# Nevada

## Historical Society Quarterly

FALL 2009

# *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*



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

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

The *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* (ISSN 0047-9462) is published quarterly by the Nevada Historical Society. The *Quarterly* is sent to all members of the Society. Membership dues are: Individual, $35; Family / Institutions, $50; Sustaining, $100; Contributing, $250; Patron, $500; Benefactor, $1,000; Seniors, $20 (without Quarterly). Membership applications and dues should be sent to the Director, Nevada Historical Society, 1650 N. Virginia St., Reno, NV 89503. Periodicals postage paid at Reno, Nevada and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly,* 1650 N. Virginia St., Reno, Nevada 89503.

Publication production by Double Click Design

# Nevada
## Historical Society Quarterly



Volume 52 Fall 2009 Number 3

## Contents



**Front Cover:** "Clemens Bay," the location of Mark Twain's timber camp, is shown in this oblique aerial photograph about one-third of the way along the shoreline between George Whittell's Thunderbird Lodge, to the right, and Sand Harbor, to the left. Twain's escaped fire burned over the low ridge disappearing into Marlette Creek, and reappearing up the slope toward Marlette Lake. *(Special Collections Department, University of Nevada, Reno Library)*

## Book Reviews



**Erratum**

On page 153 of the Summer 2009 issue of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, Ansel Adams's wife is incorrectly identified as a Carson City native. In fact, it was Adams's mother, Olive Bray, who had Nevada connections. This error is the result of interference by the managing editor and should not be attributed to the author of the article.

# *Editor's Note*

This edition of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* offers what we hope is a typical combination of articles and reviews addressing different aspects of the West and Nevada. We strive for a variety of articles from a variety of scholars.

Newer scholars populate this issue. Dana Bennett, a doctoral student at Arizona State who is a veteran of Nevada politics and lobbying, draws on her research to discuss the post-World War I era. William Rowley, the Grace Griffen chair in history at UNR and my predecessor as editor of this journal, once called that period "the narrows of Nevada history." Bennett's article fills in some of those narrows with an examination of the economic and political climate in that period. Daniel Bubb, a UNLV graduate, also uses his research in connection with the Ph.D. he is completing at the University of Missouri-Kansas City to examine commercial aviation in the southwest, especially in southern Nevada.

While Larry Schmidt is no stranger to Nevada, he is new to these pages and an example of the kind of scholar who does so much to fill in those gaps that Rowley wrote about. Schmidt spent forty years with the United States Forest Service and, in retirement, has been involved with mapping parts of Nevada. He adds to a recent issue that focused on Mark Twain, offering his own conclusions in relation to articles by Robert Stewart and David Antonucci on Mr. Clemens's travels.

Thus, we end up with an issue that covers early and recent Nevada, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, familiar topics and new ones. That is our goal with most issues of the *Quarterly*. At other times, we offer thematic issues that address one major topic. That also fits with our goal of providing you as readers with enlightening, interesting information and analysis of Nevada's past.

Michael Green
*Editor-in-Chief*

To the Editor:

In reading Stephen Marino's fascinating article in the Spring 2009 *Quarterly* about *The Misfits* I noticed a couple of errors and omissions regarding the settings for the movie.

On page 45, Marino speaks of the wind blowing dust off Pyramid Lake and causing all sorts of problems for the crew. The dusty playa scenes were not filmed anywhere near Pyramid. They were shot on a playa south of Highway 50 between Dayton and Fort Churchill, which has officially been named Misfits Flat on the 1985 USGS map of the area in remembrance of the filming.

The author follows Arthur Miller's lead in claiming the location of the "rodeo town far out in the desert" is forgotten (p. 40). Not so. The bar scene was filmed at the Odeon Hall and the rodeo set was on Bill Anderson's property, both in Dayton.

There is an interesting contrasting perspective brought out by the article and the nature of these comments. Marino points out how Miller made good use of indeterminate settings to forward the disconnection of the characters with the landscape and practically everything else. But the movie had to be made somewhere, and by doing so, this unusual film unintentionally created a lasting connection with the places where it was filmed that has, if anything, grown in importance to the local community with the passing of time. Most viewers of *The Misfits* see and think about it from the perspective crafted by Miller. It is quite a different thing to ponder the movie and its complex meanings from the spot on the ground where it was filmed, surrounded by the onrush of changes that have so altered the physical and cultural landscape since the movie was made. Further details about the relationship of the film to Dayton can be obtained from Ruby McFarland, Dayton Valley Historical Society, at 775-246-5543.

Ron Reno

# *"The Up-Growth of New Industries"*
## *Transformation of Nevada's Economy, 1918-1929*

DANA R. BENNETT

Nevada legislators faced a daunting task after the end of World War I caused the state's mining and agricultural industries, which had boomed during the hostilities, to spiral into a depression. The traditional bedrock of Nevada's resource-based economy was crumbling again, and the state's leaders were not keen to return to the time when newspapers across the country called for the revocation of statehood, as they had two decades earlier after the state's Comstock Lode had played out. Although some continued to believe that a manipulation of natural resources would induce Nevada's primacy as an agricultural producer, legislators were acutely aware of the limitations inherent in 110,000 square miles of craggy mountain ranges and dry desert valleys. The assemblywoman Alice S. Towle spoke for many of her legislative colleagues when she avowed that "[c]onditions must be made favorable for the reclamation of new land in Nevada, the up-growth of new industries and the bringing in of more people."[1]

A native Nevadan and recent graduate of the University of California, Towle was one of thirteen women elected to the Nevada legislature after Nevada women won the right to vote in 1914. During those legislative sessions between the Great War and the Great Depression, the Carson City solons, both men and the newly-arrived women, concentrated on crafting conditions that would be favorable to Nevada's economy and, in the process, shifted the emphasis away from natural resource extraction and consigned the state to an economic course based on federal funds, dedicated taxation, and the burgeoning industries of construction and tourism.

Dana R. Bennett is a doctoral candidate in public history at Arizona State University. The working title of her dissertation is *'Undismayed by Any Mere Man': Women Lawmakers and Tax Policy, 1919-1960.*

Alice Towle in her graduation photo, University of California at Berkeley, 1918. Photographer unknown. *(Churchill County Museum)*

## TOWARD NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The Comstock Lode's fabulously wealthy gold and silver mines, which had facilitated Nevada's shift from territorial status to statehood, faded away in the 1880s, and the state began a precipitous decline. The farming and ranching industries in the small arable sections of this mostly arid environment, while significant to their home counties, were not enough to buttress the economy of the entire state. People left, businesses closed, and tax revenues plummeted. By the time of the 1890 census, the population had declined almost 24 percent; by

1900, another 10 percent had gone. National commentators looked at the country's seventh-largest state by land mass, saw only blowing dust, and shouted for it to be dismantled and foisted off onto neighboring states. The outsiders' plans came to naught in 1900 with the discoveries of gold and silver ore bodies near Tonopah on the west-central side of the state and a copper lode near Ely on the eastern border. The state's population quickly doubled.[2]

During the teens, the Nevada legislature, like many other state legislatures, adopted social reforms advocated by progressives and triggered an expansion in the size and scope of state government. The 1909 legislature instituted the direct primary system, including the direct election of United States senators, four years before the rest of the country. Two years later, the legislature established the state's highway fund, adopted workmen's compensation legislation, and reformed property assessments for taxation purposes. Voters added the procedures of initiative and recall to the Nevada Constitution in 1912; they had added the referendum eight years earlier. In 1914, Nevada voters—all male to this point—amended the state's constitution to allow women to vote and hold office; four years later, the first woman was elected to the legislature, followed by twelve additional women during the 1920s. The legislature created the Nevada Tax Commission and adopted other new revenue generators, such as vehicle licensing, in 1913, and established the office of labor commissioner, the teachers' retirement program, and the State Racing Association in 1915.[3] James G. Scrugham, governor from 1923 to 1926, found the origins of the exponential growth in government in the "familiar slogan of the early years of the century that organization was essential to secure any beneficial reform. . . . During the first fifteen years of the century at least a dozen new offices and commissions were created in Nevada."[4]

World War I brought the semblance of a boom to Nevada's traditional industries. The military's demands for more materials, especially metals and food, during the Great War led to a significant increase in Nevada's mining and agricultural production. The output from precious metal mines in Nye and Esmeralda counties and copper mines in White Pine County caused mineral production to soar to levels exceeding those of the Comstock Lode period. The developments that resulted from water projects initiated under the federal 1902 Newlands Reclamation Act—championed by Nevada's lone member of the United States House of Representatives, Francis G. Newlands (Silver Party, 1893-1903)—boosted the fortunes of agricultural Churchill County, which made up Assemblywoman Towle's district. Livestock production soared and, unusual for Nevada, agricultural industries, such as beekeeping and sugar beets, generated significant profits.[5] Like many Nevadans, Newlands believed that the future of the state's economic development would be found in the traditional industry of agriculture for which the development of water resources was mandatory.

On Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, Nevadans celebrated the country's war victory by parading in the streets of towns large and small during the holiday

The Towle family at Bucklands Station, ca. 1907. Photographer unknown.
*(Churchill County Museum)*

declared by Acting Governor Maurice J. Sullivan. The celebration came to an end quickly, however, as the war-stimulated boom began to bust, and employers and residents seemed to parade right on out of the state. The 1920 census showed that the population had declined more than 5 percent from the 1910 level.[6] By 1920, Nevada's major industries were in trouble again.

Both mining and agriculture were in the throes of depressions when Governor Emmet Boyle, a Democrat, presented his message to the Republican-dominated legislature of 1921. The ranching industry had been particularly damaged, he noted, and postulated hopefully that "[t]he worst for this industry is perhaps behind us."[7] It was not. The assessed valuation of sheep hit its lowest point during the decade in 1925; the assessed valuation of cattle, horses, and pigs, in 1927.[8] In mid-decade, Governor Scrugham, also a Democrat and assumed to be Boyle's choice as successor, blamed the continued distress on uncertainty about access to public ranges, a lack of water, and proposed increases in grazing fees.[9] By 1929, the Republican Governor Frederick B. Balzar reported to the decidedly Republican legislature that the sheep industry was beginning to recover, but that the number of cattle in the state was less than half of the number in 1919.

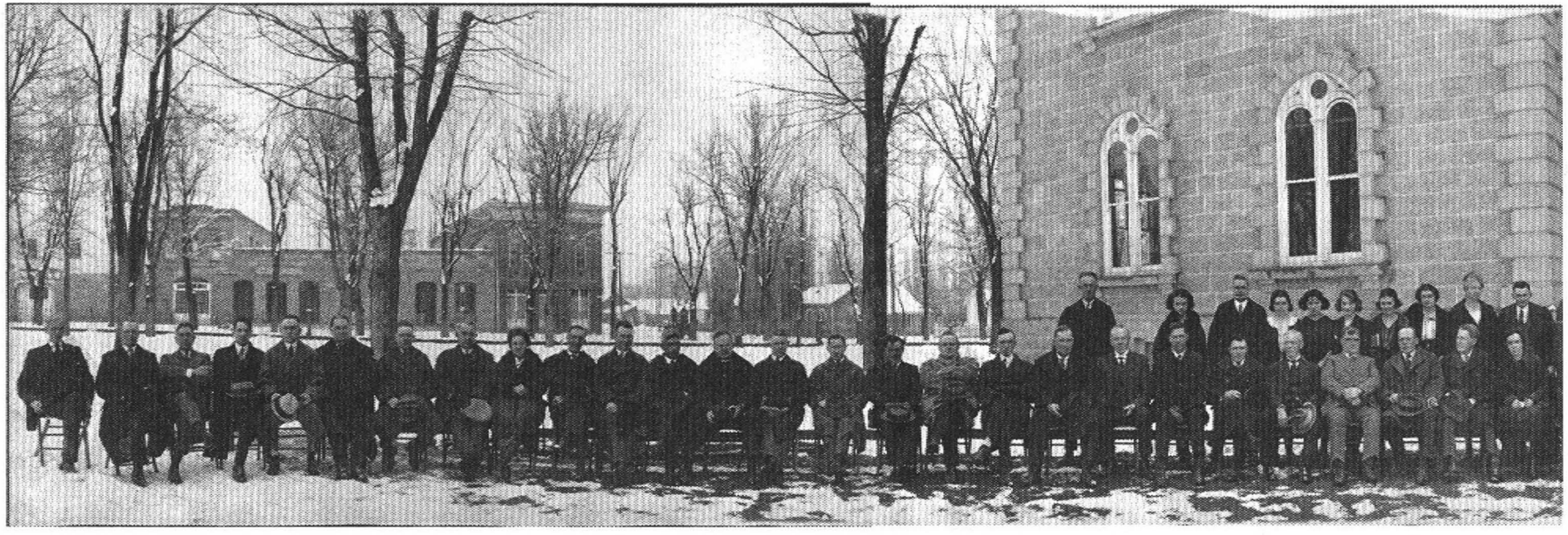
The value of crop production began to increase again because of an addition of two thousand acres of irrigated land. For Governor Balzar, recent reclamation projects were achieving their goals.[10] Despite growing optimism at the end of the decade, however, Nevada's agricultural industry remained troubled. Many Elko County ranches had already been forced out of business, and prices for wool and sheep did not regain pre-1920 levels until after 1929.[11]

The mining industry also stumbled going into the 1920s, but recovered somewhat more quickly than did agriculture. In 1920, mineral production had dropped off to less than half of the 1918 total, marking the low point in mineral production, but mines that had been idle since the end of World War I began to re-open in 1921.[12] In 1925, Governor Scrugham applauded the marked increase in the production of base metals—copper, lead, and zinc—and nonmetal minerals—gypsum, borax, lime, and clay—although the production of the metals for which Nevada has been famous—gold and silver—remained weak.[13] By the end of the decade, the increased production of all metals (including gold and silver) and nonmetals had combined to exceed 1920 levels. A substantial increase in copper and gold output caused the value of minerals produced in 1928 to be about a third higher than that of 1919, yet still significantly less than the value at the height of World War I.[14]

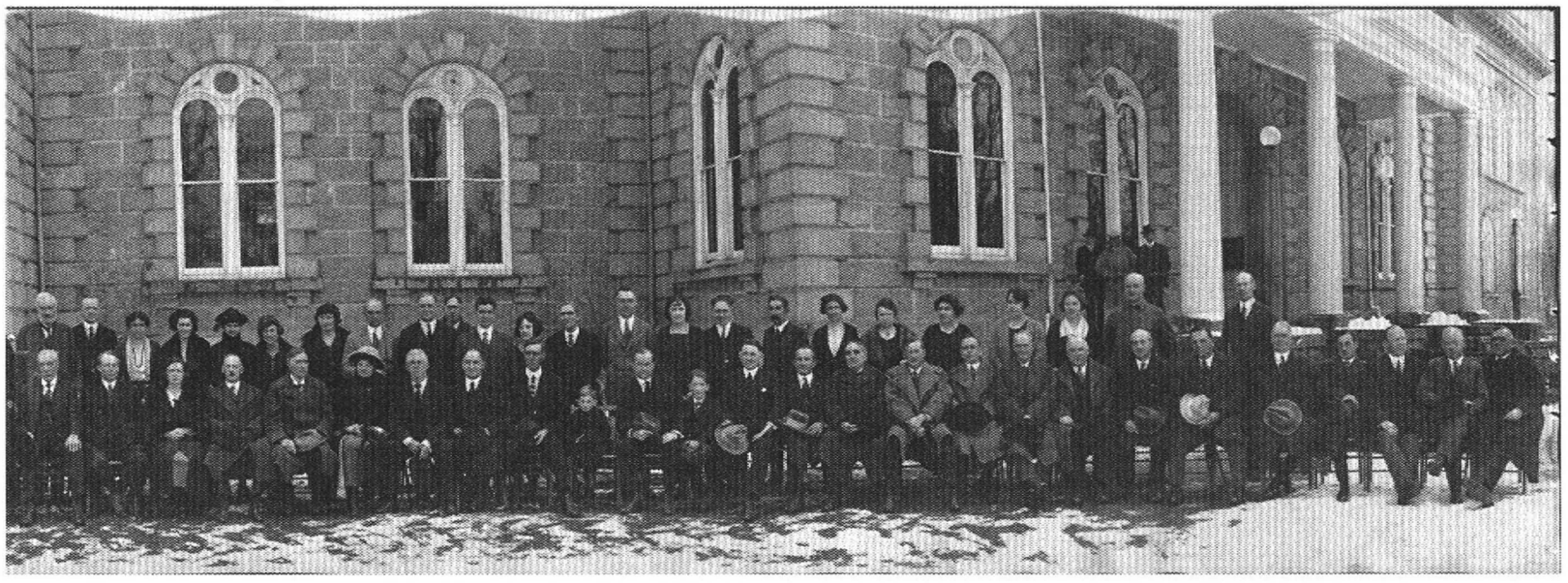
By the time the 1920s arrived, programs and offices were established in Nevada, and state government was expanding, even though industries were not. The legislature's constitutional authority to impose taxes ensured that the governing body would be engaged in attempting to reconcile the state's increasing needs with its decreasing means. In 1921, State Controller George A. Cole, a Democrat who had been in office for seven years, reported that state government was "in an excellent financial condition" and growing rapidly. "The increase is, of course, the result of legislation," he submitted. "We are extending government." Warning against excessive taxation, Controller Cole explained that maintaining the current course of action would require additional funds.[15] For the next decade, the Nevada legislature attempted to answer his call.

## The Nevada Legislature

Mandated to meet in regular session for sixty days in each odd-numbered year and imbued with specific powers, such as the authority to impose taxes, the bi-cameral Nevada legislature had become a potent policymaking body by 1919. The number of legislators had fluctuated for fifty years since the granting of statehood in 1864, and then stabilized in 1919 at thirty-seven assembly members and seventeen senators (one from each county).[16] In addition, the 1919 session instituted the budget process, requiring the governor to submit an itemized budget for state government to the legislature for the members' approval. A succession of Nevada Supreme Court decisions, particularly under Justice



The 1923 Nevada State Legislature at Carson City. Photographer unknown. *(Nevada State Archives, courtesy of Alan and Harle Glover)*



Patrick McCarran (1913-18), concentrated the law-making body's considerable authority by providing "that the legislative branch should be given the widest possible latitude in passing progressive statutes to advance the economic and social status of the people."[17]

In the period between the end of World War I and the beginning of the Great Depression, the Nevada legislature gathered in six regular sessions and three special sessions. Throughout the 1920s, Republicans or Republican-leaning Independents held leadership positions, and numerically, the Republicans appeared to control both houses throughout the decade.[18] In reality, the legislature reflected Nevada voters' tendencies to not align completely with either of the major parties, as noted by both contemporary observers and historians. Indeed, many of the contested votes did not split down party lines, and measures lived or died as a result of coalitions formed between Republicans and Democrats whose other interests—geographic, economic, or social—outweighed party loyalty. Those interests often outweighed gender loyalty as well. Although Anne Martin, Nevada's internationally famous suffragist, exhorted the newly-political women toward cohesiveness to improve the lot of all women, women legislators rarely answered that call.[19] It would soon become apparent that legislators' biology did not necessarily determine legislation's destiny.

Despite Nevada's huge expanse, its modest number of residents lived in a handful of towns, which shaped a familiarity between politicians and constituents and among politicians themselves. Historians agree that Nevada's relatively tiny population allowed for an intimacy in pre-World War II politics that was impossible in more populous states. Gilman Ostrander, although highly critical of Nevada, painted an idyllic picture: "Had not the expanse of the state prohibited it, all of the voters could have assembled conveniently on the beautiful lawn of the state university campus at Reno and there argued out their affairs and selected their public officers."[20] The small size of both the capital city and the capitol building's legislative chambers inevitably cultivated cooperation among legislators and lobbyists.[21] In the close confines of such a political setting, personality often trumped party principle.

The personality around which many Nevada politicians orbited in the 1920s was George Wingfield. In the nineteenth century, the vast majority of men who took their wealth from Nevada literally took their wealth from Nevada. Wingfield, the wealthiest man in the state thanks to a diversified portfolio of twentieth-century business interests, did not. His considerable economic resources contributed to the development of his political power, which he chose to exercise behind the scenes. He did not hold an elected office, other than Republican national committeeman and university regent. Instead, he worked his relationships with state and federal politicians to effect changes that would be favorable not only to his personal business interests but to the state's economy as a whole, as he perceived it.[22]

For Wingfield and other political and business leaders, those relationships had been incubated in central Nevada in the early 1900s. Many of the men and women who stepped to the front of Nevada's political stage during the

first half of the twentieth century had lived and worked in Nye County and in Tonopah, the county seat, during the early years of that century. Historians have examined the relationships among Nye County's political men, such as the Democrats Key Pittman (U.S. senator, 1913-40), his brother Vail (state senator, 1924-28, and governor, 1945-51), and Patrick McCarran (U.S. senator, 1933-54); Republicans George Nixon (U.S. senator, 1905-12) and Tasker Oddie (governor, 1911-15 and U.S. senator, 1921-33); and the power brokers George Thatcher and George Wingfield. Scant attention, however, has been paid to the women. As the home of Ruth Averill, Republican, the first female attorney elected to the legislature (1920), and Ethel B. McGuire, Democrat, the first woman re-elected to the legislature (1926 and 1928), Tonopah was a common factor in the lives of many of Nevada's political women. In the first half of the twentieth century, Nye County sent more women, by far, to the Nevada legislature than any other county. Between 1920 and 1928, Nye County elected five female legislators; in the 1925 session, half of its Assembly delegation were women.[23] An interesting study awaits of the relationships among Nevada's political men *and* women who hailed from Tonopah, which surely shaped the twentieth-century operation of the Nevada legislature.

These close personal relationships contributed to the perception, both contemporaneously and historically, of the existence of a political machine controlled by Wingfield from his office on the second floor of the First National Bank building on the corner of Second and Virginia streets in downtown Reno. Supposedly composed of Wingfield and his business friends, such as George Thatcher, the Democratic national committeeman with whom Wingfield shared a receptionist and telephone number, this political machine was assumed to be issuing directions to Nevada's congressional delegation and governor as well as ensuring the elections of "members of the legislature, regardless of party affiliation, who were zealous in safeguarding the interests of the business community and Nevada capitalist George Wingfield."[24] Writing to Wingfield at the beginning of the 1913 session, Senator Will F. Heffernan, a Democrat from Esmeralda County, asserted that his "vote and influence will be to kill all radical measures" about which Wingfield might be concerned, and in a recent issue of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, Paul R. Bruno demonstrated the benefits Wingfield enjoyed from his close relationships with legislators in 1928. Wingfield did not limit his influence to male legislators. Ethel McGuire, Nye County's Democratic assemblywoman, sought "talking points" from Wingfield prior to the 1928 special session, and Maym Schweble, a Republican assemblywoman from Nye County and "a good friend of" Wingfield's, was considered as a potential sponsor for a particular piece of legislation during the1925 regular session.[25]

These relationships reflected Nevada's small population much more than the operation of a political machine, the existence of which Wingfield's biographer, C. Elizabeth Raymond, cogently refutes. Explaining that "Wingfield never felt

that he was in a position simply to issue political orders," Raymond notes that, "instead, he consulted and coaxed, laboriously currying favor for his positions among the relevant players and repaying their loyalty, in turn, with his gratitude and the prospect of future favors.[26] Unlike a machine, the power emanating from such a network of constructed relationships was not absolute. Two different legislative sessions revealed the network's limitations when Wingfield proved unable to force legislators to legalize "wide open" gambling, which would have been profitable for him and some of his associates. As Eric Moody elucidates, gambling became legal in Nevada, not because one influential person wanted it, but because a confluence of business and government interests coalesced around "a business proposition" that could not make sense until the social and economic conditions were ripe.[27] Nevada legislators were not ready to fling open the casino doors in the 1920s, but they were more than ready to ensure the building of the roads that would eventually lead there.

