

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Diverting the Mob Mentality: The Real Dam History of Las Vegas

A Dissertation Submitted

by

Stephen Mislán

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History

Presented to the
Department of History in the
College of Arts and Sciences at
Liberty University

Lynchburg, Virginia

May 21, 2024

Doctoral Dissertation Committee:
Director: Dr. Larry Toll
Reader: Dr. James Ricker
Reader: Dr. John Moore

Abstract

Las Vegas emerged as one of the most popular cities in the United States. Many factors impacted this improbable transformation from just a remote desert valley to a world-class resort destination in its relatively short existence. The story of how all of these factors led to such a fabulous city in such an unlikely location was truly the stuff of legends. The most prevalent narrative about the history of Las Vegas was that the mob built the city. The mob, indeed, was responsible for many casinos and casino innovations. Several other key figures, events, and circumstances contributed to the city's growth as well. There was, however, a larger driving force, one capable of controlling a river. Established in 1905, Las Vegas was originally home to its first inhabitants, the Paleo-Indians, as early as 11,000 B.C. The Archaics were next, then the Anasazi, and later the Paiutes. The local springs provided water for these Native Americans to survive. The location of Las Vegas and the readily available water later made the valley an ideal spot for a railroad stop. Las Vegas also had the good fortune of tolerant Nevada laws and its positioning in the vicinity of the Colorado River. The story after that included the mob, legendary entertainers, unmatched casino resorts, elite sports franchises, and more. By 2024, Las Vegas was a city in a class by itself, and few would have wagered on that a century ago or so. It is somewhat fitting that, in many ways, this was a matter of pure chance. The unpredictability of the Colorado River, for instance, had long been a threat to the American West leading into the 1930s. The Hoover Dam, erected in close proximity to the Las Vegas valley and open for business beginning in 1935, controlled the wild river, preventing flooding and harnessing energy. This was the real story of how the Hoover Dam built modern Las Vegas.

Contents

Figures.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Historiography.....	15
Chapter One: Early Inhabitants, Explorers, and Settlers.....	23
Chapter Two: Establishment of the Town.....	47
Chapter Three: Emergence of a City.....	64
Chapter Four: 1930s.....	85
Chapter Five: 1940s.....	109
Chapter Six: 1950s.....	132
Chapter Seven: 1960s.....	155
Chapter Eight: 1970s.....	176
Chapter Nine: End of the 2nd Millennium.....	196
Chapter Ten: 3rd Millennium.....	219
Chapter Eleven: Analysis/Conclusion.....	245
Bibliography.....	260

Figures

Figure 1. Painted Wood Fragment.....	27
Figure 2. Red Rock Canyon Anasazi Petroglyphs.....	29
Figure 3. Archaeologists Studying the Lost City.....	30
Figure 4. Old Spanish Trails Map.....	33
Figure 5. Dellenbaugh Oil Sketch of Los Vegas Rancho.....	51
Figure 6. Clark's Las Vegas Townsite.....	62
Figure 7. Diagram Showing Hoover Dam Operation.....	94
Figure 8. Hoover Dam Aerial View from Downstream.....	97
Figure 9. Hoover Dam Aerial View from Upstream.....	97
Figure 10. Chuck Wagon Buffet.....	116
Figure 11. El Rancho Vegas, Circa 1951, Atomic Bomb Mushroom Cloud in Background.....	134
Figure 12. Rat Pack at the Sands.....	144
Figure 13. Fabulous Las Vegas Sign.....	154
Figure 14. Evel Knievel Caesars Palace Jump.....	166
Figure 15. MSG Sphere.....	239

Introduction

The Hoover Dam was the most significant factor in Las Vegas history that made the city the “entertainment capital of the world” and much more.¹ In 2024, Las Vegas is a thriving metropolis and a world-class resort destination in what was once a remote and desolate desert valley. The Hoover Dam was the driving force behind the city’s dramatic rise, but this was not how historians of Las Vegas explained it. Largely beginning in the 1990s, the historiography of Las Vegas consistently contained the narrative that the mob essentially built the city. In fact, throughout its existence, the gambling mecca did not always have a good name. While the widely-known label, “Sin City,” was not completely off the mark and even propelled tourism and growth, it did not adequately express the true essence of Las Vegas.² The aim of this dissertation is to clean up the reputation of Las Vegas by countering the mob narrative through a retelling of the city’s cultural history putting the Hoover Dam at the top of the hierarchy.

This includes explaining how the construction of the Hoover Dam led to the population and tourism explosion that fueled the resort and casino business where the mob ran its operations. From 1930 to the end of World War II, just a few years after the end of construction of the Hoover Dam, the population quadrupled from about five thousand, one hundred to twenty thousand.³ Greater growth was just around the corner, but only the Hoover Dam could deliver the power and water necessary for it. The mob was wise enough to take advantage of such circumstances to get their take. Other less nefarious factors also contributed. Still, further explanations were required to debunk any possibilities of the other significant events or key

¹ Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 206, 222.

² Howard Taubman, “Mozart in Las Vegas: When Sun Comes Up in ‘Sin City,’ the Action Often Turns to Culture,” *New York Times*, (New York, December 6, 1966), 57.

³ Moehring and Green, 84.

figures having the largest impact on the city's growth. Interestingly, other cities that shared many of these factors attempted to outdo Las Vegas, but without the Hoover Dam, they could never fully achieve similar success. These accounts were developed through research of a multitude of primary and secondary sources on the city's cultural history.

Up until about two hundred years ago, though, Las Vegas was nothing more than a desert valley with a spring-fed creek in Southern Nevada. The spring water, though, was vital to any prolonged human presence in the area. The first recorded inhabitants, the Paleo-Indians, lived in the valley as early as 11,000 B.C.⁴ In 2500 B.C., after a long dry spell, the Archaics inhabited the area.⁵ With some possible overlap, the Anasazi were the primary residents from approximately 300 B.C. to 1150 A.D., and the Paiutes replaced them in the Las Vegas valley for the next 700 years.⁶ These inhabitations were the only examples of recorded human activity in the region to that point.⁷ However, others would journey near the region after that. The first non-native American to set foot in the valley, arriving in 1829, was a Mexican scout working for traders on their way to California led by New Mexico merchant, Antonio Armijo.⁸

The Armijo party veered off course from the Old Spanish Trail that Spanish missionaries had blazed much earlier, and one of his scouts entered the valley on his own encountering a Native American village.⁹ The village was there, undoubtedly, to take advantage of the abundant spring water vital to their survival.¹⁰ Without such water availability, it was next to

⁴ Barbara Land and Myrick Land, *A Short History of Las Vegas*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 4.; Thomas Ainlay, Jr. and Judy Gabaldon, *Las Vegas: The Fabulous First Century*, (San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 12.

⁵ Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.

⁶ Moehring and Green, 2.; Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.

⁷ Moehring and Green, 2.; Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.

⁸ Moehring and Green, 2.

⁹ Land and Land, 3.

¹⁰ Land and Land, 3.

impossible to survive in such a region. The water was also vital to expeditions like the one Armijo and his scout, Rafael Rivera, were on. In fact, the water was so vital that the Spaniards came up with the Spanish name Las Vegas, or “the meadows.”¹¹ The name stuck, but none of the early visitors could possibly have imagined how these meadows would turn out. Las Vegas transformed into a world-class resort destination, but the story of how it did so was as wild and diverse as the entertainment mecca, itself.

Americans soon found the valley, too. Federal explorer John Fremont, making maps for the United States (U.S.) Topographical Corps, was the first to put Las Vegas on the map, quite literally. Leading a party of scientists and scouts, he first set eyes on the valley on May 3rd, 1844. Fremont noted that the taste of the water was good, but, because its temperature was in the low seventies, it was even more suitable for bathing. He likely marked down the location because of these notable characteristics. Finding water there was an important find indeed. His detailed maps were useful for those who would follow, and soon many would. This was especially true for those on their way to California.¹²

In 1855, Brigham Young hoped to colonize the area to expand Mormon influence into California.¹³ A few years earlier, in 1852, another Mormon, Hosea Stout stopped for water from the Las Vegas springs.¹⁴ Stout recorded in his diary that the stream in the region was useful for irrigation and that the soil also was excellent for crops.¹⁵ Young likely recognized the valley’s valuable potential. One month after Stout’s visit, Las Vegas became a regular stop for the winter mail route.¹⁶ The Mormon leader sent William Bringham with twenty-nine others to settle

¹¹ Land and Land, 4.

¹² Land and Land, 12, 13, and 17.

¹³ Land and Land, 20 and 21.

¹⁴ Land and Land, 18.

¹⁵ Land and Land, 20.

¹⁶ Land and Land, 20.

there.¹⁷ Because Las Vegas was also a town in New Mexico, the Mormon settlers referred to the site as Bringhurst in his name.¹⁸

Native Americans moved in seemingly to assist the Mormons in their mission. The Paiutes, who had already been in the region when the Mormons arrived, willingly participated in planting and growing the Mormon crops. A drought hurt the Mormon effort though, along with a growing factionalism. The Mormons' in-fighting did not help relations with the Paiutes, who also were growing hungry. Moreover, the Native Americans had a different view than the Mormons concerning private property. Consequently, the Paiutes stole the 1858 harvest believing they all had access to the limited crops. Young recognized the mission was not working out. Accordingly, he allowed the Mormons in the valley to abandon the mission.¹⁹

In 1861, prospectors flooded the region when a nearby mine yielded traces of silver, and when a gold strike was reported in El Dorado Canyon. These precious metal discoveries were both in close proximity to the Las Vegas valley. Given the isolation of the two mining camps, miners visited the valley to stock up on food and supplies. In 1902, Montana Senator William Clark began developing the location as a small town around what was named Fremont Street and a railroad stop between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. It turned out that the spring water was vital to the steam-powered locomotives. Certainly, these events were necessary for Las Vegas to thrive as a small town.²⁰

In 1905, though, it was another matter related to the water in the region, this time the Colorado River, that would, in due time, seal the deal for the fate of this budding oasis. The

¹⁷ Land and Land, 21.

¹⁸ Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 3.

¹⁹ Moehring and Green, 5.

²⁰ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 2-4 and 6.

federal government began talks with residents of the Southwest that would eventually lead to the construction of the Hoover Dam.²¹ Flooding was a major concern in that region. As President Roosevelt later stated about the Colorado River in his 1935 speech at the dam, “the Colorado added little of value to the region,” and “in flood the river was a threatening torrent.”²² Roosevelt also discussed the power generated by such a dam. He said that the power generated would run “factory motors, street and household lights and irrigation pumps...in Southern Arizona and California.”²³ These fears and hopeful possibilities were, in fact, central to the ultimate decision to move forward with the dam.

The Hoover Dam was by no means the end of the story, though. Once dam laborers began flocking to the site twenty-eight miles outside Las Vegas, the town that refused “to admit that the Old West ever died” provided liquor and gambling for its new neighbors.²⁴ This was at a time when such vices were outlawed elsewhere.²⁵ These workers make the short trek to Las Vegas to unwind during their off-duty hours. Las Vegas was also listed in 1927 as one of the cities with a municipal airport, so, by the dam’s completion in 1935, tourists started arriving to see the dam and the visit the local saloons.²⁶ It did not take long for savvy businessmen to recognize the growing need for hotels.

Suddenly, Fremont Street in what became the Downtown area, was not big enough, and the Pair-O-Dice and the Meadows Club opened up by the local highways.²⁷ In 1941, the El

²¹ Moehring and Green, 58.

²² Associated Press, “President’s Talk at Boulder Dam,” *New York Times*, (New York, October 1, 1935), 2.

²³ Associated Press, “President’s Talk at Boulder Dam,” 2.

²⁴ Duncan Aikman, “New Pioneers in Old West’s Deserts: The Prospect of Work at Hoover Dam Lures Men from Many States, and They Trek in Ramshackle Autos New Pioneers in the Desert,” *New York Times*, (New York, October 26, 1930), SM4.

²⁵ Aikman, “New Pioneers in Old West’s Deserts: The Prospect of Work at Hoover Dam Lures Men from Many States, and They Trek in Ramshackle Autos New Pioneers in the Desert,” SM4.

²⁶ Unknown Author, “4,000 Airports Built, But New York City Owns None of Them,” *New York Times*, (New York, June 27, 1927), 1.

²⁷ Moehring and Green, 106.

Rancho Vegas opened up on what would become known as the Strip, along with the Last Frontier in 1942.²⁸ The Flamingo was next, followed by the Thunderbird in 1948.²⁹ The new hotels housed casinos, originally available to entertain the dam laborers, and the gambling quickly gained traction as a big part of the tourism with an uptick in slot machine odds by 1948.³⁰ Tourists began visiting the area to see what a marvel the Hoover Dam was, but also to find entertainment in Las Vegas. This presented more and more of an inviting opportunity for those with an entrepreneurial spirit. One particular group could not resist and thrived in the casino business, which was not necessarily built or operated with clean money.

Mob bosses quickly got involved, starting with the Flamingo. Gangsters, like Israel “Ice Pick Willie” Alderman and Bugsy Siegel got heavily involved there.³¹ The mob money initially came mostly from the race wire, which the Mafia controlled.³² The race wire had been developed by a former telegraph operator from Cincinnati, Ohio named John Payne, who learned how to combine a coded race results message through a mirror flashed by a spotter at the track with a nearby telegrapher who forwarded messages to the bookies.³³ The mob’s involvement with the race wire eventually put Attorney General Robert Kennedy in direct opposition to Teamsters President Jimmy Hoffa.³⁴ As mob activity increased in the local casino business, even Frank Sinatra’s relationship with mob boss, Sam Giancana, put his reputation in jeopardy.³⁵ The mob’s presence and influence throughout the city was extensive.

²⁸ David Clary, *Gangsters to Governors: The New Bosses of Gambling in America*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017), 83.

²⁹ Unknown Author, “Del Webb Buying Las Vegas Hotel,” *New York Times*, (New York, September 19, 1964), 24.

³⁰ Goodman, Jack, “Jackpot Jamboree: Small-money Slot-Machine Gamblers in Nevada Have Struck a Bonanza,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 15, 1948), SM30.

³¹ Clary, 84 and 87.

³² Clary, 111.

³³ Allan May, “The History of the Race Wire Service,” *Crime Magazine*, October 14, 2009.

³⁴ Clary, 111.

³⁵ Associated Press, “Gangster Called Sinatra’s Guest,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, September 12, 1963), 1.

By 1966, the former aviator and reclusive tycoon, Howard Hughes, moved in and worked to transition these activities from the mob to corporate leadership.³⁶ The mob did, in fact, began filtering out, and Las Vegas went corporate. In 1968, Kirk Kerkorian, who along with Steve Wynn and others would transform the Strip, opened the International Hotel where Elvis Presley so famously performed.³⁷ Entertainment, including magic and other themed shows, boxing, and, later, other major sports, became permanent fixtures in the city. This transformation came at a price, as the cleaned-up operations were not conducive to many of the extras the mob provided. This was a far cry from the original meadows.

Describing how this particular region was either chosen or how it was ideal for the various influential events was important in this research. That included analysis as to how each of the major turning points in the city's history impacted the overall growth. This research and comparative analysis were vital to demonstrating the conclusion that the Hoover Dam was the most significant factor in building modern Las Vegas. While there remained an emphasis in this project on the role of the mob, which was still one of the factors that made Las Vegas what it became, a similar focus was applied to the other factors as well to finally arrive at that conclusion. The completion of this research provided context as to why Las Vegas developed into a celebrated metropolis in what had been just a remote desert valley. Government officials might not have considered the effects of site selection in planning other federal projects without this pointed research. Residents of Florida, Texas, or Maine, or any other state may have wondered why a city in their home states was not the site of the world-famous Strip. They might have asked why they had to travel so far to enjoy the Las Vegas experience in the middle of a

³⁶ Associated Press, "Howard Hughes Buys Desert Inn," *New York Times*, (New York, March 15, 1967), 52.

³⁷ Clary, 206.

desert. Residents of Las Vegas may have wondered how their city was created and why it expanded, or they might have been concerned that the rest of the history of Las Vegas, beyond its mob ties, received less airplay. This dissertation endeavors to address these unresolved issues.

The dissertation was organized into a chronological depiction of the growth of Las Vegas from the time of its earliest recorded human activity in 11,000 B.C. right up to the modern day. The first chapter is dedicated to the earliest inhabitants of the valley. That includes a study of the petroglyphs and Paiutes, and their predecessors, and how they lived in the region. The chapter then examines the earliest non-native New Mexico merchants, starting in 1829, led by Antonio Armijo headed for California.³⁸ There is discussion on why they passed near this valley because of the fresh water springs.³⁹ The availability of water would be a recurring theme among the reasons why Las Vegas was a practical spot for stopping or settling there. Without it, the valley might well have been ignored.

Instead, it grabbed their attention enough to adjust the previous trail to include it. This expedition, in fact, was also when the first non-natives to refer to the area as Las Vegas explored it.⁴⁰ Beyond the water, the meadows and its soil made it a good place to camp. Travelers would make similar stops over the next two decades.⁴¹ The valley became a welcome respite for travelers going to or coming from California. This was the first step in the evolution of Las Vegas, and appropriate analysis explains how this would be the first of many critical elements in the city's history along with its particular valuation in the overall conversation.

³⁸ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 1.

³⁹ Land and Land, 3.

⁴⁰ Land and Land, 12.

⁴¹ Moehring and Green, 2.

Chapter One continues until Las Vegas was established once and for all. There were still a few key temporary visits and occupations in the valley. The first of which was the Federal explorer Captain John Fremont. Making maps for the U.S. Topographical Corps, he marked the spot as Las Vegas and noted the multiple uses of the available water there.⁴² Next, in 1855, Brigham Young attempted to settle the site as part of his plans for expanding the Mormon influence into California although they did not use the Las Vegas name.⁴³ Factionalism undermined this effort, and he abandoned the plans, leaving only Native Americans to feed on their crops for a time.⁴⁴ This chapter finishes with the discovery of silver and gold in the area that led to a flood of prospectors.⁴⁵

One of these prospectors, Octavius Decatur Gass, links Chapter One with Chapter Two. His financial difficulties led to Archibald Stewart taking possession of the land, which was actually a ranch, with his wife, Helen. This marked the renaming of the area as Las Vegas once and for all. Upon his colorful death, Helen eventually sold the ranch to Montana Senator William Clark in 1902. The bulk of Chapter Two hones in on his desire to grow the economy in the Western U.S. Clark recognized that the location and the available water made the site the perfect midway point for the railroad, and, being a shrewd businessman, he began acquiring the rights for the proposed railroad from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles. When local surveyor, J.T. McWilliams bought up the land west of the tracks, he set up the new town that would eventually be West Las Vegas.⁴⁶

⁴² Moehring and Green, 2 and 3.

⁴³ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 1 and 2.

⁴⁴ Moehring and Green, 1 and 2.

⁴⁵ Moehring and Green, 1 and 2.

⁴⁶ Moehring and Green, 3, 4, and 6.

Chapter Three details the continued development from a town to a city. In 1917, the Overland Hotel burned to the ground.⁴⁷ Because of the fire danger due to the wooden structures, a fire department and other municipal government agencies were required.⁴⁸ This was made official in a special election on June 1st, that same year.⁴⁹ This chapter also covers the early federal government discussions, as early as 1905, of the possibility of damming the Colorado River.⁵⁰ Pertinent to this material is a biographical study of a young engineering student, Herbert Hoover, who graduated from Stanford in 1895 and quickly rose through the ranks as an up-and-coming engineer and politician.⁵¹ These first several chapters are necessary to not only telling the history of the city, but also of explaining the impacts such key activities and visitors and residents had on the city's development.

Chapter Three also includes a discussion on how boxing first arrived in Nevada. This was certainly pertinent, as later success of boxing in Las Vegas made the possibility of other major sports in the city feasible. The chapter also examines Herbert Hoover's background and progress, specifically concerning the Boulder Dam project, as well as similar work done by Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Calvin Coolidge. That includes a Congressional study on the Colorado River specific to irrigation and hydroelectric power. Other prominent federal government figures also had roles in this planning of the dam that would be the Hoover Dam. This chapter explains how Las Vegas's location was now vital to the Western U.S. and the nation as a whole.

⁴⁷ Moehring and Green, 39.

⁴⁸ Moehring and Green, 39.

⁴⁹ Moehring and Green, 39.

⁵⁰ Moehring and Green, 58.

⁵¹ Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover (1874-1920)*, (London: Hollis & Carter, 1952), 25 and 26.

The construction of Hoover Dam and the simultaneous impact of that construction on Las Vegas is described in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. The nearby city of Boulder City was created just to house the dam builders. Also, forty-five saloons defied prohibition and laws against gambling to provide entertainment for the workers in their off-time in Las Vegas.⁵² Chapter Five describes the growing casino resort development outside the Downtown Las Vegas area and the mob's role in expanding the resorts footprint, beginning in 1941, to what would be the world-famous Strip. The population steadily reached fifty-nine thousand by 1960.⁵³ Entertainment was part of this conversation, including Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack. These chapters address how the military and air travel enabled tourists to visit Las Vegas to witness the grand achievement that was the Hoover Dam. It also covers the power generated by the dam for Las Vegas and beyond.

The four subsequent chapters focus on the growth of Las Vegas once the Hoover Dam was in place and in operation. Chapter Seven examines the continued impact the Hoover Dam had on the city in the 1960s. Chapter Eight addresses the 1970s and competition from Atlantic City and entertainers like Elvis Presley. From 1970 to 2000, the population grew from 270,000 to more than 1.3 million.⁵⁴ Chapter Nine includes a discourse on the casino magnates like Kirk Kerkorian and Steve Wynn, as well as the entertainment like Siegfried and Roy's tiger show. Chapter Ten covers up until 2024 and the arrival of major sports franchises.

Chapter Eleven is the conclusion and covers the bulk of the analysis for the dissertation. This consists of a review of the major turning points, and key figures in the history of the city. It also addresses the ideas from previous historiography crediting the mob with building the city.

⁵² Aikman, "New Pioneers in Old West's Deserts: The Prospect of Work at Hoover Dam Lures Men from Many States, and They Trek in Ramshackle Autos New Pioneers in the Desert," SM4.

⁵³ Richard Zoglin, *Elvis in Vegas*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019), 11.

⁵⁴ Moehring and Green, 205.

Then, it examines how the Hoover Dam impacted the city's rapid growth. This includes discussion on the power necessary to sustain the activity covered in previous chapters. Including the conclusion, which highlighted the significance of identifying the most significant element, this chapter finally connects the analysis in the other chapters to demonstrate how the Hoover Dam, more than any other factor, built Las Vegas.

This project was not an examination of the events, figures, and agents that affected wider areas of the country or world. For instance, research into the impact interstate highways had on Las Vegas would not have necessarily differentiated it from a number of other cities throughout the U.S. or even the rest of the world. While it could have been argued that the same might be said of air travel, the strategic location of Las Vegas was the main reason why military airfields were built there which also made civilian air travel possible sooner. Meanwhile, interstate highways were constructed in the U.S. more as a reaction to make travel easier to the populous cities, of which there were many throughout the nation. However, the highways were still a small part of a larger argument that could not be completely overlooked.

Like the highways, the development of air conditioning made life more sustainable in many other cities with warmer climates. While there might have been mention of both highways and air conditioning, they were more a universal part of the national or even world history. While both were, of course, necessary, they did not make Las Vegas what it was any more than they helped shape Orlando, Atlanta or any of several other cities. In other words, this project was limited in scope to those elements that were specific to Las Vegas. Certainly, other cities emerged because water was available there. Again, though, like the air travel example, the location of Las Vegas was central to why it was chosen due to several conditions. It was near enough to the Old Spanish Trail that scouts would stumble upon it. It was located half way

between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles, a trip that was otherwise too long by rail without water. It also happened to be near the path of the Colorado River and predisposed to its unpredictable flooding.

Conversely, like the Hoover Dam, which prevented such flooding, the components this research project did scrutinize were both impactful to the development and growth of Las Vegas and conditional upon its specific footprint. One example of this was the need for a railroad stop. Another example was the Rat Pack filming *Ocean's Eleven* (1960) in Las Vegas.⁵⁵ They filmed the movie while also performing shows as part of their legendary residencies. A number of other entertainers followed like Elvis performing at the International and even Evel Knievel jumping over the fountains at Caesars Palace.⁵⁶ Another was the mob seizing the opportunity to add the fledgling casinos to its gambling empire at the time of the dam construction. In fact, that last example was the key to this whole enterprise.

This dissertation endeavors to divert the mob mentality prevalent among many Las Vegas historians that the mob built the city. The first such work was *The Green Felt Jungle* (1963) by Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris which shined a light upon widespread mob activity in Las Vegas.⁵⁷ This mob mentality developed out of the certain luster attributed to the mob and its colorful characters within American pop culture. This was especially true in films like *The Godfather* (1972) and *Casino* (1995).⁵⁸ These works glamorized brutal murderers and hardened criminals and the ugly deeds they committed in the name of their families. Perhaps, it was that family loyalty, ironically also evident in the comedic classic, *Vegas Vacation* (1997), that captured the hearts of Americans and generated a sense of good that made the mob connections to Las Vegas

⁵⁵ Lewis Milestone, *Ocean's Eleven*, Warner Bros., 1960.

⁵⁶ Zoglin, 8, 9, and 11.

⁵⁷ Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris, *The Green Felt Jungle*, (New York: Ishi Press International, 1963).

⁵⁸ Francis Coppola, *The Godfather*, Paramount Pictures, 1972; Martin Scorsese, *Casino*, Universal Pictures, 1995.

such an enamoring story.⁵⁹ Maybe it was the immense power these sinister individuals were able to garner in this town because of the unique opportunities presented. It was probably a little of both that put the mob at the very center of Las Vegas historiography.

