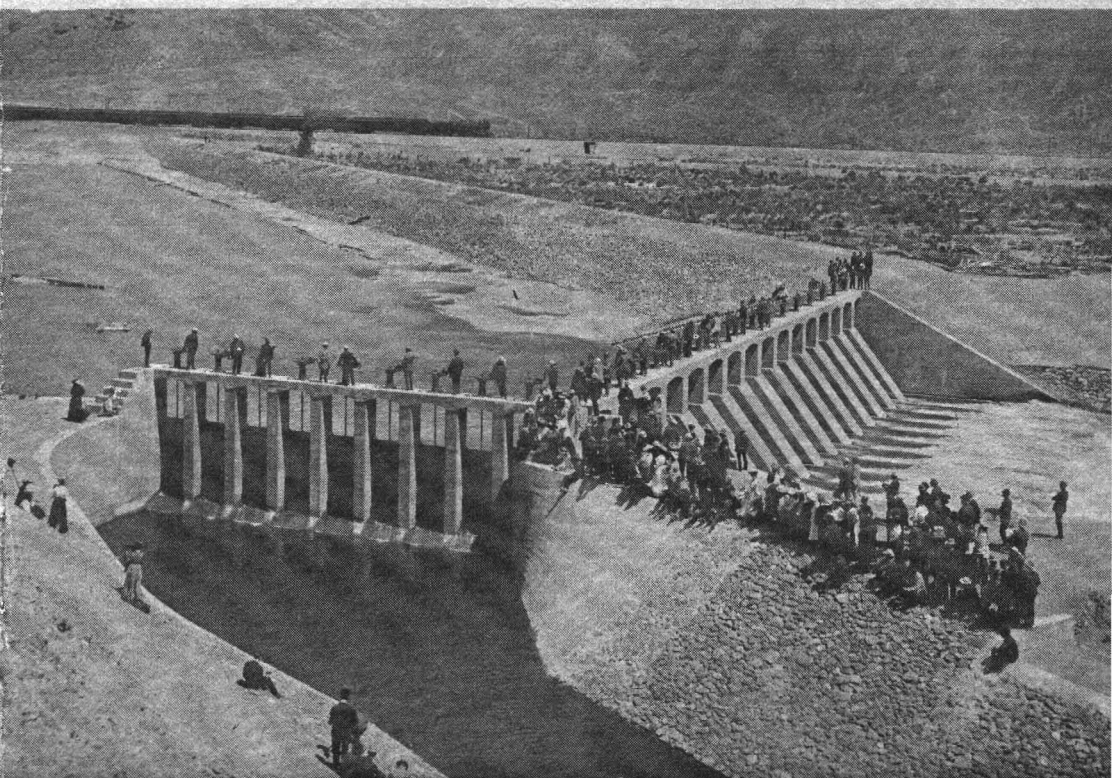


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**Historical  
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Quarterly**



**Summer - 1974**

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**THE COVER**

Francis G. Newlands and a congressional delegation open Derby Dam on June 17, 1905

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*Francis G. Newlands*



# *Francis G. Newlands: A Westerner's Search For a Progressive and White America*

by William D. Rowley

RECLAMATION, national Progressivism, and white political supremacy strike prominent themes in the political philosophy of the Progressive Senator Francis G. Newlands of Nevada. During his career in the House of Representatives and in the Senate from 1893 to 1917, he won a national reputation for his sponsorship of the National Reclamation Act of 1902 and climaxed a long campaign in the West for federal support of irrigation projects. Government assistance to western irrigation was consistent with the objectives of Newlands's progressivism that sought government intervention into the economy for special interests and ultimately for the welfare of the entire community. On the other hand Newland's demand for guaranteed white political supremacy in the nation appears far afield of his usual western Progressive interests.

The bridge between Newlands's progressivism and racial ideas forged itself around his view of the role of the federal government in promoting the efficient, modern, and rational society in the twentieth century. He believed the Reclamation Act or Newlands Act had more far-reaching implications than merely facilitating western irrigation. The broader purpose of his bill would demonstrate "the efficiency of Government itself in taking hold of public utilities," he wrote in 1904.

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William D. Rowley is an Associate Professor in the History Department at the University of Nevada-Reno. This paper was first read at the Western History Association's Conference in October 1972 at Yale University and is a part of a larger study on the local and national career of Senator Francis G. Newlands.

The national government was to be the great engine of American Progressivism bringing efficiency to many phases of American life. The existence, however, of racial diversity in the society produced what Newlands referred to as "race complications." Racial complications struck directly at Newlands's vision of a harmonious, homogeneous society by introducing conflict. The entire racial question bore with it portents of industrial disturbance and hostility repugnant to the efficient, modern state. To meet the threats to the developing society posed by racial and cultural diversity, the national government must rise to the occasion by restricting immigration on the foreign front and eliminating black men from the political process on the domestic front. To the latter end Newlands called for a repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution and national prohibition of black suffrage rights at the Democratic National Convention of 1912.<sup>1</sup>

There is, of course, nothing demonstrably new in detecting a link between Progressivism and racism, particularly on the West Coast. Newlands's racial ideas, however, illustrate the development of a social theory within his Progressivism that was rooted in his quest for the efficient society. The racial aspect of his Progressivism, and others like him, effectively translated popular prejudice into a sophisticated political theory that made some brands of twentieth century Progressivism a further confirmation, if not a nationalization, of the Compromise of 1877 by seeking to bar blacks completely from the political life of the entire nation.

Beyond reflecting some of the dominant racial thinking of the day, Newlands's racial policies demonstrate an important link between racial outlook and far Western or Pacific Coast Progressivism not unlike the link between white racism in the South and the reform posture in southern politics at the beginning of the century. There the presence of blacks in the political process definitely was seen as an obstacle to progress. As Senator John T. Morgan of Alabama said on the Senate floor in defending disfranchisement sections of the new constitution of Louisiana in 1900, "It is not necessary to go into the details of history to establish the great fact that negro suffrage in Louisiana and other southern states has been one unbroken line of political, social, and industrial obstruction to progress, and a constant disturbance of the peace in a vast region of the United States." Even the northern Progressive Ray Stannard Baker wrote in 1908 of "the idealism of Southern leadership" once it was freed from "the incubus of the Negro . . . ." In the same tone Newlands spoke in 1909 of initiating national policies toward "the people of the black race now within our boundaries which, with a proper regard for humanity, will minimize the danger to our institutions [*sic*] and our civilization." By national policies Newlands meant ultimately the elimination of the Negro from American political life through national disfranchisement.

In a preliminary draft of a disfranchisement resolution that would eventually be submitted to the Democratic Party Platform Committee in 1912, Newlands termed the Fifteenth Amendment "poison in the Constitution" and called for its repeal. <sup>2</sup>

As a West Coast politician who appealed to labor votes, Newlands understandably opposed unrestricted immigration, particularly of Asians, but he also believed in curbing Negro political and educational opportunities essential to the future development of the nation. Politically he could have ignored the Negro because his Nevada constituency had little concern with "the Negro question" and on the national level the issue does not appear popular enough to make him presidential timber. While his views on immigration restriction exhibited political motivation, Newlands's view of the position of the Negro in American society was partially inspired by his Progressive idealism. His policies toward the Negro reinforced his Progressive ambition to streamline the workings of democratic government, to free it from divisive tensions, and to promote its efficient operation. American democracy at its best reflected the interests of white Americans and to exclude non-whites and undesirable immigrants, as he proposed, would merely be in the interests of more efficient and competent government. Still some charged that his purpose was entirely political and that he intended to fuse the anti-Oriental West and the anti-Negro South in the cause of white supremacy. To Newlands this idea was far-fetched. Nevada presented a weak springboard for any presidential candidate no matter how popular his national views. <sup>3</sup>

Newlands brought to the West many of the attitudes of a southern Democrat as well as the current views of Progressive nationalism. He was born in Natchez, Mississippi and grew up in the southern Illinois town of Quincy. By sympathizing with the South after the Civil War and regretting northern Reconstruction policies, he adopted the current view of southerners and many northerners that the North had pursued a foolish policy when it went beyond simple emancipation and gave Negroes political rights. His ideas on race also resemble the rising vogue of "scientific racism" when he spoke of nature classifying three races in the world — the yellow, the brown, and the white. The amalgamation of these races was clearly undesirable because efficient progressive societies naturally tended to be homogeneous and free from racial complications. The removal of non-whites from the political process would be a scientific and necessary reform prerequisite to the modern society. It was incumbent upon the national government to move in this direction just as it must play the central role in western water utilization and foreign policy questions. <sup>4</sup>

Translated into political action this meant Newlands believed, along with a coterie of other West Coast Progressives such as Hiram Johnson, James D. Phelan, and Chester H. Rowell, that reform politics and the tasks of modernizing government for the twentieth century

belonged only to white men. From Newlands's point of view one way to speed modernization and open the doors to reform was to ban the participation of non-whites through national legislation. John Higham in his work *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* emphasizes that in the far West and South "reform thinking accomodated [sic] itself to race-thinking." In the case of western Senator Newlands "reform thinking" not only accomodated itself to race-thinking, but served to inspire it.<sup>5</sup>

Newlands first became interested in the Negro question as a member of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia. On the subject of Negro education in the District he advocated the training of children for manual service occupations. If instituted in Washington, the plan could be used as a pattern for Negro education in the South, he believed. "My idea is that the District of Columbia should furnish a model system to all the Southern States for the training of colored children," he said. The curriculum should stress preparation for vocations in the manual arts and not in the professions. Booker T. Washington, much to the disgust of more militant black intellectuals such as W.E.B. DuBois, had similar ideas. Above all Newlands believed this educational system would give the Negro "self-control" needed for his subordinate economic functions in the emerging modern society.

Newlands saw his system as a substitute for the discipline that the plantation demanded of the Negro in the Ante-Bellum South. He reasoned, "Under the old system of slavery every plantation was a training school, in which discipline was maintained. The colored race has lost this training, and no adequate training has been substituted for it." The Nevada senator maintained the best education for "an inferior race" was the training of the hands in industrial pursuits and in the trades. The practical training schools in the District of Columbia would fit "colored children with their present intelligence" to the proper vocations. A model system there could be duplicated throughout the South by following the pattern of national aid to state schools already established by the Department of Agriculture. From his position on the Senate's Committee for the District of Columbia he continued to offer advice on the course of Negro education for the District and the nation until his death in 1917.<sup>6</sup>

Newlands' views soon received attention from a leading southern newspaper. *The Atlanta Constitution* complimented him in its December 27, 1907 issue on his "familiarity with the race problem as it exists today in the South." The paper said Newlands's system of education for the District of Columbia was identical to its remedy for "solving the domestic servant problem, and partially, the industrial labor problem." And concluded, "It is encouraging that the exigencies of the situation, as they actually exist are being recognized by men of influence outside of the southern states."

As Newlands made known his views on Negro education, another racial problem reasserted itself in the Far West in California. The anti-Japanese movement in California had been gathering momentum since the turn of the century and now received national attention because of the San Francisco school board's attempt to require Japanese children to attend a segregated Oriental school and the state's attempt to prevent alien land holding. The subsequent protests by Japan to President Theodore Roosevelt against what it considered discrimination against the Japanese of California prompted Roosevelt to pressure California to ease the anti-Japanese agitation. Many westerners along with Californians accused Roosevelt of interfering with states' rights and in strictly local questions. The legislature of Nevada moved quickly to pass resolutions in support of California's "to enact such stringent measures as will absolutely stop forthwith the encroachment of the Japanese." President Roosevelt called the Nevada senators to the White House hoping to silence inflammatory statements about Japan from the Nevada legislature. He urged Senators Newlands and George S. Nixon to discourage hostile statements from Carson City because the president feared a strong resolution from the Nevada legislature would encourage the Californians "to take drastic measures." After the conference Senator Nixon telegraphed the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the Assembly in Carson City, that "the very object of the resolution may be injured by radical action at this time."<sup>7</sup>

Senator Newlands took similar action and went several steps further in a long letter to Denver Dickerson, governor of the state. Newlands admitted that he wanted to moderate actions by the legislature that might lead to friction between the United States and Japan. At the same time he took the liberty of suggesting a plan of action which he believed would preserve friendship between Japan and the United States and most importantly "will mark clearly our purpose to maintain this country as the home of the white race . . ." Newlands chided the legislature for its threats which would be ineffective and possibly harmful. The states should not waste time on meaningless resolutions, rather they should look to the national government for a comprehensive program of restricting immigration. The surplus of all peoples must be stopped from coming to the United States, said Newlands. Such a policy would not offend the Japanese for if faced with the same problem Japan would be the first to take action against the white races were it necessary to maintain the integrity of her race and her institutions. A declaration must come from the federal government and through "statutory enactment that it would not tolerate further race complications." He pronounced, "Our country, by law to take effect after the expiration of existing treaties, should prevent the immigration into this country of all peoples other than those of the white race . . ."<sup>8</sup>

