

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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CHAPTER III
THE GOLD COAST

The "Gold Coast," extending along the North Shore from East Chestnut Street to Lincoln Park, and west to North State Parkway, is the home of the leaders of Chicago's "Four Hundred."

The Four Hundred are those who have "arrived." They form a self-conscious group. They have mores of their own—"good form" and the amenities of life are of enormous importance in their lives. To violate the social code is a vastly greater sin than to violate the Ten Commandments. A gentleman may drink, he may gamble, but under no circumstances may he appear at an afternoon tea in a morning coat, or at dinner without an evening jacket. How elaborate is this social code is attested by the bulk of Emily Post's *Blue Book of Etiquette*, a codification for the yearning "common," for those not to the manner born. The Four Hundred have their own papers, *Club-fellow* and *Town Topics*; the daily newspapers devote columns to their comings and goings; they have their own clubs, such as the Onwentsia and the Casino; their own summer colonies at Lake Forest, Hubbard Woods, and half a dozen other places. They live in a totally different world from that of the rest of the great city of which they are a part. Within this world they lead a life of kaleidoscopic activity, centering about the fashionable hotels along the Drive, fashionable resorts, "pet charities," the golf club, and the bridle path, to say nothing of the bridge and dinner table, with occasional trips to La Salle Street. And of the prerogatives of this world they are jealous.¹

Such is "society" at a first superficial glimpse. Such is the Gold Coast. For in Chicago all that is aloof and exclusive, all that bears the mark of *l'haute société*, is crowded

¹ Document 3. The documents upon which this chapter is based were written, without exception, by residents along the Gold Coast. Consequently they represent friendly insights and half-amused self-analysis, rather than jealous intolerance. For sufficient reasons, the documents are anonymously presented here.

along the strip of "drive" between the Drake Hotel and Lincoln Park, or along the quiet, aristocratic streets immediately behind it. Here is the greatest concentration of wealth in Chicago. Here live a large number of those who have achieved distinction in industry, science, and the arts. Here are Chicago's most fashionable hotels and clubs. Here live two thousand of the six thousand persons whose names are in the social register of Chicago and its suburbs, and these two thousand include in their number those who are recognized as the leaders of "society."

But if we look more deeply into the life that goes on within these luxurious hostelrys, these "exclusive" clubs, these stately and forbidding mansions, the picture is less clear. For what, after all, is "society"? At the question social leaders and society editors shake their heads, look bewildered, smile helplessly.

A generation ago the question would have been promptly answered: "Social position is a matter of family, breeding, aristocracy." The old "society" was a caste—very nearly, indeed, a clan. The old "assemblies" were almost a hereditary institution. The dowagers of the older families were the heads of the clan and the arbiters of social destiny. An invitation to the assemblies was a proved title of social rank. If one was received at the assemblies, one was received everywhere in "society."

But the growth of the city with its monetary standards and its economic organization, its startling mobility, and its very force of numbers was to change the nature of "society" just as it was to change every other phase of social life. The old "society," based on hereditary social position, has passed, to be replaced by a "society" of cliques and sets, of wealth and display, and, above all, of youth.

There is no society in Chicago as there used to be. Instead, there are numbers of small groups. One little group is dancing its head off, another is drinking its head off and hunting, and still another is madly playing bridge. Everyone is doing things madly and at a great pace. It is the pace which makes the small groups in the place of the older, broader, more dignified society. The little groups come together at "assemblies." But they don't mix—they divide into the same little groups of a dozen or two members, and dance together as if there weren't any other people in the ballroom. They don't wish to run the risk of new people, to talk to someone they don't particularly like, to dance with someone who doesn't dance well. They even try to duck the receiving line.

Society has no leaders such as it used to have—gracious, charming, genuinely hospitable older women. These women were real leaders. One must be on their lists to be recognized as belonging to society. They could invite whom they chose—an eccentric or a dandy, on occasion—and the fact that this person was invited to this house insured his courteous recognition by all. That is the real test of leadership. This leadership may still exist in Europe, and in some cities in this country, but not in the Chicago of today. Chicago society is in the hands of young people—cliques of very rich young people. The leadership is often in several cliques, or in one season one clique will be on top, and another season may find another in power. The pace is so fast, competition is so keen, that in practically all the smart cliques there is no one left of the type who is there because of good family, personal charm, and culture. These people must live up to the standards of the day—dress smartly, attend smart functions, entertain smartly and often—or they will be forgotten; and it doesn't take long to forget.

The society of today is topsy-turvy. No doubt it is due to the growth of the city. Great fortunes and great wealth have led to ostentation and display. The city is so large that society can no longer hold together. The faster pace of the city has put youth on the social throne.¹

¹ Documents 4 and 5. One of these documents was contributed by a woman who is a member of one of Chicago's oldest and most aristocratic families; the other by a man very popular in the society of today, and much sought after as a leader of social functions and charity entertainments. Their comments might almost have been lifted bodily from Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer's *The Social Ladder*, a history of society in New York.

