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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NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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The Nevada Historical Society Quarterly: *A Thirty Year Retrospective*

JEROME E. EDWARDS

THIS ISSUE OF THE *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* marks its thirtieth anniversary of publication. To celebrate this achievement, the Editorial Board decided on a special issue reprinting some of the best work published in the *Quarterly* over its lifetime. It has been this writer's pleasant task to review all the issues of the *Quarterly* and to select the articles included here.

The Nevada Historical Society is known to a world-wide audience through the pages of the *Quarterly*. Circulation numbers 1,800, which includes members all over the United States, and in Europe, South America and Asia as well. Most of the country's leading university and public libraries are subscribers, and the Historical Society exchanges publications with a large number of other historical societies and museums. The *Quarterly*'s articles are cross-listed and indexed in other journals. Through its pages readers can be acquainted with contemporary scholarship about Nevada and the Great Basin, learn about recent acquisitions to the state's historical repositories and examine documents from the past. In short, the *Quarterly* is the Historical Society's window on Nevada's heritage.

The *Quarterly* was not the first periodical to be issued by the Nevada Historical Society. The Society, however, after its beginning in 1904, was hampered in its ambitions by a hand-to-mouth financial situation. Yet, five volumes of *Papers* were published from 1913 to 1926, and biennial reports were sporadically issued. These contained much quality material still of value to researchers on Nevada's historical heritage, but their publication was intermittent. In 1957, the *Quarterly* was established in an attempt to redress this problem and to provide for the state of Nevada a regularly published periodical with "articles of interest to readers in the social, cultural, economic, and political history" of Nevada and of the Great Basin area. The first editor was William C. Miller of the Speech Department at the University of Nevada. In 1961, he was succeeded as editor by Mrs. Andy Welliver of the Historical Society staff.

Jerry Edwards is professor of History at the University of Nevada, Reno. He is chairman of the Editorial Board of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, and author of *Pat McCarren, Political Boss of Nevada.*

During its first dozen years, the *Quarterly* was restricted in its offerings because of the lack of widespread support from the scholarly community of Nevada. In one early issue, the editor pleaded, "we are looking for material," and the periodical published all that it could get. Overall editorial standards were lacking, so too much depended upon the calibre and qualifications of the individual contributors. At its best, the *Quarterly* published excellent material, but unfortunately the journal was not always at its best. Under Miller and Welliver, the emphasis was on trail and mining history, on the reproduction of documents (many of them interesting and significant but all of which were unannotated), and on biography. Examples of the last included the writings of Effie Mona Mack on William Morris Stewart, James Nye, and Orion Clemens and Sister Margaret P. McCarran's warm appreciation of her father, Senator Pat McCarran. Other writers who contributed quality work to the *Quarterly* during these early years include such diverse scholars as Edna Patterson, Juanita Brooks, Anthony Amaral, Grace Dangberg, and David Myrick.

With the first issue of 1970, the *Quarterly* significantly changed direction, and this direction has for the most part been followed to the present. Under the leadership of Wilbur Shepperson, then chairman of the Editorial Board and a member of the History Department at the University of Nevada-Reno, the journal became more consistently professional and scholarly, while at the same time retaining its popular appeal. For the first time the editors of the *Quarterly* exercised needed supervision over submitted articles and also required that they be put through a review process. The criterion for published articles was widened to include not only material on the history of Nevada and the Great Basin, but also its anthropology and archaeology, its literature, language, and natural history. Articles of a national or western scope, but with a Nevada twist, were encouraged. The journal became less parochial with offerings by scholars who did not reside in Nevada. New sections were added, including "Notes and Documents" to reprint interesting historical documents and others informing readers of developments in the areas of manuscript collection, scholarly research, museum exhibits, and oral history throughout Nevada. The *Quarterly* also began a book review section, and scholarly reviews were solicited nationally. The stated aim of these changes was to make the *Quarterly* into a vital, intellectually provocative publication, which would keep its readers abreast of the latest developments in scholarship and also keep them involved. As Professor Shepperson put it:

> There are now more than a half-million people in Nevada and the resources of the state—both in money and historians—are equal to a more ambitious and systematic effort. The Board of Directors and the staff are hopeful that the *Quarterly* can now become an important forum for sharing historical arguments and news as well as letters, items of interest, articles, and other notes relevant to Nevada history and social life.[1]

Subsequent to Shepperson, the *Quarterly* has been edited successively by Lynn Williamson, John Townley, Gary Roberts, and since 1985, Cheryl Young. The present director of the Historical Society, Peter Bandurraga, has also been closely involved with its publication. Today, the journal still reflects the changes which were instituted in 1970. Physically, however, it has considerably improved, as a larger page size and far more readable type face were adopted in 1979. Photographs are used more imaginatively than they were in the past; and increasingly an effort has been made to utilize the vast photographic resources of the Historical Society, which are by far the largest and most complete in the state. In 1986, the *Quarterly* began using a slicker type of paper to enhance photographic reproduction. The purpose of these changes has been to adopt a more popular and attractive physical format without compromising the scholarly character of the material.

Over the years the nature of the articles published in the *Quarterly* has changed. To some extent this reflects a shift away from the purely historical issues of the early years. Beginning with Anthony Amaral's discussion of the writings of Idah Meacham Strobridge, published in Fall, 1967, there has been an attempt to publish more on Nevada and western literary themes. Ann Ronald of the University of Nevada-Reno has written for the *Quarterly* on Edward Abbey and on various women writers, and in Winter, 1985, a special issue presented selected papers from the 1984 annual meeting of the Western American Literature Association. The *Quarterly* has also been interested, since the Fall-Winter issue of 1965 when it published a talk by Ruth Simpson on "Mark Harrington: Father of Nevada Archaeology," in the anthropological and archaeological study of Nevada and the Great Basin. Since 1970, the *Quarterly* has published contributions in these fields by David Hurst Thomas of the American Museum of Natural History, Don Hardesty of the University of Nevada-Reno, Sheilagh Brooks and Martha Knack of the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, and Mary Rusco among others.

The majority of *Quarterly* articles are still devoted to historical studies. Over the years the pages of the journal have reflected changing tastes and directions of scholarship within the discipline of history. Certainly the *Quarterly* has shifted somewhat away from the subjects which dominated its earlier issues: trail and mining history and biographical studies of elite political figures. As early as 1905, Jeanne Wier, the founder of the Nevada Historical Society, urged writers of history to eschew "the deeds of kings, presidents, governors, or others who sit in high places," and instead write of "the records of the masses."[2] Since 1970, writers for the *Quarterly* have made far greater efforts to analyze and to explain such hitherto neglected subjects as the life of the common people, of women, of the disadvantged, the contributions of the immigrant to the Nevada experience, and the contributions and activities of the Chinese, Indians, and Blacks. The American historian Page Smith describes the importance of writing "A People's History," and the definition of "the people" has become far more complex than in times past.

Looking at random through the *Quarterly* one also notes articles on religion, labor problems, atomic bomb testing, constitutional issues, and—crucial to the study of a state such as Nevada—the urban development of Las Vegas and Reno. Recent issues necessarily display a greater emphasis than before on the twentieth century and more use of statistics and statistical method. The negative aspects of the Nevada experience (e.g. race prejudice, prostitution, the Ku Klux Klan) have received their share of articles. Thus, the definition of what is important to the study of Nevada and Great Basin history has greatly widened and become more varied through the years. Still lacking, though, are analytical and informative studies on the development of the institutions which have made present-day Nevada so individual a state, and in the eyes of its critics such a controversial and notorious one. Substantive articles on gambling are non-existent, and there is almost nothing on the permissive divorce, marriage, and tax legislation which have helped give the state of Nevada its special flavor in the twentieth century. This is a major and regrettable omission which needs to be addressed by the scholarly community in the *Quarterly*.

With such a bewilderingly rich variety of articles to choose from, it has been quite difficult to select only a few which would represent the best that the *Quarterly* offered during these past thirty years. This writer was forced with great regret to make some very arbitrary decisions. Dropped from consideration were certain fine pieces which were simply too long to fit into the tight confines of a seventy-five page special issue. Two examples are Donald J. Pisani's work on "Western Nevada's Water Crisis, 1915-1935" (Spring, 1979) and Russell Magnaghi's "Virginia City's Chinese Community, 1860-1880" (Summer, 1981). Another arbitrary decision was to dismiss work which later became part of a published book. At one fell swoop this eliminated first-rate material by such scholars as Marion Goldman, William Douglass, and Wilbur Shepperson. Other fine scholars whose work had to be omitted for space reasons include Russell Elliott, Phillip Earl, James T. Stensvaage, William D. Rowley, James Hulse, Eugene Moehring, Clark Spence, Michael J. Brodhead, Ann Ronald, Guy L. Rocha, and Mary Ellen Glass among others. They have greatly contributed to the quality of the *Quarterly*.

In the end, seven pieces were selected. The Jeanne Wier speech "The Mission of the Historical Society" was excerpted from an address given before the Nevada Academy of Sciences in 1905. Although this address was republished in the *Quarterly* as recently as Fall, 1984, it is included in this special issue because of Wier's importance to the development of the Nevada Historical Society, and because of the wise, illuminating, and even inspiring nature of the address. Two pieces were selected to represent the 1957-1969 period. Edna Patterson's "Early Cattle in Elko County" (Summer, 1965) is a personal treatment of the beginnings of the cattle industry in Elko County. Mrs.

Patterson is a historian of Nevada's northeastern frontier, a long-time rancher, who has also served for many years on the Boards of Trustees of the Nevada Historical Society and the Department of Museums and History. Anthony Amaral, the biographer of Will James, is represented by a short piece, "Idah Meacham Strobridge, First Woman of Nevada Letters," (Fall, 1967), a sympathetic, sensitive, gentle treatment of a Nevada writer who deserves renewed attention.

Four articles date from the period since 1970. David Hurst Thomas, "Historic and Prehistoric Land-Use Patterns at Reese River" (Winter, 1971) represents fine anthropological work with a pointed argument as to what happened to the Indians upon the intrusion of white civilization. David A. Johnson, "A Case of Mistaken Identity: William M. Stewart and the Rejection of Nevada's First Constitution" (Fall, 1979) is probably the single most significant article, from the standpoint of its influence on other historians, to be published in the *Quarterly*. L.G. Moses, an authority on Native American history, contributed "James Mooney and Wovoka: An Ethnologist's Visit with the Ghost Dance Prophet" (Summer, 1980) which has both historical and anthropological interest. Finally, Wilbur Shepperson's "The Maverick and the Cowboy" (Spring, 1983) is an example of the review essay at its best, quite humane and highly informative not only about the book it is reviewing but also about cowboys in Nevada. Shepperson's indispensable services on behalf of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* stem not only from his stint as editor, but also from his long-time service on the Editorial Board and on the Boards of Trustees of the Nevada Historical Society and the Department of Museums and History.

The *Quarterly* has been with us for thirty years now. It has fulfilled a necessary role in disseminating the results of scholarship regarding Nevada, the Great Basin, and the American West and in encouraging and fostering interest in this state and its heritage. Whether the *Quarterly* will continue to provide these vital functions for another thirty years depends upon the future involvement and commitment of the contributors, the staff of the Historical Society, the Board of Trustees of the Department of Museums and History, and most important of all, the readers.

NOTES

[1] *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, XIII (Spring, 1970), 41-42.

[2] Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, "The Mission of the State Historical Society," *State of Nevada: First Biennial Report of the Nevada Historical Society 1907-1908* (Carson City: State Printer, 1909), p. 61-70.

The Mission of the State Historical Society

JEANNE ELIZABETH WIER

(Address Given Before the Academy of Sciences, 1905.)

IN ATTEMPTING AN ENUMERATION OF THE MOTIVES for local historical work in Nevada it is but natural that those which embody a conception of its most immediate and direct purpose should receive first consideration.

Certainly the thing that appeals most strongly to the members of the Society and to other citizens of the State is the work of saving the records of the past for future generations. Through a well-organized system of field work it is the function of this Society to carry on archaeological investigations, the study of our own Indian tribes, and to accumulate manuscripts and other materials which will form the basis, not merely of a library and of a museum, but which will furthermore serve as a warehouse from which to draw materials for the writing of the true history of Nevada.

So far as the record of this Commonwealth is concerned—a record to which the coming years will give a value beyond our most sanguine estimates—the opportunities are unique, but they are on the wing. The story of Nevada's infancy, fascinating as it now is, will become more important as the influence of the State increases. Shall that final record of the early days be written by those who have been separated by a long term of years from the events they portray—who have only the confused, obscured vision and dull inspiration which comes from the study of official records and ill-preserved archives—or shall the work be done now by those who have themselves made that history and who are therefore able to furnish that wonderful wealth of detail which alone can give to it the highest value?

The time has forever gone by when the writer of history has but to chronicle the deeds of kings, presidents, governors, or others who sit in high places. The history of to-day and that of the future must be the record of the masses, the events which have to do with human nature, with human hopes and ideals, and which point the way to the working out of the political and social order of the world. And if, perchance, here and there to one man or woman is given an extra page of the chronicle, the reason for such emphasis

This article was originally published in the *First Biennial Report* of *the Nevada Historical Society 1907-1908.* Jeanne Weir was at the time Executive Secretary of the Society and professor of History at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, founder and director of the Nevada Historical Society from 1904-1950. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

will be found, not in the strength of official rank, but in the heroism, the self-sacrifice, and the patriotism of the truly great individual.

Do we wish the history of Nevada to be thus written? Then it is for us as a Society to see that the landmarks of our history are not obscured, neither the

portraits of our heroes and our pioneers lost to present view. Certain it is that the day cannot be far distant when no human memory will be able to furnish the details of the events which have made us what we are to-day. Already there is a lamentable lack of interest among the younger generation. It will indeed be a sad day for Nevada when a people have grown up "who know not Joseph nor the way by which we came into this land." I need not speak further of this immediate direct aim.

To explain the indirect and more distant, though no less important, purpose of the Society will require more space, for it must include a discussion of the Society as an educational force—an instrument in the fostering of that historic consciousness among our people which is the basis of civic patriotism.

And first of all let me assure you that I speak as a Nevadan. Shortly after coming to the State, when Stanford University vanquished Nevada in a game of football, it was impossible for me to conceal my pleasure at the result. There were many who chided me for my sympathy with my own college team, but I shall never forget how the President of the University mildly remarked that he would allow me two years in which to change my views—that he did not believe in sudden conversions, anyhow. And two years was none too long a period in which to grow into citizenship in spirit and in truth, to become acclimated to these strange new conditions, to come to understand something of the struggle of the past by riding or driving over large sections of our desert wastes, and having borne in upon the senses the sparsity of population, the meagerness of developed resources, and the hardy, determined spirit with which these conditions are being met. To-night I speak to you as an adopted child of the State, and ask you if it be not true that those affections which come to us, not by nature, but by second nature—those friendships as of David and Jonathan which are based, not upon blood, but upon intimate knowledge and thorough appreciation, may not perhaps be stronger and deeper than even those of heredity?

True it is that I have come to love the mountains and the valleys and even the desert wastes of this State. For in few places on the earth's surface have Nature's gifts and her withholdings been equally complete. Nowhere are there broader and more majestic mountain ranges, nowhere better climate, nowhere broods an atmosphere more pure and exhilarating, yet nowhere are the deserts more appalling in their extent or the winds fiercer in their sweep. Who can withstand the prolonged daily, yes, and the nightly, wooing of the ever-changing mountains with their endless variety of form, with their infinite possibilities of color—sometimes of a mottled appearance, anon an iron gray, here and there soft as velvet they look, while over on the Western range lie banked at sunset the masses of dark blue shadows, those children of the brilliant sunset which tinges the Eastern peaks with edgings of glittering fire, which again in their turn fade away into strips of lilac and purple? And then

there is the occasional bank or streak of silver snow, the sign of water for man and the promise of food for beast. How it glitters in the moonlight—a moonlight more resplendent than that of other climes as the sunlight is purer and warmer. Who shall describe the glory of those clouds banked around the horizon at sunrise and sunset—clouds which minister to man's needs as truly as though they precipitated their moisture upon the thirsty land? Absent for a time from these surroundings, how the imagination recalls the silvery sheen of the sagebrush when the stream shines across its tops; the alkali fields dazzling white as with hoar frost; the capricious rivers, whose waters rise and flow and waste within themselves; the sulphurous waters which beat and bubble beneath the surface and occasionally burst out in clouds of steam. What tongue shall ever be able to describe the sense of peace and inspiration combined which holds as by spell the human soul which has once come to an appreciation of the grandeur of this desolate desert life?

You will understand me then, I believe, when I say that, to my mind, in but few other places in these United States is there to be found in the same space such poverty of ideals in social and intellectual life, and, perhaps I might add, in political life as well. The East never tires of girding at Nevada, denouncing her as a "rotten borough," scoffing at her so-called barbarism and uncouth ways. And I ask you to consider whether we, not as individuals, but as a whole, have not, in some measure at least, merited the criticisms which have been heaped upon us? Has not our development, as compared with that of our neighbor States, been in the main a materialistic one, so materialistic in fact that when men even today accumulate a competency they go elsewhere to enjoy a richer, more inspiring life? I leave you to answer these questions for yourselves.

If this which I have just said of Nevada be true, what, then, are the reasons for the peculiarities of her civilization? Many a superficial reason has been given: the sparsity of her population, the greater attractions of California as to climate and scenery, the higher taxes, the undue altitude—these and scores of others. The real reason is to be found, I believe, in the physiographic conditions of this district and the peculiar westward movement of the frontier.

The ever-changing frontier of the United States is, without question, the most vital topic in American history, for in it are included all the great movements of the Nation and in it, as in an index, may be found the key to American characteristics: energy, ambition, and the power to do. "A rapid advance of the boundary, whether of settlement or political control, speaks of vigorous, abundant forces behind demanding an enlarged field of activity; a retrogression or caving-in of the frontier points to declining powers, inadequate strength." Nevada is scarred, because of the unfavorable geographical condition and because an unusual factor, gold, diverted still more strongly the natural westward development which should have included this section.

The population flowed all around it and about it and then, when the California trail was opened, directly through it, and left it still an isolated vacant spot. Then a little part of the human mass which had poured by ebbed back into the Washoe District; then came the discovery of gold and silver and the great rush to the Comstock; and then the conferring of Statehood upon this people of abnormal growth.

And may I suggest right here that we bear a Spanish name, Nevada, to-day as a token of this abnormal development? For I think that you will find that it is only in those places and States where the white man has come into possession of the country gradually that the old Indian names have been preserved.

And still the scar remains and always will remain. For it is a scar, not merely of scant population, but of retarded development as well—the scar that comes from the lack of home-building instinct and from the absence of an agricultural stage in its proper time and place. California, though the child of gold, and although for a brief moment her mining interests seemed to obscure all other resources, had, before attaining the age of twenty years, outgrown her parentage, and had come to depend more on her agriculture and her commerce than upon her mines for prosperity. Unfortunate has it been for Nevada that its youth was spent, not under the open skies in closest contact with even a desert soil, but in the deeps of the darksome mines. Something of the light and joyousness of her life has been sacrificed forever. You cut your finger and the wound may heal, but, if the hurt be but deep enough, the scar will remain through life.

Is it true that our pure sunlight and wonderful color effects are due to the very sparsity of our population and the lack of vegetation; that the desert air is not thickened by particles of moisture and factory dust and human breath? It may be true. But who is there among us who has witnessed the travail of Nevada's birth or the struggle of her early years who can say that the American desert should never be reclaimed? It may be good theory to say that some sections should lie fallow in order that other sections may be richly productive, and that the deserts as breathing-spaces on the continent furnish health to the plant as well as to the human. But practically we are not willing that Nature should come to her own again here. Even now we plan the extension of cultivated fields and the promotion of manufactures and commerce as well as the future development of the mines. We are indeed determined that Nature shall reap, if it be necessary, even where she has not sown. How is it with respect to the less material interests of the State?

It is a true saying and worthy of great acceptation that civilization at bottom is economic, but at top it is ethical. What are the ethical forces at work in Nevada? The church and the school, you will answer. And truly these are potent instruments in developing a broader, better type of manhood and womanhood. I wish to present to your attention this evening the Historical

Society as an active assistant in this educative ethical work. And in order to make my meaning more clear, allow me to speak first of history study in general. History is not simply a collection of events. It is the logic of events. Historic intelligence is not merely information respecting events. It is the comprehension of their logic, and history is therefore one of the most difficult of studies. It is the great channel which conveys to man the past experience of the race, showing him the different phases of his progress upward and onward into civilization, and it may be taken, as a general rule, that those people who cannot look very far back into their past do not look very far forward into future needs and conditions. No work can stand unless it grows out of the real wants of the age and strikes firm root in the soil of history. And I question whether any man can be called truly educated unless he has so far and so well studied history as to be able to feel with Tennyson:

"Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs, And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns."

History, moreover, is moral knowledge. By its study conduct is shaped and the intellect is disciplined. Bishop Stubbs once said: "While of all studies in the whole range of knowledge the study of law affords the most conservative training, so the study of modern history is, next to theology itself, and only next in so far as theology rests on a divine revelation, the most thoroughly religious training that the mind can receive."

In the next place, I hold that the study of local history has more than ordinary historical value as an ethical and intellectual force. There is perhaps no better corrective for the unpopularity of historical studies in general than to bid people in their own little hamlets and towns work out the history of the men who have lived and died there. Elementary history teaching must perforce commence with what we call the sense phase of the subject, or thought and feeling as expressed in outward acts—acts which can be seen, heard, and felt. Through careful training in this stage, the child becomes able through the transforming power of the imagination to build pictures of the deeds of all peoples of all times, and finally to reflect upon these pictures and to form judgments. Such likewise must be the best method for the development of the historic sense of a community, and therefore local historical work finds its justification, not only in its bearing upon the affairs of the community, but also in the fact that it furnishes a basis in actual understanding for the proper comprehension of all history. In other words, such work will lift the institutional facts of the community up to their place in the general historic process and at the same time bring the apparently remote historical movement down to the present and root it in the concrete life of our people, enriching thereby our civic institutions.

Moreover, historical insight depends intimately upon human sympathy.

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

Is the time ripe for it now, or are we seeking to force it by undue means, is a question which should be carefully considered. Any such movement, if it be an exotic, rarely flourishes, and is too costly in human strength for mere idle experiments. I feel that we stand at this time at the parting of the ways. It is not that our people are unwilling to aid in the work, but that they need to have its importance impressed upon them. I do not wish to say that our people are without energy or capacity. A Western man has been defined as an Easterner with added experiences. You will grant that this is true of Nevadans. What we do need is intelligent organization of the forces, the passions, that are swaying the hearts and lives of our people. We need, as some one has said, "the primal support of basal moral quality to insure success." The call of the wild is very strong all over this American desert. Constantly, like Buck, we are harking "back through the ages of fire and roof to the raw beginnings of things in the howling ages." Places once humanized and full of life have become desolate within a few miles of where we are to-night. Nature has come to her own again at Washoe City and many another spot within our borders. An interesting subject for investigation would be to find out how many names which were on the maps of the 50's and 60's are known no more to-day.

But we are determined that Nature shall not always conquer us thus. We are determined that out of all this adversity and pain and struggle there shall finally emerge a strong, enduring, and self trusting Commonwealth, that the final triumph in government, in social development, in intellectual advancement, and in material supremacy shall be on a scale commensurate with the hardness of the way in which we have come. Let us hope that in this work the Historical Society may find an honored and useful place.