Problems of Japanese exclusion and an all white immigration policy reflected only one side of Newlands's concern with the racial question. He then turned in this same letter to Nevada's governor, to the entire race question and declared it to be "the most important question confronting the Nation." On the Negro question, he reasserted his belief that the nation had "drifted regarding the black race into a condition which seriously suggests the withdrawal of the political rights heretofore mistakenly granted . . ." He also mentioned his educational plan for the Negro on which he had been speaking for three years calling for "a Humane national policy which, with the cooperation and aid of the southern states, would recognize that the blacks are a race of children requiring guidance, industrial training and development of self-control . . ." This measure was only one suggestion aimed at reducing "the danger of race complication formerly regional, but now becoming national."<sup>9</sup>

Important newspapers in the South saw in Newlands's statement to the Nevada governor and his subsequent press releases a move toward a national race purity policy. Since he had said the race question was not regional but national, the *Atlanta Constitution* believed that Newlands's statements suggested an alliance between the South and the West on the race issue. "The overtures of Senator Newlands of Nevada, indicate that the anti-Jap west is yearning to have the anti-Negro south pull the exclusion chestnuts out of the fire for it," the Atlanta paper concluded, but at the same time refused to accept that the racial problems on the West Coast were comparable to the southern racial crisis.<sup>10</sup>

The *Macon Telegraph* of February 12, 1909 welcomed Newlands's statements to the Nevada Legislature as a sign of a growing "bond of sympathy with the West" on the race issue. It congratulated Newlands on his "sane policy with regard to the Japanese question" and said the South should take satisfaction in the racial agitation on the Pacific Coast because "it has opened the eyes of the West to the necessity of race integrity and purity in which the South has so vital an interest." Obviously some southern publications were beginning to see an alliance developing between the South and West on the race issue just as earlier Bryanites in the Democratic party had tried to forge a political alliance between the two sections around economic issues.

Some westerners were not as concerned with creating a sectional alliance on the race issue as they were with making the anti-Japanese movement "respectable." The reasoned statements from Senator Newlands were serving this purpose. The *Santa Cruz Sentinel* applauded Newlands's letter to the Nevada governor not because of its service in forming a national race policy, but because the letter made the most important contribution in recent years to the immediate problem of Asiatic immigration. Most importantly, it said, the senator presented the problem dispassionately and without "that



sensationalism in which writers who discuss the 'yellow peril' are wont to indulge." Newlands made the argument clear and simple when he said that without immigration restriction "the brown races of Asia would quickly settle up and take possession of our entire coast and [intermountain region." *The Sentinel* hastened to point out that Newlands was no mere rabble rouser who appealed only to marauding street crowds when it declared, "This is not sand-lotism," referring to the long history of street haranguing on the race issue in California's past. Rather Newlands's statements reflected truths "that are fully recognized by most persons who have studied the race question in general, and especially on the Pacific Coast, where it has phases that are almost unknown in other parts of the country." In other words the distinguished senator from Nevada was lending his studied, considered, and well-balanced opinion not only to the race question in general, but more specifically to the West. His statements, the paper suggested, should be read as opinions of an informed expert and should not be dismissed as political opportunism. Because Senator Newlands spoke with unquestionable knowledge and credentials on the subject, his type of racism was respectable whereas the older type of mindless, lower class "sand-lotism" which combined anti-Oriental agitation with attacks on the capitalist system was not respectable. This was Progressive and respectable racism that in no way questioned the existing economic structure. It sought to preserve, strengthen, and equip American society for the challenges of the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup>

On the national scene Newlands hoped to gain acceptance for his racial views from the Democratic party's 1912 convention in Baltimore. Shortly after he arrived in Baltimore in June of 1912, Newlands captured national headlines with the announcement that he intended to work for a "white plank" in the national platform that would call for the disfranchisement of Negroes. *The New York Times* for June 17, 1912 asserted that such a plank, "almost in the stroke of the pen . . . would appeal to the sentiment against the negroes in the Southern States and meet the views of the Pacific Coast on Chinese and Japanese exclusion."

The proposed plank skillfully appealed to anti-Negro and anti-foreign sentiments in the following words:

Experience having demonstrated the folly of investing an inferior race with which amalgamation is undesirable with the rights of suffrage, and the folly of admitting to our shores peoples differing in color, with whom amalgamation is undesirable, we declare that our Constitution should be so amended as to confine the right of suffrage in the future to people of the white race, and we favor a law prohibiting the immigration to this country of all peoples other than those of the white race, except for temporary purposes of education, travel, and commerce.

Newlands believed this plank would serve both the interests of the Pacific Coast and abolish the hypocrisy of the law in the South, "where negroes are disenfranchised in spite of the law, a discrimination which has come to be condoned in the Northern states." Again without any hesitancy Newlands declared, "I believe this should be a white man's country, and that we should frankly express our determination that it shall be." Such an amendment would do away with the mockeries of the Fifteenth Amendment and the sham election procedures in the South, he observed. <sup>12</sup>

Although the Democratic platform committee refused his racial plank because, in Newlands's words, "It might divert from our support many who might be shocked by so radical a proposal," Newlands explained, "My purpose was simply to open the way for urging this issue by a union between the South and the Pacific Coast." On race Newlands criticized southern apathy and accused southerners of being more interested in the development of their industrial system and too satisfied with "the temporary expedient of suppressing the negro vote by indirection." A more direct and comprehensive plan was needed now in order to keep the Negro vote permanently suppressed or southerners would wake up one day to the fact of Negro domination occurring through legal channels. <sup>13</sup>

In spite of the platform committee's refusal, Newlands had no doubt that agitation on the race issue would grow into one of the most important questions in the United States. <sup>14</sup> On the other hand an old-line Republican paper in Washington, D.C. asserted that Newlands and his cause would soon be outdated and he would be numbered among the "has beens." The paper attempted to classify Newlands with southern politicians whose chief whipping boy and claim to fame was their persecution of the Negro. It observed that the obscure white man in the Senate or House finds that one of the best ways to distinguish himself is by abusing the Negro. Newlands was compared to "the old Southern Cracker" who by tradition took "the Negro as his text." Newlands with his great wealth and vaunted sophistication would not have appreciated this comparison, but nevertheless his name, in the opinion of *The Bee* of Washington, D.C., ranked along side of Senator Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina and James Vardaman of Mississippi. <sup>15</sup>

By August 1912, Newlands spoke in terms of denying the vote only to the unborn Negro. He hoped that this move would void "even the appearance of injustice by applying it only to those hereafter born." He continually argued that the denial of the suffrage to this race would be for their benefit and regretted "their sudden transformation from slaves to 'sovereigns' as the greatest cruelty that could be inflicted upon them, as well as the whites." Newlands conceded that blacks had the right to be free men, but not sovereigns which the exercise of the suffrage implied. "Freedom," he said, "was a right; suffrage was a

privilege." By denying this privilege the nation and the states could cooperate "for the real — not the sham — betterment of this unfortunate race." <sup>16</sup>

Although the Nevada senator failed in his efforts to have a white plank written into the national Democratic platform, the race issue remained before him. In commenting on the proposed alien land legislation in California in 1913, Newlands again emphasized, "We should confer citizenship upon no one but people of the white race" and "we should write the word white into our constitution . . ." Regarding the future of blacks in the United States, Newlands believed that provisions for their industrial standing should be made in order that they be prepared for "an individualized national life through assisted emigration to some part of Africa especially prepared by scientific development for their occupancy."<sup>17</sup>

Finally in 1916 just one year before his death, Newlands was asked to give his views on the life and work of Booker T. Washington. He warned that his views might not be acceptable in a preliminary letter and announced, "I think the most important work Dr. Washington has done has been to discourage the contention of his race for political rights and to encourage them in economic development." He continued, "True humanity to the negro demands today that the right of suffrage in this country should be limited to the white race . . ." If blacks should later "insist upon participating in the government," because of their development, this would present a difficulty that could be met by transporting these people in a humane manner to African soil where they could enjoy political rights. "But the only sure development of the black race in this country depends not upon the grant of political rights but their denial," he concluded. <sup>18</sup>

Newlands's position on the race issue both in the West and on the national level reflects not only his devotion to white supremacy and the popular racial myths of the day, but also demonstrates how political, social, and intellectual currents afoot in American thought and experience affected racial ideas.<sup>19</sup> Above all Senator Newlands considered himself a national Progressive committed to the modernization of the nation. A modern and efficient nation was best achieved by a political system that rested on a homogeneous society with commonly accepted values; not a pluralistic society. Denying political rights to blacks and non-whites was essential for peaceful and stable political life. It would remove serious obstacles in achieving governmental reforms necessary to the efficient conduct of American political and economic life.

The United States was not the only country with "reformers" bent upon the exclusion of "lesser races" from the life of the modern nation for reasons of progress. Mexico at the turn of the century experienced the *cientifico* movement that embraced progress in economic terms and scientific efficiency in government. The *cientificos* saw the Indian

and Indian blood in Mexico as the enemy of progress. Such people were to serve only as beasts of burden to the civilizing energies of the white race. Of course, Mexico could have no hopes of a homogeneous society and therefore must depend on the leadership of a racial elite for scientific progress.<sup>20</sup> Senator Newlands's racial policies held similar assumptions. Since the majority of the population in the United States was white and capable of progress, why should it not take steps to preserve its superior position and avoid the complications which a nation such as Mexico endured.

Newlands stood for progress and his racial policies were an important aspect and expression of that view of progress. They expressed Progressive optimism inherent in both material and social engineering. If the reclamation engineers could successfully bring water to the Nevada desert, proper Progressive legislation at the national level on matters of race could also engineer the viable and homogeneous society for the future and avoid the complications of racial and cultural diversity.

#### Notes

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2. *Congressional Record* 56th Cong., 1st sess., part 1, vol. 33, p. 674; Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line: American Negro Citizenship in the Progressive Era* (Harper & Row, ed. of original Doubleday, Page & Company, 1918), pp. 256-257; Darling, ed., *The Public Papers of Francis G. Newlands*, vol. 1, p. 298 quotes Newlands's letter of February 3, 1909 to Nevada Governor Denver Dickerson on matters of race and Asian immigration; Newlands MSS, Box 104, file 1.
3. For a discussion of Newlands's anti-Oriental views which does not consider his search for a national solution to the race question in the Progressive context see Harlan H. Hague, "The Racial Attitudes of Francis G. Newlands," *The Pacific Historian* XV (Fall, 1971), pp. 11-30; Newlands to Franklin K. Lane, July 11, 1911, Newlands MSS, Box 41.

4. Newlands to J. H. Patten, July 8, 1912, Newlands MSS, Box 48; Darling, ed., *The Public Papers of Francis G. Newlands*, vol. 1, p. 297.
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6. *Washington Herald*, December 17, 1907.
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8. Darling, ed., *The Public Papers of Francis G. Newlands*, vol. 1, pp. 296-299.
9. *Ibid.*; the letter also appears in the *Nevada State Journal*, February 4, 1909.
10. *Atlanta Constitution*, February 9, 1909.
11. *The Santa Cruz Sentinel*, February 11, 1909.
12. *New York Times*, June 17, 1912.
13. Newlands to William Pickett, July 15, 1912, Box 48, Newlands MSS.
14. Newlands to James A. MacKnight, July 16, 1912, Box 48, Newlands MSS.
15. *The Bee* of Washington, D.C., August, 1912.
16. *New York Evening Journal*, August 6, 1912.
17. Special to the *Nevada State Journal*, Reno, from the *San Francisco Bulletin*, July 26, 1913.
18. Newlands to A. R. White and enclosed statement on Booker T. Washington, January 4, 1916, Newlands MSS.
19. George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), p. 320.
20. Henry Bamford Parkes, *A History of Mexico* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), pp. 299-300.

# *Nevada Reacts to My Lai*

by Terry E. Rowe

## **Introduction**

ON THE MORNING of March 16 a company of United States soldiers stormed into a village in enemy-controlled territory. The one hundred officers and men advanced by platoons, expecting to engage an armed enemy force; instead, they found only women, children, and old men—many of them cooking their breakfast over open fires. During the next few hours most of these unarmed and unresisting civilians, including infants in their mothers' arms, were rounded up and shot by the soldiers. Some of the women and girls were assaulted before being shot. Then the soldiers systematically burned the dwellings and destroyed the livestock.

