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The Private Lives of Public Women: Prostitution in Butte, Montana, 1878-1917

MARY MURPHY

The Cult of True Womanhood excluded one important group of western women—prostitutes. They had left the "private sphere" to become the most public of women and left it for sexual commerce, while "true women" were supposed to be asexual. This belief was reflected in the Butte, Montana, statute Mary Murphy cites in this article, which differentiated "women" from "lewd and dissolute female persons." Western mythology softened this distinction by creating the "whore with the heart of gold," who had all the gentle virtues of proper women. Murphy's study of prostitution in Butte takes us beyond these stereotypes to look at why women became prostitutes, what their private lives were like, and the people who helped or hurt them. Murphy finds no whores with hearts of gold, but she does find women whose lives were as much affected by economic circumstances and emotional needs as other women's.

Because mining towns had many more men than women, they supported large red-light districts and made "private" life fairly public. These circumstances may have led to a more open recognition of the reality of sex. We don't know yet if this recognition included more realistic acknowledgments of female sexuality than the Cult of True Womanhood would suggest. The impact of public sexuality on standards of "normal" male and female behavior merits further investigation. Murphy takes us beyond polarized images of "good" and "bad" women, and helps us rethink an important chapter in the history of "private" life.

The prostitutes who worked in Butte, Montana, before 1917 were daughters of the nineteenth century, yet they violated every tenet of Victorian "womanliness." They were hardly temperate with regard to social or sexual intercourse, they were impious and impure, they lived without true homes or families, and they were anything but submissive. They aggressively sought customers, fought publicly, and cursed not only among themselves but with patrons and the police.¹ Between 1878, when its first hurdy-gurdy house opened, and 1917, when its red-light district closed down, Butte was the temporary home of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of prostitutes. They lived and worked in a one-block area where most of the vices of the nineteenth century were available for a price. The red-light district was



Crapper Jack's Dance Hall and Saloon, Myers Avenue, Cripple Creek, Colorado. Courtesy Glenn Kinnamon.

their home, the demimonde their family. In the world of prostitution the division between public and private, which was so central to nineteenth-century women's lives, was virtually nonexistent. Sexuality, a most private and intimate concern for most people, became blatantly public for prostitutes. Their husbands or lovers were often pimps, and family or lovers' squabbles were regularly reported in the paper as battles among the "denizens" of the district. Prostitutes' clothing and language, even their shopping places, became issues of public policy and regulation.

Prostitution was a highly stratified occupation. Each woman's status was determined by a combination of race, ethnicity, education, sociability, and sexual skill and was reflected in the place in which she worked. Parlor houses, such as Butte's elaborately furnished Windsor and the Irish World, were the top of the line; they functioned as social centers as well as brothels. Madams hired attractive women, usually white, who dressed well, acted like ladies, and played the parts of companions as well as sexual partners. These houses were few, however, and many more prostitutes worked in shabby brothels decorated with brewery calendars and whiskey-stained chairs rather than gilt-framed mirrors and brocade couches. A few prostitutes acquired the resources to work on their own in small cottages on the fringes of the red-light district. But the vast majority of prostitutes in Butte, women of all ages and races, were "everynight workingman's whores" who lived and worked in the cribs lining the streets and alleys of Butte's tenderloin.

Only those women who were private mistresses, served clients in the large parlor houses, or worked out of their own cottages managed to retain a degree of privacy. They catered to a middle-class clientele for whom publicity was undesirable. In return for discretion these women received protection from the police, public censure, and the violence of street life. However, for prostitutes who worked on the street or in cribs, public display was part of the trade. They could not afford both a public and private life.

