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JOHN M. TOWNLEY

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THE COVER

Helen J. Stewart



*Helen J. Stewart*



# *Helen J. Stewart*

## *First Lady of Las Vegas*

by Carrie Miller Townley

### *Part 2*

IN MARCH, 1886, a man had drifted to the ranch who provided companionship to Helen Stewart after Megarrigle's death.<sup>159</sup> Frank Roger Stewart was hired as a ranch hand, but seventeen years later became Helen Stewart's second husband. Frank, no relation to Archibald Stewart, was born December 28, 1850, the son of Madison Stewart and his wife.<sup>160</sup> Frank and his brother, Madison, Jr., had wandered throughout the Southwest, working in the mining areas. They had worked as contractors on the Kansas Pacific Railroad, and had spent some time in Denver, Colorado. From Denver Frank went to southern California where he attempted placer mining for two years. Another two years were spent in San Diego. He drifted then to the White Hills District of Arizona for a year. His next stop was Vanderbilt, California, and thence to Shadow Mountain, where he built and operated a quartz mill. It was from here that he migrated to Sandy, Nevada, where he and a partner, Halsey, kept a store and post office. From Sandy he made his way to the Las Vegas Ranch, where he found a niche and remained the rest of his life.<sup>161</sup>

After Megarrigle's death, Helen Stewart began to rely increasingly on Frank Stewart. When he talked of leaving the ranch in June, 1901, she

Carrie Miller Townley received her M.A. in history/archaeology from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She taught Nevada history at Robert O. Gibson Junior High School in Las Vegas for several years, and while there organized the Trailblazers, the first Junior History Club in the state. At present she is employed by the Washoe County School District, presents an adult lecture series in Nevada history, and contributes Nevada history articles to the Las Vegas newspapers. She is also currently engaged in the preparation of a book length biography of Helen J. Stewart.

expressed her regret in a letter to an unidentified friend working the Amazon Mine. The friend wrote her, "I am sorry to hear that my friend Mr. F. Stewart contemplates leaving the Vegas. He is a good Man. I am sorry for your sake also. But I am of the opinion that he will not go. So do not worry over it."<sup>162</sup> The miner proved right, as Frank Stewart did stay on at the ranch. In addition to the normal ranch chores, he helped Helen Stewart keep her books and run the post office.<sup>163</sup> In the spring of 1899, when Archie was ill, he helped the harrassed mother nurse the boy, and even gave her a hand with such feminine chores as making preserves from the excess of figs.<sup>164</sup> Later, Henry Lee described Stewart as a very quiet and reserved person, but noted he seemed to enjoy the wine made at the ranch. During a week Lee spent at the ranch in 1900, he noted that he never saw Frank doing anything except sitting around the wine cellar drinking wine with visitors to the ranch. The wine cellar, made of native rock, was not a real cellar. It was built on the surface rather than underground, because of the difficulty of excavating the hard *caliche*.<sup>165</sup> Although Frank Stewart found a home at the Stewart Ranch, his was a secondary role to Helen Stewart. There is no doubt that she was the dominant one, and Frank never attained the status of her first husband, nor the status a husband customarily enjoyed at the time. When he died, Frank was not accorded the privilege of joining family burials in the "Four Acres," but was buried in Woodlawn, the city cemetery.<sup>166</sup>

Isolated though the Stewart Ranch was, the major holidays were frequently celebrated with great festivity. Christmas of 1893 found some thirty travelers stopping at the Vegas Ranch. A general feast was prepared, and the company spent two or three days dancing. Dances were generally held, and enjoyed, on those occasions when a sufficient number of visitors appeared at the ranch. During such joyous times as these, the isolation was easily forgotten, if only for a short while.<sup>167</sup>

The following July, nearly the entire population of Las Vegas Valley gathered at the Yount Ranch, home of the Harsha Whites, for three days to celebrate the Fourth of July. The settlers came from as far as one hundred miles. Among the fifty who joined the festivities were Helen Stewart and her children; James Wilson and his adopted sons; Leonard Carmen and Lena Carl, visiting the Stewarts; H. Fruedenthal of Pioche; and Mrs. William Gann and her daughters, Dreme and Demmie.<sup>168</sup> The settlers began arriving on July 3 and were entertained that evening by various amusements. Dancing was engaged in until after midnight, at which time the Fourth was ushered in by the firing of pistols and an anvil salute.<sup>169</sup>

The afternoon of the Fourth was spent in exercises and races, including foot races, sack races, rock races, and egg races. The national songs were sung. John Yount gave an exhibition of turning and jumping on the bar, while George Rose and Charles Grundy brought roars of laughter playing the clowns. Dancing began again in the evening. The feast accompanying the celebration was catered by William Sollender. Feeding fifty people in such circumstances was no small task, but Sollender managed with ease. The next day an invitation was extended to all by the MacArthurs to adjourn to their

Pahrump ranch, six miles away, for the evening. After a pleasant evening, the MacArthurs provided a meal at one o'clock in the morning. On the sixth everyone began the trip home.<sup>170</sup>

One of the continuing frustrations which plagued the settlers in Las Vegas Valley was the problem of mail service. Mail came from Pioche by a circuitous route, stopping at St. Thomas, then down to El Dorado Canyon, and back to Las Vegas. Because the Stewart Ranch was the hub of the valley for the settlers, it was the logical site for a post office. Messages for the settlers in the surrounding areas were frequently left with Helen Stewart. On June 24, 1893, Helen Stewart was appointed postmaster of the Los Vegas Post Office. The name, spelled Los, was not changed to Las until December 9, 1903.<sup>171</sup> The original spelling was intended to prevent confusion with Las Vegas, New Mexico.<sup>172</sup>

Although the appointment of Mrs. Stewart as postmaster in 1893 marked the official opening of the post office, actual service began much later. Before mail could be brought directly to the valley, a contract had to be given for the delivery. Upon receiving a letter from the auditor of the Treasury in the spring of 1894, inquiring why no report had been submitted for the Los Vegas Post Office, she replied that as service was not yet available, she had nothing to report. She explained they were a long distance from any post office and it took a long time to receive a reply. The closest service was fifty miles by wagon road.<sup>173</sup> Helen Stewart continued to serve as postmaster until she resigned in 1903, after selling the ranch.<sup>174</sup>

Not only did the Stewart Ranch serve as postal center for the valley, but it was the logical site for the voting precinct. The first voting precinct in Las Vegas Valley was set up July 11, 1870, during Gass's occupation of the ranch.<sup>175</sup> Again, in 1872 and 1874, the precinct was established, although it supported only four voters in 1872 and three in 1874.<sup>176</sup> It was not deemed practical to maintain polls for so few voters, subsequently they had to travel to El Dorado Canyon to cast their ballots. This inconvenience was removed in 1888 when the Sand Stone precinct was set up at James Wilson's ranch.<sup>177</sup> Finally, in 1890, the Las Vegas precinct was reestablished, this time to remain.<sup>178</sup>

With the attainment of adulthood, Will Stewart assumed civic duties connected with the ranch. Beginning in 1896, he served in several capacities at the Las Vegas precinct during the period the Stewarts owned the ranch.<sup>179</sup> Although he had received little formal education, Helen Stewart had provided him with a background adequate to assist in the establishment of the town of Las Vegas in 1905. He remained a civic leader of the town until his death in 1931, holding various offices in the local government.

As Will and Hiram grew older, they divided the ranch chores to relieve some of their mother's burden. Will shouldered the farming responsibilities and handled civic duties, while Hiram's interests were in the ranching portion of the enterprise. Will had begun working on the ranch as a very young boy; at the age of ten he began accompanying his father on trips to El Dorado Canyon to sell produce and beef.<sup>180</sup> After Archibald's death, Will continued

to make trips with Bates, a hired hand.<sup>181</sup> During the visits Hiram Wiser paid to the ranch, he and Will frequently made the canyon trips.<sup>182</sup> Although occasionally needed to help in cattle operations, most of Will's chores revolved around farming. As a young teenager, he baled hay, pruned trees, irrigated, maintained the plows and other machinery, and repaired the ranch buildings. He spent his seventeenth birthday burning grass in the fields.<sup>183</sup>

Hiram concentrated on the ranching duties of the enterprise. At fourteen, he was rounding up beeves to be slaughtered and helping with the slaughtering as well. By 1898, he was attempting to set policy concerning stock raising and sales. He held out for a higher price from Wyoming cattle buyers visiting the ranch in the winter of 1897-98. The buyers offered \$12 for yearlings; Hiram wanted \$13. He raised the price from \$15 for two year olds to \$17, and from \$16 for dry cows to \$20.<sup>184</sup> At the completion of the sale in February, Hiram accompanied the buyers to the Muddy where the cattle were ranging and helped them select their herd. After a week spent in selection, he escorted the buyers as far as Cane Springs before returning to the Vegas.<sup>185</sup>

The isolation of the ranch did not allow the young men much opportunity to experience the company of girls, yet each had found a wife by 1896. In 1891, the Crosby family from the Muddy paid a visit to the Las Vegas Ranch. Although Mrs. Crosby and her son, Alvin, returned home in two days, the daughter, Lena Carl, stayed longer. Helen Stewart had become ill with "la grippe," and Lena helped the children prepare meals until their mother recovered.<sup>186</sup> Will had become acquainted with the girl while spending time with his grandfather on the Wiser Ranch. Lena was born in Germany, and with her mother and brother, Adolph Carl, had converted to the Mormon faith. After emigrating to Utah, the mother married Jesse W. Crosby; two children were born to the union.<sup>187</sup> Will and Lena were married on October 1, 1895, in Muddy Valley. The ceremony, performed by Robert Logan, was witnessed by Etta Eastman and Frank Logan.<sup>188</sup>

Megarrigle's death left a vacancy in the Las Vegas School District for a teacher. In 1895, Dreme Gann filled the vacancy. At the time of her appointment, Hiram Stewart was appointed to serve as clerk for 1895 and 1896.<sup>189</sup> The young woman had been the only applicant from Lincoln County to pass the state examination for teachers in July, 1893.<sup>190</sup> The proximity of Hiram and Dreme at the Las Vegas Ranch led to courtship, then marriage on December 5, 1896, at the ranch. William O. Harris, justice of the peace for the St. Joseph District performed the ceremony with Frank Stewart and Tiza Stewart serving as witnesses.<sup>191</sup>

Dreme's parents, William and Prairiebird (known as Birdie) Gann, had settled their family in St. Joseph in 1888. They acquired one third of the land in St. Joseph, gradually selling most of it to other settlers. They raised hay, grain, and other products such as melons, and also ranged cattle. The Ganns had another daughter, Demmie, and a son, William Richard.<sup>192</sup> The Gann family became very close friends of the Stewarts. Helen Stewart and Birdie Gann remained the best of friends for the rest of their lives, frequently



*Helen J. Stewart (left) and "Birdie" Gann*

visiting each other.

Although her two older sons had become adults, the three younger children continued to worry Helen Stewart. She decided to send them to California to further their education. In September, 1897, she took Archie with her to Los Angeles to arrange for the three to board there while continuing their studies. From Los Angeles Archie wrote to Tiza, still at the ranch, explaining that he had sent her by John Powers, 800 cartridges. That was all he could get. He hoped she would enjoy shooting them.<sup>193</sup> One of the pastimes of the women of the ranch was walking up and down Las Vegas Creek, which ran near the house, and shooting ducks.<sup>194</sup>

The Stewart girls soon joined their mother and brother in Los Angeles. By November 24, 1897, Helen Stewart had established her children in Los Angeles and was returning to the ranch. She stopped in Manvel, California, the end of the railroad. Horse and buggy was required past that point for the remainder of the trip to the Vegas. While staying at the Manvel Hotel, she wrote to her young son in Los Angeles

Archie My Darling Boy

See you teacher learn all you can. Be good to the girls. Keep your room clean. Be sure to learn all you can. I will come soon as I can. Dont go with rough boys. Do all you can to learn so you can help me by and by. With a hug and a kiss.

