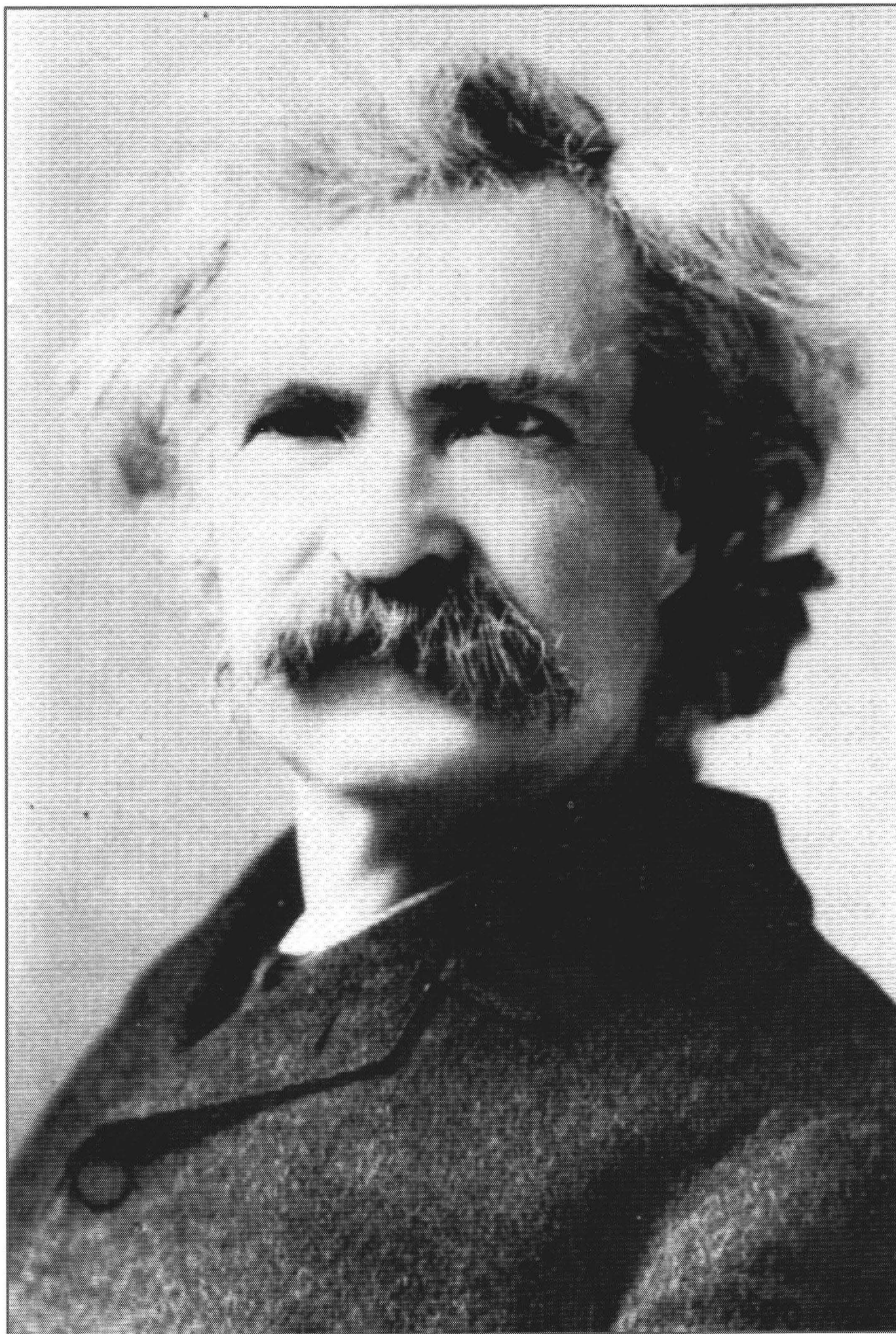


Nevada

Historical Society Quarterly



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Washoe Mark Twain

JAMES E. CARON

As city editor of the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise* in late 1862, Sam Clemens rehearsed a comic persona of a sometimes bumbling, sometimes wise-cracking reporter. While uncovering the facts to report the truth, this wise-cracking reporter also prospected the town to discover where its jokes lay. By elaborating his initially unnamed comic newspaper persona, Clemens created his earliest version of Mark Twain, what might be called Washoe Mark Twain. By combining would-be reporting with clowning and teasing, Washoe Mark Twain comically reflected the manners of the mining community on the Comstock Lode: playful, boisterous, uncouth, and extravagant.

Sam Clemens also embodied these manners. When he quit his reporter's job and left Virginia City in May of 1864 never again to return, he left behind not one but probably three aborted duels. How did he manage to become entangled in these duels? With newspaper raillery, that is, by teasing and mocking people in print. He had joked in his column about a rumor that money raised by prominent Carson City women for the Sanitary Commission Fund (the forerunner of the American Red Cross) was being diverted to "a miscegenation society in the east." Mr. Cutler, the husband of one of the women, may have offered to duel Clemens, since a draft of his challenge exists. The next day Clemens ribbed the staff of the *Virginia City Daily Union* in an editorial, by wondering if their pledges to the Sanitary Fund would ever be redeemed. That maneuver brought him

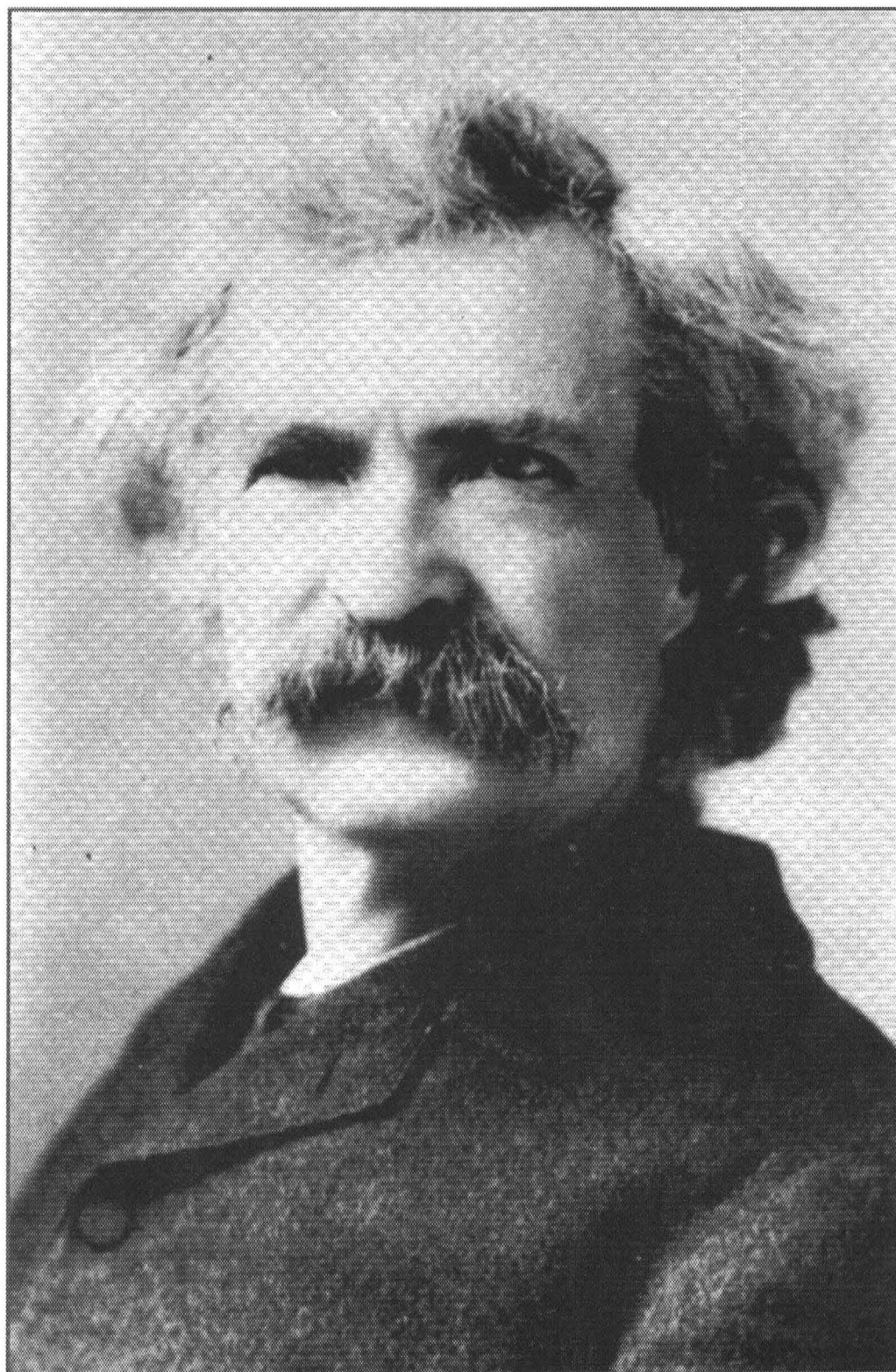
James E. Caron is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, where he teaches American Literature and directs the university's undergraduate Honors Program. His research interests include the American comic tradition, mark Twain, popular culture, and theories on humor and laughter. His most recent publications include "From Ethology to Aesthetics: Evolution as a Theoretical Paradigm for Research on Laughter, Humor, and other Comic Phenomena," appearing in *Humor: An International Journal of Humor Research* 15.3 (2002): 245-81. He is currently working on a book tentatively titled, *Mark Twain, Unsanctified Newspaper Reporter: Comic Traditions and Contexts for Sam Clemens in the 1860s*, from which "Washoe Mark Twain" is excerpted.

closest to a duel. Only James Laird, a *Virginia City Daily Union* editor, was apparently issued a challenge by Clemens, but Wilmington, a printer from the *Union*, maintained that he was ready to fight him too. One of Sam's closest friends, Steve Gillis, offered to fight Wilmington while Clemens engaged Laird.

Undoubtedly Sam did not think dueling over jokes was his most hilarious accomplishment. It might best represent, nonetheless, his participation in the Nevada Territory's majority community. The frontier community for which Clemens tailored his Mark Twain persona was composed of those who were eligible for citizenship, rather than of those who actually lived in the recently created Territory of Nevada.¹ Citizenship and its rights, such as voting, were modeled on the practices of states that were already in the Union. This circumstance meant that the majority community along the Comstock and throughout the territory was overwhelmingly white and male. The fact that the silver strikes in Nevada had attracted hordes of men from all over the United States was also crucial in forming this majority community. "The boys," a phrase that appeared in sketches signed by "Mark Twain" and in the correspondence of Sam Clemens, was the colloquial designation for a particular sense of the community, one which included the habit of verbal and practical jokes.²

Playful joking behavior by Sam Clemens was therefore to be expected. For more than a year prior to his brush with dueling, he had established a considerable reputation in the Nevada Territory as well as in California for teasing folks in the columns of the *Territorial Enterprise* as "Mark Twain." Several people had missed the playful intent in his joke about the Sanitary Fund, however, and were insulted, not amused. Perhaps one could not joke about displays of patriotism in the midst of the Civil War. In any case, the rejoinders to his railery were clearly intended as insults, were taken as such by Clemens, and his formal challenge to duel Laird followed. The initial playfulness had evaporated quickly.³

Part of the problem came from the fact, no doubt, that for some people the gibes about the Sanitary Fund were the latest outrages in a series that had been perpetrated for laughs by "Mark Twain," the signature that more or less functioned as alter ego to Sam Clemens but sometimes also served as a literary comic character. In any case, much of the laughter the Mark Twain persona/character had generated in the first fifteen months of its existence from February 1863 to May 1864 had clearly come from a propensity for teasing. By the end of that period Clemens, in the guise of his comic figure, had made fun of virtually all of the important men in the Nevada Territory and California, starting with both governors. He had also given a fellow newspaper reporter an unflattering nickname, "The Unreliable," and then made up comic stories about his uncouth behavior. These tales were immensely popular and helped propel the career of Sam Clemens as Mark Twain on the West Coast. Chaffing the *Union* staff about their Sanitary Fund pledges and the Carson City ladies about the disposition of their money for the fund was, thus, standard behavior for



Mark Twain (*Nevada Historical Society*)

Washoe Mark Twain. So much of Washoe Mark Twain's comic personality consisted of making fun of people that eighteenth-century writers like Joseph Addison or Henry Fielding would have said he had a humor for raillery—a disposition for bantering and teasing that was generally good-natured. During the 1860s, the Nevada Territory's largest mining population, Virginia City, displayed a freedom from conventional manners that approached the license of carnival. In his Washoe phase, Mark Twain was a comic figure whose raillery embodied that extravagant freedom from a respectable norm.⁴

Manners in Virginia City in 1864 were probably not different from other nineteenth-century American towns, before they had outgrown the rawness of their frontier past. Frontier manners allowed for joking behaviors on a scale hard to comprehend today, and people in frontier Nevada enjoyed all kinds of jokes. The ubiquitous nature of stock speculation during the Comstock silver boom and its accompanying giddiness, also seems to have affected the behavior of folks. Perhaps frontier joking reached its greatest heights, then, in Nevada. In any case, the habit of joking started right at the top. Before Charles Farrar Browne in the guise of Artemus Ward, the most famous comic figure of the day, left the Comstock following a tour in 1863, Governor Nye signed a document, complete with his official seal, appointing the funny man "Speaker of Pieces to the People of the Nevada Territory."⁵ The Nevada Territory's true claim to having the most jokers per capita must rest, nonetheless, on the strength of its unique institution, the so-called "Third House."

This strange institution of Carson City appeared in 1862 and lasted at least seven years. It is, apparently, without a parallel in American history. Intended by its prankster founders to burlesque the processes and results of popular legislation, it met informally, in rear rooms, saloons, the schoolhouse, the Presbyterian Church, the Assembly itself. Legislators, lawyers, hangers-on, and townsmen made up the membership [who] made fun of governors' messages, proposed absurd bills, told lies, punned, played tricks, baited prominent politicians, and "elected" state officials.⁶

During the final shenanigans of the Third House following the 1864 legislative session, Sam Clemens helped present a giant wooden comb to an elected official, William Claggett, who was famous for his unruly hair. With folks in the territorial capital hosting a quasi-formal institution of joking behavior, "the boys" in Nevada's mining camps provided spontaneous exhibitions. For example, when a drunk in the street one evening stripped off his shirt and began hollering for Bill to "come out," individuals in the crowd that had quickly assembled took turns spinning the would-be boxer about and calling "Here he is," much to everyone's amusement.⁷

"The boys" working for the *Enterprise* typified this impish, joking spirit. Just before Clemens joined the newspaper, it was published on A Street. A shed attached to the main building served as the staff's kitchen, dining room, and bunkhouse. The cook at the time was so inept at keeping the food free from bugs and mice hair that he was finally fired. When his successors also proved

to be unsatisfactory cooks, the men scattered to different boarding houses. Before that dispersal a favorite joke of the *Enterprise* staff was to invite a friend or an acquaintance to dinner to see if his stomach could stand—not the food itself or what might be found in it—but the yarns about what had supposedly been found at previous meals.⁸ Other joking instances are easily added. The *Enterprise's* editor and owner, Joe Goodman, recalled that Alf Doten, a member of his staff, would pretend to new acquaintances that “Mark Twain” meant ordering two drinks, something which Clemens supposedly did for himself and Doten.⁹ After William Wright, the *Enterprise* reporter writing under the pseudonym “Dan DeQuille,” returned to Nevada from a vacation, he and Clemens shared rooms. Their visitors were always ready to play jokes on them, like rigging buckets of water to fall on them when the door opened or setting bells to ring in the middle of the night. One evening Clemens and Wright returned to their rooms, opened the door, and were startled to discover a huge man menacing them with a sword. When they called on him to surrender and received no answer, they realized the “man” was a dummy holding Clemens’s souvenir Japanese sword. *Enterprise* printers supposedly hid Sam’s lampshade whenever possible just to hear him swear. An often-repeated tale involved a fake meerschaum pipe. In one account, Clemens was told that the staff wanted to give him a new pipe, and the point was to have him pretend surprise at the gift and deliver an “extempore” speech. In another account, the idea was to have Clemens discard his favorite pipe, which was so odoriferous it was called “the remains.” Perhaps the most outrageous joke played on Clemens though, was a fake robbery, which was staged after he had lectured in Virginia City and had been given a fancy gold watch.¹⁰

Clemens had his moments, of course, on the other end of the joke. Calvin Higbie, to whom *Roughing It* is dedicated, was a partner in a mining venture with Sam and his brother, Orion Clemens, before Sam became a newspaper writer. Sam played a joke on him the day they met. While returning home from a day’s work on another mining claim, Higbie said that “a total stranger rushed up” to him “and began shaking hands cordially,” and declared that he was moving in with him.¹¹ Clemens managed to talk Higbie into letting him stay without mentioning Orion’s letter of introduction explaining that he was coming to help Higbie work on their joint mining claim. The ultimate joke was, perhaps, the fact that Clemens never did work on their claim. By endowing Washoe Mark Twain with a humor for raillery, then, Clemens reflected not only his own but also a communal habit of joking typical in mining camps and towns throughout the Nevada Territory.

