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NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

The *Quarterly* solicits contributions of scholarly or popular interest dealing with the following subjects: the general (e.g., the political, social, economic, constitutional) or the natural history of Nevada and the Great Basin; the literature, languages, anthropology, and archaeology of these areas; reprints of historic documents (concerning people, flora, fauna, historical or archaeological sites); reviews and essays concerning the historical literature of Nevada, the Great Basin, and the West.

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"The Life of My Child": Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, the Nevada Historical Society, and the Great Quarters Struggle of the 1920s

JAMES T. STENSVAAG

ON NOVEMBER 19, 1910, Jeanne Elizabeth Wier of the Nevada State College and the Nevada State Historical Society in Reno addressed the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association. "Coming from out that great silent region in the desert," she wryly introduced herself to the Berkeley assemblage, "in a humble way, Nevada's representative to this assembly would be a 'voice crying in the wilderness' rather than a fulfiller of prophesy."[1] In actuality Miss Wier considered herself more of a missionary than a forerunner, a bearer of Clio's light into the dark of her adopted state's mining past.[2] The intellectual wilderness of Reno was real enough to her, however, and it is unlikely that in the half century she served the university and the Historical Society she ever considered herself free from its confines. Her purpose in life never varied from a dedication to the truth, but she constantly feared for the endurance of the progress she had made.

Wier had come to Nevada State College, later to be the University of Nevada (Reno), in 1899 as a temporary replacement for Anne Martin in the college's Department of History and Political Science. Martin, who would later gain fame as a suffragist and feminist, had taken a leave of absence for advanced study at Columbia University. She and Wier had met earlier in the decade at Stanford University where they were both students of history. Wier, already 29 by the time she reached Reno, was certainly no ingenue—besides her studies at Stanford, she had taught school in Iowa, her home state, and had served as an assistant principal in a high school in Oregon.

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[1] Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, "The Work of the Western State Historical Society as Illustrated by Nevada," *State of Nevada; Second Biennial Report of the Nevada Historical Society, 1909–1910* (Carson City: State Printer, 1911), p. 59.

[2] Wier was born Jennie Elizabeth Wier in Grinnell, Iowa, in 1870. When exactly she decided to "Frenchify" her name is uncertain.

Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, Secretary of the Nevada Historical Society, circa 1910.

Governor James G. Scrugham

She enrolled at Stanford in 1895, and studied under Americanist George Elliott Howard for her initial four full years and the two additional years of part-time work to finish her degree. Her continued close contact with the institution brought Wier into the company of Max Farrand, probably Frederick Jackson Turner's best academic friend, and later Herbert Eugene Bolton, a disciple from Turner's seminar table. Farrand came to Stanford in 1901 to take Howard's place; Bolton arrived in 1909 and stayed for two years before he moved across the bay to the University of California. From these men she learned a healthy regard for the new historical professionalism along with a generous dollop of Turnerian historicism which guided her thinking for the rest of her life.[3]

Once she arrived in Reno she found little intellectual stimulation outside of the university except for meetings of the Nevada Academy of Science. She joined the Academy's Social Science section immediately, and became a central figure in its activities. By 1904, Martin had decided against returning permanently, Wier had obtained tenure, and the Iowan had become a Nevadan. Vitally interested in the preservation of her adopted state's history, she had become convinced that the Social Science section could not accomplish that task. Membership in the Academy, and hence the section, was restricted, and regional history suffered because of the diversity of interests represented. Therefore, upon the suggestion of Romanzo Adams, professor of economics and sociology in the college, the section created (and Wier chaired) a committee on organization to study the formation of a historical society. The committee and Wier solicited evidence of interest from the state's more prominent citizens, informing them that the purpose of the society would be to encourage "the investigation of topics pertaining to the early history of Nevada and the collection of relics for a museum. We realize," the letter continued, "that the pioneers are rapidly passing away and that if this work is ever to be done in a satisfactory way it must no longer be delayed."[4] Response to the appeal was overwhelmingly positive, and by September 1904 an organization existed, the Nevada State Historical Society. Mail ballots returned from all parts of the state; R. L. Fulton, editor of the *Reno Evening Gazette,* assumed the presidency. Jeanne Wier was elected Secretary and Curator, the only "professional" office, a position she would hold until her death in 1950.[5]

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[3] For a discussion of Howard and the circumstances under which he left Stanford, see Orrin Leslie Elliott, *Stanford University: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Stanford University Press, 1937), pp. 326–78. For a discussion of the friendship of Farrand and Turner, see Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 207 ff. Farrand and David Starr Jordan tried to lure Turner to Stanford in 1904–05, but failed. Wier did lure Bolton to Reno in 1912 to address the Nevada Society's eighth annual meeting.

[4] Wier, "Report of the Historical Society," *State of Nevada: First Biennial Report of the Nevada Historical Society 1907–1908* (Carson City: State Printer, 1909), pp. 19–21.

[5] Wier, "Report," *First Biennial Report,* p. 21.

Wier threw herself into the life of the Society from the outset. She firmly believed in the necessity of collecting the stuff of history as well as in the importance of saving documentary resources, and she was willing to go to great lengths both geographically and physically to accomplish these ends. The most graphic evidence of her dedication comes from the diary she kept on an excursion in 1908. She travelled by train, buckboard, foot, and even automobile on her way south through Las Vegas and into the Colorado River country. Wier never doubted while she travelled that she was on the rough edges of the frontier; she "slept on floor when girl tried to occupy bed with me with her feet in my face"; she agonized over "the filth and dirt of these settlements"; in Crescent, she stayed in a tent "boarding house" with canvas partitions, no floor, and "gunny Sack rugs . . . musty from the recent floor and the air is foul."[6] Still, for the most part on this and like trips she found the people to be gracious, though a bit confused and skeptical about her mission. She established auxiliary societies, acquired personal and company papers, and obtained promises from pioneers that they would soon complete their memoirs for posterity.[7]

Wier and other officers of the society sought support from the legislature and recognition of the organization as an official state institution from the time of its founding. A small appropriation was granted by the 1906–07 legislature; however, state support through the rest of the Society's first decade was spotty.[8] Money was appropriated by the 1910–11 legislature to build the Society its first home, which was located on the edge of the university campus at the corner of Ninth and University Avenue. It was completed in 1913. The small headquarters was conveniently close to Wier's own home at 120 East Ninth; later an intervening structure at 106 East Ninth was purchased for a storage building. It is likely that Wier thought these quarters inadequate from the outset; certainly by the end of the decade this was true. She had fought with longtime university president J. E. Stubbs in 1911 over whether the university should provide a building; over and over again, she tried to force the legislature to acknowledge the problem. In 1920 she toured the Midwest to gather ideas for plans which seemed suitable for a historical society building, all to no avail.[9]

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[6] Diary (1908), Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, entries for Saturday August 1, Tuesday August 4, Friday August 7. Jeanne Elizabeth Wier Papers, Nevada Historical Society, Reno. Reprinted in part in *The Back Number (Nevada Historical Society Quarterly)* 4 (January–March, 1961): 5–21.

[7] Diary (1908), entries for August 14, August 18, October 19. Wier Papers.

[8] Wier, "Statement of Mr. Scrugham's Dealings with the Nevada Historical Society" [February 5, 1937], typescript. Wier Papers.

[9] Phillip I. Earl, "Preserving the Past: The Nevada Historical Society," text of audio-visual presentation, January 16, 1977, Nevada Historical Society, Reno.

The Nevada Historical Society building as it appeared in the mid-1920s.

Wier harbored mixed emotions about the relationship between the Society and the state. Certainly she favored bountiful funding from state coffers; after all, the work of the Society was nothing if not for the state's citizens. At the same time, however, she was totally unwilling to compromise any of the autonomy of the organization. Correspondence between Wier on behalf of the Society and state offices, particularly that of the state comptroller, revealed no love lost. She felt no compunction to provide the kind of accounting services that the comptroller desired; consequently she received many inquiries concerning the propriety of specific expenditures that she had not justified in detail.[10] And beginning in 1920, she began to detect some worrisome signs concerning the future of the Society. Governor Emmet Boyle, whom she had considered a friend of the Society, wrote to her in December proposing that she, as both a professional historian and an agent of the state government, should be paid for her time at the Society. Wier concurred, of course, especially since payment would be at least *de facto* recognition of the professionalism of the organization as well. But a salary constituted only part of Boyle's proposal, and Wier had no enthusiasm whatever for part two. The governor felt, he wrote, that the Society as a servant of the people of the state should be responsible to an elected official—perhaps the chief justice of the state supreme court, or perhaps the regents of

[10] See for example, Office of the State Comptroller to Wier, January 14, 1914, requesting justification for travel, and Wier's reply January 18 that she really had no time to bother with such pettiness.

the university.[11] Wier would accept neither, and she so informed the legislative budget committee during her defense of the Society's appropriation in January 1921. Nothing but complete independence would satisfy her, even at the expense of her salary. "I told him [Boyle] that I and my council were agreed that if they thought it necessary to change our form of organization that I would be compelled to give up my work."[12] No change was made at that time, but appropriations continued to be slim for operating expenses, negating any new undertakings such as better housing.

Wier remained watchful, guarding against any apparent attempt to politicize the Society. When James Scrugham, hand-picked successor to Emmet Boyle, suggested forming a State Board of Historical Research with herself as "honorary chairman," Wier balked and questioned the governor concerning such a committee's functions. Would it be strictly advisory, or would it have policy-making powers? She knew Scrugham to be a history buff, and she was wary of such an intrusion into her professional bailiwick by an amateur. There is no evidence that the board ever functioned, but the episode strained relations between Wier and Scrugham and contributed to a more serious confrontation, this one over new quarters for the Society, a subject dear to Wier's heart.[13]

A new idea for housing the Society and its collections had arisen in 1921 in connection with the development of a Nevada Transcontinental Exposition. The proposal suggested the erection of a building to highlight the completion of the first coast-to-coast highway. After the exhibits on roadwork came down, then the Historical Society could move in. Wier at first was enthusiastic. She wrote her thanks to the Reno Chamber of Commerce, which had been a main promoter of the Society's use of the building. "When once we are able to get a building to adequately exhibit our collections," she promised the business leaders, "we will have the greatest 'show' place of the city,"[14] No action was taken by the 1921 legislature, however, and the project was shelved.

When James Scrugham revived the idea in 1924, however, Wier's enthusiasm was tempered somewhat. With the backing of both the governor and the bipartisan leadership of the legislature, the measure seemed sure to pass. The Historical Society was included again in the planning, with essentially the same offer, namely that the Society be given quarters once the exposition ended. The board agreed to participate subject to certain conditions urged on them by Wier. First, the legislature should consult the So-

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11 Boyle to Wier, December 22, 1920. Wier Papers.

12 Wier to "Dear Mrs. West." February 17, 1921. Wier Papers.

13 Scrugham to Wier, September 15, 1924; Wier to Scrugham, September 17, 1924. Wier Papers.

14 Wier to "Dear Mr. Knight," President, Reno Chamber of Commerce, February 6, 1921. Wier Papers.

ciety on all plans to insure that adequate display areas would exist which incorporated the latest ideas in museology. Second, living quarters were to be provided for the Society's curator to insure that a professional was always available in the museum and research areas. The Society's board evidently felt these conditions had been agreed to, since it gave its approval to continue planning in late 1924.[15]

However, as the bill authorizing the exposition and the building came up for a vote, the only mention of the Historical Society came in a provision that the organization was to be given space once the highways exhibit ended. When the Society pressed Scrugham to explain why the specifics of the board's arrangements had not been included, the governor replied that he feared the bill would bog down in committee while long debate raged over arrangements which could as easily be made on the side. The Society reluctantly agreed to accept the bill as written and to continue to cooperate. Wier, however, had grave reservations. Ever since the historical advisory board proposal, she had suspected Scrugham of wanting to usurp the functions of the Society, to effect a takeover. She had no liking for Scrugham's apparent presumptions about knowing more about how proper arrangements should be made, and she was upset when she learned that the bill had passed with no provisions for consultation and no mention of living quarters. She was particularly chagrined, however, when she heard that the Society's board had voted, eight to one, to proceed with the planning anyway.[16]

She immediately wrote to the board restating the conditions originally demanded for consultation and quarters. The building plans, she asserted, to her knowledge had no really acceptable exhibit space, no provision for expansion, no room for a research library, and no space for her to live. If the board continued to accept the exposition design as presented, she concluded, the directors would automatically accept her resignation as well.[17] She presented this letter to a meeting of the board on April 13, two weeks after their original decision. After depositing the sealed envelope with them, she left the room to allow their consideration of her position. When she returned, she was greeted by several statements which led her to believe that the board now considered her as just another addled female, stretched to her limits by personal problems and a persecution complex. She left the meeting in a rage, convinced that the directors were just pandering to her, and more determined than ever to resign. Only later did she find out that

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[15] Wier in fact queried Senator Frank Miller about the contents of the bill, complaining on February 19, 1925, that the legislation had passed sooner than the Society expected. Miller replied on February 25 that "without going into detail . . . about what you expected." Wier Papers.

[16] Wier to NHS Board of Directors, April 10, 1925. Wier Papers.

