Nevada

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NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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FRONT AND BACK COVER: Gambling photo collage designed and photographed by Erik Lauritzen. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

SUCKERS AND ESCAPISTS?
Interpreting Las Vegas and Post-war America

John M. Findlay

WHILE MOST OBSERVERS HAVE TENDED TO PLACE LAS VEGAS, Nevada, on the margins of their mental maps of the American cultural landscape, a few writers have occasionally proposed a more central location for the nation's gambling capital. In 1965 the journalist Tom Wolfe, in *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, portrayed Las Vegas as an exaggerated version of a new national lifestyle. In 1972 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour advised students of American urban architecture that they ought to be *Learning from Las Vegas*. And in 1979 Robert G. Kaiser and Jon Lowell chose Las Vegas as the most logical site for studying *Great American Dreams: A Portrait of the Way We Are*. Although none of these works appears to have altered the general tendency to see Las Vegas strictly as an aberration, they nonetheless make a forceful case for viewing Nevada's leading metropolis as more than a loose thread in the American fabric. Following up on their leads, the present essay offers historical perspective on the national importance of Las Vegas during the mid-twentieth century. It considers explanations of why people gambled in the resort town in the context of widely held beliefs about the nature of American society after World War II.

As the betting capital of the United States, Las Vegas is a creature of the postwar period. Public commercial gaming had taken hold there in the early 1930s after the state of Nevada legalized the activity as one response to the Great Depression, and in the hectic years of World War II, the city surpassed Reno as the best-known site of legal gambling in the country. But Las Vegas truly came into its own only after 1945, taking on a new and distinctive form with the development of the Las Vegas Strip. It became the regular beat of a number of widely read journalists; the setting for movies, television shows, and novels; and the destination of more than ten million tourists annually by

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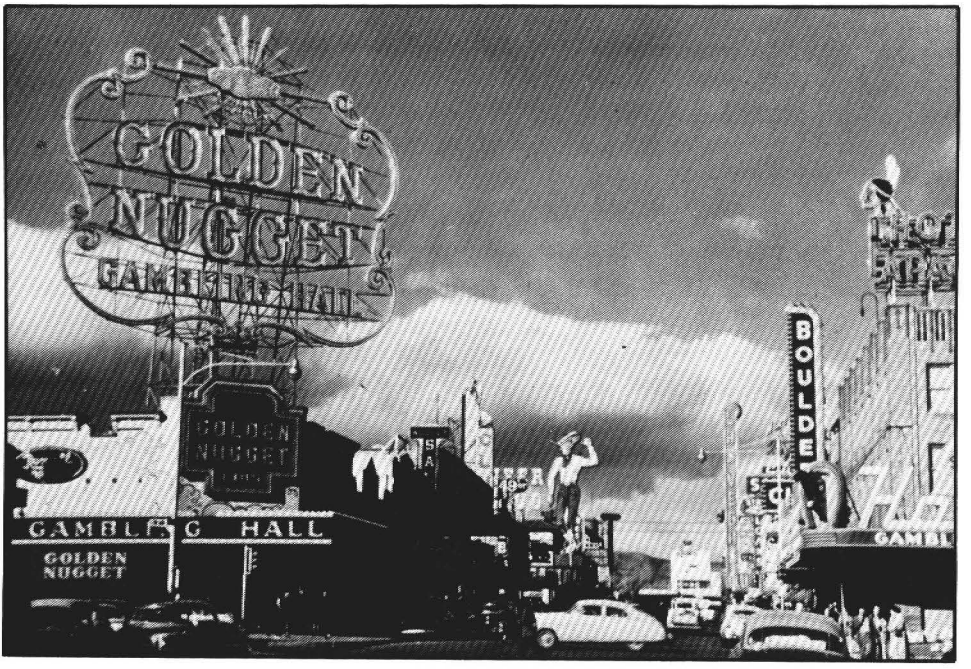


Fremont Street, Las Vegas, 1950. *(Nevada State Museum and Historical Society)*

1960.[1] It became, in short, a national phenomenon during the postwar era, and a place worthy of historical exploration for those hoping to learn something about the larger society. This is not to say that Las Vegas typified American culture after the war, but to suggest that the city may be analyzed in ways that illuminate little-understood aspects of the broader civilization.

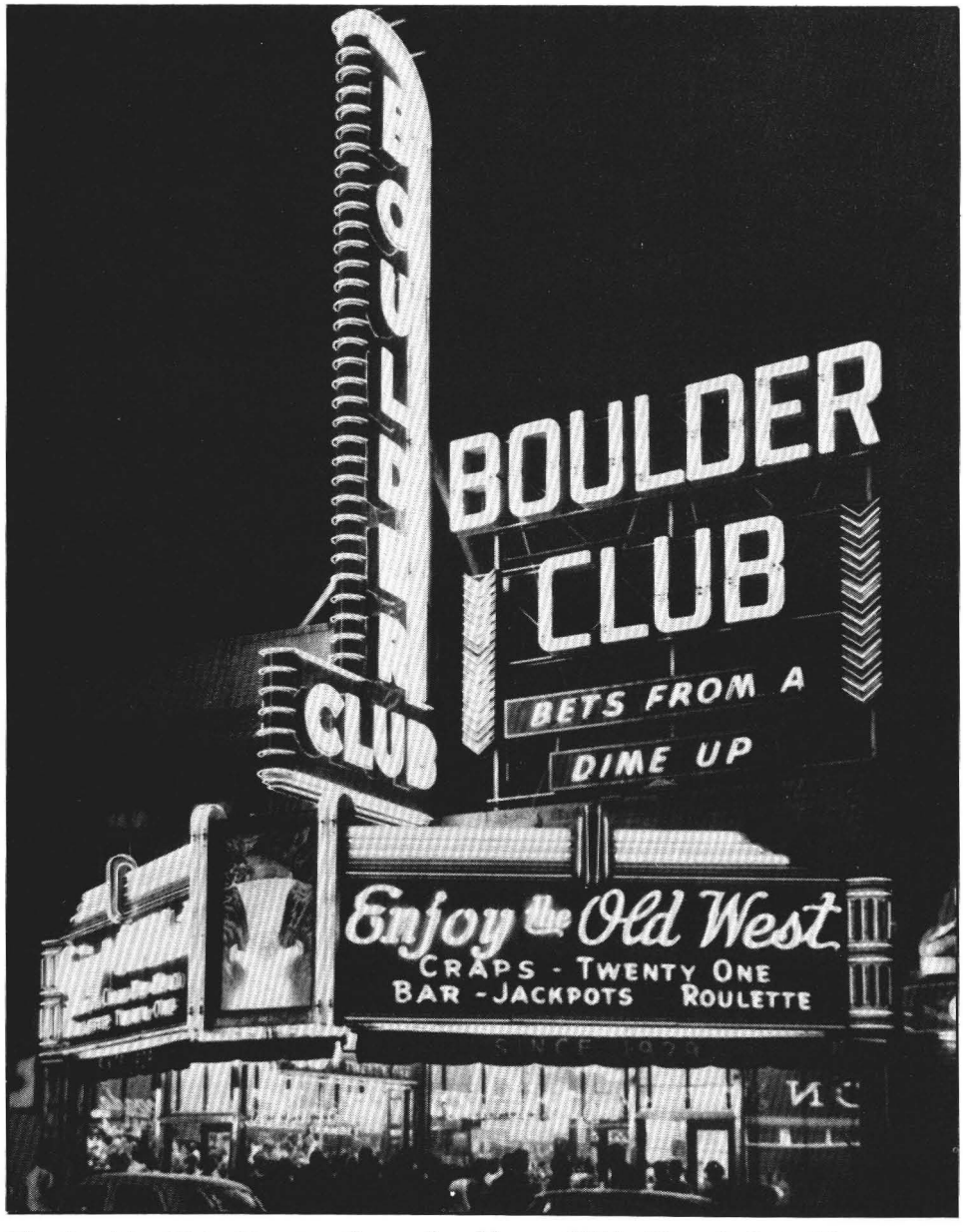
The two decades following World War II have a reputation as a comparatively conservative era in United States history. This reputation derives in part from legal, political, and diplomatic trends, all of which were affirmed in Las Vegas. Residents of the city postponed the desegregation of casinos, resisted the policies and programs of the welfare state, and embraced the anticommunist crusade. The reputation also rests, however, on an analysis of society and culture that was in large part framed by contemporary critics. Historians have tended to agree with John Kenneth Galbraith's characterization of society as the bland leading the bland, and with C. Wright Mills's picture of middle America "as a great salesroom, an enormous file, an incorporated brain, a new universe of management and manipulation."[2] Again, a study of Las Vegas provides some confirmation of these views, but, predictably for a city that defies blandness, it provides a glimpse of something else as well. Las Vegas flourished largely because of an upheaval in culture, most notably in the Far West, that brought some striking, and perhaps even liberating, innovations to the American scene.

To probe the significance of Las Vegas, I propose to scrutinize two different explanations, characteristic of critics of the 1950s, as to why people went there to gamble. One holds that visitors to Las Vegas were suckers, the other that Las Vegas provided a needed escape from everyday society. Variations of these arguments prevail today in textbook accounts of American society after the war. While both perspectives provide some insight, the deficiencies in each critique recommend that we supplement them with still another angle on both Las Vegas and United States society after the war, one that considers the gambling capital as an artifact of a culture undergoing substantial change.

Before considering the two explanations of the attraction of postwar Las Vegas, it may be helpful to summarize the traits of those who travelled there to gamble. There is little hard evidence about the social and economic position of tourists in Las Vegas, but one may infer that most of them were of a middling status. "High-rollers" naturally received a lot of attention, but were hardly typical tourists. On the other hand, the city was remote enough from most centers of population to discourage the poorest people from coming; the majority of visitors had to have enough money to stay overnight, and to afford to gamble.[3] As a rule, vacationers lost just enough to cause them to stop wagering and go home, but seldom enough either to discourage them from returning or to mark them as problem gamblers.[4] Most gamblers were adult men, although periodically Las Vegas worked to attract more women by featuring entertainment designed to interest them and by facilitating play at what were perceived to be the preferred games of wives. Finally, and perhaps most important for understanding the place of Las Vegas in American civilization, the majority of the city's visitors came from the Far West, especially southern California—and needless to say, they arrived by car.

Why did they come? One view holds that people visited Las Vegas and gambled there either because they were ignorant, or because they were in some way manipulated to behave in a fashion that they would not normally have chosen. That millions of Americans could be so gullible as to throw their money away in Las Vegas is not inconsistent with the conventional historical wisdom about the 1950s. Our textbooks rely heavily on ideas and phrases coined by leading social critics of the time, who clearly doubted the abilities of average citizens to resist the temptations of advertisers and other mass media, to resist the complacent security of "Consensus and Conformity," to resist the urge to flee to the safe worlds of suburbia and the corporation.[5] In the eyes of social critics, Americans had been more astute when they were less wealthy. Now, John Kenneth Galbraith explained in 1958, the affluent American possessed "a well-observed tendency to put [his wealth] to the wrong purposes or otherwise to make himself foolish."[6]

There is no evidence that the renowned economist had Las Vegas on his mind when he explained how affluence had befuddled Americans, but there was no need for Galbraith to make explicit the connection between Las Vegas



The Boulder Club, Fremont Street, Las Vegas, 1954. *(Nevada State Museum and Historical Society)*

and American foolishness. Many others had already marked the gambling capital as a prime example of the irrationality that could seize members of the society in the face of economic abundance and institutional power. According to some observers, Las Vegas catered to "suckers," people who either didn't

know any better or were seduced by the advertising, bright lights, free-flowing liquor, and illusions of wealth to shed their natural suspicions of gambling.[7] The atmosphere and architecture of casinos encouraged players to lose track of their conventional senses of time and money, so that they seemed compelled to put their money down at the tables.[8]

To take advantage of naïve tourists, the critique continued, Las Vegas had turned itself into an entirely artificial and insincere place. Caricaturing, perhaps, that personality identified by David Riesman in *The Lonely Crowd* as "other-directed," the city had no identity of its own. Rather, it prospered by catering cynically to whatever the tourist wanted, keeping up the appearance of casual and harmless fun at all costs.[9] The casino became a vulgar, high-volume "assembly line," devoted to "fleecing tourists" for the benefit of faceless corporations, many of which were controlled by organized crime.[10]

This view of Las Vegas and of postwar Americans has some merit. At both the local and the national levels, the "power elite" in government and business, and the "hidden persuaders" of Madison Avenue, helped to define a context within which people lived and worked and consumed. And in Las Vegas the techniques for designing casinos whose architecture and atmosphere ensured maximum yields became a successful science. However, this interpretation of Las Vegas explains neither the timing of the city's ascendance on the American landscape nor the motivations of individual visitors. It suggests, in fact, too little understanding of the behavior of average bettors in Las Vegas, and too much faith in the views of postwar social critics.

In uncritically affirming the critics' assessment of postwar society, historians have reduced our ability to understand why postwar Americans gambled in Las Vegas. The historians have stressed the same traits that contemporary social critics regarded as distinctive, even though the attributes supposedly peculiar to the period—leisure, suburbia, advertising, and mass culture—had long antecedents and did not simply spring up full-blown at the end of World War II. Moreover, historians seem to have inherited the critics' preoccupation with the fate of the helpless individual (generally portrayed as a white, suburban, middle-class male from the Northeast) in mass society.[11] But much evidence indicates that members of the affluent society were not so mindless after all. Americans devoted some of their increasing income to such culturally uplifting activities as acquiring more education, travelling more frequently, supporting the arts, and buying more records of classical music.[12] The very fact that the "people of plenty" could make books by Galbraith and other social critics into best sellers suggests that wealth was not necessarily a relentless enemy of understanding.

Without accepting President Dwight D. Eisenhower's dictum that Americans were " 'a happy people' doing exactly what they choose,"[13] we can perhaps refine our generalizations about the character of postwar society. One way to start the process is to focus on what average Americans, rather than

social critics, said about themselves. In a recent study of men and women of the 1950s, Benita Eisler presents a people whose private lives stood quite apart from the "willed blandness in style, speech, and dress" that they adopted for external consumption.[14] To understand this dimension of cultural history, historians might examine situations in which people had removed themselves from the pressures of public convention.

Las Vegas is one place to begin. On the surface, the city reinforces the image of the mindless citizen: If betting is regarded as throwing away one's money, gambling represents the ultimate in irrational behavior. However, a closer look at the nature of gambling tells us that bettors brought serious purpose and calculation to the games they played. In Las Vegas, most casino patrons lost money—and knew that they would—but the money was not thrown away without return. Gambling was a form of recreation akin in many respects to attending movies, visiting amusement parks, or vacationing at a spa. Lost wagers were simply the price of admission, and for the money a player received benefit in the form of a memorable experience. Without money, games of chance were meaningless; with money, they gained seriousness and excitement, and were therefore rewarding and worthwhile—even if the player lost his bet.[15]

Bettors in the Las Vegas casinos may be likened to consumers who purchase commodities not just for subsistence and display but because the goods they consume also help to create or sustain some essential cultural meaning that they have in large part defined for themselves.[16] Once the activity of consumption is taken seriously,[17] the act of gambling seems less frivolous or naïve, and more a matter of weighty choice for players. Defining bettors as consumers also makes it easier to see that they could be quite shrewd with their disposable income. Many patrons of Las Vegas casinos calculated cost and benefit carefully, rather than wagering thoughtlessly. Although the inexperienced bettors (including many women) who tended to congregate at slot machines did not wager cautiously, more knowledgeable players favored the games that offered the best odds. They preferred "craps, '21', and roulette—in that order—the same as the order of percentages against them."[18] It might be said that skilled consumers of gambling vacations knew how to get the "most meaning" for their money.

What exactly were the cultural meanings of the popularity of casino games in postwar Las Vegas? This question leads to a consideration of the second critique of Las Vegas—that it represented a kind of safety valve for a society whose existence bordered on the insufferable. If Las Vegas served any useful function at all, according to the critics, it was to salve the wounds inflicted by the larger culture. Throwing one's money away at the gambling tables was a form of protest against the stifling economic system, a mockery of the values of capitalism.[19] More important, Las Vegas provided an escape from any

The Mint, a popular gambling spot in Las Vegas, c. 1958. *(Nevada State Museum and Historical Society)*

number of culturally induced problems. Some tourists escaped from their own "inner emptiness"; others sought refuge from day-to-day boredom and austerity; still others freed themselves from the specific ills that beset the society, such as the cold war, racial tensions, and increasing crime rates.[20] Finally, the sense of excitement and liberation that infused the casinos compensated for "the contemporary package of adjusted organization life," the pressure to conform, and the "tension and boredom" inherent in the culture.[21]

In equating the gambling capital with escape, discussions of Las Vegas borrowed terms and ideas from postwar intellectuals' appraisals of the society.[22] Again, historians of the period 1945–65 have tended to rely upon the same terms and ideas: In their view, the constraints of conformity and corporations, the pervasive fear of the cold war and atomic destruction, the "Flight from Cities" to "Station Wagon Suburbs" all bespoke a widespread, largely unarticulated malaise that encouraged escapism. Feeling "hedged-in"

and diminished by "Russian threats abroad and the restraints and manipulations of large organizations at home," in the words of historian Roland Marchand, people embraced "popular culture reveries" that provided the "diversion and transitory compensation" necessary for them to forget the world's troubles, as well as restoring "a reassuring sense of individual dominion."[23]

Like the view that the behavior of average people could become foolish and gullible in an era of affluence and mass culture, the portrayal of escape as a crucial ingredient in postwar culture is partly persuasive. One of the purposes for taking a gambling vacation in Nevada *was* to depart from the everyday world. The issue of timing, however, remains unresolved. Like big organizations and international tensions, the need to escape was not something new or peculiar to the postwar period, and neither was the effort to carve out a sphere of personal autonomy. Historians need not have tried so hard to demonstrate the existence of these tendencies, since the urge to escape appears to affect all societies; further, it would be difficult to prove that one decade needed escape and personal dominion more than another. Rather, it may be more helpful to explain how the form and meaning of the two pursuits changed to suit the needs of particular periods. Moreover, we need to document more thoroughly how average people themselves interpreted their participation in popular culture.

Vacationers left little forthright evidence about why they gambled in Las Vegas, but the multiple implications of betting and the forms of tourist behavior in southern Nevada do not fully support the idea that their recreation represented a protest against or escape from the surrounding civilization.[24] In fact, when polled in 1965 about why they came to the city, tourists stressed three overlapping attractions: "entertainment and nightlife," "gambling," and the "atmosphere of excitement, glamour, and luxurious surroundings," in that order.[25] These responses reveal that casino patrons, whatever else their motives, were quite consciously trying their hand not so much at legal betting by itself, but rather at a way of living that featured wide-open gambling as well as numerous other attractions.

Las Vegas presented, in a safely packaged but highly distilled form, what Tom Wolfe termed "the super-hyper-version" of a "whole new way of life in America."[26] In doses of three days and two nights, it offered tourists the chance to sample exotica and innovations, luxuries and pleasures, that had never before been both so accessible and so acceptable. The effect may have been rather liberating. Visitors to Las Vegas could learn something about the future that seemed to be in store for postwar society, and at the same time they could see themselves in a different light by envisioning how they would fit into the new picture.

To be sure, gambling vacations offered neither an imaginative nor an accurate view of tomorrow. Las Vegas embodied a new direction in American

Gambling is an activity that is promoted in many ways, as shown in this 1958 photo of the Sands Hotel/Casino, including floating 21 tables and poolside slots. *(Las Vegas News Bureau)*

civilization less by announcing new hopes than by fulfilling old ones. Economic abundance, increased leisure and convenience, greater mastery over nature, and expanded personal freedom were all old cultural ideals that seemed more attainable after 1945 than before. Many of those Americans who had endured the crises of the years 1929–45 were prepared to agree with Walt Disney that the era in which they were living was "a dream coming true," and the sentiment perhaps led to a tone of complacency and conservatism in the society.[27] After decades of trial, American culture seemed to be fulfilling people's yearning to "Return to Normalcy," as the textbooks point out.

But the fact is that the normalcy to which postwar Americans aspired was not a bygone world to be recreated, but "something entirely new" in their history, a new way of life in an unprecedented setting.[28] The ideals that nurtured Las Vegas may have been bound in convention, but the city that they created was not. Las Vegas exemplified the plethora of cultural change occurring throughout the United States after the war, a transformation whose

momentum and logic defied the characteristic blandness of the age. Americans may have remained conservative in many matters, but the sheer accumulation of cultural innovation precipitated changes that influenced the country in profound and often unanticipated ways.

Transformation was boldest in the realm of material culture.[29] If political and diplomatic and social attitudes were slow to change between 1945 and 1965, the technologies and landscapes of the era were not. Postwar inventions, ranging in size from the birth-control pill or transistor to the Apollo rocket, helped to usher in attitudes and values that were sometimes radically different from their predecessors.[30] Similarly, the landscape could no longer be looked upon in the same fashion. The birth of the McDonald's hamburger chain in 1955, the creation of a national interstate highway system in 1956, the beginnings of regular international jetliner service in 1957, and the migration of major-league baseball to the West Coast in 1958 were but four instances of Americans forming dramatically new relationships between themselves and their physical surroundings.[31] Las Vegas was another.

As an artifact of material culture, Las Vegas suggested rapid transformations on the land and in people's attitudes. Some of the changes—such as the broadening influence of autos and movies, and an increasing devotion to the enterprise of consumption—had been accumulating since before World War II.[32] Others were more recent, resulting in part from the crises of the depression and war themselves, and included a more widespread sense of affluence and a greater permissiveness toward gambling.[33] Together, these values helped to fashion an urban setting that conformed to nothing that had gone before it. Such novelty in itself, a combination of chance and change, served to attract tourists. Las Vegas presented an exaggerated, but not aberrant, version of what was new throughout the American scene. By permitting people of middle-class budget and mind-set to sample the trappings of upper-class luxury and privilege, it reiterated a growing sense of classlessness in mid-century America.[34] Furthermore, the gambling capital exemplified new patterns on the cityscape. Strip casinos and hotels emerged in roughly the same period and style as the indoor shopping center, domed stadium, landscaped research park, and theme park. These new forms of land use represented not places for escape but rather new centers for culture and business in the metropolitan United States.

Disneyland was the best analogue to Las Vegas. Las Vegas has been called "Disneyland for adults,"[35] but since the gaming resort was in place before the amusement park opened in 1955, it may be more proper to call Disneyland "Las Vegas for families." Each place was an example of the "pragmatically themed environment," a postwar addition to the American landscape that by the 1970s had proliferated across the country in the form of gaming resorts, theme parks, shopping malls, and redeveloped downtowns.[36] Both Las Vegas and Disneyland demonstrated the application of movie-making techniques to

three-dimensional forms. Most important, both sites demonstrated the growing influence of California as a western fountain of cultural change.[37] Las Vegas and Disneyland encapsulated the innovations of California, and particularly of the Los Angeles area, that had begun to transform the look of clothes and buildings and cities across the country.[38] The civilization of southern California, including Las Vegas, epitomized that blend of unprogressive politics and rapid cultural change that may, more than our textbook stereotypes suggest, have typified the mid-century United States.

When postwar social critics wished to check the condition of their society, they generally took the pulse of eastern suburbs and corporations, and felt the hardening arteries of an aging culture.[39] Such an approach had been standard for decades because few expected to find much that was either new or significant in the far western regions of the country. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, the neglect of the more vital signs on the Pacific slope verged on critical malpractice. In light of the regional bias of contemporary social critics, it is no longer sufficient to accept so readily the notion that postwar Americans in general, and tourists in Las Vegas in particular, were suckers or escapists. Westerners were no doubt gullible in their own way, and many may well have held an escapist attitude, having come westward in often quite explicit rejection of the ways of the East. But they were also engaged in the creation of new cultural forms, defined at least in part on their own terms, that helped to remake ways of life across the country. The people who lived in cities like Los Angeles and who frequented resorts like Las Vegas belonged to a region in which rapid growth and perpetual mobility discouraged cultural fossilization and encouraged the creation of new cultural forms for the nation as a whole. Their experience in Nevada's casinos indicates that mid-twentieth-century Americans were more open to chance and change than the stereotypes of the postwar period have allowed.

NOTES

[1] In this article, much of the detail about postwar Las Vegas comes from John M. Findlay, *People of Chance: Gambling in American Society from Jamestown to Las Vegas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), chs. 4–6.

[2] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), 5; C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), xv.

The contention that historians have relied too heavily on the views of 1950s social critics is based in large part on a reading of depictions of postwar society and culture in numerous textbooks on U.S. history. One is struck by how much authors of the texts relied upon the very catch-phrases created by 1950s critics to frame historical discussion of postwar society and culture. Numerous chapters and subchapters are titled with such headings as "The Affluent Society," "People of Plenty," "Insolent Chariots," "White-Collar World," "The Power Elite," and "The Military-Industrial Complex." At times the texts challenge some of the conclusions of the social critics—for example one text ponders "A homogenized society?" along with "Stirrings under the surface," while another depicts suburbanites as "Conformists . . . ? . . . Or Social

Pioneers"—but they have still accepted the terms of discussion as handed down from the period in question, rather than developing their own analytical context.

The textbooks consulted include the following general surveys: John M. Blum *et al.*, *The National Experience*, 6th ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985); Joseph R. Conlin, *The American Past*, 2d ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984); Robert A. Divine *et al.*, *America: Past and Present* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1984); John A. Garraty, *A Short History of the American Nation*, 4th ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1985); Gerald J. Goodwin *et al.*, *A History of the United States*, 2d ed. (New York: Knopf, 1985); James A. Henretta *et al.*, *America's History; Since 1865* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1987); Winthrop D. Jordan *et al.*, *The United States*, 6th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall 1987); Robert Kelley, *The Shaping of the American Past*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1986); Gary B. Nash *et al.*, *The American People; Creating a Nation and a Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986); Mary Beth Norton *et al.*, *A People and a Nation; A History of the United States*, 2d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986); Norman K. Risjord, *America: A History of the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985); Edwin C. Rozwenc, *The Making of American Society* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1973); Charles Sellers *et al.*, *A Synopsis of American History*, 6th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985); George Brown Tindall, *America: A Narrative Portrait*, 2d ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988). Similar coverage is provided in the following texts devoted to post-World War II America: William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey; America since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Robert A. Divine, *Since 1945; Politics and Diplomacy in Recent American History*, 3d ed. (New York: Knopf, 1985); Melvyn Dubofsky and Athan Theoharis, *Imperial Democracy: The United States since 1945* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1983); James Gilbert, *Another Chance; Postwar America 1945-1985*, 2d ed. (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1986); William E. Leuchtenburg, *A Troubled Feast; American Society since 1945* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1983); Richard Polenberg, *One Nation Divisible: Class, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States since 1938* (New York: Pelican Books, 1980); Joseph M. Siracusa, *The Changing of America, 1945 to the Present* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Forum Press, 1986); Allan M. Winkler, *Modern America: The United States from World War II to the Present* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985); Lawrence S. Wittner, *Cold War America: From Hiroshima to Watergate* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974).

[3] There is much impressionistic evidence about the "middle-class" character of Las Vegas tourists. See, for example, Gladwin Hill, "Why They Gamble: A Las Vegas Survey," *New York Times Magazine*, 25 Aug. 1957: 27; Gilbert Millstein, "Mr. Coward Dissects Las Vegas," *New York Times Magazine*, 26 June 1955: 411; Tom Wolfe, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (New York: Pocket Books, 1966; orig. pub. 1965), xvi; Robert G. Kaiser and Jon Lowell, *Great American Dreams: A Portrait of the Way We Are* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 173, 253. The U.S. Commission on the Review of the National Policy toward Gambling, "Survey of American Gambling Attitudes and Behavior," supplement to *Gambling in America: Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 100, 115, 231, found that the cost of travel to the relatively remote city of Las Vegas tended to discourage play by the poorer strata of society.

[4] Hill, "Why They Gamble," 60, discusses the importance of repeat business. As the restrained pattern of "losses" and return visits suggests, most tourists in Las Vegas were not "problem" gamblers. Vicki Abt, James F. Smith, and Eugene Martin Christensen, *The Business of Risk: Commercial Gambling in Mainstream America* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1985), ch. 4 and p. 8, distinguish between conventional and nonconventional gambling. The vast majority of the population is conventional in its approach to gaming, meaning that gambling generally does not represent a social problem. Only a small fraction of the population is nonconventional, meaning it is either professional, obsessive, or compulsive in its gambling, and therefore more liable to represent a social problem. Less than one percent of the population consists of "probable" compulsive gamblers, and 2.33 percent of "potential" compulsive gamblers. (The figures are higher for residents of Nevada, adding up to almost five percent.) This paper deals with conventional gambling.

[5] The books that impress me as most representative of this way of thinking include: Hortense Powdermaker, *Hollywood, The Dream Factory* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1950); David Riesman with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, abr. ed., 1960; orig. pub. 1950); Mills, *White Collar;* David Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956); Galbraith, *Affluent Society.* Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age; American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), provides one selective review of these intellectuals; I concur with his

admiration for them (pp. ix-x). A number of other social critics, who wrote about advertising (e.g., Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders*), suburbs (e.g., John Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window*, and Richard E. Gordon *et al.*, *The Split-Level Trap*), and autos (e.g., John Keats, *The Insolent Chariots*), are also frequently cited by history textbooks in the same vein. The phrase "Consensus and Conformity," like others below that are shown capitalized and in quotation marks, comes from the textbooks listed in n.2.

[6] Galbraith, *Affluent Society*, 1, 2, 158.

[7] Julian Halevy, "Disneyland and Las Vegas," *Nation* 186 (7 June 1958): 511-12; William S. Fairfield, "Las Vegas: The Sucker and the Almost-even Break," *Reporter* 8 (9 June 1953): 15-21; Ian Fleming, *Diamonds Are Forever* (New York: Signet Books, 1956), 88. In general terms, Virgil W. Peterson, "Obstacles to Enforcement of Gambling Laws," in Morris Ploscowe and Edwin J. Lukas (eds.), *Gambling*, v. 269 of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (May 1950), 18, depicted how advertising lured into casinos those who could least afford to gamble.

[8] Fleming, *Diamonds Are Forever*, 96; Sean O'Faolain, "The Coarse and Lovely Illusions of Las Vegas," *Holiday* 20 (Sept. 1956): 58; Ed Reid, *Las Vegas: City without Clocks* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 20. The sentiment was more recently reiterated by A. Alvarez, "A Reporter at Large; The Biggest Game in Town—I," *New Yorker* 59 (7 March 1983): 80-81.

[9] See, for example, Max Miller, *Reno* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1941), 256-58; Walter Van Tilburg Clark, "Reno: The State City," in Ray B. West, Jr. (ed.), *Rocky Mountain Cities* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1949), 50; Oscar Lewis, *Sagebrush Casinos; The Story of Legal Gambling in Nevada* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1953), 169-70; Neil Bowen Morgan, *Westward Tilt, the American West Today* (New York: Random House, 1963), 318-19. The point of view has been updated by: Jack Richardson, *Memoir of a Gambler* (London: Cape, 1980), 153; Peter Wiley and Robert Gottlieb, *Empires in the Sun; The Rise of the New American West* (New York: Putnam, 1982), 214.

[10] Writing about Reno, Ernest Havemann, "Gambler's Paradise Lost," *Life* 37 (25 Oct. 1954): 67, 72, depicted the impersonal, industrial process that gambling had become in Nevada. On tourists in Las Vegas, see Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris, *The Green Felt Jungle* (New York: Trident Press, 1963), 1; Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (New York: Knopf, 1957), 132-33, 185. Carey McWilliams, "Legalized Gambling Doesn't Pay," *Nation* 171 (25 Nov. 1950): 482-83 exemplifies the moralistic refrain that Las Vegas and Reno benefited from the losses of others. On the dominance of large corporations, see: Fairfield, "Sucker and the Almost-even Break," 20; "Whose Glitter Gulch?" *Newsweek* 52 (29 Sept. 1958): 72. Reports about political corruption and organized crime figures in Las Vegas were numerous. Good examples include: U.S. Senate Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce, *The Kefauver Committee Report on Organized Crime* (New York: Didier, 1951), 71-75; Mary K. Hammond, "Legalized Gambling in Nevada," *Current History* 21 (Sept. 1951): 177-79; Fred J. Cook, "Gambling, Inc.," *Nation* 191 (22 Oct. 1960): 297-302; *New York Times*, 18-22 Nov. 1963. Two novels, Zane Grey's *Boulder Dam* (1963) and John Haase's *Big Red* (1980), both of which depict Las Vegas in the 1930s, contain a picture of corruption and crime in the town that is more characteristic of post-1945 attitudes than pre-1940 reality.

[11] The limited vision of postwar social critics has been noted by Pells, *Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, 184, 186, and Roland Marchand, "Visions of Classlessness, Quests for Dominion: American Popular Culture, 1945-1960," in Robert H. Bremner and Gary W. Reichard (eds.), *Reshaping America: Society and Institutions 1945-1960* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 168-69, who commented on the narrow focus on middle-class people; Benita Eisler, *Private Lives; Men and Women of the Fifties* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1986), 14-15, and Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men; American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983), ch. 3, who argue that social critics neglected to analyze women's lives; and Bennett M. Berger, *Working-Class Suburb; A Study of Auto Workers in Suburbia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 11-13, 103, and Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners; Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 186, who disputed intellectuals' critique of suburbs. The idea of the mindless citizen of a mass society may be more a symptom of postwar intellectuals' concern about their own recent experience with totalitarianism than an accurate depiction of average Americans. See Pells, *Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, *passim*.

[12] That Americans were not so vulgar or uninspired in their tastes after all was the conclusion reached by planners of the 1962 Seattle World's Fair, who were concerned about presenting the right mixture of entertainment and education at their exposition. See especially Stanford Research Institute, "Research Services for the Washington State World Fair Commission; Memorandum Report No. 4," April 1958, in

Ewen C. Dingwall Papers, Manuscripts Collection, University of Washington Libraries. Included in the report were summaries of interviews with such experts on trends in American leisure as the manager of New York City's proposed Lincoln Center, the general manager of Disneyland, the president of Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, the president of the Mutual Broadcasting System, the general manager of Madison Square Garden, editors of major leisure industry magazines, the planning director at the Smithsonian Institution, and scholars Rolf Meyersohn, Reuel Denney, and Robert K. Merton. Other "cultural gains" are discussed by Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak, *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 8-9.

[13] Quoted in Frederick F. Siegel, *Troubled Journey: From Pearl Harbor to Ronald Reagan* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 105.

[14] Eisler, *Private Lives*, 7, 18, 20.

[15] Abt, Smith, Christensen, *Business of Risk*, 135, 137; Hill, "Why They Gamble," 27, 60; Robert D. Herman, *Gamblers and Gambling: Motives, Institutions, and Controls* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1976), 73-74; D.M. Downes, B.P. Davies, M.E. David, and P. Stone, *Gambling, Work, and Leisure: A Study Across Three Areas* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), 15.

[16] Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), esp. pp. 59-78, provide an insightful understanding of consumption. The authors specifically reject Galbraith's view of consumption as a matter of fulfilling either "real" or "contrived" needs, and argue that consumption of goods sustains a cultural "communication system" that transcends strict economic logic and defies moralistic views of consumption. (I recognize that gambling vacations were not "goods" in any physical sense, but they were commodities in the form of memorable experiences that could be purchased with money.)

[17] Additional perspective on the meaning of consumption is provided by Daniel Horowitz, *The Morality of Spending: Attitudes toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 168-70; Michael Schudson, "Criticizing the Critics of Advertising: Toward a Sociological View of Marketing," *Media, Culture and Society* 3 (Jan. 1981): 8-10. Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: Free Press, 1962), ch. 9, and Gans, *Levittowners*, 33-37, ch. 8, 189-91, 417, contrast the consumption patterns of Italian-Americans and Levittowners to intellectuals' picture of a mindless consumer society. Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), links the rise of the environmental movement to the emergence of a consumer society.

[18] Fairfield, "Las Vegas: The Sucker and the Almost-even Break," 18. This pattern may no longer apply. Since the 1970s, the relatively mindless slot machines and video games have become the main attraction in Las Vegas, producing 54 percent of casinos revenues by the mid-1980s. See *Los Angeles Times*, 2 Jan. 1987.

[19] Halevy, "Disneyland and Las Vegas," 512; O'Faolain, "Coarse and Lovely Illusions," 59.

[20] On Las Vegas as an island where one could get away from it all, see *Las Vegas Sun*, 17 Jan. 1951. On gambling as an escape from psychological constraints, consult Charlotte Olmsted, *Heads I Win; Tails You Lose* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 275; Reid and Demaris, *Green Felt Jungle*, 9. On Las Vegas as an escape from boredom, austerity, and specific social ills, turn to Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games* (1958), trans. Meyer Barash (New York: Schochen Books, 1979), 117; Perry Bruce Kaufman, "The Best City of Them All: A History of Las Vegas, 1930-1960" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1974), 544. Different views of Las Vegas as escape have been offered by John Pastier, "The Architecture of Escapism: Disney World and Las Vegas," *AIA Journal* 67 (Dec. 1978): 26-37; John Cawelti, "God's Country, Las Vegas, and the Gunfighter: Differing Versions of the West," *Western American Literature* 9 (Winter 1975): 275-76.

[21] Halevy, "Disneyland and Las Vegas," 511.

[22] Pells, *Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, 222-25, discusses social critics' concern about escapism.

[23] Marchand, "Visions of Classlessness, Quests for Dominion," 163-90. See also: Pells, *Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, 215. Marchand's treatment of postwar popular culture is brilliant, but he provides virtually no documentation that average people either truly felt that they needed escape or were actually aware that popular culture fulfilled that function.

[24] These ideas are more fully developed in Findlay, *People of Chance*, ch. 5.

[25] Don Robinson Murphy, "The Role of Changing External Relations in the Growth of Las Vegas, Nevada" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1969), 155; see also Hill, "Why They Gamble," 27, 60; and the comments of a Midwestern reporter, James B. Luber, cited in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, 25 Feb.

1954. Unfortunately, these sources are not very rigorous. Murphy relied on a poll where respondents had to explain why they visited Las Vegas in terms established by the survey. But there is little else to go on.

[26] Wolfe, *Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, xvi.

[27] "Wisdom of Walt Disney," *Wisdom* 32 (Dec. 1959): 78.

[28] Thomas Hine, *Populuxe* (New York: Knopf, 1986), 8-9.

[29] The study of material culture is "the study through artifacts (and other pertinent historical evidence) of the belief systems—the values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions—of a particular community or society, usually across time." Thomas J. Schlereth, "Material Culture Studies in America, 1876-1976," in Thomas J. Schlereth (comp.), *Material Culture Studies in America* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982), 3.

[30] For instance, Walter A. McDougall, . . . *the Heavens and the Earth; A Political History of the Space Age* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), documents how the rise of an American space program, for quite conservative reasons, resulted in a substantially liberalized view of the role of the state in U.S. society.

[31] Kenneth I. Helphand, "McUrbia; The 1950s and the Birth of the Contemporary American Landscape," *Places: A Quarterly Journal of Environmental Design* 5:2 (1988): 40-49. The novel importance of Las Vegas on the American landscape has been assessed by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977, orig. pub. 1972); Wolfe, *Kandy-Kolored, Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, xvi.

[32] James Oliver Robertson, *America's Business* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 188-254, argues that twentieth-century Americans transferred their entrepreneurial skills from the realm of production to the arena of consumption.

[33] On the increase in legalized betting during the depression, see U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, *The Development of the Law of Gambling: 1776-1976* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 427-32. On increased exposure to gaming during World War II, consult U.S. Commission on the Review of the National Policy toward Gambling, "Survey of American Gambling Attitudes and Behavior," 230-31.

[34] The growing sense of classlessness is discussed by many textbooks as well as by Marchand, "Visions of Classlessness, Quests for Dominion," 163-190.

[35] Kaufman, "Best City of Them All," ch. 4.

[36] Pastier, "Architecture of Escapism," 33, 35. Pastier noted that in 1978 the equivalent of one eighth of the American population annually visited either Disney World or Las Vegas, and one half of the population visited either those two places or a similar gaming resort or theme park.

[37] Historical geographers have traced the emergence of the Golden State as a "cultural hearth" to the 1920s, but its impact on American design crested after World War II at the same time that its population and wealth multiplied. On the importance of California and Los Angeles in American culture, see: D.W. Meinig, "The Continuous Shaping of America: A Prospectus for Geographers and Historians," *American Historical Review* 83 (Dec. 1978): 1200; D.W. Meinig, "Symbolic Landscapes: Some Idealizations of American Communities," in D.W. Meinig (ed.), *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes; Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 169-72; Peirce Lewis, "America between the Wars: The Engineering of a New Geography," in Robert D. Mitchell and Paul A. Groves (eds.), *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowan and Littlefield, 1987), 433-34; Marchand, "Visions of Classlessness, Quests for Dominion," 167-68.

[38] Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (Middlesex, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1973; orig. pub. 1971), 124, explains changes in southern California building styles as the consequence of "traditional cultural and social restraints" having "been overthrown and replaced by the preferences of a mobile, affluent, consumer-oriented society." The process, he continues, was probably furthest along in Las Vegas.

[39] Most social critics focused on such suburbs as the Levittowns in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, and Park Forest near Chicago. A few observers, however, sensed that the trend in the West was different. See, for example, Bruce Bliven, "The California Culture," *Harper's* 210 (Jan. 1955): 33-40; Nathan Glazer, "Notes on Southern California: 'A Reasonable Suggestion as to How Things Can Be'?" *Commentary* 28 (Aug. 1959): 100-107.

FROM BACK ALLEY TO MAIN STREET
Nevada's Acceptance of Gambling

Jerome E. Edwards

NEVADA'S REPUTATION LAY UNDER A THICK CLOUD of moral criticism for many years after the state relegalized gambling in 1931. In the federal system, the state deemed to fill a special niche, but to many it was not a desirable one. In Robert Laxalt's words, it has been perceived as "the Sin State," making a speciality of providing services that elsewhere are either outlawed or difficult to obtain. Ultimately the most important of these special legislated services was legalized gambling, but they also include, among others, the easiest divorce and marriage laws in the nation.[1]

For certain religious groups, what Nevada provided was morally offensive. Particularly was this true for the leadership of several powerful mainline Protestant denominations, such as the Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian, which had influenced the national moral tone for many years. After enactment of the 1931 gambling law, the Presbyterians of California and Nevada passed an official resolution extending "sympathy to our fellow Christians who must live and labor to promote morality in Nevada under the unhappy handicap which the moral breakdown of the state presents." Paul Hutchinson, writing a series of articles for the influential *Christian Century*, called Nevada "a prostitute state," a society "catering to vicious gain." He was not impressed with Reno either. The "purveyors of vice" had "drawn into Reno about as sorry a collection of the ragtag and bobtail of humanity as could be swept up." The town was overrun with "panhandlers and down-and-outers." Not all of the moral criticism of Nevada had a religious foundation. Some observers were just offended. Former President Harry S. Truman vented his bad temper at the state in the safe confines of his private diary by calling it "hell on earth," "that awful sinful place," and "a disgrace to free government."[2]

This moral disdain for Nevada and its special industries was complemented

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Harolds Club in Reno, c. 1950. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

and reinforced in the 1950s and 1960s by another popular image of the state, perpetrated by a spate of magazine articles and sensational books. These alleged that Nevada, and particularly Las Vegas, had become a safe haven for organized crime. Nevada, according to this view, not only provided services that were outlawed elsewhere, but it also gave sanctuary to people who were outlawed elsewhere: Las Vegas, it was held, had become a major center for organized crime, or the Mafia, as it came to be called. No less an individual than United States Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy believed that Nevada casinos served as "the bank of America's organized crime." Kennedy planned ultimately to use federal power to close down gambling in Nevada, a move stopped only by the assassination of his brother.[3]

Yet, this negative attitude is not the one that most people hold toward Nevada today. Gambling is increasingly becoming an acceptable force in American life. Indeed, Nevada's peculiar institution is being carefully studied, even emulated, by other states. Gambling has never been so widespread, at least in this century, and has gained increasing support and encouragement from organized government. And gambling, coupled with the other special legislated services, has been brilliantly successful in what it

has done for Nevada—this, indeed, is part of the national fascination with the institution.

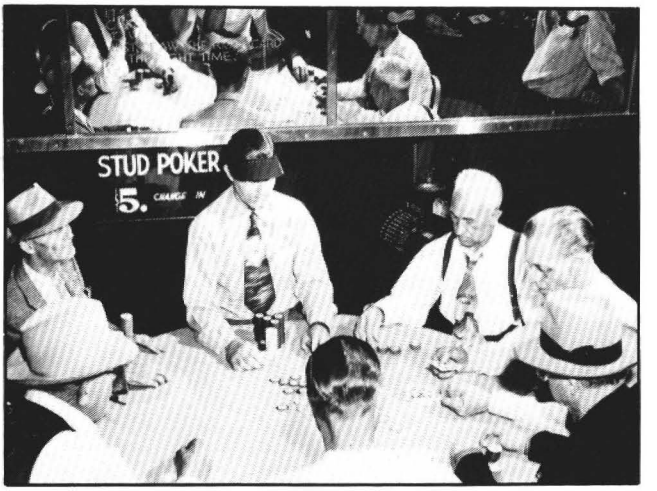
If America has gradually accepted this erstwhile vice, it has been because one specific state legalized it, giving it time and safety in which to grow, to develop and change, and to become something quite different from what it had started to be. The end result was a commodity quite attractive to those beyond Nevada's boundaries. To accept and protect their developing institution, Nevadans demonstrated either a certain self-assuredness or perhaps an insulation from standards prevalent elsewhere. There was clearly a major difference between what outsiders thought of Nevada and what Nevadans thought of themselves and their institutions. The purpose of this essay is to explore and suggest some of the reasons why the state of Nevada accepted legalized gambling and why its citizenry have clung to it so doggedly through the years.

In retrospect there may perhaps be a certain historic inevitability to Nevada's legalization of gambling in 1931. Certainly the state lacked the resources necessary for economic viability, and, ever since its admission as a state in 1864, it had ranked a sad last among the states in population. Too arid for extensive agriculture or for much harvestable timber, its comparatively rich mining resources supported only a small, fluctuating population. As recently as 1940 Nevada had only 110,247 people, approximately one person per square mile—a population a little smaller than that then enclosed within the city boundaries of Camden, New Jersey. According to this view, Nevada had to do something, simply to survive.

But the particular mix of Nevada's population in 1931 was also a factor conducive to the legalization of gambling. Nevada's mining and ranching heritage had created a specific society that could be open to legal experimentation with social forms outlawed elsewhere. Anne Martin, Nevada's early leader for women's rights, argued in 1922 that the state had an unhealthy society because it lacked a strong family environment. "It appears that practically one-half the men of Nevada, or nearly 20,000 out of our total population of nearly 80,000, are living under bad social conditions outside the home environment." In Martin's view, these lonely, single men were vulnerable to certain vices:

> A characteristic Nevada sight, and to those who know its significance one of the most pathetic, is the large groups of roughly dressed men aimlessly wandering about the streets or standing on the street corners of Reno, Lovelock, Winnemucca, Battle Mountain, Elko, Wells, Ely, Tonopah, Goldfield, and other towns, every day in the year. They are in from the ranches and mines for a holiday with hard-earned money, and the only place they have to spend it is in the numerous men's lodging houses, gambling dens, or brothels.[4]

Analysis of the 1930 United States Census suggests that Martin's descrip-



Harolds Club, a well-known gambling establishment in Reno since the '30s. These photos from the 1950s show two popular games: stud poker and chuck-a-luck. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

tion was right on the mark. Nevada indeed was heavily male-oriented, with 140.3 males per 100 females. This was by far the greatest disparity in numbers between the sexes in any state in the Union, including the District of Columbia. Subtracting those individuals below age 20, the ratio of the number of males to females grows to 160.8 to 100. The discrepancy was not greatest in the group aged 20 to 39, as one might have thought, but in the group over age 40, where the ratio is almost 2 men to 1 woman. Among the states, Nevada in 1930 had by far the lowest percentage of males 15 years of age and older who were married—less than half. There simply were not enough women to go around. It is certainly probable that this sexual asymmetry and the predominance of single adult males lent to Nevada's values certain features that would have been less prominent in a more balanced, family-oriented population.[5]

Then, too, church membership was low. Statistics for religious membership tend to be unreliable, and they are not always comparable among different reporting groups, but the available figures for 1926 and 1936, compiled by the federal government, and cross-checked with census information for 1930, suggest that Nevada's church membership of approximately 24 percent was among the smallest in the United States. Perhaps the statistics for individual denominations are more revealing. In 1936 the largest church in Nevada was the Roman Catholic, with 12,053 members. The Catholic Church has never stood particularly against gambling, nor, in Nevada, did it even take an active stance against permissive divorce legislation. Second in size was the Mormon Church, with 7,744 members. The Mormons were strongly antigambling but were not at this time an active political force in Nevada. The largest Protestant denomination was the relatively tolerant Protestant Episcopal Church, with 3,557 members. In the United States as a whole, the most militantly antigambling, antidrinking churches were the Methodist and Baptist, but in Nevada they had only a miniscule 927 and 1,193 members, respectively. So the population and religious composition of Nevada was unusually conducive to the permissive attitude that tolerated gambling.[6]

The bill to relegalize gambling (it had previously been legal from 1869 to 1910), although quite well publicized, produced minimal debate. In fact, it had already been written before reaching any official sponsor in the legislature. Norman Biltz, then close to Nevada kingpin George Wingfield, later declared, "All the legal brains of the state of Nevada—I say all principal ones—went to work to draft a gambling bill." Eventually first-term Assemblyman Phil Tobin from Humboldt County was prevailed upon to introduce the bill formally. Almost no one in the populace spoke in its favor. It was opposed by the *Reno Evening Gazette,* the state's largest newspaper; by some women's groups; and by representatives from the Mormon, Baptist, and Methodist churches. The legislature politely listened, and then passed the measure by 24:11 in the Assembly and an overwhelming 13:3 in the Senate. Governor Fred Balzar's immediate signature sealed what had appeared all along to have been a prearranged deal. As the *Gazette* spitefully commented, the legislature had been under the control of "aggressive lobbies."[7]

After its passage, the statute was accepted with remarkable equanimity. One writer commented that "no organized opposition to Reno liberalism exists at the moment. I asked the editor of one of the newspapers whether the churches had opposed the new liberalism. His answer was that they had done so, but that it was hopeless." On the whole the city seemed quite satisfied with things as they were: "The vast majority of Reno's citizens are well satisfied with the new regime, and her business men appear to stand unanimously behind open gambling and open prostitution."[8]

The Mapes Hotel in Reno, built in 1947, was frequented by locals and tourists because of the famous Sky Room restaurant. Photo c. 1950. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

The Anne Martins in the society had either left the state or shut up. The American Guide Series volume on Nevada, published in 1940 under the auspices of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration and sponsored by Jeanne Wier, director of the Nevada State Historical Society and a one-time ally of Martin, reflected this complacency:

> Though visitors occasionally put up large stakes, the local citizens stick to small amounts and, with many opportunities to observe the workings of the law of averages, are restrained in their gambling. Young Nevadans show relatively little interest in the sport when they reach the age that permits them to place counters on the roulette boards and pull slot machine handles. Further, the State is completely free of racketeers, in spite of the large sums handled by some of the clubs, and no Nevada prosecuting attorney has had a chance to make a name for himself by exposing corrupt relations between politicians and gambling club owners.[9]

In short, Nevada could offer wide-open gambling; it would be honest, and the state and its people would somehow be untainted by the institution. "But Nevada is large," the American Guide Series volume went on to say, "its

people content with their way of life, so it is unlikely that even large numbers of visitors will change its essential quality." A decade later, Joseph McDonald wrote in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* that there was "probably no other state in the United States today that could successfully control wide-open gambling." Why? Because the state was small in population and the people understood gambling. Besides, were there to be scandals, racketeering, and shootings, legal gambling "would go out in a hurry, as it did in 1909 when shortsighted gamblers tried to control the state's politics." Nevadans claimed to be somehow disembodied from the institution they were nurturing in their midst, and, if it did turn bad, the state could just abolish it, none the worse for the experience.[10]

The smug support for gambling reflected its strong popular backing. It would have been suicide for a politician to oppose gambling. That support, however, has never been tested by popular vote, either by referendum or proposed constitutional amendment, a fact that made some casino owners nervous. As Norman Biltz later recalled, "I can go back about thirty years [from 1967], and about every two years, here comes somebody with a petition. They got a few hundred names on it, and then the gamblers say, 'Well, what do you want for the petition?' And they'd say, '2,500,' or '5,' whatever it was. They'd buy the petition and tear it up." They might as well have saved their money. Gambling had overwhelming public support, as is attested by confidential surveys, commissioned by the Thomas C. Wilson Advertising Agency for Harolds Club over a twenty-year period. The surveys were conducted by Facts Consolidated, a Los Angeles research firm. In 1948, the survey asked people how Nevada's "progress" was affected by the gambling laws. Eighty-three percent answered that progress was helped by gambling, while only 14 percent believed that it was hindered. The 1948 survey also inquired as to what effect gambling had on taxation, to which 89 percent replied that it "helped" taxation. The survey also asked whether the 1931 law should be repealed. Only 9 percent favored repeal, and 82.5 percent wanted legalized gambling to remain. Later surveys suggested that popular support for gambling actually increased with time. By 1962, only 5 percent of the respondents polled thought that gambling should be repealed. As was evident from some of the responses, the wide support derived partly from the public's perception that gambling kept taxes low, a belief that accorded well with the semiofficial slogan "One Sound State"—the idea being that Nevada should offer a low-tax package in order to attract the wealthy to the state. Legalized gambling was popular because it threw much of the tax burden upon the tourist. Although gambling brought with it growth, and with that growth came increasing government responsibilities, the idea was somehow prevalent that gambling also decreased the tax burden for the individual, and everyone remained ahead of the game.[11]

In the 1940s and 1950s gambling began to take on a life of its own. For

approximately a decade after the passage of the 1931 law, gambling retained a frontier, back-room type of atmosphere. Then came the success of Harolds Club in Reno, which was fostered by new and adventurous advertising techniques. Gambling became something to be merchandised. In Las Vegas, entrepreneurs seized the opportunities presented by the arrival of thousands of tourists on their way to see newly constructed Hoover Dam. During World War II thousands of workers flooded into town to work at Basic Magnesium, Inc. (B.M.I.), and thousands of soldiers were being trained at the army gunnery school. Many of these enjoyed the gambling available in town. After 1946, commencing with the Flamingo, giant hotel-casinos were built on the rapidly developing Las Vegas Strip. Downtown Las Vegas became Glitter Gulch. Gross revenues from gambling operations in Nevada soared from $21,575,472 in 1946 to $55,235,560 in 1952 and an astonishing $145,037,000 in 1958. Gambling was increasingly indispensable to Nevada's economy, and by 1955 it had emerged as the state's chief industry.[12]

This momentous growth, at first ignored by many of the state's politicians, forced the crucial accommodation. By the 1950s, active protection of gambling became a necessity, because if gambling disappeared, the state's tourism, employment, and budget would also vanish. Nevada would be ruined. This accommodation is illustrated by the experience of United States Senator Patrick A. McCarran, easily the state's most important politician at the time. McCarran, if he had had his way, would have preferred other forms of industry for the state. As he wrote to Joseph McDonald, "The State has builded its economy on gambling. Indeed so much so, that I'm afraid we have blinked our eyes at that which to my mind is the stronger form of economy, namely, payrolls on legitimate business and payrolls coming from industry." The senator was forced to confront the situation because of the introduction of a bill in the United States House of Representatives that was specially designed to destroy Nevada gambling, a bill that "would close every gambling house, regardless of where it is located or how it is conducted. Virginia Street would be in mourning and the gleaming gulch of Las Vegas would be a glowing symbol of funereal distress." The results would be devastating for the state he loved, and, although not entirely happy with gambling's new indispensability, McCarran believed he had no choice but to try to save it. "I hope the time will come when the financial structure of the State of Nevada will not rest on gambling. I hope the time will come when we point with pride to industries of all kinds in the State of Nevada, with payrolls that will sustain the economy of Nevada. But that isn't today, Joe, and it won't be tomorrow." He succeeded in killing the legislation.[13]

Traditional business leadership also was forced to accommodate, for it, too, found gambling indispensable for maximization of investment and profits. No one illustrates this better than Norman Biltz, who had all sorts of ventures in real estate, ranching, and mining, but not gambling. Gambling made him

"nervous," and he believed that Nevada's growth should be orderly, slow, and selective. Biltz decided to build a hotel in Reno that would not offer gambling. He told his partners Stanley Dollar and John Mueller:

> "If you'll stand still for something, I want to try something. I want to experiment with something. Let's open the Holiday Hotel *without* gambling, with a lovely lobby and all the things that these people who are against gambling say they want and will support." Which we did. And a week after it opened, I got a boat and went around the world and left Mueller, which I guess was sort of a dirty trick. You could shoot a cannon through the place. I think on a good night we might have had five percent occupancy.
>
> When I got back, Mueller was pretty upset about it. We were in debt about $300,000, a loser in the hotel operation. We had it designed so gambling could be put in physically, if necessary. So we contacted Newt Crumley from Elko, and gambling went in, and the Holiday for the last three or four years has run about ninety-five percent occupancy, instead of five. And I don't hear any more from the die-hards about building them another public place without gambling.[14]

To protect gambling fully, however, the state had to recognize its responsibilities in regulating it. Before 1955 Nevada government had been remarkably permissive in matters of regulation, allowing virtually anyone who applied to own and operate a casino. The result was an influx of former felons to the gambling operations, as well as individuals sought elsewhere by the law. The sensationalized hearings of the Kefauver Committee in the United States Senate, with its charges of the existence of organized crime in Nevada, brought the dawning awareness that some sort of supervision by the state was necessary, or else the industry would be destroyed by an increasingly outraged federal government. Although Nevada had put gambling under state supervision in 1945, for a decade this supervision was desultory and ineffectual. Under Governor Charles Russell, however, the legislature created the State Gaming Control Board in 1955 and, under Governor Grant Sawyer, the State Gaming Control Commission in 1959. Several important court decisions, on both the state and federal levels, reinforced and even bolstered Nevada's regulatory powers. State government either had to regulate gambling or lose it. By supervising gambling, the state promised protection against a potentially vengeful federal government. Nevada government and gambling became partners in order to survive. The state also instituted use of the euphemistic word *gaming* as the name for its chief industry, a term less associated with sin, and one that implied that the gambling enterprise was just another business, as were the steel, automobile, and mining industries.

