INTRODUCTION

A Trip Along the Pike's Peak Express

Cross-Dressers and America's Frontier Past

In the mid-nineteenth century, the *New York Tribune*'s Horace Greeley exhorted young American men bereft of family and friends to go West to build their homes and make their fortunes.[1] In 1859 the journalist traveled to the region to observe the fruits of his advice. He did not necessarily find there what he had hoped. On the Great Plains en route to the Rocky Mountains, for example, he learned that hundreds of prospectors had recently gone bust at the Colorado gold-diggings, deserted the region in droves, and consequently faced unemployment and other sufferings. Greeley reported his encounter with only one such individual, a young clerk with whom he had supped at Station 9 of the Pike's Peak Express and who, "having frozen his feet on the winter journey out, had had enough of gold-hunting, and was going home to his parents in Indiana." The morning following Greeley's repast with the clerk, and only after they had departed in opposite directions, the New Yorker learned something astonishing about his new acquaintance: "I was apprised by our conductor," exclaimed Greeley, "that said clerk was a woman!"[2]

Horace Greeley's clerk and other people like him are my subjects in *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past*. I focus on the era 1850 to 1920—roughly from the heyday of the California gold rush to just after the last of the western (continental) territories became states in the union. I have two principal goals. One is to *re-dress* America's frontier past—recovering its cross-dressers and exploring what their transgressive sexual and gender identities meant to their societies and communities. In doing so, I reveal that cross-dressers were not simply ubiquitous, but were very much a part of daily life on the

frontier and in the West. I suspect that readers will be as amazed as I was with the number and variety of cross-dressers who found a home on the proverbial range—as astonished perhaps as Horace Greeley *claimed* to be when he encountered the gender-changing clerk in 1859 along the Pike's Peak Express. In fact, my surprise led me to a self-reflexive project that metamorphosed into the second goal of my study: how and why did such a large group of people so visible and so much a part of daily life in the nineteenth-century West become so forgotten that their rediscovery was such an unexpected thing?

I was prompted to this question during the early phase of my research when a high-profile public event occurred that starkly exposed the relationship between the American West and transgressive sexual and gender activities. That event was the Hollywood release of the full-length motion picture *Brokeback Mountain*, based on Annie Proulx's short story by the same title, in the late fall of 2005.[3] The film depicts a love and sex affair between two Wyoming cowboys (they are really sheepherders but are popularly identified as cowboys) during the second half of the twentieth century. The film sparked something of a national debate: everyone from late-night Hollywood talk show hosts to *New York Times* reporters sought answers to the question—some through what passed as humor and others needing "investigative" journalism—as to whether there really was such a thing as a gay cowboy.[4]

And why not? Generations of these Americans had grown up on Hollywood's hyper-masculine and hyper-heterosexual western actors and characters—actors such as Tom Mix, Gary Cooper, John Wayne, Alan Ladd, Glenn Ford, Kirk Douglas, Paul Newman, Clint Eastwood, Charles Bronson, and Chuck Connors, to name but a few; and characters such as Jesse James, George Custer, Daniel Boone, Buffalo Bill, Davy Crockett, "Wild Bill" Hickok, Butch Cassidy, Wyatt Earp, and a string of entirely fictional lawmen, gunslingers, and especially cowboys. They had also been imbued with Madison Avenue images of the Marlboro Man and the pulp heroes of Zane Grey and Louis L'Amour novels. Through these fictional and real-life characters and people, popular cultural outlets had long shaped the American imagination about the masculine, heterosexual West. After years of such fare, popular audiences who considered *Brokeback Mountain* simply found it incongruous and therefore uproariously laughable that homosexuality could exist within what was popularly understood to be the classic West—not just as a place, but as a culture represented by the iconic cowboy.

And yet fully two generations before *Brokeback Mountain*, Alfred Kinsey found and reported in his eyebrow-raising *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* that the highest frequencies of homosexuality in America that he uncovered were in fact in rural communities in the most remote parts of the country, particularly in the West. Ranchmen, cattle men, prospectors, lumbermen, and farmers—the most virile and physically active groups of men—Kinsey found, commonly engaged in same-sex sexual activities, probably, Kinsey further remarked, much like their pioneer forebears had. "This type of rural homosexuality," Kinsey concluded, "contradicts the theory that homosexuality in itself is an urban product."[5]

The sexual reality of the American West that Kinsey uncovered and made publicly known in the 1940s differs considerably from popular understandings and memories about sexuality and gender in the Old West and on the frontier. My second goal, then, is to explain how and why this is so. In *redressing* America's frontier past, I posit that the roots of the answer can be found before Hollywood stepped into the fray and, more precisely, in the history of cross-dressing. Cross-dressers linked two monumental events that occurred at the tail end of the nineteenth century. One was the so-called closing of the frontier. The other was the development of our modern gender and sexual system—that is, the creation of the categories of homosexual and heterosexual, the division of people into these categories, and the identification of cross-dressing with the former. At the intersection of these two events at the turn of the twentieth century, cross-dressers crossed from one to the other: from the frontier to modern homosexuality. In doing so, they left behind them a wholly heterosexualized and unambiguously gendered American West. It is worth outlining these events here.

