

# NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY



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# NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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"A New Mine"



"A Friend Indeed"

From the original 1872 edition of *Roughing It*.



# Mark Twain and the Nevada Notary Stampede

GUY LOUIS ROCHA AND ROGER SMITH

*I would have been more or less than human  
if I had not gone mad like the rest.*

— *Roughing It*, 1872

SOON AFTER NEVADA TERRITORY was created in March 1861, it became a hotbed of mediocrity. Carpetbaggers, patronage stumpers, the down-and-out, fortune seekers, and East Coast political also-rans rushed into the rich mining region—hoping for position and easy wealth, but also willing to scramble for simple security. Government in the territory was a kind of earnest madness, and nearly everyone who had not struck it rich mining tried to strike it rich politicking.

In his early days in Carson City, Samuel Clemens reveled in the frenetic pursuit of riches that enlivened Nevada Territory. He prospected; he mined; he worked in a mill. He thoroughly recorded his disappointments with mining in *Roughing It*, but he never gave up entirely on finding his bonanza. He already had suffered a disappointment when his position as unofficial secretary to his brother Orion, Secretary of the Territory, turned out to be worthless. So when in early 1864 an opportunity befell him to reverse both disappointments and cash in on the mining industry as a public official, he appears to have pursued that opportunity with all the political influence he could muster. The intrigues of frontier politics stirred his contempt and moved him to satirize the shenanigans of office seekers; nevertheless, he became an office seeker himself and succeeded. He received the exalted position of notary public—the only genuine public office he was ever appointed to in Nevada Territory or anywhere else. And his involvement in the Nevada notary stampede of 1864 epitomizes the irony of territorial politics.

Plans were afoot for Nevada to become a state in early 1864, and in preparation one of Territorial Governor James W. Nye's most important

duties was to ensure a government loyal to the Union and efficient in its gathering of revenues. President Lincoln needed Nevada silver and gold to help finance federal campaigns in the Civil War, but even more he needed electoral support for the elections of November 1864. One group of public officials who could not be trusted at the time to be either loyal or efficient was that of notary public. The positions had been dispensed freely in early territorial days, and many residents had eagerly sought them. All mining documents had to be recorded with a notary, and fees could be very lucrative in booming districts. Upon the notaries depended the smooth legal workings of the mining industry. Governor Nye feared that notaries who were copperheads or secessionists—and rumors circulated that some were—could obstruct collection of revenues. Also, records and documents he was receiving showed that many notaries, through ignorance or greed, were not performing their duties properly.

On January 15, 1864, Storey County Representative Thomas Barclay, himself a notary, introduced House Bill No. 6 into the territorial legislature; it was designed to wipe clean the notary slate and start fresh. In its final version, the bill repealed an earlier law concerning notaries public and empowered Governor Nye to appoint seventy-two new notaries for the territory's ten counties and six notaries for each additional county created by the legislature.

Sam Clemens knew the bill well. He was reporting on House of Representative proceedings for Virginia City's *Territorial Enterprise* and watched the bill's official progress. But he was also a close friend of the governor—and many legislators—and he knew the bill's importance all the better. His dispatches to the *Enterprise* from Carson City show clearly that he approved of the measure:

January 27 — The House resolved itself into Committee of the Whole . . . and occupied the remainder of the forenoon session in consideration of the Act providing for the appointment of Notary Publics and defining their duties.

Here he inserts his opinion—typically hyperbolic—signing as Mark Twain:

This is a most important bill, and if passed will secure clearer and more comprehensible records hereafter. It will leave Storey County twelve Notaries in place of the fifteen hundred we have at present, and these twelve will have to be men of solid reputation.

He then summarizes the debate, which was slightly sensational, emphasizing past misdeeds of notaries. Clemens focuses on the arguments of Representative William H. Claggett of Humboldt County:

Mr. Claggett said that there was scarcely a valid deed on the Humboldt records, because the certificates attached to them by ignorant Notaries were worthless, and he supposed property worth millions had already been jeopardized in the Territory by this kind of officer . . . Besides, Mr. Claggett said, the passage of this Act would oust from office some twenty-five rabid Secessionists in Humboldt alone.

And Clemens reports the instances of incompetence he has discovered in documents sent to his brother Orion, Secretary of the Territory:

If you could just see the official bonds drawn up and sent to the office of Secretary of the Territory by some of these mentally deaf, dumb and blind Notaries, you would wonder as I do what they have been and gone and done, that Heaven should be down on them so. They never use revenue stamps—they don't subscribe the oath, they—well, they don't do anything that could lay them liable to an accusation of knowing it all, or even part of it.

Clemens concludes his report by appending a copy of the bill and suggesting that the *Enterprise* print it.

The bill passed on February 9, and it was to go into effect on March 1. In the meantime, Governor Nye accepted applications and petitions for the seventy-eight new posts. (A bill creating Nye County was approved on February 16, thus allowing six more positions.) Many notaries stood to lose their offices under the new bill, since fewer positions would be available. So even before the bill passed the legislature, aspirants had begun to solicit appointments and enlist political support through influential people. The petitions trickled in at first; then came a blizzard. Dozens of letters of solicitation, telegrams, and petitions arrived daily until more than 1,000 (by conservative modern estimate) awaited Governor Nye's decision. That means almost one in every twenty men in the territory applied. Men from mining districts were in the majority, but nearly every area and town, and nearly every profession and social class were represented by at least one petitioner.

The applications became a joke at first and then a worry in the capital. And Clemens decided to have some fun. On February 6, three days before the bill was approved, he sent a dispatch to the *Enterprise* in which he loosed his full powers of satire: "A strange, strange thing occurred here yesterday," Mark Twain writes, "to wit: A MAN APPLIED FOR A NOTARY COMMISSION."

The petition the man had with him, Twain claims, was so large it had to be brought on two stages. He pretends to marvel at its size. Then the narrative jumps ahead in time, and the reader finds that Twain has done some investigating: "Since writing the above, strange events have happened." He has discovered 1,742 applications on file at the governor's office with "as much as eleven cords of petitions."

He also finds himself importuned by every passing Nevadan, all of whom have petitions in hand. Strangers greet him familiarly, offer to stand him a drink, and, the drink gobbled down, show him a petition and ask him to use his influence with Governor Nye to secure them notaryships. Twain agrees each time in order to rid himself of the pests. After one leaves, however, he promises to himself "to damn his official aspirations with a mild dose of my influence."

Soon he discovers that literally everybody is applying. Not just miners from distant districts and ragtag opportunists, but the territory's high and mighty also hail him: Supreme Court Chief Justice George Turner and Associate Justice John W. North, William Stewart (later U.S. Senator from Nevada), General Thomas H. Williams—even Wells Fargo. He watches a "long pack train laden with their several petitions," some acres large and many with all the names signed in the petitioner's own handwriting.

At last Twain happens upon a man, recently arrived in Carson City, who has not caught the notary bug. Twain offers to buy him a drink, and the two end up consuming all the liquor in the nearest saloon. From a drunken stupor the man suddenly revives:

"I feel it—O Heavens, I feel it in my veins!" "Feel what?" says I, alarmed. Says he, "I feel—O me sainted mother!—I feel—feel a hankering to be a Notary Public." And he tore down several yards of wall-paper and fell to writing a petition on it.

In an instant, Twain too succumbs to the disease and scrawls out a petition with a copy of the Territorial Directory attached in lieu of signatures.

And there the narrative ends. Reporter Twain concludes ironically, "Ah, this legislature has much to answer in cutting down the number of Notaries Public in this Territory, with their infernal law."

The sketch was a burlesque, but one with sufficient cause. His 1,742 "applications," an attempt at exaggeration, turned out not to be so far from the truth. Furthermore, a contemporary observer confirms that the sort of influence-peddling Twain lampoons was occurring. On February 7, a man named Morgan wrote from Virginia City to Governor Nye, who had sent him there to investigate. Morgan had found that "a lot of sharpers at Carson try to make applicants believe that they are men of influence and for a 'certain consideration' can secure their appointment." The "certain consideration" turns out to be a fee, ranging from \$50 to \$500. But money was not the only stimulus offered. Morgan reports that one man spent over \$100 on champagne to entertain prospective backers. Worse, legislators themselves were willing to sell promises of appointment. Morgan quotes the Honorable Henry Edger-

ton, an influential Storey County attorney, as claiming he could, "if it would be left to the members of the legislature," get appointments for \$50 apiece.

Many applicants may have been bilked. Only the governor could award appointments. The promises of legislators assured nothing. And with so many applicants, only the most influential of Nye's friends and advisors could really be sure they would persuade the governor.

"Concerning Notaries," then, is fairly accurate, a burlesque mostly through hyperbole and in choice of details: the size of petitions, the amount of corruption, the extent of notary mania. The sketch is not one of Twain's masterpieces, but it is among the finest surviving early satires and demonstrates that his flights of mordant humor could have just cause. Clemens never seems to have been able to stomach corruption, and he disliked manias. The article was surely intended, in part, to chasen fellow citizens.

But only in part. Clemens had another reason for fighting the army of applicants with satire: he was an applicant himself. Among Governor Nye's executive records regarding the notary episode is this petition:

To His Excellency - Gov. James W. Nye: We the undersigned would respectfully solicit the appointment of Samuel L. Clemens as a Notary Public in and for the County of Storey.

The petition's signers included Clemens' brother Orion; Thomas C. Nye, the governor's nephew and private secretary; William W. Ross, Territorial Auditor; and F.A. Hollister, legislative attaché and clerk for the Territorial Auditor. Exactly when the petitioners recommended Clemens is not clear. The date has been torn from the petition. But one can assume it was turned in between the notary bill's introduction in the legislature on January 15 and March 1, when it became law. There is no direct evidence that Clemens knew of the petition, but there can hardly be much doubt that he did, since his brother and a close friend (Thomas Nye) were among the signers.

In any case, with such influential backing, the petition won approval. Under the March 1 heading in Governor Nye's volume of "Proclamations, Appointments and Messages," and fifth on the list of notary appointments, is Clemens' name. Governor Nye assigned him a two-year commission for Storey County.

"Concerning Notaries," thus assumes new significance. Certainly his exasperation, so evident in the sketch, was just. But was it only exasperation? Perhaps he was not at all confident of securing an appointment; Clemens was known to worry himself into a funk, even when he was young. He had already seen a job as secretary to Orion turn out to be valueless, and his "sure chance" at mining wealth slipped



from him. With such disappointments in mind, he might have written the sketch partly to ridicule and discountenance competing applicants in order to protect his own petition, if indirectly.

The sketch concludes with Twain catching the notary disease too. It is hard to say whether the sketch, written on or shortly before February 6, preceded, coincided with, or postdated Clemens' petition. But it is likely the petition came first. Clemens, with so much inside knowledge of legislative business, would have known of the bill far enough in advance to become one of the first applicants. And the sketch's satire rests upon the most typical mixture of Twain humor: a burlesque of public manner—inspired in part by self-interest—mingled with some consciously self-directed humor. He must have realized that the influential names on his petition, although honestly enlisted, came through the same general process mocked in the sketch. Sam Clemens could not resist involving himself in the sorts of adventures—mining, trips abroad—that Mark Twain makes fun of.

That Clemens knew he received a notaryship is certain. On April 14, he resigned:

Hon. O. Clemens

Acting Governor

I hereby resign my commission as a Notary Public having been granted me on or about the 1st of March of the present year.

Acting in Nye's absence, Orion accepted his brother's resignation the next day. Sam Clemens supplied no reason for abandoning the office, and it is strange that he did quit it. Finally he had within reach the means to a substantial income. As a reporter for the *Enterprise*, he knew many of the Comstock moguls and mine administrators. He might easily have attracted business in the recording of mining claims, transfers of deeds, stock transactions, and the like. He never tried.

Writing eight years later in *Roughing It*, Twain claims he became restless in Virginia City:

I began to get tired of staying in one place so long. There was no longer satisfying variety in going down to Carson to report the proceedings of the legislature once a year, and horse races and pumpkin shows once in three months.

The final "indignity" occurred on May 29, 1864, according to editor Sam Davis of the Carson City *Morning Appeal*, who wrote about the matter some years later. Sam was standing on a street corner, when a mangy dog owned by fellow reporter Steve Gillis came up and rubbed its side against Clemens' leg. He looked down at the dog and drawled to others standing near, "Well, if I have become a scratching post for Steve Gillis'

dogs, I'd better hit the trail." He left for California that night.

Wanderlust may have been part of the reason for Clemens leaving, but not the entire one. He had gotten himself into trouble with a carelessly written editorial lampooning Carson City socialites, and there was some talk of a duel with a rival newspaper editor.

Moreover, his bid for a notary sinecure had failed. Storey County records show that he never posted the \$5,000 bond required of appointees before they could practice. He was broke. Worse, the Comstock mines seemed to have played out. The big mines were losing money; smaller mines were closing down. Miners were being laid off en masse, and the economy of the whole region was suffering. With fewer transactions to record, notaries were making little profit. They began to resign—six in Storey County within six months.

The notary episode was one more disappointment for Sam Clemens, one more misadventure that sent him moving on. Had he waited a few years, when the Big Bonanza was located, he would likely have become wealthy. But Clemens was too restless to wait for anything—and perhaps he was a little bitter.

It is a blessing to literature that Clemens did leave Nevada. He had seen and taken part in enough pranks and politicking, enough heroics and dissoluteness, in the territory to learn his true gift for satire. Nevada had little more it could teach him. After Nevada became a state in October of 1864, the Comstock and surrounding areas began to settle, if slowly, into respectability, although respectability has never quite set easily with Nevadans. Clemens would have had increasingly fewer chances to throw himself into the sort of madness that inspired Twain's best occasional humor.

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## *Thomas Starr King and the Comstock Lode: The California Patriot's Visits to Nevada*

JAMES HULSE

"IF THE UNION CRUMBLES, come out here and we will squat on a silver mine in Washoe, & snap our fingers at disaster."<sup>1</sup>

This rather flippant advice was written in December of 1860, about a month after the balloting had designated Abraham Lincoln as the sixteenth President of the United States and as there were ominous signs of political crisis in the Eastern states. The author of these lines was Thomas Starr King, the young San Franciscan who was even then making the reputation that would eventually give him a place in the National Statuary Hall in the Capitol building in Washington D.C. The legend which accompanies his statue in this honored location indicates that he "saved California to the Union" in the dark hours at the beginning of the Civil War.

Although King's name and his role in keeping California loyal to the Union are well known in California, his interest in the Nevada mining frontier has received almost no attention on the inland side of the Sierra Nevada. During his brief and productive career in California, he made two trips to the Comstock Lode, and his correspondence indicates that he had an active interest—almost certainly financial—in the mines of Virginia City.

King was a Unitarian and Universalist minister who had come to San Francisco from Boston, where he had served the prestigious Hollis Street Church for twelve years. He was thirty-five years old when he accepted his call to San Francisco, and the beginning of his ministry coincided with the bitter electoral campaign of 1860. On several occasions King limited his pulpit services to his congregation in order to campaign for Lincoln and plead the Union's cause. A majority of the newspapers of California opposed Lincoln, and there were fears that

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Thomas Starr King to Randolph Ryers, December 3, 1860, Manuscript Collection, Bancroft Library.



Rev. and Mrs. Thomas Starr King  
(courtesy of the Thomas Starr King  
School for Religious Leadership,  
Berkeley, Calif.)

California would, like the southern states, leave the Union during the winter of 1860-61 following Lincoln's election.<sup>2</sup>

The first visit of King to the Comstock Lode, which was then still part of Utah Territory, came the year after the discovery of the Lode in 1859. He was apparently invited by Tom Peasley, the burly chief engineer of the Virginia City Engine Company. This organization was dedicated not only to fighting fires but also to supporting the Union against the southern sympathizers who wanted to turn Virginia City into a stronghold for John Breckenridge, the candidate of the Southern Democrats. Peasley invited the Unitarian preacher to the Comstock because he already had a reputation as a spokesman for the northerners and for Lincoln. Arnold Crompton, one of King's better biographers, says:

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<sup>2</sup> An admirable study of this phase of King's career may be found in Ann Casey, "Thomas Starr King and the Secession Movement," *The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly*, XLIII, No. 3 (September, 1961), pp. 245-275. For a general biography, see Arnold Crompton, *Apostle of Liberty: Starr King in California*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950). Another commendable description of King's services may be found in Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream: 1850-1915*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 97-105.



It was a dangerous journey for any man pledged to Lincoln. The mines still drew rough adventurers to whom life was the cheapest of all commodities. The fire lads had to keep a watchful eye on their precious missionary of nationalism.

His oratory did not disappoint them, though he was, at first, startled to confront audiences where guns and knives flashed in the belts of everyone present. More than ever before he was on trial, not for himself, but for the cause on which he spoke. With sudden determination, he abandoned his manuscripts and spoke directly on the things which were in his heart. His topics did not touch always upon the issues of the hour, but he turned inevitably towards them. When he spoke in Virginia City, the miners threw their silver dollars on the stage—tokens of their approval. He moved to Gold Cañon, to Silver City, to Devil's Gate, to Six Mile, and to Seven Mile. He returned to San Francisco exhausted in body, but his mind active with new knowledge of the far-reaching energies of the secessionists.<sup>3</sup>

This was an era when platform eloquence was respected as a high form of art, and when an effective speaker could change the course of events with a few well-turned phrases. King was in the same oratorical tradition as Daniel Webster. C.C. Goodwin, the longtime editor of the *Territorial Enterprise*, heard him speak in Carson City: "King's soul was on fire," he wrote, "and his appeals were bugle calls."<sup>4</sup>

The preacher's interests were not confined to his ministry and his politics, however; the letters he wrote from San Francisco shortly after his return home show that, like many Californians, he yearned for a stake in the mines. He wrote one letter to a friend in the East suggesting, perhaps in jest, that he would like to have a gift of "two to five feet of the Gould and Curry," which was one of the most promising mines on the Comstock Lode.<sup>5</sup> It was this same friend who received the invitation to come and squat on a silver mine if the Union did not survive its ordeal.

