



A Century of Service Centennial

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Las Vegas Ranch. Credit: UNLV Library Special Collections.

The San Pedro, Salt Lake and Los Angeles Railroad, owned by Montana Senator William Clark, purchased the Las Vegas Ranch from Helen Stewart in 1902, and auctioned off lots for a townsite three years later. The ranch was originally a Mormon mission in 1855, then operated by a series of owners. It continued to be leased and operated as a ranch, a resort and supplier of meat, dairy and produce for Las Vegas well into the 20th century.



Helen Stewart

Helen Stewart arrived at the Las Vegas Ranch in 1882 with her husband Archibald and four children. Two years later, her husband was murdered and she was left to run the ranch. Helen determined to make a go of ranching, supplying produce and beef to travelers and nearby miners. When she sold her spread to the railroad in 1902, she had the foresight to buy 924 acres in the new town, and thereafter lived a life of service to the community. At her death in 1926 Helen Stewart was known to all as "the First Lady of Las Vegas."

Photo courtesy of the Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas



Searchlight

The town of Searchlight had a short but colorful heyday for about 10 years between 1898 and 1908. The district produced approximately \$4.5 million in gold and silver, with the peak year in 1906. Searchlight was in the running for the county seat when Clark County was created but lost narrowly to Las Vegas. Scott Joplin even immortalized the place in "The Searchlight Rag" although it is unlikely he ever set foot in the town. The boom quickly turned to bust as the mines played out but Searchlight lives on, still filled with pioneering spirit.

Photo Courtesy of the Clark County Museum



The Las Vegas Springs

The Las Vegas Springs, or "Big Springs," gave relief to Native Americans who followed trade routes through the desert. In 1844 Lt. John C. Fremont and Kit Carson, on an Army-sponsored expedition,

literally put Las Vegas on the map when they stopped at the springs. Fremont's report was widely distributed, causing an influx of immigrants through the Las Vegas Valley. In 1855 Mormon missionaries established a fort on the Las Vegas Creek, which was fed by the springs. They later provided water for a new town and the railroad's steam locomotives. The springs have now given birth to the Springs Preserve, a new oasis in the desert for Clark County residents and visitors.

Photo courtesy of UNLV Library Special Collections.



On May 15, 1905, William Clark's Los Angeles, Salt Lake and San Pedro Railroad auctioned off lots at its new townsite of Las Vegas. Hundreds of people snapped up the lots in a couple of days and starting building a new town. Since lumber was scarce in the desert, many stayed in tents until they could build houses. The comforts of home were not entirely lacking as these determined settlers, and especially the wives, tried to make their temporary abodes as civilized as possible. This tent with its brass bed and plump pillows tells the story of the pioneer spirit taming the frontier.

Photo courtesy of UNLV Library Special Collections.



Las Vegas Land Auction.

On May 15, 1905, in heat that soared well over 100 degrees, the railroad auctioned off lots in the new town of Las Vegas. A thousand excited prospective landowners watched as businessmen bid up the choice lots on Main and Fremont where the train station would be built. The next day remaining lots were sold at advertised prices, and horse-drawn wagons began bringing in lumber and canvas to erect tents and simple frame buildings for houses, stores, hotels, saloons, banks and a school.

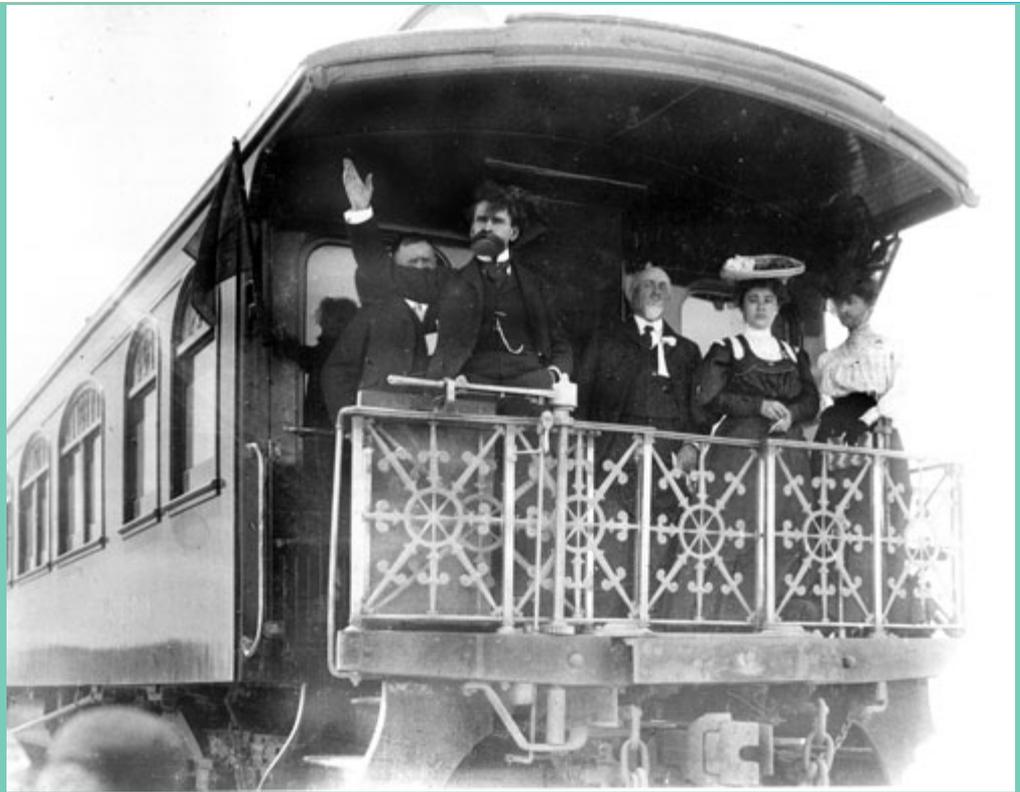
Photo courtesy of UNLV Library Special Collections



County Division Rally 1908

In 1908 a mass meeting opened the campaign for county division. Led by a "non-partisan committee of substantial and representative businessmen" according to the Las Vegas Age, the meeting generated great enthusiasm. Those in favor of moving the Lincoln county seat from Pioche to Las Vegas, instead of creating a new county, were greatly outnumbered. The Lincoln County Division Club raised \$1,630 from local business leaders to fund the campaign and take it to the Nevada legislature. A year later, on February 5, 1909, Governor Denver Dickerson signed the creation of Clark County into law.

Photo courtesy of UNLV Library Special Collections.



When it came to choosing a name for Clark County, Montana senator and railroad magnate William Andrews Clark got the honor. Clark's San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad (later bought out by the Union Pacific) was the reason Las Vegas was born in 1905. The railroad provided most of the jobs in town, and the railroad's subsidiary, the Las Vegas Land and Water Company, controlled the town's water. Although William Clark was seldom in Las Vegas, and left Montana in 1907 to live in New York, members of the Lincoln County Division Club decided that his name should be bestowed on the new county.

Photo courtesy of UNLV Library Special Collections.