## New Funding Sources

Americans quickly fell in love with the new automobile early in the twentieth century, and by 1918, almost five million vehicles of various types scooted around the country, driving the necessity for more and better highways. Between 1890 and 1929, the Good Roads movement ensured that "[g]raded and graveled rural highways became the primary good offered by the state to their citizens," and the number of road miles in the United States rose almost 240 percent between 1904 and 1925.[28] Some states, especially those with small populations and tax bases, began to look to the federal government for funding assistance. In 1916, the Federal Aid Act provided matching funds to states with highway departments. The next year, the Nevada Legislature instituted the Department of Highways, but had difficulty raising the state portion of the funding match.

Nevada, like most states, relied on property taxes to provide the necessary revenue to support state government in the nineteenth century; by the end of that century, it was not a sufficient mechanism. In his last message to the Nevada Legislature in 1921, Governor Boyle lamented that "some 40% of our citizens pay no very substantial tax on property."[29] The two census counts that bracketed the decade found that he had understated the percentage of Nevadans not paying property tax. During the 1920s decade, 53 percent of Nevadans did not own their own homes. In addition, the small number of registered motor vehicles in Nevada limited the usefulness of licensing fees.[30]

The 1921 Federal Highway Act provided a funding formula more friendly to states having small populations and large swaths of public land, like Nevada. Designed to funnel federal dollars to the states for the building of a national highway system, the new law specified that states could receive 50 percent

of the total estimated costs to construct or reconstruct up to 7 percent of their roads. In addition, a state could receive federal funding that amounted to "a percentage of such estimated cost equal to one-half of the percentage which the area of the unappropriated public lands in such State bears to the total area of such State."[31] According to the Nevada surveyor general, 74 percent of the state was unappropriated public land, which significantly enhanced the amount of federal money available to Nevada. In the 1920s, Nevada's United States senators and congressman worked vigorously to ensure that the narrow end of the federal funnel pointed directly at their state. In particular, Senator Oddie spent much of his D.C. career working on legislation to increase the amount of federal highway funding that went to Nevada.[32]

Back in Oddie's home state, road construction began in earnest. Between 1921 and 1929, the number of completed highway miles more than doubled, from 1,750 to 3,553 miles. Key to this growth was federal aid, which rose to 69 percent of the state's highway budget by 1924. Throughout the twenties, federal funding sources, such as the Federal Highway Act and the Shepard-Towner Act for Maternal and Child Welfare, significantly augmented the state's budget. In 1919, the state treasurer reported that all receipts from the federal government represented only 2 percent of total revenues. In mid-decade, when federal highway funds reached their highest mark, that item alone was nearly identical to the state's entire revenue in 1919. By 1929, federal sources provided 27 percent of the state's total receipts.[33]

While Senator Oddie and his colleagues diligently shook the federal coffers, policymakers in Carson City searched for alternatives to the property tax to pay for the new road system's maintenance, which the Federal Highway Act specified was the responsibility of each state. Federal funds could be used only for initial construction or reconstruction of roads, but if their maintenance was not adequate, the federal government would reduce the amount of funding available for construction.[34] Toward the end of 1922, staff from the Nevada Department of Highways surveyed other state highway departments and found enthusiastic support for a levy on gasoline, an option already exercised by the legislatures in the neighboring states of Oregon and Arizona.[35] As assemblywoman Towle and her colleagues settled into their seats for the 1923 legislative session, most of them already favored the imposition of the gas tax at two cents for each gallon of motor-vehicle fuel sold, but they differed about its disbursement. Some legislators joined Governor Scrugham in supporting the state's retention of the revenues, estimated by the Nevada Public Economy League to be $120,000 annually; others advocated a fifty-fifty split between the state and county highway funds.[36] By the end of the Republican-dominated session, a two-cent-per-gallon excise tax, distributed to state and county highway funds, had been approved by all seventeen senators and most of the assembly members, including all of the women.

The predictions for the new tax's production proved overly modest. In the first nine months, collections totaled more than $110,000. Revenues continued

Alice Towle as Republican nominee for the Nevada State Assembly, 1922. Photographer unknown. *(Churchill County Museum)*

to accumulate, assisted by a doubling of the tax rate to four cents in 1925, and by the end of the decade, totals were shooting past the $700,000 mark. In 1923, the gas tax provided 3 percent of the state's revenue; in 1929, it was 11 percent, all of which was earmarked for road maintenance.[37] Federal funding ensured that road construction crews were busy throughout the state; gas-tax revenue ensured that maintenance workers were not far behind them.

Highway construction served several purposes in Nevada. For one, it marked a modern state. The movement of people and goods was accelerating, and Nevada was not going to be left behind. Improved and additional roads provided important routes for Nevada's products—particularly minerals—to leave the

state and for other items to be imported. A decent road system was useful, too, for people who were in the habit of moving about, looking for the next big strike. The roads also brought potential residents to Nevada, and more people, as Towle astutely noted, provided the key for the continued improvement of her state. The drivers and passengers in all those new cars might be headed west to California or east to Utah or points beyond, but they would have to go through Nevada to get there, providing additional customers for Nevada's restaurants, auto service stations, and hotels. Maybe they would even stay.

More important, road building vividly illustrated the continuing economic development benefits that could accrue from federally funded, state-run construction projects. Such potential had been predicted earlier in the twentieth century after the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act; the act provided financial support for the development of an irrigation system that brought thousands of acres into agricultural production and created the small farming towns of Fernley and Fallon.[38] By the end of the 1920s, the siting of two additional and substantial projects in Nevada provided construction jobs financed primarily by the federal government, which further demonstrated the enormous statewide potential of economic development through federal funding.

The first project originated with the military. After the explosion of the United States Naval Ammunition Depot at Lake Denmark, New Jersey, Senator Oddie convinced President Calvin Coolidge of the benefits of a remote location near the tiny, west-central Nevada town of Hawthorne. In October 1926, President Coolidge issued an executive order to reserve 197 square miles of land in Mineral County, of which Hawthorne was the county seat. The next year, Oddie successfully persuaded Congress to authorize the building of the depot and provide an appropriation of $3.5 million. Construction began immediately, and Hawthorne began to feel the effects. In 1929, the Nevada legislature voted for measures to facilitate the construction of an addition to the high school and of a town water plant.[39] The depot officially opened in 1931, but its construction had already caused the population to explode 210 percent by 1930. Hawthorne's growth exemplified the economic boost that the military and its associated federal funding could bring to the state.

The federal project with the most significant effect on Nevada was the building of Hoover Dam in Black Canyon at the southern tip of the state. Much negotiation among the seven Colorado Basin states resulted in the development of the Colorado River Compact in 1922. The next year, six of the legislatures for those states, including Nevada, ratified the agreement. The Nevada legislature also created the state's Colorado River Commission in 1923 and amended its scope in several subsequent sessions. On the federal level, congressional negotiations culminated in the Boulder Canyon Project Act in 1928, which authorized the huge public-works project, creating hundreds of jobs and the new town of Boulder City, Nevada, twenty-three miles from Las Vegas. Governor Balzar pronounced the Colorado River dam "the single most important development

for the State of Nevada."[40]

Before the Great Depression began, Nevada was positioned to benefit from additional federal activities. To be sure, legislators expected that highways and reclamation projects would primarily buoy Nevada's major industries of mining and agriculture and the budding industry of tourism. In the process, however, the building and maintenance of roads, public facilities, and other infrastructure significantly contributed to the establishment of construction as an industry in its own right. Construction jobs, particularly those that were part of public-works projects, provided employment for which people moved to Nevada. Those new residents then patronized local businesses, enrolled their children in school, and bought or rented homes. As the population grew, more homes, businesses, and infrastructure were built, and the cycle continued. By the time the number of federal programs escalated during the Great Depression, Nevadans were accustomed to having federal funds and dedicated state taxes as drivers of a large part of the state's economy. They were also accustomed to an economy that thrived on attracting visitors to the state for distinctive reasons.

## Gambling on Divorces

In 1923, Governor Scrugham successfully convinced a reluctant Legislature to embark on the development of a state park system. Nevada did not have the spectacular natural scenery of a Yosemite or a Yellowstone, however, and the legislature did not nourish the embryonic system, which practically vanished under Governor Balzar.[41] The attraction of tourists to the state, and the attendant growth of a tourism industry, could not be dependent on Nevada's natural environment, which did not appeal to many people. Instead, the legislature ensured that it would be dependent on human nature.

By 1920, Nevada's reputation—particularly Reno's—as a famous destination for both divorce and marriage was well established; its unique laws provided for a short residency period to obtain a divorce and none to marry. Nevadans were cognizant of the many economic benefits brought by these temporary residents. An earlier extension of the residency period for a divorce, from six months to one year, had had such a deleterious effect on Reno's economy that the 1915 legislature quickly returned to the six-month requirement.[42] For the visitors who sought both life-changing events, hotels were built, restaurants were opened, and profitable enterprises were launched. Limited gambling was also available to while away the waiting period.

During the twenties, the Nevada legislature actively protected the state's divorce industry. In 1921, reform-minded residents presented a petition to the legislature to increase, to one year, the residency period to obtain a divorce in Nevada. According to the initiative petition process, which Nevada voters approved in 1912, legislators could accept or reject the residents' proposal.

Acting on it as Assembly Bill 1, the Assembly, including the Republican assemblywoman Ruth Averill, voted to reject the petition, with the result that the initiative would be placed before the state's voters.[43] The legislature, however, could also propose an alternative, which it did with a referendum to maintain the state's current six-month residency requirement. Both proposals appeared on the 1922 general election ballot.

The supporters of the referendum appealed to women's concerns for other women *and* for the economic health of their state. On the day before the election, a large advertisement from the Nevada Business Men's Association exhorted female voters to preserve the six-month residency requirement and "help retain this state as a 'women's refuge.'" Included in the advertisement was a letter from George Wingfield, who recalled that "property values in Reno dropped over fifty per cent and other business suffered in proportion" during the last imposition of the twelve-month prerequisite.[44] The appeals effectively convinced Nevada voters to approve the legislature's referendum while soundly defeating the initiative.[45] The legislators and their constituents had agreed together that divorce was good for the state's economy.

Five years later, rumors circulated around the state that legislation would appear in the 1927 session to lower the residency requirement to three months. For sixty days, no such bill surfaced. Then, late on the last night of the session, a conference committee consisting of legislators from six of the rural counties presented their report to their respective chambers. With it, they proposed that Assembly Bill 195, a measure that added insanity as a legal cause for divorce, be amended to accomplish that reduction. The buzz in the hallways of the capitol building and the bars of the capital city about the imminent proposal had been sufficient to pack the galleries with observers well after midnight when, with voice votes, both chambers quickly approved the change and sent the bill to Governor Balzar for approval.[46]

Decreasing the amount of time a person must be a Nevada resident before obtaining a divorce was a deliberate strategy to increase the number of unhappily married people who ventured into the state. The reduction, however, did not promise increased economic benefits to everyone who had profited from the divorce industry, as revealed in a Reno newspaper on the day after the final vote was taken:

> "Well, I'm not so sure I like this new law," said an enterprising motor car dealer this morning. "Divorce seekers would usually buy a car for six months' use, but who will buy one for three months?"[47]

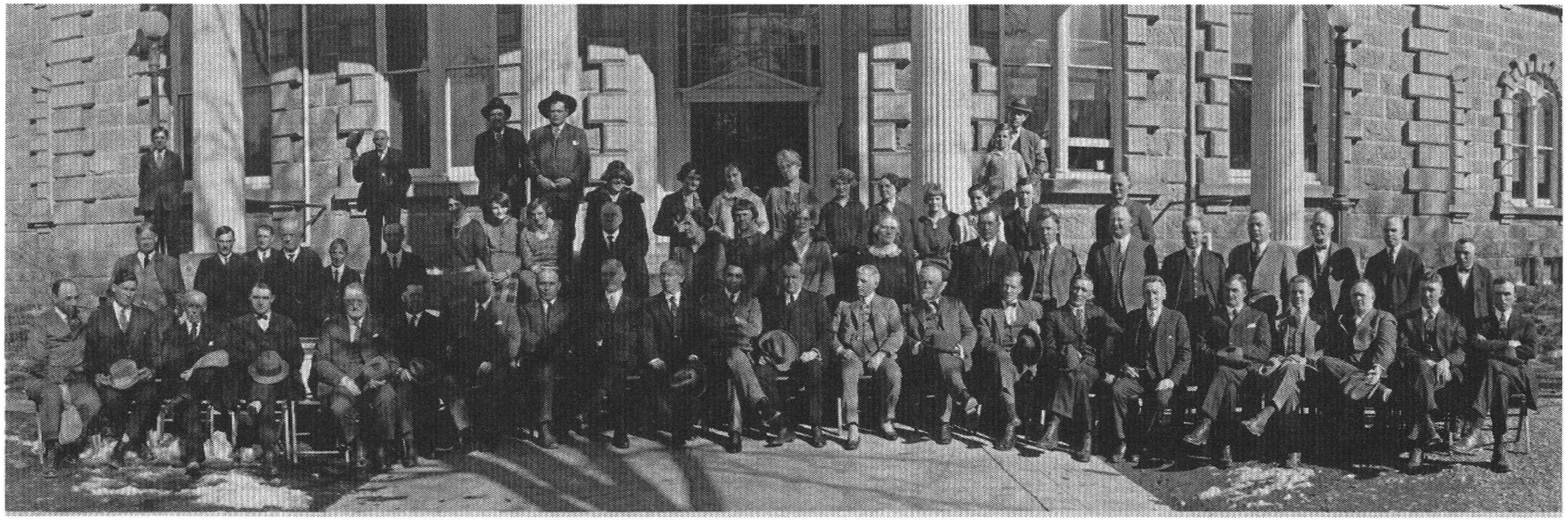
After the legislative session ended, divorce opponents quickly sued, arguing that not only did the legislators not realize what they were doing (a disingenuous assertion at best), but that the legislature was constitutionally prohibited from changing the law that the voters had affirmed through the 1922 referendum.

Nevada's Supreme Court did not agree, allowed the three-month requirement to stand, and, thus, continued to expand the broad reach of legislative powers.[48]

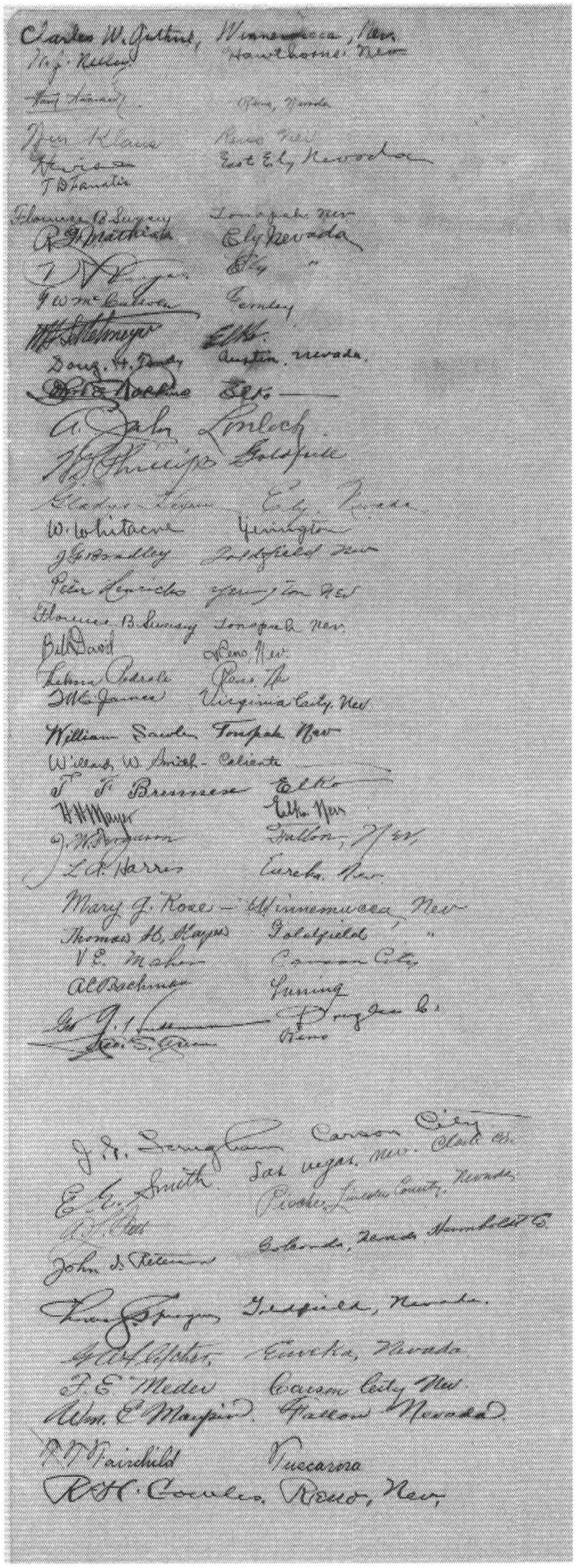
The galleries had been packed earlier in the 1927 session and during the 1925 session, too, for another economic-development bill. Gambling was, for the most part, illegal in Nevada, except for certain games allowed by the 1915 legislature. The 1919 legislature, and Governor Boyle in 1921, attempted unsuccessfully to outlaw gambling completely.[49] Two years later, the legislature, without much fanfare, approved Assembly Bill 5, which authorized counties to license and tax "billiard or pool halls, dancing halls, bowling alleys, theaters, soft-drink establishments, and gambling games." The measure had been introduced by Assemblyman Harry Swanson, a Reno Republican, and referred to the Assembly Committee on Judiciary, which recommended the bill's passage. The Assembly unanimously supported the bill with positive votes from twenty-one Republican men and women, eight Democratic men and women, and two Independents, both men. In the Senate, only one Republican was opposed. With the signature of Governor Scrugham, the county licensing scheme became law, but it applied only to legal games. Legislators and average Nevadans alike understood that the requirement would not affect the illegal gambling industry, which continued to thrive throughout the state.[50]

In 1925, the Nevada legislature, "composed of men and women of ability and experience,"[51] contemplated a measure that would have authorized and licensed virtually all forms of gambling in the state. Assemblyman John Robbins, a Democrat from Elko County, introduced Assembly Bill 135 and referred it to the Assembly Committee on Public Morals, chaired by Republican Assemblywoman Florence B. Swasey of Nye County. Opposition to the bill on both moral and economic grounds was fierce, but the bill did not die in committee. Chairwoman Swasey sent it to the floor without a recommendation from the committee, indicating that the members could not muster enough votes to kill it outright. Once the bill came before the entire Assembly for a vote, however, its end was swift and decisive after Speaker Albert Henderson, a Republican from Clark County, rose to oppose it. The large number of legislators voting against the bill comprised an interesting mix of Republicans and Democrats. Among the four assemblywomen, Swasey voted in favor of the gambling bill, but she was in the minority. Republican Mayme Schweble and Democrat Mary Rose opposed it; Daisy Allen (a Democrat) did not vote.[52] In addition to concern that "[t]he moral effect would have been pernicious,"[53] some legislators indicated that their opposition stemmed from concerns that existing card-game and slot-machine operators would not be able to pay the new gaming taxes and would thus be forced out of business by "a gambling monopoly in the hands of a limited number of 'boss gamblers.'"[54]

At the next regular session, however, one lone vote in the Senate stopped the legalization of gambling in 1927. Again, legislators not from Reno, where illegal gambling was available at the Bank Club and other establishments on



The 1925 Nevada State Legislature at Carson City. Photographer unknown.
*(University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Special Collections Library)*



Signatures of some of the 1925 Nevada State Legislators on the back of the photograph. *(University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Special Collections Library)*

Commercial Row downtown, introduced the measure, which was substantively similar to the 1925 version. Wingfield's support for the legalization of gambling was well known, and the bill's fortunes were expected to be good in the Senate where, for Wingfield, "[t]he key was keeping friendly control."[55] He and others, such as Senator Noble Getchell, had worked hard during the election of 1926 to increase the number of Republicans in elected office. Despite the disappointing outcome, which had resulted in ties between Republicans and Democrats in both the Senate and the Assembly (a handful of Independents held the power to tilt the balance in either house), Wingfield assured other pro-business interests that "there are several Democratic Senators that will play decently on any bills that are aimed for economy."[56]

When it came to the gambling bill, an economic-development bill for which Wingfield personally lobbied, his plan backfired as more Republicans than Democrats were opposed to the bill. The Assembly voted two-to-one in favor of the bill, but its passage was not the result of support from Republicans or representatives from Reno. Indeed, a consortium of Reno businessmen descended upon the Capitol and insisted on another committee in the Assembly where they railed against the gambling bill. "Hell will pop in this state," Reverend Brewster Adams thundered, "if this thing goes through." Continuing, the Reno Baptist minister prophesied that the state "will grow so hot that in five years, you won't be able to spit in Nevada."[57] None of the passionate opponents could stop the bill's progress at that point, but when it reached the Senate, Richard H. Cowles, Reno's lone Republican senator, joined its opposition. Failing in the Senate with eight in favor and nine opposed, the measure died without support from Reno, despite Wingfield's best efforts.[58]

Public concern about the legalization of gambling extended into the next election and compelled two newly elected assemblywomen to declare that they were "absolutely opposed to a wide-open gambling bill."[59] The one re-elected assemblywoman, Ethel McGuire of Nye County, had expressed her opinion on the subject when she voted in favor of the 1927 gambling legislation.[60] The 1929 Assembly did not vote on gambling, however. The issue did not appear again until 1931, when a complex piece of legislation was passed by the legislature and signed by the governor. No women were elected to that session, but the previous voting records of female legislators demonstrate that a connection cannot be assumed to exist between the gender of legislators and the results of policy decisions.

Many women actively opposed gambling and divorce bills and personally lobbied the legislature, but assemblywomen's voting records reflect a more complex approach, which was shared by many Nevadans. When it came to legislation concerning gambling and divorce, which many considered economic issues first and moral issues second, the gender of the lawmaker was not a prediction of support or opposition. Both male and female legislators could be found on each side of both issues. For the assemblywomen Towle and McGuire

and for many other Nevadans concerned about the state's economic development, divorce and gambling were acceptable parts of the "up-growth" of new industry. Although these enterprises did not directly contribute to Nevada's treasury—a direct state tax on gambling revenues did not exist until 1945—they attracted new people to the state, both as visitors and residents.

## New Industries Established

At the end of the decade, Governor Balzar trumpeted "a general spirit of optimism [that] prevails throughout our State as to its economic future."[61] Indeed, state revenues had increased steadily throughout the twenties: By 1929, they exceeded those of 1919 by 315 percent. Of the receipts in 1929, slightly more than one fifth came from the federal government, and federal highway funds represented the largest single item. By contrast, ten years earlier, all federal receipts had constituted less than 2 percent of Nevada's total revenue.[62] Gas-tax revenues grew rapidly, too, as more people drove to Nevada to start a new job, get a divorce, or marry.

More people were, indeed, coming to the state. On the eve of the Great Depression, Nevada's population was 18 percent greater than it had been ten years earlier. Almost one quarter of Nevadans lived in Washoe County, with most of those living in Reno, the county seat and the state's most populous city for the first sixty years of the twentieth century. Located thirty miles from the state capital, Reno was the political and social hub of the state in the 1920s, growing 54 percent during the decade. The construction on Hoover Dam, in southern Nevada, helped to launch the exponential growth of Las Vegas, which shot up 124 percent between 1920 and 1930. Nye County, which was economically dependent on mining, lost nearly half of its population.[63]

This boost in Nevada's population resulted primarily from new opportunities for construction employment. Public investment in large projects, particularly road building, shifted Nevada's economy from resource-based to growth-based and inextricably intertwined it with federal and state funding. The gas tax proved wildly successful; the military demonstrated its economic potential; and the establishment of divorce and gambling as reasons to visit Nevada continues to resonate today. Despite the resuscitation of the state park system and the ultimate establishment of a national park, tourists do not, for the most part, come to Nevada for the natural wonders. They come for what some may argue are unnatural wonders: the huge resorts on the Las Vegas Strip. Finally authorized in 1931, casino gaming quickly outpaced divorce as a major economic force.

