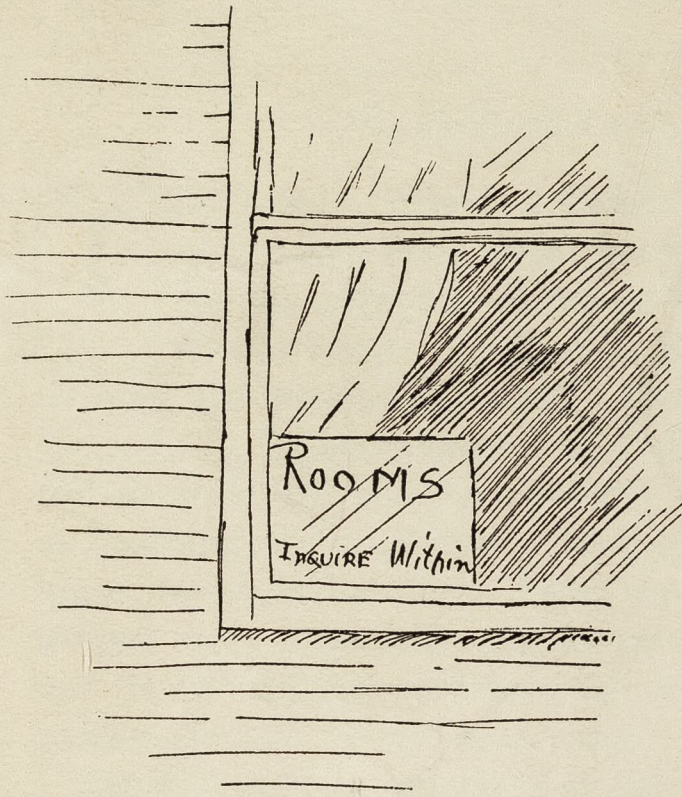
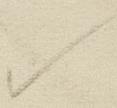


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INFORMATION BUREAU ON WOMEN'S WORK  
305 Commerce Guardian Building  
Toledo, Ohio 3, 1927, 1200



Pamphlet

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## FOREWORD

**T**HE Toledo Council on Girls' Work was desirous of knowing more about the problem of housing for the employed women of Toledo, who do not live with their families; the Non-Family women, as they are technically called. As a member of that Council, the Toledo Consumers' League secured information from 126 employed women who were rooming or boarding, and interviewed landladies in the rooming house section of the City. These two approaches to the subject made it evident that the rooming house section had its own distinct problems, and it was determined to publish the two reports separately.

The first of these reports is on the rooming house section. Eighty-two rooming houses scattered throughout the rooming house district were visited in 1925-26, and an effort made to secure from the landladies something of their experiences and opinions on the question of housing the non-family woman. They were most cooperative, and gave generously of that experience. This pamphlet is an attempt to make some of that experience available for the use of organizations and persons interested in Toledo and its housing problems. Because conditions are similar in other cities, the study throws light on the housing problem anywhere, and we therefore hope it may prove of interest and value to other communities in the State.

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## ROOMS

**U**NPAINTEd, drab, not even smiling on a Spring day, are the old residences which surround Toledo's business district. The front steps have not been repaired, here and there the balusters have gone, never to return; the lawns are without grass, old papers have accumulated in its stead. Over the whole section is an atmosphere of dreariness. Even youth finds it difficult to enter the doors of one of these old homes in a gay mood. Yet these houses which encircle our commercial world shelter no inconsiderable portion of our population. It would be interesting to know just how many people sleep under these roofs in a year's time. The census gives us a picture at one particular time, but these inhabitants shift from one house to another with great rapidity; some move from the district, to return; others are replaced by newcomers. The old house built to shelter a family of five or six is stretched to capacity and holds ten or twenty at one time. Three months is considered a long period of residence. The yearly population must be three or four times as great as the recorded population, and the old houses try to adjust themselves to their ever-changing world.