Mama Goodby Sweet Heart.<sup>195</sup>

In Los Angeles, Mrs. Stewart had arranged for Archie to work with a tutor every evening to catch up on work he had missed during his sketchy education. In every letter she admonished him to continue to go to his teacher and to attend school.

No sooner had Helen Stewart left her children in Los Angeles than a story about Archie appeared in the Los Angeles and Pasadena newspapers. Upset at being abandoned by his mother, and homesick, he promptly got into trouble, even before his mother arrived back at the ranch. The account printed in the Pasadena newspaper explained that Archie was picked up on the streets of Pasadena by a policeman the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day. With one penny in his pocket, he told the police he was on his way to Nevada, intending to walk. He explained that his mother had left Los Angeles for Nevada two days before, leaving him and his two sisters residing in Los Angeles. The three had been given tickets by their mother to return to Nevada, but the tickets expired the day he was found. The children, according to Archie, had pawned the tickets, lost the pawnbroker's receipt, and could not get the tickets back. So, he had set out on foot to join his mother in Nevada, where she owned some eighteen hundred acres and considerable head of cattle. The chief of police in Los Angeles was notified and sent an officer to interview the sisters.<sup>196</sup>

The *Los Angeles Record* of November 26, 1897, had a different version. Archie's sisters were quoted as saying he was a prodigious liar. The story repeated Archie's tale, but added an interview with the sisters:



It is true Archie was lost in Pasadena without money, but he had no intention of going to Nevada. He was taken to Pasadena by a friend, Mr. Pete Cochran, but they became separated and Archie was taken care of by the police.

It is true our mother recently went to Nevada, where she owns considerable property, but we are going to school here. Archie was very anxious to go east with mother, and was rather spunky when he was not permitted to do so. That is all there is to it.<sup>197</sup>

Tiza hurriedly sent a letter with the clippings to her mother explaining the situation. Archie had left the house on Thanksgiving morning without telling anyone. He encountered Pete Cochran and accompanied him to Pasadena, thinking they would be back shortly. In Pasadena the two became separated, and Cochran, tiring of searching, returned to Los Angeles, leaving Archie in Pasadena. When it began to get late, Archie went to the police station where he told his story. At first, the marshal thought he had escaped from the reform school, and tried to get him to admit that he had. During the questioning, the marshal discovered the boy had eaten nothing all day, so took him to his own home where Archie joined the family for Thanksgiving dinner.

After dinner, the marshal telephoned the chief of police in Los Angeles, who then sent an officer to the home where the children boarded. Tiza telephoned the marshal in Pasadena to hold the boy until she could pick him up. A police escort was provided her for the trip. Tiza, Eva, and their friends had searched for the boy since ten o'clock in the morning until the call from the police arrived.

Tiza explained to her mother that the experience had taught Archie a lesson he would not soon forget. He promised to behave and go to school. Tiza felt Archie became frightened and told more than was necessary to get out of his dilemma. The presence of a newspaper reporter encouraged him to spin his story more elaborately than he otherwise might.<sup>198</sup>

Although she would have preferred to remain with her children in California, Helen Stewart was needed at the ranch where she was expecting cattle buyers to inspect her stock. The winter months were the poorest time to sell cattle, but she was tempted, even selling at a loss, to insure the ready cash she needed to keep the children in Los Angeles. After the sale, it was to be, "Hurrah for Los Angeles and the children I love!"<sup>199</sup> The children were well cared for, but their mother continued to worry about them. In several letters she cautioned them to be careful to turn off the gas in their rooms, and to "never forget and blow it out. You see that would leave the gas jet open and fill the room with gas which if the windows were closed would be sure to cause you death."<sup>200</sup> Gas was a modern convenience not enjoyed at the ranch and was unfamiliar to the youngsters.

Work at the ranch did not always end at dark. Writing to her children at midnight after preparing a meal for a hand returning home late, she instructed Tiza to encourage both Eva and Archie to do their best. She wrote:

I know you will, so [I do] not need to write this to you. I appreciate you much more than you realize, Tiza. I know you are a little bundle of the truest womanly material that was ever put together. Others appreciate the fact and know it.<sup>201</sup>

To Archie, constantly urging him to educate himself, she wrote:

Since I came home I have been looking with *disgust* on these *ignorant* poor fellows who havent a cent to their names and dont know enough to take care of themselves let alone taking care of anyone else.<sup>202</sup>

The mother took every opportunity to instill a need and appreciation in her youngest son for education. It was too late for the older boys, and no urging was needed to encourage the girls as they were better motivated, so she concentrated on Archie.

The following week, failing to receive a letter from Archie, Helen Stewart wrote him again. She enclosed a self-addressed envelope, asking him to put a letter inside, seal it up, and drop it in the mailbox at the corner. She told him she started to write the letter for him, but decided not to, as he might be able to think of something to say she could not. She reassured him of her love for him and told him she knew he was lonesome, but she would come as soon as possible. She begged him not to make it any harder on her than was necessary. Archie was requested to go every Saturday to spend an hour or so with Frank Stewart's brother, Madison, who was "held very high in the esteem of other men." She explained to her son that the deal with the Wyoming cattlemen was dragging on much longer than anticipated. The gathering of the cattle was not to take place until January 20, and would require about ten days, so it would be longer before she could join her children. With the letter she sent a little purse belonging to Archie with \$3 in ten cent pieces for a Christmas present. By John Powers she sent ninety-eight pounds of apples raised on the ranch.<sup>203</sup>

Archie's fourteenth birthday, January 25, 1899, found Helen Stewart in Emeryville, California. From there she wrote to her son:

This is your birthday. You are fourteen years old. I wonder what course you will pursue. What you will do? What kind of a man you will be. I think you have pride and manliness about you to try and be one of the best. Remember always I love you and always think of you every day and wonder what you are doing.

Dare to do right,  
Dare to be true,  
Dare to do good,  
Everything will come right for you.<sup>204</sup>

Archie had no chance to answer these questions posed by his mother. His fourteenth birthday was his last one. In July Archie was chasing wild horses on the ranch. He fell from the horse he was riding, and the fall proved

fatal<sup>205</sup> The boy was buried just north of the father he had never seen, bringing the number of graves in the burial ground to four. South of her husband, Helen Stewart had buried J. Ross Megarrigle. The third person buried in the plot was Nipe, an Indian girl close to the Stewart family.<sup>206</sup> She had died in October of 1891.<sup>207</sup>

Helen Stewart was unable to overcome her grief at the death of her son for some time. The boy, her pride and joy, had held a special place in her affections. On January 25, 1900, the day which would have been the boy's fifteenth birthday, the grieving mother wrote another letter, but, oh, so different this time! To Tiza she wrote:

Today Archie would have been fifteen years old. I have cried most all day through my work and all. I have had a dreadful time bringing myself to submit to what I know must be. I needed him so much.<sup>208</sup>

Stains of tears shed during the composition mar the letter.

With heart aching and tears in her eyes on this birthday, the cause of sorrow and not celebration, she would not allow herself the luxury of neglecting her work. Certainly the ranch was never the same to her without the presence of her beloved young son.

The turn of the century brought the death of the remaining Kiel family members in Las Vegas Valley. After Conrad's death in 1894, Ed Kiel inherited the Kiel Ranch. Conrad Kiel left to his wife, Mary, living in Mansfield, Ohio, one half of the small amount of cash on hand at his death. The other children besides Ed were given equal shares in the Noonan Ranch in Vegas Valley. None of the children, except Ed, were living in the valley. Ed, along with Mary Latimer, an elderly woman who had made the Kiel Ranch her home for several years, served as executors of the estate.<sup>209</sup>

In 1900, William, younger brother of Ed, appeared at the Kiel Ranch to stay with his brother. On the morning of October 11, Frank and Will Stewart drove to the Kiel Ranch to buy some tobacco and to inform Ed Kiel that some wagon wheels had arrived at the railroad station in Manvel. Upon arriving, they found the front and back doors of the house open. Through the doors they saw a man lying on the kitchen floor. It was Ed Kiel, a pistol lay near his right hand. Investigating further, they found William Kiel lying about thirty feet away across a ditch, his body partly submerged in the water. A double barreled shotgun was lying near his feet. Touching nothing, they returned to the Stewart Ranch to report the incident. A guard was set up over the bodies until a coroner's jury could be assembled.<sup>210</sup>

The members of the jury, James Wilson, Sr., James Wilson, Jr., George Allen, Robert Stuart, F.D. Spaulding, and Benjamin Sanders, appeared two days later before C.M. Over, justice of the peace of the Goodsprings District, to make their report on the shooting. The only injury on the body of Ed Kiel was a gunshot wound above the right eye. Several injuries had been inflicted upon William Kiel. A gunshot wound in the left arm between the elbow and wrist broke the bones of the arm. A second gunshot wound was found near

the center of the body, passing entirely through the body. A third gunshot wound was located near the left eye, passing through the brain. Because of the known ill feelings between the brothers, and the location of the weapons and powder burns upon the bodies, the jury agreed that William Kiel had been killed by his brother, who then committed suicide.<sup>211</sup>

Frank and Will Stewart were the only witnesses called by the jury. Frank explained to the jury that Ed Kiel had told him, only a few days before the killing, that he planned to run William off the ranch. Ed felt William was "no good" and had no interest in the ranch. William Kiel had confided in Frank that because he did not get along with Ed, he planned to leave the ranch. He explained he had no affection for his brother, Ed. When questioned about the drinking habits of the Kiels, Stewart commented that Ed Kiel was known to be a heavy drinker, and while William drank heavily also, it was to a lesser degree. Will's testimony confirmed that of Frank's.<sup>212</sup>

The investigation showed that the pistol lying near Ed Kiel had two cartridges still in it, and four shots had recently been fired from the gun. Three of these shots were surmised to have been the bullets which struck William. The fourth killed Ed. The pistol lay, according to the jury, where it would have naturally fallen had Ed Kiel shot himself. The rim of Ed Kiel's hat was cut by the bullet, and there were powder burns on the hat as well as the face. The shotgun which lay near the feet of William had no shells in it, nor had it been fired recently.<sup>213</sup>

Although the jury determined that the deaths were an open-and-shut case of murder and suicide by Ed Kiel, stories still persist that the Kiels were killed by the Stewarts, in particular, Hiram Stewart, and the murder-suicide theory hid the facts. A Stewart family legend claims that the Stewart boys, still carrying a grudge over the shooting of their father, had finally decided to take revenge on the Kiels. To accomplish this without arousing suspicion, the boys tied horseshoes to their feet and walked into the area of the Kiel ranch house. Other oldtimers relate that many believed the killing was retribution on the Kiels by the Stewarts. Henry Lee, two years before his death in 1973, still felt very strongly that Hiram Stewart killed the Kiels. Lee stated, "I figured Hi did it, Hi Stewart. I don't think there is a doubt in the world of it. He was the most reckless one of the family."<sup>214</sup>

It seems unlikely that the Stewart boys would wait so long to revenge the death of their father. The extensive report available from the jury, passing verdict on the deaths, points out that the six men investigating found no reason to believe the killing was done by anyone but Ed Kiel.<sup>215</sup> It is difficult to imagine that two young men, such as the Stewarts, or even one, Hiram, could have caught the Kiels unawares and murdered them in the manner in which they were found. In order to fire the one shot which killed Ed Kiel, one would have had to stand just next to him and place the gun very close to his head. What experienced man with the reputation of Ed Kiel would have been duped into a situation where someone could kill him from such close range? The Stewart boys, with their background, would have been no match for someone who had dealt over twenty years with men of unsavory

reputations, gunslingers, desperados, and the ilk. Ed Kiel, himself, had a reputation for not being much better than the desperados who frequently lounged around the Kiel Ranch. It is, therefore, more probable that the rumors were just calumny; rumors spread in an area which still retains much of the tradition of avenging angels and blood atonement. There is no proof to suggest that the Stewarts committed the killings, however, legends die hard, and this one continues to live on in southern Nevada's oral tradition.