Clemens also comically burlesqued “the boys’” behavior with Washoe Mark Twain’s imaginary social manners. The first three letters signed “Mark Twain” were published in the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise* on February 3, 5, and 8, 1863. They began a series of misadventures for Washoe Mark Twain and a comic sidekick, “the Unreliable,” that would metamorphose into comic sketches

involving Mark Twain and another companion, Mr. Brown, in Clemens's 1866 travel letters about the Kingdom of Hawai'i. Remarkably, at the outset Clemens did not mind making Washoe Mark Twain's behavior similar to that of the clodish Unreliable. Both characters apparently crashed a party described in the first letter, and both also looked foolish in separate incidents. Mark Twain confessed to his "girlish passion" for looking into mirrors, and the Unreliable pressed his face against a parlor window. Later, both guarded the supper table and punch-bowl "until the punch entirely evaporated," whereupon both rejoined "the hazy dance." In the second letter, Mark Twain again joked about the Unreliable's drinking capacity, but when a description of a wedding followed, Mark Twain was "confused" by all the "shampain."¹²

Although both Washoe Mark Twain and the Unreliable exhibit bad manners and foolish behavior, Clemens made sure his comic alter ego was not seen as being in the same league as the inane Unreliable. A good example of the difference between the two emerged in the first letter, which reported the mildly comic way in which Washoe Mark Twain sang a song, while the Unreliable sang his song in a grotesquely comic way. Taken together, these first three Mark Twain letters centered on the bad manners and vulgarity of the Unreliable, rather than on those of the newly-minted Mark Twain. Readers are told that the Unreliable blithely wore other people's clothes, tiddled so much that drinking a glass of water was nearly fatal, acted like a coward about fighting a duel, pestered the bride and groom "like an evil spirit" at a wedding, and stole silver spoons along with a copy of the New Testament.¹³ During the wedding reception in the third letter, however, the behavior of the Unreliable reached a climax of fantastic repugnance.

... he carried away a codfish under one arm, and Mr. Curry's plug hat full of sour-kROUT [sic] under the other. He posted himself right where he could be most in the way, and fell to eating as comfortably as if he were boarding with Trumbo by the week . . . I believe he would have eaten a corpse last night, if he had one. Finally, Curry came and took his hat away from him and tore one of his coat tails off and threatened to thresh him with it, and that checked his appetite for a moment. Instead of sneaking out of the house, then, as anybody would have done who had any self-respect, he shoved his codfish into the pocket of his solitary coat tail (leaving at least eight inches of it sticking out), and crowded himself into a double quadrille. He had it all to himself pretty soon; because the order "gentlemen to the right" came, and he passed from one lady to another, around the room, and wilted each and every one of them with the horrible fragrance of his breath. Even Trumbo, himself, fainted. Then the Unreliable, with a placid expression of satisfaction upon his countenance, marched forth and swept the parlors like a pestilence. When the guests had been persecuted as long as they could stand it, though, they got him to drink some kerosene oil, which neutralized the sour-kROUT and codfish, and restored his breath to about its usual state, or even improved it, perhaps, for it generally smells like a hospital.¹⁴

"The Unreliable" was a wild caricature of Clement Rice, a rival reporter with the *Virginia Daily Union*. Clemens originated the character within weeks of starting work on the *Enterprise* in order to stir up a mock feud with Rice during the

1862 legislative session. In these first three Mark Twain letters, Clemens used that on-going mock feud as a narrative framework for introducing a second comic character, "Mark Twain," along with fictional incidents, that effectively escalated the feud. The creation of Mark Twain was therefore an elaboration of the bantering scenario with which Clemens had been teasing Rice for months by calling the veteran reporter "the Unreliable."¹⁵

Both the Unreliable and Washoe Mark Twain parody miners' behavior. Washoe Mark Twain was fond of drinking, more or less admitted he did not go to church much, and pursued ladies.¹⁶ If the earliest version of Washoe Mark Twain was invented to aid and abet a joke on one of Sam Clemens's fellow newspapermen, the character also comically replicated a stereotypically uncouth miner: He was one of "the boys," fond of women and whiskey, and not much on religion. Add to that profile the habit of piling good-natured ridicule onto Rice, a fellow reporter, imitating the joking behavior often found in the mining camps, and it is no wonder Washoe Mark Twain was an instant hit. Nor is it surprising that Joe Goodman was ready to devote space in his newspaper to the character.

As a comic example of "the boys'" behavior, Washoe Mark Twain possessed shortcomings that must have had multiple effects on his Virginia City audience—miners and non-miners alike. In comparison to the Unreliable's outlandish behavior, Washoe Mark Twain's behavior was tamer, consisted more of foibles than vices, was more ludicrous than ridiculous, and presumably generated laughter characterized more by the tolerance of humor than by the scorn of satire. Taken together, however, Washoe Mark Twain and the Unreliable can be read as humorous parodies of a typical miner. Both figures certainly made fun of the semi-civilized behavior found in the mining camps. Insofar as the Unreliable's actions were beyond the pale, some miners might have considered him a satiric figure, an example of how not to behave. Though not quite as wild, from the viewpoint of respectable folks in Virginia City, the Washoe version of Mark Twain would be a satiric figure too, since his behavior was also to be eschewed rather than imitated.

Once developed by Clemens as a comic figure, Washoe Mark Twain became a full-blown, wise-cracking character whose humor for raillery produced comic insults and lampoons of individuals, burlesques of literary styles and genres, and satires of human behavior and institutions. With such funny business, Sam Clemens made his reputation as a professional writer, one that almost immediately exceeded the boundaries of the Nevada Territory and reached San Francisco. In the course of his meteoric success on the *Comstock*, however, Clemens also learned that exceeding boundaries was not always a sign of success. In wide-open mining camps and towns, elastic rules about what constituted rude behavior allowed for great latitude in the kind of humorous ridicule that could be taken as a joke. There was a limit, nonetheless, beyond which a mad-cap reporter's bantering could not go. Clemens exceeded that limit with the

Sanitary Fund episode, especially with his joke about miscegenation. Duels, not laughter, were the results.

The combination of serious reporter and full-time clown meant that in addition to having poor manners, Washoe Mark Twain was subverting the reporter's trade. This subversion was happening even before the character was invented because Clemens enjoyed mixing fact with fantasy in his local column. He presented facetious yarns as though they were serious news items, effectively burlesquing the concept of a local column by imitating its form while mocking its function. Such mixing was a dangerous exercise in boundary blurring, since it effectively mocked any expectation that a story printed in the newspaper was true. This play with journalistic conventions was of paramount importance for the funny business of Washoe Mark Twain. Clemens installed Washoe Mark Twain within the sober columns of a respectable newspaper as a comic character who disrupted the orderly processes of journalism. He inverted and subverted them in carnival fashion, even as he ostensibly maintained them. The disruption resulting from being a reporter and simultaneously mocking that role led at times to confusion. As the *Carson City Independent* acknowledged on 13 February 1864: "Our friend, Mark Twain, is such a joker that we cannot tell when he is really in earnest."¹⁷ The effect was the same as teasing someone with a deadpan face. In addition, mixing the facetious with the serious led to the printed practical joke, the literary hoax. This species of comic writing was a major cause of the challenges to duel and, therefore, to the hasty exit of Sam Clemens from the Comstock in 1864.

Although Washoe Mark Twain could be subversive of journalistic conventions, the figure also comically mimicked his fellow reporters as a cap-and-bells journalist, parodying local newspaper editors' habit of mock-feuding. The parody began with the Virginia City custom of reporters ribbing one another, a printed version of the Comstock's rampant joking behavior. Clemens joked with local reporters on rival papers (Clement Rice and Adair Wilson of the *Virginia Daily Union*, Charles Parker of the *Virginia Evening Bulletin*, Charles Sumner of the *Gold Hill Daily News*) as well as with William Wright of the *Enterprise*. The immediate success of the Washoe Mark Twain character stemmed from a clever manipulation of this existing custom of badinage among newspapermen. At first Clemens conformed to the rules of the game, kidding Rice about being an unreliable reporter because of actual mistakes in his column. Then he trumped the custom by making up outrageous peccadillos and ascribing them to Rice. By telling stretchers about the behavior of Rice, the Unreliable, Clemens, as Washoe Mark Twain, raised the stakes for which the reporters' mock feuds were usually played. He did not invent the comic game of mock combats in print, but he did beat everyone at it with his extravagant manner of playing.

The strategy of extravagance made the Mark Twain pseudonym well known within weeks of its appearance, especially given the encouragement of his edi-

tor-in-chief, Joe Goodman. The notoriety of the pseudonym as well as the good-natured reception by Clemens's peers is suggested by Parker's local columns in the *Virginia Evening Bulletin* and Sumner's in the *Gold Hill Daily News* in the summer and fall of 1863. These two papers were newer than the *Union* or *Enterprise*: The *Bulletin* commenced publication 6 July 1863, and the *News* began on 12 October 1863. The local columnists for both papers enjoyed a relationship of friendly raillery with Mark Twain. For example, during the first month of the *Bulletin*'s publication in July of 1863, Parker mentions either Sam Clemens or Mark Twain in nineteen separate items, almost all of them in the familiar mock-feud style. In addition to kidding Mark Twain (or sometimes Sam Clemens) about miscues as a reporter, other local reporters claimed that Mark Twain drank too much, ate too much, and stole—among other faults that sound a lot like what Mark Twain had been saying about the Unreliable. Some items illustrate the no-holds-barred tactics of Washoe newspaper ridicule. For example, when large and evil-smelling boots are left on a stage, they are said to be Mark Twain's. Other items suggest Washoe Mark Twain's notoriety: his criticism of a play, a *bon mot* uttered that day, and a rumor that he has proposed marriage are all considered worthy of mention.¹⁸

The facetiousness of the newspapermen's banter and the camaraderie behind it can be more clearly understood when compared with the blackguarding that routinely went on among the editors and reporters on Nevada and California newspapers. An example of this more serious kind of exchange is found in what editorialists said of one another during the debate on Nevada's first proposed constitution. When the *Virginia Daily Union* abruptly switched to a negative position on the issue, the *Enterprise* referred to it as "the Weathercock" and as "the Virginia Daily Stultifier, bartered, abandoned, unprincipled and daily stultifying itself," while another newspaper was satisfied with "contemptible, word-eating, blackmail sheet." The *Union* responded to one attack by referring to the rival paper as "that venal purchasable smut-machine."¹⁹ The apparently severe nature of the roughhouse raillery of Washoe Mark Twain should be understood in comparison to these venomous exchanges, as should the possibility of deadly consequences. Reminiscences from those who were journalists in Nevada at the time are clear about the reality that an editor had to both fight well and write well to be a success. Joe Goodman was just such an editor, and his duel with Tom Fitch of the *Virginia Daily Union*, a sensation in its day, became legendary afterward.²⁰

In this context, Washoe Mark Twain, as one half of a mock-feud that comically duplicated the good-natured ridicule of local reporters along the Comstock, makes perfect sense. Such teasing in print reflected frontier values, especially as embodied in a habit of practical jokes. Clemens did not use Washoe Mark Twain just to replicate Comstock customs. The mock feud with the Unreliable also functioned as a parody of more serious feuding among the Comstock newspapermen. In addition, Washoe Mark Twain's comic attitude about his

reportorial duties meant that the persona mocked a newspaper's claim to report the news as it happens. The subversiveness of these parodic effects, however, did not detract from the figure's popularity. The instant success of Mark Twain during the time Clemens lived and worked in Nevada occurred because Mark Twain's laughable manners as well as his humor of newspaper raillery comically reflected the communal values of "the boys" along the Comstock in the early 1860s. Even the miscue with the Sanitation Fund jokes did not derail that success, which established a foundation for what would become the most famous comic persona in the postbellum United States.

NOTES

¹"Frontier community" thus operates here in a relatively narrow sense, not to indicate an opposition of indigenous people versus Euro-American pioneers nor notions of ethnic identities (e.g., Chinese immigrants versus white settlers). These concepts are from a larger debate among historians between a Turnerian construct of frontier and a less Anglo-centric narrative of continental conquest suggested by the term "borderland." See Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review*, 104 (June 1999), 814-41.

²Late in life, Clemens talked about the boyish quality of practical joking and its approbation in the mining camps of Nevada. See Albert Bigelow Paine, ed. and intro., *Mark Twain's Autobiography* (vol II) (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1924), 305-06.

³The story of the duels can be followed in Mark Twain's, *Mark Twain's Letters, vol I* (1853-1866) ed., Edgar M. Branch, Michael B. Frank, Kenneth M. Sanderson, et. al. (Berkeley: University of California Press 1988), 287-301.

⁴Russell R. Elliott gives a very good idea of how close Virginia City could come to a spirit of carnival in *History of Nevada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), 147.

⁵Richard Gordon Lillard, "Studies in Washoe Journalism and Humor." (Ph.D. diss., part II, State University of Iowa, 1943), 83.

⁶*Ibid.*, 11; see also *Mark Twain's Letters*, 272-73.

⁷*Virginia Evening Bulletin* (23 February 1864); *Gold Hill Daily News* (27 October 1863); both articles are found in Dave Basso, ed., *Mark Twain in the Virginia Evening Bulletin and Gold Hill Daily News* (Sparks, Nevada: Falcon Hill Press, 1981), 30, 62.

⁸Effie Mona Mack, *Mark Twain in Nevada* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), 208.

⁹Joseph T. Goodman, "Joseph Goodman's Memories of [Mark Twain the] Humorist's Early Days," *San Francisco Examiner* (22 April 1910), 3.

¹⁰These stories can be found in William Wright, "Salad Days of Mark Twain," *San Francisco Examiner* (19 March 1893), p. 13; William Wright, "Reporting with Mark Twain," *California Illustrated* (4 July 1893), pp. 170-78; Arthur McEwan, "In the Heroic Days," *San Francisco Examiner* (22 January 1893), p. 15; Alf Doten, "Early Journalism in Nevada, Part II," *The Nevada Magazine*, 1 (October 1899), p. 181-89; George Wharton James, "Mark Twain and the Pacific Coast," *The Pacific Monthly*, 24 (August 1910), pp. 115-32.

¹¹Michael J. Phillips, "Reminiscences of Mark Twain by his Partner, Calvin Higbie," *The Saturday Evening Post* (11 September 1920), pp. 22-23, 69-70, 73-74.

¹²Quotes from these two Mark Twain letters are found in *Early Tales and Sketches*, vol. I (1851-1864). vol. 15 of *The Works of Mark Twain*, eds. Edgar M. Branch and Robert H. Hirst (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 195, 196, 203.

¹³*Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 208-09.

¹⁵Clemens most likely encountered Clement T. Rice during the first Territorial Legislature, which met from 1 October to 29 November 1861, when Rice was covering the session for the *Carson City Silver Age*. The *Silver Age* would become the *Virginia Daily Union* in November of 1862, with Rice still as one of its reporters. Clemens and Rice were probably friends long before that date. A 25 October 1861 letter to Jane Clemens tells of Clemens's interest in a mining claim owned by Rice, and a 12 May 1862 letter to Orion takes note of more mining claims involving Rice. See *Mark Twain's Letters*, 131, 135, 206, 211.