This was not an episode in the Indian wars of the United States. The incident took place on March 16, 1968. The village was Son My, in Quang Ngai Province of South Vietnam. The unit was Company C, First Battalion, Twentieth Infantry, Eleventh Light Infantry Brigade, American Division, United States Army. One of the hamlets of the village gave this incident its name: *The My Lai Massacre*. This incident and its aftermath brought great repercussions in the United

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States. One result was the longest court-martial in United States history—the trial of First Lieutenant William L. Calley, Jr. <sup>2</sup>

The My Lai Massacre and the Calley trial received extensive coverage in the news media and provoked an intensive reaction on the part of the American public. The following is an account of the coverage given those events in five major Nevada newspapers. It is also an examination of the reaction of Nevadans to those events, as manifested in local editorials, local columns, and letters printed in those newspapers. <sup>3</sup>

### **U.S. Infantry Kills 128 Cong [March 16, 1968]**

Saigon (AP) — U.S. infantrymen, in a hide-and-peek fight through rice paddies and sand dunes along the central coast, killed 128 Viet Cong guerrillas today, the U.S. Command said.

A spokesman said a company of the 11th Light Infantry Brigade, sweeping into an area that had been bombarded minutes earlier, tangled with guerrillas this morning.

A second company dropped by helicopters two miles to the north an hour later and heavy fighting broke out as the guerrillas tried to escape the tightening vise.

Helicopter gunships and artillery supported the advancing U.S. infantrymen in the running battle six miles northeast of Quang Ngai City and 330 miles northeast of Saigon.

American casualties were not given since the forces were still in contact, a U.S. spokesman said.<sup>4</sup>

### **Army Acquits Henderson of My Lai Charges [December 18, 1971]**

FT. MEADE, Md. (UPI) — Col. Oran K. Henderson was acquitted yesterday of charges he tried to cover up the murder of unarmed South Vietnamese civilians at My Lai.

The end of the sixth and final court-martial growing out of the massacre came almost four years after the slaughter of men, women, and children at the coastal hamlet.

+ + +

Henderson, 51, a slight man who has served in three wars, was commander of the 11th brigade on March 16, 1968, the day more than 100 civilians were killed in the sweep on My Lai. One of the platoon leaders under Henderson that day was Lt. William L. Calley Jr., the only person convicted in the various court-martials. <sup>5</sup>

These two news items marked the beginning and, essentially, the end of Nevada exposure to the My Lai Massacre and its aftermath. In the intervening period of almost four years, Nevada readers were exposed to several hundred articles and syndicated columns which unfolded a story that often dominated the news. The My Lai Massacre was adjudged the fifth most important news story of 1969 in a poll of North American newspaper editors. <sup>6</sup> In 1971 the trial of Lieutenant Calley was voted eighth in headline impact. <sup>7</sup>

The Nevada reaction to the My Lai Massacre and subsequent developments was extensive. The issues of the five newspapers in question contain approximately one hundred editorials, local columns, and letters pertaining to these events. An examination of these writings provides some insights into the nature of the Nevada reaction to the My Lai Massacre and its aftermath.

### **Reaction to the Disclosure**

#### **G.I.'s CHARGED IN VIET ATROCITIES [November 17, 1969]**

##### **567 Civilians Massacred Survivors Hide Under Piles of Murdered Men <sup>8</sup>**

These or similar headlines and column headings provided Nevada readers with their first information on the actual nature of the My Lai incident. The next seven weeks constituted one of the two periods that this story received intensive coverage in the five Nevada newspapers. A total of 234 news items, syndicated columns, and political cartoons provided details of what was alleged to have occurred at My Lai, how the story was exposed, investigative efforts underway, and public reaction to the exposure. This coverage included reprinted photographs of the My Lai victims that were taken by an army photographer on the day of the attack:

#### **Massacre Inquiry Sought**

#### **Court martial Ordered for Army Officer Accused Soldier Tells How Company Killed 370 Vietnamese**

#### **Massacre Reports Astound Colonel**

#### **Color Photos of Massacre Shown in *Life***

#### **Captain Denies Ordering Troops to Kill Children**

**General Quizzed on Killings**

**Army to Court-Martial Sergeant in Massacre** <sup>9</sup>

The actual events which took place in Son My on March 16, 1968, emerged as something quite different from the account related in the original news release of "128 Viet Cong Killed." No enemy units were encountered. No battle took place. Yet, an estimated 347 civilians had been killed by Company 'C', commanded by Captain Ernest Medina. An estimated 90 - 130 of those by the First Platoon, led by Lieutenant Calley. <sup>10</sup> Company 'C's "victory" remained the official version until March of 1969, when ex-GI Ronald Ridenhour wrote letters concerning the incident to the president, several congressmen, and other government officials. <sup>11</sup>

The Nevada reaction to the disclosure was not extensive in the five newspapers in question. There were a total of thirteen letters and editorials dealing with the subject in the three months following the disclosure. These letters and editorials, however, did bring to light a number of themes that would later receive more thorough discussion.

Some Nevadans were critical of the coverage of the disclosure by segments of the media:

Why do the newspapers, television, and radio try to over publicize this type of thing? Is a story worth a lot of young men bowing their heads in shame because something that they have been trying so hard to believe in, is completely destroyed by the very citizens and country they represent. <sup>12</sup>

Who made the rules for the Viet Nam War? Who appointed our TV news commentators as referees? . . .

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Just where was Mike Wallace, with his emotion-packed voice, when Viet Cong women and children planted bombs that killed hundreds of Vietnamese women, children, and GI's on our side? Didn't hear him interview a Viet Cong woman and ask her how she could kill babies! . . . <sup>13</sup>

One of the first Nevada editorials made thoughtful use of an analogy not found in the early reaction of the national press, perhaps reflecting a heightened awareness of U.S. Western history:

In January, 1879, the long struggle to pacify a hostile continent, if not to win the hearts and the minds of its aboriginal inhabitants, was virtually concluded at Fort Robinson, Neb., with the massacre by the U.S. Cavalry of the remnant of rebellious Cheyennes, whose only crime was

that they insisted on occupying ancestral lands coveted by the white man.

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As cruelty towards their enemies was the norm among the Indians, so is it among the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese and as so-called civilized Europeans often dealt back to the Indian measure for measure, so have American boys often matched the savagery of the foe in Vietnam.

"The only good Indian is a dead Indian," said the Indian fighters, and meant it. A similar feeling seems to be prevalent in Vietnam that, "The only gook you can be sure isn't a Viet Cong is a dead gook."<sup>14</sup>

Early letters and local columns mentioned a comparison that was to receive much future attention — a comparison between the killing of civilians at My Lai and the killing of civilians in other wars:

Several score civilians were reported to have been shot in My Lai. It is charged that it was intentional. It is inexcusable. All right, how does anyone equate this act with the dropping of the A-bomb on Hiroshima? Were these people more deserving of their much more horrible punishment? Were there just a few score? Was this act unintentional? Is it excusable? I do not see any difference.

It is the Army's job to inspire their charges to kill without question. I cannot see how it is possible to pillory one man or a small group of men for doing what they were drilled to do, no matter what went wrong.

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This exposure, this trial, is as senseless as war itself.<sup>15</sup>

There is absolutely no comparison to be made of the Mylai [*sic*] incident and the atom bombs of World War II.

To order the murder of civilians where there is no possible strategic advantage nor the protection of friendly soldiers involved is never worth defending as, "just part of the war!" I believe the trial will uncover the truth of the entire situation . . . Remember, we are a people who profess to believe in justice for all and punishment for crime, even in a war.<sup>16</sup>

Another early-expressed viewpoint saw My Lai as a consequence of the unconventional nature of the war in Vietnam — an undeclared and "limited" war, much of it consisting of guerrilla-type actions and the absence of front lines:

The VC have exercised their unconscionable treacheries on our men that have baffled and miffed our most experienced officers in the atrocities that only wars

can conjure up. The worst of these is to use their women and children in their bloody plots. To train these so-called innocents to hide grenades and other weapons of war in their clothing and to strike when our unsuspecting men held out a helping hand to them is something to really ponder before we judge what is allegedly being bandied about as the cold-blooded murder of women and children.

I'm sure when the order was given to shoot at anything that moved and burn anything that didn't, our men had learned through bitter experience and much loss of life that this order had unquestionable validity.

WAR IS HELL and an UNDECLARED WAR is seven times seven, times seven times seven worse. <sup>17</sup>

Much of the Nevada reaction during this period evidenced a sense of shock and confusion about the nature of the My Lai incident and its implications. Nevadans seemed to be struggling to establish perspective:

Vietnam has been at war with every country that has tried to help them, or fighting among themselves. Why not leave them to their own destruction? They certainly don't need us to help them or they wouldn't be the two faced people they are. I'm sure that the VC threaten them daily into doing things against the allied forces. And there must be an answer somewhere to this whole rotten mess. I certainly don't have the answer. <sup>18</sup>

These feelings are also apparent in these published responses by Nevadans to an inquiry concerning their reactions to the news of atrocities being committed by servicemen in Vietnam: <sup>19</sup>

Shock and disbelief. As a combat veteran of Korea, I know that natives are often enemy agents. But even if every native in Song My was V.C., they shouldn't have been murdered by Americans.

To me it is almost unbelievable that our American boys could do such a thing. Until it can be proven otherwise, I will believe that it was done in the heat of battle.

I personally do not want to judge anybody but, if what has been reported in the newspapers are facts, then I am appalled.

Much of the Nevada editorial reaction was infused with a plea against making premature judgments:

A lot of people are making a lot of conclusions about the reported "massacre" at Song My. We suspect that many of these conclusions are premature, and are reached on the basis of hysteria rather than a deliberate view of documented evidence.

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We recommend the withholding of judgment by the citizenry until the evidence of the case has been weighed and commented upon by members of the courts martial board, who have a first-hand understanding of proper conduct in combat. <sup>20</sup>

### **Reaction During the Period Prior to the Calley Trial**

The My Lai Massacre and subsequent developments remained in the news during the period from March to November 17, 1970, the start of the Calley trial. The story no longer made headlines, but news items and columns continued to inform the Nevada public about the investigations in progress, and related matters:

#### **Medina Admits to War Terrorism**

#### **West Point Chief Charged in Viet Massacre 'Coverup'**

#### **Three More Soldiers Charged With Murder in My Lai Event**

#### **Probe of My Lai Underway in Congress**

#### **Civil Courts Intervene in My Lai Army Justice**

#### **First Yank on Trial in My Lai Case** <sup>21</sup>

It was during this period that the army, following an investigation by Lieutenant General William R. Peers, charged fourteen officers, including Major General Samuel Koster, of involvement in the suppression of information about the My Lai incident. A congressional investigation also concluded that the incident had been covered up at division level in 1968. A book by Seymour M. Hersch, *My Lai 4*, was published during this period. <sup>22</sup> It contained the first full account of the massacre and was to win the Pulitzer Prize. The trial of Staff Sergeant David Mitchell was the first court-martial of a My Lai participant.

The Nevada reaction during this period was subdued — there was only a handful of letters in the five Nevada newspapers. These con-



tinued the often emotional thrust of the previous letters. This example also touches upon a theme which came to dominate later Nevada reaction — that of Calley as a “scapegoat”:

For shame America! Why are we picking on this Army officer, Lt. Calley, who was doing what he was sent to do? It's a national disgrace to try a man for killing the enemy . . . I wonder what some of the bleeding hearts would do if they were confronted with women and little children boobytrapped to the gills and no other way out but to kill them or be killed?

. . . Where were all the squawks when President Truman ordered the bombing of old folks and little children in World War II of the two cities in Japan? Eighty-four thousands killed and many maimed for life! Nobody seemed to object to these bombings. How premeditated can you get? <sup>23</sup>

### **Reaction During the Calley Trial**

With the start of the Calley court-martial and the acquittal of Staff Sergeant Mitchell, My Lai once again became headline news. The news coverage remained at a relatively high level throughout this period of the trials of Lieutenant Calley and others:

#### **GI WINS ACQUITTAL IN FIRST MY LAI MASSACRE VERDICT**

**Emotional Scene at End of Sgt. Mitchell's Trial**

**Army Nears Completion of Calley Panel Picks**

**Calley Brutality Related**

**My Lai Witness Says Action Was a Reprisal**

**Second GI Cleared of All Charges  
In My Lai Massacre**

**Calley Testimony Near End**

**Medina To Stand Trial for Murder**

**Jury May Be Near Verdict  
In Calley Court Martial <sup>24</sup>**

Any skepticism as to the full horror of what happened in May Lai on March 16, 1968, should have been dispelled by news items containing accounts of testimony given by members of Calley's platoon:

The six officers making up the Calley court-martial board heard the most damaging testimony to date against the defendant Friday when a former soldier recounted how he watched as Calley fired his rifle repeatedly into unarmed civilians who had been rounded up into groups outside the village.

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Conti said he saw Calley and Meadlo fire for about two minutes at a group by the trail and "They just screamed and yelled. I guess they tried to get up. They just died."

