

William J. Stewart

March 9, 1874 - February 6, 1931

Elected commissioner 1920 long term, 1924 long term

William J. Stewart came from one of the most prominent early Las Vegas families. He held a number of political positions including Las Vegas City Commissioner, Clark County Commissioner, and County Surveyor. Stewart played an integral role in the development of the Clark County highway system and his knowledge of Las Vegas landmarks and sites made him invaluable as a surveyor.



Stewart was a native Nevadan and was born in Pioche in 1874. In 1882, his father, Archibald Stewart, purchased the Las Vegas Ranch and the family moved to Las Vegas. The ranch with its abundant water and shade trees served as a site of refuge for travelers and miners returning to the city. The Stewarts grew fruit on the property. In 1884, Archibald Stewart was murdered and his wife, Helen Stewart took over operation of the ranch. Stewart sold the bulk of the ranch to the railroad in 1902 and the land became the site of Las Vegas. She became active in Las Vegas society as the city grew and collected Native American baskets.

William Stewart, known as Will, trained to work as a surveyor. In 1911, he was named a Las Vegas City Commissioner and put in charge of streets and public property. In 1916 and 1918, residents of Clark County elected him to the position of county surveyor. As surveyor, Stewart's residency in Las Vegas from its earliest days proved useful as he was able to identify landmarks and other distinguishing features of the landscape that had long-since been forgotten.

In 1920, Stewart ran as a republican for the Clark County Commission. He easily won the position. As a commissioner, Stewart focused on the development of roads and highways for Clark County to replace the old system of trails. Voters reelected him in 1924.

Stewart died at home in 1931 from a heart attack. He was a well-loved member of Las Vegas and had served as an unofficial historian of the city with his recollections of the early days of Las Vegas. Before his death, Stewart requested a private funeral. He was buried near his parents at the old ranch.