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It’s Good Business:

Regulation Models in the 1911 Closure of Butte Montana’s Red Light District

Anne Marie Johnson
American Studies Thesis
December 11, 2016
Introduction

Prostitution occupied a mythic place in the settlement narrative of the American frontier. Scholars such as Anne Butler, Mary Murphy, and Ellen Baumler have written about the ways that prostitutes and the various roles they occupied influenced the early American West. Butler’s revisionist history *Daughters of Joy; Sisters of Misery* (1987) argues that the lives of prostitutes on the American frontier were far removed from the romanticized versions shown in film and popular western novels. By examining the poverty, violence, and desperate circumstances of the West’s “soiled doves,” she redefines the historical position of prostitutes on the American frontier by considering their roles as women who faced personal hardship and contributed to the settlement of the frontier as opposed to romanticized accessories in a male history of the West.

Murphy also writes about prostitutes during this period, focusing specifically on the history of prostitution in Butte, Montana. Murphy’s work, like Butlers, moves away from moral condemnation and looks at the varied roles prostitutes played in settling and developing an emerging industrialized mining town. Murphy’s 1984 article, “The Private Lives of Public Women: Prostitution in Butte, Montana, 1878-1917,” provides a brief glimpse into the regulation of Butte’s red-light district. Murphy identifies prostitutes in Butte as “public women,” meaning they belonged to all men and, as such, weren’t afforded the protection of private lives. This status prevented prostitutes from being treated like and categorized with the “good” women of Butte. The Butte city council furthered this idea when it passed a city ordinance against vagrancy. The ordinance referred to prostitutes as “lewd and dissolute female persons.” These “female persons” were subject to arrest if they conducted themselves in an ”improper, profane or obscene manner” within the sight or hearing of women.” ¹ The division between women and “lewd and dissolute female persons” is an example of the moralistic language used to regulate and define the role of

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prostitutes in Butte, Montana, and this moral rhetoric is a consistent theme found in the history of regulating prostitution in the United States.

This thesis continues and contributes to Murphy’s work by examining the regulation surrounding the 1911 closure of the red light, or “restricted district,” in Butte, Montana. ² In December 1910, a petition was brought before the Butte City Council requesting the city “take some action toward the cleaning” of the red light district. This petition, and the subsequent events, marks a transition in Butte from regulating prostitution as a tolerated part of mining culture toward the Progressive Era model of regulating prostitution through eradication.

Prior to 1911, Butte used a pragmatic model of regulation based on the toleration of prostitution as a “necessary evil” in accordance with prevailing moral beliefs and as a viable economic source of funding for city government salaries including those paid to Butte’s police force. The 1911 crisis showed an attempt to change this model and introduce a new, top-down model of regulation that focused on the eradication of prostitution. This top-down model failed, however, and Butte returned to its pragmatic model of regulation which worked effectively for over 70 years.³

Examining the models of regulation surrounding prostitution in Butte provides an alternative method of framing prostitution’s contribution to the social and economic structure of the mining town in the American West. Butte’s tolerance for prostitution was directly related to its mining culture but it was also deeply intertwined with the economic benefits prostitution brought to the city government, Montana’s businessmen, and the Anaconda Copper Mining Company. Butte’s method of regulating prostitution fostered its mining culture and supported the economic structure that mining culture was responsible for developing.

² Historical documents indicate that “red light” and “restricted” are both used to describe the prostitution district in Butte, and this paper will use the terms interchangeably.
Tracing Butte’s red light history is a complex task for researchers because much of the information is disguised under different terminologies and archived in unexpected places. For instance, dance halls, saloons, and hurdy-gurdy houses were possible places where prostitutes operated, and all of these places surrounded the restricted district in Butte. The euphemisms for prostitutes also varied. In Butte, as well as other mining towns, prostitutes were referred to as ladies of the line, hurdy-gurdy gals, courtesans, box girls, sportin’ women, street walkers, Park Street girls, and chippies. During the turn of the century, very few public officials, clergy, or citizens referred to these women using the word “prostitute.”

Researchers must also draw on a wide range of sources to study the history of prostitution and its regulation, including newspapers, city ordinances, police records, censuses, and maps. These documents help researchers uncover prostitution’s history by indicating the different terms used to describe a red light district and the women who worked there. They also help researchers define the historical boundaries of red light districts and how cities attempted to regulate them. A unique feature of researching the red light district in Butte is the Sanborn Fire Maps which list the businesses that occupied the buildings in Uptown, Butte. An examination of these maps shows “female boarding,” a euphemism

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5 The business district in Butte was and still is referred to as “Uptown” because the city was built on a hillside. Historical documents capitalize the name of the business district.
for a brothel, listed on the buildings in the red light district and reveal that the district was located on Mercury and Galena between South Main and Arizona streets (see Figure 1).

This data helps establish the names, although many were aliases, and ages of the prostitutes living in the district through United States censuses. It also provides a means of establishing the ownership of the land in the restricted district through real property records. The research in this work accesses each of the sources listed above, but draws most heavily on newspaper accounts, real property records, and 1910 U.S. Census records. The specific information from these sources will be discussed more thoroughly later in the paper.
A Brief Look at the Relationship between Prostitution and Mining in the American West

In order to understand Butte’s attitude toward prostitution and the women who worked the red light district, a brief overarching look at the relationship between mining and prostitution in the American West is needed. According to historian Richard White large scale prostitution usually emerges when the following factors exist: large ratios of men to women, men are mobile and rootless, and there is sufficient money to pay for sexual favors.6 The gold, silver and copper strikes in the early American West delivered these factors in spades. In addition, in early mining communities, ranging from the gold rush of the Klondike in Dawson City, Yukon to the silver mines in Tombstone, Arizona, scholars have documented the relationship between miners and prostitutes linking them on the basis of mutual necessity.

Men were drawn to the West because of its promise for adventure and economic prosperity, and in the mining camps in the American West, single men outnumbered women and often by staggering amounts. For example, in 1860 the Comstock Lode of Nevada boasted a population of 2,306 men to only 30 women.7 In her book Red Light Women of the Rocky Mountains (2009), Jan McKell discusses the experiences of men in these early mining settlements writing, “the population of women in the early frontier was slow to grow. The mining camps, military forts, and ranching districts of the West were filled with women-hungry men.” 8

While the reasons women followed men into the West varied, Butler’s book Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865-1890 (1987), examines necessity as a primary explanation for why many of these women turned to prostitution. According to Butler, women migrated to the West in search of adventure and economic opportunities just like their male counterparts. However, she argues that employment opportunities for women were much more difficult to find. “Migrant frontier

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7 Ibid. 305.
women . . . surely were no less driven by economic expectations than men,” writes Butler. “Excluded from extensive direct employment within the frontier industries, working women had to recognize the limited scope of their own economic possibilities. For some frontier women work in prostitution best suited their economic chances and interest.”  

