

# Nevada

Historical Society Quarterly



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Historical Society Quarterly

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# CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM IN THE SILVER ERA: A PUZZLE

Elmer R. Rusco

## PART ONE

As the 1895 session of the Nevada Legislature ended, Major John Dennis, a legislative correspondent for the *Reno Evening Gazette* whose nom de plume was Joblots, reported that a Purity of Elections bill had passed the State Senate "by the Heaven inspired majority of eleven to three."<sup>1</sup> Since the Assembly had previously approved the same measure in the same form, he assumed correctly that it would shortly become law, and went on to rhapsodize:

I am too happy for utterance or writurance. Farewell, a long farewell to the potency of the sack, and all hail to the blessed era of decent politics in the battleborn commonwealth of Nevada. Bless the Seventeenth session, with all its short comings. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.<sup>2</sup>

## PROVISIONS OF THE 1895 PURITY OF ELECTIONS ACT

Nevada's first campaign finance regulation law was in several respects more thorough and comprehensive than anything enacted or proposed since, although in recent years campaign finance reform has been considered at every legislative session. Crucial information about this apparent early Nevada attempt to deal with the role of money in elections has not been found and may not be, but it is worthwhile to review what is known and attempt to explain the law in relation to what is known of the patterns of Nevada politics.

The Purity of Elections act applied to all general elections in the state, at all levels, including county, municipal and township elections.<sup>3</sup> Federal elections were even covered by the law, although this part may have been unconstitutional. Section 1 declared that the law applied to "All nominations [*sic*] of candidates for public office to be filled by election within this State, and Presidential

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elections." Presidential electors were mentioned specifically in section 11 and United States Representatives in section 3.

In spite of the wording of section 1, the statute did not apply to nominating conventions, which still selected most candidates for public office. An 1891 statute had laid down rules governing such conventions and specified a means by which candidates could be nominated by petition, a first step toward the direct primary.<sup>4</sup>

Section 1 of the Purity of Elections act seemed to centralize responsibility for collecting and spending general campaign moneys in appointed five-person committees. It declared that certificates of nomination for candidates for public offices in the state had to be filed in the manner required by the 1891 statute noted above. This requirement was followed by this language:

and at the time of filing the certificate of nomination the persons signing such certificate shall also file with the person authorized by the law to receive and file such certificate, the names of five persons who have accepted in writing and consented to act, selected to receive, expend, audit and disburse all moneys contributed, donated, subscribed or in anywise furnished or raised for the purpose of promoting the election of the candidates for office or electors named in the said certificate of nomination, or in any manner to be used in respect to the conduct and management of the election at which such candidates are to be voted for.

This section went on to state that no certificate of nomination was to be accepted without "written acceptance and consent" of the five members of the appointed committee, all of whom had to be "citizens and electors." It provided further for the filling of committee vacancies which might occur after the filing of the certificate. Then it went on to state an apparent requirement that the five-person committees were to have a monopoly on the receipt and disbursement of campaign moneys:

The said committee shall have the exclusive custody of all moneys contributed, donated, subscribed or in anywise furnished or raised for or on behalf of the political party, organized assemblage or body, or candidates represented by said committee, and shall disburse the same on proper vouchers under the direction of the body, or superior authority to which it is subject, if there be any.

The committees were required by section 2 to file a report twenty-one days after the canvass of the vote, detailing

all of the moneys contributed, donated, subscribed or in anywise furnished or received to the use of the political party, organized assemblage or body, or any or all of the candidates for public office, or electors, coming under the control of such committee.

The report also was to contain the total amounts expended by each committee. Specifically, it was to contain the name of each "contributor, donor, subscriber

or source from which said moneys were derived," as well as an "itemized" account of each expenditure, including the names of "the various persons to whom such moneys were paid, the specific nature of each item, by whom the service was performed, and the purpose for which it was expended." Finally, it was to contain an affidavit

subscribed and sworn to by each member of said committee, setting forth in substance that the statement thus made is in all respects true, and that the same is a full and detailed statement of all moneys, securities or equivalents for money coming under their control or into their custody and by them expended, directly or indirectly.

This language has been noted in detail because it seems clearly to require that a five-person committee was to be appointed by political parties as well as candidates. Nevertheless, the reports that were filed fell short of the fullness apparently required by the act (a matter that will be discussed in Part Two of this article which will appear in the next issue of this journal).

However, Section 3 introduced a confusing complication: It also required each candidate to file a report within 15 days of the election, which was to contain an itemized statement

showing in detail all moneys paid, loaned, contributed, or otherwise furnished to him or for his use, directly or indirectly, in aid of his election, and all moneys contributed, loaned or expended by him, directly or indirectly, by himself or through any other person in aid of his election.

The candidate's report was to list the names of all persons contributing funds "in aid of his election" plus a list of all persons to whom such moneys were contributed, together with appropriate detail on the expenditures made by the candidate. It was to be accompanied by an affidavit, "subscribed and sworn to by such candidate, which must be substantially in" the form spelled out by the statute. Since the precise wording of part of this section may be crucial in understanding the effect of the Purity of Elections act, it is quoted in Part Two of this article, in the discussion of what is known about the implementation of the law.

Another provision of Section 3 stated that, "If the candidate seeks to avoid the responsibility of any illegal payment made by any other person in his behalf, he shall set out such illegal payment, and disclaim responsibility thereof." Finally, it specified that candidates for state offices or any office involving more than one county and candidates for the Legislature were to file these reports with the Secretary of State, while all other candidates were to file with county clerks. The reports were to be public documents and "open to public inspection." Vouchers were required for all expenditures of five dollars or more.

Section 8 stated that no expenditures on behalf of a candidate or in connection with an election could be made by anyone other than the candidate or a com-

mittee organized under authority of the statute. It went on to say that "Any contract for the payment of money or any expenses incurred contrary to the provisions of this Act shall be absolutely void."

Section 5 detailed the purposes for which campaign moneys could be spent, by either a candidate or a committee, "whether before, during or after an election," as follows:

the expenses of holding and conducting public meetings held for the discussion of public questions, and of printing and circulating specimen ballots, handbills, cards and other papers previous to such election, and of advertising, postage, telephoning, and of supervising the registration of voters and watching the polling and the counting of the votes cast at such election, and of salaries of persons employed in transacting business at office or headquarters, and necessary expenses of maintaining the same, and for rent of rooms necessary for the transaction of the candidate or committee, or superior authority to which such committee is subject, if any, and for necessary incidental expenses.

A limit was placed on the amount to be spent for "incidental expenses" by either a candidate or a committee.

The total amount which could be expended on campaigns was also limited by Section 5. For salaried offices with two-year terms (members of the Nevada Assembly and the U.S. House of Representatives) the limit was five percent of the annual salary of the office; for four-year offices (statewide officers and members of the State Senate) the limit was four percent of the annual salary; and for offices with longer terms (State Supreme Court judges and U.S. Senators) the limit was three percent. There were also expenditure limits for part-time or unpaid offices.

Section 11 expanded existing corrupt practices provisions of law.<sup>5</sup> For example, the new statute outlawed aiding any person who was violating election laws to escape arrest or conviction, boarding or "maintaining a person at any place or domicile" for the purpose of securing the vote of such person, interfering with "the line of voters" at a polling place, paying for a nomination, and paying or receiving funds to secure a candidate's withdrawal from an election. Section 9 prohibited use for electoral purposes of any place in which "intoxicating liquors" were sold or provided, and sections 19 through 28 contained many other newly illegal practices.

Penalties for violation of the statute were substantial. Candidates or members of a committee who failed to file the required reports or who violated the statute in several other ways could be convicted of a misdemeanor, defined as an offense punishable by a fine of not over \$500 and/or imprisonment for up to six months (sections 30-37). However, filing a false statement was a felony (defined as a crime requiring incarceration in the State Prison), with possible imprisonment for one to seven years (sections 27, 28). A felony conviction for violation of the statute was also to result in loss of the right to vote (Section 17).

Any candidate or officeholder found guilty of violating any part of the statute



was to be prevented from assuming the office to which he had been elected or was to forfeit the office which he occupied (Section 11). Moreover, such a person could not be appointed to fill any future vacancy in the office (Section 16).

Any elector could file an action in a district court that could lead to such forfeiture "for any of the causes or offenses named in" the act (Section 12). Sections 13–15 expanded on the procedure for citizen initiatives to enforce the law. However, Section 13 also provided a very large loophole that could be used to avoid removal from office. Judges could permit officeholders to retain their offices if they found that the offenses were not committed by the candidate or were committed without the "knowledge or consent" or the "sanction or connivance" of the candidate or were "trivial, unimportant and limited in character" or were accidental and "did not arise from any want of good faith." Finally, if a judge found that "under the circumstances it seem[ed] to the Court to be just" not to require forfeiture of office, this penalty would not be exacted.

District attorneys were specifically required to "diligently inquire into the facts" of alleged violations of the statute brought to their attention by "any person." Prosecutors were also required to file affidavits alleging violation of the law if they found "reasonable ground" for a prosecution (section 18). Moreover, this section declared it to be the duty of the district attorney "to prosecute any and all persons guilty of violation of any of the provisions" of the act, "under penalty of forfeiture of his office." To further aid in prosecution of such cases, any citizen was authorized to hire an attorney "to assist the District Attorney to perform his duties under the Act" and such an attorney was to be "recognized by the District Attorney and Court as associate counsel in the proceeding." However, there was no provision for paying the expenses of such an attorney.

The extent to which these provisions represented an expansion of existing rights of citizens to bring alleged infractions of the law to the attention of law enforcement officers is unclear. On its face the provision for allowing private attorneys to assist prosecutors, since it provided no threshold conditions for such intervention, expanded the standing of ordinary citizens to intervene in cases of this sort, although this writer is not acquainted in detail with legal practice in the late nineteenth century. Certainly the penalty of removal from office for failure to prosecute diligently was new.

In summary, the Purity of Elections law dealt primarily with the reporting of general election contributions and expenditures. All campaign contributions and expenditures (with no threshold requirements) in all general elections in the state had to be reported, provisions which go far beyond anything given serious consideration by the Nevada Legislature in recent decades. The penalties for violation of the new law were severe and extended to forfeiture of office. Finally, there were provisions specifically requiring prosecutors to pursue allegations that the statute had been violated, under the threat of removal from office for failure to enforce the law.

Moreover, the statute was well drafted and went into great detail to deal with

all aspects of the electoral process and outlaw many different practices which could be used to corrupt elections. Only two provisions suggest anything other than a good faith effort to enact a stringent law designed to ensure that money could not be used to buy elections. These were the obvious loopholes which could be used to prevent a candidate violating the law from forfeiting office and the fact that public reports on contributions and expenditures were to be reported only after the election, which meant that voters could not use them as a guide for casting their ballots. A source of potential confusion was the provision for two entities required to file disclosure reports—committees (including party bodies) representing candidates and candidates themselves.

The Purity of Elections act was in effect for the general elections of 1896 and 1898, although it was amended in minor ways in 1897. Acting Governor Reinhold Sadler, in his address to the 1897 Legislature, commended both the 1891 Australian ballot law and the Purity of Elections statute, saying of the latter that it “places the poor man and the millionaire who aspire to office on terms of equality.” He suggested that the law be amended “to enable the candidates to visit their constituents in the various parts of the State or county, as the case may be, and to pay the legitimate expenses of the campaign.”<sup>6</sup>

Responding to this request, the 1897 Legislature added some more purposes for which campaign moneys could be spent and amended the expenditure limits. The candidate campaign finance committee, renamed the auditing and disbursing committee, was limited to spending \$1,000 in contests for statewide office or multi-county offices, \$600 in contests for county or township offices, and \$100 in contests for municipal office. Candidates could not spend more than \$250 in seeking statewide offices or \$100, \$50, \$25 and \$5 for county, township, municipal or public school trustee offices respectively.<sup>7</sup>

#### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE LAW

The biggest problem in understanding the 1895 Purity of Elections law is that it was adopted when the state apparently was dominated by a non-party electoral organization—the Southern Pacific machine—which reportedly ruled primarily through use of money in ways outlawed by the act. Moreover, the statute was clearly copied from one previously passed in California, where it is also alleged that the same corporation-based machine dominated state government. What can account for its passage at this time? Finally, what evidence is there that the act diminished the power of this machine or in other ways made transformative changes in the patterns of Nevada politics? Part Two of this study will deal with these questions, but first we must examine the available evidence about the political situation which existed at the time the act was put forward and adopted.

On its face the Purity of Elections act was passed to carry out state platform planks of both the Silver Party and People’s Party. The 1895 Silver Party platform stated:

We denounce the purchase and sale of the Elective Franchise as destructive of our liberties and treason to our Government. We demand the disfranchisement of both parties to the crime, and the punishment of the prisoner by fine and imprisonment. The franchise once sold shall be gone forever.<sup>8</sup>

The People's Party platform in the same year was both more specific and closer to the law enacted:

We are in favor of the enactment of a law with an adequate penalty compelling candidates for public office, to make under oath, an itemized account of all their campaign and election expenses of whatsoever nature or character, and restricting the maximum of such expenses to five percentum of the gross emoluments of the particular office, thereby enabling poor and able men to become candidates for office as well as rich men.<sup>9</sup>

It was widely assumed at the time that the 1895 Legislature was nominally under the control of a coalition of members from these two parties, although the actual situation was more complex. However, support for campaign finance regulation was more widespread than these two planks would suggest. The longest address to the legislature was delivered by retiring Republican Governor R. K. Colcord. His twenty-eight-page address called specifically for purity of elections legislation, praising the Australian ballot law and suggesting that the legislators should concern themselves with "the more urgent matters of corruption and intimidation." Noting that Nevada had many laws prohibiting improper electoral acts, he charged that these "in a measure . . . have failed of their purposes."<sup>10</sup>

Colcord said that public opinion in Nevada and other states "condemns the notorious use of money in elections and insists on the wise enactment of laws to promote the purity of the ballot." He specifically recommended passage of the 1893 California statute which was clearly the model for the Purity of Elections law the session later passed, saying that it was "rigidly drawn" and that its enactment would "be a mighty blow to corruption." He went on to say what he thought was important in this law.

Not only are candidates compelled to file certified statements of their receipts and expenditures, but political committees, and their agents, are obliged to do likewise. The management of the whole campaign thereby becomes a matter of public record: the sources of the committee's revenues and the objects of their expenditures are within the reach of all. This publicity tends to the discouragement of bribery and of contributions of large sums of money by corporations or individuals to campaign funds. The law also provides for the severe punishment of all known offenses against the elective franchise.<sup>11</sup>

Silver Party Governor John E. Jones did not make an early or long address to the Legislature because of illness (he died April 10, 1896). But he did "commend to [the Legislature's] earnest attention" the recommendations of Governor Col-

cord on the Australian ballot and purity of elections, plus woman's suffrage, which was another reform topic of the time.<sup>12</sup>

On the first day of the session Silver Party Lieutenant Governor Reinhold Sadler addressed a joint session of the Legislature in place of Governor Jones. He did not mention election reform but did note that "the people will hold the Silver Party in this Legislature responsible for the results of this session."<sup>13</sup>

The Secretary of State was the official charged with some of the duties of enforcing the law, and his views on election law are normally of substantial importance. It appears that neither the outgoing nor the incoming occupants of this office were among those advocating campaign finance reform. Outgoing Republican O. H. Grey did not mention this topic in his biennial report for 1893-94 but did express disapproval of the Australian ballot law, saying that, "This ballot system is very expensive, and, in my opinion, does not meet the hopes of the people by eliminating the element of dishonesty in the exercise of the franchise."<sup>14</sup> His replacement, Silverite Eugene Howell, demonstrated by his response to the bill after it became law that he was not enthusiastic about it (a topic covered in Part Two); what he may have told the 1895 Legislature about the proposal is not known.

Several newspapers echoed the Lieutenant Governor in describing the session as dominated by the Silver Party;<sup>15</sup> but in neither house did the Silver Party



Governor John E. Jones (the younger man in a dark suit) and family. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

alone have a majority, and only in the Assembly did the Silverites plus the Populists constitute such a majority. Moreover, in both houses the coalition which elected the leader, though numerically dominated by members of the Silver Party, comprised members of several parties, and in each case the most important elected official was not a member of either the Silver or People's parties.

Fourteen of the thirty members of the Assembly were Silverites, and with the three Populists they constituted a majority. However, what is probably most important is the majority which elected the Speaker, because this determined the composition of committees. Voting to elect Democrat Lemuel Allen of Churchill County were the fourteen Silverites, two Populists (Populist H. H. Hogan did not vote for Allen) and one Democrat; Allen did not vote in this contest. The opposing candidate, Republican J. A. Conboie of Storey County, was supported by the lower chamber's eleven Republicans and Hogan.<sup>16</sup>

The resulting committee structure gave the leading positions but not total domination to the Silver/Populist coalition. Of the twenty-three committees, fourteen had Silver Party majorities and seven more majorities of Silverites plus Populists. No committees had majorities of either Democrats or Republicans but two lacked single-party majorities or a Silver/Populist majority. If the first person in the lists of committee members in the *Assembly Journal* was in each case the chair (which was the customary practice) nineteen committees were chaired by Silverites and three by Populists; some individuals chaired more than one committee. Each of the Populists chaired a committee and among the Silverites only J. A. Denton of Lincoln County and J. I. Wilson of Lyon County did not head a committee. However, Denton was the floor leader for the coalition; Speaker Allen also did not chair a committee.<sup>17</sup>

The situation in the Senate was similar, with no clearcut single-party majority and an even more complex organizational coalition. Of the fifteen members of the upper house, only five were Silverites and the addition of the one Populist member did not give that coalition a majority. The President Pro Tem chosen in this situation (effectively the majority leader) was another Democrat, J. E. Gignoux of Lyon County. He was elected with the votes of five Silverites, one Populist, four Republicans and one Independent. Opposing this coalition were two Democrats (one of whom was Gignoux), one Republican and one Independent.<sup>18</sup> The Lieutenant Governor was constitutionally the presiding officer but could cast a vote only in case of a tie; he was Sadler, a member of the Silver Party.

The Senate committee structure also did not indicate clearcut Silver/Populist control. Only three of the eighteen committees had Silver majorities, and two more had Silver/Populist majorities. Four committees, including Ways and Means (which presumably had most responsibility for the state budget) had Republican majorities, one had a Democratic majority, one an Independent majority, and seven no party majority at all. Assuming again that the first

member listed for each committee was its chair, nine committees were chaired by Silverites, one by the lone Populist, six by Republicans, one by a Democrat, and one by an Independent.<sup>19</sup>

#### LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF THE PURITY OF ELECTIONS BILL

The purity of elections bill began as Assembly Bill 9, introduced on the fifth day of the session. It was approved without amendment by both the Assembly standing Committee on Elections and a select Joint Committee on Elections. It passed on third reading in the lower house (the decisive action) by a vote of twenty to seven on March 12, the fifty-first day of the session, four days before adjournment.<sup>20</sup>

By the time it had reached the floor there was clearly a strong majority in favor of AB 9, although it was still controversial. Silverite J. H. Weiland of Elko County moved for indefinite postponement (which would have killed the bill) but lost, with only five votes supporting his motion. A motion by floor leader J. H. Denton of Lincoln County to postpone final action until the next day was also voted down, and three members (Populists Hogan, H. H. Beck and Silverite F. O. Gorman) were each appointed a committee of one to correct unspecified but minor language in the bill. Following adoption of the minor amendments brought back by these members, the bill was read and approved by the large margin noted above.

During the debate on March 12, according to one newspaper account, Speaker Allen opposed the section that, as the reporter put it, "prohibits a candidate entertaining a voter, furnishing him with meals, drinks, etc." He was answered by Assemblyman Beck, who said that this provision was not overly broad because "the intention to corrupt the voter by such donations had to appear." The *Reno Evening Gazette's* Joblots reported that Speaker Allen had "spoken several times against the bill" but unfortunately no reporter recorded what he said (and the legislative journals did not record debates).

Democrat S. L. McNaughten of Esmeralda County supported the bill, noting that "a similar law had worked well in California, and it was in the interest of honesty and purity of elections." Populist Dr. Hogan "said there was nothing in the bill that any honest man need be afraid of. It was designed to give a good man of merit a show against a rich man devoid of it."

The opponents in the Assembly floor debate mostly argued that the bill was too long and complicated and could not be enforced. Silverite Gorman of Eureka "said it would put the candidate in danger from the moment of his nomination until the day of election." Joblots wrote that Denton, who had tried to postpone the final vote, originally voted no on final passage but then changed his vote to aye.<sup>21</sup>

Analysis of the votes on final passage shows all parties divided on the issue and that the bill could not have passed without some Republican support. Sur-

prisingly, only nine Silverites voted for the bill, while four voted against it. Populists Beck and Daniel C. McDonald of White Pine County were for it but Dr. Hogan, after supporting it in debate, voted against it. Eight Republicans voted in favor of AB 9 and two against it. One Democrat voted for the bill but the Speaker, also a Democrat, did not cast a ballot. A Silverite and a Republican were absent.<sup>22</sup>

Following the vote in the Assembly, Major Dennis, the *Gazette's* legislative correspondent, reported that some observers were predicting that AB 9 would die in the Senate, and that for this reason "no particular pains were taken to down it in the Lower House." A later story by Dennis stated that the Senate was debating the bill and that "the indications are said to be favorable for its final passage. God grant that they are correct." At the end of this dispatch, Dennis reported the news that the bill had passed the Senate and made the remarkable statement quoted at the beginning of this article.<sup>23</sup>

Senate approval came only two days after Assembly passage, two days before the session's adjournment. Earlier the Judiciary Committee had unanimously recommended its approval, without amendment. On the day of final passage a motion to strike out Section 21 (which provided a penalty of one to five years' imprisonment for knowingly registering to vote illegally) was defeated by a vote of nine to five, followed quickly by Senate approval by a vote of eleven to three. If the amendment had been adopted, the measure would have had to go to conference with the Assembly, which would have offered another opportunity to defeat it.