Las Vegas historians recognized the many contributions the mob made to the city's development, and likely could not resist attributing the growth of Las Vegas to it. These historians generated this narrative perhaps trying to capture the one element that set Las Vegas apart from other cities. Certainly, the mob casino operations in Las Vegas were unique. Because the mob story drew so much interest from all parts of the U.S., it was difficult to blame the historians for getting caught up in writing about such a compelling tale. After all, who would not want to learn about the Las Vegas shady dealings of iconic gangsters with legendary nicknames? The large role the mob did, in fact, have was still part of what made this project so alluring.

However, much like the Hoover Dam diverted the Colorado River to ultimately control its often dangerous imprecise movements, this dissertation research aims to divert the historiography away from its current underdeveloped path to one that holds more water. That is by no means an effort to dispute the significance of the mob though. The mob contributed significantly to the development of Las Vegas, as did several other factors. Instead, the research and analysis in this project are just making use of and building upon the existing historiography. That is not too dissimilar to how the Hoover Dam enabled the local residents and officials in and around Las Vegas to harness the massive energy generated by the Colorado River to rapidly expand the city. Explaining the colossal impact the Hoover Dam had on such expansion is the driving force behind this dissertation.

⁵⁹ Stephen Kessler, *Vegas Vacation*, Warner Bros., 1997.

Historiography

Prior to this research, the highest concentration of Las Vegas cultural history centered around the ties to the mob and the resulting city's nickname of "Sin City."⁶⁰ The idea of a city built and run by a mob syndicate was novel and, therefore, made for a good story. Las Vegas history tellers tapped into the sort of rough-and-tumble, made-man dynamic that intrigued many among the public. Chronicling these accounts was absolutely justified, as the role of the mob was significant. The city certainly did grow as a result of the mob's dubious activities. However, because the focus was on such a captivating story, a serious study on the most influential event in the rise of Las Vegas was not conducted until this dissertation. The Hoover Dam was that influential event, and recognizing that finally clarifies the historical narrative.

The historiography of Las Vegas generally did not begin to take shape until the 1990s. As a result, many theories exist as to how Las Vegas grew to become a premier resort destination. In larger part, this confusion may be due to the scholarly focus given to one event or change agent. This included works focusing on the mob, travel, casinos, entertainment, the Hoover Dam, and on the comprehensive history of the city. Still, biographies on United States Presidents included relevant material much earlier in the twentieth century. These texts can provide valuable material which can be pieced together and analyzed to add to the existing information in the comprehensive city history books. Because the comprehensive history texts were produced so recently, there was not much transition in the historiography. However, none of these works has attempted to evaluate the major events associated with the city to determine the major driving force behind the creation of modern Las Vegas. Making such an evaluation

⁶⁰ Howard Taubman, "Mozart in Las Vegas: When Sun Comes Up in 'Sin City,' the Action Often Turns to Culture," *New York Times*, (New York, December 6, 1966), 57.

and determining the most significant element is a change to the historiography, as it fills in a gap, and is certainly a worthwhile effort.

The earliest works on this subject were from the 1950s in the form of Presidential biographies. While these books had a much larger focus than on anything directly affecting Las Vegas, they were valuable resources for this research. Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) recognized the need for control over the Colorado River and for power sources in the West. The British author and historian of American politics, Patrick Renshaw, published *Franklin D. Roosevelt* in 2004.⁶¹ Hoover had recognized the need for control over the Colorado River and for power sources in the West. He also played a role in zeroing in on Las Vegas. Hoover wrote his *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover* in 1951.⁶² Numerous other works were produced since then that included discussions on the roles these and other Presidents had in Las Vegas's development.

Works with a focus on the mob, casinos, developers, and the railroad came later as the city's mystique grew. History professor, Alan Balboni, published *Beyond the Mafia: Italian Americans and the Development of Las Vegas* in 1996.⁶³ Balboni argued that Italian Americans were involved in construction and labor before the mob's entry into Las Vegas. Such integration could not be discounted, but the mob's impact was greater. This text did not support the widely-believed narrative that the mob was responsible for the making of Las Vegas. A large section of the Las Vegas historiography did though.

The narrative included the argument that a handful of mobsters manipulated the casinos and other questionable establishments to make money, and this expanded into making the city a

⁶¹ Patrick Renshaw, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, (London: Routledge, 2004).

⁶² Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*, (New York: Macmillan, 1951).

⁶³ Alan Balboni, *Beyond the Mafia: Italian Americans and the Development of Las Vegas*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1996).

popular destination. Historian David Clary wrote *Gangsters to Governors: The New Bosses of Gambling in America* in 2017.⁶⁴ Clary discussed how the mob gained interest in Las Vegas as modernization enabled Californians to travel for gambling. Mob hitman, Frank Cullotta and mob chronicler, Dennis Griffin published *The Rise and Fall of a 'Casino' Mobster: The Tony Spilotro Story Through a Hitman's Eyes* in 2017.⁶⁵ This was the story of the mob's man in Las Vegas in the 1970s, known as an enforcer. W.R. Wilkerson, the son of a mobster, wrote a biography on his father, *Hollywood Godfather: The Life and Crimes of Billy Wilkerson* (2018).⁶⁶ Wilkerson tangled with other mobsters as Las Vegas transformed into a gambling mecca.

Another theory alleged that the major casino developers were the actual force behind modern Las Vegas. Historian, Jack Sheehan published *The Players: The Men Who Made Las Vegas* (1997) to explain how a few colorful and smart casino operators built the city.⁶⁷ Also, historian, Robert McCracken wrote *Las Vegas: The Great American Playground* (1997) to highlight the development of the many casino resorts in Las Vegas.⁶⁸ These resorts directly reflected the growth of Las Vegas. There was also no question that the larger-than-life figures in these books affected Las Vegas.

Another element that did the same was the entertainment business, which also had its share of the Las Vegas historiography. In 2019, writer and critic, Richard Zoglin wrote *Elvis in Vegas* which covered the indelible impact Elvis Presley had on Las Vegas.⁶⁹ No entertainer was

⁶⁴ David Clary, *Gangsters to Governors: The New Bosses of Gambling in America*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017).

⁶⁵ Frank Cullotta and Dennis Griffin, *The Rise and Fall of a 'Casino' Mobster: The Tony Spilotro Story Through a Hitman's Eyes*, (Newburyport: Wildblue Press, 2017).

⁶⁶ W.R. Wilkerson, *Hollywood Godfather: The Life and Crimes of Billy Wilkerson*, (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2018).

⁶⁷ Jack Sheehan, *The Players: The Men Who Made Las Vegas*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997).

⁶⁸ Robert McCracken, *Las Vegas: The Great American Playground*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997).

⁶⁹ Richard Zoglin, *Elvis in Vegas*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019).

bigger than Elvis. Nevada historians, Richard Davies and Kathleen Szawiola wrote *The Main Event: Boxing in Nevada from the Mining Camps to the Las Vegas Strip* (2014) to describe how Las Vegas became the center of American boxing.⁷⁰ Certainly, the entertainment business interacted with the mob and the moguls, but it was a significant piece of the creation of Las Vegas on its own.

The Hoover Dam, which controlled the Colorado River and powered a large region of the Southwestern U.S. including Las Vegas, also is a large part of the historiography. Professor Kevin Wehr wrote *America's Fight Over Water: The Environmental and Political Effects of Large-Scale Water Systems* (2004) to explain the environmental and political factors involved with the dam.⁷¹ Professional engineers, Richard Wiltshire, David Gilbert and Jerry Rogers drafted *Hoover Dam: 75th Anniversary History Symposium* (2010) to remember the history behind building the dam.⁷² Las Vegas writer, Paul Papa wrote *Boulder City: The Town that Built the Hoover Dam* (2017) which explains how a new city outside Las Vegas was created to build the huge dam.⁷³ This scholarship was central to understanding the impact Hoover Dam had on Las Vegas, although there was no historiography suggesting that it had the most significant effect.

The works that did cover comprehensive histories of the city argued that Las Vegas was the result of the combination of the many elements in the historiography of the city. Urban and Western history historian, Eugene Moehring, published *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second*

⁷⁰ Richard Davies and Kathleen Szawiola, *The Main Event: Boxing in Nevada from the Mining Camps to the Las Vegas Strip*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2014).

⁷¹ Kevin Wehr, *America's Fight Over Water: The Environmental and Political Effects of Large-Scale Water Systems*, (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁷² Richard Wiltshire, David Gilbert and Jerry Rogers, *Hoover Dam: 75th Anniversary History Symposium*, (Las Vegas: American Society of Civil Engineers, 2010).

⁷³ Paul Papa, *Boulder City: The Town that Built the Hoover Dam*, (Charleston: The History Press, 2017).

Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000 (2000) to explain how Las Vegas evolved from a small railroad town to the city it became.⁷⁴ Writers Myrick and Barbara Land wrote *A Short History of Las Vegas* (2004) to tell the story of Las Vegas from the earliest inhabitation to modern times.⁷⁵ Eugene Moehring joined UNLV professor Michael Green to write *Las Vegas: A Centennial History* (2005) discussing one hundred years of Las Vegas history beginning with its role as a Mormon outpost and leading into the twenty-first century.⁷⁶ Historian James Roman expanded the time frame with his *Chronicles of Old Las Vegas: Exposing Sin City's High-Stakes History* (2011) which told the 150 year-history of the city beginning with its existence as a railroad town and going to the time of publication.⁷⁷

While these comprehensive histories cover a majority of the major events and figures that helped build Las Vegas, none of them attempted to argue in favor of any of these factors as being the main reason the city grew to what it became. The notoriety of Las Vegas driven by many of the negative elements involved in its growth, namely the mob, was unfair in a way. For the residents of Las Vegas, arguing the significance of the Hoover Dam and its construction as the most important event in the history of Las Vegas concerning the city's development was a worthwhile and valuable endeavor. The same could be said for Americans who gained from Las Vegas tourism. While these comprehensive histories did highlight how the city growth was a result of more than just the mob or gambling, they did not go far enough.

⁷⁴ Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000).

⁷⁵ Barbara Land and Myrick Land, *A Short History of Las Vegas*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004).

⁷⁶ Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005).

⁷⁷ James Roman, *Chronicles of Old Las Vegas: Exposing Sin City's High-Stakes History*, (New York: Museyon, 2011).

These works did contain the details that revealed the more accurate history, but they were never fully pieced together. More research examined the key figures involved with the major events like engineer Frank Crowe, who put together a six-company conglomerate to build the Hoover Dam. That would also include the early power players and government officials who made impacts in a variety of ways. A study also included the Army's footprint in the city, as well as reasons for an initial settlement in the valley, including the available water, which was also a critical need for a railroad stop. Such research helped to adjust the narrative and maybe to instill pride in Las Vegas locals and Americans and generate greater tourism and further growth. To avoid evaluating these details would be a disservice to the reputation and history of Las Vegas.

To best demonstrate how each factor impacted Las Vegas, this dissertation is organized chronologically. This is not all that dissimilar to previous studies, as a limited number provided comprehensive histories using linear timelines, but without highlighting which significant events or figures were most responsible for the city's development. Instead, these accounts merely recognized the varied elements and achievements in the order they occurred as the city continued to transform. Because these city history books were useful in depicting the various unexpected turning points and unique figures and events that made Las Vegas, this research was not conducted to discount their validity in any way, shape, or form. In fact, these books were valuable in underscoring why the story of Las Vegas is so fascinating, and arguing otherwise would have been counter to the purpose of this research project.

Moreover, the collection of mob-themed histories also added flair to the already intriguing story of the rapid growth in size and popularity, and perhaps, notoriety, of this world-famous city. After all, it was this same forceful magnetism that inspired so many big-name

entertainers and government officials, as well as tourists to visit Las Vegas. Similarly, the undeniable presence of other relevant factors in cultural histories of other subjects, like sports, entertainment, military, casinos, resorts, or government, demonstrated the impression the city made on the nation and the world. This project was an addition to the existing historiography to build upon the city's history which was widely known, due to its charm, even before such scholarship emerged. For that reason, these powerful stories found in many secondary sources were an essential part of this project.

To expand on the historiography, then, and to also explain how the Hoover Dam, and not the mob, built the city, an examination of the primary sources, like newspapers and journals describing significant events, was an essential part of this endeavor. These events included a variety of newsworthy occurrences in and around the valley. The challenges recognized by the government and locals that the Colorado River presented was a major early concern. Federal officials, including Presidents, visited the area to deal with such concerns. There were stories covering the major decisions that led to the decision to build the Hoover Dam and the city to house its laborers. There were even stories on how these workers found entertainment. That included even more coverage on the new resorts and casinos where the mob did make an impact. Subsequent articles also discussed incoming military units and airports, entertainers, sporting events, resort developers, and further government intervention.

Other archived primary sources were examined, too. That included Presidential letters and speeches, and local personal historical collections. Museum archives also contained items with valuable information. Additionally, landmark documentation was reviewed to uncover telling facts and figures about Las Vegas and its surrounding areas. Ongoing Hoover Dam

project official histories were also pertinent in this research. These items were instrumental in following each new development in the city.

The information in these primary and secondary sources then had to be organized in such a way that this project would differ from previous Las Vegas city histories. Again, it was necessary to keep the narrative in the form of a chronology to explain how each factor led to the initial sight selection, the need for the construction of the Hoover Dam, and the resulting events that created modern Las Vegas. This also consisted of an examination of the major crime figures to make the argument against the existing mob-centric narratives as they entered and left the scene. Every facet of the contributing pieces of the city's history had to be evaluated to uncover their level of impact. Falling short of that, the significance of the Hoover Dam could not be fully represented.

Chapter One – Early Inhabitants, Explorers and Settlers

Throughout the long history of the area that would become Las Vegas, water was almost always central to its allure as an inhabitation. Long before the residents of Southern Nevada lived in constant fear of flooding by the wild Colorado River, the region that would become Las Vegas was home to its earliest recorded inhabitants as far back as 11,000 B.C.⁷⁸ These earliest inhabitants, during the terminal Pleistocene, or the waning years of the Ice Age, were known as the Paleo-Indians.⁷⁹ They survived into the next age, the Holocene, but vanished due to drought when climatic conditions deteriorated from 5500 B.C. to 3000 B.C.⁸⁰ The Archaics lived in the valley beginning in 2500 B.C.⁸¹ The Anasazi were next beginning in 300 B.C., followed by the Paiutes who began leaving evidence of their residence in the area at least eight hundred years ago.⁸² Then, in 1829, Mexican merchants from New Mexico made the first modern visit to the valley where Las Vegas would occupy.⁸³ American explorers, the Mormons, and silver and gold strikes all contributed to getting Las Vegas on the map literally and figuratively. The common thread among these separate occupations was water.⁸⁴

Evidence consistent with this idea was left behind by the area's original inhabitants. A collection maintained by the Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum includes artifacts that demonstrate this habitation. This assortment of artifacts consists of a wide range of items that signaled human activity in the region where the Hoover Dam would eventually be

⁷⁸ Barbara Land and Myrick Land, *A Short History of Las Vegas*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 4.; Thomas Ainlay, Jr. and Judy Gabaldon, *Las Vegas: The Fabulous First Century*, (San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 12.

⁷⁹ Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.; David Meltzer, *First Peoples in a New World: Colonizing Ice Age America*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 16, 94, and 305.

⁸⁰ Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.; Meltzer, 305.

⁸¹ Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.; Meltzer, 305.

⁸² Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 2.; Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.

⁸³ Moehring and Green, 2.

⁸⁴ Moehring and Green, 2.

built. The museum dated these artifacts as far back as 10,000 B.C. The artifacts demonstrate a dependence on the water found in the region. This is understandable, considering the location and lack of water elsewhere in the surrounding areas.

The Paleo-Indians, the inhabitants responsible for the earliest of these artifacts, were foragers rather than farmers, but still needed water.⁸⁵ According to behavioral ecology models, which attempt to explain risk evaluation and habitat selection, foragers typically resorted to farming only when the returns were greater than that of foraging.⁸⁶ Moreover, farming investments increased as a response to diminishing foraging opportunities.⁸⁷ The Paleo-Indians survived hunting bison and woolly mammoths, which were the staples of their diet.⁸⁸ These animals either became extinct or disappeared due to either overhunting or to an increasingly more arid climate.⁸⁹ As a result, the early inhabitants likely attempted to invest more in farming. However, the climate became too arid for that, so eventually the Paleo-Indians disappeared from the valley, leaving behind only traces of their existence.⁹⁰

Items in the artifact collection include a mix of tools, pottery, artwork, and jewelry. While several of these items are just fragments, they are still clearly examples of at least a piece of an item that was made with human hands. A sandstone hatch cover fragment signaled that these people either stored items in an area requiring a hatch or it covered an egress of some type.⁹¹ The Paleo-Indians lived in shoreline caves and perhaps used such a hatch cover to store

⁸⁵ Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.

⁸⁶ Barbara Roth and Maxine McBrinn, *Late Holocene Research on Foragers and Farmers in the Desert West*, (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2016), 215 and 216.

⁸⁷ Roth and McBrinn, 215 and 216.

⁸⁸ Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.

⁸⁹ Roth and McBrinn, 215 and 216.

⁹⁰ Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.

⁹¹ Andy Cattoir, *Hatch Cover Fragment*, Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850, Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum, Accessed June 1, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#15025>.

food or something else of value.⁹² Interestingly, many pieces in the collection convey more information about the humans involved than just their mere presence in the region. (See Figures 1 and 2.)⁹³

Many of them were used in or reflected some association with water. This was meaningful in that such evidence alluded to a connection between the activity and the water. In other words, and maybe not very surprisingly, the water seemed to be significant in the lives of these inhabitants. Shell pendants and Olivella shells, used as beads in jewelry, are prominent in the artifact collection. These were undoubtedly worn because of their beauty, but also because of their value, as shells were used as currency. Even though these shells may have been transplanted to the region in the latter part of the prehistoric era, they seemed to represent an affinity for such water-based treasures by those adorned with the jewelry

Somewhat ironically, archaeologists found these particular artifacts near the region that is now Lake Mead, a lake created by the Hoover Dam. This was not exactly where the heart of Las Vegas would be, but certainly close enough that the inhabitants spent ample time in the valley that would contain the future city. This symbiotic relationship in this region between man and the water grew out of necessity, especially in this vast desert area, much like the city, itself, grew where it did. These early humans had little choice but to rely on the water for survival under the harsh desert conditions. Finding water elsewhere would have meant traveling hundreds of miles in just about any direction, so it only made sense to remain in this location.

Some of the artifacts in the museum's collection are pieces of artwork or possibly clothing that establish human activity within the region. An incised stone, made from red

⁹² Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.

⁹³ Cattoir, *Hatch Cover Fragment*.

sandstone, engraved with a star-like shape is an example of early inhabitant art.⁹⁴ Magnesium silicate beads, perhaps used for clothing or jewelry, represents another piece from the collection that highlights a probable sensibility for crude fashion.⁹⁵ Magnesium would later be important in the growth of Las Vegas through its connections to military defense due to its uses in firebombing.⁹⁶ For these people, though, it was just perhaps another nod to their sense of style, or at least another way for them to define their culture.

A painted wood fragment is another artifact in the collection that similarly conveys their efforts to capture and share their values. This particular fragment consists of two portions of mostly red separated by blank column. Although not directly identified by the Virtual Museum as a fish, the artwork had all the characteristics of one with the larger portion of red containing a darker circle as an eye and an open mouth with possibly teeth showing. The smaller red portion seems to be cut off where a tail most likely once was. This rendering of what is most likely a fish combines the inhabitants' value-sharing objectives with that of their association with the water. This further demonstrates their recognition of the significance of water in their lives and the necessity of having access to it.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Andy Cattoir, *Incised Stone*, Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850, Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum, Accessed June 1, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#3901B>.

⁹⁵ Andy Cattoir, *Magnesium Silicate Beads*, Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850, Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum, Accessed June 1, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#3332>.

⁹⁶ Moehring and Green, 101.

⁹⁷ Andy Cattoir, *Painted Wood Fragment*, Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850, Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum, Accessed June 1, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#3356>.



Figure 1 - Painted Wood Fragment⁹⁸

Overall, though, these artifacts are invaluable in that they provide a glimpse into the lives of the earliest inhabitants of the area that would be Las Vegas. This is important for two reasons: first, the artifacts are proof of a human presence in the valley, and, second, the artifacts convey why these inhabitants chose to live in this area. This presence was the first inhabitation and started the timeline that would endure to modernity. The first inhabitants survived until the climate became increasingly arid and uninhabitable.⁹⁹ By 2500 B.C., the behavioral ancestors of the Paiutes, referred to as the Archaics appeared.¹⁰⁰

Some of the artifacts in the collection may have been left by this group. A milling stone, for instance, made from coarse volcanic rock, used for grinding corn into paste or flour for cooking, demonstrated daily activities were conducted in the area.¹⁰¹ The Archaics used bedrock mortars, similar to such a milling stone, to grind mesquite pods.¹⁰² They survived on a combination of foraging and farming.¹⁰³ They hunted deer, sheep, jackrabbits, tortoises, and

⁹⁸ Cattoir, *Painted Wood Fragment*.

⁹⁹ Thomas Ainlay, Jr. and Judy Gabaldon, *Las Vegas: The Fabulous First Century*, (San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing. 2003), 12.

¹⁰⁰ Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.

¹⁰¹ Andy Cattoir, *Milling Stone or Metate*, Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850, Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum, Accessed June 1, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#3481>.

¹⁰² Roth and McBrinn, 220.

¹⁰³ Roth and McBrinn, 215.

even rodents and reptiles.¹⁰⁴ They also lived on agave, mesquite, maize, cactus, squash, pumpkins, spinach, and wolfberries.¹⁰⁵ The Archaics placed some berries and cactus fruits on the surfaces of rocks positioned together in ring formations to dry.¹⁰⁶ The resulting rock rings were found much later throughout the valley.¹⁰⁷ The Archaics also used roasting pits to prepare their food which were also found much later in the bases of nearby mountains.¹⁰⁸ These pits were used to cook some plants including agave and animals.¹⁰⁹

Along with similar roasting pits, some of the artifacts in the Lake Mead collection, including seashells, may also represent the next verifiable presence in the region by the Anasazi beginning around 300 B.C.¹¹⁰ Archaeologists recorded petroglyphs in the Red Rock Canyon, as well as Gypsum Cave to the east and Tule Springs to the northwest.¹¹¹ The petroglyphs at Red Rock Canyon, which were basically examples of rock art on the face of a rock cliff-side, were more than eight hundred years old.¹¹² According to archaeologists, prehistoric peoples recorded this rock art to signify the sun's movement, to retain maps of springs and villages, and to identify animals suitable for hunting.¹¹³ Such petroglyphs are not unique to the Anasazi, as other Native American art was also found throughout the United States.¹¹⁴ For instance, locally, near Big Springs, which became part of the more modern Las Vegas Springs Preserve, there is also

¹⁰⁴ Roth and McBrinn, 217.

¹⁰⁵ Roth and McBrinn, 217.

¹⁰⁶ Roth and McBrinn, 219.

¹⁰⁷ Roth and McBrinn, 219.

¹⁰⁸ Roth and McBrinn, 220.

¹⁰⁹ Roth and McBrinn, 220 and 221.

¹¹⁰ Ainlay, Jr. and Gabaldon, 12.; Roth and McBrinn, 225.

¹¹¹ Moehring and Green, 2.

¹¹² Unknown Photographer, *Petroglyph Wall*. Red Rock Canyon, Accessed May 25, 2023, <https://www.redrockcanyonlv.org/petroglyph-wall-trail/>.

¹¹³ Mark Rothschild, "The Anasazi Petroglyphs of the Red Rock Canyon," Mark Rothschild, Photography, <https://www.markrothschildphoto.com/blog/2015/3/8/the-anasazi-petroglyphs-of-the-red-rock-canyon>, Accessed May 25, 2023.

¹¹⁴ Rothschild.

similar rock art evidence that the Paiutes spent the summers in the nearby mountains and winters in the valley as early as 850 years ago.¹¹⁵ Both sets of examples of artwork, and some of the early artifact collection from Lake Mead, document symbolically basic elements of both of these Native American cultures.



Figure 2 – Red Rock Canyon Anasazi Petroglyphs¹¹⁶

The Anasazi clan, known as the Virgin Anasazi due to their proximity to the Virgin River, built settlements relying on a variety of resources in the area. This region, just a few miles northeast of the Las Vegas valley, would later be referred to as the “Lost City” after Lake Mead flooded the locus in. Inhabitants of smaller, somewhat more remote, settlements extracted rare resources such as turquoise, salt, and shells like those represented in the Lake Mead artifact collection.¹¹⁷ In 1827, the first American to enter what would become Nevada, Jedediah Smith, recorded that he had seen salt caves along the Virgin River.¹¹⁸ Indeed, the Anasazi did previously mine salt from there.¹¹⁹ The Anasazi mined turquoise from three mines, one that was located in present-day Boulder City.¹²⁰ The shells had likely been transported from the Pacific

¹¹⁵ Moehring and Green, 2.; Kevin Rafferty, “The Virgin Anasazi and the Pan-Southwestern Trade System, A.D. 900-1150,” *Kiva*, Volume 56, Number 1, 1990, 5.

¹¹⁶ Rothschild, “The Anasazi Petroglyphs of the Red Rock Canyon.”

¹¹⁷ Rafferty, 5.

¹¹⁸ Land and Land, 12.

¹¹⁹ Rafferty, 9.