Prostitutes had no place within the ranks of true womanhood. They were "public women," belonging to all men, not one man, and therefore not quite women at all. The Butte city council expressed this position in its ordinance concerning vagrancy, which drew a distinction between "women" and "lewd and dissolute female persons." These "female persons" were subject to arrest if they conducted themselves in an "improper, profane or obscene manner" within the sight or hearing of women.²

The consequences of occupying this position outside "womanhood" were mixed. On the one hand prostitutes were freed from maintaining the facade of middle-class respectability. They were expected to curse, drink, and smoke in public; they frequented saloons and gambling halls where even the most curious of respectable women dared not enter. But the costs of flouting the image of true womanhood far outweighed the pleasures of drinking and smoking in public. The arrival of "true" or "good" women on the frontier brought into sharp relief the bad women of town and exaggerated their outlaw character. Persons who lived through the early days of mining towns recalled prostitutes as "real women beneath their coldly-warm exterior . . . not . . . the hard-shelled harlots they have all been pictured."³ Such a sympathetic view changed when respectable "real" women established themselves in the West. Prostitutes then forfeited the public courtesies due women, though not all Butte residents were able to recognize a lady when they saw one. In 1909 a man was fined ten dollars for insulting a woman on West Park Street, and the court delivered a lecture on the evils of men loitering on the sidewalks and street corners making "improper remarks to ladies."⁴ Prostitutes complied with the new code of manners and used it to their advantage when they were outside the district. One miner observed: "They knew how to act like ladies when away from the district—and did it too. I seen one of them up and give a poke in the face to a masher on Park Street one afternoon, when he . . . tried to flirt with her."⁵ Prostitutes tended to exact retribution more directly than did ladies. Operating outside the boundaries of "womanhood" had graver consequences than the loss of courtesy. Because of their status prostitutes enjoyed little protection from insult or violence. In 1881 a man was fined ten dollars for disfiguring a prostitute, the same fine a woman paid when convicted of vagrancy.⁶

The public nature of their lives often denied prostitutes the private comforts of home and family. Though each woman cherished the few possessions which distinguished her crib from every other, nothing could disguise the fact that her bedroom, often her only quarters, was a place of

business. A few prostitutes managed to keep a room apart from their cribs, sometimes sharing it with a husband or "secretary," a euphemism for "pimp" apparently used only in Butte. Although a few prostitutes formed long-term relationships with men who had nothing to do with their business, most of their liaisons were with "secretaries" and were rarely formalized by marriage.⁷ The lack of legal bonds in their partnerships again denied prostitutes legitimacy in the eyes of respectable society.

The relationship between prostitutes and pimps was the most complex in the demimonde. Some prostitutes considered pimps parasites and would have nothing to do with them. One independent Frenchwoman commenting on the district in 1902, declared, "There are at least twenty-five secretaries on this street who live on the fat of the land because foolish girls will give them their money."⁸ Pimps unquestionably exploited prostitutes, living off their earnings and often treating them viciously. But some women willingly allied with pimps. Whatever emotional support, physical protection, sexual satisfaction, or illusion of romance these men "of fancy dress and patent leather shoes" provided seemed to offset the abuse with which they treated their lovers.⁹ John Day was arrested for stealing fifty dollars from a woman whose crib he had shared for some time. However, once his lover had him arrested she never came forward to testify against him. May Raymond was "beaten almost into insensibility" by William Beierman, her paramour of eight months, but she did not press charges. In one of the most tragic stories of Butte's tenderloin, Mollie Scott, a young woman employed in a dance hall, was murdered by her husband, "the man whom she had cheerfully supported from the gains of her arduous calling," in a trivial argument about whether she could visit another dancing saloon.¹⁰

Many prostitutes demanded faithfulness from their paramours, and when they suspected infidelity, they took action. One night at a party Laura Evans decided that her "beau," Arthur, was dancing too frequently with another woman and knocked him through a plate-glass window, nearly cutting his throat. Dolly Arthur lived with one man for twenty-six years. After witnessing his repeated affairs, she told him they could continue living together "but you must never put your hands on me again."¹¹

In many respects prostitutes' relationships with pimps were similar to those with madams. Both pimps and madams procured customers, protected prostitutes from violence inflicted by others, and established an emotional bond of some permanence. Yet in the popular culture madams became romanticized, often admired figures, while pimps were always despised. By some criteria madams fit the nineteenth-century ideology of womanliness. They kept a house; they played the role of mother to their "girls"; they wielded influence and used their sexuality behind the scenes, rarely making overt use of what power they may have had. Pimps, however, violated every tenet of nineteenth-century manliness. Men of all classes derived their identity from their work, and pimps did neither "honest" nor "manly" work. They were supported by women; worse, they exploited women's virtue. In an age when men fought for wages that would

keep their families "from the soup house and the brothel," pimps, who pushed women into vice, could only be despised.¹²

