Nevada

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NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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

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Nevada
Historical Society Quarterly

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Front Cover: Civilian Conservation Corps architect's crew planning reconstruction work in the laundresses' quarters at Fort Churchill. (*Civilian Conservation Corps Collection, Elwood Decker File, Nevada Historical Society*)

Book Reviews

THE RAWHIDE STAGECOACH ROBBERY OF 1908

Frank Adams

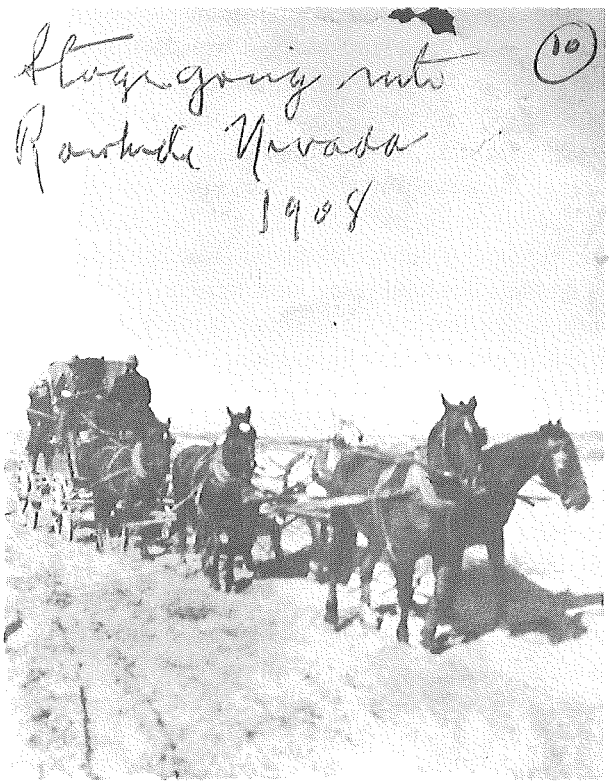
When demanding money and valuables from waylaid travelers along the roadways, the early English highwaymen said it most eloquently: "Stand and deliver." In what was possibly the last strongbox robbery from a Wells Fargo & Company stagecoach, the demand was not so eloquent.[1] It happened June 13, 1908, on the road between Schurz and Rawhide, Nevada. Two men armed with revolvers jumped from behind a rock and shouted "Hands up" to the driver and passengers of the Day and Kano stagecoach. They demanded the strongbox that belonged to Wells Fargo & Company. After ordering the stagecoach driver to drive on, they began to pry open the strongbox.[2] Recent research into this event has revealed some intriguing facts about this little known but historic robbery.

The early morning air was still crisp as stagecoach driver Tony Kano hitched up his team of six horses for the run from Schurz to Rawhide. He knew the summer sun would quickly heat the desert. Distant clouds offered only thin hope for relief—maybe a late afternoon rain shower.[3] As Kano finished with the team, Wells Fargo Agent Charles Covell loaded the locked express box onto the stage, sliding it under the driver's seat, since the passenger compartment was filled with fresh fruit and vegetables, packages for local Rawhide merchants and mail, leaving no room for passengers or the express box. Kano, his two passengers and the express box would all be riding atop the coach for this trip.

Kano's passengers had both arrived in Schurz via train from opposite directions. Young Ernest Eagon had come in from Goldfield earlier that morning. He was headed to Rawhide searching for work. Miss Rebecca Barrett was traveling from San Francisco enroute to Rawhide to visit her brother before her return to England. Shortly after 7:00 a.m., with his coach loaded and passengers seated next to him, Kano set out for the stage company's halfway station.

A native Nevadan, Frank Adams is a twenty-five-year veteran in law enforcement. He graduated from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and has pursued graduate studies at the Southern Police Institute at the University of Louisville. Currently the Deputy Chief of the Nevada Division of Investigations, he presented this paper at the Fourth Biennial Conference on Nevada History, sponsored by the Nevada Historical Society.

After stopping for lunch, Kano and his passengers continued to Rawhide. The country they rode through was desolate and uninhabited, open desert covered with stubby sagebrush and greasewood bushes. As the stage approached the upper end of the Regent District, Kano slowed for a curve in the road.[4] Briefly, they watched a stray dog running alongside the coach in hot pursuit of a rabbit. All of a sudden two heads popped up from behind a large rock outcrop near the trail. Two men stepped forward. The short one wore sackcloth over his head and the tall one wore a black silk handkerchief over his face. They each trained a revolver on the stage and ordered "Hands up!" Kano brought the six horses to a stop. The tall man with the handkerchief over his face demanded to know what the stage carried beside mail. Kano replied, "The Wells Fargo." The bandit ordered him to "Throw it down." Once the strongbox was on the ground, the men asked for water. Both highwaymen drank from Kano's canteen and returned it with a polite "Thank you." One of them looked under the stage flap at the rear of the coach and then ordered Kano to "Drive on." Just down the road, Miss Barrett looked back and saw the men prying open the strongbox with a



The stagecoach that serviced Rawhide during 1908. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

chisel.[5] His passengers now safe from harm, Kano covered the six remaining miles to Rawhide as rapidly as possible.

The Investigation and Arrest

Even before the robbery, Rawhide was less than a peaceful spot. Captain W. L. Cox, superintendent of the Nevada State Police (NSP), had just arrived from Nevada's capital, Carson City, on June 9th. He had been dispatched by Governor John Sparks to resolve a general strike called by the miners. They were protesting earlier actions against them and some local businessmen by officers of the state police.

Once word of the robbery reached Rawhide, a posse of local citizens and lawmen was quickly organized and set out in search of the bandits. Captain Cox took charge of the investigation immediately.[6] Deputy sheriffs and state police officers returned to the robbery scene with the aid of several citizens and their automobiles. Other lawmen headed out to the settlements of Fallon and Manhattan to search for the bandits—some on horseback, some in roadsters and touring cars.[7]

Following directions to the robbery site, NSP Sergeants William Otts and J. R. Hunter, along with Privates Templeton, Anderson and H. W. Lane, arrived to examine the crime scene. Along the stage trail they found the Wells Fargo strongbox. It had been pried open and emptied. They followed two sets of boot tracks away from the box to the top of a nearby hill, where they found evidence that two men had lain in wait with a commanding view of the stage trail. In the sand, they found two empty beer bottles, one broken. Officer Lane spotted a bit of tissue paper sticking out of the dirt a short distance down the trail. It turned out to be wrapping for two of the strongbox packages. These were open, but their contents—diamonds—were still in their small boxes. Captain Cox arrived at the scene accompanied by R. D. Pickett, a land surveyor from Rawhide. With pertinent detail, Pickett mapped the vicinity of the robbery site, producing a crime scene sketch for the state police.

When Otts had finished at the robbery site he traveled on to the halfway station and then to Schurz. There he talked to Robert C. Dyer, the merchant at the Paiute trading post. Dyer told him that two men had visited the trading post on June 9, hoping to borrow money. They claimed to have been prospecting near Wabuska and told him about losing their team of mules. The smaller of the two men wore a badge of bright metal on his vest and claimed to be a deputy sheriff. Since they were broke, they pawned a gun with Dyer for five dollars. The fellow with the badge had Dyer send a telegram to Rawhide.

Otts also talked with Charles Covell, the stage agent in Schurz. Covell told Otts that he had provided two men with tickets for the stage that departed for Rawhide on June 10. One of the two identified himself as a deputy sheriff from

William L. Cox was the first superintendent of the Nevada State Police and headed the Rawhide stagecoach robbery investigation. This photograph shows him in the uniform of the Nevada volunteer cavalry during the Spanish-American War. (*Walt Gist Collection*)

Goldfield and showed Covell his badge. Covell recognized the other man. They were brothers in the same fraternal order. The men said that they would make their headquarters at the Claiborne Hotel in Rawhide, and would arrange to pay for the tickets when they arrived. Feeling comfortable with these two, Covell allowed them to ride C.O.D.

The next morning, Sergeant J. R. Hunter headed south over the mountains from Rawhide to Walker, then down to Double Springs and back to the halfway station. There he contacted W. C. Stubler who worked and lived at the station. Stubler informed the sergeant that two strangers had arrived at the halfway station on the morning of the robbery. They drove a hack drawn by two roan horses. The men bought breakfast and feed for their horses on credit. They told Stubler they would be prospecting in the Red Mountain area, several miles from the halfway station. These men left the team and hack with Stubler and started out on foot. Stubler said he prepared for them a lunch of two sandwiches and

water in two soda or beer bottles. To follow up on this information, Sergeant Hunter gave one of the horses from the strangers' team to Officer Templeton who had arrived by auto from Rawhide. He instructed Templeton to continue the search for the robbers on horse back. Hunter would wait at the halfway station for the return of the so-called prospectors.

Later in the day, one of the two men walked out of the desert into the halfway station. Promptly, he was at odds with the station master: "What God damn son of a bitch of a state police took my horse?" The man was soon standing face to face with Sergeant Hunter. The stranger had his hand on his gun, a Colt revolver in a holster at his side. Sergeant Hunter explained that the horse was being used to search for the stage robbers. The man became less belligerent and told Hunter that he was James Bliss, a deputy sheriff from Goldfield. He showed Hunter his badge, a five point star with ball tips. Tension resurfaced when Bliss demanded to know if Hunter intended to confiscate his gun. Not having to surrender his firearm, Bliss told Sergeant Hunter that he and his friend, William Walters, had been prospecting in the nearby mountains. Now he was headed back to Rawhide. Bliss paid for the meals and horse feed from the day before with a ten dollar gold piece, then set out for Rawhide together with Sergeant Hunter.

Information about the two hapless prospectors in Schurz was relayed to Captain Cox. This helped the state police officers in Rawhide determine that these fellows had rented a cabin from Ed Gosslein, a Rawhide real estate agent a couple of days earlier. They then rented a wagon and two horses from the Pioneer Corral on June 12. The men told the owner of the corral of their mining claims about twelve miles east of Schurz. With the hack and team they planned to check on their claims.

When Hunter returned from the halfway station with Bliss, he made his report to Captain Cox. Based on the information gathered from Schurz and Rawhide about Bliss and Walters, Cox ordered the two men arrested for the stagecoach robbery. The next morning, the state police took the pair into custody and turned them over to the local deputy sheriff. They were promptly locked up in the Rawhide jail.

Otts retrieved Walters's boots from the jail. The sole leather was torn away exposing the boot nails. With a greater taste for fashion than for comfort, Bliss purchased a new set of boots after returning to Rawhide. Otts checked with the local merchants and found that Bliss had bought the new boots from Simonds. The merchant still had Bliss's old boots at his shop. With both pairs of boots, Otts returned to the site of the robbery. There he matched Walters's boots with seventeen prints of tracks made by one of the bandits. The distinctive, nail-riddled sole made Otts's task easy, having left a distinct impression in the dirt. Bliss's boots also had a unique characteristic. There was a large "V" or wedge on one of the heels that matched four of the shoe prints found at the scene.[8]

The earliest reports of the robbery indicated that the bandits made off with

$12,000 in payroll for the mines. The Coalition Company was supposed to have lost $7,000.[9] However, by the time the preliminary hearing was held on June 18, 1908, the record of the contents of the express box had been reduced considerably. One of the witnesses was W. P. Talbott, assistant agent for the Southern Pacific Railway at Schurz. It was his duty to handle the "express" for Wells Fargo before it was transferred to the stagecoach company. He testified that the contents included three small boxes, valued at $1,210 total, a box addressed to the Rawhide Press Times with a C.O.D. of $7.80, letters of expense and several items of personal correspondence.[10] It was not unusual for Wells Fargo & Company to understate their loss in a robbery to maintain credibility with their customers. This possibly was the case with this stage robbery. Wells Fargo detectives stayed on the case well after the recovery of the property and the preliminary hearing.[11]

The Preliminary Hearing

During the hearing in Rawhide, Justice of the Peace H. F. Brede heard several witnesses. Their testimony provided circumstantial evidence which linked Bliss and Walters to the robbery. State police officers presented evidence collected at the site of the robbery and from the suspects. Also admitted into evidence was the map prepared by R. D. Pickett, the surveyor employed by Captain Cox. The map showed detailed information about the location and terrain at the site of the robbery.[12] The closest thing to a positive identification of the robbery suspects was the testimony of the nineteen-year-old passenger, Ernest Eagon. Sergeant Hunter had escorted him to the Rawhide jail to look at the suspects, Bliss and Walters. Eagon testified that the tall man he had seen in the jail cell (Walters) had the same eyes as the masked stage robber.[13]

Wells Fargo & Company was so interested in this case that a senior detective was sent to monitor the hearing. Special Officer Cornelius Cain arrived in Rawhide from San Francisco shortly after the robbery and was present during the proceedings. Cain later provided Sheriff W. A. Ingalls of Esmeralda County with considerable information regarding James Bliss and his criminal history. He prepared a written synopsis of the testimony at the hearing and forwarded it to Ingalls. Cain's correspondence with the sheriff reveals that Wells Fargo & Company was very anxious to see Bliss and Walters prosecuted for this robbery.[14]

Based on the evidence, on June 22, 1908, Justice of the Peace Brede ordered Bliss and Walters "held to answer" and set bail at $1,500 each. He turned over the case to the Esmeralda County District Attorney. The D.A. would have to present the case to the county grand jury in Goldfield.[15] Sheriff Ingalls's deputies transferred Bliss and Walters from the Rawhide jail to the jail in Goldfield. Since neither man could make bail, they were both held there pending further court appearances.

Though the Goldfield jail was hardly a year old, Walters apparently found it not to his taste. On August 1, 1908, he staged an unsuccessful jail break with four other inmates. Surprisingly, Bliss was not one of them. Obliging the conspirators' pleas, Jailer Jack Hart fetched donuts for them. As he opened the jail door to the lower corridor the prisoners attacked him. Hart was hit over the head with his heavy set of door keys and knocked to the floor. Fortunately, Sheriff Ingalls saw to it that two deputies were on duty whenever prisoners were out of their cells. Deputy Pete Brechelsen was close at hand. Before any of the prisoners could exit the corridor, Deputy Brechelsen jumped in and leveled his gun at them. The injured jailer called for him to shoot. Instead the Deputy beat Walters over the head with his pistol. The other prisoners withdrew and headed for their cells. Suddenly, two came back out toward Brechelsen, promptly meeting the same fate as Walters. Walters and the others were eventually charged with attempted escape from a county jail.[16] During their preliminary hearing, Bliss became a witness for the prosecution, testifying against Walters and the others.[17]

Bliss Makes Bail

On September 5, 1908, the Esmeralda County Grand Jury returned a "true bill," indicting Bliss and Walters for the "crime of robbery." Bail of $5,000 was set for each defendant.[18] Neither Walters nor Bliss had the means to make bail, and it looked as if they would stay in jail until their trial date.[19]

Oddly, Bliss was already familiar with the Goldfield jail but not as an inmate. Under the name of Thomas Bliss, he had in fact served as a deputy sheriff in 1907 and 1908 and had been a key witness in the Smith and Preston murder trial in 1907.[20] This case helped stir the call for federal troops by mine owners to prevent union violence. The deployment of troops in Goldfield rapidly led to the formation of the Nevada State Police, established by the Nevada Legislature in January of 1908.[21] The state lawmen served in Goldfield and later in Rawhide to maintain order between the miners and businessmen. Since the Smith and Preston murder trial ultimately gave rise to the Nevada State Police, Bliss's testimony in that infamous case, in a sense, begot the very lawmen who later apprehended him.

The irony does not stop here. The Smith and Preston trial shook loose the first tantalizing hints that there was more to Deputy Sheriff Bliss than met the badge. A defense witness told the court that Bliss was not a mine owner from Utah as he claimed. Actually Bliss was C. L. "Gunplay" Maxwell, a member of Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch. Although several of Goldfield's citizens knew of Bliss's reputation as an outlaw, they overlooked it at the Smith-Preston trial, since they benefitted from his perjured testimony. Bliss continued in his role as a deputy sheriff for a short time after the Smith-Preston trial.[22]

Shortly after Bliss's robbery indictment, he wrote a letter to his wife, Bessie, in

Deputy Sheriff and robbery suspect James Bliss, aka C. L. "Gunplay" Maxwell. (*Richard Johnston Collection*)

San Francisco. In this letter he bragged that if he had made bail he could have sent her a considerable amount of money. He told her that his bail should have been posted by those who were supposedly his friends, but they made his will their pleasure. He hinted of personal details of his background, but evidently could not bring himself to tell her.[23] Bliss may have had in mind his previous criminal activities or his relationship with the mine owners after his perjured testimony at the Smith-Preston trial.[24]

On September 31, 1908, Bliss wrote another letter to his wife. He told her that the "unexpected had happened"—someone had posted bail for him and he was "once again enjoying freedom." He said he would wait for his trial date to be set and then head for San Francisco. It is unknown how he signed his first letters to his wife, but this letter was signed "Clarence L. Seaman," one of his many aliases. He was seen later that fall in San Francisco living well and sporting a

number of jewels on his vest. While Bliss was in San Francisco, his activities were monitored by agents of Wells Fargo & Company.[25]

In fact, Bliss never was tried for the stagecoach robbery. The only mention of his jumping bail was printed in the *Goldfield Daily Tribune.* There was no mention about him being allowed to leave the area. Evidently, no attempt was made to return him to Goldfield for trial. By perjuring himself in their behalf at the Smith and Preston trial, Bliss may have tried to hold the Mine Owners' Association and Citizens' Alliance of Goldfield hostage. As a result members of this organization, including George Wingfield, may have been disinclined to have Bliss prosecuted or interfere with his personal life.[26]

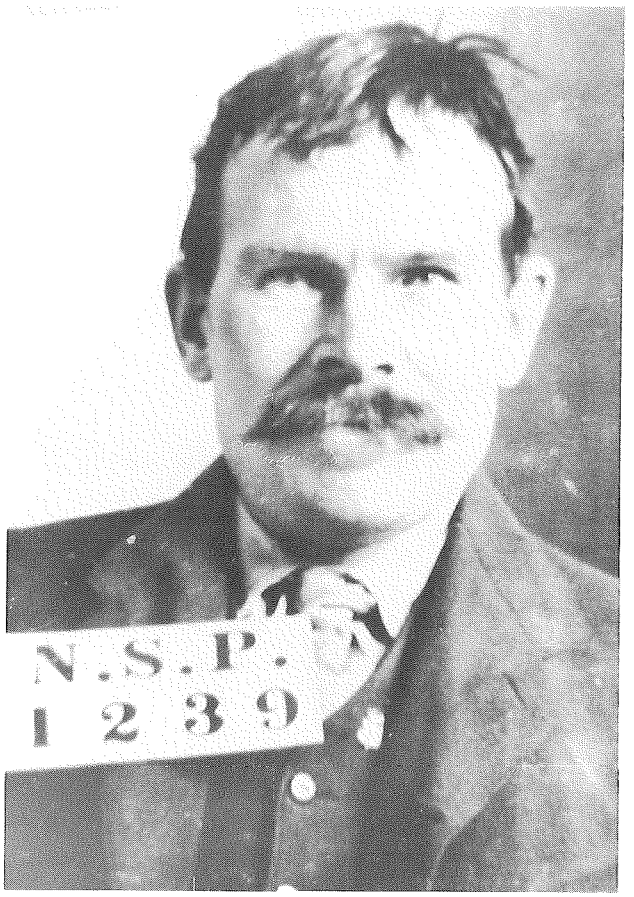
Walters Does Time in Prison

Like Bliss, Walters did not stand trial for the stage robbery. However, Walters stayed more familiar with prison than did Bliss. He was convicted on February 20, 1909, for "attempt to Escape from a County jail"; and on March 5, 1909, he was sentenced to four years in the Nevada State Prison in Carson City.[27] During his incarceration there, he asked for clemency or a pardon from the Board of Pardons, but was refused. The district attorney from Esmeralda County commented that Walters was lucky he did not receive a longer sentence because of his lead role in the attempted escape.[28]

In 1912, Captain J. P. Donnelley of the Nevada State Police tried to have Walters stand trial for the stagecoach robbery before his release from prison. Donnelley wrote several letters to the district attorneys of both Esmeralda County and Mineral County in an effort to convince them to bring Walters to trial. Donnelley's efforts were unsuccessful.[29] Nevada State Police criminal history records reveal that William Peter Walters was born in Minnesota and was a resident of Grass Valley, California. He apparently had spent some time in Montana. One of his letters of recommendation for pardon came from a fraternal organization called "Shoshone Tribe No. 1 Improved Order of Red Men" from Butte, Montana.[30] Walters was released from prison in 1912. Oddly enough, if Bliss had spent as much time behind bars as Walters, he likely would have fared better over the next few years.

James Bliss AKA C. L. "Gunplay" Maxwell

Bliss was born in or about 1860, probably in Boston, to a family that owned a hotel. Sometime around 1875, he killed a friend in a barroom brawl. To avoid arrest, he fled westward and settled in Wyoming. There he worked for several large cattle companies as a cowboy and gunfighter.[31] He was eventually convicted of grand larceny in Wyoming in 1893, and served three years in the state penitentiary. C. L. Maxwell was the name he was known by during his trial and incarceration. It was during this prison stay that he first met Butch Cassidy.