Clark County's First Housing Tract

In 1909 the railroad decided to build a housing tract for its mid-level employees in Las Vegas. The little cottages were very nice homes for Las Vegas at the time. Located between Second (Casino Center) and Fourth, and Garces and Clark, the 64 cottages were built of concrete block and designed in the California bungalow style, with covered front porches and overhanging eaves that provided shade. There were 16 to a block, 8 on each side, and originally the back yards extended all the way back to an alley down the middle of the block on double lots 50 feet wide and 140 feet deep. The homes were four or five rooms, costing about \$1,600 for the smaller ones and \$1,800 for the larger. The Las Vegas Age praised the cottages, saying: "Every house is as neat and attractive as possible, handsome electric light fixtures, plenty of kitchen cupboards and nooks to delight the housewife..." Sadly, one by one the houses were remodeled past recognition or torn down to make way for larger structures. Only one or two recognizable cottages remain. Fortunately the Clark County Museum was able to save one cottage and move it to its campus on Boulder Highway, where it is being restored and will open during the Clark County Centennial Year.

Photo courtesy of UNLV Library Special Collections



Clark County's 1914 Courthouse

The supporters of Lincoln County division were so eager to get started that before the Clark County bill was signed into law they had raised \$1,800 to build a small "temporary" county courthouse. It served its purpose well for the next few years until the county's permanent structure was completed. In 1913 the county hired noted Nevada architect Frederick DeLongchamps to design a more imposing building.

Completed in late 1914 for a total cost of \$50,000, the two-story neo-classical structure featured a front façade with wide steps leading to Mission Revival arches which in turn opened into a shaded entryway. Arched windows on either wing repeated the theme, while a row of Corinthian columns separated the windows on the second floor. A red-tiled Spanish roof gave the new courthouse a southwest flavor. With its broad, tree-shaded expanse of lawn in front, the Clark County courthouse became a popular community gathering-place. Speeches and sometimes entertainment were set up on the front steps with the citizens comfortably seated on the green grass below. Much like today's Clark County Government Center Amphitheater, the courthouse lawn was a welcome oasis in the desert until it was replaced in 1958.

Photo courtesy of Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas

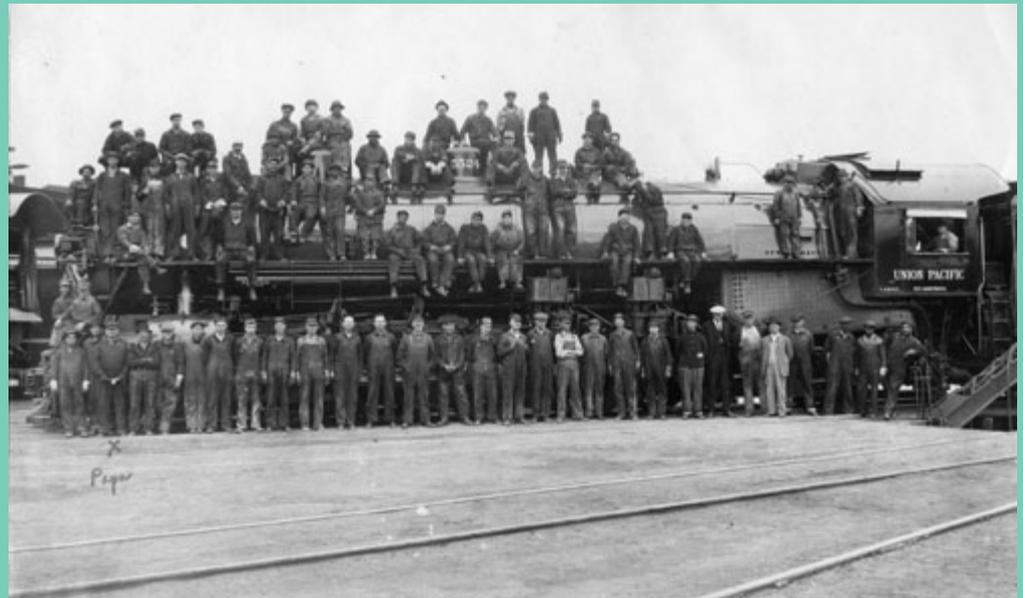


Mission on the Muddy

About ten years after the Mormon settlers from Salt Lake City built their mission in Las Vegas, another group, led by Thomas Smith, set out for the lower Muddy River. The original party was made up of only eleven men and three women. But by the end of 1865 that number had ballooned to over 100. The towns of St. Thomas and St. Joseph flourished, producing crops of cotton, wheat, corn, grapes and alfalfa. The settlers survived the heat, mosquitoes and the unhappy Paiutes who had been displaced by the newcomers. But in 1871 the towns were abandoned because of a tax dispute with the state of Nevada.

The area had been part of New Mexico Territory, then Arizona. Until a boundary survey settled the issue in 1970, settlers in the Muddy River Valley thought they were part of Utah and paid taxes there. After the Mormons left, other families moved in and farmed the area. A few years later many of the Mormon families returned. Over the years St. Joseph became Logan (then Logandale) and Overton developed, while St. Thomas was submerged under Lake Mead. The communities are now important agricultural centers, contributing their part to Clark County's rich history.

Photo Courtesy of Clark County Museum



The Railroad Strike of 1922

From 1905 to 1922, Las Vegas and Clark County relied on the Union Pacific to provide most of the jobs in town. The railroad did more than provide employment—it controlled water through its subsidiary, the Las Vegas Land and Water Company. It provided housing for many of its workers. Social gatherings were held at Hanson Hall, on the upper floor of the railroad storehouse. Then in 1922 local railroad shop workers and electricians voted to join a national strike and walked off the job. At first the effects weren't noticeable—the trains ran late at times, and for awhile the city was without electricity, as the railroad supplied the city's power. Then seven men who were brought in to replace striking workers were beaten, and the stationmaster was given a coat of tar. Even though the violence came from a small minority, Union Pacific officials decided to close the repair shops in Las Vegas and move them elsewhere. The loss of jobs put the area into a slump from which it only began to recover with the announcement of the Boulder Dam Project. The construction of the dam and the thousands of sightseers the completed project brought in gave the town a start

on a new tourist industry. Reliance on the railroad for prosperity became a thing of the past.

Photo Courtesy of Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas



Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority: Fifty Years Old

Fifty years ago on April 12, 1959, the Las Vegas Convention Center opened its doors to welcome the World Congress of Flight and usher in an era that would see the city become the leading convention destination in the country.

State and community leaders in the 1950s decided that Las Vegas needed a new market segment to supply visitors for the growing hotel community. One industry stood out as a potential leader – the convention industry. A group of businessmen and elected officials decided that the best way to attract this lucrative market segment would be to build a convention center. In 1955 the Nevada Legislature levied a room tax on all hotels and motels in Clark County to finance the construction. They also created the agency that would become the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), and charged

them with promoting Southern Nevada as a convention and tourism destination.

The Las Vegas Convention Center, which was built for \$5.4 million, consisted of the 20,340-square-foot rotunda, 18 meeting rooms and a 90,000-square-foot exhibit hall. The center hosted 22 meetings in 1959, beginning with the 7,500 attendees at World Congress of Flight aerospace industry show. Today, the rotunda has come down and some major events have moved to other venues; however, the Las Vegas Convention Center is still an integral part of the local economy hosting 1.5 million delegates and generating more than \$2 billion in economic impact to Southern Nevada each year.

