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“CROSSING THE LINE”

American Prostitutes in Western Canada, 1895–1925

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BORDERLANDS STUDIES have traditionally focussed on the movement of ethnic groups over national boundaries. For example, Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands: La Frontera*, a path-breaking study of movement across the U.S.-Mexican border, examined the effects of the border on ethnicity and the construction of identity, shifting cultural practices and language.¹ While ethnicity affected some groups’ experiences in the borderlands, as a category of analysis ethnicity is less useful when studying a group of people who arguably had little in common—American prostitutes who crossed the western Canadian-U.S. border. While groups of marginalized people in borderlands studies often have similar backgrounds, the women in this study came from many different class and ethnic groups. They also worked in the sex trade at different levels, from the brothel madams, who were some of the wealthiest residents of the towns, to the women working in the cribs or on the streets.

Prostitutes' position within the community and their financial success, contact with authorities, the formation of relationships and personal safety, and their experience of crossing the border into a new country were all affected to some degree by class, ethnicity, and stratification of the sex trade. By focussing on the role of the border in the lives of American prostitutes who crossed the line into western Canada, this article examines how women negotiated various types of border crossings and how nationality affected women's experiences and their construction of identity in the borderlands.

The transnational movement of women can easily be related to the standard national frameworks of resource and economic development. Just as we can trace the movement of American capital and people into British Columbia and Alberta (from urban development in the lower mainland, to gold and coal mining in the Kootenays and southern Alberta), so too we can follow the immigration of prostitutes into the boomtowns.² Yet this framework often leads to the standard narrative of western frontier prostitution in which women of loose morals followed the men into the resource extraction areas to turn a quick buck and leave the area as soon as the "civilizing influence of women of good character" started to filter into the towns.³ A study of American prostitutes in western Canada suggests that the "standard narrative" based on geographic and economic models needs to be reconsidered when examining prostitutes who crossed national borders to conduct their trade.⁴

So what drove American prostitutes across the border? Following economic models, historians often argue that prostitutes came north to seize the opportunity of engaging in a lucrative, if temporary, business.⁵ There are many stories on both sides of the border of the whore with a heart of gold, the Mae Wests who were fixtures in the frontier towns, providing feminine care and companionship in the rough and ready male world of cowboys, miners, and lumberjacks, outlaws, and even Mounties. These women are often depicted as beautiful, well dressed, independent, and even powerful within their communities. As with any stereotype, my research found that there was some truth to these representations, but they did not tell the whole story.⁶ Like other immigrant groups,

American prostitutes came North for a number of reasons. Wealthy brothel owners in Rossland clearly saw economic opportunity in the British Columbian mining booms. Some women crossed so often that the border may have been meaningless, while others capitalized on their nationality by catering to the large number of American men in the Canadian West. Personal ties, too, may have drawn prostitutes into British Columbia and Alberta. Border crossings were relatively easy in the early years of fluid migration, and many women had family and friends on both sides of the border.⁷ Some prostitutes used the border to escape their pasts, elude the law, or give in to a restless mobility, common for many women who lived life on the margins. Finally, some sex trade workers were subjected to involuntary border crossings as police increasingly exercised deportation as a viable tool for the removal of undesirable women from western Canadian cities and towns.

Popular cultural representations of wealthy and beautiful brothel madams are very similar on both sides of the border. While contemporary stereotypes in Canada are fed in part by the importation of American cultural icons like Mae West, historically, the transnational movement of prostitutes may have contributed to the stereotype. Sid, Dora, and Stella were all wealthy brothel owners in Rossland in the 1890s through the 1910s.⁸ All had travelled from the western states during a mining boom in which Rossland was called “the new Eldorado.” Along with the American miners, capital, and expertise that crossed the border in the early years of the rush, these prostitutes also crossed the line, bringing their own capital or making enough money to open up brothels in the boomtowns. In an atmosphere of intense competition, the brothels began to develop specific clienteles. Stella’s Vancouver House was on the “respectable” edge of a large block of tenements used as cribs.⁹ Close by were numerous saloons, hotels, a bowling alley and poolroom, lodging houses, and miners’ rooms over offices and stores. Her customers were the men who spent their leisure time in the downtown core, as well as her hotel guests—in many cases the “elites” or the wealthiest in the town.¹⁰

Dora’s and Sid’s brothels were located in the southern end of the city, almost beyond the city limits in 1897. Far from the bustling downtown

saloons and hotels, their brothels likely catered to workingmen coming from the smelter in Trail and to travellers.¹¹ They were located half a block away from the passenger platform of the Columbia and Western Railway that traversed the southern edge of the city on its route to Trail, with important connections south to Washington state and north to steamer connections on the Arrow Lakes.¹²