Robbery suspect William P. Walters. (*Nevada State Library and Archives*)

They served a year and a half in prison together and were released within a week of each other. After leaving Wyoming, he headed for Utah where he continued his criminal association with Butch Cassidy and Cassidy's Wild Bunch.[32] In 1898, still using the name Maxwell, he was convicted of bank robbery in Springfield, Utah, and served five years in the state prison.[33] After his sentence was commuted, he went to work as a mine guard during a strike in Carbon County, Utah.[34] From there he drifted to Goldfield, where he became a deputy sheriff using the name Thomas Bliss. In the later winter of 1907, he presented himself in San Francisco as William H. Seaman, "a descendent of one of the oldest titled families in Italy." He eventually married a wealthy widow, Bessie Hume. Bliss returned to Reno for his honeymoon and may have been in Rawhide using the name Seaman. In October of 1908, after making bail on the stagecoach robbery charge, he joined his wife in San Francisco but did not stay long. He left San Francisco and by all accounts his wife, Bessie, in the summer of 1909.[35]

Bliss next showed up in Price, Utah, back in the same territory where he had tried so hard to be an outlaw.[36] During the appeal of the Smith-Preston murder case, attorney Orrin Nelson Hilton did extensive research into Bliss's background in an effort to impeach his testimony. Hired by the Western Federation of Miners to represent the defendants, Hilton determined that shortly after Bliss returned to Price, he began planning a payroll robbery. Tipped off, the coal companies moved to thwart Bliss's plan to relieve them of their money and ordered Deputy Sheriff Edward Black Johnson to stop Bliss. Johnson and Bliss's paths had crossed twice before, once in Utah after Bliss was released from prison and again in Goldfield. There Johnson had tried to discredit Bliss's testimony against Walters by telling the judge that Bliss was actually an outlaw from Utah.

Johnson's actual mission was to kill Bliss at the earliest opportunity.[37] True to form, Bliss made the deputy sheriff's job simple by becoming involved in an argument with a local railroad detective, Thomas Barge. Using this as a pretext for a confrontation, Johnson met Bliss on the street in Price. Words were exchanged, then gunfire, and Bliss lay dying on the ground. Before he died he recognized Johnson.[38] So ended the criminal career and life of James Bliss, a.k.a. C. L. "Gunplay" Maxwell.

At the time of the stagecoach robbery Rawhide was a booming mining town that was more "boom" than mining. Its fame was short-lived and it soon declined to become one of Nevada's obscure ghost towns. The West was in a period of transition. Automobiles were replacing the horse and buggy. The telephone was replacing the telegraph. Scientific forensic methods such as fingerprints, firearms identification and the collection of physical evidence were being studied and increasingly applied in the field of criminal investigations. Although the 1908 holdup was not the last stagecoach robbery in Nevada, it was probably the last strongbox stage robbery the Wells Fargo & Company would experience. The days of the highwaymen of the "Old West" were drawing to a close, but not before some of their activities became involved with the modern problems of labor-management relations in the urban mining towns.

Notes

[1]Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg, *U.S. West, the Saga of Wells Fargo* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1949), 310.

[2]*State of Nevada vs. James Bliss, W. P. Walters,* Justice Court of Rawhide Township, County of Esmeralda, 22 June 1908. Preliminary hearing transcript, County Clerks Office, Box 600—Case #83 (513).

[3]Report of Weather, Mina, Nevada, 13 June 1908. Nevada State Climatologist, University of Nevada, Reno.

[4]*Rawhide Rustler* [Nevada], 13 June 1908.

[5]*Ibid.*

[6]Captain Cox had arrived in Rawhide from Carson City on June 9, 1908, to help settle a dispute

between the Nevada State Police officers and the local miners and businessmen. Carson City [Nevada] *Appeal*, 9 June 1908.

[7]Beebe and Clegg, *U.S. West*, 310.

[8]*State of Nevada v. James Bliss, W. P. Walters.* Preliminary hearing transcript.

[9]*Rawhide Rustler* [Nevada], 13 June 1908.

[10]*State of Nevada v. James Bliss, W. M. Walters.* Preliminary hearing transcript.

[11]Richard Johnson, interview with author, 1992.

[12]*State of Nevada v. James Bliss, W. M. Walters.* Preliminary hearing transcript.

[13]*Ibid.*

[14]Cornelius Cain, letter to W. A. Ingalls, Sheriff, Goldfield, Nevada, 30 October 1908, Manuscript Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Ca., P-G 258.

[15]*State of Nevada v. James Bliss, W. M. Walters.* Justice Court Commitment—Held to Answer Robbery, 22 June 1908.

[16]*Goldfield Chronicle* [Nevada], 1 August 1908.

[17]Guy Louis Rocha and Sally Zanjani, *The Ignoble Conspiracy* (Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1986) 134.

[18]*State of Nevada v. W. M. Walters and James Bliss,* First Judicial District of Nevada (Goldfield, Nevada), indictment for Robbery, 5 September 1908.

[19]*Ibid.*

[20]Rocha and Zanjani, *Ignoble Conspiracy*, 82–84. Richard Johnson, interview, 1992.

[21]Rocha and Zanjani, *Ignoble Conspiracy*, 82–84; Papers of Governor John Sparks, Nevada State Archives, Carson City.

[22]*Ibid.*, 133–134, fn. 22.

[23]Clarence Seaman, letter to Bessie, no date, Manuscript Collections P-G 258, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; in this letter signed "Clarence," "Bessie" was instructed to write to him in care of Sheriff Jas. Bliss.

[24]Rocha and Zanjani, *Ignoble Conspiracy*, 132.

[25]Richard Johnston, interview, 1992.

[26]Rocha and Zanjani, *Ignoble Conspiracy*, 132; Richard Johnston, interview, 1992.

[27]*State of Nevada v. W. P. Walters,* District Court, Seventh Judicial District Conviction and Commitment Notice, 5 March 1909.

[28]W. Walters, letter to Board of Pardons, 29 September 1909. Augustus Tinden, Esmeralda District Attorney, to W. Walters, Nevada State Prison Record No. 1239, Nevada State Archives, Carson City.

[29]Supt. J. P. Donnelley, Nevada State Police, letter to J. Emmett Walsh, 30 January 1912. J. Emmett Walsh, letter to Supt. J. P. Donnelley, Nevada State Police, 31 January 1912. J. P. Donnelley, letter to H. F. Breed, 2 February 1912. Nevada State Prison Records No. 1239, Nevada State Archives, Carson City.

[30]Albert M. Glinney, Letter to Pardons Board, 8 December 1910, Nevada State Prison Record No. 1249, Nevada State Archives.

[31]Richard Johnston, "The Outlaw and the Jewel Thief," *National Association and Center for Outlaw and Lawman History*, 3 (Winter 1977–78) 5.

[32]Richard Johnston, "The Robbery That Was to Have Been," *National Association and Center for Outlaw and Lawman History*, 4 (June 1979) 10.

[33]Arthur Pratt, Warden Utah State Prison, letter to George Curtis, Manuscript Collection P-G 258, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[34]Charles Kelly, *The Outlaw Trail* (1938; reprint, New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1959) 185.

[35]Rocha and Zanjani, *Ignoble Conspiracy*, 132.

[36]Richard Johnston, "Ed Johnson Kills 'Gunplay' Maxwell," *National Association and Center for Outlaw and Lawman History*, 7 (Spring 1981).

[37]Rocha and Zanjani, *Ignoble Conspiracy*, 132–134.

[38]*Ibid.*, 133.

DECIPHERING THE ORMSBY GOWN
What Does It Tell?

Elaine L. Pedersen

Fashionable dress has been found in frontier areas even when communities are in the building stage. Described as a symbol of "women's desire to remain feminine," and sometimes challenged by the new and often rough conditions,[1] fashionable dress was a sign of the female sphere and it also "provided novelty in a setting where women were not very mobile thus making work routines and surroundings sometimes monotonous."[2]

In 1955 Mrs. Willard Ormsby Wayman donated a gown that had been in her husband's family for many years to the Nevada State Museum. The family informed the museum that it was a ball gown imported from Paris and had been worn by Mrs. William Ormsby in 1864. As Carson City was founded only in 1858, it was still a very new community during the years in which Mrs. Ormsby was a resident.

Clothing reflects not only the individual, her or his tastes, but also social norms. Garments that come to us with provenance make it possible to discover more about particular individuals and their societies. Unfortunately, there are few garments documented to women living in Nevada in the 1860s. Thus, the Ormsby gown is an important subject for research into the lives led by women in early Carson City.

Typically, when researchers begin investigating garment styles of a particular period and location, they first study extant garments with an identified history. However, the family information accompanying the Ormsby gown, when combined with historical details about Mrs. Ormsby, presented several problems. Major William Ormsby died in May 1860, and mourning in the 1860s typically lasted, in its various stages, for two or more years. Mrs. Ormsby remarried on February 4, 1863, and she and her husband, Dr. John H. Wayman, moved to California. Thus, if the Ormsby-Wayman family was correct with respect to the

Elaine L. Pedersen is associate professor in the Apparel, Interiors, Housing, and Merchandising Department, Oregon State University, Corvallis. The author wishes to acknowledge initial research on the Ormsby gown by Julie Thomas and Tracy Hamby as undergraduate students at the University of Nevada, Reno; she also thanks Jan Loverin and Bob Nylen of the Nevada State Museum, and Susan Searcy, manuscript curator of the Special Collections Department, University Library, University of Nevada, Reno, for their invaluable assistance with this project.

date the gown was worn, 1864, then the gown was worn by Mrs. Wayman in California and not Mrs. Ormsby in Nevada. The purpose of this research is to determine when and where the Ormsby gown was worn and to analyze its significance to its time.

The name Ormsby is a familiar one to Nevadans. Major Ormsby is probably best known for his participation in the battle of Pyramid Lake, May 1860. Of the 105 volunteers, 76 were killed in an ambush, including Major Ormsby. As he was recognized as the unofficial leader, his death in this engagement gave him historical status.[3]

Born in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, on September 3, 1814,[4] William Ormsby was a pioneer in the California gold rush of 1849. Before coming to Nevada he operated a mint in Sacramento, dealt in stocks and real estate, and operated a stage line between Sacramento and Marysville, California.[5] When he came to Genoa in 1857,[6] Major Ormsby acted as an agent for the Pioneer Stage Company[7] and played an important role in the movement to establish the Nevada Territory on land then in western Utah Territory. He continued to be active in territorial politics after he moved to Carson City in 1858[8] as one of the town's first settlers. There in 1859 he built a two-story adobe building, the Ormsby House,[9] which was the fourth building to be constructed in the city. Ormsby had a general merchandising and hotel business until March 1860[10] and was also involved in mining.[11]

Mrs. Ormsby

Margaret Trumbo Ormsby was born on February 4, 1826, in Sharpsburg, Bath County, Kentucky. She married William Ormsby on July 1, 1844, and their only

The Ormsby gown as it was displayed in the Nevada State Museum in Carson City. (*Nevada State Museum*)

child, Lizzie Jane, was born August 2, 1848.[12] As Mrs. William Ormsby she was the wife of a leading figure in the Utah Territory who helped develop Carson City.

After the death of her husband, Mrs. Ormsby appears to have been active in the community and the new Nevada Territory as well as being involved in real estate and mining claims transactions.[13] During the early legislative period, in the fall of 1861, when government funds were scarce, she, along with Miss H. K. Clapp, a Carson City educator, provided chairs for the House,[14] and on November 22, 1862, Mrs. Ormsby presented a basket of wine to the legislators.[15] The next month there was an attempt to pass a bill that would have allowed Mrs. Ormsby and others to construct toll roads, but the bill was rejected.[16]

Mrs. Ormsby remarried on February 4, 1863, to become Mrs. John H. Wayman; the ceremony was performed by Acting Governor Orion Clemens.[17] The couple then moved to California.[18] When Mrs. Ormsby died three years later, on July 22, 1866,[19] the *Carson Appeal* described her as "one of the most extensive property holders in the State of Nevada."[20]

The Ormsby Gown

The Ormsby gown is a two-piece garment made of a coral silk taffeta.[21] The lower edge of the sleeves, sash, and skirt have what at first appears to be lace trim applied on top of the fabric. The "lace" is actually an integral part of the fabric; it is created by utilizing supplementary weft yarns to create a variation of a weft loop weave.[22]

The skirt is extremely full with large pleats controlling the fullness at the waistband. When the gown was donated the Wayman family told the museum staff that it had been taken apart for storage and then reassembled before it was given to the museum. Needle-sized holes, presumably left from an earlier stitching line, can be found in the skirt, as can modern snaps and hooks and eyes in the waistband. The skirt is fuller and slightly longer in the back than in the front. There is a sash, now separate from the skirt, which was probably attached to hang at the waist. It is made of a darker, rust-colored taffeta. At the end of the sash two strips of the supplementary weft garment fabric are attached. The sash is edged with beige piping.

The bodice has two front darts and princess seams in the back. There is a row of somewhat roughly covered buttons running down the center front of the bodice[23]; the dress laces up in the back.[24] It has a stand-up collar with beige Brussels Duchesse bobbin lace applied on top of the silk dress fabric.[25] Below the collar the rust-colored taffeta used for the sash has been applied in a bib-like shape. The bodice edge forms points at the center front and back of the waist, to which beige piping has been applied. The interior of the bodice shows evidence of alterations. The rust-colored silk bib appears to have been applied after the bodice was constructed, and examination of the interior lining reveals that

there may have been an earlier, lower neckline. The sleeves are fitted in the upper arm and then flare at the elbow into a modified bell sleeve. Attached to the lower sleeve edge is a band of the decorative supplementary weft fabric used in the lower portion of the skirt. To that band and up a center slit to the elbow is attached a ruffle of beige Brussels Duchesse bobbin lace similar to that on the collar.

The Wayman family also gave the museum a photograph of a portrait of Mrs. Ormsby wearing the gown. The gown in the portrait is not identical to the actual gown, though it is very similar. The greatest difference appears in the sleeves and the sash. On the shoulders of the portrait gown where the sleeves join the bodice there is a band of fringe of the kind used on military officers' epaulettes, and there is also a band of fringe attached to the lower end of the sash. The sleeve shape itself is noticeably different. The portrait gown has a wrist-length coat sleeve trimmed with the lace-like supplementary weft fabric found in the skirt. It is placed around the edge and up the back center of the sleeve to the elbow. The skirt of the portrait dress also appears to be fuller than the museum gown, but this could very well be due to the crinoline support underneath or to Mrs. Ormsby's pose.[26]

During the nineteenth century it was not unusual for a gown to be reconstructed, sometimes more than once. As a result of this practice, there are garments that bridge from two to as many as thirty years of fashion.[27] If interest in the Ormsby gown lies in its use by Mrs. Ormsby, both gowns must be dated, and the resultant dates compared with the facts of Mrs. Ormsby's life in order to determine whether she could have worn one or both versions. Although no evidence appears, it is possible the difference between the museum and portrait gowns is due to changes by the portrait artist.

Most garments donated to museums are of the type that were designed in accordance with the fashion of the day. Fashionable apparel has been defined as the style currently accepted by a discernible number of individuals in any one social garment.[28] In placing a dress with a known period of style, clothing historians look at bodice, sleeve, and skirt silhouettes. This method of dating is based on the assumption that fashion was present and that, in the particular geographical region, styles similar to those presented in contemporary women's magazines were being worn. During the nineteenth century, women's magazines such as *Peterson's Magazine* and *Godey's Lady's Book* featured both color plates and black-and-white illustrations along with text describing the latest proposed designs. At present, however, additional regional research is needed before that assumption can be validated for the American West. Although it is known that fashion was present on the frontier, in early times access to fashion news was often limited, as were resources and materials, so that each community's styles of dress may have varied to a smaller or greater degree from those portrayed in fashionable women's magazines.[29] Comparison of the two Ormsby

Photograph of Mrs. Ormsby in what is presumed to be the earlier version of the gown. (*Nevada State Museum*)

gowns with styles illustrated in such magazines places them both into the 1858–65 period.

The Ormsby Gown and Gowns of 1858–1865 Compared

The fabric of the Ormsby gown is appropriate for the 1858–65 period. A great variety of fabrics was used for women's dresses during the 1850s and 1860s. Silk taffeta was one of many fabrics used for "good" dresses. Some fabrics were woven with designs planned for a specific garment part; these fabrics were called *à disposition*. Pieces or strips of the patterned fabric might also be used for other parts of the garment.[30] This type of fabric is seen in the Ormsby gown in the lower skirt, sleeve edge, and the two bands on the sash. Fabrics for evening wear were usually lightweight and delicate, and lighting was considered in selecting the fabric colors. "The yellowish cast of gaslight enhanced some colors, like maize and salmon."[31] Since the color of the Ormsby fabric may have

changed over time, it is possible that it could have originally been described as salmon.

The Ormsby skirt silhouette fits the period, but it is longer than the usual ball gown. Skirts were of great widths; for evening gowns they could be five or more yards in circumference.[32] Skirt fabric was often folded into multiple box pleats radiating from the waistline, giving the skirt more of a straight line,[33] or the skirt might have inverted pleats in the front and double box pleats at the sides and back.[34] The circumference of the Ormsby gown skirt is slightly larger than four and a half yards, and it features both inverted pleats and accordion pleats. Since the skirt has been reconstructed and not all of the original stitching lines were followed, it may have originally had all inverted pleats. The pleats are not visible in the portrait. Skirts shown in *Godey's Lady's Book* in January 1863 are described as being of moderate length on the street, and for a reception, visiting, or evening, they were to be very long. Mrs. Ormsby's portrait skirt is floor length.

Bodices were frequently cut separately and usually had a center front closure with buttons. Buttons became popular in the 1850s when combinations of jackets and vests were introduced, and buttons were utilized at that time as decorations for women's dresses.[35] The Ormsby bodice is separate from the skirt, but it laces up the back, which is atypical though it does have decorative self-fabric buttons down the center front.

The Ormsby gown has a high neckline that appears from the inside to have been raised from a lower neckline. Mid-nineteenth-century evening gowns, both formal and informal, typically had lower necklines than day dresses, which had either jewel necklines or stand-up collars. Afternoon dresses and reception dresses were usually made from dressier fabrics than those used for day dresses, but typically they had jewel necklines or stand-up collars.[36] Shoulders were usually bare for evening wear.[37] Occasionally evening dresses did have high necklines and long sleeves.[38] Thus even the altered bodice of the Ormsby gown, while not typical for evening wear, would not be unique.

Pointed waists were one bodice style of the period; they were particularly popular for evening wear.[39] Both the portrait gown and the museum gown have pointed front waistlines.

During the 1850s, sleeves were typically short and wide, and were called pagoda sleeves. In the mid 1850s, the bishop sleeve was also worn, as was the coat sleeve.[40] An 1865 article describes sleeves as continuing "in the coat form and very small, and generally trimmed with epaulettes."[41] The sleeves of both the museum and portrait gowns are typical of the 1858–65 period. Those of the portrait gown appear to be coat sleeves, somewhat wide, with epaulettes trimmed with fringe. The end of each sleeve has the supplementary weft fabric used in the skirt. The shape of the sleeves and the placement of the trimming is much the same as that of a sleeve illustrated in an 1865 issue of *Godey's Lady's Book*.[42] In contrast, the sleeves of the museum gown are somewhat fitted in the upper arm and then flare at the elbow into a modified bell or pagoda sleeve.

Both a bell sleeve and a pagoda sleeve are illustrated in the May 1861 issue of *Godey's*.[43]

Carson City

In order to further examine the Ormsby gown and its significance to its time, it is necessary to look at Carson City in its beginning years. Carson was founded in 1858. Still in its infancy while Mrs. Ormsby lived there, Carson City became a center for travelers, speculators, and prospectors. In 1859 and 1860, with the discovery of silver on Virginia City's Comstock, Carson City became the headquarters for miners who explored the surrounding area. They transformed the town from one largely based on agriculture to a busy community centered around mining, manufacturing, and commercial speculation. Hotels, saloons, and other places of business, along with stage and express lines, were established.[44]

In 1860 Carson City was described as "the acknowledged center of business, and most important town in western Utah,"[45] but individuals began to locate their businesses closer to the mines. Although the city did not grow as quickly as Virginia City, it did continue to make gains. In 1861 a bill signed by President James Buchanan authorized creation of the Territory of Nevada, and Carson City was selected as the capital.[46]

During the town's early years there was a variety of opinion about the community and its people. To some extent, the opinion depended upon whether the individual was fresh from California, had newly arrived after a long overland journey, or was comparing Carson City to the more rugged mining towns.[47]

The Carson City of 1860 had few women, and not all of these were regarded as equally respectable.[48] One resident described the townspeople as "the roughest and most disorderly agglomeration of the refuse of California that was ever assembled at any one time or place,—gamblers, murderers, road agents, and all sorts of unclassified toughs."[49]

Not all agreed with the description of how tough and rough the city was. At the least, there were some who thought Carson City was more gentle than Virginia City and other mining towns. William M. Stewart practiced law in Virginia City in the early 1860s, but he lived in Carson City during this period. When asked why he lived in Carson City and not in Virginia City where he practiced law, he said that his choice was due to the climate, the water, and the fact that Virginia City was not a suitable place to live because it was a mining town.[50]

From fairly early on there were various forms of organized entertainment. A racecourse was established in April 1860,[51] followed by a theatre built by J. Q. Moore in 1861.[52] While there were dramatic attractions almost from the beginning, formal music did not appear until 1865.[53] Dances were held from 1858 forward.[54] Since the dances preceded formal music, it may be that the music for the dances was provided by local talent.

