

Nevada

Historical Society Quarterly



WINTER 1995

NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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Historical Society Quarterly

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CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM IN THE SILVER ERA: A PUZZLE

Part Two

Elmer R. Rusco

The 1895 Nevada Legislature passed a Purity of Elections law which a knowledgeable observer predicted would "reduce the potency of the sack" in state elections and give poor men the same opportunity to run for office as rich men. Part One of this article has described the statute in detail and what can be learned of the circumstances surrounding its passage. This second part reports what is known of the actual operation of the law and ends with speculation on the puzzle presented by the fact that the law was passed by a legislature allegedly dominated by a non-party organization, the Southern Pacific machine, which allegedly used money in ways forbidden by the act to secure this control.

REPORTS FILED UNDER THE PURITY OF ELECTIONS LAW

Some of the documents filed as a result of this law are still available to the public. Ninety-five returns filed with the Secretary of State by candidates and committees for the 1896 general election were examined in the office of the Nevada State Library and Archives in Carson City, and a single party return for 1898 was copied from the library of the Nevada Historical Society.¹ No attempt was made to determine whether there are comparable records at the county level.

Perhaps the 1896 collection was once larger, but it is assumed here that probably the only significant records missing, if there are any at all in this category, are records filed by political parties (see below). If no other returns than those now preserved by the State Archives were filed, it is clear that not all returns apparently required by the Purity of Elections act were filed with the Secretary of State.

Table 1 provides information from which to develop an estimate of the extent to which the State Archives collection is complete at the state level. Because the

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Political History of Nevada gives election returns for all statewide offices plus races for the University of Nevada Board of Regents, it is possible to tell what proportion of candidates running for these offices filed returns (if some have not been lost).² Overall, in races for Presidential Elector, Congress, the Supreme Court, Lieutenant Governor and University Regent, 69.5 percent of the candidates filed returns; sixteen candidates filed returns while seven did not.

The largest number of candidates ran for legislative seats; there are thirteen returns for Senatorial candidates and sixty-six for Assembly candidates. Unfortunately, the Secretary of State's office was not required to collect election returns for all these races, so there is no official record of all candidacies. However, the Nevada Historical Society has compiled a list of all legislative candidates in that election. If this list is complete, two Senatorial candidates and ten Assembly candidates did not file. Overall 86.6 percent of all legislative candidates filed returns.³

The fact that all the legislators elected that year complied with the law by filing returns is no doubt testimony to the importance of the provision of the statute which could have resulted in forfeiture of office for not doing so. The legislative effort in 1899 which ultimately led to repeal of the Purity of Elections law initially was confined to repeal of this section, which presumably meant most legislators were particularly hostile to this provision. The forfeiture provision was not the only penalty portion of the act, however; failure to file could have resulted in a criminal indictment for any candidate.

Two conclusions stand out from the data on these returns. They indicate that almost all the money spent on the general election in 1896 came from the candidates themselves; reported contributions by others were so minor as to be insignificant. In fact, the only clearcut contributions from someone other than a

TABLE 1
Campaign Finance Reports by Office, 1896

Office	No. of Candidates	No. Filing Returns
Presidential Elector	9	5
Member of Congress	3	2
Supreme Court Justice	3	3
Lt. Governor	3	2
Member University Board of Regents	5	4
Total	23	16
State Senator	15	13
State Assemblyman	76	66
Total	91	79
Grand Total	114	95

candidate were reported by J. C. Doughty, the People's Party candidate for Congress. He reported that he had received personal contributions of \$25 each from W. H. Barrett of Virginia City and J. B. McCullough. Notably, there were no reported contributions from the Southern Pacific Company reported by anybody.

A small amount of money may have been contributed by political parties, but this is doubtful. D. W. Cutts, a Republican Assembly candidate in Ormsby County, reported receiving \$13.25 from the "Central Com." On the contrary, candidates often reported making contributions to parties. Because rebates from such gifts were often reported by candidates, it is assumed that this payment was a rebate from a party, possibly the Ormsby County Republican Central Committee. C. E. Allen, who was elected to an Assembly seat from Eureka County, reported loans of \$25 each from H. Kind and Hank Knight. If these were not repaid, which is sometimes the case with loans, these might have been campaign contributions.

In summary, the only clearcut contributions by anyone other than candidates in all the races reported in these returns totalled \$50, or 1.3 percent of the total of all contributions, which came to \$3,964.71. If one adds the Cutts payment and the loans to Allen, the total amount of contributions comes to \$113.25, or 2.8 percent of the new total of \$4,027.96, still an insignificant amount.

The second major conclusion is that the requirement of the Purity of Elections law that all contributions be channeled through appointed committees turned out to be meaningless, because no committees reported receiving or spending any money. In almost all cases where a filing was made, there is a return for a committee appointed by a specific candidate, and almost all of these state that no moneys were received or spent by the committee. Typical is the statement from five men who comprised the appointed committee acting on behalf of Robert T. Wilkerson, a People's Independent Silver Party candidate for the Assembly from Douglas County. Each swore that "he ha[d] not received, any money or anything else, neither directly nor indirectly, from Robert T. Wilkerson for the purposes of promoting his election." In this case the committee did not say specifically that it had received no money from anyone else, but it reported no contributions at all.

Many committees made a statement like the one made for the committee appointed to collect and spend money on behalf of Robert F. Gilbert, a Silver Party candidate for the Assembly in Lincoln County. Each swore that "he ha[d] received no money, or other valuable consideration or thing for the purpose of promoting" the candidacy of Gilbert "nor ha[d] he paid or promised to pay any money or other valuable thing for or on behalf of the said Robert F. Gilbert."

In a few cases, such as that of Andrew Maute of Nye County, the candidate reported that "As no money was paid to, or disbursed by, the Committee of Five, in my behalf, the said committee has no report to make." Therefore, in spite of the fact that not all committees filed reports, no report lists any contributions received or spent by any such committee.

These reports, in summary, state that only candidates contributed money to campaigns for these offices in 1896. The total amount contributed by candidates in these races reportedly was \$3,914.71, or an average of \$41.20 per candidate. The amount contributed by the average candidate does not seem high by contemporary standards, but the fact that candidates entirely financed their own campaigns (if it is a fact) indicates that one of the stated purposes of the statute was not achieved. That is, poor men were not on the same basis as rich men, because they would have had greater difficulty in contributing the amounts purportedly provided by candidates from their own resources.

Before speculating on whether the returns are accurate with respect to the sources of campaign funds, what the returns report on the expenditures by candidates will be noted. Only one candidate, Assembly candidate James Russell of Elko County, reported no contributions and no expenditures. Assembly candidate George B. Whitney of Lincoln County reported first that no money was contributed or spent on his behalf during his campaign but later filed another return stating that he had donated \$90 to the Democratic Fusion Party in Lincoln County. It may or may not have been coincidental that Russell was defeated while Whitney was elected.

Since the statute did not state any precise categories for reporting expenditures and clearly the Secretary of State did not do this either, there is some confusion on this question. However, the act was specific about the purposes for which money could be spent, and most returns were made in a way which can be fitted into these categories. Most returns could be organized in this way with reasonable assurance of accuracy, and in some cases receipts enclosed with the return provide additional information. In only one case is the handwriting of the candidate so poor that the purposes of his reported expenditures could not be determined. Table 2 reports the expenditures reported by all but this one return.

The largest category of reported expenditures was payments to political party central committees at county and state levels, although sometimes the level cannot be determined. It is clear from occasional statements on the returns that political parties often assessed candidates to pay for the expenses of conventions, although contributions were also solicited after the nominating stage.

The amounts contributed to parties varied substantially. Representative Francis G. Newlands reported giving \$200 to the Silver Party State Central Committee. His only other reported expenditure was "not exceeding" \$50 for postage. The second largest contribution to a party committee was the \$90 which George B. Whitney, elected to the Assembly from Lincoln County, reported making to the Democratic Fusion Committee.

Most candidates for the Senate or Assembly gave small amounts to their parties, ranging from \$6 to around \$30, although the precise range was not determined. In all, contributions to party organizations totalled \$1,233.26, or

TABLE 2
Campaign Expenditures Reported for 1896 General Election

Office	Donations to Parties	Payments to Newspapers Announcements		Materials Printed	Unspecified	Total	
Pres. Elector	\$4.00					\$4.00	
Member of Congress	200.00			\$4.00		4.00	
Supreme Court Justice	100.00	\$1.00		9.00	\$30.00	40.00	
Regent of Univ.	5.00			14.50	45.00	59.50	
State Senator	225.00	87.50		77.00	28.00	192.50	
Assemblyman	699.26	247.50		296.00		543.50	
Total	1,233.26	336.00		407.50	103.00	846.50	
	Travel Transportation	Stables	Lodging	Meals	Unspecified	Total	
Pres. Elector	\$34.90		\$6.50			\$41.50	
Member of Congress							
Supreme Court Justice	155.25	\$.75	6.00	\$5.40	\$20.50	187.90	
Lt. Governor							
Regent of Univ.	4.00					4.00	
State Senator	15.30	51.00	14.00	1.00	35.00	116.30	
Assemblyman	329.40	46.50	76.99.5	46.38	185.25	684.52.5	
Total	538.85	98.25	103.49.5	52.78	240.75	1034.12.5	
	Treating Alcohol	Cigars	Unspecified	Total	Hall Rent	Postage, Telegraph	Filing Fees
Pres. Elector						\$.40	
Member of Congress					\$6.50	\$52.50	
Supreme Court Justice					\$8.00	3.10	
Lt. Governor						1.00	
Regent of Univ.							
State Senator		\$1.00	\$162.50	\$163.50		1.70	\$.50
Assemblyman	\$36.50	26.25	40.87	103.62	4.00	35.91	9.80
Total	36.50	27.25	203.37	267.12	18.50	97.11	10.30
	Payments to Individuals			Miscellaneous	Undetermined		
Pres. Elector							\$.75
Member of Congress							
Supreme Court Justice							100.00
Lt. Governor							
Regent of Univ.							4.50
State Senator			\$45.00				116.75
Assemblyman			62.45	\$18.15			114.50
Total			107.45	18.15			336.50
Overall total of expenditures: \$3,869.01 1/2							

31.1 percent of all reported expenditures, which totalled \$3,969.015. The half cent reported here is accurate. In other words, the party committees did not fail to file returns because they had no income, although because they did not file returns we have no way of knowing what they may have received from other sources. Likewise, we have no information about how the parties spent money, although there are clues.

In some cases contributions to parties by candidates were based on some kind of formula, because candidates reported receiving rebates from party committees after they had made a contribution. For example, Assembly candidate Wilkerson reported contributing \$45 to the Douglas County People's Party. A receipt from the treasurer of this committee acknowledged his contribution but noted that Wilkerson's "rebate" was \$25.74 and that therefore the "Amount actually Expended" by him was \$19.26. Likewise, Assembly candidate Ed. Vanderlieth of Ormsby County reported contributing \$30 to a party committee but receiving a rebate of \$12. Wilkerson was elected but Vanderlieth was not.

The second-largest expenditure category consisted of payments for travel, including railroad and stage fares, expenses for teams, lodging and meals while the candidate was away from home, and travel costs lumped together so that one cannot determine precisely what they were for. Overall the candidates reporting spent \$1,034.12.5 for travel, or 26.1 percent of all moneys spent.

The third-largest category was payment to newspapers for various kinds of printing. Many candidates reported paying newspapers anywhere from \$5 to \$10 for printing an announcement of candidacy, but the largest spending in this category was for printing "cards," although sometimes the word "circulars" was used. It is not certain what these were, but presumably cards were printed single-page pieces ranging up in size from business cards to larger formats. Prices varied: Candidates reported spending anywhere from \$2 to \$5 for 500 cards, a range great enough to suggest that sizes varied significantly.

In a few cases, printing bills clearly were for large items. For example, Sol Hilp, who ran unsuccessfully as a Silver Party candidate for the Assembly in White Pine County, reported spending \$10 to have printed fifty "large size posters for [his] personal use." Payments for printing were also occasionally for stationery. Overall expenditures of \$846.50 were reported to newspapers, which amounted to 21.3 percent of the total reported.

The three categories of payments to parties, travel and payments to newspapers totalled 78.5 percent of all expenditures by candidates reported for the 1896 general election. None of the remaining seven categories was large. One describes "treating" by a few candidates. "Treating" voters by providing them with alcohol and/or cigars was reported in an aggregate amount of \$267.12, or 6.7 percent of the overall total.

Only two candidates accounted for approximately two-thirds of the money spent on treating. State Senator J. E. Gignoux, a Democrat/Silver candidate for reelection from Lyon County, reported 35 separate expenditures for "Segars" or

"Liquor" or both, totalling \$149.75. His only other expenditures were \$35 to party committees and \$15 to newspapers. Lem Allen of Churchill County reported spending \$17.50 on treating, including \$5 for "1 gal. whiskey" and \$3 for 100 cigars. His only other reported expenditures were \$5 to an unidentified party committee and \$5 for "Candidates Ball Music." Both these men had been party leaders during the session which passed the Purity of Elections law; Gignoux had been Senate President Pro Tem and Allen Speaker. Gignoux was defeated in 1896 but Allen was reelected and in 1897 was again elected Speaker.

A category significant for its small size is payments to individuals, because it indicates that paid staffs to conduct campaigns were nonexistent, at least at the candidate level. Only a few legislative candidates reported any payments to individuals at all. For example, Silver Party candidate C. E. Allen of Eureka County reported paying M. Johnson and F. Raphel a total of \$1.25 for "posting election cards" and giving \$3 to Bert Henderson, L. McGarry and E. Krauss for "watching polling and counting of votes at Wards #1 & #2, town of Eureka." J. A. Conboie, a nonpartisan Assembly candidate, reported paying C. Piper \$1 for "posting notices," \$1 to "boys for carrying [a] banner" which had been painted by Geo. Meadows for \$2 and C. Conrad and J. H. Sutherland each \$2 for "watching." The most interesting payment in this category is the report by Senate candidate Andrew Maute of Nye County that he had "Paid [\$5] to 'Pablo,' an Indian, for services as messenger, delivering message," but Maute did not explain the entry.

Somewhat larger payments to individuals were reported by only three candidates. Republican G. I. Leavitt was elected to the Senate from Lyon County as an "Independent (*sic*) Silver Republican." He reported paying Ed. Hinch \$10 and D. Crowninshield \$20 for "looking after my interests." Senate candidate F. C. Lord, who was elected as a Silver Party candidate, reported paying John W. Williams \$10 for "watching count" and unsuccessful Silver Party Assembly candidate Chas. F. Meissner from Lyon County reported paying \$10 to M. Powers for unspecified "work on election day."

As noted above, there was no required reporting form, so that data were not reported in a uniform way. One consequence of this is that one cannot tell whether the highly variable nature of the data reported is due to the fact that candidates ran their campaigns differently or because there was much under-reporting. However, the latter is likely, in part because of confusion over what counted as a campaign expenditure.

The spottiness of the data suggests that candidates interpreted the statute differently. For example, even though contributions to political parties made up the largest single expenditure category, thirty-seven of the seventy-nine legislative candidates did not report such an expenditure at all. Likewise, many candidates reported no spending for printing; while some may not have spent money in this way, it is likely that others did but failed to report it. Whether any more than the two Senate and ten Assembly candidates who reported treating

actually engaged in this practice is not known, but expenditures for this purpose could very well have been included in lump sums reported for travel.

The biggest obvious gap in these returns is the absence of any reports from party committees, although the statute seems to require them. We know from the returns that all parties together had at least \$1,233.26 in income from candidates within the state. In the absence of any information at all about other sources, we cannot be certain that they had other income. However, it is highly implausible that the parties were without other sources of funds. The excellent study of the 1896 presidential election by Stanley L. Jones establishes from incomplete data that the Republican national committee in that year spent several million dollars in conducting the presidential election. A summary report by a leader of that campaign reports that the two main headquarters together spent more than \$3.5 million.⁴

Moreover, the national Republican campaign contributions to state and local organizations from the Chicago office alone came to over \$900,000. Whether the Nevada Republican Party received some national moneys during this year, in addition to whatever it could raise locally, is unknown. The national Republican organization contributed little to Rocky Mountain states, because they recognized that the ticket had little chance of success there.

Other parties had less to spend at the national level in 1896; the Democratic Party raised and spent much less money than the Republican Party and the People's Party was even more handicapped by lack of money. Jones concluded that, "Undoubtedly the amount of money furnished by the Republican national committee to any one of the middle western states greatly exceeded the amount available to the Populist party for its entire national campaign."⁵

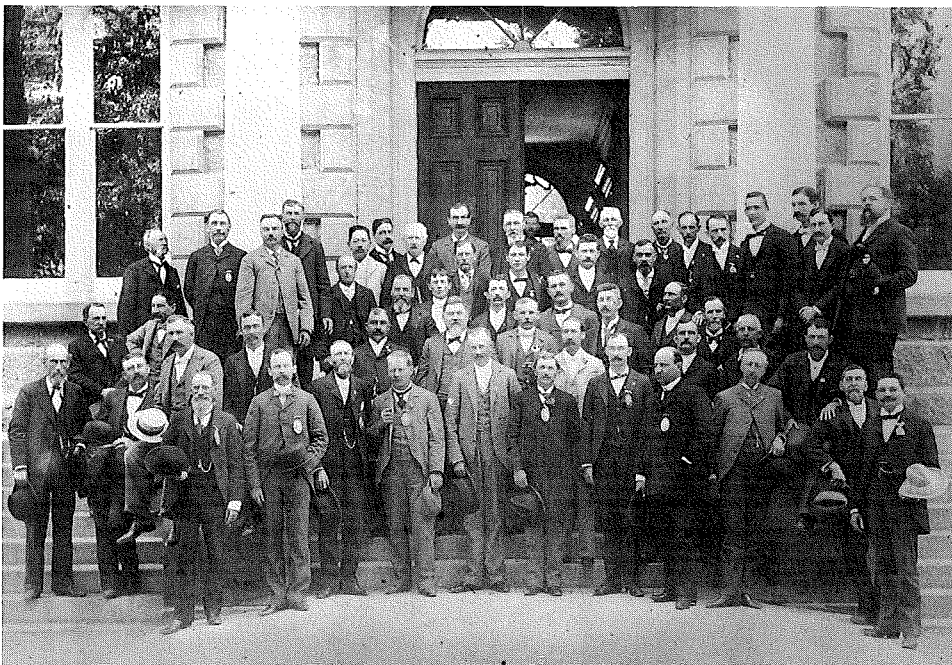
Nationally in 1896, the Republicans received contributions from many businessmen and corporations, typically in large increments (\$1,000 and up). It is therefore likely that state organizations also raised at least some funds from local businesses or other sources, with the Republicans receiving most of these contributions. The data available to Jones indicate again that contributions from individuals varied widely by party but that no party had a significant small-donor base. The Democrats tried to secure numerous small contributions but largely failed, although William Randolph Hearst did succeed in raising about \$25,000 in this manner.⁶ However, the Purity of Elections law did nothing, at least as interpreted, to record any contributions to the Nevada parties except for the amounts given by candidates and did not reveal any information about party expenditures.

While we have no hard data at all on this question, at least two kinds of expenditures by parties within Nevada are evident. First, there were costs associated with the nominating process, including the county and state conventions, which were at that time purely party activities. The Purity of Elections law referred only to the general election and therefore required no information from

parties about this aspect of the campaign, although some candidates did report expenditures for conventions (as noted above).

However, it is also clear that the parties conducted some general election activities as well, and a naive reading of the law makes it difficult to understand why these were not reported. While we do not have an accurate overall account of how campaigns were conducted in Nevada in the 1890s, the parties not infrequently sponsored rallies which often lasted for hours and were attended by significant numbers of voters. Such rallies must have been expensive (at least in comparison with the campaign costs reported by candidates); and since they were intended to elect candidates it is hard to tell why the parties made no reports of these kinds of activities. Perhaps the party leaders pretended that the rallies were not in support of individual candidates but rather were intended only to further collective partisan purposes, but if so this seems a transparent evasion of the law.

A newspaper clipping in the *Alfred Doten Journals* (presumably written by Doten) reports at length on a Silver Party rally in Carson City on election eve in 1896.⁷ The rally was held at the Carson Opera House and was preceded by "Bonfires and music on the streets." There were numerous musical selections in the Opera House by a Carson quartette, the Comstock Glee Club, the Comstock Quartette, the Nevada State Band and the Stewart Institute Band. Addresses by



Members of the 1897 Legislature. (Nevada Historical Society)

numerous party leaders went on for a total of more than three hours. Judge Bonnifield (presumably M. S. Bonnifield, who was a member of the State Supreme Court at that time) gave an introductory address of unreported length, followed by introductions of "Numerous vice-presidents" and three addresses of one hour or longer each by United States Senators John P. Jones and William M. Stewart and Representative Francis G. Newlands. The costs of the rally must have been substantial: rent for the hall, compensation to the musicians, and money to publicize the event.

Perhaps the parties did file reports required by the Purity of Elections law but these have somehow been lost. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the Nevada Historical Society has a document evidently filed December 31, 1898 for the 1898 election by the Auditing Committee of the Silver Party. According to this document, the income of the state committee, which came to \$1,150, derived entirely from "Assessments," all from Silver Party candidates for state-wide offices. Twelve individuals paid amounts ranging from \$160 (from A. L. Fitzgerald, a candidate for District Judge) to \$50 (from J. R. Judge, who was elected Lieutenant Governor). Francis G. Newlands (who was handily reelected to Congress that year) contributed \$150 to the committee. Secretary of State Howell (reelected that year) gave \$110. Reinhold Sadler (who in a four-way contest was elected Governor with only 30.5 percent of the total vote in his race) gave \$92. W. D. Jones (elected Attorney General) gave \$80, and so on.

The expenditure reports provided by this document show somewhat different patterns than the reports for candidates for the 1896 election (see Table 3). There was a tabulation error in this report. The document states that the listed expenditures come to \$1,000 but they actually total \$987.53. Included with the document are receipts for small shipping charges by the Southern Pacific Company which probably make up the \$12.47 difference between the two figures. It may be significant that the amount reported spent was exactly the amount allowed by the law for state committees.

There were no payments to other party organizations and the largest single

TABLE 3
Expenditures by Silver Party Central Committee, 1898

<i>Travel</i>		<i>Printing</i>	<i>Payments to</i>	
<i>Transportation</i>	<i>Unspecified</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Individuals</i>	<i>Meetings</i>
\$2.00	\$200.00	\$203.75	\$90.55	\$412.75
<i>Postage,</i>				
<i>Telegraph</i>	<i>Miscellaneous</i>			
\$37.98	\$40.50			

expenditure category was for the expenses of rallies held around the state—two in Tuscarora and one each in Battle Mountain, Carlin, Carson City, Dayton, Eureka, Gardnerville, Hawthorne, Lovelock, Paradise, Silver City, Virginia City, Wells and Winnemucca plus one in an unspecified location (perhaps Reno, because it is not included in this list). Receipts enclosed with the form indicate that the money spent on these rallies (costs ranged from \$10 in Wells to \$56 in Eureka) went chiefly for hall rent, music and printing. Overall expenditures for these various rallies came to \$412.75, or 41.8 percent of the total.

The next highest category of expenditures was printing, totalling \$203.75, or 20.6 percent of the total. This included payments to a San Francisco firm for printing "stereotypes," the costs of posters and certificates of nomination, and unspecified payments to newspapers.

The only other large expenditure (\$200, or 20.2 percent) was to J. F. McDonell, for "Expenses . . . for trip to Delamar." No detail was provided to explain how long McDonell spent in this town or why he went there. Personnel costs were not high; apparently there were no paid employees of the central committee, at least for an extended period. There is an item of \$40 to Richard Ryland for "headquarters" which may be payment to an employee; however, it may be for rent or something else. Other than this item, there is a \$10 payment to W. H. Noyes for "copying register of the City of Reno" and payments to seven individuals for "bill posting."

The Secretary of State during the period in which the law was in effect—Eugene Howell—obviously did not attempt strict enforcement of the law. In his Biennial Report for 1895–1896 Howell did not mention the Purity of Elections act at all.⁸

One does not have to look far to find one good reason why the Secretary of State paid scant attention to the duties specified in the law. Beginning in January 1895, Howell was required to act as Clerk of the Supreme Court and State Librarian as well as Secretary of State. Apparently there were only three individuals who carried out the duties of all three offices; Howell presumably supervised the others but also served as Clerk of the Supreme Court (he says that he performed all the clerical duties required by this office), a deputy performed the duties of Secretary of State, and the third employee was the State Librarian.⁹ Under these circumstances it would have been surprising if Howell had done anything more than accept the reports delivered to him.

A central problem posed by the Purity of Elections law was its conjunction with the apparent domination of the state by the Southern Pacific machine. But in the 1896 and 1898 reports there is no evidence that the machine was in any way involved in these elections. According to a naive interpretation of the statute, the machine should not have made any expenditures on behalf of candidates without making them to the candidates and/or through the various candidate committees, but there is no report of any such help. There are allegations

for this period that "the sack" was freely used in state elections, but if so the Purity of Elections law did not disclose such use. There also is no indication of any other corporate contributions to campaigns.

One possibility to explain the absence of such information is that some candidates were reimbursed by the machine for many of their expenditures. Before proceeding to a discussion of the wider question of the role and power of the machine, the possibility that such reimbursement may have been legal under the law will be explored.

Section 3 of the Purity of Elections law required that each candidate filing a return submit with his statement an "affidavit, subscribed and sworn to by such candidate, which must be substantially in" a form described in detail, as follows:

[I, the candidate] . . . do solemnly swear that the foregoing statement is a full and true account of all moneys expended by me or in my behalf in said election, and that except as herein stated, I have not, nor to the best of my knowledge and belief has any person, club, society or association, on my behalf, directly or indirectly made any payment or given, promised or offered any reward, office, or employment, or valuable consideration, or incurred any liability, on account of, or in respect of the conduct or management of the said election, except such moneys as may have been paid to or expended by the committee selected as prescribed by the Act And I furthermore solemnly swear that, except as aforesaid, no money, security, or equivalent for money has to my knowledge or belief been paid, advanced, given or deposited by any one, to or in the hands of myself, or any other person, for the purpose of defraying any expenses incurred on my behalf, or in aid of my election, or on account of or in respect of the conduct or management of the said election. And I further solemnly swear that I will not at any future time make, or be a party to the making or giving of any payment, reward, office, employment or valuable consideration for the purpose of defraying any such expenses as last mentioned, or provide or be a party to the providing of any money, security or equivalent for money, for the purpose of defraying any such expenses.

This is complex language. There is little reason to expect that all candidates understood it in precisely the same way. It seems to state flatly that no association of any kind could legally contribute to the campaign of any candidate in any way ("directly or indirectly") without disclosure. One possible loophole is that support had to be known to the candidate. Perhaps independent activity by the machine not directly (or provably) tied to candidates was not covered by the law.

Another possibility is that the machine reimbursed the candidates it favored after the election. A close reading of this section leaves some doubt about whether a non-party organization could reimburse a candidate for expenses after the election was over. The first sentence seems to eliminate the possibility of such an organization making such a reimbursement if it "promised or offered" any such action, but what if there was simply an understanding or expectation that winning candidates favored by the machine would find some or all of their expenses quietly taken care of? I first read the last sentence of the statement as prohibiting

any "future" payment, even of this sort, but then decided that this sentence may mean only that the candidate will observe the law in this election and in any future ones in which he may participate. However, it is not certain that an unstated policy of reimbursing candidates would be illegal under this provision.

The candidates did file the statements required by section 3 in several ways. Some wrote out or typed the long statement and signed it. In a number of cases the candidates signed a separately printed copy of the affidavit, and in several cases the text of the section was cut out of a statute book and signed.

One defect of the statute was that it did not specify the period for which reports on contributions and expenditures were required. Most obviously assumed that this period extended from the convention which nominated them to the general election, but some reported costs associated with conventions. If the statute did not apply to the nominating process, which it apparently did not, this may offer a clue to how the Southern Pacific machine could have played a significant role in the election without doing anything that was disclosed by the returns filed. If the machine spent heavily before and during conventions to secure the nomination of candidates favorable to its interests, there would be no reason to expect reporting of these efforts.

The extent to which there were local prosecutions or other attempts to enforce the law remains to be investigated. There are no reported State Supreme Court opinions involving the law, but no search has been made of District Court records. Acting Governor Reinhold Sadler reported in his 1897 legislative message that a reward of \$200 was paid to W. H. McInnis and F. A. Norcross "for the arrest and conviction of C. H. Wright and V. Gardella for violating the election laws at Reno, November 3, 1896" but this comment did not specify which law or laws was violated.¹⁰

The only opinion published interpreting the statute was issued after the 1898 election by Attorney General J. R. Judge. He advised the Elko County Clerk to issue a certificate of election to F. S. Gedney, a Silver Party candidate who had won election but failed to file a return required by the law during the prescribed filing period. The Attorney General's opinion was based on two grounds. First, he assumed that Gedney had not "intentionally" failed to file his return on time. Judge also expressed the opinion that the Act had unlawfully attempted to "impose other or additional qualifications [for legislative office] to those prescribed by the Constitution. . . ." ¹¹

The Nevada Purity of Elections law was repealed by the 1899 legislative session. Incomplete accounts of this action, which apparently did not attract widespread interest, offer a few clues about its impact on Nevada politics but raise more questions.

First, the legislature which repealed the Purity of Elections statute did not differ in an obvious way from the 1895 and 1897 bodies. Nominally, the Silver Party had a majority in both houses: Seventeen of the thirty members of the Assembly were members of that party (there was also a Silver/Democrat) while

eight of the fifteen Senators were Silverites (with another a Democrat/Silver candidate).¹²

Governor Reinhold Sadler, elected as a member of the Silver Party, did not mention Purity of Elections in his address to the legislature. Secretary of State Howell's only mention of the act in his report was a request that the law be amended to require candidates for the legislature to file reports with county clerks rather than his office.¹³

Little can be learned about the repeal effort from state newspapers which carried legislative news. The *Nevada State Journal* charged that C. C. Wallace and the railroad lobby were behind the reelection of William Stewart to the United States Senate and suggested that the Southern Pacific machine would work to repeal the law. The paper reported the day before the issue first came up in the Assembly that a repeal bill was to be voted upon by that body; it went on to say that "As it is about the only restriction to bribery and bribe-taking on our statutes, it is likely to pass both houses which gave majorities for Stewart. . . . Let us not assume a virtue if we have it not. . . . 'Rah for the liberty of the sack!'"¹⁴

AB 4, a measure to repeal the Purity of Elections law, was initially defeated in the Assembly on February 1, 1899, the seventeenth day of the session, by a vote of fifteen to fourteen. During debate on this bill Speaker Lem Allen, who had argued against its passage in 1895 (although he finally voted for it) favored repeal. His ground was that the law had been ineffective. According to a news-



Governor Reinhold Sadler. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

paper account, Allen said that "it was impossible, in his opinion, for any candidate to help committing perjury to some extent under the provisions of the law. He admitted frankly that he had committed perjury and believed that all the balance had."¹⁵ This seems an extraordinary admission in a public debate, but no newspaper thought it worthwhile to report precisely what Allen said or meant or to investigate this assertion.

The *Reno Evening Gazette* reported that Assemblyman L. A. Blakeslee, a Republican from Washoe County, "when it was seen that the measure had been lost, immediately introduced a bill amending the Purity of Elections law, and there is still a chance of repealing the objectionable parts."¹⁶ The new bill, AB 25, proposed to repeal only section 4 of the statute (which provided for forfeiture of office for failure to file reports or filing false reports); it was immediately referred to the Committee on Public Morals.

