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Front Cover: Noel Coward with Frank Sinatra in Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955. Photographer unknown. *(Las Vegas News Bureau)*

Editor's Note

This editor's note is an unusual explanation of an unusual issue.

If you look, you will notice that it says "Summer 2010," and you might think to yourself, "But it's 2012." We know! Like you, we have felt the effects of the economy, and this led to staffing and financial issues that delayed publication of the *Quarterly*. But we are still here, and we plan to stay here.

Whether it is 2010 or 2011, Las Vegas is a subject of great historical interest, and it is the subject of this issue. In 2005, Las Vegas celebrated its centennial, marking its development from the May 15, 1905, auction that created the town. But other centennials have happened since: in 2009, the hundredth anniversary of the creation of Clark County, and in 2011, the centenary of Las Vegas's incorporation as a city. Since Las Vegas long has put a premium on celebrating just about anything, we will join in with three articles about tourism, broadly conceived.

The first, by Eugene Moehring, the dean of historians of Las Vegas and a longtime member of the *Quarterly*'s editorial board, is a study of consolidation efforts in the 1970s. The article, which is part of a larger project comparing the tourist cities of Las Vegas and Reno, shows how the issue of consolidation grew directly out of the growth of the tourist economy. Those who have landed at McCarran International Airport or driven up Interstate 15 from southern California and stayed exclusively on the Strip never actually set foot in Las Vegas; they were in an unincorporated township that is part of Clark County. As the Strip grew, the question of municipal control gained in importance. Moehring examines how state and local officials, business leaders, and private citizens addressed the benefits and problems associated with these changes.

Tourism also played a role on Las Vegas's stages, as Larry Gragg demonstrates in his study of Noel Coward's 1955 performance. Gragg combines an analysis of entertainment and show business outside and inside Las Vegas with a study of the tourism business to explain why the presence of the noted singer/writer/entertainer/playwright/bon vivant marked a significant moment in Las Vegas history. Gragg's scholarship has appeared in these pages before. He is now working on studies of the image of Las Vegas that will treat this subject in greater depth than ever before, and Coward's saga is part of that image in surprising and important ways.

A similar yet different sort of tourism is at play in Megan Weatherly's close examination of the history of Lorenzi Park before it actually was Lorenzi Park. From the town's beginnings, Las Vegans looked to tourism, thanks to the availability of transportation and the desert climate (well, some of the year). David Lorenzi was an early Las Vegas entrepreneur who proved innovative and creative in appealing to tourists, including the seemingly anomalous local tourist. Today, Lorenzi Park houses the Nevada State Museum, and Weatherly's article shows that spot's history includes more than just the fine museum on its grounds.

For this issue, we have no book reviews, but they will return soon. We hope you will return to reading the *Quarterly*, too. After all, one of the reasons that Las Vegas and Nevada leaders supported legal gambling in 1931 was to attract visitors who might decide to stay and invest, so stay with us!

Michael Green
Editor-in-Chief

Tumult in Playland:
The Annexation-Consolidation Controversy in the Las Vegas Metropolitan Area

EUGENE P. MOEHRING

In the 1970s the question of whether to merge the governments of Las Vegas and its suburbs finally came to the fore. For more than thirty years Las Vegas city leaders had dreamed of annexing the Strip. Over the decades, while the city had expanded its border somewhat to the north and east and to the west and northwest, it failed to move south of its 1905 boundary on today's Sahara Avenue (formerly San Francisco Street). For many years, this was hardly a problem while the desert flats south of town remained largely the domain of snakes and scorpions, and some hardy ranchers. But following the construction of Thomas Hull's El Rancho Vegas (1941) and R. E. Griffith's Hotel Last Frontier (1942) and the impending debut of Bugsy Siegel's (and/or Billy Wilkerson's) Flamingo Hotel, Las Vegas's Mayor, Ernie Cragin, and the city commissioners cast an imperial eye toward the three sprawling resorts along the Los Angeles Highway. Here in the county suburbs parking was convenient and space abundant enough to put casino gambling in a resort-hotel atmosphere that many visitors seemed to prefer to the narrow, crowded clubs downtown near the railroad station on Fremont Street.

Eugene P. Moehring is professor of History at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He is the author of many articles on urban history and Nevada history as well as several books, including *UNLV: A History of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas* (written for its 50th anniversary) (2007); *A Centennial History of Las Vegas* (2005), *Urbanism and Empire in the Far West, 1840-1890* (2004); *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-2000* (2000), and *Public Works and the Patterns of Urban Real Estate Growth in Manhattan, 1835-1894* (1981).

Las Vegas's efforts to annex the Strip and surrounding areas began in 1946. Contending that "the places on the 'strip' are actually a part of Las Vegas; they derive their revenues as part of Las Vegas, and there is no reason why they should not help pay the costs of maintaining our municipal government," Mayor Cragin led a valiant effort that ultimately failed to sway residents and hotel owners.[1] Five years later, Lieutenant Governor Cliff Jones (a part-owner of the Strip's Thunderbird resort, opened in 1948) secured legislation that, among other restrictions, banned any city from annexing an unincorporated township without the county commissioners' approval. Paradise and Winchester residents rushed to create these townships during 1950-51 and thwarted Cragin's annexation efforts.[2] In response, an angry mayor and city commission cut off sewer service to the Strip hotels. As a result, Clark County's commissioners voted to create a county fire department to serve the hotels and emerging Strip suburbs. The county also sold bonds to finance a sewer network. They already controlled the airport, and in 1947 obtained control of the new Las Vegas Valley Water District, which would, by 1955, begin to deliver Lake Mead water to the Strip area and the city. Cragin's petulance spurred the Clark County commissioners to begin building an expanded government that by the 1960s provided numerous urban services valleywide.

The annexation conflict simmered throughout the 1950s, as Las Vegas grew in popularity, and large hotels such as the Sands, Desert Inn, Sahara, and other new resorts drew thousands of guests. As the prominent banker E. Parry Thomas recently noted, most of the Strip hotels in the 1950s were mob controlled. And the mob wanted no part of city taxes, politicians, and police. Gus Greenbaum (once called the Mayor of Paradise) and other mobbed-up casino executives on the Strip routinely instructed their workers who lived in the area to reject any city annexation petitions.[3]

But, why was the Strip so opposed to annexation? Part of the reason lay in the City of Las Vegas's ad valorem tax. At a meeting on May 8, 1946, where more than 90 percent of affected residents (mostly Strip hotel employees living in nearby apartments) signed protest petitions to block the move, the hotelmen, through their attorney Frank McNamee, voiced their objection to the ad valorem tax. They also worried about restrictive ordinances that "redlined" or confined gaming to certain streets downtown, and they surely preferred the laissez-faire policies of the county commissioners.[4] Strip executives undoubtedly feared the influence of powerful downtown casino executives such as J. Kell Houssels who might well resent casinos on the periphery picking off too much business from their own in the urban core. After all, during his first term as mayor in the 1930s, Cragin had been accused of running a political machine with help from local New Deal agency officials who controlled public-works jobs for projects on the city's building agenda.[5] Again in the 1940s, critics such as Charles Pipkin of the Las Vegas Taxpayers' Association implied that two city commissioners, Bob Baskin and Pat Clark,

both publicly considered respectable businessmen, used their power to control "the issuance of liquor licenses" to favor Houssels's interests. Other columns reported Pipkin suggesting that Houssels, who owned the Nevada Beverage Company (one of the key wholesale liquor vendors for the casinos) with Clark, wanted everyone's business, and could use the mayor, city commissioners, and the city police to threaten clubs and resorts that did not buy from him. While this was never substantiated, the defeat of Baskin and Clark in the 1949 municipal election and the ouster of Mayor Cragin from office two years later did little to revise this machine image.[6]

Clearly, the city police department was also an issue. Charges of corruption and even "burglary rings" revolved around the agency in the 1940s and 1950s. As one pro-annexation supporter noted in 1974, "The Strip hotels did not want to deal with the city …. The old mob preferred doing business with the sheriff and county commissioners." Why? He explained that in those years the city was "an unstable entity with many charges of corruption …. So, who do you pay off?" Las Vegas's Assistant City Manager Richard Bunker never used the word "mob," but, looking back during the 1970s, he insisted that annexation failed to occur in the 1950s because the hotel owners "had a strong hold on the legislature"—if not on governors Charles Russell and Grant Sawyer.[7] (I inserted that last phrase because Bunker obviously went on to other things.)

The mob's influence began to wane in the 1960s under relentless pressure from United States attorneys general Robert Kennedy and Ramsey Clark. Contemporary figures observed that the introduction of corporate gaming in the late 1960s began to change the Strip's landscape. Corporate Strip executives who generally preferred uniform and efficient government were increasingly favorable to joining the city or merging city/county government in the valley to save money and streamline services. But there was another factor in the equation. A continuing series of aggressive annexation threats, moves, and countermoves in the Las Vegas Valley by the cities and Clark County in the early 1960s led the state legislature in 1965 to impose a moratorium on further annexation. The statute noted, "Annexation of land to incorporated cities and unincorporated towns in Clark county is still proceeding at an extraordinarily rapid rate. Such annexation often includes land not developed or ready for urban development, for the sole apparent purpose of forestalling its acquisition by another governmental body." The statute went on to explain, "Such annexation introduces confusion and oppression into the vital questions of taxation, special assessment, provision of municipal services, [and] utilization of the limited supply of underground water" among other concerns. For these reasons, the state halted further annexations, and another law temporarily stopped the incorporation of new cities and towns by Clark County commissioners. Not until passage of a 1975 law re-legalizing the expansion of Las Vegas boundaries (which effectively ended the 1965 moratorium) did annexation by state mandate and by city ordinance again become possible.[8]

The 1965 action by the state forced all sides in the Las Vegas Valley to consider how government functioned in what was increasingly becoming a politically fragmented metropolitan area. In 1967, County Commissioner (and future Las Vegas mayor) Bill Briare, whose district mostly encompassed the city, proposed that the Board of Clark County Commissioners consider hiring consultants to examine government operations in the Las Vegas area and make recommendations. He ultimately convinced his fellow commissioners, who retained the Public Administration Service, a well-known Chicago consulting firm, to conduct the study.

After months of work, the consultants submitted a report in 1968 that found needless duplication of services and costly inefficiencies in the Las Vegas area. Consultants David Norrgard and Donald Nemetz offered a range of solutions. The most limited approach was "functional consolidation," which would retain Clark County and all of the cities but merge each major urban service (e.g., police, fire, public works, parks) into its own separate department valleywide. So, there would be one metropolitan police department and one fire department, etc. At the very least, the consultants urged that the Clark County commissioners "should resist the creation of any new special service districts which would further fragment local government." Norrgard and Nemetz also recommended that the commissioners discourage new leapfrog growth along the metropolitan fringes and "sharply curtail the granting of zoning variances." While "functional consolidation" was the most limited step officials could take to ease the duplication of services in the Las Vegas Valley, the consultants suggested another option: annexation of nearby suburbs by Las Vegas, Henderson, and North Las Vegas, leaving Clark County with no urban services to offer in the metropolitan area.

Then the consultants presented what they considered the "more preferred solutions." The first possibility was to incorporate into one city (Las Vegas) "all of the area now urbanized or likely to become such in the foreseeable future." This would also entail Henderson and North Las Vegas (but not necessarily the more distant Boulder City—at least for the foreseeable future) joining Las Vegas—a politically explosive option indeed. The second "preferred" approach was "full consolidation" of all local governments into one metropolitan government "with the total urban area identified for purposes of providing special municipal-type services."[9] Under such a scheme, it would be possible for one or perhaps none of the current city and county governments to dominate the metropolitan entity. For the consultants, which government entity controlled which services would be for state and local officials to decide. The idea was to have one licensing bureau (to please business groups), one police department, and one fire department, and to consolidate sewers, public works and other services into one efficient operation. One metropolitan government would also bring uniform zoning and a single regional planning agency to replace the various city plans and other fragmented approaches to

highway construction and flood control that for years had plagued the Las Vegas area with bad service. In response to the report, local officials met at the Sahara Hotel to discuss consolidation, but no action resulted from it.[10]

But, at the behest of many members of the Las Vegas business community, state legislators decided to tackle the problem. A 1969 state legislative bill established a committee to draft a Las Vegas/Clark County consolidation plan, but Republican Governor Paul Laxalt vetoed the measure because it did not allow for a vote of affected residents. Having just seen his town of Carson City merge government and services with Ormsby County after a supportive vote of *all* Nevada voters in 1968, Laxalt believed the precedent should also apply to the Las Vegas situation. In a letter to both houses of the legislature, the governor warned lawmakers well in advance of the session's end that he would veto Assembly Bill 799 and Senate Bill 542 if they were not amended to include a vote of the people affected. He wrote, "I am deeply disturbed that this legislation can result in the absorption of local government without the consent of the people involved." The governor went on: "To sacrifice City Halls and Court Houses under the banner of efficiency without the vote of the people directly involved is contrary to our basic belief that people should have a voice in their destiny."[11]

The hopes of central city supporters rose with the 1970 election of Donal "Mike" O'Callaghan (a Las Vegas resident) as Nevada's new governor. O'Callaghan, a liberal Democrat, supported government reorganization in the valley. In response to the consultants' report and continued pressure from business owners and Las Vegas officials, the 1971 legislature established a local "Government Study Committee," chaired by Assemblyman Robert "Hal" Smith of Henderson, which ultimately recommended some consolidation of services. Armed with Smith's recommendation, the 1973 legislature made another effort to address the issue of consolidated government in the Las Vegas area. Senate Bill 407, drafted by the Senate Government Affairs Committee, chaired by Senator Jim Gibson, also of Henderson, provided for creation of an Urban Action Committee to study expanding Las Vegas's boundaries "to include the surrounding areas."[12]

The initial paragraph of Senate Bill 407 laid out the bill's purpose, and couched it in noble language: "Sound urban development is essential to the continued economic development in this state." The bill declared that the current legislative session was not long enough to study the problem thoroughly in the Las Vegas area, but that paid consultants and others had recommended changes. So, because "further proliferation of governmental entities in the area is not in the best interests of the state or the residents of Clark County," the bill provided for creating the Urban Action Committee (UAC) to examine the issue over the next year. The bill controlled the UAC's membership by specifically directing that each member of the Clark County state legislative delegation select a resident to serve from his or her district

who was "not a public officer" or employed "in a supervisory capacity" by any city, county, or state agency. Senate Bill 407 also directed the Clark County commissioners to "provide office space" for the UAC to conduct its work. It also directed the UAC to consider all options regarding the consolidation issue and submit a plan for local government reorganization. The bill directed staff personnel from Clark County, Las Vegas, Henderson, North Las Vegas, and Boulder City to assist UAC members in their fact-finding effort. Finally, the bill mandated that a steering committee of all members of the Clark County legislative delegation work with the UAC.[13] The delegation also had to work with the Senate Government Affairs Committee in the next (1975) legislative session to draft the legislation embodying UAC's recommendation. In the 1975 session the Steering Committee chair, Senator Keith Ashworth (D-Clark County), worked primarily with Jim Gibson and his committee to draft new legislation.

The 1973 bill also began the process of consolidating some metropolitan services by mandating creation of a metropolitan police department. Obviously, lawmakers hoped this action would lead to creation of a Metropolitan Fire Department and consolidation of other urban services. Senate Bill 407 soon began to draw attention from interested observers in other cities. For example, in a September 1973 story, the *Los Angeles Times*, often a critic of events in Las Vegas, attributed the city's effort to consolidate local government to "a maturing metropolitan outlook," and commended the city for trying to avoid "the multiplicity of governments that has proven so costly and confusing to regions like the Los Angeles metropolitan area.[14]

In 1974 the Urban Action Committee (chaired by Albert Johns, professor of political science at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas), created five task forces to study specific services. Part of the context for the city/county consolidation movement in Las Vegas lay in the much publicized and successful merger of Indianapolis and Marion County in October 1969. But many local residents, unfazed by this experiment, were convinced it would not work in the Las Vegas metropolitan area. Moreover, leaders in Boulder City, Henderson, and North Las Vegas feared that the UAC might recommend their forcible annexation to Las Vegas. From the beginning, Boulder City opposed any consolidation of services with governments in the Las Vegas Valley. In a report to the UAC, Boulder City spokesman Arleigh West told members that his city had a small population and therefore less air pollution and other problems than bigger municipalities often experienced. He also noted that Boulder City received its water not from a special service district or private water companies but from the federal government. It also had other arrangements with the Bureau of Reclamation for receiving power from Hoover Dam because it had once been a federal reservation. West added that Boulder City was not located in the so-called Las Vegas Valley, "and because Boulder City differs in many other ways from its neighbors," that "there is a strong feeling among its residents for maintaining its identity *in toto*. This is not to say that some consolidated

services might not be performed satisfactorily on some kind of mutually acceptable joint basis" such as "library and swimming pool district merging."[15]

Of course, many of the arguments for and against consolidating governments within the Las Vegas metropolitan area were even more elaborate than West's and required close scrutiny. So, the Urban Action Committee approached consolidation by breaking up into five task forces to study the impact of a merger on major government functions. The prominent businessman and community leader James Cashman, Jr., chaired Task Force One, which handled budget and finance. Other members were former Clark County School District superintendent R. Guild Gray, businessman and former county commissioner Harley Harmon, longtime businessman Wayne Bunker, and the Nevada Tax Commission's former Gaming Division head, Robbins Cahill. After hearing testimony on numerous issues, Task Force One endorsed consolidation of some budget and finance functions.[16]

Task Force Two, covering police and fire services, libraries, and computer facilities was chaired by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal's* editor Don Digilio, received much negative testimony. After telling the group that his city had "an adequate fire department on an equal level with Las Vegas," the North Las Vegas's fire chief, asserted that "we can see no reason why local government should be consolidated," but added that his department would be "happy to cooperate on a mutual aid basis." It should be mentioned that in the mid-1970s, under pressure from some property owners near Sahara Avenue and other spots bordering a city, the Clark County Fire Department had agreed to cross Sahara Avenue and other jurisdictional borders to fight fires on the city's side of the street.[17] The growing level of cooperation in this regard was clearly evident on November 21, 1980, when the huge MGM Grand Hotel fire overwhelmed county fire services, and crews from Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, and Henderson rushed in to help. Boulder City fire trucks even drove to Henderson's stations to handle local blazes, because many Henderson firemen were on the Strip fighting the MGM conflagration.

Regarding consolidation, Boulder City's fire chief, Jim Harris, told the task force that "we can see some benefits in the purchase of equipment and possibly communications, but see no benefits in regard to manpower." Henderson's fire chief was even more blunt. According to the meeting's minutes, he told Digilio's task force that "Henderson is quite happy with what they have and cannot see anything Henderson would gain…or any improved service from consolidation." Clark County's fire chief, Clell Henley, conceded that "annexation may have some value, but not consolidation."[18] The cities were concerned enough to send their fire chiefs because the Las Vegas Police Department and Clark County Sheriff's Office had been merged into a metropolitan police department (Metro) in 1973, an organization that Henderson, North Las Vegas, and Boulder City refused to join. And there was concern at the time that the 1975 state legislature might try to establish a

metropolitan fire department by law, which it later did. Indeed, state lawmakers mandated creation of a metropolitan fire department near the end of their session while under the false impression that the Clark County commissioners liked the bill. After Clark County District Court Judge Joseph Pavlikowski ruled the law constitutional, county officials rushed their ultimately successful appeal to the state Supreme Court before the law could take effect later in the summer. So, the smaller cities and the county were determined in 1974 to make it clear to the UAC that they saw no need for consolidation.[19]

Part of the argument rested on the fact that the Metropolitan Police Department itself was not yet the unmitigated success its advocates had expected. Testimony before Task Force Two was quite negative, especially from police officials. For example, when asked whether the North Las Vegas, Henderson, and Boulder City police departments should join Metro, Undersheriff John Moran (former Las Vegas police chief and future Clark County sheriff) "indicated that he could see no reason [why] North Las Vegas could not become part, but for the present time, Henderson and Boulder City were a little far removed; possibly in ten years they would be ready for consolidation."[20] Clearly, in 1974, miles of empty desert still separated Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, and the Strip suburbs from Henderson and Boulder City. But that condition would change by the new century when several million new residents largely filled in these spaces, creating in effect, one contiguous metropolitan area. That gave Las Vegas's Mayor Oscar Goodman a new reason to support some form of unification in the twenty-first Century.

The historical record seemed to be on Las Vegas's side. In 1898, when New York City (which then included Manhattan and the Bronx) consolidated with the City of Brooklyn (which then included Queens and Richmond—today's Staten Island—counties), swampland and other empty tracts separated myriad population clusters from one another, but a single police department, fire department, public works department, parks department, and similar agencies cared for them all. As the decades passed, New York's greatly enlarged city council saw to it that every area was serviced. This depended on the councilman for each district making sure that all of the new and emerging neighborhoods had enough police, fire, and other services. So, the model had worked before in metropolitan areas, and people such as Bill Briare were convinced the model could work again in southern Nevada.[21]

But as Digilio's task force soon learned, there was no guarantee of savings. Both city and county administrators agreed in 1974 that there had been no savings as yet in police budgets because of Metro's creation, and none was expected for at least five years. Las Vegas City Commissioner Ron Lurie blamed the vague state law for making Metro's budget "confusing," and even declared that the Las Vegas Police Department was "superior" to the "Sheriff's Office." Most of those testifying agreed that Metro should remain under the Clark County Sheriff's control rather than the city's, which it has. But this view only undermined later city efforts to dominate any valleywide consolidated government.[22]

North Las Vegas's resolute opposition to consolidating police, fire, and other services was particularly impressive. The city's position was contained in a "Condensed Policy Statement" composed by City Manager Clay Lynch, who was certainly no innocent when it came to aggressive annexation. He began by emphasizing how North Las Vegas voters supported consolidation in 1968—the consolidation of Carson City with Ormsby County—only because the affected residents "up there" clearly indicated that they wanted it. So, as Lynch remarked, "we're not opposed to consolidation IN Carson City…. What we're opposed to is consolidation FROM Carson City," mandated by the state legislature without a vote of the affected residents. He reported that in its 1969 and 1973 municipal elections, North Las Vegas put the issue of merging with Las Vegas on the ballot as a question, and both times North Las Vegas voters rejected it.[23]

Lynch's North Las Vegas report to the UAC went on to assert that "we particularly do not like the form of intervention from Carson City expressed by the recent act creating the Metropolitan Police Commission." North Las Vegas definitely disliked this concept, which, "if carried further," would create a metropolitan fire commission. Lynch predicted that eventually "we would have 18 to 20 metropolitan commission governments instead of five general local governments responsible for full activity." Lynch further denounced the idea of 18-20 commissions "each pursuing its own independent aim and goal without regard…to its effect upon other operations." Lynch noted that his city was not opposed to merging some services with neighboring jurisdictions, and pointed out that since the early 1950s, North Las Vegas had had an agreement with the City of Las Vegas to treat its sewer effluent. He also reported that over the past twenty-three years, North Las Vegas has entered into 232 "intergovernmental agreements" with other governments over a variety of matters. But Lynch's main reason for opposing a forced consolidation with Las Vegas was that it would cost North Las Vegas money and "may bankrupt us."[24]

For Lynch the current state of affairs was most beneficial to North Las Vegas. He reported that his city, as part of its agreement with the state of Nevada, maintained the lights on Interstate 15 in its jurisdiction because the road benefited the city's commuters and commerce. As citizens of an independent entity, North Las Vegas's residents could pick and choose what aspects of government they wanted (such as their at-large city council/manager form of government with no wards), something they could no longer do if forcibly annexed to Las Vegas. Lynch's "condensed report" noted, for instance, that even with a service as basic as libraries, North Las Vegas preferred to control its own. The city funded its libraries at a higher per-resident amount than the county did. The city not only controlled where its libraries were located but also what books and materials they purchased. In his report, Lynch emphasized, "We want to pick the books that reflect our population's needs, not the valley's."[25] This kind of thinking was particularly convincing in the

1970s when the United States Supreme Court was still struggling to define obscenity, and books on evolution and New Left interpretations of American history were still the subject of public debate.