It is evident from other correspondence in King's papers that he solicited gifts of stock in the mines as support for his struggling church. His parishioners included William Ralston of the Bank of California, whose investments in the Nevada mines enabled him to gain virtual control of the Comstock for several years.

King visited the Comstock again in 1863, this time for reasons of health. In a letter to his sister in the summer of that year, he wrote:

I broke down in June, and was obliged to quit preaching in the evening & took a run across the great Sierras into Nevada Territory for a month. The journey

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<sup>3</sup> Crompton, *Apostle*. . . , p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> C.C. Goodwin, *As I Remember Them*, (Salt Lake City: 1913), p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Thomas Starr King to Randolph Ryers, October 10, 1860, Manuscript Collection, Bancroft Library.

did an immense amount of good & I have worked harder than ever since my return.<sup>6</sup>

He was a frail man, small of stature and unusually thin. His rhetorical powers seemed almost misplaced in his diminutive frame. Part of the reason for moving from New England to California in 1860 had been the hope that it might improve his health, but he was driven by a sense of mission that outstripped his physical resources. Between his two trips to Nevada he had visited most of the major communities between San Diego and Vancouver, preaching or lecturing for the Union cause. He had become enthralled with the physical beauty of California, and especially of the Sierra Nevada and Yosemite. He had become a cultural and intellectual leader of San Francisco, organizing or participating in numerous literary and social organizations. At the urging of Henry Whitney Bellows, the New York City Unitarian Minister who had founded the Sanitary Commission, he had become the West Coast organizer of this movement, which assumed primary responsibility for giving relief to the wounded of the Civil War.

During his second visit to Virginia City he was accompanied by his wife, Julia; they stayed at the home of Charles L. Strong, the superintendent of the Gould and Curry mine, then one of the most lucrative producers of precious metals on the Lode. King was effusive in his descriptions of the journey through the mountains, his praise of the hospitality of his hosts, and in his hopes for the success of the mines and mills. (The Gould and Curry never became as rich as the famous Ophir or some of the Gold Hill mines that were then prospering, but King's investments appear to have helped him dispatch some longstanding debts.) He testified that the trip to Nevada had restored his health.<sup>7</sup>

There is reason to wonder, however, whether his impressions of the Comstock region (sometimes called "Washoe" in that era) were entirely consistent. He was quoted in the *Tuolumne Courier* as saying "There are but three things at Washoe, sir; big mines, little mines, and whiskey shops; in other words Ophir holes, gopher holes and loafer holes."<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps there is better evidence of his reactions in the orations that he wrote after his return to San Francisco. He composed religious sermons on "Religious Lessons from Mountain Heights, from Tahoe, and from Mines & Mining." One of his popular sermons relied upon a series

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<sup>6</sup> Letter from Thomas Starr King to his sister, Sarah, August 28, 1863, Manuscript Collection, Bancroft Library.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Starr King to Charles Lyman Strong, July 5 and July 28, 1863, Manuscript Collection, Huntington Library.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from the Columbia, California *Tuolumne Courier* (September 5, 1863), in Paul Fatout, *Mark Twain in Virginia City*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 74.

of metaphors based on the milling and reduction of ores. In a sermon entitled "Religious Lessons From Metallurgy," King affirmed that God is purifying man by a process that is comparable to the work of a metallurgist who is refining the rocks from a mine.<sup>9</sup> The divinity is leaching and burning out the impurities by several different methods—by means of several dissimilar religious movements—in order to achieve the pure gold and silver of morality. The rhetoric is too ornate for most contemporary tastes, but it reveals that Comstock experiences were a rich source of pulpit material. He has occasionally been credited for suggesting the renaming of "Lake Bigler" as "Lake Tahoe."

Either during or following this second visit to the Comstock, King arranged for a selection of ore samples to be sent from Virginia City to San Francisco and ultimately to the East Coast for exhibition. Shortly before Christmas, 1863, a Comstock newspaper reported:

The boxes of specimens which have been collected for the exhibition at the East, were forwarded to Rev. T. Starr King, San Francisco yesterday—and will be forwarded by him by the first steamer. The collection is one of the richest ever made in the Territory, and will no doubt cause our Eastern brethren to open their eyes.<sup>10</sup>

Less than three months after these arrangements had been reported, King was dead. Exhausted from overwork and weakened by diphtheria, he died on March 4, 1864, just thirty-nine years old. He was widely mourned over the entire "Pacific Slope." The *Gold Hill News* called his passing "a public calamity."<sup>11</sup> The *Humboldt Register* of Unionville, nearly a hundred miles further inland where King was probably known only by reputation, carried a front-page article describing the death-bed scene and his final remarks to family and friends.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the most singular tribute to the now-legendary preacher appeared in the *San Francisco Morning Call* about six months after his death. By this time, King's pulpit was being filled by Bellows, the famous New York minister with whom King had worked on the Sanitary Commission enterprises. A one-time Comstock resident named Samuel Clemens was writing for the *Call*. The following passage, probably written by Clemens, may serve as our summary of the reputation which King had established on the Pacific Slope during his brief ministry:

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Starr King, *Christianity and Humanity: A Series of Sermons*, 4th ed., (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1878), pp. 348-362.

<sup>10</sup> *The Virginia Evening Bulletin*, December 18, 1863, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *The Gold Hill Daily News*, March 5, 1864, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *The Humboldt Register*, March 19, 1864, p. 1.

California and Nevada Territory are flooded with distressed looking abortions done in oil, in water-colors, in crayon, in lithography, in photography, in sugar, in plaster, in marble, in wax, and in every substance that is malleable or chiselable, or that can be marked on, or scratched on, or painted on, or which by its nature can be compelled to lend itself to a relentless and unholy persecution and distortion of the features of the great and good man who is gone from our midst—Rev. Thomas Starr King. We do not believe these misguided artistic lunatics meant to confuse the lineaments, and finally destroy and drive out from our memories the cherished image of our lost orator, but just the contrary. We believe their motive was good, but we know their execution was atrocious. We look upon these blank, monotonous, over-fed and sleepy-looking pictures, and ask, with Dr. Bellows, "Where was the seat of this man's royalty?" But we ask in vain of these wretched counterfeits. There is no more life or expression in them than you may find in the soggy, upturned face of a pickled infant dangling by the neck in a glass jar among the trophies of a doctor's back office, any day. But there is one perfect portrait of Mr. King's extant, with all the tenderness and goodness of his nature, and all the power and grandeur of his intellect drawn to the surface, as it were, and stamped upon the features with the matchless skill. This picture is in the possession of Dr. Bellows, and is the only one we have seen in which we could discover no substantial ground for fault finding. It is a life size outline photograph, elaborately wrought out and finished in crayon by Mrs. Frances Molineaux Gibson, of this city, and has been presented by her to Rev. Dr. Bellows, to be sold for the benefit of the Sanitary Commission. It will probably be exhibited for a while at the Mechanics' Fair, after which it will be disposed of, as above mentioned. Dr. Bellows desires to keep it, and will do so if bids for it do not take altogether too high a flight.<sup>13</sup>

Whatever damage may have been inflicted on King's memory by these unfortunate reproductions of him did not do lasting harm, because more than a half-century after his death Californians chose him, along with Father Junipero Serra, to represent their state in Statuary Hall.

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<sup>13</sup> *San Francisco Morning Call*, September 1, 1864.

## *Reno's Little Italy: Italian Entrepreneurship and Culture in Northern Nevada*

ALBIN J. COFONE

THE DEVELOPMENT of a "Little Italy" in Reno was an outgrowth of the small but steady population gains that distinguished Reno from other Nevada communities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This growth provided Reno with a level of economic stability, which when combined with the ability of Italians to save discretionary income, made the city headquarters for the acquisition of Italian capital and investment.

Complementing this concentration of Italian wealth was an active and informed Italian press that reflected the needs of the community.<sup>1</sup> Much of what Italians did and thought is revealed in this press, and it provides a unique opportunity to see how they perceived their presence in the region. Ethnic groups in America have frequently viewed themselves differently than the dominant group that surrounds them. Sometimes their perceptions of events differ dramatically, at other times subtly. Consequently, the use of the ethnic press can prove a valuable tool in assessing both areas of agreement and disagreement between the immigrant group and the host society. In the case of Reno's Italian newspapers, there were constant expressions of pride that Italians were now new Americans, and satisfaction with life in Nevada. The press consistently extolled business, cultural, and personal events associated with Italians, and it was frequently unrestrained in its endorsements of the fine lives Italians had achieved in the Reno area.

A brief review of Italian involvement in other communities and areas will add perspective to the discussion of Reno. It seems clear that in

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<sup>1</sup> Three Italian language newspapers were published in Nevada between 1907 and 1944. In Reno, there was John Granata's *Bollettino del Nevada* and F. Moracci's *Italian-French Colony News*. In Sparks, M. Paggi published the *Corriere Di Nevada*. The *Corriere* apparently only went through a few editions in 1907. No copies have been located. By far, the *Bollettino* was the most enduring, lasting almost to the end of World War II.



Nevada, the region's overall climate and dry farming requirements to some extent matched past experiences, and led to an Italian proclivity to save and invest in Nevada, rather than merely taking quick profits and moving on. There were not only significant Italian businesses, farms, and ranches in Reno, but also in Virginia City, Carson City, Austin, Eureka, and Paradise Valley, among others. In Sparks, for example, although not one of the first settlers in the area was Italian, by 1924 many of the Italians who had originally come to the community as laborers had saved enough to have purchased ranches, farms, shops, and homes. A review of the history of Sparks shows that of the twenty-three properties owned by the first settlers, by 1924 eleven had ended up being owned by Italians.<sup>2</sup>

A similar pattern can be seen in the settlement of Dayton. Although in 1880 there were only three Italian-owned ranches along the Carson River in the vicinity of Dayton, by 1900 twenty-seven of the twenty-eight ranches in the area were Italian-owned. (The one non-Italian ranch was owned by a former resident of Maine.) There were also two saloons in Dayton owned and operated by Italians.<sup>3</sup>

During the 1860s and 1870s, the Comstock boom in Virginia City attracted many Italians eager to work on the lode. Having come to Nevada with few financial resources, this was one way to earn a stake. Once having saved up enough money, the majority went into ranching, farming, and business, but at least one group of Italians went back to the mines as capitalist investors. Founded in 1874, the Roman Capitol Mine was an entirely Italian operation.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately the company was mired in conflict, with two shareholder factions vying for control. By April of 1874 relations between the two groups had reached the boiling point, when two slates of officers, all Italian, were elected at separate meetings. Noting that extreme tension existed between the two groups, the *Territorial Enterprise* observed: "Which party owns the mine we really cannot say. Shotguns and pistols will probably prove the potent argu-

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<sup>2</sup> F.B. Kingsbury, "Pioneer Days in Sparks and Vicinity. Earlier Settlers and Points of Interest," *Nevada Historical Society Papers*, Volume V (1925-1926), pp. 309-317.

<sup>3</sup> Manuscript Census of 1880, Dayton, Lyon County, Nevada, Census Population Schedules, Washington, D.C., microfilm number G235-57; Manuscript Census of 1900, Dayton, Lyon County, Nevada, Census Population Schedules, Washington, D.C., microfilm number G235-91. See also the *Census of the Inhabitants of the State of Nevada*, Vol. II, Lyon County, (Carson City, 1875). At that time, the estimated value of real property in Lyon County was \$924,454. Of that amount, the Italian share was only \$900. Personal property for the county was estimated at \$587,743. The Italian share of personal property amounted to \$525. The state figures of 1875 support the state figures of 1880, in showing that only three Italians had enough funds to own land. Although there are no comparable figures for 1900, the amount of thrift required to become the dominant ranch holding faction in the Dayton area within twenty years suggests that Italians were quite adept at managing their finances.

<sup>4</sup> *The Territorial Enterprise*, April 7, 1874.

ments which will make the title clear.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, the eventual outcome is not clear. In June of 1881 litigation was still in progress.<sup>6</sup>

Other areas of the state also were impacted by the presence of Italian entrepreneurship. In Austin, Samuel Crescenzo, described in Thomas Wren's *A History of the State of Nevada* as “the well known retired capitalist,” lived in the community for forty years, and at one time ran both the International Hotel and a general merchandise store.<sup>7</sup> Further to the east, in Elko, Emilio Dotta, born in Switzerland but of Italian ethnicity, started out as a freight hauler only to become, through thrift and shrewd business sense, the largest supplier of milk and dairy products to the community.<sup>8</sup> While in Eureka, Frank Pastorino, who arrived from Italy in 1875 to work in the mines, saved enough to buy the prosperous Hay Ranch. He did well with the ranch, selling it in 1937 to become city assessor. In addition, he owned and managed the Eureka Theatre.<sup>9</sup>

In Paradise Valley, Batista Recanzone and Angelo Forgnone, who arrived in Nevada in 1863 (they were among the first Italians in the state), became the wealthiest entrepreneurs in Humboldt County.<sup>10</sup> Prior to arriving in Paradise Valley, they had spent time in North Africa working as masonry contractors. The construction skills developed in North Africa apparently served them well in Nevada, where they were able to find employment working on canals near Winnemucca and in stone mason work at Fort Scott. Eventually they acquired vast amounts of land in Paradise Valley, built up their possessions, and invested in the community. By the end of their lives they had owned several ranches, a number of homes and commercial buildings, and a flour mill. The mill, known as the Silver State Flour Mill, was built in 1866 and purchased by the Recanzone family in 1890.<sup>11</sup> The flour ground at the mill was of such quality that it was awarded the gold medal at both the Saint Louis Exposition of 1904, and the San Francisco Exposition of 1915. Capacity at the mill was about two tons a day; it remained in operation until 1945.

By the turn of the century, Reno was still the premier choice of all the state's communities for Italian investment, and this reflected both a

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, April 9, 1874.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, June 13, 1881.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas A. Wren, *A History of the State of Nevada* (New York: Lewis Publishers, 1904), p. 333.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 620.

<sup>9</sup> Although Pastorino's achievements were primarily in Eureka County, in later years some of his family members moved to Reno. As a result, a record of his activities is to be found in the Nevada Historical Society's *Early Nevada Families Collection, Washoe County*.

<sup>10</sup> See Nevada Historical Society, *Early Nevada Families Collection, Humboldt County*.

<sup>11</sup> *Nevada State Journal*, January 6, 1957.

favorable economic location, and the continuing enthusiasm of Italians for Nevada real estate. In part, this loyalty to Reno and Nevada can be understood in terms of the poverty experienced in Italy, and the contrasting success that could be achieved along the banks of the Truckee. John Gottardi, a prominent member of the Reno community, wrote in his University of Nevada thesis in 1926:

Speaking particularly of the Italians in Reno; the community is well organized with an excellent element. The people are daring, have initiative, honest, good, and respected by the American population.

Fifty years ago they helped Reno develop into a great city. Not many of the original miners are left, but their children have settled, dedicated to commerce, business, mining, agriculture, and fellowship. Some miners that originally settled in Reno became hoteliers, restaurateurs, store owners, and before the Volstead Act, liquor store operators.<sup>12</sup>



By the turn of the century, the almost exclusively Italian nature of Dayton was reflected in both the number of ranches owned by Italians, and in the presence of two Italian saloons, the Europe and the Umberto. c.1900. (*Nevada State Journal*)

<sup>12</sup> John R. Gottardi, "Gl'Italiani Di Nevada" (M.A. thesis, Department of Modern Languages, University of Nevada, Reno, 1926).

Italians stayed in Nevada, not thinking they had arrived in El Dorado, but because they formed a successful and valued part of the community.

Some years later, agreement with Gottardi's view of local Italians was expressed by another resident of Reno. Amy Gulling, who lived in Reno from 1911 to 1965, was an astute observer of the mores and social trends of the city. Although her comments regarding Italians are somewhat condescending, they accurately reflect the genuinely high rate of social mobility achieved by Italians:

Our Italian people have become such fine citizens, and in two generations they have become complete Americans. They have married girls of other blood sources and have become complete Americans. Some of our finest citizens are the Italian people. They are a very fine looking people; in every way just the finest kind of citizen.<sup>13</sup>



The heart of Reno's "Little Italy," Lake Street and Second, looking north from the southwest corner. The building on the northwest corner is the Mizpah (Pincolini), and the one immediately before the Hotel Mint Club is the Toscano. The Mint Club is located in the Colombo building. c.1959. (*Nevada State Journal*)

<sup>13</sup> Amy Gulling, "An Interview with Amy Gulling," (Reno: University of Nevada, Oral History, 1966), pp. 40-41.

