterno

¹ Harriet E. Vittum, "Politics from the Social Point of View," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (1924), pp. 423-25.

² Document 54.

stoves in rooming-houses, a different world from the world that gathers in stables and garrets to argue heatedly and endlessly over obscure schools of art. There are those who, knowing it only through headlines in the newspapers or appeals of social agencies, knowing only its poverty, its squalor, and its crime, think of it merely as a world of tragedy. But to those who have participated in its life it has its pathos and humor as well.

We like living here. The Italians are good neighbors, and we like them. They do funny things, of course. Garbage cans disappear from alleys, to reappear on stoves as washboilers. Spring finds the winter's ashes in the bathtub—if there is one. An Italian making six dollars a day at the least takes food from the charities, the proceeds of the *Tribune's* "Give till It Hurts" campaign, and anything else that he can get. A father went to a public school to protest against paying for his children's books. "Free country, everything free!" he exclaimed from his seal-lined overcoat. The Italians save—but when they die they spend all the insurance on a funeral, bound that no one shall have a grander.

Yes, they are funny. But after all I wonder if there is as much happiness on the Gold Coast as over in these basement rooms. When the father comes home at night, six or seven children run to meet him, and a warm supper is always ready; and summer nights—the streets—you would go a long way to hear the concertinas.¹

¹ Document 55.