Given the testimony of Lynch, West, and others, it was no wonder that some significant conflicts occurred within the membership of Task Force Two. Even though the majority disregarded much of the negative testimony and voted to please Albert Johns and recommend consolidation of some services, a determined opposition group led by Terry Marren filed a minority report. Marren claimed that the majority view favoring consolidation of fire departments was "the clearest possible indicator [of the] political motives of the majority advocates. They clung steadfastly to the theoretical maxim that 'bigger is better' in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary." Marren's report then switched to police services, charging that "since the record proves that money is not being saved by the Metropolitan Police Department, the majority allege better efficiency, which is a bit difficult to measure." In the end, Marren wrote in the task force's report that "North Las Vegas, Henderson and…Boulder City would find it most disadvantageous and demeaning to give up their respective police forces to the city of Las Vegas where they would have no voice in the administration of Metro."[26]

In similar fashion, Marren noted that the same consensus existed regarding creation of a metropolitan fire department. Earlier, Las Vegas and Clark County had consolidated their alarm systems, which, as both departments reported, resulted in many "foul-ups" and "delays in response." Both departments, however, expressed concern "regarding the problems of borderline areas and [insurance] ratings in the incorporated entities and outlying areas."[27] Mutual-aid agreements, not consolidation, eventually solved the problem. But it was partially the problem of high insurance rates along Sahara Avenue and other boundary lines that had prompted then-County Commissioner Briare (an insurance manager himself) to call for some consolidation of services. But Marren's report, after summarizing the fire chiefs' testimony regarding the foul-ups resulting from the effort to coordinate alarm systems, predicted the same result for a metropolitan fire department. The fire and police chiefs' testimony did much to undermine the cost savings and efficiency rationales pushed by R.G. "Zack" Taylor, chairman of the board of First Western Savings and then the leader of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, giving even more ammunition to County Commissioner Bob Broadbent (a Boulder City resident) and other opponents of unification. The minority report concluded with a comparative analysis, arguing that Anaheim, Fresno, and Santa Ana, California—all cities larger than Las Vegas—had more efficient fire departments than the current Las Vegas Fire Department in terms of expenditures, manpower, and areas covered.[28]

Reports such as these were effective in countering Las Vegas's arguments, which allowed opponents to cite the city's ambitious desire to expand its tax base as the real motive behind the push for consolidation/annexation. While

there was considerable conflict within Task Force Two, other UAC task forces looked at planning, zoning, building codes, sewers, and flood control and, for the most part, endorsed consolidation as the best means of countering the fragmented approach to valleywide problems. While Task Force Four members Terry Marren and Ann Zorn (wife of former UNLV President Roman Zorn) noted the presence of a regional flood control district, they agreed that "it has not been adequately funded or activated." But no one was sure that the City of Las Vegas would be any more successful at building a comprehensive flood-control network. Not until 1985 would the county (and specifically Commissioner Bruce Woodbury) address the problem by establishing the Clark County Regional Flood Control District—which created even more momentum for letting the county, not city government, deal with valleywide problems.

Some county officials, in an effort to sway the UAC, sought to minimize the effect of the 1968 county-funded consultants' report favoring consolidation of local governments under Las Vegas's control. In his testimony, County Commissioner Broadbent recalled that in 1968, when the county commissioners hired the consultants to study local government options, he had understood that they would recommend a "total plan for the streamlining of existing government and/or consolidation." He then reasoned that "this would presume also that quasi-municipal or special-purpose districts would be melded into the appropriate local city or *Clark County* [italics supplied] government" to ensure that all citizens were represented.[29] This was Broadbent at his political best. Once the consultants clearly called for a metropolitan government, Broadbent shifted the focus to whether the City of Las Vegas should run it or whether Clark County should *continue to run* areawide services. From many of the reports and subsequent anti-unification politics, it became clear that the combination of Las Vegas's own inefficiencies, Metro's failure to demonstrate cost savings, and the preference of many residents in annexable areas to stay out of all three valley cities could unite thousands of people behind Broadbent's argument for efficient, valleywide government run by the Clark County commissioners rather than their municipal counterparts.

But Broadbent's persuasive commentary was not enough to stop the process in 1974. In the end, despite much evidence in support of a contrary decision, the Urban Action Committee did what many observers expected: it endorsed the city's annexation of Paradise, Winchester, East Las Vegas, and Sunrise Manor and recommended the consolidation of police, fire, and some other services under the City of Las Vegas's control. Approved by Al Johns and a majority of UAC members, the final committee report declared, "We recognize that existing political realities may make an immediate consolidation impractical, but we feel that the expansion of the boundaries of the City of Las Vegas is a realistic step which should and can be accomplished now, and that the county government, which will be relieved thereby from the responsibility of providing urban services in the valley, should concentrate its attention

on providing services which are regional in nature." So, the UAC rejected the recent approach of merging Carson City and Ormsby County into one municipal government because, unlike tiny Ormsby County, Clark County was large with a number of towns in its outlying areas that had to be served. In addition, UAC members did not recommend the forcible annexation of Henderson, North Las Vegas, and Boulder City by Las Vegas but did agree that, within the Las Vegas metropolitan area, Clark County should continue to run Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital (now University Medical Center), McCarran Airport, and tourism and recreation boards, (the last two under separate departments).[30] Today, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority handles tourism and marketing while recreation is administered by a separate county agency.

While Henderson, North Las Vegas, and Boulder City were relieved, the UAC's recommendation hardly pleased county commissioners. They were not convinced that the City of Las Vegas was capable of running a metropolitan government efficiently, but worried that their longtime allies, Strip resort executives, might not remain in the fold for much longer. Indeed, Al Johns himself remarked that the approval of an effective corporate gaming law in 1969 pleased Strip hotel owners, because the county sheriff would remain in charge of the police, a move that made resort owners more willing to join the city.

The 1975 legislative session hardly relieved the county's fears. The UAC's efforts resulted in a 1975 bill, Senate Bill 601, which mandated the expansion of the City of Las Vegas's borders and enlarged Clark County's Board of Commissioners to eleven members, eight of whom would also serve as city commissioners representing the "New Las Vegas"; this entity would now include the current city plus the unincorporated towns of Paradise, Winchester, East Las Vegas, Sunrise Manor, and other small pockets of population.[31]

In the 1975 legislative session, Senator Gibson referred to the 1965 annexation moratorium, noting, "Since that time we have kept an arbitrary lid on the development of the urban area within the municipal boundaries." But "the result has been that we have had a population grow up outside the major city boundary which is nearly equal to the population within the city boundary." In short, much of the territory that Las Vegas, or a typical American city like it, would normally have annexed and served could not be annexed because of the legislature's interference. Now, Gibson indicated, it was time to end the interference. As he reasoned, "County government was never intended, nor is it designed to take care of the urban services required by such a population. Hence, the need for some major realignment of governmental responsibilities in the area." Senate Bill 601 embodied this realignment.[32]

In response, Senator Lee Walker (D-Clark County), whose district encompassed North Las Vegas and surrounding areas, explained that even though he had worked hard with Senator Gibson and others in drafting the bill, he would vote against it. Walker reported that North Las Vegas officials had

four concerns going into the process. The new legislation had addressed two of them: maintaining a fair share of distributive revenues from sales, cigarette, and alcohol taxes with an enlarged Las Vegas, and maintaining the city's revenues from water lines it had built in neighborhoods beyond its borders. However, there were still two more issues of concern: Senate Bill 601 would cause North Las Vegas to be landlocked on all sides but the north, allowing little room to expand its tax base. In addition, residents affected by Las Vegas's expansion would not be allowed to vote on the issue. This was the same problem that led Governor Laxalt to veto the Las Vegas expansion bill of 1969.[33]

Senator Jack Schofield (D-Clark County), an annexation supporter and a candidate for governor in 1978, responded that the legislative committee members who drew up Senate Bill 601 had made many compromises to satisfy the various cities' concerns which had surfaced since the 1973 session. Most important, lawmakers agreed "to protect the sovereign right [and] city limits" of North Las Vegas, Henderson, and Boulder City. Senate Bill 601 embodied the UAC's suggestion to let Las Vegas annex the unincorporated towns and not the cities. But, of course, cities such as North Las Vegas were not content with being liberated from their fears of having to join Las Vegas; they also wanted to be able to expand.[34]

Once Governor O'Callaghan signed Senate Bill 601 into law, opponents of state-mandated annexation and the partial consolidation of city and county services quickly appealed in court. A district court judge ruled against them in 1976, but the state Supreme Court overturned portions of the law because it violated the equal-protection clause by failing to properly apportion city-county commission districts. Following this ruling, a group of citizens in September 1976 asked Las Vegas for information regarding the benefits of annexation. "Zack" Taylor of First Western Savings and the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce later gave the pro-merger advocate Dorothy Eisenberg and her associates demographic information and a map of the affected areas. In November 1976 they founded Citizens for a New City, a private organization that worked for annexation to Las Vegas by ordinance (the legislature had already ended the moratorium) rather than working merely for the consolidation of city/county services.[35]

But any number of small issues clouded the annexation question in 1975, making Eisenberg's group's job more difficult. As one writer pointed out, Senate Bill 601 would have made the consolidation of Clark County and Las Vegas only the second city/county merger without a vote of the people in the United States since World War II—a distinction that many suburban county residents in the Las Vegas Valley wanted no part of. One *Las Vegas Review-Journal* column pointed out that, under the 1975 bill, which mandated consolidation to take effect in 1977, forty-five hundred people living in the county islands of Vegas Heights, Sandy Acres, and Berkley Square would have resided within the new city limits, but as residents of islands, they would not

have been represented in any ward with a city commissioner; only a county commissioner would represent them—a major reason why the Supreme Court justices had objected to the law.[36] Then there was the issue of taxes, which were lower in the unincorporated towns than in the City of Las Vegas itself. Al Johns himself complained about how "for various political reasons," the 1975 legislature supported a bill that partially consolidated Las Vegas/Clark County government, but ominously left the details for local officials to work out—something they could not or (in the case of the Clark County commissioners) would not do.[37]

In August 1976, Clark County's Board of Commissioners voted not to put consolidation on the ballot, a move which angered David Canter, who charged that some of his fellow commissioners were determined to subvert the process and not let county residents vote on their own future. However, one of Canter's two rejected motions contained wording similar to the provisions of the 1975 law that the state Supreme Court had overturned. Furthermore, since the city and county commissioners did not use the same wording on the ballot questions they put to voters, this only created more potential legal obstacles to unification.[38]

Clearly, the county commissioners wanted as much as possible to delay acting until the 1977 legislature could perhaps re-work the law. In September 1976, Las Vegas city commissioner and future Las Vegas mayor (1987-91) Ron Lurie tried to ease concerns by arguing that the 1977 legislative session should scrap the 1975 city/county consolidation approach in Senate Bill 601, declaring, "They wasted a lot of taxpayer money trying it last time. I'm a taxpayer and I certainly don't want to see it happen again."[39] This kind of talk from Las Vegas leaders only worried county commissioners who continued to resist putting annexation or consolidation on the ballot for residents to vote on. Their foot-dragging approach helped postpone the whole matter until the 1977 legislative session, where decisive action was finally taken. Not until March 1977 did the Clark County Commissioners change their position, when state lawmakers began considering a bill that would place the issue on the ballot and mandate that both city and county voters express their preference on the measure.

Meanwhile, Eisenberg's pro-annexation group collected more signatures for annexation by ordinance. As a result, Winchester and Paradise (the Strip) residents not only feared state-mandated annexation and/or consolidation of county government, but increasingly worried about Las Vegas aggressively annexing suburbs using traditional methods. According to the Las Vegas city charter and municipal code, one resident could circulate a petition seeking annexation of a tract of land to Las Vegas. The City of Las Vegas could submit a plan to govern the new area and hold a public meeting on the plan if that petition was signed by 10 percent of all property owners in the tract as well as those owning 10 percent of land in the tract and those owning 10 percent

of the tract's total assessed valuation. The process could be stopped only if 51 percent of property owners in the affected area signed a petition opposing the unification (as some annexation supporters called it) move within thirty days. By spring 1977, Eisenberg's group had enough signatures in the surrounding unincorporated townships to fulfill the first two criteria. They lacked only the third, but were progressing quickly on that one. Had they succeeded, any legislative action on the issue in Carson City would have been moot.[40] So, opponents of Las Vegas's expansion efforts were desperate to stop the city. This was the context underlying the 1977 legislative session.

That session moved toward supporting a bill that would provide for a vote of the people in 1978 on annexation in Las Vegas and in the annexable unincorporated county areas. State Senator Jim Gibson, whose son later served as mayor of Henderson, used his position as chair of the Senate Committee on Government Affairs to examine all the options for streamlining government in the Las Vegas Valley. In an April 1977 meeting to discuss what ultimately became Senate Bill 503, Senator Keith Ashworth told Gibson's committee that he and members of his Select Committee of the Clark County (legislative) Delegation on Government Reorganization had drafted a bill that would treat all sides fairly. While Gibson and Ashworth, two political veterans, knew that county voters would probably reject annexation, they wanted to put the decision in the voters' hands and not try to mandate a merger, as the 1975 legislature had done. The strategy was clear: Let voters decide the measure before Las Vegas could annex the areas using its traditional city charter/municipal code procedure. As Gibson concluded about Senate Bill 503, "This just gives the voters a chance to decide what they want."[41]

It was the duty of Gibson's committee to refine the bill further. This took several months, and during that period pro-annexation groups pushed their case while a variety of opponents offered myriad reasons for rejecting the measure. The clearest presentation of the city's position lies in a brochure that Dorothy Eisenberg's group, Citizens for a New City sent to property owners and other citizens in the affected areas. It touted a number of benefits, including "no new taxes," "no double taxation," "greater efficiency," and eligibility for more federal funding due to Las Vegas becoming a larger city. The brochure often substituted the word *unification* for the more divisive term *annexation* and it offered examples of how some citizens would experience lower taxes. For instance, the brochure noted that "at the present time some businesses pay taxes to the city based on gross retail sales—only to be taxed again by the County on the estimated portion of sales sold to non-city residents. Unification-annexation would eliminate this unfair double taxation."[42]

During the 1977 session, it was obvious that many in the business community were determined this time to get some kind of a unified government in the Las Vegas area. At a public hearing on Senate Bill 503 Jack Libby, a businessman in the unincorporated town of Paradise, supported the "New City" concept

and annexation. Vern Willis, a former Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce president, local airline executive, and *Review-Journal* financial columnist, discussed the benefits of annexation for local businessmen and declared that annexation was "the logical answer to the problems that they have faced for many years." These included having to get five or more business licenses to run a landscaping, pool-building, or other business in the metropolitan area. Chuck Ruthe, a realtor and president of the Chamber of Commerce, noted "the rapid growth of unincorporated areas…and also the growth of duplication of governmental services." He recalled that his group had brought this up in the 1975 session and secured a bill that the Supreme Court later overturned. He then emphasized that "in the two years that followed the 1975 session, the unincorporated urban area has continued its rapid growth, making even more obvious the need for [this] legislation."[43]

The prominent bank executive and former Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce President "Zack" Taylor, told the senators that he represented his neighbors who supported annexation, and observed that "while they live in Winchester, most of those…work in Las Vegas and they all belong to the same community. Sahara Avenue represents a false boundary. They want to join with the total community as neighbors."[44] He also declared, "Under annexation, businessmen would have a more stable government with one set of rules and fees." He went on to tie this issue to orderly economic development, a goal shared by virtually everyone in the valley. "To have sound economic development, you've got to have progressive, stable, local government. You have to be consistent in such matters as licensing, zoning, and other things that build a city." He went on to advise lawmakers that "annexation is the proven method cities have used to provide municipal services to developing urban areas."[45]

In fact, some in the business community gave money to Dorothy Eisenberg's "New City" group in order to speed up efforts in 1977 to secure enough resident signatures to annex most of the unincorporated suburbs by ordinance rather than by a vote of the people. Eisenberg later explained that several "volunteers" gave $10,000 to fund the mass-mailing campaign because the legislature was already considering several bills to make traditional annexation by ordinance harder. She defended her organization's actions by noting that one bill being pushed by the Winchester town board and its allies would raise the minimum amount of property-owner signatures to start the annexation process from 10 percent to 33 percent, and that county commissioners were supporting a host of other measures. Eisenberg went so far as to describe Clark County commissioners as "schizophrenic" when it came to the consolidation issue.[46]

So, in early 1977, the battle raged on two fronts: first, to stop Las Vegas's effort to annex by ordinance by making the process more rigorous or securing a state-imposed moratorium on annexation until the people had a chance to vote; and second, to block the senate bill that would mandate a popular vote

on the issue. To this end, annexation opponents pitched a variety of arguments to convince state lawmakers and potential voters that annexation was a mistake. One source, for instance, estimated that a county resident who owned a $100,000 home would pay $40 a year more in property taxes while a comparable city resident (also with a $100,000 home) would pay $70 less a year. This amount seemed relatively negligible for the benefits gained by merger, but other factors also influenced the decision. Many residents felt their interests would get lost in an expanded Las Vegas. As one columnist, George McCabe, wrote, "officials in smaller cities feared that consolidation…would create a monster called Big Government." Others countered that when Indianapolis merged with Marion County in 1970, four other cities in that county remained independent. But even though Henderson, North Las Vegas, and Boulder City were safe for the time being, residents in the unincorporated towns around Las Vegas wondered about their level of services if annexation occurred.[47]

At the same time, the annexation of Clark County's unincorporated towns also threatened to destabilize the county's finances. In January 1977, budget analysts predicted that Clark County would lose $25.1 million if East Las Vegas, Paradise, Winchester, and Sunrise Manor joined Las Vegas. And although the county could cut its operations budget by $12.8 million, that would still leave a $12.3 million deficit. At the same time, the City of Las Vegas would gain $30.1 million in revenue but spend only $11.9 million in added operations. With a gain of $18.2 million, it was no wonder that Las Vegas wanted a merger. Gaming taxes were a case in point. If Las Vegas annexed Paradise and Winchester, which hosted the Strip area, then the city could collect tax revenues from the big Strip resorts for the first time in history.[48] And while Las Vegas charged lower license fees for casinos downtown than Clark County did, the county commissioners argued that the extra money was needed to fund Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital (now University Medical Center).

Revenue losses from a merger were not limited just to Clark County; nearby cities also stood to lose money if the merger occurred. This was a big issue for local officials. In 1977, accountants estimated that if Las Vegas doubled its population, and therefore gained a larger share of distributive tax revenues on sales, cigarettes, and liquor, Henderson would lose $646,000, North Las Vegas $1.3 million, and Boulder City $108,000. Henderson's city manager, Dave Dawson, had earlier argued that the consolidation of Las Vegas with Clark County would bankrupt Henderson, North Las Vegas, and other "small cities" that would lose much revenue from sales, liquor, and cigarette taxes. Dawson estimated that Henderson alone would lose $680,000 in the first year. And, he warned, "if it occurs, the bankruptcy of small cities is inevitable and would immediately force total consolidation"—which had been Bill Briare's goal when he was a county commissioner in 1968. Other Henderson officials noted aloud that "our service levels would drop."[49] While some annexation supporters conceded that water, police, fire, and sewer services might remain

the same, virtually everyone agreed that county taxes would have to rise. Anxious to defuse this issue, Las Vegas officials promised in writing that they would support a change in the tax formula so that the other cities would not lose distributive tax revenues. But they need not have bothered, because there was no way that Senator Gibson would allow his city to go broke. The 1977 bill, like its 1975 predecessor, contained a provision that limited Las Vegas's share of distributive taxes to its current percentage.

Many newspaper columns supported the opposition. In January 1977 the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* reported that if annexation occurred, the City of Las Vegas would gain $10 million in new operating expenses to serve the unincorporated area, but would also pick up $32 million in new revenue at the expense of Henderson, North Las Vegas, and Boulder City, while Clark County itself would lose $28 million in revenue and be stuck with the high cost of serving remote places like Overton, Bunkerville, and Searchlight.[50]

The point was not lost on officials in the unincorporated townships. Dan Newburn, chair of the Paradise Town Board, cynically noted that at a recent meeting his constituents were "intrigued with the [city's] interest in the 80,000 residents and the billion and a half dollars in assets they have out there." He also told legislators that at the meeting, citizens expressed "overwhelming opposition to annexation at this time." Thalia Dondero, County Commission chair, only reinforced the concerns of town residents, predicting that not only would taxes increase by 25 percent in the unincorporated areas, but the county would lack the money to run Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital.

