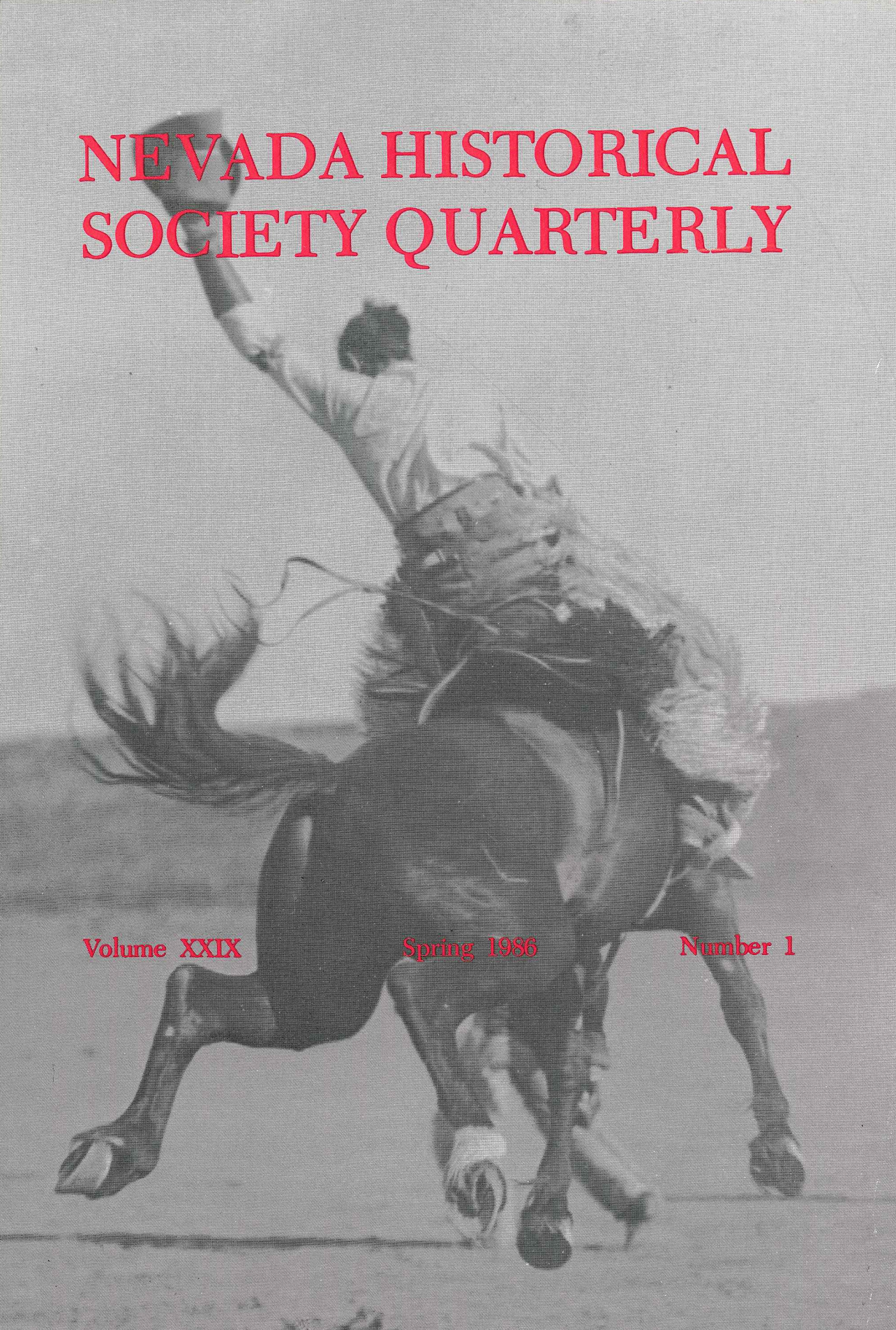
NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY



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

Prospective authors should send their work to The Editor, *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 1650 N. Virginia St., Reno, Nevada 89503. Papers should be typed double-spaced and sent in duplicate. All manuscripts, whether articles, edited documents, or essays, should conform with the most recent edition of the University of Chicago Press *Manual of Style*. Footnotes should be typed double-spaced on separate pages and numbered consecutively. Correspondence concerning articles and essays is welcomed, and should be addressed to The Editor.

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THE COVER *Cowboy in Elko County, Nevada.*

Las Vegas and the Second World War

EUGENE P. MOEHRING

IN SEPTEMBER, 1939, AS SCREAMING HEADLINES informed Las Vegans of Hitler's attack upon Poland and the subsequent British and French declarations of war, the town found itself in the midst of an economic slump. While tourists and gamblers partially offset the revenue void created by departing Boulder Dam workers in 1935, the community struggled to maintain its position as the business center of southern Nevada. Few residents realized the future boom and sacrifice the distant conflict would bring.[1]

Clearly, the hearts of most Las Vegans were with the Allies, just as they had been a generation earlier. From the beginning, they supported a variety of refugee programs including the Finnish, Greek and Chinese relief drives. Within a few weeks, the local Red Cross, its cause trumpeted by *Review-Journal* editorials deploring "the tragic plight of millions" brought on by the "revengeful" Adolf Hitler and the "bandit" Mussolini, received thousands of dollars in donations and clothing.[2]

Ensuing months also witnessed an increased military preparedness. By June, 1940, as the "Battle of Britain" raged, the War Department began constructing a small Marine auxiliary base at Boulder City's airport consisting of a hangar, storage tanks and a dormitory for crews servicing Navy planes. Of greater importance, however, was the new airport Las Vegas hoped to receive as a by-product of President Roosevelt's program to strengthen western air defenses. As early as July, 1940, *Las Vegas Review-Journal* editor John Cahlan and other members of the Junior Chamber of Commerce urged Mayor John Russell and City Commissioners to approve a bond election for a new airport to replace the old Western Air Express facility (today the site of Nellis Air Force Base) north of town. The Jaycees, emboldened by a Civil Aeronautics Authority promise to provide $300,000 for a first-class military airport or auxiliary base, pushed local politicians to secure a site closer to town. The battle for a modern facility had raged since the 1930s when municipal officials tried in vain to secure New Deal money for the project. Western Air Express (today Western Airlines) had successfully blocked that effort, but now, with American security threatened by Hitler, federal officials moved quickly. War accomplished what five years of lobbying had not; by fall 1940 the C.A.A. had begun paving a 4,000-foot east-west runway and a

5,900-foot north-south counterpart. A third runway plus grading, drainage and hangars finally gave Las Vegas a decent airport for joint military and commercial airline use. Gradually, the War Department revealed its plans for the field. It was not to be an airbase but an "air training school"—a million-acre shooting range to prepare army pilots and gunners for airborne combat. Townsmen rejoiced as they contemplated the vast payroll harvest that Clark County casinos and businesses would reap.[3]

By October, 1941, with land condemnations finalized by the courts and federal marshalls clearing the last stragglers out of southeastern Nye County, the new center (renamed "Camp McCarran") began operations. Ensuing months saw hundreds of recruits arrive at the base swelling the population of nascent North Las Vegas. But there was more. Thanks to the efforts of Nevada Senator Pat McCarran and utility officials, the army also began erecting barracks at Boulder City to house troops assigned to protect Boulder Dam from saboteurs. It was expected that, when completed, "Camp Sibert" (later renamed "Camp Williston") would accommodate twenty-seven officers and over 700 men—contributing further to the local economy.[4]

As each week brought more bleak news from Europe and the Far East, patriotic fervor mounted in Las Vegas at first out of friendship for the Allies, but later from a growing sense that America's inevitable intervention made readiness essential. With the announcement in July, 1940, that military officials would renew the draft, young men between the ages of 21 and 35 prepared to attend "boot camp" in the fall. In early October local "conscription boards" similar to those of World War I were created, and Nevada Governor E.P. Carville declared October 16 "Draft Registration Day." The response was so strong the enrollment period had to be extended. According to the *Review-Journal*, former Clark County servicemen, veterans of the "Spanish War through the World War," followed the urging of the American Legion and registered "their special talents which would be useful to the nation in non-combatant service in case of an emergency." The Las Vegas Jaycees also contributed to the movement, sponsoring a "cadet drive" to attract qualified men for the army air force's pilot-training program.[5]

Increasingly, as "defense" became a growing concern, Las Vegas and the Silver State reflected nationwide trends. During the summer of 1940, Nevada joined other states in submitting proposals for "defense training" in its schools. Eventually, under the so-called Nevada Plan, Clark County received federal funding to train W.P.A. and defense workers in such vocational skills as welding, aircraft maintenance and truck repair. While educators refined plans for the new curricular emphasis, the local Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion and other groups interested in "awakening a feeling of loyalty to the flag and promoting young men in joining the United States armed forces," paralleled the efforts of their counterparts in other cities by staging a massive parade and rally on Fremont Street. On September 21,

Fremont Street, Las Vegas, c. 1942. Note the phrase "Buy War Bonds" painted on a building in the background. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

marching bands, boy scouts, ex-servicemen, C.C.C. workers, V.F.W. and Legionnaires marched in one of the largest demonstrations in the city's history. Throughout the winter, pamphlets, speeches and rallies sustained the public fervor. Spring saw more demonstrations of loyalty climaxed by another massive parade on "Army Day," featuring the town's first look at new motorized tank divisions brought in especially for the occasion by gunnery school officers.[6]

By fall, 1940, as Nazi tanks invaded Russia and war engulfed more of the world, a greater sense of urgency surrounded defense. Precautionary measures like the compulsory registration and fingerprinting of Clark County aliens were supplemented by the creation of a "defense committee" by local Elks (in conjunction with the national organization) "to uphold and teach Americanism . . . promote the general and more constant display of [the] flag . . . and assist in the physical development of the youth of the country." Throughout 1941 preparations for possible military intervention continued. In fact, the Elks, American Legion and V.F.W. seemed to accelerate their activities. June, for instance, saw the Elks, in expectation of arriving troops at the gunnery school and other camps, embark on a remodeling effort to

convert their "Helldorado Dance Hall" into a U.S.O. headquarters. At the same time, prominent merchant Archie Grant agreed to chair the new U.S.O. chapter and began appointing program committees.[7] On another front, the summer of 1940 saw Boy Scouts and Jaycees sponsor an aluminum drive (as part of a national campaign) for a war which had not yet been declared! Later in November Las Vegans observed "defense week" as a time, in the words of President Roosevelt, "to give thought to their duties and responsibilities in the defense of this nation."[8]

Clearly, the President was preparing America for the inevitable struggle, but, as Pearl Harbor approached, Las Vegas was already touched by the war. A defense boom gripped the city, energizing and diversifying its tourist economy. The gunnery school, army camp and a growing number of bases in Arizona and California combined to swell local revenues. An additional defense bonanza came in 1941 with the announcement that the United States would build a giant magnesium factory for the British to supplement their explosives industry already weakened by the *Luftwaffe* bombings of 1940. The Las Vegas valley quickly became the preferred site because of northern Nevada's vast magnesium deposits and the city's proximity to Lake Mead and Boulder Dam, whose supplies of water and electricity were crucial to magnesium production. By early 1943 the sprawling Basic Magnesium Industries' complex would boast ten separate plants, a townsite and over 5,000 employees. Even before construction began, local boosters recognized that the factory, together with the gunnery school and the city's strategic location along key truck, rail and air routes between the Rockies and southern California, guaranteed a housing and population boom of enormous proportions. Already by December, 1941, retail sales, rentals and construction soared.[9] Local business was good, and regionally, mining, farming and ranching were again paying the kind of dividends reminiscent of 1917. Of course, no one in town really wanted war; indeed, Las Vegans responded to the attack on Pearl Harbor much like Americans everywhere with shock, anger and a grim resolve which united the town as never before.

Following the news of December 7, authorities first moved to defend Boulder Dam. The War Department dispatched troops from nearby Camp Sibert and Bureau of Reclamation rangers closed the structure to all visitors. Chief Ranger C.F. Peterson urged local residents to use alternative routes into Arizona; the few vehicles traversing the dam road were convoyed by military escorts.[10]

Civil defense was the next priority. On December 9 Clark County Civil Defense officials along with Major H.W. Anderson of the gunnery school scheduled the first "blackout." At 8:15 p.m. the Union Pacific shop whistle blew shrilly throughout the valley and neon signs along with street, business and house lights went dark. Sheriff's deputies enforced the ban on city motorists while state police stopped cars on highways for fifty miles in all

Aerial view of Las Vegas during World War II. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

directions. The test, however, proved less than successful. Winds limited the whistle's effectiveness in some areas, leaving rows of homes aglow. In addition, there were other problems. For some reason, Boulder Dam's interior power house lights remained lit, making the structure an easy target for enemy bombers. The giant magnesium plant also ignored the test, as did ranchers whose illuminated buildings formed a necklace of lights around the valley. The town's air raid committee also noted thirty-six "establishments" downtown which failed to observe the alarm. On the following night a second blackout produced a better response, aided by three army planes which circled the valley reporting delinquents. During the next few weeks, anxious residents, eager to ensure their community's safety, cooperated with authorities. Blackouts won increasing compliance and citizens mastered the fine points of civilian defense. Several false alarms, however, contributed to the jitteryness of townsmen, especially the "red alert" of March 6, 1942, when, for some unexplained reason, the West Coast Defense Command activated Las Vegas's air raid sirens, sending children under desks and residents for cover. If nothing else, the event provided a useful test of the community's readiness. Nerves were hardly calmed when just a day later police arrested two "enemy aliens" and confiscated a number of guns, cameras and short

wave radio sets. For the first few months of the war, residents, ever wary of an Axis attack on the dam, continuously patrolled Lake Mead inlets looking for saboteurs. In fact, throughout 1942 citizens worried about the presence of aliens. While there were no measures taken against residents of German or Italian ancestry (except registration), Japanese citizens aroused suspicion. In November, 1942, for instance, the Clark County Defense Council opposed the importation to Moapa of fifty "supposedly American born Japanese" workers by a San Jose Produce Company. Fearing that Moapa Valley "could be used to launch sabotage plots against Boulder Dam," the Defense Council sent a sharply-worded protest to Governor Carville, though to no avail.[11]

Actually, the basic medical, air raid and civil defense programs were largely in place by Pearl Harbor. Earlier in 1941, as the European war spread to Russia and relations with Japan deteriorated, Nevada and other states had begun organizing state "Defense Councils." During the summer of 1941 state director Hugh Shamberger had ordered the creation of county Defense Councils and local community boards. By June, 1941, twenty-eight prominent residents including the sheriff, district attorney, elected politicians and businessmen had formed a provisional Clark County Defense Council. At its first meeting a few weeks later, James Farndale, a Las Vegas member of the State Council, outlined the new group's duties which included "protecting the civilian population, utilities and key businesses and industries," organizing a "scrap aluminum drive," and forming a group "for observation of the approach of enemy planes."[12] Following American entry into the war, the Defense Council's functions and influence expanded greatly. Located at downtown police headquarters, the group served as the "eyes and ears" of the federal government in Las Vegas, reporting rent and price violations to the Office of Price Administration (O.P.A.), conducting housing surveys, enforcing blackouts, investigating black marketeers and running scrap drives. Organization tightened markedly in 1942 with the advent of the "block leader" program, in which Council trainees were assigned to supervise and inform every family on their block. As a result, virtually every person in Clark County had frequent contact with the Council. Crucial to this effort was the *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, which listed the name of every block captain and printed vital civil defense information. Across America the newspapers, together with defense councils, were the glue which kept the communications networks between government and citizens functioning. The program, of course, required numerous volunteers. All through the war the Clark County Defense Council trained additional recruits to swell the group's ranks. As early as July, 1942, the county hosted eleven community councils with over 350 trained members, 150 of whom lived in Las Vegas.[13]

In addition to these activities, the war fostered cooperation on a variety of other levels. By January, 1942, the national emergency had forced what two decades of peace had failed to accomplish: an end to labor conflict. Putting

aside their differences "for the duration," the Clark County Central Labor Council, representing all major unions including the powerful teamsters and building trades, agreed to suspend picketing, strikes and boycotts in return for a promise by the Las Vegas Association of Employers to refrain from engaging in "lockouts" and other anti-union practices. The truce proved successful; except for some labor turbulence at Basic Magnesium, no major strikes afflicted the valley until after the war.[14]

The town's fund-raising efforts were also noteworthy. Following the declaration of war, the sale of bonds and stamps was brisk. In fact, the first week saw residents contribute over $100,000 to the Treasury at the First National Bank and Post Office; and both institutions, their bond supplies depleted by the rush, had long waiting lists for more. By February, 1942, the National Defense Saving Staff had set a national sales goal of $1 billion per month with Clark County's first annual quota $767,000—or $91 for each of the town's 8,400 residents. During the next few months patriotic citizens made the figure seem low. A record sales burst occurred on the city's first "Pearl Harbor Day" in December, 1942, when townsmen and Basic Magnesium employees purchased over $70,000 worth of bonds and stamps—fully one-fifth of the county's monthly quota. Children alone accounted for $2,000. On the impoverished Westside, black students pooled their nickels and dimes into a $120 contribution—an effort matched at other grammar schools. But Las Vegas High led all competition. Local businesses and workers also played a leading role; the local Seven-Up bottling plant pledged its entire week's receipts; employees at the Las Vegas Land and Water Company and the *Review-Journal* took their day's salary in war stamps; while miners at the Blue Diamond gypsum works bought extra bonds and stamps.[15]

Success, however, only begot higher quotas. By early 1943, as Clark County's annual bond goal surpassed $2 million, local patriots resorted to various devices to help raise the money. Hotels and businesses were particularly helpful. In April, for instance, the Hotel Last Frontier hosted a "bond banquet" which netted $400,000 for the drive. The affair, which began with a cocktail party in the resort's famed "Canary Room," climaxed with a lavish dinner and show in the "Ramona Room." Responding to the publicity and local approbation, Standard Oil representatives pledged $75,000 in donations while Sears-Roebuck gave $50,000 and local merchants bought lesser amounts of bonds. These periodic fetes, usually sponsored by local hotels, were highly effective in encouraging large bond purchases by area businessmen.[16]

Throughout the war Las Vegas continued to make its bond quotas. Of course, the town's proximity to Los Angeles was an asset to promotion campaigns. Indeed, movie and radio personalities frequently visited town and helped fundraising efforts. In 1945, for example, Tom Breneman, star of the nationally popular "Breakfast in Hollywood" radio program, originated

Basic Magnesium Plant, Henderson, Nevada, c. 1940. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

his show from the Huntridge Theatre, admission for which was "by war bond only." Later in the year, Arthur Lake, who portrayed "Blondie's" husband "Dagwood" in the movies, appeared at an El Rancho Hotel show as the personal guest of bond committee member and later Desert Inn host, Wilbur Clark. In addition to celebrities, local bond promoters also staged boxing matches to attract public support. More than once, soldiers from the gunnery school donned the gloves and provided an exciting "night at the fights" with admission "by war bond only."[17]