Photo Credit: Las Vegas News Bureau of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority



First Airmail Service From Las Vegas Begins in 1926

April 17, 1926 was an auspicious day in Clark County aviation history. On that day Western Air Express made the first flights from Los Angeles to Las Vegas, and on to Salt Lake City and back, carrying mail. Two Douglas M-2 biplanes made the trips coming from both directions. Pilot Maury Graham donned coveralls and goggles and eased into the open cockpit for the flight, which he finished in 2 ½ hours, from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. After briefly stopping to pick up mail and refuel, he completed the entire route to Salt Lake City in eight hours. His instructions were to stay to the right of the railroad tracks to avoid colliding with Jimmie James' plane coming in the opposite direction. A few weeks later WAE added two chairs to the mail compartment, and the plane carried its first passengers—equipped with parachutes. Sometimes passengers had to hold mail sacks on their laps—and sometimes they were bumped when extra mail showed up. In the early years before air travel became more

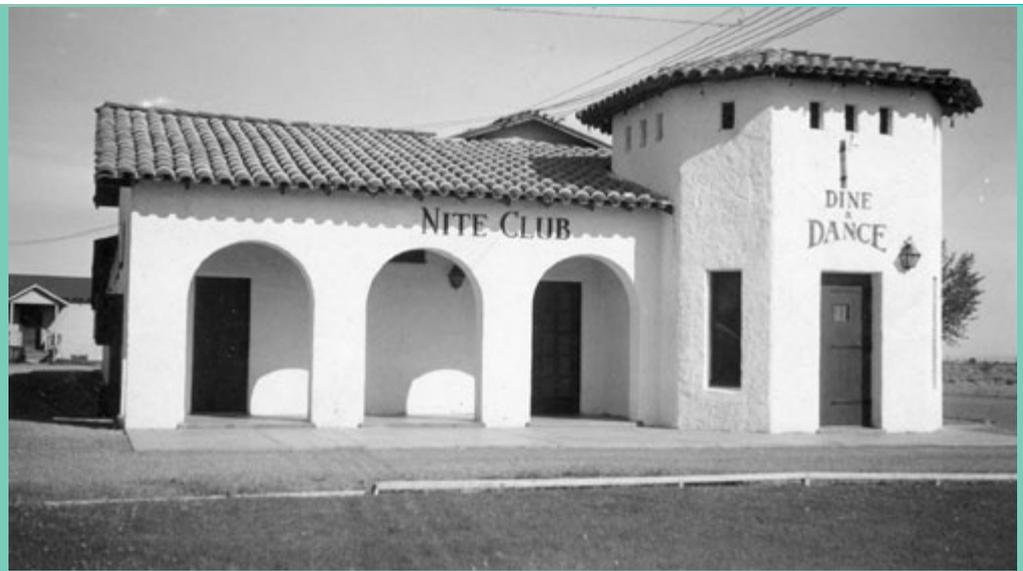
common, the airlines needed the mail contracts to subsidize the still-infrequent passenger travel. But Western Air, although it lost the mail contract to Boeing in 1928, was able to begin passenger service with a brand-new 12-passenger Fokker F-10 tri-motor airplane that offered comfortable seats and no mail sacks for passengers to hold.



Boulder Dam Project Brought Thousands Looking for Work

The news of the coming Boulder Dam project injected new life into Clark County after the slump that took place in the 1920s. Roads, new schools and other building projects were planned in addition to the huge Dam, which was to be the largest man-made structure in modern history. The Dam meant work for many, but many more came to southern Nevada and didn't find work. By 1930 hundreds of people were sleeping in Union Pacific Park on Fremont Street, and nearly a thousand in "Hoover City" near Woodlawn Cemetery. The employment line was long and the breadline was even longer. With a population of only 5,000, Las Vegas saw a total of 11,000 coming through and asking for work and for help. Out near the dam site, many families lived in Ragtown on the river, hoping for employment. Clark County was prosperous compared to the rest of the country, but even with all the federal spending, many people struggled to survive.

Photo courtesy of UNLV Library Special Collections



1931 Legalized Gambling Brings Prosperity

In spite of the jobs created by the Dam, the Depression hit Clark County hard. In 1931 the state legislature, casting about for ways to bring in more money, legalized table games and slot machines. Gambling had flourished in Nevada's earlier years but a wave of reform sentiment led to a ban on gambling in 1911. After protests, in 1915 card games were re-legalized. By 1931 it was an easy step for nightclubs to add games of chance. In the city, the first gaming license was issued to Mayme Stocker and J.H. Morgan, owners of the famed Northern Club. In the county on Highway 91, which was not to be called The Strip until the late thirties, the Pair-A-Dice Club had already been operating since 1930. But its competitor down the road, the Red Rooster, got the first County-issued gaming license, with the Pair O Dice following soon after. The Pair O Dice, which was later incorporated into the Last Frontier Hotel, was built by Frank and Angelina Detra. The Detras operated the place as a private club with illegal gambling and liquor. They had everything in place when Prohibition ended in 1933 and they welcomed the growing streams of visitors from southern California.

Photo Courtesy of the Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas



Blue Diamond School

The Blue Diamond School, one of the oldest in Clark County, began in 1929 after the Blue Diamond mine began operating. The little building was first located at the Cottonwood Ranch (today Blue Diamond) and then was moved up on the hill near the mine, where the workers lived, many in tent houses. This 1938 photo was taken by Elbert Edwards, then District Superintendent. A new school was built down below in 1942 when the company built Blue Diamond Village. The school is still operating.

Photo: Elbert Edwards Collection, UNLV Library Special Collections



Boulder City - End of Track

Boulder City Takes Shape

On February 5, 1931 a railroad line from Las Vegas to Boulder City officially opened. Shortly after that Six Companies, Inc., which had won the contract to build the dam, began work on a temporary camp to house the men who would erect Boulder City. In April, 1931, construction began on the lodging and housing facilities for employees of Six Companies. Throughout the next months a town gradually took shape. Administration buildings and more housing appeared, along with trees and shrubs. The first business permit was issued on July 31 to the Boulder Theatre. The dam was to take until late 1935 to be completed.

Photo courtesy of Clark County Museum.



Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas

In 1959 the Clark County Commission approved the winning bid of \$4,000 from a small sign company named Western Neon to construct a welcome sign to be placed on the south end of the Strip. Western's Betty Willis got the job of designing the sign. She drew the letters by hand and placed them in an odd, eye-catching diamond shape, outlined with neon, surrounded with chasing lights, topped by a row of coins spelling out "Welcome," with a twinkling star on top--creating what was to become one of the best known images in the world. The sign was listed in May 2009 on the National Register of Historic Places by the Department of the Interior, from a nomination submitted by Clark County.

Photo courtesy of UNLV Library Special Collections



Boulder Dam in 1934

By 1934 Boulder Dam (renamed Hoover Dam in 1947) was almost completed. The government contract, which had been awarded to Six Companies, Inc., was for just under \$49 million. Six Companies was given seven years to build it, but the dam was finished two years ahead of schedule and dedicated on September 30, 1935 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The work had included building a city to house the workers, and power plants to produce the electricity generated by the dam. On January 11, 1936 the top of the dam was opened to the public. Already an important tourist attraction during construction, the completed Dam began bringing in thousands of visitors annually, visitors who stayed to enjoy the young town's gambling establishments.

Photo courtesy of Nevada State Museum Las Vegas.



Lake Mead Covers St. Thomas

In early 1935 the Colorado River began to collect behind almost-completed Hoover Dam, backing up for miles to begin forming Lake Mead. One consequence was that St. Thomas, settled by Mormon pioneers in 1865, was doomed to end up under the lake. The pioneers had built sturdy homes, farm buildings, stores, a school and even a hotel, and the community prospered for many years. Hugh Lord was the last to leave, rowing away on June 11, 2008. In 2008, however, foretelling a future of receding Lake Mead waters that may not come back, the ruins of St. Thomas emerged and stand silently as a testament to the loss of the desert's most precious resource, water.

Photo credit: UNLV Library Special Collections



Historic Camp Lee Canyon

Las Vegas weathered the Depression with the help of the federal Works Progress Administration. Among the projects partly funded by the W.P.A. was a camp for children in Lee Canyon. Pioneer Clark County resident J.T. McWilliams generously donated a total of 60 acres of his property. Under the direction of local W.P.A. head Claude Mackay, a camp was constructed and opened in 1937. The camp began with six cabins, a dining hall and a recreation hall, which included offices and staff quarters. Several hundred children enjoyed a week at camp that first year. Today Camp Lee Canyon is run by Clark County Parks and Recreation, which offers a week-long program for elementary children and one for teens. The camp, which has been improved but very little altered, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Photo credit: United States Forest Service



El Rancho Vegas First Strip Resort

In 1940 businessman James Cashman and other civic leaders invited hotel owner Thomas Hull to Las Vegas to entice him to build one of his El Rancho chain of hotels. Their idea was that his other California hotels would lure customers to an El Rancho Vegas. To their surprise he picked a spot just outside the city boundaries on Highway 91, at the intersection of what would later be Sahara Avenue, instead of

near Fremont Street. Construction began in 1940 and El Rancho Vegas opened on April 3, 1941. The new Western-themed 63-room casino resort featured a swimming pool in front of the hotel to attract travelers. The El Rancho Vegas set the stage for development of the Strip, which would soon rival Fremont Street. After a popular 19 year run, the El Rancho burned to the ground on June 17, 1960 and was never rebuilt.

Photo courtesy of Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas.



Las Vegas Army Gunnery School

As the Las Vegas Strip was welcoming its first resort in early 1941, the war in Europe heated up. The United States, though not a yet a combatant, was committed to preparedness. To this end the Army's West Coast Air Training Command decided, after extensive lobbying by Las Vegas officials, to locate their training facility in Clark County. The ideal flying weather and the vast stretches of empty public domain land were big inducements. When Las Vegas civic leaders agreed to shut down the notorious "Block 16," the Army sealed the deal. Construction began at facilities that had just been purchased from Western Air Express. The new Las Vegas Army Air Forces Gunnery School (later Nellis Air Force Base) was officially established in June, 1941, and the first class of cadets began training in December, shortly after Pearl Harbor. By the end of the World War II nearly 55,000 aerial gunners had passed through training at the Las Vegas facility.

Photo courtesy of Clark County Museum.



Carver Park, Basic Magnesium Resident Housing

During World War II the huge Basic Magnesium Incorporated plant, built between Las Vegas and Boulder City, produced war-related metals. The plant employed thousands of people, including blacks recruited from the Deep South. The first housing at the town called Basic, later Henderson, was for whites only. In 1943, Carver Park, designed by famed African-American architect Paul Revere Williams, opened as a segregated housing tract. The first family to move in was Robert C. Williams and his wife Rosie Lee, with children Theodore and Patrick (back) and Yvonne, Clarice and Roscoe (front.) Later, Carver Park admitted whites also. Most black families lived on Las Vegas' West Side where conditions were appalling, with no paved streets, running water or sewers for many years. But the residents of the West Side created a close-knit community with churches, restaurants and homes, which were sometimes only tents, in spite of the conditions.

Photo: UNLV Special Collections



Flamingo Hotel

The end of World War II saw a surge of optimism and building on the Strip. The El Rancho Vegas and the Hotel Las Frontier, the two big properties, were soon to be joined by a more sophisticated project—Billy Wilkerson's Flamingo Hotel. Wilkerson, a successful southern California nightclub owner and publisher of the Hollywood Reporter, created, designed and began the construction of an opulent hotel and casino that would attract Hollywood's elite. Unfortunately, Wilkerson ran out of money and decided to partner with a group of east coast gangsters headed by Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, who soon muscled him out. Siegel's extravagant spending and cost overruns led to his demise when he was assassinated shortly after the hotel opened. Within 24 hours of Siegel's death a group led by Gus Greenbaum, Meyer Lansky and Moe Sedway took over the operations and within a few years Flamingo was the most successful hotel on the Strip.

Photo early 1950s, Courtesy Nevada State Museum.



McCarran Airport Dedicated 1948

In 1946 Senator Pat McCarran announced that the U.S. Army planned to reopen the airfield, which had closed after the war. But on one condition—commercial airlines would no longer be allowed to share the facility. City and County officials pondered the issue and finally accepted an offer from George Crockett, owner of Alamo Airport at the south end of the Strip. Crockett offered free use of his facility while a new airport was built. The huge stone pillars adorned with neon propellers that had once stood at what is now Nellis Air Force Base were carefully moved to the new location. On December 19, 1948 Senator McCarran attended a celebration for the second airport to be named in his honor. The stone pillars can still be seen, just south of the Welcome to Las Vegas sign, at what is now Signature Flight Support.

Photo: Clark County Museum



First Nevada Atomic Bomb Test

This early photo shows an atomic bomb test at what was then called the Nevada Proving Grounds, later the Nevada Test Site. The first atomic test in the United States, after New Mexico's Trinity explosion in 1945, was on January 27, 1951 at Frenchman Flats, Nevada. Initially the blasts left people in Las Vegas unsettled, but the town soon grew used to the tests and even embraced them. The Chamber of Commerce published a list of upcoming bomb tests. Blast viewing picnics were organized, Strip hotels featured "Miss Atomic Bomb" contests, and there was even an Atomic Cocktail. Only later did people realize the dangers of nuclear testing. Atmospheric tests stopped in 1963 with the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and the United States stopped all nuclear testing in 1996. This photo is part of the year-long Clark County Centennial Celebration.

Photo Courtesy of Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas.



The Sands Joins Early 50s Strip Hotels

By the end of the 1940s there were only a handful of hotel-casinos on the Strip. By 1952 there were three more; the Sahara, the Desert Inn and the most sophisticated and lavish, The Sands. Designed by architect Wayne McAllister, the Sands was technically a \$5.5 million remodel of the Club LaRue, a French restaurant built by Hollywood restaurateur and Flamingo originator Billy Wilkerson. McAllister designed the sign, which was the word "Sands" in flowing, elegant script. The Sands was controversial even before it opened, because some of its investors reportedly had ties to organized crime. Entertainment Director Jack Entrattar booked some of the biggest names in show business, including Frank Sinatra, who made the Sands home base for himself and his Rat Pack friends. Howard Hughes bought the Sands in 1967 for \$14.6 million. The hotel eventually became the property of Sheldon Adelson who added a huge convention center. In 1996 the Sands, once the most sophisticated hotel on the Strip, was reduced to rubble to make way for the Venetian.