Middle-class Victorian ideas of manliness and women's lack of passion fated pimps to condemnation and again made prostitutes' lives subject to public scrutiny. While repulsed by prostitution, many Victorians were sympathetic to prostitutes, imagining them to have been trapped by white slavers, driven to sexual commerce by dire economic need, or seduced, abandoned, and then "honor-bound" to take the only course left open to a ruined woman. That women had some choice or might enjoy their work was beyond their understanding, or perhaps threatening to their own sexuality. The possibility that a woman could voluntarily associate with a pimp was unthinkable, and thus women's own needs and motives were ignored in the public campaigns to rid western towns of pimps. During one of the repeated attempts to cleanse Butte of secretaries, Judge Donlan settled the maximum fine of three hundred dollars on one man arrested for vagrancy and censured him for carrying on "the lowest and vilest business that could possibly be imagined for a human being."¹³

Just as prostitutes' relationships with lovers were jeopardized by their work and by public policy, so were their attempts at motherhood. Few prostitutes were wives in the traditional sense, and children had little place in a brothel. In several frontier communities, when children were discovered living in the red-light district they were taken from their mothers and placed in the county poor farm. Prostitutes' appeals to place them in private homes went unheeded.¹⁴ For this reason prostitutes frequently left their children with relatives or paid families to take them in. Many mothers desired to protect their children from the environment of the red-light district and recognized that the transience of their occupation often precluded good care. Many Butte prostitutes had borne children, but only a few lived with them.¹⁵

Prostitutes could hardly practice the most common forms of nineteenth-century birth control, abstinence and withdrawal, although women undoubtedly made use of pessaries, vaginal sponges, suppositories, and douches. They also resorted to abortion, a decision often painfully calculated.¹⁶ Madeleine Blair, who started working as a prostitute at seventeen had borne two children by the time she was twenty-one. Her daughter died at birth, and she was determined to rear her second child, a son. Intending to save enough money to start a legitimate business, she left him with a nurse and went to Winnipeg to work for the summer. She returned and reclaimed her son, but, not having made enough to start her business, she continued to work as an occasional prostitute. Madeleine soon found herself pregnant again. While she was debating whether to have an abortion, her son died of pneumonia. In grief and anger at the thought of bearing another fatherless child she performed a self-induced abortion in her fifth month. She nearly died from peritonitis but recovered to mourn "with strange perversity and inconsistency" for the child she had "deliberately destroyed."¹⁷

In Butte between 1900 and 1917, twenty-three women died as a result of abortions. They ranged in age from seventeen to thirty-nine; they were married, single, divorced; black and white. It is unclear how many were prostitutes. These deaths only hint at the number of abortions performed in the city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Montana prostitution was considered a misdemeanor, but having an abortion carried a one-year jail sentence. Because of its illegality only unsuccessful procedures, revealed by sickness or death, were reported, and hundreds of successful abortions went unrecorded.¹⁸

Creating a home or family was only one of the problems faced by prostitutes. Prostitution was a competitive business in both the parlor houses and the cribs. Although in parlor houses madams often tried to distribute customers equally among the workers, the women vied for men. Since prostitutes split each fee with the madam, it was in their own interest to have as many "callers" as possible, and they tried to build up a regular clientele. Down on the street there was no mediating factor like a madam. Prostitutes posed in the doors and windows of their cribs "as if [they] were a part of a live-stock exhibition."¹⁹ The term "lost sisterhood" which has been applied to prostitutes is apt, for the fierce competition for customers gnawed at any bonds of solidarity. One pimp wrote of the competition among prostitutes, "In rivalry they eat the flesh skin off one another alive."²⁰