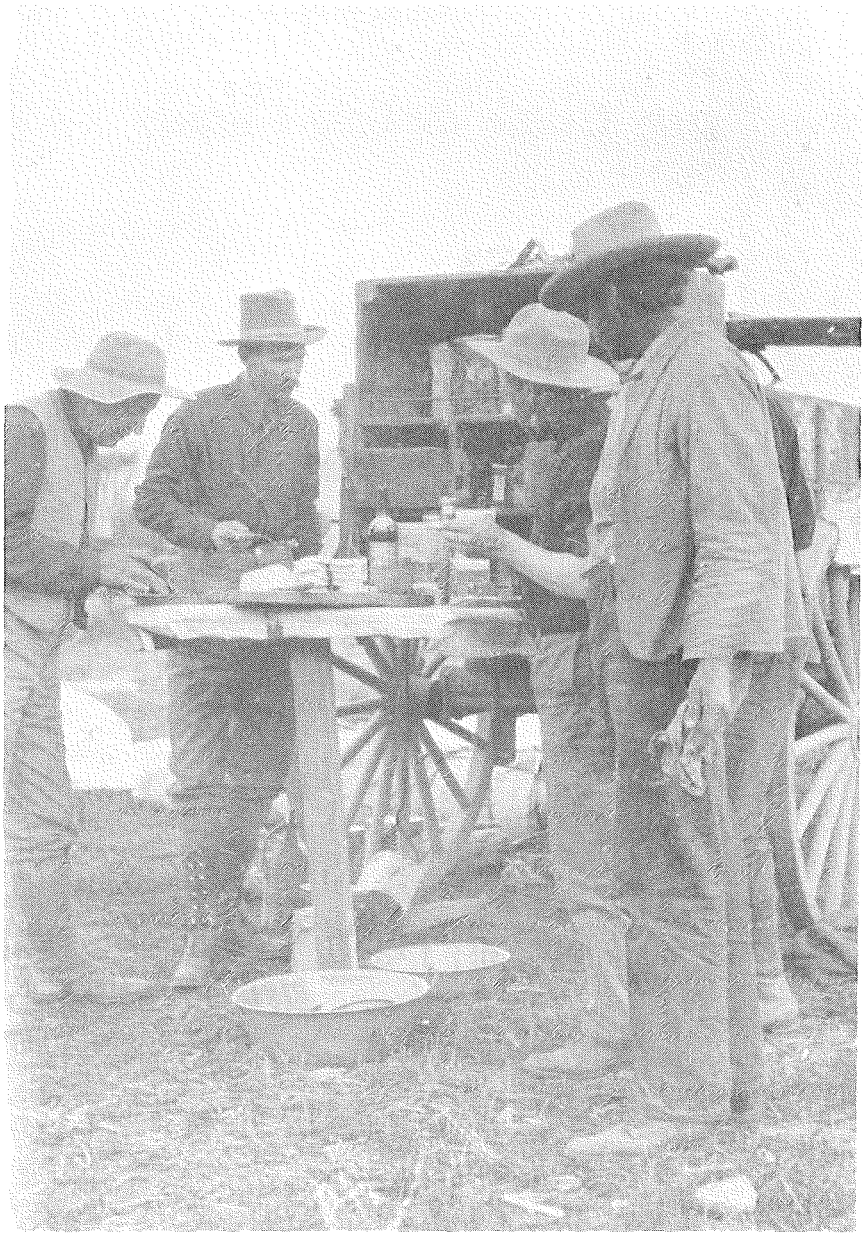
Early Cattle in Elko County

EDNA B. PATTERSON

IN NORTHEASTERN NEVADA, where temperatures often dip to 40 degrees below zero, lies one of the great counties of our State. This vast area, larger than the combined states of Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Jersey, still retains its flavor of the old West; for even today thirsty and dried-out cowpokes ride the juniper-covered hills, sagebrush flats, and tortuous trails of towering mountains caring for their cattle which total one-third the combined numbers of the seventeen Nevada counties. To even fresh and raw incident time has a way of tangling and shattering facts, so that to unravel the naked truth is a task of gigantic proportions. In order that the the beginning of the cattle business of Elko County be not lost I shall relate tales of research and legend, exploration and pioneer reminiscence.

The first cattle brought into this country were cattle that had weakened and faltered along the way of the Humboldt and Overland Trails. These exhausted animals were either traded with an occasional settler, or else turned loose to fare as best they could with whatever grass and water the fagged-out critter might find. These numbers, however, were small, and the first cattle of any quantity to reach Elko County were brought into that country in the two decades following the Civil War when herds of bellowing Texas longhorns took to the trail and headed west to lush bunchgrass of Northeastern Nevada; or else they came as cattle driven from California, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, and Oregon in times of drought or in quest of a market, or to give their owners a new chance in this land of opportunity. These herds moved into the northeastern section of Nevada where there were no fences, the grass was thick between the sage and was free for the taking. They came in the years when bankrupt Texas numbered her cattle in the millions, her people in the thousands, and her money in worthless Confederate paper; and so for survival sought an outlet in the range countries of the North and West. They came in the years when Mexican cattle were reckoned in the worth of their hides and tallow, and a few jingling pesos; and

This article was originally published summer, 1965. Edna Patterson was a long time member of the Boards of Trustees of the Nevada Historical Society and the Department of Museums and History. She is a founding member of the Northeastern Nevada Historical Society in Elko. She has written many books including *Nevada's Northeast Frontier* and *Sagebrush Doctors*.



Governor John Sparks had a ranch in Elko County. He is shown here, second from left, at the chuck wagon. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

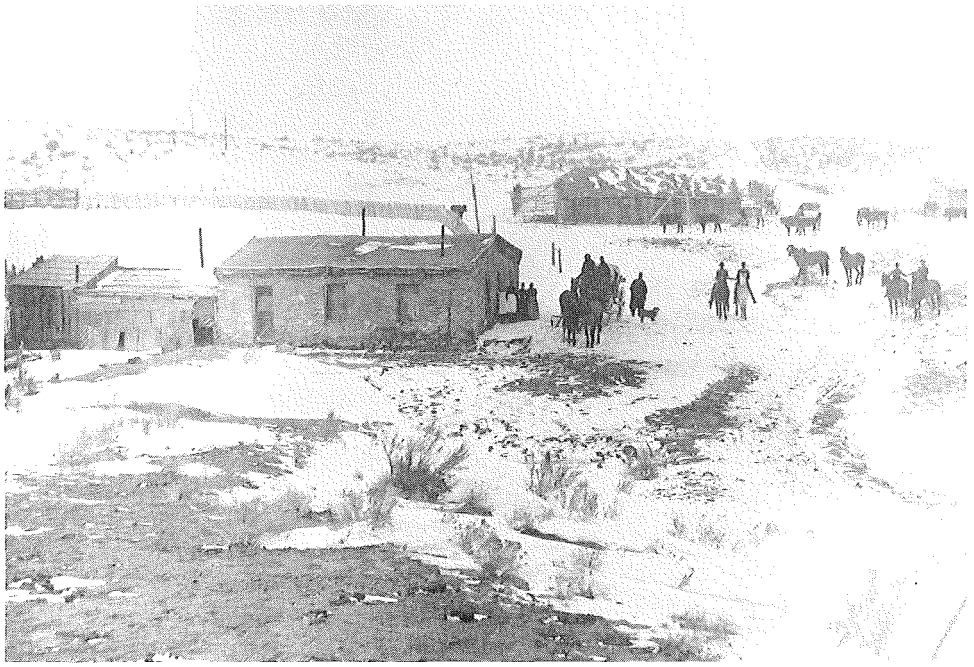
they came in the years when California was fast being taken up by the homesteader, and men of the open range found themselves hemmed in by fences. It was the years from 1865 until as late as 1914. These were the years

when men bought and moved droves into Elko County; and these were the years when speculators bought cattle and trailed them into this country, and then sold them in smaller lots to ranchers and farmers; and they were the years when the frugal farmer let his few milk cows build into a herd that could graze on the sagebrush range. They were the years when men gambled on a herd and the dirty, sweating cowboys—that they would deliver to the mining camps and government forts the cattle of the trail. They were the years when adventurers drifted down alkali-fogged trails with cattle that would roam free and feed upon the lush grass and would make a man a quick and easy dollar. But whether they became a part of a big spread, or whether they became a part of a smaller ranch holding, or were a part of a speculator's dream, this movement of cattle marked the birth of the cattle industry in Elko County.

From the 1860's until the hard winter of 1889-90 the years were prosperous for the cattlemen. They lived under few laws except those of their own making; they laughed and they pocketed their money. They sang and hummed soft tunes to the hooves of the cattle at roundup time. Then came the year 1887; it was unusually dry and there was little rain that summer, and during the winter of 1887-88 little snow fell in the mountains and practically none upon the sagebrush flats. The following summer was dry and the grass shriveled to nothing, and the cattle gaunted up and lowed at the dry streams and stagnant, scummy waterholes. Then came October and November, and it half rained and half snowed on the poor skeleton-like animals as they shivered and turned their backs to the stinging sleet. Then came December, and the winter struck with the fury of demons. The wind howled and drifted snow in white tornadoes. By January 5 snow lay 3 feet deep on the level, and the grass and sage was covered over. Cattle were frozen stiff in solid drifts, and in the gulches cattle died too poor for the buzzards. The cowboys stumbled through snowdrifts that were shoulder high, and they rode floundering cow ponies into drifts where they dug out living cattle skeletons. At the same time, they left hundreds of cattle huddled in death, where the dead could take care of the dead, as they tried to get the living few back to the ranch. I've heard how one oldtimer, with the small herd he was able to get back to the ranch, took some of the hay he had cut by hand that summer and tied it onto his back and walked amid his cattle the night the temperature dropped to 60 degrees below zero. He knew if his cattle stopped moving and lay down they would never rise again. He walked among his cattle, for a man would freeze to death upon a horse. When he could stand the cold no longer he would call to the house and another would come out and put the hay upon his back and walk amid the cattle, and when he became numb with cold another replaced him, and so on through the night. The cold chilled the air until late spring, and the snow stayed on the ground until May when patches of brown grass became the symbol of the life of the land. Everywhere were frozen carcasses of cattle that had huddled against the willows to die in the cold and the blizzards, and

as spring came on the carcasses of the cattle that had died along the bed of the Humboldt River began to float downstream, and the lower towns began to complain of the sickening stench. The outfits sifted their ghastly herds as they stood nearly lifeless during the spring roundup. Then the cattlemen learned the truth—they were flat broke. The grizzled and stunned men were face to face with disaster. Some of the ranches closed out or went bankrupt. In this country that had been favored for the making of beef, one found a boneyard. Some of the cattlemen survived and began anew. Barbed wire was strung up and meadows fenced. Following the hard winter of 1889-90 many changes came to the Elko County ranges. There was plowing and pasture planting, hay mowing and winter feeding. And then came the sheep bells to tinkle over what had once been a cattlemen's free range, as whole bands of sheep moved in and nibbled off the grass too close to the roots. George Banks, who spent most of his 91 years in the cattle industry, related to me that as a young boy he lived with the Bill Hunter family, and that he was given the job of patrolling their range to keep the first transient Basque sheep outfit in the country from trespassing upon Hunter range. He told how the sheep outfit out of Bakersfield, California tried to get to the Hunter waterholes, and how he was given a gun and told to use it. And as the Bill Hunter outfit armed themselves against the sheep, so did other cattle ranches. The "Don't Give A Damn" cowboys would ride whooping and hollering into bands of docile sheep and scatter them to the four winds; and the sheepmen would trespass with no regard for anyone. Tempers flared and killings came about.

There was the shooting by the little homesteader, Dan Wallace, of one of the herders of a big sheep outfit. Dan was a homesteader in that remote and lonely country on the way to the Jarbidge mountains, and the sheepmen and sheepherders felt he had no right to be there. They would tear down his fences and drive their sheep into his garden. Dan would rebuild the fence and again it would be torn down. One day the herders came when Dan was home. Savage words flew, and when they refused to leave his homestead with their sheep Dan turned and shot the herder. The country took sides and was aflame with indignation. The cowmen of the area became the champion of Dan Wallace, and they sent men by horseback to ride into the Bruneau country, and the North Fork and Charleston, to raise funds from the cattlemen for Dan's defense, for as it was with Dan Wallace so might it be with them. They raised money and they fought it out in the courts of Elko County; the cattlemen and the sheepmen with Dan Wallace the puppet. Dan was tried and eventually acquitted of the charge, and the cattlemen had beaten the sheepmen. There were other sheep and cattle wars, and then there were just cattle wars. In the Whiterock country, hard feelings had grown into a long-standing feud between ranchers over the use of a brand. The bitterness was fanned by the loose tongue of a neighbor who carried to the two men each inflamed word that the other said. At the crescendo of the feud one of the



A storm in Elko County, reminiscent of the dreadful winter of 1889-90 when so many cattle died. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

men died from a bullet from the other's gun. And in Ruby Valley some of the cattle outfits hired gunmen to protect their range from trespass by other cattle outfits, and here in this valley a colorful range war had its setting and men died by the gun.

There was the Sam McIntyre outfit that ran some 12,000 head of cattle in the Halleck area. This canny Scotsman believed that from Scotland came only the best, and so he ran the Galloways developed in that country. One oldtimer has said that he was sure the McIntyre Galloways were part billy goat, in the way they could climb the rocks, and by their size. When Sam first turned out in this country, he thought his blacks symbol enough and did not brand his cattle. When told that he should do so he replied, "I can ship them in as fast as they can steal them." But Sam reckoned without my neighbors' talents; and when someone inquired from him a few years later as to who was running his cattle he replied, "Every blasted so-and-so that has a horse!" After a time of this rustling he decided it wise to have his cowboys burn the MC iron into the hides of his blacks. Oldtimers tell me that he ranged in the north, and that the last of his cattle would be trailing out of the Devil's Gate Ranch as the first of the string would reach the Home Ranch at Halleck, a distance of nearly 25 miles. Sam was a thin man of medium stature. He had

white whiskers and a goatee. He always wore a white kerchief about his neck; and he was a master in the use of the bullwhip, a talent he picked up in his trail driving days from Texas. He could curl it over his head and make it crack with the sound of a cannon. There is the story of how he came upon one of his hands jogging along at a leisurely pace in an old spring wagon, and how Sam let fly with his bullwhip across the rump of the horse and then hauled back and delivered the second lash as he bellowed, "I'll teach you lazy whelps to loaf on my time. Giddap."

There is the story of the Dan Murphy outfit and how Dan Murphy became the largest individual landowner in the world. There is the deeply religious side of the man, that is evidenced in the opening clause of his holographic will that was probated in the Elko County courts following his death in Elko in 1882. He made his peace with his God before he distributed any worldly goods. I could go into detail about how he came through the North Fork of the Humboldt River country in the first covered wagon train to ever reach California, in the year 1844, as part of the Murphy-Stevens-Townsend party. I would like to tell how he later drove cattle north from California and into Nevada, where his home domain stretched along the North Fork of the Humboldt and into Idaho, and his cattle ranged to the east and into White Pine County where he was a partner with A.C. Cleveland. Dan Murphy reached his peak in Northern Nevada when some 20,000 head of cattle wore his Diamond A brand. He owned land in California near San Martin, named for his father, Martin Murphy. He owned land in New Mexico and over 4 million acres in old Mexico. There is the story of his son Dan, and his daughter Dianna, and her life with her husband, Morgan Hill. Following Dan Murphy's death the Mexican land was left to the son, and the American property was shared equally between the son and the daughter. After the daughter's inheritance the Hills moved from Morgan Hill, California, to Elko where Morgan Hill became overseer for his wife's vast property. Dianna's life with Morgan Hill was an unhappy affair, for this tall, dark-complexioned man became deaf and gradually lost his mind; and as this tragedy progressed he allowed his garb to become careless, until he seemed to fairly bespeak of poverty. He always wore an old pair of overalls, a dirty work shirt, a slouch hat, and had one pant leg tucked into his boot and the other outside. His last years were spent in a wheelchair with a nurse constantly at his side. There is the tragic suicide of the Hills' only daughter in Paris, and the coming to Nevada of the daughter's husband, a Frenchman named Captain Worth, and how he raised hogs at the mighty Rancho Grande. There is the story of how Dianna Murphy Hill later found happiness as Lady Dianna Rhodes of England.

There is the story of the fiery old soldier, Colonel Jerimiah Moore, of Ruby Valley, and how he put one over on "Uncle Sam" by using soldier labor under his command at old Fort Ruby to develop his nearby ranch. After leaving the army he went to Texas, and in 1869 trailed some 800 head of Texas longhorns

into his ranch, where he and his two dogs could look after them with less commotion than most outfits could using a dozen buckaroos.

There was the French Basque family of the Garats who developed a cattle spread in the distant Whiterock area. Juan and Grace Garat came to California from France during the gold rush days and went into the cattle business in the San Joaquin Valley of California, first using their YP iron in 1852. The influx of settlers caused them to look for a new base, so in 1871 they started trailing their herd of a thousand head to Nevada, crossing the Sierra Nevada at Bridgeport. The first year they arrived at Lovelock and spent the winter on the Humboldt River east of that town. The following winter found them on the Humboldt just north and east of Golconda. It was 3 years after leaving California that they purchased 320 acres at Salmon Point, on the Tuscarora Fork of the Owyhee River, from the Captain Stiles estate. This was the start of the Garat holdings that, when they were sold in 1939 to the Petan Company, comprised some 75,000 acres of land, of which 70,000 were in one block, 7,500 head of cattle, and 500 head of horses. This rugged country molded these people into God-fearing, honest, hard-working individuals who were more interested in opportunity than they were in security.

There is the story of the Spanish Basque family, the Altubes, and the two brothers, Bernardo and Pedro, and the great cattle kingdom of the Spanish Ranch in the Independence Mountain country of the Tuscarora region. There is the story of how Pedro came to America in 1850 on an old sailing vessel out of Spain, and in the next few years saved enough money to send back to Spain for his brother, Bernardo, and how these two Basques first settled at San Mateo where they ran a dairy. The city was growing and wanted their ground for a cemetery, so the brothers sold and moved farther south to Palo Alto, where it was said that the town took its name from Pedro, who stood 6 feet 6 inches without his boots and was known as Palo Alto, or the "Tall Pine." In Palo Alto they continued to run a dairy, and also a slaughter house, and so bought and traded in cattle. The railroad was coming and they wanted their land, so they sold to the speculators and took their dairy herd and slaughter-reprieved cattle and drove north into Nevada. While on the trail Pedro related they were not in as much danger from the Indians as from the bandits that preyed on the trail drivers of the time. When they reached the Independence Mountain country of the north they established the mighty Spanish Ranch. Pedro owned two-thirds, and Bernardo one-third, of the Palo Alto Land and Livestock Company; where with the help of Jeff Henderson, and later the Henderson Banking Company, they were able to build their great ranch. They made huge purchases of land and used thousands of additional acres of open grazing land upon which they finally ran up to 23,000 head of P-(P Bench) cattle. Following the hard winter of 1889-90 they went into Idaho and restocked with 1,500 head of cows. These brothers were along in years when they came to Elko County, Pedro being 46 and Bernardo 42. They led a life of hardship, but from this life of perseverance and hardship, together with

their belief in the goodness of God, they built one of the great cattle ranches in Nevada. Old Palo Alto was strictly a character. He always carried a pint of whiskey in his pocket and his greeting was always the same, "Hey, son-of-a-witch, my friend. Take a drink with me"—only the name wasn't witch. Old Pedro had a passion for poker, and every night he and his daughters would have a game. Miss Amelia even played with the cowboys, and won back most of the money Palo Alto paid them in wages. Palo Alto was a handsome man and rode with the air of a Spanish Grandee. His demeanor and help to his countrymen earned him the title of Father of the Basques in America. His cowboys were mostly Basque, with a sprinkling of Spanish and Mexican. In 1960 Pedro Altube was elected to the Cowboy Hall of Fame as Nevada's candidate to the shrine located at Norman, Oklahoma.

There was Colonel Hardesty, who drove longhorns from Texas into the Wells area, where, in 1889, 20,000 head of cattle wore his brands. In 1890, after the hard winter, he branded only 25 calves. There was the Bradley outfit of old Governor "Broadhorns" Bradley and his son John R. I would like to tell how Bradley cattle used to rumble out of Twelve Mile Ranch, on the Humboldt River east of Elko, and on to the trail as they were being driven to Kansas City for market. The Bradleys had great holdings around Deeth and the Mary's River, and they extended north into Idaho where one of their rodeo grounds was where the town of Twin Falls now stands. There was the great cattle domain of John Sparks and Jasper Harrell that controlled the northeastern section of the county. There was the Utah Construction Company whose area claimed comprised one thirty-second of the area of Nevada. The company owned, leased, and used 3 million acres, had 42,000 head of sheep, 50,000 head of cattle, and 3,000 head of horses. Their holdings were divided into 38 units, and there were 232 year-round employees with extra seasonal help for lambing, haying, and shipping.[1] There was the ranching career of J.J. Hylton, the interests of the Badt Family; and the story of W.H. Moffitt and how he lost a fortune and built back is a gigantic story. Each generation had its kings, some could hold onto their domain and others lost them.

There is the story of the Larios family of the northern country and how their grandfather was the possessor of one of the original Mexican Land Grants in California, and how this man's lands were confiscated by the Americans and their Congress. Following the taking of his lands he and his sons worked for the Murphys and the Altubes in Nevada, and the cowboys always showed their deference by addressing them as Don Pedro and Don Manuel, their inherited titles. Following Manuel Larios's death in 1956, at the age of 89 years, he was buried in his grandfather's private cemetery at San Juan Batista, California.

There is the story of Susie Rapier, the woman outlaw and cattle rustler who, with her band of men, preyed upon the cattle of Elko and Lander counties. I would like to tell of "Six-Shooter Sal," who buckarooed for one of

the large outfits and had her apartment in the bunkhouse along with the men—but she always kept her honor by the six-shooter she placed under her pillow each night. There is the tale of how the foreman of one of the big outfits came upon a smaller rancher butchering one of his company's steers, and how he told him in no uncertain terms to take the hide and nail it to the front of his barn and if he ever came by and found that hide down he'd have him arrested for cattle stealing, and how that hide stayed on the barn for all to know and see that here was the home of a cattle thief, so long as the foreman remained boss of the company.

The backbone of the cattle industry of Elko County was not necessarily the large outfits, but the smaller ones from 500 head upward. They were in reality the true builders, for the land was their home and they lived upon it. Many of the large outfits only spent their summers in Elko County and then went to California for the winter. They drained this country and used their riches to provide them with money for the type of living they wished to maintain in California for the winter season. In order to build a solid foundation, it takes the people, the land, and their homes. I could name these pioneers in every valley of the county, but I would probably leave out some to whom credit would be due so I shall let their names go by.

Before I close I must mention the men of steel, skill, and stamina whose job it was to ride the range. These men who were so proud of their jobs rode with an air of dignity as they sat straight in their saddles. They always wore a large felt hat, a kerchief about their necks, and usually chaps. These cowboys spoke with a profanity that was perfection itself, and has never been surpassed. In their hearts they were not profane, but in their speech they challenged all comers. A cowboy's life was not easy but it was colorful. Both cowboy and owner built this country, and if it was done with many an oath it was also done with a song and a prayer. Oldtimers have told how at the close of a day, as old George Russell sat around his campfire with his boys, they often took to singing, and invariably before the evening was over they had to sing his favorite song, "Just One More River To Cross." Then they always said goodnight with a passage from the Bible.

What I have related here is but a fragment of the cattle story of Elko County. The subject is tremendous, but I love it for its size and its herds and its people. In closing I quote the words of Teddy Blue in "We Pointed Them North": "I would know an old cowboy in hell with his hide burned off. It is the way they stand and walk and talk. Only a few are left now—the rest have left the wagon and gone on ahead, across the big divide looking for a new range. I hope they find good water and plenty of grass—but wherever they are it is where I want to go."

NOTES

[1] Bowman, Nora Linjer. *Only the Mountains Remain.*

Idah Meacham Strobridge: First Woman of Nevada Letters

ANTHONY AMARAL

LITERARY INTERPRETATIONS OF NEVADA are as sparse as the land itself is abundant in sagebrush. By interpretations I mean a literature that conveys with deep feeling and perspective expression a sense of place, mood, and tempo of living.

Although definitions of regional literature abound, regional writing that lasts is characterized first by its feeling. The prose might read like poetry because of the writer's ability to translate an individual meaning to life and land and its history and legends. The perspective is not muddled with prosaic descriptions or a silly emphasis of a pantheistic land of clear skies and eternal blossoms. Neither does forthright regional literature confuse a region's local significance for unique values. Without perspective the writer will have no difficulty outliving his own writing.

But the writer might be overlooked, as is Idah Meacham Strobridge, now dead over thirty years. Her three books, *In Miner's Mirage Land* (1904), *Loom of the Desert* (1907) and *Land of Purple Shadows* (1909), all privately printed in limited editions, do not merely contain stories and reminiscences told within a regional setting. Idah Strobridge casted away flimsy observations and presented vivid and graphic impressions of the northern Nevada country.

Her writings, as her own life, reflect varying attitudes to the Nevada desert. She knew the desert when it was still sinister and vivid in the memories of people who remembered the toll it had taken of the emigrants and animals along the Overland Trail. The other world of the desert she saw or, more adequately, felt as a place of awe and reverence for mind and body.

Mrs. Strobridge wrote of one of the loneliest parts of Nevada—Humboldt County in the northern part of the state. Her first book, *In Miner's Mirage Land,* appeared one year after Mary Austin's classic, *Land of Little Rain,* and

The late Anthony Amaral authored many books on Western history including *Mustang: Life and Legends of Nevada's Horses,* and *Will James, The Last Cowboy Legend.*

This article was originally published fall, 1967.