In the final analysis the chief reason for Nevada's acceptance of gambling has been the huge increase in population, for which the industry is itself respon-

sible. No state has had as great a percentage increase in population since 1940, and this growth is directly attributable to the expansion of gambling and of its supporting services. This ever-growing number of people means that an ever-growing number and percentage have a stake in the institution and in its perpetuation. The phenomenal gain in population has also meant a major redistribution of that population within the state. This, coupled with some crucial United States Supreme Court decisions, has fundamentally strengthened the gambling industry's political power.

In 1940, Nevada had but 110,247 people. By 1960, the number had risen to 285,278. In 1980, the figure was 800,493, and the 1990 census will surely report a population of well over a million. This astonishing growth has resulted directly from the success of gambling. In 1989, of 537,433 people employed in Nevada statewide, nearly 70 percent (372,000) worked in the gambling or associated industries. In Clark County, those with occupations in gambling or related industries accounted for 78 percent of the work force.[15]

With this huge increase has come a radical geographical redistribution of Nevada's inhabitants, a redistribution greater than in any other state. As might be expected, the area of the state where gambling is most dynamic and significant has had the greatest increase in population. Clark County, which had but 15 percent of Nevada's population in 1940 (16,416 people), went to 44 percent of the total in 1960 (127,016), and to 58 percent in 1980 (461,816). The 1990 census will push the figure well above 60 percent. No state, with the exception of Hawaii, has become so dominated by a single county-metropolitan area as has Nevada. By contrast, the urbanizing western tier of counties—Washoe, Carson City, Douglas—in which gambling is important, although less so than in the Las Vegas area, accounted for 34 percent of the whole (37,741 people) in 1940, remained at 34 percent in 1960 (96,287), and fell to 30 percent in 1980 (245,066). The really big losers in relative influence have been the thirteen other counties, which, although occupying territory of almost the size of West Germany, have very few people. This is the part of Nevada where mining and agriculture still hold sway. The thirteen counties have plummeted from a combined 51 percent of the total population in 1940 (56,100 people) to 22 percent in 1960 (61,975) to 12 percent in 1980 (93,626). At that time they averaged only about one individual per square mile. At the end of the 1980s their populations approximated only 10 percent of the state's citizenry.

Historically, the counties other than Washoe and Clark have been able to dominate in numbers the Nevada state legislature. This domination was protected by the state constitution, which gave each county, no matter how large or small, one seat in the Senate and a minimum of one seat in the Assembly. Thus, before 1965, the fifteen counties other than Washoe and Clark had fifteen out of seventeen Senate seats, and a disproportionate power in the Assembly. Since gambling was not a major industry in most of this area, there

was always the potential threat that the political power of the small rural counties could be used against casino interests. These counties had, however, been bought off in the closing days of the 1957 legislative session by an amendment to a gambling bill offered in conference committee by Senator Errit Cord, who represented tiny Esmeralda County. Cord's amendment distributed the table tax equally to each county, and it was estimated that in the first year of operation each county would receive $39,000, with the annual bounty to grow handsomely over the years. This tax distribution saved several counties from bankruptcy and possible dissolution. As Norman Biltz remarked concerning the deal, "Little Esmeralda County's got so much money with four hundred registered voters in Esmeralda; they got money running out of their ears." In 1957 the small counties had thus secured a stake in the perpetuation and growth of the gambling economy.[16]

Actually there was little need to buy off the small counties, as they were soon to lose their political power. The United States Supreme Court, in two decisions, *Baker* v. *Carr* (1962) and *Reynolds* v. *Sims* (1964), revolutionized the Nevada structure of government. The first of these decisions affirmed that the apportionment of state legislatures was a matter that was reviewable in the federal court system; the second decision declared that the apportionment of *both* houses of the legislature had to be according to population. Because of these decisions, Clark County, and to a lesser extent Washoe County, assumed greatly increased importance in the legislature. In the 1980s Clark County had twelve senators out of the twenty-one, and twenty-four of the forty-two members of the Assembly. By contrast, one state senator from the central district represents an area larger than the state of New York and the senator from the northern district represents an area larger than either Ohio or Tennessee.[17] The implication of the Supreme Court decisions was that dynamic growth and numbers were to become the sole determinants of representation and power in state government; other interests were brushed aside, and, from the standpoint of Nevada's chief industry, there was no great competing power—or population interest—to counteract its influence. It was not that the Clark County legislators were particularly united on most issues, and they certainly remained divided in party and ideology. But on gambling, Clark County and its political representatives do have a common interest in protecting and encouraging gambling. The industry's triumph in the state and its ultimate acceptance was completed with the apportionment decisions.

The acceptance and endorsement of casino gambling by Nevada was a crucial prerequisite to the growing acceptance that it has encountered elsewhere in the United States. Gross revenues in Nevada from gambling soared from $301,245,000 in 1965 to $1,065,392,000 in 1975 to more than 4 billion dollars in 1988. "Gaming" was certainly no longer a sin but had become part of the good times that Americans looked forward to on vacation. Advertisements

promoted by the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce depicted the local pastime as the "American Way to Play." In short, Nevada standards were becoming American standards. According to *Business Week*, "Gambling has gone through cycles of being prohibited and legalized. It's coming into the American mainstream." Michael Rumbolz, former head of the Nevada Gaming Control Board and head of Donald Trump's operations in Nevada stated, "You have a whole new generation of people who feel they can gamble without thinking that it reflects poorly on their character." It appears that government and society in the country at large are today making their way through a period of accommodation similar to that pioneered in the state of Nevada.[18]

NOTES

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[10] Joseph F. McDonald, "Gambling in Nevada," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 269 (May 1950): 30, 34.

[11] Biltz, "Memoirs," 120; Thomas C. Wilson Opinion Survey, manuscript division, Nevada Historical Society, Reno.

[12] Russell R. Elliott with the assistance of William D. Rowley, *History of Nevada* (Second edition, revised, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 408.

[13] Quoted in Jerome E. Edwards, *Pat McCarran, Political Boss of Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1982), 152-55.

[14] Biltz, "Memoirs," 227-28; Freeman Lincoln, "Norman Biltz, Duke of Nevada," *Fortune* 50 (Sept. 1954): 140-41.

[15] *Nevada Business Journal* IV (July 1989): 10.

[16] Biltz, "Memoirs," 120-21; *Nevada State Journal*, 3 April 1957; *Reno Evening Gazette*, 3 April 1957.

[17] Eleanore Bushnell and Don W. Driggs, *The Nevada Constitution: Origin and Growth* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1984, sixth edition), 89-94.

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GAMBLING IN NEVADA
The Early Years, 1861–1931

Ralph J. Roske

NEVADA GOVERNOR FREDERICK B. BALZAR SIGNED THE BILL that legalized gambling on March 19, 1931. Almost from that moment, Nevada has been known as the nation's greatest spot to attempt to beat the odds, the recent efforts of Atlantic City notwithstanding. After early doubts about whether gaming would prove to be the economic windfall that its sponsors had envisioned, the state became the home of a gaming and tourism industry that produced revenue for smaller cities and booms in Reno, Las Vegas, and more recently the Colorado River town of Laughlin. These facts are widely known and increasingly well documented, but much less attention has been paid to earlier times, specifically the years between 1861, when Nevada became a United States territory, and 1931. Before making gambling legal on what now appears to be a permanent basis, Nevadans had undergone numerous shifts in attitude and made many changes in the practice and law relating to their state's unique institution.[1]

Gambling in Nevada has not only a colorful history, but a colorful prehistory: the Anasazi and Paiutes engaged in rudimentary wagering before A.D. 1150. Seven centuries later, as early as 1850, a resident of the Carson Valley who hoped to attract California-bound emigrants as players set up a gambling game. In doing so, this resident of what was then in the western part of the Territory of Utah was in the mainstream of mid-nineteenth-century America. Already, professional gamblers were earning a living by relieving steamboat passengers of the monotony of river travel and of their money as well. While the amount of cheating cannot be ascertained, these gamblers were usually so underfinanced that they refused to allow a mark an even break, since they were unable to fund a large payoff.[2]

The Mexican War and its aftermath profoundly affected the development not only of the West, of course, but also of gambling. At the time of the war,

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The Willows Resort/Casino in Reno during the 1930s. *(Nevada Historical Society)*

many professional gamblers headed west to fleece the relatively well-paid American troops. Then, when the conflict ended and the gamblers might have been expected to return to the East, gold was discovered in California. Hordes of single men flocked to the Pacific Coast as goldseekers, providing the political and economic means for California's statehood and perfect pickings for gamblers.[3] To have made the trip to California, the prospectors had to be bolder than the average young man, and many of them were away from home for the first time. They found or, alternatively, created a rough barracks society in which many of the innocuous forms of entertainment were lacking. In the miner's club, the local saloon, it was a short jaunt from the bar to the gambling tables which usually graced the back rooms of these establishments. Indeed, many of them were a combination saloon, casino, and bordello.[4]

The mining boom in Nevada was to produce a similar society. With the discovery of gold and silver on the Comstock in 1859, thousands of California miners streamed east across the Sierra into what would become Nevada, and they brought with them their gamblers and their gambling habits. In *Roughing It*, his classic work on the Comstock, Mark Twain commented upon the widespread social acceptability of the professional gambler: "In Nevada, for a time, the lawyer, the editor, the banker, the chief desperado, the chief gambler, and the saloonkeeper occupied the same level of society, and it was the highest." Dice games and roulette were popular gambling pastimes, as were such card games as poker and two games that were prominent then, but less widely known later: faro, or "bucking the tiger," in which bets were placed on a card dealt by the dealer, and monte, a specialized form of faro that was

supposedly of Spanish origin. As with the California gold camps, the Comstock Lode in its early years lacked the urbanization that led to other forms of entertainment, and so gambling served to pick up the slack. Technically, it was illegal: The rules and regulations of the Gold Hill Mining District restricted "banking games," and it and its sister towns still were part of the Utah Territory, which had banned gambling. But the local governmental units of the far western part of the territory were so poorly organized and so frequently ignored by officials in Salt Lake City that wide-open gambling continued unabated.[5]

The creation of the Territory of Nevada on March 2, 1861, changed all that. James W. Nye, a Republican from New York whose loyalty Abraham Lincoln rewarded with the patronage post of territorial governor, opposed gambling. In his message to the first territorial legislature, Nye wrote,

> I particularly recommend that you pass laws to prevent gambling. Of all the seductive vices extant, I regard that of gambling as the worst. It holds out allurements hard to be resisted; it captivates and ensnares the young, blunts all the moral sensibilities and ends in utter ruin. The thousand monuments that are reared along this pathway of ruin, demand at your hands all the protection the law can give.

Although the legislators ignored Nye's pleas for enlightened treatment for blacks, they heeded his admonition against gambling and passed legislation banning it. Under the law's provisions, owning or working in a gambling establishment was a felony punishable by imprisonment for as long as two years and a fine as high as $5,000. A person who patronized such an establishment was to be charged with a misdemeanor and faced six months in jail and a $500 fine. It was a tough law, but it went almost totally unenforced, in part because that problem was left to county officials, who apparently lacked the moral inclination to care about the statute. The result, according to Phillip Earl, was that "the men of the mining camps were exercising what amounted to a popular nullification" of the law.[6]

The two proposed constitutions for the state of Nevada also considered the benefits and liabilities of gambling. The constitution of 1863, which the voters turned down because of a controversy over the far more important issue of taxing the mines that were then Nevada's economic lifeblood, included a paragraph banning lotteries. But a successful organic law in 1864 carried the same ban. It is interesting that this constitutional prohibition was not given teeth until 1873, when a statute made running a lottery a misdemeanor. Until then, individuals openly held lotteries, and even advertised them in Carson City newspapers that were readily available to legislators.[7]

With statehood came new restrictions on gambling. Both houses of the first state legislature approved a new antigambling statute by overwhelming margins. Governor Henry Goode Blasdel, as staunch in his Methodism as he was in his hatred for gambling, promptly signed it into law on February 23, 1865.

This act reduced the crime of running a gambling establishment from a felony to the easier-to-prosecute misdemeanor and let the patron off without penalty. The intent was to encourage rigorous enforcement of the law by eliminating penalties on the individual and making it easier to punish those who made the games available to the public.[8]

Apparently, the antigambling statute was enforced frequently enough to move those who disliked it to marshal their forces behind a drive for its repeal. The measure they proposed required the licensing of gambling houses, but it faced problems in the legislature, where parliamentary maneuvering by the opposition on several occasions appears to have killed it. It finally hurdled all obstacles in the Assembly, and then passed in the Senate on the next-to-last day of the session. Unfortunately for the progambling side, the margin in both houses was less than the two-thirds majority needed to pass the law over the anticipated veto of the governor.[9]

Predictably, on March 10, 1866, the "coffee and chocolate governor," as Blasdel was known among the rollicking Nevadans for his abstemious entertaining, vetoed the bill. Because the legislature had adjourned, Blasdel filed his veto message with the secretary of state. When the new legislature convened the following January, the veto message and the bill were referred to the Assembly, and the effort to override failed. Blasdel's veto message was never officially printed, but he voiced his views in his State-of-the-State message: "Gambling is an intolerable and inexcusable vice. It saps the very foundations of morality, breeds contempt for honest industry and totally disqualifies its victims for the discharge of the ordinary duties of life."[10]

Two years later, gambling proponents once again rallied their supporters. This time, they offered a licensing measure that had the endorsement of the state controller, who hated to see the state losing revenue because gambling was illegal. Accordingly, a bill was introduced in the Assembly and referred to the Committee on Public Morals. That body reported the bill favorably, declaring, "The investigations of your committee lead them to the conclusion that the only effectual method of restricting gambling is to *license* it *heavily*." The Assembly passed the measure by the towering vote of twenty-two to seven, almost positively assuring that the lower house had the votes to override any gubernatorial opposition. In the Senate, it had a harder time because that body's Committee on Public Morals reported the measure with a "do not pass" recommendation. Ignoring its committee's report, the Senate supported the bill, thirteen to five, disappointing Blasdel, who had sought stricter enforcement of the antigambling law.[11]

As expected, the legislature overrode Blasdel's inevitable veto, and Nevada had a progambling law on its books that resembled the gambling license laws in other western states and territories. The law provided that a professional gambler who operated without a license was guilty of a misdemeanor. Licenses were to be issued in each county by the sheriff. In the

most heavily populated county, Storey, a licensee had to pay $400 quarterly, while those in smaller counties had to put up $250. Half of the license fees went into the county treasury, while the rest went to the state. Reflecting the youth of the silver miners, the minimum age for gambling was set at seventeen. The relaxed attitude toward gambling in Nevada meant that Californians could cross the Sierra to gamble when their state enacted a strict antigambling law, and, in a twist on the stereotypical image of the shrewd riverboat gambler, unlicensed professionals boarded transcontinental trains to ride across the state, bilking unsuspecting travellers.[12]

Between 1869 and 1909, the basic gambling law underwent several changes, including a complete rewriting. License fees were quickly lowered, despite the pious 1869 talk of having heavy charges so as to limit the spread of gambling houses. Certain games which easily lent themselves to cheating were banned, as they were in other western states and territories. In response to complaints that under-age youths were being cheated, the minimum legal age to gamble was raised to twenty-one. Minors were forbidden to frequent gambling establishments for any purpose.[13]

Within a decade, Nevada moved to impose additional restrictions limiting and defining who could frequent gambling establishments. Opponents of gambling failed in 1875 to secure passage of a law against the practice; although the Comstock was at or near its peak at the time, state leaders were loath to give up their share of the annual licensing fees, which had exceeded $60,000. In 1877, the legislature passed "An Act to Prohibit the Winning of Money from Persons Who Have No Right to Gamble It Away." This statute allowed dependent families or creditors to serve notice on gambling hall proprietors that their fathers or debtors were depriving them of needed funds. Ignoring this warning would cost a proprietor a misdemeanor charge, but it was ignored anyway, and local officials showed no interest in enforcing the new law.[14]

The location and hours of gambling rooms were also subject to frequent changes in regulation, especially as the Comstock boom gave way to bust during the 1880s and the state became more dependent on revenues from gambling—a scenario somewhat similar to that which prompted the 1931 law. Whether gambling belonged in the back rooms of the first floor or on the less accessible second floor was a matter of constant argument and legislation; an 1881 law limited gambling to the second floor to keep it out of the vision of passers-by on the street. As of April 1, 1889, the state legislature reduced the operating hours of casinos from twenty-four hours a day, forcing them to close between midnight and 6 A.M. in what was presumably a sop to the moralism of antigambling groups. Yet, interest continued in a state lottery: The 1881 legislature passed a lottery bill that the Nevada Supreme Court, heeding the state constitution's ban, ruled illegal the next year, and the 1887 legislature approved a lottery to finance irrigation projects, but Governor C. C.