Again, the Senate vote showed division within the parties with the largest representation: Four Silverites and the lone Populist voted for it, but one Silver Party member was opposed. Three Republicans were for it but two voted no. All three Democrats voted for the bill, joined by one Independent; the other Independent was absent.<sup>24</sup>

#### THE ORIGINS OF THE LAW AND REASONS FOR ITS PASSAGE

Newspaper accounts of the 1895 session do not present a full or adequate explanation of why the legislature passed this bill. The *Carson Morning Appeal*, the *Carson City Morning News*, the *Nevada State Journal*, the *Reno Evening Gazette* and the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise* were examined for dates around key legislative actions, but little information was provided by any of these. In its only significant comment about the bill, the *Carson Morning Appeal* reported that when the sixty-page bill was taken up in the upper house, someone secured some guns from the State Museum and put them on the desks of various Senators "during the reading of Beck's Purity of Election bill, in order that the members might kill the clerk if his reading grew tiresome."<sup>25</sup>

Clearly Henry Hudson (usually called H. H.) Beck, one of the three members of the People's Party in the Assembly, was the most vigorous advocate of AB 9.



H. H. Beck. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

He also worked hard for a constitutional amendment providing for woman's suffrage and for calling a state constitutional convention. On the first day of the session he received unanimous consent to introduce both measures.<sup>26</sup>

Beck had been a successful Reno businessman for several decades by the time he led the drive for passage of the Purity of Elections law. He had come to Nevada in the early 1860s from Iowa, a way station on his way from his birthplace in Ohio. Settling first in Carson City, he later moved to Washoe City, where he superintended construction of the Ophir mill and set up a retail business. While in Washoe City he played a key role in the struggle to prevent removal of the county seat to Reno between 1868 and 1871. He participated in two court suits, the second of which was lost, and as a member of the Assembly led a legislative attempt to prevent transfer of the county seat. These efforts were futile, mainly because building of the Central Pacific Railway through Reno had brought about a major population shift from Washoe Valley to the Truckee Meadows.<sup>27</sup>



Beck apparently moved to Reno in January 1876, when he opened a general merchandise store at Virginia and Second streets, advertising that he sold "Groceries, provisions, hardware, crockery." He also was involved in numerous other business activities. For example, he was an owner and manager of the Pioneer (later Silver State) Flour Mill, near the Truckee River in what is now downtown Reno. In 1876 he was one of three trustees of the Consolidated Poe Mining Company, just before the mine at Poeville on Peavine Mountain was closed.<sup>28</sup>

From his early days in Washoe City, Beck played an active role in the community. Before moving to Reno he served as a Justice of the Peace and a Washoe County Commissioner. Later he was a member of several Washoe County grand juries, at least twice (in 1874 and 1876) serving as foreman. He was elected to the Assembly several times but had no strong partisan commitment; before 1895 he served in the 1864–65 and 1866 sessions as a Unionist, in the 1871 and 1875 sessions as a Democrat, and in the 1889 session as a Republican. According to newspaper accounts, he at one time participated in a Conservative Party and in 1885 took part in a Silver Party convention. In 1896 he was elected a member of the Washoe County Commission, as a Silver/Democrat. He died in Reno in 1907, at the age of 72.<sup>29</sup>

From at least the early 1880s he shared a strong reformist orientation with his friend Dr. H. H. Hogan, and obviously sought ways to win office and effect his ideas without a strong commitment to any party. In 1882 Beck ran for the Assembly as a candidate of the National Greenback Labor Party and by the early 1890s had joined Hogan as a leading Populist in the Reno area. For thirty years Dr. Hogan was Beck's physician; in 1902 Beck eulogized Dr. Hogan in the pages of the *Nevada State Journal*, stating of him that "If [Hogan] had any dominant ambition it was to do good. . . . Hypocrisy, pretense and duplicity were foreign to his nature."<sup>30</sup>

Beck led the ticket in Assembly races in Washoe County in 1894, followed closely by his friend Henry Hardy Hogan (also known as H.H.). Hogan was a physician and surgeon who had long been a passionate reformer. He had known Beck since they were both residents of West Union, Iowa before each came to Nevada in the early 1860s; Dr. Hogan arrived in 1864 to find Beck already living in Washoe Valley. Hogan had graduated from college in Albany, New York and from the Burlington, Vermont Medical College before the Civil War. During the great conflict he served in the Union army; he was wounded and subsequently discharged in 1863, and was an active member of the Grand Army of the Republic, the local post of which was in charge of the arrangements for his funeral. Dr. Hogan at first had a practice in Washoe City and, like Beck, moved to Reno after it became the county seat. Eventually he owned a ranch on Mayberry Road and for many years had an office on Center Street in downtown Reno.<sup>31</sup>

For a total of eight years, from 1881 to 1884 (with a gap of several months from



H. H. Hogan. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

November 1883 to May 1884) and again from 1895 to 1899, Hogan published the *Plaindealer*, a weekly newspaper which he subsidized and in which he presented his political views. From the beginning he was a strong advocate of the monetary views associated with the Greenback Party nationally but his views (to be described in greater detail in Part Two) were complex and evolved through the last two decades of the century. Like Beck, but to a lesser extent, Hogan had been an active participant in political life but without displaying partisan consistency. He had been elected to the Assembly in 1871 as a Republican and in 1875 as a Democrat.

#### PURITY OF ELECTIONS AND THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC MACHINE

Editorial comment by major newspapers was favorable to the Purity of Elections act immediately after its passage but also asserted that the Legislature which had produced it had been under the control of the Southern Pacific machine. Typical was an editorial in the *Territorial Enterprise*, which asserted that

the entire legislative works were under the absolute control and dictation of the political factotum of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, who maintained his supremacy in all matters, from the date of convening to the hour of adjournment

but that

the passage of the Purity of Elections bill was the one bright showing and most righteous act of the Sixteenth [*sic*] Session, and the one which, if any, will save it from the almost unanimous and unqualified execration of the respectable and decent element in the State.<sup>32</sup>

The *Reno Evening Gazette* attacked the Legislature and the Silver Party and said that the Purity of Elections law and several other measures (including first-time passage of a constitutional amendment allowing women to vote) “comprise almost the entire work of the Legislature of which any good can come.”<sup>33</sup> That both newspapers remained Republican during the 1890s may have had a bearing on their judgments of the session, although it is clear that the campaign finance reform law had important (and necessary) Republican support, as noted above.

There has been no way to locate all newspaper articles on the law during the two elections during which it was in force, but those which have been found suggest that most of the press regarded it as of minor importance. For example, Alf Doten lamented in his diary toward the end of the 1896 campaign: “Dull campaign under the Purity of Elections law,” and in a signed article in the *Nevada State Journal* for October 31, 1896 made this cryptic remark:

The purity of election law seems to operate quite favorably thus far, especially in the opinion of stingy candidates who like loaves and fishes in advance, and it is to be hoped that it will result to the general advantage in the outcome. Ward heelers, kickers and strikers feel the most aggrieved over it: the saloon keepers merely smile and saw wood or play ball.<sup>34</sup>

Several historians agree that Nevada operated under the political domination of the Southern Pacific machine, at least in several types of legislative decisions—such as the election of United States Senators—for several decades during the nineteenth century, including the 1890s. This thesis is a major theme of Gilman Ostrander’s *Nevada: The Great Rotten Borough*, and he offers documentation to support this conclusion. His suggestion that Nevada did not deserve to be a state because of this corruption does not necessarily follow, in part because similar conditions existed in several other states.<sup>35</sup>

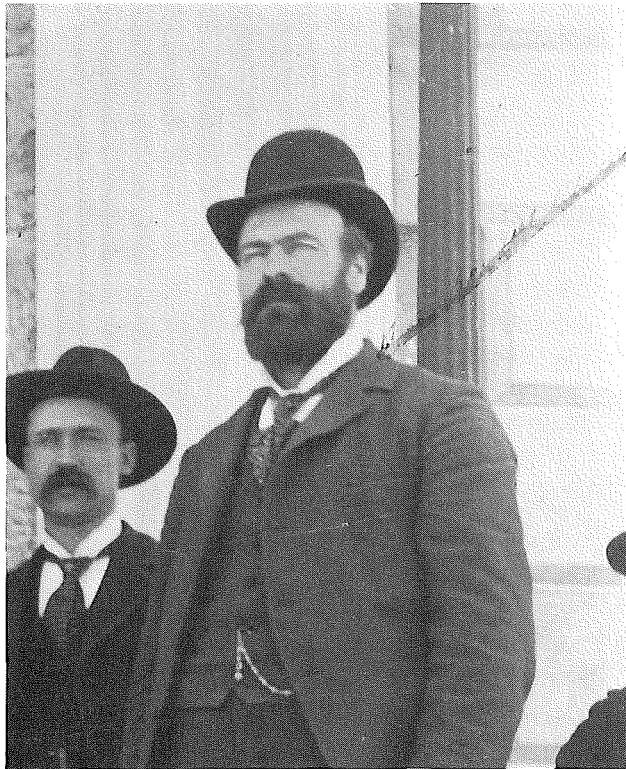
Writers more sympathetic to Nevada have essentially agreed with Ostrander’s indictment. Sally Springmeyer Zanjani wrote in her doctoral dissertation that “From the time that the first constitution was defeated . . . the mining soon joined and overshadowed by the railroad, manipulated political outcomes for their own benefit.” She spoke also of “the system of corporate control from sources outside the constitutional framework. In short, Nevada government was conducted for much the same purposes as the mines and by the same men.”<sup>36</sup> It is a demonstrable fact that most of Nevada’s United States Senators during the nineteenth century were either themselves major figures in important mining firms or persons clearly serving the interests of these firms.

A less certain claim is that these Senators were elected, to a major degree, through the efforts of the Southern Pacific machine. (This term is used throughout this article, although the railroad company was known as the Central Pacific before 1884, to simplify discussion and emphasize the continuity in behavior despite the name change). It is certain that, until 1910, the railroad company

maintained a Political Bureau whose employees were charged with dealing with governments. Earlier Stephen J. Gage headed the portion of this company unit devoted to Nevada; he was replaced later by C. C. ("Black") Wallace, who had gained this nickname when he was a "black" Republican.<sup>37</sup>

The railroad's Political Bureau clearly went beyond similar efforts by other corporations to control elections and elected officials. In fact, it duplicated functions normally engaged in by political parties, by recruiting candidates for public office, subsidizing campaigns, attending and attempting to control the party conventions which nominated candidates and formulated party platforms and lobbying legislatures and elected executive officials to secure tax, regulatory and other decisions favorable to the railroad.<sup>38</sup>

Neither the exact extent of the Southern Pacific's political efforts nor the degree of its actual success have ever been determined, although it is apparent that for several decades at the national level and in several states, including Nevada, most governmental decisions directly affecting the railroad were favored or at least not opposed by the company, although it sometimes lost. This issue is discussed more fully in Part Two, but clearly one problem in determining the



Charles Chestnut "Black" Wallace. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

extent of its effectiveness with respect to government was the charge that much of what it was doing was clearly corrupt.

Corruption has several meanings and many commentators, in the nineteenth century and more recently, have not indicated clearly what they mean by the term. However, it has been charged against the Southern Pacific machine that it corrupted Nevada government in two senses. First, it is alleged that, by controlling elections and officeholders without the knowledge of the voters, it subverted the democratic political process. Second, it is alleged that the machine actually purchased votes and/or governmental decisions. Since the latter actions were clearly illegal under Nevada law from the beginning, it is especially difficult to determine whether (or rather, to what extent) they occurred. Politicians seldom acknowledge that an unpopular group played the major role in getting them elected and those involved in bribery are even less likely to discuss the vital connection between a payment of some kind and an official act which makes the transaction criminal.

Fuller discussion of these questions is postponed until Part Two, but here it will be noted that many observers of Nevada politics, then and now, have believed that the Southern Pacific machine exerted control over Nevada government to a substantial extent for several decades, including during the 1895 session. For example, we have the opinion of veteran Nevada journalist Alf Doten, included in his journal (which remained unpublished until recent years) in the form of a news clipping he had written. C. C. Wallace was the Political Bureau's chief Nevada operative from the late 1880s to his death in 1901. When Doten learned of his death he wrote the following:

Mr. Wallace was probably the best known man in Nevada, where for many years he has acted as political manager for the Southern Pacific railroad company. His ability has never been questioned and his control over his fellowmen was but little short of the marvelous. His word was as good as a government bond with either friend or foes and he has probably placed more men into public office than any other man ever did. While he never allowed his energies to be directed away from the company he represented, it is well known that he was responsible for a great deal of excellent legislation.<sup>39</sup>

Historian and politician Sam Davis wrote in his 1913 history of Nevada that Wallace was "the chief" of several "political bosses who have directed the trend of political parties in the state at various times." Davis went on to say that

Legislatures, Central Committees and State Conventions were mere pieces on his political chess board. His rule finally became so absolute that delegates to state conventions waited for him to say what he wanted, and when his word went down the line it came as the general order of a military commander to his troops.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, Ostrander has asserted that "The Southern Pacific Political Bureau was probably never more powerful in the state than in the nineties. . . . S.P.'s Black Wallace dominated the politics of the state during the decade."<sup>41</sup>

Zanjani agreed, writing that "When the big bonanza ended in 1880, the position of the railroad became even more commanding," and Mary Ellen Glass, in a book devoted to the silver era of the 1890s, documents to a substantial extent Wallace's control over the Silver Party during that decade.<sup>42</sup>

Not only was the Purity of Elections law enacted during a period when apparently the Southern Pacific machine dominated the legislature. It was also, as noted above, copied almost verbatim (with changes necessitated by slightly different electoral laws) from a statute passed in California in 1893. This was during the period of apparent Southern Pacific dominance of the government of that state and before the development of any significant movement directed at counteracting the power of the Southern Pacific machine.

The fact that its source was the statute books of another state also explains how such a complex and detailed law came to be drafted at a time when staff assistance was very limited. The Purity of Elections law contained thirty-eight sections and occupied fourteen pages in the statute book embodying the legislative product of the 1895 session. There was no legislative counsel bureau at that time and no paid attorneys who could have drafted such a complex law, nor is there any evidence of a citizen group with the ability to provide such services. Either lawyers who were members of the legislature or attorneys employed by the Southern Pacific could have made the required adaptations, however.

#### SUMMARY: THE PUZZLE CONNECTED WITH ITS PASSAGE

The Purity of Elections law seems on its face to outlaw practices which had been used to maintain Southern Pacific control of the legislature and other elected officials. Both expenditure limits and the draconian disclosure provisions should have had the effect of sharply limiting if not preventing the Southern Pacific machine's use of money to control elections, and the long list of illegal election practices should have had the same effect. Moreover, the statute was well drafted (with a few exceptions) and contained unusual language designed to support strict enforcement of its provisions and allow citizen involvement in such enforcement. In short, apparently the law directed a heavy blow against the entity which had been ruling the state through corrupt means. This was the view of Major Dennis, who reported just before Senate action on the bill that the "lobby power" was opposing its passage and that

It is no wonder that that power is directed against the bill, for with its development into a law, the occupation of the class which fatten upon the corruption of conventions, elections and legislatures would, like Othello, be gone.<sup>43</sup>

If this be so, how could a measure of this sort have been approved by a Legislature dominated by the very organization against which the measure was directed? This article as a whole addresses itself to that puzzle. In Part Two, to appear in the next issue of this journal, the impact of the Purity of Elections law

on Nevada elections is examined and further attention is devoted to attempts to resolve the puzzle.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (15 March 1895), p. 3. Dennis, who died in Reno in 1907, spent forty years as a newspaper editor and reporter in Nevada. During his career he was editor and/or publisher of the *Reese River Reveille*, the *Eureka Sentinel*, the *Tuscarora Times-Sentinel*, the *Virginia Chronicle* and the *Nevada State Journal*. (*Nevada State Journal*, [22 March 1907], p. 4). Although an ardent and active Democrat, he was known primarily as a fearless advocate with a trenchant but witty style. An editorial after his death said that, "Nothing that he thought should be said in the columns of any paper of which he had charge was not said by reason of fear or favor." (*Nevada State Journal*, [8 April 1904], p. 2.) His military title was honorary, although he was appointed to command troops sent to eastern Nevada by Governor L. R. Bradley in 1875 because of rumors of an Indian "uprising." The troops were not needed and did not engage in any military action. Sam P. Davis, *The History of Nevada*, Vol. 1 (Reno: Elms Publishing Co., 1913), 184.

<sup>2</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (15 March 1895), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Statutes of Nevada, 1895, chapter 103, 103.

<sup>4</sup>Statutes of Nevada, 1891, chapter 40.

<sup>5</sup>Legislation designed to "preserve the Purity of Elections," a phrase contained in the titles of several acts, goes back to territorial days. The first Territorial Legislature passed a law forbidding the stuffing of ballot boxes or the practice of unlawfully ("by force, violence, fraud, or other improper means") obtaining ballot boxes before the ballots were counted, or destroying ballots or ballot boxes. Statutes of Nevada, 1861, chapter 48. Various legislatures subsequently expanded the list of illegal acts pertaining to elections.

<sup>6</sup>Reinhold Sadler, "Message to the Legislature of 1897," *Appendix to Journals of the Assembly and Senate* (hereafter *Appendix*), 10–11.

<sup>7</sup>Statutes of Nevada, 1897, chapter 85.

<sup>8</sup>*Nevada State Journal* (6 September 1894), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>*Nevada State Journal* (8 September 1894), p. 2.

<sup>10</sup>*Journal of the Nevada Senate*, 1895, 8.

<sup>11</sup>*Journal of the Nevada Senate*, 1895, 12–13, *Nevada State Journal* (23 January 1895), p. 4.

<sup>12</sup>Gov. John E. Jones, "Inaugural Message," *Appendix*, 1895, 8, *Nevada State Journal* (23 January 1895), p. 4.

<sup>13</sup>*Journal of the Nevada Senate*, 1895, 8.

<sup>14</sup>O. H. Grey, *Biennial Report of the Secretary of State, 1893–94, Appendix*, 1895, 14.

<sup>15</sup>*Nevada State Journal* (20 January 1895), p. 2, (22 January 1895), p. 4, (15 March 1895), p. 2 and others quoted later in this paper.

<sup>16</sup>*Journal of the Nevada Assembly*, 1895, 8. Allen had served five previous terms in the Assembly, matching the record of H. H. Beck, and had an extensive legislative career later. He was elected to the Assembly for the 1875 and 1877 sessions and also served in that body from 1889 through 1901, always as a Democrat, and was Speaker from 1895 through 1899. In 1902 he was elected Lieutenant Governor and served through 1906. He died in 1918. Nevada Secretary of State, *Political History of Nevada* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1990), George E. Peckham, "Reminiscences of an Active Life," *Nevada Historical Society Papers, 1917–1920* (1920), 127–28.

<sup>17</sup>*Journal of the Nevada Assembly*, 1895, 11–13.

<sup>18</sup>*Journal of the Nevada Senate*, 1895, 8–9.

<sup>19</sup>*Journal of the Nevada Senate*, 1895, 14–15.

<sup>20</sup>*Journal of the Nevada Assembly*, 1895, 23, 89, 133, 198.

<sup>21</sup>*Nevada State Journal*, (March 13, 1895), 3, *Reno Evening Gazette*, (March 13, 1895), 3.

<sup>22</sup>*Journal of the Nevada Assembly*, 1895, 198.

<sup>23</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (13 March 1895), p. 3; 15 March 1895, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup>*Journal of the Nevada Senate*, 1895, 193, 201.

<sup>25</sup>*Carson Morning Appeal* (16 March 1895), p. 3.

<sup>26</sup>*Journal of the Nevada Assembly*, 1895, 11, *Nevada State Journal* (22 January 1895), 4, *Carson City*

*Morning News*, (25 January 1895), p. 3. There was much ferment in favor of significant constitutional revision in the 1890s but also much confusion over the issue. In 1890 the electorate voted in favor of calling a constitutional convention, but no such body was convened because the state Supreme Court ruled that while the law allowed them to canvass votes for candidates they were not allowed to canvass votes for propositions. Colcord, "Second Biennial Message," 15–17. However, at the general election of 1894 the voters turned down twenty proposed constitutional amendments, by large margins (the highest number of yes votes for an amendment was 569 while the lowest number of no votes was 3,584), Nevada Secretary of State, *Political History*, 255. Governor Colcord attempted to explain these apparently contradictory actions by speculating that the "wholesale rejection" of the 1894 amendments "was not due to a non-desire for revision, but to the fact that correction and remedy by amendment is wholly impracticable." Colcord, *Second Biennial Message*, 16–17. In any case the result was that no significant constitutional revision took place during the 1890s.

<sup>27</sup>*Nevada State Journal* (5 October 1907), p. 3; Stanley W. Paher, "Significant County Seat Controversies in the State of Nevada" (MA thesis, University of Nevada, Reno, 1969), 8–30; Russell McDonald, "History of Washoe County," typescript, Nevada Historical Society, cliv. It was reported in 1876 that Beck was one of only thirty county taxpayers with an assessed valuation of over \$10,000. *Nevada State Journal* (14 September 1876), p. 3.

<sup>28</sup>*Nevada State Journal* (5 January 1876), p. 3, *Reno Evening Gazette* (29 September 1876), p. 1. A later advertisement listed additional goods: "Wines and Liquors, Paints and Oils, Tobacco, Etc., Etc." *Nevada State Journal* (12 September 1876), p. 3. The Reno Sanborn map for 1885 (sheet 1) shows the "H. H. Beck/Silver State Flour Mill" at the southwest corner of Ralston and Fourth Streets. Nevada Historical Society. In 1884, when Beck was sued by a Sacramento mill with the same name and a similar flour sack design, it was known as the Pioneer Mill; presumably he changed the name as a result of this suit, *Smith and Williams v. Beck et al.*, Common Law and Equity Case Files, Records of the United States District Court, District of Nevada, case 421, Record Group 22, Federal Regional Archives Center, San Bruno, California.