Rivalry often led to the violence endemic in the district. Women fought with each other verbally and physically, sometimes quarreling over a customer, more often over pimps. They frequently joined in the general brawls that erupted in the saloons and dance halls. Sometimes they fought out of sheer spite. When one prostitute placed the skins of some plums on her neighbor's doorstep rather than in the garbage can, her neighbor attacked her with scissors and inflicted a severe scalp wound.²¹

Although prostitutes occasionally availed themselves of the courts to redress a wrong, more often they acted immediately and personally—and often ended up in court as the accused. When a peddler somehow provoked two "Park Street women," they assaulted him with cayenne pepper and beer bottles. Laura Evans, who bore the scars to prove it, testified that when she and her lover were angry at each other they fought with knives. When a drunken man in the Royal parlor house struck Emma Robinson in the face, she stabbed him.²²

Prostitutes were much more often on the receiving end of violence, frequently from unpredictable customers. On May 21, 1907, under the headline "Woman of Lower World Is Stabbed by Italian Tamale Vendor," the *Butte Miner* reported in unusual detail an assault in the red-light district. Teodosio Campanelli had given Gussie Clark a dollar, stood outside her crib talking for some time, and then asked for the dollar back. Clark, who had come from Seattle only two days before, called to her neighbor Mollie Quinn, who told her not to return the money. Campanelli pulled a knife; Quinn seized him, permitting Clark to escape while Campanelli stabbed Quinn in the abdomen. Quinn's husband arrived on the scene as she was

being placed on a stretcher. As he stood by her side, an elderly woman emerged from the crowd, shook her fist, and cursed him: "You have disgraced your dead father in the boneyard. You told me years ago that you had quit her. Yet here you are . . . May you die the death that woman is dying. And she deserves it, for you were a good boy till you took up with Mollie Quinn." Another prostitute who had witnessed the scene muttered to a reporter, "That's your Christianity."²³

Denied protection enjoyed by "true women," prostitutes often had only each other to rely upon in times of danger or crises; at such moments some tenuous bonds of sisterhood emerged. The common hazards prostitutes faced sometimes brought them together; abortion, the death of a child, assault by a customer, or attempted suicide suspended the daily competition. There were many incidents like Campanelli's attack on Gussie Clark, and women like Mollie Quinn were often the only defenders other prostitutes had. When a prostitute was killed or committed suicide, it was fellow members of the lost sisterhood who buried her.²⁴

Amid the atmosphere of spite and rivalry, and hidden in the dismal quarters of the district, was a corner of the nineteenth-century "female world of love and ritual." Not all prostitutes were like Dolly Arthur, who claimed she "never had a good girlfriend in [her] life."²⁵ Prostitutes frequently traveled in pairs and sought jobs together. There are many allusions to lesbianism in brothels, and it is likely that women often turned to each other for the love and comfort lacking in their relationships with men.²⁶

Sometimes, however, women's pride kept them apart. Laura Evans's friend Spud Murphy left her to set up her own business, which prospered for many years. But as she grew older, she became an alcoholic, lost her house, and ended up as a washerwoman in another red-light district. Evans went to offer her a home with her for the rest of her life, but Spuddy refused to see her, ashamed of the way her life had turned out. She continued to reject any help from Evans and died alone.²⁷

Women joined the fast life for a number of reasons, but it did not always lead to what they expected. Investigators from the mid-nineteenth century through the Progressive Era sought to explain why a woman turned to commercialized sex. They posited as causes abuse as a child or wife, poverty, early sexual experience, alcoholism, emotional deprivation, "keeping bad company," or abandonment by a man. All these factors were undoubtedly contributing influences in particular cases. But there were other reasons, too. Some women decided that prostitution would provide them with fancy clothing, a desirable social life, sexual freedom, or simply a better standard of living.²⁸ Other women joined the sisterhood out of despair, expecting nothing better than the life they had been leading, and probably worse. Some women found the luxury and excitement they desired; others experienced a brief period of financial success, enjoying a standard of living beyond the means of most working-class women. But the constant travel, the threat of arrest, violence, betrayal, and immersion in a world of alcohol, drugs, and disease debilitated women emotionally and physically. Contrary to white-slave tracts, which portrayed women following the path

to ruin after visiting an opium den or becoming an alcoholic, it is far more likely that prostitutes turned to opiates and alcohol to numb themselves once they discovered that the fast life was not all they had hoped or was even worse than they had expected.²⁹

Alcohol and drugs were a part of the tenderloin culture and addiction only sucked prostitutes more deeply into the life. Alcoholism and drug abuse united members of the demimonde and drew yet another line between them and Butte's respectable citizenry. A Butte bard wrote an epic poem describing a dance attended by Butte's demimonde in 1898. Several verses illustrate the community involved and suggest the widespread use of a variety of drugs.