¹⁶These qualities are displayed, respectively, in the following early sketches: "Silver Bars—How Assayed," "A Sunday in Carson," and "Territorial Sweets," *Early Tales and Sketches*, 210, 220, 190.

¹⁷Quoted in Henry Nash Smith, ed., *Mark Twain of the "Enterprise"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 159.

¹⁸*Gold Hill News* (22 October 1863); *Virginia Evening Bulletin* (17 July, 21 July 1863); and *Gold Hill News* (28 October 1863).

¹⁹Quoted in Paul Fatout, *Mark Twain in Virginia City* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), 142-43.

²⁰Rollin M. Daggett, "Daggett's Recollections," *San Francisco Examiner* (22 January 1893), 15; Sam Davis, ed., *The History of Nevada*, 2 volumes (Reno: Elms Publishing Company, 1913), 395, 451-52, 462-63, 467; Thomas Fitch, "Fitch Recalls Mark Twain in Bonanza Times," *San Francisco Chronicle* (30 March 1919), p. 6F; Charles C. Goodwin, *As I Remember Them* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Commercial Club, 1913), 187; McEwan, "In the Heroic Days," p. 15.

Mark Twain's Aurora Cabins

Site of his "First Success"

CLIFFORD ALPHEUS SHAW

We lived in a little cabin and cooked for ourselves; and altogether it was a hard life, though a hopeful one.

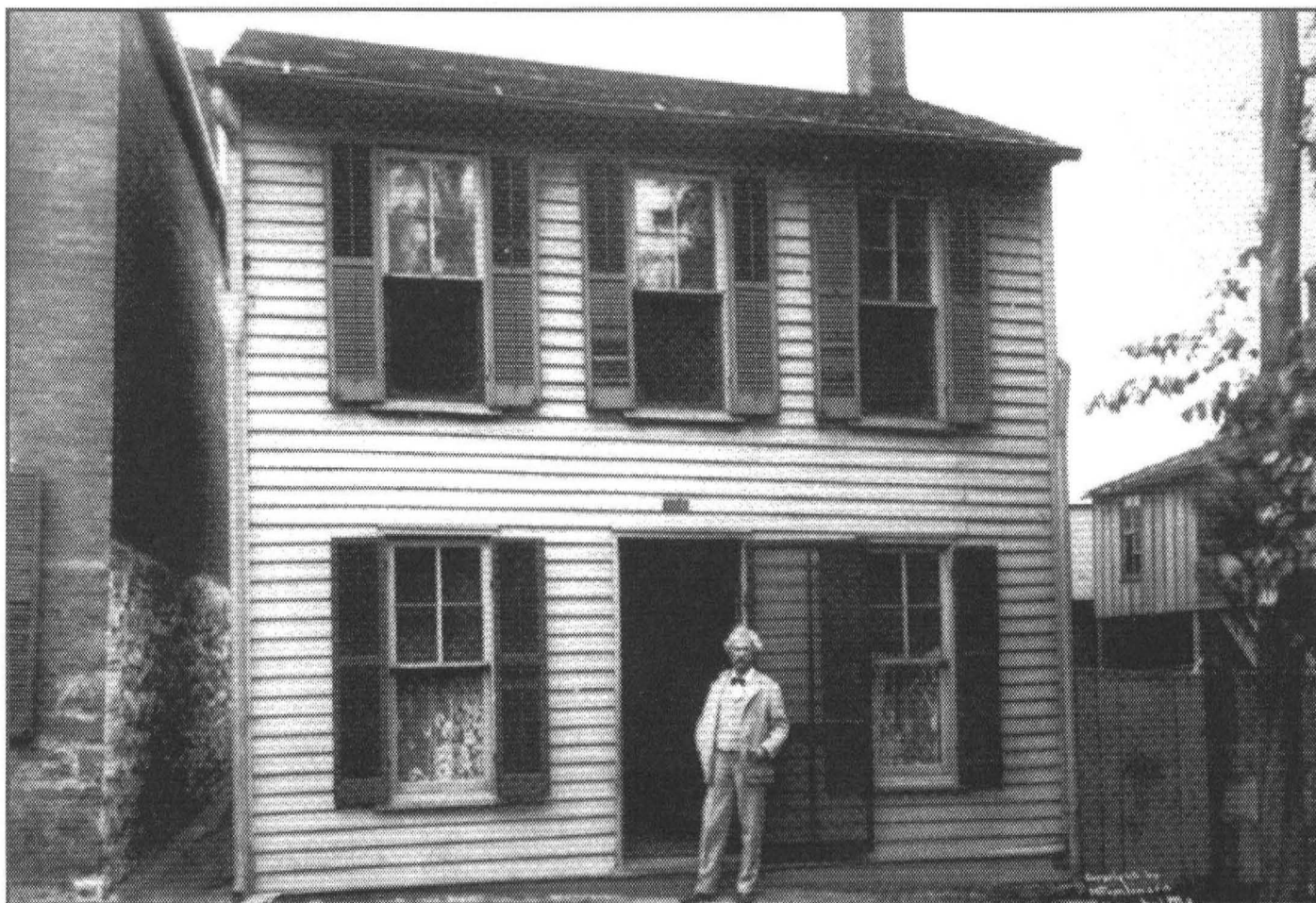
*-Mark Twain, *Roughing It**

INTRODUCTION

During his remarkable seventy-four year life, Mark Twain lived in homes ranging from a two-room cabin where he was born Samuel L. Clemens in 1835, to magnificent homes in the eastern United States and in many parts of Europe. His more important residences, including his birthplace at Florida, Missouri, his boyhood home in Hannibal, Missouri, and his homes in Elmira, New York, and Hartford, Connecticut have been preserved and are visited by thousands each year.

Although Mark Twain lived in many stately homes, and counted the world's social elite, including kings, queens, and American presidents, as his friends, he began his career as a writer in a dirt-floor cabin living with miners and prospectors on the western frontier. While many have visited the homes where he wrote his most famous works, few have traveled to Aurora, Nevada, the place where he got his start as a writer. This once prosperous mining town had a population of over 5,000 at the height of the Civil War. By 1865 the town's fortunes plummeted when the mines ran out of gold ore. Today it is deserted and its buildings are gone. The cabins where 26 year-old Sam Clemens wrote

Clifford Alpheus Shaw, now retired from the US Forest Service, spent the last 13 years of his career in public service on the Bridgeport Ranger District, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. He now lives in Suches, a small mountain community northeast of Atlanta, Georgia. While at Bridgeport, Clifford was responsible for administering the mines and historical resources in and around the ghost town of Aurora, Nevada. He is the author of the booklet, *A Boom Town Directory and Ghost Town Guide to Aurora*, (Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, 1996). Clifford has spent the last three summers as an archaeological volunteer for the Forest Service at Bridgeport.



Mark Twain in front of his Hannibal, Missouri boyhood home in 1902. (*Courtesy of the Mark Twain Foundation*)

newspaper stories during the summer of 1862 that led to his first writing job have not only completely disappeared, their locations in Aurora have been lost and forgotten.

The following review of historical documents focuses on Clemens' residences and living conditions during the six-months he lived in Aurora. The aim of this review is to bring to light information regarding where and how he lived during this critical turning point in his life. In an effort to dispel, or to show the source of, the many myths and stories associated with his famous cabin and writing debut, many first hand accounts written in Clemens's lifetime are included.

"SMITTEN WITH THE SILVER FEVER"

In the summer of 1861, Sam traveled with his brother Orion by overland stage from St. Joseph, Missouri to Carson City, in the Nevada Territory. Orion had just been appointed Secretary of Nevada Territory and Sam, who had lost his job as riverboat pilot on the Mississippi River because of the Civil War, accompanied his brother for an adventure.

Soon after he arrived in Carson City, Sam was "smitten with the silver fever." "By the time I [Clemens] was fairly inoculated with the disease, 'Esmeralda' had just had a run."¹ Sam and his brother began buying shares of mining

companies in the Esmeralda Mining District, whose principal town, Aurora, located about seventy-five miles southeast of Carson City, was just beginning to flourish. Rich new mining strikes at Virginia City and Esmeralda were making the region east of the Sierra Nevada one of the most famous mining areas in the country. Sam was sure his mining ventures at Aurora would one day make him rich.

He took up residence in Aurora during the spring of 1862, so he could personally attend to the many mining claims he and his brother had purchased. His first job at Aurora was as a miner digging and blasting tunnels in some of their more promising claims. Unfortunately, neither his labor as a miner, nor his speculation in Aurora's mines, provided any income. Since his only paying job "as a common laborer in a quartz mill, at ten dollars a week and board," lasted only a week,² Sam lived on money sent to him by his brother in Carson City.

The Clemens's failure at Aurora was not unique as only about one in a thousand of Aurora's countless mining claims ever amounted to anything. The following excerpt from an 1875 San Francisco newspaper describes how mining investments fared during the time Sam lived in Aurora:

During the great stock fever of 1862, '63 and '64, the credulous and then comparatively inexperienced people of California were most wretchedly humbugged and swindled by having wild cats [worthless mines] of all kinds, sizes and colors palmed off upon them as genuine mines by unscrupulous stock sharps and swindlers.³

Broke and disheartened, Sam quit mining later that summer. In a letter to his brother Sam complained that Aurora was "the d—dest country for disappointments the world ever saw."⁴

"FIRST ATTEMPTS AT LITERATURE"

Not everything Sam did while living in Aurora turned out to be a disappointment. A few months before his move to Aurora, several of Clemens's "travel" letters from Nevada to family members back east were published in the Keokuk, Iowa *Gate City* newspaper. After only a week in Aurora Sam was eager to write again. In a letter dated April 13, 1862, Sam asks his brother to: "Send him [Sam's new cabin mate Horatio Phillips] one of those black portfolios-by the stage, and put a couple of penholders and a dozen steel pens in it."⁵

About a week later, Clemens began sending stories about mining life in Aurora under the pen name "Josh" to the editor of the Virginia City *Territorial Enterprise*. Mark Twain described the importance of these letters ten years later in his book *Roughing It*:

Now in pleasanter days I had amused myself with writing letters to the chief paper of the Territory, the Virginia *Daily Territorial Enterprise*, and had always been surprised when they appeared in print.⁶

Sam's letters to the *Enterprise* so impressed the editor Joseph Goodman, he was offered a job as a local reporter in the fall of 1862. According to an 1899 *New York Times* article entitled "Mark Twain's First Success," one newspaper story written by Clemens to the *Enterprise*, in particular, may have started Clemens on his way to fame and fortune:

The Fourth of July was at hand, and it had been decided to give a grand celebration. Twain was selected to arrange the programme, and he put the Mayor on the list as orator of the day. Now it so happened, as all old Comstockers can attest, that the Mayor of Aurora was not elected for his judicial or scholarly qualifications, but because he was in the habit of opening more jackpots than any other man in town. Twain was told by the Mayor that he could not make a speech, so Twain agreed to write one for him if he would read it. This was agreed on, and Twain saw a chance for a joke. He wrote a burlesque speech which he began with these words: "I was sired by the great American eagle and born by a Continental dam[e,]" and winding up with "the only mistake that Washington made was that he was not born in Aurora."

The Mayor could never tell why the populace laughed at him instead of taking him seriously. Mr. Joseph T. Goodman, then the editor of The Virginia City Enterprise, heard of the speech and wrote for it for publication. When he learned that Twain was the author he sent him a letter saying that if he was not making more money than a certain weekly salary would make him he had better quit mining and become a reporter on The Enterprise.⁷

Aurora did have a grand Fourth of July celebration while Clemens was there. The celebration involved about 1,000 people, or just about half of Aurora's population, and it was highlighted by a "fine oration" delivered by L. O. Stearns.⁸ While there is no evidence to confirm whether Clemens actually wrote his speech or not, Clemens did state that his position with the *Enterprise* resulted from a parody of a speech he had written while at Aurora.⁹

Calvin Higbie, Clemens's cabin mate and best friend in Aurora, witnessed Sam's beginnings as a writer. In a 1920 article in the *Saturday Evening Post* entitled "Mark Twain's Partner," Higbie states:

After we had lost out at the Wide West [mine] Sam began making his first attempts at literature. As he sat in the corner riding the bunk and spinning yarns for dear life he would stop suddenly, get out a little book, jot down something that occurred to him, and then go on with his story. I learned afterward that he was writing articles for the Virginia City Enterprise, which finally resulted in his going to work for that paper.¹⁰

A few months after leaving Aurora, Clemens became a successful and popular newspaper reporter in Virginia City. He began signing his articles "Mark Twain," and became widely known throughout Nevada and California for his satirical and humorous stories about the Comstock's "flush times." Five years later readers across the country were introduced to Mark Twain after his first book, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*, was published.

TYPICAL MINER'S CABIN

Clemens's "first attempts at literature" at Aurora were undertaken while living in a small one-room cabin, like thousands of other miners across the Nevada and California frontier. Miners like Clemens lived in and around Aurora, in every conceivable kind of dwelling. One of the best descriptions of how these cabins were built comes from J. Ross Browne who visited Aurora and nearby Bodie, California in 1864.

Usually it is constructed of the materials nearest at hand. Stone and mud answer for the walls where wood is scarce; but if wood be abundant, a kind of stockade is formed of logs placed close together and upright in the ground. The roof is made of clap-boards, or rough shingles, brush-wood covered with sod, canvas, or anything else that may be available. I have seen roofs constructed of flour-sacks, cast-off shirts, coats, and pantaloons, all sewed together like a home-made quilt. Rawhide, with big stones on the corners, is very good in dry countries, but it is apt to become flabby and odorous in damp climates. The chimney is the most imposing part of the house. Where the location permits, the cabin is backed up against a bluff, so as to afford a chance for a substantial flue by merely cutting a hole through the bank; but where such natural facilities do not exist, the variety of material used in the construction of chimneys is wonderful. Stone, wood, scraps of sheet-iron, adobe-bricks, mud, whisky-barrels, nail-kegs, and even canvas, are the component parts.¹¹

The ruins of many of these cabins are still visible in and around the ghost town of Aurora. The cabin in the photo is a typical miner's cabin from the early 1860s. It was supposedly located somewhere in Aurora and appears to have a canvas roof and stacked stone and log siding like those occupied by Clemens.



Bob Howland (far left) in front of a cabin in Aurora. (Courtesy of Robert M. Guinn and the Mark Twain Project)

MARK TWAIN'S CABIN

Although Clemens owned portions of many mining claims, he never owned residential property in Aurora. He lived in at least two, possibly three, different cabins during his stay in the community. He shared cabins with Horatio G. Phillips, Calvin H. Higbie, Daniel H. Twing, and Robert M. Howland, all recent emigrants to Aurora from various mining districts in California.

Clemens's first residence in Aurora was a cabin owned by his friend and fellow mining partner Horatio Phillips. Referred to by Clemens as "Raish" or "Ratio" in the letters he wrote from Aurora, Phillips was a friend he met in Carson City during a political convention in August 1861. In his second letter to his brother from Aurora, Clemens states "I am living with 'Ratio Phillips.'"¹² Phillips and Clemens were most likely sharing this cabin with their mining partner Bob Howland.

Clemens was happy in Aurora even though times were tough. "I have struck my tent in Esmeralda, and I care for no mines but those which I can superintend myself. I am a citizen here now, and I am satisfied—although R. [Phillips] and I are 'strapped' and we haven't three days' rations in the house."¹³

Sometime during June or July Clemens had a falling out with Phillips and moved in with Calvin Higbie, his next-door neighbor and friend. "He [Phillips] is a d—d rascal, and I can get the signatures of 25 men to this sentiment whenever I want them."¹⁴ Clemens first mentioned Higbie in a July 9 letter to his brother: "A friend of mine, C.H. Higbie . . ."¹⁵ In the same letter he complained about writing in a cabin: "Besides, I have no private room, and it is a torture to write when there is a crowd around, as it is the case here [in a cabin], always." At the time Clemens moved in with Higbie, fellow mining partner Daniel Twing owned two lots adjacent to the Phillips's lot. Because Higbie did not own residential property in Aurora until he bought Twing's lots in August 1862, Higbie and Clemens were probably living in one of Twing's cabins.

