

Catherine Holder Spude

Brothels and Saloons: An Archaeology of Gender in the American West

ABSTRACT

An analysis of eight artifact collections from mining-related communities in the North American West sheds light on the manifestation of gender in the archaeological record. Saloons and brothels served similar functions in the mining boomtowns, often overlapping. A critical difference between the two types of collections lies in who was selecting the material culture: men or women. Women's contributions to the archaeological assemblages of sporting establishments can be identified by items specific to them, as well as by relatively high percentages of pharmaceuticals. High frequencies of armaments and generic personal items in the brothels may have more to do with the specific activities taking place in the brothels than with gender. The importance of distinguishing between the brothels and saloons is examined in the context of feminist theory.

Introduction

Within the last decade, historical archaeology has become an increasingly useful tool for elucidating gender studies. Men's and women's lives, relationships, roles and their functions in communities have changed through time, and the ways they have evolved are important in understanding those aspects of culture as it exists today. Archaeological techniques, combined with an anthropological perspective on human history and human interactions, have the potential to shed new light on understudied populations. This potential is especially great when dealing with working-class people of both genders who have failed to leave a written record of their lives.

The primary documentation of the lives of male laborers and working-class prostitutes in the North American West often appears in the form of reminiscences. Written decades after the big boom, the prostitutes recall all the fun they had and the laborers remember the

generous, golden hearts of the substitutes they found for the wives and sweethearts back home. An excellent example is seen in a memoir by Richard "Dixie" Anzer (1959:138–139), who spent time in the Yukon and Alaska during the Klondike gold rush years of 1897–1899. He wrote glowingly of "Popcorn Kate," whom he portrayed as a buxom, fun-loving lass. The same woman appeared several times in the Skagway, Alaska, newspaper as a lush, being hauled to jail in a wheelbarrow, wearing "only enough clothes to fill a thimble," and drawing a nine-month jail sentence for vagrancy (*Daily Alaskan* 1900:1; 1901a:4; 1901b:4). Who told the truth about Kate? Anzer or the newspaper journalist?

The studies of Marion Goldman (1981), Ruth Rosen (1982), Anne Butler (1985), Jacqueline Baker Barnhart (1986), Benson Tong (1994), Madelon Powers (1998), Howard Chudacoff (1999), and James A. Morone (2003) have gone a long way towards increasing our knowledge of the role prostitutes played in the turn-of-the-century North American West. It becomes quite obvious that the Western prostitute, while providing a service in a predominantly male world, was not doing so because she was deprived, lustful, having a good time, or simply from the kindness of her heart. Her reasons for prostituting herself were as varied as the reasons that men rushed north for gold, and most of those reasons boiled down to one simple denominator: money.

Unfortunately, at least in the North American West, the works of these scholars are still overwhelmed by the tongue-in-cheek, titillating books by journalists (Irwin and Miller 1960; Miller and Mazzulla 1962; Brown 1995), retired geologists (Bird 1987), hospital administrators (Sandwich 1991), and religious reformers (Williams 1980), to mention only a few who have relied almost entirely on interviews and letters of madams. Note the huge success of the University of New Mexico Press's recent biography of madam Millie Clark Cusey, written by novelist Max Evans (2002). The first edition sold out within a month. Evans stated

that he tried interviewing Millie's friends for the book, but they all told the same stories she did, so he soon gave it up and settled in for pleasant afternoons of drinking whiskey with Millie while she recounted her hilarious adventures (Evans 2002:296). What all these men—and they are invariably men—seem to have forgotten is that it was a madam's job to entertain the customer with amusing, ribald stories while he awaited the service for which he came through the door. And the madams were very good at telling stories, true or not. The hilarious stories become so entertaining that these researchers found themselves losing their objectivity very quickly, while losing their hearts to their subjects.

Trying to find unbiased source materials for the early-20th-century Western prostitute is especially difficult. The reform era drew upon the Victorian vision of the Devil's mistress and then turned her into a depraved victim (Morone 2003:222–280). The reformers' literature is often substantiated by court documents, which tell only a small part of the story, the part that ends up in the courts (Washburn 1997: vi). The madam fought back with uproarious tales of good times that were corroborated by her friends and clients, who only went to her place for the conversation. These stories are echoed by the newspaper quips that made fun of the prostitutes, making them seem hilarious in another sense.

While the archaeologist entering the remains of the Western boomtown has some solid secondary sources to start with, he or she may have very little good primary material on which to figure out where the women were and what they were actually doing in their day-to-day lives. The mining camps bloomed and died in a matter of weeks or months, often having no more court system than a miners' committee and no more law than vigilante law. No one kept copies of the newspaper, if there was one. The archaeologist has only material remains and analogy with other mining camps (or logging camps, or railroad construction camps, or other places where men gathered in large numbers without their wives and families) to try to figure out where the few women in the camp might have been.

The social historian and the archaeologist cannot help but believe that the entire truth

cannot be told and interpreted either by the participants, their male observers, or their female reformers. The historians who have studied Western prostitution combined their ability in finding a variety of sources with their skill at interpretation and art in presentation to reveal much of the truth that is known about prostitution in Western North America today. Archaeologists trust there are ways to increase the variety of historical tools through the study of the physical remains of brothels.

Saloons and Brothels in the West

On the Western mining frontier, the saloon was "the poor man's club" (Kingsdale 1973: 472), functioning to provide a social sphere for a man far from friends and family. Respected historian Elliott West (1979:73–96) called it "the social heart-centre of the camp." The saloon was not simply a place to relax with a whiskey or beer after work. The bachelor men in the mining camps, far from home and family, sought out the saloon for its camaraderie, information about lucrative strikes, and news from the rest of the world. And, as one author wrote, "the nature and the scope of the diversions offered in public drinking places was limited only by the tolerance of the authorities and the imagination of the owner. While drinking remained as the primary attraction, there were many added inducements for visiting a saloon" (Brown 1978:35).