Indeed by the late 1940s the success of the Italian community in Reno was a matter of record throughout the state.<sup>14</sup> The president of the First National Bank of Nevada was Edward Questa.<sup>15</sup> Until his death in a plane crash on February 10, 1962, Questa was one of Reno's, and Nevada's, leading citizens. He was the son of Italian pioneers, Fred and Cameila Questa, and was born in Reno in 1899, and he worked his way up the First National Bank hierarchy and contributed greatly to the bank's economic profile in the state. His contributions to Nevada were recognized beyond the state's boundaries when the Italian Government appointed him Vice Counselor of Italy in Nevada. He was again recognized by Italy when he was awarded the Order of Merit for his achievements in America, the Italian Government's highest award for noncitizens. Newspaper accounts of Questa at the time of his death reflect on both his importance to Nevada's economy and how well liked he was as an individual. The First National Bank also provided an avenue of mobility for other Italians in the state. Among the bank's officers in the late 1940s from Italian backgrounds were Hugo Quilici of Reno and Harry Menante of Las Vegas as vice presidents, and William Cassinella, the manager of the Carson City branch.<sup>16</sup> Italian economic success in the immediate area is evident when one notes the many successful Italian farmers and ranchers in Washoe County, among them the Garaventas, Ghiglieris, Avansinos, Pecettis, Raffetos, Gardellas, Raggios, and Pirettos.<sup>17</sup> The "Grand Old Man" of the successful Italian community in Reno was acknowledged by the *Nevada State Journal* to be Manuel Cafferata.<sup>18</sup> Cafferata's father, James, was born in Italy in the 1830s, and had previously worked in Australia before coming to California. Upon arriving in America, he was joined by his wife. Manuel, who was born July 16, 1862, was quite possibly the first European child born in Amador County, California. When he was six months old, his family crossed the Sierra Nevada and relocated in Virginia City where they eventually prospered. In later years, Manuel's achievements in the region were generally acknowledged by his peers, as was his extensive knowledge of Nevada real estate.

By 1910, the growing concentration of Italians in Reno had resulted in an Italian district centered around Lake Street in the vicinity of Second and Commercial Row. Although a number of Italian stores were scat-

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<sup>14</sup> *Nevada State Journal*, July 6, 1952.

<sup>15</sup> *Reno Evening Gazette*, February 11, 1962.

<sup>16</sup> *Nevada State Journal*, July 6, 1952.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, July 6, 1952.

<sup>18</sup> *Nevada State Journal*, December 23, 1939.



tered throughout downtown, this was the heart of the community, the "Little Italy."<sup>19</sup>

As an ethnic area, the Lake Street district rested heavily upon the perceptions of local Italians. Compared to the large Little Italies of the West End of Boston, South Philadelphia, or Mulberry Street in New York, where the presence of Italian-oriented commercial services overwhelmed all other business activities, Reno's Little Italy, which had shops run by Basques, Chinese, and French within its boundaries, might appear to be too ill defined. However, even the sizeable Little Italies of the East and Midwest were often not as homogeneous as popularly imagined. While neighborhoods with large numbers of Italians in the East are culturally visible by the presence of Italian shops, statues of saints on front lawns, and the occasional fig tree wrapped in cloth to protect branches against cold winters, non-Italian residents are not always unknown. These neighborhoods have historically proven attractive to a wide variety of people, since they are considered stable and well kept. Loyalty to a church (if only at times on the part of the women), strong family bonds, and pride of home ownership are usually cited as factors in the desirability of an Italian neighborhood. In Herbert Gans' *The Urban Villagers*, a study of the West End of Boston, it is argued that non-Italian bohemians found the West End desirable because the Italian residents did not interfere with their unorthodox life style.<sup>20</sup> As Gans points out, as long as the bohemians did not threaten Italian family values, they were free to live in their own way. Similarly, in San Francisco, a large bohemian population has for years lived side by side with an Italian population along Columbus Avenue in the city's North Beach neighborhood.<sup>21</sup>

In essence, ethnic and social differences in Reno's Little Italy were more a matter of scale than of substance. The greater interaction of different ethnic groups along Lake Street reflected the sociological dynamics of a small western city, as opposed to an eastern metropolitan center. The important point is that the Italian population's mental, or cognitive, map considered the Lake Street area to be the commercial

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<sup>19</sup> This high concentration of Italians in the Reno-Sparks area is also revealed in street names. At least twenty-three streets in Reno and Sparks are named after Italians who were involved in the development of the Truckee Meadows region. In Reno: Anelli Lane, Aquila Avenue, Aquila Way, Bigotti Way, Carano Lane, Casazza Drive, De Lucchi Lane, Depaoli Street, Ferrari Street, Ferretto Lane, Mastroianni Drive, and Raffetto Drive. In Sparks: Capurro Way, Cassinelli Lane, Fighi Ranch Road, Galletti Way, Lagomarsino Court, Lagomarsino Drive, Martini Road, Parlanti Lane, Puccinelli Drive, Rizzo Drive, and Rossi Lane.

<sup>20</sup> Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers*, (New York: Macmillan, 1962).

<sup>21</sup> For a comprehensive look at San Francisco's Italian community, see Paul Radin's *The Italians of San Francisco, Their Adjustment and Acculturation*, (San Francisco: R and E Associates, 1935).

center of their community, and by extension the cultural hub as well.<sup>22</sup>

The Lake Street district served the marketing needs of the substantial Italian population in Reno and surrounding Washoe County.<sup>23</sup> Included at different times in the area were grocery stores, liquor stores, insurance agencies, a travel agency, and a significant number of hotels. Bilingual merchants facilitated the shopping patterns of Italians still learning English, while also providing a level of camaraderie traditionally associated with American Little Italies. The hotels in the area provided similar services in the realm of accommodations, catering to ranch hands, farmers, miners, railroad men, and merchants in town from outlying communities. According to the local Italian press, accommodations ranged from the superior to the basic and appealed to both a business and an ethnic trade.

There are today only faded remnants of these hotels. A walk down Lake Street shows that the Pincolini (Mizpah), Toscano, and Colombo are still standing, although by no means in their former state. The Lake Street and Commercial Row area was a district where deviance and respectability existed side by side; the hotels, at least in their newspaper ads, did not take notice of the negative side of their location. Ads for the hotels appeared regularly in the Italian language press for the first three decades of the twentieth century, and were usually unabashedly glowing in the assessment of amenities offered. While a level of boosterism is to be expected, the persistence of the ads over time suggests that if the hotels were not in fact first class, they were at least respectable enough for the city's Italian trade. In a number of cases, the hotels appear to have been making their pitch directly to the Italian market by emphasizing in their advertisements Italian cooking, cigars, and wines.

The Pincolini was built by the Aldevado Pincolini family, which migrated to Nevada from Palma, Italy, in the last decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> Having achieved financial security by working and investing in the western Nevada region, the family decided to build a first class hotel in Reno. In 1927, the *Bollettino del Nevada* observed

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<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of mental maps and their application to an ethnic group's understanding see Peter Gould and Rodney White, *Mental Maps*, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974).

<sup>23</sup> *Thirteenth Census of the United States*, Vol. III, 1910 (Washington, D.C., 1913), p. 145. *Fifteenth Census of the United States*, Vol. III, 1930 (Washington, D.C., 1933), p. 92. In 1910, Italians, with 372 members, were the largest single foreign-born ethnic group in Reno. By 1930, they were still the largest foreign-born group with a population of 637. At that time, Italians were also the largest group, numbering 733, of native-born who had parents born in a foreign country. In addition, the 1930 Census shows that the Italian position as both the largest single foreign-born ethnic group and largest single group of foreign-born parentage in Reno was also true in the rest of Washoe County, as well as in nearby Storey and Lyon counties, and in distant Eureka County.

<sup>24</sup> *Nevada State Journal*, January 27, 1974.

that the Pincolini was "the most unique modern hotel in the state of Nevada."<sup>25</sup> Over the years the family continued its involvement with the local hotel scene; in 1967, Bruno and Guido Pincolini bought and refurbished another downtown hotel, the El Cortez.<sup>26</sup>

North of the Pincolini, the Toscano was a respected rival, and claimed to have an excellent Italian restaurant. In 1915, the management proudly ran an ad stating:

Cooking is strictly Italian. The maximum in cleanliness with well furnished and airy rooms. Wine and liquor served. Famous brand cigars. The best beers.<sup>27</sup>

Next door to the Toscano, the Colombo also sought to provide its patrons with a fine environment. Affirming its carriage trade aspirations, the management advised in its publicity that the Colombo was "a first class and elegant establishment featuring an Italian restaurant."<sup>28</sup> The Colombo's food and entertainment were also endorsed by local mystery writer Greer Gay, in *The Case of the Well Dressed Corpse*.<sup>29</sup> Caught in a tale of murder and intrigue involving the citizens of Newlands Heights, the heroine of the story, Julie Barclay, suggests to her fiance, Curt Terry, that they escape their present problems and enjoy a pleasant evening at the hotel: "Could you enjoy Italian food tonight? The floor show at the Colombo is super."<sup>30</sup>

Two other hotels with Italian roots in the vicinity of Lake Street that are still standing are the Saint Francis on Virginia between Fourth and East Plaza, and the Senator, on the corner of Second at West Street. The Saint Francis (the Piazza Building) was built by Santino Piazza in 1925. Piazza left a small town near Genoa in 1905, and with his wife migrated to Nevada. He first worked as a ranch hand, then prospered in Reno after opening a successful produce transportation business. Funds from this venture assisted in the construction and operation of the hotel property.<sup>31</sup>

The Senator was built by Leopoldo (Pete) and Teresa Saturno, founders of one of Reno's most prominent Italian families.<sup>32</sup> Leopoldo

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<sup>25</sup> *Bollettino del Nevada*, Annual Edition, October, 1927.

<sup>26</sup> *Nevada State Journal*, biographical questionnaires, February 1, 1969, January 27, 1970.

<sup>27</sup> *Bollettino del Nevada*, November 13, 1915.

<sup>28</sup> *Bollettino del Nevada*, January 19, 1929.

<sup>29</sup> Gay Greer, *The Case of the Well Dressed Corpse*, (New York: Pageant Press, 1953).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> *Nevada State Journal*, biographical questionnaire file.

<sup>32</sup> *Nevada State Journal*, November 6, 1959 and *Reno Evening Gazette*, August 18, 1960. The Saturno name became world famous in 1959 when two of Leopoldo's and Teresa's children, Joseph and Victor, gave away \$1,200 of Bank of America stock to every resident of their father's native Italian village of San Marco. This generous act was based on a desire to share with the people of that village some of the riches that their father had found in Nevada.

was born in San Marco, Italy, and Teresa in Genoa. They were married in Reno in 1885, and embarked on a life that would earn them a fortune in western Nevada real estate. The Saturnos first built up their equity through the purchase of large farming and ranching parcels in the Truckee Meadows and Mason Valley. In later years, they parlayed this into additional ranch holdings around Stockton and Oakdale, California, and into commercial real estate in Reno. Besides the Senator, at one time they also owned the property on Virginia Street where Harrah's Club stands, and another parcel near the corner of Virginia and First Street. Although Leopoldo died in 1919, Teresa lived until 1958; during those years she continued to reside in Reno, and was especially helpful to new Italian immigrants arriving in the community.<sup>33</sup>

The rest of the extensive Italian hotel business in Reno is no longer visible, but impressions can still be gained from the newspaper record. Italian newspapers of the period carried ads for most of the commercial hotels in the area, usually indicating the segment of the market that each establishment sought to serve. While the Travatore and the Europa both prided themselves as "first class establishments," the more modest Depot Hotel, run by the Dormio family, restricted its ego to "modest rooms."<sup>34</sup> In neighboring Sparks, two hotels, the local Europa and the Piemonte, simply provided an address in newspaper advertisements.<sup>35</sup> Of the existing Italian hotels in Reno, only one is the recipient of an endorsement as a lodging place.<sup>36</sup>

In spite of the hoopla contained in many hotel ads regarding superior accommodations, there were of course still unsatisfied customers. In 1907, Frank Guscetti came to Reno to spend a few days and checked into C. Ramelli's (Italian) Swiss American House.<sup>37</sup> In a letter to his brother Louis, he observed that the room cost twenty-five cents and was not very good.

Besides the hotels, a variety of stores met the needs of the Italian shopper. In 1908 Lake Street had an Italian grocery, the Grosseria Italiana Di Zolezzi, which in later years continued to cater to the same

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<sup>33</sup> *Nevada State Journal*, January 27, 1958.

<sup>34</sup> *Bollettino del Nevada*, December 2, 1916, October 13, 1917, and *Italian French Colony News*, December 19, 1908.

<sup>35</sup> *Italian French Colony News*, November 14, 1908.

<sup>36</sup> A review of contemporary American travel guides indicates that of the existing hotels in Reno with Italian roots only the Senator receives any sort of recommendation. In Arthur Fromer's *Where to Stay U.S.A.*, (New York: Council of International Education, 1982), the Senator is suggested as a budget hotel when staying in Reno. It is compared to the popular Motel 6 chain.

<sup>37</sup> Jacqueline and JoEllen Hall, *Italian-Swiss Settlement in Plumas County* (Chico: Association for Northern California Records and Research, 1973), p. 25.

clientele as Joe Brunetti's Lake Grocery.<sup>38</sup> During the 1930s a more extensive supermarket style grocery, The Italian Chain Store Company, opened at Fifth and Virginia. Although a flyer announced that the owners were "direct importers of foreign products and delicacies," the grand opening sale was decidedly non-ethnic, featuring instead bargains on Heinz's 57 Varieties.<sup>39</sup> Also on Lake, the Nevada Fish Market specialized in a wide variety of fish especially attractive to the Italian palate.<sup>40</sup> Not unaware that money was to be made from the extensive Italian commerce downtown, in 1929 the Reno National Bank ran an ad noting that "Italian is spoken."<sup>41</sup>

John Granata was a major voice of the Italian community during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Granata was born in Torre, Italy, in 1881, and ran an insurance and travel business on Lake Street. In 1911 he made local history when he opened the first car wash in the state on the corner of Lake and Second.<sup>42</sup> While his skill as an entrepreneur and the assistance that he gave to other Italians still hoping to come to America made him a respected member of the community, it was in his role as publisher and editor of the *Bollettino del Nevada*, the largest circulation Italian language newspaper in the state, that his influence on the politics of Reno was most keenly felt. As publisher of the *Bollettino*, Granata often played a role as the conscience of the Italian community. He greatly wanted Reno's Italians to remember that they were *Italian*, and was alarmed at the ease with which members of the group assimilated into local society. Fearful that as a result of business success Reno's Italian heritage was on the verge of extinction, he ran an editorial in the *Bollettino* entitled "What We Want to See in Reno." The editorial expressed his dismay with the Italian status quo in Reno, and exhorted his countrymen to consider the folly of their ways:

We want the Italians of Reno to be the best in Nevada. The Italian community of Reno is weak because it lacks cohesion and harmony. We want to see our community strong and compact; together. Consider the merits. We want the Italian family to speak Italian, for there are children of Italian families that cannot speak one word of the language. This is a great error, a great shortcoming of the parents, taking away from their children the advantage of knowing another language and thinking in Italian. They should know Italy—the greatness past and present, for they will be proud of the country of their origin. It is so important that they understand the language.

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<sup>38</sup> *Italian French Colony News*, November 21, 1908, and *Bollettino del Nevada*, December 6, 1916. Both stores were located at 252 Lake Street.

<sup>39</sup> Advertising Flyer, Nevada Historical Society collection.

<sup>40</sup> *Bollettino del Nevada*, June 3, 1930. The store was located at 233 Lake Street.

<sup>41</sup> *Bollettino del Nevada*, January 12, 1929.

<sup>42</sup> *Nevada State Journal*, November 16, 1962.

We want to stress that the thoughts and minds of Italians are developed along a special line that cannot be changed. The majority of Italians cannot think like Anglo-Saxons (those who try do not realize the consequences). Our ideal should not be the dollar; one does not live by bread alone. Do not forget Italy. Therefore, read Italian books, Italian magazines, and play Italian sports. Always hold high the name of Italy and her leader.<sup>43</sup>

In the same issue, Sam Platt, "the perennial Republican" candidate for the Senate and political rival of Key Pittman, wrote a laudatory essay entitled "Mussolini: Italy's Mighty Man."<sup>44</sup> Platt was no doubt aware of Italian political clout, for the article unabashedly praised all things Italian. Written in English, the essay was based on a trip that Platt had made to Italy: "I wished sincerely to see the man (Mussolini) who from every rational point of observation or contact had done so much for Italy."<sup>45</sup>

Governor Fred Balzar, another politician who was well aware of Italian political power, and who was himself of Italian descent, wrote an article that proclaimed a bright future for all the state's citizens. Writing in Italian, Balzar observed that an industrious citizenry, of which Italians were very much a part, was the key to Nevada's progress.<sup>46</sup>

The Dante Club was an important local Italian social organization which stressed some ideas similar to Granata's.<sup>47</sup> Located on Sierra, between First and Second, the purpose of the club was to keep alive the interest of Italians in their heritage.<sup>48</sup> It sought to achieve this through an emphasis on sports, rather than just lectures and readings. Organized on the principle of good fellowship, Dante members believed that sports built good character and contributed to an informed citizenry. The club offered its members a full line of sporting activities including baseball, boxing, bowling, football, and bocci.<sup>49</sup> At different times during the year,

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<sup>43</sup> *Bollettino del Nevada, Annual Edition, 1927.*

<sup>44</sup> The reference to Platt is found in Russell Elliot, *History of Nevada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), p. 272.