Exclusion from industrialized jobs in mining communities forced most women to take work deemed appropriate for their gender which largely regulated them to domestic careers. Many of the women hired into domestic occupations resorted to prostitution to supplement their meager wages. Often, working in the sex trade saved both married and unmarried women from poverty. Jan MacKell also speaks to this in her book, noting that, “Indeed, many women worked as “occasional” prostitutes, taking up the profession to subsidize other income they earned as seamstresses, laundresses, domestics and factory workers. Even a temporary layoff from any of these legitimate professions could mean starvation during a harsh winter. Prostitution was a viable way to make extra cash.”

Prostitution not only served to fill the sexual needs of single men and provide some women with an alternative source for income, it also served as a primary financial source of funding for emerging cities in the West. In the late 1800s many American cities began segregating and regulating red light districts for the purpose of collecting revenue. The money received from prostitution and its economic value to the local community played a key role in the social acceptance of prostitution in western mining towns, and these economic benefits also played a central role in the regulation of prostitution. Regulating prostitution became a lucrative economic resource for municipalities.

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10 Mackell, Red Light, 5.
Historical Background of Butte and Butte’s Red Light District

Butte began as a small mining camp in 1864 when G.O. Humphreys and William Allison filed placer claims along the Missoula Gulch. The gulch ran through the center of what is now present day Butte. Although there were high hopes for gold in Butte, the 1.5 million dollars of gold mined there during the early 1860s was a disappointment when compared to the nearly 30 million dollars’ worth of gold recovered from placer claims in the surrounding area.\(^\text{12}\) By the late 1860s, it appeared that the Butte mining camp would soon be abandoned. However, William L. Farlin’s Travona claim produced enough silver to create a mining boom in Butte in the early 1870s, saving the settlement from decline. During the silver mining boom, Marcus Daly, founder of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company (ACM) and future Copper King, purchased the Anaconda claim in 1876. Dailey discovered a rich, yet undeveloped copper deposit, and, with the help of investors, built the major ore smelter needed to process the copper. He organized the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, and the vast copper deposits mined by the ACM gave Butte the moniker “the richest hill on earth.”\(^\text{13}\)

Twenty-five years after Humphreys and Alison filed their claims on Missoula Gulch, Butte had transitioned from a small placer mining camp into a full blown mining city. In 1887, Butte surpassed Michigan’s Keweenaw Peninsula in copper production by mining 78 million pounds of copper. In 1899, the price for copper saw a significant rise because the “uses for copper increased dramatically with new electrical applications in communications, illumination and manufacturing.”\(^\text{14}\) The increased demand for copper made Butte, which sat on top of the largest copper ore deposit on earth, the center of industrialized mining in North America, and by 1910 Butte and was second to South Africa for metals production in the world.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^\text{13}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{15}\) Ibid, 89.
Copper production required ore to be extracted from its hard rock base, brought to the surface, and processed in smelters for distribution. In order to do this, mine owners needed thousands of men willing to perform hard manual labor. Mining jobs in Butte attracted the largest population of single men in the West, and the Anaconda Copper Mining Company paid these miners well. In 1900, the ACM’s monthly payroll to miners averaged $1,000,000. In 2016 terms, the ACM’s payroll would be the equivalent of nearly $24,328,500.00 distributed between approximately 6,000 men. As a result, Butte contained one of the wealthiest populations of single men in the country.

Between 1890 and 1917, Butte sported the largest red light district in the Rocky Mountain Region and even rivaled other prostitution districts in major cities such as San Francisco and New Orleans. The magnitude and infamy of Butte’s red light district resulted from the sheer amount of wealth that copper production created in Montana at the turn of the twentieth century and the prominent clientele, including the Copper Kings and political figures, who frequented it. The miners had the money, and the “ladies of the line” knew how to help these men spend it. In the book Copper Camp (1943), one ‘contemporary observer’ of the red light district during its peak describes seeing prostitutes walking home with “their stockings so weighted down with silver dollars” that they had to “use both hands to keep their stockings from falling and let [sic] money spill out over the street.”

The prostitutes and patrons of the “restricted district” solidified the city’s national reputation as a “wide-open” town. Murphy defines “wide-open” as follows: “When people described Butte as a wide-
open town, they meant that a man could buy a drink, place a bet, or visit a prostitute at any hour of the day or night without worrying about being arrested.” 21 While other towns in the West may have been uncomfortable with their red light districts, Butte embraced its “restricted district” and celebrated its existence as part of its mining culture. 22 Baumler contends that “Butte remained a rough mining camp well into the twentieth century, a “sinful city,” as one writer described it, where debauchery and dissipation were considered a boon to the local economy.” 23

In her article “Devil’s Perch: Prostitution from Suite to Cellar in Butte, Montana,” Baumler writes about the roles that prominent Montana businessmen such as Anton Holter, “a wealthy pillar of the capital city at Helena,” and “newspaper tycoon” Lee Mantle played in the ownership and operation of Butte’s red light district. Holter constructed the Blue Range Cribs around 1897, and today they remain as one of the last examples of red light district architecture in Butte. (see figure 2) She also acknowledges that their

22 Moynahan, *Butte’s Sportin’ Women*, 15-16. Moynahan compiles a list of terms Butte residents used to describe the red light district. They include: bad lands, demimonde, the district, half world, the line, red light district, restricted district, social evil district, tenderloin, and twilight zone.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/4520070
open involvement in Butte was not as controversial to Montanans as it may have been had the investment been located in Helena. 24

According to Bauml, the miner’s patronage not only bolstered the economy but it also benefited the Anaconda Copper Mining Company (ACM) referred to by locals “the Company.” She writes that, “A thriving restricted district meant the thousands of single miners would spend their time and paychecks on entertainment rather than organizing against their bosses.” 25 By providing the miners with sex, the red light district played a role in preventing the workers from organizing and protesting against the working conditions that existed in Butte’s copper mines. Both the prostitutes and the ACM received economic

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
benefit from the arrangement. However, it goes without saying that the benefits for ‘The Company’ and the real estate investors in Butte’s red light district far exceeded that of the prostitutes.

