



Red Light Women of the Rocky Mountains

Jan MacKell

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Throughout the development of the American West, prostitution grew and flourished within the mining camps, small towns, and cities of the nineteenth-century Rocky Mountains. Whether escaping a bad home life, lured by false advertising, or seeking to subsidize their income, thousands of women chose or were forced to enter an industry where they faced segregation and persecution, fines and jailing, and battled the hazards of disease, drug addiction, physical abuse, pregnancy, and abortion. They dreamed of escape through marriage or retirement, but more often found relief only in death. An integral part of western history, the stories of these women continue to fascinate readers and captivate the minds of historians today.

Expanding on the research she did for *Brothels, Bordellos, and Bad Girls* (UNM Press), historian Jan MacKell moves beyond the mining towns of Colorado to explore the history of prostitution in the Rocky Mountain states of Arizona, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. Each state had its share of working girls and madams like Big Nose Kate or Calamity Jane who remain celebrities in the annals of history, but MacKell also includes the stories of lesser-known women whose role in this illicit trade nonetheless shaped our understanding of the American West.

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