

# NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

## COMO MID-PACIFIC RAILROAD



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## NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Founded in 1904 for the purpose of investigating topics pertaining to the early history of Nevada and of collecting relics for a museum, the **NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY** has dedicated itself to the continuing purpose of preserving the rich heritage of the peoples—past and present—who have inhabited the land of Nevada.

The Society believes that it can best serve the State by arousing in the people an historical consciousness which it hopes will be carried to succeeding generations. Thus, through its Director, the Society sponsors an educational program which carries the history of Nevada to the schools and organizations throughout the State.

The Society maintains a library and museum where historical materials of many kinds are on display to the public and are available to students and scholars.

The Society publishes the **NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S QUARTERLY** which publishes articles of interest to readers in the social, cultural, economic, and political history of the Great Basin area: Nevada, eastern California, eastern and southern Oregon, Idaho, and Utah.

The Society's membership is open to the public; application for membership should be made to the Secretary of the Society, State Building, Reno, Nevada.





The road to Como, from a photograph by Herman Davis, probably taken some fifty years ago. Unlike other parts of the road, this section is in good condition. Beyond, up the grade, cloudbursts leave the road as a challenge to the modern automobile. Behind Dayton, in the background of this picture, are Virginia City and Mt. Davidson.



## COMO

BY DAVID F. MYRICK

Among the little known ghost towns in Nevada is Como, Lyon County. Active several times in the last century, the story of the mining community is told here for the first time.

Just a century ago, a scribe noted that the worst portion of an important road, running south from Virginia City, lay between Chinatown and Palmyra. The town names have changed—they are now Dayton and Como—but the road is still noted for its poor condition.

Going back in time, the rush to Washoe began in 1859 and the riches of the Comstock and resulting development of Virginia City made fascinating newspaper reading everywhere. Stunned indeed were readers all along the Pacific Coast when the Indians routed the whites at Pyramid Lake in 1860. Prospectors, who had been reaching out boldly into unknown lands, quickly withdrew to the safety of the few cities, but the lure of prospective riches in outlying areas was strong enough to cause them to return within a matter of weeks.

The early history of Como is well hidden—fires consumed newspaper files which might have told the story. Piecing together available information does provide a fragmentary history of the early days of Como. In the *Territorial Enterprise* of July 21, 1860 (then published at Carson City, Utah Territory), the following news item appeared:

“Surface diggings capable of paying \$10 a day to the hand, has [sic] lately been struck in El Dorado Canon, a locality about ten miles northeast of Carson City. The gold is of fine quality and rather coarse, but the water supply being limited, but few miners are employed there at present. With sufficient water, a large number could make good wages. On Onion Creek, a few miles further south, and among the foothills nearly east of this city, similar diggings have been found, and a number of men are at work with rockers, making \$6 to \$12 per day.”

Onion Creek is not on any map but it appears to have been the forerunner of the Palmyra Mining District and the towns of Palmyra and Como.

In 1864, famed editor and newspaper correspondent Alf Doten, writing in *The Como Sentinel*, described the road to the recently opened stone quarry, a half mile east of Como. A bit of a romanticist, he was taken by the beauty of the scene and wrote,



"Within the leafy bowers, too, the wild onion may be seen luxuriantly growing in all of its native liveliness."

From this, one may deduce the discoveries at Onion Creek to be the first mining at the Como area.

Later reports speak of the discovery of the Palmyra District as having taken place in June 1860. A great rush ensued in July and August, and in the fall of 1860 some 500 men were reported to have been on the scene, limiting their activities to locating numerous claims and working but a few. A letter written from Virginia City, dated November 30, 1860, said that there were then about 20 miners at work in the Palmyra District, but with the advent of spring great things were expected to be in store and Palmyra rock was to "make quite a stir in mining circles."

The rigorous winter gave way to spring and summer but little development was reported during 1861, contrary to expectations. High on a plateau, with canyons leading off in many directions, the area had the advantages of plenty of wood and water to partially make up for its isolation. There was an active demand for wood and, if things were not overly-bright in the mining world, it was a simple matter to switch occupations and chop wood until better times returned. As the nut pine (piñon) was an important source of food for the Indians, cutting of their trees was the cause of several Indian scares and murders.

Except to some 50 miners, other districts had more appeal during the summer of 1861. True there was some activity, most of it centered on the "immense tunnel" driven about 100 feet in the earth with the hope and daily expectation of striking a valuable vein. The lack of successful reports suggests this operation was just another event in the long tally of mining disappointments.

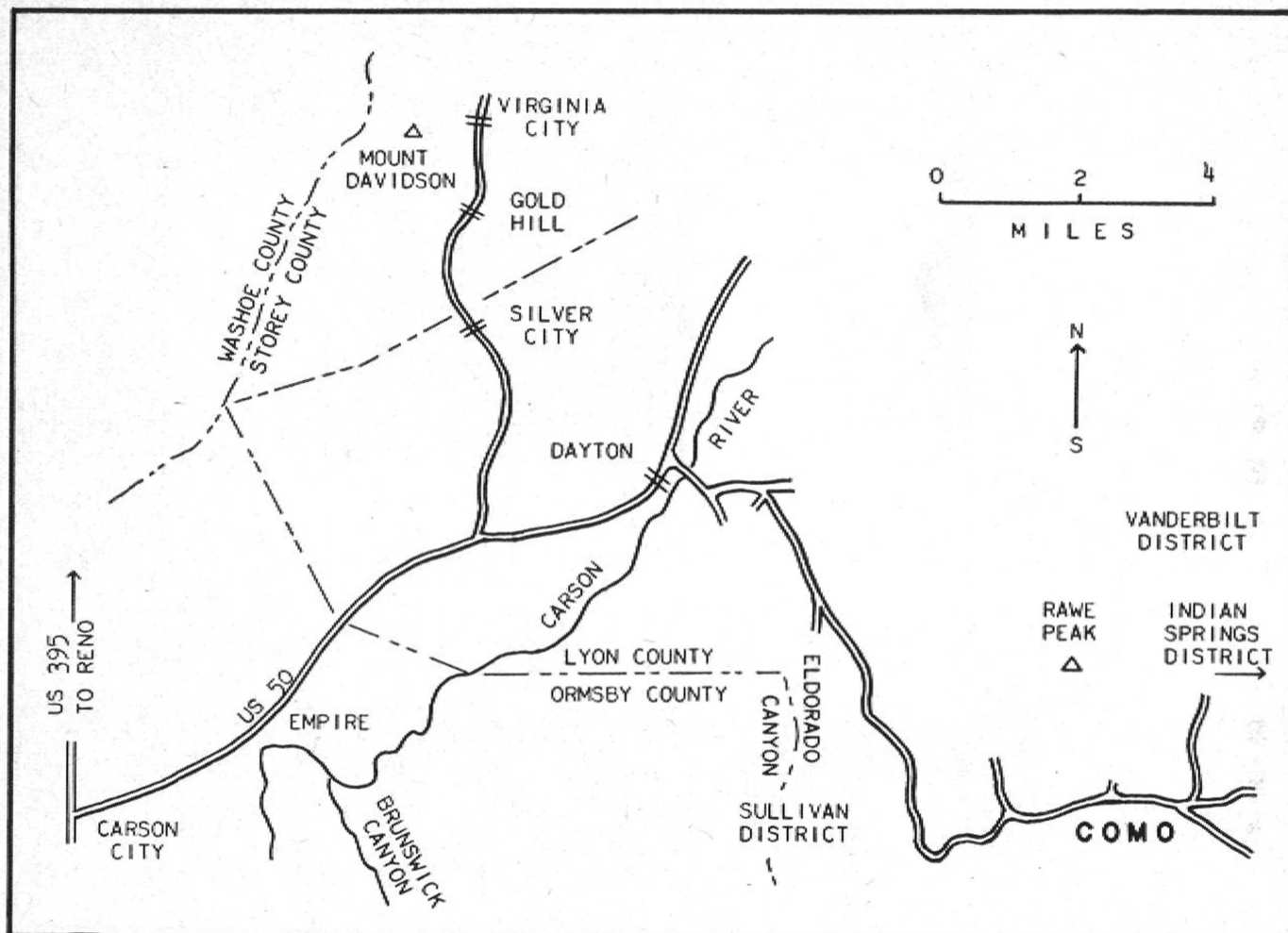
One interesting discovery was made in 1862, but its true purpose was never known. On a prominent peak near the Palmyra District was a stone building, about eight feet in diameter, shaped like a bee-hive with one very small opening. It may have been used for a grave or it may have been a shelter for an Indian sentinel to watch for signals from other peaks—this location was on the dividing line between the Paiutes and the Washoes.

A town, Palmyra, did develop and lasted for a year or so. One town was not enough, so about a half mile east, in a beautiful tree-studded plateau, Louis Boitel and friends set up housekeeping October 28, 1862. Harvey Fay and associates went one step further—they surveyed the townsite of Como on November 12, just a few weeks later. Both parties claimed title to the ground



but as no one was particularly interested in Como as a residence, little was done about it. A year later, when attention was focused on Como, the town lots had value (even though it was of short duration) and Boitel took the matter to court, successfully convincing the judge that the prior actual possession made him the rightful owner.

At the end of 1862, favorable accounts of the "Palmyra Diggings" were being circulated and several companies were taking out ore, hauling it down the miserable 12-mile road to Dayton



to be milled. The Yuba lead looked promising enough to start movements of lumber from Virginia to be used in the construction of the first ore mill in Palmyra.