Higbie was Clemens's closest friend at Aurora. Ten years later, Mark Twain would dedicate his third book, *Roughing It*, to his favorite Aurora cabin mate: "To Calvin H. Higbie, of California, An Honest Man, a Genial Comrade, and a Steadfast Friend, This Book is Inscribed by the Author, In Memory of the Curious Time When We Two Were Millionaires For Ten Days."¹⁶ While they were "millionaires," Higbie's "floorless, tumble-down cabin was a palace, the ragged gray blankets silk, and the furniture rosewood and mahogany."¹⁷

The cabin's canvas roof and log siding pictured in the illustration from *Roughing It* are likely accurate, because Mark Twain was involved with the work's many drawings and "clearly attended closely to the illustrations as they appeared in proof."¹⁹ In his autobiography, Clemens described what it was like to live in the tiny cabin he shared with Higbie.



Clemens (left) and Higgins inside their Aurora cabin from *Roughing It*.

Higbie and I were living in a cotton-domestic lean-to at the base of a mountain [Lover's Leap]. It was very cramped quarters, with barely room for us and the stove - wretched quarters, indeed, for every now and then, between eight in the morning and eight in the evening, the thermometer would make an excursion of fifty degrees. We had a silver-mining claim under the edge of a hill [Last Chance Hill] half a mile away in partnership with Bob Howland and Horatio Phillips, and we used to go there every morning, carrying with us our luncheon, and remain all day picking and blasting in our shaft, hoping, despairing, hoping again, and gradually but surely running out of funds.²⁰

Higbie also described his cabin in a 1920 *Saturday Evening Post* article:

Soon after [Higbie arrived in Aurora], I acquired a large lot in the lower end of town with a cabin on the rear end of it. Our new home was just eleven feet square on the outside, constructed of slabs and with a canvas roof. It had, I remember, four pairs of rafters. I put a small stove in one corner, a small table in another, and a rude bunk of willow poles in the third. As a door occupied the forth corner there was barely room to thread one's way amongst all this furniture...

I was right on the main road leading to Bodie [Spring Street], was young and strong and healthy. I had every prospect of making my fortune within a short time, and I wouldn't have traded that little shack for a mansion on Fifth Avenue, New York.²¹

It is interesting to note that Clemens never mentioned living with Higbie in any of the letters he wrote while he was living in Aurora. Clemens did, however, mention living with Daniel Twing in a letter to his sister:

Dan Twing and I and Dan's dog, "cabin" together - and will continue to do so for awhile -until I leave for- [presumably the White Mountain district, a trip he made soon after this letter was written]

The mansion is 10 x 12, with a "domestic" [canvas] roof. Yesterday it rained- the first shower for five months. "Domestic," it appears to me, is not water-proof. We went outside to keep from getting wet. Dan makes the bed when it is his turn to do it -and when it is my turn, I don't you know. The dog is not a good hunter, and he isn't worth shucks to watch -but he scratches up the dirt floor of the cabin, and catches flies, and makes himself generally useful in the way of washing dishes. Dan gets up first in the morning and makes a fire -and I get up last and sit by it, while he cooks breakfast.²²

The last cabin Clemens may have occupied while he lived in Aurora was owned by Robert Howland. This cabin was supposedly moved by Clemens and Howland from Aurora's "China garden" section, at the west end of town, to the east side of town. Clemens never mentioned living in a cabin owned by Howland. The source of this story is Howland who, during a trip to Aurora in 1879, was featured in an *Esmeralda Herald* article:

This gentleman arrived in town last Wednesday. He was on his way to Bodie and beyond, but upon arriving here concluded to stay a few days and look the old stamping-ground over. In years gone by, when Aurora was in its flush days and the inhabitants numbered in the thousands, Bob [Howland] and Mark Twain were pards here. Their old cabin, which they moved from below the China garden, still stands at the head of Pine street, and Bob showed us the very flag-pole he had nailed to the rafters fifteen years ago.²³

Additional information on how Howland and Clemens moved their cabin appeared six months later in the same newspaper:

Bob also tells that when the cabin was being moved from down the gulch [China garden] to where it now stands fifteen or twenty of the boys stood to help. When they got so far with it as the Exchange saloon they put it down to go in and get a drink. As they ranged up to the bar Bob and Mark were awful jolly and happy to think how quickly they were getting their cabin moved. But as the crowd began to pour in, each man showing how and where he had blistered his hands while assisting to move the cabin, it dawned upon them that at two bits a drink it would have been almost as cheap to buy a new one with a mansard roof and observatory. Two hundred and fifty men, at least, drank on that moving, and Bob says if he had not put in a demurrer they would have been drinking until now. Those were the days when it was not necessary to ring a bell or blow a horn to collect a crowd in Aurora.²⁴

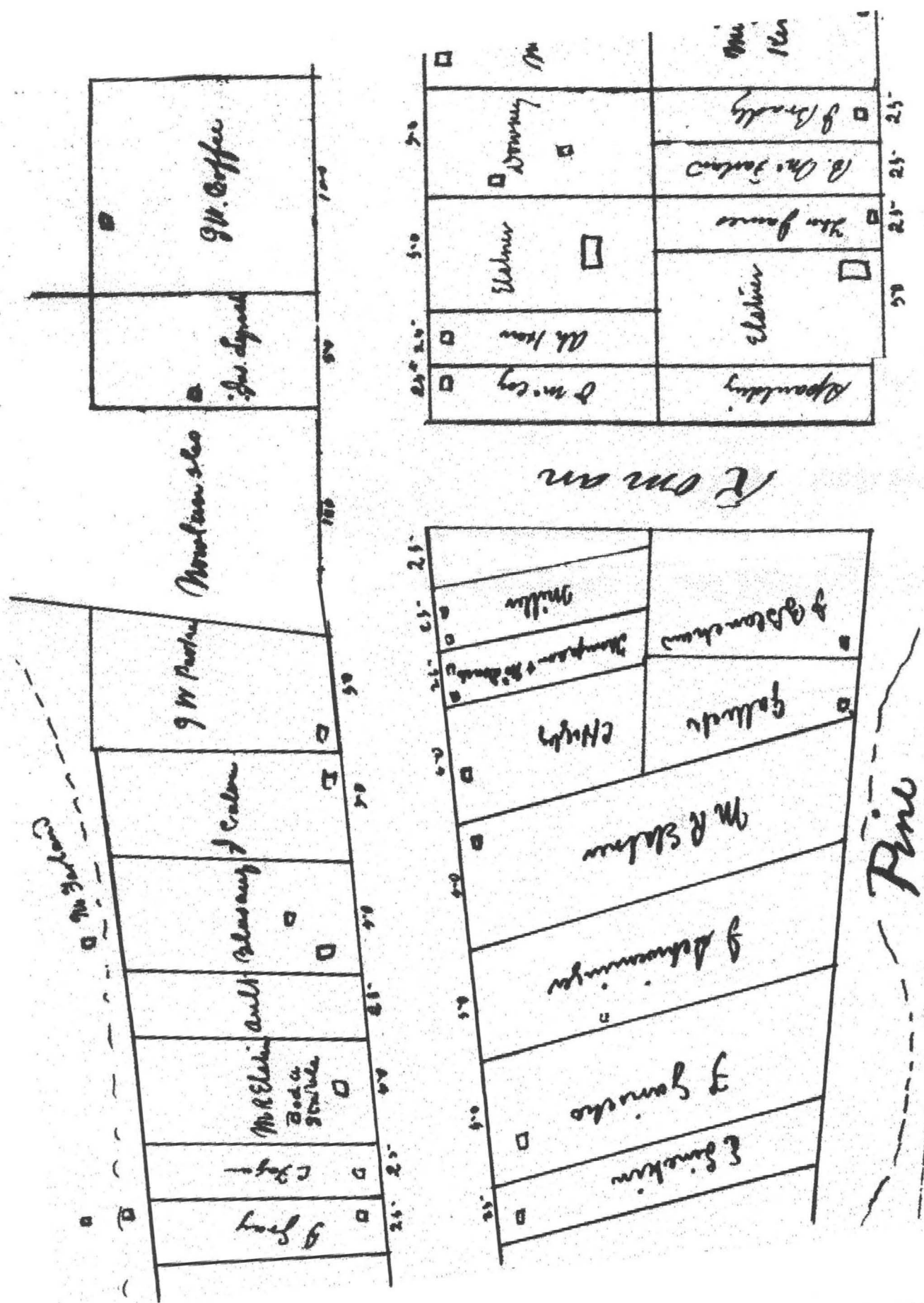
MARK TWAIN'S NEIGHBORHOOD

According to Mono County, California deed records, and an 1864 Esmeralda County, Nevada tax roll map, the lots and cabins owned by Phillips, Higbie, and Twing in 1862 were located three blocks west of Pine and Antelope Streets, Aurora's main business district.

The illustration shows the lots, property owners, and streets from a portion of an Esmeralda County tax roll map prepared in early 1864.²⁵ The left half of this map depicts the general area where Clemens lived about 18 months earlier. The road running east and west across the center of the map is Spring Street which continues west approximately twelve miles to Bodie, California. Aurora Creek, an intermittent stream typically flowing only during the spring thaw, now runs west along portions of Spring Street. A steep mountain cliff known as "Lover's Leap" during the early 1900s is located just off the map to the northwest. The intersection of Aurora's most important thoroughfares, Pine and Antelope Streets, is just off the map to the east. The Wide West Mine that made Clemens a "millionaire for 10 days" in *Roughing It* is located on Last Chance Hill about a half mile to the southeast.

During the summer of 1862 this area was home to many miners who, like Clemens, lived in crudely made shanties. After Aurora's population tripled about a year later, many of these shacks were replaced with businesses including a blacksmith shop, lumberyard, stable, slaughterhouse, and brewery. Most of these businesses, as well as the remaining miners, left this part of Aurora when the mining boom collapsed in the mid 1860s. A few years later this part of town was referred to as "China garden" after a small population of Chinese occupied the area. By 1915, the area was abandoned. Today, the "China garden" section of Aurora is part of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

The cabin Clemens shared with Phillips was probably located on the "J Gavin" lot shown in the upper left hand corner of the previous photo on page 99, and just off lower right corner of the 1915 "China garden." Mono County records



The area west of downtown Aurora where Sam Clemens called home in 1862. (Nevada Historical Society)

establish a connection between Phillips and the Gavin lot include recorded copies of the following deeds: H. G. Phillips to C. F. Wood; C. H. Higbie to John Blasauf; and John Gavin to John Galvin.²⁶

The lot and cabins owned by Higbie and Twing were located adjacent to the Phillips lot on both the Blasauf lot on the north side of Spring Street, and the "C Higbie" lot on the south side of Spring Street. Mono County records containing references to Higbie's lot on the south side of Spring Street include copies of the following deeds: D. C. Croker to D. H. Twing, and D. H. Twing to C. H. Higbie.²⁷ Records establishing a connection between Higbie and Twing to the Blasauf lot on the north side of Spring Street include recorded copies of the following deeds: W. J. Sibby to D. H. Twing stating that this lot included a "log & pole cabin," D. H. Twing to C. H. Higbie, and C. H. Higbie to John Blasauf.²⁸ Blasauf constructed a house and the "City Brewery" soon after he purchased this lot from Higbie. The brick ruins of these structures are still visible today.



The lower half of this 1915 photograph includes part of "China garden;" downtown Aurora appears in the upper left corner. (Courtesy of the California Department of Parks and Recreation)



"Mark Twain's Cabin" on the north side of Pine Street circa the early 1990s. "Lover's Leap" can be seen in the distance above the adjacent brick cabin. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

Howland's cabin was located about a third of a mile east of "China garden" where Phillips, Twing, and Higbie lived. Howland purchased a lot including a "one story frame building" on the east end of Pine Street on December 6, 1862.²⁹ The same lot was later described in an 1863 deed as having a "one story frame building now occupied as the [Esmeralda Mining] District Recorder's Office" as well as including a "cabin situated on the back end of the lot now occupied by the party of the first part [Howland]."³⁰

An on-the-ground review by this author with photographs (photo on page 100) depicting "Mark Twain's Cabin" from the early 1900s confirms this building was located on the north side of Pine Street at the east end of town on the lot once owned by Howland. It is unlikely, however, that Clemens ever occupied this particular structure. The deed records previously mentioned indicate Howland did not own a lot on the north side of Pine while Clemens was living in Aurora. More important, the "Mark Twain Cabin" structure shown in the early photographs was most likely used as the District Recorder's office during the 1860s, not as a residence. According the following story "which circulated for a number of years" Mark Twain never lived in a cabin with a roof:

It seems a shingle was taken from the roof [presumably from Howland's cabin] and mailed to Clemens with a note saying he would probably like to have a piece of his old Esmeralda home. His reply was since there was no roof on his residence, there were therefore no shingles!³¹

THE FATE OF MARK TWAIN'S "AUTHENTIC" CABIN

According to a newspaper story by Dan De Quille, Mark Twain's friend and former *Enterprise* associate, the "Mark Twain Cabin" at Aurora was still in pretty good shape in 1878:

Mark Twain's Cabin- The cabin in which Mark Twain lived when he was an "honest miner" is still standing at Aurora in a tolerable state of preservation. The back end, which extended into the side of the hill, and was made of stones laid up with mud, has fallen in, but the front and sides, which were of rough lumber, still stand. The door is gone, little of the roof is left and what remains of the structure has a decided "dip" to the southwest.³²

Although it is not clear which particular cabin this article referred to, the story was probably written about Howland's old cabin on Pine Street because the description included walls made of "rough lumber."