<sup>45</sup> *Annual Edition, loc. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Promotional supplement to the *Bollettino del Nevada 1927 Annual Edition*. The Dante Club was located at 133 Sierra. The building still stands, and has several tenants, including the Reno-Tahoe Visitor Center.

<sup>48</sup> It should be explained that the primary goals of the Dante Club were different from the better known Ordine Figli d'Italia, The Sons of Italy. The Sons of Italy, which was founded in 1904, was during the first half of the twentieth century mainly a mutual aid and benevolent society. It concerned itself with the welfare and "Americanization" of its members. Although after World War II The Sons of Italy became progressively more involved with the promotion of Italian culture, it remained different from the Dante organization, which emphasized the celebration of Italian culture and the teaching of the classic tongue of Dante. Whereas The Sons of Italy was an American organization, Dante Clubs were usually affiliated with, or modeled after, the parent organization, the Dante Alighieri Society of Rome.

<sup>49</sup> Bocci is an Italian form of lawn bowling. The word is also spelled "bocce" and "boccie."



competitions were held between the branch in Reno and branches in Sacramento and San Francisco. Sporting activities may have been the hook, but the statement of the club's philosophy emphasized the ethnic tradition from which they were descended:

The Italian people lived under circumstances that encouraged their bringing into flower some of the finest products of the human mind. The spread of that civilization is at least one of the goals of the Dante Club.<sup>50</sup>

An appreciation of the art, music, and literature of Italy was for the members of the Dante Club the needed tonic to calm the mercantile passions of Reno's Italians.

In the end, however, the exhortations of both Granata's *Bollettino* and the Dante Club proved to be of little avail. Italian cultural pursuits in Reno continued to decline. During the period from 1910 to 1930, Italians were well established in business and community activities, and had they wished the old ethnic roots could have prevailed. But that was not their choice. The ethnic past that originally defined Italians as different was quickly lost because of the success and local acceptance of group members as Nevadans, rather than Italians. Italians were not viewed as unique in Nevada, but rather as one of the many European ethnic groups that dotted the citiscapes of the state. Too, there was nothing special to the majority of Italians about being Italian. Both Granata and the Dante Club appear to have ignored the fact that most Italians left Italy with few regrets. Many came to America hoping to forget the bitter memories of life in poverty-stricken mountain towns, and to get a fresh start in a new land. As Hubert S. Nelli reported in a study of Chicago's Italians, once even a modest success was achieved, Italians tended to pick up and move away from old ethnic enclaves.<sup>51</sup> A Little Italy might provide a cultural beachhead for new immigrants to get their bearings in a strange country, but once a course was set upon the primary objective was to move out and get on with life. While the wish of both Granata's *Bollettino* and the Dante Club that Italian culture would flourish in Reno was noble, there was little desire for it among the majority of their countrymen. Italian culture in Reno was doomed by the success of its own practitioners. The West in general, and Reno in particular, had provided Italians who were willing to take a risk with more opportunity than the East. As Erik Amfitheatorf noted in *The Children of Columbus*:

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<sup>50</sup> Promotional supplement to the *Bollettino del Nevada Annual Edition*, 1927.

<sup>51</sup> Hubert S. Nelli, *Italians in Chicago, 1880-1930: A Study In Ethnic Mobility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

The Italians who did manage to cross the Mississippi and settle in the West usually had a far better chance of rising economically and socially. They were newcomers in an opportunistic, if frequently dangerous, world of newcomers.<sup>52</sup>

The economic achievements of the hoteliers, store owners, and investors meant that they could afford a better life. Reno's Little Italy, as well as the tightly-knit ethnic bonds that existed in Italian communities throughout the state, were of a time and place. The images and values that allowed Italians to perceive their social space in Reno as a Little Italy were transitory. Once having gained acceptance, there was little economic incentive to hold on to the past.

Table I: Reno's Italian Hotels

1. The Depot	130 East Commercial Row.
2. Europa Hotel	244 Lake Street.
3. Firenze Hotel	B Street, Sparks.
4. Hotel Europa	Sparks.
5. Italia Hotel	120 East Commercial Row.
6. Italia Hotel Annex	128 East Commercial Row.
7. Mizpah (Pincolini)	248 Lake Street.
8. Piemonte	37 Plaza.
9. Saint Francis	Virginia, between Fourth and East Plaza.
10. Senator Hotel	West at Second.
11. Toscano	238 Lake Street.
12. The New Toscano	246 Lake Street.
13. Travatore Hotel	222 Lake Street.
14. The New Travatore Hotel	210 Lake Street.

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<sup>52</sup> Erik Amfitheatorf, *The Children of Columbus* (Boston: Little-Brown, 1973), p. 190.

# *Gypsum Production at Blue Diamond, Nevada,*

## *1924-1959*

KIM GEARY

THE EMERGENCE of Las Vegas as a major international center of tourism and gambling, and as the self-proclaimed "entertainment capital of the world," has attracted considerable attention, both in popularized accounts, and to a lesser extent in solid academic treatises.<sup>0</sup> Well known are its origins as a railroad town; the boost the area received when construction was undertaken on Hoover Dam; the increasing importance to the local economy of gaming and the divorce and marriage trade in the 1930s; the impact of World War II and the origins of the "Strip."

Many economic developments not as vital to the growth of Las Vegas as a premier center of gaming and tourism have too often been neglected or obscured, perhaps because of the concentration by many authors on the more colorful aspects of the area's development. More attention needs to be focused on subsidiary aspects of the economic history of the area. A good example is the gypsum mining at Blue Diamond, some twenty-three miles southwest of Las Vegas, where there have been continuous mining operations for nearly sixty years, and plant operations for the fabrication of gypsum products for over forty years. At times, the economic output and the attendant work force have been important factors in the non-metallic mining output not only of Clark County, but also of the state as a whole.

The following account is intended as an introductory survey of the mining activities of the first company located at the site, and thus the account closes with 1959, when the Blue Diamond Corporation was acquired by the Flintkote Corporation.<sup>1</sup> First, it will be necessary to

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<sup>0</sup> The author wishes to thank Phillip Earl of the Nevada Historical Society, and Keith Papke of the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, for research assistance. Thanks are also due to Prof. Ralph Roske for originally suggesting the publication of this paper, and to Gary Roberts for editorial aid.

<sup>1</sup> Originally the Blue Diamond Materials Company, the firm became the Blue Diamond Corporation in 1932.

provide some background information concerning the use of gypsum in the construction industry, and the Blue Diamond site itself.

### *Origins and Early Development, 1924-1941*

Gypsum is the fourth most prevalent mineral deposit in Clark County, and many of the reserves are of very high quality. Most of the production from this area has been used in the construction industry, and in the period under consideration the fortunes of the Blue Diamond Corporation were closely tied to the general economic health of the construction business in southern California, and also to prevailing conditions in the country as a whole. In the early history of gypsum mining in the United States, the mineral had a stronger relationship to agriculture than to the building industry, because of its use as a soil conditioner; however, the Blue Diamond firm relied almost exclusively upon the need of gypsum products in general building construction. At first, it provided the crude gypsum which was processed in southern California for plaster products, wallboard, and retarder for portland cement; after the early 1940s, the firm's importance in Clark County dramatically increased: a plant was built at the mining site for the actual processing of the gypsum and the manufacture of a variety of gypsum products; a company town was constructed; and the work force increased significantly.<sup>2</sup>

The Blue Diamond deposits are located in an area which in the 1920s was relatively isolated and undeveloped. The nearest station on the Union Pacific Railroad was located at Arden, eleven miles to the east. The Cottonwood Springs, an historic stopover on the Old Spanish Trail in the 1830s and 1840s, are nearby. The deposits are found on a series of steeply-rising bluffs along the foothills of the Spring Mountain Range, at an altitude which varies from 4,300 to 4,750 feet above sea level. The deposits are both rich and extensive, but were not readily accessible during the first quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup>

When the Blue Diamond Materials Company became involved in the search for gypsum deposits, which eventually led to the location of the firm in southern Nevada, it was still a young company. It had been

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<sup>2</sup> *Business Opportunities in Southern Nevada* (San Francisco: Arthur D. Little, Inc., 1970), p. 74; Paul M. Tyler and R.W. Metcalf, "Gypsum," *Minerals Yearbook, 1935* (Washington, D.C., Dept. of Interior, Bureau of Mines, 1935) pp. 957-958.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis Nordyke, "Blue Diamond's Gypsum Works in Nevada," *Explosives Engineer* (Nov.-Dec., 1957), pp. 167-168. The earliest production of gypsum in the area southwest of Las Vegas occurred just west of Arden. Deposits were worked from 1909 to 1919 by the Arden Plaster Company, which was purchased by United States Gypsum, which in turn mined deposits until they were exhausted in the early 1930s.

organized in 1915 by J.W. Jamison and W.C. Hay. These men saw great possibilities for growth in the expanding building industry in the Los Angeles area. Jamison owned high quality lime deposits near Tehachapi, California; he was so impressed by the quality of these that he referred to his product as a "blue diamond," claiming that his deposit's excellence among lime sources was comparable to that of the blue diamond among gems.<sup>4</sup>

For his part, W.C. Hay had a patent on ready-mix mortar, and controlled a large deposit of sand. He had been delivering ready-mix mortar to builders in the Los Angeles area; he had improved his process and enjoyed a prosperous business, and wanted to expand. One way to accomplish this was to be able to meet more of a variety of the needs of local contractors by supplying them with gravel, sand, brick mortar and plaster putty.<sup>5</sup>

In 1915 the two men formed a partnership, the Blue Diamond Materials Company. The company prospered, and within ten years it had several branches, 700 employees, and assets of \$5,000,000. The partners constructed a small plaster mill in Los Angeles in 1922; because they owned no gypsum deposits, they first acquired this necessary material from Imperial Oil and Gypsum. This deposit was later purchased by the United States Gypsum Company, and the Blue Diamond therefore had to search for another supply. In the meantime, they used various deposits in California and Utah.<sup>6</sup>

In 1923, W.G. Bradley, who had considerable experience in gypsum production, joined the firm as vice-president and director. He and other members of the staff became involved in the search for deposits. The search was intensive, and among others, involved the eventual site chosen, a property west of Arden, Nevada, a few miles to the southwest of the small city of Las Vegas. Unfortunately, there were problems with the site, including its distance from California, the expenses connected with development, the lack of a railroad connection from the site to the Union Pacific line at Arden, and the lack of roads for trucks going into the area. It was evident, also, that an aerial tramway would have to be constructed to transport the raw gypsum from a deposit on the bluff to the newly-built railroad terminus. Evidently decisive in the final decision

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>5</sup> E.D. Roberts, "Developing a Remarkable Institution, The Greatest of Its Kind, Part I," *Pit and Quarry*, p. 70. W.G. Bradley, letter to Tom Brooks, no date. (Bradley was at various times a vice-president and production manager of the Blue Diamond. He was instrumental in choosing the southern Nevada deposits for the company, and he helped in the early development of the site.) Xerox copy in the possession of the author.

<sup>6</sup> Roberts, p. 68; Bradley to Brooks; Nordyke, p. 169.

to exploit the southern Nevada deposits were the high quality of the ore, and its great abundance at a single site.<sup>7</sup>

After negotiations with local owners Vincent Matteucci and Peter Buol, the one thousand acre site finally chosen by the Blue Diamond Materials Company was purchased for \$75,000. The *Las Vegas Age* noted that the sale marked an important stage in the development of Clark County, and would result in a substantial addition to local payrolls.<sup>8</sup>

The movement of the firm's business activities into southern Nevada is a good example of the results of the expanding construction needs of the Los Angeles area, and of the consolidation movement in companies attempting to meet those needs. Larger companies were being formed, and they were showing patterns of vertical growth and integration. The markets were potentially quite large, and growing larger; in order for firms to reach these markets and to compete effectively and efficiently they had to expand their functions, and become involved in all phases of production from the mining of ore to the fabrication of the final products. This process was quite evident in the gypsum industry, because the ore was relatively cheap, and so were the finished products. The best prospects for company growth and profitability were to be found in vertical integration and by catering to the needs of the ultimate consumer.<sup>9</sup>

The first year was a costly one for the company. Equipment and supplies had to be brought in for the construction of the quarry equipment and housing facilities. The total initial investment on the site was over \$1,000,000. In addition, of course, there were the problems associated with a new operation: equipment repairs, derailed tram cars, jammed kettles, and any number of other obstacles to be overcome. The production capacity established was approximately 200 tons per day; this capacity gradually increased as additional improvements in equipment were made.<sup>10</sup>

During the 1920s, mining was accomplished by open-pit methods, in those areas where the overburden was thin. The ore was extracted by drilling and blasting, and it was then loaded by hand onto quarry cars. These were moved by locomotive to the primary crusher, and then to

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<sup>7</sup> Nordyke, p. 169; Bradley, letter to Brooks; W.C. Bradley, *Information Circular 6615: Methods and Costs of Mining and Crushing Gypsum at the Mine of Blue Diamond Corp. (Ltd.) Arden, Nevada* (Washington, D.C., Dept. of Interior, Bureau of Mines, 1932), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Bradley to Brooks; *Las Vegas Age*, Nov. 22, 1924, 1:2; Oct. 24, 1925, 5.

<sup>9</sup> For background, see Glenn Porter, *The Rise of Big Business, 1860-1910* (New York, 1973), p. 43. Tyler and Metcalf, *Mineral Yearbook, 1935*, pp. 951-955.

<sup>10</sup> Roberts, "Developing A Remarkable Institution, The Greatest of Its Kind, Part II," *Pit and Quarry*, p. 50; Bradley to Brooks; Bradley, *Information Circular 6615*, pp. 5-7.



the jaw crusher. After the gypsum had been loaded on the aerial tramway for the 3,600 foot journey from the bluff to the shipping bins, it was then transferred to railroad cars and shipped to California for further refinement and processing. The "room and pillar" form of mining was also utilized by the company. This method allowed the extraction of as much as 92% of the gypsum. Mining was carried out in large underground caverns that were supported by pillars of rock; after ore deposits were depleted, remaining pillars were removed with explosive charges, and the overburden settled into the rooms, thus eliminating the later danger of cave-ins. That the mine was fairly quickly established is evident from early production statistics. From October, 1925 through September, 1926, the Blue Diamond site produced 78,642 tons of rock gypsum, and the well-established U.S. Gypsum mine 104,551 tons. During the calendar year of 1930, W.G. Bradley reported a total of 67,209 tons produced.<sup>11</sup>

Working conditions at the Blue Diamond mine were difficult at best, and at times dangerous. Muckers, who were at the lowest level of the labor structure, worked eight hours a day, and earned fifty cents per hour; they worked six-day weeks on a year-round basis.<sup>12</sup>

Housing accommodations were spartan, but adequate. The mining camp was situated on the bluff near the mine itself. Transportation up and down the hill was difficult due to the treacherous terrain; the road was steep and rough. All water for domestic and plant purposes had to be pumped to the top of the hill; power was supplied by two diesel generators. The camp itself consisted of a cook house, bunk houses, and three apartments; there were three houses for employees with more prestigious positions. The mining camp seemed remote, although it was located only a few miles away from Las Vegas. Air conditioning was nonexistent, and the summer heat was in the early years something that had to be faced on a daily basis. Swamp coolers were used to keep perishable foods cool; there was a refrigeration plant on the hill, but ice was not available for the men's personal use.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Bradley, *Information Circular 6615*, pp. 5-10; Roberts, "Remarkable Institution, Part II," pp. 56-57. Some production statistics are available in the *Annual Report of the State Controller* for the years 1927, 1929 and 1931. These are printed as appendixes to the *Journals of the Senate and Assembly*. (Carson City, State Printing Office). See Bradley, *Information Circular 6615*, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> The *Las Vegas Age* reported an accident at the mine site in November of 1926. A Coroner's Jury met after the death of William Dotson and determined that he had been "required to work in a place unnecessarily hazardous and dangerous, and that said place could have been rendered less hazardous and less dangerous by said employer." See the *Age* account in the November 20, 1926 issue, 1:6. Some general conditions at the mine are described to the author by Reed Phelps, who worked there, in a taped interview, November 2, 1978.

<sup>13</sup> Roberts, "Remarkable Institution, II", p. 54; Reed Phelps, interview.

Ironically, during the same period the Blue Diamond Materials Company began the exploitation of its Nevada deposits some problems started to manifest themselves within the gypsum industry as a whole. Production peaked in 1925, and as early as the last quarter of 1926 marketing problems began to occur. Although prices generally held firm elsewhere in the country, the Pacific Coast suffered from severe price cutting; profits were seriously affected, but there still was optimism that conditions were fundamentally sound, since there existed a solid demand for finished gypsum products.<sup>14</sup>

For the next two years, however, cut-throat competition and low prices spread from the West Coast to the general market. A decline in housing construction occurred even prior to the stock market crash of late 1929 and the resultant tightening of credit. The demand for plaster and gypsum products thus experienced an overall decline and then a serious drop as the decade closed. Some observers still stressed the positive side: the severe competition would force the modernization of some of the older mills, and the lower prices would force the mills to operate more efficiently or they inexorably would be driven out of business. On the other hand, the cement industry initially resisted the decline in economic activity, and as a result until 1930 there was less of a problem in terms of the demand for raw gypsum, since it was used as a retarder in cement.<sup>15</sup>

With the full onslaught of the Great Depression, the production of gypsum and the demand for the product deteriorated to very low levels. In 1929, the total production of mixed crude gypsum was over 5,000,000 short tons valued at \$31,000,000; only 3,500,000 short tons were produced in 1930, and by 1933 levels were at the lowest point since 1905.<sup>16</sup>

Production patterns in southern Nevada were sometimes similar to those in the United States as a whole, but they differed in some respects. A summary of gypsum and silica sand production in the Arden District shows over a doubling of production from 1928 to 1929, and then a 16% decline from 1929 to 1930. The bottom then dropped out: production in 1931 was 75% less than in 1929, and in 1933, 88% less. Production then nearly doubled by 1934, and by 1936 had nearly reached the levels of 1929; there was a decline in 1937, but by 1939 production was slightly

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<sup>14</sup> R.M. Santmyers and Jefferson Middleton, "Gypsum," *Mineral Resources of the United States, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of Interior, Bureau of Mines, 1929) II, p. 144.