Aside from these campaigns, Las Vegans also contributed to a variety of relief efforts. Beginning in January, 1942, the Red Cross established booths in Las Vegas to collect donations toward Clark County's $5,000 war relief quota and civil defense. About 85% of the funds were used to aid refugees in the Pacific and Europe, while the rest stayed at home. In another program, Las Vegans made or gave over 20,000 garments to the Red Cross for shipment to soldiers and their families. All during the war, members of the Mesquite Club, the "Fortnighters," "Union Pacific Old Timers" and other groups worked in the Elks Lodge basement sewing surgical gowns, socks, sweaters, children's outfits and other clothes. Residents also supported Nevada's "Navy Relief Drive" to aid the emergency needs of the Navy, Marine and Coast

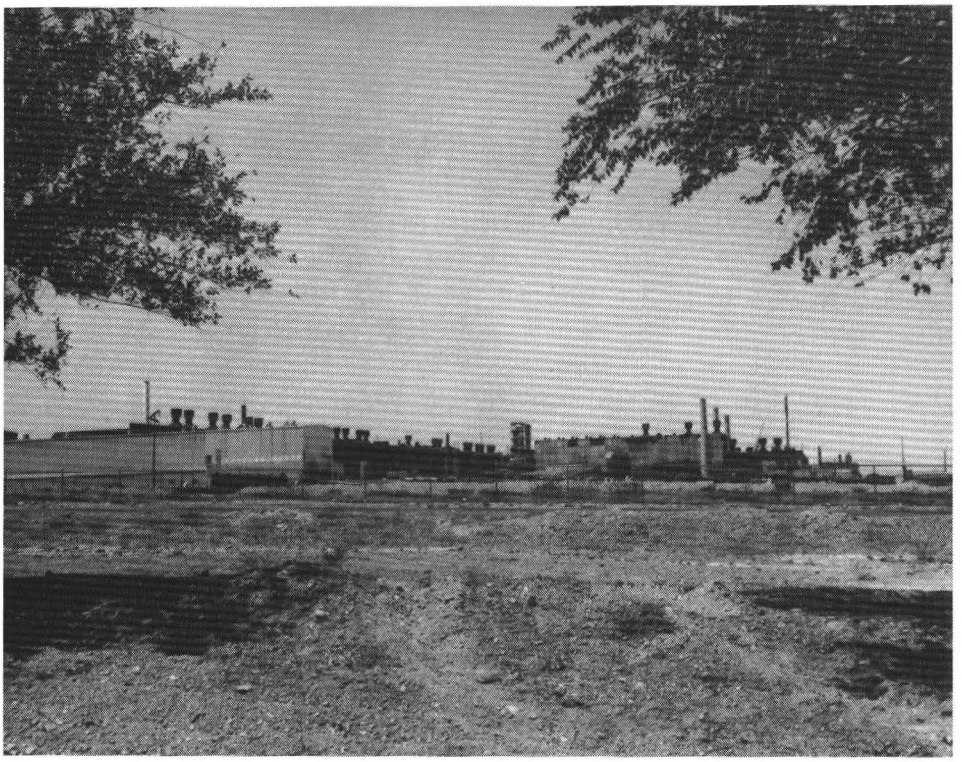
Guard dependents. As was usually the case, casinos like the Boulder Club and Las Vegas Club, the Bartenders' Local and other unions and businesses contributed to the first few hundred dollars with the rest of the population eventually running the total to almost $2,000.[18]

In addition to financial support and clothing, Las Vegans also provided tons of scrap for war production. Following the recommendations of state and national agencies, Clark County inaugurated its scrap and rubber drive on June 14, 1942, using area gas stations as the depositories. Newspapers printed a complete list of items to advise readers that even brake pedals and vacuum cleaners contained enough rubber to help the war effort. By August county residents had either sold or donated 450,000 pounds—a figure surpassed only by Washoe.[19]

Rubber, of course, was not the only material needed by the nation's factories. As the feverish production of new ships, tanks and planes depleted manufacturing supplies, defense councils across the nation began drives for iron and steel. In Las Vegas, the *Review-Journal* offered readers detailed charts explaining that parts of old stoves, radiators, bathtubs, toys, lawn mowers, furnace grates and bedsprings, etc. could be used to make "shells, guns, cargo ships, aircraft carriers, armored cars, tanks [and] gas masks." The call also went out for kitchen "waste fats" to help relieve oil shortages and make glycerine for explosives. During the typical drive in September, 1942, the town's "Salvage Committee" marshalled a large number of adults plus virtually all of the area's Boy Scouts to collect the scrap. In circulated fliers and newspaper stories, the Committee appealed to citizens to donate "old keys, lamp bulbs, parts of electrical fixtures, pieces of copper wire, metal ash trays, broken sprinklers, hose fittings, radiators, stoves, refrigerators, auto parts and trimmings." Throughout the war Clark County residents responded enthusiastically to these campaigns, often leading the state in tonnage.[20]

In addition to backing scrap and bond drives, Las Vegans engaged in a variety of other activities, including the planting of "Victory Gardens" and support of R.O.T.C. The former was part of the government's plan to conserve food for the armed forces. Working with the University of Nevada's Extension Service, local stores provided widow displays and pamphlets instructing residents about vegetable and fruit gardening in the hard desert soil. Many local youngsters helped their parents with these efforts while also participating in the new R.O.T.C. program for training officers. Classes began in September, 1944, at Las Vegas High School when a War Department instructor finally arrived in town. The response was immediate, as dozens of boys over fourteen years of age wore uniforms to school while taking classes in citizenship, leadership, discipline and rifle marksmanship.[21]

Las Vegas also played an active role in supporting the United Service Organizations (U.S.O.). During the early months of 1942 the U.S.O. engaged in a flurry of activity, organizing recreation and residence centers in com-



Basic Magnesium Plant, Henderson, Nevada, c. 1942. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

munities nationwide. Surrounded by a substantial military hinterland comprising the gunnery school, Camp Sibert and a huge desert warfare training center south of Searchlight, plus other camps in northern Arizona and California, Las Vegas required several U.S.O. facilities. In June, 1942, the national U.S.O., as part of its new program, funded and furnished a residence hall in town to accommodate female defense workers and servicemen's wives until they could find permanent shelter. Later in August, on the recommendation of the western regional director of the National Catholic Community Service, the U.S.O. established a recreation program in the predominantly black "Westside" for "negro soldiers" stationed at the gunnery school and Camp Sibert. Housed in an old C.C.C. building next to the neighborhood's grammar school, the program opened in November with films, games and music. These special quarters complemented the main U.S.O. Hall on 4th and Stewart, the Boulder City building and other branches.[22]

Community U.S.O. Council members catered to servicemen in a variety of ways, even on occasion hosting luncheons for their parents. Sometimes local U.S.O. troupes left the city to entertain distant camps. Every few months, for

example, the Las Vegas "mobile service unit" transported a "Sun and Sand Caravan," composed mainly of local girls over seventeen years of age (who met U.S.O. standards), to visit the lonesome troops as far away as Tonopah. Back in Las Vegas, the hotels often took turns sponsoring parties at U.S.O. clubs, as in July, 1945, when the Hotel Last Frontier provided food, chefs and entertainment for a gala evening at the Hall on 4th and Stewart.[23]

Of course, these halls also served a variety of community purposes. The Boulder City Club, for example, hosted area children in the daytime, with arts, crafts and woodshop classes for boys, "charm schools" for girls, and other programs for everyone. After the war, U.S.O. buildings continued to fill local needs. For a while, the Westside facility housed meetings of the "colored" Legion post. Later, the Community Chest converted the Jefferson Avenue building into a recreation center. Similarly, in 1946 the City Commission purchased the main Hall on 4th and Stewart for $25,000 from the Federal Works Agency and made it the hub of Las Vegas's post-war "recreation movement."

Related to the U.S.O. effort was the "Share Your Home" program in which local families volunteered to entertain two soldiers from the gunnery school one night each week with a pot-luck dinner. Beginning in December, 1942, many local families registered with the "Army Liaison Committee," providing such details as the number of children in the family, their ages and interests. The goal was to give soldiers an "evening at home" with "respectable" people, who could offer the men "the privileges of a family circle 'without frills and furbelows' " to boost spirits and ease the loneliness of military life.[24]

Aside from supporting various drives and troop programs, Las Vegans, like other Americans, made many sacrifices to help the war effort. For an isolated town lacking mass transit, tire and gas rationing programs were particularly burdensome. The former began in January, 1942, with the *Review-Journal* explaining the details in columns using a question-and-answer format. Once again, the populace cooperated, driving less and refraining from registering for special auto and tire certificates. Instead, residents conserved their tires and, when necessary, settled for retreads. This response complemented the gasoline rationing campaign which began in December. To be sure, motorists filled their fuel tanks and storage drums in anticipation of shortages. Indeed, on November 30, the day before rationing began, one local filling station pumped over 1,700 gallons compared to 20 the next day. People stocked up, but reserves quickly ran out in a western town so dependent upon the internal combustion engine. Not surprisingly, drivers soon jammed the ration board office applying for "A" ration books and many even for supplementary "B" books. Nevertheless, rationing dramatically cut motor travel in Nevada, and, at the same time, state revenues from the indispensable gasoline tax.[25]

Aside from rubber and fuel, other items were also in short supply. Sugar

rationing began in 1942 and eventually affected hotel pastry and baking operations. The program started in April, with Las Vegas School Superintendent Maude Frazier in charge of educating retail and industrial users about the process. All "business people" in Clark County had to register for ration books at Las Vegas High School. Retailers had to give registrars detailed information concerning gross sales of "all meats, fruits and groceries for the week ending April 20, 1942" plus all sugar deliveries during the previous November and their stores' total sugar reserves in stock and warehouse. Bars, cafes and boarding houses were similarly regulated; each had to provide officials with records of sugar use during each month of 1941 and thereafter throughout the war.[26]

On another front, Las Vegans responded positively to President Roosevelt's executive order to "discourage credit and installment buying" in order to promote savings, cut inflation and encourage war bond purchases. In 1942 local merchants sponsored newspaper advertisements informing consumers that "all charge accounts must be paid in full by the 10th of the second calendar month following purchase," and that all future installment buying would require one-third down payment with the total contract limited to twelve months. Only expensive items like pianos and furniture were allowed a twenty percent down payment. From all evidence, consumers and merchants complied with the Administration's policy.[27]

While restrictions on credit and sugar were bothersome, the developing nickel shortage was especially troubling. Beginning in September, 1942, the nationwide dearth of nickels began afflicting Las Vegas, as local bankers were unable to secure the coins from the Federal Reserve Bank in Salt Lake City. The Denver and San Francisco Mints had earlier ceased coinage because of the metal's importance to war production. As a result, 1943 saw local news vendors struggling with pennies to make change for 5-cent newspapers, while the shortage also played havoc with merchants and cigarette machines. Hardest hit were the city's casinos with their ever-popular nickel slot machines.[28]

The war touched all aspects of community life and all groups, including youngsters. During the 1942 Christmas season, for instance, the city complied with a War Production Board request to forego the usual outdoor Christmas lights. Local officials, short of workers in the Street Department and anxious to save fuel on government trucks, readily cooperated as did many stores and restaurants. Indoor lights, however, continued to glow till New Year's. Besides the holidays, sports in town were also affected, especially teams requiring travel. Thus, in 1942 Las Vegas High School faculty and students agreed to conserve gasoline by canceling all basketball games with schools other than those at Basic Townsite and Boulder City. To fill the void, pupils formed eight teams of their own and played a mostly intra-mural season.[29]

Fremont Street between Main and First streets, Las Vegas, c. 1940. *(Photograph courtesy of Manis Collection, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Library)*

Even the gaming industry was forced to make sacrifices. True, the city benefitted handsomely from defense contracts and military payrolls, but these bonuses also had their drawbacks. This became obvious in November, 1942, when General John DeWitt, commander of the Army's "Ninth Corps Area" (including Nevada), requested that all taverns in the district close between 2 a.m. and 10 a.m. While the army had no power to force compliance, proprietors knew that an "off-limits" decree would keep military patrons away permanently. Faced with this prospect and the inevitable bad publicity for defying the order, tavern owners met a determined County Commission Chairman, Ira Earl, and reluctantly agreed to obey.[30]

A week later casino operators also fell into line, promising to close Fremont Street's "gay white way" at 2 a.m. for the first time since gambling was legalized in 1931. In a deal worked out with county officials including Police Commissioner Pat Clark, liquor stores would close nightly at 8 o'clock, taverns at midnight and casinos at 2 a.m. Already the military had declared several non-complying bars in Phoenix "out of bounds," and while General DeWitt's order did not specify that casinos close, County Commissioners felt

they should. The reason was loss of man hours. At a public meeting in December with tavern and casino owners, Earl and others explained that War Production Board agents were due in Las Vegas to investigate why Basic Magnesium consistently recorded the highest absentee rate of any defense plant in the country. For this reason, the Commissioners insisted that a positive local response was needed now before W.P.B. authorities arrived, became incensed, and clamped down a set of regulations "which might even be carried so far as to close down all the gambling and liquor in the area"—a move which could only wreck the community's tax base and future.[31]

As if to reinforce their concern, city and county leaders warned club owners that gunnery school officers were highly disturbed by the failure of the casinos to curb prostitution. Indeed, Chief of Police Don Borax charged that the trade still thrived "in most all the hotels and out of the bars and gambling establishments." So, threatened by federal action, police raids and stricter county enforcement of liquor and gambling regulations, club owners responded positively. J. Kell Houssels of the Las Vegas Club insisted that if "DeWitt wants us to close at 12 o'clock, we'll close at 12 o'clock." Guy McAfee of the Frontier Club then conceded that "the war is more serious than we in Las Vegas realize. The Japanese war will be on for a long time. Our industry is not essential to the war effort. . . ." In general, all agreed at the meeting to stamp out prostitution and close their clubs at midnight during the week and 2 a.m. on weekends. Thanks to this move, the federal government left Nevada alone for the war's duration.[32]

During the next six months, while the glittering neon palaces on Fremont Street and the Strip quietly complied with the county's wish, restive tavern owners along the Boulder Highway between Las Vegas and Basic Townsite (later Henderson) objected to and even defied the early closing time. At a hastily organized meeting between the tavern owners and county officials on August 16, 1943, Commission Chairman James Down angrily rejected any changes in the Board's policy. After denouncing the "tendency of some liquor dispensers to consider only the 'almighty dollar' at the expense of the war effort," Down threatened to revoke the liquor license of any establishment which stayed open late and contributed to the absenteeism of B.M.I. workers. Supporting this policy was Basic Magnesium, the Army, Central Labor Council, City Club, other tavern owners and the *Review-Journal*. Faced with such formidable opposition, the rebels backed off. But the citywide loss of business hurt.[33]

By April, 1944, the early closing of Las Vegas bars and casinos brought increased grumblings of discontent from owners. Under pressure from tavern and casino operators, Sheriff Glen Jones and Las Vegas Police Chief Harry Miller met with gunnery school authorities to discuss resuming 24-hour operation of clubs and taverns for civilian patrons, while maintaining the curfew for soldiers. Wary Army officials rejected the proposal, guaranteeing

that any resumption of all-night gambling and drinking would bring an "off limits" order from the West Coast Defense Command. Casinos and taverns thus continued to observe General DeWitt's order until late in the war. County officials were no doubt glad they did, because military relations were always a delicate subject, especially in Clark County. While servicemen contributed mightily to the revenues of casinos and bars, police kept a close eye on these men, fearing that one barroom brawl might bring an "off-limits" order from the Western Defense Command. These fears were actually realized in 1944, when the Army declared Las Vegas "off limits" to troops for a month following the murder of one black soldier and the wounding of two others in a Westside shooting.[34]

While some casino owners might have resented military restrictions, they were nonetheless comforted by the unprecedented boom which the war triggered. Newspaperwoman Florence Lee Jones remembered that twice a month thousands of troops on desert maneuvers from Needles to Kingman came to Las Vegas. Soldiers slept in Union Pacific Park (today the site of the Union Plaza Hotel) and on hundreds of cots in the War Memorial Building (part of City Hall). Local citizens also took soldiers into their homes on weekends providing them with clean towels, a bath and place to sleep. But the war also raised the town's official population. By mid-1942, B.M.I., Camp Sibert and the gunnery school alone had boosted the valley's population from 8,400 (in 1940) to over 30,000 people. Plant employees and soldiers thronged the bars and casinos on weekends. And tourists, many of them Southern Californians, also came. Despite shortages of gasoline, one journalist nevertheless reported that "you can't find a parking space on Fremont Street at five-thirty in the morining." "KENO Radio" founder Maxwell Kelch remembered "high-ranking officers" patronizing the city's major casinos even before gunnery school construction had begun! And their numbers grew as the base took shape and prepared to open. Later the arrival of 6,000 trainees, supplemented by a growing stream of troop buses from California, further strengthened the local economy. In response, casinos hired extra help. In fact, due to the shortage of male dealers, clubs, for the first time ever, employed a large number of women.