The appraisers appointed to the estate of Ed Kiel were Helen and Hiram Stewart and George Allen.<sup>216</sup> William died single, but Ed had married Mary J. Sermon, signing a marriage contract with her on May 9, 1889, because there was no official in the vicinity to perform the ceremony. Mrs. Kiel was twenty-eight and Ed Kiel was forty-two.<sup>217</sup> The marriage had not worked out, and Mary, called Mollie, left Kiel on January 25, 1891.<sup>218</sup> She obviously got a divorce, as Ed Kiel's only heirs were his siblings.<sup>219</sup> His estate consisted of one horse, ten head of cattle, some farm implements, sundry store goods, 50 acres of improved agricultural land, and 190 acres of unimproved desert land. William Kiel left one watch and chain of nickel or silver and one tobacco sack with \$21 in coin.<sup>220</sup> Thus, the Kiel family in southern Nevada came to an end, much as it had lived, violently.

Talk of a railroad building through the county had been widespread for several years. Many expected the presence of a railroad to help bail Lincoln County out of its financial troubles. The fear of extensive taxation, however, caused interested rail promoters to hesitate laying track through the county. For this reason, the Utah and Pacific Railroad incorporated only to the stateline. In the spring of 1899, a new railroad, the Oregon Short Line, spoke publicly of building through the county.<sup>221</sup> W.H. Bancroft, representing the Oregon Short Line Railroad Company, had taken options on both the Stewart and Kiel ranches in the late spring of 1901. A title bond was signed May 27, 1901, between Bancroft and the heirs of Ed Kiel for \$6,500.<sup>222</sup> Two days later, another title bond was executed by Bancroft with the Stewart family. Most of the Stewart Ranch, with the exception of 160 acres and the "Four Acres," was included. Water rights were to accompany the land. The railroad was to get some 350 head of cattle with the Stewart brand. All crops raised on the ranch were to remain the property of the Stewarts, although Bancroft could at any time purchase them at market price. The Stewarts were to retain possession of the ranch long enough to harvest all of the year's crops, but if Bancroft chose to purchase the crops, they would give possession within sixty days. Fifty head of cattle and fifteen horses were also to be retained by the Stewarts. A total price of \$65,000 was agreed upon. Five hundred dollars was given as earnest money, with \$5,000 to be paid before June 15, 1901. The remaining \$59,500 was to be placed in the Crocker-Woolworth National Bank of San Francisco by July 29, 1901, along with the deed to the ranch to be delivered to the railroad upon completion of payment.<sup>223</sup> However, the railroad failed to provide the remaining money, therefore, they forfeited the options on the Stewart and Kiel ranches.<sup>224</sup>

In October, 1902, Helen Stewart signed a contract with Senator William

A. Clark of Montana to sell the ranch to the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad. At this time she traveled to Salt Lake City to discuss the deal with Clark, and while there signed the contract. It resembled the earlier agreement she had made with the Oregon Short Line, except that the price was \$55,000. She received \$5,000 down to be refunded if she could not deliver clear title to the land. In addition to retaining the "Four Acres," she was allowed four miner's inches of water from Vegas Creek, or as much of that amount as needed for irrigation of the tract.<sup>225</sup>

The Stewart children had each inherited one tenth of the ranch at their father's death. Because Helen Stewart continuously entertained the idea of selling the ranch, the older boys, upon reaching their majority, deeded her their shares in the ranch, enabling her to act for them more easily. On April 11, 1895, Will Stewart deeded his share in the ranch to his mother for the sum of one dollar and love and affection. Frank Stewart and Hiram Stewart signed this document as witnesses.<sup>226</sup> On his wedding day, December 5, 1896, Hiram signed a similar document, with Frank Stewart again witnessing.<sup>227</sup> It was not until the Oregon Short Line agreement had fallen through, that the daughters deeded their shares to their mother. Eva signed hers in March, 1902, in Oakland, California.<sup>228</sup> In July, Tiza executed her deed, for the same amount as the others, one dollar and love and affection.<sup>229</sup> By the time the girls signed over their shares of the ranch, Archie had died. There seems to be no record of whether his estate went to his mother, or was divided among his siblings. Either way, Helen Stewart had complete control of the ranch before the sale. However, to insure that there would be no problems in the future concerning clear title to the land, each of the four surviving children again signed the deed. Hiram did not want to sell the ranch, although he had already deeded his share to his mother. Knowing little else for most of his life, he did not want to leave the ranch. His objections were overruled by the remainder of the family, and the sale went through.<sup>230</sup>

The deed was executed on December 8, 1902. Helen Stewart and each of her four children were signatories. By this time Eva had married James Coffey and was living in San Francisco; she was the only one who could not sign at the ranch. Frank Stewart, as usual, witnessed the document.<sup>231</sup> After twenty years, Helen Stewart had sold the ranch. She had moved there in 1882, believing it to be an interim move, and therefore, temporary. She never realized it would take so long to sell. Although she had not intended to make it her home, it had become so over the years.

The sale of the ranch did not end Helen Stewart's land dealings. Within a week after signing the agreement with Clark, she purchased 280 acres. Forty acres of this was north of the "Four Acres," and adjacent to it. The remainder was a strip beginning just south of the burial ground and extending eastward. For these 280 acres she paid \$1,240. On the 40 acre plot north of the burial ground she made her home for the remainder of her life.<sup>232</sup> Realizing the future value of land in the immediate area, she bought 924 acres adjacent to the land she had sold the railroad, within a period of only three years.<sup>233</sup>



The Stewart family vacated the ranch in April, 1903, and went to Los Angeles. It was there that the final payment on the ranch was made by Clark who then took custody of the Las Vegas Ranch.<sup>234</sup> The relief and joy of having the sale behind her lapsed when tragedy again struck. In June, Hiram had gone swimming and caught cold. The cold developed into pneumonia, resulting in his death on June 23.<sup>235</sup> His body was embalmed and later shipped to Las Vegas where it was buried between his brother, Archie, and the Indian girl, Nipe, in the "Four Acres."<sup>236</sup> The funeral was held at his mother's home in Los Angeles on June 25. Besides his mother and siblings, he left his wife, Dreme, and two children, Leslie and Geneva.<sup>237</sup>

The year, 1903, was an eventful one for Helen Stewart. In addition to the ranch sale and the death of her second son, she decided to remarry. Although a young woman when widowed, she chose not to remarry, but not from lack of opportunity. One reason is given by Florence Boyer. When John Powers sold the Wall Street Mine in El Dorado Canyon in 1898, he proceeded to the Stewart Ranch and asked Helen Stewart to marry him. She replied, "You are a fine man, John, but I won't change my name."<sup>238</sup> Whether or not this was the reason for her long widowhood, certainly it has given rise to one more legend. Tradition insists that she refused to change her name, and her second husband, Frank Stewart, was in reality Frank Condon. Before she would marry him, she allegedly demanded he change his name from Condon to Stewart. The story seems to have originated with the writings of Delphine Squires.<sup>239</sup> This error has been repeated in the writings of others, and frequently has appeared in short articles dealing with Helen Stewart in the Las Vegas newspapers. Yet, as long as ten years before their marriage, Frank Stewart signed his name as Frank Stewart on legal documents. Helen Stewart's day journals in the 1880s and 1890s refer to him as Frank Stewart. Further mention of Frank's brother, Madison Stewart, Jr., in Helen Stewart's letters long before her marriage to Frank, gives one more proof that this story is mere legend, yet the myth persists.

Helen Stewart did not require that her husband change his name before she would marry him, but she did insist that he sign a premarital agreement. Just before the ceremony was to be performed in Ventura, California, Frank signed an agreement stating that because Helen Stewart had children by a previous marriage and a considerable amount of wealth and property, she was to have complete control over all of this. Frank was to give up all claims to his fiancée's property held at the time of the wedding. She, alone, was to make decisions concerning it; it would remain her sole and separate property to do with as she wished. Although Helen Stewart was willing to marry Frank, she did not intend to lose the independence she had become accustomed to in the years of her widowhood. After Frank signed the document, they were married by A.B. Morrison, pastor of the Methodist-Episcopal Church on July 23, 1903.<sup>240</sup> Whether or not Helen Stewart actually chose Frank because she was able to retain the name Stewart, certainly she had grown to depend upon him for support in the last years on the ranch. Even so, Frank was never accorded the full status husbands enjoyed at the

time. His wife remained the dominant partner in the marriage, retaining to a large degree the relationship established when Frank worked for her as a ranch hand. Had she chosen a more dominant personality, the marriage might have been fraught with much stress and strain. Having been the head of a large ranch and her family for twenty years, Helen Stewart would have found it difficult to reassume the subservient role she had played in her first marriage.

Will and his wife, Lena, returned to Las Vegas from Los Angeles to oversee the building of the new home just across the street from the old ranch house. The Frank Stewarts joined them in late fall of 1903.<sup>241</sup> By the early months of 1905, the Vegas buzzed with activity. Some 150 buildings were already completed or under construction.<sup>242</sup> Because there had been 5,000 applications for 1,200 lots in Clark's townsite, an auction was held on May 5, 1905.<sup>243</sup> One of the principal streets in the site was named Stewart for the Stewart family. No longer would Helen Stewart be situated in an isolated oasis in the barren desert. She described the drastic change:

Following the trail of the trapper and of the trail blazer, and the pioneer, came the iron horse, that great annihilator of time and distance, bringing all the modern ideas of advanced civilization in our midst and we awoke as if in a dream and found all the comforts of an advanced civilization with us. The hardships were no more.<sup>244</sup>

Helen Stewart often told her children to be patient and civilization would catch up with them. She spoke of seeing "the glint of rails, the smoke of the trains, and homes and church spires in the grain field on the hill."<sup>245</sup>

Civilization may have come to her land, but for the first time she encountered a problem with water. When buying her ranch, the railroad agreed to allow her four miner's inches of water to flow onto her property at "Four Acres."<sup>246</sup> By 1907, she was still fighting to obtain the allotted amount through the pipes. In July, 1907, she wrote to her attorney, Frank R. McNamee, complaining that someone was diverting the water from Vegas Creek, interfering with her rightful flow of water. Instead of forty-four gallons a minute to which she was entitled, she was getting only fourteen. Some days the flow stopped completely. She requested that McNamee investigate the matter.<sup>247</sup> When she consulted Walter Bracken to determine the person in charge of the water, Bracken referred her to two others in the company. He was, he stated, simply instructed to check daily at the Old Mormon Dam, a quarter of a mile from the Stewart property, to insure the flow did not exceed a limitation which the company had placed upon the water. Helen Stewart quickly gave McNamee this information, noting that at the point described by Bracken, a large quantity of filth and dirt accumulated from a bathing pond and portable house, causing an obstruction. The pressure of the water fluctuated according to the use in the town. The night of the first large fire in Las Vegas, when the ice plant burned, the water had been completely shut off. Helen Stewart, of course, did not object to this

emergency, but it did illustrate the ease with which her water could be taken away by those living in the town below her property.<sup>248</sup> By September, McNamee had managed to extract a promise from the company to rectify the problem.<sup>249</sup> By 1912, Mrs. Stewart had drilled two artesian wells, providing the family with ample water.<sup>250</sup>

