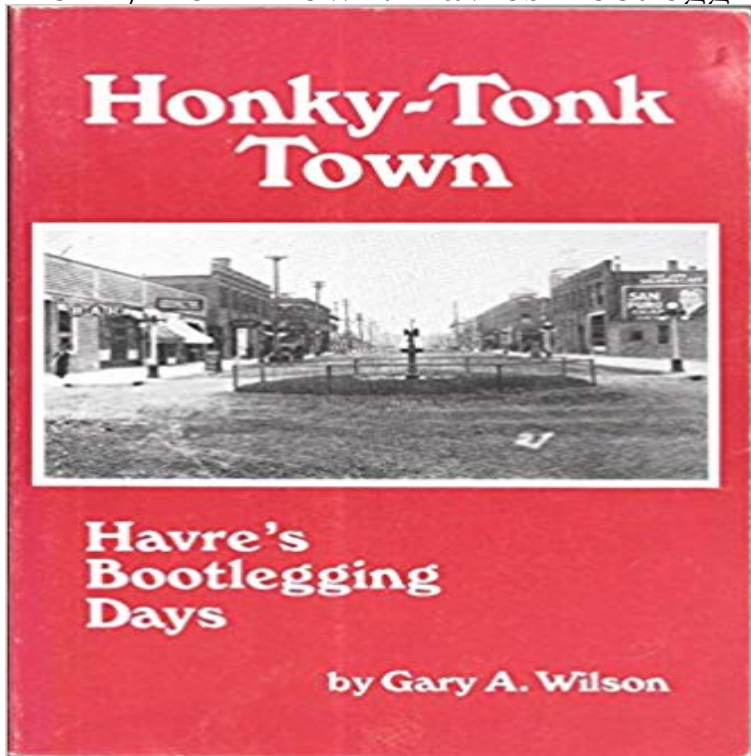


Honky Tonk Town: Havres Bootlegging Days



From its beginnings as Bull Hook railroad siding in 1887, Havre, Montana was a tough, wide-open town with plenty of saloons, gambling halls, opium dens, brothels and cheap cribs. With the passage of Prohibition, it was a natural hub for smuggling with the Canadian border nearby. Federal officers declared that the town - backed by some corrupt local officers - was the gateway for a vast stream of alcohol that flowed into Montana, and that it was the headquarters of as bold an organization of bootleggers as could be found in the U.S. During that era of depression, drought and violence, C.W. Shorty Young, a successful businessman and philanthropist, stood out as the leader of the organized crime element. His Montana Hotel-known as the Honky-Tonk-catered to all mans carnal desired, gaining notoriety throughout Montana and northern states between Seattle and St. Paul. But the reform clock was moving. The influx of eastern farm families and merchants, joined by a minority of townspeople, demanded that the lawlessness associated with the excesses of drinking, gambling and prostitution be stopped. This new morality, which was sweeping the nation, eventually brought an end to the vice district and the loss of prestige of its leaders. The author lives in Havre and has been researching the history of Northern Montana since 1978 and has written about that history for various Montana publications.

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