"They were pretty well shot up—heads were shot off—pieces of heads. Flesh was flying."

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I seen a woman get up and I seen Lt. Calley fire at her and saw the side of her head blown off." <sup>25</sup>

+ + +

"Then someone hollered, 'There's a child getting away! There's a child running back toward the village!' Lieutenant Calley ran back and grabbed the baby by one arm. I don't know whether it was a boy or a girl. He picked it up by one arm and threw it into the ditch, and shot it." <sup>26</sup>

Given the tone of previous Nevada editorials and letters, it would have been reasonable to anticipate some reaction to the developments of this four and one-half month period. Depending upon the viewpoint of the individual, it might have taken the form of revulsion to the confirmed details of the atrocity, or a vigorous protest against bringing Calley and others to trial at all. Editorial and letter reaction, however, was almost nonexistent in the five Nevada newspapers during this period. It would prove to be "the quiet before the storm."

### **Reaction to the Calley Verdict and Sentence**

#### **CALLEY VERDICT: GUILTY**

#### **CALLEY GETS LIFE SENTENCE**

#### **ARMY TRIES TO STEM UPROAR OVER CALLEY**

#### **Calley Verdict Triggers Protest Throughout U.S.**

**Army Defends Prosecution of Calley as  
"Legal and Moral Obligation"**

**Nixon to Personally Review Calley Decision**

**Poll Underlines Dilemma of Public Over Calley**

**Colonel Charged**

**Henderson Trial Promises  
To Be Lengthy Proceeding**

**Government Gives Up On Attempt To  
Prosecute 15 GIs For My Lai <sup>27</sup>**

The conviction and sentencing of Lieutenant Calley was only one of the events of this period. There were charges and trials involving others associated with the My Lai Massacre or its cover-up. There were also revelations of other alleged atrocities in Vietnam and trials of military personnel connected with them. The focus of the Nevada news coverage, however, was the Calley predicament — his verdict and sentencing, or the reaction to them. The five Nevada newspapers published a total of 240 news item, syndicated columns, and political cartoons with these themes during the next seven weeks.

The national reaction to the Calley verdict and sentence, by any measure, was overwhelming. It included petitions, parades, draft board resignations, legislative resolutions, flag-flying campaigns, letter-writing campaigns, and other expressions of protest. The extent and tone of the reaction is indicated by the fact that the White House received an estimated 25,000 telegrams in a two-day period, running 100 to 1 in favor of First Lieutenant Calley. <sup>28</sup>

A Gallup poll conducted April 1-2, 1971, confirmed the American public's opposition to the Calley verdict and some of the underlying reasons for the opposition: <sup>29</sup>

Do you approve or disapprove of the court-martial finding that Lt. Calley is guilty of premeditated murder?

Approve	9 percent
Disapprove	79 percent
No opinion	12 percent

Do you disapprove of the verdict because you think what happened at My Lai was not a crime or because you think many others besides Lt. Calley share the responsibility for what happened?

Not a crime	20 percent
Others share responsibility	71 percent
No opinion; other answers	9 percent

Do you think Lt. Calley is being made the scapegoat for the actions of others above him, or not?

Yes	69 percent
No	12 percent
No opinion	19 percent

A very limited poll of Nevadans which was published in the *Las Vegas Sun* on April 2, 1971, showed similar results.<sup>30</sup> A random sampling of fifty Las Vegas citizens replied to questions about the verdict. Forty of the fifty felt that the court's decision was unfair. Some of the responses considered typical by the newspaper:

He was acting on his superior officer's orders; he should be punished, but others should be also.

The decision was made by higher-ups. He (Calley) could have received the death penalty, administered on the spot, for refusing an order under fire.

Forty of the fifty felt that Calley was made a "scapegoat" by the Army:

He is the butt of the Army face-saving instinct. A lot of manipulation went into making him a scapegoat.

The press blew it up and the politicians and generals had to alleviate the pressure from themselves.

When asked their opinion of a proper verdict, ten agreed with the life sentence, fifteen wanted a lesser degree of punishment, fifteen thought the case should have been dismissed, and ten thought a "not guilty" verdict should have been returned:

I think he should be freed because his own conscience will be his judge.

I think he deserved imprisonment. but not for life.

Calley's conviction should be reversed . . . he should be given a medal for common sense and effectiveness.

The newspaper commented that the following statement seemed to express the immediate Nevada reaction to the Calley decision:

I feel that it's the most unjust thing that's ever happened in this country. You don't ask people to go over there and fight a war that's not a war, and then convict them of murder.

The quoted comments of Nevada's elected representatives ac-

curately depicted the public's dismay; Senator Howard Cannon:

We are getting thousands and thousands of letters of protest against the court's decision . . . . It seems very harsh to me when boys are taken against their will and sent someplace to fight and then tried for their actions.<sup>31</sup>

Senator Alan Bible:

The Calley case is a tragic outgrowth of a miserable and savage conflict. Making Lt. William Calley the scapegoat is wrong.

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The charge and the sentence should be reduced immediately. The system that sent Lt. Calley to Vietnam and ordered him to kill must now be prepared to grant clemency or fully share in the burden of guilt.<sup>32</sup>

Congressman Walter Baring, in a letter to the White House:

. . . Mr. President, as congressman for the State of Nevada, I respectfully request that you give Lt. Calley an unconditional pardon. I make this request in behalf of my constituents, myself and every former, current, and future American soldier.

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When a soldier is trained to kill or has to expect that he could get killed in his duty to his country, he must have the support of the American people. I believe this to be the sentiment of the great silent majority in America today.<sup>33</sup>

The five Nevada newspapers printed a total of fifty-two local editorials, columns, and letters on this subject during the two months following the verdict. Several editorials and letters echoed the pleas for clemency:

What kind of a nation have we become when we send our young men to fight and die in a senseless war, then bring them home to be tried for murder?

We urge every concerned American to write President Nixon asking him to use his influence to intervene in Lt. William Calley Jr.'s behalf.<sup>34</sup>

The question of why some Nevadans (and other Americans) would rally to support of someone who was convicted of murdering women and children has many facets. Some explanation can be found in the themes developed in their editorials, columns, and letters. Some

Nevadans pointed to the military establishment which trained Calley and sent him into My Lai:

If Calley unjustly slaughtered those civilians, then the military system is to blame because he is a product of that system. The "military" trained, educated, and formed Lieut. Calley into the image of the officer it evidently wanted.

Now he is sentenced to life at hard labor because he acted true to the form in which he was molded.<sup>35</sup>

Other Nevadans found justification (either explicit or implicit) for the My Lai killings in the fact that civilians were killed by other military actions, in the particular nature of the Vietnam conflict, or in the illusive nature of the enemy:

Theses [sic] so-called innocent citizens have been known to put ground glass in our soft drinks, lure our men into traps, and give the enemy any information they wanted about our bases. . . .

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War has one purpose and that is to defeat the enemy whether it be men, women, or children. . . .

How can you single out a man and convict him of murder when every day, civilians are being killed by inaccurate bombing and artillery missions? If killing civilians is the wrong thing to do then how about the pilot who bombed Hiroshima? What makes him right and Lt. Calley wrong? They were both following orders to destroy an area populated with civilians.<sup>36</sup>

I am sure that we all felt horrified by what happened at My Lai, but we must all consider the type of war our boys have been asked to fight. This is an enemy that USES women and children to kill and maim our soldiers, who USES a baby as a time bomb, who USES our reverence for human life as a weapon against us. It is stupid to ask our fighting men to conduct themselves as Boy Scouts against an enemy who doesn't know what honor means.<sup>37</sup>

Some Nevadans saw in the Calley conviction an indictment of U.S. foreign policy, or a mandate for other changes:

The trial, conviction and sentence just recently imposed on Lt. William Calley Jr. is in TRUTH the TRIAL, CONVICTION and SENTENCE on AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY in SOUTHEAST ASIA.<sup>38</sup>

To call Lt. Calley a murderer is the latest series of sick



tricks being played on the American People. American blood is being shed for the protection of oil leases.

Every GI in S.E. Asia should immediately demand to be returned to the U.S. (former friends), that failing should go over to the Viet Cong (former enemy).

The govt. of the U.S. has become destructive to the aims of the people and it is our right and duty to change and abolish that government (U.S. Constitution).<sup>39</sup>

The editorials and letters often expressed concern with the questions of judgment and guilt. There was some speculation on the broader aspects of these questions, but the primary focus was upon more specific correlative questions, most of them involving Calley: Can or should anyone judge him? Should he have been tried at all? How could he have been found guilty? Should his sentence be carried out?:

Judges, juries, lawyers are not qualified to judge this case unless they have actually been in frontline combat. Even then, every battle is different. There are always errors.

I have been in battles where civilians were killed. I could not possibly judge Lt. Calley guilty, regardless of the testimony. Only God can judge a man who is forced to kill in battle.<sup>40</sup>

If Lt. Bill Calley is guilty, then I'm guilty, along with many, many more of the World War II era. Also guilty are the old men that know not of what they do, except create wars, for young men to die in!

Or is it the conglomerates we fight for, rather than the country?<sup>41</sup>

The real issue at stake here is not whether Calley is guilty but at what point is there guilt. If there is guilt, this guilt extends to all involved and you better believe it, right up or down the line.<sup>42</sup>

Calley as a "scapegoat" was the theme that received most attention in the letters and other writings that sympathized with his predicament. He was seen as a man deserted by his nation, and even as a hero:

Calley was a scapegoat and there seems little doubt of that. It is on the record that higher officers—some as high as the general staff—attempted to cover up what first was revealed as "the incident at My Lai."

But the pressure grew too great. Complaining witnesses stepped forward and revealed details on what later became

the "massacre at My Lai."

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Suddenly the "military," including the Pentagon, the "establishment," the Defense Department and other areas of national government had a full blown scandal on their hands.

Somebody was called to answer, and it turned out to be a second lieutenant in the field. His name was Calley.<sup>43</sup>

In the *Las Vegas Sun's* "Inquiring Photographer" feature of April 7, 1971, the question was asked, "What person do you most admire in the world today?" Two of the five printed replies: "Lt. Calley."<sup>44</sup>

A change in the tone of the Nevada reaction was evidenced in the editorials and letters appearing towards the end of this period. Many Nevadans were obviously concerned with the reactions of their fellow citizens to the Calley conviction:

What a tragic example of moral and spiritual sickness and degeneration the American people show when a mass murderer like William Calley is overnight elevated to the pedestal of national hero.

Even enemy soldiers in World War II were disarmed and marched off to captivity. Here we have a man that orders and participates in wholesale execution of unarmed women, children and babies. . . .

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It's unbelievable that this nation could be so completely sick that this man Calley is now given national hero worship. Think for a minute just how really sick that is.<sup>45</sup>

Have all Americans gone mad and become so nationalistic ala Hitler's Germany that we insist on whitewashing massacres?

We seem to have so much blind sympathy for Calley. What about (the) babies? I did not see rifles or grenades hidden on their naked defenseless bodies. . . . The fact remains if we leave incidents such as this unpunished we are no better or no worse than the barbarians on the other side. Am I the only person in the whole country who feels this way?<sup>46</sup>

Other letters and editorials attempted to counter some of the specific arguments used to justify the My Lai Massacre or in defense of Calley. Many made reference to the war crimes trials after World War II:

One of the most regrettable results of the reaction to the Calley conviction has been the blurring in the minds of

many Americans the distinction between what is permissible and what is not permissible in war.

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Others have asked what is the difference between killing civilians by dropping bombs on them from 30,000 feet and shooting them at 30 feet? There is all the difference in the world. The difference is whether a nation kills non-combatants inadvertently in pursuit of a military objective or whether he kills them by design. . . .

The difference is whether in this war, or any other war, US bombs or bullets have been directed against civilians as a matter of policy—against homes, churches, schools, hospitals, orphanages—to the exclusion of purely military targets.<sup>47</sup>

Nuremberg is on the books and we must live with it. Is the Calley case anything more than a reverse Nuremberg? If we could try the Germans for what they did, why should we not hold one of our own to answer when his acts go beyond the dictates of war?

If Calley was ordered to “waste” the village then these orders, under Nuremberg, should not have been carried out; and if he had no orders, then his acts are inexcusable.