Sid, Dora, and Stella were all white madams from middle-class backgrounds between the ages of thirty and fifty who had sold properties in the United States before relocating to Rossland. Although the records do not provide much detail, they appeared to have followed the mining booms as they moved across the western United States. Certainly by the time they reached Rossland, all were experienced businesswomen. They provided a variety of services, offering their customers lodging, meals and drink, laundry services, companionship, entertainment, and (of course) sexual services. These madams appear to have maintained their American connections, and prostitutes coming from the United States quickly found a warm welcome in Rossland brothels, especially in Stella's hotel, which had a high turnover of American women.¹³

Nationality was important for women who sought to capitalize on it by catering to the migrant men who populated the Canadian boomtowns. In the police records, many of these women chose to identify themselves as Americans, and like the woman who renamed herself "Texas" when she crossed the border proudly proclaimed, it was their place of birth. There may have been significant benefits for American madams. Many boomtowns attracted large numbers of American immigrants, and "Texas's house" reportedly offered the reassuring sounds of a true southern drawl, along with its other services.¹⁴ Nationality thus became significant for women who in many other ways were nameless, existing on the outside margins of society, and identified only by the category of "prostitute." Police recognized that women frequently used aliases, and in the monthly collection of fines, nationality and location were more significant identifiers for police than names. But nationality may have had multiple meanings for the women in the borderlands.

For some women, ethnicity may have been as important as nationality. In all the towns of the Kootenays, and in city police records in Victoria,

Vancouver, and Calgary, police identified brothels as Asian, Black, or ethnically grouped, such as the women described as “Italian” in Greenwood’s police records and newspapers or “French Mary’s” house in Rossland.¹⁵ Police recognized and used the names of “characters” like Texas and Stella; however, anonymity was often protection for women of ethnic minorities. Police seldom identified individuals in ethnically grouped brothels, more often using locations rather than names. Thus, “Japtown whorehouses” appeared in Calgary records, and “the houses on Dupont [Street]” referred to brothels in Vancouver’s Chinatown. Rarely are women in these brothels mentioned by name except in the regular collection of fines, and the frequency of some names in certain brothels suggests the ease with which women changed names and nationalities.¹⁶ Ethnicity was less easy to hide. So when the North West Mounted Police closed down a Japanese brothel just outside of Calgary due to an outbreak of syphilis, the women had fewer options and less mobility than other prostitutes and remained in the house until their symptoms appeared to go away and they had passed a medical inspection, allowing the house to reopen.¹⁷ While increased marginalization in ethnically grouped brothels may have worked to strengthen the bonds of identity, the women in most brothels came from a wide variety of backgrounds, and some of the most successful brothels may have purposely offered a selection of women of different nationalities. For women who were cut off from their past and exiled from their nation of birth, however, personal connections may have become more significant than national or ethnic identity.

If we complicate national models of western expansion and the economic analyses of resource development with an examination of the individual experiences of prostitutes who crossed the line, it becomes clear that personal connections played a role in drawing women into the borderlands. By frequently using aliases and refusing to provide personal information to the police, or by quickly moving on to the next town when they found themselves under surveillance, prostitutes often avoided contact with police by maintaining their anonymity. In contrast to the brothel prostitutes who had proudly proclaimed their nationality, when women chose a transient lifestyle, or when they were driven out of towns as police closed vice districts, their identities became less connected to

national or ethnic markers and more closely tied to the personal relationships they developed.

At first glance, public fights, abusive language, and thefts appear to characterize prostitutes' relationships with each other. Rossland police records show twenty-seven instances of fights between prostitutes between 1898 and 1902 and numerous cases of stolen property. One example is the charge brought against Irene by a fellow prostitute for stealing a silver tray valued at \$4. Also typical were the results of the case—the plaintiff decided to drop the charge and the case was dismissed the next day.¹⁸ But not all prostitutes' relationships were characterized by violence, jealousy, and competition. Marion Goldman notes that structural aspects of the trade led to the formation of long-lasting friendships between women. Women living and working together in brothels or as independent prostitutes forced into close proximity in restricted districts led to “isolation from the respectable community, [which] created a bond among them.”¹⁹ In western Canada, instances of this type of bond became apparent when prostitutes travelled together over long periods of time, protected each other from the hazards of the trade, provided charity to co-workers in times of need, and responded emotionally in times of extremity.

