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**Quarterly**



**Fall • 1971**

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# NEVADA Historical Society Quarterly

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EDITOR

WILBUR S. SHEPPERSON

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## THE COVER

Burial site at  
Lost City. See  
story on page 47.

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*Senator Key Pittman*



## *Overview of Articles in This Issue*

IN OCTOBER, 1970, Reno was host city for the annual meeting of the Western History Association. At one of the sessions, Professor John Brennan of the University of Colorado read a paper called "The Politics of Silver in the New Deal: Pittman, Roosevelt, and the Domestic-Silver Subsidy, 1933"; Professor Fred Israel of the City University of New York presented remarks on "Key Pittman and New Deal Politics"; and Professor Gilman Ostrander of the University of Missouri at St. Louis commented on the two other papers. The three articles are being brought together for this issue of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*.

The research and point of view for Mr. Brennan's article are the same as for his recently published *Silver and the First New Deal* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1969). He characterizes Senator Key Pittman of Nevada as an industrious and realistic proponent of legislation to relieve the silver producers, a man who used "rational and effective techniques to achieve his legislative goals," whose "personal qualities assured his welcome among Roosevelt's advisors and assistants." In scholarly fashion, Brennan assesses Pittman's economic usefulness. The senator was, he argues, the author of the only concrete achievement of the London Economic Conference of 1933, and a statesman whose personal characteristics "improved the atmosphere for negotiations" at this important gathering. Pittman is praised for his striving for attainable objectives, his shrewd ability to get the strongest possible silver legislation passed, and for what he did to stimulate mining production and employment. The author concludes, "the mining industry responded enthusiastically and thousands of men returned to work."

Mr. Israel's Key Pittman bears no similarity to Mr. Brennan's. Israel's article is a reiteration of views more lengthily presented in his book *Nevada's Key Pittman* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963). Pittman was, in Israel's viewpoint, merely a provincial "agent for the people of Nevada," a man preoccupied by local issues, who unfortunately occupied, in the 1930s, the chairmanship of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "Foreign relations were too much for him to handle and perhaps realizing that he was not competent for the job, he compensated with depressive reactions, perhaps anticipating failure." Throughout the article Israel focuses on Pittman's alcoholic binges. The author concludes that Roosevelt and his advisers "humored" Pittman, and "tried to make him think that he was the trusted adviser." In Israel's damning opinion, "a study of Pittman's tenure as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee is an excellent argument for changing the current congressional seniority system."

Mr. Ostrander agrees wholeheartedly with Israel against Brennan. Reiterating the conclusions of his *Nevada, the Great Rotten Borough, 1859-1964* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. 142-150, 177-188, he too emphasizes Pittman's alcoholic excesses and his provincialism, while raising the interesting point that Pittman's efforts to raise the price of silver had very little to do with Nevada's future development—that in fact the senator seriously misread the future of the state, and ultimately helped only outside mine owners such as the Guggenheim interests.

Israel and Ostrander may have seriously underestimated Senator Pittman. One of Roosevelt's chief advisers in 1933, Raymond Moley, has recently written that Pittman's counsel actually was valued very highly by the president because of the senator's "wide knowledge of national issues generally" and his political experience. According to Moley, Pittman had a "brilliant mind" which was not limited "at all" by "local necessities."<sup>1</sup> Many Nevadans would have agreed, as Pittman was often criticized for not having much interest in the Silver State except at re-election time. And as head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Pittman consistently in the 1930s warned of the threat posed to the United States by Germany, Italy, and Japan. This writer fails to see why Pittman should be especially criticized for his attempts to protect the Nevada silver industry: ninety-five other contemporary senators could be accused of similar provincialism—that is if they wished to be re-elected. Why subsidies to silver are *per se* any worse than subsidies to shipbuilding, airlines, and agricultural products remains an opaque point. In this writer's opinion, Israel, by concentrating exclusively on Pittman's frailties, and lacking any compassion or respect for his subject, gives a much too one-sided and biased view of the senator.

But Brennan's article also poses problems, for he does not convince one that special silver legislation did much ultimate economic good for Nevada or even for the West. Brennan's overly optimistic conclusion that the "mining industry responded enthusiastically and thousands of men returned to work" is blunted by his own footnote (note 63) that metal mining employment in the mountain states rose only 9 percent from 1930 to 1940 and remained considerably below 1920 levels. Ostrander's criticism that the future of Nevada lay in another direction from silver mining, and that Pittman misread the state's future, seems to have pertinence in this context.

The three articles evaluate an enormously fascinating man, and come to widely divergent conclusions. In this writer's viewpoint, Pittman is worthy of some further assessment by historians.

JEROME E. EDWARDS

### Notes

1. Raymond Moley, *The First New Deal* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), pp. 368-371.

# ***The Politics of Silver in the New Deal***

*Pittman, Roosevelt, and the  
Domestic-Silver Subsidy, 1933*

by John A. Brennan

LATE IN 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt decided to subsidize silver mining in the United States. He initiated this policy through a presidential proclamation under the emergency monetary powers granted him in the Thomas amendment to the Agricultural Adjustment Act of May, 1933. That Act, intended to lift agriculture from the depths of economic depression, provided a means for increasing income from such basic agricultural products as corn, wheat, and cotton. The following year additional legislation added sugar beets and tobacco to the aid lists. With cotton and tobacco for the South, corn and wheat for the Middle West, sugar beets and silver for the arid West, these production subsidies formed an obvious sectional pattern.

This paper discusses the events leading to the president's silver-subsidy proclamation from the perspective of its chief advocate, Senator Key Pittman of Nevada. A Democrat from Tonopah, Pittman was first elected in 1912 and served continuously until his death in 1940. His

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**John A. Brennan** is a graduate of Michigan State University and holds advanced degrees from the University of Colorado. Since 1964 he has been Curator of the Western History Collection at the University of Colorado. He is the author of a book and several articles dealing with silver and monetary policy in the New Deal era. The present paper was read before a session of the Western History Association at its meeting in Reno in October, 1970.

activities promoting the white metal during 1933 were varied, persistent, and ultimately persuasive. He sought legislation during the spring, and that summer became a delegate to the London Economic Conference. There, Pittman negotiated agreements helpful to silver producers with delegates representing eight nations. Later the president ratified these accords by exercising his emergency monetary powers. The senator's efforts were effective because he strove for attainable objectives.

Despite criticism by constituents, most western senators were realists on the silver issue, and Pittman was the most persistent. His efforts that year to secure silver purchases were sharply criticized by some westerners, who said his willingness to compromise would prevent its remonetization. Replying to a complaint from Jonathan Bourne, a former colleague from Oregon and a Progressive Republican who prompted Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana to advocate bimetallism,<sup>1</sup> Pittman admitted that his theory of legislation was one of compromise: "I would rather take one step at a time, than eternally fall through an attempted too broad a jump."<sup>2</sup>

Within a month after Roosevelt's inauguration, Pittman began working for an agreement between the new administration and the silverites. On April 5, 1933, he was host at a private dinner for legislators and presidential advisers. Pittman's gathering honored William H. Woodin, Roosevelt's amiable and able secretary of the Treasury. Also present were seventeen members of the Congress, who had introduced silver legislation during the preceding thirty days, and Assistant Secretary of State Raymond Moley, the president's legislative liaison. Each legislator had an opportunity to explain his ideas to Woodin. Pittman encouraged the secretary to select the proposal most compatible with monetary policies then being formulated. The measures proposed were both intricate and controversial, however, and Woodin refused to be committed.<sup>3</sup>

Despite his persistence and seeming single-mindedness, Pittman used rational and effective techniques to achieve his legislative goals. He listened to and shared credit with his colleagues. These traits plus his personal qualities assured his welcome among Roosevelt's advisers and assistants.<sup>4</sup> These persons were comparatively inexperienced in Washington, where Pittman had been acquiring expertise for nearly twenty years. Furthermore, he was an able, persuasive legislator, well versed on his objective—the rehabilitation of silver—and he knew how to achieve it, so long as Roosevelt did not bar the way. The latter's commanding prestige during the early period of his administration prevented any legislative action which he outspokenly opposed. Later events indicated that the senator never overlooked that fact.

Pittman was doubtlessly pleased when the western senatorial group, dubbed the Silver Bloc, steadily augmented its power and influence during the first years of the New Deal. This resulted from a combination of circumstances. The nation was ready to experiment with new ideas to

improve economic conditions. Inflationists in the Farm Bloc approved and even sponsored silver legislation. The senators' differences of opinion were subordinated to satisfy constituents interested in mining and its prosperity. The Bloc was ably led by Pittman, who was also chairman of the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations and its president pro tem. Finally, perhaps of more importance than the foregoing, Franklin D. Roosevelt sought to restore the economy through aid to industry, agriculture, and labor. He did not object to a subsidy for the mining interests.

Following his inauguration on March 4, 1933, the new president called Congress into special session to cope with the banking crisis then threatening the nation's financial system. Five days later it swiftly adopted the measures proposed by the chief executive. These resolved the emergency if not the underlying problems, and the Congress remained in session for the following three months. During that period it adopted many other important measures, including aid to agriculture.

Pittman began his drive for silver legislation on March 9, 1933, the first day of the special session known as the "100 days" Congress, by introducing three proposals. Senate Bill 145 permitted the Treasury to accept silver in lieu of gold from foreign governments as installments on war debts due the United States government. Senate Bill 146 authorized the Treasury to make limited purchases from current domestic production. Senate Bill 147 authorized the Treasury to buy on the world market. The purchase programs would be self-supporting: silver certificates were to be issued as payment for the silver, and the silver was to be coined in silver dollars and held for redemption of the circulating paper.<sup>5</sup> None of these measures became law, although the ideas turned up later in other pieces of legislation.

On April 17, 1933, during debate on amendments to Roosevelt's farm bill, the Senate devoted an entire legislative day to the silver question. A weekend of intensive political activity and newspaper comment preceded this clash over "free silver." During the hours of tedious argument, the Silver Bloc vigorously supported the principle of bimetallism. Despite opposition by Democratic leaders, the vote was unexpectedly close, thirty-three to forty-four, with nineteen not voting. While only a third of the senators approved the bill, less than half voted against it. Apparently, a majority favored some form of inflation, if not the defeated measure. The vote told the Roosevelt administration that it must cope with congressional demands for inflation.<sup>6</sup>

The balloting on "free silver" had a startling aftermath. Immediately following the vote, Senator Elmer Thomas of Oklahoma offered a measure that combined several well-known ideas into one politically powerful compendium.<sup>7</sup> It included his own paper money scheme,<sup>8</sup> the bimetallism amendment, and a plan to reduce the dollar's gold content. Thomas had made an important change in each of the foregoing measures, however. He asked that the president be authorized, but not required, to undertake

monetary inflation. As the senator specifically intended, he at once united the competing inflationist groups.<sup>9</sup>

The Thomas amendment caused a sensation. Immediately after a clerk completed its oral reading, Majority Leader Joseph Robinson of Arkansas ended debate. Impressive support emerged within hours.<sup>10</sup> Organized inflationists contributed to the clamor. Dozens of western farmers demanding monetary relief had descended on Washington at the behest of John A. Simpson, president of the National Farmers' Union.<sup>11</sup> The Committee for the Nation to Rebuild Prices and Purchasing Power also strongly supported Thomas's inflationary measure.<sup>12</sup>

The strength of the amendment's supporters prompted the administration to reassess the situation. Informed opinion was unanimous; the amendment could easily pass both houses of Congress. Senate leaders, presidential advisers, and even political columnists Walter Lippmann and Arthur Krock agreed. For proof, observers pointed to those voting "nay" on remonetization. Their ranks included several known inflationists; Moley took this information to the president.<sup>13</sup>

On April 18, 1933, Roosevelt accepted the Thomas amendment. Its opponents failed to change his mind. The popular demand for monetary action overrode the best judgment of his associates.<sup>14</sup> Of these, only Budget Director Lewis Douglas asserted his opposition vigorously. James P. Warburg, another "sound money" adviser and the scion of a famous banking family, later wrote that "no one, as far as I know, in administration circles, unless it was the President himself, had any idea" that previous monetary policies would be altered.<sup>15</sup> Later, Warburg referred to the Thomas amendment as "an exceedingly narrow squeak."<sup>16</sup> His comment supported Moley's overall assessment, since the latter credited pure circumstance—"the prosaic results of a counting of noses in the Senate"<sup>17</sup>—as being the decisive factor. He later said of these events that "rationalizations—the business of making a virtue of necessity—came after the decisions were made."<sup>18</sup>

The president's views on the Thomas amendment were not recorded at that time. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has noted that the president "could only give a fraction of his attention to monetary questions." He also suggests that the president's attitude on monetary matters seemed to express "a heretical feeling that on some issues Elmer Thomas might be nearer right than Lewis Douglas." Like Roosevelt's advisers, Schlesinger had to speculate on this point. Warburg later complained that he was not "able to pin the man down so that he would really think about it—a very odd experience."<sup>19</sup>

Prior to April 18, the most precise indication of Roosevelt's attitude appeared in his letter of April 5 to Colonel Edward M. House: "It is simply inevitable that we must inflate and though my banker friends will be horrified, I am still seeking an inflation which will not wholly be based on additional government debt."<sup>20</sup>

Roosevelt's economic advisers disputed his decision to accept inflation. Meeting with them to discuss the forthcoming world economic conference, the president announced his decision to support the Thomas amendment and to abandon the gold standard. Immediately, "hell broke loose" in the room, according to Raymond Moley, followed by two hours of intense discussion of monetary policy. Key Pittman was present and defended both of the president's decisions.<sup>21</sup>

The next day, Moley, Warburg, Douglas, and Pittman reworked the Thomas amendment. Their labors began that morning in the Committee on Foreign Relations' conference room and ended late that night in Moley's apartment. The new draft retained optional authority to issue greenbacks, but limited the amount to three billion dollars. It also permitted the president to fix the weight of the gold and the silver dollars and to establish the ratio of silver to gold.