¹²⁰ Rafferty, 9.

coast of California to Nevada. These smaller satellite communities became necessary due to increased farming which caused a population surge in the larger settlements.¹²¹ Still, they supported the larger centralized settlements with the mined resources.¹²² The population increase later led to expansion and colonization in the Hohokam region in what would become Southern Arizona.¹²³



Figure 3 - Archaeologists Studying the Lost City¹²⁴

The larger Anasazi settlements were more reliant on horticulture and hunting and gathering.¹²⁵ The shells were used as currency to trade for food in their regional exchanges.¹²⁶ Such exchanges extended to Chaco Canyon in what became New Mexico.¹²⁷ Chaco Canyon also was a trading location in the periphery of the Toltec Empire in modern-Mexico, where the turquoise was a highly valued commodity.¹²⁸ Pochtecas, or long-range traders, conducted such trading on the periphery of the Toltec Empire, as they would into the Aztec Empire.¹²⁹

¹²¹ Rafferty, 10.; Roth and McBrinn, 232.

¹²² Rafferty, 10.

¹²³ Roth and McBrinn, 232.

¹²⁴ National Park Service, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, *The Lost City*, Accessed June 25, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/lake/learn/the-lost-city.htm>.

¹²⁵ Rafferty, 5.

¹²⁶ Rafferty, 9.

¹²⁷ Rafferty, 11.

¹²⁸ Rafferty, 14 and 16.

¹²⁹ Rafferty, 15.; Kenneth Hirth, *The Aztec Economic World: Merchants and Markets in Ancient Mesoamerica*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2016., 18.

Similarly, salt was traded along this extended route. Without water, of course, the Anasazi would have struggled to grow the necessary crops and to maintain the nourishment for hunting and gathering in those settlements.

Red Rock Canyon, a location within proximity of the Las Vegas valley, also offers some confirmation as to what the archaeologists can conclude from the petroglyphs.¹³⁰ La Madre Spring was a natural spring that the Anasazi might have used and mapped.¹³¹ The fact that the spring was in the area and likely one of the mapped springs certainly highlights the value these people put on water availability.¹³² While such value associated with water among the Anasazi and the Paiutes was fairly intuitive based on the importance of it for human life, the fact that they found the water in this region was one critical event that would have a role in the eventual founding of the city of Las Vegas.¹³³ By 1150 A.D., the Anasazi left the region, while the Paiutes remained a part of the region's activities for much longer.¹³⁴

While some speculation did endure as to the disappearance of the Anasazi, Kevin Rafferty, a Mesoamerican trade author, provides a probable cause. According to Rafferty, a series of droughts disrupted the Toltec Empire agricultural base leading to the fall of its capital, Tula, around the year 1156. This in turn triggered the collapse of the Chaco Canyon economic base. No longer having a direct trade connection to the rest of the Toltec Empire, the Lost City and the Anasazi culture collapsed. Certainly, the Anasazi population increase made this even

¹³⁰ Land and Land, 8 and 9.; Moehring and Green, 2.

¹³¹ Red Rock Canyon Website, <https://www.redrockcanyonlv.org/la-madre-spring/>, Accessed May 25, 2023.

¹³² Land and Land, 10.

¹³³ Land and Land, 10.

¹³⁴ Land and Land, 10.

more catastrophic. Ironically, the lack of water, although elsewhere in the Toltec Empire, quite possibly led to the demise of the Anasazi.¹³⁵

Much later, in April, 1598, under Felipe II, Spain set out to colonize what would later be the American Southwest. Juan de Onate founded the town of El Paso and took possession of New Mexico where he would then be the governor. Onate demanded obedience to the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church from the native Pueblo leaders. In 1767, under Carlos III, Jose de Galvez sent three ships, the *San Antonio*, the *San Carlos*, and the *San Jose*, commanded by Captain Gaspar de Portola, in an effort to beat the opportunist Russians to exploit what the Spanish called Alta California. On that expedition, Galvez was able to establish San Diego and the Spanish capital of Alta California, Monterey.¹³⁶

The Portola expedition proved to be too expensive, so Spain looked to Galvez's replacement Maria Bucareli to open a land route that could help strengthen the coastal forces. After a lack of enthusiasm, in 1773, Bucareli relented to pressure from many Spanish authorities and appointed Juan Perez to explore Russian territorial claims along the Pacific coast, which ended up being British Columbia. Bucareli also appointed Captain Juan Bautista de Anza to open a land route from Sonora. Anza included Father Francisco Garces in his party that opened a route from Sonora to the Los Angeles Basin and then north to Monterey. Such travel opened up what would be referred to as the Old Spanish Trail. Bucareli then encouraged Garces to make

¹³⁵ Rafferty, 16.; Arizona Museum of Natural History, *The Hohokam*, Accessed April 3, 2024, <https://www.arizonamuseumofnaturalhistory.org/plan-a-visit/mesa-grande/the-hohokam>.

¹³⁶ David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America: The Brief Edition*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 57-58, 180-182.

a trip from Santa Fe to Monterey which inadvertently led to the first encounter with Native Americans local to what would become the Las Vegas valley.¹³⁷



Figure 4 - Old Spanish Trails Map¹³⁸

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Native American tribe that would eventually be referred to as the Las Vegas Paiutes made contact with frontiersmen and Spanish merchants as they travelled up and down the Old Spanish Trail.¹³⁹ For those intrepid pioneers and traders, these ventures into the wild unknown territories depended on the water provided by the springs along the trail. At first, Native American contact seemed to be friendly. Garces' 1776 interactions with tribes aware of, and likely associated with, the Las Vegas Paiutes, were cordial.¹⁴⁰ However, a half century later, a trend of hostility emerged among the Native Americans. For example, on one of Jediah Smith's excursions, Mojaves killed ten of his

¹³⁷ Weber, 184-187.

¹³⁸ Weber, 154.

¹³⁹ Moehring and Green, 2.

¹⁴⁰ Logan Hebner and Michael Plyler, *Southern Paiute: A Portrait*, (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2010), 148.

men.¹⁴¹ About that same time, another exploration team had issues of their own according to James Pattie, whose diary described how they lost three men treading on Native American territory in search of wild game.¹⁴² This growing hostility might have been due to a perceived threat among the Native Americans that outsiders were depleting their water sources.

The first recorded contact occurred when Garces, on his trek for Bucareli, covered the trail marching southwest along the Colorado River in July of 1776. His objectives included determining which Native American tribes might be good candidates for Christian conversion, as well as gathering whatever information might be useful in future travels. On July 3rd, the day before the Americans declared their independence, Garces made note of his arrival at Moqui, where he saw a “very copious spring of water,” and met the Yabipais. The next two days, they fed him, and they discussed other tribes in the area, explaining which tribe was friendly or not. During this discussion, mention was made of the Paiutes by the Yabipais “calling them Payuchas.” Garces likely had a good impression of the Paiutes, as he recorded, “so many as I enumerate in this Diary...have manifested desires to receive the catechism.” Because conversion was a large part of his mission, such an attitude would have been agreeable to him. Given their mention during the discussions, then, the Paiutes likely lived in the same areas taking advantage of the springs, too.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ A.D. Hopkins, “John C. Fremont” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, (Las Vegas, February 7, 1999), Accessed June 22, 2023, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/john-c-fremont/>.

¹⁴² James Ohio Pattie, *The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie of Kentucky*, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc, 1966), 96; A.L. Kroeber, Clifton Kroeber, R.C. Euler, and A.H. Schroeder, “The Route of James O. Pattie on the Colorado in 1826: A Reappraisal by A.L. Kroeber,” *Arizona and the West*, Volume 6, Number 2, (Summer, 1964), 96 and 97.

¹⁴³ Francisco Garces, *On the Trail of a Spanish Pioneer: The Diary and Itinerary of Francisco Garces in His Travels Through Sonora, Arizona, and California 1775-1776*, Translated by Elliott Coues, (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1900), 388, 404-406, and 500.

It was not until fifty years later that further interaction with the Paiute tribe would occur near the valley that would be Las Vegas. On August 22nd, 1826, Smith took fifteen men with him “for the purpose of exploring the Country” southwest from Great Salt Lake.¹⁴⁴ He traversed southwestward along what he called the Adams River which would reach the Colorado River, somewhere near the future southeastern corner of what would be Nevada.¹⁴⁵ In this area, he met with the “Pa Ulches,” or Paiutes, and noted their typical crops.¹⁴⁶ He also noted the water along the way was “of a muddy cast,” and was “a little brackish,” indicating that he was on the lookout for good places for water for future journeys.¹⁴⁷ On his next trip, in the summer of 1827, he travelled past the Colorado River crossing again, but this time lost half his party to the Mojaves.¹⁴⁸ It was possible that the water resources were becoming more and more important as populations grew and more visitors were arriving on the scene.

Pattie also explored the unknown territory in March, 1826 and had his own difficulties with hostile Native Americans. Pattie recorded that on March 23rd he ran into “Shuena Indians.”¹⁴⁹ Historian, A.L. Kroeber concludes that these were actually Paiutes.¹⁵⁰ Kroeber also postulates that on the seven days leading up to this unfriendly meeting Pattie had marched up Black Canyon to where Hoover Dam would later stand.¹⁵¹ It was near this area, then, that Pattie detached three men to find beavers in a small stream.¹⁵² A Native American, most likely then a

¹⁴⁴ Jedediah Smith and C. Hart Merriam, “Earliest Crossing of the Deserts of Utah and Nevada to Southern California: Route of Jedediah S. Smith in 1826,” *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Volume 12, Number 3, (Berkeley, October, 1923), 234.

¹⁴⁵ Smith and Merriam, 234.

¹⁴⁶ Smith and Merriam, 234.

¹⁴⁷ Smith and Merriam, 234.

¹⁴⁸ John Parish, “Jedediah Strong Smith-Pathfinder,” *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California*, Volume 13, Number 3, (Berkeley, 1926), 269.

¹⁴⁹ Pattie, 129.

¹⁵⁰ Pattie, 129.

¹⁵¹ Kroeber, Kroeber, Euler, and Schreoder, 129.

¹⁵² Pattie, 96.

Paiute, killed these three men. It was quite possible that this was because Pattie and his men presented a threat to their waters and associated wildlife. The fact that the three men were found in “the same fashion which is used in roasting beaver” hinted at such a possibility.¹⁵³ Much later, it would be a bit ironic that these dam-building creatures had a small role in explaining the rise of Las Vegas at the very site where the Hoover Dam would be built.

Despite the Native Americans’ apparent rising concerns, the region was still essentially uncharted territory for non-natives in 1826. Although these early explorers made contact with the Native Americans and passed through what would be the location of the Hoover Dam, no explorers had found the future Las Vegas valley. This might not have been pure coincidence, given the value of the springs in the valley. It was quite possible that the Native Americans withheld this location from the explorers when providing helpful information. Either way, it was inevitable that Euro-American explorers would find the lush valley.

Such was the case, when in 1829, the New Mexico governor, Jose Antonio Chavez, ordered a licensed expedition into California led by Spanish-speaking Antonio Armijo. After Mexico had gained independence from Spain in 1821, Chavez recognized that Mexico should maintain trade routes with California. He must have also understood the political benefits of ordering such an effort. His May 14, 1830, letter to Mexico City officials would later identify his successful mission and confirm his cognizance of the political repercussions of such a move. And so it followed that Mexico’s independence from Spain was an early catalyst in discovering the value in the valley that would become Las Vegas.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Pattie, 97.

¹⁵⁴ LeRoy Hafen and Antonio Armijo, “Armijo’s Journal,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*. Volume 11, Number 1, (San Marino, November, 1947), 89 and 90.

Beginning on November 6th, Armijo led a caravan of sixty men and one hundred mules on a journey from Abiquiu, just north of Santa Fe, to San Gabriel Mission near Los Angeles, carrying blankets and rugs that he hoped to trade for mules.¹⁵⁵ He strayed to the south of the original trail forging a path that would be favored over the original for the next twenty years.¹⁵⁶ On December 25th, Armijo sent a scout party ahead of his main team. Many of these men, including Rafael Rivera, had been on a similar journey the year before, wandering as far as the ford of the Colorado River.¹⁵⁷ Rivera seemed to be familiar with the location where the Hoover Dam would eventually be built according to Armijo's diary.¹⁵⁸

Armijo's expedition stopped by the Colorado River on New Year's Eve, but noticed one of those from the scout party, Rivera, was missing from the returned scout detachment.¹⁵⁹ On January 4th, 1830, Armijo sent a reconnaissance party to look for him starting at the Las Vegas Wash, which entered the Colorado River a little above where Hoover Dam is now located.¹⁶⁰ They only found him when he returned to their camp on January 7th, claiming he located what was most likely a Paiute and Mojave village.¹⁶¹ Rivera had been in the Las Vegas Valley, and was one of the first recorded non-natives to do so.¹⁶² He explored the dangerous, unexplored valley over the course of fourteen days, and his courageous trip would later be commemorated by a statue of him in East Las Vegas.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁵ Aztec Ruins, National Monument New Mexico Website, Antonio Armijo, <https://www.nps.gov/azru/learn/historyculture/antonio-armijo.htm>, Accessed May 26, 2023.

¹⁵⁶ Joseph Sanchez, *Explorers, Traders and Slavers: Forging the Old Spanish Trail, 1678-1850*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1997), 104.

¹⁵⁷ Hafen and Armijo, 98.

¹⁵⁸ Hafen and Armijo, 98.

¹⁵⁹ Sanchez, 104.

¹⁶⁰ Hafen and Armijo, 98.

¹⁶¹ Sanchez, 104.

¹⁶² Hopkins.

¹⁶³ Hopkins.

The Spaniards referred to this oasis with springs as “Las Vegas,” which was Spanish for “the meadows.”¹⁶⁴ The Spanish chose “vegas,” which referred to fertile or marshy plains, rather than the word “llanos,” which referred to “dry and sterile plains.”¹⁶⁵ The significance of the water in the valley was clear. By 1844, the name Las Vegas began appearing on Spanish maps because of the significance of the springs in the area.¹⁶⁶ By January 9, 1830, however, Armijo’s expedition moved on, most likely not ever entering what would become Las Vegas, with the exception of Rivera.¹⁶⁷ Had Armijo visited the large spring in the valley Rivera explored, he most certainly would have made note of it in his diary, as he made notes of access to water throughout his journey.¹⁶⁸ Armijo also stopped at another spring, Cottonwood Spring, seventeen miles away.¹⁶⁹

The contact with the Native Americans in and around the valley by Garces, Smith, and Rivera demonstrated the importance of the valley springs. It reinforced the idea that the Native Americans were willing to set up villages and even fight to keep their access to the water. The fact that Rivera, partially following in the footsteps of the other two non-natives, found the valley, and that the valley became a valued point on Spanish-language maps, highlighted the significance of the site to the Mexicans. Certainly they wanted to know where hostile forces might be, but they also needed to know where water might be found. One interesting consequence of the discovery of this lush area soon materialized.

¹⁶⁴ Land and Land, 12.

¹⁶⁵ John Fremont, *Narrative of an Exploration of the Country Lying between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 290.

¹⁶⁶ Land and Land, 13.

¹⁶⁷ Hafen and Armijo, 98.

¹⁶⁸ Hafen and Armijo, 98.

¹⁶⁹ Sanchez, 106.

From 1830-1831, another branch of the trail was created south of where Armijo trekked, and it indirectly explained why the valley that would become Las Vegas was such an attraction for development. Frontiersmen, George Yount and William Wolfskill, selected a route that included a stop in Needles, California.¹⁷⁰ This route was the route of choice for many travelers, but not due to anything Needles had to offer. In fact, there was nothing special about Needles, and that was exactly what made the route popular. Travelers understood that the grass and water available in the Las Vegas valley attracted horse thieves and Native American slave traders and consequently posed a danger.¹⁷¹

The next major step in the evolution of Las Vegas had a less tenuous feeling to it than everything before. John Fremont was the man responsible for this. He was a lieutenant in the Army Topographical Corps, commissioned by the U.S. Federal Government to map the Pacific Northwest. Among the men on his team was none other than “Kit” Carson, one of the most accomplished American frontiersmen. Although this expedition included much more than Fremont’s 1844 stop in Las Vegas, this stop was an essential part of Las Vegas development. It marked the first American official recognition of the valley. As Fremont’s party moved eastward along the Old Spanish Trail, he camped in Las Vegas and marked it on the American map for the first time.¹⁷²

On May 2nd, Fremont completed a horseback ride of twelve miles, “descending to a small valley plain.”¹⁷³ He noted that his team found “Digger tracks... but no Indians were

¹⁷⁰ Michael Green, “A Prehistory of Vegas Visits,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, (Las Vegas, March 11, 2023).; Charles Camp, “The Chronicles of George C. Yount: California Pioneer of 1826,” *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Volume 2, Number 1, (Berkeley, April, 1923), 37.

¹⁷¹ Moehring and Green, 2.

¹⁷² A.D. Hopkins, “John C. Fremont” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, (Las Vegas, February 7, 1999), Accessed June 22, 2023, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/john-c-fremont/>.

¹⁷³ Fremont, 290.

visible.” Digger was another name for the Paiutes.¹⁷⁴ The next day included an 18-mile journey to the northeast.¹⁷⁵ Fremont made a May 3rd entry in his journal that day recording that they “encamped in the midst of another very large basin, at a camping ground called las [sic] Vegas.”¹⁷⁶ He commented on “[t]wo narrow streams” that “gush suddenly, with a quick current, from two singularly large springs.”¹⁷⁷ He continued, indicating that the “water is good, but rather too warm,” but that it “afforded a delightful bathing place.”¹⁷⁸ His party left early the next day, but what a discovery they had made!¹⁷⁹ The site he had visited would later be part of the Las Vegas Springs Preserve.¹⁸⁰

Like the explorers before him, Fremont learned, in the next couple days, the significance of the water in the valley he put on the map as well as the hostile nature of the Paiutes trying to protect their water.¹⁸¹ An entry in his journal just after leaving Las Vegas specified that the next part of the journey included a ride “between 50 and 60 miles without a drop of water.”¹⁸² Fremont commented on the resulting “intolerable thirst while journeying over the hot yellow sands of this elevated country.”¹⁸³ Had his party been going the opposite direction, making it to Las Vegas and its springs would have been a life-saving event. Perhaps, nobody knew that more than the Paiutes who were a somewhat migratory tribe, moving back and forth between the mountains and the valleys depending on the seasons.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁴ Garces, 405.

¹⁷⁵ Fremont, 290.

¹⁷⁶ Fremont, 290.

¹⁷⁷ Fremont, 290.

¹⁷⁸ Fremont, 290.

¹⁷⁹ Fremont, 290.

¹⁸⁰ Moehring and Green, 2 and 3.

¹⁸¹ Fremont, 290 and 291.

¹⁸² Fremont, 290.

¹⁸³ Fremont, 290.

¹⁸⁴ Moehring and Green, 2.

On the morning of May 5th, Fremont noticed that the Paiutes, “crowded numerously around” them. He detailed how “each man carried a quiver with 30 or 40 arrows partially drawn out” and that the arrows were “barbed with a very clear translucent stone...as hard as the diamond.” When the chief approached the camp and boasted that he had a number advantage over Fremont, the fiery Carson answered, “don’t you say that-your life’s in danger.” Carson was not one to be easily intimidated. Cooler heads prevailed, though, and Fremont “gave a fatigued horse to some of the Indians for a feast.” The Paiutes were satisfied, at least for that time, the invading party was not a threat to their resources.¹⁸⁵

The U.S. was dealing with a much greater threat that would have its own incidental implications on the growth of Las Vegas. In 1846, the U.S. declared war on Mexico, and an American victory resulted in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which gave the U.S. five-hundred thousand square miles of land.¹⁸⁶ Then, in 1850, President Millard Fillmore signed legislation creating the state of California and two new territories.¹⁸⁷ Las Vegas was in one of these, New Mexico, and the Mormons were in the other, Utah, which was governed by the Mormon leader, Brigham Young.¹⁸⁸ Young was dedicated to spreading his religion throughout America and the world.

This first trip sanctioned by Young concerning Las Vegas, albeit somewhat indirectly, began in August of 1852, when he appointed Hosea Stout as a missionary to China.¹⁸⁹ Stout moved south from what was then referred to as Great Salt Lake City through San Francisco,

¹⁸⁵ Fremont, 291 and 292.

¹⁸⁶ Moehring and Green, 4.

¹⁸⁷ Moehring and Green, 4.

¹⁸⁸ Moehring and Green, 4.

¹⁸⁹ R. Lanier Britsch, “Church Beginnings in China.” *Brigham Young University Studies*, Volume 10, Number 2, (Winter, 1970), 161 and 162.

where he boarded a ship for China.¹⁹⁰ Despite his focus being on his mission in China, he wrote detailed notes throughout his entire journey. The Stout party, with its fourteen wagons, followed Fremont's route, which, of course, included Las Vegas, although it was most likely not a predetermined stop.¹⁹¹ However, somewhat serendipitously for the future of Las Vegas, Stout soon learned what a vital stop Las Vegas could be on a long trip such as this one.¹⁹² As the party pushed on in the direction of Las Vegas, the chaplain of his party, Nathaniel Jones, fell ill.¹⁹³ This left Stout with little choice but to stay in Las Vegas until he recovered.¹⁹⁴ When the wagon train arrived in Las Vegas on November 18th, Stout held in place hoping for Jones to recover.¹⁹⁵ It was probable that the party knew this valley to be a good place to reenergize based on Fremont's recorded experiences.¹⁹⁶

Meanwhile, Stout took stock of the valley for himself, and immediately marveled at what he saw. He noticed the valley had "the first stream, since leaving the basin, which could be used for irrigation."¹⁹⁷ He also noted that the soil was "fertile," but he doubted there was enough timber for a "settlement large enough to be secure against the Indians."¹⁹⁸ Lastly, he indicated that Las Vegas was "a most desirable spot where the weary traveler can sit down in calm and rest himself."¹⁹⁹ He may have attributed that to the "spring of boiling pure water, twenty feet wide and two feet deep" located in the valley.²⁰⁰ The stop there worked wonders, as Jones recovered

¹⁹⁰ Wayne Stout, *Hosea Stout: Utah's Pioneer Statesman*, (Salt Lake City, 1953), 158, 161, and 165.

¹⁹¹ Land and Land, 17.; Britsch, 162.

¹⁹² Stout, 163.

¹⁹³ Britsch, 162.

¹⁹⁴ Britsch, 162.

¹⁹⁵ Britsch, 162.

¹⁹⁶ Britsch, 162.

¹⁹⁷ Stout, 163.

¹⁹⁸ Stout, 163.

¹⁹⁹ Stout, 163.

²⁰⁰ Stout, 163.

after a couple days, and the party continued on from Las Vegas.²⁰¹ A modern Las Vegas park would be named after Jones in a location that would be called Mountain's Edge.²⁰²

Back in 1855, though, Young initiated another mission that would involve Las Vegas directly.²⁰³ The plan seemed to be almost a direct result of Stout's notes. The objective of the mission was that William Bringhurst, and thirty others working for him, would "teach those wild Piede Indians [a branch of the Paiutes] the blessings of peace and industry, and honesty, and kindred principles."²⁰⁴ Young must have recognized that Las Vegas was the bountiful valley Stout made it out to be, but also that the Piedades had to be addressed in order for a settlement to take hold.²⁰⁵ Young and Bringhurst were certainly willing to give it their best effort. Naturally, this mission required an interpreter to facilitate direct communication with the Piedades.²⁰⁶ George Bean met with Young to secure a spot as one of the thirty under Bringhurst as the interpreter.²⁰⁷ Young was pleased with Bean, and "blessed" him "setting him apart to his Mission."²⁰⁸ The mission began in May, and by June 15th, the Mormons reached their destination.²⁰⁹ Bean recorded the events of this mission in detail.

Much like Fremont recorded, although this time in the opposite direction, the drive pushed for "55 miles without water." Bean was relieved after the thirty or more hours when he "reached the water at last." He was surprised, though, to find "no Natives at the Las Vegas

²⁰¹ Britsch, 162.

²⁰² Mosier, Jeff, "Nathaniel Jones Park Steeped in Southwest Valley History," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, (Las Vegas, October 1, 2012), Accessed June 23, 2023, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/uncategorized/nathaniel-jones-park-steeped-in-southwest-valley-history/>.

²⁰³ Flora Diana Bean Horne, *Autobiography of George Washington Bean: A Utah Pioneer of 1847 and His Family Records*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1945), 114 and 115.

²⁰⁴ Horne, 115.

²⁰⁵ Albert Winkler, "The Circleville Massacre: A Brutal Incident in Utah's Black Hawk War," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Volume 55, Number 1, (Salt Lake City, 1987), 7.

²⁰⁶ Horne, 117.

²⁰⁷ Horne, 115-117.

²⁰⁸ Horne, 115.

²⁰⁹ Horne, 117-119.

Springs.” The Native Americans were not hostile this time, and, in fact, “were very shy at first.” As the Bringhurst group began planting crops, “good kind treatment won them over in time,” and the Mormons used them for “much of...[their] labor.”²¹⁰ By July, the Mormons had produced “fine squashes and melons.”²¹¹ The Mormons baptized many of the Paiute adults, and they assisted with irrigation “and in construction of a fourteen foot wall around a space of one hundred and fifty feet square,” which was the “Mission Fort.”²¹² After finding and opening a lead mine thirty miles away, near what would become Blue Diamond, none other than a once-again healthy Nathaniel Jones took charge of it.²¹³ Interestingly, silver was left on the ground, while the lead was shipped to Salt Lake City to make tools and bullets.²¹⁴

As winter approached, all but seventeen Mormons left to return in the spring.²¹⁵ Bean noted that there were “probably one thousand Indians within sixty miles,” but he remained cautiously confident that they were safe.²¹⁶ He embraced the “mildness of the climate and warmth of the water” when he took a bath in the springs on January 1st, 1856.²¹⁷ With the settlement taking on a more permanent character as a stop on the way to California, the Mormons established a post office with the name “Bringhurst” after the mission leader, as Las Vegas, New Mexico already existed.²¹⁸ In late February, Bean went back to Utah to report on his findings.²¹⁹ He returned to Las Vegas, on June 1st, to a dispute between Bringhurst and the

²¹⁰ Horne, 119.

²¹¹ Horne, 120.

²¹² Horne, 120.

²¹³ Horne, 120.; Moehring and Green, 5.

²¹⁴ Horne, 120 and 121.

²¹⁵ Horne, 122.

²¹⁶ Horne, 122.

²¹⁷ Horne, 123.

²¹⁸ Andrew Jensen, “History of Las Vegas Mission,” *Nevada State Historical Society Papers 1925-1926*, Nevada Historical Society, 207.

²¹⁹ Horne, 123.

more liberal Jones.²²⁰ This impeded the success of the mission, as the “bad spirit affected the Natives.”²²¹ The Paiutes, hungry due to a drought, believed they were entitled to the crops, and they began to perform routine raids on the grain fields for nourishment.²²²

Unfortunately for the Mormons, while much progress had been made, their opposing forces threatened the efficacy of the mission. Young asked “many questions,” but, by late 1856, he was convinced that “the spirit of the Mission was broken and he thought best to abandon it.” Before leaving, though, he ordered the group to gather “all the lead possible” to bring back to Salt Lake City. Although Bean left, his brother, James, stayed there to look after his property.²²³ Along with Bean’s brother, two other Mormons brothers, Albert and William Knapp stayed to run a general store for the next few years.²²⁴ While the mission was over, the settlement was not. Two separate nearby precious metal rushes meant the valley would be the focal point for the two remote mining sites.²²⁵ In 1861, prospectors caught on to the silver at Blue Diamond, as one newspaper, *The Deseret News*, reported on April 3rd that “mines of silver recently discovered on the Los Vegas...are attracting considerable attention.”²²⁶ Also, a large gold strike was made in El Dorado Canyon near the future site of the Hoover Dam.²²⁷ One of the gold miners served by the Knapp brothers was an El Dorado Canyon miner named Octavius Decatur Gass.²²⁸

Acquiring the rights to the Old Mormon Fort, Gass would soon usher in the next era of this

²²⁰ Horne, 124.

²²¹ Horne, 123.

²²² Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 2.; Moehring and Green, 5.

²²³ Horne, 126.

²²⁴ Moehring and Green, 5.

²²⁵ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 2.

²²⁶ Jensen, 281.; Unknown Author, “The Los Vegas Silver Mines,” *The Deseret News*, April 3, 1861, Accessed March 25, 2024, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=Aul-kAQHnToC&dat=18610403&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.>, 2.

²²⁷ Jensen, 281.; Unknown Author, “The Los Vegas Silver Mines,” 2.

²²⁸ Moehring and Green, 5.

valley.²²⁹ He called the place, “Los Vegas,” due, again, to the existence of Las Vegas, New Mexico.²³⁰

Up until Gass’s arrival on the scene, though, the main factor in the early development of Las Vegas was water. Had the springs not existed in the valley, it would have been all but a certainty that travelers would have passed right through without a second thought. The Native Americans might have migrated down off the mountains in the winter, but nothing else would have attracted them to this particular valley. The Mormons would have had no practical reason for stopping there or for selecting it as the headquarters for Young’s mission. The mining camps would have struggled without the supplies and food in the centrally located valley. However, the springs were in this remote valley, and, accordingly, this revitalizing location would transform into a railroad town, and later a city as men found new ways to take advantage of the water.

²²⁹ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 3.

²³⁰ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 3.

Chapter Two – Establishment of the Town

In the early 1860s, as the rest of the nation was dealing with the ravages of the American Civil War, Las Vegas was on the precipice of becoming a town. It still did not have the official name of Las Vegas at that time, but its earliest residents began arriving. As water remained a vital resource, plans to make the area a railroad stop began to take shape. A railroad stop meant an influx of residents to keep the train running and to cater to the passengers. This valley, hardly visited in the earliest days of the U.S. republic, was still barely a point on the map, fluctuating from state to state, but its worth was about to multiply exponentially in the eyes of those who mattered at the federal level.

In the early 1860s, however, it remained a small resupply point for those seeking their fortunes in gold. The nearby Eldorado Canyon district was filled with claim jumping and murder as these fortune hunters arrived after the recent gold strike.²³¹ In 1861, the federal government, reacting to similar threats, sent troops to protect the Overland Mail Route from Salt Lake City to Southern California.²³² Three companies of cavalry and one of infantry, all made up of mostly California volunteers, set up an encampment called Fort Baker.²³³ Fort Baker was the general Las Vegas area.²³⁴ Colonel James Carleton commanded these troops that General George McClellan sent to take over Arizona the next year.²³⁵ These troops investigated Eldorado

²³¹ Glenn Dumke, "Mission Station to Mining Town: Early Las Vegas," *Pacific Historical Review*, Volume 22, Number 3, 1953, 260.

²³² Leo Kirby, "A Civil War Episode in California – Arizona History," *Arizoniana*, Volume 2, Number 1, Spring, 1961, 21.; Clarence Clendenen, "General James Henry Carleton," *New Mexico Historical Review*, Volume 30, Number 1, January 1, 1955, 35.

²³³ Dumke, 259.

²³⁴ National Archives, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Mormon Fort*, Clark County, Nevada, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/63816428>.

²³⁵ Kirby, 21.

Canyon as their interest grew in the mining opportunities.²³⁶ Certainly federal officials began taking notice of the area, even if it was in small measure.

One civilian interested in finding gold was Octavius Decatur Gass. He had travelled from his home in Ohio to San Francisco in the early 1850s seeking his fortune in gold.²³⁷ Previously, he studied civil engineering and Spanish at Oberlin College.²³⁸ Next, he went to Los Angeles and tapped into the tin mines.²³⁹ Gass then came to the Las Vegas valley to seek his fortune in gold in 1863.²⁴⁰ By this time, Congress had created the Arizona territory which took what would later be Southern Nevada from the New Mexico territory.²⁴¹ Arriving in Eldorado Canyon, Gass spent the next few years obtaining and working the land until he controlled about a thousand acres in the region.²⁴²

Taking over the deserted Mormon fort and restoring old buildings, he named the place “Los Vegas Rancho.”²⁴³ With experience in irrigation and his civil engineering background, he set up irrigation works on the ranch.²⁴⁴ He also hired Paiutes to harvest the grains, vegetables, and fruits.²⁴⁵ As the ranch developed, wagon trains soon followed, declaring the ranch as the best stop on the route.²⁴⁶ Gass also participated and excelled in the Arizona legislature.²⁴⁷ Being fluent in Spanish and several Paiute dialects, he worked with diverse groups and gained the

²³⁶ Dumke, 259.

²³⁷ Barbara Land and Myrick Land, *A Short History of Las Vegas*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 27.

²³⁸ Ralph Roske and Michael Green, “Octavius Decatur Gass: Pah-Ute County Pioneer.” *The Journal of Arizona History*, Volume 29, Number 4, (Winter, 1988), 371 and 372.

²³⁹ Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 5.

²⁴⁰ Moehring and Green, 5.

²⁴¹ Moehring and Green, 5.

²⁴² Moehring and Green, 5.

²⁴³ Land and Land, 27.

²⁴⁴ Land and Land, 27.

²⁴⁵ Land and Land, 27 and 28.

²⁴⁶ Land and Land, 27 and 28.

²⁴⁷ Land and Land, 28.

admiration of many.²⁴⁸ However, following the creation of the state of Nevada in 1864, and a subsequent land dispute settled by 1872, the ranch became part of Lincoln County, Nevada.²⁴⁹

In September of 1872, Las Vegas still had not been officially founded as a town by that name. One newspaper, from the county seat of Lincoln, though, demonstrated both how small the population was and how the name was still subject to change. The Pioche primary elections, as reported by the local Pioche newspaper, *The Pioche Daily Record*, credited the voting in the area with one Democratic delegate and one Republican delegate. In comparison, Pioche was apportioned twenty-six delegates. The Democratic Convention still referred to the area as “Los Vegas,” while the Republican Convention used “Las Vegas.” While no official change had been made, the name variations revealed how fledgling the area was at that time.²⁵⁰

Gass was not happy about suddenly being a Nevada resident, as he understood that losing his Arizona resident status would be a financial blow. He and others had not paid their Nevada taxes for the two previous years as the border dispute endured. He and his then former Las Vegas constituents, at least when they lived in Arizona, worked to find a solution. They decided to petition the Nevada legislature to create Las Vegas County out of the expansive Lincoln County. However, this was not to be, as Nevada, fully aware of the possible tax revenue at stake, did not allow the move.²⁵¹

Nevada then, as Gass had feared, began targeting its new citizens who lived in this new southeastern corner of Nevada for back taxes.²⁵² Gass refused to pay, as he questioned whether

²⁴⁸ Land and Land, 28.; Roske and Green, 380.

²⁴⁹ Land and Land, 30.

²⁵⁰ Unknown Author, “Primary Election,” *The Pioche Daily Record*, (Pioche, October 1, 1872), Accessed April 23, 2024, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84022048/1872-10-01/ed-1/seq-1/>, 1.

²⁵¹ Roske and Green, 383.

²⁵² Moehring and Green, 6.

his residence was in Nevada or still Arizona during the tax years that were being addressed.²⁵³ Nevertheless, he was stuck with the bill.²⁵⁴ That, combined with lawsuits for his Los Angeles tin mines, left Gass financially strapped.²⁵⁵ Gass, who had been married in 1872 and was raising six children in Las Vegas, might have begun wondering if trying to succeed economically in this remote valley was feasible.

Gass was not one to give up so easily though. Even before he was in financial trouble, the Fort Baker soldiers investigating El Dorado Canyon routinely complained that he overcharged for his fruits. Due to the remote location, though, this was not really out of the norm. The soldiers' other complaint, though, that he took their stray horses for his own use, perhaps demonstrated how determined Gass was to succeed. As early as 1868, he tried selling the ranch but to no avail. At that time, he maybe was not quite as attached to the ranch as he seemed later when his family was around making it feel more like a home. Consequently, as his debt grew, he looked for a way to keep the ranch but leverage it while also maintaining his mines in California.²⁵⁶

His first attempt to salvage the ranch and the situation was to mortgage it to his neighbor William Knapp, one of the Mormon brothers with the general store.²⁵⁷ He did so in 1874 for three thousand dollars.²⁵⁸ In 1876 he went to California to collect gold bullion to repay Knapp.²⁵⁹ He did just that the following year, and he pressed forward managing his ranch, as

²⁵³ Moehring and Green, 5 and 6.

²⁵⁴ Moehring and Green, 6.

²⁵⁵ Moehring and Green, 6.

²⁵⁶ Roske and Green, 379.

²⁵⁷ Roske and Green, 385.

²⁵⁸ Roske and Green, 385.

²⁵⁹ Roske and Green, 385.

evidenced by his personal notes in his scrapbook in the late 1870s.²⁶⁰ He kept notes on his farming tasks like “cutting corn” on October 6th, 1877 and weather events like the “first snow” on Mount “Charleston” on October 14th.²⁶¹ Interestingly, Gass recorded between both of these notes that “F.S. Dellenbaugh is the name of the man that sketched Los Vegas Rancho.”²⁶²

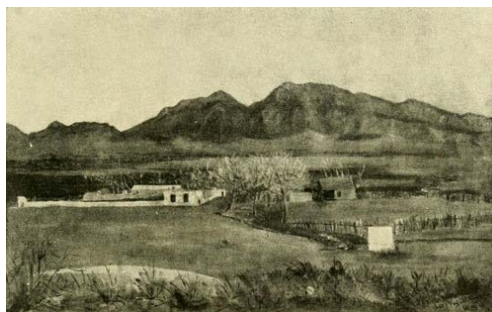


Figure 5 - Dellenbaugh Oil Sketch of Los Vegas Rancho²⁶³

Indeed, Frederick S. Dellenbaugh sketched the place possibly during his visit there in 1876. In Dellenbaugh’s 1914 book *Fremont and ’49* which followed Fremont’s journeys, he mentioned that “[t]he road Fremont went east over passes through the gap on the left” of his sketch. He recalled Las Vegas as being a “delightful oasis.” He also referred to it later as “always a central point in the vast waste of this region.” The fact that Gass made a note of the artist in the journal which he otherwise only used to record crops and weather reinforced the idea that he must have, indeed, grown attached to the ranch. Nonetheless, his dire financial circumstances still put his future with the ranch in jeopardy.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁰ UNLV Special Collections and Archives Portal, Octavius Decatur Gass, *Scrapbook of O.D. Gass, 1870*, Accessed June 15, 2023, <https://special.library.unlv.edu/ark%3A62930/d10k26r95>, 6.

²⁶¹ UNLV Special Collections and Archives Portal, Octavius Decatur Gass, 6.

²⁶² UNLV Special Collections and Archives Portal, Octavius Decatur Gass, 6.

²⁶³ Frederick Dellenbaugh, *The Romance of the Colorado River*, Project Gutenberg, 2002, Accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4316/4316-h/4316-h.htm>, 137.

²⁶⁴ Frederick Dellenbaugh, *Fremont and ’49*, (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1914), 254-255.

In 1879, he was forced to take out a loan for five thousand dollars in gold to Archibald Stewart, a successful businessman in the Lincoln County seat of Pioche.²⁶⁵ Stewart had also been a miner and a cattle rancher.²⁶⁶ He had married Helen Wiser, twenty years his junior, on April 6, 1873, having gained the approval of her parents because of his age and success.²⁶⁷ Stewart provided the loan to Gass at two-and-a-half percent interest, to be repaid within a year.²⁶⁸ This loan and marriage would be significant in the development of the city of Las Vegas.

Bad weather ruined some of Gass's crops that year, putting him in a real bind as he planned to repay the loan.²⁶⁹ On August 2, 1880, Stewart drew up another agreement when Gass could not make one of the payments.²⁷⁰ This time, Gass offered his land holdings as collateral, and was given nine months to pay back the remaining balance, which with interest amounted to six thousand, four hundred, seventy-eight dollars.²⁷¹ If Gass failed to pay the full amount by May 2, 1881, Stewart would own Gass's property.²⁷² Stewart was certainly capable of running the ranch which had included one thousand, five hundred cows.²⁷³ That, in fact, was exactly what happened, as Gass failed to pay and the shrewd Stewart took over the ranch.²⁷⁴

Unfortunately, on July 13, 1884, Archibald Stewart was shot dead.²⁷⁵ As Helen Stewart, his widow, told it a few days later, she received a note from Conrad Kiel, a fellow Ohioan who

²⁶⁵ Moehring and Green, 6.; Roske and Green, 385.

²⁶⁶ Roske and Green, 385.

²⁶⁷ Carrie Townley, "Helen J. Stewart: First Lady of Las Vegas Part 1" *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, Volume 16, Number 4, (Winter, 1973, Reno), 216.

²⁶⁸ Townley, 218.

²⁶⁹ Roske and Green, 385.

²⁷⁰ Townley, 226.

²⁷¹ Townley, 226.

²⁷² Townley, 226.

²⁷³ Meg Mueller, "Helen Stewart: First Lady of Las Vegas," *Nevada Magazine*, May-June 2020, Accessed July 5, 2023, <https://nevadamagazine.com/issue/may-june-2020/13327/>, 1.

²⁷⁴ Townley, 226.

²⁷⁵ Land and Land, 31.

had followed Gass to the region and had taken over an old Paiute experimental farm in an area that would later be North Las Vegas.²⁷⁶ He had been feuding with Archibald Stewart, as he was convinced that the businessman swindled Gass out of his ranch.²⁷⁷ Helen Stewart wrote that the note read, “Your husband is here dead. Come take him away.”²⁷⁸

Stewart “immediately rode over there, when she found the body of her husband,” and “on the opposite side of the face from which the shot had struck him, his face was broke in.”²⁷⁹ According to J.T. Moore, a longtime Pioche teacher, on July 12th, Archibald Stewart had been arguing with Schyler Henry, a young man who had worked on Stewart’s ranch and had recently quit.²⁸⁰ Moore left but discovered upon his return to the Kiel Ranch that “the difficulty had terminated and that Archy Stewart was killed.”²⁸¹ Moore spoke to those present at the Kiel Ranch and assembled his account of what happened.²⁸² He wrote that Stewart, upon his return from Eldorado Canyon, learned that Henry was at Kiel Ranch, so he armed himself and took his horse on “a circuitous route” and “came in on the north side of Kiel’s ranch.”²⁸³ A veritable wild-west gunfight ensued.

As Stewart ran toward the house where Henry was seated near the south window, Henry reached for a Spencer rifle. Stewart then fired, but missed. Henry’s rifle misfired next, and he “stepped behin[d] the door.” Stewart “placed his gun against the door and fired.” The ball went through the door “grazing Henry’s arm.” Henry reloaded his rifle and stepped out from behind

²⁷⁶ Unknown Author, “Local Intelligence,” *The Pioche Weekly Record*, (Pioche, August 2, 1884), Accessed April 23, 2024, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86091346/1884-08-02/ed-1/seq-3/>, 3.; Moehring and Green, 6.

²⁷⁷ Moehring and Green, 7.

²⁷⁸ Unknown Author, “Local Intelligence,” (Pioche, August 2, 1884), 3.

²⁷⁹ Unknown Author, “Local Intelligence,” (Pioche, August 2, 1884), 3.

²⁸⁰ Unknown Author, “Local Intelligence,” *The Pioche Weekly Record*, (Pioche, July 26, 1884), Accessed April 23, 2024, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86091346/1884-07-26/ed-1/seq-3/>, 3.; Townley, 225 and 226.

²⁸¹ Unknown Author, “Local Intelligence,” (Pioche, July 26, 1884), 3.

²⁸² Unknown Author, “Local Intelligence,” (Pioche, July 26, 1884), 3.

²⁸³ Unknown Author, “Local Intelligence,” (Pioche, July 26, 1884), 3.

the door. Both shot again. Henry got a “flesh wound through the hip, and Stewart was “shot through the chest.” They both fired again. This time with “Stewart receiving a shot in the head” and he “was instantly killed.”²⁸⁴

Moore indicated that Kiel was not involved in the affair at all.²⁸⁵ Helen Stewart indicated in a letter that Henry murdered her husband as he attempted to “defend his family’s honor.”²⁸⁶ Henry had threatened her to pay him off, but she was not familiar with that sort of business matter.²⁸⁷ She believed Kiel and another man Hank Parish were involved in the killing, and, as a result, she never spoke to Kiel or his heirs again.²⁸⁸ Helen inherited the ranch and almost one thousand acres and remained in Las Vegas.²⁸⁹ Her future husband, along with her son, William Stewart, went to the Kiel Ranch to report the arrival of wagon wheels.²⁹⁰ They found the two Kiel brothers dead from gunshot wounds, although this was later reported as a murder-suicide.²⁹¹ Seventy years later, anthropologists would label it a double murder, but, either way, nobody ever claimed responsibility.²⁹²

In October, 1885, Stewart requested permission to sell the ranch. Her reasons were that there was no place available for a home, and no education facilities for her children. Granted permission, her first potential buyer came in May, 1887. A.G. Campbell, a businessman from Pioche, was looking at mining properties. Campbell looked at the ranch, but no sale was made. In March, 1889, Stewart had two more prospective buyers from Haywood, California. Stewart

²⁸⁴ Unknown Author, “Local Intelligence,” (Pioche, July 26, 1884), 3.

²⁸⁵ Unknown Author, “Local Intelligence,” (Pioche, July 26, 1884), 3.

²⁸⁶ Townley, 226 and 227.

²⁸⁷ Townley, 227.

²⁸⁸ Townley, 228.; Moehring and Green, 7.

²⁸⁹ Moehring and Green, 7.

²⁹⁰ Moehring and Green, 7.

²⁹¹ Moehring and Green, 7.

²⁹² Moehring and Green, 7.

proposed an offer to them to sell at fifty-five thousand dollars. The buyers were not able to match the asking price, though, so, again, no deal was reached.²⁹³

In the meantime, the next era in the development of Las Vegas had arrived, as rumors spread throughout Lincoln County of a railroad being built through the Las Vegas valley.²⁹⁴ This was, in fact, more than just a rumor. The golden spike had been driven in Utah on May 11, 1869 connecting the transcontinental railroad, and, even then, Utah residents lobbied for a connection to San Diego.²⁹⁵ An 1889 Articles of Agreement and Consolidation among several railroad companies including the Nevada Pacific Railway Company, headed by its president, John Sharp, declared a number of new railroads and connections. One of these new proposals was a railroad that would run “from a point on the eastern boundary line of the State of Nevada, near Pioche, in Lincoln County” across the state. While no direct mention was made in this document about a railroad through Las Vegas, it was most likely not lost on most that it was an ideal location for a stop.²⁹⁶

There typically were several factions that planned to gain from such matters. Industrialists like Andrew Carnegie and Cornelius Vanderbilt took in vast amounts of money constructing railroads across the nation as the new mode of transportation gained steam. Meanwhile, shrewd businessmen, both regionally and locally, also strove to profit from the inevitable expansion. These capitalists recognized the economic opportunities of bringing the

²⁹³ Townley, 234 and 236.

²⁹⁴ Townley, 236.

²⁹⁵ Unknown Author, Untitled, *The Farmers' Cabinet*, Volume 67, Number 43, (Amherst, May 13, 1869), 2.; Unknown Author, “The Celebration Yesterday,” *The Deseret News*, May 12, 1869, Accessed March 26, 2024, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/desnews2/id/39884/rec/48.>, 7.

²⁹⁶ *Articles of Consolidation and Agreement between the Oregon Short Line Railway Company, the Utah and Northern Railway Company, the Utah Central Railway Company, the Salt Lake and Western Railway Company, the Utah and Nevada Railway Company, the Ogden and Syracuse Railway Company, the Idaho Central Railway Company, and the Nevada Pacific Railway Company*, (New York: Burgoyne, 1889), 4 and 16.

railroad to their locales. Those who actually ran the railroads had to have a say in the matter, and they understood that building more tracks was more than just garnering the necessary funds and manpower. They knew that managing the steam engines for the locomotives required water to traverse the continent. Moreover, the fresh produce being transported needed ice. Consequently, all parties involved in the route design process had to consider these necessities.²⁹⁷

The general public simply hoped to have nearby access to the railroad for quicker, safer travel. Just after the transcontinental railroad was completed, routes were soon added that linked Salt Lake City to San Francisco. The next planned expansion in the West would enable Utah residents to get their wish of rail travel to Southern California. However, the logical destination in Southern California was Los Angeles, rather than San Diego, in order to reach the ocean quicker to expedite transport by ship. Even so, the protracted distance to Los Angeles meant a water stop would be necessary for the steam engines. When considering the possible stops along the route, the Las Vegas valley, with its valuable water sources and its prime central location, was the clear choice.²⁹⁸

As a result, a surge of land acquisition followed.²⁹⁹ Helen Stewart already owned the springs and had acquired additional property, so much so, that she became the largest landowner in Lincoln County by 1890.³⁰⁰ She raised cattle and horses (which had been sold along with the ranch when her husband acquired it), yet, this did not seem to be enough for Stewart.³⁰¹ Her father, Hiram Wiser, had taken a calculated gamble when he bought land in nearby Muddy

²⁹⁷ James Roman, *Chronicles of Old Las Vegas: Exposing Sin City's High-Stakes History*, (New York: Museyon, 2011), 23 and 25.

²⁹⁸ Roman, 25.

²⁹⁹ Townley, 236.

³⁰⁰ Roman, 23.

³⁰¹ Mueller, 1.

Valley anticipating an influx of new residents looking for land.³⁰² She followed his lead while seeking for more land in the Las Vegas valley. This was no simple task, as she had to deal with land acts that prevented prospective land buyers from exceeding set maximum acreages.³⁰³

Stewart was unfazed. She turned to her sister, Asenith Roach, to circumvent this legal obstacle.³⁰⁴ Roach purchased tracts of land with the full intent of selling the tracts back to Stewart who funded the entire operation.³⁰⁵ One such transaction was executed on November 1st, 1892, when Roach acquired two hundred, sixty-five and twelve one hundredths acres.³⁰⁶ At the time, Roach paid twenty-five cents per acre up front and agreed to pay the remaining dollar per acre over the course of the next twenty-five years at six-percent interest.³⁰⁷ These transactions would later prove to be lucrative when Stewart would sell.

One man who would be influential in sending a railroad through the Las Vegas valley was the owner of the Union Pacific Railroad, Edward Harriman.³⁰⁸ He also maintained an interest in the Southern Pacific Company, for which he would later provide a model of sorts for the building of the Hoover Dam.³⁰⁹ In fact, in January, 1907, at the urging of President Theodore Roosevelt, Harriman was responsible for completing the Hind-Clarke Dam which eventually controlled the Colorado River in California and saved both the Imperial Valley and his railroad.³¹⁰ He once discussed his satisfaction with his work when he “stopped the overflow

³⁰² Townley, 236.

³⁰³ Townley, 236.

³⁰⁴ Townley, 236.; UNLV University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, *Marriage Certificate of Helen and Frank Stewart and Tiza Stewart Land Patents*, Las Vegas, Nevada, Accessed July 3, 2023, <https://special.library.unlv.edu/ark%3A62930/d17941439>.

³⁰⁵ Townley, 236.

³⁰⁶ *Marriage Certificate of Helen and Frank Stewart and Tiza Stewart Land Patents*.

³⁰⁷ *Marriage Certificate of Helen and Frank Stewart and Tiza Stewart Land Patents*.

³⁰⁸ Roman, 25.

³⁰⁹ Associated Press, “Discount Death of Magnate,” *Los Angeles Herald*, Volume 36, Number 345, September 11, 1909, 3.; George Kennan, *The Salton Sea: An Account of Harriman’s Fight with the Colorado River*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 40, 77, 89, 90, 94, and 95.

³¹⁰ Kennan, 77, 78, 89, 90, and 93-95.

of the Colorado [R]iver when the government could not.”³¹¹ This man that believed “nothing is impossible” demonstrated on other large projects, like the Lucin Cutoff railroad trestle across Great Salt Lake, that such feats could be accomplished.³¹² Before all that, though, his interest in the Las Vegas valley was specific to setting up a stop for his Union Pacific Railroad.

Another man interested in profiting from a railroad passing through the Las Vegas valley was Montana Senator, William A. Clark. His first stop in the West was in Montana, though, seeking his fortune in gold in 1863.³¹³ Clark would later be known as one of the “Copper Kings” due to his success against the Rockefeller Empire in purchasing the Anaconda Copper Company.³¹⁴ In 1899, his success as a miner and businessman helped him to obtain a Senate seat in Montana.³¹⁵ Eventually, he would go on to be one of the wealthiest men in the world, although many were critical of his methods.³¹⁶ Mark Twain once said Clark “is the most disgusting creature that the republic has produced since Tweed’s time.”³¹⁷ This was a reference to the corrupt “Boss” Tweed who was best known for his vast political corruption.³¹⁸ In his efforts mainly concerned with beating another competitor, Clark would affect the Las Vegas valley in a dramatic way.

Clark was frustrated that Harriman’s railroad companies were overcharging his Butte shipments to San Francisco, so he decided to build his own railroad with the help of his brother,

³¹¹ Associated Press, “Discount Death of Magnate,” 3.

³¹² Kennan, 62.

³¹³ Brian Grinder and Dan Cooper, “William Andrews Clark and the War of the Copper Kings,” *Financial History*, Issue 106, Spring, 2013, 10-12.

³¹⁴ Grinder and Cooper, 10-12.

³¹⁵ Grinder and Cooper, 10-12.

³¹⁶ Grinder and Cooper, 10-12.

³¹⁷ Grinder and Cooper, 10-12.

³¹⁸ Jeffrey Broxmeyer, “The Boss’s ‘Brains’: Political Capital, Democratic Commerce and the New York Tweed Ring, 1868-1871,” *Historical Sociology*, Volume 28, Issue 3, September, 2015, 374-403.

J. Ross Clark.³¹⁹ Their railroad would be the San Pedro, Los Angeles, & Salt Lake Railroad.³²⁰ Harriman feared such a line would threaten his western railroad empire, and, not wanting his fierce competitor to outdo him, he decided to build his own line through Nevada and on to Los Angeles.³²¹ According to historian, James Hulse, William Clark “combined a remarkable intelligence and attention to detail with a plunger’s genius for the rewards to be had in gambling on a large scale.”³²² It was certainly a gamble to take on the mighty Harriman, but Clark was up to the challenge. The competing companies fought from 1901 through the fall of the next year in court and even once with shovels and axes over one disputed path as they both built close, parallel lines through narrow Nevada gorges.³²³ Finally, Harriman blinked, as it became increasingly clear that they might as well just build one line.³²⁴ Harriman settled for a half-stake in Clark’s line and he would share costs.³²⁵ The line would go through the Meadow Valley Wash and lead through the Las Vegas valley.

With the feud over, Clark moved to purchase land in the Las Vegas valley, as both railroad barons wanted to take advantage of the valley’s abundant water and prime location. This was the opportunity for which Stewart had been preparing. Clark’s brother, J. Ross Clark, smartly opened communications with her in 1902, with the intent of purchasing the ranch.³²⁶ J. Ross Clark and his associates routinely communicated to address the typical logistical details associated with such a purchase. For instance, getting an accurate count on the cattle and horses

³¹⁹ Malone, 15.; Moehring and Green, 10.

³²⁰ Moehring and Green, 10.

³²¹ Malone, 15.

³²² James Hulse, “W.A. Clark and the Las Vegas Connection,” *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, Volume 37, Number 1, Winter, 1987, 49.

³²³ Hulse, 52 and 53.

³²⁴ Hulse, 53.

³²⁵ Hulse, 53.

³²⁶ UNLV University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, J. Ross Clark/Los Angeles Office Files, *Las Vegas Ranch, Nevada (1 of 4)*, Las Vegas, Nevada, Accessed July 5, 2023, <https://special.library.unlv.edu/ark%3A62930/d1w37m>.

spread out across the ranch was necessary. This, of course, presented a challenge because getting the tally correct meant having to track them all down to determine whether or not Stewart had the livestock numbers she declared. Over the course of a month or so, the Senator's brother continued communication with his railroad business associates, like William McDermott and C.O. Whittemore, William Clark's personal attorney, to get these details sorted out. His team worked with J.T. McWilliams, the U.S. Deputy Mineral Surveyor, to sift through the issues specific to boundaries and water rights. The high stakes nature of this purchase required ample written correspondence and even personal visits to the ranch to ensure it was a fair deal.³²⁷

Finally, on December 8th, 1902, both sides were satisfied, and the deal was struck. William Clark paid Helen Stewart the fifty-five thousand dollars for the "Los Vegas ranch" that she had wanted back in 1889. Along with the land, Clark acquired the cattle, complete with the Stewart brand, "a diamond on left ribs," horses with a T-shaped Stewart brand on the right hip, the adobe dwellings, including the Mormon fort, and an exhaustive list of ranch supplies. Stewart was rewarded handsomely for her chancy business decisions designed to cash in on the arrival of a railroad. Her gamble, much like that of Clark, was one of many that would pay off in the Las Vegas valley.³²⁸

However, Stewart was not done yet, although she did move to Los Angeles. Before she moved, she purchased two hundred, eighty acres in the Las Vegas valley to build a new home in which she would later live upon her return to Nevada.³²⁹ In 1904, J.T. McWilliams looked to profit from this valley in his own right. He bought eighty acres from Stewart's new home site,

³²⁷ UNLV University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, J. Ross Clark/Los Angeles Office Files, *Las Vegas Ranch, Nevada (1 of 4)*.

³²⁸ UNLV University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives. *Stewart Family Real Estate Documents*, Las Vegas, Nevada, Accessed July 7, 2023, <https://special.library.unlv.edu/ark%3A/62930/d1kp7v19t>.

³²⁹ Mueller, 1.

and began selling plots of this land as part of what he called the “Original Las Vegas Townsite.”³³⁰ This land, which would eventually be referred to as “West Las Vegas,” soon housed fifteen-hundred residents who opened and operated stores, saloons, bakeries, newspapers, and even a hotel.³³¹ On January 13th, 1905, McWilliams filed his declared site name with the Lincoln County Recorder.³³²

Meanwhile, Clark was not about to let McWilliams take his profits, as his railroad was rapidly nearing completion. On January 23rd, J. Ross Clark sent a telegram to Dr. J.K.W. Bracken requesting that he use his influence with the County Commissioners to prevent their approval of the McWilliams filing.³³³ On the same day, he sent a telegram to his Chief Engineer, E.G. Tilton, asking him to rush a survey of the land his brother had purchased for “townsite Las Vegas.”³³⁴ On January 30th, 1905, in the midst of the latest Senator Clark fight, the last railroad spike was driven connecting Salt Lake City to Los Angeles.³³⁵ Senator Clark was determined to strike while the iron was still hot, and in March, his admirers greeted him eagerly as he rode into Las Vegas in his private railroad car.³³⁶

He deployed his attorney to counter the McWilliams plan. Whittemore wrote to J. Ross Clark, on February 8th, that the McWilliams filing was void. He also made mention of the necessity to “organize a corporation...and have the title to all lands not necessary for railroad use conveyed to such corporation.” He also declared that this step would be useful if they became

³³⁰ Moehring and Green, 11.; Land and Land, 37.

³³¹ Moehring and Green, 11.

³³² UNLV University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, J. Ross Clark/Los Angeles Office Files, *Townsite*, Las Vegas, Nevada, Accessed July 10, 2023, <https://special.library.unlv.edu/ark%3A/62930/d1v379>, 17.

³³³ UNLV University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, J. Ross Clark/Los Angeles Office Files, *Townsite*, 11 and 12.

³³⁴ UNLV University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, J. Ross Clark/Los Angeles Office Files, *Townsite*, 8.

³³⁵ Hulse, 53.

³³⁶ Hulse, 53.

“involved in litigation over the lands and water rights.” By May 10th, this corporation was created under the name, “Las Vegas Land and Water Company.” Whittemore also publicized the lot sale which he referred to as “Clark’s Las Vegas Townsite” on that day. Although McWilliams argued against it, criticizing Whittemore’s practices, the sale occurred on May 15th along the valley’s main thoroughfare, Fremont Street, named to pay homage to the explorer who had visited the valley in 1844. The town of Las Vegas was established, and Clark won again.³³⁷

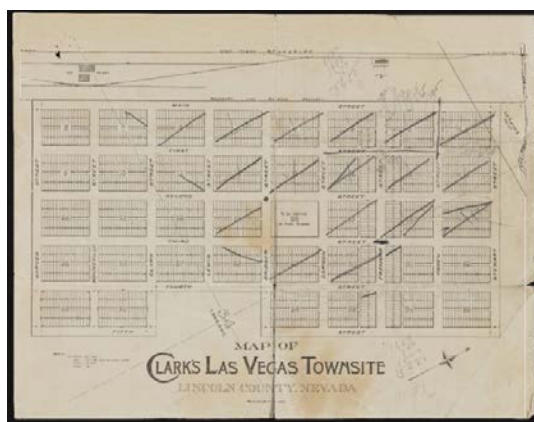


Figure 6 - Clark's Las Vegas Townsite³³⁸

A week before the auction, the new *Las Vegas Age* advertised the “Las Vegas Ranch Resort.”³³⁹ The advertisement referred to this “Cool and Refreshing Retreat” as “An Ideal Place to Spend the Warm Summer Months” with a “Bar and Café in connection.”³⁴⁰ This resort would be the first among many that would grace the Las Vegas grounds, including the Hotel Nevada in 1906.³⁴¹ While no mention was directly made in the advertisement, gambling was almost

³³⁷ UNLV University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, J. Ross Clark/Los Angeles Office Files, *Townsite*, 17, 18, 36-38, and 41.; Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 4-6.

³³⁸ UNLV University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, J. Ross Clark/Los Angeles Office Files, *Townsite*, 36.

³³⁹ Unknown Author, “Las Vegas Ranch Resort,” *Las Vegas Age*, (Las Vegas, Volume 1, Number 27, October 7, 1905), 1.

³⁴⁰ Unknown Author, “Las Vegas Ranch Resort,” 1.

³⁴¹ Unknown Author, “Las Vegas Ranch Resort,” 1.; Brian Horwath, Oldest Las Vegas Casino, Golden Gate, Celebrates 115 Years on Fremont Street,” *Las Vegas Sun*, Las Vegas, January 15, 2021, Accessed January 29, 2024,

certainly available there.³⁴² The *Las Vegas Age* was critical of California newspapers for rebuking Nevada for its tolerance of gambling, claiming Nevada was at least honest about its vices.³⁴³

Clark was later recognized for his local high-stakes contributions. The residents, led by prominent local civic leaders, Charles “Pop” Squires and Ed Clark, decided to form a local government, given that the Lincoln County seat was a hundred, seventy-five miles away. At that time, J. Ross Clark announced that his brother was setting up his main railroad shops in the new town. This was done to urge the residents to recognize the contributions of his brother. Although Clark’s interest in Las Vegas waned after this, the “high-roller” certainly had earned the love and adoration of Las Vegas. Accordingly, the residents selected “Clark” as the name of their new county. The legislative bill establishing Clark County passed on February 5th, 1909, the same day when another statute outlawed gambling there.³⁴⁴

<https://m.lasvegassun.com/news/2021/jan/15/oldest-las-vegas-casino-golden-gate-celebrates-115/>; Tony Illia, “Battle Born State,” *Southwest Contractor*, Phoenix, Volume 65, Issue 1, January 1, 2003.

³⁴² Unknown Author, “Las Vegas Ranch Resort,” 1.

³⁴³ Unknown Author, “Las Vegas Ranch Resort,” 1.; Hulse, 53.

³⁴⁴ Hulse, 55.; Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 8.

Chapter Three – Emergence of a City

By the end of 1905, Las Vegas was an established town with a permanent name. The abundant water located in this valley was almost solely responsible for the town's founding. Initially, inhabitants and explorers visited the site because of the necessity of water for their survival. In 1905, residents and travelers spent time in Las Vegas because it was the ideal site for a railroad stop between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. The next twenty-five years was a transition from a fledgling new town to a city on the verge of much greater expansion, although few could have ever predicted the impending growth. Water would still figure prominently in the city's later development, too. 1906 started, however, with a census that indicated just three hundred, twenty Las Vegas residents.³⁴⁵

Establishing Las Vegas as a railroad stop was a watershed moment. The local population increased over fifteen-hundred percent from 1906 to 1930. Las Vegas began to show early signs of what it would become in later decades. Tolerant laws opened the door to tourism for gambling, drinking, and other vices, and this later became all too inviting for those involved in organized crime. For the time being, though, as the uncontrollable Colorado River became a larger threat with increasing populations in the American West, the federal government tried to control it. Las Vegas was unwittingly preparing to become a destination for visitors of another sort looking to blow off some steam. These unique and necessary conditions did not materialize from the influence of the railroad alone.

A few events occurred prior to 1906 that shaped Las Vegas over the next quarter century and beyond. The first occurred in London in 1867 and ushered in modern American sports.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵ Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 36.

³⁴⁶ Richard Davies and Kathleen Szawoila, *The Main Event: Boxing in Nevada from the Mining Camps to the Las Vegas Strip*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2014), 5.

Another happened in 1895, when a young engineering student graduated from Stanford and began to work in mining.³⁴⁷ The other happened when one pioneering gentleman, with two partners, whom he quickly bought out, purchased land in the Clark auction and built a saloon and gambling hall right out of the Old West.³⁴⁸ The influence that these three completely separate and diverse events wielded over the future development of Las Vegas cannot be overstated.

While major sports franchises waited decades before calling Las Vegas home, one sport, boxing, was there during its humblest beginnings as a railroad town. It was a sport known to the Greeks who used something similar to a glove that barely lessened the blow from the fist. The boxing glove was later invented by Jack Broughton in the eighteenth century. John Jackson, known as “Gentleman Jackson,” was a boxing champion for the last five years of that century and taught the principles of the sport to young Englishmen. It was another Englishman, though, that created modern boxing.³⁴⁹

John Chambers formed the Amateur Athletic Club in 1866 when he and the eighth Marquis of Queensbury, John Douglas, developed a code of laws that have governed the sport since that time.³⁵⁰ Before this code, the public frowned upon this sport due to its brutality.³⁵¹ The new, more civilized “Queensbury rules,” however, were more humane and enabled prizefighting to become a mainstream American sport.³⁵² Even President Theodore Roosevelt boxed in college and later lost sight in his eye sparring with a navy champion in the White House.³⁵³

³⁴⁷ Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover (1874-1920)*, (London: Hollis & Carter, 1952), 25 and 26.

³⁴⁸ Moehring and Green, 30-32.

³⁴⁹ T.A. Reed, *The Blue and White: A Record of Fifty Years of Athletic Endeavour and the University of Toronto*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1945), 224.

³⁵⁰ Reed, 224.; Davies and Szawoila, 5.

³⁵¹ Davies and Szawoila, 5.

³⁵² Davies and Szawoila, 5.

³⁵³ Davies and Szawoila, 6.

After New Orleans took the lead on permitting sponsored bouts, the Nevada state legislature voted to permit what they termed as “glove contests” in February of 1897.³⁵⁴ However, this was not about the sport. Instead, it was a way to generate tourism in the state during a challenging economic time.³⁵⁵ Six weeks later, Nevada became the first state to legalize prizefighting, and the American champion, Gentleman Jim Corbett, fought the Australian fighter, Bob “Ruby Robert” Fitzsimmons.³⁵⁶ This fight might not have happened, had it not been for a Dallas promoter, Dan Stuart, who was looking to settle his Texas gambling debts.³⁵⁷

Stuart had first attempted to hold a Fitzsimmons fight in Dallas, but the Texas governor would not allow it.³⁵⁸ He next took a train to El Paso to combine the fight with the bullfights in Juarez, Mexico.³⁵⁹ The train entourage included the security director, William “Bat” Masterson, and filmmaker, Enoch Rector.³⁶⁰ Fitzsimmons won in Juarez, and Corbett announced that he would “lick Fitzsimmons.”³⁶¹ No longer wanting to hide the fights from the law Stuart looked to Nevada which had been in the market for making a quick buck off of lax morality.³⁶² The state had already permitted rapid six-month state residency divorces, and this would remain a state staple, along with hasty weddings.³⁶³ Similarly, the state allowed gambling and brothels, and such tolerance suited Stuart perfectly.³⁶⁴ He set up a seventeen-thousand spectator arena, and set

³⁵⁴ Davies and Szawoila, 20.

³⁵⁵ Davies and Szawoila, 20.

³⁵⁶ Davies and Szawoila, 23.; Unknown Author, “The Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight: Heavy-Weight Championship of the World: Victory for the Australian: A Severe Contest,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (Sydney, March 19, 1897), 6.

³⁵⁷ Davies and Szawoila, 11, 12, 22, and 23.

³⁵⁸ Davies and Szawoila, 15.

³⁵⁹ Davies and Szawoila, 15.

³⁶⁰ Davies and Szawoila, 16 and 17.

³⁶¹ Davies and Szawoila, 18.

³⁶² Davies and Szawoila, 18 and 20.

³⁶³ Davies and Szawoila, 20.

³⁶⁴ Davies and Szawoila, 20.

the bout for March 17, 1897.³⁶⁵ The fight was scheduled, although only five thousand turned up to watch it.³⁶⁶

Fitzsimmons won the fight, but the small crowd threatened Stuart's profits. Still, the fight got wide publicity. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on its victor all the way in Australia.³⁶⁷ Wyatt Earp, the legendary gunfighter and also a boxing referee, was quoted in the *New York World* saying that he "witnessed today the greatest fight with gloves that was ever held in this or any other country."³⁶⁸ In the end, the empty seats did not faze Stuart in the least. He made an estimated hundred-thousand dollars off the eleven thousand feet of film that Rector captured. The motion picture, *Corbett vs. Fitzsimmons*, which was the first many Americans had seen, succeeded in parts of Europe, too.³⁶⁹

Another previous Fitzsimmons fight outside Nevada was also consequential to the future of the sport and its reputation, although perhaps in a less favorable way. Earp refereed this fight against Tom Sharkey in San Francisco. Sharkey was losing the fight, and it was clear to everyone watching.³⁷⁰ To the utter disbelief of nearly the entire crowd, Earp disqualified Fitzsimmons for a low blow.³⁷¹ Although tried in a local court and found innocent, Earp was accused of defrauding Fitzsimmons out of his ten-thousand-dollar purse and of also betting large on Sharkey.³⁷² The *Sacramento Daily Union* noted that "[p]rofessional men, merchants, horsemen, millionaires and men in every vocation of life, save church men, may be seen

³⁶⁵ Davies and Szawoila, 23.

³⁶⁶ Unknown Author, "The Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight: Heavy-Weight Championship of the World: Victory for the Australian: A Severe Contest," 6.

³⁶⁷ Unknown Author, "The Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight: Heavy-Weight Championship of the World: Victory for the Australian: A Severe Contest," 6.

³⁶⁸ Davies and Szawoila, 30.

³⁶⁹ Davies and Szawoila, 26, 30, and 31.

³⁷⁰ Davies and Szawoila, 24.

³⁷¹ Davies and Szawoila, 24.

³⁷² Davies and Szawoila, 24.

illustrating just how the Australian put the sailor to sleep.”³⁷³ Perhaps any result, then, in the Corbett fight was bound to generate the same laudatory comments from Earp after this controversial fight.

By 1910, three title fights were held in Nevada. Fights were held in Reno and mining towns like Goldfield, and smaller fights even made their way to Las Vegas. Still, this rush of boxing was a double-edged sword for the state, then at least, as the success led to the legalization of boxing in many other states. The short-lived success did translate into the pervasion of another sporting pastime into the American gambling scene, sports betting, which became significant in Las Vegas much later. As 1920 approached, though, the boxing craze increased on the east coast which meant less business for Nevada. However, when football and basketball took over the airwaves of radio and television, boxing returned to Nevada and Las Vegas. However, that would not happen until the 1960s, when boxing would once again fit right in with legalized gambling, and other Las Vegas niceties.³⁷⁴

Nevertheless, boxing in this early era left an indelible mark on Nevada that significantly influenced the future of Las Vegas. The same state lax morality policies that earned Nevada the moniker, “Sin State,” would later be represented down at the city level in Las Vegas.³⁷⁵ Interestingly, many businessmen and many boxing promoters in Nevada seemed to exercise dubious business practices similar to those involved in gambling. Many in and around boxing

³⁷³Unknown Author, “Fitzsimmons-Sharkey Fight: About the Only Topic at San Francisco: The Battle Being Fought Over and Over Again by Men in Almost Every Vocation of Life,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, (Sacramento, Volume 92, Number 106, December 5, 1896), 1.

³⁷⁴ Davies and Szawoila, 34, 35, 92, 110, 142, and 143.

³⁷⁵ Davies and Szawoila, 92.

had long been suspicious of predetermined results, otherwise known as the “fix.”³⁷⁶ The revered Earp’s alleged involvement in a boxing controversy highlighted the public concerns.³⁷⁷

Sports betting, a large reason for suspicions, had long been around in another sport, horse racing, leading to public debate on the morality of gambling as early as the seventeenth century.³⁷⁸ Even in London, the “popular idea prevailing among those who do not take an active interest in the sport of kings is that bookmakers and the entire racing army are a generally coarse and low-living lot.”³⁷⁹ Nevada sports bettors must have been just as uneasy when having to pay up to these “bookies” after losing bets.³⁸⁰ As a result, offering such services likely required the guarantee of certain protections among this disreputable lot. These early sports challenges, then, would later make Las Vegas a place ripe for business for those connected with the mob.

Just before Nevada legalized boxing, however, another figure central to the Las Vegas story graduated from college. President Herbert Hoover, obviously for whom the Hoover Dam received its name, graduated from Stanford University in 1895. He later remembered back to a time a few years before when he was ten years old. He remembered his “eyes filled with the wonders of Iowa’s streams,” and his “great undertakings” from those times. His next memories were those of living in Oregon through his teen years when he got to fly fish in the “mountain streams.” He successfully “nursed...three flies and used them until all the feathers were worn off – and still the trout rose to them.” Although these fond memories would not necessarily

³⁷⁶ Davies and Szawoila, 125.

³⁷⁷ Davies and Szawoila, 24.

³⁷⁸ William Thompson, *The International Encyclopedia of Gambling*, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009), xxiii and xxiv.

³⁷⁹ Unknown Author, “‘The Bookie’,” *The Pioche Weekly Record*, (Pioche, November 9, 1906), Accessed April 24, 2024, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86091348/1906-11-09/ed-1/seq-2/>, 2.

³⁸⁰ Unknown Author, “‘The Bookie’,” 2.

influence what he studied at Stanford, they did hint at his affinity for water and tackling nature's challenges.³⁸¹

It was actually a mining engineer who was the ultimate driving force behind Hoover's decision to study geology and mining. Hoover had excelled in mathematics and was considering mechanical engineering. After a trip to the Cascades with this engineer, he was drawn to geology and mining. The engineer persuaded Hoover that this branch of engineering "offered more choice." His decision was not rooted in any noticeable outpouring of passion for the job from the engineer though. Instead, Hoover recalled that the engineer's "conclusions...that the mine was no good excited...[his]...imagination."³⁸²

During a summer at Stanford University, Hoover worked on the U.S. Geological Survey in "the glorious High Sierra, the deserts of Nevada, and among the mining camps where vitality and character ran strong." Hoover must have prided himself on fitting in at these demanding locations. He enjoyed this job so much, that, in another summer when he did not have money for a train to get to the survey, he "walked 80 miles in three days and arrived on time." Being mentally formidable must have also been important to him. The former President Benjamin Harrison was at Stanford to watch a football game, but others did not approach him for his twenty-five-cent admission fee. The gritty young Hoover did, though, and ended up getting Harrison to pay a full dollar for four games. That was who Herbert Hoover was.³⁸³

He quickly started to build his career. After a few years as an engineer in Australia and China, Hoover became a partner in the Bewick, Moreing and Company in London. There he travelled even more, getting to China, England, France, India, Australia, New Zealand, and the

³⁸¹ Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover (1874-1920)*, 1, 13, 14, and 24.

³⁸² Hoover, 13 and 14.

³⁸³ Hoover, 18, 19, and 21.

Hawaiian Islands all just in 1901. Hoping to remain in the U.S. more, he retired from the company but still travelled the world throughout 1914 as a freelance engineer. Along the way, he gained valuable experience working with various political figures and patriotically acting on behalf of the government as the circumstances required.³⁸⁴

When World War I started, Hoover received a call from an old friend who happened to be the American Consul General in London. Americans were suddenly unable to use their currency for hotels. Because Hoover had a “cash reserve of a few hundred pounds” which he withdrew in case he had to pay his staff, he was able to assist the Americans until they found out what “our government is going to do about it.” When the American Ambassador, Walter Page, found out about this, he asked Hoover to set up an operation to get “probably 100,000 to 200,000 Americans in Europe...away from the war.” Successful, Hoover realized later that beginning on that day, August 3rd, 1914, he “was on the slippery road of public life.”³⁸⁵

Another such episode began on October 18th when Page called on Hoover again. This time, there was a food shortage in Belgium, a nation dependent at the time on imports. With the Germans unwilling to assist due to their frustrations with a British blockade, immediate action was required to feed the Belgians. An international group turned to Page for an American, as the U.S. was still neutral, with “wide administrative experience and knowledge of the world” who had the “confidence of the American Ambassadors.” Hoover was selected and “quickly got the worst of these disasters remedied.”³⁸⁶

Such expertise and action earned Hoover an appointment by President Woodrow Wilson as the head of the Food Administration.³⁸⁷ In this position, he worked with European nations to

³⁸⁴ Hoover, 29, 35, 75, 98, and 99.