In the records of monthly fines, occasionally it is possible to identify prostitutes who had a family connection through the uniqueness of their surnames. Gay and Marion, for example, crossed the line into Grand Forks and travelled together throughout the Kootenays, changing residence frequently, but always appearing together until they left the area one year later.²⁰

Similarly, Blanche and Louise fled Vancouver together and opened up a brothel in Hedley in the aftermath of a very public trial of Louise's alleged husband, Desire Brothier. In 1904, Brothier received seven years for forgery, procuring, and buggery. At the time, Brothier's sister and brother-in-law were also charged in connection with the forgery of a medical certificate that claimed Blanche was free of disease, but the charges were dropped when they fled to Montana. The persistent efforts of Brothier's brother-in-law and new evidence of the sister's involvement in the forgery led to Brothier's release after serving just two years. Blanche

and Louise remained together for the duration of his incarceration and disappeared from British Columbia immediately upon Brothier's release, presumably to return with him to the United States.²¹

At times, prostitutes assisted their colleagues, even when it was dangerous for them to do so. Mrs Welsh was fined for running a bawdy house because she opened her doors to a fellow American prostitute who had no other place to go, ensuring "she would no[t] be drove [sic] around like a dog when she had not done anything."²² In the same spirit of sisterhood, a group of prostitutes in Nelson raised money for a madam "to provide her with the necessities of living, she being sick and destitute with a large family, and no one to assist her but the charitable."²³

Although prostitutes' isolation may have led to the formation of stronger personal ties, it likely made things like child-bearing and motherhood more difficult. Children appear in the records in connection with prostitutes quite regularly, and there are several stories of neglected children who police believed were endangered by the involvement of their mothers in the sex trade.²⁴ Yet the sources also indicate that prostitutes may have had a broader range of options for caring for their children than is often suggested. For example, Minnie, a brothel madam in Golden, took care of a young prostitute's child for many years, eventually sending him to live with Minnie's mother in Spokane, Washington. This type of arrangement would usually be hidden from public view, except Minnie became annoyed when the young mother quit paying for the boy's monthly room and board and took her case to the local justice of the peace.²⁵

While personal ties may have drawn some prostitutes into western Canada, others used the border to escape their pasts. In the West, the presence of men in the brothels in the roles of lovers and pimps is apparent, though not all that common in the earlier years. Further, charges of "living off the avails of prostitution" may have included many types of relationships other than the obvious one involving economic exploitation and physical abuse. In Desire Brothier's case, procuring appears to have concerned a relationship with Blanche and Louise that transcended even a few years in jail. A letter from one of Brothier's former prostitutes,

who fled to France to escape testifying against him, declares her undying love and an offer to send letters or money if doing so would help him gain his freedom.²⁶

Many prostitutes who travelled with men may have benefited from their protection. In Rossland there were two husband and wife teams operating brothels, and police remarked on the lack of conflict in those houses compared to others in operation at the time. Jennie, a Japanese prostitute in Revelstoke, who had come to British Columbia from Seattle in 1900 with her husband, appeared to have a stable relationship in which she controlled the couple's finances. Yet her husband's presence did not prevent her murder in 1905.²⁷ For the occasional woman who might have gained from long-term connections with men, many suffered from abusive, violent relationships—and some paid the price with their lives.

There are many tragic stories of domestic and physical abuse of prostitutes in western Canadian legal records. While some women sought to escape their pasts, not all were successful. Annie was a Black American prostitute who had travelled to Phoenix with an entertainment troupe in 1903. From all accounts she had a beautiful voice. She had sought to escape the memories of an almost fatal stabbing in Spokane, Washington, for which her live-in companion, Joshua Bell, had done time. But she did not run far enough. Just one year later, Bell arrived in Phoenix with an American prize-fighting outfit that had toured the West, presumably on a hunt for Annie. When he found her, he planned a cold-blooded murder, waiting in hiding for her to come out of her brothel and “stabbed her in the breast with a knife, and then kicked in her teeth.” Bell tried to flee back across the border but was quickly caught. His hanging made big news in all the British Columbia newspapers, with race and nationality the dominant themes in the narratives. Some editors even indulged in the opportunity to add to the rampant anti-Asian rhetoric by calling for the deportation of all people of colour who had come from the United States. For Annie, the Canadian borderlands were no safe haven from the violence that followed her.²⁸

Whether prostitutes crossed the line for economic gain, to capitalize on their nationality, re-establish personal ties, or to run away from the

past, mobility was pervasive in the trade. Except for a lucky few who were able to achieve financial success, sex trade workers suffered from a general lack of stability caused in part by the marginalization of women who existed outside the law and outside the bounds of accepted morality. In the late 1800s, as resource booms occurred across western Canada, many American prostitutes voluntarily crossed the line on a regular basis. Structural changes in the trade in the early twentieth century, when brothels were shut down and streetwalking increased, led to greater mobility. But this mobility was increasingly restricted within national boundaries when the police began to deport “undesirable” prostitutes and used the border to limit re-entry. Border crossings were also made more difficult with the implementation of changes to the Immigration Act in 1906, which halted the earlier policy of free entry. By 1914, the prohibited classes increased from those who might become public charges or infirm to include persons convicted of “any crime involving moral turpitude, prostitutes, pimps, professional vagrants or beggars...”²⁹ Police then had a powerful weapon with which to fight morality crimes, and in a climate of social change they began to use that weapon more frequently.