The growing worldwide fame and popularity of Mark Twain during the early 1900s made the cabin he supposedly lived in on Aurora's Pine Street a boon to the few residents who still inhabited this once prosperous mining camp. Tourists from across the country made the long and arduous journey to this remote part of Nevada just to see his famous cabin, and "genuine" Mark Twain souvenirs were regularly sold to gullible tourists. According to a *Nevada State*

Journal article, written after Twain's death in 1910, souvenir hunters regularly tore off parts of his famous cabin:

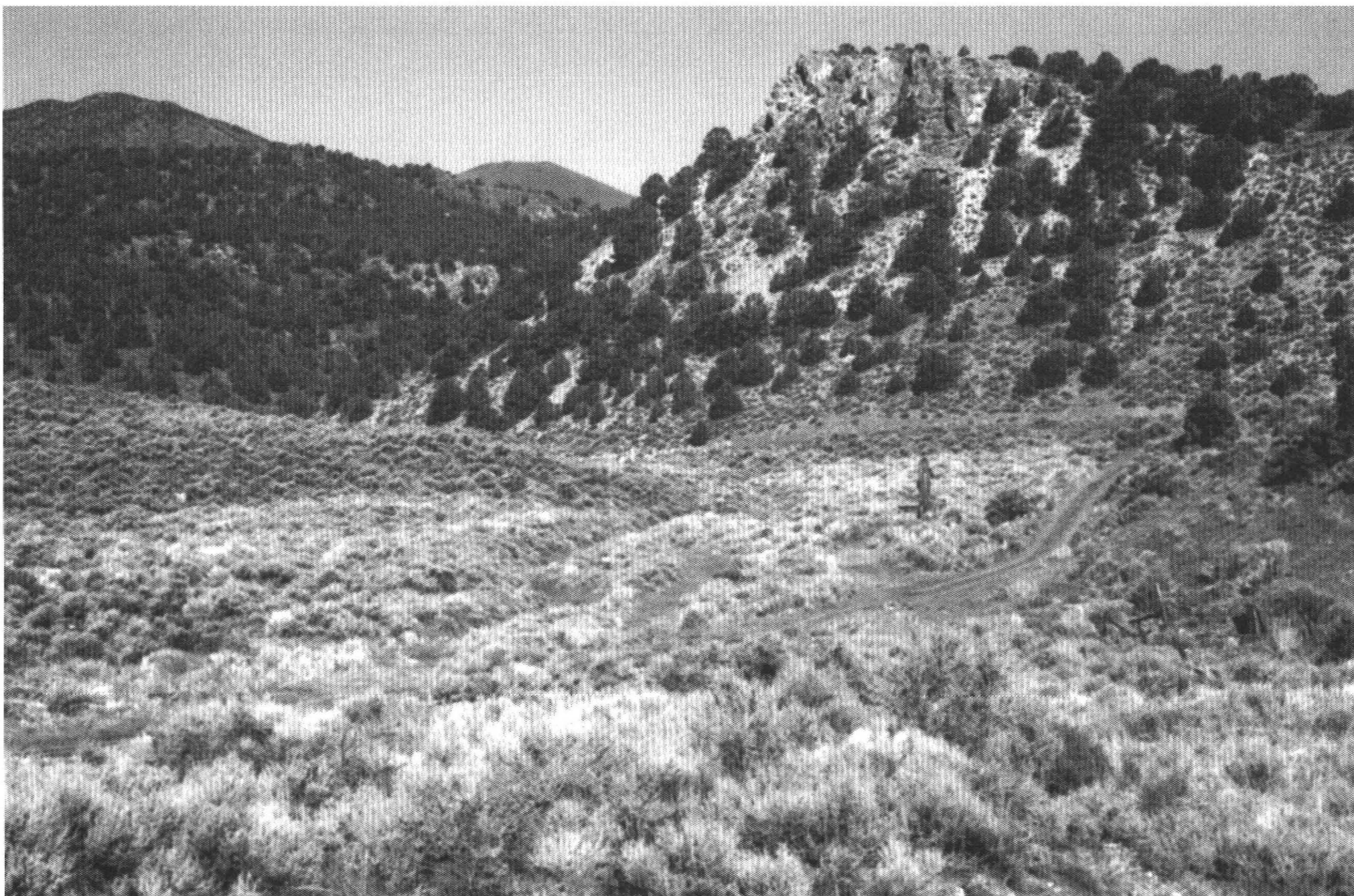
In appearance it is a plain two-room affair with a small front stoop, and it appears upon the county assessor's tax roll from year to year and up to the present time as 'Mark Twain's lot and cabin on Pine Street.' . . . It has been necessary to repair and reshingle it many times as tourists and relic hunters have stripped it bit by bit, of small pieces, parts of locks, hinges, a shingle or sliver of wood.³³

Public concern for the preservation of the now famous cabin began to grow, particularly after Mark Twain's death in 1910. By 1924, the Reno Chamber of Commerce proposed moving the cabin from Aurora to Reno as part of the upcoming 1927 Transcontinental Highway Exposition. A *Nevada State Journal* article, published in November of that same year, mentioned that Nevada Governor James G. Scrugham and Reno Mayor E. E. Roberts "assisted materially" in arranging the cabin's move. The article went on to state that those involved with the relocation were convinced Mark Twain once lived in the cabin:

The authenticity of the Mark Twain cabin has been proved beyond a doubt and [Fried] Walker said yesterday that he has the table at which Mark Twain wrote "Roughing It" and many more of his most scintillating stories while he was a prospector at Aurora.³⁴

Fried (short for Sigfried) Walker may not have been the best source for verifying the authenticity of the cabin, and he might not have actually had the table where Mark Twain wrote *Roughing It*. Walker was one of a handful of colorful characters who inhabited Aurora after it became a ghost town in the early 1920s. He was born in Switzerland and immigrated to Aurora in 1903, some forty years after Clemens had departed from Aurora. Walker lived in the town for fifty years and was referred to by many as "the mayor of Aurora." He was Aurora's "last inhabitant" when he died in 1955 at the age of ninety-one.³⁵

"Mark Twain's Cabin" was dismantled in Aurora and loaded on two large trucks bound for Reno in the fall of 1924. It arrived at Reno's Idlewild Park on November 25. Sadly, over the next twenty five years, the cabin "was slowly dismembered piece by piece by souvenir hunters and skaters from the nearby pond" until it was "reported to have disappeared altogether" by the early 1950s.³⁶



"China garden" below "Lover's Leap" today, looking west from near "downtown" Aurora. *(Courtesy of the author)*

CONCLUSION

Mark Twain, one of America's greatest and most revered writers, began his literary career after several of his letters to the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise* were published in the summer of 1862. He wrote those letters while living with his mining partners in one or more cabins at Aurora, Nevada. That he was able to write anything, much less create work that early on showed a spark of genius, while living in a cold and cramped dirt-floor cabin with a canvas roof, is a testament to his inherent talent.

Twain never thought much of Aurora. He was eager to leave there during the fall of 1862 for his new job as a reporter in Virginia City. In his last letter from Aurora he complained, "I don't think much of the camp—not as much as I did."³⁷ He certainly didn't like living in his "wretched" cabin. He never returned.

Abandoned and neglected for over a century, the "China garden" section of Aurora, where Mark Twain once lived, is now protected from souvenir collectors and further destruction by federal laws. If you visit the deserted ghost town today you won't see anything left of his cabins, or any monuments commemorating his six-month residence there. His "authentic" cabin, moved to Reno in the 1920s, is also gone. We have only the historical record, and a few pictures of a cabin he likely never lived in, to remind us where Mark Twain had his "first success."

NOTES

- ¹Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1872), 193-94.
- ²*Ibid.*, 251.
- ³*Mining and Scientific Press* (23 January 1875), p. 2.
- ⁴Edgar M. Branch, Michael B. Frank, Kenneth M. Sanderson, *et al.*, *Mark Twain's Letters*, vol. 1, 1853-1866 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1988), 221.
- ⁵*Ibid.*, 186.
- ⁶Twain, *Roughing It*, 294.
- ⁷*The New York Times, Illustrated Magazine* (25 June 1899), 6.
- ⁸*Sacramento Daily Bee* (21 July, 1862), 1.
- ⁹Bernard DeVoto, ed., *Mark Twain in Eruption* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1940), 390-391. For a discussion on Clemens's possible role in writing the Stearns speech see William C. Miller, "Samuel L. Clemens and Orion Clemens vs. Mark Twain and His Biographers (1861-1862)," *Mark Twain Journal*, 16:4 (1973), 7, 8.
- ¹⁰Michael J. Phillips, "Mark Twain's Partner," *Saturday Evening Post*, 193 (11 September 1920), p. 74.
- ¹¹J. Ross Browne, *Adventures in the Apache Country: A Tour through Arizona and Sonora, with Notes on the Silver Region of Nevada* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1868), 399-401.
- ¹²Branch, *Mark Twain's Letters*, 186.
- ¹³*Ibid.*, 207.
- ¹⁴*Ibid.*, 228.
- ¹⁵*Ibid.*, 225, 226.
- ¹⁶Twain, *Roughing It*, iii.
- ¹⁷*Ibid.*, 281.
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*, 282.
- ¹⁹Harriet E. Smith, Edgar M. Branch, L. Salamo, and Robert P. Browning, eds., *Roughing It* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993), 853.
- ²⁰Albert Bigelow Paine, ed., *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, vol. II (New York: Harper Brothers, 1924), 257-58.
- ²¹*Saturday Evening Post* (11 September 1920), 23.
- ²²Branch, *Mark Twain's Letters*, 236.
- ²³*Esmeralda Herald* (7 June 1879), 2.
- ²⁴*Territorial Enterprise* (2 December 1879), 1, reprinted from the *Esmeralda Herald* (29 November 1879).
- ²⁵Esmeralda County Tax Assessors Roll, fiscal year ending May 1, 1864, Nevada Historical Society.
- ²⁶*Deeds*, Mono County Archives, Bridgeport, California. Hereafter cited as *Deeds*. Book A, p. 570. Recorded copy of a September 10, 1862 deed from H. G. Phillips to C. F. Wood for ownership of "a certain town lot situated on Spring Street in Block La Rue adjoining on the west B. Haslett & Co's barn and lot . . . and extending back 150 feet & known as Phillips lot." *Deeds*, Book B, p. 308. Recorded copy of a June 6, 1863 deed from C. H. Higbie to John Blasauf deed for "One Lot on the West [actually north] side of Spring Street. Fronting fifty (50) ft. on said street and running back at right angles thereto one hundred and fifty (150) ft and bounded on the North [actually east] by the lot and cabin of Phillips formerly but by John Gavin & Co at this date, and on the south [actually west] by the lot now occupied by Alt of 32 ft. separating the said undescribed [sic] lot from the lot and stable of Haslett & Co. the whole of the above description property being situated about three hundred (300) [feet] below [actually west of] the Union Mill." *Deeds* Book B, p. 54. Recorded copy of a March 25, 1863 deed from John Gavin to John Galvin for a lot "Commencing eighty five (85) feet East of Bodie Stable on the line of the street or road running down Esmeralda Gulch, and [on] the North side of said street or road and running back from said street one hundred twenty five (125) feet, thence Easterly fifty (50) feet, . . . to the place of beginning."
- ²⁷*Deeds*, Book A, p. 349. Recorded copy of an April 1, 1862 deed from D. C. Croker to D. H. Twing for a lot "fronting fifty (50) feet on the north of La Rue Street [actually south side of Spring Street] and running back at right angles South one hundred 100 feet said lot being directly

opposite the stable and shed of Haslep [Haslett] & Co. and adjoining the lot occupied by Gallagher and McLaughlin on the East." *Deeds*, Book A, p. 476. Recorded copy of an August 20, 1862 deed from D. H. Twing to C. H. Higbie for "One lot on the Easterly [actually south] side of Spring St. fronting 50 ft on said street and back at right angles therewith one hundred (100) feet and being situate [sic] opposite Haslett & Co's stable adjoining the lot on the East occupied by Gallagher and McLaughlin," and "One lot on the West [actually north] side of Spring St. fronting fifty (50) feet on the said street, and running back at right angles thereto one hundred and fifty (150) feet and bounded on the North [actually east] by the lot and cabin of Phillips: and on the south [actually west] by vacant lot of Thirty two feet, separating the said described lot from the lot and Stable of Haslett & Co. The whole of the above described property being situated about three hundred (300) feet below [actually west] of the Union Mill."

²⁸*Deeds*, Book A, p. 320. Recorded copy of a February 3, 1862 deed from W. J. Sibby to D. H. Twing. *Deeds*, Book A, p. 476. *Deeds*, Book B, p. 308.

²⁹*Deeds*, Book B, p. 139. Recorded copy of a December 6, 1862 deed from H. B. Waggoner to R. M. Howland.

³⁰*Deeds*, Book B, p. 400. Recorded copy of a July 10, 1863 deed from R. M. Howland to G. L. Church.

³¹*Nevada Appeal*, *Apple Tree Magazine* (2 October 1977), p. 7.

³²*Territorial Enterprise* (24 April 1878), p. 3.

³³*Nevada State Journal* as quoted in the *Nevada Appeal*, *Apple Tree Magazine* (2 October 1977), p. 7.

³⁴*Nevada State Journal* (7 November 1924), p. 8.

³⁵*Territorial Enterprise* (11 March 1955), p. 3.

³⁶*Nevada Appeal*, *Apple Tree Magazine* (2 October 1977), p. 7.

³⁷Branch, *Mark Twain's Letters*, 239-40.

Book Reviews

Scots in the North American West, 1790 – 1914. By Ferenc Morton Szasz (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000)

Toward the end of his book, Ferenc Morton Szasz thanks the great Scottish vaudevillian performer, Harry Lauder, and the renowned entertainer, Buffalo Bill, for enabling “the dramatic histories of Scotland and the American West [to enter] the realm of myth, from which they could never be dislodged” (p. 211). Therein, I believe, lies the dilemma of this book, which elicits both puzzlement and fascination in the reader: How does one separate the many myths from the collection of facts; the various anecdotes from the more sustained narrative; and, in fact, the digressions from the intended story? In truth, this cannot be a traditional account of immigration and adaptation because, as Szasz points out almost halfway through the volume, the “lack of prejudice” Scottish immigrants experienced, created “few purely Scottish towns to parallel those established in” Canada (p. 81). Consequently, without such communities to center the narrative, the author is compelled to look at individual stories, and making this approach work coherently can be a challenge. If, as a result, one does not put too many demands upon the book, expecting it to present a complete and sustained account, then it is rather interesting to read. But, if one is expecting a serious *analysis* of the Scottish experience in western America, then this work will not provide it. And, in fact, precisely because the focus of necessity is on individual accounts, it probably could not easily be such a book.

Prof. Szasz describes this work as:

about the interaction between Scots (and I include Ulster Scots) and the North American West from about the 1790s to about World War I. The late eighteenth century inaugurated the British exploration of the West, and the outbreak of the First World War essentially marked the start of a new era. In the intervening years the Scottish-Western connection was extensive (p. xii).

Since this is not to be a community study, the author concentrates on several areas where Scots in the West—rather loosely defined—were more (or somewhat more) visible: among fur traders and explorers; among several Native American tribes; and in several specific occupational pursuits, notably mining, cattle ranching, and sheep herding. Indeed, the title of Chapter 6 ought to have been the title of the book: “Varieties of the Scottish-Western Experience,” for, in addition to the above areas of activity, there are brief accounts of investors, writers, travelers, isolated “remittance men” living off of regular stipends from home—most fully (and enjoyably) depicted in the life of “Lord” Lyulf Oglivy.

The long period of singer Harry Lauder's popularity is also noted, and the singular contributions to American conservationism of John Muir. In terms of Scottish *group* experiences the most informative portions are in Chapter 4, "Scotland and the Victorian West: The Reality," and the segment on the Scottish Mormons (pp. 153-59). Credit should also be given for Chapter 7, "The Western Canadian Alternative," which provides some valuable contrasts between the Scots experiences in Canada and the United States.

Chapter 3, "Scotland and the American Indians," is also quite intriguing. Here Szasz concentrates not so much on the general interaction between Scots and Native Americans, but on the "Scoto-Indians," the offspring of encounters between Scots and Native American women. Certainly one must consider the roles or influence that mixed-race individuals may have had, illustrated by the stories of Alexander McGillivray (Creek), John Ross ("seven-eighths Scottish" and one-eighth Cherokee), and, most especially, of Duncan McDonald (Flathead), whose impact as a major "cultural broker" stands out most interestingly. When Szasz feels compelled to fill in the gaps, his work occasionally gets troublesome. When he says McGillivray was sent by his father, a fur trader, to study with a cousin in Charleston and "must have listened" (p. 64) there to accounts of the 1746 battle of Culloden, when the Scottish clans last fought together, the reader knows the writer is taking a liberty. When he then discusses Tecumseh, whose mother, Metheataske, was "an Alabama Creek of McGillivray's generation," and suggests she "must have been aware of McGillivray's earlier efforts to unite the Creeks" (p. 65), implying she influenced Tecumseh's efforts to unite the various tribes against the Americans, he takes further liberties. Not content to ad-lib a few ahistorical leaps here, Szasz then states, "Even if Culloden had not occurred, there is little doubt that the American Indians would have adopted a similar pan-Indian defensive tactic." To this reader, the statement implies a Scottish influence of sorts, even indirectly, as if the Iroquoian Confederacy and others had not existed before the Scots came on the scene. Finally, when he notes that "many" Oklahoman Indian names are of Scottish origin, it would have been nice to have had some solid data, or even a source.

Indeed, Szasz could have provided a more solid statistical base at the work's outset than he does. For, notwithstanding the time period on which the book is supposed to concentrate, he goes back much earlier in time and brings the story forward to the present by describing the shift among Scoto Americans from ethnicity to symbolic ethnicity signaled by such activities as the celebration of Burns Day and the Highland games. Thus, to provide the fuller context, he presents only Roland Berthoff's tables on Scottish immigration, 1820-1950, and Scottish-born populations, 1850-1950 (p. 11), when he could have added readily available immigration data for 1951-1979, during which time 60,601 more Scots entered the country. Relying on a direct use of census data would have also prevented his misstatement (p. 12) that in 1990 the majority of per-

sons of Scottish ancestry "still reside in various western states." In reality, the census report for 1990 on ancestry (Report 1990 CP-S-1-2) reports only 26 percent of the 5.393 million persons indicating either a primary or secondary Scottish ancestry lived in the West (1.4 million), while almost 33 percent resided in the South (1.768 million).