Brothels, on the other hand, almost defy a standard definition. Most people recognized the word to mean a place where men went to purchase sexual favors from women. Goldman (1981), in her study of the prostitutes of Virginia City, Nevada, constructed a detailed typology of such institutions, ranging from the rented cribs in the back alleys, to the rooms above the saloons, to the high-priced parlor houses operated by wealthy madams. The common denominator was sex for cash. And almost without exception, this trade could not be conducted without alcohol.

Most informative for the archaeologist, though, is that most Western saloons provided some sort of sexual entertainment, and most brothels provided liquor for sale to their customers. If one is to believe the reminiscences of miners and prostitutes, alcohol and conversation were indeed

more important than sexual commerce in both institutions (Anzer 1959; Lucia 1962). West (1979:49) describes the similarities thus:

The distinction between a brothel and a barroom, like that between a dance hall and a saloon, could be a fine one. Certainly any whorehouse sold liquor, but the proprietor depended on the sexual commerce of the boarders as his [sic] main source of revenue. Some saloon men, on the other hand, seem to have employed a few hardened hussies to supplement the income of the bar. A saloon might have one-room cribs behind or to the side, or simply a back room, to which women took their customers. Prostitutes usually were expected to encourage their men to drink before concluding the transaction, and some of them performed other services as well. The St. Elmo Saloon of Globe, Arizona, featured women acrobats and singers who doubled as whores between acts.

Because most brothels served alcohol and most saloons offered sex for sale, the archaeologist initially may be challenged to identify the primary commodity being sold when confronted with the overwhelming amount of liquor bottles in the archaeological records of these institutions. For archaeologists, the principal difference between the saloons and brothels was not so much what occurred behind the swinging doors but, rather, who selected the material culture: men or women. By 1900 in much of the North American West, women were forbidden from entering saloons, either legally or at least through convention. Those who did so in defiance of law or custom were assumed to be prostitutes and treated accordingly (usually by being able to conduct their business rather than by being arrested). Social historian Mary Murphy (1997: 51) cites an example from Butte, Montana, in the early decades of the 20th century:

For the most part public drinking outside the country's largest cities remained a male privilege until Prohibition. Even in freewheeling Butte, as [informant] Aili Goldberg declared, "You just didn't see a woman in a saloon." Alma and Lillie Muentzer [also informants] were born above their father's brewery and saloon. Alma recalled that the Butte Brewery and Saloon had a "little room in case the ladies wanted anything ... [but] it was never used much because women at that time didn't go to bars." Lillie remembered that the California Bar featured "booths for ladies," but she also noted, "You weren't a lady if you went in." Throughout the West, the only women to frequent saloons openly were prostitutes. As the custom became entrenched, any woman who entered a saloon was assumed to be of dubious character. Men in

Denver capitalized on the universality of that assumption to taunt female reformers. When women of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) tried to enter saloons to record the condition of drinkers, they were met by guards who shouted, "Whore!"

In other places, laws existed banning women from saloons. In 1903, the federal courts denied licenses to all Alaskan saloon owners who allowed women into their establishments, forcing many who relied on the "family trade" to take up delivery service (*Daily Alaskan*, 1903a:1, 1903b:2, 1908:1).

Women in the saloons, by nature of their illicit status, had little choice in the purchase or use of material culture. Brothels, on the other hand, were often owned, operated, and occupied by women (Petrik 1987:25–58). While men were the customers in both establishments, women dominated the selection of material culture in the brothels.

If they functioned so similarly in society, why even try to distinguish the differences? Donna Seifert (1991a) and Michael Meyer and colleagues (this volume) have compared the collections from brothels with those of nearby residential units. Their analyses have produced useful information on the differences in the material cultures of the respectable and disrespectable segments of female society. They have elucidated the difference between different sorts of women. By comparing saloons and brothels, which served very similar functions in a community but did so with different genders choosing the material culture, it may be possible to increase our understanding of the manifestation of gender as a whole in the archaeological record.

Examined Collections

Eight collections were examined for this study: five saloons and three brothels. Seven collections came from working-class, mining-related communities; the eighth was from a middle-class urban neighborhood in Los Angeles (Figure 1).

Mascot Saloon, Skagway, Alaska

Skagway was established in 1897 as a transshipment point on the way to the Klondike gold rush. Ships off-loaded people and supplies bound



Figure 1. Locations of sites that provided data for this study. (Base map courtesy of the General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin.)

inland to Dawson, Yukon Territory, and accepted the outgoing minerals and ores from throughout the territory. The White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad, headquartered in Skagway, formed a critical link in the transportation route to and from the Yukon. The Mascot Saloon was a favorite gathering place for miners traveling to the interior from 1897 to 1908 and for longshoremen and railroad laborers from 1899 until local prohibition in 1916. In 1900, four men lived in the rooms above the saloon, including the owner-proprietor, the bartender, and a cook. Albert Rienert, the owner, lived above the saloon from 1899 to 1911, when he finally married. Free “lunches” were served throughout the day and night from about 1901 through 1904. As was common at the time, these lunches were extremely cheap, sometimes free, to encourage their exclusively male patrons to spend their money on liquor. Excavated in 1986 by Paul Gleeson, a draft report is now being prepared by the author of this study. The collection dates mostly from

1897 to 1904 and has been summarized by Catherine Blee (1991:179–182).

Pantheon Saloon, Skagway, Alaska

This saloon was built as the Rosalie Hotel in 1897, shortly after the start of the Klondike gold rush. After briefly serving as a hardware store, it was turned into a saloon in 1903. It served transient miners, longshoremen, and railroad workers until late 1916, when local prohibition closed its doors. There is some evidence that it continued to be used as a speakeasy during the prohibition years. The proprietor, John Anderson, lived upstairs, except when his wife was in town. Then they rented a house elsewhere, and the upstairs rooms were used as a gentlemen’s club or card room. The Pantheon was also known to serve some free lunches but only for its first year or two of operation (Kardatzke 2002).