Their considerable mobility makes it very difficult to trace prostitutes who travelled in the West; most worked alone and may have had very good reasons to maintain their anonymity. Fortunately, prostitution was not just a profitable business for the women. The police and town councils also made a lot of money regulating the sex trade, and they left extensive records. Just like other national myths, western Canada’s law-abiding reputation does not hold up well in an examination of the police court dockets, which are full of charges for prostitution, theft, gambling, assaults, and even the occasional murder. And the sex trade was certainly one of the steadiest sources of income for the fledgling western cities.³⁰ For example, when John S. Ingram took over as chief constable of the Rossland Police, he systematically collected fines from all the brothels and cribs on a monthly basis, filling the city coffers with well over \$1,000 per month. To maintain this source of revenue for the city, Ingram and his constables kept extensive records tracking the movements of prostitutes in and out of the city, many of whom were

Americans.³¹ To control the influx of transients into their towns, a regular duty of the lowest constable on the roster in Rossland was to watch passengers as they disembarked from trains, looking for single women who were not met by “respectable” residents.³² In towns like Princeton, in the Similkameen, where trains came from both Vancouver and from the south through the border crossing of Oroville, Washington, “Specials” were hired to help the single policeman keep an eye on the day and night trains. Once marked, police tended to keep a close watch on these women’s activities.³³ For itinerant prostitutes, this intense surveillance usually resulted in charges within a few weeks or even a few days of the woman’s arrival, and the prostitute frequently left town immediately after appearing in court and paying her fine.³⁴ If police felt they did not have enough evidence for a charge of prostitution, they often charged the woman with other offences, which suggests that once a woman was suspected, any means that effectively removed “undesirable” women from the community was deemed legitimate.³⁵

Women were frequently on the move throughout the early 1900s, yet they were increasingly restricted within national boundaries as borders were closed down. Social reformers frequently called for deportation as one means to close down the red-light districts. The Vancouver Police Commission’s recommendations for “handling the social evil” in 1912 are typical for this era: “The Chairman stated the Attorney General had laid down five different ways or means of bringing about a better condition of affairs viz (1) That all undesirable aliens be stopped at the border and refused admittance into Canada. (2) That these women can be brought up in court everyday and fined, and in time got rid of. (3) You can fine the land-ladies each day and if the fine is not paid you can issue distress warrants on their goods. (4) You take proceedings against the males who visit these places and (5) To prosecute the owners of these buildings for living off the proceeds of crime.”³⁶ On the streets of Lethbridge, Calgary, Vancouver, Nelson, and Victoria, reformers toured the red-light districts, making recommendations to police departments that usually demanded complete suppression of the trade. These tours had dire consequences for prostitutes, as they incited public opinion against the women. As

early as 1903, growth in Vancouver's downtown area made the brothels on Dupont Street too visible for the comfort of Vancouver City Council and it decided to force the women to leave.³⁷ However, council could not decide where to move the women, most of whom owned their properties, and therefore it let the matter rest for almost three years, until moral reformers increased their activities in 1906.

The fight between the prostitutes of Dupont Street and city council began in earnest in 1906 with a letter from a resident of the area to the mayor, claiming that the police chief, reportedly for "mercenary" reasons, had ignored his complaints about a brothel on Dupont. He claimed that the brothel was "conducted by two colored girls, whose conduct is in the extreme reprehensible...they harbour white girls who are visited and debauched by colored men and chinamen who induce them to smoke opium and indulge in many un-natural practices."³⁸ This inflamed public opinion about the brothels because the complainant focussed on their multi-racial nature in an era when racism, and especially anti-Chinese sentiment, was already heightened in the city.³⁹ The allegation that Chief North was profiting from the presence of the red-light district caused an investigation that resulted in his suspension in June 1906, and he was replaced by Chief Chisholm.⁴⁰

Despite a legal fight, the women were finally given ten days' notice to vacate their premises.⁴¹ Although it appeared to the public that Chisholm's ultimatum was being adhered to, internal police records suggest that this was not the case. After a city police sergeant was forced to resign for allowing the brothels on Dupont to "[run] full blast," the chief recommended "that his resignation be accepted," and he suggested that "the Commissioners have nothing further to enquire into."⁴² Possibly, the chief did not want the commissioners to investigate too closely into where the women had gone when they followed his orders to vacate Dupont Street. In an interview in November 1906, Chisholm said he could not respond to the question of the dispersal of the women: his instructions were to clear the street, and he had obeyed those instructions. When questioned if they would "flit again to respectable sections of the city," Chisholm replied, "I make no concealment of my view...that ultimately one place,

one district remote from respectable streets and centres, will have to be set aside for these dames."⁴³ But this sentiment was in direct opposition to the reform agenda of suppressing vice altogether, and Chisholm did not last any longer as chief of police than had his predecessor, North.⁴⁴

