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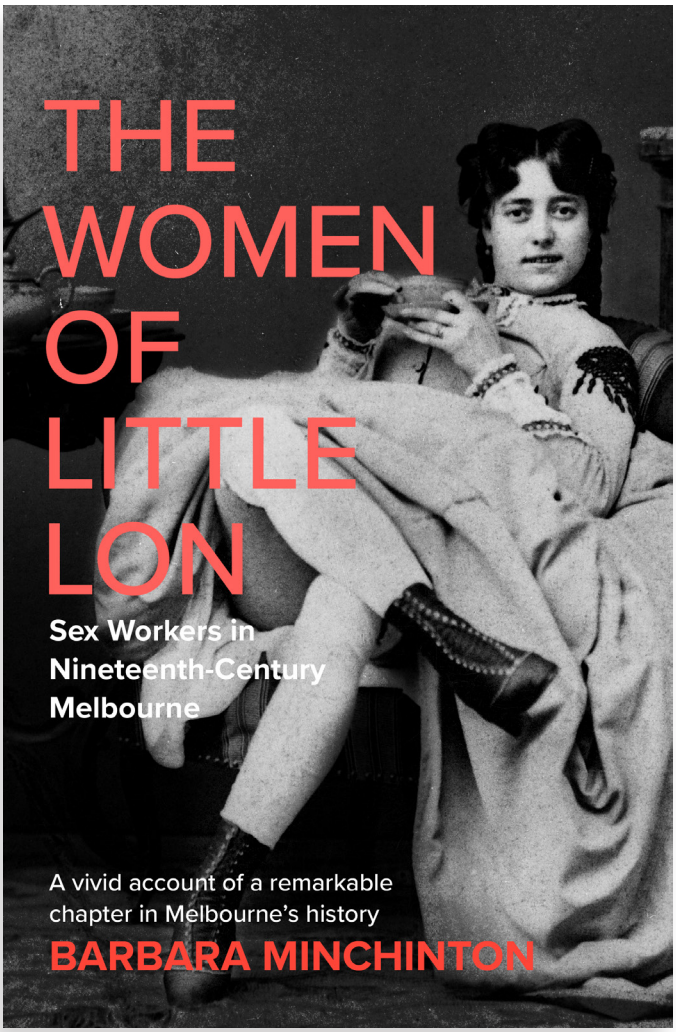
The Women of Little Lon

Sex Workers in Nineteenth-Century Melbourne

Barbara Minchinton



A vivid account of a remarkable but little-known chapter in Melbourne's history

Sex workers in nineteenth-century Melbourne were judged morally corrupt by the respectable world around them. But theirs was a thriving trade, with links to the police and political leaders of the day, and the leading brothels were usually managed by women.

While today a popular bar and a city lane are famously named after Madame Brussels, the identities of the other 'flash madams', the 'dressed girls' who worked for them and the hundreds of women who solicited on the streets of the Little Lon district of Melbourne are not remembered.

Who were they? What did their daily lives look like? What became of them? Drawing on the findings of recent archaeological excavations, rare archival material and family records, historian Barbara Minchinton brings the fascinating world of Little Lon to life.

BARBARA MINCHINTON is a historian and researcher at Deakin University. For several years she collaborated with a team of archaeologists on the analysis and interpretation of artefacts from Melbourne's Little Lon district. She is the co-editor of *The Commonwealth Block, Melbourne*, a history of the city's working-class and immigrant communities.

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