



# **Boomtown Saloons: Archaeology And History In Virginia City (Shepperson Series in Nevada History)**

*Kelly J. Dixon*

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"Boomtown Saloons" was heralded upon its publication as a groundbreaking book on the historical archaeology of the Old West. Its account of the excavation and analysis of four nineteenth-century Virginia City, Nevada, saloon sites offers a provocative new interpretation of the role of saloons in a mining boomtown. Dixon, who participated in the excavation projects, discusses the meticulous work of the modern archaeologist and the technologies involved in analyzing evidence, and what these discoveries tell us about Virginia City's people and their social habits. Contrary to the image, perpetuated by films and legend, of Old West saloons as sites of violence and raucous entertainment, these establishments, including one owned by an African American businessman that offered some of the finest meals in the city, provided patrons a place to relax and dine with friends, participate in gambling and other amusements, and find a refuge from the anonymity and isolation that often afflicts a transient population. Available now in paperback, "Boomtown Saloons's" sparkling text and thoughtful interpretation of both physical and documentary evidence reveal an unknown aspect of the life and culture of one of the Old West's most storied cities. Dixon persuasively demonstrates that the traditional western saloon had a far more socially and ethnically diverse clientele than previously believed, and that it served a vital, complex social and economic role in its community.

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