<sup>15</sup> Santmyers and Middleton, "Gypsum," *Mineral Resources of the United States, 1929* (Washington, D.C., Department of Interior, Bureau of Mines, 1932), II, pp. 105, 358; Tyler and Metcalf, *Minerals Yearbook, 1935*, p. 959.

<sup>16</sup> Santmyers and Middleton, *Mineral Resources of the United States, 1929*, II, p. 106; Tyler and Metcalf, *Mineral Yearbook, 1935*, p. 955.

higher than in 1929. Total output at the Blue Diamond mine from 1930 to 1940 was 600,000 tons, with a gross yield of \$1,302,442. Since W.G. Bradley, the production manager of the Blue Diamond Corporation, had reported a production of 67,209 tons of rock gypsum in 1930, with a work force of about 25 to 30 men, it can be assumed that the number of workers must have been about the same number at the end of the decade, having dropped off considerably from 1931 to 1934, and then having gradually picked up again. Thus, during the decade of the Great Depression, the Blue Diamond facility not only survived the worst years, but also, at least in terms of production, flourished during the last five years of the decade.<sup>17</sup>

### *Years of Expansion*

Gypsum sales in the United States were greatly stimulated by the quickening pace of building activity and industrial production in 1940 and 1941. The value of gypsum products sold in 1940 soared to \$53,500,000 in 1940, and the demand for crude gypsum also sharply increased (the most dramatic such increase since 1929). The industry particularly was affected by the construction of emergency housing in connection with the rapidly-expanding defense program and the increased number of draftees. As the nation began to gear up for war, the demand for gypsum increased in many areas, but the overall effects of the war itself had an adverse effect on the market for gypsum products. Thus, there was a wartime lull in construction activity from 1942 until 1944, and then a renewal in 1945 and 1946, when many companies built new plants and enlarged their wallboard capacities. This expansion continued as the postwar boom was followed by general prosperity in the late 1940s and early 1950s. New records were set in this era for the production of crude gypsum and manufactured products alike. Mines and plants were established in entirely new areas.<sup>18</sup>

The Blue Diamond Corporation made a significant move in 1941 when its executives decided to move milling operations from Los

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<sup>17</sup> Bertrand F. Couch and Jay A. Carpenter, *Nevada's Metal and Mineral Production (1859-1940 Inclusive)*, (Reno, University of Nevada Bulletin, Vol. XXXVII, 1943), pp. 29, 32; Bradley, *Information Circular 6615*, Table I, p. 10. In his taped interview with the author, Reed Phelps notes that the Blue Diamond operation was subjected to occasional shut-downs during the worst periods of the depression; in addition, the work week was sometimes shortened and individual workers were not able to work on a full-time basis.

<sup>18</sup> Forrest T. Moyer, "Gypsum," *Minerals Yearbook, 1940* (Washington, D.C., Dept. of Interior, Bureau of Mines, 1941), p. 1197; Review by Charles Harness and M.G. Downey, "Gypsum," *Minerals Yearbook 1945* (Washington, D.C., Dept. of Interior, Bureau of Mines, 1947), p. 1315; Leonard Larson and Nan Jensen, "Gypsum," *Minerals Yearbook, 1955* (Washington, D.C., Dept. of Interior, Bureau of Mines, 1955), p. 525.

Angeles to Nevada. Formerly all rock, except that which was sold for cement retarder, had been shipped directly to Los Angeles for further processing. The mill was now moved to the mine site, and its capacity was considerably expanded; in addition, a wallboard plant was constructed. The gypsum was now mined, treated, and manufactured into ready-to-purchase products at the Blue Diamond site. The wallboard plant and mill were completed in time so that products could be sold for the buildings at the Las Vegas Gunnery School (later re-named the Nellis Air Force Base).<sup>19</sup>

The Blue Diamond Corporation now needed an augmentation of its water supply, and this was achieved through the purchase of the Matteucci Ranch, formerly a family operation but by 1941 owned by the Union Pacific Railroad. The Union Pacific retained the water rights, but leased them to the Blue Diamond Corporation. With an adequate water supply insured through newly-drilled company wells, transportation needs still met by the spur to the main line of the Union Pacific, and power supplied by Boulder Dam, the company was in an excellent position for the expansion of its facilities.<sup>20</sup>

A further significant step taken by the Blue Diamond Corporation involved the establishment of a company town, one which eventually evolved into a permanent community. In 1942, construction began on the housing at the new company village; initially, the structures were to house married supervisors and key employees. A trailer court was established for workers, in addition to the original camp. A grade school was constructed, and it quickly had an enrollment of about forty students.<sup>21</sup> The site chosen for the village was the old site of Cottonwood Springs, very near the plant and the mining operations. The new post office was named Blue Diamondville, and opened in July, 1942, but by December of the same year it had been renamed Blue Diamond. Social problems surfaced, also: the general store at the town was robbed on October 24, 1944.<sup>22</sup>

Very quickly, the corporate operations assumed considerably more importance on the southern Nevada scene. The number of workers

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<sup>19</sup> Nordyke, p. 169; *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, July 28, 1941, 1:1; author's interview with Herb Wells, Las Vegas, Sept. 26, 1978.

<sup>20</sup> Ethel Matteucci, oral interview with Tom Matteucci, in Special Collections Department, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Library; see also, Dorothy Ritenour, "The Blue Diamond Adobe," unpublished paper, Special Collections Department, UNLV Library; Bror Nordberg, "Manufacture of Gypsum, Plaster and Wallboard," *Rock Products* (Jan., 1950), pp. 137-138.

<sup>21</sup> George Holmes, Jr., *Information Circular 7555: Mining, Milling and Manufacturing Methods at the Blue Diamond Corporation's Gypsum Property, Clark County, Nevada* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Interior, Bureau of Mines), p. 4-5.

<sup>22</sup> Walter Averett, *Directory of Southern Nevada Place Names* (Las Vegas, Nev., revised ed., 1963), p. 12; *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, Oct. 25, 1944, 10:3-4.

dramatically increased with the opening of the plant. For the decade of the 1940s, the number of workers employed fluctuated from about 100 in 1942 to 191 in 1950; 1948 was a peak year, with a total of 219 working, 61 in the mine, and 158 in the mill.<sup>23</sup> Transportation to the area was improved when a gravelled and oiled road was completed; the Nevada State Highway Department constructed fourteen miles of state highway after a contract was let in July of 1944.<sup>24</sup>

Because of the postwar construction boom and the resultant increased demand for the company's wallboard, lath, and plaster, the firm expanded its operations in 1946 and 1947. The capacity of the plaster mill was increased by one-third, and that of the wallboard plant by one-half. The boiler plant was enlarged, and the carrying capacity of the aerial tramway was increased. Operations in the plants were now on a twenty-four hour per day basis, in three shifts; the mine itself was operated on a one shift basis, six days per week.<sup>25</sup>

Further, the company town was expanded, and another step taken toward its becoming a slightly larger and more permanent community. The *Las Vegas Evening Review Journal* reported in mid 1946 that twelve one-bedroom houses were to be constructed there, at a total cost of \$45,000.<sup>26</sup>

The expansion of the plant capacity in 1946 and 1947 set the stage for the Blue Diamond Corporation's steady production record and increases in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s. Indeed, there were further plant additions and modifications during the latter period. In 1954, a second wallboard plant was constructed, and important repairs and modifications of the facilities continued in the mid and late 1950s. The corporation by the end of the decade was not merely an important regional supplier of gypsum products; it was the sixth largest such producer in the entire United States.<sup>27</sup>

In concluding this survey, it will be helpful to present a summary account of the work force and production figures for the 1950s. In general, the picture is one of continuity and stability up to the point in 1959 when the Flintkote Corporation acquired the company. During the decade, the Blue Diamond Corporation remained one of the most important mining and milling operations in the state, and a major employer of mining and mill workers in Clark County.

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<sup>23</sup> Data on the number of workers at the Blue Diamond site are available in the various volumes of the *Biennial Report of the State Inspector of Mines* (Carson City, State Printing Office).

<sup>24</sup> *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, July 10, 1944, 1:2.

<sup>25</sup> Holmes, *Information Circular* 7555, pp. 4-6; Nordberg, pp. 137-138; *Las Vegas Evening Review Journal*, June 17, 1946, 1:4.

<sup>26</sup> *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, June 17, 1946, 1:4.

<sup>27</sup> Nordyke, pp. 169-170, 174; L.C. Davis and R.Y. Ashizawa, "Nevada," *Mineral Yearbook, 1959*, III, Area Reports (Washington, D.C., Department of Interior, Bureau of Mines, 1959), pp. 635-636.

In 1950, the corporation was the number one employer in Clark County in terms of those working in mines and mills; 191 men were on the payroll, out of a total of 367 workers of this type employed in the county. Clark County in that year was third in the state in terms of the number of its mining and mill employees, lagging behind both White Pine (with 1,863) and Lincoln (with 495).<sup>28</sup>

By 1956, the Blue Diamond Corporation was employing 350 men, and it ranked number two in Clark County, behind Titanium Metal Corporation of America, which employed 1,100 at its Henderson location. White Pine County had 2,896 employees in this "mines, mills, and smelters" category. By this time, Clark County in this regard ranked number two in the state; the total for Nevada was 7,830.<sup>29</sup>

By the end of the decade, just after its acquisition by Flintkote, the Blue Diamond site had 303 men at work, second in Clark County only to the 578 employed by Titanium. There were 1,171 in the "mine, mills, and smelters" category in Clark County, which again ranked second to White Pine, which had 1,498.<sup>30</sup>

Production figures for the decade of the 1950s show a steady pattern in the early 1950s until 1954, when increased plant capacity led to a considerable increase in output. The total value of crude gypsum and calcined amounted to \$1,695,000 in 1952, and \$2,764,000 in 1954; figures for 1955 and 1956 are \$3,624,000 and \$3,342,000. After a decline in 1957 and then a substantial increase in 1958, the corporation produced crude gypsum and calcined valued at \$3,697,000 in 1959.<sup>31</sup>

Over the course of nearly three and one-half decades, the Blue Diamond Corporation remained in constant production. Its work force was quite small, even in proportion to the population of Las Vegas, in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s, when the firm simply shipped crude, unprocessed gypsum to southern California. After the key date of 1941, however, the operations assumed more importance, both locally and on a regional scale. The corporation became one of the most important employers of mine and mill workers in the southern Nevada area during two decades of tremendous economic expansion and population growth. The firm established a "company town" which remained small, but did eventually make a successful transition to its present status as a residential community.

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<sup>28</sup> *Twenty-Fifth Report of the State Inspector of Mines, State of Nevada* (Carson City, State Printing Office, 1950), pp. 9-10, 19.

<sup>29</sup> *Twenty-Eighth Report of the State Inspector of Mines, State of Nevada* (1956), pp. 11-12, 20.

<sup>30</sup> *Thirtieth Report of the State Inspector of Mines, State of Nevada* (1960), pp. 10-11, 20.

<sup>31</sup> These figures were compiled from unpublished U.S. Bureau of Mines statistics by Keith Papke of the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, and provided to the author.



It cannot be argued that the Blue Diamond Corporation was particularly *vital* to the development or the emergence of modern Las Vegas or Clark County. But further analysis of this type of activity, so important in terms of its *supplementary* contribution to the overall economic growth of the area, is indispensable for a well-balanced evaluation of the history of southern Nevada, particularly in connection with other mining, milling, chemical, and metal manufacturing operations. It may well be that the cumulative effects of such businesses, and others not directly related to marriage, divorce, gambling, tourism, and "fun in the sun," have been rather underrated in the assessment of the economic history of southern Nevada.

## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

### *Views of Early Twentieth-Century Indian Life: The Harry Sampson Photo Exhibit*



DURING THE MONTH OF MAY, the changing gallery of the Nevada Historical Society Museum in Reno featured an exhibit of the photographic work of the late Harry Sampson. Born to Paiute parents at Moundhouse, just east of Carson City, in 1892, Sampson lived through an eventful period, from the "Adventist" movement of Wovoka and the Ghost Dance, to the Indian activism of recent years.

At the time of Sampson's birth, Nevada Indians had neither citizenship nor any rights the white man was bound to observe. The failure of

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Text and photo selection by Elizabeth Raymond, Assistant Editor.

the reservation system had been adequately demonstrated, and most Nevada Indians were living in and around the towns and ranches, wherever they were able to find work. But Indian culture had not by any means been suppressed. The language was still viable, and traditional ceremonies and customs endured. Hunting and pine nut gathering continued as subsistence activities rather than a way of life, though, and much had changed over the half-century since whites had entered the Great Basin. Alcohol, narcotics, and disease had taken a toll, as had White laws and practices. Indians had come to be a degraded minority, despised and rejected. Harry Sampson took advantage of the opportunities that were available, however, and engaged in a variety of worthwhile pursuits.

Taken from his parents at a young age and forcibly enrolled at the Stewart Indian School at Carson City, Sampson learned the printing trade. He also took up the clarinet and was a member of the All-Indian Band which played at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, in 1915. A life member of Reno Local No. 368, American Federation of Musicians, Sampson was active in state labor affairs for many years. As a professional printer, he worked for several Reno firms and was once a printing instructor at Stewart. Sampson was also a baseball player of some renown. He pitched for his school and later played semi-professional ball in Nevada and California. Shortly after his death in November, 1975, he was posthumously inducted into the Stewart Indian School's Sports Hall of Fame.



Groundbreaking for the first church at the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, early 1920's. Pictured left to right are Harry Sampson, John Scott, and Mr. Scott.



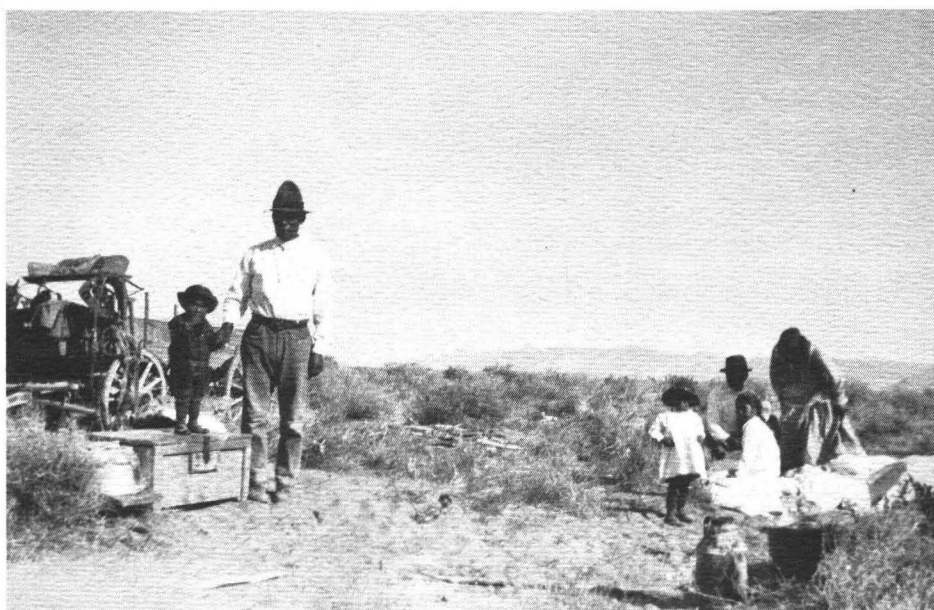
Indians gambling in downtown Reno.

Harry Sampson's dedication to the welfare of his own people was perhaps the most notable feature of his long life. In addition to speaking out on behalf of the Indian, he was one of several Paiutes who worked with the federal government in 1917 to purchase a twenty-acre tract of land which later became the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony. His knowledge of native plants used for medicinal purposes was put to use in a 1936 Works Progress Administration study of the subject. Sampson also worked with the Indian Claims Commission in connection with the Paiute people's claims, and he served as Chairman of the Reno-Sparks Colony Council, which was established under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Generations of students and scholars interested in Northern Paiute language and culture also benefited from Sampson's knowledge of his people.

Selections from the exhibit are reprinted here. The photographs featured represent Harry Sampson's efforts to document that part of Nevada's Northern Paiute history which he himself lived. Included are views of Indian life at Schurz, Stillwater, Nixon, Winnemucca Lake, Reno, and the Reno-Sparks Colony in Washoe County. The photos date from the 1910s and 1920s, and have been printed from the original negatives. They have generously been made available to the Society by Clayton Sampson, Harry's son.



Photo taken in the 1920's, in front of Harry Sampson's house in the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, looking toward the present site of the MGM Grand Hotel. The vehicle pictured is the taxi to town.