Usually the old parlor, where 25 years ago, Mary, after much urging, practiced her scales, is a bedroom, one of the most expensive in the house despite the folding doors which open and shut with such difficulty, and at one time gave a sense of great spaciousness. Now they have become the cause of the dark, narrow hallway which no longer gives a welcome. The dining room of former days has also changed its function; other folding doors, for years hidden in the walls, have come from their retreat and now vainly attempt to give some privacy to the occupants of the parlors and the occupants of the dining room. Every sound penetrates; the inhabitants of the one-time parlor know all about the inhabitants of the dining room. The articles of a vanished comfort add to the depression, for they have a way of speaking from the past. The gold framed mirror over the mantelpiece, sometimes in good repair, sometimes with a great crack across its surface, silently protests that it was never intended for its present life; the marble topped table and the walnut dressing table agree that they are out of place and refuse to lend a feeling of comfort.

Nearly every house has changed its character. Sometimes with light housekeeping equipment, sometimes without, they provide shelter for roomers. Every possible inch of space must be utilized, for space is valuable because of that future day when the house will be torn down and the property used for some more lucrative business. The outlying neighborhood business sections also have their fringe of old houses cast in a new role. Rooming houses follow the street car lines, awaiting, in outlying districts, the advance of business just as their fellow houses await it in the main business section.

While they wait, an income must be had, taxes must be paid, there must be no further outlay of capital in repairs, and the solution is the business adaptation of the building which is there, which means, with few exceptions, the rooming house.

The life in these old houses is both drab and colorful, melodramatic at times (if the drama of actual existence can be called melodrama), usually obscure, without relationship to the community life of the city. It is unlike the life in the suburbs, but it touches and influences that life. It is often prophetic in its attitude toward customs; changing ideas receive a readier acceptance than in more conventional sections of the city. The newspapers carry many a story from the rooming house district, but they are only stories to all but the persons involved, for perhaps the people in the house next door or the members of the household itself, even, do not know that their fellow residents are objects of "news interest". When they do know, they usually do not judge too harshly.

## THE INHABITANTS

An analysis of the population of the old sixth ward gives us a picture of what groups in our population live in these old houses. It shows how, as a group, they differ in makeup from the population of the city as a whole. In 1920, when the census was taken, the boundaries\* of that ward more nearly corresponded with the rooming house district than they would today, for each year the district moves out a little farther, an old house is torn down and a place of business erected in its stead, while at the other end a family decide that they cannot

\*The Sixth Ward, at the time that the Census of 1920 was taken, was bounded roughly by Washington, Thirteenth and Cherry Streets and the River.

remain longer and the private home of last year becomes the rooming house of this.

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic that the census reveals is the large proportion of men as compared with women, and the small proportion of children. In 1920, Toledo had a few more males than females: 51.7 per cent of the total population were males. But the population figures for the old sixth ward show that nearly two-thirds, 65.3 per cent, were males. There is an even greater difference in the child population. In the city as a whole over a fourth of the population, 26.9 per cent, were children under sixteen years of age. The sixth ward had only 9.3 per cent of its inhabitants so young. In the city, 30 per cent are under eighteen years, and over a third, 35.2 per cent, are under twenty-one years of age. In this rooming house ward we find only 10.9 per cent under eighteen years, and 15.9 per cent under twenty-one. Evidently the young people begin to come into the district at eighteen and nineteen, for a glance at the tables will show that the percentage of those in the "eighteen to twenty" age group for the whole city and for the sixth ward more nearly approach each other than do the younger age groups. It is significant that the greatest difference is found in the youngest group given by the census. The proportion of children under seven years is three times as great in the city at large as it is in this ward, the proportion of children fourteen and fifteen years of age twice as great in the city as in this ward, while there is a difference of only .2 per cent for the youth of eighteen, nineteen and twenty. Toledo had 5.1 per cent of its population in these age periods when the sixth ward had 4.9 per cent of its people so young.