The loudest opposition to merging with Las Vegas came from the town boards. By March 1977 four of them had joined with Dart Anthony's group Citizens Against Annexation to oppose Eisenberg's efforts. The town board of East Las Vegas, for instance, firmly opposed a merger. As the chair, Bernice Riggs, wrote to Commissioner Dondero, "there is…by far a majority against being annexed to the city of Las Vegas." Riggs observed that county zoning rules were "superior" to those of Las Vegas. She added that "consolidation will not eliminate so-called duplication of services because [county commissioners] still have responsibility of everything outside cities, [and] as surrounding areas become populated, the situation will be right back as it is today." Some town board members resorted to humor in expressing their opposition to joining Las Vegas. In Riggs's letter to Dondero, after declaring that "we do not believe there is wisdom in a large overall government," she reported her board's suggestion to "pull the charter of the City of Las Vegas and make it an unincorporated town under county rule" to end the duplication of services. As a sop to the municipality, Riggs's town board recommended changing Clark County's name to Las Vegas County "to preserve its [the city's] name."[52]

Opposition to joining the City of Las Vegas seemed to grow as the 1977 legislative session wore on. By spring, Anthony's group had collected ten thousand signatures opposing annexation. Many also opposed the partial

annexation of some areas to Las Vegas, which the proposed law would allow, so town board spokesmen addressed that issue as well. In a mailgram to Senator Ashworth, the chairs of the town boards of East Las Vegas, Winchester, and Paradise, as well as Anthony's group, all opposed annexation to Las Vegas. They proposed an amendment to Senate Bill 503 to prevent any partial annexations. They argued that the bill should require "annexation of all the unincorporated towns" for consolidation to occur. In other words, even if Sunrise Manor's people voted Yes, Sunrise Manor should not join Las Vegas unless Paradise and Winchester voters also approved the merger. In a related argument, County Commissioner Bob Broadbent told Senator Ashworth's Select Committee of his objections "to leaving islands within the area to be annexed." He insisted that the annexed "land should all be contiguous."[53]

Another obstacle to annexation was the issue of whether some county residents would have a representative in a district that was not much larger than their county commission district. In January 1977, Eisenberg responded that in the upcoming state legislative session the City of Las Vegas would fight for more wards in the city to represent the county suburbs, but conceded there were no guarantees. Concerned about these and other problems, Broadbent opposed Senate Bill 503 and instead recommended "putting all services under one government and hopefully, providing better services at lower cost or forgetting the whole thing." Of course, Broadbent preferred that the "one government" be Clark County. But he felt that the current version of the bill was "too fragmented in coverage."[54] Mandated consolidation of services rather than the government (something many local officials had opposed at the UAC meetings in 1974) sparked some discussion. Assembly Majority Leader Danny Demers (D-Clark County) told reporters the legislature might have to opt for only "functional consolidation" of specific services like fire, parks, police, and public works, etc., rather than a wholesale merger of government. George Franklin, a former Clark County commissioner and district attorney, *Review-Journal* columnist, and political gadfly, agreed. "Everything desirable by true consolidation of governmental functions can be done now by a consolidation of government functions without a very complex, complicated, confusing consolidation of government," he said. It was clear, however, that, as Broadbent's arguments indicated, in 1977 the Clark County commissioners still rejected annexation but were willing to consider some consolidation of the two governments—with the county retaining control of the Metropolitan Police Department and perhaps acquiring authority over other services as well.[55]

To be sure, the unincorporated town boards preferred that their areas remain in the county to enjoy not only lower taxes but less restrictive zoning laws as well. As Pat Cassedy of the East Las Vegas Town Board warned his constituents, "the city has more laws than the county, and their ordinances are more restrictive." Other critics observed that in Las Vegas residents even needed a license for their cats and that ranch owners might have to sell their livestock.[56]

Then there was the issue of the Las Vegas franchise tax on utilities. In 1969 the City of Las Vegas passed an ordinance placing a 5 percent "franchise tax on utility payments including power, gas, and phone bills and any private company selling water except the Las Vegas Valley Water District." The charges added up. One writer explained that "the extra tax tacked onto utility bills of the city but not county residents ranges from $3 to $4 per week for the average homeowner to many thousands of dollars for the hotel-casinos." Government and industries were exempt. But this did not include the casino hotels on Fremont Street because, as more than one critic noted, the City of Las Vegas did not consider the "resort industry" an industry. But as the *Las Vegas Sun* reported, "last February [1976], with proposed consolidation of Las Vegas and Clark County running into big trouble, the city fathers were considering dropping the franchise tax." The 1975 act, overturned by the Supreme Court, had prohibited the expanded City of Las Vegas from charging annexed residents a utility tax higher than the county, and lawmakers in 1977 were willing to reinstate that provision, as were city commissioners. In September 1976, City Commissioner Ron Lurie undoubtedly pleased county residents by predicting that Las Vegas would repeal its utility franchise-tax surcharge if annexation occurred. But Lurie noted that the study committee, chaired by City Commissioner Myron Leavitt, had already drafted a proposal to end it, and Lurie predicted: "the recommendation will be passed when the city can broaden its tax base."[57]

Despite the city's concessions, many people remained unconvinced that unification was a good idea. One opponent in the state legislature, Assemblyman Bob Price (D-Clark County), a North Las Vegan, objected to being constantly characterized as an "obstructionist" when it was clear that consolidation would not save money and county voters opposed it. Indeed, he reiterated his position that "the whole consolidation is caused by the city wanting $8-10 million [in tax revenue] generated by the Strip." Assemblyman Demers voiced his concerns for residents north and west of Las Vegas who lack "many services, such as sewers, gutters, street lights, etc., but who traditionally oppose annexation, especially if it means a tax raise of $400-$600 per resident." He suggested that "the forces of annexation offer the residents something."[58]

In response to this and similar suggestions, Dorothy Eisenberg told lawmakers that her group supported legislation to change the tax formula so that, under annexation, there would be sufficient funds to run Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital. She also noted that there would be no increase in property taxes because residents in the City of Las Vegas, like those in Paradise, Winchester, Sunrise Manor, and East Las Vegas already paid the maximum rate of property tax ($5 per $100 of assessed valuation) allowed by the Nevada Constitution. County commissioners had just raised Spring Valley's tax rate to build new fire stations, but she conceded that Spring Valley and Grandview residents would all go to the $5 rate if annexation to Las Vegas

occurred. So, residents in those edge areas had good reason to vote No. And, as noted earlier, some county residents who kept livestock (primarily those with ranchettes) worried that stricter city zoning laws would force them to sell their animals.[59] But city commissioners promised to be flexible on the zoning issue. Supporters of a merger continued to emphasize the idea that efficiency and cost savings outweighed these other concerns.

At the state level, Senator Ashworth of Las Vegas favored consolidation by vote of the people, but if annexation failed, he insisted that "something has to be done to try to save future expenses on duplication of services in Clark County."[60] At the same time, Henderson's Jim Gibson was determined to draft, for endorsement by the full legislature, a bill that would require a vote of both city *and* affected county residents (who, most pundits felt, would vote No). He nevertheless applied some pressure to the City of Las Vegas, giving it just two days to draft a plan describing how it would provide services for the unincorporated townships it sought to acquire.

Las Vegas submitted its plan, and in the waning weeks of the session the legislature passed Senate Bill 503, which Governor O'Callaghan signed. In its final version, the bill allowed Las Vegas to annex Paradise, Winchester, East Las Vegas, and Sunrise Manor if voters in both the city and those parts of the county agreed. The final bill controlled the election's rules, creating three groups: Area A, the City of Las Vegas; Area B, Paradise and Winchester, whose votes would be counted collectively; and Area C, East Las Vegas and Sunrise Manor, whose votes for annexation would be counted individually. According to the bill, voters in Area A *and* Area B had to agree to annexation before Paradise and Winchester could join Las Vegas. If East Las Vegas voters agreed to join the city, then that town would do so, and the same rule applied to Sunrise Manor. It was even possible for one to join and not the other, but the main point was that voters in East Las Vegas and Sunrise Manor played no role in determining what happened in Paradise and Winchester. Small pockets of population outside the four townships could also be annexed if Paradise and Winchester's collective vote favored annexation. The bill also allowed Las Vegas to expand from four to eight wards with each new ward represented by a city commissioner. Finally, state legislators inserted Section 18, a moratorium (in counties with more than 200,000 people) on any annexations of land using traditional city charter methods unless the land was contiguous to that city and all property owners on the tract signed the petition. The bill faced little opposition. Only three senators voted against the bill: Lee Walker, Gene Echols (a declared candidate for mayor of North Las Vegas), and Margie Foote (D-Washoe County), a suburban Reno-area senator possibly worried about the future implications of the Senate Bill 503 for her district.[61]

In the intervening months before the election, all sides pressed their cases with the public. Finally, on September 12, 1978, local voters went to the polls in Nevada's primary election to cast their ballots on Question 1, the annexation

issue. Las Vegas residents approved the idea, 17,676 to10,043 (63.8 percent to 36.2 percent). However, in Clark County's affected areas, the measure lost overwhelmingly, 18,196 (65.2 percent) to 9,703 (34.8 percent), as well as individually in Paradise, Winchester, East Las Vegas, and Sunrise Manor.[62]

Reactions to the defeat were mixed among annexation supporters. While Mark Smith of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce vowed to fight on in the 1979 legislature, Bill Briare, by then finishing his first term as mayor of Las Vegas, was less enthusiastic, telling the *Las Vegas Sun*, "The question [annexation] has been settled, and I just hate to see the next legislature getting bogged down in it again." Las Vegas City Commissioner Paul Christensen was less restrained. He declared that his concern was not whether Clark County became part of the city, but rather "to see that the city does not become part of the county." Indeed, Christensen emphasized Clark County's imperial designs. "As far as I'm concerned the county has not deviated from its plan to become the supreme power of the valley." Of course, in the spirit of community, Christensen, as did other city commissioners, agreed that he would cooperate with his county counterparts in trying to govern the urban area effectively, but then added that "it's hard to cooperate with the robber after he's taken everything." He then remarked somewhat bitterly, "We're the only city in the country that is without a police department and without water and sanitation."[63] It is an irony that Christensen later became a Clark County commissioner and in the 1990s occasionally sparred with his cousin, Matthew Callister, a Las Vegas city councilman, over various city-county conflicts.

The county residents' vote in the 1978 election should have ended the matter in the state legislature. But as the upcoming 1979 session of the legislature appeared ready once again to consider annexation, Fred Welden, in a letter to Senator Ashworth, reminded him that voters in the unincorporated towns had just rejected joining Las Vegas. It helped that lawmakers not representing the city also considered the matter a dead issue for the time being. In the 1979 session, Assemblyman Mike Fitzpatrick (R-Clark County), whose District 12 straddled the city/county border, submitted a bill at Dart Anthony's request to allow voters in the unincorporated towns to vote on any future annexation sponsored by the state legislature. But his bill died in the Assembly Government Affairs Committee chaired by Joseph Dini (D-Yerington), who later told Fitzpatrick: "We have no time for this"—a clear indication that legislative interest in the Las Vegas annexation/consolidation was over for the time being.[64]

Las Vegas community leaders, including politicians and business figures, sporadically advocated the city's annexation of the unincorporated towns again in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, because the new and old middle-class residents' flight to the suburbs, further intensified by the Strip's explosive growth, had eroded the city's tax base and increasingly limited downtown casino revenues. By 1987, Mark Smith, president of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, favored a Las Vegas/Clark County consolidation, having an

eleven-member city council (some of whose members would have districts smaller than the current Clark County commission districts), but he had finally given up on convincing Henderson, North Las Vegas, and Boulder City to go along. In response, opponents once again attacked the increased-efficiency argument that Smith and other businessmen made to justify a merger of city and county services. In 1989, even though many reports estimated $3 million a year or more in cost savings if consolidation proceeded, some local government officials predicted that merging some departments "might create hardships for builders and residents who may experience longer waiting periods for government approval of projects." But business and the Chamber of Commerce, always influential voices in local politics, were determined that streamlining of government should occur. Indeed, many prominent business executives persisted in their desire to see the governments merge. As Peter Thomas, president of Valley Bank, told the *Las Vegas Sun* in 1987: "It's never going to get any easier [to consolidate] than right now because of the area's tremendous growth over the past several years. It's going to get tougher and tougher."[65] The valley's explosive growth during the 1980s filled in many of the desert areas that had isolated Henderson, North Las Vegas, and the Strip suburbs from the City of Las Vegas. Thousands of new residents in the modern subdivisions being constructed near the Strip and farther out had widened the county's tax base and given commissioners even more reason to fight to hold onto the unincorporated towns. For Christensen, Dondero, and other county commissioners, nothing had changed since the 1970s when, with the expert help of Commissioner Broadbent, the county had fended off the determined efforts of Mayor Briare and others.

In the twenty-first century, when Las Vegas's popular Mayor Oscar Goodman again called for consolidation of services, using the declining revenues of the 2008-2010 "Great Recession" as a new reason for streamlining government, the neighboring cities, the county, and the unincorporated towns, pushed by the 2009 state legislature,[66] agreed to re-examine the issue of consolidating *some* services. But there was little sentiment in the suburbs for much more and certainly not for joining the city. This was occurring at a time when the Las Vegas area's nearly three-decade spurt in population growth had put almost two million people in the valley and virtually eliminated the desert open spaces between the built-up areas. But thirty-five years of anti-consolidation political sentiment, along with fifty years of resident parochial loyalties in Henderson, North Las Vegas, Boulder City, and the unincorporated townships, would, despite the budget strains occasioned by the "Great Recession," probably limit this state-mandated effort to the consolidation of only a few services, if that. The arguments in 2009 were almost the same as those in the 1970s: The valley's urban areas have common interests; there was a costly duplication of services; city and county ordinances would be more uniform; zoning and planning would be more coordinated; and the leading contention of business that one stable, local government would be a key to economic and social progress.

Yet, in 2009, many of the old questions were still there. Because of growth, the Metropolitan Police Department had not yet demonstrated enough cost savings or necessarily improved coverage to everyone's satisfaction. These were the same concerns that helped derail a metropolitan fire department in 1977. In addition, Clark County had adopted a "comprehensive plan" for valley development in the mid 1980s, and there was no guarantee that consolidating public works, buildings, parks, fire services, and recreation would save enough money to justify the controversial consolidation of government. Still, business groups pointed out again in the 1980s that buying one city business license to operate a valleywide company would eliminate wasteful duplication. And having one zoning ordinance pertaining to casinos in residential neighborhoods (something that Clark County and North Las Vegas allowed, but Las Vegas did not) would be more efficient.

But as the *Las Vegas Sun*'s reporter George McCabe noted, County Manager Pat Shalmy was correct in asserting that throughout the 1980s, "there have been no indications at all, at least in the unincorporated areas, that consolidation is something that people in those areas want."[67] In the end, county lobbyists and others successfully blocked Las Vegas mayors Ron Lurie (1987-91) and Jan Laverty Jones (1991-99) from once again putting the question to a referendum vote. And city leaders groaned in the 1990s as county commissioners began ringing the valley with a locally financed beltway that served mostly the Strip suburbs and Henderson before progressing slowly toward the southwest, where it spawned dozens of new subdivisions in county-controlled Southern Highlands while leaving rapidly urbanizing nodes in Summerlin, Centennial Hills and other city-controlled places waiting for the road to arrive, although it finally did after more than a decade.

From the 1960s to the 1990s, city officials and elements of the business community optimistically worked to expand the borders of Las Vegas for what they considered good business reasons. But in every decade parochial forces worked against them, as suburban groups saw no reason to give up their own government and join Las Vegas. In 1894, when the people of Brooklyn, then America's fourth largest city, voted to consolidate with New York, there were many who never wanted to join that city. But they had to. Residents of Brooklyn and Queens, commuter suburbs of Manhattan, needed another bridge across the East River to end daily bottlenecks at the Brooklyn Bridge and the East River's crowded ferry terminals. In addition, Brooklyn's growing populations bordering the saltwater ocean were draining fresh water supplies in local wells. Brooklyn was therefore desperate for access to Croton River water, whose aqueduct New York City controlled. So, Brooklyn joined New York, thereby allowing that city to greatly expand its tax base and population.[68] This also enabled New York to fend off Chicago's efforts to become America's largest city and then use that crown, along with its respected Grain Futures Exchange, to lure the New York Stock Exchange away from Wall Street and thus become

America's new financial center as well. In Massachusetts earlier, residents of Roxbury (in 1867) and Dorchester (in 1869) had agreed to annexation by Boston partly to gain access to that city's water and sewer systems. Most of the suburban towns around Philadelphia had joined their central city in 1854 to be protected by the city's police department after a wave of anti-Catholic rioting, which threatened public safety, property, and commerce. Offers of better schools and water and sewer systems helped St. Louis in 1876 to annex all of the then remaining areas that today lie within its city limits, and in 1889 the same enticements helped Chicago take an additional 125 square miles of suburban lands. In later years, Denver, San Francisco, Nashville, and Louisville, like New York, also merged with their counties—with the central city usually taking over metropolitan services.[69]

These trends extended into the Southwest. From the postwar decades into the 1980s, other southwestern cities, including Phoenix (which was virtually ringed by incorporated cities), Tucson, Albuquerque, and especially San Antonio, were annexing large chunks of developing lands along their peripheries. Las Vegas mayors Ernie Cragin (1931-35 and 1943-51), C. D. Baker (1951-59), Oran Gragson (1959-75), and Bill Briare (1975-87) often dreamed of similar annexations. But they ran into a state-imposed moratorium and fierce opposition from its county and neighboring cities. Nevertheless, as the experiences of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and the other cities demonstrate, Las Vegas's determination to control the government of the metropolitan area it helped create had ample precedent in American history.

But Las Vegas had nothing significant to give Boulder City, Henderson, North Las Vegas, and the unincorporated towns nearby. Nationally, annexations had slowed by the 1930s, thanks to the Great Depression, unfavorable court decisions, increased suburban representation in state legislatures, and the emergence of special-service districts. The latter two factors plagued Las Vegas's efforts to capture control of its metropolitan area. Special-service districts were particularly troublesome. Created in 1947, the Las Vegas Valley Water District provided Lake Mead water valleywide, and by statute was controlled by Clark County's commissioners. The Clark County School District, established by state law in 1955, provided educational services and funded school construction in the county and in the cities. So, aside from the use of its sewage treatment plant, Las Vegas could offer its suburbs little more than the promise to save money by ending the duplication of services and being more efficient.

Whatever arguments the different sides may have raised to promote or block the annexation/consolidation process, in the 1970s and 1980s the motive was less (at that time) about efficiency and cost savings because, as the evidence showed, little savings could really be demonstrated. For the City of Las Vegas it was about widening its tax base, finally capturing the Strip, and generating more revenue. For county commissioners it was about maintaining

their ever-increasing power to control airports, water, the Strip's burgeoning tax revenue, and other functions. For residents in the unincorporated towns it was about keeping their taxes lower than in the central city. And for the people of Henderson, North Las Vegas, and Boulder City, it was about pride in maintaining their small-town identities and self-government. After all, Boulder City had existed since 1931. Henderson officially became a city in 1953, although it had begun as a town site in 1940-41. North Las Vegas, though formally incorporated in 1946 and again in 1952, had started in 1917. These valley residents were accustomed to being separate from Las Vegas, with autonomous governments that provided municipal services just for them. They controlled their mayors and city councils and could drive them from office whenever they failed to meet the needs of their communities. A similar feeling pervaded the unincorporated towns as well. By the 1970s, the Las Vegas metropolitan area had been a politically fragmented community for almost half a century, and this tradition of parochialism was not easily broken.

Notes

[1]*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (6 April 1946).

[2]*Statutes of the State of Nevada Passed at the Forty-Fifth Session of the Legislature, 1951*, 285, 457.

[3]Jack Sheehan, *Quiet Kingmaker of Las Vegas: E. Parry Thomas* (Las Vegas: Stephens Press, 2009), 69.

[4]For brief coverage of the Strip area's opposition to annexation in the 1940s, see Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 2nd ed. (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press), 69.

[5]For a brief discussion of Mayor Cragin's so-called political machine in the 1930s, see Eugene P. Moehring, "Public Works and the New Deal in Las Vegas, 1933-1940," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 24:2 (Summer 1981), 123-26.

[6]*Resort City in the Sunbelt*, 70-71.

[7]*Las Vegas Sun* (3 January 1977).

[8]*Journal of the Senate, Fifty-Eighth Session, 1975*, 1119-22.

[9]See Public Administration Service, "Local Government in Clark County, Nevada" (Chicago, 1968), 77-81, for the consultants' options and "preferred solution."

[10]*Las Vegas Sun* (3 January 1977). See Charles Zobell's column in particular.

[11]*Journal of the Senate, Fifty-Fifth Session, 1968-69*, 960.

[12]*Journal of the Senate, Fifty-Seventh Session, 1973*, 1050-53.

[13]*Ibid.*

[14]*Los Angeles Times* (16 September 1973).

[15]Las Vegas/Clark County Urban Action Committee Collection (hereafter cited as LV/CC UAC Collection) Box 1, Special Collections, Lied Library, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

[16]*Ibid.* See Task Force I folder.

[17]*LV/CC UAC Collection*, Task Force II folder.

[18]*Ibid*.

[19]*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (23 July 1977).

[20]*LV/CC UAC Collection*, Task Force II folder.

[21]Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1219-33.

[22]*LV/CC UAC Collection*, Task Force II folder; see Minutes of 15 January 1974 meeting.

[23]*LV/CC UAC Collection,* see Arleigh B. West folder.

[24]*Ibid.*

[25]*Ibid.*

[26]*LV/CC UAC Collection,* Task Force II folder.

[27]*LV/CC UAC Collection,* Task Force II folder; see Minority Report.

[28]Ibid.

[29]*LV/CC UAC Collection*, Task Force IV folder; see Commissioner Broadbent's letter dated 17 October 1973.

[30]*LV/CC UAC Collection*, Task Force V folder; see the Final Report endorsing annexation of the valley's unincorporated townships by the City of Las Vegas as well as recommendations affecting Clark County.

[31]*Journal of the Senate, Fifty-Eighth Session, 1975*, 1119-22.

[32]See *Statutes of Nevada, 1964-1965, Vol. 1*, 66-67, for the 1965 moratorium, and *Journal of the Senate, Fifty-Eighth Session, 1975*, 1121, for the moratorium's renewal.

[33]*Journal of the Senate, Fifty-Eighth Session, 1975*, 1121-22.

[34]*Ibid.*

[35]See *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (8 February 1977) for an informative review of Eisenberg's efforts as well as other pertinent events.

[36]See Andrew Grose, "Las Vegas-Clark County Consolidation: A Unique Event in Search of a Theory," *Nevada Public Affairs Review,* 14:4 in Las Vegas/Clark County Consolidation Collection (hereafter cited as LV/CC Consolidation Collection), Box 1, Special Collections, Lied Library, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; *Las Vegas Review-Journa*l, (9 July 1975).

[37]*Las Vegas Sun*, (3 January 1977).