The revised Thomas amendment bore evidence of Pittman's influence. It permitted the Treasury, at the president's discretion, to accept limited amounts of silver at no more than fifty cents per ounce in payment of obligations due the United States from foreign governments for a period of six months after enactment. It further provided authority to coin standard silver dollars from such silver and to issue silver certificates backed by the silver dollars retained in the Treasury.<sup>22</sup>

The practical effect of the Thomas amendment depended upon one inscrutable man, Franklin D. Roosevelt. That fact boosted confidence among inflationists. The president had indicated a disposition toward monetary inflation when he decided to abandon the gold standard as a permanent policy. His decision portended, so it seemed to observers (some fearfully, others hopefully), a policy of monetary experimentation intended to expand the currency and to raise commodity prices. For the time being, this measure pacified inflationists in the Senate.

Of significance for this paper were Pittman's activities relating to the Silver Agreement signed at the Monetary and Economic Conference held at London that June. The League of Nations sponsored this conclave pursuant to requests from the European nations. American agreement to participate had stipulated that the agenda include the silver problem,<sup>23</sup> that is to say a discussion of the low price of silver and its impact on international trade and monetary problems.

In April, 1933, Roosevelt asked Pittman to be a conference delegate. He readily accepted, thereafter assisting the president's advisers in devising statements on monetary gold and silver consonant with the unorthodox presidential views. Raymond Moley later informed Roosevelt that "Pittman is [the] only member of [the] delegation able intellectually and aggressively to present your ideas."<sup>24</sup>

Pittman prepared for the London Economic Conference through preliminary conversations with prospective foreign delegates who visited Washington that April and May. His efforts centered on representatives



from the nations most concerned with silver: Great Britain, Canada, Mexico, and China.<sup>25</sup> Pittman carefully solicited the opinions and intentions of T. V. Soong, China's Minister of Finance. Soong favored silver agreements such as the senator hoped to propose.<sup>26</sup> Later, at London, Soong publicly praised Pittman's efforts and expressed the hope that the Economic Conference would thereafter attempt to "raise and stabilize the price of silver, thus increasing the purchasing power of China and India."<sup>27</sup>

According to Pittman, the conferees agreed to request that all nations discontinue the practice of debasing their silver coinage, and if debasement had already taken place, to restore their coinage to its former purity. Concerted action, Pittman believed, would not only enhance silver's monetary status, but also help raise its price.<sup>28</sup>

The Economic Conference failed to cope with the world depression. It began on June 12 amid hopes of international cooperation reviving trade and easing the severe monetary stringency confronting many nations. The discussions quickly reached a stalemate, however, between the countries led by France, insisting upon currency stabilization, and others led by the United States seeking to stabilize domestic prices after appropriate increases.<sup>29</sup> Early in July, Roosevelt rebuked the delegates, deploring their "singular lack of proportion" and minimizing the importance of currency stabilization. He told the conference that the United States sought "the kind of a dollar which a generation hence will have the same purchasing and debt-paying power as the dollar value we hope to attain in the near future." That objective meant more than temporary stabilization of currencies. This message led to a "petulant outcry" that he had wrecked the conference.<sup>30</sup> Thereafter, the unhappy delegates remained in London for three additional weeks, but without significant accomplishment.

The senator from Nevada alone achieved a specific goal while in London, thereby saving the conference from total failure before it adjourned late that July. A presidential silver memorandum guided Pittman's actions. It instructed the American delegation to seek agreement by governments represented at London (1) to limit their sales of silver, (2) to refrain from debasing their coinage, (3) to restore their coinage to former grades of metallic purity, and (4) to establish an optional 20 percent silver reserve as backing for currency.<sup>31</sup>

Pittman also sought additional steps to ease the silver problem. He chaired the subcommittee on silver which reported to the Monetary and Financial Commission. Pittman's group first met on June 21; he soon became chairman of a smaller special committee dedicated to the task of negotiating an agreement on silver. The second group, composed of representatives from Mexico, Canada, Peru, Bolivia, India, China, and Spain, discussed "regulation of the supply of silver coming on the market from the mines" and limiting the flow from "government stocks." On July

5, the special committee announced that its sessions would be conducted in private and that it would report any progress.<sup>32</sup> Pittman gave daily luncheons for its members.<sup>33</sup> It was reported that his personal characteristics "improved the atmosphere for negotiations."<sup>34</sup>

Negotiation of a workable silver agreement proceeded under persistent threat that the international conference might suddenly adjourn. Not until July 20 did the subcommittee on silver adopt a four-part resolution urging an agreement among silver producing and using nations "mitigating fluctuations in the price of silver."<sup>35</sup> Two days later representatives of eight nations signed such a document. On July 26 they reached supplemental accords allocating purchase quotas among five producing nations, with the United States assuming by far the largest commitment. The conference adjourned the following day.<sup>36</sup> "I was constantly fighting to keep the conference in session so that I could obtain the agreement," Pittman later wrote a leading mining executive.<sup>37</sup>

Upon returning to Washington in August, Pittman found that the terms of the Silver Agreement had provoked both negative and positive reactions from the West. Some were very pleased. Three Idaho silvermen telegraphed Pittman their "sincere congratulations on the fine accomplishments you have achieved" in advancing the "silver cause."<sup>38</sup> Similar feelings were expressed by Irvin E. Rockwell, an Idaho mining man and political intimate of Senator William E. Borah, who said:

Those SOB's down in Manhattan regard us as sons of W[ild] J[ack] A[sses] fit only to march in goosetep to their music (this is literally true) and but for you and YOU ALONE, giving due credit to the others for beating the drum, silver as such would still be regarded by them as good only for knives and forks and spoons.<sup>39</sup>

If some westerners swelled with gratitude, many reacted otherwise. The editors of the *Salt Lake Tribune* lamented that the agreement was "No Help for Silver." Moreover, they felt that it would be "more of an obstacle than an aid to the ultimate objective of the silver movement."<sup>40</sup> Senator Wheeler wrote to the president about this negative reaction, informing him that "we do not have much faith that the agreement reached in London on silver will do much good."<sup>41</sup> Wheeler had expressed this opinion publicly as well. Shortly after the London Conference began, he informed newspaper reporters that Key Pittman's efforts would be of little benefit because "he is still treating [silver] as a commodity and not even as a favored commodity."<sup>42</sup> Pittman tacitly conceded the validity of Wheeler's complaints. He told Utah mining executive George Snyder that if the president ratified the Silver Agreement, "the value of silver mines will be more greatly benefited than the value of silver."<sup>43</sup>

Wheeler's contentions, then, rather than Pittman's, reflected the discontentment re-emerging in the West. The limited program agreed upon

at London could not offset the disenchantment over generally declining commodity prices after midyear. Moreover, inflationists complained because the president failed to use his powers under the Thomas amendment.

The president sympathized with their point of view. His concern and his political instincts overcame both his own uncertainty and the resistance of his advisers in the Treasury Department. That fall he ordered a gold purchase program in order (1) to reduce the purchasing power of the dollar by a de facto devaluation and (2) to raise general commodity prices through reduction in the gold value of the dollar.<sup>44</sup> This would be accomplished, he hoped, by increasing the price paid for gold.<sup>45</sup> The program initiated a series of highly controversial monetary actions.

Before the president announced his new policy on gold, Pittman had been confidently awaiting a silver purchase program. Initially, he adopted a straightforward approach to winning Roosevelt's approval. On September 15, the senator submitted a four-page brief describing the poor condition of the mining industry in Nevada and Utah. He noted that the Thomas amendment gave the president authority to change this situation. Continuing, Pittman stressed that a profitable price for silver would stimulate general activity and employment since it was a by-product in most mining operations.<sup>46</sup> On September 19, he talked with the president about this and other subjects for more than two hours. Apparently Roosevelt disarmed the senator. In early October he told a mining executive that "the President prefers to deal with only the American production of silver at the present time."<sup>47</sup> His optimism was premature, however.

Pittman's satisfaction vanished when Roosevelt failed even to mention silver in his "fireside chat" about the purpose of buying gold. Pittman claimed in a letter to the president the following day that raising the price of silver would do more to raise commodity prices than buying gold at a high price. In a reminder of his potent position as chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Pittman also asserted that those who warned of some hardship in China due to higher silver prices should be disregarded since that nation's minister of finance, T. V. Soong, had written that he was "happy" with the Silver Agreement. Finally, the senator employed the most forceful of his political arguments. After mentioning the rising clamor for inflation, Pittman suggested that "the possibility of [mandatory] legislation at the next session of Congress," returning the nation to the free coinage of silver at sixteen to one, made a good case for the president to act beforehand.<sup>48</sup>

Pittman solicited support from the president's assistant and political adviser, Louis McHenry Howe. This tactic was appropriate for two reasons: the senator's personal relations with Howe were cordial, and the latter was concerned about the discontent from the West. Pittman informed Howe about "the numerous letters and telegrams I am receiving

from the West expressing disappointment that [the president] did not take up the silver question."<sup>49</sup>

Pittman later elaborated to Howe these dangers because "I know that the President relies upon you to relieve him . . . and to keep your eye upon the political situation." Roosevelt should take action because "our friend Bert Wheeler is about to start a riot among the silver producers of the West." Pittman saw the possibility of a movement "which might result in the necessity of the President vetoing an act of Congress relating thereto."<sup>50</sup>

Pittman tried to convince Howe that Roosevelt should disregard the objections to buying silver raised by professional economists. Howe shared the senator's disdain for the academicians' advice. Pittman was dogmatic on this matter.

I must contend that the general economists know little about the silver problem. They have studied under those who did not regard silver as money. . . . They have lived, spoken, and lectured in such an environment. They are conservative by nature and are opposed to any unusual move. The President has gone far ahead of them.<sup>51</sup>

The effect of Pittman's cultivation of Howe had limited value. The latter provided a conduit and a source of information for the senator but probably no more than that. Howe's biographer has emphasized that the influence his subject once had on Roosevelt waned sharply after the election, while that of his highly educated advisers grew.<sup>52</sup>

Pittman also sought help from a comparatively obscure member of the New Deal, Herman Oliphant, a little-known but respected legal expert. Prior to his governmental appointment, Oliphant had been professor of law at Johns Hopkins, and had also taught at Columbia and the University of Chicago. He filled a bill of particulars reportedly drafted by Roosevelt to guide those seeking a general counsel for the Farm Credit Administration. They wanted an attorney who had been brought up on a farm, "had not been in a Wall Street office, had a broad social viewpoint, was an outstanding lawyer and highly respected at the Bar."<sup>53</sup>

Oliphant's obscurity in Washington in no way diminished his aid to Key Pittman. Fortunately for the senator, Roosevelt named Oliphant the general counsel at the Treasury Department to assist Henry Morgenthau, Jr., who, on November 17, 1933, succeeded the ailing William Woodin.<sup>54</sup> In the two weeks preceding that realignment, Oliphant and Pittman became friends and learned to work together. The former Indiana farm boy and the silverite from Nevada agreed on the need for higher agricultural prices and monetary experimentation to that end. Their common views greatly helped the silver movement in the following months.