Corner Saloon, Lake City, Colorado

Lake City was one of many commercial centers serving a hard rock mining community in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado. The Corner Saloon burned to the ground on 27 December 1912, leaving the then economically depressed mining community without its last drinking establishment. The building’s cellar became a repository for the material culture of the saloon as it existed at Christmas time. Excavated by Steven Baker in 1977, no reporting of its collection is available except as a summary in the study by Blee (1991:183–184).

California Saloon, Fairbanks, Alaska

This saloon served the relatively stable population of men working along the Chena River waterfront between about 1904 and 1916, when local prohibition was enacted. The building had two stories, and until 1908, the second floor was rented to the “Tanana Club.” Obviously a men’s club, this “notorious hellhole” had a reputation for indulging in orgies and “various acts of immorality,” which may explain the limited number of female-specific items found in the deposits relating to this time period. After 1908, the proprietor remodeled the upstairs rooms for use as a pool hall and place where

men could go to read the newspapers. Besides pool, the saloon offered bowling as entertainment. At least one Christmas, in 1911, the saloon served dinner. It is not known if the serving of meals was common at other times of the year or other Christmases (Gannon and Bowers 1997:Section 4.3).

Miners' Home Saloon, Fairbanks, Alaska

This establishment served working-class miners of Fairbanks from 1907 to 1918. It appears to have been favored by more non-Americans than the California Saloon. There is no evidence that the saloon served as a residence, although it was the headquarters of the Miners Labor Union during the Tanana Valley Miner's Strike of 1907. The cellar of the saloon was excavated in 1992 and reported by Brian Gannon and Peter Bowers (1997:Section 4.6).

Vanoli Sporting Complex, Ouray, Colorado

The Vanoli sporting complex was the center of entertainment in the silver and gold mining district surrounding the community. The complex of buildings, owned by the Italian family of John Vanoli from 1881 to 1915, covered half a city block. It included two saloons, a combination theater and dance hall, a hotel with another dance hall and rooms upstairs for prostitutes, two bathhouses, a Chinese laundry, and a varying number of prostitutes' cribs. Unlike the hotel rooms or more formalized brothels, the cribs were places where business alone was conducted. The women employed in these tiny, one-room cabins did not live in them (Gregory 1982). Only the artifacts taken from contexts directly associated with the prostitutes—the cribs and upstairs rooms—were examined for this study. Like two of the saloon collections, the Vanoli collection has not been fully reported, but is summarized in Blee (1991:199–202).

Hill 60, Blairmore, Alberta, Canada

Blairmore was established when the Canadian Pacific Railroad completed a line to the area in 1889 and opened the area to coal extraction. Coal miners were the principal clients of the

prostitutes on the “hill,” which was used from 1904 to about 1939. These Japanese prostitutes left three separate refuse dumps, from which their collection was taken (Kennedy 1983; Blee 1991:202–205).

*Aliso Street Parlor House,
Los Angeles, California*

Three privy vaults (the Privy 426 Complex) were filled with domestic refuse dated from about 1888 to 1901. Meyer and colleagues write about this material in some detail in another article in this volume. This parlor house served a somewhat higher-class clientele than the gold and coal miners who patronized the Vanoli Sporting Complex and Hill 60 (Costello 1999).

Characterization of the Collections

The first step in comparing collections taken from brothels and saloons is to create an archaeological typology that will select for gender-related variables. It does little good in trying to ascertain gender by using pre-established categories devised to solve other types of problems (South 1977) or simply to serve as consistent terminology in the naming of categories (Sprague 1981). Neither of these widely used taxonomies distinguishes items used by women from those used by men, and neither separates other artifact categories into types that would enable the archaeologist to discern gender in the archaeological record. This observation is not intended as criticism: neither Roderick Sprague nor Stanley South was interested in this particular problem, and there is little reason that either should be expected to devise typologies that can answer all questions for all researchers.

The next important step is to eliminate all items associated with the construction, repair, and demolition of buildings and other structures: the Architectural Group used by both South (1977:100) and Sprague (1981:251–252). Construction, repair, and demolition activities relate specifically to the building itself, not to human behavior and the activities taking place within a given household or business. Construction and demolition events in particular yield very high frequencies of artifacts relative to other categories of artifacts.

These frequencies can seriously skew the other categories to a point where the comparison of a collection taken from a demolished structure can appear very different from that taken from a nearby structure of identical type that was simply abandoned but never destroyed. Nails do not compare equally with dishes, although a statistical comparison of dishes and bottles can be instructive in answering far different types of questions. Blee (1991:107–108) discusses this phenomenon in more depth.

To select for gender, it is important to separate personal items that were probably used only by women from those likely used only by men. Female-specific items include such obvious articles as clothing designed specifically for women; fancy buttons and combs; hairpins; hatpins; jewelry obviously not used by men such as pendants, earrings, and bracelets; makeup and cosmetic containers; corset stays; thimbles and other sewing implements (except in obvious tailoring contexts); douching paraphernalia; purses; and parts of curling irons. For this study, garter snaps and clips were assumed to be female-specific despite the fact that men occasionally used them as well. In a similar study of 45 collections, no garter clips were found without other types of female-specific items (Blee 1991:330–381).

As important as it is to isolate female-specific items, male-specific items should also be identified. This category includes pocket knives, suspender buckles and buttons, watch fobs and chains, pocket watches, jeans rivets, bib overall fasteners, collar stays, cuff links, shaving cream tubes, shirt studs, obvious male clothing (e.g., size 13 boots), straight razors, and large belt buckles (Blee 1991:104,330–381).

To account for all other personal items, an additional category of generic personal artifacts was defined. This Generic Personal Items category includes all those objects owned or used by a single individual. Overwhelmingly, these artifacts were such small items as coins, keys, and buttons that cannot be associated with a specific gender.

A category that has the *potential* of being an indicator of gender includes artifacts associated with the use of tobacco. Tobacco was sold and used in both saloons and brothels, and evidence for its use is ubiquitous on archaeological sites of the period.