This change in the nature of "society," which has come with the city's growth, can be phrased in a sentence: "One no longer is born to social position; one achieves social position by playing the 'social game.'" And this is as true of the "society" of London or of New York as it is of the "society" of Chicago.² In every great city hereditary and traditional social barriers are breaking down. "Society," in the old sense, is being replaced by the "social game," and in the Chicago of today one must constantly "play the game" to maintain that envied distinction known as social position.

THE SOCIAL GAME

The "social game" is a constant competition among those who are "in" for distinction and pre-eminence; a constant struggle upon the part of those who are not "in" to break into the circles of those who are. Perhaps as good a criterion as there is of social position, which is the goal in the "social game," is the *Social Register*, a thin blue book which one can own only by virtue of having one's name in, containing a complete list of Chicago's socially acceptable, with their universities, their clubs, their marriages, their connections, and their deaths. To have one's name in the *Social Register* "one must not be 'employed'; one must make application; and one must be above reproach."

¹ Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, *loc. cit.*, and Document 6.

² Document 3. For an interesting account of the mysteries of the *Social Register* see Norman S. Hall, "The Ins and Outs of American Society," *Liberty*, February 13, 1926. One of the amazing things about the *Social Register* is the utterly unquestioning acceptance which society accords to its verdicts. While talking with several of the acknowledged leaders of Chicago society one afternoon the writer asked what was the criterion of social position. It was agreed that acceptance by the *Social Register* was perhaps the safest criterion. Yet no one had the faintest idea who selected the names for the *Social Register*, or upon what basis they were included.

The *Social Register*, however, but sets the seal of approval upon those who have already arrived. It but certifies that they are already members of certain clubs, are seen at certain social functions, are on certain invitation lists.

There are certain events of the season to which *the* people are invited. The big events of the season are the Bachelors and Benedicts, late in November; the Some Bachelors; the First Assembly; the Twelfth Night Party; and the Second Assembly, the middle of January, by which time the season is pretty well over. The Assemblies get a few younger married people, but mostly the older people—no debs—and are a terrible bore.

There are, besides, the Service Club Play—a mixture of prominent people and people unheard of; the Junior League Play and Party—after Easter, when people are back in town before going away for the summer; the opera; and certain charity affairs—the Paderewski concert for the Children's Home, and the Chauve Souris for Eli Bates—where it counts to be seen on the main floor or in the boxes.

Then there are certain more general things to be in on—the Women's Exchange lunchroom, for one. Society women go there in committees, wait on tables, work hard for two or three hours. It's the "smart" thing to do; that's the psychology of it—it's "exclusive."

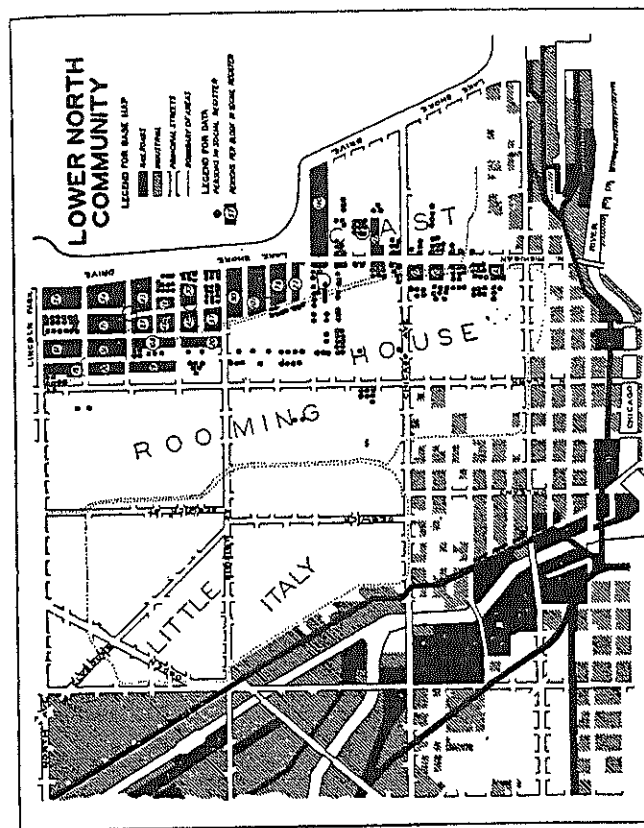
You can't refuse the invitations of the social season; if you do, you are dropped. Generally speaking, you're in if you're invited, and you're out if you're not.

Then, too, there are certain clubs, and the like, to which one *must* belong. You *immediately* place a man by his clubs. *The* clubs are the Casino and the Saddle and Cycle. The Onwentsia, Shore Acres, the Racquet, and Indian Hill are also good. Of the women's clubs, only the Friday Club is exclusive enough to mean much.

Churches mean nothing—people for the most part simply don't go. Certain of them are more or less "fashionable," though, and if one does go it is to St. James, St. Chrysostom's, or to the Fourth Presbyterian.

If one lives at a hotel, it must be at the new Lake Shore Drive Hotel, which is *the* hotel of the day, or at the Ambassador, the old "Mayflower of the Gold Coast."¹

¹ Document 6.