The long absence from cultured society had dulled Helen Stewart's familiarity with the social amenities. With the arrival of numerous women in Las Vegas, Helen Stewart was suddenly thrown back into the stream of social affairs. The arrival of Mary Belle Viley Park, bride of William S. Park, created a stir of excitement, even among women who had been living in areas not so isolated as the Vegas Ranch. Mrs. Park, accustomed to the strict rules of etiquette accepted by the plantation society of Kentucky, did not understand the anxiety she created among the western women living in Las Vegas. She wasted no time in entertaining the Las Vegas ladies in her new home at Fourth and Fremont. The women invited to this gala affair were thrown into a dither because many of them did not own a hat, and they simply could not make an appearance without one. A plan was soon devised whereby a group of women attended wearing the available hats, then, after leaving the Park home, each quickly turned her hat over to a friend, enabling all to attend the affair. Mrs. Park indicated puzzlement at the duplication of several chapeaus adorning the women. To add to her confusion, Helen Stewart entered the house, went through the receiving line, and immediately ensconced herself in a rocking chair in the dining room. There she proceeded to rock for the remainder of the afternoon. Mrs. Park was aghast at such behavior. The rigid rules to which she was accustomed stipulated almost to the exact minute how long a guest stayed at such functions. She appealed to Delphine Squires for assistance. Mrs. Squires helped Mrs. Park understand the situation in which Helen Stewart had lived for over twenty years, where every guest in her home was welcome to stay in terms of days, not minutes. This smoothed over an awkward situation.<sup>251</sup> How different were the rules of Las Vegas from those back East! Mrs. Park soon adjusted to western conduct and became one of the leaders of Las Vegas social life until her death in the 1960s.<sup>252</sup>

Helen Stewart, starved for feminine companionship for twenty years, drained every minute of enjoyment she could from the social affairs she suddenly found available to her. She frequently attended socials, as well as gave them, in the early days of the town. Her habit of never making an unkind remark about anyone endeared her to the women of Las Vegas, thus, she was included in all their activities.<sup>253</sup>

While acquiring new friends, in 1906, Helen Stewart lost two of her oldest friends, James Wilson and George Allen.<sup>254</sup> These two had provided help and encouragement during the crisis of the death of her husband, and had continued to offer companionship for over twenty years. It was to them that she turned in times of trouble. Both frequently spent time at the Stewart Ranch, relying upon the supplies available there, as well as the friendship of the woman who ran the ranch. The scarcity of settlers in Las Vegas Valley before the railroad, bonded together the few who lived there. Because of the

character of the people who congregated at the Kiels, and because of the hostility between the two families, Helen Stewart was unable to call upon her closest neighbors, the Kiels, for assistance or friendship. This served to create a closer bond between Helen Stewart and Allen and Wilson.

Helen Stewart's interest in the history of southern Nevada had begun early in her residence in the area and continued until her death. When Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, founder of the Nevada State Historical Society, made a trip to southern Nevada in the summer of 1908, one of the people she visited was Helen Stewart. Miss Wier, while at the Stewart home, decided that it would be beneficial to establish a branch of the Historical Society in Las Vegas.<sup>255</sup> Who was better qualified to undertake this organization than Helen Stewart? No one had better knowledge of the history of the area, or greater interest in it than she. It was logical that Helen Stewart should be chosen as the first president of the society.<sup>256</sup> After spending hours listening to Mrs. Stewart's experiences on the Vegas Ranch, Miss Wier noted in her diary, "Truly she is a pioneer of the pioneers."<sup>257</sup> Twelve years later when Jeanne Wier was struggling to provide a permanent home for her beloved historical society, she set up committees throughout the state composed of the most influential citizens in each area. Helen Stewart served on the building committee from Las Vegas.<sup>258</sup> In addition to her membership in the Nevada Historical Society, Helen Stewart joined the Society of Nevada Pioneers when it was organized in 1914.<sup>259</sup>

Because Las Vegans were aware of the interest Helen Stewart had in relics of the area, she frequently was given items for her collection. After the incorporation of the city of Las Vegas, C.P. Squires donated the pen with which Governor Tasker L. Oddie signed the act of incorporation, along with the accompanying letter from the governor.<sup>260</sup> Her collection included a myriad of items representing various eras of development in the area. Spanish coins and a Spanish rosary had been found in the vicinity of the Colorado River. These she kept as relics of the era of Spanish exploration.<sup>261</sup> Using the few resources to which she had access, she began to develop a history of the Vegas Valley. Realizing the value of Indian legends and artifacts, she began assembling a collection of these, as well as items of more recent historical interest.

Her collection of Indian baskets was reported to have been the finest in the state. This collection became of great concern to several people who realized its value. Jeanne Wier quickly recognized its historical value during her 1908 trip to Las Vegas.<sup>262</sup> Yet, she was at that time hesitant about suggesting the collection be donated to the Society. In answer to a letter from Rita Breeze of Las Vegas, expressing concern over the future of the collection, Miss Wier wrote:

For many years I have hoped that at some future time we might come into possession of the really fine collection made by Mrs. Stewart. But it seemed so much a part of herself that I could never bring myself to ask her outright for it, although this



*Frank Stewart (left), Helen J. Stewart.  
The two gentlemen on the right are not identified.*

Institution is of course the proper place for its permanent preservation.<sup>263</sup>

Miss Wier was encouraged enough to write to Mrs. Stewart about the basket collection, indicating that the Society would greatly appreciate having the honor of housing the collection:

as a permanent memorial of the work of a good woman whose pioneer surroundings did not crush out of her the innate and permanent intellectual interests which mark the truly cultured individual. To me the collection stands for this quite as much as for its value to Indian history. It would be eloquent as a tribute to our pioneer women in the centuries to come.<sup>264</sup>

Over the next few years the two women corresponded concerning the collection. Helen Stewart wrote to Miss Wier:

I have many things I would like to have preserved for future benefit to my Home and State. My collection is not yet just as I would like it. I have spent much time and money in getting my collection as near perfect as I could. I have the reading of my Baskets and many Legends of the Indians which I wish to place in book form that they may be together a History of a people that has lived nearer to God and Nature than any race of people on the face of the earth.<sup>265</sup>

The quality of some of the baskets was so exquisite that Abe Cohn, the Indian basket connoisseur who managed Dat-So-La-Lee, was forced to admit that Helen Stewart's baskets were the most beautiful he had ever seen. The finest one displayed at a meeting of the State Federation of Women's Clubs in Carson City had fifty-two stitches to the inch with the feathers of the yellow hammer woven into the design. Dat-So-La-Lee's finest contained only thirty-two stitches to the inch.<sup>266</sup>

Although she dearly loved her Indian collection, at times the maintenance of it proved exhausting as she grew older. To Tiza she wrote:

We have been house cleaning and I have handled and dusted and washed Indian Jugs and cleaned and dusted until I would like to go out in the mountains and find a Wic-i-up and stay there awhile.<sup>267</sup>

Jeanne Wier continued to correspond with Helen Stewart, ever urging placement of the baskets with the state. In 1925, Governor Scrugham wrote to Helen Stewart asking her to display examples of her collection the following year at the State Exposition in Reno. He suggested that the legislature might be willing to pass an act providing a modest sum of money for the purchase of the baskets for the Nevada Historical Society.<sup>268</sup> Her reply asked him to place a value on the materials. She seemed amenable at this time to make arrangements with the state for the purchase of the collection.<sup>269</sup>

After a visit from Scrugham, she agreed to show part of the collection for



six months at the 1926 State Exhibition in Reno, which would coincide with the National Rotary Convention, bringing visitors from all over the country. It was arranged that her expenses and a salary for her and an assistant would be paid by the state. Scrugham also obligated the state to copyright a manuscript which she planned to write, based on her Indian material. She intended to donate the profits from this book to the Indian school in Las Vegas, which she had helped to establish.<sup>270</sup>

Just as Jeanne Wier came close to preserving this extensive collection for the citizens of Nevada, she saw the dream vanish. Before arrangements could be finalized, Helen Stewart died. The basket collection, which seemed destined at long last to become a part of the heritage of Nevada, was sold the following year by her executors. The purchaser, H. Schweizer, of Albuquerque, New Mexico, paid \$12,500 for the 550 baskets. Schweizer, upon examining the baskets, recognized the fantastic value of them, and within an hour paid cash for the collection. He chose the best 25 and sold them for an amount equal to what he had paid for the entire collection. Some brought as much as \$1,000 to \$1,500.<sup>271</sup> The real loss was to the citizens of Nevada, present and future. Once more, relics of Nevada's heritage passed from the state to other areas of the country.

Having spent so many years without the company of other women, Helen Stewart was delighted to participate in the various womens' clubs formed in the early days of Las Vegas. Perhaps, the most important group to organize was the Mesquite Club, which began in March, 1911. The group wasted no time in utilizing Helen Stewart's talents. The name itself was conceived by her. When suggesting it as a possibility, she commented that if the members could do as much for one community as the mesquite tree did for the Indians in the early days, it would be well named.<sup>272</sup> So Mesquite it became. At the first meeting Helen Stewart presented Mrs. Givens, the president, with a gavel she, herself, had made from a mesquite tree.<sup>273</sup> This idea was repeated four years later when members of the Lincoln County and Clark County delegation presented another gavel to the Speaker of the Assembly. This gavel was made from the wood of an immense fig tree on Helen Stewart's property. This tree, at the time, was regarded as the largest fig tree in the United States.<sup>274</sup>

As one of the delegates representing the Mesquite Club at the annual meeting of the State Federation of Women's Clubs in 1915, Helen Stewart traveled to Yerington, where, as the guest of honor, she spoke to the group on "Reminiscences of the Mormon Trail," tracing briefly the early history of the Las Vegas area.<sup>275</sup> From Yerington she traveled to Reno where she was the guest of her friend, Jeanne Wier. There she was interviewed by a reporter for the *Nevada State Journal*, which referred to her as "an authority of state history."<sup>276</sup> The next stop on her itinerary was Carson City. She appeared before the Leisure Club, displaying and lecturing on some of her baskets. She was then entertained by Governor Emmet Boyle and Abe Cohn.<sup>277</sup> From Carson City she traveled to California to attend the exposition in San Francisco, and visit friends in Galt.<sup>278</sup>

It came as no surprise when the following year Governor Boyle appointed Helen Stewart one of Nevada's delegates to the Twelfth Annual Convention for the American Civic Association held in Washington, D.C. in December. Although she felt greatly honored, her health prevented her from attending.<sup>279</sup> The *Clark County Review* commented:

The appointment of Mrs. Stewart comes as a deserved honor. Besides being Las Vegas' pioneer woman since the establishment of the city she has taken an active part both in the work of the various women's clubs for improvement and community welfare work in general.<sup>280</sup>

That same year Helen Stewart became the first woman elected to the Clark County School Board. What is just as unique was the manner in which she was elected. Although she ran as a Republican, she was also endorsed by the Democratic party, and, as she commented, "elected by all my friends."<sup>281</sup> At the first meeting of the new board of education in January, 1917, Helen Stewart was elected clerk. She accepted with the stipulation that the actual clerical work was to be done by the principal of Clark High School.<sup>282</sup> The problem had to be submitted to the state attorney general for a decision on the legality of the plan. When his decision was favorable, Mr. Street, the principal, was appointed officially, adding \$15 a month to his existing salary of \$183.<sup>283</sup>

As one would expect, when men finally allowed women to join them on juries, Helen Stewart was among the first. In February, 1916, ten women were among those subpoenaed to serve in justice court. This was the first time in Clark County, and probably in the whole state, that women sat on any jury. The trial was of little significance; the women jurists received most of the attention.<sup>284</sup> This trial was followed by a more important one in 1922. For the first time in a murder trial, *State of Nevada vs. Nick W. Dugan*, women in Clark County sat on the jury. Again, Helen Stewart was a jurist.<sup>285</sup> Although the attitude of most lawyers consulted during a poll taken was that women were most unsuited for jury duty, the women proved more harsh than the men at judging. The verdict was arrived at after three ballots. The final verdict was a compromise. On the first ballot all four of the "weaker sex" voted for first degree murder. On the second, two of the women relented and switched to voluntary manslaughter. Finally, on the third, the other two women were persuaded to change their votes to voluntary manslaughter, making the vote unanimous.<sup>286</sup> Helen Stewart had helped to prove that women could perform as jurors.