This rooming house ward had a slightly larger proportion of foreign born than the city as a whole; 17.1 per cent of its inhabitants were classified as foreign born whites, whereas the percentage for the whole city was 15.6. The ward showed a high percentage of Greeks and Orientals. Its negro population was proportionately very high; the 534 negroes listed represented 6.6 per cent of the population of the ward; the percentage for the whole city was 2.3.

There is greater crowding here than in the city at large. The definition of a dwelling used by the census is not very helpful for our purposes, but it illustrates the comparative crowding of this ward. It is defined as "any building or structure in which one or more persons regularly sleep. It may not necessarily be a house in the usual sense of the word. A boat, a tent, a freight car, or a room in a warehouse, if it serves as a regular sleeping place for one or more persons, is treated as a dwelling. On the other hand, an entire apartment house, although the abiding place of many families, constitutes but one dwelling." The sixth ward may have a disproportionate number of unusual dwellings, with warehouses and office buildings, where people sleep, but this is the best index that we have, and we find that whereas there were 4.9 persons to every dwelling counted in Toledo, there were 8.2 persons to every dwelling in the sixth ward. In January, 1920, 8,084 persons were listed as living in 977 dwellings in this part of our rooming house district. The number who lived there at various times during the year was two or three times the eight thousand, and each one touched the life of the district, some casually, some intimately, but all adding to the ever changing character of the rooming house world.

Comparison of the Population of the Old Sixth Ward With Toledo's Population, as Shown in the 1920 Census

	TOLEDO		SIXTH WARD	
	Number	Per Cent of Total	Number	Per Cent of Total
Total Population.....	243,164		8,084	
Males .....	125,518	51.7%	5,273	65.3%
Females .....	117,646	48.3%	2,811	34.7%
Native white.....	199,240	81.9%	6,123	75.7%
Native white of native parent- age .....	124,055	51.0%	4,408	54.5%
Native white of foreign parent- age .....	51,101	21.0%	1,170	14.4%
Native white of mixed parent- age .....	24,084	9.9%	545	6.7%
Foreign born				
whites .....	38,145	15.6%	1,384	17.1%
Males .....	21,751 (57.1%)		1,068 (77.1%)	
Females .....	16,394 (42.9%)		316 (22.9%)	
Negroes .....	5,691	2.3%	534	6.6%
Males .....	3,184 (56.0%)		349 (65.4%)	
Females .....	2,507 (44.0%)		185 (34.6%)	

Comparison of Age Groups in the Old Sixth Ward With Toledo's Age Groups, as Given in 1920 Census

	TOLEDO		SIXTH WARD	
	Number	Per Cent of Total	Number	Per Cent of Total
Total Population.....	243,164		8,084	
Under 7 years.....	31,450	12.9%	328	4.0%
7 to 13 yrs., inc.....	27,220	11.1%	310	3.8%
14 and 15 yrs.....	6,958	2.8%	115	1.4%
16 and 17 yrs.....	7,554	3.1%	136	1.6%
18 to 20 yrs., inc....	12,504	5.1%	400	4.9%

Comparison of Age Groups in the Old Sixth Ward With Toledo's Age Groups, as Given in 1920 Census (Cumulative Table)

	TOLEDO		SIXTH WARD	
	Number	Per Cent of Total	Number	Per Cent of Total
Total Population.....	243,164		8,084	
Under 7 years.....	31,450	12.9%	328	4.0%
Under 14 years.....	58,670	24.1%	638	7.8%
Under 16 years.....	65,628	26.9%	753	9.3%
Under 18 years.....	73,182	30.0%	889	10.9%
Under 21 years.....	85,686	35.2%	1,289	15.9%

## THE LANDLADY

But what about the persons who understand most intimately this section of Toledo: the landladies who have seen the stream of their roomers come and go, who know some intimately and speak of others as "the man with the grey coat", or perhaps give them a vocational label as "the postoffice boy" or that "Overland man"? Even when the name of the lodger is unknown, and he leaves in the early morning and comes home late at night, these landladies somehow know their lodgers better than the hotel clerk knows the people on his register. Lodgers are not mere units to Toledo landladies, they are personalities.