An additional category that has the potential to be used to select for gender are all items associated with armaments. There can be little doubt that some women occasionally fired guns. Anecdotal accounts abound in the newspapers and literature of the time, but its rarity was what made it news. At the turn of the century, the realm of armaments was a manly pursuit and most often associated with men.

Because this analysis concerns business establishments that sold alcoholic beverages, it is important to separate the bottles containing alcoholic beverages from those containing non-alcoholic beverages and food. This separation is consistent with Sprague's (1981) taxonomic system, and recognizes the importance in the difference of the use of alcohol in the overall social system.

Unlike Sprague, it is important, in addition, to separate the liquor bottles from those containing pharmaceutical and medical products. Both popular images and historic documentation (what there is of it) indicate that women were more likely than men to take their alcohol through the more socially acceptable medicinals of the time. Diseases and discomforts particular to women in the late-19th and early-20th centuries were rarely discussed, even amongst lady friends or relatives, it being unwomanly to complain of such "minor" discomforts as headaches and menstrual cramps. The embarrassment of contracting a sexually transmitted disease was too great an obstacle for most women to overcome to consult a friend, relative, or physician on how to treat the symptoms. As a result, it seems likely that many women found at least temporary relief from pain by purchasing alcohol, opium, and morphine through mail-order catalogues and from their local druggists. Such nostrums as Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, with its 20.6% alcohol or Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup, with its high proportions of morphia at least temporarily "cured" the symptoms. The Victorian woman's reliance on such preparations is well documented and well researched by John S. Haller and Robin M. Haller (1974:271–303) and Barbara Hodgson (2001).

In other studies, this author has divided the material culture pertaining to the storing and serving of food, as well as other household items, into a series of categories that are helpful in distinguishing socioeconomic class (e.g.,

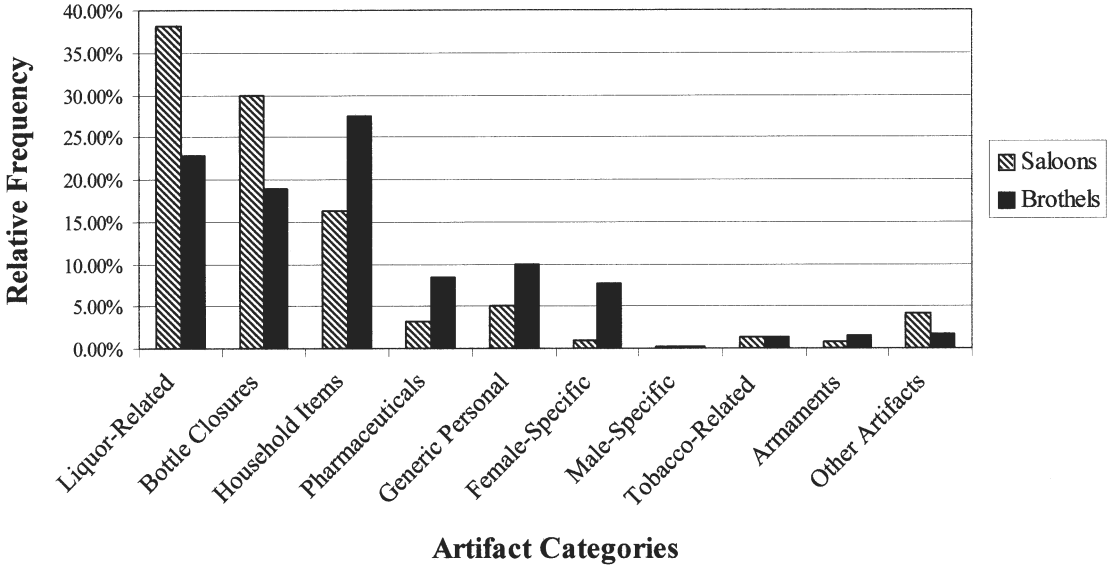


Figure 2. Relative frequencies of each artifact type in the Saloon and Brothel data sets.

Blinman 1985; Blee 1991), the two data sets yielded a correlation value of .7821, with a probability of being incorrectly correlated of less than .0001. A value of 1.000 would indicate a perfect correlation. The high degree of correlation reinforces what has already been

stated: saloons and brothels were very similar in their overall function in turn-of-the-century society. The difference between the two types of collections is of more interest.

A word of explanation on the utility of using the multiple regression method for comparing

TABLE 2
RELATIVE FREQUENCIES OF ARTIFACTS IN SALOON COLLECTIONS

| Artifact Type | Miners | | | | | Averaged Frequency |
|------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| | Mascot Saloon | Pantheon Saloon (Kardatzke 2002) | Corner Saloon (Blee 1991) | California Saloon (Gannon and Bowers 1997) | Home Saloon (Gannon and Bowers 1997) | |
| Liquor-related | 47.35% | 24.49% | 41.34% | 31.82% | 45.31% | 38.06% |
| Bottle closures | 14.56% | 42.42% | 24.79% | 35.71% | 31.90% | 29.88% |
| Household items | 13.38% | 13.41% | 26.26% | 19.22% | 9.12% | 16.28% |
| Pharmaceuticals | 4.56% | 7.43% | 1.85% | 0.97% | 1.34% | 3.23% |
| Generic personal | 9.85% | 3.21% | 2.75% | 3.90% | 5.90% | 5.12% |
| Female-specific | 1.62% | 0.73% | 0.00% | 1.36% | 1.34% | 1.01% |
| Male-specific | 0.44% | 0.44% | 0.00% | 0.19% | 0.27% | 0.27% |
| Tobacco-related | 2.06% | 0.29% | 1.15% | 2.47% | 0.54% | 1.30% |
| Armaments | 1.03% | 1.02% | 1.15% | 0.39% | 0.27% | 0.77% |
| Other artifacts | 5.15% | 6.56% | 0.70% | 3.96% | 4.02% | 4.08% |
| Total | 100.00% | 100.00% | 100.00% | 100.00% | 100.00% | 100.00% |
| N | 680 | 686 | 1,565 | 1,540 | 373 | 969 |