[17] Ibid., April 13, 1925. Wier Papers.

the board had never even opened her letter, but she was only partially mollified by that explanation. "The intimation made several times that I was personally hurt and needed 'comforting' was maddening in the face of the realization that it was not my personal feelings but the life of my child that was at stake."[18] After all, she continued, Scrugham was merely using the ploy of the building to gain control of the Society for his own political ends. Therefore the board should act one way or the other to resolve the situation, either to recant its earlier acceptance of the plan as presented by the governor, or to accept her resignation. There could be no compromise.[19]

Several board members joined in an appeal for her to reconsider the absoluteness of her decision. Included were Judge George F. Talbot and Charles F. Cutts, one whom she considered her strongest influential ally, and the other whom she had brought in nearly a decade before to help with the curatorial duties. But Wier was convinced that at least two of the petitioners were less than sincere—ex-governor Emmet Boyle, whom she now considered to be firmly in Scrugham's camp, and James D. Finch, one of Scrugham's lieutenants.[20] But besides the plea, the letter from the board offered no new position, and Wier accordingly replied the next day that the board left her no other choice except to continue her plans to resign.[21]

The alliance of Cutts with the majority on the board was the hardest for her to accept, since she was his mentor and she considered him to be the most attuned to her way of thinking. "Does [your opposition] mean really that you are allied with those forces from within, which whether consciously or not are seeking the death of me and of this institution?" Wier had been sure that her tutelage of Cutts through the years had made some impression, but now she had her doubts. "Almost from the beginning of our acquaintanceship I have left you to find out your mistakes through experience, and you usually have come over to my views. In this present matter it would be indeed too late when you realize your mistake." Her confidence in Cutts had, she believed, instilled in the Society's board a trust in him equal to her own, and now, it seemed, he was using that against her. "Are you willing to leave things in this equivocal light? . . . The board is not really interested in the vital life of the society. . . ."[22]

Cutts went immediately to her to see if some calm could be brought to the situation. After a rethinking of her position and a long discussion with her protégé, Wier wrote to him the next day that "pursuant to our conversation of last evening," she felt that if the board would push exposition plan-

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Board of Directors to Wier, April 16, 1925. Wier Papers.
21 Wier to Board of Directors, April 17, 1925. Wier Papers.
22 Wier to Cutts, May 26, 1925. Wier Papers.

ners for some changes, including living quarters for her, special locations for Society exhibits, and space for a library, she would stay on.[23]

She did not hear from the board again for a month and a half. When the next communication arrived, she found that it contained a general repetition of the plea made earlier for her to rescind her threat to resign "over such a petty issue," and another call for compromise.[24] Wier was again irate and greatly distressed, because after such a time lag she had convinced herself that the board had indeed gone to the planners and that a solution was in the offing. The directors, she lamented in a reply to their position, were kin to the proverbial blind men who experienced the elephant, except to the board members all had hold of the same part of the anatomy to the exclusion of the rest of the beast. Instead of arguing about appearances, they were all agreed, but like the blind men in the story they were all devastatingly wrong. "Only I have the proper perspective. The ailment affecting the society is not trivial, but critical." A specialist should be called, but care had to be taken. Everyone knew how to distinguish between the physician and the patient, but "it is not so easy to measure the distance between the trained historian and the average intelligent citizen of a commonwealth, but the difference is there just the same. It is difficult for the historian to define to the laity in what his art consists. . . . I have not tried very hard to speak in technical terms nor to unfold my plans as a whole."[25] Was there a conspiracy to undermine the Society? The board, she wrote, should look at the evidence. When Boyle's attempt to place the Historical Society under control of the university failed, a university museum was created, a curator named by Scrugham's Board of Historical Research, and the Lost City and Lovelock Cave archaeological sites placed strictly within the university's province.[26] And the Reno Exchange Club's essay contest winner copied his entry directly from a paper printed in the Society's *Annual Report*; there had been no attempt to correct the error, no consequences to the winner, and Scrugham had been among the judges. "Will you still insist that we are not putting our head into the lion's jaw by going into a building erected and maintained by our enemies . . . with not even a janitor who is not selected and employed by the enemy."[27]

But overriding her distrust of Scrugham was Wier's agony over the apparent lack of appreciation of her work and her ideals by the Society's

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23 Wier to Cutts, May 27, 1925. Wier Papers.

24 Board of Directors to Wier, July 1, 1925. Wier Papers.

25 Wier to Board of Directors, July 8, 1925. Wier Papers.

26 There is no evidence to substantiate that the university was ever directly responsible for either the Lost City or the Lovelock Cave projects, or that Scrugham had any hand, either directly or indirectly through the alleged board, in naming the curator of the University Museum.

27 Wier to Board of Directors, July 8, 1925. Wier Papers.

board. She wrote to the board's vice president, Dr. Henry Reid of the university faculty, about her weariness occasioned by playing David for the Society against the state's Goliath, and of her disgust with the whole situation. In defense of her own work, she wrote that despite "jealousy on the part of larger institutions of our partial success [and] the indifference of the frontier community to the more intangible things of the higher life . . . ," the Historical Society had still made an impression. "The quality and scope of this success is better estimated from without the state than within." She now realized, Wier continued, that there had been too much stress on things visible, the museum particularly, both by her and by the board. This problem actually had been enhanced with the acquisition of Cutts, with whom she was again on friendly terms, because he had been almost too professional a museologist for the Society's own good. More stress should have been placed, she could finally appreciate, on the two equally worthwhile functions of a historical society, the issuance of publications and the development of a research library. Moving to the new building under conditions as they stood would only worsen the imbalance, and such a move would be foolhardy regardless of the advantages of the new structure over existing quarters. Nothing should be done until the public and the legislature could be properly educated about the real purpose of the Society, namely, the collection of source materials to facilitate proper research.[28]

Wier's threat to resign became unnecessary during the course of the next several months. She was able to muster enough support from the membership-at-large to unseat board members from whom she had alienated herself at the annual meeting of the Society in April, 1926.[29] Scrugham's man Finch, one of those who had lost, apparently boasted immediately after the election that the results were of no consequence, since the governor had already insured the course of events through his control of the legislature. True to that prediction, the legislative finance committee followed by the legislature itself approved only enough money for the Historical Society to meet the organization's existing debts, thus insuring its impotence.[30] The reconstituted Board of Directors of the Society was too weak to fight successfully against any impending move. Even the wording of the provisions for the Historical Society in the exposition bill had taken on sinister overtones for those on the board who believed Wier's contention that Scrugham was out to destroy the Society. In the bill, the legislature had declared itself

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28 Wier to "My dear Dr. Reid," n.d. [1926]. Wier Papers.

29 George F. Talbot, who had been president of the board through all of the controversy and had survived the "purge," resigned when the new board reversed the agreement with the Capitol Commissioners. Talbot to Board of Directors, April 5, 1926. Wier Papers.

30 Wier to United States Senator Key Pittman, February 18, 1928. Wier Papers.

on behalf of the state to be the owners of all property acquired by the Historical Society, and had provided that "the Board of Capitol Commissioners of the State of Nevada are [sic] hereby authorized and directed as soon as the relics, library, manuscripts, museum, and collection of the Nevada Historical Society shall be provided with suitable quarters in the said Nevada building erected in Reno and, in any event not later than January 21, 1927, to sell all lots and lands" which had been purchased for the Society by the state in 1911 and 1919. This referred to the lot and building on the corner of University and Ninth, and the lot and storage building next door at 110 East Ninth.[31]

The key word to Wier was, of course, "suitable," but by the time she had once again gotten her own board to agree with her position she realized that she was running out of time. She wrote to Scrugham, asking him to postpone the mandated sale until all differences had been resolved and the Society's collections insured a permanent home.[32] The governor replied that he found no objection to the delay, although he went on to suggest that she consult with the state's attorney general and, if necessary, the courts to determine the legality of delay given the specific language of the law.[33] Wier wrote again to Scrugham scarcely two weeks after his reply, asking him again when the Society might be assured of a delay.[34] Once more the governor urged her to consult with the attorney general.[35] A few days later he reiterated his willingness to approve the delay, but he also provided quotes from the text of the bill to demonstrate his handicaps in the matter.[36] Wier finally wrote to the attorney general, M. A. Diskin, at the end of August, four months after her original plea to Scrugham and more than a month after his suggestion to do so. She received assurance of support from Diskin's office as well, and with his assistance she took a "friendly suit" to the state supreme court, challenging the timetable, the state's right to assume control of the collections, and the effort to force the Society into quarters it did not want.[37] But on October 22, 1926, the supreme court upheld all parts of the law, and refused to issue a writ of prohibition.[38] By this time a new governor, Fred Balzar, had assumed office, but to Wier this meant nothing. She was convinced that there was not one whit of difference among any of the state's

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31 *Statutes of the State of Nevada, Passed at the Thirty-First Session of the Legislature, 1926–27* (Carson City: State Printer, 1927), Ch. CLV.

32 Wier to Scrugham, April 12, 1926. Wier Papers.

33 Scrugham to Wier, July 8, 1926. Wier Papers.

34 Wier to Scrugham, July 19, 1926. Wier Papers.

35 Scrugham to Wier, July 20, 1926. Wier Papers.

36 Scrugham to Wier, July 31, August 6, 1926. Wier Papers.

37 Diskin to Wier, August 25, 1926. Wier Papers.

38 Wier to Board of Directors, October 22, 1926. Wier Papers.

politicians. To her, the election of Balzar meant only that a different hand would guide the course of policies already decided.[39]

As if to confirm her suspicions, the legislature formally ended all except a pittance appropriation for the society during the January 1927 session. Wier might have been discouraged, but she was not surprised. Despite her success in shifting the board to her side through the last annual elections, the chain of events was already too far gone to prevent what she had been predicting all along. The first sale date for the buildings and property came and went without action, since the new building being erected in Powning Park remained unfinished. A second date in April 1927 was set, but no one bid on the old quarters. Regardless, the Building Board, chaired by Balzar and with Scrugham as a member, ordered on May 31 that all exhibits be removed to the now completed Powning Park site.[40] The next week almost everything was taken, despite Wier's protest to the new building's superintendent that "your order from the Nevada State Building Board to remove any and all exhibits that you may see fit from the Nevada State Historical Society Building is unlawful. I, as legal custodian of the Nevada State Historical Society, yield only to superior force in the surrender of any Nevada State Historical Society property."[41]

Wier, theoretically at least, washed her hands of the entire affair at this point. She was disheartened and unwilling to sap any more of her energy in the fight. She did continue, however, to try to relate her side of the story and to warn of the dire consequences that would result if circumstances were not reversed. When a state newspaper editorialized that the exhibits on display at the new building were invaluable and should be preserved, especially those which showed the region's history, Wier was quick to reply. "Only a handful [of the Society's exhibit material] was taken, and that with garbled record," she wrote after reviewing the events of the past several years. "It was placed into the hands of a political appointee who was wholly ignorant of this kind of work."[42] When United States Senator Key Pittman wrote to ask her for permission to use the Society's archives to write a proposed history of the state, she replied that all of the material was "in the hands of a *mining* specialist at the state building." But the present keeper, protested Pittman, had assured him that the archives were useable. Wier

[39] Wier believed in the existence of the Wingfield Bipartisan Machine, a rather nebulous political association run by George Wingfield, banker, who played an important part in Nevada Republican politics from 1908 until 1932. Direct evidence for the actual existence of the machine is scanty. (See Russell Elliott, *History of Nevada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), pp. 270–73.

[40] Memorandum, State Building Board to Nevada Historical Society, May 31, 1927. Wier Papers.

[41] Wier to Henry Higgins, June 2, 1927. Wier Papers.

[42] Wier to Mr. and Mrs. D. E. Williams, Editors, Churchill County *Eagle* (Fallon, Nevada), July 26, 1927. Wier Papers.

replied by outlining the whole controversy and then added: "Hence you can see that the claim made by the present curator that the cataloging and arrangement had been completed and ready for use is nothing short of idiotic. . . . In other words, what was intended as a workshop for the specialist has become either a cemetary or a place of amusement for the idle. It does not require either money or brains to administer either one or the other of such places."[43]

All of Wier's dire predictions and worst fears seemed to come true. When the exposition closed, the state found no real need for the building and turned it over to Washoe County. The collections of the Society, with little or no regard for provenance, ended up boxed and in the basement. Over the next several years, floods and vandals took their toll. So, Wier felt, her child had been kidnapped and killed, despite her best efforts. She could not realize in 1930, of course, that it would rise again under the auspices of federal depression programs such as the Works Progress Administration; in fact, what perhaps could be regarded as her own greatest contribution to the history of her state would emerge in 1940 as a result of WPA revivification of the Historical Society and historical work in general in Nevada.[44] By the time she died in 1950 the Society was a firmly entrenched part of the Nevada cultural scene, as she had always envisioned it. But in the early 1930s no such revitalization seemed possible, much less imminent, and though her predictions had all come true, being correct about disaster was precious little comfort.

In retrospect, and with the knowledge that the Society actually was not dead, the whole controversy over the new quarters seems extraordinarily petty. Wier appears almost paranoid to the contemporary observer; in fact, she must have seemed something less than in total control to many participants in the tempest from Scrugham on through the board. With a bit of hindsight, it is possible to criticise Wier for not making the initial moves to compromise with the state and then to assert her prerogatives as curator; those compromises might well have kept the collections intact and out of the basement. But it is possible to determine from her thoughts and her personal situation why she reacted as she did. The events certainly did not seem petty to her; they were certainly not unimportant to the fate of at least part of the Historical Society's collections. And her strong reaction to these apparent challenges to her ideas about history tell much about the evolution of history as a discipline, about the development of regional approaches to studies of the past, and about Jeanne Elizabeth Wier as an intellectual in a frontier environment.

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[43] Wier to Pittman, February 18, 1928. Wier Papers.

[44] Works Progress Administration, WPR Division, *Nevada: A Pageant of Progress* (Reno: WPR Division, 1938).

When Wier first came to Nevada in 1899, she carried some definite ideas about the makeup of civilization and the place of history in the scheme of life. She was fully aware that she was going from Stanford to the frontier, and she was not thoroughly thrilled: she frankly admitted later that she was elated when Stanford's "civilized" football team defeated Nevada. When she confided her feelings to Joseph Stubbs, then president of the College, he predicted that within two years her attitude would change. She found to her surprise that it took an even shorter time for her to consider herself a Nevadan.[45] The state offered many challenges for her—she participated briefly in the fight for woman's suffrage, and she developed a strong women's studies program within the department of history. But her first devotion, her loyalty even before that due the college, became the Historical Society. She saw in that institution the real social application for historical studies; apostolic historians could come muse with Clio and take the wisdom so gathered out to the whole culture.

