

# Nevada

Historical Society Quarterly



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The *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* (ISSN 0047-9462) is published quarterly by the Nevada Historical Society. The *Quarterly* is sent to all members of the Society. Membership dues are: Student, \$15; Senior Citizen without *Quarterly*, \$15; Regular, \$25; Family, \$35; Sustaining, \$50; Contributing, \$100; Departmental Fellow, \$250; Patron, \$500; Benefactor, \$1,000. Membership applications and dues should be sent to the Director, Nevada Historical Society, 1650 N. Virginia St., Reno, NV 89503. Periodicals postage paid at Reno, Nevada and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 1650 N. Virginia St., Reno, Nevada 89503.



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# Nevada

## Historical Society Quarterly

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Volume 40

Winter 1997

Number 4

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# THE POSSIBLE DREAM

## Las Vegas and the 1948 Presidential Election

Michael S. Green

Half a century later, it remains the greatest upset in American political history. In 1948, Harry Truman seemed almost certain to lose his bid for a full term as president. Since succeeding Franklin Roosevelt in 1945, Truman had looked unsteady and uncertain, lurching about for a consistent domestic and foreign policy, seemingly with no success. Indeed, during the campaign, the left and right wings of the Democratic party seemed to have abandoned him. Some liberals, disenchanted with his more conservative approach, nominated a "Progressive" ticket headed by Henry Wallace, Roosevelt's former secretary of agricultural and vice-president and Truman's former secretary of commerce; he accused Truman of escalating the Cold War through his belligerent policies toward the Soviets. Racist Southern Democrats, fed up with Truman's support for civil rights and fearing further incursions on states' rights, supported Governor Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and his fellow "Dixiecrats." Making matters worse for Truman, Republican Thomas Dewey, a reform-minded governor of New York and former prosecutor, enjoyed a wide, apparently insurmountable lead in pre-election polls. Disaffection with the New Deal and the liberalism associated with it, coupled with the economic dislocation that inevitably accompanies the end of a major war, had cost Democrats control of Congress in 1946 for the first time in a decade-and-a-half, and that disaffection appeared likely to continue into 1948.<sup>1</sup>

Yet Truman won--and big, rolling up an electoral majority of 303-189 over Dewey. Three of his electoral votes came from Nevada, which had cast its votes for the winning candidate in every presidential election since 1908, and has done so in all but one election since. Nevada had been consistently Democratic during Roosevelt's presidency, electing mostly Democrats to federal and state offices, and benefitting from an infusion of federal dollars that made it the top state per capita in New Deal spending. Basking in a massive postwar boom that would make it Nevada's largest county, and Las Vegas the state's largest city, Clark County was heavily Democratic, with that party outnumbering Re-

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publicans four-to-one in voter registration. Whether Truman would win Nevada's votes was uncertain--it was Democratic but conservative, and had elected a Republican senator and representative in the GOP landslide of 1946--but Truman might have been expected to carry Clark County, and he did.<sup>2</sup>

An examination of the 1948 election in southern Nevada offers a window into several aspects of American and western history at the time. It provides a means of gauging the partisan feeling about Truman and his surprising victory. It gives an indication of the kind of political campaign that was characteristic of the time and place. It also affords an opportunity to look at Las Vegas at an unusual and important moment in its development. Las Vegas was no longer the small town whose population had barely numbered 5,000 two decades before, but it was not yet a major tourism mecca with a population of more than a million. It had enjoyed the fruits of federal spending--the building of the dam, New Deal largesse, and wartime projects like the Las Vegas Army Air Corps Gunnery School and Basic Magnesium, Incorporated--but had yet to cash in on the Cold War, as it soon would with Nellis Air Force Base and the Nevada Test Site. In the late 1940s, Las Vegas was reaping the benefits of the



Looking west on Fremont Street in Las Vegas, Nevada, c1940s. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

wartime and postwar boom that would remake it as a city, and trying to come to grips with the problems related to that growth--and it showed,

Where Las Vegas and the rest of the West would stand on the presidential election was uncertain. Although polls showed that dissatisfaction with him knew no regional bounds, Truman appealed to the West on several grounds. Aware of its need for water and development to meet the wartime and postwar influx of people and industry, he campaigned on his record of support for conservation and reclamation against congressional--and thus Republican--budget cuts. Truman's "Liberalism" earned him popularity in the West among labor groups angry with the Republican Congress for passing the Taft-Hartley Act over the president's veto, farmers and ranchers satisfied that he shared their concerns about the availability of water and land, and African Americans conscious that their chances of achieving meaningful gains in civil rights were better with Truman than with Dewey. Still, the Republicans had made a strong demand for the West's loyalty by choosing one of its own, Earl Warren, as Dewey's running-mate--the first time a Californian had been part of the Republican national ticket, and a concession to the state's and the region's increasing electoral importance.<sup>3</sup>

Nevada, and particularly southern Nevada, was indeed interested in economic development. Basic Magnesium, built as a World War II defense production measure in what became the city of Henderson, had passed from federal to state hands with Truman's blessing, and it was rapidly becoming an important local employer. Nor could water's importance to the area be understated. Reclamation traditionally had been an important issue in Nevada, due to the efforts of Francis G. Newlands early in the century that culminated in the reclamation act that bears his name, and Democratic Senator Pat McCarran had been a loyal supporter--or servant--of Nevada's agricultural and ranching interests. As the general election approached, Las Vegas diverted their attention to meetings and debates dealing with the plans that would, in 1954, set up the local water district that would supplant the antiquated Las Vegas Land and Water Company, a subsidiary of the Union Pacific Railroad. In addition, the cornerstone of Clark County's growth had been the Colorado River dam that had built the town of Boulder City, provided water for Nevada, and boosted tourism since workers and equipment had first begun arriving in 1931. And the Republican Eightieth Congress had changed the project's name from Boulder Dam to Hoover Dam to honor the man who, as secretary of commerce, had supported its building, and who had been president when construction began.<sup>4</sup>

The dam was an issue in the 1948 presidential election in southern Nevada, but not because it played so crucial a role in the local growth that interested southern Nevadans. At the time, Boulder City still tended to be Democratic; its first residents had been dam workers who blamed Herbert Hoover and the Republicans for the Depression that had cost them their jobs and forced them



to move west. Republican Representative Charles Russell, a former Ely legislator and newspaper editor who was seeking his second term, emphasized the work he had done on Boulder City's behalf amid concerns about federal reductions in appropriations and McCarran's efforts to win the area's support for his party. But from all appearances, the name change proved to be a more important issue to Boulder City and the rest of southern Nevada. Once Congress passed the measure, according to Russell, "the first couple of times after that, that I went back to Boulder City, you can imagine the reception wasn't very good. Probably this in part contributed to my defeat."

As one resident recalled, "[B]oy, did Boulder City descend on Charlie!" At a nonpartisan Boulder City rally, Cliff Jones, a local McCarran machine operative who was lieutenant governor, Clark County Democratic chairman, and intimately connected to southern Nevada's burgeoning gaming industry, asked Russell why he had supported the change. "But your congressman was not a man to be trapped. He explained it was a voice vote and he didn't have to publicly tell whether he said yes or no," one newspaper account said. "He said he voted for the change because Truman approved it and because no one from Boulder City told him not to ahead of time." Notwithstanding Truman's admiration for Hoover, the Democratic *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, the area's largest newspaper, perceived the name change as wholly a partisan measure: "it is not probable that this victory for the republicans will be as readily accepted as the victory of the United States in the war."<sup>5</sup>

For editorial sarcasm to be directed at Republicans was unusual in 1948, since more than three-fourths of the nation's newspapers reflected the conservative inclinations of their publishers and endorsed Dewey. But southern Nevada's press proved to be an exception. Morry Zenoff's *Boulder City News*, which expanded from a semi-weekly to a morning daily serving mainly Boulder City and Henderson a month before the election, praised and faulted both candidates. Zenoff concluded, "I can't see where neither [sic] will lead us astray. So, go ahead, vote as you want to, it's safe." He added that on election day, the "voters will choose the candidate they feel best suited to a particular job, or the candidate they have read the most about in the newspapers, or the candidate their husband has told them to vote for, or the one who has the nice name or maybe he has blue eyes."<sup>6</sup>

The *Review-Journal's* position was less ambivalent, and certainly unsurprising: It was ardently—and conservatively—Democratic. Publisher Frank Garside, a longtime Nevada mining camp newspaperman who had bought what was originally the *Review* as a struggling weekly in 1926, was a longtime Democrat who had been rewarded during the Roosevelt and Truman administrations with the patronage job of postmaster. The Cahlan brothers, Al and John, who ran the paper's daily operations, were staunchly Democratic and close allies of McCarran, who had long since become the state's political strong man. Thanks to this connection, Al Cahlan, whom Garside had hired to run the paper almost



Republican Representative Charles Russell, a former Ely legislator and newspaper editor became governor of Nevada in 1951. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

at once and who often wrote the daily's "policy" editorials in addition to an editorial page column, was the state's Democratic national committeeman. His younger brother, John, who edited the paper and wrote many of the day-to-day editorials, was active in the party. He also was friendly with Truman, first meeting the president when he was a Missouri senator investigating expenditures at Basic Magnesium. The two men sat in Truman's cabana at the El Rancho Vegas, the first hotel on what became the Las Vegas Strip, "drinking bourbon for about three or four hours."<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the editorial that appeared in the *Review-Journal* on the Sunday before the election took the position that its readers would have expected. Entitled "Look at the Record," it was an unbridled attack on Dewey. "The republicans urge that we 'look at the record.' Well, we're doing just that and Dewey doesn't stand up," the *Review-Journal* declared. It charged that Dewey was "the most extravagant governor in New York's history." He "dictated to the New York legislature . . . [b]y exercising a ruthless control over patronage"—an ironic statement, given the paper's adoration for McCarran, whose opponents complained that he was similarly dictatorial. In keeping with Al Cahlan's brief experience as a schoolteacher, and his mother's long career in that profession, the *Review-journal* condemned Dewey as "an outspoken opponent of better schools and living salaries for teachers." He opposed labor, and "Dewey takes an anti-



The El Rancho Vegas was the first hotel on what became the Las Vegas Strip. (*Nevada Historical Society*)



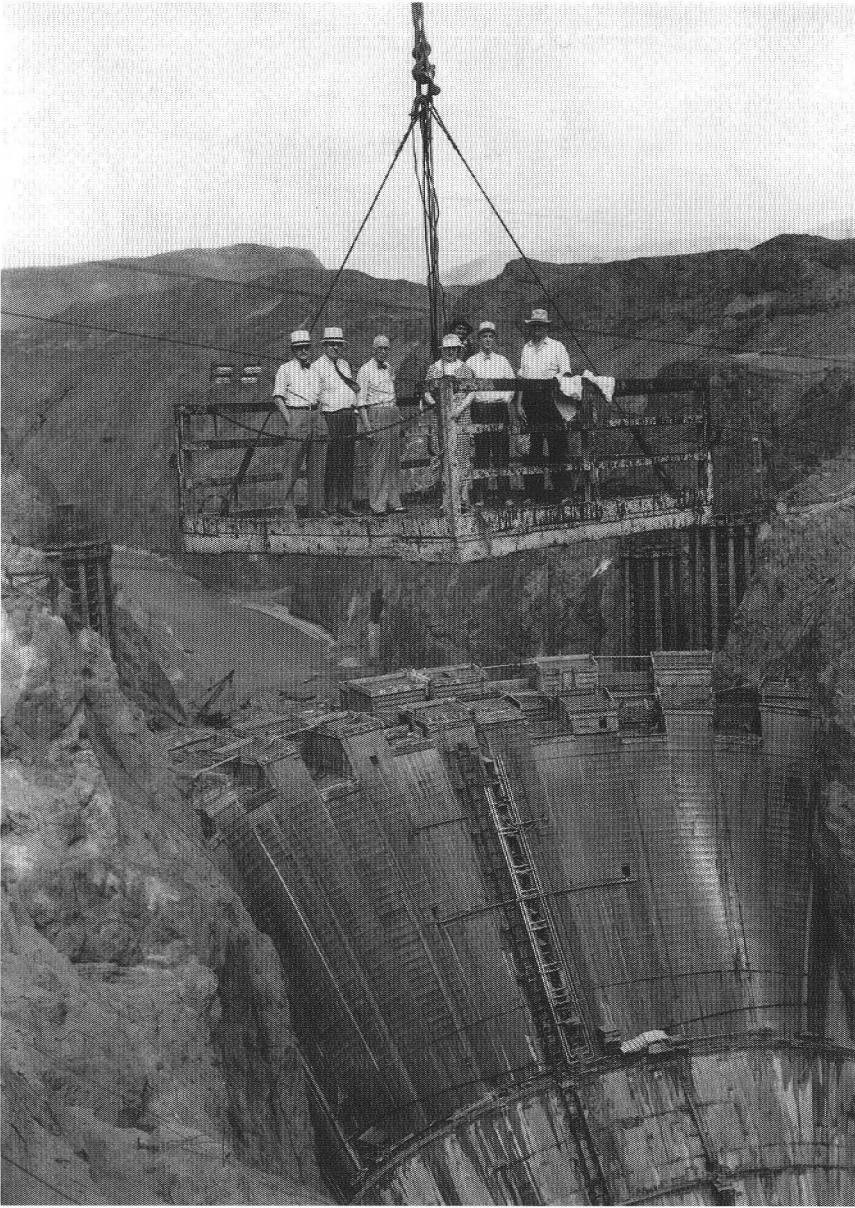
The pool area bustled with activity at the Flamingo Hotel in the 1950s. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

communist stand only when he thinks it politically smart."<sup>8</sup>

Labor and communism were important, often interrelated issues to the *Review Journal*. "Top GOP congressmen are reported ready to make some important changes in the Taft-Hartley law at the next session," the Democratic daily said of the anti-labor measure that Truman had opposed and Russell had supported. "They may do it, too, if they can bypass a union labor movement which is reported ready, willing and eager to make some important changes in the congress that passed that law." Yet the *Review-Journal* sometimes proved less indulgent toward labor unions. In editorials and his "From Where I Sit" column, Al Cahlan worried about communism and the possibility that its agents had infiltrated labor unions. He frequently referred darkly to "Harry Bridges and his ilk," fretting about the longshoremen's union leader's alleged communist ties. Indeed, Cahlan foresaw "the most critical situation that has faced the American Republic—the war between the states not excepted—since it was founded—the control of SOME (not all, nor yet a majority) labor unions by the Communists."<sup>9</sup>

Communists, the *Review-Journal* believed, desired control not only of the unions, but also of the presidency. The means to that end appeared to be Henry Wallace's third-party candidacy. With surprising gentleness, given their frosty relationship in the 1940s, Truman later described Wallace as "an honest man and a faithful public servant "who" was apparently unaware of the purposes to which the Communists were putting his 'progressive' movement." In 1948, Truman and the Las Vegas daily that supported him proved less understanding. The *Review-Journal* charged that as "the campaign continued, Wallace looked less like a mystic reformer and misguided messiah, and more like a politician who doesn't care much what else happens so long as he can help defeat the man who embarrassed him by giving him a well-deserved boot out of the cabinet." Editorials criticized the former vice-president's proposals and supporters. "Playing politics with the pension problem is political racketeering," it alternately observed about his ideas for revamping the social security system. The predilections of his "crackpot supporters" also were obvious. "There is little doubt but that the candidacy of Henry Agard Wallace was actively sponsored by the communist party in the United States," the *Review-Journal* warned, "and there are many indications that Mr. Wallace has a pipeline into the Kremlin where sits Josef Stalin."<sup>10</sup>

Although Las Vegas essentially was a one-newspaper town, Dewey still had a voice, albeit a feeble one. Born just before the city itself in 1905, the *Las Vegas Age* had been absorbed by the *Review-Journal* and closed in late 1947. But its octogenarian editor, pioneer Las Vegas businessman and political leader Charles P. "Pop" Squires, continued to write a Sunday column for his longtime competitor. He remained as devoted an advocate of the Republican cause as he had been in every election since buying the *Age* in 1908. Squires also stayed active in party affairs, serving in 1948 as a delegate to the national convention. Dewey



Charles P. "Pop" Squires (center) and Senator and wife, Mimosa, Pittman visit the construction of Boulder Dam in 1934. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

wrote to him, "[W]e will all be working shoulder to shoulder for the greatest victory our party ever had." Warren agreed, "Rarely has the Republican Party had such an opportunity for achievement as well as victory," he wrote,<sup>11</sup>

As a staunch Republican, Squires shared their optimism. Predicting a Re-



publican victory, "[u]nless something startling, unforeseen [*sic*] and catastrophic happens politically," Squires found it hard "to imagine that any 'political accident' like President Truman can possibly defeat two fine, straightforward, sincere, intelligent men like Dewey and Warren." In Squires's opinion, Truman merited no such words of praise. He linked Truman to the Communists. He accused him of appeasing the eastern bloc, a charge that resonated especially well with voters only a decade removed from British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's negotiations with Adolf Hitler, and usurping power that more properly belonged to the legislative branch. Nor did he approve of the president's "whistle-stop" campaign and his assailing of the "do-nothing" Republican Congress. "Truman is shooting off his venomous mouth at every railroad station with the mistaken idea that he is being eloquent, forgetting that the new deal and its type of scurvy political oratory is out of date," Squires wrote.<sup>12</sup>

In Las Vegas, editorially, Wallace proved even less fortunate than Dewey. He had no local organization, no newspaper support, and only twenty registered voters in his ephemeral Progressive party. The only attention he received from the *Review-Journal* came when eggs were thrown at him on the stump. The paper's "Inquiring Reporter" asked several Las Vegasans whether they approved of what Wallace's detractors did. They decried the egg-throwing as an effort to stifle free speech, but their commitment to the First Amendment paled in comparison with their distaste for the candidate whose views it protected. Their comments ranged from "I'm afraid I would have been tempted to do the same thing" to "[t]he facts about his communistic leanings are true, they should be brought to light, but only by the proper authorities and in a democratic manner." Another added, "I am not in favor of it, because I think the price of eggs much too high to waste on Wallace."<sup>13</sup>

Despite their nearly unanimous disdain for Wallace, southern Nevadans seemed to evince little overt excitement toward the candidates of the two major parties. The campaign went on as usual, but more as a rote exercise than as the form of high and low entertainment that politics usually provided in small Nevada towns—a reflection, perhaps, of the growth and accompanying pains that Las Vegas then confronted. "The state of Nevada was not particularly active in that national election, aside from the political chairman and the party workers," according to Norman Biltz, a businessman and land developer who, despite his Republican affiliation, served as an important cog in McCarran's Democratic political machine. "I don't remember much excitement among the citizens as a whole." That was partly true in Clark County. Most of the campaign news that appeared in the local papers concerned routine party functions. But that does not mean that the two parties made no attempt to drum up interest, or that their efforts failed.<sup>14</sup>

Both parties struggled for support. They scheduled rallies in larger cities as well as such outlying areas as Searchlight, Goodsprings, and Overton. They

planned banquets and parades. They opened headquarters in Las Vegas and Henderson, and in Boulder City, and did so with the sense of partisanship and fun that usually accompanied such activities. Boulder City chairman Mort Wagner announced that his party would be based at what was once a self-service laundry. "It's an apropos location . . . we'll continue along the same line --washing out the new deal," he declared. His Democratic counterpart, Leonard Atkison, pointed out that his party had occupied an old dry-cleaning establishment, and "we'll go right on taking these republicans to a cleaning."<sup>15</sup>

Both parties realized that they needed to take action if they were to have bragging rights after the elections, and acted accordingly. Women's organizations were numerous and active, holding regular club meetings, town hall debates, and rallies. The Las Vegas Women's Democratic Club honored congressional candidate Walter Baring. The Henderson Republican Women's Club held teas. Southern Nevada women also made politic decisions: The Boulder City Democratic Women's Club postponed an October 30 rally so that local children could use the American Legion Hall for a Halloween party.<sup>16</sup>

If not children, younger voters also played a role in the election. Throughout the valley, young Democratic and Republican clubs held meetings and membership drives, sponsored rallies and dances, and met with candidates. Cognizant of Truman's efforts in behalf of civil rights, African Americans, too, were active, forming a Westside Democratic Club and a Young Democratic Club. And Florence Elmore, the operator of the first licensed beauty shop in West Las Vegas, became "the only member of the Negro race to be nominated for office in a primary election in the history of the state" when she ran for a seat on the Clark County Hospital Board of Trustees.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, the most important campaign, other than the one for the presidency, was the Baring-Russell congressional contest. Both candidates stumped Clark County for votes. Amid more ceremonial functions, such as dining with local Republican leaders and leading party parades, Russell not only commented on international affairs and the need for a balanced budget, but also bashed the New Deal social welfare policies that Roosevelt and Truman had pursued. Then a party loyalist--in the 1960s, he would break with the Democratic party and refuse to support the New Frontier and Great Society programs that Roosevelt's New Deal and Truman's Fair Deal presaged--Baring defended them and attacked the recent Republican Congress for opposing "all progressive suggestions in the interest of the national welfare."<sup>18</sup>

