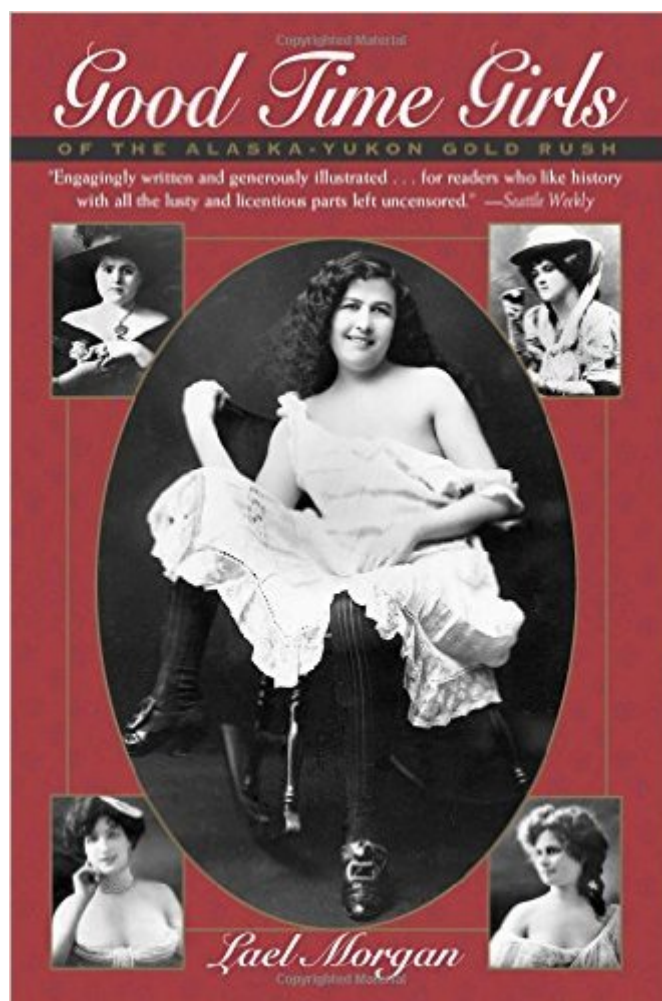


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Good Time Girls Of The Alaska-Yukon Gold Rush: Secret History Of The Far North



Synopsis

In the boomtowns of the Alaska-Yukon stampedes, where gold dust was common currency, the rarest commodity was an attractive woman, and her company could be costly. Author Lael Morgan takes you into the heart of the gold rush demimonde, that "half world" of prostitutes, dance hall girls, and entertainers who lived on the outskirts of polite society. Meet "'Dutch Kate'" Wilson, who pioneered many areas long before the "respectable" women who received credit for getting there first... ruthless heartbreakers Cad Wilson and Rose Blumkin... "'French'" Marie Larose, who auctioned herself off as a wife to the highest bidder ... Georgia Lee, who invested her earnings wisely and became one of the richest women in the North... and Edith Neile, called "the Oregon Mare," famous for both her outlandish behavior and her softhearted generosity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lael Morgan does a great job of piecing together old newspaper articles and photos to recreate the lives of these adventurous pioneers. The stories from Dawson are especially detailed (due to the resources) and give you the feeling that you know what it was like to live and work in Dawson during the gold rush. Knowing that the characters in the book were real make the stories that much more compelling.

I bought this book at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks bookstore. My dad, Class of '51 at UAF (we were there for his 50th reunion), had told me some stories about "The Line" and he had had his first job with the gold mining operations, so I was curious. There's not a lot of gory detail here. It's about

people and places, but it's quite a colorful history. Though never officially legal, prostitution was tolerated and it flourished in Alaska for more than 50 years. And some very famous characters pop up, like Wyatt Earp and the "Birdman of Alcatraz". Definitely worth the time.

My grampa bought this book in Sitka, Alaska at Old Harbor Books one summer while we were fishing, and it stayed on the boat until it sank. So I bought another one! Kinda disjointed, short stories about some memorable ladies of the Yukon, but all in all, very entertaining. The title of "Diamond Lil" Davenport has been passed down to grampa's youngest grandchild, Lillia.

This is not the type of book I typically read. But while in Skagway on a second cruise to Alaska this summer, I skimmed this book in a bookstore but did not purchase it there. I continued to think about it, so I ordered it from Amazon.com. I am not studying anthropology nor am I an avid reader of books related to historical things, so this was a "one of a kind" read for me; and an interesting one at that.

However, I agree with another reviewer that the book, while well researched, was not well organized. Except for a few chapters devoted to specific women, there was considerable lack of organization and I especially found chronology confusing. But, in addition to stories about the women in the trade, it has enlightening segments about men everyone has heard of - Al Cody and Wyatt Earp - who spent some time in Alaska. I even learned about the "Birdman of Alcatraz".

Interesting comparisons are made of the various gold rush "camps", the extent to which the "good time girls" were accepted in these camps and what happened to some of these women later in life. Other than an occasional mention about the two common STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) of that era, not much is mentioned about the other health-related issues the women faced other than tuberculosis, pneumonia or plagues. For example, I don't recall any mention of pregnancies and struggles with raising children while in the trade; perhaps there was no information available on these issues.

The Alaska-Yukon Gold Rush, a time at the turn of the century, when the gold camps were booming and the dust flowed like wine. Leaving behind law and many of the constraints of the Post-Victorian era, men and women went north to find adventure and wealth. Most found death among the cold frozen mountains and rivers but a few survived to find money, power and, sometimes, even love. The women found it easier to mine the miners than to mine the mines. Women couldn't work claims in most cases and most of the normal jobs didn't pay well. If a woman wanted the wealth and adventure she was searching for she ended up becoming a Good Time Girl. Men outnumbered

women ten to one and were always willing to pay for the company. Dance hall girls and prostitutes were among the pioneers who opened the new regions, became rich entrepreneurs and powerful women who, in some cases, changed the towns for the better. But their history cannot be written in a vacuum. As many of them left behind no written records we have to use police logs, old photos and stories left behind by the more respectable women and men of the cities. The book deals with the conditions and events that made the Far North so much different from the lower forty-eight states where many of the women came from. Why did the cities, in many cases, allow a red light district? Why did they give them police protection? How did the women influence the towns and change the very future of the frontier? Why did so many women turn to be Good Time Girls? With tons of humor, happy endings and sad ones, the chapters within this book give a detailed look at the history of the independent women who faced hardships, lost fortunes and the dangers of a wild land to find a future.

How fun to "meet" these clever, intrepid women of the fabulous Alaska Gold Rush - not surprising that many later became the very backbone of early Alaska society. Great photos and a way cool history of Alaska lesson.

Finished this vacation read today. A feminist voice of history of the women and their influence and roles...often powerful both in politics, finance, business, property owning, and society during the late 19th century and early 20th c Alaska Yukon goldrush. There is tragedy, drama, romance and even some comedy, but with the truth at the core of the power afforded women in the early years of U.S. occupation and territory of Alaska...of all cultures and races...is no where paralleled in the rest of the United States or northern neighbor Canada during this same period of time. A wonderful souvenir from Juneau. Dawn Ham-Kucharski

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