Many of the women who left Dupont moved to Shanghai and Canton streets, also in Chinatown, and by the end of 1906 the whole process began again.⁴⁵ First, Chinese merchants began a petition requesting that police "prevent an invasion of undesirable women."⁴⁶ Then, moral reformers and aldermen toured the district, finding that conditions in the restricted district were the "worst in [the] city's history."⁴⁷ The allegations were brought before the police board, extra police were put on duty in the area, and the brothels were raided regularly.⁴⁸ In Vancouver, forcing the brothels to close down and move to a new district every few years had the undesirable result of scattering many of the women who could not afford to buy new houses every time they were forced to move.

With each relocation, more women ended up moving into rooming houses throughout the city. Police thus found it increasingly difficult to regulate the women, and police records correspondingly show a decrease in large groups of monthly fines that were collected from the madams and inmates of brothels as police went house to house. Individual charges for streetwalking increased throughout the period, as did charges for "keeping a bawdy house" that were collected from single women in rooming houses.⁴⁹ Increased suppression of the trade had long-range effects on the structure of prostitution in western Canada. From finding some protection amongst the female communities of the brothels, prostitutes were increasingly forced to rely on their own resources as they negotiated their increasingly marginalized status.

The reform movement that led to the closing of formal red-light districts in the cities also affected national identity. Whether forcibly scattering women into new areas in the city, deporting them back to the States, or moving them on to another town, nationality may have become less important as women sought to hide their country of birth to avoid deportation or resigned themselves to accepting a new nationality as borders became harder to cross. While women who seized economic opportunity or formed personal connections voluntarily crossed the line, others were

not able to exercise the same degree of agency. A wave of deportations of American prostitutes in the early 1900s from western Canadian cities afforded the women little opportunity to choose their nation of residence. While many could claim at least twenty years' residency in Canada, in the new climate of moral regulation they were uprooted from their homes, families, and friends and unceremoniously dumped on the other side of the border as a means of ending the "social evil."

Charges of "white slavery" were frequently heard in this era as a result of the highly publicized anti-prostitution campaigns in the United States, in which "muckraking journalists exposed the web of corruption between police, politicians, and vice magnates. Novelists and filmmakers sensationalized the traffic in women in lurid tales of abduction, rape, and sexual slavery."⁵⁰ Much of the American material, estimated to amount to as many as one billion pages over the period, was incorporated into Canadian publications, with the Methodist Church's Department of Temperance and Moral Reform leading the way in generating numerous pamphlets that were presented in speaking tours across the country. One Methodist publication, *Canada's War on the White Slave Traffic*, used American estimates that "15,000 foreign girls, and 45,000 native born are the victims every year in the United States and Canada."⁵¹

Police usually recognized that the stereotypical representation of the "black-hearted man" waiting on the train platform to force an innocent young woman into the sex trade occurred very rarely. Nevertheless, they did use the rhetoric of the white slave trade to assist them in their sweeps through the red-light districts. For example, in 1907 police took a "census of...[Vancouver's] restricted district in Chinatown...found 180 sporting women recently settled there."⁵² Fortunately for the police, they found that all but five of the women came from the United States, and thus involved immigration inspectors in the deportation of more than 150 women.⁵³ This led to an odd kind of cross-border trade—a trade in prostitutes. Once the deportees arrived in Seattle and were released by the immigration officials, they quickly re-crossed into Canada. In late 1907 another census set the number of American prostitutes in Vancouver's Chinatown at 210.⁵⁴

All border towns found deportation a handy way to deal with unwanted prostitutes, although everyone knew they simply re-crossed the line. In Lethbridge, Alberta, after five years of deporting prostitutes across the border only to see them re-enter almost immediately, the newspapers began to call for an end to the expense of using police hours to gather and transport the women to the border. After tossing out the idea of simply sending them en masse to Calgary, the town eventually settled for putting the prostitutes on a train, preferably not at town expense, and sending them east or west.

Whether forcibly scattering women into new areas of the city, deporting them back to the States, or moving them on to another town, increased suppression of the trade had long-range effects on the structure of the trade. After finding some protection amongst the female communities of the brothels, prostitutes were forced to rely on their own resources as they negotiated their increasingly marginalized status. One means was to construct an identity linked to national pride. As expatriates, many American women banded together and proudly proclaimed their national identity. Others found anonymity to be safer and formed connections on the personal level as friends, sisters, daughters, wives, and mothers, choosing to reject nationality as an identifying factor. Some had little choice but to withstand the repeated deportations that might arise from being identified as American.