Baring also benefited from one high-level Nevada Democrat working for his political welfare: McCarran. Granted, the state's senior senator was "privately unenthusiastic" about both Truman and Baring. Not only was Truman too liberal for the more conservative, ardently anticommunist McCarran's taste, but the Missourian had made no impression on the Nevadan when they had served together in the Senate. Baring had been a protege of Senator Key Pittman, who had been one of McCarran's longtime political enemies. And McCarran liked

Russell, with whom he worked well in Congress, despite the senator's propensity for fighting with members of Nevada's congressional delegation. Yet McCarran overcame his personal feelings and supported both of his fellow Democrats. At a Democratic banquet in Las Vegas, McCarran urged the voters not to "hamstring" Truman with a Republican congressman. He also defended Truman's domestic and foreign policies, with which he often disagreed privately.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the support they enjoyed from their parties, Russell and Baring shared the burden of heading their state ticket, but the incumbent's problems proved much greater. Russell really had no senator to aid him: Republican George Malone, McCarran's junior colleague, owed his election in 1946 not so much to the national Republican victory as to a split among Nevada Democrats, and so he lacked the widespread support that McCarran enjoyed, not to mention the senator's political acumen. Nor did Russell have a Republican newspaper in Las Vegas to advocate his cause, although Squires tried valiantly in his Sunday column to help. Recounting how the congressman "fought and bled and almost died" as the editor of *The Ely Record*, Squires called him "one of the outstanding citizens of Nevada," and "a man of splendid character, sound judgment and highest integrity." But, Russell felt, the Republican party itself in southern Nevada was ambivalent about him. He spent some of his small war chest on campaign pamphlets that he later found "put out on the junk pile," and concluded that his southern Nevada supporters abandoned him. "Sometimes in politics a candidate is traded. I was of the belief that those who, at the time, professed to support me in Clark County, had decided that I probably would not be elected and had traded with others."<sup>20</sup>

Still, Russell eventually received some important help. The Young Republicans Club tried to bring in Warren, but the arrangements fell through. Even so, Russell believed that neither national candidate assisted him much. "Dewey was cold, as far as the public was concerned," Russell declared, "and Earl Warren was like a big St. Bernard dog; he'd let his tongue loll out and wag his tail, and thought everything was wonderful." When Warren visited Reno, and Las Vegas Republican leaders traveled north to meet him, Warren "wouldn't do anything that would upset, or be contrary to the ideas of the people that he was talking to," Russell remembered. Senator William Knowland of California addressed a Las Vegas rally at which he announced, "There is no one who stands in higher esteem in both the house and the senate than Charlie Russell," and that Dewey and Warren "want Charlie Russell on their team in Washington."<sup>21</sup>

Democrats throughout Nevada and Las Vegas prepared for similar visitors. Senator Claude Pepper of Florida, whom Truman later called one of "the chief agitators who claimed that I was not perpetuating the New Deal policies of President Roosevelt," was slated to address a Clark County Democratic banquet. But a scheduling problem and bad weather forced him to cancel his appearance. Pepper, who early in 1948 had suggested himself as the Democratic



Walter S. Baring. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

candidate, later stopped in Las Vegas en route to California for a speech. He declared, "We have two more weeks to catch up and I believe we're going to make it."<sup>22</sup>

The greatest believer of all, Truman, visited Reno on September 22, but Las Vegas still played its part. Bonanza Airlines rescheduled its 9 A.M. flight to 7:45 A.M. so that southern Nevada Democrats could greet Truman when he arrived at 10:30 A.M. In Reno and Sparks, Truman attacked the Republican Congress as "a bunch of old mossbacks living in 1890" and "men who want to turn the clock back." Al Cahlan, who, the *Review-Journal* noted, led the delegation that met Truman, praised the president in a statement as committeeman, and as a columnist:

... Harry, pardon, President Truman . . . was just as anxious to meet you as you were to meet him, and his smile was genuine and warm, You can't fake those things . . .

Your contact and conversation with him is all too short. You feel like you'd found a friend and regret the inevitable end of the brief interview--you'd like to be near the man indefinitely to claim him for a real friend and enjoy all the accompanying privileges. You never feel nervous or ill at ease, and in a few minutes you're answering his kindly wisecracks with some of your own . . .

If everyone could meet Harry Truman between now [September 24] and election time, and have the opportunity to chat with him a few minutes, he wouldn't lose a state--he'd make enough friends to give him the greatest popular vote in history.<sup>23</sup>

Whether Truman would receive enough votes even to win the election was another question, and some Nevadans had an answer that differed from the usual response. Gallup polls reported Dewey would coast to victory, but Nevada's leanings were less certain. Both Gallup and the United Press eventually shifted Nevada from Dewey to a toss-up. Russell recalled warning Dewey "to take off his boxing gloves and start fighting, because in Nevada, surveys that we had made indicated that it looked pretty slim for the Republican party." Meanwhile, the *Review-Journal* happily reported any of Truman's gains in the polls.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, the *Review-Journal* went beyond those reports and dared to predict a Truman victory, "The results are becoming quite apparent," Al Cahlan wrote in his column as early as September 24. "He's gaining strength every day and should NOT be sold short, regardless of all the polls." Two weeks before the election, "From Where I Sit" announced, "The republicans are in for the shock of their life, come November 2 . . . The final result will be close . . . Nevada will be in the Truman column. So will California, Governor Earl Warren notwithstanding." On the Sunday before the election, the newspaper went out on the limb with Cahlan. The *Review-Journal's* endorsement editorial began, "Before the general election campaign is wrapped up in history and President Harry Truman returned to the White House . . . "That Halloween Sunday, a front-page story from the heretofore unseen "Review-Journal Washington Bureau" appeared. In a writing style that strikingly resembled Cahlan's, it announced that



"the consensus of a nationwide survey completed by unbiased reports" was that "Tuesday's presidential election will be a lot closer than the polls or astute political observers profess to believe. Although a shortender by long odds, Harry S. Truman can win reelection to the White House!"<sup>25</sup>

While the *Review-Journal* dispensed predictions, Clark County prepared to vote. The evening daily urged its readers to register, as did the parties, which also gave instructions on how to fill out the ballots. The candidates made their final speeches, and one local radio station rebroadcast endorsement addresses by McCarran and Knowland. Another station and the *Review-Journal* readied themselves to broadcast returns on election night while the Golden Nugget advertised that it would provide the same service by wire in its Race Horse Room. The American Legion ordered six dozen flags for local precincts. Sheriff Glen Jones's office distributed bags in which to hold the ballots. The district attorney warned against election fraud. The county clerk collected "the amazing total of 961 absentee ballots." Most of the remaining city and county workers looked forward to a four-day weekend celebrating both election day and the eighty-fourth anniversary of Nevada's statehood.<sup>26</sup>

All of their efforts were expected to produce a heavy turnout. Las Vegas had come a long way from its first election in 1906, when 320 voters marched to one precinct. In 1948, it had more than 11,000 voters and thirty-two precincts. Clark County boasted 23,620 registered voters--17,742 Democrats, 4,572 Republicans, 20 Progressives, and 1,286 nonpartisans. County officials predicted that sixty percent of them would vote at sixty-four polling places, ranging from automobile dealerships and garages to city and county buildings, as well as a mattress factory and an ice cream parlor. Wherever they cast their ballots, Clark County voters would play an important role. "Reno political wiseacres contend the presidential contest in the state is a toss up," the *Review-Journal* reported a week before the election, "but admit frankly that Clark county, with its four-to-one democratic registration edge, could easily tip the scales in favor of Truman to such an extent that Dewey could not catch up even if he carries most of the northern counties."<sup>27</sup>

Clark County voters marched to the polls in record numbers. "I don't know where all the voters are coming from," the district attorney said. By noon, several precincts reported that nearly every voter had cast a ballot. Boulder City precinct workers found voters lined up when they arrived and eventually called frantically for more voting booths. Still, election day proceeded quietly at all precincts, no doubt in part because of the state law requiring all bars to close during voting hours (8 A.M. to 6 P.M.). The only controversy involved an argument between downtown policemen and citizens that required a legal opinion: it was not a legal holiday, so the parking meters could operate. It also was a stirring day. An aged, frail woman, unable to walk, needed her nurse to help her vote. Deputy Sheriff Butch Leyboldt watched her and declared, "Boy, if we had one hundred and fifty million people with that woman's heart we'd be the

greatest nation in the world--and there wouldn't be a 'commie' within two thousand miles of our shores. "<sup>28</sup>

There were no communists in Clark County that day. Considering the registration figures, the outcome there should have been unsurprising. Seventy-four percent of the eligible voters cast their ballots--17,543. Of these, 10,787 voted for Truman's electors, or 61.8 percent, while Dewey received 6,382 votes, or 36.6 percent, and Wallace had 284 followers, or less than two percent. Dewey won seven of the thirty-two precincts in Las Vegas and the outlying areas of Logandale, Moapa Valley, Nelson, Overton, and Searchlight. Truman racked up huge majorities in the predominantly black Westside and in North Las Vegas. In no precinct did Wallace amass more than fifteen votes.<sup>29</sup>

Notwithstanding his victory in Clark County, Truman showed himself to be vulnerable in the area. He polled about sixty percent of those who voted, sixty percent of the eligible Democratic voters, and less than half of all registered voters. Dewey received at least 28.4 percent of his votes from non-Republicans, having received 1,810 more votes than there were registered Republicans. Wallace's 284 votes constituted an unimpressive total, but 264 of them had not registered as Progressives. Yet only two Democrats, Assembly candidates Harry Claiborne and Harley Harmon, won more votes than did Truman. The president out-pollled the victorious Baring by about 1,000 votes. Dewey, the top Republican vote-getter, ran less than fifty votes ahead of Russell. Despite his vote on the dam's name, Russell won more votes in Boulder City than Dewey did.<sup>30</sup>

Whatever the comparative popularity of the candidates in Clark County, the state's second largest county was indeed strong enough to win Nevada's electoral votes for Truman. His electors received about one-third of their votes from Clark County, Dewey's slightly more than one-fifth. Dewey's strength was, as expected, in northern Nevada. Truman won Clark, Esmeralda, Lincoln, Mineral, and White Pine counties in the south, and Elko and Churchill counties in the north, and the voting was fairly close in the northern counties of Storey, Eureka, and Humboldt.<sup>31</sup>

Nevada's southernmost county showed great interest in the outcome. "As it became apparent that the supposed 'landslide' would not slide, most of Boulder sat attentively listening to their radios . . ." the News reported. Without a landslide, Boulder City settled for a mild earthquake, prompting such comments as "must have been that Republican landslide" and "must have been F.D.R. turning over in his grave." When the results were in, the conclusion was that the "earthquake we had the other day wasn't the Dewey landslide. It was the Truman steamroller."<sup>32</sup>

That steamroller caught the attention of Las Vegas. Truman elector L.O. Hawkins became so engrossed in listening to the election returns that he missed his first American Legion meeting in two years and lost a seventy-dollar door prize. "A very drunk man" staggered into a restaurant and, when told who had won, moaned, "My gawd, I'm ruined. I gave 20 to 1 that Truman wouldn't



Thomas Dewey is greeted by Morley Griswold and another Nevadan during a campaign trip. (*Nevada Historical Society*)



Clifford Jones

make it." One Democrat told another, "Yes, sir, yesterday it was Dewey, today it's sunshine. Even children became involved. One ten-year-old announced, "I'm sure glad Dewey didn't get elected" because "he'd probably make us go to school on Saturday . . . ." <sup>33</sup>

Democrats, and their local newspaper, were equally glad. The party set a victory banquet. The *Review-Journal* cheerfully reported that because Democrats had regained control of the Senate, McCarran again would be chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Al Cahlan, "who was in frequent contact during the long hours of counting . . . with President Truman's headquarters," paid homage to "a fighting president, a man who refused to concede defeat even though the majority of experts had predicted his opponent's election." <sup>34</sup>

The *Review-Journal* had disputed those experts and was quick to remind its readers of its position. Boulder City reporter Don Ashbaugh opened his "Chips from the Boulder" column by confessing, "Certainly I'm surprised—who isn't?"

He noted one of the prophets of Truman's victory was his own boss, "Al Cahlan, who's been saying it in his columns and editorials for the last three weeks." A week after the election, Cahlan proudly--and with overstatement--wrote,

The United Press reports that the *Review-Journal* was the only newspaper in the United States to conclusively forecast the Truman trend and possible election. Not even the more vociferous supporters of the chief executive went into print with the prediction he might win. This newspaper hit right on the nose with a front page story Sunday, October 31--called the turn not only for the nation but specifically placed both Nevada and California in the Truman column.<sup>35</sup>

The pollsters and pundits who had thought otherwise received considerable ribbing. "Wiseacres Lose Face in Great Political Upset" and "Groggy Pollsters Scramble to Find Where They Erred in Vote Forecast," were two *Review-Journal* headlines that appeared in the days following the election. Al Cahlan reported in his column that pollsters were calling newspaper editors, asking them to continue to print their features. Columnist Drew Pearson, who had predicted a Dewey victory, reported who would be in the Republican's cabinet. "The following column was written in advance of the election," the *Review-Journal* informed its readers. "The less said the better." When sports editor Clarence Heckethorn's prediction that the university at Reno would beat Santa Clara's football team went awry, his column consisted of a one-paragraph bulletin: "The guy who writes this column was not to be found . . . today he was seen--with red face--heading for the hills to join a group of pollsters." *Boulder City News* associate editor David Zenoff, the editor's brother and later a Nevada Supreme Court justice, suggested that George Gallup was "hiding in a red beet patch where he can't be seen."<sup>36</sup>

If the pollsters were embarrassed, the Republicans were shocked. Beneath the title "An Astonished Nation," Squires began his postscript. "Most of us are thankful that the election is over, although I must admit that not all of us are pleased with the results." Yet Squires believed that his friends were wrong when they "greeted me with sighs and trod gently as if in the presence of an irrevocable tragedy," for he was certain that the Grand Old Party would be grand again. Others were less sure. Ignoring Truman's origins as the choice of Kansas City's corrupt Pendergast machine, the *Review-Journal* suggested that unless Republicans stopped trying to shove a "machine" candidate down the throats of the American public, "the party might just as well fold its tent and silently steal away." David Zenoff believed that Dewey was "through as a national candidate." He recommended Harold Stassen, Minnesota's "boy governor," as "the salvation of the Republican Party."<sup>37</sup>

The more immediate question was not what next. Rather, why and how had Truman won a supposedly unwinnable race? John Cahlan's later assessment was popular then and now: "Truman was able to get to the people . . . He was like your Uncle Pete, and just a nice guy," as well as "a true American . . . He



had no glamour whatever." Perhaps more important for Nevada, Cahlan concluded, "He talked like a Westerner. He had a lot of ideas that we had out here," including his support for federal pork barrel projects such as military bases and reclamation. According to David Zenoff, "Harry went to the people. He out-peopled Dewey hands down . . . Harry Truman is one of us." And, in Al Cahlan's opinion, "The republicans figured they had a cinch and dogged it," staying at home on election day and radiating overconfidence. Squires quickly recovered to stand that thinking on its head. "Sane and sensible democrats, who comprised a large proportion of the party, were quite frank in admitting that Truman had no chance of election. In fact they were more outspoken in predicting Truman's defeat, than the republicans were in claiming victory," he wrote. "So, of course, all the millions of democrats who were relieved beyond words by the prospect of putting Truman and the new deal on the shelf for all time, went to the polls and voted for Truman rather than be guilty of bolting their party. And how they do try to explain!"<sup>38</sup>

Whether Truman would extend the New Deal was as debatable as the logic that Squires employed. The *Review-Journal* and *News* believed that Truman would fight for the people who had just elected him and among whom he had spent so much time in the weeks before the election. "I don't profess to be the seventh son of a seventh son," Al Cahlan admitted, but he foresaw a moderate presidency that would help laborers, not organized labor, which Cahlan considered communistic. But Truman apparently failed to live up to the expectations of Nevada and Clark County. By 1952, McCarran had grown increasingly critical of him, and his *Review-Journal* allies followed suit. The state and county backed Republican Dwight Eisenhower over Democrat Adlai Stevenson, as did the nation, in the next election. McCarran went to the Democratic convention supporting his Georgia colleague, Richard Russell, and threatened to engineer Baring's defeat if he refused to go along with him; Baring lost that fall, although his fate may have been more attributable to the national Republican sweep, which gave the party control of Congress and cost McCarran his Judiciary Committee chairmanship.<sup>39</sup>

Although Eisenhower's landslide victory in 1952 throughout the nation and in Nevada probably had more to do with his personal popularity and concerns over communist infiltration than any major political realignment, Nevada politics and journalism had changed dramatically by that year. In 1950, McCarran's machine supported Republican Russell in his ultimately successful campaign for governor against incumbent Vail Pittman, the younger brother of Key Pittman and a longtime McCarran foe. The *Review-Journal* continued to support the senator, but by then, it, too, was different. Garside had sold his interest to chain publisher Donald Reynolds, who eventually forced both Cahlans out of the paper. Refusing to negotiate with a typesetters' union, Reynolds locked out his compositors, who started their own newspaper in 1950. They sold it to Hank Greenspun, a former lawyer turned gunrunner for Israel, hotel

publicist, and local investor, who turned it into the daily *Las Vegas Sun* which consistently and caustically attacked McCarran, his ideological soulmate Joe McCarthy, and their leading journalistic supporter in Nevada, the *Review-Journal*. In 1952, Greenspun's support for challenger Thomas Mechling contributed to the upstart's victory over McCarran protege Alan Bible in the Democratic Senate primary. When Mechling's attacks on the McCarran "machine" continued after the primary, Nevada's Democratic "boss" refused to endorse him in the general election, which incumbent George Malone won. These events remained in the future, but the seeds for the most turbulent decade in Nevada politics were being sown in 1948.<sup>40</sup>

These twists and turns also reflected the changes that Las Vegas was enduring in 1948. By the end of that year, four major properties dotted the fledgling Strip: the El Rancho Vegas and Hotel Last Frontier, both western-style low-rises, and the more luxurious Flamingo and Thunderbird, both linked to organized crime interests involving Meyer Lansky; planning was well underway for the Desert Inn, which would be operated by graduates of Cleveland's mob. The town was enjoying a construction boom, thanks to a flood of new residents. And yet much about the 1948 election was redolent of what had happened in early campaigns, when Las Vegas was a dusty railroad stop: political gamesmanship between friends and neighbors, and editors indulging in their own partisanship, both folksy and darker. Perhaps part of Harry Truman's appeal to Las Vegas reflected their similarities: a small-town businessman and politician suddenly thrust into a position of power and limelight for which he had been almost completely unprepared, just as the small town of Las Vegas was gaining power in Nevada and limelight throughout the nation, thanks to population growth and economic development that went far beyond the wildest dreams of its founders.

In 1948, what would happen in the years to follow was unclear and unknown, to Nevadans and Las Vegans, of course. But what had happened was abundantly clear. Truman had scored a stunning political upset by beating Dewey. Nevada had helped him achieve it, but it would not have done so if not for Clark County. What occurred in Southern Nevada was neither surprising nor an upset: The area was heavily Democratic, and it acted accordingly. And the region's major newspaper, run by one of Nevada's leading Democrats, believed that Truman could and would win, and never hesitated to say so. Harry Truman may well have been dreaming the impossible dream, but in Las Vegas, he did not dream it alone.

## NOTES

This article has evolved considerably from a paper at UNLV, but I am indebted to Dr. Eugene Moehring for his help with the original project and an earlier revision, and to Dr. Gary E. Elliott and Dr. DeAnna E. Beachley, two of my colleagues in the Department of Philosophical and Regional Studies at the Community College of Southern Nevada, for their helpful comments on the manuscript.

<sup>1</sup>There are numerous accounts of the 1948 election. A succinct, valuable one is Richard S. Kirkendall, "Election of 1948," in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Fred L. Israel, eds., *History of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968* 4 vols., (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1971), IV, 3099-3147. On Truman himself, with plenty of attention, of course, to the 1948 election, see David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), and Alonzo L. Hamby, *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup>On Clark County's Democratic leanings, see Elmer R. Rusco, *Voting Behavior in Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1966), 5, 1 1-12. See William D. Swackhamer, *Political History of Nevada 1979* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1979), 177; *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, 8 October 1948, 1:1-2; 20 October 1948, 3:4. This paper was technically the *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* and *Boulder City Journal* on weekdays and the *Las Vegas Sunday Review-Journal* and *Age* on Sundays, with no paper on Saturdays. For the sake of simplicity, it is hereafter cited as R-J.