After all the facts and figures were in from the 1890 U.S. federal census, the superintendent of that enterprise declared that population growth and redistribution made it impossible for him to trace, as he had in previous years, an unbroken frontier line from north to south across the western portion of the continent. This signaled to him that the American frontier had vanished.[6] Later historians have shown time and again that the superintendent's 1890 definition of what constitutes the frontier was entirely arbitrary (he had defined it as a line marking off an area where population density dropped below two people per square mile). The same historians have further demonstrated that the frontier of late nineteenth-century popular imagination was nothing more than the product of popular imagining. Still,

what happened in 1890 and the years surrounding that date was very real and meant a great deal to a large and influential sector of the American populace. By 1890 Americans were grappling with all sorts of troubling issues that seemed to be products of the same forces that caused the imagined frontier to disappear: rapid urbanization, industrialization, the rise of impersonal corporations, terrible economic depression, the depletion of natural resources, and any number of social problems and worries, such as women's growing independence, mass immigration of peoples of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, frightening labor unrest, and the spread of extreme squalor in the shadow of growing fortunes of unprecedented vastness.

Reeling from and trying to make sense of all this, many Americans looked into their own past—their so-called frontier past—for solace, escapism, and in some cases examples of alternative ways of living that might be useful in the modern era. Some did these things through purchasing, reading, and thus fueling the mass market for western dime novels and other regional literature that sensationalized frontier life. Others did so through attending any number of the era's live shows that depicted the wildness of the West and that sported bison herds, real live Indians and cowboys, shooting demonstrations, and even reenactments of Custer's Last Stand. Yet others found escapism and celebration of the nation's western past through viewing and patronizing the growing number of artists who filled galleries and museums with paintings and sculptures depicting monumental western landscapes and romanticized versions of western life. And a host of Americans began traveling to the West to experience what they felt were the last vestiges of its wildness, woolliness, and pristine environmental conditions, elements of the frontier that were just then receding into memory. Such responses show that however real or imaginary it was, the frontier epoch could be identified and separated from the dawn of the twentieth century—that is, from the modern era that had only just commenced and was defined by its complexities, changes, uncertainties, and hard realities.

At the very moment when Americans memorialized the frontier, social understandings of gender and sexuality were undergoing profound alteration, so much so that by the last years of the 1800s there emerged what historians have termed the "modern" sexual and gender system. Prior to the nineteenth century, the western world held to what is known as the one-sex model, as the historian Thomas Laqueur has ably demonstrated.[7] Accordingly, males and females were viewed as just different forms of the same sex.

They had, it was believed, the same sex organs; only the addition of a certain measure of heat turned them to the exterior of the body, forming a male, while sex organs that remained inside denoted the body of a woman. Significant alterations in knowledge systems as related to political developments led to the two-sex model replacing the one-sex model by the year 1800. The two-sex model maintained that the sexes were not different in degree, but rather they were so different as to be complete opposites. This set up in our "modern" thinking the notion of a binary sex system—that is, a system composed of two distinctly different sexes.

Corresponding to the binary two-sex system was the binary two-gender system. It held that feminine behaviors, actions, and feelings reside in the female body. Masculine behaviors, actions, and feelings reside in the male body. That is, gender (how one acts, the tasks one performs, how one carries and comports oneself, how one dresses, and even the feelings one is supposed to have) corresponds to biology. Among the feelings one has, of course, are sexual desires. Under the two-sex/two-gender system, a male-bodied person would have sexual desires for a woman. A female-bodied person would have sexual desires for a man (if she had any sexual desires at all—there was something of a debate about this at various times in the nineteenth century).[8] Under the two-sex model, then, body, gender, and sexual desire should all conform to each other. And that, moreover, is how nature determined it.

But what about people with female bodies who acted and behaved in masculine ways and people with male bodies who acted and behaved in feminine ways, especially, for example, in the clothing they chose to wear? The numbers of such people seemed only to be increasing in the latter years of the nineteenth century. The broader western world came to believe that these people's gender had become reversed or inverted from their physical sex. Such reversal was also believed to be manifest in sexual desire: the sexually inverted female (a manly woman) and the sexually inverted male (an effeminate man), it was thought, would have sexual desires for, respectively, a feminine woman and a masculine man. Accordingly, medical science developed the term "sex invert" to refer to such people and used it interchangeably with "homosexual," a term likewise coined in the latter part of the 1800s. "Sex invert/homosexual" as a term and concept evolved in direct contrast to "heterosexual."[9] By the end of the nineteenth century, therefore, not only did we have a binary sex and a binary gender system, but we also had a binary sexuality system composed of homosexuality and heterosexuality.

