Abstract:

New York City during the last decade of the nineteenth century seemed to be on the edge of complete catastrophe, both politically and morally. The more than fifty years of Tammany rule had transformed the city into a political machine that was fuelled by vice and ruled over by graft hungry politicians and corrupt policemen, both put into position through patronage, and in no position to properly run a city as important as New York. While many reformers were present during this unruly period, no one person garnered more attention than Reverend Charles H. Parkhurst, who sought to end Tammany and police corruption. Fraught with the embarrassment of detesting Tammany without proper evidence, Parkhurst toured the many red-light districts of New York with the help of a private investigator and the company of a fellow clergy member. Parkhurst’s evidence gathering tour of the city eventually garnered enough attention to bring about a full senate hearing over the New York City Police Department which in turn exposed just how deep crime and corruption went into the city. To combat this, the hearing, popularly referred to as the Lexow committee, reorganized the political structure of the New York City Police, which is where one of America’s most important politicians entered the scene. Theodore Roosevelt, who was made president of the four person police commission, would work fervently to end the city’s deep relationship with vice, crime, and corruption. Eventually, Roosevelt could not cope with New Yorkers inability to enact true change. In less than three years Roosevelt left his position, beaten by his fellow New Yorkers.
Literary Review:

Previous research has been focused on reformists within New York City and how they inspired the Lexow Committee, and in turn how the Lexow Committee influenced reform movements within the City of New York and the New York City Police Department. This research has also focused primarily on these actors and the environment they were involved in, yet little has been mentioned about the failures that reformist minded individuals came across and why this occurred.

Thesis:

By the 1890’s reform movements were gaining traction within the city of New York, the actions of Reverent Parkhurst enabled the New York City Police Department to be scrutinized under the Lexow Committee, and in turn, an equally bi-partisan four person police commission was put in place in which Theodore Roosevelt was elected as president. Yet the weakness of a bi-partisan commission which could make no real change within the police department, along with a whole society that did not wish to see the old way of life to be changed, Theodore Roosevelt was unable to make any lasting progress, and eventually this led to his departure as Police Commissioner.

Methodology:

For this paper I will be relying on an archival approach, focusing in on the New York State Legislature Senate Committee on New York City Police, as well as using the press at the time to paint the political picture of what Roosevelt and the commission were up against by New York citizens opposed to reform as well as Tammany officials who equally despised the reformists.
Bibliography:


