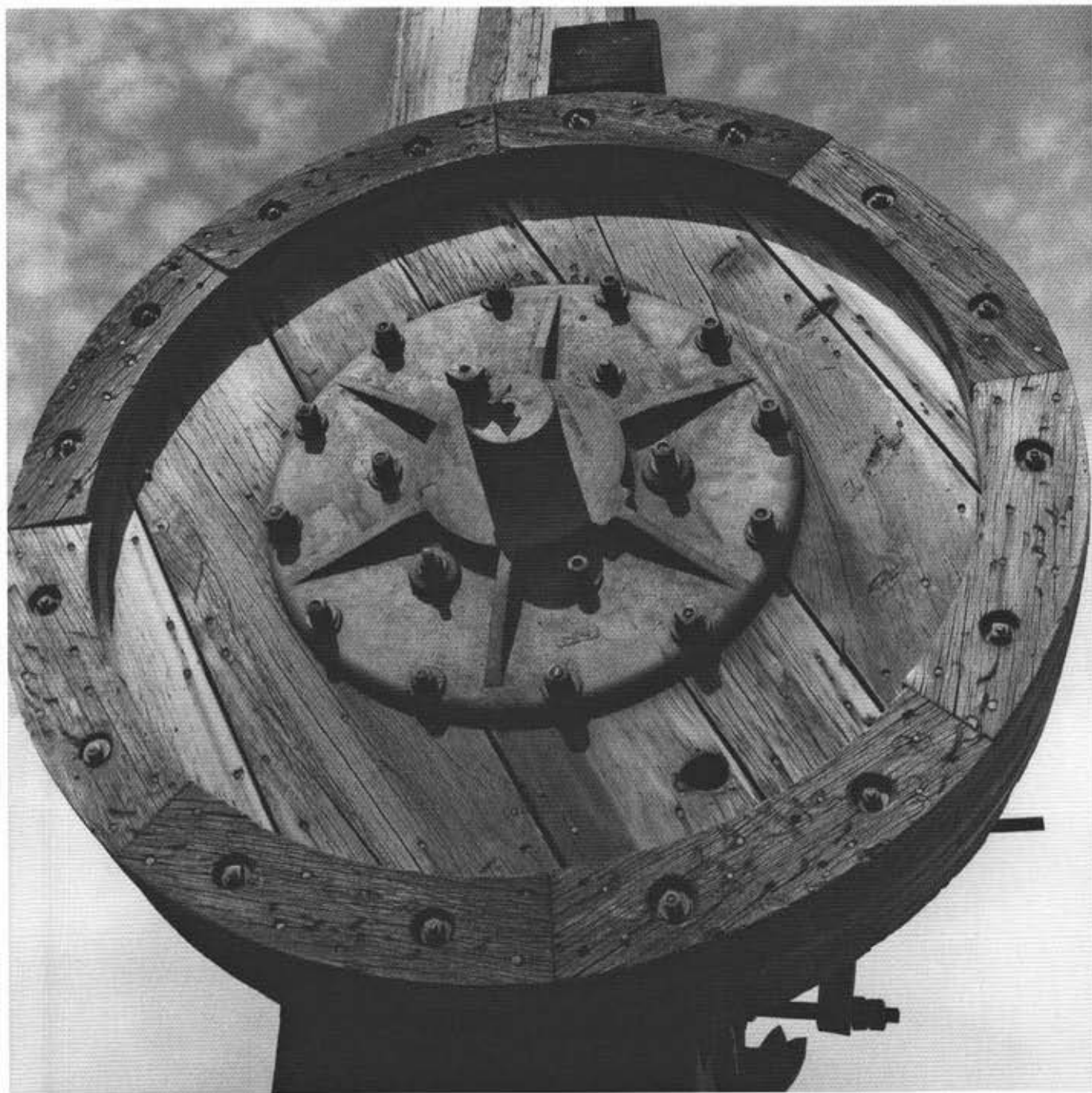


Nevada

Historical Society Quarterly



SUMMER 2002



Nevada Historical Society Quarterly

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Prospective authors should send their work to The Editor, *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 1650 N. Virginia St., Reno, Nevada 89503. Papers should be typed double-spaced and sent in duplicate, along with a copy on disk (in MAC® or IBM® compatible form-WordPerfect® 5.1, 6.0, or Microsoft Word®). All manuscripts, whether articles, edited documents, or essays, should conform to the most recent edition of the University of Chicago Press *Manual of Style*. Footnotes should be typed double-spaced on separate pages and numbered consecutively. Submission guidelines are available on request. Correspondence concerning articles and essays is welcomed, and should be addressed to The Editor. © Copyright Nevada Historical Society, 2002.

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Nevada

Historical Society Quarterly

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Volume 45

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Contents

78 Pictures of Nevada
PETER L. BANDURRAGA

82 Time in Nevada
LEE BRUMBAUGH

Book Reviews

- 113 *The American West: The Invention of a Myth*. By David Hamilton Murdoch (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2001)
reviewed by Don Franklin Shepherd
- 114 *A History of Environmental Politics since 1945*. By Samuel P. Hays (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000)
reviewed by David E. Camacho
- 117 *American Byzantium: Photographs of Las Vegas*. By Virgil Hancock III and Gregory McNamee (Albuquerque: University of Arizona Southwest Center Book, 2001)
reviewed by Peter Goin
- 119 *Picturing Chinatown: Art and Orientalism in San Francisco*. By Anthony Lee (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001)
reviewed by Sue Fawn Chung

Front Cover: Stamp mill pulley, Tonopah, 1994, (Lee Brumbaugh)

Pictures of Nevada

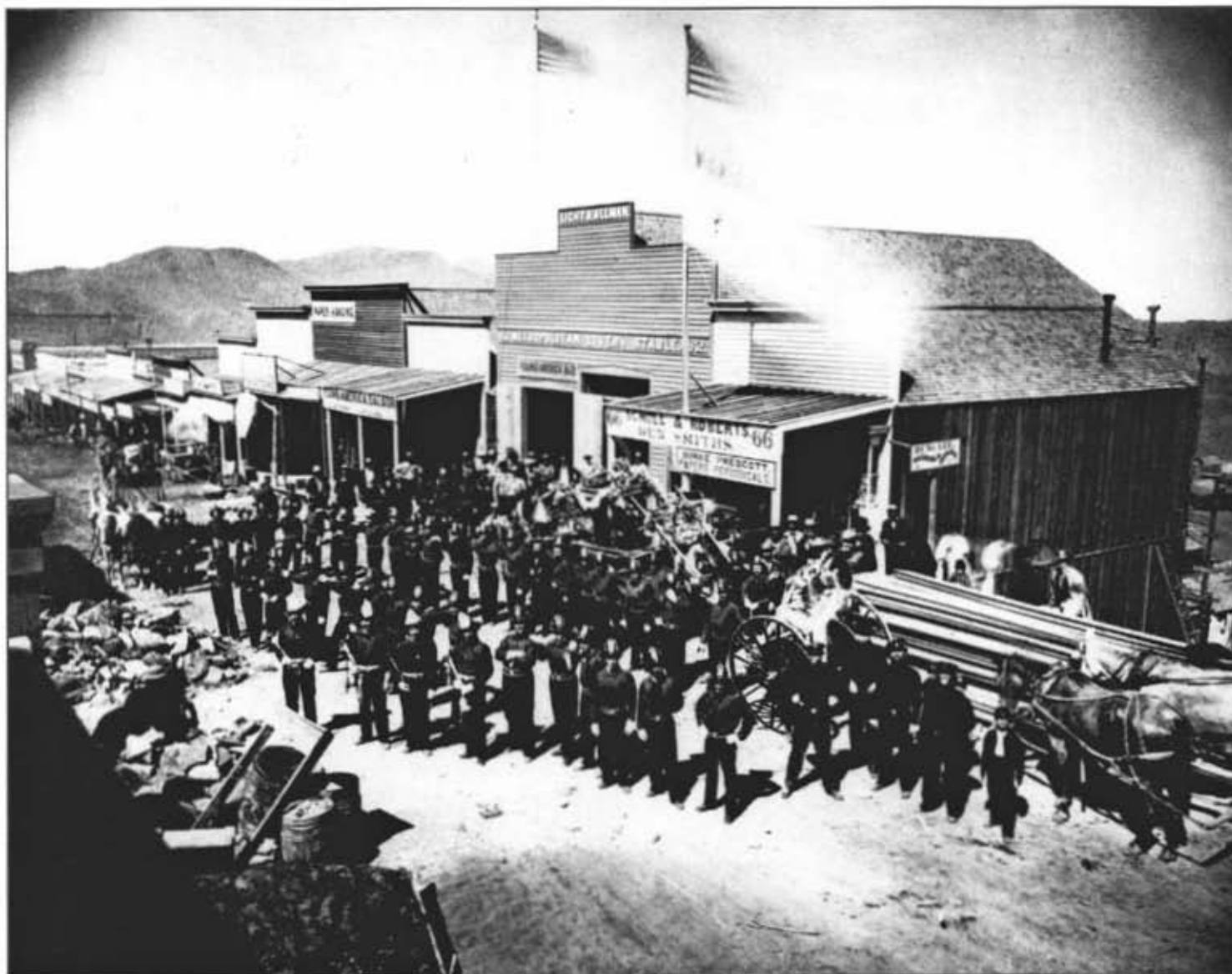
PETER L. BANDURRAGA

Photographers have been documenting modern life in Nevada almost from the start. The earliest print in the collection of the Nevada Historical Society is a shot by R. H. Vance of the Young America Fire Company forming up for a parade in Virginia City on July 4, 1862. This may well be the earliest image made in Nevada that still exists. Another image in the society's collection is almost as early, and it is extremely rare. It is the only known picture of the main street of the booming gold camp of Treasure City in 1869, and shows a holiday celebration in progress. Just as rare, but much better known because the historical society has published it so frequently, is the 1869 *carte de visite* with a scene looking north across Myron Lake's bridge to Virginia Street and the Central Pacific railroad tracks in the brand-new town of Reno in August of 1868. There are many, many more such images in the Nevada Historical Society's collections. They document for us the increasingly distant past, and they help us know what life really was like. Sometimes they tell us that things were not so different.

From the earliest days of the Nevada Historical Society, collecting and exhibiting photographs has been an important activity. Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, the society's first secretary or director, began the task almost as soon as the society was founded, on May 30, 1904, and she continued to collect throughout her long tenure. She was still director when she died in 1950. The society's first museum, built in 1912, had most of its photo collection on display. There are many old hardback prints in the collection today that bear the pinholes from where they were stuck up on the walls of the first museum. Fortunately, we no longer employ thumbtacks for exhibitions, and the ancient photos are receiving the best of care in the collections area.

Lee Brumbaugh has been the curator of photography at the Nevada Historical Society since 1996. All of those early photographs, plus the hundreds of thousands that have come into the collections since, are in his care. It is his responsibility to ensure their safety and longevity, and to provide public access to them. He has also curated a number of outstanding exhibitions in the society's Changing Gallery, bringing original images from the collection to the attention of the public for the first time in decades. Without his curatorial expertise, neither of the society's permanent exhibitions—*Nevada: Prisms and Perspectives* and, in

Peter L. Bandurraga has been the director of the Nevada Historical Society since 1981.