Eighty-two rooming houses in various parts of this transition district were visited and the landladies interviewed. Only one proprietor was a landlord. In nine cases the landlady was not at home and the facts were obtained from someone else. More than half of these landladies seemed to be quick, alert, capable women with high standards for their rooming houses. Some twenty of them seemed slow, unable to meet the daily problems which came to them; the condition of their housekeeping reflected their inadequacy. All but ten were very frank and seemed eager to tell their problems and those of some of their roomers. They knew that their district offered housing problems for young people, and they were glad to contribute from their experience. All but three of the landladies were American.

It seems to take no uncertain ability to run a rooming house successfully. The poor managers come and go, and only the fairly efficient stay on. But the marginal houses are always there for the marginal people to try to run. In many cases the landladies own their houses, in others they rent the house for rooming house

purposes, while at times they are employed as managers by the owner of the property, and may manage several houses. It is a business full of risks, the income very uncertain and very uneven. There are many empty rooms when the factories have laid off men, but the taxes or rent continue. The curve of prosperity of some Toledo houses may almost be said to go up and down with the conditions of the automobile industry. Such, at least, was the impression that many landladies had; again and again they remarked: "—— has laid off men, I have empty rooms." "I am starving in the rooming house business," said one woman, with a ring in her voice that carried conviction.

### LENGTH OF RESIDENCE

There is always an opening, for the shifting of the landladies is only rivalled by the ever moving roomers. Forty-seven women reported on the length of time they had lived at their present address. They had occupied their houses anywhere from one month to sixteen years, eleven had lived in their present houses less than six months, nineteen less than one year, twenty-five less than two years, thirty-two less than five years, and forty less than ten years. There were seven who had lived in one place more than ten years. While the majority shift, there seems to be a good proportion who hold out through a number of years.

Length of Residence	Cumulative Table	
Five months and under.....11	Less than six months.....11	23.4%
Six months but under one year.. 8	Less than one year.....19	40.4%
One year but under two years.. 6	Less than two years.....25	53.1%
Two years but under three years ..... 1	Less than five years.....32	68.0%
Three years but under five years ..... 6	Less than ten years.....40	85.1%
Five years but under ten..... 8	Over ten years..... 7	14.8%
Ten years and over..... 7		
Total .....47		

### METHOD OF SECURING LODGERS

The signs on the house for rooms, or light house-keeping apartments, were considered the best method of securing lodgers; only one or two depended entirely on advertising; most inquiries come from the searcher for rooms who answers the sign. The location and nearness of the houses to each other is, of course, a great help in securing the patronage of those persons who go "room shopping"; anyone looking in this district has a feeling that there is some choice without going far, and the sign in the window gives an assurance that an inquiry will not be rebuffed. For the most part men and couples, married and unmarried, make the inquiries. Some landladies said that they had ten times as many single men apply as single women. It is significant that those women who said they had frequent calls from women were on the brighter and more cheerful streets. While the requests from single women are small when compared with the number of men, the total number who ask and find rooms in this section is by no means insignificant. Most of the landladies reported that they had had non-family women at some time, and many had a few at the time they were visited.

### OBJECTIONS TO WOMEN

They do take women as roomers in spite of the fact that a great number of them prefer men. They must rent their rooms, and if there are not enough men applying to fill them, and a woman appears, there are very few who will allow their preference to keep them from the room rent. They try to pick the right type of woman, they do not want to run the risk of hurting the reputation of the house, and the same degree of precaution does not seem necessary in selecting men. The reasons given

for this bias in favor of men are varied; the problem of company, and the fact that the women wish to wash and iron, are those most frequently given.