On April 10, 1914, Will's second wife, Mina, gave birth to a daughter which they named Helen Jane Stewart for her grandmother.<sup>287</sup> Helen Stewart was delighted to have a namesake. The family did not realize for several months that the difficult delivery of the child had left her mentally retarded. The doting grandmother had a special love for this exceptional granddaughter, and took great pleasure in each small, slow step forward the child took.<sup>288</sup> It was for this child that the Helen J. Stewart School for retarded

children in Las Vegas was named. The school stands across the street from the Stewart burial ground and Helen J. Stewart's grave.

In 1918, during World War I, Helen Stewart observed:

At best it seems to me life is quite a struggle. And in these dreadful War Times it seems to me the chances are for a great Herculianian struggle. The Germans are so thoroughly prepared for war and we are just like a Hornets nest just getting started up but they better beware of the sting.<sup>289</sup>

Although sixty-four, Helen Stewart contributed as much as possible to the war effort. She spent many hours working for the Red Cross. Construction of bed socks, sweaters, comforts, night shirts, bed pillows, and "little sacks of clipped pieces left from the cutting out of the garments" were tasks at which she labored long.<sup>290</sup> Her treasured artifacts and relics were loaned to be used in the stage setting of a high school entertainment to benefit the American nurses in France.<sup>291</sup> An additional burden to her war work was the illness the family had suffered in the months of December, 1917 and January, 1918. Helen, Eva, and Frank had been ill during these two months, thus the depression that fell upon Mrs. Stewart is understandable when she wrote Tiza, "Oh, Dear I am sometimes so tired of all the great confusion of existence."<sup>292</sup> Generally an optimist, difficult times in her later years occasionally managed to break down her natural love for life, but only temporarily.

During the spring of 1918, Frank, suffering from terminal cancer of the throat, continued to be a burden for his wife. In addition, Eva's first pregnancy at age thirty-six, incapacitated her so that she required her mother's help. Having the responsibility of two invalids on her hands, caused Helen Stewart to forget her own health and tax her strength to provide for her loved ones. After suffering from cancer for over a year, Frank Stewart died on September 1, 1918.<sup>293</sup> Although wearied by the arduous load she had carried all year, the death of her husband, while causing sadness and grief, tended to renew her love of life. She buried Frank in Woodlawn Cemetery, not the family burial plot. Afterward, she wrote Tiza:

He had been suffering so long and desired to pass away from the pain though he dreaded the approach of *death* and the final desolation. Some say it is well to let them go when they suffer so. But for me give me life as long as the Lord sees fit. To be born is life, to live, to enjoy, to suffer, and to die. But there are loved ones and loves in a way make us glad that life is ours, and pain and suffering for them a secret joy. At 64 I am again alone in one sense of the word and my children and Grand children around me to help some. I would be too lonely for expression were it not for the other two families (Will's and Eva's) here with me.<sup>294</sup>

When expressing this philosophy, even in the midst of pain, suffering, and death, she had no idea that soon she, too, would suffer from the dread disease.

Eva and Helen exhausted themselves nursing Frank, and for two nights after his death, neither one could find release enough from tension to sleep. Helen wrote to Tiza, "It seemed every atom of my body had for awhile stood still and every nerve and muscle and movement of my body had become tense."<sup>295</sup> Nor was relief from illness to come in the near future. As the influenza epidemic of 1918 swept the country, Las Vegas, isolated though it was, was not spared. The Stewart family, as were most families, was hit hard. Coming after a year of caring for Frank and Eva, the illness found both Helen and Eva readily susceptible.

The illness so completely encompassed the town that on October 10, the Health Department ordered the board of education to close the schools.<sup>296</sup> In addition, all public gatherings of any sort were prohibited in an attempt to halt the spread of the influenza.<sup>297</sup> The schools remained closed until December 9, at which time they were opened with a "fair attendance."<sup>298</sup> Those fortunate few who escaped the illness, or who had light cases, did what they could to help others. Rita Breeze wrote to Jeanne Wier that by December 1, the epidemic was gradually being subdued. She explained she had been running a "little diet kitchen for the poorer people who could not take care of themselves and all those who could have been nursing the sick."<sup>299</sup> Those whose incomes were very low were left destitute as the paychecks ceased for two months because of the illness. They were cared for by such women as Mrs. Breeze. Las Vegas, blanketed with the specter of illness for two months, began to resume normal activities by the middle of December.

Yet, Helen Stewart was not allowed time to recoup her resources before the death of her eighty-five year old mother in May, 1919. Receiving word of the death, she commented, "Her great charity was ever present in her never failing effort to answer the call of the afflicted and needy."<sup>300</sup> These words of a loving daughter could have been applied equally well to that daughter herself. In apologizing to Jeanne Wier for not replying to her letter sooner, Helen Stewart wrote, "Sicness and grief kill the spirit, sometimes the shock is so great that all else is forgotten for awhile . . . so kind friend forgive seeming neglect."<sup>301</sup> In her later years, the mother had spent much time visiting her daughter in Las Vegas, frequently requiring nursing while there. Hiram Wiser had died May 1, 1898 at Downey, California.<sup>302</sup> After her mother's death, Helen Stewart was able to regain her emotional strength before she encountered the difficult illness she, herself, experienced in her last two years of life.

Although she had been unwell for sometime, it came as a shock to Las Vegas to learn that Helen Stewart was ill with cancer.<sup>303</sup> She now was forced to depend upon all those to whom she had given devotion and care for so long. When, in January, 1924, she became critically ill, Mina took charge, helping Eva prepare the ailing woman for travel to Los Angeles where she was taken for treatment.<sup>304</sup> Will Stewart and Birdie Gann, Mrs. Stewart's dearest friend, accompanied her on the trip. Just before leaving, she executed a legal document in which she turned over all of her personal property, her dwelling,

all of her "household furniture and fixtures, Indian baskets, Indian curios, beads and other curios" to her three children for the sum of one dollar and in consideration of the love and affection which she bore them. The document is listed as a bill of sale. If at her death, the children already possessed her belongings, there would be no legal entanglements over them. No doubt she remembered her own problems at the death of her husband. This document was held in the family papers — as many Stewart documents were — and not recorded until after her death two years later.<sup>305</sup>

Once in Los Angeles, Helen Stewart was taken charge of by Dreme Stewart Benson, her daughter-in-law. Upon examination, it was determined that the cancer was terminal. Because of her age and frailty, it was decided an operation was out of the question, so radium treatments were begun. Dreme, writing to Tiza, offered no hope of recovery.<sup>306</sup> Dreme not only opened her home to her mother-in-law, but devoted herself to her care. After the ailing woman was dismissed from the hospital, Dreme saw to it that she was taken back twice a week for an X-ray treatment. Lena Carl Yount, Will's first wife, now living in Los Angeles, offered transportation to and from the hospital for the treatments in her new Nash. Staying with Dreme and her two daughters, Virginia and Geneva, was easier on Helen Stewart than spending an extended time in the hospital. Dreme expressed a fear to Tiza that Virginia was corrupting her step-grandmother. She was teaching her how to shoot craps and next, "she will want to teach her to smoke cigarettes. My young hopeful is real sporty and she will demoralize her grandmother as well as entertain her."<sup>307</sup>

Helen Stewart was not forgotten by her many friends in Las Vegas. Flowers poured in upon the small, cramped apartment. Any businessman from Las Vegas who was in the city attending to business dropped in for a visit. This provided frequent visitors from home. The Las Vegas Rotary Club sent her flowers every week while she was in Los Angeles.<sup>308</sup> In March, she received a letter from Clark Alvord, an old friend. Alvord had earlier told her that he was earmarking for her collection the mountain sheep net, hunting knife, and cactus fire maker with rod belonging to the renegade Indian, Queho, who had plagued Vegas Valley. Alvord had intended to keep the relics until such time as Queho had been found, or until it was proved he was dead. Now, because of her illness, and because she needed cheering up, he had decided to wait no longer and presented the treasures to her for her collection. No doubt, he, as everyone else, felt that such a frail body could not long fight the cancer. He wished her to have the pleasure of the relics before she died.<sup>309</sup>

Between the series of radium treatments, Mrs. Stewart was allowed to return home to Las Vegas. Although far from well, she continued to show vast interest in the activities of her little town, writing to Tiza of the events taking place. Although in constant pain, she retained the wit with which she frequently viewed life. She noted that "Yesterday the Mormons Baptized seven converts, all children in our tank. It is now Holy Ground."<sup>310</sup>

The cancer was taking its toll of her emaciated body. During her hospital

stay, she weighed only 80 pounds. The X-ray treatments temporarily arrested the cancer so that in the months that followed, she gradually increased her weight to 100 pounds.<sup>311</sup> Ever the businesswoman, she continued to wheel and deal with her properties. To Tiza, after discussing the boom which would result in real estate if the bill for the dam on the Colorado River were passed by Congress, she continued:

Going to a Hospital makes quite a hole in ones Pocket Book but that is better than being Dead for when you are Dead you are Dead a long time. But if alive and well one can tackle the World and get from it some part of ones share of this worlds goods; I would like to sell all the outside land and concentrate on one place.<sup>312</sup>

If any woman ever tackled the world by herself, that woman was Helen J. Stewart.