Wier developed these thoughts clearly in a paper presented to the Academy of Science before the Historical Society was even a year old. First and foremost, she explained, the Nevada Historical Society owed future generations the true story of the past. To obtain this, the members needed to gather all that they could of contemporary records as speedily as possible. The best time to acquire source material, after all, was the nearest to the events themselves, and the collecting of the history of the first days of territory and state should not be left to some distant corps of historians far removed in time and space from the events. For the truth of such an observation, one need only consult archaeologists sifting through ruins of ancient cultures, trying to piece together the past from almost nothing. The task had become even more difficult in recent days, Wier continued, because of the shift in the emphasis on historical studies away from mere recantations of political moves made by men in high office: "The history of today and that of the future must be the record of the masses, the events which have to do with human nature, with human hopes and ideals, and which point the way to the working out of the political and social order of the world." Heroes of history most certainly existed, even in Nevada, but the emphasis had to be placed on what they did, and within what context, not who they were.[46]

Nevada, Wier continued, offered a special challenge for historians. The state had been born from political expediency—Lincoln needed the votes in Congress to make the passage of the thirteenth amendment a certainty. From that time on, the state had lived under a political cloud, with the reputation of a "rotten borough." Those beliefs, shared even by many resi-

[45] Wier, "The Mission of the State Historical Society," *First Biennial Report*, p. 62.
[46] Ibid., pp. 62–63.

dents of the state, were partly earned and partly inflicted, and it was the duty of historians to sort out which was which.[47]

To begin this process, one had to understand the forces which shaped Nevada. "The ever-changing frontier is, without question, the most vital topic in American history," Wier intoned in an echo of Turner, "for in it are included all the great movements of the Nation and in it, as in an index, may be found the key to American characteristics: Energy, ambition, and the power to do." Quoting Ellen Churchill Semple's paean to physiographic interpretation, *American History and its Geographic Conditions* (1903), Wier outlined the reasons for Nevada's slow growth—deserts close to the lush California coast had attracted no one except speculators, the state had never been on the main trade routes, and so on. Wier even attributed the name of the state to the slowness of settlement: "I think that you will find that it is only in those places and states where the white man has come into possession of the country gradually that the old Indian [and presumably the Spanish] names have been preserved." Neither had Nevada gone through the proper stages of development from agriculture to industry, and therefore her growth was retarded and her political life similarly stunted. "Unfortunate has it been for Nevada that its youth was spent, not under the open skies in closest contact with even a desert soil, but in the deeps of the darksome mines."[48]

What could Nevada historians do to illuminate the gloom? Before she could answer, the Academy had to know the purpose of a historical society generally, and Jeanne Wier was glad to enlighten the membership. Since "civilization was at the bottom economic, but at the top . . . ethical," she saw the historical society as primarily an agent for education about ethics. History could transcend existence as a mere collection of past events and provide "the comprehension of their logic. . . . It is the great channel which conveys to man the past experience of the race, showing him the different phases of his progress upward and onward into civilization, and it may be taken," she paraphrased Hegel, "that the people who cannot look very far back into their past do not look very far forward into future needs and conditions. . . . History, moreover, is moral knowledge. By its study conduct is shaped and the intellect is disciplined."[49]

Teaching intelligent laymen about the value of history resembled the education of children; success came fastest with concepts that were already grasped. Consequently, local and regional studies provided the ideal tool for such an enterprise, for what did anyone know better than his own en-

[47] Ibid., pp. 63–64.
[48] Ibid., p. 66.
[49] Ibid., pp. 67–68.

virons? The impact of widespread interest in local historical study could be great at all levels of human experience. Patriotism would be necessarily enhanced, and wrongs in governing righted:

> Moreover, historical insight depends intimately upon human sympathy. You must think and feel with the people you are studying, and therefore the more historic association we can link with our localities the richer will be the life of our people in human friendships and affections, as well as in accuracy of thought and of judgment. If to think and to feel the truth be indeed to know God, then shall this local historical work be for us a religious and ethical influence, increasing in value as the days and years go by, bringing to our people eventually a true freedom of spirit.[50]

Civilization, however, could not be taken for granted in such a place as Nevada. "The call of the wild is very strong all over this American desert. Consequently, like Buck, we are harking 'back through the ages of fire and roof to the raw beginnings of things in the howling ages.' "[51] Nature could be counted on to reclaim that which was left untended, including the minds of men, like the desert broke down the homes of long-departed boomers. The historical society's civilizing influence could help overcome the tendency to succumb to the baser elements in human nature.

As she studied the problem further, and as she gained practical experience in trying to gather historical data in the field, she found in the impermanence of the mining frontier all the more reason to pursue the stuff of history sooner rather than later. Nevada had a much different set of problems compared to those of other states, she informed the meeting of the PCB in 1910. Mining camps had a short enough life as corporate entities, but such makeshift towns were also subject to frequent fires and populated by those who had no sense of belonging and hence no sense of history. County seats also moved with the boomers, so even those points which under ordinary circumstances would be stable collecting points often proved unreliable. Only two methods of recapturing the past seemed feasible, she reported—checking newspapers and interviewing pioneers or gathering memoirs from their descendents.[52]

As her cry of despair about Nevada's lack of appreciation of the "more intangible things" to Henry Reid in 1925 showed, the next fifteen years of Wier's life did little to convince her that she had succeeded in bringing the past alive to her fellow citizens. She had, indeed, brought with her to Reno a singleminded dedication to a new understanding of history which was

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50 Ibid., pp. 68–69.

51 Ibid., p. 69.

52 Wier, "The Work of the Western State Historical Society," *Second Biennial Report*, pp. 60–64.

much different from anything to which most of the people in Nevada cared to relate. She preached the gospel of gathering and learning about the pioneer experience, and with that Nevadans could agree. But she never conveyed her sense of history as the scientific key to the truths of the past which were applicable to the future. To most of those around her who had any interest in the past, heritage meant observing history to demonstrate the reality of progress, to see how far the state had come. Wier, on the other hand, regarded history for curiosity's sake as irrelevant; she feared during the quarters crisis that she herself had pandered to the merely curious by overemphasizing the museum. Her bias against what she regarded as the "boomer mentality" in all facets of Nevada's life made her disparage James Scrugham's interest as meddling by an amateur for political advantage alone. Her missionary zeal for the new professionalism, undiminished through the rest of her life from her 1905 statement of principles to the Academy of Science, made Wier fight tooth-and-nail for her point of view through the 1920s and 1930s. Jeanne Elizabeth Wier did not hyperbolize, in her own mind at least, the intensity of her feelings when she worried over the death of her "child"; when she compared intrusions such as Scrugham was making to medical quackery; or when she claimed to have the sole perspective on the whole elephant.

In addition to carrying biases of her own, Wier fought against a whole set of prejudices when she presumed to speak for Nevada's ethics. She was a woman, educated far beyond most men in the state, unmarried, and vocal in support of her ideas. She did not compromise, at least in any standard sense; she sometimes slid a little toward the opponents' position, but even that was mostly by default. She had her personal traumas; her mother and her sister both lived with her and were psychological burdens. One reason she so adamantly fought for the quarters near the collections was the fragility of her family; her mother was quite frail and her sister often thought she was. Wier felt that if she could have both of her responsibilities nearby, each of them could receive attention without harm to the other. This arrangement had been assured with the nearness of her home to the first Society headquarters. When her mother died in 1928, however, matters had gotten out of her control.[53]

But the most serious difficulty which she confronted was her inability to accede to uses of history less intellectually based than her own. She entangled her visions of new professionalism with her own highly idealistic

[53] In connection with her family, particularly in regard to her sister Eva, she often consulted astrologers; that manifested her larger interest in things metaphysical. In one particularly poignant letter in the midst of her problems with the Historical Society, she asked "My Dear Mr. Stodgell" for support, adding "don't fear to tell us if you see Eva's passing coming soon." Eva outlived Jeanne by more than a decade. Wier to Stodgell, April 20, 1928. Wier Papers.

conceptions of history and society; and she concluded that opposition to her ideas meant a crass rejection of all ethical considerations in favor of opportunism. She could not, or at least she did not, convert such as Scrugham to her views; she would not bend her own ideas to encompass others. Scrugham epitomized the archenemy because of his interest in things historical without a concomitant commitment to things of the spirit as she saw them. His dabbling in the past with no professional direction was worse to her than disinterest.

In 1937, when it became apparent that federal monies would be available for historical work, Wier proposed the revitalization of the Nevada State Historical Society. Scrugham also sought funding under his own conditions. But Jeanne Wier's feelings clearly had not mellowed over the decade either toward him or toward anyone who had not so far come around to her point of view. In explaining a lengthy exposé of her side of the building affair and in opposition to Scrugham's candidacy for funds, Wier concluded: "For the good of posterity I feel that I should sacrifice my own personal wishes and make this statement. I do this with no feeling of bitterness towards those who accomplished [the Society's] ruin. It is in a spirit of infinite pity for the state which is still so pioneer that an individual of so low development is still allowed to use the state for such purposes."[54] Wier had come to the frontier full of ideas nurtured by Turnerians, but not yet fully developed by them. Her observations of Nevada and frontiersmen somehow did not match the supergeneralized conceptions she had learned, nor what she had expected of the frontier. It was not surprising, then, that by 1937 "pioneer" had become for her in some senses an opprobrious term.

Jeanne Elizabeth Wier and the Nevada Historical Society won back a place within the Nevada cultural scene when the Society acquired federal funding in 1937, and the Society grew in strength in the 1940s. Wier's ideas had not changed, except that she was even more wary of those who would oppose her. As a consequence, the organization played to a limited audience until well after her death at mid-century. In the latter-day Society, professionalism reigns as Wier would have wanted, but of a less self-conscious variety than she practiced. A dedication to educate also characterizes her progeny, but in forms she would not recognize and for ends less carefully structured than her own. Given her fierce dedication to her own set of ideals, it is unlikely that she would feel at home.

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[54] Wier, "Statement of Mr. Scrugham's Dealings." Wier Papers.

New Perspectives on American Agriculture

SCOTT L. LOCICERO

SCHOLARS, JOURNALISTS AND WRITERS subjected agribusiness to merciless criticism during the decade of the 1970s. Such criticism spread and has now created a whole new way of looking at American agriculture and rural life. This essay is an examination of six recent books that share this common and highly critical view of large agricultural and business concerns and their agents and accomplices in federal, state and local governments. The essential argument in these volumes is that large agribusiness concerns have diverted government offices originally intended to help the citizen, and in particular, the rural resident farmer, and have created ever larger bureaucracies that have operated to the detriment of farmers, rural communities, food quality, the urban consumer and governmental integrity.

Two books in this group have a special relevance for Nevadans, since they address the issues surrounding public grazing lands and the more general problem of the public domain. William Voigt, Jr. has examined the problem of *Public Grazing Lands: Use and Misuse by Industry and Government.*[1] T. H. Watkins and Charles Watson in *The Lands No One Knows: America and the Public Domain*[2] have written the history of American public land with an emphasis on what has become in the twentieth century a struggle between those who wish to retain some exclusively wild land and those who see all land as subject to use for profit.

Frank Browning's *The Vanishing Land: The Corporate Theft of America's Soil*[3] is almost exclusively concerned with rural farm land, although it also discusses the urbanization and suburbanization of farm land. The Agribusiness Accountability Project Task Force published a second edition of *Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times,*[4] an uncompromisingly critical assessment of the

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[1] William Voigt, Jr., *Public Grazing Lands; Use and Misuse by Industry and Government* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1976).

[2] T. H. Watkins and Charles Watson, Jr., *The Lands No One Knows; America and the Public Domain* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1975).

[3] Frank Browning, *The Vanishing Land; The Corporate Theft of America's Soil* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

[4] Agribusiness Accountability Project, *Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times; The Original Hightower Report, Unexpurgated, of the Agribusiness Accountability Project on the Future of America's Land Grant College Complex and Selected Additional Views of the Problems and Prospects of American Agriculture in the Late Seventies* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1978).

effect of Land Grant Colleges on American agriculture. The most comprehensive of these recent books are *The People's Land: A Reader on Land Reform in the United States* by Peter Barnes and the National Coalition for Land Reform,[5] and *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*[6] by the farmer, novelist and poet, Wendell Berry. While most of the above volumes are interpretations of various aspects of what the authors see as problems connected with land use practices, these two books, especially Berry's, are histories of the mentality of exploitation; and they contain examinations of how we relate to our lands and suggestions about how we might amend our practices to continue a fruitful and productive agriculture into the future.

The underlying assumption in all of these books is that of Thomas Jefferson, as he expressed it in a letter to James Madison written on 28 October 1785:

> Legislators cannot invent too many devices for subdividing property. . . . Another means of silently lessening the inequality of property is to exempt all from taxation below a certain point, and to tax the higher portions of property in geometrical progression as they rise.
>
> Whenever there is in any country uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right. The earth is given as a commonstock for man to labour and live on . . . it is not too soon to provide by every possible means that as few as possible shall be without a little portion of land. The small land holders are the most precious part of a state.[7]

Thus the authors of these books say that productive property is given to society as a whole to use, and it should be divided as evenly as possible. Where this is impossible or undesirable, then the tax structure, among other things, should be used to lessen the inequity. These assumptions are the basis for a set of radical critiques of the historical development of property use and a scathing indictment of the contemporary rural situation.