Since 1908, when Nevada cast its electoral votes for Democrat William Jennings Bryan rather than the victor, Republican William Howard Taft, the state has picked the winner in every presidential election except 1976, when its electoral votes went to President Gerald Ford instead of Jimmy Carter.

<sup>3</sup>Kirkendall, "Election of 1948," 3141; Eugene H. Roseboom, *A History of Presidential Elections* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 497.

<sup>4</sup>On Basic Magnesium, see R-J, 22 October 1948, 4:1-2, 12:1. On the water district and its importance, see R-J, 5-20 October, 1948, for many news stories and editorials urging voters to approve it. For information on these and other urban issues, the author is indebted to Ralph J. Roske, *Las Vegas: A Desert Paradise* (Tulsa: Continental Heritage Press, 1986), for a general history of the area, and to Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-1970*, 2nd ed., (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1995). See also Florence Lee Jones and John F. Cahlan, *Water: A History of Las Vegas*, 3 vols., (Las Vegas: Las Vegas Valley Water District, 1975), on water and water politics in Las Vegas.

<sup>5</sup>*Boulder City News* (cited hereafter as BCN) 17 September 1948, 1:2; 28 October 1948, 1:5; R-J, 20 October 1948, 14:1. On reaction to the name change, see Charles H. Russell, "Reminiscences of a Nevada Congressman, Governor, and Legislator", 2 vols., (Reno: Oral History Program, University of Nevada, 1967), 1, 81-82; Elbert B. Edwards, "Memoirs of a Southern Nevada Educator, Scion of an Early Mormon Pioneer Family" 2 vols., (Reno: Oral History Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1968), 11, 189; *ibid.*, 13 October 1948, 1:5; *ibid.*, 30 September 1948, 24: 1.

<sup>6</sup>On newspapers endorsing Dewey, see Jonathan Daniels, *The Man of Independence* (Port Washington, Conn.: Kennikat Press, 1950), 348; Alfred Steinberg, *The Man from Missouri: The Life and Times of Harry S. Truman* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), 3:21; R-J, 10 September 1948, 1:4-5; 1 October 1948, 1:1, 2:2; 2 November 1948, 1:5.

<sup>7</sup>John F. Cahlan, "Reminiscences of a Reno and Las Vegas, Nevada Newspaperman, University Regent, and Public-Spirited Citizen" (Reno: Oral History Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1970), especially 56, 92-96, 232. See also Jamie Coughtry, ed., "John F. Cahlan: Fifty Years In Journalism and Community Development" (Reno: Oral History Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1987), 2 10-11. The author has relied heavily on his own "The Las Vegas Newspaper War of the 1950s," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, XXX 1:3 (Fall 1988), 155-82, for background.

<sup>8</sup>R-J, 31 October 1948, 8c:1. On education, see *ibid.*, 22 October, 1948, 4:3-4. A Las Vegas elementary school is named for Marion E. Cahlan.

<sup>9</sup>R-J, 1 November 1948, 48, 16:1; 9 September 1948, 24-5-6. See also R-J, 10 September 1948, 221: 1; 13 September 1948, 146; 16 September 1948, 214: 1; 28 September, 1948, 16:6; 4 October, 1948, 14:5-6; 5 October 1948, 18:5-6; 6 October, 1948, 20:1; 14 October 1948, 36:5-6. Coughtry, ed., "Cahlan," contains many references to unions that reveal the *Review-Journal's* antipathy toward organized labor.

<sup>10</sup>Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope, Volume II of Memoirs by Harry S. Truman* (Garden City:

Doubleday & Company, 1956), 185, Kirkendall, "Election of 1948," 3:1-10; *R-J*, 11 October 1948, 14:1; 12 October 1948, 14:2; 15 October 1948, 18:1. See also *R-J*, 9 September 1948, 24:1; 21 September 1948, 16:1; 22 September 1948, 22:2; 11 October 1948, 14:1.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas E. Dewey to Charles P. Squires, Albany, New York, 2 July 1948, in Squires Ms.; Box 1, Department of Special Collections, James R. Dickinson Library, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Earl Warren to Squires, Sacramento, California, 5 June 1948, in Squires Ms. For background on Squires, see *R-J*, Charles P. Squires and Delphine A. Squires, "Las Vegas, Nevada: Its Romance and History", 2 vols. (unpublished manuscript, Department of Special Collections, James R. Dickinson Library, University of Nevada, Las Vegas); Florence M. Boyer, "Las Vegas, Nevada: My Home for Sixty Years" (Reno: Oral History Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1966).

<sup>12</sup>*R-J*, 17 October 1948, 12c:3; 26 September 1948, 12c:3-4. On Truman and Communism, see *ibid*, 12 September 1948, 12b:3-4; 19 September 1948, 12b:41; 3 October 1948, 12c:4; 10 October 1948, 12c:3-4. See also *ibid.*, 24 October 1948, 12c:3-4; 31 October 1948, 8c:3-4.

<sup>13</sup>*R-J*, 12 September 1948, 1b:1. See *R-J*, 30 September 1948, 8:31; 20 October 1948, 3:4. Strom Thurmond's "Dixiecrats" were not on the Nevada ballot.

<sup>14</sup>Norman H. Biltz, "Memoirs of the 'Duke of Nevada': Developments of Lake Tahoe, California and Nevada; Reminiscences of Nevada Political and Financial Life" (Reno: Oral History Program, University of Nevada, 1969), 202. On Biltz's importance, see Jerome E. Edwards, *Pat McCarran: Political Boss of Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1982).

<sup>15</sup>*R-J*, 11 October 1948, 4:4. Numerous stories about party functions appeared in that paper. See, for example, *R-J*, 15 September 1948, 4:4-51; 16 September 1948, 10:6; 21 September 1948, 9:4; 17 October 1948, 3:4-5; 21 October 1948, 15: 1; 1 November 1948, 6:3-4; *BCN*, 15 September 1948, 1:3-4; 9 October 1948, 42; 2 November 1948, 2:3.

<sup>16</sup>*R-J*, 12 September 1948, 9:2; 22 September 1948, 15:2, 18:4-5; 24 September 1948, 148; 26 September 1948, 6:4; 3 October 1948, 10:2; 6 October 1948, 14:2, 10 October 1948, 9:1-2; 11 October 1948, 4:5-6; 14 October 1948, 8:4-5, 31:2; 17 October 1948, 4c:5; 18 October 1948, 6:6; 19 October 1948, 13:2; 22 October 1948, 11:3; 25 October 1948, 11:8; 26 October 1948, 13:1-2; 27 October 1948, 16:4; 31 October 1948, 6b:1; *BCN*, 24 September 1948, 2:3; 7 October 1948, 7:3, for example,

<sup>17</sup>On Young Democrat activities, see *R-J*, 15 September 1948, 9:2; 19 September 1948, 5:3; 5 October 1948, 12; 7 October 1948, 19: 1; 11 October 1948, 7: 1-2; 25 October 1948, 43; 27 October 1948, 2:1; 28 October 1948, 22:3; *BCN*, 8 October 1948, 9:3; 28 October 1948, 11:1. On Young Republicans, see *R-J*, 10 September 1948, 3:1; 15 September 1948, 2:4-5. On blacks, see *R-J*, 22 September 1948, 4:1; 10 October 1948, 4:6; 12 October 1948, 44; 17 October 1948, 4:6; 24 October 1948, 4:7-8.

<sup>18</sup>On Russell, see *R-J*, 19 September 1948, 10:6; 7 October 1948, 19:6; 22 October 1948, 12: 1; *BCN*, 13 October 1948, 2:4. On Baring, see *R-J*, 1 October 1948, 1:1; 4 October 1948, 10:3; 5 October 1948, 3:2.

<sup>19</sup>On McCarran in the 1948 election and his relationship with Russell, see Edwards, *McCarran*, 137 ff., and Russell, "Reminiscences. See also *R-J*, especially, 26 October 1948, 1:3, 2:4-6; and *BCN*, 26 October 1948, 1:5.

<sup>20</sup>*R-J*, 10 October 1948, 12c:3-4; 17 October 1948, 12c:3-4; 24 October 1948, 12c:3-4; 31 October 1948, 8c:3-4; Russell, "Reminiscences," 92-93.

In 1946, Democrats Berkeley Bunker and E.P. Carville fought a bitter primary. As governor, Carville had appointed Bunker to the United States Senate upon Key Pittman's death in 1940. This had irked McCarran and his supporters, who had worked in Carville's behalf when he ran for governor. With the senior senator's support, Representative James Scrugham defeated Bunker when the next election was held in 1942. When Scrugham died in office in 1945, Carville resigned as governor. Lieutenant Governor Vail Pittman, whom McCarran had defeated in a tough Senate primary in 1944, then appointed Carville to the Senate. Bunker, who had since been elected to a term in the House, defeated his onetime benefactor in 1946. Carville's backers refused to help Bunker in the fall election, and Malone won.

<sup>21</sup>*R-J*, 14 September 1948, 6:2, and Russell, "Reminiscences," 90-91, deal with Warren. On Knowland, see *R-J*, 24 October 1948, 12c:3-4; 25 October 1948, 4:1-2; 28 October 1948, 5:1-2; 31 October 1948, 8c:3-4; *BCN*, 26 October 1948, 1:1; 27 October 1948, 1:5.

<sup>22</sup>Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 185, Kirkendall, "Election of 1948," 3117; Harold F. Gosnell, *Truman's Crises: A Political Biography of Harry S Truman* (Westport, Conn. Greenwood Press, 1980), 375; *R-J*, 14 October 1948, 3:3; 18 October 1948, 1:6; 20 October 1948, 1:4-5.

<sup>23</sup>Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 219; R-J, 13 September 1948, 1:6; 19 September 1948, 3:1-2, 6:7-8; 21 September 1948, 4:5-6; 22 September 1948, 1:1-3; 24 September 1948, 22:5-6; Morry Zenoff also saw Truman in action; see BCN, 17 September 1948, 1:1; 24 September 1948, 1, 20:4-5; 1 October 1948, 1:12:2. The "mothbags" quotation may be inaccurate. Truman may have called the Republicans "mothbags." See Steinberg, *Man From Missouri*, 324.

<sup>24</sup>R-J, 13 September 1948, 8:3-4; 24 September 1948, 16:1; 17 October 1948, 6:1-2; 20 October 1948, 1:4-5, 10:1-4; 25 October 1948, 6:1-3, 11:5-6; 29 October 1948, 17:5-7; 31 October 1948, 8:3-4; 1 November 1948, 1:1-3; Russell, "Reminiscences," 91.

<sup>25</sup>R-J, 24 September 1948, 22:5-6; 21 October 1948, 28:5-6; 31 October 1948, 1:5-6, 8c:1. See also R-J, 26 October 1948, 2:4-6. For an interesting sidelight, see Biltz, "Memoirs," 201-02. According to this McCarran confidante, a Southern Pacific railroad executive who regularly predicted the outcome of presidential races on the basis of the response that the trains the candidates were riding received in a small California town, told Biltz that Truman would win.

<sup>26</sup>On voter registration and services, see R-J, 19 September 1948, 7:3-4; 29 September 1948, 4, 1; 1 October 1948, 3:6; 18:5-6, 17 October 1948, 46; 24 October 1948, 8c:8; 26 October 1948, 13:2; 27 October 1948, 2:2, 31 October 1948, 8b:4; 1 November 1948, 10: 1; BLN, 24 September 1948, 2:4-5, 143; 30 October 1948, 3:1-2. On preparations for the election, see R-J, 1 October 1948, 3:2; 19 October 1948, 12:3; 21 October 1948, 23:2, 23:6; 27 October 1948, 246; 31 October 1948, 4:1; 1 November 1948, 3:3-7, 6:1. On broadcasts and election reports, see R-J, 24 September 1948, 2:3; 28 September 1948, 6:5; 28 October 1948, 7:6; 1 November 1948, 2:5-8; 2 November 1948, 1:6-8; BCN, 30 October 1948, 3:4.

<sup>27</sup>R-J, 12 September 1948, 3b 1; 21 September 1948, 3:1-2; 8 October 1948, 1:1-2; 14 October 1948, 1:4-5; 20 October 1948, 3:4; 26 October 1948, 3:2-3; 1 November 1948, 1:3. The October 26 issue contains an eight-page supplement that lists all of Clark County's registered voters.

<sup>28</sup>R-J, 1 November 1948, 1:3; 2 November 1948, 1:6, 2:1-5; 4 November 1948, 18:1, 19:5.

<sup>29</sup>R-J, 3 November 1948, 4:1-6, 5:1-5; 7 November 1948, 5:1-2.

<sup>30</sup>These calculations are based on vote totals in R-J.

<sup>31</sup>See note 30. See also R-J, 3 November 1948, 4:5-8, for incomplete county-by county returns. Swackhamer, *Political History*, 200, lists the state returns: Truman: 31,291 (electors J.J. Cleary, L.O. Hawkins, James C. Riordan); Dewey: 29,357 (electors Carl F. Dodge, Kay Johnson, Leo A. McNamee) Wallace: 1,469 (electors M.D. Inskeep, E.P. Owens, Donald Smart).

<sup>32</sup>BCN, 3 November 1948, 1:5, 2:1, 3:1-2; R-J, 3 November 1948, 4:8; 4 November 1948, 22:6.

<sup>33</sup>R-J, 3 November 1948, 3:3-4, 8:1; 4 November 1948, 22:5-6; 5 November 1948, 18:5-6; 7 November 1948, 3:4-5.

<sup>34</sup>R-J, 3 November 1948, 1:2; 4 November 1948, 5:1-2; 5 November 1948, 3:4.

<sup>35</sup>R-J, 4 November 1948, 17:1-2; 9 November 1948, 18:5-6. An interesting perspective on the election is provided by Tip O'Neill and William Novak, *Man of the House: The Life and Political Memoirs of Speaker Tip O'Neill* (New York: Random House, 1987), 59-61. O'Neill recalled a poll similar to the one reported to Biltz, and one newspaper, the *Boston Post*, predicting Truman's victory.

<sup>36</sup>The headlines are in R-J, 3 November 1948, 1:7-8, and 4 November 1948, 1. See also "From Where I Sit" in R-J, 5 November 1948, 18:5-6; 9 November 1948, 18:5. On Pearson, see 3 November 1948, 20:3-4; 4 November 1948, 22:3-4. See also R-J, 8 November 1948, 8: 1; BCN, 4 November 1948, 1:1, 7:4.

<sup>37</sup>R-J, 7 November 1948, 12c:1-4; November 4, 1948, 1:1.

<sup>38</sup>Cahlan, "Reminiscences," 234; Coughtry, ed., "Cahlan," 407; BCN, November 4, 1948, 1: 1; R-J 12 November 1948, 24:5-6; November 14, 1948, 12c:4. See also Biltz, "Memoirs," 202.

<sup>39</sup>R-J, 10 November 1948, 16:5-6; 14 November 1948, 12c:2; BCN, 4 November 1948, 1:1; Rusco, *Voting Behavior*, 11.

<sup>40</sup>This is based on Edwards, McCarran; Mary Ellen Glass, *Nevada's Turbulent '50s, Decade of Political and Economic Change* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1981); Hank Greenspun and Alex Peile, *Where I Stand: The Record of a Reckless Man* (New York: David McKay, 1966); and the author's "The Las Vegas Newspaper War of the 1950s."

# TAXATION AND NEVADA'S SINGLE INDUSTRY ECONOMY

## Legislative Sessions 1881 and 1981

Susan I. Filer

A comparative study of two legislative sessions one hundred years apart, each in a time of statewide economic crisis, brings into focus four questions. First, what was the legislative response to a fiscal crisis? Second, what were the special interests of each time period, and how did they temper the legislative response? Third, what changes took place in the tax structure of the state as a result of legislation passed in 1881 and 1981? Finally, what, if any, real change took place in Nevada's economic picture? The preliminary answer is that there was very little change over the course of the hundred years. Nevada has continued, because of sparse resources, to be a single-industry state, and special interests related to that industry limited legislators' choices in 1981, as they had in 1881. In both cases the legislature's course of economic action was the same. In fact, many of the proposals in 1981 had already been tried in 1881.

The Nevada legislature that convened in January 1881 faced a number of major problems including a depression in the state's main industry, mining, caused by the Comstock's failure, which would continue for the next twenty years. Governor John Kinkead's message to the legislature noted that the "great business depression" of the previous two years made "economy, retrenchment, and reform" the watchwords of the day.<sup>1</sup> In particular, he proposed reducing the number of lawmakers, developing inexpensive transportation to support the farming, ranching, and mining industries, and a revenue shift away from the bullion tax to other sources, mentioning most specifically an increase in the property tax levy.

In response, the legislature curtailed state salaries, cut administrative expenses, shifted existing revenues to cover deficits, increased the property tax, and set out to reduce the Central Pacific Railroad's notoriously excessive rates. Lawmakers also doubled up the duties of most offices through ex-officio functions, establishing a tradition in Nevada politics.

Going further, they centralized government and eliminated one layer by incorporating a number of towns, including Virginia City, Gold Hill, and Austin, and abolishing all municipal offices.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the boards of county

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Governor John Henry Kinkead, May 26, 1903. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

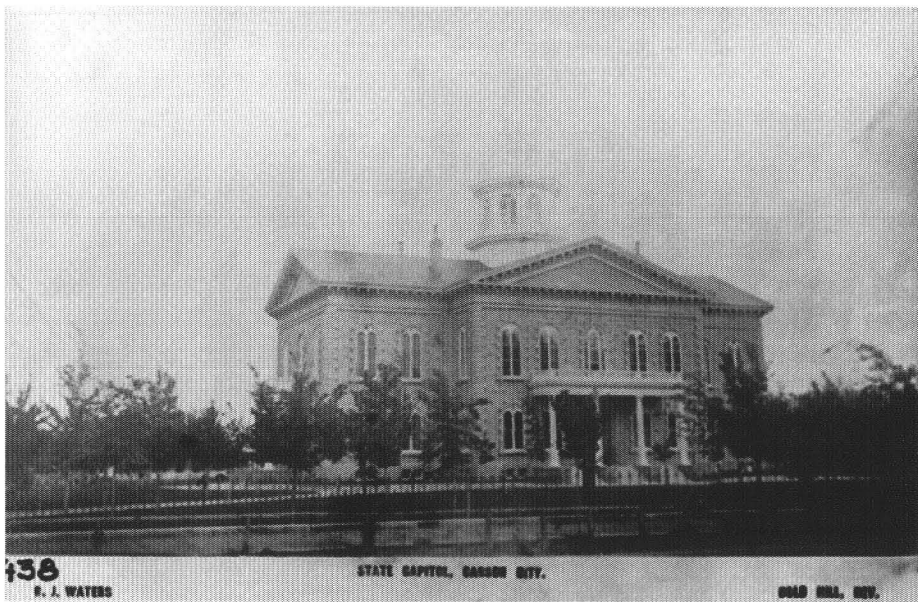
commissioners in the various counties gained complete jurisdiction over all unincorporated towns, along with total power to transfer money from town to town or from fund to fund as needed, and the power to collect property taxes in the towns.<sup>3</sup> They were also authorized to create or abolish school districts, and to change existing boundaries.<sup>4</sup> Having government concentrated in the hands of state and county officials, the legislature passed another law expressly prohibiting them from spending more than they had been allocated. Those who did would find their official bonds diminished by the amount overspent.<sup>5</sup> County officials were not the only ones shifting revenue: Legislators transferred all the money in the state building fund and soldiers' fund to the general fund and they floated various county and state bonds to keep Nevada solvent.<sup>6</sup>

In another approach to supplementing revenue, the legislators cited evidence of Anasazi civilization along the Colorado River and approached the United States Congress for \$250,000 to improve the navigability of the river to promote commerce.<sup>7</sup> The legislature further noted Nevada's desert condition and asked for federal legislation to expedite settlement and reclamation through irrigation, and proposed that Nevada subsidize costs of those who sank producing artesian wells more than 200 feet deep.<sup>8</sup> The last plan lost on a vote, probably because of fiscal concerns. Water was also at issue in another failed bill which would have prevented price gouging by water suppliers.<sup>9</sup>

With only a small percentage of Nevada land in private ownership, legislators hoped to generate revenue either through the sale of lands deeded to the state by the federal government, or through mining. Mining was the priority. Lawmakers passed only two bills concerning land per se. One set the price of all state-owned agricultural and grazing land at \$1.25 an acre and directed that former federal lands be sold in tracts of one section per applicant.<sup>10</sup> The other expedited land sales through backup offers on failed purchases.<sup>11</sup> An unsuccessful bill sought to amend the constitution so that the sale proceeds from the 1841 half-million acre federal land grant, originally intended to fund education, could be used instead for internal improvements.<sup>12</sup>

Numerous bills proposed various aggressive methods of pursuing the state's supposedly unlimited mineral wealth. In one, with an eye toward eliminating idle claims, the legislature asked Congress to end the practice of granting perpetual and unconditional patents, proposing instead that patents be renewed every five years and that a minimum of \$2,000 be spent toward mineral production on all claims, patented or not.<sup>13</sup> Asserting that the prosperity of the state was dependent on mining, lawmakers also proposed amending Nevada's constitution to allow the state to loan working capital to promising mines and claims.<sup>14</sup> Neither bill became law.