[38]*Ibid.* (3 August 1976).

[39]*Ibid.* (22 September 1976).

[40]For a good review of events in the 1970s, including city charter requirements for annexation, see *Las Vegas Sun* (29 October 1987); *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (27 March 1977).

[41]See *LV/CC Consolidation Collection*, Box 1, Staff Report for Senator Gibson dated 28 April 1977.

[42]See the brochure in *LV/CC Consolidation Collection*, Box 1.

[43]*Ibid.* See the Minutes for the public hearing regarding SB 503 dated 20 April 1977, 34 in Box 1.

[44]*Ibid.*

[45]Cynthia Ortiz Collection (Cited hereafter as Ortiz Collection), at Special Collections, Lied Library, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Folder 3; See *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (5 January 1977).

[46]*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (8 February 1977).

[47]*Las Vegas Sun* (29 October 1987).

[48]*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (7 January 1977).

[49]*Ibid.* (10 January 1977).

[50]*Ibid.* (6 January 1977).

[51]See Minutes for the public hearing on SB 503 dated 20 April 1977, 34 in Box 1.

[52]*LV/CC Consolidation Collection*, Box 1; see the Staff Report attached to the memorandum addressed to Senator Gibson dated 28 April 1977.

[53]*LV/CC Consolidation Collection*, Box 1, Minutes of a joint public meeting of the Clark County Legislative Delegation and the Senate Government Affairs Committee, 4 April 1977, pp. 5-6.

[54]*Ibid.* For Eisenberg's comments, see Ortiz Collection, Folder 3. For an informative explanation of the ward issue, see *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (5 January 1977).

[55]*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (6 January 1977).

[56]Ortiz Collection, Folder 3. For more on the context of Cassedy's remarks, see *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (5 January 1977).

[57]*Las Vegas Sun* (21 September 1976, 22 September 1976).

[58]*LV/CC Consolidation Collection,* Box 1, Minutes of a joint meeting of the Clark County Legislative Delegation and the Senate Government Affairs Committee, 4 April 1977, pp. 4, 6.

[59]*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (27 March 1977).

[60]*Ibid.* (12 January 1977).

[61]*Journal of the Senate, Fifty-Ninth Session, 1977,* 973-94. For the law itself, see *Statutes of Nevada, Fifty-Ninth Session,1977*, 1282-96.

[62]*Las Vegas Sun* (14 September 1978).

[63]*Ibid.*

[64]Interview by author with former assemblyman and Government Affairs Committee member Michael T. Fitzpatrick, 10 June 2009.

[65]*Las Vegas Sun* (30 October 1989, 29 October 1987).

[66]*Ibid.* (24 May 2009). The 2009 legislature, pressured by declining local revenues in most urban areas, charged Nevada's cities and counties with considering ways that the expensive duplication of some services (e.g. issuing business licenses) might be merged. *Las Vegas Review-Journa*l (31 August 2009).

[67]See McCabe's column on the arguments opposing annexation in the *Las Vegas Sun* (29 October 1987).

[68]Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham: History of New York City to 1898,* 1219-35. For more on the issues affecting the 1894 referendum leading to the 1898 merger with Brooklyn, see Eugene P. Moehring, *Public Works and the Patterns of Urban Real Estate Growth in Manhattan, 1835-1894* (New York: Arno Press, 1981), 339-55.

[69]Joel Schwartz, "Evolution of the Suburbs," 496; Richard C. Wade, "American Cities are (Mostly) Better Than Ever," 561-62 in *American Urban History: An Interpretive Reader with Commentaries*, 3d ed., Alexander B. Callow, Jr., ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

Noel Coward Wows 'Em in Café Town"
The Impact of Noel Coward's 1955 Performance at the Desert Inn

Larry Gragg

Noel Coward chose a blue dinner jacket with a red carnation for his opening night in the Painted Desert Room of the Desert Inn on June 7, 1955. To a *New York Times* reporter, Coward was not an impressive figure. "His hair is thinning, his shoulders are slightly hunched, his voice is a little nasal, his ears are large and his walk is toed-out."[1] He was so unlike the headliners performing at the other Las Vegas hotels during his run at the Desert Inn—Tony Martin, Dick Haymes, Kay Starr, Xavier Cugat, Abbe Lane, Mickey Rooney, Kitty Kallen, Gordon MacRae, Sammy Davis, Jr., Martha Raye, Peter Lind Hayes, and Mary Healy. Yet the celebrity-filled showroom eagerly awaited the performance by this fifty-five-year-old man who had come to symbolize English sophistication. Those up close were shocked to note that the world-renowned playwright and veteran actor and singer was visibly anxious. The actress Lauren Bacall recalled, "I shall never forget watching Noel Coward walk on that stage. He was holding a mike and—I couldn't believe it—he was shaking with nerves. After all his years and years of experience and accomplishment, he was still nervous."[2] Coward did not know what to expect from a Las Vegas crowd. He had visited the city in late 1954 and, in his diary, described the tourists who so eagerly gambled in the casinos as "earnest morons flinging their money down the drain." Would, he

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wondered, "that sort of American public understand me?"[3] All doubts swiftly vanished in the opening moments of his performance. Coward began with a medley of his most popular tunes and the crowd applauded wildly throughout his forty-five-minute show. At the conclusion, he told the audience, "Dear ladies and gentlemen, thank you for giving me such a wonderful welcome. I'm terribly touched by the way you received me."[4] The *Los Angeles Times* typified the national press response to Coward's opening, hailing his appearance as "one of the greatest triumphs ever won by an entertainer" in Las Vegas.[5] His successful month-long engagement at the Desert Inn represented a great rebirth for Coward's flagging career.

More important, the appearance of this representative of Old World charm in Las Vegas reflected the great financial challenge facing a rapidly growing resort city. In the two months prior to Coward's opening, three new properties—the Royal Nevada, Riviera, and Dunes—opened; the Hotel Last Frontier completed a major renovation and reopened as the New Frontier; and the Moulin Rouge opened off the Strip in West Las Vegas. There were so many new hotel-casinos being built in the mid 1950s that impresarios at the new establishments had great difficulty finding headliners with sufficient drawing power to bring in customers. This led to the gamble on the "ultra-English" Coward to fill the showroom at the Desert Inn.[6]

Born just outside London in 1899, Coward grew up in a modest middle-class family. His father was a piano salesman and his mother ran a London boarding house. Coward had little formal education because his mother, Violet, who loved the theater, pushed him to perform. Coward made his first professional stage appearance in 1911 and joined the cast of the popular London production of *Peter Pan* two years later. Precocious and ambitious, Coward had, by 1917, co-authored a couple of short plays, a few songs, some short stories, and a novel. Besides appearing in several plays, he also had a brief role in D. W. Griffith's *Hearts of the World*, a film about the German occupation of a French village. While performing in West End productions, Coward honed his writing skills. His 1920 play *I'll Leave It to You* was his first to reach a London stage. Coward enjoyed enormous success throughout the decade of the 1920s with hits such as *Fallen Angels*, *The Vortex*, *Easy Virtue*, and *Bitter Sweet*. He capped this remarkable run with *Private Lives* and *Cavalcade* in the early 1930s. Most of his plays, which were successful on Broadway and in Berlin and Paris as well as on the West End, had only the slightest of plots. Instead, they were largely comedies of manners about a flippant, narcissistic generation often devoid of principle. They were about witty and attractive self-absorbed people who were, in turns, charming and outrageous. The central characters tended to "talk charmingly, endlessly, about themselves." To be sure, there were exceptions. *The Vortex*, his first big hit, dealt with a young man's relationship with an older woman and her son's addiction to cocaine. *Cavalcade* was an epic tale of important events in English history—the Boer War, the death of Queen Victoria, the sinking of

the *Titanic*, and the Great War—as seen through the lives of the upper class and their servants. On balance, however, Coward's work dealt with what he saw as the decadent post-war generation.[7]

Besides his plays, Coward wrote a number of popular songs—the most famous of which was "Mad Dogs and Englishmen"—musical revues, an autobiography, and even screen titles for some silent films. His plays often became feature films. The film version of *Cavalcade* even won the Academy Award for best picture in 1933. By 1931, according to his biographer Philip Hoare, Coward had become "the world's highest-paid writer."[8] Indeed, by then, Coward had reached the pinnacle of success as a dramatist, performer, and personality who regularly mixed with the aristocracy and the royal family. When the conflict in Europe began, Coward, drawing upon his celebrity, was determined to make a contribution and agreed to establish a propaganda office in Paris in 1939. Coward accomplished little there and accepted a government assignment to travel to the United States to meet with leading political commentators and political leaders to learn about American public opinion on the war effort. He met with columnists such as Walter Lippmann, with United States senators, Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, former President Herbert Hoover, and twice with President Franklin Roosevelt. Coward traveled across the country attending "dinner parties, cocktail parties, lunches, and weekend parties, where he sang, spoke, and generally made himself an agreeable guest."[9] Frustrated with a mission that was not entirely clear and persuaded that he was making little headway in influencing American public opinion, Coward opted in 1941 to go to Australia and New Zealand, where he gave numerous concerts for the Red Cross and war charities. This was the start of an effort that lasted throughout the war to entertain troops and raise funds for charitable organizations. His concert tours took him to the Middle East, South Africa, the West Indies, India, and Ceylon. Coward's most significant contribution to the war effort was to produce, co-direct, and star in a pro-war film called *In Which We Serve* in 1942. Popular with critics and audiences alike, the film led to an Academy Award for Coward for "outstanding production achievement."[10]

After World War II, however, Coward's plays were largely commercial failures. The critics concluded "that he and his work were outdated."[11] These setbacks led Coward to "re-invent" himself as a cabaret singer at the Café de Paris in London, opening there in October 1951. His act, which he performed for four successful seasons, was a medley of his most-popular songs. Yet his lavish spending on art, automobiles, and property in England and Jamaica, along with high post-war British taxation, left Coward in debt by the early 1950s. Indeed, in 1954, he faced a bank overdraft of more than $60,000.[12]

Coward's financial salvation came from a visit with a fifty-eight-year-old theatrical agent named Joe Glaser. An accountant for Chicago nightclubs in the 1920s and the founder of Associated Booking Corporation, Glaser was known for representing African-American entertainers such as Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday, as well as professional boxers.[13] In November 1954, Glaser

flew to London to offer Coward a deal to appear in Las Vegas. Coward liked Glaser from the outset because he had taken "the trouble to fly over to London to see me at the Café and give me a concrete offer."[14] Glaser offered Coward $35,000 per week for a three-week engagement in Las Vegas.[15] Coward said that he would accept "contingent upon" whether he approved of Las Vegas. As he wrote in his diary, "I can case the joint and decide which room I prefer to appear in, if any." Actually, Glaser had already decided to seek a contract with the Desert Inn. He was not confident that Coward could fill a large showroom. Indeed, Coward noted in his diary that Glaser watched him perform at the Café de Paris and "was obviously bewildered as to why the audience liked it so much."[16] Doubting that the English performer would attract the numbers of the typical "Vegas performer," Glaser opted for the Desert Inn's Painted Desert Room, which had a capacity of less than four hundred. Guessing that Coward could attract about five hundred patrons for each performance, the smaller showroom would produce lines of people trying to get in, generating more hype for his client.[17]

Wilbur Clark, the Desert Inn's front man, knew nothing about the English performer. He asked one of Coward's associates during the opening night performance, "Who is this guy? You must tell me more about him."[18] Clark may not have known about him, but most in America were aware of the Coward persona. He had carefully crafted an image, an impression of himself as the quintessential twentieth-century sophisticated Englishman. The silk dressing gown, the ubiquitous cigarette holder in his right hand, his wit and charm were all part of the public Coward. The drama critic John Lahr has even argued, "Coward's plays and songs were primarily vehicles to launch his elegant persona on the world. In his clipped, bright, confident style, Coward irresistibly combined reserve and high camp."[19] There is no mistaking his desire to be fashionable, his embrace of associating with high social circles, and his undeniable self-promotion. From the 1920s on, Coward had developed a wide circle of friends in the entertainment world, people who admired his talent and enjoyed his flippant attitude, even his playing the role of the dilettante. From primarily theatrical performers such as Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontaine, Gertrude Lawrence, Laurence Olivier, and John Gielgud to Hollywood stars Fred Astaire, Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, Harpo Marx, Gloria Swanson, Tallulah Bankhead, and Cary Grant, Coward was acquainted with stars of both the theater and movies on both sides of the Atlantic. Joe Glaser, who saw Coward perform before an appreciative audience at the Café de Paris in London, may well have hoped that such a performer and personality would attract the Hollywood crowd to the Desert Inn in summer 1955. Likely more important was Glaser's sense that Coward's stature as an internationally known entertainment figure could fill the Painted Desert Room. Historian Robert Calder, for example, argues that by 1940 Coward was already "well known in America as a multitalented everyman of the theatre: playwright, actor, singer,

dancer, director, producer, and composer."[20] With his characteristic hubris, Coward sensed that Glaser believed that he had landed a superstar. In his diary, Coward noted in December 1954 that his agent was "over the moon with delight at having got me under his wing. My name is big prestige stuff."[21]

Because the offer was so lucrative at a time that he was in desperate financial straits, Coward had concluded that he would accept Glaser's offer, whether or not he liked the gambling center. Still, he wanted to see Las Vegas before performing there. So, in December 1954, Glaser accompanied him on a reconnaissance trip. Coward encountered "a fabulous, extraordinary madhouse." He enjoyed the desert, the "pink and purple mountains on the horizon," the luxurious hotels, the neon lights, and the frenetic action all about. "The sound is fascinating," he wrote, "a steady hum of conversation against a background of rhumba music and the noise of the fruit machines, the clink of silver dollars, quarters and nickels, and the subdued shouts of the croupiers." He approved of the showrooms he visited, all of which had "expert lighting and sound and cheerful and appreciative audiences." Assuming that the "money part" of the deal remained satisfactory, Coward agreed to appear in Las Vegas.[22]

Coward spent most of the next several months at his Jamaica retreat, Blue Harbour, although there were trips to New York and Paris. He spent most of his time working on a new play, a novel, and polishing his "lyrics for Las Vegas."[23] He also signed a contract with CBS that would net him about $200,000 to appear in a special with the popular singer Mary Martin and to televise two of his plays—*Blithe Spirit and This Happy Breed*.[24] The final negotiations with the Desert Inn's entertainment director, Frank Sennes, resulted in an agreement that Coward would perform two shows a night for four weeks beginning on June 7, 1955, for $30,000 per week. He also signed an agreement with Columbia Records for a "live" album of his performance at the Painted Desert Room.[25] Coward hoped these lucrative contracts would help him "feel secure, or at least calm, about the inroads of old age." Indeed, he mused in his diary that after working hard all his life he intended to live out his "days in as much comfort, peace and luxury as I can get."[26]

In preparation for the Las Vegas engagement Coward cut back on both his drinking and his smoking. A greater concern was the challenge of singing in fifty-six shows in a month. He had had problems with his voice during his Café de Paris performances.[27] His good friend Marlene Dietrich, who had performed in Las Vegas two years earlier, offered little solace when she warned him that "everyone's voice conked out in Vegas on account of the dryness."[28] Coward followed Mary Martin's recommendation and went to the New York voice coach Alfred Dixon, who provided breathing exercises requiring him "to make the O-est O in the world with my mouth and then roar like a bull moose." While the exercise put him splendid voice, it frightened "everybody dreadfully."[29]

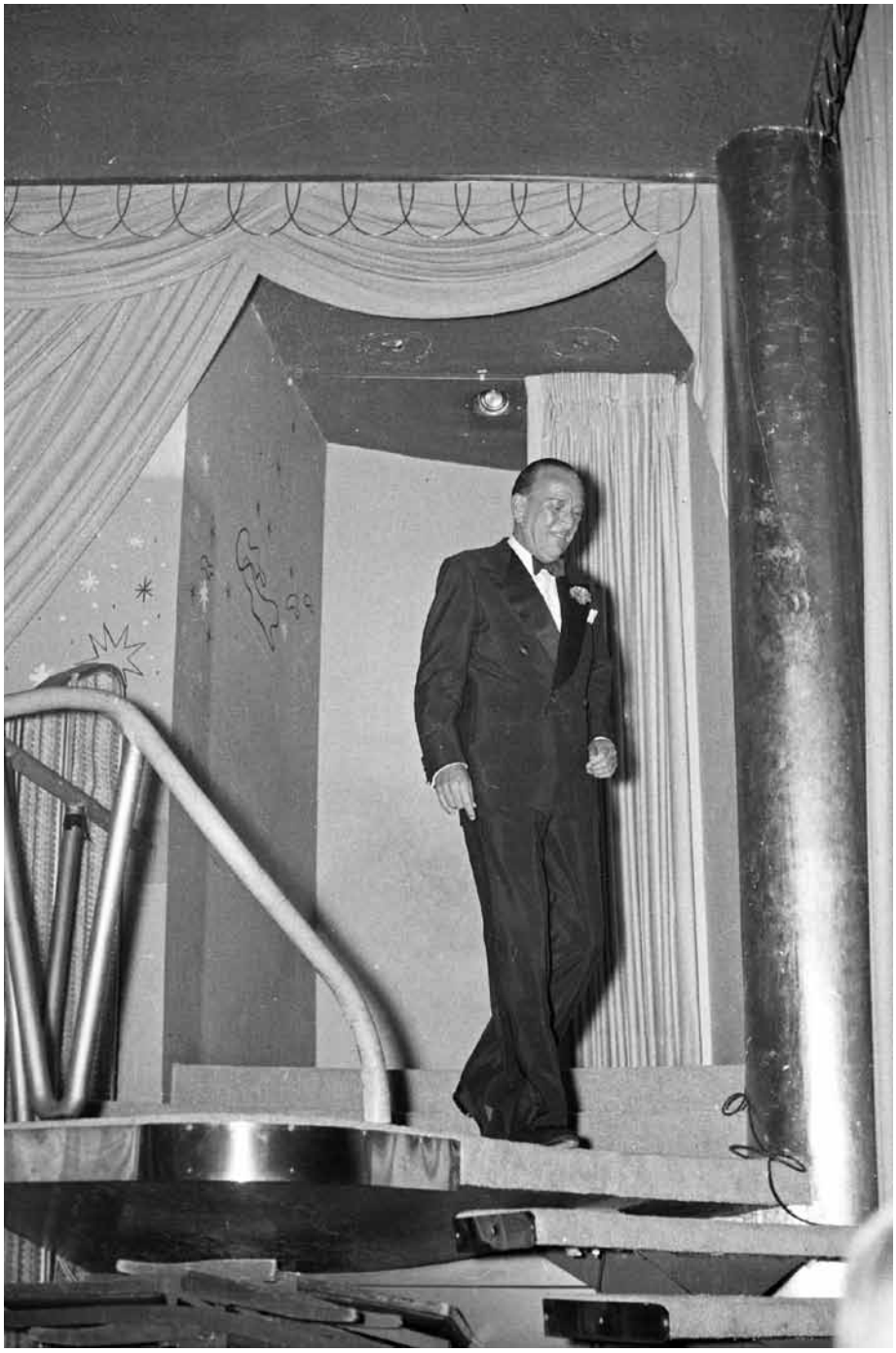
Coward's preparations hit a real snag when his longtime piano accompanist, Norman Hackworth, failed to secure a work permit in the United States.

Again, Dietrich came to Coward's rescue. She recommended Peter Matz, who arranged her music.[30] Coward was immediately delighted with the talented twenty-six-year-old pianist and arranger. The two rehearsed for three weeks in Los Angeles in preparation for the opening. Matz arranged all of Coward's songs for the Carlton Hayes orchestra at the Desert Inn. Coward confided in his diary, "the orchestral arrangements and variations are incredible—vital and imaginative." He concluded that Matz knew "more about the range of various instruments and the potentialities of different combinations than anyone" he had ever encountered in England.[31]

While he rehearsed three or more hours a day, Coward cultivated Hollywood's entertainment elite by attending numerous parties in part because he enjoyed the adulation and in part because he wanted them to attend his performances. Claudette Colbert and Joseph Cotton, among others, hosted gatherings for the English star. The biggest event was at the home of the Desert Inn entertainment director Frank Sennes, who invited nearly four hundred entertainment figures including Jack Benny, Greer Garson, David Niven, Maureen O'Sullivan, Charlton Heston, Jean Simmons, Laurence Harvey, Ronald and Nancy Reagan, and Zsa Zsa Gabor. *The Los Angeles Times* described the party as "one of the biggest turnouts of celebrities for any recent Hollywood function."[32] Coward characterized the gala as "a stupendous cocktail party," a three-hour exercise in excess. "The swimming pool was filled with roses which swirled round and round, and there were four cadaverous violinists who also swirled round and round." Photographers swarmed the grounds and everyone wanted a picture with the English legend. "I was photographed 390 times," Coward claimed.[33]

Coward arrived in Las Vegas on June 1 with a film crew documenting the event. He spent the next few evenings taking in the "dinner and supper shows." Rosemary Clooney was "charming," Jane Powell "a very pretty little thing with a fine soprano with a slight gear shift," and Sammy Davis, Jr., "a rich talent and a brilliant performer" although he went on "too long." Wherever he went along the Strip, Coward found "the same pattern." There was "a gambling casino with angular shafts of light falling on to the gamblers; the perpetual noise of the slot-machines and the cries of the crap shooters; a bar lounge with a separate four- or five-piece band playing continually. The din is considerable but you get used to it."[34] During the days, he continued rehearsals with Peter Matz and the orchestra at the Desert Inn led by Carlton Hayes.

On the day of his opening, events conspired to heighten Coward's anxiety. Hayes fell ill, leaving Matz to lead the orchestra. This troubled Coward, according to his secretary, Cole Lesley, because he had never "performed without being able to catch somebody's eye—his accompanist's or the conductor's." Now, with Matz leading the orchestra, Coward would be downstage all alone.[35] Worse, in an effort to create a facsimile of a London fog on stage before his appearance, the stage crew pumped out a heavy mist that sent "diners at the front tables into paroxysms of coughing."[36]



Noel Coward opening, walking onto the stage, 1955. Photographer unknown.
(Las Vegas News Bureau)

Nonetheless, opening night was a remarkable success. In support of his appearance, the Desert Inn also booked The Szonys, a dance team, and the DeCastro Sisters, a vocal trio who had released the hit song, "Teach Me Tonight." Notably, Donn Arden choreographed two production numbers, "Poppy Seed Alley" and "So This Is London, Land of Romance." [37] Then, with a backdrop representing the Houses of Parliament, Coward "came down the steps to the strains of 'I'll See You Again.'" Coward offered twelve numbers, including a medley of his hits, the traditional Loch Lomond, and a parody of Cole Porter's "Let's Do It (Let's Fall in Love)." In the latter song, he included some special lyrics for Las Vegas and those in the audience: "Each man out there shooting crap does it," "People say all those Gabors do it," "In the desert Wilbur Clark does it," and "Even Liberace—we assume—does it." But, he got his biggest response for his signature tune, "Mad Dogs and Englishmen."