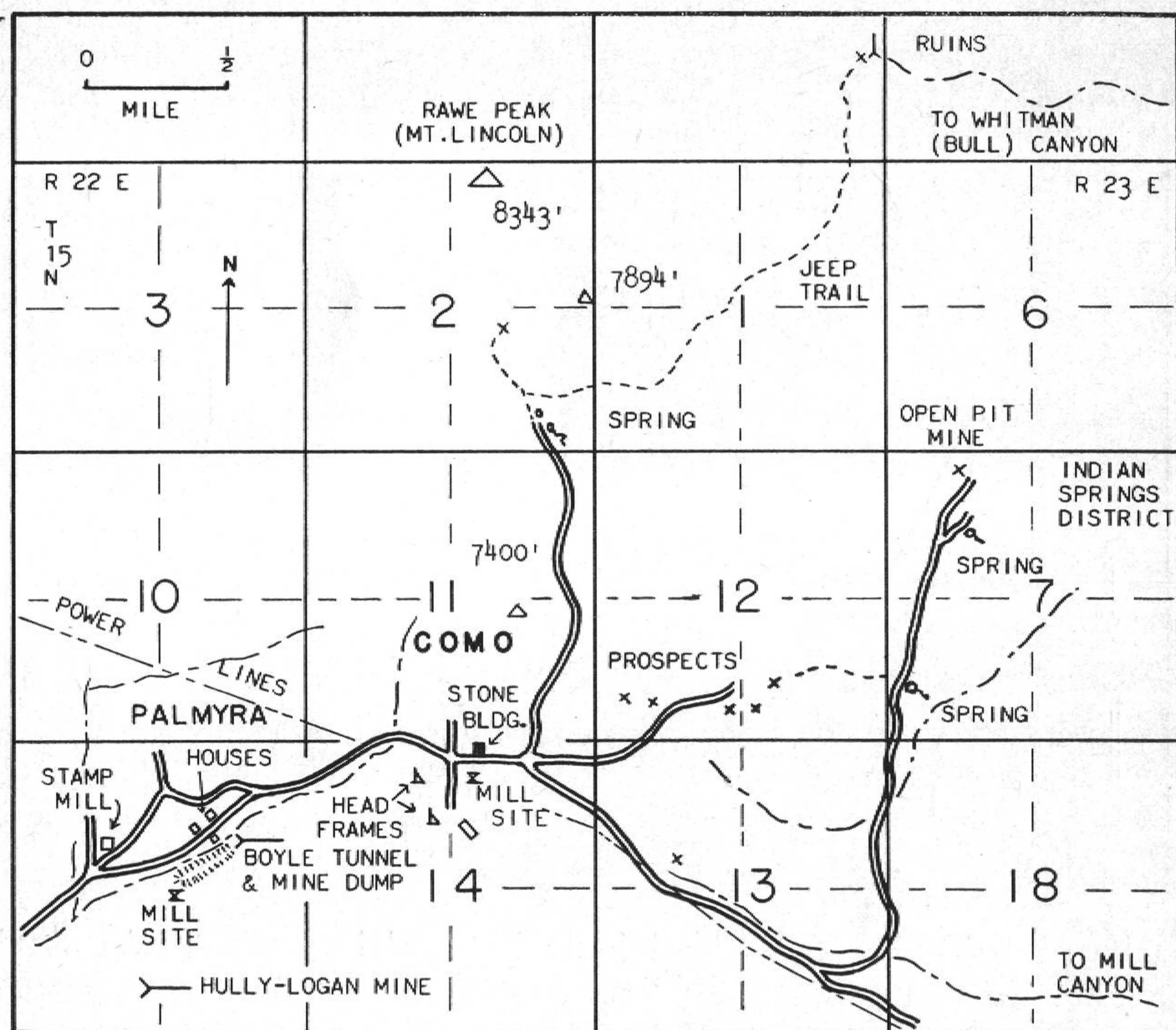
The little village of Palmyra grew as mining prospects improved. A post office was established May 5, 1863 and, although Como (a half mile to the east) was to eclipse Palmyra, the post office remained at its original location through the first of several eras until it was closed July 31, 1866.

Sparkling the rush to Como was the discovery of a natural cave between that place and Palmyra during July 1863. Three men, whose names were not recorded by the *Virginia Union* for the benefit of later historians, found a remarkable cave, consisting of long passageways and numerous chambers. The walls were unnaturally smooth but the real excitement was caused by the



discovery within the cavern of several splendid looking silver and gold bearing ledges. Many claims were recorded by the fortune seekers but no further mention of this cave appears in the contemporary chronicles.

The first mill to be completed in the district was built for the Palmyra Mill and Mining Co. by a Mr. Aikens. Located in a ravine "which falls off eastward from the town," it came under the direction of F. J. Mette, Superintendent.



Surrounding Como was the Palmyra Mining District. Around this district were other mining districts and settlements. North and easterly of the Palmyra District is the Indian Springs Mining District, with the large ravine, known in 1864 as Star Canyon, forming the dividing line.

Each district had a number of ore bearing ledges or veins on which claims were located. In the Palmyra District, the Constitution Ledge could be traced for two miles. Other ledges were the Independence, Red Jacket, Shiloh, Decotah, Baltimore, Montgomery and the old Goliah Ledge. Located "on the city limits" the latter ledge was worked in 1861 with an arrasta and "paid



fair wages." To the southwest of Como, around Palmyra, were other ledges. The Orizaba, the first claim in the district back in 1860, had been abandoned for a long time but in 1864, revived as Orizaba No. 2, its ore was proving itself at the new mill. Not far from the same area were the Rappahannoch (rich enough to invite litigation) and the Rapidan. Within the town of Como were such claims as the Monte Cristo (later called Como-Eureka) and Wagram.

In the Indian Springs District were the continuations of the Constitution and Independence Ledges and the White Point Ledge. Near the Buena Vista claim, a Mr. Van Horn had a townsite surveyed, giving it the hopeful title of "Lafayette." If the big projected 80 stamp Whitman mill had been located there, it might have been an important community, for there was plenty of nut pine and ample springs "which are so situated that water can be carried from there to any part of town, and over the roofs of houses, if necessary."

Beyond Lafayette townsite, and about four miles from Como, was the famed Whitman lead, discovered by Colonel Whitman and his party in 1860. (A year later he found an important coal vein nearby.) A reporter passed the mine on a Sunday in December 1863 and wrote that at Whitman Camp, "the hands were breaking rocks, and the Sabbath at a great rate."

The Como boom was under way and the editor of the *Gold Hill News* (probably Phillip Lynch) felt obliged to visit the camp. Technically he did, arriving one evening and departing the next morning. He was impressed with the town or at least he was polite enough to say so. He said the beauty of its location surpassed any mountain town in the Territory. It was situated on a nearly level plateau, the pioneers laid out the town sensibly with streets 80 feet wide, thus ensuring comparative safety from anything short of a general conflagration. The number of buildings was small "but the few that have been built exhibit both good taste and workmanship." This account was closed with the prophecy: "We are satisfied that another year will prove it to be the equal to any district in the Territory."

The week after this statement appeared in print, Como was in a frenzy. Lady Luck shone on five prospectors who broke off samples on a white outcropping, one and one-half miles from town on the Whitman road, and pooled the cost of an assay. Delighted indeed were these men (and the town generally) when Assayer L. Solomon reported that their samples indicated values of \$103 per ton in silver and \$66 in gold. A mad scramble for



adjoining locations was made and the Crossman Gold and Silver Mining Co. was formed with a capitalization of \$160,000. (J. S. Crossman was a Como mine superintendent. The following year he was one of the four Lyon County delegates to the Nevada State Constitutional Convention and then became the State's first Lieutenant Governor.)

Lively times were coming to Como as 1864 began. Already the National Hotel, at Fifth Avenue and Union Street, was in operation, offering thirty double and single bedrooms, with hot



Main street of Como showing ruins of two stone buildings. The walls of the building may have housed the saloon of "Martin the Wizard." This is now called Upper Como.

water piped throughout the first and second floors. With a large hall adjoining and a jolly proprietor, A. D. Cross, the hotel was the center of social activity of Como. Another attraction, famed far and wide, was the pleasant saloon of "Martin the Wizard," with its walls "decorated with the paraphernalia of his diabolical art." Besides tending bar at his Telegraph Saloon at 15 Main Street, D. Martin was also listed as Federal Auctioneer. Apparently, with time to spare, he was also Secretary of his Wizard Gold and Silver Mining Co., holding title to the appropriately named Wizard claim on the Floridan ledge. Still at other times he was called upon to demonstrate his professional skill as ventriloquist, magician and juggler.



For the first six months of 1864, Como was enjoying an expansive boom. All kinds of people toiled up the steep grade to the little burg: miners, saloon keepers, gamblers, merchants, wood cutters, men with plug hats, and just plain loafers. Plug hats were welcomed as it was hoped that the capitalist under the hat would recognize the possibilities of rich rewards to be gained by sagacious investment in the new mines of the Palmyra District.

A prospectus for a newspaper, the *Como Tri-Weekly Delta*, was circulated in January 1864 but no paper of that name was ever issued. A telegraph line and Russell's stages provided dependable communication with the outside world. Petitions to the legislature requesting franchises for toll roads were freely circulated (naturally, all were leading to Como) and even a gas street lighting franchise was the subject of a petition.

Visiting ministers favored the community with divine services, apparently with such good side effects that the Sunday school was flourishing and many of the rum-mills were closed down for want of patronage. "People are beginning to see that there is more utility in developing our mineral wealth than there is in developing an appetite for bad whiskey" wrote a correspondent to the *Gold Hill News*.

"Como is irrepressible as a Chinese rebellion, and it will be heard of in the Spring.", was another comment. Yes, Como was heard of as the seat of Lyon County. This factually incorrect statement, apparently made first in Thompson & West's *History of Nevada*, has been repeated many times. Nothing in the Territorial Statutes mentions Como as a county seat; Dayton, however, is specifically mentioned. Even while Como was enjoying its short span of prosperity, the new court house was slowly being constructed at Dayton.

