

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-

lish a record of effectiveness. This record was, admittedly, uneven across the nation, but it established a trend that was clear. Central to this effectiveness were the officials themselves—the inspectors, statisticians, analysts, scientists, engineers, superintendents, and experts. If Brock has not rediscovered “the best men,” he has certainly celebrated a new breed of good men who took the initiative to investigate and regulate the social environment. In doing so they provided the practical experience that was necessary for the federal government to build upon.

Some of Brock’s findings are worthy of further consideration. Did the development of social policy have little to do with political party? Were courts more cooperative than previously thought in giving support to use of the police power? And one would like to know more about the public that the author tends to ignore. The Michigan Board of Public Health, for instance, was organized in 1873 “largely as a consequence of pressure from Dr. Ira H. Bartholomew, who won election to the legislature to promote these objectives. His cause was aided by public alarm over the sale of unregulated and impure illuminating oil which had caused several explosions and fires” (p. 123). Were perhaps some of Brock’s enlightened liberals responding to an increasingly demanding public? In spite of these questions *Investigation and Responsibility* is clearly presented, well argued, well documented, and well worth reading.

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Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930. By Lynn Dumenil. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. Pp. xviii, 305. Illustrations, appendixes, tables, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$30.00.)

Dumenil presents a tightly controlled examination of Masonry over a period of fifty years spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the book therefore arrives in some respects as an interrupted but enlarged sequel to Dorothy Lipson’s *Freemasonry in Connecticut, 1789-1835* (1977). After a brief account of Masonry in American life immediately prior to and after the Civil War, Dumenil organizes the study under two major headings—Masonry in the nineteenth century and Masonry in the 1920s. The first part concentrates on the religious features of Masonry by identifying its mythic elements, its ritual practices, its communal aspects, its fraternal moral codices, and its vague, but nonetheless discernibly Protestant, theological assumptions. In this form, as an “asylum” from and within a culture beset by the new problems of industrialization, urbanization, and reli-