Idah Meacham Strobridge was an early twentieth-century Nevada author. Photo c. 1884. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

was somewhat similar. But Idah Strobridge may have been the first to write of desert landscapes in ecstatic moods as some parts of her book were reprinted from the *Los Angeles Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle.*

What she wrote about she had seen through long tenure of living in the desert during the late 1860's to the turn of the century. Even more, she deeply felt what she had seen; the desperation of emigrants facing the most miserable part of their trek to California in the barren face of Forty Mile Desert or Black Rock Desert; the fruitless wandering of prospectors in the hills; and Chinese and Indians living as second-place people in the egocentricity of the white man's ways.

Her people are in conflicts, culturally or with the land. Out of the mixture she finds folk tales, and strange behaviors; the recluse and the gregarious. All affect the land in their struggles and in turn are affected by the land. These elements she sensed as the living sap which a land must be soaked with to make the essence of literature. Then, of course, this essence needed a literary sympathizer to give meaning and emotional expression.

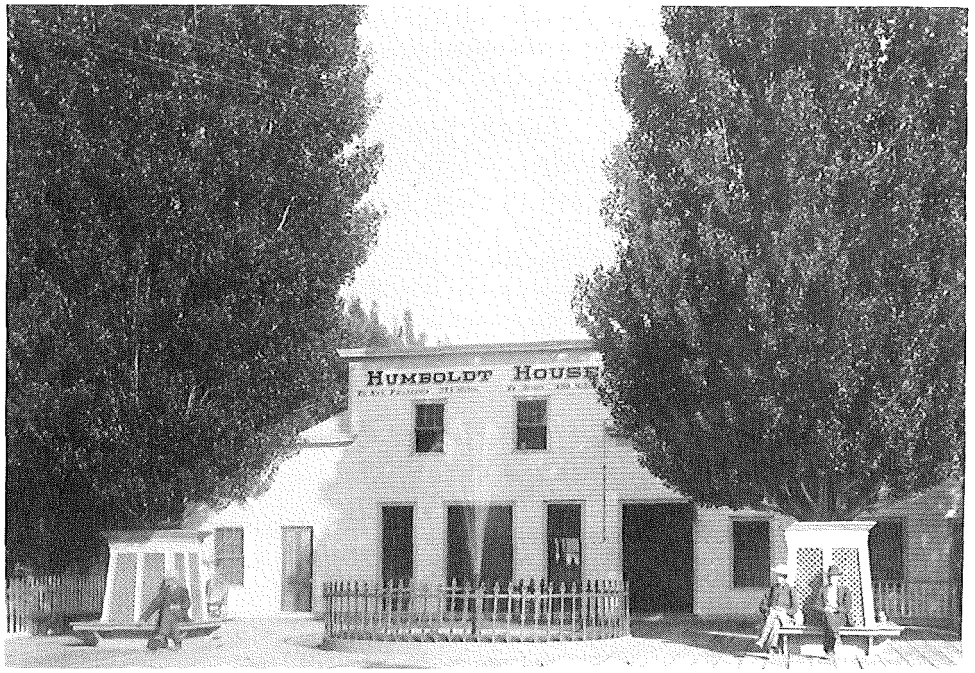
When finally impelled to write, Idah Strobridge realized almost at the outset that true sympathy is a harmonious cycle and that her writings needed another dimension—a sympathetic reader. She writes *In Miner's Mirage Land:*

> How can one convey meaning to another in a language which the other does not understand? I can only tell you the Charm of the Desert when you, too, have learned to love it. And then there will be no need for me to speak. . . .
> . . . To those who know the Desert's heart . . . speech is not needed . . . and the Desert speaks to them through her silence. . . .

She knew also that what she felt for the desert was not for all to feel in the same intensity. Moods, like the human face, are never exactly alike. And for some, the desert would always be "a gray waste of sand and sagebrush, lying in pitiful loneliness under a gray sky. . . ."

The initiated, as she implies, needed no encouragement. They would explore the desert by the momentum of their own inquisitiveness. Those only somewhat enthralled and who preferred to stand at a town's edge and admire the desert, she encouraged to go out and to open themselves to the awe and silence that is the desert. She repeats this plea virtually as a fetish, since only her deep sensitivity to the desert and her fascination for its desolation could indicate to her the difficulty of transcribing the desert's wonders as she knew them. In *Land of Purple Shadows,* her last book, she finally arrives at an analogy which leaves little else for her to say:

> At various times—in various places; in many moods, and in different mediums, are the studies and sketches made, which the painter brings back to the studio . . . Mere suggestions and rough outlines are they—first impressions . . . . Not for the galleries did he make them, nor for the critics, nor for the careless. But the folio is open to those who will understand; those who in the incomplete sketch, the half-finished study, see the Truth. Even as the painter shows you such, so, too, are put before you these studies of the West—this land of golden sunlight and purple shadows. . . .



Humboldt House was a railroad stop on the Central Pacific line during the 1860s that was operated by Idah Strobridge's father. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

Not all of her writing about the desert follows a mystic vein. She wrote of lost mines, desert animals and about people. Her best accounts were about prospectors. But she was particular. She didn't care about those prospectors who came to the land, made their riches, and then departed to find their particular happiness in San Francisco. She was intrigued by those desert wanderers who wore out their lives in search of what she calls the *rainbow gold;* a bonanza waiting somewhere for them, or a lost mine. Prospectors were her favorite people; and . . .

By campfire smoke, or in the dim light of sod cabins, I have sat in that silence the Desert teaches you, and have listened as they talked, and believed as I listened. Yes, even believed; as you, too, will believe if you hear from their own lips the fables that seem so true during the hour you are under the storyteller's charm . . . .

Still, their story-charm never lessened her perspective of the prospectors. While she could sit and be enthralled, she saw beyond their stories, and apparently, into the ticking of their souls:

The faith of the old prospector! There is no other such blind faith in the world . . . . Even if the fairy stories of the fabulous lost mines are true, and they should, someday, find each his own treasure, I doubt if the end of the search would bring joy.

To have money in the Desert, makes little change in one's way of living. And to go to the cities! They are alien to all the cities would give. So, the joy of life, for them, lies in the search for—not in the finding of gold.

Often the same theme is reiterated by Idah, but always in a fresh glimmering. In her story about the Lost Blue Bucket Mine, she repeats the idea of the prospector's wanderlust in search of gold:

. . . The years wax and wane; but time does not lessen their faith. Always and always will there be those who go up and down the length of the Desert land seeking the mines that are myths; serving the Sorceress of the sand wastes until the day shall come when they lie down to rest on the old Overland Trail, where the bones of those who broke the way were buried in the long ago. . . .

The final end of all desert rats (as she beautifully describes in a story called, *Old Man Berry*) is very much the same:

All the years of his life the old prospector gives to the Desert his best and his all—gives hope, and joy, and love, even as he gave youth. He gives his very soul; then, finally, he commits his body to the Desert's keeping—to sleep there in everlasting silence. Cruel? Nay, the Desert is kind; for in death the body rests where the heart found its joy in life. What lover could ask more?

Idah's story people and their reactions to an environment strongly portray the Nevada desert region. But symbolically, her characters are beyond strict regionalism. They might have appeared anywhere in the American West where solitude was often the rule and a governing force in great expanses of a silent and a stubbornly unyielding land.

Contrary to some opinions which claim regional writing is best written by those who were born in the region they write about, Idah was a transplant from California, but tempered at an early age by the Nevada desert. She fits perfectly the requirements for a regional writer given by Lawrence Clark Powell, bookman and former librarian at UCLA:

It does not require being a native son or long resident to write truly about a place. What is required is a writer's ability to root, to send down (and up) his sources of nourishment and strength. . . .

Idah's writings of Nevada carry the vitality Powell suggests. Her story, "The Quest of Old Man Berry," from *In Miner's Mirage Land,* is typical of her close-up description which does not lose sight of the panorama.

Take up your map of the Western States. There, where the great Oregon lava flow laps over the State line of Nevada, in the northwestern corner, lies the Black Rock country. Out there in that sweep of gray sand and sage-levels, and grim heights—the scaling of which—taxes the soul sorely, I found him—the typical prospector, "Old Man Berry," or "Uncle Berry," they called him. Over eighty years old he was, and for more than fifty years of his life led by the lure of a mirage.

All day I have been traveling over alkali flats and greasewood-covered mesas, to reach—in late afternoon—the upper tablelands. They were dotted with mountain mahogany, and slashed with cañons, and quite dark when we stopped at the ranch house doorway, through which the lamplight streamed—the friendliest sight a Desert wayfarer ever meets up with.

We had come upon one of those small ranches that are tucked away in the heights, where old prospectors are sure to drift to, when not in the mountains with poll-pick and hammer, as though they—like the ranchman's collie or the cat curled up on the bunk—were among the assets of the place.

He was tall and spare—gaunt, you would have called him; and you would have noticed at once how bowed he was. But not as other old men on whom age has rested a heavy hand. It was the head, not the back, that was bowed—as though he had walked long years, and far, with his eyes upon the ground. When he lifted them quickly—looking directly into your own—you found they were bright and piercing, with keeness that belonged to a man forty years his junior; and you felt that his sight reached away beyond—to things not of your reckoning. . . .

Although Idah Meacham Strobridge displayed a subtle touch for the pulse of Nevada, she was born in Moraga Valley, Contra Costa County, California, on June 9, 1855. Her father was George W. Meacham, born in New Jersey. He worked in the California gold fields in the 1850's, but after three years was only slightly ahead of a shifting balance of successes, and failures. He returned to New Jersey and married a childhood friend, Phoebe Craiger. But she refused to go with him to California. After six months of marriage, he returned to California alone. Upon his arrival, Meacham learned that his partner had sold their mining interests and had disappeared. Shortly after informing his wife of the recent event, she decided to join him in California.

In Contra Costa County, Meacham went into ranching. Shortly after, Idah was born. When she was about eight years old, in 1863, the family moved to Humboldt County, Nevada, and Meacham became one of the pioneer stockmen. Nevada was still a territory, and the Promontory Point epic a few years in the future. The family lived close by the Overland Trail to California in Humboldt City.

In those impressionable years, Idah watched the emigrants passing through and liked to ride out into the desert to visit with them. Often, she rode just to be alone in the desert and seemingly to wonder about it all. Like Emerson, she was to believe, "Nature never wears a mean appearance." Yet she knew the desert to be harsh and a difficult challenge to those who settled on the land. Her writings do not deny this.

By the late 1860's the Central Pacific Railroad had established a station stop called Humboldt House, about two miles from Humboldt City. During the 1870's it was operated by Idah's father, along with a partner. By this time, Idah had attended Mills Seminary, Oakland, California, from 1871-1873. Facts are vague, but she may have returned to live with her parents for the next decade. By 1884, she had married Samuel Strobridge in San Francisco and later lived in Oakland. Three sons were born, all dying in infancy. This

was the beginning of a series of tragedies. Four years after their marriage, her husband died. Shortly after this, her father's cattle herd was virtually wiped away by the severe winter of '88-'89. Her parents joined her shortly after in Oakland.

Again, facts are hazy. Idah did return to Humboldt County because by 1896, she was writing short stories and poetry for *Nevada Magazine,* some California newspapers and *Land of Sunshine,* edited by Charles Lummis. Later, she wrote for *Sports Afield* and *Munsey's.* Her very early writing carried the pseudonym of George Craiger, a combination of her parents' names.

Along with her writing she raised cattle and worked a gold mine called the Great West Gold Mine. An account in the *Lovelock Tribune* (c. 1901) of mining in that region reported some "very rich quartz having been taken from the mine and promises a fortune for its owner . . .".

An unusual hobby of hers was bookbinding which she conducted in the attic of the ranch house. Lummis, in an editorial comment in *Land of Sunshine,* wrote: "A commercial-bound book looks cheap beside her staunch and honest and tasteful bindings; and when I have a book that merits to endure longer than the commercial binds can make it, off it goes to Humboldt—and never in vain."

Spaced between her varied activities, Idah managed to take horseback rides into the desert and to visit with those who lived in cabins or in an outdoor camp. She came to know a number of prospectors, Indians, and cowboys and listened avidly to their stories. She also like to ride along the old wagon trails where the emigrants has passed. On the Black Rock Desert broken and sun-dried wagon wheels, animal bones, and household furniture abandoned by the emigrants to lighten their wagons had a profound effect upon her. Moody from her own tragedies, the mere indications of misfortunes were deeply felt by her:

> So, if you will do as I have done—in the saddle—ride over mile after mile of the old emigrant road where it winds in and out among the gullies along the foothills, or where it dips farther down into the lowlands, or as it trails along the mesa, or stretches out straight across the hard, alkali flats; or where it follows the banks of the muddy Humboldt, crossing and recrossing the bends where the old fords are, you will surely chance upon some long neglected mounds which tell their silent stories of the suffering and privations of those whose names must forever remain unknown. Sometimes a roughly-lettered board was placed at the head, but oftener it was "a grave without tombstone or token."
>
> Forgotten and neglected graves of the Desert! For more than fifty years they have been part of that vast silence; visited only by the snows of winter or the rays of the burning summer sun. No one comes to mourn them. No one comes to lay flowers on their head. . . .

The great dangers of the desert, Idah indicates, were never to be doubted.

It was an enemy to the emigrants who fought every desolate mile through Nevada and their final suffering before the rewards of California's pleasant valleys were claimed. In spite of the havoc the Nevada desert had wrought on the emigrants, the cause was not so much the desert as it was the lack of its understanding by the emigrants. Mirages—misty shapes that lured emigrants to unknowing destruction she well imagined:

> Away back in the old days when the slow-moving ox team dragged its weary way, foot by foot, over the alkali flats and the long stretches of sun-baked soil, where the only growth was the gray sage and the greasewood—away back in those far days—the mirage, that Loreli of the Desert, was there to lure men on to their destruction.
>
> Great lakes of shining water, where little waves ran up to lap the shore; wide fields of clover and bluegrass, that looked so green and cool under the burning sun; forests which reached miles away in a tangle of vine and tree—those were the visions that the Siren of the Dry Lakes showed to the water-starved emigrant of old, and—beckoning—led him on and on, in the pursuit of the unreal, until the picture grew fainter and fainter, and at last down the diminishing perspective of the vision—as he looked—he saw it fade away. The grassy fields where the oxen might have fed, the sparkling waters at which they might have drunk, the broad-leafed shade under which man and beast might have found refreshing rest, were gone! A tantalizing glimpse of Paradise in the great and awful desolation of those Desert days.
>
> Many a poor traveler, led far astray by following the ever-calling, ever-retreating, enchantress, has laid down at last to die alone in that vast waste, where his bones must bleach in the sun, and his dust must become the sport of the winds of the desert.

Typically she bridges some of her topics from the purely subjective to the descriptive real. Thus, when she speaks again of mirages she says:

> It is apt to make the shivers run up one's spine to see a harmless looking brush, of a sudden, metamorphose itself into a tall man, and see the man come striding toward you with a long, swinging step; and then—while you are still intently gazing, and wondering where he could have sprung from on that barren desert bit—as suddenly discover that he is walking away from you—and backwards at that. . . .
>
> The mirage is, in very truth, a part of the Desert itself—just as the sagebrush, and the coyote, and the little horned toads, and the sandstorms are part. To those who know the Desert-land, the picture would be incomplete without them. . . .

About 1903, shortly after Idah was finding a wider acceptance of her work, she left Humboldt County and moved to Los Angeles. She built a house in an area which then was a center for artists and writers. Charles Lummis lived close-by, as did Mary Austin and Will Levington.

From here she issued her books and continued her bindery and the residence was known as the *Sign of the Sagebrush.* Her books were issued in limited editions of about 1,000 copies. Some were covered in wrappers, 8vo, and sold for $1.75. For $6.75, she covered the books in three-quarter morocco, and in full morocco for $10.00. In these full-leather copies the chapter heads of simple vignettes were hand colored. Each book was numbered and autographed in a bold, free-moving handwriting.

An unusual practice was her use of a binder's colophon, which she also autographed. Her bindings won her a silver medal, the highest award, at the California State Fair in 1908, and a gold medal at the Alaskan-Yukon Fair in 1909. Artists Maynard Dixon and Duncan Gleason exhibit their early efforts as illustrators in her books.

Presumably Idah never did return to Humboldt County after her move to Los Angeles. Often in her stories she pined to go back to the desert where she preferred . . . "alkali in my nostrils, and to smell the smoke from a greasewood campfire. . . ." It may well be that Idah Strobridge needed the "alkali" and the "smoke," and to be close to the Nevada desert in order to write about it. For the years following her departure from Humboldt seem to drain her creative energies, and her later writings are, frankly, mediocre. Some of her attempts at fiction were even absurd.

After the publication of her third book, she apparently ceased writing. She became active in geneaological studies and continued her bookbinding craft until her death in 1932.

Copies of Idah Strobridge's books are rarely listed in booksellers' catalogues. *In Miner's Mirage Land* and parts of her other two books (*Loom of the Desert* and *Land of Purple Shadows*) are deserving of new consideration by a publisher. While many readers will delight in her personal style, Nevadans in particular will find a dimension in her writing that matches the land that she felt should be set aside for "Silence, and Space and the Great Winds." Humboldt Country is still all this. Hawks and eagles soar on wind currents, cattle graze on unfenced ranges and men still poke into the brown hills for rainbow gold; and the careless desert traveler still becomes a victim. Idah Strobridge's books have as much of an essence of the present as they do of the past.

Historic and Prehistoric Land-Use Patterns in the Reese River Valley[1]

DAVID H. THOMAS

THE REESE RIVER VALLEY of central Nevada, approximately thirty miles south of Austin, in Lander County, is a region which has recently been the object of intensive archaeological investigation.[2] In 1969, the University of Nevada conducted a field course in archaeological methods at Reese River, with twenty-three students. This past summer, the University of California (Davis) returned to the same area with thirty-five students. The primary research objective was to test the viability of Julian H. Steward's classic ethnographic model of Great Basin exploitative patterns in the prehistoric period,[3] and the present paper is an off-shoot of the original focus.

I wish to present results and speculations rather than a methodological description of the Reese River Ecological Project. This paper covers three points. First, I describe prehistoric settlement patterns in the Reese River Valley; this is abstracted from the archaeological evidence. Then I shall briefly outline the well-known mining era of the 1860s which profoundly altered the ecology of the Austin area. Finally, I shall discuss the effect of this ecological shift upon the local Shoshoni Indians.

The Reese River Valley trends north-south between the Toiyabe Mountains and the Shoshone Range. There are four basic lifezones: a riverine association, the sagebrush-covered flats, the piñon-juniper belt on the lower flanks of the mountains, and the upper montane sagebrush community. The archaeological resources of the Reese River Valley date back in time at least 4,000 years and there are obvious fluctuations through time. But for present purposes, let us ignore these local changes and paint a unified picture for the prehistoric period. There were basically two foci for aboriginal settlement: the piñon-juniper winter village and the summer gathering camp.

This article was published winter, 1971. At the time David H. Thomas had received four degrees in Anthropology from the University of California, Davis and was teaching at City College of the City University of New York. He is currently Curator of North American Archaeology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

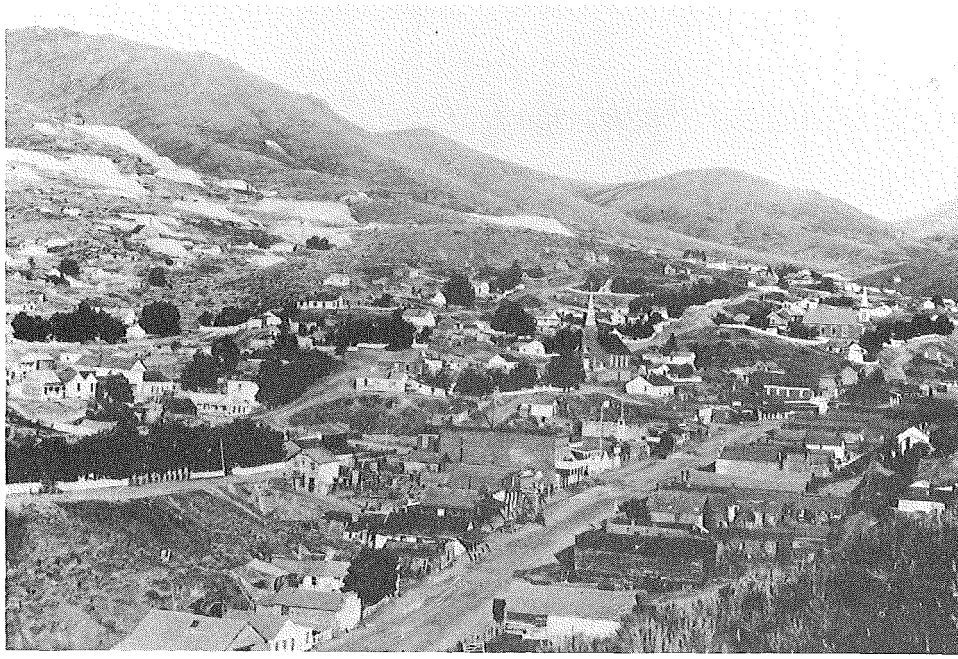


Figure 1: This turn-of-the-century photograph of Austin shows Lander Hill barren and treeless. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

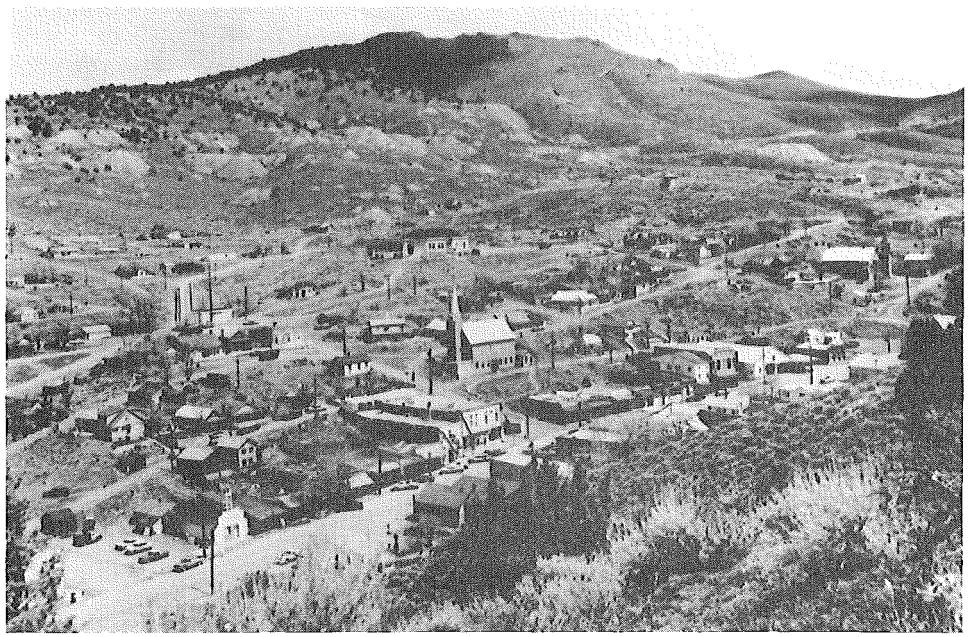


Figure 2: This photograph of Lander Hill shows the recovery of the pinon-juniper biotic community. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

The piñion winter villages were located on the ecotone between the sagebrush flats and the piñion-juniper belt. The camps themselves were located on low, flat ridges. Water was generally within a quarter mile, but these villages were rarely situated directly on streams or springs. There are several possible reasons for this, the most obvious being a reluctance to scare the local game animals from water. Additionally, snow was on the ground during these winter months, obviating the necessity for running water. Cold air drainage down mountain canyons also made the ridge tops more attractive. Bark or grass-covered domed huts probably served for shelter. The nature of these sites is not such as to build deep stratified midden localities. Apparently the occupants returned to the same ridge year after year, but not to the precise camp site. The result is a more or less continuous linear scatter of camp debris rather than the mere traditional California-type kitchen midden. In the winter village, the primary subsistence item was the family store of piñon nuts, supplemented by game—probably antelope and mountain sheep.

Sometime during the spring, piñon caches were generally exhausted, forcing the Indians to the valley floor in search of grass shoots, early ripening tubers, and other riverine crops. The focus was the area where the snow first melted. This was the lean time of year; life was a struggle until the more reliable summer staples appeared. The summer encampments were generally along the courses of the Reese River. Brush windbreaks were probably erected and women pursued their gathering tasks. Artifact inventory is primarily a large, crude, tool kit. Low-grade chert was quarried nearby and coarse, chopper-type tools were manufactured on the spot. Little exotic stone is present in these sites. Families remained in these riverine gathering stations until the fall piñon harvest drew them back to their ridge-top winter camps.