Mining optimism continued high in the spring of 1864, although production was failing to keep up with expectations. A number of mining companies were formed; many were backed by the same people. Such names as E. C. Shaw, J. S. Crossman, D. E. Jones, C. A. Witherell and George W. Walton—Como's last citizen—were listed as incorporators. A suburb, Georgetown, was created with the development of the stamp mill and the Monte Del Rey mine. Actually it was just on the outskirts of Como, for at Mill Street and Fifth Avenue (Como), just before reaching this suburb was the conveniently located Como Brewery. Not only did Como enjoy the benefits of Mr. Ficher's product, the brewery also briefly participated in the mining



excitement, albeit quite by accident. After being situated, excavation for the basement revealed that the brewery was on one of "the finest kind of ledges, of as rich looking quartz as one might wish to see." Not surprisingly it was named the "Lager Beer Ledge" but the Whitman Company, who undertook to work the claim, failed to find any worthwhile quantity of ore.

Perhaps the only birth ever recorded in Georgetown was the ten-pound daughter born to the wife of Thomas Woorstell on June 2, 1864. The *Sentinel's* editor expressed his feeling this way:

"Welcome, little stranger, we're glad to see you here.

We'll drink your future happiness in a glass of lager beer."

A happy event occurred in the morning of April 8, 1864 when the first bullion was sent out by Wells Fargo from the Whitman Mine. Weighing 70 pounds, it was valued at \$1,700. What was not reported was the number of tons crushed to produce this bullion. As the *Mining and Scientific Press* pointed out, if this were from 100 tons the result would be valueless; if but ten, it would be highly important. A plea for further information went unanswered; the diminishing mining activity over the next few months was sufficient mute evidence.

Even though the status of the mines was shaky, there was diverting activity in town. On Main Street were the offices of C. A. Witherell and J. C. Gray, ready to incorporate a new mining promotion upon the hint of a fee. Or, if need be, they were ready to secure justice for clients hauled before T. W. Penney, the J. P. of the Palmyra District.

H. L. Weston and T. W. Abraham started their weekly newspaper, *The Como Sentinel*, on Saturday, April 16, 1864. Writing from their office at Fifth Avenue and Hunt Street, among the important improvements noted in Como was the increased number of ladies and children. While there had been but three ladies in Como the previous August, there were now many, plus some 20-25 young scholars taking instruction from a teacher brought in from Petaluma, California.

Also on Main Street was the Pioneer Store where Bennett and Terrill sold hardware and building supplies. Some Frenchmen, T. F. Ardaut & Co., opened up a fine stone quarry a half mile east of town and the stone walls of ruined building still remaining probably came from Monsieur Ardaut's enterprise.

On Main Street, next to the National Hotel, was A. Freidman, a dealer in clothing, dry goods, gent's furnishings, wall papers and sewing machines. A doctor, another lawyer, and several



grocers also hung out their shingles. Mrs. H. Richards, a midwife, advertised in the *Sentinel* that she was a graduate of the Edinburg Royal Maternity Hospital and had "a Diploma from that institution duly signed by Prof. Keller."

Cross's National Hotel now had fifty rooms and advertised that the hotel was "open all night"—not a reassuring statement to light sleepers. Naturally, the National Hotel was the terminus of Russell's daily stage line from Dayton and Virginia. The Como office of Langton's Pioneer Express, presided over by G. W. Walton, was located in Sears & Witherell's store.

*The Como Sentinel* considered the inauguration of a weekly paper of great importance in the development of the area and after glowing accounts of the town, the paper put in a bid for support for itself along these lines:

"Come you who burn the midnight taper  
Contribute something for the paper  
Come all, support the enterprise  
And in the paper advertise.  
Merchants, tailors, doctors, lawyers,  
Landlords, blacksmiths, teamsters, sawyers,  
Bakers too of bread, cakes and pie  
Come one, come all, and advertise."

Following the pattern of the Comstock, the Como Mines Stock Board was organized on March 8, 1864 to facilitate buying and selling of local stocks, with such names as Alf Doten, T. W. Abraham, C. A. Witherell, and J. S. Crossman in charge. Yet it was realized that the mines were not as promising as anticipated. "Como at present rests in peace and quietness, but the day will soon dawn when the steam whistle will blow its 'horn' and the whole wide world shall hear of the rich mines of Palmyra and Indian Springs Districts, and this fact will be established by the silver bricks that must rise from their long resting place to delight the eyes of the sturdy and faithful miner."

To help bring about this awakening, a meeting of the miners was held with the view of concentrating efforts to fully develop a few claims in order to show the world that real values did exist in Como. Too much effort had already been expended to locate and hold "feet" along a ledge rather than to develop a claim.

Meeting in the National Hotel, it was agreed to appoint a committee to select one location and to concentrate heavily on



developing that particular claim. Selected was a claim freely given by the Green Mountain Mining Co. on the Montgomery Ledge and the stock books in the grand enterprise were open for one and all at the National Hotel. Stock was free to anyone—the only rub was an agreement that assessments would be faithfully satisfied.

By this time, people were leaving the Palmyra District. Adolph Sutro decided to try his luck elsewhere; eventually he built his famed tunnel. J. B. Winters, Superintendent of the Whitman Mill, departed to accept the presidency and superintendency of the Yellow Jacket Mine at Gold Hill. Other men left to acquire stature elsewhere. Among them were D. P. Pierce, Superintendent of the Betty O'Neal mine at Lewis (1882), W. C. Grimes, and Thomas Taylor, who became prominent men of Austin. Most other departures were not recorded but the 20 men who left Palmyra village for the Boise River (Idaho) country evoked this unheeded comment of the *Sentinel*: "They left a good thing for an uncertainty, and will live to regret the day they left Palmyra."

The hotel and furniture formerly belonging to Barrett and Johnson were offered for sale at a bargain—to a *cash* customer. Yet jolly Cross of the National made a trip to Petaluma, California to bring back his family, numbering almost a dozen, to "the halls of his castle on the fair slopes of our Como." While in Petaluma, he persuaded George A. Runk to come to Como to establish the Union Livery and Feed Stable at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Mill Street. Another encouraging sign was the re-opening of the former Pioneer Restaurant by J. Wager. Located on Main Street, adjoining the National Hotel, its new name was the Como Restaurant and Lodging House.

Lots were offered for sale by several parties but purchasers were duly warned by Harley Fay that H. C. Smith was no longer his partner and that Smith could not furnish good title. With his new partner, S. B. Hunt, Fay was offering lots at \$25 and up. Henry C. Smith, the accused, apparently was undisturbed by these charges, for in the next issue of the *Sentinel* he was offering over 1,000 lots in any part of Como or Smith's Southern or Western Addition at prices ranging from one dollar upward, a "rare opportunity for miners and families."

There was a problem with the postal service but a scribe from the Carson *Independent* said the complaints were not fair. "If you go to mail a letter early in the morning, you will find the postmaster indulging in a long morning sleep. Let him



sleep, there in a letter box which is always examined before the mail closes. Second complaint, 'The stage is not in sight, and here you have got the mail closed.' Many are not aware that every letter must be entered in a register, also on the waybill. Law requires the Palmyra mail to be carried only once a week, and that it be closed one hour before the stage arrives.

"Let's be patient, or else mail them at the two express offices—up to one minute before the stage leaves. . . . Another fact is that our postmaster receives the enormous sum of \$18 per month for all his trouble (and being obliged to get out of bed before he has his nap to make up the mail), we think he is as accommodating as most persons under the circumstances. Let no person find fault with a daily mail, for fear it *might be changed* to weekly."

Not always did things run smoothly in the local mining world. For example, Lewis Enderlin felt that the management of the Almonte Gold and Silver Mining Co. was mistreating its shareholders and brought the matter to the attention of all who might be interested by the following advertisement: After submitting a bid on 100 feet of tunnelling at \$11.50 a foot, Trustees awarded the contract to another at \$15 per foot. Enderlin then offered the following riddle: "Which of the two bids was the lowest—the bid at \$15 per foot or the bid at \$11.50 per foot, when both bidders are honorable men and able to give security? An arithmetical problem was solved in quite a new way by the majority of the present Trustees of said company, in opposition to all authority and common sense. But the majority of the Trustees, being uncommonly smart men, thought in their wisdom, the \$15 bid the lowest. The majority of the Trustees at the same time being so soft hearted and good natured that for pity's sake believing the undersigned in a suicidal humor, they refused to award him the contract at such starvation rates. The undersigned, being convinced of making his wages at the rate of \$11.50 per foot, was willing to give security for the faithful fulfillment of his contract." s/ Lewis Enderlin.

Alf Doten was a frequent contributor to the local paper. Describing a late spring trip to the summit of Mount Lincoln (now called Rawe Peak) in 1864, he glorified in the view of the town and also Mount Davidson, beyond Virginia City. Remaining patches of snow were helpful in quenching the thirst of the climbers but "one man, Van Doren, being of practical nature, poured a drop of brandy on the snow before eating it. We did not have any of this 'improvement,' hence did not try it."



An empty bottle left by an "ancient expedition" was found in a crevice and a sniff indicated that it was old bourbon whiskey. Inside was a scroll and, after fishing it out with a stick, Doten read:

"Frankie and Jerome  
Ascended Mount Lincoln's dome;  
And with a bottle of wine  
Had a jolly good time."

The license taken by these two was too much for Doten to pass without this comment: "Those ancients were poetical 'cusses' without a doubt, and are entitled to all due poetical license, but they couldn't play that on us for *wine*. We know whiskey when we smell it."

The sound of the noon whistle at the mill and normal hunger brought the men hurrying back to Como in an hour but, thinking ahead, the boys took time out to stop to gather bouquets of flowers for certain fair young ladies of Como. Doten again, at his romantic best!