All the junkies were invited,
 Yes, every gink and muff,
 Not a single one was slighted
 If they were on the stuff.
 Invitations were presented
 To every hustler and her man.
 They even sent up invites
 To the hopheads in the can.
 "But, before they play the grand march
 Let each dancer have a shot;
 It will act as stimulation,
 And should make the dancin' hot."
 So from scores of hiding places
 Guests brought forth their hypo gats;
 From sleeves, brassieres and bustles,
 Some even hid them in their rats.
 Not all the cokies used the needle,
 Some from their opium pipes did whiff;
 Others drained their paregoric,
 A few of "happy dust" did sniff.
 Opium pills or hasheesh
 Came forth from many a sock,
 And some twist from China Alley
 Brought out her old yen hok.³⁰

Prostitutes used anodynes other than alcohol and drugs. Some women became addicted to gambling, viewing it as their only chance to create a new life, but more often they only dug themselves more deeply into debt.³¹ Others married. In 1882 the *Butte Miner* reported a "matrimonial epidemic" on Park Street when several prostitutes married.³² Perhaps they hoped for stability if not a total escape from the life. It is impossible to know how many achieved that stability, although western folklore says that many prostitutes wed and vanished happily into the ranks of respectability. Many women, however, could not shed their pasts and either returned to prostitution or chose another alternative.³³

Suicide was a drastic solution to the despair of prostitutes' lives, but

it was often attempted. Some women shot themselves or used arsenic or chloral; more commonly they took overdoses of opiates, which were easily obtained in drugstores.³⁴ The coy prose with which newspapers usually reported prostitutes' attempted suicides masked the desperation that led to such acts. Lottie Ables had come to Helena in the 1870s. She was nicknamed "Sorrel Mike" after a racehorse that arrived in the territory about the same time. While she was in Helena, she attempted suicide several times. Around 1879 she moved to Butte, where she married a saloonkeeper named Pickett, and apparently continued to work as a prostitute while dancing in Pickett's saloon. But married life was no balm, and two weeks after her wedding she again attempted suicide by drinking a phial of laudanum. Once more she was revived. Ables's life got no easier; a few months later a man was convicted of assault and battery on her. She continued to live and work in Butte, attempting suicide again in July 1880. At some time that year her husband vanished, and her sister moved into the small house she occupied just south of Park Street. In December 1881, Lottie Ables finally died, but not by her own hand. After quarreling with her lover, she went out and found another man. When he left the house without paying for the wine he had drunk, she reputedly drew a pistol. In the ensuing struggle Ables was shot in the abdomen and died the next day. The newspaper reported her age to be around thirty, but she was only twenty-two.³⁵

The undeniable tragedy of many prostitutes' lives has led some historians and feminists to cast them in the role of hapless victims of society and male exploitation. In this respect we are as short-sighted as the Victorians who reduced them to one-dimensional caricatures of "bad" women. Butte's prostitutes were victims—victims of a tangled sexual ideology that advocated "passionlessness" in women but recognized the need for prostitution to absorb the "excess lust" of men; victims of a city government that exploited their vulnerable legal position to fill the city treasury; victims of madams and pimps who exploited their emotional vulnerability and need for physical protection and security; and victims of men who denied them any personal dignity, treating them only as sexual objects. Yet, just as women exercised some choice in the process of becoming prostitutes, they sometimes exercised power in their trade and had some pride in their accomplishments. Prostitutes like Dolly Arthur were proud of their popularity, of running a "clean" house where men had a good time and did not have to worry about being robbed. They enjoyed men, they enjoyed their work, and they considered the money they were paid a flattering reflection of their worth. While they disbursed their share of bribes and fines, they also used skill and charm to play upon men's vanities and to protect themselves from the courts, the police, and difficult customers.