Evidence was taken at trial and evaluated by a competent military court. Said evidence indicated that Calley was guilty as charged. What Calley did cannot be excused by saying “war is hell.” Nuremberg and natural justice demand that Lt. Calley answer for what he did.<sup>48</sup>

### **Subsequent Reaction**

The remainder of 1971 saw continued, but diminishing news coverage of events concerned with the My Lai Massacre and the Calley trial:

**General Demoted Over My Lai Issue**

**Lt. Calley Initiates Appeal**

**Medina's Trial Begins**

**Clemency For Calley; Parole in Six Years**

**No Happy Birthday for Col. Henderson**

**Medina Begins Defense**

**CAPT. MEDINA HEAVES A BIG SIGH OF RELIEF**

**Army Acquits Henderson on My Lai Charges**<sup>49</sup>

Nevada reaction during this period was almost nonexistent. There were no editorials, local columns, or letters of calm reflection on the significance of the events of the previous three years. Somewhat puzzling was the lack of reaction and comment on the other trials in progress—those of Captain Medina and Colonel Henderson. Perhaps

the lack of comment was connected with the fact that both of those trials ended in acquittal. Perhaps Calley, and only Calley, remained the primary symbol of My Lai and its aftermath. Perhaps the Nevada public had tired of the entire issue. In any case, the Nevada reaction to My Lai had ended.

### **Pattern of Nevada Reaction**

The pattern of the Nevada reaction to the My Lai Massacre and Calley conviction differed significantly with the pattern of news coverage of those events. The high points of both the news coverage and the reaction occurred during seven-week periods following the disclosure of the massacre, and following the Calley verdict. The news coverage during each seven-week period, as measured by news items, syndicated columns, and political cartoons, was roughly comparable (234 versus 240). The Nevada reaction, however, as measured by editorials, local columns, and letters, was heavily weighted towards the Calley verdict and sentence (11 versus 46). Also to be considered is the almost complete absence of Nevada reaction to the trials of Medina, Henderson, and others—all of which ended in acquittal—and during the three and one-half months of the Calley trial (prior to the verdict). In short, both the chronological distribution and the content of the reaction make it clear that the primary Nevada focus was not on the slaughter of 347 Vietnamese civilians, or even on the fact that Calley and others were brought to trial. The Nevada reaction centered on the conviction and sentencing of Lieutenant William L. Calley, Jr.

### **Calley as a Symbol**

It would seem apparent from the content of the Nevada reaction that Calley had become a symbol for much more than an individual on trial for murder, or even for the My Lai Massacre. Several syndicated columns printed in Nevada newspapers noted this phenomenon on a national level:

Calley is at once a symbol and a reminder. He is a symbol of how a democracy that calls itself humanist cannot fight a war today—especially a guerrilla war against a shadowy and elusive enemy—without risking the chance that its young men may be caught between killing widely and being condemned. . . . <sup>50</sup>

No sensitive American can absorb the ghoulish account of this massacre in My Lai hamlet without feeling a measure of personal guilt. For this is not merely an account of war brutalizing one lieutenant or one 20-year-old infantryman, or one platoon; it is the story of how war brutalizes a people and a nation. <sup>51</sup>

We have adopted William Calley; he is the foster son of

millions of families; he wore his country's uniform, earned medals for valor, went into the dreadful swamps and jungles to risk his life for those of us who stayed home. There is kinship toward the little fellow, there is parental pride, and the horror that we feel for his crime is something entirely apart. For his guilt we have sorrow, but not anger . . . .<sup>52</sup>

One of the ironies of the Nevada reaction is connected with the widespread opposition to Calley's conviction and sentence. That opposition generated some strange bedfellows. It stemmed from a wide spectrum of personal and political viewpoints: pity for Calley as a "scapegoat," distaste for the military, dovish opposition to the Vietnam involvement, hawkish disgust with a "no-win war," and many others. It seems clear, however, that the consensus on this subject was more unanimous (at least during the period 1964 to 1971) than on any other aspect of the Vietnam War.<sup>53</sup> This aspect of the national reaction also received comment from syndicated columnists:

For a while there it almost looked as if somebody were going to propose giving Lt. William L. Calley, Jr. the Congressional Medal of Honor. Not since the firing of Gen. Douglas MacArthur during the Korean War has there been such an outburst of sympathy for an American soldier. So at least Vietnam has produced an officer everybody recognizes—an antihero for a war without glory or nobility, and a symbol for a time of moral confusion.<sup>54</sup>

A remarkable national blessing has formed itself out of the Calley affair. At the lowest point of the damnable war . . . there came along this one subject on which virtually all Americans could agree.

They agreed, not intellectually as if on some political issue, but agreed emotionally, with a common pang in the heart. It hardly matters that some of his countrymen pity Calley out of love, or that some others pity him out of hatred for his superior military and civilian officers. All that counts, at least for the short while that this case remains foremost in many minds, is that we have found a subject where there is national unity.<sup>55</sup>

### **Neglected Themes**

There were two significant aspects of the My Lai Massacre which received little attention in the national reaction and even less in the Nevada reaction: the racial overtones in the My Lai Massacre and the counterproductive effort that such incidents have had on the U.S. effort in Vietnam.

The racial question is extremely difficult to isolate and define because it appears closely tied to questions of nationalism and dif-

ferences in culture. Although the news coverage of the Calley trial included many indications that racism may have been a factor in the My Lai Massacre, only a very few of the Nevada editorials or letters even touched upon this subject. One letter that inadvertently provided a revealing glimpse into the racial question was written by a young Nevadan serving in Vietnam. One of the ironies of the letter is that the writer was in an assignment that supposedly required a great deal of understanding and empathy for the Vietnamese:

I am a Marine in Vietnam on my second tour. I have been wounded three times by these poor little "defenseless" people.

I have worked my last eight months in a Combined Unified *[sic]* Pacification Program. This means we live in a village with the people and work with the South Vietnamese army *[sic]* in a combined effort to keep the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong out of the area.

On the radio this morning we heard that Lt. Calley was found guilty of premeditated murder. I personally am not a hippie or anything else, but an American doing a job I believe in. I personally feel as does the majority of my squad that the verdict is wrong.

+ + +

Your *[sic]* people back home don't see the young and old American lives and legs and arms that are lost because some 10-year-old *gook* kid or a 35-year-old *gook* mother planted a mortar round on a trail. <sup>56</sup> [*Italics mine*]

One of the few national columnists who met this question head-on discussed the broader implications of any racism in the U.S. effort in Vietnam:

Some of Calley's defenders are moved by some bizarre notion that "patriotism" requires them to support "our boys" who go abroad to "defend our freedom," however heinous the behavior of certain of "our boys" may be. But to cloak the My Lai massacre in red, white and blue bunting is to defile the very word, patriotism.

+ + +

The implication is clear that they are now applying what is known in Vietnam as "the mere gook rule." What Calley shot was "merely a bunch of gooks," and who is going to lock up a good American boy for that?

+ + +

To the extent that Americans apply the "mere gook rule" to the Calley case or any other aspect of My Lai, to

that extent they strip morality away from an involvement that has cost almost a million lives. And they give overpowering credence to cries that this is a "racist war."

Once we convince the world of that, we are through in Asia and much of the rest of the world. Not all our arms can save for us any portion of leadership.

And in truth, we shall deserve none.<sup>57</sup>

The adverse effect that the My Lai Massacre (and other atrocities) have had on the "other war" (the nation-building effort) in Vietnam was largely ignored in the national reaction and totally overlooked in the Nevada reaction. No small matter, since atrocities such as My Lai can be the difference between winning and losing a guerrilla war—where the key to victory is to win the support of the contested population. How many Viet Cong were successfully recruited because of My Lai and similar incidents? How many civic action projects, such as building schools and roads, were negated by such incidents? The fact that this subject received virtually no attention in the Nevada reaction could be viewed as an indication that the Nevada public had never grasped the true nature of the war.

### **Subjective Impressions**

The author of this article, as most everyone, has his own opinion of the My Lai Massacre and the Calley court-martial. The author is closer to the subject than most, having served one of his five years in Vietnam with an infantry battalion of the Americal Division (Calley's parent unit), in a district approximately fifty miles to the northwest of My Lai. The author has a deep interest in the history of the United States involvement in Indochina, particularly in the United States public's reaction to events such as the My Lai Massacre; however, a genuine effort has been made to set aside those personal views while writing this article.

The implications of the My Lai Massacre for the eventual outcome of the United States effort in Vietnam are not encouraging; however, the implications for the U.S. Army and the United States, as a nation, are even more disturbing. A particular letter from a young Nevadan haunts the author of this article because of its unique combination of vehemence, insight, and challenge to the army's integrity and our national conscience:

I was not surprised that American soldiers, immersed in that brutal and brutalizing war, were able to commit an atrocity to rival the Nazis at Belsen and Buchenwald. Nor was I surprised when the Army, which managed to cover up the whole business for a year, finally felt obliged to single out a scapegoat.

What really surprised me was the angry reaction of



some Americans at Calley's conviction. They are incensed that an American soldier should actually be punished for the wanton slaughter of unarmed civilians (enemy "gooks," after all, even the kids).

Hitler, you are avenged! All that fuss about killing you, and here you are—alive and well in the land of the Good Guys! <sup>58</sup>

Overstated? Perhaps. But consider the responses to this single question extracted from a national poll conducted *after* the Calley trial and more than a year of discussion about My Lai: <sup>59</sup>

If you were a soldier in Vietnam and were ordered by your superior officers to shoot *old men, women, and children suspected* [italics mine] of aiding the enemy, would you follow orders and shoot them or would you refuse to shoot them?

Follow orders	43 percent
Refuse	41 percent
Not sure	16 percent

Particularly disturbing is the fact that the responses to the identical question, when asked in 1969 after the first disclosure of the My Lai Massacre, showed that a plurality of 45 percent to 37 percent would *refuse* to follow such an order! <sup>60</sup>

One can only speculate on what the results would be if such a poll was taken today. Whether we—Nevadans and Americans—have heeded the injunction of a Nevada editorial published two weeks after the Calley verdict:

. . . time is the one thing the American people need at this point . . . time for all of us to ponder as objectively as we can what happened at My Lai, both in its immediate context and in the larger context of the war, of human morality, and our nation's future. . . . <sup>61</sup>

## Notes

1. The Vietnamese have a different name for this village, and for the hamlets contained therein. "Son My" is the designation on United States military maps, with its four hamlets shown as "My Lai," with numerical designations (1) through (4). The United States media has persisted in the spelling, "Song My," and this version will be seen in quotations within this article. See Seymour M.

Hersch, *Cover-up* (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 9, 181.

2. The specific events made reference to in this article were compiled from various editions of the five newspapers examined in this article and from Hersch, *Cover-up*; Seymour M. Hersch, *My Lai 4* (New York: Random House, 1970); Richard Hammer, *One Morning in the War* (Coward-McCann, Inc., 1970); John Sack, *Lieutenant Calley: His Own Story* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970); and Richard Hammer, *The Court-Martial of Lt. Calley* (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, Inc., 1971).

3. *Reno Evening Gazette*, *Nevada State Journal*, *Las Vegas Review Journal*, *Las Vegas Sun*, and *Elko Daily Free Press*. The selection criteria included frequency of publication, coverage of national news, circulation, geographical representation, and political affiliation. These are five of Nevada's seven daily newspapers. Their combined circulation is more than 80 percent of the total circulation of Nevada daily and weekly newspapers. When defined as a fifty-mile radius, their combined "area of influence" includes more than 90 percent of Nevada's population. For circulation data and political affiliation see *Ayer Directory of Publications* (Philadelphia: Ayer Press, 1972), pp. 521-22. For population data see United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population: 1970, Report PC(1) - B30, General Population Characteristics, Nevada*.

4. *Reno Evening Gazette*, Mar. 16, 1968, p. 1. Similar versions of this news item appeared on page one of the Mar. 16, 1968 issue of the *Elko Daily Free Press*, and on page one of the Mar. 17, 1968 issues of the other three Nevada newspapers.

5. *Las Vegas Sun*, Dec. 18, 1971, pp. 1, 4. Similar versions of this news item appeared on page one of the *Elko Daily Free Press*, Dec. 17, 1971, and on page one of the Dec. 18, 1971 issues of the other three Nevada newspapers.

6. *Las Vegas Sun*, Jan. 1, 1970, p. 21.

7. *Ibid.*, Dec. 31, 1971, p. 6.

8. *Ibid.*, Nov. 17, 1969, p. 1.

9. *Ibid.*, Nov. 21, 1969, p. 2; Nov. 25, 1969, p. 4; Nov. 26, 1969, p. 8; Nov. 29, 1969, p. 6; Dec. 1, 1969, p. 6; Dec. 7, 1969, p. 4; Dec. 19, 1969, p. 7; Jan. 1, 1970, p. 4.

10. Hersch, *Cover-up*, p. 7. This appears the most reliable of varying estimates. Lieutenant Calley was charged with 102 counts of murder and convicted of 22.

11. For a full account of the exposure of the My Lai Massacre and related investigative efforts, see *ibid.*, *passim*.

12. Letter, *Reno Evening Gazette*, Jan. 17, 1970, p. 5. The names of the authors of quoted letters, editorials, and local columns have not been provided in this article. The author feels he has taken certain liberties by extracting excerpts

from their writings and, as individuals, they should not be made vulnerable for even implied judgment on the basis of those extracts. In any case, the author of this article is utilizing the excerpts only to provide examples of the subject matter and tone of the *collective* Nevada reaction.