Such was roughly the state of affairs when Captain J.H. Simpson led his party across the Reese River Valley in May, 1859. He described the bunch grass of Simpson's pass as "very abundant and of the finest character."[4] The Reese River supported 2½ pound trout and Simpson described the grass along the Reese River as "luxurient . . . it is best and very abundant further up stream, and extends as far as the eye can see."[5] Contrast this scene with the modern situation along the Reese River, where most native grasses are no longer seen.

The subsequent establishment of the Pony Express in 1860 and discovery of the silver ledges of Austin is well known. More important to this discussion are the ancillary activities which supported the rich mining districts of Austin and Reese River. Specifically, I refer to the lumbering and livestock activities in the hinterland.

Incipient Austin had great need for lumber, which was necessary for building homes and mills, shoring up mines, fenceposts, and fuel for the stamp mills. So great was the demand for lumber that local supplies had to be

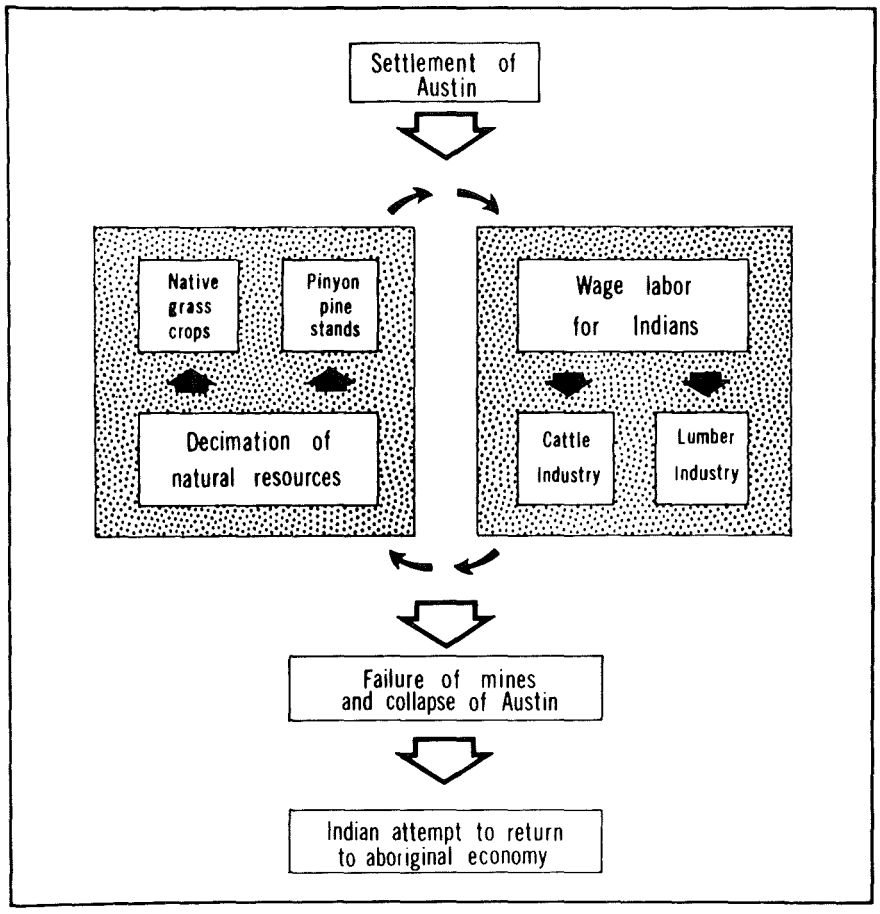


Figure 3: Feedback mechanism operative in historic Shoshoni adaptive system.

vastly supplemented by frequent wagon-loads from the Sierra. These shipments were duly recorded by the news-hungry editor of the *Reese River Reveille,* but lest his readers be misled, he added chauvinistically:

> If anybody does not believe that the Reese River country can produce trees larger than sagebrush, he can be convinced otherwise by just taking a look at the huge piles of all sorts of lumber required for building purposes at the new yard of the Reese River Mill and Mining Company.[6]
>
> A considerable quantity of lumber comes to the market from the saw mill upon Silver Creek [about 15 miles north of Austin]. This is quite good quality and manufactured from the pinyon, or digger pine, as it is sometimes called.[7]

There was also heavy cutting of stands of piñon, juniper, and mahogany in the Toiyabe and Shoshone Mountains, for firewood.

A second economic demand was for fresh meat. The livestock industry commenced early in Austin's brief history. Lewis R. Bradley, later to be Nevada's second governor, imported a herd of five hundred Texas longhorn cattle into the upper Reese River Valley in 1862. The herds grew quickly until the cattle numbered in the thousands. The period from the 1880s to the early 1900s also saw myriad sheep imported into the valley. The rich native grasses provided more than ample fodder for the herds. Contemporary accounts in the *Reveille* describe the verdant native vegetation in the following terms:

> In the Valley of Reese River there is a long, green meadow having the appearance of a vast field of barley or wheat . . . only a few weeks elapse before haying commences.[8]

> It's a joy to bovines and horseflesh to see the long, wavy grass which abounds in such profusion on the slope and main ridges of the Reese River Mountains [Toiyabe Mountains] from Austin to Toiyabe Peak and the devil only knows how much further south. Immense tracts may be seen literally covered knee deep in tender grass, looking for the world like young fields of grain.[9]

> [In Grass Valley] grass is more than knee-high at this time, consisting of blue joint, clover, and red top. Haying will commence generally about the first of July. At least 700 tons of hay will be put up during the season by different ranches.[10]

But these virgin conditions were soon to change. The Soil Conservation Service has said the early sheep outfits "took all and gave very little in return," resulting in "destructive overuse."[11] The absence of native grasses is apparent even to the most casual traveler today in the Reese River and nearby central Nevada valleys.

The effect upon local timber stands was no less pronounced. Figures 1 and 2 document a century of floristic change on Lander Hill, overlooking Austin, Nevada. The photograph of Austin around the turn of the century (Figure 1) pictures Lander Hill as barren and treeless. No photographs exist from the pre-1862 period, but it is certain that piñon and juniper trees formerly stood on Lander and other low hills surrounding Austin. The lumber market first exploited nearby timber stands, and gradually cut further and further up Reese River as more immediate stands were depleted. Other photographs taken over the years document the gradual recovery of the piñon-juniper biotic community, and Figure 2 depicts the modern (1984) situation, with a rather abundant piñon-juniper lifezone. Similar sequences can be produced for Belmont, Cortez, and other local mining camps. Changes such as this in the natural vegetation can be taken as typical of the ecological effects of the mining boom in central Nevada.

If the period from 1862 to 1900 brought change to the intricate natural balances, it revolutionized the lifeway of the Shoshoni. Individuals and families often attached themselves to ranches and mines in a pattern reminiscent of the antebellum Southern Negro. Winter villages were often aban-

doned in favor of slums near mining towns such as Austin. The importance of wage labor increased as the staples in the native diet were ruined. Perhaps the situation was best described by the Shoshoni Captain Sam, in about 1870, to Indian Agent Gheen:

> . . . the game was all gone; the trees that bore pine-nuts were cut down and burned in the quartz-mills and other places; the grass-seeds, heretofore used by them [the Shoshoni] for food, was no more; the grass-land all claimed and cultivated by the white people; and that . . . Indians would soon be compelled to work for the ranchers for two bits a day or starve.[12]

I wish to emphasize the "feedback" nature of this environmental and cultural interlude. As Figure 3 indicates, a few Indians intially hired out as wage laborers. Their duties were varied, but many were engaged in either ranching or lumbering industries. That is, during the period under discussion, Indians were generally paid to plow fields and to lumber the hillsides. As stated above, the native economy relied heavily upon two natural crops; piñon nuts and native grass seeds. As farming and lumbering progressed, the aboriginal economic systems faltered. As traditional methods became less productive, more Indians were shunted into wage labor, where they were paid to further destroy their former livelihood. In the parlance of systems theory, this is a "positive feedback cycle"—a vicious circle. If unchecked, such a loop results in self-destruction.[13]

When the mines failed during the 1890 period, wage labor practically disappeared and the semi-acculturated Shoshoni were forced to "learn to be Indians again." Three decades had dulled the hunting-gathering instincts so necessary for survival in such a harsh environment. To make matters worse, the old piñon groves had been reduced to eroding hills. The lush valley vegetation recorded by Simpson and others was now simply sage-dominated flats.

To me, this picture is a depressing one. An economic tradition with a local antiquity of at least 4,000 years was severely crippled in less than three decades of acculturation to Anglo influences. The environment, probably relatively constant for some 5,000 years, was radically altered by intensive silver mining operations and its supportive activities. Even today, the effects are noteworthy. Piñon forests have returned, but the dominant sagebrush is most reluctant to release its grasp, even in current re-seeding projects. In fact, there is some evidence that a tension zone once existed between grasses and piñon.[14] Given the stresses of last century, the grasses were eliminated, thus permitting the piñon to expand into the non-competitive sage communities. If this is the case, the modern piñon zone may be larger than in pre-contact days. The environmental change would thus be irreversible.

It should be obvious that, allowed to run its full course, the positive feedback occurring during Shoshoni acculturation would have disrupted the

entire system. With all piñon gone there would have been no lumbering jobs available. As ranching and farming expanded, the traditional foraging-grounds would have become useless for Indians. Agricultural jobs would persist, but these would probably be insufficient to support the entire aboriginal population. The unemployed would be in dire straits indeed, with traditional staple crops no longer available. The progression, as we know, was not allowed to run its course, because the mines failed and wage labor essentially disappeared. This feedback model is presented as one possible adaptation to the post-1862 situation. There were quite likely alternative pathways, perhaps more fruitful ones.

A final comment can be made about the maladaptive nature of the Shoshoni economic system during this time. This case, and that of the Chumash in southern California, should serve as ample warning against the facile assumption that cultures always adapt for their own survival or that cultures tend to maximize their environment (the so-called mini-max strategy). A restricted parallel can be noted between cultural adaptations and biological evolution: mutations occur in both cases; false starts and dead ends must occur in any living system, as well as adaptive, successful mutations. Maladaptive cycles can, and do, exist in both the past and the present.

NOTES

[1] Contribution No. 2 of the Reese River Ecological Project.

[2] For further details on the Reese River Ecological Project, see David H. Thomas, "Regional Sampling in Archaeology: A Pilot Great Basin Research Design," *University of California Archaeological Survey Annual Report, 1968-1969* (Los Angeles), 87-100.

[3] Julian H. Steward, "Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups," *Bureau of American Ethnology*, Bulletin No. 120 (Washington, D.C., 1938), 78.

[4] J. H. Simpson, *Report of Explorations Across the Great Basin of the Territory of Utah for a Direct Wagon-Route from Camp Floyd to Genoa, in Carson Valley, in 1859* (Washington, D.C., 1876), 78.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Reese River Reveille*, 3 May 1864.

[7] *Ibid.*, 7 May 1864.

[8] *Ibid.*, 3 June 1863.

[9] *Ibid.*, 6 June 1863.

[10] *Ibid.*, 13 June 1863.

[11] "Reese River Sub-Basin," Soil Conservation Service Report No. 8, Humboldt River Basin Series, 29.

[12] Levi A. Gheen, [Communication in] Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1876.

[13] Gary Stickel and Adrienne E. Cooper, "The Chumash Revolt of 1824: A Case for an Archaeological Application of Feedback Theory," *University of California Archaeological Survey Annual Report, 1968-1969* (Los Angeles), 5-22.

[14] Fred Emerson, "The Tension Zone between the Gramma Grass and Piñon-Juniper Association in Northeastern New Mexico," *Ecology*, Vol. 13, 347-358.

A Case of Mistaken Identity: William M. Stewart and the Rejection of Nevada's First Constitution

DAVID A. JOHNSON

WILLIAM STEWART, claimed his contemporary admirers, "towers among men like the Colossus of Rhodes." To this, his detractors retorted, "and has as much brass in his composition."[1] The exchange contains an essential truth about the man, and about his place in Nevada's early history. Talented, energetic, and equally arrogant and unscrupulous, Stewart dominated as no other man the legal and political affairs of Nevada's territorial period. As counsel for the largest Comstock Lode mining corporations, he played a central role in the "interminable litigation" over conflicting mining claims in the years between 1860 and 1865. Ambitious and well heeled, he left an indelible mark on the turbulent political events that preceded Nevada statehood. Stewart's legal acumen and political audacity have received prominent mention in histories of the territorial period.[2] And yet, historians have misinterpreted for almost a century his role in the events surrounding the rejection of Nevada's first constitution in January, 1864. As a consequence, both Stewart's early career and the divisive political campaigns of 1863 and 1864 remain profoundly misunderstood.

Every published account of the first statehood campaign has identified Stewart as the constitution's most important and effective opponent.[3] The claim is demonstrably false. The available evidence, gleaned from surviving Nevada newspapers and the extensive Nevada correspondence printed in the California press, clearly shows that Stewart was the constitution's "warmest advocate."[4] Indeed, it shows that opposition to statehood was based upon a widespread conviction that Stewart intended to control the new state government as a means to further his own interests and those of the mining corporation officials he represented. Contrary to what has become the con-

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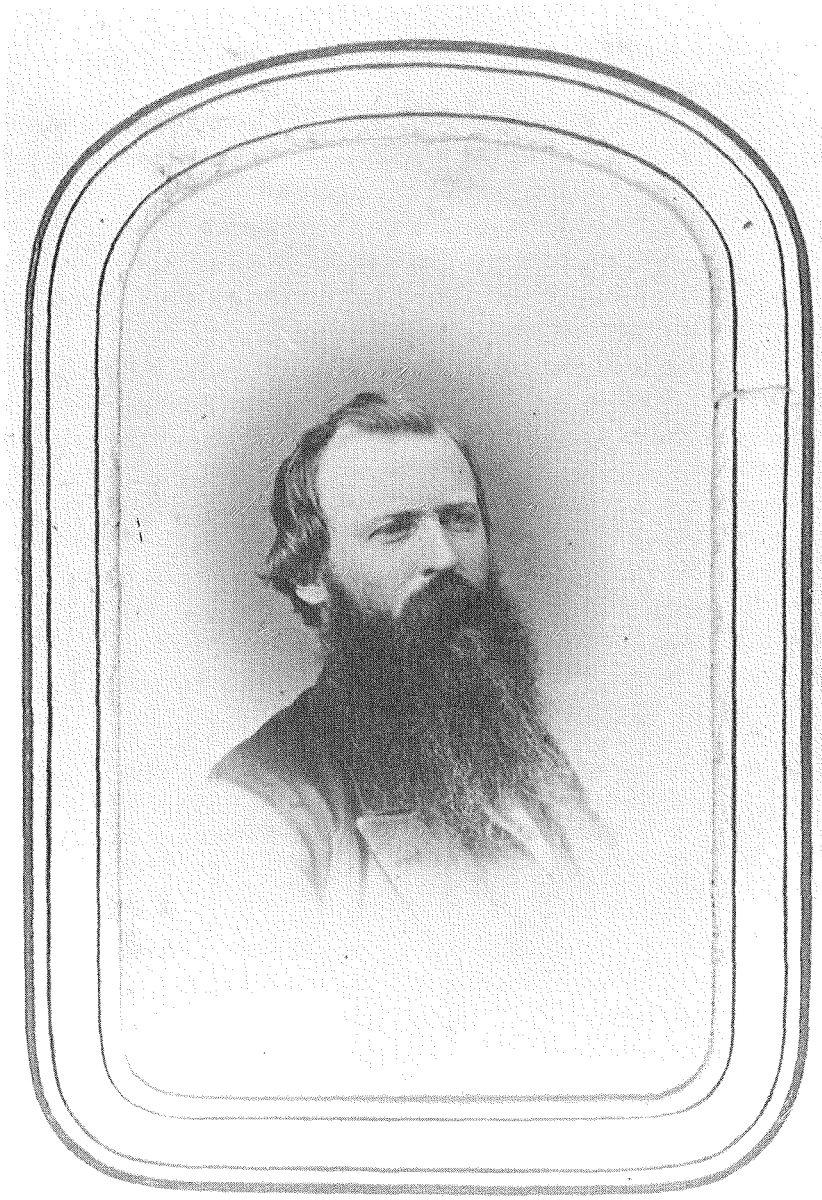


William M. Stewart, Nevada's first Senator, 1864. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

ventional wisdom, Nevadans rejected statehood because they feared and distrusted William M. Stewart.

It is time to correct the record.

I

The most sustained attempt to place Stewart in the forefront of opposition to the first constitution is found in the writings of Nevada's pioneering historian, Effie Mona Mack.[5] In publications that spanned the years from 1930 to 1964, Dr. Mack repeated a misinterpretation of Stewart's role that other historians have failed to investigate and correct. She argued, in short, that rejection of statehood stemmed from two features in the constitution: a clause providing for the taxation of the territory's mines on the same basis as other property, and a provision that called for the election of state officials concurrently with the vote on the constitution.[6]

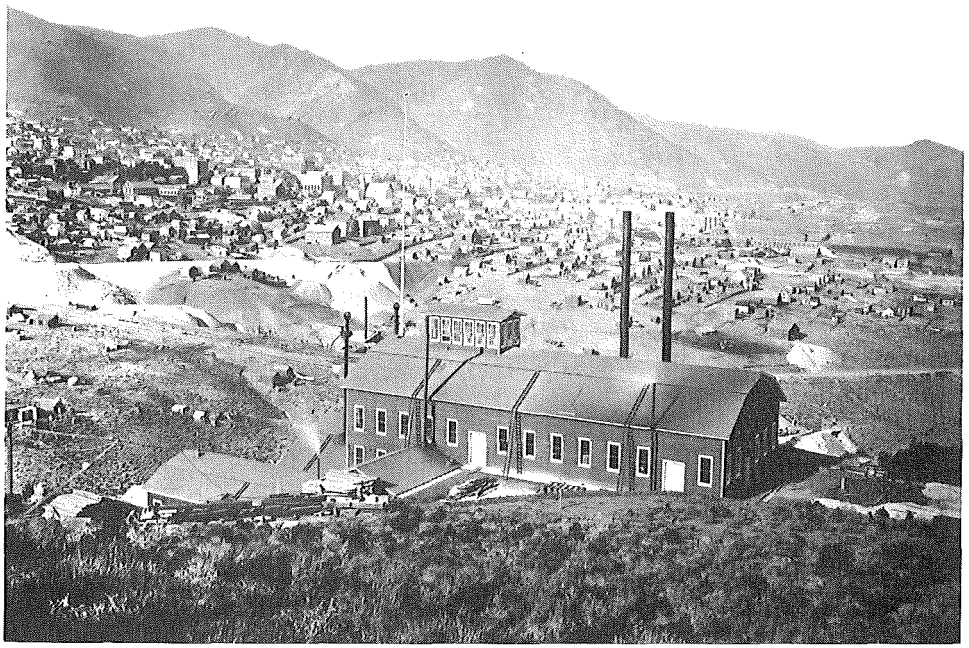
Stewart, according to this interpretation, argued in the 1863 constitutional convention for a constitutional provision that would exempt nonproductive mining claims from taxation. Against the bulk of opinion within the convention, he pointed out that a tax which treated all mining claims the same, be they rich producing mines or the prospector's speculative venture, would "impose a burden upon the miners which would be heavier than they could bear."[7] Thus, when the convention passed a tax measure he opposed, Stewart became convinced that "it would mean the death of the mining industry," and committed all his energies to defeating the constitution.[8]

After leaving the convention, Dr. Mack continues, Stewart closed his law office and, joined by his partner Alexander Baldwin,

> went out into the important mining communities to talk against the adoption of the constitution. He recognized that the voting power of the territory lay with the miners; it would be to they [sic] to whom he would have to appeal for its defeat. Consequently, he exploited the provision in the constitution which taxed the "poor miner's" shafts, drifts, and bed rock tunnels.[9]

The effects of Stewart's campaign among the miners—a campaign that never occurred, as we shall see—was purportedly decisive. As the state's official political history maintains, ". . . the importance of the mining question and the influence of Stewart were the main reasons why the voters turned down the proposed Constitution by better than a 4 to 1 majority."[10]

Complementing Stewart's campaign, we are told, was a serious split in the territory's Union Party, which led a group of disappointed office seekers to join in the opposition to statehood. Because the constitution provided for the selection of state officials at the same time as the vote on the constitution, and because there were more potential governors, judges, and legislators than posts to be filled, those who failed to gain a coveted nomination allegedly turned their backs upon statehood.[11] It is unclear whether or not Dr. Mack and those who have followed her account of this campaign count Stewart among the disappointed office seekers, for while she claimed that he was the leader of the "dissenting wing of the Union Party," she also held that he had become "violently hostile to the adoption of the newly made constitution"



The Comstock Lode was the focus of controversy during the first constitutional convention in Nevada due to the mining tax clause. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

before the Union Party "convention had made its nominations."[12] No historian has attempted to clarify Stewart's role in the nominating convention or to specify the supposed relationship between the opposition stemming from Stewart's attack upon the mining tax clause and the opposition stemming from the disappointment of potential politicians. Rather, historians have been content to interpret the role of disappointed office seekers as complementary to Stewart's personal campaign against the constitution's mining tax clause.[13]

II

As in most historical accounts that subsequent research has shown to be incorrect, the accepted explanation of Nevada's first statehood campaign includes an element of truth that has allowed it to go unchallenged for decades. In the first place, Stewart did for a time oppose the clause that provided for the taxation of the mines on the same basis as other, non-mining property. In the second place, this provision did play a central role in the events that led to the constitution's defeat. In the third place, there was a serious split in the Union Party nominating convention that led to great opposition to statehood. However, the actual substance of these issues, and Stewart's role with regard to them, were quite different from what is supposed to have been the case.

Even before the constitutional convention's close, Stewart had reconciled himself to the tax clause that the convention had passed over his objections. On the day before adjournment, he ". . . stated that he should support the constitution before the people, notwithstanding the taxation of the mines, believing, as he did, that the legislature had the power to decide that a mere hole in the ground was not property."[14] In subsequent speeches, Stewart took a position that was, as a correspondent to the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* observed, "eminently practical":

> He had been strenuously opposed to the mining tax clause, in all its stages, and in every shape it had assumed, but come to look at it now he was satisfied there was nothing in it; that it rather commended than otherwise the constitution to the support of the "poor miner."[15]

Much to Stewart's chagrin, this new argument pleased no one, and was met with criticism and suspicion from all sides. Recognizing his new tack for what it was—political legerdemain—those who supported taxation of the mines saw in it an attempt to nullify an essential constitutional provision. Those who opposed the clause saw no such legislative prerogatives inherent in it, and concluded that their erstwhile spokesman was willing to accept the mining tax in exchange for a state government he could control.

Likewise, while it is true that the Union Party nominating convention contributed mightily to the constitution's defeat, it was not simply a case of disappointed office seekers turning themselves against statehood in a fit of pique. Rather, Stewart's success in controlling the meeting and obtaining a slate of candidates Nevadans felt were his "tools," created a groundswell of opposition that quickly spread throughout the territory.[16]

In both the Nevada and California presses, the first contest over Nevadan statehood received extensive coverage.[17] From these sources, only one conclusion can be reached: Nevadans rejected statehood because they believed that William Stewart would capture the state government and use it to serve the purpose of San Francisco financiers in control of Nevada's largest mining corporations. Stewart, as attorney Lloyd Frizell put it, was "connected with certain immense mining monopolies in Storey County, and . . . the people were jealous and were afraid that they would exercise undue influence."[18] In the weeks leading to the vote upon the constitution, Nevadans expressed their fear and jealousy through two issues, both of which were raised by Stewart's support of statehood.

First was his successful packing of the Storey County Union Party convention and, subsequently, the state nominating convention. His aim, as Nevadans came to see it, was to remove the territorial judiciary which had blocked his efforts to extend the mining claims of his San Francisco clients. The second was a widespread conviction that Stewart's reinterpretation of the constitu-

tion's tax clause was a transparent cover for his baser designs upon the body politic.

III

As the 1863 constitutional convention came to a close, few Nevadans foresaw the divisive campaign that would dominate the territory during the following weeks. The convention ended with what its reporter called an "Era of Good Feelings."[19] Remarked the convention's president, future Stewart adversary John North: "I wish to refer once more to the beautiful association we have had, the happy time which we have spent together while performing this task of framing a Constitution for our new state."[20] All the delegates proclaimed their support for the constitution and vowed to work for its ratification. Within three weeks, however, the constitution faced certain defeat. The origins of this remarkable turn of events are to be found in the Storey County Union Party convention that met on December 28, 1863.