THE GOLD COAST.—Chicago's society is concentrated along the strip of lake shore north of "Streetsville," with a scattering on LaSalle, lower Rush, Huron, Superior, Ohio, and Cass, streets, fashionable a generation ago. This map, compared with those of the "World of Furnished Rooms" and "Little Sicily," brings out strikingly the segregation characteristic of the life of the great city. In this and succeeding maps the solid black areas indicate that the dots—here representing the residences of persons whose names appear in the *Social Register* (1923)—cluster too thickly to be individually represented.

It is about these clubs and hotels, these "events" of the season—assemblies, balls, the opera *première*, and the Easter parade—that the formal pageant of "society" moves. Invitations to assemblies and to membership in "smart" clubs are necessary plays in the social game. To some, indeed, they are coveted prizes. But within this pageant the "game" goes on for higher stakes: invitations to certain box parties at the opera, certain "dinners of roo" at the Casino, a dinner and dance at the Saddle and Cycle, to meet the Prince of Wales, at which "the heirs to the city's social throne are chosen"; eventual inclusion in the number of those who are recognized as swaying the destinies of the Four Hundred.

The means by which members of the Four Hundred become the arbiters of the social world, get into the top dozen, are many and varied. One accomplishes it by managing a world's fair and taking a prominent part in notable civic movements, whereupon she is taken up by the newspapers, and made—for the order in which and frequency with which names appear in the society column is a fairly accurate index of social influence. Another sponsors and heads the Casino Club; another is a patron of art; still others rise through money and lavish spending. Occasionally the sponsoring of some notable charity is the means of getting to the top.¹

Without the exclusive citadels of the Four Hundred is always a throng seeking to push its way in. The "social game" has created a new social type—the "climber." The wiles of the "climber" are many and devious. The most obvious step up is a brilliant marriage; but this route is open only to men.² The majority of climbers seek to buy their way into society—not openly, to be sure, but tactfully and insidiously, in the name of charity. Many "climb," too, by

¹ Document 3.

² It is seldom, indeed, that the wives of men who marry "beneath" them achieve social success.

clever stage management—taking up a titled foreign *émigré*, the writer of a best seller, or the latest sensation at the opera and making him the rage for a season.¹ The ability to contrive a brilliant *salon*, with a celebrity or two, and a few of “just the right people” as drawing cards has accomplished more than one social triumph. Finally, there are occasional knight errants of “society,” like the celebrated Ward McAllister of a generation ago, who achieve success by sheer force of personality.² Whatever route the climber elects to travel, a long and carefully planned campaign is required.

For example, Mrs. John Jones has social ambitions. She is the wife of a man who has made his fortune in the Northwest in lumber. She moves her family to Chicago. By applying, can she get her name in the *Social Register*? No one in the family is employed. The family name is above reproach—after all, a certain romance attaches to lumber. But no—she first has to be accepted socially. She must, as it is vulgarly put, “climb.” Now there are, of the six thousand who have their names in the *Social Register*, some two hundred, or perhaps three hundred, who form the “top layer”; and of these three hundred there are a dozen who are the “élite.” Mrs. Jones’s problem is to secure an invitation to dinner in one or more of the homes, of the “top layer” surely; of the “élite” if possible. But Mrs. Jones cannot accomplish this by inviting them first to her home; her invitation would go pointedly unanswered.

One Mrs. Jones, from an eastern manufacturing city, took apartments at one of the fashionable Drive hotels. Her little girl got acquainted about the hotel with the little girls of mothers whose names appear in the *Social Register*. Then she gave her little girl a birthday party to which these other little girls were invited. Their mothers then felt under obligation to her. She was invited to a tea, to a dance, and finally to a dinner. Then she had arrived. An invitation to a political meeting or a wedding means nothing—but opportunities. An invitation to tea is a first step. Then follow a dance, a luncheon, and

¹ Document 3; e.g., the social adventures of “Topsy and Eva.”

² See Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, *The Social Ladder*, pp. 205 ff.

finally a dinner, which is equivalent to a certificate of social acceptance—and the smaller the dinner, the more enviable the certificate.

More commonly, however, the ambitious climb by the “pet charity” route. For each of the socially prominent has her “pet” charity, or her pet political or social movement. Mrs. Van Derfelt has at her home an afternoon meeting of the Democratic Women’s Committee. Mrs. Jones is at the meeting. Afterward she goes up to Mrs. Van Derfelt: “Oh, Mrs. Van Derfelt, I’ve just heard about your interest in the Home for Crippled Children, and what a wonderful work it is doing. May I not contribute a little something?” Mrs. Van Derfelt then feels more or less obliged to invite Mrs. Jones to tea. The game goes on. And if Mrs. Jones plays her cards well, next year her name will be seen in the *Social Register*.

Still another wile of the climber is that of sending her children to a fashionable school, where they get acquainted with the children of the Four Hundred. Through the children the parents meet, and the first step is taken.³

The successful “climber” is an artist in self-advertisement, in getting and keeping her name in the society columns, in associating herself with just the “right” people and just the “right” things.³

The “social game,” whether that of getting in, or of staying in, requires a continual planning, maneuvering, reciprocation of invitations, effort to “keep in the swim.” For in the “society” of today one must constantly keep up the pace, or one is dropped. One’s position is never so assured that one can afford to relax one’s efforts—unless one is content to live in the memories of past successes.