The Ormsby gown is said to have been a ball gown. Balls seem to have been relatively common occurrences in Carson City. Held at homes, halls, hotels, and saloons,[55] balls were given to celebrate a variety of occasions including Christmas, New Year's, birthdays, and in recognition of events or individuals.[56] The organizing of the Territory of Nevada was the occasion for a ball.[57]

Most balls were advertised, and the descriptions refer to them as balls. Some of them, however, were called grand balls. Included among these grand balls were a ball given by Henry Vansickle at his new hall on February 28, 1859; a ball at the Ormsby House on July 4, 1859; two Christmas balls, one at the Susanville Hotel, Honey Lake, December 23, 1859, and one at City Exchange, Carson City, December 26, 1859; and a ball given in Gold Hill by Charley Seaman and Company, March 14, 1860.[58] One is left wondering what was the distinction, if any, between a ball and a grand ball? Possibly the status depended upon the event, location, and promoters. However, the ball given in celebration of the organization of the Territory of Nevada and the meeting of the Legislature was merely called a ball.[59] Certainly, if one looks at locations of the balls, which varied from saloons to homes to hotels, one sees that the status of the ball probably also varied according to that of the women who were apt to attend. Ladies would have been less likely to attend saloon balls, for example. However the distinctions may have been arrived at, it is probable that the type of dress might also have varied, and that best-dress attire might have been reserved for grand balls.

Dress in Carson City

In analyzing historical garments, it is useful to examine what information exists as to the kinds of clothing generally available and worn in the locale. Knowing as much as possible about the clothing of others helps place a garment and its wearer in society.

Charles Lewis Anderson, writing to his wife in 1862 and 1863, discussed the extravagant manner of dress in Carson City. He wrote that one of his original impressions was that there were many gentlemen and ladies living in the town, but he discovered later that many of the elegantly dressed individuals were gamblers, rum sellers, and women of poor repute. He also remarked on the large amount of waste and on how many useful items were thrown away.[60]

In order to obtain a dress in 1860 a woman had the options of making it herself; utilizing a local milliner, dressmaker, or seamstress; or obtaining a garment from a milliner, dressmaker, or seamstress in some other location. Although one 1861 advertisement states that ball gowns were available,[61] advertisements for ready-made garments ordinarily refer to men's wear.[62] Ready-to-wear individually or mass-produced apparel for women was not usual at this time.

Information on clothing styles then current would have been available from

several sources, although there was probably some small delay because mail transport from the East was by stage or ship. There is evidence that *Godey's Lady's Book* was at least occasionally available to women in Carson City. A notice in the *Carson Daily Independent* states, "We have received from Mr. J. G. Fox, the enterprising newsman, late copies of . . . *Godey's Ladies Book*" [*sic*].[63] It is probable that *Peterson's Magazine* was periodically available, and letters and hometown newspapers might also have brought fashion news.[64] Women who were relatively new to the West had often arrived with large wardrobes developed before leaving their eastern homes in the hope that these would sustain them for some time.[65]

Typically, a woman of Mrs. Ormsby's class would not have made her own clothing, and, even if she did manage some sewing, she would not have made her own ball gowns. Thompson and West's *History of Nevada* includes business statistics for 1860 that show six bootmakers in Carson City, but no tailors or milliners. In general, milliners produced the fancier attire for women. Gold Hill, Silver City, and Genoa also had no tailors or milliners; Virginia City, however, in addition to fourteen bootmakers had four tailors and two milliners.[66]

In 1862 J. Wells Kelly made available the *First Directory of Nevada Territory*. By that time, although there were still many more clothing-related business establishments listed for Virginia City than other nearby towns (including five milliners or millinery establishments), Carson City had acquired two milliners, one seamstress, three tailors, and eight shoe or boot sellers or makers. This was more than Gold Hill and Dayton.[67] By the publication of the *Second Directory of Nevada Territory* in 1863, however, Carson City had fewer clothing-related establishments than any nearby town with the exception of Genoa. Carson was listed as having six shoe or boot sellers or makers and seven clothing makers or sellers but no milliners.[68]

Advertisements in Carson City newspapers and directories help give a feeling for the types of products available to women. Ball dresses and necessary accessories were advertised in *The Silver Age* of July 13, 1861, although no descriptions of dresses were included.[69] This was probably an advertisement for custom-made gowns. Dressmaking services and fabrics, garments, and accessories were advertised by dressmakers and merchants.[70] Mrs. M. S. Bishop's advertisement in the 1862 territorial directory told readers that Paris Millinery offered the latest and most approved styles, along with fashionable dressmaking in all its branches.[71] In 1863 and 1864 advertisements in the *Carson Daily Independent* featured a wide variety of high-quality fabrics labeled as American, French, and English dress goods.[72] In addition, it was not unusual for women of means to have gowns made in San Francisco.

The only description of ball gowns in Carson City in the early 1860s that has been found to date is one by Charles Lewis Anderson: At a ball given on the occasion of Thanksgiving in 1862 the ladies were dressed in calico.[73] This raises

again the question as to the differences among types of balls. As earlier observed, it is likely that gowns worn to these balls varied according to status or function of the event.

Conclusion

To summarize, the Ormsby dress owned by the Nevada State Museum is a two-piece salmon-colored silk taffeta gown. It has a wide skirt and a bodice with a pointed waist, high standing collar, and three-quarter-length sleeves with a slight flare. The fabric has a supplementary pile weft in the border region of the skirt (*à disposition*) creating a lace-like effect; this decorative fabric also appears in the sleeve edges and sash. Donated by the family of Mrs. Margaret Ormsby Wayman, the gown is said to be from Paris and to have been worn by Mrs. Ormsby in 1864.

The museum's gown shows evidence of reconstruction, and its appearance differs from that shown in a portrait of Mrs. Ormsby in the gown. As noted earlier, reconstruction of gowns was not unusual in both the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If Mrs. Ormsby did the reconstruction it shows a sense of frugality and possibly an interest in keeping to a fashionable style. However, because the changes do not take the gown out of its initial period of fashion and therefore were most likely completed within several years of its initial manufacture, there are more questions than answers as to why the changes were made.

While there is no documented evidence that the gown came from Paris, several items can be noted. The fabric is of higher quality than what was typically being then manufactured or worn in the United States, and it is likely that fabric *à disposition* was not being made in the United States at this time. The most probable place of manufacture is Lyons, France, site of high-quality silk production for more than a hundred years.[74]

The quality of construction is not what might be expected of an imported gown (for example, the workmanship on the fabric-covered buttons is poor). However, because the gown has been reconstructed, this evidence is not clear. Although there is no indication that Mrs. Ormsby traveled either to San Francisco or abroad to purchase the dress, journeys to San Francisco were not unusual, and travel to Paris not out of the question for a Nevada woman. Mrs. William M. Stewart visited Paris in 1867.[75] Given the quality of the dress it is more likely that fabric manufactured in Lyons was purchased in Paris and that the gown was made in Carson City, Virginia City, or San Francisco.

There is no firm proof that the dress was a ball gown or that it was worn by Mrs. Ormsby before she became Mrs. Wayman. In fact, the family said that the gown was worn in 1864, four years after the Pyramid Lake battle and one year after the marriage to Wayman. The style of the gown is, however, appropriate to the earlier 1860s. As balls of different types occurred fairly regularly in Carson

City, Mrs. Ormsby may have attended some of these events while her husband was alive, particularly since at least one of them was held at the Ormsby House.[76] The Ormsby gown does not have the shorter sleeves, bare shoulders, or lowered neckline characteristic of ball gowns of the times, but it may have had a lower neckline at one point. It does fit into the category of a "good" gown because of the nature of its fabric, which is more appropriate for a ball or other special function than for average day wear. While ball gowns usually had lower necklines and shorter or no sleeves, not all ball gowns were of this style.

That Mrs. Ormsby was known and involved in the upper levels of society after Major Ormsby's death is shown by her interest in the legislators, the attempt at legislation to allow acquisition of a toll road, and her involvement with real estate. The preference for a modest style of ball gown may be due to Mrs. Ormsby's own level of modesty or may reflect the inclination of the more staid part of Carson City society to separate itself from the less staid. There were several types of women in Carson City during the 1860s; Mrs. Ormsby may have wished to make a definite statement about her social role and position. In addition, it has been pointed out that simple dress was often perceived as more appropriate in frontier towns.[77]

The gown is of a style that would best be dated no later than 1863 if the dating were based on proposed styles shown in women's periodicals. However, unless the gown was made and worn between 1859 and 1860, which would put it at the height of that style's fashion, the gown was worn by the widowed Mrs. Ormsby or by the remarried Mrs. Wayman. Given that women, especially upper-class women, were expected to wear mourning attire, it is most probable that the dress was worn prior to May 1860 or after May 1861, or even May 1862. While in mourning Mrs. Ormsby would initially have worn gowns of heavy, dull black fabric, later shifting to those of lighter black. Colors would be worn only when the grief eased somewhat and certainly not earlier than a year after Major Ormsby's death. In fact, mourning ordinarily lasted between two and two-and-a-half years. Even during half mourning, when gray and shades of purple could be worn, the color of this gown would not have been appropriate.[78]

What the gown does tell us, assuming that it was actually worn in Nevada, is that there was at least some fashionable dress in the territory. The reconstruction of the gown may have occurred in Mrs. Ormsby's lifetime; if so, it indicates that she was engaging in a fairly common practice of recycling gowns, presumably in order to follow fashion. Although, since the gown as remodeled is not a particularly newer style, might Mrs. Ormsby, soon to become Mrs. Wayman, have had it altered for her wedding to Mr. Wayman? Related to this possibility is the question of the continued existence of this gown, that is, why was it saved? Usually, if a woman keeps only one gown, it is the wedding gown. Might this dress have been a ball gown worn by Mrs. Ormsby, and then a wedding gown worn by Mrs. Wayman?

If it was indeed a ball gown and was worn as seen in the portrait, the high

neckline and long sleeves suggest that Mrs. Ormsby was modest in her dress. This may be evidence that the gown was worn after the initial mourning period but still in a period when such modesty might be deemed appropriate. Or, the gown might originally have had a lower neckline that was later modified for either modesty or the social conventions of widowhood. The gown also tells us of the availability of different fabrics, in this case, of specialized evening fabrics.[79] While it is only one dress, the fact that this type of fabric was used suggests that a variety of other fabrics may also have been available to those having adequate economic resources. Although this one artifact cannot be taken as indisputable proof applicable to the dress of all women in Carson City, it is evidence that there existed, for a woman of substantial economic means, access to high-quality materials, fashionable dress design, and a social life for which such garments were necessary.

NOTES

[1]Sally Helvenston, "Fashion on the Frontier," *Dress*, 17 (1990), 143.

[2]*Ibid.*, 144.

[3]*Territorial Enterprise*, 19 May 1860; Myron Angel, ed., *History of Nevada* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1881, republished by Howell-North, Berkeley 1958), 153–54.

[4]*Territorial Enterprise*, 19 May 1860.

[5]Edgeley Woodman Todd, *A Doctor on the California Trail: Diary of Dr. John Hudson Wayman 1852* (Denver: Old West Publishing Co., 1971), 20.

[6]*Territorial Enterprise*, 19 May 1860; Thompson and West, *History of Nevada*, 531.

[7]Anthony Amaral, *Lace Curtains and Bootjacks: Old Carson City's Ormsby House* (Carson City: Ormsby House, 1972), 4; Todd, *Doctor*, 20; Thompson and West, *History of Nevada*, 104.

[8]Todd, *Doctor*, 20; *Territorial Enterprise*, 26 November 1859, 24, 31 December 1859.

[9]Amaral, *Lace Curtains*, 1, 4; Todd, *Doctor*, 20.

[10]Thompson and West, *History of Nevada*, 551; *Territorial Enterprise*, 3 March 1860.

[11]*Territorial Enterprise*, 3, 10, 31 March 1860.

[12]Todd, *Doctor*, 20.

[13]Andrew J. Marsh, *Letters from Nevada Territory, 1861–1862*, William C. Muller, Russell W. McDonald, and Ann Rollins, eds. (Carson City: Legislative Counsel Bureau, State of Nevada, 1972), 682. Mrs. Ormsby may have also been active prior to the major's death but no evidence has been found.

[14]*Territorial Enterprise*, 20 October 1861; Marsh, *Letters*, 115; *The Silver Age*, 20 October 1861.

[15]Marsh, *Letters*, 502.

[16]In February 1862 a road supervisor was appointed, but he did not have the means by which to construct new roads; this was done by individuals, who usually created toll roads. Thompson and West, *History of Nevada*, 542. In the Nevada House, a bill on 13 December 1862 authorized "Mrs. Ormsby and others to construct" a toll road. Marsh, *Letters*, 601, 636.

[17]Marsh, *Letters*, note at 682; Todd, *Doctor*, 19.

[18]Todd, *Doctor*, 19, 20.

[19]*The Eastern Slope*, 28 July 1866; *Carson Daily Appeal*, 24 July 1866.

[20]*Carson Daily Appeal*, 24 July 1866, p. 1.

[21]The colors described in this paper are those of the gown's current condition. Colors do change over time, and only assumptions can be made about the original colors of the gown and its trim.

[22]Weft yarns are the cross-wise threads or yarns which run across the width of a fabric; they are added as the fabric is woven. Although supplementary weft yarns are not necessary for the basic fabric, they are integral to the fabric itself. Their function is to add an aesthetic component in specified areas of the cloth. The weft loop weave is a "weave with [the] weft . . . pulled up to form

loops on the face." Dorothy K. Burnham, *Warp and Weft: A Textile Terminology* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1980), 11, 182, 195. In this case the loops are very small, tight, and closely packed.

[23]The covered buttons, instead of being smooth and round in shape, which is the standard for well-covered buttons, have fabric tucks and points of fabric around their edges.

[24]The laces are no longer with the garment, but it has hand-worked eyelets, which suggest this type of closure.

[25]Pat Earnshaw, *Bobbin and Needle Laces: Identification and Care* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1983), 125, 149, 152.

[26]Skirts in the 1860s were typically supported by hooped underskirts, often called crinolines after the earlier horsehair petticoats known as crinolines. Blanche Payne, Geitel Winakor, and Jane Farrell-Beck, *The History of Costume, From Ancient Mesopotamia Through the Twentieth Century*, 2d ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 515.

[27]Jane Farrell-Beck and Joyce Starr Johnson, "Remodeling and Renovating Clothes, 1870–1933," *Dress*, 19(1992), 37.

[28]George Sproles and Leslie Davis Burns, *Changing Appearances: Understanding Dress in Contemporary Society* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1994), 5.

[29]Helvenston, "Fashion," 141–55.

[30]Blanche Payne, *History of Costume: From the Ancient Egyptians to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 509; Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Women's Clothes, 1600–1930* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1968), 141–42.

[31]Otto Charles Thieme, "With Grace and Favour: Victorian and Edwardian Fashion in America," in Otto Charles Thieme, Elizabeth Ann Coleman, Michelle Oberly, and Patricia Cunningham, *With Grace and Favour: Victorian and Edwardian Fashion in America* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Art Museum, 1993), 47.

[32]Priscilla H. Dalrymple, *American Victorian Costume in Early Photographs* (New York: Dover), 23.

[33]Payne, *History of Costume*, 514.

[34]Waugh, *Cut of Women's Clothes*, 141.

[35]Payne, *History of Costume*, 511; Waugh, *Cut of Women's Clothes*, 140.

[36]Thieme, "With Grace and Favour," 47.

[37]Examples of such dresses can be found in Western Reserve Historical Society, *Costume* (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1986), pl. 9; and Thieme *et al.*, *With Grace and Favor*, 34, 36, 46.

[38]Payne, *History of Costume*, 511.

[39]Examples can be found in Western Reserve Historical Society *Costume*, pl. 10; and Thieme *et al.*, 44.

[40]Payne, *History of Costume*, 511–12; Waugh, *Cut of Women's Clothes*, 140.

[41]*Godey's Lady's Book* 67 (January 1863), 105, as cited in Thieme, "With Grace and Favour," 47.

[42]"Chitchat," *Godey's Lady's Book*, 71 (November 1865), 292.

[43]*Godey's Lady's Book*, 70 (June 1865), 489. This same application of trimming and sleeve style is seen in an illustration in Robert Kunciov, ed., *Mr. Godey's Ladies: Being a Mosaic of Fashions and Fancies* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1971), 140. It is also similar to a gown illustrated in Thieme *et al.*, 42. *Fashions and Costumes from Godey's Lady's Book* (New York: Dover, 1985), 43.

[44]Sam P. Davis, "Ormsby County," in *The History of Nevada*, vol. 2, Sam P. Davis, ed. (Reno: The Elms Publishing Co., 1913), 979.

[45]Thompson and West, *History of Nevada*, 553, 554.

[46]*Ibid.*, 555.

[47]*Ibid.*, 74, 556; J. Wells Kelly, *First Directory of Nevada Territory* (San Francisco: Valentine and Co., 1862); *idem*, *Second Directory of Nevada Territory* (San Francisco: Valentine and Co., 1863).

[48]Amaral, *Lace Curtains*, 2. R. K. Colcord, "Reminiscences of Life in Territorial Nevada," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 7:2 (June 1928), 119.

[49]Jacob Klein, "Founders of Carson City," *Nevada Historical Society Papers, 1913–1916* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1917), 183; Lucy Davis Crowell, *One Hundred Years at Nevada's Capital* (Reno: Oral History Program, Center for Western North American Studies, University of Nevada, 1965), 3.

[50]Charles E. Flandrau, *The History of Minnesota and Tales of the Frontier* (St. Paul: E. W. Porter, 1900), 59. Jacob Klein, an early resident of Carson City, agreed with this assessment by Flandrau. Klein,

"Founders of Carson City," 183. This was also the opinion of Charles Lewis Anderson as he expressed himself in a letter to his wife. Charles Lewis Anderson, letter, 27 January 1863 (Charles Lewis Anderson Paper, 1862–66, Special Collections Department, University Library, University of Nevada, Reno).

[51]George Rothwell Brown, ed., *Reminiscences of Senator William M. Stewart of Nevada* (New York: The Neale Publishing Co., 1908), 140.

[52]Thompson and West, *History of Nevada*, 554.

[53]Gertrude Streeter Vrooman, "A Brief Survey of the Musical History of Western Nevada," *Nevada Historical Society Papers*, 3 (1921–22), 122.

[54]Vrooman, "Brief Survey of Musical History," 121–23. Charles Lewis Anderson mentions the lack of formal music in letters to his wife, 19 October 1862, 16 November 1862.

[55]Davis, "Ormsby County," 958; advertisements and articles in the *Territorial Enterprise* also give evidence of many dances; see 4, 11, 25 June 1859, 2 July 1859, 18 February 1860, 10 March 1860.

[56]*Territorial Enterprise*, 4, 11, 25 June 1859, 10 January 1860, 18 February 1860, 10 March 1860; Thompson and West, *History of Nevada*, 556.

[57]*Territorial Enterprise*, 1, 8 January 1859, 18, 25 June 1859, 10 December 1859, 18 February 1860; Thompson and West, *History of Nevada*, 553.

[58]Thompson and West, *History of Nevada*, 556.

[59]*Territorial Enterprise*, 5 February 1859, 25 June 1859, 17 December 1859, 10 March 1860.

[60]Thompson and West, *History of Nevada*, 556.

[61]Charles Lewis Anderson, letters to his wife, 17 September 1862, 11 February 1863.

[62]*The Silver Age*, 13 July 1861.

[63]*Carson Daily Independent*, 1 September 1863, 8 October 1863, 5 June 1864.

[64]*Ibid.*, 1 September 1863.

[65]Helvenston, "Fashion," 146.

[66]*Ibid.*, 141–55, cites Mary Gettys Lockard, "Pioneering in Western Kansas" (typescript, Lila Day Monroe Collection, Kansas State Historical Research Center, Topeka), 3.

[67]Thompson and West, *History of Nevada*, 74.

[68]Kelly, *First Directory of Nevada Territory.*

[69]Kelly, *Second Directory of Nevada Territory.*

[70]*The Silver Age*, 13 July 1861, p. 2. This advertisement raises the question whether ready-to-wear custom-produced clothing was also available for women, as is implied by the ad. As noted, this would be unusual for this time.

[71]*The Silver Age*, 13 July 1861; *Carson Daily Independent*, 5, 20 December 1863, 5 June 1864; *Carson Daily Appeal*, 16 May 1865.

[72]Kelly, *Second Directory of Nevada Territory.*

[73]*Carson Daily Independent*, 5 December 1863, 17 June 1864.

[74]Charles Lewis Anderson, letter to his wife, 27 November 1862.

[75]LoErna Simpson, textile consultant, telephone interview, Corvallis, Ore., 25 August 1993.

[76]Brown, *Reminiscences*, 219.

[77]*Territorial Enterprise*, 25 June 1859, 2 July 1859.

[78]Helvenston, "Fashion," 148.

[79]Payne, Winakor, Farrell-Beck, *The History of Costume*, 481; Lou Taylor, *Mourning Dress: A Costume and Social History* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 303.

MESQUITE, NEVADA
From Farm Hamlet to Resort City
1880-1995

James L. Scholl

Not all of Clark County's cities have enjoyed the slow but steady progress of Las Vegas, where its location as a division point alongside the main line of the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad insured its survival and growth. Other Clark County towns such as Mesquite and Bunkerville were not so lucky. Like Las Vegas, they had an abundance of fresh water, but those towns relied upon an uncertain and often parsimonious agricultural base rather than a railroad to sustain their residents.

Mesquite's roots lie deep in the nineteenth century. Like other small southwestern towns settled in the 1890s, it began as a farming community. Typically irrigation was the crucial element necessary to sustain agriculture in the Virgin Valley. Natural springs located in the mountains surrounding Zion Canyon, Utah, flowed into the Virgin River providing water for the valley's first settlers. Not only was there an abundance of water, but the loamy soil along the river's flood plain coupled with the valley's mild year-around climate combined to produce high yields of marketable crops.