There, his opponents charged, Stewart packed the meeting with his supporters, thus placing securely in his pocket the largest bloc of votes that would select the nominees for state office.[21] Over the protest of eight delegates, Stewart pushed through two resolutions that his adversaries found obnoxious. The first called upon the new state's legislature to ". . . leave free from taxation undeveloped mining claims of a mere speculative value."[22] Essentially, this resolution asked the legislature to repudiate the constitution and establish by statute the tax provision that Stewart had unsuccessfully argued for in the constitutional convention.

The second fateful resolution bound Storey County's delegation to the state nominating convention to ". . . oppose by all honorable means the nomination of said J.W. North to office by said Convention."[23] Few Nevadans found anything "honorable" whatsoever in such a resolution. North, a justice of the territorial supreme court, had become a popular figure in Nevada because of his decisions against Stewart's "one ledge" theory of the Comstock Lode. Briefly, Stewart's position held that the Comstock Lode consisted of a continuous ledge of ore that ran the length of Mt. Davidson on a north-south line. Opposed to his interpretation was the "many ledge" theory, which held that the Lode was made up of a series of parallel quartz ledges interrupted by silver-free clay and rock. As Nevadans understood the controversy, judicial sanction for the one ledge theory would only serve the interests of the largest mining companies, which controlled the original mining locations and argued that the parallel mines located to their east and west were trespassing on drifts and spurs of their claims. Their opponents concluded that the largest mining companies, with large funds and teams of lawyers at their command, would use the one ledge theory to consolidate their control over the entire Comstock Lode and thus drive out the small mine owners and prospectors. At stake was the ultimate control of Virginia City's mines, and widespread fear of

Stewart's motives convinced all but his clients that the one ledge theory was not only a "detriment to any mining district," but "odious" and an "absurdity."[24] North, whose "unquestionably good straightforward common sense" led him to uphold the many ledge theory against Stewart, became a champion of the people.[25]

The action that most offended Stewart's opponents, however, was the manner in which he ruthlessly controlled the selection of Storey County's delegation to the state nominating convention, as well as the local candidates for assemblymen, state senator, and county and district judge. Stewart had himself appointed chairman of the committee on nominations, and pushed through a rule providing for a bloc vote on the slate reported by his committee. His opponents resisted these strongarm tactics, but when their appeal fell upon deaf ears, they left the meeting, declared the "proceedings to be an outrage upon the people, and advised popular action for an independent ticket."[26] Three days later at Carson City, two contesting sets of Storey County delegates presented themselves to the state nominating convention, the regulars led by Stewart and the independents led by those who had bolted the county convention. When the latter failed to receive the endorsement of this convention, they quickly announced their oppostion to statehood.[27]

Those loyal to Stewart and statehood attempted to blunt the bolsters' charges, but without success. The *Gold Hill Evening News*, an outspoken supporter of the constitution to the day of its defeat, continuously charged that statehood's opponents were but "sore headed and disappointed office seekers," and that the attacks upon Stewart were a "Bugbear." "Mr. Stewart," the *Evening News* observed at the height of the campaign,

> is a fair lawyer, and by following out the now mostly obsolete plan of minding his own business, has accumulated much lucre, and a high position at the bar. Having some pecuniary interest in the conduct of the political affairs of the country, he has had the wisdom to attend somewhat to the defense and protection of those interests. His views of policy have chanced to be at variance with those entertained by certain other parties, and in exercising his undoubted right of expressing his preference as to who should be his rulers, he seems to have lost sight of the fact that Messrs. Church, Hannah, Fitch, Brosnan & Co. were entitled to all the offices in the State, and that without those gentlemen at the head of affairs there could be no State. Behold, then, Bill Stewart transmogrified into a great ogre, and bugbear to scare small schoolboys and denizens of hay yards withal. The people of this Territory are informed that in their present state of imbecility and ignorance they are incapable of coping with the machinations of this political Moloch.[28]

Despite daily repetition on the pages of the *Evening News*, this view of the situation made little headway against a swelling tide of anti-statehood sentiment. The adversaries of Stewart and the constitution, defining themselves as the territory's "little interests," enunciated a variety of charges that had a

telling effect.[29] Central to their attack was the claim that Stewart had controlled the Storey County and State Union Party conventions in order to fill the new state government with political hacks beholden to him and his clients, the finance capitalists of San Francisco who directed the affairs of the major Comstock mines. In announcing its opposition to statehood, the leading opposition paper declared:

> The UNION was in favor of a State Government when it supposed that the people would be protected; it opposes a State Government now that it discovers that under a State Government the people would be hopelessly subject to a very mean kind of "one man power." We prefer that the people should elect their own officers rather than that those officers should be appointed at Washington. But as it stands, they are appointed by one man, and as the people have no choice anyhow, we prefer Uncle Abe to Bill Stewart as an appointing power.[30]

Stewart's first priority, his opponents claimed, was to remove North and thus procure a supreme court that would rule in favor of the one ledge theory. Rallying to North's defense, opposition papers throughout the territory charged that "Stewart and Co. want a State Government because they have come to the conclusion that our present Judiciary care more for the people and for justice than they do for the influence of improper combinations."[31] "It is a notorious fact," the *Daily Union* declared,

> that Mr. Stewart had the reputation of dictating the decisions of our District Court, to a very great extent, previous to the time at which Judge John North took his seat. . . . It is said, and we believe with much truth, that Mr. Stewart's only object in working for a State Government is to secure the removal of Judge North from the bench. Why does he want Judge North removed? Because he cannot be used as a tool.[32]

Stewart's actions in the two conventions, his control over the Union Party's nominees, and the conviction that he supported statehood as a means to removing the popular North from the supreme bench, were probably sufficient to defeat the constitution. Opponents of statehood, however, found additional grounds for opposition: Stewart's (and his candidates') dissimulation with regard to the constitution's provision for taxing the mines.

On the one hand, owners of non-mining property throughout the territory believed that Stewart intended to have "his" legislature annul a constitutional provision they considered essential to their interests. Stewart's scheme, charged the *Daily Union*, would ". . . destroy our only means of raising a sufficient revenue," and thereby "ruin the public credit and inflict a ruinous tax on the little interests outside the mines."[33] In rural Washoe, Douglas, and Ormsby Counties, merchants, ranchers, and farmers agreed that Stewart's ambiguous reading of the constitution meant the "surrender [of] ourselves and our rights to the possession of capitalists of San Francisco and to William M. Stewart, who is their agent."[34] The *Carson Independent* charged that the

nominee for governor, Stewart minion Miles N. Mitchell, had taken one position on the mining tax in the cow counties and another in the mining region, and declared that ". . . if a clause is to be construed to suit the interests of a certain class, and millions of dollars worth of property are released from taxation, then it [the constitution] is not worth the paper it is written upon."[35]

On the other hand, prospectors, mine speculators, millers, and workers attacked Stewart's tax position from another angle: They opposed taxing the mines and believed that Stewart's argument that the legislature could redefine the constitution's tax provision was but a specious cover for his true intentions—the removal of Judge North. Stewart, they declared, did not really care about the mining tax. He was willing to let it pass if that was the price of obtaining a court that would rule in his favor with regard to the one ledge theory. These smaller mining interests argued that no court could possibly interpret the constitution in Stewart's light, and that the resulting tax would impose an unendurable burden on workingmen and small mine owners.[36]

The attack upon Stewart and statehood filled the opposition papers and the Nevada correspondence in the California press to the day of the election, when statehood was rejected by a four to one margin. In reflecting upon the constitution's overwhelming defeat, a Nevadan from Aurora concluded that "the Constitution would have been adopted had it not been for riding Stewart and his Clique into power."[37] Another, from Washoe City, concurred:

> The land rejoices and the people are glad, for the silver bowl of our prosperity came near being "crushed," but the sovereign arose from their [sic] Rip Van Winkel torpor, and rushed majestically to the polls and pop went the constitutional weasel! Bill Stewart & Co. are busted out and some of the balance of us are busted in. Whoop![38]

Stewart and the "immense mining monopolies of Storey County" had been decisively defeated, or so it appeared in January of 1864.[39]

IV

Nevadans repudiated statehood for reasons quite different from those historians have put forth for almost a century. Far from following William Stewart in a movement to protect the "poor miner" from an onerous tax, or in venting their anger at being passed over in the selection of nominees for high office, Nevadans rose up against what they considered to be a bald attempt on Stewart's part to capture the state government for the mining corporations he represented.

Once this campaign is properly understood, it becomes clear that much of Nevada's early social and political history—and William Stewart's role in that history—needs to be recast. In rejecting statehood in the winter of 1864, Nevadans made Stewart a symbol of a feared future, a future dominated by

outside interests and marked by concentrated economic and political power. Yet within nine months, the common cause against these threats evaporated when Nevadans faced another, more immediate and ominous, challenge. The depression that struck the Comstock Lode in the spring of 1864, devastating in its effect upon all ranks of Nevadan society, raised the spectre of social and economic collapse and radically altered the context of political action.[40] In the face of widespread stock failures, bankruptcies, and a collapse in capital investment, concern over economic survival supplanted Nevadans' fear of domination by outside interests. Ironically, the crisis presented William Stewart with a propitious opportunity to resurrect his political fortunes. In September, 1864, statehood again came before the voters. Stewart, along with his former adversaries, bent every energy to convince the electorate that statehood would provide an antidote to economic crisis.[41] And successfully so. The new constitution was endorsed by an overwhelming margin, and three months later the state legislature sent Stewart to Washington D.C. as Nevada's first Senator.[42]

The events of 1864, which saw the territory, first reject and then embrace statehood and its "warmest advocate," demand close re-examination. Only then will we correctly comprehend a pivotal period in the career of William Stewart, and in the political and economic development of Nevada.

NOTES

[1] Quoted in Grant Smith, *History of the Comstock Lode* (Reno: Bureau of Mines, University of Nevada, 1943), 67.

[2] No definitive study of William Stewart's life yet exists. Stewart's autobiography, *Reminiscences of Senator William M. Stewart of Nevada,* ed. George Rothwell Brown (New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1908), is unreliable, as is the biography by Effie Mona Mack, "Life and Letters of William Morris Stewart, 1827-1909" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1930). However, his career as counsel (and in some instances trustee as well) for the major Comstock mining corporations, including among others the Gould and Curry, Ophir, Chollar, Belcher, Yellow Jacket, and Sierra Nevada companies, has been outlined in Eliot Lord, *Comstock Mining and Miners* (1883; Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1959), 144-164 and *passim*; Grant Smith, *History of the Comstock Lode,* 69; and *Virginia Evening Bulletin,* January 25, 1864. Glimpses of Stewart's early political activities, which were inseparable from his legal concerns, are found in Lord, *Comstock Mining and Miners,* 131-180. Additional information is available in the recently published reports of the Nevada territorial legislature and first constitutional convention. See Andrew Marsh, *Letters From the Nevada Territory, 1861-1862,* ed. William C. Miller, Russell W. MacDonald, and Ann Rollins (Legislative Counsel Bureau, State of Nevada, 1972); and William C. Miller and Eleanor Bushnell, eds., *Reports of the 1863 Constitutional Convention of the Territory of Nevada, as Written for the TERRITORIAL ENTERPRISE by Andrew Marsh and Samuel Clemens, and for the VIRGINIA DAILY UNION by Amos Bowman* (Legislative Counsel Bureau, State of Nevada, 1972).

[3] The following books and articles all place Stewart in the forefront of the campaign against the 1863 constitution: Myron Angel, comp., *Thompson and West's History of Nevada* (1881; Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1959), 84-85; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Nevada, Colorado, and Wyoming* (San Francisco: History Publishing Company, 1890), 178 (regarding the Angel and Bancroft versions, see footnote 5, below); Mack, "Life and Letters of William Morris Stewart," 36-37, 294, 301; idem, "William Morris Stewart, Empire Builder, 1827-1909," American Historical Association, Pacific Coast Branch, *Proceedings* (1930), 188; P.O. Ray, "Stewart, William Morris," *Dictionary of American Biography,* ed.

Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1935), Volume IX, part 2, p. 14; Effie Mona Mack, *History of Nevada: A history of the State from the earliest times through the Civil War* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1936), 250-252; Effie Mona Mack and Byrd Wall Sawyer, *Our State, Nevada* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1940), 87-88; Work Projects Administration, *Nevada: A Guide to the Silver State* (Portland, Oregon: Binfords and Mort, 1940), 44; F. Lauriston Bullard, "Abraham Lincoln and the Statehood of Nevada," American Bar Association *Journal,* XXVI (March and April, 1940), 212; Effie Mona Mack, "Territorial Governor of Nevada," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly,* IV (July and December, 1961), 38; idem, "Orion Clemens, 1825-1877: A Biography," ibid., 96; idem, "William Morris Stewart, 1827-1909," ibid., VII (1964), 33; Merlin Stonehouse, *John Wesley North and the Reform Frontier* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), 157, 164; Gilman Ostrander, *Nevada: The Great Rotten Borough* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1966), 38-40; James Hulse, *The Nevada Adventure: A History* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1969), 103; Lynn Williamson, "The Bullion Tax Controversy," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly,* XV (Winter 1972), 6; Russell Elliott, *History of Nevada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), 80-83; Secretary of State, Nevada, *Political History of Nevada, 1973* (Carson City, State Printing Office, 1974), 79; James Thomas, "Nevada Territory," *Journal of the West,* XVI (April 1977), 39; Eleanore Bushnell, *The Nevada Constitution: Origin and Growth* (fourth edition, Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1977), 48.

[4] The quotation is from the *Virginia Daily Union,* January 15, 1864. Evidence concerning the constitutional campaign is limited to California and Nevada press reports. The papers of Stewart and other early Nevada politicians consulted by the author at the Bancroft, Huntington, Beinecke, California Historical Society, and Nevada Historical Society libraries contain no relevant information. Likewise, no mention of the campaign is found in the *Reminiscences of Senator William Stewart of Nevada,* or in the subscription biography of Stewart in Oscar Shuck, *Representative and Leading Men of the Pacific* (San Francisco: Bacon and Co., 1870), 635-644. Readers who are aware of additional documentary materials on the first statehood contest are urged to contact the author.

In the contemporary Nevadan and Californian newspapers, there is an abundance of information on the campaign. In these sources, there are neither statements nor intimations suggesting that Stewart opposed the constitution or statehood. On the contrary, there are many references to his continued support. The *Virginia Daily Union,* January 1, 1864, refers to his "great speech in favor of the new Constitution." The *Reese River Reveille,* January 16, 1864, names him as a "leading advocate." Other references to his support are found in the *Virginia Daily Union,* January 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 17, 19, 21, 1864; the *Gold Hill Evening News,* January 14, 1864; the *Virginia Evening Bulletin,* January 11, 1864; the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* January 6, 23, 1864; the *Humboldt Register,* January 16, 1864. Hereafter, I will use the following abbreviations to refer to the *Virginia Daily Union* (*VDU*), *Sacramento Daily Union* (*SDU*), *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* (*SFED*), *Gold Hill Evening News* (*GHEN*), *Virginia Evening Bulletin* (*VEB*), and *Humboldt Register* (*HR*).

[5] Dr. Mack's account is found in her writings cited in footnote 3, above. It should be noted that much of the confusion surrounding Stewart's role in this campaign has stemmed from the scattered nature of the sources and an unfortunate tendency among historians to rely upon, as primary rather than secondary sources, the partial and ambiguous accounts of the first constitutional contest found in Angel, *History of Nevada,* and Bancroft, *History of Nevada, Colorado, and Wyoming.* The former is cursory and misleading; the latter is demonstrably false. Angel pointed to the division in the nominating convention as the catalyst that led to the constitution's defeat. There, he explained, a formidable split occurred between the allies of Stewart and those of the Comstock journalist, Tom Fitch. While—correctly—bringing attention to this division, Angel did not state which side went on to oppose the constitution. In an ambiguous passage that has misled historians for almost a century, he remarked that "the Stewart war-cry of injustice, contained in the clause that authorized the taxing of the "poor miner's shafts and drifts and bed rock tunnels," enabled the opposition to carry with it the popular element, that resulted in an overwhelming rejection of that instrument" (Angel, comp., *History of Nevada,* 85.) In this statement, Angel may have meant that Stewart led the opposition to statehood. Or, and closer to the truth, he may have meant that the constitution's opponents adopted the "war-cry of injustice" that Stewart abandoned after the constitutional convention. Those historians who have read this passage in the former light have done so mistakenly.

On the other hand, there is no ambiguity in H.H. Bancroft's explanation. In what is, unfortunately, the weakest and most unreliable volume in Bancroft's history of the West, he boldly (and without evidence) stated that Stewart, aided by Baldwin, "used all his powerful influence to enlist the mining population against the constitution." (Bancroft, *History of Nevada, Colorado, and Wyoming,* 178.) Moreover,

Bancroft added an element that subsequent historians have ignored, claiming that Stewart opposed statehood because he was a secessionist and desired to align Nevada with the South. The charge is patently false. Unfortunately, subsequent historians have chosen to ignore this part of Bancroft's account rather than conclude that it calls the entire interpretation into doubt.

[6] The most detailed example is in Mack, *History of Nevada*, 250-252.

[7] Ibid., 251. This was, indeed, the case. See Miller and Bushnell, eds., *Reports of the 1863 Constitutional Convention*, 241-252.

[8] Mack, *History of Nevada*, 252.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Secretary of State, Nevada, *Political History of Nevada, 1973*, 79.

[11] Mack, *History of Nevada*, 252.

[12] The statement regarding Stewart's leadership of the party's "dissenting wing" is found in Mack, "Territorial Governor of Nevada," 38; the remark concerning his early hostility to the constitution is in Mack, *History of Nevada*, 252.

[13] See the Angel, Bancroft, Mack, Stonehouse, Ostrander, Hulse, Elliott, and Bushnell works cited in footnote 1, above, for the variations on this theme.

[14] Miller and Bushnell, eds., *Reports of the 1863 Constitutional Convention*, 394.

[15] *SFEB*, January 23, 1864. Other discussions of Stewart's changing position on the mining tax question are found in the *VDU*, January 6, 9, 15, 1864; and *HR*, January 16, 1864.

[16] Those candidates for state office most frequently named as Stewart allies were: (1) the candidate for governor, Miles N. Mitchell of Storey County, a member of the California legislature in 1857, the Nevada territorial legislature in 1861 (when he was Speaker of the House) and 1862, and the first constitutional convention. Mitchell listed his occupation as miner. (2) John B. Winters, of Lyon County, the candidate for Congress. Winters served in the territorial legislature in 1862. (3) The three nominees for the state supreme court, Richard S. Mesick of Esmeralda County, M.D. Larrowe of Lander, and J.B. Harmon of Storey County. All were lawyers. Larrowe was District Attorney of Ormsby County from 1861 to 1863, and a member of the first constitutional convention. See the *GHEN*, January 5, 1864; *VEB*, January 4, 8, 12, 16, 1864. For the opposition's view of these men, see the *VDU*, January 3, 6, 9, 1864; *VEB*, January 11, 1864.

[17] Relatively complete runs for the period are available for the *Virginia Daily Union*, the leading opposition paper, and the *Gold Hill Evening News* and *Virginia Evening Bulletin*, both of which supported statehood. Scattered issues of the *Reese River Reveille* and *Humboldt Register*, which opposed the constitution, have also survived. The *Daily Union* was owned by John Church, S.A. Glessner, and J.L. Laird, the *Evening News* by Phillip Lynch and J.H. Mandell, the *Virginia Evening Bulletin* by H.P. Taylor, the *Reese River Reveille* by W.C. Phillips, and the *Humboldt Register* by W.J. Forbes and L. Perkins. In addition, the campaign received coverage in the *Sacramento Daily Union* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, in the form of reprints from the Nevada press as well as direct correspondence.

[18] Frizell made the statement while arguing the Storey County bolters' case before the Union party nominating convention in Carson City. *VDU*, January 1, 1864. A reprint of the *Territorial Enterprise* report of this meeting is found in the *SDU*, January 15, 1864. Further citations on this point are found in footnotes 29 and 30, below.

[19] Miller and Bushnell, eds., *Reports of the 1863 Constitutional Convention*, 412-413. Stewart clearly left the convention without animosity. On the convention's final day, the report states: "Short speeches on the subject of impending separation, and expressing kindly feelings, were made by Messrs. Brosnan, Johnson, *Stewart*, Stearns, Kennedy, Larrowe, Epler, Mitchell, Haines, Nightingill, Small, Hickock, and Noteware" (emphasis added).

[20] Ibid., 414.

[21] *VDU*, January 1, 6, 1864; *SFEB*, January 9, 1864; *SDU*, December 31, 1863, and January 15, 1864; *VEB*, January 11, 1864.

[22] *SDU*, December 31, 1863.

[23] Ibid.

[24] *SDU*, January 26, 1864; *VDU*, January 19, 1864; *SDU*, December 31, 1863. In addition, see *VDU*, January 10, 1864; *Carson Independent*, January 17, 1864 (reprinted in *VDU*, January 19, 1864); *SDU*, December 31, 1863. A general discussion of the North-Stewart feud over the one ledge theory is found in Stonehouse, *John Wesley North*, 156-177.

[25] *SDU*, December 31, 1863; *VEB*, January 11, 1864.

[26] *SDU*, December 31, 1864. The Storey County delegation to the state nominating convention was composed of William M. Stewart, A.W. Baldwin, F.A. Tritle, John Allman, J.M. Walker, J.W. Wright, E. Cushing, E.L. Buckingham, Robert F. Morrow, D.M. Hanson, Thomas Peasley, Isaac Brokaw, N.A.H. Ball, A.J. Gould, J.H.C. Lee, and W.H. Russell, *GHEN*, December 31, 1863. The Storey County nominees to the state assembly were A.J. Gould, W.H. Dollman, John Nelson, John Leavitt, Jr., S.D.R. Stewart, T.G. Taylor, L.P. Wardle, Lewis Goodwin, Warren Heaton, J.H.C. Lee, Charles Tippett, and D.W. Balch. The nominees to the state senate consisted of A.W. Baldwin, Charles Wilson, Isaac Requa, and H.H. Flagg. The nominees for county and district judges were, respectively, David M. Hanson and H.O. Beatty, *GHEN*, January 4, 1864.

[27] *VDU*, January 3, 1864; *SDU*, January 15, 1864.

[28] *GHEN*, January 11, 14, 1864. In addition, see *Ibid.*, January 4, 7, 13, 15, 22, March 17, 1864; *VEB*, January 4, 9, 12, 1864. "Church, Hannah, Fitch, Brosnan & Co." refers to John Church, Thomas Fitch, and Cornelius Brosnan, all of Virginia City, and Thomas Hannah, of Gold Hill. The four men were leaders of the anti-Stewart forces in the Storey County and state nominating conventions. They were also key opponents of statehood.

[29] *VDU*, January 3, 1864. For another commentary along these lines, see *Ibid.*, January 23, 1864; and *VEB*, January 11, 1864. The *Daily Union*'s opposition to statehood—it composed the opposition's mouthpiece in Storey County—stemmed from three factors. First, the close association between Thomas Fitch and the paper. The *Gold Hill Evening News* claimed that Fitch, a leader of the bolters at Carson City and friend of John North, was the editor of the *Daily Union*. Though both Fitch and the paper's owners denied the allegation, it is clear that Fitch contributed mightily to the paper's campaign against the adopter of the constitution. Second, John Church, one of the paper's owners, had unsuccessfully sought the Union party nomination for state printer, only to be blocked by Stewart's supporters at both the Storey County and State Union party conventions. Third, the *Daily Union* consistently aligned itself with the sector of Comstock Lode society it described as the "little interests outside the mines." (*VDU*, January 3, 1864.) As such, in opposing statehood it represented the voice of those merchants, businessmen, professionals, and independent craftsmen who did not equate their interests with those of the dominant mining corporations, or with the Stewart wing of the Union Party.

[30] *VDU*, January 3, 1864. In addition, see ibid., January 1, 9, 17, 1864. In Carson City, rumor had it that Stewart and the Ophir Company had imported thousands of dollars from San Francisco to insure the Constitution's passage. See *VDU*, January 13, 17, 19, 1864; *Carson Independent*, January 17, 1864 (reprinted in *VDU*, January 19, 1864).

[31] *VDU*, January 10, 1864.

[32] *VDU*, January 6, 1864. See, also, *ibid.*, January 15, 17, 19, 1864; *Carson Independent*, January 14, 17, 1864 (reprinted in *VDU*, January 15, 19, 1864); *SDU*, January 6, 1864; *VEB*, January 11, 1864.

[33] *VDU*, January 3, 23, 1864.

[34] *VDU*, January 9, 1864.

[35] *Carson Independent*, January 14, 1864 (reprinted in *VDU*, January 15, 1864). In addition, see *Carson Independent*, January 8, 1864 (reprinted in *VDU*, January 9, 1864); *VDU*, January 13, 1864.