In common with American settlers and immigrants who came North, prostitutes in western Canada shared the hopes, dreams, and aspirations connected with crossing any border into a new land. But there were important differences too. As women living on the margins, prostitutes also crossed lines of respectability and acceptability, which made their journey across the border that much more difficult.

NOTES

1. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 2nd ed. (1987; repr., San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999). On transnational approaches to the history of migration see Donna R. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," *The Journal of American History* (December

- 1999): <http://80-www.historycooperative.org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca:2048/journals/jah/86.3/gabaccia.html> (accessed 1 February 2004).
2. For a good overview of the development of resources in southern British Columbia, see Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), especially chapter 6, "The Young Province," 99–128, on the economic growth of the era; and Allen Seager, "The Resource Economy, 1871–1921," in *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia*, ed. Hugh J. M. Johnston (Vancouver: Douglas & MacIntyre, 1996), 205–52. For Alberta, see Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), especially chapter 12, "Capital and Labour 1900–40: Cities, resource towns, and frontier camps." On the movement of people into southern Alberta, see Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer, *Alberta: A New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1990), chapter 6, "The Boom Years (1896–1913): Politics, Cities, and Resource Development," 128–66.
 3. Dee Brown, *The Gentle Tamers: Women of the Old Wild West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1958), presents the image of (moral) women as civilizing influences, which Mariana Valverde examines in *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885–1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991). Marion S. Goldman, *Gold Diggers and Silver Miners: Prostitution and Social Life on the Comstock Lode* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), takes a hard look at the stereotypical representations of prostitutes, finding few redeeming qualities in a life of prostitution.
 4. One of the most colourful examples of the typical portrayal of prostitutes in western Canada is James H. Grey, *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Saskatoon, SK: Fifth House, 1971).
 5. On the creation of western institutions and the role played by prostitutes in their implementation in western American contexts, see Anne M. Butler, *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865–90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).
 6. Marilyn Wood Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers: Prostitution in New York City, 1830–1870* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) also found that the correspondence of Helen Jewett, a beautiful and wealthy New York prostitute, had to be examined carefully to get beneath the surface account of her movements in high society and thus contextualize the events that led to her brutal murder.
 7. On the easy cross-border movement of migrant labourers in Montana and western Canada, see Evelyne Stitt Pickett, "Hoboes Across the Border: A Comparison of Itinerant Cross-Border Labourers between Montana and Western Canada," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 18–31. For a general look at American immigration studies, see David D. Harvey, "Garrison Duty: Canada's Retention of the American Immigrant, 1901–1981," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 15, no. 2 (1985): 169–87. On Canadian immigration to the States and open borders see Bruno Ramirez, "Canada in the United States: Perspectives on Migration and Continental History," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 20, no. 3 (Spring 2001): 50–70. On women's roles and kinship networks in the decision to migrate North, see Randy Widdis, "American Resident Migration to Western Canada at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Prairie Forum* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 237–61.
 8. One issue that arises out of the types of sources used in this study is the use of names and the suppression of personal information. Many of the repositories that hold police

and court records have policies regarding access to personal information. In the attempt to preserve anonymity, I have chosen to use only the first names of prostitutes throughout to adhere to the restrictions where necessary, and to ensure continuity in the work when using public records where full names are accessible. Just as I am aware that the naming and categorization of women may have negative effects, I also realize that there is a danger to removing identity or personhood when denying women the right to their full names, and I hope that my choice does not negatively impact the representation of women whose lives and experiences are the central focus of this paper.