Taken individually, many of the stories of individual Scots and their children do illustrate how this group of otherwise "invisible immigrants" did have an impact on the development of the American West, perhaps not in the same way that great numbers of Irish, Greek, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants did (to name but a few), but often as entrepreneurs, leaders, and writers whose accounts of the American West inspired others. Hence, Szasz concludes that, in terms of the Scots' influence,

the crucial factor was probably [their] emphasis on formal education . . . But there were other factors as well. A sense of adventure, a self-confidence, a familiarity with harsh landscape, a work ethic, an individualism that combined nicely with group loyalties, and, often, a set of industrial or agricultural skills set Scots apart from many of the other immigrants . . . Although they were never a statistically large group, Scots pioneered in the West as explorers, fur traders, gardeners, farmers, clerics, miners, cattle-ranch managers, and, especially, sheepmen [and as golf pros!] (pp. 210-211).

While one may quibble with his assertion that "In several of these areas they had few equals" (p. 211), the stories Szasz relates are still worthwhile reminders that Europeans of many backgrounds played instrumental roles in the West, and they have not yet entirely melted into mainstream America.

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Lewis and Clark: Doctors in the Wilderness. By Bruce C. Paton (Golden, Colorado: Flacrum Publishing, 2001)

As the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition draws near, commemorative books are appearing to celebrate one of the most romantic and glamorous adventures of early nineteenth-century America. To mark the event, no less than fifteen books about the expedition have appeared since 1995 and many are listed in Bruce C. Paton's bibliography. His book, titled *Lewis and Clark*, would not raise an eyebrow, however, were it not for the subtitle: *Doctors in the Wilderness*. Since six scholarly studies have been written of the medical conditions of participants of the Corps of Discovery, one might ask how this book is different from the others.

Many medical people have speculated about the diseases that plagued the expedition. A prime example of this speculation is the question of what killed

Sergeant Charles Floyd, the expedition's only fatality, and who died at the start of the twenty-eight month adventure. Paton subscribes Floyd's illness and subsequent death to "a severe and lethal infection" (p. 90). This is a safe and reasonable guess. On the western frontier in the nineteenth century and during the Civil War, infection was the most common cause of illness and death. Unfortunately, the description of Floyd's terminal event, like so many other illnesses suffered on the expedition, is too inadequate for today's physician to make an accurate diagnosis. The two medical treatises actually cited by Paton, "The Medical and Surgical Practice of the Lewis and Clark Expedition" by Dr. Drake W. Will and Elchon Chuinard's, *Only One Man Died*, concluded that Floyd succumbed to a ruptured appendix. Paton's diagnosis is closer, I think, to the cause of Floyd's death. In fact, I would carry it one step further than Paton, and postulate that Floyd died of a ruptured spleen secondary to a malaria infection. Malaria and diarrheal diseases were the most common infections suffered by nineteenth-century soldiers. But alas, due to incomplete medical records and descriptions, we will never know what killed Floyd, and, for the same reasons, we will never know the diagnosis of some of the other medical conditions encountered on the trek.

Neither Meriwether Lewis nor William Clark as a physician, but their preparation for the expedition provided them with as much knowledge of disease and treatment as many nineteenth-century physicians. Labeling them "doctors in the wilderness" is, therefore, not entirely a misnomer. Both Clark and Lewis had served, for example, under General Anthony Wayne in the Indian wars and had experience with medical emergencies. Furthermore, as the expedition traveled west, Clark's skill and reputation for medical treatment spread among the Indians, and, on one occasion, he had as many as forty patients in his outdoor "waiting room" (p. 170). He treated Indians for eye infections (p. 119) with Dr. Rush's solution, amputated a young boy's foot with gangrene secondary to frostbite, and successfully treated an elderly Indian man who was paralyzed (p. 174).

The first two chapters, "Setting the Scene," and "Putting It Together," prepare the reader for the overland adventure. The third chapter, "Medicine in 1800," gives an excellent overview of how Dr. Benjamin Rush, Lewis's mentor and the leading physician of the era, practiced medicine. Rush was given the task by President Jefferson of instructing Lewis in the treatment of illnesses that he might encounter on the trek. Since the basis of many of Rush's treatments was bloodletting and strong cathartics, and Lewis and Clark followed his advice, we are amazed that there was only one death. The third chapter also sets the stage for Paton's comments on the medical problems experienced by the Corps of Discovery. This commentary highlights Paton's modern knowledge of wilderness medicine, and this is what distinguishes his work from its predecessors. To justify the book Paton notes, "It is, in part, through the window of this new knowledge, that this book has been written" (p. vii). However,

I think this argument is weak because medical practice continues to evolve, and what is new knowledge today will be outdated in the future.

The remaining six chapters follow the men to the Pacific Coast and back to the Mississippi River with an account of their illnesses, their treatment, and how such conditions would be treated today. These medical problems included minor illnesses such as Lewis's ague (malaria—p. 64), Clark's rheumatism (pp. 75, 93), and Fields's dysentery (p. 127). Other problems were caused by exposure and frostbite (p. 104); trauma as manifested by Pryor's dislocated shoulder, Lewis's superficial gunshot wound to the buttock (p. 188) and Fields's rattlesnake bite. Serious disease also plagued the expedition, such as Sacagawea's acute abdominal illness and her son, Baptiste's, potentially fatal neck infection (p. 176).

The bottom line is that the book is well written, concise, easy to read, and directed at physicians as well as non-medical audiences. In addition to medical conditions, the book chronicles the trials, tribulations, and highlights of the trek across the continent. Thus, it is a good account of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

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Shaping the Sierra: Nature, Culture, and Conflict in the Changing West. By Timothy P. Duane (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)

In the last thirty years the rural and urban West have begun to merge into a new, unsettling phenomenon called *exurbanization*. Similar to Betty McDonald's *The Egg and I*, only with less comedic effect, urban and suburban residents are fleeing cities for the relative tranquility of rural spaces. In the process they are also exporting many of their urban problems, including sprawled development, inflated real estate values, greater demand on governmental services, and cultural clashes. Timothy Duane's *Shaping the Sierra* tries to describe these issues in the greater Sierra Nevada, and to prescribe solutions for its incumbent social and environmental problems. The results are, however, uneven.

Extensively researched and heavily theorized, *Shaping the Sierra* is neither an easy read nor, as Duane warns, does it "pretend to be either objective or neutral" (p. xviii). Although the title suggests an expansive view of the West, or at least of the Sierra Nevada, the narrative focuses primarily on events concerning Grass Valley and Nevada City, California. Duane grew up in the area and still calls it home, even though he has a teaching position at the University of California, Berkeley. Like many recent émigrés, he sustains himself economi-

cally by a combination of real and virtual commuting to work. His love for his childhood home has kept him rooted in a place more than one hundred miles from campus. His passion for that home lends this narrative a powerful vitality, yet it also leads to excessive discursives in theory, a moralistic view of history, and a skewed understanding of opponents.

Duane sees the Sierra's transition to an exurban society as a mixed blessing. The invasion of urban culture and economics, a trend he joined in the early 1970s, offers ecologically and culturally hopeful alternatives for historically extractive-industry communities. This "ecotransformation" of the Sierra, a process he describes as either a shift from "landscapes of production" to "landscapes of consumption" (p. 199), or from "exchange values" to "use values" (pp. 293-95), has forced land managers to confront an expanded understanding of how nature should be valued. Despite this environmental enlightenment, however, the sprawling development that is supplanting mining, logging, and grazing is wreaking its own environmental devastation.

Duane's analysis of the material problems of Sierra communities is strong. He is particularly good at limning the ecological consequences of different densities of development, and his integration of planning theory with environmental concerns is sometimes compelling. But, he is less nuanced with the cultural complexities of this story. He admires his "hundred-mile view of the Coast Range" (p. 249), yet criticizes his neighbors for not wanting to live in more dense settlements (p. 412). He complains about substantively empty "drive-by-debates" (p. 436), yet rails at "resource extraction elites" (p. 167) and the "growth machine" (p. 344). He cares about his community, but does not seem to understand his neighbors—most especially "equity refugees" in gated communities (p. 439), and benighted mill workers and loggers who see nature merely as "an obstacle to and a potential resource for their own economic well-being" (p. 256). And, his portrayal of planning battles and elections in Nevada County since the 1970s (pp. 337-424) is a morality play. These cardboard caricatures are a poor way to foster understanding, and most of Duane's metaphors fail to capture the complexity of what is happening in the Sierra and the West.

Timothy Duane wants to merge the personal with the academic, but he has not struggled sufficiently with the resulting contradictions. He is most consistent in his personal vision of home: He wants to keep trees in place and most people out of the woods. Duane could have argued this position much more elegantly and concisely, but *Shaping the Sierra* is a poorly mortared edifice of theoretical and empirical bricks amounting, instead, to a scholastic rationalization of NIMBYism. In this sense, at least at an abstract level, Duane is closer to his neighbors than he might realize. An overriding social and cultural reality of the rural West is its residents' "unbroken legacy," if you will, of trying to construct homogeneity where it is not. The ultimate value of *Shaping the Sierra* may be as a primary document of the New West's internal contradictions.

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The Gold Rush Diary of Ramón Gil Navarro. By Ramón Gil Navarro. Edited and translated by María Carmen Ferreyra and David S. Reher (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000)

For many the Gold Rush Era serves as the starting point in California's history. Economically and demographically, it is hard to exaggerate the event's significance. One aspect of the Gold Rush that has gained much attention from practitioners of the "New Western History" is the clash of cultures that was caused by a flood of immigrants and migrants into the region. Ramón Gil Navarro was one of the thousands of Latin Americans who, upon learning of the gold discovery near Sacramento, sought his fortune a hemisphere away. Chroniclers and historians have produced important works on the experience of, and the contributions made by gold seekers from Mexico and Chile. Navarro's diary presents a personal take on the setting, era, and events from the perspective of an Argentine national.

The *Diary* is part of a larger collection of reflections and commentaries that Navarro recorded in Chile, Argentina, and abroad between 1845 and 1856. In many respects, his Gold Rush chronicle parallels the experiences of many other Latin Americans who ventured to California from Chile. While there are only three brief entries concerning his trip, they note the mode and challenges of travel by sea from the Chilean port of Concepción to San Francisco. Arriving at the end of April 1849, Navarro observes a multitude of people stranded in the port after failing to make their fortune in the gold fields. In the entries continuing until his departure from California in June 1852, his dream of acquiring fortune plunges him into the life of a foreigner in a not so friendly land.

It becomes clear that, while his history has many similarities with other immigrants, Navarro has left for us a story of unique value. At first, this story is a product of his background and his prejudices. Well-educated and holding grand ambitions, he mixes poorly at first with other Latin Americans. He also bristles at the shoddy treatment he receives from Yankees as a result of his accented English. As he grows more accustomed to his surroundings, his commentary becomes broader and deeper. His activities carry him away from anything typical: he organizes a company to work his claims more effectively; he develops partnerships and pursues a variety of business ventures in the three years of his stay in California; and he works hard to make contacts with important persons who, he believes, might be of help to him in his search for wealth.

Navarro's diary is not a repetition of facts and occurrences streaming forward from a bored or distracted pen. As a result of his reflections on the meaning of the events of the day, his fine editorial sense, and his well-developed powers of observation, he produces a pointed commentary on the challenges facing foreigners—especially Latin Americans—in the first years of Yankee California. The topics that Navarro touches on are many. His diary includes details

on his interactions with Mexicans, *Californios*, foreigners, and the variety of Americans who were lured north and west by their hopes and dreams. From his residence in Stockton, his work, his skill as a musician, and his curiosity carries him to and from the gold camps. His descriptions of interacting with the diverse people he encounters reinforce our understanding of California's racially charged setting at this time.

His ultimately futile efforts to build and to maintain a variety of businesses makes the diary much more than a commentary on the Gold Rush. Navarro's broad interests lead him to comment on a wide range of social, political, and material concerns. Consequently, a careful examination of his entries helps the reader develop a better picture of Latino experience during the era.

María Carmen Ferreyra and David Reher, the editors and translators of the text, provide a brief introduction that places Navarro in his historical context. They also include two useful appendices: a chronology of Navarro's life and related events; and a glossary of persons mentioned in the diary that helps the reader identify and keep track of Navarro's associates. A brief bibliography lists works by and about Navarro for those who wish to make further investigations.

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Transforming California: A Political History of Land Use and Development. By Stephanie S. Pincetl (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999)

Historically speaking, state boundaries make a difference. Yet, for more than a decade many historians have argued that those boundaries are merely arbitrary geographical lines that have no meaning for anyone interested in the serious study of the past. These historians trivialize state history as, at best, antiquarianism. Stephanie S. Pincetl, research associate professor of geography and coordinator of the Sustainable Cities Program at the University of Southern California argues convincingly, however, that state boundaries not only matter but also contribute to historical developments that are unique to a specific geographical place. Using California as an example, Pincetl traces the political effects of the Progressive Movement on land use and natural resource management during the twentieth century. She argues that the political changes of the Progressive Era altered the structure and process of government in California. As a result, the Progressives laid the foundation for political paralysis, environmental degradation, and economic inequality, as well as fostered public polarization by race and class.

Pincetl astutely recognizes that the concept of place has a powerful symbolic importance and the manner in which it is constructed affects daily life in fundamental ways. Consequently, since local governments regulate places, political ideology within the confines of state boundaries determines the relationships between the society, the economy, and the state. Pincetl focuses on forest management, wildlife and fisheries, urban development, agriculture, and water use to show that the use of land and natural resources have a political history. By analyzing the Progressive reforms that restructured the governing process and minimized the importance of political parties, while elevating the use of commissions composed of appointed members, Pincetl traces the loss of public control over governmental institutions supposedly influenced by the democratic process.

Although the capture-conformity thesis that political scientists use to explain the regulatory process is not new, Pincetl skillfully reveals that special interest groups in California captured state and local governments by gaining control of a host of non-elected positions on regulatory boards and commissions. As appointed boards and commissions increasingly gained power, the discipline of party politics collapsed, thereby removing political accountability from anyone other than one's own special interest group. In time, the public became alienated from government, since it had little power to influence land use and natural resources policies through the electoral process. As a result, fewer people voted, while appointed commissions increasingly made policy. These non-democratic government structures often discriminated by class and essentially represented their own elite economic, social, and political interests. Pincetl's discussion of the application of the Newlands Reclamation Act to the agricultural development of the Central Valley cogently shows how large-scale farming corporations essentially nullified federal legislation, while ensuring their own use of public subsidized water for irrigation. She also contends that the Central Valley Project Improvement Act of 1992 became the capstone of a century of government transformation in California regarding land development, because it made water a commodity that ultimately would benefit urban development more than agriculture.

Pincetl then links the Progressives' infatuation with expertise and non-partisan commissions to the fragmentation of public issues that were once given form and were controlled by political parties, and to their management, now, managed by special interests beyond public control. As a result, given California's demographics, democratic participation in the state has been relegated to the elites, that is, to educated and affluent whites. State and local governments have, therefore, little accountability. Relatively short term limits for state legislators, increased lobbying, and an election process that permits cross filing in primary elections, among other problems, have brought political gridlock to California. The result is elitist, personality-based politics that is not representative of the state's demographics. Indeed, the political process in California is undemocratic or democratic only for insiders.

Pincetl's work merits reading and rereading by anyone interested in the history of California and the twentieth-century West, as well as in the making of public policy. While her suggestions for reform place her in the disciplines of political science and urban planning, her historical analysis shows that place, in this case, states, merits historical study in its own right.

