



Sin in the Second City: Madams, Ministers, Playboys, and the Battle for America's Soul

Karen Abbott

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Step into the perfumed parlors of the Everleigh Club, the most famous brothel in American history—and the catalyst for a culture war that rocked the nation. Operating in Chicago’s notorious Levee district at the dawn of the last century, the Club’s proprietors, two aristocratic sisters named Minna and Ada Everleigh, welcomed moguls and actors, senators and athletes, foreign dignitaries and literary icons, into their stately double mansion, where thirty stunning Everleigh “butterflies” awaited their arrival. Courtesans named Doll, Suzy Poon Tang, and Brick Top devoured raw meat to the delight of Prince Henry of Prussia and recited poetry for Theodore Dreiser. Whereas lesser madams pocketed most of a harlot’s earnings and kept a “whipper” on staff to mete out discipline, the Everleighs made sure their girls dined on gourmet food, were examined by an honest physician, and even tutored in the literature of Balzac.

Not everyone appreciated the sisters’ attempts to elevate the industry. Rival Levee madams hatched numerous schemes to ruin the Everleighs, including an attempt to frame them for the death of department store heir Marshall Field, Jr. But the sisters’ most daunting foes were the Progressive Era reformers, who sent the entire country into a frenzy with lurid tales of “white slavery”—the allegedly rampant practice of kidnapping young girls and forcing them into brothels. This furor shaped America’s sexual culture and had repercussions all the way to the White House, including the formation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

With a cast of characters that includes Jack Johnson, John Barrymore, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., William Howard Taft, “Hinky Dink” Kenna, and Al Capone, *Sin in the Second City* is Karen Abbott’s colorful, nuanced portrait of the iconic Everleigh sisters, their world-famous Club, and the perennial clash between our nation’s hedonistic impulses and Puritanical roots. Culminating in a dramatic last stand between brothel keepers and crusading reformers, *Sin in the Second City* offers a vivid snapshot of America’s journey from Victorian-era propriety to twentieth-century modernity.

Visit www.sininthesecondcity.com to learn more!

“Delicious... Abbott describes the Levee’s characters in such detail that it’s easy to mistake this meticulously researched history for literary fiction.” — *New York Times Book Review*

“Described with scrupulous concern for historical accuracy...an immensely readable book.”
— **Joseph Epstein, *The Wall Street Journal***

“Assiduously researched... even this book’s minutiae makes for good storytelling.”
— **Janet Maslin, *The New York Times***

“Karen Abbott has pioneered sizzle history in this satisfyingly lurid tale. Change the hemlines, add 100 years, and the book could be filed under current affairs.” — *USA Today*

“A rousing racy yarn.” —*Chicago Tribune*

“A colorful history of old Chicago that reads like a novel... a compelling and eloquent story.” — *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

“Gorgeously detailed” — *New York Daily News*

“At last, a history book you can bring to the beach.” — *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Once upon a time, Chicago had a world class bordello called The Everleigh Club. Author Karen Abbott brings the opulent place and its raunchy era alive in a book that just might become this years “*The Devil In the White City.*” — *Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine (cover story)*

“As Abbott’s delicious and exhaustively researched book makes vividly clear, the Everleigh Club was the Taj Mahal of bordellos.” — *Chicago Sun Times*

“The book is rich with details about a fast-and-loose Chicago of the early 20th century... *Sin* explores this world with gusto, throwing light on a booming city and exposing its shadows.”

— *Time Out Chicago*

“[Abbott’s] research enables the kind of vivid description à la fellow journalist Erik Larson's *The Devil in the White City* that make what could be a dry historic account an intriguing read.”

– *Seattle Times*

“Abbott tells her story with just the right mix of relish and restraint, providing a piquant guide to a world of sexuality” — *The Atlantic*

“A rollicking tale from a more vibrant time: history to a ragtime beat.”

– *Kirkus Reviews*

“With gleaming prose and authoritative knowledge Abbott elucidates one of the most colorful periods in American history, and the result reads like the very best fiction. Sex, opulence, murder — What's not to love?”

— **Sara Gruen, author of *Water for Elephants***

“A detailed and intimate portrait of the Ritz of brothels, the famed Everleigh Club of turn-of-the-century Chicago. Sisters Minna and Ada attracted the elites of the world to such glamorous chambers as the Room of 1,000 Mirrors, complete with a reflective floor. And isn’t Minna’s advice to her resident prostitutes worthy advice for us all: “Give, but give interestingly and with mystery.”

— **Erik Larson, author of *The Devil in the White City***

“Karen Abbott has combined bodice-ripping salaciousness with top-notch scholarship to produce a work more vivid than a Hollywood movie.”

— **Melissa Fay Greene, author of *There is No Me Without You***

“*Sin in the Second City* is a masterful history lesson, a harrowing biography, and - best of all - a superfun read. The Everleigh story closely follows the turns of American history like a little sister. I can't recommend this book loudly enough.”

— **Darin Strauss, author of *Chang and Eng***

“This is a story of debauchery and corruption, but it is also a story of sisterhood, and unerring devotion. Meticulously researched, and beautifully crafted, *Sin in the Second City* is an utterly captivating piece of history.”

— **Julian Rubinstein**, author of *Ballad of the Whiskey Robber*

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