R. H. Vance's photo of the *Young American Fire Company* on July 4, 1862, in Virginia City. (Nevada Historical Society)

the Club Cal Neva*Virginian, *Water: Life in a Dry Land*—would be possible. In fact, Lee's color photos of the Carson Valley and the hills near Fallon, both taken the day after Christmas 1999, form the basis for the murals that frame the entrance to the permanent exhibition in the Shepperson Gallery.

Dr. Brumbaugh's training and his inclinations have made him especially well suited to his task. His academic background is actually in art and art history, with a specialty in historic photography, and he received a doctorate in anthropology from the University of California at Berkeley. His dissertation work involved video documentation of Pomo ceremonies, and along the way he was awarded a Dorothea Lange Fellowship. His avocation, acquired long before he came to live in Nevada, is exploring and documenting with his camera the ghost towns, back roads, and landscapes of the Great Basin. Every weekend, he still heads out in his Jeep to see what he can see and to apply his art to recording those images.

The exhibition *Time in Nevada: Photographs by Lee Brumbaugh*, catalogued in this issue of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, represents the best of Dr. Brumbaugh's efforts. He brings an artist's eye and an anthropologist's sensibility to the joy of recording the remnants of Nevada's past. His work is neither strictly documentary nor strictly art. Rather, it is a felicitous blend of both. He brings us into intimate contact with the things of the past by focusing on extraordinary details, and he makes us pause to ponder the meaning of the past. At the same time, he is not just making pretty pictures. Although his photographic skill is more than evident in every image, his art carries us beyond the surface into the depths of the image.

We are very pleased to be able to present Lee's work, both in exhibition and in publication. This presentation of his portrait of Nevada's past creates a record as permanent as we can make it. We invite you, the members of the Nevada Historical Society, to visit Lee Brumbaugh's Nevada in the Changing Gallery between October 11 and December 30, 2002.

Time in Nevada: Photographs by Lee Brumbaugh

Nevada Historical Society Changing Gallery
October 11 - December 30, 2002



Reno in August 1868. (Nevada Historical Society)



Treasure City in 1869. (Nevada Historical Society)

Time in Nevada

LEE BRUMBAUGH

NATURAL TIME

Natural time is usually characterized, like the universe itself, in terms of its vastness. Geologic time, for example, is measured in millions of years, the kind of time it takes for seas to form and then be filled by sediments many miles thick, or for mountains to be raised up and then worn down to flat plains.

Natural time is typically also viewed as cyclical, such as in the yearly round of the seasons, the ebb and flow of the tides, the cycle of day and night, *etcetera*. Such natural or cyclic time is often contrasted with the linear time scale of human history, in which important events are recorded as a series of dates proceeding from the past to the present.

Of course, there is no time but natural time, in the sense that the phenomena giving rise to our ideas of time are part of the universe, and no time but human time in the sense that the concept of “time” is a human construct. Time always has both a linear and a cyclical aspect, as well as a perpetual “now” aspect. Cosmic time includes such linear aspects as the birth and expansion of the universe, the creation and evolution of galaxies, and of solar systems within galaxies. Geologic time includes the linear evolution of the planet, as well as the progressive expansion of the continents by cycles of mountain building.

Cathedral Gorge, located south of Pioche in Nevada’s Lincoln County, illustrates many of features and processes of geological time. A million years ago, during times much wetter than now, a large lake formed in a local basin. Over time, streams carried silt down from the surrounding hills. Eventually, the lake was filled in, and as the climate changed to desert, the dry lake bed itself began to erode.

Despite their youth, some mineralized layers of the lake bed had turned to rock, protecting the loosely consolidated sediments below from rainfall erosion. This capstone effect created spires and fluted columns, as spectacular, on a smaller scale, as their hard-rock equivalents to the east in Utah. Because of the soft nature of the materials, the shapes of the formations in Cathedral Gorge change with every rainstorm, making the processes of geological time readily apparent.

Lee Brumbaugh has been the curator of photography at the Nevada Historical Society since 1996. All photographs in this article © 2002 Lee Brumbaugh.



Eroded canyon wall, Cathedral Gorge, 2001



Closeup view of silt erosion, Cathedral Gorge, 2001



Erosion details at Cathedral Gorge, 2001

NATIVE AMERICAN TIME

The Native American conception of time has often been described as cyclical and contrasted with the linear construction of time found in European culture. Actually, Native Americans, like people in general, conceive of time as both linear and cyclical.

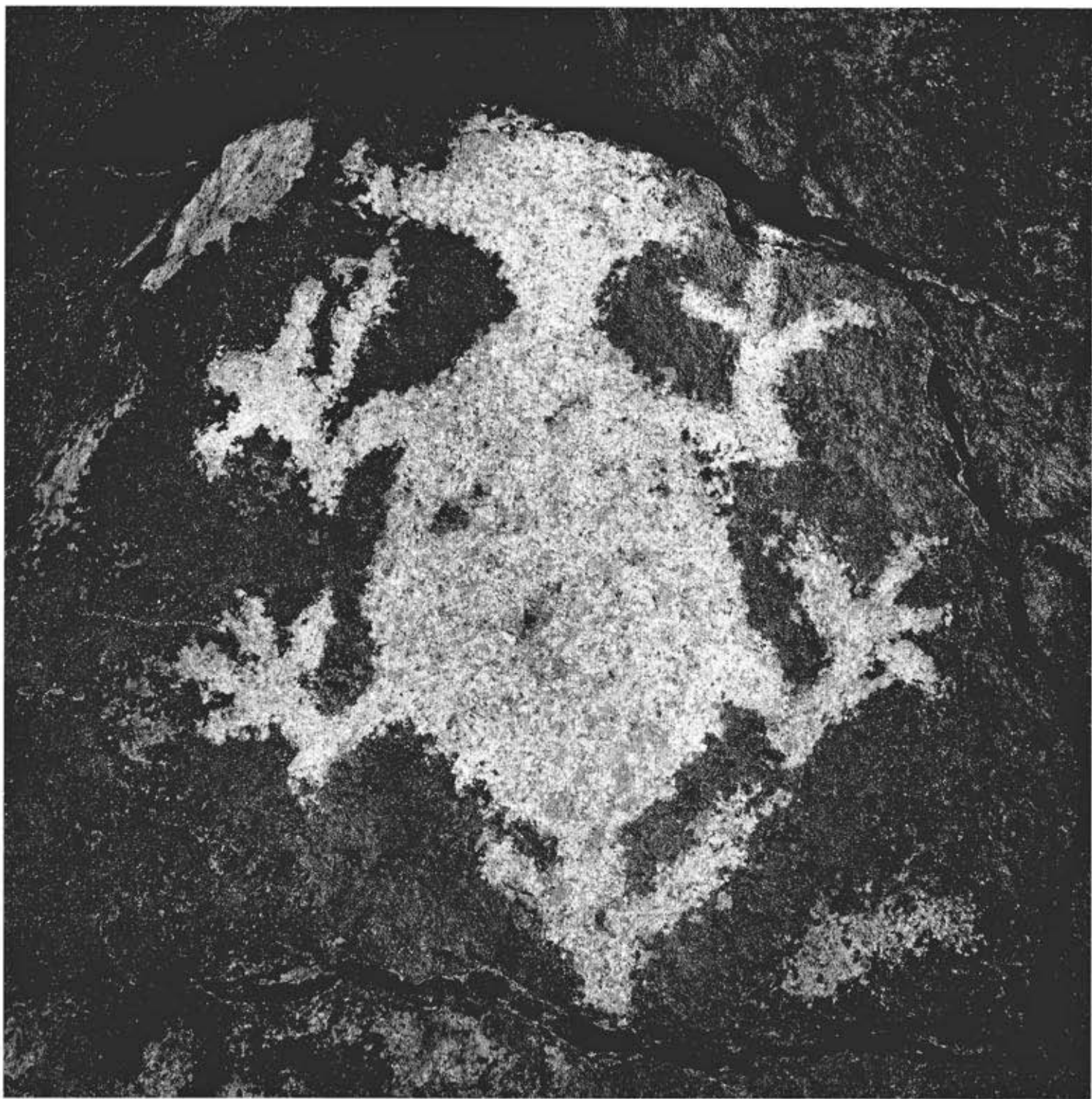
In tribal and peasant societies everywhere, views of time were tied to the seasonal round and to the ceremonies marking its major events, such as the planting of crops, harvests of specific wild or domesticated plants, annual communal hunts, or collective fish harvests. Only relatively recently in the history of culture has the seasonal cycle of life been overshadowed by the linear historical achievements of specific individuals and imperial dynasties.

In Nevada, petroglyphs and pictographs offer one of the best insights into the worldview of the first people, before the invasion of European colonists. Although the exact meaning of Native American rock art is unknown and probably unknowable, certain clear themes emerge, based both on visual content and early interviews with religious practitioners.

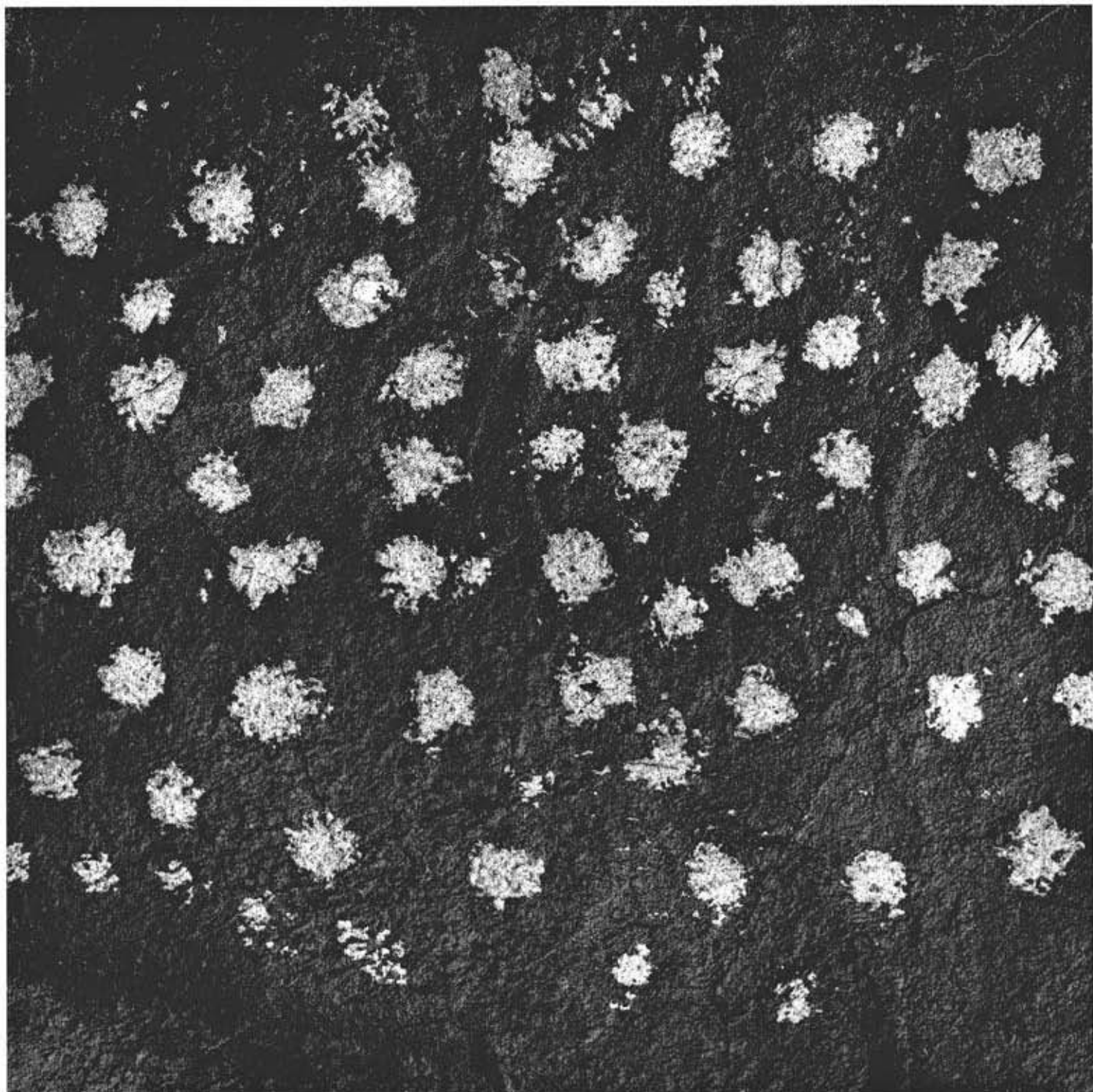
Wavy lines, possibly symbolic of rainfall, flowing water, and other natural processes, predominate in the most common rock-art substyle found in Nevada, which archaeologists have appropriately termed the Great Basin curvilinear.

Spirals and circles within circles are among the most frequent motifs in Nevada rock art. These symbols are often associated in Native American cultures with the sun, and the cyclical nature of time. Such circles were sometimes placed where they would serve as calendars, with a ray of light passing through the center of the circle on the day of the summer solstice.

Representational petroglyphs are fairly rare in Nevada, and animals are depicted more frequently than humans. The animals shown sometimes relate to hunting practices, as where actual hunting scenes are recorded. However, researchers today believe many of the animal depictions relate to the animal's function as a spirit guide for religious practitioners. Representing the animal on stone may have helped a medicine man or woman to attain its aid or receive its powers.



Horned toad petroglyph, near Fallon, 2001



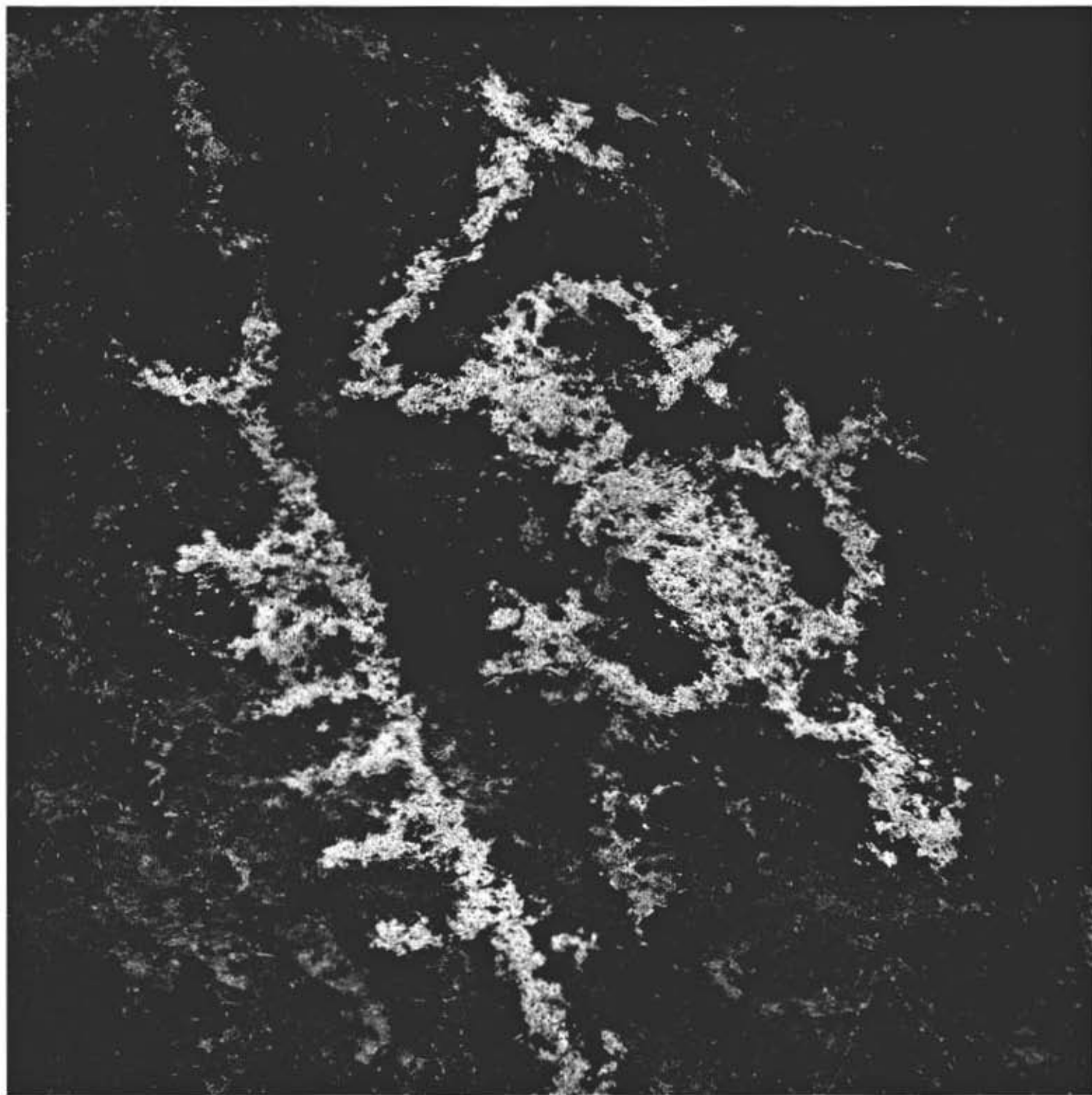
Field of dots petroglyph, near Virginia City, 2002



Mountain sheep petroglyph, near Virginia City, 2002



Descending lines petroglyph, or so-called rake motif, often interpreted as a rain symbol, near Virginia City, 2002



Upside-down human petroglyph, possibly symbolizing death, near Virginia City, 2002

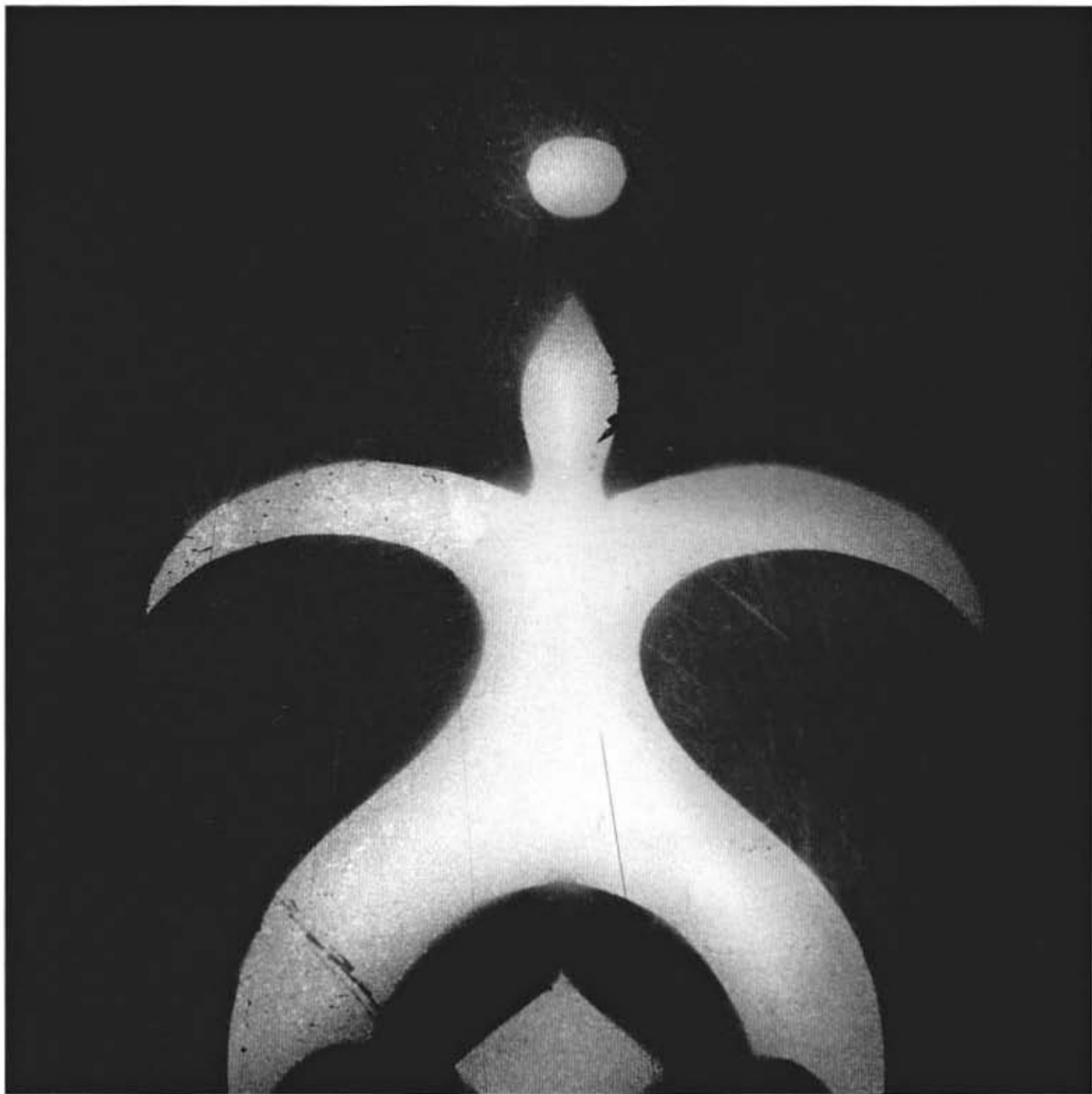
EUROPEAN-AMERICAN TIME

History, as written by European Americans, focuses on linear time: the chain of events giving rise to statehood, the careers of famous mining tycoons and political bosses, the progressive expansion of transportation networks, and the like. Cyclical patterns of time have had, nonetheless, an equal role in shaping the human landscape of Nevada. The boom-and-bust cycle of capitalism, exacerbated by a harsh desert environment, has led to Nevada's terrain being dotted with far more partially occupied ghost towns and abandoned town sites than growing communities.

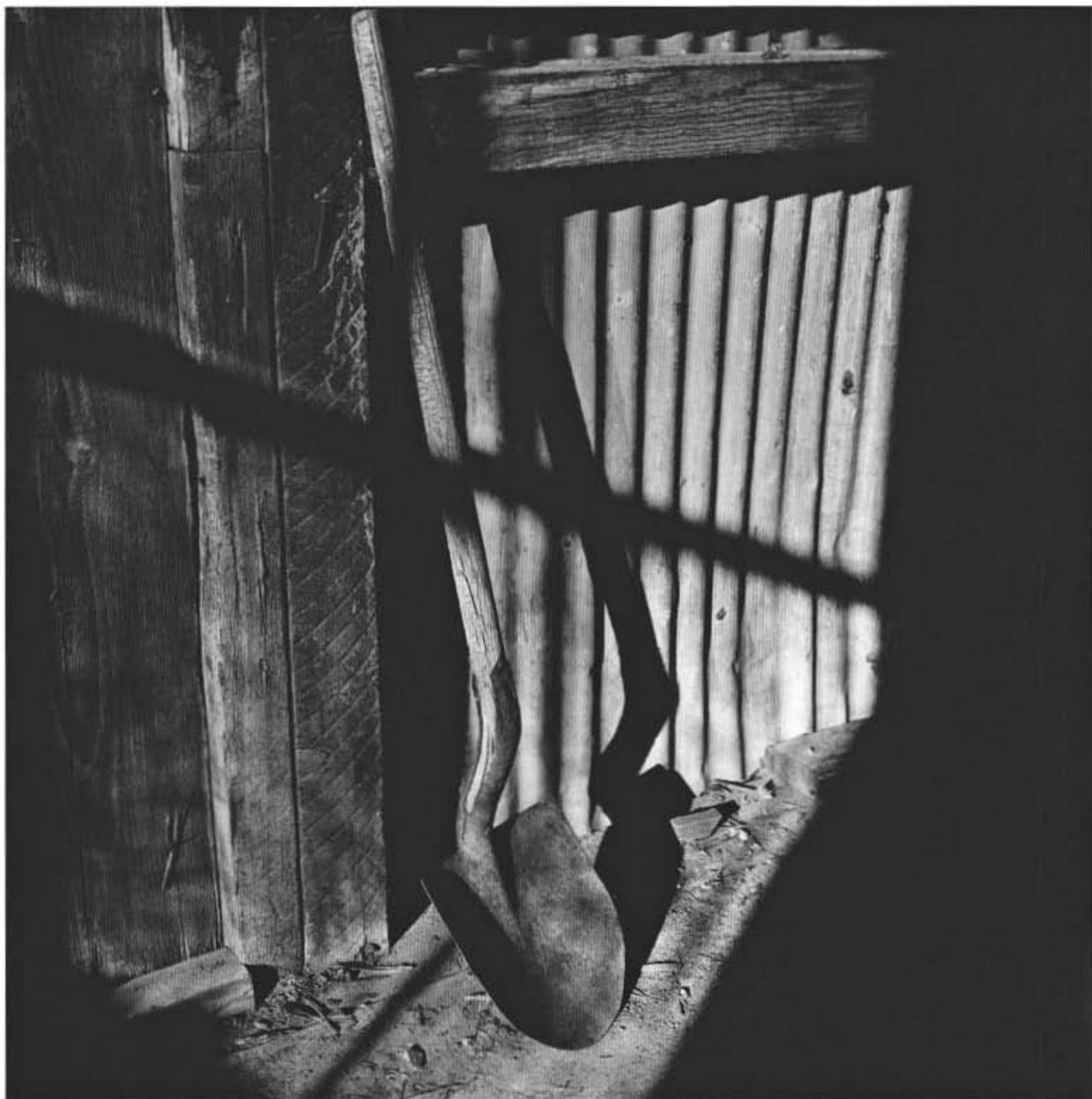
Nevada's limited resource base has always encouraged an overdependence on single industries, whether mining or gambling, and a consequent vulnerability to economic downturn or even collapse. Virginia City, Tonopah, and Goldfield, in their successive heydays, were each the largest city in Nevada, with populations exceeding twenty thousand. Today, they are so-called living ghost towns with populations in the hundreds. Rhyolite, Rawhide, Aurora, Treasure City, and Seven Troughs, as well as hundreds of lesser-known mining towns, are now only historic or archaeological sites.

The more prosaic railroading or service centers like Reno, Beatty, and Fallon have outlasted most of the high-flying mining towns. Some, such as tiny Fernley and megacity Las Vegas, are experiencing growth booms. Reno, like many cities today, is experiencing both boom and bust at the same time. The rapid expansion of business and residential development in the suburbs contrasts with the ongoing problems of a declining downtown.

The romance of the western ghost town stems in part from a sense of loss—the imagined loss of a time when life was more intense, freer from the restrictions of society and the weight of mundane responsibility. The ghosted mining town evokes a time when the American ideals of individualism and self-reliance were at a premium, when the iconic American goal of self-made wealth seemed more readily achievable. The ghost town, with its crumbling remains of buildings once so full of life, also resonates emotionally as a symbol for the shortness of the human life span and the seeming insignificance of human endeavor in the face of death and the vastness of cosmic time.



Etched window decoration, Goldfield Hotel, Goldfield, 2002



Shovel and interior wall of hoist house, Silver Top Mine, Tonopah, 2000



Partially dismantled mine building, Rochester district, 1993



Abandoned truck, Tunnel Camp, 1993



Ruins of the Rhyolite School after a rare thunderstorm, Rhyolite, 1990



Lime kiln, near Aurora, 1992



Mine level indicator on hoist, Seven Troughs district, 1993



Posters on west interior wall of the press room, Eureka Sentinel Building, Eureka, 2002



Torn advertisement, north interior wall, press room, *Eureka Sentinel* Building, 2002



Dynamite bag, Prince Mine, Caselton, 2001



Cyanide tank, near Silver City, 2002



Steel-reinforced ore bin chute, near Gold Hill, 2002

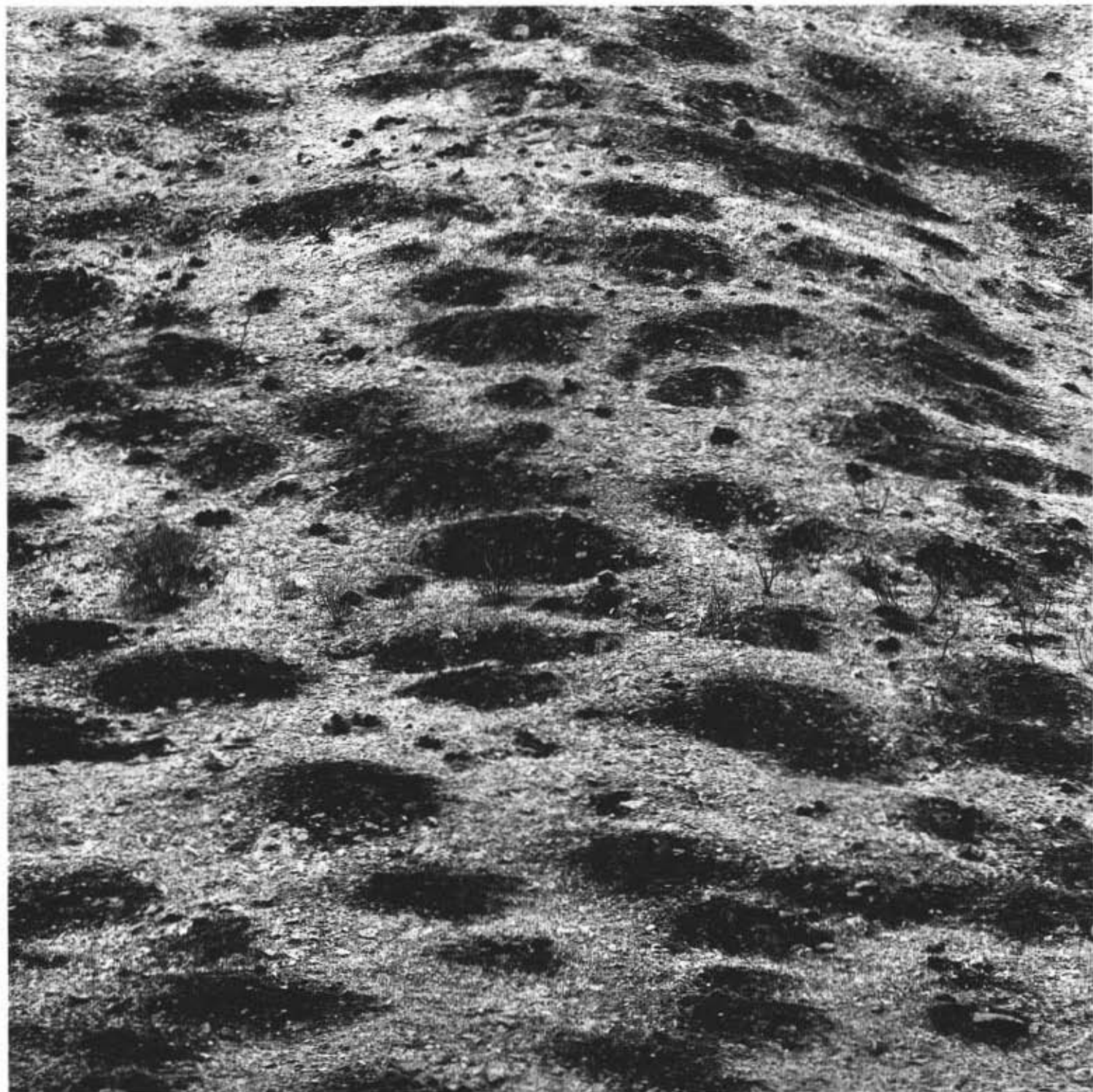
DISASTER TIME

With the ongoing concentration of the American population in disaster-prone areas, including flood plains, coastal zones, and deserts, disasters are becoming a central concern of American culture. Disaster anxiety and its associated political debate had become critical issues even before the events of September 11.

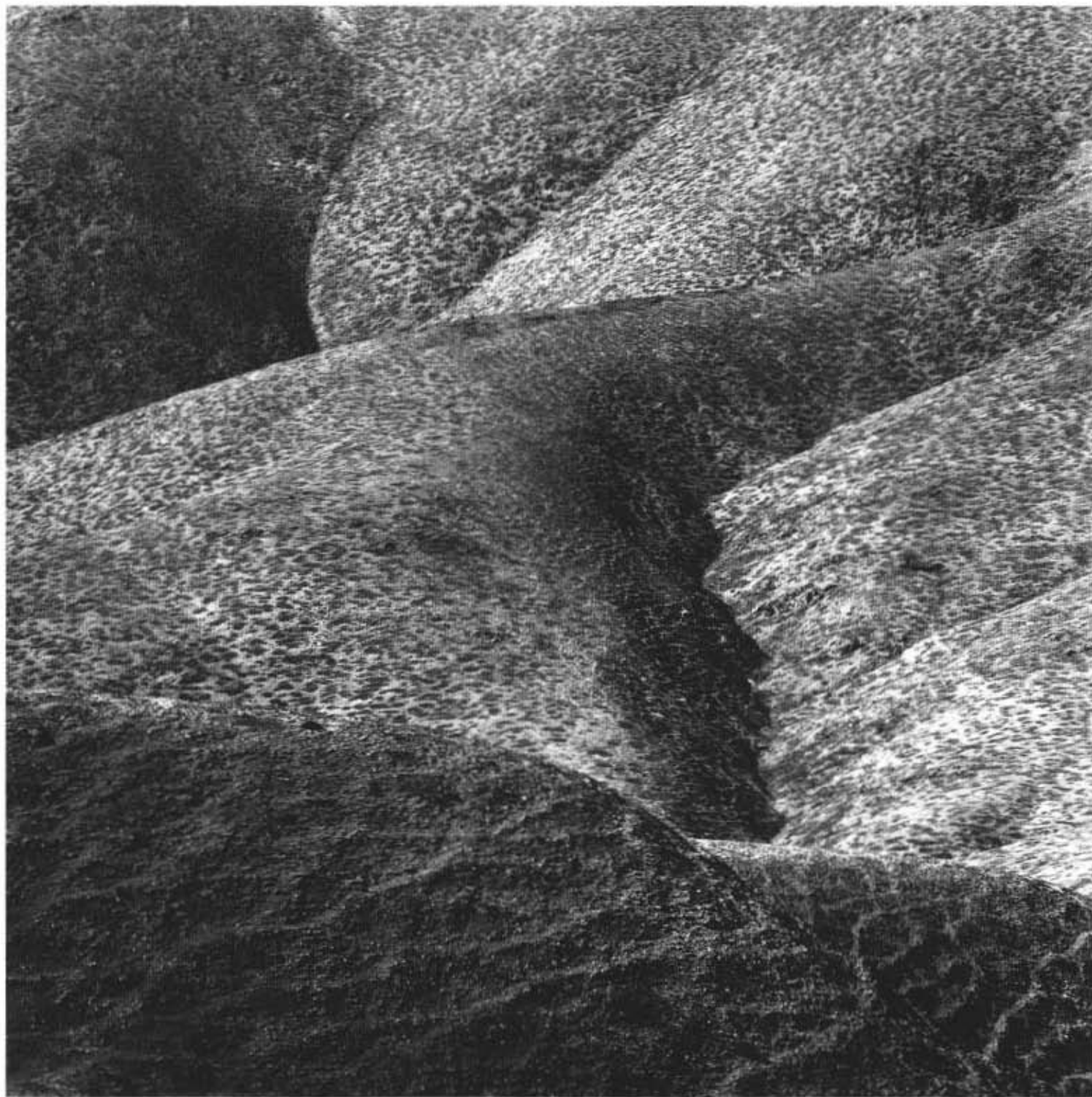
In the West, the threat of wildfire—and what should or should not be done to prevent it—has been one of the most debated public policy issues. For many years, all fires were viewed as attacks upon humanity by nature gone amuck. Total fire suppression was the normal and expected governmental response. Decades of fuel buildup, combined with increasing drought conditions, led to massive, uncontrollable forest fires in the 1990s and to a call for rethinking fire-management concepts. In some forested areas, fire has been shown to be a necessary part of natural regeneration. Although the science was sound, its application by land managers was sometimes faulty.

In the Nevada desert, fire is not an ally of the indigenous species; it spreads European weeds at the expense of our native sagebrush and juniper ecosystem. Overgrazing transforms the natural hills into weedy slopes terraced by cattle trails, which greatly increases the likelihood, not only that lightning will cause fires, but that those fires will burn rapidly beyond control, destroying ever more of Nevada's fragile desert ecosystem. In a typical Nevada summer, fires burn almost half a million acres.

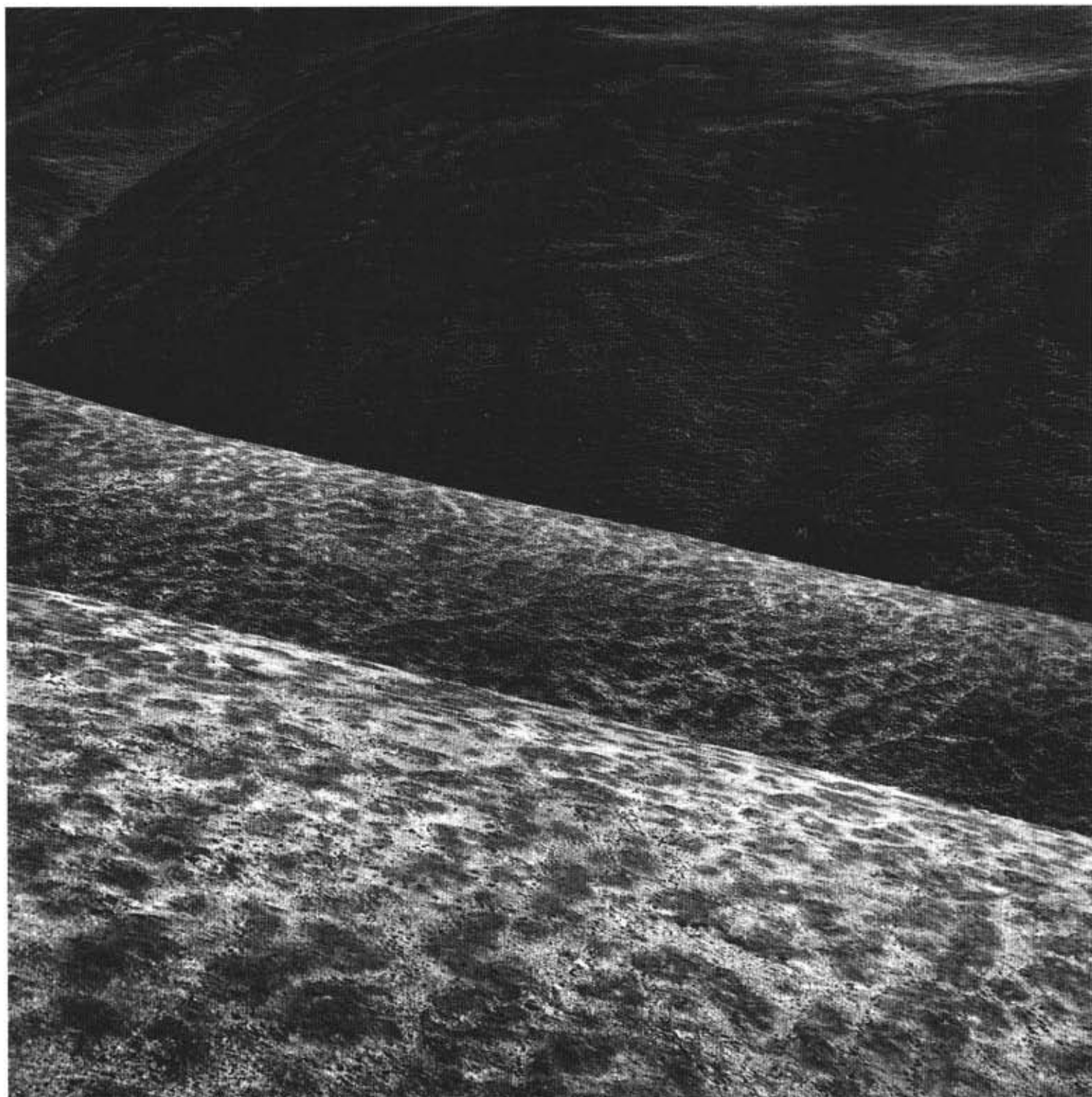
In these photographs, the clear desert light raking across charred, terraced hills creates attractive graphic patterns that mask the underlying destruction. In some areas, burning sagebrush has deposited circles of charcoal on the ash-coated soil, creating a constantly changing array of pattern and texture, where some hillsides may look like the rind of a muskmelon, others like the fur of an animal. This is disaster time, but the beauty of nature still shines through these blighted landscapes.



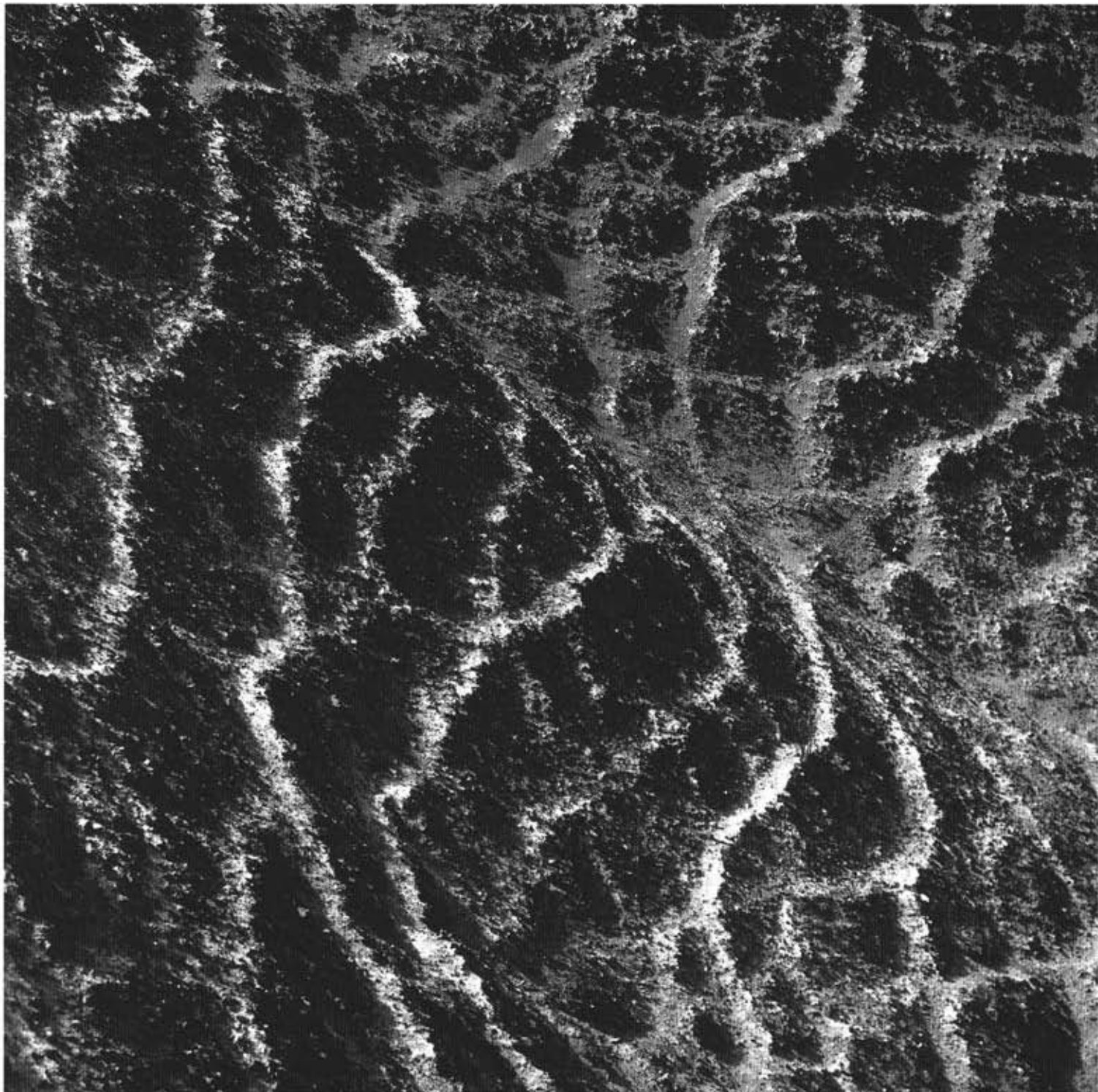
Close-up view of burned sagebrush, Clear Creek Fire area, Summer, 2001



Wider view of the same fire area, showing the eroding overgrazed zone in foreground, Summer 2001



A view contrasting the carbonized sagebrush circles in the foreground with burned grassland in the background, Summer, 2001



Detail view of cattle trails and consequent terracing in the Clear Creek Fire area, Summer, 2001

Exhibition Checklist

Natural Time

Eroded canyon wall, Cathedral Gorge, 2001. In the upper part of this image, one can see the thin, hard layers that, by protecting the soft layers below, have led to the formation of flutes and pillars.