Photo courtesy of Clark County Museum



The Silver Slipper Sign

The Silver Slipper, which began life in 1950 as the Golden Slipper, was a casino and convention hall on the grounds of the Last Frontier Village. The name was changed to Silver Slipper soon after it opened. The Slipper advertised a 49 cent breakfast, and featured entertainment by a variety of vaudeville type performers. The famous slipper sign was designed in the mid to late 1950s by Jack Larsen, Sr. of Young Electric Sign Company. Home to the famous Minsky's Follies and later Boylesque, the Silver Slipper was a popular after-hours spot for Strip entertainers. Howard Hughes bought the Silver Slipper in 1968 after purchasing the Last Frontier. The property was demolished in 1988 to build a parking lot, by then-owner Margaret Elardi. The Silver Slipper is now being restored to its original glory and will soon be installed in the median just outside of the Neon Museum Boneyard on Las Vegas Boulevard North.

Photo courtesy of the Clark County Museum.



The Moulin Rouge

The Moulin Rouge, which opened in 1955, was the valley's first interracial resort at a time when African-Americans were not allowed to patronize or work at Las Vegas casinos and hotels. Even nationally known black entertainers on the Strip were not allowed to stay at the hotels in which they performed. The Moulin Rouge not only allowed blacks to dine and gamble and see the shows, the casino employed blacks in key positions. Sonny Boswell, former Harlem Globetrotters star was the hotel manager. Boxing champion Joe Louis was casino host. Performers in the showroom included Dinah Washington, Lionel Hampton, and nine-year old tap dancing sensation Gregory Hines. The Moulin Rouge became a very popular after hours spot with its 2:30 a.m. late show which attracted droves of celebrities and gamblers away from the Strip. The resort closed after only five months, with rumors of undercapitalization. Five years later the Moulin Rouge was the site of an historic agreement to desegregate the gaming and hotel properties. Attempts to reopen as a resort proved elusive. The property suffered major fires in the last few years, the most recent in 2009, shortly after the famous sign, designed by Welcome sign designer Betty Willis, was removed to the Neon Boneyard.

Photo courtesy of Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas



Elvis and Liberace

In April, 1956 a young Elvis Presley, just turned 21, played a two-week gig at the New Frontier. He got a lukewarm reception, as the adult casino patrons didn't quite know what to make of him. A special Saturday afternoon show however was mobbed with teenagers. During his two weeks Elvis met Liberace, who was performing across the street at the Riviera. The nine-story hotel had opened in 1955 as the tallest building on the Strip, with Liberace starring at an unheard-of \$50,000 a week. Elvis was not to perform again in Las Vegas for another 13 years. But in November of 1956 he returned for a visit and after Liberace's show, the Las Vegas News Bureau staged this famous photo backstage. The entertainers switched jackets and instruments, with Elvis at the piano in gold lame, and Liberace holding Elvis' guitar. They went on to become two of the most popular and highest paid Las

Vegas entertainers of all time. Elvis Presley played to record-breaking crowds for seven years starting in 1969 at the International, now the Hilton Hotel, before his death in 1977. He spawned a cottage industry of Elvis impersonators. Liberace's memory lives on at the Liberace Museum, where "Mr. Showmanship's" costumes, rhinestone studded pianos and other mementoes are there for all to marvel at.

Photo courtesy the Las Vegas News Bureau of the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority.



A University for Southern Nevada

In September, 1951, University of Nevada Professor James R. Dickinson arrived from Reno to start extension classes at Las Vegas High School. In 1954 the university regents met for the first time in Las Vegas. They expressed support for a southern campus while warning that most of the funding was needed in the north. Clark County School Superintendent R. Guild Gray took up the challenge. Assisted by Assemblywoman Maude Frazier, who was also former School Superintendent, the Porchlight Campaign kicked off. High school and college students going door to door raised more than \$135,000, enough to construct the first building. Eighty acres of desert had been acquired on remote Maryland Parkway in unincorporated Clark County. The State Legislature, impressed with the local fundraising and the donated land, provided \$200,000. When

the first building was completed in 1957 it was named, appropriately, Maude Frazier Hall. In 1969, Nevada Southern University became the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, putting it on equal footing with the northern campus. Ten years later, UNLV's enrollment surpassed Reno's. As of 2009 UNLV has more than 100 buildings and 1,000 faculty members teaching 28,000 students, as well as more than 220 accredited undergraduate, masters and doctoral degree programs.

Photo Courtesy of Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas

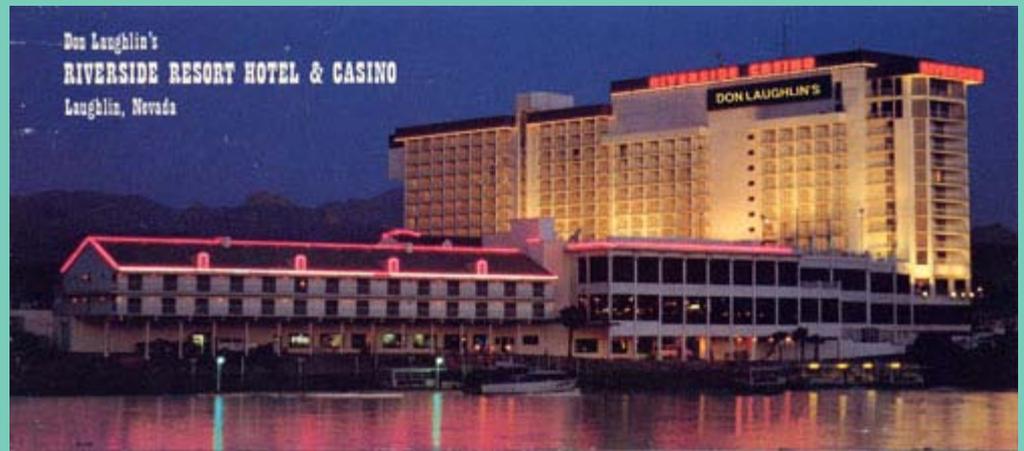


The Stardust Sign

In 1955 gambler Tony Cornero had plans to build the Stardust, his dream project, a 1,000 room resort across from the Desert Inn. Cornero had served prison time for smuggling liquor during prohibition, so when Nevada's governor Russell proclaimed that Cornero would never get a Nevada gaming license, Cornero had to agree to lease the casino to Moe Dalitz. But when the resort was three-quarters finished Cornero died at the Desert Inn's craps table, apparently of a heart attack. The resort was shuttered for two years while potential investors were sought. Jake Factor, brother of Max, bought the property and finished the construction, then leasing the casino to Moe Dalitz. The hotel, opening July 2, 1958, had the biggest casino, the most rooms, the biggest swimming pool, and the biggest sign, designed by Kermit Wayne of YESCO. Yet only ten years later the hotel built a new sign (pictured,) designed by Paul Miller of Ad-

Art. Today that sign sits in the Neon Boneyard, and the Stardust property sits vacant, waiting for the Echelon Resort to be built.