Stevenson vetoed it because of the constitutional prohibition. But in 1889, Nevada voters, going against the legislative trend, refused to change the constitution when they were given the opportunity to do so. It may be that Nevadans disliked lotteries because they constituted a form of gambling that, in the form of lottery tickets, actually entered the home. Casinos, at least, ostensibly stayed outside.[15]

Yet, at that time, Nevada gaming appears to have extended its influence into the home even more than it does today. Nevada's gambling establishments catered not to a few wealthy clients, as was the case in the East, but to a wide spectrum of economic classes in the community. Few of these businesses relied exclusively upon gaming; most operated a gambling room simply as an adjunct to a dance hall, saloon, or bordello, none of which seems to have inspired the outspoken opposition that gambling created. The great exception to the humble nature of Nevada's gaming rooms was Virginia City's sumptuous Gentry and Crittenden House, which, at the height of the excitement along the Comstock Lode, had no limit on faro. But the stakes in most games were usually modest; in poker, for example, most bets were below a dollar. Establishments usually reserved only a few tables for gambling. Seldom did a Nevada gaming room possess more than one faro layout, a roulette table, and a three-card monte arrangement, and efforts to ban the newfangled slot machines ended in 1905, when the legislature finally decided instead to license them.[16]

Nevada's legislative tergiversations regarding gambling failed to quiet the critics. The chorus of complaint swelled noticeably after 1900. To be anti-gambling seemed logical amid the reformist spirit of the Progressive Era. To many progressives, gambling was one of a trio of evils that included prostitution and drunkenness—relics from man's primitive past that had no place in the twentieth century. In addition, the adjacent state of California, which had always exercised enormous political, social, and economic influence on its less populous neighbor, had mounted a crusade against racetrack betting, and some of its zeal was transported across the border into Nevada.[17]

This new crusade consisted of a cross-section of Nevada's leaders. Not surprisingly, the Civil League, a women's organization well aware that respectable women were barred from Nevada's casinos, and the Anti-Gambling League, made up of socially prominent Reno citizens, turned their wrath upon Nevada's system of legal gambling. A host of Nevada politicians jostled for a place aboard the Good Ship Reform—notably Denver Sylvester Dickerson, a White Pine County editor, patriarch of a family important in state politics, and from 1908 to 1910 the acting governor; Francis G. Newlands, the state's leading progressive politician and a member of the United States House of Representatives from 1893 to 1903, and of the Senate from 1903 until his death in 1917; and James G. Sweeney, a Nevada Supreme Court justice. Joseph Edward Stubbs, the activist president of the University of

Nevada, joined the fray, urged on by many of his faculty and the majority of teachers at Reno High School. Finally, the prestigious Reno Commercial Club, forerunner of the local chamber of commerce, fought gambling, arguing that it was bad for business.[18]

Reno's apparent distaste for gambling was crucial to the antigambling cause, for it had become the state's pre-eminent city by the turn of the century. It had never been a mining camp, and by 1880 its importance as a railroad gateway to the Comstock had faded with the lode's falling output. By 1909, Reno was a mercantile community, led by solid businessmen and orthodox clergymen. It had become acutely conscious of its close business and social ties with California's Bay Area, center of that state's opposition to racetracks. And many other states, acknowledging the winds of Progressive change, were eradicating gambling. Events within Nevada also influenced the foes of gambling: With the revival of mining in the early twentieth-century boom at Tonopah, Goldfield, and Ely, and the accompanying development of Las Vegas to the south as a railroad town, the number of gambling houses had increased, and so had the stakes of the games. Worst of all, rumors of cheating and dishonesty at the tables were rampant.[19]

The element that favored gambling was at a distinct disadvantage. Its members were for the most part in the mining camps. Far from the population center of Reno or the political center of Carson City, they were unable to lobby with the effectiveness demonstrated by organizations near Reno. Powerful northern Nevada newspapers, particularly the rabidly crusading *Reno Evening Gazette*, constantly barraged readers with editorials and cartoons that condemned gambling. A religious Oklahoman provided it with a plaintive poem:

> O Nevada Wicked State
> Cut the gambling ere too late,
> Lift yourself out of the mire—
> Throw the crap game in the fire.[20]

The Reno-based Anti-Gambling League, which rotated its meetings among the churches of various Protestant denominations and the halls of fraternal organizations, could draw support from all parts of the state. The league had sent antigambling petitions to all of the counties. They gathered hundreds of signatures from all corners of the state. Other northern Nevada newspapers, especially the *Elko Independent* and the *Wells Herald*, ran powerful editorials stressing the need to ban gambling so that Nevada would not stand alone among the states in condoning the vice.[21]

To ensure that a sufficiently tough bill would be passed, the Anti-Gambling League drew up its own proposal. Elko Assemblyman George McIntosh was given the honor of introducing the bill, which the Anti-Gambling League had written to exempt bets on horse racing and small wagers on card games for

entertainment purposes; rather, the group focused its ban on percentage games such as blackjack, craps, faro, and roulette. Progambling elements tried to block the bill but soon discovered that they were a distinct minority. They therefore concentrated upon passing an amendment in committee to push the law's effective date back from September 1, 1909, to January 1, 1910, and won this limited victory. (In order to show that the Reno area spoke with more than one voice, the leader of the progambling Assembly forces represented Washoe County.) This amended version of the bill then passed in the Assembly, twenty-seven to twenty.[22]

Friends of the bill feared a difficult battle in the state Senate, but they soon received help. George C. King, superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church and long active behind the scenes, now openly threw the moral and political weight of his twelve thousand Nevada communicants behind the antigambling law. Acting Governor Dickerson, an avowed progressive and opponent of gaming, announced publicly that "gambling is a curse" and that he stood ready to sign the bill, although his willingness to delay the effective date of the bill and his expressed concern that the measure was too weak to kill off gambling entirely did little to endear him to the antigambling forces.[23]

In the face of the widespread support for the bill, the senators who favored gambling decided not to risk the wrath of the voters by openly fighting the people and principles behind the bill; their strategy became more clandestine. They, too, concentrated upon pushing back the effective date of the bill, which would give the gambling industry time to adjust to the new order of things by going underground. In committee, these senators were able to delay the effectiveness until October 1, 1910—a date, perhaps not so coincidentally, close to the next state election. To make the bill as obnoxious as possible to solid citizens, they amended it to add the seemingly more upper-class card games of bridge, whist, and hearts to the list prohibited by the measure. Their mission accomplished, the progambling elements stepped aside, and the bill passed unanimously. Dickerson promptly signed it into law on March 29, 1909.[24]

When the next legislature gathered, in 1911, its members heeded both the political clamor and the sadness with which many had bade farewell to their hobby or source of revenue. Governor Tasker L. Oddie, a Republican whose progressive tendencies were often less pronounced than he claimed, lauded the antigambling legislation that the previous session had passed. But he argued that the measure was far too stringent, because it made "no distinction between card playing and other games for recreation, and actual gambling." The legislature responded to the governor's suggestion and loosened the 1909 act's restrictions on social games. The new bill, approved on March 17, 1911, also legalized studpoker, five hundred, solo, poker, and whist where the deal alternated.[25]

Two years later, the legislature, under heavy pressure from religious and

civic groups, ostensibly attempted to restore the stringency of the original act, and succeeded only in muddying waters that were already dirty. During the course of its passage, the 1913 act underwent so many changes that its wording became confusingly vague. As a result, it took an opinion from the attorney general to clarify the intent of the act as finally passed. Some local officials had claimed that the new law actually restored licensed gambling. The attorney general opined that it banned all gambling, except for social games.[26]

As Reno's economy began to suffer and some of the progressive fervor began to dissipate, the legislature became less enamored with morals legislation. In the 1915 session, with the approval of newly elected Democratic Governor Emmet D. Boyle, legislators reduced the residency requirement for divorce from one year to six months. They also weakened the antigambling law. An amendment warned "that nothing in this paragraph shall be construed as prohibiting social games played only for drinks and cigars served individually, or for prizes of a value not to exceed two dollars, nor nickel-in-the-slot machines for the sale of cigars and drinks. . . ."[27]

The legislative writhings over gambling between 1909 and 1915 revealed a great deal about the nature of Nevada, but meant little in terms of impact. They showed that, even in the national progressive climate, Nevada was more concerned with economics and political power plays than with morality. Whatever the law, however, the public generally ignored the legal games, patronizing instead the larger-scale clandestine gaming operations, which were far more challenging and exciting—not to mention more profitable for the winner. The act of 1915 was enforced with decreasing effectiveness from the time of its passage until its repeal in 1931. Indeed, in the young railroad town of Las Vegas, as well as other points throughout the state, gambling often continued in the open.[28]

By 1931, Nevada was ready to change the legitimacy of gambling from de facto to de jure. According to his own account, Assemblyman Phil M. Tobin of Humboldt County spontaneously saw the possibilities inherent in the facts that gambling laws were unenforced, that illegal gamblers were corrupting law officers, and that Nevada needed additional sources of revenue to replace those lost to the disastrous mining slump during the Great Depression. He thus introduced Assembly Bill 98, which lifted all restrictions on gambling, except for lotteries. Despite the opposition of most Protestant churches and many of the same women's groups that had supported prohibition, and after three weeks of heated debate, the bill sailed first through the Assembly and then the state Senate, to be signed into law by Governor Balzar that March. The same legislature shortened the duration of the residence requirement for obtaining a divorce from three months to six weeks.[29]

Of course, the reality was far different from the memories of some of those involved. Unlike other Great Basin and Rocky Mountain states, Nevada had

failed to evolve beyond mining to enjoy a more balanced economy: Nevada's arid climate had rendered agriculture a difficult proposition. Too, Nevada had become accustomed to being the legal provider of activities and services that other states banned, most notably prize fighting and easy divorce. The social climate was thus right for a return to legal gambling, particularly at a time of increasing economic desperation. In addition, Reno's business element had concluded that if Nevada were to retain its primacy over other states in easy divorce, it needed an additional attraction. Gambling seemed to be a possibility.[30]

In southern Nevada, in the still-small city of Las Vegas, the sporting gentry were agog at the prospect of having as clients the relatively well-paid workers who were to construct the nearby Boulder Dam, but a potential menace to this gambling bonanza remained. Already, Las Vegas had failed to win over the officials of the Department of the Interior who decided where the dam workers would live; unimpressed with the spartan facilities, moral climate, and distant location of Las Vegas, they had instead turned to the federal reservation that soon became known as Boulder City. Disappointed in their quest for a larger population with ready money at hand, Las Vegans had received strong indications that the presence of illegal gambling might prompt federal officials to act to protect these federal workers, who were frequent visitors to the "big city."[31]

As a result, Las Vegans joined with some Renoites in support of the bill—motivated less by legal gambling's economic potential than by its connection to the Boulder Canyon project, which they considered far more important to their financial well-being. Phil Tobin's role was to introduce the proposal as a comparatively unknown legislator from a small county, with little to profit personally from the return of legal gambling. It was done with subtlety, and Tobin may well have decided later that it had been his idea. Whatever Tobin's actual role, his bill surmounted all of the obstacles put up by religious and educational organizations, thanks largely to the strong backing of businessmen at both ends of the state.[32]

The basic structure established by the legislature in 1931 continues today; it is similar to that which had existed in Nevada before 1910, although the enforcement and licensing apparatus has obviously changed considerably over the years. The 1931 law was not passed in a vacuum of economic deprivation, although the Depression was certainly the impetus. The legislature was acting much as it had done since the 1860s: It was responding to pressures, not taking a moral stand, though its members had professed to do so—often with little veracity—on previous occasions.[33]

Between 1861 and 1931, despite considerable noise from forces on both sides, gambling always was merely an entertainment sideline to mining as a part of Nevada's economy. It was expected to perform a similar function after 1931. Renoites hoped that it would improve the divorce trade. As for Las

Vegans, as John Findlay has written, they "viewed that activity as only a secondary factor in the growth of their city. . . . While Hoover Dam promised to revitalize the railroad town without changing it fundamentally, visitors and builders of the dam fueled the industry of gambling that was to remake Las Vegas altogether."[34]

In the years immediately following the legalization of gambling, the story remained much the same. Not until the Harold Smith and William Harrah families swung into action later in the 1930s did gambling in Reno become the crucial industry in the city's financial well-being. The New Deal and World War II, followed eventually by Nellis Air Force Base and the Nevada Test Site, appeared to influence Las Vegas more than gambling, even after the birth of the Strip with the building of El Rancho Vegas in 1941. So it was for a time even after the building of the Flamingo Hotel, the first truly modern Las Vegas resort, in 1946 and 1947. But by the 1950s, gambling was becoming the predominant factor in Nevada's economy, and the rest of the story is well known. Before 1931, gambling had been an important part of Nevada life, but it was secondary. When Fred Balzar signed that bill on March 19, 1931, he was setting in motion forces that would deeply and profoundly affect Nevada's political, economic, and social composition from then until now, and far into the future.[35]

Notes

This article, in different form, was originally presented several years ago to a meeting of the Western History Association.

[1] The literature on gambling in Nevada is immense. I will not attempt to cite all of it here, but a few sources seem particularly worth noting. On the development of gaming in Las Vegas, two recent works are Ralph J. Roske, *Las Vegas: A Desert Paradise* (Tulsa: Continental Heritage Press, 1986), and Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-1970* (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1989). On Nevada generally, of course, with more emphasis on Reno, the best source is Russell R. Elliott with William D. Rowley, *History of Nevada* (Second edition, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987). A recent treatment that doubts the credibility and worthiness of gaming is James W. Hulse, *Forty Years in the Wilderness: Impressions of Nevada, 1940-1980* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1986). A fine work related to the subject of this essay is Phillip I. Earl, "Veiling the Tiger: The Crusade against Gambling, 1859-1910," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, XXVIII:3 (Fall 1985), 175-204. The best modern one-volume work on gambling in the United States and particularly in Nevada is John M. Findlay, *People of Chance: Gambling in American Society from Jamestown to Las Vegas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[2] Henry Chafetz, *Play the Devil: A History of Gambling in the United States from 1492 to 1955* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1960), 78-81; Herbert Asbury, *Sucker's Progress: An Informal History of Gambling from the Colonies to Camfield* (Montclair, N.J.: Patterson Smith, 1969), 219-59, 310-24; Findlay, *People of Chance*, 11-43.

[3] Asbury, *Sucker's Progress*, 117-18, 310-22; Oscar Lewis, *Sagebrush Casinos: The Story of Legal Gambling in Nevada* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1953), 30-31; G. Robert Blakey et al., "The Development of the Law of Gambling, 1776-1976" (National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminals, Cornell University Law School, May 1977), 405, copy in James R. Dickinson Library, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

[4] Fact Research Incorporated, "Gambling in Perspective," manuscript (Washington, D.C.: Commission on the Review of the National Policy toward Gambling, October 1974), 27, copy in James R. Dickin-

son Library, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; J. D. Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters: A First-Hand Picture of Life in California Mining Camps in the Early Fifties*, Horace Kephart, ed. (New York: The Book League of America, 1929), 61, 65-71, 121-22; John Walton Caughey, *Gold in the Cornerstone* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1948), 190, 224.

[5] Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (New York: New American Library, 1962), 255; Blakey et al., "Law of Gambling," 405; Lewis, *Sagebrush Casinos*, 30-31; Asbury, *Sucker's Progress*, 38, 39, 49, 53-54; Chafetz, *Play the Devil*, 82-86.

[6] J. Ross Browne, *A Peep at Washoe* (Balboa Island, California: Paisano Press, 1959), 70; Eliot Lord, *Comstock Mining and Miners* (Berkeley: Howell-North, 1959), 93, 213; Blakey et al., "Law of Gambling," 407-08; Andrew J. Marsh, *Letters from Nevada Territory, 1861-1862*, William C. Miller, Russell W. McDonald, and Ann Rollins, eds. (Carson City: Legislative Counsel Bureau, 1972), 251, 262, 313-14, 323, 329; *Laws of the Territory of Nevada, Passed at the First Regular Session of the Legislative Assembly 1861*, Chapter XXV, 53; Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 72; Earl, " 'Veiling the Tiger,' " 176.

[7] Andrew J. Marsh, Samuel L. Clemens, and Amos Bowman, *Reports of the 1863 Constitutional Convention of the Territory of Nevada*, William C. Miller and Eleanor Bushnell, eds. (Carson City: Legislative Counsel Bureau, 1972), 148; Constitution of the State of Nevada, Article IV, Section 1, Paragraph 24; Statutes of the State of Nevada, Sixth Session, 1873, 185-87; *Carson Daily Appeal*, 11 January 1866; 16 March 1866. See also David A. Johnson, "A Case of Mistaken Identity: William M. Stewart and the Rejection of Nevada's First Constitution," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 22:3 (Fall 1979), 186-98, for a good perspective on the fight over the first constitution.

[8] *Statutes of the State of Nevada*, First Session, 1864-65, 169-70; Blakey et al., "Law of Gambling," 410; Earl, " 'Veiling the Tiger,' " 176-77.

[9] *Journal of the Assembly*, Second Session, 1866, 90, 119, 136, 183, 251, 280; *Journal of the Senate*, Second Session, 1866, 217, 222, 248, 249.

[10] "The Governors," *Reno Evening Gazette-Nevada State Journal*, 27 March 1976, 19A; Myrtle Tate Myles, *Nevada's Governors: From Territorial Days to the Present, 1861-1971* (Sparks: Western Printing and Publishing Company, 1972), 15-16; *Journal of the Assembly*, Third Session, 1867, 20, 24, 29, Appendix.

Ironically, Nye and Blasdel shared similar views of gambling, but their approach to entertainment differed a great deal. An evening with Nye usually featured far stronger libations than coffee.

[11] *Journal of the Assembly*, Fourth Session, 1869, 105, 135, 164; *Journal of the Senate*, Fourth Session, 1869, 177, 190; Romanzo Adams, *Taxation in Nevada: A History* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1918), 149.

[12] *Journal of the Assembly*, Fourth Session, 1869, 282-83; *Journal of the Senate*, Fourth Session, 1869, 190; State of Nevada Gaming Control Board, *Gaming-Nevada Style* (Carson City: Securities Division, Economic Research, 1975), 1-2; Statutes of the State of Nevada, Fourth Session, 1869, 119-22; Blakey et al., "Law of Gambling," 387-88; W. F. Rae, *Westward By Rail: A Journey to San Francisco and Back and a Visit to the Mormons* (London: Longmans, Green, 1871), 185-90; Lewis, *Sagebrush Casinos*, 53.

[13] *Statutes of the State of Nevada*, Fifth Session, 1871, 107; *Ibid.*, Seventh Session, 1875, 50-51, 128-29; *Ibid.*, Eighth Session, 1877, 95; *Ibid.*, Ninth Session, 1879, 116; *Ibid.*, Sixteenth Session, 1893, 36; *Ibid.*, Eighteenth Session, 1897, 111; *Ibid.*, Twenty-First Session, 1903, 98; *Ibid.*, Twenty-Second Session, 1905, 72-73; Blakey et al., "Law on Gambling," 388.

[14] *Statutes of the State of Nevada*, Eighth Session, 1877, 173-74; Earl, " 'Veiling the Tiger,' " 178.

[15] *Statutes of the State of Nevada*, Seventh Session, 1875, 128-29; *Ibid.*, Eighth Session, 1877, 95; *Ibid.*, Ninth Session, 1879, 116; *Ibid.*, Fourteenth Session, 1889, 71; *Ibid.*, Twenty-First Session, 1903, 98; *Ibid.*, Twenty-Second Session, 1905, 72-73; Walter Van Tilburg Clark, *The Journals of Alfred Doten, 1849-1903* (3 vols., Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1973), 111, 1685; Earl, " 'Veiling the Tiger,' " 179.

[16] Lewis, *Sagebrush Casinos*, 53; Blakey et al., "Law of Gambling," 412-13; Asbury, *Sucker's Progress*, 351-52; *Statutes of the State of Nevada*, Twentieth Session, 1901, 23-24; *Ibid.*, Twenty-Third Session, 1905, 77.

[17] Ray Ginger, *Altgeld's America, 1890-1905* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965), 99, 250; Ross Evans Paulson, *Women's Suffrage and Prohibition: A Comparative Study of Equality and Social Control* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1973), 120-21; R. Laurence Moore, "Directions of Thought in Progressive America," in Lewis L. Gould, ed., *The Progressive Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1974), 35-54; *Reno Evening Gazette*, 25 January 1909; 19 February 1909. Obviously, this takes into account only a smattering of the vast literature on the Progressive Era.

[18] *Reno Evening Gazette*, 12 January 1909; 27 January 1909; 12 February 1909; 19 February 1909; 22 February 1909; Wilson with Higginbotham, *Legalized Gambling in Nevada*, 10; James W. Hulse, *The University of Nevada: A Centennial History* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1974), 32. For the basic background on Progressive politics in Nevada, see Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 233-50.

[19] Joe Jackson, "A History of Reno," *Reno Evening Gazette-Nevada State Journal*, 27 March 1976, 8A-12A; Max Miller, *Reno* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1941), 12-15; John M. Townley, *Tough Little Town on the Truckee* (Reno: Great Basin Studies Center, 1983); William D. Rowley, *Reno: Hub of the Washoe Country* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, 1984); Emmett L. Arnold, *Gold Camp Drifter, 1906-1910* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1973), 83-87, 99; Lewis, *Sagebrush Casinos*, 40-41; Wilson with Higginbotham, *Legalized Gambling in Nevada*, 10. On that boom, the major source is Russell R. Elliott, *Nevada's Twentieth-Century Mining Boom: Tonopah, Goldfield, Ely* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1988), [reprint, with a new introduction by Jerome E. Edwards]).

[20] *Reno Evening Gazette*, 8 February 1909; 10 February 1909; 15 February 1909; 16 February 1909; 25 February 1909. See also Earl, " 'Veiling the Tiger,' " 182-204.

[21] *Reno Evening Gazette*, 12 January 1909; 25 January 1909; 27 January 1909; 9 February 1909; 11 February 1909; 16 February 1909; 27 February 1909; 3 March 1909. The *Gazette* reprinted many editorials on the gambling issue that appeared in other newspapers.