¹ Document 3.

² See Document 7: A Mrs. _____, whom you and I both know, never misses a trick; she gets a position on a committee of a fashionable club, or on the same board of trustees with Mrs. _____, and you see it in the *Dowagers’ Column* the next day; she sees everyone at the box parties: “I’m just sure I saw you in Mrs. McCormick’s box last night.” A Mrs. _____ has her picture taken with a group of settlement children, and the picture appears the next day as Mrs. _____’s “box party,” though actually she didn’t take the children.

B and her husband, A, are members of the smartest group in Chicago society, the types of members who work early and late to keep their positions. Their entrée came through the fact that both belonged to families who were in the society of an earlier generation, and through attendance at private schools which accepted only the children of the fashionable world or those well recommended. This insured invitations, during childhood and youth, to the parties given for children in fashionable homes, and meant a more or less familiar acquaintance with the society of their generation.

But as the A's had an income that was relatively small, it was a real struggle to keep this position after their marriage and the setting up of their own establishment. In fact, they had finally to give up the effort of keeping a house or apartment, as the cost of maintaining it at the standard of their set was too great, and they resigned themselves to a suite in the most exclusive hotel in the neighborhood.

Their real "hold" came through an unusual gaiety and zest which both possessed. B is unusually spirited, and enlivens any gathering of which she is a part. This is her reputation, and she lives up to it unflinchingly. No comedy actor on the public stage could be more merciless with himself. I have seen her quite exhausted and dispirited, even bitter, after some dinner or dance at which she has been "the life of the party."

A takes a delightfully genuine pleasure in social life—somewhat unusual and readily felt. He is a popular leader of dances and other entertainments. His tall, handsome figure, graceful gestures, and gay smile bring out all the high spirits latent in a gathering. "I always drink one good glass of champagne before this sort of thing, and stay in bed the next day," he explains, admitting that the effort and late hours "take it out of me."

This zest and gaiety, and a ready willingness to do services for their friends—from helping to choose the latest ball gown to arranging flowers at a funeral—are the assets which make their success despite a small income. They dress with great care—always something very smart and exclusive and a little ahead of the popular style. They entertain in the same way, at carefully thought out intervals, and spend an immense amount of time and energy in making the entertainment very smart and novel. They are very painstaking about their lists of guests—no risks taken there, only the recognized smart people, with

perhaps an opera singer, just the right stage star, or a literary light; dinners, a dinner and dance, a very snappy tea at the Casino for some much-sought person, a small gathering at the hotel.¹

The leaves of a society woman's calendar for a month vividly portray this constant round of activities that make up the social game:

Hairdresser—once or twice a week.

Manicure—once or twice a week.

Massage—once a week.

Dressmaker.

Shopping—every few days.

Ballet class, to preserve the figure—once a week.

French class, group of six, at a friend's home—once a week.

Lectures—Bridges' series of six (time to attend only three) at the Playhouse, and the Fortnightly Club.

Club meetings—two clubs, each meeting monthly, at the Fortnightly; non-uplift; papers by members, and luncheon or tea.

For the most part, life on the Gold Coast is an affair of constant display. For one must constantly keep it up, reciprocate invitations and gifts to one's charities by invitations to others and gifts to other charities, in order to keep in. And the game becomes so complex that it may demand the entire time of a social secretary. One of Chicago's wealthiest "married maidens" has, for example, a calling list of two thousand names, filling two indexes, which contain merely the names of those to whom she owes obligations, or with whom she must keep in touch to keep in the game. She has to have a secretary to handle her correspondence, to plan her dances and receptions, to send out invitation, acknowledge other invitations, and keep track of her social obligations. Indeed, the requirements of the game are such that there have sprung up women whose profession is

¹ Document 8.

that of compiling lists of eligible bachelors, of children, their ages and birthdays, of the movements of families, of marriages, of divorces, of getting out invitation lists and managing dances, dinners, receptions, and the like.

An interesting index in the files of the social secretary is that of the "five hundred dancing men." They are eligible young bachelors whose names are in the *Register*; who dance and play bridge uncommonly well; who can talk, and who play golf or tennis passably. This list is at the service of the matron who wishes to give a big dance, a house party, or such.

Then there are the "hall room boys." They are young men from other cities, of good connections, usually university graduates, employed by prominent firms in the city, living in fashionable bachelor apartments or rooming-houses—not yet in the *Chicago Social Register*, but living in hopes. These outside men are welcome with the daughters of the Four Hundred, who play them off against the "dancing men" just as the girls on "Main Street" play off the new boy against the town boys. They are extra men, much invited about, and often one of them is the lion of the season. Their names, too, will be found in the files of the social secretary.