9. *Rossland Fire Insurance Plans* (Toronto: Chas E. Goad, Civil Engineer, 1897), unaccessioned records, Rossland Historical Museum and Archives, Rossland, BC (hereafter cited as RHMA).
10. City of Rossland, Tax Roll, 1898–1901, unaccessioned records, RHMA. Stella owned block 42, lots 18 and 19, and the lot on Queen Street, located in the block behind the main street, which were valued at \$3,200 in 1898. One lot contained the Vancouver House Hotel, which was assessed at \$1,250, while the other remained unimproved. Stella’s property holdings were considerably more than that held by the average female property owner held in 1898. Of the forty-four women on the tax rolls, the average value of land and improvements was \$1,343.50. Only eight other women held more property than Stella, and of those, four were hotel owners. Clearly, Stella’s holdings were very substantial for the period.
11. City of Rossland, Tax Roll, 1898–1901 and City of Rossland, Arrears of Taxes, 1898–1902, RHMA. Sid sold her property by 1914, and a man named Hop Ching owned block 48, lots 11 and 12, between 1914 and 1917, the next date that tax assessments and collectors rolls for Rossland are available. The majority of Chinese who owned properties had relocated to this area by the 1920s, moving from their former location close to the downtown core in the Sourdough Alley. Kutenai West Heritage Consulting, Summary Report Prepared for the City of Rossland and the West Kootenay Chinese Heritage Society, 29 September 1995, 139.
12. *Rossland Fire Insurance Plans*, 1897, RHMA, and Jeremy Mouat, *Roaring Days: Rossland’s Mines and the History of British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 31–33.
13. City of Rossland, Daily Police Report, 13 November 1900 to 17 June 1903, unaccessioned records and *Rossland Fire Insurance Plans*, 1897 and 1912, all RHMA.
14. Typical is this entry in the daily reports on 28 June 1901: “On duty 4 to 12 pm. Called at 11:30 to Texas’s house. Couple of fellows broke glass in door, but they moved before I arrived. Quite a few drunks around but are orderly.” Texas was frequently involved in altercations with her customers and the police considered her a “character.” City of Rossland, Daily Police Report, 13 November 1900 to 17 June 1903, unaccessioned records, RHMA.
15. British Columbia Provincial Police (BCPP), “Greenwood Correspondence Jan 1918–Dec 1919.” File 40–3050, R. N. Atkinson Museum and Archives, Penticton, BC (hereafter cited as RAMA); and City of Rossland, Daily Police Reports, RHMA.
16. Sid Horrell notes that “prostitutes frequently changed their names and seemed to prefer diminutive first names like Tilley, Trixie, Georgie, Lulu and Allie that had a friendly

- ring of familiarity,” in “The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies,” *Prairie Forum* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 105.
17. Superintendent Deane to Commissioner Perry, NWMMP correspondence 28 February 1907, RG 18 Vol. 1605 File 133, quoted in Horrell, “The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police,” 117.
 18. City of Rossland, Police Court, 1 October 1902 to 28 June 1907, entries on 3 and 4 June, 1905, unaccessioned records, RHMA.
 19. Goldman, *Gold Diggers*, 117.
 20. City of Rossland, Police Court, 30 January 1904 to 29 August 1904, unaccessioned records, RHMA.
 21. The details of Brothier’s trial are found in *The Daily News-Advertiser*, Vancouver, 10, 11, 12, 15 March 1904 and in the *Vancouver Province*, 2, 13 June 1906, 5 October 1906. The women’s activities in Hedley are described in a letter to the Chief of the Provincial Police, Victoria, 28 July 1906 and in reports from the Hedley constable to Superintendent Hussey, BCPP Victoria, 5 September 1906 found in GR0429 Box 13, File 3, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Victoria, BC (hereafter cited as PABC) Blanche may have returned to Vancouver the next year as a prostitute named Blanche, using the same last name as Brothier’s brother-in-law, and is found in Vancouver’s Prisoner Record Book, 5 March 1907, City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, BC (hereafter cited as CVA), although it is difficult to be certain because all the women connected with Brothier, including his sister, used a number of pseudonyms throughout the trial. The constable in Hedley believed that Blanche and Louise, a.k.a. Bernice or “Mrs. Brothier” in the brothel, were the same women who worked for Brothier in Vancouver.
 22. Welsh to E.V. Bodwell, Barrister, Victoria, 29 September 1899 in GR0429, Box 5, File 2, PABC.
 23. *The Tribune* (Nelson), 26 September 1899.
 24. Thomas H. Long, Chief of Police, Rossland to C. J. South, 26 June 1905, in GR0429, Box 13, File 1, PABC.
 25. Golden BCPP, Letter Book 1913, 5 September 1913, unaccessioned records, Golden Museum, Golden, BC.
 26. Marcella to Desire Brothier, 1 November 1904, in French, translator unknown, GR0429 Box 11, File 3, Document 1132/04, PABC.
 27. *Revelstoke Herald and Railway Men’s Journal*, Revelstoke, 20 April 1905. This case is discussed in detail in my thesis, “Regulating Prostitution in British Columbia,” (master’s thesis, University of Calgary, 2001), 46–47.
 28. Annie’s story is told in the *Boundary Creek Times*, 19 August 1904 (7 days after the murder), 21 October 1904, and 14 January 1905. Quotation is from 19 August 1904. The events of Joshua Bell’s trial and hanging are in the Attorney General’s files, GR0429 Box 11, File 5, 3142–04 1904 dated 11 October and 17–25 October, 1904, PABC.
 29. *The Immigration Act and Regulations* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1919), Effective July 14, 1914.
 30. Greg Marquis, “Vancouver Vice: The Police and the Negotiation of Morality, 1904–1935,” in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law, Volume VI: British Columbia and the Yukon*, ed. Hamar Foster and John McLaren (Toronto: The Osgood Society for Canadian Legal History,