Homosexuals/sexual inverts were understood to be neither normal nor natural—some sort of physical, psychological, or neurological disease or disorder or personal vice must have interfered with nature to cause such a monstrous problem. As I explain in detail in Part II of this book, medical theory of the day at times went beyond individual malady to link the etiology of homosexuality to general social decay, degeneration, and the stresses and strains of modern living. Thus, homosexuality was understood as an unfortunate by-product of modernization. As such, it seemed that it could be neither associated with nor found on the early frontier, an era and place conceived of as unimpaired by all the troubles of the modern period.

So what, then, to do about all the people in America's recent frontier and western past and even present who did cross-dress and thus in doing so raised questions about transgressive sexual and gender identities understood as modern? In Part II of this book I demonstrate that through broad social projects some of these cross-dressers were re-imagined as heterosexuals, their legacies transformed. In Chapter 3 I explain that this was what principally happened in the case of female-to-male cross-dressers. I argue that myths developed in response to the closing of the frontier were embedded with powerful ideas about gender, tropes informed by the knowledge that the West and the frontier had been primarily male places. They held that a woman in the West might only have made it on her own had she disguised herself as a man. Once the frontier had closed, this myth easily made it possible to return western cross-dressing women (who might otherwise now raise concerns about sex and sexuality) to "normal" womanhood—that is, to heterosexuality and to appropriate gender behaviors. Americans undertook this project in part through inventing in the popular press and in dime novels fictionalized and idealized sexual and gender biographies for past and present female-to-male cross-dressers of the frontier and West.[10]

Male-to-female cross-dressers' effeminacy and sexuality ran diametrically counter to what the frontier and the American West symbolized already at the end of the nineteenth century. Thus, they represented a more serious problem. The western gender myths that could contain, explain, and rehabilitate female-to-male cross-dressers could not do the same in the case of male-to-females. The latter could be dealt with only through their exclusion from the frontier and the Old West. In Chapter 4 I explain that the public imagination by the end of the nineteenth century came to associate male-to-female cross-dressing and male effeminacy more generally with

nonwhite/non-Anglo races. Accomplishing this stripped the male-to-female cross-dresser from America's frontier history along with its Asians, Mexicans, Indians, and other nonwhite/non-Anglo peoples. This rendered America's frontier past not only a white place and time, but a heterosexual one as well.

The turn-of-the-twentieth-century popular projects that heterosexualized some western cross-dressers and eliminated others from the frontier also had their scholarly counterpart—particularly at the intersection of the discipline of history and the science of sex, a topic that I focus on in Chapter 5. When Americans at the end of the nineteenth century romanticized their frontier past, professional historians also got into the act. In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner, a University of Wisconsin professor, took note of the findings made by the census superintendent. From these he wrote his singularly influential "The Significance of the Frontier in American History."[11] Like his inspirational source, Turner claimed that the frontier had disappeared in 1890. He went beyond that determination to argue that a four hundred–year epoch that had commenced with the voyage of Christopher Columbus had now come to an end and that the United States had entered a new era. Somewhat differently from the census, he defined the frontier as the point where civilization meets savagery. He then expansively declared that all of American history could be explained by the frontier's continuous retreat westward. From a very narrow but altogether contemporary perspective, Turner saw American history as a story of Europeans moving triumphantly westward. In confronting and subduing savagery, they became Americans. That is, this process instilled in westering pioneers those qualities and characteristics viewed as distinctly American in nature, things like democracy, freedom, independence, and equality. Turner's heroes, in keeping with popular opinion, were white men, the most important being farmers who married and had children and built successive communities that became towns and then turned into cities. Turner's "frontier thesis" provided what in time became the most definitive, if not emblematic, white and heterosexual statement from his generation about the end of the frontier era and what that frontier meant to the United States, its people, and its institutions.[12]

The ideas that informed Turner were strikingly similar to the notions that informed scientists and medical experts of the day, the so-called sexologists who theorized, explained, and thereby helped to create modern sexuality at the precise moment the frontier vanished. Working from the same premises as Turner, late nineteenth-century American sexologists broadly claimed that

sexual inversion/homosexuality, as products of modernity, could not be found in early American history, specifically on its frontier. They further forcefully argued that frontier conditions secured heterosexuality in westering Americans.

Notions of the frontier therefore played a foundational role in the development of modern sexuality. Likewise, transgressive sexuality and gender identities notably represented in the person of the cross-dresser have played a critical role in how western and frontier American history and myth have been conceived, imagined, and written since the 1890s. Because the frontier and the American West have been fundamental to how Americans (at least, that is, Americans who have traditionally been the socially dominant group) have understood and defined themselves, I further assert that cross-dressers have been functionally central to the American national narrative. These might seem odd, even counterintuitive claims considering my other contention that cross-dressers have been largely forgotten in western and frontier myth and history precisely because of their transgressive sexual and gender identities. But I follow the Foucauldian reasoning that in trying to forget, re-imagine, and expunge cross-dressers, nineteenth-century western and frontier history and myth have been written and conceived in direct opposition to the myriad cross-dressers of our past. In Part II of this book I reveal how and why this happened.