In October, 1924, Helen Stewart entertained Governor Scrugham and a crew of government employees who were performing archaeological surveys in southern Nevada. They had also recently inspected Lehman Caves, declaring them to be one of the wonders of the United States. During this visit, Scrugham appointed Mrs. Stewart to his Committee on Historical Research. The appointment was honorary, because she obviously was not well enough physically to participate actively.<sup>313</sup> The following April, she excitedly wrote Tiza of the marvelous discovery which had been made of a buried city near St. Thomas, and how the scientists were going wild over the discovery. Governor Scrugham, in the area for the excavation, again paid his old friend a visit, asking that she show her basket collection at the Nevada State Exposition in Reno the following year.<sup>314</sup>

After a visit to Las Vegas in early 1926, Dreme Benson, realizing how very close to death Helen Stewart was, wrote to Tiza:

Of all the people I have met, of all the ones I have known she has been the dearest the most understanding, her love and sympathy has helped me through some of the darkest hours of my life, just to know that one person loved and understood has meant more to me than any one will ever know.<sup>315</sup>

On March 6, 1926, Helen Jane Stewart lost her battle with cancer. It had conquered her body, but never her spirit. The gallant little body had fought to the end. Her funeral procession on March 10 was the largest ever witnessed to that time in Las Vegas, possibly to date. The cortege traveled from her home to the Methodist church where services were held by Reverend W.L. Stockton. The choir of the Mormon church furnished music, while two favorite hymns of Mrs. Stewart's, "Jesus Lover of My Soul" and "Nearer My God To Thee," were sung by a quartette, one of whom was Florence Boyer. The businesses in Las Vegas closed for the day to honor its most prominent pioneer.

People poured into Las Vegas from all areas of the state to pay their last



respects to this woman who had wrestled with a desert wilderness, making it her home, and who had helped develop the area into the town which was later to become the largest in the state. Among the crowds of people who passed by the casket were miners, prospectors, and Indians, all of whom she had befriended in some way during her fifty years in the area. Hundreds of floral arrangements covered the casket and filled the church and her home. Most of them were sent from other towns at great expense.<sup>316</sup> The body, returned to her home after the service, was retained there until a special vault was chipped out of the solid *caliche* in the earth of her "Four Acres." Then, a graveside service was held on March 16, with only the immediate family and pallbearers present. The Reverend Haubert chose as his text for this service, "Eternity."<sup>317</sup>

Perhaps the words of Delphine Squires provide the best epitaph for this pioneer woman, "Her frail little body housed an indomitable will, a wonderful strength of purpose, and a courageous heart, and she faced death as she had faced the every day problems of life with sublime fortitude."<sup>318</sup> In later years, Mrs. Squires gave her a well-merited title which can be claimed by no other person, "The First Lady of Las Vegas." After almost a half-century, the title still applies.

## Notes

159. Journal, 1884-1887, March, 1886.
160. Death certificate of Frank Roger Stewart, Nevada Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, State Index No. 788, Local Registered No. 33, Carson City, Nevada.
161. Helen J. Stewart to Sam Gay, November 18, 1919, Stewart Papers.
162. Letter to Helen J. Stewart (writer unknown), June 24, 1901, Stewart Papers.
163. Helen J. Stewart to Sam Gay, November 18, 1919, Stewart Papers.
164. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza Stewart, n.d. (June, 1899?), Stewart Papers.
165. Interview, Henry Hudson Lee, August 31, 1971.
166. *Las Vegas Age*, September 7, 1918.
167. *Pioche Weekly Record*, January 11, 1894.
168. *Ibid.*, July 19, 1894.
169. *Ibid.*
170. *Ibid.*
171. Joseph Howerton, National Archives, to author, February 12, 1973.
172. The first post office established at Las Vegas in 1856 was named Brighthurst for the head of the Mormon settlement there. Because the site was in New Mexico Territory at the time, and the present Las Vegas, New Mexico, already had a post office, it was not called Las Vegas.
173. Helen J. Stewart to John B. Brady, March 15, 1894, copy in Journal, 1869-1895.
174. Joseph Howerton to author, February 12, 1973.
175. *Commissioners' Records*, Lincoln County, July 11, 1870, vol. 2, p. 61.
176. *Ibid.*, November 15, 1872, vol. 1, p. 265; November 13, 1874, vol. 1, p. 382.
177. *Ibid.*, December 3, 1888, vol. 3, p. 32; *Pioche Weekly Record*, October 30, 1880; November 1, 1884.
178. *Commissioners' Records*, Lincoln County, August 4, 1890, vol. 3, p. 100.
179. *Pioche Weekly Record*, July 9, 1896.
180. Journal, 1884-1887, June 21, 1884.
181. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1884.
182. *Ibid.*, March 20, 1886.
183. Journal, 1890-1892, March 9, 1891.
184. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza, Eva, and Archie Stewart, December 8, 1898, Stewart Papers.
185. *Ibid.*, February 17, 1898.
186. Journal, 1890-1892, May 3-4, 1891.
187. *Deed Records*, Lincoln County, Book Y, September 13, 1907, p. 263; *Las Vegas Age*, October 26, 1907; Interview, Evelyn Moden, February 2, 1973.
188. Marriage License of W.J. Stewart and Lena Carl, October 1, 1895, Stewart Papers.
189. Nevada, *Appendix to the Journals of the Senate and Assembly* (1897), "Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction," p. 46.
190. *Pioche Weekly Record*, July 13, 1893.
191. *Marriage Records*, Lincoln County, Book B, December 5, 1896, p. 129.
192. Arabell Lee Hafner, ed., *100 Years on The Muddy* (Springville, Utah: Art City Publishing Co., 1967), p. 332; Interview, Robert Stewart, March 9, 1972.
193. Archie Stewart, Jr., to Tiza Stewart, September 21, 1897, Stewart Papers.
194. Interview, Henry Hudson Lee, August 31, 1971.
195. Helen J. Stewart to Archie Stewart, Jr., November 24, 1897, Stewart Papers.

196. Clipping from unidentified Pasadena newspaper, Stewart Papers.
197. *Los Angeles Record*, November 26, 1897.
198. Tiza Stewart to Helen J. Stewart, November 27, 1897, Stewart Papers.
199. Helen J. Stewart to Archie Stewart, Jr., n.d. (January, 1898?), Stewart Papers.
200. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza, Eva, and Archie Stewart, Jr., December 8, 1897, Stewart Papers.
201. *Ibid.*
202. Helen J. Stewart to Archie Stewart, Jr., December 8, 1897, Stewart Papers.
203. *Ibid.*, December 16, 1897.
204. *Ibid.*, January 25, 1899.
205. *Pioche Weekly Record*, July 20, 1899.
206. Author's observation at Stewart burial excavation.
207. Journal, 1890-1892, October 27-28, 1891.
208. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza Stewart, January 25, 1900, Stewart Papers.
209. Conrad Kiel's will, August 10, 1893, Conrad Kiel Probate File, Lincoln County courthouse, Pioche, Nevada.
210. *Lincoln County Record* (Pioche), October 19, 1900.
211. Verdict of coroner's jury, October 13, 1900, Edwin Kiel Probate File, Lincoln County courthouse, Pioche, Nevada.
212. *Lincoln County Record*, October 19, 1900.
213. *Ibid.*
214. Interview, Henry Hudson Lee, August 14, 1971.
215. Verdict of coroner's jury, October 13, 1900, Edwin Kiel Probate File, Lincoln County courthouse, Pioche, Nevada.
216. Appointment of appraisers, December 14, 1900, Edwin Kiel Probate File, Lincoln County courthouse, Pioche, Nevada.
217. *Miscellaneous Records*, Lincoln County, Book C-2, May 9, 1889, pp. 575-576.
218. Journal, 1890-1892, January 25, 1891.
219. Petition of Frank C. Keil, Edwin Kiel Probate File, Lincoln County courthouse, Pioche, Nevada.
220. Inventory of effects of Edwin and William Kiel, Edwin Kiel Probate File, Lincoln County courthouse, Pioche, Nevada.
221. *Pioche Weekly Record*, February 9, 1899. For a discussion of the railroad situation in Lincoln County, see James W. Hulse, *Lincoln County, Nevada*.
222. *Miscellaneous Records*, Lincoln County, Book F, May 27, 1901, pp. 32-34.
223. *Ibid.*, May 29, 1901, pp. 10-13.
224. *Pioche Weekly Record*, November 6, 1902.
225. *Miscellaneous Records*, Lincoln County, Book F, October 14, 1902, pp. 237-239.
226. *Deed Records*, Lincoln County, Book U, April 11, 1895, pp. 139-141.
227. *Ibid.*, December 5, 1896, pp. 143-146.
228. *Ibid.*, March 6, 1902, pp. 133.
229. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1902, pp. 141-143.
230. Interview, Robert Stewart, March 9, 1972.
231. *Deed Records*, Lincoln County, Book U, December 8, 1902, pp. 222-228.
232. *Ibid.*, October 21, 1902, pp. 197, 300-302; *Miscellaneous Records*, Clark County, Book 5, pp. 443-444.
233. *Deed Records*, Lincoln County, Book U, January 8, 1903, pp. 201-203; February 8, 1903, pp. 302-304; April 23, 1903, pp. 305-307; *Las Vegas Age*, August 19, 1905.

234. *Lincoln County Record*, April 24, 1903.
235. Interview, Robert Stewart, March 9, 1972; *The Searchlight*, July 3, 1903.
236. Author's observation at Stewart burial excavation.
237. *The Searchlight*, July 3, 1903.
238. Florence M. Boyer, "Las Vegas, Nevada: My Home for Sixty Years," typed transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Mary Ellen Glass, University of Nevada, Reno (Reno: 1966), p. 82. In University of Nevada, Reno, Library.
239. Squires, p. 177.
240. *Miscellaneous Records*, Clark County, Book 5, July 23, 1903, p. 405.
241. Lena Stewart to Helen J. Stewart, September 10, 1903, Stewart Papers.
242. *Lincoln County Record*, January 20, 1905.
243. *The Searchlight*, May 19, 1905.
244. *Clark County Review*, November 6, 1915.
245. *Las Vegas Age*, March 13, 1926. This obituary of Helen Stewart was allegedly written by Delphine Squires.
246. *Deed Records*, Lincoln County, Book U, December 6, 1902, pp. 222-228.
247. Helen J. Stewart to Frank McNamee, July 15, 1907, Stewart Papers.
248. *Ibid.*, July 16, 1907.
249. *Ibid.*, September 9, 1907.
250. *Clark County Review*, December 21, 1912.
251. Interview, Florence Boyer, November 14, 1971.
252. Mrs. Park and her husband later bought the Kiel Ranch and built the large house still standing there.
253. Interview, Florence Boyer, November 14, 1971.
254. *Pioche Weekly Record*, January 26, 1906; May 19, 1906.
255. "Diary of Jeanne Elizabeth Wier," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, (January-March, 1961) vol. 4, no. 6.
256. *Las Vegas Age*, August 22, 1908.
257. "Diary of Jeanne Elizabeth Wier," p. 10.
258. List of committees of Nevada Historical Society, 1920, Jeanne Elizabeth Wier Papers, Nevada State Historical Society, Reno, Nevada. (Hereafter cited as Wier Papers.)
259. *Register of Society of Nevada Pioneers*, p. 11.
260. C.P. Squires to Helen J. Stewart, June 19, 1911, Stewart Papers.
261. Rose I. Ellerbe to Jeanne E. Wier, October 20, 1908, Wier Papers. The crucifix from this rosary, described in Mrs. Stewart's writings in Davis's *History of Nevada*, has recently been donated to the Nevada State Historical Society by Evelyn Moden.
262. "Diary of Jeanne Elizabeth Wier," p. 6.
263. Jeanne E. Wier to Rita Breeze, November 11, 1918, Wier Papers.
264. *Ibid.*
265. Helen J. Stewart to Jeanne E. Wier, June 17, 1919, Wier Papers.
266. Squires, p. 178.
267. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza Stewart, May 8, 1921, Stewart Papers.
268. J.G. Scrugham to Helen J. Stewart, February 24, 1925, Stewart Papers.
269. Helen J. Stewart to J.G. Scrugham, March 10, 1925, Stewart Papers.
270. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza Stewart, April 4, 1925, Stewart Papers.
271. *Las Vegas Age*, March 19, 1927.
272. Squires, p. 178.

