

Prostitutes in the Far West: Playthings or Social Workers?



Throughout time, humans have gathered into groups of social interaction accompanied by food and drink which, in time, have taken the form of **clubs, societies, bars, pubs, ale houses** or **saloons**. Ale houses have existed since medieval Europe, evolving into the saloons made familiar by American westerns, and then into the modern bar or club of today. **Alcohol and prostitution** have always gone hand in hand since ancient times – which explains why mid-nineteenth century madams relied on a flourishing liquor business in the brothel. The popularity of these businesses has in many cases contributed to the **expansion and growth of the community** itself by attracting outsiders. Thus, **prostitution** has ultimately affected society both economically and socially in a positive way, that is, by acting as a **catalyst for business** and by empowering women through **economic and social independence**. This social phenomenon becomes particularly evident when one thinks of the **urban development of the Far West**, where camps became bustling towns largely because of female contribution – that is, thanks to sex workers. Brothels and saloons then acted as a place for men to conduct business while providing independence for women. For example, did you know women in **Wyoming** could vote a half century before the rest of the USA, and when that right was threatened its inhabitants even resisted becoming a state? It's time to acknowledge the role of sex workers in American (and European) history and to give them their due credit...

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