The ultimate purpose behind the promotion of mining was to increase taxable production. Biennial tax revenue from mining dropped from nearly \$400,000 to \$57,000 between 1877-78 and 1879-80. This reduction in the bullion



Early photo of the Nevada State capitol. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

tax collected had a twofold origin. Mineral production decreased and its effect on tax revenue was compounded by the 1879 legislature's reduction of the overall tax levy, including that on mines, from \$1.25 to \$0.55 per one hundred dollars of assessed value, a move Kinkead concluded had been a mistake.<sup>15</sup>

One of the most problematic issues of 1881 was the confusion created almost twenty years earlier when Nevada's constitutional convention left it to the legislature to determine what constituted the taxable net proceeds of the mines. Between 1865 and 1875, Nevada mines operated under five succeeding sets of laws. The issue came to a head in the bullion-tax fight waged in the legislature and courts between 1875 and 1883. The 1881 legislature tried to extract payment from the Big Bonanza Consolidated Virginian firm through careful wording of a bill designed to bypass the courts, but Governor Kinkead vetoed the bill.<sup>16</sup>

In spite of Governor Kinkead's recommendation that the state shift revenue dependence away from mining, lawmakers proposed several bills adjusting the formula used to determine the net yield of mines for tax purposes. Passage of any one of three bills would have limited the mine owners to deducting only the actual cost of production, ultimately increasing their tax burdens.<sup>17</sup>

Instead of a direct revenue shift, the legislature raised the general property tax levy, including proceeds of the mines, from \$0.55 to \$0.90 per hundred dollars of assessed valuation while leaving the net-mineral-yield formula un-



The Nevada State Capitol building, Carson City. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

touched.<sup>18</sup> In addition, to keep the state on a cash basis, legislators raided all available school funds for a total of \$220,000 simultaneously floating a bond issue to repay those funds through an additional temporary ad valorem tax of \$0.10 per hundred dollars until the original amount should be paid back at 4 percent interest.<sup>19</sup> Although some of the change must be attributed to the overall slump in mineral production, the net result was a de facto tax shift. Property taxes, which had provided between 48 and 58 percent of the state's revenue between 1867 and 1880, accounted for 81 percent in 1881, while mining's contribution dropped from between 12.6 and 21 percent during the earlier years to 5.5 percent in 1881.

Both the bullion-tax fight and the failure of several attempts to restructure the mining tax point to the continuing strength of mining interests in nineteenth-century Nevada. The other major influence at the time was the Central Pacific Railroad, which had a virtual stranglehold on the economy and therefore the politics of the state. At issue during the 1881 session was the railroad's openly discriminatory rate schedule, which authorized exorbitant charges for passengers and freight originating or terminating in the state. For example, transporting dry goods from New York to San Francisco might cost \$1,200; moving those same goods from New York to Reno cost \$1,436, and from New York to Winnemucca, \$1,616.<sup>20</sup>

During the 1881 session, legislators introduced five different bills designed

to regulate freight and passenger rates.<sup>21</sup> In each case, the bills either lost on a vote or were indefinitely postponed. Other bills requiring railroads to carry a reasonable amount of luggage per passenger or to file business statements with county assessors to expedite taxation met the same fate.<sup>22</sup> The reformers' only victory was to exclude railroad property from the ownership tally in counties where local aid was proposed for railroad construction, preventing corporate domination of county fiscal policy.<sup>23</sup>

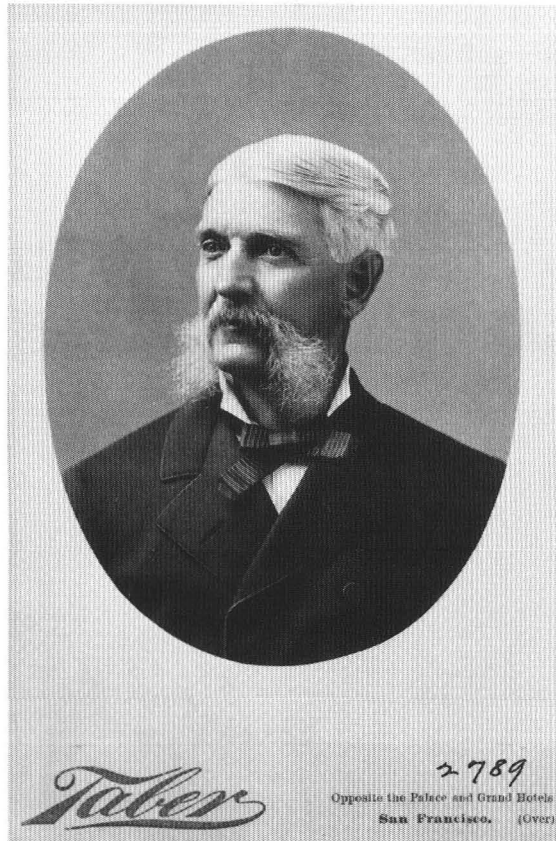
The Central Pacific's control of Nevada's political process was an ongoing problem. An attempt to end the bribery of legislators and other officials with free railroad passes was approved by both houses but refused engrossment.<sup>24</sup> As a last resort, legislators turned to the federal government. Citing "the most gigantic unredressed wrong ever inflicted upon a free people since the day of Magna Charta," they asked Congress to pass the Reagan Bill, which would regulate interstate commerce.<sup>25</sup> It was still pending in 1885.

Why was the Central Pacific able to exert so much influence in the politics of Nevada? With the decline of the mining, ranching, and farming industries, and the resulting population loss, those who stayed tended to be either rich and powerful or too poor to leave.<sup>26</sup> Ownership of the land along its lines gave the Central Pacific a tremendous power base. In addition, the population between 1880 and 1900 was both transient and in decline, which resulted in large numbers of single-term legislators during the period, thus preventing the development of the experience and leadership necessary to oppose railroad lobbyists who used money and influence to control the legislature.<sup>27</sup> In 1881, the assembly was largely first term and Democratic; the senate was experienced and Republican. Virginia and Truckee Railroad lobbyist, Henry Yerington had only to control the senate through the Republican party to block legislation unfavorable to the railroad. The overwhelming Democratic majority in the Assembly suggests that his small Republican majority in the senate was artificial, the result of Yerington's manipulation. Not surprisingly, only one of the five unsuccessful railroad bills originated in the Senate.

Finally, Washoe County's experience in attempting to bring the railroad interests to heel was certainly in the minds of legislators during the 1881 session. A few years earlier, the county had managed to force the Central Pacific to pay \$45,000 in taxes. Within days, some freight costs had doubled; Senator C. C. Powning of Roop and Washoe, speaking against one of the bills designed to regulate railroad rates, estimated that Washoe County had paid \$2.5 million for its folly, and warned his colleagues that passage of the bill, which could save the state \$33,000 annually, could easily result in monthly exactions of the same amount as revenge.<sup>28</sup>

Probably the most telling proposal of the 1881 session was one designed to deter "every person who willfully, and by force or fraud, prevents the Legislature of this State or either of the Houses composing it, or any of the members thereof, from meeting."<sup>29</sup> The bill also outlawed interrupting proceedings, al-





H. M. Yerington of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad, lobbyist for railroad interests. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

tering bill drafts, and attempted bribery of legislators, and was to become effective immediately. It died in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

One hundred years later, the circumstances of 1981 presented strong parallels to those in 1881. National inflation coupled with recession and a statewide drop from double-digit to single-digit growth in gaming meant that the legislature convened in an atmosphere of economic crisis. Governor Robert List proposed a tax reform package featuring a drastic property-tax cut offset by increases in sales and gas taxes, and a temporary increase in the tax on gross gaming revenues. He further recommended increased taxation of mining, no longer the main industry, by separating the industry from the property tax laws and "creating a separate rate for the net proceeds of mines tax."<sup>30</sup> Governor List also proposed expanding a state government hiring freeze begun several months earlier.



Part of List's reasoning was that a property tax was ludicrous in a state where only 13 percent of the land was privately owned and therefore liable for such a tax. His other argument concerned the proposed MX-missile program which would import thousands of workers, putting demands on state services while contributing nothing to pay for them.<sup>31</sup>

The legislative response to List's program was to cut property taxes by 40-50 percent while doubling the gas tax and nearly doubling the sales tax. A temporary 0.25 percent increase in the tax on gross gaming revenues was supposed to offset the loss of property taxes from the industry, thereby maintaining its revenue production at the same level. Lawmakers imposed a moratorium on the incorporation of cities and put strict revenue caps on local governments to reduce spending. It continued the hiring freeze but increased state salaries an average of 15 percent on the theory that fewer people would be doing more work. Legislators and top administrative positions saw salary increases of 30 percent.<sup>32</sup>

By the end of the session, the extent of the new fees and taxes was such that lawmakers considered the fictitious AB 711, which directed that "any person, firm, association, corporation, estate, trust, social club or fraternal organization which was neglected by the Nevada legislature " pay an annual \$10 fee to the state to meet the constitutional requirement for a "uniform and equal rate of assessment and taxation."<sup>33</sup> Proposed general-fund spending had been estimated at \$10 per resident.

Land and water were once again primary legislative considerations in the face of the proposed MX-missile system. While the Sagebrush Rebellion had officially been launched in the previous session, the 1981 legislature passed several bills designed to claim sovereignty over the state's land and water, and to establish a legal framework for maximizing the state's financial benefits in the event of the MX system's deployment. In the assembly, AJR 20 requested that all federal agencies operate within Nevada water law, and that Congress increase Nevada's allocation from the Colorado River at the expense of surrounding states to compensate for federal demand on unappropriated water. Senate Bill 508 created the Colorado River Commission in order to shift control of the water from the federal to the state level. Other bills directed the state to acquire without charge title to any capital improvements associated with the MX, directed the governor to accept federal money to offset the effects of the missile system, and increased the authority of the attorney general to sue in any court or federal agency if federal use of public lands or water impaired the sovereignty of the state.<sup>34</sup>

The complex financial issues and accounting practices of the twentieth century make a direct statistical comparison of the effects of the tax shift impossible. While mining and property were taxed separately in 1881, the gaming industry paid both property taxes and taxes on gross revenues. The issue is further complicated today by county-wide rather than statewide assessment

of property taxes and some gaming taxes. It is clear that in 1981 corporate gaming properties benefitted from a 40-50 percent drop in property taxes, while the increased sales tax, a pass-along tax, had only a nominal effect. The only question is whether the 0.25 percent tax increase on gross revenues actually offset the drop in property taxes. As both the largest property holder and the wealthiest industry in the state, the gaming establishment probably would have killed this legislation if it had not been beneficial to it. The Nevada Resort Association was represented in Carson City that year by Robbins Cahill, who built the Nevada Gaming Commission before leaving it for the NRA, and by Harvey Whittemore, gaming's twentieth-century Henry Yerington.

To summarize the parallels between the two sessions, in 1881 as in 1981, Nevada's main industries were in declines attributable in varying degrees to larger national events. For the most part, remedies proposed in 1981 had already been tried in 1881. In both cases, the legislature talked about economic diversification but mandated a tax shift which was beneficial to the dominant industries—mining in 1881, gaming in 1981. Part of this was due to the intrinsic strength of the industries themselves. In 1881, the Big Bonanza firm was powerful enough to keep the bullion-tax issue alive in the courts for eight years. In 1981, the Desert Inn was fighting gaming authorities in the courts over the same issue—the definition of gross revenue for tax purposes.<sup>35</sup>

Transportation was of major importance in both 1881 and 1981. Mining depended on the railroads just as gaming depends heavily on interstate highways. In 1881, the cost of transportation threatened mining; in 1981, the cost of highway maintenance was a potential threat to gaming. During both sessions, lawmakers passed legislation designed to solve the problem.

Nevada fiscal policy in both 1881 and 1981 featured centralization and reduction of government. In 1881, getting more work from fewer employees meant virtually eliminating local government in most towns. In 1981 it meant an across-the-board hiring freeze at the state level, and a moratorium on the incorporation of cities.

Lawmakers in 1881 tried unsuccessfully to legislate against the various strong-arm tactics of the day; the 1981 legislature was the first to operate under new rules requiring the registration of lobbyists, although few would argue that registration reduced the power of special interests.

There are several important differences between 1881 and 1981. Mining was the main industry in 1881; by 1981 gaming had replaced it. Gaming's slowed growth in 1981 was nothing like the near collapse of mining in 1881. And finally, legislators and top government officials in 1881 set the standard for fiscal austerity by cutting their own salaries and expenses; the same cannot be said for 1981.

Nevada's economy has been and still is based on a single exploitative industry. In 1881, it was exploitation of a natural resource and in 1981, exploitation of a human resource. The legislative response in both 1881 and 1981 was to

protect that industry. The future is open to speculation. Gaming is no longer Nevada's monopoly. Today a major resource in Nevada is an abundance of federal land. Like it or not, the nuclear industry may win its drive to use the land. If nuclear storage becomes a fact of life, it may emerge as the next big industry peculiar to Nevada. In that case, if Nevada's economic and political patterns hold into the next century, we will see initial heavy taxation of all things nuclear, followed by favorable adjustments during a time of economic crisis.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John Kinkead, State of the State, January 4, 1881, (Carson City:1881), 4.

<sup>2</sup> AB 57, 1881 Assembly Bills, Box 29, Nevada State Library and Archives, Carson City.

<sup>3</sup> AB 58, AB 33, AB 53, AB 119, 1881, Box 29.

<sup>4</sup> AB 120, 1881, Box 29.

<sup>5</sup> AB 65, 1881, Box 29.

<sup>6</sup> SB 123, SB 124, 1881 Senate Bills, Box 31, Nevada State Library and Archives, Carson City.

<sup>7</sup> SJR 10, 1881 Senate Bills and Resolutions, Box 31, Nevada State Library and Archives, Carson City.

<sup>8</sup> SJR 8, 1881, Box 31, AB 92 1881, Box 29.

<sup>9</sup> AB 135, 1881, Box 29.

<sup>10</sup> AB 142, 1881, Box 29.

<sup>11</sup> SB 90, 1881, Box 30.

<sup>12</sup> SJR 22, 1881, Box 31.

<sup>13</sup> ACR 13, 1881, Box 29.

<sup>14</sup> ACR 22, 1881, Box 29.

<sup>15</sup> Kinkead, State of the State.

<sup>16</sup> SB 68, 1881, Box 30.

<sup>17</sup> SB 126, 1881, Box 31; AB 126, AB 127, 1881, Box 29.

<sup>18</sup> SB 122, 1881, Box 31.

<sup>19</sup> SB 104, 1881, Box 31.

<sup>20</sup> Myron Angel, ed., *History of Nevada* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1881; repr., Berkeley: Howell-North, 1958), 276.

<sup>21</sup> SB 12, 1881, Box 31; AB 4, AB 88, AB 32, AB 145, 1881, Box 29.

<sup>22</sup> SB 58, 1881, Box 30; AB 84, 1881, Box 29.

<sup>23</sup> SB 140, 1881, Box 31.

<sup>24</sup> AB 114, 1881, Box 29.

<sup>25</sup> SJR 3, 1881, Box 31.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Ellen Glass, *Silver and Politics in Nevada: 1892-1902* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1969), 29.

<sup>27</sup> Don W. Driggs and Leonard E. Goodall, *Nevada Politics and Government: Conservatism in an Open Society* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 43.

<sup>28</sup> Angel, *History of Nevada*, 277.

<sup>29</sup> AB 146, 1881, Box 29.

<sup>30</sup> Robert List, State of the State, Nevada, (*Journal of the Assembly*, 61st sess.), 34.

<sup>31</sup> List, State of the State, 33.

<sup>32</sup> *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Opinion, 3 June 1981, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Chris Broderick, "No Taxpayer Overlooked," *Las Vegas Review Journal*, 3 June 1981, 12B.

<sup>34</sup> SB 175, 1981; SB 381; SB 215, 1981.

<sup>35</sup> Grant Sawyer and Robert D. Faiss, "The Outlook for Gaming at the 1981 Legislature," in "Legislation for the 1980s," Richard L. Siegel and Andrew P. Grose, eds., *Nevada Public Affairs Review*, 1981, no. 2.

# THE LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU

## A Narrative Look Through the Eyes of Time

Mara E. Vernon

I sometimes get carried away and talk like the News Bureau was my child. I had that affinity for it, I just loved it and everybody who worked there loved it, we really did.

—Don Payne

I was a 100 percent Bureau man, I loved it.

—Don English

Formerly the Desert Sea News Bureau, the Las Vegas News Bureau played an integral role in the development of Las Vegas as “The Entertainment Capital of the World.” Through its publicity campaign that has spanned six decades, the agency is probably the largest single factor in the behind-the-scenes success story of Las Vegas as a resort city, yet it has remained cloaked in a shroud of self-imposed anonymity for nearly half of this century. Although the News Bureau’s role in the publicity of Las Vegas has changed in recent years with the city’s growing success and changes in the bureau’s organization, the Las Vegas News Bureau was, and remains a dynamic organization worthy of study in the history and development of Las Vegas.

Don English and Don Payne, two influential bureau members, together hold seventy years of experience with the agency and are still residents of the city they helped build through their promotional efforts. English and Payne provide personal accounts of the Bureau’s character, its functions, and its influence over the years not only locally but nationally and internationally as well. Theirs is a rich story ripe for the telling as the Las Vegas News Bureau has kept itself anonymous in the shadow of the massive campaign it directed to keep Las Vegas in the limelight. English and Payne’s journey starts with the bureau’s beginning in 1949 and continues through 1992, when the bureau became an agency of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. Because both men left the bureau at this time, the organization’s history since 1992 is discussed by

Mara E. Vernon has a bachelor’s degree in journalism, with an emphasis in photojournalism, from Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, where she later spent two and a half years as a part-time instructor of photojournalism and photography. Following the completion of a master’s degree in communication studies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, she will return to NAU to continue teaching in the School of Communications.

Myram Borders, the agency's current bureau chief who also provides insight into the its future.

Don English brought his photographic expertise and creativity to the Las Vegas News Bureau at its inception in 1949 and provided millions of viewers with images, both still and motion pictures, of Las Vegas and the surrounding area. His pictures spoke of and symbolized the fun and exciting times Las Vegas had to offer, and his ingenious ideas and talent put these images in publications worldwide. English shot still photography throughout his career with the bureau, but also began shooting newsreels in 1955 after the death of fellow bureau cameraman Dave Lees. English's tenure spanned all six decades of the bureau's existence providing him with great insight into the organization he loved and to which he devoted forty-three years of his life.

Don Payne started with the bureau in 1965 and by 1969 had become its manager. He played a determining role in pushing Las Vegas publicity into the global market, primarily through an organization he created in 1974 called Sun Corner USA. Sun Corner USA was included in the News Bureau's budget and was a cooperative effort by four cities, Las Vegas and the California destinations of San Diego, Palm Springs, and Long Beach, to promote those areas internationally. This effort died out with Payne's departure from the bureau in 1992, but it set the tone for the international exposure that the bureau continues today.

Myram Borders took over the leadership of the bureau in August 1992 upon Payne's departure. Borders's background with United Press International (UPI), for whom she worked almost exclusively from 1958 to 1991, gives her added knowledge of the Las Vegas News Bureau because throughout those years she had the opportunity to work with the Las Vegas organization. "I did [work with the Las Vegas News Bureau] a lot because they had a UPI transmitter out there and we had no photographer in town and so major stories would break and we'd call the Bureau." This experience, along with eighteen months as the commissioner of consumer affairs for the State of Nevada immediately prior to joining the bureau, helped prepare Borders for the transition from the field of journalism to the field of publicity.

Before the story of the Las Vegas News Bureau can begin, some light must be shed upon the city that necessitated its creation. In the shadow of an impending world war, Las Vegas emerged triumphantly in the 1940s building its first full-fledged resort, El Rancho Vegas, in 1941 on a remote four-mile section of US 91 (Los Angeles Highway) that would later be called the Strip.<sup>3</sup> By the end of the decade, El Rancho Vegas would be joined by three other major resorts, the Last Frontier, the Flamingo, and the Thunderbird, as well as several smaller hotels.<sup>4</sup> The Flamingo drew extensive national attention to Las Vegas because it was built by mobster Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegal, and although seemingly a negative, the notoriety Las Vegas gained as being an underworld haven only highlighted the city's wide-open appeal.<sup>5</sup>



Las Vegas News Bureau vehicle amidst snow, November 10, 1958.  
(*Las Vegas News Bureau*)

Throughout this time the Chamber of Commerce supported the increasing word-of-mouth reputation of Las Vegas as a marriage, divorce, and gambling mecca.<sup>6</sup> World War II provided a model propaganda campaign demonstrating the crucial role of advertising and public relations in developing mass support for the war effort, and its example inspired the chamber to lay the foundations for an intensive advertising campaign in 1944.