On February 24, nearly a month later, AB 25 was brought up again on the Assembly floor. This time it was amended to substitute complete repeal of the Purity of Elections law; on February 28 the amended bill was passed by a vote of sixteen to eleven.¹⁷

In the Senate the repeal bill passed by the Assembly was passed on third reading on March 4 by a vote of nine to three, but then "placed at the bottom of the file" without a recorded roll call vote three days later (on March 7) and again on March 8. Finally, it was brought up for another floor vote on March 9 (only two days before the end of the session) and adopted by a vote of nine to five.¹⁸

No explanation for this strange legislative history is available from examination of the *Territorial Enterprise*, the *Reno Evening Gazette*, the *Carson City Morning Appeal*, and the *Nevada State Journal* for the appropriate debates. As noted above, the *Journal* had predicted that the bill would be repealed and asserted that the machine was in control of the Legislature. The *Gazette* complained about Black Wallace's "pull" with legislators and referred to "Wallace's Assembly" but did not specifically link this alleged control with repeal of the statute.¹⁹ No mention of repeal of the law was included in any of the newspapers' summations of the legislative session after adjournment.

Analysis of the floor votes on repeal indicates that the Silver Party was nominally responsible for the death of the Purity of Elections law. The crucial Assembly vote was the motion on February 24 which substituted repeal of the entire law for the dropping of one section. On this vote fifteen Silverites voted aye, along with three Republicans and one Democrat (Speaker Allen). The eleven opposing votes came from seven Republicans, one Silver/Democrat, one independent and two Silverites. On final passage in the Senate, the repeal was supported by seven members of the Silver Party, one Republican and one Populist (J. A. Denton of Lincoln County). The opposing votes came from three Republicans, while one Silverite, one Republican and a Democrat/Silver Senator were recorded as absent.²⁰

EXPLANATION OF THE PUZZLE

The principal historical puzzle associated with this relatively short-lived experiment with campaign finance reform legislation in nineteenth-century Nevada is that it occurred when Nevada government was allegedly dominated by a private association which ruled by corrupt methods. The Southern Pacific Company abandoned its political bureau in California (and presumably in Nevada although the Nevada effort may have been abandoned earlier) following the Progressive victory of 1910 in that state. Legislation to prevent the return of such a machine would have made sense at that point, but a strict campaign finance law enacted at the height of machine dominance is harder to understand, particularly since the allegations of machine dominance continued after adoption of the law. Yet this was the case in both California and Nevada.

The puzzle seems harder to understand when it is realized that Nevada had another episode of strong campaign finance legislation which correlated with apparent dominance by an extra-governmental machine. From 1913 to the early 1930s Nevada had a law limiting campaign expenditures and requiring strict reporting of contributions and expenditures.²¹ During much of this period the state was allegedly dominated by the George Wingfield bipartisan machine.²²

It is obvious that no definitive or certain conclusions can be drawn about these matters and that complete consideration of them would require a more comprehensive treatise than is possible here. What follows will be the speculations of a political scientist who has devoted much professional attention to the problem of determining *Who governs?* and has some knowledge of Nevada history. It is essentially an essay rather than a thorough study.²³

The first possibility for explaining the apparent coexistence of a strong campaign finance law with control by a machine is that the descriptions of the dominance of the machine are mistaken. If this view is correct, the passage of the Purity of Elections act was a response to perceived corruption which the machine could not prevent because it was not guilty as charged. Thus, the law had little effect because there was no systemic corruption to be overcome. In other words, the allegations of machine dominance were merely campaign rhetoric.

No definitive history of the Southern Pacific machine in either California or Nevada has been written, and probably never will be. If the machine purchased the votes of electors or officeholders, it did so in violation of existing law. All but a few people who engage in this kind of corruption are smart enough not to discuss the transaction except with the other party to it. This is why the successful contemporary prosecutions of some Nevada officeholders were possible only because an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation posed as a corrupter and secretly recorded conversations with public officials willing to accept money for votes.

In spite of the absence of definitive studies, however, there is much reason to

believe that the basic allegations of Southern Pacific machine dominance in Nevada are essentially correct. It is well-established that for several decades the Southern Pacific maintained a political bureau, with paid employees, which was charged with securing governmental action favorable to the company and preventing action unfavorable to it. Moreover, it is also clear, although details are scarce, that this organization participated actively in the electoral process in pursuit of these goals.²⁴ Unfortunately, the most thorough study of the machine to date, by William Deverell, barely mentions the political bureau and makes no attempt to chronicle this unit's activities.²⁵

A relatively small number of corporations or associations has ever attempted to control government in this fashion, although lobbying of elected officials is routine activity for many corporations and groups. That an electoral organization which was largely unsuccessful over several decades in achieving its goals would be continued at substantial cost to the company is highly unlikely.

The Southern Pacific Company also purchased and/or subsidized newspapers to serve its ends, again without open acknowledgment of this fact. Dr. H. H. Hogan once charged that "almost the entire press of our state . . . is under the domination and control of the Central Pacific railroad."²⁶ Deverell's study of the machine in California does report extensively on this aspect of the company's efforts to influence public opinion in that state but does not relate these efforts to the electoral aspect of the company's activities.²⁸

In an era when newspapers were openly partisan and editors did not hesitate to take public policy stands in both editorial and news columns (which often could not be distinguished), this element of the company's political activity must have been important. Again, it is unlikely that the policy would have been continued for decades by an organization necessarily committed to profit-making if its leadership had not believed that attempting at least partial control of the press was cost-effective. This is so even though there is now no way to measure precisely either how extensive the effort was or its effectiveness.

Moreover, while some of the allegations that the Southern Pacific machine dominated Nevada politics were made by opponents of this organization, a number came from persons who were not hostile to the machine yet were in a position to have an informed opinion on the subject. One of the strongest general statements about the power wielded by C. C. Wallace, for example, came from Alf Doten, who never criticized the machine (reported in Part One).

The basic allegations about machine dominance, however, do not justify the assertion that the organization dominated all government officials or all aspects of governmental action; major control does not mean total control. For example, Deverell's study of the Southern Pacific machine's activities in California notes that the company lost some battles decided by government, notably the struggle over whether the harbor for Los Angeles would be built at San Pedro rather than Santa Monica, where the railroad owned much property.²⁸ Yet his study, overall, is not in conflict with earlier conclusions that the Southern Pacific Company



Governor Sadler (front row, fourth from left) and clerks and lobbyists who participated in the 1897 Legislature. C.C. "Black" Wallace, who controlled the Southern Pacific machine, is on the far right, in front of the lamp post.

was never effectively regulated by either the state of California or the national government during the time the political bureau was active. Nor does Deverell's account deny that the company secured preferential treatment from the national government in that its construction was heavily subsidized and that the company was never required to repay government loans on the terms originally set down.

One of the problems in evaluating the success of the machine in California or Nevada is the absence of an explicit list of company goals. There is no reason to believe that the company was interested in controlling all aspects of Nevada government, but we do not know (in all cases) what matters were of crucial significance to it. If the newspaper accounts of the 1895 session are correct, it is highly probable that the machine involved itself in leadership elections, because these determined committee structure (most bills either die in committee or acquire the form in which they are eventually approved in these bodies), but which bills were of most importance to the machine is far from clear.

It does seem clear that one of the machine's goals was to secure the election of United States Senators friendly to its interests or at least not opposed to them, because the national government decided many issues important to the com-

pany. There seems little doubt that the machine was successful in this respect. William M. Stewart worked actively on behalf of the company in Washington and no Nevada Senator from statehood to the demise of the machine in 1910 was clearly an enemy of the company or its machine.

Finally, the thorough study of politics during the 1890s conducted by Mary Ellen Glass plus the earlier effort by Gilman Ostrander both provide a great deal of detail on the success of C. C. Wallace's efforts to control party organizations.²⁹ It is not likely that he sought such control for altruistic purposes.

A complicating factor is that there are hints that the Southern Pacific machine in Nevada actively collaborated with the Virginia and Truckee Railroad in many of its political efforts. H. M. Yerington, the head of the latter company, was clearly a major figure in late-nineteenth century Nevada; a full account of railroad politics in the state in that era would require an assessment of his role.

In brief, then, while we cannot measure precisely how effectively the Southern Pacific machine controlled Nevada politics during the 1890s (and at earlier times), there is no reason to throw out the many assertions that the machine exercised a great deal of power, although it never openly ran candidates in any election and did not control all aspects of government. In this sense it corrupted Nevada politics.

That the machine spent money for political purposes is obvious, but whether some of this expenditure went for legally corrupt purposes—buying the votes of electors or public officials—remains uncertain, however. As noted above, such use of money was clearly illegal then, as now, but could have been hidden fairly easily.

A second possibility to explain the puzzle is that the machine did normally dominate Nevada politics but failed to prevent passage of the Purity of Elections act because in this case it was overwhelmed by forces beyond its control. This explanation is plausible to a substantial extent. In the nation and even more in Nevada, the nineties was a decade of unrest, seeking and protest, and many events disrupted traditional political patterns and even threatened major changes in the party system.

During that decade the most important third party between the Civil War and the present grew up and might have become a major party. The Populist Revolt, as it has been called, ended abruptly in 1896, when the Democrats took over the most popular plank of the People's Party platform. The long-term result was the beginning of a new era of conservative Republican domination of the party system which lasted (with the exception of the period during which Woodrow Wilson was President) until the New Deal.³⁰

Some reform measures put forward by the People's Party were enacted at the national level during this period and it is plausible that the forces protecting the old order sometimes were defeated, although they never lost on the most important issues.

The sources which led to this period of change and apparently the prospect for

greater and more long-lasting change than actually occurred were various. There was a revolt of the farmers. Their desire to inflate the currency was a major issue for several reasons. A deflation of the currency from the Civil War into the 1890s, had had a serious long-range negative effect on farmers. Farmers were often debtors and they usually found themselves paying off loans in dollars worth more than when they had borrowed them. In other words, the currency issue, with farmers, was partly a matter of rational self-interest. Their view that bankers controlled the currency, which has occasionally been characterized as paranoiac, did not seem unrealistic at the time; bankers both benefited from deflation of the currency and vigorously opposed any effort to reverse it.

The farmers' revolt, which was much more important in the Plains states and the South than elsewhere, also involved other issues. Farmers participated in the market as individuals, each of whom had little market power, against an increasingly concentrated corporate world. Railroads were especially important corporate foes, as the Populists saw things, because both the goods they purchased and the produce of their fields moved largely by rail. Many reformers had felt for decades that railroads were not fair in their pricing policies and that farmers could not counter railroad power without seeking governmental regulation or ownership. For large portions of the country individual farmers had no choice of which railroad to use and railroads often seemed to dominate state governments.

Again, these views were not unrealistic. In Nevada, for instance, the charges demanded by the railroads for shipments between Elko and San Francisco exceeded the charges from San Francisco to New York.³¹ Furthermore, to the extent that the Southern Pacific machine actually exercised governmental control in Nevada and other states, it prevented government at all levels from forcing changes in such rate structures or in other practices which were not in the interest of farmers.

Second, from the 1870s on there were a number of movements, often largely local and/or transient, in reaction to the post-Civil War growth of large-scale corporations. Not just farmers but many workers' groups criticized monopolies and large-scale concentrations of economic power in general. There was no federal legislation against monopolies in interstate commerce until the 1890s and many corporate lords agreed with one of their number, who said: "The public be damned."

Increasing corporate power, not adequately restrained by market forces because labor unions were weak during this period, seemed to many observers to be depressing the wages of workers. Again, these views were not unrealistic. For example, many people saw that the idea of individual workers supposedly bargaining with large-scale aggregations of capital over wages, hours and working conditions on an equal basis was unrealistic. Atomized workers bargaining with great aggregations of wealth obviously had to accept what they were offered, legal doctrines notwithstanding.

The various solutions to the problem of corporate power ranged from the quixotic through the major elements in the welfare state which emerged in the first decade of this century. The latter expanded significantly during the New Deal to the idea of public ownership of major corporations. Coxey's Army and the utopian ideals and ideas embodied in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, which envisaged a future society without government at all and with radical equality of income and status, represent the quixotic element.

Many aspects of the Populist platform plus the rise of the "Social Gospel" among Protestant churches and scholarly critiques of the dominant Social Darwinist ideology represent the reform element which became much more important later. Also in the reform category was the drive to increase the extent and power of labor unions in order to counterbalance corporate power with institutions which pooled the power of workers. Both Christian socialism and worker-based socialism often espoused reformist ideas.

An important event in this development during 1894 was the strike against the Pullman Company, which gained much sympathetic support from other railroad workers. One source states that railroad workers in Reno supported the local People's Party in that year's election. R. A. Maynard, from 1893 to 1895 a co-minister of a Unitarian Church in Reno, wrote in 1903 that striking railroad workers in 1894 had prompted "the first organization of the Populist party as an afterclap of the strike" and that the Populist party in Nevada therefore "was a working class movement, as [it] rarely was in other states."³² This assertion is plausible. Railroad workers contributed to Populist strength in California and several Rocky Mountain states in that year.³³

The distinctively socialist idea that major reform and/or revolution required the nationalization of the means of production was also evident as a minor theme of the 1890s reform brew. The 1892 Omaha platform of the People's Party, for example, called for the nationalization of railroads. The charismatic leader of the Pullman strike, Eugene V. Debs, supported the People's Party and later became the leader of the American Socialist Party.

Third, the widespread effort to change the economic system quickly developed a critique of existing governmental institutions as undemocratic, which led to a reform drive to alter or abolish some of these structures. The critics were correct that the major institutions of the federal government and of state governments based on the national model were undemocratic, if by that term is meant that they were designed to frustrate majority rule.³⁴ United States Senators were not directly elected but were chosen by state legislatures. There was no way for voters to legislate directly or overcome decisions by legislatures. The possibility of recalling officeholders serving fixed terms of office was unheard of, unelected judges had the authority to annul acts by legislatures and were often accused of siding with corporations against labor unions in labor disputes, and women could not vote.

Several of the features of the political system which were extraconstitutional

were also criticized as undemocratic. These included the nominating conventions which chose candidates for office (and therefore greatly reduced voter choices in the general election) and the absence of the secret ballot, which made it possible for persons with power to coerce voters. In the early 1890s the movement for the Australian ballot, which introduced secrecy into voting, swept the country. Nevada responded to this movement. The 1891 legislature passed an Australian ballot measure.³⁵ This change may have played a major role in the 1894 election in the state.

From 1900 up to the outbreak of the First World War, many of the structural changes desired by the Populists and other reformers of the late 1880s and early 1890s became standard features of American governmental and political life, although others did not. For example, this period saw the popular election of U.S. Senators and the introduction of the direct primary as a way to give party voters more power, and direct legislation and recall were made possible by state constitutional amendment in a number of states, including Nevada. Women gained the right to vote in Nevada in 1914 and in the nation in 1920. Not all the reforms took place; for example, the attempt to permit popular majorities to control courts failed, as did efforts to secure the direct election of the President and Vice President.

The fact that many of their objectives would be achieved later even though their attempt to restructure the party system failed was of course unknown to the Populists and other miscellaneous reformers of the 1890s. At the time there was widespread confusion among the reformers and the small number of members of the political elite (or would-be elite) who worked for many changes during this period. The most important reform party—the People's Party—was itself divided on these issues, with some wishing to concentrate primarily on the currency issue and closely-related questions of an economic nature and others backing the Omaha platform, which embraced elements of all the matters noted above. Overall, no coherent reform and/or revolutionary ideology which united the reformers and offered a prospect of gaining the support of the majority of voters developed during the decade.

While all these matters have been argued over for many years, the early 1890s opened up the possibility of widespread popular support for the reformers' ideas because the depression of 1893 was unusually severe.³⁶ In the absence of unemployment compensation or other governmental programs to maintain family incomes when involuntary unemployment occurred and without the pooled resources of strong labor unions to help, large numbers of workers suffered severe economic hardship. The reformers sought, with some temporary success but ultimate failure, to use the evident deprivation inflicted on millions of citizens by the defects of the economic system to restructure the party system and change the direction of national and state policy into one more favorable to workers as well as farmers.

To understand what happened during this crucial decade, the nature of the

existing two-party system must be taken into account. The terrible suffering and turmoil of the Civil War had created an electorate aligned behind the Democratic and Republican party elites primarily in terms of the allegiances developed and strengthened by the great conflict. The South was predominantly Democratic, although it had not yet become the "Solid South." The north was largely Republican.

Nevada followed the national pattern by voting Republican most of the time. For example, only seventeen (or 19 percent) of the eighty-nine statewide non-judicial contests (including races for the U.S. House of Representatives but not the Senate, since it was not popularly chosen) from 1864 through 1900 were won by Democrats.³⁷

More important was the fact that the members of the political elite before the 1890s (including officeholders campaigning for reelection) were agreed on more things than the issues on which they disagreed. Both party leadership groups constantly referred back to the crucial yet obsolete issues which had developed during the Civil War.

The major issue in many national Republican campaigns during this period was advocacy of high tariffs to protect American industries, while Democrats usually stood for lower tariffs (although few in any party advocated completely free trade). The parties simply embraced slightly different versions of a long-established policy of protectionism rather than contesting with each other over fundamental matters. Even the currency issue, as Jones has reported, did not clearly divide the two major parties until 1896, with party platforms and leaders typically straddling the issue.³⁸

In the country as a whole (though perhaps not in Nevada; we do not know) the Democrats were perhaps more likely to claim to speak for workers than the Republicans, but neither party would admit to not representing workers, and workers seemed to vote more in terms of the alignments established by the Civil War than on any other basis. In the pivotal 1896 presidential contest, clearly a major reason for Democratic failure (and for the major realignment of the electorate which took place during that election) was that Democrats were less successful than Republicans in persuading the working class that they represented their interests.³⁹

A key skill of political elites in democracies is framing the issues for electoral purposes. Even without the necessity to take a stand on a major issue by saying something which might be shown for less than a minute on television, politicians had to oversimplify and to convince voters that their concerns coincided with those of the party leaders. The Republican argument for protective tariffs and "sound money"—opposing currency inflation—was presented to a substantial extent during the 1896 campaign in terms of protecting the interests of workers—jobs and pay. Evidently a majority of workers agreed.

Nor would either major party admit to being anything other than a party of business. Even up to 1896, the major parties made no systematic criticism of

business, large or small. To illustrate, it would be difficult to find a president during the nineteenth century more committed to sound money and to maintaining an economic climate favorable to business than Democrat Grover Cleveland, who was elected to this office in 1892.

Behind these similar orientations of the two major party elites lay the nature of American parties from the Civil War up to very recent times. As campaign organizations and therefore as governing structures once elections were over, the parties were not mass-based but instead aggregations of prominent and necessarily affluent individuals. Each was a party of "notables," to use one descriptive term from this period.

The pattern of financing reported in the 1896 election returns considered in detail above, for example, although it probably omitted important elements of the campaign finance situation, illustrates this fact about both parties. Some of Nevada's U.S. Senators during the nineteenth century were rich men who chose to use their wealth to seek political power. Others—such as Senator Stewart—were men who became rich by serving those who had high incomes and wealth—two bases of power—and also chose to use them for political purposes. Francis G. Newlands is an excellent illustration of this phenomenon. He used the wealth of the Sharon family, into which he had married, to finance a political career which led to his service as a U.S. Representative and Senator for many years.

Without membership-based political parties or significant non-business oriented groups which could finance parties or provide the services money could buy, this pattern was perhaps inevitable. But it meant that both parties represented high income segments of the electorate. The existence in some states of business-based political organizations, assuming secretly the ordinary functions of political parties, provided another way to finance elections, but again in a way that favored business. This is another reason, of course, to believe that the Southern Pacific machine was powerful; C. C. Wallace may well have been the only official devoting full time to electoral and lobbying activities in Nevada, with appropriate backup funding, for several decades.

During the 1890s new elements of the political elite loosely oriented toward reform finally coalesced within the Democratic Party. In 1896 there was an attempt to reshape that party into what could have become a farmer/labor party. If the Democratic Party had not moved in this direction the People's Party might have become a major party, replacing or supplementing the Democrats in a long-term multi-party situation. The Populist decision not to hold its national convention until after those of both major parties doomed that party to insignificance when Williams Jennings Bryan won the Democratic nomination by embracing the silver issue and the basic anti-big business ideology (though few of the specific policy stands) of the reformers. The mistake was made because the Populists were confident that the free and unlimited coinage of silver was an extremely popular issue and that neither major party would advocate the policy.

Whether the Populists or the Democrats emerged from 1896 as the major

opposition party to the Republicans, a portion of the political elite not supported by the wealthy would have had to develop a membership to support its activities or find farmers' or workers' groups willing to finance its struggles. That neither of these changes took place may partly account for the weakened status of the new Democratic Party, although the reformers never took over completely. The Great Depression finally allowed fundamental change.

It is probable that these basic developments on the national level were paralleled in Nevada politics during the 1890s, but with a major difference. In the first place, Nevada's economy had been depressed longer and more deeply by the mid-1890s than was the case elsewhere, because the state's economy was so lopsidedly dependent on mining. When the production of the Comstock mines dropped dramatically during the 1880s, Nevada was plunged into a depression which ultimately forced a substantial drop in the state's population. Agriculture in the state at that time meant primarily large-scale ranching and accounted for a small part of the state's economy, tourism had not become important, and manufacturing was virtually nonexistent. In fact, few Nevadans could even conceive of any other way to restore prosperity than by revitalizing mining.

In this respect, Nevada was similar to the Rocky Mountain states, also heavily dependent on mining. In Nevada as in some of these other states, the electorate became solidly committed to the silver issue, less because this action would revive agriculture (which had been its principal appeal in the Plains and South) or revamp the currency system of the country, than because it would restore the health of the mining industry.

This emphasis on the silver issue also had the advantage that it provided a means of financing political campaigns, since mining companies adopted a pro-silver stance as being in their own self-interest. In fact, mining industry-financed groups actively organized Silver parties in various states, although we do not have specific information for Nevada on this aspect of development of the Silver Party.⁴⁰ Such parties could collaborate with either Populists or Democrats as long as their primary issue was the inflation of currency through the restoration of the coinage of silver.

In Nevada the Silver Party, which dominated Nevada elections during the 1890s, was not led by new elements of the political elite. Instead, most of the leading officeholders of the state declared that they were now Silverites, and most of the voters believed them. Incumbent Republican Senator John P. Jones was the first to convert, former Republican Senator William M. Stewart returned to the Senate by running as a member of the Silver Party, and many other prominent leaders of the major parties volunteered themselves as leaders of the new party.

This phenomenon may be understood in various ways. Perhaps the most insightful was the view of Dr. H. H. Hogan, who with H. H. Beck outran all other candidates for the Assembly in Washoe County in 1894. Hogan thought that the major politicians declared themselves Silverites to forestall reformers

from benefiting from the voter concern over a number of issues by coopting the most popular issue in Nevada—currency reform through increasing government purchases of silver. This view is supported by information uncovered by David B. Griffiths, which establishes that while Stewart maintained extensive friendly ties with People's Party leaders around the country during the 1890s, he steadfastly refused to embrace any Populist policies except currency reform.⁴¹

In brief, as he wrote several times, Dr. Hogan thought that the Nevada Silver Party was

the result of a piece of political chicanery originated by Senator Stewart, Senator Jones, Congressman Newlands, the Hon. C. C. Wallace and other employees of the Southern Pacific Railroad. . . . There is in reality no silver party. In the state of Nevada it is but another name of C. P. Huntington's party.⁴²

Whatever the motivations of key political actors may have been, the practical effect of the conversion of most of them to the single issue of most concern to Nevada voters was to stymie the growth of the People's Party and of reform-oriented members of the political elite. A partial exception to this pattern was that nothing halted the passage of the Australian ballot law or, I believe, the Purity of Elections law.

A key to understanding why the law under consideration in this study passed was that some genuinely reform-oriented politicians did manage to win election, particularly in Washoe County. The indications are that voter unrest was substantial. While the chief beneficiaries of this desire for change were the leaders who opposed real change, some genuine reformers managed to get elected.

So far as I have been able to discover, Hogan commented publicly only once on the 1895 legislature in which he served. But then he asserted that that session had been dominated by the "dictator" Wallace, who enjoyed a "two-thirds majority" in the legislature. Likening the members of this majority to "steers," Hogan claimed that all the Washoe legislators were "broncos." The legislators from Washoe County constituted, according to Hogan, "the only delegation from which Mr. Wallace expected the least opposition to his undisputed rule."⁴³

Not enough is yet known about Nevada politics during the 1890s to provide definitive evidence for the propositions outlined above, but the evidence to support them is marshalled below.

First is the fact, noted in an intriguing article by Sally S. Zanjani, that the Democratic Party in 1890 took decisive steps toward becoming a party of reform. Not accidentally, it was the 1891 legislature which enacted the secret ballot.⁴⁴ This was before the rise of either the People's Party or the Silver Party. Nevertheless, Zanjani's article suggests that the 1890 election was indeed the "Last Hurrah for the Old Regime."⁴⁴

The opportunity to vote secretly for the first time in the state's history produced an almost complete turnover in the state legislature, although not in the

first election after this reform took place. But in 1894 only two of the thirty Assemblymen who had served in the previous legislature were returned: Lem Allen of Churchill County (a Democrat in both cases) and S. L. McNaughten of Esmeralda County (elected as a Silverite in 1892 and a Democrat in 1894). Beck, as reported in the first part of this study, had served in several previous sessions (but not in 1893) and therefore was an experienced legislator. It has not been determined how many others were in this category, but the number was undoubtedly small. In the Senate, only six of the fifteen Senators had served in the previous session, probably because they were holdovers (Senators served for four-year terms, then as now).⁴⁵

Nothing like such a complete sweep occurred in the subsequent legislative elections of this decade. While there could be several explanations for this massive change, the most plausible major reason surely was voter dissatisfaction with things as they were.

This interpretation is supported by the fact, reported in Part One, that Beck and Hogan led the Assembly ticket in Washoe County. Both were long-standing mavericks from a partisan standpoint, both were passionate reformers, both were able, well-informed persons whose integrity was indisputable, and they ran as Populists. Reno, though the largest town in Nevada at that time, was still small—Beck received only 1,029 votes and Hogan 890. Both, however, had been prominent in public affairs for many years in the community. It is obvious that Washoe County voters knew these men and knew when they elected them that they were reformers, although the extent to which voters were aware in detail of their views on most issues is uncertain. In addition, as noted above, they reportedly received the votes of railroad workers, who were involved in a strike against the Pullman company at that time.

Hogan edited the *Plainedealer* for eight years (although with a major gap from 1884 to 1895), and so we have more information about his views than we have about those of Beck. A more extensive study of Hogan's ideology is called for, but it is apparent that his primary concern (almost an obsession) was currency reform. He attached great significance to defending the now-accepted principle that the value of currency was essentially established by government, not impersonal market forces.

Beyond this, Hogan advocated inflation of the currency solely by issuing paper money; while agreeing with the general desire of Populists to inflate the currency, he argued that basing monetary policy on any minerals was in principle undesirable. However, he also believed that the national government should stockpile both silver and gold, for purposes of international trade but also as a protection against possible currency manipulations by bankers, and therefore in practice agreed with the other parties that government policy should help Nevada's recovery through extensive purchases of silver.

Hogan also at several times had advocated the alliance of currency reformers with workers, flatly asserted that the Southern Pacific machine had long dom-



Another grouping of members of the 1897 Legislature. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

inated Nevada politics, and believed generally (with few specifics) that concentrated wealth had come to dominate American governments.

How many of Hogan's views were shared with Beck is unknown, but according to Hogan they had been friends before either arrived in Nevada, and we know they cooperated on several local matters at various times. After 1896 there was a policy split between them, because Hogan remained a strong advocate of the basic People's Party policies (he regularly reprinted the 1892 Omaha Platform, for example) while Beck accepted the fact that the Populists were essentially dead and successfully ran for the Washoe County Commission under other auspices.

What seems clear is that the Washoe County voters deliberately sent Beck and Hogan to the legislature because they were passionate reformers. As noted in Part One, because of his prior legislative experience and ability, Beck was a candidate for Speaker, although he lost out to Lem Allen. Probably, as Hogan suggested, although he provided no details, Wallace and the machine played the key role in determining that the leadership in both houses, in spite of the voters' desire for change, would be in the hands of legislators who had worked with the machine in the past. We know that Allen opposed the Purity of Elections bill both in 1895 and in 1899, when it was repealed. Hogan claimed that he

had come to the 1895 session with a speech supported by "statements and documents enough to send old Huntington and all his gang to state prison forever" but was never allowed to make the speech during the session.⁴⁶

In spite of their inability to win the organizational elections, the reformers could not be prevented from securing enactment of the Purity of Elections bill for several reasons. First, Beck's passionate advocacy of it, combined with his considerable abilities and hard work, made it impossible to quietly sweep the bill under the rug. Second, campaign finance reform along the lines of the existing California law had been endorsed both by outgoing Governor Colcord and half-heartedly—probably because he was ill—by current Governor Jones. Finally, the only public arguments which could be made against it were obviously self-serving from the standpoint of legislators, and these arguments could not be expected to appeal to an electorate which had just made sweeping changes in the composition of both bodies.

A third alternative is that the Southern Pacific machine was responsible for passage of the Purity of Elections law, because it had backed a similar measure in California and knew that it would be ineffective but thought that having such a law on the books might reduce criticism of its rule and/or methods. This cynical interpretation could be correct, although the only evidence supporting it is the fact that the law on which Nevada's campaign finance law was built apparently coexisted in California with rule by the California version of the machine for a substantial period of time. However, the explanation just given seems more compelling, partly because Nevada's law was quietly repealed in 1899, presumably when there was little public concern about corruption in government.

Finally, this episode in Nevada's history raises the question whether rules governing elections and especially campaign finance laws are effective in accomplishing their objectives. This question goes back to a wider one, which is how to reconcile the basic rules governing democratic regimes with the rules under which economic life is conducted in industrialized societies.

Increasingly in constitutional democracies, the basic rules of the game have become radically egalitarian. That is, these rules presuppose genuine equality of rights under the law; all persons are supposed to enjoy the same fundamental freedoms, regardless of socioeconomic standing or other measures of one's status in society. Moreover, the rules for choosing government officials are also radically egalitarian; each person is supposed to have one and only one vote, representatives who make laws are supposed to be apportioned fairly according to the same one person—one vote rule, and governments are supposed to do what majorities of the electorate want them to do, if this is within the Constitution.

But no such egalitarian rules prevail in the economic system. Except for co-operatives, the power to control wealth within large scale economic aggregations is allocated on the basis of ownership (one share—one vote) rather than the one person—one vote rule. Similarly, market economies, although they are

founded on the preservation of some basic rules of fairness and procedure by government action, presuppose that economic players are free to aggregate wealth and/or the capacity to withhold labor or goods and services, within limits set by government. These rules, combined with inherent individual differences in productive capacity plus inherited inequalities of various kinds—ranging from the ability to transmit wealth to one's children to the group inequalities which determine and/or substantially limit the availability of the resources needed to permit development of human potential—inevitably result in societies with very large disparities in both income and wealth.

In other words, there is inherently a conflict between the basic egalitarian rules governing the political regime and the inegalitarian rules governing economic life in modern societies. To put it simply, in all such regimes one of the persistent problems is how to prevent economic inequality from nullifying the equality assumed by the political system. Put another way, there is inevitably a danger in such societies that the unequal socioeconomic system will be mirrored in the political system, regardless of the egalitarian rules governing political life.

