

MY NOTORIOUS LIFE

A NOVEL by KATE MANNING

SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Orphan Trains:

In 1850, an estimated 30,000 children lived homeless on the streets of New York. Charles Loring Brace, who founded the Children's Aid Society, attempted to alleviate their misery (and get rid of "the dangerous classes" of what he believed to be future criminals) by finding homes for them. To that end, between 1853 and the early 1900's some 250,000 children were plucked from the streets and orphanages in East Coast cities, and sent West on the railroads. They landed in towns and villages from Illinois to Michigan. Some of them were destined to be exploited as servants, and worse, while others were adopted into loving homes.

For more information about Orphan Train Riders, the following books are recommended:

Orphan Trains: The Story of Charles Loring Brace and the Children He Saved and Failed, by Stephen O'Connor (University of Chicago Press, 2001)

<http://orphantraindepot.org>

You can also read The Diaries of Charles Loring Brace online, [here](#).

Ann Trow Lohman (1840-1878):

Known in the newspapers of her day as "the wickedest woman in New York," Lohman was an immigrant from Gloucestershire, England who arrived in New York with her husband, Henry Summers, and a young daughter. Summers soon died of a 'bilious fever,' and his widow married Charles Lohman, a fellow immigrant. In the next few years, Ann took on the name "Madame Restell," and began to sell medicines to women for "the relief of female complaint," in short, Madame was a midwife who performed abortions. Not much is known about how she came to learn her profession, but her arrests, trials and the scandal attendant to her career, as well as her dramatic death, are well-documented.

For more information about Ann Trow Lohman, look to the following books:

The Wickedest Woman in New York, By Clifford Browder (Archon Books, 1988)

Scandalous Lady, the Life and Times of Madame Restell, by Allan Keller (Atheneum, 1981)

The following websites are helpful:

[Smithsonian Magazine](#)

[The Wonderful Trial of Caroline Lohman](#)

Anthony Comstock (1844-1915)

Anthony Comstock was a Christian religious crusader, the founder of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, who was instrumental in the passage of the 1873 “Comstock Law,” which made it a crime to use the US mail for the distribution of “obscene” material. This might include information about birth control, an anatomy textbook, or postcards of statues of nudes. He was appointed as postal inspector, and used his unpaid, unelected position to arrest those he believed to be in violation of obscenity laws.

Anthony Comstock: Roundsman of The Lord, by Heywood Broun and Margaret Leech, (The Literary Guild of America, 1927)

Anthony Comstock, His Life of Cruelty and Crime, by DeRobigne Mortimer Bennett (New York, Liberal and Scientific Publishing House, 1878)

Online, [here](#).