Pittman lauded Oliphant to the president. The day after their first working session the senator told Oliphant a letter was on its way to the

White House saying that Oliphant "had the best grasp, not only of the legal situation involved but of the practical side of the problem of anyone connected with the Government with whom I have had the opportunity to confer."<sup>55</sup> Pittman put his high praise in writing, he admitted to Oliphant, because of his "hope that Mr. Morgenthau will bring you in contact with the President at an early date."<sup>56</sup>

Pittman provided Oliphant with answers to specific questions which he felt might be asked in conversations with Roosevelt. The most important item was the price of silver. Apparently the senator learned that Roosevelt had previously asked Secretary Woodin to "give serious consideration to some method of raising the price of silver to sixty cents an ounce."<sup>57</sup> Since the statutory price was \$1.29 per ounce, Pittman was not entirely satisfied with his proposal. He told Oliphant that if the president seemed determined to fix the price somewhere near sixty cents, "it would simplify matters by simply taking half of the bullion for seigniorage, which would make the price sixty-four and one half cents an ounce."<sup>58</sup>

It became apparent after mid November that the president was delaying the proclamation of a silver program for political reasons. However, Pittman was increasingly confident. He told Josephus Daniels, American ambassador to Mexico, that the president would soon take action on silver and that it would "undoubtedly" be a step in the right direction. "We cannot go too far at once."<sup>59</sup> Pittman tempered his optimism with realism because he understood the president's role. During that year and for some time afterward, Roosevelt sought to contrive a balance of sectional forces through "broker leadership," to use the term favored by Professor Burns.<sup>60</sup> For obvious reasons, Pittman supported the president in his role as political broker. Roosevelt was right, Pittman told him, and he was winning his battle against depression and deflation.<sup>61</sup>

On December 21, 1933, the president proclaimed American acceptance of the Silver Agreement arranged at London. Using Pittman's suggestions as to the quantity and the price, he ordered the Treasury Department to begin immediately to purchase and coin all silver "mined . . . from natural deposits in the United States" after that date. The seigniorage charge was 50 percent, resulting in an effective price of sixty-four and one half cents per ounce for silver presented to the mints. This program would continue until December 31, 1937, as specified in the Silver Agreement.<sup>62</sup>

The president's order to purchase all newly-mined American silver immediately stimulated production and employment. By offering a temporary subsidy for domestic silver, the president apparently hoped to reinvigorate a declining industry. Mine-owners and operators knew that if they expanded existing operations and opened their closed mines, at least one of the metals they produced would be profitable during the following four years. The copper, lead, and zinc produced in combination with silver were not profitable at 1933 prices. Despite this, the mining

industry responded enthusiastically and thousands of men returned to work.<sup>63</sup>

New Deal historian Carl N. Degler recently has noted that "although Franklin Delano Roosevelt was called everything from a fascist to a communist in his lifetime, and the reforms over which he presided brought about sweeping changes in American life, he was no radical and never had been. From the beginnings of his presidency he had emphasized his essentially conservative approach to the problems of society." In support of this view, Degler quotes from Roosevelt's fireside chat of September, 1934. "In our effort for recovery we have avoided, on the one hand, the theory that business should and must be taken over into an all-embracing government. We have avoided, on the other hand, the equally untenable theory that it is an interference with liberty to offer reasonable help when private enterprise is in need of help."<sup>64</sup>

It is this writer's opinion that the self-sustaining subsidy for the western silver producers qualified as "reasonable help" toward their recovery.

## Notes

1. Interview with Burton K. Wheeler, September 17, 1962.
2. Pittman to Bourne, February 16, 1933, Pittman Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C., box 140, "B" folder.
3. *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 5, 1933; *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), April 4, 6, 1933.
4. Moley has stressed Pittman's personal popularity in assessing his usefulness to Roosevelt. Raymond Moley, *First New Deal*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 369.
5. U.S. *Congressional Record*, 73rd Cong., 1st Sess., 1933, LXXVII, Part 1 (March 9, 1933), 117. Other silver bills were offered by senators Bankhead of Alabama (S. 818, p. 859), Dill of Washington (S. 234, p. 194), and Wheeler of Montana (S. 70, p. 115). Bankhead and Dill proposed liberal silver purchase programs, and Wheeler wanted silver remonetization.
6. U.S. *Congressional Record*, 73rd Cong., 1st Sess., 1933, LXXVII, Part 2 (April 17, 1933), 1817, 1841, 1842.
7. *Ibid.*, 1844.
8. *Ibid.*, 72nd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1932, LXXVI, Part 1 (December 23, 1932), 949. Thomas offered a bill (S. 5292) to authorize the Treasury to pay current government expenses with "liberty notes," a new paper currency.
9. Elmer Thomas to author, May 20, 1963.
10. Raymond Moley, *After Seven Years*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), pp. 158-59. Early the following morning Democrats Bulkley of Ohio and Byrnes of South Carolina phoned Moley to warn him that the Thomas amendment would sweep through the Senate.
11. *New York Times*, April 11, 1933.
12. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Coming of the New Deal*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1958), pp. 198-99. "The Committee lent a sort of pseudo-respectability to the inflation drive."

13. Moley, *After Seven Years*, pp. 158–59; *New York Times*, April 18, 19, 1933.
14. Moley, *After Seven Years*, p. 57.
15. James P. Warburg, *The Money Muddle* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934), p. 96. Warburg was an unpaid assistant without portfolio from March through October, 1933.
16. Fred L. Israel, *Nevada's Key Pittman*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), p. 102.
17. Moley, *After Seven Years*, p. 157.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 161; Moley, *First New Deal*, p. 304. For an excellent general assessment, see Schlesinger, *Coming of the New Deal*, pp. 194–201.
19. Schlesinger, *Coming of the New Deal*, pp. 202–203.
20. Elliot Roosevelt (ed.), *F.D.R., His Personal Letters*, III (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1959), 342.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 200–01; Moley, *After Seven Years*, pp. 159–60; Moley, *First New Deal*, pp. 302–03; Herbert Feis, *1933: Characters in Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), pp. 127–30. These accounts conflict, but the most complete and accurate is that by Feis. He attended as economic adviser to the State Dept. Feis cites James P. Warburg's Journal for April 18, 1933, as the source for one contradiction of Moley's account.
22. U.S., *Congressional Record*, 73rd Cong., 1st Sess., 1933, LXXVII, Part 2 (April 20, 1933), 2003.
23. U.S., *Foreign Relations . . . 1932*, I, 808–810; Hoover, *Memoirs*, III, 130; Israel, p. 89; Pittman to George W. Snyder, November 8, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 144, "S" folder.
24. U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers*, 1933, I, 680. Moley later said that he meant to say "intelligently" rather than "intellectually." Schlesinger, *Coming of the New Deal*, p. 230.
25. U.S., *Foreign Relations . . . 1933*, I, 516–26. See pp. 516–21 for talks with Canadian and Mexican delegates. The delicate question of India and silver was discussed with British officials in private, unofficial sessions.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 521–26.
27. *New York Times*, June 15, 1933.
28. *Denver Post*, May 18, 1933.
29. Schlesinger, *Coming of the New Deal*, p. 214.
30. Samuel I. Rosenman (ed.), *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, II (New York: Random House, 1938), pp. 264–67.
31. U.S., *Foreign Relations . . . 1933*, I, 626. Memorandum on policy for the American delegation, May 30, 1933. The writer has paraphrased and interpreted the memorandum to suggest its intent.
32. League of Nations, *Journal of the Monetary and Economic Conference, London, 1933* (Geneva, Switzerland: Documents Service for the Monetary and Economic Conference, June, 1933), No. 11 (June 22), 101; No. 15 (June 27), 101; No. 22 (July 5), 146.
33. Pittman to Brownell, August 30, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 140, "B" folder.
34. *New York Times*, July 21, 1933. Clarence K. Streit wrote the special report in London.
35. League of Nations, *Journal of the Monetary and Economic Conference, London, 1933*, No. 35 (July 28, 1933), 208–09.
36. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, XLVIII, 73rd Cong., 1933–34, Part 2, Executive Agreement Series, No. 63, *Silver Agreement: Memorandum of Agreement Between*



the United States of America, Australia, Canada, China, India, Mexico, Peru, and Spain, with Supplementary Undertakings, pp. 1879-88.

37. Pittman to Francis H. Brownell, August 30, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 140, "B" folder. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, XLVIII, Part 2, 1882-88.

38. Telegram, James P. McCarthy, H. G. Washburn, and Stanley A. Easton to Pittman, August 9, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 145, "Mc" folder. Each represented a different mining company.

39. Rockwell to Pittman, September 12, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 140, "R" folder.

40. *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 25, 1933.

41. Wheeler to Roosevelt, July 31, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers (Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York), PPF 723—James A. Farley. Hereafter cited as Roosevelt Papers.

42. *New York Times*, June 24, 1933. The following day Wheeler said that the adoption of the American resolutions on Silver "would be the most backward step . . . since 1873" *New York Times*, June 25, 1933. Wheeler may have been piqued that Pittman had ignored his Senate resolution, which instructed the American delegates to promote bimetallism exclusively, despite its approval by that body. U.S., *Congressional Record*, 73rd Cong., 1st Sess., 1933 LXXVII, Part 3 (May 8, 1933), 2967.

43. Pittman to Snyder, December 12, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 144, "S" folder.

44. Rosenman (ed.), *Public Papers*, II, 420-27. The date of this announcement was October 22, 1933.

45. Schlesinger, *Coming of the New Deal*, pp. 239-40; see also Chapter VI.

46. Pittman, "Emergency Mining Legislation," September 15, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 142, Government Department folder.

47. Pittman to W. Mont. Ferry, October 13, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 142, "F" folder.

48. Pittman to Roosevelt, October 23, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 142, Government Department folder.

49. Pittman to Howe, October 28, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 142, Government Department folder.

50. Pittman to Howe, November 1, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 142, Government Department folder.

51. Pittman to Howe, October 28, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 142, Government Department folder.

52. Alfred B. Rollins, *Roosevelt and Howe*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), p. 8.

53. Allan Seymour Everest, *Morgenthau, The New Deal and Silver; A Story of Pressure Politics* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1950), pp. 34-35.

54. U.S. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury* . . . 1934, 1935, Document No. 3065, p. xiii.

55. Pittman to Oliphant, November 1, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 142, Government Department folder.

56. Pittman to Oliphant, November 1, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 142, Government Department folder. The same day, the senator wrote to Louis Howe that Oliphant had "a clearer grasp of the law affecting the silver problem and the practical approach to it than anyone." Presumably, Howe so informed the president.

57. Memorandum: The president to the secretary of the Treasury, September 20, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, POF 229, box 3.

58. Pittman to Oliphant, November 3, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 142, Government Department folder.
59. Pittman to Daniels, November 9, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 142, "D" folder.
60. James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: the Lion and the Fox*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1956), p. 197.
61. Pittman to Roosevelt, November 15, 1933, Pittman Papers, box 142, Government Department folder.
62. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, XLVIII, 73rd Cong., 1933-34, Part 2, Proclamation No. 2067, *Coinage of Silver*, pp. 1723-25.
63. Israel, p. 95. Metal mining employment in the mountain states totaled 57,147 in 1920, declined sharply to 48,113 in 1930, but returned to 52,836 by 1940. Leonard J. Arrington, *Changing Economic Structure of the Mountain West*, (Logan: Utah State University, 1963), pp. 35-37.
64. Carl N. Degler (ed.) *The New Deal*, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), pp. 4-5.

## ***Key Pittman and New Deal Politics***

by Fred L. Israel

KEY PITTMAN was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi, on September 19, 1872. His parents died when he was a child, and he was raised by his maternal grandmother on her Louisiana cotton plantation. Pittman's relatives belonged to the Presbyterian Church, and he matriculated at the synod university, Southwestern Presbyterian, in Clarksville, Tennessee. Before graduation though, he decided to cast his lot with the rapidly developing new states of the Far West. To Pittman, a restless, chronically ill, 18-year-old, eager for money and fame, it seemed that the West offered the best opportunities, so he read law and was admitted to the Washington State Bar. When news of the Klondike gold discoveries reached Seattle in 1897—tales of easy money and overnight fortunes—Pittman headed for Alaska. His adventures in the new mining camp of Nome—the severe winters, the isolation, the grubstakes, the rough, lawless men gathered in a crude community knowing little of and caring less for the gentler things of life—are pages for a movie script. Pittman, it seems, never found gold but became, instead, prominent in Nome politics, enjoying a profitable law practice adjudicating conflicting mine claims. In Nome, on July 8, 1900, Pittman married Mimosa Gates in a ceremony presided over by the Episcopal parson.

With news of the Tonopah, Nevada, gold and silver strike of 1900, the Pittmans left Alaska to seek their fortune in Nye County. The

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Tonopah discovery opened southern Nevada to a period of fantastic prosperity. But Pittman discovered, as did most of the other newcomers, that a good deal of costly development work would be necessary to determine if the ores remained valuable at deeper levels. Short on capital, Pittman decided to make his fortune first as a mining lawyer. "I will succeed! I will succeed!" he promised his wife. "I will soon be making money and then we can speculate." "I see many opportunities in Nevada both in law, mines, and politics. The boys are even thinking of running me for the legislature. There will be a U.S. Senator elected at the next legislature and I could gain prominence there—I have many schemes and am bending every energy to succeed. I will succeed and when I do I will make you the happiest woman on earth—Nevada seems to offer the best opportunities."<sup>1</sup>

Pittman's law practice grew with the area, and even though he rapidly became one of the most prosperous lawyers in southern Nevada, he considered himself a failure. "Bryan at my age had been two terms in Congress. . . . I realize I am not mature, not settled."<sup>2</sup> "I have failed you," he repeatedly told his wife. But, his life's aim—money and fame—impelled him on. Money through a thriving law practice and fame through politics became his obsession. On January 29, 1913, the Nevada legislature elected the forty-one-year-old Pittman to the United States Senate. Pittman held his Senate seat for twenty-seven years, until his death in 1940.