TABLE 3
RELATIVE FREQUENCIES OF ARTIFACTS IN BROTHEL COLLECTIONS

| Artifact Type | Vanoli Complex (Blee 1991) | Hill 60 (Kennedy 1983; Blee 1991) | Aliso Street (Costello 1999) | Averaged Frequency |
|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Liquor-related | 21.64% | 22.56% | 24.08% | 22.76% |
| Bottle closures | 12.17% | 37.12% | 7.09% | 18.79% |
| Household items | 32.64% | 18.49% | 31.47% | 27.53% |
| Pharmaceuticals | 7.81% | 3.64% | 14.04% | 8.49% |
| Generic personal | 17.18% | 1.02% | 11.70% | 9.97% |
| Female-specific | 1.35% | 14.99% | 6.87% | 7.74% |
| Male specific | 0.01% | 0.00% | 0.30% | 0.10% |
| Tobacco related | 1.34% | 0.15% | 2.57% | 1.35% |
| Amnaments | 3.78% | 0.44% | 0.38% | 1.53% |
| Other artifacts | 2.07% | 1.60% | 1.51% | 1.73% |
| Total | 100.00% | 100.00% | 100.00% | 100.00% |
| N | 8,799 | 687 | 1,325 | 3,604 |

the collections is perhaps required here. To historical archaeologists, the most familiar method of comparing collections is through the use of simple descriptive statistics, best illustrated by South (1977). In that method, the analyst looks at the range of given frequencies of artifacts represented by a large number of collections from a given site type. If the relative frequencies of artifact types from the collection being examined fall within the standard deviation of relative frequencies defined by the comparative collections, then the studied collection is assumed to be “normal” for that type of site.

By regressing a given collection onto the comparative collection, one can determine to what extent the two collections are similar or different (the correlation coefficient). The more they are similar, the closer the correlation will be to 1.000. Further, if an archaeologist wished to sort a known mixed collection to estimate the probable sources of the collection, he or she could compare the study collection with a variety of statistically described collections and determine what mix of collections best approximates the study collection. Blee (1991) discusses this method in some detail.

The method proved of considerable effectiveness when Blee (1991:283–284) predicted that the artifacts from a layer of trash, dating from 1901 to 1911, located between the Peniel Mission (a nondenominational salvation mission)

and a lodging house was comprised of 44% Hotel Assemblage plus 26% Brothel Assemblage plus 30% unexplained. At the time, Blee was unable to explain this result, except to hypothesize that the high brothel prediction may have been a result of having no other heavily female-influenced comparative data sets to use in the regression analysis. She speculated that the all-female missionary staff could only be identified by the data sets available, and the brothels were the only other all-female data set.

In 1999, the author of this study read all of the newspapers for Skagway, Alaska, from 1898 through 1909. She came upon the report of a municipal court case against two prostitutes who occupied the lodging house 10 feet west of the Peniel Mission (*Daily Alaskan* 1905:4). The multilinear regression had accurately identified the prostitutes' contribution to the trash deposit long before the historic documentation had been found to confirm the accuracy of the method.

The point here is that it is not important if the standard deviations for two collection types overlap, especially if they are very similar in function. Furthermore, it is not particularly important if the sample size is small (i.e., only five collections for the saloons and three collections for the brothels). It is expected that the brothels and saloons should be very similar; it would be surprising if the range of frequencies of most of the artifact types did not in

fact overlap, considering the great similarity in social function. What is of interest instead are the central tendencies of the minor differences and what they may mean.

Returning to Table 1 and Figure 2, it is hardly surprising that the liquor-related items dominate both collections. Lower frequencies of liquor-related items characterized the brothel data set (23%), reflecting the greater importance of its sale in the saloons (38%). These relative frequencies may not be significant differences, nor is the category necessarily gender related, but the figures reflect the different emphasis on activities in the brothels and saloons.

Associated with the liquor-related items are the bottle closures, which vary greatly amongst both the brothel collections and saloon collections. The relative frequency ranges from 7% to 37% in the brothel collections and 15% to 42% in the saloon collections. It is suspected that bottle closure frequency may be a temporal variable. As the manufacture of beer bottles became more standardized, disposable, one-time use crown caps also became more common. Earlier cork stoppers do not survive equally in all environments and so may not prove to be a reliable predictor for function. Certainly, for the purposes of this study, it seems readily apparent that the differences in bottle closure frequencies between saloons and brothels are not gender related and that the category cannot be used reliably to distinguish the saloons from the brothels.

Household items are about 70% more frequent in the brothels than in the saloons. The prostitutes lived at their place of business at all three brothels, whereas only the proprietors lived at two of the saloons. While lunches and other occasional meals were served at all saloons, it is obvious that the household activities taking place within the brothels yielded a greater frequency of household items than in commercial establishments. That this may be a gender-related phenomenon is bolstered by a similarly high frequency of household items in drinking-family assemblages (30%) and temperate families (58%), compared to the transient-male assemblages (13%).

The collection of a priest's trash pit in Skagway, Alaska, yielded 46% household items, more than the drinking families, which his collection strongly resembled in many other ways.

Father Philibert Turnell lived by himself in the Catholic rectory in Skagway, Alaska, from 1901 to 1918. A trash pit found in an abandoned privy pit behind his rectory contained his discards dating from about 1914 to 1918 (Spude et al. 1993). A regression of Father Turnell's collection on the drinking-family assemblage yielded a correlation coefficient of .8755, with a probability of being incorrectly drawn from the same population as less than .0001. When compared with the transient-male assemblage, his collection yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.1544 and a probability of incorrectly drawn from the same population as less than 0.2319. Father Turnell's collection was much more like that of the drinking families than the transient males. Given the fact that Father Turnell's collection had a higher frequency of household items than either of the family assemblages, it seems unlikely that household items are gender related but, rather, dependent on some other variable such as length of residence.