William Voigt Jr.'s *Public Grazing Lands: Use and Misuse by Industry and Government* is an interesting, informative book. It was originally planned to be an account of how an aggressive clique of large scale public land-using stockmen in the West attempted a land grab by trying to take legal title to immense tracts of publicly-owned range and National Forest System lands, and who were successfully opposed by a small "rag-tag army"

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[5] Peter Barnes, ed., *The People's Land: A Reader on Land Reform in the United States* (Emmaus, Pa.: Rodale Press, 1975).

[6] Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (New York: Avon Books, 1977).

[7] Barnes, ed., *People's Land*, 3–4.

of conservationists. The book, however, developed until it finally outgrew the story of the land grab to become a history of the (mis)management of public grazing lands. The original book is still there, its main outlines and its vigorously partisan point of view still plainly visible. Voigt's original story clearly dominates the book and provides the main theme. The story of the attempted land grab is seen from the point of view of a conservationist insider. Voigt was then an official of the Izaak Walton League and a principal in the events he describes.

Voigt's close connection to the events of the "land grab" probably accounts for the fact that it looms so large in the story and also for the style in which the book is written. It is a familiar, at times chatty and even chummy, style, so much so that some may find themselves put off by it. But for all of that, it is informative, accurate and as objective as any account by a passionate participant can be expected to be.

Students of the life and career of Senator Pat McCarran will find the book worth a close reading. The Senator's efforts on behalf of his public land-using constituents are described as "indefatigable."

Indeed, Nevada's McCarran and Wyoming's Senators Robertson and O'Mahoney appear as key participants in what Voigt describes as a continuous attempt to appropriate the public domain on a colossal scale. For Voigt, McCarran was clearly acting as an agent for large-scale livestock and woolgrowing interests. Voigt documents McCarran's connections with both cattlemen and sheepmen and the organizations which represented their interests in Congress, and also what appear to be straightforward attempts on McCarran's part to rig Congressional hearings so that any point of view not consonant with those of the livestock associations would be either underrepresented or not represented at all.

What were McCarran's motives and involvement in this matter? More seems to have been behind his actions than simple representation of economic interests. Sister Margaret Patricia McCarran explains the Senator's motives in an entirely different, and in at least a plausible manner. She explains that although the Senator favored sportsman's organizations, he parted company with them over the administration of the Taylor Grazing Act. The issue involved the right of the federal government to regulate and thus change local usages and customs.[8] She also explains that as an avid hunter, the Senator was personally in favor of "control of wild grazing herds," because he believed that elk and deer devoured the graze so severely that cattle might have to be reduced in number. The origin of McCarran's ideological interest in the issue seems to have stemmed from the mid 1930s,

[8] Sister Margaret Patricia McCarran, "Patrick Anthony McCarran," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* XI, 3–4: 34.

when the USDA published a small volume entitled *The Major Range Problems and their Solution,* which argued that the federal government should actively regulate rangeland to balance grazing, watershed service and wildlife production for maximum private and public benefits.[9] The Senator took issue with then Secretary of Agriculture Wallace over this position, which he likened to Soviet policy. McCarran wanted grazing policy under almost total local control.

Was the determining factor in McCarran's position a right-wing states' rights ideology, or was it that he was simply the agent of large livestock interests, who wanted the right to overgraze the public's land at no expense to themselves? On the basis of material cited by Voigt and Sister McCarran it is clear that both factors were at work. Sister McCarran details the contents of telegrams from F. E. Mollin, the secretary of the American National Livestock Association, to Senator McCarran about the initiation of hearings of the Committee on Public Lands and Surveys, and the contents of a telegram from the Senator to Elmer Brock, the President of the American Livestock Association, asking him for names, addresses and affiliations of interested persons and associations, and calling for suggestions as to the most convenient place to all concerned to conduct the hearings.[10] All of this seems to partially corroborate Voigt's view of the Senator as an agent of the livestock owners. Yet Sister McCarran also includes an ideological explanation that seems to have a ring of truth. She explains the Senator thought the grazing regulations were part of a plot to, at the least, exercise federal "hegemony" over the land, if not to completely eliminate free entrepreneurs.[11] This is a perfect example of the shift of values one finds in Nevada, and elsewhere, where there is a large amount of public land that has been in essentially private use for a number of years. It ceases to be conceived of as land owned for the American public and is seen as private land. McCarran was able to rail against federal "hegemony" over federal land only because he and the users had come to perceive the land as the personal property of the user.

It may seem to some that a history of an unsuccessful land grab in the context of an account of the development of policies and regulations concerning grazing on public lands is much too specialized an endeavor to expect a broad reading public. And this is true. Nonetheless, on reflection, this is a surprisingly important topic, one that is relevant to a great many contemporary urban concerns. Urban and suburban consumers in America would do well to consider the importance of this topic to some of their own pressing concerns: the price of food, the allocation of water resources and

[9] Ibid., 1: 8–9.
[10] Ibid., 1:10.
[11] Ibid., 1:15.

the availability of increasingly scarce wilderness and outdoor recreation facilities, to mention only a few.

But obviously the book was not written with a broad audience in mind. It is too long, too detailed–almost tedious in places. It is aimed squarely at an academic and administrative reading public. In his account of the most recent period, since the 1960s, the author may not have given sufficient account of the impact of the environmental movement and the influence of the outdoor recreation industry. Indeed, the story seems centered on a few policymakers and politicians, and there is a neglect of many rapidly-growing public concerns, although these begin to have significant influence in the period covered in the later chapters.

T. H. Watkins, an environmental writer from San Francisco, and Charles S. Watson, Jr., a Reno, Nevada conservationist, collaborated to produce *The Lands No One Knows: America and the Public Domain,* a history of what was once more than two billion acres of land held in trust by the U.S. government and owned by the people. It is, as the authors explain, the story of a squandered inheritance. Most of this rich inheritance was simply given away by grants to the states and privately owned railroad companies, by direct sales at below market prices to mining, ranching, farming and timber interests, and to land speculators who reaped spectacular profits. The story is one of the private enrichment of a few who were able to seize the nation's property to further enrich themselves at public expense.

The Lands No One Knows is divided into two segments; one describes the history of the exploitation of public land ("The Inheritance"), and the second examines the current problems and the forces seeking to continue the squandering of the diminishing and increasingly precious inheritance ("The Inheritors"). Beginning in the period between 1605 and 1785, in spite of the fact that land was plentiful, it was established that land was money, a commodity to be disposed of rather than seen as a resource to be managed for the good of the community. The next seventy-five years saw the patrimony of the public domain almost disappear. A series of well-intentioned laws administered in a spirit of venality, speculation and irresponsibility gave over 300 million acres to private use, and there was still more to be had in the West. Vernon Parrington called the great land giveaways of the period 1860–1900 "The Great Barbecue," a forty-year raid on the public lands. More than 400 million acres were served up as preemption lands, homestead lands, desert act lands, timberculture lands, swamp lands, college grant lands, mineral lands, timber and stone lands, Indian lands, and lands sold outright. The 1850s through the 1880s, a period of approximately thirty years, saw some 91,000,000 acres given away to the railroads. And more than ninety-six percent of the land given away was to only four railroad companies. Further, these same companies were also

granted more than $100,000,000 in low interest loans by the government.

After 1900 a slow revolution began in men's thinking about the public domain. Men began to think of the publicly owned land as a resource to be managed for the public good. Finally, in 1934, the Taylor Grazing Act closed public lands to settlement and they began to be managed as income-producing property for the benefit of the whole nation. But the horrors of misuse had not yet been stopped. The West's historic willingness to sell out its patrimony cheap saw what Bernard De Voto has called "Two-Gun Desmonds," the corporate cowboys, farmers and prospectors who repeatedly attempt to take control of public resources. Watkins likens their attitude to public wealth to a man standing on his front lawn handing cans of gasoline to the arsonist bent on destroying it. He further points out the paradox of men of power in the West crying "freedom" and bargaining away its life and heritage; of crying "individualism" and repeatedly bowing before corporate enterprise bent on destroying the individual; of crying "paternalism" and begging for government handouts. In their story of the Two-Gun Desmonds and the paradoxes, Watkins and Watson identify as the chief, or at least representative, villains the corporate stockmen and their representatives in Congress, Senators Pat McCarran of Nevada and Allan Robertson of Wyoming.

The Two-Gun Desmonds and the paradoxical attitudes of westerners have not disappeared in recent decades. "The Inheritors" points out both continuing and relatively new problems in managing the public domain. One of the problems is the Bureau of Land Management. The BLM was founded by legislators who were acting for corporate interests. They expected the BLM to act as a steward for the land while they thought up ways to turn the land over to private hands, and they are offended when it acts in the public interest. There are a number of controversies concerning grazing land. The definitions of overgrazing, the quality of the rangeland, the presence of native grazing animals and predators all support their own set of questions around which many environmental problems continue to center. One of the most lively of the controversies to emerge in recent years centers on off-road vehicles and their effects on the land. Organizations of recreational vehicle owners and manufacturers are well-organized enough to have some political clout. But, in spite of protests to the contrary from the RV community, these vehicles do damage to the land that is often not reversible; erosion, pollution, stampeded cattle, noise and the destruction of flora and fauna often result. Control of ORV's is not popular, especially with such organizations, but it is increasingly necessary. The "energy crisis" also puts its strains on public land and adds to the difficulty of managing it intelligently. There are several centers of energy-related problems: the integrity of the Alaskan wilderness, problems related to exploitation of geo-

thermal energy and the exploitation of the oil reserves of the continental shelf. Recently Nevadans have seen the very same arguments applied to the Red Rock Recreation Area outside of Las Vegas. All of these developments directly threaten both public resources and the quality of life. Their exploitation will most likely wreak various degrees of havoc with land, and pollute and use up scarce water supplies.

Another interesting problem concerning public land mentioned by Watkins and Watson relates to the beginnings of legal battles initiated by Native Americans aiming at the recovery of land assured to them by long-ago broken treaties. A great deal of this land is currently held as public land. Legal decisions favoring the Indians would have immense repercussions over a wide variety of issues.

The Lands No One Knows, a Sierra Club publication, is engagingly and forcefully written. It presents a conservationist view of dwindling and increasingly important public resources, and describes the sources and direction of the attacks on public use, management and control of these resources. Anyone who wishes to survey the issues surrounding management of public resources would do well to begin with this book. As with so many Sierra Club publications, it is well-illustrated with a great many good quality black and white photographs.

As its subtitle indicates, Frank Browning's *The Vanishing Land* is a journalistic exposé of the "Corporate Theft of America's Soil." According to Browning, this gigantic heist is intimately involved with the fundamental political, ecological and cultural issues of our century, all of which ultimately depend on questions relating to who shall use the land, and for what purposes.

The book argues that large corporations are rapidly gaining control of alarming amounts of rural property in America. It is a virtual land rush. Corporations, led by the railroads and timber and paper companies, have gained control of nearly 59 million acres of public and private land. The large corporations use this land as a reservoir for surplus cash. The author charges that the Bank of America is in virtual control of California agriculture, and he uses the case of the Prudential Life Insurance Company to show that in large measure these companies view the land as simply a source of capital. This in itself is a source of ecological mistreatment of the land, since financial institutions viewing the land simply as a repository of capital have not been historically responsible for husbanding the soil and have no real interest in so doing. Soil is used for immediate short-term profits, and is not husbanded in ecologically responsible ways.

Other evils follow from corporate involvement in rural land. Individual farmers are being closed out by big operators. USDA figures soft pedal the drastic decline in personal or family-run farms, since many agribiz oper-

ations are either "family" owned or report their taxes as limited partnerships. Large farm operations take most of the farm income. Less than eight percent of American farms make twice as much money as sixty percent of the small farms. Still more serious consequences flow from this situation, including the widespread conversion of farm land into residential subdivisions and home lots. Moreover, large farms are able to control prices, keep consumer prices high, pay little or no taxes and receive federal crop subsidies. The consumer and taxpayer is left with both high prices and high taxes inequitably distributed.

Chapters Four and Five deal with residential and recreational developments from farm and ranch land by large concerns such as the Chrysler Corporation and the Irvine Corporation. One of the better features of the book is an appendix entitled "Tilling for Taxes," which describes how agricultural income tax shelters work to produce five results for agribiz corporations: they boost profits, lower or eliminate taxes, squeeze real farmers out of business, gain monopoly control of agriculture, and ensure high food prices.

The chapters of Browning's book are largely independent journalistic accounts. Portions of the book appeared as articles in *Ramparts* magazine and in the *New York Times*. As such, they have the strengths and weaknesses of journalism. What is somewhat regretable, however, is that while the book has a unity of theme, there is no introduction, preface or conclusion to tie these disparate chapters together.

Rather than being an individually-written journalistic exposé, *Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times* is a meticulously researched and closely argued report by a collective research agency. The turbulent politics of the late 1960s left a legacy in the scholarly world: the action-oriented social research agency that sought to provide a factual basis for popularly directed political change in somewhat the same way that the Consumer's Union seeks to provide consumers with a factual basis for consumer choices. The difference is that action oriented social research agencies have often found it difficult to secure facts about the sometimes embarrassing and hidden connections between government and American business corporations. All the more reason, then, for congratulations to Jim Hightower and the Agribusiness Accountability Project for their research on how "the tax paid, land grant [college] complex has come to serve an elite of private, corporate interests in rural America, while ignoring those who have the most urgent needs and the most legitimate claims for assistance."[12]

The problem is that rural America is crumbling: the family farm is disappearing, along with schools, churches, communities and a whole way of

[12] *Hard Tomatoes*, xvii.

life. The land-grant college complex has failed to respond to these needs. Instead, its response has been to allocate a mere five percent of its resources to helping people and ninety-five percent to projects that have created an automated, integrated and corporatized agriculture that has been a disintegrating influence on rural America. People have been sacrificed to the welfare of agribusiness corporations. This has exacerbated the problems in rural America. Money is progressively siphoned out of rural areas and into the corporate headquarters of agribusiness in urban centers of agricultural power.