Those crops included cotton, grain, fruit, and seedless raisins, all of which furnished hard cash for the valley's farmers.[1] Additionally, a few settlers established small ranches specializing in the production of cattle, hogs, and dairy products. As the community developed its agricultural base, it became a principal stop-over point for weary travelers en-route between towns in southern Nevada and Saint George, Utah.[2] Travelers usually planned their journey through the Virgin Valley to avail themselves of the lodging and ample meals provided by Mormon families along Mesquite's main street. With the development of the automobile and paved roads, many of those part-time tourist accommodations evolved into full time businesses.

Although the Virgin River provided irrigation and drinking water for Mesquite, it also posed the largest problem for settlers attempting to establish a

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permanent community there. During periods of high water the Virgin River became a treacherous torrent that destroyed homes, irrigation ditches, and crops.[3] Equally important, in times of normal flows the river bottom developed areas of quicksand that precluded travelers from safely crossing the treacherous river bed. Moreover, the shifting quicksands took a heavy toll of animals that strayed along the river banks in search of forage.[4] As a result of these and other factors, "Mesquite Flats," as the original settlement was called, ended in failure.[5] After spending twelve years unsuccessfully attempting to harness the untamed river, Mesquite's weary farmers surrendered to nature. Lacking water for their crops, most people abandoned their homes and returned to Utah in 1892.[6]

Although the settlers had temporarily given up their farms, they never forgot the enjoyment of pioneering along the Virgin River. In 1895, Mormon settlers returned, and this time succeeded in conquering the river, planting fields, and building the present town of Mesquite.[7] Planning and organization were the keys to their success. Upon their return, community leaders initiated a field survey for the construction of a permanent town based on a grid pattern. The survey foreordained Mesquite's orderly urban development. Using true north, early surveyors determined a line running due north-south along the western right-of-way line of Willow Street. From that base line all of the town's public utilities, streets, homes, and schools were planned and constructed. Years later, in 1978, the Clark County Surveyor re-established the original survey base line, prepared a record of survey, and adjudicated many of the property lines that had formed the foundation for Mesquite's earlier pattern of urban development.[8]

Although Mesquite remained a minor communications and commercial center during the first eighty-nine years of its existence, it also continued to prosper as a farming community, shipping its produce to urban centers in Utah and Nevada. In recent years, Mesquite's transformation into a resort community has depended solely upon its location along the main route between Las Vegas and

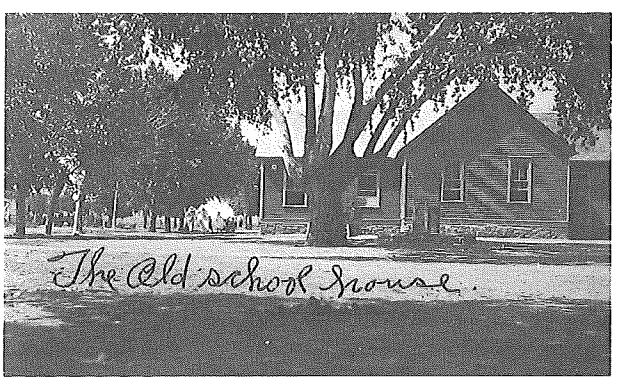
The Joseph S. Leavitt family, early pioneers of Mesquite. (*Desert Valley Museum*)

Salt Lake City. Furthermore, Mesquite, like other cities and towns, followed the "Rank-Size rule" of the distribution of population centers in the United States.[9] Accordingly, Mesquite's business district straddled its main street, bi-secting the town's population center like most other small western villages.[10] Mesquite therefore remained a model of southwestern Mormon farming communities until its incorporation as a city in 1984.

During Mesquite's years of pastoral isolation the town's only element of contention involved a good-natured rivalry with nearby Bunkerville. The latter had been settled by Mormon farmers a few years before Mesquite Flats, and like its neighbor, was a rural farming community. In the early 1960s civic rivalry exploded into a struggle for survival. At that time open hostility over the location of Interstate 15 replaced good-natured banter among farmers from both communities. Both towns knew that being bypassed by the new freeway meant economic decline. Each lobbied determinedly for the most advantageous location. The political and social amimosity that began over the issue of the location of I-15 still exists today among many of the older residents in both communities.[11]

Relations worsened between the two communities after the Nevada State Highway Department announced that two routes for I-15 were under consideration. The first required construction of two bridges across the Virgin River. Engineers contemplated building one span near Riverside and the other at the present location of the existing bridge connecting Mesquite and Bunkerville. The first strategy also included on and off ramps for both Mesquite and Bunkerville.

The second design recommended completely by-passing Riverside and Bunkerville, thereby eliminating the ramps and both bridges. This plan was the more attractive because it cut millions of dollars from construction and future maintenance costs.[12] The Highway Department's selection of the second plan in



The Virgin Valley School in 1916. It began as a one-room school and church in 1902. Three additional rooms were added later. (*Desert Valley Museum*)

1963 meant certain prosperity for Mesquite while relegating Riverside and Bunkerville to economic obscurity.[13] After the state's final route selection, the motel at Riverside closed its doors and has never reopened. Bunkerville lost its general store and gasoline stations because of traffic reduction. Of course, Bunkerville has continued to maintain its status as a rural farming community, although its population, prosperity, and property values steadily decreased. Mesquite, on the other hand, has profited from an influx of travelers, tourists, and vacationers traveling over the new freeway between Las Vegas and Saint George.

After the freeway's completion, Mesquite experienced a period of growing affluence and fiscal sophistication that prompted town leaders to question the growing disparity between revenues generated by its flourishing tourist industry and the limited services provided by Clark County. Historically, both Bunkerville and Mesquite had always been unincorporated towns governed by the Clark County Board of Commissioners under the Nevada Revised Statutes. As long as both towns sustained a farm-based agricultural economy neither objected to its status. But, once Mesquite had become the vital transportation link and truck stop along I-15 between Utah and Nevada, the town's leaders began arguing for more tax revenue and political power.[14]

Eventually, Mesquite's geographic location, coupled with its economic base changing from a farming center to a resort city, resulted in demands for municipal incorporation.[15] The fact that Mesquite was contiguous to the Arizona state line and eighty miles from Las Vegas evoked sympathy from other county residents and political leaders in hearings before the Clark County Board of Commissioners.

Since I-15 represents the only major traffic arterial from other cities and towns in the region, it is crucial to the town's tourist industry. In 1979, Mesquite saw an opportunity to become a resort community complete with hotels and golf courses rather than remaining a roadside motel stop. Indeed, Mesquite's leaders argued that the town could not expand unless it became an independent city.

Until the city's incorporation in 1984 the Mormon church was the town's landmark and largest building. The church's neatly trimmed lawns and hedges constantly reminded Mesquite's residents of those hardy pioneers who had braved the wilderness to settle the valley and build a community in the desert. But after Mesquite's incorporation as a city in 1984, the church no longer enjoyed its traditional prominence on the skyline.

Instead, the town's pastoral landscape was transformed into a thriving hub of commerce by the erection of resort hotels, gambling casinos, and golf courses. Unlike other Nevada gambling communities, Mesquite's zoning board relegated those tourist-oriented establishments to either end of the town.[16] In this respect Mesquite's basic zoning plan and ordinance, adopted in 1984, attempted to preserve the city's rural western character while at the same time permitting a growing tourist industry.

The transition from rural to urban center was not easy. It occurred only after

a persistent group of local residents, including farmers, laborers, and small businessmen, peacefully rebelled against the existing paternalistic, often exploitative county government. Arguing for self determination and incorporation as a city under the control of their own local elected representatives, townsmen convinced the county commissioners, the district court, and the legislature that their cause was just.

By March 1984, the town had reached a population of 1200 people living in approximately 440 homes situated in and around the city limits.[17] Even with its scanty population Mesquite's strategic location on Interstate 15 just west of the Utah border, combined with its desire to augment revenues, made it an ideal site to build a resort casino. In 1981 the Reno-based Peppermill Resort Hotel and Casino recognized Mesquite's economic potential and purchased the Western Village truck stop.[18] Building upon the existing twenty-eight room motel, coffee shop, and gasoline station, the Peppermill, over a ten-year period, expanded its operation into a 700-room hotel, four restaurants, six swimming pools and an eighteen-hole golf course.[19]

Marketed as a popular overnight stop on the highway and a convenient getaway for Las Vegans seeking a mini-vacation, the resort with its 950 employees filled the town's coffers with badly needed taxes. In January 1995, following a change in ownership, the Peppermill amended its name to Si Redd's Oasis Resort Hotel-Casino.[20] Arguing that the Peppermill had not reached its full potential as a resort hotel, Redd began the construction of a ninety-one space, full service, recreational vehicle park as well as another eighteen-hole golf course.

At the same time the new Oasis Resort Hotel-Casino began building its new facilities, the Virgin River Hotel located on the east end of Mesquite expanded its hotel-casino from 379 to 724 rooms and increased its work force to 610. Opened

The front entrance of the Oasis Hotel-Casino in 1995. (*Desert Valley Museum*)

in 1990, the Virgin River Hotel's newly completed 18-hole golf course, 250-seat bingo parlor, convention center, and twin movie theaters have added to Mesquite's entertainment amenities catering to the needs of the city's vacation guests.[21] Since its opening the Virgin River Hotel, like its rival the Peppermill, has undergone continuous expansion, while increasing its work force, and adding tax revenues to Mesquite's expanding budgetary needs. At the same time, however, both hotels created an instant housing crisis while also spawning more crime and other growth-related social problems.

The handling of legal conflicts, major medical problems, dental work and governmental business prior to the advent of the town's incorporation as a city required a 160-mile round trip to the county seat at Las Vegas. Townspeople begrudged spending time away from their farms on matters dealing with the county bureaucracy. Bruised feelings over the benign neglect of the county government toward the town, and its needs, turned into festering wounds.

Until the district court gave Mesquite autonomy on March 9, 1984, a town advisory board governed the town. The Nevada Revised Statutes provides county commissions with the authority to establish advisory boards. Under these statutes an unincorporated town can be established by the board of county commissioners. The advisory board members that oversee the functions of the town act as liaison to the county commissioners, and are appointed by them.[22] The town board is advisory only and has no real power to influence the daily events that affect the lives of the town residents. By law, there is a minimum of three and not more than five commissioners appointed to an advisory town board.

Residents of an entity under the unincorporated township system are completely dependent upon the good will of the county commission. Townspeople can ask for services, but they cannot demand them or set priorities for local projects without prior approval of the county commissioners. During Mesquite's period as an unincorporated town, many examples of benign neglect and mismanagement occurred.[23] Even seemingly innocent incidents irritated local citizens, causing many to conclude that they had been "treated unfairly by the Clark County Commission."[24]

Heading the list of grievances was the 160-mile round-trip drive to Las Vegas to apply for a building permit, a zoning application or other county services. Mesquite was at a great disadvantage. On the one hand, the townsmen needed services, but county officials had to balance the requests of small rural towns like Mesquite against the demands of Las Vegas and the large suburban cities. The metropolis usually won. Harassed officials, faced with the choice of responding to requests for a crew to mow the lawn around Mesquite's community center or dispatch the same crew to cut the grass of baseball fields in Las Vegas, usually satisfied the demands of the larger, more powerful political constituency.

The long distance between the county seat and Mesquite as well as the lack of personal contact between the county department heads and the community became two of the key issues in the town's struggle for home rule. Telephone

messages and ambiguous instructions to and from county workers and their headquarters in Las Vegas further aggravated the growing hostility between the two entities.[25] Mesquite's distance from the county seat, the lack of attention to concerns about the town's infrastructure, and the perceived inequity of taxes raised versus revenues spent in the town, formed the triad of forces that inspired Mesquite's campaign for home rule.

During the period between 1982–1984, Clark County's expenditures in Mesquite "dropped from $180,000 to $126,986," but Mesquite's contributions to the county tax base increased from $8.6 million to $10.7 million dollars.[26] The disbursement of funds for local services and the maintenance of the town's infrastructure did not keep pace with its expanding tax base. One complaint often voiced by Mesquite's protesting community members was that the needs of large and politically powerful Las Vegas always took precedence over the county's rural areas. The old saw about the squeaking wheel getting the grease was the sardonic response often heard in the town when there was little or no immediate response by county officials to their requests for services.[27] Desiring a fair share of tax revenues for the town, a government that was located in their own city, not eighty miles distant, and civic employees who worked under local control led the community to rebel against the county commission and seek incorporation in 1984.

On 10 February 1983, the Mesquite Town Board discussed the merits of the town's incorporation as a city.[28] The meeting included chairman of the town board, Tommy R. Leavitt, members, Craig Pulsipher, Harley Leavitt, J. L. Bowler, Elwin Barum, and twenty-seven community members. The board appointed Harley Leavitt to promote and coordinate the town's efforts to incorporate. Thelma Davis, a member of the Mesquite Chamber of Commerce also attended the hearing and accepted an appointment on the committee.[29] Faced with the option of either proceeding through the court system or the legislature to achieve incorporation, the committee elected to apply to the district court for relief. The committee selected the courts to hear their case because the legislature required an expensive lobbying effort and stiff opposition from politically powerful Clark County, whereas the courts simply required an attorney to present a petition signed by a majority of the town's property owners who had voted in the last election.[30]

In January, the *Las Vegas Review Journal* reported that Mesquite was studying the feasibility of incorporation as a city. Commissioner Bruce Woodbury observed that the town had too small a tax base to become a city and that the county staff had been assigned the task of aiding the town in a feasibility study to determine if self rule was a viable alternative. He conceded, however, that, "No matter what we do there is still that distance from the county seat and the lack of their own decision making authority."[31]

Woodbury did not struggle alone with the problem; other commissioners and concerned citizens also sought alternatives to incorporation. Clark County's size

precluded a speedy response to the demands of the local town board. After reviewing the facts concerning Mesquite's demands for self rule, commissioners reluctantly agreed to support Mesquite's incorporation as a "third class city,"[32] despite misgivings about the town's ability to finance itself.

In February 1984, a majority of qualified voters who owned real property in Mesquite filed a petition before the district court in Las Vegas requesting home rule and incorporation under the Nevada Revised Statutes. The application complied with all of the requirements of law and on March 9, 1984, Judge Addelair Guy entered a decree declaring the former unincorporated town a city.[33] On May 1, 1984, the *Las Vegas Review Journal* reported that everyone expected a large turnout of Mesquite's 413 registered voters for the first municipal elections. It was the biggest political event in Mesquite's history.

The first mayor of the new city was Jimmy Hughes, a life-long resident and prominent rancher. He was sworn into office on 23 May 1984, by District Judge Guy at a celebration in the Mesquite Community Center. Hughes, however, dampened the crowd's spirits by announcing that the new city was broke. It had no money to pay for the basic services. As one reporter noted, "The 1,200 residents in the 11 square mile city wondered how they were going to make ends meet."[34] Hughes exhibited his leadership ability by announcing his trip to Carson City the next day to "appeal to the Nevada Tax Commission for an emergency $43,000 appropriation from the state emergency relief fund."[35] Pat Pine, the executive director of the state Department of Taxation, observed that the new city had a number of on-going costs and no immediate cash, furthermore Mesquite had to "start paying [its] own freight."[36]

The new city commission earmarked the $43,000 requested by Mesquite's city council from the Nevada Tax Commission as seed money to start the new city. The funds were intended to pay for the following: city salaries, a city-attorney's office, public works projects, parks, and all of the incidental things necessary for the public's safety and welfare. Although the city's financial problem was not a nightmare, it posed significant problems for the newly-elected mayor and city commission. Pine ironically remarked that the money for Mesquite's interim financing came from the state's emergency fund. He also wondered if the voluntary incorporation of the city was really an emergency, thereby questioning whether Mesquite's residents ought to be given a free ride at the expense of other state tax payers. The point became moot when the tax commission issued a check for $50,000 from the state's supplemental relief fund.[37]

Nevada Taxation Director Pine's work did not end with the issuing of the $50,000 check. Mayor Hughes and Mesquite's council members found themselves unable to reconcile Mesquite's budget. The dilemma arose because Mesquite had included Bunkerville in its original plans for incorporation without seeking approval from its neighboring town. Bunkerville's refusal to accept inclusion as a supplemental segment of Mesquite's tax base stemmed from its bitter, quarter-century struggle over the location of I-15.

Although Bunkerville had been removed from Mesquite's city limits, it remained in the statistical data base used to calculate and forecast budgetary requirements. Discovery of the error decreased the amount of acreage and population within the city's incorporated area, reducing Mesquite's ad valorem tax base. This inattention to detail cost it "a couple of million dollars"[38] in assessed valuation and $25,000 to $30,000 in property taxes annually. Taxes had to be increased without delay to prevent financial disaster.

The tax commission realized that to become solvent Mesquite had to adopt strict economic measures. It eased the financial burden by paying in advance, the interest on a $70,000 loan that the city had obligated itself to in its unincorporated period. The note carried an eleven percent interest rate. Following this move, the commission set a maximum allowable annual ceiling of $228,000 on the city's ability to raise revenue. The revenue ($228,000) would come from two sources: a fifty percent supplemental tax funds and fifty percent property taxes at the rate of $1.42 per $1000 of assessed valuation. This meant a thirty percent tax increase for the new city property owners. Pine noted wryly that "apparently there is some understanding that this is the cost of self-determination."[39]

Keith Latham, Clark County Treasurer and Tax Collector, agreed with Pine in predicting that Mesquite residents would be paying the highest taxes in Clark County.[40] The county commissioners turned over to the fledgling metropolis, without charge, the garbage dump, cemetery, swimming pool, community center, the abandoned hospital and jail, observing that the new city lacked the financial resources to pay for the property. Under state law the county could have required payment for the structures and furnishings.[41] Although acquisition of the public facilities was the realization of one of the goals of home rule, the city still needed funding for the maintenance and other liabilities connected with those assets. Despite financial problems and a high ad valorem tax rate, the municipality continued to expand because of an influx of workers in the city's new resort hotel-casino business. Demanding homes, schools, sewer, water, medical and other urban services, the new hotel-casino workers strained Mesquite's infrastructure to the breaking point.

Mesquite's rapid expansion from town to city also caused unexpected social divisions. The split developed among progressive minded newcomers, conservative old timers, and the newly-arrived Peppermill casino interests. Each side focused their arguments on the rapid rate of land development in the new city. In July 1985, at a meeting held in the city council chambers, community leaders attempted to defuse the widening discord and disparity among the various factions. Growing fears of the pre-incorporation residents over the city's rapid growth and a perceived high-handed attitude among the new city officials fueled public anger. More than fifty people filled the meeting hall. A controversial agenda item and the focal point of the meeting was the proposed construction of a mobile home park next to an old, established neighborhood.[42]

Labeled as "oldtimers" by the pro-growth forces of Mesquite's growing pop-

ulation, opponents of the trailer park lived in the older established residential area of the city. Many of them were descendants of early pioneers who had originally settled the valley. The progressive faction usually opposed the old timers by siding with the newcomers to achieve its goals. On the other hand, the newcomers represented land development and progress while harboring aggressive notions about changing the sleepy little city into a thriving metropolis. All three of the power blocs were independent, issue-oriented, and ineffective without combining with one of the other groups to overcome the balance of political power.

City Manager Paul Henderson, a recent graduate of Brigham Young University, favored the newcomers. Ideologically attuned to the expansionists' program, he envisioned Mesquite becoming a resort retirement community. Together with the city council, he shaped the city's policies to reflect those views.[43] Predictably the mobile home park received unanimous approval.

Growing disaffection with the new governing body and its decision was evident among the measure's opponents. Sue Hardy, a long-time resident who had voted to incorporate now wished that Mesquite had remained under Clark County rule, concluding that "These people are not honest."[44] Joy Hardy noted that the decision "set a precedent. Are home owners listened to, or is it just the businesses?"[45] Other residents, more sympathetic to the new city council, viewed the decision as growing pains.

Thelma Davis voted for incorporation also, and insisted, primarily because it eliminated the lengthy trip to Las Vegas for building permits, that the first year of home rule had been a wonderful experience. Now inspections, she argued, would be made by local officials. Davis concluded that progress brought growing pains, but was confident that the new city would be able to work them out in time.[46]

In 1991, undaunted by Mesquite's growing social fragmentation over perceived abuses of political power, the city council launched itself into the twentieth century by purchasing a Cessna 310 twin engined airplane.[47] The acquisition of a private airplane for the use of the city council further heightened hostility and divided the community into groups. Although city officials paid $16,019 for the Cessna, only one person in the community, a road maintenance employee, had the expertise to fly it. Dissident Troy Leavitt denounced the acquisition as an underhanded move by an out of control city council.[48] Leavitt argued that "if this was such a good idea why was it such a secret?"[49] Furthermore, "city employees I talked to denied the purchase until cornered."[50] Finally Leavitt wondered if the aircraft had been bought without going before the city council for approval.[51] In March 1995, Mesquite's new mayor, Ken Carter and the city council settled the issue by putting the Cessna up for sale. The city's asking price for the controversial plane was $20,000.[52]

Dismissing local dissension, Henderson listed the positive accomplishments of the municipality's first years. By 1995, Mesquite contained 5,000 residents and

had surpassed the population projections of the Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning.[53] The level of service to the people was better, property taxes had been reduced and the city budget called for expenditures of $664,000 in its second year and prospects of continuing prosperity for future years. Hotel-casino operations had created full employment as well as a housing shortage with its ever increasing demands for new labor, prompting the city manager to comment that "Having more jobs than people to fill them, was the type of problem that most communities would like to have."[54]

However, the political discord evident at the meeting continued to represent a symbol of social unrest and dissatisfaction with the new municipal government. As the 1980s wore on, friction between competing economic, social and political forces began eroding the community's social cohesion. The rural environment of the unincorporated town had provided ample living space, clean air, good food, and a plentiful supply of drinking water. After incorporation, and with a substantial population increase, new demands strained the ecosystem, as the fragile ecological infrastructure of the Virgin Valley resisted the heavy influx of new residents and tourists.

