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Victor Lowell Thomas Museum Hosts Book Signing for Local Author

The shady side of history has been the focus of research for Victor author Jan MacKell Collins. Collins has just published a third book on the subject of red light districts in the West. The books put a human face on the hidden histories of prostitutes and the shady side of mining camps.

Collins's latest book, *Wild Women of Prescott, Arizona*, tells the stories of shady ladies in the uncivilized territory of Arizona. Prostitution was a wide spread business in the West and often, as Collins found out in researching her latest book, some of the same paths crossed over into more than one camp. One such case was Lida Winchell, whose real name was Eliza Jane Crumley. Cripple Creek District historians will recognize the last name from the story about the shooting of mining mogul Sam Strong in the Newport Saloon on Bennett Avenue. As Collins found out, Lida is the niece of Grant Crumley who shot Strong in a gambling argument in 1901.

Both Victor and Cripple Creek had active Red Light Districts in the gold rush days and Collins has captured several of the true stories of those who conducted business in the brothels and cribs.

Collins will be at the Victor Lowell Thomas Museum Saturday, Sept. 5 from 3 to 6 p.m. to sign her new book and others she has written, including *Red Light Women of the Rocky Mountains, Brothels, Bordellos & Bad Girls*, and *Cripple Creek District: Last of Colorado's Gold Booms*. A limited number of books will be available for signing.

The public is invited to meet Collins at the museum and learn more about the stories of the past. The event is free and will be held in the museum gift shop.

Collins writes about prostitution history and other interesting aspects of the West. She is formerly the director of the Cripple Creek District Museum and the Old Homestead Parlor House Museum in Cripple Creek. She has also had the pleasure of working for Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott, AZ and is a former board member of the High Desert Heritage Museum in Cordes Junction, AZ. In addition, Collins has written over 2,000 western history articles for magazines in Colorado, Montana and Arizona, including *True West* magazine. In 2010 she was nominated for Women Writing the West's WILLA

award for her 2009 book, *Red Light Women of the Rocky Mountains*; also, she was a co-nominee in 2011 for the 2010 anthology *Extraordinary Women of the Rocky Mountain West*. In addition to her writing, Collins has given over 40 programs on the subject of prostitution and western history, and has been featured on Rocky Mountain PBS.

For more information, call 719-689-5509. For more information on Collins, visit <http://janmackellcollins.wix.com/janmackellcollins>.