This book, however, is about more than how and why cross-dressers and the transgressive sexual and gender identities they represented have been marginalized, expunged, and forgotten in western history. A few years ago queer theoretician Ki Namaste pointed out that for all the recent outpouring of scholarship on "drag, gender, performance, and transsexuality," those who produced it "have shown very little concern for those who identify and live as drag queens, transsexuals, and/or transgenders."[13] *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past* takes seriously this omission in cross-dressing studies. I have designed Part I of this book to recover the lives of cross-dressers in western and frontier history. In two chapters, one on women who dressed as men and the other on men who dressed as women, I examine the reality of cross-dressers' lives, explore how they understood their own gender and sexual identities, consider the ways in which their societies and communities viewed them, and analyze how they both affirmed and challenged the gender and sexual categories of their society. To help accomplish these tasks, I begin each chapter with an extended meditation on the life history of a particular

western cross-dresser. This strategy, in addition to recovering the subjectivity of cross-dressers, also serves to draw attention to critical issues that the chapter following that biography analyzes in greater depth. In preparation for the deployment of this method, I here offer the reader a lengthy biography that amplifies and informs the tasks that I set out to accomplish in Part I.

Edna Bamford, a descendant of pioneers who arrived in Oregon in 1861, married Albert Hart, a more recent arrival to Oregon from Kansas, at the home of her parents in the Willamette Valley town of Oakville in 1888. Both Albert and Edna had business educations. Both business and family reversed their westward migration, taking them from Oregon back to Albert's Kansas not long after their nuptials. Albert prospered as a merchant in the Great Plains town of Halls Summit, becoming a respected business leader within just a few short years. Tragically, a typhoid epidemic prematurely claimed his life in the summer of 1892. Not quite two years before, on 4 October 1890, Edna had given birth to the couple's only child. Thankfully for his heirs, when Albert departed this world he left them a nice estate. Edna packed up herself, her inheritance, and her toddler and soon returned to Oregon, where her parents yet resided.[14]

Edna and Albert's child was born with a female body. The two parents christened her Alberta Lucille. Perhaps they had some premonition in choosing their daughter's patronymic, but in any case she widely became known as Lucille. When she grew into childhood in rural Oregon, she increasingly preferred what society then considered to be boyish pursuits. She played games such as horse and wagon and reenacted Civil War scenes with wooden guns. She had something of a passion for pocketknives and liked chopping with an ax—an accident even took the tip of one of her fingers; the remaining appendage she bandaged and hid from her mother. In time, Hart took up camping, tennis, hiking, rowing, and hunting. She also became an avid football fan. Likewise, because she despised domestic work, she instead took to boys' chores about the family farm at the same time that she set aside toying with dolls. She soon came to insist that she was the "man of the family" despite the fact that her mother remarried when Hart had not yet turned five. She also began behaving as such. For example, when Hart and her mother traveled anywhere in their buggy, she demanded to sit on the right side and take the reins. Hart forever intensely disliked her stepfather, but she idolized her grandfather, following him everywhere and listening to him talk politics and

agriculture with other men of the neighborhood. She particularly liked adventure stories and listened in rapt attention to those told by local men who in years past and present traveled as far as the Klondike and as close as eastern Oregon to prospect for gold. Hart fantasized that one day she would do the same. Always regarding herself as a boy, she early claimed that she would be one if only her family would permit her to cut her hair and wear trousers. During these years Hart also fell hopelessly in love with a string of domestic servants whom the family employed. In her daydreaming she advanced from imagined scenes in which she petted and kissed such women to fantasies in which she had erotic relations with them, always seeing herself in what she and her society understood to be the male role.[15]

Homeschooled when in the country, just before seventh grade Hart and her mother and stepfather moved into Albany so that the girl might enter upon a more routine education. Hart did not do particularly well at first. But when students began taunting and teasing her for being skinny and unattractive, she buried herself in her studies and soon became the best student of the lot. When she graduated from high school in 1908, Hart had the highest grades in her class. During these years she developed a series of crushes on female teachers and students she came to know.[16]

She next entered Albany College (today Lewis & Clark College and now located in Portland), where she studied for two years. She continued to excel in her work and became a class leader. Albany College's yearbook described her as athletic and her command of English "fierce." It also revealed that her dream was to live a life of "blessed spinsterhood," though the annual's editors felt this "will be *only* dreams."[17] In fact, Hart formed a close relationship with classmate Eva Cushman, the "society butterfly" who represented the class in all its interclass organizations. The school's annual observed that Cushman did not pay much attention to the boys. Another student publication took note of her and Hart's relationship, reporting that they joked about being in love and that they even planned to marry one day.[18] With a third classmate, Hart and Cushman decided, "as part of their duty to the world and the rising generation—to discard all rats and artificial puffs, and to adopt the dress-reform style of clothing. They have not yet worn their new costumes in public, though they contemplate doing so."[19] Hart and Cushman were inseparable by day, typically attending all functions in each other's company, and they usually spent one night of the week together. Early in their relationship they engaged in petting, but in time they became intensely sexual. During the

summers when Cushman was away (her parents resided elsewhere in Oregon), Hart daily wrote love letters to her.[20]