[22] *Ibid.*, 25 January 1909; 9 February 1909; 18 February 1909; 19 February 1909; 24 February 1909.

[23] *Ibid.*, 26 February 1909; 4 March 1909. See also Earl, " 'Veiling the Tiger,' " 200-01.

[24] *Reno Evening Gazette*, 11 March 1909; 15 March 1909; *Statutes of the State of Nevada*, Twenty-Fourth Session, 1909, 307-08; Adams, *Taxation in Nevada*, 150.

[25] *Appendix to Journals of the Assembly and Senate*, Twenty-Fifth Session (1911), 1, 25; Ita E. Gunn, Jr., *The Tax Structure of Nevada* (Reno: The Nevada Taxpayers Association, 1954), 19; *Carson City News*, 15 March 1911; *Revised Laws of Nevada* (1912), 1, 1850, 1860-61. On Oddie, see Loren Chan, *Sagebrush Statesman: Tasker L. Oddie of Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1972); Sally Springmeyer Zanjani, "Losing Battles: The Revolt of the Nevada Progressives, 1910-1914," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 24 (Spring 1981): 17-38.

[26] *Carson City News*, 16 March 1913; 19 March 1913; 6 April 1913; 9 April 1913; Attorney General's opinion in No. 33, *Biennial Report of the Attorney General, 1913-1914* in *Appendix to Journals of Senate and Assembly*, Twenty-Seventh Session of the Legislature of the State of Nevada, 1915, 1, 32-34.

[27] *Statutes of the State of Nevada*, Twenty-Seventh Session, 1915, 31, 462.

[28] Richard G. Lillard, *Desert Challenge: An Interpretation of Nevada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1942), 326; Lewis, *Sagebrush Casinos*, 56; Gilman M. Ostrander, *Nevada: The Great Rotten Borough, 1859-1964* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 207; *Las Vegas Age*, January 20, 1931.

[29] Frank Johnson, "The Man Who Brought Gambling to Nevada," *Nevada: Centennial Magazine* (1964): 14, 15, 144; Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 278-79; *Journal of the Senate*, Thirty-Fifth Session, 1931, 157-58, 160, 226, 230, 250; *Journal of the Assembly*, Thirty-Fifth Session, 1931, 110, 119, 121, 141-42, 238-39, 247, 252-54, 369, 378, 396, 414; *Reno Evening Gazette*, 2 February 1931; 13 February 1931; 14 February 1931; *New York Times*, 20 March 1931.

[30] *New York Times*, 5 April 1931; Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 277-85.

[31] Personal Interview with Harold Stocker of Las Vegas, 10 October 1973; *New York Times*, 7 June 1931. Federal agents raided several speakeasies to "dry up" the Boulder Dam area for the workers. *Reno Evening Gazette*, 22 January 1931.

[32] *Las Vegas Age*, 20 January 1931; 21 March 1931; *Reno Evening Gazette*, 27 January 1931; *New York Times*, 5 April 1931.

[33] Blakey et al., "Law of Gambling," 434-35.

[34] Findlay, *People of Chance*, 113.

[35] These developments are traced in Roske, *Las Vegas;* Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt;* and Elliott, *History of Nevada.*

HISTORY NEWS

UNLV Professor Ralph J. Roske Retires

Michael S. Green

AFTER A CAREER OF FIVE DECADES, a reception attended by most of the leaders of the University of Nevada System, and the presentation of the Alumni Association's Outstanding Faculty Award, Ralph J. Roske, professor of history at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, retired to emeritus status on December 31, 1988.

The reception, held in the foyer of UNLV's Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall, included addresses by President Robert C. Maxson and former Dean of the College of Arts and Letters Thomas C. Wright, whose father, Dr. John S. Wright, was among those who brought Dr. Roske to UNLV. The History Department presented Dr. Roske, one of its more prominent members for twenty-one years, a plaque and a gift, and held a dinner for him afterward.

Born on August 28, 1921, in Chicago, Illinois, Dr. Roske was graduated cum laude and as valedictorian in 1943 from DePaul University, where he had been active in fraternities, literary studies, the debating society, and the college newspaper. He originally had planned to teach high-school social studies, but after returning from World War II, in which he served as a navigator in the Army Air Corps, he began graduate studies at the University of Illinois.

Dr. Roske became a student and protégé of James G. Randall, a leading Civil War scholar and author of more than a dozen books, including a four-volume history of Lincoln's presidency. He was a research assistant to Professors Randall and Fred A. Shannon, and a teaching assistant for two years. He earned his M.A. in 1947 and his Ph.D. in 1949, writing his dissertation on "The Post Civil War Career of Lyman Trumbull." He became a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi. More important, he met Rosemary Smith, whom he married on June 26, 1948. They have three children—Mark, Randall, and Amy—and five grandchildren.

Dr. Roske taught at St. Mary's College in northern California from 1949 to

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1955, including two years as department head; his classes ranged from the Civil War to Western Civilization. In 1955, he became assistant professor of history at Humboldt State College (now University) in Arcata, California. Promoted to associate professor in 1959, he became full professor in 1964, and chaired the Division of Social Science from 1960 to 1967, and the Academic Senate.

In 1957, Dr. Roske published his first book, *Lincoln's Commando*, a biography of William Cushing, a Civil War naval officer. The co-author was Charles Van Doren, a young English instructor at Columbia University who soon became famous—or infamous—for his involvement in the television quiz-show scandal of the late 1950s. Dr. Roske also published several articles during the 1950s and early 1960s: "Lincoln's Peace Puff" (*Abraham Lincoln Quarterly*, 1950), " 'Visiting Statesmen' in Louisiana, 1876" (*Mid-America*, 1951), "Republican Newspaper Support for the Acquittal of President Johnson" (*Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 1952), "Lincoln and Lyman Trumbull" (*Lincoln Images*, 1960), "The Perry-Elliott Controversy," with R. W. Elliott (*Northwest Ohio Quarterly*, 1962), and "The World Impact of the California Gold Rush" (*Arizona and the West*, 1963), a study first presented to the American Historical Association's Pacific Coast Branch.

An article published in 1959 won Dr. Roske particular notice among historians of his favorite field, the Civil War and Reconstruction. Doubting that those who voted against Andrew Johnson's conviction were entirely heroic or victims of retribution, as John F. Kennedy suggested in *Profiles of Courge*, Dr. Roske wrote "The Seven Martyrs?" It appeared in the *American Historical Review* and has been cited in numerous works as a definitive commentary on the episode.

Another Civil War scholar was to influence Dr. Roske's later career. When a flight home from a conference was delayed, Dr. Roske played bridge (not particularly well, he adds) with Dr. John S. Wright, the first historian at what was then the University of Nevada's Southern Regional Division. He was also a superb bridge player, who tolerated Dr. Roske as his partner for three hours. When that division was reconstituted as Nevada Southern University and colleges were to be created, Dr. Wright thought of him, and the Humboldt State professor moved to Nevada.

Dr. Roske served as director of the School of Social Science for the first year, and as dean of the College of Social Science from 1968 to 1971. He oversaw the hiring of many current UNLV faculty members, and supported the young university's growth, including construction of the Flora Dungan Humanities Building.

Dr. Roske returned to full-time teaching in 1971. For most of the past two decades, he has taught a range of popular courses, including American Constitutional History, History of Nevada, History of Southern Nevada, Military History of the United States, Gunfighters of the Old West, various graduate

colloquia and seminars, and, after Dr. Wright's retirement in 1976, the National Period, and the Civil War and Reconstruction. He served for twenty years as social science and pre-law adviser.

He also has compiled a long record of professional, university, and community service as longtime chairman both of the departmental personnel committee and of the college's Social Science Interdisciplinary Committee; fifteen years as a member of the University of Nevada Press Advisory Board; and as an officer of the Southern Nevada Historical Society. He served also as a member of the Clark County-State of Nevada Bar Association Disciplinary Panel and of the Clark County Law Library Board, receiving awards of appreciation from both organizations.

He continued the active pursuit of scholarship amid all these other activities. In 1968, Macmillan published his *Everyman's Eden: A History of California,* which won the Commonwealth Club of California's Silver Medal for the best book about the state that year. Several college courses on California have used it as a textbook. Dr. Roske also continued to study the Civil War and Reconstruction. In 1979, the University of Nevada Press published a book based on his dissertation, *His Own Counsel: The Life and Times of Lyman Trumbull.* He has also prepared a manuscript on a wartime escape from the Confederate Libby Prison, and has written entries on this era for the *Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Americana,* and *Encyclopedia of Southern History,* as well as reviews for the *American Historical Review, Journal of American History,* and *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly.*

Since coming to UNLV, Dr. Roske has focused on the history of the West, and especially Nevada. He has presented papers on gambling and welfare in Nevada, and is the co-author of works on Las Vegas pioneer Octavius Decatur Gass for both scholarly and popular publications, including the *Journal of Arizona History.* He has written or contributed to half a dozen archaeological and geographic studies for the Bureau of Land Management and the Nevada Highway Department.

In 1986, *Las Vegas: A Desert Paradise* was published by Continental Heritage Press. Written for a general audience yet backed by in-depth research into the region, it is the only one-volume history of Las Vegas to cover the area's history from its beginnings to the present. At its Diamond Jubilee dinner, the Greater Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce honored Dr. Roske and the Southern Nevada Historical Society for their efforts.

Dr. Roske has also contributed to the study of Nevada's history as an adviser for theses and seminars. Several research papers and master's degree theses in history and historical archaeology have been produced under his guidance, and his Nevada history classes have conducted countless interviews and surveys of historic buildings. Many of these are now housed in the UNLV Library, especially in the Department of Special Collections. Many of his former students have gone on to further graduate studies, teach-

ing, or library work that has expanded Nevadans' awareness of their state's history.

Dr. Roske has long been active in the Las Vegas community. Over the years, he has made numerous public appearances, speaking at clubs and schools. He also has been involved in Democratic party politics, serving as campus coordinator for Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign in 1976. In his early years at UNLV, Dr. Roske held a symposium on Nevada politics that stamped him as something of a seer: Seeking to invite politicians whom he expected to be increasingly prominent, he chose Assemblymen Harry Reid and Richard Bryan, and Justice of the Peace James Santini.

Although his health has been fragile in recent years, Dr. Roske continued to teach and advise a full load, and to do research. Now that he has retired, he plans to refine a book-length manuscript, and is generally enjoying the chance to loaf.

All of this may seem like a biography of one serious historian, but everyone who knows Dr. Roske also knows his boisterous sense of humor and laugh, and his dry wit. He can often be seen at UNLV football and basketball games. And he has been known occasionally to lose his temper because of one of his outside interests: He is a Chicago Cubs fan.

Finally, a personal note. I share with many other students, from historians and attorneys to politicians and businessmen, an association with Dr. Roske that has been of lasting influence. When I came to UNLV in the fall of 1982, I took Dr. Roske's course in United States History to 1865. Because of him, I became a history major. He directed my master's thesis and many research papers. We have written articles and papers together; shared countless hours, stories, and jokes; and I have sat through more of his classes than either of us cares to remember. I am glad to be able to write here that he is a gifted historian and a good friend. I am proud to call him my mentor, and on the occasion of his retirement I am happy to acknowledge my debt and thank him for all he has done for me, his university, his state, and his profession.

BOOK REVIEWS

Nevadans. By Rollan Melton. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1989. 275 pp., illustrations, index, forward, acknowledgments.)

THIS COLLECTION OF EIGHTY-EIGHT NEWSPAPER COLUMNS (selected from more than 1,600 published over the past decade in the *Reno Evening Gazette* and the *Reno Gazette-Journal*) not unexpectedly reveals the essential Rollan Melton, celebrant of Nevada. The opening section joyfully asks the reader to listen to the sounds of wildlife, to smell the flowers, to view the dramatic desert sunsets and then try to imagine where else life could be so wonderful. It is unabashed, unvarnished local pride.

It would be a mistake, though, to think of Rollan Melton as a mere booster. For the most part we find him using his column to weave the fabric of community, giving the area a sense of place by telling the stories of Nevadan's achievements, particularly as he sees them serving the state. He revels in revealing the minutiae of his adopted hometowns, Fallon and Reno, and the stories of their families, thus providing the raw data of local history. In a form more enduring and more accessible than newsprint, *Nevadans* will be a resource for those who will look back and ask what kind of place northern Nevada was in the mid-twentieth century.

The columns are divided into categories, most of which are about individuals—there are profiles of community leaders, as well as pieces on the lives of the less known. Particularly poignant are columns written about the participation of boys from Fallon who fought and were killed in "the war" and about the reunion of a B-17 crew. Of particular interest are those sketches in which the writer shares his own life, his heart attack and his brush with cancer, and instructs his readers to follow healthier ways than he.

Rollan Melton arrived in Fallon as a child, became a reporter more or less by accident and worked his way through reporting into management at the local newspapers. He made his way to the presidency of the Speidel Newspaper Company and eventually to the executive office in the nation's largest media organization, Gannett. In 1978, after ten years as a senior vice-president of Gannett, he retired from management and returned to writing.

It is apparent that Melton is in love not so much with writing itself, as with the people about whom he writes. It is not the turn-of-phrase that turns him on, but rather the opportunity to ask questions, to learn about people and to

share their stories. This journalist's love of a good story makes *Nevadans* a significant contribution to the understanding (and enjoyment) of contemporary Nevada.

Travis Linn
University of Nevada, Reno

The Basque Hotel. By Robert Laxalt. (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1989. 124 pp.)

ROBERT LAXALT'S LATEST NOVELETTE REAFFIRMS HIS NOTABLE reputation as an author of memorable novels and histories, most of which are set in Nevada or in the Old World Basque country. But *The Basque Hotel* moves beyond these earlier works in his even more well-developed uses of theme and form.

Set in Carson City in the Depression era, Laxalt's brief novel centers on a two-year period in the life of Pete, a young Basque, lingering between boyhood and approaching manhood. The first half of the book treats Pete's months in a Basque hotel, but the second half divides between his stay in a different home his family acquires and his memorable days in the mountains with his father, his uncle, his brothers, and their band of sheep. Most of the novel consists of a series of abbreviated chapters dramatizing single incidents, but together they illustrate Pete's traumatic rites of passage toward adulthood. The discerning reader sees that Laxalt's carefully coordinated plot reinforces his major theme of an adolescent's maturation.

Equally appealing are the variety and persuasiveness of the experiences that Pete faces. Early on, while he's still in the protective womb of the Basque hotel, his mother broods over him, he plays soldiers, and he obviously remains a boy. But Laxalt uses a serious illness and removal from the hotel as turning points in Pete's journey. Although not entirely freed from his boyhood, Pete is now thrust into the adult world of religious doubts, violence, death, sex; and his life takes several dramatic turns. In the final scene, Laxalt's Basque Huck Finn sees his past destroyed in the burning Basque hotel and in his realizing the infantile qualities of his boyhood war games. Here again Laxalt uses superb symbolic acts to communicate larger meanings, a clear and evident strength throughout Laxalt's best fiction.

For readers more interested in regional and historical fiction, *The Basque Hotel* also recalls a place and a time. The opening scenes, the later mountain setting, and the little daily dramas played out on Carson City's main street are skillfully wrought evocations of place. Nor will close observers miss the sense of time in Laxalt's depictions of a small western town edging into de-

pression, tied to faraway (at least in Pete's mind) Reno, and shot through with the class and ethnic divisions of the 1930s. In this regard, *The Basque Hotel* sets the story of its protagonist against a resonating background of specific settings and historical times.

Finally, those acquainted with Laxalt's other writings will recognize anew his literary talents: sentiment without sentimentality; minimalistic Hemingwayesque style; humor balancing seriousness; and pen portraits of a gaggle of interesting characters. But for this son-of-a-Basque reviewer, the moving scenes in the sheepcamp, the familiar struggles with brothers, the embarrassing moments of emotional and physical uncertainties, and the social pressures of a small western town recall his own lost innocence as he, too, struggled to become a man. In all, Laxalt marries the specifics of his experiences with the universal theme of a departing boyhood to fashion a work of fiction at once illuminating and absorbing.

Richard W. Etulain
University of New Mexico

The American West: A Twentieth-Century History. By Michael P. Malone and Richard W. Etulain. (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989. 347 pp., introduction, illustrations, bibliographical essays, index.)

The American West is an intelligently conceived and skillfully written book. It is about the seventeen trans-Mississippi states, paying no attention to Alaska and Hawaii and treating the Spanish borderlands only as Southwest and home of ethnic minorities. Sound in concept and fact and generally arresting in interpretation, *The American West* is both thought provoking and readable. Effective format and attractive presentation round out its prospects for both scholarly and popular reading.

The authors work from the proposition that a clear break occurred in western history in the years after 1890. This contributes to a chronological framework and a developmental unity that are conventional enough, but also comment suggestively on certain problems to which western history is subject. The first chapter deals with early twentieth-century resource utilization (agriculture, extractive industries, transportation, tourism, commerce and labor) and then move into a chronological political format (the Progressive Era, World War I, the twenties, the Great Depression, and World War II). The postwar era follows in topical chapters on social patterns, (the urban West, demography, ethnicity, gender/family), western culture (history, literature, art, religion, education, and the search for a Western identity), and the mod-

ern economy (federal influence, transportation, extractive industries, and new economic forces). A final chapter offers a statement on the West in national politics, an assessment of changing political roles, and a state by state run-down of political climate issues and personalities. A superb bibliographical essay organized by chapter content reflects the authors' command of their subject.

The American West's presentation of developments within the various states and subregions of the West provides numerous opportunities for comparison. This is clear in the text but is also apparent in the authors' effective presentation of graphic illustrations. State and subregional differences stand out in strong perspective in this treatment enabling readers to draw rather vivid delineations around each of the seventeen states and each of the subregions of the West, as well as to put locally held perceptions to test by comparing historical development state by state.

By contrast, however, the authors confess they have been unable to inform us as to how state and subregional variety add up to a distinctive historical identity for the entire region. They suggest, in effect, that they have presented a West distinctive in its parts but not in the sum of its regional history. In some respects this seems to reflect the genius of the American political system for producing unity out of variety, but when applied to the dilemma of regional identification, it leaves history without the organizational force to understand deeply, as well as generally, what the twentieth-century West is all about. Although they do not address it directly, the authors recognize that this dilemma looms larger for twentieth-century western history than it does for nineteenth-century history with its clear cut themes and spirit of conquest.

As one contemplates the way distinctive parts add up to a vaguely conceived whole in twentieth-century western history, one wonders if some kind of answer may still lie in regional and national (or sectional) comparisons. *The American West* focuses the readers' attention on state and subregional identities. Is there a way the comparative apparatus can be rearranged to work from the region to the larger community of regions to sharpen the lines of regional identity? This, of course, seems initially to be an application of Frederick Jackson Turner's sectional idea, but as one contemplates the success Etulain and Malone have had in drawing state and subregional identity into view through a method that seems to play them off against the regional whole, one dares hope that comparative sectionalism or something like it may yet hold promise for a more compelling perception of the twentieth-century West as a distinct field of history.

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Fallout: An American Nuclear Tragedy. By Philip L. Fradkin. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989, 300 pp., notes, index.)

A NEWCOMER TO THE "ATOMIC REVIVAL" SCENE, Philip Fradkin's *Fallout* revisits now quite familiar territory downwind of the mushroom cloud. Following the plethora of books and documentaries on the sociopolitical consequences of American atomic weapons testing which have appeared since the mid-1980s, *Fallout* is not likely to draw much attention. This is unfortunate because Fradkin provides indepth coverage of one aspect of the story, the *Allen* trial which pitted 1,200 "atomic litigants" against the U.S. government.