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The Hollywood West: Lives of Film Legends Who Shaped It. Edited by Richard W. Etulain and Glenda Riley (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2001)

Telling Western Stories: From Buffalo Bill to Larry McMurtry. By Richard W. Etulain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999)

Over fifty years ago, American Studies scholars revolutionized the study of American civilization through their employment of interdisciplinary methods. Unlike today's practitioners of "cultural studies," mid-century American Studies scholars carefully combined painstaking research in historical and literary sources to produce documented, reasoned, and articulate narratives focusing especially on the significance of the frontier in American mythology, literature, and history. Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (New York, 1950) begat John William Ward's *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age* (Palo Alto, 1955). The stellar books of Roy Harvey Pearce, Arthur K. Moore, Marvin Meyers, and Leo Marx, and others then followed.

In the 1960s, a second generation of American Studies scholars, most notably William E. Goetzmann, Kent Steckmesser, Brian Dippie, and Richard W. Etulain carried on this work, adding American art history, folklore, and film studies to the powerful American Studies history/literature interdisciplinary mix. Richard W. Etulain is one of the most prolific and important members of this "second wave" of American Studies scholars. Author and editor of more than twenty books, Etulain has left a legacy to those who seek to view American civilization through an interdisciplinary lens. His two most recent works focus on "storytelling" in the media of literature, history, and movie-making.

Etulain co-edits *The Hollywood West: Lives of Film Legends Who Shaped It* with noted frontier historian Glenda Riley. The contributors include newcomers alongside noted scholars of American Western movies and the mythic West. Focusing on "one or more leading actors or actresses" the authors create a case-study history of Western movies while simultaneously examining "shifting sociocultural trends in America that influenced the shape and content of many

Westerns. Taken as a whole, these essays furnish scholars and general readers alike with an overview of America's most significant film genres" (pp. x-xi).

Etulain introduces the volume with a portrait of silent film icons Bronco Billy Anderson, William S. Hart, and Tom Mix. Raymond E. White follows by examining the next evolutionary step—the grade B Western stars Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. Ray Merlock and Jack Nachbar explore the career of the “singing cowboy” Gene Autry, tracing his career from that of grade B movie star to rodeo producer to television actor to Western heritage museum founder. Ronald L. Davis profiles John Ford and “clearly delineates the director’s huge impact on the Hollywood Western” (p. xi), complemented by John Lenihan’s informative and compelling artistic biography of Ford’s greatest star and symbol of frontier individualism, “The Duke” John Wayne. Glenda Riley describes how Barbara Stanwyck “feminized” the Western in *Annie Oakley* (1936) and her popular television series *The Big Valley* (1965-1969). Katy Jurado, who appeared alongside Gary Cooper in *High Noon* (1952), is the focus of a unique article by Cheryl Foote. Gretchen Bataille views the roles of Indians in movies, focusing on the careers and acting styles of Jay Silverheels, Iron Eyes Cody, and Chief Dan George. Finally, James Hoy traces Clint Eastwood’s meteoric rise from television’s *Rawhide* series (1959-65) to “spaghetti Westerns,” to his epic role as a “gray hero” in *The Unforgiven* (1992).

Unexplored is the rich subject of urban Westerns—a sub-genre including *The Misfits* (1961), *Lonely Are The Brave* (1962), *Hud* (1963), *Coogan’s Bluff* (1969), *Last Picture Show* (1971), *Billy Jack* (1971), *Junior Bonner* (1972), *Urban Cowboy* (1980), *Thelma and Louise* (1991), *Walker, Texas Ranger* (1996-present) and, arguably, *Star Wars* (1977), and many, many more. Placing Katie Jurado (who was terrific in *High Noon* and 1954’s *Broken Lance*) alongside Barbara Stanwyck and John Wayne as a “Film Legend” is a stretch. Yet, this book’s ultimate strength is an accessibility made possible by its authors’ case-study focii and the readability of their essays. This solid collection is suitable for the scholar’s bookshelf, the *aficionado’s* library, or the book bag of the undergraduate American Studies major.

Telling Western Stories: From Buffalo Bill to Larry McMurtry is a scholarly monograph more reflective of Richard W. Etulain’s deep expertise in the mythic West and his sharp analysis of current literary debates. It is a small book about a huge topic and it accomplishes its aims surprisingly well by focusing on specific works within four general chronological periods in the evolution of the Western genre. “This brief book discusses a select number of these stories performed, lived out, or published in the century and more stretching from the end of the Civil War to the present,” writes Etulain. “I use about twenty books, persons, movies, or other mediums to examine the ingredients of western stories, narratives that persisted relatively unchanged for a century but that have moved in notable new directions since the 1960s” (p. xi). Eschewing post-structuralist, “cultural studies” methodology, Etulain re-tells the stories (plot

summaries are plentiful here), places them in the context of the evolving Western genre, and analyzes their historic and artistic significance.

After a (very) brief introduction, Chapter 1, "Creation Stories" surveys the late nineteenth century's Western stories. The Dime Novels', Wild West Shows', and Frederick Jackson Turner's versions of the Western saga comprised a retelling of the story of America's surge westward and the pioneers' taming of a "Wild Frontier" with its beasts of prey, Indians, outlaws, and wild forces of nature. Chapter 2 examines an important group of "Untold Stories." Here the biography and mythic life of Calamity Jane is viewed alongside Geronimo's autobiography and the fiction of Mourning Dove to demonstrate the breadth of the Western story and emphasize individuals and groups whose stories have been excluded from the classic Western genre. Chapter 3—"Traditional Stories"—features the Western in its prime. Beginning with Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902) and ending with Louis L'Amour's hugely successful 1950s and 1960s Westerns, Etulain also examines John Noble Burns's biography *The Saga of Billy The Kid* (1926) and John Ford's (and John Wayne's) classic movie *Stagecoach* (1939). Here the Western hero most often emerges as a wild individualist utilizing frontier savvy to advance the cause of American civilization—a civilization that, ironically and tragically, in turn forces him to either move on, or die with his boots on. Chapter 4 closes with "New Stories" in a Western genre changed markedly by the advent of 1960s radicalism and a climate less receptive to earlier romantic notions of a "Wild West." Here the writings of novelists Leslie Marmon Silko and Larry McMurtry, and historian Patricia Nelson Limerick evince the "dramatic changes that redefined the western story after the 1960s" (p. xii).

It is of great note that Etulain equates historians with other "storytellers" in this study. He quickly deflates gross overgeneralizations about Turner as a romantic triumphalist, showing instead the depth of Turner's portrayal of the good, the bad, and the ugly aspects of the frontier experience. He describes Patricia Nelson Limerick's anti-Turnerian polemic as "an innovative meta-narrative" (p. 128) reflective of the 1960s' emphasis on diversity, and its questioning of traditional American values. In this regard, Etulain accurately points to many precursors of the "New Story," most especially in the fiction and historical work of Wallace Stegner.

One could argue that the Introductory chapter of this book is much too brief and that Etulain needs to carefully delineate the folkloric (oral) origins of the Western genre, the primordial Westerns of the Davy Crockett Alamanac series and the printed newspaper tales of Daniel Boone and Big Mike Fink. Yet, the beauty of this book is the amount of muscle packed within its slender frame.

Etulain ends with a bang. Respectfully questioning Richard White's cynical observation that "on the whole Americans prefer cheerful history," Etulain suggests that "perhaps a slightly different observation is equally correct: Americans do not cherish gloomy history" (p. 151). To embellish this counter-

argument, he points to Larry McMurtry's blockbuster western *Lonesome Dove* (1985). Etulain depicts this Pulitzer-prize novel as a "New Gray Story" "combining elements from Traditional and New Stories." As a result this "sprawling novel marries revised views about race and ethnicity, gender relations, and the environment to the familiar plot of a trail drive novel" (p. 152).

"Americans, as well as those outside the United States," concludes Richard W. Etulain, "will continue to be fascinated with the American West. Western stories, Traditional and New, as well as combinations of the two, will be told well into the next millennium" (p. 152).

Michael Allen
University of Washington, Tacoma

Cowboys, Ranchers and the Cattle Business: Cross-Border Perspectives on Ranching History. Edited by Simon Evans, Sarah Carter and Bill Yeo (Calgary: University of Calgary Press and Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2000)

In September 1997, the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Canada sponsored a conference on ranching history to complement their exhibit on "The Canadian Cowboy." Because the goal of the conference was to review contemporary research and present "some new perspectives on Canadian ranching history" the seventeen presentations dealt with a variety of topics and were not centered around "a single thesis" (p. vii). Nine of the papers were included in this volume along with an Introduction, a description of "The Canadian Cowboy Exhibition," postscripts and a bibliography.

Simon Evans provided the historiographical background for the work in his introduction by describing David H. Breen's thesis that the ranching frontier evolved differently north and south of the Canadian boundary. He also noted the increasing diversity seen in regional varieties of ranching and suggested it is time to "put aside sweeping comparisons between ranching in Canada and the United States" and ask new questions (p. ix).

Geographer Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov's opening presentation to the conference was entitled "Does the Border Matter? Cattle Ranching and the 49th Parallel." He noted that in terms of Old World national origins and agricultural geography there did seem to be evidence that the border did matter "in diverse cultural and agricultural ways" (p. 4). After discussing the "Texas," "California" and "Midwestern" systems of ranching and their intrusions into Canada, he concluded that "as far as cattle ranching is concerned, the border does not matter" (p. 10).

Brian W. Dippie analyzed the life and development of the artist in "Charles M. Russell, Cowboy Culture, and the Canadian Connection." He concluded:

"Charles M. Russell's West recognized no border" (p. 25). Russell saw cowboys on either side of the 49th parallel as interchangeable, but he did have significant connections with Canada. His first "extended exposure to native peoples" occurred in Canada, and he had good patrons in Alberta (p. 23). "Charles M. Russell remains for so many on both sides of the border the Cowboy Artist" (p. 27).

Two presenters gave biographical sketches of men who made significant contributions. Alan B. McCullough described the role of Frederick Smith Stimson, who was manager of the Bar U Ranch, from 1882 to 1902. Despite his important contributions to ranching, Stimson's reputation is more as a character and storyteller. "Under his management the ranch gained the reputation of being the best run and most profitable large ranch in Alberta" (p. 32). Joy Oetelaar studied George Lane, a Montana cowboy who became an Alberta cattle king. His career spanned from 1884 as foreman on the Bar U to his ownership of the Flying E in 1896. Operator of a successful cattle and horse breeding program and a grain-growing operation, and booster of Alberta agriculture and business.

In "Tenderfoot to Rider" Simon M. Evans dealt with how young men who emigrated from Eastern Canada, the United States, and Great Britain to Western Canada became cowboys. He asked: "Who taught them? And where in turn had their 'teachers' served their apprenticeship" (p. 65)? He wanted to place them in the continental context of ranching frontiers. Using biographical information about individual newcomers, seasoned cowboy mentors, foremen and managers, he concluded that further research might "well demonstrate that southern Alberta during the 1880s represented the finest flowering of Jordan's Midwestern tradition" (p. 79).

Warren M. Elofson's presentation "The Untamed Canadian Ranching Frontier, 1874-1914" demonstrated "that ranching society on the Canadian prairies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries displayed considerable disrespect for legal authority." This directly contradicts "one of the most enduring and cherished myths about the West and its symbol of law and order, the North-West Mounted Police" (p. 81). There was only one officer for every 500 square miles, and cattlemen committed a variety of types of livestock theft, carried and used firearms, consumed alcohol, and consorted with prostitutes.

Henry C. Klassen described the founding, growth, and evolution of two family ranches in Alberta, the Rocking P and the Bar S, for a century.

Perhaps the only similarity between the fledgling ranches of the late 19th century and the sophisticated modern firms of 1990 was that both institutions were livestock raising businesses whose owners invested capital in land, animals, buildings, and equipment; who recruited and rewarded ranch hands; and who arranged the marketing of finished products in order to make profits (p. 101).

Max Foran explored "The Impact of the Depression on Grazing Lease Policy in Alberta." In 1881 the Canadian government established a leasehold system

which assumed that land was uniform and constant. "Amid the economic travail of the late 1930s, a group of southern Alberta stock men began advocating a change from rentals based on gross acreage to those linked with production costs and market prices" (123). In 1945 the Department of Lands and Mines began to base "grazing charges on the production method" which remained in place for the next fifty years.

Researching for Glenbow Museum's *The Canadian Cowboy* exhibit, Lorain Lounsberry discovered a "rich treasure trove of photos and archival material" to document "a distinctive variation of the Real Wild West show did develop in Canada" (p. 139). Influenced by Buffalo Bill Cody's *The Real Wild West*, a number of successful troupes traveled Alberta. The first Calgary Stampede in 1912 emphasized the "truly Canadian National epic of the days of the Old West" (p. 148). The melodramatic "conquest" aspects of Cody's productions were replaced by "the myth of peaceful progress in the Canadian West" (p. 152).

Richard W. Slatta described Glenbow Museum's 1997 *The Canadian Cowboy Exhibition*. Curators divided the exhibit into *The Working Cowboy*, *The Performing Cowboy*, and *The Imaginary Cowboy* illustrated with murals and authentic artifacts of ranch life. Popular culture was illustrated by 1930s and 1940s films shown in a mini-theater and 1960s television clips on a black-and-white television.

Sarah Carter noted in a "Postscript: 'He country in Pants' No Longer—Diversifying Ranching History" that some areas of ranching history have been neglected.

In particular the history of women and Aboriginal people in ranching and the cattle industry is poorly understood. While class or social stratification is being addressed by several scholars, there is as yet little serious attention to other categories such as race, ethnicity and gender" (p. 155).

Carter concluded that evidence on these topics has always been there and gives several examples urging further study. Bill Yeo's "Postscript: Ranching History: Have We Covered the Ground Yet?" noted topics covered and pointed out areas for further research. He asked: "But where are the sources?" He concluded that papers in private hands, which historians have never seen, need to be collected to provide answers to some of the questions posed by the conference.

This is an attractive, thoughtful, and valuable contribution to ranching history. Historical photographs and some color reproductions of the works of Charles M. Russell illustrate the text. This brief review with a short description of each of the papers inadequately describes the complexity and richness of the topics covered. Scholars of ranching history might regret that they did not attend the conference on ranching history.

This book reminds readers that ranching is a topic of enduring scholarly interest on different borders, boundaries and frontiers. Santiago Roel,

Ex-Canciller del Gobierno Mexicano, recently commented at a "Borderlands in Transition" conference in Laredo, Texas: "For some strange reason Americans call their frontier with Canada the Boundary and ours the Border. We all know the lyrics of the American song that goes: 'South of the Border, down Mexico's way,' it doesn't say 'South of the Boundary.'" This book presents an especially interesting cross-border perspective on ranching history and heritage.

Leslie Gene Hunter

Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Federal Indian Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, 1961-1969. By Thomas Clarkin (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001)

During the Kennedy and Johnson years policymakers sought to move Indian policy in a new direction, one that offered indigenous peoples more self-determination and promised to reverse, slow, or stop termination efforts. The public rhetoric and pledges to improve the lives of Indian peoples, however, didn't always match the expectations, reality, or effect of the new policies. Historian Thomas Clarkin explores the often contradictory, thorny, and sometimes unsatisfactory compromises between Kennedy and Johnson administration officials and partisan congressional leaders during these critical years. The end result is an important contribution to the historiographical literature on federal-Indian relations.

The constant threat of termination and the fears it provoked within Indian communities, Clarkin argues, is the key to understanding the 1960s as a transitional period in Indian history. He maintains that most previous historians have correctly noted termination's effect in the 1950s, but failed to note its lasting influence and invisible hand long after the policy began to wane in the 1960s. In particular, he believes historians have failed to recognize termination's power to both alter attempts to create new policy and to generate apprehension and distrust among American Indians toward federal programs designed to benefit them. Thus, self-determination evolved under the penumbra of termination, and this curtailed the goals of liberal policymakers and limited the gains of Indian peoples during the decade.