- 1995), 242–73. Marquis in part examines the profitability of policing the vice trade in Vancouver.
31. On 1 July 1897, John S. Ingram replaced Kirkup as chief constable. With the appointment of Ingram, a new era of policing began in Rossland. Order and accountability became paramount in the newly incorporated city. As a result, regular record-keeping procedures were enacted that make it much easier to trace charges for prostitution-related offences from mid-1897 into the first decades of the twentieth century. These records are available at the Rossland Museum and Archives as Daily Police Reports.
 32. Many instances of this type of duty are evident in the Rossland Daily Police Reports.
 33. BCPP “Princeton Reports / Crime: Sex Offences 1924–26.” File 40–3472, RAMA.
 34. While these tactics seem to be in a grey area by contemporary practice of the law, in the *Revised Statutes of Canada, 1927*, Section 225 “disorderly houses” included “common bawdy houses,” “common betting houses,” and “common gaming houses.” The British Columbia Provincial Police used the term consistently to refer to “bawdy houses.” A *bawdy house* was defined as “a house, room, set of rooms or place of any kind kept for purposes of prostitution or for the practice of acts of indecency, or occupied or resorted to by one or more persons for such purposes.” Thus, almost any women who exhibited suspicious behaviour in any location could be charged with prostitution. For example, Phyllis booked into the Davenport Rooming House in Princeton; she was convicted under Section 229 of the Criminal Code of being an “Inmate of a Disorderly House” the very next day, paid her \$25 fine, and immediately left for Seattle via Vancouver. BCPP “Princeton Reports / Crime: Sex Offences 1924–26.” File 40–3472, 14 May 1924, RAMA.
 35. I examine the treatment of transient prostitutes in more detail in “Policing Prostitution in the Similkameen: Informal Systems of Regulation in the 1920s,” in “Regulating Prostitution in British Columbia, 1895–1930,” (master’s thesis, University of Calgary, 2001), 98–113.
 36. “Minutes” Vancouver Board of Police Commissioners, 3 December 1912, 75-A-1 File 3—Minutes June 12, 1912 to November 17, 1920, CVA.
 37. “Mayor Says They Must Be Moved,” *The Daily Province*, 18 August 1903, 1.
 38. “A Citizen,” to The Mayor, Vancouver, 2 February 1906, in Vancouver Board of Police Commissioners General Files Correspondence 1905–37, 75-A-5, File 13, “Petitions,” CVA.
 39. John McLaren, “The Early British Columbia Judges, the Rule of Law and the ‘Chinese Question’: The California and Oregon Connection,” in *Law for the Elephant, Law for the Beaver: Essays in the Legal History of the North American West*, ed. John McLaren, Hamar Foster, and Chet Orloff (Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1992), 237–73.
 40. “Alexander Selected for Police Inquiry,” *The Daily Province*, 23 June 1906, 1.
 41. *The Daily Province*, 13, 15 August; 7, 11 September; 31 October; 3, 5 November; 4 December 1906.
 42. Chisholm to The Board of Police Commissioners, Vancouver, 31 October 1906, “Vancouver Board of Police Commissioners General Files, Correspondence 1905–1937” 75-A-5 File 4, CVA.
 43. “Lottie Mansfield the Only One Left,” *The Daily Province*, 3 November 1906, 3.
 44. “Alexander Selected for Police Inquiry,” *The Daily Province*, 23 June 1906, 1.
 45. “Deporating From Restricted Districts,” *The Province*, 23 January 1908, 8.

46. Chisholm to Police Board, 3 September 1906, "Vancouver Board of Police Commissioners General Files, Correspondence 1905-1937" 75-A-4, File 13, "Petitions," CVA.
47. *The Daily Province*, 19 November 1906.
48. *The Daily Province*, 20, 21 November 1906; 24, 28 December 1906; 16 March 1907.
49. "Says Women Must Not Scatter, Mayor is Indignant," *The Daily Province*, 15 June 1906, 1.
50. Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987), 140.
51. Rev. J.G. Shearer and Rev. T. Albert Moore, *Canada's War on the White Slave Traffic* (Toronto: The Department of Temperance and Moral Reform of the Methodist Church, 1912), 2-3; "Rev. Hugh W. Dobson Papers 1912-26, Western Field Secretary for Evangelism and Social Service," Box A3/File G, United Church Archives, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.
52. *The Daily Province*, 16 March 1907.
53. "Vancouver's Restricted District," *Victoria Colonist*, 6 December 1907, 14.
54. "Deporting From Restricted Districts," *The Province*, 23 January 1908, 8.