The press jargon is appropriate here as Fradkin, a Pulitzer Prize winner for his 1965 coverage of the Watts Riots, is writing from a journalist's perspective. He sat through the entire *Allen* trial in Salt Lake City and interviewed the claimants, the lawyers from both sides, the expert witnesses, and even Judge Bruce Jenkins after the landmark decision was rendered. He also relies heavily upon newspaper accounts and government documents which were among the hundreds of exhibits used in the trial. While he cites the classic works in the field, including early accounts of the Manhattan Project and more recent political analyses, these sources provide more scholarly window dressing than interpretive material within the text.

Using the *Allen* trial as the framework for his narrative, Fradkin rehashes the development of atomic weapons, the insensitivity of the AEC, and the legal obstacles currently faced by atomic victims seeking compensation. Aside from the detailed focus on the 1953 Dirty Harry shot and the exposure of Chief Justice Warren Berger's role in the coverup of evidence detrimental to the government's case, however, there is little new information. Furthermore, Fradkin clearly falls into that camp of writers who approach this controversial topic with a strong anti-government bias. "In the end," he writes, "these people were betrayed by their government . . . this breach of faith . . . resembled a perfidious deed carried out by a government against its own people." Indeed, the subtitle of the book, *An American Nuclear Tragedy*, sets the tone from the outset, causing the work to be viewed with skepticism by some.

Nonetheless, Fradkin's account of the *Allen* trial itself is fascinating as the drama unfolds in a Perry Mason-like fashion. It is chock full of visual imagery and personal descriptions. Judge Jenkins is described as "a tall gaunt man with a thatch of black hair who bore a certain resemblance to Abraham Lincoln;" and one section begins: "During two months of testimony that was unrelenting in its somberness, Indian summer and fall had passed. It was now winter. Snow blanketed the surrounding mountains. . . ."

As is often the case when one tackles a contemporary subject, much has transpired since *Fallout* went to press. Following the Tenth Circuit Court's

reversal of Judge Jenkins' decision, the plaintiffs appealed to the Supreme Court where they were denied certiorari on January 11, 1988. Shortly thereafter, Congress passed legislation in May 1988 granting compensation to atomic soldiers who had served in Japan after the war and in Nevada and the South Pacific during the period of atmospheric testing. The law makes the presumption that certain kinds of cancer suffered by veterans exposed to radiation are service-connected and therefore compensable. A similar bill providing compensation for civilian downwinders with certain cancers has been introduced by Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). In the courts, Federal District Judge Roger Foley recently breathed new life into the movement for judicial remedy by ruling on October 27, 1989, that the discretionary function exclusion of the Federal Tort Claims Act, which protects the government against certain lawsuits, does not apply in cases involving test site workers. And so the story continues, providing ample material for a number of revised editions.

Dina Titus
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Dreamers and Defenders: American Conservationists. By Douglas H. Strong. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1971, 1988. 295 pp., introduction, index, notes, illustrations.)

FOR TWO CENTURIES AFTER THE FIRST European settlement on this continent, the destructive effects on the landscape of human activity were accepted and encouraged by society and government. Concern for the environment has come only relatively recently to the American consciousness, largely through the efforts of the few who recognized the perilousness of the course being followed. Gradually, however, within the past hundred years a conservation movement developed in this country, and the purpose of this book, a revision and enlargement of Strong's 1971 work *The Conservationists*, is to delineate the "development of a more enlightened attitude toward the land. . . ." (p. 7)

Strong has accomplished this by selecting a dozen "dedicated conservationists" (p. ix) through whose lives and careers he traces the evolution of the conservation movement in the United States. In the nineteenth century, the "Forerunners"—Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Law Olmstead, and George Perkins Marsh—were among the first to recognize the problems with contemporary policies of rampant development, while John Wesley Powell in proposing government involvement in managing the environment and natural resources of the arid West laid the groundwork, Strong asserts,

for those who would follow. The divergent approaches to conservation and the conflicts over Western resource management during the Progressive Era are explicated in the battles of Gifford Pinchot, John Muir and Stephen Mather. And the career of Aldo Leopold demonstrates the rise of the concept of ecology.

During the Depression and World War II, Harold Ickes attempted to involve the federal government more actively in resource planning and management, hoping to eliminate waste and special interest group control of valuable resources. And for the second half of the twentieth century, Strong has selected three people—Rachel Carson, David Brower, Barry Commoner—whose efforts reflect the two of the major goals of conservationists during those decades: to preserve wilderness areas and protect national parks, and to convince Americans that the effects of our actions are jeopardizing life on this planet.

On the whole, Strong's approach succeeds, although the reader not thoroughly familiar with the details of the conservation effort may occasionally wish for clarification, as for example in the passing reference to an "acrimonious relationship" between Harold Ickes and National Park Service director Arno B. Cammerer (p. 166), or in Strong's statement without further elaboration that "the vulnerability of the Three Sisters wilderness in Oregon made it clear that administrative rulings provided little protection." (p. 205) And *Quarterly* readers may question why although William Stewart is prominently featured in a discussion of the irrigation movement, Francis Newlands is absent despite a lengthy section on the National Reclamation Act of 1902.

But these problems are minor. The book is not intended as a comprehensive history of the conservation movement in the United States nor to provide definitive biographies of the conservationists included. Rather, it was written with the "hope that the story of their efforts, both triumphs and defeats, will promote a better understanding of the rise of conservation in the United States and perhaps encourage others to follow in their footsteps." (p. ix) *Dreamers and Defenders* should accomplish the first of these goals; the fate of the second remains to be seen.

Kathryn D. Totton
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The Mysterious Lands. By Ann Haymond Zwinger. (New York: Truman Talley Books, 1989. 388 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.)

FOR MANY OF US, THE DESERT IS AS familiar as our own backyards; for others, it remains a mystery, a landscape hidden behind relentless temperatures, oddly-scaled creatures, harsh vegetation, and a perpetual dearth of water.

But most of us, whether we love that alien setting or not, find the desert fascinating. Ann Haymond Zwinger fosters that fascination in her latest book, *The Mysterious Lands.*

Ann Zwinger is a contemporary American nature writer who invites her readers to walk with her into the landscape. Most of *The Mysterious Lands*'s chapters begin just that way, when Zwinger and a friend or two step gently into unknown territory. Quickly they leave civilization behind, immersing themselves in their surroundings. Often that immersion is microscopic: "The small lavender flowers are worked by bees and ants and many ladybugs," she reports. "I get on my knees to watch." Or: "We sit down to get out of the wind, and then, still pestered by sand, lie on our stomachs, and end up spending a delightful hour entranced by a brace of grouse locusts."

While the details could become overwhelming, Zwinger writes with such grace and finesse that her company is welcome. Besides, not all her observations are miniscule. A trip into the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge to count bighorn sheep, for example, sweeps us across a land filled with plants and animals both large and small. A flight over Nevada brings an even more panoramic point of view. "Sometimes the land has a worn velvet look, tucked with arroyos, pleated with mountains, a landscape seemingly without seasons or eternally half past autumn, a landscape left out to dry, forgotten, tattered with rain, wrinkled with sun, and yet, in a peculiar sense I cannot explain, always vital and never forlorn."

As a matter of fact, all the deserts of *The Mysterious Lands* are vital rather than forlorn. Zwinger explores the most arid regions of the American southwest, moving from the Chihuahuan to the Sonoran deserts, and then from the Mojave to the Great Basin. Equally at home in each terrain—or at least equally ready to investigate—she invites her readers to watch the land unfold and to learn about the inhabitants. Interspersing her own observations with meticulous research, the sojourner/author/artist then overlays her words with a host of detailed illustrations. No seedpod is too small, no wing too delicate, no behavior too insignificant to catch her attention. A look at the lengthy notes and annotated bibliography appended to the book defines the care with which she verified the scientific accuracy of her work.

Just as significant, however, is Zwinger's sense of the ambience behind the science. Explaining the desert's effect on her spirit, she acknowledges, "I prefer the absences and the big empties, where the wind ricochets from sand grain to mountain. I prefer the crystalline dryness and an unadulterated sky strewn from horizon to horizon with stars. I prefer the raw edges and the unfinished hems of the desert landscape." Any reader who agrees—whether desert rat or armchair aficionado—will find *The Mysterious Lands* just as compelling.

Ann Ronald
University of Nevada, Reno

READER'S NOTEBOOK

Eric N. Moody

"NEVADA'S EVOLVING LANDSCAPE" is the theme of the first 1988 number of *Nevada Public Affairs Review*. Among articles in the issue are Mark Klett's "Rephotographing O'Sullivan's Nevada: The Rephotographic Survey Project," which revisits scenes recorded by photographers with the major nineteenth-century geological and geographical surveys led by Wheeler, Hayden, King, and Powell; Elizabeth Raymond's "Desert/Paradise: Images of Nevada Landscape," which examines literary impressions of the state; Stephen P. Thompson and Kenneth L. Merritt's "Western Nevada Wetlands: History and Current Status"; Earl Kersten's "Landscapes and Landscape Change in Nevada"; and Stanley J. Patchet and Joel Kirk's "Gold Hill and the Crown Point Ravine: 128 Years of Change," a text and photo examination of a heavily used area on the Comstock Lode. The Silver State's lands and environment have also been treated in Douglas H. Chadwick's "Sagebrush Country: America's Outback," *National Geographic*, January 1989; Bob Wiseman's "Killer Winter: 1949 Winter Made Nevada Another Siberia," *The Nevadan* (Sunday magazine of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*), February 5, 1989; and Brett Pauly's "The Battle for Tahoe's Water," *Trends 1989* (annual publication of the Incline Village *North Lake Tahoe Bonanza*), which examines effects of the severe drought experienced by westerners in the early 1930s. The debate in the 1980s over what the federal government should be doing with public lands in Nevada and elsewhere in the country is analyzed in C. Brant Short's *Ronald Reagan and the Public Lands: America's Conservation Debate, 1979-1984* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1989). The so-called Sagebrush Rebellion is one of the subjects discussed in the book.

The preservation of private properties, in the form of historic structures, is the subject of T. Allan Comp's "Preserving Our Past," *Nevada Magazine*, June 1989, which reports on recent efforts to preserve significant buildings and discusses, optimistically, the state's growing awareness of the importance of historic preservation. A landmark neighborhood in Las Vegas which grew up around Las Vegas High School following its completion in 1930 is discussed in Dorothy Wright's "Wildcat Country," *The Nevadan*, April 9, 1989. (The Nevada State Museum and Historical Society in Las Vegas issued a booklet to accompany an exhibit on the neighborhood that the museum recently displayed.)

Another aspect of southern Nevada's past, work by the state's cooperative agricultural extension service, is examined in another Wright article, "Extension Agents: Showing New Ways for 75 Years," *The Nevadan*, July 16, 1989, while Marshall Bowen, in "A Backward Step: From Irrigation to Dry Farming in the Nevada Desert," *Agricultural History* 63 (Spring 1989), has looked at a farming experiment—one that didn't work—in northeastern Nevada early in this century. A pest that has periodically plagued farmers in Nevada and the Great Basin is the subject of John L. Hansen's article "Invasion of the Crickets," *Nevada Magazine*, June 1989, which recalls the author's experiences with an invasion of Mormon Crickets in the 1930s. Ranchers of Nevada and the West, past and present, are the subjects of editor Alan Axelrod's *Ranching Traditions: Legacy of the American West* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989), a lavish volume of photographs and essays by thirteen authors, among them Hal Cannon, Baxter Black, David Dary, and William Kittredge; and Lawrence M. Woods's *British Gentlemen in the Wild West: The Era of the Intensely English Cowboy* (New York: The Free Press, 1989). Dale W. Bohmont, former dean of the College of Agriculture at the University of Nevada, Reno, has written a history of the college and a defense of his long stewardship of it in *Golden Years of Agriculture in Nevada* (Reno: Nevada Agricultural Foundation, 1989).

One of the most significant documents of nineteenth-century western exploration, a long lost journal by Jedediah Smith, was published by the Arthur H. Clark Company in 1977. Now the University of Nebraska Press has reprinted that work in an inexpensive paperback edition, still with the same title, *The Southwest Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith: His Personal Account of the Journey to California, 1826-1827*. A southwestern trade and migration route has been examined in *Archaeology of the Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road*, by Keith Myhrer and William G. White, which was issued in July 1989 as Cultural Resource Report 5-1950(P) by the Bureau of Land Management, Stateline Resource Area, Las Vegas District, and Richard M. Davis has written about a more northerly emigrant route, "The Walker River-Sonora Crossing," in *Overland Journal* 6 (No. 3, 1988). The remarkable life of Annie Bidwell, wife of John Bidwell, who led his emigrant party along the Walker River to California in 1841, is examined in Valerie Sherer Mathes's "Anne E.K. Bidwell: Chico's Benefactress," *California History* LXVIII (Spring/Summer 1989).

Two groups of ethnic immigrants to Nevada are the subjects of Louie A. Gardella's *La Zappa* (Reno: Nevada Agricultural Foundation, 1989), which relates the histories of dozens of families that came from northern Italy (Liguria and Tuscany), and Donald Warrin's "Portuguese Immigrants in Nevada," *UPEC Life* (official publication of Uniao Portuguesa do Estado da California) LXXXCIII (Spring 1989). Some of Nevada's Jewish pioneers in the nineteenth century have been written about by Robert Joe

Stout in "Shoes, Shaves, Cigars," *The Nevadan*, February 19, 1989.

Events and personalities of Nevada's mining history have been recalled in a number of recent publications. A nearly disastrous prospecting expedition led by Nevada Governor Henry G. Blasdel in 1866 is described in Susan James's "Blazing a Trail with Blasdel," *Nevada Magazine*, October 1989; the life of a Utah mining man who also operated in Nevada is the subject of Donald Q. Cannon's "Angus M. Cannon: Frustrated Mormon Miner," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 57 (Winter 1989); and the western uranium boom of the 1950s and the career of Charlie Steen have been examined by Raye C. Ringholz in *Uranium Frenzy: Boom and Bust on the Colorado Plateau* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989). Carl Glasscock's classic 1932 book on the Tonopah-Goldfield boom, is once again readily available, having been reissued by Nevada Publications of Las Vegas. Aspects of mining camp life and society are discussed in Dennis Casebier's article about Arda M. Haenszel, "Searchlight Lass Paints the Town, 66 Years Later," *The Nevadan*, December 18, 1988; Lois D. Whealen's "Childhood Memories" (of Tonopah in the 1930s), *Central Nevada's Glorious Past* 12 (November 1989); John C. Thomas's "Friday Night at the Barber Shop," *The Nevadan*, October 8, 1989, about the "best place in the world for a kid, on Friday night in the summer of 1938 . . . on Main Street, Pioche"; George Moss's "Popular Entertainment in Virginia City, Nevada, 1859-1863," *Journal of Popular Culture* 22 (Fall 1988); and Sally Zanjani's "Hop Fiends' Gulch," *The Nevadan*, July 2, 1989, which takes a look at drug use in early Goldfield. That scourge of mining camps, fire, is dealt with in William J. Metscher's "1912—A Hot Year for Tonopah," *Central Nevada's Glorious Past* 12 (May 1989). The colorful history of Tonopah provides material for Doug McMillan's "Tales of Tonopah," *Nevada Magazine*, June 1989, while Sally Zanjani, in "Alvah Myers: Fast-Living Father of Goldfield," *The Nevadan*, September 24, 1989, writes about the prosperous early days of Tonopah's neighbor.

A pair of Nevada and Colorado River area railroads are the subjects of Jack Fleming's "Rail Tales," *Nevada Magazine*, August 1989, which presents the story of the Nevada Northern Railway of White Pine County, and "Grand Canyon by Rail," an article in *The Nevadan*, August 27, 1989, about the Grand Canyon Railway in northern Arizona. Both these railroads, inactive for years, have recently reinaugurated passenger service on a limited basis. The story of a train that the Nevada State Railroad Museum hopes to run between Boulder City and Henderson is told by K. J. Evans in "One Century Old and It's Still in Training," *The Nevadan*, December 18, 1988.

Education in rural Nevada schools of the past has been described in Robert Joe Stout's "As Simple as ABC?," *The Nevadan*, March 5, 1989; L. C. ("Roy") Schank's "Highlights of My Teaching Experiences in Churchill County," *In Focus* (Annual Journal of the Churchill County Museum Association) 3 (1989-1990); and Leona Gilbertson Harris's "Journey Into the Past: Island Mountain

School, 1926," *Northeastern Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* (No. 2, 1989). The long and distinguished career of Nevada educator Elbert B. Edwards, who began teaching in Las Vegas schools when the city was still a small community, is recalled in Gene Segerblom's "Pioneer School Master in 20th Century," *The Nevadan*, October 15, 1989.

A useful tool for today's teachers of Nevada history has been created by Robert W. Davenport of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. *Desert Heritage: Readings in Nevada History* (Needham Heights, Mass.: Ginn Press, 1988), edited by Davenport, contains selections from published articles and books on a wide variety of subjects, from prehistory and overland emigrants, to twentieth century politics and gambling. Davenport himself has contributed an original essay on "The Sagebrush Rebellion: Nevada's War with the 'Feds'."

Another recent book of collected writings, containing the work of Stan Steiner and others, deals with the broad subject of the American West, although its principal focus is on the southwestern states. *The Waning of the West* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), authored by Steiner, but including "testimonial" passages by a dozen other writers, is a wide-ranging gathering of reflections on the old and new Wests by the late historian and social critic. The West and its history are also reflected on in a significant essay by Michael Malone, "Beyond the Last Frontier: Toward a New Approach to Western American History," *Western Historical Quarterly* XX (November 1989). Malone, in turning away from traditional "frontier" explanations of western development, suggests that a widely-focused view of the West as a distinctive geographic area, yet one which was and is strongly affected by national and international forces, may provide the best (although a less romantic) approach to studying and thus explaining the "complexities of this diverse and changing region."

Journalists and writers of Nevada, and writers who have found in the state a subject for their work, have been examined in Jake Highton's "Mining Camp Chronicles," *Nevada Magazine*, April 1989, which traces the exploits of certain newspapermen; K. J. Evans's "Nevada's Lettered Legend," *The Nevadan*, January 22, 1989, about Walter Van Tilburg Clark; and Ann Ronald's "Why Don't They Write About Nevada?", *Western American Literature* XXIV (Fall 1989), which concludes that nature writers have not been as attracted to Nevada as other parts of the West because the "traditional modes of appreciation are inappropriate" in the face of that place's "desolate power." A number of contemporary western writers, including several from Nevada, are profiled and discuss their work in S. Jean Mead's *Maverick Writers* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1989), while the largest and most prestigious book publisher in the state, the University of Nevada Press, is reported on by A. D. Hopkins in "Turning a New Leaf," *The Nevadan*, December 18, 1988.

The development of law and the judicial system in Nevada and the Far

West has been examined recently in James W. Hulse's "Making Law in the Great Basin: The Evolution of the Federal Court in Nevada, 1855-1905," and Gordon Morris Bakken's "American Mining Law and the Environment: The Western Experience," both in *Western Legal History* 1 (Summer/Fall 1988); Michael W. Bowers's "Judicial Selection in Nevada: Choosing the Judges," *Halcyon* 11 (1989); and Elmer R. Rusco's "Early Nevada and Indian Law," *Western Legal History* 2 (Summer/Fall 1989), which unsurprisingly concludes that the rights of Indians in early Nevada were "virtually ignored."