In a parlor house a man paid for companionship, entertainment, and a semblance of romance, as well as for intercourse, but in poorer brothels and cribs, no such illusion existed. Prostitutes often had several customers each night, and they reduced sexual intercourse to a mechanical process. One worker described his experience:

She'd lay on her back and get you on top of her so fast, you wouldn't even know you'd come up there on your own power. She'd grind so that you almost felt like you had nothing to do with it. Well, after that, she had you. She could make it get off as quickly as she wanted to, . . . and she didn't waste any time, I'll tell you, . . . I'd say the whole thing, from the time you got in the room until the time you came didn't take three minutes.³⁶

Women in the cribs were not selling romance, and unless a man lingered to drink there was no profit in prolonging the engagement. Prostitutes like Madeleine could not reconcile themselves to the fact that some men wanted more than their bodies:

I could not make a demonstration of affection over men nor any pretense or response to their caresses. For the life of me, I could not understand why they should expect it. They had only bought my body. I could not see why they should want more. My love was not for sale, piecemeal, to every man who had the price to pay for my body.³⁷

The relationship between prostitute and client was a marketplace transaction, and, as in any other commercial exchange, the customer sought to get as much as he could for his money. Much of the violence directed against prostitutes occurred when a man thought he had purchased more than a woman was willing to give. Because of crib women's low status they were especially fair game for cheating and abuse. Several bloody altercations in the district occurred when women tried to get payment from parsimonious customers. For the most part, however, women controlled what happened in their cribs and in their beds, "turning a trick" on men who thought they had bought "the right to handle [them] at will."³⁸

When a man became a nuisance or blind drunk, prostitutes often "made a touch." Some whores felt that it was "against their religion" to let a man get away with a penny in his pocket, and they were not choosy about the means they used to get it. Men who were robbed were frequently reluctant to make a legal complaint for fear of publicity. Dozens of men, including a sheriff from another part of Montana, claimed that they were robbed in Beryl Hasting's house on Mercury Street, but none would swear out a complaint, much to the chagrin of the police.³⁹

Although Butte prostitutes exerted some personal power in their individual lives, there is little evidence that they, or any other member of the tenderloin, ever acted collectively to improve their lot. Madams may have used their influence on important men in the city, and individual prostitutes may have had some sway over a policeman or official. But the examples of Denver, where prostitutes formed an organized voting block, or Cripple Creek, Colorado, where dance hall girls founded the Dance Hall Girls Protective Association and called a strike to protest a reduction in their percentage of liquor sales, are absent, or still hidden, in Butte's history.⁴⁰

Perhaps prostitutes' greatest source of power was society's need for them. The prostitutes of the demimonde were indeed residents of a half-

world with little legal and no moral standing since they had, in effect, been read out of the ranks of "true women." But prostitutes and their madams, pimps, and liquor and drug suppliers weathered many storms of reform, for they knew there was an enduring demand for their services. Power is exercised in subtle ways by oppressed groups or members of an underclass, many times by giving those in power the illusion of submission. The members of Butte's demimonde, for all their flamboyance, knew how to play a subtle game. They were able to protect themselves by giving something to everyone, even reformers.

In May 1905, Christian reformers invaded the red-light district of Butte. The Reverend C. L. Bovard and the Salvation Army band, accompanied by a thousand men, women, and children, held a revival meeting and then marched through the district singing, "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?" Later that evening the evangelist William Biederwolf addressed the crowd, calling Butte "the lowest sinkhole of vice in the west." The week-long revival culminated in a meeting in the district. The manager of the Casino Theater opened his doors to the evangelist. The orchestra pit was jammed with "gamblers, rounders and male habitués" of the district; the boxes were filled with "women in flimsy garments" accompanied by their secretaries and paramours. For thirty-five minutes Biederwolf addressed the crowd; when he asked those who desired to do better to raise their hands, everyone did. After Biederwolf departed, the bar reopened, the orchestra struck up a tune, and the women went back to work. Someone asked the manager of the Casino whether he intended to give up the liquor trade. He looked up in amazement and said, "Me? I guess not."⁴¹