Photo credit: Clark County Museum



Western boomtowns aren't just a 19th century phenomenon. In 1966 gaming entrepreneur Don Laughlin bought a bankrupt eight-room motel and bar at the southern tip of Nevada, across the river from Bullhead City, Arizona. He saw opportunity in the Arizona residents who might cross Davis Dam to gamble, rather than drive 25 miles further to Hoover Dam. In 1968 the Post Office named the place Laughlin. Don Laughlin began building his Riverside Resort, which by the year 2000 had 1,400 rooms, plus 800 RV spaces. The unincorporated town of Laughlin was created in 1979. Don Laughlin continued to play a major role in the shaping of the town, funding the entire \$4.5 million cost of the new bridge connecting Laughlin and Bullhead City. Today Laughlin, with an estimated population of 8,800, is the only unincorporated town in Clark County with a full time Town Manager. And although a large percentage of the workforce lives in Bullhead City, Laughlin boasts schools, parks, a library and other civic amenities, as well as a number of corporate-owned casinos lining the Colorado River. It's a town that's here to stay.

Photo courtesy of the Clark County Museum.



The Candlelight Wedding Chapel, built in 1966, was one of only two freestanding wedding chapels left on the Las Vegas Strip when it was moved to the Clark County Museum in 2007. The other is the Little Church of the West, which the Candlelight closely resembles. The Candlelight was originally called the All Religions Chapel, but then changed ownership and name a few years later. For more than 40 years the Candlelight served locals, visitors and celebrities with elegant and moderately priced weddings. It stood in its familiar location just north of the Riviera while all around it hotels came and went, expanded or imploded. Celebrity marriages included Bette Midler, Michael Caine, Barry White, Whoopi Goldberg and many others. On November 14 the newly restored Candlelight Wedding Chapel will reopen with a free gala celebration at its new location at the Clark County Museum, 1830 S. Boulder Highway in Henderson. County Museum staff are seeking couples who were married at the Candlelight to help make the event even more memorable. For information call (702) 455-7955.

Photo courtesy of Gordon Gust.



Sunset Park History

Delbert "Sonny" Gibbs and his little brother Rollie enjoy a pony-cart ride in the 1930s at the Miller Ranch, where their father Bert Gibbs was caretaker. John F. Miller, who came to Las Vegas on the first train in 1905, owned the ranch that would later become Sunset Park, from 1909 to 1939. Miller also built the Hotel Nevada, later the Sal Sagev (Las Vegas spelled backward) and now the Golden Gate Hotel and Casino. In 1932 he hired Bert Gibbs, who oversaw the haying and raised horses, turkeys, goats, chickens and geese with his wife Cecilia. In 1939 Las Vegas Club owner J. Kell Houssels, Sr. bought the ranch. Houssels, who later became general manager and part-owner of the Tropicana, used the ranch for horse-breeding and training. He later sold the property to a group of investors including the Desert Inn's Wilbur Clark. In 1967, after tireless campaigning by neighboring rancher Mary Gravelle Habbart, Clark County purchased the land with a federal grant match by Paradise Town funds. The land became Clark County's first, and still most popular, regional park. Sunset Park is currently undergoing renovations, again with federal funds, that will add many amenities for its many patrons.

Photo courtesy of the Gibbs Family.



Casino entrepreneur Jay Sarno had a dream. His Cabana Motel chain, built in the fifties and sixties, had some of the elements of his ultimate vision. Caesars Palace, which he built in 1966, had it all—authentic Roman architecture, luxury and uniqueness. Italian stone and marble, Roman-style fountains and the curved hotel wings that echoed St. Peter's Square. Sarno, with architect Melvin Grossman, created the most lavish hotel-casino ever built at that time in Las Vegas. Everything about Caesars Palace was opulent, including the elegant Palace Court Restaurant and the 800-seat showroom, Circus Maximus, which over the years featured stars including Streisand, Frank Sinatra, and a full theatrical production of Fiddler on the Roof. The famous fountains made national headlines in 1967 when daredevil Evel Knievel failed his attempt to jump them on his motorcycle, landing instead in the hospital for months. In 1989 his son Robbie successfully completed the stunt. Sarno sold the property in 1969, already wrapped up in his new project, Circus Circus. Caesars has been through several owners in the intervening years, and its façade is so changed and filled in as to be almost unrecognizable from the street. But it remains one of the most popular and iconic Las Vegas Strip properties, still symbolizing luxury and elegance.

Photo courtesy of Clark County Museum.



On July 3, 1975, raging floodwaters cannonballed down the Flamingo Wash, a major tributary of the valley's natural drainage system, from the Spring Mountains, sweeping hundreds of cars from the Caesars Palace parking lot. The cars and debris clogged a drainage culvert and created a lake of water. Patrons at the Imperial Palace across the street were evacuated. Property damage around the valley was estimated in the millions. In North Las Vegas, two city employees directing traffic were grabbed by the fast-moving water and swept away. Their bodies were found later. It was not the first serious flood in Las Vegas nor would it be the last. As recently as 2003 a major flood claimed the lives of seven people. But improvements made subsequent to the 1975 flood by the Regional Flood Control District have helped to minimize loss of life as well as property damage. Caesars Palace also addressed the flood hazard by building storm drains under the hotel's parking lot and posting warning signs.

Photo courtesy of the Clark County Museum



Former First Lady meets the Stripper

In 1958 an unlikely meeting took place at the El Rancho Vegas, across from the Sahara, when Eleanor Roosevelt met strip tease artist Lili St. Cyr. Pictured also are comedian Joe E. Lewis and El Rancho owner Beldon Katleman. Mrs. Roosevelt was in town at the invitation of the Clark County Chapter of the United Nations Association. The El Rancho Vegas hosted her meetings and parties. Lili St. Cyr and Lewis both starred in their own shows at the El Rancho during the 1950s. Lewis was said to be an inveterate gambler, who usually spent his paycheck at the craps tables. Lili St. Cyr was famous for her six marriages, suicide attempts, and run-ins with guardians of the public's moral standards during her career. Only two years later, the El Rancho Vegas burned to the ground on June 17, 1960 and was never rebuilt.

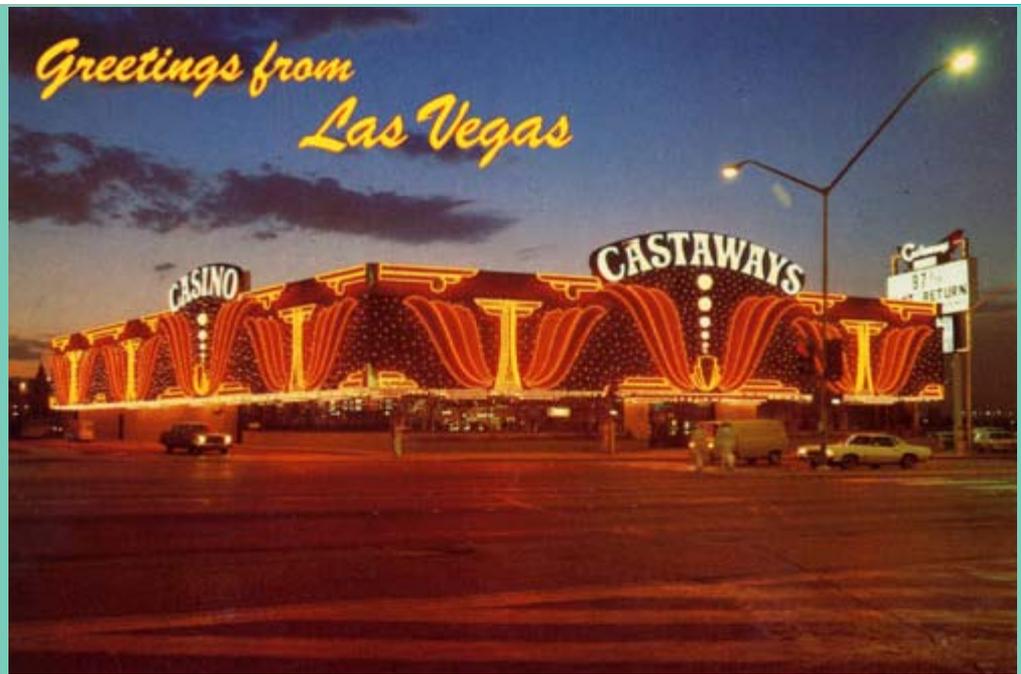
Photo courtesy of the Clark County Museum