The state health department immediately confirmed fears of the old timers that the city was growing too fast. In 1985, it conducted a series of tests on the city's drinking water system. Water used for domestic consumption contained a high level of salts and sulfates. That high concentration of salts in the water exceeded the health department standards. The city had one year to find an alternative source of drinking water or construct a treatment plant to purify the water from the existing wells. Ken Jenson, president of the water association, predicted that "it will cost $200,000 to $400,000 to construct a purification plant, and will impose a hardship on the city."[55] The only alternative to the water treatment plant was a limited growth policy that contradicted the city's long range goals.

Water had always been the principal factor controlling Mesquite's growth. In the 1990s it was no different, especially with two resort hotels operating on the outskirts of town. Local water officials, confronted with a major outlay of funds for the construction of a treatment plant, sought less costly alternatives for delivering water to an expanding population. To that end, Michael Winters, general manager of the Virgin Valley Water District, began a study of all of the existing water wells in Mesquite's jurisdiction to determine the growing salinity's exact source.[56]

Winters's examination of the city's wells in 1990 pointed to well No.9 as the culprit. In fact, it was the sole contributing source of the obnoxious salts contaminating the system. In 1990, the director capped well nine and drilled two new wells to replace the water loss within the system.[57] Selecting well sites in Abbott and Town Wash, two of the city's major sources, Winters's drilling efforts soon resulted in an abundant supply of pure, fresh potable water. Each of the new wells today yields approximately 2,000 gallons of fresh water per

minute.[58] Although Winters solved the city's salinity problem and saved the community hundreds of thousands of dollars, other water-related issues continued to disturb the water district.

During the water district's predicament concerning the salinity problem, the city council became increasingly aware of the political and economic importance of water. As a consequence, it struggled to acquire jurisdiction over the district itself. Frustrated in their attempts to covertly seize control and authority over the "Farmstead Water Association," city officials resorted to the right of eminent domain to achieve its ends. However, enraged residents, fearing a dictatorial takeover by the city council, appealed to the legislature for relief.[59]

In response to appeals from the citizens of Mesquite, the legislature created the Virgin Valley Water District as a political subdivision separate and apart from the City of Mesquite.[60] The service area of the new district included the City of Mesquite, the Peppermill golf course located in Mojave County, Arizona, and the town of Bunkerville.[61] Interestingly enough, Bunkerville decided to join with the people of Mesquite in the battle against Mesquite's city council and voted to be included within the new entity. The resourcefulness of Michael Winters in solving the city's salinity problem has guaranteed the community's future expansion but widened the rifts among the old timers, progressives, and newcomers.

Placing limits in the city's growth captured the imagination of a large segment of Mesquite's population. The oldtimers, in particular, embraced the new concept. In their dissatisfaction with the city, they began calling Mesquite the "land of disenchantment."[62] They looked backward toward the golden days of unincorporated bliss under the county government. Citing corruption, rising crime and personal enrichment of public officials, many citizens demanded reform.

Crime, like population, grew with the city and its new resort industry. In 1989 the Mesquite Police Department reported that the use of narcotics had risen 230 percent over the previous year. Making seven hundred arrests in the preceding year, the department reported that it had handled 150 more cases than in 1986.[63] Those statistics further fueled growing fears of old-timers that full employment and prosperity created by its new resort industries also contributed to a loss of innocence and the destruction of the city's rural character.

In 1994, growing concerns about political corruption were realized with the recall election of the mayor for illegally laundering drug funds.[64] Mayor Jim Lee resigned under pressure from Mesquite's irate citizenry after his conviction. The city council appointed Ken Carter to replace Lee as interim mayor until the next regular election could be held. Carter ordered the sale of the Cessna 310 airplane and instituted a new "honesty in government" approach for Mesquite's city officials.[65]

Rising crime rates, water issues, a rapidly changing economic base, and social fragmentation all served to divide Mesquite in the years since its incorporation. Expensive infrastructure projects brought about by the demands of the casino

industry and its expanding labor force only intensified the pressure. The city's sanitation system was a case in point. Although adequate, it faces modernization in the near future. According to Allen Bell, Mesquite's Director of Public Works, the city has no immediate worry over its current sewage capacity.[66] On the other hand, contingency plans are in place for the use of aeration trenches in the event of an emergency or for needed expansion of the system. Mesquite's sewer system consists of a series of gravity pipe lines draining into an arrangement of septic lagoons.[67] The lagoons abut the Virgin River and are located close to the bridge that links Mesquite to Bunkerville. It is difficult to argue that Mesquite has entered the fraternity of Nevada's cities while its sewage system consists of settling ponds and lagoons interspersed with privy vaults.

Increased population has forced government to address the problem. *The Virgin Valley Comprehensive Land Use Plan* adopted by the Clark County Commission on 17 May 1980, and still in use by Mesquite, indicated that soil conditions in the Virgin Valley generally favored septic systems as a means of sewage disposal.[68] Although the Valley contains excellent drainage conditions and the ability to maintain its system of privy vaults and settling ponds, future population increases may demand that Mesquite consider the construction of a modern sewage treatment plant.[69] Finally, because Bunkerville is situated downstream from Mesquite it cannot participate in efforts to consolidate both communities' sewage in one facility without first constructing an expensive lift station. Mesquite's use of a sewage system composed of settling ponds clearly demonstrates its struggle to become a twentieth-century tourist center while relying on nineteenth-century technology.

At the same time, Mesquite's new position as a city has not prevented it from utilizing Clark County's advanced planning and engineering specialties such as regional flood control. In 1986, the Clark County Regional Flood Control District included Mesquite in its jurisdiction.[70] In November 1991, both the Clark County Commission and Mesquite's city council approved and adopted the latest updated version of "The Flood Control Master Plan for Mesquite."[71] This updated master plan called for the construction of a system of detention basins, channels, and culverts on three watershed areas. Equally important for Mesquite's safety was the completion of a "major Master Plan detention basin [named] Jim Wilson Dam".[72]

Regardless of Mesquite's adoption of Clark County's planning and zoning ordinances and master flood control plan, it cannot continue to react to rapid urban development without charting its own plan for the future. Mesquite's schools, sewer system, water system, police, fire, and flood control systems may be adequate for current needs. If growth continues, many of these facilities will be obsolete. The success of the Peppermill and Virgin River hotel-casinos has attached other resort-oriented industries to examine Mesquite's economic possibilities.

In June 1994, Players International, Inc. submitted plans to build a 500-room

hotel-casino near Mesquite's easternmost off-ramp of I-15.[73] It is estimated that the first phase of the Resort Players Island and Resort Casino will cost 60 million dollars. The new project will consist of an 18-hole golf course, 500-room hotel, gambling casino, spa, four restaurants, a 400-seat theater, meeting rooms, and gift shops.[74] Construction crews followed by hotel-casino employees and support personnel present burdens on the community's infrastructure adding to existing social, political, and economic stresses. Spokesmen for Players International optimistically predict Mesquite's emergence as a primary major resort and golfing center in the Southwest.[75] All of this suggests the need for modern urban planning techniques.

Mesquite's successful rise to prominence as a tourist center reflects its leaders' practical approach to problems. On the other hand, an appraisal of the community's social costs resulting from home rule can best be appreciated by its residents. Collectively, town leaders made a conscious decision to incorporate as a city, and to accept the fiscal and social costs for Mesquite's future development. Without consciously considering the costs in a damaged environment, political divisiveness, corruption, rising crime, the loss of its rural culture, overcrowding of its schools, and increased taxes, the town's citizens voted for home rule. In the early 1990s former City Manager Henderson grappled with the question: "What comes first, the businesses or the people who employ them?"[76] While searching for an answer to the dilemma, he steered Mesquite on a course that included plans to construct two golf courses, an airport, major housing projects, and an updated water system capable of supporting a population of 5000 people.[77]

The rural-oriented residents of Mesquite have survived home rule and incorporation since 1984 by solving every problem piecemeal as it arose. Mesquite is a microcosm of Las Vegas and other cities in southern Nevada, and like them has successfully dealt with lack of funding, population growth, political corruption, and a changing economic base. Mesquite sought incorporation because it wanted home rule at any price. Its future depends upon the common sense and collective wisdom of its people. Thorstein Veblen, the early twentieth century American economist and philosopher, put the situation succinctly when he declared that "The scheme of natural rights grew up and found secure lodgement in the common sense of the community."[78] And as is often the case in American history, the question is whether community can prevail over "the interests."

Notes

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[3]Venstrom Cruz, *An Economic Study of the Virgin Valley in Southeastern Nevada* (United States

Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics in Cooperation with the University of Nevada Experimental Station, 1941), 2.

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[8]James Scholl, "History of Land Surveying in Mesquite, Nevada" (unpublished memoir, 1995).

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[10]Clark County Planning Commission, *Virgin Valley, Nevada Comprehensive Land Use Plan* (Las Vegas: Clark County, 1980), 5.

[11]Laurin "Dutch" Leavitt, interview with James Scholl, 3 February 1995.

[12]*Ibid.*

[13]*Ibid.*

[14]*Las Vegas Sun*, 10 March 1984, p. B-1.

[15]*Ibid.*

[16]Cheryl Koeven, "Mesquite: A New City In An Old Town," *Mesquite Magazine*, (Centennial Issue 1994), 11.

[17]*Las Vegas Review Journal*, 24 May 1984, p. B-20.

[18]Cheryl Koeven, "Mesquite: A New City In An Old Town," *Mesquite Magazine*, (Centennial Issue 1994), 11.

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[20]*Ibid.*

[21]*Ibid.*

[22]*Nevada Revised Statutes*, Chapter 269.020, 502.

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[26]*Las Vegas Review Journal*, 1 May 1984, p. F-6.

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[28]Thurston, *A River and A Road*, 197.

[29]*Ibid.*

[30]*Ibid.*

[31]*Las Vegas Review Journal*, 31 January 1984, p. B-3.

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[34]*Ibid.*

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[38]*Las Vegas Review Journal*, 24 May 1984, p. B-20.

[39]*Las Vegas Review Journal*, 25 May 1984, p. B-6.

[40]*Las Vegas Review Journal*, 24 May 1984, p. B-20.

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[42]*Las Vegas Review Journal*, 29 July 1985, p. B-1.

[43]*Ibid.*

[44]*Ibid.*

[45]*Ibid.*

[46]*Ibid.*

[47]*Las Vegas Sun*, 26 May 1991, p. D-1.

[48]*Ibid.*

[49]*Ibid.*

[50]*Ibid.*

[51]*Ibid.*
[52]Helen Gardner, interview with James Scholl, 16 March 1995.
[53]Paul Henderson, interview with James Scholl 16 March 1995.
[54]*Las Vegas Review Journal*, 29 July 1985, p. B-1.
[55]*Las Vegas Review Journal*, 15 May 1986, p. B-4.
[56]Steven Tietjen, interview with James Scholl 16 March 1995.
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[58]*Ibid.*
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[61]*Ibid.*
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[64]Mayor Ken Carter's secretary, telephone interview with James Scholl 17 March 1995.
[65]*Ibid.*
[66]Allen Bell, interview with James Scholl 3 February 1995.
[67]*Ibid.*
[68]Clark County Planning Commission, *Virgin Valley Nevada Comprehensive Land Use Plan.*
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[70]*Desert Valley Times*, 2 February 1995, p. 1.
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[72]*Ibid.*
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[74]*Ibid.*
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[76]*Las Vegas Review Journal*, 29 April 1988, p. B-9.
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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS
ELWOOD DECKER AND THE CCC AT FORT CHURCHILL

Harold Housley

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), one of many New Deal relief measures, employed over 3 million young men, war veterans, and Native Americans nationwide during the Great Depression.[1] Though only a fraction of these saw action in Nevada, due to its low population the state ranked first per capita in funds allocated.[2] In twenty-four camps scattered across Nevada, over 5,500 workers were employed in a wide range of projects, including building roads, digging canals, planting trees, and developing recreation areas.[3] One of the most notable projects in the state was the restoration and reconstruction of Fort Churchill, located in Lyon County, about 35 miles east of Carson City.

Beginning in 1935, and continuing the next year, Civilian Conservation Corps Camp SP-5, Company 590, employed about 250 men in stabilizing ruins, reconstructing buildings, and developing facilities for camping and general public use.[4] Photographs provide visual documentation of the project, but a series of crayon drawings by Elwood Decker, the camp's artist, provide a more vivid and personal illustration of the undertaking. With an eye for detail, Decker richly depicts the restoration and reconstruction. An August 1935 article in the *Nevada State Journal* notes that Decker's work possesses an "individual and vital quality."[5] The drawings are both works of art and a unique source of information about the New Deal in Nevada. When combined with the artist's personal correspondence, a more complete picture of the reconstruction emerges.

By the early 1930s the physical remains at Fort Churchill provided little evidence of the range and significance of the activities that had occurred there during the relatively brief period in which it was an operational military post. Like many forts in the American West, the establishment of Fort Churchill,

A master's candidate in History at Arizona State University, Harold Housley served as an intern in the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office during the summer of 1994. Some of the original Decker drawings are now in the collections of the Nevada Historical Society. They will be a part of the exhibition, "Fort Churchill: Sentinel of the Desert," which will be in the Changing Gallery in the Historical Society Museum from September 9 to December 31, 1995.

Nevada's largest nineteenth-century military installation, was due to conflict between white settlers and Native Americans, the Pyramid Lake War of 1860.[6]

Prior to the discovery of the Comstock Lode in the summer of 1859, the small white settlements in the Carson Valley and elsewhere posed little threat to the native Northern Paiutes. Until shortly before the Pyramid Lake War, Euro Americans and Native Americans were largely on good terms.[7] But the wave of humanity that followed the Comstock discovery precipitated a meeting of the Paiutes and some of their Bannock allies at Pyramid Lake in the spring of 1860 to discuss increasing white encroachment. During the conference, news arrived that a group of Bannocks had killed three white men at nearby Williams Station.[8]

Exactly who was responsible for the killings at Williams Station remains a matter of conjecture. Following an absence of several days, James Williams, who along with his two brothers had established the trading post and station on the Carson River, returned there on May 8, 1860 and found his brothers dead and the station destroyed by fire. The commonly accepted explanation was that the act was in retaliation for the kidnapping of several Indian women, though there was considerable doubt that the men had been slain by Indians.[9] Nonetheless, James Williams concluded that the Paiutes were responsible. When news of the killings reached the Comstock towns, exaggerated reports of hundreds of Indians on the warpath spread like wildfire, and volunteer military companies were hastily organized in Genoa, Carson City, and Virginia City.[10] An engagement two miles from Pyramid Lake resulted in the deaths of 76 volunteers.

While the killings at Williams Station had caused quite a stir on the Comstock, news of the Pyramid Lake battle four days later brought widespread panic. Rumors that more than eighty volunteers had been killed by a force of 3,000 Paiutes led to fears that the towns would be attacked.[11] A force of over 700, composed of about 500 local volunteers and 200 U.S. Army troops from California, was assembled and this time decisively defeated an outnumbered Indian force near present-day Wadsworth on May 31, 1860. While the volunteers returned to Virginia City and disbanded, the army regulars constructed a temporary post at Pyramid Lake, called Fort Haven. To guard against further conflict and to protect the overland emigrant trail, one branch of which passed along the Carson River, the federal government approved the establishment of a permanent fort in northern Nevada. In the middle of July 1860 the troops moved to a site on the Carson River, which became Fort Churchill.[12]

The newly-created military reservation in what was then western Utah Territory, consisted of about 1380 acres, 200 of which became the actual post. Captain Joseph Stewart, the commander of the fort, named the site after Sylvester Churchill, who had been elevated to the rank of brigadier general in 1847 for meritorious conduct at the Battle of Buena Vista during the Mexican-American War.[13]

Captain Stewart approved plans for the fort, which included officers' quarters, storehouses, stables, guard house, and shops for a blacksmith and a carpenter. Though none of the officers had any previous experience with adobe construc-

tion, they agreed that it would make the most economical building material since sand, clay, and water were readily available. Stone for foundations was also easily obtainable, but lumber had to be transported by mule teams. Other supplies such as nails, plaster, windows, and doors had to be purchased in Virginia City or Carson City.

The construction process was both tedious and costly. Initial attempts at making suitable adobe bricks were unsuccessful, and the transportation costs only increased the price of already expensive materials.[14] Nonetheless, construction of the buildings continued throughout the spring and summer of 1861, by which time eleven southern states had seceded from the Union and Congress had created the Nevada Territory.

Though Fort Churchill was established as a result of the Pyramid Lake War, its function soon shifted to other areas. Large-scale conflict in the area had essentially been eliminated in August of 1860, when the Northern Paiute leader Numaga and Superintendent of the Wagon Roads Frederick West Lander reached an agreement to suspend hostilities for one year; in return for the suspension Lander promised to present the Paiutes' grievances in Washington.[15] Even though the United States government and the Northern Paiutes never agreed on a permanent treaty, reservations were established at Walker and Pyramid lakes. Tensions were revived when whites entered reservation lands, but no major confrontations occurred in the area following the Pyramid Lake War.[16]

Rather than serving to protect overlanders from Indian attack, Fort Churchill instead became a supply center, where destitute emigrants could obtain necessities until they reached the nearest towns.[17] The fort also served as a prison camp for Confederate sympathizers in 1863. Arrested suspects were taken to Fort Churchill and required to sign an oath of allegiance to the United States. Those who complied were released; those who refused were forced to perform manual labor.[18]

In addition to its military role, Fort Churchill functioned as a communications center. The Pony Express established a station there in the spring of 1860, and Fort Churchill was, for a number of months, the eastern terminus of the Placerville, Humboldt, and Salt Lake Telegraph Company. The year 1861 marked the completion of the transcontinental telegraph line. When Nevada achieved statehood three years later, the new state's constitution was telegraphed from Fort Churchill to Washington at a cost of over $3400.[19]

Completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 largely eliminated the need for maintaining Fort Churchill. Although the most serious white-Indian conflicts in Nevada after 1860 occurred in its eastern sections, Fort Churchill was still considered necessary for the protection of emigrant travel and the overland mail route. But by 1869 the heyday of overland migration had passed; because Fort Churchill was miles to the south of the Central Pacific line, the post was impractical for protection of the railroad. So the U.S. Army ordered the abandonment of the post.[20]

Following 1869, the buildings at Fort Churchill began to crumble. The resulting collection of roofless ruins created an eerie visual appearance that Nevada author Alice Baltzelle Addenbrooke likened to Stonehenge.[21] In 1925 the Nevada Sagebrush Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, based in Reno, expressed an interest in acquiring and preserving Fort Churchill. The U.S. Department of the Interior gave the site to the state of Nevada, which in turn deeded 200 acres of the area to the D.A.R. Due to limited funds the D.A.R. completed only a few small restoration projects between 1925 and 1934.[22] The D.A.R.'s greatest success at Fort Churchill was leading a campaign to establish a Civilian Conservation Corps camp there.

The Federal Unemployment Relief Act of 1933 created the Civilian Conservation Corps, which was intended to provide work for unemployed youths, war veterans, and Native Americans. Enrollees earned a monthly cash allowance of thirty dollars of which twenty-five dollars went to the worker's family.[23] The CCC performed over 150 types of work involving the protection and improvement of natural resources in ten general categories: forest culture, forest protection, erosion control, flood control, irrigation and drainage, transportation improvements, structural improvements, range development, aid to wildlife, and landscape and recreational development.[24] Camps were established in national parks and forests, wildlife reserves, state parks and forests, and other public lands designated for soil conservation projects.[25]

The Civilian Conservation Corps engaged in more than conservation, however. Reflecting New Deal financial support for cultural endeavors, the CCC employed artists to provide a pictorial record of its activities. CCC artists were hired through the Painting and Sculpture Section of the Treasury Department's Public Building Service. They were given the freedom to use the medium of their choice, but were required to furnish their own materials. While camp artists did not perform the strenuous construction and conservation projects that most enrolles did, they were expected to work forty hours per week in exchange for the standard monthly salary of thirty dollars.[26]

Elwood Decker was living in Los Angeles when he read about artistic opportunities with the CCC. In March of 1935, he wrote to Edward B. Rowan, Superintendent of the Treasury Department, Painting and Sculpture Section, expressing his interest in becoming a camp artist:

> I am 31 years old, can furnish recommendations references, etc, and will gladly send examples of work if necessary. I am free to travel and would relish an opportunity to interpret the ideas in back of the C.C.C. camps.[27]

The following month Decker officially enrolled and was assigned to Company 590, which at the time was based in San Leandro, California. In May 1935, Company 590 moved to Fort Churchill. As Decker sent his drawings to Washington, D.C., he continued to correspond with Superintendent Rowan.