This wartime prosperity financed an expansion of gaming operations. Dozens of houses and stores on Fremont Street yielded to new casinos, bars and restaurants. Major downtown establishments like the Pioneer and Frontier Clubs, and Western Casino owed their roots to the betting fever. The early 1940s also saw the famed "Las Vegas Strip" begin to take shape. True, the development along the so-called Los Angeles Highway antedated Pearl Harbor. Los Angeles hotelman Thomas Hull had begun work on the El Rancho Vegas resort in 1940, followed in 1941 by construction of Texan R. E. Griffith's Hotel Last Frontier a half mile farther out. But, according to contemporary observers, typical weekends during the war saw the parking

Fremont Street, Las Vegas, c. 1943. Note soldiers in foreground. *(Photograph courtesy of Manis Collection, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Library)*

lots of both Strip resorts full of cars bearing California license plates. Such patronage not only encouraged more resort expansion but also legitimized the Strip as a viable new center for casino development after 1945.[35]

Of course, physical expansion was hampered by government restrictions on building materials and other supplies. Also bothersome for the lounges and restaurants were federal price controls on liquor, wine and food. The last, in particular, affected every Las Vegan. By 1944, as part of its effort to slow inflation, the Office of Price Administration (O.P.A.) set a "ceiling price" for virtually every food product sold in America. Local newspapers like the *Review-Journal* supported the program, printing lists of brandname goods with local "ceiling prices" to inform consumers and discourage price gouging. To be sure, every community recognized the importance of making sure that rationing and price controls did not interrupt its adequate supply of essential food items. So, following the example of other towns, the Las Vegas area food industry in April, 1944, formed an "advisory committee," consisting of retail grocers, meat producers, wholesalers and packers, to notify the Office of Price Administration and the War Food Administration about any conditions affecting the "equitable distribution" of food. Obviously, the organization was designed as a lobbying force to protect not only the community but merchants themselves from shortages resulting from bureaucratic miscalculations.[36]

Despite these safeguards, Las Vegas suffered from a variety of shortages. However, the crisis became acute in 1945, when items usually in plentiful supply disappeared off store shelves. Particularly irksome for this gambling and drinking haven was the cigarette shortage which began in January and worsened with the diversion of more "Lucky Strikes" and "Camels" to the military. Many citizens, forced to cut their consumption from two packs to four or five "fags" a day, simply quit. Casinos, long accustomed to doling out free packs to their patrons, ended the practice. According to the *Review-Journal*, a black market eventually developed and stalwart smokers found it necessary to "cultivate the cigarette girl, the grocer, the barman."[37]

Supplies of other items also thinned. As V-E Day approached, critical shortages of fish, shortening, frier chickens, rayon clothing, napkins, toilet tissue and "almost every type of merchandise" plagued stores everywhere. Wartime conditions caused most of the problems, but the lack of fish resulted directly from the excessively low O.P.A. price levels which kept fishermen in port. In addition, the insatiable demand for medical supplies overseas spawned a nationwide drug shortage in quinine, camphor and other medicines whose chemical bases came from South Pacific plantations. While aspirin and many salves were still locally available, an acute shortage of shaving cream convinced many pragmatic patriots to grow beards.[38]

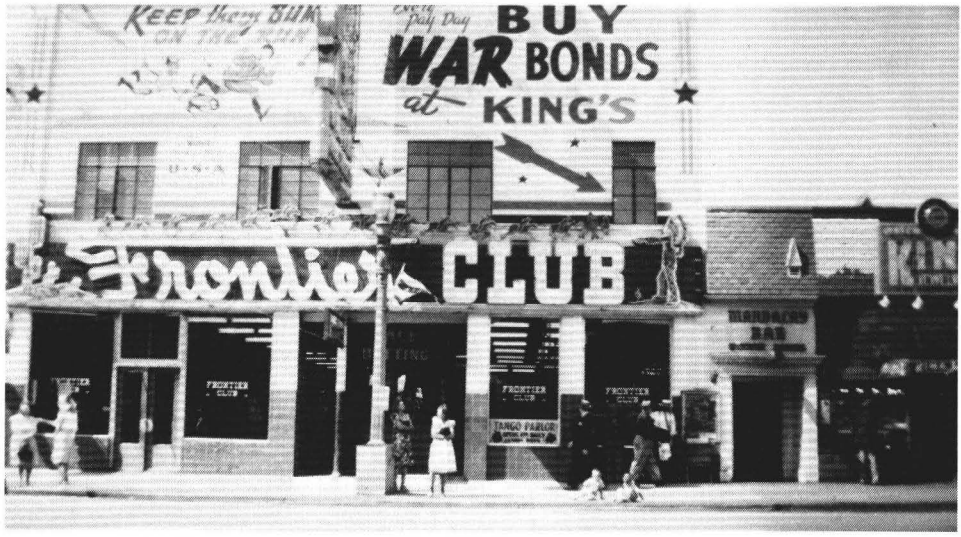
While Las Vegans supported most wartime controls, tempers flared in August, 1944, when O.P.A. Director Chester Bowles ruled that butter could

not be shipped more than 200 miles beyond the point of production. This absurd decree threatened to leave Clark County permanently "butterless," since it lay 450 miles from its supplying creameries in Salt Lake City. Fortunately, as butter supplies became depleted, Bowles reconsidered and exempted Nevada, western Wyoming and other victimized areas.[39]

While the dairy crisis eased, meat shortages worsened. As the Japanese war dragged on through the summer of 1945, steaks, roasts, sausages and even the usually plentiful cuts began to disappear from cafes and store shelves. Worse still, a statewide beef shortage forced some restaurants specializing in hamburgers to drop the item from their menus. At the same time, some "stands" mysteriously prospered. Tensions steadily rose within the city's restaurant industry, as angry hotel and cafe owners charged O.P.A. officials with awarding excessive meat ration points to hamburger stands and "drive-ins." This occurred because the government's formula for computing "business volume," the key index for awarding ration points, counted everyone who even bought so much as a cup of coffee. Thus, small stands received more ration points than large hotels and cafes which served more full-course meals but to a smaller clientele. Moreover, local restauranteurs complained that ration points were computed in Reno on the basis of business volume in typical Reno "eateries," which rarely did the business of their Las Vegas counterparts.[40]

Despite O.P.A. claims to the contrary, the agency clearly bungled the meat crisis in southern Nevada. In a sharply-worded editorial in June, 1945, John Cahlan blasted the agency's policies especially with regard to Boulder City's problems. A few weeks earlier the government had awarded a contract to the Guy Atkinson Company to complete a $2 million project at Boulder Dam. Several hundred workers then streamed into the federal town. Unable to rent suitable housing, they lived in motor courts and patronized local restaurants. Overwhelmed by the business, local cases quickly depleted their ration supplies. Faced with the prospect of closing, owners quickly requested more ration points from the government. Incredibly, O.P.A. officials turned them down, insisting that the cafes maintain their 20 percent increased volume for the next month. Cahlan, noting that all but one Boulder City restaurant had been forced to close, berated O.P.A. and the "Wonderful Wizards" who ran it.[41]

Trouble brewed throughout the last months of the war. In June O.P.A. aggressively closed two Las Vegas cafes for "black market operations." Officials charged "Green Shack" manager H.G. Jones and the five Chinese operators of the "Overland Cafe" with purchasing over 25,000 meat ration points illegally. On the other hand, the Reno-based O.P.A. office continued short-changing area restaurants. In July members of the Las Vegas Restauant Owners' Association agreed to serve only "meatless dinners" on Mondays and Tuesdays. But that move only postponed the inevitable. Alarmed by the



Frontier Club, Las Vegas, c. 1940. *(Photograph courtesy of Manis Collection, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Library)*

prospect of shutting down totally, the Las Vegas Restaurant Owners' Association invited O.P.A. representatives to a July 23 meeting to express their sentiments. E.M. "Doc" Ladd spoke for all businessmen when he warned that "the restaurant association is now up against the greatest gang of organized racketeers in history. . . . Compared to the widespread operations today, Prohibition was . . . peanuts." Charging that over 65% of area "cafe men" were short of ration points, Ladd blamed the O.P.A.'s program of consistent ration cuts for placing the industry at the mercy of black marketeers. Local grocers also complained that tougher O.P.A. quotas had wrecked southern Nevada's distribution system, creating unnecessary "meatless days" and enhancing the leverage of racketeers. Little relief, however, came from the meeting, as state O.P.A. leaders once again restated their noble reasons and justified current quotas. Fortunately for Las Vegans, the V-J Day rescue was only a few weeks off. But actually, the crisis "mysteriously" disappeared even earlier. Indeed, a *Review-Journal* survey of local eating establishments in early August revealed that virtually every cafe and hotel dining room in town was serving "steaks of almost every description even for breakfast along with ham and bacon." "Meatless days" had apparently died a quiet death. With O.P.A. regulations still in effect, one must surmise that Las Vegas restauranteurs had made their deal with the devil.[42]

To be sure, this underground economy of profiteers antedated 1945. Spawned by rationing and shortages, a black market prospered nationwide and locally as early as 1942. By 1943 it controlled a growing number of items

in Clark County, prompting Defense Council leaders, including *Review-Journal* owners Al and John Cahlan, to denounce the "traitorous acts" of the "ration chiselers." Comparing these "chiselers" to the "soldier violating orders on the field of battle," the Cahlans conceded that it was "possible" in Las Vegas "to buy all the gasoline you want, at double the market price. And you can get butter, meat and other commodities the same way." The editors, however, pleaded with citizens to resist the temptation and "realize that the economic battle plan worked out in Washington is as much a part of the fight for the life of this country as the campaign in Tunisia or the Solomons." Still, despite scathing editorials, full-page newspaper advertisements and patriotic vigilance, some restaurants, clubs and homes always seemed to have a plentiful supply of goods scarce in other parts of town.[43]

But in 1945, as shortages worsened and O.P.A. slashed ration points further, the *Review-Journal* gradually shifted its focus to the agency itself. Perhaps reflecting the position of many Las Vegans, John Cahlan's cynicism grew as the war dragged on. Finally, in a July, 1945, editorial he wondered aloud whether "meatless" Mondays and Tuesdays were really promoting the "equitable distribution" of meat nationally or just serving "to place more meat in the hands of the black marketeers." Cahlan, long a supporter of Franklin Roosevelt, the New Deal and wartime restrictions, chastised O.P.A. Agreeing with recent statements made by Nevada Senator Pat McCarran, who a few weeks earlier had helped convince Congress to lift the ban on alcohol production, Cahlan demanded that meat regulations either be enforced or abolished to break the black market.[44]

In general, Las Vegans supported the vastly increased powers of the federal government during the national emergency. Of course, rationing and price control measures were always controversial, because competing groups were rarely pleased with their cut of the pie. The government's rent control program, which pitted tenants against landlords in a nationwide struggle, was no exception. The housing crisis was particularly acute in Las Vegas, thanks to the pre-war influx of soldiers and defense workers. Even before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the "fair rents committee" of the Clark County Defense Council threatened to crack down on landlords who were exploiting the local housing shortage to raise prices. Already in 1941, numerous complaints about unjustified rent hikes of sometimes over 100 percent flooded the committee's office. Paul Culley, of the Council's "consumer committee" claimed he could find no corresponding "increases in wages in grocery stores, creameries or meat markets" to justify the housing costs. While the Defense Council itself lacked a local or national rent control law to enforce, Chairman Irwin Crandall demanded that the Clark County Assessor immediately revalue any property upward by the jump in rent.[45]

Finally, in January, 1942, after failing to control rents through moral suasion and patriotic appeals, the Roosevelt Administration pushed legislation through Congress, authorizing the O.P.A. to enforce price ceilings with

prison sentences and heavy fines. In Clark County rent regulation became the duty of the Defense Council's "fair rents committee." Later in the spring authorities categorized Las Vegas as one of 323 "defense rental areas" in the nation. This classification required landlords of homes, apartments or trailers to register locally and roll back their charges to March 1, 1942, levels. A month later O.P.A. pushed the Las Vegas level back even further to July 1, 1941, after the "fair rents committee" conducted a housing survey and received over 300 complaints that property owners had begun "kiting" rents before the war to exploit the influx of soldiers and Basic Magnesium workers.[46]

Most Las Vegans supported the law as a necessary war measure, while the Clark County Defense Council viewed it as essential to their task of curbing possible strikes for higher wages at B.M.I. and elsewhere. But enforcement proved difficult. In July, 1942, O.P.A. officials, after listening to local Defense Council complaints about landlords charging $140 per month for "glorified chicken coops" worth only $50 a year earlier, appointed a "rent director" for the area. Local landlords blasted the government, prompting one O.P.A. investigator to respond that "Las Vegas landlords are among the worst we have had to deal with. They seem to want nothing else but gouge the defense workers." According to reports, building owners pulled any trick to force people out and raise rents still higher with a new lease. One man even turned off the "coolers" in the middle of summer to drive tenants out of his apartment house "so he could rent the apartments at hotel rates in conjunction with one of the hotels which had a large overflow." While most landlords patriotically, if not enthusiastically, observed federal guidelines, rent gouging continued to plague Las Vegas throughout the war. As with other price ceiling programs, the government relied on consumers to report violations. More than once local courts awarded tenants triple the overcharge for exposing offenders.[47]

To ease the wartime housing crisis, the national government supplemented its rent control policies with a vigorous construction program. Throughout 1942 and 1943 building activity was particularly feverish at the new Basic Townsite in expectation of the 10,000-plus workers expected when all ten magnesium plants were due to come "on-line." The 300-unit "Victory Village" complex was the first built by the Defense Housing Corporation. Begun in 1942, the project boasted a school, recreation center, apartments and dormitories. But, plagued by a chronic shortage of defense workers, B.M.I. eventually had to import black employees from Mississippi and elsewhere. This move forced construction in 1943 of "Carver Park," a 324-unit housing facility for blacks, with one, two and three-bedroom apartments for families, dormitories for the unmarried, plus an athletic field, recreation center and grammar school. While Basic's grade schools were racially segregated, the town's high school admitted black and white students.

These housing projects, while helpful in accommodating some workers,

were inadequate to handle the eventual flood of people entering Clark County. With each new wave of migrants the crisis worsened. Journalist Florence Lee Jones remembered many families who were forced to live in motor courts, trailer parks, shanties, tents and mine shafts. A.F. of L. and C.I.O. union leaders complained for three years about the conditions these workers had to endure. In fact, controversy even surrounded the planning stages of "Carver Park" and "Victory Village," as union officials pressured a reluctant, cost-conscious Defense Housing Corporation to revise preliminary blueprints and install air conditioning, electrical refrigeration and "fireproof construction" for the residents.[48]

Despite the problems, a new town rose in just over a year. At the time, few realized it would become a permanent Nevada city; however, the indications were there. Indeed, within a few months of settlement, Basic residents began forming organizations to heighten their sense of community. In October, 1942, for instance, a local American Legion Post sponsored creation of the town's first Boy Scout troop in the new B.M.I. school. In addition, Railroad Pass School District officials and faculty joined Las Vegas members of the Nevada Congress of Parents and Teachers in calling a meeting of mothers to launch a P.T.A. chapter for the school. In education, housing and business, leaders of nearby cities helped the fledgling town organize its institutional life. By early 1943 its social calendar bulged with club meetings, sewing classes, arts and crafts, orchestra rehearsals and other weekly events typical of small towns across the nation. "Victory Village" residents led the way until "Carver Park" opened on a limited basis in October, 1943.[49]

The Roosevelt Administration built almost 2 million housing units during the war. By September, 1944, the National Housing Agency had supplied Nevada defense workers with over 7,300 new units, including 5,500 family dwellings, twenty-five percent of which were built by private developers given access to limited building materials by the government. The rest were federally financed. Another 1,100 "dormitory-type" units for single workers and 644 "stop-gap units," usually trailers or "demountable" homes, were also provided. Most of the construction centered in Clark County with Las Vegas itself receiving a few new subdivisions. Still, B.M.I., dam work and military operations required more workers than even this new housing could accommodate. While hotels, auto courts and lodging houses absorbed some of the overflow (hence the rent hikes) and "share your home" programs also helped ease the strain, B.M.I. improved the situation by inviting wives to join their husbands at the plant. This, in turn, forced the Clark County Health and Child Welfare Committee to lay plans in 1943 for a "day nursery" program to care for the pre-school age children of defense workers. By winter the Committee had registered all affected mothers, gathered data on their work-shifts and children, prepared lists of standards for adequate foster care, and secured the services of qualified volunteers.[50]

While efforts like these helped mothers work, thereby reducing the need for additional men and their families, a housing shortage still gripped the valley. Throughout most of the war the Las Vegas vacancy rate hovered at or below the so-called critical level of two percent. Not surprisingly, this ongoing crisis often fueled intra-community battles. In 1945, for example, the Boulder City Rotary Club and other groups objected when the Defense Housing Corporation in Washington decreed that employees of the Rheems Company (a contractor at Basic Magnesium) had priority for all vacant, federally-controlled homes in Boulder City. Rotary President Leonard Atkinson, noting the "acute" housing shortage in town, complained that "there are several hundred empty houses in Henderson, adjacent to the Rheems Plant. Why [do] Boulder City . . . employees of the Bureau of Reclamation and Bureau of Mines seeking quarters which they badly need, have to go elsewhere to live so that Henderson workers can live here?"[51]

Unfortunately, these controversies did not end with V-J Day. The pent-up demand for housing caused by the war sparked a home-building fever among returning veterans. Anxious to borrow money under the G.I. Bill, ex-servicemen deluged V.A. and F.H.A. headquarters with building requests. But, a continuing shortage of wood, metal pipe and other materials slowed the housing boom in Clark County and elsewhere. In fact, by early 1946 the housing shortage for returning men was so acute that federal officials opened some of Henderson's "Victory Village" and "Carver Park" apartments and even temporary dormitories for veterans and their families. Later, in 1947 the city of Las Vegas even bought the federally-owned Kelso-Turner housing project to provide low-cost accommodations for former soldiers. New construction continued to lag in Las Vegas because of building supply shortages and a thriving black market in lumber which kept costs beyond the reach of many ex-servicemen. According to Jake Von Tobel of Von Tobel Lumber, "priority certificates" for building were easy to acquire, but the real problem lay in sifting through the bureaucratic maze to procure doorlocks, bolts and other basic items. As late as 1947, a priority certificate was "still nothing but a hunting license."[52]

Despite the conflicts produced by shortages, rationing, rent control and housing policies, Las Vegans nevertheless maintained a largely cooperative spirit. Throughout the war local businessmen helped rally civilian morale by frequently sponsoring newspaper advertisements designed to condition residents to sacrifice and compliance. Typical was the "Victory Home" campaign pushed in 1943 which, in cartoon form, suggested that a true "V Home" member "buys war bonds and stamps regularly," salvages materials for war reproduction, "refuses to spread Axis rumors, . . . conserves—but does not hoard—food, household supplies and other vital materials [and] follows air raid precautions recommended by the local Defense Council."[53]

The daily flow of news from the various battlefronts was perhaps the

greatest force in maintaining civilian commitment to the war effort. Tales of combat, especially those involving area servicemen, thrilled newspaper readers. Take, for instance, the story of South 8th Street's Norman Ready and his narrow escape from the sinking aircraft carrier *Lexington* during the Battle of the Coral Sea. In fact, the *Review-Journal* kept a running feature column on "Clark County Men in Service" complete with pictures and stories highlighting the contributions of local boys. Followed closely also were the exploits of the battleship *Nevada*. Indeed, the community rejoiced when the great fortress returned to New York in 1944 "without a scratch," boasting a "100 percent success record of all targets hit on D-Day." Attention also focused on the transport ship *Las Vegas*, christened by Mayor Ernie Cragin's wife at the Richmond, California, shipyards in September, 1944. And, when war heroes periodically toured the city as part of the Pentagon's program to boost morale, Las Vegans spared no expense in feting the guests. Such was the case for the July, 1943, banquet honoring the "Memphis Belle" plane crew. The *Review-Journal* devoted a full page to chronicling the accomplishments of the men who flew twenty-five bombing missions over Nazi-occupied Europe. Special coverage was accorded Captain Vincent Evans, chief pilot and, incidentally, the husband of a local resident.[54]

Propaganda was also an effective government tool for manipulating civilian opinion and reinforcing loyalty. To this end, the War Information Office in Washington continually transmitted censored stories and biased reports to the nation's news agencies. Locally, the *Review-Journal* occasionally published accounts of the latest Nazi atrocities. These columns increased noticeably after 1944, as Allied armies liberated European towns and concentration camps. Far more visual in effect were the so-called atrocity films. Produced by the government, they shocked audiences at local theaters, while also reminding them of the lofty, national purpose served by aiding the war effort.[55]

Las Vegans, however, needed little prompting. Like other Nevadans, they supported bond, clothing and scrap drives, tolerated rationing, attended parades on patriotic occasions, solemnly observed "Pearl Harbor Day," and honored their dead and wounded. In fact, by May, 1944, as victory seemed no more than a year or two away, local chapters of the American Legion began work on a fifty-foot-long plaque bearing the names of all Clark County servicemen. Completed a few weeks later on a site east of the Federal Building, the memorial bore eloquent tribute to the residents who served their country. But, imagine the shock just four months later when vandals sprayed the monument with yellow paint, "obliterating many of the names." Within months the outraged Legionnaires had replaced the plaque with a grander model, but such incidents were not uncommon in Nevada. Repeatedly during the war (especially on Memorial Day), "fifth columnists" were credited by police across the state with desecrating flags, memorials and Legion buildings.[56]

Most citizens deplored these events, especially as the war dragged on and the number of dead and wounded mounted. By 1944, though, it was obvious that victory in Europe was just a matter of time. For the most part, Las Vegans followed events closely in the *Review-Journal*, rejoicing with news of each major advance. The "D-Day" invasion set off a mild celebration; unfortunately, the euphoria in Las Vegas began three days early on June 3 when the race wire, reporting the results of New York's Belmont Stakes to the local race books, carried an erroneous report of a landing at Normandy. Three days later citizens cheered again and greeted the subsequent liberation of France with marked enthusiasm. The disastrous early weeks of the Battle of the Bulge evoked some concern, but the successful counterattack by General Patton and others renewed local confidence.[57]