Nevada's current revenue sources are more numerous and productive than those of the 1920s, but the percentages are remarkably similar. In 2008, 22 percent of the state's total revenue came from the federal government and

4 percent from mining taxes; in 1928, they provided 23 percent and 1 percent, respectively, while general property taxes, Nevada's main revenue source, represented 27 percent of total revenue. In 2008, sales and use taxes, to which the state had shifted from property taxes in 1981, yielded only 12 percent of the total. Add gaming taxes, the most visible budgetary reflection of Nevada's tourist economy, and the portion from the primary source becomes 22 percent.[64] The gas tax, earmarked for road maintenance, also produced a significant part of the state's revenue in 1928—13 percent—but was proving to be inadequate. At the beginning of the 1929 legislative session, only six years after the tax was first implemented, Governor Balzar lamented the insufficiency of Nevada's road maintenance program and recommended halting road construction in the state for two years. He did not, however, suggest any change to the tax; eighty years later, taxes on gasoline continue to fund road projects and additional dedicated taxes and fees complicate the state's budget.

Governor Balzar also advocated implementing revenue sources other than taxation "[t]o prevent taxes from becoming an undue burden."[65] The legislature had already done so and needed little encouragement to continue that course. Well before the first New Deal program of the 1930s, Nevada's economy and tax structure leaned heavily on federal funds, and those funds helped to establish construction, especially homebuilding, as Nevada's second biggest industry in the twentieth century. With its willingness to authorize unorthodox behavior, the Nevada legislature relied increasingly on visitors rather than residents to support governmental functions. By 1930, as assemblywoman Towle desired, the legislature had begun to make conditions favorable for new industries, such as divorce and gambling, attracting thousands—eventually millions—of new people to Nevada. In the process, Nevada's twentieth-century economy became dependent on nonstop growth, and its policies expressed a constant tension between keeping taxes low as part of the state's appeal and generating sufficient revenues for state and local governments, a formula that shows significant signs of stress in the twenty-first century.

## Notes

[1]"She's Going To Assembly," *Reno Evening Gazette* (13 November 1922).

[2]Russell R. Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 2d ed. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1987), 211, 224, 404-5.

[3]Michael W. Bowers, *The Sagebrush State: Nevada's History, Government, and Politics*, 3d ed. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006), 49, 53-55; James G. Scrugham, *Nevada: A Narrative of the Conquest of a Frontier Land; Comprising the Story of Her People from the Dawn of History to the Present Time*, Vol. 1 (Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1935), 399-489; Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 246.

[4]Scrugham, *Nevada: A Narrative*, 465.

[5]Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 236, 252.

[6]*Ibid.*, 404.

[7]Gov. Emmet D. Boyle, "Message to the Legislature of 1921" (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1921), 4.

[8]Biennial Report of the State Board of Stock Commissioners (Carson City: State Printing Office, biennially, 1923-29); Annual Report of the State Sheep Commission (Carson City: State Printing Office, annually, 1921-29).

[9]Gov. James G. Scrugham, "Message to the Legislature of 1925" (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1925), 6-7.

[10]Gov. F. B. Balzar, "Message to the Legislature of 1929" (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1929), 31-32.

[11]Edna B. Patterson, Louise A. Ulph, and Victor Goodwin, *Nevada's Northeast Frontier* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 241, 309.

[12]Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 262; Andy J. Stinson, *Biennial Report of the State Inspector of Mines, 1921-1922* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1923), 6. According to Stinson's biennial report in 1921, the number of mine producers dropped from a high of 943 in 1917 to 421 in 1919, and the value of production was reduced by more than half.

[13]Scrugham, "Message" 8-9

[14]A. J. Stinson, *Biennial Report of the State Inspector of Mines, 1927-1928* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1929), 9, 40.

[15]George A. Cole, *Annual Report of the State Controller, 1920* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1921), 5.

[16]Art. IV and Art. X, *The Constitution of the State of Nevada*; Brian L. Davie, "Legislative Redistricting," in *Political History of Nevada 1996*, 10th ed., issued by Secretary of State of Nevada (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1997), 123.

[17]Jerome E. Edwards, *Pat McCarran: Political Boss of Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1982), 17.

[18]"Membership of the Nevada State Legislature," in *Political History of Nevada 1996*, 180-84.

[19]The first woman elected to the Nevada Legislature, Sadie Hurst, had feuded publicly with Anne Martin in 1915 over which of them spoke for Nevada women. Hurst's campaign ads in the Reno newspapers ensured that voters would not confuse her with Martin, simply because they were both women, by declaring that she was "Not a Member of the Woman's Party." See, for example, *Reno Evening Gazette*, 1 November 1918. Both Kathryn Louise Anderson in her 1978 PhD dissertation for the University of Washington, "Practical Political Equality for Women: Anne Martin's Campaigns for the U.S. Senate in Nevada, 1918 and 1920," and Anne Bail Howard in the only published biography of Martin (*The Long Campaign: A Biography of Anne Martin* [Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1985]) comment on Martin's inability to connect with Nevada's female voters and politicians after suffrage was won.

[20]Gilman M. Ostrander, *Nevada: The Great Rotten Borough, 1859-1964* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 133. See also Robert Laxalt, *Nevada: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1977), and in particular, biographies of the twentieth-century Nevada politicians Anne Martin, Patrick McCarran, Tasker Oddie, Key Pittman, and Vail Pittman.

[21]In 1920, Nevada had fewer than 78,000 residents; Carson City, 2,400. State Data Center, "Nevada Place Names Populations 1860-2000," http://dmla.clan.lib.ns.us/docs/nsla/sdc/placenames.

[22]C. Elizabeth Raymond, *George Wingfield: Owner and Operator of Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1992), 148.

[23]Dana R. Bennett, *Women in the Nevada Legislature*, Background Paper 95-1 (Carson City: Nevada Legislative Counsel Bureau, 1995), 13.

[24]Loren Briggs Chan, *Sagebrush Statesman: Tasker L. Oddie of Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1973), 85.

[25]Handwritten letter from Will F. Heffernan to George Wingfield on Senate Chamber letterhead, 27 January 1913, *George Wingfield Papers*, Nevada Historical Society; Paul R. Bruno, "The Cole-Malley Scandal: Nevada's Political System Revealed" *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 50 (Summer 2007), 135-136; Memo to George Wingfield, 13 February 1925, *George Wingfield Papers*.

[26]Raymond, *George Wingfield*, 152-53.

[27]Eric N. Moody, "Nevada's Legalization of Casino Gambling in 1931: Purely a Business Proposition," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 37 (Summer 1994), 96.

[28]R. Rudy Higgens-Evenson, "Financing a Sound Era of Internal Improvements: Transportation and Tax Reform, 1890-1929," *Social Science History Association* 26 (Winter 2002), 624.

[29]Boyle, "Message," 7.

[30]Nevada State Library and Archives, "Trends in Nevada's Population and Housing, 1900-2000," http://dmla.clan.lib.nv.us/docs/nsla/sdc/Centurychanges.htm. In 1918, Nevada had the smallest number of registered vehicles (6,885) of all fifty states. Richard F. Weingroff, "Vol. I, No. 1—The First Issue of Public Roads, May 1918," *Public Roads*, 63 (May/June 2000), http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/mayjun00/volume1.htm.

[31]Federal Highway Act of 1921, Public Law 87, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 119 (1921): 214.

[32]*Biennial Report of the Surveyor-General and State Land Register, 1923-1924* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1925), 7; Chan, *Sagebrush Statesman*, 120.

[33]Boyle, "Message," 15; Balzar, "Message," 20; Scrugham, "Message," 16; Ed Malley, *Annual Report of the State Treasurer* (Carson City: State Printing Office, annually, 1919-1926); George B. Russell, *Annual Report of the State Treasurer* (Carson City: State Printing Office, annually, 1927-1929).

[34]Federal Highway Act of 1921, 215.

[35]John Chynoweth Burnham, "The Gasoline Tax and the Automobile Revolution," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 48 (December 1961), 346.

[36]"Gasoline Tax Question Looming as Big Problem At Legislature," *Reno Evening Gazette* (15 January 1923).

[37]Malley, *Annual Report of the State Treasurer*; Russell, *Annual Report of the State Treasurer.*

[38]Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 236.

[39]Chan, *Sagebrush Statesman*, 129, 131; Statutes of Nevada, Chapter 117, 173-76; Senate Bill 137 (Statutes of Nevada, 1929, chapter 117), 173-76; Senate Bill 107 (Statutes of Nevada, 1929, Chapter 139), 178-79; State Data Center.

[40]*Balzar*, "Message," 7.

[41]Thomas R. Cox, "Before the Casino: James G. Scrugham, State Parks, and Nevada's Quest for Tourism," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 24 (August 1993), 342, 346.

[42]Richard G. Lillard, *Desert Challenge: An Interpretation of Nevada* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 345.

[43]*Journal of the Assembly, 1921* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1921), 127.

[44]"A Final Word to the Women Voters of Nevada," *Nevada State Journal* (6 November 1922).

[45]"State Elections," in *Political History of Nevada 1996*, 10th ed., issued by Secretary of State of Nevada (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1997), 287. The legislature did not exercise this option again until 1981.

[46]"Legislators Complete Duties and Depart For Their Homes," *Reno Evening Gazette* (19 March 1927); Lillard, *Desert Challenge*, 348; Assembly Bill 195 (Statutes of Nevada, 1927, Chapter 96), 127.

[47]"They Work Fast When New Divorce Goes into Effect," *Reno Evening Gazette* (19 March 1927).

[48]Robert E. Cushman, "Public Law in the State Courts in 1927-1928," *The American Political Science Review*, 22 (August 1928), 619.

[49]Oscar Lewis, *Sagebrush Casinos: The Story of Legal Gambling in Nevada* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1953), 56; Moody, "Nevada's Legislation," 80; Boyle, "Message," 19. Assembly Bill 34, which would have eliminated gambling, died for lack of consideration in the Senate, after passing the Assembly in a floor fight. *Journal of the Assembly*, 1919, 121-29; *Journal of the Senate*, 1919, 95.

[50]Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 279.

[51]"The 1925 Legislature," *Reno Evening Gazette* (19 January 1925).

[52]*Journal of the Assembly*, 1925, 151.

[53]"The Gambling Bill," *Reno Evening Gazette* (12 March 1925).

[54]"Gambling Bill Is Heavily Swamped in Legislature," *Reno Evening Gazette* (11 March 1925).

[55]Raymond, *George Wingfield*, 152, 195; Moody, "Nevada's Legislation," 81.

[56]Quoted in Raymond, *George Wingfield*, 154.

[57]"Observations," *Nevada State Journal* (13 March 1927).

[58]*Journal of the Assembly*, 1927, 253; *Journal of the Senate*, 1927, 220; Moody, 34.

[59]"They Will Contribute Legislative Charm," *Reno Evening Gazette* (17 January 1929).

[60]*Journal of the Assembly*, 1927, 253.

[61]Balzar, "Message," 32.

[62]*Annual Report of the State Treasurer* (annually, 1919-29). In 1929, the state treasurer reported receipt of $1,025,743.44 in federal highway funds.

[63]State Data Center. Clark County's population rose seventy-six percent from 4,859 in 1920 to 8,532 in 1930, making it the fourth largest county behind Washoe, White Pine, and Elko. From 1920 to 1930, Nye County's population fell from 6,504 to 3,989, moving the county from fourth to sixth largest.

[64]Nevada Department of Administration, "2009-2011 Executive Budget in Brief" (Carson City: January 15, 2009), 7, 8; Ed. C. Peterson, *Annual Report of the State Controller, 1928* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1929), 7-8; George B. Russell, *Annual Report of the State Treasurer, 1928* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1929), 6.

[65]*Message of Gov. F.B. Balzar*, 1929, 4, 22.

# *Transforming the Desert*
## *Commercial Aviation as Agent of Change, Las Vegas, 1926-1945*

DANIEL BUBB

Aviation's roots run deep in the Southwest, dating to the days when the barnstormers Louis Paulhan, Glenn Curtiss, Charles Hamilton, and other world-famous aerobatic pilots dazzled audiences by performing hammerhead stalls, barrel and snap rolls, loops, inverted flight, and other daring maneuvers. Indeed, in the early 1910s, tens of thousands of enthusiastic viewers flocked to air shows in Los Angeles and San Diego hoping to meet these pilots and witness their talents. The air shows drew city boosters from Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Phoenix, and Tucson who eagerly returned home hoping to raise money for local air shows, promote aviation in their own communities, and boost city coffers with aviation-generated revenues.

In 1910, Phoenix city boosters Nat Reiss and Kirk Moore did just that after they attended the Los Angeles Air Show. Buzzing with excitement and convinced that an air show would put Phoenix on the aviation map, the two implored the Phoenix City Council and local business owners to help raise funds for an air show. The city council and a few business owners were skeptical, claiming they were uncertain that Phoenix residents would be receptive to such an event. Reiss passionately argued that "the flying idea . . . has got the people going . . . . The country is aviation mad and the advertisement it would give Phoenix to be the

Daniel Bubb is a doctoral candidate (ABD) in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. Currently, he teaches History and Political Science courses at Gonzaga University. He would like to thank the students at Gonzaga University for their continuous encouragement and inspiration to write about aviation history and share his stories with them.

scene of the third aviation meeting in America would be incomparable and attract the attention of millions who never yet have heard of the place."[1] Reiss was right, and his persuasive effort paid off. Within four days, he, Moore, and other members of the Phoenix Aero Club raised $12,870, easily exceeding the $12,000 cost for the show.[2] Enormous crowds attended the three-day event, which prompted the conservative local newspaper *Republican* to declare it "a financial success . . . likely no single event ever occurred that will give Phoenix as much advertising of a sort that can be secured by purchase as the late aviation meet."[3]

The excitement of air shows even prompted Tucson leaders to try to attract Charles Hamilton to perform in their air show. Unlike Denver and Salt Lake City, which were willing to pay him $20,000, Tucson could not afford it and offered him $2,000. Wanting to promote aviation in smaller communities, he agreed.[4] Though the air show was less successful than the one in Phoenix, it nonetheless created a buzz among the residents. The historians Roger Launius and Jessie Embry point out how "city promoters believed aviation held promise for the development of the area as a center for aviation."[5] Indeed, this was the case for many other southwestern towns such as Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Vegas, whose town officials and residents also embraced aviation and recognized its value.

The popularity of air shows in the Southwest reflected national trends. The historian Joseph Corn describes how Americans embraced aviation with such enthusiasm that they became obsessed with it as if it were a sort of religion or "winged gospel."[6] They became fascinated with the concept of flight in the form of an airplane, developing an "air-minded" mentality.[7] At the air shows, people stood in long lines for hours waiting to pay their entry fees[8], spent money on souvenirs, and practically climbed over one another to sit in airplane cockpits on display. Aviation had planted its seed in America, and it was only a matter of time before it would grow and blossom into a thriving industry.

## Post-War Years 1918-1926

Aviation's popularity proliferated throughout the country after World War I. But with the level of military aviation diminished, the question arose: What to do with the airplanes and pilots when they were not conducting training exercises? Prior to the war, the federal government had experimented with the idea of transporting mail by air because it would be faster. Since military pilots were the most experienced in the country, it made sense to have them transport the mail. On May 15, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson ordered the allocation of $50,000 for pilots, airplanes, maintenance personnel, and facilities for the United States Post Office to transport the nation's mail by air from New York to Washington, D.C., via Philadelphia.[9] The Post Office contracted with the United States Army Air Corps to transport the mail. Using DeHavilland DH4s capable

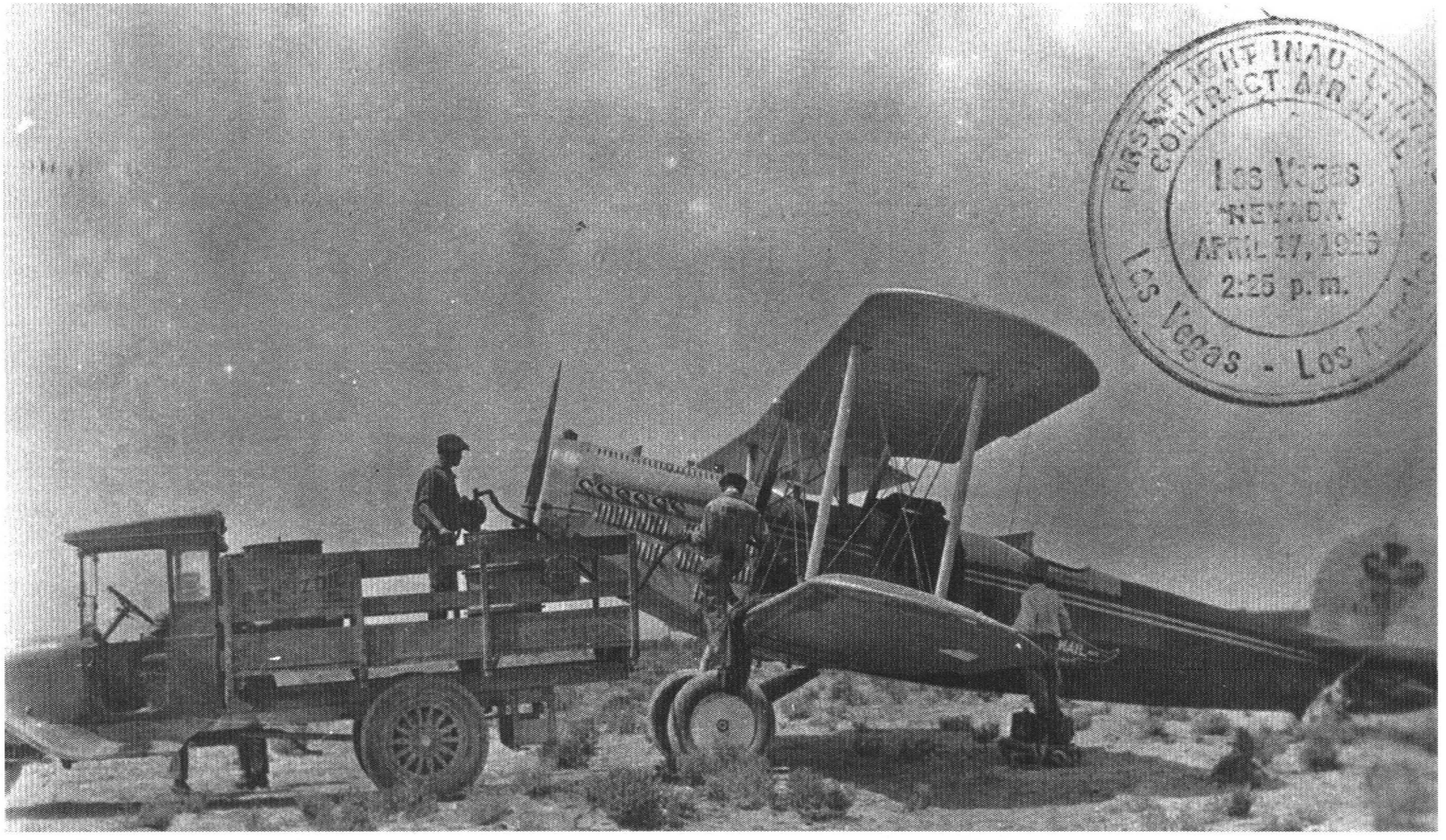
of carrying more than four hundred pounds of mail in the forward compartment, the Post Office hoped to break even, and it did.[10] The future Postmaster General Harry New was to recall that the point of transporting the mail by air was not necessarily to make money, but to "establish itself [airmail] as a new means of communication between the people of this country."[11] Instead of waiting for days to receive mail by carriage or train, depending on location, people received mail within one day. However, the air-mail system had its flaws. Pilots complained about a lack of adequate navigation aids, which made night flying virtually impossible. Also, a series of crashes created fear among government officials and the public that airplanes were unsafe. With mounting pressure, and realizing that contracting with private carriers might generate more revenue, in 1924 the Post Office seriously contemplated terminating its contract with the Army Air Corps.

With the help of Representative M. Clyde Kelly (R-Pennsylvania), those plans became reality on February 2, 1925, when Congress passed the Kelly Act, effectively privatizing the air-cargo industry.[12] More than twenty carriers immediately placed bids for air routes. But the Kelly Act really fostered passage of another congressional act that would allow passengers to travel on air-mail planes.[13] On May 20, 1926, President Calvin Coolidge signed the Air Commerce Act, officially inaugurating the airline industry.[14]

Pressure on Coolidge came from air-mail transportation executives calling for government intervention to lessen competition with smaller regional carriers, from city officials wanting more air-cargo flights to their cities, and from business owners interested in developing cozy relations with the carriers. Since Coolidge had envisioned commercial air travel as a stimulus to the economy, he saw no reason to wait. While the Air Commerce Act expanded the responsibilities of the Department of Commerce to regulate the commercial air-travel industry by certifying airplanes for airworthiness, requiring pilots to pass flight tests and written examinations, and providing funding for adequate navigation aids (including color-coded flashing beacons for night flying), the measure was designed to make air travel accessible to the public.[15]

Eager to see the country by air, passengers holding airline tickets became part of a growing trend. Businessmen, airline executives, and celebrities enthusiastically boarded passenger planes. Even though the comforts of commercial air travel were lacking in many ways in comparison to the train and automobile, people still wanted to fly because it was faster and an adventure. They also were willing to put up with the possibility that they might not arrive at their destinations because the mail took priority.[16]

But most noticeable was the transformative impact commercial airplanes had on America's cities and the people's minds. Not only did passenger planes substantially boost local economies and require cities to build airports capable of accommodating passenger planes, but they changed people's concept of "region" because airplanes united the country. Launius points out how "no longer would the American West be a 'colony' of the East; instead it would become an equal




A Western Air Express M-2 refuels at Rockwell Field on April 17, 1926, the first day of scheduled air mail flights at Las Vegas. The pilot sat in the rear open cockpit. The forward compartment was for mail and, occasionally, passengers. Photographer unknown. *(Cahlan Collection, Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas)*

partner as airplanes inextricably tied the nation together and strengthened all of economic, political, social, and cultural bonds already in existence."[17] Such was the case in Las Vegas. When commercial airplanes landed there, they began the transformational process of changing this small railroad town in the desert into a bustling commercial aviation center connected with not only the nation, but, ultimately, the world.

## COMMERCIAL AVIATION ORIGINS IN LAS VEGAS

On May 23, 1926, Ben F. Redman, chairman of the Salt Lake City Chamber of Commerce's Aviation Committee, and John A. Tomlinson, a businessman, deplaned a Western Air Express Douglas M-2 at Rockwell Field and received an enthusiastic welcome from Las Vegas residents.[18] Many people were amazed that a commercial airplane actually landed in Las Vegas. Nobody ever imagined such an event, because at that time, aviation remained a novelty. Observers occasionally witnessed the general aviation pilots Randall Henderson and Emery Rogers practicing touch-and-goes and read brief articles about commercial airlines in the local newspaper. When the Western Air Express flight landed in Las Vegas, it not only made headlines the next day, but created a frenzied atmosphere of excitement among the town's residents.[19] The plane even attracted non-resident celebrities such as Will Rogers, a Hollywood actor and aviation enthusiast who wanted to be the first passenger to board a commercial flight departing Las Vegas for Salt Lake City. The pilots declined his offer, insisting that the mail took priority. Rogers offered to buy as many postage stamps as necessary (to cover his body) for a ride. Again the pilots politely refused his request. On June 6, 1926, Maude Campbell paid $90 to fly the five hour, forty minute trip from Las Vegas to Salt Lake City, becoming the first female passenger on Western Air Express.[20] After she deplaned in Salt Lake City, a group of newspaper reporters asked her questions about the flight. She expressed her excitement about flying but also remarked that the seat was uncomfortable and the engine was noisy.[21]

That was a common experience for passengers because Ford Tri-Motors, Douglas M-2s, and Fokker F-10s were non-pressurized, uncomfortable, and lacked cabin heat. Even on hot, windy days, many flights were briefly delayed because ground crews had to hose out the cabin. But that did not stop passengers from flying because airplanes still were faster than automobiles, significantly reduced travel time, and had an intrigue about them. In fact, the *Clark County Review* printed an article on how airplane passenger travel would be ideal not only for Las Vegas, but for all of Nevada. The paper noted how commercial flights would mean "improving travel over the long mountainous stretches between towns in the southern section of Nevada."[22] It cited the lack of railroad connections among Las Vegas, Goldfield, and Tonopah. People essentially had

to drive for ten hours to travel the two hundred miles between the towns. The paper also suggested that "a regular air service would cut the time to three hours and would have the advantage of being a much cooler and more pleasant trip."[23] Little did journalists know their words foreshadowed the golden opportunity about to be bestowed upon Las Vegas.