The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, the Hatch Act of 1887 and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, which created the land-grant college complex, were designed to serve a majority of rural Americans and serve a wide array of rural needs. Since that time the investment of tax dollars in this complex of institutions has grown to staggering dimensions—several billions of dollars in any recent given year. Research projects funded by the system are preoccupied with mechanization and chemicalization of agriculture designed to assist agribusiness and eliminate the human element from farming. The results drive up the cost of farming through ever larger scale machinery, machinery that is irrelevant to the needs or wants of a majority of America's farmers. Tax supported research ends up serving a dwindling number of corporate farmers so that the research amounts to government research subsidies to the largest agricultural corporations, all the while making it increasingly difficult for the family farmer to compete with large scale subsidized agribusiness.

Individuals within the land grant college complex shift easily between campus, government and agribusiness. This produces a fundamental sameness in outlook that stifles critical questioning of methods and purposes. A prime example of the land grant college-agribusiness-government tie is the career of Earl Lauer Butz, the former Secretary of Agriculture. Butz spent his whole life shifting from campus to industry to government. At Purdue he was a student and then a professor, head of the agricultural economics department, dean of agriculture, dean of continuing education and Vice-President of the Purdue Research Foundation. A man so prominent in agricultural research also found his way to corporate boards: Ralston-Purina, International Minerals and Chemicals, Stokely Van-Camp and Standard Life Insurance. Not only was he well-paid for board services, but also he received dividends from stock held in these companies. Rather than seeing these interconnections as evidence of conflict of interest, Butz expressed the opinion that they were useful and helpful contacts for training students for careers in agribusiness and for fundraising. No doubt. But with this background it is not surprising that research projects in agricultural economics should have favored an agribusiness point of view. And once appointed As-

sistant Secretary of Agriculture (1954–1957) or later as Secretary of Agriculture after 1971, it is likewise not surprising that USDA monies would continue to flow to support the major agribusiness concerns that had advanced Earl Butz's carer. Clifford Hardin, Butz's predecessor as Secretary of Agriculture, on leaving government service merely stepped into Butz's shoes on the Board of Directors of Ralston-Purina.

Moreover, an agribusiness-agrigovernment liaison is consummated on the campus. Large corporations provide substantial sums for research, enough to influence other research accomplished with public money. It is a good investment, and even more so when it is recalled the grants given are tax-deductible. These grants are "seed money" well-spent. After all, a relatively small research grant can be picked up by a graduate student and continued as a doctoral dissertation done on public money. The result for industry is a manyfold return on its investment: research done for free on public money, and an expert to employ who was trained largely on public money; private research and job training financed with public tax money, and yielding tax exemptions for private business. A good deal.

Peter Barnes has edited *The People's Land: A Reader on Land Reform in the United States* for the National Coalition for Land Reform. A century ago the United States envisioned itself as a nation of sturdy yeoman farmers, and other nations saw it this way also. But with industrialization came an ever more urban existence and the decline of the reality of a rural independence. Today, Americans are looking back to their landed heritage. In doing so, they see a "cradle of poverty and injustice" in the late twentieth century. The beauty of the land is fast disappearing. Moreover, the urban areas are becoming more crowded and the quality of life therein is deteriorating still further. The thesis of *The People's Land* is that many of these problems have their roots in the land, or, more precisely, in the lack of access to productive land ownership by the poor, the young and the non-white.

The analysis in *The People's Land* begins with the fact that over one-third of the land in the United States is publicly-owned, while the rest is privately-owned. Analysis of this privately-owned sector reveals that there is a very highly concentrated pattern of landownership, one that the editor and many of his contributors do not hesitate to call "feudal." Five percent of the population owns close to two-thirds of all the private property in this country. Furthermore, in many areas this involves ownership by absentee landlords—the timber companies, railroads, energy companies, and corporate farms. These entities dominate and destroy the lives and livelihoods of rural citizens, and destroy also the possibility of independent rural life.

The root cause of this situation is the American conception of private property, which derives from the property traditions of Imperial Rome. All

was well in Rome until the Roman state began to divide up the public land Rome had acquired in the unification of the Italian peninsula. Then this land was distributed, not to the poor, but to the already wealthy, who in turn created the *latifundia,* types of plantations worked by a rural underclass of unfree agricultural workers called *coloni,* the predecessors of the medieval serfs. According to this view of the public land situation in the U.S., something similar has gone on in the United States because of the giveaway of America's public lands, called by the authors "one of the most inglorious scandals in the annals of modern man.[13] That the public land giveaways were shot through with fraud and corruption was bad enough—with railroads, cattle barons and assorted speculators being the principal beneficiaries; but still worse was the fact that the federal and state legislators disregarded the social consequences of uneven land distribution, so that great disparities in wealth and power were "etched into the national landscape." This paved the way for the urban crisis of the late twentieth century and the corporate feudalism that dominates rural areas.

This conception of the situation in late twentieth century United States and the possible remedies for it are developed in thirty-eight separate selections ranging from Thomas Jefferson to Jim Hightower, Robert Rodale, the President's Commission on Rural Poverty, and the North Dakota Farmer's Union. In the section entitled "Historical Perspectives" the selections show that at the end of the eighteenth century and in the mid-nineteenth century there was intelligent and articulate opinion arguing for the free distribution of land to the poor. Unfortunately, the homestead law of 1862, instead of distributing land to the industrious farmer, actually distributed most of the land to railroads and well-heeled and unscrupulous speculators. The situation was further compounded by New Deal land policies which laid the foundation for the highly capitalized and government subsidized agribusiness operations of the present time.

The section entitled "Regional Perspectives" shows that in Appalachia, the South, the Northern Plains, the Midwest and New England up to eighty percent of the land is owned by absentee landlords, usually in the form of railroads, timber companies, resort developers, banks and international companies. The section on Indian lands charges that government policies towards Indian lands have gone "beyond scandal" and calls for a new legal category, which would free Indian lands from federal control and place control of the lands in the hands of the tribes.

The editor's attack on agribusiness is developed in the section entitled "Farms, Food and Technology." According to this view, when giant corporations take over the food production business, food ends up costing more

[13] Barnes, ed., *People's Land,* xi.

and tasting worse. Moreover, the reason for the increased cost is that very large scale farming by non-resident owners is less efficient. A summary of the 1967 U.S.D.A. sponsored Madden Report on production costs of different sized farms showed that the family farm is the most economically efficient unit of agricultural production. A report on the Land Grant College complex also shows that it is the large scale growers, the farm machinery and chemical companies and the food processors who are the primary beneficiaries of agricultural research done at the tax-supported land grant colleges.

"Water and Energy" demonstrates the connection between increasing energy production in the West and the enormous new demands for water that are an inescapable part of that development. It also shows how the allocation of water rights by public agencies have aided corporate agribusiness, in spite of laws that have made irrigation of large holdings by non-resident owners illegal. It calls for the end to water "mining" of underground reservoirs at a faster rate than the water can be replaced in the aquifer.

The section on "Taxes" attempts to show how tax policies help to shape the economic and social structure of rural America, and it provides imaginative examples of ways to tie land-related taxes to land reform. The contributors' essays show that both federal and state tax laws have been silent partners in the systematic undertaxation of large absentee-owned investors. Loopholes have made it possible for corporations to become farmers for tax purposes. Ralph Nader's selection calls for either taxing all kinds and sizes of property at the same rate, or "even better," a progressive property tax that would tax larger units at a still higher rate than smaller units. Other suggestions include property tax relief to open space landholders; lower tax schedules if the landholder agrees not to sell the land for housing development; and a severance tax—a tax on the extraction of minerals, timber and other depletable resources.

The last two sections, entitled "Small Towns and Rural Poverty" and "Co-ops, Land Trusts and Land Reform" explore the relationships between agribusiness domination of small rural communities and the quality of life in these communities, and present suggestions for relieving the problems that were discussed at the First National Conference on Land Reform.

Particularly notable features of the book are the sensitive photo essays placed between the various sections of the text. The photos are keyed to the substance of the text as well as the subject and provide graphic illustrations of the deteriorating quality of rural life, the diminution of alternatives for the urban consumer, and the successes brought about by reform which offer hope for the rural community.

Wendell Berry's *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*

is the most remarkable book of the lot. Berry calls the book a "review" rather than a critique of American agriculture. It is this, but it is also a great deal more, for it lays bare many of the assumptions that have allowed the current "crisis" in agriculture (and also of urban and suburban life) to come about. In this sense, the book is about the American psyche, about the assumptions behind the successes as well as the faults and foibles of our civilization.

The Unsettling of America originated in 1967, when President Johnson's Special Commission on Federal Food and Fibre Policies stated that the nation's biggest farm problem was a surplus of farmers. Both the Commission and the writer of the article took it for granted that small farmers' lives and communities were of less consequence than the much praised "technological advances in agriculture" that had made them expendable. Berry's book, however, has been written in the conviction that small farmers and the rural ways of life they embody are still productive and immensely valuable for this nation.

Berry observes that from the very beginning Americans have ended up neither where they originally intended to go, nor where they hoped to be. The American continent was discovered by an Italian, working for Spain, who was on his way to India. From this time on, even when communities were founded, the goal, *el dorado,* was always over the hill, in the distance somewhere. Some people have, however, settled intending to stay put. But generation after generation, the tendency has been for those who intended to remain to have been dispossessed, driven out, subverted or exploited by those who were carrying out some version of the search for *el dorado.* The exploiters have always claimed that what they destroyed was outdated, provincial and contemptible. Berry's law is that "members of any *established* people or group or community sooner or later become 'redskins' —that is they become the designated victims of an utterly ruthless, officially sanctioned and subsidized exploitation."[14] The only escape from victimization has been and continues to be to "succeed"—to join the exploiters and become so specialized and so mobile that one ceases to be conscious of the effects of one's livelihood.

The points of his opening observations are to show, first, how deeply rooted is the mentality of exploitation; second, to show how fundamentally revolutionary this attitude is; and third, to analyze how crucial this approach is to our history. Berry has set up an explanation of American history that centers upon the treatment of agriculture and the fundamental attitudes of exploitation and of nurture. The very model of the get-rich-quick exploiter is the strip miner, and the ideal of the nurturer is the ideal of the farmer. The exploiter is a specialist, an expert, and his goal is money and

[14] Berry, *Unsettling of America,* 4.

profit. The model nurturer is not and cannot be a specialist. He must be a generalist, and his goal is health—his own, his family's, his community's and his country's. The exploiter asks of a piece of land only how much and how quickly it can be made to yield a profit; the concern is to take and get out. The nurturer asks "what is its carrying capacity"—that is, how much can be taken dependably from it, without diminishing it, for an indefinite period.

Thus the ecological crisis of the late twentieth century becomes, for those who see the paradoxes inherent in our society, at once a crisis of character, a crisis of agriculture and a crisis of culture. It is a crisis of character because, once one understands one's many personal connections to what is wrong, and that it is impossible to separate oneself from a system that includes both exploitation and nurture, then one must begin the uncomfortable process of changing his life to become less destructive. It is a crisis of agriculture because the largest scale agriculture has abandoned the notion of ecologically sound "kindly use" of the land and adopted policies of specialization and exploitation. It is a crisis of our entire culture because food is a cultural product. Food production is not simply a matter of technology, because our market systems and our technology are embodiments of our values and priorities.

Berry's criticism of the "modern" agricultural ideal asserts that the exploitative value structure of modern agribusiness has begun to see the future as a newly discovered continent that corporations are in the process of colonizing. The inhabitants of the future, our descendants, are the "redskins." Never has there been a better subject for exploitation than the future and its inhabitants; they cannot strike back; they cannot strike for better wages or for better treatment; and their complaints that non-renewable resources were used up before they were born do not have to be faced. They are the perfect subjects for exploitation. How is the future treated as a colony? In many ways, but let it suffice here to point out that both depletable and non-depletable resources can be destroyed in the present and it is the future, not the present, that will be deprived of them.

On the energy crisis, Berry tells us the truths that most have been trying to avoid saying and hearing. The energy crisis is a crisis not of technology, but of morality. The issue is not of supply but of use, of restraint. There are only two kinds of energy. One type is made available, and consumed, by machines. This is the energy that can be stockpiled or placed in some kind of reservoir such as a gasoline tank or a pile of coal; it is clearly finite, and we are rapidly coming to the end of our supply, the more so because of our insatiable greed for it. The other type of energy is truly infinite in supply, but it cannot be stockpiled. It is produced by combining the four elements of medieval science: earth, air, fire and water. It can be preserved only for short periods of time in the humus of the soil, in the flesh of

living animals, and in grain elevators. The preservation of this energy involves the conservation of its cycles. The moral order appropriate to the use of biological energy is not an oversimplified one, as in the case of petroleum where production is followed by consumption. On the contrary, there is another element in the economy of nondepletable energy: return. The economy is one of production, consumption *and return.* If we look at the world as stripminers or agribusinessmen, we cannot but destroy it. But if we see the world, and use it, with care and a concern for the future, we will see to maintaining the vitality of its life-cycles.

This fine and wise book has much more to say on a great many more topics, all of which are connected to the main theme, culture and agriculture in twentieth-century America. It has much to say about health, marriage, education, the *status quo,* and about margins, those creative places from which come creative changes.

These six disparate books present views of America and its prospects that are markedly different from those one might receive by perusing most contemporary histories of the United States, or, for that matter, of the Western World. They represent the beginnings of a reinterpretation of history from the point of view of human ecology. This is an outlook which puts the integrity of the biological world first, and sees mankind as a part of a larger cultural and biological whole. Because it panders to no political or economic ideology, but puts the long-term survival of our species and our culture first, it can be both passionately partisan and at the same time reach toward true objectivity.