The CCC project at Fort Churchill began in April 1935 with the construction of the camp by a twenty-five-man crew. The camp officially opened the following month with the arrival "by special train of 114 rookie enrollees from Indiana and Ohio, and a contingent of 45 additional men by truck from Lake Chaibo, Cal."[28] For Decker the move to Nevada began inauspiciously. He wrote to Rowan:

> The next morning the company moved to a desolate stretch of desert near Weeks, Nevada where the ruins of Fort Churchill afford a problem in reconstruction. I sympathize with those ruins. When we arrived I afforded a problem in reconstruction myself——I had a cold, a sore throat, my eyes hurt from a mild sandstorm we encountered, my face was sunburned, my nose hurt, I had no hat, and after the pleasant sanctuary of San Leandro, the precincts of Weeks, Nevada looked like a fine place to view from a fast passenger train (even then I would insist on a mellowing sunset)[29]

Like so many before and since, however, Elwood Decker quickly grew to appreciate the stark beauty of the Great Basin:

> Now after three or four days I am beginning to like the place. The wind has died down. I feel better. I've found lots to draw and early in the morning it's wonderful. I can't understand why everybody doesn't like it. We are so close to Mother earth . . . .[30]

Decker enthusiastically threw himself into his work, writing to Superintendent Rowan, "I am anxious to do my work well and I hope that you will not fire me when I send my first batch of drawings in." Rowan was pleased with Decker's initial efforts, but urged Decker to narrow his focus and "concentrate on less material but digest it more thoroughly." Decker heeded the advice, noting, "The material is so varied and interesting that it is a temptation to try for quantity rather than quality. Be assured, however, that the next batch of drawings you get from me will be more to the point."[31]

Decker's subsequent drawings caught the eye of William Mott, who was an inspector for the San Francisco office of the National Park Service when he visited Fort Churchill in 1935. Mott, who later became director of the Park Service, mentioned the drawings to the regional officer, who wrote that "a selection of a dozen sketches pertaining to the preservation of the Fort might advantageously be hung in the museum that the state contemplates building at Fort Churchill. It is conceivable that such a collection of pictures might be of the greatest value, not only historically but esthetically, in the immediate surroundings of Fort Churchill."[32]

The drawings of the reconstruction attracted attention locally as well. The *Nevada State Journal* noted:

> The pictures show each phase of the work as reconstruction of the old fort progresses and the sketches are, for the most part, scenes of action in which the conservation corps boys figure in characteristic poses as they work in blacksmith shop, repair trucks, dig ditches, build roads and carry on the routine of camp life.[33]

Decker sent over forty pictures to Washington and left a set of the drawings of the reconstruction to the state of Nevada.

In addition to providing a visual record of the CCC camp at Fort Churchill, Decker also provided a written record of camp life in his letters to Edward Rowan. In one letter Decker relates a near drowning:

> The biggest boy in our camp at Fort Churchill floundered in water over his head. We felt that he was fooling as the Carson River bore him downstream, his arms grotesquely reaching and beating the water. We suddenly realized he was drowning. We raced along the bank thru [*sic*] and around the trees and dead underbrush. The current was swifter than we, but as we broke into the clear, there he was, clinging like a weak little kitten, to a jutting spar of driftwood. Even then it took two or three men to get him ashore.[34]

Most days at Fort Churchill provided little excitement, however. The 250 men employed by the CCC at Fort Churchill spent countless hours stabilizing ruins, manufacturing brick, and reinforcing walls. Elwood Decker also had many routine tasks to perform such as lettering, of which he wrote: "A deluge of company lettering has slowed me up somewhat but it is good honest toil & I don't mind it a bit." Weekends provided somewhat of a break; Decker noted: "I usually draw on Saturdays & Sundays as I find it the only way to enjoy myself." Decker also found time to teach an art class on Tuesday nights, which he found especially rewarding. He wrote of his students: "They have strengthened my faith in the unending interest of fundamental principles."[35]

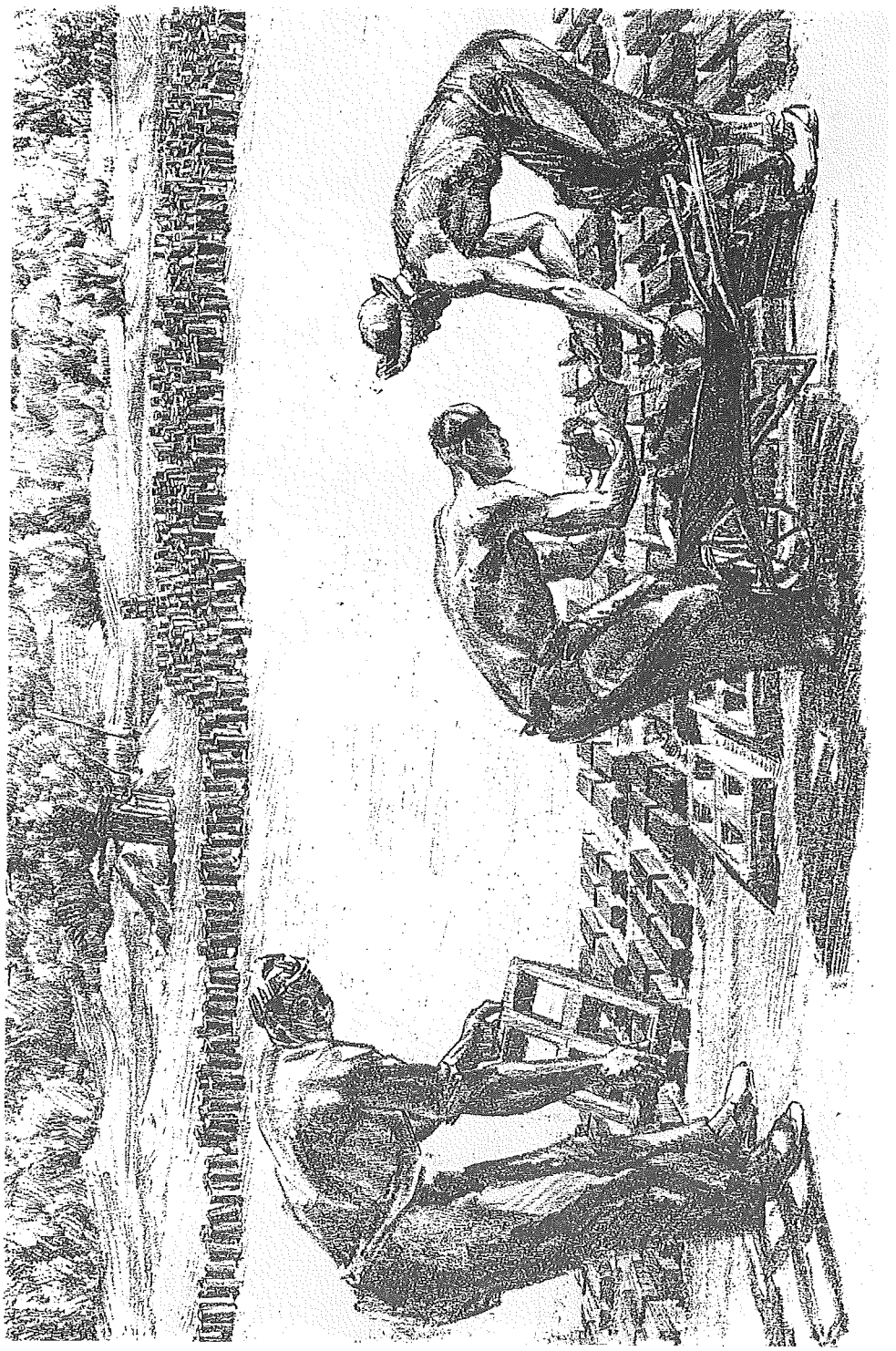
It was this total dedication to his art that motivated Decker to request a transfer. He wrote to Superintendent Rowan

> I would like to get near San Francisco or Berkeley so if I had an art class I could show them better what aesthetic ideas look like. They have a wonderful civic art gallery in Frisco now. I took a pass & spent half a month's pay to see a fine sculpture exhibit there a couple of weeks ago. I miss that sort of thing out here.[36]

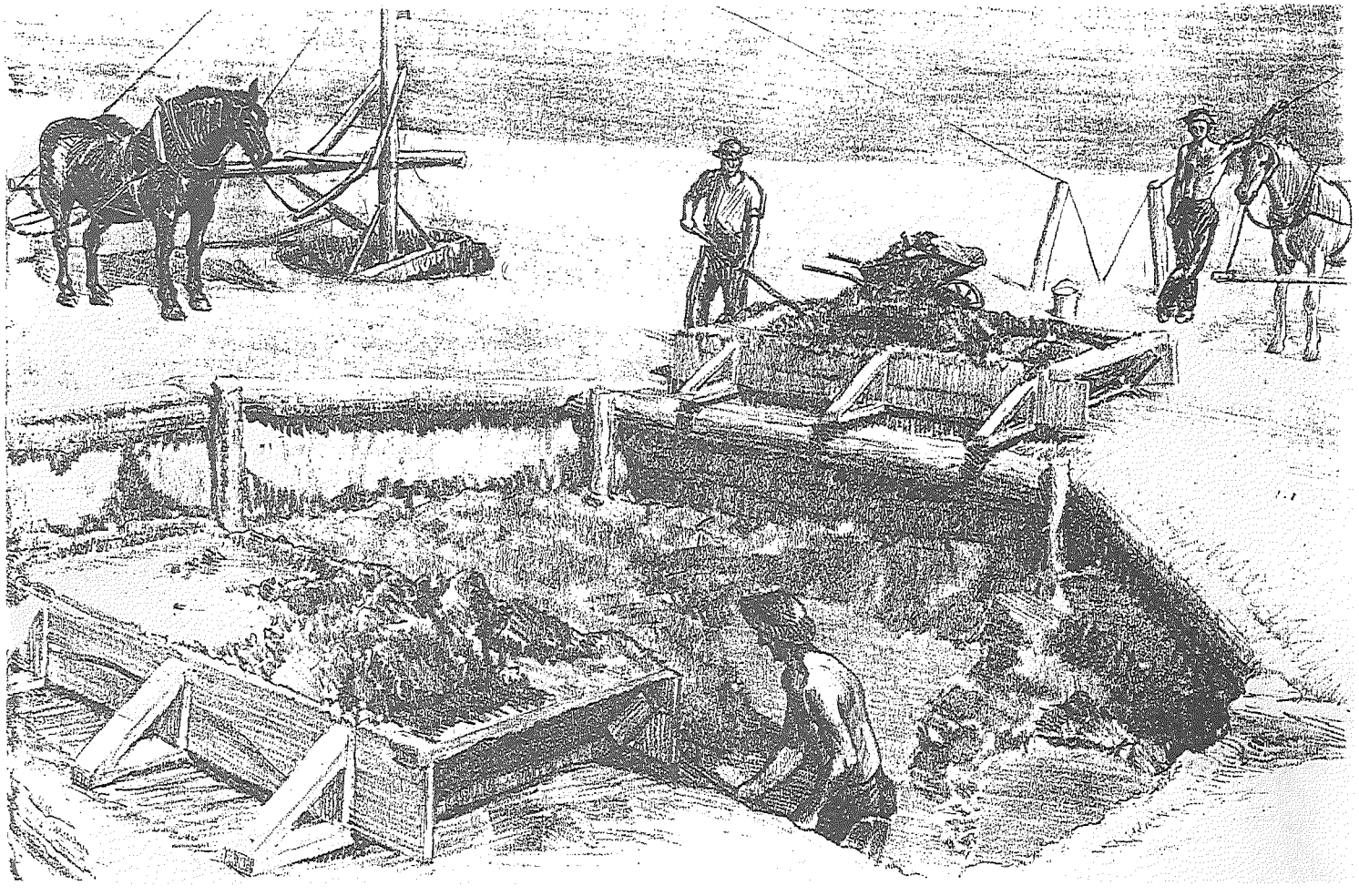
Superintendent Rowan acknowledged Decker's request for transfer, recommending that he be assigned to a camp at San Pablo Dam in Contra Costa County, California.

Decker's request for transfer to California proved to be irrelevant; in October 1935 the entire company moved to Berkeley, to begin work on a project at Wildcat Canyon. But the transfer request had already been forwarded to Washington, where it went through the normal administrative channels for approval, until it was learned that the San Pablo Dam camp was staffed exclusively by African Americans. Superintendent Rowan was informed that the transfer could not be made "in accordance with instructions issued by the Director, prohibiting the mixing of white and colored enrollees."[37]

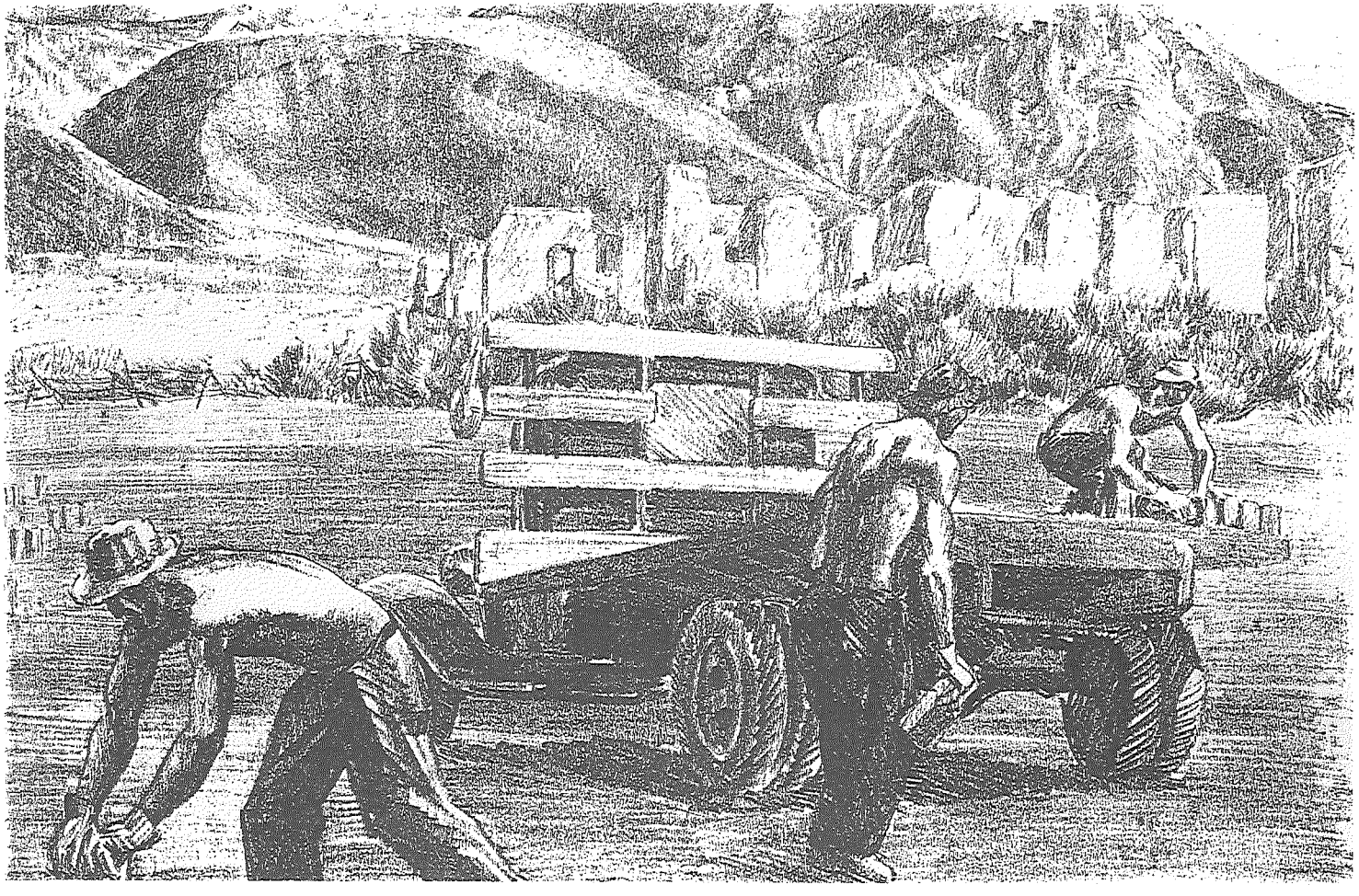
The denial of Decker's transfer was consistent with the segregationist policies of the era. Decker's own attitudes on race were quite different, however. He was



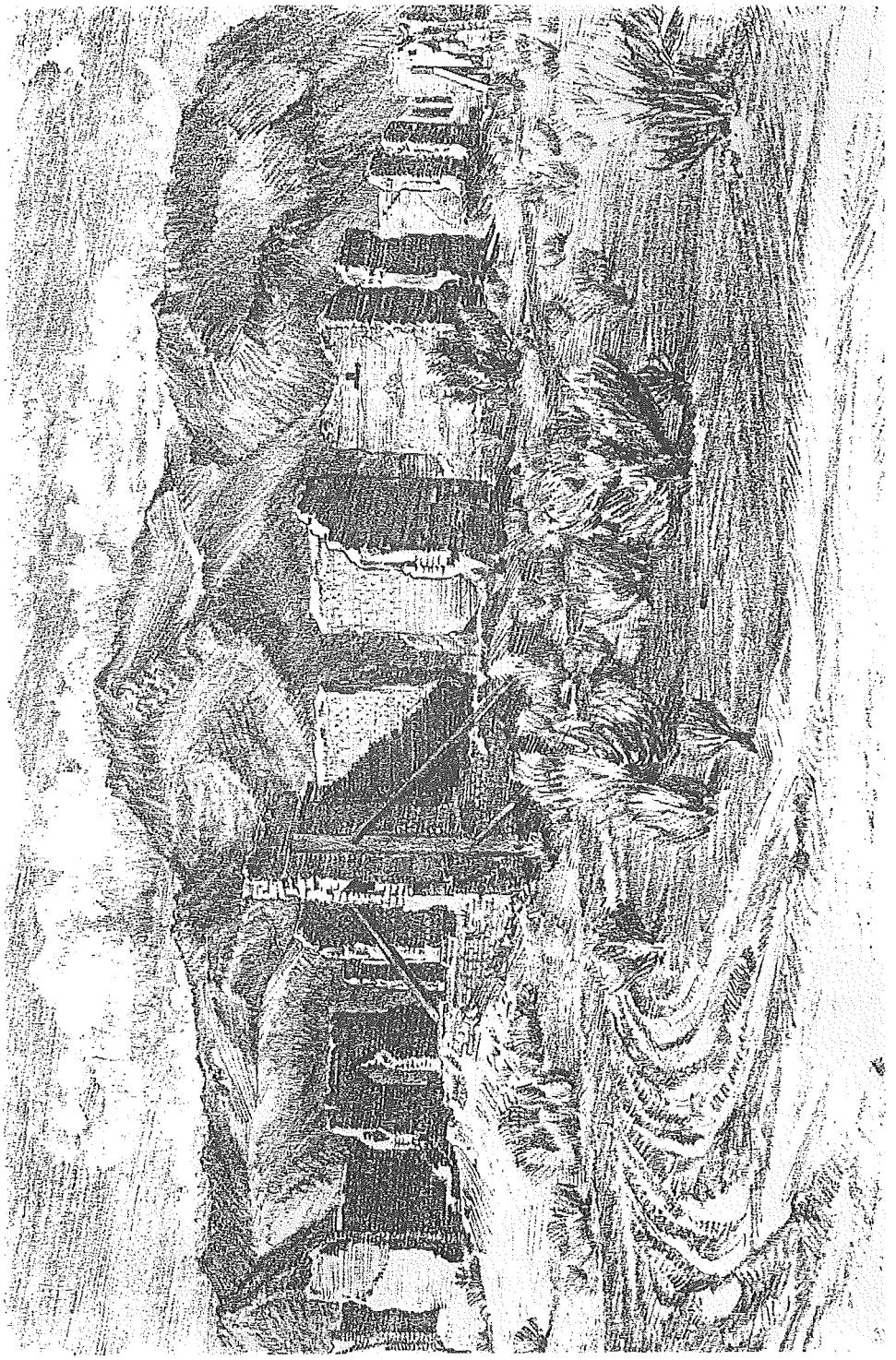
"Making brick."



