

Chicago's Street of Streets

BARBARA CONSODINE

Michigan Avenue is a sophisticated young lady who strolls from Roosevelt Road up toward the Gold Coast with one shoulder lowered. Across this shoulder one sees the green beauty of the park and the masts and sails of white yachts on the blue lake.

State Street is a queen. She is an exciting, colorful, glamorous darling with the pleasures and needs of millions of subjects on her mind.

But the street which typifies Chicago and her people is Halsted Street.

To a stranger wandering through the city she might appear drab and dirty, but this is not so to natives of Chicago. She does not compare with Michigan Avenue for beauty, nor with State Street for fame and fortune, but in spite of her shabbiness and her ugliness, she is the happiest of the three.

Visitors to Chicago love to walk up and down Michigan Avenue and breathe the wind off the lake, and there is a strong, cool wind in State Street that people enjoy whether the day is hot or cold. Seldom is there a wind on a hot day in Halsted Street, but when there is, it blows dust, debris, and germs; and the smells from stock yards, tanneries, glue factories cling desperately to this wind.

Winter or summer, fall or spring, one can see thousands of children playing in the street and on the sidewalks. They run merrily over the red bricks and fill

the dull day with laughter and song. People stand on the corners of the street, or in front of the stores, and have pleasure just in talking. Men and women sit on the stairs of their homes and look at the world passing by. And in those looks is no bitterness, but merely friendship for all.

Halsted Street is primarily a business street and a lucky street, for few merchants have ever failed here. The most colorful section is that leading south from Madison to about Fourteenth Street, where there are stores selling foods from all parts of the world. Here we find a store selling American ice cream and soft drinks and Greek churches, complete even to the altar and stained glass windows. These are rented for funerals. Down the street one finds a store selling religious goods.

Most picturesque of all are the open air markets east and west off Halsted Street on Maxwell Street. Here is sold everything, gloves, tomatoes, shoes, blankets, suits, spices, pictures of the Virgin or General MacArthur. These goods are stacked attractively on wooden stands in the street.

Yes, Halsted is a great street. It is a thoroughbred with filthy hands and an old cotton dress. It is a dreamer, a student, a fighter, eternally busy, but always with time for a smile.