273. *Las Vegas Age*, March 4, 1911.
274. *Clark County Review*, January 30, 1915.
275. *Ibid.*, November 6, 1915.
276. *Nevada State Journal*, November 2, 1915.
277. *Las Vegas Age*, October 30, 1915.
278. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza Stewart, October 27, 1915, Stewart Papers; *Nevada State Journal*, November 2, 1915.
279. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza Stewart, December 2, 1916, Stewart Papers.
280. *Clark County Review*, December 2, 1916.
281. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza Stewart, December 2, 1916, Stewart Papers.
282. *Board of Education Records*, Clark County, January 6, 1917, p. 69, Clark County School District, Administration Building, Las Vegas, Nevada.
283. *Ibid.*, February 17, pp. 69-70.
284. *Clark County Review*, February 12, 1916.
285. *Ibid.*, January 27, 1922.
286. *Ibid.*
287. *Las Vegas Age*, April 11, 1914.
288. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza Stewart, May 11, 1914, Stewart Papers; Interview, Florence Boyer, November 14, 1971.
289. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza Stewart, January 29, 1918.
290. *Ibid.*
291. *Clark County Review*, March 2, 1918.
292. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza Stewart, January 29, 1918, Stewart Papers.
293. Death Certificate of Frank Roger Stewart.
294. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza Stewart, September 18, 1918, Stewart Papers.
295. *Ibid.*
296. *Board of Education Records*, Clark County, October 10, 1918, p. 120.
297. *Clark County Review*, October 26, 1918.
298. *Board of Education REcords*, Clark County, December 18, 1918, p. 125.
299. Rita Breeze to Jeanne E. Wier, December 1, 1918, Wier Papers.
300. *Clark County Review*, May 31, 1919.
301. Helen J. Stewart to Jeanne E. Wier, June 17, 1919, Wier Papers.
302. Petition to Decree Grantee in Patent, Hiram Wiser Probate File, Lincoln County courthouse, Pioche, Nevada.
303. *Las Vegas Age*, January 19, 1924.
304. Mina Stewart to Tiza Stewart, January 18, 1924, Stewart Papers.
305. *Miscellaneous Records*, Clark County, Book 5, January 14, 1924, p. 6.
306. Dreme Stewart Benson to Tiza Stewart, January 26, 1924, Stewart Papers.
307. *Ibid.*
308. *Ibid.*, January 29, 1924.
309. Helen J. Stewart to Tiza Stewart, March 27, 1924, Stewart Papers.
310. *Ibid.*, May 15, 1924.
311. *Ibid.*, July 14, 1924.
312. *Ibid.*, October 14, 1924.
313. *Ibid.*, October 26, 1924.
314. *Ibid.*, April 4, 1925.
315. Dreme Stewart Benson to Tiza Stewart, (February ?) 5, 1926, Stewart Papers.

- 316. *Las Vegas Review*, March 12, 1926.
- 317. *Ibid.*, March 19, 1926.
- 318. *Las Vegas Age*, March 13, 1926.



# What's Being Written

*The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands*, by D.S. Otis, edited and introduced by Francis Paul Prucha (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973; xvii, 197 pages; index; \$6.95).

DURING HIS TESTIMONY in support of the Wheeler-Howard Bill in 1934, Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier criticized the old policy of allotting land to individual Indians and offered the congressional committee a document that supported his position. Under his urging it was published in the hearings of the Committee on Indian Affairs of the House of Representatives. The author of this important monograph, which was entitled "The History of the Allotment Policy," was D.S. Otis, a trained scholar with a doctorate from the University of Wisconsin, who had been employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

John Collier had been a bitter critic of the allotment policy before becoming commissioner, and he was undoubtedly pleased with the thorough, scholarly work by Otis which confirmed many of the commissioner's beliefs. Otis describes the reform movement which led to the passage of the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 and assesses its impact on the Indians to 1900. The reformers, who are correctly characterized as products of their age because of their belief in individualism, wished to substitute the culture of the white man for that of the Indian, and they believed that it could be accomplished by breaking up tribal organizations and individualizing the Indians. They believed that land allotment would help attain this goal.

Land allotment failed, as Otis indicates, because it was alien to Indian cultures, and the government and reformers failed to provide the vocational training that was essential if Indians were to become self-sufficient farmers. The leasing policy further weakened the program. By 1900, Otis finds, land allotment was already a failure.

Although Collier obviously wanted to make Otis's small monograph available, it was buried in the flood of government documents coming out of

the New Deal and thus was apparently not used by scholars who studied nineteenth century Indian policy. Francis Paul Prucha has rescued it from obscurity and has added an introduction and a new title. Errors have been eliminated and citations, most of which refer to government records, have been improved. These changes will be especially appreciated by those who have used the monograph in its original form. Others will thank Prucha for calling attention to an important and useful volume.

RICHARD N. ELLIS  
*University of New Mexico,  
Albuquerque*

*The Desert World*, by David F. Costello (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1972; 264 pages; illustrations, index; \$7.95).

The desert is the land of sun and little water. It is the land where you see in stark detail the work of the elemental forces of earth and time. It is the land where only properly adjusted living things can long endure. It is a harsh land only to those who will not accede to its demands, or to those who live elsewhere and believe that only their own surroundings are normal. It is a land where you must cultivate an acquaintance with its principles, processes, and creatures in order to understand it; otherwise, if you pass through the desert, it is something you have merely seen.

OFFERING DESERT VISITORS a better understanding, and consequently a greater appreciation, of the unique environment they entered, Mr. Costello's *The Desert World* is competently written in a concise and easily read style. Although suitable for the uninformed reader, the book's 248 pages are packed solidly with information, some of which the experienced naturalist may find worth his time.

The eleven chapters and appendix discuss many related fields of study, including climate, geology, water, plants, animals, prehistory, history, and the general ecology of desert regions. It is probable that some readers will find statements and interpretations which do not agree with their own observations or information sources, but this is to be expected in books which deal with living things and their relationships to their environments. The lack of sufficient illustrations of the interesting plants and animals does, I believe, reduce the effectiveness of the written descriptions — especially for the newcomer to these arid lands.

In his last chapter, "Man and the North American Deserts," Mr. Costello compares the prehistoric Indians' nondestructive use of the desert with the changes modern man has made. Hopefully, it may offer many readers an understanding of the values of retaining as much as possible of these last, great primitive areas, and it may help explain the outdoorsman's frustrations

as he watches the desert's beauty unnecessarily destroyed by the unscrupulous promoter-speculator.

The appendix, "How to See the Desert," provides general suggestions on desert survival and things and places to see. I liked its beginning paragraph:

Some people go to the desert just to see what it is like. Others go there to be in communion with the spirit of nature, where all of the human senses may come to life. To do this, you must walk upon the desert's sands, gingerly touch its prickly plants, listen to the songs of its birds, and smell the sweetness of its flowers. You must brace yourself against the wind, sit in the shelter of rocks, explore shady canyons, and endure the midday heat to experience the desert's many moods.

Most of those who love the desert will agree.

SESSIONS S. WHEELER  
*University of Nevada,  
Reno*

*Polygamy Was Better Than Monotony*, by Paul Bailey (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1972; vii, 200 pages; \$7.95).

HERE IS AN ACCURATE PORTRAYAL of polygamy in the homes of the author's two grandparents. These two men and their plural wives are skillfully brought to life; stalwart individuals, living their convictions, suffering heroically the misfortunes their beliefs entailed. The author takes the reader on an intimate tour of a Mormon hamlet and a Mormon family. The "kindliness, the eccentricities, the rugged endurance" are presented with sound perception, deep understanding, and love.

The book is also an autobiography of Paul Bailey, written with literary skill, candidly, and with a liberal sprinkling of both humor and tragedy. The difficulties in the home of his parents are reluctantly recalled, but with great compassion. His own struggles and disappointments are detailed, with an overtone of ultimate triumph.

This reviewer enjoyed the book immensely and laid it down with great admiration and affection for Paul and his admirable Evelyn.

The home-town primitives by Don Louis Perceval are appropriate and delightful illustrations.

LeROY R. HAFEN  
*Provo, Utah*

*The Oriental Americans*, by H. Brett Melendy (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1972; 235 pages; appendix, bibliography, index; \$ ).

THE FIRST BOOK-LENGTH works dealing with the Chinese migration to

the United States were published almost a century ago. Three or four decades later the Japanese began to replace the Chinese as a subject for both major national concern and popular literary notice. Although migration virtually ceased in the period between the First and Second World Wars scholarly research dealing with the Orientals was greatly expanded. And starting in the late 1940s there has been an increasing interest in the relocation camps in which Japanese aliens and American citizens of Japanese ancestry were forcibly confined. Professor Melendy touches on all of these eras in *Oriental Americans* and in addition he includes the role of the Hawaiian Islands in Oriental settlement patterns. His study is about evenly divided between the Chinese and the Japanese (six chapters are devoted to each nationality). In both instances an introductory chapter is used to provide a historical evaluation of the conditions in the migrants' homeland followed by a factual account of the immigrants' adjustment to the American environment. The religion, occupation, social characteristics, and general contributions of the migrants are noted. Particular attention is given to the reception of the Orientals in the United States and the unique and pointed discrimination which they faced.

The book is designed as a quick survey (182 pages of text); chronology is emphasized; facts, figures, and declarative sentences are extensively used. Relatively little attention is given to theorizing, to philosophical questions, or to general analysis. The author stresses the unreasoning fear, the hatred, and the xenophobia which faced many of the new arrivals, and he recounts many of the now famous examples of mob action, public violence, and official injustice. Although his information is not new his position is well taken.

The Chinese were actively sought and genuinely needed by promoters and developers of the West. They worked hard at very low wages, they seldom interfered with White communities, they were heavily taxed, they performed tasks unattractive to the dominant society, their numbers were always small, and they were willing and indeed anxious to return to their homeland. Yet they created national controversy for over forty years. They were the recipients of most inhumane treatment and their traditions, their culture, and their character were consistently and methodically excoriated.

The Japanese readily accepted American culture and tastes, they were particularly anxious to participate in the economic system, and they excelled when given an opportunity. They demonstrated something of a Puritan work ethic, they became excellent foremen on railroad and construction work gangs, they performed as exceptional agriculturists, and they were superior students. Nevertheless, it was repeatedly necessary for the Japanese government to appeal to American authorities in an attempt to mitigate the restrictions and hostility directed toward the Japanese in the United States.

Most thoughtful persons will concede that the treatment of the Chinese in the nineteenth century and the Japanese during World War II was a national disgrace. At this point, however, critical examination and the probing of issues should accompany historical fact. And the suggestion that white rural Anglo-Saxon Protestants were basic to American discrimination

(see Introduction) is surely obsolete. Indeed, it is not born out by the author's own historical references. Irish Catholic labor leaders, Jews like Samuel Gompers, and other continental urban immigrants are often cited as leading the anti-Oriental movements. As the author rather forcefully demonstrates greed, bigotry, and fear emanated from almost every facet of western society.

Since *The Oriental Americans* is a brief survey only California and Hawaii are discussed in any significant detail. Western states like Nevada are, perhaps justifiably, almost completely ignored. However, the anti-Chinese violence which broke out in Truckee during the 1870s is noted, and it tends to provide a typical example of the failure of the constabulary and the judiciary to provide either protection or justice for Orientals.

