

The increase in reading gave impetus to the growth of libraries for soldiers. Libraries and reading rooms were established in hospitals, in many rear echelon areas, and even in some camps. Most, notes Kaser, were sponsored by religious groups, and their contents, not surprisingly, seldom reflected the expanded interests of the soldiers. Nevertheless, they did provide a great service to the troops, and following the war the army proved "much more hospitable to having post and garrison libraries for the use of troops than it had been earlier" (p. 122).

The Civil War also had a dramatic impact on the public library movement. Following the conflict new tax-supported and often free public libraries sprang up in unprecedented numbers. The war affected the nature of these libraries and the character of their collections. The increased interest in reading also provided a tremendous boost to the publishing industry, which enjoyed great prosperity during and following the war. Time to read, asserts Kaser, "was a principal cause of this prosperity" (p. 97).

The story of reading and libraries in the Civil War was not an altogether uplifting one. Kaser briefly touches upon the "wanton and thoughtless wholesale destruction of books and libraries, private or public . . . during the war (p. 89). Sherman's march to the sea took a particularly heavy toll on libraries. At one plantation in South Carolina, Audubon plates were used for kindling fires. But despite this darker side of the history of books and libraries in the Civil War, the picture that emerges from Kaser's study is on the whole a very bright one.

It is difficult to find serious fault with this book, except for its price. At \$27.95 it is unlikely to end up on many private library shelves, and this is a pity. Civil War buffs, however, may want to dig deep. This is different from the usual Civil War fare and may prompt further research and interest in a number of areas touched upon by Kaser. It is well written, contains some interesting illustrations, and provides an excellent bibliography. Kaser also makes a number of references to Indiana soldiers and regiments. The book is delightful, and if readers cannot afford it, they should make sure that their library orders a copy.

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Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865-90. By Anne M. Butler. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985. Pp. xx, 179. Notes, illustrations, bibliographical note, index. \$16.95.)

Anne M. Butler's history of western prostitution is a provocative and sensible book that undermines the old folktales about

whores with hearts of gold and newer ones that portray prostitutes as liberated feminists. To be sure, Butler demonstrates that economic exchange was the heart of the matter, but few prostitutes were able to do more than eke out a precarious and dangerous living. Most were poor young women who frequently found themselves at the mercy of their customers, the law, and each other.

Prostitutes worked in a variety of settings in the West. Some worked in the sumptuous sporting houses that were the hallmarks of large urban centers. Many more operated out of squalid one-room cribs on back alleys, in the infamous "hog ranches" near military posts, and cigar-store fronts that provided a thin patina of legitimacy in many western towns. A few worked quietly out of their homes, perhaps only as economic necessity dictated. (The book reminded me that a few years ago I inadvertently nominated a Sacramento brothel to the National Register of Historic Places. In one of its nineteenth century incarnations the Comstock building had been called "The Young Ladies Segar Company" which I naively thought was operated by a gentleman and his several daughters.)

Some courtesans married to get out of the whoring trade, but Butler shows that many women continued to work after marriage usually with the consent of their husbands, who were often professional criminals. These marriages, it is not surprising, were unstable and marred by strife and violence. Many prostitutes' daughters, instead of being raised in exclusive eastern boarding schools, blissfully ignorant of their mothers' professions, became full-fledged professionals by their mid-teens. Family life did not end the high life in Victorian America.

Prostitutes had an ambivalent relationship with officers of the law. Even though it was illegal, prostitution flourished with the knowledge and occasional assistance of duly constituted authorities. Indeed, police patrolled the red-light districts to control violence and skim protection money from its denizens. Courts accepted prostitutes' testimony without qualms, and brothel inmates sought legal redress in civil and criminal actions. While prostitutes' testimony and complaints were heard in court, prostitutes received very little protection under the law, especially from crimes of violence. Beatings and murders of these women were often regarded as trivial—sometimes even humorous—by respectable citizens who thought that whores merely received their just desserts for straying from the path of virtue. Butler argues, nevertheless, that prostitution helped to establish authority on the frontier because prostitutes provided a ubiquitous and visible criminal class that could be easily prosecuted. Rustlers and

highwaymen might escape over the next mountain, but a local madam and her girls could always be hauled into court, fined, jailed, and run out of town thus giving palpable and frequent demonstrations that the law was powerful.

Prostitution was a common feature of western military life; yet, ambivalence characterized the relationship of the institution with military authority. The army officially outlawed the flesh trade, but every post had its nearby hog ranch, a complement of laundresses, camp followers, or impoverished Indian women to cater to the soldiers' sexual wants. Commanding officers recognized that prostitution provided a mechanism to keep the sexual tensions of frontier garrison life from threatening officers' wives and daughters, and it was not unusual for them to transport, house, and feed prostitutes at government expense.

Butler has provided a lively, well-written, and admirably researched history of prostitution that uncovers the squalor and misery of these western women while showing the curious relationship that prostitutes had with frontier authority and Victorian society. The author dedicated her book to her respected mentor, the late Walter Rundell, and it is a fitting tribute.

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Investigation and Responsibility: Public Responsibility in the United States, 1865-1900. By William R. Brock. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Pp. viii, 280. Notes, appendixes, essay on sources and historiography, bibliography, index. \$39.50.)

Professor William R. Brock offers a significant reassessment of the period from 1865 to 1900 in American history. He rejects the phrase "gilded age" as "a meretricious label that has done much to obscure the true character of a period to which we owe so much" (p. vii), and he questions the reality of the American belief in laissez-faire during this era. Instead, he finds a period characterized by vigorous intervention by agencies at the state level. Focusing his attention on the boards of state charities, boards of public health, bureaus of labor statistics, and railroad commissions, Brock concludes that these agencies considerably promoted the cause of activism, investigation, and regulation. The result was an advancement in public responsibility that included such areas as railroad regulation, inspection of factories and mines, and laws on pure food, liquor, and sanitation.

Brock has relied very heavily on the published annual and biennial reports of the various state agencies. His findings estab-