<sup>29</sup>*Nevada State Journal* (10 January 1874), p. 3, (7 September 1876), p. 3; Nevada Secretary of State, *Political History*, 191–204; *Nevada State Journal* (16 January 1895), p. 4.

<sup>30</sup>[Reno] *Plainedealer* (4 November 1882), p. 4; *Nevada State Journal* (21 March 1902), p. 1; McDonald, "History," cliv.

<sup>31</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (17 March 1902), p. 3; *Nevada State Journal* (18 March 1902), pp. 1–2; (21 March 1902), p. 1.

<sup>32</sup>[Virginia City] *Territorial Enterprise* (19 March 1895), p. 2.

<sup>33</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (18 March 1895), p. 3.

<sup>34</sup>Alfred Doten, *Diary* (Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Library), entry for 7 October 1896.

<sup>35</sup>Gilman M. Ostrander, *Nevada: The Great Rotten Borough, 1859–1964* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966).

<sup>36</sup>Sally Springmeyer Zanjani, "The Minority Party Innovation Theory: The Case of Nevada, 1886–1918," (PhD dissertation in political science, New York University, 1974), 40–41.

<sup>37</sup>George E. Mowry, *The California Progressives* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951).

<sup>38</sup>Elmer R. Rusco, "Machine Politics, California Model: Arthur H. Samish and the Alcoholic Beverage Industry," (PhD dissertation in political science, University of California, Berkeley, 1960), offers a typology of electoral organizations.

<sup>39</sup>Doten, *Diary*, clipping from *Carson News* (31 January 1901) in diary entry for 31 January 1901. In spite of Doten's remark about Wallace's veracity, there is good reason to believe that this is not strictly correct. For example, Wallace once wrote H. M. Yerington urging him to "say some untruths" in order to pass a measure favorable to the railroad, and went on to say: "I have often lied for you, which I denied," Ostrander, 122.

<sup>40</sup>Davis, *History of Nevada*, 441.

<sup>41</sup>Ostrander, *Nevada: The Great Rotten Borough*, 115.

<sup>42</sup>Zanjani, "Minority Party," 41. Mary Ellen Glass, *Silver and Politics in Nevada: 1892–1902* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1969).

<sup>43</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (13 March 1895), p. 3.



# SOUTHERN ITALIANS AND EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWS

## Cautious Cooperation in Las Vegas Casinos, 1940–1967

Alan Balboni

The predominance of Jewish Americans and Italian Americans in post-World War II Las Vegas gaming is striking, and reflects their success in providing gambling to America during the second quarter of the twentieth century. While less than 10 percent of the United States population was of East European Jewish or Southern Italian birth or ancestry in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, men of these backgrounds dominated the ranks of the hotel owners and executives, casino managers, and entertainment directors.<sup>1</sup> Jews were the principal owners of all but two of the major Strip hotels built between 1946 and 1967, while Italians were always overrepresented among the entertainment directors, showroom maître d's, casino managers, shift bosses, pit bosses, and floormen at these hotels. Italians and, to a lesser extent, Jews were often hidden investors in Strip hotels.<sup>2</sup> As casino gambling was illegal in all states except Nevada, virtually all Italians and Jews who owned or managed Las Vegas hotels had played at least a limited role in organized crime.<sup>3</sup>

Jewish and Italian primacy in both ownership and management of casinos reflected the extent to which these men had mastered the art of operating successful gambling enterprises. Young men of both backgrounds were disproportionately represented in casino work for the following reasons: patterns of urban settlement during the massive 1880–1910 immigration of Italians (more than 90 percent of whom were born in Southern Italy) and East European Jews; the cultural values of the two groups; the inclination of the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture to make illegal those activities widely viewed as immoral; employment discrimination against Italians and Jews by many corporations; and, perhaps most important, the American tradition of criminal enterprise as a career ladder

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for immigrants and their children. Booking numbers and running illegal gambling parlors offered a chance for economic and social advancement to some immigrant Italians and Jews, as well as to their children.

The economic and social circumstances of East European Jews and Southern Italians in the last quarter of the nineteenth century were dissimilar in some respects, similar in others. The former tended to live in towns and cities, to engage in commerce, and to respect formal learning; the latter were overwhelmingly farm laborers, most often illiterate. A similarity was that they did not exercise political power. While the commercial activities of the Jews sometimes led to living standards better than those of the surrounding peasants, they generally had limited opportunities to translate even their relative prosperity into political power. The inhabitants of Italy, especially those living south of Rome, had not controlled their destiny for centuries. A host of foreign conquerors—Arabs, Austrians, French, and Spanish—had dominated the Mezzogiorno, which includes the Italian peninsula south of Rome and the island of Sicily. Both the Italians and the Jews generally avoided contact with government officials and regulations.

The impetuses for their respective migrations to the United States also had points of contrast and comparison. Jews in the towns and cities of what is now Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, and Rumania were adversely affected both by the political turmoil that accompanied the growth of nationalism and by the economic hardship caused by overpopulation. Ruling elites often deflected popular demands for political and economic change by scapegoating the Jews. Most notable in that regard was the Russian nobility. Pogroms in 1881 and 1882 were directed against more than two hundred Jewish communities; this officially sanctioned mob violence continued for over three decades. The pogroms, the increasing economic misery of many Jewish communities, and the banishment of Jews from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Kharkov accelerated immigration. Often, as was the case with other ethnic and religious groups who migrated to the United States, the initial immigrants sent home glowing reports of opportunities in such cities as New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago. Others then had no hesitation in following. The East European Jewish exodus was essentially one of families. Young males, married and single, predominated at first, with wives and family members soon following; they did not expect to return and few did.<sup>4</sup>

The Italians had become impoverished as a result of overpopulation. Most desperate were those from Southern Italy, where low levels of land ownership and literacy prevailed. Millions of Italians migrated to North Africa, South America (especially Argentina and Brazil), and the United States; indeed, they migrated anywhere that offered greater opportunity for economic security than their exhausted lands. Yet the Italian migration was of a different nature from that of the Jews. The residents of such high-emigration regions as Campania, Calabria, Abruzzi, and Sicily were attached to their lands, to the natural beauty

of Italy, and to their villages. Grim as their situation was, there were signs of hope for their children as the Italian government attempted to eliminate illiteracy among school-age youths. The great majority of Italian migrants were young men seeking to make enough money so that they might return to their villages and live comfortably. It was not unusual for Italian men to journey to Argentina, return to their villages after two or three years, then set out for the United States a year or two later, return again to the village, and then leave again for the United States, this time with wife and family. Even so, the goal often was to return to Italy eventually.<sup>5</sup> Such an approach had implications in terms of citizenship, levels of political participation, and the degree to which parents were committed to their children's education. While Italian parents usually discouraged their children both from education beyond the elementary level and from participation in civic activities, Jewish parents tended to encourage their children's involvement in the larger community, especially in regard to education.

While the Jewish immigrants had more experience with urban living than the Italians, both groups were drawn to the growing cities of the Northeast and Midwest. New York, Newark, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago were most prominent among cities characterized by a growing industrial base, expansion of port facilities, burgeoning populations, and construction of roads, buildings, sewer systems, and subways. Members of the two groups often settled in close proximity as a result of circumstances beyond their control, rather than any conscious choice or affinity. They were the newest arrivals, and, like their predecessors, they generally had to accept the less desirable neighborhoods. In New York the Jewish immigrants, almost without exception, huddled together in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and the Italians settled nearby in Little Italy; in Boston, the North End and West End were almost totally Jewish or Italian by 1900; in Philadelphia the Italians and Jews populated distinct areas in the city's south.

Italian and Jewish immigrants initially had little in common, and members of the two groups seldom enjoyed close relationships. In addition to language difficulties and their differing orientations toward permanent settlement in the United States, Italian and Jewish immigrant men had distinct views of how best to make a living. The Italians offered their physical labor. A small minority pursued such trades as barber, cobbler, or tailor. In great contrast, the Jews were absent from the ranks of laborers. They preferred to enter business, particularly peddling, garment making, and fur wholesaling and retailing. Only in the New York City garment industry did Italian and Jewish immigrants have significant workplace contact.<sup>6</sup>

Some Italians and Jews engaged in criminal activities. This is not surprising, for several reasons. First, many American laws, especially those regarding gambling, liquor, and business regulation did not reflect either Italian or Jewish values. Second, most Italian and Jewish immigrant families lived in circumstances which, while often better than those in their native lands, were far below

the standard of living of most white Americans. Third, there was ample precedent, particularly for those who faced discrimination in legitimate employment, for seizing the opportunities presented by organized crime not only as a means to satisfy the basic needs of life, but also as a ladder of social mobility. The Italian and Jewish immigrants and their children saw that some of their predecessors, whether Irish, German, or English, had engaged in organized crime to gain wealth, political power, and eventually social acceptance. In short, as Moe Dalitz, Las Vegas's most successful syndicate-criminal-turned-casino-entrepreneur, said in explaining his youthful turn in organized crime, "Hard times make hard people."<sup>7</sup>

Sociologist Daniel Bell argued in the 1950s that crime was an integral part of the American experience. Protestant-dominated America had attempted to control perceived vices such as liquor consumption, gambling, and prostitution by making them illegal, but the laws did not eliminate the market for these goods and services. Indeed, the demand for liquor and gambling increased in urban areas inhabited by Catholics and, to a lesser extent, by Jews. By definition then only criminals could respond to the demand. Crime did pay, and nowhere better than in cities with large immigrant ghettos. As the American economy became more organized and legitimate businesses larger in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, crime became more organized, and criminal enterprises involved increasing numbers of participants. In the same fashion, Bell argues, successive waves of immigrants settling in cities have contributed some of their talented (and not-so-talented) to increasingly sophisticated organized-crime activities. Successful criminals, particularly those who either avoided violent crime or confined that activity to their youths, could achieve leadership and a certain respectability in their ethnic communities. The most talented might use the money gained from a flourishing illicit enterprise to assert political power even beyond the community.<sup>8</sup>

Predictably, some young Italian and Jewish men, seeking to avoid the monotony of difficult work for low wages in garment-industry sweatshops or construction projects, and often denied opportunities in banking, insurance, and other more legitimate endeavors, saw organized crime as a social ladder. Other paths to economic security and power included politics, trade-union leadership, and entertainment. The overlap in these areas, particularly organized crime, entertainment, and union leadership, had a positive impact on the development of Las Vegas.

Whether these young men were providing services that the Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture deemed illegal or were committing burglaries, robberies, or larcenies, they carried out their initial activities in their own ethnic neighborhoods. No less ambitious than their counterparts in legitimate businesses, however, some sought enhanced wealth and power by taking advantage of opportunities in other neighborhoods. These extensions often produced conflict, sometimes

grudging mixtures of cooperation and conflict, and occasionally long-term cooperation that enhanced the city-wide power of the participants.<sup>9</sup> The most successful often invested in legitimate businesses and garnered the respect of many who labored on at monotonous sweatshop and construction projects.

Bell was only the first to write about the rise of Italian and Jewish leadership in organized crime. He discusses the movement—perhaps evolution is an appropriate term—of Lepke Buchalter, Gurrah Shapiro, Dutch Schultz (né Arnold Flegenheimer), Arnold Rothstein, Lucky Luciano, and Frank Costello (né Castiglia) from ghetto criminals to major leaders of New York's organized crime, progressing, in the cases of Rothstein and the two Italians, to national infamy. Whatever their other vices, they were not blinded by ethnic loyalty: Jews and Italians often cooperated, occasionally including also those Irish mobsters who had recognized the ascendancy of these more recent immigrants. More often, they formed mutually beneficial relationships with Irish politicians.<sup>10</sup>

Other scholars and a number of journalists have written of the evolution of Italian and Jewish criminal entrepreneurs and their cooperative relationships in Chicago, Boston, Detroit, and Cleveland. In each case, the Prohibition Era (1920–33), with its great opportunities for bootleggers to amass small fortunes, proved the impetus for upwardly mobile Italian and Jewish gangsters to replace their Irish counterparts. Sometimes violence was used; at other times deals were struck. The most enterprising Irish gangsters had often already moved on to relatively more legitimate realms, forming businesses that depended on contracts with local or state governments. As millions of respectable Americans enjoyed a drink or two during Prohibition, the Italian and Jewish suppliers not only got rich, they also gained a measure of respectability. This was particularly true of the Jews. The best examples are Samuel and Harry Bronfman. The Bronfmans, Canadian Jews of East European background whose illegitimate activities began with the management of houses of ill repute, made a fortune sending liquor across the Great Lakes in the 1920s. They then bought Seagram Liquors, a Canadian company, and entered the ranks of legitimate businessmen after the repeal of the prohibition amendment.<sup>11</sup>

Others were not quite so successful in making the transition to legitimate business. Meyer Lansky, often referred to as the financial genius of organized crime during Las Vegas's rapid development during the 1950s and 1960s, is a good example. Robert Lacey writes that just a few days before Prohibition ended in late 1933, Lansky and several co-investors (including two Cleveland-based bootleggers who were to play an important role in the post-World War II development of Las Vegas, Moe Dalitz and Sam Tucker) formed a company to supply dehydrated powdered molasses to the distilling industry. They could not resist the temptation to increase their incomes by illegal means. The business, Molaska Corporation, declared bankruptcy after agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms discovered its connection to illegal stills, designed to

avoid taxes. In the 1940s Lansky invested money and time in supplying juke boxes and then television to bars and restaurants. Each failed, for a variety of reasons.<sup>12</sup>

Frank Costello's post-Prohibition activities provide another example of gangsters seeking legitimacy. Costello, a widely reputed major (and hidden) investor in Las Vegas hotels in the 1950s, and Phil Kastel, a Jewish mobster whose expertise was running gambling enterprises, opened a casino near New Orleans. Louisiana's governor, Huey Long, short on cash, invited Costello to install slot machines. In addition, and in collaboration with more obscure organized-crime associates, Costello purchased a legitimate office building on Wall Street, the Copacabana night club, and a liquor distributorship. While he used his substantial financial resources to exert local and state political influence, the respectability gained by the Bronfmans eluded him.<sup>13</sup> Other Italian and Jewish organized-crime figures, including many who would contribute capital and expertise to the development of the Strip, were establishing sophisticated gambling operations in locations as varied as Newport in Kentucky, Hallandale in Florida, Hot Springs in Arkansas, Cicero in Illinois, Butte in Montana, and Saratoga Springs in New York, as well as off the coast of Southern California, and even in Havana, Cuba.<sup>14</sup> Their financial resources brought them influence with local police and politicians, and sometimes with state law-enforcement officials. Yet they operated outside the law, and complete respectability was not possible.

Joseph Albini, a sociologist writing twenty years after Bell, describes syndicate crime as the provision of illegal products and services for which there is a steady demand, not the least from seemingly law-abiding people. "Serving as an intermediary source between the legal normative and the social normative systems in society, the syndicated criminal dedicates his energy and skills toward erecting a structure that though illegal, then becomes a functioning part of the social system within which it operates."<sup>15</sup> The best examples in twentieth-century America have been sex, gambling, liquor, and drugs. As syndicate crime is of necessity more visible than crimes such as murder, robbery, and assault, its leaders must provide for "protection" by the police and/or the elected officials. Two factors motivate the more enterprising of the syndicate criminals in their movement toward legitimacy. One, the more legitimate they appear, the less costly are their payments for protection; what is only socially normative now may in time become legally normative. Two, they may eventually have an opportunity to become legitimate without sacrificing income, prestige, or power.<sup>16</sup>

By the end of World War II, Las Vegas had everything to offer resourceful Italian and Jewish syndicate criminals. The great increase in the Southern California population, the rise in automobile ownership, and the development of the interstate highway system made Las Vegas accessible to millions. In addition, the United States economy was booming and provided the great majority of Americans with discretionary personal income. All of these factors served

virtually to ensure a healthy return on investment for experienced gambling entrepreneurs.

As gambling was legal in Nevada, respectability was a reasonable goal for those who wished to leave completely behind any earlier days that might have included bootlegging and even labor racketeering and hijacking. Las Vegas's reputation as a frontier town focused on the future rather than the past made this goal even more attainable. In addition, political influence was less expensive in Nevada than in the states of the Northeast or Midwest, which had larger populations and a multiplicity of interest groups. Thus syndicate criminals from New York, Chicago, Cleveland, and elsewhere enthusiastically channeled significant amounts of capital into Las Vegas, a city of fewer than twenty thousand at the end of World War II. Few questions were asked by local officials about the sources of the money that directly or indirectly provided jobs for thousands.

The involvement of so many Italians and Jews in entertainment and trade-union leadership—two of the other career ladders for the foreign born and their sons—was a source of power for the syndicate criminals who became Las Vegas investors. Knowledgeable about all aspects of the entertainment industry, these Jews and Italians had often been supportive of famous singers and comedians when they were just starting their careers. Frank Sinatra and Shecky Greene, both of whom dominated Strip marquees scores of times in the 1950s and 1960s, are good examples. Several of the syndicate criminals who invested in Las Vegas, most notably Moe Dalitz and Jay Sarno, had established business relationships with their counterparts in the Teamsters Union. They had access to capital that was used not only for construction or renovation of Strip hotels but also to build a hospital, a shopping mall, and various commercial and residential developments in rapidly growing Las Vegas.

Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel and Moe Sedway, prominent New York gangsters of Jewish backgrounds who had concentrated on syndicate crime since the end of Prohibition, appear to have been the vanguard of scores of Italian and Jewish mobsters who would either reside in Las Vegas or visit the city regularly from the late 1940s to the mid 1960s. They arrived in 1941 and looked over the small casinos in Downtown, the area adjacent to the railroad station that had prompted the founding of Las Vegas in 1905, to determine where they should make their investments.<sup>17</sup> They made contact with Nate Mack, a leader in the small Las Vegas Jewish community and a successful businessman. They and Mack cooperatively invested in several Downtown casinos. Sedway and Siegel were only the first of the Jewish syndicate criminals to benefit from Mack's respectability. A review of Las Vegas's major newspaper indicates that Sanford Adler, Gus Greenbaum, Charley Resnik, and Morris Rosen also made joint investments with Mack while he served as president of the Jewish Community Center and immediately thereafter.<sup>18</sup>

The extent to which Jews with backgrounds in syndicate crime quickly assumed high-visibility leadership roles reflected the openness of Las Vegas soci-



The Flamingo in the mid-1950s. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

ety. Sedway set the standard for Jewish syndicate criminals who wished to gain respectability in Las Vegas by serving as chairman of the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) in 1946. In 1951 Jake Kozloff, initially described as a Pennsylvania brewery owner in the Las Vegas press, took the UJA reins. Twelve months later Gus Greenbaum, perhaps the most effective casino manager among the gambling entrepreneurs who flocked to Las Vegas after World War II, succeeded Kozloff as UJA chairman. Sam Tucker, an executive at the Desert Inn and a close associate of Moe Dalitz in bootlegging and gambling enterprises in Cleveland and Detroit and Newport, Kentucky, followed Greenbaum. Two years later Moe Dalitz coordinated the UJA fundraising in Las Vegas. Ed Levinson, like Greenbaum an effective manager of gambling enterprises before and after syndicate criminals made Las Vegas the focus of their talents, succeeded Dalitz in 1956.<sup>19</sup>

Other Jewish casino owners and managers assumed prominent roles in Jewish religious life. Nate Mack was president of Temple Beth Shalom from 1945 to 1949. Jake Kozloff served in the same capacity for two years beginning in 1951. Jack Entratter held the presidency from 1959 to 1963, and then again during 1966–67. In addition, several of the Jewish gaming entrepreneurs were active in civic affairs, with Gus Greenbaum and Beldon Katleman, owner of the El Rancho, serving on the Paradise Town Board. (Paradise was an entity created to thwart efforts of the City of Las Vegas to incorporate the Strip; indeed, Greenbaum had been a prime mover in the creation of the aptly named artificial entity.)<sup>20</sup> No other American city offered such opportunities for religious and civic leadership as Las Vegas.

The Italians with syndicate backgrounds who came to Las Vegas provide some



contrast. Pete Bommarito, an associate of Moe Dalitz and a casino executive at several Strip resorts in the 1950s and 1960s, served as the second president of the Italian American Club of Southern Nevada. Nick Kelly (né Fiore), maître d' at the Sands and an associate of Frank Costello as well as of many Jewish criminals, was the guiding force of the club for more than a decade following Bommarito. But they were the exceptions. The Italians never matched their Jewish counterparts in community or philanthropic leadership.<sup>21</sup>

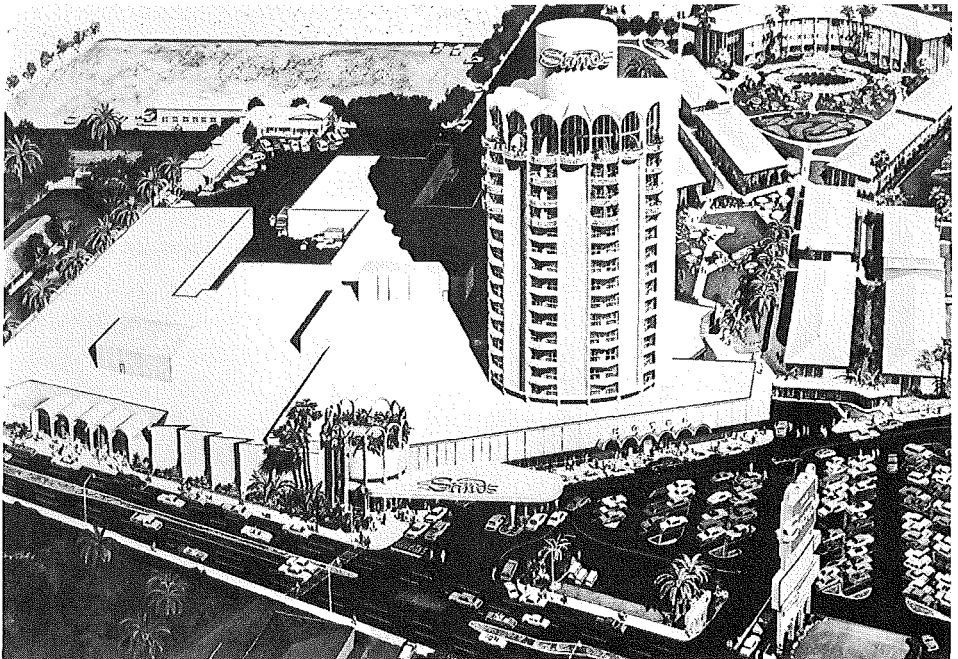
A review of the early years of Strip hotels shows Jews in highly visible leadership positions, with the Italians, and always some Jews, quite well represented in casino and showroom management jobs. With occasional exceptions, the Jews sought publicity; the Italians avoided it. The relationship of Italian and Jewish syndicate criminals at the Flamingo, the Strip's first modern resort, appears to have been repeated at all other Strip resorts. While almost all of Siegel's lieutenants at the Flamingo, as well as the men who took over the hotel's management after Siegel's gangland-style execution, were Jewish syndicate criminals, Italian mobsters contributed considerable capital to the realization of Siegel's dream.<sup>22</sup> Italians with experience in illegal gambling in the East were employed in the casino, but not in executive positions.

The same pattern appeared at the Desert Inn and the Sands. Moe Dalitz, Sam Tucker, and Morris Kleinman were the men in charge of the Desert Inn, though Wilbur Clark, neither Italian nor Jewish, was the ostensible major owner. Clark, who started construction on the Desert Inn and then exhausted his capital, went to Dalitz, Tucker, and Kleinman for a loan. It was an ideal marriage, with Clark receiving the cash to complete construction and Dalitz and associates gaining control of a major gaming property on the rapidly expanding Strip. In 1954 Clark sold his interest in the Desert Inn to Dalitz, Kleinman, and another long-time Dalitz associate, Rudy Kolod. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Italians, many from such Great Lakes cities as Detroit, Cleveland, and Buffalo, were well represented among the casino bosses and dealers at the Desert Inn. Frank Sennes, an Italian associate of Dalitz in Cleveland, served for several years as entertainment director at the Desert Inn, and later at the Stardust.<sup>23</sup>

The Sands opened in December of 1952. Its founders, as well as its executives for the next fifteen years, were Jews born either in Eastern Europe or in the United States. Initially, Jake Friedman, Jack Entratter, and Carl Cohen were most prominent. All had considerable experience in managing gambling operations—Friedman in Miami and Houston, Entratter in Miami and New York City, Cohen in Midwest cities. All had business and/or personal relationships with Meyer Lansky. Other leading executives at the Sands included Charles Kandel, Ed Levinson, Ed Levy, Ed Torres, Sid Wyman, and Aaron Weisberg, each of whom brought considerable experience in gambling management to their positions. They, too, appear to have been associates of Lansky; indeed, Levinson was captured on a hidden FBI tape when he was chief executive of a Downtown casino, the Fremont, discussing Lansky's share of money skimmed



Wilbur Clark's Desert Inn about the time it opened in 1952. (*Lawton B. Kline Collection, Nevada Historical Society*)



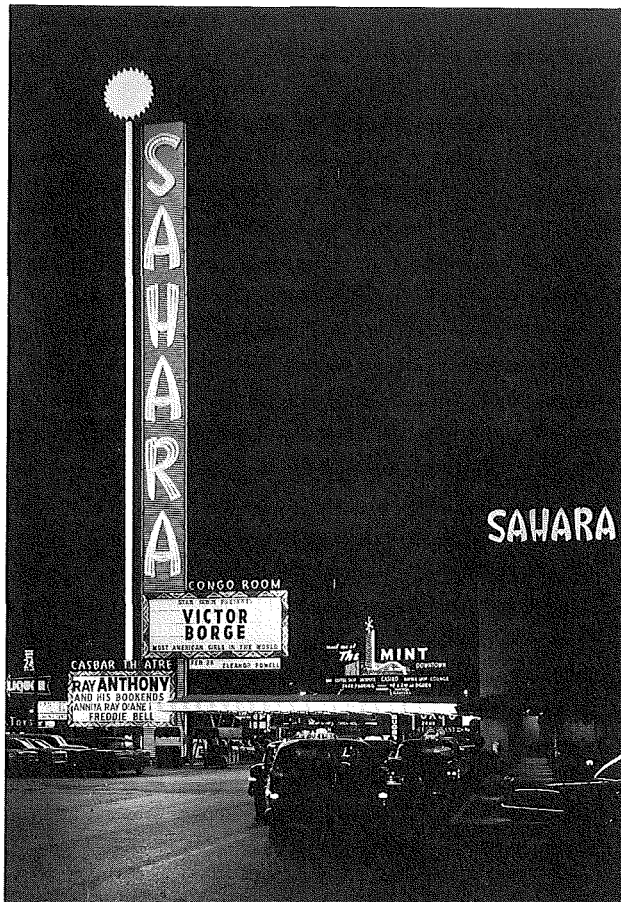
The Sands in a later phase. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

from casino revenue. Meyer Lansky's Miami neighbor, Jimmy Alo, regularly visited the Sands, presumably to make certain that he and other Italians received a fair return on their hidden investments.<sup>24</sup> Here, too, an Italian, Hank Saricola, was entertainment director, and many Italians worked as floormen, pit bosses, shift bosses, dealers, and showroom maître d's.

The Riviera, just north of the Desert Inn on the Strip, was also built and managed by men of East European Jewish birth or ancestry, with Italians well represented among the managers and hidden investors. Sam Cohen, a professional gambler and business associate of Meyer Lansky, was the most prominent of the group, generally referred to in the press as Miami investors, who built the Riviera in 1955 on land leased from the Gensbro Hotel Company, which was in turn owned by three Los Angeles Jewish businessmen.<sup>25</sup> The Riviera's early history was similar to the Flamingo's. As Bugsy Siegel had opened the Flamingo in December 1946 with an Italian, Jimmy Durante, as the featured entertainer, only to close quickly pending the better organized re-opening in March 1947, the Riviera's owners opened with Liberace, only to go bankrupt three months later. In the same manner that Gus Greenbaum and Moe Sedway, Morris Rosen, Charley Resnik, and, more briefly, Sanford Adler rapidly assumed management of the Flamingo following Siegel's assassination, so did Gus Greenbaum take over the Riviera, along with Ben Goffstein, Harry Goldman, Dave Berman, and Jess Goodman. Once again, Italians were well represented at all levels in the casino and hotel industry, with Tony Zoppa, entertainment director through the mid 1960s, the most prominent. Later, when Ed Torres, a Jewish associate of Meyer Lansky in Havana in the 1950s, served as chief executive officer of the Riviera, Frank Falba managed the casino.<sup>26</sup> Italian and Jewish mobsters were influential behind the scenes at the Riviera, as they had also been at the Flamingo. Las Vegas historian Eugene Moehring writes that Greenbaum's return to the high-pressure job of casino manager at the Riviera was the result of threats from emissaries of Tony Accardo and his Jewish associate, Jake Guzik, then the most powerful of the successors to Al Capone's Chicago-based syndicate crime empire.<sup>27</sup>

Sam Cohen's failure to manage the Riviera profitably apparently did not diminish his self-confidence or his access to capital: He and another close Jewish associate of Lansky, Morris Landsburgh, purchased the Flamingo from Albert Parvin in 1960. Lansky received a \$200,000 finder's fee for bringing his three associates together to consummate the sale. That several journalists then and subsequently regarded Lansky as the guiding force behind virtually every development in Las Vegas is easy to understand considering that Parvin, another of Lansky's Havana associates, was the most prominent among the large group of investors, virtually all of East European Jewish origin, who bought the Flamingo when Gus Greenbaum left in 1955.<sup>28</sup> Here again the Italians held many management positions and, probably, given Lansky's close connections with Italian syndicate criminals, were among the hidden investors.

At the northern boundary of the Strip stood another example of Italian and Jewish cooperation, the Sahara. Milton Prell, who had operated illegal casinos in the West, most notably in Butte, Montana, was the prime mover in the development and management of this resort. Prell, too, recruited many Italians among his managers and casino workers, with Frank Schivo, who had managed the Club Bingo, predecessor of the Sahara at the intersection of Las Vegas Boulevard and San Francisco Street (later renamed Sahara), and Vince Silvestri, the slots manager, the most prominent. He also did business with the Miami investors. Prell, who had announced his retirement from the casino business in 1961, five years later bought the Aladdin, a resort on the southeast end of the Strip, selling it shortly thereafter to a company formed by Albert Parvin.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the best example of cooperation between Italian and Jewish syndicate criminals was the Tropicana, located on the east side of the Strip, south of the



The marquee and porte cochere at the Sahara. (Lawton B. Kline Collection, Nevada Historical Society)

Aladdin. Once again Miami investors were the developers. This time the Las Vegas press identified Ben Jaffe, chairman of the board of the luxurious Fountainbleu Hotel in Miami as the new resort's president. Jaffe leased the casino to "Dandy" Phil Kastel, who, like Ed Levinson, had managed illegal casinos financed by Costello and Lansky. The Tropicana opened with more than the usual fanfare in April 1957. A few weeks later, Frank Costello, reputed boss of all the Italian organized-crime bosses in New York City, was shot and superficially wounded while entering the lobby of his hotel. When the police searched his clothes, they found slips of paper with numbers corresponding to the drop (total amount of money wagered) and win (net revenue for the casino) at the Tropicana for the previous week. Costello recovered, but the revelations helped guarantee that Kastel did not get a license to operate the casino.<sup>30</sup>

Crossing Las Vegas Boulevard to the west side of the Strip, one again finds Jewish gambling entrepreneurs at the forefront of hotel and casino development, with Italians active behind the scenes and in a variety of management and dealer positions. Originally most prominent were Jacob "Jake" Kozloff and Beldon Katleman. In 1951 they bought the Last Frontier, opposite the Desert Inn on Las Vegas Boulevard. When Kozloff and Katleman quarreled in 1954, Maurice Friedman, a Jewish gambler from Southern California, replaced Katleman as part owner, whereupon Katleman filed a \$1 million suit, charging the two with theft and mismanagement. Friedman responded with a \$200,000 slander suit against Katleman. Presumably, the adverse publicity from these suits, as well as several others involving Katleman's family and his girlfriends, diminished the usefulness of Kozloff and Katleman as front men for syndicate investments. In fact, Kozloff, who sold his interest in the New Frontier (by then remodeled and renamed) in June 1955, was denied a license to manage a new casino by the Nevada Gaming Control Board because of his alleged criminal syndicate associations. Friedman, however, continued through the 1960s to work with Johnny Rosselli, the widely reputed representative of organized crime in both Hollywood and Las Vegas in the 1950s and 1960s, to facilitate investments in the Frontier (again renamed) by Detroit mobsters Anthony Zerilli and Mike Polizzi and St. Louis crime figure Anthony Giardino.<sup>31</sup>

Jews and Italians played a predictably large role in establishing and managing the Dunes. Located diagonally across from the Flamingo, it opened in May 1955. Moehring identifies three original owners: Joe Sullivan, a Rhode Island restaurateur; Al Gottesman, a theater-chain owner; and Bob Rice, a Beverly Hills maker of costume jewelry.<sup>32</sup> Almost certainly there were several hidden owners, notably Raymond Patriarca, the New England crime czar based in Providence, Rhode Island. In addition, Sid Wyman and other Sands executives were soon employed at the Dunes, making likely their hidden ownerships. After too many casinos opened in 1955 without a significant expansion of the market, the Dunes, faced with financial disaster, closed its casino in 1956; it reopened only after a reputed Chicago syndicate criminal, Jake Gottlieb, brought an infusion of



The Last Frontier in its first incarnation. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

capital and managerial talent to the troubled property. Gottlieb's managers were creative, and soon the Dunes was in full operation and making a profit.<sup>33</sup>

No Strip hotel better illustrates the extensive cooperation among Italian and Jewish syndicate criminals than the Stardust. It was the dream of Tony Cornero, an Italian immigrant and convicted 1920s bootlegger. Cornero had an unorthodox approach to finance, raising money through the sale of stock not registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission. However, he collapsed and died of a massive heart attack on July 31, 1955, near his favorite craps table at the Desert Inn, with construction of his dream far from completed.<sup>34</sup> Immediately, Moe Dalitz and Jake Factor, an associate of Italian syndicate criminals in Chicago, took over construction of the Stardust. Mob hitman and later government informant Jimmy Fratianno asserted that Sam Giancana, generally recognized as Chicago's most powerful mobster in the 1960s, had four managers in the casino protecting his hidden interests: Al Sachs, Bobby Stella, Johnny Drew (né Jacob Stein), and Phil Ponti. He also identified Yale Cohen, whom he had met at the Ohio State Penitentiary in the late 1930s, as performing the same function for Moe Dalitz and his silent partners. Hank Messick, author of several well-researched books on organized crime, makes the same analysis as Fratianno. He suggests that both Italian and Jewish mobsters had great faith in Moe Dalitz's ability to protect their interests.<sup>35</sup>

The story of organized crime at the Stardust is a complex and long one,

extending at least to 1984, when, at the request of the Nevada Gaming Commission, this valuable property was taken over by the Boyds, respected owners (even though Sam Boyd, the founding father, had worked as a dealer on Tony Cornero's gambling ships) of Downtown and suburban casinos. Most of the individuals who were alleged either to have organized and implemented large-scale skimming of revenue or, at the least, to have been aware of such theft were Italian or Jewish.<sup>36</sup> The Boyds were neither.

Two quite distinct gaming properties, Circus Circus and Caesars Palace, also provide examples of Italian and Jewish collaboration. Jay Sarno, misperceived by some Las Vegas as Italian rather than Jewish, was the founder of both Circus Circus and Caesars Palace. The former California motel-chain developer was yet another gaming entrepreneur with easy access to funds from the Teamsters Central States Pension Fund. After creating the gaudy Circus Circus opposite the Riviera on Las Vegas Boulevard, Sarno put his energy into building Caesars Palace, a luxurious Greco-Roman theme resort designed primarily for high rollers—the antithesis of Circus Circus. Nate Jacobson, described by the press as a Baltimore insurance executive, was his major partner in developing and managing Caesars Palace.

The behavior of Sarno and Jacobson lent credence to the perception that they were conduits for organized-crime investors. Much to the surprise of many in Las Vegas and elsewhere, Sarno and Jacobson soon sought new opportunities;



The Stardust in the 1970s. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

they sold the profitable resort in 1969, four years after it opened, to the Miami-based Jewish owners of a national restaurant chain, Clifford and Stuart Perlman. Sarno then dreamed of building a new hotel, to be the largest not only in Las Vegas but also in the world—the Grandissimo. In March 1969 Jacobson and millionaire businessman Howard Levin bought a small trouble-plagued hotel, the Bonanza, located on the land where the MGM Grand would be built two years later. Jimmy Fratianno asserted that Sarno and Jacobson, Jewish owners of Caesars, were aware of a skim operation managed by another Jew, Jerome Zanolitz, on behalf of the Genovese crime family, reported to be one of five powerful Mafia groups in New York City.<sup>37</sup> His assertion does not appear far fetched, particularly as it provides some reason for the seemingly irrational financial behavior of Sarno and Jacobson. Their decisions may have been dictated more by the need of syndicate criminals for skim opportunities than by a concern to optimize the return on their investment.

A review of the employment patterns of four Italian gaming managers—Phil Dioguardi, Pete Bommarito, Pete Brady (né Genchi), and Silvio Petricciani—illustrates the close and usually positive relationships between Italians and Jews that generally prevailed in the management of Strip casinos. Dioguardi, who had been an executive casino host at the Stardust for many years when I interviewed him in 1991 and 1992, grew up in an Italian section of Chicago. As an adolescent he dealt blackjack in one of the many illegal casinos in Cicero, a Chicago suburb in which Al Capone and Jake Guzik had exercised great influence. When he returned after military service in World War II, the heat was on from Chicago law enforcement authorities, so he went west, first settling in Palm Springs, California. Italian and Jewish acquaintances from Chicago then advised him to go to Las Vegas. Carl Cohen, recalled by Dioguardi as speaking a nearly perfect Sicilian dialect when circumstances required, helped Dioguardi get a job as a dealer at Beldon Katleman's El Rancho. When one of Katleman's girlfriends showed interest in Dioguardi, Katleman fired him, after which he dealt at two other casinos before moving into a managerial position at Jake Kosloff's New Frontier. He was assisted in gaining each position by Italian or Jewish friends. Soon after the New Frontier's temporary bankruptcy in 1958, Dioguardi was hired as a dealer at the Silver Slipper, a small casino south of the Stardust on the Strip. The part owners and managers of the Silver Slipper were Joe and Tony Canino, whose father had operated a popular illegal casino in Denver. A few months later, he was hired by Silvio Petricciani, who was the Stardust's casino manager when it opened in July 1958. During the decades of the Stardust's tumultuous history, Dioguardi served in several management positions. In his interviews, he emphasized that cooperation usually characterized relations between Italians and Jews at all levels of gaming.

Silvio Petricciani had learned every aspect of the gambling business from his father, who operated an illegal slot-machine parlor until Nevada legalized gambling in 1931. He then opened a small casino, the Palace Club, in Reno. When



Petricciani came to Las Vegas after World War II, he worked at the El Dorado in Downtown, and then took a dealer's job at Katleman's El Rancho. (He recalled that Jimmy Contratto, an Italian who had invested in a Reno casino, had also invested in the El Rancho.) Petricciani took on additional responsibilities and soon was reporting to Alex Goldfine, the Jewish casino manager. He also enjoyed the confidence of Ruby Kolod, a friend and business partner of Moe Dalitz. It was Kolod who recommended Petricciani for the casino-manager position at the Stardust. Throughout his reminiscences about Las Vegas in the twenty years following the war, Petricciani spoke highly of many Jewish gambling entrepreneurs, and especially of Moe Dalitz.<sup>38</sup>

Pete Bommarito was, like Dioguardi, of Sicilian ancestry. He and other family members had operated illegal gambling enterprises in Michigan and Ohio. Coming to Las Vegas with his second wife, Joan, in 1949, he worked first as a boxman at the craps tables of the Desert Inn, which opened in the spring of 1950. Joan remembered that Pete and Moe Dalitz had been friends for many years. In 1951, Bommarito left Las Vegas to take a casino-management position at the Golden Hotel in Reno. Joan noted that when the people in power asked an employee to take on a new assignment, he accepted knowing that if he performed well, he would be rewarded. Less than two years later, Bommarito returned to Las Vegas and for the next sixteen years held such jobs as floorman, pit boss, and shift boss at the Sands, the Dunes, the Silver Slipper, and finally, the Riviera. His business and social associates were almost all either Italians or Jews.

Pete Brady's Las Vegas career was similar to that of Pete Bommarito, his good friend. A Cleveland native, he had known and respected Moe Dalitz. When the Desert Inn opened, Brady, who had managed illegal gambling operations in the East, left his job as manager of a small Downtown casino and went to work at the new resort as a floorman in the blackjack and roulette areas. In 1954 Dalitz and his associates built the Desert Showboat Motor Inn on Boulder Highway, several miles east of the Strip. When the Showboat opened, Brady was appointed a shift boss. He returned to the Desert Inn but then moved to Lake Tahoe as a floorman at Bill Graham's Cal-Neva Lodge. His wife Joan, widow of Pete Bommarito, said that he later worked at the Hacienda in Las Vegas, finishing his gaming career as a floorman at the Stardust. His associations, too, were predominantly with Italians and Jews.

Cooperation between Italians and Jews was not perfect. Some Italians whose illegal activities extended beyond victimless crimes such as bootlegging, prostitution management, and gambling enterprises expressed jealousy of the success often achieved by Jewish syndicate criminals in becoming legitimate, that is, in using their wealth to buy political power and social prestige. Echoing somewhat the complaint of Meyer Lansky during his years in Israel that inconsistent media standards portrayed him as a gangster while regarding the Bronfmans and some other former bootleggers as respectable businessmen, mob enforcers Marshall Caifano and Jimmy Fratianno resented the apparently easy life—that is, an

existence seemingly free from government surveillance and the ever present threat of prison—led by many Jewish casino owners and executives.<sup>39</sup> Ovid Demaris and Ed Reid's study recounts two incidents in which Caifano and Jewish casino owners were in conflict. About two weeks after Beldon Katleman ordered Caifano ejected from the El Rancho, a fire completely destroyed the property. They also write of a loud argument that began with Morris Kleinman and Caifano exchanging ethnic epithets in the cocktail lounge of the Desert Inn, and ended with Kleinman locked in his private room while Chicago mob enforcer Caifano used his gun to bang on the door.<sup>40</sup>

Fратианно expressed several times his frustration with the economic and social success of Jewish syndicate criminals in Las Vegas. Rancho La Costa was a luxurious resort thirty miles north of San Diego, built by Moe Dalitz and Jewish associates with funding from several regional Teamsters Union pension funds. When Frатианно and Johnny Rosselli first visited the resort, Frатианно recalled that as a young man he had driven customers to Cleveland gambling establishments owned by Dalitz. He confided to Rosselli, "I feel like I want to clip them. They made it on our fucking sweat and blood." Rosselli responded, "Jimmy, let it go. It's no good spinning your wheels about something you can't change." After becoming a government informer, Frатианно publicly asserted that Jews had a better understanding than did the Italians of how to invest money gained in syndicate activities in legitimate businesses and then pay taxes on at least some of the income.<sup>41</sup> Rosselli, who often took a conciliatory approach to resolve problems among syndicate criminals, probably responded to Frатианно's complaint as would most successful Italian members of organized crime.