A mudhen drive on Winnemucca Lake, north of Nixon, Nevada. Pictured left to right are Conley Jones, Mark Jones, an unidentified baby, Sarah Moore, and Charlie and Ella Winnemucca.



These two photographs are both probably from the Stillwater Indian Reservation, in the early 1920's. Clayton Sampson identifies the bottom picture as possibly an Indian rodeo.





## *A Mystery Cleared: The Diary of James W. Nye*

L. JAMES HIGGINS, JR.

DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, it was a common practice for people to occupy their free time by keeping diaries, compiling scrapbooks of poetry or other articles of interest, and bringing up to date the family Bible. Because these activities were cultivated within the family unit as a measure of good taste and beneficial productivity, our progenitors have left a rich legacy reflecting many of the attitudes of the Victorian age.

Difficulties arise with the use of all historical sources. The problem with the Bibles was that when a significant event occurred in a family, e.g., a marriage, death, or birth, it was sometimes months or even years before the family historian would remember that such information should be recorded in its proper place. The result of passing time and sometimes faulty memories has often been inaccurate information. Scrapbooks were kept and added to often on whims or when the owners would get around to pasting in all of the accumulated articles that had been stuffed loosely inside the front cover for safe-keeping—a good job to accomplish on a rainy day.

Diaries, however, were different. In the first place, the author recognized from the outset that a certain discipline would be necessary for the effort to be worthwhile; a period of time should be set aside each day, usually in the evening, to record events of any importance. Archivists and students of the period are quite familiar with diarists' opening remarks on the first pages of diaries in which the authors proclaim their intentions to abide by the basic rule of the practice—to sit down everyday and write something in their treasured volume. Sometimes they complied with the rule, but more often they did not. More pressing matters prevailed and the diary would be laid aside and eventually be forgotten. Thus, the efforts to record one's personal history, a psychological need widely recognized among people even today, were thwarted. Complete diaries have become exceedingly rare.

These diaries sometimes continued to lie around the house or office, neglected and devoid of entries. But some, which might be termed "Journals of Significant Events," took on a slightly different meaning. That is, they continued to be ignored until some occurrence of great importance to the owner might cause them to be brought out again to record a death, birth, marriage, election, promotion, or other significant event. Benjamin C. Bradlee, Executive Editor of the *Washington Post* newspaper, in his published journal covering the years of his friendship with President John F. Kennedy, found it noteworthy that most Americans were still able to recall with clarity exactly where they were and what they were doing when news of the assassination in Dallas was announced to the world. No doubt countless diaries with "1963" emblazoned on the covers were brought out from the recesses of desks and dressers in the days that ensued so that individuals could record the profound grief experienced by a nation in mourning. Such, it would seem, was the case with the 1865 diary attributed to Nevada's U.S. Senator James Warren Nye when *his* friend, Abraham Lincoln, met a very similar end nearly a century earlier.

This "Nye Diary" was acquired for the Nevada Historical Society by Miss Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, one of the founders of the Society and its head until 1950. Who *first* identified the document as having been written by Nye is not clear, but Miss Wier thought it was Nye's, and displayed it as such in the Society's museum. Although it has not been exhibited in recent years, it was featured in a case with Nye's photograph and pieces of the Nye family silver both in the old State Building and in the Society's new facility, which was completed in 1968. The diary has occasionally been consulted by researchers, who have disagreed on its authenticity.

One of the puzzles concerning the document arises when the historian attempts to establish the whereabouts of then Senator Nye at the time of Lincoln's death and during the funeral procession that went from Washington, D.C., to Springfield, Illinois. An examination of the diary attributed to Nye at the Nevada Historical Society shows that there is an entry for "Friday, April 14, 1865" in which the author records the assassination in emotionally-charged terms:

President Lincoln was this day assassinated in Washington City, by the notorious J. Wilkes Booth, illegitimate son of Junius Brutus Booth, an English actor and attempted at the same hour to assassinate Hon. Wm. H. Seward, Secy. of State, in his bed, to which he was confined from recent injuries by a fall from his carriage.

From the information exhibited, it seems that the author was either close at hand in Washington, or, more likely, he made this entry at a

later date. He could not have known everything recorded in the space of those few lines. This is confirmed by the reading of the next entry for April 15th:

Rec'd the sad news of the assassination of President Lincoln, and attempted assassination of Secy. Seward, last night, at Washington City. Mr. Lincoln died this morning.

A clue is contained in the April 16th entry when the author writes:

The Cheering news by telegraph today is, that Mr. Secy. Seward is improving slightly.

Rev. A. F. White delivered a feeling and eloquent discourse on the assassination of President Lincoln.

The popular A. F. White was an early minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Carson City for a number of years.<sup>1</sup>

The April 17th entry is comparatively brief: "The news is today that Mr. Seward's surgeon thinks he will recover." And the April 18th entry soberly states that "Earnest and appropriate preparations are being made by the citizens generally, to observe, in a becoming manner, the funeral rites of President Lincoln."

The author would then lead the reader to conclude without a doubt that he was in Nevada when he writes on the 19th:

Participated as 'President of the Day' in the Solemn observances of Funeral Rites of our late beloved President, Abraham Lincoln; this was done throughout the Loyal States of the Union, and in some places in the Canadas. Hon. C.W. Brosnan delivered, at the Pavilion, in Carson City, an eloquent eulogy on the life and Character of the lamented Dec'd. 'Requiescat in pace,' illustrious dead!

If the author were Nye, then the following statement further would establish that he was in Nevada:

Rec'd. letter from Hon. Wm. H. Seward, Secy. of State at Washington, acknowledging the receipt by the President, and filing, by himself, of my letter of Feby. 17, 1865, enclosing certified copy of Resolutions of the Legislature, ratifying amendment of the Constitution of the U.S. abolishing Slavery throughout our government.

The Sheriff of Esmeralda, left for Aurora, with the two Walker Lake Indians, held for murder.

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. A.F. White, A.M., *A Discourse Delivered on Thanksgiving Day, November 27th, 1862* (San Francisco: Towne & Bacon, 1863).

However, the *New York Times* announced that with the funeral rites in Washington, D.C. coming to an end, the train bearing Lincoln's remains to his home, together with a selected party of family, close friends, and delegates from Congress, would leave on April 21st for Springfield.<sup>2</sup> And on April 22nd, the same newspaper described the departure of the train, stating "...the following on the part of the Senate and House of Representatives [specially invited to accompany the remains] ... [from Nevada] ... Mr. Nye ..."<sup>3</sup>

At that time, when the swiftest travel was by railroad, it would have been impossible for Nye to go from Carson City, Nevada to Washington, D.C. in such a short time. The reader might well come to the conclusion that, since Nye makes mention of the Esmeralda sheriff going to Aurora with two Indians charged with murder, the newspaper had merely made an error in reporting, but when the funeral train reached New York City on April 24th, the casket was removed and "...the members of the cortege followed the coffin to the Governor's Room..." at City Hall. The *New York Times* quotes Philadelphia sources accompanying the party that Nye was included in the ceremonies which followed.<sup>4</sup>

Only one other entry in the 1865 diary makes mention of the Lincoln assassination; on Sunday, April 23rd, the author writes that the "Rev. A.F. White preached an able and eloquent sermon, on the life and character of Mr. Lincoln." The balance of the diary is either blank or bears dryly stated remarks concerning the signing of state bonds. It has become a "Journal of Significant Events."

Thus, questions remain that affect students of Nevada history. Some have accepted the diary as saying that Nye was, in fact, in Nevada at the time of the assassination and took no part in the trip to Springfield with the lifeless body of the lamented President. Others have not accepted it at face value and argue that Nye came back to the diary after the funeral ceremonies to record his feelings of the circumstances. One would think that being asked to join a highly select group to accompany the casket on its long ride home would warrant some mention in a diary, rather than recording the happenings in a community 2,500 miles away, especially as insignificant an occurrence as two Indians being returned to Aurora for trial. And what of many stops the train made on the way to Illinois? The author says nothing about these, or of the more elaborate ceremonies conducted in the larger cities such as Philadelphia.

It is possible to conclude that the diary, so long used by historians and students of Nevada history, displayed in the Nevada Historical Society

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<sup>2</sup> *New York Times*, April 17, 1865.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, April 22, 1865.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, April 25, 1865.

museum, and represented as being Nye's, has long been misattributed. Somewhere along the way, since the diary's acquisition in 1916, an error has been made or someone was confused about its origins. Further clues concerning the real author are to be found in the references to the signing of state bonds.

State bonds were issued by Nevada's government for the purpose of defraying debts incurred during the territorial period. By law, the bonds bore three signatures:

The bonds to be issued pursuant to the provisions of this Act shall be signed by the Governor, countersigned by the Controller, and indorsed by the State Treasurer, and shall be authenticated with the great seal of this State; coupons for the payment of the interest thereon shall be so attached that they can be removed without injury to the bonds.<sup>5</sup>

If we are willing to accept the evidence presented regarding Nye's presence in the East, together with the detailed descriptions of the obsequies conducted in Carson City, not to mention the arrested Indians, then one can only surmise that the diary, so long credited to Nye, was actually authored by someone else. And, in view of the notations regarding the state bonds, such as the following, it seems logical that one of the three above-mentioned elected officials is the real diarist:

Monday, April 24. Signed State Bonds No. 7 to 95 inclusive, for \$500.00 each—Bonds issued under an act to fund the debt of the Territory of Nevada.

It becomes obvious that the person who maintained this diary was rather meticulous in nature, recording the numbers and amounts of bonds bearing his signature, possibly to keep some track of actions made in his official capacity in lieu of carbon copies or receipts.

In 1865, the three Nevada elected state officers under discussion were Governor Henry G. Blasdel, State Treasurer Eben Rhoades, and State Controller A.W. Nightingill (the last of these is credited with having designed the great seal of the State of Nevada, the seal of the Supreme Court, the seal of the State Controller, state revenue stamps, and, not without a little irony attached to his artistic flair, the design of state bonds).<sup>6</sup>

State bond #7, mentioned in the entry for April 24th, continues to exist, and does indeed bear the signatures of the three individuals

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<sup>5</sup> *Statutes of the State of Nevada, 1864-5*, "An Act Authorizing the Issuance and Sale of Certain State Bonds, and levying a tax to provide means for the payment thereof."

<sup>6</sup> *Statutes of the State of Nevada, 1869*, "An Act to provide for the payment of the claim of A.W. Nightingill."

required by statute, as well as the effective dates of interest accumulation in 1868, 1869 and 1870. In short, the diarist signed the state bond on the 24th, and Eben Rhoades, the State Treasurer, affixed his signature, and at the same time stated when the interest payments might be made at a later date. We may thus assume the diary was kept by either the Governor, Henry G. Blasdel, or the Controller, A.W. Nightingill.

The answer to the mystery might be found in the preserved papers of President Abraham Lincoln. The diarist, in the entry for April 20th, indicated his having received a communication from Seward saying that the President had received the diarist's "... letter of Feby. 17, 1865, enclosing certified copy of Resolutions of the Legislature, ratifying the amendment of the Constitution of the U.S. . . ." Contained in the microfilmed papers of the assassinated President is a telegram to Lincoln dated February 17, 1865 which reads:

Received constitutional amendment yesterday abolishing slavery our legislature ratified it immediately only two dissenting

H G Blasdel  
Gov Nevada

And indeed, the telegram was prepared for filing in the President's hand:

Carson Feby 17, 1865

Gov of Nevada telegraph that constitutional amendment was ratified by that state.<sup>7</sup>

Some mention should perhaps be directed to the discrepancy in the diary referring to a "letter" as opposed to the real form of the communication, a telegram. There are, however, no other letters, telegrams, or memoranda contained in the Lincoln papers from Nevada for the period of April 1865. It is probably safe to assume that Blasdel, the real diarist, made an almost semantical error on the 20th since the balance of the information is correct.

The diary, for so many years attributed to the authorship of James Warren Nye, friend of Lincoln, Nevada Territorial Governor, and U.S. Senator, should diminish in importance. This slender little volume, however, should serve as a significant lesson to historians and archivists, admonishing them to question the validity of what is represented to be authentic, but perhaps may not be.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Blasdel to Lincoln, 17 April 1865, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Presidential Papers Microfilm, Reel 92, frame 40836, Noble H. Getchell Library, University of Nevada, Reno.

<sup>8</sup> The diary itself has for some time been a part of the Blasdel Collection at the Nevada Historical Society in Reno.



## Book Reviews

*Pat McCarran: Political Boss of Nevada.* By Jerome E. Edwards. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1982. pp. x+237; notes, bibliography and index. \$8.75, paper)

ALTHOUGH MOST of the states in the trans-Mississippi West during the first half of the twentieth century had sparse populations, the men who represented them in Congress often made up for the lack of numbers in their forcefulness. It is not difficult to conjure up the names of powerful western Senators during these years who made a strong impact on national politics. The list is lengthy and would include individuals such as Hiram Johnson, Norris, Borah, Langer, Wheeler, Murray, O'Mahoney, Hayden, Cutting, Chavez, and Johnson of Colorado, to name only a few. Nevada, too, made its contribution to this cadre, with the despatch of William M. Stewart, Key Pittman, and Pat McCarran to Washington. A detailed biography of McCarran has long been needed. In this study Professor Edwards makes a fine beginning by analyzing McCarran's career in state politics, particularly his role in building a new political machine.

McCarran's career as Nevada's political boss was both typical as well as unique. If, in the words of historian Gilman Ostrander, Nevada's political life could be viewed as a "rotten borough," then the state was not at all unlike a boss-ridden ward in one of the nation's great eastern metropolitan centers, whether New York, Philadelphia, or Chicago. The similarities were striking. Nevada's population was no greater than that of a city ward, and reflected much of the same ethnic diversity and immigrant population that was typical of big cities. It depended on government largesse for much of its income. And political patronage was dispensed through a highly-developed and intricate network of personal relationships. At the same time Nevada also reflected certain unique elements. For many years the economy was heavily dependent on mining, and by 1931 it became the only state to legalize gambling. Moreover, with the smallest population of any state in the Union its representation in Congress was limited. Political struggles within the state, therefore, took on special intensity.

In nine terse chapters Edwards provides a clear and cogent account of McCarran's progress in building a powerful political machine. That he

succeeded was surprising, because his beginnings were not auspicious. A first-generation Irish-American born in Reno of a poor family, he grew up on a small ranch near the Truckee River. Upon graduation from Reno High School he entered the University of Nevada and, despite some interruptions, graduated in 1901. At the age of twenty-six he entered his first political race when he won a seat in the lower house of the Nevada legislature. With a driving sense of ambition and a strong strain of vanity and egotism he excelled in keeping his name in newspapers and suppressing rivals. Nevertheless, he was not a particularly attractive political figure, and he was defeated in an attempt to win a seat in the state Senate. He then moved to the new mining town of Tonopah where competition was less keen than in Reno. In this remote area he secured election as district attorney of Nye County in 1906. But his three-year tenure was not at all successful. He made powerful political enemies like George Wingfield. And he failed in his effort to become wealthy through mining investments. Thus he returned to Reno to open a criminal law practice. In 1913, despite opposition from the state's legal fraternity, he won election for a five-year term on the Nevada Supreme Court. There he showed continuing restlessness, which fired his ambition to win a seat in the United States Senate. But as Senator Key Pittman, then the reigning Democratic Party leader in Nevada noted in 1915, McCarran was widely distrusted "by reason of the fact that nearly all who know him doubt his sincerity, and believe that he would sacrifice everything for his own political ambitions." (p. 13)

Consequently, it was not easy for McCarran to build a political base in the state. During the 1920s his ambitions to sit in the United States Senate were repeatedly thwarted by his enemies. It was only in 1932, with the Roosevelt landslide, that McCarran gained the coveted Senate seat by the slimmest of margins. He was then fifty-five years old. Once in office, however, he consolidated his position by working vigorously and wholeheartedly for the special interests among his constituency. This meant that he became a special advocate for the state's major industries, particularly mining, gambling, and livestock. At the same time, in an underdeveloped economy such as Nevada's, the federal government constituted a major industry in itself. The United States owned 86.9% of the state's land area, and federal military installations and water projects constituted a significant share of Nevada's total income. McCarran shrewdly grasped the picture early in his Senate career and made himself a forceful and highly effective spokesman for the state in the nation's capital. He ruthlessly used this leverage and the patronage that now became available to him to build a strong political organization in Nevada. He not only rewarded friends, but a vindictive streak led him to seek out and punish enemies. By 1950, Edwards notes, McCarran's

enemies were numerous enough seriously to divide the Democratic Party in the state. From then until his death in 1954 his influence began to wane.

In his epilogue Edwards concludes that McCarran's contributions to Nevada politics were mixed. He secured a great deal for the state from the federal government. But his singular desire for personal power was an increasingly divisive influence in state government and undermined his party. Such a judgment is balanced and cogent.

This is a very competent monograph. Edwards has done his homework by consulting a wide range of sources. The McCarran Papers—now at the Nevada Historical Society in Reno—were basic. In addition, he consulted manuscript collections of other Nevada politicians, newspapers, and the valuable oral history interviews at the University of Nevada. The book is a well-written and concise account of McCarran's role in Nevada's political life and whets the reader's desire for a full biography of one of the state's most important politicians.