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

The United States Government Meets the Nevada Mule: The Humor of Sam Davis

SALLY SPRINGMEYER ZANJANI

ALL THE WORLD still laughs with Mark Twain, Dan De Quille lives on in *The Big Bonanza,* Joe Goodman's recollections have recently been published in pamphlet form to entertain a new generation of readers, but the humor of Samuel Post Davis, another of Nevada's great nineteenth-century journalists, is little known today. We now remember Davis chiefly for his 1913 *History of Nevada* and his short stories. However, his humorous essays were highly esteemed by his colleagues. The *Sacramento Bee* declared that even when the mines fell into borrasca, Nevadans could still count on two enduring resources—a high quality potato crop and Sam Davis.[1] Myron Angel wrote of him in 1881:

> He is constituted of a strange combination of extremes that permits him to take no middle course in life, the ordinary paths of men being monotonous routes that he travels only when forced into them; an event out of the ordinary, or gigantic exceptions, are his elysian fields to travel in—where the mind is always building strong contrasts of strange forms that makes of him a natural humorist.[2]

A recently discovered "letter" from Davis appearing in the San Francisco *Daily Examiner* on February 10, 1889, provides a rare glimpse of this "natural humorist."

Born in Branford, Connecticut, in 1850, Sam Davis attended Racine College in Wisconsin, and then embarked on an unsettled journalistic career at several newspapers in the Midwest and eight more in California before becoming a reporter for the *Evening Chronicle* in Virginia City. After the death in 1879 of Henry Mighels, editor of the Carson City *Morning Appeal,* Davis began to edit the newspaper; a year later he married Mighels' widow,

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[1] Quoted in the *Tonopah Bonanza,* June 29, 1901; on Davis' legacy, also see "Sam Davis," by Sylvia C. Stoddard in *Nevada Official Bicentennial Book,* ed. by Stanley M. Paher (Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1976), 51.

[2] Myron Angel, ed., *History of Nevada* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1881), 315.

Nellie. The nomadic journalist had apparently found his place. Accepting the "sage-brush obscurity" Artemus Ward had once counseled Mark Twain to flee and persisting through the hard times which followed the decline of the Comstock, Davis continued to edit the *Appeal* for nearly twenty years until he abandoned journalism for politics in 1898.[3] He served as state controller until 1907 and returned to politics after a short hiatus to make a final and unsuccessful campaign for the office in 1910.

Recalling this political phase of Davis' career, Wells Drury observed that Sam spoke even better than he wrote, no mean compliment in an age predating the speech writer, when politicians carefully cultivated the art of humorous oratory.[4] While pinch hitting for the ailing Governor Reinhold Sadler during the 1898 campaign, Davis' renditions of the governor's speeches, with an imitation of Sadler's heavy German accent, used to bring down the house. In 1910 when the Republican progressives were attacking the Southern Pacific, Davis' satiric variations on the theme of buying a railroad mileage ticket must have been equally funny.[5] Unfortunately, the spoken word disappears even more swiftly than newsprint, and those witty declamations by the sad-eyed man with the luxuriant mustaches can never be recreated.

Davis' letter to the *Daily Examiner* does, however, convey a sense of his wry comic style. In the arrival of a government surveying party, Sam Davis had seen one of those unusual events that tickled his sense of humor. Though the piece needs little explanation, some modern readers might miss the inside jokes which probably elicited knowing guffaws in 1889. Western Nevadans of earlier generations knew an obvious coolness—some might even call it a feud—had existed for several years between Herman Springmeyer and Fred Dangberg, the two Carson Valley ranchers who Davis slyly commented "look happy and contented when they meet." They also knew that Davis' close friend Springmeyer, casually dismissed in the essay as a mule dealer who "knows very little of horses," was actually a locally renowned horse breeder with a pasture of some fifty horses, including fine steeds chosen at the trotting races in Carson City and a Shire stallion specially imported from England around Cape Horn. Carson Valley rancher James Haines drove the band of sheep Davis humorously insisted were really "China jacks" over the Sierras from Placerville in 1859, and probably, as Davis hinted, he often related the incidents of that journey, including the

[3] On Ward and Twain, see Edgar M. Branch, ed., *Clemens of the Call* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 9; on Davis' career, also see Angel, *op. cit.*, 314–315, and Stoddard, *loc. cit.*

[4] Wells Drury, "Journalism," in *The History of Nevada*, ed. by Sam P. Davis (Los Angeles: Elms Publishing Company, 1913), Vol. I, 476–478.

[5] Myrtle T. Myles, *Nevada's Governors* (Sparks: Western Printing and Publishing Company, 1972), 205; on Davis in 1910, see the *Nevada State Journal*, September 30, 1910.

snowstorm that delayed him in the mountains for eleven extra days and compelled him to winter the gaunt remnants of his herd in the Carson sink. The reference to "old Farmer Tredway" was a straightforward one, since "Farmer" was the usual appellation for Aaron Treadway, proprietor of the Treadway Park ranch at Carson City and local sage on agricultural matters, but the image of this wise, elderly gentleman offering "many valuable suggestions" on how to cross breed a supremely vicious strain of mules was pure comic invention.[6] In the phrase of Kaulbach, whose artistic heart would have warmed to the sight of these Nevada mules, Davis probably alluded to the late Wilhelm von Kaulbach, a famous German painter fond of depicting grandiose historical spectacles. Any comment on Poncho the mule, leading character of Sam Davis' letter, would be superfluous; Poncho follows, kicking all the way, in the path of an inglorious tradition first established by Mark Twain's Genuine Mexican Plug.

Sir:

For the past few weeks I have been taking a lively interest in the United States Geological Survey which was recently pushed with such vigor in the State.

The first survey, you will doubtless remember, was made, if I recollect aright, by Major Powell, and if I recollect awrong it was probably made by some other surveyor whose name I do not at present recall. The maps made from notes of the survey were quite prettily gotten up in red and blue, and also had a salmon-pink border, which altogether constituted a very pleasing effect.

After Major Powell had triangulated and tripodded the surface of the country the Wheeler survey came along and took some more chickens and field notes.

It is a fact well established up here that when a surveying party has gone through a county certain breeds of chickens become almost extinct.

The Wheeler people, however, got out a map that was a decided improvement on the Powell effort. It was blue, crimson, pink, green, red and intermediate shades of color.

Wherever these maps were exhibited a buzz of admiration greeted them. People realized that the United States Government didn't propose to spare expense when it comes to sloshing color onto maps.

The last surveying party appears to have been here mainly for purposes of business, but it is very clear to my mind that it did not understand mules.

A Government surveyor may be a mathematician of the first water and may be able to calculate an eclipse with the most ordinary appliances and still give no idea of the habits and tricks of a Nevada mule.

Many years ago I stumbled across a man in Virginia City who led me into many errors of judgment regarding the sagebrush mule.

He told me that the mule was a badly maligned animal and the victim of the grossest slanders. He considered the mule the emblem of docility and forbearance, and told me so many stories of the beast in illustration of his gentle demeanor that I soon became saturated with sympathy and affection for the whole tribe of sagebrush mules, and never lost an opportunity of lifting a pen in its defense.

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[6] On Hines, see Angel, *op. cit.*, 383; on Treadway, see the same work, pp. 136, 533, 555.

I soon became known in this section of the earth as the sworn champion, friend and interest promoter of the mule.

All the information I gave to the world on this subject was dealt out to me secondhand by the man I have mentioned, who was no other than "Long Brown," a gambler of some note on the Comstock.

The members of the surveying party above mentioned apparently shared my ideas of the habits of the mule. They were new to the business and said that they had never used the mule in field service, but they had seen newspaper accounts of the docile habits of the Nevada mule and felt sure that it would prove capable of filling a wide sphere of usefulness in the Government employ.

That is now just about my idea. If I wanted to fill a sphere with pieces of disintegrated wagon and fragments of harness, I would employ a Nevada mule to throw in the filling.

The head of the party, a short man by the name of Wilson, whom the boys called Major for short, much to his disgust, sent up the valley for sixteen miles [mules]. Wilson had a light airy way when ordering anything. His camp was at the edge of town, and I often dropped in to call (about lunch time), and it was here I heard Wilson order the mules. He was eating at the time and paused as if he had suddenly recalled something of importance to the U.S. Government.

"I say, Billy, you run down to Myers' right after lunch and get $2 worth of coffee—and, by the way, when you get back take a run up the valley and get sixteen head of good serviceable mules, and, George, please pass the butter up this way."

Billy was a new lad in camp and of course he got the order mixed, having no shirt-cuff to write it on. The result was that he went to the grocery and ordered $16 worth of coffee, and then started up the valley to look for a two-dollar mule.

Mules of this particular strain are not hard to run across in Carson valley, but I can assure your subscribers that they are rather hard to stay across.

The variety of mule I have referred to originated by an inbred cross between Fred Dargburg's [Dangberg's] mustangs and Herman Springmeyer's China jacks.

When Jim Haines came across the Sierra range over twenty years ago he brought some China jacks over from Placerville, under the supposition that they were mountain sheep, and to this day in relating the incidents of the trip he always mentions them as sheep.

Dargburg knows nothing about mules and Springmeyer knows very little of horses, and so the two ranchers, whose land is contiguous, swap the worst stock they have with each other.

When Springmeyer has a particularly hard mule or China jack he goes over to Dargburg and, assuring him that it is a thoroughbred with recordable pedigree, offers it in trade, and Dargburg trots out an old calico bronco or registered Gardnerville plug which he has been carefully nursing for the occasion, and after considerable dickering the trade is made. Each man has become so interested in doing up the other on stock that they have been for years breeding down the hardest strain they can find, purely for trading purposes. Each supposes that he is largely besting the other. For this reason both these ranchers look happy and contented when they meet the other. Springmeyer is confidently expecting to be able to produce a dollar animal for the spring market, and I am disposed to think that he will reach the goal of his ambition by next March.

He is generous enough to acknowledge that he has secured many valuable

suggestions from John Bath and old Farmer Tredway [Treadway] of this city. The Government mules finally secured for the Geological Survey were the result of the series of down and cross breeding that I have described.

This method had been very carefully and intelligently pursued with a result that landed the scrub mule upon the towering pedestal of infamy and unworth, but as a kicker and bucker he left nothing to be desired, and as a bone-breaker and man-eater his record was without a blot. Along with his other sins, rank hypocrisy was the controlling vice, and the meek dissembling look he wore when the Government agent was trying to beat down his price to $1.25, would have filled the artistic heart of Kaulbach with ten degrees of heat.

One day these mules were led into camp, and their willing and docile appearance was very approvingly commented on by the surveyors.

They were hitched to the fence, and each animal walked up to his post and allowed itself to be tied there, as if it was some old landmark of its childhood days.

But in the night it was different. The surveyors slept in four tents, and about 2 o'clock in the morning the mules took a stroll over the camp. They lacked practice in unhitching themselves, so they simply yanked the posts up and took the fence along with them. Sixteen mules skipping along over a camp in the night with 200 yards of fence make stirring times for the camp.

When the Government surveyors awoke they found themselves all tied up with their tents and equipments, and being carried over the ground by the mules and the fence, the upper portion of it being composed of barbed wire.

The animals took them up and down over the ground several times before they wound them all up tight in a grove of cottonwood trees. It would make your heart bleed to see those Government people extricate themselves from that mass of mules and belabor them with pieces of fence board. One man grabbed the leg of a theodolite and hammered a mule blind before he was sufficiently cooled down to go off and get a lantern and hunt his pantaloons, which were 400 yards away in the northwest corner of the field, which, by the way, was about the most thoroughly harrowed piece of land you ever saw.

I have never been an advocate of nocturnal profanity. I believe in swearing if the occasion calls for it in the day time open and above board, but if ever there was a positive call for rank language at 2 o'clock in the morning this was, in my opinion, one of the times when a moderate use of damnatory and other expletives was not only justifiable but urgent.

This is only an individual opinion, however, but if any clergyman in good standing—and who is not at present being investigated by his flock for immoral conduct—were to take issue with me on the subject, I would call for a hall and a public debate before I would acknowledge myself mistaken. After the mules were skinned and buried the fact was duly reported at the Headquarters of the Government Survey at Washington, and another batch of the same kind of mules ordered.

No doubt someone will innocently ask why some other kind of mule was not ordered. Simply because there happens to be only one kind of mule in Nevada, and this is the kind whose history I have recorded. These mules were taken down to Dayton, where the surveyors began their hunt for water storage reservoirs.

They began the wrong way, however.

They tied the mules up in the camp and began scouring the face of nature

and Lyon county for water sites. Had they turned the mules loose and followed them, they would have discovered any amount of storage reservoirs.

There was a young lad named Kelly in the party, who had charge of the sixteen mules. The head of the string was an old standby, Poncho by name, who, by reason of his age and experience, was a leader among his kind.

This old master taught deviltry to the balance of the animals, and when he knocked an idea into the head of a younger mule it was there to stay.

Poncho went to water about 6 o'clock every morning and always took young Kelly along with him.

I inclose a rough draft of Poncho leading Kelly to water.

These morning strolls he had with Kelly soon wore a path from Kelly's tent to the spring, and then Wilson made a requisition on the department for one dozen pairs of leather plated pants.

After quenching his thirst the mule would invariably attempt to eat Kelly, but never succeeded, the activity and disinclination of the youth proving a sufficient bar to such proceedings when supplemented by a club about six feet long.

It was a stirring sight to see Poncho giving instructions to his class. Diagram no. 2 represents Poncho giving his pupils a light exercise in the primary steps of education. Poncho was the one standing at the end watching the class go through the first motions and seeing that they do it right. The halter that the old hellion wore had been on his head for twelve years, no one daring to take it off, and one day when he was sick they tied him fast to a tree and administered a sedative dose by playing it into his mouth with a syringe.

He brayed defiance at the operation, and every time he opened his mouth he took his medicine.