Even spring weather could be a problem in Como. Unlike its colorful namesake in Italy, located at the end of a long lake and among flowers found at low altitudes, Como, Nevada, was 7,080 feet above sea level—a sharp contrast to the elevation of 650 feet of Como, Italy. Early in May 1864, a snowstorm dropped 18 inches one evening, quickly melting with no consequences. The next meteorological event, a heavy rainstorm a few weeks later, resulted in a flash flood down Main Street, carrying sagebrush and boulders along the way and depositing as much as a foot of mud in some kitchens. The Como Mill was severely affected; it lost its sluice boxes and the flood carried away its large water tank. The mill was closed for a time until repaired.

Around town, horseplay and fun continued. A dog fight was staged not far from town drawing a large crowd. Notwithstanding the strenuous efforts of Constable Andrews and his "entire posse" to prevent it, the performance came off as scheduled because the site of the match was a closely guarded secret until the last minute. Alf Doten's fighting dog, Kyzer, won the 33-round bout with J. B. Witherell's pup, Nero. Some \$10,000,000 in worthless Reese River mining stocks changed hands in the betting on the victor for the future Pacific Coast Championship, "even though the attendance was something short of 10,000 persons."

Prizefight bets were paid off, although some claimed that



**I'm Here!**  
**AT THE Dayton Theatre!**

"Again with Songs We Greet You."

**THE**  
**COMO AMATEURS**  
WILL GIVE THEIR SECOND PERFORMANCE  
**AT DOYLE'S THEATRE!**  
DAYTON, ON  
**TUESDAY EVEN'G!**  
JULY 5th, 1864,

On which occasion the following named gentlemen will appear:

WM. CARROLL,	FRANK GRAY,
BILLY BRYANT,	DICK FULLER,
ABE DUCROW,	GEO. BUCKLEY,
CHAS. RUSSELL,	CHAS. WHITE,
H. PESCADERO.	

Stage Manager, - - WM. CARROLL.  
Musical Director, - CHAS. RUSSELL.  
Business Manager, - - ABE DUCROW.

**PROGRAMME.**  
**PART FIRST.**

Operatic Overture.....	Full Band
Opening Chorus.....	Company
Have a Little Dance.....	Frank Gray
Swiss Warblers.....	Wm. Carroll
Rudy Gray.....	Geo. Buckley
Julius' Bride.....	Billy Bryant
Pretty Moth.....	Chas. Russell
Kiss Me Quick and Go.....	Chas. White
Gum Tree Canoe.....	Abe Ducrow
Grand Finale.....	Company

**GRAND WALK AROUND!!**  
**PART SECOND.**

Banjo Solo and Song.....	Abe Ducrow
Abraham's Daughter.....	Billy Bryant
Quartette.....	Carroll, Bryant, White and Buckley
Othello.....	Carroll and Bryant

AFTER WHICH THE HIGHLY AMUSING FARCE OF REE & LYLAND'S

**Burlesque Circus!**

will be performed, and in which the wonderful TRAINED ELEPHANT NIM-ROD; the Wild ARABIAN CAMEL; the celebrated Fighting and Performing DOG KYZER, and the TRAINED CAT FLORA, will be introduced; together with Feats of Strength and Agility, Gymnastics, Tight Rope, Legerdemain, Etc., too numerous to mention and of the most astounding character.

**To conclude with a Grand Ball**

Tickets of Admission, \$1; Children Half Price.--Doors open at 7½ o'clock; performance to commence at 8 o'clock. Front seats reserved for the Ladies.  
(COMO SENTINEL PRINT.)

Probably the last job printing done in Como. After 13 issues THE COMO SENTINEL (see last line of Playbill) moved to Dayton. Among the features was Alf Doten's dog Kyzer. (Playbill from author's collection.)



Nero had been drugged. Sharp words were exchanged by the owners of the dogs but, thanks to mutual friends and a visit to the Como Brewery, the two prospective combatants continued to be sworn friends once more.

Another fight—this time carried on legally in the District Court—resulted in a popular decision. Disturbed from his slumbers by the noisy celebrants, Deacon Smith had the whole crowd arrested. Trial was prompt and fines were levied: more drinks for the crowd, ordered the Court, and the party was even bigger than before.

Social activities of a more refined nature were provided by the dances at the National Hotel and the concerts of the Como Amateurs Club. One performance provided funds to benefit the Como Public School fund and another benefited the Sanitary Fund (Civil War Relief).

May Day was celebrated with a picnic in a little pine grove on the outskirts of town on April 30, as May 1 fell on the Sabbath. "In the afternoon a 'merrie companie' was there congregated together," a Queen of the May was crowned and the Como Brass Band blared forth with patriotic airs. The party reconvened at the National Hotel and dancing went on until midnight to the music of the Como Quadrille Band (probably the same as the Brass Band).

Times at Como had been gloomy, even though it was claimed that 25 mines were active. Notwithstanding its previous faithful support of Como, *The Como Sentinel* found the allure of the county seat (and perhaps enough financial support to fill the dinner pail) too strong to resist. The last issue with the Como banner appeared July 9, 1864—thirteen issues in all. The following Saturday it appeared at Dayton as the *Lyon County Sentinel* and continued publication for two more years.

Mrs. Jules Paymal struggled to operate her Como Laundry (Third Avenue and Smith Street), offering free delivery to any part of the Palmyra or Indian Springs Districts. But the slump was on, as Alf Doten wrote on July 27. Looking at the unfortunate experiences of the last year, he said that it was too bad that we could not see into the future for the thousands of dollars expended in tunnels and shafts at White Point would have been saved. "The Crossman and other kindred 'bilks' would never have been allowed to humbug the community as they did."

Wood cutting continued, not only by individuals but by a formal organization (Pine Mountain Wood Company), in spite of protests, pleadings and threats from hungry Indians. Having



lost their shirts in Como silver mining ventures, some of the town's most prominent citizens were burning charcoal with energy previously unknown in an attempt to restore their finances. Charcoal was considered an exportable product for use in the ore reduction furnaces, although gathering the wood involved potential perils.

Back in May, James Doherty, a 22-year-old man from Illinois, working at Gregory's Wood Ranch some three miles west of Como in Palmyra Canyon, was brutally murdered. As things from his camp were stolen and as moccasin tracks led to their camp a short distance south of Como, Indians were suspected. After an inquest, a posse of seven men set out for the camp. The Indians resisted and, while one escaped, the other was stopped by a bullet in his leg. Enough excitement was created to bring Governor Nye to Como to investigate the shooting of the Indians. The matter was allowed to drop and the choppers held full sway in the piñon forests.

In spite of dull times, picnics, evening parties or dances continued to fill the social calendar. There was a burglary involving a paramour with an Indian maiden and those who were not told the details verbally were intrigued with Doten's statement that "the richest and most important portion of the evidence in the case won't do to publish."

At the end of July, Russell withdrew his regular stages, but George Walton, the news agent, continued his daily trips for papers, mail and express matter. A week later a man named R. R. Roberts took over the route vacated by Russell and again there was service for awhile.

There was a flurry of excitement with the report that the Whitman had hit the best ore yet but this proved to be only a temporary cause for elation. The Amazon, under the direction of Superintendent Weston, was driving its tunnel 200 feet into the side of Amazon Hill, about a mile from Como.

News of Como became sparse when Alf Doten, its loyal champion and protector, left for Virginia City in October 1864 to be the local editor of the *Union*. That there was some life in the town in 1865 was indicated by the report that the Como Mill resumed operations on March 9 on ore from the Rey del Monte mine dumps. Operations, which had been scheduled to begin earlier, were delayed because of the intense cold weather. S. B. Hunt announced that he would build a new road from Dayton to Como, where he still maintained his residence.

This activity did not last long and people deserted Como. The



big departure was in 1865—it was almost a panic—the few remaining straggled down the hill over the next year or so. As a town of 1,500–2,000 and with a neighbor over the hill, Palmyra, with some 500 additional residents, the area attracted much attention—one report said that it was talked about as much as Virginia City (hardly likely, but an interesting comment anyway). According to the same report, the main street was a mile long, with not a vacant lot. Hotels were commodious and the saloons were crowded. The “rich ore” did not pay expenses. “Old miners say that Comstockers combined to crush the rising young camp, and that John B. Winters was the selected agent. He went there and took charge of the mill as soon as it was built, and, it is said, raised the mullers [grinding pan] so that the ore would not amalgamate, and the result was—collapse.” Still circulating 15 years later were reports of gross mismanagement and that thousands of dollars of “dead work” was done. One tunnel is said to have gone into the hill 100 feet, then turned right and gone another 100 feet, terminating within eight feet of the surface.

Perhaps there is a modicum of truth in these statements made in 1879 but the reader should remember that in subsequent revivals of Como varied methods of mining were tried and yet no bonanzas were found in Como.

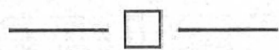
The town was left silent and deserted. Machinery from the ten-stamp mill was sold and hauled away. Some buildings were destroyed by fire, others by wind. In November 1865, a big wind leveled two houses and lifted roofs from barns and other houses. George Walton, officially considered to be the last resident of Como, narrowly escaped injury when the chimney was blown through the roof of his house.

George W. Walton became sort of a legend. Believing in spiritualism, he had utmost faith in Como mines, particularly the Buckeye, for which he obtained a patent. Known far and wide as “Old Como” he had a host of friends, though he lived all alone in his cabin in the center of Como. Supplies and grub he packed in on his back from Dayton as he religiously performed the assessment work on the Buckeye mine. He served two terms in the Nevada Assembly (1866–1867) and then was called to his home in Illinois on important business in 1871. He returned to Dayton on a Saturday and proceeded up to his cabin on Sunday, November 22, 1874. Apparently exhausted on his arrival in Como, he built a fire and went to bed. It is believed that sparks from the chimney set fire to the roof and flames engulfed the entire cabin



before he had a chance to escape. Three days later the cabin was discovered burned, along with the remains of a man, undoubtedly Walton. Fellow Masons arranged for a funeral and burial at Dayton.