In October 1925, Las Vegas officials learned that the Post Office was considering the town as a refueling point on Civil Air Mail Route-4 between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. Originally, it had not occurred to Postmaster General Harry New that the planes lacked the fuel range to fly the route non-stop—this despite pilot complaints about being unable to do so because the airplanes kept running out of fuel. Although other Nevada towns such as Caliente, Pioche, and Ely also wanted the route, they could not compete with Las Vegas for two reasons. First, the town's geographic location offered the safest place for airplanes to take off and land. The postmaster general deemed the original air route from San Francisco to Salt Lake City via Reno too dangerous because of the treacherous weather and altitude of the Sierra Nevada. Second, Las Vegas officials convinced New that they were far better prepared to provide the facilities needed to accommodate more flights should the air-mail industry expand in the Southwest. To drum up local support, the Las Vegas City Commission released a statement claiming "the value of the airmail to Las Vegas cannot be overestimated, aside from the convenience of the service the inauguration of this new route will bring a vast amount of publicity for this city which could not be purchased at any price. It is in the interest of every businessman of this city that he avail himself of the new means of communication at every opportunity."[24]

With the announcement that Las Vegas would be part of the Civil Air Mail Route-4, excitement grew. By 1926, Western Air Express transported 209 passengers with a profit of $1,029.[25] By 1927, more than 250 airplanes had landed at Rockwell Field in addition to the Western Air Express flights.[26] And to top it all, that year, Charles Lindbergh completed his famous New York-to-Paris flight in the *Spirit of St. Louis*, making aviation even more popular. But Las Vegas needed a better airport for general aviation and commercial flights. And sharing the plight of many other western cities, it could not rely solely on the federal government to provide funds because the government was woefully unprepared for expansion of the air-mail and passenger industry and was in addition facing onset of the Depression. Essentially, before the New Deal, airports had to find their own funding, and Las Vegas was no exception. In 1929, the lack of funding only worsened the impending ominous situation for aviation development in Las Vegas.

The year before, Leon and Earl Rockwell had leased the airport to the city, which balked at renewing the lease. The Rockwell brothers had no intention of keeping the property, and the city certainly had no interest in acquiring it, so the Rockwell brothers sold it to the Leigh Hunt Company, which planned to build a resort on the property.[27] This left Harris Hanshue, the founder and president

of Western Air Express, in a tenuous situation. Not only was the airline not guaranteed an airport, but it faced higher takeoff and landing and airport usage fees. Hanshue threatened to take his airline out of Las Vegas, panicking city officials. Newspaper headlines dramatized the volatile situation, with one article claiming that "not having an airport was among the most pressing problems the city council faced."[28] City officials frantically searched for more suitable land upon which to build an airport. They approached Peter Albert Simon, a Texaco fuel distributor and entrepreneur who, with his partners, had been constructing an airport eight miles northeast of Las Vegas as the base for Nevada Air Lines, which would offer flights between Las Vegas and Reno.[29] Simon's airline endeavor failed, and just a few general aviation pilots used the airfield, so he figured it would be a wise investment to lease the airfield to Western Air Express. In 1933, Simon did just that. The company signed a twenty-year lease and renamed the air field Western Air Express Field.[30] Las Vegas city officials and Hanshue breathed a major sigh of relief because, had Simon not agreed to lease his airfield to Western Air Express, Las Vegas would have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in business revenue and the airline would have lost its most profitable route (Los Angeles to Salt Lake City via Las Vegas).

The deal between Western Air Express and Simon was fortunate for both Las Vegas and the airlines, because nationally the airline industry suffered from many challenges similar to those facing the world during the Great Depression. Only the affluent and businesspeople traveled. As the economists Peter Lyth and Marc Dierikx point out, "high ticket prices kept the tourists away, the general level of air fares being priced above first-class rail or sea travel. . . . In 1932, less than 9 percent of passengers on European airlines were flying for pleasure."[31] In the United States, planes still took off with empty seats, and some air carriers finding they could no longer profit by only transporting mail, went out of business. Between 1930 and 1933, the number of airlines declined from forty-three to five (including mergers).[32] This was partially due to the Watres Act of 1930, which authorized the postmaster general to reduce the number of air carriers in the transcontinental air-mail service to four (United, American, Transcontinental and Western Airlines, and Eastern) in order to discourage smaller regional carriers from competing for the same routes. That provision sent airlines scrambling. It forced Western Air Express to merge with Transcontinental Air Transport just to stay in business (they remained separate carriers, but operated under one parent company, TWA). They continued offering flights to Las Vegas, and later, to Boulder City, but Western Air Express fell behind in its rent to Simon, resulting in protracted and expensive litigation, and Transcontinental Air Transport proved unprofitable.[33] Worst of all, the Watres Act also contained a provision ordering all airmail contracts voided once the ten-year contract date expired, and then the United States Army was to transport the mail.[34]

Even without that provision, the airlines still would have faced trouble because alleged collusion between the postmaster general and the four major air carriers (United, American, Eastern, and TWA) resulted in a congressional

investigation spearheaded by Senator Hugo Black of Alabama. His findings concluded that Postmaster General New's successor, Walter Folger Brown, had accepted bribes to choose which air route would belong to which air carrier, despite his denial and claim that the intent of the Watres Act was to streamline and organize an air-mail transportation industry that was in disarray. The Roosevelt Administration authorized the cancellation of all air-mail contracts. This slashed more than half of the airlines' business.

In Las Vegas, Western Air Express had to reduce its fleet to six airplanes and a staff of four pilots.[35] Transcontinental Air Transport experienced the same problem. The airlines were on the ropes. However, air-mail transportation by the Army was short lived because too many planes crashed. This gave the Roosevelt Administration no choice but to go back to contracting with private air carriers to transport the mail. Under the Air Mail Act of 1934, once again private air carriers transported the mail. But the act also forbade bidding by the companies that had originally participated in air-mail transportation prior to the Watres Act. So, the airlines took advantage of a loophole: If they simply changed their names, they could bid once again for the air-mail routes. Western Air Express, which became known as General Airlines, resumed transporting airmail on its Los Angeles to Salt Lake City route. But the route had become less profitable because people affected by the Depression could not afford to send as much mail as they had in previous years. Desperately trying to find a way to at least stay in business, both General Airlines and Transcontinental Air Transport (by then TWA) turned to better marketing.

TWA offered scenic flights over Hoover Dam and the Grand Canyon, and took advantage of promoting marriages with an on-call minister ready to wed couples at Western Air Express Field. The city even allowed the airlines to install slot machines in the air terminal. The former Western Air Express ticket agent Vern Willis recalled how popular the slot machines were, noting that "airline personnel had to empty them three or four times a day."[36] TWA added to its profits by offering popular air tours. In 1935, the airline applied to the Interstate Commerce Commission to add Los Angeles to its San Francisco to Newark route, with Las Vegas as a stopping point.[37] In 1937, with the help of Nevada's Senator Patrick McCarran, TWA won approval to add the route.

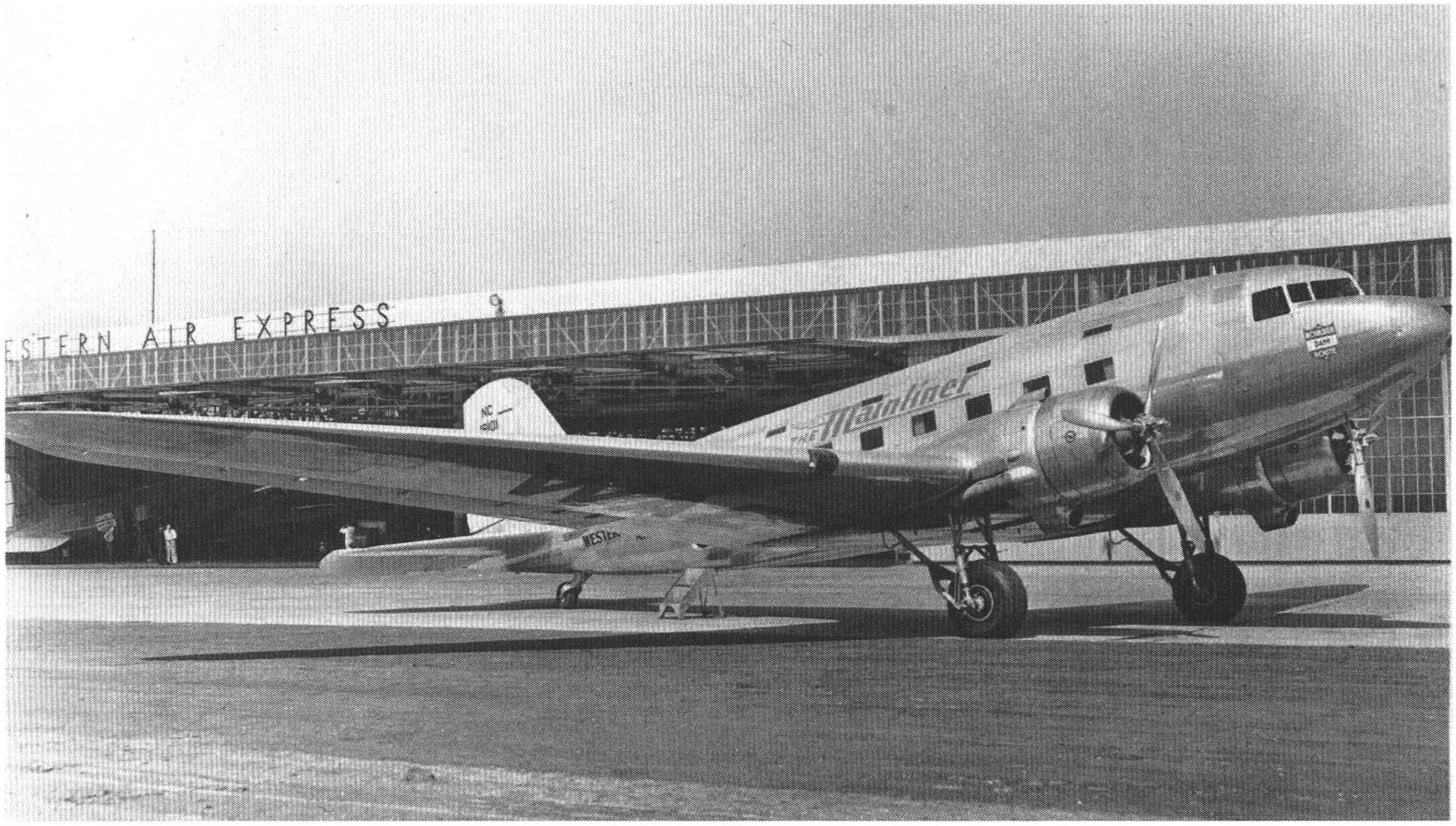
What also helped the airlines stay afloat were improvements in aviation technology. Airlines replaced their fleets with larger, faster, and eventually pressurized aircraft with more seating and comfort for passengers. In 1933, the Douglas DC-1 appeared on flight lines, capable of carrying twelve passengers and cruising at 196 miles per hour. Just one year later, airlines added the DC-2, which flew faster than its predecessor and carried up to twenty passengers. But the aircraft that won the hearts of passengers was the DC-3 "Sky Sleeper." With a soundproof fuselage, 1000-horsepower engines, and seating for twenty-one passengers, the DC-3 showcased aviation's future.[38] Entirely composed of metal (not wood or cloth like the Ford Tri-Motor and Fokker F-10), the DC-3 not


Western briefly owned four new DC-2s in 1934. Western Air Express was known as "General Airlines" through most of that year. The occasion noted by this photograph is General's first flight to Salt Lake City, Utah, via Las Vegas, Nevada. Shown are pilots Jimmie James (far left) and Fred Kelly (far right). The airline's founder, Harris "Pop" Hanshue is shown near the center with a cigar. Photographer unknown. *(Cahlan Collection, Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas)*

only impressed observers and passengers, but confirmed in Americans' minds that aviation indeed had a legitimate future and offered even more promise and progress. Including fuel stops, a passenger now could travel from coast to coast in less than twenty hours. With aviation aficionados and entrepreneurs such as Howard Hughes financially backing the aerospace industry, and engineers designing future airplanes capable of carrying even more passengers and traveling at faster speeds, the aviation industry appeared to have no limits. This movement significantly affected the Southwest, including Las Vegas. Roger Launius and Jessie Embry point out that "the aeronautical technology revolution of the 1930s—especially manifest in the Boeing 247 and Douglas DC-3, all-metal, multiengine transports—allowed a much more rapid and sustained expansion of aviation in the region along essentially the same course that had been started by the early aviation promoters of the Southwest."[39]

Even with Hoover Dam's completion and a steady increase in tourism, the airline industry in Las Vegas managed at best to maintain only modest profits. The industry still moved in fits and starts and needed a boost, either in the form of more passengers and airmail (and a larger airport with better facilities to accommodate them), or higher fares. The only other option was to lower fares. The airlines received little financial support from the government and refused to lower fares. As a result, passenger volume plateaued, and the airport lacked funds to upgrade the terminal and repave the runways and taxiways. Las Vegas needed a massive cash infusion in order to improve Western Air Express Field and thus sustain amicable business relations with the airlines. This was a microcosm of a larger problem that existed throughout the country. The aviation industry needed better organization, and the government needed to provide an agency that was better equipped to directly manage the airline industry, especially as airlines added larger and faster airplanes to their fleets. The Commerce Department could no longer supervise and regulate the airline industry while simultaneously tending to other industries' needs.

Recognizing that aviation's future depended on more regulation and better organization, Senator McCarran co-authored a bill recommending that the federal government provide an agency whose only function was to regulate and supervise the aviation industry. In 1938, Congress passed the McCarran-Lea Bill (known as the Civil Aeronautics Act) and President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed it into law. The bill essentially called for the creation of a five-member panel headed by an administrator whose task was to regulate air-mail rates, airlines rates, fares, and routes. This Civil Aeronautics Board was also to establish civil airways, provide better and more efficient navigation facilities, and provide air-traffic control in locales where air traffic was heaviest. Finally, the act also mandated inspection and improvement of the nation's airports to meet the needs of both commercial and general aviation traffic.[40] This act eventually proved important not only for the airline industry, but also for the airports, especially as commercial air travel proliferated after the end of World War II. Las Vegas particularly was to benefit from this as it eagerly awaited commercial aviation's future.




Because of Western's 1940 interchange agreement with United Airlines, this Western DST (DC-3) "Skysleeper" is marked with United's "Mainliner" trademark. Photographer unknown. *(Cahlan Collection, Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas)*

The population in Las Vegas continued to grow, largely thanks to the Hoover Dam project and New Deal funding for public works, and aviation played an increasingly important role as airlines continued to bring passengers to the desert. The airlines did not yet have a direct impact on urban development during the years between 1926 and 1938 because Las Vegas remained in many ways in its developmental stages, but they did pump thousands of dollars into the city economy. More important, the airlines planted the seed that, especially after World War II, was to directly influence and help transform Las Vegas from a railroad town in the desert to a bustling aviation center. In the postwar years, this was especially evident as gambling became more popular, low-rise hotels with air-conditioned rooms and casinos appeared along Highway 91 (which ultimately became Las Vegas Boulevard, also known as the Strip), and the tourism industry proliferated. Even in the 1930s, when workers completed construction of the Hoover Dam and thousands of them left Las Vegas, the tourism industry still thrived. The Las Vegas historian Eugene Moehring notes that "[despite] the fact that the departure of thousands of dam workers and their families coupled with a reduction of New Deal spending in 1937 slowed the Las Vegas economy, Las Vegas was already attracting 300,000 tourists annually."[41] Not only did tourism provide a significant percentage of revenue for Las Vegas's economy, it also provided the airlines another source of clientele and revenue. In the 1930s and early 1940s, even though businessmen made up the majority of passengers traveling on commercial airlines, the volume of tourist air travel to Las Vegas slowly grew, eventually surpassing the number of business travelers, especially in the post-World War II era.

But, if not for the Air Commerce Act, the inclusion of Las Vegas on the Civil Air Mail Route-4, and the technological advancement of the airplane from the Douglas M-2 and Boeing 247 to the more spacious, streamlined, and faster Douglas DC-2 and DC-3, aviation would have remained a novelty and had little or no impact on Las Vegas. In fact, an absence of commercial airlines, and especially Western Air Express (the dominant airline in Las Vegas), would have contributed even more significantly to Las Vegas's economic problems after the 1922 Union Pacific Railroad strike nearly shut down the town's economy. Also, city officials and local business owners realized how lucrative a thriving airline industry could be in Las Vegas and were not about to squander the opportunity to profit from it. However, Western Air Express Field still needed upgrading, especially as the airlines brought in larger and faster airplanes and more passengers. With the level of air traffic increasing, the city needed to act. Officials offered to buy Western Air Express Field from Western Air Express, but the airline balked, fearing it would lose its status to the competition as the dominant airline serving Las Vegas. This left officials with few options. The city lacked the funds to purchase land and build a new air field with runways, taxiways, and a terminal, so it would have been necessary to purchase an already existing field. And it really could not even afford basic changes to upgrade Western Air

Express Field. Facing a growing problem, city officials, desperate for funding, looked to the federal government for help. Senator McCarran was able to procure some funds, but they were inadequate and arrived too late.

Fortunately, the Army Air Corps had been considering places in the Southwest to build bases to train its pilots. Las Vegas was on the list of potential candidates. Seeing an ideal opportunity to provide defense for city residents, boost the city's economy through population expansion and increased consumption of goods, and upgrade the airport using military funds, McCarran employed his political power and persuasion to convince the Army to build a base in Las Vegas. As part of the agreement, the Civil Aeronautics Board agreed to contribute $340,000 toward three new runways, grading, draining, and hangars.[42] Now, the airport could at least meet the airlines' needs, even if only temporarily, or so officials thought.

What they did not foresee was the postwar boom in passenger travel that once again sent them scrambling for funds. This became a common theme as commercial aviation continued to proliferate in Las Vegas. The seed blossomed and the airlines continue to pump more than $2 billion annually into the city's economy. But this result was possible only through the collaborative efforts of airline executives, city businesspeople, and politicians, especially during the New Deal years and with New Deal funds. However, there was one significant difference during the post-war years. Instead of airplanes arriving in Las Vegas in the form of Douglas M-2s, they were now Boeing 767s. The big birds had landed in the desert. And when they did, Las Vegas became a major commercial aviation center. The transformation was complete.

## Notes

[1]Jessie L. Embry, "Air Travel in the Southwest," transcript, 1-10, 3.

[2]Ruth M. Reinhold, *Sky Pioneering: Arizona in Aviation History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), 32. Also see "Committees on Aviation," *Arizona Republican* (27 January 1910), p. 1; "Preparation for Aviation in Phoenix," *Arizona Daily Star* (3 February 1910), p. 3; and "Financial Success of Aviation Meet," *Arizona Republican* (18 February 1910), p. 3.

[3]Jessie L. Embry, "Air Travel in the Southwest," 2.

[4]Roger D. Launius and Jessie L. Embry, "Fledgling Wings: Aviation Comes to the Southwest, 1910-1930," *New Mexico Historical Review,* 70 (January 1995), 1-27, 5.

[5]*Ibid.*

[6]Joseph Corn, *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation, 1900-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 43.

[7]*Ibid.*, 136.

[8]Nick A. Komons, *Bonfires to Beacons: Federal Civil Aviation Policy under the Air Commerce Act, 1926-1938* (Washington D.C.: United States Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration, 1978), 86.

[9]Carl Solberg, *Conquest of the Skies: A History of Commercial Aviation in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1979), 20.

[10]Postmaster General Harry S. New, "Growth of Air Mail Service," *Aero Digest*, 14 (March 1929), 56. Note that New served as Postmaster General from 1923 to 1929.

[11]Daniel Rust, "Flying across America: The Airline Passenger Experience and the West," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* (Fall 2007), 3-21, 7.

[12]John H. Frederick, Commercial Air Transportation (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1961), 76.

[13]Komons, *Bonfires to Beacons*, 86.

[14]Roger E. Bilstein, *The Enterprise of Flight: The American Aviation and Aerospace Industry* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 26.

[15]Roger E. Bilstein, *Flight in America: From the Wrights to the Astronauts* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984 [reprints 1994, 2001), 56. See note 20 regarding the priority of mail over passengers.

[16]Roger D. Launius, "Planes, Trains, and Automobiles: Choosing Transportation Modes in the Twentieth Century American West," *Journal of the West*, 42 (Spring 2003), 45-55, 50.

[17]Elizabeth Harrington, "A History of Aviation in the Las Vegas Valley," *Nevadan* (22 August 1976), 5.

[18]*Ibid.*

[19]*Las Vegas Sun* (11 June 1998), p. 7E.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 4, 5. Note when passengers purchased tickets, they had to sign a proviso acknowledging the mail took priority and that there was no guarantee they would get to their ultimate destinations. It was not uncommon for people to spend a few days in a different city until they could catch a flight to their intended destination.

[21]Jessie Embry, "Entertainment or Transportation? Aviation in the West, 1910-1930," typescript, 1- 43: 18.

[22]*Ibid.*

[23]*Ibid.*, 26. Also see "Air Mail May Come This Way," *Clark County Review* (12 February 1921), 1; "May Route Air Mail via Vegas," *Ibid.* (23 October 1920), 1.

[24]Launius and Embry, "Fledgling Wings ,"17.

[25] Embry, "Entertainment or Transportation?" These additional landings were by aircraft manufactured on the West Coast and headed for service on the East Coast.

[26]*Las Vegas Sun* (11 June 1998), 7E.

[27]*Ibid.*, 32.

[28]Frank Wright, *Desert Airways: A Short History of Clark County Aviation, 1920-1948* (Las Vegas: Clark County Heritage Museum Press, 1993), 8.

[29]*Ibid.*

[30]Peter J. Lyth and Marc L. Dierikx, "From Privilege to Popularity: The Growth of Leisure Air Travel since 1945," *Journal of Transport History*, 15 (September 1994), 97-116, 98.

[31]Frederick, *Commercial Air Transportation*, 72.

[32]Rust, "Flying across America," 12.

[33]Daniel K. Bubb, "The Success and Failures of Presidential Policy on Commercial Air Travel," *Journal of Air Law and Commerce*, 71 (Fall 2006), 653-67.

[34]Wright, *Desert Airways*, 12.

[35]County Commission Airport Summary, "McCarran 2000: Reflections of the Past," 18-38, 18.

[36]Wright, *Desert Airways*, 14.

[37]Bilstein, *Enterprise of Flight*, 42. For another description of passenger planes see Rust's, "Flying across America," 15.

[38]Launius and Embry, "Fledgling Wings," 21.

[39]Paul Biederman, *The United States Airline Industry: End of an Era* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 1982), xi.

[40]Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas 1930-2000*, 2d ed. (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1989 [reprint 1995, 2000), 29. Also see Hal Rothman, *Neon Metropolis: How Las Vegas Started the Twenty-First Century* (New York and London: Rutledge Press, 2003), 7.

[41]Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt*, 32.

