SACRIFICING OUR DAUGHTERS: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF PROSTITUTION IN IOWA, 1880-1915

Hope Mitchell
Outline

- Research Process
  - Historiography
  - Finding Sources
- Writing Process
- My Findings
- Graduate School
Historiography of Prostitution

- 1970: Society > Prostitution
  - The Maimie Papers
- 1980-1990: Prostitution > Society
  - Prostitution empires
- 2000: Differing points of view
  - Historical archaeology
  - Class theories
## Historiography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>East</th>
<th>West</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Urban prostitution</td>
<td>- Abundance of literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Religious driven reform</td>
<td>- Development of prostitution empires</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Little emphasis on developing life skills</td>
<td>- Rise and fall of boom towns</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Ex: Mamie Pinzer</td>
<td>- Ex: Julia Bulette</td>
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Prostitution in the Midwest?

- Located between East and West
- Limited Historiography
- Why?
  - Perceptions of Midwest
  - Lack of attention to Midwestern History
Where to begin?

- State Historical Society
- Door of Hope
  - Des Moines based reform society
  - Detailed annual reports
Brick Wall

- Dead end with Door of Hope
  - Track down descendants?
- Newspapers
  - Very time consuming
- Asylum Records
  - Lack of detail
- Court Records
  - Petition a judge?!
Eureka!

- Governor’s Papers
- Lacking women’s prison
- Dual Perspective
  - Testimonies of women
  - Correspondences of prosecutors
July 6\textsuperscript{th}, 2013

- State Historical Society
- John Zeller
- District Court Records
- Newspaper Articles
The Hard Part

- Sifting through sources
- Transcribing everything
  - Zotero
- What do you have?
- What does it mean?
Use of Narrative

- Seminar on Narrative
- Descriptive take on actual events
- Creative solution to brain lock
- Gives a voice to your sources
Setting up the Historiography

- Perceptions of prostitution
  - 1860’s: animalistic, chaotic, “nymphs”
  - 1870’s: pathetic, drug addicted, beyond saving

- Increased industrialism
  - Trains
  - Factories

- Increased freedom for women
  - Opportunities for life off the farm
Shift in Blame

- Previously, women were to blame
- Husbands
- Landlords
- Irredeemable Women
Role of the Media

- Newspapers
  - White Slavery
  - Melodramatic
  - Warnings to parents
- Increase in public awareness (aka fear)
- Fuel the fire to action
Legal Reform Efforts

- Parole before commitment
- Undo negative upbringing
- Remove women from negative environment
- Mixed results
  - Alice McCarl
  - Anna Lind
Social Reform Efforts

- Traditionally...
  - Emphasis on spiritual reform

- Door of Hope
  - 1893-1906
  - Family environment
  - Education
  - Rural placement
Door of Hope

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Just a Few of Our Babies.

open for me and that was the bad. I became a street-walker and finally a ballahoo, and traveled around with a show as a Kootche Kootche dancer, taking in the street fair, etc. Finally I landed in Sioux City in a house of ill-fame, and there...
Door of Hope

An example of the fliers that reformers at the Mission would have handed out to fallen men and women in the White Chapel neighborhood of Des Moines.

Get on the Right Road

Are You Discouraged?  
Have You no Friends to Help You?  
Are You in a Tight Place?  
Do You want to be Happy?

God is your friend. He helps everybody out of tight places, saves their souls, and gives them peace, friends and work if they trust and serve Him.

Sunbeam Rescue Mission

Is open every night to help people on the “Right Road” and saved people to keep on the “Good Road”

Take the road to Walnut Street, keep out of the saloons and strike for No. 212—it’s on the alley. They will give you further directions about the “ROAD” which leads to eternal life.
Door of Hope

An image, taken from the 11th Annual Report, which shows a photo of the building that housed the Mission.

The Sunbeam Mission’s Gospel Wagon, which would have been used to patrol White Chapel.
Reflections on Prostitution

- 1908: Prostitutes gone
- Prohibition: 1920-1933
- Great Depression
  - Destruction of White Chapel
Importance of this history

- Better understanding of society
  - Prostitutes as a lens
  - At the mercy of society
- Better understanding of Midwestern history
  - “We didn’t have those here…”
  - Strength of cultural values
Grad School

- Re-learn how to read
  - Not about every single detail
- Reading Schedule (front load)
  - Get as much done as early as you can
- Rough Drafts
  - Take advantage of any extra aid
- Pick something you love