The crowd for Coward's opening featured some of the biggest stars of the entertainment world. Those in the front row were all Coward's chums. Frank Sinatra had brought most of them on a chartered plane, including David Niven, Judy Garland, Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, Joseph Cotton, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Joan Fontaine, Laurence Harvey, Jane Powell, and Coward's American literary agent, Irving "Swifty" Lazar. Rosemary Clooney, Ernie Kovacs, and Peter Lind Hayes and Mary Healy joined them.[38] They were all delighted. Ralph Pearl, the *Las Vegas Sun*'s entertainment columnist, reported Coward's performance "sent such as Bogart and Bacall, Sinatra and Garland, Niven and Mike Romanoff…into hysterics at…every grimace or snide inflection."[39]

The national press covered the auspicious opening and their accounts were uniformly enthusiastic. *Variety* proclaimed, "Las Vegas, Flipping, Shouts for More as Noel Coward Wows 'Em in Cabaret Turn." *The Los Angeles Times* reported, "Cries of 'more, more' ringing out again and again in the Desert Inn" throughout Coward's performance. *The New York Times* noted that Coward's debut prompted "a furious ratapan of applause." The syndicated columnist Dorothy Manners wrote that he was "a smash hit." Las Vegas was "mad about the boy," who represented "the quintessence of British humor and sophistication." Walter Winchell called the opening a "history-making invasion and conquest of Vegas." Winchell contended that "the Droll One's triumph among the crapshooters and slot-machines attracted more newspaper space than his numerous plays, songs and books."[40]

The local press was even more enchanted with Coward. Jack Cortez's entertainment publication *Fabulous Las Vegas* announced that "for the first time in history," Las Vegas was "privileged with an appearance of the 'great of greats.'" The *Las Vegas Sun*, in a similar vein, eagerly anticipated "this once in a lifetime entertainment event" when "a living legend" would appear at the Desert Inn.[41] Les Devore, in his *Las Vegas Review-Journal* review of the opening, wrote, "Throughout, the man who has become a legend before his time, drew tremendous hands." The "material was punchy, and entirely new to the Las Vegas scene.

Noel Coward with Jane Powell and Zsa Zsa Gabor, 1955. Photographer unknown. *(Las Vegas News Bureau)*

His stories in sing-song were rib-ticklers having overtones of delicately phrased ambiguity." Coward's "satirical humor" is what set his show apart from the typical Las Vegas offering.[42]

Those fortunate to be in the audience were amazed. "The bloody blighter," David Niven said, "did just what I imagined he would, give as great a performance as I've ever seen him give."

Peter Lind Hayes, who was performing at the Sands Hotel, told the press, "He'll do as well with his swanky friends as he will with average dice shooters from Dented Sombrero, Arizona. The man is great enough to adjust to his audience when the occasion arises." Jack Entratter, the entertainment director at the Sands, said, "Never laughed heartier. Man's a genius." The singer Jane Powell proclaimed, "I've never been so thrilled in my life. I just hung on every word."[43] After his second show, the stars flocked to his dressing room, which was "banked with flowers." The likes of Sinatra, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Bacall, Garland, and Jane Powell eagerly posed for photos with Coward. Gabor spoke for many when she gushed, "I'm short of the necessary adjectives."[44] The last

of the well wishers did not leave until four a.m., yet Coward and his secretary Cole Lesley could not sleep and an hour later a knock at the door brought the delivery of "an immense mauve teddy-bear" from Zsa Zsa Gabor. The love fest continued. Frank Sinatra took to the airwaves and told a radio audience that if they wished to know how songs "should really be sung, to hurry to the Desert Inn." Sammy Davis, Jr., performing at the New Frontier, often closed his show with an admonition to the crowd to cross the Strip and hear a true master.[45]

For Coward, his Las Vegas opening was an enormous personal triumph. After his post-war struggles with English crowds and critics who had panned his plays and his performances at the Café de Paris, Coward had found an adoring audience. In a letter to longtime secretary Lorn Loraine, he wrote, "I have never had such an ovation in my life and the whole place went raving mad." Acknowledging that he had seen the engagement as "rather a dangerous challenge," a relieved Coward reported that the opening had "turned out to be successful beyond my wildest dreams."[46] His euphoria remained unabated, as is evident from this entry in his diary a few days later, "Well, it is all over but the shouting which is still going on." "I have," he concluded, "made one of the most sensational successes of my career and to pretend that I am not absolutely delighted would be idiotic." Reviewers, audiences, and friends assured him that he was "the greatest attraction that Las Vegas has ever had." It all was a wonderful vindication after years of reading the reviews by "the English newspaper gentlemen" who claimed he "massacres" his songs when performing at the Café de Paris.[47]

Besides the "screaming rave notices…flashed round the world" after opening night, the nation's media devoted much ink to Coward's success throughout his run at the Desert Inn. *Life* magazine drove him out to the desert for a series of photos in the 118-degree heat of the Mojave, printing one with him in a dinner jacket smoking a cigarette (the epitome of "Mad Dogs and Englishmen out in the noon day sun") in their June 20 issue. *The New York Times* printed a feature article on Coward for the June 26 issue of their Sunday magazine. "In his American night club debut," the Las Vegas newsman Ed Oncken wrote in *Billboard*, "Noel Coward draws $40,000 [actually, it was less, $35,000] a week at the Desert Inn, and his cheering audiences will vow he's worth every cent of it."[48]

All the hoopla over Coward's appearance in Las Vegas momentarily distracted the national media from their questions about the gambling city's future. Throughout late 1954 and 1955, articles in newspapers and magazines openly questioned the rapid growth of Strip properties. Watching the opening of several new hotels and the expansion of older ones led many critics to conclude that developers mistakenly believed that they "could expand without limit," that the "hotel building spree" was "on thin ice," and that there would not be "enough new customers to absorb this huge new expansion."[49] An article in *Time* magazine in September 1955 raised similar questions, and the very issue of *Life* magazine featuring Coward's photo noted that room capacity was racing

Noel Coward with Frank Sinatra, 1955. Photographer unknown. *(Las Vegas News Bureau)*

ahead of the increase in the tourist trade. The magazine argued that "a shadow of doubt fell across Las Vegas, a worry that the boom it was set for had started to wilt." The article included photos of "idling croupiers" at roulette wheels, a resort hotel swimming pool with only four swimmers, and the virtually deserted lobby at the Riviera.[50] The columnist Aline Mosby even posed the question, is Las Vegas "Fizzling into Expensive Ghost Town?"[51]

A talent war complicated matters for the Strip properties. For a decade, hotel owners had understood that entertainment was essential to bring in customers. In 1946, *Billboard* noted that operators had increased talent budgets "way out of line with what owners in other areas might consider good business." The owners of the El Rancho Vegas, Hotel Last Frontier, and Hotel Biltmore were paying Sophie Tucker, Paul Winchell, Liberace, Arthur Lee Simpkins, Sally Rand, Benny Fields, and Harry Richman between $3,000 and $4,000 a week to perform in Las Vegas.[52] Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel upped the ante considerably when he began offering as much as $25,000 a week to attract top talent to his new Flamingo Hotel.[53] After the

Thunderbird opened in 1948, and the Desert Inn followed two years later, hotel entertainment directors at the five hotels concluded that there were not enough headliners for their showrooms. As *Billboard* explained in 1950, changing talent every other week, each hotel needed twenty-six "names per year," and there simply were not 130 headliners available.[54]

The bidding for headliners such as Danny Thomas, Milton Berle, Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, Red Skelton, Betty Hutton, Frankie Laine, Sammy Davis, Jr., Lena Horne, Nat King Cole, and Frank Sinatra drove salaries ever higher. By summer 1953 the *Oakland Tribune* was reporting on the "lushest price war in U.S. entertainment history," with the Sahara paying Skelton $25,000 a week, the Desert Inn paying Hutton the same, and the Sands paying Berle $35,000.[55] Salaries hit a new peak when the Riviera paid Liberace $50,000 a week as its opening act in spring 1955. Jack Entratter, the Sands entertainment director, reported in 1955, "I'm buying talent at the rate of about $1,340,000 a year." The Flamingo's publicist, Abe Schiller, lamented the trend. "By the time you pay Liberace $50,000, plus a band, a line of girls, supporting acts and small combos for the bar," he explained, "you've got a $90,000-a-week bill. And that doesn't include the cost of publicity and exploitation."[56] Schiller was correct about the rapid escalation in costs. A calculation done by the *Chicago Tribune* in February 1954 had estimated the cost of a "headliner," orchestra, dance line, opening act, "second-billed entertainer," publicity, and advertising at about $30,000 a week.[57]

There seemed to be no end to the spiraling costs of headliners. In 1955, hotels paid twice as much to entertainers as they did the previous year.[58] Several times the hotels' entertainment directors sought agreements on salary caps, but they always failed. In 1953, for example, the major hotels agreed not to bid on another property's acts and that none of them would pay more than $15,000 a week.[59] Yet the temptation to lure a major headliner away from a competitor was too powerful. The solution for the hotels with the deepest pockets was to sign major stars to long-term contracts. The Flamingo, for example, signed the popular vocalist Kay Starr to a five-year, $800,000 contract for her to perform eight weeks a year.[60]

Under these challenging conditions, entertainment directors, such as Maxine Lewis, who worked at the Hotel Last Frontier, Flamingo, and El Rancho Vegas, scrambled to find talent. She placed ads in trade papers, traveled to New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Hollywood to audition acts, and met frequently with talent agents to find new acts.[61] However, all the hotels quickly learned that their audiences wanted to see "name" stars, not new talent, so some entertainment directors had to "create" headliners. At the Sahara, Stan Irwin persuaded Broadway and Hollywood star Ray Bolger, opera singers Helen Traubel and Lauritz Melchior, flamenco dancer Jose Greco, and the actress Eleanor Parker to headline.[62] Entratter brought Maurice Chevalier to the Sands for three weeks in 1953. Pierre Cossette, a booking agent for Musical Corporation of America (MCA), also created headliners by persuading Mae West to perform at the Sahara in 1953 and Ronald Reagan to do a show at the Hotel Last Frontier the following year.[63]

Noel Coward on stage performing, 1955. Photographer unknown. *(Las Vegas News Bureau)*

Reagan, like others, had to be persuaded that he could play Las Vegas, as did Lew Wasserman, the head of MCA. His Las Vegas booking agent, Cossette, impressed by Reagan's skill at delivering compelling speeches, recommended to Wasserman that Reagan could do well in a Strip showroom. "What in God's name makes you think," Wasserman asked, "Ronald Reagan could do a nightclub act?" Cossette argued, "Vegas is dying for new ideas. Ronald Reagan can be the first nonmusical movie star to appear in Vegas!" Cossette persuaded Wasserman that Reagan could be a congenial emcee for other acts. Although Reagan initially thought the idea was "preposterous" because he could neither sing nor dance, he agreed to perform for two weeks at the Last Frontier in 1954, offering a "humorous monologue" and then introducing the other acts, including a singing group called the Continentals and some chimpanzees, because he was in "a heavy cash crunch."[64] By 1955, this approach became essential for the newer properties such as the Royal Nevada. Eddie Rio, the booking agent for the hotel, explained he looked for entertainers who had yet to perform in Las Vegas, believing there was a great "novelty value" with "stars who aren't familiar to the strip audiences." The Riviera even paid the actress Joan Crawford $10,000 to be a hostess for their grand opening.

Not all of these experiments went well. In 1955, the Dunes Hotel fired Wally Cox, who played the popular television character "Mr. Peepers," after only three shows of a scheduled four-week run when people began walking out on his show.[65] Likewise, the movie stars Jeff Chandler and Orson Welles bombed.[66] The most notable case involved Mario Lanza. The remodeled New Frontier Hotel signed the famed tenor to open its Venus Room in April 1955. He agreed to perform for two weeks for $100,000. However, on opening night, a toxic mix of anxiety, alcohol, and barbiturates caused Lanza to flee Las Vegas without singing a note.[67] All these developments made Joe Glaser's idea to sign Noel Coward a predictable one. After all, as the columnist Aline Mosby noted, "With nearly every American celebrity who can totter booked as saloon acts," Las Vegas needed to look overseas for talent.[68]

His appearance at the Desert Inn was a boon to Coward's career. Besides the money, he had become the darling of Las Vegas and the Hollywood crowd. A parade of Hollywood luminaries helped fill the Painted Desert Room throughout his four-week run. George Burns and Gracie Allen, Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone, Kay Thompson, Joseph Cotton, Jeanette MacDonald, Cole Porter, Tallulah Bankhead, Van Johnson, and Ethel Merman made it to the show. Many of the celebrities stayed for a few days, spending a great deal of money. David Niven recollected several evenings of seeing the headliners and gambling "endlessly."[69] When Coward fell ill with the flu, Gordon and Sheila MacRae covered his first showtime, and Peter Lind Hayes and his wife, Mary Healy, filled in for the second show. Many years later, Hayes recalled that Coward was grateful and asked "if there was anything he could do to reciprocate." Hayes persuaded him to visit his mother Grace Hayes at her saloon, the Red Rooster. Coward went every night after his second show and sang at the piano. Unfortunately for Coward, the saloon crowd was not as crazy about his song stylings as the Desert Inn crowd. "All the drunks at the bar said," according to Hayes, '"would you tell the sissy to knock it off, we want to play the juke box.'"[70] People associated with his show befriended him. One evening Coward went to a party hosted by one of the Desert Inn dancers. "We sat in the garden under oleander trees and had barbequed hotdogs and potato pancakes with chives and sour cream, and it was delicious and peaceful and I stayed cheerfully until dawn."[71]

When his run ended at the Desert Inn, Coward enjoyed a victory lap of sorts by attending a round of parties in Hollywood. Cole Porter, Merle Oberon, and Humphrey Bogart all hosted gala events at their homes, and Frank Sinatra had a dinner for him at the famed Beverly Hills Romanoff's Restaurant.[72] There were also movie offers, and Columbia Records recorded four of his performances to release a "live" album of his Desert Inn appearance. The recording and his Las Vegas run "re-established Coward as a star of international stature," and the publicity surrounding both contributed to the audiences for his three television specials on CBS between October 1955 and May 1956.[73]

Other than the packed showroom at the Desert Inn during his performances, the rest of Las Vegas also benefited from Coward's successful run. His audiences were willing to gamble. That did not always happen when impresarios brought other "legitimate" stars to Las Vegas.[74] His appearance also persuaded other major stars, who had formerly refused nightclub offers in Las Vegas, to reconsider. Jack Benny was a good example. Benny had said no to appearing in Las Vegas showrooms, believing that it would hurt his public image. However, Coward's "smashing debut" at the Desert Inn prompted Mary Livingstone, Benny's wife, to urge him "to seriously consider the offers he had received. I figured if it was classy enough for Noel, it was good enough for Jack!" The radio and television comedian signed with the Flamingo to appear in 1957 for $50,000 a week.[75]

Coward's interviews about his Las Vegas experiences were great publicity for the resort city. He told the columnist Art Buchwald that he had worried about the challenge of performing in Las Vegas. He had been warned that his "material was only good for a sophisticated audience." However, the "ordinary" people who came to his shows enjoyed themselves immensely. Coward theorized that tourists in Las Vegas simply wanted to be entertained and they were always respectful. "They're only interested in gambling, and for that reason," Coward said, "they're so well behaved."[76] Clearly, Coward knew the expectations for him in the interviews. He had been handsomely rewarded, and he was complimentary and expansive on how great a resort city Las Vegas had become. Almost. He did say to Gilbert Millstein, in an extended interview published in *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, that there was a "tragic side" to Las Vegas. He had encountered "some pretty sad, foolish faces" among the gamblers, particularly in the downtown bingo parlors filled with "little middle-class ladies" and all the people playing the slot machines. They seemed "mesmerized longing for that jackpot." He also did not like all the noise—the "constant cough of the slot machine," "the clink of dollars," and "the constant din of music." However, he loved the great range of entertainment on the Strip. The floor shows were "very well put on, very well lit, very efficient musically." The talent was "great" and the girls were all "incredibly beautiful." The atmosphere up and down the Strip was one of a holiday. "The bands are playing swing, jazz, progressive and retrogressive and the people move from hotel to hotel" playing the slots, blackjack, and roulette, and all seemed to be "having a whale of a time." "Out of all America," he told Millstein, "I couldn't have found a more unique place to make my night club debut. It far exceeded my expectations." On balance, Coward found the conditions in Las Vegas to be "ideal."[77]

Coward's appearance in Las Vegas came when the nature of its entertainment was changing dramatically. The failure to cap salaries and the diminishing pool of headliner talent for the ever-increasing number of hotels led owners to look at other ways to entertain their customers. In 1953, the Hotel Last Frontier contracted with the Mary Kaye Trio as a "lounge" act. In an attempt to keep gamblers in the casino after the floor show, lounge acts would perform four or five shows a night. Typically, the acts played on stages that "were tiny spaces raised above and situated behind

the actual bars."[78] The following year, the Sahara entertainment director Bill Miller brought Louis Prima and Keely Smith to the Casbar Lounge, where they enjoyed a remarkable five-year run. Lounge acts became a critical piece of the entertainment scene, with names such as the Treniers, Freddy Bell, Arte Shaw, Cab Calloway, Red Norvo, Mel Torme, Don Rickles, and Shecky Greene. Meanwhile, some hotels opted for Broadway plays to attract customers. By the early 1960s Strip hotels had offered productions of *Flower Drum Song*, *Bye, Bye, Birdie*, *Anything Goes*, *Guys and Dolls*, and *South Pacific*.[79]

The most dramatic departure in entertainment policy came with Major Riddle's decision in 1957 to book "Minsky Goes to Paris," a production show featuring some topless dancers, at the troubled Dunes Hotel. The following year, the new Stardust Hotel and the El Rancho Vegas also premiered shows with topless dancers. Despite substantial opposition from hotels such as the Sands and the Sahara, complaints from many churches in Las Vegas as well as from local politicians, and a threatened ban by the state legislature, the "French-style revue" became a standard on the Las Vegas Strip with long-running shows such as the Folies Bergere, which ran at the Tropicana for nearly half a century, Casino de Paris at the Dunes, and Jubilee, a decades-long fixture at Ballys. Indeed, the statuesque showgirl with feathers and fishnet became the city's most iconic figure.[80]

Still, the headliner remained a staple in the entertainment appeal of Las Vegas. Indeed, the pinnacle of the city's entertainment success came in early 1960 when Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Jr., Joey Bishop, and Peter Lawford—"the Rat Pack"—performed at the Sands Hotel. Between January 20 and February 16 of that year, while filming the movie Ocean's Eleven, the quintet attracted the nation's press and hordes of tourists eager to see the "summit" of America's greatest headliners.[81] But the conundrum that Las Vegas entertainment directors faced in the 1950s has never faded. There have always been too few name entertainers for all the showrooms, and those who can attract a gambling crowd have demanded ever-higher salaries. In 1969, the Desert Inn's publicity director, Max Walkoff, reported that there were no more than "a dozen name stars in the country that are sure to fill the house." A decade later, a frustrated Burton Cohen, the Desert Inn's president, explained, "a lot of so-called names don't fill our showroom."[82] By the mid 1980s, the leading hotels along the Strip were willing to pay $300,000 a week for entertainment, and a few stars such as Frank Sinatra and Dolly Parton commanded even more, $350,000 a week.[83] The search for names, novelty acts, and production shows will endure whether it be through the long-term contracts offered to Celine Dion, Cher, Bette Midler, Elton John, and Barry Manilow, the remarkably successful run of Siegfried and Roy's magic spectacular, Broadway plays, stand-up comics and magicians, or the array of Cirque de Soleil production shows. The commercial success of Strip hotels, as the owners clearly understood in 1955 when Noel Coward broke "all records" for the Desert Inn, has been and remains inescapably linked to offering the entertainment tourists want to see.[84]

Notes

[1]*New York Times* (26 June 1955), p. SM18.

[2]Lauren Bacall, *By Myself and Then Some* (New York: Harper, 2006), 250. Also see Michael Wilding's comment in Charles Castle, *Noel* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1973), 215.

[3]Graham Payn and Sheridan Morley, eds., *The Noel Coward Diaries* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 246; 1961 interview with Coward in *The Noel Coward Trilogy: The Boy Actor, Captain Coward, Sail Away* (DVD, produced by Adam Low, 1998; Kultur Video, 2008).

[4]*New York Times* (26 June 1955), p. SM18.

[5]*Los Angeles Times* (8 June 1955), p. 3.

[6]The label of "ultra-English" is from Sheridan Morley, *A Talent to Amuse: A Biography of Noel Coward* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 280.

[7]The best sources on Coward's early life are Morley, *A Talent to Amuse*, 1-162, and Philip Hoare, *Noel Coward: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 1-242.

[8]Hoare, *Noel Coward*, 230.

[9]Robert Calder, *Beware the British Serpent: The Role of Writers in British Propaganda in the United States, 1939-1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 95.

[10]Morley, *Talent to Amuse*, 217, 233-34, 240-48, 21-252; Hoare, *Noel Coward*, 322-329, and 338-50.

[11]*New York Times* (27 March 1973), p. 40.

[12]*Noel Coward Trilogy*; Morley, *Talent to Amuse*, 267.

[13]*Las Vegas Sun* (28 April 2000), http/www.lasvegassun.com/news/2000/apr/28/columnist-joe-delaney-recalling-noel-cowards-foray/ (accessed 12 May 2009).

[14]Payn and Morley, *Noel Coward Diaries*, 247. There had been other inquiries from Las Vegas for a couple of years, but Glaser actually showed up and watched him perform. See *Los Angeles Times* (12 June 1955), p. E1.

[15]Cole Lesley, Graham Payn, and Sheridan Morley, *Noel Coward and His Friends* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1979), 172.

[16]Payn and Morley, *Noel Coward Diaries*, p. 244.

[17]Peter Lind Hayes, interview, 1993, Oral History Program, Special Collections, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, *Las Vegas Sun* (28 April 2000). Long after Coward's successful run, both Frank Sennes, the entertainment director for the Desert Inn, and Allard Roen, one of the managers of the hotel-casino, claimed credit for attracting Coward to their property. See *Las Vegas Sun Magazine* (8 August 1982), p. 7; Allard Roen, interview, 2003, Oral History Program, Special Collections, UNLV.