[42]*Ibid.*

# *Locating Mark Twain's 1861 Timber Camp at Lake Tahoe*

LARRY J. SCHMIDT

Shortly after arriving in Nevada in 1861, Samuel L. Clemens, later writing as Mark Twain, hiked from Carson City to Lake Tahoe with the intent of acquiring a timber claim. These travels, as described in his *Roughing It*, were the subject of recent thought-provoking research articles. These articles by Robert E. Stewart and David C. Antonucci, were published in the Summer 2008 issue of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*.[1] Based on their research, they each offer their best estimate of Twain's route of travel from Carson City to Lake Tahoe, known at the time as Lake Bigler. Each author then makes predictions, using some facts, assumptions, and speculations, regarding where Twain's timber claim, camp, and subsequent fire occurred. These studies suggest the possibility that additional research and analysis might locate Twain's camp using facts from *Roughing It* and other correspondence.

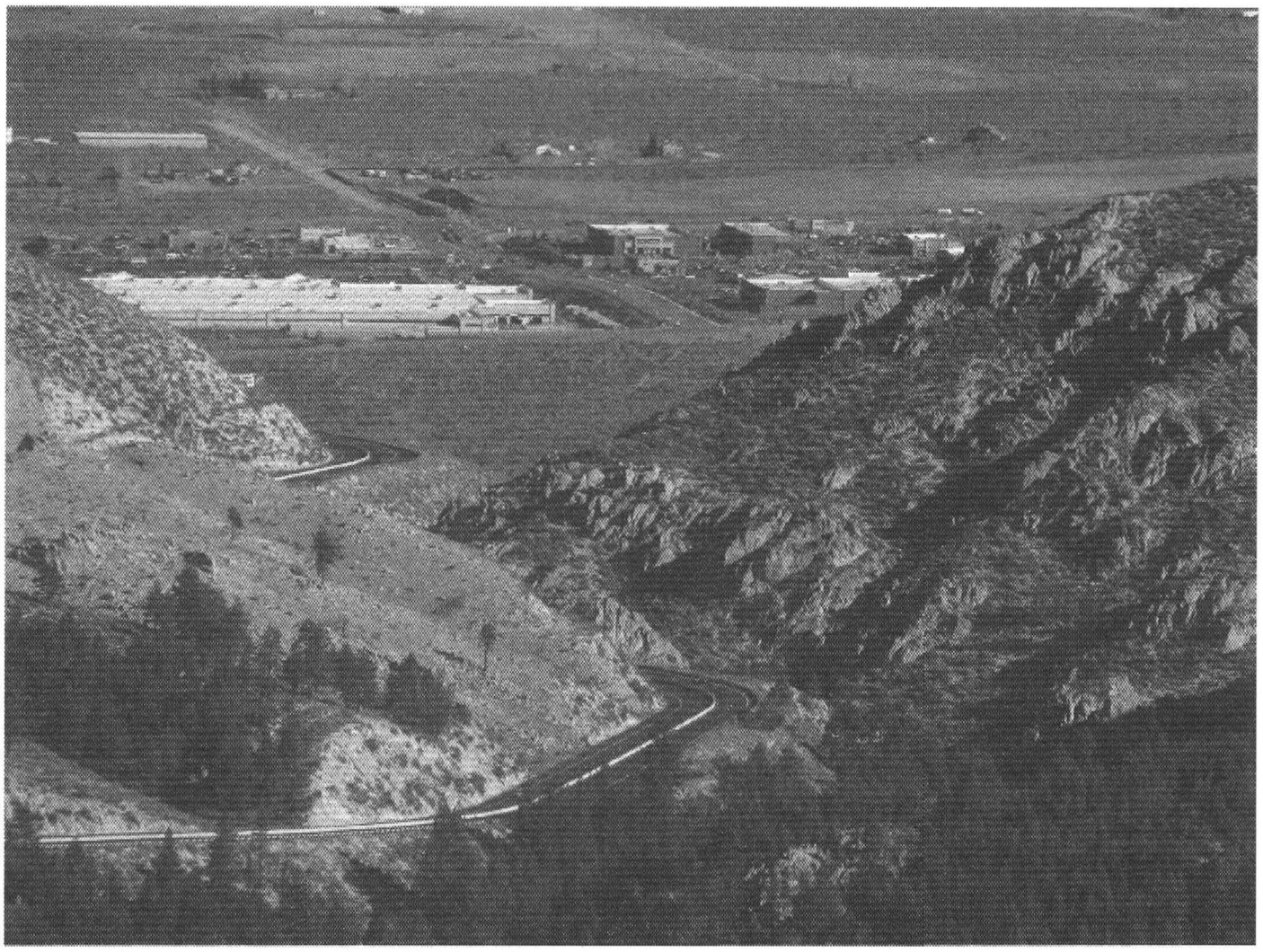
In brief, based on Twain's *Roughing It* account, Stewart asserts that Twain and John Kinney traveled south from Carson City to the mouth of Clear Creek and then up the Walton Road to Glenbrook Bay. There they found a skiff belonging to the Brigade, a group whose members were a collection of Governor James W. Nye's associates. These men were in the process of making a timber claim on the eastern shore of Lake Tahoe about three miles north of Glenbrook.

Larry J. Schmidt is a life member of the Nevada Historical Society. He retired in 2004 after a 40-year career with the USDA Forest Service as a physical scientist. His interest in Nevada history developed in the 1970s while on the Toiyabe NF researching flash-flood histories. He currently participates, along with other volunteers, in the Oregon-California Trail Association and Trails West, Inc., to locate and map the Johnson Cutoff in Nevada and the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Twain and Kinney rowed about three miles north to a cache of supplies left by the Brigade. Stewart's research produced a copy of a timber-claim plat filed by Governor Nye's brother and other members of the Brigade. He includes this plat as an illustration in his article.[2] This surveyed plat provides a vital keystone fact regarding the location of the timber claim made by Nye and the Brigade. The surveyed plat clearly depicts the shore line from and including Secret Harbor extending north to the vicinity of Marlette Creek and George Whittell's Thunderbird Lodge. Based on this plat, Stewart believes that Twain understated the three-mile distance he traveled from Glenbrook to the cache. Twain states that he and Kinney rowed north another three miles and established their camp and located their potential timber claim on the shores of the lake. Stewart assumes that Twain was consistent in his understatement of the first three-mile distance. Accordingly, he uses a longer distance to place Twain's camp just south of Sand Harbor State Park. His analysis appears to ignore the two summits and the approximately eleven-mile distance described by Twain in *Roughing It*. The topography described in the fire was also absent from the area identified by Stewart.

Using the same information from *Roughing It*, Antonucci reaches an entirely different result. He suggests that Twain and Kinney left Carson City going west in Kings Canyon, and then traveled up Ash Canyon northwest over a watershed divide through Little Valley to a connection with the Placer County Emigrant Road. They then passed over a second summit and descended to the lake near present-day Incline Village. Antonucci hypothesizes that Twain and Kinney found a skiff along the shore and that they then rowed west across Crystal Bay to the Stateline Point vicinity and found the Brigade cache. He believes that they then rowed three miles farther west and established their camp and claim near present-day Tahoe Vista. Antonucci appears to ignore the Brigade cache association with the timber-claim plat filed by Nye and its location about three miles north of Glenbrook. According to Twain's account, there was a sawmill three miles from the Brigade cache. Antonucci's assumed Stateline Point location results in a nearly ten mile distance to the Pray Sawmill on Glenbrook Bay. He explains this major discrepancy as Twain perhaps forgetting the actual distance with the passage of time. Alternatively, he speculates that there might have been an unknown sawmill in the area.

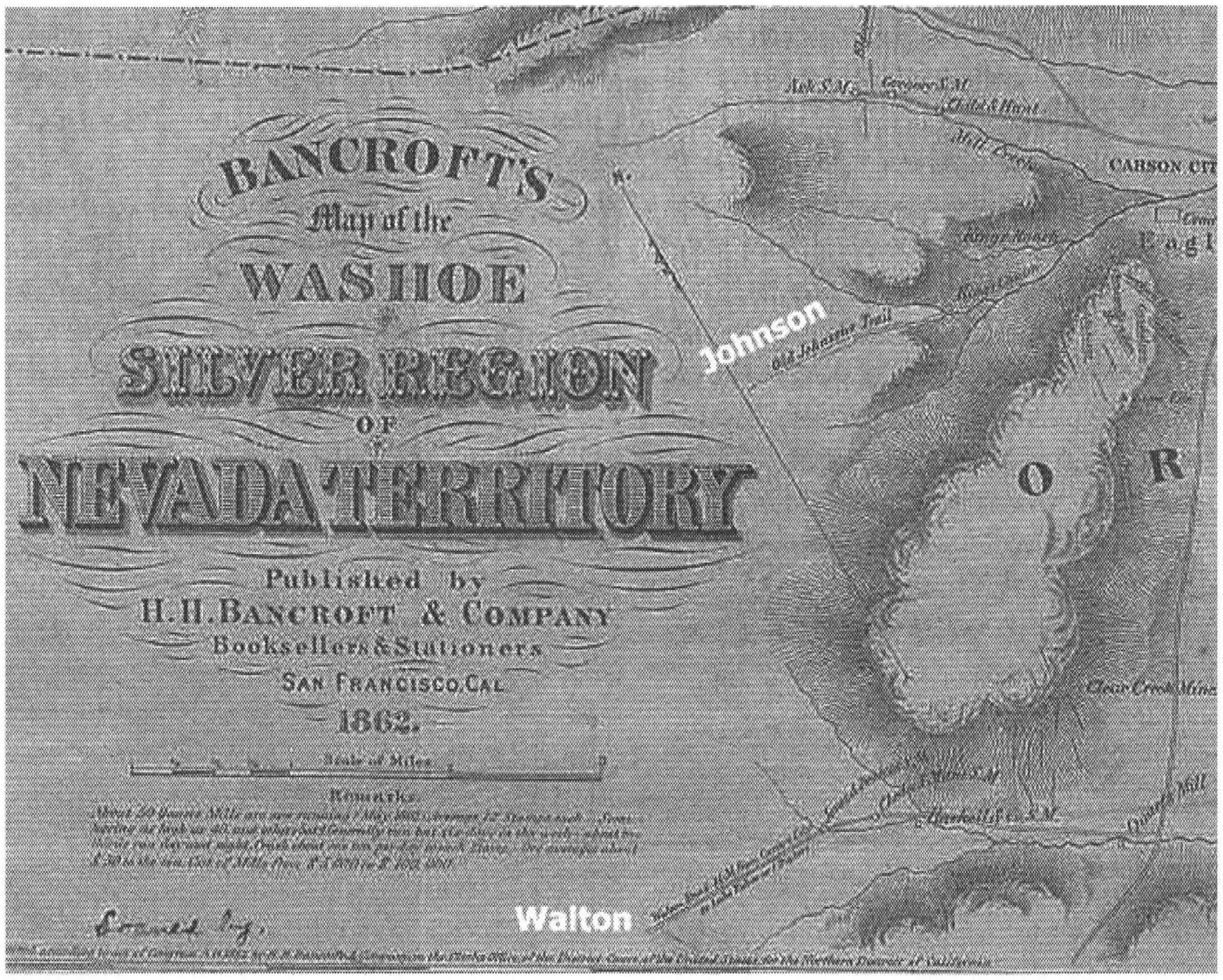
Another critical aspect is Twain's route of travel from Carson City to Lake Tahoe. On this point Antonucci and Stewart disagree. Antonucci asserts that in 1861 roads did not exist or were little used in Kings Canyon near Carson City. He then suggests that Twain used a possible route up Ash Canyon connecting via Little Valley to Lake Tahoe in the vicinity of present-day Incline Village.[3] Stewart similarly asserts that "the Johnson Route is identified on Briton and Rey's 1860 map of California, and on DeGroot's 1862 map, where it appears to tie to Kings Canyon, *which it did not*" [emphasis added]. He further asserts that "General Land Office plats do not identify any trails between Carson City and the lake shore via . . . Kings Canyon."[4]



The rock palisades in the mouth of Clear Creek presented a barrier to emigrant wagon travel. Johnson avoided this obstacle by taking his cutoff up Kings Canyon and over a low pass into the Clear Creek drainage above the rock palisades. Photograph by the author.

Both authors incorrectly understand an essential fact regarding the location of Twain's most likely route between Carson City and Lake Tahoe. In fact, the original Johnson Cutoff did ascend the length of the Kings Canyon drainage before descending into the Clear Creek drainage and ascending again over Spooner Summit.

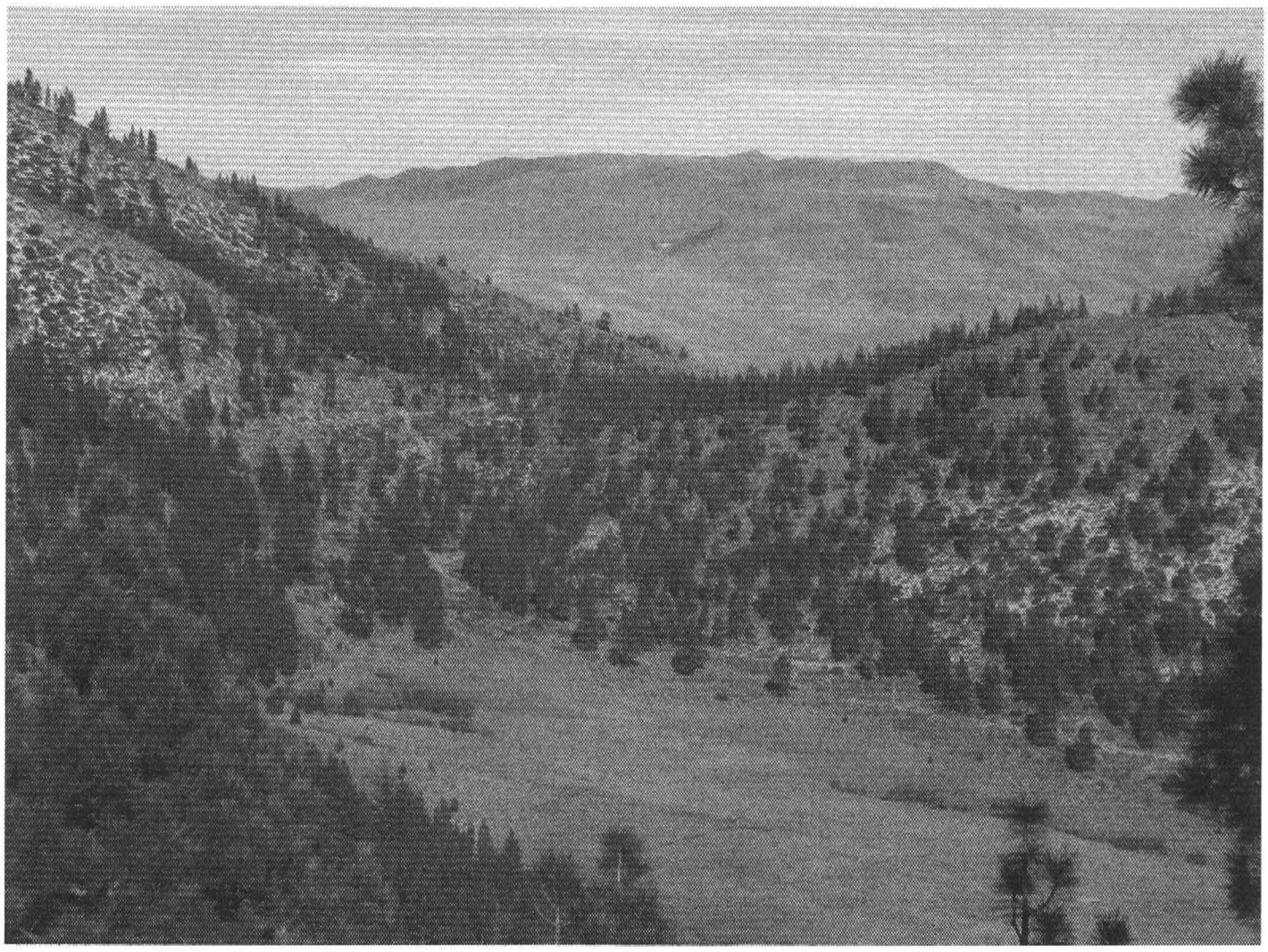
The Johnson Cutoff was pioneered by John C. Johnson, sometimes referred to as "Cockeyed" Johnson, circa 1852. He pioneered this route from near his Placerville, California, ranch eastward via Peavine Ridge to a point near Wright's Lake. At that point he was able to take advantage of the existing Georgetown Trail that connected to Genoa, Nevada, through Lake Valley and Daggett Pass. The portion of this trail from Daggett Pass to Genoa was a steep footpath unsuitable for wagons. To provide for wagon travel from Eagle Station in present-day Carson City, he pioneered an additional original trail from a point near Friday's Station and Edgewood, Nevada. This portion of the route followed a course northerly across the heads of canyons tributary to Lake Tahoe descending in the vicinity of Montreal Canyon to Glenbrook Canyon, and then passing over




Bancroft's 1862 Map clearly shows the Old Johnson Trail going up Kings Canyon. The map also shows that the Walton Road was located separately from the Johnson Cutoff in the lower part of Clear Creek Canyon. *(Hubert H. Bancroft, Map of the Washoe Silver Region of Nevada Territory, H. H. Bancroft & Company, San Francisco, CA 1862. From the electronic map collection of the Mary B. Ansari Map Library in cooperation with Nevada Historical Society and the DeLaMare Library, University of Nevada, Reno)*

Spooner Summit, also known then as Eagle Pass.[5] The Johnson Cutoff corridor then descends from Spooner Summit down Clear Creek Canyon to a point near the former Job Corps Center. At that point, in order to avoid the major road construction required to by-pass the rocky granite palisades near the mouth of Clear Creek, the trail continues up a steep valley to the north. It then exits the Clear Creek drainage through a low pass into Kings Canyon and then descends to Eagle Station at approximately Fifth and Thompson streets in Carson City.[6]

Johnson's development of the cutoff was in part self-serving because he sold or traded campsites, forage, food stuffs, and refurbished equipage with arriving emigrants for used equipage and livestock. By diverting westward emigrant traffic over his route at Carson City there was less likelihood they would chose alternate mining-camp destinations offered at points farther along the Carson

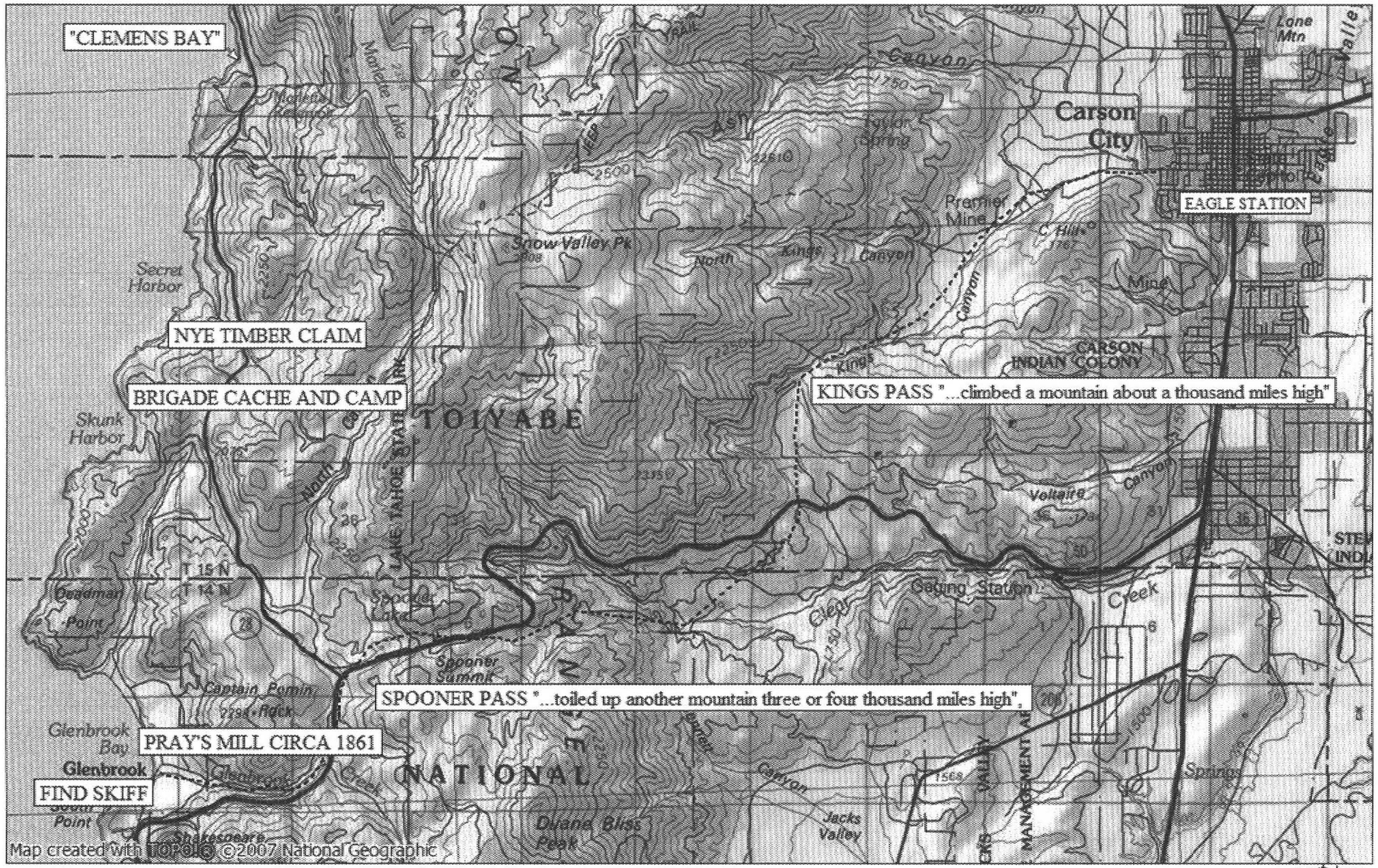


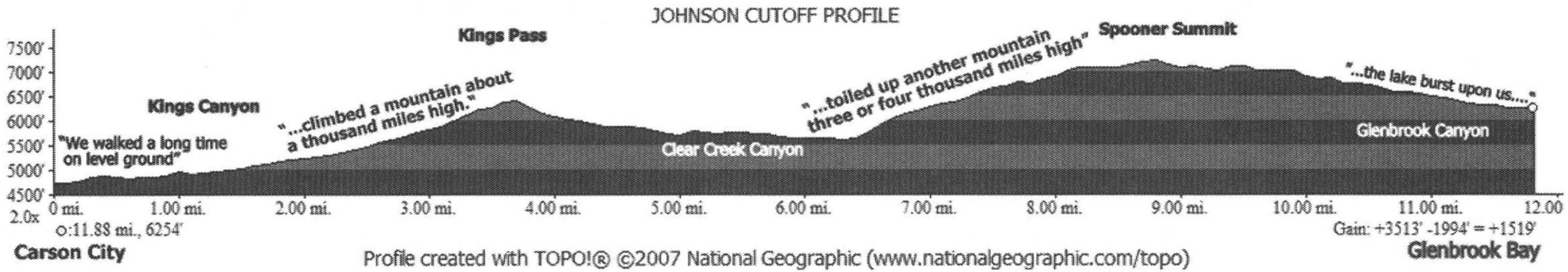
View to the northeast of the pass from Kings Canyon to the Clear creek drainage. The Johnson Cutoff descended into the meadow area in the foreground. Photograph by the author.