The Pragmatic Tolerance Model of Regulation

The pragmatic tolerance model of regulating prostitution is based on the idea that the red light district is allowed to operate openly because prostitution fills both a social and economic need inside Butte’s mining community. To establish the pragmatic tolerance model of regulation as the status quo model of regulating prostitution in Butte prior to 1911, the discussion about the overarching relationship between mining and prostitution needs to be applied on a localized level.

The conditions surrounding employment opportunities in mining communities discussed by both Butler and MacKell were also a reality in Butte. In her book *Mining Cultures: Men, Women, and Leisure in Butte, 1914-41* (1997), historian and Butte scholar, Murphy, specifically focuses on why women had difficulty finding employment in Butte’s mining community. In 1917, after pressure from Butte city’s women’s clubs, the city government opened a position for a female police officer, and fifty women applied for the job. However, Butte was a male dominated city with specific ideas about how women should behave. City officials contacted the fathers, brothers, and husbands of the applicants who “put a halt to their relatives’ job search.” 26 The city did not hire any of the applicants. Although this incident occurred after the 1911 closure of the red light district, it still demonstrates the low availability of industrialized jobs for women in the area and the mindset that limited females to specific occupations based on strongly held gender traditions in Butte.

In addition to these gender traditions, Murphy also argues that, “Butte had inherited the dichotomous ideology permeating late Victorian and Edwardian-Anglo culture that viewed woman as either “good” or “bad.” According to this scheme, good and bad women occupied different universes and

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26 Murphy, *Mining*, 77.
rarely if ever came into contact with each other.”

This ideal also supported the prevailing moral belief that prostitutes protected the “good women” in society by attending to the sexual needs of “passionate” men. In many ways, tolerance for prostitution became part of Butte’s frontier morality.

The notion of necessity surrounding the red-light district also influenced the pragmatic attitude toward prostitution in the mining town. Murphy addresses necessity by including it in a discussion about the mixed emotions Butte residents had toward their red light district, “Sordid it might be, but it seemed necessary in a town full of single miners. There was even a touch of braggadocio in comparisons to New Orleans’s Corduroy Row and San Francisco’s Barbary Coast. The city, in fact, was proud of both its good and its bad women – as long as they remained separate.”

Another quote from a Butte “old-timer” in Copper Camp (1943) sums up the citizens’ perspective on the women who worked in the red-light district. “They were a necessary evil. They did little harm – and maybe some good. Many’s [sic] the miner who’d never wash his face or comb his hair, if it wasn’t thinkin’ [sic] of the sportin’ [sic] girls he might meet in the saloons.” Although residents recognized that prostitution was a questionable moral activity, they were willing to tolerate it as something that served as a social outlet for miners, providing them with experiences that may have prevented them from engaging in other, potentially more damaging, activities.

While prostitution was never legal in the state of Montana, it was regulated on a local municipal level. Butte’s first law regulating prostitution was approved in 1885 under Ordinance No. 62 titled “Offenses Against Good Order and Morals” which made “any person” who “intentionally and unnecessarily disturb[ed] the peace and quiet of any street, neighborhood, family or person” through any “offensive conduct” guilty of committing a public nuisance and subject to a fine between $5 and $100 dollars. Ten years later, in The Compiled Ordinances of the

27 Murphy, Mining, 77
28 Murphy, Mining, 78.
29 Writer’s Project of Montana, Copper Camp, 183.
City of Butte 1897, the city council expanded on the definition of “good order and morals” by amending Ordinance No. 62 to include language specific to prostitution.

Any person who . . . shall commit any indecent, lewd or filthy act in any place in the city, . . . or shall invite or solicit any passer-by to enter any bawdy house, house of ill-fame or house of assignation, or shall upon any street, alley, saloon or other public place in any way invite or solicit any person to commit an act of lewdness . . . or shall exhibit or perform any indecent, immoral or lewd play, act or other representation, shall be deemed guilty of committing a nuisance, and upon conviction thereof shall be fined in any sum not less than one dollar ($1.00) nor more than one hundred dollars ($100.00) and costs of suit.30

The moralistic language used in the revised ordinance is representative of the type of language associated with the regulation of prostitution. On the surface this language explicitly condemns prostitution as an immoral activity and also can be interpreted as the city’s attempt to protect its citizens from the red light district’s influence. However, it is more likely the ordinance was instated for the economic benefit of the municipality which is the underlying purpose of regulating prostitution. Notice that “indecent, lewd, or filthy acts” weren’t considered a “crime” but rather a “nuisance” punishable by the collection of fines. The collection of “fines” from prostitution and the financial contribution to city coffers and the pockets of police officers are well documented in Butte.

In a newspaper article printed in The Anaconda Standard on January 16, 1902, a reporter documents the city council and the chief of police openly discussing the financial benefits from red light district fines. The article reads as follows:

The Red Light District. The aldermen found time last evening to discuss quite extensively the red light district, and nearly all of them expressed the opinion that the district could not be moved until a place was found to remove the district to . . . "I don't believe that the people of this district are a bit worse than we are ourselves." Said [Alderman] Duggan. "We are collecting from these people money to pay our salaries. We are getting part of our salaries from the price of the shame of these people."

. . . [Alderman] McConnell asked the Police Chief to explain the collection system. "The city clerk issues to me blank receipts," said the chief, "which he charges to me. I collect $5 each month from every woman in the district. I advocated several months ago the doing away with the tax because I ran across so many who are more unable to pay the fines. But in talking with the women they themselves were in favor of paying the fine as a protection money. Otherwise they said experience had taught them in other cities that they would be harassed by everyone with a little show of authority. The fines are in reality a bail bond to the police court which they forfeit and the money is turned over to the city from the police court."

"I would ask if you get a per cent?" asked [Alderman] Dempsey.

"I do. I get a percentage of 10 per cent, for collecting, as in preceding administrations. I don't like percentage and wish the whole thing could be abolished."