Throughout his years in the Senate, Pittman considered himself an agent for the people of Nevada. Obtaining results for his constituents entitled him to re-employment at election time "the same as any other attorney or employee who has worked hard and given good service."<sup>3</sup> Coming from a state with approximately sixteen thousand voters in 1912, Pittman took his constituents' requests seriously. The resolutions he introduced and the amendments he sponsored were almost always to benefit them. Pittman was truly Nevada's ambassador to Washington. "Nevada first, last and all the time" became his motto.

Pittman's years in Washington were lonely and frustrating. "I am determined to succeed," he wrote and rewrote Mrs. Pittman. He was an alcoholic and described himself as "a periodical drunkard." His drinking increased during periods of emotional strain, such as his own campaigns, and especially while he was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee:

Then came the reaction. The breaking of the anchor chain—The surrender and abandonment—a mania seized me, you cannot understand it, and no one can explain—and my growing desire, was to escape from myself, from my thoughts, from my will. . . . I longed for, and nothing satisfied me, but the most intense excitement—I longed to Kill and howl with delight. . . . at the sight of human blood.<sup>4</sup>

Pittman could abstain from drinking for brief periods, but he was unable to drink moderately. One drink usually began a spree. As a delegate to the 1933 London Economic Conference he was, especially at crucial moments, drunk. In London, while in this condition, his favorite method of amusing himself was to pop the London street lights with his six-shooter. Only the intervention of Secretary of State Cordell Hull prevented the London police from arresting him. Pittman lived in his own twisted world in which he magnified his troubles. Only through liquor could he find what he described as that "hazy golden state."<sup>5</sup> With a bottle, he forgot his oppressive thoughts. Alcohol gave Pittman a feeling of power and mastery. He drank almost every day, and although he repeatedly boasted that he was on the wagon, this was one promise the senator could not keep. Mrs. Pittman, chronically ill herself, required hospitalization over extensive periods. The Johns Hopkins Medical Center diagnosed her ills as "apparently psychosomatic in origin."<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Pittman was also a heavy drinker which, in later years, adversely affected her mind, and Pittman blamed himself for her condition.

With the Roosevelt landslide in 1932, the Democrats gained control of the Senate for the first time since 1918. Seniority made Pittman Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. Slender, graying, now 61, he had been a committee member for seventeen years. Pittman's principal concern in Washington had been to do something for the silver interests. His power in foreign affairs was a political accident, for he had no particular interest in the subject and sought appointment to the committee in 1916, an election year for him, to impress the people back home. Seniority and party organization combined to make him chairman at a time when the fascist powers threatened to destroy the European democracies. During his seven years as chairman, the senator's addiction to alcohol grew progressively worse. He drank seven days a week, and when Washington bars refused to serve him, he would whip out his silver pistol and threaten to "shoot up" the establishment. Foreign relations were too much for him to handle, and perhaps realizing that he was not competent for the job, he compensated with depressive reactions. Roosevelt's foreign policy advisers understood Pittman's problems; they tried to humor him, they tried to make him think that he was the trusted adviser. The president saved his ribald stories for the senator and often sent him handwritten notes of encouragement. But, whether it be the 1933 attempt to grant the president discretionary power to halt arms shipments, the 1935 attempt to ratify the World Court protocol, or the neutrality legislation of 1935, 1937, and 1939, the White House found that the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee was more of a hinderance than a help. The State Department held special briefings for Pittman, and Roosevelt agreed to his patronage requests, but Pittman was no match for the strong-willed committee members—especially

Senators Hiram Johnson, William Borah, and Arthur Vandenberg. Pittman's vacillation and lack of leadership in the Foreign Relations Committee, to phrase it mildly, was disappointing to the administration. The senator's principal interests, regardless of worsening European conditions, remained Nevada and silver. When in the late Spring of 1939, for example, the White House moved to repeal the arms embargo, the president was forced to buy Pittman's support by agreeing to raise the government's purchase price of domestic silver from 64½ cents to 71 cents per ounce.<sup>7</sup> In my opinion, a study of Pittman's tenure as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee is an excellent argument for changing the current congressional seniority system.

During the now famous Congress of the Hundred Days, Pittman voted for the New Deal measures but took no part in debates except, of course, if a resolution affected silver. The discussion of any monetary bill, however, found the senator at his desk ready to defend Nevada interests. The great victory for the silver-mine owners in 1933 was the London silver agreement concluded by Pittman in July. On December 22, 1933, President Roosevelt ratified the London agreement through a presidential proclamation, certainly an unusual construction of presidential power. The United States Mint was now authorized to buy the yearly output of American silver until December 31, 1937, at 64½ cents per ounce. (In 1932, the year before this agreement, domestic silver prices had fallen to a low of 31 cents an ounce.) In other words, the federal government now began granting a high subsidy to domestic silver-mine owners. Pittman held a large portfolio of silver-mining stocks, and he personally benefited from the London silver agreement which he had negotiated. The president's proclamation, wrote Pittman, was "the best Christmas present I have ever received. I am more than happy that it is also a Christmas present from the President to all the people of my State."<sup>8</sup>

During 1934, the Roosevelt administration came under increasing pressure from monetary inflationists. Pittman though was not concerned with monetary theory. Unlike Burton Wheeler, he was not obsessed with the 16:1 ratio. Pittman's concern was raising the price paid by the government for domestic silver. The Silver Purchase Act of 1934, which Pittman helped to write, did just that. The monetary inflationists were split, and the New Deal, despite the opposition of Treasury secretary Morgenthau, embarked upon a massive silver-purchasing program, thus raising the price and also insuring the mine owner of a purchaser. Throughout 1935, 1936, and 1937, the United States Treasury purchased almost the entire domestic silver output. (In reality, the silver was taken from one hole in the ground, the mine, and buried in another hole in the ground, at West Point.) Key Pittman was the watchdog of this program. Of course, there was opposition to this massive subsidy program, mainly from Eastern economists, the American Economic Association, and from the National Committee on Monetary Policy. Pittman dismissed the

opposition as statements from "crackpot professors." He advised the professors to stick to their classrooms and leave the silver issue to him.

The protector of the silver interests succeeded admirably in defending and increasing the profits of this small group of men who, while not proportionally raising miner's salaries, nevertheless, personally profited from the New Deal silver-buying program. Their champion, Senator Key Pittman, would repeat that when paper currencies shrank to the value of waste paper, silver would still purchase something to eat. Because of their Senate champion, because of his skillful parliamentary maneuvers and purchasing schemes, and because of his chairmanship of the Foreign Relations Committee, the silver interests, including both the western mine owner and the Wall Street speculator, achieved large profits. Pittman and the silver issue is an excellent example of a special subsidy to a selfish, powerful minority.

Key Pittman was a professional politician. His job depended upon others who got the vote out, enlisted new party workers, and conducted the electioneering. The regular Nevada Democrats (about 30,000 in 1934) had to be kept in good humor because any serious factional split could have cost Pittman his Senate seat. The most important potential dispenser of political offices for Nevada during the New Deal was Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes. Ickes' patronage scope ranged from choosing newspapers in which to publish notices of the General Land Office to designating deputy marshals for the Boulder Dam project. Pittman and his Democratic rival, Nevada's junior senator, Pat McCarran, competed for patronage. Roosevelt funneled all of his Nevada patronage through Pittman, but Ickes attempted to select appointees who were relatively free from political influence. Pittman was furious. He repeatedly blasted Ickes in language which I will not repeat here. But the secretary of the Interior, who feared no politician, simply told Pittman to "go to hell." "I am the dictator of patronage," wrote Ickes, "and I shall continue to be so as long as I am head of this Department."<sup>9</sup> Needless to say, Pittman opposed Ickes' policies whenever he could, regardless of their merit—whether it be the administration of the Taylor Grazing Act, the appointment of Ebert Burlew as first assistant secretary, or above all, the creation of a federally administered Boulder Dam National Recreation area. Ickes had his revenge by relishing stories of Pittman's alcoholic escapades.

Pittman charged that Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins both ignored his patronage needs. He detested the "Harvard Clan" which surrounded Roosevelt, and to counteract the "intellectual professors from the East" he brought deserving Nevada boys to Washington, found them government jobs, and had them enrolled in local law schools. In letters of recommendation, Pittman delighted in writing that the nominee was well qualified "even though he



is not a graduate of Harvard University, which seems essential to appointment in some departments of our Government."<sup>10</sup>

There are many illustrations of Pittman's brand of domestic politics, the aim of which was re-election. If a bill was not good for the people of Nevada, it could not be good for all America. Hence, the senator led the 1940 debate against the Reciprocal Trade Act—his real reason being that he feared a pending copper agreement with Chile would adversely affect Nevada. For five years, the senator successfully pigeonholed a proposed animal products convention with Argentina as Nevada cattlemen did not favor it. Pittman often carried this sort of ambassadorial politics to extremes. During 1938–1939, the senator proposed allotting twelve square miles of the Boulder Canyon Reclamation Area to Nevada for a state park. The suggested land was located nineteen miles from Las Vegas on the northern side of Lake Mead. The state park was a shrewd political move on Pittman's part. While gambling and the sale of liquor is forbidden in national parks, this vest-pocket state park within a national park would gain Pittman votes among the Las Vegas gambling interests. Of course, Ickes opposed the plan. But the senator, indeed a skillful politician, got the bill through the Senate, and under Pittman's pressure, Nevada's only congressman guided the proposal through the House. Ickes demanded and obtained a presidential veto. This small incident, and there are many to choose from, illustrates how Pittman represented his state—safeguarding the interests of Nevada, then the nation's least populated state, first and always.

Pittman ran for re-election for a sixth term in 1940. The campaign, although short, proved strenuous. The senator tired easily. During the last weeks of the contest, he drank heavily and was in an almost continuous stupor. On November 5, 1940, he was re-elected, but five days later he died.

A few months after his death, Mrs. Pittman attempted to summarize his career—the carefree days in Alaska, settling in Tonopah, the Democratic conventions, the London Economic Conference, the Foreign Relations Committee. After many erasures and much crossing out, she simply wrote: "Key loved our State and its people."

### *Notes*

1. Key Pittman to Mimosa Pittman, April 4, 1902; April 11, 1902; Personal Correspondence, Mrs. Key Pittman, 1898–1903 Folder, Box 53, Key Pittman Papers, Library of Congress.
2. Key Pittman to Mimosa Pittman, September 19, 1904; July 8, 1905; Personal Correspondence, Mrs. Key Pittman, 1904–1905 Folder, Box 53.
3. Key Pittman to M. E. Jepson, July 3, 1916, J Folder, Box 7.
4. Key Pittman to Mimosa Pittman, September 19, 1904, Personal Correspondence, Mrs. Key Pittman, 1904–1905 Folder, Box 53.

5. "The Reminiscences of James Warburg," Oral History Project, Columbia University, pp. 486, 487, 998, 1248, 1250.
6. The Johns Hopkins Hospital Examination Report, June 15, 1923, Personal Correspondence, Mrs. Key Pittman, 1922-1925 Folder, Box 55.
7. Henry Morgenthau Diary, June 23, 1939, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.
8. Key Pittman to *Nevada State Journal*, December 21, 1933, Newspaper Folder, Box 1455.
9. Harold L. Ickes to Key Pittman, October 11, 1933, Box 116, Harold Ickes Papers, Library of Congress.
10. See for example Key Pittman to Homer S. Cummings, April 29, 1935, Correspondence B Folder, Sen 74A-F9 (123B), Foreign Relations Committee Papers, National Archives.

## ***Comments on the Papers of Mr. Brennan and Mr. Israel***

by Gilman M. Ostrander

A COMPARISON OF Mr. Brennan's and Mr. Israel's papers indicates no significant difference of opinion as to the political purposes and accomplishments of Senator Key Pittman of Nevada. Their disagreement concerns the question of whether Pittman *ought* to have pursued those political purposes in the way he did and also whether the American political system *ought* to have been such as to give him so much political power nationally, to be used so narrowly in the interests of the western silver-producers.

How one feels about Pittman using his influence as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee so single-mindedly in the cause of silver is apt to depend upon one's regional point of view. From the western-mountain-region point of view, Pittman was the loyal representative of the interests of his constituents. From the national or, perhaps, the patriotic point of view, Pittman was something less than the loyal representative of his national constituency. Pittman saw himself as a Nevadan, first, last, and always, and he was quite ready, on occasion, to bargain with his authority in foreign affairs in order to "do something for silver," as Pittman, himself, liked to put it.