[36] *VDU*, January 9, 19, 1864; *SFEB*, February 4, 9, 1864. In the less developed Humboldt region, opposition to statehood began before the split in the Union Party, and was based almost solely on the mining tax question. Nevertheless, contributors to the columns of the *Humboldt Register* recognized that "with the big mining companies in litigation, . . . the question is, will certain legal questions be sustained, or will they be reversed, by the proposed new judges?" *HR*, January 16, 1864. In addition, see ibid., December 19, 26, 1863, January 2, 9, 16, 1864.

[37] *SDU*, January 26, 1864.

[38] Ibid.

[39] *VDU*, January 1, 1864. In addition, see footnote 18, above.

[40] The depression is discussed in Lord, *Comstock Mining and Miners*, 181-182; Smith, *History of the Comstock Lode*, 48-49; and Rodman Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1880* (1963; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), 74-75. For a contemporary comment, see *SDU*, July 16, 1864.

[41] *SDU*, October 7, 1864; *Territorial Enterprise*, reprinted in *SDU*, August 19, 1864.

[42] *SDU*, December 16, 1864.

James Mooney and Wovoka: An Ethnologist's Visit with the Ghost Dance Prophet

L. G. MOSES

BY LATE NOVEMBER, 1890, the newspaper and magazine press in the United States were reporting a great religious excitement among western Indian tribes, most notably the Sioux in the Dakotas. Stories about the imminent uprising of crazed "redskins" filled columns of newsprint. Plains and Great Basin Indians were dancing a "ghost dance" given to them by a mysterious prophet who lived somewhere in the Rocky Mountain West. Half the army of the nation was arrayed against the Sioux.

In addition to his other assignments, James Mooney had been asked by John Wesley Powell, his superior at the Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, to examine the effects of the Ghost Dance religion on the tribes of Indian Territory. Mooney had wanted to visit the region during the winter of 1890-1891 to compare the remnant band of Cherokees from the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina to the large group in Indian Territory, separated as they were by over 1,000 miles and a generation since removal. Powell had also asked the ethnologist to investigate the Kiowas. Ever interested in philology as the first step in classification of Native Americans, the explorer of the Colorado River wanted Mooney to gather information about the linguistic affinities of the Kiowas, regarded by many ethnologists as the most "primitive" of Plains Indians.[1] If Mooney were seized with excitement at the prospect of visiting the peoples of Indian Territory, that excitement must have increased as he read about the Ghost Dance.

On the morning of December 22, 1890, Mooney boarded a west-bound train that would, for the first time in his career, carry him beyond the Mississippi, near the hundredth meridian, where the "wild tribes" lived.[2]

Government sponsored comprehensive programs for assimilation of Native Americans were of recent origin. By 1890 Indians had been conquered militarily and retained small hope of ever challenging the white man's gov-

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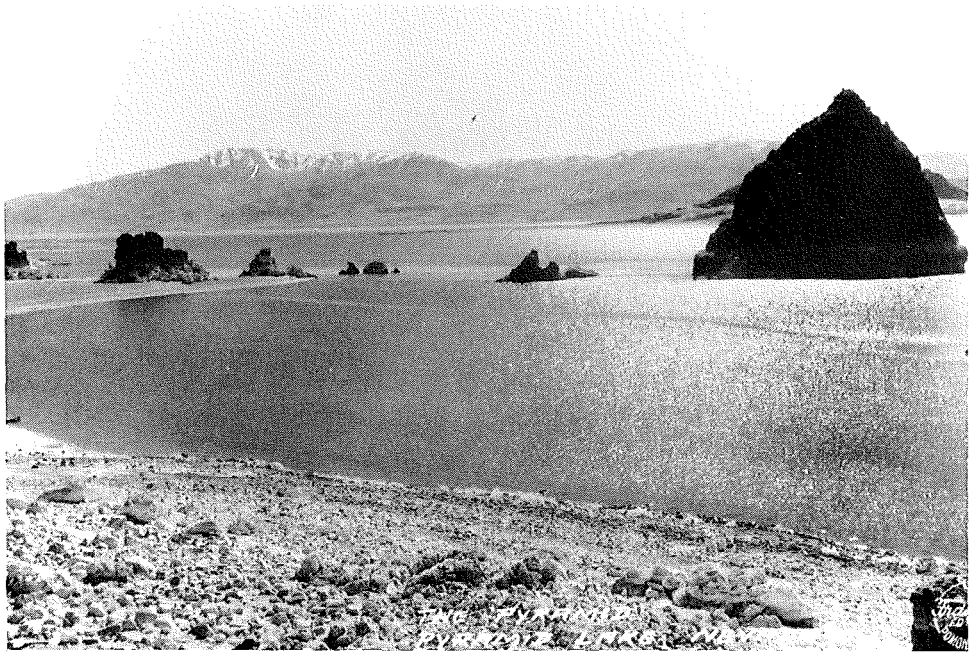


Pyramid Lake is the site of a large Indian reservation in Nevada. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

ernment. Consigned to reservations, Indians could achieve citizenship only if they abandoned their tribes, accepted an allotment of land, and exchanged their hunting rifles and skinning knives for plows. Plains warriors who in years past had followed the great bison herds now queued up at their agencies on issue day to receive their families' food and supplies. It was hoped that individual freeholds would provide Indians with a means of livelihood, future independence, and a respect for private property. The 160-acre allotment became the assimilationists' solution to the "Indian Problem," despite the fact that many southwestern Indians had been farmers and herders for generations. Such a limited acreage, even where available, might work to their disadvantage in the arid regions. The mercurial largesse of the federal government became even more unpredictable as each tribe, through persuasion or force, surrendered its "surplus land." Treaty provisions were often ignored in the rush of legislation affecting Indians which passed Congress after the adoption of the Dawes Land in Severalty Bill in 1887.

It was the preceding quarter century of broken treaties, encroachment on tribal lands, and assimilationist programs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Christian reformers that helped to produce one of the greatest social and religious movements among Indians during the nineteenth century. The Ghost Dance religion came at a time when many western and Plains Indians

were in a demoralized state. The religion promised a return of halcyon days, and a future unencumbered by an Anglo-American civilization. This the ethnologist James Mooney would find when he arrived in Indian Territory. There he would begin his research into the religion—research that led him eventually to Wovoka.

The Ghost Dance religion of the Paiute prophet Wovoka, or Jack Wilson as he was known to non-Indians, blew as a warm wind out of the parched landscape of western Nevada, heating the imaginations of Indians with anticipation of their redemption. A time would come, Wovoka told them, when all Indians living and dead would be reunited in aboriginal splendor on a remade earth. Indians would be free forever from destitution, disease, death, and non-Indians. To hasten the transformation, the faithful were instructed to perform certain rituals, the most spectacular and ubiquitous of which was a circular dance, known by various names but renowned as the "ghost dance." In their exhaustion from performing the dance, and in their wild longing after validation of the prophet's vision, the ghost dancers would collapse and "die." After returning to consciousness, they would tell about their meetings with loved ones long dead, harbingers from a subliminal world of things to come.[3]

Nebulous rumors of the existence of a new prophet reached the office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in June, 1890. The commissioner and members of his staff remained unconcerned until late in the summer when the Sioux seized upon the religion. By the early fall ghost dances were in full performance at a number of widely scattered reservations in the trans-Mississippi West. The Sioux version of the Ghost Dance, however, was particularly militant. Sioux apostles of Wovoka preached a variety of the doctrine in opposition to the prophet's counsel that peacefulness should reign as the directing principle among the faithful. As the atmosphere at the Sioux reservations grew increasingly tense into the late fall, the Bureau of Indian Affairs sought first to contain the perceived rebellion in the Dakotas and only afterward to isolate the person responsible for the excitement.[4] Once order was restored among the Sioux by mid-January, 1891, and when it appeared unlikely to leaders in the Indian service that the regrettable incidents at Pine Ridge and Standing Rock reservations would be repeated elsewhere, it no longer seemed important to locate the leader and originator of the Ghost Dance religion. The mendacity of the prophet, so Thomas Jefferson Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, believed, should have been made manifest to the ghost dancers by the death of Sitting Bull and the tragic affair at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota.

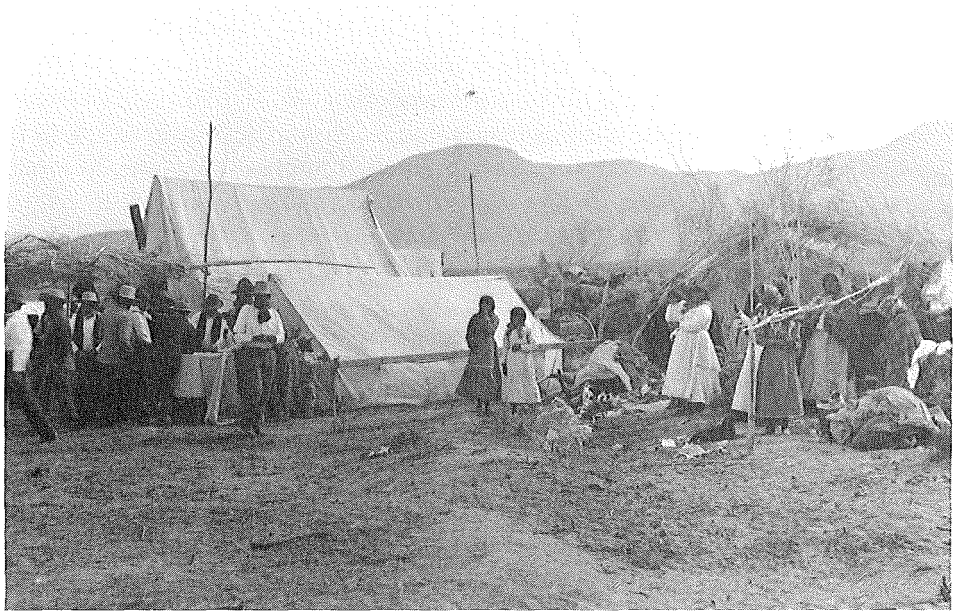
Despite the fear and trepidation created by the Ghost Dance among members of the Indian service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs never sent a representative to confer with Wovoka, or to learn from the prophet himself about his mission to America's natives. The first governmental agent to visit Wovoka was Arthur Chapman, army scout and interpreter, under orders

from General John Gibbon, commander of the Military Department of the Pacific. Chapman spent a few days with Wovoka the first week of December, 1890. His report went first to General Gibbon, and afterward it climbed a ladder of endorsements all the way to the Secretary of War.[5] The report dispelled much of the confusion that surrounded the sources and tenets of the religion. Remarkably, however, it was never included in the special file kept at the Indian Office on the Ghost Dance.[6] A more complete account of the prophet had to await the publication of James Mooney's history of the religion. Mooney's meeting with Wovoka took place a year after Chapman's. It is a story as fascinating as any other in the pageant of the Ghost Dance of 1890.

James Mooney (1861-1921) was a member of the first generation of government ethnologists. He was born in Richmond, Indiana, February 10, 1861, the only son of Irish immigrant parents. He received his education in Richmond public schools. For a year after his graduation from Richmond High School in May, 1878, he taught school. Rather than surrender his life to endless drill, chalk dust, and farmers' children, he hankered after a more venturesome career in the newspaper business. He became a typesetter and later advanced to the editorial office of the Richmond *Palladium.*[7]

His fascination with the American Indian began when he was still a child. He started collecting notes on Indians of the Americas with the intention of producing a map that located all tribes, their ranges, and important ethnological sites. His familiarity with Richmond members of the Society of Friends and their work in Indian education in North Carolina brought the Eastern Cherokee tribe to his attention. He planned to visit the western region of that state to begin a study of the Mountain Cherokees but realized that, without extensive financial resources to draw on, the task would prove beyond his means. In 1882 he tried to win appointment to the ethnological bureau of the Smithsonian Institution. He did not receive employment until 1885, after he had visited Washington, D.C., and displayed samples of his work to John Wesley Powell, the bureau's director. He joined the Bureau of Ethnology six years after its founding. Within two years of his appointment as government ethnologist, he escaped the confines of philological research in the capital archives and began field research. He became one of the premier field investigators for the Bureau of Ethnology.[8] It was his research into the Cherokees and Kiowas that sent him to Indian Territory in late 1890, and into an examination of the Ghost Dance religion, the history of which would preoccupy his attention for several years thereafter.

Mooney departed Washington the day before Big Foot's band of Miniconjou ghost dancers from Cheyenne River reservation, South Dakota, escaped their military escort and fled toward Pine Ridge agency. The ethnologist was still en route to the territory on the morning of December 29 when Sioux and soldiers clashed at Wounded Knee Creek on the Pine Ridge reservation. A



Paiute Indian Camp, c. 1910. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

fight started between Miniconjous and troopers of the Seventh Cavalry as the Indians were undergoing a search for weapons. Soon all were engaged in a fierce battle at close quarters that ended with over 200 dead and wounded. By the time Mooney reached the Cheyenne and Arapaho agency at Darlington, Indian Territory, Sioux ghost dancers, and those other Indians who had fled Pine Ridge in fear after the battle, were camped within range of the field guns that ringed the agency compound. General Nelson A. Miles, commanding the Military Division of the Missouri, took the Sioux surrender on January 15, 1891.

Bloodshed at Wounded Knee followed by the parade of military power at Pine Ridge agency that culminated in a grand review of troops on January 21 served grim notice to all Indians that the United States government refused to countenance any threat to the process of assimilation.[9] Leaders at the Bureau of Indian Affairs had long before decreed that their wards were to become citizen farmers in the fashion of other Americans. The Ghost Dance religion had challenged, if only for a time, the tidiness of the process. For the Sioux who watched the military parade in silence, faith in the prophet ceased to inspire armed resistance to the forces of civilization. But for many other Indians, and especially for those living in Indian Territory, the religion still offered hope.

From Darlington on January 19 Mooney wrote: "Indians are dancing the

ghost dance day & night. . . ."[10] He attended Cheyenne and Arapaho performances for the next week. "I am so far in with the medicine men," he boasted to a fellow ethnologist at the bureau, "that they have invited me to take part in the dance although they order any other white man away from the grounds. . . . The Caddos, Kiowas, Comanches [around Anadarko agency] to who I go from here are all dancing."[11] For the next month and a half, Mooney traveled between the two reservations, where he participated in ghost dances, collected specimens of clothing and crafts used in the ritual for the National Museum, and interviewed leaders of the religion.

Toward the end of February, 1891, Mooney received hints about the identity and location of the Ghost Dance prophet. Apiaton (sometimes spelled Apiatom), or Wooden Lance, a Kiowa, had just returned to the Kiowa and Comanche reservation after a visit to the "Indian Messiah." The agent, Charles E. Adams, with the assistance of Lieutenant Hugh L. Scott at Fort Sill, called a council at Anadarko agency and invited the attendance of Cheyennes and Arapahos from their reservation north of the Washita River.[12] With Mooney present, the tribes gathered to hear Apiaton's story of his search for the messiah. The trail had led him first to Pine Ridge and thence to Wind River reservation, Wyoming. From the home of the Shoshonis and northern Arapahos he moved on to Fort Hall, Idaho. Again he learned, this time from Bannocks and Shoshonis, that he must travel farther. After stopping at Pyramid Lake reservation, he arrived at last in Mason Valley near the Walker River reserve, where the prophet told him his search was ended.

Wovoka had told others before Apiaton about his ministry. The prophet had given the delegates a dance, but they had gotten things twisted after leaving him. The Sioux more than other tribes had wandered from the charted path and a great many of them had been killed as a consequence. The violence and bloodshed distressed the prophet. Wovoka recommended that the Kiowa delegate return to his tribe and tell his people to stop the dance.[13] Disheartened by his discovery, Apiaton left Nevada and hurried home convinced, as Mooney wrote later, "that there was no god in Israel."[14]

Apiaton's recounting of his meeting with Wovoka had an effect. Devotion to the religion decreased at both the Kiowa and Comanche, and the Cheyenne, Arapaho and Caddo reservations.

Mooney left Anadarko agency to continue his work on the Cherokees. By mid-April, 1891, he was back in the capital. In short order, however, he was ordered to return to the territory, this time to prepare an exhibit on the Kiowas for the forthcoming Columbian Exposition in Chicago scheduled for the following year (later postponed until 1893). He stayed in Kiowa camps in the Wichita Mountains from May until late July. He returned to Washington in early August, relieved to be free from his role as collector of curiosities for the celebration of the quartocentennial of Columbus, or the "Italian dreamer" as the ethnologist called him. Mooney arranged and wrote descriptive labels

for the Kiowa collection stored in the basement of the National Museum and then to his delight, resumed work on the Ghost Dance. From August through October, in preparation for another trip to western tribes, this time to the northern plains, he visited the Bureau of Indian Affairs and War Department to research documents about the late "Messiah Craze."[15]

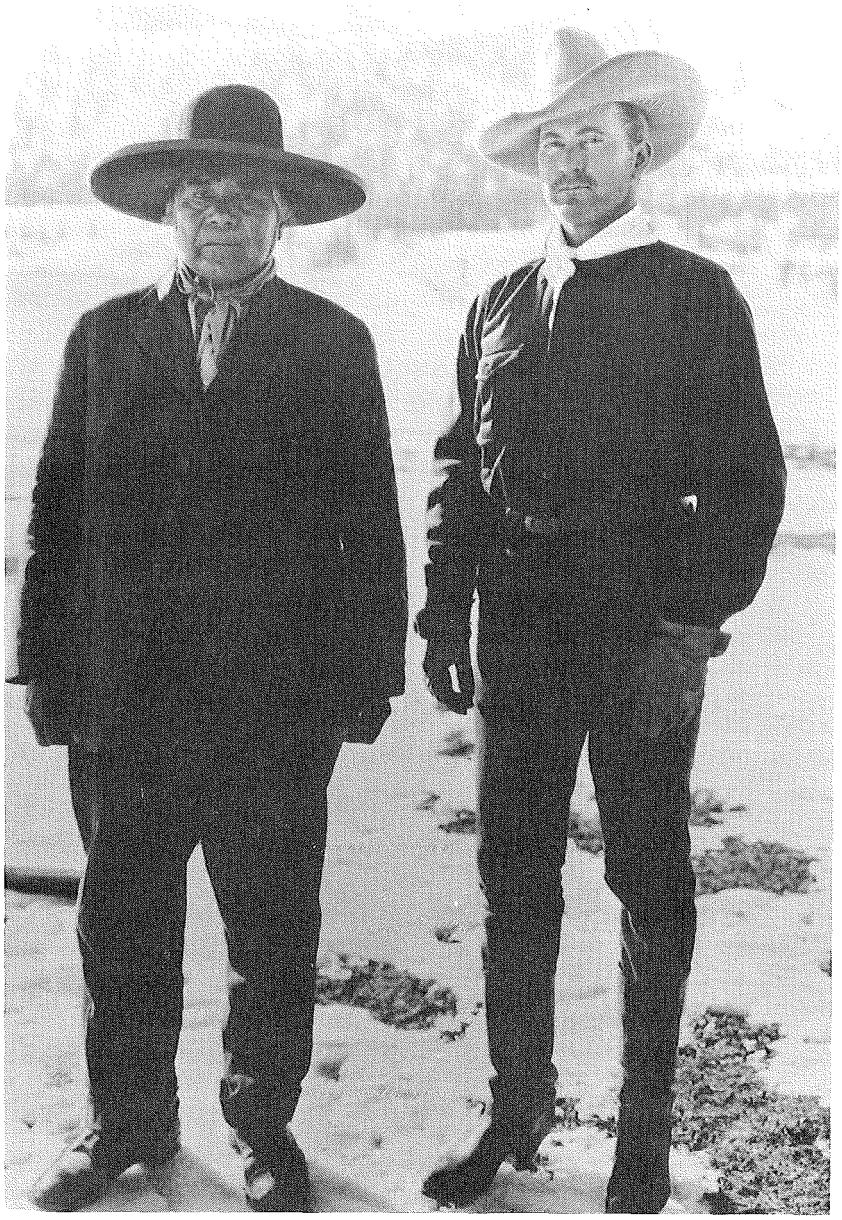
It was about this time that the ethnologist decided to find the prophet for himself. Confusion about the source of the religion permeated the writings of persons at the Indian bureau. Through his participation in the council at Anadarko the previous winter and his subsequent conversations with a number of delegates who visited Wovoka, Mooney knew that he would need to travel to Nevada during his planned research trip. He wrote to C. C. Warner, superintendent of the Nevada agencies. Warner had been appointed to his post at Pyramid Lake reservation at the height of the Ghost Dance in December, 1890. Warner, a Republican, had replaced S. S. Sears, an appointee from the previous Cleveland administration. Warner answered Mooney's inquiry with a derisive tone. He had never seen Jack Wilson or Wovoka, he told the ethnologist:

> I am pursuing the course with him of non-attention or a silent ignoring. He seems to think, so I hear, that I will arrest him should he come within my reach. I would give him no such notoriety. . . . There are neither ghost songs, dances nor ceremonials among them about by agencies. Would not be allowed. I think they died out with "Sitting Bull."[16]

Mooney suspected otherwise. Unable to get any assistance from the man close to the source of the Ghost Dance, the ethnologist was determined to follow his own devices. The trail to the messiah, never well traveled by members of the Indian service, was still warm.

Mooney left Washington about the middle of November, 1891, and after stopping in Nebraska long enough to learn that the Omahas and Winnebagos had little to do with the religion, he moved on to South Dakota.[17] At Pine Ridge reservation he rode out to the battlefield at Wounded Knee where he saw the mass grave of the dead from Big Foot's band. The survivors had fenced the perimeter of the trench, and smeared the posts with paint made from the sacred clay of western Nevada given to Sioux delegates by Wovoka. Mooney was touched by the pathetic scene. The grave had been marked so that those recently dead might be among the first at the Indian resurrection.[18]

Research among the Sioux confirmed for Mooney the tragic implications of the Ghost Dance. It was a religion of a beaten people. Seeing and speaking with the prophet would help determine whether the tragedy had been a consequence of the revelation itself or, as so often happened, had been produced by misunderstanding among the faithful, as well as between the faithful and unbelievers.



Wovoka and J. T. McCoy in Snake Valley. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

After arriving at the Pyramid Lake reservation, he learned that Wovoka's uncle, Charly Sheep, lived near the Walker River agency. Mooney spent a lonely Christmas at a hotel across from the Reno railroad station. His thoughts that day were turned toward a different, a newer messiah. After the holiday he moved south and found the prophet's uncle at Walker River

reservation.[19] By showing Charly photographs of a number of the ethnologist's Arapaho and Cheyenne friends from Indian Territory, Mooney overcame much of the Indian's initial suspicion. Many Indian delegates from the East had recently descended on Wovoka's home in Mason Valley. As Charly indicated, Wovoka found the visits increasingly annoying, particularly after the government branded the religion dangerous and inimical to order and progress. Mooney told Charly that, as an ethnologist, it was his job to study Indians. He wished to bring no harm to the prophet.[20]

Mooney spent a week with Charly Sheep, discussing various aspects of Paiute culture. "When the ice was well thawed, I cautiously approached the subject of ghost songs and dance. . . . I then told Charly that . . . I was anxious to see the messiah and get from him some medicine-paint to bring back to his friends among the eastern tribes." The Indian agreed to take Mooney to his nephew's home.

The two rode the Carson and Colorado Railroad from Schurz twenty miles northwest to Wabuska where they left the train and travelled overland southeast for twelve miles, until they reached Mason Valley. There they met F. A. Dyer, who kept a store at Yerington. Dyer, well acquainted with Wovoka and fluent in the Paiute language, offered his assistance to the ethnologist. Mooney hired a team and driver and moved on up the valley. It was New Year's Day (a Friday), 1892, and a deep snow covered the ground, the result of Wovoka's command of the elements, Charly Sheep assured the group. "It is hard to imagine anything more monotonously unattractive than a sage prairie under ordinary circumstances unless it be the same prairie when covered by a heavy fall of snow," Mooney wrote. He found it difficult to determine whether mounds he saw in the distance were snow-draped sage brush or Paiute wikiups. The party passed a dance ground that, though deserted, offered visible proof of frequent use. So much for Agent Warner's contrary assertion, Mooney thought.

After going several miles Mooney observed a solitary figure on a nearby ridge. On drawing closer, he noticed that it was a man with a gun propped over one shoulder.

> Dyer looked a moment and then exclaimed "I believe that's Jack now!" The Indian thought so, too, and pulling up our horses he shouted some words in Paiute language. The man replied, and sure enough it was the messiah, hunting jack rabbits. At his uncle's call, he soon came over.