[18]Quoted in Cole Lesley, *The Life of Noel Coward* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), 342. Coward confirmed this in a 1961 interview. See *Noel Coward Trilogy,* (DVD).

[19]John Lahr, *Coward the Playwright* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 1.

[20]Calder, *Beware the British Serpent*, 90.

[21]Payn and Morley, *Noel Coward Diaries*, 247.

[22]*Ibid*., 246-47.

[23]*Ibid*., 258.

[24]*Ibid*., 258, 264, 287-88, 312-14; Hoare, *Noel Coward*, 410; Barry Day, ed., *The Letters of Noel Coward* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 587.

[25]Day, *Letters of Noel Coward*, 587-88. This was the same deal that Marlene Dietrich struck for her three-week run at the Sahara Hotel in late 1953 and early 1954, but $20,000 less than the Riviera Hotel paid Liberace for its opening in 1955. Maria Riva, *Marlene Dietrich* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 634; Darden Asbury Pyron, *Liberace: An American Boy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 264.

[26]Payn and Morley, *Noel Coward Diaries*, 258; 263.

[27]*Ibid*., 242.

[28]Day, *Letters of Noel Coward*, 588.

[29]Ibid.; Payn and Morley, *Noel Coward Diaries*, 268.

[30]Hoare, *Noel Coward*, 410.

[31]Payn and Morley, *Noel Coward Diaries*, 270.

[32]*Los Angeles Times* (30 May 1955), p. 6.

[33]Payn and Morley, *Noel Coward Diaries*, 268; Day, *Letters of Noel Coward*, 588-89.

[34]Payn and Morley, *Noel Coward Diaries*, 269.

[35]Lesley, *Life of Noel Coward*, 341.

[36]*Ibid*., 342.

[37]*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (9 June 1955), p. 5.

[38]Payn and Morley, *Noel Coward Diaries*, 270; Bacall, *By Myself*, 249; Day, *Letters of Noel Coward*, 589-90.

[39]*Las Vegas Sun* (10 June 1955), p. 6.

[40]*Variety*, quoted in Hoare, *Noel Coward*, 408; *Los Angeles Times* (8 June 1955), p. 35; *New York Time*s (26 June 1955), p. SM18; *Lima News* [Ohio] (19 June 1955), p. B10; *Humboldt Standard* [Eureka, Calif.] (9 July 1955), p. 4.

[41]*Jack Cortez's Fabulous Las Vegas Magazine* (11 June 1955), p. 23; *Las Vegas Sun* (4 June 1955), p. 6.

[42]*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (9 June 1955), p. 5.

[43]*Las Vegas Sun* (10 June 1955), p. 6; *New York Times* (26 June 1955), p. SM18.

[44]*New York Times* (26 June 1955), p. SM18.

[45]Lesley, *Life of Noel Coward*, 342, 343.

[46]Day, *Letters of Noel Coward*, 590.

[47]Payn and Morley, *Noel Coward Diaries*, 269.

[48]"Gambling Town Pushes its Luck," *Life* (20 June 1955), p. 20; *New York Times* (26 June 1955), p. SM18; Ed Oncken, "Noel's 40G at Desert Inn is Rare Bargain," *Billboard* (18 June 1955), p. 15. A photo of Coward holding a tea cup and attired in the dinner jacket while in the desert appeared on the dust jacket of his album "Noel Coward at Las Vegas."

[49]*Humboldt Standard* (13 Sept. 1955), p. 2; *Oakland Tribune* (15 Sept. 1955), p. 37; *Long Beach Press-Telegram* (29 Dec. 1954), p. B6.

[50]"Snake Eyes in Las Vegas," *Time* (19 Sept. 1955), p. 97; "Gambling Town Pushes its Luck," *Life* (20 June 1955), pp. 20, 25.

[51]*Long Beach Press-Telegram* (14 Sept. 1955), p. B13.

[52]Al Fischler, "Las Vegas as Showbiz Mint," *Billboard*, (August 31, 1946), pp. 3 and 43.

[53]Ralph J. Roske, *Las Vegas: A Desert Paradise* (Tulsa: Continental Heritage Press, 1986), 113; George Stamos, Jr., "The Great Resorts of Las Vegas: How They Began!" *Las Vegas Sun Magazine* (22 April 1979), p. 8.

[54]Lee Zhito, "Las Vegas Set to Spend Big on Top Names," *Billboard* (10 June 1950), pp. 3, 44.

[55]*Oakland Tribune* (21 July 1953), p. D-10.

[56]*The News* [Newport, R.I.], (30 Dec. 1954), p. 7; Katharine Best and Katharine Hillyer, *Las Vegas, Playtown U.S.A.* (New York: David McKay Co., 1955), 99.

[57]*Chicago Daily Tribune* (21 Feb. 1954), p. H18.

[58]*Yuma Daily Sun* [Yuma, Arizona] (17 January 1956), p. 16.

[59]Pierre Cossette, *Another Day in Showbiz: One Producer's Journey* (Toronto, Canada: ECW Press, 2002), 42.

[60]*The News* (30 December 1954), p. 7; and see "Snake Eyes in Las Vegas," p. 97.

[61]Maxine Lewis, interview, 1987, Oral History Program, Special Collections, UNLV.

[62]Stan Irwin, interview, 2003, Oral History Program, Special Collections, UNLV.

[63]*The Galveston (Texas) News* (3 Dec. 1953), p. 11; Cossette, *Another Day in Showbiz*, pp. 47-49.

[64]Cossette, *Another Day in Showbiz*, 48-49; Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan: A Life in Letters* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 142.

[65]*Reno Evening Gazette* (16 July 1955), p. 1.

[66]*San Mateo Times* (4 Feb. 1956), p. 15; *Oakland Tribune* (13 March 1956), p. 18.

[67]Roland L. Bessette, *Mario Lanza: Tenor in Exile* (Portland, Ore: Amadeus Press, 1999), 159-67; Derek Mannering, *Mario Lanza: Singing to the Gods* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2005), 126-30; Armando Cesari, *Mario Lanza: An American Tragedy* (Fort Worth: Baskerville Publishers, 2004), 190-96.

[68]*San Mateo Times* (12 July 1954), p. 14.

[69]David Niven, *The Moon's a Balloon* (London: Coronet Books, 1971), 277; Payn and Morley, *Noel Coward Diaries*, 270-271.

[70]Hayes, interview, 1993; Lesley, *Life of Noel Coward*, 343-44.

[71]Payn and Morley, *Noel Coward Diaries*, 272.

[72]*Ibid*., 272-73; Bacall, *By Myself*, 250.

[73]Hoare, *Noel Coward*, 413; *Noel Coward Trilogy* (DVD); *New York Times* (27 March 1973), p. 40.

[74]Morley, *Talent to Amuse*, 281.

[75]Irving A. Fein, *Jack Benny: An Intimate Biography* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1976), 224; Mary Livingstone, Hilliard Marks, and Marcia Borie Benny, *Jack Benny: A Biography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978), 212. Fein was Benny's longtime manager.

[76]*Oakland Tribune* (7 Sept. 1955), p. D5.

[77]*New York Times* (26 June 1955), p. 41.

[78]Mike Weatherford, *Cult Vegas: The Weirdest! The Wildest! The Swingin'est Town on Earth!* (Las Vegas: Huntington Press, 2001), 49.

[79]Garry Boulard, *Louis Prima* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 102-14; Donn Knepp, *Las Vegas: The Entertainment Capital* (Menlo Park: Sunset Publishing Corporation, 1987), 146-47; *Los Angeles Times* (8 March 1963), p. C9.

[80]See Larry Gragg "'Big Step to Oblivion for Las Vegas?' The 'Battle of the Bare Bosoms,' 1957-1959," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 43 (2010), 1004-22.

[81]See Larry Gragg "Never Accorded the Recognition He Deserved: Sands Hotel Publicist Al Freeman, 1952-1972," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 51:1 (Spring 2008), 40-41.

[82]*Chronicle-Telegram* [Elyria, Ohio] (29 June 1969), p. 22; *The Post* [Frederick, Md.] (30 May 1980), p. A7.

[83]Joe Delaney, "The Performing Arts in Las Vegas: Impressions of a Journalist," in *Inflation and the Performing Arts*, Hilda Baumo and William J. Baumo, eds.(New York: New York University Press, 1984), 25-29.

[84]*New York Times* (26 June 1955), p. SM41

Lorenzi Park:
Building Community Since 1921

Megan Weatherly

Lorenzi Park sits near the intersection of Washington Avenue and Valley View Drive, a location that hardly compares with Sun City Anthem, Aliante, or Summerlin. The nearby swath of small, ranch-style homes reached its zenith thirty to forty years ago, and most of its original occupants have moved on to better neighborhoods. Graffiti dots street signs; second- and third-generation homeowners have carelessly covered broken windows with plywood panels; and weeds and grasses sprout between the rocks of poorly xeriscaped lawns. However, a tranquil green space with a stocked lake bordered by manicured grass and walking paths anchors this decaying quarter. Parkgoers sit on benches and read, walk briskly with pets, cast fishing lines into the lake, and stroll through the nearby rose garden. Though its heyday passed decades ago, this parcel of green amidst a sea of concrete and asphalt represents unique phases of urban, Western, and Las Vegas history.

In the Fall 1983 edition of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, David Millman argued that Lorenzi Park has always been a social, cultural, and service center for the city of Las Vegas.[1] His assertions are true, but the park also has played a vital role in community-building efforts within the city. *Community* is a complex term; scholars have grappled with its definition for generations. In the late 1800s, the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies outlined his theory of social relationships with the dichotomy of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*.[2] The

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former, often translated as "community," centers on close, interpersonal ties developed from local, rural life and attachment to place. The latter forms in an industrial, modernized society in which ties are associational, and individuals act in self-interest. In recent decades, community has become a topic of interest for urban historians, its prominence surging in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Among western historians, Robert Hine has written most extensively on the topic, though other scholars have undertaken case studies of individual towns and institutions.[3] In one such study, Elliott West considered the social functions of the saloon in early mining communities, arguing that it not only disseminated news and information and aided in the formation of political and municipal institutions but was "first and foremost a place of entertainment and relaxation," sponsoring dances, bands, prizefights, and contests.[4] Lorenzi Park played a similar (though less comprehensive) role in Las Vegas, proving that "the process [of town building] involved more than the mere physical construction of buildings."[5] The park helped build community within Las Vegas by providing a space for social and recreational gatherings (first phase), contributing to development and "future making" (second phase), and serving as a home for social and cultural programs (third phase).

DAVID LORENZI: EARLY LAS VEGAS ENTREPRENEUR

On September 10, 1912, a San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad train rolled into Las Vegas, bringing an enterprising young Frenchman named David Gerland Lorenzi to the desert railroad town. Born in Montone, France, in the 1870s, Lorenzi came to the United States as a teenager. An East Coast millionaire, admiring the youngster's aptitude for masonry and desiring to give him an education, adopted young David upon arrival.[6] However, the wealthy benefactor soon took ill and died; his brother destroyed Lorenzi's adoption papers and sent the teenager back to France. With a steely resolve, Lorenzi saved his money and quickly returned to America, using his linguistic abilities to secure work as a tour guide for monied European families visiting the eastern seaboard.[7]

Forced to seek a dry climate after contracting tuberculosis, Lorenzi bounced around California, Colorado, and Arizona, trying his hand at mining and other ventures. Lured by promotional newspapers and pamphlets published by the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, he arrived in the town in September 1912. His enterprising spirit hoped to make a living farming in the tiny desert town. As his train approached the settlement, his keen eye spotted a patch of green trees and brush in the distance, so he mentally noted that a water source must be near the vegetation. Although he shopped around for an equally attractive and viable piece of land, he eventually purchased the verdant plot he first saw from the train window.[8]

Farming in the desert made for a tough livelihood, so Lorenzi began to contemplate other uses for his eighty acres. In the meantime, to keep his growing young family afloat, he opened a confectionery called The Palms (later renamed The Oasis) on Fremont Street, between First and Second streets. There, he sold hand-dipped chocolates, candy, and soda in addition to operating a tea room in which he served light lunches that included tasty dishes such as oyster stew (with oysters imported from the East Coast) and homemade sandwiches. Hurried customers—particularly soldiers passing through town on troop trains—purchased the sandwiches (which Lorenzi boxed with fruit and candy) as quick, take-away lunches.[9] As World War I raged in Europe and sugar rationing rendered candy making increasingly difficult, Lorenzi took a cue from the passing soldiers carting off his individually priced fruit, sandwiches, and sweets. He slowly converted the confectionery into a cash-and-carry, a variety of grocery store in which customers tallied their purchases and took their goods, eschewing the need for grocery delivery and resulting in price cuts of as much as 20 percent.[10]

Yet the acreage Lorenzi owned on the edge of town remained in his thoughts, and he decided to construct the accoutrements of a resort on a portion of the land.[11] With his intentions known, skeptics abounded. Bankers, accustomed to loan requests from ranches and small-scale mining operations, had trouble grasping Lorenzi's grand vision or seeing it as a viable financial risk. Such "conservative lending institutions had no faith in his plan to build a resort area" and he had trouble financing his dream of a park.[12] Even local citizens, who, unlike the banks, had no vested financial interest in the endeavor, remained doubtful. They feared that Lorenzi would fail and abandon the project, leaving a large parcel of land half-developed and creating an eyesore.[13] Undaunted, Lorenzi did not succumb to the myopia that plagued his skeptics; he envisioned an impressive facility that would attract all Las Vegans. Yet it is doubtful, as he began reshaping the land late in the 1910 decade, that he could have envisioned his resort as a centerpiece of the nascent Las Vegas community—a recreational escape for a generation of the city's residents.

The Dearth of Parks and Recreation Facilities Prior to Lorenzi's Lake Resort

Unlike many of its contemporary urban counterparts, Las Vegas lacked a park of significant size. In 1920, more than 2,300 residents called the city home, and the population topped 5,100 by 1930.[14] Twenty-five years after its incorporation, the city still lacked a green space to fulfill the recreational needs of citizens. Fewer than twenty years after its 1848 population explosion, San Francisco, inspired by New York City's Central Park, had cobbled together a series of sand dunes and grasslands and begun to form Golden Gate Park.[15] Los Angeles and Reno also had parks by 1920. Las Vegas's lack of parks was

partially due to its lack of a sizable tax base to finance such projects. (The city was far more concerned with providing basic municipal services.) Indeed, the parks and recreation centers within the city lacked a Progressive spirit and were either small-scale organizational or municipal afterthoughts or privately owned and wholly profit driven.

Las Vegas Ranch Resort served as one example of a privately owned recreation space geared toward profits. As early as 1905, the ranch's owners saw the monetary possibilities in providing a retreat for the valley's citizens and began transforming the working ranch into a destination. In the spring of 1905, the *Las Vegas Age* heralded the changes under way at the ranch: "The beautiful Las Vegas ranch will, after the ending of this month, be the center of pleasure's circle for all the valley."[16] Within a few weeks, the "cool and refreshing retreat" included a dance pavilion (where a piecemeal orchestra played), a café, a "pool" formed from the dammed Las Vegas Creek, and ground that could be leased for pitching tents.[17] Although the resort's organizers advertised the opening in several California newspapers, local residents, including "the leading people of the valley," made up the bulk of their guests.[18] Las Vegas Ranch Resort, however, had a stilted beginning when its manager, Harry Beale, lost the lease and the new lessee, Walter Bracken, removed the dance pavilion and other buildings.[19] Nevertheless, after a short absence, the business returned with a new moniker: Vegas Park Resort.[20] The new proprietors diverted the creek into a concrete plunge, which was "a good place [to swim because] the water was warm."[21] Dances, with music provided by a Salt Lake City orchestra, took place on Saturday nights.[22] The resort remained open in various forms until the 1930s.

Similarly, Ladd's Plunge provided a break from the heat for many weather-weary Las Vegans. Captain James Ladd, who operated one of the first tent hotels in Las Vegas, in 1905, opened the aquatic oasis in 1911 on Fremont Street (between Twelfth and Fifteenth streets) to serve the housing subdivision he had constructed nearby. The pool remained open throughout the 1920s and 1930s, eventually eclipsed by Mermaid Pool on Fifth Street, which Ladd scorned because of its cold water.[23]

Las Vegas's first small-scale green space of noticeable duration came from the town's main employer, the railroad. As traffic along the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad increased, the railroad station became the bustling center of town. Trains frequently stopped to change crews, giving travel-weary visitors a chance to stretch their legs for a few minutes. Beside the depot, employees constructed a park containing "many varieties of trees, shrubs and flowers." Editors of the *Las Vegas Age*, ever concerned with promotion, contended, "If proper attention is given, [the park] will prove one of the best advertisements along the line of the Salt Lake railroad." Indeed, with such green growth, the newspapermen felt that Las Vegas would soon become known as the "Garden Valley."[24] Unlike its resort precursors and successors, Railway Park was never intended by its organizers to be used for municipal recreation.

Similarly, county officials never considered recreational uses for the lawn of the Clark County Courthouse, which, after its 1914 completion, provided another park-like atmosphere attributable to its large trees.[25] Despite general use of these locations for picnics and shady seating by small groups, the city lacked a space in which significant portions of the population could come together for socialization and recreation.

Having watched the ebb and flow of parks and resorts in Las Vegas since his arrival in 1912, Lorenzi had big hopes for his eighty-acre patch of land. Thus, with a team of mules, he dug two lakes, which filled with water from a pair of artesian wells on the property. By 1922, he opened the lakes to the public, allowing Las Vegans to escape the summer heat in the cool of the spring water. By 1924, Lorenzi had constructed a swimming pool (the largest in Nevada) 90-feet wide by 115-feet long that, like the lakes, filled with "fine and sanitary" water from the on-site wells.[26] Within months, Lorenzi's Lake Resort, begun as a pipe dream of the immigrant owner, became the main stomping ground for city denizens of all ages. Hank Greenspun, a fiery municipal critic and editor of the *Las Vegas Sun*, remembered Lorenzi's intentions in a positive light more than forty years later: "All he knew was that people needed a beautiful, restful place to spend their leisure hours, and he built it for them."[27]

Phase One: Lorenzi Lake Resort, Las Vegas's Social and Recreational Center

Because Las Vegas lacked a sizable park, Lorenzi Lake Resort filled a void, promoting community cohesion by serving as a social and recreational space where Las Vegans could congregate on friendly terms.[28] The press lauded Lorenzi's dreamscape as "the pride of … residents and visitors of this county," a verdant getaway where guests could "lose [themselves] completely from the material cares and worries of the everyday world and dream and build air castles to [their] heart's content."[29] For Las Vegans who spent their days laboring in the desert heat or serving out-of-town guests in smoke-filled saloons and taverns, the resort became a popular retreat thanks to its rural location and "rippling moon washed lake in the midst of the desert[,] with the gay laughter of a merry crowd of dancers drifting across the eerie waters on the wings of limpid breezes from the distan[t] azure, sky piercing peaks of old Nevada."[30] The combination of proximity to town, spacious amenities (fireproof dressing rooms, concessions), sprawling lawns, refreshing lakes, and a pool gravity fed by 70.5-degree artesian water made the area "one of the chosen spots of recreation" in the valley, especially in the days before air conditioning.[31] Proximity also made Lorenzi Resort a desirable retreat: though it wasn't located within the city, it wasn't far away, either.[32]

Throughout the resort's tenure, Lorenzi contributed to community building by holding Independence Day celebrations of unprecedented size. As one Las Vegan, "[r]eminiscing about the 'good old days,'" noted, "When the Fourth of

July came, Lorenzi's was the place to go. Whole families—from the youngest to the oldest—converged there for an all-day outing."[33] For Independence Day in 1926, David Lorenzi tendered use of his aquatic escape without charge, and "hundreds of automobiles, probably a thousand in all, formed a solid procession on the road between Las Vegas and the Lake."[34] Guests spent the day swimming, boating, enjoying the company of neighbors, and participating in events such as swimming contests, tub races, and ladies' nail-driving contests.[35] Several thousand Las Vegans celebrated at Lorenzi Lakes, particularly enthralled by the fireworks display, "nothing approaching [which] had ever been seen in Las Vegas."[36] Though Lorenzi charged admission for July Fourth festivities in 1927, the crowds still made his resort the chosen meeting place that year and for years to come. They continued to be drawn by the lakes, pool, and Lorenzi's signature program of entertainment, such as his 1932 re-enactment of Admiral George Dewey's attack on the Spanish fleet in 1898 at the Battle of Manila Bay, complete with the sinking of the USS *Maine*.[37] For such events, the resort's pleasant atmosphere played an important role in attracting crowds; it lacked pretensions and included amenities that added to comfort and safety. A homemade piping system sprinkled the ground to keep down dust, and at night, electric lights illuminated the lake and concrete walkways.[38] As one citizen remarked, with such facilities and catch-all attractions, "Why go out of Las Vegas for the Fourth of July?"[39]

Similarly, Labor Day drew large crowds and enhanced community connections. Lorenzi's event programming expanded to include boxing, motorcycle races (including a special performance in 1935 by the daredevil motorcycle rider Carey Loftin), boat juggling, and a log-rolling contest. Lorenzi smartly exploited the Las Vegas-Boulder City rivalry to attract construction workers and their families from the dam site. To do so, he sponsored competitive events that pitted the towns against each other in a variety of contests, including a tug-of-war and boat jousting.[41] He even arranged for buses to shuttle guests between the resort (located about two miles north of Las Vegas) and Boulder City.[42]

Amid the Depression, the exciting events at Lorenzi Lake Resort buoyed community spirits. As the country wallowed in economic despair, Lorenzi organized a soirée to celebrate President Franklin D. Roosevelt's inauguration. He promoted the event in the *Evening Review-Journal* with the declaration, "Let's Go, Gang! It's a 'New Deal,'" and asserted, "We want everyone to enjoy this special occasion upon the inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his cabinet and to forget this depression."[43] The high spirits of the inaugural ball also translated into the 1933 Labor Day festivities. To encourage attendance, Lorenzi organized contests with significant cash prizes (ranging from $25 to $50). Turnout, even during the trying economic times, was tremendous. A September 6, 1933, editorial in the *Las Vegas Age* lauded Lorenzi's tireless "courage and… energy in attempting and carrying out so pretentious a program," which "added greatly to the pleasure" of the citizens of Clark County. The *Age*'s editors wrote,