Mr. Brennan has taken the Nevada—or western mountain region—

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point of view toward Pittman's statesmanship and has chosen to ignore the question of whether, as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Pittman ought not to have answered to a higher loyalty than Nevada and silver. Mr. Israel has taken the national point of view and consequently has concluded that "a study of Pittman's tenure as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee is an excellent argument for changing the congressional seniority system." I would be inclined to go a little farther in the direction of Mr. Israel's thinking and suggest that it is an excellent argument for going back to James Madison and the Virginia Plan and reconstituting the national upper house on the basis of proportional representation. In the unlikely event that current plans to get rid of the Electoral College succeed, perhaps such a reconstitution of the United States Senate (on the principle of one man, one vote) might be the next logical step toward a more democratic national constitutional system.

Pittman represented a state that contained a total population of forty or fifty thousand early in his political career and grew to a total of 110,000 at the time of his final political campaign in 1940, and he liked to boast that he knew almost every one of his constituents personally. Taken as a whole, their demands were very simple, and, with the national power of a United States senator, Pittman was well situated to satisfy them. This was the secret of Pittman's success in winning re-elections to the Senate, as it has been with senatorial incumbents from other similarly unpopulated states.

However, Pittman achieved a greater degree of eminence in national politics than most Nevada senators have enjoyed, in spite of remaining uninterested in national and international affairs, except insofar as they related to silver or to some other Nevada issue. The main reason for this, as Mr. Israel points out, is the fact that the Senate seniority system eventually brought Pittman the chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Even before that happened, however, Pittman had cut considerably more of a figure in national politics than his fellow senator from Nevada, Tasker Oddie, or perhaps than any previous Nevada senator except Francis Newlands.

One reason for Pittman's earlier prominence in the party was his well-earned reputation for party loyalty on the national level, best demonstrated in the election of 1928, when Pittman ran an Al Smith-Key Pittman campaign in Nevada, despite the fact that Al Smith was obviously a heavy political liability as far as Pittman's senatorial candidacy was concerned. Pittman worked to earn political credit with the national party that he could draw upon in the interest of himself and his state.

Another reason for Pittman's earlier national prominence was the Pittman Act of 1918, which, in turn, had been to some extent a reward for his record of party loyalty. Pittman had strongly supported Wilson in 1912 and in 1916, and Wilson, in 1918, had given Pittman the welcome responsibility of guiding a bill through the Senate to enable the American

government to sell large quantities of silver to Great Britain, to strengthen British credit in India, where the silver standard was still in operation. The Pittman Act called for the melting of up to 350 million standard silver dollars, at a replacement value of one dollar per ounce, which was about double the going rate for silver. Doubling the price of silver was Pittman's contribution to what was otherwise an administration measure.<sup>1</sup>

The 1920s was a bad decade for silver, but Pittman continued in the role of the nation's leading silver statesman; in 1930, as chairman of a subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee, he prepared a bill to improve Chinese-American trade relations by raising the price of silver at home, "by reason," as the bill explained, "of our continuous friendship for her people and our sympathy for them in their poverty."<sup>2</sup> Pittman was working to organize an international conference to achieve such an objective at the very time the London Economic Conference was arranged; so when he was appointed to the American delegation to that conference, he knew what he would do.

Pittman got what he wanted out of the London Economic Conference, "thereby," according to Mr. Brennan, "saving the conference from total failure." As a matter of fact, Pittman got a number of things out of the conference to save it from total failure as far as he was concerned. He got roaring drunk and raised hell with the London bobbies, as Mr. Israel has indicated, and he had the pleasure of chasing Herbert Feis with a bowie knife down the corridors of the Claridge Hotel.<sup>3</sup> As a member of the historical profession, Mr. Brennan will join me, I am sure, in disapproving of this savage treatment of one of our own colleagues by Senator Pittman.

Pittman contributed to the conference about all of the action and color it possessed, by hoorahing the town as well as the conference and by whooping it up with a couple of "birds," as the English call them, who were later in the evening ejected from the hotel by the management. And, by the time the conference was over, Pittman had additionally been able to "do something for silver," as he had promised he would beforehand.

What Pittman actually did for silver at the London Economic Conference was to arrange a purchasing agreement with seven other nations, by the terms of which the other nations promised to go on doing just about what they were already doing with respect to silver. The United States, by contrast, would do something radically different than it had been doing; it would agree to purchase what amounted to the entire current domestic production of silver, providing Roosevelt would agree to authorize it, which he did. In other words, Pittman arranged an international pseudo-agreement, a huge thimble-rig, which committed the government to buy all of the silver that was being mined at a new high price under the spurious guise of contributing to international economic harmony.

Pittman got along quite well with Roosevelt and with the State Department people, partly because Pittman was basically a party regular who was inclined to do as the administration asked, partly because Pittman was a very good fellow, if you approached him at the right time of day, and partly because FDR was naturally willing, as president, to do what he reasonably could to remain on friendly terms with the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

In a letter to Pittman written in 1938, Roosevelt struck off the perfect parody of Pittman's peculiar brand of internationalism. Roosevelt wrote that Congressman Scrugham of Nevada "tells me they have found a manganese process and at the next session we will pass a bill demonetizing silver and substituting manganese. That will give variety to our currency and a nationwide political issue! Not only will the United States Treasury be saved but so will Brazil. That is why the Chairman will introduce it and call it 'The Pittman World Currency Act of 1939.'"<sup>4</sup>

I would be inclined to disagree with Mr. Brennan's conclusion, regarding Pittman's silver statesmanship, that "the self-sustaining subsidy for the western silver producers" was "reasonable" help toward their recovery. I do not think that it was entirely reasonable of Pittman to arrange for silver subsidies and purchasing programs on the pretext of doing something for world commerce and international amity. I certainly do not think it was reasonable to use his position as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee to trade his cooperation in enacting neutrality legislation for new and higher subsidies for silver.<sup>5</sup>

Pittman did not live long enough to be tempted to obstruct the war effort in the interests of Nevada silver, and it seems unlikely that he would have gone that far. However, his colleague in the Senate, Pat McCarran, did live long enough to be tempted, and McCarran, when the occasion arose, did not scruple to obstruct the war effort in the interests of Nevada silver. McCarran, who later became associated with the idea of 100 percent Americanism, practiced 100 percent silverism against government efforts to release federal silver reserves to relieve critical shortages in war industries.<sup>6</sup> Key Pittman, on the other hand, while he used his chairmanship for bargaining purposes, always did ultimately go along with his party leader for a price.

However, there remains one serious criticism of Pittman's silver statesmanship, from a Nevada point of view, that ought to be considered in this discussion. One is apt to gain the impression from what has been said by Mr. Brennan and Mr. Israel and myself that the welfare of Nevada during the depression largely hinged on the price of silver. That was not the case at all. Only a rather small fraction of the working population was engaged in silver mining and related industries. And the owners of the mines were, themselves, largely outsiders and not Nevadans at all at the time Pittman went to London to "do something for silver." The rewards of Pittman's silver statesmanship consequently went mainly to outsiders,

such as the Guggenheim interests, and therefore, I suppose, such as those scholars who, unlike myself, have been awarded the Guggenheim fellowships that they have applied for.<sup>7</sup>

The economic future of Nevada in 1933 would depend not upon silver mining, but upon what Nevadans call "tourism" or "fun in the sun," which had been legally arranged for in 1931 by a new state law legalizing gambling. Had Pittman been doing something for tourism in 1933 rather than silver, he would have proved himself a truly provident representative of his constituents. However, few if any Nevadans at the time foresaw what a bonanza legalized gambling would create for the state. Much more damaging to Pittman's record as a Nevada statesman is the fact that the authorization of the construction of Hoover Dam in the southern part of his state was sponsored in 1928, not by Key Pittman or by any other Nevadan, but by Congressman Philip Swing and Senator Hiram Johnson of California.

The consequence of Hoover Dam to Nevada included, among much else, the rise of world-famous Las Vegas from a mere railroad division point to what it is today. Even by the standards of Nevada self-interest, alone, therefore, Pittman was really beating a dead horse with his endless efforts to "do something for silver" at a time when the basis for Nevada's golden future was being prepared by the more far-sighted legislation of wiser statesmen from the neighboring state of California.

### Notes

1. Everett L. Cooley, "Silver Policies in the United States, 1918-1946," (Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1951).
2. *Ibid.*, 56.
3. Fred L. Israel, *Nevada's Key Pittman* (1963), 167; Herbert Feis, *1933: Characters in Crisis* (1966), 189.
4. Key Pittman Papers, Library of Congress, Roosevelt to Pittman, July 13, 1938.
5. Israel, *Pittman*, 167.
6. Cooley, "Silver Policies," 192-193.
7. For an analysis of Nevada's economy in the 1930s, see R. A. Zubrov, R. L. Decker, E. H. Plank, *Financing State and Local Government in Nevada* (1960).





*From "A Peep at Washoe," by J. Ross Browne, 1860.*

*The honest miner.*

## ***Notes and Documents***

### *Sources for Nevada History: A Survey of Institutional Collections Outside the State*

NEVADANS SEEM ALWAYS to have been proud of their past, but have at the same time been reluctant to preserve in public institutions the materials that are necessary for the study of their state's history. Until fairly recently Nevada institutions themselves have not been sufficiently or consistently aggressive in their collecting policies. The business of gathering together the tangible evidence of the state's history, then, has been left too often to those people and institutions outside of Nevada whose interest is really only peripheral to other objectives, and as a consequence much of inestimable value has been scattered or lost. There is little to be gained in bemoaning our earlier default; we should, in fact, be delighted that materials have been saved somewhere, even if that "somewhere" requires that we travel extensively or incur large copying expense in order to use them. Most students of Nevada history will already know of the principal institutional sources outside of Nevada, but it might be useful to review them briefly anyway, along with some comments on repositories that are perhaps not so well known. Absence of any particular library from this compilation should not be construed as anything more than the author's ignorance of its collections; neither should the relative amounts of space given to each of the libraries necessarily be interpreted as indications of their quality for purposes of Nevada research.

The abundance of Nevada materials in libraries in the East, and the relative paucity here at home, may be explained in part by the longer period of settlement in that area and an earlier appreciation of the importance of preserving historical documents. Often, though, these libraries are passed over. As an example, Boston is hardly a frequent stopping place for Nevada researchers, yet the city itself and its surrounding area hold extraordinary riches for the student of Nevada history. The Massachusetts State Library, housed in the state capitol, has a fine collection of publications of the Territory and State of Nevada, including one of the best collections anywhere of early gubernatorial proclamations. The library has not collected extensively outside of official documents, but its collections in that field are sound and have few gaps. Other libraries in the city, such as the Social Law Library and the Boston Public Library, are well equipped in the same field. Across the Charles River at Harvard

is the country's largest university library, and its Widener, Law, Business Administration (actually in Boston), and Museum of Comparative Zoology libraries—the last containing many reports of Comstock mining companies—are especially strong Nevada sources. The Houghton Library at Harvard also owns one or two rare Nevada items. The library of the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester has a little bit of everything, but its terminal collecting date (1876) limits its usefulness somewhat.

Yale University, which has the second largest academic library in the United States, did not begin collecting Nevada materials extensively until well into the twentieth century. Yet the New Haven campus has one of the very best Western Americana collections in existence, largely as the result of the beneficence of William Robertson Coe and the Beinecke family. While Yale cannot approach, say, the Bancroft Library in depth, it contains many Nevada items that will not be found elsewhere, and has as well the papers of Senator Francis G. Newlands, a Yale graduate, and the manuscript records of several Comstock mining companies.

In midtown Manhattan the Research Library of the New York Public Library (along with its Annex, several long blocks away) has excellent Nevada collections, although they tend to concentrate, as do those of many other Eastern libraries, on public documents. The NYPL does hold a few very rare nondocumentary Nevada items, however, and it cannot be ignored if one aspires to completeness. The New York Historical Society's handsome building overlooking Central Park has little of Nevada interest, but it, too, owns a few unique or rare materials.

The Princeton Collections of Western Americana have until now contained little Nevada material, but the collections are growing rapidly and the growth is in some measure concentrated in areas that have previously been neglected. Princeton's Theater Library is worth checking, too, as it contains several playbills from Piper's Opera House in Virginia City—items which are in peculiarly short supply.

Philadelphia is another city, like Boston, whose libraries began collecting Nevada materials early and as a matter of course. To name only a few institutions with important holdings, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Academy of Natural Sciences, and the University of Pennsylvania all have strong collections of Nevada materials. There are others, some of them nearly as rich.