As Wovoka approached the group, Mooney saw that he was a young man about thirty-five and nearly six feet tall—considerably taller than the ethnologist, who stood only five feet four inches. The Indian was dressed in "white man's" clothes, including a rather large, broad-brimmed white felt hat. Wovoka clasped Mooney's hand with "a strong, hearty grasp" and asked what he wanted. Charly Sheep translated Mooney's interest, adding that the

small stranger knew some of the prophet's Indian friends in the East. Wovoka said that he was hunting now, but if Mooney would come to his camp this evening, he would tell the ethnologist sent by "Washington" about his sacred mission to the tribes. With another handshake all around Wovoka moved off.

It was late afternoon. Mooney and his party drove on to the nearest ranch where they awaited nightfall. After supper they started in what they thought was the direction of the Paiute camp. They had been traveling for an hour, with nothing to be seen in any direction but snow covered bushes, when Charly Sheep, the guide of the expedition, announced that he was thoroughly lost. "To be lost on a sage plain on a freezing night in January is not a pleasant experience. There was no road, and no house but the one we had left some miles behind, and it would be almost impossible to find our way back to that through the darkness."

Except for a lantern they carried in the wagon, there was no other light except the winking of a few stars in the cloud-broken sky. To add to the uncertainty, cattle trails, which seemed to be "Indian trails," cut in every direction "and kept us doubling and circling to no purpose, while in the . . . gloom every large clump of sage brush took on the appearance of a wikiup, only to disappoint us on a nearer approach." After vainly following a dozen false trails, and hearing no answers to their frequent shouts for assistance, they decided to leave Charly, the oldest in the party, with the wagon, while Mooney, Dyer and the teamster fanned out from the central point. When each had gone far enough to determine that he was on a wrong trail, the wagon was brought up and the process repeated. This went on for some time until, from the darkness, the driver's shouts brought the group together. He had heard noises in the distance, and as each man strained to listen and searched the blackness for some sign of life, a shower of sparks from a campfire disclosed the existence of the Paiute camp. They leaped to the wagon and with considerable jostling drove directly to the circle of huts.

Wovoka courteously bid the visitors enter his wikiup. He inquired more precisely about the purpose of the ethnologist's visit. Charly Sheep's translation, Mooney explained, "stretched out to preposterous length, owing to a peculiar conversational method of the Paiute." Each statement by the older man was repeated at its close, word for word, by Wovoka, with the same monotonous inflection. This done, the first speaker signified by a grunt of approval that it had been correctly repeated, and then began the next statement. The first time Mooney heard two Paiutes conversing in this fashion at Pyramid Lake, he thought that they were reciting some sort of litany and "it required several such experiences and some degree of patience to become used to it." Finally the prophet signified his understanding, and then in answer to Mooney's questions, he gave an account of his life and the tenets of the Ghost Dance religion.

Wovoka told Mooney about his vision of a restored Indian world. The

prophet had a vision during an eclipse of the sun in January, 1889. As Mooney later learned from a rancher who frequently employed Wovoka, the Indian had been sick with a fever of unknown origin. In his delirium, he traveled to heaven where God showed him members of his tribe, all happy and young, engaged in old sports and occupations. God then commanded that Wovoka return to earth and inform all Indians that they must be good and love one another and that they must put away all the practices that savored of war. If the Indians followed the precepts and performed the God-given dance at regular intervals for five days, they would secure their own happiness and hasten the end of the world. Paiute apostles carried the doctrine to other Nevada tribes. Within the year delegates from distant plains tribes began arriving in Mason Valley eager to meet their deliverer.

Wovoka repudiated any idea of hostility toward non-Indians, asserting that his religion advocated universal peace. He disavowed responsibility for the ghost shirt which had formed so important a part of the dance costume among the Sioux and which supposedly made the wearer inviolable.[21] Mooney recorded his impression of the conversation:

> I knew that he was holding something in reserve, as no Indian would unbosom himself on religious matters to a white man with whom he had not had a long and intimate acquaintance. Especially was this true in view of the war-like turn affairs had taken across the mountains. Consequently I accepted his statements with several grains of salt, but on the whole he seemed to be honest in his belief and his supernatural claims, although, like others of the priestly function, he occasionally resorts to cheap trickery to keep up the impression as to his miraculous powers.

In subsequent interviews Wovoka added little to the story of his vision and doctrine but showed great interest in Mooney's friendship with the Cheyennes and Arapahos.

Because Mooney had been honest with him, Wovoka allowed the ethnologist to take his picture, something that had never been done before. He would only charge the white man two dollars and fifty cents for the privilege. "I was prepared for this," Mooney explained, "and refused to pay him such charges, but agreed to give him my regular price per day for his services as informant and to send him a copy of the picture when finished." The prophet agreed. Mooney also acquired a number of souvenirs to take back to the Indians at Darlington. "With mutual expressions of good will we parted, his uncle going back to the reservation, while I took the train for Indian Territory." Mooney had seen the Indian messiah. Other than a few minor errors or omissions, he had the whole story.[22] Other investigators, with the exception of Arthur Chapman, had been within easy distance of the prophet but had failed, either out of disinterest or inattention, to make the acquaintance of Wovoka and learn about his religion.[23]

News that Mooney had returned after a visit to the prophet caused great

excitement among the Cheyennes and Arapahos. Indians gathered around the ethnologist "eager to hear all the details of my visit . . . and to get my own impressions of the man. In comparing notes with some of the recent delegates I discovered something of Wovoka's hypnotic methods, and incidentally learned how much a miracle depends on the mental receptivity of the observer."[24] He sensed that a number of delegates had been prepared to believe all that Wovoka had told them.

Mooney established enough trust between himself and the delegates to be shown written statements which Wovoka had given the Indians during their last visits to him the previous August. One of the Cheyennes, Black Short Nose, asked that Mooney take the letters to Washington, "to convince the white people that there was nothing bad or hostile in the new religion."[25] The ethnologist agreed to the suggestion.

True to his word after reaching Washington in early February, Mooney prepared copies of the "messiah letters" for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. "It will be noted," he informed Commissioner Morgan, "that no date is fixed for the change and that [Wovoka] counsels peace with the whites."[26] Since Wounded Knee there had been little trouble at reservations, and the commissioner paid scant attention to Mooney's points. Morgan found other matters more pressing. Since the Ghost Dance no longer threatened disruption of his stewardship over the dependent tribes, the commissioner could carry on with his program for bringing the Indians of the United States into full participation as productive citizens.

Although distracted by other bureau matters, Mooney intermittently continued his research into the Ghost Dance for another two years. It was not until December, 1893, that he began to concentrate on the completion of his manuscript. He spent the next seven months writing, editing and arranging copy for the book.[27] The completed work went to the government printers in the summer of 1894, but owing to a backlog of other manuscripts it was not published until 1896.

When his book on the Ghost Dance appeared in print, it secured Mooney's reputation as an ethnologist of the first order. So praiseworthy did Dr. Washington Matthews, a fellow ethnologist as well as an army physician, find it that Mooney felt compelled to demur, if only a little disingenuously. Matthews had written in the *Journal of American Folklore* that:

> It is customary for a reviewer . . . to find some fault with the book, if for no other purpose than to show his own superior knowledge. We have read this ponderous tome through, with care, in the hope that we might find some noteworthy blemish; but we are forced to admit that we have failed in our praiseworthy effort.[28]

Matthews sent a copy of the review to the ethnologist while it was still in galleys. Mooney replied that he could suggest no change "in your review of the Ghost Dance, excepting perhaps in the last paragraph. I am not infallible

or omniscient & every field trip servs [sic] only to convince me more than before that at the best a whiteman can only hope to gather scraps around the edge of his Indian subject."[29]

Some of the Smithsonian ethnologists (and many anthropologists in more recent times) agreed that Mooney was fallible. His attempt to compare the Ghost Dance religion and other messianic cults troubled individuals at the Bureau of Ethnology the most. Although often a stickler for detail in his research, Mooney's own writing at times went beyond the prescribed borders of his discipline, and moved from particularism to the universal. He had tried such comparisons before when he described similarities between Irish and Native American mythology. But the extent of his comparisons of the Ghost Dance with other religions was truly grand.

Mooney began the work with a quotation from Thomas Moore, an Irish poet and songwriter, whose lyrics the ethnologist had learned as a child: "There are hours long departed which memory brings / Like blossoms of Eden to twine round the heart[.]" "As with men," Mooney continued into metaphor, "so it is with nations."

> The lost paradise is the world's dreamland of youth. What tribe or people has not had its golden age, before Pandora's box was loosed, when women were nymphs and dryads and men were gods and heroes? And when the race lies crushed and groaning beneath an alien yoke, how natural is the dream of a redeemer . . . who shall return from exile or awake from some long sleep to drive out the usurper and win back for his people what they have lost. The hope becomes a faith and the faith becomes the creed of priests and prophets, until the hero is a god and the dream a religion. . . . The doctrine of the Hindu avatar, the Hebrew messiah, the Christian millennium, and . . . the Indian Ghost dance are essentially the same, and . . . have their origin in a hope and longing common to all humanity.[30]

In subsequent chapters, Mooney described the Ghost Dance in careful, elaborate detail, and most of his research has withstood the assaults of scholar-critics. Yet beyond his careful analytical reconstruction of the religion in most of its forms, Mooney tried to demonstrate convincingly that, though aboriginal, the religion still spoke to the wild longing common to the human heart. In chapter sixteen, entitled "Parallels in Other Systems," he returned to his universalist theme. It proved to be the most controversial section of the work then and since. In introducing his comparisons he wrote:

> The remote in time or distance is always strange. The familiar present is always natural and a matter of course. Beyond the narrow range of our horizon imagination creates a new world, but as we advance in any direction, or as we go back over forgotten paths, we find ever a continuity and a succession. The human race is one in thought and action. The systems of our highest modern civilizations have their counterparts among all the nations, and their chain of parallels stretches backward link by link until we find their origin and interpretation in the customs and rites of our own barbarian ancestors, or our still existing aboriginal tribes. There is nothing new under the sun.[31]

The last statement, a paraphrase from *Ecclesiastes*, was the most perplexing of the book. Perhaps Mooney's lyricism overwhelmed the more prosaic concerns of objective science. But there is another explanation.

Mooney attempted to suggest that Wovoka's religion, described by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs as heathenish and barbarous, was no more fantastic in its precepts than were the more tradition-bound religions of the larger American society; that one's skepticism concerning prophets diminished in direct proportion to the number of years that separated the faithful from the revelation. To liken the Ghost Dance religion of Wovoka to that of Mohammad, Flagellants, Fifth Monarchy Men, or Millerites, was not to scoff at individual differences, but to stress that element common to the experience—a profound difference. Later anthropologists would label such phenomena "crisis cults" or "revitalization movements."[32]

Wovoka's religion had for a time generated interest in the dominant society because it had challenged that very domination. But if the Ghost Dance were simply a religion of the materially and culturally deprived, what possible purpose was served by such an extensive study? In choosing to compare Wovoka's religion to other religions, Mooney wrote as a historian who, stepping back from his notes of incidents and anecdotes, sees themes that transcend denomination or particular philosophy, tribe or nation. More orthodox ethnologists might criticize his bending of methods, but Mooney on occasion stressed that his motives for writing about the Ghost Dance were purely scientific. He desired only to chronicle the evidence. Other agencies were doubtless better equipped, he believed, to protect Indians or to foster sympathy for them.

Although Mooney denied a role as Indian apologist, as if sympathy or humanity were somehow beyond the prerequisites of a scientist, he nevertheless wrote with a sense of compassion, in an almost lyrical style. Universality is a recurring theme. Mooney's mistake may have been in his phrasing: "There is nothing new under the sun." Perhaps he would have been more successful had he emphasized, as did Willa Cather, that there are only two or three human stories, and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they had never happened before.

For a time many American Indians were fiercely devoted to the religion of Wovoka. Mooney wrote about the Ghost Dance with such detail and precision as to suggest that it had never happened before. He had the sense to realize, however, that what separated the Ghost Dance from the more conventional varieties of religion was not so much the difference in ritual and belief as it was the absence of authority conferred upon it by the number of believers. Indians, as whites, often believed in the truth of the revealed word. Missionaries, Indian service employees, philanthropists, and ethnologists of Mooney's generation might view the religion as a strange belief of an often quaint, and sometime dangerous race, all the while clinging

to their own theologies, which still held that the world would end in a day of divine judgment.

In many ways, Mooney's history of the Ghost Dance religion has proven to be his greatest work. It was the first accurate history of the religion. It has served generations of historians and anthropologists as the fountainhead of research about the Ghost Dance of 1890 and its prophet. Its publication gave Mooney a new sense of authority and acceptance among both his fellow workers at the Smithsonian, and a growing community of scholars interested in American Indians. Mooney's book also gave to Wovoka a larger audience, one which stretched beyond Native Americans, the American continent, and his own generation. Although faith in Wovoka waned relatively early in his life (he lived until September, 1932) interest in Wovoka remained. It continues to this day.

NOTES

[1] Mooney to Henry W. Henshaw, June 18, 1890. Records of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Letters received, Selected Correspondence File, Box 14, Smithsonian Institution National Anthropological Archives, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Cited as BAE Records, LR, Box —, SNAA. The "American" was attached to the title of the Bureau of Ethnology in 1894.

[2] *Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. xxx-xxxi. Annual reports of the ethnological bureau are hereafter cited in the fashion, BAE, *12th Annual Report* (1894). The date in parentheses indicates year of actual publication rather than year of the report. The BAE was notoriously tardy in the publication of its annual reports.

[3] The standard reference for the Ghost Dance is the classic, contemporary account of James Mooney, "The Ghost Dance Religion and Sioux Outbreak of 1890," in BAE, *14th Annual Report* (1896), Part 2. Cited as Mooney, *Ghost Dance Religion*. See especially pp. 746-802.

[4] Robert M. Utley, *Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), is still the best source on the Sioux Ghost Dance.

[5] See Chapman to Gibbon, Dec. 6, 1890, in "Report of the Secretary of War," *Executive Documents of the House of Representatives*, 52nd congress, 1st session, Executive Document 1, Part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892), pp. 191-194. Cited as Sec. of War, *Annual Report*, 1890-91.

[6] See "Special Case 188: Ghost Dance, 1890-1898," Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Cited as SC 188, RG 75, NA.

[7] James Mooney Vertical File, BAE Records, SNAA.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Utley, *Last Days of the Sioux Nation*, pp. 269-270.

[10] Mooney to Henshaw, Jan. 17, 1891, BAE Records, LR, Box 14, SNAA.

[11] Mooney to Henshaw, Jan. 27, 1891, ibid.

[12] Mooney, *Ghost Dance Religion*, pp. 900, 909, 911, 913.

[13] Scott to Post Adjutant, Fort Sill, Feb. 22, 1891, SC 188, RG 75, NA.

[14] Mooney, *Ghost Dance Religion*, p. 913.

[15] Mooney to Charles Adams, April 3, 1891, Kiowa Employees File, Indian Archives Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City; Mooney to Henshaw, March 6, 1891, BAE Records, LR, Box 14, SNAA; and BAE, *13th Annual Report* (1896), p. xxxix.

[16] Mooney, *Ghost Dance Religion*, p. 767n.

[17] BAE, *13th Annual Report* (1896), p. xxxix; and Pine Ridge Agency, Guest Register, 1884-1894, Book 1, Archives 165, Box 516183, RG 75, Federal Archives and Records Center, Kansas City, Missouri.

[18] Mooney, *Ghost Dance Religion,* p. 769.

[19] Mooney to Captain John Gregory Bourke, Dec. 25, 1891, John Gregory Bourke Papers, Series I, Box 1, Folder 15, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln.

[20] The following account, unless otherwise indicated, is taken from chapter nine, "Wovoka the Messiah," in Mooney, *Ghost Dance Religion,* pp. 767-776.

[21] Wovoka repudiated responsibility for the ghost shirt in his interview with Arthur Chapman in early December, 1890, weeks before the clash at Wounded Knee. See, Sec. of War, *Annual Report,* 1890-01, p. 192. Paul Bailey, Wovoka's biographer, goes into detail on the ghost shirt and uses as his source the E. A. Dyer manuscript of the Nevada Historical Society. See, Paul Bailey, *Wovoka the Indian Messiah* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1957), pp. 120-124.

[22] As the anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace writes in his abridgment of *Ghost Dance Religion*, Mooney "mistakes, for instance, the farmer of Wovoka . . . for another man who actually launched the earlier Ghost Dance of 1870. And he grossly underestimates not only the importance of the 1870 Ghost Dance . . . but also the significance of beliefs concerning the return of the dead, traditionally so important among the Paviotso and their northern neighbors." Although a "thorough understanding of the Ghost Dance as a cultural phenomenon requires consultation of later works as well as Mooney's . . . ," Wallace adds "it is remarkable indeed, that so early a student was able to accomplish so much under extraordinary difficulties." James Mooney, *The Ghost Dance Religion*, edited and abridged with an introduction by Anthony F. C. Wallace (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. viii. For biographies of the prophet that contain either first-hand accounts or additional research that goes beyond Mooney, consult Grace Dangberg, "Wovoka," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly,* XI, No. 2 (Summer, 1968), pp. 5-53; and Bailey, *Wovoka the Indian Messiah.*

[23] For example, Daniel Dorchester, Methodist minister and United States Superintendent of Indian Education, had been assigned by Commissioner Morgan in the spring of 1891 to investigate the Ghost Dance. His report, which appears in the commissioner's 1891 *Annual Report,* showed confusion about the source of the religion. Dorchester, however, had been present for a few days at Walker River reservation in June, 1890, at the very time that Acting Commissioner Robert V. Belt sent out circulars to agents asking them for information about the Ghost Dance. A number of visiting delegations of plains Indians were then present at Walker River. See James O. Gregory to S. S. Sears, June 26, 1890, Records of the Walker River reservation, Letters Sent, Box 314, RG 75, Federal Archives and Records Center, San Bruno, California.

Mooney had met with Gregory during his visit in late December, 1891. Gregory had been replaced the previous summer as farmer-in-charge at Walker River by Nelson Hammond, a Republican. Gregory told Mooney that Wovoka had asked him to write to President Benjamin Harrison asking that he recognize the prophet as a leader of all Indians. The letter, as Mooney correctly notes, was never forwarded. Mooney, *Ghost Dance Religion,* p. 773. See also, Edward C. Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes: A Tribal History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Printing Service, 1975), p. 48.

[24] Mooney, *Ghost Dance Religion*, p. 775.

[25] Ibid., p. 776.

[26] Mooney to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Feb. 20, 1892, Records of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, LR, RG 75, NA.

[27] BAE, *15th Annual Report* (1897), pp. xliii, xlvii, lii.

[28] Washington Matthews, "Review of the *Ghost Dance Religion,*" *Journal of American Folklore,* X, No. 38 (Summer, 1897), p. 249.

[29] Mooney to Matthews, July 4, 1897, Washington Matthews Papers, Box 1, Wheelwright Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

[30] Mooney, *Ghost Dance Religion,* p. 657.

[31] Ibid., p. 928.

[32] Anthony F. C. Wallace excluded chapter sixteen from his edition, thus disturbing the provenance of the original work. For ancillary studies in both anthropology and history that either challenge Mooney's thesis, or expand the theme of the Ghost Dance, see the bibliography in Wallace, ed., *Ghost Dance Religion,* pp. viii-x.

The Maverick and the Cowboy

WILBUR S. SHEPPERSON

OWEN ULPH WAS BORN IN ENGLAND, grew up in Oakland, was educated at Stanford, became a professor at the University of Nevada, and in 1951 made his way to a ranch in Smoky Valley. He lived off and on in central Nevada for seven years, and returned to university teaching at U.C.L.A., the University of California, Riverside, and Reed College. In 1979 he moved to a ranch near Lamoille. Although his field of study is Medieval French Constitutional History, some thirty years ago Ulph started a work on the "authentic world of cowboys." This major study, to be entitled "The Leather Throne," is now in finished manuscript; "The Pecos Swap" and "Waiting for a Chinook" are to come later. In the meantime, Ulph has herded "a bunch of strays to the shipping pens" (written several articles) which are published as *The Fiddleback: Lore of the Line Camp.*[1] Ulph's treatment of this nostalgic and infectious fragment of the West calls for more attention than the usual "galloping review" of four hundred words.

Although the twentieth century has become an age of exaggeration and hyperbole when noting cowboys, one claim seems certain: a five hundred year old tradition is now drawing to an end. It was the Spanish who introduced both cattle and horses to the New World in 1494 during Columbus's second expedition. Both prospered and soon Cortés and other conquerors and explorers found the animals to be a vital feature in furthering their economic and military plans. By the early 1500s, cattle raising had become common in Mexico and in 1529 something akin to the roundup was officially established, with the registration of family and ranch brands becoming standard practice. The cowboy had already assumed an economic and social position that he was to maintain for the following four hundred years.[2]

In the early 1540s, Coronado pushed north to the present American Southwest driving cattle and bringing the first horses and other livestock. The Mexican vaquero was by then accepted as "the laborer on horseback" who

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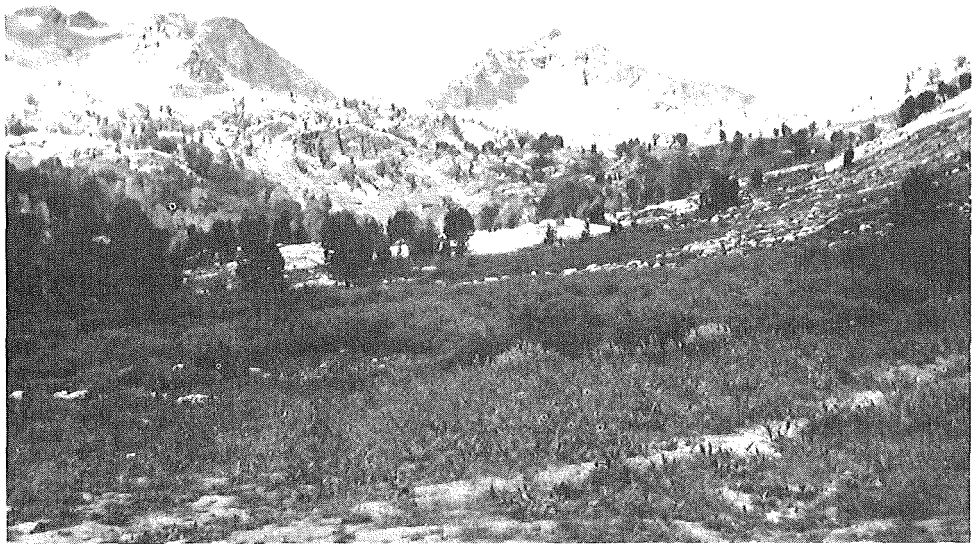


The Ruby Mountains is where Owen Ulph chose to live on a ranch and write about cowboys.

lived a primitive life as an employee on the large haciendas. The ranchos quickly expanded over thousands of acres and the vaquero evolved, with his techniques, equipment and skills, into a colorful and necessary part of the new society. Indeed, he was often the cutting-edge not only for the Spanish as they moved north, but eventually for the Anglos as they moved west. In much of New Spain the land and climate favored stock raising and, as missions were founded (over fifty were established in Texas), the Indians were introduced into the vaquero system. Despite arid deserts, Indian raids, rustlers, governmental bureaucracy and isolation, by the beginning of the nineteenth century a solid basis for both giant ranchos and working vaqueros, or buckaroos, had been laid in the vast area from Texas to California.