³⁸⁵ Hoover, 141-143 and 148.

³⁸⁶ Hoover, 152-154 and 172.

³⁸⁷ Hoover, 251 and 252.

deal with famine after World War I on a level he believed the U.S. had never seen.³⁸⁸ This political work, of course, set him on a trajectory for an even greater political career. His next job was under President Warren Harding as Secretary of Commerce, and then Chairman of the Colorado River Commission, and he continued in these roles under President Calvin Coolidge in 1922.³⁸⁹ It was in these positions that he found himself at the center of the first stages of the construction of the Hoover Dam.³⁹⁰

Prior to this time, Americans fully recognized the problems the wild Colorado River presented. Agriculture had grown in the American West, and the inability to control the Colorado River opened up the Imperial Valley in Southern California, the neighboring states, and Mexico to possible devastation. This sort of devastation could not be allowed. Hoover later recalled how “President Theodore Roosevelt...had to intervene to stop the break in the levees on the river through which the whole of this river was pouring torrents into the arena of the Imperial Valley.” This was a reference, of course, to Harriman’s Hind-Clarke Dam. While Roosevelt was a proven fighter, and such patchwork efforts did work in the short-term, Americans were slowly recognizing that a more permanent solution was needed.³⁹¹

Hoover later became the public servant who eventually accepted the role to complete this critical mission. He led his peers in the mining and geology field and successfully tackled major challenges on a world stage. Given the unique challenges he faced, his Stanford mining and geology background certainly groomed him for what was to come. Probably nobody in 1895

³⁸⁸ Hoover, 428.

³⁸⁹ Associated Press, “Hoover’s Speech at Dam: President Hails Fulfillment of His Work Begun Decade Ago,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 13, 1932), 16.; Barbara and Myrick Land, *A Short History of Las Vegas*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 53.

³⁹⁰ Associated Press, “Hoover’s Speech at Dam: President Hails Fulfillment of His Work Begun Decade Ago,” 16.

³⁹¹ Associated Press, “Hoover’s Speech at Dam: President Hails Fulfillment of His Work Begun Decade Ago,” 16.

could have known the impact his particular skills would have on what was then not even a town. Yet, the foundation was already being laid as his formative years ended.

In 1905, while Hoover was travelling the world with his mining job and modern boxing was still trying to catch on in Nevada, many in the small, local populace understood that the railroad would bring in an influx of strangers. The solution was to have a gathering place where everyone got to know each other.³⁹² This sort of networking of the day was conducive to a more secure environment in the area and maybe even to establishing profitable business relationships. If nothing else, the owner stood to make a nice profit from it himself, and perhaps few understood this more than William Clark. His railroad company shrewdly included a stipulation in the sales contracts that no liquor could be sold on any of the lots in his land auction outside of just one block, Block 16.³⁹³ The stipulation stated that if liquor was sold, the lot would revert back to the possession of the railroad company.³⁹⁴ This seemed to be a surefire moneymaker for Clark. The plan did not really work out as he might have hoped though.³⁹⁵

An early resident, John Wisner purchased a lot along Fremont Street, outside Block 16, and built the Overland Hotel which included a saloon. The railroad decided to enforce their contract and sent one of its loyal employees, Pop Squires, who would later lobby for a new county, to Pioche to testify against Wisner. According to Squires' daughter, nothing came of the suit, nor was the contract provision ever enforced. Interestingly, she recalled that her father wrote to Whittemore requesting reimbursement for poker losses, stating, "in Pioche, poker losses are legitimate losses." Whittemore reimbursed him, signaling a popular understanding of how

³⁹² Moehring and Green, 29 and 30.

³⁹³ Land and Land, 42.

³⁹⁴ Land and Land, 42.

³⁹⁵ Land and Land, 42.

business was known to operate in Pioche and maybe indirectly signifying why Squires would soon want a new county. The Overland Hotel endured for a time.³⁹⁶

One intrepid entrepreneur, J.O. “Jim” McIntosh, was not as willing to test the railroad’s legal team, but he did plan on profiting off the new town.³⁹⁷ Buying out his other two partners who joined him in acquiring land in Block 16 from Clark, he built the Arizona Club.³⁹⁸ The club was located between Ogden, named for Peter Ogden, an explorer who entered Nevada in 1826, and Stewart, named for Helen Stewart.³⁹⁹ McIntosh recognized an opportunity to make money off the growing population and visiting rail passengers.⁴⁰⁰ He knew how to grab their attention to get their business. Mahogany and beveled glass made up the entrance, and gas lighting was used for lighting the large mahogany-backed bar, although electricity was also used sparingly.⁴⁰¹ These extravagances, reminiscent of the flashing lights of modern Las Vegas, stood out on Block 16, and got customers through the door.⁴⁰²

Other less elegant establishments graced Block 16, as well. This included places like The Gem, Red Onion, Turf, Favorite, Star Saloon, Double O, and Arcade. Later, by 1909, the three latter places ran prostitution in their back rooms. The Arizona Club would, too, eventually, creating a red light district. While this was disturbing to some civic leaders, it was not stopped. Prostitution later became legal in modern Nevada, although not Las Vegas or Clark County. The one thing all of these saloons had in common other than selling liquor, though, was gambling.⁴⁰³

³⁹⁶ Land and Land, 42 and 43.

³⁹⁷ Moehring and Green, 31.

³⁹⁸ Moehring and Green, 31.

³⁹⁹ Moehring and Green, 31.; Stanley Paher, *Las Vegas As it Began – As it Grew*, (Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1971), 12.

⁴⁰⁰ Moehring and Green, 31.

⁴⁰¹ Moehring and Green, 31.; Robert McCracken, *Las Vegas: The Great American Playground*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997), 56.

⁴⁰² Moehring and Green, 31.

⁴⁰³ Moehring and Green, 31 and 32.

On Block 16, the Arizona Club was the main attraction. Customers went there to play slot machines, roulette, and blackjack, but they also went there to drink. This was exactly what McIntosh wanted, as he rightly suspected that the more they drank, the more they gambled away their money into his pockets. With that simple formula, he set the standard that nearly all Las Vegas gambling establishment owners would follow. At the time, it was still a rough town, and adding gambling and liquor to that was a recipe for disaster. McIntosh was prepared for such dangers and hired a big burly bouncer, Sam Gay. Gay was a miner in Alaska and Goldfield, Nevada and then took on his first bouncer job at the Goldfield Northern Club. At the Arizona Club, he got the job done. He would eventually go on to be the Clark County sheriff for twenty years but earned the somewhat dubious reputation of not always enforcing laws he disliked.⁴⁰⁴

When a progressive movement pushed Nevada legislators to outlaw gambling as part of moral reform in 1909, Sheriff Gay took his first passive stand. At the time, Reno and its large economy compared to Las Vegas, suffered when travelers could not spend their money playing games of chance. Nevada lawmakers restored some forms of gambling in 1915 as a result, but Gay had not enforced them in Las Vegas anyway. Similarly, in 1920, he refused to enforce Prohibition. These actions may have given Las Vegas an edge over Reno during this temporary progressive period in the state. Gay understood what Las Vegans wanted, and such resistance only helped him win the Sheriff elections.⁴⁰⁵

Gay was not the only local official that addressed Prohibition in this manner. Some went further. Gay was able to take this stance, without even trying to encourage the hiding of such activities in speakeasies like other towns, because he was not duty-bound to enforce federal laws.

⁴⁰⁴ Moehring and Green, 31, 32, 37, and 57.

⁴⁰⁵ Moehring and Green, 47-49.

One of Las Vegas's mayors, though, Fred Hesse, did not have any excuse for his actions. He was arrested for operating a still and supplying illegal booze to one of Las Vegas's biggest bootleggers, James Ferguson, for two years. Even conservatives in the railroad company, who were against alcohol, understood its use in the desert town. This sort of brazen attitude among the local officials worked in boosting the local economy and attracting patrons from elsewhere looking for such vices without fear of retribution.⁴⁰⁶

Not surprisingly, the population grew steadily, reaching 5,165 people by 1930.⁴⁰⁷ While security was a high priority in the rapidly growing town, one other danger persisted during this era. First, in 1905, a large fire destroyed most of the McWilliams site.⁴⁰⁸ Next, the Opera House burned.⁴⁰⁹ Then, in early March of 1911, the Overland Hotel caught on fire, and at the time, the town still did not even have a fire truck.⁴¹⁰ The residents needed to act quickly or risk losing more of the town which was predominantly built with wood.⁴¹¹

On March 17th, 1911, Nevada Governor, Tasker Oddie, signed a bill that incorporated Las Vegas as a city. On June 1st, Las Vegans held a special election and approved the city charter. The first mayor was a developer, Peter Buol, and one of his four commissioners was Helen Stewart's son, William. Squires, and surely the others in on this momentous vote, understood that government services would improve with a city government. Las Vegas got its first fire truck in 1917.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁶ The Mob Museum, Prohibition: An Interactive History, *In Las Vegas, Prohibition was Sporadically Enforced*, Accessed July 21, 2023, <https://prohibition.themobmuseum.org/the-history/prohibition-in-las-vegas/las-vegas-and-prohibition/>.

⁴⁰⁷ Moehring and Green, 57.

⁴⁰⁸ Land and Land, 44.

⁴⁰⁹ Moehring and Green, 39.

⁴¹⁰ Moehring and Green, 39.

⁴¹¹ Moehring and Green, 39.

⁴¹² Moehring and Green, 39.

The new city wasted no time bringing in tourism to what they hoped would be a resort city.⁴¹³ In 1911, President William Howard Taft became the first U.S. President to visit the new city as his train passed through.⁴¹⁴ The locals wanted to support other modes of transportation to raise tourist numbers. Ed Clark joined E.W. Griffith in promoting highway construction.⁴¹⁵ Efforts were underway in 1914 to improve automobile transportation between Las Vegas and Southern California.⁴¹⁶ Highway 91, linking Las Vegas and Los Angeles, would mostly be completed by 1931.⁴¹⁷ Locally, in 1925, the city commission voted to pave Fremont Street, as well as Main Street, Fifth Street, and San Francisco which would later be Sahara Avenue.⁴¹⁸ The city even built its first golf course in 1927 south of the city in the hopes of luring visitors.⁴¹⁹ Certainly, lush greens in the desert would be a draw for tourists who would get there any way they could.

Accommodating cars and trains was still not enough for Las Vegas. With air travel developing, Las Vegas was one of many cities with an airport listed in a 1927 *New York Times* article, ironically critical of its own city for not owning one yet.⁴²⁰ In fact, Western Air Express, began service between Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Salt Lake City using a local airfield south of town.⁴²¹ City officials moved operations ten miles northeast, and this airstrip would actually be on the future site of Nellis Air Force Base.⁴²² Las Vegas was certainly on the move.

⁴¹³ Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 11.

⁴¹⁴ Thomas Ainlay, Jr. and Judy Gabaldon, *Las Vegas: The Fabulous First Century*, (San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 33.

⁴¹⁵ Moehring and Green, 47.

⁴¹⁶ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 11.

⁴¹⁷ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 11.

⁴¹⁸ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 10.

⁴¹⁹ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 11.

⁴²⁰ Unknown Author, "4,000 Airports Built, But New York City Owns None of Them," *New York Times*, (New York, June 27, 1927), 1.

⁴²¹ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 11.

⁴²² Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 11.

Unfortunately, as Las Vegas grew, so did the threat of flooding from the Colorado River. In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt later recalled, “the Colorado added little of value to the region,” and “in flood the river was a threatening torrent.”⁴²³ As early as 1905, the federal government had begun discussions with residents of the Southwest about the possibility of damming the Colorado River.⁴²⁴ Harriman’s Hind-Clarke Dam, encouraged by President Theodore Roosevelt, demonstrated how such great undertakings could be achieved.⁴²⁵ Unfortunately, that dam cut the water off for some farmers during a drought.⁴²⁶

That sparked an urgent call from the public for a massive dam that would enable engineers to harness the power of the river while still controlling the unpredictable waters.⁴²⁷ Franklin Roosevelt also later commented on “the national benefits which will be derived from the completion of this project.”⁴²⁸ He said that the power generated would run “factory motors, street and household lights and irrigation pumps...in Southern Arizona and California.”⁴²⁹ Roosevelt may have included Arizona in that statement as a political commentary on the state’s reluctance to get on board with the project. Conversely, he did not include Nevada and Las Vegas, but the potential energy and maybe even location must have been evident to Las Vegas.

Shortly before World War I, two men had obtained a permit to build a power plant on the Colorado River. They created the Colorado River Hydro-Electric Company. Generating power from the Colorado River would be extremely valuable, especially in a desert region. Such a proposition eventually completely transformed Las Vegas. The John B. Stetson Company, led

⁴²³ Associated Press, “President’s Talk at Boulder Dam,” *New York Times*, (New York, October 1, 1935), 2.

⁴²⁴ Moehring and Green, 58.; Land and Land, 50.

⁴²⁵ George Kennan, *The Salton Sea: An Account of Harriman’s Fight with the Colorado River*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 77, 78, 89, 90 and 93-95.

⁴²⁶ Land and Land, 50.

⁴²⁷ Land and Land, 50.

⁴²⁸ Associated Press, “President’s Talk at Boulder Dam,” 2.

⁴²⁹ Associated Press, “President’s Talk at Boulder Dam,” 2.

by the future Las Vegas mayor, Fred Hesse, before his alcohol antics, also studied the feasibility of damming the Colorado. The war, put an abrupt end to these ambitious endeavors, but only until shortly after the cease fire.⁴³⁰

In the early twenties, the U.S. Congress authorized the U.S. Department of the Interior to study the Colorado River Basin with respect to irrigation and hydroelectric power.⁴³¹ At that time, the highest concrete dam in the U.S. was Arrowrock Dam near Boise Idaho, built in 1915 and standing at three hundred, fifty feet high.⁴³² Hoover Dam would eventually need to be a little over twice that height. Director of the U.S. Reclamation Service, Arthur Powell Davis, immediately began work on the study for Secretary of the Interior, Albert B. Fall.⁴³³ Davis's branch had been established in 1902 and was made up of geologists, surveyors, engineers, and other experts equipped for such studies and projects.⁴³⁴ Initially, there was debate on whether the dam site should be at Boulder Canyon or Black Canyon.⁴³⁵ Both deep gorges were only twenty miles apart from each other.⁴³⁶

Davis appointed Engineer Walker Young, and others, to determine which would be better.⁴³⁷ Young spent most of 1921 testing the strength of the rock at Boulder Canyon.⁴³⁸ Young found unexpected faults during his testing.⁴³⁹ The resulting March, 1922 Fall-Davis report, named after the Secretary of the Interior and the director of what would be refashioned as

⁴³⁰ Land and Land, 49 and 50.

⁴³¹ Michael Duchemin, "Water, Power, and Tourism: Hoover Dam and the Making of the New West," *California History*, (Bowling Green, Volume 86, Issue 4, 2009), 62.

⁴³² Richard Wiltshire, David Gilbert, and Jerry Rogers, ed., *Hoover Dam: 75th Anniversary History Symposium*, (Las Vegas: American Society of Civil Engineers, 2010), 26.

⁴³³ Duchemin, 62.

⁴³⁴ Land and Land, 50.

⁴³⁵ Land and Land, 50.

⁴³⁶ Land and Land, 50.

⁴³⁷ Land and Land, 52.

⁴³⁸ Land and Land, 51.

⁴³⁹ Land and Land, 52.

the Bureau of Reclamation just a year later, recommended that the U.S. fund and build a giant dam at or near Boulder Canyon and recoup the funds through the power it would generate.⁴⁴⁰ Given the unexpected faults he discovered, Young then moved to Black Canyon, and tested through the winter of 1922 into the spring of 1923.⁴⁴¹ Finally, he determined that Black Canyon was better due to its sturdier rock foundation.⁴⁴² Subsequently, the Bureau of Reclamation submitted the “Weymouth Report,” named after its Chief Engineer, Frank Weymouth.⁴⁴³ This report called for an “arched concrete gravity dam in Black Canyon.”⁴⁴⁴ Another benefit of Black Canyon, although not a determining factor, was that it was only thirty miles from the Las Vegas railroad station.⁴⁴⁵

In 1924, Californians began efforts to get federal approval of what still went by the “Boulder Dam” and its planned accompanying All-American Canal which would provide water for irrigation and local use in their state.⁴⁴⁶ The League of California Municipalities advertised the dam’s benefits in a promotional packet.⁴⁴⁷ In 1926, The Imperial Irrigation District put together a book containing the images of all the water resources involved and the agricultural lands that might flourish from the project.⁴⁴⁸ That same year, two San Diego government officials conducted a tour to several American Legion posts rallying the leaders to support the

⁴⁴⁰ Duchemin, 62.; David J. Rogers, “How Boulder Canyon Dam Ended Up in Black Canyon as Hoover Dam,” *World Environmental and Water Resources Congress 2020: Nevada and California Water History*, May 14, 2020., 69.

⁴⁴¹ Land and Land, 52.

⁴⁴² Land and Land, 52.

⁴⁴³ Rogers, 68-70.

⁴⁴⁴ Rogers, 70.

⁴⁴⁵ Land and Land, 52.

⁴⁴⁶ Duchemin, 63.

⁴⁴⁷ Duchemin, 63.

⁴⁴⁸ Duchemin, 63.

“Boulder Canyon Dam” as part of their “hammering campaign.”⁴⁴⁹ Californians made no qualms about what the dam project meant for their state.

Their concerns were magnified when the St. Francis Dam near Los Angeles failed on March 13th, 1928.⁴⁵⁰ Los Angeles officials had built and maintained the dam.⁴⁵¹ The devastating collapse demonstrated the high stakes involved in stopping water in its tracks, with the resulting death toll over four hundred and “many millions of dollars” in property losses.⁴⁵² California Governor, C.C. Young, appointed a commission to determine the cause and the way forward.⁴⁵³ The commission noted that the failure was “due to defective foundations,” and that there were no indications “that the accepted theory of gravity type dam is in error.”⁴⁵⁴ They also proposed such projects should be “under the supervision and control of State authority.”⁴⁵⁵ For the Colorado River project, this meant three things. First, it confirmed the fairly obvious, that such a grand undertaking would require federal oversight. Next, finding the right foundation for the enormity required of such a dam was critical, so Walker Young’s work was all the more important. Finally, and maybe most importantly, the disaster was not going to deter California, nor any other state, from moving forward.

Nevadans shared Californians’ hopes that the dam project would proceed promptly. Again, Ed Clark and Pop Squires lobbied for the interests of Las Vegas when the governor appointed them to be part of the new Colorado River Commission. Interestingly, Clark and Squires were on opposite aisles politically. The governor, willing to overlook political

⁴⁴⁹ Unknown Author, “Dam Boosters on Coast Trip,” *Imperial Valley Press*, (El Centro, July 21, 1923), 1.

⁴⁵⁰ Associated Press, “Collapse of Big Dam Blamed on Builders,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, March 28, 1928), 3.

⁴⁵¹ Associated Press, “Collapse of Big Dam Blamed on Builders,” 3.

⁴⁵² Rogers, 66.; Associated Press, “Collapse of Big Dam Blamed on Builders,” 3.

⁴⁵³ Associated Press, “Collapse of Big Dam Blamed on Builders,” 3.

⁴⁵⁴ Associated Press, “Collapse of Big Dam Blamed on Builders,” 3.

⁴⁵⁵ Associated Press, “Collapse of Big Dam Blamed on Builders,” 3.

differences in this case, must have recognized the business acumen of these two and their shared vision for the growth of Las Vegas. The expectations in Las Vegas and Nevada were high for what the dam would do for the city and state.⁴⁵⁶

Meanwhile, as Franklin Roosevelt later seemed to shrewdly point out, Arizona did not share the same sentiments.⁴⁵⁷ The state across the Colorado River from Nevada did not agree with the terms of the *Boulder Canyon Project Act of 1928*, and, in fact, would fight it into 1930 and beyond.⁴⁵⁸ The *Boulder Canyon Project Act of 1928* was the official act, signed by President Coolidge on December 21st, 1928, that authorized the construction of the dam.⁴⁵⁹ Coolidge did not sign the act, however, until the necessary state agreements were in place.⁴⁶⁰ Seven states came together at the table to determine how much of the Colorado River's water would be apportioned to each state.⁴⁶¹ The states involved were Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.⁴⁶²

President Warren Harding appointed Herbert Hoover as Secretary of Commerce and also Chairman of the Colorado River Commission, and so he handled the complex water rights negotiations.⁴⁶³ These negotiations took over three years until Hoover offered a compromise.⁴⁶⁴ Instead of a by-state division, he proposed simply dividing the Colorado River basin in half, into

⁴⁵⁶ Moehring and Green, 58.

⁴⁵⁷ Kevin Wehr, *America's Fight Over Water: The Environmental and Political Effects of Large-Scale Water Systems*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 47.

⁴⁵⁸ Herbert Hoover, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States Herbert Hoover Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President January 1 to December 1930*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 433.; National Archives, Milestone Documents, *Boulder Canyon Project Act (1928)*, Accessed July 24, 2023, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/boulder-canyon-project-act>.

⁴⁵⁹ National Archives, Milestone Documents. *Boulder Canyon Project Act (1928)*, Accessed July 24, 2023, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/boulder-canyon-project-act>.; Duchemin, 63.

⁴⁶⁰ Duchemin, 63.

⁴⁶¹ Land and Land, 53.

⁴⁶² Land and Land, 53.

⁴⁶³ Land and Land, 53.; Associated Press, "Hoover's Speech at Dam: President Hails Fulfillment of His Work Begun Decade Ago," 16.

⁴⁶⁴ Land and Land, 53.; Associated Press, "Hoover's Speech at Dam: President Hails Fulfillment of His Work Begun Decade Ago," 16.

an upper and lower part, even setting aside a portion for Mexico.⁴⁶⁵ Hoover's proposal was accepted by six of the seven Colorado Basin states and codified in what he referred to as the "Santa Fe Compact."⁴⁶⁶ As he stated later during a visit to the dam site in 1932, he was able to solve "in a unique way the legal conflicts as to water rights amongst six of the states which had long held up any possibility of the realization of these works."⁴⁶⁷ Hoover, understanding the distinctive skillset he brought to the table, also "had the satisfaction of presenting, both as an engineer and as head of the commission...the great importance of these works."⁴⁶⁸

Arizona was the lone hold-out, arguing that the act was misleading on its promise of "improvement of navigation."⁴⁶⁹ Hoover left the state with the option to join later.⁴⁷⁰ Even when he became President, the fight continued, as Arizona took the matter to the U.S. Supreme Court to rule on its constitutionality.⁴⁷¹ Hoover never wavered, stating at a 1930 press conference, "The Boulder Dam construction will proceed as rapidly as possible," and that his hope was that "the States may be able to get together and compose their difficulties."⁴⁷² The Supreme Court ruled against Arizona, stating that the compact included the acknowledgement that "the river had 'ceased to be navigable for commerce'" and that negated any issue with navigability improvement.⁴⁷³ Arizona still did not approve the compact until 1944.⁴⁷⁴ The 1947

⁴⁶⁵ Land and Land, 53.

⁴⁶⁶ Land and Land, 55.; Associated Press, "Hoover's Speech at Dam: President Hails Fulfillment of His Work Begun Decade Ago," 16.; Kevin Starr, "Watering the Land: The Colorado River Project," *Southern California Quarterly*, Volume 75, Number 3/4, Fall/Winter, 1993., 304.

⁴⁶⁷ Associated Press, "Hoover's Speech at Dam: President Hails Fulfillment of His Work Begun Decade Ago," 16.

⁴⁶⁸ Associated Press, "Hoover's Speech at Dam: President Hails Fulfillment of His Work Begun Decade Ago," 16.

⁴⁶⁹ Unknown Author, "Arizona Loses," *New York Times*, (New York, May 24, 1931), E1.

⁴⁷⁰ Associated Press, "Hoover's Speech at Dam: President Hails Fulfillment of His Work Begun Decade Ago," 16.

⁴⁷¹ Herbert Hoover, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States Herbert Hoover Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President January 1 to December 1930*, 433.

⁴⁷² Herbert Hoover, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States Herbert Hoover Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President January 1 to December 1930*, 433.

⁴⁷³ Unknown Author, "Arizona Loses," E1.

⁴⁷⁴ Wm. Joe Simonds, Bureau of Reclamation. Reclamation History, *The Boulder Canyon Project: Hoover Dam*, Accessed July 24, 2023, <https://www.usbr.gov/history/hoover.html>.

Interior Department project history included “improvement of navigation” as one of the dam’s achievements, so maybe Arizonans got what they wanted in the end.⁴⁷⁵

Las Vegas, meanwhile, was a city of over five thousand in 1930 and was ready to explode on to the American scene with the construction of the Hoover Dam. This construction required so many laborers that a city would have to be built to accommodate them. These same dam workers would need time for rest and relaxation, and Las Vegas was just the place to go. This would lead to the development of Downtown Las Vegas which would cater to them and take their money. The military would also begin its relationship with the city in 1935.⁴⁷⁶ The next decade would be the last before the first hotels were built on what would later be referred to as the Strip. The approval of the Hoover Dam in Black Canyon was monumental for Las Vegas.