"His warrant has been approved by the council every month. Alderman Dempsey," said the mayor. "That percentage has been given every chief since 1896." 31

This discourse establishes the practice of using the money collected from prostitutes to fund Butte’s city officials and police force. When this article was published, the collection process had been in existence for six years, and records indicate that money was collected from prostitutes and madams until the early 1980’s. 32 Baumler also discusses the influence of the income generated by Butte’s red light district, “The women realized that the municipal revenues from the district were substantial; based on a $10 fine collected from every woman working the district, the city took in an average of $2,000 per month.” 33

As demonstrated by these accounts, the collection of “fines” from the red light district and its redistribution to city government and police officials was common public practice in Butte. At the time of the 1911 closure of Butte’s red light district, the practice of fining prostitutes had been in existence for over 15 years. Because the money made from regulating prostitution helped finance municipal salaries, neither the city government nor its police force had any interest in permanently shutting down the district. This revenue provided a clear financial incentive for tolerating prostitution.

31 The Anaconda Standard, January 16, 1902.
32 Baumler, The Devil’s, 20.
33 Ibid, 15.
Of course, prior to 1911 there were other attempts made to “clean up” or move the red light district.\textsuperscript{34} One such instance occurred in January 1902 when the Butte city council refused to move the red light district and, instead, acknowledged that, “The only thing we can do is place restrictions on these unfortunate women.” As a result, the city alderman voted to have the chief of police keep the blinds closed in the district and for “other proper restrictions” which included having the prostitutes wear dresses “to the necks and the shoes.” While the prostitutes did comply with the restrictions, many of them cut holes in the blinds for their faces.\textsuperscript{35}

Fining prostitutes instead of jailing them or removing them from of the restricted district can be interpreted as an inclusive regulation model where the women of the restricted district, the Butte city council, and the police force worked together. By expressing their preference in paying a fine to the police chief and complying with city ordinances regarding dress and behavior, prostitutes in the red light district became active, if unwilling, participants in their regulation.

**The 1911 Closure of the Red-Light District**

The 1911 closure of the red light district marked a change in Butte’s status quo model of regulating prostitution because the petition resulted in a municipal order closing the district and a forced removal of its prostitutes and madams. On December 28, 1910, T.O. Angell Jr., filed Petition 2518 in the office of the Butte city clerk requesting the cleansing of the city’s red light district in Uptown Butte. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to Petition 2518 as Angell’s petition. The Angell petition contained 112 signatures from other businessmen in Uptown and requested the city administration involvement concerning the red-light district because of the “first impressions of a visitor to our city” and their obligation to make the city center “clean and pure, for our wives and daughters.”\textsuperscript{36}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Cleaning up the district refers to previous attempts to decrease drug use, violence, theft, and the public solicitation of clientele. *The Anaconda Standard*, February 2, 1902.}
\footnote{*The Anaconda Standard*, January 16, 1902}
\footnote{T.O. Angell, Jr., *Petition 2518 of T. O. Angell Jr. et al. re: Removal of the Redlight District* (Butte: Office of the City Clerk City of Butte), December 28,1910.}
\end{footnotes}
Angell’s petition doesn’t ask for the removal or elimination of the red-light district but simply requests, “that some action should be taken toward the cleaning of this section herein spoken of.” However, the December 29, 1910 edition of The Butte Miner reported the following, “A petition was received, signed by 112 of the citizens of Butte, requesting that the council take some measure for eradicating the evils of the restricted district by causing the removal of the district.”

Subsequent newspaper articles regarding the 1911 closure report that Angell’s petition either requested the removal or elimination of the red-light district. The perception that Angell and the other signors wanted the district removed or eliminated contributed to the climate surrounding the conflict because it challenged the status quo. Whether or not Angell’s petition advocated for elimination or removal, its filing marked a major change in the regulation of prostitution in Butte. In contrast to the earlier model of pragmatic tolerance, where regulation involved working closely with the prostitutes to develop a collaborative relationship of management, Angell’s petition prompted the closure of the district, the removal of its inhabitants, and introduced the eradication model of regulating prostitution to Butte.

T.O. Angell, also known as Tom Angell, was a hat maker and a prominent business leader in Uptown; his generosity and commitment to the local community is well documented. The December 24, 1929 edition of the Butte Montana Standard had the following to say about Angell’s business prowess. “Before coming to Butte he [Angell] learned the hat business in all its details under an experienced English hat maker . . . the hat manufacturing business at No. 10 Wyoming Street was the only factory between the Twin Cities and Puget Sound. The business prospered.” In an era where every head had a hat, Angell flourished as the only hat maker in town.

In addition, Angell was also “public spirited.” The same article states that, “he tirelessly gave of his time to every worthy enterprise and of his money as well.” Angell served on the

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37 “Want Restricted District Moved,” The Butte Miner, December 29, 1910
38 Ibid. “Decides to Move Restricted District,” The Anaconda Standard, January 12, 1911
40 Ibid.
board of directors of the influential Silver Bow Club, established by copper king Marcus Daly, which indicates his social position in the community. He was also part of the Butte Rotary Club, Elk’s Club, Masonic Temple, and Butte Merchants’ Association. His memberships in these organizations showed his commitment to Butte’s community and gives us insight into his financial position in Uptown Butte. Given his wealth and status in Butte’s community, it is easy to see why Angell championed the removal of the red-light district and how he persuaded 112 Uptown Butte merchants to sign his petition.

The attempted change in regulation models began when businessmen, like T.O. Angell, started to view Butte’s red light district as a deterrent to potential consumers accessing Uptown Butte’s business district. Prior to the filing of Angell’s petition in December of 1911, the red light district had occupied the same land for over twenty years. The existence and regulation of the area had always been a part of Butte’s mining town culture and was an accepted source of revenue. Angell’s petition signified the beginning of a new view of prostitution in Butte which suggested that the red light district was an economic obstacle for Uptown business owners and their patrons.

Angell also used moral rhetoric as the basis of his argument for removing prostitution from Uptown. In this petition, Angell states:

The first impressions of a visitor to our City, cannot but be, of a nature that is unpleasant, because of having to go through this section and seeing the character of business carried on in these streets. Mercury St., is the only street in our City which is a direct connecting line from the far eastern, to western portion of the City, an as it is now used it is out of the question for the general public to have the proper protection, that they are entitled to when traveling upon our streets, and we feel that the time is now at hand, that some action should be taken toward the cleaning of this section herein spoken of, to the end, that the center of our City may be made clean and pure, for our wives and daughters, and younger generation of boys and men to go through and over without being subjected to the many indecencies that now exist.\(^41\)

Angell’s petition represents the red light district as a threat to the safety and morality of Butte residents. This view contrasts the earlier Victorian idea that the red light district protected “good” women by providing men an option for sexual release. Angell’s petition also suggests he speaks for the “residents” of Butte who are calling for the cleansing and purifying of the red light district on behalf of “our wives and daughters, and younger generation of boys and men.” The rhetoric used here further identifies the distinction between “private” and “public” women defined by Murphy in her 1984 article and depicts the women of the district as contaminants practicing “indecencies” in Uptown Butte in clear contrast to the “private” and protected status afforded to their “wives and daughters.” Of course, at the same time, Angell’s portrayal of the district as dangerous for the “general public” fails to acknowledge that a large portion of that demographic frequented the district as clientele.