By early 1945 townspeople read of the agreements at Yalta and looked forward to Germany's inevitable collapse. V-E Day prompted a gleeful celebration on Fremont Street and a loosening of federal restrictions. Naturally, rationing and shortages continued as did the wartime ban on conventions, but, in a key move, the Western Defense Command lifted its nightly curfew for bars and casinos. The change, however, affected only civilian customers, not servicemen. With the outcome in the Pacific still in doubt, soldiers were due back on their posts by midnight.[58]

By late July, as Las Vegans read of the events at Potsdam and Soviet preparations for an attack against Japan, it became obvious the war was reaching a climax. The dramatic breakthrough came sooner than most people expected. On the whole, Las Vegans regarded the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a triumph of American technology and a catalyst for ending the war quickly. In fact, following the destruction of Hiroshima, the *Review-Journal* applauded the role played by Las Vegas High School graduate and physicist, Dr. William Ogle, for his research contributions at the University of Chicago and Los Alamos. By August 10, following the detonation of the second nuclear device over Nagasaki, local newspapers reported that a "lull hung over Las Vegas," with residents and soldiers staying close to their radios awaiting the official announcement of Japan's surrender. In the interim, several gunnery school trainees complained of being "gypped" of their chance to see combat; at least one resident urged the atomic bombing of Tokyo, while local Veterans Administration chief Harry Robbins, though pleased, worried about economic conditions for returning servicemen.[59]

Anticipating word of Japan's surrender, the community planned an appropriate celebration. On August 10 the "Retail Merchants" and "Las Vegas Grocer's" Associations jointly agreed to close all stores on the date designated by President Truman as "V-J" Day (erroneous reports of V-E Day had led to widespread employee absenteeism in May). Five days later Japan capitulated and Las Vegas went wild. Casino patrons lapped up "Atomic Bomb cockails," drunken servicemen sang in the streets (prompting several arrests by M.P.'s after city police refused to take action), and residents rejoiced, knowing that

their loved ones would soon return home. The next day hundreds filled the churches, offering prayers of thanksgiving that the great "World War" had finally ended.[60]

During the next few weeks, joy gradually yielded to concern as the Armistice and subsequent demobilization produced a new set of problems. Communities across the nation braced for the inevitable crisis, as millions of veterans returned home seeking jobs in a transitional and uncertain economy where most factories were either closing or retooling for production of civilian goods. In Las Vegas "reconversion" was particularly jarring, because the government planned to phase out and sell the giant B.M.I. complex. This, together with the scaling down of operations at the gunnery school, eroded the tax base and threatened the town's future. Although most businessmen feared the loss of military spending and wondered if tourism could even fill the void, the Commerce Department was more optimistic. In November, 1945, the "Committee of Economic Development," a federal post-war planning agency, conducted a spot check of the Las Vegas job situation and confidently predicted that unemployed workers in the area would soon be rehired once reconversion was underway. According to E.O. Underhill, local Chairman of C.E.D., "All released defense workers have found reemployment in Clark County and elsewhere leaving less than 300 unemployed."[61]

This announcement was contradicted, however, in January, 1946, when officials reported 762 people registered for unemployment benefits—273 of whom were returning veterans. According to U.S. Employment Office Manager John O'Leary, part of the problem resulted from out-of-state workers pouring into the valley hoping to land positions on the Davis Dam construction project, an event which only worsened the job and housing crisis for returning Clark County veterans. By February O'Leary reported over 1,000 people unemployed in the county—a figure he blamed on the arrival of "many residents of strike-bound states," especially California, Pennsylvania and Michigan unskilled labor. Conceding that the local employment office "resembled Grand Central Station the past month with a total of 10,308 cases handled," O'Leary ignored the fact that many of these workers, unable to find jobs in Las Vegas, moved on or back to California and other states. Still, local veterans competed with ex-servicemen and defense workers from other states in a steadily shrinking (especially once B.M.I. scaled down operations) job market. As the crisis worsened in March, 1946, with over 3,200 Nevada returnees filing claims in February alone, Thomas Miller, of the Veterans Employment Office, joined the state director of the United States Employment Office in urging employers to list their job openings with U.S.E.S. offices. Warning that another 2,650 more Nevada sailors and soldiers were scheduled for military discharge by July, Miller reminded businessmen that, unlike 1918, "veterans of this war don't want apple-selling jobs." Insisting

that these men learned a variety of useful mechanical and administrative skills while in uniform, Miller described them as the "cream" of the labor crop. And, perhaps mindful of the turbulence already threatening the coal, steel and railroad industries, Miller ominously noted that "peace without the certainty of gaining useful employment would be an empty peace for them." But in Nevada, as elsewhere, many men returned to find that those who never went to war held all the jobs. Typical was the case of the son of pioneer townsman Leon Rockwell who was called a "sucker" by one employer when he complained that few jobs were available for veterans.[62]

Clearly, the national emergency created a myriad of problems for Las Vegas. Yet, like the railroad and Boulder Dam before it, World War II represented a bonanza for the small town's economy and gaming industry. The upgrading of airport facilities, construction of B.M.I., creation of Basic Townsite, the new housing, roads, sewers and other infrastructural improvements, along with military and defense payrolls all exerted a multiplier effect. Moreover, with the fall of the "Iron Curtain" just a year later, two wartime legacies played key roles in the city's subsequent development. In 1949 the old gunnery school and range became Nellis Air Force Base, the nation's primary tactical weapons training center, and in 1951 the atom bomb found a home at the nearby Nuclear Test Site.[63]

The war tried, tested and transformed Las Vegas. The seemingly endless rounds of rationing, shortages, scrap drives and fund-raising measured the community's resolve. But, as it did for cities in California, New Mexico, Texas and other sunbelt states, World War II both created and confirmed the strategic importance of Las Vegas, thereby enhancing its chances of attracting future defense programs. In another way, too, the conflict helped shape the post-war economy. The unprecedented wave of soldiers and plant workers clearly demonstrated the widespread popularity and revenue potential of gaming. In a way, the war gave Las Vegas promoters a sense of direction. And its end only heightened their resolve. As local businessman Maxwell Kelch put it: "we knew that when the war was over, this town would go back to its whistlestop status, grass would grow in the streets and that it would be all over."[64] So, following massive layoffs at Basic Magnesium, Kelch and other concerned boosters, joined by the Chamber of Commerce, embarked upon an aggressive campaign to market Las Vegas as a "vacation center." Within two years, this effort, aided somewhat by the flamboyant "Bugsy" Siegel, had fashioned a glamorous new "resort image" which made Las Vegas a tourist mecca. In short, World War II unified the community as never before, while also triggering a chain of fateful events that altered the face of this small, desert town.

NOTES

I would like to thank Mr. David Millman and Mrs. Romelle Baker-Jarvis for their help in preparing this manuscript.

[1] On the national scene there are several fine works which describe the domestic response to the war: Richard Polenberg, *War and Society* (Philadelphia, 1972), Geofrey Perrett, *Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph: The American People, 1939-1944* (New York, 1973), and D.R.B. Ross, *Preparing for Ulysses: Politics and Veterans During World War II* (New York, 1969). For more of a local focus, see Roger Lotchin, "The City and the Sword: San Francisco and the Rise of the Metropolitan-Military Complex, 1919-1941," *Journal of American History,* LXV (March 1979), 996-1,012 and William Schmidt, "The Impact of Camp Shelby in World War II on Hattiesburg, Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History,* XXXIX (February 1977), among others.

For the most part, secondary source materials covering Las Vegas during the war are thin. A number of works, however, do provide some basic backgound information. The most informative, though unsatisfying, is Perry Kaufman's "The Best City of Them All: A History of Las Vegas, 1930-1960," unpublished dissertation (University of California, Santa Barbara, 1974), pp. 48-105. A number of other works provide some useful insights into the war. See appropriate sections of: Elbert Edwards, *200 Years in Nevada* (Salt Lake City, 1978); Russell Elliott, *History of Nevada* (Lincoln, 1973); James Hulse, *The Nevada Adventure* (Reno, 1965); Florence Lee Jones and John Cahlan, *Water: A History of Las Vegas . . .* , 2 volumes (Las Vegas, 1975).

[2] *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal,* January 12, 1940; November 20, 1940; December 9, 1940; June 1, 1940; July 10, 1940.

[3] Ibid., June 26, 1940; July 24, 1940; December 14, 1940; *Las Vegas Age,* March 14, 1941.

[4] The city cooperated with the gunnery school, often leasing land and rights-of-way for as little as a dollar a year. See Las Vegas City Commission, *Minutes,* Volume 5 (1942-1946), September 4, 1942, p. 11; June 7, 1944, p. 162; *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal,* October 10, 1941; December 23, 1940; January 11, 1941.

[5] Ibid., July 29, 1940; October 3, 1940; February 22, 1941; September 13, 1940.

[6] Ibid., September 16, 1940; September 21, 1940.

[7] Ibid., August 19, 1940; September 25, 1940; July 21, 1941.

[8] Throughout the war the city provided space for American Legion and V.F.W. fundraising events; see, for instance, City Commission, *Minutes,* 5, September 8, 1942, p. 13 and May 26, 1943, p. 91. *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal,* July 22, 1941; November 10, 1941.

[9] For more on B.M.I., see Maryellan Sadovich, "Basic Magnesium Incorporated and the Industrialization of Southern Nevada During World War II," unpublished M.A. Thesis (University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1971) and William T. Dobbs, "Working for B.M.I.: Reflections on Life and Labor at America's Largest World War II Magnesium Plant," unpublished manuscript which can be found in Special Collections, James Dickinson Library, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal,* November 10, 1941. The expanded population (approximately 8,400 in 1940 compared to almost 20,000 at its peak in 1944) strained municipal and county services. Despite federal aid, the city had to borrow several times and was forced into higher budgets. See, for example, City Commission, *Minutes,* 5, November 23, 1942, pp. 37-38 and the 1944 city budget with 1943 figures also in Ibid., pp. 153-157.

[10] *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal,* December 8, 1941.

[11] Ibid., December 8, 1941; December 9, 1941; December 10, 1941; March 6, 1942.

[12] Ibid., June 21, 1941; June 27, 1941; September 11, 1941; November 8, 1943.

[13] Ibid., December 8, 1941; January 30, 1943; October 23, 1943; March 20, 1943; July 3, 1942.

[14] Ibid., January 22, 1942.

[15] Ibid., December 16, 1941; February 25, 1942; December 10, 1942.

[16] Ibid., April 21, 1943.

[17] Ibid., May 29, 1945; June 28, 1945; June 21, 1945. The city routinely approved free space for the Army in the municipally-owned War Memorial Building (today the site of City Hall) for fund-raising events. The Army staged its boxing matches in the large auditorium, which in peacetime served as the town's convention center. See City Commission, *Minutes,* 5, October 16, 1943, p. 115.

[18] *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal,* January 6, 1942; November 20, 1942; April 4, 1942; May 15, 1942.

[19] Ibid., June 15, 1942; August 5, 1942.

[20] Ibid., September 10, 1942.

[21] Ibid., April 10, 1944; September 22, 1944.

[22] Ibid., June 13, 1942; August 12, 1942; November 9, 1942. The city made sites available for U.S.O. buildings; City Commission, *Minutes*, 5, September 15, 1942, p. 36. At the Valley View Addition, town fathers leased a one-story frame house with bath house to the U.S.O. for only a dollar a year; Ibid., June 7, 1944, p. 163. The city approved moving an old C.C.C. building next to the Westside grammar school on municipal land and then paid for a concrete foundation. Later, however, town fathers also moved the Army's prophylactic station from downtown police headquarters to the site. See, Ibid., December 22, 1942, p. 47; February 4, 1943, p. 62; March 4, 1943, p. 1943, p. 67; February 10, 1944, p. 440.

[23] *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, January 19, 1945; July 11, 1945.

[24] Ibid., August 7, 1943; December 7, 1945; December 8, 1942.

[25] Ibid., November 27, 1942; December 1, 1942; April 3, 1945.

[26] Ibid., April 25, 1942.

[27] Ibid., June 16, 1942.

[28] Ibid., September 19, 1942.

[29] Ibid., November 12, 1942; November 26, 1942.

[30] Ibid., November 28, 1942.

[31] Ibid., December 7, 1942.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., August 17, 1943.

[34] Ibid., April 8, 1944; February 5, 1944.

[35] Florence Lee Jones, I, 121; Richard English, "The Boom Came Back," *Colliers Magazine*, 110 (August 22, 1942), 49; Oral interview with Maxwell Kelch by Sheila Caudle printed in the *Review-Journal*, January 9, 1977, 1A, 7A; Jones, 114; Oral Interview with Florence Lee Jones and John Cahlan by William Dobbs, November 8, 1984.

[36] *Evening Review-Journal*, March 9, 1944; April 6, 1944.

[37] Ibid., February 2, 1945.

[38] Ibid., April 5, 1945; May 15, 1945.

[39] Ibid., December 14, 1944; January 4, 1945.

[40] Ibid., June 15, 1945; July 23, 1945; April 19, 1945.

[41] Ibid., June 12 1945.

[42] Ibid., June 14, 1945; July 24, 1945; July 26, 1945; August 21, 1945.

[43] Ibid., May 8, 1943.

[44] Ibid., July 24, 1945.

[45] Ibid., December 4, 1941.

[46] Ibid., January 31, 1942; April 29, 1942; May 13, 1942.

[47] Ibid., July 22, 1942; March 27, 1945; May 28, 1945.

[48] Jones, I, 99; *Evening Review-Journal*, April 15, 1943.

[49] Ibid., October 15, 1942; February 6, 1943.

[50] The city cooperated with federal and county housing officials, granting utility easements for new subdivisions and projects, recognizing the county's War Housing Authority and giving it the right to operate within municipal limits. See, for instance, City Commission, *Minutes*, 5, August 24, 1942, p. 7; May 5, 1943, p. 81. *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, September 11, 1944; September 22, 1943.

[51] Ibid., April 16, 1945; April 21, 1945.

[52] Ibid., August 24, 1945; March 21, 1946. For more on Kelso-Turner, see City Commission, *Minutes*, 5, September 7, 1945, p. 320; February 21, 1946, p. 392; *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, April 13, 1946.

[53] Ibid., May 4, 1943.

[54] Ibid., June 16, 1942; January 19, 1943; September 15, 1944; September 16, 1944.

[55] Ibid., October 9, 1944; May 8, 1945.

[56] Ibid., December 6, 1943; May 4, 1944; September 14, 1944; July 5, 1945.

[57] Ibid., June 3, 1944.

[58] Ibid., May 9, 1945.

[59] Ibid., August 7, 1945; August 10, 1945.

[60] Ibid., August 10, 1945; August 15, 1945.

[61] For its part, the city of Las Vegas considered a number of public works projects to ease the unemployment crisis. In October, 1945, elected officials authorized the city manager to release a report to federal authorities outlining necessary post-war projects; see City Commission, *Minutes*, 5, October 8, 1945, p. 336. *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, November 12, 1945.

[62] Ibid., January 17, 1946; February 7, 1946; March 11, 1946. Leon Rockwell, "Recollections of Life in Las Vegas, Nevada, 1906-1968," (transcript of UNR oral history, 1969), 102-103.

[63] For more on the Test Site, see A. Costandina Titus, "A-Bombs in the Backyard: Southern Nevada Adapts to the Nuclear Age, 1951-1963," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, XXVI (Winter 1983), 235-254.

[64] Oral Interview with Kelch cited above, n.35.

New St. Joseph, Nevada: The Muddy Mission Experience Revisited

CAROLYN GRATTAN-AIELLO

THE HISTORY OF THE MORMON church's colonization policies has long been of importance to Nevada historians. One such colonization project, the "Muddy Mission," occurred between the years 1865 and 1871. Small settlements along the Muddy River in southeastern Nevada became the first permanent towns of the Moapa Valley.

A few historians have treated the turbulent years of the Muddy Mission in detail.[1] Moving to the Moapa Valley in 1865, the settlers found the need to relocate their townsites several times. The change in town locations has been a source of confusion, as have the reasons for the abandonment of the valley in 1871. The reasons for the abandonment are usually attributed to Nevada's tax policies. However, the work of earlier historians and pioneer diaries now allows a new interpretation. The many townsite relocations, as well as the abandonment, were the logical results of processes going on in the 1860s. Moreover, failures at the administrative level of the Church's colonization program contributed to the failure of the Muddy Mission.

New St. Joseph, one of the most longlasting of the Muddy Mission settlements, is the focal point for this discussion. Occupying the center of the Moapa Valley, near the present-day Overton Airport, it was founded by a mixture of settlers from two other Muddy Mission towns. New St. Joseph is an atypical example of the Mormon experience during the Muddy Mission, and the Muddy Mission itself is atypical of the Mormon experience in the Great Basin. Most colonization projects thrived, while in sharp contrast the Muddy Mission failed. Since the focal point for the mission was the establishment of a large central community, St. Joseph, and New St. Joseph shows the manifestation of this effort in several forms, it is necessary to study New St. Joseph in order to understand the entire Muddy Mission experience.[2]

Leaders of the Church of Latter Day Saints hoped to accomplish three purposes by settling in southern Nevada: establish the cultivation of cotton, develop a support system for navigation on the Colorado River, and keep non-Mormons or "Gentiles" from settling the area. Because the Civil War cut off cotton supplies to Utah, the Mormons decided to grow their own. Begin-

ning in 1861, settlers were "called" to southern Utah to fulfill a Church mission by raising cotton. The Muddy Mission, part of this effort, became a prime cotton supplier to Utah.

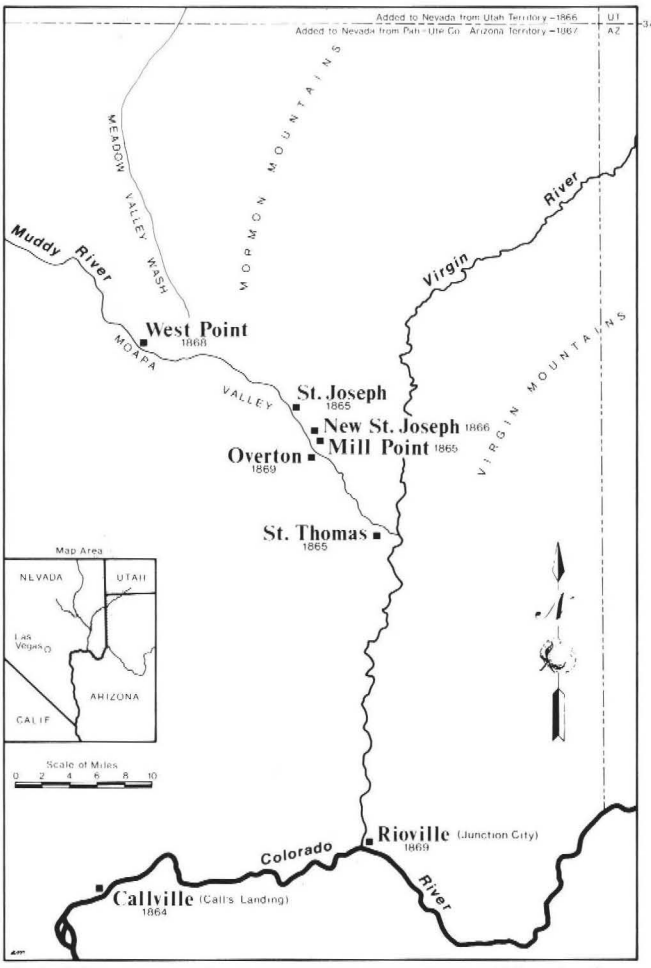
The Colorado River had been a source of interest to Mormon leaders from the time of the first settlement of Utah. It was hoped colonists and goods could be transported from Europe, around Cape Horn, and up the Colorado as far as possible. Wagons could then carry settlers and supplies to Utah, thereby eliminating the long overland trek across the prairie. In 1864, Call's Landing was established as a port on the river. The Muddy settlements were founded shortly thereafter, and served as support for the Call's Landing project.