> In such times of business depression as these, anything which will bring people out into the open and permit them to mingle in community enterprises is extremely helpful. The crowds which turned out…gave us visible evidence of the fact that Las Vegas, Boulder City, and the other Clark [C]ounty communities are far from being discouraged. In fact, we take the success of the two-day celebration as the best and most positive evidence that we are already well on our way toward the new era of prosperity.[44]

Between the high cost of operation, property taxes, and interest on the loan used to purchase the eighty acres, Lorenzi himself endured hard times during the Depression and barely broke even. His daughter Louise recalled wearing cardboard in her shoes and having few clothes.[45] Nonetheless, he kept Lorenzi Lake Park open so "Las Vegans still could leave behind the worries of the day for a small investment." He understood how much the park meant to the people.[46]

After construction crews completed the dance pavilion in 1926, the resort became a hot spot for dating couples, bringing together young adults from all over Clark County. The pavilion, which could hold two thousand people, featured a large dance floor with a capacity of seven hundred. These balls soon became so popular that, to accommodate the swelling crowds, Lorenzi enclosed the pavilion, extended it over the lake, and installed a heating system for winter dances.[47] He (or one of the proprietors to whom he occasionally leased the pavilion) held dances on Wednesdays and Saturdays during the summer and for special occasions or upon attraction of well-known musical acts during the winter. For special occasions, "he sponsored prize waltz and foxtrot dances, awarding gold pieces to the winning couples."[48] In addition to burgeoning crowds of peers and jiving contests, the price of admission was also affordable—ten cents for entry and a ten cent surcharge per dance or a flat one-dollar admission fee for those planning to spend all evening on the floor. Ladies, of course, paid no cover charge.[49] Advertisements in both the *Review-Journal* and the *Age* drew pairs with clever slogans such as "red hot music, good smooth floor."[50] Though casual notices might simply announce headlining orchestras and bands, others featured copy more overtly directed at youthful audiences. One 1932 announcement featured a photo of a young lady with a bubble that read, "My boy friend is smart! He takes me to Lorenzi Park every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday night—and do we have fun!"[51] Although ads promised a good time and even encouraged prospective guests to "[f]ollow the crowds tonight and make 'whoopee,'"[52] Lorenzi often patrolled the dance floor and grounds to enforce his strict rules of behavior, lest any hanky-panky break out. Such "built in 'chaperonage,'" remembered the veteran newswoman Florence Lee Jones, "still was considered good form in social circles [and] gave the resort a good reputation."[53] Puppy love blossomed multiple times each summer. Jones also recalled,

> Young women of Las Vegas who married Boulder Dam workers can recall that their boy friends showered off by diving from the highboard or racing with their friends across the pool, then climbing out onto the grassy slope to receive the plaudits of girls watching; or of dancing "cheek to cheek" to the dream music of "Jazz" Morrison and his orchestra; or of gliding over the water on one of Lorenzi's lakes in a canoe paddled by a current swain.[54]

Indeed, Lorenzi's eldest daughter, Louise, met her husband, the future county commissioner Ed Fountain, at the resort not long after he left Georgia for Nevada during the Depression in search of work at Boulder Dam. For starry-eyed couples like the Fountains, Lorenzi's Resort proved a memorable location that altered their lives. There, "with moonbeams flickering on water, ukuleles accompanying baritone ballads, and with what in those days was known as 'sparking,' many a grandparent of today proposed the eventual perpetuity of his line."[55] The rowboats proved exceptionally popular venues for proposals, particularly when paddled underneath the weeping willows lining the lakes.[56] Surrounded by drooping willow branches and with the moon above, "[many] Las Vegas women…heard…proposals from the lips of their swains."[57]

In addition, Lorenzi brought a variety of musical acts to the pavilion that appealed to community members of differing musical persuasions. Local bands, such as Jazz Morrison and His Orchestra, the Blue Bird Orchestra, Jack Lorraine and His Parisians (and Apaches), and the Las Vegas-Union Pacific Orchestra, played at the twice-weekly dances.[58] Music varied from Hawaiian and swing to jazz and blues. On special occasions, out-of-town bands such as the Original Arizona Nighthawks, Fred Wolcott and His Californians (featured on NBC and CBS radio stations nationwide), and Merle Carlson and the CBS Orchestra played, often drawing crowds willing to pay as much as a dollar admission, ten times that of the regular 10-cent entry fee.[59] Lorenzi even showcased the talents of female bands such as a California-based "girls radio orchestra" and the Happy Notes ("Utah's snappiest girl band") as well as acts like the Harlem Playgirls, a group of "colored artists and entertainers" known for their tap dancing and blues performances at New York City's Saratoga Club and Plantation Follies.[60] Themed dances, such as a barn dance and "farmyard frolic" also attracted guests.[61] Years later, one patron remembered, "There simply wasn't anyplace else to go in Las Vegas…The whole town turned out [for the dances]."[62]

Much like a modern urban park, Lorenzi Resort also proved an enticing weekend destination for families. The pool, lakes, and grounds kept family members of all ages entertained, but Lorenzi also held activities designed to attract youths. Swimming contests for boys and girls occurred almost every weekend, with cash prizes of $1.50 and $1 handed out, even during the height of the Depression. The prudent Frenchman also "provided watermelons and

ice cream for the kiddies on Sunday afternoons and, during the hey-day, if you wanted to find a Las Vegan on a Sunday, Lorenzi's was the place."[63] Parents also took comfort in the crackerjack lifeguard staff, who not only supervised the pools and lakes for safety but also taught youngsters to swim.[64] Many Las Vegans learned to swim at Lorenzi's Resort. One remembered, "I pulled myself along by grabbing the weeds on the edge of the pond and paddl[ing] now and then."[65] On special-event weekends, guests such as "Freckles the Movie Dog" and circus clowns made appearances.[66] Foot, egg, and potato races offered competition for kiddies on holidays such as July Fourth and Labor Day, while aquaplaning, boating, and feats of daring (such as fire divers plunging from the high board in flaming suits and parachutists dropping from a passing airplane) kept youngsters and parents alike amused.[67] In addition, Lorenzi stocked the lakes with trout, black bass, and crappie in 1932, making the resort a destination for fishing outings.[68] Outdoor movies, shown on a screen placed on an island in one of the lakes, proved enticing for both couples and families, and crowds as large as twelve hundred gathered to witness the cinematic endeavors.[69]

Religious and civic organizations also took advantage of the resort's beckoning landscape and facilities. High-school groups were among the first to turn to the green terraces of Lorenzi Lakes for a group outing.[70] Methodist Sunday school members also enjoyed picnicking and swimming and made the acreage one of their favorite gathering spots.[71] Similarly, members of the local Latter-day Saints church held their own program and dance at the pavilion.[72]

Lorenzi's Resort also served as a venue for less pious activities. While Las Vegas residents disliked the Volstead Act, the city was hardly a "wide open town."[73] For those looking to imbibe during Prohibition, Lorenzi Resort was one place to do so. Although Lorenzi forbade the sale of alcoholic beverages, staff members often turned a blind eye to drinks spiked with alcohol from a hip flask. In addition, a building on the island at the center of one of the lakes hosted card games, heated political exchanges, smoking, and illicit drinking. To gain access, Island Club members had to cross a small wooden footbridge and unlock an iron gate with a secret key. A spiked fence surrounded the building to keep out unwanted guests, and inside, a rug-covered trapdoor permitted underground storage of alcohol should an inspector arrive.[74]

As competing resorts, ranches, and casinos opened in the early 1930s, Lorenzi continued to strive to attract customers. While hotels along Fremont Street catered to out-of-town visitors, Lorenzi Lake Resort remained primarily a hub for locals. A newly constructed baseball field opened in 1933; the press touted it as "the best field ever offered Las Vegas."[75] Lorenzi organized a baseball league whose games attracted local viewers and further exploited the Las Vegas-Boulder City rivalry.[76] He also constructed a racing oval, which featured quarter-mile and half-mile races.[77] Horses likewise took center stage at Lorenzi's rodeos, which debuted in time for the resort's 1934 Labor Day festivities. The Frenchman promised "everything the Wild West has ever seen,"

and events often included saddle-horse racing and bronc riding.[78] Leading the activities were "famous" bull riders lured from tiny western towns, as well as cowboy clowns and stunt riders.[79] Horses also proved popular for rides around the property.[80]

PHASE TWO: TWIN LAKES, AIDING DEVELOPMENT AND "FUTURE MAKING"

Boosted by the funds pouring into Boulder Dam's construction, Las Vegas was less scathed by the Depression than other American cities. A host of businesses, including the Boulder Club and Hotel Apache, took advantage of workers' paychecks, which cumulatively totaled more than $500,000 per month.[81] Lorenzi's Resort, too, profited from dam workers, though the profit was not much after Lorenzi paid bank notes, property taxes, and expenses. When construction neared an end, in 1935, local establishments suffered as the dam workers dispersed. City leaders, who had worked long and hard to wean Las Vegas off its dependence on the railroad, "feared [the city's] return to dullness. Others believed that the dam itself would become a major tourist attraction, encouraging a thriving resort hotel trade."[82] In 1933 alone, the dam attracted more than 200,000 tourists, and local leaders knew that promoting tourism would offset the workers' departure.[83]

The infrastructure to support a tourist trade had begun to fall into place. Funding for widening and oiling the Los Angeles Highway came through in 1927, and other roads connecting Nevada cities loomed on the horizon. Similarly, air service came to the valley in 1926, and Union Pacific erected a new depot in 1940.[84] As new transportation corridors brought people to and through the city, "Las Vegans looked for opportunities to convince passengers on the train and drivers on the highway that they could do more in the Las Vegas area than just stretch their legs. One step involved the creation of resorts."[85] In striving to develop a tourism-based economy, Las Vegans "engage[d] in what might be called future making—the process by which a young community, through its own initiative, tries to shape and ensure a prosperous future for itself."[86] Lorenzi Resort, which had been so instrumental in helping the city's five thousand residents coalesce into a community, again helped the town by morphing into a destination for out-of-towners.

As a new consumer ethic gripped the nation after World War II, Americans explored their own country, heading especially to western destinations to gawk at natural wonders symbolic of the nation's grandeur. Americans flocked to Las Vegas to marvel at the dam, enjoy the desert scenery, and take advantage of the state's liberal gambling laws, and they needed a place to stay. But by the time James Cashman and Robert Griffith brought Thomas Hull from California to persuade him to build the Strip's first sprawling resort (El Rancho Vegas), several long time residents had already devised ways to attract travelers. One

Ed Fountain, Julia Moore Lorenzi, David G. Lorenzi (standing, left to right), Louise Lorenzi Fountain and Pauline Fountain (seated, left to right), ca. 1936. Photographer unknown. (*Nevada State Museum)*

of those men was David Lorenzi. Knowing that the construction at Boulder Dam—whose workers constituted a portion of his clientele—would conclude soon, Lorenzi acted. Upon returning from a business trip to Los Angeles in the summer of 1935, he announced the "[f]ormation of a corporation which proposes a million dollar development of Lorenzi Lake Resort as one of the finest 'dude ranches' in the west."[87]

Although dude ranches had been around since the 1880s, the posh amenities Lorenzi proposed were a far cry from the hard-scrabble facilities of early Jackson Hole, Wyoming, home of some of the earliest dude ranches.[88] By the 1930s, the dude-ranching experience had been diluted to the point where most of Nevada's dude ranches catered to couples waiting out the state's six-week residency requirement for divorce. As the Victorian era's strictures gave way to the Roaring Twenties, the American public became more accepting of divorce. Reno, featured in movies as a playful destination at which to wait out

residency, profited from divorce tourism for more than two decades before Las Vegas established its first ranch to cater to those with failing marriages.[89] But Lorenzi planned to rectify the shortcoming. "The plan," he stated, "is to build a first class resort to take care of the divorce trade and tourists who may demand that type of accommodation. We have long needed a place of this kind here, and have been working on it ever since I can remember. I will feel like I have performed a real community service if thru my efforts and my resort, this can be realized."[90] With a capital infusion of $1 million, Nevada-Biltmore, Inc. planned to construct a forty-room lodge and more than two dozen private bungalows while also purchasing an adjacent four-hundred-acre tract on which to build a golf course, airport, bridle path, and other recreational facilities.[91]

The press lauded the takeover, rationalizing that now that a solid community had been established and sustained in Las Vegas (by institutions such as Lorenzi Lakes), the resort's development would be required for continued growth. "Lorenzi Lake Park is ideally situated for such an enterprise and would materially add to the growth of Las Vegas," asserted a *Las Vegas Age* article.[92] A *Review-Journal* editorial added, "Two of the most famous resorts in the southwest are comprised of attractive hotels and nothing more. Palm Springs and Death Valley would have nothing whatever to offer without the tourist hotels around which center all activity. Not so here…It is to be hoped that the Lorenzi deal works out. For Las Vegas needs a resort of this kind as much as the owners will need Las Vegas."[93] The deal closed in February 1936.

Lorenzi stepped aside and the Los Angeles-based capitalist W. E. Alexander, Jr., announced plans for immediate construction of a group of "de luxe [sic] bungalows of the rough, western type, luxuriously appointed and furnished to appeal to an exclusive trade."[94] Alexander was determined to eclipse Palm Springs. "I am convinced we can compete with [it] and eventually get as much if not more than that resort is getting now. We have so much more to offer here in the way of scenery and other attractions as well as ultra-liberal laws," he declared.[95] Tapping Mt. Charleston Resort's owner, Robert Griffith, as vice president of Nevada-Biltmore, Inc., Alexander planned to headquarter the dude ranch at Mt. Charleston in the summer and at Lorenzi Resort during cooler months to avoid the heat and appeal to long-term guests. Improvements would make the summer grounds "a veritable playground on the desert."[96] Despite the immense changes planned, the owners intended for the pool, dance pavilion, and grounds to remain open to city residents.

Yet, for reasons unannounced and unrecorded, Alexander and his grand plans departed in April 1936, and Lorenzi regained ownership of the eighty-acre plot. After cleaning up the construction mess and returning the grounds to their former shape, he opened his namesake resort in early June, a full six weeks later than normal. But his heart no longer seemed to be in the business. Advertisements for dances and holidays lacked the flair of years past and ran less often in local newspapers.[98] To top off the year's events, Louise Lorenzi

David G. Lorenzi, Julia Moore Lorenzi, Louise Lorenzi, unidentified neighbor, and "Mother Moore" (Julia Moore Lorenzi's mother). Photographer unknown. (*Nevada State Museum)*

married and moved, depriving her father of a substantial portion of the resort's workforce. "He sold [the resort] when I got married," she remembered years later. "I was the only one who ever helped him run the place. I was his right-hand man. It bothered him to sell it."[99]

In 1937, Lorenzi offered the resort to the city for a paltry $70,000—which was $40,000 less than its value—and even offered to accept municipal bonds in lieu of cash. Understanding his resort to be a community asset, Lorenzi claimed to have turned down purchase offers from corporate developers.[100] He proffered several reasons why the city should accept his offer. First, acquisition would give the Las Vegas Recreation Department the municipal pool it had been seeking for several years. Second, the eighty acres would provide ample ground for a municipal golf course, and third, the water provided by the property's three wells would supplement the city's water supply. The buildings could be rented out or used for municipal functions, and Lorenzi even suggested that the island host a zoo. The acquisition "would be one of the finest parks in the [W]est," the *Review-Journal* contended.[101] An editorial urged serious consideration of the offer, noting that the city's population would surely reach fifty thousand soon, and "we cannot have too many attractive and spacious parks, and the Lorenzi holdings would make an excellent site—in fact they are made to order…From the standpoint of the municipal park, the resort is a 'natural.' Everything is

already there to serve a community many times the size of Las Vegas."[102]

Citizens also chimed in, favoring municipal purchase to preserve land that had been at the heart of community formation for more than a decade and a half. In a letter to the editor, one resident wrote, "A great wish of mine seems to be on its way to fulfillment by the contemplated purchase of Lorenzi [P]ark by the city of Las Vegas." Citing a long list of the park's natural and constructed amenities, the writer concluded, "I trust that this project of the purchase of this beautiful spot will have the unanimous support of everyone."[103] Yet city commissioners hemmed and hawed on the matter. Commissioner Joe Ronnow opined, "[W]e should give serious consideration to this proposition…if [the resort] is sold to a large corporation, we will have no further opportunity to buy it."[104] Others in the municipal bureaucracy voiced weak, politicized opposition, arguing that the resort would appeal only to young people, who would not ride two miles out of town on their bicycles over unimproved roads to patronize it. In the end, despite strong arguments for purchase, the city declined Lorenzi's offer. At the time, the newspapers failed to report the reasons the city passed on such a good deal; the only seed of the story came more than fifteen years later, when A. E. Cahlan wrote, "Lorenzi has an interesting story as to why the offer wasn't accepted and will tell it if you inquire." Politics aside, Cahlan bemoaned, "one of the tragedies of earlier Las Vegas history is the fact that the commission turned the proposal down on the grounds that it was 'too far out to ever be used for a park'."[105]

In 1938, Lorenzi extended an option to purchase the resort to Tomadon, Inc., headed by the San Diego hotel and radio station owner Thomas Sharp, and completed the sale in 1940. In the meantime, Las Vegas's first dude ranch, Boulderado Dude Ranch, opened at the old Kiel Ranch north of town. Though Sharp remained tight-lipped about his intentions, citizens and the press speculated that he planned to use the Lorenzi grounds as his private residence. But in 1941, he renamed the property Twin Lakes Farm and kept the pool, grounds, and concessions open to the public for the summer. However, Sharp's interest in the project waned following the death of his son, and in 1945, he began leasing the property—first to a flurry of corporations that planned to develop it into "one of the foremost amusement spots in the west" and finally to Lloyd St. John in 1947.[106]

St. John, who had developed the Toluca Lake area in the San Fernando Valley, planned to turn the resort into a soon-to-be-divorcée and tourist oasis but also recognized its value as a retreat for Las Vegans.[107] His transformation of the resort into a dude ranch took time. St. John's son spent months dredging the tule-laden and cattail-clogged lakes, whose maintenance Sharp had neglected. He also hauled lumber from a Mt. Charleston mill and built the ranch's central lodge himself.[108] With construction under way, he continued to encourage community use of the pool and facilities and even targeted valley residents as overnight guests. Advertisements encouraged citizens to "[d]o as many Las

David G. Lorenzi and Julia Moore Lorenzi. Photographer unknown.
(*Nevada State Museum)*

Vegans have. Discover a relaxing wooded Lake Resort within minutes of your work." For those not wishing to fork over a daily ten dollars for a kitchenette room or twelve dollars for a deluxe room, the lodge entreated them to "be our guest for a day" and enjoy the water, ping pong, volleyball, horse rides, cocktail bar, and coffee shop.[110]

But out-of-town guests—particularly potential divorcées and convention participants—constituted the largest portion of names on Twin Lakes Lodge's guest register. In the early 1950s, Las Vegas adopted the slogan "Getting it is half the fun" to attract divorce seekers. Aided by the influx of movie stars and big-name entertainers headlining shows at downtown and Strip resorts, Sin City became a popular sun-soaked destination for a hassle-free divorce.[111] St. John continued with additions and renovations to attract such clientele and to keep pace with the resort-casinos springing up along the old Los Angeles Highway. He added lounging terraces, new dressing rooms, a "sun deck, sky room, and a poolside restaurant" and restored the dance pavilion "not for Saturday night

twists [as in the Lorenzi years], but for conventioners who…rapidly [adopted] Las Vegas as the convention center of the world."[112] Pamphlets emphasized the resort's pastoral setting and seclusion: "Here, in complete privacy, you may enjoy desert living at its best…Trees and water in the foreground with rose tinted mountains and desert for a backdrop."[113] However, they also emphasized recreation and social opportunities: "A whole delightful empire of healthful fun in the sun is here for your unalloyed contentment … adventurous trail trips through the ever changing desert…horseback riding under God's blue canopy."[114] St. John persuaded Tex and Freda Gates to move more than seventy horses from the Hotel Last Frontier to new stables at Twin Lakes.[115] Fishing in the stocked lakes proved especially enticing for guests, and staff even dressed and packaged catches for anglers to carry to the lodge to be cooked poolside. Staff entreated visitors to visit "this socially smart pool" that offered ample entertainment and socialization, including "adult swimming" available until 3 a.m.

Even with the flood of divorcing customers, Twin Lakes remained a destination for families. It proved an ideal vacation spot, as the available activities kept every moment full. The resort even offered babysitters for parents wishing to escape for an evening as well as suites of connecting rooms designed for families.[117] In fact, the wives and children of scientists working at the Nevada Test Site called Twin Lakes home in the early 1950s as they transitioned to Nevada from out of state.[118] Other child-oriented organizations, such as scouting associations, frequented the resort to entertain children in their care. The North Hollywood *Valley Times* rewarded newsboys successful in "corral[ing] orders" with a three-day trip to the lodges.[119]

The resort evolved with Las Vegas. As tourism expanded and large-scale resort-casinos opened on the Strip, "Twin Lakes reinvented itself as a getaway for visitors and offered daytime excursions to the property."[120] Conventioneers staying at the major hotels often visited the resort on company-paid excursions that had a heavy western flair. A horse-drawn stagecoach picked convention guests up at their hotels and brought them to the lodge.[121] A sample itinerary often began with mid-morning drinks, notably signature Twin Lakes Ramos Fizzes, and a welcome by "Wagonmaster St. John." After drinks, guests surveyed the grounds and waited for the camp chef to ring a gong, signaling the time for a hearty noon "ranch breakfast" that included trail dishes such as pan-fried rainbow trout, "man-sized flapjacks with loganberry syrup," and camp coffee. In the afternoon, they watched a rodeo produced especially for them, consisting of bronc and bull riding, roping, and barrel racing.[122] In addition, Twin Lakes marketed its cottages and lake islands as perfect places for catered barbeques, weddings, receptions, company parties, and picnics.[123] Other ads entreated tourists and locals to visit just for a meal; dishes included trout, lobster, chicken, and steak, and could be enjoyed poolside, in the coffee shop, or even at the cabana bar. Friday-night clam bakes proved exceptionally popular with both locals and tourists; the entertainer Tony Martin frequented them.[124]

Aiding Twin Lakes's popularity was the preponderance of Hollywood stars who visited, choosing the off-the-beaten-path resort over the Strip and downtown hotels.