In the fall of 1910, Hart entered Stanford University. By then she had come into her inheritance from her father. She could afford to take Cushman with her, paying her lover's way as Cushman's parents could not, and all the while maintaining their affair discreetly. At Stanford, Hart began experimenting with certain articles of men's clothing and undertook what society considered to be more masculine activities—for example, drinking and smoking. These Cushman could not tolerate and their affair began to change; their love slowly subsided, though their relationship persisted for some years. Meanwhile, Hart began making regular trips to San Francisco, in fact almost every weekend, where she fell in love with the city's cabarets, cafés, theaters, and concerts. She occasionally visited the Tenderloin entertainment district and there developed a relationship with a dance-hall girl. They sometimes met at the San Franciscan's apartment, where they had sexual relations.[21]

Hart spent rather lavishly during these years, what with her trips to San Francisco and also supporting herself and Cushman. Thus, when she left Stanford in 1912 with a bachelor of science degree, she had exhausted her inheritance and faced mounting debt. She moved to Portland and found employment in a real estate office and then in a wholesale and retail butchery. In her spare time she typed, cleaned, worked wood, and built furniture. She slowly climbed out of debt but then borrowed again in order to enter the University of Oregon's Medical College, also in Portland, in 1913. Hart was the only woman in her class. As such, she experienced harsh hazing. But when she completed her medical degree in 1917, much as she had done years before to spite her classmates who had then taunted her for her looks, she did so with the highest honors in her class.[22] During these years Hart's relationship with Cushman finally ended and she had a string of intense emotional and sexual affairs with other women, each one ending for some reason or another, and some resulting in considerable misery for Hart. At one time, as a result of failed love, Hart even contemplated suicide. She tried a sexual relationship with a man, but it so disgusted her that during their first attempt to sleep together, she abruptly left in the middle of the night. That was the end of that.[23]

While in medical school Hart began perusing professional books to learn more about her gender and sexual feelings. What she read, not surprisingly, considering the era, only caused her despair. But after a period of self-condemnation, and once she had completed her studies, Hart sought

professional help.[24] She turned to the rather progressive Portland physician J. Allen Gilbert, who began treating her psychologically and then medically. In fact, when Hart initially sought Gilbert's treatment, she did so ostensibly for a phobia related to the noise of shotgun fire. During their early visits, Gilbert suspected more was going on in Hart's life and one day confronted her with a question about sexuality. Hart's rather awkward response and abrupt departure led Gilbert to conclude that she would probably never return to him. But two weeks later, and after a great deal of soul-searching on her part, as Gilbert explained it, Hart "made up her mind that this was her chance to meet the difficulty and correct it, if possible; at least, to do the best for the condition that could be done."[25]

Upon consideration, Hart explained to Gilbert that she did not want any treatment that might deprive her of her masculine ambitions and tastes, as she did not want to exchange her male mental makeup for that of the "female type of mind."[26] Since Gilbert could not assure her that psychological therapy would not alter Hart's psyche, the two decided on another course: to accept the situation and move forward with completing Hart's physical and sartorial transformation into a man. Gilbert removed Hart's uterus to relieve her of the painful menstrual cramps from which she had suffered for some time, and to eliminate altogether the inconvenience of the menstrual cycle. They also thought sterilization precautionary, as it would prevent any pregnancy that might blow her cover, even though pregnancy was unlikely in Hart's case. Hart then cut her hair. She chose the name Alan, a variation on her first name. She also changed her wardrobe. Then, as Gilbert would straightforwardly put it in 1920, though all this happened in 1917, she "made her exit as a female and started as a male with a new hold on life and ambitions worthy of her high degree of intellectuality."[27]

Hart's own words, related in a remarkable 1918 interview with his hometown newspaper, confirm what Gilbert described two years later. When a reporter caught up with him at his mother's home in Albany and asked him about his "sex change," Hart explained that "I had to do it. . . . For years I had been unhappy. With all the inclinations and desires of the boy I had to restrain myself to the more conventional ways of the other sex. I have been happier since I made this change than I ever have in my life, and I will continue this way as long as I live. . . . There can be no dual sex in a person. It is either one or the other. I have long suspected my condition, and now I know."[28]

The news spread quickly. Henry Waldo Coe, a medical doctor and somewhat conservative editor of Portland's *Medical Sentinel*, reported on this "AMAZING SEX DISCOVERY" made by the Albany press. Calling this a "serious matter [that] means more than . . . gratifying the desire of a female to play the male role," Coe demanded that the doctor who operated on Hart publish his findings in a medical journal.[29] In fact, Gilbert would do just that, but a couple years later, when a suitable time had passed for any developments to appear in Hart's life and treatment that might add completeness to the picture.[30]