As a result of the Angell petition, a special committee was appointed to consider “the petition for removal.”42 The January 12, 1911 editions of both The Anaconda Standard and The Butte Miner reported that the special committee consisting of Mayor Nevin and Chief of Police Quinn submitted a report to the city council advising the red-light district be moved to “Arizona street to Ohio Street and Cutris street from Arizona street to Ohio street. The proposed new location of the red-light district was referred to as the “Cabbage Patch” in Butte.43 Murphy describes the Cabbage patch as an area south east of the red light district which consisted of, “a hodgepodge of cabins and ramshackle buildings full of “batching” and ”housekeeping” rooms. In its confines working-class poor rubbed elbows with drug addicts, older prostitutes, bootleggers, and criminals.” 44

City administrators obviously felt that the Cabbage Patch was an area of Butte where the red-light district and the prostitutes would fit in well with its current occupants. By choosing the slum area of Butte for the new location of the red-light district, city officials move further away from the pragmatic tolerance model of regulation. Instead of acknowledging the prostitutes’

42 The Anaconda Standard, “Decides,” January 12, 1911
43 Ibid. “City Council Considers Proposed Bills for Legislative Action,” The Butte Miner, January 12, 1911
44 Murphy, Mining, 13.
economic and social contributions to Uptown, the chosen location implies that these women are undeserving of such a prominent location in Butte’s business district and should be removed from public view. It also stands to reason that Mayor Nevin and the Chief Quinn may have thought that protest from the Patch’s residents about the new location was unlikely.

However, on January 12, 1911, Reverend J.M. Venus, Father of the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, and 53 additional signees filed a petition protesting the removal of the red light district to the Cabbage Patch. Again, for the sake of clarity, I will refer to this petition as Venus’s petition. Like Angell, Reverend Venus objected to the red-light district for moral and economic reasons, but he believed that the district should not be moved because its location in the community was well established and moving it would endanger other portions of the city.

We take it that the quarters now devoted to the purposes of vice have ineffaceably stamped upon them the calling of the scarlet woman, and it is idle and even hypocritical to speak of their use for residence purposes in the future. . .Our children attend the church and school in close proximity to the contemplated new Redlight [sic] quarter, and we protest against your compelling the church and the school to be moved, for they can not [sic] remain if you move the prostitutes of the city over under the very close observation of innocent children and noble women. 45

Here Venus seems to be arguing for preserving the status quo. Although he believed prostitution was harmful, moving the district would leave the current location unusable and would also threaten to destroy the moral stability of other neighborhoods in town. In short, Venus contended that Angell’s petition simply abolished one district and created another that would affect his own parish “economically and materially and besides socially and publicly.” The Venus petition contained the following, “But we are owners of property constituting our homes which have been built upon our savings, and we see no more reason why out property should be confiscated and destroyed any more than the residences of the West side millionaire.” Father Venus, individually and on behalf of his parishioners, took exception to the

45 J.M. Venus, Petition, (Butte: Office of the City Clerk City of Butte), January 12, 1911.
district being forced upon his parish by the wealthy business men who lived on Butte’s west-side adding further complications to the city’s plans.

Like Angell, Venus represents the red light district as a threat to the safety of the community and furthers the distinction between the “public” and “private” women in Butte. The use of the phrase “prostitutes of the city” distances Venus and his parishioners from the women of the district by representing them as objects that pose an urban threat to the purity of the parish. His concern for the “innocent children and noble women” echoes Angell’s argument for a safe and secure Uptown. However, Father Venus expands on Angell’s rhetoric by arguing that the “calling of the scarlet woman” irreversibly marked even the red light district’s buildings. He contends the influence of vice on the “quarters” has permanently affected them, preventing these buildings from ever being used for any decent purpose which supports his argument that moving the “prostitutes of the city” is not the solution to Angell’s petition.

The moral rhetoric used by Angell and Venus also differs from the moral rhetoric used in Ordinance No. 62 in the level of condemnation assigned by the community. Ordinance No. 62 implies that “indecent, lewd, or filthy” acts are a “nuisance” not a threat to the well-being of Butte’s women and children or irreversible mark on the cities real estate. As the economic stakes increased in Butte’s red light district, so did the degree to which moral rhetoric was used to argue for the condemnation of prostitution in Uptown.

Although Venus and Angell are ultimately arguing for two different solutions to the “problem” of prostitution – moving the red light district or leaving it in place – their petitions both represent a new model of regulation. In the prior model, city officials and citizens worked with prostitutes in the district’s Uptown location to improve conditions or clean up the red light district because they felt prostitution contributed to the mining community. The Angell and Venus petitions introduce the view that prostitutes are “degenerates” who need to be hidden or removed from Butte’s citizens and visitors, thus, representing the transition into an eradication
model of regulation. The eradication model of regulation doesn’t acknowledge the economic or social contributes of prostitutes to the community and sees the complete removal of prostitution from society as the only means of regulation.

In these petitions, we see the members of two powerful communities, the business owners in Uptown and the Catholic Church, which was the largest religious demographic in Butte, in agreement over the need to regulate prostitution in the city, but in disagreement over the location for regulating that activity. On the one hand, we have members of the business community attempting to regulate the location of prostitution in order to secure and expand their financial investments. This attempt relies on the assertion that economic success in Butte depends on separating prostitution from the Uptown business district. On the other hand, we have members of the religious community wanting to regulate the location of prostitution in order to protect the value of the homes, churches and schools in their parish. Both communities rely on moral rhetoric in their petitions to city government to argue for their respective economic interests, but this moral rhetoric differs from early models of regulation which advocated for “other proper restrictions” within the existing boundaries of the red light district. Furthermore, in contrast to prior efforts to acknowledge prostitution as a source of economic benefits, these petitions view the existence of the red light district and the influence of the prostitutes as a financial threat to business and real estate investments.

