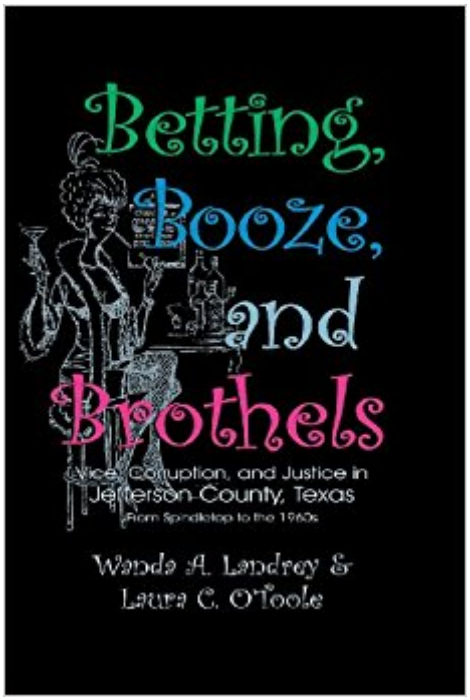
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Betting Booze And Brothels



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Synopsis

By the turn of the twentieth century, Beaumont, Texas had acquired a reputation as a rough place. Situated in the oil-soaked chaos of Spindletop, Jefferson County was a hotbed of vice. For decades, gambling and prostitution thrived as elected officials either looked the other way or took money to keep quiet. That is, until 1960 when a swashbuckling young state legislator blew into town and spearheaded an intensive investigation into the rampant vice and governmental corruption that supported it. And, at a time when such things were virtually unheard of, he and his committee played it out on live television. When the dust finally cleared, the local governments of Jefferson County were turned inside out.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A great read if you love local history. Beaumont, Texas and Jefferson County made major headlines in the 60's when the James Commission was sent by the AG to clean the community up. Ms. O'Toole does a masterful job in detaining the debauchery and the subsequent sterilizing. I have purchase numerous copies and given them to city officials who have no idea of the history of the city and county that they serve. The book is well written and thoroughly captivating.

Having grown up in Port Arthur, Texas during the time of this open vice situation, I especially enjoyed this book. The writers seemed to know the characters although they were probably too young to have had the opportunity.Their style was not along the lines I would have expected -- just

the facts, m’am, but open and freeflowing with a touch of humor in the right places.They also explained the justification many in the community had for accepting open prostitution and gambling. I applaud Landrey and O’Toole for their work.

Fun look at Southeast Texas history.

Very Interesting!!!

This is a well-researched study of the events in Jefferson County, Texas, related to the subjects mentioned in the book title, including lots of minute details and images of persons involved in court proceedings. Not of any great interest, I would imagine, to anyone not associated with that area of the state of Texas.

I lived in the area during this period and the authors did a great job.

This book, an account by local historians of the various vice activities in Jefferson County during the years leading up to the James Commission and its subsequent reforms, was a pleasant surprise. I received it as a gift from a family member who still lives in Jefferson County, and I really only started to read it when I ran out of unread books on my shelf. From the unimpressive publishing quality (it’s certainly not bad, but the book has the physical feel of a self-published or university press kind of publication, rather than a more carefully assembled volume by a major publisher) and the overly whimsical swirly font on the cover and chapter headings, I expected a vapid gossip column. Certainly, there are silly aspects of the book, like when Landrey takes a tour of the remains of the Dixie Hotel and shares breathless observations of the most notable architectural features, but most of the book is solid historical research, organized in a generally chronological way (with the exception of a one-chapter detour into Port Arthur’s history of vice that adds a great deal to the central narrative) and with extensive footnotes.Landrey has managed to arrange and record interviews with a praiseworthy variety of sources, from men who were drawn to Beaumont’s brothels as teenagers to police officers who found themselves constrained by official corruption. Additionally, she presents court documents and photographs to further develop the picture of what role the "red light district" played in the town. The authors do a marvelous job of presenting various viewpoints, including local officials who insisted that having a controlled area for vice prevented wandering sailors from endangering local women, politicians from other counties who risked their careers to

pursue law enforcement, and community activists who invited women for coffee as part of a campaign to elect officials free from corruption. The madams are portrayed as generally likable women, despite the nature of their careers, and even the most corrupt of the Jefferson County officials receive praise for their personal charm. It is difficult to present the history of a clearly moral issue without subtly condemning at least one viewpoint, but the authors succeed in this book, and they craft a charming and professional scholarly text about a colorful aspect of Texas history. I recommend this for anyone with a tie to Jefferson County, even snobs like me who have judged the book by its cover.

So interesting to finally see in print so many of the stories you may or may not have heard. More importantly to learn factual history of the area in the beginging.

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