Settlement of the Muddy River Valley, which was part of Arizona territory at that time, was also designed to keep non-Mormons away. As the mining districts of Pioche developed the Muddy River became a natural route for miners traveling south. Mormons hoped that settlement along the Muddy would keep passing Gentiles from utilizing the area.

The settlement of the Muddy River began on January 8, 1865, with the establishment of St. Thomas at the confluence of the Muddy and Virgin Rivers.[3] Erastus Snow, president of the Southern Utah Mission and presiding authority over the area, visited the Muddy on April 26, 1865, to survey the valley for future towns. Later he chose two locations, one of which became St. Joseph, the present site of Logandale.[4] On May 28 the Saints arrived at the St. Joseph site, nine miles north of St. Thomas, and organized a branch of the Church there.

In August, 1865, Arizona officials contacted the settlers to secure their vote in upcoming elections. Thomas Smith, the leader of the St. Thomas community, wrote to Brigham Young for instructions. Young advised the people to remain neutral on political issues for the time being.[5] Their refusal to vote in the Arizona elections is testimony to the control Brigham Young exerted over the Muddy settlers at that time. During the same year Orawell Simons established a grist mill three miles south of St. Joseph; the settlement which grew up at that location became known as Mill Point.

Early in 1866, in response to problems with the Indians, some of the St. Joseph settlers moved to an area surveyed as the "Public Square," and there constructed homes in the configuration of a fort. At the same time, other settlers also moved to Mill Point.[6] Later in the year, Erastus Snow received a letter from Brigham Young and his counselors urging that the small settlements of the Moapa Valley be abandoned in favor of larger fortified ones.[7] The settlers of old St. Joseph were ultimately given the option of moving to either St. Thomas or Mill Point. Snow advised the settlers to: "Take hold with energy this fall and winter in putting the water as high onto the bench at that place as can be conveniently done, and build a permanent and commodious fort there, or go down to St. Thomas."[8] Although they had already built their



Early Mormon settlements in the mid 1860s. *(Map by Amy Mazza)*

homes in the formation, the St. Joseph settlers obeyed Snow's advice and moved to one of the two new locations.

Thus, old St. Joseph, the site of present-day Logandale, was abandoned in June, 1866; and New St. Joseph, which was built in fort formation on the sand bench above Mill Point, dates from this time. By the fall of 1866 the population of New St. Joseph was recorded as 167 people, thirty-five of them men,[9] but by December of 1867 the population of New St. Joseph had fallen to twenty-three men.[10] Most of the settlers had returned to Utah.

Because of this loss of settlers, the general conference of the Church in Salt Lake City in October of 1867 called upon 158 new missionaries, mainly from the Salt Lake area, to strengthen the Southern Mission including the Muddy settlements. A total of about seventy-five had arrived at the Muddy by the beginning of the next year.[11] The success of the Muddy Mission depended

upon the number of missionaries in residence, as well as their ability to work together. Late in 1867 the new missionaries began arriving from Utah. Although some lived in Fort New St. Joseph long enough to have built adobe homes, they apparently failed to form a cohesive unit with the older inhabitants. Darius Salem Clement reported in his diary that "a dislike for St. Joseph was perceptibly growing among them. . . . A kind of conclusiveness was noticeable on the part of some, a feeling to keep themselves separate & [*sic*] not commingle with the old settlers."[12] The new settlers left New St. Joseph in early 1868 for West Point, a center on the upper Muddy near the present-day Moapa Indian reservation. This location appeared superior to New St. Joseph because of the ease with which the Saints could control irrigation water over the low level banks of the Muddy. Although the West Point settlement was sanctioned by Erastus Snow,[13] Brigham Young in February of 1868 gave the West Point settlers the option of returning to New St. Joseph fort or coming home to Utah. Most took the opportunity to return to Utah.[14]

Some settlers did remain at West Point or immediately returned after having been called back to Fort New St. Joseph, for Erastus Snow found people there on his visit on June 9.[15] The continued settlement of West Point suggests the existence of individualistic behavior which may be due to the contradictory messages the settlers received from authority figures.

Fort New St. Joseph was designed to be a temporary community, as were most forts on the Mormon frontier. After nearly two years of living in the "Fort," Erastus Snow chose a permanent location for the city of St. Joseph.[16] Indeed, on March 25, 1868, J. J. Fuller surveyed the city lots for the New St. Joseph town plat where settlers from Fort New St. Joseph were expected to move as soon as possible.[17] This location, which has been referred to as Sandy Town A, is situated near the north end of the Overton Airport.[18] "Sandy Town" was the settlers' own derisive term for the St. Joseph city.

Although Erastus Snow listened to the "pros and cons expressed relative to the best place for the city," he did not defer from his original plan of settling the permanent St. Joseph city near the center of the sand bench.[19] Located "about ½ mile north of the fort," the town could "spread each way as lots were wanted hereafter."[20] The water ditch which supplied culinary and irrigation water to Fort New St. Joseph had been completed on February 27, 1868,[21] approximately a month before Snow's decision to settle permanently on the sand bench. Perhaps if Snow had realized the problems the missionaries would encounter with ditches on the sand bench he would have chosen another location for the town.[22]

By May of 1868 the population of the fort had fallen. Bishop Alma H. Bennett reported only twenty-five to thirty missionaries called the previous October remained on the Muddy.[23] The June *Deseret News* published a lengthy letter from Joseph W. Young, nephew of Brigham Young and assistant to Cotton Mission President Erastus Snow. The letter is an advertise-

Looking toward the Mormon Mesa, St. Thomas, Nevada. *(Photograph courtesy of Bureau of Reclamation Collection, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Library)*

ment for the beauty and availability of the Muddy region. Disregarding the many desertions due to the harsh Muddy environment, Young lists the poor quality of roads leading to the area as the only disadvantage.[24]

Early in August of 1868, Joseph W. Young spoke to the inhabitants of Fort New St. Joseph on matters of "direct concern" to them:

> He said he found that some wanted to make a settlement at old St. Joseph. Others thought it best to make the city down on the west side of the valley . . . others wanted to build on their 2½ acre lots. . . . This diversity of feeling tended to scatter and weaken. He thought men who have teaching and experience in this church should manifest more wisdom and a better understanding of the principles of the religion.[25]

Joseph W. Young continued by advising the settlers to move to their city lots (Sandy Town A, the permanent St. Joseph city location) as that was the place designated for settlement by the "rightful authority."[26]

On Tuesday, August 18, 1868, a fire in Fort New St. Joseph gutted the interiors of about half of the adobe dwellings there. Spreading rapidly across the wood and cattail roofs, the fire had a devastating effect on the inhabitants. Many accounts of the fire have surfaced, but the following account by Darius Salem Clement, the Church Clerk for the local ward, gives the most com-

plete, and because of the immediacy of the account, perhaps the most accurate record of the fire.

> Tuesday, the next day after their departure, an occurence took place at St. Joseph, which will long be remembered by all who witnessed it. 3 or 4 children made a fire on the east side and midway of the fort the light (word indecipherable) trash lying around took fire a strong breeze blew from the N. E. The fire was kindled back of Bros. Streeper and Miles premises. They were living in sheds made of willow and flag. The fire took a small calf pen first. . . . It happened that all these were near enough together and arranged in such a position as to easily conduct the fire to the houses with the wind blowing in the direction it was . . .[27]

More than half the residents lost homes in the fire. The meetinghouse was also burned. Resident William Gibson reported that on the day of the fire "the heat was up to 119 in the shade and everything was as dry as tinder."[28] The next day Bishop Alma Bennett sent a letter to Erastus Snow and Joseph W. Young concerning the fire. In their response they advised the settlers to rebuild on the "Sandy Town A" (St. Joseph city) location. They urged the settlers to work together "and by so doing you will see in a short time, better homes, and brighter prospects spring out of the ashes of your ruined dwellings, than you ever had before."[29]

Although the presiding authorities suggested that the New St. Joseph missionaries rebuild on the "Sandy Town A" location, most remained in the fort.[30] It was not until September that the first house appeared at 'Sandy Town A,' and by November 15, three or four families were living there.[31] Settlers gradually moved to the new location until December of 1868.

In December a more experienced surveyor with more accurate equipment resurveyed the "Sandy Town A" location. This surveyor was probably Daniel Stark who was listed by that occupation under the Rio Virgen County organization. Stark found the town to be out of alignment by about one degree. His resurveyed site moved the town to the north. Archaeological remains identified as "Sandy Town B" appear to be this resurveyed townsite.[32]

The resurvey discouraged the settlers who had already built homes in "Sandy Town A." Additionally, in December of 1868, a lesser authority figure than Erastus Snow gave the settlers the option of moving to a third Sandy Town location, this one north of a geologic feature known as the "Big Hollow."[33] Some settlers, the ones with agricultural land located below Fort New St. Joseph were reluctant to move to the northernmost settlement, a considerable distance from their farm plots.[34]

In reality, of the three Sandy Towns, the missionaries would have had the most favorable location, in terms of water usage, at the northernmost settlement. The ditch system they constructed to carry culinary and irrigation water actually leached more water through the porous sand of its walls than it carried. Since the settlement farthest north, past the Big Hollow, meant the

shortest distance of travel for the water from the Muddy River through the ditch, the northernmost town would have experienced less water loss than either of the Sandy Towns A or B, or Fort New St. Joseph.[35]

House foundations have been recorded at a location north of the "Big Hollow," but it is difficult to determine how many settlers actually moved there. By February of 1869 people were living at all locations on the sand beach. Three teachers were listed for "St. Joseph," one in the first district at the fort, one in the "middle district," and one at the "third district on northern part of city."[36] At this time the settlers were described as "scattered and living in camp."[37] Rather than unite the settlers into a cohesive group, the experiences of living on the sand bench had scattered them and encouraged a growing individualism in their attitude toward the Muddy Mission. Moreover, many abandonments of the region at this time may be attributed to the Sandy Town relocations and water ditch problems.

During a visit to New St. Joseph in December of 1868, President Snow spoke to the brethren about the scarcity of water in St. Thomas. Although consumption by the Sandy Towns and the fort on the sand bench did not leave enough water for the downstream settlement, Snow did not consider abandoning the effort at St. Joseph. Rather, in spite of the fact that the ditches leached more water than they carried to the settlements, he suggested even greater ditch building efforts. What became known as the "St. Joseph Canal" was begun early in 1869.[38] Snow must have felt the need to emphasize his position as leader of the Muddy settlements, since he ended his remarks by "speaking of men who disregard and treat lightly the counsels and wishes of their leaders. . . . When they landed in hell and looked on their back track they would see that they commenced to go down when they began to trifle with the Priesthood."[39]

On December 3, 1868, the Church called another 150 men to strengthen the Muddy Mission. At that time, President Snow advised that not more than twenty-five families should settle the upper Muddy at West Point.[40] Perhaps this limitation on settlement indicates the settlers' preference for West Point over any of the sand bench communities. On December 15, Joseph W. Young left to meet Erastus Snow on the upper Muddy to survey and "permanently locate and organize the settlement."[41] Trouble with the upper Muddy Indians was anticipated, some of the brethren had purchased land from them. "This kind of traffick [*sic*] was forbidden . . . ," and it is assumed that the Mormons were reprimanded for this action.[42] In retrospect, the settlers' initiative in attempting to foster good relations with the Indians appears to have been justified. Although forbidden by Church policy, the purchase of land from the Indians might have forestalled further problems between the Mormons and the Indians. In any event, the act demonstrates that the settlers' desire to solve the real problems of life on the Muddy River took precedence over Church policy.

Century General Merchandise in the Mormon settlement of St. Thomas, Nevada. *(Photograph courtesy of Merle and Beola Frehner Collection, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Library)*

On February 15, 1869, Rio Virgen County was organized by the Utah legislature, an area which would have included all the Muddy townsites. Some scholars credit this organization to a desire on the part of the Muddy residents to be governed by Utah,[43] although current research points to various authority figures as catalysts for this movement. Prior to this time the settlers of the Muddy region had believed themselves to be in Pahute County, Arizona Territory.

A petition to become Rio Virgen County had been signed by the citizens of the Muddy. "The boundaries were defined in the act, but it was recommended by President Young that St. Thomas remain in Arizona at present."[44] Discussing the organization of Rio Virgen County by Utah, historian James McClintock wrote:

> This county organization is not understood, even under the hypothesis that Utah claimed a sixty-mile strip of Nevada, for St. Joseph, on the Muddy, lies a considerable distance south of the extension of the Southern Utah line, the 37th parallel.[45]

McClintock refers to the 60-mile strip of Nevada which had been added in 1866 from Utah territory. Even if Utah had claimed that the area had been

falsely appropriated, the territory in question still did not include the Muddy region, which was south of the Southern Utah border line.

On February 20, 1869, Brigham Young ordered Joseph W. Young to secure the confluence of the Virgin and Colorado Rivers and keep Gentiles out of the area by placing a settlement there. Joseph Young, in fact, had already been there and begun work on the townsite called Rioville or Junction City.[46] Erastus Snow had first explored the region on December 14, 1867, with the intention of establishing a community;[47] and he discussed the mouth of the Virgin River as a settlement site with the residents of New St. Joseph as early as December 3, 1868, although they were reluctant to move there.[48] According to President Brigham Young the mouth of the Virgin River was:

> The key to the southern country. Railroad and business men in different parts of the country are now directing their eyes toward it. It is expected that the southern and northern Pacific Railroads will be connected by one that will cross the Colorado at that point. He (Joseph W. Young) expected that he would be blamed more for letting that place slip out of his hands, than he would be if he should fail in getting the water on the bench.[49]

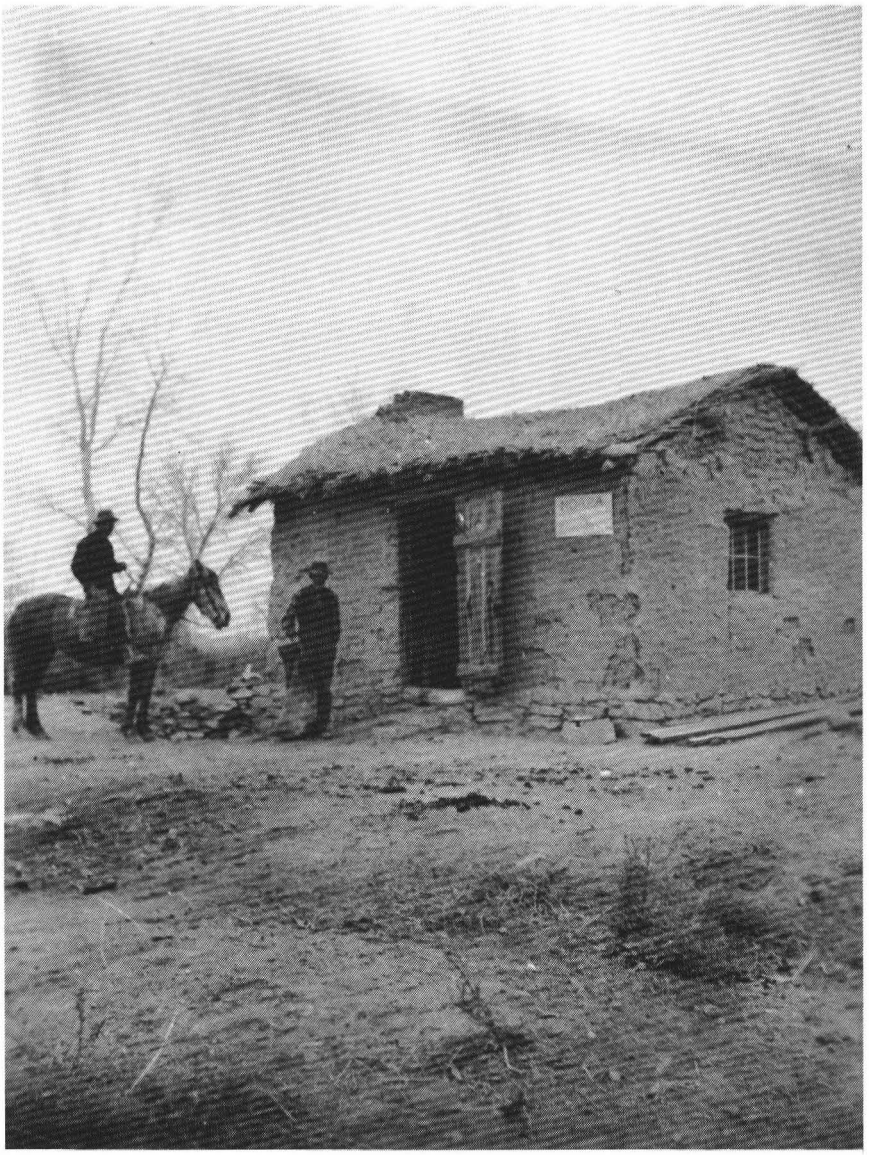
In a letter St. Thomas Bishop James Leithead described to James Bleak the problems at Junction City with the two Mormon families there at the time. Of the settlers, Leithead wrote:

> Bro Asay altho [*sic*] sent there to keep outsiders from taking possession, has without my knowledge induced three Gentiles to go down and engage in fishing taken [*sic*] them in as partners he has proven himself unfit for that position but if I withdraw him and his boys the other family can not stay alone consequently there will be no one there at all. I scarcely know how to get these Gentiles away from there for I think that Bro. Asay has told them some Big tale [*sic*] about a main thoroughfare crossing the river at that point and they [*sic*] can be money had in establishing a Ferry etc.[50]

Brigham Young was undoubtedly aware of the plan to build a southern transcontinental railroad which ultimately crossed the Colorado River at Needles. At this time, however, a crossing at the Virgin River may have been under consideration, explaining Brigham Young's urgency to control the area. Although Young was the religious leader of the territory, acquiring the Muddy region as part of Utah's Rio Virgen County would have also insured his secular control of the area.

Sometime in 1869 the settlers of the sand bench, who had been scattered in the New St. Joseph fort, the Sandy Towns and "Northern District" settlements, abandoned the area for Overton and the original St. Joseph (Logandale) locations.[51] This move appears to have been initiated by the settlers rather than sanctioned by authority.

The moves were probably based on frustration with the "St. Joseph Canal," begun on February 7 and finished as far as intended for that season on March



The Moapa Post Office, c. 1889, probably the site of the Mormon settlement of West Point. *(Photograph courtesy of Ferron-Bracken Collection, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Library)*

8, 1869.[52] By April 3, 1869, a "considerable portion" of the ditch was filled with wind-blown sand, requiring continual cleaning of the ditch as often as every two days. As people abandoned the settlements for Utah, six or seven families leaving on April 7th alone,[53] the exhausting work fell on a shrinking labor force.