Maxwell Kelch, Chamber of Commerce President and owner of the KENO radio station, led the chamber in 1945 to establish the "Livewire Fund" to which each member agreed to contribute between 1 and 5 percent of his annual gross receipts.<sup>8</sup> The resort hotels agreed to match these individual contributions up to \$50,000, the money then being used to publicize Las Vegas.<sup>9</sup> The program took off with great success, raising \$84,000 in the first year alone, which made Las Vegas the national leader for per-capita publicity fundraising.<sup>10</sup> With such success, the chamber hired one of the nation's top advertising agencies, J. Walter Thompson, who focused on Las Vegas as a desert resort paradise.<sup>11</sup> The Chamber changed agencies two more times in the next two years despite the continued success of those agencies in promoting the city.<sup>12</sup>

Steve Hannegan<sup>13</sup> and Associates, publicist for among others, the Union Pacific Railroad and its Idaho resort at Sun Valley, took over the publicity cam-



paign for Las Vegas in 1948.<sup>14</sup> Hannegan's services were offered to the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce by Union Pacific's President George Ashby, who had a winter home in Las Vegas.<sup>15</sup> "In those days the railroads were interested in passenger traffic . . . they were interested in promoting passenger traffic, and we were on the main line between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles and [made] connections to Omaha and the East so it [promoting Las Vegas] was the natural thing to do."<sup>16</sup> As a part of the publicity effort for Las Vegas, Hannegan created the Desert Sea News Bureau.<sup>17</sup> Sixty percent of the Livewire Fund was used to pay advertising, while the remaining 40 percent was applied to publicity efforts.<sup>18</sup> The Las Vegas News Bureau and its photographers were a major part of the publicity effort, working around the clock to generate free publicity and augment the advertising campaign.

Photographer Don English was hired by Steve Hannegan at the Desert Sea News Bureau's inception, but his fate with the bureau had not yet been determined.<sup>19</sup> English was originally hired for only four months because "they knew the contract would be out at the end of the year, but they didn't know whether Hannegan would get it again or not."<sup>20</sup> As it turned out, the contract was not renewed. "The News Bureau then passed from being the Desert Sea News Bureau to being a division of the Chamber of Commerce."<sup>21</sup> Although English was asked to move to Sun Valley to continue working for Hannegan's agency, he made a decision that would affect the rest of his life. He elected to stay in Las Vegas to continue working for the News Bureau.<sup>22</sup>

As the leadership of the News Bureau changed hands from Steve Hannegan and Associates to the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, the bureau itself changed. When Ken Frogley, a former Hannegan man, took over, he enacted two significant changes in the organization, starting with its name. "One of the first things he wanted to do was change the name because every time they gave a Las Vegas News Bureau credit, you got the name Las Vegas in print again, whereas Desert Sea didn't really define where we were. The whole idea was to get the name Las Vegas out."<sup>23</sup>

The second change Frogley made was in how the photographs were disseminated to news agencies. Under Hannegan, the organization was very structured and any photographs would be sent either to the headquarters in Los Angeles or New York where a decision would be made about which images would be used. Those selected were then printed at the News Bureau and sent to headquarters, where they were sent on to the newspapers and wire services.<sup>24</sup> This time-consuming practice changed with the departure of Hannegan. "As soon as we lost Hannegan," Ken Frogley said, "all we have to do is just mail [the photographs] to any of the papers we want or any of the wire services direct from here, it's like rolling off a log. If it's something they can use, they'll use it, if it isn't, they won't."<sup>25</sup> With new leadership and the chamber's backing through the Livewire Fund, the News Bureau and its staff stepped into a new decade characterized by the bureau's intensity in creating new ideas to gener-

ate publicity to promote Las Vegas.

One of English's primary functions as a photographer in the early years was getting images known as "hometown" pictures of tourists at the hotels and then sending them back to their hometown papers. English used to make what was called a "hometown run" for the hotels every day looking for couples around the pool.<sup>26</sup> The couple would be photographed in front of the diving board or at the edge of the pool and special care was always taken to get the name of the hotel in the background if at all possible. These images were then mailed to the society editor of the couple's hometown newspaper and "it went like crazy, and they'd publish them."<sup>27</sup>

"The reasoning behind the hometown photographs was that if the Joneses could go to Las Vegas, then we can too, we just live down the street . . . it was that kind of psychology, and it worked."<sup>28</sup> "You didn't send them to the *Los Angeles Times* or the *Chicago Tribune*, but if the newspaper was in Albuquerque or some smaller town, why then that was great publicity. And they, the photographers and writers, literally haunted the hotels finding people."<sup>29</sup> The hometown photographs also inherently helped with promoting the town because it always carried the dateline reading Las Vegas, Nevada.

Another thing English and the bureau photographers did a lot of was cheesecake, images of women in scant bathing suits taken in various areas in the hotels and on location to promote the town. "It wouldn't fly today . . . it's a whole social revolution, and no way, it just wouldn't go at all, but it was supply and demand for years."<sup>30</sup> As with the hometown pictures, cheesecake shots often included the hotel's name in the photograph to further promote Las Vegas.

The 1950s saw a spectacular development of the Las Vegas Strip and no other decade would see the production of more first-rate resorts.<sup>31</sup> Tourism and, to a lesser extent, the defense industry propelled the urbanization of Las Vegas; its population grew from 8,422 in 1940 to 24,624 in 1950.<sup>32</sup> The 1950s also saw the opening of a nuclear test site near Las Vegas that brought more attention to the town whose burgeoning population had transformed into a city.

Atomic testing northwest of the city in 1951 focused the nation's attention on Las Vegas. Despite fears that the tourism industry would be harmed, the testing program instead turned into another attraction that drew visitors to Las Vegas. The News Bureau and hotel publicists capitalized on the attention by announcing the test dates and sending them out over the news wires.<sup>33</sup> Some hotels went so far as to prepare box lunches for guests to take out to Angel Park to view the early morning blasts.<sup>34</sup> The publicist for the Sands Hotel, Al Freeman, was very active in catering to the press covering the atomic blasts, and there was even a club called the "Atom Bomb Watchers Society."<sup>35</sup>

The Las Vegas News Bureau became the first private organization with a press wire transmitter when UPI installed a transmitter at the News Bureau's office.<sup>36</sup> Reporting on the atomic test program represented the serious side of



Bureau staff and the hotel publicists were shooting around the pools or on location to develop story ideas to get Las Vegas in the news. This floating craps game was staged for publicity at the Sands, 1953. (*Las Vegas News Bureau*)

the bureau's work and gained the staff the respect of the news media for being able to cover hard news stories. English's credibility and neutrality as a News Bureau photographer put him even closer to the coverage of atomic testing when he was selected by the other news-wire photographers to be the one photographer allowed to shoot stills and newsreels from a trench one mile from detonation.<sup>37</sup> As he set up his equipment in the trench, English was told that "when you hear the countdown . . . that last second is going to be the longest second in your life. You won't believe how long it is." English thought this was "baloney" because "there was no way the last second could be the longest one." When they counted down on the loud speaker—ten, nine, eight, seven. . . four, three, two, and one—English started to believe that what he had been told was really right; the last second really was the longest.<sup>38</sup> Ironically, the test turned out to be a dud and the bomb never detonated.

English never did film an atomic blast from the trench, but the bureau's coverage of atomic testing started a long and mutually beneficial association between the bureau and the wire services, both national and international. In addition to UPI, the bureau developed relationships with the Associated Press (AP), which also installed a wire transmitter at the bureau for some time, and two international agencies, Reuters of Britain and Agency France Press.<sup>39</sup> Payne described the bureau's relationships with the wire services as "wonderful" because the bureau never pushed what he called "puffery" on them.<sup>40</sup> This relationship developed into a covenant between the bureau and the wire services in which the wires would generally accept feature pictures because the agency had a good idea what the wires needed, and, in return, the wires could depend on the bureau to cover fast breaking stories for them.<sup>41</sup> Ultimately the wire services were another means for the bureau to achieve its goal because "hey, they were doing our job, they were getting publicity for Las Vegas."<sup>42</sup>

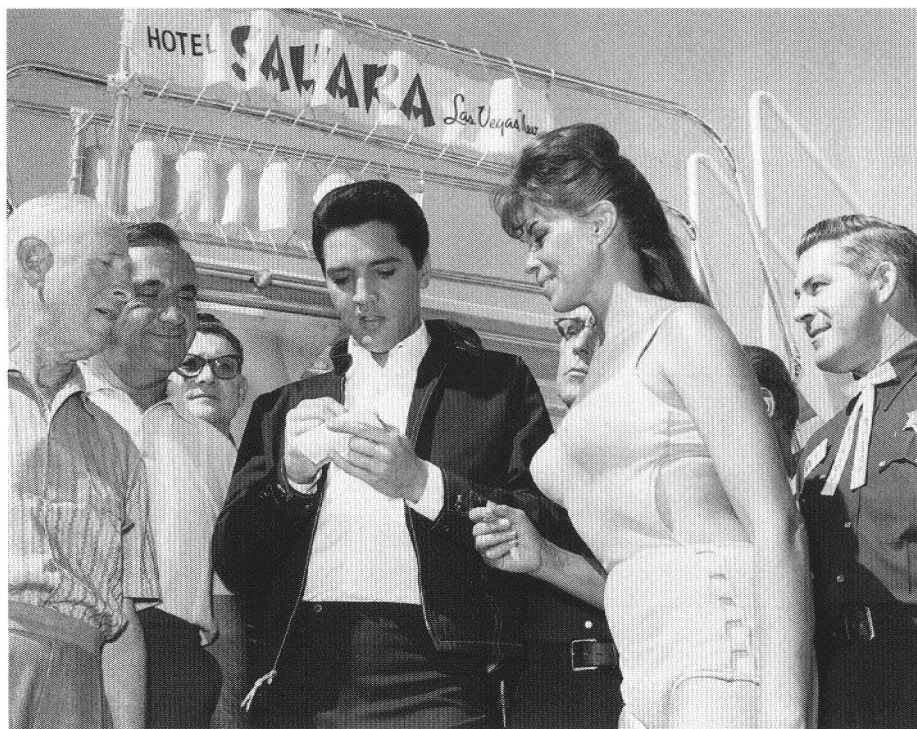
In the 1950s and 1960s, the bureau eased away from the seriousness of atomic testing and focused on celebrities. "Movie magazines were big, big deals to the teenagers who'd cut out their stars and put them on the wall in the bedroom and this kind of thing . . . , they idolized movie stars."<sup>43</sup> The millions of avid readers of these magazines provided a ready market for celebrity photograph promotions and the bureau answered this need by doing a tremendous number of movie star layouts.<sup>44</sup>

The period of the 1950s and 1960s, from atomic testing to celebrity promotions, was one of the most exciting eras for English at the News Bureau. He attributes his fondness for this time to the creativity and license given by hotels to the Bureau in developing and shooting story ideas. "If you had an idea and you talked to the PR guy at the hotel, boy they jumped on it. They could put the thing together, and they had the backing of the hotel."<sup>45</sup>

Whether they were shooting around the pools or on location, the bureau staff and the hotel publicists collaborated on their ideas.<sup>46</sup> "I understand that our job was made a lot easier because of the cooperation we got from the hotel

publicity people. We worked together—we didn't come up with all the good ideas."<sup>47</sup> Al Freeman of the Sands Hotel, set up many of the shoots in which English was involved. English recalled one shoot in which Freeman brought the network and TV people out from Los Angeles to film an old prospector who is trudging along through the desert. Suddenly the prospector sees a vision, a mirage, and the image is actually a line of showgirls all dressed up in feathers. Another English project involved a harmonica player who took on the role of the pied piper and enticed several showgirls into a swimming pool. The girls were so intrigued by the harmonica player that they kept walking until their heads were all underwater.<sup>48</sup> "We did some corny, unbelievably bad stuff . . . but that was the era that this kind of thing was acceptable and everyone knew it was a lark—you knew it was for fun. It was truly a more innocent world."<sup>49</sup>

From English's era of creativity, atomic bombs, and celebrities in the 1950s and 1960s, the Las Vegas News Bureau headed full force into the international publicity market in the 1970s with Don Payne's creation of Sun Corner USA. Payne believes this expansion from regional and national publicity into the worldwide market was the most significant change in the history of the Bu-



Elvis Presley during a celebrity promotion at the Sahara Hotel in the early 1960s. (*Las Vegas News Bureau*)



reau.<sup>50</sup> Payne's idea was formulated on one of his promotional trips to Europe. There he met up with a friend, Jerry Goodrum, who had a similar job in San Diego. Both were in Europe promoting their respective cities to the long-haul traveler, and they concluded that while they would compete in cities such as San Francisco, Denver, or New York, the international market was a different story. Payne and Goodrum decided to join forces and create a region that they would promote worldwide; it included Las Vegas, and the three California destinations of San Diego, Long Beach and Palm Springs. This union, entitled Sun Corner USA, led to many international publicity trips carried out in conjunction with participating airlines. For example, the representatives from the four cities would go into European destinations on non-revenue tickets donated by an airline that also helped to invite respected travel journalists to functions sponsored by Sun Corner USA. Sun Corner USA produced a slide show extolling the four cities which later evolved into a video presentation. As a part of the agreement with the airlines, the foreign journalists were later flown into the Sun Corner USA region again on non-revenue tickets, after which each city would have them for two days. This arrangement gave the destinations even greater exposure because it allowed the publicists of Sun Corner USA two shots at their target audience, one overseas followed by another in their home towns. "It was really a win-win situation, and that really got us into the global publicity field."<sup>51</sup>

The bureau's publicity campaign was extensive, and over the years it delved into an abundance of publicity techniques and tactics. "Our job was to create positive publicity through every media [*sic*] available."<sup>52</sup> In addition to the still photography and the efforts of Sun Corner USA, the bureau did radio shows, newsreels, press kits, and even location work for the motion-picture industry.

But regardless of the medium, everything the Las Vegas News Bureau did was done with the goal of getting the name Las Vegas into print. "The News Bureau was the funnel through which the world knew about Las Vegas and its attractions."<sup>53</sup> "It was a saturation of media concentration . . . the whole thing was to get the name Las Vegas outside of Las Vegas, and to make it sound like fun and exciting things happen here. And it worked."<sup>54</sup> The bureau's campaign worked so well that eventually Las Vegas became a news image, sometimes surprisingly so. "Things would happen someplace else, but if it happened in Las Vegas they wanted to know about it, they wanted coverage on it; they wanted the news."<sup>55</sup>

In addition to its massive publicity campaign, the News Bureau took on the role of an information agency. It not only kept the major outlets, the newspaper travel writers, the free-lance travel writers, feature writers, and general editors aware of what was going on, but also instilled in them the idea that the bureau had all the answers. "If they needed something on Las Vegas. . . , we could get the information for them."<sup>56</sup> This mission of the bureau was facilitated by the high journalistic and ethical standards the staff maintained. "When we sent



something out, it was very carefully edited and checked for typos and spelling and punctuation and proper journalism. But also that it was a valid story and that a journalist would have some interest in it."<sup>57</sup>

The bureau was forever attempting to portray Las Vegas to the rest of the nation and the world in the most effective way to garner positive publicity and thus entice tourists to visit the city. Despite the outpouring of printed material, photography played a crucial role over the years at the bureau and in the development of Las Vegas.

Don English's photography and influence at the Las Vegas News Bureau spanned six decades, and his ability to capture the essence of Las Vegas remains unparalleled. According to Don Payne, the bureau's former manager, "There is no better photographer than Don English and I'll stand behind that statement 1,000 percent . . . If I needed absolutely publishable material, I would send Don English out. He never missed."<sup>58</sup> Current Bureau Chief Myram Borders agrees: "Don English was one of the best photographers the News Bureau ever had, and probably ever will have . . . it was his imagination, it was his creativity, he'd create pictures."<sup>59</sup> English was indeed masterful at creating ideas to express the theme that it was a lot of fun to come to Las Vegas. "The thing basically is ideas. You have to have the technique. If you don't have the technique, then you can't express the idea, but I think the whole thing was generating ideas."<sup>60</sup>

English's ideas and technique landed his photographs in publications nationally and internationally. His image of the first atomic-bomb cloud seen from the city over Fremont Street was "picture of the week" in a 1951 issue of *Life* magazine and his photograph of Miss Atomic Bomb in May 1957 currently hangs in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.<sup>61</sup>

English always looked for what the famous French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson called the decisive moment—that single instant when objects within the frame organize themselves into a strong composition and also reveal something about themselves that is worth capturing on film.<sup>62</sup> English said of this quest, "I like to try to get one picture that epitomized the feeling of what's going on."<sup>63</sup> English believed this quality was crucial to an image's communicative power.

The image, in particular the early days, that the world, that people had of Las Vegas was from the photographs, because that's what grabbed their eye in the newspapers and the magazines and this is the way they interpreted Las Vegas.<sup>64</sup> [The photography] was the word, that was what got out from here.

Today, Borders places the same value on the image. "The photographers in my mind are the most important part of the News Bureau . . . you have to have people who write and send out the story ideas, but you need pictures."<sup>65</sup>

English provided the Las Vegas News Bureau with these needed images for



English's ideas and technique landed his photographs in publications nationally and internationally. This image of Miss Atomic Bomb from 1957 currently hangs in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. (*Las Vegas News Bureau*)

forty-three years and he enjoyed doing it. Both of these factors contribute to his own assessment of his impact on the bureau. "Because of longevity, I think I probably had a lot of impact. I'd like to think I was able to get guys to be creative along the way . . . I just think that I was so bureau oriented that maybe some of that permeated and rubbed off. It was fun; it wasn't a job."<sup>66</sup> Payne characterizes his role at the bureau as driving, but clearly emphasizes the bureau's party role in Las Vegas's success. "My role is insignificant, I just happened to have my hand on the steering wheel. But, the News Bureau's role made Las Vegas famous . . . and there are an awful lot of people that agree and feel the same way."<sup>67</sup>

I hold that the News Bureau was the driving and most significant force in generating the positive approach to the potential visitor. Our job was to give the media a reason to run the story which would give the reader, or the consumer of that media information a reason to want to come to Las Vegas. Whether it was good food, or shows, or area activities, or gambling, or a convention, or whatever it happened to be, we wanted them to think that "boy I gotta go to Las Vegas to do that." And, I think it worked.<sup>68</sup>

Not everyone would agree with Don Payne's position or his contention that Las Vegas would be only half of what it is today, maybe less without the Las Vegas News Bureau, but it's hard to deny the impact and influence the Bureau has had over the past forty-eight years.<sup>69</sup> Borders and English are among those in agreement with Payne, but the convictions regarding the bureau's role are less emphatic than Payne's. Borders holds that "if it hadn't been for the News Bureau, it would have been a long time probably before Las Vegas would've been on the map,"<sup>70</sup> while English's view is more modest yet: "It sure would have been a lot harder for outside press to do stories on the town. That much I know. I think it would have been a little slower coming around."<sup>71</sup>

One way the News Bureau helped put Las Vegas in a positive light and place it in the minds of people was by continually referring to it as the entertainment capital of the world.

For years we said we're the entertainment capital of the world. We knew it was a boldface lie. We were lying through our teeth, but we just kept saying it because it sounded good and we did have stars and this and that. But we knew there was no way we were in any way competition with Broadway or anything like that. Then, all of a sudden, we'd see other people writing and saying the entertainment capital of the world . . . all of a sudden it was coming back at you and you don't believe it.<sup>72</sup>

Just as Las Vegas has evolved into the entertainment capital of the world, the Las Vegas News Bureau itself transformed over the years. English attributes many of the changes in the bureau to those that were occurring in the city, especially in the hotels. English believes the whole nature of the town changed when the hotels became more corporate, because their focus shifted from generating creative new publicity ideas to internal organizational concerns.<sup>73</sup>

Payne views the 1970s and 1980s as the peak days of the News Bureau and agrees with English that the change in corporate structure affected the role and atmosphere of the Bureau.