Fратианно's complaint had a basis in fact. In general, Jewish syndicate criminals were more likely to achieve relative legitimacy than were their Italian counterparts. While Italian and Jewish males were disproportionately charged with crimes in New York City courts in the first three decades of the twentieth century, by the 1930s the Jewish representation declined dramatically. It is also worth noting that Jews had always been less likely than Italians to be charged with violent crimes in New York City. Gurrah Shapiro, Lepke Buchalter, Doc Stacher, Abe Reles, and Longy Zwillman engaged in violent crime, but when these notorious gangsters passed from the scene in the late 1930s and 1940s as a result of the electric chair, imprisonment, or deportation, no younger Jewish criminals took their places. In contrast, the five prominent New York City Mafia crime families continued to produce replacements for the Italians who were killed in gangland slayings, imprisoned for long terms, or, as the case with Frank Costello, died of natural causes.<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, the reasons for the generally different attitudes of Italian and Jewish syndicate criminals toward the achievement of legitimacy may lie in the contrasting circumstances in their respective lands of origin.

From colonial times, some ambitious Americans have achieved financial security and a few have amassed fortunes by supplying the public with goods and

services that were illegal. They then often used their financial clout to gain political power and/or social standing. John Hancock was only one of several signers of the Declaration of Independence who achieved wealth and power as a result of a well-organized criminal enterprise, smuggling. Jay Gould was only the most widely known of many who translated illegally gained financial power into political power. The Italian and Jewish pioneers of Las Vegas gambling were following in this tradition. They had gained capital and expertise in the management of large enterprises by supplying illegal goods and services to a large segment of the general public. They built the Strip and expanded Downtown casinos and hotels. Some, probably many, participated actively or passively in skimming operations that sent millions of dollars out of Nevada to criminal syndicates in Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, Miami, New York, and elsewhere. None was a saint and a few used violence, or the threat of violence, to achieve their objectives. But for better or worse, they were major contributors to the development of Las Vegas as the premier gambling center of the world.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>As the United States Census did not record the number of hyphenated Americans (i.e., Italian-Americans, Polish-Americans, etc.) until 1980, 10 percent for the maximum combined totals is an estimate. The Las Vegas telephone directories and *Luskey's City Directories* for the 1950s and 1960s confirm the memories of scores of interviewees regarding the overrepresentation of the Italian surnamed in all the Strip casinos mentioned in this article. These documents are available in Special Collections, Library, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

<sup>2</sup>More detailed information about the founding of major Strip hotels can be found in George Stamos, "The Great Resorts of Las Vegas: How They Began," *Las Vegas Sun Magazine* (series, April-December 1979) and Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-1970* (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1989). I use the terms *Italians* and *Jews* rather than the longer and more precise but more awkward terms *Italian-Americans* and *Jewish-Americans* as a convenience.

<sup>3</sup>The names of the individuals subpoenaed to testify before the United States Senate Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce (commonly known as the Ke-fauver Committee) show the extent of Southern Italian and East European Jewish involvement in organized crime in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Most of those subpoenaed were Italian or Jewish. See Part 10 (Nevada-California) of the committee's report in particular.

<sup>4</sup>Stephan Thernstrom, ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 572-73, provides an excellent summary of the causes of massive Jewish migration from Eastern Europe.

<sup>5</sup>Thernstrom, *Harvard Encyclopedia*, 545-50.

<sup>6</sup>The economic orientations of the Italians and/or Jews are discussed by many historians and sociologists who have researched American immigration, including Oscar Handlin, Jerre Mangione, and Moses Rischin. Thernstrom, *Harvard Encyclopedia*, provides an excellent summary. See Rudolf Glanz, *Jew and Italian: Historic Group Relations and the New Immigration* (New York: Shulsinger Bros., Inc., 1971), for a detailed discussion of this subject.

<sup>7</sup>"Mob On The Run," videotape, Special Collections, Library, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

<sup>8</sup>Daniel Bell, "Crime as an American Way of Life," *Antioch Review* (1953), 115-36.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*; James M. O'Kane, *The Crooked Ladder: Gangsters, Ethnicity, and the American Dream* (Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 58-75.

<sup>10</sup>O'Kane, *Crooked Ladder*, 58-75; Stephen Fox discusses at length ethnic succession in organized crime in *Blood and Power: Organized Crime in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1989), as does, in more geographically limited fashion, Mark Haller in "Organized

Crime in Urban Society: Chicago in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Social History* (Winter 1971–72), 165–177.

<sup>11</sup>Fox, *Blood and Power*, 24–25.

<sup>12</sup>Robert Lacey, *Little Man: Meyer Lansky and the Gangster Life* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), 96–97, 209–14.

<sup>13</sup>Bell, "Crime," 147–48.

<sup>14</sup>See indices in Fox, *Blood and Power*; Lacey, *Little Man*; and Humberts Nelli, *The Business of Crime: Italians and Syndicate Crime in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), for information on these endeavors.

<sup>15</sup>Joseph L. Albini, *The American Mafia: Genesis of a Legend* (New York: Appleton Century-Crofts, 1971), 10.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>17</sup>Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris, *The Green Felt Jungle* (New York: Trident Press, 1963), 12–13; for more information on the initial casino shopping, see *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, *Boulder City Journal*, (June 25 1942).

<sup>18</sup>Nate Mack's initial casino investments and his role in the management of the Eldorado Club and Flamingo Hotel are mentioned in the *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* and *Boulder City Journal* (30 December 1947), p. 3, and (17 May 1948), p. 5; *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (14 July 1949), p. 2, and (13 January 1950), p. 10. Charley Resnik, one of the founders of the notorious Purple Gang of Detroit and an early syndicate investor on the Strip, insisted in a 1995 interview that I spell his name correctly, not with a C as scores of journalists and historians had.

<sup>19</sup>*Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* (3 May 1946), p. 1; (4 June 1951), p. 1; (12 May 1952), p. 3; (17 May 1953), p. 3; (1 June 1955), p. 3; (6 June 1956), p. 3.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.* (30 January 1953), pp. 1, 3; (29 January 1953), p. 3.

<sup>21</sup>Alan Balboni, "Italian-American Organizations in Las Vegas," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* (Summer 1993), 90–105.

<sup>22</sup>Lacey, *Little Man*, 141; Ovid Demaris, *The Last Mafioso* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 56; the contributions of the Italians were funneled through Frank Costello, who, like his predecessor, Lucky Luciano, always maintained a good working relationship with Meyer Lansky.

<sup>23</sup>Interviews with longtime Las Vegas attorney Ralph Denton, and entertainment columnist Joe Delaney. See *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (4 February 1993), p. 2F, for additional information on Frank Sennes.

<sup>24</sup>Moehring, *Resort City*, 76; Lacey, *Little Man*, 369–76; and Demaris, *Last Mafioso*, 247, 465, provide information about the relationship of Italian and Jewish syndicate criminals associated with the Sands.

<sup>25</sup>Lacey, *Little Man*, 480–81; Stamos, "Great Resorts," article on the Riviera.

<sup>26</sup>"Mob On The Run"; Stamos, "Great Resorts." Susan Berman, daughter of Dave Berman, provides a viewpoint on the circumstances of the founding and early years of the Riviera in *Easy Street* (New York: Dial Press, 1981).

<sup>27</sup>Moehring, *Resort City*, 78.

<sup>28</sup>Lacey, *Little Man*, 294–95, 359–60, 366–69.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 115–16; interviews with Las Vegas attorney David Goldwater and with Charles Silvestri.

<sup>30</sup>Moehring, *Resort City*, 85 (Moehring incorrectly assumed, as did Stamos and others, that Costello was killed).

<sup>31</sup>For information on the suits and countersuits, see *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (5 September 1954), p. 1, (18 January 1956), p. 1, (25 April 1955), p. 2, (24 November 1954), p. 1, (25 March 1954), p. 3, (17 January 1955), p. 1. Charles Rappleye and Ed Becker provide information on Katleman's involvement with Italian syndicate criminals in *All American Mafioso: The Johnny Rosselli Story* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 139, 157, 184; they mention Katleman as a Federal Bureau of Investigation informant in the late 1960s (pp. 286–87), and discuss Friedman's involvement (pp. 251, 255–57, 284, 299).

<sup>32</sup>Moehring, *Resort City*, 79–80.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*; interview with Gottlieb's Las Vegas attorney, George Graziadei.

<sup>34</sup>Alan Balboni, "Tony's Carpet Joint," *Nevadan* (28 January 1990), 125–135.

<sup>35</sup>Demaris, *Last Mafioso*, 130–31; Hank Messick, *The Silent Syndicate* (New York: The Macmillan

Company, 1967), 267–68. Antoinette Giancana discussed the respect Moe Dalitz gave her father in several visits to the Desert Inn in *Mafia Princess* (New York: Avon Books, 1984), 243–48.

<sup>36</sup>Sergio Lalli, “The Saga of the Stardust Skim,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (26 January 1988), p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Moehring, *Resort City*, 116–18, 121; Demaris, *Last Mafioso*, 382–83; Steven Brill, *The Teamsters* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 218.

<sup>38</sup>Silvio Petricciani, “The Evolution of Gaming in Nevada: The Twenties to the Eighties” (Oral History Project, University of Nevada, Reno, 1982), 202–4, 217–19, 235–36, 261–62, 281–83.

<sup>39</sup>Lacey, *Little Man*, 97.

<sup>40</sup>Reid and Demaris, *Green Felt Jungle*, 58–61.

<sup>41</sup>Demaris, *Last Mafioso*, 212; “Mob On The Run.”

<sup>42</sup>Jenna Weissman Joselit, *Our Gang: Jewish Crime and the New York Jewish Community, 1900–1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 31–34, 157–59; Albert Fried, *The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Gangster in America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1980), 259–62.

# THE FIRST BATTLE FOR WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN NEVADA 1869–1871—Correcting and Expanding the Record

Jean Ford and James W. Hulse

Historians are occasionally embarrassed to learn that they have perpetuated an error in the historical record by trusting their predecessors too completely and failing to probe the primary sources adequately. One such inaccuracy is identified here, and the authors offer this correction and expansion of the record.

Historians of the woman suffrage movement in Nevada have long regarded a speech delivered by Assemblyman Curtis J. Hillyer in the state Assembly in 1869 as a landmark event. On February 16 of that year Hillyer, an attorney from Virginia City, delivered a passionate plea for women's political rights. His remarks were recorded verbatim in the *Journal of the Assembly* and widely discussed in the newspapers of the time. Hillyer mounted an eloquent argument to the effect that women should have the right to vote because they were at least as intelligent as men, they were subject to the same laws and the same taxes, and their participation in the political process could be expected to raise the level of political morality.<sup>1</sup>

Virtually all historians who have commented on this remarkable speech have appropriately stressed its importance. It was the opening salvo in the long struggle to gain voting rights for women in Nevada which finally came to fruition forty-five years later in 1914, when the voters approved a constitutional amendment (passed by the Legislature in 1911 and 1913) extending the franchise to women.<sup>2</sup> The persistent error arises from the fact that nearly all those who have commented on Hillyer's discourse have reported that it had no immediate consequences and that the 1869 Legislature did not act upon it. This is not the case. *In fact, both houses of the Legislature passed a woman suffrage amendment to the*

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*Nevada Constitution in 1869. It was considered a second time by the 1871 Legislature, where it lost in the Assembly by only a few votes and after a bitter struggle. These two facts are totally missing from the most widely read historical studies of the current era.*

One slight complication flows from the fact that there were *two* proposed constitutional amendments under consideration in 1869, and they were the first proposals to amend the Nevada Constitution that had been adopted in 1864. Article 2, section 1 of the Constitution provided that only white male citizens had the right to vote. One of the proposed amendments of 1869, sponsored by Assemblyman Hillyer, would have deleted the word *white* from the original language and the other would have removed the word *male* from the same section. The two measures were occasionally considered in tandem.

First, let us seek the source of the error. It appears first in the venerable history of Nevada edited and published by Sam P. Davis more than eighty years ago.<sup>3</sup> In the article on Woman Suffrage, written by Anne Martin, leader of the Nevada women's rights movement, these lines appear:

Referring to the Journals of the Nevada Legislature from the earliest times, we find the Hon. C. J. Hillyer delivering a speech for woman suffrage in the Assembly on February 16, 1869, which should be preserved among the orations on human rights and liberty. At



Nevada's Capitol. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

a time when equal suffrage had not been tried in any modern government . . . we find this man anticipating every argument urged today for woman suffrage. . . .

Although greeted with "round after round of applause" at the conclusion of his speech, "the loneliness of those who think beyond their time" was this statesman's portion, as the proposed amendment to strike the word "male" from the suffrage clause of the Constitution was shortly afterward laid on the table. So far as attempted legislation goes, the woman suffrage question appears to have been quiescent for some years.<sup>4</sup>

An accompanying footnote says, "The investigation of the Senate and Assembly Journals for the purposes of this article has been done by Miss Clara Smith, President of the College Equal Suffrage League of the University of Nevada."<sup>5</sup> (Clara Smith may be better known to contemporary Nevadans as Clara Smith Beatty, later the longtime director of the Nevada Historical Society.)

The next major history of Nevada, edited by former governor and congressman James G. Scrugham, correctly reported that "The Legislature in 1869 voted in favor of two amendment proposals, one striking 'white' from section 1 of article 2 and the other to strike out the word 'male' in the same section and article. The following Legislature failed to take favorable action on these proposals so that they could be submitted to the people for ratification."<sup>6</sup> This article made reference to Hillyer's speech, but later historians did not take their cue from Scrugham, returning rather to the erroneous conclusion that had been written into the Davis history by Martin and Smith.

For decades the Nevada secretary of state has occasionally published a *Political History of Nevada*, offering highlights of the evolution of the state government and providing a chronicle of its officers. The 1959 edition, for example, issued by Secretary of State John Koontz, gave special recognition to Hillyer's speech:

The bold Assemblyman, who was far ahead of his time, made a magnificent speech for woman suffrage. It was so good that the Assembly printed it in full in its Journal, and the record says that "at the conclusion of his speech Mr. Hillyer was greeted with round after round of applause." But his oratory was wasted, for the resolutions were slammed on the table without even the courtesy of a record vote.<sup>7</sup>

Essentially the same language appeared in later editions, including the one issued by Secretary of State Frankie Sue Del Papa in 1990.<sup>8</sup> (At some point in the interim the description "slammed on the table" was softened to "tabled.")

We need not prolong the list of lapses by historians, but mention should be made of two widely used textbooks in which the errors that appeared in the 1913 Davis history are reinforced. One is the highly respected *History of Nevada* by Russell R. Elliott. While Elliott does not specifically say that the resolution to strike the word *male* was defeated in 1869, that result can be inferred from his language.<sup>9</sup> The other is James Hulse's *The Silver State*,<sup>10</sup> in which a more direct repetition of the error appears.

Hulse's lapse is more serious because he gave fuller attention to Hillyer's efforts and quoted the speech at some length. He obviously needs to correct the



error in future editions of his book (if any). The fact is that Hillyer's speech was not an isolated event but rather one incident in a major debate about women's rights that was extensively discussed and widely reported in the press of Nevada of the time, including the *Carson Daily Appeal* and the *Territorial Enterprise* (which supported woman suffrage), and the *Reno Crescent* (which was eloquently ambivalent).<sup>11</sup>

#### THE PRECURSOR OF 1869: LAURA DEFORCE GORDON

The woman who became the most conspicuous voice of the enfranchisement campaign before the 1869 Nevada Legislature was Laura DeForce Gordon, who built a wide regional reputation as a stirring lecturer on spiritualism and woman suffrage. She arrived in Nevada from the East with her husband, Dr. Charles H. Gordon, in the late fall of 1867 and spoke on spiritualism to large audiences in Virginia City and Gold Hill over a period of several weeks.<sup>12</sup> The Gordons went on to California, where her lecture at Platt's Hall in San Francisco on February 18, 1868, was called "the first attempt [in California] to awaken the public mind to the question of suffrage for woman." She subsequently gave scores of lectures and even addressed the California State Legislature on the political rights of women.<sup>13</sup> The couple returned to the Comstock in the spring of 1868, where again she aroused receptive crowds on various matters.<sup>14</sup>

She even carried her activities into central and eastern Nevada. Participating with her husband in the mining rush to White Pine in eastern Nevada later that year, she continued to find opportunities to speak in public, turning more and more to women's issues. In Austin in June 1868 she raised the question "who ought to vote in this 'white' man's government?" The *Reese River Reveille* described her activities:

Mrs. de Force Gordon believes, of course, that the evils of woman's present condition—especially the tyranny of the marriage relation and the mean injustice of man paying her greatly less for longer and better work than he pays himself—would be dissipated if the ballot was placed in her hands. She demanded it as the right of woman. In her judgment the ballot is the panacea for all the social ills under which woman labors.<sup>15</sup>

Notices placed by Dr. Gordon in the *Territorial Enterprise* and the *White Pine News* lead us to believe that the couple lived for periods of time in Virginia City and Treasure City, but by the end of 1869 they had returned to California. There, Laura took an active part in canvassing the state, lecturing, and forming county societies in preparation for the suffrage convention of January 1870 in San Francisco.

#### THE 1869 SESSION REVISITED

There follows a revised and expanded version of what happened to the proposed amendments in 1869 in the Nevada Legislature. For general reference



Laura DeForce Gordon. (Courtesy California State Library)

purposes, the measure to strike the word *white* from article 2 of the state Constitution was identified as amendment (or resolution) 13, and the proposal to strike the word *male* from the same article became amendment (or resolution) 14. Introduced in the Assembly by Hillyer on January 22, they were both "laid on the table" until a special committee on constitutional amendments could be created. On January 27, the amendments were taken from the table and referred to that committee.<sup>16</sup> On February 9, that committee sent both items back to the

full house. Amendment 13 returned "without recommendation" and was placed at the "bottom of the file." The suffrage amendment, however, had more support. Committee Chair William Doolin of Nye County reported, "Your committee have been unable to agree, but the majority have failed to see any reasons why the passage of the Amendment should not be recommended."<sup>17</sup> The resolution to amend was scheduled for debate before the full house a few days later.

Hillyer's speech on the women's rights question was announced in the *Carson Daily Appeal* of February 16, with the admonition that "The ladies should turn out—to a man."<sup>18</sup> Following Hillyer's speech the proposed amendment was made a special order of business for February 20. At that time the Assembly resolved itself into a committee of the whole for debate and did so again on February 23.<sup>19</sup>

On February 24 the proposed amendment received final reading and lost by 4 votes—17 yea, 21 nay.<sup>20</sup> Upon a successful motion to reconsider the following day, the result was reversed and the resolution passed 21 yea, 18 nay.<sup>21</sup> Four assemblymen from Storey County who had initially voted against the measure switched sides to support it on the second vote. We can only speculate, but it appears that Hillyer worked effectively on them overnight to change their views.

The Senate received the bill on February 26 and referred it to the Committee on State Affairs.<sup>22</sup> It was returned to the floor for final action "without recommendation," easily survived a motion to postpone indefinitely, and passed on March 3 by the surprisingly large vote of 12 yea, 4 nay.<sup>23</sup> The proposed amendment to strike the word *white* from the same article also received approval in both houses of the Legislature during that session.

According to the usual procedure for amending the Constitution, the proposed amendment would be referred to the Legislature a second time during the subsequent session in 1871, and, if approved again by a majority of the members of each house, it would be submitted to the voters on the general election ballot in 1872.

The suffrage amendment drew at least one vocal female critic—Anna Fitch, wife of Nevada Congressman Thomas Fitch. Writing an open letter from Washington, D.C., to "Hon. Curtis J. Hillyer," she was given the entire front page of the *Territorial Enterprise* for a passionate defense of the women of Nevada. She attacked the points of Hillyer's speech in detail and then painted a picture of the effects that woman suffrage would have upon both women and society:

Which of all her womanly traits would best suit the ballot box; or, rather, which of all her charms and graces could you best dispense with? Make up your mind to take leave of them all, for the hour she challenges the divine law she violates herself and the woman is gone out of her; there is then no more music, but only discordant sounds; the spiritual essence is adulterated, and the shimmering, harmonizing tints have grown bawdy in the gross glare of political license.<sup>24</sup>

## THE 1869–1871 INTERLUDE

In the interim between the 1869 and 1871 sessions, the woman suffrage question was widely debated in the nation and in Nevada. Historians have long recognized that much pioneering work in the field of women's rights was done during this period. The Wyoming Territorial Legislature extended the franchise to women in December 1869, and the Utah territorial Legislature voted to do the same in 1870. It has not been generally recognized that the action of the 1869 Nevada Legislature in approving the proposed Hillyer amendment to the state Constitution preceded both of these actions. The failure of the amendment to pass during the 1871 session probably accounts for the fact that the positive action of the 1869 Legislature has been so completely ignored.

By constitutional provision, the early Nevada legislative sessions were limited to sixty days. Therefore about twenty-two months passed before amendment 14 could be considered a second time. Matters were rather quiet for the remainder of 1869. However, on December 31, 1869, a Woman's Rights Ball was held at Bowers Mansion in Washoe Valley. "The novelty of the affair was that it was conducted by ladies from first to last," according to a report that appeared in the *Territorial Enterprise*.<sup>25</sup> The report discreetly omitted the last names of the women involved and indulged in light-hearted banter about how strange it would be if women were to be admitted to the political forum.

On January 5, 1870, the *Elko Independent* took up the matter of the two proposed constitutional amendments and linked them: "The proposition is to strike out the words *white* and *male*—in other words, to make suffrage a free thing for everybody over twenty-one years of age."<sup>26</sup> The *Independent* did not doubt that the majority Republican Party would support the amendment granting the franchise to nonwhites and that the Democrats would oppose it.

But what is to be done about the other proposal? Is that too to be made a party question? But a short time ago the proposition would have been hooted at, for no party could be found to advocate it; but the times have changed; and it is a question now whether any party, as an organization, will attempt to oppose it. The elective franchise has been debased so often and extensively by Congressional action, that suffrage has lost the value it had when it was esteemed an honor and a privilege to participate in an election. A profound disgust has been growing up at this degradation of what was once the proudest boast of an American citizen. . . .