Gerald D. Nash  
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*Indians of the Great Basin: A Critical Bibliography.* By Omer C. Stewart. Bibliography Series of the Newberry Library Center for the History of the American Indian. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982)

IN CALLING THIS a critical bibliography, Stewart is understating the matter, for this volume not only discusses many of the references critically, but also places them historically and with regard to other writings of the same period. Essentially this is a condensed history of the Great Basin tracing the Native American peoples of the region from the Palaeo-Indian period to the historic present. Within each subtopic the consideration of the literature is historic in presentation format, so that the reader can follow the development of publications in any of the various aspects discussed from prehistory through rock art. Probably no one has a more intimate knowledge of the literature on ethnography and ethnohistory of the Indians of the Great Basin than Omer Stewart, who has utilized a regional approach in the presentation of this information.

The first section of the book is a detailed discussion of the prehistory, and major sources from university series as well as individual sources in the literature are cited. In the ethnological section there is an extensive consideration following the same pattern, and it includes a review of the historical backgrounds of the various groups with their linguistic classifications, and an overview of their acculturation periods. There are

selected citations concerning the Utes, Southern Paiutes, Shoshone, Northern Paiutes and Washos. There is a specific description of the use of peyote, or non-use during the acculturation period and into the present day. Stewart approaches the peyote cult on the basis of his own research, and he presents it as a religion related to the acculturation, citing references to support his contention. In addition there are sections on linguistics, petroglyphs and pictographs, and historical sources for ethnographic information, which contain basic research references on these fields.

Stewart includes three maps: they contain the locales of Early Man and Archaic sites in the Great Basin with a list of their names; a designation of language boundaries; and today's present Indian reservations within the region. The bibliographical references are numbered, which assists easy reference to the full bibliographical citations that are listed in the last chapter of the book.

During the course of the discussions difficulties arise, since this is not just an annotated and critical bibliography. In the preface Stewart describes the Indians' adaptation of the Great Basin environment as an admirable example of people living under harsh circumstances. Although this is not an uncommon attitude, Stewart, who lived in this environment a good many years, recognizes its resources in fauna and flora, as long as water sources were known, and has related in other publications the abilities of the peoples to survive well. He also does not mention the presence of horticulture and the use of water to irrigate the domesticated plants that occurred in the southern Nevada and Utah areas of the Great Basin after A.D. 600.

Of more significance to the reader are the bibliographic presentations, and for the most part they are excellent. There are, however, a number of editorial problems in bibliographical citations which should have been corrected. For example, Shutler's Lost City paper is cited instead of the Tule Springs report, edited by Wormington and Ellis. Typographical errors which should have been eliminated during editing are frequent (as "beogeographers" for biogeographers), but considering the details of the bibliographical references, they are relatively inconspicuous. There are always citations which the individual feels should have been included, but have not been considered, for example Don Fowler's *Models and Great Basin Prehistory* (1977).

One occasionally wishes that Stewart had expanded sections, as when he refers to the "oasis theory," which he has used and merely mentions briefly in this volume. There are some terms which might be further explained, such as "Numic" in the discussion of linguistics, and Stewart's "upstreaming" of data. The term "Anglo" is not used in the Great Basin region, and should be explained, nor is the expression "White profes-

sional historians" clear. Under "Miscellaneous Publications" the physical anthropological references mentioned are out of date, and a number of papers have appeared since Kennedy's in 1959.

For the most part these are minor irritations. The discussion of the publications from a historic point of view, dealing first with prehistory, then ethnology, tribe by tribe, bringing them into the ethnohistoric present, continuing through linguistics, works on petroglyphs and pictographs, and concluding with a discussion of historical sources, results in a careful and analytical bibliographical essay (as Stewart calls it). The presentation of the information from the historical sources is particularly interesting; Stewart cites references to Great Basin people in journals and papers where they might not be expected, such as in the Hudson's Bay Company publications. This book will be enjoyed by many, especially those who are conducting scholarly research in the field, but also by those who enjoy reading about the region with which they are intrigued or where they may live. There is enough discussion to stimulate their interest and the bibliographical citations will help them seek and find further information on the Great Basin area and its peoples.

Richard H. Brooks  
Sheilagh Brooks  
University of Nevada,  
Las Vegas

*Then and Now: A Photographic History of Vegetation Change in the Central Great Basin Desert.* By Garry F. Rogers. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982. xi+152 pp., \$15.00)

THEN AND NOW is Utah's version of Hastings and Turner's *The Changing Mile* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1965) and is no less interesting and useful. Recent (1968-1980) and historic (1868-1916) photographs from the same camera station are compared. In a few instances, photographs from the late 1960s are compared with the ones taken a decade later. Rogers' "central Great Basin" is the pluvial Lake Bonneville Basin of western Utah.

The plates are introduced with overviews of the climate and ecology of the area, a review of literature concerning historical changes in vegetation and disturbance, the sources of historical photographs, and methods of obtaining recent photographs. The plates themselves are arranged ecologically from the lower valleys to the upper valleys and foothills. Each matched pair of photographs is documented as to location, date and photographer for the original and the match, and a

summary of changes in vegetation and climatic data is presented. The book concludes with a short discussion of the observed changes in the vegetation.

The book, although aimed at those concerned with the ecology and management of the Great Basin, appeals to a wide audience with interests ranging from historical to natural-historical. Too often we are caught up in the concept of an unchanging environment. Away from obviously disturbed areas it is usually taken for granted that what was seen by the early explorers is still there today. We don't see the subtle effects of erosion (plate 16) or the gradual (plates 36, 42), or even abrupt (plates 28, 19) changes in the vegetation. Differences in an area, not easily recognized except through photography, are noticeable even after a decade (plate 47). Throughout most of the book, the effects of disturbances, especially those related to human activities, are clearly and often blatantly evident. The decrease in the water level of the Great Salt Lake (plate 1), the effects of fire (plates 15, 48), and overgrazing (plates 2, 3), and the concomitant replacement of natural plant communities by weedy, often introduced, species due to urbanization (plates 17, 18) are all well documented in *Then and Now*.

In his discussion, Robbins largely attributes the observed changes directly to settlement of the Great Basin. He generalizes that heavy grazing led to the reduction of native grasses and thus fires. This opened areas for the spread of introduced weedy plants which could outcompete native species. The documentation of the detrimental effect of human related activities goes on and is vividly seen in the photographs of *Then and Now*.

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Historical Society, Las Vegas

*Deep Enough: A Working Stiff in the Western Mine Camps.* By Frank A. Crampton. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982. 299 pp., \$16.95)

I MUST ADMIT that I approached this book with some skepticism. The University of Oklahoma's publicity release, the dust jacket summary, and the very title suggested that *Deep Enough* was just another glorification of the white man's burden school of western development. We are all familiar with the genre, the noble mine engineer (investor, manager, lawyer, doctor, etc.) who went west at the turn of the century to civilize the wilds and make Ely, Nevada safe for the Junior Chamber of



Commerce. It is a form of western history which has become institutionalized along with the cowboy and Indian school which it partially supplanted. Much of the good work in western history in the past twenty years has been devoted to debunking the breed. While the University of Oklahoma Press has kept western history alive, I was convinced that the Press had made a major error in reissuing Crampton's anecdotal tale of mining in the era of the Great War. I was wrong!

Although I am still less than taken with the title (it should be changed for our x-rated world), Crampton's autobiography is not only mining history from a modern perspective, but it is also an adventure tale which rivals the best of western fiction. I picked up the book on a slow Saturday night and was unable to put it down until dawn reminded me of my fatigue ten hours later. I was even able to pull my teenage son away from television for a few minutes when I recounted one of Crampton's better practical jokes (I can only say it involved garter snakes at a graduation ceremony). However, let me introduce Frank Crampton before recounting the sources of his tall tales.

Frank A. Crampton came from the cream of New York society. His relatives included a few of the better-known robber barons, and family friends included both Mark Twain and Grover Cleveland. His younger stepbrother was none other than the beloved Norman Rockwell. A normally dutiful child would have accepted this station in life and would have grown up to become another wealthy stockbroker, lawyer, or businessman. Frank Crampton was different. In 1906, he flunked out of the Ivy League and headed west for adventure and independence. A dropout and disgrace, Crampton went without any of the comforts to which he had become accustomed. He made his way to Chicago by working odd jobs. In the Windy City, he came under the protective wings of two genuine working stiffs, John T. Harrington and Michael Sullivan. Harrington and Sullivan directed him to Cripple Creek. There, they taught him mining and signed him up with the Western Federation of Miners.

Cripple Creek began an odyssey which would last a half century and take Crampton from Colorado through the Southwest and eventually to China. He rose quickly from raw mucker to skilled tramp miner to assayer. By the teens, he had become one of the Southwest's respected mine engineers, but an engineer with a difference. While the industry strove to jump on the anti-worker bandwagon of Tayloristic "scientific" management, Crampton realized that good labor relations required some consideration of the worker's perspective. Crampton's mines paid good dividends without time and motion study; his larger competitors saw salvation in "science," union-busting, and violence. Crampton devotes several chapters to the conditions in certain corporate mines which

materially contributed to bad labor relations, conditions summarized by the title of Chapter VII, "Men are Cheaper than Timber."

No good western autobiography would be acceptable without a bit of name-dropping, and Crampton does his share. In Arizona, he worked with Tom Campbell, the future Republican governor of the state. In Nevada, it was Pete Buol, an unconventional father of Las Vegas. Back in Colorado, Crampton tells of Ludlow and his friendship with Louis Tikis, the United Mine Workers' martyr in that sad affair. Yet, the name-dropping never interferes with the story and the "stiffs" receive as much space and praise as governors and celebrities.

The thing that is best about the Crampton autobiography, however, is its rich detail. When he writes about the Copper Belt property near Wickenburg, the reader can feel the dust and heat. When he discusses mining in Cripple Creek, it is done in such a manner that one can truly understand the underground life. I should add that his details, at least in respect to Arizona, Cripple Creek, and Goldfield, have been verified over and over again by the hundred plus miners interviewed in Arizona State University's "Working the West" oral history project.

If there is any serious criticism of *Deep Enough*, it comes in an area which Frank Crampton never really examined, occupational health. Western mining was one of the deadliest occupations in twentieth-century America, an occupation which came under increasing scrutiny when the First War greatly expanded production and mine fatalities. By chance, I was reading the autobiography of pioneering public health specialist Alice Hamilton only weeks before I picked up the Crampton book. Hamilton visited many of the same mines described by Crampton, often in the same year. Whereas Crampton would speak of the technical difficulties of finding good cinnabar, for example, Hamilton would note that men in a cinnabar mine died of mercury poisoning before the age of 40. When Crampton saw copper, Hamilton saw silicosis. It seems a bit strange that Crampton overlooked this important aspect of western life, particularly when many of the more traditional reminiscences mention silicosis, mercury poisoning, and plumbism. Perhaps it could be explained by his almost exclusive experience with small mines, mines where machine drilling (a major cause of silicosis) was rare. Perhaps, too, it shows that Crampton was really not a "stiff," even though he fervently believed he was.

What can be said about Frank Crampton's *Deep Enough* in closing? To those who have sworn off western reminiscence because of its Calvin Coolidge perspective and Wagnerian prose, take heart. Crampton has given us an unusual combination of wild West excitement and working stiff perspective written in a wry and witty way. My only regret, after finishing the book, was that Frank Crampton's passing denied me the

final pleasure of *Deep Enough*. I sure would have appreciated thanking him personally for a fine evening's read!

James C. Foster  
University of Wisconsin,  
Parkside

*Dammed Indians: The Pick-Sloan Plan and the Missouri River Sioux, 1944-1980.* By Michael L. Lawson. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982. vii+260 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index.)

MICHAEL L. LAWSON, an historian for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, has written an excellent account of how federal water development programs for the Missouri River Basin affected the Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, Lower Brule, Crow Creek, and Yankton Sioux in North and South Dakota. He discusses the evolution of federal efforts to control flooding on the Missouri River, how proposals developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation in the Interior Department uprooted the Sioux, the lengthy negotiations to compensate the Indians for the loss of their bottomlands, and the federal programs to relocate displaced tribal members and provide for their social and economic well being.

The Pick-Sloan Plan for controlling the flood waters of the Missouri River Basin was formulated in 1944 by the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. It violated Sioux treaty rights by permitting the Corps to arbitrarily confiscate reservation land. The Ft. Randall, Oahe, and Big Bend dams created reservoirs that damaged more Indian property than any other public works project in United States history. More than 202,000 acres of Sioux land were inundated and 580 families had to leave their homes and relocate on barren upland prairies.

The Sioux faced numerous obstacles in the attempt to secure just cash awards for the loss of their land. Constant delays occurred because of conflicting land appraisals by the Corps of Engineers, Indian Bureau, and tribal officials. Congress eventually authorized over \$34 million in cash settlements. The Sioux considered this inadequate compensation even though they received more money than their non-Indian neighbors.

After they reached a final settlement, the Indians had to move to new tribal communities at Eagle Butte and elsewhere. The Sioux were embittered by this experience. They found it all but impossible to purchase replacement land of equal value. The removal of their cemeteries to alternate locations created psychological stress. Indian families

had to reside in overcrowded temporary quarters because Indian Bureau officials neglected to survey their reservations for new homesites prior to relocation. Reservation conditions remained chaotic until the government finished construction of adequate housing, community centers, schools, agency offices, and hospitals.

Approximately \$20 million of the Pick-Sloan awards were used by Congress to help the Sioux establish social and economic self-sufficiency prior to contemplated termination of federal services. Congress generally did not restrict the use of rehabilitation funds except for prohibiting the distribution of money on a per capita basis. The Indian Bureau encouraged tribal leaders to plan, implement, and administer their own rehabilitation projects.

The Missouri River Sioux set up family improvement, educational, and industrial development programs. The construction of additional housing, the purchase of farm equipment, trucks, and livestock dramatically improved the Indians' standard of living. Educational loans, grants, and the opening of the Standing Rock Ft. Yates Community College benefited many younger tribal members. The Sioux opened business enterprises such as a quilt factory, cheese plant, and a supermarket. They also used rehabilitation funds to consolidate reservation land resources.

A number of problems limited this social and economic progress. The Sioux often lacked business expertise, and the distribution of rehabilitation money became entangled with tribal politics. The effort to establish additional small family ranches was, for the most part, unsuccessful because it did not parallel the large-scale corporate economic development of the Great Plains cattle industry.

Lawson concludes that the Sioux gained few benefits from the Pick-Sloan water development plan. The constant fluctuation of the reservoir water levels caused stream bank erosion and endangered tribal livestock. The Sioux did not receive lower electrical rates; they found it was too costly to develop 125,000 acres of land suitable for irrigation; and the Chief Gall Resort and a similar tourist facility at Fort Thompson went bankrupt.

*Dammed Indians* has only minor shortcomings. The author uses the Pick-Sloan controversy to indict federal Indian policy in general for being fraudulent, ignorant, and deceptive. What emerges from this volume, however, is an effort by Congress to provide the Missouri River Sioux with generous financial assistance that far surpassed funds authorized by the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act. Lawson misses the opportunity to reassess the record of the much maligned Indian Bureau during the Eisenhower years.

These criticisms should not detract from the value of Lawson's book. Carefully researched, it is based on oral interviews, tribal council

records, and manuscript collections in the National Archives. The author has made a significant contribution to the understanding of Sioux history and federal Indian policy since 1945.

Kenneth R. Philp  
University of Texas,  
Arlington

*The Forgotten Frontier: Urban Planning in the American West before 1890.* By John W. Reps. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981. 169 pp., notes, illustrations, bibliographical essay, and index.)

THIS BOOK is based largely on the author's monumental *Cities in the American West: A History of Frontier Urban Planning*, published in 1979 by Princeton University Press. The research and writing of that project took more than a decade, and the result was a volume over eight hundred pages long, containing at least five hundred illustrations, including thirty-two color plates. *The Forgotten Frontier*, a paperback of less than two hundred pages, is an elaborate summary of the previous work, which cost \$75.00 at the time of its publication. The present book contains the essential story and about one hundred illustrations—plans, maps, surveys, and views—showing the original designs of every major Western city and dozens of smaller places. The illustrations are mainly selected from those appearing in the parent volume, but a few new ones have been added. Of special interest, the footnotes and bibliographical notes have been updated to include references to more recent scholarship.

According to Reps, Frederick Jackson Turner should have devoted more attention to the urban dimension of Western history. His book supports the thesis that the founding of towns on the various frontiers preceded rural settlement or took place at the same time, and that the establishment of urban communities stimulated the development of the rural West. The "simple truth is that in every section of the West, towns were in the vanguard of settlement" (p. 3). In "virtually every aspect of life, urban residents, not farmers and ranchers, dominated Western culture" (p. 4). Moreover, Western towns "differed little from their Eastern counterparts" (p. 4). Imitation rather than innovation prevailed, since most of the urban centers were "founded by promoters and settled by migrants from the East who brought with them older urban values, expectations, and institutions" (p. 4).

Reps writes about the "dreams of power, wealth, freedom, conquest, and opportunity that led men into the American West to people it with

towns and cities" (p. 144). The lure of the urban West is a compelling theme, and it is clearly evident in his treatment of the appearance of Hispanic and Anglo settlements in Texas, the Southwest, and California, the creation of urban centers in the Pacific Northwest, Great Plains, and Mountain States, the emergence of Mormon towns, and the rise of boom towns in Oklahoma. Reps maintains that from the beginning "the West was a region of planned cities" (p. 5), and he pays special attention to well-planned places the caliber of Colorado Springs and Salt Lake City.