Walton's departure marked the end of the first era. Truly, Como was a ghost town.



Old mining districts never really die but come back again and again. It is new people or old timers with renewed faith, thanks to new money or new methods, or a combination of these factors that result in a resurgence of activity in an old district.

In the summer of 1879, some parties visited Como and, while the reason which prompted their visit is not known, they were pleased with what they saw and passed the good news on to their friends. By fall, hundreds of claims had been located and the recorder was listing five or six more daily. At Como, mines noted in this revival included the Como-Yellow Jacket, Chieftan, Eureka, Silver Globe and Como Consolidated. Over at Palmyra, mines included the old Orizaba No. 1, Orizaba No. 2 (renamed North Rapidan), West Rapidan, May Day (the old Goliah), Mountain View, Sierra Nevada and Yuba.

The Eureka (formerly the Monte Cristo) was considered the most important mine and its future was rated "brilliant"—appropriate with some assays running from \$35 to \$700 per ton. A. Anderson, Kossuth Strada and others had been sending their ore to the Dayton mill, which yielded \$17.50 a ton, less hauling and milling costs of \$12 a ton. The proposition of a Mr. Welter to build a stamp mill at Palmyra and work the ore at \$10 a ton resulted in a contract. One five-stamp mill was built and another unit of the same size was part of the plan but it is doubtful if it was completed.

The Mountain View was being worked by Sutro men and the Yuba, quite a mine in the early days, now owned by Bentz and Welter, was to be thoroughly prospected. The Chieftan, formerly the Montgomery, was the furthest north of any mine in this revival, except for the Whitman, the big mine of former times. It, too, was reported to have flattering prospects.

At Palmyra, Orizaba No. 1 was idle, in sharp contrast to other years when veins of two to three inches of rich ore stimulated the great search. No large ore bodies were ever located



here. The West Rapidan was the principal mine at Palmyra. Owned by Hepworth, Lemmon, Shafer and McCulloch, its winze was down 165 feet and "the ore assays in the hundreds." One of the partners, J. H. Hepworth of Reno, worked for Adolph Sutro and John B. Winters when they ran the mine fifteen years before. An old mine car was found at the bottom of the shaft; its wheels and iron work were rotten and the wood parts crumbled to the touch. A wheelbarrow was unearthed but crumbled to pieces before it could be pulled to the surface.

Housing was a real problem as only two walls of the old cabins were left standing. One had formerly belonged to "Martin the Wizard," the saloonkeeper who doubled as a professional ventriloquist and juggler. No accommodations were available for man or beast visiting Como in October 1879. "Jolly" Cross had gone below years before to operate his National Hotel in Dayton. Welter built a small boarding house for his men working on the stamp mill. Hepperly and his crowd found living quarters in an old mine tunnel. With the absence of water and the addition of a few boards at the entrance, the men were reasonably comfortably housed, though in darkness.

The town was surveyed and claimed by William Rose and his new map was plastered on the wall of Martin's old cabin. The streets were renamed: Virginia, Carson, etc., and lots were sold rapidly at prices ranging from \$37 to \$200 each. There was trouble in the air for some people could see no reason justifying their buying a lot as they claimed the right to squat on unoccupied land of their choice.

In spite of protests of "civic planners" of the previous era who wished to keep some of the natural trees in the townsite, the timber was pretty well cut off around Como except for a skimpy growth of junipers, and these were fast disappearing. However, eight and ten horse teams were still hauling wood from places one to five miles away, as they had done for almost two decades. Delivered in town, it cost \$3-5 a cord. There was a good deal of harvesting of tree stumps. Four men, working for Welter, cut and gathered 75 cords in eleven days.

James C. Woodward, writing to the *Reno Weekly Gazette* at the end of October 1879, said that ample water could be found, for within  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles of Como there were seventeen springs, and the water in each of them was delightfully cold and pure. His knowledge was first hand; he tried them all.

Around town, good news came from the mines. The Eureka made another rich strike on October 24. Every blast brought



forth "white granular-looking quartz, literally spangled with free gold and black sulphurets of silver." A lucky soul was said to have refused \$5,000 for a quarter interest in the Carson claim. The universal observation around town was, "What a pity Walton is not alive now." Mrs. Walton was reported to be coming to Como to look after her former husband's Buckeye claim. Another patented claim was the Ohio, owned by Levi Diggs.

The problem of housing was being solved. There were but a few constructed by the end of October but a week later a dozen were built and occupied, and lumber for others was on the ground. A comfortable addition to good living was W. H. Vance's brand new saloon, with O. E. Nash installed as "agent." The second saloon soon appeared, and for awhile both did good business as the town continued to be crowded with visitors and speculators. Stage lines, operating again, were loaded down; many extra wagons had to be pressed into service.

Thanks to the efforts of forty workmen, the Welter mill was completed and by the end of the year 1879 was working "splendidly" on Eureka ore. Eight men were then employed by this mine, now down 80 feet. The Chieftan held the record for the deepest vertical shaft—200 feet. A total of eight mines were actually being worked and forty prospecting shafts were being sunk. More activity was in prospect; General Vernon of San Francisco came up with five men to develop the old Como Consolidated mine.

The population of Como was only 150, a far cry from the boom years of 1864. A livery stable and hay yard were established; both were badly needed. A second mill was in prospect and, toiling up the steep grade, prompted some men to *talk* of a railroad to Como. A large store and hall was erected by Tom Beers; still things were quiet, at least socially.

"Life in Como is not a mad whirl of fashionable dissipation, neither is a low state of public morality possible in a community where there are only three women, and those married, and no faro or other gambling games to buck against. Still the tone of the camp is rather more sober than devout. There is no church and no services whatever on Sunday. The camp, as yet, puts on no airs. All drinks are one bit, board seven dollars per week."

Although the ore assayed well, the Eureka mine did not pay. For some unexplained reason, most of the gold and silver was lost in the reduction process. The men interested in the mine were poor and work ceased when funds were exhausted. "No capitalists have ever spent any money developing mines [in



Como]—everything was done by poor men with faith," wrote James Delavan of Virginia City in March 1883. By this time all activity had ceased except at the Eureka Gold and Silver Mining Co. Some \$25,000 had been spent on development work on this mine, for its production was then attractive: two parts gold for one of silver. Under Supt. H. L. Symonds, the shaft had been extended to 200 feet, well timbered where necessary. Some 40-50 tons of ore had been taken from the old shaft and yields of \$100 per ton were expected. Most of the equipment for this mine—machinery, gallows frame, cars, wire rope and even buildings—was purchased from the Europa Company in Virginia.

Some activity continued in the next few years but Como became known as "an isolated community." According to the *Virginia City Enterprise*, "The people of Como are now as a community as solitary as though they were planted on Pitcairn's Island or on a patch of ground far out in the midst of the ocean. The mountains rise up about them as white and glittering as so many icebergs. If they are having a good time, they are having it all to themselves. They all deserve to become millionaires for the years they have toiled up there in the lone mountain."

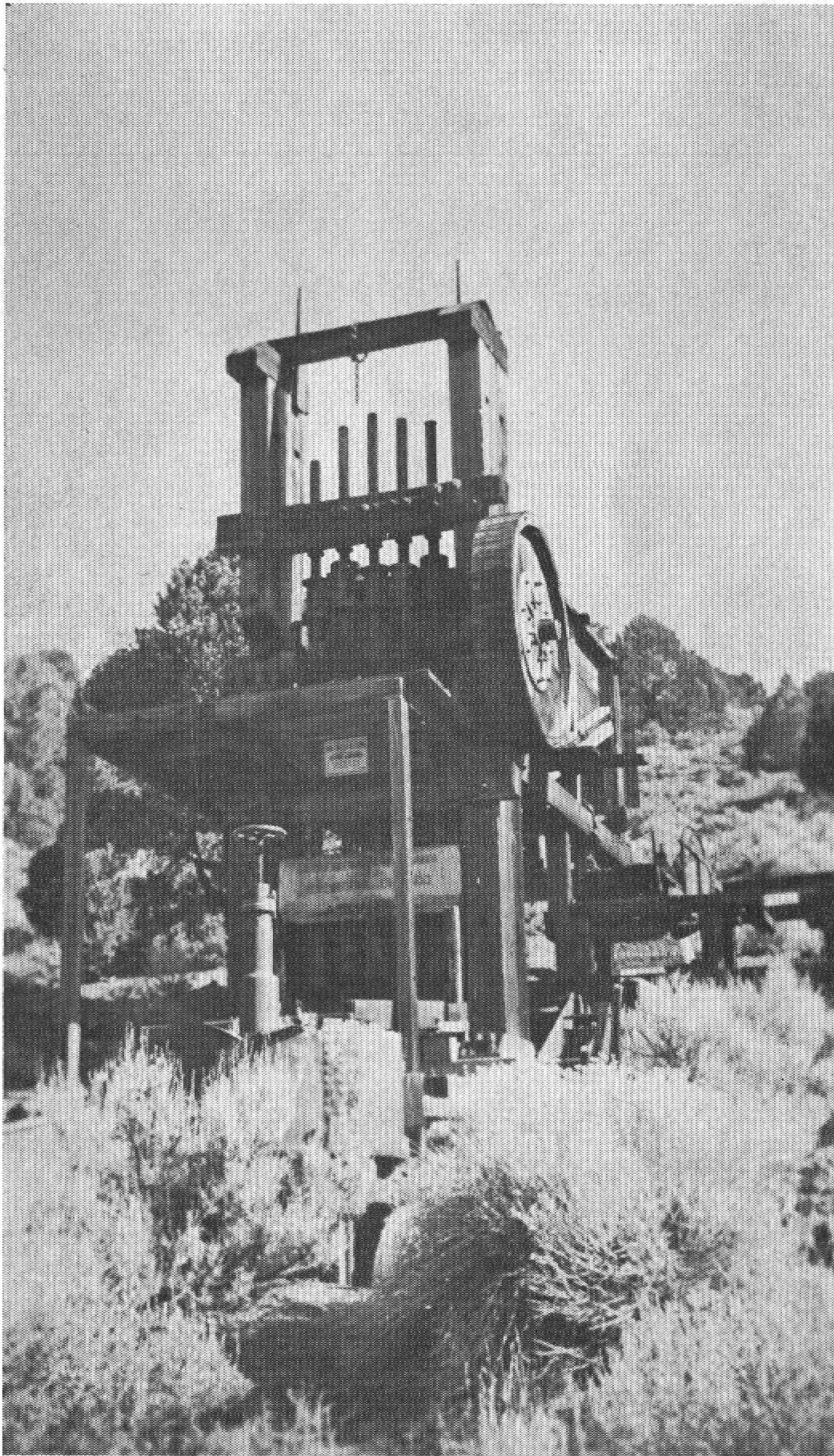
Again, five years later (1889), the *Enterprise* offered this charitable suggestion, perhaps thinking of spring or recalling the fate of "Old Como" Walton: "It would be a good plan to send a party up to Como to see if the miners there are still alive. They went into winter quarters upon their mountain with a good supply of grub, but it has been so long since they have been heard from that no one knows but they may all have been devoured by wild beasts."