Every Nevada researcher knows of the truly vast sources of Nevada history in the Library of Congress and the National Archives. Their importance as repositories of every kind of research material must not be, nor can it be, either downgraded or overlooked. Their resources are the more useful because of the availability of many of them in inexpensive photocopies. Yet because of the primacy of these two resources, other District of Columbia libraries are often missed. The Smithsonian Institution comes immediately to mind. Each of the major governmental departments maintains extensive libraries in its own field, and many lesser but

still important units do, too. Those whose inquiries are not satisfied in either of the major repositories might well consider such libraries as those of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the departments of the Interior, State, Treasury, Agriculture, and Defense, the National Library of Medicine, or any of several others in the District. Many of these libraries have published their card catalogs in book form (see below) so that one can visit a library that is relatively close to home to find out what exists in them before going to Washington. What is important to recognize is that the two major research institutions in the District of Columbia, while both of them are splendid, are in fact only the beginnings of the available facilities in the area.

Among the nation's major private libraries is the Newberry Library in Chicago, and its Nevada collections, while not exceptionally large, are important and valuable. As happens so many times in collections which are based on the interests of private collectors, the Newberry contains several unique or very rare Nevada items. The Nevada holdings of the John Crerar Library, also in Chicago, are not large, but they should not be overlooked. The library of the University of Chicago has good collections of state documents.

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin has strong collections of Nevada public documents which are supplemented by other publications and overland diaries in manuscript. The society's quarters are on the Madison campus of the University of Wisconsin.

Although the Western Americana Department of the Denver Public Library is justly famous for its resources, it is not particularly strong on Nevada history. Taken together with other collections in Denver, however—the Colorado State Library and the Colorado State Historical Society, as well as the University of Colorado Libraries in Boulder—there is sufficient material in the state to justify inquiries.

The Western Americana Collection at the University of Wyoming in Laramie epitomizes what has happened to many libraries. Within recent years the library's Western collections have grown at such a rapid pace that, coupled with the universal library problem of insufficient staff, much of the material is unavailable for use, at least in fully catalogued form. In this case, then, it would be prudent to correspond with the library to determine whether materials needed for a given project are available. (This procedure is a good one for any library, in fact; airmail stamps are cheaper than airline tickets.)

Utah presents a special problem for the Nevada researcher. Most of what is now Nevada was once part of Utah Territory and one would expect the Logan–Salt Lake City–Provo axis to be overflowing with Nevada sources. In some respects the researcher's expectations will be richly rewarded, but in others, oddly, they will not. Again, it would be wise to inquire before making plans to visit any of the repositories there. Salt Lake City in many ways does overflow with Nevada material. The

Utah State Historical Society, the Utah State Archives, the Church Historian's Office of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to a lesser degree the University of Utah, all have holdings of considerable interest to the historian of early Nevada and of the Great Basin in general. Brigham Young University in Provo has fine Nevada collections, too, including manuscript reminiscences of early Nevadans, but Utah State University in Logan is not a particularly strong source for the Nevada scholar.

Few would have the temerity to conduct research in Nevada history without consulting the collections of the Bancroft Library at the University of California in Berkeley. Curiously, though, another important source is frequently bypassed, to the detriment of serious scholarship. The California State Library in Sacramento is excellently well equipped to accommodate the Nevada historian, and its continuing emphasis on acquiring Nevada materials makes it a place to check frequently. The California Room in particular is strong on Nevada, but other sections, too, have much to offer.

The Bancroft Library, of course, is one of the best single sources for the study of any of the Western states (and its collections are augmented by those of the main University of California Library and its several branches). Its holdings of books, manuscripts, pictures, maps, newspapers—in short, all of the various kinds of source materials that one normally requires—are unsurpassed. As might be expected, its Nevada collections are superb. With the recent reorganization of the Bancroft, other related collections, particularly the Mark Twain Papers, will be more easily available. Another Berkeley library, that of the Pacific School of Religion, maintains a union catalog of the holdings of several sectarian libraries in the Bay Area. The scholar with specialized interests in this field will be rewarded by a visit.

The Stanford University Library, with its emphasis on Western transportation, is also an excellent Nevada source, particularly with respect to railroads. Comstock mining and the Sutro Tunnel also receive attention.

In San Francisco there are several libraries with long traditions of collecting Nevada materials. The California Historical Society, for instance, has good book and manuscript holdings, and its picture collection is very fine indeed. The library of the Society of California Pioneers, though small, has a good deal to offer the Nevada researcher. The society has a policy of sending materials that lie outside its primary collecting area to other institutions, however, so it is wise to inquire before visiting its quarters. Nevada materials can also be found in the History Room of the Wells Fargo Bank and at the Sutro Library (the San Francisco branch of the California State Library). The Gleason Library of the University of San Francisco, which is back to back with the Sutro Library, has good Adolph Sutro collections.

The San Francisco Federal Records Center—a National Archives

regional "branch," of sorts—is responsible for receiving and maintaining retired federal records for all of Nevada except Clark County. The importance of this much-ignored research center cannot be overemphasized. Equally as important is the Federal Records Center in Bell, California, a suburb of Los Angeles. Its responsibilities include the preservation of retired federal records from Clark County. Taken together these two repositories cover the entire state of Nevada and provide much previously untapped material.

The Western Americana collections of the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery in San Marino, near Pasadena, are immense, and the Nevada portions of them are unsurprisingly strong. Like the Bancroft Library, the Huntington has good representation in all of the kinds of materials that go to make up a "complete" Nevada library—books, pamphlets, broadsides, newspapers, manuscripts, maps, and pictures. It is a library that must be included in one's plans if comprehensiveness is desired.

Correspondence with libraries prior to visiting them was mentioned above as a matter of prudence; in some cases it is a matter of necessity. Certain institutions require letters of introduction, and a great deal of time—and potentially, at least, embarrassment—can be saved by writing first. Many specialized libraries have certain basic rules which can be explained prior to your arrival there. It would also be well to know in advance whether the library in question allows the use of typewriters for taking notes—and if it does, whether it has facilities in its reading room for an electric typewriter. The availability of photocopying facilities is also useful to know about. Perhaps most important of all, however, is the more rapid and more useful assistance that a researcher will often receive if he is expected. Frequently certain collections are in storage and can be used only with advance notification. Then, too, the curator will have more time to consider an inquiry and can often suggest other sources than the ones specifically requested.

In recent years the practice of publishing book catalogs of entire libraries or of specialized portions of them has flourished. It is thus possible to determine whether a trip to an out-of-state library is necessary or desirable without traveling any farther than, say, the libraries of the two University of Nevada campuses, which make an effort to collect bibliographical aids. It should be remembered, though, that the catalog of an active institution is obsolescent as it moves through the publication process, and that libraries will frequently be found to own more extensive collections than their published catalogs indicate.

Recently it was announced that the books and other printed materials described in *A Catalogue of the Everett D. Graff Collection of Western Americana* (at the Newberry Library) would soon be made available on microfilm. This project will be a welcome supplement to the publication



several years ago on microcards of the books described in Henry R. Wagner and Charles L. Camp's *The Plains and the Rockies*, and will further obviate the need for a certain amount of travel expense for Nevada and Western scholars. Until many other collections are made available in microfilm, however, and the Nevada items among them at least vicariously brought home again, it will be necessary for the serious researcher to visit widely scattered repositories.

ROBERT D. ARMSTRONG

### *Poets of the Water Ditch: Echoes From The Irrigation Age*

FROM THE BEGINNING of recorded history, philosophical and economic systems have been founded on agriculture. Writers have celebrated the pastoral life in hundreds of poetic, musical, and literary works. Probably no aspect of rural existence has been immune from these studies. In the United States, affirming the cultural effect of the rustic literature, the first presidents pridefully claimed agrarian backgrounds and interests. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson proposed a scheme to maintain the nation as a land of farmers to resist the encroaching evils of urban life.

Agriculture remained the basis of American industry until well into the twentieth century. The earliest settlers from the Atlantic coast to the Middle West recognized and respected this fact. But when the movement westward reached the hundredth meridian of longitude, some adjustments were necessary. West of that imaginary line lies the semiarid and arid region; rainfall decreases and much of the land is desert. *Irrigation* in the West is both topic for conversation and matter of concern.

Irrigation has proved an art as old as farming itself. Water ditches have been discovered in the ruins of many ancient civilizations. The necessity for enhancing the natural environment in water-short areas in order to grow food crops has inspired dozens of inventions and processes in the United States and elsewhere. During the late 1880s, through the 1890s, and into the first quarter of the twentieth century, irrigation, always exceedingly important to the people of the American West, became the subject of a new campaign, with some surprising results.

William Ellsworth Smythe came to prominence as an early campaigner for federal aid for agriculture, proposing that this help take the form of building irrigation works. Smythe became the most widely recognized promoter and most ardent publicist for the idea that the desert West could "bloom as the rose." He wrote constantly of the beauties of the life of



farmers, of gorgeous western landscapes, and of the profits one might earn in irrigation farming. In 1891 Smythe founded a journal of the cause, which he called *The Irrigation Age*.

The *Age* carried articles advising farmers on methods of irrigating arid acres, polemics in favor of government construction of dams and canals, romantic stories with the theme of pastoral contentment, vitriolic diatribes against "enemies" of irrigation, accounts of meetings where irrigation was discussed, descriptions of private and public irrigation systems, and interestingly, apparent attempts to improve the cultural milieu of dry-land farmers. The latter took the form of "poetry" in praise of irrigation.

The versifiers for the cause undoubtedly were amateurs, and much of their production was not only imitative, but also poorly imitative of the then popular poets. Nonetheless, their efforts demonstrated their sincerity and perhaps illustrated attempts to relieve the tedium of seemingly endless agrarian labor. The "poems" also may have helped the readers of *The Irrigation Age* to understand the pervasiveness of the great movement.

In October, 1891, the *Age* carried its first original irrigation verses, describing in rhyme the initial meeting of the newly founded Irrigation Congress. The Irrigation Congress, formed to promote the cause of government aid, met in Salt Lake City in September, 1891, with representatives from all over the West. *The Age's* bard wrote:

At the Congress<sup>1</sup>

Say, neighbor, did yer hear the talk,  
That boomin' talk on irrigashun,  
When from the North, East, South and West,  
The commonwealth shipped in their best,  
Ter start an old-time agitashun?

Yer didn't? Well upon my word,  
I'm downright sorry for yer, neighbor,  
For we uns heard surprisin' things,  
'Bout what this irrigashun brings  
Ter him who wants ter lessen labor.

A right pert man of many years,  
Just tore the atmosphere in pieces;  
He threw out hunks of native wit,  
And give us all a laffing fit,  
With Kansas tales of loans and leases.

Another man with heaps of narve,  
(Who never puts a necktie on)  
Said people of the Golden State  
Had grown quite rich, by drinking straight,  
Pure water, in the days now gone.

And then a man from Idyho,  
 Come ter the front and talked like fun;  
 Frum fair Chicago—so 'twas fated—  
 Three year ago he'd emygrated,  
 And just ter make the ditch streams run.

Nevady had a pert young man,  
 Whose talk just brought a streak of light;  
 He knew a thing er two 'bout land  
 An' told what we uns should demand,  
 Frum this time on, as 'twas our right.

Oh well, I hav'nt got the time,  
 Ter give yer all the hunks of knowledge;  
 Yer missed a heap of larning, friend,  
 Fer the hull thing, ter the very end,  
 Ware better than a course in college.

Time has obscured the identities of most of the men alluded to in the rhyme. "A pert young man" from "Nevady" stands out, however: Francis G. Newlands. Newlands, elected to Congress the next year, sponsored the Reclamation Act of 1902, popularly called the Newlands Act.

By 1896, members of the Irrigation Congress had helped to spread the word. Others might find solutions for poverty, atheism, and decline of family life in other realms; an advocate of the water cause composed this pacan for *The Irrigation Age* in January that year:

### Inspiration<sup>2</sup>

[J. Laidlaw on the situation in the central Western States.]

My fields of grain I drove across  
 To figure out my gain or loss—  
 But all around it seemed I heard,  
 Said to my soul this curious word—  
"Irrigate."

I trod my dusty corn fields thro'  
 And picked the ears so small and few,  
 But every nubbin I let fly  
 Seemed in my dust-filled ear to cry—  
Irrigate!

My half starved bairns so thinly clad,  
 My worn out wife so pale and sad,  
 My ragged clothes—my courage gone—  
 My shabby home, all seemed to moan  
Irrigate!

And debts and duns were crowding thick,  
 And shades of sheriffs made me sick,  
 And merchants watched me keen and close,  
 While from their lips this word arose—  
 Irrigate!

A tented wagon moving South,  
 Some poor starved victim of a drouth,  
 Or hunted thief—me come to this!—  
 I hear my wagon creak and hiss—  
 Irrigate!

I raised my soul in prayer to Him  
 Who feedeth serf and seraphin,  
 To aid and bless—across the night  
 Flashed out the burning word of light—  
 Irrigate!

Down in the sunless caverns hid,  
 My riches but await Thy bid—  
 Go make the watery treasures come  
 To glad thy fields and bless thy home—  
 Irrigate!