The American migrants to Texas were essentially farmers, not ranchers, and with little economic inducement the Anglo involvement with livestock was at first limited. Cattle raids by outlaw bands into the contested political regions north of the Rio Grande started by the 1830s. Therefore, the legendary American cowboy (the ancient Anglo-Irish term "cowboy" was apparently first used in the Republic of Texas) evolved in part from such bands of ruffians. Cattle culture adapted rapidly to the changing conditions and the new cowboy became personally independent, self-reliant, and above all highly mobile. J. Frank Dobie has suggested that with independence the

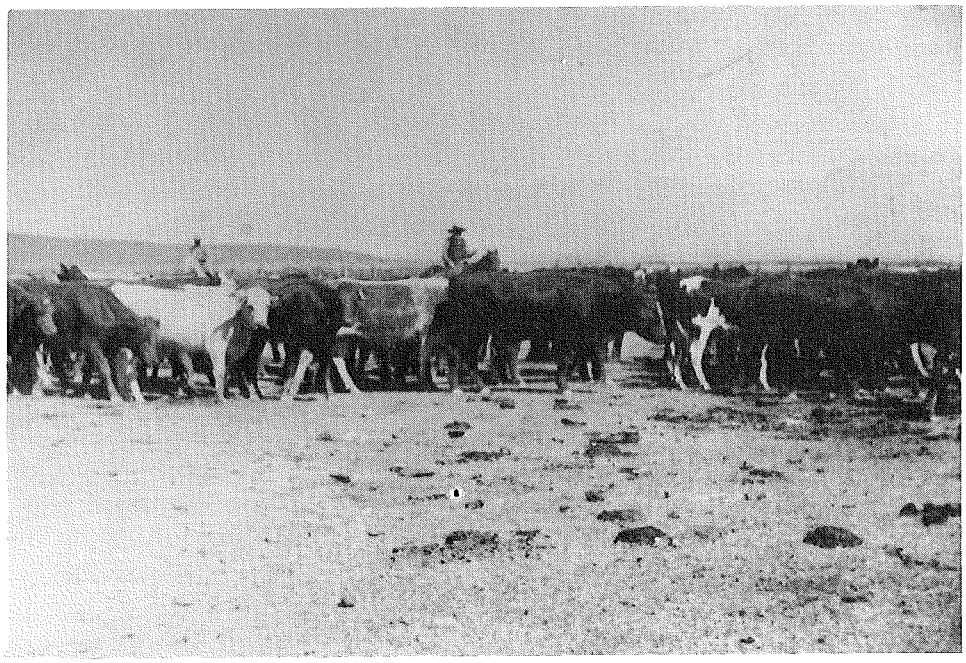
Texas vaquero evolved as a blend of "the riding, shooting, frontier-formed southerner" and the "Mexican-Indian horseback worker with livestock."[3]

With the discovery of gold in California the rancho system with its Spanish patterns was doomed, and even ranchos in the Los Angeles area found it profitable to drive herds north to the gold country. In the late forties Texans started the cattle drives west to California; by the early fifties cattle were arriving in northern California from as far east as Missouri and Arkansas. Also by the forties and fifties Texans were driving cattle to Missouri and then on to Illinois and Ohio where they were fattened for the eastern market. A few Texas cowboys herded their livestock all the way to New York City. By the late fifties there were Texas drives northwest to the mining regions in Colorado, but during the Civil War drives were generally east to Louisiana and Mississippi, whereas Florida cowboys drove cattle north to railheads and to military installations.

With the end of the war a demand for beef in the north and a critical need for markets in Texas led over a quarter of a million longhorns to be trailed to Kansas and Missouri in 1866. Despite the lawlessness, the cattle quarantines, and the opposition of state and local governments, the golden age of cowboy culture had begun. In September, 1867 the first shipment (twenty railway stock cars) of Texas cattle left Abilene, Kansas for the east. Over the following two decades many of the towns in Kansas shipped or traded Texas cattle. The lonely cowboy was at his zenith of fame and fortune; he helped make railroad switching points into boom towns. In one year, 1871, he trailed more than 700,000 longhorns to the north. Merchants, bankers, journalists, gamblers, all followed the cowboy as he switched his drives from one railway siding to another. From June to October, Kansas seemed to belong to the drovers.

In the mid-eighties, extended rail lines, legal sanctions, the coming of sheep, and a major influx of farmers led to an abrupt end to the long drives. Over 6,000,000 animals had been moved north from Texas in less than twenty years and a colorful cowboy era had ended. But while less dramatic, the regional cowboy and the cattle industry of the Great Plains and the mountain basins had been firmly established. As the buffalo, the antelope, and the elk disappeared, eastern and European interests poured capital into the ranching industry and great cattle baronies were carved out on the western ranges.

With Nevada's mining economy booming after 1860, most available agricultural and livestock lands adjacent to the new camps were quickly developed. Mormon settlers of the early fifties, followed by California buckaroos and Texas cattlemen, began to occupy valleys in both the northern and southern parts of the state. Ranches with several thousand head of livestock became commonplace by the late sixties; by 1880 Nevada had over 250,000 head of range cattle.[4] As a result of a collapse in mining, and lower beef prices, the cattle industry in the state grew more slowly during the remainder of the century. Although there was expanded agricultural activity during



Cattle drive on Glaser Ranch, Elko County, Nevada, c. 1900. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

World War I, the number of Nevada cowboys continued to decline. Increased technology and changing economic needs were bringing a picturesque tradition to an end. Some scholars have thought it unfortunate that the traditional cowboy had mainly disappeared before folklorists, cultural anthropologists, and social historians arrived on the scene with their critical techniques of study and analysis.

For a hundred years the myth of the cowboy has refused to die. The solitary man on horseback, although a laborer and a low paid hired hand, represents a force and an integrity which fascinates people around the globe. He is the common man with reckless daring and a steady nerve who isolates himself for an individualistic struggle against nature, against technology, and even against civilization. He tends to become a figure larger than life: he becomes heroic.

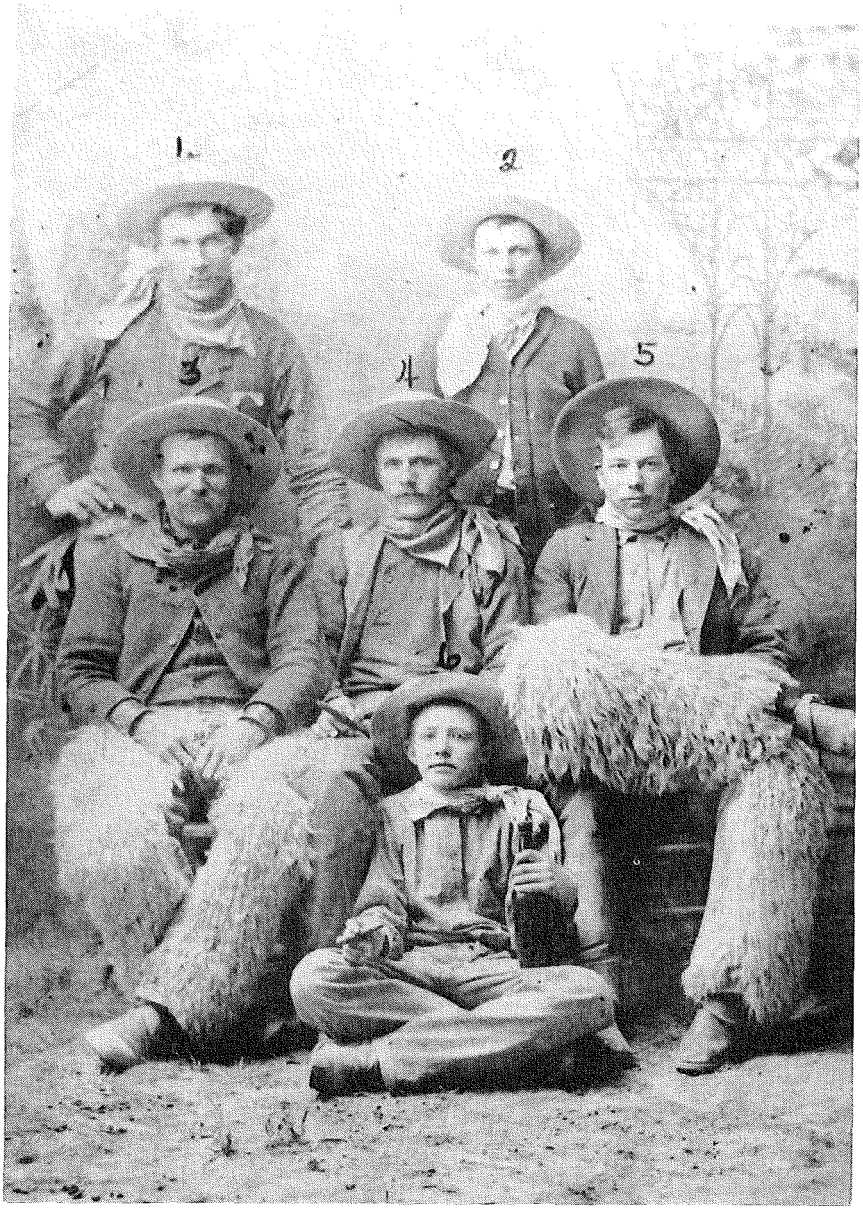
But clearly, all statements about the cowboy require qualification. In reality, tradition, terrain, weather, and economic conditions created wide differences in life styles, equipment and techniques. Cowboys have worked in all parts of the country, from Florida to Oregon, and from Minnesota to Texas. Nevertheless, most cowboys have had to tolerate isolation, long hours, low pay, and physical hardship; at the same time, they supposedly have

enjoyed independence, and personal adventure, and have earned a revered position in American folklife. They seldom cleared out outlaws, sang by the open camp fire, strummed guitars on the trail, saved maidens in distress, or shot up saloons. The ordinary working cowhand was neither a myth nor a legend; he was a long-enduring, often drifting, generally exploited mortal. And within recent memory he has tended to succumb to either cirrhosis of the liver or agribusiness.

During the twentieth century there has been a persistent attempt by scholars and others to "correct the cowboy myth." Not everyone saw the lonely man astride a horse as heir to, or pursuer of, a noble tradition. A leading Nevada crusader and reformer of 1922 found that one half of the men of the state (some 20,000 males) were living under deplorable social conditions "outside the home environment," and that a large portion of this group were cowboys.[5] It was a characteristic and "pathetic sight" to see these men "aimlessly wandering the streets" with no sense of civic responsibility and easily corrupted by gambling, whiskey and prostitutes. Indeed, the giant livestock interests were the cause of much of "the mortal illness for which she (Nevada) is suffering." "Deliberately and unconsciously its population of homeless workers has taken its revenge, as told by Nevada's overflowing jails and prison, her almshouses and insane asylum, by her lack of political, economic and social stability." No man should have to live "on top of a mountain in a company bunk-house instead of having a home." In a sad and negative way, Nevada was paying the price for its ruthless cattle industry with its legions of displaced cowboys.

Elizabeth Budy's anthropological research of 1975 to some degree formalized and authenticated Anne Martin's general perceptions.[6] Budy found that most Nevada cowhands had left school between the sixth and twelfth grade and that by their own admission all had been poor students. Furthermore, employers, associates and other acquaintances categorized them as "dumb." Few were married and none enjoyed a close long-term relationship with anyone. Indeed, not one of the eighteen cowhands studied had maintained a permanent friendship over a period of years. Their income was uniquely low, ranging from $300 to $550 per month, with board and room in addition to salary. Employment was sporadic; none of those interviewed enjoyed full employment over the course of the previous year, and the majority changed employers at least once each year. Stability was not highly prized by the drifting buckaroos; an "I gotta be moving on" syndrome predominated.

With limited education and intermittent employment, with no spouse or family or close friends, with no real contact in the community, the cowhand was reduced to working at a monotonous job which provided little social, economic, or even personal reward. Therefore, they grumbled, complained, and quickly perceived of themselves as unqualified for anything better. Their



Nineteenth-century cowboys in Nye County, Nevada. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

only alternative was to keep on moving, "to change their location in space" or to gamble and get drunk and forget it all. Equally as revealing were the responses of the ranch foremen, feeders, managers, etc. Not only was the buckaroo placed in the lowest salary bracket, but he was also placed in the lowest in terms of prestige, being labelled by ranchers as lazy, undependable, and the "lowest of the low."

Whether the contemporary cowboy was patterned after his historical antecedents is a question impossible to resolve. But Budy found that Nevada cowboys often had been "rebellious impatient youths who fled their homes in their early teens and took to cowboying because it was available and because it was something they could learn to do.[7] The cowboy "spun yarns" and told humorous anecdotes, but had "little use for cold fact." Since his own life was mundane and uneventful, "the art of lying" was highly developed. Indeed, his life tended to become like his stories—vague and imprecise. Strangely enough, what the cowboy lacked was romance and glory. His lifestyle did not promote a "free spirit with individual choice"; rather it left him at the subsistence level, provided few opportunities, and crushed his hope for a brighter future.

Despite critical appraisals and sociological studies, the cowboy is a classic example of a myth which has triumphed over research and reality. He is legendary in half a dozen major artistic and humanistic fields. Museums, historical societies, publishing houses, libraries, movie studios, and live communication centers have effectively exploited the cowboy genre. There is the cowboy in art, the cowboy in music, the cowboy in drama, the cowboy in fiction, the cowboy in pornography, and the cowboy in storytelling; a few children may still be playing cowboys and Indians. As a historical figure the cowboy has been traced back to the Moors, Camelot, and even to ancient Mesopotamia. Exciting and saleable titles like *The Cowboy from Charles Goodnight to King Arthur, Fifteen Years on the Hurricane Deck of a Spanish Pony, Girls in the Saddle,* and *Hot Spur* suggest everything from action-packed heroics to base sex.

Today, from New York to London and from Rome to Tokyo, business executives and art connoisseurs, teen-agers and hard-hat construction workers march into western wear stores and outfit themselves with jeans, boots, hats, shirts and belt-buckles so that they can become part of the world-wide cowboy culture. The paperbacks, movies, clothes, open spaces, the apparent independence, and even the unsophisticated decency still hold the fancy and the imagination of a jaded and uncertain world. Real cowboys have long been confused or amused or embarrassed by the rhinestone, urban and midnight cowboys. But at the same time most intellectual and scientific studies which have tried to correct the myth have been labeled tiresome and unimaginative, if not un-American and antidemocratic. Equally as anti-climactic has been "the last cowboy." It is rather like one of Buffalo Bill's famous final performances. For a hundred years writers for magazines, newspapers, and books have declared that they were witnessing the "end of the cowboy era." For example, on June 13, 1982 the Reno *Gazette-Journal* ran a two page spread entitled "Nevada Buckaroos: The Last of the Real Cowboys."

Early in the present century the expanding disciplines of the social sciences (particularly anthropology, sociology and psychology) emerged as powerful

factors in shaping a new form of historical writing known as the monograph. Over the past few decades every aspect of human behavior from sports, witchcraft, and sex to circuses, merchandising, and cowboys have caught the fancy of monograph writers. Historians have entered the shadowy area of nonrecorded and even nonverbal relationships. Indeed, the study of aims, purposes, and circumstances has become the object of much structural investigation. But despite a certain behavioral vagueness, monographic history is theoretically more exacting, technical, specialized, and analytical than the traditional nineteenth-century narrative literary style. Over the past decade, however, a protest against the statistical and quantifiable history has emerged; and the older narrative approach has enjoyed a limited revival. The narrative form means telling a story, concern with human responsibility, notice of individual personality, and the author's general philosophy.

Owen Ulph notes both approaches and yet he refuses to accept either. *The Fiddleback* is a monograph in that a limited and specific topic is being addressed. He investigates human behavior and he uses nonrecorded sources. Yet Ulph attacks the "vulgarizing" and "dehumanizing" social and behavioral sciences. "They take the simple and render it unintelligible."[8] In a strange and inexact way Ulph champions the legacy of traditional narrative. His emphasis is always on telling a story, philosophizing, and probing the grand design. Yet he does not underpin his work with historical sources; he does not follow any academic or systematic form, and his narrative is neither balanced, consistent nor traditional. In short, *The Fiddleback* does not fit any abstract historical method. Rather Ulph, like many other intellectuals, has developed a fascination for, and draws his inspiration from, the rugged life. *The Fiddleback* reflects a kind of ambivalence; it tends to alternate between intellectual observations and tales told by or about the noble savage (cowboys). Almost every chapter repeats the two themes; there is the alleged clarity, simplicity, and pragmatism of the cowboy way of life balanced against Ulph's view of a complicated, sophisticated and generally depressing society.

It was some thirty years ago that central Nevada became Owen Ulph's Walden Pond. It still is. He lives at the 6200 foot level on an isolated ranch in the Ruby Mountains. With unflagging energy and unfailing memory he focuses on his experiences with Nevada cowboys, ransacking the familiar for misunderstood nuances, and oscillating between cowboy dialogue and personal declarations. Ulph is fascinated but not intoxicated with the character of the cowboy. He is never parochial. His work is designed to be a remedy for half-learned or misrepresented or misinterpreted history. Ulph seems to argue that it is the story of ordinary things that forms man's individual and collective personality. He feels free to invest in natural imagery and human tragedy. He is neither formal nor abstract, but rather aesthetic and intimate in his relationship with rural Nevada. He is at times garrulous and spontaneous, but he is not superfluous and does not editorialize. Ulph is not attempt-

ing to preserve the cowboy past as an inspiration for the present or as a source of guidance for the future. Rather he is talking to "nostalgic contemporaries to whom the code of the saddle would probably remain obscure without a temperate amount of explication."[9]

Ulph's principal turf is Smoky Valley; his main devices are cowboy stories and random evaluations of American life. But *The Fiddleback* is a multi-faceted and complex book, part cracker-barrel yarns, in part austere and objective, and occasionally it is willful and indulgent. How does one deal with a study of cowboys which notes such famous men of philosophy and fiction as Prometheus, Xenophon, Hercules, Atlas, Achilles, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, Hegel, Bentham, Gogal, Pavlov, Sartre, Lenin and Marx? The author not only introduces the standard western authorities such as J. Frank Dobie, Douglas Branch, Bernard DeVoto and Frederick Jackson Turner, but he also comments on God, the Devil, metaphysics, stoicism, skepticism, cynicism, and xenophobia.

While critical of the Hollywood romances, the Louie L'Amour paperbacks, and the academic truth squad, Ulph, nevertheless, is at the same time both romantic and analytical. The eight chapters of *Fiddleback* are not consistent in style or literary approach. At times the author's asides and digressions overpower and mute the subject at hand; one would be hard pressed to pinpoint the book's central theme. The author refuses to cater to the dilatory reader. The Ulphisms are delightfully strident. ("Virtues are counterparts of certain inverse traits inappropriately called vices." "A compassionate deity was as comprehensible as a softhearted horsefly.")[10] Ulph generalizes about practical morality, justice, man and society. Cowboy virtue and performance were not occupational or "applicable only to time and conditions." Rather, the cowboys had innate virtues characterized by all the "inconspicuously great men throughout recorded history."[11] Ulph supports valid myth which "distills meaning from history," but he opposes vulgarized mythology which leads to dehumanized abstractions and brutalized legacies. He favors an ethical campaign against "rampant pollution of civilized life by unremitting and unregenerate commercialism." And yet he admits that "it is folly to attempt to recover your tobacco when it has blown away in a dust-storm." Population and technology have reduced "the individual to a midge." Sometimes in his almost capricious attacks he tends to destroy too much. We are left with only the author's deep concern and egocentric intellect. And finally, after he has gotten our attention and our respect, he refuses to show us a new way or lead us to a new salvation. He will not become another twentieth-century Messiah.

In fairness, Ulph's comments on the state of the world are secondary to his declared purpose of rescuing the cowboy "from the misguided adulation of admirers and the undeserved scorn of detractors." He describes and explains cowboy behavior; like some social anthropologists of the seventies, he turns

to a repersonalization and at times to the dramatic. The book is an intimate memoir of the author's cowboy days, and much more. Ulph tries to find the true figure in the carpet and at the same time to expunge cheap prefabrications. In doing this, it is the author rather than the subject which often emerges. George Orwell once noted in an essay on "Why I Write" that "good prose is like a window pane," and emphasized that when he lacked emotional and political purpose he wrote "lifeless books" with "purple passages" composed of "decorative adjectives" and "humbug."

Clearly Ulph has purpose. His essays are neither designed to be empirical studies or theoretical disquisitions. Rather, they are attempts to take us close to the intimacies and the immediacies of cowboy life, and to push forward a particular and occasionally a peculiar view of what that life really was. He seems to believe that cowboys are human animals suspended in webs of significance which both they and society have misunderstood. His analysis, therefore, is not rendered as a service to scholarship but rather as a happy fruition for the author and his close friends. He finds that neither theorizing, nor journalism, nor oral history can bring the sympathetic experiences and humanistic concerns required to explain the cowboy.

Ulph does not attempt artistic descriptions of landscapes; neither does he register anger at the forces of destruction, or offer jeremiads on societal failures. His criminals are mainly products of the system, and his men of character are unassuming cowbosses. He applies warmth, admiration, and feeling to natural, simple, crude individuals. He provides atmosphere laced with anecdote, and slowly the reader becomes privy to the cowboy sensibility. In addition to wit, humor and sarcasm Ulph is also nostalgic. He never robs the cowboy of pride or of a capacity for the courageous. Cowboys are never seen as downtrodden, poor, or deprived. They are not shiftless or irresponsible, but are "nomads." Since "few cowhands have possessed the inclination, schooling, or talent to serve as their own press agents," Ulph wants his cowboy friends and all readers to know and remember, even though vaguely, the "code of the saddle."

In addition to explaining the cowboy and questioning society, Ulph is at heart a scholar who enjoys doing what good scholars do. He masters the character of his participants and the quality of their environment. He does not study cowboys, he knows them. He corrals their peculiarities and makes them normal and understandable. He deftly analyzes perceptions, interprets facts, and reduces truth to meaningful lore. Most important, he has generosity of spirit and he reveals a soul. His few paragraphs on religion, God, and the Devil may say more than some philosophical treatises.

In reading *The Fiddleback*, one cannot forget that the Great Basin and much of the West is a vast barren landscape with an imposing geology. Compared with the East or South, it is imbued with little human history or regional variety; there are few long-established neighborhoods. In Nevada

nature is not worn down to an accessible scale; at times there is scarcely enough physical detail to forestall a feeling of mental anemia:

> The range presented an inexhaustible record of unwitnessed tragedy. Everywhere, withered hides clung to the crumbling scaffoldings of gray-white bones—midget tents pitched across the arid wasteland, visited only by the ubiquitous magpie and other scavengers of the purple sage. Carcasses in bogs, ravines, and caved-in mine shafts, carcasses heaped against corners of drift fences where blizzard-trapped animals, their backs to the scourging wind, perished in mass misery, carcasses strewn around water holes baked into yellow crusts by years of drought, carcasses in the buckbrush, in swampy meadows, amid the mountain timber—these and countless other testaments to the savagery of the elements constantly sharpened the cowboy's awareness of the harshness of life.[12]

Like thousands of other frontiersmen, the cowboy sought survival for himself and his animals, and not visionary morality or innate justice. Ulph's cowboys are pragmatic and proud; like all good pioneers they should quietly and with dignity take their position in the great American hall of myths.

Man's past is not a story waiting to be told. History does not really happen in story form. Rather it is drawn together, connected, and given meaning. The plot, the significance, the dissection, are always retrospective. Students of local and western lore often seem to believe that Indians, explorers, migrants, and cowboys were two dimensional, and that the facts merely need to be uncovered. Ulph knows that any story, any myth, is in the will of the beholder. Therefore, in a very special way *The Fiddleback* is eccentric and idiosyncratic. The author is highly selective in the events he has stressed and neglected to stress. Perhaps his narrative is just another form of fiction. But at any rate, Ulph and his characters move agilely in both mind and body in a way that challenges and delights the reader. *The Fiddleback* respects the human psyche and allows for a spiritual dimension. In an age when sleaziness and phonyness tempt us to equate mindless popularity with achievement, Ulph reminds us what genuine thought with all its permutations really is.

[1] Owen Ulph, *The Fiddleback: Lore of the Line Camp* (Salt Lake City, Dream Garden Press, 1981), 234 pp.

[2] One of the most informative histories of the cowboy is David Dary's *Cowboy Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1981).

[3] See Dobie's *Guide to Life and Literature of the Southwest*, 1952, p. 89.

[4] Russell R. Elliott, *History of Nevada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), p. 121.

[5] Anne Martin, "Nevada: Beautiful Desert of Buried Hopes," *The Nation*, July 26, 1922.

[6] Elizabeth E. Budy, "Cowboys and Cowboying in Nevada." A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Master of Arts Degree, University of Nevada, Reno, 1976.

[7] Budy, p. 26.

[8] Oral interview conducted in Lamoille, Nevada, August 16, 1982.

[9] Ulph, p. 3.

[10] Ibid., pp. 80-81.

[11] Ibid., p. 190.

[12] Ibid., p. 82.

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- **Nevada State Museum Newsletter** — the publication of a sister museum in the Department of Museums and History, the newsletter keeps all members informed of upcoming events.
- **Discount** of 15% in the Nevada Historical Society Gift Shop and in the gift shops of the other museums of the Department of Museums and History.
- **Tours** — Society sponsored tours take members to historic sites within reach of Reno. 15% discount on tour fares.
- Special notice of all Society events and activities.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

☐ Regular — $25.
☐ Family — $30.
☐ Student — $5.
☐ Senior Citizen (60 or over) without *Quarterly* — $7.50.
☐ Sustaining — $35.
☐ Contributing — $50.
☐ Associate Fellow — $100.
☐ Fellow — $250.
☐ Associate Patron — $500.
☐ Corporate Patron — $1000.
☐ Life — $2,500.

Special memberships help defray the cost of special exhibitions and education projects.

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Mail to Membership Department, Nevada Historical Society
1650 N. Virginia Street, Reno, NV 89503

NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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