Saloons: Eat, Drink, and be Civil

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Through Hollywood and dime novels the old west saloons have achieved a mythic status. Saloons are almost always shown as exciting places full of gambling, prostitution and violence. A place where a person was just as likely to get shot as they were to get a drink. There is a grain of truth to every myth. The myth of saloons in no exception. With the utilization of newspapers County Commissioner minutes, and other primary sources from 1865 through 1881 I will examine violence and services within saloons, in order to create a better picture of the true role of drinking establishments at that time. One of the biggest myths around saloons involves the frequency of violence. While there is a significant amount of articles in newspapers regarding violence, shootings, and robberies at saloons it is nowhere near what is frequently portrayed in movies. Variety and services help to illustrate a more complete picture of the old saloon. Because of the great number of different types of saloons, with foods from different cultures each one was a gathering place for different socio-economic groups. The reality of old west saloons is a key place of culture within the community.