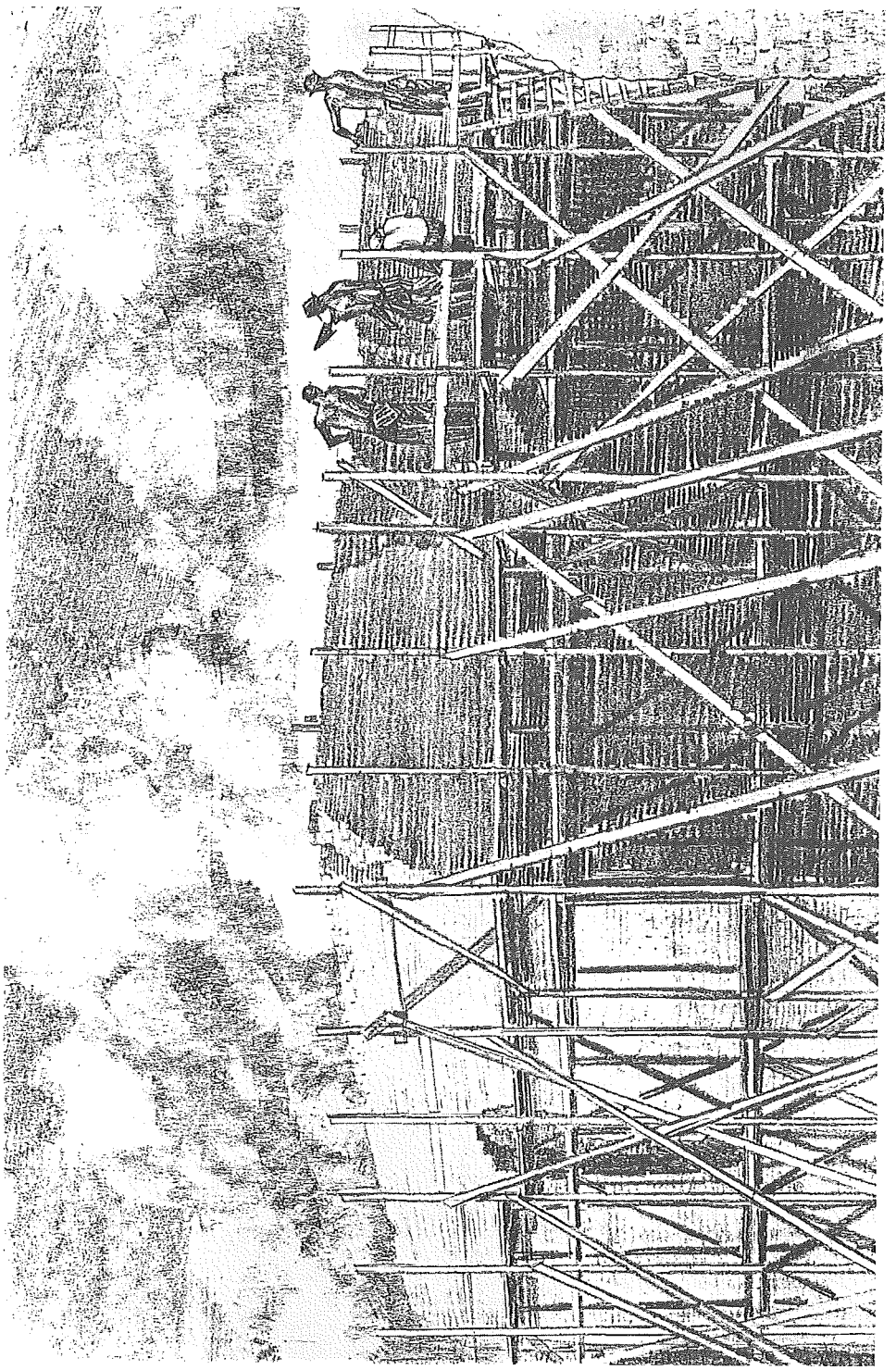
"Adobe pit where the hard adobe clay is soaked overnight before ready for the pug mill. In the pug mill it is mixed with sand & water to the proper consistency as the horse plods around & around."



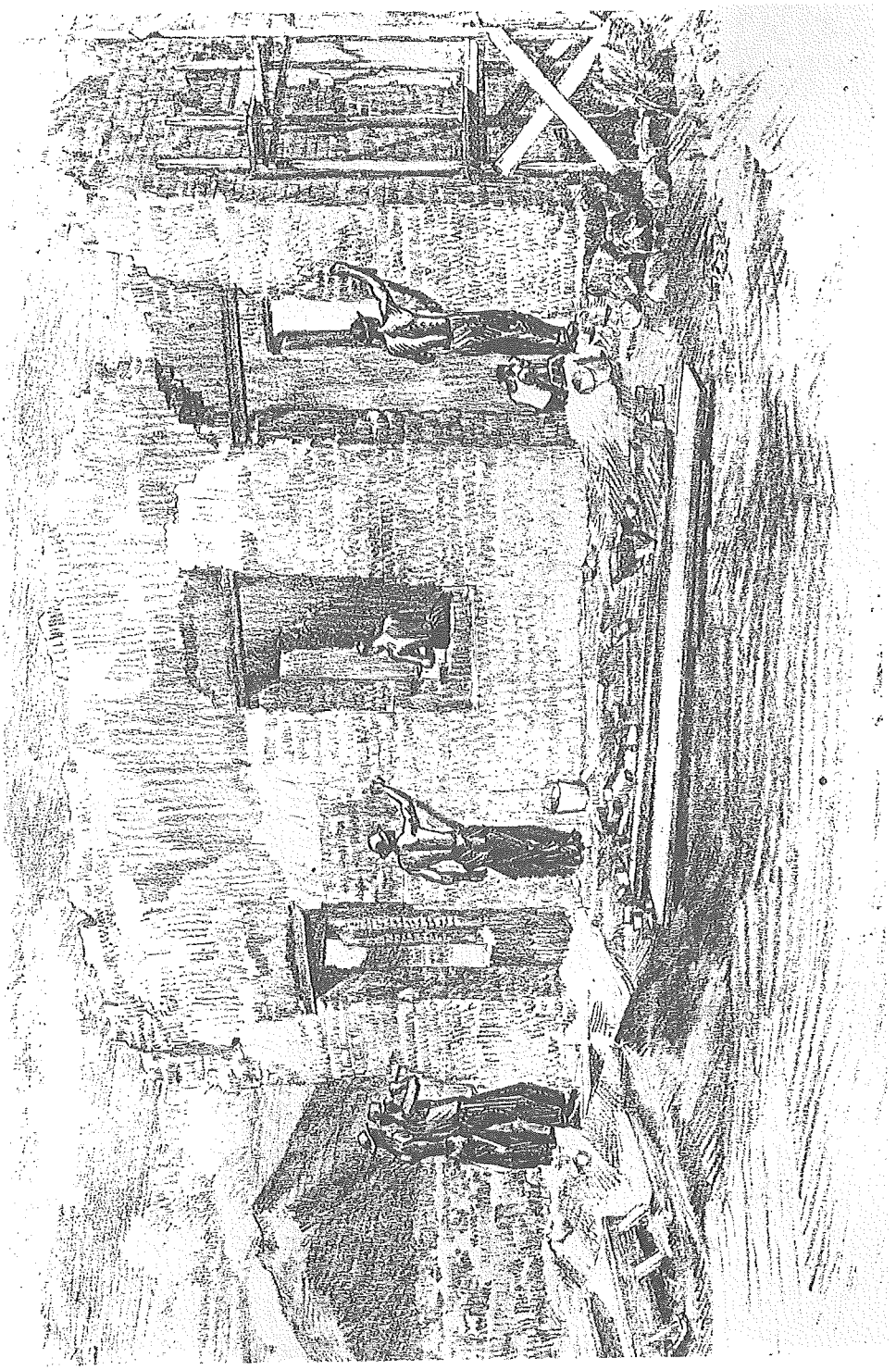
"Loading the adobe bricks on the truck to be taken to the Fort. Note bricks are stood on end to dry out better."



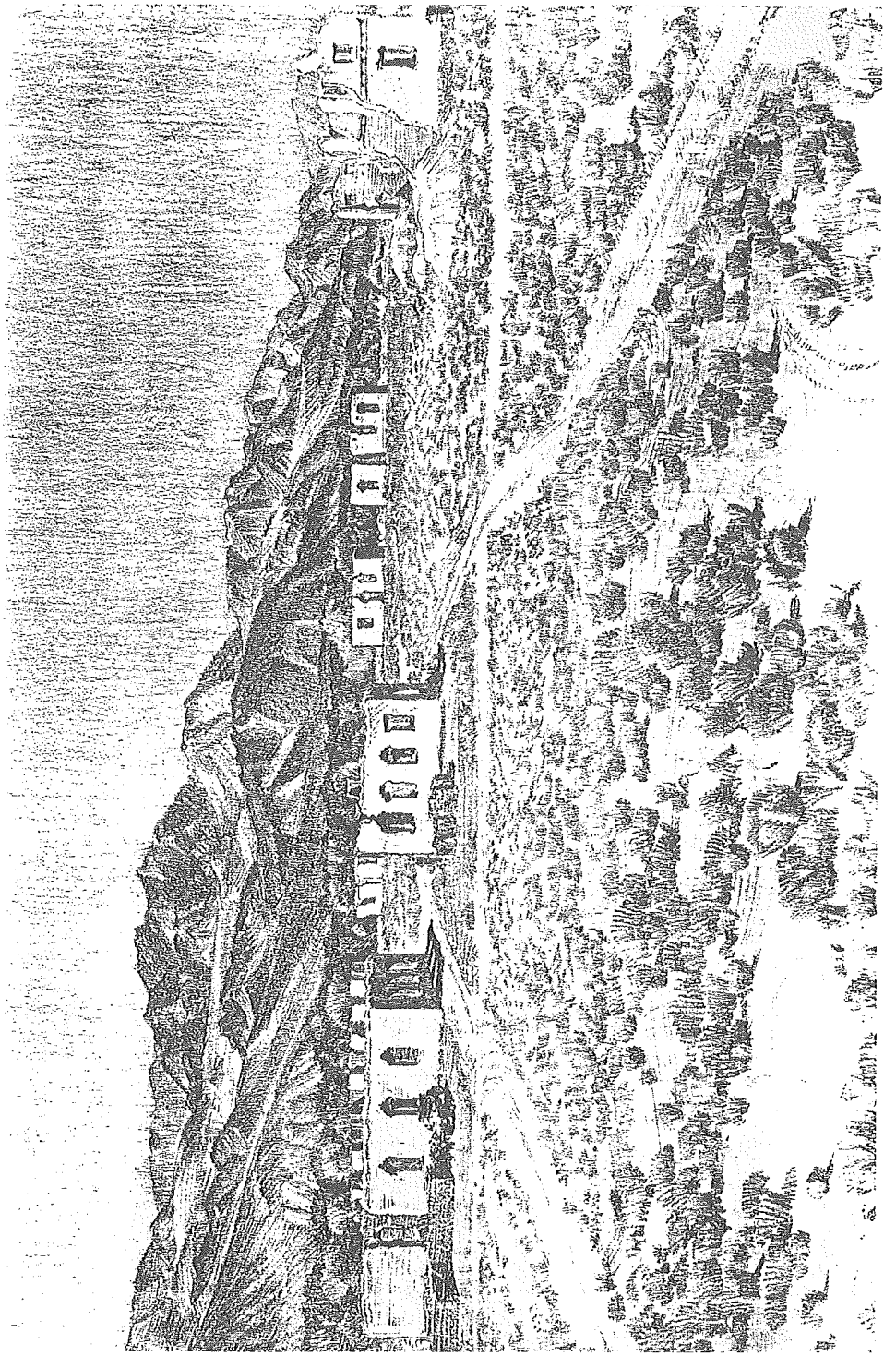
"How the barracks' walls were propped up so the foundations could be strengthened."



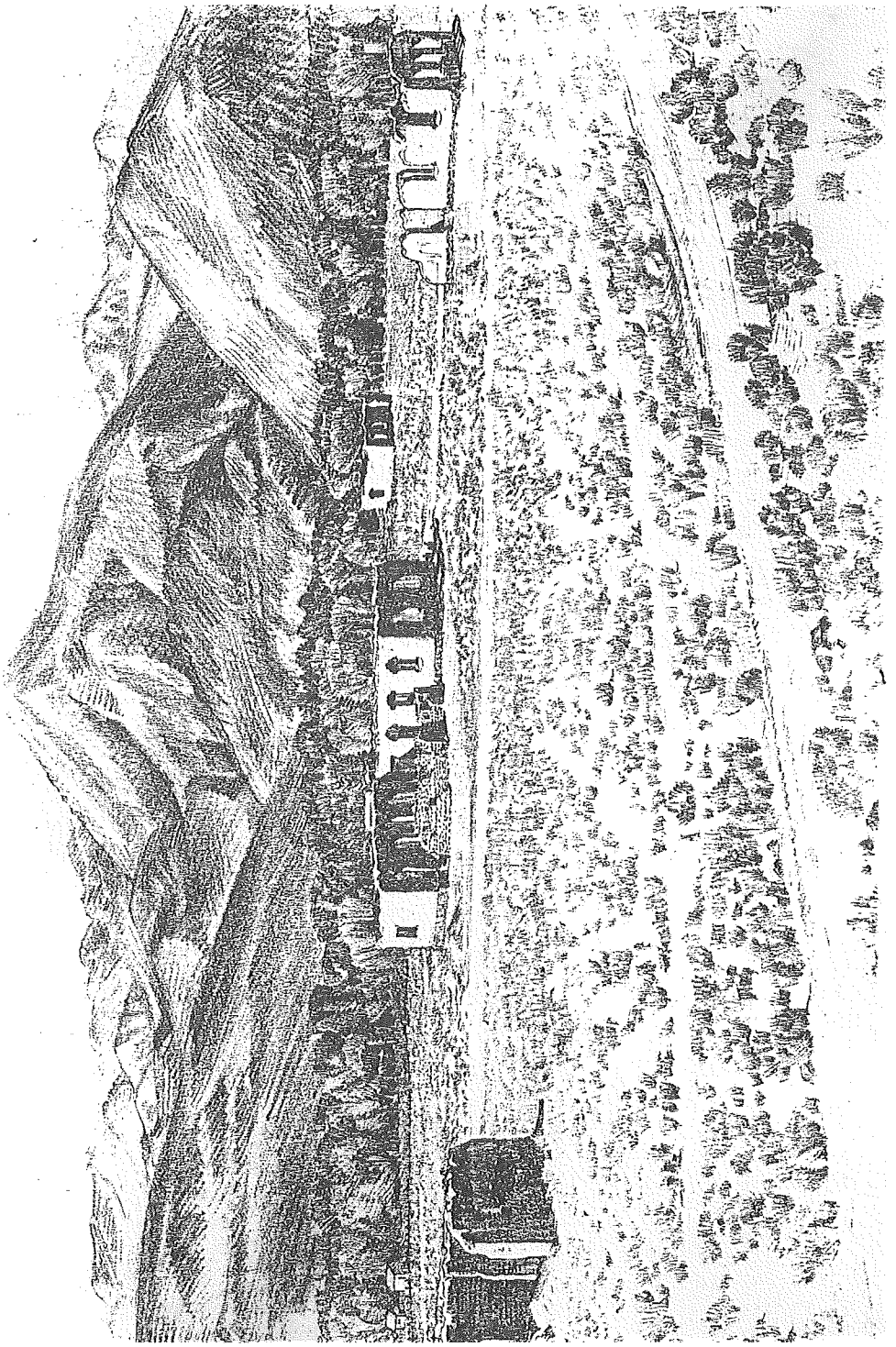
"Working on top."



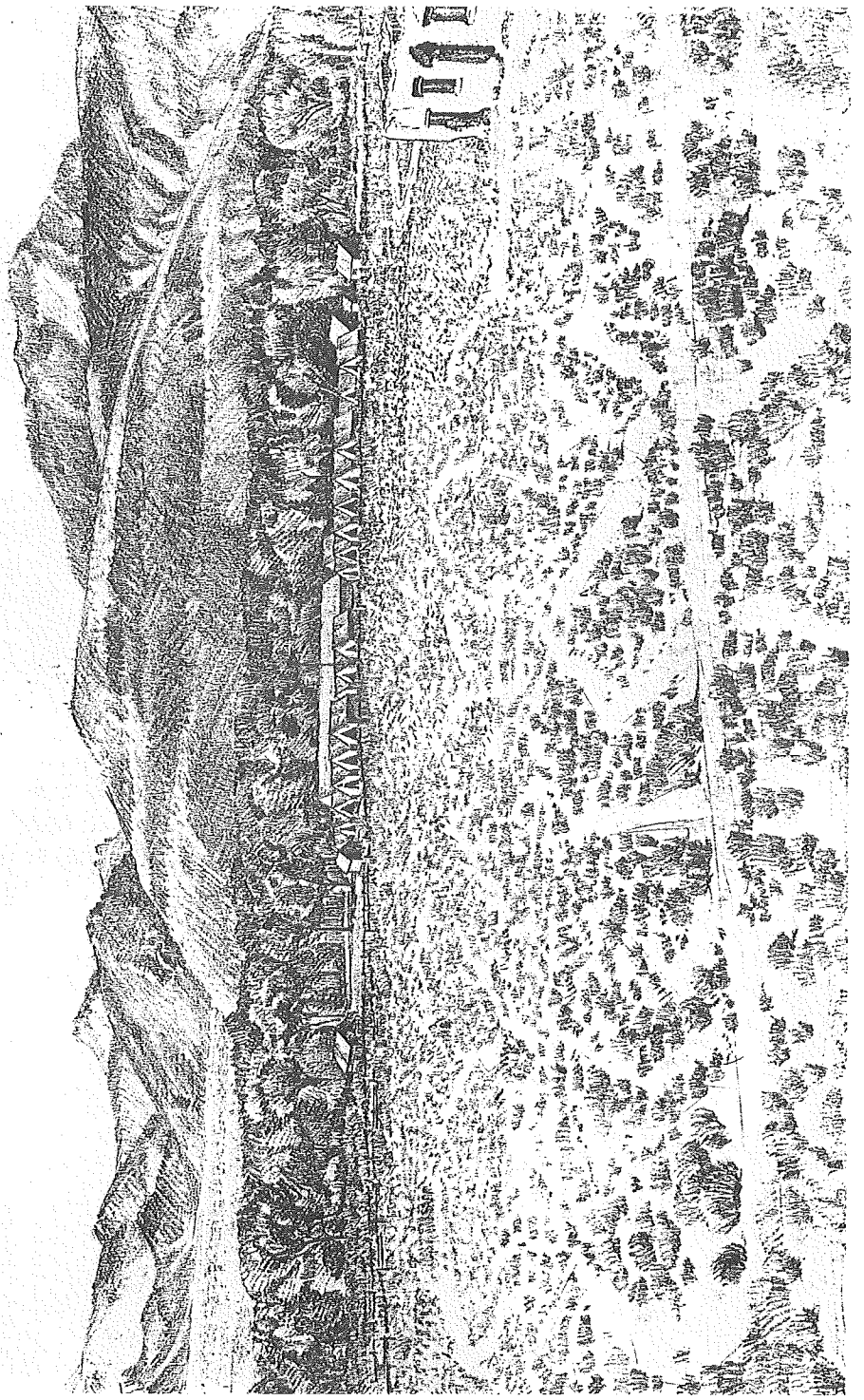
"Replacing loose brick & 'antiquing' the walls."



"Panel 1 Panorama"



"Panel 2 Panorama"



"Panel 3 Panorama"

aware that the San Pablo Dam camp was African-American, but still sought the transfer. Before he learned that the transfer was denied, Decker wrote to Superintendent Rowan:

The fact that it is all colored makes it most interesting to me that you transferred me there. It is in tune with the times. Negro sculpture has recently attained unprecedented recognition in United States . . . and as an American, I still feel in my heart the ring of "fourscore & 7 years ago . . . ." The advent of the Negro appearing in the CCC with equal opportunities for education and advancement in the service of our government, is, to me of real importance.[38]

Decker spent the remainder of his time with the CCC at Berkeley. In March 1936 he informed Superintendent Rowan of his decision to leave, writing:

I feel the need of attempting the solution of some abstract aesthetic problems before I go on with representational illustrative work. Therefore I am taking a vacation. Our association has been a very pleasant one for me. My only regret is that I did not do it better.[39]

Work on the reconstruction of Fort Churchill continued through 1936. After the CCC project ended, the D.A.R. managed the site until 1957, when Fort Churchill became a state park.[40] Four years later, the site achieved National Historic Landmark status. Today Fort Churchill reflects the efforts of the CCC enrollees who worked there. A replica fort building that the workers constructed serves as the park headquarters and visitors' center.

The drawings of Elwood Decker provide documentation of this preservation undertaking and, as works of art and historical artifacts, are themselves worthy of preservation. They serve as an important visual source of information that beautifully illustrates the activities of one CCC camp in Nevada. While the CCC project at Fort Churchill was a collective effort, the experiences and perspective of each worker were unique. The drawings and correspondence of Elwood Decker provide one such perspective. But they are also rich primary sources for twentieth-century Nevada history and Fort Churchill, a site that reflects several layers of history.

NOTES

[1]John Salmond, "Civilian Conservation Corps," in *Franklin D. Roosevelt: His Life and Times, an Encyclopedia View*, Otis L. Graham and Meghan Robinson Wander, eds., (Boston: G.K. Hall and Co., 1985), 63.

[2]Russell R. Elliott, *History of Nevada*, second edition, revised, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 297.

[3]*Carson City Daily Appeal*, 1 November 1938.

[4]Kathryn Totton, "The History of Fort Churchill, Nevada," in *Historical, Architectural, and Archaeological Studies of Fort Churchill, Nevada*, Donald L. Hardesty, ed. (Report submitted to the Nevada Division of State Parks, April 1978), 79.

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[18]*Ibid.*, 53.

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[21]Addenbrooke, *The Enchanted Fort*, 2.

[22]Totton, "History of Fort Churchill," 78.

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[25]Linda Flint McClelland, *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916 to 1942*, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1993), 200.

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[27]*Ibid.*

[28]*Nevada State Journal*, 17 May 1935.

[29]National Archives, RG 35.

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[31]*Ibid.*

[32]National Archives, RG 35.

[33]*Nevada State Journal*, 4 August 1935.

[34]National Archives, RG 35.

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[36]National Archives, RG 35.

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[38]*Ibid.*

[39]*Ibid.*

[40]Totton, "History of Fort Churchill," 80.

BOOK REVIEWS

Abraham Lincoln and the Western Territories. Edited by Ralph Y. McGinnis and Calvin N. Smith. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1994. xx222 pp., ills. maps, index.)

Abraham Lincoln and the Western Territories is a collective work conceived by the late Ralph McGinnis when he was Director of the Center for Lincoln Studies at Eastern Illinois University and completed after his death in 1989 by Calvin N. Smith. The title catches of the imagination and the subject should hold great promise for western historians as it sets out to show "President Lincoln's involvement in the administration and development of Western America prior to and during his tenure of office." (p. ix) The memory of Abraham Lincoln looms in the American imagination; like a good father taken prematurely from us by death, his greatness exceeds his shortcomings. Although his presidency was consumed with the problems of the Civil War, historians and the American public look for a connection to their state or personal causes to share in his greatness. Fred Burnell, one of the contributors to this volume, and McGinnis provide a good, concise overview of the development of the western territories, summarizing in maps and text the organic acts creating them and political boundary changes on the American landscape. Smith describes Lincoln's responsibilities for appointing the governors, court justices and hundreds of other officials and the duties of the major officers. They also emphasize three congressional acts passed in 1862 that accelerated territorial settlement—the Homestead Act, the Railroad Act and the College Land Grant Act. Finally, there is a chapter on each territory, which summarizes its history and Lincoln's influence or impact.