It required about a month's studious application to business and the habits of the animals to become sufficiently acquainted with them to be able to utilize them in the service of the Government.

Then the expedition moved down to Mason valley, a rumor having reached the camp that reservoir sites could be found in that vicinity in paying quantities.

On the way, however, a mishap occurred to one of the young mules.

He ran behind in his studies and was sent to the foot of his class by Poncho, and one morning when he refused to kick the end of a wagon in at Poncho's snort of command the old master mule corrected the insubordination by deliberately walking over and kicking out his brains.

Of course discipline had to be enforced.

At Dayton the mule purchased to replace the departed one introduced several new kinks in mule kicking which had originated in Mason valley. The old Carson valley professor became jealous of the new mule and kicked his brains out also.

He was careful not to put his rival out of the way, however, until he had got the benefit of his knowledge and then walked around the enemy as if the new methods of pulling up stumps and breaking wagons were all original with him. About the time that the surveyor[s] had got on the track of another reservoir site somewhere in the Pine Nut or Como range the mules began laying up the surveyors by kicking them in the stomach and one by one the members of the expedition were transported to Carson and laid up in the County Hospital. Then the snow began to interfere with the field work and the Government ordered them to report at Washington and furnish the department with a certified schedule of the

losses of the season sustained by the United States Geological Survey, and so the labors of 1888 were brought to a close. The old rascal Poncho has learned to distinguish at a glance anything that has the Government initials on it. I can not refrain, in closing, to mention an incident illustrating the rare intelligence of the animal. He was left with an old negro who had been with him from childhood. The negro was to board him for $8 a month until the United States Geological Survey returned. One day the negro, who had a spite against old Nesbeth, the Jacks Valley rancher, went in the night and painted the letters "U.S.G.S." in characters about three feet long on Nesbeth's barn. He then let loose the mule, and, although the night was a reasonably dark one, the mule recognized the barn as Government property and kicked it all to pieces in half an hour.

I could relate several other anecdotes of this gifted hybrid, but they would seem so out of the common order of things to people not accustomed to investigate the animal as he exists in this section that they might call for a certified copy of the facts, which could only be furnished by me at considerable expense.

A man who makes an occasional affidavit up here asks proportionately more for his services than a perjurer with steady employment managing the circulation department of a Chicago daily.

In conversation with one of the Surveyors I learned that the mule had destroyed over two million dollars' worth of Government property in the last ten years in various parts of the Union, and had kicked the map of the Union almost out of shape. Horses could be used to do all the work required of the mule without damage to the property of the United States, but mules had been ordered, and it was an old custom to have them. He did not think that a change could be made for the Pacific Coast without [Senators] Jones and Stewart brought it about by special Act of Congress.

SAM DAVIS

Book Reviews

Empire: The Life, Legend, and Madness of Howard Hughes. By Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979)

DESPITE THE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE of the late Howard Robard Hughes, Jr., both before and since his death in 1976, the man and the myth remain virtually indistinguishable. Only one unequivocal statement can safely be made about him: he was truly a man of contradictions, an American anomoly, if you will, being simultaneously idolized and pitied, respected and loathed, feared and abused. It is this characteristic of Hughes which forms the central theme of a new biography, *Empire: The Life, Legend, and Madness of Howard Hughes,* by Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele.

Empire attempts to explain Hughes in terms of his family background, depicting him as the only child of an overprotective mother and an overpowering father. Both parents died by the time Hughes was twenty, leaving him alone "without the slightest notion of what to do in life." Relying on his father's advice never to take partners, he assumed control of the family tool company and began to expand his business ventures until they eventually included aircraft manufacturing, movie making, casino gambling, and gold mining, to mention but a few. Some of these ventures were successful, others dismal failures, but they all served to increase the political and economic influence of their owner.

Over the next fifty years, as Hughes' material possessions multiplied, his mental faculties gradually deteriorated, with his first breakdown occuring in the summer of 1944. His psychological problems were intensified by the abuse of drugs which Hughes had begun to take to relieve the pain caused by near fatal airplane crashes. Instead of being helped and treated for his mental illness, Hughes was always humored and indulged as his assistants saw the opportunity to usurp his wealth and power to their own advantage. When Hughes, one of this country's richest men, died on April 5, 1976, it was from neglect, and his long-haired, unshaven corpse bore little resemblance to the Howard Hughes of legend.

Two previous reviews of *Empire* which take opposing positions further reflect the contradictory nature of Howard Hughes. One by Ted Morgan (*New York Times,* May 6, 1979) sees Hughes as an American myth, an Icarus, who was a true individualist and as such personified many of our basic traditions: he never had partners; he fought the government and was

cheered; he was a pioneer in two very "American" industries, aviation and motion pictures. The other review by Glen Thurow (*Perspective: Monthly Review of New Books*, September, 1979) states that Hughes' "sole claim to our attention is that he had a lot of money." He had no virtues, little talent, negligible political influence, and an incapacity for love or friendship. It is interesting to note that these two reviewers also take opposing positions on the quality of the book itself. Morgan feels that *Empire* is the "best of all the Hughes books," being the first fully documented account to emerge from the mass of confidential papers which became public in the litigation over Hughes' will. Thurow, on the other hand, criticizes the authors of *Empire* for not having "found out much about Hughes not already known to casual newspaper readers." He goes on to write that "the only interesting thing about this book is that a major American publisher should consider it to be its job to publish a very long book" about a man like Hughes.

The controversy surrounding Hughes, which is reflected in these contradictory assessments of *Empire*, certainly extends to his activities in Nevada (see chapters 11 through 13 and 16 through 18). Hughes' first dealings in Nevada occurred in the summer of 1950. In an attempt to avoid paying California income tax on his company's earnings, Hughes planned to build the research laboratory of Hughes Aircraft in the desert outside of Las Vegas rather than expand the existing facilities in Culver City. Furthermore, as a result of secret negotiations and powerful Washington lobbying, Hughes was on the verge of concluding an extremely lucrative land deal with the U.S. Government. As the site for his new aircraft lab, Hughes had selected a 25,000 acre tract just west of Las Vegas, which, like most of the land in Nevada, was owned by the federal government. But Hughes came up with a scheme, permissible under the Taylor Grazing Act, to exchange 73,000 acres he owned in remote northern Nevada for the much more valuable acreage outside Las Vegas. After reviewing the proposed exchange, a field examiner for the Interior Department vigorously opposed the action, but Hughes had little difficulty overcoming the low level opposition. The research lab was never built, but Hughes acquired the property nonetheless.

Hughes lived in Las Vegas for a year in 1953 and later returned to Nevada in 1957 to marry Jean Peters in a secret ceremony in Tonopah. It was not until November of 1966, however, that Hughes actually moved his operations to Nevada and began investing in the gaming industry.

He arrived in Las Vegas the day after Thanksgiving in 1966, and occupied the top two floors of the Desert Inn Hotel. Within four months, rather than move, Hughes had acquired control of that hotel and casino, the first step in building his new empire. During the next four years Hughes' investments in Nevada were earthshaking: he bought the Krupp Ranch, the Sands

Hotel and Casino, the Castaways Hotel and Casino, the Frontier Hotel and Casino, the Silver Slipper Casino, and the Landmark Hotel and Casino; he also purchased Alamo Airlines and Air West; he acquired several hundred residential lots in the Desert Inn Country Club estates; and finally, he spent $20 million for gold and silver mining claims, many of which never paid any return on investment. During this short time Hughes also fought the nearby underground testing of nuclear devices, contributed to the University of Nevada Medical School, circumvented the demands of the Nevada Gaming Commission, and fended off several federal antitrust suits. Then, on November 17, 1970, Hughes signed a proxy giving control of his Nevada empire to three of his top assistants, who reorganized the Hughes' holdings in the state into the Summa Corporation. Eight days later Hughes left Las Vegas for the Bahamas, never to return.

The book *Empire* provides excellently documented coverage of Hughes' activities and business transactions during his four years in Nevada. However, while the authors inundate the reader with detail, they fail to answer the more important questions of "why?" and "with what consequences?" Perhaps another study is needed, now that ten years have passed, which looks not at what Hughes did but rather at what impact his actions had on the political, social, and economic environment of the state, especially Las Vegas. Many significant issues remain to be addressed and analyzed.

Dina Titus
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Progressive Cities: The Commission Government Movement in America, 1901–1920. By Bradley Rice. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977. xix + 160 pp. $10.95)

In *Progressive Cities* Bradley Rice charts the rise, spread and decline of the Commission form of government and examines the development and diffusion of an idea: that cities, like businesses, can best be governed through efficient, professional, businesslike administration.

Devoting the book's first half to case studies—the Galveston Plan, the Texas Idea and the Des Moines Plan—Rice presents a detailed study of the origins and initial implementation of the Commission system. Moreover, he delineates clearly the social and economic forces at work, as well as the individuals and organizations involved with the movement, both proponents and opponents.

In the second half, Rice examines the Commission idea's diffusion (ap-

plying a model of innovative diffusion consisting of four stages: prechoice, innovation, emulation and institutionalization), subsequent modifications, weaknesses and failures and, ultimately, its transitory role.

Throughout the study Rice tests the thesis, first posited by Samuel P. Hays and James Weinstein, that the Commission government movement was the nearly exclusive concern of self-interested business elites who sought to insure and expand their political power and maintain their economic hegemony. Overall, Rice, drawing heavily from primary sources, offers a fresh interpretation of an important aspect of urban reform during the Progressive era.

Commission government emerged in 1901 following a ruinous hurricane in Galveston, Texas. Charter reform, long on that city's agenda, acquired a special urgency. The port city's rebuilding demanded quick and stable governmental action. Understandably, Galveston's business elites seized the lead in securing the city's—and their own—future. The dominant members of the Commission movement were also members of the Galveston Deep Water Committee, a group of commercial leaders which had only recently lobbied successfully for federal funding of a new deep-water port.

The fruition of the Galveston Commission plan, however, owed much to other elements, particularly the support given it by labor. Although some anti-Commission spokesmen charged that the plan would usher in a rich man's government, they failed to arouse the kind of class antagonism that had characterized Galveston politics during the 1890s. Rice demonstrates persuasively the widespread support for the Galveston plan.

Following the plan's implementation, Galveston's Commission government became a source of interest and inspiration to groups and individuals concerned with municipal reform. The National Municipal League endorsed the plan enthusiastically, as did the League of American Municipalities and many other similar organizations. Their conventions and publications insured the idea's spread and adoption in other cities. Indeed, reform organizations, along with impartial professionals and academics, played a major role in the Commission government movement.

The Galveston experience, however, differed from that of other cities in regard to the unanimity of support voiced by the populace. Rice's study of other cities fails to demonstrate the same kind of widespread acceptance, although it does show the unreality of a monolithic interpretation of the movement's nature. Although businessmen led the movement throughout the country, they were not unanimous in their support or alone in proselytizing the plan's supposed virtues.

The most important difference between the Galveston experience and that found elsewhere is the role played by labor. The strong labor support

found in Galveston was not to be repeated. In Houston, labor wards voted heavily against a Commission plan. According to Rice, "The general tendency of Labor opposition to or suspicion of the Business-supported changes of government in Texas was often repeated as the commission idea diffused across America." The sense of emergency produced by Galveston's destructive hurricane might have been an essential element not present elsewhere.

Initial success under the new form of government, along with a "litany of praise" from reform groups, led to the plan's adoption in some five hundred cities in all but a few states. The peak years were 1908 through 1911. Las Vegas, Nevada's only city to adopt the plan, did so in 1911. The Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, the leading force behind Commission government, submitted a plan along the lines of the Des Moines Plan. Active among the plan's proponents was J. F. Shaughnessy, the state's Railroad Commissioner. Commission government came to Las Vegas along with incorporation, with both resulting from a vote of the legislature.

The Commission plan became identified as a "progressive" measure, benefiting immensely from that association. The addition to the plan of direct democracy devices strengthened that association; indeed, such devices were instrumental in securing support for the plan from influential persons such as William Allen White, Robert La Follette and Brand Whitlock. However, initiative, referendum, recall and other devices failed to sway the opposition, especially its working class element.

Despite the vocal praise and widespread enthusiasm, Commission government was not to be the wave of the future, eventually giving way to the council-manager plan. Opposition to Commission government remained active and gathered reinforcement as the new form underwent the test of time. When the much-heralded efficiency did not materialize, even the plan's most fervent exponents began having second thoughts. Moreover, the demand for efficiency, having become the end rather than the means of the new governmental form, proved to be a source of weakness. The Commission plan, a product of structural reform, was often unable to meet the human needs of the cities.

The arguments expressed in *Progressive Cities* are sound and are presented clearly and convincingly. The writing of the introduction, however, seems hurried. Moreover, Rice's introductory statement that Galveston "stumbled" onto the Commission idea is contrary to his own evidence. The chapter treating the plan's transitory role could be strengthened. These few weaknesses do not seriously detract from what is a commendable piece of scholarship.

NICHOLAS BOGGIONI
Claremont Graduate School

Hamlin Garland's Observations on the American Indian, 1895–1905. Compiled and edited by Lonnie E. Underhill and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976. x + 214 pp., footnotes, maps, illus., biblio., index; $9.95, cloth; $4.95, paper)

THE WRITINGS OF HAMLIN GARLAND are generally associated with stark, realistic stories of agrarian life on the Middle Border. There exists, however, another major subject to which Garland addressed himself: Native Americans. Thirteen of his essays on Indians, several of which have never before been published, are now available in this volume. The editors, Lonnie E. Underhill and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., who as a team have written numerous articles on Native Americans, must be commended for their excellent job of supplying valuable editorial comments on Garland's essays, which they obtained from his papers housed at the University of Southern California.

The essays are derived from field notes Garland compiled between 1895 and 1905. During these years he visited several Indian reservations, including ones in the Southwest and in Indian Territory. In addition to writing these essays, Garland wrote a novel called *The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop,* published in 1902, from these notes. The book has received high acclaim from critics.