13. Letter, *Las Vegas Review Journal*, Dec. 12, 1969, p. 29.
14. Editorial, *Las Vegas Review Journal*, Nov. 29, 1969, p. 16.
15. Column, *Las Vegas Sun*, Feb. 4, 1970, p. 23.
16. Letter, *ibid.*, Feb. 14, 1970, p. 21.
17. Letter, *Las Vegas Sun*, Dec. 18, 1969, p. 41.
18. Letter, *ibid.*, Dec. 12, 1969, p. 29.
19. *Ibid.*, Dec. 10, 1969, p. 5.
20. Editorial, *ibid.*, Dec. 8, 1969, p. 2.
21. *Las Vegas Sun*, Mar. 14, 1970, p. 2; Mar. 18, 1970, p. 1; Mar. 26, 1970, p. 2; Apr. 15, 1970, p. 22; Jul. 3, 1970, p. 2; Oct. 7, 1970, p. 4.
22. Hersch, *My Lai 4*.
23. Letter, *Reno Evening Gazette*, Mar. 25, 1971, p. 4.
24. *Las Vegas Sun*, Nov. 21, 1970, p. 1; Nov. 14, 1970, p. 7; Dec. 8, 1970, p. 10; Jan. 13, 1971, p. 2; Jan. 15, 1971, p. 1; Mar. 7, 1971, p. 7; Mar. 9, 1971, p. 11; Mar. 27, 1971, p. 1.
25. *Ibid.*, Dec. 6, 1970, p. 2.
26. This is a slightly corrected version of testimony that appeared in *ibid.*, Dec. 8, 1970, p. 10. See Hammer, *The Court-Martial of Lt. Calley*, pp. 132-33.
27. *Las Vegas Sun*, Mar. 30, 1971, p. 1; *Las Vegas Review Journal*, Mar. 31, 1971, p. 1; *Las Vegas Sun*, Apr. 3, 1971, p. 1; Mar. 31, 1971, p. 4; Apr. 3, 1971, p. 4; Apr. 4, 1971, p. 1; Apr. 5, 1971, p. 1; Apr. 3, 1971, p. 1; Apr. 4, 1971, p. 2; Apr. 9, 1971, p. 4.
28. *Reno Evening Gazette*, Apr. 1, 1971, p. 1.
29. *Las Vegas Review Journal*, Apr. 6, 1971, p. 1.
30. *Las Vegas Sun*, Apr. 2, 1971, p. 9.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Reno Evening Gazette*, Apr. 3, 1971, p. 1.
33. *Ibid.*, Apr. 1, 1971, p. 1.
34. Letter, *Reno Evening Gazette*, Apr. 3, 1971, p. 4.
35. Column, *Las Vegas Sun*, Apr. 2, 1971, p. 9.
36. Letter, *Elko Daily Free Press*, Apr. 5, 1971, p. 9.
37. Letter, *Reno Evening Gazette*, Apr. 7, 1971, p. 4.
38. Letter, *Las Vegas Sun*, Apr. 10, 1971, p. 25.
39. Letter, *ibid.*, Apr. 8, 1971, p. 38.
40. Letter, *Reno Evening Gazette*, Apr. 16, 1971, p. 6.

41. Letter, *ibid.*
42. Letter, *Las Vegas Sun*, Apr. 10, 1971, p. 25.
43. Column, *ibid.*, Apr. 2, 1971, p. 9.
44. *Ibid.*, Apr. 7, 1971, p. 26.
45. Letter, *ibid.*, Apr. 13, 1971, p. 13.
46. Letter, *ibid.*
47. Editorial, *Las Vegas Review Journal*, Apr. 20, 1971, p. 32.
48. Letter, *Reno Evening Gazette*, Apr. 7, 1971, p. 4.
49. *Ibid.*, May 19, 1971, p. 7; May 30, 1971, p. 7; Aug. 16, 1971, p. 8; Aug. 21, 1971, p. 1; Aug. 26, 1971, p. 15; Sep. 11, 1971, p. 7; Sep. 23, 1971, p. 1; Dec. 17, 1971, p. 1.
50. Max Lerner, Column, *Las Vegas Sun*, Apr. 8, 1971, p. 38.
51. Carl Rowan, Column, *ibid.*, Dec. 2, 1969, p. 23.
52. Holmes Alexander, Column, *Elko Daily Free Press*, Apr. 9, 1971, p. 2.
53. For a partial indication of the early national unanimity on the subject of Calley's sentence, regardless of views concerning the Vietnam War, see *Las Vegas Review Journal*, Apr. 11, 1971, p. 22. Having previously been divided into "hawks" and "doves" by preliminary questions, students at one Illinois college were asked what should happen to Calley. A total of 94 percent of the "hawks" selected one of the two choices of "no punishment" and "some lesser punishment"; 92 percent of the "doves" made the same selection.
54. Tom Reston, Column, *ibid.*, Apr. 7, 1971, p. 59.
55. Holmes Alexander, Column, *Elko Daily Free Press*, Apr. 9, 1971, p. 2.
56. Letter, *Reno Evening Gazette*, Apr. 6, 1971, p. 4. The letter writer refers to the Combined Unit Pacification Program. This was a U.S. Marine program where marines and Vietnamese *local* forces were combined into units with the mission of living in and defending a specific hamlet or village. For views on the effectiveness of such programs in Vietnam, see William Corson, *The Betrayal* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1968), pp. 174-98 and Lewis W. Walt, *Strange War, Strange Strategy* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1970), pp. 105-12.
57. Carl Rowan, Column, *Las Vegas Sun*, Apr. 8, 1971, p. 38.
58. Letter, *Nevada State Journal*, Apr. 6, 1971, p. 4.
59. *Las Vegas Sun*, Apr. 5, 1971, pp. 1, 4.
60. *Ibid.*, Jan. 9, 1970, p. 21.
61. Editorial, *Las Vegas Review Journal*, Apr. 13, 1971, p. 26.

# *Nevada in Perspective: Some Questions for Local Historians*

by Mary Ellen Glass

AS AN ORAL HISTORIAN and collector of Nevada's pioneer history, the question I am asked most frequently goes something like this: "What can you tell us about the old Indians? Have you interviewed many old Indians?" My customary response is that "old Indians" interest me very little. That is not strictly true, but it usually suffices to change the subject to, "Oh, you have worked with the people from Virginia City! Wasn't the Comstock era just great?" Again, a non-committal response about my research interests, and my interlocutor has begun to believe that I am not really a historian at all, but only some kind of tape recorder freak.

I confess to a conviction that the tape recorder is perhaps the most useful research tool invented within the twentieth century, since it came into general use about twenty-five years ago. And therein lies the core of my complaint against questioners like the hypothetical interrogator about "old Indians" and the Comstock era. Hundreds, thousands, perhaps even millions of significant historical events have occurred *in the twentieth century!* Some such events have been in Nevada. Indeed, more than two thirds of Nevada's corporate life has passed *since 1900*. Moreover, without the dedicated efforts of scholars and students of history, the state's twentieth century will soon become almost as hazy as the bygone lives and rituals of those "old Indians."<sup>1</sup>

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Researchers in twentieth century local history often need to use different source materials than did their older counterparts, for the telephone has superseded those rich troves of correspondence and the keeping of journals and diaries has gone out of fashion. Nevertheless, work in modern archives, newspapers, and with personal interviews could be richly rewarding and intensely useful to show the Silver State's role in the development of the modern American West. At least half a hundred research topics come quickly to mind for a local historian of moderate imagination.

Looking away from the old Indians for a moment to their great grandchildren: What is the history of the active and interesting organizations known as tribal councils? What role have these groups played in maintaining a viable society on the state's several Indian reservations? How has the Indian, individually or severally, managed to affect his own destiny on or off the reservation? Why has there been only one Indian elected to the Nevada state legislature, and what did he contribute? What have Indians achieved economically, socially, politically inside and outside their segregated communities? Why do Indians and Negroes not join forces when they appear to have common goals? What is the history of the successful "self-help" home building program that is now transforming many Indian colonies? How did the present-day function of the Bureau of Indian Affairs evolve?

The Comstock era ended in the 1880s, but modern mining offers many interesting historical research possibilities: What is the history of Nevada's controversial new mining law? How do mining production figures compare or contrast now with those of the past several decades? Why has it become necessary to capitalize mining ventures, when a burro and a modest grubstake once sufficed? What is the history of the large mineral companies in Nevada, such as Anaconda, Kennecott, Newmont? What does history show about some of the small operations in some of the state's isolated communities? What keeps Austin and Tonopah alive, while Rawhide and Rhyolite died? Has the automobile affected prospecting methods?

The role of the military in Nevada has seldom been mentioned in historical literature since the glorious days of forts erected to protect against those old Indians. Yet, army, navy, air force and coast guard all have made a significant impact in Nevada in modern times. What is the history of Hawthorne? Why did Babbitt come into being? How did Fallon keep its naval installation when Tonopah lost both its air base and its air force radar station? Why did Nellis Air Force Base remain important while Stead Air Force Base was "phased out?" What has been the social impact of the services in towns where their business became vital? How did coast guard services at Lake Tahoe evolve?

With today's intense concern with the environment, scholars could contribute greatly to an understanding of the problems of both

polluters and their victims. What is the history of the Nevada Cement Company? What happened to the McGill Ranch? What caused the demise of the Tahoe Timber Company? Why did the Reno Press Brick Company abandon an apparently profitable business? Why did the Reno Rendering Works disappear? How did the sanitary land fill evolve, and what have been the results?

Closely related to a concern with pollution is the problem of conservation of natural resources. With many individuals and groups voicing their anxieties about the region's lakes, streams, and wildlife, scholars might give perspective by considering historical topics in reclamation. Why has nobody written extensively about Francis G. Newlands' vision of a complex of dams and reservoirs embracing the present-day sites of Boca, Stampede, Prosser, Donner Lake, and Lahontan reservoirs? What is the evolutionary status of the family farm in Nevada? How have Nevada's land and water laws evolved? What experiences have engrossed modern Desert Land entrymen and homesteaders? What happened to Las Vegas Springs? How have state fish and game laws changed? What is the impact of reclamation projects like Hoover Dam or Lahontan on local politics, economics, or environment?

Nicolai Lenin is supposed to have asserted that everything is politics. If that is true, then Nevada's political history is rich indeed. More narrowly construed, however, numerous political questions beg for well-researched answers. What role have ethnic groups played in the state election process? What impact did the early woman suffrage movement make? Who were Anne Martin, Edna Baker, and Sadie Hurst? What restrictions have been placed on the suffrage in Nevada? Why does Governor Emmet Boyle's term seem important? Why was Governor Charles Russell's term pivotal? What role have utility companies played in state politics? What is the true story of the Laxalt-Cannon recount? How could one measure the service of such men as James Scrugham and Tasker Oddie, both of whom were elected governors and senators. Which third party movements have been important? Why are there no formal biographies of Senators Newlands and McCarran or Congressmen Edwin Roberts and Samuel Arentz? What has been the role of the political boss in the state? How important is the north-south conflict in constructing state programs? How and why do legislatures reapportion? How successful are the processes of initiative, referendum, and recall? How has the state reacted to national political trends and eras like Progressivism and the New Deal? Why did Nevada go "dry" before national Prohibition?

Social problems peculiar to the western region in general or to Nevada specifically, have received insufficient attention from scholars. Why has there been no definitive work on modern immigration or individual ethnic group experience? What has been the true role of the Basque shepherd, the Greek peddler, the Italian



land baron, the World War II German expatriate? Do Negroes have a significant history in Nevada? How has legalized gambling affected the moral tone of Nevada communities? How and why did the state abandon legalized prostitution? Did the so-called drug culture have an important impact in Nevada towns? Which law enforcement problems have required the most attention? What is the social status of members of various occupational groups? What is the social and political importance of religious denominations like the Latter Day Saints or the Roman Catholic Church? Is alcoholism an important problem? Has Nevada suffered in epidemics of venereal disease? What is the status of organized labor?

Innumerable political-social-economic topics have received little attention from scholars. What has been the role of the railroad companies in maintaining the state's economy? How important is legalized gambling and its adjunct entertainment business? What has caused the decline of weekly newspapers? Which newspapers lead public opinion in Nevada and how do they do so? Do banking companies control local business or vice versa? What is the background of Nevada's Free Port Law? What is the impact of the home building industry? How has television affected the radio advertising market? What is the history of local broadcasting stations? Is KOH really "first" in Nevada? What has happened to FM broadcasting? What is the status of amateur radio? What is the history of the advertising business in Nevada? Has there been a cattle "king" since Henry Miller?