Both Angell and Venus also distance themselves from the occupants of the red light district and treat them unsympathetically. Neither party discusses prostitutes in terms of their private lives. Instead the “prostitutes of the city” are depicted as objects whose “indecencies” pose an urban threat to Butte. Angell and Venus also purport to be the voice of Butte’s “residents” and call for city government to protect the “general public” and stop “violating our rights in every way.” By claiming the position of concerned Butte citizens, the business leaders and church authorities are able to protect their financial stake in Uptown.
Even though Angell and Venus used similar rhetoric and represent a new model of regulation, they were ultimately arguing for different goals in terms of the location of the red-light district - removing prostitution to a new location or leaving it where it was. This clash of powers placed Mayor Nevins in the difficult position of trying to determine whether to pass a law that would go against the wishes of Butte’s business men or the Catholic Church. Because both sides of the conflict carried political weight with the electorate, Mayor Nevin and the city council could not easily side with one petition over another.

In response, Mayor Nevin introduced a third option and decided to close the red light district completely. He issued an order for the closure to take place at midnight on January 31, 1911. The day of the closure the morning edition of The Anaconda Standard quoted Mayor Nevin as saying:

> Every crib, every block and every house of prostitution in the redlight [sic] district will be closed Tuesday at midnight, or the occupants and patrons and proprietors of each will be arrested and prosecuted. I am firm in the stand I have taken in the matter. Whether the people interested in the redlight [sic] district or engaged in running houses of ill fame move to the ‘Cabbage Patch’ or not is a matter of indifference to me. However, if they do not move there they will just have to get out of town. That is just the way the situation now stands.\(^4^6\)

Mayor Nevin’s statement reiterates the impersonal and dismissive language used to describe prostitutes in Angell’s and Venus’s petitions. Nevin refers to the inhabitants of the district as “occupants and patrons and proprietors.” By using these formal terms, the Mayor also distances himself from the “public” women of the red-light district, which ultimately makes it easier for him to justify the shutdown. The red light district and its “occupants” are faced with the callous enforcement of the district’s closure and the fate of Butte’s prostitutes becomes matter of “indifference” to city leaders.

Both the Anaconda Standard and the Butte Miner newspapers provided coverage of the events leading up to and following the scheduled closure. On the night of January 31, 1911, the people of Butte turned out in droves to watch the potential conflict between the police department and the prostitutes. The Butte Miner reports the exodus.

All left when the hour of 12 came. A few loiterers stayed and witness that same scene they many times was repeated during the earlier hours of the night. Notwithstanding there was no organized disorder, and there were but few instances wherein anger was displayed. A well-organized crowd, as to the numbers, drifted laughingly, some sullenly, some cursing, many studying as they left with heads bowed, a scene that rivaled anything the worst and lowest of any big city could imagine.\(^4^7\) 

Butte’s citizens were disappointed because the madams and prostitutes packed their belongings and peacefully exited the restricted district without conflict. On February 1, 1911 Butte’s infamous red light district appeared to be closed permanently.

On February 15, 1911, two weeks after the prostitutes’ departure, Petition 2539 was filed by Robert T.F. Smith cashier of the Silver Bow National Bank and 203 other residents who were identified by The Butte Miner as “principally business men and clerks” filed Petition 2539, requesting the red-light district’s reinstatement.\(^4^8\) Once again, for the sake of clarity, I will refer to Petition 2539 as Smith’s petition throughout this paper. Smith’s petition contained the largest number of signatures and requested the reinstatement of the red light district in its present location citing the following:

> Believing in that old and tested principle “Let well enough alone”, [sic] we the undersigned citizens of the City of Butte, many of us residents for many years and taxpayers, representing as we believe we do, a very large and growing sentiment in this community and the better opinion of those who have given thought to the matter, respectfully PROTEST against the removal of the ‘RED-LIGHT DISTRICT’ so termed, to other quarters than where it at present exists, or to its closing up and the driving of its inhabitants to street walking and living in lodging houses scattered throughout our City.\(^4^9\)

The idea that the red light district, although morally objectionable, filled an important role in Butte continues in Smith’s petition with the following statement, “we deplore the necessity for such a district, - for a necessary evil and protection to the purity of many other of our women kind cannot be gainsaid.” By using the phrase “Let well enough alone” and referring to prostitution as a “necessary evil,” Smith’s petition embraces Butte’s traditional attitude and pragmatic tolerance model of regulation concerning the red light district and becomes more representative of the

\(^{47}\) “Morbid Crowd Witnesses the Passing of the Restricted District,” The Butte Miner, February 1, 1911.  
\(^{48}\) Robert T. F. Smith et al., Petition and Protest 2539 of Robert T.F. Smith et al. re: Removal of Restricted District (Butte: Office of the City Clerk City of Butte), February 15, 1911.  
\(^{49}\) Smith, Petition, 1911.
people’s “very large and growing sentiment in this community.” The language further legitimizes Smith’s right to represent the Butte’s public view of prostitution and advocate for a return to the status quo regulation of prostitution in Uptown.

Smith also displays a more sympathetic view of the red light district by using language that represents the prostitutes and their patrons as people with moral problems in contrast to the language representing prostitutes as objects participating in vice that contaminates the community as portrayed in the Angell and Venus petitions.

None go near save those who seek . . . We urge upon you who hold office by our suffrage that your power and authority should be used with moderation and discretion and with human knowledge of the frailties of our human-kind and not with crushing force against the helpless and the outcast, the weak and erring.50 In sharp contrast to describing these women as “prostitutes of our city” and “the occupants and patrons and proprietors,” the Smith petition referred to the women of the line as “the helpless and the outcast, the weak and erring.” This language prompts an emotional response toward the prostitutes in the district which serves as a reminder to the city council that distancing themselves from the closure of the red light district doesn’t release them from the fate of Butte’s “public” women. The rhetoric here also includes the patrons of the restricted district. By stating “None go near save those who seek,” Butte’s citizenry is acknowledging that the male dominated population is culpable for the existence of the district and, despite their condemnation of prostitution, all male members of the community are stake holders in the red light district’s reinstatement.