She may be able, also, to put the *parvenu* of social ambitions in touch with one of the "little brothers to the rich," young society bachelors, of limited means, who for a "professional consideration" will undertake to launch the most unpromising candidate in the social swim.¹

Such is the social game as it is played along the Gold Coast. In its essence it is a struggle for status and prestige, for position and influence. It involves an art of publicity, of display, and lavish spending, resulting in a glorification of the person to be found nowhere else in the life of the city. Some play the game from pure vanity; some play it because they are born to it, and because it is "the thing to do." Women make it a profession to advance the fortunes of their husbands. Adventurers play it for gold. Others play

¹ Document 3.

the game for power, or because they are idle, or for the sheer love of excitement. But from whatever motive the game may be played, it resolves itself into a passion for recognition that becomes the center about which life is organized. And the social game, the passion for recognition, is the dominant interest in the lives of at least a third of that group known as "society."¹

THE SOCIAL RITUAL

About the social game has grown up a vast amount of ritual, conventional ways of doing things, that serves to set off the aristocracy from the "common." And social control in "society" is largely effected through this ritual. To the "climber," to the person who is not sure of his position, the social ritual is the Ten Commandments. The mores of the larger group may be violated with impunity—if they are violated by "the" people, and if their violation is not too flagrantly flaunted. But there are conventions in the social ritual to violate which is to invite exile. A great deal even of the ritual may be ignored, however, by the few whose social position is unquestioned—if those few possess that indefinable something, that indispensable combination of assurance and discrimination known as *savoir faire*.

A society woman writes half-humorously, half-seriously, of this ritual:

Unless you have a sound social position, do not live north of North Avenue or west of North State Street, and be careful of your choice of blocks. If you must live at a hotel live at the Drake, the Blackstone, the Lake Shore Drive, the Ambassador, or the Pearson. Variations from this list are not unusual, but demand discretion. A disapproved neighborhood or hotel goes to prove that you are undesirable.

¹ Document 9.

Service is a solemn matter if one attempts it. It is proper, now, for young people to entertain without servants. But if there are servants, certain forms are absolutely required. The maid is neat and noiseless, and after five is in black. The face of man or maid is quite expressionless. A servant must open the door when guests or callers arrive. The table must be properly set. The table cloth is unpopular; a center light is *de trop*; candlelight, without shades, is required. The maid must know the service-plate game; it would be unpardonable if one's maid removed more than one plate at a time.

"Well-groomed" is the summing up of an unbreakable commandment. The perfectly coiffed or barbered hair, dustless and spotless clothes, exquisite slipper or speckless spat ("bankers always wear spats"). Women's nails *must* be polished; men's *may* be. One bath a day (or two) is in the ritual. Underclothes, in the past ten years, have assumed a new importance. Formerly one should be clean, but one might indulge in personal taste or follow personal comfort. But today the Sicilian mother is proud to show seven skirts on her child; the woman of fashion is embarrassed if she is caught wearing anything more under her gown than might be bundled into a large coat pocket. For a time pink silk crêpe was unescapable. It could have little flowers, but not too many: "M——sent me a rose crêpe chemise with a lot of colored flowers on it—harlot underclothes—I sent it to the White Elephant rummage sale." If her doctor orders wool—even knee-length and short-sleeved—she struggles to hide it from her dress-maker, from her week-end hostess. If unsuccessful, she tries to explain; but no explanation avails if she continues the habit. "She is the sort of person who wears woolen underclothes!"

Clothes must be in the prevailing exclusive mode, but not the extreme of popular fashion. "Of course one doesn't wear green slippers or shoes in the daytime, as they do up around Wilson Avenue." When the shopgirl moves up to the new style, that style is abandoned. "It is almost impossible, these days, to have exclusive clothes. The mob, from New York to Kansas, copies everything so quickly!" The woman of *l'haute société* does not wear evening slippers on the street, nor evening-cut neck, sleeves, or material in the daytime. Style in the smart set must be followed from tip to toe. The wrong gloves, the wrong line, the wrong slipper spoils the impression one strives to create. "She does not know how really to be smart." Useless to try

to list the up-to-date—change is too rapid. "Where did you get your mink coat, my dear? You should move up to Wilson Avenue; you look like a kept woman." Exhibitionism in clothes seems more prevalent on "Boule Mîche" than on the "Gold Coast." This, however, may be accounted for by the difference in the group one seeks to impress. The "Boul Mîche" seeks to impress the world at large; the "Gold Coast" wishes to impress the followers of a more exclusive and fastidious mode.

Personal cards and notepaper, invitations, are matters which demand absolute conformity to the approved styles. Never make a call; if you do call, it proves that you came from Spikesville, Kansas, or any other place which is running a quarter of a century behind the times. Never go out after the first act at the opera; wait until after the second act. It is unsafe to carry a package or an umbrella. An artist was invited to an afternoon musicale at one of the exclusive "Gold Coast" homes. It was raining, and she arrived with a wet umbrella. She passed the man at the awning entry, ascended the carpeted stairs, and came to the family servant who guarded the door. She held out her wet umbrella. He looked at it unresponsively, but made no move to take it. A person who would carry an umbrella could not have been invited.

It is unfortunate to go to functions via the street car or the Yellow Cab. Some garages advertise cars which look exactly like private cars, and which may be used on social occasions. Most of the people you know could not be taken to the opera in a Yellow Cab. It is superfluous to state that you could not take anybody anywhere on a street car, not even in the daytime.