The 70s and the 80s were really the halcyon days for the News Bureau. The positive attitude . . . that was the attitude of Las Vegas. I don't care if it was Mafia people, or legitimate people, or financial people they always seemed to have a very positive attitude and I've always felt that they never listened to the people who said "you can't do that," they just went ahead and did it. And Las Vegas is proof of that today.<sup>74</sup>

In Payne's mind this halcyon era ended with the arrival of what he calls the bean counters which were really the corporate entities that eradicated the widespread practice of providing free services. "In the old days, and I shouldn't use that term, but they were the old days, this was comp city, we never paid for a meal, or a drink, or a show, or anything else because we were working for these people."<sup>75</sup> According to Payne this changed because the corporate entities wanted the individual areas of the hotels and casinos to be sustaining, and this put an end to the total support for publicity that the city once offered.<sup>76</sup>

The bureau's most significant transformation, however, was probably one that came from within, and it forever changed the size and atmosphere of the forty-three year old entity. In 1992 the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) took over the Las Vegas News Bureau when the Chamber of Commerce no longer wanted responsibility for it.<sup>77</sup> When Myram Borders became the News Bureau chief, there were only two people left from the traditionally larger staffs. "Before the chamber started dismantling it, there were probably seventeen people on staff "<sup>78</sup> The transformation from being the Chamber of Commerce's bureau to being the LVCVA's bureau meant not only a structural change, but a financial one as well. "When the LVCVA took [the News Bureau] over they no longer could operate with Livewire Funds and all of that . . . the LVCVA pays for it, it's in their budget."<sup>79</sup> LVCVA is supported by hotel room tax which means hotels are essentially still funding the bureau, but the method is totally different. Borders explains:

When a hotel was paying into the Livewire Fund, then they could call the News Bureau at any time to use their photographers . . . when the system changed and they no longer paid into a Livewire Fund, that also changed because first of all we didn't have the photographers, and secondly some of the missions of the News Bureau changed. We're still in the business of publicizing Las Vegas, we're still attempting to archive major events around here . . . we still work very closely with the public relations people at the hotels, but, if they need a photographer for strictly a publicity thing, they need to hire their own photographer . . . We're not at their beck and call the way they were before.<sup>80</sup>

Other changes in the bureau's role and functions in Las Vegas were evolving prior to Borders's arrival on the scene. Toward what Borders refers to as the end of the "Chamber's News Bureau," the Bureau was photographing a lot of casino promotions, jackpot winners, and that sort of thing. When this practice

began, Borders believes the News Bureau fell out of the news loop it had belonged to over the years.<sup>81</sup>

And, by news loop you can call it news, you can call it publicity, you can call it whatever you want. They are sometimes one and the same . . . Is it an Anne Margaret wedding publicity, or is it news. Is it publicity for the Riviera Hotel, is it publicity for Anne Margaret, or is it news for the media? Whatever you want to call it, they were in that loop. The fact that they [News Bureau] were in the news loop all those years is what created those fantastic archives.<sup>82</sup>

Borders believes the bureau's departure from the news loop changed the complexion of the bureau, thus changing the complexion of the archives it amasses.

Another significant change that Borders has witnessed is automation. When she arrived for example, the Bureau was still mounting slides by hand which is very time consuming. The automation of all photographic processes allows the bureau to give away more photographs than ever before, even with a smaller staff. "The convention authority has been very generous in their capital investments in the News Bureau."<sup>83</sup> In addition to automating the photographic processes, the bureau purchased all top-of-the-line camera equipment for its photographers who had previously been using their own equipment.

With such a small staff, Border doubles as bureau chief and one of two writers at the bureau. She is involved in working on the extensive press kits for Las Vegas and also one on Laughlin which the bureau never had when it was under the Chamber of Commerce. Borders also works on "Las Vegas Lineage," which is a set of news briefs that goes out monthly to all journalists on the bureau's list, approximately 16,000 worldwide. "Las Vegas Lineage" covers every subject in the world with the dual purposes of updating journalists on Las Vegas happenings and of giving them story ideas. Borders said some journalists take it out and print it verbatim in briefs and fillers, but it is primarily used as a source of story ideas.<sup>84</sup>

The bureau also continues its practice of sending out media memos to hotels on an as needed basis, usually twice a week, to advise them that certain individuals or groups are arriving so that the hotels can decide if they want to offer these people any free rooms or shows. For example, the bureau will send out a memo saying that a crew from *National Geographic* is in town doing a full spread on Las Vegas, asking if anyone wants to assist them, and, if so, they should contact the News Bureau. "The days of coming to the News Bureau and getting on the free gravy train for shows and rooms is over . . . It's totally up to the hotels and [the media memos] is how it happens."<sup>85</sup> Borders believes this change in behavior of hotels in recent years has led some to believe that Las Vegas doesn't need publicity anymore. "I think where they're getting this idea is the fact that the hotels think very carefully before they give freebies. They used to hand them out like pennies and so probably some people are drawing the conclusion that well, they don't think they need publicity."<sup>86</sup> Borders believes this view is incorrect and simply feels the hotels are simply being choosy

and does not relate that to the need or lack of need for publicity. Borders personally thinks you always need to keep the name of the destination way out front as much as you can.

The Las Vegas News Bureau has accomplished more over the five decades than just promoting the popularity and growth of Las Vegas; it has become a source through which the history of Las Vegas can be seen and researched. "In the formative days [ 1949] we were just going gung-ho trying to get publicity with no eye at all that what we were doing was historical or needed to be preserved. The by-product, of course, is all the files and photographs and history of the stunts and everything in the town."<sup>87</sup>

In fact, the by-product is an archive loaded with an estimated quarter million to one million frames of still film in addition to thousands of feet of movie film that has been transferred to video format. The archives are housed on the grounds of the LVCVA and currently are not open for public examination. "Previously people were just pawing through them, doing whatever they wanted. Things were getting misplaced, lost, and misfiled. I just think they're too valuable to allow to anyone to just go in and paw around."<sup>88</sup>

Under Borders's direction, the News Bureau is continuing a project started years ago by Payne. Images are being scanned into the computer, and Borders hopes to create a data base so anyone can come in and punch information in and have an image come up, but the project is still in its infancy. This task is made more difficult by the fact that most of the individuals in the images aren't identified. The bureau is now in search of longtime Las Vegas, preferably people who were in the Strip entertainment mainstream. "Just having lived in Las Vegas won't necessarily do it . . . It isn't the celebrities that aren't recognizable, it's the other folks who, just because they weren't a celebrity doesn't mean they aren't important to Las Vegas history."<sup>89</sup> In the next budget, Borders is trying to allow for another staff member whose chief responsibility will be working on the archives. "It's someone's lifetime career if they want to do this."<sup>90</sup>

Despite its significant historical value which is acknowledged by Borders and the bureau, the archives is still secondary to the Bureau's mission. "This is minor stuff compared to the main thrust of the News Bureau which is to supply publicity pictures for conventions, travel agencies . . . that comes first, that's the bread and butter of it."<sup>91</sup>

A major opportunity for future publicity is the cooperative effort developing among Phoenix, San Diego, and Las Vegas, all of which have major airports and airlines, to promote the three areas with travel packages.<sup>92</sup> According to Borders, travel wholesalers are eager to promote the Southwest using these three primary cities because of their ease of access by airlines and their proximity to the Grand Canyon, a huge draw to international travelers.<sup>93</sup>

In the future, Borders sees the bureau remaining essentially unchanged except for the addition of the one staff member to help with scanning and identifying images in the archives. "I don't see it getting much bigger, and it doesn't



need to be primarily, because of the automation and the way technology has evolved."<sup>94</sup>

In looking at the Las Vegas News Bureau and its efforts and accomplishments over the past forty-eight years, it is easy to see how it has remained in the background. The function of the News Bureau was always to publicize Las Vegas, and in doing this the staff kept all eyes off themselves and on the city.

Our job was to publicize Las Vegas, not ourselves. We needed to get ink on our destination of Las Vegas. It was not something for self aggrandizement or egos—you can't have an ego in this business in my opinion. You have to realize who the client is and use everything you can to get positive response for your client. We weren't in it for the credit, we were in it to accomplish our mission. Which I think we did.<sup>95</sup>



The first atomic cloud seen from the city was captured by Las Vegas News Bureau photographer Don English. The image taken from Fremont Street was the picture of the week in a 1951 issue of *Life* magazine. (Las Vegas News Bureau)

Although the bureau of the past may have died out in the final years of its existence with the Chamber of Commerce, the new bureau headed by Borders under the authority of the LVCVA symbolizes the persistence of an organization grounded deeply in its mission to promote and publicize Las Vegas. It can never again be what it was in earlier years, just as Las Vegas can never again be the town of 8,422 that it once was.<sup>96</sup> The future of the Las Vegas News Bureau lies not in its past accomplishments, but in its diversity and ability to adapt to the changing city that it continues to represent. "After all, the future is what you make of it, and the past is a record of that attitude."<sup>97</sup>

## Notes

<sup>14</sup>"Having a Wonderful Time: Wish You Were Here," *Las Vegas Nevadan*, (9 February 1975), xxx.

<sup>2</sup>Myram Borders, interview tape recorded by author, Las Vegas, 1 April 1997.

<sup>3</sup>Donn Knepp, *Las Vegas: The Entertainment Capital* (Menlo Park, Calif: Lane Publishing Co., 1987), 31.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-1970* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1989), 66.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, The 1-5 percent of gross income was said to have been donated by each business, not individual. Ralph J. Roske, *Las Vegas: A Desert Paradise* (Tulsa, OK: Continental Heritage Press, Inc., 1986), 98.

<sup>9</sup>Moehring, *Resort City*, 66; Roske, *Las Vegas*, 98.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>The spelling Hannegan was adopted for this paper, but it is also spelled Hannagan in several sources.

<sup>14</sup>Don English, interview tape recorded by author, Las Vegas, 12 March 1997; Don Payne, interview tape recorded by author, Las Vegas, Nev., 19 March 1997. Roske, *Las Vegas*, 98; Moehring, *Resort City*, 66.

<sup>15</sup>Payne, interview.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>Desert Sea was an allusion to Lake Mead: English, interview.

<sup>18</sup>Perry Kaufman, "Public Relations Men, Images, and the Growth of Las Vegas" (paper presented at the Organization of American Historians Meeting, Chicago, Illinois, April 1973).

<sup>19</sup>English, interview.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Payne, interview.

<sup>22</sup>English, interview.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup>Payne, interview.

<sup>30</sup>English, interview.

<sup>31</sup>Moehring, *Resort City*, 73; Knepp, *Las Vegas*, 67.

<sup>32</sup>Moehring, *Resort City*, 73; population statistics from Las Vegas News Bureau press release material, "It's a Fact," 1.

<sup>33</sup>A. Constandina Titus, *Bombs in the Backyard: Atomic Testing and American Politics* (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1986), 93-94.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>English, interview.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*; Payne, interview.

<sup>37</sup>English, interview.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>Payne, interview.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>English, interview.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup>English interview; Payne, interview.

<sup>47</sup>Payne, interview.

<sup>48</sup>English, interview.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>Payne, interview.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>English, interview.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup>Payne, interview.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup>Borders, interview.

<sup>60</sup>English, interview.

<sup>61</sup>Borders was sent a copy of English's image of Miss Atomic Bomb at the request of the Smithsonian Institution in 1992. It will remain on display for ten years.

<sup>62</sup>Ronald P. Lovell, Fred C. Zwahlen, Jr., and James A. Folts, *Handbook of Photography*, 3d ed., (Albany, N.Y.: Delmar Publishers Inc., 1993), 104.

<sup>63</sup>English, interview.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup>Borders, interview.

<sup>66</sup>English, interview.

<sup>67</sup>Payne, interview.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup>Borders, interview.

<sup>71</sup>English, interview.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup>Payne, interview.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup>This event was proclaimed highly political by all the parties interviewed and therefore the details of the event were not clarified.

<sup>78</sup>Borders, interview.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*; Payne disagrees with Borders's belief. In a memo to the author on May 14, 1997, he stated that the News Bureau was not "out of the news loop" when it was transformed from the Chamber

of Commerce to the LVCVA.

<sup>82</sup>Borders, interview.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup>English, interview.

<sup>88</sup>Borders, interview; Payne disagrees with this statement. In a memo to the author on May 14, 1997, Payne stated that searches through the archives were always supervised by a staff member, and release was tightly controlled.

<sup>89</sup>Borders, interview.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup>Payne, interview.

<sup>96</sup>Las Vegas News Bureau, "It's a fact."

<sup>97</sup>Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, "Chamber Shaped: Las Vegas Success Story History," 1972, Special Collections, James Dickinson Library, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

# NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

## DIARY OF A WOODCUTTER

### December 1, 1872 - January 17, 1873

Forewords by Anna Layton and Evan Blythin  
Postscript by Martha Lauritzen

Foreword by Anna Layton

While going through my deceased parents' possessions, which we must all do at some point, I came upon this diary. It was carefully packed away in an old suitcase in my mother's closet, along with other documents and letters considered important to my family.

My family has been in the Great Basin since the late 1800s and so I can't determine exactly when the diary written near Pioche in the winter of 1872-73, came into my family's possession. In 1923 my mother's family migrated to Pioche from Cedar City, Utah, to work in the mines. My grandfather worked at the Number One mine at the top of the town. He may have been the one who first found and saved the diary.

An alternative source for the diary is my father. He came to Pioche from Canada via Pennsylvania and California, arriving in 1927. He worked at various mines, but most of his employment was as an electrician at the Ely Valley Mines in Ely. He belonged to the Odd Fellows, as did the woodcutter, and was that organization's secretary and treasurer for many years; my mother was a member of the Rebekahs. Both were preservers of history.

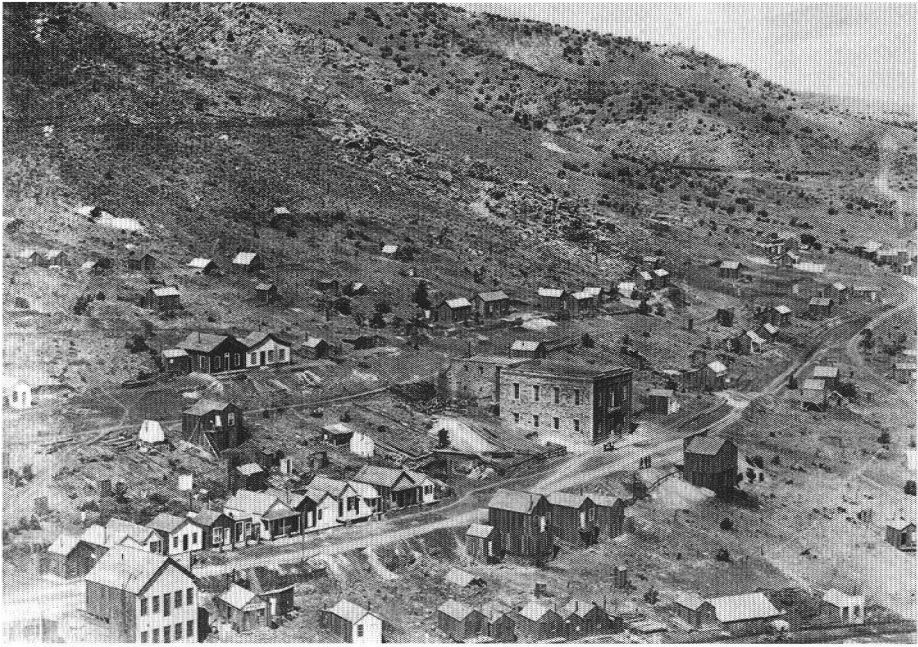
As the documents found in my parents' suitcase date back to the 1800s and relate both to their community service organizations and to their personal lives, the woodcutter's diary could have come to their attention through either avenue. In any event, they believed that the diary was a valuable personal and community resource, important enough to preserve and to pass on to me.

Evan Blythin and I decided to decipher and transcribe the diary manuscript because it is close to extinction. The writing is in pencil and has become faint and hard to read. We have tried to remain true to the original work, but have added some punctuation for clarity and have had to guess about some with particularly unclear passages.

Anna Layton, Evan Blythin, and Martha Lauritzen reside in Pioche.

At times we have been bewildered by the manuscript, and our uncertainty is noted in the text.

We do not know who the man was since the diary is unsigned. Nor do we know the outcome of the story—though the end seems obvious. The words speak for themselves and maybe they tell us all we need to know.



Pioche, Nevada. (*Nevada Historical Society*)



## Foreword by Evan Blythin

The Layton family and I have known each other for many years. Anna Layton had mentioned the diary several times before I finally became curious enough to read the work. After reading the diary, I understood why successive generations of the Layton family have worked for its preservation. I have spent most of my life in the study of human discourse, but rarely have I found a human communication more compelling and revealing than the final words of the woodcutter.

Diaries and journals have been commonplace communications in most of human history. In the American West, diaries were particularly common. Vast numbers of people exploring unknown territory wrote letters, journals, and diaries in an attempt to maintain contact with the "civilized world."

This diary is not the work of a well-known character, nor does it portray a particularly powerful moment in human history. But it does portray what is arguably the most important moment in a human life. The diary fits into the category of "last words." Human history is replete with last words: Socrates's final address in defense of knowledge, Cataline's final "Speech to His Soldiers," suicide notes, a spouse's final words before the door closes—all are remarkable in their pith, their keen attention to detail, and their pathos. This diary is short, to the point, and incredibly sad.

In a few very fast pages, the woodcutter chronicles his final days. He has hurt himself in a brutal context and in a brutal fashion. He is facing his final days and he is alone.

While the diary is short, the woodcutter's observations are detailed and thorough. For example, he introduces thirty-three people in the course of our eleven typed pages. Those people are often noted in relation to what they do and relative to their characters.

The woodcutter also provides a description of the setting, noting unemployment of the time and offering a view of the unemployed in Pioche. He also gives us a panorama of the harsh and unrelenting early West. He was from Illinois, and was obviously touched by the fierceness and beauty of the high deserts of the Great Basin.

The pathos of the diary, accentuated by the woodcutter's laments, is almost unendurable. He bemoans the fact that he is economically on the ropes, he complains of the primitive conditions, and he weeps over his pain. The diary is so personal that the reader wants to turn away, to not look. Then toward the end of the diary, he finds that the reason he has not been receiving mail from home is that his parents have died.

Like many last speeches, the diary is also very eloquent and reflects unintended literary artistry. For example, much of the ending is foretold in the beginning, as the woodcutter reports that there is a man dying a horrible death at a spring in the mountains. At the end of the diary the woodcutter is lying on a

bed that has not been changed for several weeks, dying of gangrene.

At least, that is what the reader must assume. There may have been a happy ending. We have been unable to find a death certificate or obituary for the woodcutter. Pioche has been through three major fires, and the documentation may have been burned. In any event, the reader of this diary faces a short story of compelling detail regarding the human condition in central Nevada in the late 1800s.



Lincoln County scenic view. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

## The Diary

1872

*Monday, December 1.* Am at work at the Wood Ranch of Sherwood, Nv. near Highland in Lincoln County Nevada.

Rode to Pioche on Burrow's horse. Heard of McGruly's death for the first time.

I saw plenty of idle men in town. All say they want to work but none are willing to chop wood if they can help it.

Saw John Randolph he seems to be in good spirits. I must write some letters for I have not heard from God's Country for two months--my-little cousin will think I have forgotten my promise.

Worked in the mountains making ties. Weather very pleasant. Old Crazy Philip left today. Got mad at the Foreman, Burrows was going to cut him, but was persuaded to abandon the project.

I will now solemnly swear off a bad habit that I indulged in yesterday. We had a new Man with us--he does not know how to use an ax.

*Tuesday, December 2.* Worked in the mountains today. Kirk, Phil & Myself. I scored 50 ties. A new Man went up where we were working and could not stand it. The weather is very pleasant some little snow in the hills but it is warm in Valleys. Cuddy wants a new man. Henry Palmer quit today, I expect our job will play out in two weeks.

*Wednesday, December 3.* We had another pleasant day to work in the mountains. Looks a little like a storm this evening. Some of the men quit this evening, don't like smaking [perhaps he means cutting] Our Wild Irishman is coming back, Burrows says.

*Thursday, December 4.* We had a little change in weather today. Little colder, some flakes of snow. Winter is about to come I think and I am not very well fixed for it. But guess I will get through some way.

We have a queer set of men to associate with. One of them seems to think that a man could not amount to much who had never been arrested for a crime. I hope I will not get to thinking in that way.

*Friday, December 5.* The morning opened cold. Wind increased until noon. Very disagreeable in the mountains.

I have been thinking about home and wondering if they are all alive. Must write on Sunday. Don't know what I will do after this plays out.

Weather moderated and became quite pleasant. Made 50 ties and felt as though I had earned my wages. Came home and read a little before retiring. Jim and his [wife] left today. I think there are some strange people in this country.

*Sunday, December 7.* The day of rest opened lovely. Cuddy and I went off on a trip to see Sisters Fait and Stevens. met S on the road went home with him. I went to Pioche. Clark had gone after water. They are in good spirits and I hope they will do well. I don't know C and I will try and follow their example. I feel in pretty good spirits tonight considering everything.