In spite of the isolation and winter, work was going on and, in April 1889, the Como-Eureka started its pumps and began overhauling its machinery. Placer mining was conducted in the canyon below, advantageously using water pumped from the mine. That summer some very rich ore was reported on the Rapidan and Buckeye claims, in the latter assays of \$300 per ton were reported. Unfortunately, silver ore predominated in the camp and the weak silver market then prevailing retarded the development of the camp.



Little was heard of Como during the 1890's—all Nevada mining camps were affected by the decline in silver prices. Colonel Edward D. Boyle, an experienced and well-known mining man,



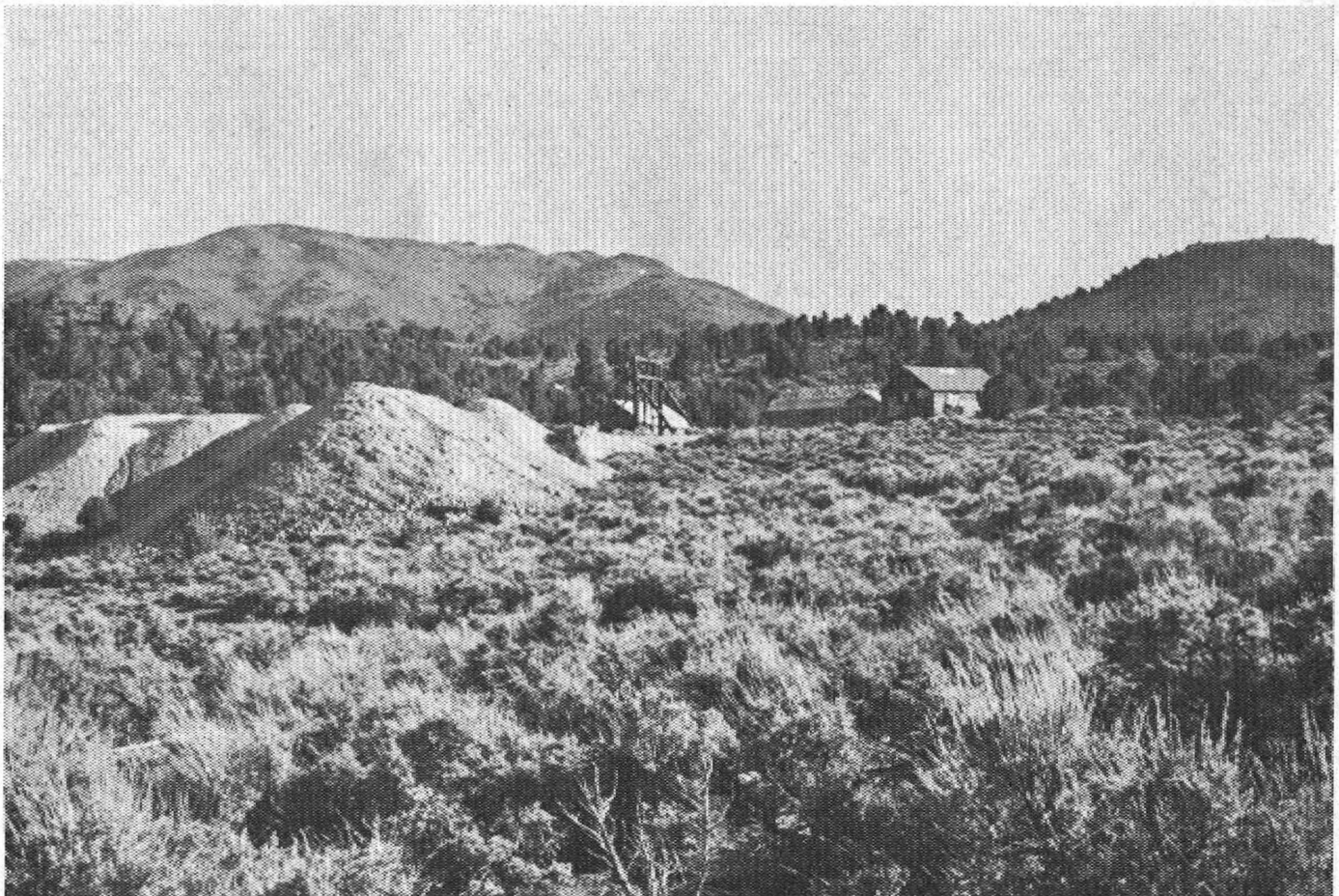


**Como Mines Company stamp mill.**



made a strike on the Brunswick Lode (near Virginia City) in May 1896. Two years later it was reported that Boyle would begin development shortly of the North Rapidan. Another group, Hulley and R. Logan, were successfully operating their new mill on ore from the Reno mine at Como.

Col. Boyle took charge of the North Rapidan in 1901. With hard work (the Boyle tunnel was driven 1,000 feet), prospects for the district were rapidly improving. Regrettably, Boyle was injured in a runaway while returning from Como to his home in Dayton. He recovered but apparently, through complications,



Mine at Upper Como showing headframe and partly completed building.

pneumonia set in and he died on February 9, 1902, five weeks after the accident. His son Emmet, later Governor of Nevada, took over the operation of the North Rapidan.

In the summer of 1902, Como again had come to the front. There was more employment than there had been for decades. Besides the Rapidan, the Como-Eureka was busy seven days a week with twelve men on the payroll at \$4 per ten-hour day. Board and lodging ran \$30 a month, and, with no time and no place to spend it, the miners must have been pretty flush when they came down from the mountain plateau. Having just struck a ten-foot ledge of "pay ore," the Company was grading a site for a reduction mill which was placed in service in February 1903.



The success of the miners at Como rankled some of the old wood and livestock men of the area. "It is amusing to see the old settlers scratch heads and hear them say, 'Well, by golly, I've tramped those Como hills for years driving cattle and cutting wood without thinking of looking for gold, and now every youngster that scratches around in the dirt a little gets some of the stuff.'", so noted the *Reno Gazette* of August 14, 1902.

In May 1903, a post office was established in the area for the third and last time; its duration was to be less than two years. Alf Doten, one of the early residents of Como, died in November 1903 after witnessing Como boom for the third time.

A boom was predicted for Como in 1904. The strike of high grade gold ore in the Como-Eureka (operated by the Federal Co.) infused new life into the district. Its mill was to be enlarged and the mill of the North Rapidan was to start again in the spring. It was also hoped that Hully-Logan would resume operations.

The Como-Eureka, with a shaft down 300 feet, and using a patched-up secondhand mill, was supposed to have turned out some \$250,000 in bullion before it succumbed. The Hully-Logan mine and ten-stamp mill were abandoned about the same time.

Control of the Como-Eureka passed into new hands in 1911 and emerged as the Nevada Deep Mines Co. Two Pennsylvania oil men, Guffy and Galey, sank a great deal of money in the development of the Buckeye and North Rapidan. Shortly before production was to begin, the backers got into financial difficulties and this property went into the hands of receivers.