To be sure, Coe was partly interested in the science of it all. More, his concern revolved about the possibility that Hart, as a man, now qualified for the draft, as America was by then committed to the European war. "If Dr. Hart is of the male sex and representatives of our government say she is a male," Coe decreed, "we must accord to the doctor all the privileges of a male. If the findings should be that the doctor is of the female sex, a monstrous, inconceivable joke has been played on the children of our state who have heard the case discussed."[31] In fact, concerns that women who masqueraded as men might find their way into America's armed forces were not isolated to Coe. By now many had heard famous stories of women who had dressed as men and fought in the Civil and the Spanish-American Wars. And in fact, not long before Hart's story came to light, a Portland newspaper carried a sensational item about Samuel Ackerman, reportedly a woman from Toledo, Ohio, who had lived as a man for years and had even married a woman. Ackerman failed to register for the current draft, as he thought his female body would be discovered. Just before authorities moved in to apprehend this "slacker," Ackerman instead took his life.[32]

Upon exiting Gilbert's Portland office in 1917, Hart set out on a long medical career, one that, at least early on, had its share of difficulties for someone who had changed sexes. Sooner or later the news caught up with him. One of Hart's first appointments, already that November, was at the city hospital in San Francisco. A former Stanford classmate there soon recognized him and went about telling Hart's story. Because of the unwanted notoriety (though he had the support of hospital administration), Hart found that he had little choice but to resign his position. In the summer of 1918, Hart began a short stint as a doctor in Gardiner on the Oregon coast, but something (lost from the historical record) led him to leave under a cloud shortly thereafter. He then found a series of jobs across the West and Midwest in

places such as Huntley, Montana; Thermopolis, Wyoming; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Rockford, Illinois; Spokane, Washington; Tacoma, Washington; and Boise, Idaho, all within the space of a few years.[33]

Whether problems associated with his "sex change" led to his quick turnover at these other locales is unclear, but in this light it is worth considering the following. Hart, an extraordinarily accomplished man, eventually published four novels, each related to medicine and each in its own way based on his own experiences. A minor subplot of his second, *The Undaunted* (1936), set in the fictional Northwest city of Seaforth, revolves about Sandy Farquhar, a homosexual male and, like Hart, a radiologist. In telling this character's difficult employment history, Hart undoubtedly drew upon his own. He wrote that Farquhar "stuck it out" in medical school, despite "a fellow there who'd known him in college and spread the word about Sandy." But henceforth for Farquhar, "when it came to outrunning gossip he found he couldn't do it. He went into radiology because he thought it wouldn't matter so much in a laboratory what a man's personality was. But wherever he went, scandal followed him sooner or later. . . . His story would get around and then he'd be forced to leave. 'Resigning by request' was the way he put it."[34] Because of such torment, in time Sandy suicided.

Although earlier in life Hart had considered ending it all just like his fictional Sandy, instead he persisted. He continued his studies, earning a master of science degree in radiology at the University of Pennsylvania in 1930 and a master's degree in public health at Yale. He finally found job security in the Connecticut Department of Health's tuberculosis office. He started there in 1945 and when he died in 1962 was serving as its director.[35] The pattern of Hart's personal life after leaving Gilbert's office followed somewhat the trajectory of his professional one. On 7 February 1918, under his grandfather's name, Hart married Inez Stark in Martinez, California. Inez followed her husband through his successive jobs until 1923, when she coldly left him and refused his several attempts at reconciliation. They soon divorced. Hart then found a loving relationship, his last, with Edna Ruddick. They married on 15 May 1925, in New York City. Edna survived him in death. Upon his passing, Hart's body was quietly shipped away for cremation and his ashes eventually spread on the waters of Puget Sound in Washington state.[36]

Alan Hart's biography highlights various issues that I consider in Part I. Two of the more tangled are how turn-of-the-twentieth-century cross-dressers

understood themselves and how broader society and specific communities perceived their cross-dressers' sexual and gender identities. It seems clear that Hart was something more than merely a cross-dresser; both he and those around him thought this so. Medical science, at least through the eyes of the rather progressive J. Allen Gilbert, thought him a homosexual; the doctor even entitled his professionally published article about Hart "Homo-Sexuality and Its Treatment." Hart's well-documented life, however, reveals no precise term that he applied to himself. Gilbert did claim that Hart accepted his condition as "abnormal inversion"; Hart likely spoke to Gilbert using this and the term "homosexual," as they both appear in the medical record.[37] Hart also read scientific books that would have used those same terms and he referred to his fictional Sandy Farquhar as a homosexual.