Noting a fundamental dilemma is only the beginning of the search for understanding. Next there is the problem of identifying all of the components and the structure of the system of which electoral law is but one aspect. Because systems tend to maintain equilibrium, a change in one part of the system may have minimal results overall. In other words, the impact of a campaign finance law may be merely to change in a minor way the means by which players in the system seek their goals rather than alter basically the rules or outcome of the game.

Laws like the Purity of Elections statute on their face attempt to prevent the purchase of governmental authority—what the *Nevada State Journal* in 1899 called “the potency of the sack.” The extent to which they do so is very difficult and perhaps impossible to determine. In this particular case, we do not yet know enough to identify all aspects of the political system in nineteenth century Nevada, so that electoral law can be put into context. Beyond this, we also certainly lack information about the actual status of crucial elements of this system, whatever it may be. To mention only one obvious problem, we have no more than minor hints about what went on in the heads of crucial players.

Not surprisingly, there is no evidence that the Purity of Elections law changed political outcomes at all during the two elections when it was in effect, although we cannot measure such matters precisely and have no direct definitive evidence on the use of money in these elections. The best guess is probably that Speaker Allen was right in 1899: The campaign financing practices changed little as a result of the Purity of Elections law and most candidates submitted reports that were in some sense falsified rather than truthful accounts of what actually happened. Unfortunately, almost certainly we will never know precisely the facts about the use of money in campaigns which candidates were hiding.

NOTES

¹Special thanks are due to State Archivist Guy Louis Rocha and Jeffrey Kintop of his staff. Rocha was especially helpful in reading an earlier draft and steering me to various sources about this subject. Earlier drafts were also read by James W. Hulse and Sally S. Zanjani and their helpful comments were taken into account where possible. As always, the staffs of the Nevada Historical Society and the Special Collections Department at the University of Nevada, Reno Library were very helpful.

²The *Political History of Nevada* is published by the Secretary of State. The edition used here was published in 1990. Statewide officers are normally not elected in presidential years but the office of lieutenant governor was vacant because of the death of Attorney General Beatty and the appointment of Lieutenant Governor Judge to fill this vacancy, as explained in the text.

³This list, which includes several nineteenth-century elections, was compiled by Waller H. Reed.

⁴Stanley L. Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 280–283.

⁵*Ibid.*, 280.

⁶*Ibid.*, 301.

⁷Alfred Doten Diary, Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno, Journal Book No. 72: 127.

⁸“Biennial Report of the Secretary of State, 1895–1896,” in *Appendix to Journals of the Assembly and Senate, 1895*.

⁹*Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁰“Message . . . to the Legislature” by Governor Reinhold Sadler, *Appendix to Journals of the Assembly and Senate 1899*, 18.

¹¹“Biennial Report of the Attorney General, 1897–1898,” in *Appendix to Journals of the Assembly and Senate, 1897*, 43–44.

¹²*Political History of Nevada*, 207.

¹³“Biennial Report of the Secretary of State, 1897–1898,” in *Appendix to Journals of the Assembly and Senate, 1899*, 21.

¹⁴*Nevada State Journal* (1 February 1899), p. 2; (2 February 1899), p. 2.

¹⁵*Nevada State Journal* (2 February 1899), p. 3.

¹⁶*Reno Evening Gazette* (2 February 1899), p. 1.

¹⁷*Statutes of Nevada, 1899*, chapter 108. *Journal of the Assembly, 1899*, 55, 124, 144.

¹⁸*Journal of the Senate, 1899*, 150, 163, 180, 187.

¹⁹*Reno Evening Gazette* (2 February 1899), p. 2.

²⁰*Journal of the Assembly, 1899*, 124; *Journal of the Senate, 1899*, 150.

²¹*Statutes of Nevada 1913*, chapter 282. The law presumably was repealed in 1931; it comprised sections 2598–2642 in Curtiss Hillyer, comp., *Nevada Compiled Laws 1929* (San Francisco: Bender-Moss Co., 1930, Vol. I) but was not included in his 1931–1941 supplement to this compilation.

²²C. Elizabeth Raymond, *George Wingfield: Owner and Operator of Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1992).

²³Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961). There is a substantial literature in American political science on this topic but little agreement. There is no space here to discuss the many questions raised by this discussion, but it has informed the author’s efforts.

²⁴See George Mowry, *The California Progressives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), Stuart Daggett, *Chapters on the History of the Southern Pacific* (New York: Ronald Press, 1922), William Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

²⁵Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 130, mentions “the corporation’s ‘political bureau’ ” but does not describe it; Richard Orsi, Professor of History at California State University, Hayward has a completed manuscript on the Southern Pacific Railroad and its land holdings.

²⁶*Plaindealer* (20 November 1896), p. 1.

²⁷Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 123–148.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 93–122.

²⁹Gilman M. Ostrander, *Nevada: The Great Rotten Borough, 1859–1964* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966); Mary Ellen Glass, *Silver and Politics in Nevada: 1892–1902* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1969).

³⁰Materials relied on in this section include John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931), Norman Pollack, *The Populist Response to Industrial America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: the Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press), Walter T. K. Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), Paul H. Boase, ed., *The Rhetoric of Protest and Reform, 1878–1898*, (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 1980), Karel D. Bicha, *Western Populism: Studies in an Ambivalent Conservatism* (Coronado Press, 1976), David B. Griffiths, *Populism in the Western United States, 1890–1900* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992) and Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896*.

³¹Ostrander, *Nevada: The Great Rotten Borough*, 86.

³²R. A. Maynard, "How I Became a Socialist," *The Comrade*, vol. 2 no. 12 (September, 1903), 275.

³³Griffiths, *Populism in the Western United States*, 39, 360.

³⁴See, for example, J. Allen Smith, *The Spirit of American Government* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912).

³⁵*Nevada Statutes 1891*, chapter 40.

³⁶See Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896*, 43–44; Boase, *The Rhetoric of Protest and Reform*, 3, 17–18. A vivid account of the impact of the depression in Denver is in Stephen J. Leonard and Thomas J. Noel, *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis* (Niwot, Colorado, 1990), 102–113.

³⁷*Political History of Nevada*, 126–136. This does not refer to the number of individuals who served in these posts—some of whom were elected more than once—nor to the number of selections—some officeholders were appointed.

³⁸Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896*: 18–19.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 345. This is also confirmed by the work of political scientist V. O. Key, Jr., who first described this election as a "critical election" which reorganized the parties-in-the-electorate until the New Deal.

⁴⁰Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896*, 22–27, 86–87.

⁴¹Griffiths, *Populism in the Western United States*, 529, 552–557.

⁴²Quoted in *Ibid.*, 534–535.

⁴³*Plaindealer* (20 November 1896), p. 1.

⁴⁴Sally Springmeyer Zanjani, "The Election of 1890: The Last Hurrah for the Old Regime," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. XX No. 1 (Spring 1977), 46–56.

⁴⁵*Political History of Nevada*, 205–206.

⁴⁶*Plaindealer* (20 November 1896), p. 1.

NEVADA'S EMERGENCE IN THE AMERICAN GREAT BASIN Territory and State

Guy Louis Rocha

Leonard O. Sterns knew what he wanted to call his proposed new state—and it wasn't Nevada. "Let us, by all mean[s], christen the State 'Esmeralda,'" declared the delegate from Aurora in Esmeralda County to the 1863 constitutional convention.

No State of this Union now commences with the letter E—let us set her up as high alphabetically as she is geographically, and in natural wealth clothe her with a congenial name; mount her upon the glorious chariot wheels of American Union, and my word for it, she will shine the brightest diadem of them all.¹

Of course, the state was eventually named Nevada, but the story of how it got its name has been shrouded in mystery over the years. "How the territory, which in answer to so many prayers was organized out of western Utah on the 2d of March, 1861, came to be called simply Nevada, snowy, is not altogether clear," wrote Hubert Howe Bancroft in his *History of Nevada* (1890). Sometime between 1776, when Padre Pedro Font gave the Spanish name Sierra Nevada—"snow-covered mountains"—to the mountain range on the eastern fringe of Spanish California, and 1864, when Nevada was added to the Union, the area east of the Sierra became known as Nevada. But when, how, and why?²

There is nothing that indicates the name Nevada was home-grown. If the people residing in the western Great Basin had done the naming, the thirty-sixth state may have been known as Bullion, Carson, Esmeralda, Humboldt, Oro Plata, Sierra, Sierra Nevada, Sierra Plata, or Washoe. Instead, the name ultimately adopted by the state constitutional convention in 1864 apparently had its origin in the nation's capital six years earlier with the House Committee on Territories. Chaired by William "Extra Billy" Smith, a friend of James M. Crane,

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who served as the unofficial delegate to Congress from western Utah Territory, the nine-member committee named the proposed new territory Nevada. How Nevada came to be and get its name is intimately linked to national expansion and territorial politics; to the Mormon question, Indian relations, and the slavery issue; and to the discovery of the Comstock Lode.³

Long before the arrival of Spanish, British, and American explorers, the Native Americans had their own names for the desert region we now know as Nevada. The Washoes, who lived in and around the Sierra Nevada, called their world *Wa She Shu E Deh*, which means Washoe lands. Other areas were home to the Numa (Northern Paiute), Newe (Western Shoshone), and Nuwuvi (Southern Paiute). John C. Frémont, accompanied by the famous scout Kit Carson, passed through the lands of all four tribes during his expeditions of 1843–44 and 1845. Frémont identified the vast area of internal drainage between the Sierra Nevada and the Rocky Mountains and called it the Great Basin.⁴

Present-day Nevada was a part of Alta California and was thus under Spanish and Mexican control in the decades before the end of the Mexican War in 1848, when this vast expanse was ceded to the United States by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. It was during this time that gold was discovered in the Sierra foothills east of Sacramento. Beginning in 1849 tens of thousands of fortune seekers bound for California trekked across the forbidding Great Basin in hopes of striking it rich. Near the Great Salt Lake the goldrushers discovered the Latter-Day Saints, or Mormons, religious refugees from the Midwest who had first settled in northern Mexico in 1847. They called the land Zion after the biblical term describing the Jewish homeland. The Mormons established a provisional government—the State of Deseret—which included most of what is now Nevada and Utah, much of southern California, Arizona, and Colorado, and smaller areas of New Mexico, Wyoming, Idaho, and Oregon. In September 1850 the United States Congress created Utah Territory. Primarily encompassing the Great Basin, the territory was named for the Ute Indians who inhabited its eastern fringe.⁵

Traders and Mormon farmers travelled to the western Great Basin, some as early as 1850, and located in the shadow of the Sierra Nevada. So, too, came the placer miners in search of gold, most of them from California. In Carson Valley—named for the Carson River, which Frémont had named for Kit Carson—a provisional local government was established in 1851; it functioned until Carson County was organized four years later at Genoa by Orson Hyde. Hyde, a Utah probate judge, was the leader of a Mormon colonization mission and one of the Twelve Apostles in the church. He soon saw that even in the West there was little love lost between Mormon and non-Mormon.⁶

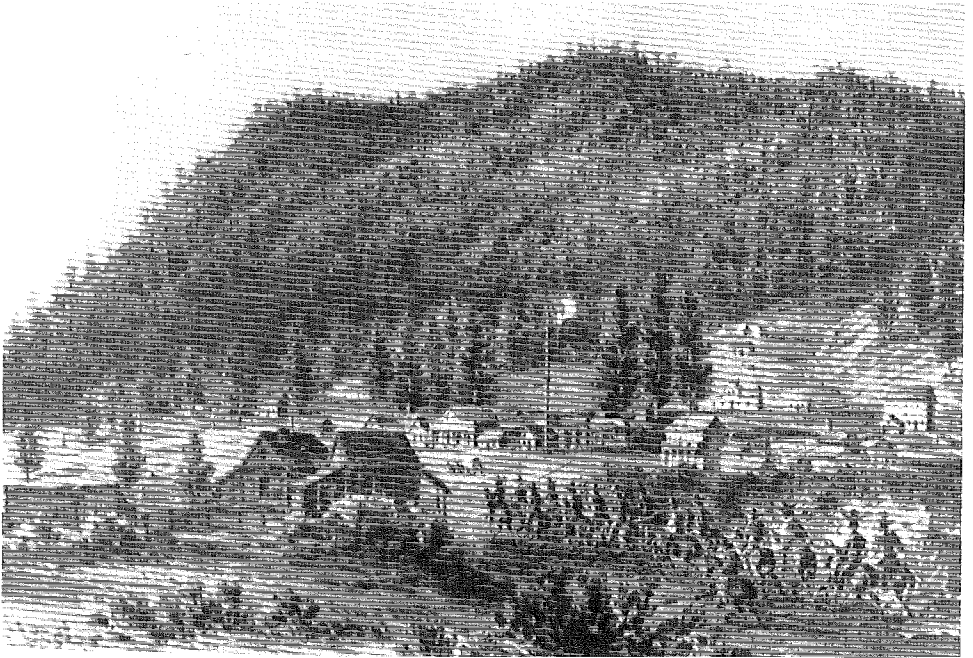
In those days non-Mormons sometimes called the region the Washoe Country, after the local tribe, or the Eastern Slope, because of its location on the eastern side of the Sierra. Many non-Mormons wanted the Washoe Country or Eastern Slope annexed to California, and that state's legislature went so far as to

create Pautah County in May 1852, its organization contingent upon Congress ceding the land to California. The provisional political anomaly was abolished, however, in April 1859 after all annexation efforts had failed, and California was no longer interested in extending its eastern boundary. Other area residents—Carson Valley pioneer John Reese among them—were disenchanted with the remote Utah territorial government, and had called for a separate territory in the western Great Basin as early as November 1851. Four years later, Orson Hyde even suggested to Brigham Young, Mormon church president and Utah territorial governor, that two territories controlled by Mormons could be more easily administered than one.⁷

The Mormon-controlled Utah Territory remained a single entity, however, and soon found itself under siege. Political affairs in its western domain had been reduced to near chaos by 1857. Orson Hyde had alienated many non-Mormons and returned to Salt Lake City in November 1856. In January, Carson County was attached to Great Salt Lake County, effectively eliminating any local government for the citizens of western Utah. Devout Mormons trekked back to Salt Lake that summer and fall as Brigham Young prepared for a confrontation with the federal government and its army over control of Utah. President James Buchanan had called on him to step down as governor because of the ongoing conflict between Mormons and non-Mormons throughout the territory, but Young refused.⁸

Mass meetings were held in Genoa in August 1857 to ask Congress to create a new territory out of what the citizens' resolution called the Great American Basin. John Reese, nominally a Mormon, had ignored Young's recall of the Latter-Day Saints and was elected president of the insurgent group. Isaac Newton Roop of Honey Lake Valley abandoned his provisional Territory of Nataqua and joined forces in this larger effort for a new territory. Roop was elected a vice-president. James Crane, former editor of San Francisco's *California Courier*, lecturer, outspoken advocate of states' rights and regional self-determination, and author of *The Past, the Present, and the Future of the Pacific* (1856), had moved to western Utah in June at the behest of William M. Ormsby, the driving force behind the territorial initiative. Through Ormsby's influence, Crane was appointed unofficial delegate to Congress. Crane's zealotry was to shape the movement for independence and win it both friends and enemies.⁹

Ormsby had been a forty-niner, coming overland to California from western Pennsylvania via Kentucky. A Sacramento real estate agent, stage-line entrepreneur, and soldier of fortune, he was said to have fought as a filibuster alongside William Walker and James Caleb Smith—William Smith's second son—in the 1856 overthrow of the Nicaraguan government. He arrived in Genoa in April 1857. Ormsby and his business associates had high hopes of winning a federal mail contract for a central route from Salt Lake City to Placerville, California through Genoa. The move also reunited Ormsby's wife Margaret with her brother, John K. Trumbo. A Kentuckian, he had travelled with his three broth-

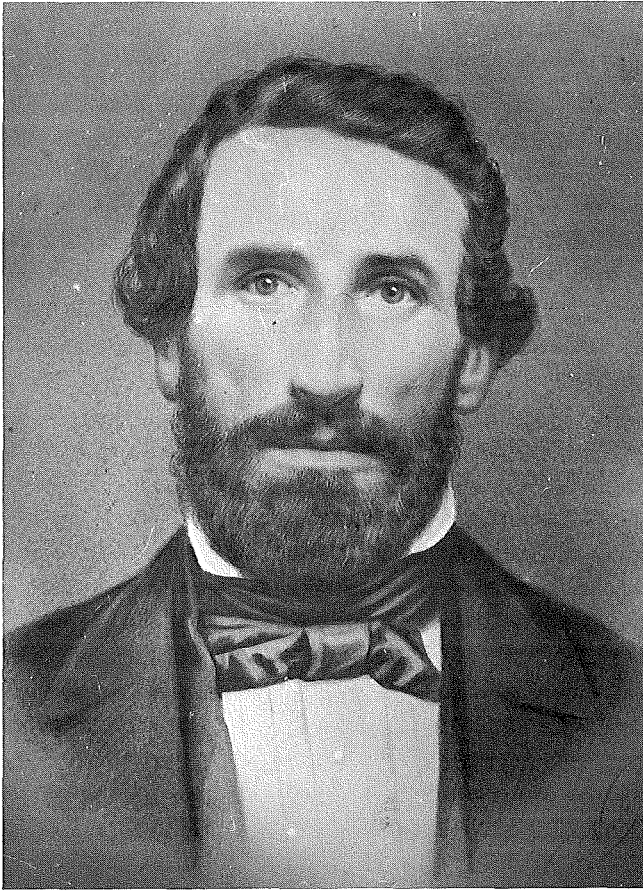


Captain Simpson's expedition entering Genoa in Carson County, Utah Territory in June 1859. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

ers-in-law to California and had come to Carson Valley in 1855. Trumbo married one of John Reese's daughters, and was a secretary at the mass meeting where Reese, with Ormsby's blessing, was chosen president of the insurgents.¹⁰

"Since that time [Ormsby's] name has been prominently connected with every thing of moment transpiring in Western Utah, whether in a financial or political point of view," wrote the *Territorial Enterprise*. Besides pursuing his extensive business interests, which included real estate and mining, "Major" Ormsby embroiled himself in Indian troubles with the Washoes and Paiutes, orchestrated the machinations of a vigilance committee (with its "people's court" and the lynching of Carson Valley pioneer "Lucky Bill" Thorington), and led the bitter anti-Mormon crusade. According to the *Enterprise*, "he was the first man who conceived and carried into execution the plan of applying to Congress for a separate Territorial organization." The proposed territory's boundaries included not only most of present-day Nevada, but also much of Arizona (then a portion of New Mexico Territory) and parts of eastern California such as Honey Lake Valley (Susanville), Lake Valley (Lake Tahoe), and Hope Valley (west of Woodfords). California newspapers sometimes referred to the area as Carson Territory or the Territory of Sierra.¹¹

Six months after the mass meetings in Carson Valley the region had the attention of Congress—and a new name. On February 18, 1858, "Judge" Crane,



Major William Ormsby. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

as he was commonly called, enthusiastically wrote from Washington, D.C., to his "fellow-citizens" that as a war measure directed at the Mormons, "the Committee on Territories has unanimously agreed to report a bill forthwith to establish a Territorial Government out of Western Utah, under the name of Sierra Nevada." Anti-Mormon sentiment bordered on hysteria as word slowly leaked out of a massacre of Missouri emigrants in September 1857 allegedly committed by Mormons and Indians at Mountain Meadows in southeastern Utah. Crane excited public opinion by proclaiming that through some type of unholy alliance the Latter-Day Saints Church was inspiring the Indian hostilities throughout the Great Basin. "For these and many other reasons," he declared, "no time will be lost to organize a Territory over western Utah, that there may be concentrated there a large Gentile population, as a check both upon the Indians and the Mormons."¹²

Crane's connection on Capitol Hill was fellow Virginian William Smith, a

former governor and state legislator. "Extra Billy" Smith, whose nickname referred to some questionable financial dealings concerning the Postmaster General, had made and lost a small fortune while running a line of post coaches that carried United States mail and passengers between the District of Columbia and Georgia, much like William Ormsby's later operations in northern California. Smith joined the California gold rush in 1849 in hopes of recouping his fortune while practicing law and pursuing other business endeavors. He presided over the Golden State's first Democratic Convention in 1852, losing the nomination for United States senator, before returning to the Old Dominion in December. He was subsequently elected from Virginia to the House of Representatives in a special 1853 election. As Crane had come to California in 1849, he may have known Smith both in Virginia and California. "It is more than probable that Judge Crane will succeed in inducing Congress to establish 'Sierra Nevada' Territory," proclaimed the *Placerville Mountain Democrat*. "It will open a fine field for broken down politicians, land grabbers and office hunters." Richard N. Allen, corresponding from Genoa as "Tennessee" in the *San Francisco Herald*, claimed that Crane aspired to be appointed territorial governor.¹³

At Crane's request, President Buchanan's April 9 message to the House transmitted a Carson Valley citizens' memorial that was extremely hostile to the Mormons. Buchanan was a Democrat from Pennsylvania and reportedly favored a new territory in the Great Basin. It is not surprising that the inflammatory memorial was signed by William Ormsby:

The prejudices existing between them and us, growing out of differences in religious faith and domestic practice, have been so augmented and strengthened by their treasonable defiance to federal authority, that our danger from them and their Indian allies is much greater than attends citizens of any other State or Territory.

The strident plea for home rule struck an even more ominous and threatening note that would serve as portent of the future in western Utah:

By the present condition of things, and unless there be, at this session of Congress, a territorial government organized, the citizens of that great basin will, as they have been, constrained to do illegally, for their own protection, that which should be done under legal authority.

The anti-Mormon citizens' memorial was endorsed by the California Legislature, Ormsby's older brother John serving in the Assembly, and by Governor John B. Weller. The House Committee on Territories received the memorial on April 13 and soon responded by shortening the name of the proposed territory from Sierra Nevada to Nevada and outlining boundaries roughly comparable to those of the state today. The inclusion in Nevada of valleys lying immediately east of



The statue of William "Extra Billy" Smith in Richmond, Virginia. (Courtesy of the Library of Virginia)

the Sierra, such as Honey Lake, required that the California Legislature cede the land to the new territory.¹⁴

"The New Territory of Nevada," read a *New York Times* headline in the May 13, 1858, edition. A correspondent in Washington, D.C., had noted three days earlier that a bill that would create Nevada Territory would shortly be reported out of committee. "I am unable to say what are the prospects of the passage of the bill at this session," the reporter concluded in his lengthy story. "The time is short, and if there is any disposition to debate it exhibited, it may be thrown over."¹⁵

On May 12, Congressman William Smith, slave owner, ardent champion for organizing territories according to popular sovereignty during the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act debates, and outspoken supporter of the proslavery Lecompton constitution for Kansas in 1857–58, submitted a lengthy committee report calling for the creation of a new territory out of Utah Territory. The report concluded:

Your committee believe that the citizens within said Territory have the right to expect of the federal government what they ask. They also believe that grave public considerations demand it. They are satisfied that the establishment of a territorial government would tend to protect the public mails travelling within and through it; make safe and secure the great overland route to the Pacific as far as within its limits; restore friendly relations with the present hostile Indian tribes; contribute to the suppression of the Mormon power by the protection it might afford to its dissatisfied members; and, in the present exigency in that region, might be, and almost certainly would be, of material aid to our military operations. Thus satisfied and impressed, your committee respectfully report a bill for the formation of a new Territory, according to the boundaries before recited, to be called the Territory of Nevada.

The bill was read a first and second time, and referred to the Committee on the Whole House; however, the first session of the Thirty-fifth Congress adjourned on June 14 without taking further action. Representative George W. Jones of Tennessee, concerned with the balance of power in Congress following the rancorous debates over statehood for Kansas and Minnesota as well as the proliferation of bills proposing new territories, expressed the prevailing view of representatives from the South when he said, as quoted in the *Congressional Globe*, "We certainly do not want any more Territories at this time."¹⁶

Despite this initial setback, when the second session opened in December of 1858, Smith, Crane, Ormsby, and the people of western Utah Territory were still optimistic that territorial status for Nevada would be granted by Congress. The first issue of the *Territorial Enterprise* printed in Genoa on December 18 urged "the propriety, yea, the necessity of the speedy organization of a Territorial Government of our own." Crane's lengthy letter addressed to Smith in Washington on January 17, 1859, made his case for Nevada Territory in no uncertain terms:

The only remedy for this unnatural war, now raging between the Mormons and the Anti-Mormons in Utah, is to be found in the immediate separation of these people under two distinct governmental organizations. One thing is inevitable, the Mormons and Anti-Mormons will never, and can never live together, under one government. The conflicts which took place between them in Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa, and which are now going on in Utah, ought to convince any intelligent man of the justice and truth of this declaration.¹⁷

The speaker of the House, James L. Orr of South Carolina, a political adversary of Extra Billy, was certainly not convinced. By clever use of parliamentary maneuver, Orr stalled the bill, believing full well that this proposed territory would outlaw slavery when it petitioned to become a state, contrary to William Smith's hopes. Meanwhile Smith has lost his committee chairmanship, and the so-called "Utah War" between the federal government and the Church of Latter-Day Saints had been peacefully resolved. As a result, the House never took a vote on the proposed legislation. Worn but undaunted, Judge Crane wrote to the *Territorial Enterprise* that

A great deal of sympathy has been expressed for the loss of our bill and for my own losses and unrequited labor. They tell me if I return next winter they will carry our bill through at a very early date. I have no doubt of my success then. The whole Virginia delegation backed me in my efforts; indeed I had powerful support in both Houses. Our people should never forget Gov. William Smith. He became an early friend of our cause and he exerted all of his energy and ability to carry our Territory. He feels the loss of the bill with as much regret almost as I do. Let us not despair. I have lost much time, money and health, but I will not give up. "Pick up the flint and fire again."¹⁸

Thanks to the tireless efforts of James Crane, William Smith, and the House Committee on Territories, Congress had applied the name Nevada to the western Great Basin for the first time, although the territorial bill was otherwise a disappointment. Correspondent Richard Allen paid high tribute to Extra Billy:

. . . I desire to express, through the columns of the *Herald*, the gratification felt by the loyal inhabitants of Western Utah on learning the probable candidacy of the Hon. William Smith of Virginia, for President, in 1860; a Democrat who, though often tried, has never failed in a long course of public service; even the envenomed tongue of slander has never dared to assail his integrity, and while he is undoubtedly attached to Southern institutions, his patriotism is of that lofty character which knows "no North, no South, no East, no West."¹⁹

Although the territorial legislature and Governor Alfred Cumming, a non-Mormon appointed by President Buchanan to replace Brigham Young, endeavored to reorganize Carson County, most of the citizens in western Utah still wanted their own territorial government, independent of Mormon influence, and still hoped William Smith would be their champion. Some were willing to accept the laws of Utah Territory until Congress created a new territory, recognizing the official authority of Cumming and Carson County Probate Judge John S. Child. They preferred this to what they viewed as the arbitrary rule of the so-called Junto in 1858 and its Vigilance Committee and People's Court. But the home-rule proponents led by William Ormsby defiantly challenged Cumming's appointment of Judge Child, a non-Mormon residing in Carson Valley, and any efforts to hold elections for county officers, adamantly refusing "to be governed by Mormon Laws." Following the adjournment of the Thirty-fifth Congress on March 3, 1859, this angry sentiment was manifested in the new community of Carson City at a June 6 mass meeting calling for a constitutional convention. Initially, the plan for popular sovereignty proposed by James Crane included the creation of a provisional government similar to one used in the Oregon Country from 1843 to 1848. The insurgents opened the convention in Genoa on July 18, and, inspired by Crane and Ormsby, they seceded from Utah Territory, adopted a constitution modeled after California's, and called for the election of their own territorial officials. The sagebrush rebels named their provisional territory Nevada, taking the name advocated by Smith and the House Committee on Territories. Included within its boundaries were all of eastern California from the

crest of the Sierra and the portion of New Mexico Territory north of the Colorado River.²⁰

The convention supported Judge Crane as unofficial delegate to Congress despite a closely contested election marked by charges of fraudulent voting on both sides. Crane's opponent was Frederick Dodge, western Utah Indian Agent. He represented a large faction, located principally in Carson Valley, Lake Valley, and the Walker River country, that also favored creation of a new territory by Congress but did not support the insurrectionist provisional government. A zealous advocate for his Indian charges, Dodge opposed the unconventional designs of Crane and Ormsby—now residing in the rebel hotbed of Carson City—and other secessionists who continued to allude to the Mountain Meadows Massacre to support their claim that the Indians of the Great Basin were their enemies and the allies of the Mormons. "It is now known that some are engaged in an effort to establish a provisional government here," decried Richard Allen from Genoa, "a course which has always been reprobated except by scheming demagogues or an ignorant rabble, I wish to publish to the world the protest of nearly all the respectable people here against the proceedings." Suddenly, on September 26, James M. Crane, the articulate spokesman for the provisional Nevada Territory, died from a heart attack in Gold Hill at the age of forty.²¹

Although Allen continued to assert that Dodge was the duly elected delegate to Congress, John Jacob Musser, president of the territorial convention, former district attorney in Downieville, California, and one of the founders of Carson City and a leader in the Provisional Government's People's Committee, was elected to replace Crane on November 12. He left Carson City one month later for Washington via steamer from San Francisco. Upon his arrival in the nation's capital, Musser spent the first months of 1860 trying to convince the House and Senate that they should recognize the extralegal actions of the territorial convention, and that he, and not Frederick Dodge, also in Washington lobbying Congress for a new territory, represented the wishes of the citizens of western Utah.²²

The secessionists had clearly usurped the prerogatives of both the Congress and the president in establishing the Nevada Territory that included an elected governor, Isaac Roop, and other executive, legislative, and judicial officials who were serving under the aegis of a constitution, a document reserved for statehood. "In reference to the difficulties known to exist in the portion of this Territory known as Nevada," proclaimed Utah's Governor Cumming in a February 1860 report to the United States secretary of state, "I believe them to arise from a settled determination on the part of its inhabitants to recognize no courts and obey no laws, except those which have their origin in, and spring directly from primitive assemblages of the people." The *Salt Lake Mountaineer* ridiculed the separatists and suggested that "each man of the three or four hundred who



John Jacob Musser. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

are citizens of that majestic sovereign territory ought to have an office. . . . But do not be afraid, Sister Nevada, we shall not contest your right to a divorce."²³

While Washington pondered the fate of Nevada, other names were commonly used for the region. Richard Allen, reporting on the "rush to Washoe" in the *San Francisco Herald* on March 26, 1860, wrote that

there has been a discernable increase in the discoveries the past week . . . giving additional evidence that richer mines, if possible, than have yet been found will ere long astonish the world, and send out to the gaping seekers after news everywhere, the glad intelligence that Western Utah (or Nevada, Carson, Washoe, or whatever it may yet be permanently named) is richer than all the Potosis or El Dorados that have ever yet been opened to the sight of man.²⁴

At first, communications from J. J. Musser expressed an optimism that Congress seriously planned to address the call for a Nevada Territory. On March 2 he wrote that "all parties there seemed disposed to do something for us, and if

a bill of some description can be brought to a vote no fears need be entertained of its passage." A Senate bill inspired by Utah's anti-Mormon federal judge, John Cradlebaugh, an ally of Dodge, had been introduced which would repeal the Organic Act for Utah Territory, change the name to Nevada Territory, and move the capital from Salt Lake City to Carson Valley. Another bill aimed to repeal the Organic Act for Utah Territory and divide the area between two new territories of Jefferson and Nevada. But nothing came of the proposals.²⁵

On May 11 the new Republican chairman of the House Committee on Territories, Galusha A. Grow, reported favorably on a bill supported by Musser, a fellow Pennsylvanian, to provide a temporary government for the Territory of Nevada. An amendment was proposed on the floor to organize a permanent territorial government when the population of the area exceeded twenty thousand inhabitants. Another amendment introduced by John B. Clark of Missouri to allow for popular sovereignty in the territory, prompted by a minority committee report, was opposed by fellow-Democrat George S. Houston of Alabama. Some representatives from the border states—including William Smith and John Clark, both of whom would later serve in the Confederate Congress—supported territorial status if the Organic Act did not outlaw slavery. Representatives from the deep South, however, like George Houston and Speaker James Orr of South Carolina in the Thirty-fifth Congress, believed that Nevada was destined to be a free state and would not support their more pragmatic colleagues. The bill and amendments were subsequently tabled by a vote of 92 to 74. William Smith, soon to leave his seat in the United States Congress and serve in the First Confederate Congress, attaining the rank of major general in the Confederate Army and serving as governor of Virginia in the final years of the Civil War, now voted against creating Nevada Territory.²⁶

By the time the Pony Express delivered the bad news from Washington to the citizens of western Utah, Major Ormsby had met a violent end, on May 12, 1860, a casualty of the ill-advised and ill-fated first battle of the Pyramid Lake Indian War. Upon hearing of the bloodshed, Frederick Dodge cut short his lobbying and made a hasty return from the nation's capital. In his investigation of the hostilities, Dodge expressed his outrage to the United States commissioner of Indian affairs over the conduct of the settlers who had instigated the confrontation with the Paiutes and their allies:

The unwarrantable war that is now waging by the whites of this country against the Indians has not a parallel in the archives of the Nation. It is nothing but a filibustering movement, the leader of which (*Major Ormsby one of Walker's disappointed men in Nicaragua*) was killed at the first fire at Pyramid Lake. . . . If I fall in doing my duty, it will be by the hands of that *Banditti* and not by the Indians.

The Pyramid Lake Indian War, which began on May 7 with the burning of Williams Station on the lower Carson River and the killing of three white men

over the kidnapping and sexual molestation of two Indian girls, ended on June 2 with a rout of the tribal forces in the second battle, south of Pyramid Lake. A tentative peace with Chief Winnemucca's band of the Northern Paiute was negotiated before Dodge returned to Washington in September to plead for the Indian cause in western Utah, and apparently to resume his efforts to persuade Congress to create a Nevada Territory.²⁷

With the demise of William Ormsby, remaining mastermind of the secessionist movement, the provisional Nevada Territory was in its death throes. The only person who seemed to identify with the provisional government was Governor Isaac Roop, in his pleas for assistance with the Indian problem. The legislative session called for July 1 was never held. Moreover, John Musser chose not to return to Washington following his negative experience with the first session of the Thirty-sixth Congress. The *Territorial Enterprise* of August 4, 1860, opined:

As for a provisional government, or in other words, inducing Congress to grant this portion of Utah a separate territorial organization, it seems to be out of the question, as



Isaac N. Roop. (*Nevada State Museum*)

all our former experience and the opinion of our present Delegate in that body tend to show. The latter even expresses a doubt if Congress ever will erect another Territory from any portion of the public domain. . . . To talk of any other kind of government than that of a State or Territory, is to talk of something foreign to our system, and can, practically, mean nothing more or less than an organized mob or vigilance committee.²⁸

The citizens of western Utah turned their backs to the provisional government and for the time being resigned themselves to being governed, albeit haphazardly, by Carson County officials and the federal court. Many of the newcomers were so busy making their fortunes in the booming mining districts that they did not really care. Still, efforts to petition Congress for a Nevada Territory continued unabated. "That notwithstanding the best efforts of the presiding judges, and officers of the law, and your petitioners, we are and must be, until Congress shall grant relief, in a deplorable state of anarchy," read one line of a petition sent in late 1860 to Milton S. Latham, Democratic United States senator from California and a member of the Committee on Territories. "Your petitioners would further represent, that they are law abiding and Union loving people, and not interested in any abstract questions about the institution of slavery, but desire to be protected in their lives and property, which can never be effected in our isolated condition, without a separate Territorial organization."²⁹

When the Thirty-sixth Congress reconvened in December, the citizens of western Utah found instead of continued opposition a receptive audience for their territorial entreaties; the provisional territorial government was not legitimized, however, despite Governor Roop's memorial to the House and his lobbying efforts in Washington. The congressional change of heart resulted from a combination of forces: silver and gold discoveries at the Comstock, Aurora, and elsewhere; the ever-growing number of settlers' need for public safety; and, ultimately most important, the coming of the Civil War. With the secession of South Carolina and six other southern states prior to Abraham Lincoln's inauguration as president, the remaining members of Congress moved to pass a Nevada Territory bill. On February 11, 1861, Senator Latham presented the petitions from the citizens of western Utah to the Committee on Territories. The committee chair, Democrat James S. Green of Missouri, reported favorably on the bill; it passed in the Senate on February 26, and in the House on March 1. William Smith, suffering from a protracted illness, did not vote on the Senate bill. On March 2, as one of his last acts in office, President Buchanan signed the Organic Act, and Nevada Territory was finally created.³⁰

So Nevada was the region's chosen name—or was it? In 1862 there appeared support for statehood, but under the name Washoe. Promoters of statehood were not discouraged by the fact that their territory, with some thirty thousand inhabitants, lacked the population requisite for one member in the House, which the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 prescribed to justify state status. When the territorial legislators met in Carson City in December 1862, they approved "an act to frame a Constitution and State Government for the State of Washoe."



Carson City in the early 1860s. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

Councilman Isaac Roop of Susanville, former governor of the provisional Nevada Territory, introduced the legislation. Ironically, within a year an official boundary survey placed Susanville, and Isaac Roop, in California.³¹

The name debate came to a head in November 1863 even though territorial governor James W. Nye failed to convince Congress to pass an enabling act. Delegates met in Carson City to draft a constitution for the "State of Washoe," using California's law as their model. However, many of the convention delegates objected to the name Washoe. Alanson W. "Lance" Nightingill of Unionville wanted the new state to be named after his county, Humboldt. That caused the delegate from Aurora in Esmeralda County, attorney Leonard Sterns, to declare that "there is a regal odor about the name of Baron Humboldt that I, for one, am opposed to encircling around the free State of Esmeralda." (The German naturalist, geographer, and world traveler had never seen the river in the Great Basin that Frémont named after him.³²) "While I pay homage to his worth and to his giant mind, I perceive a decided inappropriateness in his name for us and our posterity," Sterns decried. "Names of men of foreign birth and kingly titles, are not befitting our Republican Government, our democratic institutions." Sterns also attacked the name Washoe and displayed the racism and antidemocratic attitudes toward Native Americans prevalent at the time. "We oppose the name of Washoe because it represents the lowest and most despicable tribe that ever desecrated the American continent," he ranted to the dele-

gates. "Let his name go down unsung and unpainted upon the escutcheon of the Gem of the Pacific."³³

The Aurora attorney then turned his attention to the name Nevada. "Nevada is proposed by some. I had the honor of putting the first article in print advocating that proposition in this Territory; but I have repented, and abandoned my first love for that more endearing one which is named in my report. . . . Nevada is a euphonious name—but how much more so is Esmeralda!"³⁴

Unconvinced by Stern's diatribe, Lance Nightingill, the Humboldt County treasurer, withdrew the name Humboldt in favor of Nevada. The name Esmeralda, which means emerald in Spanish and was given to the mining district around Aurora, lost by a vote of 32 to 4. After an eloquent plea for the name Washoe by Charles S. Potter, a merchant in the Washoe County settlement of Ophir, during which he defended the good name of the Washoe people, the convention adopted the name Nevada by a vote of 28 to 8. Sterns voted in the majority.³⁵

Seemingly, Nevada was almost a state and almost named Nevada. The move toward statehood was delayed, however, on January 19, 1864, when the citizens of the territory voted down the proposed state constitution because of disputes over mining taxes and state elections. But national politics speeded the processes. Moderate Republican forces in Congress, recognizing President Lincoln's need for support in the 1864 election (a three-way race pitting Lincoln against General John C. Frémont, candidate of the Radical Republicans, and General George B. McClellan, a Democrat), soon passed an enabling act for "the People of Nevada" that paved the way for statehood. Lincoln signed the bill on March 21.³⁶

In July another constitutional convention met in Carson City. Again the proposed name of the state aroused animated debate. Humboldt and Esmeralda were suggested as in 1863, and so were Bullion, Oro Plata, and Sierra Plata. Delegate John A. Collins of Virginia City strongly advocated calling the state Washoe. He argued that the name Nevada had caused, and would continue to cause, great confusion because California already had a Nevada City and Nevada County, not to mention the Sierra Nevada—a complaint that had been registered as early as March 1860 in Carson City's *Territorial Enterprise* by the *Nevada Democrat* of Nevada City, California. Moreover, Collins proclaimed, "those who understand the meaning of the word [snow-covered] are aware that it is wholly impracticable to us. When you hear it, you are inclined to button your coat, and shiver. Here we have an almost semi-tropical climate of almost the whole of the Territory. . . . We are known everywhere, north and south, east and west as Washoe."³⁷

Charles W. Tozer, from Gold Hill, vehemently challenged Collins's characterization of Nevada and his state of Washoe: "We are already known as the Territory of Nevada and a great part of our Territory lies throughout its course

at the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. I think it proper to call the State 'Nevada' on that account alone."³⁸

"There is another reason why the name Nevada should be retained," retorted Nathaniel Ball. A Gold Hill banker, Ball said he had surveyed a number of visitors from the East on what they called the area. "Without exception, those gentleman told me that they never heard the name of Washoe applied to this country at all, until they came to California, except by some of their friends who had resided in California," he said. "They each and all assured me that the name by which we are known throughout the East is Nevada."³⁹

J. Neely Johnson, president of the convention and former governor of California, made the most compelling argument for naming the proposed state Nevada. "In the Enabling Act, as I conceive, Congress had specifically prescribed our name," Johnson pointed out. "Now the child is named; it has been baptized by the name of Nevada, and nothing short of an act of Congress can change that name."⁴⁰

On September 7, 1864, the voters of Nevada Territory approved the constitution by an overwhelming 8-to-1 margin. President Lincoln proclaimed Nevada a state on October 31, a week in advance of the national election. Lincoln carried the new state by a sizeable margin over McClellan, Frémont having dropped out of the race in September, and Nevadans gave the beleaguered president three Republican congressmen to assist him in his efforts to reconstruct the nation.⁴¹

Looking back, there was no guarantee that the name Nevada—by all accounts



Nathan Ball. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

the product of an 1858 congressional committee chaired by the now-forgotten William Smith of Virginia—would one day be applied to a state carved out of the desolate Great Basin. But once named, the “Battle Born” state has remained by that name, Nevada, for over 130 years, and will surely continue to do so despite the proclaimed aversion of many contemporary Nevadans to anything that smacks of federal regulation and control.

NOTES

¹William C. Miller and Eleanor Bushnell, eds., *Reports of the 1863 Constitutional Convention of the Territory of Nevada* (Carson City: Legislative Counsel Bureau, 1972), 35.

²Hubert Howe Bancroft and Frances Fuller Victor, *History of Nevada: 1540–1888* (rpt. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1981), 150–51; Helen S. Carlson, *Nevada Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1974), 176, 215.

³Beulah Hershiser, “The Adjustment of the Boundaries of Nevada,” *First Biennial Report of the Nevada Historical Society, 1907–1908*, 121–34; Russell R. Elliott, with the assistance of William D. Rowley, *History of Nevada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 49–89; James W. Hulse, *The Silver State: Nevada’s Heritage Reinterpreted* (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 57–73; Myron Angel, ed., *History of Nevada: 1881 with Illustrations* (rpt. Berkeley, Calif.: Howell-North, 1958), 556; Secretary of State, *Political History of Nevada* (Carson City: State of Nevada, 1990), 21–104; Miller and Bushnell, *1863 Constitutional Convention*, 21–22, 25, 32–36; Andrew J. Marsh, *Official Reports of the Debate and Proceedings in the Constitutional Convention of the State of Nevada Assembled at Carson City, July 4, 1864, to Form a Constitution and State Government* (San Francisco: Frank Eastman, Printer, 1866), 33–36, 39–40, 193; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 150–51; Carlson, *Nevada Place Names*, 176; Alvin Arthur Fahrner, “The Public Career of William ‘Extra Billy’ Smith” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1953), 170–205; John W. Bell, *Memoirs of Governor William Smith of Virginia: His Political, Military, and Personal History* (New York: The Moss Engraving Company, 1891), 24–26, 101; Chris W. Boyer, *Profits, Plots and Lynching—Mormon Station, The Founding of Carson City, and the Creation of Nevada Territory* (Carson City: Neato Stuff, 1955), 1–209.

The members of the House Committee on Territories for the Thirty-fifth Congress, first session, included John B. Clark of Missouri, Amos P. Granger of New York, Galusha A. Grow of Pennsylvania, James Hughes of Indiana, Chauncey L. Knapp of Massachusetts, Lawrence O’B. Branch of North Carolina, Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia, Felix K. Zollicoffer of Tennessee, and chairman William Smith of Virginia. *Congressional Globe* (35th Cong., 1st sess.), 31.

⁴*Wa She Shu: A Washo Tribal History* (Reno: Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, 1976), 3–19; Numa: *A Northern Paiute History* (Reno: Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, 1976), 3–24; *Neve: A Western Shoshone History* (Reno: Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, 1976), 3–22; *Nuwuvi: A Southern Paiute History* (Reno: Inter-Tribal Council, 1976), 3–51; Andrew Rolle, *John Charles Frémont: Character as Destiny* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 48–77; Thelma S. Guild and Harvey L. Carter, *Kit Carson: A Pattern for Heroes* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 118–143.

⁵Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 47–52; Hulse, *Silver State*, 50–55; J. Wells Kelly, ed., *First Directory of Nevada Territory* (rpt. Los Gatos, Calif.: The Talisman Press, 1962), 17–18.

⁶Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 49–57; Hulse, *Silver State*, 57–60; Kelly, *First Directory*, 18–21; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 66–80; Carlson, *Nevada Place Names*, 70–71; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 26; Albert R. Page, “Orson Hyde and the Carson Valley Mission, 1855–1857” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1970), 14–51, 65; Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spence, *The Expeditions of John Charles Frémont: Map Portfolio* (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1970), Map 5 (1848).

⁷Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 52–55; Hulse, *Silver State*, 58–60; Kelly, *First Directory*, 5–6, 19, 30; Hershiser, “Adjustment of Boundaries,” 121–24; Henry DeGroot, *Sketches of the Washoe Silver Mines with a Description of the Soil, Climate, and Mineral Resources of the Country East of the Sierra* (San Francisco: Hutchings and Rosenfeld, 1860), 3–24; *Laws of the State of California*, 3d sess., ch. CXVIII;

Statutes of California (1859), ch. CLXXXIII; *Senate Miscellaneous Document* (34th Cong., 1st sess. 48); *House Committee Report* (34th Cong., 3d sess. 116); Page, "Orson Hyde," 20–21, 40–44, 49–50, 52–53, 61–62, 79; James Thomas Butler, "Isaac Roop, Pioneer and Political Leader of Northeastern California" (M.A. thesis, University of California Berkeley, 1958), 49–52; "First Records of Carson Valley, Utah Territory," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 9:2 (Summer-Fall 1966), 1; *The Placerville Herald* (3 September 1853), p. 2.

⁸Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 55–57; Hulse, *Silver State*, 59–60; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 38–42; Page, "Orson Hyde," 65–125; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah, 1540–1886* (rpt. Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1982), 591–92; Donald R. Moorman, with Gene A. Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons: The Utah War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992).

According to the *Territorial Enterprise* of 11 June 1859, "the necessity of a separation from Utah, and the formation of a separate organization, began to press upon the people of this portion of the Territory as early as the Spring of 1856." The writer, who appears to be James Crane, seems to be alluding to a controversial case in Orson Hyde's probate court that polarized the people of Carson Valley. Two groups, represented principally by Mormon Jonathan Reese, son of pioneer John Reese, and non-Mormon Elzy Knott, were contesting ownership of a grist and saw mill in Genoa. The probate court jury ruled in Reese's favor in June 1856 despite clear evidence of a lien in Knott's name on the mill his father had built for the Reese Company in 1854. Elzy Knott was able to obtain a judgment for more than \$20,000 in the federal court of Judge W. W. Drummond at Mottsville and maintained possession of the mill. Crane, in a letter dated 17 January 1859 sent to William Smith, claimed that Mormons and non-Mormons came precariously close to a violent confrontation in 1856. Angel, *History of Nevada*, 37, 40; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 75–77, 151–52; C. V. Waite, *The Mormon Prophet and His Harem: or, An Authentic History of Brigham Young, His Numerous Wives and Children* (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1866), 31–32; Herb S. Hamlin, ed., *Knott Reminiscences: Early History of Nevada in the 1850's* (Placerville, Calif.: Pioneer Press, 1947), 7–8, 11–12; "First Records of Carson Valley," 74–75; *Probate Court, Carson County, Utah and Nevada Territory, 1855–1861*, (Nevada State Library and Archives, Carson City), 15–21; *Territorial Enterprise* (11 June 1859), p. 2.

⁹Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 57–58; Hulse, *Silver State*, 71; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 42–45; Kelly, *First Directory*, 29–31; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 83; Hershiser, "Adjustment of Boundaries," 125; James M. Crane, *The Past, the Present, and the Future of the Pacific* (San Francisco: Sterett and Co., 1856), 3–79; Mae Helene Bacon Boggs, *My Playhouse Was a Concord Coach: An Anthology of Newspaper Clippings and Documents Relating to Those Who Made California History During the Years 1822–1888* (Oakland, Calif.: Howell-North Press, 1942), 275; William Newell Davis, Jr., "The Territory of Nantua: An Episode in Pioneer Government East of the Sierra," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 21:3 (1942), 229–33; Butler, "Isaac Roop," 42–46; David Thompson, ed., *The Tennessee Letters: From Carson Valley, 1857–1860* (Reno: The Grace Dangberg Foundation, 1983), 14–15.

¹⁰Hamlin, *Knott Reminiscences*, 8, 12; Boggs, *My Playhouse*, 275; Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 115, 118–21; *Marysville Herald* (8 August 1853), p. 4 (advertisement); *Placerville Mountain Democrat* (11 July 1857), p. 2; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 42–46; Le Roy R. Hafen, *The Overland Mail: 1849–1869* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1926), 109–15; Michael J. Makley, *The Hanging of Lucky Bill* (Woodfords, Calif.: Eastern Sierra Press, 1993), 38, 40–46, 50, 52, 55, 60–61, 65, 67–68, 82–83, 93–94, 96, 98–100, 106, 108, 112, 116–17; *Territorial Enterprise* (19 May 1860), p. 2.

William M. Ormsby, who returned to Sharpsburg, Kentucky, in 1852 to bring his wife Margaret and their daughter to California, probably met William Walker and James Caleb Smith while living in Sacramento prior to the Nicaragua campaign in 1855. Smith, an attorney who preceded his father to California in 1849, died at New Granada, Nicaragua, on 2 May 1856. Bell, *Memoirs of Governor William Smith*, 88, 101, 135; Fahrner, "Public Career," 7, 162, 167–168.

After conquering Nicaragua, William Walker was elected its president on 29 June 1856 in a fraudulent election. His ultimate ambition was to see Nicaragua and other Central American countries admitted into the Union as pro-slavery states. A force of Central American armies finally drove Walker from power, and he surrendered on 1 May 1857 returning to the United States. Following abortive attempts to invade Nicaragua and Honduras and overthrow their governments, Walker was executed on 12 September 1860 in Truxillo, Honduras. Frederic Rosengarten, *Freebooters Must Die!*

The Life and Death of William Walker, the Most Notorious Filibuster of the Nineteenth Century (Wayne, Pa.: Haverford House, 1976).

¹¹*Territorial Enterprise* (19 May 1860), p. 2; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 45; Hershiser, "Adjustment of Boundaries," 125; Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 9, 11–12.

¹²Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 58; Kelly, *First Directory*, 24–25; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 45–48; Hershiser, "Adjustment of Boundaries," 125; Davis, "Territory of Nataqua," 231.

¹³Fahrner, "Public Career," 9–12, 162–205; Fahrner writes (p. 11), "In 1834, a violent attack was made in Congress upon the administration of the Post Office under William Taylor Barry, President Andrew Jackson's postmaster-general. An investigation disclosed that the expenditures of the department had been greatly increased, and that many contractors received extra compensation for additional services. Without actual reference to Smith, the circumstance was noted in debate by Senator Benjamin Watkins Leigh, a Whig of Virginia. But the *Blue Book*, or official register of the United States government, contained many references to Smith's extra compensation. Consequently, the Whigs in the United States Senate began to refer to Smith as Extra Billy"; Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 14; *Placerville Mountain Democrat* (5 June 1858), p. 2; *San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin* (9 April 1858), p. 2; (San Francisco) *Daily Evening Bulletin* (9 April 1858), p. 2.

J. Wells Kelly stated that Crane came to California in 1850; however, Crane's book published in 1856 states that he arrived in 1849. Crane, *Past, Present, and Future*, 3; Kelly, *First Directory*, 29.

¹⁴Angel, *History of Nevada*, 43, 46; Hershiser, "Adjustment of Boundaries," 125; *Daily Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco) (1 December 1857), p. 1, cited in Davis, "Territory of Nataqua," 231, 237; *Journal of the 9th Session of the Assembly of the State of California* (1858), 6, 134; *House Executive Documents* (35th Cong., 1st sess.), 102; *House Report of Committees* (35th Cong., 1st sess.), 375; *House Journal* (35th Cong., 1st sess.), 615; *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.) (14 April 1858), p. 3.

Unfortunately, we may never know the reason why the House Committee on Territories chose the name Nevada over Sierra Nevada as there are no committee minutes to determine legislative intent, and the original bill is no longer extant. Interview with Martha Murphy, Center for Legislative Archives, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., 16 June 1995.

¹⁵*The New York Times* (13 May 1858), p. 4.

¹⁶Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 58; Kelly, *First Directory*, 31; Hershiser, "Adjustment of Boundaries," 125. Contrary to Hershiser's contention, the bill was not lost in the Committee on the Whole on 13 May 1858. Elliott's assertion that the House adjourned on 14 May is not correct. Fahrner, "Public Career," 174–78, 180–82; *Congressional Globe* (35th Cong., 1st sess.), 2122; *House Journal* (35th Cong., 1st sess.), 1148; *House Report of Committees* (35th Cong., 1st sess.), 375; *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.) (10 April 1858), p. 3; (11 May 1858), p. 2; (13 May 1858), p. 3.

¹⁷*Territorial Enterprise*, quoted in *Daily Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco) (21 December 1858), p. 1, cited in Davis, "Territory of Nataqua," 232; Waite, *Mormon Prophet*, 31–36; Bancroft, *History of Utah*, 591–92; Don West, "Troubled Days in Carson Valley," *Nevada Official Bicentennial Book* (Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1976), 54–55.

¹⁸Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 14–15; Kelly, *First Directory*, 24–25; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 84; *Territorial Enterprise* (12 February 1859), p. 2; (9 April 1859), p. 3; (16 April 1859), p. 3.

The members of the House Committee on Territories for the Thirty-fifth Congress, second session, included John B. Clark of Missouri, Amos P. Granger of New York, Galusha A. Grow of Pennsylvania, James Hughes of Indiana, Chauncey L. Knapp of Massachusetts, William Smith of Virginia, Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio, Felix K. Zollincoffer of Tennessee, and chairman Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia. *Congressional Globe* (35th Cong., 2d sess.), 12.

¹⁹Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 150–51; Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 67–68.

²⁰Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 58–59; Hulse, *Silver State*, 71; James H. Simpson, *Report of Explorations across the Great Basin in 1859* (rpt. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1983), 91; Kelly, *First Directory*, 25–28, 90; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 61–64; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 84–88; Hershiser, "Adjustment of Boundaries," 125–27; Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 67–68, 115–21, 167; Dorothy O. Johnson and Clark M. Gates, *Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 239–45; *San Francisco Herald* (30 December 1858); *Territorial Enterprise* (21 April 1859), p. 1; (4 June 1859), p. 2; (11 June 1859), pp. 2, 3; (16 July 1859), p. 2; *Daily Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco) (17 July 1861), p. 1, cited in Davis, "Territory of Nataqua," 232–33, 238.

John Keithley Trumbo served as secretary at the Carson City mass meeting in June 1859; at this

same time, he was the clerk to the People's Court in the William Sides murder trial, William Ormsby, his brother-in-law, presiding as chief judge. Trumbo, an auctioneer born in Bath County, Kentucky, on 14 November 1821, came to Carson Valley in 1855 from Sacramento and worked for Reese and Company. He married Mary Reese on 29 November 1857, served as agent for his father-in-law, and operated his ranch in the Carson Valley after John Reese relocated to Salt Lake City in late 1858. Reese briefly returned to the Carson Valley as a guide for Captain James H. Simpson in his 1859 federal road survey across the Great Basin and the Sierra Nevada; Simpson named the Reese River after him. Reese had returned again to Genoa by late 1860, and, with Trumbo's assistance, sold off his ranch and other interests in the Carson Valley. He died in Salt Lake City on 20 April 1888 at the age of seventy-nine. *Placerville Mountain Democrat* (6 November 1860), p. 3; *The Salt Lake Tribune* (21 April 1888); *Deseret News* (21 April 1888).

John Trumbo survived a gunfight in Genoa with former Deputy United States Marshall Warren Wasson, an associate of John Cradlebaugh and Frederick Dodge, on 11 February 1860 over land allegedly belonging to the Reese family. Six months later, Trumbo lost a race to attorney John C. James of Virginia City to represent Carson County in the House of Representatives for the 1860–61 Utah Territorial Legislature. In 1862–63, Trumbo lived in Carson City and sold real estate, and, by 1866, he had moved to Austin, Nevada and worked as an auctioneer. Trumbo died in his home town of Sharpsburg in Bath County, Kentucky, on 19 June 1885 at the age of sixty-three. Angel, *History of Nevada*, 45, 374, 378–80, 533–34, 552–54; Simpson, *Report of Explorations*, 27, 48, 54, 66, 78, 80, 82, 84, 86–88, 91–92, 94, 103–7, 110, 112–13, 115, 119, 125, 127, 133, 142–43; Secretary of State, *Political History*, 61; J. Wells Kelly, *Second Directory of Nevada Territory* (Virginia City: Valentine and Co., 1863), 111; Myron Angel, ed., *Directory of the City of Austin* (Austin, Nevada: J. D. Fairchild and Co., 1866), 100; Frank Esshom, *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1966), 1217; *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah of the Tenth Annual Session for the Years 1860–61* (Great Salt Lake City: Elias Smith, Public Printer, 1861); "Mormon Station by John Reese" (1884) (University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library); *United States Decennial Census for Carson County, Utah Territory, 1860*, 56, 167; *Deeds, Mining and Real Estate, Vol. B., Carson County, Utah Territory, 1860* (Nevada State Library and Archives, Carson City), 352, 527, 587–88; *Territorial Enterprise* (8 January 1859), p. 3 (advertisement); (11 June 1859), pp. 2, 3; (18 February 1860), p. 2; (4 August 1860), p. 2.

²¹Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 59; Simpson, *Report of Explorations*, 9, 34, 37–38, 91, 93–95, 97–98, 101–3, 471; Kelly, *First Directory*, 25–31; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 63–66; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 87–89; Davis, "Territory of Nataqua," 233; *Report on the Conditions of the Indian Tribes* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1867), 517–19.

Crane died on Monday evening, 26 September 1859, not 27 September as noted in Angel, and in Bancroft and Victor. Crane was buried in Carson City on 28 September. Hershisier, "Adjustment of Boundaries," 127; Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 50, 62–63, 65, 67–68, 70–72, 82–83, 87, 104; *Territorial Enterprise* (11 June 1859), p. 2; (25 June 1859), p. 2; (9 July 1859), p. 2; (16 July 1859), p. 2; (8 October 1859), p. 2; (26 November 1859), p. 2.

²²Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 60; Kelly, *First Directory*, 31; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 59, 64–65; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 89–91; Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 102–3; *Territorial Enterprise* (8 October 1859), pp. 2, 3; (26 November 1859), p. 2; (10 December 1859), p. 1; (17 December 1859), p. 1; (24 December 1859), pp. 2, 3; (10 March 1860), p. 1.

Richard Allen claimed in a correspondence to the *San Francisco Herald* dated 25 August 1859 that "about a year ago James Crane, being then in Washington, wrote to his 'next friend' in the Territory, informing him that the Territory of Nevada would be established upon a certain day in December last, and requesting him to select a capital for this embryo empire of the West. Accordingly the 'next friend,' being at war with the inhabitants of Genoa, proceeded to Eagle Valley, fifteen miles north, and drawing at right angles across a desert a number of lines, some distance apart, he named the intervening space streets and blocks, and to the whole he gave the name Carson City." If Allen's claim was essentially true and the next friend was Abraham Curry, one of the principal founders of Carson City, then the creation of Carson City was part of a greater plan formulated by a number of key players (including William Ormsby, James Crane, Abe Curry, John J. Musser, Frank M. Proctor, and Benjamin F. Green) to garner the territorial capital, possibly territorial offices, and, one day, maybe the state capital for themselves.

Richard Allen had been promoting the fledgling community of Harford, one mile north of Genoa, as the proposed capital for what he called Carson Territory in 1858, Allen being one of the town's principal developers. He and John Cradlebaugh, federal district judge, were business partners in the Harford Mining Company.

A native of Harford County, Maryland, north of Baltimore, Allen came to California in 1851. He moved from San Francisco to Genoa in September 1857 and reported on events in western Utah Territory in the *Herald*. An ardent Democrat, he was elected justice of the peace on 6 August 1860, presided over the coroner's jury inquest on the killing of desperado Sam Brown by Henry Vansickle in July 1861, and practiced law in Genoa prior to moving to the Walker River country and Aurora in 1863. He would return to the Carson Valley by 1865 before relocating with his second family to Hamilton in the White Pine district in the summer of 1869. On 24 May 1870, Allen, a chronic alcoholic possessed with a violent temperament, was shot to death in eastern Nevada at the age of thirty-nine; he had provoked a showdown with Dr. J. N. R. Owen during the last of his many drinking binges. Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 12, 76, 154, 177–179; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 337, 349, 356–57, 375, 550–51; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 86; Kelly, *First Directory*, 56, 66; Kelly, *Second Directory*, 419; *The Silver Age* (13 July 1861), p. 2; *Esmeralda Daily Union* (2 May 1864), p. 4; *Douglas County Banner* (21 October 1865), p. 3; *White Pine Daily News* (25 May 1870), p. 3; *Early Maps, Genoa, Carson County, Utah Territory, 1855–1860* (Nevada State Library and Archives, Carson City), 161; *County Court, Carson County, Utah and Nevada Territory, 1855–1861* (Nevada State Library and Archives, Carson City), 21; *United States Decennial Census for Carson County, Utah Territory, 1860*, 168.

Russell Elliott in his biography of William M. Stewart has the future United States senator from Nevada chairing a send-off committee for John J. Musser on 10 December 1859. The chair was actually Wellington Stewart, prosecuting attorney for the second judicial district of Utah Territory. Elliott assumed that records and newspaper accounts referring to W. Stewart related to William Morris Stewart. Short-hand references to William Morris Stewart included W. M. Stewart, Wm. Stewart, and William Stewart, but W. Stewart was reserved for Wellington Stewart. Wellington Stewart, not William M. Stewart, was appointed acting prosecuting attorney of Carson County by the Probate Court on 12 September 1860 and designated selectman on 13 April 1861. Russell R. Elliott, *Servant of Power: A Political Biography of Senator William M. Stewart* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1983), 10–11, 16–17; Angel *History of Nevada*, 76, 333–34; *Territorial Enterprise* (10 December 1859), p. 1; *Probate Court, Carson County, Utah and Nevada Territory*, 74; *County Court, Carson County, Utah and Nevada Territory*, 111.

²³Angel, *History of Nevada*, 63–64; “Governor’s Report upon the Present State of Utah, February 2, 1860” (Alfred Cumming Papers, Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina); *Salt Lake Mountaineer* (27 October 1859), quoted in Davis, “Territory of Nataqua,” 233, 238.

²⁴Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 125.

²⁵Hershiser, “Adjustment of Boundaries,” 127; Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 102, 104, 124, 133–37; J. Ross Browne, *A Peep at Washoe and Washoe Revisited* (rpt. Balboa Island, Calif.: Paisano Press, 1959), 55–56; *Congressional Globe* (36th Cong., 1st sess.), 374; “Report of the Grand Jury of the Second District of Utah Territory, September Term, 1859” (Genoa, Carson Valley: *Territorial Enterprise*, 1859), 1–4; *Territorial Enterprise* (18 February 1860), p. 2; (3 March 1860), p. 2; (10 March 1860), p. 1; (14 April 1860), p. 2; (21 April 1860), p. 1.

A native of Circleville, Pickaway County, Ohio, John Cradlebaugh was appointed United States associate justice for the district of Utah by President Buchanan on 4 June 1858. Cradlebaugh, early in 1859, tried to investigate the highly controversial Mountain Meadows Massacre, roundly condemned efforts to cover up the brutal slayings of the Missouri emigrants, and directed the burial of the remains. He was reassigned by the territorial legislature to the second judicial district in western Utah in January 1859, arrived in Genoa in August, and held court beginning in September. He empaneled a grand jury to examine conditions in western Utah—the foreman being Algernon S. Dorsey, secretary of state for the provisional Nevada Territory—which produced a scathing report highly critical of the Mormons. When President Buchanan appointed a new judge for the second judicial district, Robert P. Flenniken, who arrived in October 1860, Cradlebaugh refused to relinquish his position, claiming that the president had no legal right to remove a federal territorial judge before completion of his term in office.

After the creation of Nevada Territory, Cradlebaugh was elected as delegate to the Thirty-seventh Congress on 31 August 1861 and took his seat on 2 December. He joined the Union Army in April

1862 and was elected a colonel in the Ohio Volunteer Infantry, resigning his seat in Congress. After being badly wounded in the mouth during the Vicksburg campaign, he was honorably discharged in October 1863 and returned to Nevada Territory. He was considered for the United States Senate during the first effort for statehood. On 7 September 1864, Cradlebaugh was again elected as delegate from Nevada Territory, but the granting of statehood on 31 October voided the office. He was unsuccessful as a candidate for the United States Senate in December 1864; however, Governor Henry Blasdel appointed him adjutant-general. In January 1867, after the secretary of state became the ex-officio adjutant-general, Cradlebaugh retired to private life, engaged in the mining business, and died at the age of fifty-three near Eureka, Nevada, on 17 February 1872. Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 59–61, 75, 89; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 48, 63, 65, 74, 76, 78, 84–87, 100, 333–34, 556; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 89, 158; Secretary of State, *Political History*, 58, 62, 73; Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 45–47, 57, 62, 68, 72–74, 81, 83–85, 90, 92, 101–2, 104, 124, 128, 133, 135, 136, 141–42, 145–46, 153, 156–57, 163, 176; Moorman and Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons*, 102–23, 142, 145–49, 219, 298; *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1989), 174, 838; “William M. Cradlebaugh Memoirs”, (University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library, 1883); *The Eureka Sentinel* (20 February 1872), pp. 2–3; (23 February 1872), p. 3; *Territorial Enterprise* (8 October 1859), p. 2..

²⁶Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 60; Kelly, *First Directory*, 31; Fahrner, “Public Career,” 218–306; *Biographical Dictionary*, 783, 1839–40; *Congressional Globe* (36th Cong., 1st sess.), 817, 2068–69; *House Journal* (36th Cong., 1st sess.), 326, 825–26.

The members of the House Committee on Territories for the Thirty-sixth Congress, first session, included James M. Ashley of Ohio, Charles Case of Indiana, John B. Clark of Missouri, Daniel W. Gooch of Massachusetts, John J. Perry of Maine, William Smith of Virginia, Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio, Henry Waldron of Michigan, and chairman Galusha A. Grow of Pennsylvania. *Congressional Globe*, (36th Cong., 1st sess.), 726.

²⁷Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 92–94; Hulse, *Silver State*, 69–71; Kelly, *First Directory*, 33.

Ormsby was not the only veteran of the Walker filibustering expedition to Nicaragua to fight in the Pyramid Lake Indian War. Captain Richard G. Watkins, commander of the Silver City Guards, and other volunteers participated in William Walker's Nicaraguan campaign. Captain Watkins had been shot in the hip at the Battle of San Jacinto on 14 September 1856 and subsequently lost a leg. Watkins survived the bloody confrontation with the Paiutes, and by all accounts showed considerable bravery and military skill. The account of the first battle in Myron Angel's *History of Nevada* is principally drawn from the recollection of Watkins.

On the death of William Ormsby, a forty-five-year-old native of Mercer County, Pennsylvania, the *Territorial Enterprise* paid the fallen leader high praise and captured Ormsby's temperament when it wrote that “the future history of Nevada Territory will bear honorable testimony to the memory of Maj. Ormsby. As a man he possessed those positive qualities of character which eminently fitted him to exert an influence in a frontier settlement. Energetic and untiring in carrying out whatever he attempted, he sometimes arrayed formidable opposition against him, yet he seemed to always be equal to any emergency. At times impetuous as a torrent, yet as easily influenced by those he loved as a child, he bore, and justly, the name of being a warm friend and bitter enemy. Courageous as a lion he died fighting bravely till the last.” Angel, *History of Nevada*, 149–65; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 208–17; Thompson, *Tennessee Letters*, 134–50, 154–55, 157–64; Numa, 25–37; Rosengarten, *Freebooters*, 27–56; William Walker, *The War in Nicaragua* (rpt. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 284–85; Dan DeQuille (William Wright), *The Big Bonanza* (rpt. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 75–84; Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, *Life among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (Boston: Cupples, Upham and Co., 1883), 70–73; Ferol Egan, *Sand in a Whirlwind: The Paiute Indian War of 1860* (rpt. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1985); Joy Leland, ed., *Frederick West Lander: A Biographical Sketch (1822–1862)*, (Reno: Desert Research Institute, 1993), 151–90; William C. Miller, “The Pyramid Lake Indian War of 1860,” *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 1:1 (September 1957), 37–53; Ferol Egan, “Warren Wasson, Model Indian Agent,” *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, (Summer 1969), 3–26; *Report on Condition of Indian Tribes*, 517–22; *Territorial Enterprise* (19 May 1860), pp. 1, 2; (2 June 1860), p. 2; (9 June 1860), pp. 1, 2; (14 July 1860), p. 2; (4 August 1860), p. 2; *The New York Times* (26 June 1860), p. 5; *Letters Received by Office of Indian Affairs, 1824–1881* (Records Group 75, Utah Superintendency, 1859–1860, National Archives Microfilm 234, Roll 899); Letter, F. Dodge, Indian Agent, to A. B. Greenwood, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 7 June 1860.

Frederick Dodge was born in Indiana in 1828. Before his appointment as Indian agent in Utah Territory in 1858, Dodge had resided along the Missouri-Kansas border and served as an Indian agent for the Delaware tribe.

Dr. Jacob Forney, Indian agent for Utah Territory in Salt Lake City, decided to locate a separate agency in western Utah Territory, and in October 1858 Dodge arrived in Genoa and immediately proceeded to carry out the orders given him by the Indian Department, which involved reporting on the condition of the tribes and locating possible sites for reservations.

Dodge submitted his first report on 4 January 1859. He requested an Indian reserve to minimize contact between Indians and non-Indians, and to protect tribal hunting grounds, which were being destroyed by the settlers and immigrants to California. On 25 November 1859, Dodge proposed that two reservations be established for the Northern Paiute, one at Pyramid Lake and one at Walker River. The commissioner of the General Land Office on 8 December 1859 ordered the surveyor general of Utah Territory to reserve the land surveyed and described by Dodge.

During Dodge's tenure problems developed between the western Utah agency and Superintendent Forney in Salt Lake City over insufficient funding and the need to compensate Dodge for using his own money to help the Indians. The two federal officials came to blows and the commissioner of Indian affairs, A. B. Greenwood, had to remove the Carson Valley agency from the jurisdiction of the Utah Indian Department in order to prevent Dodge from resigning.

Besides assisting in preserving the peace in the summer of 1860 following the Pyramid Lake Indian War, Dodge was also caught up in the mining frenzy sweeping through western Utah. On 7 July 1860 he entered into a business partnership with Richard N. Allen, who had championed his cause as unofficial delegate to Congress, and others in a mining claim called Allen's Vein, located near Genoa.

Prior to leaving Carson Valley on 5 September, Dodge appointed Warren Wasson as acting Indian agent, intending to return to western Utah in the spring of 1861. On 20 April 1861, he resigned his position and two months later was commissioned a first lieutenant in the Third (later Sixth) Cavalry of the Union Army in Washington, D.C. While recruiting in the Philadelphia area that fall, Dodge took leave and returned to the western Great Basin and the newly created Nevada Territory during its first territorial legislative session. He was listed in Carson County records as selling a mining claim in the Eagle and Washoe Valley mining district on 18 October 1861, and on 5 November he and other partners leased land in Carson City.

In April 1862, Lieutenant Dodge was reassigned to the headquarters of General James Craig's brigade on the California overland mail route at Fort Leavenworth. Six months later, while serving with the Sixth Cavalry following a reassignment, Dodge was caught drunk on duty and tendered his resignation from the army on 10 October. He left his unit before his resignation became official to pursue his reinstatement. On 6 November, while en route to Perryville, Missouri, to plead his case to Congressman John Noell, Dodge died, at the age of thirty-four, from injuries sustained when the steamboat *James Dickey* exploded after it ran aground on a Mississippi River sandbar south of St. Louis near Ste. Genevieve. Biographical information and sources supplied by Robert A. Nylen, Nevada State Museum, Carson City, 14 September 1995; Simpson, *Report of Explorations*, 9, 107; Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, Volume 1* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 376; Edward C. Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes, a Tribal History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Printing Service, 1975), 28; *Senate Executive Documents* (36th Cong., 1st sess.), 741–45; *Deeds, Mining and Real Estate, Vol. B*, 324; *Deeds, Real Estate, Vol. 1, Carson County, Nevada Territory, 1861* (Nevada State Library and Archives, Carson City), 503–4; *Powers, Plats and Contracts, Carson County, Nevada Territory, 1861–1862* (Nevada State Library and Archives, Carson City), 160–62; *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis) (7 November 1862), p. 2.

²⁸Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 68; Kelly, *First Directory*, 31–34; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 148–49, 163; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 90–91; Leland, *Frederick West Lander*, 160–61, 169–70, 174, 182, 184; *Territorial Enterprise* (4 August 1860), p. 2.

John J. Musser's obituary makes it clear that he did not attend the second session of the Thirty-sixth Congress, contrary to Elliott's claim in the *History of Nevada*. Musser never returned to Congress, losing the election for Nevada territorial delegate to Supreme Court Justice Gordon N. Mott in September 1862. However, in May 1863 the acting governor for Nevada Territory, Orion Clemens, appointed him prosecuting attorney for the second judicial district. Leaving his family behind in Carson City, he moved to Shermantown in White Pine County in 1869 to practice law. He fell ill in

October 1870 and returned to the state capital, where he died on 8 March 1871 at the age of forty-one. "Colonel" Musser was eulogized as "a man of eminent ability; a sound lawyer, a brilliant orator, and socially, was genial as sunshine. He had his faults, as most men of genius have, but they will be buried with him, and lost sight of in the recollection of his intellectual brilliance and many noble traits of character." Angel, *History of Nevada*, 80, 335; *The Daily State Register* (9 March 1871), p. 3.

²⁹Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 68; Kelly, *First Directory*, 31, 34; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 73–77; Robert D. Armstrong, *Nevada Printing History: A Bibliography of Imprints and Publications, 1858–1880* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1981), 34; *Territorial Enterprise* (4 August 1860), p. 2.

³⁰The bill establishing Nevada Territory passed the House on 1 March, contrary to Elliott's date of 2 March. Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 68; Hulse, *Silver State*, 79–80; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 66; Fahrner, "Public Career," 216–17; *House Journal* (36th Cong., 2d sess.), 269, 451, 485; *Senate Journal* (36th Cong., 2d sess.), 213–316; *Congressional Globe* (36th Cong., 2d sess.), 120, 897, 923, 1334, 1337, 1356, 1362, 1425; *The New York Times* (15 February 1861), p. 1; (27 February 1861), p. 8.

The members of the Senate Committee on Territories for the Thirty-sixth Congress, second session, included Jacob Collamer of Vermont, Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, Benjamin Fitzpatrick of Alabama, Milton S. Latham of California, William K. Sebastian of Arkansas, Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio, and chairman James S. Green of Missouri. Senator Latham was excused from service on the committee on 21 January 1861. *Congressional Globe* (36th Cong., 2d sess.), 23, 483.

After the Civil War, William Smith returned to his estate, Monterosa, outside Warrenton, Virginia, and pursued the life of a gentleman farmer. Smith served in two sessions of the House of Delegates, 1875–77, and was an unsuccessful candidate for the United States Senate in 1878. He died in Warrenton on 18 May 1887 at the age of eighty-nine. He is interred in Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery; a bronze statue erected in 1906 in Capitol Square pays tribute to this son of the Old Dominion. Bell, *Memoirs of Governor William Smith*, 87–88, 100–2; *Biographical Dictionary*, 1839–40.

³¹Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 74–78; Hulse, *Silver State*, 81; Secretary of State, *Political History*, 80–81; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 81; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 164–65, 177–78; Kelly, *Second Directory*, 51–55; *Laws of the Territory of Nevada* (1862), ch. CXXIII.

Isaac Roop was born in Carroll County, Maryland, on 13 March 1822, and lived in Ashland County, Ohio, before coming to California by sea via the isthmus of Nicaragua. Roop arrived in San Francisco on 18 October 1850 and soon travelled to Shasta, where he entered into a business partnership with his elder brother Josiah.

In September 1853, Roop relocated to Honey Lake Valley in northeastern California, believing then that he resided in western Utah Territory. He founded the town of Susanville, naming it after his daughter. Through Roop's efforts the Territory of Nataqua was created on 26 April 1856, which included much of northwestern Utah Territory. Ironically, the boundaries failed to include Honey Lake Valley, and the provisional government proved to be short-lived.

Following the failure of the provisional Nevada Territory in 1860, and the subsequent creation of Nevada Territory by Congress, Roop was elected to the first and second territorial legislatures as a councilman. During this period, he tried to convince the California governor and state legislature to cede lands east of the crest of the Sierra to Nevada Territory. Nevada's Organic Act provided for transfer of the lands if the State of California would accede. In early 1863, the so-called Roop County War broke out, pitting officials of Plumas County, California, and Roop County, Nevada Territory against each other in the fight for control of the Honey Lake area. Following the boundary survey report, the California Legislature created Lassen County on 1 April 1864, and Susanville was designated the county seat.

In 1865, Isaac Roop was elected Lassen County district attorney and held the position for three years. He died on 14 February 1869 in Susanville at the age of forty-six. Butler, "Isaac Roop."

³²Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 44, 77–84; Hulse, *Silver State*, 81–83; Secretary of State, *Political History*, 83–84; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 81–85; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 177–79; Miller and Bushnell, *Reports of 1863 Constitutional Convention*, 21–22, 25, 32–36; *Nevada State Journal* (8 June 1895), p. 3.

³³Miller and Bushnell, *Reports of 1863 Constitutional Convention*, 33.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 82–84; Hulse, *Silver State*, 83; Secretary of State, *Political History*, 86–87;

Angel, *History of Nevada*, 84–85; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 179–80; Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 228–33.

³⁷Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 85–86; Hulse, *Silver State*, 83–84; Secretary of State, *Political History*, 87–90; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 85–86; Bancroft and Victor, *History of Nevada*, 180–81; Marsh, *Official Reports of Debate*, 33–34; *Territorial Enterprise* (3 March 1860), p. 2.

³⁸Marsh, *Official Reports of Debate*, 35.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 88–89; Hulse, *Silver State*, 84; Secretary of State, *Political History*, 89–91, 252; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 87; Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 233; Leslie Burns Gray, *The Source and the Vision: Nevada's Role in the Civil War Amendments and the Reconstruction Legislation* (Sparks, Nevada: The Gray Trust, 1989).

LAS VEGAS IN POPULAR CULTURE, 1950–1959

Edward E. Baldwin

Las Vegas has come to occupy a distinctive position in American mythology. Like New York and Hollywood, the city's abundance of glamour, money, and sex makes it seem as if every human desire is within reach. However, it is Las Vegas's reliance on gambling to achieve its position that contributes the most to its unique sense of freedom, as does its frontier heritage. Its isolation in the Mojave Desert, far from the sea and hundreds of miles away from the nearest city, sets Las Vegas apart both geographically and symbolically from the rest of America. The hold that Las Vegas has on the American mind can be seen in literature, both fiction and nonfiction, that uses the neon city as a setting or as a symbol. A study of depictions of Las Vegas in mass culture print media such as novels and magazines reveals much about the city itself, but also shows how the city can act as a mirror reflecting the writer's biases. The period from 1950 to 1959 is especially instructive about Las Vegas, for it was during that decade that Vegas began to realize in a major way its megaresort reputation that continues to this day. Well-publicized openings of large hotel-casinos like the Sahara, Riviera, Stardust, Desert Inn, Sands, Tropicana, and Dunes¹ helped fix Las Vegas in the minds of many Americans as a place of limitless possibilities and endless luxury. A survey of the contemporary writing, as represented by magazine articles, descriptive books, novels, short stories, and plays, demonstrates how images of Las Vegas varied widely depending upon who was looking, and also reveals the genesis of attitudes that have persisted in our culture throughout the intervening years.

NONFICTION

The most obvious vision of Las Vegas, and the one which had the most inspiration from the Chamber of Commerce, was that of tourists "basking in the

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sunshine, dancing under the stars, and winning at the tables."² Aided by materials from the Las Vegas News Bureau, some 1950s magazine writers never seemed to tire of describing the city's wonders. *Holiday's* Sean O'Faolain exults in the lights of the city as seen from an incoming airplane: "To alight after this prolonged experience of blankness on the tarmac of the McCarran airport and drive into the sudden blaze of the Strip is like seeing a rocket go off on the Fourth of July, crackling cheekily under the stars. . . . What a wonderful illusion!" O'Faolain seems completely taken by this illusion, writing that

anywhere along this boulevard, the sky is blue, the baby clouds are white, the sun umbrellas are gold-and-cream, like the bathers, the pool is clear as the sky, the air warm and exhilarating, the deck chairs variegated as the rainbow, the mowed and watered lawns like shot silk, the flowers dazzle, the shadows are cool; at a raised finger a shapely houri sways forward with a smile to fill the pasha's glass—and all the time, indoors, is the chance of free gold.

The 1990s reader may need to be reminded that all of this is written without a trace of irony; O'Faolain ultimately pronounces Las Vegas to be "part of the whole fantastic pilgrimage of man in search of the heart's desires,"³ echoing F. Scott Fitzgerald's romantic description of Jay Gatsby's America as having "once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams."⁴ Other writers similarly evoked fantasy worlds to portray Las Vegas as a "never-never land of exotic architecture, extravagant vegetation, flamboyant scenery and frenetic diversion,"⁵ and as a "Showgirl Shangri-La."⁶

After setting a scene unlike any other in America, magazines reported that Las Vegas was the place for the entertainment dream of a lifetime. The cutting edge of popular culture was out there in the middle of nowhere, and writers expressed wonder and awe at the variety of stars and shows that could be seen in "the carnival city in the desert."⁷ Throughout the 1950s, major magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Look*, and *Life* all ran articles about the entertainment opportunities in Las Vegas. Some pieces discussed the huge amounts of money being paid to top entertainers; *Look* produced a four-page portfolio of photographs of big stars such as Betty Hutton, Milton Berle, Red Skelton, Vic Damone, Spike Jones, and Anna Maria Alberghetti in performance, accompanied by their names on the marquees of the various hotels at which they were appearing.⁸ Likewise, *The Saturday Evening Post* ran a picture of these stars at a barbecue and provided a rather breathless profile of a reviewer of Las Vegas acts for *Variety* who, "in what passes on this dusty Broadway as an average show-business fortnight, covered the opening of Gower and Marge Champion, a Latin Quarter Revue, Liberace, Nelson Eddy, Joe E. Lewis, and Peter Lind Hayes and Mary Healy."⁹ These near-Homeric catalogues of American royalty were calculated to impress, appealing to our culture's tendency to worship celebrities as if they were gods. The presence of so many stars in one place

elevated Las Vegas to a Pantheon or Olympus of these secular deities, amazingly accessible to mere mortals.

Some magazines sought to educate their star-struck readers while pandering to their voyeurism. In a typical display of tsk-tsk attitude, *Time* pointed out that "the stars, of course, are just an added attraction, gold-horned Judas goats who lure the herds of tourists to the gaming tables."¹⁰ Similarly, *Life* magazine, always providing a moral viewpoint for its readers, asserted that "to performers the work is a mixed blessing. Usually they fritter their huge wages away in the gaming rooms and, like lower-salaried mortals, leave Las Vegas far poorer than when they came in." The references to "mortals" and to "gold-horned Judas goats" in these articles underscored the public's reverence for their pagan gods, which the editors of the magazines appeared anxious to diffuse. *Life's* moralistic stance did not, however, prevent it from running an accompanying photograph of girls in a Sahara chorus line, shot from maximum crotch-viewing perspec-



Anna Maria Alberghetti. (*Sierra Magazine* [May 1959], 30)

tive.¹¹ This is a common technique of critics of Las Vegas: to provide sensational and titillating hints of the city's decadence while affirming traditional middle-class values.

Although the most popular names in show business were touted as regular performers in Las Vegas, entertainment innovations were noted as well. New performers or unique productions were reviewed, with the sense that Las Vegas was so jaded that continuous novelty was required to hold the attention of its patrons. *Newsweek* proclaimed in 1953 that "this desert oasis is now the entertainment capital of the country," and described "a new gimmick, long-hair talent," which was calculated to appeal to high rollers. Opera singer Mimi Benzell played the Thunderbird, Ezio Pinza sang at the Sands, and Lauritz Melchior appeared at the Sahara, while Mario Lanza is reported to have turned down \$25,000 per week at the Sands because of the cigarette smoke there. *Newsweek* concluded that these "long-hair performers" were "willing to forget their pride



Nelson Eddy and Gayle Sherwood. (*Sierra Magazine* [July 1959], 32)

and sing over the clang of the slot machines and the buzz of voices around crowded tables, because that desert gold will make up for lean pickings at Carnegie Hall next season."¹² In another genre, *Time* devoted its "Show Business" page in 1959 to three new acts in the "neon-painted desert," including *Ecstasy on Ice* at the Thunderbird, which featured "nudes on ice." Again mixing mild sexual excitement with a slight sense of condemnation, *Time* noted that "finding good-looking girls who could skate was no trouble; finding skaters who would work seminude was somewhat more difficult; finding strippers who could also skate was next to impossible." The "artistic integrity" of the show, though, was saved by Leny Eversong, a 280-pound Brazilian singer who was "worth the price of admission" on her own.¹³ The artistic high ground was thus secured; no one could accuse *Time* of encouraging people to see the naked women, but the magazine could take credit for promoting a legitimate (nonprurient) talent.

In the midst of all of this excitement, a few writers managed to discover that Las Vegas was actually a community where real people lived and worked. The *Newsweek* headline, "Las Vegas: Nice People Live on Divorce, Gambling," neatly expressed its sense of surprise that anyone could lead a normal life in this city. The article reported that

behind the gaudy façades of the Strip and Fremont Street are residential districts seldom seen, and even then unnoticed, by tourists. There are quiet, tree-shaded streets more reminiscent of New England than of the Southwest. There are 30 churches. True, there are slot machines in the supermarkets, but not enough Las Vegans lose their food money to make it a civic problem.¹⁴

A *New York Times Magazine* article also delved into the life of the town, claiming that "Las Vegas' most eye-filling show of female charm is not at the casinos. It unfolds every afternoon at Market Town, the shopping center at the end of the 'Strip.' " And sure enough, the article was accompanied by photographic proof: An attractive blonde woman pushing a shopping cart, identified in the caption as a dancer who, "here doing her marketing, is also a volunteer worker with handicapped children."¹⁵ The purpose of these articles seems to be one of reassurance to readers that they were not missing out on something: Even those who live in one of America's most glamorous places still have to attend to mundane activities like shopping, and the inhabitants are not all pleasure-sated sybarites who feed off the labor of everyone else. The special mention of charity work seems also to be an attempt to show the rest of the country that beautiful people have social consciences as well. This could be seen either as a sympathetic look at a misunderstood community or as another publicity stunt devised to soothe potential visitors who may have qualms about the morality of it all. Whatever the underlying reason, it is an interesting counterpoint to the criticism that casts Las Vegas as a town devoid of basic values, a topic to be examined later.

Once the attractions of Las Vegas had been described, national media attention in the early 1950s turned to an important aspect of the historical period: the atomic bomb testing that occurred in the southern Nevada city. Las Vegas's ability to capitalize on any situation was emphasized in most of the coverage, which also made ample use of the obvious metaphor of a big scientific and strategic gamble being played out in this location. A *New York Times Magazine* article entitled "Atomic Boom Town in the Desert" exemplified the tone taken by the mass media when reporting on the explosions. The article reported that "Las Vegas can be described as pleased with its new acquisition . . . the town's publicity man has had the local hairdresser create an 'atomic' coiffure and has rushed out to the nation's press a collection of pictures of bathing beauties equipped with Geiger counters."¹⁶ The link between the town's gambling industry and the bomb was made most explicit in the now-famous photograph, which originally appeared in *Life*, of a mushroom cloud looming over the shoulder of Vegas Vic and the Fremont Street skyline, with the caption, "Wherever You Look There's Danger in Las Vegas." The accompanying text noted that the picture "illustrates two of the riskier aspects of life in the 20th Century."¹⁷ A more detailed depiction of life in Las Vegas during the nuclear tests appeared in a *New Yorker* article that included the bomb-watching parties and the paradoxical existence of the brilliant scientists who lived in hotels in this gaudy town.¹⁸ In general, however, the bomb tests were portrayed as yet another spectacle in an already-spectacular place.

Another concern of the 1950s, and one that became more insistent as time went on, was the presence of organized-crime figures in the nation's everyday life. The Kefauver Committee hearings in 1961 focused attention on Las Vegas, and the widespread knowledge that Bugsy Siegel played an important role in the city's growth served to increase awareness and interest in gangsters. The political climate of the 1950s may have also contributed to the suspicion of devious forces at work under the surface of things, with the McCarthy hearings and the subsequent Red Scare providing grist for the conspiracy-minded.¹⁹ If one relies upon contemporary accounts, however, it is possible to come away with two radically opposing viewpoints regarding the influence of gangsters on the Las Vegas scene.

A *Sports Illustrated* article quoted the chairman of the Gaming Control Board as saying that "there are constant rumors of hoods, and when there are we move quickly under the breadth of the law to run these rumors down. Invariably, there is absolutely no proof. . . . Costello, Kastel and Lansky were all either directly or indirectly here for a while—and they left."²⁰ Similarly, Paul Ralli's enthusiastic *Viva Vegas* asserted that "The men who own the Las Vegas casinos are men of character, personality and unusual ability. Gangsters and racketeers are not welcome."²¹ A considerably different viewpoint, however, appeared in a *Reader's Digest* article, which stated that "there are racketeers in the woodwork of many of these multimillion-dollar casinos. They are taking the customers, the

state of Nevada and the U.S. government for a ride. It's the mob's biggest haul since Prohibition."²² Sid Meyers's *The Great Las Vegas Fraud* also condemned the presence of organized crime: "Las Vegas' fantastic gambling structure is controlled by hoodlums and racketeers . . . who are labeled respectable citizens in Nevada, but who are in reality cut-throats and law-defying thugs."²³ Meyers's book was a precursor to Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris's well-known exposé, *The Green Felt Jungle*, which informed the reader that "thought there are any big hoodlums in Las Vegas operating openly as licensed owners in plush Strip casinos, there are many more who operate behind legitimate or semilegitimate fronts."²⁴ Meyers, however, was a much harsher critic of Las Vegas than Reid and Demaris, charging that "the tragic story which is Las Vegas is there for anyone to see . . . when you enter Las Vegas you set foot in a catacomb of hell."²⁵ As rabid as this criticism may seem, it is apparently nearer to the truth than the statements of those who denied or downplayed mob influence, as later historians have confirmed that "the contribution of reputed underworld figures goes beyond their hotel-building activities. To some extent, these men even influenced the suburban development of the metropolitan area," as when Paradise Township was established in 1950 to keep the Strip "independent of [the city of] Las Vegas."²⁶

Sid Meyers's book deserves special attention for its overwhelming hostility to everything that Las Vegas stands for. Although Meyers insisted that he was "not anti-gambling," he attacked the "pretentious scale" of it in Las Vegas, as it "adheres only to the worst of a bygone era—and fosters on the gullibility and greed of human nature."²⁷ The evil of gambling pervades every aspect of life; "there is no laughter and gaiety in Las Vegas,"²⁸ and visitors become "morbid, mean and morose" after a short time at the tables.²⁹ Even the dealers were criticized: "One would have to travel far and wide to find a meaner, uglier and greedier bunch . . . the overall majority of them are not very bright."³⁰ Meyers predicted that "legitimate business structures"³¹ would soon take over, and then gambling would be outlawed. But as extreme as Meyers's criticism was, it was not unique; it had its roots in concerns voiced by other, more balanced writers. A 1950 *Woman's Home Companion* article answered the question, "Should Gambling Be Legalized in Your Town?" with a definite "no," concluding that "Las Vegas has bought prosperity at the price of complete and ever-growing dependence on a nonproductive, parasitic and corrupting trade."³² Even Paul Ralli, the ultimate booster, engaged in some soul-searching when he admitted to "a creeping doubt" as to whether Las Vegas was "a good place to live in. . . . More than anything it is a question of values. You find yourself gradually ceasing to retain hard-won basic standards. . . . You become saturated with a certain easy-come, easy-go philosophy that is rooted deep in gambles. . . . Also, there is too little future opportunity for the children."³³ This is an extraordinary statement, as the rest of *Viva Vegas* is almost comical in its naïve enthusiasm for the city. Ralli's ambivalence points to the remnants of traditional middle-class misgivings

about the basis of the Las Vegas economy. Gambling is not, and never has been, part of the Puritan work ethic, and not even the most positive commentator can reconcile the two.