An examination of the remaining artifact categories provides stronger evidence of how gender is manifested in the archaeological record of brothels and saloons (Table 1 and Figure 2). The most obvious link to gender is in the frequency of female-specific items, which are over eight times higher in the brothel data set (8%) than in the saloons (1%). Complementing this ratio, the male-specific items in the brothels (0.1%) are about one-third what they are in the saloons (0.3%). Only five male-specific items appeared in the three brothel collections: two razors, two cuff links, and a jeans rivet. From the saloons, they consisted of buttons from obviously male clothing, suspenders, a leather hatband liner, a man's wallet, a man's shoe, shirt studs, and a pocketknife.

Apparently connected with the presence of men in both institutions are the tobacco-related items. As can be seen, artifacts associated with the use of tobacco in saloons was practically identical to that seen in brothels (1.3%) (Table 1 and Figure 2). The selling and, presumably, the use of tobacco was common in saloons, as is evidenced by the ubiquitous appearance of tobacco cases in photographs of saloons, as well as the yearly licenses saloonkeepers paid to sell tobacco. From these archaeological data, it is obvious that tobacco use in the brothels was just as frequent as in the saloons.

Curiously, this pattern of high tobacco use was not evident in the other data sets. The families had much lower frequencies of tobacco-related items (0.4%) than the transient males (12%) or the priest, Father Turnell (2%) (Table 1). These data suggest that the presence of “respectable” women in the two family assemblages served to suppress tobacco use. In the absence of these “respectable” women in the brothels, saloons, transient-male households, and the priest’s household, tobacco use among men could be indulged more freely.

When the tobacco-related items are compared only to other personal items, to control for variables such as differential use of liquor, serving of meals, and use of medicinals, and to concentrate solely on gender factors, the correlation with tobacco use and gender seems even stronger (Figure 3). The frequency of tobacco-

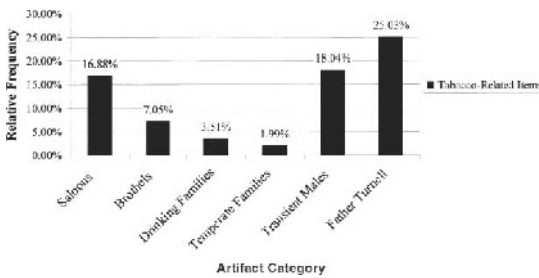


Figure 3. Frequencies of tobacco-related artifacts in the comparative assemblages relative to all personal items.

related items in the collections associated with drinking families and temperate families is lower than 4% and higher than 18% in the collections associated with the transient males and Father Turnell. In the saloons, it was about 17%. In the brothels, it was only about 7%.

Whether the prostitutes themselves also used tobacco, of course, cannot be determined from this set of data alone. The fact that the frequency is not higher in the brothels than in the saloons is inconclusive, as the sample size of brothels is so small. The high frequency of female-specific items in the brothel assemblage probably serves to depress the frequency of the tobacco-related items. The data imply that there is some correlation between the use of

tobacco and gender, and that the brothel setting was a setting in which men, at least, indulged in the use more so than they did at home.

It is also significant that the brothel collections had twice as many generic personal items as the saloons (Table 1 and Figure 2). This relationship is the opposite of that observed between transient-male households (46%) and the families. The former had more than four times as many generic personal items than found in the drinking-family (9%) and the temperate family assemblages (11%). The higher frequency of generic personal items in the brothels probably has more to do with what happens in a brothel than it has to do with gender. Buttons and coins, in particular, seem to be more common in brothel collections than in saloon collections. These are the sorts of things that could be easily lost during the process of changing one’s clothing, an activity presumed to take place more frequently in a brothel than in a saloon. It is not that women by themselves are changing clothing more often than men, but that the commerce in the brothel involved the changing of clothing. The higher frequency of generic personal items, therefore, is not caused by a gender-related variable but is an occupation-related one.

One of the most interesting contrasts between the brothels and saloons is in the pharmaceutical category. The prostitutes appear to generate almost 2.6 times the number of medicinals as the saloon. These women were constantly exposed to communicable diseases of all kinds, not just sexually transmitted ones. Prostitutes commonly used alcohol, morphine, opium, and other drugs to dull the pain and discomfort of their maladies, if not to “cure” them. That this artifact category may be a gender-related as well as an occupation-related variable is reinforced by the data from drinking-family and bachelor-male households: the drinking-family assemblage yielded 4.8 times the frequency of pharmaceuticals as in the transient-male households. Even the temperate households had 1.6 times as many pharmaceuticals as the transient males.

Another case shows how pharmaceuticals can be a gender-related artifact category. The principal difference between Father Turnell’s collection and those of the drinking families was in the relative frequencies of female-specific items (Father Turnell’s trash pit had none), and in the

pharmaceuticals. The drinking families had more than twice the relative frequency of pharmaceuticals (Table 1 and Figure 2). It appears that, consistently, pharmaceuticals may be a predictor of gender.

Armaments (mostly cartridge casings) were twice as frequent in the brothels as in the saloons (1.5% to 0.8%). Again, the difference might not be significant. The higher frequency in the brothels appears to be almost entirely due to the Vanoli Complex, which contained almost 4% armaments, compared to less than 1% in the other two brothel collections. The Vanoli Complex was notorious for its rough character.

Activities taking place within the brothels were disreputable at least and illegal at most. Brothels, in particular those at the Vanoli Complex, may have drawn a slightly less law-abiding clientele than saloons. Antisocial behavior, such as the shooting of guns, may have been more likely to occur in the brothel than in the saloon. Indeed, shooting incidents involving both men and women in brothels made excellent newspaper copy, apparently more so than between men in the saloons. Shootings in 1887 and 1888 attest to the presence of guns at the Vanoli complex. In one of these, the jealous lover of a "scarlet daughter of prosperity" committed suicide in the Vanoli's "220 Boarding House." In another, the "Dago fiddler" shot his prostitute "girl" in a fit of jealousy (Gregory 1982:13–18). Apparently the mix of sex, guns, and liquor in the somewhat lawless Western gold mining town proved more than some miners could handle and still behave in a socially acceptable manner.