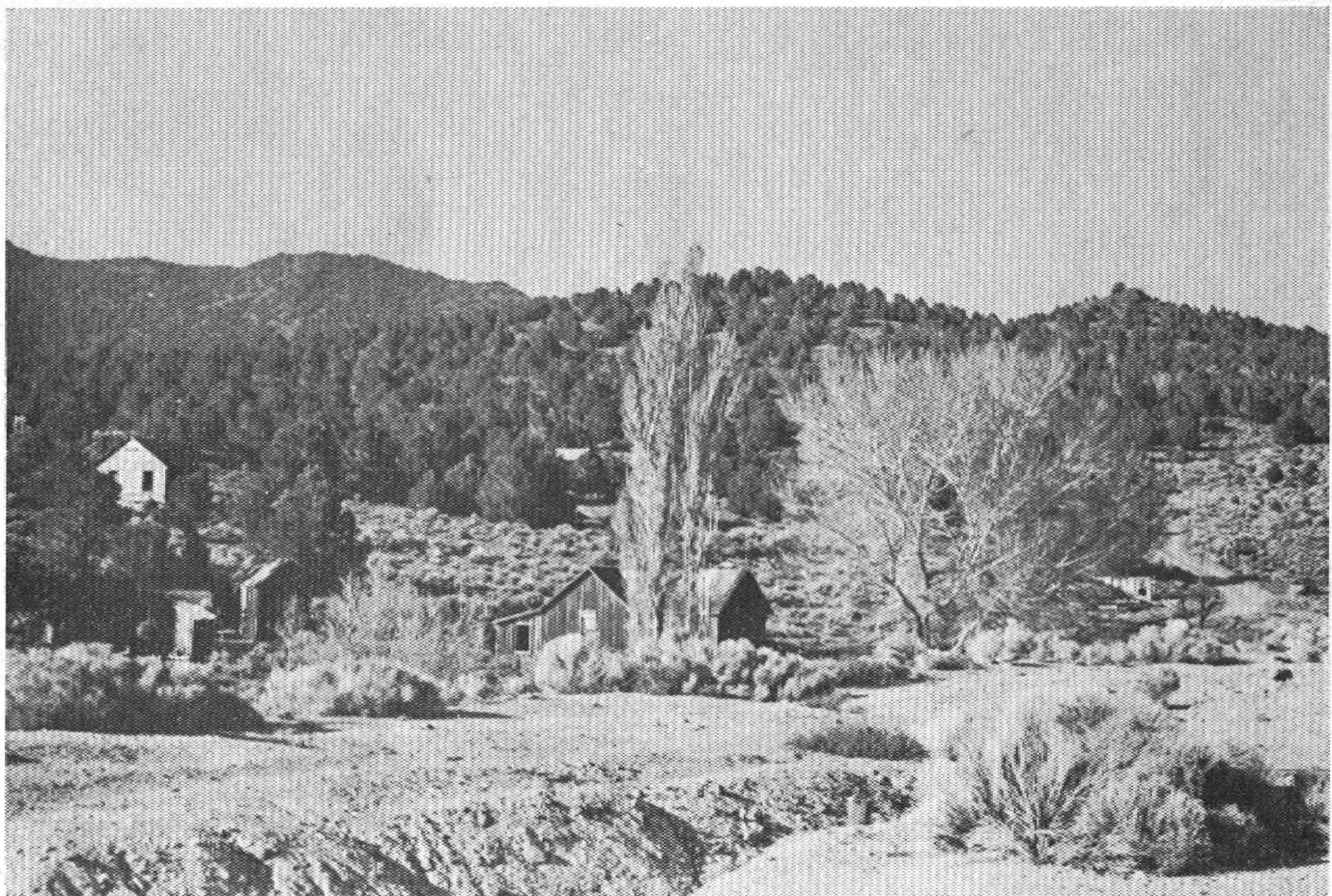
The Como Consolidated Mines Co. was formed in 1916 to acquire the Buckeye, Rapidan and Como-Eureka mines. The period from April 1918 to September 1920 was marked with great activity, to be followed by a long period of idleness. After coming into the hands of the Como Mines Co., the long Boyle tunnel was extended and a 300-ton flotation mill was completed in June 1935. Until there was a change in the operating management, losses of \$15,000 per month were recorded in 1935. A change in mining policy reduced the monthly losses to \$6,000. Henry C. Carlisle, a well-known mining engineer, was called in to examine the property. Although almost \$300,000 had been taken out in the previous twelve months, profitable operation was impossible and Carlisle recommended that the mine be closed immediately, which was done. Receivership of the Company followed shortly; it was too late to save it.

Some men continued to work the mines in Como but the results,



at best, could be considered no more than marginal. Nine small operators worked during parts of 1939. No production was recorded during World War II but there was a little activity noted in 1949 and 1950.

After the 1936 shutdown a few individuals leased the mines in Como. Production was small but the spirits of the four renegade Irishmen working the mines in 1940 were jolly. The brogue was delightful and the stories equally so. Paddy Haggarty announced with a chuckle that there was a bounty on his head. According to his story, he was Field Marshall in the Irish



Como 1962—Palmyra 1863

Republic Army. Jailed, he escaped and made his way to this country, ending up in Como. Sharing the cabin with him were two other men, each had his own corner. In Paddy's corner, a large map of Europe was marked with pins denoting the developments of the early stages of World War II. Another man had pictures of prize fighters in his corner. He had engaged in an exhibition match with Gene Tunney in Paris some 20 years before and carried a broken nose as a proud souvenir of the great event. The third man's corner was an extensive art gallery, specializing in the undraped female form, much to the displeasure of the others. However, it was his corner and that settled the matter.

The cabin was clean and neat; from the ceiling hung hams and cheeses and around the remaining walls was the typical



mining cabin insulation—newspaper mats. In the nearby bunk-house lived the fourth man with his wife and children. Entertainment was always at its best when Paddy engaged in some hair-raising story of the Irish Revolution.

Paddy and his friends went off to other mines as World War II progressed and again Como rested in silence. Some attempts were made at mining in 1949–1950—there were then typical old mine hopes of uranium but nothing developed.

The visitor who ventures up the steep road from Dayton will find Como a true ghost town—not a soul to be found. Nine miles from Dayton is a solitary four-stamp mill. A few turns further are a number of frame houses of Paddy's era among a few cottonwood trees and long mine dumps. The stone walls of the two buildings at Como, about a mile beyond, are probably the monument to the hard work and faith of almost a century ago. One might even be the remaining walls of Martin's Telegraph Saloon. Mill foundations and gallows frames of more recent construction indicate that Como has always found some people with enough faith to try again. Although quiet now, renewed interest and activity in the future is not entirely improbable for old mining districts never really die but live again and again.

### REFERENCE NOTES

Research material for the Como article was obtained from the Nevada Historical Society, Bancroft Library, University of California, the Sutro Library, San Francisco, and the Library of the California Division of Mines. Also Mrs. Zoray A. Kraemer.

The following newspapers were used for the Como story:

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# MID-PACIFIC RAILROAD

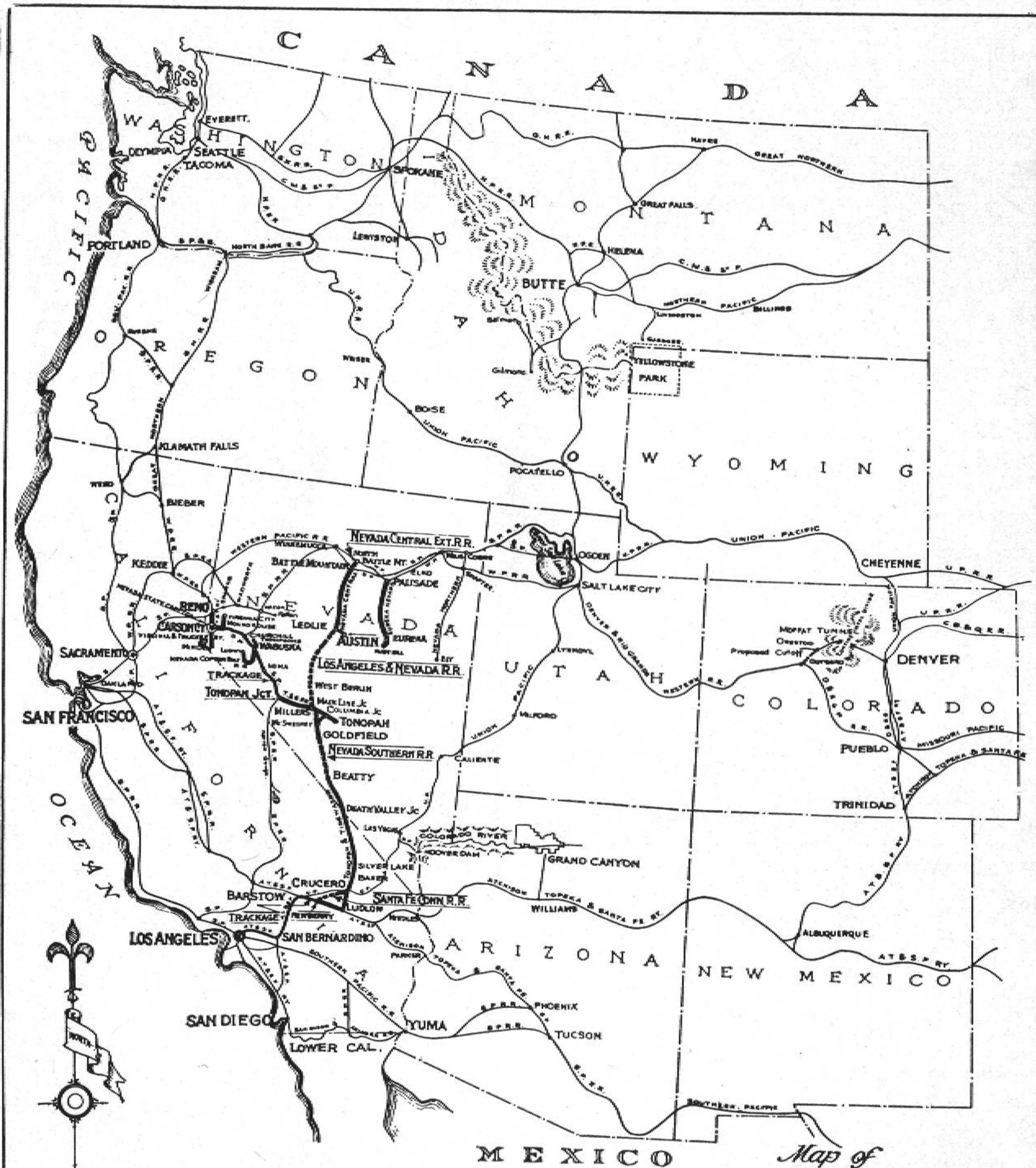
DAVID F. MYRICK

In the light of current discussions of railroad consolidations, the proposal to join six Nevada railroads into a single system under the banner of the Mid-Pacific Railroad some thirty years ago is of interest today.