This hostility or ambivalence regarding the moral climate of Las Vegas is evident even in the straight news stories which appeared in national magazines in the 1950s. These stories purported to be objective in reporting facts rather than providing description or analysis, but objectivity seems to be close to impossible when Las Vegas is the subject. This can be seen in the appearance of several stories speculating that the boom was about to end, together with the suggestion that Las Vegas was getting what it deserved: *Life* observed that, "like a gambler on a prolonged winning streak, Las Vegas had the feeling its run of luck couldn't end. . . . But when the excitement of the opening [of three new hotels in 1955] died down, the town looked at its new places where customers were scarce and the betting light and wondered: Had Las Vegas pushed its luck too far?"³⁴ This article was accompanied by pictures of "idling croupiers dawdl[ing] behind their roulette tables," a "little-used pool," and a "lonely lobby"³⁵ to show how expectations of packed houses were not being met. *Time* reported, with its characteristically value-laden prose, that "part of the trouble was due to the fact that the number of new suckers had not kept pace with the new gambling facilities."³⁶ The *New York Times Magazine* was less judgmental in its 1956 analysis, attributing the minor economic slump to the new hotels having gone overbudget on their construction costs, the engagement in "a prohibitively costly competition for entertainment," and the management by "men experienced in standard motel operation, but unworldly in the ways of gambling."³⁷ In the same year, however, *Business Week* said that "Lady Luck appears to be smiling again on Las Vegas" because of strategies such as approving a bond issue for a convention center, attempting to bring more diversified industry into the city, and eliminating free or cut-rate entertainment and restaurant fare.³⁸

It is interesting that the earliest ruminations as to Las Vegas's downfall came in a 1950 *Newsweek* article, which detailed moral, not economic, trouble. "Last week," the magazine noted gravely, "it began to look as though the free and easy way of life was contagious—in the wrong quarters. . . . The high-school basketball team, it was rumored, had got noisily drunk in Reno," and some juveniles had broken into a railroad car and stolen a case of whiskey. "The storm broke," however, when a Las Vegas school board meeting addressed problems of teen pregnancy, the existence of a "non-virgin society in which sexual experience was a prerequisite for membership," and wanton "love-making . . . on the school's rear steps." Those present at the meeting blamed the city's lax morals, exemplified by "the strapless dresses common on Las Vegas streets [which] had no place in the schoolrooms." The article concluded that, following these incidents, "Las Vegas began looking uneasily at the neon lights of the gambling casinos and wondering about the whirring, clattering machines of

their biggest business."³⁹ This article is a direct antecedent of Paul Ralli's momentary lapse into self-doubt.

In addition to appearing in news-based stories driven by current events, Las Vegas sometimes became the subject of social analysis in the 1950s, as if it were somehow representative of general trends at work in American society. In one of the few references to racial tensions in the city, Katharine Best and Katharine Hillyer's *Las Vegas: Playtown, U.S.A.* reported that "any Mississippi share cropper bracing a Greasy Spoon for a meal can rest assured he will not be contaminated by the presence of Negroes. . . . No motels, hotels, casinos or restaurants will serve the colored."⁴⁰ Their chapter on race relations in Las Vegas deserves special credit, for almost nowhere else in 1950s literature was the subject broached. The entire book is a well-written, balanced look at the city; more than just a guidebook, it is a thoughtful analysis of the workings of Las Vegas.

Another distinguished critic of Las Vegas was *The Nation's* Julian Halevy, who saw the city as an escape, just like the recently-constructed Disneyland: "Both of these institutions exist for the relief of tension and boredom, as tranquilizers for social anxiety. . . . Their huge profits and mushrooming growth suggest that as conformity and adjustment become more rigidly imposed on the American scene, the drift to fantasy will become a flight."⁴¹ *Harper's* printed a similarly judicious appraisal of the city, with the conclusion that

your reaction to it will depend upon the kind of person you are. The Strip is basically unwholesome. One cannot help moralizing. Remember, however, that what you see meets with the approval of the sovereign people of Nevada, and that some millions of tourists drop in each year without coaxing to try their luck. . . . Try to look upon the place simply as a phenomenon.⁴²

This type of nonfiction magazine prose represents the best of what was written about Las Vegas in the 1950s; neither a puff piece nor a Jeremiad, it attempted to place the city in the context of the entire society, and the *Harper's* article is admirable for recognizing that much of one's response to the city is related to one's own personality and moral or intellectual outlook.

FICTION

Although many of the nonfiction pieces discussed above show a bias, most of the depictions are cloaked in the guise of objective reportage or description. This is not the case in fictional representations, which allow authors to give full vent to their imaginations, and which free them from concerns about accuracy or fairness. As a result, the fictional depictions gain, rather than lose, power, for it is in the imagination that the illusion or mythology of a setting contributes most to a story's theme, symbolism, or plot; if the audience does not share the artist's

conception, much of the impact is lost. Therefore, Las Vegas functions in these stories both as a physical place and as a state of mind, or as a series of connotations shared between author and reader.

Alice Denham's 1955 short story "The Deal" describes the objectification and commodification of the people in an overly materialistic world.⁴³ An early ancestor of the 1993 film *Indecent Proposal*, "The Deal" recounts what happens when the struggling artist and cocktail waitress Linda is propositioned by Alf the Albino, "the greatest poker shark in the West."⁴⁴ He offers her \$1,000. Linda is an outsider to Las Vegas, as symbolized by her sensitivity, her artistic skills, and her nonglamorous appearance: Her "hair was plain brown, a rare color in Las Vegas," and she wore a "plain gray skirt and gray cashmere and saddle shoes."⁴⁵ Alf, on the other hand, is in his element in Las Vegas, and his grotesque appearance mirrors the city's deceptive sheen: He is "the quintessence of blond decay," with a "yellow toupee and . . . smooth poreless skin, like thin dough about to tear, [and] the same sick blue underneath, an old baby with a withered turkey neck and chin."⁴⁶ Ironically, Linda, who is the victim of objectification, herself dehumanizes not only Alf, but the entire crowd she is sketching in the casino. She intends to "record the bawdy greedy oversexed sterility and expensive starvation of the Las Vegas dying,"⁴⁷ so that she can test her skills as a painter. The people all have "gaudy faces and glassy eyes," and she sees them as "dissonant color patterns, glittering façades of faces, one painting after another." As an artist, Linda is aware of color: She notes the people "jammed against the green felt crap island and the red-and-black roulette wheel of the luxury hotel, in luxury-ridden neon-glutted Las Vegas."⁴⁸ This equation of the people with the artificial landscape becomes internalized after the liaison, with Linda "feeling like all the neon on the Strip."⁴⁹ The story almost has a twist ending when Linda considers refusing the money, but in the end she takes it because "it was simply a matter of choice, your way of selling yourself."⁵⁰ A possible hope for the future is glimpsed when Linda returns to the hotel bar and flirts with a young air force pilot, a "knight in blue,"⁵¹ who symbolizes the vitality she has lost. This pilot may also symbolize the future of Las Vegas in its position as a national defense and technological center, as some observers have hoped that this development would lessen the area's dependence on gambling and produce a more respectable and diversified basis for the economy.

Another fictional account of the high personal cost of operating in Las Vegas is told in William R. Cox's 1955 story "Las Vegas Trap."⁵² This story involves an independent dealer, Nick Crater, who runs afoul of the mob when he punches out a well-connected gangster named Buster during a high-stakes card game and takes off with the money. He and Meg Bond, a barmaid at the "Flaming Arrow Hotel," decide to leave town, pursued by men in the employ of Sam Makowski, "the paunchy, balding, former consul of an eastern murder syndicate, now turned legitimate."⁵³ This legitimacy is precarious, however, as Crater is now

"duty bound to report [Makowski's illegal activities] to the Greek and High-Play Monte and other legit members of the fraternity. When this news got around, it could ruin the Flaming Arrow."⁵⁴ Crater is an outsider, one of the many independent operators around Las Vegas, and because of this he is not trusted by the mobsters. As Buster reports to Sam, "You can't trust Crater. . . . He'll rat on us, Sam. A gambler, sure. A hanger-arounder. But not one of us."⁵⁵ The sense of group identity serves as a plot device, since Crater is forced to flee from the organization that he has angered, but it also reinforces the story's depiction of Crater as a lonely outsider, much like Linda in "The Deal." Crater's beloved sister died of heartbreak and polio, and his army buddy was killed in the line of duty as a policeman. Crater and his friend were "going to open a [gambling] joint in Jersey after the war,"⁵⁶ and at the end of the story Crater considers taking Meg to Hawaii to "open a small place of their own."⁵⁷ Thus, gambling for Nick is seen as the fulfillment of the American Dream; instead of opening a shop or a bar, Nick ironically sees gambling as the way to a respectable life. Things would have been all right for him in Las Vegas had he not crossed the wrong people. It is significant that in this story gambling itself is not condemned; it is the unsavory people connected with gambling who are the trouble. Adopting the argument of those who wanted to purge all gang interests from the casinos, the story proposes that if good people like Nick and Meg were allowed to run things, casinos would be safer, more respectable places.

There is an interesting subtext in this story concerning the treatment of minorities. In one of only two instances in which a nonwhite is a major character in 1950s Las Vegas fiction, Nick and Meg become involved with Andy Perez, a young Mexican American with a wife and a baby. On the run in California, Nick and Meg stay at a motel where the owner is murdered following a poker game in the motel office. Perez is framed for the murder by two of the other players, both prominent businessmen in "Suntown, California." Nick and Meg help Andy and his wife Angelina escape a lynch mob because they are touched by the way that the couple express their love and devotion for each, Nick and Meg agreeing that they "haven't seen in a long time, what they have."⁵⁸ As they are trying to get out of town, Buster and his goons show up, a shootout ensues, and the appropriate people are killed. The Andy-Angelina story is a parallel subplot to the Nick-Meg story in that each couple is trapped in a bad situation and is being pursued by dangerous people. The familiar conceit of uneducated third-world people being somehow more in touch with the basic aspects of human goodness is expressed here. Although sentimental, the subplot effectively shows how people whose hearts are in the right place will ultimately triumph over evil. While it is ironic that a stereotype was needed to express this notion, it is remarkable that these characters were used at all. In the stories we are examining, there is only one other major nonwhite character (an Hispanic-Irish mix), and virtually no minor nonwhite characters either. In this way, 1950s Las

Vegas fiction mirrors the social reality of the city: "To preserve its hard-won image as an all-American vacation town, Las Vegas felt compelled to keep its hotels, casinos, pools, and showrooms 'lily white.'" ⁵⁹

The suggestion in "Las Vegas Trap" that the underworld hides behind legalized gambling is pursued in Jack Waer's 1955 novel *Murder in Las Vegas*.⁶⁰ In this story, the low-level mob functionary Steve Walters, a "local Vegas boy"⁶¹ made good, is framed by his boss, Sam Talmadge, for two murders so as to cover up mob involvement in prostitution and pornography. Walters sardonically reports that Talmadge is "a 'financier' who admitted to certain club interests in Vegas, but they were entirely legitimate."⁶² Talmadge's excuse for framing a good employee is that "if the investigation goes too deep it could ruin my operations in Vegas."⁶³ Walters explains how a small-time hood like himself can rise in Las Vegas, where "if you have style and keep impressing the right people, you can get into the class stuff, might even wind up with a nice refined spot in the Hacienda Club in Las Vegas which is in Nevada, an action where the suckers know good grammar and wouldn't think of misspelling their names on an I.O.U."⁶⁴ Presumably, the "Hacienda" was intended to be a fictitious name; although the novel was published in 1955, the same year the Hacienda opened, the novel was probably written before then. Nevertheless, the Strip's artificial landscape is used to good effect. One of Walters's hangouts is the "Desert Club," which is "cool and modern with lots of redwood and natural rock put together for the best artistic effect, and against the flat desert setting it appeared to be in perpetual flight."⁶⁵ It is not uncommon in Las Vegas fiction for a merging of the characters and the city to occur; the flight of the Las Vegas architecture mirrors Walters's own flight from the mobsters who set him up. Walters flees to Los Angeles, where the story concludes amid car chases and shootouts, but the scene of the crime and the setup is in Las Vegas, giving an extra metaphorical boost to the intrigue of the underworld.

Perhaps the most ambitious fictional chronicle of the mob in Las Vegas is Irving Shulman's epic 1951 novel *The Big Brokers*.⁶⁶ This 570-page, *Brothers Karamazov*-like story traces the expansion of a group of eastern Jewish gangsters into semi-legitimate businesses like car dealerships, finance companies, jewelry shops, and Las Vegas casinos. The head of the organization, Itzik Yanowitz, chooses three men, Larry, Mitch, and Bull, to run the "Las Vegas Riviera" on the Strip (this book was published four years prior to the opening of the actual Riviera hotel-casino). The novel shows how each man falls victim to his own weakness: Larry ends up becoming an alcoholic and flying off to Mexico with part of the casino's bankroll, Mitch rats out on his bosses and gets sent to prison for manslaughter, and Bull turns to Orthodox Judaism when his conscience gets the best of him after he murders a man. The theme of the novel is that these men (boys, really) have been taken out of their element and placed in a situation that they cannot handle. They felt confident in "the old days," when "a guy worked someone over. Or stuck up a bookie joint. Or handled a protection route. . . .

But this! Managing a hotel and casino! . . . they were in Las Vegas to revitalize an investment of a million dollars, if not more. . . . The sum was staggering."⁶⁷ The excess endemic to Las Vegas proves to be the downfall of them all, as their every whim is catered to. Money, women, and booze are available on demand, and the corrupting force of it all ruins the men and their hotel.

The central symbol of the excess of Las Vegas in *The Big Brokers* is Cherry, a vulgar monstrosity that Bull chooses as decoration for the bar: "a life-size, real-skin, nude doll with blonde hair, reddest mouth, and startling black eyebrows and eyelashes . . . every hour on the hour the doll's stomach undulated for a full minute while the rosy nipples of her real-skin rubber breasts glowed brightly with a startling incandescence."⁶⁸ When this show began, "the people at the counter screamed with glee, made ribald and derogatory comparisons with the women in their company, and exclaimed over the doll which continued to gyrate with mechanical sensuality for a full sixty seconds."⁶⁹ Bull's religious conversion later in the novel leads him to reject Cherry as a "gold calf," saying that "It isn't right to make things look alive. . . . Ask God."⁷⁰ That Cherry symbolizes worship of the false idols of money and sex is made explicit here; what is also evident is that she represents the subjugation of the women in the novel, who exist mainly either to sleep with or to slap around. Women are constantly objectified as "nice-looking gash," "Goddamn slut[s]," and "tramps," and the conversations are punctuated with strange misogynist remarks such as "there's nothing like a double-jointed babe with muscles."⁷¹ The gangsters often violently beat their women and enjoy it, as when Mitch hits a woman "across the side of her face, felt some relief in striking her, and slapped her hard across the head."⁷² If there is any doubt as to the attitude of the men, it is dispelled when Shulman writes that "they didn't want, need, or enjoy women, but they had screened women until they were in their proper place: to take care of a guy."⁷³ Women, never seen as very important in the man's world of Las Vegas, are here devalued even more than usual.

The role of the mob in Las Vegas is accepted as a matter of course in *The Big Brokers*. In fact, the title itself is ironic: the brokers, or investors, in the gambling palaces are all mobsters and criminals. A series of rhetorical questions attempts to convey the prevalent attitude:

What difference did it make if a St. Louis syndicate had put up sixty-four percent of the backing for the Amarillo? . . . If one of the dealers at a place on Fremont Street had once been a minor member of Murder Incorporated? If the other boys had records or had made lurid headlines? They were on the right side of the law now, with social security numbers and living clean.⁷⁴

There is a sense of retribution, though, not only in the outcome of the stories of Mitch, Larry, and Bull, but in the introduction of real-life events surrounding gambling: "Now they've got a big guy from Tennessee—Kefauver . . . and he's

supposed to be lookin' into rackets and stuff. So let'm."⁷⁵ This is spoken by a minor character who is preparing to leave town after the debacle of the Riviera, and the implication is that it is well past the time for such housecleaning. By the end of the novel, Mitch understands why one would hate Las Vegas: "The goddamned wind never stopped blowing, the mammoth neon signs drilled in the eyes, and the effen desert was a trap—with the Riviera a prison in the sand."⁷⁶ Mitch's woman, Joyce, takes a final look at the city and sees it as "the whole human amalgam of every passion, lust, and tension . . . the rich hot colors, its beautiful, reckless, and dangerous power, its magnificent corruption."⁷⁷ Like Lot's wife, Joyce looks back upon the doomed city, but she escapes to pronounce her judgment.

The use of a central symbol in *The Big Brokers* to express the essential nature of Las Vegas is repeated in Richard S. Prather's 1951 novel *Find This Woman*,⁷⁸ but in an even more obvious way. Much of the action here revolves around Victor Dante, who is described by private eye Shell Scott as a "gambler—a smart one. . . . He's got a lot of influence around here now. And that influence, they tell me, is not only political but police."⁷⁹ It is interesting that there is no mention whatever of the mob; Dante is an independent operator, although the police captain of Las Vegas says that he "would like very much to hang something on Victor Dante. . . . But he is a man with much power and many friends, and there seems to be nothing . . . wrong with him."⁸⁰ The overriding symbol of the novel is a hotel-casino on the Strip owned by Dante and called, predictably, "Dante's Inferno." The casino is a true vision of hell, and the fictional description of it surely surpasses even the most satirical observer's vision of Las Vegas:

. . . the building was huge, . . . fronted with ten thousand square feet of velvety green lawn. Equally distant from the two sides of the lawn and out close to the street, a statue of Satan stood, forty feet high and bathed in a wash of crimson from spotlights at its base. . . . The figure itself was slightly crouched, the evil head bent forward as if peering into the cars that passed all day and all night in front of it.

The front of the casino is adorned with red neon lights, so that "the entire face of the building seemed to be covered with leaping flames that occasionally shot higher than the roof." People walk through a "monstrous face with the gaping door for its mouth" in order to enter the casino. But the crowning touch is provided inside the casino itself, which is decorated with murals on all four walls of

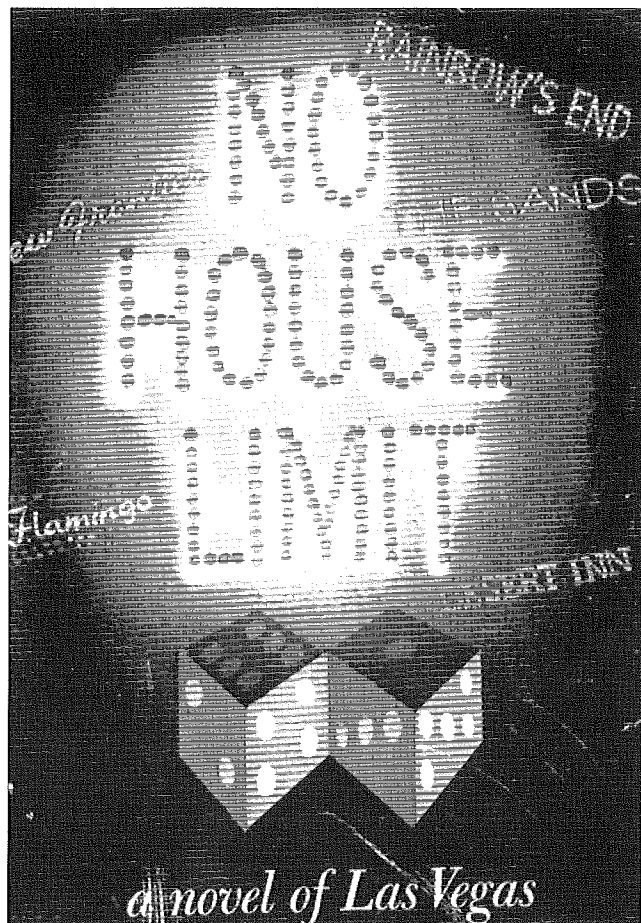
hundreds of naked figures: in chains, being consumed by fire, being whipped or beaten or stretched on racks. It seemed that all the tortures of all time were being employed on the straining figures, but on no face was there any expression of pain, or any expression at all. These were blank, set faces with dull, staring eyes, and all the faces were exactly the same. These were the eternally damned and the eternally dying who could never die, existing forever till all senses were dead and living itself was death.⁸¹

In this section, Las Vegas actually becomes hell; while Sid Meyers makes the same comparison, it takes the loosened constraints of fiction to produce such a potent symbol of the horror that critics saw in the city.

An interesting use of local color in *Find This Woman* is in its setting at the time of Helldorado, "the wildest, shootingest, rooting-tootingest ruckus since the West was really wild. . . . Four days when Las Vegas, which jumps plenty all the year found, jumps clear up into the air and clicks its spurred heels."⁸² This "Mardi Gras with pistols"⁸³ provides a key moment in the plot when Dante's men capture Scott and brazenly parade him through the casino, tied up and in full cowboy garb, with a sign around his neck reading "hoss thief." The kidnapping is carried out with no one the wiser, as Scott reflects that "downtown and even here on the Strip scenes similar to this were going on, the only difference being that this was a little more elaborate than most. Men had been thrown into Helldorado jail for no reason at all; other men were waving guns at the sky. . . . Yeah, they could get away with it."⁸⁴ Prather thus uses both aspects of Las Vegas, the Wild West and the modern resort, to portray the city as a dangerous place. Finally, another convention is skillfully employed as Prather identifies people with objects, in this case merging a person with one of the games of chance. Scott has a dream about the ball in a roulette wheel, but when he looks carefully he realizes that "it wasn't a white ball at all but a tiny naked blonde, and she was running like hell because there, loping along behind her and right in the groove, was Freddy [a lady-killer bartender at the Desert Inn]."⁸⁵ The sense of entrapment and objectification is nicely summarized in this vision of Scott's. The novel itself is a fairly conventional crime story of double crosses and false identities, but Prather deserves credit for his skillful utilization of the real and imagined aspects of Las Vegas to propel his story, and he has produced perhaps the most effective symbolic use of this city to date.

Another example of hard-boiled Las Vegas fiction is Steve Fisher's 1958 novel *No House Limit*, which describes a rival syndicate's attempt to ruin Joe Martin's "Rainbow's End" casino by employing a professional dice player, Bello, to try to break the bank in a three-day craps marathon.⁸⁶ The story is played out as a battle of wills between the owner and the gambler, but it is in the subplots that the novel is most revealing in its attitudes and most resembles the misogyny displayed in *The Big Brokers*. Las Vegas in this novel is a man's territory, and the women surrounding the action are entirely subsidiary. Thus, a waitress named Cottontop is described as "a kind of cute scarecrow: or a floppy-floppy rag doll with white braid hair,"⁸⁷ and a woman with whom Joe Martin is involved is a "miserable conniving doll-faced slut."⁸⁸ Even Dee, Bello's lady companion, is described as "an exotic little peasant"⁸⁹ having an "angelic-waif face."⁹⁰ Dee is meant to be a sympathetic character, as she is trying to escape the influence of Bello, but her depiction only underscores her subservient role in the novel, and it shows the lack of regard for women in general.

An interesting sidelight of *No House Limit* is its attempt at realism, for almost



No House Limit. (Nevada Historical Society)

every chapter begins with a section on Las Vegas, gambling, or some other aspect of the setting. These sections, taken apart from the novel, provide a fairly good guidebook for the visitor to Las Vegas. Fisher discusses rules of the games, as well as casino procedures and terminology, and even provides information about area attractions such as Boulder Dam, which we are told is “the biggest in the world, [and] is seven hundred and thirty feet high and a thousand feet wide.”⁹¹ Factual material like this shows that Fisher obviously did his research, and it provides an interesting counterpoint to the fictional action in the novel. These descriptive sections are akin to the techniques of Henry Fielding or Herman Melville in that they provide a frame of reference larger than the merely fictional, and they help to elevate the novel somewhat above the ordinary crime drama.

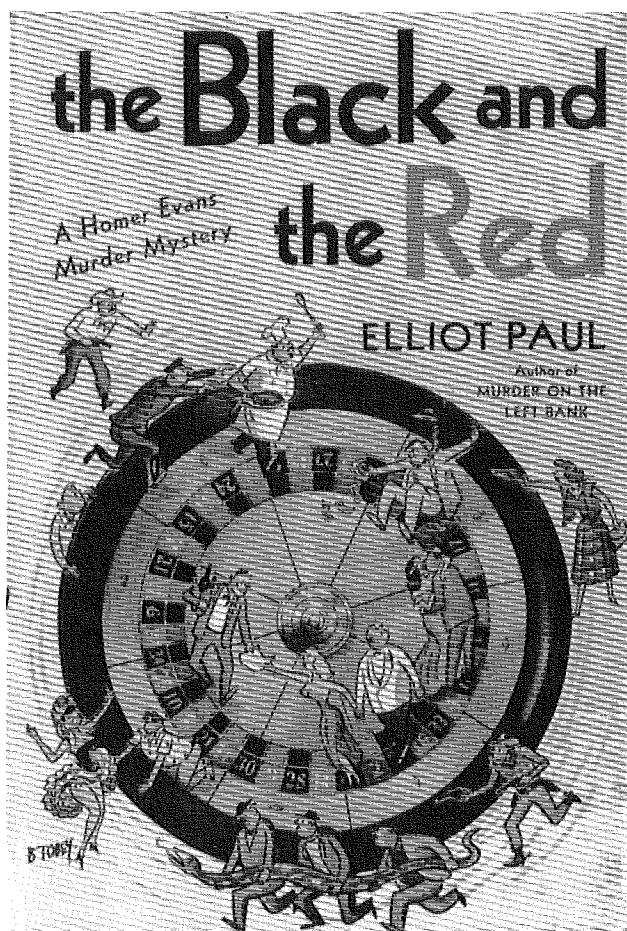
Probably the best known of the 1950s Las Vegas fiction is Ian Fleming’s 1956 novel *Diamonds Are Forever*,⁹² which features James Bond investigating a mob-

run diamond-smuggling operation that stretches from South Africa to London, New York, Hollywood, and Las Vegas. The key to understanding the depiction of Las Vegas in this novel is that while the suave Bond makes his way effortlessly through each of these cities, all luxurious refuges of the rich, only Las Vegas is described in negative terms. Fleming's attitude toward the city may be analogous to Bond's derisive comment about American gangsters: "mostly a lot of Italian bums with monogrammed shirts who spend the day eating spaghetti and squirting scent all over themselves."⁹³ Bond's chief of staff attempts to disabuse Bond of this notion, telling him that "those are only the ones that you see," and that "gambling is the biggest single industry in America. . . . Get hold of the Kefauver Report if you don't believe me." It is, the chief of staff assures Bond, "all owned and run by the underworld."⁹⁴ The organization here, appropriately enough for a diamond-smuggling enterprise, is "the Spangled Mob," run by the Spang brothers, who also operate illegal wire services and other unsavory businesses from their Las Vegas hotel, the "Tiara."

Although Fleming's British snobbery is not explicit, his characterization of Las Vegas' vulgarity as being quintessentially American runs throughout the novel. Bond is bedeviled from the moment that he arrives by the heat, which hits his face "like a fist," turns the road into "frying concrete," and produces "a glittering spray of light-splinters [that] pierced Bond's eyes . . . and he felt his shirt clinging stickily to his skin." He ironically observes "an elegant drive-in restaurant" on the Strip called a "GASETERIA," which offers "HOT DOGS! JUMBURGERS!! ICE-COLD DRINKS!!!"⁹⁵ The aggressive capitalization and exclamation marks convey the obnoxious ambience of the city. However, it is not only the physical aspects of the city that are condemned; the people themselves are ugly and uncouth. At his hotel pool, Bond decides that "only about one per cent of the customers should be allowed to wear bathing suits."⁹⁶ Seeing people at the slot machines "reminded Bond of Dr. Pavlov's dogs, saliva drooling at the treacherous bell that brought no dinner, and he shuddered at the empty eyes and the flaccid skin and the half open mouths and the thoughtless minds."⁹⁷ These descriptions of the city and the people are in marked contrast to those of the other places he visits. In London, he goes to the "London Diamond Club," which has "neat white portals" and is "smart" and "luxurious" inside,⁹⁸ the "House of Diamonds" in New York is "elegant," "discreet," and "handsome,"⁹⁹ and the resort at Saratoga, New York, is full of "peace and serenity" under the "green majesty of the elms."¹⁰⁰ Las Vegas, by contrast, is "hot and stuffy," "sultry," and characterized by "a new school, its main purpose being to channel the customer-mouse into the central gambling trap whether he wanted the cheese or not."¹⁰¹ It seems that Bond is simply too elegant for this desert city, and this impression is reinforced by the climax of the Las Vegas portion of the novel, which takes place at Spang's personal "ghost town way out on Highway 95,"¹⁰² a kind of private dude ranch and Wild West town. The primitive nature of Las Vegas's culture thus asserts itself as Bond gets into trouble out in the

uninhabited desert, and the city degenerates into its natural state of wilderness before the reader's eyes.

Another fictional sleuth who is too cool for Las Vegas is Homer Evans, "the suave criminologist"¹⁰³ who is the hero of Elliot Paul's 1956 novel *The Black and the Red*. The improbable plot of this mystery revolves around the attempt of a Las Vegas hotel owner to lure the famous French chef Jean-Pierre Sabin to his casino, so that Sabin's superior taste buds can sample the desert soil to test for the presence of oil. Sabin, like Bond, but more explicit in his criticism, continually expresses horror at being in the "wild lawless Western outpost."¹⁰⁴ Evans populates his book with stock western figures such as Alkali Ike, Parentheses Pete "(so nicknamed because of the relationship between his bow legs and other outer appurtenances),"¹⁰⁵ and Mercury Matt, old prospectors and cowboys. Paul apparently fancies himself a writer of highbrow Literature, describing himself in his author's note as one of the founders of "*Transition*, the startling avant



The Black and the Red. (Nevada Historical Society)

garde magazine of the Parisian expatriates." This makes for insufferably pretentious prose, including some unintentional humor, as when the conflicts between the one-dimensional characters are described as being "on a level with Dostoyevsky's historical duel between Raskolnikov and Pytor Petrovich."¹⁰⁶ To summarize Paul's attitude it is sufficient to say that he connects Las Vegas to past civilizations like "Babylon and Ninevah, Tyre and Sidon, the wild dream of all ages, a kind of sur-reality our epoch can salute and nourish, a peak of pleasure second to none which ever has erupted since the Coming of Man."¹⁰⁷ Although the comparison is not unique, Paul's style makes it particularly difficult to take seriously.