The magazine closed the same year (1896) with a free verse prescription:

### What Irrigation Does<sup>3</sup>

Irrigation  
 Reclaims arid wastes.  
 Makes a prosperous country.  
 Insures full crops every season.  
 Is the oldest system of cultivation.  
 Increases the productive capacity of the  
 soil.  
 Destroys insects and produces perfect  
 fruit.  
 Creates wealth from water, sunshine and  
 soil.  
 Makes the farmer independent of the rain-  
 fall.  
 Will redeem 100,000,000 acres of arid and  
 desert lands.  
 Will yield support to 50,000,000 popula-  
 tion.

William Smythe gave the chores of *The Age* over to other editors while he wrote his classic *The Conquest of Arid America*.<sup>4</sup> The magazine continued, however, to promote the cause, and incidentally, to encourage the amateur poets. Even Easterners began to catch the fever spreading

from the West. These lines written for *The Age* by a New Englander illustrate the popularity of an inspirational idea:

### Irrigation<sup>5</sup>

By Arthur Howard Hall.

As silver streams through mountain courses  
     seek,  
 By man's deft aid, the bleaching arid plain,  
 With healing, tranquil flow,  
 Like cooling hand on fever's burning cheek,  
 Bringing new flowers and leagues of wav-  
     ing grain,  
 Golden as sunset glow.  
 So in deep confines of the pensive brain,  
 Thought like a lakelet glistening in the sun,  
 Trickling o'er the stones to waste;  
 A hand has turned to bless and heal again,  
 Love's crystal waves by channels new, that  
     run,  
 Where man his need has traced.

Bradford, Mass.

Other publications also began to take up irrigation's banner. They accepted rhymes with familiar metre, which *The Age* duly reprinted. This verse appeared in 1899, with appropriate credit to the *National Advocate*:

### Irrigation in Rhyme<sup>6</sup>

How dear to my heart is the prospect of riches,  
     When dizzy old age comes along by and by,  
 A farm in the west with a number of ditches,  
     And life would be one constant Fourth of July.

How sweet is the sound of swift flowing waters,  
     That course near the fields of alfalfa and oats,  
 A sod house to shelter my sons and my daughters,  
     A monster frame barn for the horses and colts.

Thus blessed in old age life would be worth living;  
     No failure of crops from the desolate drouth,  
 Each day would indeed be a day of thanksgiving;  
     A prayer in my heart and a song in my mouth.

The best thing I know of for saving the nation,  
     Is found in the creed of the people now here,  
 Whose motto is "ditching," whose pass "irrigation,"  
     Who stand up for water as some do for beer.

No more hot winds will sweep over the prairies  
To wilt the potatoes and wither the rye,  
When the people dig ditches from Dundy to Cherry,  
And keep them bank full in the sweet bye and bye.

There'll be ample cause then for constant rejoicing,  
When money is plenty and crops never fail,  
For all will be happy and nobody voicing  
The gruesome refrain of calamity's wail.

Despite the earlier minor "New England movement" among the poets of the water ditch, not all Easterners understood the Western cause. This ironic (sarcastic?) little effort printed in *The Age* in 1903 probably brought knowing smiles to the faces of a few Western ruralites:

"Disillusioned"<sup>7</sup>

A poet came from 'way back East  
Unto the glorious West,  
Whose charms, he claimed, had ne'er by pen  
In fitting garb been dressed.

He wrote of mountains, mesa, butte;  
He sang of azure skies,  
Whose blue he likened to the blue  
Of the western girl's bright eyes.

His noblest effort, so he thought,  
Was on a murmuring stream  
That rippled 'tween alfalfa banks,  
A sweet, soft-slumbering dream.

He took this to his western maid.  
She laughed—the little witch—  
And cried: "That stream? Ha! Ha! Why, that's  
Dad's irrigating ditch!"

—Florence Ansley Perkins.

*The Age* enjoyed several more years of prosperity and popularity. The magazine maintained its identity with the reclamation cause, while other similar publications like *The Western Irrigator* and *The Drainage Journal* were absorbed, abandoned, or simply forgotten. By 1918, however, war-time difficulties and financial problems began to cause a decline. *The Age* undertook one last effort to propagandize for a blooming arid region. Editor D. H. Anderson sensed a beautiful dream of concrete and steel growing in the minds of members of the League of the Southwest. These visionaries from California, Arizona, and Nevada found promise in a grandiose scheme for a dam in Black Canyon on the Colorado River. In

the next-to-last issue of *The Irrigation Age*, an anonymous writer portrayed the plans for what would someday become Hoover (Boulder) Dam:

A dream you say?  
 Nay, not a dream,—  
 Each thought shall gleam  
 In stone and mountain lake,  
 And power dams full river's wide  
 With streams flung 'round  
 The mountain side  
 And vales with flowers  
 And fruits agleam  
 That here shall make  
 Complete God's plan,—  
 Despite the doubts  
 And sloth of man,—  
 His Empire building scheme.<sup>8</sup>

The last issue of *The Irrigation Age* appeared in November, 1918. The venerable magazine could claim then to have set the pace in the reclamation effort for more than a quarter century. Indeed, it had been the principal organ for many who believed that water was truly the West's life blood—and who, like William Smythe, illustrated their faith in verse:

#### Emancipation<sup>9</sup>

*The Nation reaches its hand into the Desert,*  
 And lo! private monopoly in water and in land is scourged  
 from that holiest of temples,—the place where men  
 labor and build their homes!

*The Nation reaches its hand into the Desert.*  
 The wasting floods stand back, the streams obey their  
 master, and the stricken forests spring to life again  
 upon the forsaken mountains!

*The Nation reaches its hand into the Desert.*  
 The barred doors of the sleeping empire are flung wide  
 open to the eager and the willing, that they may  
 enter in and claim their heritage!

*The Nation reaches its hand into the Desert.*  
 That which lay beyond the grasp of the Individual yields  
 to the hand of Associated Man. Great is the  
 Achievement,—greater the Prophecy!

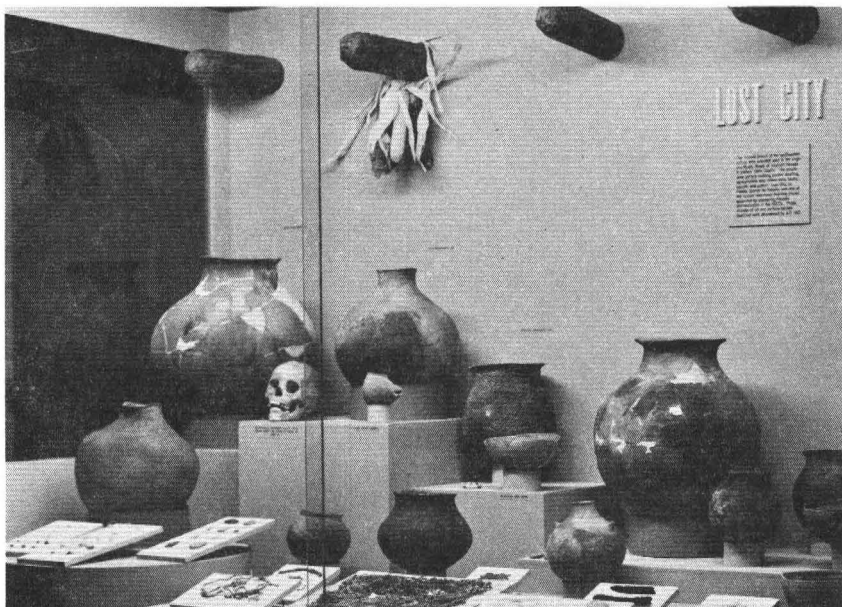
#### Notes

1. *The Irrigation Age*, I, No. 11 (October 1, 1891), 215.
2. *Ibid.*, IX, No. 1 (January, 1896), 30.

3. *Ibid.*, X, No. 6 (December, 1896), 171.
4. William E. Smythe, *The Conquest of Arid America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969. Originally published by Harper and Brothers, 1899; revised edition published by Macmillan Company, 1905).
5. *The Irrigation Age*, XII, No. 2 (November, 1897), 36.
6. *Ibid.*, XIII, No. 7 (April, 1899), 226.
7. *Ibid.*, XVIII, No. 7 (May, 1903), 202. Reprint from *Sunset* magazine.
8. *Ibid.*, XXXIII, No. 7-8 (September-October, 1918), 191.
9. Smythe, *The Conquest of Arid America*, viii. Italics in text.

MARY ELLEN GLASS





*A comprehensive display of artifacts from the Lost City site showing many of the Society's finest examples of pottery and implements. Note the skull, which may be a thousand years old.*

## ***From Our Museum Collection***

### ***Lost City—Pueblo Grande de Nevada***

SOUTHERN NEVADA archaeological observations were first noted in 1827 when Jedediah Smith wrote of prehistoric artifacts along the Virgin River. The first extensive excavations were not begun until 1925 when field work was initiated at the Lost City site under the direction of M. R. Harrington, then associated with the Heye Foundation, in cooperation with the State of Nevada. The construction of Hoover Dam prompted a salvage program to excavate as much as possible of the Lost City site before the artificial Lake Mead inundated the area. This salvage program, under the sponsorship of the National Park Service in cooperation with the state, was carried on from 1933 until 1938, again under the direction of Harrington who was at this time with the Southwest Museum. In many instances, water was flowing into the sites while they were still being excavated.

The inhabitants of Lost City are generally agreed to be a branch of the Anasazi Culture of the Southwest and habitation dates of the site proper were approximately AD 700 to AD 1100. The site is one of the largest communal dwelling places yet excavated. The people were agriculturists whose primary crops were the usual Southwest triad of corn, beans, and squash, with cotton also a major crop. The economy of these Pueblo farmers was supplemented by hunting the wild game of the area such as deer, mountain sheep, and tortoises, gathering native foods, and trading with neighboring groups. Pottery making was also a major activity as was salt and turquoise mining. The site itself was abandoned by AD 1150.

The Nevada Historical Society is indeed fortunate to include in its collections representative artifacts from Lost City, including ollas, points, bowls, cotton fabric, and numerous pottery shards—as well as an original inhabitant.

JANET STERLING

## ***What's Being Written***

*Restless Strangers: Nevada's Immigrants and Their Interpreters*, by Wilbur S. Shepperson (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1970; 287 pages; bibliography, index, illustrations, \$7).

CONSIDERING WILBUR SHEPPERSON'S previous work in immigration history and his interest in Nevada, it was only natural that he should turn his attention to the experience of the foreign born, specifically in his home state. The result, *Restless Strangers*, is a significant and delightful book and a model for similar studies.

Shepperson set out to do two things: to determine the impact of immigration on Nevada, and to explore what the immigrant has meant to those writing about her people. As he points out, "Knowledge of both history and literature . . . is central to an understanding of western immigration and the Nevada experience." Through a variety of materials—census records, extensive interviews with foreign-born Nevadans, newspapers, novels, short stories, memoirs, and biographies—he presents an impressive and fascinating picture of how immigrants adapted, thrived, or failed in this sparsely-settled, arid land, so foreign to anything most of them had ever known. Some lived out their lives, tolerating what they could not change, and dreamed of returning home. Others left or committed suicide. But most remained and profited by the unique opportunities for social mobility and economic advancement.

During most of her history Nevada has needed people, and, as Shepperson observes, the state has been something of an immigrant frontier. By 1870 her population was 44.2 percent foreign born—the largest immigrant state in America. She remained one of the top ten foreign-born states for more than seventy-five years. Upon arrival, rarely did ethnic groups colonize towns or settlements. Instead, they diffused and, except for Orientals, were permitted to help form the dominant society and to assume leadership roles. Some even voted before they were citizens. Nevada needed and welcomed their skills and talents as well as their brawn, and the immigrants "more than any other group gave variety, flavor and motley to Nevada life." Shepperson makes this abundantly clear from his study of immigrant themes in fiction and non-fiction. And his discussion of Nevada literature, although admittedly limited, is the best that has appeared.

Hopefully *Restless Strangers* will stimulate further exploration of the immigrant role in the westward movement. For example, we need to know more about the experience of Orientals in Nevada. They were the

obvious exception to the generality that the foreign born encountered few barriers to social and economic escalation. The author also suggests that had Frederick Jackson Turner looked more closely at the impact of immigration on the West "he might have propounded a thesis suggesting that the West was unique because it had been settled by three times as many foreigners per capita as then occupied the remainder of the United States."

*Restless Strangers* adds a new dimension to our understanding of Nevada's development and is a credit to the University of Nevada Press.

ROBERT W. DAVENPORT

*Ghosts of the Humboldt Region*, by Dave Basso (Sparks: Western Printing and Publishing Co., 1970; 189 pages; illustrations, \$6.50).

THE HUMBOLDT RIVER has been a source of intrigue, wild adventure, and tremendous hardships since it was first discovered by the white men. This sluggish, ever-winding stream has had a continuing impact upon both the men who have settled by it, and the land that it passes through.