This little known proposition, which at one time seemed likely to materialize, is taken from a two-volume history on Nevada and Eastern California railroads, by David F. Myrick, member of the Nevada Historical Society Board of Directors.

Publication of the first volume of the history is scheduled for late 1962, with the second to follow next year.





Prepared in the Office of  
James H. Payne, Consulting Engineer, Los Angeles.

*Map of  
proposed  
Mid-Pacific Railroad  
To be formed by the merger of the  
following Rail Units.*

- | <u>Existing Roads.</u>   | <u>Proposed Roads.</u>        |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Tonopah & Tidewater R.R. | San Joaquin Connecting R.R.   |
| Tonopah & Goldfield R.R. | Nevada Southern R.R.          |
| Nevada Central R.R.      | Los Angeles & Nevada R.R.     |
| Virginia & Truckee R.R.  | Nevada Central Extension R.R. |
| Nevada Copper Belt R.R.  |                               |
| Eureka Nevada R.R.       |                               |



## MID-PACIFIC RAILROAD

Data for the Mid-Pacific Railroad history was obtained from papers in the archives of the Nevada Historical Society and from correspondence with the late J. G. Phelps Stokes of New York and Andrew Stevenson, Jr., of Washington D. C.

Late in 1929 a group of men, headed by Andrew Stevenson, formed the Nevada Manhattan Corporation to develop a plan to weld together six short-line railroads in Nevada into one system 1,000 miles long. The route formed a great "Y" with Reno and North Battle Mountain being at the northern ends of the "Y," which joined at Millers, and continued through Goldfield and to Barstow, California. Forming this route, with connecting lines, were the Virginia & Truckee, Nevada Central, Tonopah & Goldfield and Tonopah and Tidewater. Two other lines, the Eureka Nevada and the Nevada Copper Belt would also be part of the system which was to be called the Mid-Pacific Railroad. (This should not be confused with the Mid-Pacific Railway, a three-mile line operated by the U. S. Army in Hawaii.)

Andrew Stevenson, whose previous railroad experience included a turn on the C&EI and the Wabash, completed his 400-page report in August 1932. The two and one-half year study was thorough. It included a physical examination of the existing lines and such aspects as traffic, financial, operating and necessary rehabilitation. The proposed connecting lines were surveyed and mapped and the results and possibilities of the merged system were fully explored.

Under the 1932 plan as detailed in the proposed *Consolidation and Merger Agreement* between the Nevada Manhattan Corporation and the various railroads, each line was to cause its securities to be exchanged for those of the Mid-Pacific and additionally they would make a cash subscription for \$100,000 of the common stock of Mid-Pacific to cover part of the cost of the remaining field work and necessary legal expenses. The Nevada Manhattan Corporation would also receive stock in the company as reimbursement for money spent on surveys and reports and for part of the construction cost of the connecting lines. Mid-Pacific bonds, to be sold to the public, were to cover the bulk of the cost of these connections.

Under the plan of consolidation and merger, the following lines were to be unified into one system:



*Existing Roads:*

Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad Company  
Tonopah & Goldfield Railroad Company  
Virginia & Truckee Railway Company  
Nevada Central Railroad Company  
Nevada Copper Belt Railroad Company  
Eureka Nevada Railway Company

*New Roads to be Constructed:*

Nevada Southern Railroad Company  
Los Angeles and Nevada Railroad Company  
Nevada Central Extension Railroad Company  
Santa Fe Connecting Railroad Company

*Trackage Rights to be Acquired:*

Southern Pacific Company—Mound House to Tonopah Jct.,  
Nevada  
The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company—  
Newberry Springs to Barstow, California

Under the original plan, the following work was to be done:

*Existing Roads:*

T&T: Rehabilitate entire main line of 169 miles, including relaying main line with 90-lb. secondhand rail.

T&G: Rehabilitate main line, including replacing light rail between Tonopah and Goldfield with 90-lb. secondhand rail and rebuilding abandoned cutoff between McSweeny Junction and Main Line Junction.

NCB: Minor additions for anticipated heavier motive power.

V&T: Rehabilitate main line from Reno to Mound House, 41 miles. There was a plan to build a grade along the Carson River from Merrimac (5.6 miles east of Carson City) to Dayton on the S.P. Mound House branch. New grade would be .6 percent vs. 2.4 percent on V&T between Merrimac and Mound House and the present 2.5 percent on the S.P. between Dayton and Mound House. Some minor grade reductions would also be made between Reno and Carson City.

NC: This line would be standard guaged for the entire distance, 90-lb. secondhand rail would be installed and a complete secondary shop would be established at Battle Mountain.

EN Ry.: Minor addition and betterments would be made, standard guage ties would be installed, but the line would be left narrow guage for the present time.



*New Roads:*

**Nevada Southern:** This road would be built from Goldfield to Beatty. Using the old Bullfrog-Goldfield grade from Beatty to near Ancram (MP 0 to MP 18), then building a new grade across desert for 26 miles (MP 18 to MP 44), then regrade the abandoned Las Vegas & Tonopah grade from Wagner to three miles north of Ralston, a distance of 15 miles (MP 44 to MP 59). The remaining twenty miles to Goldfield would be over a new grade (MP 59 to MP 79).

**Los Angeles and Nevada:** This proposed line extended from Millers, on the T&G, to Ledlie (near Austin) on the Nevada Central, a distance of 111 miles. The route passed through the Ione Valley, crossing the Ione Mountains at Railroad Pass into the Reese River Valley. Original plans called for a 7,392-foot tunnel at the summit, but this was discarded after later surveys as a maximum grade of .8 percent was possible under a revised plan.

**Nevada Central Extension Railroad:** This was a seven-mile connection between Battle Mountain (northern terminus of the Nevada Central) and the Western Pacific at North Battle Mountain. This line involved embankments of ten to twenty feet high and the only bridge (across the Humboldt River) over the entire line as small trestles and wooden culverts would suffice elsewhere.

**Santa Fe Connecting Railroad:** This plan, later dropped, was to furnish a low grade line from Crucero on the T&T to Newberry (Springs) on the Santa Fe, a distance of 36 miles. The line paralleled the LA&SL for fifteen miles from Crucero through Afton Canyon (trackage possibilities were noted). The line would avoid two 1.5 percent grades on the T&T and would be 25 miles shorter.

The cost of rehabilitating the six existing lines was estimated to be \$4,678,000 and the cost of building and equipping the four new lines was \$5,980,000 or a total cost of \$10,658,000. Later an estimate by a Los Angeles construction firm, limited to a minimum amount of work necessary to complete a through standard guage line, was given of \$5,123,000. This did not include the Santa Fe Connecting line (\$1,039,000), equipment, supplies, etc. of \$2,670,000 nor another \$275,000 for engineering work.

Andrew Stevenson was a hard worker and might have accomplished the merger if the nation, and these railroads in particular, were not suffering economically. In 1931 the combined gross revenues of the six roads totaled \$585,000. Net railway operating



income was a red figure of \$104,000, and after interest charges the loss reached \$315,000. It was hoped that by connecting these lines new traffic patterns would be established over this system, developed primarily as a bridge line. Bridge traffic would have been largely dependent on the effects of solicitation and the willingness of the Santa Fe and the Western Pacific to share the division of the through rate with the Mid-Pacific which would not be necessary by the direct interchange at Stockton, California. Had one of the northern transcontinental lines been interested in reaching Southern California and been willing to lend a helping hand, the picture would have been improved. None came forward, although the plan was described as "bringing the Great Northern into Los Angeles." To make matters less encouraging, local traffic prospects were dim. One of the reasons for considering the merger proposal was the realization that a complete system certainly had more appeal, and, if built up, could be sold far more readily than six little disconnected unhappy rails.

Early in 1932 the project was strengthened when Robert W. Campbell joined the group. He was an attorney, with offices in Los Angeles and Chicago, and perhaps even more important, he was the son-in-law of Judge Gary, a dominant figure in business and politics. It was Campbell who drew up the many documents necessary for the merger. Shortly after the documents were distributed to the interested parties outlining the basis of exchange of securities, Great Britain went off the gold standard and, with ownership of the Tonopah & Tidewater vested with Borax Consolidated, Ltd. of London, it was necessary to revalue the securities accordingly. Then, before the new agreements could be signed the United States went off the gold standard, and more revisions had to be made.

The load proved to be too much for Stevenson and he passed away in December 1933 after a few week's illness. Campbell, and his associate, John McHenry, attempted to carry on. Times were a bit better now and there were some signs of encouragement. True, Ogden Mills of the V&T, had some reservations as to the form of the merger but it was expected that this would present no serious problem. W. L. Haehnlen, a receiver for the T&G, was very enthusiastic about the project (even if short of cash) as it would put his road on the map and would be highly beneficial to the short lines in Nevada. In April 1934 he took the matter up with the famed Van Sweringen brothers but, while



interested, it was indicated that it was not sufficiently attractive to produce necessary financial support from them.

Other parties became involved. Senator Tasker Oddie took a hand in the project but he too was unsuccessful in obtaining financial aid. John McHenry in carrying on the plan tried to interest Aurthur Curtis James (through T. M. Schumacher) in the line as a Southern California feeder for his Western Pacific but this also received a negative response. The time was now June 1934 and the increasing number of railroad receiverships created a discouraging picture for new railroad enterprises. Further work became futile and the Mid-Pacific project quietly vanished. It was never really in the public eye as it never reached the stage calling for public announcement although a Carson City newspaper in 1934 revealed the general plan.