Often the key to understanding a community or a segment of the government lies in a local or state institution or agency. What is the history of Nevada's rural schools? Why are there no biographies of men like Orvis Ring and John Edwards Bray or women like Mary S. Doten and Effie Mona Mack? What forces molded the State Department of Education? How did the Community College come about? Who was responsible for the creation of the University of Nevada medical school? How has the State Department of Welfare evolved? What is the new role of the State Department of Health? Why was the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources created? What happened to the office of the State Surveyor-General? How does the Nevada State Highway Department contribute to local problems? Why was the Legislative Counsel Bureau created? What is the history of the Nevada Industrial Commission? What is the importance of the Nevada State Park System? How have various state agencies competed for the tax dollar? What is the role of the federal government in financing state functions?

Nevadans have become famous or notorious in dozens of fields. Biographers or feature writers might consider some contributions to the idea that "history is people." Why has there been no complete study of the work of James Edward Church? Why do Peter Frandsen's

students remember him respectfully? Has Jeanne E. Wier been forgotten? Are the geological studies of Vincent Gianella important? Was Norman Biltz ever really "the Duke of Nevada"? What did judges George Bartlett and Frank Norcross contribute to Reno's "divorce capital" reputation? What is the truth about Key Pittman? Were William Graham and James McKay vice lords or merely businessmen? Was Walter Clark Nevada's only major literary figure? Would Max C. Fleischmann and Clarence Mackay be satisfied with the present status of their philanthropies?

This brief list of questions offers some possible topics for teaching, research, and writing in the field of Nevada local history. The queries, though limited in scope and direction, may remind students and scholars that most of the Silver State's history has occurred within living memory, and furthermore, that history is happening right now. Nevada needs good historians and researchers. The source materials exist both in documents and possible personal interviews. May we start now to put the state into proper perspective?

#### Notes

1. I cannot believe that the old Indians are as unknown as some students profess. Katherine Fowler's *Great Basin Anthropology, A Bibliography* (Reno: Desert Research Institute, 1970), contains more than 6,500 citations to printed sources about Indians in this region.

## *What's Being Written*

*Americanizing The American Indians: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian" 1890-1900*, edited by Francis Paul Prucha (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973; 344 pages; bibliographical note, index; \$ ).

THE ACCULTURATION of the American Indian has taken many forms and directions through historical time. First they were considered friends by the Anglo-Americans, then a barrier to settlement as enemies, and finally, a defeated people who were to be moulded and forced into the mainstream of Anglo-American culture.

From approximately 1870 to 1900 a group of men and women took up the problem of Indian "Americanizing" and set about with direction and purpose to make the Indian into an "acceptable citizen." The reservation system had been in operation for some years and with it were vested numerous difficulties such as graft, corruption, and mismanagement by government officials and bureaucrats.

Using the plight of the Indian as their base, the "Friends of the Indian" organization was formed. Francis Paul Prucha, S.J., a noted scholar of the history of the American Indian and Professor of History at Marquette University, has collected major writings of the "Friends of the Indian" and edited a most informative account of their activities.

There are forty-six articles in the book collected into the following headings: Indian Policy Reform; Land in Severality; Law for the Indians; Indian Education; Closing the Loopholes; and the summary entitled Epilogue.

Prucha leads the reader through the beginnings of Indian reform with the writings of Carl Schurz and Henry L. Dawes into the debates regarding Indian lands as penned by Ezra Hayt and Henry M. Teller. Indian Law and its application is ably constructed by the author from

abstracts ranging from William J. Harsha's attitudes for special Indian controls to the more liberal policies of James B. Thayer. Indian Education is thoroughly treated by reports and accounts extending from the Board of Indian Commissioners to the provocative "Christianizing the Indians" by Merrill E. Gates.

Henry M. Teller's vivid accounts of the Courts of Indian Offenders is contrasted by the methods of issuing beef on the reservations as viewed by Thomas J. Morgan. The summary or epilogue is a collection of addresses by Merrill E. Gates at the Lake Mohave Conferences in 1900.

For almost fifty years non-Indians took it upon themselves to react for the American Indians, to plan their way of life, determine their future through the eyes and minds of the humanitarian and benefactor, and to judge Indians on what they did and not on what they were. The "Friends of the Indian" attempted to carve and mould a spirit, mind, and body into an identifiable entity which their culture would recognize and accept. However, the plan as helpful as it may have seemed at the time, was kindling the fire of resentment and distrust.

The Indian way was momentarily blocked by the pressure of Anglo-American society, but the results of the attempts by the "Friends of the Indian" ultimately failed. It was unsuccessful in its basic objective, but it was successful in another and quite different way. The movement spurred the Indians to a deeper realization of their legacy of the past based upon pride, honor, and determination. Today we are beginning to see and feel this heritage within our American society. The Indians are slowly gaining that which has always been rightfully theirs in this country.

Perhaps the movement of the "Friends of the Indian" could have achieved its goal, perhaps not. It did fail, and the fault was vested in the acts and actions of many men and women. Two cardinal requirements were omitted from the beginning: two fundamental laws which permit humans to be human. First, do not attempt to superimpose mores and traditions on another culture while masking the attempt as charity. Second, man must accept other men for what they are, not what he thinks they should be according to his own judgment.

Father Prucha has done a great service to laymen and scholars alike who attempt to understand and appreciate the American Indian. His *Americanizing the American Indians* serves as a valuable source of information and answers many questions as to why the American Indian is striving for identity today.

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*Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher*, by Ray Allen Billington (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973; 599 pages; illustrations, notes, bibliography, index; \$17.50).

UNTIL IT WAS SUGGESTED that he make his projected biography of Frederick Jackson Turner a realistic life of a classroom teacher, Professor Billington faced a dilemma. He wished to tell all about Turner with a full-length picture of the man, his works and his ideas, but how to justify so many words about an individual so little known outside his own academic area? Billington's decision to follow the suggestion led to a masterful biography of some 500 pages, distilled from 2,000 pages of manuscript, the original of which is deposited in the Huntington Library for the use of those who may wish further facts or documentation.

Billington's decision to give more than the usual amount of detail about Turner's early life and his own skill as a writer and organizer allowed him to capture the reader's interest and to hold it throughout the story of intimate glimpses of the Turners' family life. Brief references to bird-watching hikes, fishing and mountaineering trips, intimate dinners with friends, the tragic loss of their two youngest children within a period of nine months, bicycling along the streets of Madison, paddling a canoe in Lake Mendota, playing the pianola for friends, his interest in his own children and his grand-children, the unceasing fight to keep family finances solvent and to many other family matters, give the reader a sense of immediacy and a reluctance to put the book aside until it is finished.

The picture of Turner in the family environment is only a small part of the total story. The bulk of the biography centers around Turner as a classroom teacher and historian, first at Wisconsin as he works his way from the rank of instructor to professor and then to department chairman, then to a professorship at Harvard and finally to the role of senior research associate at the Huntington Library. By following Turner through these various academic environments, Billington not only gives the reader a detailed study of a college professor, but a clear and readable analysis of Turner's basic frontier and sectional interpretations as well as a study of higher education during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and Turner's part in the growth and development of the history profession in the United States during that period.

Many members of the teaching profession who read this biography will see in Turner's activities a mirror of their own academic problems, frustrations and successes and will find solace in the knowledge that so famous a scholar as Turner faced many of the same tribulations as they do: too many classes and students, too many committees, too many demands by the department, the college, the university and the community and too few financial rewards. It should

be emphasized, however, that Turner was anything but a typical college history professor. One cannot ignore the fact that his frontier thesis, his superb record with graduate students and his work in the profession, made him the most famous United States historian of his era. In addition, it is quite clear that Turner had a much more comprehensive view of the obligations of a college professor to his discipline, to his colleagues, to his students, to the university community, to the general community and to public school education than did the average college instructor.

One of the most important contributions of the Billington work is to recapture for the modern reader the contributions Turner made to the world of scholarship above and beyond the importance of the frontier and sectional theories. These achievements are impressive: dozens of graduate students of a quality few other historians, then or now, can rival; his promotions of the useful *Atlas of Historical Geography* and *The Dictionary of American Biography* and his contributions to the *Guide to The Study of American History*; his contributions to other phases of history, agricultural, economic, social, urban, but particularly to immigration history and to diplomatic history; his work and achievements in other disciplines such as sociology, political science, statistics and geography; his influence in directing history from a single cause philosophy to one of multiple causation; his pioneering in historical methods; his revitalization of local history; and his role in helping to change the Huntington Library into a major research institution.

Professor Billington brought unusual credentials to the task of writing the Frederick Jackson Turner story. For many years an interpreter of the American West through his teaching, writing and lecturing, with a knowledge of the facts and sources of Western history shared by few, if any, present-day historians, Professor Billington found in this subject a worthy challenge to his own well-recognized talents as a researcher, organizer and writer. It is a tribute to the author's skill that he is able to place the reader under the same Turner "spell" that he acknowledged having succumbed to as he read the Turner letters.

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*Gold-Camp Drifter, 1906-1910*, by Emmett L. Arnold (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1973; 186 pages; photographs; \$4.00).

AS A YOUNG MAN Emmett Arnold drifted in and out of Nevada's

mining camps during the boom of the early twentieth century. This book, written some sixty years afterward, contains his reflective recollections of his experiences, of the people he encountered, and of the mining communities in which he lived and worked. Pieces of an autobiography rather than a complete chronological record, *Gold-Camp Drifter* offers a rare first-hand glimpse into the life of Nevada mining camps, principally Goldfield and Rawhide.

Later to earn a degree in mining engineering and become an oil geologist, Arnold was in his early Nevada years a common miner and odd-jobber, and he has written of what he knew then — the everyday (but often exciting) life of the miners, IWW unionists, small businessmen, gamblers and dance hall girls. It is a description of a side of mining camp life largely ignored in the other recent major reminiscence of southern Nevada in that era, Mrs. Hugh Brown's *Lady in Boomtown*.

Arnold witnessed and sometimes dealt with the famous figures of the mining camps, men such as George Wingfield, George Nixon, Tasker Oddie, Tex Rickard and Walter Scott ("Death Valley Scotty"), but makes no pretense of having been their boon companion.

Written in an engaging, though not professionally polished style, the book presents a lively, unromanticized portrait of individuals who moved among the long dead cities and lived the faintly remembered events of a vanished West. It is Arnold's chief accomplishment that his work endows those individuals with a spirit of humanity which, complementing the plain facts of their lives found in more formal histories, makes them really live once again.

ERIC N. MOODY

*Nevada Historical Society,*  
Reno

*Hank and Horace: An Enduring Episode In Western History*, by Richard G. Lillard and Mary V. Hood (Georgetown: Wilmac Press, 1973; 64 pages; illustrations; photographs; \$5.95).

ON FEBRUARY 23, 1861, New York City Police Commissioner James W. Nye wrote to his political ally William Seward, including in his letter a denouncement of Horace Greeley as a leading war hawk for his policies toward the South. "Imagine Greely [*sic*] booted & Spurred with Epaulets on his Shoulders and with a whetted blade in his hands marching at the head of a column: Shade of a Scott defend us: The idea of Greely [*sic*] turning warrior, is too ridiculus [*sic*] to be thought of."

Greeley was editor of the prestigious *New York Tribune*. His station in life was that of "Pillar of the Community," rather than



soldier, frontiersman or daredevil. But popular history chooses and dresses its own heroes. Nye later came to Nevada, chased the ladies, and established a robust political arena in Western Nevada—and never caught the imagination of the people to establish himself in any oft-told stories.

Staid Greeley, in comparison, made a quick trip through Nevada during which an incident occurred that became a legend of flying dust coats, even while both principals lived. The tale remains alive in Western lore to this day. In the interest of space, and with the greatest of self-restraint, we will refrain from relating the tale in question at this juncture. Refer to the book being reviewed, or to Mark Twain's *Roughing It*, if you are unfamiliar with the plot.

Any historian working his way through early Nevada history runs again and again into the story of stage driver Hank Monk and passenger Horace Greeley as they approached Placerville, California. And if the gentle reader will but keep his seat, we will soon get you there (to the point of the review).

"Hank and Horace" serves a dual purpose. First, it explores in succinct form the substance of the basic story, concluding that it has more than a few elements of truth, and therefore the folk tale is probably based on an actual incident.

Along with Dr. Lillard's exploration of versions and details of the Monk-Greeley ride, this book presents the documentation for a photo now accepted as being of Greeley on Monk's coach. The young historian will learn from the attention to detail involved in verification of the photograph; the more experienced historian will appreciate the problems confronted by the researcher, and will find it difficult to fault Mary Hood's approach to the question.