⁴⁷⁵ National Archives, Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor, Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California, *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History. 1947*, Accessed August 3, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/218518060>, 31.

⁴⁷⁶ Associated Press, “Army Planes Begin Tests in 5 States,” *New York Times*, (New York, July 22, 1935), 6.

Chapter Four – 1930s

Las Vegas was still a small Nevada city heading into the 1930s. Large-scale changes were on the horizon. The Hoover Dam, touted by President Hoover as “the greatest engineering work of its character ever attempted at the hand of man” was finally assembled.⁴⁷⁷ Such a feat had an immediate and forceful impact on the city which was still little more than a railroad stop entering the decade. The construction of this dam, which stood more than a hundred feet taller than the Washington Monument, actually required the founding of another city.⁴⁷⁸ As laws tightened elsewhere, another organized group looked for opportunities in the more open and tolerant Las Vegas.⁴⁷⁹ Perhaps, more than any other decade, the 1930s brought changes that helped shape modern Las Vegas.

The number one reason for that transformation was the construction of the Hoover Dam. The locals knew it would have a huge effect on their city, and, in fact, an impromptu parade broke out on Fremont Street once the news of the *Boulder Canyon Project Act of 1928* got out.⁴⁸⁰ Although President Coolidge signed it in December of that year, more work had to be done to get the actual construction started.⁴⁸¹ The federal government needed to find the construction company that would take on the project, and so the way to do that was to bid out a contract.⁴⁸² Such a contract required a five-million-dollar bond from the winning company.⁴⁸³ This was an

⁴⁷⁷ Associated Press, “Hoover’s Speech at Dam: President Hails Fulfillment of His Work Begun Decade Ago,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 13, 1932), 16.

⁴⁷⁸ Associated Press, “Hoover’s Speech at Dam: President Hails Fulfillment of His Work Begun Decade Ago,” 16.

⁴⁷⁹ James Roman, *Chronicles of Old Las Vegas: Exposing Sin City’s High-Stakes History*, (New York: Museyon, 2011), 51.

⁴⁸⁰ Roman, 43.

⁴⁸¹ Richard Wiltshire, David Gilbert, and Jerry Rogers, ed., *Hoover Dam: 75th Anniversary History Symposium*, (Las Vegas: American Society of Civil Engineers, 2010), 311.

⁴⁸² Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 311.

⁴⁸³ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 311.

enormous sum of money for any one company to absorb heading into a project, and, given the grandeur of this one, the competition was bound to be fierce.⁴⁸⁴

In fact, because it was more than western contractors could afford, the solution would have to come from one man with proven organization and innovation skills. Frank Crowe graduated from the University of Maine in 1905, the same institution from which Frank Weymouth graduated nine years earlier.⁴⁸⁵ Often under the tutelage of Weymouth at the Reclamation Service, Crowe gained experience from a number of irrigation canal and dam construction jobs.⁴⁸⁶ By 1910, Weymouth had assigned him his first supervisory dam job at Jackson Lake in Idaho.⁴⁸⁷ This was just the start of what would be an illustrious career.

Crowe's rise would be extraordinary. He next became the superintendent of the Arrowrock Dam, which stood as the highest dam in the world for twenty years.⁴⁸⁸ He moved on to the Flathead Project, where he learned about bureaucracy and administration.⁴⁸⁹ At the Tieton Dam, he learned to work with the public and local media. He even acted as a city manager of sorts, with a thousand occupants living on that dam site.⁴⁹⁰ He was honing the skills that would serve him well as he continued to progress.

His career did take a slight detour after the Reclamation Service got out of the business of building dams in 1924. Instead, they would contract out such jobs. Suddenly forced to work a desk job, Crowe quickly realized he was really only happy working out in the field.

Accordingly, in May of 1925, he left his government job to work for the Utah Construction

⁴⁸⁴ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 311.

⁴⁸⁵ Associated Press, "F.T. Crowe Dead; Built 19 U.S. Dams," *New York Times*, (New York, February 28, 1946), 19.; Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 309.

⁴⁸⁶ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 309.

⁴⁸⁷ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 309.

⁴⁸⁸ Associated Press, "F.T. Crowe Dead; Built 19 U.S. Dams," 19.

⁴⁸⁹ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 310.

⁴⁹⁰ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 310.

Company on the Guernsey Dam in Wyoming. Under that company and also the Morrison Knudsen Company, he also went on to build the Van Giesen and Deadwood Dams.⁴⁹¹ His move to the private sector proved to be a prudent one, and, at the end of his career, his peers recognized him for “his skill, ingenuity and construction of vast public works, notably in the construction of the world’s highest and deepest dams.”⁴⁹² Certainly, the Boulder Canyon project required even his best.

On March 4th, 1931, the government opened the Hoover Dam project up for bidding, and Crowe was ready. He had already convinced his bosses, at both the Utah Company and Morrison-Knudsen, that a consortium was the answer to raising the exorbitant bond. It seemed like a good idea to them and four other companies, and so the Six Companies, Inc. was formed. It also made good sense to put Crowe in charge of the operation. When Crowe submitted his cost estimate for the project at \$48,890,955.00, he validated their selection in spades. His bid won a week later, as he was only a paltry twenty-four thousand dollars above the government engineer’s estimate.⁴⁹³

A notice to proceed was given on April 20th.⁴⁹⁴ Interestingly, the order from Interior Secretary Ray Wilbur to commence work and advertise for bids, issued on July 7th, 1930, had listed Walker Young, the Bureau of Reclamation engineer that did the initial site testing, as the “engineer in charge.”⁴⁹⁵ While Young may have started out in charge, effectively, being a government engineer, that did not last. In all actuality, Crowe, the “stately-looking” man who

⁴⁹¹ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 310.

⁴⁹² Associated Press, “F.T. Crowe Dead; Built 19 U.S. Dams,” 19.

⁴⁹³ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 311.; Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam, The Story of Hoover Dam – Articles, *Chronology*, Accessed August 2, 2023, <https://www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam/history/articles/chrono.html>.

⁴⁹⁴ Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam, The Story of Hoover Dam – Articles, *Chronology*.

⁴⁹⁵ White House Press Releases, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, *Boulder Canyon Project Construction Start*, West Branch, Iowa, Accessed August 2, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/19086664>.

was known for his “large Stetson hat” ran everything on the dam site.⁴⁹⁶ In fact, in a 1975 interview, when talking about Crowe, Young said, “He was actually my boss. He was the man that I obeyed.”⁴⁹⁷ With Crowe in charge, the project moved forward.

Winning the bid was just the first of many challenges, and Crowe was immediately put to the test again. The first giant obstacle on the job site was simply dealing with the harsh living conditions. The nationwide depression meant that thousands from all over the country camped out in the desert hoping to find work at the dam, but many were not equipped to live in such dry, hot conditions.⁴⁹⁸ Crowe drew from his experience in leading a city-like work site at Tieton Dam to set up a town near Black Canyon within six months.⁴⁹⁹ This fully functioning town eventually became “Boulder City.”⁵⁰⁰ Foreshadowing differences in the dam naming, there seemed to be at least some degree of uncertainty on the city’s name, as one newspaper columnist referred to it as “Wilbur City” in two separate 1930 articles.⁵⁰¹ Interestingly, naming the city after the Interior Secretary did not catch on.⁵⁰²

Notwithstanding, having established adequate living spaces for the five thousand dam workers and their families, Crowe had to determine how to get the site operational. As before, he was up to the task. He started by building a railroad spur from Las Vegas. He also set up warehouses to store the supplies for the project and the housing site. Then, to get actual dam construction underway, Crowe set up processing facilities to make concrete, and he called on the

⁴⁹⁶ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 314.

⁴⁹⁷ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 314.

⁴⁹⁸ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 311.

⁴⁹⁹ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 311.; William Atherton Du Puy, “Construction of Hoover Dam is Uncle Sam’s Biggest Job: How Giant Hoover Dam Will Look,” *New York Times*, (New York, March 8, 1931), 126.

⁵⁰⁰ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 310 and 311.

⁵⁰¹ Duncan Aikman, “New Pioneers in Old West’s Deserts: The Prospect of Work at Hoover Dam Lures Men from Many States, and They Trek in Ramshackle Autos New Pioneers in the Desert,” *New York Times*, (New York, October 26, 1930), SM4.; Duncan Aikman, “Nevada Now Awaits Dam and Dry Regime,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, October 14, 1930), 13.

⁵⁰² Paul Papa, *Boulder City: The Town that Built the Hoover Dam*, (Charleston: The History Press, 2017), 9.

Babcock-Wilcox Company to establish a fabrication facility that could build the necessary machined parts. The preparation was over. The whole project was expected to last seven years, but Crowe would have his say in that.⁵⁰³

The first order of business in the actual construction was to build four tunnels to divert the Colorado River, so work could then be done in the resulting dry riverbed.⁵⁰⁴ Here, Crowe developed a new vehicle that would expedite the drilling process dramatically.⁵⁰⁵ The vehicle was a large staging area mounted on the frame of an International Truck that allowed thirty drillers to drill inside the tunnels at the same time and to enter and leave the tunnels swiftly.⁵⁰⁶ The genius behind the invention, called a Williams' Jumbo, was that it meant workers did not have to waste valuable time tearing down and rebuilding scaffolding every time blasting operations were needed.⁵⁰⁷ As one of his employees saw it, "He'd come down in the canyon by the river and look up this side and look up that side."⁵⁰⁸ The same employee went on about Crowe's somewhat unorthodox approach, "Then he'd scratch his head and go away. Pretty soon there'd be some machine we'd never seen before, and it would work, too."⁵⁰⁹

As work progressed in the summer of 1931, workers in the Six Companies suffered tremendously due to the "atrocious living conditions" and wage cuts.⁵¹⁰ As a result, the workers went on strike asking for cold water or ice on the job, a dollar, fifty-an-hour wage for eight hours, and for strict enforcement of Nevada and Arizona safety laws.⁵¹¹ As the strike wore on,

⁵⁰³ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 311.

⁵⁰⁴ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 308 and 311.

⁵⁰⁵ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 312.

⁵⁰⁶ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 312.

⁵⁰⁷ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 312.

⁵⁰⁸ Frank Taylor, "He Puts Rivers to Work: Meet Frank T. Crowe, Who Can Make Rivers Stand Still-Or Run Backwards-To Play a Vital Part in America's Defense Program," *The Sun*, (Baltimore, September 14, 1941), MA4.

⁵⁰⁹ Taylor, MA4.

⁵¹⁰ James Gallagher, "Strike Ties Up Hoover Dam Construction at Boulder," *New Leader*, (New York, Volume 13, Issue 7, August 15, 1931), 1.

⁵¹¹ Gallagher, 1.

federal, county, and city officials pointed out that the thirteen hundred employees out of work would starve in a few days unless construction resumed.⁵¹² Many of these workers went to Las Vegas rather than spending the nights in the desert hills surrounding the canyon.⁵¹³ In Las Vegas, perhaps gambling offered these hungry workers a quick way to possibly afford food during the strike.

Crowe did not give in to the strike.⁵¹⁴ However, a letter from Young that ordered Six Companies back to work put pressure on him to act.⁵¹⁵ He calmly and wisely installed security fencing, locked the strikers out, and fired them.⁵¹⁶ Because of the depression, he was able to hire many from the numerous hopefuls hanging around the site waiting for a job.⁵¹⁷ Some of the strikers were probably hired back, but the main agitators were jailed in Las Vegas.⁵¹⁸ This was another valuable time-saving maneuver by Crowe whose workers affectionately called “The Old Man.”⁵¹⁹

Crowe completed digging the four “largest holes ever bored in the earth’s crust,” at a mile long and fifty feet in diameter each, at a total cost of twenty million dollars.⁵²⁰ The Colorado River would be diverted through these tunnels to keep the site clear to erect the dam.⁵²¹ Two cofferdams made of earth and rock would also be required to keep the water moving into

⁵¹² Associated Press, “Hoover Dam Strikers Pitch Camp in Desert,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, August 13, 1931), 4.

⁵¹³ Associated Press, “Hoover Dam Strikers Pitch Camp in Desert,” 4.

⁵¹⁴ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 313.

⁵¹⁵ National Archives, Department of the Interior. Office of the Solicitor, Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California, *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History. Beginning to 1931*, Accessed August 3, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/218518040>, 295.

⁵¹⁶ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 313.

⁵¹⁷ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 313.

⁵¹⁸ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 313.

⁵¹⁹ Taylor, MA4.

⁵²⁰ Taylor, MA4.; Du Puy, 126.

⁵²¹ Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam. The Story of Hoover Dam – Essays, *Cofferdams*, Accessed August 2, 2023, <https://www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam/history/essays/coffer.html>.

the tunnels and to prevent backwash once the water exited the tunnels.⁵²² The upper cofferdam was six hundred feet downstream from the tunnel inlets and stood ninety-eight feet high, thirty feet higher than the top of the diversion tunnels.⁵²³ The lower cofferdam was set up downstream from the dam site, but before the tunnel outlets.⁵²⁴ Workers built a rock barrier three hundred, fifty feet downstream from the lower cofferdam, but still short of the outlets.⁵²⁵ These were completed in time for the river to be diverted November 14th, 1932.⁵²⁶ This was in time for the spring floods of 1933 in which the dams easily held up.⁵²⁷

Building the actual dam would come next beginning on June 6th, 1933.⁵²⁸ To save time and effort here, Crowe replicated a suitable practice from his previous dams and implemented the use of cableway systems.⁵²⁹ For this, “he swung five cableways across the canyon from rim to rim” to facilitate the transport of the concrete that would form the dam.⁵³⁰ The biggest of these cableways, “a monster named King Kong, handled 150 tons of concrete or steel at a crack.”⁵³¹ Crowe also developed a new way to pour the concrete in the intensely hot temperatures. He poured it into five-foot blocks in alternating columns with cooling tubes running through the bottom of the blocks. As the concrete blocks were set, the tubes were then

⁵²² Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam. The Story of Hoover Dam – Essays, *Cofferdams*.

⁵²³ Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam. The Story of Hoover Dam – Essays, *Cofferdams*.

⁵²⁴ Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam. The Story of Hoover Dam – Essays, *Cofferdams*.

⁵²⁵ Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam. The Story of Hoover Dam – Essays, *Cofferdams*.

⁵²⁶ Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam. The Story of Hoover Dam – Essays, *Cofferdams*.; Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam, The Story of Hoover Dam – Articles, *Chronology*.

⁵²⁷ Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam. The Story of Hoover Dam – Essays, *Cofferdams*.

⁵²⁸ National Archives, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Hoover Dam*, Clark County, Nevada, Accessed August 3, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/63816442>, 2.

⁵²⁹ Taylor, MA4.

⁵³⁰ Taylor, MA4.

⁵³¹ Taylor, MA4.

sealed. With this method, Crowe avoided the one hundred, twenty-five year drying phase predicted by some experts, and he also sped up the project as a whole.⁵³²

Public officials at the federal level recognized that the design was important, too, in that it should reflect “humankind’s triumph over nature” and “our capacity to shape the landscape.”⁵³³ These officials may have sensed that such a monumental dam would attract tourism, and so they included a concentration on aesthetics in the dam plans. In 1935, the Bureau of Reclamation “hired architect Gordon Kaufman to create a compelling look for the Dam.”⁵³⁴ According to famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright’s boss, Louis Sullivan, “form follows function.”⁵³⁵ Kaufman “opted for the simple curvatures and streamlined features prevalent in Art Deco design” to highlight the “power” of the dam.⁵³⁶ This “form,” which represented modernism at the time, then, was quite demonstrative of the “function,” or power of the Hoover Dam.⁵³⁷ Undoubtedly, Kaufman, with the assistance of Denver artist Allen Tupper True and sculptor Oskar J.W. Hansen, succeeded with the “graceful curve” of the dam, the sand paintings, and the many sculptures included in the design.⁵³⁸ The top level of the dam was, of course, unobtrusively, yet magnificently, straight and flush with the canyon. Unlike Sullivan, Wright argued that “form and function are one,” and the Hoover Dam, which looked exactly like one might expect a powerful dam to look, exemplified his axiom maybe more than Sullivan’s.⁵³⁹

⁵³² Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 312.

⁵³³ Roseanne Shoaff, “The Art of Hoover Dam,” *Boulder City Magazine*, December 2010/January 2011, Accessed April 11, 2024. https://www.bouldercitymagazine.com/past_issues/2010/2010_decjan/history.html.

⁵³⁴ Shoaff.; Unknown Author, “The Hoover Dam: Why is it Art Deco?” *HighEndWeekly.com*, June 13, 2012, Accessed April 11, 2024, <https://www.highendweekly.com/the-hoover-dam-why-is-it-art-deco/>.

⁵³⁵ Guggenheim Museum, *Form Follows Function*, Accessed April 11, 2024, <https://www.guggenheim.org/teaching-materials/the-architecture-of-the-solomon-r-guggenheim-museum/form-follows-function>.

⁵³⁶ Shoaff.

⁵³⁷ Unknown Author, “The Hoover Dam: Why is it Art Deco?”

⁵³⁸ Unknown Author, “The Hoover Dam: Why is it Art Deco?”

⁵³⁹ Guggenheim Museum, *Form Follows Function*.

Meanwhile, Crowe may have been more concerned with function. Just like any other job site, this one did have its minor delays, as a second strike erupted in July of 1935 after shift times were adjusted. The three hundred carpenters involved had limited success with Crowe this time. He allowed them to return to their previous schedules, but he did not give in to their wishes for higher wages. That stayed firm at seventy-five cents an hour. To get the project momentum back and to keep morale up, he also agreed not to hold any ill will toward any of them. Not having to fear any retribution, then, they filtered back in slowly, despite not getting their way on the wages.⁵⁴⁰

Operations resumed, and Crowe never looked back. On May 29th, 1936, the Hoover Dam was completed, twenty-five months ahead of schedule.⁵⁴¹ The dam was “larger than the Great Pyramid of Egypt.”⁵⁴² The colossal amount of diverted water following the dam’s activation on February 1st, 1935, created the largest artificial lake in the U.S. once it settled in place.⁵⁴³ The resulting eight trillion-gallon lake, Lake Mead, would appeal to those interested in fishing or other recreational activities.⁵⁴⁴ Just a byproduct of the dam project, then, this one hundred, ten-mile-long lake would become a draw for tourists in its own right.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁰ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 312.

⁵⁴¹ Taylor, MA4.; Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam, The Story of Hoover Dam – Articles, *Chronology*.

⁵⁴² Taylor, MA4.

⁵⁴³ Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam, The Story of Hoover Dam – Articles, *Chronology*.

⁵⁴⁴ Grady Johnson, “Lively Las Vegas New Vacationland is Growing Up Rapidly Around the Great Lake at Hoover Dam,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 14, 1948), X16.; Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam, The Story of Hoover Dam – Articles, *Chronology*.

⁵⁴⁵ Johnson, X16.; . Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam, The Story of Hoover Dam – Articles, *Chronology*.

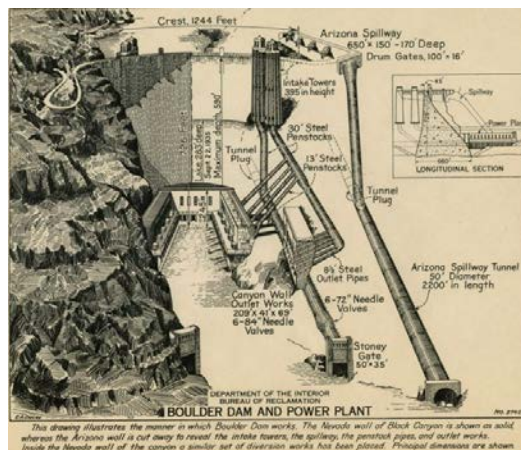


Figure 7 - Diagram Showing Hoover Dam Operation⁵⁴⁶

Building the dam was no safe venture. Ninety-six workers lost their lives during the dam construction, mostly due to the fumes while digging inside the tunnels.⁵⁴⁷ Still, Crowe worked tirelessly to improve the dam site safety, and “[e]verybody had respect for his ability to make decisions.”⁵⁴⁸ As a result of his ability to adapt on the fly and make what were routinely life-and-death decisions, few lives were lost after the tunnels were completed.⁵⁴⁹ Crowe earned the respect of the dam workers because of his innovative and caring efforts. As one of his work associates on the site, Curly Francis, said later, “I think he was a very outstanding man. Everybody liked him.”⁵⁵⁰ In the end, Six Companies cleared about thirteen million dollars in profits, with Crowe making salary and bonuses over a quarter of a million dollars.⁵⁵¹

During construction, another battle had ensued. Many people in the West called the dam “Boulder Dam,” due to its proximity to Boulder Canyon, even though it was really in Black

⁵⁴⁶ National Archives, Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor, Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California, *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History*. 1947, Accessed August 3, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/218518060>, 10.

⁵⁴⁷ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 126 and 127.

⁵⁴⁸ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 126, 127, and 314.

⁵⁴⁹ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 126 and 127.

⁵⁵⁰ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 314.

⁵⁵¹ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 126 and 127.

Canyon.⁵⁵² President Hoover's Secretary of Interior, Ray Wilbur, already christened it "Hoover Dam" in September of 1930, although he had officially ordered its construction two months earlier calling it "Boulder Dam."⁵⁵³ The Secretary of Interior in May of 1933, Harold Ickes, sent instructions to the Bureau of Reclamation that the name of the dam would revert back to "Boulder Dam."⁵⁵⁴ That may have been a political maneuver by Franklin Roosevelt, a Democrat, while Hoover was a Republican. Roosevelt's Southern California supporters had earlier teased him during his 1932 Hollywood Bowl campaign speech, saying, "Come on out, Governor: if you don't come out we'll vote for Hoover," suggesting that maybe the move was a nod to his Democratic supporters.⁵⁵⁵ This fight continued until 1947, when President Harry Truman signed a resolution that officially proclaimed the name, "Hoover Dam," crediting Hoover for his work on the project.⁵⁵⁶

On September 30th, 1935, though, at the dam dedication, President Roosevelt referred to it as "Boulder Dam."⁵⁵⁷ Moreover, he did not mention Hoover's name once during his speech, nor Crowe's for that matter.⁵⁵⁸ He did mention the "power house," which was "nearing completion" and would "contain the largest generators and turbines yet installed in this country,

⁵⁵² Associated Press, "Secretary Ickes Orders Big Colorado River Project to be Called by its Original Title, Disregarding Wilbur's Christening," *The Sun*, (Baltimore, May 13, 1933), 2.

⁵⁵³ Associated Press, "Secretary Ickes Orders Big Colorado River Project to be Called by its Original Title, Disregarding Wilbur's Christening," 2.; White House Press Releases, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, *Boulder Canyon Project Construction Start*.

⁵⁵⁴ Associated Press, "Secretary Ickes Orders Big Colorado River Project to be Called by its Original Title, Disregarding Wilbur's Christening," 2.

⁵⁵⁵ National Archives, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt Master Speech Files, *Hollywood Bowl Speech*, Accessed August 4, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/122176774>, 2.

⁵⁵⁶ Unknown Author, "Truman Signs Bill Naming Hoover Dam," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, May 1, 1947), 7.; National Archives, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs, 1970-79. 80th Congress, Hoover Dam – Public Law 80-41*, Accessed August 4, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/280985242>.

⁵⁵⁷ Associated Press, "President's Talk at Boulder Dam," *New York Times*, (New York, October 1, 1935), 2.

⁵⁵⁸ Associated Press, "President's Talk at Boulder Dam," 2.

machinery which can continuously supply 1,835,000 horsepower of electric energy.”⁵⁵⁹ He hailed the dam completion as “an engineering victory of the first order – another great achievement of American resourcefulness, skill and determination.”⁵⁶⁰ Perhaps, Roosevelt lauded this accomplishment because he was proud of the multiple dams built under his watch as part of his conservation and public power initiatives.⁵⁶¹ Certainly, Hoover and Crowe were instrumental in getting the Hoover Dam project done, but that did not necessarily fit the political narrative of the day.

However, there was nothing political about the capabilities of the dam. The power plant, consisting of seventeen turbines, was actually capable of 1.85 million horsepower.⁵⁶² An estimated one hundred, eighty-four-million dollars was later saved by the Hoover Dam flood control operations from 1950 to 1977.⁵⁶³ The development of Los Angeles and coastal Southern California would have been “greatly impeded or prevented without the water supply that Hoover Dam provided.”⁵⁶⁴ Because the dam provided low-cost hydroelectric power, it could literally pay for itself, and, by 1985, the dam’s fiftieth anniversary, the majority of the cost was paid to the National Treasury.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁵⁹ Associated Press, “President’s Talk at Boulder Dam,” 2.

⁵⁶⁰ Associated Press, “President’s Talk at Boulder Dam,” 2.

⁵⁶¹ Patrick Renshaw, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 132.

⁵⁶² National Archives, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Hoover Dam.*, 4.

⁵⁶³ National Archives, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Hoover Dam.*, 5.

⁵⁶⁴ National Archives, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Hoover Dam.*, 8.

⁵⁶⁵ National Archives, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Hoover Dam.*, 8.; Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam. The Story of Hoover Dam – Essays, *Cofferdams.*; Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam, The Story of Hoover Dam – Articles, *Chronology*.



Figure 8 - Hoover Dam Aerial View from Downstream⁵⁶⁶



Figure 9 - Hoover Dam Aerial View from Upstream⁵⁶⁷

While the dam construction was in its early stages, in 1931, Nevada made gambling lawful again. Although laws had already been gradually easing restrictions on some games of chance since the morality-charged state law change in 1909, this brought gambling completely out in the open. One bartender of the era captured the spirit of the change when he said, “People

⁵⁶⁶ National Archives, Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor, Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California, *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History. 1947.*, 3.