An interesting subgenre, consisting of two works, also emerged in the 1950s and concerns religious miracles taking place in Las Vegas. The first is a play called *Seven Nuns at Las Vegas*, written and produced by the University Theatre and the Department of Speech, University of Notre Dame, July 25, 1954.¹⁰⁸ In this play, the entire convent of Saint Genesius, nuns and all, has been mysteriously moved from South Bend, Indiana, to Las Vegas. It turns out that this is the result of Sister Columba's prayers to Saint Joseph to help her with her rheumatism. Saint Joseph himself has chosen the location, as Sister Columba explains: "When St. Joseph said he would take me to where the weather was warm and I could walk again like a young girl, I thought he meant he was taking me to Heaven—and I'm surprised as you it should be Las Vegas."¹⁰⁹ The mere presence of the convent has a transforming effect on the city, as a radio announcer reports that

every night club and tavern and cocktail bar in the city is closed. The vacationists have not left; they are still here; but they refuse to drink; they refuse to gamble; all *normal* activities have ceased in Las Vegas . . . there is a new *fad* in Las Vegas, a kind of *game* called *contemplation*. I do not understand it myself, but it seems to be played by just *thinking*. Nothing like it has ever been tried before in Las Vegas.¹¹⁰

In true Vegas fashion, the casino owners attempt to capitalize on the religious revival by establishing a "Convent Refreshment Station" next to the convent and offering "Hot Dogs, Beer, Barbecue, Coca Cola, and Relics." Faced with the loss of their patrons, the "Board of Directors of Amalgamated Night Clubs" offers to combine Father O'Brien's "instruction classes with a floor show and cocktails. . . . They say he has a better personality than Marlene Dietrich."¹¹¹ Naturally, these requests are refused, and, far from engaging in the corrupting commerce of Las Vegas, the convent takes in three of its most stereotypical denizens: Peaches, Baby, and Boots, casino hostesses who are laid off from their jobs and decide to become nuns. As expected, they loosen up some of the stricter sisters, teaching them the "gypsy dance," while becoming examples of the power of faith to transform anyone. In the end, Sister Columba asks Saint Joseph to return the convent to South Bend, and the casino owners are trans-

ported along with them, presumably to lead more spiritual lives. We are not told whether the residents and tourists in Las Vegas return to their gambling and drinking. Another story with a miraculous theme is Robert Nathan's 1956 novel *The Rancho of the Little Loves*.¹¹² In this intensely Catholic novel, a convocation of saints decides to "send to earth one of our number, to remind men to love one another."¹¹³ The ambitious Blessed Pierre maneuvers to have his friend Saint Odule appointed for this mission, intending to go to Paris, Geneva, or some other beloved center of European culture. Instead, their directions get mixed up and they arrive "in the Mojave desert approximately six thousand miles west of Geneva, Copenhagen, and Paris, France."¹¹⁴ Moreover, they arrive at the "Rancho of the Little Loves," a brothel on the outskirts of Las Vegas, but "Conchita [O'Rourke] was the only girl at the Rancho Los Amores Pequeños, and the Rancho had only one customer, Mr. Robert Teagarden. . . . Without experience or knowledge of the world, she had given her heart to her first customer."¹¹⁵ Thus, the heavenly envoys meet up with the most virtuous Hispanic-Irish prostitute ever, and most of the book is devoted to their attempts to make the haughty Teagarden, "a man of dignity and distinction, and a headwaiter at The Winds Hotel,"¹¹⁶ aware of the devotion of the beautiful and faithful Conchita.

A subplot provides the necessary complication for whose resolution the miracle is required: Gullible Saint Odule is taken advantage of by a gang of toughs who plan to rob the casino on Christmas Eve. In the casino, Odule prays to God for help when it appears that the evil men are preparing to commit mayhem, and "it appeared then to the trembling guests that the ceiling of the hotel split apart like thunder; an intolerable brightness blinded them, an odor of frankincense assailed their nostrils, and fire descended on the room to the sound of trumpets."¹¹⁷ This, it turns out, is Saint Augustine and his attending angels sent down to protect everyone from harm, and the angels break into a chorus of "O Little Town of Bethlehem." The single example of cynicism in this novel appears at the end, when the loose ends of the story are wrapped up, and it is noted that after the would-be thieves were "swept away like chaff by a great wind, they were reunited two thousand miles to the east, and went into politics. It did not seem to them that their lives had changed in any way."¹¹⁸ Thus, in both *The Rancho of the Little Loves* and *Seven Nuns at Las Vegas*, the city is seen as a place in need of spiritual help, but not so far gone as to be lost to all hope. In this way, these two works are quite touching in their simplicity and their faith in the goodness of men and the benevolence of God.

It is of interest that the two works which specifically deal with religion in Las Vegas have Roman Catholicism as their subjects. This may be either a reflection of the heritage of the Latin American inhabitants of Las Vegas, like Conchita, or of the mythical view that sinful Italians are running the city, but it is also curious that in none of the fictional works examined is there a single mention of a Mormon character. There is a strong Mormon community in Las Vegas, and Mormons were the original white inhabitants of the area, but Mormonism may

have been too far from mainstream American beliefs to warrant an extended treatment of it in popular fiction. Similarly, depictions of the Native Americans who live in the area are conspicuously absent from mass-culture portrayals. In this way, 1950s fiction reflects the conservatism of the time, and advances in civil rights and in the recognition of diverse cultures in fiction as well as in real life were yet to come.

The Las Vegas of 1950s fiction and nonfiction was a reflection of various aspects of American society as a whole. Perhaps the greatest historical and sociological interest lies in the way that these works treated society's marginalized groups. As we have seen, only two works presented nonwhite characters in major roles: the Perez family in "Las Vegas Trap," and Conchita in *The Rancho of the Little Loves*. Andy and Angelina Perez, however, were essentially stock figures, as was Conchita, who embodied the classic "whore with a heart of gold." The fact that the only two female main characters (Conchita and Linda from "The Deal") had to sell themselves to get by in Las Vegas reflects both the city's commodification of all people and the low status of women in the prefeminist period (the nuns in *Seven Nuns at Las Vegas* were also stock figures of womanly virtue, devotion, and naïveté). Women were beginning to broaden their roles beyond those of wife and mother in the 1950s, but their contributions to the economy were often undervalued.¹¹⁹ In this way, the criticism of Las Vegas was enhanced by the conditions of the larger society. And except for Best and Hillyer's book, the discussion of blacks was nonexistent, which fits the city's practice of keeping them away from the tourists. As a whole, then, these depictions of Las Vegas demonstrate how both personal and cultural biases can affect the presentation of a subject, whether the genre is fiction or nonfiction. It is thus fitting to end as we began, with *Holiday's* Sean O'Faolain pronouncing Las Vegas a "coarse and lovely illusion."¹²⁰

NOTES

¹Alan Hess, *Viva Las Vegas* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993), 9.

²Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1989), 67.

³Sean O'Faolain, "The Coarse and Lovely Illusions of Las Vegas," *Holiday*, September 1956, p. 61.

⁴F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 182.

⁵Gladwin Hill, "Klondike in the Desert," *New York Times Magazine*, 7 June 1953, p. 14.

⁶"Showgirl Shangri-La," *Life*, 21 June 1954, p. 47.

⁷L. M. Comstock, "How to Leave Home and Like It," *House Beautiful*, November 1951, p. 254.

⁸"Vegas Hits the Talent Jackpot," *Look*, 8 September 1953, pp. 36-39.

⁹Richard English, "The Million-Dollar Talent War," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 24 October 1953, p. 68.

¹⁰"Las Vegas: 'It Just Couldn't Happen,'" *Time*, 23 November 1953, p. 30.

¹¹"Gambler's Gala," *Life*, 16 February 1953, pp. 105-8.

¹²"The Desert Song," *Newsweek*, 24 August 1953, p. 48.

¹³"Big Week in Vegas," *Time*, 17 August 1959, p. 60.

¹⁴Leonard Slater, "Las Vegas: Nice People Live on Divorce, Gambling," *Newsweek*, 20 April 1953, p. 32.

¹⁵Gladwin Hill, "Las Vegas Is More than the 'Strip,'" *New York Times Magazine*, 16 March 1958, p. 31.

- ¹⁶Gladwin Hill, "Atomic Boom Town in the Desert," *New York Times Magazine*, 11 February 1951, p. 14.
- ¹⁷"Wherever You Look There's Danger in Las Vegas," *Life*, 21 November 1951, p. 37.
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- ¹⁹William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 105.
- ²⁰Kenneth Rudeen, "Gambling's Adult Western," *Sports Illustrated*, 11 May 1959, p. 94.
- ²¹Paul Ralli, *Viva Vegas* (Hollywood: House-Warven, 1953), 119.
- ²²Lester Velie, "Las Vegas: The Underworld's Secret Jackpot," *Reader's Digest*, October 1959, p. 138.
- ²³Sid Meyers, *The Great Las Vegas Fraud* (Chicago: Mayflower Press, 1958), 35.
- ²⁴Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris, *The Green Felt Jungle* (New York: Trident Press, 1963), 60.
- ²⁵Meyers, *Great Las Vegas Fraud*, 19.
- ²⁶Moehring, *Resort City*, 242-43.
- ²⁷Meyers, *Great Las Vegas Fraud*, 33.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*, 47.
- ²⁹*Ibid.*, 34.
- ³⁰*Ibid.*, 106.
- ³¹*Ibid.*, 71.
- ³²Albert Q. Maisel, "Should Gambling Be Legalized in Your Town?" *Woman's Home Companion*, October 1950, p. 44.
- ³³Ralli, *Viva Vegas*, 37-39.
- ³⁴"Gambling Town Pushes Its Luck," *Life*, 20 June 1955, p. 20.
- ³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 25.
- ³⁶"Snake Eyes in Las Vegas," *Time*, 19 September 1955, p. 97.
- ³⁷Gilbert Millstein, "Count on Las Vegas' Silver Lining," *New York Times Magazine*, 18 March 1956, p. 65.
- ³⁸"Las Vegas Hedges Its Bets," *Business Week*, 11 August 1956, p. 157.
- ³⁹"Las Vegas Twilight?" *Newsweek*, 5 June 1950, p. 24.
- ⁴⁰Katharine Best and Katharine Hillyer, *Las Vegas: Playtown, U.S.A.* (New York: D. McKay, 1955), 135.
- ⁴¹Julian Halevy, "Disneyland and Las Vegas," *The Nation*, 7 June 1958, p. 513.
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- ⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 143.
- ⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 142-43.
- ⁴⁶*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 146-47.
- ⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 142.
- ⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 155.
- ⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 156.
- ⁵¹*Ibid.*, 151.
- ⁵²William R. Cox, "Las Vegas Trap," in *The Hardboiled Lineup*, Harry Widmer, ed. (New York: Lion, 1955), 7-40.
- ⁵³*Ibid.*, 7.
- ⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 8.
- ⁵⁵*Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 28.
- ⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 40.
- ⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 27.
- ⁵⁹Moehring, *Resort City*, 173.
- ⁶⁰Jack Waer, *Murder in Las Vegas* (New York: Avon, 1955).
- ⁶¹*Ibid.*, 8.
- ⁶²*Ibid.*, 79.
- ⁶³*Ibid.*, 49.
- ⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 9.

- ⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 17.
- ⁶⁶Irving Shulman, *The Big Brokers* (New York: Dial Press, 1951).
- ⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 8.
- ⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 132.
- ⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 173.
- ⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 342.
- ⁷¹*Ibid.*, 171, 270, 159.
- ⁷²*Ibid.*, 270.
- ⁷³*Ibid.*, 289.
- ⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 324.
- ⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 564.
- ⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 439.
- ⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 569.
- ⁷⁸Richard S. Prather, *Find This Woman* (New York: Dial Press, 1951).
- ⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 41.
- ⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 76–77.
- ⁸¹*Ibid.*, 53–54.
- ⁸²*Ibid.*, 22.
- ⁸³*Ibid.*, 32.
- ⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 95.
- ⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 24.
- ⁸⁶Steve Fisher, *No House Limit* (New York: Dutton, 1958).
- ⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 184–85.
- ⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 215.
- ⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 201.
- ⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 46.
- ⁹¹*Ibid.*, 106.
- ⁹²Ian Fleming, *Diamonds Are Forever* (New York: Macmillan, 1956).
- ⁹³*Ibid.*, 17.
- ⁹⁴*Ibid.*
- ⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 117, 121, 120.
- ⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 124.
- ⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 126.
- ⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 24.
- ⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 50, 56.
- ¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 80.
- ¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 121, 125.
- ¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 137.
- ¹⁰³Elliot Paul, *The Black and the Red: A Homer Evans Mystery* (New York: Random House, 1956).
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- ¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 140.
- ¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 202–3.
- ¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 265.
- ¹⁰⁸Natalie E. White, *Seven Nuns at Las Vegas* (Notre Dame: Genesian Press, 1954).
- ¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 17.
- ¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 23.
- ¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 33, 44.
- ¹¹²Robert Nathan, *The Rancho of the Little Loves* (New York, Knopf, 1956).
- ¹¹³*Ibid.*, 9.
- ¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 16.
- ¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 28.
- ¹¹⁶*Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 162.
- ¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 166.
- ¹¹⁹Chafe, *Unfinished Journey*, 126.
- ¹²⁰O'Faolain, "Coarse and Lovely Illusions," 56.

MURDER ON THE NEVADA DESERT

Reed Slays Snyder of the Donner Party

Joseph A. King

The slaying of John Snyder, a young teamster traveling with the Graves family, by James Frazier Reed is one of the most controversial incidents in the saga of the Donner Party. The event took place about October 5, 1846, in the Nevada desert. What exactly happened is clouded in uncertainty, although there is no shortage of eyewitness testimony or interpreters of that testimony. It was an important incident, one of several having severe consequences for every person in the company. The Donner group, burdened with many children and short on adult male muscle, lost both the popular Snyder, age about twenty-five, and the energetic Reed, age forty-six, who was sent into exile because of the slaying, leaving his wife and four children behind. If the Donner company had had these two strong backs, they may well have made it over the high pass in the Sierra Nevada before early snows in the last week of October entrapped them for the winter. One day or two would have made the difference.

The story of the long trek over plains and mountains, of the entrapment of more than eighty persons during the terrible winter of 1846–47 in the Sierra Nevada, of the deaths in the high camps and the survival of some who ate the dead, is well known, and beyond the scope of this article. What follows is a summary and analysis of the available documents on the Reed/Snyder affair. The documents will point up, I hope, the immense difficulty of historians of the Donner Party and, by inference, the general problem in writing any history.

LOCATION OF THE TRAGEDY

The exact place of the killing was long thought to be Gravelly Ford, near Beowawe. But George R. Stewart in an itinerary noted that Snyder was killed

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near today's "Stone House."¹ Concurring, H. C. Ryker of Berkeley, California, in a November 30, 1948, letter to Carroll Hall, curator at Fort Sutter, wrote:²

There is only one place on the Humboldt meeting the topographic description [of various eyewitnesses] surrounding the quarrel . . . this is the two low hills near Stonehouse Railroad Station . . . we climbed these hills during our vacation this summer and found definite evidence of an old wagon trace, traversing the saddle between them. These hills are . . . just north of and west of Valmy Station. By going through the saddle, the emigrants saved several miles of travel around an ox bow in the river.

The location identified by Stewart and Ryker is about seventy-five miles west of Gravelly Ford, between Battle Mountain and Winnemucca. In 1963, Dale L. Morgan identified the place as "a toilsome sand ridge west of present Redhouse, Nevada."³ In his and J. Roderick Korn's *West from Fort Bridger* (1951), as revised and updated by Will Bagley and Harold Schindler in 1994,⁴ we have this footnote (p. 236):

It seems likely that on October 4 the detachment of the company with which Reed was traveling moved down the river [from Stonehouse] 10 to 15 miles to encamp for the night in the vicinity of Redhouse. Next day, while engaged in the toilsome traverse of Emigrant Pass between the Osgood Mountains and the Sonoma Range . . . Reed fell into the altercation with the Graves' hired hand, John Snyder.

All the locations mentioned are between Battle Mountain and Winnemucca.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

William Eddy/J. Quinn Thornton

Drawing on William Eddy as a witness, J. Quinn Thornton, in an account published in 1849, wrote:

On the morning of October 5th, they broke up their camp. Mr. Eddy went out hunting antelope . . . at noon he came up with the company, which had stopped to take some refreshments, at the foot of a very high and long sand-hill, covered with rocks at the top. At length they commenced ascending the hill. All the wagons had been taken up but Mr. Reed's, Mr. Pike's and one of Mr. Graves', the latter driven by John Snyder. Milton Elliot, who was Mr. Reed's driver, took Mr. Eddy's team, which was on Mr. Reed's wagon, and joined it to Mr. Pike's team. The cattle of this team, being unruly, became entangled with that of Mrs. Graves', driven by Snyder; and a quarrel ensued between him and Elliot. Snyder at length commenced quarreling with Mr. Reed, and made some threats of whipping him, which threats he seemed about to attempt executing. Mr. Reed then drew a knife, without, however, attempting to use it, and told Snyder that he did not wish to have any difficulty with him. Snyder told him that he would whip him, "any how"; and turning the butt of his whip, gave Mr. Reed a severe blow upon the head, which cut it very much. As Reed was in the act of dodging the blow, he stabbed Snyder a little below the collar-bone, cutting off the first rib, and driving the knife through the left lung.

Snyder after this struck Mrs. Reed a blow upon the head, and Mr. Reed two blows upon the head, the last one bringing him down upon his knees. Snyder expired in about fifteen minutes.⁵

The Eddy/Thornton account continues:

Mr. Reed, although the blood was running down over his face and shoulders from his own wounds, manifested the greatest anguish of spirit, and threw the knife away from him into the river. Although Mr. Reed was thus compelled to do as he did, the occurrence produced much feeling against him; and in the evening Kiesburg proposed to hang him. To this, however, he was probably prompted by a feeling of resentment, produced by Mr. Reed having been mainly instrumental in his expulsion from one of the companies, while on the South Platte, for grossly improper conduct. Mr. Eddy had two six-shooters, two double-barreled pistols, and a rifle; Milton Elliot had one rifle, and a double-barreled shot gun; and Mr. Reed had one six-shooter, and a brace of double-barreled pistols, and rifle. Thus Mr. Reed's comrades were situated, and they determined that he should not die. Mr. Eddy, however, proposed that Mr. Reed should leave the camp. This was finally agreed to, and he accordingly left the next morning; not, however, before he had assisted in committing to the grave the body of the unhappy young man.

One problem with the Eddy/Thornton scenario is obvious. How could Snyder have struck both Reed and his wife so forcefully *after* he had been stabbed in the collarbone *and* through his left lung? Another problem is that Eddy was a less than reliable witness, having earned the sobriquet "Lying Eddy" on the trail for his boasting and telling of tall tales.⁶ In Thornton's accounting, Eddy's experiences are almost always presented heroically. We might guess that there was some elaboration on Thornton's part. He was writing a book for sale, and there was a strong market worldwide for exciting stories of the American West.

Still another problem is that there was little likelihood of Reed's being hanged without the approval of George Donner, the head of the company, whose wagons were a day or two in advance.

John Breen

John Breen, oldest of the seven children of Patrick Breen and Margaret Bulger, was about fourteen years of age at the time of the slaying. In 1877, when Hubert H. Bancroft was collecting material for his *History of California*, John Breen wrote to him as follows:

. . . on the Humbolt river, J. F. Reed and a man named Snyder quarreled and Snyder was killed; some thought Reed was to blame others that Snyder was in the wrong . . . at all events Reed left the company on horseback and alone leaving his family with the company, I have always thought that this was a misfortune for the whole party as Reed was an intelligent and energetic Man, and if he had remained the party might of got through—He said that he would go before and endeavor to send help back as provisions were now getting scarce.⁷

Later in the manuscript, John Breen wrote:

Some one writing to the San Francisco Chronicle last December from Illinois said that Patrick Breen was killed, while crossing the plains by J. F. Reed; The writer probably refered to the killing of Snyder, but even then, he stated what was not true as he said that "Breen struck Mrs Reed with a whip, which so enraged Reed that he, plunged a knife into Breen, killing him." . . . Now the truth is that the team was "stalled" on a sand bank on the Humbolt river; it was Reeds team; Snyder was driving Greavs team next to Reeds behind Reed. Reed was on the off side of his team assisting his man to get the team to pull. Snyder came up on the nigh side also to assist. Soon there was an altercation between Reed and Snyder. when Snyder called Reed some name and attempted to strike him across the tongue between the oxen and the wagon, Reed jumped across the tongue and stabbed him, Snyder died in a couple of hours. . . . Mrs Reed had nothing to do with the affair and if she had Snyder would not strike her, for he would not strike a woman at all; He was too much of a man for that. . . . Snyders loss was mourned by the whole company; Still Reed was not blamed by many—

Although thirty years after the event, John Breen's testimony must be taken quite seriously. One of his neighbors in San Juan Bautista spoke highly of his integrity:

A more honest and incorruptible man than John Breen never lived in San Benito Co. He was a very unassuming man, spoke but little, and when he did speak he talked directly to the point. He did not decide without due deliberation and once his mind was made up nothing could move him.⁸

John's brother James wrote to C. F. McGlashan on April 29, 1879, about the affair: "Patrick [James's father] consulted with Dolan [bachelor traveling with the Breens] and the consensus seemed to be: 'We all seem to be doomed, and I think we had better not have the man's blood on our hands.' "⁹ James was only five or six at the time of the incident, and so was probably drawing on what he had been told by his parents and older brothers.

William C. Graves

Billy Graves, oldest son of Franklin Ward Graves and Elizabeth Cooper of Marshall County, Illinois, was seventeen years old at the time of the murder. A handwritten manuscript of his testimony and several letters to McGlashan are at the Bancroft Library.¹⁰ In a section of his manuscript headed "Terrible Tragedy," he wrote:

Father was in the lead, Jay Fosdick second, John Snider third and Reed fourth; arriving at the foot of a short steep hill my fathers team was not able to pull the wagon up, so Fosdick took his team, doubled to fathers and went up, then took both teams back and started up with Fosdicks. Snider said his team could pull up alone, just then Reed had got

another team to double to his wagon and started to pass Sniders wagon, but the leaders did not want to pass, and tangled in with Sniders oxen. Reed at this time was on the opposite side of the oxen from Snider, and said to Snider "you have no business here in the way." Snider said "it is my place." Reed started towards him and jumping over the wagon tongue said "you are a damned liar, and I'll cut your heart out"! Snider pulled his clothes open on his breast and said, "cut away." Reed ran to him and stuck a large six inch butchers knife into his heart and cut off two ribs. Snider then turned the butt end of his whip stock and struck at him three times, but missed him the third and hit Mrs Reed, who had in the meantime got hold of her husband. Snider then started up the hill and went about ten steps, when he began to stagger, just then I got to him and kept him from falling by laying him down easy where he died in five minutes. I then went a little ways to a place where we could camp and held a council to find out what to do with Reed and took affidavits from the witnesses, with the view of giving him a fair trial when we got to civilization. But Mrs Reed and I were the only witnesses that got through, the affidavits were all lost, and I went back to Illinois the next June, so Reed taking advantage of the circumstances went before a Justice of the Peace, told his own story and was acquitted for the lack of evidence. Some of the company were opposed to allowing Reed to travel in company, so they agreed to banish him instead of sending him after provisions as he and others have erroneously stated. He left and, catching up with the Donner brothers who were two days ahead on the trail, persuaded one of his hired hands, Walter Herron, to go with him.

In a March 30, 1879, letter to McGlashan, Graves wrote, "It was not a brutal decision to banish Reed. He killed a man."¹¹ In the same letter Graves said he saw the event from thirty feet away, on horseback.

There are serious problems of credibility with any testimony of William Graves. In later life, settling in Calistoga as a blacksmith, he was an embittered man who reviled other survivors and their rescuers. Of Reed he wrote, "being he was an aristocratic fellow, [Reed] was above working, so he had hired hands to drive his teams and he gave orders, although no one paid much attention to him, but his wife was a lady and the company humored him a good deal on that account . . ."¹² Graves published a version of Patrick Breen's diary (the only record of events as they occurred in the camp of entrapment) in which he deliberately falsified the record to protect his family. This is perhaps understandable, since his mother, father, a younger brother, and brother-in-law (Jay Fosdick) were cannibalized. His written testimony, appearing in newspaper accounts and in letters to McGlashan, is full of blatant error, for example, from the same manuscript: "Mary Donners feet were so badly frozen they had to be cut off." Not true. Also not true: In an April 13, 1879, letter to McGlashan, he insisted that William Eddy and William Foster "never went out [with a relief party] at any time."¹³ Actually, Eddy participated in the first and third reliefs, and Foster in the third and fourth.

William's sister, Mary Ann, age nineteen at the time, also disliked Reed. In an 1847 letter, she wrote: "On Mary's river [now the Humbolt River] a quarrel took place between John Snyder and an overbearing Irishman, in which the latter

stabbed the former."¹⁴ (Reed had been born in County Armagh, Ireland, in the Province of Ulster.)

James Frazier Reed

A long account of the trail experiences of James F. Reed, from "notes written by Mr. J. F. Reed," was printed in the *Illinois Journal* (Springfield) of December 9, 1847. Reed ignored the real reason for his departure from the company. After noting that Charles Stanton and William McCutchen had been sent ahead in Nevada to procure supplies at Fort Sutter, Reed reported:

The company then proceeded, and after traveling three hundred miles [a vast overestimate], giving ample time, as they supposed, for the return of Messrs. Stanton and McClutchen, and fearing that some accident had befallen them, they determined to send another messenger. Mr. Reed was at once chosen as the most proper person for this service, and providing himself with seven days provisions, he commenced his lonesome march.

Many years later, Reed gave essentially the same story to the *Pacific Rural Press* (March 25 and April 1, 1871):

After their leaving us we traveled on for weeks, none of us knowing the distance we were from California. All became anxious for the return of McCutchen and Stanton. It was here [Reed doesn't define *here*] suggested that I go in advance to California, see what had become of McClutchen and Stanton, and hurry up the supplies. They would take care of my family. That being agreed upon I started taking with me about three days provisions expecting to kill game on the way. The Messrs. Donner were two days drive in advance . . . with George Donner there was a young man named Walter Herron who joined me . . .

Again, not a word about the killing of Snyder. Not a word about Reed's banishment. He was also silent about this in a December 3, 1872, deposition supporting Riley Moutrey's claim for compensation for his participation in the rescue efforts:

About the 17th of October 1846, fearing that we should be late in getting in, and chiefly with a view to get in ahead to California and send relief to the Company if they should be overtaken by the snows, about 60 miles from the old sink of Humbolt River I left the company—distant from the old Sutters Fort about 300 miles, which I traveled mostly alone and arrived at Sutters Fort about the 28th day of October 1846.¹⁵

Actually, he traveled with Herron the whole distance to the fort, as evidenced by his account for the *Pacific Rural Press*. The many errors in Reed's copy of the statement may be attributed to a failing memory and age. He signed the document in a large and bold but shaky hand.

Virginia Reed Murphy

Virginia Reed Murphy's account was published in *Century Magazine* in 1891.¹⁶ It is understandably weighted in favor of her father (actually her step-father). It differs very little from the account of Eddy/Thornton, except that her father thrusts the knife into Snyder after her mother has been struck:

Another blow was descending when my mother ran in between the men. Father saw the uplifted whip, but had only time to cry: "John, John," when down came the stroke upon mother. Quick as a thought my father's hunting knife was out and Snyder fell, fatally wounded.

Virginia mentions the council that was called. "The feeling against my father was so strong that lynching was proposed." She says that "all the animosity against my father was caused by Lewis Keseberg [whose] hour for revenge had come." According to Stewart in *Ordeal by Hunger*, it was "largely through the urging of Reed [that] Keseberg had been for a while banished from the company with which he had then [on the Platte] been traveling." He had desecrated an Indian grave by removing the buffalo robes from the body, thereby risking the wrath of the Sioux, and was forced to return the robes.¹⁷

HISTORIANS REPORT THE EVENT

C. F. McGlashan

In 1879, C. F. McGlashan interviewed and corresponded with five survivors who claimed to be witnesses to the event. He mentions four by name: Mrs. J. M. Murphy (Virginia Reed), Mrs. Frank Lewis (Patty Reed), William G. Murphy, and William C. Graves. The fifth, unmentioned, would have to be John Breen.

Not nearly all of McGlashan's correspondence with his informants has survived. In the interests of not embarrassing any of them, he destroyed the greatest portion of letters he received from them before he died. However, more than ninety letters he wrote to Eliza P. Donner Houghton have survived, and in them he expresses the great problems he was having reconciling the conflicting accounts of Reed's daughters, the Murphys, and the Graveses.¹⁸

McGlashan's account appeared in the first edition of his *History of the Donner Party* in the fall of 1879. In 1880, for the second edition, he made some changes to please the Reed sisters, apologizing to members of the Graves and Murphy families for not being able to reconcile their accounts with those of the Reeds. Curiously, McGlashan ignored the account of John Breen. The story McGlashan chose to tell follows Virginia Reed Murphy's account, as later published in *Century Magazine*, very closely, and differs little from the Eddy/Thornton account, with that exception of the timing of Reed's thrust with the knife. McGlashan mentions the council that was held, the feelings that "ran so high that at one time the end of a wagon tongue was propped up with an ox-yoke by some of the emigrants with the intention of hanging Reed thereon [but] calmer coun-

sel prevailed." In what seems to have been a considerable stretch of the imagination to please the Reed daughters, McGlashan reports that Reed's decision to leave the company was a voluntary one:

. . . he refused to comply with the decree . . . then came the wife's pleadings! . . . she urged him to remember the want and destitution in which they and the entire company were already participants. If he remained and escaped violence at the hands of his enemies, he might nevertheless see his children starve before his eyes, and be helpless to aid them. But if he would go forward, if he could reach California, he could return with provisions . . . it was a fearful struggle, but finally the mother's counsels prevailed . . . Mr. Reed made the company promise to care for his family.

George R. Stewart

Stewart was a master storyteller and the author of best-selling novels. When he wrote history, he employed many of the techniques of popular fiction writers. "Catch the reader with the first sentence and never let him get away after that" was his advice to writers.¹⁹ Stewart accepted the Eddy/Thornton version almost *in toto*, including Snyder's blow to Mrs. Reed occurring after he had been stabbed by her husband.²⁰ He pictures Eddy and Elliot "armed to the teeth," standing in defense of Reed, and says that "Eddy finally effected a compromise . . . Reed was to be allowed to leave the camp and go on ahead." In *The California Trail*, Stewart imaginatively included Patrick Breen among those wanting to hang Reed.²¹

Surprisingly, in his notes to the 1936 and 1960 editions of *Ordeal by Hunger*, Stewart cites five sources of information on the events but does not include John Breen's account. Why he ignored this quite credible report is a mystery, although Stewart's general bias regarding the Breens is abundantly evident elsewhere in the book.²² In his note, Stewart says he "followed the [information from Eddy] which by the rules of evidence seems decidedly preferable to . . . the others."

Other Accounts

A score and more of historians (for example, Bernard DeVoto in *The Year of Decision, 1846*) and fiction writers have been heavily influenced by the brilliantly written *Ordeal by Hunger*; generally accepting Stewart's version of events, they have often added fanciful elaborations of their own and are usually disparaging of Lewis Keseberg, Patrick Breen, and Franklin Graves.²³

CONCLUSION

Who was responsible for starting the fight, Reed or Snyder? Did Reed, allegedly defending himself and his wife, have justification for thrusting his knife into Snyder? Did Snyder strike Mrs. Reed as well as her husband? Was Mrs. Reed struck by Snyder after Snyder had been stabbed (Eddy/Thornton)? How long did it take Snyder to die, fifteen minutes (Eddy/Thornton) or "a couple of hours" (John Breen) or five minutes (Graves)? Was Reed in danger of being hanged? Did he and his friends (Eddy, Elliot) have guns at the ready to defend themselves from people crying for vengeance (Eddy/Thornton, Virginia Reed

Murphy)? Was it Eddy who suggested the "compromise," that is, banishment of Reed? Did Patrick Breen, a gentle and unvengeful man according to much testimony not cited in this article, cry out for vengeance? (Stewart)²⁴

It is my belief that the testimony of *all* the witnesses must be treated with the utmost caution, much more caution, for example, than Stewart has given to the Eddy/Thornton testimony. I would give a modicum of credence to the testimony of John Breen, ignored by McGlashan and Stewart. Yet John Breen's recollection that Snyder did not strike Mrs. Reed is not convincing. The events happened in a matter of seconds. Even eyewitnesses could miss some details and the exact sequence. Besides, memory plays many tricks over the years. The accounts of Breen, the Reed sisters, and Billy Graves were given more than thirty years after the tragedy.