If the word "white" is to go out, the word "male" ought to go with it. If suffrage is to be open indiscriminately to negroes, Chinamen, Kanakas and Indians, the intelligent white women of this State should be entitled to as much consideration, at least.<sup>27</sup>

Citizens of both sexes in Winnemucca took up the cause of suffrage in earnest in the spring of 1870 and began to prepare a systematic program to influence the next session of the legislature. A correspondent identified only as "Olivia" wrote an impassioned article for the *Humboldt Register*:

As no one pretends to deny the right of woman suffrage in the abstract, then the question is, why are they denied the privilege of exercising it on a par with men? Can it be because women are morally and intellectually inferior to men, and therefore, more liable to injudicious use of the ballot? Is it because they contribute nothing toward the expense of carrying on this Government?<sup>28</sup>

Olivia continued with a series of rhetorical questions intended to show that women had all the obligations and talents of men, without the basic political right.

It was this Winnemucca newspaper that became the most conspicuous champion of the woman suffrage cause in 1870. One of the publishers of the *Register* was M. S. Bonnifield, who was also a senator from Humboldt County in the 1869 Legislature. On April 30, 1870, and for several weeks thereafter, the newspaper ran an advertisement that announced a "WOMAN SUFFRAGE Convention" to be held in Winnemucca on July 4. Invitations had been extended to many dignitaries, including C. J. Hillyer, the governors of Arizona and Wyoming, the editor of the *Reno Crescent*, and prominent female advocates of women's rights.<sup>29</sup>

The long-planned Independence Day convention finally met not in Winnemucca but in Battle Mountain Station—a stopping point on the Central Pacific that had been established less than two years earlier and had taken on the status of a town only during the previous winter. It is not clear why the location was changed shortly before the date of meeting, but it may be related to the fact that Senator Bonnifield had recently moved there.<sup>30</sup> No record exists to indicate the number of participants, but it cannot have been large because no more than a few hundred people lived within a hundred miles of the place. Battle Mountain Township (which probably included adjacent mines) had a population of 261 according to the official census of that year.<sup>31</sup>

Participants came from as far away as Winnemucca and Elko, and Laura DeForce Gordon was on hand with another regional leader from California, Emily A. Pitts Stevens. Senator Bonnifield chaired the meeting, and John I. Ginn of the *Elko Independent* served as secretary.

Stevens opened the meeting by reading "A Woman's Declaration of Independence." Participants were encouraged to subscribe to the *Pioneer*, a newspaper that she published for the movement in San Francisco. Then Gordon delivered an oration that correspondent Ginn of Elko found most effective:

Taken as a whole the speech of Mrs. Gordon (given without notes) was one of those rare, intellectual efforts in which all the parts of a discourse were so completely put together that it might seem to have been created by a single stroke. The hearty applause elicited by striking hits, beautifully rounded periods, and eloquent perorations, soon merged into the most intense enthusiasm; and as the most chaste, elegant and forcible words in the language poured from her lips like a stream of liquid fire, and her eyes sparkled with animation, her graceful form swayed to and fro, and her taper fingers moved through the

**WOMAN SUFFRAGE**

**Convention!**

—

AS THE last Legislature has proposed an Amendment to the State Constitution by which women may be enfranchised, therefore, in order that the issue may be fairly brought before the electors of this State at the ensuing election, the friends of the measure in Humboldt county are requested to meet in Mass Convention, at Winnemucca, on

**Monday, 4th Day of July, 1870,** for the purpose of effecting an organization. The friends of Female Suffrage throughout the State are respectfully invited to be present for consultation and to devise the best means of perfecting a State organization. The following distinguished advocates of the cause have been invited to address the convention:

Mrs. J. N. Hule, of Winnemucca; Miss Anna M. Dodge, of Chicago; Theodore Tilton; Gov. Safford, of Arizona; Miss Gordon Bennett; C. J. Hillyer, of Nevada; S. F. Lewis, of Reno Crescent; Gov. J. A. Campbell, of Wyoming.

GEO. W. FOX,      T. V. JULIEN,  
J. C. WATKINS,    M. S. BONNIFIELD,  
Committee of Arrangements.

April 16, 1870                      25-tf

An announcement for the Woman Suffrage Convention in Winnemucca. (Humboldt Register. 16 April 1870)

air in unison with her burning words, the whole audience became electrified and listened with bated breath, as if in fear a gem might fall unheeded.<sup>32</sup>

The group proceeded to form a state organization to promote suffrage, with Gordon as president, Bonnifield as recording secretary, and Ginn as corresponding secretary. Several vice presidents were designated from the various counties, mostly politicians, journalists, or wives of jurists known to be sympathetic to the movement. (It is unlikely that any of those designated as a vice president was present in Battle Mountain on the occasion.) They formed an executive committee and another committee to draft a constitution for the state organization. Abbreviated reports of the meeting appeared in several newspapers, including the *Daily Appeal* of Carson City, the *Humboldt Register*, and the *Reno Crescent*.<sup>33</sup>

Joseph T. Goodman of the *Territorial Enterprise*, the leading newspaper of the state, reported the event some days later and registered surprise on two counts: (1) that the meeting to organize a woman's rights state organization had been initiated in a place like Battle Mountain "unless the warlike name commended it to favor," and (2) that he had been elected to the executive committee.<sup>34</sup> With tongue in cheek he suggested that he was not an appropriate person for such a movement, partly because he did not want to be called to account for his conduct "in the secret proceedings of the committee room." It can be inferred from the article that while Goodman had supported the amendment to put woman suffrage on the ballot in 1869, he was not convinced of the merits of the proposal and declined to accept membership on the committee. He prodded Editor H. R. Mighels of the *Carson Daily Appeal* to accept the appointment in an exchange that resulted in light-hearted banter between the two papers over a period of several weeks. Goodman subsequently published news of women prominent on the national scene who opposed suffrage for their gender.<sup>35</sup>

In the weeks immediately following the Battle Mountain meeting, Gordon traveled widely in northern and western Nevada. She made speeches in the Humboldt County mining towns (apparently accompanied by Stevens) and in Elko, Carson, and Virginia City. The audiences were disappointingly small on the Comstock, and Goodman of the *Territorial Enterprise* commented on the apathy of women toward the movement.

The lecture of Mrs. Laura DeForce Gordon on "Woman's Enfranchisement" last night at Piper's Opera House was poorly attended. The able and eloquent lecturer handled her subject in a masterly manner throughout. . . . It is evident, however, that there is for some reason a lack of interest in the matter. . . . Mrs. Gordon appears to be thoroughly in earnest, and while no one can give any good reason why things should not be settled as she desires, the multitude do not appear to care much whether they do or not—apathy appears to be what she most finds to combat.<sup>36</sup>

#### THE 1871 LEGISLATURE

The amendment to strike the word *male* from the suffrage clause came before the 1871 Legislature for its second consideration early in the session, submitted by Secretary of State Chauncey Noteware along with other pending business from the 1869 session. Only seven members who had been in the Assembly during the previous session were on hand; there were forty-six members in the lower house in that session. The leading champion of woman suffrage, Hillyer, did not return. He served as chair of the state Republican convention in 1870 and presumably could have been renominated by his county convention had he wanted to run, but apparently he did not choose to do so.

When the amendment came to the floor of the Assembly on January 27, 1871, John Bowman of Nye County moved that the matter be indefinitely postponed—an obvious attempt to kill it. According to the *Territorial Enterprise* of the

following day, this motion carried by a vote of 26 to 17. However, subsequent debate produced the conclusion that such a motion was inappropriate because the Constitution seemed to require that the Legislature either approve or disapprove the measure. The vote to postpone was therefore expunged from the official record, and the matter was set for consideration on the following day.<sup>37</sup> This did not bode well for the Hillyer amendment.

The *Nevada State Journal* reported in its "Rambler" column a few days after the session opened that

Laura Gordon, the strong-minded championess of the down-trodden, overburdened, and much to be pitied women of Nevada, arrived in town this morning [January 27]. It is expected that she will lecture on the wrongs of her sex.<sup>38</sup>

C. H. Patchen and Wilmer Brown, two assemblymen from White Pine County (where Gordon had resided for a short time), led a movement to offer her the privileges of the Assembly chamber in the Capitol Building. The members of the lower house voted to allow Gordon the use of the chamber for an evening "for the purpose of lecturing on any subject she may deem proper."<sup>39</sup> Gordon attracted an overflow audience and spoke for two hours about the advantages of woman suffrage and the benefits its enactment would bring to Nevada. Once again she seemed to hold her audience spellbound:

The floor, the lobby, the gallery, and even the recesses of the windows were crowded almost to suffocation with the beauty, wit, and intelligence of Carson. . . . Mr. Lockwood of Ormsby introduced the speaker. . . . She said women in Europe were not obliged to submit to laws enacted by boot-blacks and the ruff-scuff of the nation. Women were the vitalizing power of the country. . . . Wanted the question of female suffrage in this State submitted to the people and appealed to the Legislature to sustain the proposed amendment striking the word "male" from the Constitution of Nevada. Having spoken two hours to an attentive and appreciative audience and assuring them that women in untold numbers would flock to Nevada if the right of suffrage was granted them, she left the stand amidst the plaudits of the multitude.<sup>40</sup>

But her impassioned rhetoric did not reach the crucial audience—the majority required to pass the proposed amendment a second time in the Assembly. The usual intense parliamentary maneuvering occurred before the decisive vote, but when the matter reached the Assembly floor for the decisive vote on February 15 without debate, it lost by 6 votes (19 yea, 25 nay, 2 absent).<sup>41</sup>

While a motion to reconsider by Assemblyman Robert E. Lowery of Storey County passed on the next legislative day, the resolution failed this time by a vote of 21 yea, 22 nay, 3 absent.<sup>42</sup> (In the Nevada Legislature, any bill or substantive resolution requires a majority vote of all members for passage. Therefore it would have required 24 votes to pass Hillyer's amendment in this instance.) In this manner, the last chance for the Hillyer amendment on woman



suffrage failed, exactly two years to the day after he had delivered his noteworthy address.

The *Nevada State Journal* reported that two of those who were absent favored the measure and one was opposed. By the best possible construction of these reports, if all members had been present, the vote would have been 23 to 23, in which case the motion to reconsider would have lost.

In reporting on the initial 19-to-25 vote against the suffrage amendment, the *Territorial Enterprise* of February 16 commented,

We think the resolution should have been adopted, and would have been, doubtless, but for the over-officiousness of the strong-minded women of the coast.<sup>43</sup>

A letter to the editor of the *Humboldt Register*, signed by "Ida" and written from Carson City on February 22, berated the assemblymen for their actions, asserting,

. . . (I)t is to be hoped for the honor of the State . . . that such a brainless rabble will never again be permitted to assemble at the Capitol of Nevada in a legislative capacity. . . . Every man in that august assembly who voted against submitting the question to the voters of the State are "political cowards," and will be so regarded by every noble-hearted woman in the land. Out of the 69 members elected to both houses, 47 favor submitting the question to the people, and yet it so happened that 22 who doubtless realize their inferiority to the proscribed class, were by accident permitted to defeat it.<sup>44</sup>

According to the standard history of woman suffrage published in 1886, there was fraud in the 1871 proceedings:

In February, 1871, Mrs. Gordon again lectured in Nevada, remaining several weeks in Carson while the legislature was in session. She was invited by that body to address them upon the proposed amendment to the State constitution to allow women to vote, which amendment was lost by a majority of only two votes, obtained by a political trick, the question being voted upon without a call of the House, where several members friendly to the measure were absent.<sup>45</sup>

The analysis by the suffragists in this case reflects the passions of the time. It is quite clear that Gordon was not invited to address the Legislature, but rather merely to speak in the Assembly chamber. In addition, it is not obvious that any political trickery was involved; that conclusion can be inferred only on the basis of incomplete evidence.

What is clear, however, is that the advocates of woman suffrage came close to proposing a constitutional amendment which, had it passed on second consideration in 1871 and been approved by the electorate in the following year, would have placed Nevada at the front of the states extending the franchise to women. There is no point in speculating what might have happened at the polls in 1872 in a state that was overwhelmingly male.

Although the issue of woman suffrage was dead for the moment in the legislature, Gordon used her strong links with national suffrage leaders to continue to educate and to try to arouse the citizens of Nevada. In August 1871, Elizabeth Cady Stanton appeared in Virginia City, speaking at the opera house on "The New Republic," asserting that women already had the right to vote by virtue of the passage of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the United States Constitution.<sup>46</sup> The following December, Gordon arranged for Susan B. Anthony to speak both in Carson City and Virginia City as she ended several months of lecturing on the West Coast and she and Gordon were returning to the East for a national suffrage meeting.<sup>47</sup>

Alfred Doten, diarist and longtime editor of the *Gold Hill Daily News* wrote in his journal:

Miss Anthony's subject was "the Power of the Ballot" . . . the most able lecture on the subject ever given in this section. It was totally unanswerable, even by the most obstinately bigoted speaker, writer, or satirist, especially if too illiberal to attend and learn a little good, sound, practical sense, on the matter of who have really the best right to the ballot, and who would be most benefited by it.<sup>48</sup>



Governor Emmett D. Boyle signs Nevada's resolution ratifying the Nineteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, February 7, 1920. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

But in spite of eloquent discourses by the outstanding suffragist leaders in America, the campaign for woman suffrage in Nevada was effectively dormant for a long period. Gordon continued to work with Anthony as California's delegate to the National Women's Suffrage Association, later helping gain admittance for women to California law schools, acting as editor and publisher of several California newspapers, and serving for more than ten years as president of the California Suffrage Association.<sup>49</sup>

The larger record should be clarified on one crucial point, however. Hillyer's speech to the Assembly in 1869 did not strike a terminal roadblock. In fact, it carried the day with surprising strength during that session. The debate on women's rights continued vigorously for many months thereafter, and finally faded away for a decade or two after the Hillyer amendment's failure to pass its first hurdle in the 1871 session. Women had to wait another forty years before they received the right to vote in Nevada.

As supporters of the women's rights movement celebrate in 1995 the seventy-fifth anniversary of the women's suffrage amendment to the United States Constitution, it is appropriate to salute Assemblyman Hillyer, Mrs. Gordon, and others who began the dialogue in the early days of Nevada. Their successors eventually achieved the vote for women in Nevada in 1914 and the ratification of the women's franchise amendment to the United States Constitution in 1920.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Woman Suffrage. Speech of Hon. C. J. Hillyer, Delivered in the Assembly of the State of Nevada, Tuesday, February 16, 1869," Appendix to the *Journal of the Assembly*, Fourth Session, Legislature of the State of Nevada, 1869 (Carson City: State Printer, 1869).

<sup>2</sup>The most satisfactory and thorough study of the successful struggle for suffrage for women in this period is Anne Bail Howard, *The Long Campaign: A Biography of Anne Martin* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1985), 74–98.

<sup>3</sup>Sam P. Davis, ed. *The History of Nevada*, 2 vols. (Reno and Los Angeles: Elms Publishing Co., 1913).

<sup>4</sup>Anne Martin, "Woman Suffrage," in Davis, *History of Nevada*, II, 780–81.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 781. Three years later, an essentially correct report of the action of the 1869 Legislature appeared in *The Winning of Nevada for Women Suffrage* (Carson City: Nevada Printing Company, 1916). However, this was not widely distributed, and it was incorrect as to the fate of the bill in the 1871 session.

<sup>6</sup>James G. Scrugham, ed., *Nevada: A Narrative of the Conquest of a Frontier Land . . .* (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1935), I, 264, n.17.

<sup>7</sup>John Koontz, *Political History of Nevada: 1959*, 4th ed. (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1960), 38.

<sup>8</sup>Frankie Sue Del Papa, *Political History of Nevada: 1990*, 9th ed. (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1990), 116.

<sup>9</sup>Russell R. Elliott, with the assistance of William D. Rowley, *History of Nevada*, 2d ed. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 246.

<sup>10</sup>James W. Hulse, *The Silver State: Nevada's Heritage Reinterpreted* (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 159.

<sup>11</sup>*Carson Daily Appeal* (14 February 1869); *Territorial Enterprise* (2 March 1869); *Reno Crescent* (20 February, 6 March 1869).

<sup>12</sup>*The Journals of Alfred Doten: 1849–1903*, Walter Van Tilburg Clark, ed. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1973), II, 963–69.

- <sup>13</sup>Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage* (Rochester: Anthony, 1886), III, 751.
- <sup>14</sup>*Journals of Alfred Doten*, II, 993–1007.
- <sup>15</sup>*Reese River Reveille* (20 June 1868).
- <sup>16</sup>*The Journal of the Assembly*, Fourth Session, Legislature of the State of Nevada, 1869 (Carson City: State Printer, 1869), 60–61, 70, 73.
- <sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 116.
- <sup>18</sup>*Carson Daily Appeal* (16 February 1869).
- <sup>19</sup>*Journal of the Assembly*, 1869, 171, 183, 185.
- <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 188–90.
- <sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 203.
- <sup>22</sup>*The Journal of the Senate*, Fourth Session, Legislature of the State of Nevada, 1869 (Carson City: State Printer, 1869), 214–15, 229.
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 280.
- <sup>24</sup>*Territorial Enterprise* (25 February 1869).
- <sup>25</sup>*Territorial Enterprise* (8 January 1870).
- <sup>26</sup>*Elko Independent* (5 January 1870).
- <sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup>*Humboldt Register* (9 April 1870).
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.* (30 April 1870), and several later issues.
- <sup>30</sup>*Ibid.* (2 July 1870).
- <sup>31</sup>Ninth Census, vol. I: *The Statistics of the Population of the United States . . .* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 199. In the “Third Biennial Report of the State Mineralogist” (Appendix to the Proceedings of the Senate, Nevada Legislature), the population of Battle Mountain Village for 1870 is listed as fifty.
- <sup>32</sup>*Elko Independent* (6 July 1870).
- <sup>33</sup>*Carson Daily Appeal* (8 July 1870), *Reno Crescent* (9 July 1870), *Humboldt Register* (9 July 1870).
- <sup>34</sup>*Territorial Enterprise* (9 July 1870).
- <sup>35</sup>*Ibid.* (22 July 1870).
- <sup>36</sup>*Ibid.* (23 July 1870).
- <sup>37</sup>*Ibid.* (28 January 1871).
- <sup>38</sup>*Nevada State Journal* (28 January 1871).
- <sup>39</sup>*The Journal of the Assembly*, Fifth Session, Legislature of the State of Nevada, 1871 (Carson City: State Printer, 1871), 74.
- <sup>40</sup>*Nevada State Journal* (4 February 1871).
- <sup>41</sup>*Journal of the Assembly*, 1871, 147.
- <sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 154.
- <sup>43</sup>*Territorial Enterprise* (16 February 1871).
- <sup>44</sup>*Humboldt Register* (25 February 1871).
- <sup>45</sup>Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, III, 755–56.
- <sup>46</sup>*Territorial Enterprise* (27 August 1871).
- <sup>47</sup>*Ibid.* (17 December 1871).
- <sup>48</sup>*Journals of Alfred Doten*, II, 1145.
- <sup>49</sup>For a brief summary of the career of Laura DeForce Gordon, see *Notable American Women, 1607–1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, Edward T. James, *et al.*, eds. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), II, 68–69.

# NOTES AND DOCUMENTS OF HUMOR, DEATH, AND MINISTERS The Comstock of Mark Twain

Charles Jeffrey Garrison

Like most Western mining camps, Virginia City earned a reputation from wild and unsettled elements within its population. In the 1860s, this wealthy mining camp resting upon the rich Comstock Lode had its saloons, gamblers, prostitutes, street fights and shootings. Via Hollywood's distillation, this is what many have come to expect in a western mining town setting of the late nineteenth century. Samuel Clemens, writing as Mark Twain, described this type of city in *Roughing It*, but Virginia City was not just a frontier outpost for fugitives and desperadoes. As in many mining camps, there was also a more refined element among the citizens of the Comstock. This group included many businessmen, merchants, civic leaders, and the clergy. One of the goals of this group was to tame their society so that businesses might flourish. This class of people mostly lived high on Mount Davidson, above the seedy parts of town.<sup>1</sup> They demonstrated that it was possible to live on the Comstock and be unaffected by the underworld activities in the C Street saloons, the prostitutes' cribs on D Street, and the opium dens of Chinatown.<sup>2</sup> It is hard to believe these two worlds existed on the same side of a mountain.