The idea of moving to Overton was not new to the settlers; indeed, it had been discussed as early as August of 1868. The Overton settlement, which lasted from 1869 until abandonment of the Valley in 1871, appears to have been successful in terms of agricultural productivity. However, authorities were dissatisfied with the region.

In March of 1870 Brigham Young journeyed to the Muddy villages where he found conditions "unfavorable for agricultural or commercial development."[54] In a December 14, 1870, letter addressed to James Leithead, he ascribed the reason for the abandonment of the Muddy to the property assessment made by Nevada officials. The Muddy was actually in an area added to Nevada in 1867, although the boundaries were in dispute until an 1870 survey confirmed Nevada's claim to the region. On December 20, 1870, the colonists met with Joseph W. Young and decided to abandon the valley.[55] Of the 600 people living in St. Thomas, old St. Joseph (Logandale) and Overton, only 123 voted to leave and three to stay; obviously most people abstained.[56]

During the spring of 1871 the Mormon colonists abandoned the Muddy Mission in a large-scale effort. Indeed, according to Morton Cutler, "teams were sent down from Washington, Santa Clara, St. George and other southern towns to help us hurry out of Nevada. The people who couldn't move were aided in getting back to Utah."[57]

The exorbitant tax Nevada wished to impose on the residents and the demand for payment in gold, which was believed impossible for the Saints to acquire, are the reasons usually given for the abandonment of the Muddy Missions. There is evidence, however, that the Saints were able to obtain cash either by employment within the Muddy settlements or in Gentile towns. For example, in March of 1869 one settler earned five cents per head per day for herding cattle at New St. Joseph,[58] and others had apparently worked for wages on the railroad in February.[59] In October of 1868 "several of the brethren" were recorded as having hauled salt to Pahranagat for money and "store pay."[60] Also, Snow reprimanded some settlers for selling grain to "outsiders" although it is not clear to whom the term refers.[61] At one point a missionary was counseled by the local Bishop to go to work at the Pahranagat Quartz Mills where men were needed to chop wood.[62] But allowing Mormons to work for Gentiles was against the Church's goal of self-sufficiency. Dependency on the Gentile world would have reduced Church control over the Muddy.

One author has argued that the Mission failed prior to the abandonment of the area, because of problems with the canal and water supply on the sand bench.[63] The abandonment of the sand bench and the subsequent success of Overton should, however, be taken to its logical conclusion. The settlers were able to pick an area which became agriculturally successful. Although agricultural success was crucial to the average settler, it would not have been

Brigham Young, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1847-1877, directed the settlements of the Mormons in the Utah Territory. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

desirable to the Mormon officials if it meant the loss of control over the brethren. Moreover, agricultural success is indicated by Joseph W. Young's

suggestion that ten men stay in the valley to grow cotton, after the call for abandonment was made.[64]

Daniel Bonelli, one of the few who voted to stay in Nevada, vented his frustration to the *Reese River Reveille* at being abandoned by the Church as follows:

". . . while indeed there were not six men on the Muddy who would have had more taxes to pay over in Nevada than two square rods of grape vine would have yielded, or a load of salt hauled to the smelting works would have paid." The writer then proceeds to point out the repeated failures of enterprises undertaken at the command of the inspired Priesthood, and finally comes to the conclusion that Brigham Young does not interview God Almighty near as often as he pretends to, else he would not make so many egregious blunders.[65]

Although Bonelli was embittered because the Church had left him to face the Muddy environment alone, his harsh words reflect another reason for the abandonment of the region, namely, the strong possibility that leadership figures had lost control over their charges.

The greatest authority figure for the Muddy settlers was Brigham Young. Although the Muddy was important to him, he did not personally make the trip to view the settlements until 1870; instead, Young advised the settlers through Erastus Snow, President of the Cotton Mission. Feramorz Young Fox contended that Mormon colonization would have progressed in much the same way even without the leadership of Brigham Young.[66] Fox felt the real decision making for each settlement was made at a lower level of authority.

The lines of authority led from his hands [Brigham Young's] through the hands of divisional leaders, to the most remote settlement. Thus careful attention to detail and genuine solicitude on the part of leaders for the welfare of their people went far to assure the success of Mormon colonial enterprise.[67]

Lower level authority figures were crucial to the process of transforming people into "Saints." But there were problems associated with Mormon authority. The power of Church authority had developed early in Mormon history, and it remained strong for years afterward, "even when rigid authority was unnecessary and sometimes disadvantageous."[68] The lines of authority at New St. Joseph ran from Brigham Young to Erastus Snow and then to Joseph W. Young, who seems to have been "assigned" to the St. Joseph settlement early in 1868, becoming Muddy Mission President in the fall of that year.

It is important to remember that even lower level authority figures were believed to follow divine guidance. The operation of the Mormon religion relied on "conceptual looseness" of religious thought coupled with authoritarianism.[69] Little discussion of theology is recorded for New St. Joseph, but little was needed. If a person believed in the religion, then he believed in

obeying an authoritarian leader. If the leader was successful in the outside world, the belief of the individual was enhanced. The leadership must have been inspired if secular success was attained. Erastus Snow and Joseph W. Young reminded the New St. Joseph settlers that their guidance came from a divine source: "Now brethren these are our feelings and we trust they are dictated by the Holy Spirit."[70] This reinforcement gave greater credibility to their instructions. If their instructions proved successful on temporal matters, the settlers' belief in Mormonism grew.

Joseph W. Young's role in the development of the Muddy settlements was, as assistant to Erastus Snow, to enforce Snow's decision to locate St. Joseph city on the sand bench (Sandy Towns A and B). In June of 1868 he published a lengthy letter in the *Deseret News,* which was clearly an advertisement for the beauty and availability of the Muddy region. On August 17, 1868, Young visited the New St. Joseph fort, where he spoke to the people on the issue of settlement. Some wanted to resettle the old St. Joseph location (Logandale), some wanted to make a new settlement on the west side of the valley (Overton), and some wanted to settle on their two and a half acre farm lots near the river. Young "earnestly advised the brethren to move on to their city lots (Sandy Town A) as soon as they could and go to improving and not think of any other place than that which has been designated by the rightful authority."[71] In December of 1868 new settlers arrived at Fort New St. Joseph. Before they had a chance to unload their wagons and settle in the fort, Young led them to the Sandy Town A site where the permanent city had been designated for settlement.[72] There he told them to "amalgamate and unite together,"[73] later telling them not to give way to a "murmuring spirit" of fault-finding.[74]

Young felt that the St. Joseph settlement was superior to St. Thomas due to the abundance and desirability of the land. He admitted the city lots were located in a sandy area but extolled the virtues of the sand to the point of being ludicrous: ". . . yet the Sand was clean; they might lay down and roll in it, and then get up and shake themselves, and it would fall off and not stick like the mineral mud of the northern (word indecipherable)."[75]

The fact that irrigation was crucial to the agricultural prosperity of the Muddy Mission was well known to Joseph Young, who appears to have been a tireless speaker on the issue of building the water ditch to supply the Sandy Towns with water. Young's solution to the problems lay in the concept of unity. On January 24, 1869, he spoke on the subject of union. Again on February 7 he spoke on the principle of union, countering the feelings of some of the settlers who felt the canal would fail.

> Before work was begun on the Canal, he gave the plan of operation, and invited all who were interested to go with him, and look over the ground where it was to be located, to see for themselves and then give their judgement. . . . As but few

accepted the invitation and went he supposed the remainder would acquiese and be satisfied with any arrangement that might be made by those who did go. When any measure of importance is brought before the people, they have the right and priviledge of expressing their views and opinions in relation to it. But no man has a right to find fault with a measure after it has been decided upon. . . .

The St. Joseph Canal might possibly prove a failure, but he did not believe it would. And if it did, it would be because men failed to perform that which is expected of them, and not because of any defect on the plan on which it is being carried out. But should it fail after everyone has done his part, they might find fault with him as much as they pleased.

He believed that the opposition and fault finding proceeded more from ignorance and want of faith than from a disposition to be rebellious.[76]

The ultimate reasons for leaving the sand bench in favor of Overton and the old St. Joseph location are not recorded by Clement but may be assumed to be the exhaustive work required on the water ditch project. More important are the methods used to secure the continued work and faith in the sand ditch project. Fort New St. Joseph, a temporary community, represented a transition. The Mormon hierarchy sought to kindle a spirit of unity among all Mormons living in the fort, a unity that would prevail in their later permanent settlement. To accomplish this, Young felt the people needed to "unite with their leaders and follow them. It could never be accomplished by the Leaders endeavoring to follow the people in all their different ways and notions."[77] President Snow summarized the process, arguing that "there were some minds that can see . . . the future of this country, and what can be made of it. There were others who cannot see, but if they will continue to be steadfast, and do as they are told, their faith will increase."[78]

Ultimately, one must question why people remained on the sand bench and continued to build a community there. At one point, of the 175 men called the previous fall, only eight of them remained at New St. Joseph.[79] George Brimhall in *Workers of Utah* surveyed the Muddy region for settlement, decided against it, and returned to Utah where he prospered.[80] According to Melvin T. Smith, "For some of these Mormons, the issue was not one of options, but whether or not one would be faithful.

For the faithful, not only was history an unfolding of God's will, but Church leaders were viewed as the ones who understood these things best. Leaders were believed to be inspired, so that what they asked the Saints to do was seen as God's will for the members. One consequence for many cotton missionaries was extreme sacrifice, both economically and in loss of loved ones.[81]

Can the Mormon leadership be described as insensitive to the sufferings of their people in light of the many failures of the sand bench ditch? Smith characterizes the Mormon leadership in the case of Jacob Hamblin as being so religious that he "reported what he believed was supposed to be there, not what in fact was."[82] The same can be said for Joseph W. Young, in another

context. His comments about the sand, "they might lay down and roll in it" might not be taken seriously in a later age, but he probably meant them to be serious. But they illustrate how his faith in the project took precedence over his ability to see reality.

Finally, it must be concluded that an individual's personal faith determined how closely he followed the advice of the Mormon hierarchy. While Mormon elders often asked for superhuman feats in order to settle the sand bench area, it must be assumed the efforts of the brethren in following their leaders were proportionate to their individual belief. But even if a settler did remain faithful, he would have faced problems in following the mixed messages of the leaders of the Muddy Mission.

At West Point, for example, Snow allowed settlement while Brigham Young later recalled the settlers, who must have been confused and discouraged. The call to settle Rioville met with passive resistance which ultimately backfired when Gentiles were included in the settlement. But the location of the St. Joseph City on the sand bench was the worst exercise in poor judgment by Snow. The need for water on the sand bench and the limited technology for procuring it prohibited settlement of the area. However, if Snow personally believed with other Mormon leaders at his administrative level, that his choice had followed Divine guidance, it would have been difficult if not impossible to suggest later a different location was needed. The New St. Joseph settlers realized the folly of settling at the location and resisted moving there. Although the town was surveyed for settlement in March, no one even attempted to move there until September of 1868, well after the New St. Joseph fire. A year after the original survey, in the spring of 1869, settlers were still living in the fort. The faithful settlers were faced with a double bind situation. How could they question the location of the St. Joseph city on the sand bench? It had been set aside according to religious protocol. To admit it would not work would question the Church itself.

Appendix Note

Fort New St. Joseph

"The Great Basin is a good place to make Saints," said Brigham Young.[83] This statement implies that the primary goal of Mormon colonization was a social one, that of transforming people of diverse cultures into a people of one thought: Mormons. The place for this transformation was the Mormon village or town. Examination of New St. Joseph and the Muddy Mission shows the town as a social force, a mode of transformation wherein all people, American or European, wealthy or common, were asked to develop a new Mormon cognition.

The term cognition has been developed by many scholars. Archaeologist

James Deetz's definition includes: "Such aspects of a past people as the way in which they perceived their environment, the world view that underlay the organization of their physical universe, and the way ideology shared their lives."[84] Anthropologist Mark Leone has analyzed Mormon technology and cognition in a study of Mormon fences and town plans. He believes the effect of the Mormon environment on the individual has been a cognitive one.[85]

> The Mormon's physical world is divided or compartmentalized by interior walled spaces, yards full of fences, and gridded towns with gridded fields. This is the cultural environment the Mormon was and is born into and raised in. He knows it all his life and it is reasonable to assume it has an effect on him: a cognitive effect.[86]

Leone argues that twentieth-century Mormons need to compartmentalize. They need to be able to synthesize contradictions between their religion and twentieth-century reality, and the Mormon environment reflects this need symbolically with a compartmentalized landscape.

Nineteenth-century Mormonism was in the process of development. The Great Basin gave the Mormons the isolation necessary to create a Mormon cognition. The developmental stages of Mormonism were reflected in a nineteenth-century society characterized by forts. Ordering the physical environment in such a way as to separate Mormons and alienate outsiders, the fort epitomized the isolation characteristic of Mormon society.

The primary role of the fort was to create a unity of feeling among its inhabitants. Symbolically the fort contributed to this feeling. The effectiveness of symbols lies in the change of ideas they express. Claude Levi-Strauss has shown that symbols manipulate thought "through meaningful equivalents of things meant which belong to another order of reality."[87] The "thing meant," as symbolized by the fort, was unity of thought. The Mormon reality was the physical environment, and the Mormon fort the symbol. The constant visual reminder to unify, symbolized by the fort, would have added to the individual settlers' development of a Mormon cognition.

Scholars have observed significant variations between Mormon settlements in size of town plats, widths of roads, size of garden plots, etc.[88] If individual examples of Mormon fort settlements are examined, a large disparity between the "ideal" and the "real" fort exists. Brigham Young dictated on several occasions the exact type of fort settlement he desired:

> I want to see every settlement fort in their cities. I want you to make a wall round here so that no man can get over and if your enemies come with scaling ladders they cannot get you and no gun faze the wall and be perfectly safe make four permanent gates and make yourselves secure so that you can sleep in peace. . . . Make the wall 6 or 8 feet high and don't be talking about it but go and do it.[89]

Mormon settlers appear to have followed the prescribed "idea" of a fort, but with modifications necessitated by frontier conditions or personal prefer-

ence. Indeed, according to Anson Call, who described the early fort attempts at Fillmore, Utah, "it was next to an impossibility to stockade or picket in our houses with the tools we had to work with so we have built our houses in close order having no doors or windows upon the outside."[90] In fact, the desire to follow Brigham Young's advice was strong enough that settlers in Wellsville, Utah, in 1865 built a stockade consisting of a pole fence which was unable to keep out livestock, scarcely a threat to the Indians.[91]

Fort-building was a symbolic gesture which served a twofold purpose: protection against the Indian threat, real or imagined, and a system to consolidate settlers into a homogeneous group. Brigham Young spoke in 1853 on the concept of the fort, advising his people to "Let your dwelling house be a perfect fort."[92] The fort became a symbol to the Mormon encouraging him to keep out alien ideas and to preserve the Mormon unit.

New St. Joseph was constructed as a fort, following a pattern already prevalent in Utah. Settlers built forts on the Utah frontier which roughly fall into one of three categories: the cabin row fort, the detached wall fort, or the contiguous compartment fort.[93] Warren Foote described New St. Joseph as similar to the St. Thomas fort, "only the rows of houses were farther apart."[94] "The north end was kept open so as to add to the length if necessary."[95] A description of the New St. Joseph fire includes more information about the fort. In his "Diary" Darius Clement explained that "the roofs of both strings of houses were joined but disconnected from those that did not burn."[96] From these descriptions it is assumed that New St. Joseph fit the "cabin row fort" pattern, although the backs of houses do not appear to have formed a continuous wall. Nor is there archaeological evidence to point to a detached wall surrounding the fort.

Forts were almost never the first type of settlement in a new area. As Pitman stated, "most of the settlements were actually several years old and quite well established before a fort was built."[97] And so it was with New St. Joseph, which was formed from a mixture of settlers from the original St. Joseph and from the Mill Point group. While it has traditionally been assumed that the move to New St. Joseph was in response to an Indian menace, there is evidence to indicate that the settlers did not feel overly threatened by the Indians. In fact, local frustration with the Muddy Indians prompted some Mormons to call for "indiscriminate extermination" of the Indians at one point.[98]

The population of old St. Joseph (Logandale) had moved into a fort encampment during January of 1866. The call to consolidate the settlers of old St. Joseph and Mill Point during the summer of 1866 could have been in part in response to the hostility between the two groups which is discussed in Warren Foote's autobiography. If the Indian threat was exaggerated, then it would have been a greater influence for the amalgamation of the people. They would unite in a common effort against a common enemy. The fort at

New St. Joseph would contribute to a cognitive effect for the inhabitants. It is interesting to note that of the original settlers listed at old St. Joseph and the settlers at New St. Joseph at the time of the fire, most resided together at the "burned" end of the fort; only the Andersen and Bennett families of the original settlers of old St. Joseph were in the unburned section.

On May 30, 1866, Erastus Snow and others met with the Muddy Indians, and although a "good feeling" prevailed, Snow organized on June 7 a battalion of the Nauvoo Legion. On June 12, 1866, Snow issued the letter to Thomas Smith advising the old St. Joseph settlers to move to Mill Point and "fort up" or move to St. Thomas. Issuing the letter as General Snow of the Nauvoo Legion emphasized the Indian threat, although the real threat might have been the dissension between the two groups of Mormons.

In reality, the New St. Joseph complex offered a poor method of defense. All types of cabin row forts were deficient, because Indians could easily scale the walls, although the mere presence of a fort might have deterred Indian attacks.[99] New St. Joseph was even more deficient as there were spaces between the cabins, and the north end of the fort was kept open. The only importance of New St. Joseph as a fort was in the minds of those residing there.

According to Darius Clement, Joseph Young viewed the fort as a temporary town:

> He spoke of the brethren having to move from where they intended to settle, at Old St. Joseph, on acct. of Indians, and afterwards their getting on the hill and building in a fort, which was all right and served a good purpose for the time being, yet they would have to make another move in order to get places in the right position. In all these moves there is a guiding hand of wisdom, leading the Saints in the path wherein lies the experience necessary to qualify them for the work required at their hands.
>
> So long as men stayed in the fort, and tried to get rich by farming or raising stock, so long they would remain poor.[100]

Still, people remained in the fort for months after receiving instructions to move. The New St. Joseph experience does not seem to have united the population sufficiently for the tasks they were then asked to perform. New St. Joseph failed as a true fort, and also failed in fostering a Mormon cognition among the residents. Although other forts on the Utah frontier failed as true fortifications, most were successful in developing a Mormon cognition among the Saints. Thus, the causes of New St. Joseph's failure as a social force must lie within another realm: that of leadership and administrative problems.

NOTES

[1] Elbert Edwards, "Early Mormon Settlements in Southern Nevada," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, VIII (1965), 25-43; Pearson S. Corbett, "Settling the Muddy River Valley," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, XVIII (1968), 141-151.

[2] Refer to the Appendix for a further discussion of the fort built at New St. Joseph.

[3] James Bleak, *Annals of the Southern Utah Mission*, Book A (Utah Writers Project, 1941), p. 165; St. Thomas is now under the waters of Lake Mead.