Trail. Johnson invested minimum effort in this enterprise. The wagon trail was carefully designed to limit construction work to minor clearing and stream-crossing improvement. Accordingly, Johnson chose a route that avoided side hills, but often chose steep assents, ridge lines, and hollows to prevent tipping a wagon. He by-passed swamps and rocky points along the Tahoe shore by selecting a mid-slope route that headed the primary drainages into Lake Tahoe.[7] Johnson and the owners of Eagle Station seemed to cooperate in this venture, which served both their interests as Myron Angel noted: "In 1852, the Halls and partners ran Eagle Station . . . and helped to grade a road up King's Canyon with a view of inducing the overland travel to pass that way." [8]

Maps of the 1860 era, including those previously cited, consistently show the Johnson Route going from Carson City, formerly known as Eagle Station, up Kings Canyon and over a low pass, then descending into the Clear Creek drainage. The Bancroft Map of the Silver Region of Nevada Territory dated 1862 distinctly shows the "Johnson Trail" in Kings Canyon and further distinguishes it from the "Walton toll road" in lower Clear Creek, which is also shown on the map.[9] At the time of the General Land Office surveys cited by Stewart and

"TWAIN'S ROUTE ANOTATED"1






Facing page: Topographic map from a 1:100,000 scale USGS base showing the approximate Johnson Cutoff Route with a black dashed line from Eagle Station to the vicinity of Pray's 1861 Sawmill on Glenbrook Bay. *(Map created with TOPO!® © 2007 National Geographic)*

This page: Profile of the Johnson Cutoff Route from Eagle Station vicinity in Carson City to Glenbrook Bay on Lake Tahoe. It is styled after a similar profile in Antonucci's paper. It clearly demonstrates a pattern of travel with two summits and a distance of twelve miles consistent with Twain's account in Roughing It. *(Profile created with TOPO! ® © 2007 National Geographic)*

Antonucci the Kings Canyon Toll Road was under construction and likely was overlaid in significant part on the existing Johnson Trail in Kings Canyon.[10]

The completion of the Kings Canyon Toll Road in 1862 provided a much improved route to Glenbrook on Lake Tahoe.[11] Its ultimate connection to the Lake Bigler Toll Road made the portion of the original Johnson Cutoff from Carson City to Friday's Station obsolete after 1863. Some confusion was introduced because these new routes still connected to the so-called Johnson Route near Friday's Station, and as such the new improved routes were referred to as "to Johnson Pass" or "to Johnson Cutoff," while the original Johnson Trail between Friday's Station and Montreal Canyon became referred to as the "Emigrant Trail." [12]

More important evidence for the Johnson Cutoff in Kings Canyon is provided by the 1853 one-page waybill entitled Bartlett's Guide.[13] The 1853 William Wirt Gilbert Diary describing his travel via wagon over the Johnson Cutoff provides additional evidence and confirmation of the route.[14] The descriptions in both Bartlett and Gilbert provide congruent evidence of a route up Kings Canyon. The description of distances, stream crossings, ascents, and descents is consistent only with a route up Kings Canyon and descending into Clear Creek. It is hoped that this information, along with the consistent map evidence depicting the Johnson Cutoff in Kings Canyon, will correct the misunderstanding of the Johnson Cutoff presented in the previous studies by Antonucci and Stewart.[15]

Twain's description of ascents and descents along his path to the lake and his inability to see the lake from either summit fits with Bartlett's Guide and Gilbert's Diary descriptions of the Johnson Route. Further, the twelve-mile distance over the Johnson Route from Carson City to the lake shore approximately fits. This puts the distance close to the eleven miles, as was told to Twain. Using the actual route of Johnson's Cutoff in Kings Canyon substantially strengthens Stewart's case for Twain going from Carson City to Glenbrook.

Twain's well-known use of humorous exaggeration tempts one to disregard the basic factual foundation of his descriptions. However, a rational analysis of Twain's descriptions must avoid discounting the facts merely because they appear inconvenient to a preconceived outcome. For example, judging any fact an exaggeration without a clear basis, or questioning Twain's memory of the facts, potentially produces faulty results. For the most part one can identify and appropriately discount the extravagant exaggerations. In my opinion the totality of facts in Twain's accounts deserve more consideration. As Twain said in his autobiography,

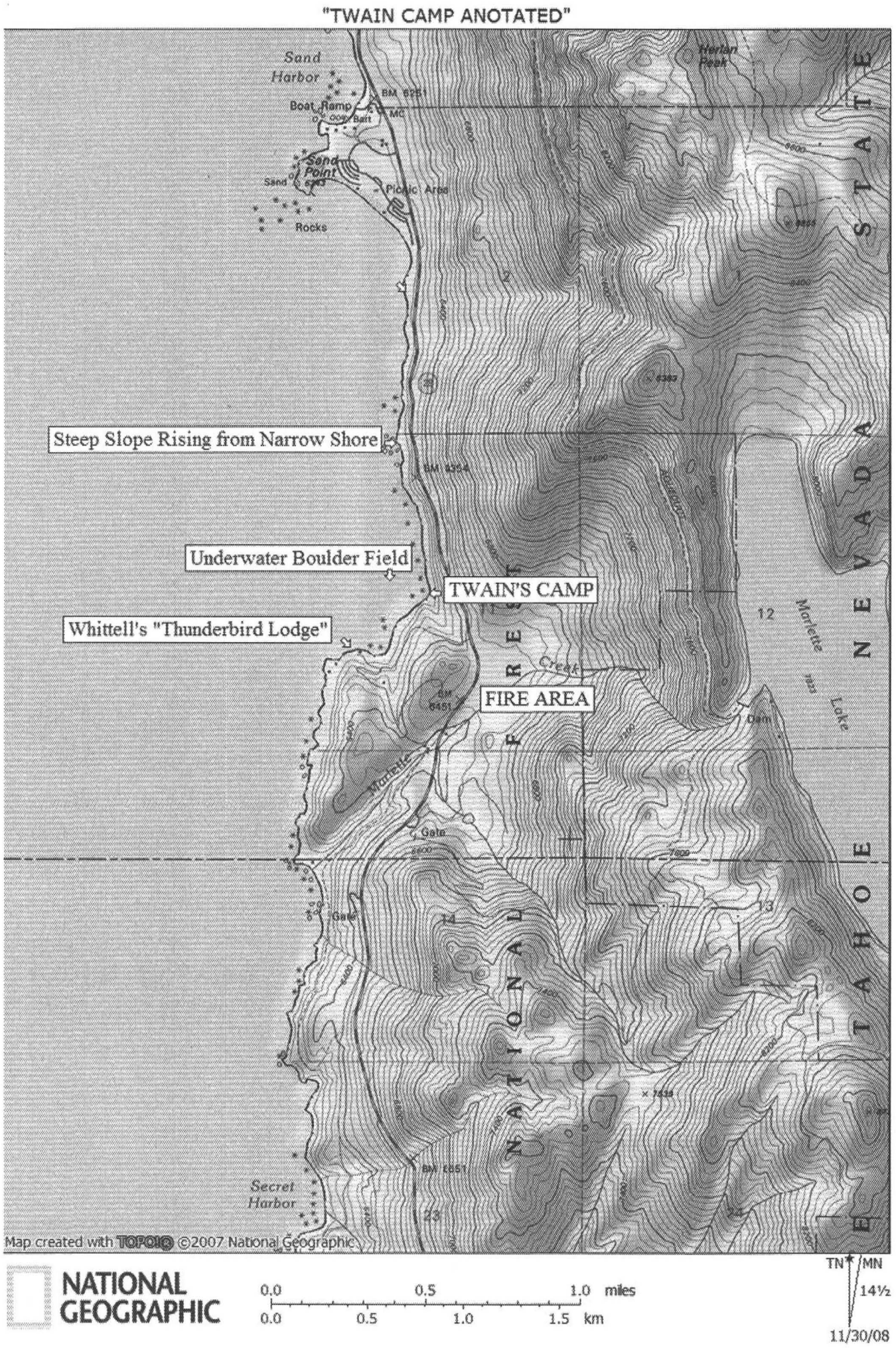
> all through my life my facts have had a substratum of truth, and therefore they were not without value. Any person who is familiar with me knows how to strike my average, and therefore knows how to get at the jewel of any fact of mine and dig it out of its blue-clay matrix. My mother knew that art. When I was seven or eight . . . a neighbor said to her, "Do you ever believe anything that that boy says?" My mother

> said, "He is a well spring of truth, but you can't bring up the whole well with one bucket. I know his average, therefore he never deceives me. I discount him thirty per cent for embroidery, and what is left is perfect and priceless truth, without a flaw in it anywhere."[16]

For the purpose of further analysis of Twain's trip assume the general truth of his statements in the *Roughing It* account of events. Also, for the moment suspend any belief that he might intentionally mislead the reader. According to the principle of parsimony, the simplest explanation consistent with, or at least not inconsistent with, the available facts will likely produce the more correct analysis result. The analysis should account for the following: the approximately eleven-mile distance to the lake, the level ground at the beginning, two summits the first being relatively lower than the second, inability to see the lake from both the first and second summits, the presence of Chinese, the sudden appearance of the lake, the location of the Brigade skiff, a deep bend in the shore line of the lake, a three-mile distance to the Brigade camp and cache, a sawmill within three miles of the Brigade camp, an additional three miles to Twain's camp for a total of six miles from where they found the skiff, a dense tall yellow pine forest, a sandy beach with two protecting boulders, a north shore with gray and white rocks in transparent water about a hundred yards from shore, a shoreline with numerous small bays and coves with narrow sandy beaches, a steep mountainside arising from the narrow sandy beach into space like a wall a little out of perpendicular, an adjacent ridge with canyon beyond and higher ridge farther in the back, and a sandy beach in a bay with two sheltering boulders in close proximity to a huge flat-surfaced table-like boulder.

Using Twain's facts quoted from each of the relevant statements from *Roughing It* as a basis, consider how each contributes to locating his timber claim:[17] *"We were told that the distance was eleven miles."* [18] The distance over the Johnson Route to Montreal Canyon plus the road extension to the lake at Glenbrook is approximately twelve miles. *"We tramped a long time on level ground."* [19] The original Johnson Cutoff up Kings Canyon meets this criterion: *". . . then toiled laboriously up a mountain about a thousand miles high and looked over. No lake there. We descended on the other side, crossed the valley and toiled up another mountain three or four thousand miles high, apparently, and looked over again. No lake yet."* [20] The profile of the Johnson Cutoff clearly demonstrates two summits. The first, Kings Pass, lies lower than the second much higher pass, Eagle Pass, or Spooner Summit. Even in Twain's exaggeration of the height he maintains the relative height proportions of each pass. Also, without ambiguity in both cases, ridges in front of each pass summit prevent a view of Lake Tahoe.

*"We sat down tired and perspiring, and hired a couple of Chinamen to curse those people who had beguiled us."* [21] Chinese laborers were likely in the Spooner Summit area at this time working to build new toll roads. The Walton Road passes this location, and the Kings Canyon Toll Road begins in this area. The Kings Canyon Toll Road contains many old stone retaining walls typical of Chinese construction.




Vicinity map of Twain's camp and related features based on a 1:24,000 USGS topographic base map. Physical features near this camp location satisfy all the topographic features described in Twain's account in Roughing It. This location lies approximately six miles north of the Pray Sawmill vicinity on Glenbrook Bay. *(Map created with TOPO!® © 2007 National Geographic)*

*"We plodded on, two or three hours longer, and at last the Lake burst upon us."* [22] The ridge dominated by Pomin Rock obstructs the view of the lake in the Spooner Summit area. The lake becomes visible only when well down Glenbrook Canyon very near the lake.

*"We found the small skiff belonging to the Brigade boys, and without loss of time set out across a deep bend of the lake toward the landmarks that signified the locality of the camp."* [23] Glenbrook Bay fits as a deep bend in the lake and the Glenbrook beach would be a likely place to leave a skiff.

*"A three-mile pull brought us to the camp."* [24] Depending on the initial point where Twain began his measurement, a three-mile pull would take them to the vicinity of the first drainage past the point between Skunk Harbor and Secret Harbor. This is a little short of the point on Secret Harbor where the cabin in the timber-claim plat is located. The initial cache and beach camp could have been situated differently from the final cabin location. Likely the claim was later refined in a northerly direction to avoid conflicts with the existing Pray and other pending claims. Such an extension could have lapped over into the proposed Clemens and Kinney claim.

*"In a 'cache' among the rocks we found the provisions and the cooking utensils."* [25] As discussed previously this was likely in the vicinity of Secret Harbor, using the three-mile distance offered by Twain.

*"Three miles away was a saw-mill and some workmen, but there were not fifteen other human beings throughout the wide circumference of the lake."* [26] This distance is consistent with a Secret Harbor location. Twain seems to be referring back to the sawmill established by Captain Augustus Pray on Glenbrook Bay in 1861. This mill was initially water powered, and was acknowledged as the first and only sawmill existing on the shore of Lake Bigler in 1861. At the time, the location was one of the closest points on the lake that had existing access routes for delivering the mill's lumber to growing communities in Eagle Valley and the Comstock.

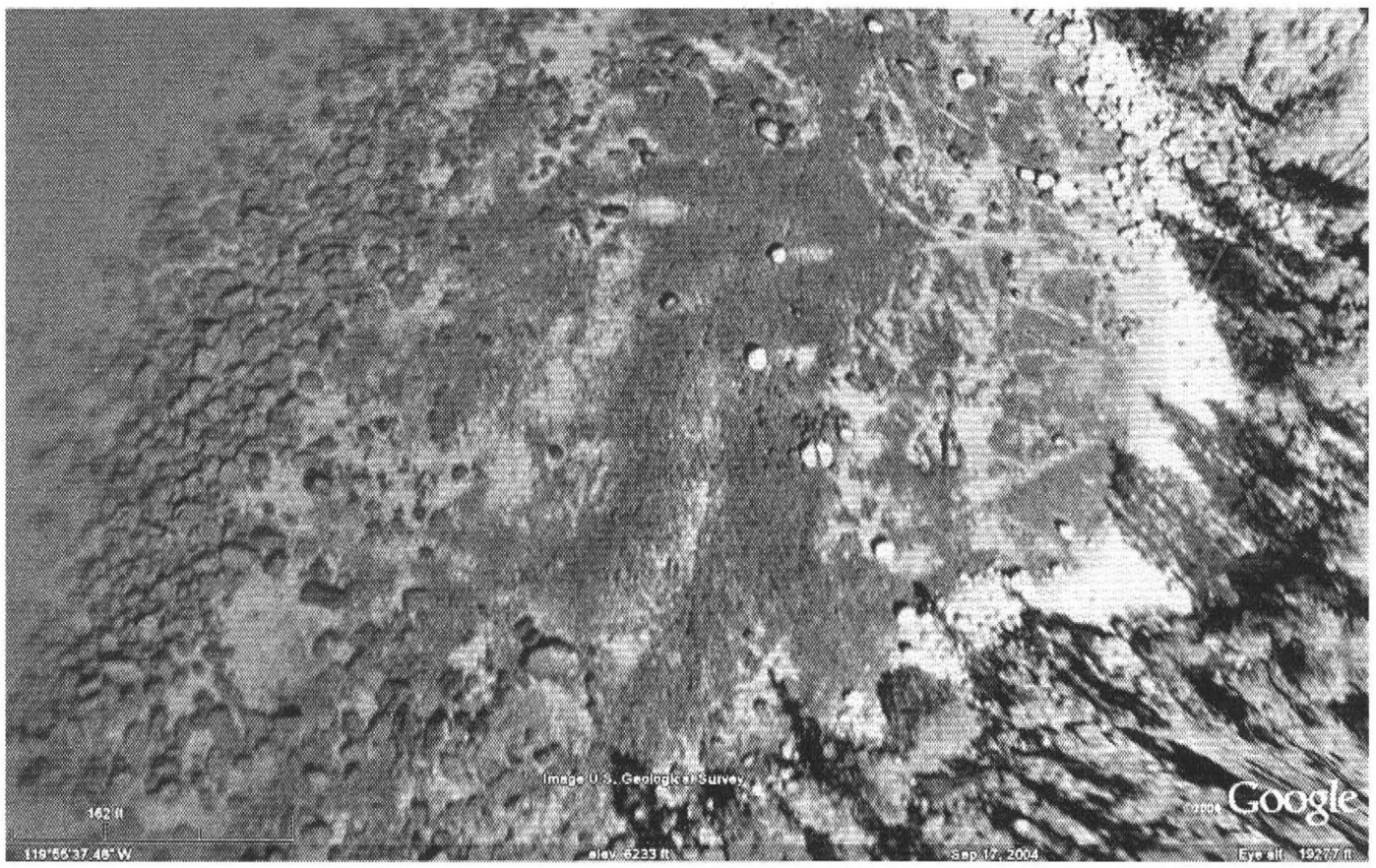
*"I superintended again, and as soon as we had eaten breakfast we got in the boat and skirted along the lake shore about three miles and disembarked."* [27] This takes Twain and Kinney an additional three miles north along the east shore to a point in the vicinity of George Whittell's Thunderbird Lodge.

*"It was yellow pine timber land—a dense forest of trees a hundred feet high and from one to five feet through at the butt."* [28] This is not unique and fits much of the Tahoe shoreline. The yellow pine does dominate the lower slopes on the northeastern shore of the lake.

*"We slept in the sand close to the water's edge, between two protecting boulders, which took care of the stormy night-winds."* [29] This could fit many locations on the lake, particularly along the northeastern shore between Glenbrook and the former Ponderosa Ranch near Incline Village.

*"We were on the north shore, there, the rocks on the bottom are sometimes gray, sometimes white. This gives the marvelous transparency of the water a fuller advantage than it has elsewhere on the lake. We usually pushed out a hundred yards or so from*

Twain said: "We slept in the sand close to the water's edge, between two protecting boulders, which took care of the stormy night-winds." A protecting boulder set fitting this description lies in the beach area of "Sam Clemens Bay" in close proximity to a huge flat granite table topped boulder. Photograph by the author.




This aerial image of Lake Tahoe in the vicinity of Twain's Camp clearly shows the high clarity of the water and the underwater boulder field viewed by Twain and Kinney on their "Balloon Voyages." *(Image U.S. Geological Survey, Google Earth © 2008 Google)*

*shore, and then lay down on the thwarts, in the sun, and let the boat drift by the hour whither it would."* [30] This is a broadly defined location and could include most of the northern quarter of the lake. Again, the lake includes many locations that have high transparency. Having said that, the classic clear-water view of under water boulders can be seen in aerial photo imagery at latitude 39° 10′ 41″ N and longitude 119° 55′ 40″ W. The view shows an evident under-water boulder field lying about a hundred yards from the beach near the likely location of the Twain and Kinney camp.[31]

*"The shore all along was indented with deep, curved bays and coves, bordered by narrow sand-beaches, and where the sand ended, the steep mountain-sides rose right up aloft into space—rose up like a vast wall a little out of the perpendicular, and thickly wooded with tall pines."* [32] The deep, curved bays and coves with narrow sand beaches typify the northeastern shoreline north of Glenbrook Bay to near Incline Village. Further, a mountain rises steeply above the narrow sandy beaches lying north of the vicinity of Whittell's Thunderbird Lodge and extending a little beyond Sand Harbor State Park. This area matches Twain's description.

*"So singularly clear was the water, that where it was only twenty or thirty feet deep the bottom was so perfectly distinct that the boat seemed floating in the air! Yes, where it was even eighty feet deep. Every little pebble was distinct, every speckled trout, every hand's-breadth of sand. Often, as we lay on our faces, a granite boulder, as large as a village church, would start out of the bottom apparently, and seem climbing up rapidly to the surface. . . . So empty and airy did all spaces seem below us, and so strong was the sense of floating high aloft in mid-nothingness, that we called these boat-excursions 'balloon-voyages.'"* [33]

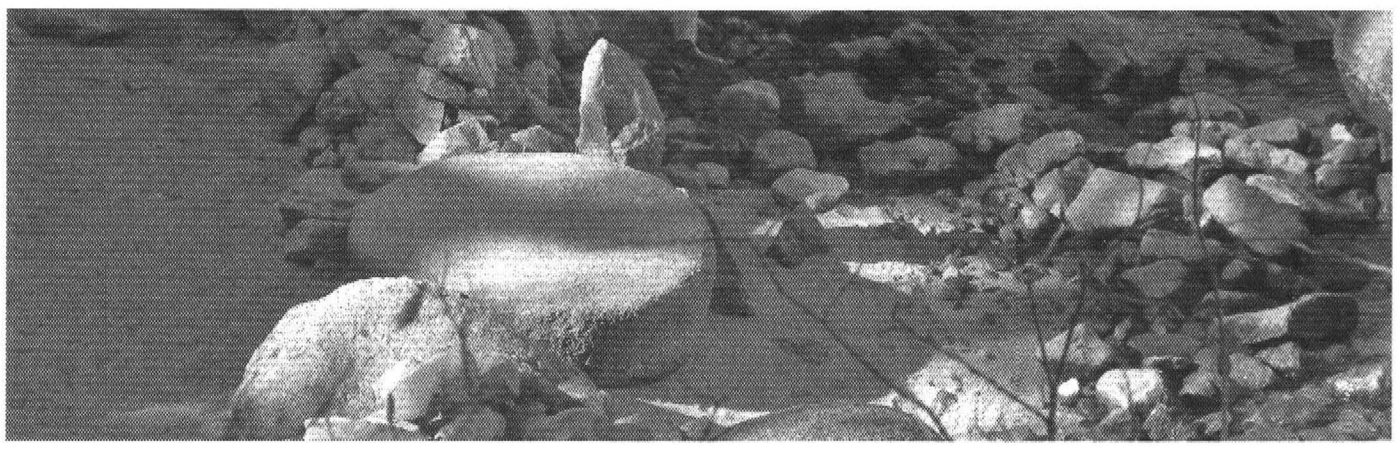
Again the view of aerial photo imagery along the northeastern shore typifies this at latitude 39° 10′ 41″ N and longitude 119° 55′ 40″ W.[34]

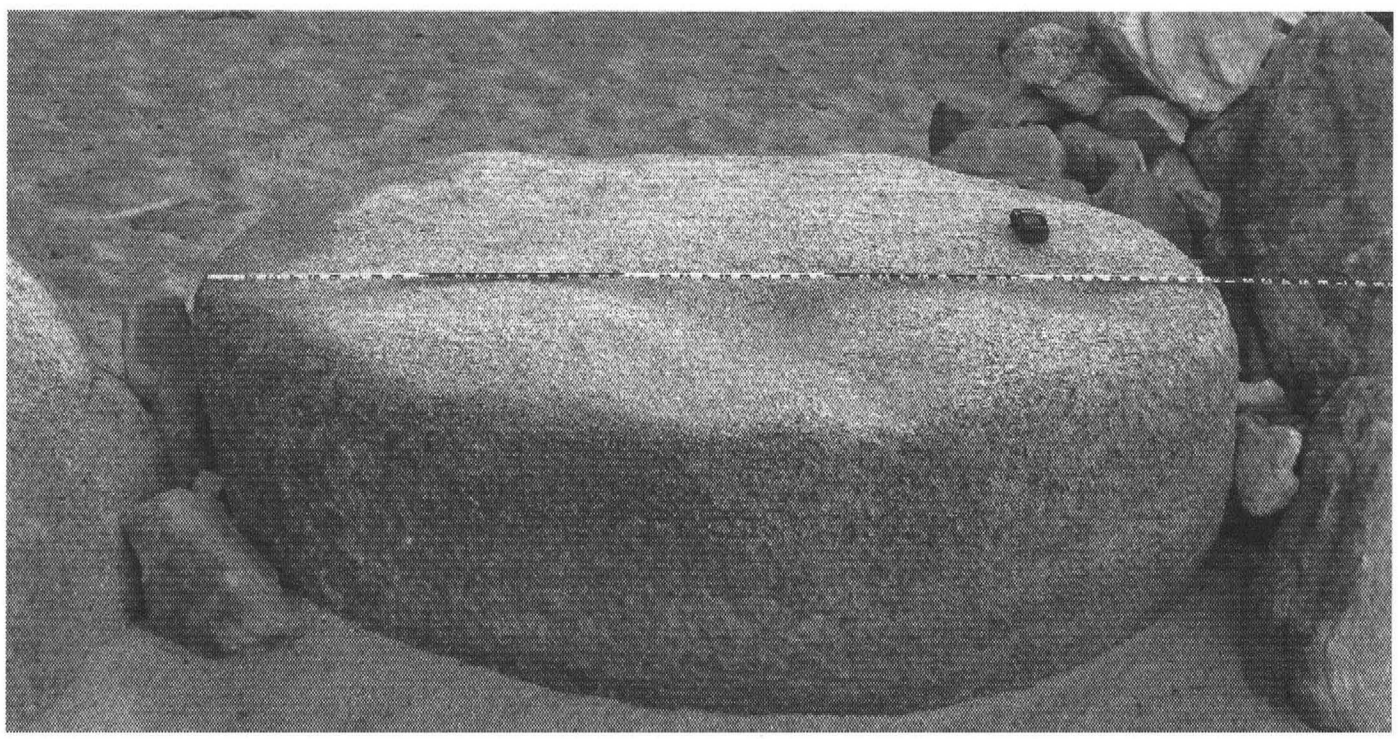
*"We were driven to the boat by the intense heat, and there we remained, spell-bound . . . . Every feature of the spectacle was repeated in the glowing mirror of the lake!"* [35] If Twain and Kinney moved off shore to the northwest of their likely camp location they would have observed a forest fire being reflected off the water when looking back at the fire burning up the slope. It appears from the later descriptions that they went a bit north and beached their boat in what they perceived was a safe location and spent the night on a small beach and were surprised to find that *"the fire had burned small pieces of driftwood within six feet of our boat, and had made its way to within 5 or 6 steps of us on the South side."*

*"It* [the fire] *went surging up adjacent ridges—surmounted them and disappeared in the canons beyond—burst into view upon higher and farther ridges, presently—shed a grander illumination abroad, and dove again—flamed out again, directly, higher and still higher up the mountain-side."* [36] Six miles north of Glenbrook Bay is a small embayment that uniquely meets these criteria as well as the steep mountainside rising like a vast wall previously mentioned. It lies northeast of Whittell's Thunderbird Lodge by about three tenths of a mile. To the southeast of this embayment over a low ridge lies the canyon of Marlette Creek, which is backed by steeper slopes to the ridge line. This would account for the fire disappearing in the canyons beyond and bursting into view upon higher and farther ridges.