When the Vanoli complex is removed from the brothel assemblage, the other two brothels averaged only 0.36% armaments, about a third of that in the two saloons (1.10%), suggesting that the use of arms might actually have been lower in most brothels than saloons. This relationship parallels that of the family and transient-male households, where the bachelors seem to exhibit twice as many armaments than the families. It is possible that the relative frequency of armaments was gender related, but, at least in the case of the brothels, only when communities evolved past their "wild and wooly stages" and became somewhat more socially stable and law-abiding.

The contrast between brothel and saloon frequencies in the remaining category, the "Other Artifacts," is a little harder to explain. The incidence of this group in the saloons (4%) was more than twice that of the brothels (1.7%). The frequency of this category in transient-male households (11%) is more than twice that of drinking-family households (4.5%) and 1.6 times that of temperate families (7%), suggesting this category is indeed affected by gender. It appears that the artifacts generated by turn-of-the-century male-oriented tasks (e.g., bookkeeping, maintenance of horses and vehicles, construction of railroads), for want of another category, ended up being grouped as "other." Items generated by women's work—especially those associated with the care and feeding of the family—were more likely to appear in the household categories. As can be seen in Table 4, that trend appears to remain true for the brothels and saloons, with a higher relative frequency of writing, repair, fishing, and railroad construction artifacts in the saloons than in the brothels.

Conclusions

Variables that appear to select for gender on archaeological sites of Western brothels and saloons are gender-specific items, pharmaceuticals, and a category of "Other Artifacts." Relatively high frequencies of female-specific items and pharmaceuticals are directly attributable to prostitutes in the brothels. Higher frequencies of male-specific items and "Other Artifacts"—largely ascribed to male-dominated tasks—characterize the saloons. Household items may be more frequent on sites used by women, but the association with gender in brothels is unclear from this small sample of sites and is complicated by the residence pattern in saloons and brothels. At least with this sample, people were more likely to live in the brothels than in the saloons, thus resulting in higher household frequencies. Higher household frequencies tend to relate to residency rather than gender. The slightly higher frequency of generic personal items in the brothels may be more a function of the activities taking place in a brothel than with the gender of the occupants. The slightly lower frequency of armaments in the brothels (once the wild and raucous gold miners are

TABLE 4
 "OTHER ARTIFACTS" IN THE SALOON AND BROTHEL COLLECTIONS

| Item | California Saloon | Miners Home Saloon | Pantheon Saloon | Corner Saloon | Mascot Saloon | Vanoli Complex | Hill 60 | Aliso Street |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------|-----------------|
| advertising plaque for furniture | 1 | | | | | | | |
| advertising sign | 1 | | | | | | | |
| auto lens cover | | 1 | | | | | | |
| automotive items | | | | | | 42 | | |
| barrel band | | | 1 | | | | | |
| batteries | | 1 | | | 1 | | | |
| battery, dry-cell | | | 1 | | | | | |
| bucket | | | 1 | | | | | |
| bucket, paint | | | 1 | | | | | |
| business stamps | | | | | | 4 | | |
| chisel | 1 | | | | | | | |
| clamp | 1 | | | | | | | |
| claw hammer | | | | | 1 | | | |
| clipboard clips | 2 | | | | | | | |
| crate banding | 12 | 3 | | | | | | |
| drill bits | 1 | | | | | | | |
| drills | 1 | | | | | | | |
| electrode for movie cameras or street lamps | | | 31 | | | | | |
| erasers | 3 | | | | | | | |
| files | 3 | 2 | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| fishing line sinker | | | | | 1 | | | |
| furnace parts | | | | | | | 2 | |
| gear | | | | | 1 | | | |
| glue bottle | | | | | | | | 1 |
| hacksaw blade | | | | | 1 | | | |
| handle, bucket | | | 1 | | | | | |
| horse tack buckle | 1 | | | | | | | |
| horse tack, strap and hook | | 1 | | | | | | |
| horse-related items | | | | | | 56 | | |
| horseshoe nails | 2 | | | | | | | |
| horseshoes | 6 | | | | | | 2 | |
| ink bottles | 8 | 1 | | | 2 | | | 7 |
| ink wells | 1 | | | | | | | |
| lens, optical, not eyeglass | | | 1 | | | | | |
| license plate, Alaska, 1930 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| machine stand | 1 | | | | | | | |
| miner's poke | 1 | | | | | | | |
| mule/horseshoe | | | | | | | | 2 |
| other office supplies | | | | | | 1 | | |
| other repair and maintenance | | | | 2 | | 26 | | |
| pails/buckets | | | | | | | 7 | |
| paint brushes | 1 | | | | | | | |

TABLE 4 (CONTINUED)
 "OTHER ARTIFACTS" IN THE SALOON AND BROTHEL COLLECTIONS

| Item | California Saloon | Miners Home Saloon | Pantheon Saloon | Corner Saloon | Mascot Saloon | Vanoli Complex | Hill 60 | Aliso Street |
|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------|-----------------|
| paint/ink bottle | | | | | | | | 1 |
| paper clips | | 1 | | | | | | |
| paper fastener | | | 1 | | | | | |
| pencil, mechanical | | | 1 | | | | | |
| pencils | 6 | 2 | | | 5 | | | 3 |
| pens | 4 | | | | | | | |
| photographic film | | 1 | | | | | | |
| pulley | | | | | 1 | | | |
| railroad spikes | | | | | 3 | | | |
| rubber band | | | | | 1 | | | |
| rubberized canvas hose | | | | | | | | 1 |
| ruler | | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| safety-related item | | | | 1 | | | | |
| scale weight - 3 lb | 1 | | | | | | | |
| shovel | | 1 | | | | | | |
| sponge | | | | | 1 | | | |
| tag, dog | | | 2 | | | | | |
| tire valve | | | 1 | | | | | |
| tool handle | | | | | | | | 1 |
| tool handle, small | | | 1 | | | | | |
| type face | | 1 | | | | | | |
| wedge | 1 | | | | | | | |
| whetstone | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| wrenches | 1 | | | | | | | |
| writing accoutrements | | | | 8 | | 47 | | |
| yard and garden items | | | | | | 6 | | |

removed from the comparison) may be gender related, but the samples were too small to suggest anything other than a firm maybe.