Gamblers, prostitutes, and many miners forsook the ways and traditions of Victorian society. In the West, they were out from under the shadow of the steeples. Some had even moved West in the hope of being free of church influence. In his often humorous study of frontier religion, Ross Phares tells about an eastern settler who, while preparing for the western journey, was asked where he was heading. He reportedly said, "Whar [*sic*] the grass grows and the water runs and the sound of the gospel never comes."<sup>3</sup> For many on the Comstock who had broken away from traditional Victorian standards, death was the one occasion that called for a return to more conventional norms. Generally when someone from the more rowdy crowd died, his or her friends would seek the services of a clergyman. They wanted a decent burial and, as Ferenc Morton

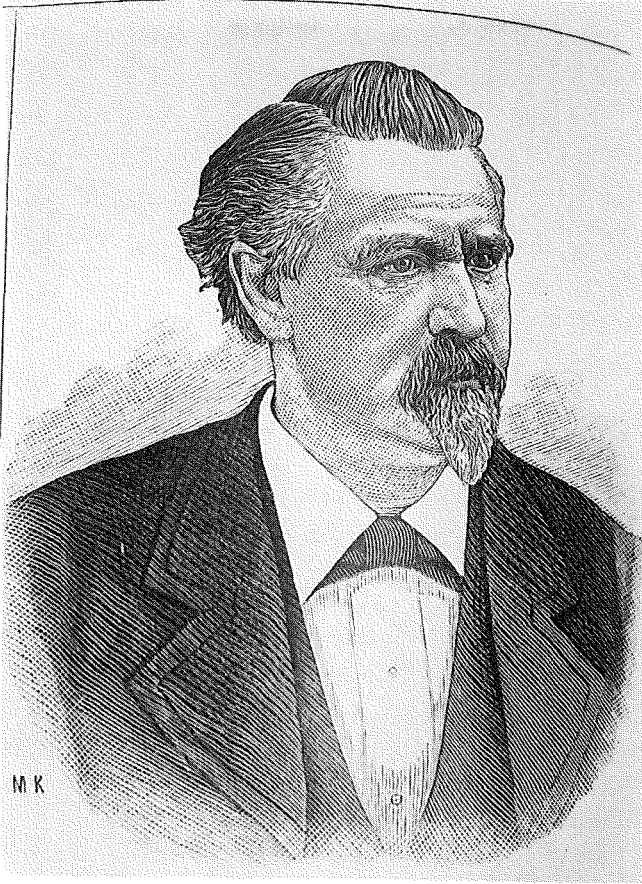
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Szasz, an historian of religion in the West, has demonstrated, most western ministers were willing to provide this pastoral service without asking embarrassing questions concerning the past of the deceased.<sup>4</sup>

Protestant ministers in the West were thus often kept busy performing funerals for those who had no connection to the church. The journals of the Reverend David Henry Palmer, first pastor of the struggling Presbyterian congregation in Virginia City, indicate that he officiated at nine funerals for nonchurch members during his first six weeks in Nevada.<sup>5</sup> Palmer began his work on the Comstock during the summer of 1863, and that fall, Virginia City witnessed the most murders in its history.<sup>6</sup> Palmer's letters to his parents in western New York are more descriptive than his journal. Writing from Carson City soon after his arrival in Nevada, he told them that he was in "an awfully wicked place" and that in the two preceding days there had been three funerals. "The first an awful drunkard, the second one of the greatest gamblers and the profanest man in the territory, and the third was murdered." Palmer concluded by telling his family that he had heard Virginia City was even worse.<sup>7</sup>

Newspaper reporters, like ministers, were able to see both sides of society in the mining camps. Alfred Doten, editor of the *Gold Hill News* and a friend of the staff at the *Territorial Enterprise*, spent many wild evenings drinking and enjoying the company of prostitutes.<sup>8</sup> His journals also indicate that he was quite comfortable attending church and revivals. On one occasion he had dinner with the Reverend William Martin, the Presbyterian minister, and Colonel John A. Collins,<sup>9</sup> a trustee of the Presbyterian Church.<sup>10</sup> Having been associated with William Lloyd Garrison in the abolitionist movement and with Robert Owen's socialist movement, Colonel Collins had headed to California in 1849 to seek his fortune. He was one of the first to arrive on the Comstock in 1859 and represented Storey County (Virginia City) in both state Constitutional Conventions.<sup>11</sup> He was known in Virginia City as the town's pillar of righteousness.<sup>12</sup> Another newspaper man who found himself drawn into the church was William Barstow. He joined the Presbyterian Church in May of 1867<sup>13</sup> during the revivals of the Reverend A. B. Earle.<sup>14</sup> As a manager of the *Territorial Enterprise*, Barstow was responsible for hiring Samuel Clemens as a reporter.<sup>15</sup>

Most of the reporters in Virginia City's early years enjoyed the festive and laissez-faire atmosphere the city offered. At the same time, their position in the city required them to be in contact with the clergy and other community leaders. On July 8, 1863, representatives of all Virginia City newspapers were invited to the opening of the Collins House, Colonel Collins's new 120-room hotel. Samuel Clemens attended. After dinner, champagne was served, and many of Virginia City's leading citizens gave speeches. Colonel Collins began, followed by a patriotic speech by R. M. Daggett entitled "The Potomac—May It Rise Till It Drowns Every Rascally Traitor," to which Tom Fitch, editor of the *Virginia Daily Union*, responded. Other speakers included Tom Goodman on the history of the



Alf Doten. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

newspaper in Nevada, Mr. Feusler on the "mercantile interest," Dr. Cleveland on the medical practices in the city, and Colonel Turner on the legal profession. Clemens also made a speech that evening, as the next issue of the *Virginia Evening Bulletin* reported:

[P]erhaps the speech of the evening was made by Samuel Clemens. Those not familiar with this young man, do not know the depths of grave tenderness of his nature. He almost brought the house to tears by his touching simple pathos.<sup>16</sup>

Clemens's speech at the Collins House earned him the praise of his contemporaries. This speech, given six months before Twain's famous address as "governor" of the "Third House," a parody of the territorial legislature, is of note because Twain had not yet met Artemus Ward, who is credited for inspiring Mark Twain's career as a humorous public speaker.<sup>17</sup>



R. M. Daggett. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

#### FUNERALS AND MINISTERS IN VIRGINIA CITY

Virginia City's first two Presbyterian ministers, Palmer and Martin, officiated at the funerals for a group of characters all connected to Tom Peasley, who is alleged to have been Mark Twain's model for Buck Fanshaw in *Roughing It*.<sup>18</sup>

One of the Reverend Palmer's early funerals was for John Jenkins, better known as "Sugar-foot Jack."<sup>19</sup> While standing in front of Lynch and Hardy's Saloon, Jenkins supposedly threatened Tom Peasley. Peasley promptly shot Jenkins three times.<sup>20</sup> After the shooting, Peasley, a rowdy but somewhat prominent Constock citizen, laid down his gun and turned himself over to the police.<sup>21</sup>

Tom Peasley was one of Virginia City's favorite citizens, and it would have been difficult to find a jury willing to convict him. He was tried for second-



degree murder, and the jury acquitted him without even adjourning for deliberation.<sup>22</sup> Peasley's friends included Mark Twain.<sup>23</sup> Twain was impressed by Peasley, who owned the Sazarac Saloon, was a partner in an opera company, and had served a term as chief for Virginia Fire Company No. 1. Although he had a temper and was considered the leader of a rough group, Peasley favored law-and-order and was an ardent supporter of the Union. It was said that he was ready to challenge anyone who questioned President Abraham Lincoln or any Copperheads who were willing to risk speaking up in favor of the Confederacy.<sup>24</sup> Four months after his murder trial, Peasley served with honor as deputy marshal at Virginia City's observance of Lincoln's death.<sup>25</sup>

Tom Peasley continued to live a rough life after Jenkins's death. Twice he got into a fight with Martin V. Barnhart. Both times guns were drawn, Peasley shot first, and Barnhart was wounded. On February 2, 1866, at the Corner Bar in Carson City's Ormsby House, Peasley and Barnhart met for a third and final time; the ensuing fight left both men dead.<sup>26</sup> The newspapers lamented Peasley's demise, and his funeral procession, a display of patriotism unlike anything Virginia City had ever seen, involved all the fire companies on the Comstock.<sup>27</sup> The Reverend William Martin, then minister of the Presbyterian Church, officiated.<sup>28</sup> Though the words of comfort spoken by Martin at Peasley's service have been lost, they may have been similar to his comments for another well-known fireman, Ben Ballou, who was killed in a bar fight a month after Peasley. Reporting on Ballou's funeral, the *Gold Hill News* noted that Martin's message was "very appropriate and much to the point, although entirely too protracted."<sup>29</sup>

In 1867, the Reverend Martin was again called upon, this time to officiate at the funeral of Julia Bulette, Tom Peasley's "dashing helpmate." She had been Tom Peasley's girlfriend and was an honorary member of his fire company. Julia Bulette was a prostitute and was murdered by a customer in her D Street crib. The funeral took place at the fire department, and the firemen and her co-workers gave her a fine procession. An editor for the *Gold Hill News* noted in his journal that Martin's comments, spoken at the fire hall, were the "best and most appropriate for the occasion."<sup>30</sup> When Mark Twain visited Virginia City in 1868, he arrived in the morning of April 24, in time to witness the public hanging of the convicted murderer.<sup>31</sup> Julia Bulette's fame continued to grow following her death, and on the Comstock of today she is a local folk heroine.

Directly and indirectly, Tom Peasley provided the Presbyterian ministers with three funerals in a four-year period: He killed Jenkins, he was himself killed, and his girlfriend was murdered. Today Peasley is all but forgotten, but he is immortalized as Mark Twain's character Buck Fanshaw in *Roughing It*.

He was a representative citizen. He had "killed his man"—not in his own quarrel, it is true, but in defense of a stranger unfairly beset by numbers. He had kept a sumptuous saloon. He had been the proprietor of a dashing helpmeet whom he could have discarded without the formality of a divorce. He had held a high position in the fire department and



This portrait is reputedly the likeness of Julia Bulette. (*Effie Mona Mack Collection, Nevada Historical Society*)

had been a very Warwick in politics. When he died there was great lamentation throughout the town, but especially in the vast bottom-stratum of society.<sup>32</sup>

Peasley fit the description of Fanshaw. He was considered a good, loyal American citizen, he ran a saloon, Julia Bulette was his dashing helpmate whom he would not have need of divorce to discard, he had served as chief of a fire company, and there was a great outpouring of public sympathy at his funeral.

In Twain's story, Fanshaw's friends wanted to give him a "good sendoff," so they elected Scotty Briggs to "roust out somebody to jerk a little chin music for us to waltz him through handsome." Scotty, a rough sort of character, formed quite a contrast to the "head clerk of the doxology works." The minister was described by Twain as being "a fragile, gentle, spiritual new fledgling fresh from an Eastern theological seminary." The dialogue between the two is classic and goes on for several pages, with neither understanding the jargon of the other.<sup>33</sup>

Though it is probable that Tom Peasley was used as the model for the life of Fanshaw, Twain took many liberties in this account of Fanshaw's death. Peasley had been shot in a bar fight, whereas the fictitious Fanshaw killed himself while delirious from typhoid fever. As for the Reverend Martin, who officiated at Peasley's funeral, he was far from being the youthful and inexperienced "spiritual advisor" described by Twain. Fifty-four years old at the time of Peasley's

death, he had been principal of a high school in Brooklyn, New York, and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Woodbridge, New Jersey, before going West as a missionary. Prior to coming to Virginia City, he had served the Presbyterian Church in Columbia, California.<sup>34</sup>

It has often been assumed that the young minister in *Roughing It* was the Reverend Franklin S. Rising, rector of Saint Paul's Episcopal Church.<sup>35</sup> Effie Mona Mack even mistakenly claimed that it was Rising who officiated at Peasley's funeral.<sup>36</sup> It must be noted that Mark Twain was not in Nevada when Peasley was shot.<sup>37</sup> Rising left Virginia City at some point during the month of Peasley's funeral, and he had been confined to bed with a strained knee for two months prior to departing the Comstock, able to get around only with crutches.<sup>38</sup> However, it is true that Twain knew Rising in Virginia City, and they met again in Hawaii in 1866. Rising could have given Twain some insight into being a pastor in Virginia City, but he probably would not have been able to supply the details of Peasley's funeral. It is likely that Twain, who was writing for entertainment rather than historical accuracy, drew upon several accounts to create his story.

One possible source of information would have been the first pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Virginia City. David Henry Palmer and his wife moved to Nevada in July 1863, just two months after he was graduated from Auburn Theological Seminary. Palmer's journals reveal a young, bookish, somewhat confused clergyman. He had a difficult time visiting and talking to parishioners, but his journals indicate that he was sincerely concerned with their spiritual welfare. Palmer was only twenty-three when he assumed the Presbyterian pastorate in Virginia City, and he was often sick during his fifteen-month stay. In many ways Palmer fits Twain's description of a "fragile, gentle, spiritual fledgling fresh from an Eastern theological seminary."<sup>39</sup> Palmer's wife Jennie later insisted that he told Mark Twain the story of Scotty Briggs "fetching" a minister.<sup>40</sup>

It is impossible to know for certain if Palmer knew Twain or if he was an influence in any of Twain's characters. However, a funeral at which Palmer officiated during his first week in Nevada could have been a possible source for the Buck Fanshaw funeral story. While staying in Carson City, Palmer assumed the pastoral duties of the Reverend A. F. White, who was making a missionary exploration trip into the Humboldt and Reese River mining districts. In the Reverend White's absence, Palmer conducted the funeral for a Mr. Rogus, "who had shot himself while ill of fever."<sup>41</sup> Palmer's account of Rogus's death, although similar to the Fanshaw demise, is not nearly as descriptive as Twain's treatment.

Twain does not mention Palmer in any of his published letters from Virginia City, but he did have a Presbyterian background and was in contact with many friends and members of the Virginia City congregation. In addition to Colonel Collins, mentioned earlier, Twain also knew Samuel A. Chapin<sup>42</sup> from the state

Constitutional Convention and the "Third House."<sup>43</sup> From his reporting of the first state Legislature, Twain knew A. B. Elliott, who was a Presbyterian and later served as an elder of the church.<sup>44</sup> When criticizing the Storey County delegation for their absence during key debates, Twain praised Elliott for being in attendance. "Mr. Elliott was present—he always is, for that matter, and always awake." The next day, Twain credited Elliott as being one of the few people in the lower house who protected the interests of the people and stood up to William Stewart (a successful mining litigation lawyer, trustee at First Presbyterian Church in Carson City, and later United States Senator from Nevada).<sup>45</sup>

Mark Twain seemed to have a natural attraction to the Presbyterian church.<sup>46</sup> His family became Presbyterian when he was a child, and he credited the denomination for teaching him to "fear God and dread the Sunday School."<sup>47</sup> As a young man, Samuel Clemens had considered becoming a minister. As a great critic of organized religion, Twain said later in his life that he had had only two real ambitions: to be a riverboat pilot and a preacher of the gospel. He noted that he accomplished the one and failed in the other because he could not supply himself with the necessary stock in trade, that is, religion.<sup>48</sup>

#### MARK TWAIN AND PRESBYTERIANS IN CARSON CITY

Even though Twain can be linked to the Presbyterian Church in Virginia City only through his friendship with members of the congregation, his connection with the First Presbyterian Church in Carson City is more apparent. Twain's brother Orion and his family were members of the Carson City church, which was founded in 1861, a year earlier than the one in Virginia City.<sup>49</sup> On several occasions, while reporting from Carson City, Twain spoke of the church as if he were a member, calling it "my chronic brick church."<sup>50</sup> *Chronic* probably refers to the difficulty the congregation had in completing the edifice, which was under construction for three years,<sup>51</sup> a long time for a building to be in process in a boom town. Twain's journalistic reports made fun of the church's troubles, yet they also indicate that he cared about the congregation. While reporting on the Third House on December 12, 1863, he mused upon the possibility of being elected to office and thereby being able to complete the church:

If elected, I shall donate my salary to charitable institutions. I will finish building this chronic brick church here, and lease a high-priced parson to run it. Also, an exorbitant choir. Everything connected with the church shall be conducted in the bulliest manner.<sup>52</sup>

As governor of the burlesque association known as the Third House, Twain was asked by the trustees of the Carson City Presbyterian Church to give his Annual Message at a fund raiser. Agreeing, Twain responded:



Samuel Clemens in 1863. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

If the public can find anything in a grave state paper worth paying a dollar for, I am willing they should pay that amount, or another; and although I am not a very dusty Christian myself, I take an absorbing interest in religious affairs, and would willingly inflict my annual message upon the Church itself if it might derive benefit thereby.<sup>53</sup>

Reporting on this speech for the *Virginia Daily Union*, Clement T. Rice noted that Twain successfully raised money for a church that was in need of completion.

Mark Two's [*sic*] message only helped to keep up the effervescing spirit of the good work in behalf of the same, ever-present, gaping skeleton of a church. The benefit on this occasion was large—perhaps \$200—which will take the institution in out of the weather and hasten its completion.<sup>54</sup>

On April 25, 1864, Twain reported on a festival given by the ladies of the Carson City church, and indicated that the church was slowly approaching completion. Reflecting on whether or not he should pray for the church, he decided that his prayers would be a bit risky:

The ladies gave a festival here last Friday for the benefit of my chronic brick church. The net proceeds amounted to upwards of \$500, and will be applied to furnishing the edifice, which is still in a high state of preservation, and is gradually but surely becoming really ornamental. That is the church for the benefit of which I delivered a Governor's message

once, and consequently I still take a religious interest in its welfare. I could sling a strong prayer for its prosperity occasionally, if I thought it would do any good. However, perhaps it wouldn't—it would certainly be taking chances anyhow.<sup>55</sup>

The pastor of the Carson City church, the Reverend A. F. White, was also a good target for Twain's humor. He was involved in Nevada politics and served as the superintendent of public instruction for several years.<sup>56</sup> After the defeat of statehood for Nevada in 1863, Twain satirized the slate of state officers who had no state to govern. The spoof appeared in the New York *Sunday Mercury* on February 7, 1864, under the title "For Sale or Rent." Referring to White, then superintendent of public instruction, Twain wrote:

One Superintendent of Public Instruction—good as new. Understands all the different systems of teachings, and does not approve of them. It is his laudable boast that he is a self-made man. It has been said of him by his admirers that God Almighty never made such a man. It is probably so. He is the soul of honor, and is willing to take greenbacks at par. No objection to making himself useful; can preach if required.<sup>57</sup>

As chaplain for the territorial Legislature, White provided numerous opportunities for satire. During the 1862 session, Twain reported that Representative Colonel Williams ate a raw eighteen-pound turnip during the chaplain's prayer. Twain said that he had sent the turnip to the representative as a joke, telling him to extract his "payment in blood" from it.<sup>58</sup> During the 1864 session, Twain reported that even though the legislators were authorized to pay a chaplain three dollars a day for the "consolation of religion," the Reverend Mr. White had been "gouged out of a prayer" for which they intended not to pay. Twain continued, noting that the Third House had decided to dispense with the services of a chaplain.<sup>59</sup> The Reverend White's nomination as chaplain had created a controversy over the need for such a position, which was later satirized by Twain in *Roughing It*.<sup>60</sup> After attending one of White's worship services, Samuel Clemens gave this unfavorable impression of the Carson City pastor in a letter to William H. Claggett, written March 8–9, 1862:

I intended to finish this letter to-day, but I went to church—and busted! For a man who can listen for an hour to Mr. White, the whining, nasal, Whangdoodle preacher, and then sit down and write, without shedding melancholy from his pen as water slides from a duck's back, is more than mortal. Or less. I fear I shall not feel cheerful again until the beans I had for dinner begin to operate.<sup>61</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Ministers in the western mining camps like Palmer, Martin, and White provided grist for satirical journalists, but they also served their communities well, experiencing both sides of society through their ministry to the cross section of the population. Though their goal was to tame, civilize, and Christianize society,

at the solemn time of death they were moved by compassion and willing to comfort all who grieved, including those who had forsaken conventional norms. For these people it was comforting to return to familiar customs and ceremonies, and the clergy were happy to oblige. Perhaps the ministers hoped this subtle form of evangelism would occasionally lead to a convert, as it did with Scotty Briggs, who, according to Twain, became the only true convert from among the "Virginia City Roughs."<sup>62</sup>

Mark Twain found much fuel for satire in ministers. He once wrote for the *Territorial Enterprise* that a "man's profession has little to do with his moral character. If we had as many preachers as lawyers, you would find it mixed as to which occupation could muster the most rascals."<sup>63</sup> But even though Twain satirized the church and clergy, it can be shown, as in his Governor's Address, that he was sympathetic toward the church. Nevada was probably the most secular place in America during the mid-nineteenth century, and Twain's skepticism toward religion is evident during this period of his life; however, while living there he seemed unable or at least unwilling to shake his ties with the church.<sup>64</sup>

As a newspaper reporter, Mark Twain had opportunities to meet and come to know a wide variety of people in Nevada. Drawing upon this vast experience, he was able to create numerous stories of life on the Comstock. He was in contact with a number of churches, their ministers, and their parishioners. As an observer of human nature, Twain gained insight from them that proved invaluable during his literary career.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Marion S. Goldman, *Gold Diggers and Silver Miners: Prostitution and Social Life on the Comstock Lode* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), 14.

<sup>2</sup>Grant H. Smith, *The History of the Comstock Lode: 1850-1920* (Reno: Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, 1966), 233.

<sup>3</sup>Ross Phares, *Bible in Pocket, Gun in Hand: The Story of Frontier Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), 8.

<sup>4</sup>Ferenc Morton Szasz, *Protestant Clergy in the Great Plains and the Mountain West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico), 33. Cf. George D. Lyman, *The Saga of the Comstock Lode* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), 232.

<sup>5</sup>David Henry Palmer, *Journal* (1863), Manuscript Collection, Department of History, Presbyterian Church (USA), Philadelphia (cited hereafter as Palmer). A transcription of the journal by Charles Jeffrey Garrison is available at the Nevada Historical Society, Reno. When Palmer first arrived in Nevada, he carefully recorded all the funerals and weddings he performed. After a few months, these recordings became more infrequent. For more information, see Charles Jeffrey Garrison, "David Henry Palmer: A Pastoral Baptism in Western Mining Camps," *American Presbyterians: The Journal of Presbyterian History*, 72 (Fall 1994), 173-86.

<sup>6</sup>Smith, *History of the Comstock Lode*, 35.

<sup>7</sup>Letter of D. H. Palmer from Carson City, 22 August 1863. This letter was reprinted on 13 October 1863 in the *Rochester Democrat* (Rochester, N.Y.). A copy of the newspaper clipping was provided by the Columbia (Calif.) State Park Archives.

<sup>8</sup>Goldman, *Gold Diggers and Silver Miners*, 51-54.

<sup>9</sup>Alfred Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten, 1849–1903*, Walter Van Tilburg Clark, ed. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1973), 880 (hereafter cited as Doten).

<sup>10</sup>Nelson Winton, handwritten history of the First Presbyterian Church placed in the church's cornerstone in 1866. A copy of this document was provided by the First Presbyterian Church of Virginia City.

<sup>11</sup>David Alan Johnson, *Founding the Far West: California, Oregon, Nevada, 1840–1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 194–99.

<sup>12</sup>Effie Mona Mack, *Mark Twain in Nevada* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), 296.

<sup>13</sup>First Presbyterian Church of Virginia City, Nevada, *Session Minutes* (27 May 1867), Manuscript Collection, Department of History, Presbyterian Church (USA), Philadelphia.

<sup>14</sup>For a description and some amusing comments on Earle's revivals, see Doten, 925–27. For a discussion of these revivals and a detailed history of the Virginia City Presbyterian Church, see Charles Jeffrey Garrison, "'How the Devil Tempts Us to Go Aside from Christ,' The History of First Presbyterian Church of Virginia City, 1862–1867," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 36:1 (Spring 1993), 13–34.