The landladies are sufficiently conservative to have a feeling of responsibility for the girls and women in their houses, while they have no such feeling about the men and boys. If a woman is not in by a certain hour the landlady has the additional burden of worry as to what her roomer is about; whereas, if she has a household of men or boys, no matter how young, they are not her responsibility. "Why should we have that responsibility?" say those who follow tradition; while a more analytical landlady remarked: "The reason we prefer men to women is that public opinion allows the men to do what they please, but we feel responsible for the women and girls, we worry about them. We should worry about the boys, but we don't."

Many of them feel that they should not take younger women, unless they can provide some place for them to entertain their men friends, and this they usually cannot afford. Eighty per cent of the landladies who reported on this point had no place other than their rooms where the roomers could entertain guests. The one-time parlor is almost always another bedroom. Twelve houses granted parlor privileges, forty-seven had none and twenty-three did not report. Of the forty-seven, thirty-one allowed the girls to entertain in their rooms. "I figure that their room is their home," was an oft-repeated remark.

With some it is the desire to have quiet for the other members of the household rather than any feeling of responsibility for the girls, that makes them prefer men. "Couples are all right even when they are not married; they are quiet, while girls entertaining friends are

noisy," said one woman. Others, in complaining of girls who had rooms in their houses talked of the laughter and conversation which the other roomers found very disturbing. Sometimes it is the tendency of neighbors to gossip which makes the landladies prefer men. One woman said: "The moment you have girls and men in the house, or even men calling on girls, the neighbors gossip."

### RULES

When there are younger women in the house, the landladies try to meet the problem of responsibility for what the women do with rules, such as setting the hour at which a visitor must leave. These rules frequently represent the desire to have the house quiet, rather than an interest in youth. There are few people who enjoy the laughter of others, and no one wishes to live where he cannot retire at an early hour if he so desires. The landladies must keep their houses quiet, even though they themselves like to hear young people have a good time. Nine was the earliest hour set, 11:30 the latest at which callers must depart. Eleven o'clock was the hour most frequently specified. "Must keep doors open while they have callers," was another not uncommon rule, while others simply said: "No men callers allowed in rooms." "No men callers allowed in rooms; may call for girls and wait for them in the hall," could hardly meet the problem of the young girl, though it may protect the household. "Girls can have one beau," seemed to reflect the notion of safety of a number of landladies, easily understandable in the light of criticisms to which they have been subject, but hardly, again, a solution for the individual girl.



Then there is the laundry question! The women and girls are forever washing their clothes. More frequently than not the landladies allow this privilege, but it is a great trial, and there were many complaints about the amount of electricity used, the mangles that were broken, the dressing table that was scorched; innumerable calamities, in fact, caused by the necessity for cleanliness.

Interest in personal appearance, and the use of the room for living, also accounts for the feeling of some of the landladies that women are not as neat as men. The powder, the rouge, make the room untidy, and the women have more possessions, which makes dusting harder. Then the women are at home so much more; evening after evening they are there; they come in to talk when the landlady is busy, whereas many of the men can truly be called, in the language of the trade, "sleepers". Scarcely a waking moment is spent in the rooming house. The "sleepers", literally and technically, are preferred above all other lodgers.

This preference for the men persists in spite of the fact that in some cases the women care for their own rooms when the men do not. One landlady showed all the splendid indignation of the most devout feminist over the fact that some of her neighbors had the women make their own beds, while the men had theirs made for them for the same price.

The feeling that the girls and women did not earn enough to pay for those comforts which are absolutely essential was often expressed. "They should have a parlor, but they can't afford to pay for it," was the statement made again and again. One tired woman expressed this feeling of not being able to do the things she would like to do for her lodgers when she said: "I

take women sometimes; but the nicer they are, the more privileges I want to give them, and that makes it hard. Older women are just as hard up as the girls; they do not earn any more." Another said: "I have known girls to pay their last cent for room rent, and then have nothing to live on. But I can't run my house if I do not get the rent in advance. I worked myself for eight dollars in one of the department stores. The whole trouble is with wages. Girls should be able to afford a parlor, but they would have to pay more than they do now."