*Monday December 8.* Weather pleasant. Sawed 54 T's. The Piutes came around today and took their [woman] from the Shoshone. The cook knocked one of them down with a revolver. I have about made up my mind to cut loose from B--when I get through here. Don't like his style. Not to be depended on. K wants me to work with him but I guess I won't switch. Will try to stick to C--if everything goes right.

*Tuesday, December 9.* Sharp frost but pleasant weather. Sawed 54. Nothing new today. I went up on the top of the highest mountain on the ranch. Could see Nevada for miles and miles. On a plain beyond those hills is an alkali flat that looks like a lake of water glistening in the sun. It is the most broken country I ever saw.

*Wednesday, December 10.* No change in the weather. Sawed 53 T's. B went to the city. Had Kirk Patrick's rock assayed. It went \$7.85 per ton. That is just enough to make them go further. Perhaps it may prove rich. I will take another trip Sunday and shall secure something I think. Don't know who I will take with me.

*Thursday, December 11.* Mild and pleasant. Sawed 46 T's. Had some words with K today. He is the worst man on the job as far as I know. B tells about a man at the Spring that is dying and no one to assist him. What a horrible situation for a man to be in. Our cook is a queer one. He was just calling the cat to feed and it was the grind stone squeaking. Got a new ax tonight.

*Friday, December 12.* [at this point there is a scratch out and the 12 has been replaced by a 13. There are similar corrections throughout the diary, and it is assumed that at times the man loses track of time.] Pleasant Weather. Sawed 45 Ts. B is getting uneasy about his ranch. Had O and Phil working today. I was putting a handle in my new ax today and carelessly cut my knee. Don't know how bad it will be but hope it will not be serious. Another new arrival tonight. It looks as though our job will last some time yet.

*Saturday, December 13.* Weather cold. I started out to do a day's work. My knee commenced draining in forenoon. Knocked off at 12 and started for camp. Got about half mile and had to be carried.

*Sunday, December 14.* Weather cold and I am unable to move in bed. Suffering torments. Knee swelling.

*Monday, December 15.* Continues cold and misery deepens on my part.

*Tuesday, December 16.* Very cold nights and I am here sick. Almost penniless and none that care to attend on me much.

*Wednesday December 17.* Freezing weather and my leg is almost beyond endurance. Sent for a Dr. today--did not come. Some want me to send for conveyance and go to town. But I feel that it would kill me.

*Thursday, December 18.* Dr. came today

1873

*Wednesday, January 1.* A miserable New Year for me. On a sick bed in Pioche Nevada. Unable to help myself in the least. How it will turn out I can't tell. I have lost confidence in my Dr. He is weakening my body everyday and letting my leg grow worse. I can't stand this long. My finances are about gone. My courage also. Oh if I were back in old Illinois. I wish were able to write to my friends but I'm too weak yet. Hope to God it may soon get better.

*Thursday, January 2.* I am growing gradually weaker. Deal [the doctor] is here. Says he intends giving me chloroform and making another incision. I believe I won't allow it. Sent for Chinese Dr., looks it over, says he can relieve me in four or five days. Will let him try. he cannot make it much worse. He commenced by pasting all around a larger yellow plaster and giving me inwardly 2 cups full of nasty bitter dope.

19th day in bed.

*Friday, January 3.* Passed a fearful night burning with fever and pains racking my body. Oh how I wished for morning. Which came at last and Chinese Dr. He dressed my leg which gave me a little relief But there seems to be no rest for me. May God in his mercy soon relieve me. Oh that I were back in the good state of Illinois. I know I would get well. But here in this country in my situation it is a Kun Savoy case [the meaning of this sentence is unknown]. I am getting fearfully weak and cannot stand what I could.

*Saturday, January 4.* I am growing weaker and the pain seems to increase. Old Chinese says he will bring me through all right and I hope to God he may. Oh that I could have myself laid down in Springfield Illinois or Dayton Ohio. I know I could get well then. It has been quite lonely for me today. No one called on me at all. Just 21 days today since I laid down on my bunk and have been unable to help myself. Oh it is terrible to one that has never been sick.

*Sunday, January 5.* Passed another fearful night. My leg gradually growing worse I fear. Heard today that I was very lucky to change Drs. as Deal had made up his mind to amputate my leg and then I would as soon be under the sod. Stephens came to see me today. He is a good fellow but does not realize my situation. Does not think that I am as bad off as I really am. Would to God he were right. Dewey was up also and stopped some time. Would like very much to hear from home.

*Monday, January 6.* Old Chinese still claims that he can cure me but the pain still grows worse. No rest for me night or day. I get into a doze and a nightmare gets hold of me and the first I know I give my leg a twitch that wakes me up almost screaming. Passed a very lonesome day. No one came to see me but Randolph and he could not stay but a minute. He is a splendid fellow and I think if I ever get well I will try to repay him for his kindness. 23rd day down.

*Tuesday, January 7.* Night of misery. Worse than ever and morning wished for a thousand times. After getting my wound dressed I spent the day a little better. Had two callers that helped to pass away the time a little. Oh that I could see some end

to this. The pain is getting beyond my power of endurance. I fear. And no show for an improvement yet. Wrote a letter to Father. Poor man will feel badly I fear. Oh that I could see him again. But must submit to circumstances and hope for the best.

*Wednesday, January 8.* A bad night. My limb not allowing me any rest. A very lonesome day. McKenzie called. Johnson and Mitchell also. All talk encouraging. But none realize how bad it is. I hope that the Dr. is doing me some good but my God he makes me suffer more all the time. That is something I can't understand. Burrows was up, a few moments, twice today. I should be glad to see Barnes for a while. Wrote a letter to Crabb today. When I commence to get answers, oh how nice it will be. H. Cornelius. [The name H. Cornelius appears at the bottom of the page, after the last entry. Other names start showing following other entries. It is suspected they represent those people who took on the traditional role of death watch for people in terminal conditions.]

*Thursday, January 9.* No better apparently and pain growing worse. Splendid day out doors. But terribly lonesome for me. No callers. And here I lay and try to be patient but oh it is hard and I can't help but grumble sometimes. Am gradually growing weaker and I don't know how long I will be able to stand this. If I could only get relief from pain for part of the time I would be so thankful. Could not write today being weak and leg is growing so that I can't rest on it. Jas Olliver

*Friday, January 10.* How long must I be compelled to suffer these torments. It seems to me there is a limit to human endurance. Oh how long before mine is reached. Worse worse worse the pain becomes every day and I must stand it. Wrote a letter to Bro Pritchard. Hope he will answer promptly. Think I will write another letter to Wilson tomorrow. Oh that I were back in Illinois. It seems as though I never want to leave it again. Shall hope for the best.

*Saturday, January 11.* A terrible night brought me into this day. As through some mistake, no watchman came. I suffered a good share of pain today. My bed is becoming horrible to lie on--not made up for two weeks. Had a few calls today. Among the rest was Tait. Oh how I wish he could come and stay with me. He is a noble fellow and I believe could help me out of this more than anyone. Herrins was down for some time this evening. I like some of these fellows pretty well. G. Buckner.

*Sunday, January 12.* A beautiful morning. But I cannot enjoy it. Passed a fearful night. Oh how fearful the pain is growing in my leg. It seems worse and worse to me but they all talk encouragingly and say that is a good sign. Dewey called on me today. Also Mitchell. Hear that Ylaummy [name unclear] is in town. Oh I want to see Welch again. Hear he is unwell. The old Wood ranch must be pretty deserted. Oh wouldn't it be fearful to be there yet. I would have passed in my checks in this. H

*Monday, January 13.* I am, I fear, gradually losing hope and the pain is worse. The question is can I stand this increase of misery until there is a change. Read of very cold weather east. RR blocked and I need not look for answers to my letters for some time. Oh I do get so discouraged sometimes when all alone and suffering intense pain. And no way to relieve it. The Brothers are rather going back on me in the watch business, and now is just my time of need.

*Tuesday, January 14.* No improvement in my condition apparent to me. Intense pain is the rule. My bed has not been made up for 18 days and it is becoming horrible.



Had a call from Coleman. He seems to be a fine fellow and does all he can for me. But I was rather lonesome in the afternoon. Had a very willing man with me through the night. But he was awkward and was some the cause of my more than usual bad night. Oh for a change. I am growing so restless and discouraged about my condition.

*Wednesday, January 15.* Bad worse worst. I think that I have reached my worst stage of suffering certainly. Oh God for a change for the better. I try to be patient but when the pain is such, I must shriek in spite of all I can do. Why then I get discouraged. The day was very cold and I had few visitors which made it lonesome. Also had a small replenishment-- 2 weeks benefits--small but at my state of finances, very welcome. Very good man on watch. T. Dale.

*Thursday, January 16.* The worst had not come yet. For today, for the first time, my strength failed when I was helping to dress my leg. The pain became so great that I could do nothing but lay and shriek.

It is swollen larger than ever and is, I fear, beyond the Chinese Drs. control. Oh but this is a horrible country where a man can get no medical aid worth a cent. Afternoon very lonesome. No callers and I was mostly alone. But there is an end to everything and there was to the day. Williams.

*Friday, January 17.* Five weeks ago today, my leg was cut and what I have suffered in that time no mortal can tell. They put me under the influence of chloroform twice today, to dress my leg.

Troubles never come singly. Had a letter from Hiantie and it tells me of the death of my father and mother, both within 2 months.

Oh but this has been a terrible year for me, 1872 and 1873. Part of each and they have used me up pretty well. They say it is always darkest just before day. Would to God that day would break soon. Yerrins.

\*            \*            \*

## Postscript by Martha Lauritzen

The diary ends on January 17, 1873, and this iteration might also have ended had not my curiosity driven me to pursue the real ending of the story. I travelled from Pioche to Reno, to the research library of the Nevada Historical Society. I searched through the library's microfilm copies of the *Pioche Record* for 1872-73, and there, 300 miles to the northwest and 126 years later, I discovered the identity and destiny of the woodcutter.

The first reference came from January 23, 1873, one week after the diary ends.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul—John W. Errisson is an inmate of the hospital of this benevolent institution. He is in bad condition. He was cut in the knee five or six weeks ago and entrusted his care to a Chinese physician. His leg is badly swollen. He is now under better medical treatment. The injured member may be saved but, it will take a long time before he can be restored.

The report is informative, it gives the woodcutter a name, and it supplies hope that Mr. Errisson survived his ordeal. The report is also interesting in its casual attitude toward detail. The knee had been cut "five or six weeks ago," and no mention is made of the fact that Mr. Errisson was at first under the care of an American doctor.

Singular Family Fatality—We have made note of the critical condition of a gentleman in this city named John Errisson in consequence of a cut above one of his knees. Since his prostration originating with a slight wound, his parents who lived in Springfield, Illinois have one after the other, to the tomb. Mr. Errisson is now improving rapidly.

The second report thoroughly belies the ending suggested by the diary. Although it does not give us any new information, it is interesting in that the wound previously noted as "in the knee" is now described as "above the knee." Reporting on the frontier seems to have been as approximately accurate as contemporary news gathering.

Five weeks later, on March 9, 1873, the *Pioche Record* records the death of the woodcutter. There are two articles, and they are strange in that the spelling of his name is not the same as in the previous two news stories.

Burial of J. W. Erisman—Remarkable Fatality—The remains of John W. Erisman were yesterday consigned to their last resting place by his brother Oddfellows. He arrived here two or three months ago from Springfield, Illinois and took a contract to cord wood. He had been working but a few days when his ax slipped inflicting a slight wound on his left kneecap. Surgical aid was not promptly secured and the wound grew worse until the entire leg was affected. After weeks of indescribable suffering, he died of the effects of a trifling cut. A singular fatality has attended the family of Mr. Erisman. After leaving his home, his mother took sick and died, her death being speedily followed by that of his father. He was an only child. Thus within three months the entire family has passed away. Mr. Erisman was an intelligent, hard working, industrious man.

The second article describes the funeral:

The Odd Fellows Funeral—The odd Fellows ceremonials at the burial of J. H. Erisman was [sic] unusually impressive. A band of music was engaged, the solemn funeral notes of which added much to the impressiveness of the rites. The beautiful burial service of the Episcopal Church was also read at the grave. Rev. Badger officiating.

These last two reports confirm the ending suggested by the diary and further illustrate the approximate nature of reporting on the American frontier. The woodcutter is variously noted as John W. and John H. and is given two last names—Erisson and Erisman. He is also observed to be without family, which, as a reader of the diary knows, is not the case—he is survived by a brother.

The story of the woodcutter ends with a final report in the March 14, 1873, issue of the *Pioche Record*:

IN MEMORIAL—At a regular meeting of the Pioche Lodge No. 28 IOOF held March 11, 1873, the following resolutions expressive of the sense of this lodge on the death of brother John W. Erisman, late a member of the Niantic Lodge No. 318 of Niantic, Illinois were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, It has pleased the Ruler of the Universe in His All Wise Providence to remove from our midst our much beloved brother, John W. Erisman, therefore be it resolved that while we bow to the decrees of God and recognize therein the chastening hand of Providence, we deeply sympathize with the sister of the deceased in this, her hour of affliction.

Resolved: That in the death of Brother Erisman society has lost a useful member, friend, genial companion and our Order a true Odd Fellow.

Resolved: That these resolutions be published in the Pioche Daily Record, a copy spread on the minutes of this lodge, and a copy forwarded to the sister of the deceased and a copy to the Niantic Lodge No. 38 of Niantic, Ill.

Signed HN Barnes

JW Wright

Frank Cook Committee, March 13, 1873

The details of the newspaper story are extremely imprecise. The reader cannot tell the exact nature of the wound, the name of the woodcutter changes from report to report, and while the diary notes a brother, the news reports give him at one point no relatives, and at another, a sister. Those were of course but fleeting details in this booming mining town of strangers from all over the world. That the story was reported at all is remarkable.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Mr. Erisman's final days is the attention that this unknown and recent arrival received from so many other unknown and recent arrivals. A doctor rides thirty miles to see and attend a patient, a Chinese physician responds to a request for alternative treatment, six different people maintain nighttime vigils over the patient, a benevolent insti-

tution takes the patient in and gives care, a brotherhood invested in community service assumes the responsibilities and details of burial, and the local newspaper runs the story in four issues. Because those issues were microfilmed and preserved for posterity, Mr. Erisman's life is still in our thoughts, relevant and receiving our attention.



Odd Fellows building in Pioche, Nevada. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Nevada: Readings and Perspectives*. Edited by Michael S. Green and Gary E. Elliott. (Reno: Nevada Historical Society, 1997, xv, 289 pp., ill.)

In *Nevada: Readings and Perspectives* Michael Green and Gary Elliott admirably fill an important niche in the history of the Silver State. The authors have edited a valuable selection of readings from among the state's foremost historians. From citizens of diverse ethnic backgrounds, through the mining era, to the current concerns over the impact of gaming and the federal government, this is a comprehensive selection of writings that paints Nevada's history with broad brush strokes. For both longtime residents as well as uninitiated students, this book explores the issues that make Nevada's history so unconventional.

Only a few authors who wrote during the formative years of the state's history are represented; the vast majority of the essays are taken from studies written during the past thirty years. Most essays were originally published by the Nevada Historical Society or the University of Nevada Press. Although the nineteenth century stories of the pioneers, miners, and ranchers are included, the subsequent impact of gaming and government tend to receive more sympathetic treatment. From the individual story of "Missy" Wah's success as a Chinese cook in Pioche, to Anne Martin's effect on female suffrage, people, often unknown beyond the borders of the state are the lifeblood of history. In addition, the contributions of major politicians, including William Stewart, Francis Newlands, Pat McCarran, Howard Cannon, and Grant Sawyer, are evaluated. The book also includes the life of George Wingfield, which exposes the unique way that Nevadans earn—and often lose—economic fortunes and political clout. It has been a salient fact of Nevada's politics that quite a few of the state's politicians enjoyed long careers and seniority that brought them into close contact with United States presidents. From Reconstruction after the Civil War to President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society a hundred years later, Nevada's senators have often provided key votes for Presidential initiatives, and in return have acquired lucrative spending for projects situated within the state. With 87 percent of the state's land under control of the federal government, Nevada's relatively small population has been tremendously influenced by decisions made elsewhere. Finally, several essays explore the impact of contemporary Las Vegas on the history both of the state and nation. Although the scope of the essays differ, their overall quality is quite high.

The essays in this book, by necessity, are short. Although there are black and white photographs, the book is not documented and lacks an index. These may be peripheral distractions in order to keep the book inexpensive and to make it widely available to readers. The editors provide a useful introduction to each section that includes a biographical sketch of the author and a brief interpretation of the topic under examination. Using good pedagogy, Green and Elliott pose a series of questions that the reader can keep in mind while reading the essays.

*Nevada: Readings and Perspectives* is a valuable addition to the historiography of the state and should be available to both high school and college students seeking an introduction to the state's history. The next edition should eliminate typographical errors (i. e. run-together words and one repeated sentence on page 249). There tends to be too much emphasis on the role of activist politicians as the movers and shakers in the state's history, rather than people like William Harrah, Steve Wynn, and other entrepreneurs who have transformed the state's gaming, mining, educational, or ranching industries. This is a state in which the politicians have often had to adjust to the economic realities of life. In addition, the impact of corporate gaming could have been considered. The dispassionate side of history in analyzing complex individuals and events sometimes takes a back stage to historical journalism. For example, how can Walter Baring be "politically inept" but continue to be elected to the House of Representatives? A selection from the thoughtful writings of James Hulse on the seriously negative impact of gambling and a "get rich quick" materialism should have been included. Whereas the authors provide a fine sampling of writings by historians, their sections on culture and the arts would have been richer with primary examples of authors like Walter Van Tilburg Clark or Robert Laxalt. An annotated bibliography of suggested readings would have enhanced the book's usefulness. Despite these minor criticisms, *Nevada: Readings and Perspectives* fulfills its purpose, and should be widely used within the state's educational system.

John F. Yurtinus

*Western Nevada Community College*

*Many Wests: Place, Culture and Regional Identity.* Edited by David Wrobel and Michael Steiner. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997, x, 385 pp., ill.)

This collection of essays seeks to explore the many cultural and environmental forces that contribute to the "many Wests" that make up a larger, complex "West." In their introductory essay, Michael Steiner and David Wrobel grapple with the difficulties inherent in attempting to define and characterize



western regionalism, in the process offering analysis of recent debates in western history and regional thought. Steiner and Wrobel argue that regionalism "is truly a 'source for good in human life,'" and add that "it is in the West, with its sprawling variegated landscapes and swirling varieties of people that American regionalism may find its fullest expression (8). By visualizing the West as a set of dynamic regions, then, Steiner and Wrobel place their volume in the tradition of intellectuals and social scientists ranging from Frederick Jackson Turner and John Wesley Powell to Terry Jordan and Donald Meinig who have worked to uncover "the complex matrix of western regions (Steiner and Wrobel, 9 quoting Howard R. Lamar, "Westering in the Twenty-first Century: Speculations on the Future of the Western Past," in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*, ed. by William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin [New York: Norton. 1992] 274).

The book is divided into four sections, each one organized around a theme: environment and economy, aesthetic Wests, race and ethnicity, and extended Wests. The authors in each section explore the tensions between place and culture in a particular subregion of the West. In part one, John Findlay analyzes the relationship between "outsiders" and "insiders" in constructing a regional identity for the Pacific Northwest, while Elizabeth Raymond investigates the historic origins of the Great Basin's wasteland identity. Anne Hyde argues that the modern ski industry shares with the historic extractive Rocky Mountain industries qualities that inhibit the development of community, while James Shortridge analyzes the climate of economic uncertainty that has plagued residents of the northern Great Plains over the last century.

In part two, "Aesthetic Wests," three authors "examine the role of creative expression in forging regional identity" (137). Brent Wallach begins this section with his examination of the understated, vernacular architecture of the southern Plains as a reflection of regional sensibility. Mary Murphy works with the writings of three Montana women, subverting the traditionally male emphasis of the "master narrative of Montana," and Peter Boag focuses on the Snake River Plain's role as a physical crossroads between the Pacific Northwest, the Great Basin, and the Rocky Mountains. The third section, "Race and Ethnicity," counterpoises the mythic imagery of the frontier West as the domain of solitary white men against the complexities offered by minority histories. Glenna Matthews analyzes the liberal and pluralistic identity of San Francisco as rooted in its gold-rush beginnings, while William Deverell, by contrast, sees the emergence of white hegemony in Southern California. Like Deverell, Arnoldo De Leon focuses on the emergence of Texas's mythic regional identity which subsumes four major cultural groups into one Anglo vision of the rugged cowboy.

