

Sanitary ate.” it was a
symbol of



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Sanitary conditions in the West were practically non-existent. In the cities, horse manure covered the streets. Housewives emptied garbage, dishwater, and chamber pots into the middle of the city streets where free-roaming pigs devoured the waste. The pigs left their urine and feces on the streets. It was not easy to wash clothes. Many people had clothes splattered with manure, mud, sweat, and tobacco juice. Privies, or necessary houses were often too close to the homes with a very noticeable odor on hot and/or windy days. If a family had a kitchen, all the members washed at the sink each day, without soap, rubbing the dirt off with a coarse towel.

Eventually, many cold bedrooms had a basin, ewer (pitcher), cup, and cupboard chamber pot. Bed bugs and fleas covered many of the travelers' beds. “ Isaac Weld saw filthy beds swarming with bugs.” These insects followed the travelers, crawling on their clothes and skin.

Alcohol consumption was at an all time high at the late 1820s. “ Elbridge Boyden, architect and builder, said that alcohol was used as commonly as the food we ate.” It was a symbol of hospitality and fellowship. Drinking and fighting (a knock-down) went together. The violent fights involved “ gouging,” in which a person loses an eye. Early America was sexually active. One third of the brides were pregnant on their wedding day. Sexual relations were a part of courtship.

“ Bundling was the custom that allowed couples to sleep on the same bed without undressing.” “ Erastus Worthington, a local historian, noticed the custom in 1828, of females admitting young men to their beds, who sought

their company in marriage." In large cities, prostitution became more common and was priced according to location.

Tobacco usage was wide spread because it was cheap, homegrown, and duty free. Short, thick, clay pipes were used, although snuff and powdered tobacco were inhaled. Longer and slimmer stems on pipes appeared. Cigars or " segars" from the Caribbean were smoked to show off.

These cost three cents each. The most disgusting habits were chewing and spitting. Spittoons were provided, but mostly ignored.

The floors of public buildings and courthouses were " decorated by a mass of abomination." Yes, the West was wild, but also dirty and disgusting.

Everything you need to know about american history: Page 60 - 35