Experiences and achievements of Nevada's Indian peoples are discussed in Mary W. Anderson's "Between Two Worlds: The Goshutes of 1917," *The Nevadan,* August 13, 1989, about events on the Goshute reservation that straddles the Nevada-Utah line; W. J. Woyski's "Slave Trade in the Southwest," *The Nevadan,* November 20, 1988, which takes a look at the system of slavery that grew out of the old Spanish *encomienda* system; and Clara Lopez's "A Native American of Fallon, 1989," *In Focus* 3 (1989-1990), in which the author surveys the history of tribal groups in the Fallon-Carson Sink area. Nevada's premier basketmaker is the subject of Ronald McCoy's "Datsolalee," *Antiques and Fine Art,* May-June 1989, which focuses on her basketry, and Christopher Ross's "Dat So La Lee and the Myth Weavers," *Nevada Magazine,* October 1989, which also looks at her art, but pays more attention to her promotion by patrons Abe and Amy Cohn. The evolution of Indian schools in the West is explored by Margaret Connell Szasz in "Listening to the Native Voice: American Indian Schooling in the Twentieth Century," *Montana, The Magazine of Western History* 39 (Summer 1989).

The 1989-1990 issue of *In Focus,* journal of the Churchill County Museum Association, contains several accounts by women of their experiences in that part of the state. Among the articles are Michon Mackedon's "A Voice from the Past: The Diary of Delia Thompson Brown"; a selection of "The Correspondence of Alma Jenkins, 1910"; and Roberta Childers's "Early Ranchers—View of a Courtship" (excerpted from Childers's very-limited edition 1985 book *Magee Station and the Churchill Chronicles*). Doris D. Dwyer has contributed an essay on "The Role of Women in Nevada's Early History."

In Focus also carries a historical sketch of one of Nevada's independent telephone companies: Wesley Wayne Craig's "One Hundred Years of Prosperity," about the Churchill County Telephone and Telegraph System. Another rare type of Nevada business is treated in Larry Prosor and Ron Rudolph's "Heli-Skiing's Crown Jewels: The Ruby Mountains," *Snow Country,* December 1989, which briefly profiles Ruby Mountain Heli-Ski of Lamoille, Elko County. Recent efforts to revitalize the downtown business districts of both Reno and Sparks have been described by John Richlin in "A Facelift for Two Cities," *Nevada Business Journal,* September 1989.

The military's presence in Nevada, and military matters involving Nevadans, are discussed in Tony Holmes's largely pictorial *Superbase 8–Fallon:*

Supercarrier in the Desert (London: Osprey Publications, 1989), about the Fallon Naval Air Station; Stephen C. Fox's "General John DeWitt and the Proposed Internment of German and Italian Aliens during World War II," *Pacific Historical Review* LVII (November 1988), a study dealing with the commander of the Western Defense Command, which included Nevada; Jim Schreier's "Born a Cavalryman: Camillo C. C. Carr in Arizona," *Journal of Arizona History* 30 (Summer 1989), about an army officer who also served at Nevada's Fort Halleck; Lisa A. Kirk's "A Century of Soldiering: Looking Back on UNR's ROTC," *UNR Times,* Winter 1988-89, a review of military training at the University of Nevada, Reno; William Pencak's *For God and Country: The American Legion, 1919-1941* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), which contains references to longtime Nevadan Thomas W. Miller, one of the founders of the legion; and David C. Henley's *"The Land That God Forgot . . .": The Saga of Gen. George Patton's Desert Training Camps* (Fallon, Nevada: Lahontan Valley Printing, 1989), about activity on the army's World War II Desert Training Center in California, Nevada and Arizona. David P. Robrock, head of the Special Collections Department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas library, has written about a "displaced Civil War volunteer cavalry unit on the western frontier" in "The Seventh Iowa Cavalry and the Plains Indian Wars, 1861-1866," *Montana, The Magazine of Western History* 39 (Spring 1989).

An important figure in the early development of southern Nevada and Las Vegas is examined in Ralph J. Roske and Michael S. Green's "Octavius Decatur Gass, Pah-Ute County Pioneer," *Journal of Arizona History* 29 (Winter 1988). Later, nearly as important, events have been recalled in two articles by K. J. Evans: "Las Vegas Meets the Beatles," *Nevada Magazine,* August 1989; and "Skipper Gipper," *The Nevadan,* January 15, 1989, which describes Ronald and Nancy Reagan's 1954 publicity outing on Lake Mead while he was in town performing on stage at the Hotel Last Frontier. Evans also relates the violent exploits of a onetime North Las Vegas mayor, Horace Tucker, in "Terrible Tucker," *The Nevadan,* August 20, 1989, and the accomplishments of Wilbur ("Butch") Leypoldt, Clark County sheriff when the last Las Vegas brothel was closed in the 1950s, in "Butch Leypoldt, Civilizin' Sheriff," *The Nevadan,* October 1, 1989.

Nevada communities other than the major cities have received attention in a variety of recent articles and books. An early Humboldt region mining camp that has been given new life as a retirement community and tourist destination is portrayed by Mary F. Whalen in "The State of Unionville," *Nevada Magazine,* April 1989; an isolated Elko County camp that stays alive today as a hunting and fishing retreat is the subject of a "visitor's guide" by Donald E. Mathias, *I'd Rather Be in Jarbidge* (Glendora, Calif.: Dojeri Publications, 1986); Hazen, a small railroad town and the site of Nevada's last lynching, is examined in articles by Doris E. Sheppard, Mary Ellen Smitten, and Phillip

I. Earl in *In Focus* (1989-1990); fast growing Pahrump has its story told by Kate Butler in "The Greening of Pahrump," *Nevada Magazine*, August 1989; the intricacies of social life in a government town of the 1930s are described in Dennis McBride's "Among the Lotus Eaters: Class and Caste in Boulder City," *The Nevadan*, February 12, 1989; and much information on the history of Incline Village at Lake Tahoe is contained in an article by Kimberly Zaski, "A Man With a Vision," *Trends 1989*, about Arthur L. Wood, the founder of the community.

Gambling, the backbone of Nevada's economy, is discussed in Jerome E. Edwards's "Nevada: Gambling and the Federal-State Relationship," *Halcyon* 11 (1989); Shawn Jones's: "The Road to Jackpot," *Idaho Yesterdays* 33 (Spring 1989), about the history of gambling in Idaho and the Idaho gamblers who eventually moved south to establish Jackpot, Nevada, as a legal gambling center; and in a number of articles in *The Nevadan* about prominent southern Nevada gaming industry figures. Among these are Harvey Diederich's, "The House of Houssels" (about J. Kell Houssels, Sr. and Jr., and Nancy Wallace Houssels, wife of the son), April 16, 1989; Bill Moody's "Jackie Gaughan," September 17, 1989; and Jean Norton's "Gentleman Gambler" (about Bill Boyd, the "man who made poker pay"), December 11, 1988.

Important personalities, and some just plain unusual ones, outside the gaming industry have received attention in a host of new publications. Don Flamm's "A Political Giant," *Nevada Magazine*, August 1989, offers a portrait of former Nevada Secretary of State John Koontz; J. M. Fenster writes about an elusive millionaire in "The Private Universe of George Whittell," *Automobile Quarterly* 26 (No. 1, 1988); Jerry Tarkanian and Terry Pluto have penned *Tark: College Basketball's Winningest Coach* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988); Greg Lemond and Kent Cordis have collaborated on *Greg Lemond's Complete Book of Bicycling* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1987), which includes a chapter on "The Greg LeMond Story"; Constance Wynn Altshuler's "The Scandalous Divorce: Governor Safford Severs the Tie That Binds," *Journal of Arizona History* 30 (Summer 1989), relates a much-publicized event involving the onetime Comstock resident who became Arizona territory's chief executive in 1869; and Mary G. Stano, in "Dan's Ferry," *The Nevadan*, February 26, 1989, has written about southern Nevada pioneer and Colorado River ferryman Daniel Bonelli. Deborah Whitford, in "Married to the Colorado River," *The Nevadan*, October 22, 1989, presents a portrait of a later Colorado River figure, Georgie Clark, who began running rafting tours in the 1940s. Jerry Hendershot's "Doby Doc, Robin Hood of Elko County," *Northeastern Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* (No. 4, 1988), takes a look at controversial collector of Nevadiana Robert ("Doby Doc') Caudill; Mary F. Whalen offers a profile of an accomplished artist and photographer in "Cliff Segerblom and the Nevada Odyssey," *The Nevadan*, January 8, 1989; Mary Dean's "The Harmons of Las Vegas," *Las Vegan City Magazine*, January/

February 1989, relates the contributions of Harley A. Harmon and his heirs to the southern Nevada city; and Mary G. Stano, in "Miner-cum-Minister Used 'Creative Financing' to Build Austin Church," *The Nevadan,* November 27, 1988, tells the story of William G. Blakely, an enterprising frontiersman of California, Nevada and Arizona. The role of Nevada Senator Francis G. Newlands in the annexation of Hawaii in the 1890s is examined by Joseph A. Fry in "Strange Expansionist Bedfellows: Newlands, Morgan, and Hawaii," *Halcyon* 11 (1989), while the stories of some lesser known Nevadans are related in Louise Walker Botsford's "Valentine Walther, Nevada Pioneer," *Northeastern Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* (No. 1, 1989), about a prominent Elko County rancher, and Douglas McDonald's "The Lure of the Mining Camps. F. W. Blake: Assayer, Banker, Expressman," *True West,* July 1988, which describes the career of a western businessman whose residences in Nevada during the early 1860s included Carson City and Unionville. A portrait of a northern Nevada lawman, Earl Cobb of Palisade, can be found in Ron Donoho's "The Nearsighted Marshal," *The Nevadan,* October 8, 1989, and the life of the famous "cowboy detective," Charles A. Siringo, who at one time was hired to investigate highgrading by miners in Goldfield, has been authoritatively told by Ben E. Pingenot in *Siringo* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1989). In *Around Douglas County: A Collection of Columns About the People of Douglas County* (Genoa, Nevada: Desk Top Publishers, 1988), Jane Lehrman presents lively biographical sketches of more than a hundred longtime residents, artists, proprietors of businesses, and civic figures.

A major work of western biography has appeared in Dan L. Thrapp's three volume *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1988). While there are some notable omissions of prominent personalities, and the author chose not to include figures from the mining frontier, the work still stands as a significant reference work for anyone interested in the history of the western United States.

Nevada commemorated its one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of statehood in 1989 and, while the celebration couldn't quite transcend the contrivance of a major milestone from a minor one, it did stimulate some thoughtful and significant writing about the state's beginnings. Besides Leslie B. Gray's ambitious *The Source and the Vision: Nevada's Role in the Civil War* (Reno: The Gray Trust, 1989), two articles appeared that place the story of Nevada's admission to the Union in its proper political context: Jerome E. Edwards's "Union Made," *Nevada Magazine,* October 1989; and Michael S. Green's "Statehood for Nevada," *The Nevadan,* October 29, 1989.

NEW RESOURCE MATERIALS

Nevada Historical Society

Nevada Consolidated Telephone and Telegraph Company Records

The Society recently received a significant collection of records of the Nevada Consolidated Telephone and Telegraph Company, a Carson City business that at one time provided telephone service in the state capital, Gardnerville, Minden, and portions of Lyon and Washoe counties. Established in 1907, Nevada Consolidated operated into the early 1920s.

The records, covering the years 1907 to 1918, consist of minutes of directors' and stockholders' meetings, articles of incorporation, bylaws, legal agreements, resolutions by the board of directors, financial statements, stock certificates and various other documents. Among the principal officers of the company whose activities are reflected are James F. Adams, James G. Sweeney, James D. Finch, Jr., Alfred Karge, and George L. and Louise J. Sanford.

We wish to thank Jean Sanford of Carson City for her gift of these important materials from an early Nevada utility company, a type of enterprise for which we have relatively little primary source documentation.

Aaron Wingate Records

One of the early arrivals in booming Aurora, Nevada, at the beginning of the 1860s, was a New Englander named Aaron M. Wingate. By the spring of 1862, he was operating a freighting business, running pack trains between Folsom, California, and Aurora, and operated a general store in his two-story Wingate Building on Pine Street. Wingate prospered along with the mining camp; when Aurora was incorporated in 1864 he was elected to the city's first board of aldermen; two years later he became a state assemblyman from Esmeralda County.

When Aurora's fortunes declined in the late 1860s, it appears that Wingate's did also. By the early 1870s he had moved to Carson City and was employed as a watchman at the United States branch mint there. He continued to hold that position into the 1880s. Eventually he relocated to Sac-

ramento, California, where he died in 1894, reportedly at the age of seventy-five.

As the result of a generous donation by Arnold G. Tolman of Healdsburg, California, the Society has acquired an account book kept by Wingate during 1863-1864, one that reflects his various business activities in Aurora. The daily journal records transactions in Wingate's store (customers include numerous individuals and mining companies, the City of Aurora, and a "Safety Committee" of vigilantes), the apparent leasing of the store to Garland and Company in 1864, rents received and taxes paid on various properties that Wingate owned, and a complete inventory of items in the Aurora House hotel, which he either owned or had an interest in (W. A. B. Cobb, his brother-in-law, was the proprietor in 1864).

The Wingate journal has traveled widely since it was found by the Tolman family when they lived in Aurora in 1940 to 1941. We are pleased that, after many years of safe-keeping by the Tolmans, it has made its way back to Nevada, where it will provide valuable new information about one of the state's major early mining centers.

Eric N. Moody
Manuscript Curator

University of Nevada, Reno Oral History Program

The Oral History Program recently completed the following works, all of which can be purchased from the department. (Call 784-6932 for more information.)

Barbara Bennett: Mayor of Reno and Political Activist. Barbara Bennett served as the mayor of Reno from 1979 to 1982. This oral history contains a brief biographical treatment of Bennett's early life and descriptions of her employment prior to her becoming mayor of Reno. Most of the history deals with Bennett's political activities, term as mayor, and service to the community. She also discusses the growth of the gaming industry, water and smog problems, women's issues, and her work in Common Cause. City and state political leaders are profiled in this candid appraisal of Reno politics and government from the 1960s to the 1980s.

Harry P. Callahan: The Callahan Family and Ranch. Harry Callahan was born in 1895, and was the grandson of Matt Callahan, an Irish immigrant who owned brickyards in Carson City and Virginia City during the years of the

Bonanza. In 1883, with the demand for bricks in steep decline, Matt sold his Virginia City brickyard and bought the Jacob Griner homestead in Steamboat Hills, a few miles north of Washoe City. Within a few years, additional parcels of land were acquired, and the ranch provided a livelihood for the Callahan family, in whose possession it remains today.

Harry Callahan's oral history describes the development of the ranch and contains informative memories of rural schooling, Indian-white relations, the economic matrix of the region, water rights struggles, and other topics useful in developing an understanding of ranching experiences in northwestern Nevada.

Verne Foster and the Nevada Mining Association. Verne Foster is the daughter of Alex Wise, the mining engineer for the C & C Mine in Virginia City, and who, with Roy Hardy, owned and operated the Flowery Mines in Six Mile Canyon in the 1920s. Verne Foster attended the University of Nevada in 1919 and 1920. In 1925, she married Herb Foster, who went on to become athletic director and head football coach at Reno High School for almost three decades.

Foster's extended family has been deeply involved in the mining industry in Nevada since the late nineteenth century. She joined the staff of the Nevada Mining Association (NMA) in 1952, and remained there until her retirement in 1988. This oral history is partially biographical, and includes interesting sketches of Virginia City and student life at the University of Nevada; but it primarily concentrates on illuminating the role of the NMA in the development of mining in the state from 1952 to 1988. As part of the Oral History Department's work with Verne Foster, we collected some of the retired files of the Nevada Mining Association, which were subsequently deposited in the Special Collections Department of the University of Nevada, Reno Library.

George L. Ullom: Politics and Development in Las Vegas, 1930s-1970s. George Ullom, a native of Las Vegas, was born in 1915. He became active in local politics in the 1930s, eventually becoming city manager and registrar of voters in the 1960s. Biographical information gives flavor to this topical study of half a century of life in Las Vegas. Mr. Ullom discusses at length his work on the city police force from the 1940s to the 1950s. This oral history also contains information about early Las Vegas industries; problems between the Basic Magnesium, Incorporated (BMI) strikers and the police; minorities in Las Vegas; tourism; and the notorious Block 16 and prostitution.

1987-1988 Oral History Program Master Index: volume 2. This volume contains approximately 10,000 index listings of all oral histories published in 1987 and 1988. Updates to the *Master Index* are published biennially.

Works in Progress:

Albina Redner, as yet untitled. Albina Redner is a Shoshone who was born in 1924 in Austin, Nevada. This oral history is both biographical and topical, and it spans the 1930s to the present. Albina Redner gives details about her early life in Austin, Fallon, and Stillwater with information about Shoshone settlements, families and interaction with whites. She describes in detail Shoshone medicine and healing practices, which were shown to her by her grandfather and mother, both of whom were Indian doctors. Daily life at the Stewart Indian School is also detailed, and Redner gives a profile of Governor E. P. Carville, describing her experiences while working in the governor's mansion in the late 1930s to early 1940s. Redner discusses her military service in the Women's Army Corps during World War II; raising and educating ten children; and the difference between contemporary Indians and their ancestors. This oral history will be available by early 1990.

Woodrow Wilson, as yet untitled. Woodrow Wilson grew up in the South in the 1920s and 1930s. He came to Las Vegas in response to the demand for workers in the defense industry during World War II. Wilson's oral history contains information about his family, the role of blacks in the South and North, and his move to Las Vegas. In addition, Wilson discusses the socio-economic position of blacks in Las Vegas from the 1940s to 1960s; discrimination in housing and public accommodations; Westside Las Vegas; the Westside Credit Union; his work in the NAACP; other civil rights issues; and his service on the county commission. This oral history will be available by early 1990.

Oral History Program Collection Catalog: A greatly expanded catalog containing abstracts of original introductions to oral histories is in progress. A topical index has been added to aid researchers. The catalog will be available by early 1990.

Kay Stone
Program Assistant

University of Nevada, Reno
Special Collections Department

The Special Collections Department is pleased to announce that Reno architect, Raymond Hellmann, has donated the architectural records created by his firm during his career of 25 plus years. The collection contains over 70

cubic feet of specifications and drawings for the more than 100 projects designed by Hellmann. Some of the projects include the Fleischmann Planetarium, 1963; the former Sierra Pacific Power Company administration building at South Virginia and Moana, 1965; and the Sparks Library, 1965. Access to the collection is restricted until processing is completed.

Mrs. Willard Day has donated two taped interviews of William G. Emminger, made by Willard Day in 1962. Emminger discusses mining, the history of Rochester and Unionville, Rawhide Jack Davis and Jack Longstreet.

A recent acquisition to the manuscript collection includes three letters written to H. M. Yerington from I. Oliver and J. W. Haynie of Aurora. Haynie's letters discuss accusations that the Belvidere Mine encroached on the Bulwar Mine at Bodie, California (1878); Oliver's 1882 letters report on erroneous government surveys through Soda and Hawthorne.

New mining items include a video tape made from 1950s movie footage of the Bootstrap Mine (in the Carlin Trend goldfields), donated by Marion Fisher; legal and financial records of the Savage Mining Company, 1862-1894; deeds to the Eliza Bradbury Ledge of the Utah Silver Mining Company and the Santa Rita Mining Company, 1860-1863; and an 1863 letter from G. W. Cassidy in Gold Hill, Nevada, to his brother C. C. Cassidy, discussing G. W.'s mining activities, Southern sympathies, and an acquaintance carrying "Rebel" dispatches.

Susan Searcy
Manuscript Curator

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(Signed) Cheryl Ann Fox, Editor

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