The final section of the book, "Extended Wests" pushes accepted boundaries of the American West in new directions. Here, Richard Maxwell Brown contemplates the similarities and differences between British Columbia and

the United States Pacific Northwest, while John Whitehead examines the forces that make Alaska and Hawai'i simultaneously part of and separate from the contiguous states. Paula Gunn Allen stretches the imaginative borders of the west southward, arguing that the "highly porous and glaringly artificial line between the United States and Mexico is overshadowed by the geospiritual reality of the Southwest" (278). Including such nontraditional geographies offers a new perspective on old debates about the boundaries of the West and the demographic and cultural forces that comprise it.

The majority of essays in this volume are historical, and all offer fresh insights into the nature of western regional identity. Steiner and Wrobel's interpretive essays at the beginning of each section help to knit together the thematic parallels both within the sections and between other sections. *Many Wests* is a valuable contribution to the increasingly complex fields of western history and regional studies.

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*Heart of the Circle: Photographs of Native American Women by Edward S. Curtis.*

Edited by Sara Day. (San Francisco: Pomegranate Artbooks, 1997,  
128 pp., ill.)

Edward Curtis (1868-1952) labored intensively for thirty years on a project attempting to document through photography, ethnographic notes and sound recordings eighty tribes west of the Mississippi from New Mexico to Alaska. This life-long work resulted in the twenty-volume set published as *The North American Indians* (final volume published in 1930). Each volume contains its own appendix which summarizes the tribes, providing information about language, population, dress, dwellings, primitive foods, arts and industries, games, political organization, social organization, marriage, culture heroes, ceremonies, medicine men, burial customs, vocabularies, biographical sketches, winter count, and music. Clearly, this effort was arduous. The logistics of field work were often overwhelming, as the supply network had to be organized in remote areas. Most of the photographic work was done before the days of the automobile. Cameras were cumbersome, and the glass plate negatives were fragile. There were heartbreaks and frustrations: floods destroyed hundreds of his plates, wiping out months of valuable work. Recording devices were difficult to handle. Curtis's presence and intentions were not totally understood. He was verbally abused and physically endangered. Every year, Curtis spent nearly fifty weeks in the field, eroding his marriage and forcing his divorce. He finally suffered from a nervous breakdown and a physical collapse.

Why? Compelled to bear witness to the plight of indigenous tribal peoples, Curtis was committed to document through photography the "Indian as he was in his normal, noble life so people will know he was no debauched vaga-

bond but a man of proud stature and noble heritage." This endearing sentiment is clearly reflected in Curtis's visual strategy. Poses were carefully orchestrated. The concept of nobility was heightened by low horizons and skyward views. Dramatic lighting enhanced the sense of pictorial theater. Ceremonial costumes and other props were provided for portraits, and these are only a few examples of Curtis's romantic point of view. As a result, the anthropological utility of Edward Curtis's visual information has been enduring greater scrutiny. This occurs in part because the photographs were presented as "fact" but were actually laden with biases, halftruths, and misrepresentations. Objects that provided evidence of cultural diffusion were etched out of the glass plate. Cultural artifacts such as baskets were added after the photograph had already been made, and Curtis acted directorially to create a scene that might not otherwise have existed. Irrigation ditches were disguised to appear as pastoral watering sites. These are only a few examples of Curtis's manipulation of the photographic document in the service of his ideals.

*Heart of the Circle* derives from the photographic collections at the Library of Congress which includes *The North American Indians*. This is the first book devoted exclusively to Curtis's images of Native American women. The editors selected photographs of the women of every tribe Curtis visited. There are hundreds of images of women within the circle of camp life, making pottery, tending infants in cradleboards, hauling wood, harvesting wild berries, carrying water, grinding corn, stretching hides, and butchering game. While arbitrarily selected, these portraits of women are both intimate and revealing. The editors have arranged the photographs within geographical groups reflecting broadly the methodology Curtis followed. Within these groups, the greatest possible variation of ages and activities was selected. Tribal names are given following Curtis's notation; where a different name is used today, it has been noted. The underlying assumption of *Heart of the Circle* is that Native American women are at the heart of their communities; that these women symbolize the essential connection to the cycle of natural life. The authors contend that the photographs provide evidence of Native American matrilineal society. As an additional element, the editors introduce eight Native American women—Nancy Ackerman, Val Crews, Wanda Frenchman, Carolyn Smiley-Marquez, Ann Strange Owl-Raben, Nico Strange Owl-Hunt, Lark Real Bird Paz, and Janelle Sixkiller—who offered their personal reactions to selected Curtis photographs. Usually, these photographs were made of individuals that were contemporaries of their grandmothers and greatgrandmothers. These eight women write eloquently about their heritage and memory, and their words are endearing testimonials to the ancestral nobility Curtis tried so hard to picture. In the final analysis, however, these accounts only serve to accentuate the fabricated, romanticized and sanitized native world. Perhaps this what the editors intend.

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*Wovoka and the Ghost Dance, Expanded Edition.* By Michael Hittman (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997, xviii + 373 pp., ill., appendix, bibliography.)

Ever since Dee Brown convinced us to bury our hearts at Wounded Knee in the 1970s, the Wounded Knee massacre has become an American icon symbolizing the post-modern cultural wars over Indian-White relationships in the United States. In these wars, Wovoka, a Northern Paiute shaman born in the late 1850s near Yerington, Nevada, should be recognized as one of the most important figures in the history of American Indian-White relationships. As the prophet of the 1890 Ghost Dance movement, Wovoka was directly responsible for creating the conditions that led to the Wounded Knee massacre on December 29, 1890, on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. As described by Michael Hittman, Jack Wilson was cutting wood near Yerington on New Years Day, 1889, when he died and was resurrected as Wovoka, the Indian Messiah who preached the Ghost Dance Religion (revitalization dances lasting five days and nights every three months) among tribes oppressed by the final colonization of the West. Ghost Dances were first held in Yerington, in April 1890 and the Ghost Dance movement reached the Pine Ridge Reservation in the Summer of 1890. Based on their interpretation of Wovoka's message, Miniconjou Sioux resisted reservation life. Whites panicked and in December of 1890, the 7th Cavalry, of Little Big Horn fame, killed at least 146 men, women, and children at Wounded Knee. Photographs of the frozen dead at Wounded Knee remain seared into our consciousness like holocaust images and this massacre has become a trope of Indian-White relationships in the United States.

Wounded Knee effectively ended the Indian Wars (1786-1890) among the various tribes and the United States government and began the process of converting these wars into cultural mythology. Wovoka should have been part of the myth. He is not, in part, because of the constriction of the myth itself. Wovoka was not from a romanticized Plains tribe: painted by Remington, lionized by Collier, and ennobled in cinema. Instead Wovoka, like all Great Basin Indians, was not one of the mythological noble Indians worthy of our respect as doomed but gallant soldiers. Great Basin Indians, denigrated since the 1800s as "digger indians," have come into the mythology as worthy only of our contempt. Second, Wovoka's historic influence stems from his messianic religious visions and mission. In the western myth soldiers are heroes and false messiahs are villains. Accordingly, all except the Christian Messiah are charlatans proclaiming false prophecies, who must be destroyed and driven from the myth. Since scholarship is embedded in our cultural mythology, it is no surprise that there has been limited academic interest in Wovoka, no serious attempt to include him and his prophesy in the myth, and no preservation of the primary historic records of Wovoka and his life.

Published 79 years after Mooney's classic anthropological studies, *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak* (1896) and *The Indian Ghost Dance* (1911), the first edition of Hittman's *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance* (1990) was the major contemporary Wovoka study and went about as far as possible to correct these deficiencies. At its core, the first edition was an exposition and critique of the four published accounts of *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance* (Chapman, Mooney, Dyer, and Bailey), a multi-voiced and thus fragmented Wovoka biography, a source book that compiled primary sources on Wovoka, and a limited analysis of Wovoka and his place in Western history. I use the first edition in my upper division university classes on Great Basin Indians to expose students to primary sources while also educating them about Wovoka's place in the history and anthropology of the West.

The students have to struggle to define Wovoka in the face of contradictory primary evidence and, with a little coaching, come to realize that primary perceptions of Wovoka depend as much on the relationship of the observer to Wovoka as they do on any objective account of his life and works. With a little more coaching, students realize that their responses are similarly conditioned. This is valuable stuff for showing students the pitfalls in making sense of primary source material. However, the first edition, by and large, leaves the reader to fend for herself. It is less valuable for bringing students to an understanding of *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance*. Each time I use the book in class, I regret that Hittman had not given us more context to complement and amplify the primary material and a map to understanding Wovoka.

Therefore, it was with great anticipation that I looked forward to the expanded edition of Hittman's *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance*. Unfortunately, an expanded edition is not a second edition. The expanded edition is essentially a reprint of the first, with some additional source material: transcripts of Mooney's field notes, transcripts of informant interviews taped by Margaret Wheat, three very short newspaper notices, excerpts of thirteen additional government letters, and two short analytical reports, one from 1964 and the other undated.

In keeping with the first edition, the extension does add to the known primary material while at the same time providing limited new interpretation or analysis. This is troubling for two reasons. Both are exemplified by the list of significant questions about Wovoka found on pages 1-2 of the first edition and reprinted verbatim on pages 1-2 of the expanded edition. These questions include: "What was the original message of the 1890 Ghost Dance Prophet? Did Wovoka prophesy an earthly paradise in which the dead would be resurrected, or were the living to be reunited with their lost loved ones in the afterlife? Did Wovoka urge militancy or pacifism? Who were his parents? Who was his wife? What were the 1890 Ghost Dance ceremonies like in Nevada? and, How is the Prophet remembered by his descendants? In both editions Hittman asserts that these questions are unanswerable. However, at least one, "How is the prophet remembered by his descendants?" is clearly answered and could

have been profitably addressed in the expansion. In lieu of further explanation in the analytical expansion, one is forced to conclude that this and the other basic questions have not been considered, let alone answered in the seven years between editions.

The second troubling aspect of the expanded edition is also highlighted by the list of unanswered questions. These questions represent a traditional approach to history and anthropology. They were appropriate in the first edition and Hittman was understandably discouraged about answering them. However, new paradigms bring new answers to old questions and the questions appropriate in 1990 are inadequate now. In both anthropology and history, the range of questions has been expanded to encompass those from many different perspectives, including traditional scholarship, native views, and post-modern issues. On the one hand, Hittman's expanded edition responds to some of these. There is no privileged position, no *ex cathedra* voice pronouncing truth. Instead everyone has a say, and all voices are there to be heard. On the other hand, all voices speaking at once produce noise, not insight. The value of the expanded edition would have been greatly enhanced by a discussion of the theoretical changes in anthropology and history since the first edition and by contextualizing the individual narratives within the cultural traditions of the many voices speaking through Hittman's work.

In the end, the expanded edition does provide more primary material for Wovoka scholarship. It retains its value in teaching the use of primary materials and should be useful for this reason. Compared to the first edition, it does not greatly expand our understanding of *Wovoka, and the Ghost Dance*, but should be valuable to anyone taking the next step and placing Wovoka in the historic mainstream, where he so richly deserves to be.

Pat Barker

*Bureau of Land Management, Nevada*

*Jesse James Was My Neighbor*. By Homer Croy. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997, Bison Books reprint of the 1949 edition, sources, appendices, index.)

Homer Croy, a writer of popular fiction and nonfiction in the years before and after World War II, was not literally Jesse James's neighbor. He did, however, grow up in Jesse James country in northwestern Missouri. From childhood he absorbed tales of the renowned bank and railroad robber, his brother Frank, and their gang. Much of the book is based on facts and folktales gathered by Croy through interviews of contemporaries and descendants of the James boys. His research made this work probably the best on the subject in its time. The always popular subject, easy-going style, and anecdotal quality



pleased a great many readers when the work originally appeared in 1949. Although the book is several cuts above the usual collections of myth, fabrication, and drivel about Jesse and Frank, readers will sense that he should have been more skeptical of some of the old-timers' accounts. Much of the book is tongue-in-cheek—even the index.

One of the fans of the noted desperado was another Missourian, Harry S. Truman, whom Croy quoted in a later work: "Jesse James was not actually a bad man at heart. I have studied his life carefully, and I come from his part of the country. Jesse James was a modern-day Robin Hood. He stole from the rich and gave to the poor, which, in general, is not a bad policy. I am convinced that Jesse would have been an asset to his community, if he had not been diverted into a lawless life" (quoted in Croy's introduction to *The Complete and Authentic Life of Jesse James*, by Carl W. Breihan, 45). In northwestern Missouri it is still a dangerous business to suggest that Jesse James was nothing more than a murderous punk.

Robbing from the rich and giving to the poor is the simplest and commonest understanding of the term "social banditry." By this standard the James gang cannot qualify as social bandits. Many of its victims were ordinary folks, and there is no reliable evidence of largesse to the poor.

Historian Richard White, in 1981, laid down more sophisticated criteria for defining social banditry. According to White, true social bandits thrive when law enforcement is distrusted and when the bandits can rely on widespread community and kinship support. Many Missourians of that time did not trust the duly constituted machinery of law enforcement, and certainly the brothers James had a multitude of loyal defenders and protectors. Although sometimes based on fear of the bandits, more often the support, both active and passive, is grounded in the belief that the bandits are doing battle with the oppressors of the community. In post-Civil War Missouri these later included victorious Unionists (Jesse and Frank had served in Confederate guerilla bands), banks, and railroads. White points out that vengeance and hatred of authority, rather than a desire for social change, motivated late-nineteenth-century bandits such as the Jameses. Much of their appeal, says White, can also be explained by admiration of their real or imagined "masculine virtues." These include bravery, honor, and individualism—qualities that supporters of the gang saw in abundance.

For a better testing of Jesse and Frank James with these and other of White's criteria, one needs to look at a later work, William A. Settle, Jr.'s *Jesse James Was His Name: or, Fact and Fiction Concerning the Careers of the Notorious James Brothers of Missouri* (1966), which still stands as the most authoritative study. It is unfair to dismiss Croy's work as a potboiler, but Settle's book has relegated it to secondary importance. Settle described *Jesse James Was My Neighbor* as "an entertaining and refreshing telling of the tales in which Croy was steeped" (Settle, 198). In his insightful introduction to this reprint, Richard E. Meyer

praises Croy for "employ[ing] with considerable skill the fieldwork techniques of the professional oral historian and folklorist in producing a work of historical biography quite different in texture and emphasis from the standard models of his time" (xi). Without these virtues to recommend it, we would be left with the conclusion that the University of Nebraska Press issued this edition for profit only.

Michael J. Brodhead

*Nevada State Library and Archives*

*Lawmen and Desperadoes: A Compendium of Noted, Early California Peace Officers, Badmen and Outlaws, 1850 - 1900.* By William B. Secrest. (Spokane, Washington: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1984, 350 pp., preface, bibliography, index.)

Those who take an interest in the saga of the outlaw West will be delighted with this series of sketches on the lives of fifty-four outlaws and lawmen of early-day California. Well written and adequately documented, the book is a welcome supplement to the many similar works dealing with the Midwest and the Southwest which have come to dominate outlaw scholarship and publishing in recent years.

Even though the individuals involved and the venues for the events chronicled are limited in number—saloons, isolated ranches and sites convenient for stagecoach and train robberies—they tend to run together in the mind. We should thus approach the phenomenon of western lawlessness from the point of view of social scientists, psychologists and sociologists if we are to get any sense of meaning, any feeling for life as it was, which, after all, is what we, as historians, should be seeking.

Fifty-four men out of the hundreds of thousands who migrated to California in this period is but a tiny demographic niche. What was it about their psychology which inclined them to robberies and gratuitous mayhem? Too often—indeed every sketch—the story begins with some such phrase as "We don't know much about his early years, but . . ." and then goes on to trace an outlaw career or a life as a lawman. An adolescent psychologist would wonder how many were abused as children, abandoned or forced out on their own too soon and spent the rest of their lives getting back at society, whether they realized what their real motivations were or not. We realize that documenting childhood and family relations is much more difficult than chronicling a life in the outlaw business, but the question is worth asking.

Such works on outlawry as this also raise other questions. Other Californians who also came up in rough circumstances did not become lawbreakers. Why not? Does scholarship on law enforcement give us a false picture of our

past? For every man who robbed a stage, heisted a mine payroll, faced down a Wells Fargo agent or shot it out with an adversary in a saloon or on the street, there were untold thousands who went off to work and got through their day in a peaceful fashion. Where is their story?

The alcohol-saloon contagion in much of the documented violence is very evident, as is the propensity for carrying handguns. Would laws requiring saloonkeepers to cut off drunken patrons have ameliorated this situation? What about laws restricting the carrying of weapons? An exaggerated "sense of honor" on the part of men who were the objects of personal aspersions was also an element. Perhaps counseling on dealing with anger would have rewritten some personal histories. Likely not.

Again and again, the author documents the fact that young men sentenced to San Quentin for trivial offenses came out as professional criminals because of the associations made there and their treatment by penal officials. Should this have been a spur to penal reform. What about substance abuse programs? Vocational education?

At least a third to a half of the men who pursued outlaw careers in California were veterans of the Civil War, many having served in border, irregular and guerrilla units. We know this was also the case with Jesse James and his gang, the Youngers, the Daltons and others who operated in the Midwest and the Southwest. Perhaps there should have been counseling programs to ease them back into civilian life and assistance with vocational training, job placement and low interest loans to purchase farms and start their own businesses.

Racial prejudice, employment discrimination and the unequal application of the laws are elements which explain the rise of Mexican banditry in California, most notably the careers of Tiburcio Vasquez and Joaquin Murrieta. Programs to ensure equal treatment under the law, equal educational opportunities and affirmative action could have perhaps ameliorated this situation and given Californians the opportunity to achieve a middle class lifestyle and contribute to society in a positive manner.

These comments should not be taken as criticisms of this book. The author does what he set out to do. If anything, this reviewer is reflecting upon the whole genre of outlaw literature and the manner in which such writing skews our view of the realities of our past. In a sense, the reviewer is also affirming his belief that the past is a foreign country, understandable only on its own terms, and will always remain so.

Phillip I. Earl  
*Nevada Historical Society*

*Shavetails and Bell Sharps: The History of the U. S. Army Mule.* By Emmett M.

Essin. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997, 245 pp., introduction, illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliographical essay, and index.)

General Ulysses S. Grant had favorite stories he liked to tell about mules. So did William Tecumseh Sherman. George Crook also admired the animals, as did a lot of other strong-willed military commanders including Omar N. Bradley and George S. Patton. Enlisted men assigned to muleskinner outfits in the U. S. Army developed either a love or hate relationship with mules, but they nevertheless universally respected what the animals could do in the field. The army deactivated its last two mule units in 1956, officially branding the sure-footed animals useless in a mechanized world, but no American soldier who served in land-based military units from the Second Seminole War of 1835 through the Second World War would debate the wisdom of the veteran who mused, "Image be damned," the United States has "yet to win a war without mules."

Emmett M. Essin tells a grand story in *Shavetails and Bell Sharps*. Probably pack mules were not the deciding factors that enabled American troops to triumph in the Mexican War, the Civil War, the Indian wars, the Spanish American War, World War I, and World War II, it just seems that way when Essin details the story of army procurement, supply, and transportation from the vantage point of an *aparejo*, or packsaddle, placed squarely on the back of Missouri's most famous quadruped. First earning respect for their strength and agility during pre-Civil War conflicts in Florida and Mexico, mules next assumed the burden of supplying more than fifty frontier posts spread over two million square miles of territory during the 1850s. During the Civil War both sides depended on the animals to supply men in combat. As early as May 1862 Abraham Lincoln ordered that no mules could be exported from the United States because they were needed at home. In 1864 alone, Union armies relied upon 88,000 mules just to pull supply wagons one way, and ambulances on the reverse run. During the 1870s and 1880s the frontier army used large numbers of mules as pack animals, General George S. Crook taking the lead in finding the most efficient ways to use the beasts of burden. Mules under his care could carry two hundred pound packs at a pace of eight miles per hour for seven consecutive days over the rough desert and mountain terrain of Arizona and New Mexico. By contrast, George Custer might have benefited from some advice on how to treat the mules that carried his ammunition packs on the Little Big Horn campaign. At the turn of the century, in the Philippine Insurrection, the army found ways to transport mules across oceans. In World War II a few mules learned to fly, and even fewer made parachute jumps, though in both cases without much success. Mostly mules spent their time during the Second World War lugging loads in Tunisia and Italy. They were especially useful in

Sicily, but they also earned praise for their steadfastness at Guadalcanal in the Pacific Theater. The army did not use mules in the Korean War and four years later it deactivated the last units. This is a well-told, not well-known story.

Essin writes with the confidence of a man who knows intimately his primary and secondary sources. There are enough casual stories to make the book appealing, enough perspective to make it a solid historical work, and it has enough data and analysis to prove its points. Few who digest this book will entirely agree with Essin as to the absolute importance of army mules, but, on the other hand, no reader will ever again look at the military history of the United States in quite the same way.

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