Apologies, hand-shakings, introductions, should be used with great caution. You may apologize if you are late, but not if the fish is burned, or the maid's hair awry, or you have worn gloves when you should not have done so. If you are young, or go in the younger set, you can occasionally say "damn," or "hell," or "Oh, my God!" "Shut your damned face!" has been known to pass. But "I'm pleased to meet you" would be practically fatal. *Nil admirari*, unless surprise, admiration, or comment is expected. If you must notice the details or special features of a room or costume, do it without the possibility of being detected. Curiosity is the height of bad breeding.

You may stand on your head in the drawing-room at a small or a

large party, if you do it in the right way, at the right moment; you may crawl along the floor on your hands and knees; you may put your elbows on the table. If you are young enough, you may have a nine-year-old tussle with a perfectly strange young man who looks the apotheosis of the Y.M.C.A., and he may wind a handkerchief around your neck, and drag you about, and kiss you. All this may happen at the smartest of parties, and, if your *savoir faire* is perfect, you will not be criticized. But if you hold your spoon or fork wrong, you will never have another invitation to that house. Strangely enough, a person who could use a toothpick has never had even a first invitation. There is something about a person who could use a toothpick which you can tell, even though you have never had a moment of table intercourse.

If you make a mistake, it is quite plain that you have done so, and explanation or deceit is unsafe. The best way out is to take the attitude that it is of no concern—rather amusing; right, or altogether negligible, because *you* did it. "Whatever I do is *right* because *I* did it," was the repeated admonition of a well-known social leader to her young daughter. "I came over on the street car," you state, with a little laugh, or with an air of complete composure, giving the impression that you are the sort of person who can do what she likes—that you are above criticism. A friend of mine was visiting at one of the most exclusive country homes in the most exclusive of summer colonies. After an afternoon at a polo match she returned to the house with two young men before her hostess' return. A stiff serving man brought in a splendid and elaborately appointed tea table, and other tables, announcing that the hostess had 'phoned that she would not return to tea. My friend had never had tea this way; she was perfectly certain she would not serve it properly, and for a moment was frozen. This was absolutely unforgivable—she would disgrace herself and her hostess. She turned to the butler. "Will you serve the tea, Houghton?" Then she laughed. "Or won't you serve it, Mr. C.? Tea is something I never play with. Somehow it has never interested me, and I should be sure to make a wrong move. Horribly unfeminine, I admit." Then she proceeded with the conversation, holding her air of complete confidence.

The manner habitual must be self-possessed; there must be an

air of well-being and success. Graciousness in readily adjusted degrees, which at one degree warms and at another cools the recipient, is indispensable. An air of complete self-confidence, of easy assurance, with an occasional glint of *hauteur*, is requisite to social success.¹

The social ritual, with the attitudes which cluster about it, serves at once as a mark to identify the members of the Four Hundred, as a means of intercourse among them, and as a barrier between them and the rest of the world. The behavior patterns which are embodied in the ritual, which may be summed up in the words "good form" and *savoir faire*, backed up by the ruthless competition of the social game, constitute the main force for social control in "society." But more than this, the ritual lends to "society" an ease, a dignity, and a charm which are the despair of many a "climber" and the envy of many not "born to the manner."

POLITICS AND PHILANTHROPY

The social game is but one side of the life of the Gold Coast. True, it is the more spectacular side. And it sets the tempo of social life. No one who moves in society can quite escape it. But political and civic movements are not always fads. Not all charities are "pet" charities. There is a genuine and serious side to the life of the Gold Coast.

Since the war, playing the social game is not so *terribly* important as it was before. Everyone still wants to be "in," of course, but many are getting off into something else, too. It's not the thing to do just to be a social butterfly any more. And many social leaders are *really* busy women; nor is it just a matter of teas. Social recognition is increasingly secured through political, civic, and philanthropic work.²

These days society attempts to demand that its members be peo-

¹ Document 10.

² Document 6.

ple who add some achievement, some successful work or accomplishment to position and wealth. There are many persons in society who do not come up to this, of course, but they are considered "nit-wits" by the more serious and conservative social groups.¹

There is a concentration of real leadership on the Gold Coast. Not only is there a concentration of wealth, but there is a concentration of contributors to civic and social organizations (see map, facing p. 174). There is a concentration of specialized ability and achievement (see map, facing p. 244). And a study of the boards of directors and trustees of the civic and social organizations of the city revealed the fact that there is, as well, along the Gold Coast a concentration of active leadership.

Many prominent society women—and men—have a sense of an obligation that culture, wealth, and leisure owe to "the less fortunate." They actively support churches, charity organizations, social settlements, nurseries and dispensaries, reform movements in politics, city plan commissions, the "city beautiful," and movements for the democratization of art and the opera. This support is often genuine and sincere. Without it, none of these civic enterprises could exist.

There are clubs, like the Friday Club, which take a serious interest in the arts and literature, in modern movements of thought, where serious papers are read and discussed. One suspects this is not taken *too* seriously, however. A member of the Friday Club remarked, with a note of embarrassment in her voice, "One can't be civic *all* the time, you know!" The remark is interesting, for it shows that one is expected to be civic *some* of the time. One is frowned upon, a little, in more conservative circles if one does not

¹ Documents 4 and 5.

take a part in the larger civic and social movements of the day.