### ROOM RENT

There seems to be a curious inconsistency about the price of a room, an inferior room in an inferior location costs as much as a very much better room in a better location. The different blocks in the rooming house section show quite a difference in their standards of upkeep, and one would expect to find this difference reflected in the price to a greater extent than it seems to be. It is curious that quality does not play a greater part in determining price.

In order to make sure that this was not merely an impression, the houses were arbitrarily classified into A, B, C, D, E, and F groups, according to the type of landlady, the state of repair, the condition of the housekeeping, the furnishings for the bedrooms, the neighborhood, et cetera. There was only one A house (A indicating the greatest excellence), and four in the F classification, all the others falling into the B, C, D, and E groups. The single rooms in the B houses ranged in price from \$3.50 to \$7 a week; the C houses had single rooms ranging in price from \$2.50 to \$7; the D houses could provide single rooms at from \$2.50 to \$7, and the E houses rented their

single rooms at from \$2.50 to \$5. The A, B, C, and D groups all had \$7 rooms, and the C, D, and E groups all had \$2.50 and \$3.00 rooms. Five dollars was the most frequent rate for the single rooms. While the E houses did not have any of the higher priced rooms, the variation in price seemed to be influenced far more by the relative desirability of the rooms within the houses than by any comparison which might be made with rooms in other houses. The seven-dollar rooms were those which the landlady considered her best, the rooms for three dollars or two dollars and fifty cents were the least desirable rooms in the house, often third floor rooms; one was without any window.

Seven dollars was the most frequent rate for a double room; the rate was as high as \$10 in C and D houses and as low as \$3.50 in one C house. Seven dollars was the highest rate for double rooms in the E houses. The rates are subject to rapid change, according to the number of persons looking for rooms. Some of the seven-dollar rooms had been eight dollars only the week before the interview.

#### ROOM RATES QUOTED BY SIXTY-ONE LANDLADIES

Number of Landladies in Each Classification Who Quoted Rates at Each Specified Amount

Single Rooms—	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	F.	Not Classified
\$2.00 to \$2.50.....	---	---	3	---	1	---	---
\$3.00 to \$3.50.....	---	1	4	9	5	---	---
\$4.00 to \$4.50.....	---	1	4	7	7	---	---
\$5.00 .....	---	1	10	10	7	---	---
\$6.00 .....	---	1	1	2	---	---	---
\$7.00 to \$7.50.....	1	1	2	2	---	---	---
Double Rooms—							
\$ 3.50 to \$4.00.....	---	---	1	---	1	---	1
\$ 5.00 .....	---	---	3	1	1	1	1
\$ 6.00 .....	---	1	5	1	2	---	---
\$ 7.00 .....	---	1	7	5	1	---	---
\$ 8.00 .....	---	---	4	4	---	---	---
\$ 9.00 .....	---	---	3	1	---	---	---
\$10.00 .....	---	---	2	3	---	---	---
No report .....	---	1	3	8	4	3	2

The table does not give any analysis of the proportion of rooms available at each specified rate.

Such are some of the conditions that the girl who comes to Toledo to secure work and who feels that she would like to find a room near town may encounter. But these are only surface experiences; the very frank statements of many of the landladies in telling of their personal experiences give a more vivid picture of the possibilities and dangers of this section. They tell a tale of behavior standards which show far greater variation than do the standards for the city at large. If the mother in the suburbs finds many difficult problems, the mother in this district has much greater ones. As for the non-family boy or girl, searching for a place to live, they have no one to guide them. One does not learn to be a judge of landladies in school, or at home. As for fellow roomers, even the auspiciously chosen landlady has many unhappy experiences in her selection of lodgers. Notes from the schedules tell something of this transitory section as seen by the landladies.