This Comstock logging-era stump shows a distinct cat-faced fire scar. It lies on the slope above Twain's campsite. Analysis of the scar coupled with tree ring data might provide information on the fire history of the area. Photograph by the author.

*"Johnny pulled heavily through the billows till we had reached a point three or four miles beyond the camp. The storm was increasing, and it became evident that it was better to take the hazard of beaching the boat than go down in a hundred fathoms of water; . . . In the morning the tempest had gone down, and we paddled down to the camp without any unnecessary delay."* [37] That Twain moved north of their camp to avoid the fire would account for their need to go three or four miles back south on the lake, trying to reach the Brigade camp and cache. It appears they beached a bit north of this camp and "paddled" or more likely hiked the additional distance in the morning. Upon arriving in the Brigade camp they realized that they had no provisions as these had been abandoned at their beach camp while escaping from the fire. With the boat possibly unserviceable after a hard beaching, they attempted unsuccessfully to paddle back to their camp using drift logs. After giving up on this, they walked three miles to Glenbrook and Pray's sawmill area. Rufus Walton had a lakeside shack, and it is probable that Pray had workers' cabins in the Glenbrook Bay vicinity.[38]





This unique "huge flat granite dining table" along with the rest of Twain's descriptions confirms the location of his campsite on Lake Tahoe. These photos were taken when the lake surface was at the natural outflow level of Lake Tahoe. When the dam at Tahoe City increases the lake level this feature is likely submerged. Photographs by the author.

After playing a few card games, Twain and Kinney apparently borrowed a dugout and paddled back six miles to their camp as noted in his September 18-21 letter to Jane Clemens:

*"Finally, we reached the camp. But as we brought no provisions with us, the first subject that presented itself to us was, how to get back. John swore he wouldn't walk back, so we rolled a drift log apiece into the Lake, and set about making paddles, intending to straddle the logs and paddle ourselves back home sometime or other. But the Lake objected—got stormy, and we had to give it up. So we set out for the only house on this side of the Lake—three miles from there, down the shore. We found the way without any trouble, reached there before sundown, played three games of cribbage, borrowed a dug-out and* pulled back six miles to the upper camp"[emphasis added]. Later in the same letter he indicates that after reaching the upper camp they cooked

and ate supper and then *"we got out our pipes—built a rousing camp fire in the open air—established a faro bank (an institution of this country) on* our huge flat granite dining table" [39] [emphasis added].

If the singularly unique huge flat granite dining table were to be located, it would provide the capstone to the argument as to the location of the Twain and Kinney campsite. All of the foregoing facts and their interpretation converge on a specific location. They seem consistent with or, at least in some cases, not inconsistent with the location lying three tenths of a mile northeast of Whittell's Thunderbird Lodge at a place referred to as "Sam Clemens Bay."[40]

I am indebted to both Stewart and Antonucci for their pioneering analysis and research. Their work provided the inspiration and basis for this article. The foregoing comprehensive analysis simply shows a significant degree of reliability for most of Twain's facts. They can lead to a reasoned and convergent result without the need to torture or ignore apparently inconvenient facts.

The above analysis should be sufficient to resolve once and for all the location of Twain's Lake Tahoe camp site. However, for those still in doubt as to the location, the area has been preserved in much the state that Twain found it thanks to the ownership and care of the property by George Whittell. The site in question was off limits to the public for years until its 1998 acquisition by the United States Forest Service. This, coupled with the lack of development typical of other areas of the lake, provides an opportunity for verification. A correctly located site for Twain's camp should lead to finding a small sandy beach with some sheltering boulders and a singularly huge table-topped granite boulder unlikely to have been moved or carried away. Eureka! These features still exist at Sam Clemens Bay and Mark Twain would today continue to believe that this area of Lake Tahoe still offers the fairest picture that the whole earth affords. [41]

## Notes

[1]Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (1872; Berkeley: University of California Press, The Mark Twain Project of the Bancroft Library, 1993), 147-57; Robert E. Stewart, "Sam Clemens and the Wildland Fire at Lake Tahoe," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 51:2 (Summer 2008), 103-15; David C. Antonucci, "Mark Twain's Route to Lake Tahoe," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 51:2 (Summer 2008), 116-26.

[2]Stewart, "Sam Clemens,"107.

[3]Antonucci, "Mark Twain's Route,"117. Although a road did exist to the mills situated near the mouth of Ash Canyon, no credible evidence is offered for the existence of a route connecting to the lake in the late summer of 1861. The Bancroft Map of 1862 shows the road ending at the mills.

[4]Stewart, "Sam Clemens," 114 n.1.

[5]Thomas F. Howard, *Sierra Crossing, First Roads to California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 1-218. Howard provides an excellent overview of the history of road development in the Sierra.

[6]Dana Supernowicz, "Surmounting the Sierra: The Opening of the Johnson Cutoff Route, 1850-1855," *Overland Journal*, 13:4 (Winter 1995-96), 11-20. Supernowicz correctly describes the route as going up Kings Canyon. (However, he incorrectly identifies some of the distances and features from Bartlett's Guide. For example, the first summit roughly five miles from Eagle Ranch was Kings Pass and not Spooner Summit, which was the second summit.) The use of Johnson Cutoff in this section diminished after 1855 when the Luther Pass road was opened to the base of Johnson Pass. Some continued use likely occurred to avoid tolls that were intermittently collected on features of the Carson Route and on the Kingsbury Toll Road, which was completed in 1860. The heavy traffic involved with the eastward rush to Washoe in 1859-60 refurbished the route to some degree before it was supplanted in the early 1860s by the Walton Road. Myron Angel, ed., *History of Nevada* (1881, Thompson and West; reprint, Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1958), 381, indicates that the Lake Bigler Toll Road, which was on a more uniform grade adjacent to the lake, was not completed until 1863.

[7]Howard, *Sierra Crossing*, 62-65.

[8]Angel, *History of Nevada*, 34.

[9]Hubert H. Bancroft, *Map of the Washoe Silver Region of Nevada Territory* (San Francisco: H. H. Bancroft and Company,1862). From the electronic map collection of the Mary B. Ansari Map Library, in cooperation with the Nevada Historical Society and the DeLaMare Library, University of Nevada, Reno http://contentdm.library.unr.edu/cdm4/item_viewer_hmaps.php?CISOROOT=/hmaps&CISOPTR=4781&CISOBOX=1&REC=15 (accessed November 24, 2008).

[10]The purpose of GLO Surveys is to subdivide land. Surveyors are required to provide detailed notes of features, such as streams, roads, trails, and vegetation, encountered along the surveyed section lines. The plats attempt to provide this information in map form. Because the sampling is coarse, features internal to a section are sometimes missed or misinterpreted. For example, the critical area regarding the Johnson Cutoff in Kings Canyon lies in the pass to Clear Creek. Coincidentally, the pass area lies entirely within section 27, T.15N., R.19E. Mount Diablo Base and Meridian (MDBM). Also, immediately prior to the time of the survey a severe flood had occurred in the winter of 1861-62 that cut Ash Canyon down fourteen feet. (Angel, *History of Nevada*, 539). It is highly likely that the trail in the vicinity of Kings Pass was similarly eroded by this event so as to appear as a gully. It was probably not replaced in this location because the Kings Canyon Toll Road was under development and better alternatives using the Walton Road existed by 1862. Understanding early 1850s routes through an 1862 lens is a challenge. This is especially true with the explosive growth and development in roads and timber harvest activities that occurred from 1859 to 1862.

[11]Angel, *History of Nevada*, 541.

[12]This source of confusion can be observed in: Ferdinand von Leicht and J. D. Hoffmann, *Topographic Map of Lake Tahoe and Surrounding Country 1874* (San Francisco: Published by G. T. Brown and Co., 1874). The map can be viewed electronically through the Library of Congress Map Collection at http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g4362t.ct002188 (accessed November 26, 2008).

[13]William Bartlett, *Bartlett's Guide to California from Eagle Ranch in Carson Valley, through the Sierra Nevada Mountains, by Johnson's Cutoff, from Actual Measurement and Survey* (one-page waybill published August 13, 1853 by the *Placerville Herald*.

[14]William Wirt Gilbert, *A Journal of Travel from Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Placerville, California in 1853* (1853 diary, California Trail [via the Carson Trail and Johnson Cutoff] from a transcription prepared by Adella Wardrum from the original in 1919 and held by the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minn., 56. The description takes Gilbert from the road junction on the Carson River near Empire across Eagle Valley to Eagle Ranch about four miles then ascending another four and a half miles to the top of a ridge, then" . . . a short steep descent into a pretty valley. GLO survey notes circa October 1861 confirm the existence of this route at page 142. Projecting the survey westward along the southern boundary of Section 34 T.15N, R.19E MDBM, the notes add "23.41 chains. Road from Carson City via Kings Canyon bears N and S."

[15]It is important to note that the original Johnson Cutoff did not go all the way to the shore of Lake Tahoe. Instead, it departed from Glenbrook Canyon in the vicinity of Montreal Canyon. However, by 1861 Captain Augustus Pray, perhaps through Rufus Walton, must have extended the Johnson Route to the lake shore to serve his newly completed mill on Glenbrook Bay. Angel, *History of Nevada*, 541, indicates that by 1862 three new sawmills were operating in the Clear Creek drainage. The Coyote Mill was first and it appeared to be located very close to the old Johnson route as it descended from Kings Pass toward Clear Creek. In April 1860, Walton had filed in Genoa for a toll road franchise in Clear Creek. It was granted in July of that year. By October of 1861 the Walton Road passing down Clear Creek was evident to the GLO surveyors in their notes for the baseline survey between Townships 14 and 15 MDBM. This is also consistent with the language in the 1862 law authorizing the Walton Toll Road, indicating that some portions existed and some were under construction. *Laws of the Territory of Nevada* (Virginia City: J. T. Goodman & Co., Territorial Printers, 1863), 40, Google Book Search, http://books.google.com/books?id=GDE4AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA40&lpg=PA40&dq=the+rufus+walton+Toll+Road+in+clear+creek&source=bl&ots=HOxIaR-ET_&sig=KGpewdVFDtojV9fDe7s2J0hoqRs&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=2&ct=result#PPA40,M1 (accessed November 26, 2008). The Walton Toll Road and Kings Canyon Toll Road with improvements supplanted the original Johnson Cutoff in Clear Creek and Kings Canyon in 1862. Thus, scant evidence of the entire original Johnson route existed after completion of these toll roads. However, in the late summer of 1861 the Johnson Cutoff, with additions and modifications by Walton and Augustus Pray, was still the most direct route from Carson City to Lake Tahoe. The Johnson Cutoff received limited use by westward-traveling emigrants after 1855 because of the completion of the Luther Pass connection with West Carson Canyon to Johnson Pass. The eastward rush to Washoe in 1859 and 1860 likely reactivated and refurbished the existence of the Johnson Cutoff for a short time until improved freighting roads were built.

[16]Barbara Schmidt, *Directory of Mark Twain's Maxims, Quotations, and Various Opinions*, at http://www.twainquotes.com/Truth.html.

[17]The following quotations are taken from Twain's, *Roughing It*, 147-57.

[18]Twain, *Roughing It*, 147. Twelve miles is a similar distance to that suggested by Antonucci. The Johnson route is less by several miles than Stewart's proposed Walton route.

[19]*Ibid.* As indicated by Antonucci, the first couple of miles in Kings Canyon are relatively level. A significant increase in grade occurs as the trail gets closer to the pass to Clear Creek.

[20]*Ibid.* The Johnson route provides a much easier route to Lake Tahoe than that proposed by Antonucci. The first summit lies approximately 1,200 feet lower and the second summit lies 700 feet lower than the summits in the hypothesized Antonucci route. This also means that the traveler using the Johnson route encounters a lower average gradient, requiring less energy to accomplish. Neither summit on the Johnson Cutoff provides a view of Lake Tahoe because landscape features block the view.

[21]*Ibid.* The Chinese were probably in the Spooner Summit area laboring to build new toll roads. The developing Walton Road passes through this area, and Kings Canyon Toll Road begins in this area. The Kings Canyon Toll Road contains many old stone retaining walls typical of Chinese construction. There were also several saw and shingle mills in the Clear Creek area that might have employed Chinese laborers.

[22]Twain, *Roughing It*, 148.

[23]*Ibid.* The mention of the Brigade Boys ties Twain and Kinney to this group throughout the Tahoe experience. Any facts must correlate to their activities and locations. This makes Stewart's find of a timber-claim plat involving the same Brigade people a key factor in the locations described by Twain. The Brigade may have used the same Johnson Route to reach the lake at Glenbrook Bay. The Johnson Route has the added advantage of avoiding tolls that may have been imposed on portions of the developing Walton Road. If Twain had encountered tolls he would have likely integrated them into his story.

[24]Twain, *Roughing It*, 148. This is a little short of Secret Harbor where the Brigade timber-claim plat is situated. However, the initial cache and beach camp could have been in the southern Secret Harbor area. It is likely that the initial claim location was later refined in a northerly direction to avoid conflicts with the existing Pray and associates claim. Such a northward extension could have lapped over into and absorbed the proposed Clemens and Kinney claim. This might account, in part, for the lack of follow-up by Twain and Kinney. Also, the Nye/Brigade claim lies entirely within the former Ormsby County. Twain's claim would have been in Washoe County, another possible factor in Twain's failure to follow through on his claim.

[25]*Ibid.* This puts Twain and Kinney at the Brigade's temporary beach camp and cache. In my opinion, this is not the same as the cabin indicated on the Nye plat.

[26]*Ibid.* Angel, *History of Nevada*, 380, indicates that an initial claim to Glenbrook was made in the spring of 1860 by G. W. Warren, N. E. Murdock, and Rufus Walton. In 1861, Captain A. G. Pray erected a water-powered sawmill on the Glenbrook Bay. Woodburn's sawmill, built in 1860 in Lake Valley in the southeastern vicinity of Lake Tahoe, was the only other contemporary mill. To speculate that in 1861 there might have been another sawmill on the north shore, to which Twain might be referring, strains the available evidence. The six-mile distance to the Pray sawmill vicinity represents another keystone fact that cannot be dismissed as Twain's fuzzy recollection. The six-mile distance as was stated in his letter of September 1861 was a current fact and not something he necessarily recalled at a later point in time.

[27]*Ibid.* I agree with Stewart that Twain's estimate of the miles is shorter by a small amount than the actual miles probably traveled. It is about 6 miles direct distance from Glenbrook Bay to my predicted site of the Twain/Kinney camp. The distance following a water route along the shore totals somewhere between 3.6 and 3.8 miles depending on the initial point of departure in Glenbrook Bay. However, the quoted statement is consistent with the approximately 6 miles to the nearest habitation (the Pray sawmill at Glenbrook Bay) noted in his 1861 letter to Mrs. Jane Clemens and Mrs. Moffett, in St. Louis. SLC to Jane Lampton Clemens, 18–21 September 1861, Carson City [UCCL 00029,1988, 2007]. In Edgar M. Branch, Michael B. Frank, and Kenneth M. Sanderson, eds, *Mark Twain's Letters*, vol. 1, 1853-1866 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00029.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp (accessed November 26, 2008).

[28]*Ibid.*

[29]*Ibid.*, 152.

[30]*Ibid.*, 153.

[31]Imagery of the area latitude 39°10'41"N and longitude 119°55'40"W provided by Google Earth.

[32]Twain, *Roughing It*, 153.

[33]*Ibid.*

[34]Imagery provided by Google Earth at latitude 39°10'41"N and longitude 119°55'40"W

[35]Twain, *Roughing It*, 156. The general winds in September likely were prevailing from the northwest, which would have driven a fire over the ridge toward Marlette Creek and beyond. It would be sensible then to move north to avoid it. The fire would still have burned northward, albeit more slowly, accounting for the fire burning to near the beach where they spent the night.

[36]*Ibid.*

[37]*Ibid.* This is also clearly captured in the quotation from a letter to Mrs. Jane Clemens and Mrs. Moffett, in St. Louis, dated September 1861 [SLC (UCCL 00029). 1988, 2007]. Earlier in the same letter he indicates that "there was no one within six miles of us." SLC to Jane Lampton Clemens, 18–21 September 1861, Carson City [(UCCL 00029). 1988, 2007], http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00029.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp (accessed November 26, 2008). Twain is very consistent in his description of the distance of six miles, and a preponderance of evidence suggests that the six-mile total was anchored to Pray's sawmill on Glenbrook Bay.

[38]The freelance artist James Lampson's journal describes his stay at Glenbrook Bay in Walton's lakeside log cabin in the latter part of May 1861. *James Lampson's Journal 1861*, California Historical Society, San Francisco, as cited by E. B. Scott, *Saga of Lake Tahoe*, volume II (Crystal Bay, Calif.: Sierra-Tahoe Publishing Co., 1973) 74.

[39]"This is referred to in Twain's October 1861 letter to Pamela Moffett, SLC to Pamela A. Moffett and Jane Lampton Clemens, 25 October 1861, Carson City [(UCCL 00030). 1988, 2007]. In Branch, Frank, and Sanderson, eds, *Mark Twain's Letters*, http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00030.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp (accessed November 26, 2008).

[40]Sam Clemens Bay" is located on Lake Tahoe in Washoe County at latitude 39°10'39.7"N and longitude 119°55'34.9"W or NE ¼ of SW ¼ of Section 11, T.15 N., R.15E, MDBM. Twain claims the bay was so named by Governor Nye. This is just about a mile south of the camp location predicted by Stewart. Antonucci presents an interesting analysis to reach his conclusions regarding the hypothesized Tahoe Vista location. However, in my opinion, one must torture or ignore many of Twain's facts, in the context of 1861, to reach that result. As to the George Wharton James quotation, provided by Antonucci that suggests that Twain's camp was not far from Carnelian Bay, it is ambiguous and in my opinion inconclusive. Consider that "not far from" is not quite the same as "near to" or at some specific location. In 1914, with the primary means of getting around the lake being by boat, any place in the northern sector of Lake Tahoe might fall into the category of "not far from."

[41]In November 2008, I visited the predicted site of Mark Twain's camp and was pleased to find a possible site fitting the protecting boulders mentioned in *Roughing It*. Even more astounding was the find of a huge flat granite boulder that fit Twain's description of his faro table in his letter home. This exposed boulder in the picture weighs more than two tons and has a diameter of five feet and a height of one and one-half feet.

# *Book Reviews*

*Uranium Frenzy: Saga of the Nuclear West*, rev. ed. By Raye C. Ringholz (Logan: Utah State University Press 2002)

*Making A Real Killing: Rocky Flats and the Nuclear West*, updated edition. By Len Ackland (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press 1999)

While the point is debatable, historians might argue that the Cold War military-industrial apparatus has had the most profound impact on the recent North American West. Two recently reissued books that explore the post-World War II uranium industry support that idea. In her highly readable book, *Uranium Frenzy*, Raye C. Ringholz examines how the rush for claims on uranium deposits near Moab, Utah, echoed the boom-and-bust periods of mining in the nineteenth-century West. When the Atomic Energy Commission sought increased uranium production for a growing nuclear arsenal, Americans poured into the Southwest with eyes on instant riches. As Ringholz explains, the AEC "had turned the tap and engendered a flood" (p. 161).

Stimulated by the defense industry's voracious appetite for the radioactive material, self-starters, including the highly successful Charlie Steen, struck it rich behind personal fortitude in an unforgiving and dangerous business. In the wake of the uranium boom, financial organizations, including the Uranium Oil and Trading Company, made greater fortunes through speculation in uranium futures. Yet most people who converged on Moab struggled to navigate the seedy business of mining. Similar to the silver and gold rushes of the nineteenth century, opportunism, claim jumping, and subsequent litigation characterized the undaunted search for the precious metal in the Utah desert.

*Uranium Frenzy* gives great insight into the dark side of the uranium mining business. Examining within the context of the region's nuclear testing legacy, Ringholz reveals that concerns arose as to the effect of radioactive "radon daughters" on the primarily male miners working in the uranium fields. Public-health officials, including the influential expert Duncan Holaday, raised alarm about the human toll of uranium mining. Yet the zealous search for uranium deposits dwarfed the concerns of Holaday and other radiation experts. Safety measures were slow to take hold, and many miners eventually showed symptoms of cancer and a number of life-threatening respiratory conditions. Despite initial reluctance amongst miners to challenge the companies they worked for, a series

of compensation cases and congressional hearings eventually reflected a greater scrutiny of the mining business. Some family members, including the widow of Tex Garner (who had died from exposure in the mines), received compensation and even a promise of better safety conditions.

While a compelling history, readers may find fault with a lack of academic rigor in sections of *Uranium Frenzy*. At times it is not always clear if the dialogue comes from the subjects of the book or is imagined by the author. No citations exist for many personal events and private discussions, making it difficult to know where Ringholz got her information. With that concern aside, the achievement of Ringholz's book emerges in keen analysis that reveals how the success of wealthy individuals like Steen often came at the expense of people like Tex Garner. Moreover, the slow progress of health reform in the mines reflected not only the obstinacy of mine owners, but also the avarice of the Atomic Energy Commission, which sought little more than increased uranium production for a growing nuclear arsenal.

In *Making a Real Killing: Rocky Flats and the Nuclear West*, Len Ackland explores what happened to uranium once it left the mining fields. Examining the history of Rocky Flats near Boulder, Colorado, he shows that processing the radioactive substance was messy business. Colorado politicians, including Senator Edwin "Big Ed" Johnson, lobbied for the uranium processing plant, and extensive planning by the AEC and the Dow Chemical Company resulted in the creation of the highly secretive Rocky Flats. In 1953, the plant opened for business.