THE GOLD COAST AS A COMMUNITY

The Gold Coast has a common background of experience and tradition. True, with very few exceptions, the families of Chicago when traced back a generation or two are found to come from diverse and not too aristocratic origins. But as we have seen, the exigencies of the social game demand that "society" live in certain neighborhoods, attend certain finishing schools or universities, belong to certain clubs, patronize certain of the arts, serve on the boards of trustees of certain social and civic organizations, hold certain political prejudices, and, above all, conform to a common ritual. Consequently "society" comes to have a more or less common body of experience and tradition, of attitudes and conventions.

Moreover, "society" is class conscious. "I believe in aristocracy," writes a society woman; "there is something about leisure, luxury, travel, and an acquaintance with the arts which makes for a kind of superiority in the individual who has had these advantages." In the consciousness of this superiority "society" holds itself aloof from all that might be termed "common."

The solidarity of this group is probably as dense as that of any known group. It is largely based on material interests. It results from a consciousness of notable wealth, success, social position. It is conscious of expressing itself in a certain manner of life, a luxurious standard which demands an accepted and costly "style" in material details. The group is conscious of a common distinction in personal appearance and manners, of common pursuits which are followed in approved places usually inaccessible to other groups.²

Society feels itself above all other groups. It is quite sincere and simple in this, and the consciousness gives it a certain sense of respon-

² Document 11.

² Cf. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*.

sibility. It must preserve its standard of life, its etiquette, its polish—both for itself and in duty to civilization. In order to do this it must have no intimate contact, no equal footing, with other groups. Necessary contact with other groups is always safeguarded by holding clearly and constantly in mind the superiority of society and the impossibility of an equal footing. The child in school and in play is carefully guarded from other groups of children.¹

But not only has "society" a common body of experience and tradition, and a degree of self-consciousness as against other groups. Beyond this, "society" in Chicago is highly localized, being concentrated in that strip along the Lake Shore Drive from Streeterville to Lincoln Park, which is known as the Gold Coast, a strip scarcely a mile in length, and not over two blocks in depth. Here are *the* streets, *the* families, *the* hotels, *the* clubs, their segregation strikingly emphasized by the encircling area of furnished rooms.

In the present generation the center of social life in Chicago has always been along the "Gold Coast." I have not been to the South Side twice in the past five years, and seldom in that time have I been north of Lincoln Park. People in this neighborhood refuse, as a matter of fact, all invitations to tea or dinner on the South Side, or north of Lincoln Park—unless they come from some *notably* influential person, or from an *intimate* friend. People from the rest of the city all come to affairs on the "Gold Coast," however. Indeed, long before the last of the old families moved to the "Gold Coast" they found that to have anyone at their affairs they must give them at the Casino, or at some other "Gold Coast" club. Chicago has a remarkably localized and integrated social life—as compared with New York, for instance. The last of the old families have long since moved to the "Gold Coast." The South Shore and the district along Sheridan Road north of Diversey² are different social worlds. I don't know anyone north, and only a cousin along the South Shore—and she might as well be in St. Louis or New York so far as her belonging to my social world is concerned.³

¹ Document 12.

² That fringe of Lincoln Park known as Lincoln Park West is merely an integral part of the Gold Coast.

³ Document 6.

The Gold Coast, then, with this localization of "society" with its self-consciousness and common tradition, would seem to be a community. The fights waged by the Gold Coast to keep busses off North State Parkway, to keep apartments off Astor Street, and shops off the Lake Shore Drive, to prevent the widening of the Drive, to do away with the Oak Street beach, demonstrate the possibility of common action along the Gold Coast. But analysis reveals less of community here than at first appears.

To begin with, the "solidarity" of the Gold Coast is not based upon residence along the "Coast." Rather, residence on the Gold Coast is the result of the competitive segregation of the social game. There are remnants of the old neighborliness based on local residence. A few of the old residents call the old street-car conductors by such affectionate names as "Polly Black Sheep" and "Tooty." But these things are interesting only because they *are* remnants. The local life they go back to is a thing long past.

We have seen that the "society" of today is a thing of sets and cliques. And the life of the Gold Coast resolves itself largely into that of these smaller groups, while these groups are based upon common ages, or whims, or passing interests rather than upon common residence.

The Gold Coast is broken up into smaller groups. There is a Division Street crowd, for instance, composed of older girls, bachelors, and live young-marrieds. It has a sort of small town atmosphere, with its gossip and parties. Half the affairs I go to are on Division Street. One slang phrase, or peculiarity in dress, will go through this whole set at a time. But it is in no sense a *neighborhood* affair—numbers of houses are skipped; and *who* lives in those houses we *never* will know.⁴

Along the Gold Coast, as elsewhere in the city, one does not know one's neighbors. At a tea on the Gold Coast,

⁴ Document 6.

when the subject of neighborliness came up, there was a chorus of "No, we don't know our neighbors."¹ One woman who lives on the Lake Shore Drive said that she did not know the woman who lived next to her, though they had lived side by side for over twenty-five years. Another woman, living on North State Parkway, told of seeing smoke coming out of a house across the street, and of telephoning all about the neighborhood in a vain attempt to discover who lived in it. The men interviewed make the same point.² One declares that he knows no one within a block in any direction of where he lives. Another says:

There is no neighborliness among those who live on the North Side. I live in a twenty-apartment hotel, and of the others who live in it I have a speaking acquaintance with but five, and know but one. I do not think there is any local attachment or feeling on the part of those who live there—naturally there would not be. People live on the Lake Shore Drive simply because it is the most expensive place in the city to live.