Business returned to normal in the district. Prostitutes continued to ply their trade, to be picked up for vagrancy, fined, and released to be arrested the following month. In 1915 the *Miner* reported that the district had a larger population than ever and business was booming. But prosperity was short-lived. The wave of reform that swept through America during World War I touched Butte as well. In 1917 the city attorney declared war on houses of ill repute. The Copper King saloon and hotel, the financial heart of the district, was described as "a haunt for some of the most disreputable characters in the city," and it was closed in the first battle of the campaign against vice. Butte joined two hundred other American cities that shut down their red-light districts by 1920.⁴²

The closing of Butte's red-light district did not end prostitution, just as Prohibition which came in 1918, did not end the sale and consumption of liquor. But the two events changed the structure of vice. Earlier in the century when Butte attempted to shut down its district, one prostitute responded by saying that she would merely go into the lodging houses or "rustle" in the streets.⁴³ That is what happened in 1917. Vice moved underground as prostitutes dispersed through the city and speakeasies replaced corner saloons. Prostitution was a firmly established business in Butte, and prostitutes continued to demonstrate persistence and flexibility

in pursuit of their trade. The closing of the red-light district ended a particular form of commercialized vice, affecting both the public and private lives of prostitutes, but it certainly did not extinguish Butte's demimonde.

Notes

1. *Butte Miner*, 11 Sept. 1880, 16 March 1881, 22 Sept. 1881.
2. William E. Carroll, comp., *The Revised Ordinances of the City of Butte* (1914), pp. 460–61.
3. Frank A. Crampton, *Deep Enough: A Working Stiff in the Western Mine Camps* (Denver: Sage Books, 1956), p. 50; reprint (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982).
4. *Butte Miner*, 20 Aug. 1909.
5. Federal Writers' Project, *Copper Camp* (New York: Hastings House, 1943), p. 181.
6. *Butte Miner*, 6 March 1881; Butte City Ordinance no. 824, 1914.
7. Madeleine Blair maintained a relationship with one man for several years. He was a protector and lover but never acted as a pimp. Other women continued working as prostitutes while they were married to men who had nothing to do with their business. Pearl Heflin for instance, who worked as a prostitute in Butte in 1900, was married to a day laborer.
8. *Butte Miner*, 19 Jan. 1902.
9. Martha Louise Black, *My Ninety Years* (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Co., 1976), p. 48.
10. *Butte Miner*, 27 May 1907, 19 Aug. 1909, 5 Aug. 1880.
11. Forbes Parkhill, *The Wildest of the West* (Denver: Sage Books, 1951), p. xiii; June Allen, *Dolly's House* (Ketchikan, Alaska: Tongass Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 20–21.
12. Peter G. Filene, *Him Her Self: Sex Roles in Modern America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), see chapter 3, "Men & Manliness"; Elizabeth Jameson, "Imperfect Unions: Class and Gender in Cripple Creek, 1894–1904," *Frontiers* 1 (Spring, 1976): 101.
13. *Butte Miner*, 23 July 1910. In 1905 a "crusade" was begun to rid the city of men known as "red-light vagrants." One of the tactics was to arrest and fine prostitutes, presumably with the hope that if deprived of their income, the men would move on. *Butte Miner*, 26 July 1905.
14. Margaret H. Davis, "Harlots and Hymnals: A Historic Confrontation of Vice and Virtue in Waco, Texas," *Mid-South Folklore* 4 (Winter, 1976): 92.
15. "Tenth Census," 1880, vol. 1, "Montana" (manuscript); "Twelfth Census of the Population," 1900, vol. 9, "Silver Bow County" (manuscript). Two children were living with prostitutes in 1880; in 1900 no children were recorded in the red-light district, but the census revealed that prostitutes had borne twenty-six children, twelve of whom were living.
16. Marion S. Goldman, *Gold Diggers and Silver Miners: Prostitution and Social Life on the Comstock Lode* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), p. 126.
17. *Madeleine: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1910), pp. 196–202.
18. Butte Mortuary Records, 1900–17; *Revised Codes of Montana*, 1907.
19. *Madeleine*, p. 216.
20. U.S. Cong., Senate, *Importing Women for Immoral Purposes: A Partial Report from the Immigration Commission on the Importation and Harboring of Women for Immoral Purposes*, 61st Cong., 2d sess., doc. 196 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), p. 59.
21. *Butte Miner*, 4 March 1880, 17 March 1880, 26 May 1880, 5 Oct. 1881, 21 Aug. 1909.
22. *Butte Miner*, 20 Feb. 1881, 26 May 1880; Parkhill, *The Wildest of the West*, p. xiii; *Butte Miner*, 16 Oct. 1903.
23. *Butte Miner*, 21 May 1907.