La Concha: A Las Vegas Strip Icon

The structure in this photograph looks at first glance like an amusement park ride. In fact it's the La Concha Motel lobby under construction, the curvilinear swooping building that once stood just south of the Riviera Hotel on the Las Vegas Strip. Built in 1961, the La Concha was designed by famed African-American architect Paul Revere Williams. Noted more for his neo-classical homes in Hollywood, Williams was inspired by the La Concha Hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He suggested the shell concept to the Doumani family who had hired him to come up with something a little different from the ordinary motel. In 2007, the La Concha was cut into pieces, moved and put back together to be the visitors' center for the Neon Museum Boneyard next to Cashman Field. The building will open in 2011 after an addition is completed. Williams also designed the Guardian Angel Cathedral off Desert Inn Road. That building is still there.

Photo Courtesy of the Nevada State Museum



The Castaways

The Castaways was once a favorite of Strip performers because of its 24 hour, 49 cent breakfast. Many a hungry dancer could be sure of a good cheap meal at 2 AM or any time. The 1963 Castaways was also significant as the last in a long line of historic gambling establishments on that location, before it was torn down in 1989 to make way for the Mirage. The Mirage is itself now historic as the first mega-resort on the Strip. Back in 1931 on that spot the Red Rooster made its mark as the first nightclub to receive a county gaming license. It also served alcohol illegally and was shut down by the Feds on more than one occasion, until the repeal of Prohibition in late 1933. Owner Alice Morris kept the Red Rooster going for many years. In 1947 entertainer Grace Hayes bought the nightclub, then sold it, then bought it again and finally sold it for good in 1953. The property also included the San Souci Auto Court. This historic location could legitimately be called the birthplace of the Strip, or at least nominated as a contender.

Photo Courtesy of Clark County Museum



On January 8, 1973 Maurice Mickelwhite, otherwise known as Michael Caine, and his bride Shakira Baksh, are captured for posterity by an unknown photographer, who is in turn being photographed by a photographer from the Las Vegas News Bureau. The place was the Candlelight Wedding Chapel, named at the time the All Religions Chapel. Built in 1965, the Candlelight enjoyed other celebrity weddings including Bette Midler, Whoopi Goldberg and even The Lone Ranger, Clayton Moore. The chapel stayed in its original location just north of the Riviera Hotel, next to the Algiers Hotel, until 2007 when it was moved to the Clark County Museum in Henderson. Sir Michael Caine and Shakira are still happily married, and the Candlelight Chapel now has a new life as a restored historical building, just off Heritage Street at the County Museum. The Candlelight Wedding Chapel will open to the public with a free celebration on Nov. 14 at 6:00 p.m.

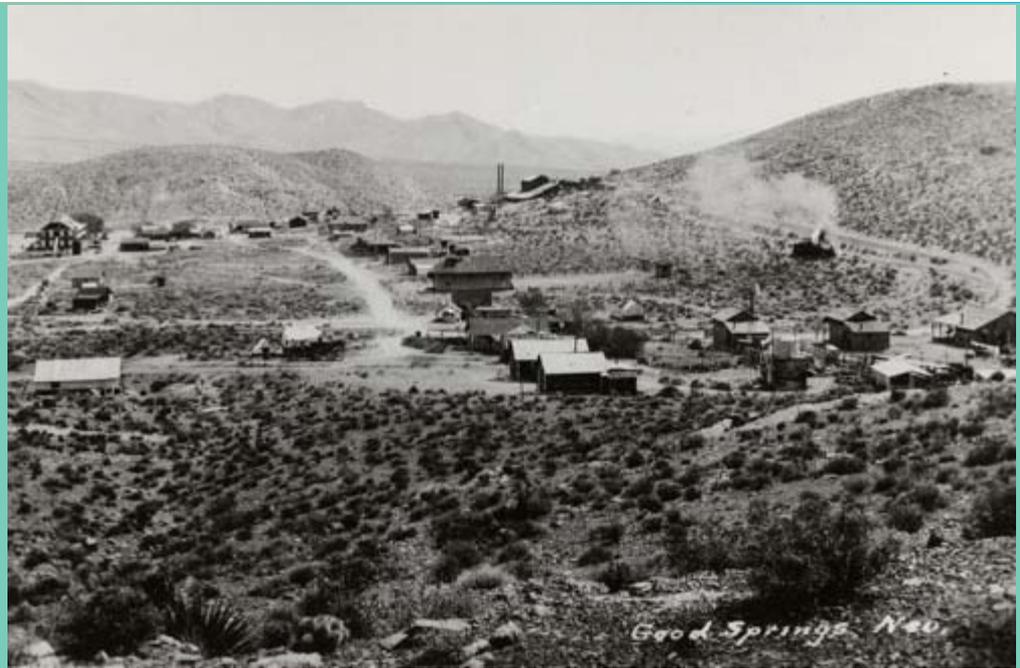
Photo courtesy of the Las Vegas News Bureau.



Human Christmas Tree

In the fifties the Copa Girls were a big part of the stage show at the Sands, produced by Jack Entratter. Shown here with singer-M.C. Chuck Nelson, the girls made a human Christmas tree to welcome the holiday season. Jack Entratter was from New York but became a Las Vegas resident and produced original shows for the Las Vegas strip. His Ziegfeld-style extravaganzas showcased the beauties who paraded in gorgeous costumes, only occasionally singing or dancing. The Sands featured such superstars as Frank Sinatra, but the Copa Girls were the backbone of Sands entertainment.

Photo Courtesy of the Clark County Museum



Goodsprings: A Survivor

Goodsprings was a bustling, thriving mining town in 1916 when its leading citizen, County Commissioner George Fayle, decided to build a first-class hotel, pictured in the upper left corner. The town boasted a hotel, general store, bar and café that were all Fayle's, and which served as testimony to his optimism and faith in the town's future. World War I saw the price of war-related minerals rise and with it Goodsprings' fortunes. The new school, built in 1913 and visible in this photo, had already been enlarged in 1915 due to expanding enrollment. Unfortunately George Fayle died in the influenza epidemic of 1918. He was only 37 years old. Goodsprings began to decline after the war but it has managed to survive. The school is still in use, the Goodsprings Saloon still in business, and a number of early buildings are still standing. Unfortunately the swanky Fayle Hotel burned in 1966, fifty years after it was built. Those interested in Goodsprings history can learn more at www.goodsprings.org, the Web site of the Goodsprings Historical Society.