The rapid increase in the number of apartments and hotels along the Gold Coast is tending to accentuate this. For one thing, the very nature of apartment and hotel life makes for secondary contacts; and moreover the hotel and apartment are being increasingly used by the *nouveau riche* and the "climber" as a means of acquiring prestige through residence along the Gold Coast.³

¹ Document 13.

² Documents 15 and 16.

³ Two interesting and spontaneous efforts at neighborhood organization of an informal sort came to untimely ends. The Virginia Hotel a few years ago decided to give Saturday night dances for its guests. The dances were a great success, so far as number went: but it was discovered that no one from the hotel itself was attending.

More recently a woman on Bellevue Place invited some of her neighbors,

A questionnaire endeavoring to discover the attitude of the person toward the locality in which he lived was sent to the residents of Astor Street. It revealed the fact that many of them did not think of the Gold Coast as a community, or of its streets as neighborhoods.¹ The majority of them stated that of their interests—social, political, religious, philanthropic, professional, intellectual, and artistic—only their "social" interests were centered along the Gold Coast. And we have seen that "social" interests mean playing the social game, not neighborly contacts. Moreover, the questionnaires revealed that without exception these people spend from three to five months of every year outside the city. All of them have their "summer places." Many of them travel abroad, or go to eastern, western, and southern resorts for parts of the year. The following cases are perhaps fairly typical of the movements of Gold Coast families:

A—Has an apartment on North State Parkway. Goes in May to Lake Forest. In August to a camp in the North. Back to Lake Forest for the autumn. The past two years has spent part of the winter abroad.

B—Gave up apartment in June; moved to Lake Forest. In October moved to the Drake. Went in February to Palm Beach. Back to the Drake in April. In May went to Lake Forest. Went in August to Dark Harbor, Maine.

whom she happened to know, to dinner. During the dinner the idea of occasional Bellevue Place parties was conceived. But they never matured. People were too busy; didn't know about Mrs. So-and-So; were indifferent, or interested elsewhere.

¹ To the question, "Do you think of the vicinity of the Lake Shore Drive as a neighborhood or as a community?" one man replied, "I am considerably mystified as to what the questionnaire is driving at. Of course, when asked whether I think of the locality where I live as a neighborhood or . . . I feel like saying, 'I give it up, Mr. Bones—What is the answer?'" (Questionnaire replies filed with the Local Community Research Committee of the University of Chicago).

C—Spent winter in Santa Barbara. To Europe in May. A few weeks in the autumn at the Drake.¹

The fact is that much even of the "social" life of the people who live on the Gold Coast centers about the fashionable suburbs of Chicago, or about fashionable summering and wintering places scattered over the country. The social season lasts but four months. Then there is an exodus to warmer climates. A few weeks may be spent in Chicago around Easter time. Then everyone leaves for the summer.²

The Gold Coast, then, can scarcely be called a community. It is simply the fashionable place for the location of one's town house, an abode for the social season. The interests of a majority of the people who live along the Gold Coast are scattered. There are no neighborhoods; people associate as members of smart cliques rather than as neighbors. A great many of the people "living" in the vicinity of the "Drive" spend much of their time in other places. Others are not members of "society" itself. And the solidarity of those who are of "society" is a solidarity that is of caste rather than of contiguity. Yet the Gold Coast is perhaps as nearly a community as is any local group, not foreign, to be found within the inner city.

¹ Document 14.

² Document 6.

CHAPTER IV

THE WORLD OF FURNISHED ROOMS

Back of the ostentatious apartments, hotels, and homes of the Lake Shore Drive, and the quiet, shady streets of the Gold Coast lies an area of streets that have a painful sameness, with their old, soot-begrimed stone houses, their none-too-clean alleys, their shabby air of respectability. In the window of house after house along these streets one sees a black and white card with the words "Rooms To Rent." For this is the world of furnished rooms, a world of strangely unconventional customs and people, one of the most characteristic of the worlds that go to make up the life of the great city.¹

This nondescript world, like every rooming-house district, has a long and checkered history.

The typical rooming-house is never built for the purpose; it is always an adaptation of a former private residence, a residence which has seen better days. At first, in its history as a rooming-house, it may be a very high-class rooming-house. Then, as the fashionable residence district moves farther and farther uptown, and as business comes closer and closer, the grade of the institution declines until it may become eventually nothing but a "bums' hotel" or a disorderly house.²

We have seen, in reading the history of the Near North Side, that after the fire this was a wealthy and fashionable residence district. But as business crossed the river and came

¹ This rooming-house district of the Near North Side is one of three such districts in Chicago. Similarly, on the South and West sides there are areas of furnished rooms, wedging their way along the focal lines of transportation, from the apartment areas into the slum and the business district. Rooming-house districts will be found similarly situated in every large city.

² Trotter, *The Housing of Non-Family Women in Chicago*, p. 5.