Second view of the main canyon wall at Cathedral Gorge, 1998.

Closeup view of silt erosion in the gorge, Summer 2001. As contrasted to eroded stone, the weather-sculpted forms at Cathedral Gorge have a soft quality.

Erosion details at Cathedral Gorge, 2001. Not all photographs must be taken by early morning or evening light to capture texture. The fine surface features of these eroded spires were captured at noon by underexposing and over-developing the film.

Rain-sculpted forms, Summer 2001. Weathering at Cathedral Gorge is not just subtractive. Liquified silt flowing downward coats the lower surfaces, creating a wider range of shapes than are found in hard rock canyons.

Native-American Time

Horned toad petroglyph, near Fallon, 2001. The horned toad is actually a lizard (or genus of lizards) notable for its ability to hide from its enemies, a trait that might well have been thought desirable by early Great Basin dwellers. The artist has made use of a natural crack in the boulder to suggest how the horned toad uses its flattened body to wedge itself into crevices when danger threatens.

Field of dots petroglyph, near Virginia City, 2002. Pecked dots, either randomly placed like these, or arranged in rows, are among the most common petroglyph design elements in the Great Basin.

Complex petroglyph panel in the Great Basin geometric style, near Virginia City, 2002. Petroglyphs of this style are elaborated through the repetition and combination of such basic element as straight lines, wavy lines and crosshatches. The designs in this panel tend toward the rectilinear, a substyle thought to be later than the equivalent curvilinear one.

Unusual pendant and stick motif on a boulder near Virginia City, 2002. Part of the romantic aura of Native-American petroglyphs lies in the uncertainty of what even the most representational designs actually depict. Does this petroglyph show a spear with attached feathers, or some kind of plant, or perhaps something else entirely? We can never know for sure, and that is again part of the mystery of time.

Possible mountain sheep petroglyph, near Virginia City, 2002. Among the few representational petroglyph depictions that can be recognized with even a fair degree of certainty are those of mountain sheep. In the present example, only the typical swept back horns suggest this identification. The frequent depictions of mountain sheep in rock art seem out of proportion to their relatively small significance as a food source, leading some scholars to believe the artists were primarily interested in the spiritual qualities of this nimble creature.

Bar and descending lines petroglyph, sometimes called the "rake" motif, near Virginia City, 2001. The design may represent falling rain. Weather control was a skill sought and practiced by medicine people among Nevada's Native Americans. One of the commonly proposed interpretations for this abstract design is that it represents rain falling from clouds.

Upside-down human petroglyph, possibly symbolizing death, near Virginia City, 2002. Human figures are rare in Nevada, where abstract designs dominate. The design on the left may represent the centipede, which in its spirit form, was sometimes used by sorcerers to poison their victims.

European-American Time

Stamp mill pulley, Tonopah, 1994. Tonopah's rich silver ledges were first located and claimed by Jim Butler in 1900. One of Nevada's biggest cities in the early 1900s, Tonopah today clings to life as a tourist town and a stop on the way from Reno to Las Vegas.

Upper portion of stamp mill, showing the drive shaft and cogs that lift and drop the stamps to crush ore, Tonopah, 1994.

Shovel and interior wall of hoist house, Silver Top Mine, Tonopah, 2000. The site of the Tonopah silver strike, complete with the original mining buildings and machinery, is preserved as an outdoor mining museum.

Screen door with turned-wood ornamentation, Goldfield, 2002. Boasting a population of about 18,000 in 1907, Goldfield was Nevada's largest city. With no motels and only one gas station, Goldfield is presently among the least lively of Nevada's "living ghost towns." Enough original buildings remain, though, to rate Goldfield among Nevada's best historic sites.

Screen door and exterior wall of the same house, Goldfield, 2002. Ever-changing patterns of light playing over weathered wood enhances a sense of the fleeting nature of time.

Etched window decoration, Goldfield Hotel, Goldfield, 2002. Goldfield promoters George Nixon and George Wingfield established political and financial empires based upon wealth generated by Goldfield's mines and ore mills. The lavish Goldfield Hotel, owned in part by Wingfield, housed the visiting elite of the day.

Partially dismantled mine building, Rochester district, 1993. Active silver producers from 1912 to the early 'forties, Lower and Upper Rochester are now true ghost towns. Since this photograph was taken, the district's few remaining mine buildings have collapsed. Only derelict cabins, headframes and the shell of a mill building still stand.

Stamp mill remnants, near Lower Rochester, 1993. The surrounding mill building has been dismantled and carried away. The top of the mine's headframe and the waste rock pile can be seen in the background.

Abandoned truck, Tunnel Camp, 1993. This photograph is somewhat deceptive. Tunnel is in a dry, rocky desert, but the patch of trees and grass planted by early settlers creates a pastoral appearance. Near the more famous, but now abandoned, Seven Troughs, Tunnel has seen the periodic revival of small-scale mining activity. Its few remaining houses are occupied.

Ruins of the Rhyolite School after a rare thunderstorm, Rhyolite, 1990. Rhyolite was part of the Death Valley area mining boom which captured the national imagination during the first decade of the twentieth century. Death Valley Scotty's promotional antics and scams fueled both his own and the region's fame. There was real gold near Rhyolite, but the panic of 1907 led to the collapse of the district before the deposits could be fully developed. Rhyolite has had only a few residents in recent decades.

Boarded up building, Tenabo, 1993. Founded in 1907 to serve the Bullion silver mining district, the town was eventually abandoned after mining ceased in 1911. Several unoccupied buildings remain.

Lime kiln near Aurora, 1992. An important mining camp of the 1860s, Aurora is perhaps most famous as the location where Samuel Clemens, soon to be Mark Twain, contracted and recovered from gold fever, and where he wrote his first newspaper pieces. After a brief revival in the early twentieth century, Aurora has remained totally abandoned. Only meager cabin and mill remnants mark its location.

Mine level indicator on hoist, Seven Troughs district, 1993. Reports of rich gold discoveries precipitated a rush to Seven Troughs Canyon and the founding of a town in 1907. A significant producer through the First World War, the district has foundations and mine ruins remaining today.

Pen and ink caricature pasted to the south wall of the press room, *Eureka Sentinel* Building, 2002. One of Nevada's major nineteenth century silver producers, Eureka began to fade by the 1890s. Since then, several brief mining revivals and its role as a commercial center and county seat have kept the small town of Eureka going.

Posters on the west interior wall of the press room, *Eureka Sentinel* Building, 2002.

Torn advertisement, north interior wall of the press room, *Eureka Sentinel* Building 2002. The haunting beauty of a model obviously now long dead has outlasted the encroaching decay of time.

Dynamite bag, Prince Mine, Caselton, 2001. Active during the 1940s in the production of base metals, the well-preserved Prince Mine is privately owned.

Detail of the headframe at the Prince Mine, Caselton, 2001. The headframe at the Prince mine is said to be the largest in the state. It is certainly among the most complex, with a covered trestle and track for ore cars passing through its middle. The jerry-rigged layering of construction elements is reminiscent of the French anthropologist Levi-Strauss's concept of *bricolage*.

Headframe at Stokes Castle, 1990. Millionaire Anson P. Stokes, who had invested in mining properties around Austin, built a tower-like summer house just southwest of town in 1897. According to the traditional story, Stokes had hoped that exposure to mining would harden his Eastern-bred sons, but they showed little interest and the structure was soon abandoned. Among the major mining centers of Nevada in the nineteenth century, Austin today survives as a small tourist stop and retirement community.

Cyanide tank, near Silver City, 2002. Since the early twentieth century cyanide solutions have been used to leach gold and silver from crushed ore. Early tanks, like this one were made of wood. Silver City, despite its name, was and is the smallest of the three surviving Comstock mining towns.

View up the steel-reinforced chute of an ore bin near Gold Hill, 2002. Ore was emptied from ore carts into the top of the storage hopper and later poured out the shoots into wagons for transport to the mill. The mine headframe still stands to the immediate north, although the rail tracks from the mine to the ore bin are gone.

Trestle beams silhouetted against the evening sky, Virginia City, 2002. Railroad tracks once connected Virginia City's numerous mines with the Virginia and Truckee main line. Most ore was hauled down to the Carson River mills for processing. Virginia City was one of the West's major mining centers of the 1860s and 1870s. The wealth from Virginia City's silver mines helped build San Francisco and finance the Northern side during the Civil War, thus aiding in the preservation the Union. Long a near-ghost town, Virginia City in recent years has been revived as a tourist destination.

Exterior doorway of the Verdi Lumber Company's Reno workshops, 1999. The facility produced wooden moldings. Idle for many years, the door sill reveals the wear of countless feet over time.

A now antique safe in the Verdi Lumber Company's Reno Offices, 1999.

Disaster Time

Cattle trails on overgrazed ridge, Clear Creek Fire area, Summer, 2001. Although the cattle trails create a striking graphic pattern, overgrazing on this grassy ridge has produced the kind of degradation cited by environmentalists, including artificial terracing, soil slumping and erosion.

Mountainside with burned sagebrush circles. As each individual sagebrush burned down, it left a circle of charcoal (oval when viewed more from the side).

Zigzagging cattle trails, deepened by erosion, climb to a natural spring and salt lick, Clear Creek Fire area, Summer, 2001.

Cattle-terraced ridge in evening light, sagebrush zone in the background, Clear Creek Fire area, Summer, 2001.

Erosion-exposed rocks and a blackened appearance characterize the overgrazed portions after the fire, Clear Creek Fire area, Summer, 2001.

Heavy erosion in the overgrazed area, Clear Creek Fire, Summer, 2001.

Close-up view of burned sagebrush, Clear Creek Fire area, Summer, 2001.

Cattle-terracing patterns along Sonoma Creek Road, Clear Creek Fire area, Summer, 2001.

Wider view of the fire area, showing the overgrazed zone in foreground, Summer 2001. Grass previously covered only the shaded side of each stream valley, as indicated by the cattle trail terracing. By summer, cheat grass and other invasive European weeds cover the entire range, replacing the native plant species.

Another view of overgrazed versus un-eroded sagebrush-covered ridges in the burned portion of the Sonoma Range, Summer 2001.

Scene dramatically contrasting the carbonized sagebrush circles in the foreground with the burned grassland in the background, Summer, 2001.

Detail view of cattle trails and terracing, Clear Creek Fire area, Summer, 2001.