Smith’s petition also reminds city officials that the red light district has operated successfully under self-regulation by citing the following,

For many years Butte has become accustomed to the fact that such a district exists; it has adopted repressive measures and today the scarlet women are practically isolated in their quarters . . . Much has been wrought – much perhaps yet remain to be done; yet such is

50 Ibid.
far better that they be so isolated and the district be amply policed in close vicinage to the police headquarters where constant supervision can be exercised.51

The inclusion of the pragmatic tolerance model of regulation in the district and its effectiveness reminds readers that the red-light district imposed restrictions on itself which prevented the spread of prostitution into the community at large. In effect, Butte’s prostitutes line not only chose self-isolation, but their location also placed them under the watchful eye of Butte’s police force. While Angell’s petition challenged the status quo model of regulation Butte, Smith’s petition embraces it and advocates for the red-light district’s reopening based on a traditionally held acceptance of prostitutions place in the community. Smith’s use of moral rhetoric also differs from the way both Angell and Venus used moral rhetoric in their petitions. Smith acknowledges the immorality of the red light district but does so without strictly condemning the district and its inhabitants as unredeemable.

The Butte City Council and Mayor Nevin appointed a “special council”, again only including Mayor Nevin and Chief Quinn, to deal with the protest, relocation, removal, and reopening petitions that were presented to the city council between December 28, 1910 and February 15, 1911.52 However, the matter was buried in the backrooms of city hall and no action was taken. By March 1, 1911, the red light district had reopened in the same location and the prostitutes were back plying their trade. The prostitutes who exited the district returned to their former lodgings, and Butte’s police force refused to enforce Mayor Nevin’s order. The red-light district re-opened without any formal resistance from Butte’s city council or its police force, and continued to operate under the pragmatic tolerance model of regulation until the closure of the Dumas in 1982.53

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51 Smith, Petition, 1911.
53 Baumler, Devil’s, 20.
The Eradication Model of Regulation and Progressive Era Reform

The introduction of the eradication model of regulating prostitution in Butte coincided with the national Progressive Era reformation movement against prostitution. In order to better understand how the 1911 petitions mark a departure from Butte’s previous model of regulation, it’s important to situate those petitions in the context of Progressive Era reforms and the anti-white slavery movement. Ruth Rosen’s book, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (1982), examines the reasons Progressive Era reformers campaigned so vigorously against red light districts in the United States. According to Rosen, prostitution became a “cultural symbol of the birth into a modern industrial culture in which the cold, impersonal values of the marketplace could invade the most private areas of people’s lives.” 54

Public discourse about prostitution, also termed the “Social Evil,” became a public forum that reflected middle-class fears about social changes at the turn of the century including “unrestricted immigration, the rate of venereal disease, the anonymity of the city, the growth of working-class urban culture, and the changing role of women in society.” 55 In many ways, these fears were magnified in Butte’s industrialized mining culture because they were so obviously present.

Many Progressive Era reformers blamed prostitution on white slavery which claimed that young women were being kidnapped and forced into prostitution by “flesh peddlers.” 56 White slavery’s existence and social impact are too complex to analyze in this paper, but the concept is mentioned here because the white slavery theory caused a public hysteria that prompted legislation to be passed in the United States designed to protect “innocents” from being kidnapped or seduced into prostitution.

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55 Ibid.
In his article, “Sex and the City: The White Slavery Scare and Social Governance in the Progressive Era,” Christopher Diffee discusses the history of this legislation on both a local and national level.

On the municipal level, Progressive reformers used commercial prostitution both to repress brothels through red-light injunction and abatement laws as well as to authorize a diverse contingent of regulatory policies - including special vice squads, night courts, and reformatories - working to police working-class female sexuality in particular and working-class culture more broadly. On the federal level, the passage of the 1910 Mann Act used the commerce clause to criminalize the interstate transportation of women for prostitution, debauchery, or "any other immoral practice." Montana was no exception to this legislative movement. The push to close Butte’s red light district coincided with the passing of an anti-white slave bill in Montana’s legislature sponsored by Montana Senator Edward D. Donlan in 1911. The Donlan White Slave Act stated that a man who lived off the earnings of a “fallen woman” was guilty of a felony and if convicted could serve from one to twenty years in prison.

During coverage of the closing of Butte’s red-light district, The Anaconda Standard reported that Mayor Nevin’s municipal order was an example of anti-white slavery legislation at work. “The Donlan white slave bill, which recently passed the state legislature and became a state law, is responsible for the hurried exit of many of the type of men classed as secretaries by the police.” The reference to white slavery in newspaper accounts of the 1911 closure provides a connection between the regulation of Butte’s red light district and the national prostitution reformation movement. For Progressive Era reformers, the eradication model was the only method of regulating prostitution in the United States.

The writing surrounding the white slavery scare allows access to the moral rhetoric used by Progressive Era reformers. While much of the writing boarders on the sensational, the book The Great

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59 The Anaconda Standard, January 31, 1911. Exodus of Butte Eyesore Begins. “Secretaries” is a euphemism for pimps. The term seems to be specific only to Butte.
War on White Slavery or Fighting for the Protection of Our Girls (1911) written by Clifford G. Roe serves as an example of just how great the condemnation of and concern over prostitution became during the turn of the century. Roe begins his book by writing:

To protect the purity and sanctity of the home, to open the doors of forgiveness to the prodigal daughter, as well as the prodigal son, to warn womanhood against the snares of girl slave traders and to raise clean, honest manhood to the golden pinnacle of youth’s ambition is the reason that facts are here set forth often times unvarnished, ungilded and unpainted . . . There is just one way to solve the social evil problem, and that is the way of education . . . YOU may think that is educational campaign for better manhood and womanhood does not concern YOU, but it does, and that very closely. There is not a life that this social evil does not menace. There is not a daughter, or sister, who may not be in danger.”  

Roe focuses on the “purity and sanctity of the home” as the reason for educating the public about prostitution. He also implies that warning society against the “social evil” is the only way to raise decent men and protect “daughters” and “sisters” from ruin.

The Angell, Venus, and Smith petitions use similar concepts and language. Angell calls the city to action to make “the center of our City may be made clean and pure, for our wives and daughters, and younger generation of boys and men.”  

Venus opposed the new location of the district because prostitutes cause a detrimental effect on “innocent children and noble women.”  

Smith’s petition asks the city council to act “with the humane knowledge of the frailties of our human-kind and not with crushing force against the helpless and the outcast, the weak and erring” reminding the city council and Butte’s citizens that prostitutes are deserving of forgiveness.  

Drawing parallels between legislation and rhetoric used by Progressive Era reformists and the participants in the 1911 closure of Butte’s red light district allows researchers to examine how and why the eradication model of prostitution came into being. Eradication became the national standard for regulating red-light districts and prostitution in the United States and continues to be enforced today.