My own belief is that Snyder may not have struck Mrs. Reed, but that her husband *thought* he struck her, or at least that she was in danger of being struck. In our comfortable twentieth-century world it is easy to condemn Reed, but in a rough frontier setting where tempers flared easily and where everyone was close to death, it is easier to forgive. Reed acted instinctively to protect, so he thought, his loved one and himself. Reed was sometimes a rash man, but not a brutal one. He organized and led the second relief party to Donner Lake, where he showed compassion even for Lewis Keseberg, bathing and feeding him.²⁵

Reed ultimately settled in San Jose, where he became prominent in business and politics, serving as a member of the town council and chief of police. He gave active support to the construction of the Methodist seminary that was to become the College of the Pacific. In 1871 he was described by a friend as "a most generous man, possessing much public spirit; social and entertaining in his own house, warm in his friendships, bitter in his hates; but honorable and apologizing if satisfied that he has been in the wrong." He died in 1874 and was buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery in San Jose.

NOTES

¹George R. Stewart, *Ordeal by Hunger* (1936; rpt New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1942), 301.

²Fort Sutter Documents Collection, Fort Sutter, Calif.: Reed Family.

³*Overland in 1846: Diaries and Letters of the California-Oregon Trail*, vol. 1 (1962; rpt Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 251, 268, n.440.

⁴(Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1984).

⁵J. Quinn Thornton, *Camp of Death: The Donner Party Mountain Camp, 1846-1847* (Golden, Colorado: Outbooks, 1986), first printed in *Oregon and California in 1848*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1849).

⁶See testimony of Reed's daughters, Virginia and Martha (Patty), and James Breen. James wrote to McGlashan on March 7, 1879 (McGlashan Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley [cited hereafter as McGlashan Papers], folder 5): "His nickname or sobriquet [was] 'lying Eddy'." Virginia Reed Murphy, writing to McGlashan on June 10, 1879 [1880?] (McGlashan Papers, folder 42): "Such a disconnected untruthful story. It sounds just like Eddy." Patty wrote similarly.

⁷"Pioneer Memoirs by John Breen," November 1877, original letter and transcription in Bancroft Library.

⁸Isaac L. Mylar, *Early Days of the Mission San Juan Bautista* (1928 [Evening Pajaronian, Watsonville,

Calif.]; rpt San Juan Bautista: Valley Publishers in cooperation with San Juan Bautista Historical Society, 1970.)

⁹McGlashan Papers, folder 5.

¹⁰Five letters to McGlashan and a twenty-page handwritten manuscript, "Crossing the Plains in 1846," McGlashan Papers, Bancroft C-B 570, folder 98, carton 1 (undated but c. 1879). See also Virginia Reed Murphy, "Across the Plains in the Donner Party (1846)," *Century Magazine* (July 1891), reprinted as *Across the Plains in the Donner Party: A Personal Narrative of the Overland Trip to California, 1846-47* (Golden, Colorado: Outbooks, 1980). Graves also published his version of events in a series of newspaper articles in the *Healdsburg Russian River Flag* (26 April to 17 May 1877, and 30 December 1877).

¹¹McGlashan Papers, folder 11.

¹²Breen, "Crossing the Plains in 1846."

¹³McGlashan Papers, folder 11.

¹⁴Letter of Mary Ann Graves, printed in the *Lacon Gazette* (Illinois), September 25, 1847, and reprinted in *Crossroads*, quarterly newsletter of the Utah Crossroads Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association, summer 1994, with note by Kristin Johnson, who submitted the item.

¹⁵Manuscript, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.

¹⁶Murphy, "Across the Plains in the Donner Party (1846)."

¹⁷For specifics of this story, see pp. 16-17 of the 1960 edition of *Ordeal by Hunger* (first Bison Book printing, 1986); however, Stewart's notes are silent as to source, and I have been unable to confirm his account. Thornton/Eddy reported only "a great impropriety" by Keseberg (see Thornton/Eddy testimony, pp. 2-3).

¹⁸Sherman O. Houghton Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. In the collection at the Bancroft Library are more than four hundred letters to McGlashan from survivors, their children, and rescuers, but he reportedly destroyed many more than that.

¹⁹Interview by Mickey Friedman, *San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle* (12 August 1979).

²⁰Stewart, *Ordeal by Hunger*, a Donner Party classic, takes many liberties with the facts for the sake of a good story, and is often fictional in content. For a critique of *Ordeal by Hunger*, see J. A. King, *Winter of Entrapment: A New Look at the Donner Party*, rev. ed. (Lafayette, Calif.: K&K Publications, 1994), esp. 186-95.

²¹*The California Trail* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 179.

²²Stewart's negative and nativist caricatures of the Breens and other "ethnics" in the Donner Party are pointed up in King, *Winter of Entrapment*.

²³King, *Winter of Entrapment*, "The Influence of Stewart" (survey of the literature), 196-201.

²⁴None of the pro-Reed witnesses mentions the name of anybody but Keseberg who allegedly was threatening to hang Reed. In *The California Trail*, Stewart names particular persons without hesitations: "The Graves were crying for justice—not to call it vengeance. With them joined the Breens. Keseberg, who hated Reed for his own reasons, was the most violent of all." Stewart's account of the incident, which he introduces with the words "We can imagine the talk during the day," contains a number of other fictional flourishes (pp. 178-79).

²⁵Many years later Keseberg expressed his gratitude. See statement given to McGlashan in 1879 in C. F. McGlashan, *History of the Donner Party* (Sacramento: H. S. Crocker and Co., 1880), reprinted in King, *Winter of Entrapment*, 133.

BOOK REVIEWS

Religion and Society in Frontier California. By Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994. x + 241 pp. notes, bibliography, index.)

California Spiritual Frontiers: Religious Alternatives in Anglo-Protestantism, 1850–1910. By Sandra Sizer Frankiel. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, xv + 182 pp., notes, bibliography, index.)

These two books provide fresh insights into the religious issues faced by the early Anglo-settlers in California. *Religion and Society in Frontier California* is the story of evangelical Protestantism in the Golden State from the beginning of the gold rush to the completion of the transcontinental railroad. The book's primary focus includes Baptist, Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches and their role in early California society. *California Spiritual Frontiers* examines religious alternatives for Anglo settlers. Together, the two books provide a welcome addition to religious studies of the Pacific slope.

Religion and Society in Frontier California is an inter-disciplinary study exhibiting the author's knowledge of society in California during the gold rush era and her comprehension of the religious issues of that day. Maffly-Kipp has researched the lives of many of California's early ministers and has examined the history of the first Protestant churches in California. In addition, she has reviewed the perception of the gold rush from the perspective of eastern missionary societies who provided support for the clergy who followed the miners to California.

Through the use of diaries and many other primary resources, Maffly-Kipp is able to develop a detailed description of the missionaries who answered the call to California. These early ministers and missionaries aspired to transform California society based upon a New England model, a goal that was in conflict with the goals of many miners.

A second area Maffly-Kipp examines is the way the church in California attempted to handle a pluralistic society. In contrast to the Eastern states, California has always lacked a homogeneous population. At the beginning of the gold rush, California was settled by Californians, Mexicans and Native Americans with few Anglo-Americans or others. This quickly changed, however, as

Anglo-Americans from the East rushed to the gold country along with Europeans and Chinese. Not only was California ethnically plural, but it was also religiously plural as each immigrant group brought in their own traditions. The young Americans from the East, most away from their homes and churches for the first time, were free to choose how to express their faith. In addition to evangelical Protestantism, the choices in California included Catholicism, Mormonism, Spiritualism, and Universalism. Supplementing these religious options, as Maffly-Kipp demonstrates, were gambling and prostitution. These "vices" also vied for the miner's loyalty and were able to use "gender" more successfully than churches in attracting the young men's attention. (p. 161)

A third theme addressed is the relationship between Protestantism and the industrialism of the mining camps. Maffly-Kipp notices a similarity between the religious issues of frontier California and similar issues which would later arise on the industrial Eastern seaboard. (pp. 56 & 184) Although the East was beginning to experience the industrialization and immigration which would lead to a religious crisis after the Civil War, most of the clergy who moved to California were from small towns in upstate New York or New England and were not aware of this shift. Life in California was also different from the East, since most of the population was mobile as people moved from town to town in search of wealth. In the East, cities were viewed as corrupt while rural areas were seen as havens of morality. Maffly-Kipp suggests that in California, the opposite was true. Large churches were established and flourished in the stability of cities such as San Francisco and Sacramento, giving the urban setting an appearance of morality. In smaller, less stable towns, churches had a difficult time surviving. (p. 77)

A difficult obstacle for the church to overcome in California, according to Maffly-Kipp, was the paradoxical relationship between the Protestant work-ethic and the ethos of the mining camps. With mining, hard work did not necessarily lead to success. The Protestant rational world view no longer seemed valid in the mining camps where luck was as much a part of being successful as was skill or hard work. Gambling became a way of life. The uncertainty of mining also led some miners to attempt magical practices as a way to increase their fortune. (pp. 122-124)

A fourth theme examined in *Religion and Society in Frontier California* is the relationship between the California Protestants and the feminized Protestantism of the nineteenth century. It has long been understood that the low ratio of women to men in the mining camps was a hindrance to the establishment of churches. However, Maffly-Kipp explores the situation in more detail. She not only looked at the role of the few Anglo-American women who were in California during the early years, but also at the way evangelical Protestantism had become feminized, "promoting hearth and home over masculine virtues." (p. 152) This feminized piety led the clergy to assume "that the western regions could not be fully christianized until they were populated by families, and more

specifically, until women arrived who could guide the growth and nurture of men and children alike." (p. 153) The Protestant ethos of the mid-nineteenth century left the church in no position to effectively evangelize the male-dominated mining camps.

Sandra Sizer Frankiel's *California's Spiritual Frontiers* parallels Maffly-Kipp's research. Whereas *Religion and Society in Frontier California* focuses on the difficulty Anglo-Protestantism had establishing itself on the Pacific slope, Frankiel's study examines a small minority who challenged traditional Protestantism from the beginning of the gold rush. The groups studied include liberal Protestants and Unitarians, metaphysical religions such as Spiritualism, Christian Science, New Thought and Theosophy, and Protestant groups outside the mainstream including the Seventh-Day Adventist and Holiness churches. Although these various groups were, as a general rule, not related to each other and remained in the minority, their presence contested the dominance of Anglo-Protestantism.

Liberal Protestantism was evident in northern California from the beginning of the Gold Rush. The popular Unitarian preacher, Thomas Starr King (1824–1864), was one of liberal Protestantism's greatest spokesmen. Frankiel explores his life and his message of unity, openness and tolerance. (p. 21) In addition to King, other ministers from more traditional Protestant denominations also espoused a more liberal theology. Two examples used by Frankiel were Presbyterian Laurentine Hamilton who was tried for heresy for his beliefs concerning the after-life and Methodist S. D. Simonds who was tried for heresy for his non-orthodox beliefs concerning the Trinity.

Frankiel demonstrates that liberal Protestants were not the only ones challenging the aspirations of the traditional clergy. Spiritualism, a teaching which believed that the soul was in a process of eternal progression, was present in California in the 1850s. (p. 40) In the late 1860s, Spiritualists began the first of two newspapers they would sponsor in California, identifying themselves "as an exponent of liberal religion while denouncing revivalism and all dogmas and creeds." (p. 32) Spiritualism remained a small movement, but Frankiel demonstrates that their presence was a reminder that Anglo-Protestantism did not enjoy the support of all Anglo-Californians.

Two additional challenges to traditional Protestantism, which Frankiel examines, are the Seventh Day Adventist and Holiness churches. The Adventists, who worship on Saturday, began revivals in California in 1868. (pp. 48–9) By 1882, they successfully challenged the state's blue laws. (p. 53) In the south, the Holiness movement began to challenge mainstream Protestantism during the 1880s with the rise of the Church of the Nazarene. (p. 107) Emphasizing conversion and sanctification at the time when mainline churches were easing their membership standards, the Nazarenes and other holiness churches were able to attract many middle class Midwestern transplants who found the church similar to the churches they had left behind. (p. 108)

It has often been assumed that California, as well as the Pacific Coast, was not

as religious as other areas in the country. Certainly the low percentage of church membership, only 35 percent in 1906, supports this thesis. However, as Frankiel illustrates, many Californians sought to fulfill their spiritual needs in ways more personal than through organized churches. All the metaphysical religions espoused a personal rather than a communal faith. Even the newer churches such as the Church of the Nazarene, with its emphasis on sanctification, embraced the individual. In her closing, Frankiel uses John Muir as an example of someone in the tradition of Thomas Starr King, a very spiritual person who did not need organized religion.

California Spiritual Frontiers is a survey of the various alternatives available to Californian settlers from the eastern states. As a survey, the book sometimes lacks detail. This is especially true with the somewhat brief treatment of Spiritualism in northern California during the mid-nineteenth century. However, the book does fill a vacuum in the role alternative religious practices played in California's development. Although the study is limited mostly to the nineteenth century, it has implications for understanding the variety of religious expression found in California today.

Timothy L. Smith in *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* states that on the eve of the Civil War, revivalism was the chief characteristic of American religion.¹ Certainly the churches studied in *Religion and Society in Frontier California* had been influenced by and placed great hope in revivalism. However, Maffly-Kipp provides little information on revivalism in her study. *California Spiritual Frontiers* explores alternatives to evangelical Protestantism so one would not expect to see as much emphasis on revivalism. Yet, one of Frankiel's conclusions is that religiosity in California was often personal and individualistic. (p. 127) William Warren Sweet's classic study of nineteenth century revivalism bases the success of revivalism upon individualism and mobility within society.² In California, both were present, but revivalism did not enjoy the same success as it did on the trans-Allegheny frontier. Both Maffly-Kipp and Frankiel recognize that revivals were not successful in the West, but neither go into much detail as to why. Those looking for details of revivalistic attempts in California will be disappointed.

Another area overlooked in these studies is the role of the various fraternal organizations such as Masonry and the Odd Fellows. Fraternal organizations were popular in mining communities and certainly could have provided the mostly male population with an alternative to the church. In addition to the lodges, there were also various state and national organizations which allowed people to gather with others of similar backgrounds. Frankiel mentions the rise of these organizations in southern California and ties their popularity to the rise of suburbs. (pp. 74–5) However, such societies existed in the mining camps. One only has to look at contemporary newspapers to see their popularity.

These two studies provide a readable and often entertaining addition, to current literature on Western religious history.³ There have been some recent stud-

ies on the Protestant church in the West, but only a few have examined the church's role in the mining camps as thoroughly as *Religion and Society in Frontier California*.⁴ In addition to Anglo-Protestant churches, alternative religious practices such as Spiritualism were also common in the far western mining camps. *California Spiritual Frontiers* provides a foundation for understanding such practices. For the historian interested in the religious development of Nevada, especially during the Comstock era, these two books provide an appreciation of the religious issues faced during that period.

NOTES

¹Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Abingdon, 1957), 45.

²William Warren Sweet, *Revivalism in America: Its Origin, Growth, and Influence* (New York: Abingdon, 1944), xii.

³Examples of recent studies of church and society in California include Michael E. Engh, S. J., *Church, Temple, and Synagogue in Los Angeles, 1846-1880* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992); Eldon G. Ernst, *Pilgrim Progression: The Protestant Experience in California* (Santa Barbara, CA: Fithian Press, 1993); and Douglas Firth Anderson, "Through Fire and Fair by the Golden Gate: Progressive Era Protestantism and Regional Culture" (Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, 1988).

⁴One study providing insight into the relationship between the church and the miner is Alice Ann Cowan, *Miners, Merchants, and Missionaries: The Role of Missionaries and Pioneer Churches in the Colorado Gold Rush and Its Aftermath, 1858-1870* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1980). For general information about churches in the mining camp see Duane A. Smith, *Rocky Mountain Mining Camps: The Urban Frontier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967). Examples of recent studies of the church in the West are Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Protestant Clergy in the Great Plains and American West, 1865-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988); and David Alvarez and Carl Guarneri, editors, *Religion and Society in the American West: Historical Essays* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987).

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The Black Book and the Mob: The Untold Story of the Control of Nevada's Casinos. By Ronald A. Farrell and Carole Case. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995, xiv + 300 pp., illustrations, appendices, index.)

Ronald Farrell and Carole Case demonstrate that consistency and predictability have been features of the establishment and maintenance of the List of Excluded Persons, commonly known as the Black Book. From its inception in 1960 until the present, Nevada gaming regulators have added names to the Black Book in response to media allegations that criminal elements were involved with Las Vegas gaming. They never included all the names of those

convicted of gambling related felonies, nor did they add just a random selection of names; rather they chose an interesting mixture of names. Reviewing the list of nominees endorsed by the Nevada Gaming Control Board (NGCB), one sees the names of a few Italian-American criminals who attained great notoriety in the late 1950s and 1960s and a handful of Jewish Americans who, unlike most of their contemporaries, were unable to buy legitimacy. They were joined by alleged Las Vegas enforcer for the Chicago mob Tony Spilotro, several other Italian-Americans who were either well known bookies or reported in the Las Vegas press to be successors to Spilotro, an Arab American who became an Excluded Person ten years after Nevada authorities banned him from the Aladdin, two Hawaiians who may well have never visited Nevada, and most recently, a few unsophisticated slot cheats, mostly of Anglo-Saxon background. Farrell and Case argue that the type of consistency and predictability Nevada gaming regulators have exhibited is incompatible with generally accepted standards of due process.

The authors pull no punches in their well documented work. Noting that each of the nominees was considered a threat to Las Vegas gaming, not to the many casinos in the Reno/Sparks or Lake Tahoe areas, they identify a bias against the city that has dominated Nevada economically but not politically for almost three decades. While Midwestern organized crime leaders were as involved in northern Nevada gaming as they were in Las Vegas in the two decades after World War II, none was even considered for nomination to the Black Book. On the other hand, northern Nevadans have played key roles on the NGCB and the Nevada Gaming Commission (NGC)—the body that actually determines which nominees of the NGCB enter the Black Book. Farrell and Case join prominent Las Vegas attorneys Dominic Gentile and Oscar Goodman in identifying an obvious bias against Italian Americans. Indeed, they argue that the gaming regulators use a double standard in regard to Italian Americans and Jewish Americans with almost identical connections with organized crime.

Finally, the two UNLV criminal justice professors go where, if not angels, at least most Nevada academicians have feared to tread in asserting that the attitudes of Mormon gaming regulators are partly responsible for the ethnic bias reflected in the Black Book since its inception in 1960. Farrell and Case suggest that while Mormon and other gaming regulators initially may have viewed both Jewish-American and Italian-American gaming entrepreneurs negatively, the Mormons in particular are reluctant to subject the former to the same standards applied to the latter because of doctrinal identification with the biblical Israelites. They contend that Mormons and others, well aware of the anti-Semitism that led to the Holocaust, have probably sought to avoid any action that might appear to be scapegoating Jews.

The authors make excellent use of the records of the NGCB and the NGC to support their thesis. Both their summaries and their occasional recounting of direct testimony at Black Book nomination proceedings provide the reader with

an accurate picture of the logical inconsistencies that abound in the selection of names for the Black Book. For example, in 1960 Nevada gaming regulators, feeling pressured by United States Justice Department officials to demonstrate their intolerance of organized crime, selected eight Italian-American mobsters to be among the first eleven placed in the just-created Black Book. At the same time, however, they approved Sam Cohen and Morris Landsburgh as part owners of the Flamingo in spite of their close association with Meyer Lansky. They also approved Sandy Waterman, as notorious as those of some of the Italian Americans placed in the Black Book, as a part owner of the Cal-Neva Lodge at Lake Tahoe. Thirty years later, at the Joey Cusumano nomination hearings, the NGC members were even unwilling to acknowledge that the majority of individuals listed in the Black Book were Italian Americans.

The Black Book and the Mob is not perfectly crafted. The authors pay inadequate attention to Nevada's history, inadvertently leading some readers to perceive that Mormons, who constitute less than fifteen percent of Nevada's population, have always exercised decisive political power. Farrell and Case would have presented a more comprehensive overview of the issues of ethnic and regional biases in gaming regulation had they interviewed the several Italian Americans—most notably Attorney-General Frankie Sue Del Papa, Senate Majority Leader William Raggio, Assembly Co-Speaker Joe Dini and former NGC member Robert Peccole—who have been in positions to address the highly disproportionate representation of Italian Americans in the Black Book. It is conceivable that some or even all of these officials might have argued that no ethnic or regional bias existed.

Most important, Farrell and Case have made a significant contribution to our understanding of modern Nevada's legal history. They deal with issues—Mormon political power in Nevada, Italian-American representation in organized crime, preferential treatment of Jewish gaming entrepreneurs in the 1950s and 1960s, and discrimination against Las Vegas by northern Nevadans—which their counterparts at Nevada colleges and universities have avoided. Their effort should encourage further exploration of these topics.

Alan Balboni
Community College of Southern Nevada

Wild Game. By Frank Bergon. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1995, 323 pp.)

When Frank Bergon submerges historic events and facts within layers of his imagination, a higher truth floats to the surface. This happened in *Shoshone Mike*, his 1987 novel about a small band of lawbreaking Native Americans chased

across northern Nevada and then massacred by a posse in what observers called the last Indian battle of modern times. A compelling narrative that's hard to put down, *Shoshone Mike* seriously questioned the ways of the law and the meanings of justice. *Wild Game*, just as compelling and just as serious, does the same.

Also set in northern Nevada and also based on factual encounters between the law and the "lawless," *Wild Game* approaches the issues from a somewhat different direction. This time the reader's sympathies (or at least this reader's sympathies) lie more with the representative of the system—Jack Irigaray, a biologist for the Division of Wildlife—than with the outlaw—Billy Crockett, a Claude-Dallas-type would-be mountain man who guns down a game warden and a friend in the desert. Where I cheered for Shoshone Mike and his band against the anachronistic Winnemucca sheriff, I never felt any bond with Billy Crockett, a murderer whom friends protected and the press made larger than life.

Nonetheless, I felt attuned to the dilemma Frank Bergon poses. Right and wrong aren't always black and white. Nevadans' own convictions about individualism and independence, and their antipathies toward federal control, shape responses when real-life events occur. So do personal attachments to the charismatic nature of a killer. When this story, in its factual form, played out in the pages of the Reno newspaper a few years ago, I read first-hand accounts that fit nearly with Bergon's creative reconstruction of those who supported the Crockett prototype.

But *Wild Game* is much more than a fictionalized version of a newsworthy escapade. *Wild Game* investigates the subtleties of human interaction, as its characters behave in sometimes predictable but more often in surprising ways. It also explores complicated issues of justice, especially in its portrayals of criminal procedures, rule of evidence, and trial by jury. Meaningful, too, are the psychological parallels drawn between the pursuer and the pursued—the single-mindedness, the bent toward self-destruction, the paradoxical inner honesty that twists them both.

To say much more will give away too much of the plot. It's sufficient to point readers back toward *Shoshone Mike*. The same starkly realistic landscape—wintertime, somewhere northwest of Winnemucca, emptiness, frigid temperatures—sets the stage. The same narrative intensity and execution propels the plot. The same imaginative overlays transform newspaper accounts into complex layers of truth. For anyone who was fascinated by *Shoshone Mike*, *Wild Game* is just as intriguing.

Ann Ronald
University of Nevada, Reno

Utah People in the Nevada Desert: Homestead and Community on a Twentieth-Century Farmers' Frontier. By Marshall E. Bowen. (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1994, xiii + 130 pp., illustrations, graphs, notes, bibliography, index.)

Few areas on earth seem less hospitable to farming than the arid Great Basin. Yet in the early twentieth century two areas were opened for farming on the high desert plains of northeastern Nevada. Marshall E. Bowen's study compares four settlements near Wells—Metropolis and Afton to the northwest and Tobar Flats-Independence Valley to the south and east—all established between 1909 and 1915. Interest in these areas was created primarily by speculative land companies after the Carey Act (1894), the Newlands Reclamation Act (1902) and the Enlarged Homestead Act (1909) encouraged the development of marginal western lands.

Settlers were attracted to these areas by the grand promises of developers, whose publications characterized the area's soil as "deep and rich, free of stones and alkali accumulations and capable of producing a wide variety of crops" (p. 14). At Metropolis, the Pacific Reclamation Company built a dam and system of canals sufficient, they claimed, to irrigate ten thousand acres. Exaggerated rainfall amounts up to 14 inches a year were advertised to those interested in dry farming, and deceptive stories of prize-winning fruits and vegetables supposedly grown at Metropolis were circulated. A Los Angeles-based promoter, Hogaglin Brothers, used the completely erroneous slogan "Tobar: Where the Big Red Apple Grows" to attract potential buyers to its Tobar Flats holdings.

By 1912, both settlement areas could be reached by rail. The Western Pacific Railroad's main line through Tobar had been completed in 1908, and in 1911 an eight-mile spur linked Metropolis to the Southern Pacific's main line. By the end of 1912, Metropolis-Afton had attracted a thousand settlers, although more than half had left again, recognizing that land developers had exaggerated the area's farming potential. The population stabilized at 450, remaining at that level for five years. At Tobar-Independence Valley, approximately eighty households had been established by 1915. Desert conditions created a challenge from the beginning. In 1912, the company-sponsored irrigation project at Metropolis became embroiled in water rights litigation, which forced many owners into dry-land grain farming on much of the land which they had intended to irrigate. After 1913, a series of dry years, infestations of jack rabbits, and poor-quality soils caused a succession of crop failures at Tobar and Independence Valley, where no irrigation system existed and farmers relied entirely on dry-farm methods. Metropolis fared somewhat better with partial irrigation, but had to contend with minimal rain, summer temperatures near 100 degrees, and early freezes. Crop failures forced the majority of men to find outside work, often requiring them to leave their farms or homesteads for extended periods.

By 1920, after several years of failed crops, population in all areas had declined significantly. By 1925, virtually no one remained at Tobar, Independence Valley, or Afton. Yet Metropolis, with approximately 200 residents, was showing a surprising tenacity in the face of adverse conditions. This small community had the advantage of limited irrigation, but, as Bowen's tracing of settlement patterns shows, it had other significant resources missing in the Tobar and Independence Valley settlements. Metropolis was settled largely by Mormon farmers from Cache and Weber Counties in Utah, in direct contrast to the settlers of the other areas, most of them blue-collar workers who had no farming experience and little capital. Another significant characteristic of Metropolis was the cohesive nature of the community, built on bonds of kinship and familiarity, shared goals, and the structure of the Latter-Day Saints Church. The church provided both leadership through its bishops and purpose for the endeavor—as Bowen put it, “the Nevada experience was no longer just an attempt to farm in the desert, but had become more of a spiritual obligation (almost a ‘mission,’ in the Mormon sense of the word) to build a lasting community of God” (p. 67). Conversely, the Tobar and Independence Valley settlements had no churches and no public gathering places other than saloons, and its residents did not establish the cooperative network through which agricultural problems could be addressed. Farmers at Tobar-Independence Valley attempted to solve problems individually—for example, digging wells and pumping water to their own crops, a solution most of their neighbors couldn't afford. In contrast, Metropolis farmers worked collectively to address their problems, obtaining expert advice on dry farming methods and working together to combat the rabbit problem, deciding as a group to explore dairying as an alternative to dry farming. This pattern of communication and collaborative effort, more than any advantage of location or irrigation capacity, explains the survival of Metropolis as an identifiable community into the 1950's.

Bowen's book is particularly interesting to historians who are interested in the idea of *community* and are reexamining “rugged individuality” as the defining characteristic of the American West. The study of population and settlement patterns, which he uses in combination with public records and first-person accounts, demonstrates how diverse frontier communities were, and that the identities and value systems of settlers intersected with environmental, social and economic factors to create that diversity.

Cyd McMullen
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Encounters with a Distant Land: Explorations and the Great Northwest. By Carlos Schwantes with the assistance of Evelyne Stitt Pickett. (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press, 1994.)

This collection of fourteen essays stems from a 1988 symposium held at the University of Idaho as part of the state's centennial celebration. William Goetzmann, the conference's keynote speaker, follows editor Carlos Schwantes's broad historical overview of exploration of the Pacific Northwest with a lively essay that establishes the pervading theme for this anthology. In presenting his highly positive analysis of the implications of Euro-American exploration, Goetzmann recognizes then neatly discounts the negative "legacy of conquest" interpretation as egocentric and faddish. For Goetzmann and the other contributors the benefits of exploration clearly exceed the costs.

Formally divided into two parts, the essays cover an array of diverse, though complementary topics. Essays by James Ronda, Gary Moulton and Mary Lee Spence examine the explorer Peter Pond, Meriwether Lewis on the trail, and the recruitment and background of the men on Frémont's 1843 excursion. Expeditionary artists are the focus of papers by Iris Engstrand and David Nicandri. Engstrand looks at the work of early Spanish explorers while Nicandri examines the role of Isaac I. Stevens, Washington's first territorial governor, in supporting the inclusion of artists in expeditions. Both essays include fascinating drawings done by expeditionary artists. Douglas Cole offers an all-too-brief overview of the contribution of Horatio Hale, Franz Boas and other anthropologists who studied Native Americans in the region. Stephen Haycox, Richard Maxwell Brown and Martin Ridge provide three of the most intriguing essays.

"In Search of the Golden Bear" by Haycox presents a historiographical look at the often neglected Russian expeditions along the Pacific Coast and into interior Alaska. Haycox suggests that such Russians as Semen Dezhnev and L. A. Zagoskin played a much larger role in exploring the region than they have been generally accorded. The role of Chinook jargon as a communication bridge between Euro-Americans and Native Americans is the focus of Richard Maxwell Brown's essay. Brown argues that Chinook jargon proved crucial in the successful exploration of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Brown identifies several examples, such as translation chains from Salish to Shoshoni to Hidatsa to French to English, of how Chinook jargon contributed to territorial, scientific, ethnographic and artistic explorations. The final essay in Part I, written by Martin Ridge, provides a broad historical overview for the more specific essays that precede it and concerns "The Taxonomy of Discovery." Ridge distinguishes between the discoverer and explorer—a discoverer finds and publicizes findings that we do not know existed, while an explorer seeks to find something that we already know exists—and then looks at why the discoverer and explorer do what they do. Ridge offers four broad motives and corresponding examples for Euro-American exploration: profit, enterprise and empire; religious evangelicalism; life sciences; and geographical knowledge. All of the expeditions examined in the previous essays fall into one or more of these categories.

Part II, "Exploration History in Print and in the Field," consists of three pieces written by Patricia Knapp, William Lang and Robert Carriker. Knapp, former acquisitions editor for the University of Nebraska Press, discusses difficulties

encountered in publishing a new edition of the Lewis and Clark journals while Lang offers some insight into publishing exploration articles in state and local journals. In the final essay, Carriker analyzes his experiences leading field seminars, sponsored by the National Endowment of the Humanities, along the Lewis and Clark route. The volume concludes with a list of suggestions for further reading.

Encounters with a Distant Land is a consistently well-crafted and complementary collection of essays by some of the field's most noted scholars. In his essay editor Schwantes states that one of the anthology's principal objectives is to interest readers in their own personal exploration of the Northwest. In this respect, *Encounters with a Distant Land* succeeds magnificently.

Chris Cronin
University of Nevada, Reno

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