Book Reviews

The American West: The Invention of a Myth. By David Hamilton Murdoch (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2001)

With the 1950 publication of *Virgin Land* by the western historian Henry Nash Smith, the study of “cultural meaning” emerged at the forefront of historical explanation (*Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, Harvard University Press [1950] 1978). The study of cultural meaning was essentially a study of the distinction between image and action. What Americans *thought* they had done was just as important as what they actually did. How Americans *thought* about the way in which the history of the West happened was just as important as the way it actually did happen. In his book *The American West: The Invention of a Myth*, David Hamilton Murdoch clearly adheres to Smith’s myth-and-symbol school. Murdoch’s themes parallel Smith’s own: The ideal of an exceptionalist western society could be considered nothing more than a device of propaganda manipulated by self-serving human interests. These self-serving interests constructed a popular image through which Americans viewed the West but which did not necessarily square with real historical action. This popular image became the myth of the American West. In later years, Smith’s *Virgin Land* came under criticism for its overdependence on metaphor. More important, it came under criticism for leaving unanswered a most basic question. Lawrence Veysey argued that *Virgin Land* failed to explain “why certain myths and not others should arise in a particular social or physical climate” (Laurence R. Veysey, “Myth and Reality in Approaching American Regionalism,” *American Quarterly*, 12:1 (1960), 42). Smith recognized that self-serving human interests led to the creation of myths, but his analysis lacked precision. Instead of pinpointing the source of myth, he allowed it to mysteriously arise from the “collective American unconscious” (Murdoch, xii). His dialogue became more elusive than clarifying. Murdoch’s book attempted to remedy this flaw. Murdoch believes that he can identify a “relatively small number” of people who focused on the “last phase of the conquest of the wilderness” and made the cowboy a “mythic hero” for specific purposes of their own (Murdoch, xii). Once the cowboy myth had been invented, they marketed it with all the resources available in a capitalist society.

In developing his argument, Murdoch attempts to demonstrate that Americans invented the popular concept of the Wild West of the cowboy between 1845 and 1880. By 1887, the western hero was no longer the plainsman, the forest hunter, or the mountain man. Rather, the publicity and exhibitions of renowned gunfighter Buffalo Bill Cody had caught the public’s attention and transformed their vision of the West. That West was now a cowboy West. But by the 1880s and 1890s, the real historical cowboy was already part of the dying breed. At the point where the real cowboy tradition vanished, the mythical one took hold. For whatever reason, a ground swell of nostalgia swept the nation at the close of the nineteenth century. It brought with it a “psychic malaise” that compelled Americans to search for a romantic “lost world” in their country’s past (Murdoch, p. 63). For Murdoch, three individuals—a politician, a painter, and a writer—helped them find that past. Theodore Roosevelt, Frederic Remington, and Owen Wister was each a “deliberate and self-conscious myth maker” determined to transfigure western history into a golden age of “Arthurian” myth (Murdoch, p. 64). All three men sought to use their western experiences, and their fabricated accounts of them, as part of a self-promotion campaign. Roosevelt utilized the western myth to ascend to the presidency, Remington exploited it to achieve fame as an artist, and Wister propagandized it to support his conceptualization of democracy.

By examining the relationship of Cody, Roosevelt, Remington, and Wister to the construction of a mythic West, Murdoch attempts to succeed where Smith failed. Smith had failed to elucidate why certain myths and not others should arise in a particular social climate. On a basic level, Murdoch clarifies this issue. First, the cowboy myth prevailed at the close of the nineteenth century because it was the most recent frontier phenomenon. Second, the myth was quickly accepted because the American mentality yearned to recover a golden past, whether it had been real or not. On a more complex level, Murdoch's argument remains vague. He cannot account for the overriding reason why American's nostalgia should have emerged at the time that it did. The cowboy myth may have arisen from that nostalgia, but the rise of the nostalgia itself is never satisfactorily explained. At times, Murdoch is tempted to explain this nostalgia in terms akin to Jackson Lears' anticapitalist rhetoric in *No Place of Grace*, but fortunately he displays a good measure of self-restraint (T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*, The University of Chicago Press: 1994). Otherwise, he would merely have produced another Marxian polemic. But, without the key for unlocking the riddle behind the rise of America's nostalgia, Murdoch's delineation of the rise of the cowboy myth is just as much an "organic growth, mysteriously arising from the depths of the collective American unconscious" as is Smith's portrayal of the creation of the agrarian myth (Murdoch, xii).

Ultimately, Murdoch encountered the same difficulty that plagued Smith when he distinguished image from action. In 1969, Smith observed that his own use of image and action had led to a "severely fixed and dualistic" model that encouraged a "rigid distinction between symbols and myths" on the one hand and a supposed "historical reality discoverable by means of conventional scholarly procedures" on the other hand (Smith, viii). Murdoch's conventional acceptance of image and action led to the same conclusion: Myth functioned primarily as a distortion of "empirical fact" (Smith, viii). But Murdoch was also perceptive enough to recognize that debunking the cowboy myth by pointing out its deviance from empirical fact could not achieve much because the "ultimate defense" of all myth is to argue its truth on a transcendental level rather than a literal one (Murdoch, p. 119). Here arose the difficulty. To effectively debunk myth on its own figurative level, empirical fact became useless. At the close of his book, Murdoch acknowledges this crucial insight. For Murdoch, the only way to resolve the issue is to posit two independent realities: mythical reality and empirical reality. Unfortunately, this rigid dualism is precisely the flaw that had threatened the validity of Smith's analysis and that Smith himself had hoped to eliminate in the twentieth anniversary printing of *Virgin Land*.

Don Franklin Shepherd

Community College of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas

A History of Environmental Politics since 1945. By Samuel P. Hays (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000)

A popular method in the examination of environmental politics and policy is the case-study approach. Although a great deal of depth may be given to the topic under study, often the case is disconnected from its historical context. Consequently, how the past helps to explain the present situation is lost in the examination. Moreover, the case-study approach often concentrates on a single explanatory factor. Lost in this narrow view of the environment is the interplay of multiple factors which contributes to an extremely complex environmental setting.

Samuel P. Hays, in an extremely informative book, has been able to capture the essence of what he refers to as environmental affairs in contemporary United States society. His view is that environmental "events can be understood better in historical terms; that is, what happens at one period of time grows out of what happened earlier." Hays claims, correctly so, that environmental affairs are a result of a complex mixture of cultural, social, economic, and political forces, all of which he places into historical context. These forces are dynamic and constantly changing; accordingly, Hays views environmental affairs as an evolutionary process. He explains, for example, how in certain historical periods, economic interests, such as development, may overpower social concerns, such as conservation and preservation, or occasionally the political dimension, as in government regulation of polluting industries, may overwhelm economic efforts at profit. In the end, this complex mixture and interplay of social, economic, and political forces make for a vibrant tension between values favoring the protection of the environment and the economic interests of advanced capitalism. In the middle of this social-economic tension is the political factor, or government, which is responsible for managing this tension, or conflict of values, through its public policy decisions. Hays suggests that public policy is generally biased in favor of economic interests. On the other hand, environmental advocates have developed a substantial political agenda, making for an interesting future in environmental affairs.

A first major point made by Hays is that over this country's more than two-hundred-year history, a strong environmental consciousness has developed among the citizenry of the United States. While we will never recapture the preindustrial notion of living off the land, we are committed to developing the environment. Herein lies the basic tension in environmental affairs, for there is disagreement on *what* development stands for and *how* development should take place. Some groups and individuals seek to protect and improve the environment by promoting such methods as "sustainable development," while others are devoted to practical, everyday, economic subsistence issues such as the availability of affordable goods and services. An interesting observation is that both views on development lead to the exploitation and consumption of the environment. The debates over the use of the environment are not necessarily a matter of degree, but rather they revolve around the quality and nature of the exploitation and consumption. These environmental debates, moreover, are all-encompassing in that land, air, water, public and private resources, science, technology, the economy, and human life itself are topics for discussion and government action. Hays offers the following insight: "Although environmental values have invaded all levels of the human world and have become influential, they have not become dominant." The theme of his book is clear:

As environmental values gained momentum and struggled for more recognition, they have encountered resistance. It is more than misleading to argue that those who shape the institutions of community, state, region, nation, and the world have become fully converted to the wisdom of environmental values. Such values certainly have entered into their thinking, and even what they profess to desire, but in the institutional context of public affairs, they have yet to become as influential as development and material values. In this context it seems sensible to recognize the intense institutional resistance to public environmental objectives and the strength of the environmental political opposition.

Perhaps because I am a political scientist who studies the public policy process, I find his last few chapters to be the most interesting and significant. In the previous chapters, Hays gives us an understanding of how environmental affairs entered the conscience of the United States citizenry. He explains how environmental advocates were able to place environmental concerns onto institutional agendas. Then he focuses on how the role of government evolved into the area of environmental policy. He gives us an understanding of the concept of politics, and of the decision and implementation practices involved in the public policy process. He then turns his attention to "the structure of environmental politics" and its resultant policy outcomes.

Hays offers the obvious: Government and its institutions of policy development and implementation have a complex task in managing environmental affairs. Government faces a quandary as it wrestles with decisions that affect the environment. For example, government has always regulated the economy, as in the building of the infrastructure (bridges, roads, dams) and will continue to do so. But at what expense? Dams provide affordable energy costs, but salmon runs are being depleted; or, nuclear plants may serve as a long-term solution to energy needs, but what about hazardous waste disposal? Mayors and city councils may win elections because of their views on sustainable development but may have to recruit polluting industries into the city to secure a more stable tax and revenue base. More important, however, is the pressure placed on government by those political actors opposed to the protection and improvement of the environment. Environmental politics, in other words, is the acceptance without serious question [of] the nation's developmental objectives in terms of more jobs, greater material productivity, higher consumption, and higher levels of conventional gross national product. One indication of this inequality in the nation's objectives was the degree to which few environmental leaders appeared on the political scene; those who seemed friendly to some environmental objectives were placed under a considerable cloud and seemed compelled to speak of those objectives only as an afterthought amid the more compelling attractions of development.

For Hays, then, it is clear that environmental affairs were and continue to be supported only at the symbolic level by major and powerful actors, including government, corporate business, the professions, the media, and institutions of higher education. Although environmental affairs have reached an important degree of legitimacy, these powerful actors have chosen to accept the economic notion that the "greening of industry" is cost-prohibitive and may actually be detrimental to an individual's quality of life. Stated differently, the environmental opposition has been able to appeal to the self-interest of individuals, which is motivated by values of materialism, consumption, and comfort. By environmental opposition, Hays means well-organized efforts aimed at opposing attempts to protect and improve the environment. In the political-science lexicon, he is referring to interest-group politics. Hays notes:

There are two major sources of opposition to environmental objectives. One involves the defense of older economic, social, and political cultures that are deeply rooted in the American past and for whom new environmental values represent a threat to the old. The other is rooted more in the contemporary economic interests that consider environmental objectives to be a major restraint on their activities.

The government apparatus is ill equipped to deal with the well-organized environmental opposition. First, the environmental opposition possesses valuable political resources, including effective leadership, political skills and knowledge, a cohesive set of interests, scientific knowledge, technology, money, and legitimacy. These resources give the environmental opposition access to decision makers, regulators, and implementors at all levels of government. Second, the structure of government works to the advantage of the environmental opposition. In particular, separation of powers and federalism disperse power, making it difficult for environmental advocates to locate the governmental units that might be most receptive to their concerns. Economic interests, on the other hand, secured a congenial and mutually reinforcing relationship with local elites at all levels of government at the birth of the nation. And last, in the contemporary era, policy analysts claim "objectivity" and "neutrality" in making decisions, and rely on "cost-benefit" analysis in reaching decisions. These principles of the profession require that decisions be based on accurate information. However, the environmental opposition is able to assemble considerable amounts of scientific and economic data and marshal a bevy of "experts" to "inform" or at the least complicate the decisions of policy analysts. In the end, the analyst tends to be biased toward the information provided or simply takes no action. Environmental advocates generally lack the political resources to effectively engage the policy process.