What is clear is that Hart thought himself to be a man. In this light it might seem appropriate to consider him a transsexual.[38] Of course, such a term did not exist as such during the years of Hart's early life and when he underwent his "sex change." The concept of transsexual—a person who emotionally and psychologically feels that s/he belongs to the sex opposite of what his/her body socially indicates—only crystallized in the 1940s and 1950s, near the end of Hart's life, when advances in medical technology allowed such individuals the ability to surgically reshape their bodies so that their corporeality would correspond to their feelings of who they were. Since the middle of the twentieth century, transsexual identity has expanded to include those who choose not to, or are unable to, surgically change their bodies to conform with their gender identity. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, a broader concept of transgender emerged. Transgender includes the expansive definition of transsexual, but it also embraces a whole set of people who, perfectly satisfied with their bodies, nevertheless identify with the gender opposite of the one that society normally assigns to them; it also counts people who truly transcend normative gender categories—those who see themselves as neither female nor male.[39]

Transsexual was not existent as such at the turn of the twentieth century; nevertheless, that era had the concept of sexual inversion. It collapsed together the later developed notions of transsexual and transgender with (the also later more fully developed ideas of) homosexuality and even transvestism. The concept of transvestite—a desire of some people to dress as the opposite sex for reasons not linked to their gender or sexual identity—began to emerge in the scientific literature only right at the dawn of the twentieth

century. Although used interchangeably with "sexual inversion" into the early years of the twentieth century, "homosexual" slowly became associated more with the object of someone's sexual desire than with how someone behaved in her/his gender comportment. J. Allen Gilbert's use of the term "homo-sexuality" alongside "abnormal inversion" in 1920 clearly shows that the former was tinged with the belief that it had something to do with gender presentation at that date.

Broader society at the time utilized terms and concepts similar to the medical profession's sexual inversion, notably man–woman and woman–man. Such terms really clue us in to how a society that held to a two-sex/two-gender model tried to come to grips with cross-dressers. Like science's sex invert, woman–man and man–woman show that society might actually perceive that a person could combine the two sexes otherwise thought to be mutually exclusive. I present any number of examples of this. But I also show that in keeping with the definitiveness of the two-sex model, nineteenth-century society and a cross-dresser's community at times closely scrutinized the cross-dresser's body in order to establish that s/he was either female or male. Henry Waldo Coe's and the Albany reporter's consideration of Alan Hart exposes this clearly. The journalist explained that Hart grew up as a girl but one day discovered his "fundamental sex organs are male."[40] Such a discovery accounts for Coe's incredulity and his demand that government representatives examine Hart's body to determine if he were really a man.[41]

I also show that cross-dressers' views on their own gender and sexual makeup varied as much as public opinion and differed as much as there were varieties of cross-dressers. Hart, whom this study holds up as transsexual, affirmed the two-sex/two-gender model. He voiced to his hometown newspaper, it will be recalled, that "there can be no dual sex in a person. It is either one or the other."[42] Hart knew he had been born with a female body, but he also knew himself to be male. In time he dressed and fully comported himself as such. Although he may have had difficulties at times with how society viewed him, evidence exposes that those surrounding him could believe him to be a man. Again, the Albany reporter evinced this: "The reporter talked with Dr. Hart this afternoon . . . and had he not known that Dr. Hart once was known as a woman he would never have given the matter a thought. Dressed in a natty, green suit, hair cut close, Dr. Hart looks the part of a man."[43]

Along these lines, queer theoretician Judith Butler pointed out some years ago that "gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted

in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*." These acts, Butler further explained, work to construct an identity, a "performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief."[44] Accordingly, when an individual in history chose certain articles of clothing and acted in ways commensurate with an idealized gender—feminine or masculine—that individual became the gender that s/he performed and her/his society viewed her/him as. When successfully wearing the clothing of the opposite sex, female-to-male and male-to-female cross-dressers in the history of the nineteenth-century West (and elsewhere) actually became, in the eyes of their society, men and women, respectively. In this way, a cross-dresser affirmed the two-gender/two-sex system.

On the other hand, and as Butler also remarked, gender "ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow."[45] As such, cross-dressers could also undermine the stability of the two-sex/two-gender system, most notably when some mishap revealed the cross-dresser to have a body that did not correspond to her/his clothing (that is, gender performance).[46] Social and communal reactions recorded at those moments provide windows into period understandings of gender and, in some cases, sexuality. We can also at these times occasionally catch glimpses of how cross-dressers might understand themselves as either a person who was a male or a female, or a person who was a mix of the two sexes, or alternatively as a person who was neither male nor female. In all these cases cross-dressers subverted the binary sex/gender system, but they also oddly confirmed it.

Among the places where such moments of revelation are best recorded is in the mass-circulation press. Today newspapers are declining in importance as sources people turn to for their news. But during the place and time that this book covers, the mass-circulation press was the fundamental source of news, outside of gossip, for Americans, though it should be added that local newspapers were also filled with all sorts of gossip. In the nineteenth century any town of any size had at least one newspaper, in many cases two. The mass-circulation press is not without its limitations as a historical source, however. This book clearly demonstrates that. Nevertheless, because the mass-circulation press more than any other source provided constant news about cross-dressers, it serves as the most abundant and richest source for understanding a community's collective views on such people. Used carefully, and when possible with other sources—for example, the varied types of documents available in

the case of Alan Hart—newspapers can also provide clues to how cross-dressers understood themselves.[47] I therefore employ the mass-circulation press extensively, complicating this source when needed.