Aerial view of Lorenzi park, ca. 1953. Photographer unknown. (*Nevada State Museum)*

Robert Taylor (star of *Camille*, opposite Greta Garbo, and later *Billy the Kid*), Wally Cox (television actor of *Philco Television Playhouse*, *Mr. Peepers*, and *Hollywood Squares* fame), Carol Channing (singer and actress best known for leading roles in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Hello, Dolly!*), Ruth Roman, Bonita Granville, and George Gobel (host of *The George Gobel Show* on NBC, frequent guest on *The Tonight Show,* and entertainer at El Rancho Vegas) all stayed there.[125] In addition, the legendary Strip crooners Wayne Newton and Bobby Darin entertained resort guests.

Phase Three: Lorenzi Park, Home for Social and Cultural Programs

As the city's fortunes became increasingly tied to tourism, larger resorts slowly edged out locally owned competition such as Twin Lakes. Also, because Reno dominated the divorce trade historically, Las Vegas focused on becoming known as a marriage destination. Of the city's three dude ranches, all struggled by the late 1950s; the City of Las Vegas purchased Tule Springs Ranch in 1964, and North Las Vegas acquired Kiel Ranch several years later.[127]

In 1959, Thomas Sharp, who had owned and leased the property to St. John throughout the 1950s, died. St. John's Twin Lakes Corporation soon invoked a purchase option clause in the 1959 lease renewal and, in 1962, purchased the eighty acres. St. John divided the property in half, selling the half along Rancho Drive for a handsome profit. Before he could sell the remaining forty acres of Twin Lakes Lodge, more than a hundred and fifty citizens drafted and signed a petition asking the city to buy the acreage for future use as a park.[128] They did not want to see their much-loved retreat dismantled piecemeal by developers.

The corporation, however, made acquisition by the city unlikely because of its $1 million asking price. St. John knew the land's monetary and sentimental value, and thus, in an itemized statement of the land, facilities, and water rights, asserted its value at nearly $1.5 million and cited the resort's 41.49 acres as "adequate for a public park in a desert area." He went on to note that, since 1947, the city had spent a significant amount of money constructing local playgrounds and pools but had never offered to purchase Twin Lakes. Accordingly, he submitted information to the city unsolicited, arguing, "The saving and abundance of water alone, as against purchase, would pay the interest on one million dollars." Aside from economic arguments, St. John reminded city commissioners that hundreds of children lived within walking distance of Twin Lakes, and that building a similar facility for their enjoyment could not be done for even twice as much of his now-lowered $875,000 asking price. He then appealed directly to the public, cautioning them to "take direct action if they wish to preserve Twin Lakes," and reminded citizens that the city had $375,000 in bond money sitting idle, awaiting a park project. That bond money, combined with monies in an improvement fund, he said, could give citizens a park immediately. Addressing them directly, reminding them of Twin Lakes's singular charm and no doubt appealing to their sentimentalities and nostalgia, he asked, "Do you want a park today or another playground five years from now? If Twin Lakes is lost, it can never be duplicated."[129]

Recognizing the need for more green space within their growing city (and likely prodded by Lorenzi's son-in-law, Ed Fountain, now a city commissioner), the commissioners began discussing the idea of acquiring the forty acres but balked at St. John's price. Seeking an impartial opinion, they hired Phoenix-based Anderson-Stanton Company to appraise the property. After "a careful and detailed study of all factors and conditions affecting the market value, and the market value for city park purposes," appraisers reported the property's fair market value at $720,000.[130] Although St. John had declared that he would take no less than $850,000, he eventually accepted $750,000.[131] The city paid another $700,000 for the forty acres he had sold to developers in 1963.[132]

The decision proved sound, giving Las Vegas its largest green space, which remained unrivaled in size until Clark County's 1967 opening of Sunset Park. For the past forty years, Lorenzi Park has provided valley citizens with what parks the scholar Galen Cranz describes as an open-space system.[133] In the

decade after purchase, the city added baseball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and a playground, and until the early 1990s, the pool remained open to the public. Equally important, Lorenzi Park also provided space for social and cultural programs. Since 1965, community-enhancing programs have occupied the five bungalows not torn down when the city took over the property. From 1966 to 1995, the Las Vegas Art Museum housed its permanent collection, which included works by Marc Chagall and Alexander Calder, in three of the bungalows. School children, senior citizens, and Las Vegans of all walks of life routinely toured the six-thousand-square-foot facility.[134] The Lorenzi Adaptive Center, whose programming helps disabled teens take part in social and community activities, has also called the park home for several decades. Its wheelchair fitness course, volunteer opportunities, and skill-building programs have provided for the recreational and social needs of thousands of disabled Las Vegans.[135] Similarly, the Derfelt Senior Center has been located in the park for many years, providing for the social needs of the city's aging population. Its creative writing, dancing, music, and fitness programs attract hundreds of participants each month and provide vital interaction for aging retirees. Various garden clubs of the city meet frequently at the park's Nevada Garden Club Center and maintain the on-site rose garden. Concerts held at the Sammy Davis, Jr., Amphitheater also enhance the park's social and cultural roles. But Lorenzi Park's grandest cultural attraction is the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society, which opened in November 1982. Its four main galleries house exhibits relating to southern Nevada's history, anthropology, and biology, and attract thousands of visitors annually.[136]

The historian Thomas Bender once wrote, "Community is where community happens."[137] For nearly ninety years, Lorenzi Park has been a place where community has occurred. In its first phase, it was the city's prime space for social and recreational gatherings, enabling citizens to congregate in a single place. As Las Vegas evolved, the resort contributed to "future making" via its development into a dude ranch that, while still welcoming residents, catered to out-of-town guests and bolstered the city's nascent tourism industry. And in its most recent phase, it has become a home for social and cultural programs that bind Las Vegas's two million residents together. Though no longer located in a prime residential area, and having been eclipsed by other local green spaces, Lorenzi Park continues to contribute in meaningful ways to community-building efforts in Las Vegas and remains an historic lens through which to view the changing nature of life in this desert city as well as the changing role of community in development.

Notes

[1]David Millman, "Lorenzi Park: A Social, Cultural, and Service Center of Las Vegas," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 26 (Fall 1983), 187-95.

[2]Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, Jose Harris, ed., Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis, trans., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[3]Robert V. Hine, *Community on the American Frontier: Separate But Not Alone* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980). For case studies of communities or institutions, see Lewis Atherton, *Main Street on the Middle Border* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954); Elliott West, *The Saloon on the Mining Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979); Kathleen Underwood, *Town Building on the Colorado Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

[4]West, *Saloon on Mining Frontier*, 84.

[5]Eugene P. Moehring, "Town Making on the Southern Nevada Frontier: Las Vegas, 1905-1925," in *History and Humanities: Essays in Honor of Wilbur S. Shepperson*, Francis X. Hartigan, ed., (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1989), 82.

[6]In the sources relating to Lorenzi Resort and the Lorenzi family, several discrepancies exist about details of the early life of David Lorenzi. Sources report his arrival as occurring in September of 1910, 1911, or 1912. I have used 1912 here, as it is the date given by Lorenzi in a 1939 memorandum. (See D.G. Lorenzi and Fred Bartlett, memorandum, 1939, Lorenzi Park vertical file, Nevada State Museum and Historical Society (hereafter cited as NSMHS), Las Vegas.) In addition, sources date Lorenzi's birth between 1874 and 1877, and thus his age upon arrival to the United States fluctuates between thirteen and fifteen. Furthermore, the name of his adoptive father is also unclear. In a set of notes handwritten by Louise Lorenzi Fountain (David Lorenzi's eldest daughter) in the late 1960s or early 1970s, she identifies the millionaire as Mr. Smithcleft. (See Lorenzi Park Collection, 1928-1967 (MS 026), Box 1, Folder 2, NSMHS.) However, in an interview with Alice Rissman in 1980, she calls him Mr. Whitfield. (See Rissman Collection (MS 111), Box 1, Folder 13, NSMHS.)

[7]Lorenzi Park Collection, Box 1, Folder 2, NSMHS. The handwritten notes of Louise Lorenzi Fountain further state that upon returning to the United States, David found his adoptive father's brother "and put a curse on him." The brother died soon thereafter.

[8]Handwritten notes by Louise Lorenzi Fountain, Lorenzi Park Collection, Box 1, Folder 2, NSMHS; K.J. Evans, "David G. Lorenzi," in *The First 100: Portraits of the Men and Women Who Shaped Las Vegas*, A.D. Hopkins and K.J. Evans, eds. (Las Vegas: Huntington Press, 1999), 69-71; "Family Portrait: The Lorenzis," *Las Vegas Sun Magazine* (28 December, 1980); Autobiography of Louise Lorenzi Fountain (13 February 1967), Lorenzi Park Collection, Box 1, Folder 2, NSMHS.

[9]"Palms Confectionery," *Las Vegas Age*, (2 August 1920); handwritten notes by Louise Lorenzi Fountain, Lorenzi Park Collection, Box 1, Folder 2, NSMHS. Lorenzi operated The Oasis successfully for nine years according to "Lorenzi Lake Resort Genuine Oasis, Genuine Achievement [f]or Las Vegas," *Las Vegas Age* (2 July 1929).

[10]"The Man Who Dreamed," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, (17 January 1962).

[11]The resort occupied about twenty acres; Lorenzi used the remaining land for other endeavors, notably Home Ice Company and farming immense fields of alfalfa and maintaining peach orchards. Like other early Las Vegans, he believed the city's initial future lay in making the desert bloom.

[12]"The man who dreamed," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*.

[13]John F. Cahlan, "D.G. Lorenzi: Saw His Dream Become Reality in Founding Twin Lakes Resort," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, undated, Lorenzi Park Collection, Box 1, Folder 5, NSMHS.

[14]United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Nevada*; United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Nevada*.

[15]Hal Rothman, *The New Urban Park: Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Civic Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

[16]"Famed Vegas Ranch Long the Desert Oasis," *Las Vegas Age* (14 April 1905).

[17]"Formal Opening of Ranch Resort," *Las Vegas Age*, (29 April 1905); advertisement, *Las Vegas Age* (6 May 1905).

[18]"Ranch Resort Opening," *Las Vegas Age* (6 May 6 1905).

[19]"New Ranch Lease," *Las Vegas Age* (25 November 1905).

[20]"Vegas Park," *Las Vegas Age* (7 August 1909). This "resort" was also known as Vegas Park Plunge and Pavilion, though many Las Vegans simply referred to it as "Old Ranch," as it had been owned by the Stewart family and operated as a ranch for many years before the family sold it to the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad. The railroad subdivided a portion of the acreage and sold it as lots in the original Las Vegas townsite.

[21]Joan Whitely, *Young Las Vegas, 1905-1931: Before the Future Found Us* (Las Vegas: Stephens Press, 2005), 163.

[22]Ralph Roske, *Las Vegas: A Desert Paradise* (Tulsa: Continental Heritage Press, 1986), 64.

[23]Roske, *Las Vegas: Desert Paradise*, 64; Stanley Paher, *Las Vegas: As It Began—As It Grew* (Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1971), 147; Whitely, *Young Las Vegas*, 163. Information on James Ladd's tent hotel can be found in Charles Squires, *Las Vegas, Nevada: Its Romance and History* (Las Vegas, s.n., 1955), I, 280-95.

[24]"Vegas Has Trees," *Las Vegas Age* (27 November 1909).

[25]Paher, *Las Vegas: As It Began*, 111.

[26]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (26 June 1930).

[27]Hank Greenspun, "Where I Stand," *Las Vegas Sun* (4 March 4 1966).

[28]Sources attribute many names to the resort, among them Lorenzi Lakes, Lorenzi Lake Resort, Lorenzi's, Lorenzi Lake Park, Lorenzi Park, and more. I will use these names interchangeably.

[29]"Let's go swimmin'—the water's fine!" *Las Vegas Age* (13 May 1932).

[30]*Ibid.*

[31]"Lorenzi Resort to Stage Great Opening Sunday," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (14 May 1932); Alan Balboni, *Beyond the Mafia: Italian Americans and the Development of Las Vegas* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1996), 6.

[32]"July 4th Program at Lorenzi Lake Resort," *Las Vegas Age* (3 July 3 1926); advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (21 May 1936); Oran Gragson, interview with Peggy Silva, 11 January 1983, in Rissman Collection, Box 1, Folder 13, NSMHS.

[33]"Memories," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (11 July 1971).

[34]"Las Vegas to Celebrate July 4th at Lorenzi Lake," *Las Vegas Age* (12 June 1926).

[35]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Age* (3 July 1926).

[36]Great Crowd Attended Fireworks at Lorenzi's," *Las Vegas Age* (10 July 1926).

[37]"Lorenzi Planning Big July 4 Fete," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (28 June 1932).

[38]"Las Vegas to Celebrate July 4th," *Las Vegas Age*.

[39]"Lorenzi Resort Will Entertain Community in Unique Program," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (1 July 1932).

[40]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (30 August 1935).

[41]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (30 August 1932).

[42]"Expects Over 5,000 Attend Celebration," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (1 September 1932).

[43]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (28 February 1933).

[44]Editorial, *Las Vegas Age* (6 September 1933).

[45]Louise Lorenzi Fountain, Interview by Claytee D. White, (The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project, Oral History Research Center at UNLV, University Libraries, University of Nevada Las Vegas (30 March 30 2005).

[46]Mark Dent, "Women's Group Seeks to Return Lorenzi Park to Better Days," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (12 October 1980); Evans, "David G. Lorenzi," in *The First 100*, 51.

[47]"Fall and Winter Season Opens," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (20 September 1932).

[48]Florence Jones, "Twin Lakes Pavilion, LV Landmark Destroyed," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (27 February 1966).

[49]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (16 April 1932); advertisement, *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (4 May 1932).

[50]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (30 March 1933).

[51]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Age* (1 May 1932).

[52]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Age* (17 May 1930).

[53]Jones, "Twin Lakes Pavilion," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (7 February 1966).

[54]*Ibid.*

[55]Corke Pepper, "The Story of Twin Lakes," *Las Vegas Sun* (15 April 1962).

[56]Fountain, interview, 9.

[57]Cahlan, "D.G. Lorenzi: Saw Dream Become Reality," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Lorenzi Park Collection.

[58]"Band Dance Opened at Lorenzi's Resort," *Las Vegas Age* (7 May 1927); "Lorenzi First Night Popular," *Las Vegas Age* (11 May 1929); "Many Frequent Lorenzi Resort," *Las Vegas Age* (16 May 1929); advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (17 May 1930); advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (18 July 1930).

[59]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (28 July 1930); advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (9 October 1935); "Carlson Band to Be Vegas Feature," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (24 November 1934); advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (8 February 1936).

[60]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (23 July 1930; advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (3 July 1935); advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (22 January 1936).

[61]"Many Frequent Lorenzi Resort," *Las Vegas Age* (16 May 1929).

[62]Dent, "Women's Group," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (12 October 1980).

[63]Cahlan, "D.G. Lorenzi: Saw Dream Become Reality," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Lorenzi Park Collection.

[64]"Let's go swimming—the water's fine," *Las Vegas Age* (13 May 1932).

[65]Dent, "Women's Group," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (12 October 1980).

[66]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Age* (4 May 1932).

[67]"Lorenzi Resort Great Opening," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (14 May 1932).

[68]"Fish Are Planted in Lorenzi Lake," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (4 November 1932).

[69]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (4 August 1934); Pepper, "Story of Twin Lakes," *Las Vegas Sun* (15 April 1962); Jim Barrows, "Another Fond Bit of Old Vegas Dies," *Las Vegas Sun* (24 February 1966).

[70]"Building Dance Pavilion at Lorenzi Lake Resort," *Las Vegas Age* (5 June 1926).

[71]"Sunday School Picnic at Lorenzi Resort," *Las Vegas Age* (22 May 1926).

[72]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (25 July 1934).

[73]Eugene P. Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 90.

[74]Dent, "Women's Group," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*; Jones, "Twin Lakes Pavilion," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*; Pepper, "Story of Twin Lakes," *Las Vegas Sun*.

[75]"New Ball Park Now Is Nearly Complete," *Las Vegas Age* (24 March 1933); "Outdoor Sports at Lorenzi Resort," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (25 March 1933).

[76]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (30 March 1933).

[77]The climate of Las Vegas, however, proved ill suited to horseracing, and the venture had limited success. Fountain, interview, 22.

[78]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Age* (31 August 1934); advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (27 June 1936).

[79]"Thrills Abound at Lorenzi Rodeo," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (3 September 1934).

[80]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (5 June 1936).

[81]Roske, *Las Vegas: Desert Paradise*, 85.

[82]Paher, *Las Vegas: As It Began*, 120.

[83]Roske, *Las Vegas: Desert Paradise*, 87.

[84]Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-2000* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 12; Moehring and Green, *Las Vegas: Centennial History*, 74.

[85]Moehring and Green, *Las Vegas: Centennial History*, 75.

[86]Moehring, "Town Making," in *History and Humanities,* Hartigan, ed., 96.

[87]"$1,000,000 Dude Ranch at Lorenzi's," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (25 July 1935).

[88]Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 126-41.

[89]Alicia Barber, *Reno's Big Gamble: Image and Reputation in the Biggest Little City* (Lawrence: University of Press of Kansas, 2008), 126-74.

[90]"$1,000,000 Dude Ranch," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*.

[91]*Ibid*.

[92]"'Dude Ranch' is plan of Lorenzi," *Las Vegas Age* (26 July, 1935).

[93]Editorial, "That Lorenzi Resort Project," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (26 July, 1935).

[94]"Big Dude Ranch Is Said Assured at Lorenzi Park by Californians," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (7 February 1936).

[95]*Ibid*.

[96]"Work on Dude Ranch Started by New Owners," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (12 March 1936).

[97]"Dude Rancher Departs," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (18 April 1936); "D.G. Lorenzi to Reopen Resort," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (5 May 1936).

[98]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (4 June 1936, 5 June 1936, 27 June 1936, 12 May 1937).

[99]Dent, "Women's Group," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (12 October 1980).

[100]"Lorenzi Urges City to Buy Park," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (12 August 1937).

[101]"Lorenzi Offers Resort to City Board for Park," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (16 July 1937).

[102]Editorial, "Well Worth Considering," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (16 July 1937).

[103]Letter to the editor, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (19 August 1937).

[104]"Lorenzi Urges City to Buy Park," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (20 August 1938).

[105]A.E. Cahlan, "From Where I Sit," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (20 October 1954).

[106]"Option on Lorenzi Resort Is Reported," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (20 August 1938); "Lorenzi Extends Option on Resort," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (29 July 1939); "Lorenzi Park Sold to San Diego Man," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (29 June 1940); "First Dude Ranch In Vegas Section Opens This Week," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (26 July 1939); advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (24 May 1941); "Twin Lakes Resort Sold," *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (26 February 1945); Fountain, Interview, 27.

[107]Charles Squires, "Observations," *Jack Cortez' Fabulous Las Vegas Magazine* (3 November 1956).

[108]Pepper, "Story of Twin Lakes," *Las Vegas Sun* (15 April 1962).

[109]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, September 26, 1954.

[110]*Ibid*.

[111]Roske, *Las Vegas: Desert Paradise*, 113.

[112]"Lorenzi's Was Popular Resort," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (28 February 1955); advertisement, *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (8 June 1949).

[113]Pamphlet, Rissman Collection, Box 1, Folder 3, NSMHS.

[114]*Ibid*.

[115]Florence Jones, "Lorenzi's Was Popular Resort," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (28 February 1955); Jim Burrows, "Smooching, Waltzes and Prohibition: Another Fond Bit of Old Vegas Dies," *Las Vegas Sun* (24 February 1966).

[116]Pamphlet. Rissman Collection, Box 1, Folder 3 NSMHS; advertisement, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, undated, Rissman Collection, Box 1, Folder 6, NSMHS.

[117]Pamphlet, 1955, Lorenzi Park vertical file, NSMHS.

[118]Gina Patrick, "Historic Lorenzi Park—How It Began," *Las Vegas Sun Magazine* (12 October 1980).

[119]Letter from *Valley Times* Circulation Department to newsboys, Rissman Collection, Box 1, Folder 6, NSMHS.

[120]United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Lorenzi Park*, prepared by Angela Moor, August 2008, section 8, page 7.

[121]"Mid-winter Travel," *The Washington Daily News* (13 January 1960).

[122]Letter, Lloyd St. John to TWA 1961 Press Junket, UNLV Special Collections, as found in National Register nomination.

[123]Advertisement, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, undated, Rissman Collection, Box 1, Folder 6, NSMHS; "Twin Lakes Lodge: For the Rest of Your Life," advertisement copy, Rissman Collection, Box 1, Folder 12, NSMHS.

[124]Alice Rissman, "Facts on Lorenzi Resort and Twin Lakes Lodge," Rissman Collection, Box 1, Folder 13, NSMHS.

[125]Patrick, "Historic Lorenzi Park," *Las Vegas Sun Magazine*; Rissman, "Facts on Lorenzi Resort," Rissman Collection.

[126]Photo #8563, NSMHS.

[127]Unlike Twin Lakes, Tule Springs Ranch was a working ranch. The city owned the property until 1977, when the state purchased it and turned it into Floyd Lamb State Park. See United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Tule Springs Ranch*, prepared by Hal Steiner and Charles D. Zeier (May 1980), 16.

[128]"Lodge Sale Petition Denied," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (4 July 1963).

[129]Lloyd St. John, "Information on Twin Lakes Lodge," 15 September 1964, Lorenzi Park Collection, Box 1, Folder 4, NSMHS.

[130]Letter, Mel Anderson and Ben Stanton to R.P. Sauer, Appraisal for Twin Lakes Resort (MS 009), NSMHS.

[131]"Owner Trims Twin Lakes Asking Price," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (13 January 1965).

[132]"City Commission Offers to Buy Land for Park," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (17 July 1965); Minutes of Special Meeting of the Board of City Commissioners, 16 July 1965, Lorenzi Park Collection, Box 1, Folder 5, NSMHS.

[133]Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982), Chapter 4.

[134]Ken White, "Las Vegas Art Museum Forced To Seek New Home," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (22 August 1995). In 1995, the City of Las Vegas did not renew the museum's lease, which stipulated a $1 annual payment to the city. The city cited a need for additional space for Derfelt Senior Center and Lorenzi Adaptive Center. The facility, which eventually relocated to a space on Sahara Avenue, closed its doors in February 2008 because of budget cuts and the poor economy.

[135]W.G. Ramirez, "Center Helps Disabled Live Freely," *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (9 April 1997).

[136]Millman, "Lorenzi Park," 187-89.

[137]Quoted in Hine, *Community on American Frontier*, 25.

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