Every student of the American West should become familiar with the work of John W. Reps. The University of Missouri Press is to be commended for publishing this shorter, less-expensive paperback version of his earlier volume. It should reach a larger audience of general readers.

Brad Luckingham  
*Arizona State University*



## NEW RESOURCE MATERIALS

### *Nevada State Archives*

The Archives has received 102 cubic feet of the executive records of former Governor Robert List; this brings to 125 cubic feet the Archives' holdings of records from the List administration (1979-83). The newly-acquired material is closed to the public for twenty-five years, although access may be permitted by submitting a formal request to List or three other designated individuals.

Other recent accessions include the minutes of the State Gaming Control Board, 1955-79, and the Nevada Gaming Commission, 1959-79. Both sets of minutes date from the creation of the agencies, and their transfer marks the first time that records pertaining to gaming regulation have been placed in archival custody.

A comprehensive survey of the Archives' holdings has uncovered portions of an extremely significant document, long thought lost: the manuscript territorial census of 1862. Mandated by the Territorial Legislature in 1861, for the purpose of carrying out legislative apportionment, the census was taken by county assessors in the summer of 1862. Although it was probably conducted in all counties, only the enumerations for Storey, Ormsby, Douglas and Washoe have survived. These areas, however, contained most of the territory's population centers, so the preponderance of Nevada residents were recorded. The 1862 census has been microfilmed on two reels, one containing the enumerations for Storey, Ormsby and Douglas, and the other containing the subsequently rediscovered one for Washoe County. Both reels are available for purchase from the Nevada State Library in Carson City (contact Joan Kerschner, Assistant Librarian for Public and Technical Services).

Guy Louis Rocha  
*Nevada State Archivist*

### *Nevada Historical Society*

In the early 1880s, a young woman resident of Eureka, Nevada, compiled a scrapbook of newspaper articles about her exploits as a bicycle racer. The volume chronicled the career of Lizzie Baymer (born



Lizzie Baymer, c.1880.

Boehmer in 1862), renowned "champion woman bicycle rider of the Pacific coast," who successfully participated in numerous contests in her home state of Nevada and in California. A copy of the scrapbook, along with several photographs of the intriguing Miss Baymer and her "Ordinary"—the bicycle she used in competition—were recently made available to the Society by Wheeler K. Hobbs of Stockton, California.

One of several valuable items recently donated by George C. Franzman is a home movie of the last run on the Virginia and Truckee Railroad. The eight millimeter color film, part of which was shot from a car following the train between Carson City and Minden on May 30,

1950, records the final day of activity on the colorful line which had commenced operations in 1869, and gained fame as the "Bonanza Railroad" of the Comstock.

Among items found last year in the bottom of a trunk belonging to Mrs. James G. Scrugham were a quantity of the late Nevada governor, congressman and senator's papers. Dating principally from the 1930s and 1940s, they consist of slightly more than a cubic foot of political and business correspondence, records of Scrugham's senatorial campaign committees, tax returns, copies of speeches, and hundreds of photographs, many of which depict the senator's activities while he was on active duty with the army during World War II. These newly-discovered materials represent a significant addition to the organized collection of Scrugham papers already held by the society.

Eric Moody  
*Curator of Manuscripts*  
*Nevada Historical Society*



Col. James Scrugham inspecting artillery during WWII.

*UNR Library to Acquire Laxalt Papers*

In the fall of 1982 an important and somewhat unique agreement was formalized between the University of Nevada, Reno and U.S. Senator Paul Laxalt. The agreement is important because it brings about the deposit in the UNR Library of Laxalt's senatorial papers and records.<sup>1</sup> Its uniqueness is that it calls for the deposit of materials while the Senator is still in office, and it brought to his Washington, D.C., office last fall a member of the library's staff to work on the papers.

Senator Laxalt initially began to consider depositing his papers in the library when he received a letter from retiring Nebraska Senator Carl T. Curtis. In his letter Curtis states:

As I wind up 40 years of service in the Congress, I find that many memories as well as words of advice come to mind, but I'll save the memories and spare you the advice—with one exception.

I have discovered the usefulness of taking steps to ensure that Senatorial papers and files are properly preserved. I well know that in the press of current legislation and other day-to-day affairs, it is easy for both ourselves and our staffs to ignore this area.

Each of us, though, for better or for worse, becomes a part of history on the day we are sworn in. I think it behooves us to see that our careers are accurately portrayed by historians (at least!). Providing proper storage for and access to our papers helps facilitate this.<sup>2</sup>

With Curtis' advice in mind, Laxalt contacted the Special Collections Department of the UNR Library last spring to ask whether it would be interested in becoming his depository. After an enthusiastic affirmative reply, a formal agreement of deposit was written and the process was begun which would bring the first group of materials to the university.

Our agreement with Senator Laxalt stipulated that I would go to Washington to work on the papers as a member of his staff. During my stay, I had three major objectives I wished to accomplish: to inventory, pack, and ship to the library all inactive records in storage; to familiarize myself with the day-to-day operation of the Senator's office, particularly regarding the creation and storage of correspondence and other office records; to prepare a records management program which would provide for the scheduled retention and retirement of all office records.

Upon my arrival in Senator Laxalt's office, I filled out the necessary papers to become an official staff member of the U.S. Senate, was given

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this paper, records and/or papers are defined as the files created by Senator Laxalt's office in the transaction of its business, e.g., ingoing and outgoing correspondence, memoranda, notes, speeches, press releases, photographs, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Carl T. Curtis, R-Neb. to Paul Laxalt, R-Nev., 11 October 1978.

a desk to use, and began five weeks of work. My first task was to meet everyone working in the office and to find out what they do, in particular how they use and generate records. In comparison with other senate offices, Laxalt's is small, with sixteen people in the main office and five in the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Regulatory Reform, of which Laxalt is Chairman. Everyone in the office, from the administrative assistant to the clerks and secretaries, was extremely cooperative, and after a few days, and voluminous notes, I had a good idea of each person's duties and how the office operated.

My next objective was to determine the different kinds of records generated in the office and how they are organized. To do this, I conducted a detailed survey of the office records, delving into file cabinets and recording in detail what I found within. By far, the most substantial amount of material I found was in-coming and out-going correspondence. Approximately 6,000 pieces of mail are received by the office each month, and this may increase to more than 10,000 with Laxalt's new role as head of the Republican National Committee. Most correspondence comes from constituents and is generally similar to that received by other senators, consisting of requests for help dealing with a federal agency (Internal Revenue Service, Social Security Administration, Veterans Administration, etc.), expressions of constituents' views on national issues, and letters asking the Senator to vote a certain way on a bill in Congress. However, because of Laxalt's close personal friendship with President Reagan, and his role as unofficial liaison between the President and the Senate, his office also receives a great deal of mail from individuals wishing to gain access to the executive branch. Usually these are from persons seeking employment such as a Presidential appointment, or those requesting the Senator to relay information directly to the President.

Along with correspondence I found a variety of other files in the office. These included legislative files, with notes, background materials, and briefing memos sent to the Senator by the legislative aides; administrative files containing invitations, acknowledgements, schedules, and requests for autographs, photographs of the Senator, flags flown over the Capitol, etc.; press files including speeches, clippings, press releases, and newsletters; the Senator's personal correspondence to constituents, colleagues, business leaders, and many national and political figures. All of these materials are dealt with in a records management plan I have written for the office. This report included recommendations on standardization of filing systems and subject headings, along with scheduling detailing how long records should be saved, when they should be retired to storage, and after what period of time they should be sent to the library.

After two weeks of interviewing staff and surveying office records, it was time to tackle my final objective, the packing and inventorying of seven years of office records stored in a dim locker in the attic of the Russell Senate Office Building. I was somewhat dismayed when I first viewed the stack of boxes, all covered with a thick layer of dust. Some of the boxes had split at the seams and their contents threatened to spill onto the floor; fortunately all were labeled, though some rather scantily. It was obvious that in the fast pace of a senate office, the materials had been packed in haste and sent to the attic to be forgotten or rarely looked at again.

Despite rumors, I was assured the attic was not inhabited with rats (only mice, evidenced by abundant traps). My fears allayed, I spent the next two weeks making my daily ascent, sorting, inventorying, and packing the ubiquitous boxes of papers. Through my previous research knowledge of the files in the office, I was able to identify everything correctly, and to decrease the volume slightly by disposing of items having no historical or tentative value. The results of my labors were 190 neatly packed and labeled boxes which, with great relief, I saw mailed off to the UNR Library.

The papers which are now on deposit in the UNR Library will receive further organization by the Special Collections Department's manuscript curator and myself. This in-depth processing stage will be greatly enhanced by the knowledge I gained in Laxalt's office and through consultation in Washington with the Library of Congress, National Archives, Senate Historical Office, Senate Computer Center, and Micrographic Division. Because of this information, we will know the origin of office files, who was responsible for them, and what they were used for. Since the Senator is still in office, we will be able to consult with his staff when questions arise. In accordance with the records management guidelines, we can expect to receive regular deposits of papers, yearly and at the end of every Congress.

Through the urging of the Senate Historical Office and because of a growing realization that senatorial papers are of great historical value, there is a movement on the part of a number of senators to begin doing something about their papers earlier in their careers. This will help avoid the problems of hasty and haphazard packing during the senators' last days in office, and will insure that the material will reach their final repositories in a consistent and organized manner. My own experience in Washington was unique; archivists whose repositories are receiving a collection of senatorial papers have not in the past had the opportunity to spend a few weeks learning about the operation and organization of the senate office which will be sending them the materials. The



University of Nevada, Reno is pleased to be participating in the deposit of Senator Laxalt's papers, and we hope other repositories can duplicate this experience in the coming years.

Robert E. Blesse, *Head*  
*Special Collections Dept. and*  
*University Archives*  
*University of Nevada, Reno Library*

## NEWS AND DEVELOPMENTS

### *New Resource Materials Section*

Effective with the Spring, 1983 issue of the *NHS Quarterly*, the "NHS Acquisitions" section has been expanded, partially altered in terms of focus and emphasis, and re-named. No longer will the section feature Historical Society acquisitions only; instead, an effort will be made to regularly include important new documents and collections of other state repositories, such as the Special Collections Departments of both UNR and UNLV, and the Nevada State Archives. The acquisitions of the Historical Society will continue to be noted, of course; as has been the case for the past several issues, they will be reported by the Society's Curator of Manuscripts, Eric Moody.

### *New Assistant Editor*

The Society is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Elizabeth Raymond as Assistant Editor of the *NHS Quarterly*. She has been assisting the Editor for several months, and her appointment became official in January, 1983.

Dr. Raymond has been employed by the Society in Reno since January, 1981; she is a research associate and has been primarily engaged in the organization of manuscript collections and the preparation of registers. She received her Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Pennsylvania in 1979. Dr. Raymond is interested in environmental perception—the interaction of people with landscapes—and she is bringing an interdisciplinary approach to her current studies in Nevada history.

### *Addendum to Bushnell Article*

Because of a proofing error, a note was omitted from the first page of the text of Dr. Eleanore Bushnell's recent article "One of Twelve: Nevada's Impeachment Connection" (Spring, 1983). Dr. Bushnell wished to acknowledge that "Eslie Cann of the Nevada Historical Society contributed greatly-valued research assistance to this article." The Editor apologizes for this oversight.

Members of the Society will be pleased to learn that Mrs. Cann, who has with friendliness and expertise assisted thousands of patrons and researchers over the years, is still associated with the Reno office on a part-time basis.

### *Forthcoming Publications*

Two new books of considerable interest to Nevada readers will be available later this year. Dr. Russell Elliott, Professor Emeritus of History, University of Nevada, Reno, has completed his long-awaited study of the life and career of Senator William Stewart. It is being published by the University of Nevada Press.

Professor Martha Knack of the Department of Anthropology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, has authored *As Long as the River Shall Run: An Ethnohistory of Pyramid Lake Reservation*. It is being published by the University of California Press.

## Contributors

Guy Louis Rocha is currently completing his doctoral dissertation at the University of Nevada, Reno. He is the Nevada State Archivist, and formerly was the Curator of Manuscripts at the Nevada Historical Society; he has written articles and book reviews related to labor and mining in the west.

Roger Smith is a graduate student in medieval literature at Stanford University. Previously he studied English literature and dead languages at the University of Nevada, Reno, and was an associate editor of *Nevada* magazine, where he strove to imitate the spirit, but not the spelling, of Sam Davis.

Albin J. Cofone is a Professor of Anthropology at Suffolk Community College in Selden, New York. He previously published "Themes in the Italian Settlement of Nevada" in the Summer, 1982 issue of the *Quarterly*.

James Hulse is a Professor of History at the University of Nevada, Reno, and is a specialist in European and Russian history. He has published a number of articles, reviews, and books on Nevada history, including *The Nevada Adventure*; *The University of Nevada: A Centennial History*; and *Lincoln County, Nevada: 1864-1909, History of a Mining Region*.

Kim Geary received her undergraduate degree in history from the University of Tulsa, and is completing the requirements for the M.A. in Historical Archaeology through the History Department of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Ms. Geary's research interests focus upon the mining companies and communities of southern Nevada.

L. James Higgins received his B.A. in history from the University of Nevada, Reno, and did graduate work at the College of William and Mary. He formerly was the Curator of Manuscripts at the Nevada Historical Society, and compiled *A Guide to the Manuscript Collections at the Nevada Historical Society* (1977).

## **Books on Nevada**

### **A GUIDE TO THE MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS AT THE NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

L. James Higgins

After more than seventy years of collecting, the Society has published its first guide to the non-print collections. An alphabetical list of the individual holdings occupies over 200 pages. A unique "name, place and thing" index guides the reader to collections containing items on a particular person or place. For the convenience of researchers interested in a specific chronological range, collections are indexed by five-year periods in the concluding section of the book. \$8 postpaid.

### **YOUR GUIDE TO WESTERN NEVADA**

Al and Mary Ellen Glass

This first of a series of guidebooks to major sections of Nevada offers five self-guiding tours of the most fascinating portions of the Comstock country. Maps and detailed instructions guide the reader to Virginia City, Lake Tahoe, Alpine County, CA, Carson Valley, the Newlands Project and Humboldt Sink. Historic sites, mining districts and ghost towns abound as well as an opportunity to join in the Pyramid Lake Indian War of 1860. \$2.50 postpaid.

### **YOUR GUIDE TO SOUTHERN NEVADA**

Maryellen V. Sadovich

Take six self-guiding tours in your own automobile. Simple directions to southern Nevada's back country and historic sites. Explore the Colorado River, Muddy Valley, Eldorado Canyon, Goodsprings and Searchlight. Search for Breyfogle's lost gold in the valleys where near-pure gold lay exposed. Follow detailed maps and enjoy the old photographs of Nevada's picturesque southern bonanza camps. \$2.50 postpaid.

### **TURN THIS WATER INTO GOLD: THE STORY OF THE NEWLANDS PROJECT**

John M. Townley

The fascinating heritage of Churchill and its Newlands Project, the nation's first federal reclamation system, is the subject of this richly illustrated narrative history. It treats the prehistoric occupants of Carson Sink, the pioneer years of the 19th Century, then details the development of irrigated agriculture and the contemporary water controversy over the Carson and Truckee rivers. \$12.50 postpaid. Hardbound.

### **AN INDEX TO THE PUBLICATIONS OF THE NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1907-1972**

Eric N. Moody

This long-needed finding aid to more than sixty years of Society publications will greatly simplify reference inquiries into the various *Papers*, *Reports* and the *Quarterly*. A must for any western library. \$12.50 postpaid. Hardbound.

**NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
1650 North Virginia  
Reno, NV 89503

## *New Publications from the Nevada Historical Society*

### **NEVADA ARTICLES IN DESERT MAGAZINE, 1937-1977**

*Marion Ambrose*

This publication provides a comprehensive index to the 364 articles dealing with Nevada that appeared in *Desert Magazine* from 1937-1977. The alphabetical listing of articles by author is accompanied by a subject index. An excellent guidebook for those interested in exploring Nevada's historical and scenic areas. \$4 ppd.

### **TERRITORIAL NEVADA: A GUIDE TO THE RECORDS**

*Robert Armstrong*

This bibliography covers the manuscript and archival sources available in libraries and collections throughout the United States which relate to Nevada's Territorial Period, 1850-1864. Collections are listed by state and library, and many are described in considerable detail. An indispensable research aid for this era, and a must for Western libraries. \$5 ppd.

### **OVERLAND CHRONICLE: EMIGRANT DIARIES IN WESTERN NEVADA LIBRARIES**

*Frank J. O'Brien*

Emigrant diaries located in five Western Nevada libraries are classified by author and title, and by year of passage. Included also are cross-indexing sections that refer the researcher to emigrant origins, major trails and routes followed, and final destinations. Seven maps are included. \$2.95 ppd.

### **HISTORIC SITES OF CLARK COUNTY, NEVADA**

*Dorothy Ritenour and M. Katherine Tipton*

This publication contains an alphabetical listing of historic sites in Clark County from the 1850s to 1928, together with locations by section, township and range. There is a listing of all townships within the county and the sites located within each. A valuable guide to the inventory of historic sites located at the NHS Las Vegas office, and an important reference for researchers, governmental agencies, and libraries. \$4.95 ppd.

**Nevada Historical Society  
1650 North Virginia St.  
Reno, NV 89503**



# NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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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.