*Ghosts of the Humboldt Region* is an attempt by a long-time resident of Pershing County to present a deeper insight into the extremely haphazard and spontaneous history of the lower Humboldt River. The bottle collector and the weekend explorer will find that the merit in this book lies mainly in the location and description of seventy-two different historic places in Pershing County. To help identify each site, a map has been included. The reader is therefore encouraged to make forays out into the alkali desert to search for crumbling evidence of the unfounded optimism of the early dwellers along the Humboldt.

Mr. Basso has included some curious items of information that should help hold the interest of the reader. One such item deals with bone ash (obtained from thousands of animal carcasses), which was burned as fuel to process lead and silver at Oreana. One of the more colorful quotations appearing in the book is as follows: "Half the lumber you got was just what was cracked up to be and the other half was knot." This provocative quotation gives an insight into the type of dry humor typifying these early inhabitants and matching the aridity of the land around them.

The author has also included many photographs in the book. Some of these photos were taken many years ago and provide a pictorial record of the growth of the Lovelock area. Other pictures were taken at various historical sites by Mr. Basso himself.

The book has been well received by the people in the Lovelock area, and although the Pershing County Library has several copies, the demand has resulted in a considerable waiting list. The lack of a bibliography and an index, however, contributes to some frustration to the reader. And

although the book contains 189 pages, some of the pages carry only one or two sentences.

The publication of this book has helped to fill a void in the vibrant history of the lower Humboldt area which other historians have tended to neglect in the past.

FRED R. HORLACHER

*Union Pacific Country*, by Robert G. Athearn (New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1971; 480 pages; bibliography, index, \$15).

ONE OF THE MOST detailed books on American railroadiana in recent years, *Union Pacific Country* presents a complete compilation of the history of one of the largest railroad systems ever. From the beginning, when the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862 was passed, through the booms and busts of westward expansion, the bonanzas and borrascas, to the eventual reincorporation and final reorganization in the summer of 1897, the complete saga of that huge railroad empire is faithfully chronicled.

While little Nevada material appears in this book, Nevada has always been touched in one way or another by the U.P. Even as early as 1869, when the silver spike from the Silver State was used at Promontory Point, Senator William Stewart from Nevada was chairman of the Senate Committee on the Pacific Railroads. Through his understanding of the complexities of the West, the committee was able to make wise decisions, nation-wide in their scope, concerning the frontier railroads and especially the Union Pacific.

With the advent of the eastern-Nevada mining rushes of the 1870s, the U.P. immediately became involved in plans for rail connections to such communities as Pioche and even considered a trans-Nevada line linking many of the mining areas of the Great Basin. In the meantime, the U.P. purchased the Nevada Central Railroad between Austin and Battle Mountain in order to prevent "competitors" from acquiring the line. This move was the worst venture the parent railroad ever tried in Nevada. The Nevada Central was run in "the worst possible" manner and even its purchase price was outrageous for its value. A contemporary observer stated "no honest railroad man would have paid the price for so worthless a property," and the short-line was soon sold out of the U.P. chain.

All through the 1880s, Union Pacific endeavored to build new feeder lines into the mining areas of Nevada, and always these attempts were halted before completion. The continual financial sinking of the U.P. made the possibility of these feeder lines more and more remote and eventually, when the reorganization took place in 1897, there was no chance for Nevada to benefit from the concerted main-line efforts of the new U.P.

In the main though, this work deals with so much of the political, social,

and actual operational workings of the Union Pacific that its 480 pages cover only some forty years of existence. It is slow reading, but each point of the line's history is very well documented and footnoted as an aid to historians. *Union Pacific Country* appears so well researched that it should find continual prominence as the major reference work of the entire Union Pacific system as well as being of interest to every American railroad buff.

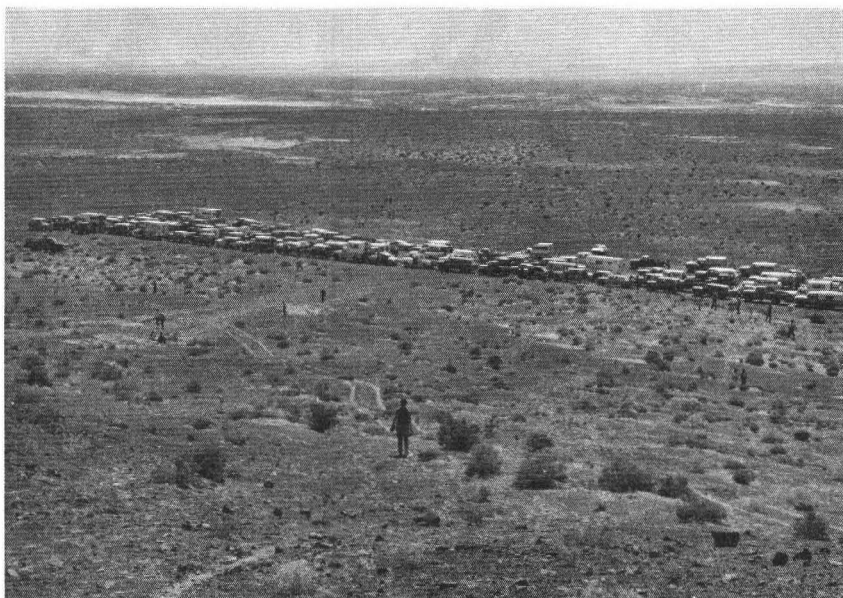
DOUGLAS McDONALD

*The Desert People: A Portfolio of Nevada Indians*, by Robert Caples (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1970; nine reproductions, \$20).

IN THE MID 1930s Robert Caples did a series of charcoal sketches of Nevada Indians as part of a project for the WPA. These sketches, owned by the University of Nevada, have long been admired by those who had the opportunity to see them. Now the University of Nevada Press has made them available to a wider audience by publishing nine of the best in a large, handsome format.

With the portfolio comes a commentary by Walter Van Tilburg Clark, longtime friend of the artist. In providing some background for the original sketches, Clark describes Caples' growing discomfiture with academic painting and portraiture, and tells how Nevada's silence and space and hard light ultimately forced the artist to adopt a new perspective for his work. "The portraits became fewer, the desire to draw Indians for impersonal reasons grew stronger. He went out and sketched them in their own places. The sketches became less and less portraits. They sought Indian, not single Indians. They were the simplified, strong faces of an outdoor people." The early Indian sketches earned Caples an appointment to the Federal Arts Project, and his first assignment was to go out and draw Indians as of the old days—how they lived, what they made, and so on. The present portfolio is the record of what he saw and how he felt about his subject.

The quality of reproduction is very fine. From the rich black in "Hunting Lesson" to the subtle shading of "Burden Carrier," we have every nuance of the charcoal medium, thus capturing the texture of the originals and preserving the enormous talent of the artist. The Caples folio is now completely sold out, but hopefully the University Press will provide us with further examples of the work of our best western artists.



*The caravan stopped at Upsal Hogback, on the Carson River route of the Overland Trail. Note the sound truck at extreme left, used throughout the tour to give in-depth histories of the areas covered. The well-ordered control of such a large number of vehicles is due to the supervision of the Churchill County Search and Rescue Association. (Photo by Keith Mulcahy.)*



## ***What's Going On***

### ***The Forty-Mile Desert Tour***

ON JUNE 6, 1971, The Nevada Historical Society, in conjunction with the Churchill County Search and Rescue Association, the Churchill County Citizens Band Radio Association, and the Churchill County Museum Association, conducted a guided tour across the famous Forty-Mile Desert section of the Old Overland Trail.

The caravan formed at Wadsworth on the morning of the sixth, and at 9:30 AM over 250 cars under the strict control of the Search and Rescue group from Fallon started eastward to view the historical sites along the Truckee River Route of the old trail. At the intersection of I-80 with US 95, the entire caravan turned south to follow a portion of the Carson River branch of the trail, and for the final few miles of the tour the caravan traveled right on the old emigrant road.

To aid the persons who made up the caravan in identifying the most famous locations along the tour, the Nevada Historical Society published a twenty-three-page tour guide written by Mr. Walter Mulcahy. This booklet was available during the tour and listed a brief history of the emigrant trails of the area as well as twenty-one sites along the caravan's route, giving explicit details of their history.

All post-tour reports indicated that the caravan was a great success and many people inquired about future tours, wanting to return to the Forty-Mile Desert as well as to visit further sites of historical interest in western Nevada. Future tours will be announced to members of the Society well in advance.

### ***Junior History News***

Activities of all of the Junior History Clubs were suspended for the school summer vacation. At the publication of this Fall *Quarterly*, the various clubs should be preparing new projects as well as continuing with previous designs. It is hoped that this year's programs will include an active interest in Nevada History, field trips, and the gathering of artifacts. All Junior History advisers and club officers are reminded to submit news items to:

Douglas McDonald; Nevada Historical Society; P.O. Box 1129; Reno, Nevada 89504.

### *The Carson City Fire Department's Museum*

IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY America, fires and fire-fighting played a larger role than is generally recognized. Before the advent of building codes, professional fire-fighters, and sophisticated equipment, flames consumed thousands of lives, millions of dollars of property, neighborhoods, and even entire communities.

The heroics, tragedy, and often the futility of the era of volunteer fire companies are exceptionally well presented in the instructive exhibits housed in the upper floor of the Carson City Fire Department's building at the corner of Musser and Curry streets. Most of the equipment and mementos displayed there belonged to Carson City's volunteer units of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the Warren and Curry engine companies and the S. T. Swift company. Of these, only the Warren company (founded in 1863) survives, consisting now of twenty volunteer members and the twenty full-time, paid firemen of the department. Although the Warren Engine Company selects the trustees of the museum, the professionals of the department maintain it and serve as courteous and knowledgeable guides. The public is welcome to the museum without charge, from one to four every afternoon.

Certainly the most eye-catching piece of equipment is the Seagraves chemical wagon, purportedly the first motorized fire-fighting apparatus in Nevada. Built in 1913 and delivered the following year, the truck saw duty until 1955. Other items of interest include: the original hose cart of the Warren company and another of the S. T. Swift company; wooden water pipes; leather nozzles; a collection of ornate chief engineers' trumpets; helmets; artifacts recovered from Carson City's Chinatown fire; photographs; the Curry company's ballot box—used to vote acceptance or rejection of candidates for membership; alarms; and paraphernalia for the many parades, such as dress uniforms, belts, flags, banners, and badges. Along the walls is a set of striking Currier and Ives lithographs illustrative of early American fire-fighting. For prospective researchers into the field, the museum houses a complete set of minutes of the Warren company as well as other manuscripts pertaining to the Warren and Curry companies.

This small, fascinating, and well-arranged museum is a credit to the men who have organized and maintained it.

## *Lost City Museum*

MEMBERS OF THE Lost City Museum Advisory Commission, who are to work with the Lost City Museum at Overton, were recently named by Governor Mike O'Callaghan. The seven members of the commission, created by an act of the 1971 legislature, will guide the curator and employees in adopting new policies.

Thomas R. C. Wilson, Sr., in public relations and advertising in Reno and Las Vegas, was named to the commission seat always filled by a member of the Board of Trustees of the Nevada State Museum. Appointed for two-year terms were Jim Barrows, associate editor of the *Las Vegas Sun*; Florence Lee Cahlan, a Las Vegas columnist and feature writer; and Dr. Shiela Brooks, an anthropologist at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Appointed for four-year terms were Celesta Lowe, a librarian at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Maggie Schneider; and William Wright, general manager of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. All are Clark County residents, as is required by the legislation creating the commission.

## *In Memoriam: Mark Raymond Harrington, 1882-1971*

A FAITHFUL FRIEND of Nevada archaeology died on June 30, 1971. Without Dr. M. R. Harrington, the majority of the knowledge of Nevada caves and archaeological sites would still be unknown. He was not a typical armchair anthropologist; he was instead both a collector of handi-crafts and an intense student of Indian customs and traditions, having had the opportunity of actually living with Indians who were still maintaining their traditional way of life.

Harrington's first job as an archaeologist was with Professor F. W. Putnam of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. After four years of excavating in New York and New Jersey, he attended the University of Michigan and Columbia University. His career expanded to include work with George G. Heye of the Heye Foundation, collecting artifacts of living Indians. While still with that foundation, Harrington joined with Lwellyn Loud of the University of California at Berkeley in excavating Lovelock Cave in western Nevada.

Harrington went to the Southwest Museum as Director of Research and became Curator in 1930, which position he held for thirty-four years until his retirement as Curator Emeritus in 1964. While with the Southwest Museum he surveyed such Nevada sites as Moapa Valley, Mesa

House, Paiute Cave, Gypsum Cave, and Tule Springs. Nevada archaeologists, however, are most grateful for his being associated with the excavation of Lost City, which greatly expanded our knowledge of man's antiquity in the new world.

The Nevada Historical Society is indeed grateful for the work Harrington accomplished for Nevada. We are fortunate enough to own many of his published works and numerous artifacts from his digs at Lost City and Lovelock Cave, both major milestones in Nevada archaeology. We join with all Nevadans in lamenting the death of this most dedicated man.