24. *Butte Miner*, 5 Aug. 1880, 11 Nov. 1881.
25. Dolly Arthur, interview by John Grainger, Ketchikan, Alaska, n.d.
26. Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900–1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 104, 163; Paula Petrik, "The Bonanza Town: Women and Family on the Rocky Mountain Frontier, Helena, Montana, 1865–1900" (Ph.D. diss. SUNY-Binghamton, 1982), p. 194; Goldman, *Gold Diggers and Silver Miners*, pp. 116–21.
27. Parkhill, *The Wildest of the West*, p. xv.
28. For a discussion of why women turned to prostitution and an analysis of the many vice commissions, see Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, chap. 8.
29. Parkhill, *The Wildest of the West*, p. xv; *Madeleine*, pp. 228–312. Regular use of opiates also caused disruption or cessation of menstruation; thus it is possible that prostitutes used opiates as a form of birth control. David T. Courtwright, "Opiate Addiction in America, 1880–1940" (Ph.D. diss. Rice University, 1979), p. 93.
30. Federal Writers' Project, pp. 272–73. *Gink* means a fellow or "guy"; *muff*, prostitute; *gat*, pistol or revolver; *rat*, pad with tapering ends over which a woman's hair is arranged; *cokie*, drug addict, cocaine user; *happy dust*, cocaine; *twist*, woman with loose or "twisted" morals.
31. Lucie Cheng Hirata, "Chinese Immigrant Women in Nineteenth Century California," in Carol Berkin and Mary Beth Norton, eds., *Women of America, A History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), p. 232; *Madeleine*, pp. 233–38.
32. *Butte Miner*, 8 Feb. 1882.
33. Crampton, *Deep Enough*, p. 50; Petrik, "The Bonanza Town," pp. 194–99; Anne Ellis, *The Life of an Ordinary Woman* (1929; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), pp. 222–23; James Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairie* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 179–80.
34. Alfred R. Lindesmith, *Addiction and Opiates* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968), p. 210; Goldman, *Gold Diggers and Silver Miners*, pp. 134–35; *Butte Miner*, 20 Feb. 1880, 26 May 1880, 6 Oct. 1881, 11 Nov. 1881, 7 Aug. 1883, 6 Apr. 1884.
35. *Butte Miner*, 28 Aug. 1879, 7 Oct. 1879, 31 July 1880, 16 Dec. 1881; *Tenth Census*, 1880.
36. Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, p. 96.
37. *Madeleine*, p. 71.
38. *Madeleine*, p. 82.
39. Parkhill, *The Wildest of the West*, p. xii; Anne K. Butler, "The Tarnished Frontier: Prostitution in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1865–1890," (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1979), p. 119; *Butte Miner*, 5 Oct. 1881, 7 May 1905, 27 May 1907, 20 Feb. 1909, 20 Aug. 1909.
40. Parkhill, *The Wildest of the West*, pp. 23–24; Ruth Rosen, "The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution During the Progressive Era," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1976), p. 132; Jameson, "Imperfect Unions," p. 101.
41. *Butte Miner*, 5 May 1905, 11 May 1905.
42. *Butte Miner*, 16 July 1915, 11 May 1917; Mark Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 26.
43. *Butte Miner*, 19 Jan. 1902.