Similar districts in other cities show extremely high delinquency rates.\* The odds seem to be against the young people who grow up in these sections of our cities, they are very hard for the girl or boy who comes into the district at 19 or 20, as the census shows us that many of them do. People need the more stabilizing influence of a less transitory community. Young people need the chance to have some home recreation, and there is very little chance where there is no space.

\*In a recent study of delinquency in St. Paul, M. C. Elmer found the greatest amount of delinquency "in 'zones of transition' in neighborhoods in which business was invading a residence section, where people lived only a short time and families were moving up and down the economic scale."—The Survey, February 15, 1927.

## THE WAY IT LOOKS TO THE LANDLADIES

Dislikes women because they are always wanting something. Does take them, however. Allows a girl to have one "sweetie", but cannot have a lot of men going to a girl's room. Said that a "sporting" woman had asked for a room that morning. She would not object to her if she carried on her trade outside. "But first thing you know she would bring them in here and I can't have that."

Landlady came here from X fifteen years ago. She ran a hotel in X. Has had more trouble with people who skip their bills here in a few months than she had all her life in X. Thinks the world is in a sad way, particularly the young people.

Had two girls who were brought to her by a woman in charge of a group of saleswomen for some patent product. They were to stay only two or three weeks. One became too friendly with one of the men in the house, and the girls had to go.

Neighbors say that taxis drive up to this house at all hours of the night.

Landlady told a tale of a woman who was in the house when she took it over. Although she was living with her husband she proved to be a prostitute. Her daughter, aged 17, was forced into the same life and had a child. Landlady had a difficult time getting the woman to move.

The house had a bad reputation when this woman took it over, and she has had a struggle changing it.

Puts people out the moment she does not like their actions. Thinks it all right if a girl has one "beau"; more than one, objectionable.

"Respectable girls go out farther for rooms and those who wish to be free to do whatever they please go close to town." She had recently had two girls whose father brought them to her, but they soon had innumerable brothers, so that she got rid of them.

Has recently had two women whom she had to put out. Mother of landlady said there were many questionable houses in the neighborhood; that she dislikes the rooming house business; they had always "lived private" before.

Did have three girls in one large light housekeeping room, at \$2.25 a week each. Allowed them to entertain in their room, as she thought there were enough of them, if the company left at 11 p.m. Finally had to let them go, as they broke the rules so frequently.

Told of a house which she took in this district and found it filled with drug users. She discovered that one of the women roomers sold the drug, and addicts would come and tap on her window at all hours of the day and night.

Twice men have come to the door at three o'clock in the morning to ask for someone in the house, and the landlady told them "where to get off at".

The landlady is the widow of a Methodist minister and evidently finds herself in an utterly strange world. Said that when she first took the house there was a

woman rooming there, and she fears she used to have company in her room.

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Landlady says that about ten men to one woman apply for rooms. Thinks there should be houses for women only, with parlors and chaperons. Told stories of her trouble with bootleggers.

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Has had much trouble with girl roomers and does not care to take young girls.

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Very emphatic in her statement that: "A rooming house is no place for a girl."

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Put two girls out last week because they had too gay a time. She tells them they can have one "beau" only.

---

Girls extravagant with lights and make more work. Had had an experience with a nicely dressed, genteel looking woman who said she was married. A different man came out of her room every morning.

---

Tried women and was unfortunate. Had two "bad ones".

---

Young girl of nineteen is very sweet, but causes trouble because of the number of telephone calls which she has.

---

Very kindly young woman, likes women as roomers. Says she has had very fine girls.

---

Very sympathetic about girls. Should have a place to entertain, and they do in her home.

Very frank, wholesome woman, glad to have girls.

---

Evidently enjoys girls; has a living room; likes to have them use the piano and radio. Has two charming children.

---

Prefers older women with no men friends. Women better pay than men.

---

Said she had women who caused her no trouble.

---

Has one woman who is a "jewel"; she is a seamstress and is busy all the time. Also, two likable, bright, good girls who are not neat, and whose callers are a nuisance.

---

Thinks she would just as soon have women any time as men.

