



Alcohol and Opium in the Old West: Use, Abuse and Influence

Jeremy Agnew

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This book explores the role and influence of drink and drugs (primarily opium) in the Old West, which for this book is considered to be America west of the Mississippi from the California gold rush of the 1840s to the closing of the Western Frontier in roughly 1900. This period was the first time in American history that heavy drinking and drug abuse became a major social concern.

Drinking was considered to be an accepted pursuit for men at the time. Smoking opium was considered to be deviant and associated with groups on the fringes of mainstream society, but opium use and addiction by women was commonplace. This book presents the background of both substances and how their use spread across the West, at first for medicinal purposes--but how overuse and abuse led to the Temperance Movement and eventually to National Prohibition. This book reports the historical reality of alcohol and opium use in the Old West without bias.

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