Underhill and Littlefield begin their book with an introductory survey of Garland's life and writings. They then present helpful introductions, which contain information on the tribe and conditions as they were when Garland visited them, to each of the thirteen essays. The Indian subjects include the Southern Utes, the Pueblo Indians at Isleta, the Hopis, the Zunis, the Jicarilla Apaches, the Cheyennes, the Sioux, and the Creeks.

Two of the most interesting essays are entitled "The Red Man's Present Needs" and "The Red Man as Material." Both have been previously published, the former in the *North American Review*, April 1902, and the latter in *Booklover's Magazine,* August 1903. Garland showed himself to be not only sympathetic to the Indians' needs, but also a sincere reformer, recommending the abolishment of the allotment system and the preservation of native art and religion. Thirty years after Garland advocated such reforms, the Indian New Deal did indeed establish programs supporting both of these recommendations. Garland also supported the reservation system because reservations served as havens which provided Indians with a land base, and he viewed assimilation of Indian culture with the dominant society as inevitable. Garland's use of such phrases as "the red people are like children" (p. 172) could be misconstrued, but the editors explain that such usage was not meant to be demeaning.

This volume has few shortcomings. The editors do overuse the term "Anglo society." A more accurate term is, of course, "dominant society." Garland emerges from these pages as a good source for others to employ when studying the tribes he visited. He understood the Native American more than many of his contemporaries who also wrote on the subject. *Hamlin Garland's Observations on the American Indian* contains several helpful illustrations and is a truly remarkable book, providing hours of enjoyable reading.

RAYMOND WILSON
Fort Hays State University

Blacks in Gold Rush California. By Randolph M. Lapp. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977. xiv + 321 pp., illustrations, $15.00)

IT HAS NOT BEEN FASHIONABLE among historians to search out the locations where American blacks fared best, or enjoyed the brightest future, in pre-Civil War America. Since blacks suffered discrimination everywhere, albeit in different measure, it smacks of racist apologies to some ideologues to inquire where genuine black opportunities lay. California blacks in the 1850s would not have been bothered much by such ideological burdens, for they recognized that not only did unique opportunities for material progress lay within their grasp, but also that their environment demanded of them a positive frame of reference, a focus on the possibilities of the future as well as on the disabilities of the present.

As Randolph Lapp depicts pre-Civil War California, unusual blacks gravitated to an unusual opportunity. Both slaves and freeborn comprised the black population of the fifties, and although migrants came from every state, the British West Indies, Mexico, and Chile, Massachusetts-bred individuals, particularly those hailing from New Bedford, provided a disproportionate share of community leadership and material success. New England blacks in the two decades before the Civil War gained the greatest amount of civil rights of any area in the North, including voting rights, desegregated schools, and prohibitions against Jim Crow transportation. These New Englanders were accustomed to fighting for their hard-won civil rights, both in court and from the public platform. Fortunately for California's black community, many persons experienced in local leadership, as well as others associated with the black press and the abolitionist movement, quickly assumed leadership in California.

One consequence of this ex-New England leadership was a focus on California civil rights and a de-emphasis of the overall slavery issue. The

plight of a modest number of enslaved brethren in California certainly moved blacks to encourage slaves to run away, hide fugitives, and prevent the rendition of others to the South. But California blacks did not duplicate the gamut of antislavery organizations found in the East, nor did persons publicly trumpet themselves as abolitionists. Slavery in the South was simply too far removed, and with no underground railroad activity to keep the issue prominent, even John Brown's raid generated only a distant echo. Instead, the focus was on civil liberties in California, particularly the right to testify in courts of law against whites and the right to enjoy publicly supported schools. The goal of black leadership was a stable, educated, structured black community integrated into the larger population. With no other black community of significant size closer than fifteen hundred miles, the foremost priority was to seize the same opportunities available to whites in Gold Rush California and build a respectable, economically prosperous, and socially responsible population. That they succeeded in large measure, within the strictures of Dred Scott-era civil disabilities, is credit to their endurance and endeavor. When statewide black conventions pressed the testimony issue and sought to gather petitions, hundreds of whites, many from the mercantile and upper social reaches of their society, affixed their signatures in support of the blacks' plea. This acceptance was only earned through diligence, restraint, economy, yet also an unwillingness to adopt a supine posture before the white majority. Sambo did not migrate to California.

The organization of this volume clearly leads the reader to the major themes of the black California experience in the fifties. A useful introductory chapter depicts the state before 1849, while the section on the Gold Rush itself is expanded considerably beyond state boundaries; changing race relations and new commercial possibilities in Panama and Nicaragua are also depicted. Many blacks headed for the mines, but many wisely chose to pursue urban occupations in that labor-short age, and their business successes in San Francisco and Sacramento, with more modest achievements in Stockton and Marysville, again show the influence of black New England. The entrepreneurial gains of San Francisco blacks are especially noteworthy. Southern California, on the other hand, received only a small trickle of black migrants in this decade.

Pursuit of gold, or other avenues to prosperity, did not totally obscure the need for political activity, and California blacks were hardly indifferent to their brothers still in slavery, especially those bondsmen in the mines. Clearly it was both legal and extra-legal actions of free blacks that spelled the doom of slavery in this officially free state, for by encouraging escapes and sponsoring legal challenges they simply made it too great a financial risk to keep a slave in California by 1860. The Archy Lee case was, practically speaking, the final nail in slavery's coffin in California.

California blacks were unsuccessful in gaining equal access to tax dollars for even segregated schools. The emphasis on education, as Lapp points out, was encouraged by the black churches, and, as in many other black communities north and south, these became the most important community institutions in the ante-bellum period. The author also devotes two chapters to the most concerted political activity of California blacks, the three statewide conventions, which focused their energies especially on the campaign to repeal the anti-testimony laws. Success here would not come until the Civil War years.

The last three years of the decade were ones of growing uncertainties for California blacks. Slavery itself had largely disappeared, but declining placer mining created unemployment and labor friction between blacks, whites, and Chinese. The Dred Scott decision cast as great a pall over the state's blacks as it did those seeking full citizenship in the East. Incidents of naked racism seemed to be on the increase, so it is scarcely surprising that when a new gold strike in the Fraser River area of British Columbia was announced, many California blacks contemplated a new migration. Ultimately several hundred went, some to return during the Civil War, others to plant the seeds of a long-lasting black community in Victoria. Lapp skillfully weaves the story of these blacks who so readily accepted the blessings of monarchical English rule and, indeed, found fewer discriminations in western Canada than in California.

Blacks in Gold Rush California is an essential addition to the libraries of both Afro-Americanists and western historians, and invites comparison with Elmer Rusco's *"Good Time Coming?": Black Nevadans in the Nineteenth Century* (1975). Both volumes focus, of necessity, on the black middle class, for only this group left identifiable records. Neither work sheds much light on relationships between the black leadership class and the masses on whose behalf they presumed to speak. We would like to know, in the case of California, whether the testimony issue and public educations were priorities of the black masses as well as the higher classes, or whether the former would have preferred more political emphasis on, say, land preemption and homestead rights. But one suspects that the available evidence provides no conclusive data on these and related questions. Neither book is truly a work of social history, because sufficient primary sources needed for such history do not, apparently, exist. But both volumes are nonetheless welcome, and will likely remain the standard works on those states and eras for years to come.

THEODORE KORNWEIBEL, JR.
San Diego State University

NHS ARCHIVAL ACQUISITIONS

Fulstone Family Papers

A RECENT PURCHASE from Hammon's Archives & Artifacts of Sacramento has resulted in the acquisition of another fine collection for the Society's holdings.

Natives of Bath, England, the Fulstone Family emigrated to the United States in 1853. Five years later, they travelled from Salt Lake City to Eagle Valley and became early residents of Carson City. In 1873, the family permanently settled in Jacks Valley.

The collection reflects seventy-five years of ranching activity in Douglas County, and includes records of the Fulstone's dairy farm from 1910 to 1940. A large number of family photographs and shots of the ranch were also acquired.

Adelberg & Raymond Collection

DURING A RECENT REORGANIZATION of the Society's manuscript collection, a major discovery occurred. Over thirty-five mining reports had been catalogued under the names of the properties evaluated, but no real connection had been made between all the reports and the mining, engineering, and consulting firm of Adelberg & Raymond. By the latter 1860s, Adelberg & Raymond ranked among the world's foremost experts on mining and metallurgy. After further investigation, it was found that the NHS purchased this extremely valuable collection in 1923 from Cadmus Book Co. of New Jersey. The price: "$335 for the lot."

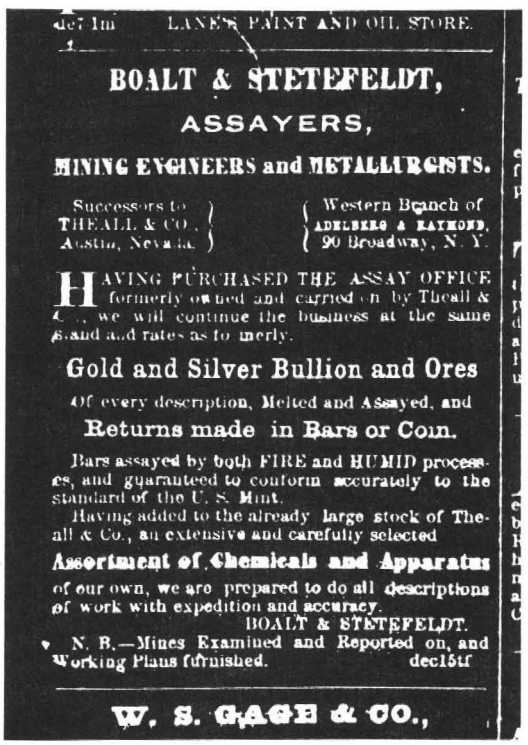
Rossitor W. Raymond and Dr. Justus Adelberg established their business in New York City in 1864, and in November 1865, along with John H. Boalt and Carl A. Stetefeldt, they opened a western branch of the operation in Austin. Many of the mining reports contain detailed information regarding claims, ledges, and mines in Lander County's Reese River Mining District. Other mining districts throughout central Nevada and the Comstock area also are represented in the collection. These early professional appraisals of mining properties and districts, especially those for central Nevada, will be invaluable in any future research on the state's formative years. While Austin's role in the history of Nevada's mining industry has never been given an adequate treatment, the foundation for such a project would certainly begin with the Adelberg & Raymond Collection.

Rossitor Worthington Raymond (1840–1918) was appointed United States Commissioner of Mining Statistics in 1868. During his eight-year tenure in office, Raymond produced what would be recognized as the most authoritative studies on mineral deposits in the American West. He helped establish the American Institute for Mining Engineers in 1871 and served as the organization's president after its founding. Raymond also worked as editor of the prestigious *Engineering & Mining Journal* for many years.

Carl August Stetefeldt (1838–1896) left a lasting legacy in the form of the Stetefeldt furnace, a major technological advancement in the processing of sulphide ores containing gold and silver. This invention was instrumental in opening the Eureka mines to full-scale development in the 1870s. At Stetefeldt's death, Rossitor Raymond eulogized that "the process won its inventor a high place in the history of metallurgy."

John Henry Boalt (1837–19?), a partner in the Stetefeldt Furnace Company, worked closely with his associate in perfecting the revolutionary reduction process. Boalt was also an attorney in Austin, and later served as Lander County District Judge.

Unfortunately, little is known about the life of Dr. Justus Adelberg.



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NHS NEWS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Institute of Museum Services Grant

THIS CULTURAL PROGRAM within the U.S. Office of Education has made an outright award of $25,000 to the Society. The funds are for general operating purposes and will be spent to support the various newspaper indexing projects, to equip the new storage facility and to institute a private fund-raising drive.

Photograph Preservation Project

THE 1979 Legislature authorized slightly over $50,000 in support of a program to protect the Society's photograph collection. Many of the old and historic prints and negatives were deteriorating through use and age. Researchers will gradually find that the present system of access to the photos has changed. The collection is being filmed and the original photos withdrawn from use and replaced with microfiche cards. Negatives for original prints are being made, with the collection indexed as well. Much of the indexing and organizational work with the photos is being done by Frank O'Brien and other RSVP volunteers. An estimated two years will be required to work through the complete collection. However, at the end of the process, we hope to have a published guide to the photo collection similar to the existing finding aids to our manuscript materials.

Frank Wright Becomes Curator of Education

R. FRANKLIN WRIGHT has replaced Angela Brooker as our educational specialist in the Las Vegas office. Mr. Wright will continue the series of teaching units for Nevada history classes in the public schools and assist teachers in improving the quality of instruction in this important area.

A Political Atlas for Nevada

VOLUNTEER RESEARCHER Waller Reed has undertaken a project to index all candidates and officeholders for Nevada counties since 1861. Mr. Reed is taking each county in turn and tracing official ballots to identify all candidates for office. Names and terms of office are placed on index cards, then

arranged so that researchers can locate lists of officeholders for each county office, or by looking for individual names find what offices were held or sought by the person. At this time, Lincoln, White Pine, Nye, Esmeralda and Mineral counties have been indexed. At the conclusion of this project, the results will be summarized in a publication.

Cumulative Index

Volume XXII

(Number 1, pp. 1–80; Number 2, pp. 81–160; Number 3, pp. 161–240; Number 4, pp. 241–296)

NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FOUNDED IN 1904, the Nevada Historical Society seeks to advance the study of the heritage of Nevada. The Society publishes scholarly studies, indexes, guidebooks, bibliographies, and the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*; it collects manuscripts, rare books, artifacts, and historical photographs and maps, and makes its collections available for research; it maintains a museum at its Reno facility; and it is engaged in the development and publication of educational materials for use in the public schools.