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60 Roe, The Great, Preface.
61 Angell, Petition, 1910.
62 Venus, Petition, 1911.
63 Smith, Petition, 1911.
However, the failure of the eradication model of regulation in Butte was, in many ways, a forgone conclusion. Butte’s citizens held strongly to their mining culture traditions including the belief that the red light district served a necessary social purpose for the miners and their deeply rooted ideas about traditional gender roles. The Smith petition provided the best example of citizen’s attitudes toward these traditions by stating that, although deplorable, the red light district and prostitution were necessary for the protection of the women and children of Butte. Further, the call to “leave well enough alone” supports the current model of regulation which the signers of the Smith petition felt worked because it isolated the prostitutes to one location that was easily accessible to Butte’s police force. Additionally, the Smith petition acknowledges that in the current location “none go near save those that seek,” implying the solicitation of sex occurred where it was meant to occur and that was inside of a policed red light district.

Maybe the most important reason for the failure of the eradication model of regulation was an economic one. Baumler writes that, “Nothing directly links the red light district to the ACM, but prostitution and other forms of vice, like everything else, ultimately served the company.” 64 While there may not be a “direct link” to the ACM, historical records support economic connections between “the Company,” prominent Montana business men, and Butte’s red light district.

On February 15, 1911, another petition requesting the reopening of the restricted district was filed by C.J. Kelly directly after the Smith petition. This petition, referred to in this paper as the Kelly petition, contained fewer signatures than Smith’s petition but the signature of John G. Morony, Banker on the second page provides a direct connection between the reopening of the district to Marcus Daly, owner of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company. 65 John G. Morony served with Marcus Daly as a director of the Daly Bank and Trust Company. 66 The Kelly petition also contains the names of John Mac Ginnis, who

64 Baumler, Devil’s, 6
65 C.J. Kelly, Petition 2540 of C.J. Kelly et al. re: Reopening of Restricted District (Butte: Office of the City Clerk City of Butte), February 15, 1911.
was the vice president and director of Silver Bow National Bank and president of United Copper Company and H. Mason Raborg, who was the president of Montana State Savings Bank and head of the Farmers and Drovers Company, which was worth an estimated $5,000,000 in 1913. 67 The inclusion of these banker’s signatures on the petition requesting the reinstatement of the red light district implies an economic connection between the banks, the ACM, and prostitution in Butte important enough for these prominent Montana business men to publically acknowledge their position against closing Butte’s red light district in 1911.

Additional information gleaned from real estate documents can further illuminate the close connections between prostitution and local businesses in Butte. As discussed previously, Braumler’s research addresses the economic opportunities Butte’s red light district posed for some of Montana’s most prominent citizens. Although Braumler reports that the cribs build by Anton Holter were sold to Lee Mantle in 1900, information gained from researching alternate sources, specifically newspapers, real property records, and 1910 U.S. Census records suggests a later connection between a real property owner in Butte’s red light district and the influential Holter family of Helena. 68

The January 31, 1911 edition of The Anaconda Standard lists the real property owners of the red light district in Butte. Among those owners is G. R. Wood, who owned Lots 6, 7, 8, and 9 in the Copper King block, which included the Copper King cribs and the alley south of Galena Street known as Pleasant Alley. 69 A review of real property records in Silver Bow County indicates that N.B. Holter, aka Norman B. Holter, deeded these parcels to Mr. Wood. Norman B. Holter, the son of Anton Holter, was president of the Holter Company, which was formed to manage the Holter family’s property investments. Norman B. Holter was also the vice president of the A.M. Holter Hardware Company in Helena, Montana. Both


68 Baumler, Devil’s, 8.
69 The Anaconda Standard, “Exodus,” January 31, 1911
companies were sub corporations of the wealthy and prominent Holter family who had made their multi-

million-dollar fortune logging in the Montana Territory. Further review of the 1910 census lists the

occupation of G.R. Wood (also known as George R. Wood) as “collector” for the Holter Company in

Helena. Because of the close connection between Wood and the Holter family, it appears that the

prominent Holter family didn’t completely sever its business ties with prostitution in Butte. The sale of

the property in Butte’s red light district to Wood served to publically distance the Holter’s from their

financial association with prostitution. However, despite removing themselves from public land

ownership records, the Holter family likely continued their economic involvement in the red light district

through Wood owing to the fact that prostitution in Butte was good business.

The January 25, 1911 morning edition of The Anaconda Standard also reported that the bankers

and real estate owners of Butte were involved in the 1911 closure when it printed the following quote

from Mayor Nevin regarding the removal of the red light district. “I am so sick and tired of being drawn

into such controversies, so I am going to close the present district up . . . For the past two weeks I have

been unable to attend to many important matters just because real estate men, secretaries, and even a

banker or two have been hounding me to let the matter drop.” Mayor Nevin did indeed let the matter

drop when moved to assign the petition to a special committee and no further action was taken regarding

Butte’s red light district in 1911.

Conclusion

According to Ruth Rosen, studying prostitution’s role in society “can function as a kind of

microscopic lens through which we gain a detailed magnification of a society’s organization of class and

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70 Tom Stout. *Montana, Its Story and Biography: A History of Aboriginal and Territorial Montana and Three

Decades of Statehood.* (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1921), 517-519.

71 Montana. Lewis and Clark County. Helena. 1910 U.S. Census, District 0158, Sheet No. 1B, Line 68, National

Archives and Records Administration. Washington, D.C.
gender.” Similarly, the study of the regulation of prostitution can also provide insight into the establishment of the economic structure of mining towns in the American West. Participation in red light districts provided economic options for women who suffered in poverty in the West because they were largely excluded from working in industrialized jobs. In mining cultures, red light districts provided social outlets for miners and also benefited their employers. The regulation of prostitution in the United States started because municipalities needed to finance their administrations and police forces. Prostitution is woven into the economic structure of emerging industrialized mining towns.

Butte, in particular, stands out in terms of researching how the regulation of prostitution worked to support the economic structure of a mining town in the American West because it offered a different response to Progressive Era regulation of red light districts during the early twentieth century. While there was an attempt to implement the eradication model of regulation sweeping the rest of the nation, Butte rejected this model in favor of tolerating prostitutions involvement in its mining culture and economic structure. Examining the social and economic reasons for Butte’s alternative model of regulation changes our understanding of the history of regulating prostitution in the American West. Instead of dismissing the role of prostitution in the West’s history, Butte’s pragmatic tolerance model of regulation respects the economic and social roles of prostitutes and the red light districts they occupied in the mining towns of the American West.

73 Rosen, *Sisterhood*, xii.
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