The data on tobacco pipes were relatively the same for both brothels and saloons and are intriguing. They demonstrate how the women of the brothel indulged the men, perhaps even joined them, in partaking of bodily pleasures in that age of repressed middle-class sensuality. Sex, intoxicating drink, tobacco, all were available for the pleasure of the customer. A Victorian customer who saw a hedonistic woman disobeying the rules of "respectable" society may well have been all that much more stimulated by the experience, even if it involved so little as the smoking of a cigarette.

Women breaking these sorts of social rules at the turn of the century certainly had little "reputation" to protect. In illustration, the district attorney prosecuting a notorious court case in

Juneau, Alaska, in 1903 sought to establish that a gambling house and saloon was also a bawdy house. He called several witnesses who testified they had seen the male customers smoking, cursing, and leaving their hats on in the presence of the women who frequented the saloon. All actions together were sufficient to establish the reputation of the women as prostitutes. To the court and the jury, a woman who tolerated smoking was a prostitute, *ergo*, the place was a house of prostitution. The prosecutor did not need to call a witness who had seen or been party to an act of commercial sex (U.S. District Court 1903). It is interesting to note that none of the witnesses stated he had seen the women smoking. Perhaps that activity was left to behind the upstairs doors.

When used in conjunction with studies such as Blee's (1991), Seifert's (1991b), Costello's (1999), and the other papers in this collection,

these data assist in understanding the manifestation of gender on the archaeological sites left by prostitutes. The lives of prostitutes as revealed by newspaper articles, magistrate records, reminiscences, biographies, and folklore often tell more about the attitudes of those recording the historic documents than about the prostitutes themselves. The archaeological record is somewhat more neutral to the moral judgments pronounced by newspaper editors and reformers. Anthropologists are more likely to find substance in the discarded material culture of prostitutes than in the rosy-tinted lenses through which old prostitutes and miners view “the good old days.”

Knowing that prostitutes used pharmaceuticals in the brothels more than men did in the saloons—and even more than women in family households—does not substantially change our understanding of prostitutes as revealed by the historian. But it does help archaeologists tell the difference between a saloon and a brothel in the anonymous trash pits and sheet middens of the boomtown West.

Why should it be important to know the difference between a saloon and a brothel? Ephemeral sites associated with mining, ranching, lumbering, and the construction of railroads litter the Western landscape. Mining communities went bust far more often than they succeeded. The likes of Goldfield, Nevada; Grand Forks in the Yukon Territory; and Independence, Colorado—all of which sprang up overnight and disappeared again in a few months—were far more common than Fairbanks, Butte, and Denver. Logging and railroad camps housed large groups of men for a few weeks. When the job was done, they moved on. Public agencies in the West today, when logging forests, granting permits to mining companies, and building pipelines, roads, and dams, are recording and destroying hundreds of these sites each year. These archaeological sites rarely existed long enough to generate any kind of historic documentation. Researchers feel lucky if they can find a name for a place, much less know who lived there. Most seem to assume that women had little or no role in these camps, or if they did, it was to serve as surrogate wives, mothers, and sweethearts. These androcentric historians and archaeologists appear to believe wholeheartedly in the statement by Richard

Erdoes in his obligatory chapter on prostitutes in his book *Saloons of the Old West*: “The overwhelming fact that determined the role of women in the West, and their relationship to men was their almost total absence during the early years. Whores, of course, were there almost from the beginning” (Erdoes 1979:182). It is almost as if prostitutes were not women at all, but some other kind of creature entirely.

Feminist theory holds that if a cultural system is to work and survive, all members of the group must be empowered, must have a role in the society, and—most importantly—must benefit by that role (Spencer-Wood 1991:239). To suggest that women were hangers-on, camp followers, and assistants to the more important work of men in the mining camps is to deny that women were profiting by the phenomenon as well. Women were an integral part of the Western gold rushes; they shared directly in the riches and shaped the society as much as their husbands, brothers, and clients.

If the student of history is to acknowledge the contribution of women to the Euro-American peopling of the West, then archaeologists must be able to identify them in the archaeological record. If archaeologists do not attempt an understanding of the difference between households that contained women and those that had only men, or between brothels and saloons, statements similar to the following will continue to appear in the archaeological literature:

At Gold Bar, Feature 6-17 ... was identified as a saloon from the archaeological record. The key was the artifact assemblage, which was heavily dominated by bottle glass and by crown bottle caps. No mention of this saloon, which is quite a distance below [the] camp, could be located in written accounts (Hardesty 1988:78).

As has just been shown, large quantities of liquor bottles and bottle closures do not automatically mean a saloon. Indeed, brothels often generated as large or even larger quantities of bottles and closures as saloons. Because this archaeologist did not quantify the pharmaceutical bottles separately from the liquor bottles, or count the female-specific items independently from those used by men, it is not possible to tell if he and his crew had found the remains of a saloon or a brothel. It appears not to have occurred to him that he might actually

have encountered the remains of a woman-owned business. Its very anonymity in the historic record might have been a clue that the business was not entirely legitimate. By not asking the question, the archaeologist merely assumed the site was the remains of a saloon.

Until they attempt to pry gender from the discards of the past, archaeologists of the West will continue to assume that the region's settlement by Euro-Americans took place by and for the benefit of its male population. As Paula Petrik (1987) so ably demonstrates, women as family members, entrepreneurs, and reformers played a vitally important role in Western history. Archaeologists can and should contribute as much as the historian to an understanding of our past, in the intelligent, thoughtful reporting of the vast body of anonymous data that lies in the Western forests, recreation areas, and rangelands. Only then will archaeologists have succeeded in saying something different and important about the Euro-American peopling—not the “manning”—of the North American West.

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CATHERINE HOLDER SPUDE

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