Unfortunately, Indian policy studies have fallen out of favor during the past several years. It is refreshing to see new historians like Thomas Clarkin are still willing to work the field of policy history and to help fill important gaps in our understanding of federal-Indian relations, particularly in the late twentieth century. His study of the Kennedy and Johnson Indian policies offer important insights into the dynamics of those administrations and the often controversial liberal programs they produced. In essence, it adds one more piece to the

complex picture that is still emerging on those critical years and takes us one step closer to more fully evaluating the long-term legacies of those programs. With the exception of anthropologist George Castile Pierre in his work *To Show Heart*, no other scholars have explored these years with any significant depth. For the record, Clarkin focuses more on the origins and processes of policy than on the repercussions of such changes. His study is based on fairly extensive archival research, official government sources, a few oral interviews, and appropriate secondary sources.

While Democratic officials sought to advance more liberal Indian programs beginning in 1961, Clarkin notes, a small group of senators from western states led by Frank Church, Clinton Anderson, Henry Jackson, and Gordon Allott advanced their constituents interests. These self-serving pursuits included termination and efforts to thwart Indian self-determination. These key members of Congress and others did not always present, however, an insurmountable deterrent to the formulation of new policy since several liberal policymakers and Indian leaders successfully influenced policymaking during these years. For example, such Kennedy programs as the Public Housing Administration and the Area Redevelopment Act, as well as, Johnson's War on Poverty met with some success in advancing Indian interests and in creating an environment more favorable to Indian self-determination. Yet, ultimately, Clarkin argues, poor management and underfunding limited Indian advances under these programs.

Throughout the work, Clarkin closely examines the specific roles of both Kennedy and Johnson and their administrative officials in striving, or sometimes failing to strive, for a new Indian policy in the tumultuous 1960s. While neither Kennedy nor Johnson had a personal interest in Native Americans, Johnson had more success in the Indian policy arena partially due to his general concern for minority civil rights and his desire to combat poverty in America. As Clarkin notes, the absence of records relating to Indian concerns at the Kennedy Library offers evidence that Indian policy was low on the priority list of the thirty-fifth president. Moreover, the Kinzua Dam controversy, which received national attention, revealed Kennedy's unwillingness to promote sovereignty and defend treaty rights.

Clark also examines the roles of specific administrators most directly involved with shaping Indian policy during these critical years. He blames Phileo Nash, Commissioner of Indian Affairs under both Kennedy and Johnson, for fostering a nonconfrontational administrative style that prevented him from making hard choices. His infighting with Steward Udall, Secretary of the Interior under Kennedy and Johnson, also had negative consequences, and his poor relations with the Senate Interior Committee and other western senators thwarted efforts to support Indian issues. He does credit Nash and Robert Bennett, who replaced Nash in 1966, for attempting to restore Indian confidence in the federal government and for trying to consult with Indian leaders

about policy changes. Neither, however, were willing to promote necessary radical changes. He saves his harshest criticisms, however, for Udall. While Udall became an ardent defender of Johnson's "War on Poverty" programs, his promotion of gradual termination lessened his commitment to self-determination. Moreover, he declined to include Indian leaders in the decision making process. Thus, the interior secretary failed to meet the needs of Indian peoples and ignored issues critical to Indian survival such as treaty rights, tribal sovereignty, and land and cultural rights. In essence, paternalism and emphasis on economic development under Udall fostered continued dependency and an even greater reliance on federal money for new programs. In the end, the combination of the presidents' limited involvement in Indian policy, the weaknesses of administrative officials, and the powerful coalition of western senators supporting termination resulted in minimal gains for Indians during the 1960s.

Clarkin's writing style is clear, his ideas are well-presented, and his endnotes are substantive. His narrative, however, could have benefited from other discussions. At times, for example, he needs to make more effective connections between changes in Indian policy and larger national issues. Moreover, his story is largely about non-Indian policymakers and contains little insight into Indian political responses. Examining Indian organizations' papers such as those of the National Congress of American Indians, the activities of the National Indian Youth Council, the roles of various tribal leaders, Native American lobbyists, and Indian activists would have enhanced his story and demonstrated that Indian peoples are dynamic political actors in their own right. The story of the volatile 1960s will never be complete until we more fully understand Indian actions during the period. While Indian actors certainly did not win all the battles they fought during this period, they deserve recognition, nonetheless, for the role they played in shaping federal policy. Their legacy will prove that contemporary Indian actors continued to adopt, adapt, resist, and survive. Regardless of these shortcomings this is a fine work and will appeal to scholars from a variety of fields.

Thomas W. Cowger
East Central University

The National Congress of American Indians: The Founding Years. By Thomas W. Cowger (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999)

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is the most prominent cooperative, inter-tribal, lobbying organization. Its beginnings can be traced to several Indian Service employees, who originated the idea of creating a tribal

advocacy group. Early in 1944, Archie Phinney, Charles Heacock, and D'Arcy McNickle began discussions that eventually led to ad hoc meetings at the Indian Service's Chicago headquarters and, then to the NCAI Denver meeting.

In November 1944, tribal representatives traveled to Colorado for NCAI's first meeting and ratified its constitution. The first task NCAI's leadership faced was to create the organization's own identity and that required, ironically, breaking ties with the Indian Service employees who had laid the organization's foundation. At the same time, the leadership was embroiled in tribal, factional, and regional conflicts that threatened to weaken the group. The battles between plains tribal delegates and northwest tribal delegates hurt the organization. Thirty years later, the leadership conflicts remained as heated as ever when Helen Peterson and Robert Burnette fought for control.

Several objectives guided the author's crafting of this story, and the extent to which it fulfills each is its measure of success. First, the author wanted to use an inter-tribal organization as a springboard to scrutinize federal-Indian relations. This goal was limited to discussing the federal policy decisions that the NCAI opposed in the name of tribal rights: the Tongass Timber Act of 1947 and the tribal termination legislation of the 1950s. As a result, most other areas of federal Indian policy were ignored, limiting the author's effectiveness at meeting this goal. Second, the story was intended to be a study of a tribal political action group. That objective was attained, with the writer's discussion of such prominent NCAI personalities as Ruth Bronson. The NCAI's relations with the American Association on Indian Affairs and Arrow were also brought to life, as well as the attorney contract conflict involving James E. Curry. Third, the author examined the social and ethno-historical threads of the NCAI, intending to show that the organization was "an institutional expression of identity" (p. 6.). This was his most elusive goal because the theme was not developed as thoroughly as the other two topics. For example, no specific instances of the resurgence of tribal identities were discussed. Instead, a singular Native American culture was stressed. Employing that pan-Indian concept, one might ask how the Burnette-Peterson leadership conflict furthered either one's ethnic identity.

Termination is a complex subject. An illustration of its intricacy is found in the fact that the NCAI opposed forced termination, but did not provide an alternative to the government paternalism inherent in the nation's trust responsibility to tribal America. At the same time, several prominent tribal leaders, such as Wade Crawford from Klamath, favored termination. The issue's complexities are also seen in the NCAI's initial description of Menominee termination as a victory for tribes, since the Menominee had supported the plan. These contradictory positions beg to question how the NCAI rectify these opposing views as an Indian lobbying group. The author does not answer this question.

Several other missteps distract the reader from the story. The Pick-Sloan plan never considered constructing "five major dams below Sioux Falls" (p. 63), but

did construct main stem Missouri River dams upstream from Sioux City. There are also typographical errors such as 1993 instead of 1953 (p. 112) and John Ewes for Ewers (p. 135), detracting from the work.

In the end, nonetheless, this is an important study. This conclusion is based on the fact that this is the first book on the NCAI, and its story forces students of post war American Indian history to take into account this influential inter-tribal organization and its influence on American Indian policy. That alone makes this book required reading.

Richmond L. Clow
University of Montana

Anaconda: Labor, Community and Culture in Montana's Smelter City. By Laurie Mercier (Urbana:University of Illinois Press, 2001)

Laurie Mercier's *Anaconda* is a story about the "other West," not the one of cowboys, farmers, and ranchers, but of blue collar workers and industry. In this book, Mercier follows the fortunes of Anaconda, Montana, and the Anaconda Copper Mining Company from the 1876 discovery of copper ore to the 1980 closing of the smelter. Based on documents from local private and public organizations, government documents, newspapers, and extensive oral histories, it is the first scholarly, book-length history of Anaconda, Montana. And, along with Elizabeth Jameson's *All That Glitters: Class, Conflict, and Community in Cripple Creek* and Mary Murphy's *Mining Cultures: Men, Women, and Leisure in Butte, 1914-1941*, it is one of the few histories to examine closely the urban, industrial West.

While the Anaconda Copper Mining Company—like its towering stack—looms large in this story, it is really about working people and their unions in "a quintessential one-company, resource-based community in the northern Rockies" (p. 3). In that place, workers formed associations to protect their rights, banded together to weather the storms of strikes and depressions, and experienced conflict over Cold War anti-communism. Mercier describes Anaconda's commitment to a locally-based community unionism, as opposed to the international union movement, as one of its distinctive features. Union membership did not just extend to the workers at the smelter, but to the waitresses at the local cafes as well. The Anaconda she describes was solidly blue-collar and solidly union, with a fairly low average income, but with an impressively low poverty rate as well.

The theme of gender relations runs throughout the study. In addition to its union and blue collar identity, Anaconda was also clearly masculine, defined by the hard, physical work in the smelter. Women were key players, however,

in family support systems and community institutions. A few women did work at the smelter, some in heavy industrial positions as a result of World War II, but most experienced the stresses of life in Anaconda by way of "economic insecurity, abusive spouses, rigid gender expectations, and, for some, the narrowness of small city life" (p. 211). Except in rare cases and in rare situations like the war, men did not welcome women into the smelter. Since 1980 and the smelter's closing, women have become more important as breadwinners in this newly "demasculinized" Anaconda.

Mercier is strongest when describing the development of community unionism, the relationship between the company, the union, and the community, and women's place within the workforce and the home. Her discussion of the gender's workings in the workforce is powerful. What is not always so clear, however, is her picture of life within Anaconda itself. Some of this is revealed in discussions of such community celebrations as Smeltermen's Union Day, or of events within the Catholic Church, but on the whole the texture of life can only be glimpsed, rather than fully grasped. Was there a life outside of work, or were the smelter and the union so much a part of daily life that the one cannot be viewed without the others? Perhaps that is why her conclusion is not as strong as it could be, leaving the reader with a somewhat unsatisfying picture of life in Anaconda after the closing of the smelter. Anaconda, after 1980, is not—and should not be—Mercier's central concern, but the reader is left wondering at her story's end.

These concerns aside, *Anaconda* is well worth reading. It helps the reader to understand and appreciate a different West than that of the usual American imagination. Mercier's work helps us to know the industrial, extractive West, and to realize the void that de-industrialization has created in many western communities. The West of tourism and minimum wage jobs is a far different place from the Anaconda Laurie Mercier describes in this study. And, despite the environmental and economic problems inherent in extractive industries such as copper mining and smelting, it would seem to be a less hopeful one for working people as well.

Pamela Riney-Kehrberg
Iowa State University

NOTE: The author of the following review was incorrectly identified in the Spring 2003 issue. We reprint it here with the correct author credited, and our apologies.

Dust Bowl, USA: Depression America and the Ecological Imagination. By Brad D. Lookingbill (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001)

Reading Brad Lookingbill's statement in the Introduction to *Dust Bowl, USA*, that "because knowledge arises phenomenologically out of the sensory engagement with circumstances through languaging, the distinction between an objective reality and an observing subject is untenable in discourse" (p. 2), I was concerned. Here I am, a bench historian in an academic backwater who is used to saying that pigs is pigs, and having everybody pretty much get what I'm talking about. Could I understand a book freighted with post-modernist concepts and jargon seldom heard, mercifully, outside of departments of modern language? As it turns out, I could, or at least I believe I could, because what *Dust Bowl, USA* seems to be mainly about is the myths whereby outside observers and folks in the Dust Bowl region—conventionally and narrowly defined by Lookingbill—conceived, explained, and understood what was happening.

Among the most popular myths were the Biblical ones. Plains folk and others with a religious bent saw the drought and dust as Divine retribution for the sins of the people, and allusion to the plagues of Egypt and other ancient catastrophes was common. The frontier myth was also popular, both among those who insisted that local victims would conquer the drought because they were made of the same stern stuff as their pioneer forebearers, and among those who saw the frontier striking back. The myth of the desert, it seemed, was conquering the myth of the garden. Those who prescribed something beyond rain for the parched region borrowed traditional myths and fashioned some of their own. Grasslands ecologists promulgated the myth of the climax community, for example, and government officials fashioned myths of rehabilitation and reform.

Lookingbill recounts these myths and others by borrowing liberally from published sources, most of them well known, which he paraphrases in extended passages. For example, he follows four paragraphs on John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* with four more on *The Golden Bowl* by Frederick Manfred and another four on Woody Guthrie's *Dust Bowl Ballads*. Going at his task in this way, Lookingbill eventually cobbles a whole book together, albeit a very short one of fewer than 130 pages of text.

Lookingbill is at his best when he unravels myths. When he attempts to convey what most historians would define as straight facts he runs astray. Among other errors, he misunderstands the relationship between Southern

Plains Indians and the buffalo (p. 13), suggests that government price controls on wheat enacted during World War I did not end until the onset of the Great Depression (p. 21), accepts the erroneous notion that the drought triggered a massive outmigration from the Dust Bowl region (p. 22), and confuses the nature and effects of New Deal agricultural programs. Lookingbill might say that the products of scholarly research are themselves myths, and by his broad definition he may be right. But many historians would argue that some myths are more mythic than others, and that agreed-on and verifiable facts deserve more respect than Lookingbill gives them.

Lookingbill writes early on that "historians have yet to answer the question: How did Depression America conceive the dust bowl?" (p. 4) While that may be technically true in his terms, this is a subject to which a number of talented historians have turned their attention. Donald Worster looked at the phenomenon from a Marxist-environmentalist point of view, and Paul Bohnifield chronicled how the people living there viewed it. Douglas Hurt focused on government programs and Pamela Riney-Kehrberg on family survival. Ronald Tobey told the story of grasslands ecology, and James Malin, Walter Stein, and James Gregory have explored Dust Bowl migration. Scholars familiar with these works and others will appreciate *Dust Bowl, USA's* construction and Lookingbill's prose, which is quite nice when not freighted with post-modernist jargon. What they will not find here is anything they did not know or have not seen. Indeed, *Dust Bowl, USA's* main accomplishment may be to indicate that this subfield has temporarily exhausted its possibilities. The topsoil has all been removed, and we are left with unproductive hardpan. Perhaps it's time to let the Dust Bowl lie fallow for a while, resolving to return to it only when its fertility is restored.

David B. Danbom
North Dakota State University

The Photojournalism of Marilyn Newton

October 10 - December 31, 2003

Opening Exhibition Reception, Friday, October 10, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Program with the photographer, Marilyn Newton
Wednesday, October 15, 7:00 p.m.



Photo by Marilyn Newton

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The Library of the Nevada Historical Society now provides web access to the index for its publication, the Nevada Historical Society Quarterly. Previously the index was available only in print; the new online database indexes citations to the publication for the period 1971 to date.

Creation of the online index was a collaborative project of the Nevada Historical Society and the University of Nevada, Reno libraries to make the information easily accessible and widely available.

A powerful search capability allows for searching of the author, title, and subject fields of the web index, with a contextual display of terms within the citations that are relevant to the user's search terms.

This new online index has been received favorably by our users. We hope in the future to be able to offer full-text access to the Nevada Historical Society Quarterly.

The web index is accessible at:

<http://dm.la.clan.lib.nv.us/docs/museums/reno/nhsp/search.html> or go to www.nevadaculture.org to Division of Museums and History, and click on Nevada Historical Society Reno, under the library's collection page choose Search Nevada Historical Society Quarterly Archives.

The Nevada Historical Society is an agency of the Division of Museums and History, within the Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs. The Nevada Historical Society's library, with its print, photograph and manuscript collections, constitutes the largest and most complete repository of materials related to the history of Nevada and the Great Basin. The collection is used by historians, students, genealogists, local residents and visitors interested in the State of Nevada. Materials available to the public include books, newspapers and periodicals, print files, maps, a newspaper clipping file, ephemera, the manuscript collections of diverse individuals and organizations, and over 400,000 photographs.

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Nevada Historical Society Quarterly



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