[4] Ibid., p. 170. After the abandonment of the Muddy Mission other settlers moved rapidly into the valley, often inhabiting the Mormons' homes and harvesting their crops. Logandale, named for an early pioneer, became the new designation for the old St. Joseph townsite.

[5] Pearson Starr Corbett, "A History of the Muddy Mission" (Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, Provo 1968), p. 136.

[6] Warren Foote, *Autobiography of Warren Foote of Glendale*, Microfilm of holograph, U.N.L.V. Special Collections, p. 194.

[7] Brigham Young, Heber Kimball and Daniel Wells to Erastus Snow, May 2, 1866, James Bleak Papers, Latter Day Saints Historical Library Archives, Salt Lake City.

[8] Bleak, *Annals*, p. 220.

[9] Ibid., p. 233.

[10] Ibid., p. 258.

[11] Andrew Jenson Comp., "Muddy Valley Mission Manuscript History," Latter Day Saints Historical Library Archives, February 5, 1868.

[12] Diary of Darius Salem Clement, 1867-1868, Latter Day Saints Historical Library Archives.

[13] Corbett, "History of the Muddy Mission," p. 80.

[14] Diary of Darius Salem Clement, August 1868-April 1869, Latter Day Saints Historical Archives, p. 11.

[15] Ibid., p. 83.

[16] Diary of Darius Salem Clement, August 1868-April 1869, Latter Day Saints Historical Library Archives.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Richard Lincoln McCarty, "Sandy Town, A Mormon Confrontation with the Mojave Desert" (Master's Thesis, University of Nevada Las Vegas, 1981), p. 112. Sandy Town A and B are designations used by modern historical archaeologists. It is the author's belief that these sites correspond to the historical documentation presented in this article.

[19] Clement, "Letter," n.p.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Diary of Clement, 1867-1868.

[22] It should be remembered that New St. Joseph was founded in July, 1866, yet the ditch was completed more than one and a half years later. Snow's permanent residence was St. George, Utah, and he visited the Muddy Mission infrequently as there were other areas also under his jurisdiction.

[23] Bleak, *Annals*, p. 263.

[24] *Deseret News*, June 19, 1868.

[25] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 1.

[26] Ibid. Beside receipt of a "city lot," most settlers obtained a two and a half acre "garden plot" located near the Muddy River and a five acre parcel on the sand bench. It appears that vegetables, hay and products for personal use were grown on the two and a half acre parcel, while grain and cotton were more likely to be grown on the five acre parcel. William Wood, "Autobiography." Latter Day Saints Historical Library Archives; German E. and Mary Smith Ellsworth, *Our Ellsworth Ancestors* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1956), p. 130.

[27] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, pp. 3-4.

[28] Journal of William Gibson, 1855-1870, Latter Day Saints Historical Library Archives, p. 78.

[29] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, pp. 6-7.

[30] The settlers could physically move quite rapidly if they chose to by settling in a wagon box removed from the running gear of a wagon. This could be supplemented by tents and willow "wickiup" structures. Most people settled in this fashion when they arrived on the Muddy River. When adobe dwellings were desired rapidly settlers could pay Indians to construct the bricks, cf. Gibson *Journals*.

[31] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 12.
[32] McCarty, "Sandytown." The religious importance the Mormons placed on proper polar alignment of their cities should not be underestimated.
[33] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 24.
[34] Ibid., p. 25.
[35] Even today, few of the homes located on the sand bench have landscaping and lawns are almost nonexistent.
[36] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 36.
[37] Ibid. The term "living in camp" refers to the practice of living in a wagon box removed from the running gear of a wagon and placed on the ground.
[38] Ibid., p. 23.
[39] Ibid., p. 24.
[40] Ibid., p. 15.
[41] Ibid., p. 21.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Corbett, "History of the Muddy Mission," p. 141.
[44] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 44.
[45] James H. McClintock, *Mormon Settlement in Arizona* (Phoenix, Arizona, 1921), p. 126.
[46] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 40.
[47] Diary of Clement, 1867-1868.
[48] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 15.
[49] Ibid., pp. 35-36.
[50] Corbett, "History of the Muddy Mission," p. 86.
[51] Arabell Lee Hafner, Comp., *100 Years on the Muddy* (Springville, Utah: Art City Pub., 1967), pp. 44, 73.
[52] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 47.
[53] Ibid., p. 52.
[54] McClintock, *Mormon Settlement in Arizona*, p. 120.
[55] Francis Leavitt, "The Influence of the Mormon People in the Settlement of Clark County" (Master's Thesis, University of Nevada, Reno, 1934), p. 100.
[56] "History of St. Thomas Ward 1865-1932," Latter Day Saints Genealogical Library, Las Vegas.
[57] Morton Brigham Cutler, "Autobiography," Latter Day Saints Historical Library Archives, p. 7.
[58] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 42.
[59] Ibid., p. 36.
[60] Ibid., p. 11.
[61] Ibid., p. 21.
[62] Wood, "Autobiography."
[63] McCarty, "Sandytown," p. 107.
[64] "History of St. Thomas Ward," For other missionaries' commentaries on the agricultural success of the last years of the Muddy Mission, see William Decatur Kartchner, "Autobiography," Brigham Young University Special Collections," Hafner, *100 Years on the Muddy*, pp. 73, 70, 68, 58, 51, 129.
[65] *Reese River Reveille*, March 21, 1871.
[66] Feramorz Young Fox, "The Mormon Land System: A Study of the Settlement and Utilization of Land Under the Direction of the Mormon Church" (Doctoral Dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, 1932), p. 76.
[67] Ibid., p. 77.
[68] Ephraim Ericksen, *The Psychological and Ethical Aspects of Mormon Group Life* (Salt Lake City: Univ. of Utah Press, 1922), p. 39.
[69] Mark P. Leone, *Roots of Modern Mormonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 7-8.
[70] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 7.
[71] Ibid., p. 1.
[72] Ibid., p. 14.
[73] Ibid., p. 15.
[74] Ibid., p. 20.
[75] Ibid., p. 16.
[76] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[77] Ibid., p. 28.

[78] Ibid., p. 24.

[79] Ibid., p. 11.

[80] George Brimhall, *Workers of Utah* (Provo: 1889).

[81] Melvin T. Smith, "Mormon Exploration in the Lower Colorado River Area," Richard H. Jackson ed., *The Mormon Role in the Settlement of the West* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press Charles Redd Monographs in Western History No. 9, 1978), p. 44.

[82] Ibid.

[83] *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London 1856-86) 4: 32.

[84] James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten, The Archaeology of Early American Life* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977), p. 23.

[85] Mark Leone, "Archaeology as the Science of Technology: Mormon Town Plans and Fences," Robert L. Schuyler ed., *Historical Archaeology: A Guide to Substantive and Theological Contributions* (Farmingdale, New York: Baywood, 1978), p. 197.

[86] Ibid., p. 199.

[87] Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 200.

[88] Robert Lynn Layton, "An Analysis of Land Use in Twelve Communities in Utah Valley, Utah County Utah" (Doctoral Dissertation, Syracuse University, Syracuse, 1962).

[89] Joel Edward Ricks, *Forms and Methods of Early Mormon Settlement in Utah and the Surrounding Region, 1847 to 1877* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press Monograph Series, 1964), p. 38.

[90] Ibid., p. 61.

[91] Ibid., p. 65.

[92] *Journal of Discourses*, 1: 167.

[93] Leon Sidney Pitman, "A Survey of Nineteenth Century Housing in the Mormon Culture Region," (Doctoral Dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1973), p. 128, and Peter L. Goss, "The Architectural History of Utah," *Utah Historical Review*, XLIII, No. 3 (Summer 1975), pp. 208-239.

[94] Foote, "Autobiography," p. 196.

[95] Ibid., p. 201.

[96] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 4.

[97] Pitman, "Survey of Nineteenth Century Housing," p. 127.

[98] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 18.

[99] Pitman, "Survey of Nineteenth Century Housing," p. 130.

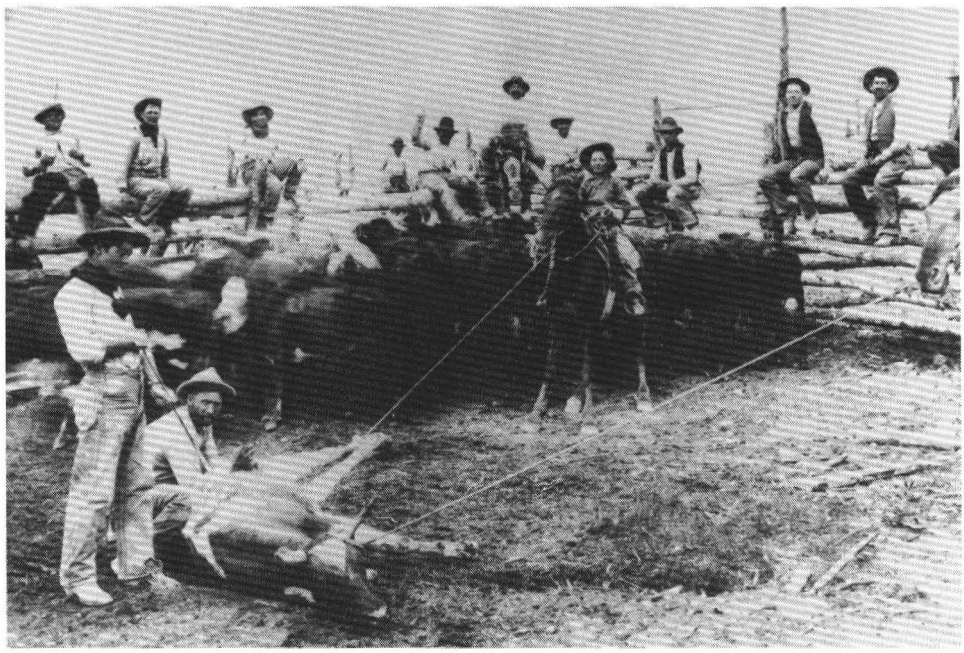
[100] Diary of Clement, 1868-1869, p. 9.

The Cowboy—One More Time

WILBUR S. SHEPPERSON

IN THIS THE 1980s, an era of born-to-be rich Yuppies, of *People* magazine, of television's Dallas, of *USA Today,* of BMWs and of manuals on sex and money, *The Leather Throne: A Novel Account* by Owen Ulph (Dream Garden Press, Salt Lake City, 1984) seems strangely out of place. Nor does the work fit the socialist realism of an earlier America when gritty, dirt-poor courage was demanded of farmers, ranchers and cowboys from the Great Plains through the Great Basin. In short, Ulph's factual novel does not embrace what America once held dear—truth, justice and hard work or the goals of contemporary America—money, power and unleaded supreme. Ulph argues that both present and past American society has been routinely misevaluated and that no group has been more flagrantly misportrayed than the cowboy. The tide of novels, movies, television programs, songs, poems and wearing apparel built around the cowboy has floated atop a tidal wave of deliberate misrepresentation and grand delusion. For Ulph this golden barge of history has generally been filled with garbage. The nation and indeed the world has been seduced by *The Virginian,* Tom Mix and *Little House on the Prairie.*

Ulph's strong opinions about cowboys and cowboy legend arise in great part out of his radical swings from refined intellectualism to harsh rural survival. He was born in England, lived in Canada, grew up in Oakland and was educated at Stanford. After teaching for two years at Reed College, he quit to accept a post at Montana State. But upon receiving his Ph.D. in 1947 in the area of Medieval French Constitutional History, he again was attracted to Reed. In 1949 he left Reed to become a professor at the University of Nevada, Reno. However, after only two years at Reno he returned to Reed for the third time, but after only one year gave up the college life and in the autumn of 1952 made his way to Emma Rogers's Fiddleback Ranch in Smoky Valley, the geographical heartland of Nevada. *The Leather Throne* as well as *The Fiddleback: Lore of the Line Camp* have grown primarily from the two years experience (autumn, 1952–autumn, 1954) in which he worked as a one hundred dollars a month cowboy. Two more books, "The Pecos Swap" and "Waiting for a Chinook," are to come later. During the mid-fifties cap and gown again beckoned and Ulph taught at the University of California, Riverside, at UCLA, and at Scripps College; finally in February, 1958, he was



Cattle branding in Nye County, Nevada, c. 1910. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

again, for the fourth time, drawn to Reed College. Ulph the idealist could not live with or without the university nor could he desert the cow country. Over the following years he often made his way to Smoky Valley for long stays; indeed, he had started to write *The Leather Throne* in early 1958 as he rejoined the Reed faculty. In 1961 Ulph purchased the Bear Trap Ranch at Lamoille, Nevada, and when he retired from Reed in 1979 moved permanently to the foot of the Ruby Mountains where he could live bucolically with his horses and dogs.

Some may wonder if every bunkhouse full of cowboys was in need of a Stanford intellectual, someone to keep track of the deeper surges of world-wide cognition, someone to provide them with impromptu seminars and someone who with only the slightest trace of impatience could lecture them in the sunwash of the alkali desert and in the starlight of the grassy leas. Ulph makes knowledge and learning into a game. He interprets and examines the cowboys' metaphors, symbols and assumptions. In sum he explains both what made up their society and the engines that drove it. The recipients of his respect and sarcasm were men of the Fiddleback along with Emma Rogers, manager and part owner of the giant spread.

In fact Emma and the ranch were a dying breed, allowed to survive for decades past their time because of the economic paralysis caused by the

Cattle roping, Glenbrook, Nevada, 1947. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

Great Depression and later by the peculiar economic dislocation created by World War II. Despite the introduction of some technology—kitchen appliances and both road and field machinery—the traditional cowboy still functioned on the Fiddleback. In a material and primitive sense everything was still of use and everyone was still needed. But by the early fifties new pressures had to be faced, and everyone on the ranch knew that one day soon they would ride off for the last roundup. Contemporary capitalism could not be long ignored even in the wild desolation of central Nevada.

In addition to Emma, "who because of age, experience and wisdom had grown immune to shocks of any kind," Ulph slowly reveals the character of his most intimate cowboy associates. He admires Ed Fisher, the calm, competent Vermont Yankee cowboss, a stoic whose life was almost over and who accepted it. He liked Jean who wore a railroad cap instead of the prescribed cowboy hat and "whose dyspeptic realism allowed no room for abstractions." Jean muttered a mixed metaphor "I've buttered my bread, guess I'll have to lie in it" and shot himself. Zane and Carl were the pragmatists always orientated to the realities of the present or the wave of the

future. Zane was ready to desert the sinking ship and Carl, Ulph's shrewd former student, was ready to exploit the situation. Henry and Holly were either married with children or young, simplistic and in love. They faced impossible obstacles; they "were beached against a cliff with the river rising."

In *The Leather Throne* Ulph lives with, follows, exploits and adumbrates these men and others for about a year. Clearly he is telescoping much experience into a compact framework so that his post-mortems are spirited and manageable. Ulph does not hide behind documentation and the paraphernalia of traditional history, rather he is trying, after over thirty years, to resurrect the truth. His literary imagination and creativity are consistent with the known facts. But rather than academic objectivity, he introduces a kind of subjective humanism; he puts feelings, emotions, insights into circulation and in passing he notes at least some of the black holes in human nature. In 469 pages of small print he shows cowboys to be dreary, charmless, foul-mouthed, self-sufficient characters. He leaves little to supposition and hint, the fragments slowly merge into complete mirrored images. He grafts meaning on to boring cowboy routine. He has the verbal dexterity to frame the most flat-footed facts into creative philosophy. Ulph is the antithesis of a Kafka.

In the first sentence of *The Leather Throne* the author declares the work to be "a novel that attempts authenticity." Flaubert once said that every novelist seeks to disappear behind his work. This Ulph does not do. But neither does he present himself as hero-narrator. He is not confidential, he does not complain of discomforts in the outback. Most of the time he laughs at his own naïveté and marvels at the insistence of his colleagues to remain ignorant of the seminal bit of information which he offers. *The Leather Throne* is an extension of Owen Ulph, but the work does not disappear behind the author. Nor does it slowly become a kind of appendage of his actions, declarations, feelings and position.

Most writers and surely great novelists search for a suprapersonal insight which makes their best creations more precise, exciting and intelligent than they. If the reader comes to perceive that the author is wiser than his work, the work is a failure. The novel by its basic intent is creative and imaginary. It is not all truth, rather it allows everyone to be understood, it is the territory where all have rights, where there are few final answers and where men are not usually what they think they are. In *The Leather Throne* an era is ending bringing with it a growing numbness of the human spirit and a weakening of the symbiotic relationship between man and man and man and animals. The ranch, like most of contemporary America, was introducing a jukebox to replace a live orchestra. Soon soy was to be substituted for beef as food. This realization makes the book more than a chatty memoir, more than the sum of its parts, more than its author.

All of Ulph's writings are replete with free associations. Often he barely

Cattle round-up in Humboldt County, Nevada. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

begins to retell a tale or recount a personal incident of cowboy life when other ideas or reflections suddenly overwhelm him. This can become extravagant and exasperating and in *The Fiddleback* the stream of consciousness approach was at times carried to an extreme. However, Ulph's most insightful observations lie in his strident, rhetorical interpretations and not in the late-summer shapeless dialogue of his cowboys.

The literary observer of subcultures, as revealed in travel books about remote places, often exposes little more than the product of modern sensibilities. In the case of the cowboy there is also the problem of excessive romance and the graceless literary excesses that have been rung from western American history. Most stories about the cowboy have been artistic disasters. There is not much that is unfamiliar, it is hard to astonish with new facts, there are few unknown national phenomena. In *The Leatther Throne* the author immersed himself in cowboy life and culture, but at the same time he dyes his experiences in the tincture of his own personality. Owen Ulph the sensitive intellectual is also a working cowboy. His convictions and his cowboys are equally authentic.

By way of helpful sarcasm the author in another context has laid down nine commandments for writing westerns. Don't attempt authenticity. Don't try to educate or uplift your readers. Don't do research on the subject. Don't

Rounding-up wild horses on the Antoniazzi Ranch, c. 1920. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

experience cowboy life. Don't demand quality. Don't use words of over two syllables. Don't strive for variety or be different. Don't write for yourself, always write for the lowest common denominator. Don't personally care about your subject. Obviously *The Leather Throne* is not a western since the author violates all of the above popular truisms.

The Leather Throne is an all-encompassing cowboy story evoking the flavor of an era, a place and a time (1953). It is a moment from America's recent innocent past that is somehow today so far away—mornings half a lifetime ago when Ulph and his steadfast companions rode off in the semilight to face another day of tedium and fatigue. Beginning with the cold and treacherous drives of early spring the author follows ranch life through the early suns of summer into the fall roundup and the clean straw of winter. There are dry water holes, the days of steady rain, a killing during the Fourth of July celebration, suicide, Rex-dog caught in a steel trap set for coyotes, the purchase of a tub for the new bathroom at Emma's ranch, repeated cattle drives, full cattle trucks with no gasoline and the flash of atomic bombs in the south.

Although physically active Ulph's cowboys tend to become passive victims of fate. While seemingly independent, they are actually dependent upon forces beyond their control. They sense this and wonder what is to happen to them. They can understand the harshness of nature, the cruel accidents and

the misfortunes associated with their occupation, but they cannot understand the tricks visited upon them by the agricultural and commercial revolutions of the mid-twentieth century. Although the author comes to secretly admire and grudgingly emulate his cowboy subjects, he does not decry the cowboy catastrophe or discriminate between triumph and disaster, between winners and losers. He does not expose or condemn; there are no good guys with white hats. In this, as elsewhere, he defies the norms of the traditional western.