From the plant's inception, health and environmental hazards existed within its numerous buildings, which handled everything from oralloy to depleted uranium. Yet Building C (771) completed the most important work of shaping uranium into the substance that ultimately became the core of a nuclear weapon. While early on the AEC could duck the issue of radiation pollution behind calls for absolute secrecy, several events made human health and environmental decay at Rocky Flats a subject of concern. In 1957, a fire struck Building 771 sending plutonium throughout the structure. Workers frequently disposed of solid radioactive waste in on-site burial grounds and left liquid waste in holding ponds. The 1969 Mother's Day fire almost burned through one building's roof. Had it done so, radioactive ash would have spewed out into surrounding communities including Denver and Boulder. Such blithe lack of concern for contamination amongst Rocky Flats management and from within the AEC spelled potential disaster for local populations.

Ackland could have gone a step further in exploring the relationships between environment and fallout. While he emphasizes that Rocky Flats made the area a disaster zone, there exists little discussion of the environmental and physiological outcomes of uranium processing at the plant. What happened to fish, cattle, wild ungulates, soil, and plant life? How exactly did plutonium affect human bodies and how many? Ackland did not set out to tell the environmental history of Rocky Flats. Yet the significance of those issues warrants greater discussion.

With that said, *Making a Real Killing* offers an important reconsideration of what Cold War military-scientific reserves meant to a myriad of factions. Ackland shows that Rocky Flats did not exist as merely a weapons production facility. This is the clear success of the book. At one time Rocky Flats was home to a ranching family with continued ties to the area and concerns for their land. Boosters saw it as an economic benefit to surrounding urban centers. Unionized laborers saw the plutonium production site not only as a workplace, but a locus of economic and political negotiation. Behind organizations such as the Rocky Flats Action Group, environmental and social activists saw the site as an environmental abomination. As much as it existed as a Cold War nuclear landscape, Rocky Flats ultimately became a contested place.

Shut down during the 1990s, Rocky Flats went through extensive cleanup. While recently transferred to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and now a wildlife preserve (an act that occurred after *Making a Real Killing* was reissued), it existed as a contaminated landscape well into the new century. Similarly, tailings from uranium mining remain a part of the desert around Moab. *Uranium Frenzy* and *Making a Real Killing* tell us a lot about what one historian has called the Ugly West. The Cold War arms race consumed western landscapes and human lives. Taken together, the works of Ringholz and Ackland reveal the intricate and troubling impact of the nuclear weapons industry in the so-called Atomic West. Both books are highly recommended.

Ryan Edgington
*Haverford College*

*Public Lands and Political Meaning: Ranchers, the Government, and the Property Between Them*. By Karen R. Merrill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002)

Few conservationist issues have remained as politically intractable as the administration and management of the western public grazing lands. On superficial inspection, the contemporary stakeholders' motives seem obvious: Ranchers want unregulated access to the federal rangelands without interference from government officials or activist do-gooders, while environmentalists would prefer to see this enormous acreage managed in the national interest and with ecological goals foremost. To the activist's argument that these lands are owned by the public and should be preserved for posterity, the westerner has a quick and bracing retort: Set aside more of *your* land in the East, then—don't lock up *our* resources and maintain *us* in a state of colonial dependence.

The standard historical backdrop to this conflict is no doubt familiar. Beginning in the 1890s, the federal government began to alter its policies of distributing all unclaimed land to private owners, instead maintaining control

over a network of forest reserves and nurturing a cadre of conservationist administrators to orchestrate the conditions of their use from Washington, D.C. These activities fit squarely within the context of Progressive Era experiments in national state building; premised on expert discretion and administrative action, the conservationist agenda held that exhaustible natural resources required the continuous presence of the government, whose increased powers derived from a newly formulated mission to regulate private property in the public interest. The stage was set, then, not only for continuous conflict between range users and conservationists, but also for regulatory capture. By empowering private ranching interests who quickly resisted federal oversight and occasionally claimed ownership over the public domain (which again expanded dramatically in the 1930s as a result of the Taylor Grazing Act), the conservationist state builders of both the Progressive and New Deal eras failed to anticipate the weaknesses and penetrability of their liberal governance methods.

But perhaps we have gotten the story wrong. Indeed, *Public Lands and Political Meaning*, Karen Merrill's forceful new analysis of the politics of the Western range from the 1890s to the 1940s demonstrates quite conclusively that we have. While this is a sophisticated work that deserves careful reading, its overarching argument is fairly straightforward: What previous historians have failed to understand is that certain guarantees for ranchers' own private property were built into federal administrative structures from the start, and that ranchers' access to the public rangelands was always premised on their owning a complementary amount of property for maintaining their animals in any given off-period.

No wonder the conflict between ranchers and federal officials became so dependably "scabrous," in Merrill's telling. The federal government neglected to articulate a convincing political philosophy or to define the public interest, instead retreating to the position that it owned the land simply because of its powers of territorial sovereignty. Ranchers perceived, largely correctly, that the new laws granted them substantial rights to use the range and thus resented what appeared like a feudal landlord's attempt to supervise range conditions or to impose grazing fees. Both sides were therefore locked into battles over the definition and boundaries of private property—a battle, Merrill implies, that unfortunately has continued to inform even environmentalist conceptions of the national interest in the public domain. This is an important and rewarding book, highly recommended for anyone interested in political, legal, environmental, or western history.

Sarah T. Phillips
*Columbia University*

*Madam: Inside a Nevada Brothel*. By Lora Shaner, rev. ed. (Las Vegas: Huntington Press, 2003)

In *Madam: Inside a Nevada Brothel*, Lora Shaner provides readers with a number of entertaining short stories from her experience as a madam at Sheri's Ranch, a brothel in Nye County, Nevada. Shaner divides the book into two parts. In the first section, which comprises most of the book, Shaner includes several chapters of short stories about the brothel's prostitutes and the men they served. The accounts range from hilarious tales of Shaner's interaction with male clients to sad stories of domestic abuse. Part two departs from the short-story format and reads more like an advertisement and an etiquette guide meant to attract and prepare future customers for a visit to the newly renovated brothel.

Alongside her entertaining stories, Shaner does not try to hide her agenda. She states early on that she hopes to defend brothel prostitution against its opponents and dispel outrageous myths about prostitution. Moral reformers, according to Shaner, are prudes who do not understand the brothel business. Shaner goes so far as to criticize the fees imposed on brothels by the county—perhaps the only reason that lucrative brothels are allowed to operate in many poor, rural Nevada counties—as an unjust burden on sexual entertainment. Many of the rules placed on brothels are, according to Shaner, "turgid, self-serving, and largely arrogant" (p. 25).

While Shaner defends brothel prostitution, she admits that many of the women at Sheri's Ranch work for pimps outside the brothel. Alexa Albert's *Brothel: Mustang Ranch and Its Women* (2002) provides similar conclusions. In light of this evidence, Shaner argues that readers should celebrate the courage of these prostitutes, rather than question the ethical nature of brothel prostitution. "Forget morality," Shaner writes, "[s]imply consider the guts it takes to do what they do" (p. 44). Shaner makes a clear distinction between brothel owners and the pimps to whom many of the women send money. The prostitutes at Sheri's Ranch are "volunteers" or "independent contractors," not victims of coercion (p. 255). Shaner does not understand the moral dilemma that brothels place themselves in when they hire "independent contractors" who are forced to send money back to their pimps.

In making these arguments, Shaner often teeters between characterizing prostitutes as independent, strong, and courageous women and as victims of controlling, abusive pimps. At times Shaner emphasizes the prostitutes' agency and strong character. At other points, she notes that most of the prostitutes at Sheri's Ranch were sexually abused as children and have a unique need for relationships with men. She argues that "[f]ew prostitutes have the knowledge, ability, or motivation to get out into the real world and take care of themselves, their kids, and their lives on their own" (p. 42). "These women," Shaner notes, "have a fragile sense of self. Only the belief that they are loved by a man, no matter how abusive, gives them validation" (p. 42).

For readers looking for entertaining short stories about a madam's experience, Shaner's book will not disappoint. But to gain a better understanding of Nevada's brothel industry, look for Kate Hausbecks and Barbara Brents's new book *The State of Sex: The Nevada Brothel Industry*.

Matthew Johnson
*Temple University*

*Jews in Nevada: A History.* By John P. Marschall (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2008)

The author has studied the Jews of Nevada, past and present, from a wide variety of perspectives—religious, ethnic, political, social, and interpersonal; he has thereby provided both scholars and those particularly interested in Nevada history or the Jewish experience in the American West with a comprehensive picture of a religious and ethnic group whose members have been active contributors to the development of the Silver State. An emeritus professor of history (University of Nevada, Reno), John Marschall has used every primary and secondary source imaginable so that the reader gains an understanding of the variety of religious, political, and social views that have characterized the Jews of Nevada almost since statehood was achieved, in 1864.

While avoiding minutiae, *Jews in Nevada* provides enough information about the lives of many men and women that readers are able to understand the religious, economic, and cultural diversity of Nevada Jews during the past one hundred and fifty years. The book jacket informs us that John P. Marschall spent almost twenty years researching his subject, and even a brief perusal of the chapters and of the substantial number of traditional and non-traditional sources—he interviewed more than sixty individuals directly or by phone—provides evidence of impressively comprehensive and thorough research. Indeed, this reviewer, a longtime resident of northwest Las Vegas, was delighted to note mention of the expansion of kosher food sections at supermarkets in response to a rapidly growing Jewish population, especially in Summerlin. Marschall went beyond the library and the Internet in conducting his research.

As Las Vegas was not founded until 1905 and its Jewish population remained tiny until the rapid growth following World War II, the Jews of northern Nevada are the focus of most of the first half of the book. Marschall used a variety of primary and secondary sources in describing Jewish communities in Virginia City, Reno, and several rural areas that experienced brief but intense periods of expansion. Most of the respondents described their own or their parents' place of birth as Prussia, though the majority of those seemed to have resided in what is now western Poland. The more substantial involvement of northern Nevada

Jews, many foreign born, in the social and political activities of the larger Gentile community—at a time when most of their contemporaries in the East were living in ethnic enclaves with often little or no contacts with Gentiles—is no great surprise to students of the immigrant experience in the American West. Still, that Jews were found among the ranchers, miners, and militia members of northern Nevada, and were quite overrepresented among the legislators who drafted the Nevada Constitution as well as among the leaders of fraternal organizations, might not have been predicted even by those who argued that assimilation came much more rapidly in the West for European immigrants and their children than it did in the eastern United States. Perhaps for white immigrants, Nevada offered the best opportunities for economic advancement and social acceptance.

The author provides two compelling examples of the extent of rapid assimilation of Jews living in northern Nevada in the decades following Nevada's statehood. One is Virginia City's Purim ball, an always well-publicized and boisterous event attended by hundreds of Gentiles, drawn from every ethnic group except the widely despised Chinese. Marschall makes it clear that the downside of rapid assimilation was that few among the Jews rejected the prevailing prejudices. The other is the story of Jacob Klein, a successful brewer in Carson City after the Civil War, who, after forming a friendship with Father Hugh Gallagher, converted to Roman Catholicism and helped construct Saint Theresa of Avila Church. Yet, even subsequent to his conversion, the second floor of his brewery remained the meeting place for Jewish organizations and for High Holy Day services. Worth noting is that Marschall studied both the United States census records and the baptismal records of the church to give readers the flavor of Jewish life in a small western city.

Throughout his discussion of Jews in the latter part of the nineteenth century in northern Nevada, Marschall finds Jews in virtually every occupation, including those on both sides of the law. During the Charcoal Burner's War in 1879, the militia major David Manheim was arrested for fraternizing with some of the Italian immigrants who dominated the ranks of the rebelling charcoal burners. He identified a few Jewish women who worked as prostitutes and described the rather brief but presumably exciting life of Jim Levy, one of the few Jews who had worked as a miner, and who was quick to use his revolver, killing at least two men before being gunned down in a gambling dispute.

The author uses a variety of secondary sources and some primary ones in discussing Jewish men with experience in gambling operations who came to Nevada, more to Las Vegas than to Reno and the Lake Tahoe area; initially they arrived in small numbers after the Nevada legislature relegalized gambling in 1931, and then in much greater numbers after World War II. In both the north and the south, some in the already existing Jewish community welcomed their arrival and perhaps especially their general willingness to donate funds to the United Jewish Appeal, the establishment of synagogues, and a variety of phil-

anthropic undertakings. Others did not welcome these men who had been on the other side of the law during Prohibition and who later owned or operated illegal casinos. But time was on their side and the side of their children as their names increasingly appeared in the leadership positions in Jewish organizations, especially in Las Vegas.

Marschall covers thoroughly the religious differences among Jews that became more pronounced as tens of thousands of Jews from across the United States and, in the case of Las Vegas during the last ten or so years, from Israel and other areas of the globe. New synagogues were formed and rabbis, some with much formal training and others with very little, settled in a Las Vegas that had become an attractive city for retirees, with its sunny days, casinos offering low-cost food and entertainment, and many golf courses. Chabad, a movement to bring Jews back to traditional Jewish observance, eventually established a strong presence in Las Vegas, a city with perhaps the highest percentage of non-practicing Jews in North America, and then in Reno.

The author discusses the roles of Jews, mostly Las Vegans, in Nevada politics since World War II, and pays particular attention to those who were active in the movement to eliminate segregation in public accommodations. Here, as in other subject areas, Marschall is careful to show that no "Jewish position" existed on either the desirability of ending segregation or on the means to end it. He interviewed several of the more recently elected prominent Jewish officials in Las Vegas, noting appropriately that being ethnically or religiously Jewish was not a predictor of where each might stand on any issue, and that sometimes the elected officials crossed swords with Las Vegas Jews of enormous wealth and considerable power, the Wynns and the Adelsons.

In addition to providing a substantial number of photographs of Jewish men, women, and children, including both the living and the long deceased, and some illustrations, the author has thoughtfully provided a glossary for Gentile readers so that they might not confuse a mitzvah with a mikveh.

Alan Balboni
*College of Southern Nevada*

*Henry M. Teller, Colorado's Grand Old Man.* By Duane A. Smith (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002)

*Honest John Shafroth: A Colorado Reformer.* By Stephen J. Leonard, Thomas J. Noel, and Donald L. Walker, Jr. (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 2003)

In recent years a host of readable biographies of formative Colorado political figures has emerged. This is an encouraging trend. Well-written biographies that connect the local and state to the national scene are much needed to promote the understanding of the American West. The books discussed below do this at a high level.

Duane Smith's study, *Henry M. Teller*, is an overdue reassessment of one of the most significant western politicians of this era. Smith's work expands upon earlier studies of Teller by Elmer Moore and others. Teller did much to shape Colorado's fortunes from the post-Civil War era until his death, in 1914. To Smith, Teller was a Colorado original, the truest expression of Colorado's political sensibilities for the first fifty years of its history. Smith treats Teller as a transitional leader who pointed the way from Colorado's territorial era to the early twentieth century.

Smith does a remarkable job of explaining the complexities of Teller's relation to the major events of his era, including the Civil War, the establishment of Colorado's mining industry, and the emergence of the silver issue in Colorado and the nation. In the great national silver crusade, Teller bolted from his home base in the Republican Party to present the advantages of free and unlimited coinage of silver to many audiences, even though the better-known William Jennings Bryan became the standard bearer of the fused Democratic-Populist Parties in 1896. Smith leaves little doubt that Teller's contribution to national silver agitation, first as a Silver Republican and later as a Democrat, equaled or surpassed that of Bryan. No matter what position Teller embraced, most Coloradans of all political stripes repaid him with political support. From 1876 to 1909 he occupied a United States Senate seat, with the only break coming during his tenure as interior secretary from 1882 to 1885. Smith emphasizes that Teller's career was defined by more than his pro-silver position. He also made a significant national impact on federal Indian policy both as interior secretary and as an unusual western opponent of the emerging land allotment policy implemented after the 1887 Dawes Act. Teller was also a staunch opponent of American expansionism, taking a strong position (the Teller Amendment) against annexation of the Philippines in the Spanish-American War. He was to continue as a critic of the growing American empire until the end of his life.

Where Smith's story ends, the career of the notable Colorado Progressive John Shafroth takes off. Stephen J. Leonard, Thomas J. Noel, and Donald L. Walker, Jr. tell the story of the early twentieth-century Colorado Progressive Democrat who epitomized Colorado's commitment to reform. According to his

biographers, Shafroth played the most significant role in changing Colorado's reputation as a haven for corruption to that of a state that belonged in the front ranks of the progressive reform movement.

Similarities between Teller and Shafroth abound. Like Teller, Shafroth began his political career as a Republican, and became embroiled in Colorado's silver crisis, which blurred party lines and changed the political affiliations of Teller, Shafroth, and many other Coloradans. Elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1894, Shafroth was to remain in Congress for almost a decade, when the close and controversial 1902 election forced his resignation. Fearing that some of his ballots from the Denver area were tainted and corrupt, Shafroth earned a lifelong reputation for honesty by resigning his seat rather than remaining in Congress under a cloud of suspicion. "Honest John," as he was now known, soon cast his eyes toward the Colorado governor's mansion in 1908.

Writing in a lively, but florid and somewhat over-the-top style—"luck dealt [Shafroth] a king early in the game, and later delivered four aces" (p. 43), and "Like the origins of the toothpick, the ins-and-outs of the 1908 Colorado Democratic convention may never be known" (p. 44)—the three authors still do justice to Shafroth's significant career. Lives of western American progressives are particularly illuminating because many of the young states were only beginning to build political party systems. Western politicians exhibited an independence that set them apart from their eastern brethren. As Colorado's governor (1909-13), Shafroth presided over a major era of Progressive achievement. Legislation authorizing an initiative and referendum, railroad regulation, direct election of senators, an income tax, and child-labor laws became law under Shafroth's watch. Shafroth also promoted mine and workplace safety and women's suffrage.

The Shafroth that emerges from this study's pages is a noble dragon-slayer who fought for the people against the forces of corruption that had dominated Colorado politics for decades. Shafroth fought notable political duels against Denver's Mayor "Boss" Robert Speer, who headed the conservative wing of the Democratic Party, and the powerful pro-big-business factions of the Republican Party. As a United States Senator from 1913 to 1919, he remained a strong voice for tariff reform, constructing the federal reserve system, and supporting national child-labor legislation. Yet at the same time he fought hard for the interests of his state and region, particularly as a foe of the great federal landlord that controlled more than 30 percent of Colorado's land base. In the election of 1918, his magnificent political career ended at the hands of the conservative millionaire Lawrence C. Phipps, who used his immense wealth and the anti-reform atmosphere that accompanied the end of World War I to defeat Shafroth. Shafroth had remained a vigorous opponent of American involvement in the war until Wilson's 1917 declaration of war, which forced the reformer to defend his patriotism at every turn.

Taken together, these two short but informative biographies weave the political story of early Colorado in its first seventy years. Both Teller and Shafroth were leading western politicians and were among Colorado's first political leaders to have a national impact on the questions of the day. Teller's story is a case study of a steady hand who guided the state through its early years of statehood. Shafroth's life reflects the state's struggles to cope with the impacts of the wild-frontier era of economic growth. Both books are well grounded in primary source material and include relevant published source materials.

Steven C. Schulte
*Mesa State College*

*Metropolitan Phoenix: Place Making and Community Building in the Desert.* By Patricia Gober (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006)

The author of *Metropolitan Phoenix* is a professor of geography at Arizona State University and co-director of the Decision Center for a Desert City. Her book examines the development of Phoenix, originally a small desert community now transformed into a proliferating mega-metropolitan center. Professor Gober describes what amounts to Phoenix's real maturation in the post-World War II era, having to deal with urban sprawl and explosive population growth. Like other southwestern cities such as Las Vegas and Tucson, Phoenix also faces serious environmental challenges, inadequate funding for public-works projects, and ethnic segregation. Noting a population exceeding 3.6 million expected to double by 2050, Gober described how city officials and urban planners are drafting new plans to meet the needs of this rapidly expanding and culturally diversifying city. She also explains how Phoenix's inhabitants struggle to maintain their identities because of a division between traditional, conservative residents, who prefer to live in small, isolated communities, and newer residents who are more progressive-minded and prefer to live in large, open communities. The book's seven chapters attempt to provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of Phoenix through urban, historical, sociological, geographical, and environmental lenses.

On the whole, Gober provides a balanced account of Phoenix's development. She highlights the visible progress city officials have made in combating urban sprawl, providing more affordable housing, and revitalizing and modernizing downtown to include more shops, public parks, and buildings that are architecturally and aesthetically pleasing to the public. Even though it took many years for city officials to realize the need to redevelop the downtown district and procure adequate funds to make the improvements, they nonetheless took an aggressive and optimistic approach to moving forward with their plans. At

the same time, as the city modernized with the construction of sports arenas, shopping malls, and high-rise condominiums, the sacrifice was the demolition of its historic buildings and districts, which is an unfortunate but common consequence of urban renovation projects. Gober also presents a very real problem facing Phoenix that also can be found in other southwestern cities: the threat of a possible water shortage. It is an important and relevant topic about which Gober does an excellent job of framing the issue and providing all aspects relevant to the discussion. She asserts that "the city faces growing climatic uncertainty stemming from global climate change, episodic droughts and floods, and an urban heat island that threatens human comfort" (p. 205). Clearly, if these conditions became magnified, there would be unspeakable devastation to the city. The same conclusion can be applied to Tucson, Tempe, Las Vegas, Albuquerque, and other Southwest desert cities. Gober blames the Phoenicians for being too careless in their use and consumption of water.

The book's shortcoming is its unevenness of depth. While Gober provides terrific coverage of Phoenix's development from a geographic and sociological perspective, her historical coverage is good but lacks depth. She includes a few works by prominent historians such as Brad Luckingham's *Phoenix: The History of a Southwest Metropolis* and William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. And obviously, it is not her intent to write a book about the history of Phoenix. However, since her book includes a historic perspective, the reader would benefit from the author's deeper insight and exploration. To Gober's credit, from an urban perspective, she does recognize the important roles that commercial airlines and Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport play in the sustainability and future growth of Phoenix's economy. However, her coverage of them, at four pages, is inadequate because commercial airlines and airports were vital to Phoenix's development, and merit a more extensive discussion. Annually, commercial airlines deliver more than forty-six million air travelers to Sky Harbor Airport and, with the airport, pump more than two billion dollars into the city's economy. Without them, the city would be in serious financial straits. Gober's inadequate coverage of this major theme is not surprising because many academic publications fail to adequately address and grasp the pivotal roles of commercial air travel and airports in urban development and the economic sustainability and growth of the cities of the Southwest.

Nonetheless, the book gives the reader a good understanding of Phoenix's development including the many challenges it historically faced and still faces as it continues to grow. Gober's book is a concise and worthwhile read. Any serious undergraduate student or general scholar of urban studies would benefit from this book.

Daniel Bubb
*Gonzaga University*

# *Give the Gift of the Past!*

A membership in the Nevada Historical Society makes the perfect gift for the friend or family member who shares your fascination with Nevada's heritage. A year's gift membership brings all the benefits you enjoy: four issues of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly,* free admission to all seven museums in the Nevada Division of Museums and History, a 15% discount in all the museums' stores, invitations to exhibition openings, programs and events, the *Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs Newsletter*. Plus, any amount over $18 that is paid in membership fees is tax deductible and supports the educational programming of the Nevada Historical Society.

---

**Membership Categories**

___ Yes, I want to give a gift of membership in the Nevada Historical Society at the following level:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ___ | Individual | $35 |
| ___ | Family / Institutions | $50 |
| ___ | Sustaining | $100 |
| ___ | Contributing | $250 |
| ___ | Patron | $500 |
| ___ | Benefactor | $1,000 |
| ___ | Senior* | $20 |

**For those seniors who would simply like free admission, the 15% museum store discounts, and the divisional newsletter, and not the Nevada Historical Quarterly, we have created a special senior membership category. For those seniors who would also like to receive the Nevada Historical Quarterly, membership at the higher levels, beginning at $35, is available.*

---

**Member Information**

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: Home _____ Business _____

New Membership _____ Renewal _____ Date_____

*Mail this form and your check to:* **Nevada Historical Society**
1650 N. Virginia St.
Reno, NV 89503

# *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*



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.