The book falls short of its promise because it provides only an introduction to the subject and a glimpse at the work that needs to follow. The authors emphasize that Lincoln's most important influence on the territories was his selection of appointees to oversee their governance, yet little is said to explain the criterion of selection. Lincoln's appointments of territorial officials would have made an interesting chapter. Biographies are available for most of the territorial governors and could have been reviewed in search of closer connections to the president. There are also several books and articles on the territorial courts that give good insight into the personalities of the justices and the problems in the

administration of justice. Omitted from the Nevada chapter is the resignation of Chief Justice George Turner and Associate Justice John North. Why did Lincoln hesitate in appointing new justices and how could Turner then validate the election results for the acceptance of Nevada's Constitution and later Lincoln's reelection?

There were other congressional acts that advanced territorial settlement that are perhaps more important than the ones emphasized. For example, the Presidential Townsite Act of 1863 required the president to reserve lands for townsites on rivers, harbors and other prospective centers of population. Port Angeles in Washington Territory was the first city surveyed under this act. In 1864, another land law allowed the sale of reserved coal lands and also rewrote the Townsite Act of 1844. Most of the cities and towns in the nation were surveyed under this act. The land grants to the Union Pacific Railroad were doubled, and land was granted to the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1864. These land laws accelerated western settlement more than the College Land Grant Act.

Larger themes could also have been explored in relation to individual territories, notably Lincoln's Indian policy. The Sioux War of 1862 spread from Minnesota and Iowa to Dakota and Nebraska territories. The president became more militant in his policy, emphasizing removal to reservations, and supported the use of extreme military force to quell uprisings, as evidenced by the Sand Creek Massacre in Colorado and the starving Indian captives in New Mexico as the Civil War drew to a close. Although for the most part Indian affairs were left to the territorial governors as superintendents of Indian affairs and to the army, they were only enforcing the existing policies.

The chapters on the individual territories are of mixed quality. Most are well researched and written, all relying on Roy Basler's nine-volume *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* and his index for specific references to individual territories. The chapters on Utah and Nevada rely on older, standard histories and are very limited in their presentation. There is a large body of territorial literature from state and regional historical journals which is not included in the notes.

The Nevada chapter is one that relies on older information and neglects some of the newer themes, including the wholesale resignation of the territorial Supreme Court and Lincoln's role in the Ordinance at the beginning of Nevada's Constitution. The Ordinance set down the conditions for statehood imposed by Congress to prohibit slavery, prohibit religious persecution, swear paramount allegiance to the federal government and cede all future claims to the unclaimed public lands within the state. The paramount allegiance clause and the cession of public lands affect the western states to this day in the context of continual Sage Brush Rebellions.

Lincoln's thoughts on the West preceded his presidency with his arrival in Congress in 1847 and his voiced opposition to the Mexican-American War, including his "Spot Resolution" asking President James Polk to show where American blood had been spilled on American soil. From there his thoughts

developed into what he voiced as his priorities in his annual message to Congress in 1864—new territories, railroads, minerals and the "welfare of the Indians." There is still a great deal of work that can be done in this area of Lincoln studies and this book is only an introduction to those possibilities.

Jeffrey M. Kintop
Nevada State Library and Archives

Politics in the Postwar American West. Edited by Richard Lowitt (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995. X+400 pp., notes, maps, index.)

This book not only makes an important contribution to a growing scholarly literature on the history of the postwar American West, it also demonstrates the continuities with the prewar period and the discontinuities that have followed. The book contains nineteen essays, one on each state, that follow no prescribed form or format. This is the weakness and the strength of the book. While some of the authors contribute little to the reader's education or understanding, the majority clearly depict a region beset by deep divisions and common problems. Remarkably, despite the lack of apparent guidelines, what has emerged is a complex work highlighting similar undercurrents running throughout the American West.

Simple arithmetic based on the issues presented uncovers three themes common to most states. First, the effect of the federal government on the economic welfare of the region is the major concern of most western states. The state of Washington typifies this regional ambivalence: With federal money come federal priorities and planning. The Grand Coulee Dam delivered prosperity to some and disappointed the expectations of others who received little benefit from the project. Second, federally-financed water development projects still command western attention. Indeed, the word water appears in the titles of four of the nineteen articles and water development, in some form, is mentioned in sixteen of the pieces. While some fairly typical views about the need for the development of water resources are restated, the present concern seems to be the affordability of massive works like the Central Arizona Project. Closely related to water development is the third theme: environmental concerns, whether Oregon's Land Use Law of 1973, Washington's concern with the health of the salmon fishing industry, Alaska's oil pipeline, or Hawaii's destruction of native flora to make room for tourism. Alarm is region-wide.

Other issues deserve mention as well. The politically conservative nature of the West as a whole would appear to have changed little from the prewar

period. This is reflected in the strong reemergence of the Republican Party in states once controlled by conservative Democrats or in states with a viable two-party system. Also, there are some disturbing problems, especially in Idaho: "Since 1975 the Gem State and its environs have become haven to a virulent strain of bigotry and racism." Although this is not typical of the entire state's attitude, Idaho may well inherit a reputation it neither wants nor deserves, much the same as Nevadans experienced in the 1950s.

Nevada's sinful image has largely disappeared, as Professor Jerome E. Edwards chronicles in "Gambling and Politics in Nevada." The driving force has been corporate gaming, which replaced the ever-present mobster. Other changes have been no less significant—the personal machine politics of Senator Pat McCarran have been supplanted by a political culture controlled and fueled by casino gaming. For example, court-mandated reapportionment resulted in a shift of power to Las Vegas and Clark County, where gaming interests employed 78 percent of the work force. With more than 60 percent of the state's population, Clark County is in a commanding legislative position with 24 out of 42 seats in the Assembly and 12 out of 21 State Senate seats.

Nevada's delegation to Congress is no less driven by gaming interests than are state representatives. While this is certainly one aspect of Nevada's postwar political culture, other features can be traced to the prewar years, which have much in common with the political heritage of North and South Dakota. Nevada, like South Dakota, has lived off federal money for most of its life, whether in reclamation projects, road construction, flood control, Hoover Dam, Lake Mead, military installations, or subsidies to mining companies. And like North Dakota, senatorial politics in Nevada has a long and honored history, dating back to the nineteenth century, of bringing federal dollars home to Nevada. Protection of the gaming industry and "pork barrel" projects are the dominant themes in Nevada's national politics.

Surprisingly, two issues received little attention in this book: mining and the livestock industry. It was as if the old western land-based industries of the prewar years had disappeared completely, only to be replaced by tourism and a high-tech work force. Grazing and mining interests, at least in the intermountain region of the West, have maintained the strength of their single interest politics—witness the defeat in 1994 of amendments to the 1872 mining law to provide for royalty payments to the U.S. government.

Overall, this is a superb work that features high quality research and penetrating analysis. Only a few unfortunate examples in the essay selections fall short of the scholarship associated with Richard Lowitt. *Politics in the Postwar American West* compares favorably with such recognized works as Michael Malone and Richard Etulain's *The American West*, Gerald Nash and Richard Etulain's *The Twentieth Century West: Historical Interpretations*, and Clive S. Thomas's *Politics and Public Policy in the Contemporary American West*. It is also a welcome

supplement to the many issues addressed in Clyde A. Milner II's *Major Problems in the History of the American West.*

Gary E. Elliott
Community College of Southern Nevada

Rooted in Dust: Surviving Drought and Depression in Southwestern Kansas. By Pamela Riney-Kehrberg. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 181 pp., introduction, illustrations, maps, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, index.)

The "dirty 'thirties" was a complex decade. Volumes have been produced about it. Categorizing and stereotyping aspects of the national economic disaster neglect the diversity of the Great Depression experience. Historian Pamela Riney-Kehrberg looks beyond the familiar in her examination of southwestern Kansas, one of the most devastated areas of Depression-era America. Although attention most often focuses on those who fled once-prosperous farms and towns, others stayed behind to endure and rebuild when the rains and prosperity returned. Their story is one of persistence.

Riney-Kehrberg demonstrates that the economic collapse, accompanied by environmental disaster, was particularly distressing in southwestern Kansas, an area which had flourished in the prosperous 'twenties. New technology had opened land to eager farmers who turned "idle acres" into a "sea of wheat." Despite a constant struggle against declining prices, they entered the thirties with a sense of optimism. The 1931 winter wheat harvest topped previous yields and produced the highest quality wheat in the nation. Hopes for an even better crop the next year faded as the drought years of the decade began. Crops shriveled in the fields, and tons of blowing sand and dirt buried farms and towns.

Many abandoned their homesteads and communities. Drought and depression drove them from the land and homes. Those who were more firmly rooted stayed on to fight the dust and despair. Their staying power was dependent upon numerous factors. Ownership status, farm size, family ties, and ability to generate outside income were the most important determinants.

Farmers and townsfolk alike employed a variety of survival techniques. Men and women supplemented farm income with outside work or piecework in the home; housewives cut corners to stretch the family budget. Business owners bartered merchandise and services for eggs and wheat. As the crisis deepened, people turned to churches and county relief. The magnitude of the disaster

overwhelmed local welfare capabilities, and people and governments turned to the federal government for aid. The shift from self-reliance to suspicious and reluctant dependence on the federal government is an important factor in survival over the decade, one that is convincingly detailed within the context of difficult times.

This volume draws upon written and visual resources. The pictures portray a ravaged landscape marked by the remnants of once prosperous farms. The writing is crisp, describing and interpreting the troubles endured by the residents of this part of the country, and the sacrifices they made to stay on their land. This book is an expansion of Riney-Kehrberg's dissertation, but it lacks the awkward, hesitant tone that works of that nature often have. She analyzes and utilizes statistics persuasively, and the theme of disrupted lives and desperate coping mechanisms is clear and well-supported throughout the volume.

Riney-Kehrberg avoids the harsh, generalized indictment of people and lifestyle of Donald Worster as well as James Malin's criticism of government. Those who survived the catastrophic 'thirties are surveyed within the context of their times. Their settlement of the plains was a natural progression in the course of nation building. In their view, supplanting prairie grasses with acres of wheat was not a malevolent desecration of the landscape but a mark of progress. Lacking both prescience and Worster's and Malin's advantage of retrospect, the farmers and townspeople of southwestern Kansas survived as best they could, endured what they could not change, and rebuilt when the worst was over.

Rooted in Dust is an excellent work, exhaustively researched and effectively written. It makes an important contribution to the history of both Kansas and the Dust Bowl, and is informative and enjoyable reading, especially so for anyone interested in the West, or the Great Depression.

Anita Ernst Watson
University of Nevada, Reno

The Fishes and Fisheries of Nevada. By Ira La Rivers; foreward by Gary Vinyard and James E. Deacon; current nomenclature and status of Nevada fishes by Craig Stockwell. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1964; (originally published by the Nevada State Fish and Game Commission, 1962. 782 pp., 272 figs.)

It is a joy to know that Ira La Rivers's *magnum opus* has been reissued. While it is perfectly useful as a field manual, it is best thrown in a backpack or left in your vehicle, as it is too large and hefty for a jacket pocket. The real pleasure in the book, though, and its uniqueness compared to other regional works, is the huge

amount of geographical and historical information in it. La Rivers was a down-to-earth field man whose diamond-in-the-rough exterior belied the vast amount of knowledge in his head. He was tremendously interested in western ichthyological history, as was I as a lineal ichthyological descendent of David Starr Jordan and the Stanford school of ichthyology. The all too few discussions I had with him were a great pleasure to me. His book shows that interest throughout.

In a perceptive forward, Gary Vinyard and James Deacon, both of the University of Nevada (at Reno and Las Vegas, respectively), give a brief review of La Rivers's life, point out his catholic tastes in biology, and especially call attention to the many recent changes which have occurred in the Nevada fish fauna, and to some of the things which are being done to stop and to reverse a number of these deleterious processes. Craig Stockwell, of the Biodiversity Research Center, University of Nevada, Reno, reviews the current nomenclature and status of Nevada fishes: He gives a list of them, correlating La Rivers's usage with the current one; a list of extinct, endangered, and threatened species, and species of special concern; and a list of unsuccessful introductions.

La Rivers's introduction is a literature overview of Nevada's climate and physiography, with a bit of early human history. His acknowledgments plainly show that he was not afraid to go to the most knowledgeable people to get the facts he needed, and this is obvious throughout the book.

Chapter I takes a quick tour from the Permian through the Pleistocene, and a leisurely and fascinating one, nearly year-by-year, from 1776 to 1954, giving in considerable detail the fisheries history of Nevada. Chapter II is devoted to paleontology, and gives a description of each of the fossil forms described from the state.

Chapter III discusses the present and past physiography of the state, including a detailed treatment of Pleistocene lakes and drainages, with especial emphasis on Lake Lahontan. La Rivers sets great store by the comprehensive physiographic/ichthyological survey, of Carl L. Hubbs and Robert R. Miller in "The Great Basin," *University of Utah Bulletin* (1948) (i-191).

In Chapter IV, La Rivers treats the rivers and river drainages of Nevada (the Lahontan, Snake, White River, Colorado, Amargosa, and Nevada Bonneville), with a physical and biological description of each. Chapter V is a similar treatment of lakes and major reservoirs.

The meatiest part of the book is Chapter VI. It starts with a checklist of Nevada fish species as of 1962, followed by an annotated list of unsuccessful introductions (with keys); these have been brought up to date by Stockwell (see above). Next is a clear, easy-to-use illustrated key to the fishes of Nevada. The balance of the chapter is taken up by the species accounts, in systematic order. Each starts with a synonymy, followed by the original description and a taxonomic diagnosis, the type locality, range, taxonomy (taxonomic relationships), life history, and economics, with keys to the species and subspecies of each group.

Chapter VII is an extensive appendix. Much of the information here can be

found elsewhere (for instance, methods for determining acidity and alkalinity and for determining the age of fishes by scale readings) or are no longer completely valid (for example, the inventory of game fishes by specific waters and the list of stream and lake reports, both issued by the Nevada Fish and Game Commission, and, in particular the list of Dingell-Johnson Fisheries Projects in Nevada, which covers only 1951-1961). Nonetheless, these are handy inventories, county-by-county, of bodies of water and their drainages.

A list of the invertebrate biota of Pyramid Lake and Lake Tahoe is still useful, as are papers, reprinted from other sources, of the biology of *Crenichthys baileyi*, *Richardsonius balteatus*, and *Siphateles obesus*. The appendix closes with a glossary of terms. The bibliography is extensive, including virtually every publication between 1851 and 1961 which relates in any way to Nevada fishes and fisheries.

The volume closes (except for the usual terminal index) with a list of pluvial lakes and now-disconnected pluvial rivers, their past connections, and the fish-faunal relationships of the recent remnants of such waters, with a map keyed to the list (from Hubbs and Miller 1948). There are many photographs in the book, some of considerable historical interest. All are black and white, and of sufficient quality to be useful. The drawings of fishes, all in black and white, are mostly by William Brudon and Silvio Santini. Those by Brudon are the more professionally done, but some of Santini's are very good indeed; all are more than adequate for the purpose of identifying fishes. There are also several distribution maps.

This book contains an incredible amount of information. La Rivers shows a fine understanding not only of fish and fishes but of physiography and history as well. The latter aspects alone would make the book extremely useful. Even if you don't take it into the field, it is worthy of many hours curled up by the fire, unearthing fact after absorbing fact. La Rivers has written a book well worth every dime of the price, even after twenty-three years.

Martin R. Brittan
California State University, Sacramento

NEW RESOURCE MATERIALS

Nevada Historical Society

Clel Georgetta Papers

The Nevada Historical Society has received a large addition to the papers of Clel Evan Georgetta (1901–1979), a prominent Nevada lawyer, judge, legislator, businessman, rancher and author, whose published works include *Wool, Beef and Gold,* a collection of short stories, *Japan As Seen By An American,* and *Golden Fleece in Nevada,* a major history of the state's sheep industry. Added to the Society's holdings are more installments of Georgetta's diary, which he maintained throughout his adult life (the Society now has volumes for 1924 through 1965), files of personal and business correspondence, photographs, and a variety of materials relating to his legal and political careers (he served in the 1931 state legislature) and his military service during World War II. There is a substantial group of records, mostly from the 1930s, for the Triune Ranch, the extensive sheep and cattle enterprise he owned and operated in eastern White Pine County and western Utah. We wish to express our appreciation to Roberta Jahnke of the Clel Georgetta Trust for making these materials available to us.

George Cress Photographs

George Cress, who was active as a photographer in Nevada during the 1920s, and who for a time worked as a truck driver and photographer for the Nevada Department of Highways, took many pictures throughout the state. He included in his well-composed views landscapes, roads, agricultural scenes, lakes and rivers, and numerous communities, among them Carson City, Virginia City, Austin, Eureka, Goldfield, Las Vegas, Pioche, Battle Mountain and Winnemucca. He also photographed sections of the Colorado River that were soon to be covered by Hoover Dam and Lake Mead, snow removal on Sierra highways, Lehman Cave, petroglyphs, and the ruins of Fort Churchill. The Society recently obtained two large photograph albums whose several hundred pictures, all taken—and apparently also labeled—by Cress, significantly enhance our holdings of images of Nevada in the decade of the 'twenties. In connection with the receipt of these albums, we gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the Jacobsen Trust, which provided funds for their acquisition from Bob Coffin Books of Las Vegas.

Truckee River Photographs

Peter A. Johns of Klamath Falls, Oregon, has generously donated a number of detailed photographs of locations west of Reno in the Truckee River Canyon. All from the year 1905, they depict the California paper milling community of Floriston and the power plant at Fleish (earlier Marmol), Nevada. A diversion dam at Fleish is shown under construction, and there is a view of the interior of the power plant there, which was built and operated by the Truckee River General Electric Company

Eric N. Moody
Manuscript Curator

University of Nevada, Reno

The Pyramid Lake Guest Ranch was a privately owned resort located at Sutcliffe, on the west shore of Pyramid Lake. Purchased in 1936 by Alva LaSalle (Beau) Kitselman, it was owned by various members of the Kitselman family until the 1950s. During that period the ranch catered to the wealthy and to easterners establishing Nevada residency in order to obtain a divorce. The Kitselmans hired managers to run their ranch; among them were Wayne and Bernice Cutlip. Mary Cutlip Bean, daughter of Wayne and Bernice, has donated materials documenting the Pyramid Lake Guest Ranch (which was also known briefly as The Sage) and other papers of her parents to the Special Collections Department. The materials include 1936 guest lists, a list of other Reno area guest ranches in 1936, promotional brochures, and clippings about the lake, ranch, and Kitselman family. Mrs. Bean also compiled extensive notes about her parents and the ranch and those reminiscences have been included in the collection. The collection includes one-half cubic foot of records dating from 1934–1967.

Well-known civic leader and newspaper editor Clarence K. Jones was vice president of Reno Newspapes, Inc. in 1958 when he was appointed chair of the Nevada Civic Olympic Committee. The Committee's responsibilities were to assist the California Olympic Organizing Committee in civic affairs connected with staging the VIII Olympic Winter Games in Squaw Valley, especially in the areas of transportation, housing, and courtesy services. Clarence's wife Martha has donated his records related to the 1960 Winter Olympics to the Special Collections Department. They include correspondence; programs; official results of the events; a commemorative medal and paperweight; and a scrapbook of clippings, tickets, photographs, banners, and ephemera.

The Special Collections Department recently acquired a small but interesting collection related to J. W. Flood and his wife, May Belle Hayes. Flood was a vaudeville and circus acrobat who toured the United States, especially the West, from about 1900 to 1915. May Belle Hayes was a singer, dancer, and acrobat,

who, with her sister, teamed with Flood during part of his road show. Flood and Hayes eventually moved to Fallon where they built the Rex Theater in 1921. The Flood and Hayes collection includes a datebook listing dates, towns, and theaters where they performed; a stock offering for the Rex Theater and proposed Fallon Community Hotel; playbills and theater programs; and photographs of Flood, Hayes, and other vaudeville performers.

Susan Searcy
Manuscript Curator

Oral History Program

The University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) received a $20,000.00 grant from the John Ben Snow Trust to conduct a series of oral histories on the experiences of Nevada men and women during World War II. The book will chronicle the experiences of Nevadans in the European and Pacific theaters, the different branches of the armed forces, and the various roles played overseas and here at home—from those who served directly to Rosie the Riveter. This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war, and we expect this publication to be available by late fall 1995.

Available now for research in unedited form are transcripts of eighteen oral interviews with members of the Nevada Board of Medical Examiners, 1941 to 1995. Anita Watson, a doctoral candidate in History, conducted the interviews and is incorporating information from them into a history of the board that she is writing. That history will be published as a book by the UNOHP late this year.

Copyright for forty-two Lander County oral histories is being shared between Lander County and the UNOHP. On Director Tom King's recommendation, Sylvia Arden was hired by Lander County in 1993 to conduct a series of interviews with residents. The region was populated by immigrants from twelve different countries who developed the land through ranching and mining. Our oral histories cover much that has been significant in the twentieth-centure history of Lander County, and they are also an important contribution to women's history in this area. Copies of each oral history are available in the UNOHP office and at the Nevada Historical Society.

Margene S. Foster
Office Manager

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NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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