Photo courtesy of the Clark County Museum



Indian Springs History

Indian Springs, 45 miles north of Las Vegas, has a transportation history, a farming and ranching history, and a military history. In the 19th century a group of local Native Americans farmed the area, which was then called Indian Creek. Charles Towner bought the property from them and then sold it to the railroad. Senator William Clark built the Las Vegas and Tonopah Railroad in 1906 to the mining area near Beatty, with a depot in Indian Springs. In 1910 Ira MacFarland developed a ranch that became a retreat for Las Vegas in the summer. After the railroad shut down, the ties were taken up for construction, including the Indian Inn pictured here. In the 1930s an artist colony hosted Erle Stanley Gardner of Perry Mason fame and Walter Van Tilburg Clark who wrote *The Oxbow Incident*. During World War II the area was used by the Army as an extension of the Gunnery Range. Now Creech Air Force Base plays an important role in the country's defense efforts.

Photo courtesy of the Clark County Museum



Boy Scout Outing

In March 1918, the local Boy Scout Troop, Las Vegas Troop #1, held a three-day march and camp-out at Grapevine Springs, south of Las Vegas. This particular outing was led by Scoutmaster and Reverend W. H. Rogers, and included the following scouts: Giles Morrison, Harold Robinson, Roger Wright, Cecil Cazal, Donald Schuyler, Lee Boyd, Ralph McGoey, Leonard Noblitt and Russell Squires. The Las Vegas Age reported that "they all returned Friday night with sunburned faces and sore lips, but happy." Rev. Paul B. James of the Christ Episcopal Church originally organized the troop, the first in Clark County, in 1911, only one year after Boy Scouts were organized in the United States. Troop 1 was active in many local efforts and led the way to troops being organized in many other Clark County communities, including Bunkerville and Searchlight. According to the Las Vegas Age, the Boy Scouts were involved in Arbor Day, took part in the Liberty Loan Drive, and were reported as organizing an ice cream social, among other activities. Boy Scouts are still a part of Clark County and will be celebrating the centennial of Boy Scouts in America in 2010.

Photo Courtesy of Clark County Museum

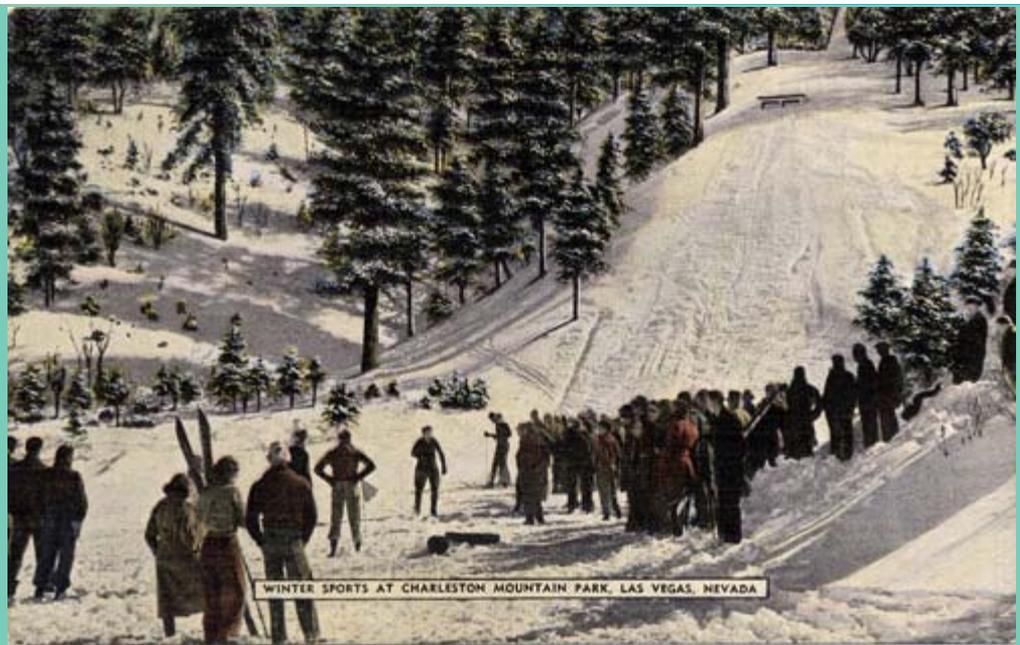


HISTORICAL EVENT—George Washington's birthday was notable every year in the calendar of the Mesquite club, and the members are shown above gathered on the porch of the home of Mrs. Roy W. Martin (which stood at Fifth street and Fremont where the Standard Oil station now is located). They were dressed for the party event in Martha Washington costumes. The picture was taken in February, 1914. At back, left to right, are: Mesdames J. Lancelotti, Charles Ireland, Joe Tulley, David Farnsworth, E. G. Murtaugh, Jack Hinge, W. B. Mundy, Earl Davison, J. H. Craig, A. Mayes, and Zoe Thompson, and four who are unidentified. Second row, left to right, are: Mesdames Roy W. Martin, W. N. Schayler and C. C. Boyer. In front, left to right, are: Mesdames Ed Long, W. R. Thomas, Helen J. Stewart, C. F. Ball, W. B. Dobson and Marie Espezet.

Mesquite Club

Shown in the picture are member of the Mesquite Club in February, 1914. They are dressed in period costumes to commemorate George Washington's birthday. This was an annual club function. The Mesquite Club is the oldest non-profit women's club in Nevada. It was founded in 1911, with Las Vegas Ranch owner Helen Stewart, pictured in the middle of the front row, being one of its founding members. Stewart also helped pick the name, which commemorated one of the few indigenous trees in the valley. One of the Mesquite Club's first projects was to initiate an Arbor Day, with their husbands, who made up most of the civic leaders, doing the tree planting. In all they planted 2,000 cottonwood trees. Another major project was the establishment of a library in the old city-county courthouse. After the 1914 County Courthouse was completed, the City offices shared space with the Library in the old building. The Library was staffed in part by volunteers from the Mesquite Club. Over the years the Mesquite Club has supported the purchase of books and promotion of literacy; established the Rose Garden in Lorenzi Park, formed a USO Club during World War II, helped start the Secret Witness Program (today called "Crimestoppers,") and many other projects. As they approach their Centennial, the women of the Mesquite Club continue to work hard to better their community and the lives of those who live there.

Photo courtesy of the Clark County Museum



Mt. Charleston Getaway

E. W. Griffith and his son Robert Griffith were father and son Las Vegas pioneers who both contributed significantly to the building of Las Vegas and Clark County. Robert became Postmaster and helped nurture aviation in the valley. His father meanwhile provided Las Vegans with a summer getaway by building Mt. Charleston Resort in Kyle Canyon. At first there were only tents, but people were happy to have them. The July, 1915 opening was described in the Las Vegas Age: "Starting this morning, a jolly party of Vegas folks left for Griffith's resort in the Charleston mountains. They expect to remain two days, enjoying the shade of the pines and the ice-cold stream. They will celebrate the Fourth by walking up the mountain about a quarter of a mile and having a frolic in the snow drifts which are there the year round." By the 1920s, according to the Age, almost a hundred people spent the entire summer, with the numbers swelling on the weekends. Card parties, hiking, dancing and a great campfire in the evenings kept the campers entertained. Eventually the Lodge and permanent dwellings were constructed. Today the two and a half hour drive has been shortened to less than an hour, and visitors number in the hundreds of thousands annually.

Photo Courtesy of the Clark County Museum