What has Samuel P. Hays provided us in *A History of Environmental Politics Since 1945*? In his concluding remarks, Hays writes:

Understanding this new phenomenon—environmental affairs—in American society, then, is shaped heavily by the course of the political battles with which it is engaged, and one continually hopes for some perspective that can more adequately inform. Ways of thinking are called for that can place the different views about the environmental world and the human engagement it has engendered in a more overarching context to make sense out of the whole.

He continues:

First and foremost is the perspective of “knowledge in the making,” of the way in which inquiry into the environmental world has produced a factual basis for thinking that goes beyond the immediate fray of debate and competing visions. Little of that environmental world was known at midcentury, but by the end of the century, enough was known to outline how the environment worked and how humans worked in relationship to it. That knowledge provided the basis for an increasingly firm human perspective.

Hays has placed environmental affairs in the United States into a political framework. At the same time, he has clearly explained how environmental politics and affairs are central to the social and cultural fabric of the nation. He has placed this body of knowledge into historical context, suggesting that environmental politics and affairs will continue to evolve. In his attempt to capture the big picture, he has stressed the complex and the dynamic. Hays has provided a wealth of information, a “knowledge in the making.”

David E. Camacho

Northern Arizona University

American Byzantium: Photographs of Las Vegas. By Virgil Hancock III and Gregory McNamee (Albuquerque: University of Arizona Southwest Center Book, 2001)

Ancient history makes money in Las Vegas. Against the idealized backdrop of the dynastic period in Egypt, Caesar’s Rome, the ‘forty-niners’ gold rush days, medieval Camelots, and Caribbean pirates, visitors indulge in the material realms of history exaggerated to the superficial. Las Vegas is a secular spiritual site, a Mecca and monument of entertainment capitalism. History becomes in Las Vegas a pleasure market punctuated by imaginary, quaint, and sanitized cities that are, in contrast to the desert heat, cool and perennially at dusk. The complex human history of political evolution, conquest, and survival is cast into an abbreviated and encapsulating entertainment narrative. Against this backdrop, visitors are baptized by the sounds of coins dropping into stainless steel buckets and bathed by the colored lights of everywhere. Why the title *American Byzantium*? This book of photographs by Virgil Hancock and essay by Gregory McNamee is about Las Vegas, cultural capital of capitalism, and a parallel world, that of Byzantium, the trading and cultural capital of the ancient world.

Byzantium, founded in 667 B.C., was characterized by its role as a major trade center for Europe, Asia, and Africa during the first millennium. From Constantine to Constantinople to the capital of the Ottoman Empire, this was a worldly city, a commercial, intellectual, and spiritual center remembered as a place given to feasts, murderous politics, and icons, the “stuff of art history courses and auction house catalogs” (p. 56). The neon metropolis of Las Vegas is a pleasure dome at the crossroads of capitalist imagination, blending wealth and comfort in iconographic ways. Las Vegas is capitalism’s brothel, and the pleasure-for-sale is addictive. Performers and entertainers are likened to the narratives of Catholic saints or the myths of Greek gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus.

And, might we ask, who is empowered to record their images for our sake? Virgil Hancock III, of course. He writes in his introduction that the guardians of the corporate interest are ever prideful in their decision to extend reproduction rights for this book. Mr. Hancock photographed four basic categories: nighttime along the Strip; daytime signage and buildings throughout the county; interiors of casinos, stores, museums and malls; and people. The interiors include the sublime landscapes of The Forum Shops at Caesars, the four-layered Aladdin on grand-opening day, the interior of Paris (the interior of Paris is an odd description) and Venice. How can he not photograph the Eiffel Tower, obligatory for any (real) Parisian tourist? People? The technical demands of an eight-by-ten-inch camera dictate patience and contemplation. Even those stationary capitalists paying homage to the slot machine move enough to diffuse their recording on film. Perhaps it is ironic that only a few, among them Liberace and Bugsy Siegel in Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum and Hal Rothman, historian and Las Vegas critic, stood still, long enough, for a portrait. Most other visitors and inhabitants of imaginary Las Vegas disappear in the lengthy exposures of large format photography. The views are oddly absent of people.

Neon is seductive. All those colored lights—visiting Las Vegas is like living within a Kodachrome cartoon. But this magical narrative is not two dimensional, rather a complex virtual world. Everything in Las Vegas is designed for a visitor's visceral discovery; it is almost as if the illusionary plateau offers a view from every conceivable angle. Every angle, corner, and visual fragment is dynamic because it is simply designed that way. Every day, a legion of workers busily erects, dismantles, and rebuilds one monument after another. This is no longer the place that John Charles Frémont, western explorer, described as a fertile and marshy plain. Every view is sanitized with hope; even the deconstructed highways and the cinderblock walls are colorful, rich in compatible reds and blues. The Turner-esque skies—open space for sentiment, wealth, and happiness—offer a romance for a moment, or for a quarter. The arch is a standard architectural feature used to welcome visitors entering communities, and whether the arch is in Modesto, California, or in Reno, the concept of welcoming is dynamic in Las Vegas. The entire city, if it can indeed even be called an integral whole, is an arch, a welcome sign, and a poster for gratuitous entertainment. Hope, not water, springs eternal from *las vegas*. The meadows from which Las Vegas derives its name are metaphors now, both visually and literally. Joan Dideon proclaimed that nobody remembers the past. And the paradox of Las Vegas, in all its (*anti*-) historical luminance, grows in complexity as we know less and less of history, of ancient Rome, of Constantinople, of Egypt's contribution to global culture. Las Vegas immortalizes history's clichés. An observer from another planet might imagine that we celebrate history in Las Vegas, deriving pleasure from our homage. Instead, history is reduced in *American Byzantium*, both in the text's references to ancient eras and in the photographs. This happens not so much by virtue of what is included, but by what is excluded. So it is with the city, too.

Peter Goin
University of Nevada, Reno

Picturing Chinatown: Art and Orientalism in San Francisco. By Anthony Lee (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001)

Utilizing his knowledge of photography schools, photographic techniques, art history, and history, Anthony Lee has written a detailed study of the picturing of San Francisco's Chinatown—the images and the image-makers—between 1850 and 1950. Chinatown was central to the early development of the city because it was located between the docks and the Euro-American town. Therefore newcomers arriving by boat passed through the increasingly colorful ghetto that captured the attention of some famous photographers and artists from outside the community as well as some from within the community, some born in San Francisco and others passing through. Lee is concerned with how photographs and paintings attempted to produce a suitable image of Chinatown and its population for people who lived elsewhere, and to relate them to the political and social developments that affected Chinatown and its inhabitants. He asserts that the images speak most directly to the needs, desires, and assumptions of their makers" (p. 8) rather than representing what actually was taking place.

Lee begins by describing Chinatown and the interest of early photographers in capturing the exoticism of the people and place. He focuses upon the photography on the streets and in the books—almost all of the photographers being non-Chinese. He then turns to the revolutionary Chinese artists of the 1920s who supported the Chinese republican revolution but were disillusioned by the subsequent warlordism and invasions by the Japanese. Finally, he turns his attention to Charlie Low's Forbidden City as an example of the Chinese-American transformation that tended away from Chinese models and closer to American values and behavior.

This is an excellent but flawed study. On the positive side, Lee reminds historians of the importance of images in the writing of history. He creates a mosaic of several early Euro-American photographers, their backgrounds, and the developments in Chinatown. Isaiah West Taber, Arnold Genthe, Louis Sellman, Hansel Mieth, Dorothea Lange, and others, both well-known and relatively obscure professionals and amateurs, are discussed in detail. He analyzes their styles, use of lighting, training, and goals in pictorializing a Chinatown that had already become a tourist attraction in the 1860s. Then he switches to the revolutionary Chinese artists, particularly Yun Gee, of the 1920s. The Chinese Revolutionary Artists' Club exemplified the meeting of politics and art as the painters attempted to balance modernism, Chinese republican visions, and the harsh life of Chinatown. Finally, Lee examines Charlie Low's nightclub, Forbidden City, and its performers, who "enacted a narrative of difference, whereby to dance like whites, they first had to avow their racial origins" (p. 249). It was this hybridity—the recognition of Chinese Americans by a non-Chinese audience and by Chinese Americans themselves—that "may be Chinatown's most powerful legacy."

What Lee missed was how Chinese Americans viewed themselves and Chinatown. For the late nineteenth century he could find few examples of works by Chinese photographers and rationalized that the cost of portraits was beyond the financial ability of the majority of Chinese immigrants. However, an examination of Chinese identity and residence papers, immigration and emigration applications, miscellaneous correspondence from the Bureau of Immigration, and, most important of all, family photographs in China and in Chinese-American family albums clearly demonstrates the results of Chinese-American portrait photographers. The United States government required photographs. Photographs also were sent to loved ones, especially wives and family members, in China. Some were superior in setting and technique, in contrast to the examples of Lai Yong's work (p. 31) that Lee cites as probably typical. The photographs in the National Archives and Records Administration show many similarities to portrait photographs taken by non-Chinese photographers. Although portraits and special occasion photo-

graphs were the bread and butter of the photography studios, several Chinese-American photographers in those studios did creative photography. The Suen brothers (whose work for the DeYoung Museum was a source of regular income) and those employed in the studios owned by May Chan and Kam Wah Lee (as well as in a studio on Kearney Street) photographed landscapes, daily activities, and other subjects from the 1930s to the 1950s and beyond.

Another problem is Lee's handling of the transition from the revolutionary artists to the Forbidden City. The transition would have been stronger if Lee had examined the *Chinese Digest*, an English-language publication that had a staff photographer who captured the "American" character and activities of the second and third generations of Chinese Americans. Photographers from other Chinese-American magazines and newspapers would have made the Forbidden City chapter more comprehensible as representing part of a larger development. Do these photographers reveal something different from John Gutmann, Dorothea Lange, and Hansel Mieth? I would imagine that they did.

Lee includes many assertions that are not necessarily valid. For example, he states, "Rarely—I count only a handful of photographs—are the Chinese and non-Chinese poor pictured together" (p. 262). This might be the case for San Francisco, where the boundaries of Chinatown were strictly drawn until the civil-rights movement, but if one looks at the Los Angeles Chinatown, which bordered on the Mexican-American ghetto, the interaction of the poor and working class from both cultures can be seen in numerous photographs. Photographs from towns and rural areas, such as the Chinatowns in Nevada, show even more interaction. One of my favorites is a photograph now at the Huntington Library. It shows a Chinese physician in front of a two-story Victorian house (the office of several Chinese physicians according to the signs over the entrances) with his elegantly dressed non-Chinese patients. I would be surprised if San Francisco did not have similar photographs.

Nevertheless, the rich collection of photographs and Lee's discussions of them are invaluable in understanding and picturing what occurred in San Francisco's Chinatown between 1850 and 1950.

Sue Fawn Chung
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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