The mass-circulation press also makes possible another of my tasks in Chapters 1 and 2: to show how communities and broader society reacted to the cross-dresser beyond questions of his/her gender and sexuality, though these two concerns were never far from mind. The press's coverage of Alan Hart reveals that period medical doctors, for example, could accept and support the cross-dresser as well as deride and condemn him. Some of Hart's employment history was also carried in the press. What there is of it demonstrates that he might gain support from some employers, and yet he might also be dogged by rumormongers apparently interested in titillating fellow workers. The news story about him from his hometown in 1918, furthermore, discloses that a community, or at least in this case a news reporter from a local community, could respond with objectivity to the cross-dresser. In this case the journalist plainly pointed out that "the story sounds unbelievable, but the facts are supported by documentary evidence of such a character that there is no use poo-poohing or denying" that Hart changed his sex.[48]

Before commencing our trip into cross-dressing history, I would like to clarify a few terms that I employ along the way. First, I regrettably use "cross-dresser" to refer to a large group of varied people—at one end of the spectrum individuals like Alan Hart and at the other end those who took on the garb of the opposite sex for purposes unrelated to either sexuality or gender identity. The term "cross-dresser" repeats the assumption that two immutable poles of gender and sexuality exist, and when one person from one gender and one sexuality historically took on the guise of a person of the other gender and the other sexuality, that person actually engaged in "crossing." In fact, as Alan Hart and myriad other "cross-dressers" have told us, such an act was not crossing at all but was something that came naturally to them, as they really felt themselves to be other than the sex their bodies suggested them to be.

Second, I have adopted feminine and masculine pronouns for cross-dressers according to how individuals likely viewed themselves. Therefore, I typically utilize "he," "him," and "his" (as well as the person's masculine name) when discussing biographical details of a female-to-male cross-dresser when evidence suggests that is the way he understood himself. Sometimes I switch from one gender to the other, depending on what was going on in the

biography of the individual at a particular time. For example, in this introduction I began by referring to Alan Hart using feminine pronouns but switched to masculine when he finally made the decision that he was indeed a man and decided to live as such. Sometimes I put quotation marks around such pronouns when that is how sources referred to the individual, but at the time the individual seems to have thought about himself/herself differently. Sometimes I use gendered pronouns simultaneously and interchangeably when it is pretty clear that the person to whom they apply felt her/himself to be both male and female or neither.

Third, I often refer to the "progress narrative." My premise is not that all cross-dressers have been forgotten in western history; I contend that when historians, antiquarians, and the broader public have remembered them, notably female-to-male cross-dressers, they have been averse to considering the complex gender, sexual, and social meanings and realities of these people (for reasons I have outlined earlier in this introduction). In doing so, western writers have invoked the progress narrative. It normalizes the cross-dresser by maintaining that "she" changed her clothing for some purpose related to securing personal advancement in a world with a deck that was otherwise stacked against her. For example, she might have dressed in male attire to pass herself off as a man so that she could obtain better-paying employment. Perhaps she wanted to succeed in a profession that her biological sex excluded her from. Maybe she desired to follow her husband or male lover into a milieu, such as the army, which excluded women. Or a woman might also find that dressing in men's clothing could provide her safety when traveling in a male-dominated society. Humanities scholar Marjorie Garber pointed out a few years ago that the progress narrative impedes the recovery of transsexuality or transgenderism in the lives of cross-dressers.[49] Since *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past* seeks to retrieve transgressive sexuality and gender identity in cross-dressing, I often conjure the progress narrative in it, usually to point out its limitations and inapplicability.[50]

Finally, as every American historian knows, "frontier" and "West" are problematic terms and concepts. The West might best be understood as a place, though a place that admittedly has moved around a lot and has vague boundaries.[51] In this book I consider the region classically known as the trans-Mississippi West, but sometimes I narrow my scope to the trans-Missouri West and alternately broaden my vision to include the northern Mexican borderlands and western Canada. One prevalent definition of "frontier" in

American history is that it is a process. But what it has been a process of is something that has been highly debated.[52] I at times search for the frontier as far east as New York. I also often use that term interchangeably with the West and I do so for a couple reasons. First, it is pretty clear that in the late nineteenth century (the period that I am most concerned with), the broad American public and even American sexologists understood that the West they knew was also the place where the last frontier (that they imagined) actually existed, however much it was also disappearing. Second, I am most interested in how Americans imagined the frontier and the West, in particular how they imagined them as related to who they were as a heterosexual nation. This was a process, a process about a place. And it is reflected in the vignette with which I commenced this introduction. When Horace Greeley implored young American men to "go West," he meant the West as a place. But by pairing that place with the verb "to go," he was referring to a process. Moreover, he saw both the place "the West" and the movement to it as male in nature. Along the Pike's Peak Express that he followed into his male West, Greeley encountered an otherwise nondescript fellow, a clerk heading in the opposite direction, to the East. As the male clerk moved out of the West, however, he changed into a cross-dressed woman. The clerk thus underwent a process, a process that linked two regions—the West and the East—into a binary relationship that, like the binaries of female and male, masculine and feminine, and homosexual and heterosexual, tell a great deal about how we have constructed America's geographical and historical past and have used cross-dressers to do so.