WILBUR S. SHEPPERSON  
*University of Nevada,  
Reno*

*The Story of Fairview, Churchill County, Nevada*, by Hugh A. Shamberger in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey and the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (Carson City; Nevada Historical Press, 1974; 61 pages; map, illustrations, photographs, index; \$4.00).

This fifth volume of Hugh Shamberger's series on Nevada mining camps might more properly be titled "The Story of the Fairview Mining District" as the town of Fairview itself was of secondary importance in the district in terms of mineral production. It was the site of the post office, the newspapers, and the focus of publicity on the district, and is better known as a "ghost town" than the Nevada Hills townsite or the camp at Chalk Mountain which were more productive. The district never developed a viable water supply, although the attempts to do so are admirably documented by Mr. Shamberger. Also well covered are the promotions of stock, development of transportation systems, the post office, banking, and business. Fascinating small vignettes of individuals associated with the development of the district spice up the text and make the book a worthwhile investment for those interested in the history of Nevada's lesser-known mining booms.

# *What's Going On*

## THE HISTO/SHARE PROJECT

The Nevada State Historical Society archives and manuscript collections are now available to researchers within Nevada on a temporary loan basis. These collections include the permanently valuable, noncurrent records of the state of Nevada, materials documenting many facets of Nevada and Far Western history, and significant holdings in the areas of politics, anthropology, mining, ranching, and mass transportation.

Our staff has arranged, described, and catalogued all holdings that will be loaned. The Society maintains central bibliographic control, holds title to all materials, and provides general administrative supervision. Cooperating libraries provide secure and environmentally sound storage areas, professional staff supervision and assistance to researchers, and suitable space for the use of the loaned materials.

Persons having a need for individual collections should request transfer from their local public or university library. The library will submit a formal request for each patron. A checklist of our holdings will soon be completed and distributed to state libraries. Each loan request will be reviewed separately before approval. Delivery of manuscript collections will be made by Society staff while on public education trips within the state. Loan periods will vary from thirty to ninety days.

A detailed description of the HISTO/SHARE PROGRAM has been mailed to each library in Nevada. Interested members should contact their county or university libraries for further information. Questions may also be directed to the Society office in Reno.



## **THE JOHN H. DETAR COLLECTION**

A collection of correspondence and politically conservative periodicals has been given to the Society by Dr. John H. Detar of Reno. The donor has been associated with the American Independent Party and John Birch Society for many years and is a regional spokesman for those groups, as well as officer in these and other organizations. The correspondence relates to politics and economics on the national and state level, and provides insights into the conservative spectrum of political thought. Permission from the donor is required before access to the collection.

## **THE LETTERS OF ALONZO MONROE**

A collection of thirty letters from Monroe to his wife was recently located in the Society files. Monroe was a discoverer of the Reese River, Reveille, and Eureka districts and was active in central Nevada for many years. The letters range from 1863 to 1869 and provide many detailed descriptions of mining and social conditions in central Nevada during that period.

## **IN MEMORIAM: CHARLES W. CLARK**

Charles W. Clark, longtime member of this Society, died in Santa Clara, California, June 13, 1973. The Society Museum houses Mr. Clark's trophies which he won participating in motorcycle races during 1908-1913 in Nevada. He also won the championship bicycle race for the state of Nevada on July 4, 1908.

## **JUNIOR HISTORY NEWS**

Working under the direction of Denton Gehr and co-sponsor, Kay Hackbarth, students at Fernley Junior-Senior High School have organized a chapter of the Junior History Society of Nevada. Members of the club have elected to call the club the Fernley Frontiersmen. Officers elected by the membership are: Robert Conradt, president; Tim Holloway, vice-president; Bridgette Baker, treasurer; Julie Ames, secretary; and Brett Barker, historian.

The Nevada State Historical Society sponsored a field trip on October for chapters of the Junior History Society in the Reno-Sparks area. Participants

visited the town of Dayton and the remains of Ramsey, a mining camp in northern Lyon County which prospered during Nevada's twentieth century mining boom. Mrs. Afton Frederick of the Odeon Museum in Dayton conducted a walking tour of Dayton for the young historians.

The Tommyknockers Junior History Club of Swope Junior High have just completed their reorganization. Elected club officials are: Terri Zmak, president; Brian Hollingsworth, vice-president; and Dan Marfisi, reporter.

The Tommyknockers plan to take their first field trip of the year soon, the trip will be to Lovelock Cave.

Members of last year's Tommyknockers bought a Nevada State Flag which arrived only this year, so according to club reporter, Dan Marfisi, "we took all the credit in presenting it to Mr. Hawkins, our principal, and the school."

The Washoe Canaries Junior History Club of Archie Clayton Middle School in Reno undoubtedly have the most exciting news for the *Quarterly* this issue. Lori Ann Osgood, a member of their group, has been chosen the winner of the 1973 statewide Junior History Society Essay Contest. Dr. Russell R. Elliott, member of the board of trustees of the Nevada State Historical Society, personally contributed the \$100 prize which Miss Osgood received for her essay on the Donner Party.

It is the privilege of the Society to publish Miss Osgood's winning essay. It is as follows:

### The Tragic Story of the Donner Party

IN 1845 LANSFORD HASTINGS went from California, through Nevada and to Salt Lake. He wrote a guide for emigrants and in 1846 George and Jacob Donner and James Reed decided to go to California. They started out and formed a wagon train that with all the people, including ones who later joined, totaled eighty-seven<sup>1</sup> or ninety.<sup>2</sup> The length of the train finally ended up to be two miles long including two hundred to three hundred wagons.<sup>3</sup> George Donner was elected captain and thus the party was known as the Donner Party.

The party went on to Fort Bridger where they thought Hastings would be to guide them, as they were planning on using his new route. But when they got there Hastings had already left with another train, so they decided to go on by themselves. They sent three men on ahead to find Hastings. One returned with Hastings who said to avoid dangerous Weber's Canyon. Following this advice, they ended up having to cut through miles of the tangled mess on the Wasatch Mountains. They came across the other two half-starved men who had been looking for Hastings, at which time they discovered they were all lost.

Finally, the tired party came out of the mountains and spent six grueling days and nights crossing the Salt Flats. It was a catastrophe. Even though no lives were lost, after almost dying of thirst, many oxen died or ran off and

disappeared in the night. The train split into two parts. The faster wagons went ahead and the slower ones stayed at the rear.

When they reached Pilot Peak they stopped and recuperated. After being refreshed, the party went on. The party reached the Ruby Mountains and instead of going over the mountains, went around them. This foolish detour caused them to travel extra hundreds of miles. The party was low on food. So they elected two men who they thought would be reliable to go on ahead to Fort Sutter and bring back food.

All along the trail they had trouble with Indians — the Diggers, to be specific. The bothersome Indians shot oxen with their blunt arrows and stole food, animals, and other items. One story states that while the train was stopped for the night, a prairie fire made the tall grasses look like Indians sneaking up on them. A general panic went through all the people before they saw that it was only resin grass. <sup>4</sup>

Traveling along the Humboldt, at Gravelly Ford, John Snyder was having problems with another wagon, so he started whipping their horses. Reed, having just arrived, tried to stop him. Snyder then started striking Reed with the butt of his whip, inflicting deep gashes. Mrs. Reed was also struck while trying to break up the struggle. In a so called act of self-defense, Reed stabbed Snyder to death. Reed was instantly sorry for having killed one of his best friends. Instead of hanging him, members of the train decided to banish Reed. Unhappily Reed, with another man, left behind his family and everything he owned.

The party now was near starvation. They were saved, however, when one of the men they had sent for food returned with food loaded onto mules. The other man had stayed behind at the Fort because of an illness.

In October the party reached Truckee Meadows. They fed the few oxen, rested, and stayed longer than they should have. They went onto Truckee Lake (now called Donner Lake) and ran into snow which had come a few months earlier than had been expected! They tried to get through the snow, but it just got too deep. Wagons had to be abandoned. People tried to cross on foot. But a dreaded storm came, measuring about eight feet. <sup>5</sup> Cattle were buried alive. The remaining animals were slaughtered for meat. A cabin built by earlier emigrants was soon occupied. Other cabins were speedily put together. The Donners were the farthest behind and had only tents. Buried cattle were recovered.

Reed, having been delayed, had formed a rescue party to help get the party over the mountains. After finally crossing the flooded Sacramento Valley, they arrived at the Sierra only to be stopped by the deep and deadly snows.

There were an estimated sixty people at the camp, excluding the Donners. <sup>6</sup> There was little luck with hunting, and attempts at fishing were fruitless.

One man knew how to make snowshoes, so he constructed a few. Fifteen men, women, and boys volunteered to walk across the summit to find help. With six days ration of food, they started across the snowy wilderness. The

depth of the snow ranged from twelve to sixty feet.<sup>7</sup> They were near starvation and had to eat the flesh of their dead comrades.<sup>8</sup> As they were ready to give up, Eddy (one of the men in the group) came across an Indian settlement. The others were helped in and later taken to a white settlement. Seven of the fifteen survived — all five of the women, but only two men. A rescue party was started when it was discovered that people were trapped in the Sierra.

The people back at the camp were having a very rough time; the Donners perhaps being the worst off. The main food source at the camp was a sticky, gluey substance made from animal hides. Sometimes internal organs of dead friends were eaten. Little or no meat was left at the camp.

At this point the rescue party was struggling to cross the still flooded Sacramento Valley. Finally getting over the mountain, they were joyously united with the half-dead emigrants. Leaving food with the emigrants who stayed behind, the rescue party started back with as many people as possible. On the way, they met a second rescue group whose members were somewhat stronger. This group took back as many of the remaining persons as they could. General Woodworth was expected to appear with much needed food. Little did they realize that General Woodworth had chickened out and wasn't so anxious to bring the food.<sup>9</sup>

Then, with all the rotten luck possible, a feared snowstorm hit them. The group did all they could to keep from freezing, and to make matters worse, they were without food — the cached food eaten by wild animals. They got through it and met a third rescue party. Only five people remained after this group left.

A salvage party was formed to bring back what they could find. One man, Lewis Keseberg, was living. He had survived by eating dead bodies. Other men tried to get him to tell them where he had hidden some money, but he wouldn't tell. He was accused of murder and was shamed for his acts of cannibalism. But the group brought him and some salvaged goods back.

April 25, 1847,<sup>10</sup> marks the date Keseberg, the last man, was brought in (without the help of Woodworth).

There's a discrepancy between books on the number of people that survived. One source says, "Forty-seven out of eighty-seven people survived."<sup>11</sup> Another source says, "Forty-eight out of ninety people survived."<sup>12</sup>

The journey of the Donner Party was a foolish one. Why they decided to go to California, being pretty well-to-do in the first place, we're not sure of. Maybe deaths could have been prevented if they had started earlier, not used Hasting's route, or not have spent so much time resting. But after this disaster, the trail wasn't used again until the Gold Rush of 1849.

## Notes

1. George Stewart, *Ordeal by Hunger* (New York: Pocket Books, 1971), p. 215.

2. C.F. McGlashan, *History of the Donner Party* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), p. 19.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
5. Stewart, *Ordeal by Hunger*, p. 93.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
7. McGlashan, *History of the Donner Party*, p. 71.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
9. Stewart, *Ordeal by Hunger*, p. 189.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
12. McGlashan, *History of the Donner Party*, p. 237.

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