<sup>15</sup>Edgar Marquess Branch, Michael B. Frank, and Kenneth M. Sanders, eds., *Mark Twain's Letters*, vol. 1: 1853–1866 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 231, 232 n.1, 237. See also Albert Bigelow Paine, *Mark Twain: A Biography* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1912), 202–4.

<sup>16</sup>*Virginia Evening Bulletin* (9 July 1863).

<sup>17</sup>Twain stated that he had never talked to a crowd before his address as Governor of the Third House. Henry Nash Smith notes that "it seems a little odd in view of his previous appearances before the Third House." Smith concludes that perhaps Twain's address as Governor was his first address open to the public. Henry Nash Smith, ed., *Mark Twain of the Enterprise: Newspaper Articles and Other Documents, 1862–1864* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 146. Even though his address at the Collins House was given to a private party, the newspaper reports suggest that there was a sizable crowd.

<sup>18</sup>A number of authors have indicated that Twain used Peasley as a model for Buck Fanshaw. See Lyman, *Saga of the Comstock Lode*, 10. Lyman cites N. P. Langford, *Vigilante Days and Ways* (McClurg, 1923), 438. Also see Mack, *Mark Twain in Nevada*, 195–98; and Margaret Sanborn, *Mark Twain: The Bachelor Years* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 227.

<sup>19</sup>Palmer, 27 September 1863.

<sup>20</sup>Mack, *Mark Twain in Nevada*, 196. Mack states that Peasley "riddled" Sugar-foot Jack with bullets. But considering the newspaper accounts, Mack overstated Peasley's actions.

<sup>21</sup>*Virginia Evening Bulletin* (31 September 1863).

<sup>22</sup>*Gold Hill News* (9 January 1865).

<sup>23</sup>For information on Twain and Peasley, see Sanborn, *Mark Twain: The Bachelor Years*, 188, 227. Also see Mack, *Mark Twain in Nevada*, 196, 198.

<sup>24</sup>*Gold Hill News* (5 February 1866).

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.* (18 April 1865).

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.* (2 February 1866). Also see Steven R. Frady, *Red Shirts and Leather Helmets: Volunteer Fire Fighting on the Comstock Lode* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1984), 87–91.

<sup>27</sup>*Gold Hill News* (6 February 1866).

<sup>28</sup>Doten, 877.

<sup>29</sup>*Gold Hill News* (5 March 1866).

<sup>30</sup>Doten, 912.

<sup>31</sup>Sanborn, *Mark Twain: The Bachelor Years*, 392–93.

<sup>32</sup>Mark Twain [Samuel L. Clemens], *Roughing It* (New York: Signet, 1980), 247.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 247–54.

<sup>34</sup>Charles Ripley Gillet, *Alumni Catalogue of Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, 1836–1926* (New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1926).

<sup>35</sup>Paine, *Mark Twain: A Biography*, 214–15. In his biography, Paine identified Rising as the young minister. See also Andrew Forest Muir, "Notes on Twain and Rising," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 34:4 (December 1955), 317–18; and Lyman, *Saga of the Comstock Lode*, 79.

<sup>36</sup>Mack, *Mark Twain in Nevada*, 198. Mack does not cite her source. As noted earlier, Alf Doten, who attended the funeral, wrote in his journal that the Reverend Martin officiated.



<sup>37</sup>Mark Twain left Virginia City for San Francisco in May 1864. See Paine, *Mark Twain: A Biography*, 253.

<sup>38</sup>In February 1866, Rising left Virginia City for Hawaii. See Muir, "Notes on Twain and Rising," 318.

<sup>39</sup>Twain, *Roughing It*, 242. One notable difference between Twain's account and Palmer's situation is that Palmer never had a church building while he was in Virginia City, whereas Twain refers to the "gospel-mill next door" (p. 243). Palmer and the church had hoped to build in 1864, but the depression of that year forced the church to delay their plans. It wasn't until 1866, under the leadership of the Reverend Martin, that the Presbyterians began building their church. While Palmer was the pastor, the congregation mostly met in the courthouse. The Presbyterian Church did not have a building in Virginia City when Mark Twain lived there; however, the Carson City congregation had a church in various stages of completion.

<sup>40</sup>As told to the author by Palmer's granddaughter, Elisabeth Ruddy, of Encinitas, Calif., 13 August 1991.

<sup>41</sup>Palmer, 3 September 1863.

<sup>42</sup>Chapin served on the Presbyterian Church's Finance Committee. See the *Virginia Evening Bulletin* (23 August 1863).

<sup>43</sup>Smith, *Mark Twain of the Enterprise*, 20–21, 104.

<sup>44</sup>Elliott was a charter member of the Presbyterian Church and was elected as an elder on 2 April 1865. See First Presbyterian Church of Virginia City, *Session Minutes* (2 April 1865). For brief biographies of members of the church, see Charles Jeffrey Garrison, ed., "Members and Adherents of the First Presbyterian Church of Virginia City, Nevada: 1862–1924." A copy of this paper available at the Nevada Historical Society, Reno.

<sup>45</sup>Smith, *Mark Twain of the Enterprise*, 158, 165. For information on Stewart's position as a church trustee, see "The First Presbyterian Church of Carson City, Nevada, 75th Anniversary Celebration," 7 June 1936. A copy of this pamphlet is in the Manuscript Collection, Department of History, Presbyterian Church (USA), Montreat, N.C.

<sup>46</sup>The purpose of this article is to look at Twain's connection to the Presbyterian Church while he was in Nevada. However, while living in Buffalo, N.Y., Twain and his wife attended Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church. For information on Twain's later involvement with the Presbyterian Church in Buffalo, see Tom Reigstad, "Twain's Buffalo Clergyman and the Beecher Preacher Exchange," *Mark Twain Society Bulletin*, 13:2 (July 1990).

<sup>47</sup>William Dean Howells, *My Mark Twain* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1910) 125, as quoted in Jeffrey R. Holland, "Soul-Butter and Hog Wash: Mark Twain and Frontier Religion," in *Soul-Butter and Hog Wash and Other Essays on the American West*, Charles Redd Monographs in Western History, No. 8, Thomas G. Alexander, ed. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 9.

<sup>48</sup>Holland, "Soul-Butter and Hog Wash," 14. Holland claims that Twain intended to become a Presbyterian minister and cites as evidence Twain's *My Dear Bro: A Letter from Samuel Clemens to His Brother Orion* (Berkeley: The Berkeley Albion, 1961), 6–7. Holland quoted only a portion of this letter, implying that Twain had said he wanted to become a Presbyterian minister, whereas the letter stated a "preacher of the gospel." See Justin Kaplan, *Mark Twain and His World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 60.

<sup>49</sup>Victor Goodwin, *History of the First Presbyterian Church in Carson City, Nevada, 1861–1987, Including a List of Pastors Serving During the Church's Lifetime* (Carson City: private printing, May 1987), 4. A copy of this history was provided by the First Presbyterian Church in Carson City.

<sup>50</sup>Smith, *Mark Twain of the Enterprise*, 97, 129, 180.

<sup>51</sup>In June 1861, the newly formed congregation secured subscriptions of \$5,000 for the building of a church. Because of various hindrances the church was not complete until May 1864. See Edward Arthur Wicher, *The Presbyterian Church in California: 1849–1927* (New York: Frederick H. Hitchcock, 1927), 320.

<sup>52</sup>Smith, *Mark Twain of the Enterprise*, 97.

<sup>53</sup>Paine, *Mark Twain: A Biography*, 245.

<sup>54</sup>Smith, *Mark Twain of the Enterprise*, 145–46.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 180–81.

<sup>56</sup>For a humorous report on White's activities as superintendent of public instruction, see *Gold Hill*

*News* (11 January 1865). For a brief biography of the Reverend White, see The Presbyterian Theological Seminary of Chicago, *General Catalogue* (Chicago: Melton Printing Company, 1939), 61.

<sup>57</sup>Smith, *Mark Twain of the Enterprise*, 125.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 133–34.

<sup>60</sup>Branch, Frank, and Sanders, *Mark Twain's Letters*, vol. 1: 1853–1866, 173–74.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>62</sup>Twain, *Roughing It*, 254.

<sup>63</sup>Smith, *Mark Twain of the Enterprise*, 60.

<sup>64</sup>Edgar Lee Masters said that Twain “threw out the Bible, but it seemed to be attached to a rubber band and was likely to bounce back in his lap at any time.” Allison Ensor, *Mark Twain and the Bible* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1969), 1.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850–1900.*

By Philip J. Ethington. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, xvi + 464 pp., ill., maps.)

Philip Ethington has given us an important and provocative historical study of the changing political culture of early San Francisco and, more generally, of nineteenth-century urban America. The author's central thesis is that the urban politics of 1850–1900 featured a shift from an antebellum political culture of "republican liberalism," based on a vision of virtuous citizens battling the inroads of corrupt politicians, to a postbellum, ultimately Progressive, "pluralist liberalism" recalibrating politics as the governmental mediation of interest group socioeconomic needs.

Ethington emphasizes the relative autonomy and importance of the "public sphere"—the press, voluntary associations and political parties—and of public discourse in structuring political behavior and institutions. As such, the author criticizes all manner of liberal and radical social determinists who emphasize the material mainsprings of politics.

*The Public City* represents an important empirical contribution to our understanding of early San Francisco politics. Based upon prodigious primary and secondary research, the book recasts San Francisco's great political upheavals—the Vigilance Committees of the 1850s, the Workingmen's Party of the 1870s and the political reform efforts of the 1890s—and its periods of normalcy as episodes in liberalism's great transformation from republicanism to pluralism.

This theoretical storyline, however, is both the book's greatest strength—and ultimate weakness. The emphasis upon political culture as a driving force is a powerful and parsimonious explanation. Yet the treatment of republicanism has serious shortcomings. *The Public City* draws its title from—and offers theoretical riposte to—Sam Bass Warner's classic study of Philadelphia, *The Private City*.

The contrast between the two studies is illuminating. In Warner's hands, Quaker Philadelphia serves as an early pantheon of market liberalism, not republicanism—"a community of private money makers." In Ethington's hands, Gold Rush San Francisco—conceded to be "an entrepot for the plunder of gold from the land of a native people" (pp. 78–79)—is transformed into a deliberative forum for Vigilantes to follow "republican ethical scriptures" while illegally banishing or executing their enemies.

In this fashion, the book's antebellum "republican liberalism" is really Romantic republicanism shorn of market liberalism—and of materialist explanations generally. While republican ethical scriptures may have been the rhetorical high road, used to legitimate political action, group power and conflict were the low—and frequently traveled—road of politics, even in the antebellum period.

The Second Vigilance Committee of 1856, whose power rested in the hands of the city's merchants, aimed to dismantle the Tammany Hall West being constructed by Irish-American Senator David Broderick using immigrant votes and profligate public spending. A group conflict model remains a compelling account of the Committee's targeting of Irish-American politicians. The committee's few Irish members, and its subsequent installation of a conservative fiscal regime benefited the city's merchants and property owners. Notwithstanding the apparent popularity of the new elite-led regime, which Ethington highlights to dispel notions of class bias and benefit, a more Gramscian interpretation of the new order is called for. This raises issues of ideological hegemony and false consciousness, which this more culturally oriented, as opposed to materialist, Marxism espouses.

Ethington is on firmer theoretical ground in the second half of the book, where interest group identification and appeals hold sway. Yet while claiming to critique interest group pluralism, the author offers instead an explanation of its early and complete triumph. Both the Workingmen's Party upheaval of the 1870s and the charter battles of the 1890s are treated as cases of pluralist, not republican, liberalism in action.

*The Public City* is replete with theoretical irony concerning the meaning of "public." On one level, while the book pays homage to the public sphere of non-state associations, its preferred usage of the term—like Hannah Arendt's— involves republican rhetoric and rituals performed in public forums. As with Arendt's Greek *polis*, San Francisco republicanism thrived best when the system was most exclusionary. Notwithstanding the efforts of early suffragists which culminated in failure, the voices of ordinary women, blacks and Asians were missing from the public sphere.

On another level, *The Public City* concentrates on the input—or participatory—side of politics to the near exclusion of the output—or policy—side. On the output side, however, early San Francisco was the quintessential private, not public, city. Under conservative regimes, there was little public spending on infrastructure or amenities. As a consequence, private utilities and transportation firms reigned supreme—and corrupted local politics.

In response, the reform movements of the 1890s (the epitome of interest group liberalism in Ethington's terms) laid the institutional groundwork for the building of public San Francisco: its magnificent parks, thoroughfares, street railways and water system. David Perry's recent *Building the Public City* tells this important story of the provision of urban public infrastructure.

Despite these theoretical caveats, *The Public City* is a book that needs to be

reckoned with. It makes an important argument for the primacy of political culture. It highlights the discursive role of institutions such as the press in linking and shaping state/civil society relations. It effortlessly blends qualitative and quantitative approaches. And it deepens our understanding of early San Francisco political history. These are no small achievements.

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*The Desert Look*. By Bernard Schopen. (New York: The Mysterious Press, 1990, Reprinted Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1995, 251 pp.)

Private investigator Jack Ross has seen enough of Nevada's seedy underside for one lifetime, or so he thinks. Retiring from the business, Jack withdraws into the big silence of sagebrush and stars, making his lonely camp in a remote canyon where no one will find him, or so he believes. But, on a cold February afternoon, a local television journalist named Miranda Santee drives her rainbow-striped Bronco into his camp. Miranda has been shot. She's scared, and she needs his help. Nothing doing, replies the stone-hearted detective. Miranda shows Jack an old photograph of two Las Vegas showgirls, flanked by four men in suits. Now, thirty years after the picture was taken, one of the girls is still missing. Miranda believes the other girl to have been murdered. She wants Jack to help her get to the bottom of the story, hoping that this scoop will be her ticket out of Nevada to national TV. Jack agrees to take the case. Why? Because the murdered woman is his mother.

As Jack and Miranda break camp and prepare to drive into Reno, they glimpse a mustang stallion, three mares, and two yearlings. Turning suddenly malevolent, Miranda declares,

It makes me sick, the way everybody romanticizes them, makes them some kind of symbol of freedom. They're vicious stupid brutes. They maim and kill each other and control the mares with violence, they'll kill another stallion's foal while it's still in the womb, they . . . mate with their daughters. . . . They're ugly, inbred abominations. (17)

If the reader expects *The Desert Look* to perpetuate the golden legends and rosy sunsets of the heroic American West, he or she may be shocked by Miranda's unglamorous depiction of Nevada's wild horses. But, be forewarned, worse is in store, for the people in Schopen's novel are just as abominable and even more brutish than the horses. Murder, rape, incest, dysfunctional families, alcohol-

ism, loneliness, drug abuse, thievery, and prostitution make up Schopen's Nevada. In this demythologized West, Schopen's grisly characters wear "the desert look," a cold stare that looks *through* people, an unfeeling gaze that regards another's existence as of no consequence.

Jack's search for the truth becomes a quest for his own identity, as he looks to his mysteriously murdered mother for clues to his own inexplicable urge to kill people. As a detective, Jack is fearless and without subtlety. His method is to drive his Wagoneer all over Nevada, interrogating suspects and witnesses point-blank. This investigation takes him to casinos in Las Vegas and Reno, a whorehouse north of Vegas called Tawny's Fillie Ranch, a ghost town in eastern Nevada named Chokecherry, a horse ranch outside of Tonopah, and an Air-stream trailer parked near a mine site and so filled with pornography and rotting garbage that it reminds him of "stepping into a diseased brain." The principal characters include a mob boss and his goons, a casino operator, a Basque lawyer, crazy hicks, and sleazy hookers. Nevada, it would seem, is particularly hard on women, all of whom become "victimized, . . . debased and destroyed" (15) and whose choices are apparently limited to being a killer or a whore. One prostitute who goes by the assumed name of Linda Goshgarian seems to stand for them all. "After years of penetration by organs and appendages, she seemed impenetrable. After years of absorbing semen, she seemed impregnable. After years of being handled and mauled and grabbed and stroked, she seemed untouchable" (82).

The hero, Jack Ross, is himself a tough character, emotionally and physically scarred and unable to establish a meaningful relationship of any kind, including with his own unnamed daughter. Eventually, a credible story emerges after enough people are bullied and several are shot. As a mystery, *The Desert Look* works. The clues are there, the motives are there, the story hangs together when the dark secrets are brought to light. The reader doubts, however, that Jack's or anyone else's problems have been solved. The resolution remains troublingly unresolved. As a commentary on human nature and as a portrait of Nevada, *The Desert Look* is hopelessly bleak.

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*Po'i Pentun Tammen Kimmappéh. The Road on Which We Came: A History of the Western Shoshone.* By Steven J. Crum. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994. xii + 240 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index.)

*Po'i Pentun Tammen Kimmappéh* is a long-anticipated historical account of Western Shoshone (Newe) life in the Great Basin. With the exception of *Newe: A*

*Western Shoshone History*, published in 1976 and intended for a public school audience, few published materials exist recounting modern Western Shoshone life. Steven Crum, a Western Shoshone on the faculty of the University of California, Davis, has bridged a major gap in the historical literature regarding Native Americans of the Great Basin. More important, he has provided an account from the perspective of scattered groups of Shoshone people deeply affected by white incursion into their homeland.

Several themes pursued by the author are intriguing and welcome additions to the existing literature on the subject. Professor Crum takes pains to emphasize the wide diversity of opinion existing within Shoshone tribal groups on such issues as money distributions, land claims and the degree to which the Newe should cooperate with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Also, the centrality of the Ruby Valley Treaty issue to the development of Shoshone responses to federal policy is illuminating. Focus on modern groups referring to themselves as the "unsigned" Indians illustrates the extent to which the 1863 treaty shaped Western Shoshone perceptions of themselves and of the federal government.

Another persistent theme of the work is that of a tribal identity based on specific geographical parameters. Since traditional Western Shoshone territory covered a broad range and the population density was low, there is a certain lack of commonality regarding the identity of a homeland. While general agreement exists among the Newe regarding traditional boundaries of Western Shoshone territory, no single reservation location satisfies disparate Shoshone groups who seek claim to their own concept of homeland. Through sheer persistence various Western Shoshone societies in such places as Duckwater, Fallon, Reese River, Elko, Ely, Battle Mountain and Death Valley have been relatively successful in acquiring land bases though in some cases woefully small within their indigenous habitats.

The overriding message of *Po'i Pentun Tammen Kimmappah*, however, is the capacity of the Western Shoshone to survive, to resist assimilation, and when necessary to adapt to changing conditions. From the earliest encounters with a harsh terrain, to first views of European-American trappers, emigrants and miners, to the formidable challenge of holding the federal government at bay, the Newe have responded to a myriad of threats, and have experienced defeat at some times, and victory at others. Though the tribe has not been successful in establishing its view that the Ruby Valley Treaty recognized traditional Shoshone boundaries which were not ceded by the agreement, Shoshone people have preserved important cultural, religious and political traditions that have defied eradication attempts.

Although *The Road from Which We Came* fills a unique niche in Western Shoshone historiography, it is not a comprehensive tribal study. Professor Crum's emphasis on the twentieth century is narrowly political. Though there are cursory references to contemporary religious and cultural activities of tribal members, this reader was left wondering about the non-political aspects of modern

Shoshone life. Though federal-Indian relations is an indispensable theme to pursue, what of the everyday life of the modern Shoshone? An attempt at a truly interdisciplinary account of modern Shoshone life would have strengthened the work. This challenge remains for scholars wishing to pursue aspects of Great Basin Indian life.

Nevertheless, *The Road on Which We Came* sets a new academic standard in Shoshone historical literature. It is well-researched and the incorporation of non-traditional sources such as songs and oral tradition significantly add to its value. Unlike so many accounts of Native-American life, the voice of the Western Shoshone comes through clearly in this book. Those interested in Great Basin Indian life would welcome similar studies of the Northern Paiute and Washo experiences.

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## NEW RESOURCE MATERIALS

### *Nevada Historical Society*

The Society has received significant groups of records relating to two government bodies in Washoe County. The first of these is the Washoe County Bicentennial Committee, which worked with the Nevada American Bicentennial Commission to coordinate activities relating to the celebration of the bicentennial in 1975–76. The records were donated by John W. Riggs, Sr., who served as chairman of the committee.

The second group of records, mostly correspondence, is from the Design and Criteria Committee of the Washoe County Fair and Recreation Board, which during 1960–62 was involved with the planning for construction of the Pioneer Auditorium and the Centennial Coliseum (later the Reno-Sparks Convention Center) in Reno. These items were received as a donation from Grace K. Copp, the secretary of the committee.

A gift of books, magazines, and other library materials from Fern H. Adamson of Susanville, California, includes numerous photographs of importance. Among these are images of the El Rancho Vegas motor hotel and the El Rancho Village in Las Vegas in 1945, and a snapshot of Amelia Earhart and several other individuals standing beside her airplane at Lovelock, Nevada, after problems with the craft forced her to land there in June, 1931.

Additions have recently been made to several of the Society's established manuscript collections. A small but significant group of letters from the period 1870–72, including ones written by Stephen Gage and Charles E. DeLong, has been added to the papers of Senator William M. Stewart. (The existing Stewart collection contained virtually no material from the years prior to 1886.) Richard D. Smith, noted cowboy poet of Stagecoach, Nevada, has donated a substantial number of writings, correspondence, and publications (many containing his verse), which have been integrated with the collection of his papers already held by the Society. And a gift from Elaine E. Quilici of Reno has allowed us to expand the major collection we hold of Evans family papers and business records. As a result of this donation, our records of the ranching and livestock business of Alvaro Evans, John N. Evans, and their brothers, the water and electric companies in the Truckee Meadows with which they were associated, and several mining companies in the Pyramid Lake Mining District that Evans family members invested in, have been made more complete. The donated items include, also, a minute book of the Reno Congressional Lyceum, 1877–78, which Pierce Evans belong to.

Eric Moody  
*Manuscript Curator*

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