While eating, resting around the campfire or drinking at a bar, Ulph's cowboys discuss a wide variety of personal and social issues from marriages, children and incest to war, capitalism and the Mafia to ethnic prejudice, religion and the Bureau of Land Management. "Reciprocal castigation approached the dimension of art and the stature of a tradition. Innocuous topics milled about until a victim unexpectedly found himself roped while the others worked him over" (P. 166).

It is, however, Ulph's personal digressions, asides and observations more than cowboy dialogue which provide an eloquent if somewhat encyclopedic cord for the book. In a quick paragraph he creates a beguiling mental vision of the home ranch in late spring. Unfortunately it was only an image exalted by poets "unwilling to recognize life as a sequence of anticlimaxes."

> A grove of mammoth cottonwoods expanding and contracting in the lucid, yet deceptive atmosphere—vigilant barbicans grouped in the center of the far reaching plateau of ruffled sage. . . . Ponds of beatific shade cool the red-ochre tiles of the gently-sloping roofs and rambling, tesselated porticos. . . . A meadowlike lawn cloven by a chuckling stream from which a trim cluster of barns, bunkhouses, and machine sheds for housing and maintaining a spruce cavvy of brightly-colored ranch implements are arranged like pieces on a chessboard of holding pens, working corrals, and small feeding enclosures (P. 94).

The real Fiddleback enjoyed less hospitable surroundings.

> There were deformed buildings of weathered sod-slabs and decomposed adobe among uncouth cottonwood thickets. Surrounding them were corrals constructed of railroad ties, willow, wire, and rusty cable. Although antiquated, these graceless stockades could withstand the angry abuse of critters resisting the attentions bestowed upon them during branding, breaking, doctoring, dehorning, and loading out. The Fiddleback . . . was durable, practical, and well-equipped for running cows. As an object of beauty, it would qualify only in the category of the poetry of dilapidation and nostalgia—a rich lode for Hellenistic photographers fascinated by broken wagon wheels (especially the hubs), discarded churns and cider presses, weathered lumber, rotted logs, and knotholes (P. 95).

While Ulph's landscapes are not environmentally inspired or pieces for *Mother Earth News* they do nevertheless, catch the almost inconspicuous and ever fragile animal life under foot.

A carpet of unblemished grandeur when viewed from afar and a parched map of destitution when encountered in its scantily clad proximity, the tufted desert wastelands shelter a thriving economy for the minikin. Scanned from the eyrie of the saddle, the ground under foot abounds with diminutive entities engrossed in efforts to forefend extinction. Lives accustomed to passing unobserved quicken at the menacing throb of approaching hoofs. A horned toad scuttles beneath the deceptive protection of a spiny shrub and blinks fatuously at the aberrant intruders. Motionless against the naked earth, a cottontail huddles in terror while its lanky cousin, the black-tailed jack, leaps from the precarious cover of the greasewood, doubles back and forth over the dry denuded ponds of fractured suntanned mud, exciting Rex-dog to eager pursuit. . . . A lizard performs nervous pushups on the solitary platform provided by a rock protruding strangely from otherwise unvaried terrain. [Yet] indifferent to geomorphic marvels and reptilian calisthenics, the herd plods past (Pp. 38-39).

For Ulph the rhythmic motion of the saddle was conducive to much more than daydreaming and observing the wonders of nature; it often induced him to couple prose of ineffable richness with thoughts of somber universality.

Seasons issue forth from the womb of time, establishing illusions of cosmic patterns, rhythms, cycles of withdrawal and return—a metagenetic fallacy—a false affirmation of stability and security through perennial resurrection. But we ride a doomed landscape on a doomed planet, witnesses to an awesome, isolated splendor divorced from all context beyond a suspended moment in eternity (P. 42).

Awakening after a night on the desert floor, Ulph witnessed one of the first atomic bombs detonated at the Nevada Test Site. We are reminded of John Hersey and "Hiroshima."

Opening my eyes, a wide flattened arc of phosphorescent amber billowed above the naked hills giving the ragged rim of the southeastern horizon the semblance of torn cowhide. In the expanding glow, a silhouette kneeling over the ashes of the previous evening's campfire assumed the gaunt shape of Jean Daniels. For a fanciful moment I saw him as the spectre of a battleworn Prometheus heaping pitch-laden faggots on the dying embers of a vanished epoch while fellow Titans slept. Alone and cadaveric, he stood erect in a great pool of shadowless illumination—in the twilight of a sunset, off course and off time, masquerading as sunrise (P. 1).

The Leather Throne is a story that is told slowly; details accumulate like layers of sandstone while the flow of narrative cuts through to expose a maze of canyons. In part an autobiography, in part a personal memoir, in part a descriptive novel and in part a eulogy for the cowboy, it is what Clarus Backes of the *Denver Post* has called "popular quality literature." It is straight-forward, chronological, strident, theatrical, often outrageous and true to life. There is humor but not comedy, there is adventure but not expectation, there is farce and tragedy but neither romance nor mystery. Ulph is personal but never intimate, factual but not historical, episodic but

not picaresque. Like Hemingway he often seems to be turning into one of his own creations.

To understand a man, you must know his memories. *The Leather Throne* grows from three decades of earthy yet intellectual reflections. The characters are neither decadent, pretentious nor particularly appealing. Ulph chastizes them for being uninformed while they in turn needle "Doc" or the "professor." But more important Ulph needles the reader for being lazy and wishing to glide through his story at a fourth grade level. A score of words like renitent, teratogenic, avolation and iracund are mixed with Christ-on-a-crutch, Holy-scented Moses, sonovabitch and Jeezus. Much repetition and imaginative twists are given to the traditional Anglo-Saxon four letter words and even a horse and a mule gain suggestive names like Come-Along and Whore-Ass.

There is always a dichotomy. While drinking and dancing with teenage Indian girls at an Austin Fourth of July celebration, he keeps thinking about Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* and Conrad's *Outcast of the Islands.* While decorating a Christmas tree, the subject of the Christ Child and the Holy Ghost lead the author to discuss the virgin birth in explicit terms and then to suggest to bewildered cowboys that they read Frazer's *The Golden Bough.*

The rebel in Ulph helped him to absorb cowboy life as he continued to rebel against academic bureaucracy. He quickly learned to respect his new vocation and in his writing now challenges and upbraids his readers as he once did students and cowboy colleagues. His intellectual principles are both a bore and a joy to behold. His student-cowboy friend Carl once chided him, "you'll go on hunting oases that dry up on you while you're pitching camp." And in a burst of pragmatism Carl patiently explained, "Life ain't holding good cards, it's playing poor cards well" (Pp. 320-321). (Carl became the owner of the Fiddleback.)

The Leather Throne is neither simple nor primarily designed to please. It is not for lazy readers, it is not for the pious, it is not for the Louis L'Amour–John Wayne crowd. Although leisurely and not plot-heavy, it assiduously collects, builds and interprets. The cowboy psyche, personality, and soul is laid bare. But while the book flows naturally from cowboy life, Ulph shapes and reshapes the series of overlapping vignettes. He is creative despite a deep sense of futility, he strives to emancipate the mind despite man's banality. Although one wonders if a sensitive, wildly radical, yet deeply conservative, garrulous college professor can really become a cowboy, one does not question the deep conviction, the high flavor and the true authenticity of *The Leather Throne.*

Book Reviews

Overland to California with the Pioneer Line: The Gold Rush Diary of Bernard J. Reid. Mary McDougall Gordon, ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press. Pp xvi, 247. illus., bibliog., index.)

WHILE FOR MOST California emigrants the overland journey was a family farmer's emigration, with the gold fever in 1849, many men, unused to the rigors and routines of farm and frontier life, headed for the gold fields. In this marvelously edited diary of one man's excursion, we discover the life on the "Pioneer Line," a commercial St. Louis venture that offered for $200 Eastern passengers a berth in specially built "carriages," tented sleeping quarters, meals, and one hundred pounds of allowable baggage. The line guaranteed to get the passengers to California in sixty days or less. But plagued with bad planning, underfinancing, and poor leadership, the trip took over 150 hard days of travel and cost the lives of a considerable portion of the company.

The diarist in this book is Bernard J. Reid, a western Pennsylvania schoolteacher, newspaper editor, and sometime surveyor in his mid-twenties, who decided, after reading Frémont's best-selling report of his 1842 expedition, "to take the chance of going West and growing up with the country." Later, an old man, Reid wrote a journal, based on the diary. Both remained lost for years. But thanks to what editor Mary McDougall Gordon describes as "serendipity," Reid's lifetime collection of papers was discovered in attics and junk shops. This publication reproduced the introduction from the journal, the diary in its entirety, and interposes additional detail from the journal and Reid's letters home, as well as the reminiscences and letters of several other participants in the "Pioneer Line."

Like Reid, most passengers were urban-raised and middle class greenhorns, hardly suited to the rigors of overland travel. Most came armed to the teeth, fearful of Indian attacks that never materialized. On one occasion Reid engaged in some target practice with his "Allen" five-shooter "pepper box," and was immediately confronted by a traveling companion at his rear who angrily demanded why Reid had shot at him! Like Reid, almost none of the passengers could shoot, but they nevertheless took aim at almost everything that moved along the trail. Reid himself killed several rabbits, but they were so "mangled" by his rifle that he was forced to leave them for the coyotes.

None were so "green," however, as the men who had organized the line. Progress in the late spring of 1849 was laborious, even on the relatively easy leg of the journey to Fort Kearney. Wagons carrying excess baggage bogged

down, and the promised pace of the trip caused drivers to push their mules unmercifully. West of Fort Laramie the company began to worry that they would not make it at all, and visions of the stranded Donner Party haunted them. Some men set out on their own, abandoning their baggage and fares, but for most that was too much of a risk.

So the passengers took matters into their own hands. They convened a meeting, elected officers, formed an executive comittee and overthrew the authority of the captain and proprietor. "Pioneer train on its last legs, and needs reform," wrote Reid. "Meeting called in the corral at 1 o'clock to adopt measures for lightening the train." Then a scene of destruction began. Trunks, gabs, boxes were brought out, opened and ransacked. Cut down to 75 lbs. a man. The scene can be easily imagined. In the evening the plain was scattered with waifs and fragments, looking as though a whirlwind had scattered about the contents of several dry goods, hardware and variety shops."

From these events Gordon suggests an important conclusion: "Even though the Pioneers remained armed and in the majority, they still refrained from violence," and "demonstrated in the end that the frontier did not lead necessarily to lawlessness. The restraints of their social conditioning in the East carried over into the wilderness." Moreover, despite the lack of kin and family cohesion to bond the individuals together, she points out that "the passengers did forge strong fraternal bonds among themselves," bonds that Reid suggested when he wrote that there had been a "family jar [or fight] in our mess" of single men. Men shared food, assisted the sick and straggling, and demonstrated very little of the "each man for himself" kind of individualism that supposedly characterized the American frontier.

The Pioneer Line offers an interesting contrast to other overland experiences. Reid's diary is lively and colorful, and the juxtaposition of journal, diary, letters, and others' accounts makes this one of the finest editions of an overland diary to appear in many years.

John Mack Faragher
Mount Holyoke College

Dust from an Alkali Flat: A Forest Ranger Remembers Central Nevada. By Basil K. Crane. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1984. Pp. 156, illustrations, introduction. $9.50)

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, Crane tells a good story. His reminiscences of forty years back are sparse, lean—more buckaroo Hemingway than saddlesore Faulkner. His fluent recaps of the Great Basin's alkali-flavored prose poesy can be overheard any Saturday night at Austin's International Bar. The

author's command of personal highlights from a decade-long assignment as U.S. Forest Service ranger in Lander and Nye counties, central Nevada, reaches the reader as true as that musty smell of Toiyabe range aspen groves on hot fall afternoons. His target is the working cowboy, not the ranch proprietor, the miner or merchant—perhaps because these professional individualists most impressed a young forester fresh from Utah State's classrooms. Accurate to a fault, these transient, posturing, perpetual adolescents return again from yesteryear in Crane's series of short, incidental anecdotes. Readers will undeniably relish this largely anonymous flock of characters scattered around Reese River during the late 1930s and into World War II. Printwork and design are professional. There is no index, but one is probably superfluous in a volume more recollection than interpretive history.

What saddens this uncomfortable reviewer is a missed opportunity to delve into working-level relationships between the Forest Service and stockmen at the end of the open range. Crane never opens the question of grazing monopolies on the national forests, nor mentions the never-ending squabbles between the Service and Nevada's congressional delegation over access to grass. We don't even know policies the Forest Service attempted to enforce, or how the holders of pasturage rights to the Forests reacted. Here is an individual who represented the interface between policy and range practice, and his editor failed to elicit any first-person commentary regarding the origins of such policy or the author's reaction to it. True, Crane limits his scope to relating to his children a junior forester's life in the 1930s and 1940s. However, as the text now stands, its potential is unrealized and is simply a well-written volume suitable for handing around at family reunions.

John M. Townley
Great Basin Studies Center

Tarnished Expansion: The Alaska Scandal, the Press, and Congress, 1867-1871. By Paul S. Holbo. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1983. Pp. xix + 145, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. $12.95)

FOR THOSE FAMILIAR WITH Paul S. Holbo's previous work on late nineteenth century American foreign policy, this exhaustively researched, clearly written, and closely argued study on the scandal surrounding the Alaska purchase will come as no surprise. Holbo goes beyond the existing literature on this much-studied episode by focusing on the charges of corruption and suggesting their effect on subsequent territorial expansion. In the process, he confirms some charges, refutes others, illuminates several shadowy characters, and creates a fascinating detective story.

Contending that corruption and scandal have been "neglected subjects in American history," Holbo meticulously traces the lobbying and monetary payoffs that accompanied the Senate's ratification of the treaty and the House's approval of the $7.2 million appropriation. He demonstrates that Edouard de Stoeckl, the Russian minister to the United States, had approximately $400,000 at his disposal to help secure U.S. agreement to the treaty—$200,000 from the Russian government and $200,000 from the U.S. appropriation. Holbo agrees with previous charges that Stoeckl used $26,000 to compensate Robert J. Walker, a veteran Democratic politician and expansionist, for his lobbying and publicity efforts. He also concurs with the accusations that Stoeckl retained Frederick P. Stanton and Robert W. Latham, shadowy lobbyists and manipulators, as go-betweens with newspaper reporters and editors. Unlike prior commentators, Holbo argues persuasively that Stoeckl seized the opportunity provided by these surreptitious activities to pocket the "lion's share" of the funds. Finding no concrete evidence of payoffs to congressmen, Holbo challenges the allegation that Walker was on his way to bribe legislators when robbed of $16,000 in gold certificates in New York City, and he absolves both Thaddeus Stevens and Nathaniel P. Banks of having traded their votes for money. His convincing conclusion that the verdict on Banks "should be not guilty, or at least not proven," breaks with the long-held historical consensus.

Rumors surrounding this Alaska lobby received a sympathetic hearing in 1868 and 1869; for it was, writes Holbo, a "time of little faith in government." An American public already bombarded by stories of corruption in the Treasury Department, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Interior Department was most receptive to the suggestion of still another "ring." Uriah Painter, an influential Washington lobbyist and reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *New York Sun*, doggedly pursued the rumors, broke a garbled version of the story, and prodded Representative Ben Butler of Massachusetts to call for a congressional investigation. After numerous other papers joined Painter in exposing the scandal, the House Standing Committee on Public Expenditures conducted two months of inconclusive hearings. The hearings substantiated little beyond payments to Walker, Stanton, and D.C. Forney, the publisher of the *Philadelphia Morning Chronicle*, but since accusations against important papers and reporters abounded, the press provided extensive coverage. Ironically, when reporters and editors responded vigorously to the allegations of press corruption, they intensified the "impressions of widespread dishonesty."

"The purchase of Alaska," Holbo asserts, "had became a tainted act, and the suspicions were as important as the reality of the scandal." In his final and most provocative chapter, he argues that this scandal and the association of territorial expansion with corruption played key roles in frustrating subsequent Gilded Age expansionists. Most immediately the Alaska affair

"heightened sensitivities" among those inclined to suspect a "job" in Grant's efforts to purchase the Dominican Republic; and opponents of the Dominican acquisition consistently linked and emphasized the corrupt nature of the two projects. Nor was the impact confined to the early Grant years; the suspicions and taint attached to this "first scandal" would reappear with efforts to acquire Samoa and Hawaii. Not until 1898, when both the McKinley administration and its opponents were expansionists, would the "pattern of expansion blocked owing to cries of corruption" be broken.

In summary, Holbo has made an important contribution to the history of both the Alaska purchase and the course of late nineteenth century territorial expansion. His promised sequel tracing the theme of corruption and expansion through the remainder of the Gilded Age should prove equally useful.

Joseph A. Fry
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The Expeditions of John Charles Frémont. Volume 3: Travels from 1848 to 1854. Edited by Mary Lee Spence. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984. xxxiii + 641 pp., footnotes, illustrations, maps, appendix, bibliography, index. $37.50)

THIS IS THE FINAL VOLUME of documents detailing the career of the preeminent figure of the romantic era of American exploration. Volumes 1 and 2 (1970 and 1973, edited by Spence and Donald Jackson) covered Frémont's beginnings as a military explorer and the first three of his major expeditions. In this volume we have his fourth (1848-1849) and fifth (1853-1854) ventures into the trans-Mississippi West, both of which were performed under private rather than governmental auspices.

Much of the material here concerns activities not directly related to exploration, namely Frémont's political and economic pursuits and his residence in Britain in the early 1850s. As in the earlier volumes the documents consist largely of items printed in periodicals, extracts from the writing of members of his expeditions, previously unpublished material such as correspondence and archival manuscripts, and government publications. Among the latter is Frémont's *Geographical Memoir upon Upper California,* which contains an early and important description of the Great Basin, a name given by Frémont to this region.

The years 1848-1854 represent the most unhappy period of Frémont's career as an explorer. The fourth expedition was a tragic failure; the fifth was only marginally successful. He never succeeded in publishing a full account of either of these last expeditions. His tenure as one of California's first US

senators was brief and undistinguished. Attempts to make a fortune with his Mariposa Estate and other California properties produced bitter quarrels with associates and investors. His quite public dispute with naval explorer Charles Wilkes did not redound to Frémont's credit. Throughout all of these troubles he was fortunate to have the continued support of his politically powerful father-in-law, Thomas Hart Benton, and his fiercely loyal wife, Jessie Benton Frémont, both of whom figure prominently in these pages.

His post-1854 life is the story of continued reverses: two unsuccessful bids for the presidency, an embarrassing stint as a Civil War general, loss of control of his California domain, bad investments; an unsatisfactory term as territorial governor of Arizona, and near-poverty by the time of his death in 1890.

Frémont's life naturally invites comparison with that of Meriwether Lewis. Following the unqualified success of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1806), Lewis blew out his brains in 1809 upon proving a failure as governor of Louisiana. Although we are not suggesting that Frémont should have done likewise, it would perhaps have been better for him had he been able to rest on his laurels after 1847.

Volume 3 adheres to the same high editorial standards set in the preceding volumes. The index, however, omits some important names. The complete set offers abundant information which will be used profitably by western historians and future biographers of the Pathfinder.

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Contributors

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