*Hank and Horace* becomes a delightful addition to the thorough historian's bookshelf. Frustrations at again and again coming across the Monk-Greeley episode are allayed through having readily at hand a concise account of what can be known of the facts behind the tale, and the delightful story itself emerges delightfully undamaged by many hands and years.

ROBERT E. STEWART

State of Nevada,  
Carson City

*Western Mining: An Informal Account of Precious-Metals Prospecting, Placering, Lode Mining, and Milling on the American Frontier from Spanish Times to 1893*, by Otis E. Young, Jr. (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970; index, bibliography, illustrations; \$8.95).

WHEN MOST PEOPLE think of western mining, they think of gold and silver — the Mother Lode in California, the Comstock Lode in Nevada, or the many other boom camps of the past. Base metals — even the name seems to imply that they are less interesting — have become more important to our civilization. And sadly much of the gold and silver produced today in the West is recovered as by-products of base metal mining. The romance is gone, yet gold and silver remain the sentimental favorites, with a lure that copper, zinc, or molybdenum will never have.

This book is about precious metal mining in the West — about the days of “old-fashioned” placer and underground mining when men not machines did most of the work. In other words, this book is about the “good old days.”

The main title, *Western Mining*, is misleading; the book is not about all types and periods of western mining. Nor is it a comprehensive treatise on precious metal mining in the west. It is, as the subtitle indicates, simply “an informal account of precious-metals . . . mining from Spanish times to 1893,” and covers both mining history and mining methods.

The book begins with a chapter on the geology of precious metal deposits, and discusses prospecting methods. Succeeding chapters describe: assaying methods; mining during Spanish times; the placers of California's Mother Lode; placer mining methods; placer mining in Montana, Arizona, and Colorado; the miner; underground mining methods; law suits; and the Comstock Lode. The final chapter covers the Black Hills, several refining methods, Tombstone, and the end of the mining frontier.

As one can see from the book's table of contents, the author has not chosen to present his account in a formal, systematic fashion — he becomes interested in a particular subject, expands on it in greater or lesser detail depending on how it strikes his fancy, then suddenly darts off on another tangent. The results are a charming, readable, yet highly personal account, that gives the reader a taste of the true flavor of western gold mining as it was practiced before 1900.

I enjoyed reading the book, and would recommend it to anyone interested in mining, the West, or gold and silver. The Buck O'Donnell sketches of mining in the raw, scattered in generous numbers through the book, are an especially delightful feature.

JOHN H. SCHILLING

*Director*

*Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology,  
Reno*

*Mining Engineers & The American West: The Lace-Boot Brigade, 1849-1933*, by Clark C. Spence (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970; 407 pages; index, illustrations; \$12.50).

ALMOST EVERYONE knows that mining was, and is, an important part of Nevada and the West. But the mining engineer, the designer and builder of mines, remains an obscure figure, mentioned briefly but seldom described or analyzed in any detail. This book is meant to fill this gap in the cast of characters that won the West.

The mining engineer was a complex character, of necessity a loner and a jack-of-all-trades, who seldom functioned as an engineer, but often was promoter, foreman, manager, geologist, etc., etc. Maybe some better name should have been coined for this unusual breed of man. Their training was strongly based in engineering, but was designed to also instill leadership qualities. Many mining engineers worked their way up the management chain and became presidents of mining companies. One, Herbert Hoover, became president of the United States.

Today, the mining engineer is basically still of the same breed. He is often better trained in management techniques, uses more modern tools such as the computer, lives more comfortably, and less seldom becomes president of a mining company (accountants and lawyers are today's favorites), but he still is the maker of mines.

This book is an attempt to describe and analyze the "old-time" mining engineer and show the important role they played in the development of the West. The book was meticulously researched, is filled with footnotes, and contains a fine bibliography, making it an excellent reference work on not only the mining engineer but on mining in general. Unfortunately this mass of information is almost overwhelming, and ends up being a series of rather disjointed statements — one easily becomes lost in the maze of details.

The book is a fine reference volume on the old-time mining engineer, and if one perseveres, and wades through the mass of details he ends up with a picture of the mining engineer, and his place in the history of the West. Yet the book hardly is one that I would recommend for a few evenings of pleasant, relaxing reading.

JOHN H. SCHILLING

*Director  
Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology,  
Reno*

# *What's Going On*

## **WASHOE COUNTY REPUBLICAN CENTRAL COMMITTEE RECORDS**

Les Gray, long-time friend and member of the Society, is responsible for a donation of the records of the Washoe County Republican organization. Publications and correspondence of this influential part of the state Republican framework from the 1950s are included. The collection contains manuscript minutes of state conventions and county meetings in addition to specific Washoe County political matters. Mr. Gray is a past county chairman and active participant in Republican politics since the 1940s.

## **PRELIMINARY CHECKLIST OF MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS**

The result of two years labor in the Society's manuscript collections has at last been published. Each library in the state has received a copy of this volume. All manuscript collections have been listed alphabetically and described as to size and subject content. An index showing which collections pertain to various topics in Nevada history completes the work.

This helpful checklist will enable researchers throughout the state to determine if our manuscripts contain material useful to their individual studies. Under the new HISTO-SHARE arrangements, manuscripts may be temporarily transferred to libraries within the state for study by patrons. Questions concerning the collections should be directed to our Reno office. Specific inquiries about individual collections will be researched and the results forwarded to

correspondents. Publication is possible through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

### **LAKE TAHOE STUDY**

Work on the Camp Richardson and South Shore Estates area, sponsored by a grant from the United States Forest Service was completed this spring. The manuscript treating the historic development of this interesting portion of the Tahoe Basin will hopefully be published in one of the western history journals after acceptance by the Forest Service.

### **DAGGETT SCRAPBOOK**

A valuable scrapbook kept by Comstock editor Rollin M. Daggett has been donated by Doris Foley of Nevada City, California. The Bancroft Library possesses a microfilm copy, which was used by Daggett's biographer, but the original was considered lost. Manuscript poems and articles concerning Daggett make up the bulk of the entries.

### **KTVN-TV HERITAGE SERIES**

The news department of Reno's KTVN-TV and the Nevada Humanities Committee have combined to create a weekly news feature on state history. Called "Heritage" the program uses photographs and materials from the Society's files to illustrate each weekly presentation. The feature is a regular part of each Friday's 5:30 p.m. broadcast.

### **LEE MORTENSEN RECEIVES AWARD**

Lee Mortensen, NHS librarian, has been the recipient of the Outstanding Achievement Award for the State of Nevada. The award, which was given to Miss Mortensen by Governor Mike O'Callaghan during a recent ceremony in the Executive Offices, represents her efforts in the cataloguing of the extensive manuscript collections in the Society's holdings. The criteria for eligibility to receive the award was the attainment of an exceptional level of achievement, above and

beyond the normal required duties and responsibilities.

### **JUNIOR HISTORY NEWS**

A new chapter of the Junior History Society has been formed at the Pahrump Valley High School. Sponsors of the club are Miss Janet Bernd and Mr. Schoenfeld. Members of the new organization have chosen to call themselves the Pahrump Valley Homesteaders. Officers elected by the membership are: Maureen Anderson, president; Tim Allison, vice-president; Cindy Raetz, secretary-treasurer; and Wade Christensen, sergeant-at-arms.

The third grade teachers at Stead Elementary School are in full swing with the Junior History Society again this year. The club that they formed last year, The Coyotes, has followed its members into the fourth grade. The four third grade teachers: Ingeborg Stone, Donna Hagerman, Elizabeth Squires, and Doris Nachtshein have consequently formed a new club for their present third graders. The new club members chose to call themselves The Junior Nevada Historical Club of Stead School. Elected officers of the new chapter are: Tanya Laue, president; Steven Warner, vice-president; Candy Lambert, treasurer; and Larce Yates, secretary.

The new club, nicknamed the Eagles, has been quite active since its inception. Meetings have included films on different aspects of Nevada history and a lecture on black-smithing given by Mrs. Van Dusseldorp whose childhood was spent in Canada where her father was a blacksmith.

The group has also taken field trips to Fort Churchill, the Fallon Museum, and the Nevada Historical Society. A field trip that was especially popular with the Eagles was that taken to Genoa where the young historians visited the museum. Stops were also made at Snowshoe Thompson's gravesite and the Van Sickle pony express station.

### **RENO GEM AND MINERAL SOCIETY SHOW**

The Reno Gem and Mineral Society will hold its annual show—"Jackpot of Gems and Minerals"—at the Washoe County Fairgrounds on Saturday and Sunday, July 13 and 14. Hours: Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.; Sunday, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Exhibits and demonstrations

will emphasize every phase of the hobby.

### **SOCIETY RECEIVES GRANTS**

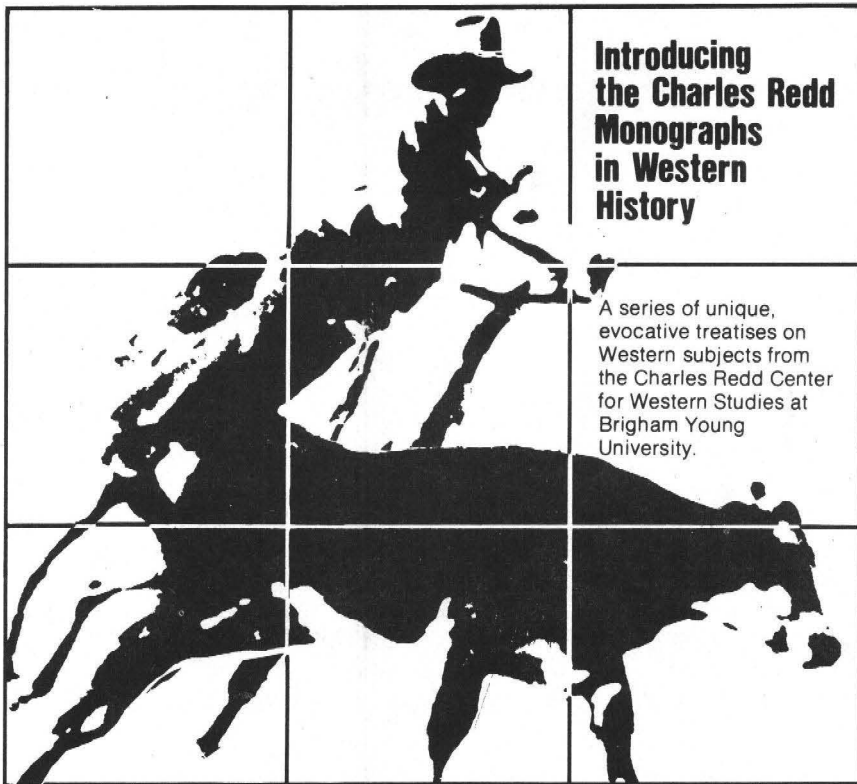
The National Endowment for the Humanities has made two grants to the Society. The first project is funded at \$70,000 and enables the Society to completely renovate its prehistory and Native American exhibits. The area immediately adjacent to the entryway will be cleared and redesigned. The self-contained exhibit, entitled Nevada's Native American Heritage, will occupy approximately twenty-five percent of the existing museum area. A second project extends over a two-year period and will result in a long-needed index to the publications of the Society. Endowment support is estimated at \$26,000 and includes cost of printing the index manuscript.



# *New Resource Materials*

## **THE NORTHEASTERN NEVADA MUSEUM, ELKO**

The Northeastern Nevada Museum has on file complete bound volumes of the official Elko County newspapers from 1869 to 1974. Included are: *Elko Independent*, *Weekly Elko Independent*, *Elko Daily Free Press*, *Elko Weekly Free Press*, and *Elko Weekly Post*. These newspapers were given to the museum by the Elko County Commissioners and are available to researchers during regular museum hours.

		<h2>Introducing the Charles Redd Monographs in Western History</h2>
		<p>A series of unique, evocative treatises on Western subjects from the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at Brigham Young University.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> No. 1 West by East: The American West in the Gilded Age, by Gene M. Gressley. Paper, 54 pages, \$2.50. <i>The economic booms of the so-called independent West were really the product of Eastern capital. Right?</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No. 2 Conquered Provinces: Nevada Moves Southeast, 1864-1871, by John M. Townley. Paper, 66 pages, \$2.50. <i>The Pahrnagat District (later Clark and Lincoln counties) was annexed to Nevada despite precedent and the cultural tradition of the people. Politics again?</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No. 3 Essays on the American West, 1972-1973, edited by Thomas Alexander. Paper, 166 pages, \$3.95. <i>From the Charles Redd Lectures come a potpourri of lively essays on such subjects as lively stables, heroes and villains, the Mormon Cattle Pool, Silver Reef and Peter Skene Ogden.</i></p>
<p>Please send the monographs I've marked. Enclosed is my check or money order for \$ _____.</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ Zip _____</p> <p>Brigham Young University Press, Marketing 205 UPB, Provo, Utah 84602</p>		