⁵⁶⁷ National Archives, Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor, Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California, *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History. 1947.*, 113.

who want to gamble are going to gamble...All Nevada did in '31 was to take 'em out of the claws of the polecats and give 'em a run for their money.” In other words, because of the repeal, the gambling halls in Nevada would then be establishments run by reputable owners, so, as he also said, “You will get a fair deal.” Other cities had gambling, but “behind locked doors where the law can’t watch 'em.” Nevadans certainly had a pioneering spirit when it came to making laws to generate tourism.⁵⁶⁸

The identity of Las Vegas began to transition. The original town site still offered an “Old West atmosphere,” but there was a sense that this was gradually phasing out.⁵⁶⁹ Visitors in the 1930s might find “sombbreroed cowboys and prospectors, and silver-starred deputies with shooting irons...and the click of dice and the jingle of silver dollars as of old,” but they also might notice the “electric lights and modern streets, and cars only faintly dusted by desert dust.”⁵⁷⁰ Block Sixteen still thrived as “women in riots of silk and close-fitting pajamas came to windows or doors to gaze frankly at the tourists, motioning openly.”⁵⁷¹ At the same time, Hollywood elites began taking advantage of the liberal marriage and divorce laws.⁵⁷² Still, Las Vegas remained a “city where the new type of pioneering...[had]...its best chance to rub shoulders with the old.”⁵⁷³

On April 25th, 1935, an annual event that continued on even into modern-day Las Vegas, took its inaugural ride.⁵⁷⁴ The “Helldorado Festival” was a celebration of the “epoch in which

⁵⁶⁸ Keith Wyatt, “‘Wide Open,’ Las Vegas Surprises the Easterner With Open Gambling, Licensed Joints, Nevada Town Recalls Frontier Days,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, May 1, 1938), SM3.

⁵⁶⁹ Wyatt, SM3.

⁵⁷⁰ Wyatt, SM3.

⁵⁷¹ Wyatt, SM3.

⁵⁷² Wyatt, SM3.

⁵⁷³ Aikman, “New Pioneers in Old West’s Deserts: The Prospect of Work at Hoover Dam Lures Men from Many States, and They Trek in Ramshackle Autos New Pioneers in the Desert,” SM4.

⁵⁷⁴ Associated Press, “Las Vegas Ready to Go ‘Wild West,’” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, April 25, 1935), 4.

fortunes were plucked from creek beds and hillsides and cattle roamed free of fences.”⁵⁷⁵

Organizers hoped that the carnival-like event would draw the Hoover Dam workers into the city to spend their money.⁵⁷⁶ Las Vegans wore Paramount Studios-provided costumes from those frontier days, and a frontier village was even erected, including “a mining scene” on the “outskirts.”⁵⁷⁷ This four-day long gala commemorated the pioneer spirit among the population of that period.⁵⁷⁸ That spirit would endure in Las Vegas, but outside of this soon-to-be annual extravaganza, the “Wild West” atmosphere was about to subside in this city.⁵⁷⁹

The reason for such changes was the Hoover Dam. Its impact on Las Vegas was virtually instantaneous, but the mob slowly infiltrated the town-dam community. The large number of dam workers needed places to eat, stay, and have fun when they were not toiling away at the dam site. In 1931, the newly paved Boulder Highway, which was Fremont Street extended out to the dam site, was a prime location for such places.⁵⁸⁰ In May, Tony Cornero, an illegal rum-running “shrimping vessel” operator from California, opened the Meadows Club at the cost of thirty-one thousand dollars with his brothers along the new highway.⁵⁸¹ The club had licenses for two roulette wheels, blackjack tables and poker tables.⁵⁸² Notably, Cornero offered entertainment there including the singing Gumm Sisters, the youngest of which at nine years old was “Baby

⁵⁷⁵ Associated Press, “Las Vegas Ready to Go ‘Wild West,’” 4.

⁵⁷⁶ Karen Jones, “‘The Old West in Modern Splendor’: Frontier Folklore and the Selling of Las Vegas,” *European Journal of American Culture*, (Volume 29, Number 2, July 1, 2010), 96.

⁵⁷⁷ Associated Press, “Las Vegas Ready to Go ‘Wild West,’” 4.; Jones, 97.

⁵⁷⁸ Associated Press, “Las Vegas Ready to Go ‘Wild West,’” 4.

⁵⁷⁹ Associated Press, “Las Vegas Ready to Go ‘Wild West,’” 4.

⁵⁸⁰ Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 87.

⁵⁸¹ Moehring and Green, 87.; The Mob Museum, *Gangster-Built Golden Nugget Turns 70*, August 30, 2016, Accessed August 17, 2023, <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/gangster-built-golden-nugget-turns-70/>; Roman, 51 and 52.

⁵⁸² Roman, 52.

Gumm,” soon to be known as Judy Garland.⁵⁸³ One of the first mob associates to hit Las Vegas, Cornero also announced his plans for a new hotel.⁵⁸⁴

Similarly, the Railroad Pass Casino opened up outside the Boulder City limits.⁵⁸⁵ However, this was not without certain exceptions. The Bureau of Reclamation’s counsel and executive head of Boulder City, Louis Cramton, had to confer with the county commissioners before announcing it would be constructed.⁵⁸⁶ The concern was that it was only a mile from the dam site.⁵⁸⁷ The casino was authorized, as it was really seven miles away, but, “if liquor or immorality appeared there the permit would be revoked.”⁵⁸⁸ The proprietor, F.J. Warren, opened seemingly capitulating to those terms, but still proceeded to serve liquor, albeit somewhat discretely.⁵⁸⁹ Clark County historian, Mark Hall-Patton, said about the new casino, “They didn’t know it was going to be a speakeasy.”⁵⁹⁰

Changes to downtown hotels with the addition of the Hoover Dam signaled the city’s first turn from business to pleasure. The Hotel Nevada added a third floor and more rooms and was renamed the Sal Sagev, or Las Vegas spelled somewhat backwards. The MacDonald Hotel also added rooms, and the Apache Hotel was built housing the city’s first elevator. These changes were done primarily to accommodate the increasing amounts of tourists for the Hoover Dam, but

⁵⁸³ Roman, 53.

⁵⁸⁴ Moehring and Green, 87.; The Mob Museum, *Gangster-Built Golden Nugget Turns 70*, August 30, 2016, Accessed August 17, 2023, <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/gangster-built-golden-nugget-turns-70/>; Roman, 51 and 52.

⁵⁸⁵ Moehring and Green, 87.

⁵⁸⁶ Associated Press, “U.S. Will Not Balk Las Vegas Resort,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, June 7, 1931), M6.

⁵⁸⁷ Associated Press, “U.S. Will Not Balk Las Vegas Resort,” M6.

⁵⁸⁸ Associated Press, “U.S. Will Not Balk Las Vegas Resort,” M6.

⁵⁸⁹ Mike Shoro, “Nevada’s Oldest Casino Turns 90,” *Las Vegas Review Journal*, (Las Vegas, July 30, 2021), Accessed August 4, 2023, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/business/casinos-gaming/nevadas-oldest-casino-turns-90-2410326/>.

⁵⁹⁰ Shoro.

the recent relegalization of gambling certainly drew these tourists to the downtown area. The increase in hotel rooms was not the only improvement made as investors reacted to the promise of a bigger Las Vegas.⁵⁹¹

The downtown area rapidly expanded in the early 1930s. Dozens of businessmen-turned landlords got in the business of purchasing lots and opening apartments. The old wooden-framed buildings were replaced by taller, sturdier successors. The Union Pacific spent four hundred thousand dollars on facility upgrades. The Masons built a new temple at the cost of one hundred, ten thousand dollars. The county commissioners even spent eighty thousand dollars for a courthouse addition. Roads were widened, and a new post office and hospital were constructed. This was a city on the move.⁵⁹²

On November 26th, 1930, only just about four months after the Hoover Dam bidding announcement, the fortunes of Las Vegas truly turned. The Red Rooster opened on that day along Highway 91. Alice Wilson Morris was the owner of this establishment, which featured a stage, dance floor, and restaurant.⁵⁹³ This night club was the first to open its doors next to the highway that connected Las Vegas to Los Angeles. This club, although more of a “roadhouse” than a casino, offered gambling even before Nevada formally restored it as a legal activity again in 1931. It was also a speakeasy.⁵⁹⁴ Morris was one of the first twenty-five businesses to receive a gambling license, but she lost it after only a few months being charged by federal agents for

⁵⁹¹ Moehring and Green, 82.

⁵⁹² Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 19.

⁵⁹³ Eric Endy, *Paul S. Endy Jr.: Las Vegas Casino Gaming Legend*, (Meadville: Fulton Books, 2022), 38.

⁵⁹⁴ Endy, 38.

selling alcohol illegally.⁵⁹⁵ Nevertheless, although nobody knew it yet, this was the first gaming site on what would become the world-famous “Las Vegas Strip.”⁵⁹⁶

Next, the Pair-O-Dice Club opened in 1931 as the first full-fledged casino on the Strip.⁵⁹⁷ Frank Detra was the original owner of this club that only opened during nights.⁵⁹⁸ Like the Red Rooster, this club offered gambling before it was completely legal in Nevada.⁵⁹⁹ Notably, this club may have also been associated with the early mob presence in Las Vegas, although Nevada historians, Robert Stodal and Eric Moody, maintained that no records have been located to confirm this.⁶⁰⁰ During Prohibition, Nevada and its passive efforts to “mop up” liquor offenses presented a lucrative opportunity for mob bosses like Al Capone.⁶⁰¹

As the family story went according to Deirdre Capone, her grandfather and Al Capone’s brother, Ralph Capone, were looking at Nevada as a “gold mine” if gambling and alcohol were legalized.⁶⁰² She also claimed that Ralph opened the Pair-O-Dice Club.⁶⁰³ The story was possible, as John Detra, Frank Detra’s son, whose claim was that his father was close to Al Capone, did business with mobsters, and actually received money from Capone to assist in

⁵⁹⁵ Endy, 38.

⁵⁹⁶ News 3 Staff, “92 Years Ago Gaming Got its Start on the Las Vegas Strip,” *News3LV.com*, November 26, 2022, Accessed August 16, 2023, <https://news3lv.com/news/local/92-years-ago-gaming-got-its-start-on-the-las-vegas-strip/>; Martin Griffith, “Descendant: Capones Paved Way for Nevada Gambling,” *Tahoe Daily Tribune*, (South Lake Tahoe, May 28, 2012), Accessed August 17, 2023, <https://www.tahodailytribune.com/news/descendant-capones-paved-way-for-nevada-gambling/>.

⁵⁹⁷ Griffith.

⁵⁹⁸ Unknown Author, “Las Vegas Known for its Trendy, Ultrachic Nightclubs,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, (Las Vegas, July 16, 2009), Accessed August 17, 2023, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/las-vegas-known-for-its-trendy-ultrachic-nightclubs/>.

⁵⁹⁹ Unknown Author, “Las Vegas Known for its Trendy, Ultrachic Nightclubs.”

⁶⁰⁰ Griffith.

⁶⁰¹ Chapin Hall, “Los Angeles Game for Racket Leader,” *New York Times*, (New York, April 5, 1931), Accessed August 17, 2023, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/99089896/D0B42394887B42EAPQ/136?accountid=12085>, 53.

⁶⁰² Griffith.

⁶⁰³ Griffith.

legalizing gambling in Nevada.⁶⁰⁴ The son of W.R. “Billy” Wilkerson, who would be the mastermind behind the Flamingo in the next decade, also discussed his father’s friend, Joe Schenck, who ran in the same Hollywood gambling circles as some of Capone’s men.⁶⁰⁵ A similar story included a stay by Baby Face Nelson, also known as “Public Enemy Number One,” in a small house referred to as the “monkey house” just outside the Pair-o-Dice Club.⁶⁰⁶ The building normally housed monkeys used in a sort of roulette game.⁶⁰⁷ While maybe these family stories were nothing more than rumors, the mob was slowly gaining influence in Las Vegas hoping to take advantage of the burgeoning gambling city.⁶⁰⁸

In 1939, former Los Angeles policeman, Guy McAfee moved to Las Vegas and purchased the Pair-O-Dice Club that year and operated it as the 91 Club.⁶⁰⁹ McAfee would later be credited with giving the Strip its name after seeing the similarities between the new hotels along this Las Vegas road with the Sunset Strip he patrolled in Los Angeles.⁶¹⁰ He would later found the Golden Nugget downtown in 1946.⁶¹¹ There, he set up a “100-foot neon sign, the first of many huge displays on Fremont Street.⁶¹² As it turned out, though, McAfee was not one of Los Angeles’s most model citizens.

During the 1920s, McAfee took “hush payments” from bootleggers. He decided there was more money to be made as a crook, so he left his job as captain and vice-squad commander

⁶⁰⁴ Griffith.

⁶⁰⁵ W.R. Wilkerson, *Hollywood Godfather: The Life and Crimes of Billy Wilkerson*, (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2018), 112.

⁶⁰⁶ Frank Wright, *Nevada Yesterdays*, (Las Vegas: Dorothy Wright and Stephens Press, LLC., 2005), 117.

⁶⁰⁷ Wright, 117.

⁶⁰⁸ Griffith.

⁶⁰⁹ Wright, 103.

⁶¹⁰ Moehring and Green, 111.

⁶¹¹ United Press International, “Guy M’afee, 72, Dies,” *New York Times*, (New York, February 21, 1960), 92.

⁶¹² United Press International, “Guy M’afee, 72, Dies,” 92.

with the Los Angeles police and joined the city's largest crime syndicate.⁶¹³ He was known as the "Los Angeles gambling king," and was taking in a hundred thousand dollars per month by 1934.⁶¹⁴ Along with Billy Wilkerson, he ran the Clover Club, which was a night club and illegal casino on the Sunset Strip.⁶¹⁵ McAfee also was involved with the city's brothel racket, even marrying one of the madams.⁶¹⁶ In 1931, upon the death of mob boss, Charles Crawford, he took over the organization of which Tony Cornero, the owner of the Meadows Club, was also a member.⁶¹⁷ By the end of the 1930s, the mob was primed to stake an even larger claim in Las Vegas.⁶¹⁸

New York crime boss, Meyer Lansky, had moved in early, too, to get in on the Las Vegas action. He had installed Bugsy Siegel in Los Angeles and Moe Sedway in Las Vegas to oversee the horse racing results telegraph betting service better known as the Race Wire. They saw Cornero's Meadows Club as an intrusion on their gaming space and worked to get their service into the club. Interestingly, in September of 1931, after Cornero did not comply, the Meadows was burned to the ground. The allegation was that New York mobsters were behind the mysterious fire. This was not enough to stop the wily Cornero, as he took what he learned from Las Vegas and purchased two large ships which he anchored off the coast in California. He named himself the "Admiral" and used the *S.S. Rex* and the *S.S. Tango* as offshore casinos. The

⁶¹³ The Mob Museum, *Gangster-Built Golden Nugget Turns 70.*; David Littlejohn, ed., *The Real Las Vegas: Life Beyond the Strip*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 244.

⁶¹⁴ Larry Gragg, *Bugsy's Shadow: Moe Sedway, "Bugsy" Siegel, and the Birth of Organized Crime in Las Vegas*, (Albuquerque: High Road Books, 2023), 55.

⁶¹⁵ The Mob Museum, *Gangster-Built Golden Nugget Turns 70.*; Wilkerson, 113.

⁶¹⁶ The Mob Museum, *Gangster-Built Golden Nugget Turns 70.*

⁶¹⁷ The Mob Museum, *Gangster-Built Golden Nugget Turns 70.*

⁶¹⁸ The Mob Museum, *Gangster-Built Golden Nugget Turns 70.*

S.S. *Rex* had a crew of three hundred, fifty that included a wait staff, gourmet chefs, an orchestra, and gunmen. Cornero was making big money in this latest venture.⁶¹⁹

That was until 1939, when a sort of siege developed as California and Los Angeles police officers attempted to raid his “neon-trimmed ship” for gambling and nuisance charges.⁶²⁰ At one point during the siege, according to the chief agent, Oscar Johnson, “Cornero had hauled down the American Flag and threatened to seek a Japanese registry for his ship.”⁶²¹ Given that the U.S. was indirectly backing China in its war against Japan at the time, Cornero was sending a defiant message to put it mildly. Moreover, Cornero ordered his crew to spray the officers with fire hoses.⁶²² Even the Coast Guard got involved as it “circled the gambling barge through the day and early evening.”⁶²³ The man also dubbed “The Admiral of the Rolling Bones” finally surrendered on August 10th, but posted the five thousand-dollar bail and would have more to say in the history of Las Vegas.⁶²⁴

Like the Coast Guard’s minor involvement in this scuffle during this era, the U.S. Army made at least a couple visits in Las Vegas towards the end of the 1920s and into the 1930s. When a film party became missing on November 8th while on their 1927 Pathe-Bray expedition navigating the Colorado River gorge in the Grand Canyon, the Army selected Las Vegas to set up a base station.⁶²⁵ Army Lieutenant W.C. Burgess, an Army airplane pilot, landed there on November 27th to begin a search of the Grand Canyon by air.⁶²⁶ Lieutenant Dean Farran, a

⁶¹⁹ Roman, 53 and 54.

⁶²⁰ Associated Press, “Betting Ship Man Taken,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 11, 1939), 15.; Associated Press, “Gaming ‘Flagship’ Defeats Officers,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, August 3, 1939), 6.

⁶²¹ Unknown Author, “Gambling Ship Owner Still Blocks Raiders,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 3, 1939), 3.

⁶²² Unknown Author, “Gambling Ship Owner Still Blocks Raiders,” 3.

⁶²³ Unknown Author, “Gambling Ship Owner Still Blocks Raiders,” 3.

⁶²⁴ Associated Press, “Betting Ship Man Taken,” 15.; Associated Press, “Tony Cornero Dead; is Stricken at Dice,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 1, 1955), 38.

⁶²⁵ Associated Press, “Start Air Canyon Hunt,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 28, 1927), 12.

⁶²⁶ Associated Press, “Start Air Canyon Hunt,” 12.

radio expert, and Fred Brown, an aviation mechanic, accompanied him.⁶²⁷ After a hurricane at the expedition's base camp in Arizona slowed operations, the embattled expedition party was just safely reaching their objective as they also noticed the plane of Burgess overhead.⁶²⁸

The next episode in the emerging U.S. Army – Las Vegas relationship occurred in July of 1935. Then-Brigadier General Henry “Hap” Arnold, the commander of the first wing air force of the general headquarters force, discussed plans for upcoming scheduled maneuvers that involved seventy-five planes from Rockwell Field in San Diego and Hamilton Field in San Francisco. He argued “An army unit to defend a territory must know it.” He continued, “To fulfill properly its mission of defending the Pacific Coast and the Rocky Mountain region, the first wing will manoeuvre [sic] three days and return to their home stations July 25.” The planes were all aiming to meet in Salt Lake City with Arnold and some of the planes stopping through Las Vegas. It was not much more than a stopover, but it demonstrated the city was gaining at least some federal military visibility, as the future five-star Army and Air Force general did single it out for the training.⁶²⁹

By the end of the 1930s, Las Vegas was gaining its identity as a potential tourist destination. The construction of the Hoover Dam brought workers and tourists from all over the country. Lake Mead also became a destination for the recreationally-minded tourists. Nevada lawmakers understood all too well that relaxed morality laws which allowed for liquor and gambling would entice these tourists and workers to Las Vegas, and maybe elsewhere in the state. As a result of this combination, Las Vegas, and some who came to Las Vegas from

⁶²⁷ Associated Press, “Start Air Canyon Hunt,” 12.

⁶²⁸ Unknown Author, “Describes Battle with Canyon Rapids,” *New York Times*, (New York, December 4, 1927), N1.; Unknown Author, “Hurricane Sweeps Arizona Film Camp,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 30, 1927), 22.

⁶²⁹ Associated Press, “Army Planes Begin Tests in 5 States,” *New York Times*, (New York, July 22, 1935), 6.

elsewhere, built apartments, clubs, hotels, and casinos, hoping to make a quick buck in the process. These mobsters of the day preferred this situation, and they began muscling their way in. This was just the beginning of the city's rise to be a world-class entertainment destination.

Although the water and the railroad helped create the isolated desert city of Las Vegas, the Hoover Dam likely would have been constructed in the same place due to stability of the rock foundation. Had Young concluded that Boulder Canyon was a better site, perhaps another smaller city closer to that canyon could have developed instead, or maybe Las Vegas was still the closest destination. Either way, the fact that Las Vegas was there and that it had a railroad station did not seem to be the reason for even the general location of the dam. However, as it turned out, the dam was built in close proximity and the city benefitted exponentially because of it.

That is not to infer that the spring water and the railroads were not important in the development of Las Vegas. They were both crucial pieces in the early establishment of the city. They simply did not seem to be reasons why the Hoover Dam was built in Black Canyon. Ultimately, the Colorado River, its pattern of flooding the Los Angeles Basin, and geology may have controlled that. The Hoover Dam, then, was a separate factor in the growth of Las Vegas, not directly linked to the spring water or railroads, although these other factors did help facilitate the connection between the dam and the city. This distinction between these factors was an important one, as similar connections later were also cases in which such overlap requiring further discussion existed, like the Hoover Dam and the mob for instance.

At this juncture in the history of Las Vegas, the mob was just gaining traction, but the Hoover Dam was already a permanent fixture. As a result of the astounding construction and design efforts of Frank Crowe, Gordon Kaufman, and others, tourists continued visiting to

witness the dam's magnificence and strength. The Hoover Dam was an engineering marvel and an architectural masterpiece. The city was certainly heading toward an inflection point as the Hoover Dam opened up the city to wide tourism, but also as the mob was about to infiltrate many of the places that later attracted more visitors. Although entertainment was a part of the city's early era, it would also start gaining momentum in the 1940s. Likewise, the military would establish a more permanent presence during that decade. Magnesium would also, once again, have a role in the growth of Las Vegas. The Strip also continued to expand. As the 1940s approached, perhaps fewer Las Vegans knew what to expect from their city than the residents of the previous decade.

Chapter Five – 1940s

In the early 1940s, the city of Las Vegas had a “population of only 8,422” with the hopes of becoming a legitimate resort destination.⁶³⁰ Until then, the Strip had been nothing more than a couple of small clubs offering gambling along the side of Highway 91, but a slow transformation was manifesting. Americans became familiar with the “strip,” although some may not have been ready to capitalize the “s” just yet.⁶³¹ As all other Americans went all in answering the call to support the national World War II war effort, the citizens of Las Vegas, too, were willing to do their part, even hosting permanent military units for the first time. Also, to bolster American defenses, a new factory was built nearby to provide bombing materials, and its impact would be felt throughout Las Vegas, the valley, and beyond.⁶³² Making a profit whenever possible seemed to be the Las Vegas way, even when that business had a greater altruistic purpose like contributing to the national defense. Sometimes, the objectives were not quite as noble. Either way, the local residents would see their hopes realized, when after this decade, Las Vegas would finally become an American resort city.

During the previous decade, with the construction of the Hoover Dam, Las Vegas had recognized its newfound potential to be a tourist destination. At first the construction of the dam was the main attraction. Early smalltime visionaries opened clubs with gambling and liquor to make money off of the influx of dam laborers who also needed short bouts of rest and relaxation. Others realized Lake Mead was becoming an attraction, too, which also brought more visitors to

⁶³⁰ Walter Winchell, “Walter Winchell...of New York: Memos About Las Vegas,” *The Washington Post*, Washington, May 1, 1953), 53.; Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 84.

⁶³¹ Jack Goodman, “Jackpot Jamboree: Small-money Slot-Machine Gamblers in Nevada Have Struck a Bonanza,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 15, 1948), SM30.

⁶³² Moehring and Green, 101.

the city. While the Hoover Dam and Lake Mead remained cherished destinations, a transition throughout the 1940s would shift the main draw of the region to Las Vegas.

One man had a lot to do with this. Nevada U.S. Senator, Pat McCarran, was once described as “a man of dignity and intellect,” who “reaches his own conclusions and doesn’t change them because they are resented elsewhere.”⁶³³ In other words, this senator who was once a divorce attorney for Hollywood actress, Mary Pickford, and who introduced a bill to make St. Patrick’s Day a legal holiday in Washington, DC, understood the needs of Nevada and would never compromise.⁶³⁴ Liberal marriage laws and a holiday rooted in liquor, even starting with just the nation’s capital to garner larger backing for expansion, were both aimed at increasing visitors to Las Vegas, and he was not going to capitulate to the power brokers in the nation’s capital or anywhere else. Instead, he worked tirelessly to deliver sound policies and deals favorable to Nevada and Las Vegas.

McCarran had his hand in several major deals that would generate business in Las Vegas beginning in 1940. That year, he piloted a deal in which Western Air Express sold its airport to Las Vegas.⁶³⁵ He then brokered a thirty-year lease that gave the airline landing rights.⁶³⁶ At the same time, McCarran was instrumental in obtaining army approval of installing a gunnery school on the same grounds. Similarly, he pushed the War Department to set up Camp Sibert to guard the Hoover Dam.⁶³⁷ His other big 1940 achievement was convincing Roosevelt’s staff to place a

⁶³³ Unknown Author, “Pat and the President,” *New York Times*, (New York, July 15, 1938), 16.

⁶³⁴ Unknown Author, “Senator McCarran Reminisces About ‘America’s Sweetheart,’” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, March 23, 1934), 13.; Unknown Author, “Irish Holiday,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, March 16, 1934), 3.

⁶³⁵ Moehring and Green, 103.

⁶³⁶ Moehring and Green, 103 and 104.

⁶³⁷ Unknown Author, “Army to Send 850 to Guard Boulder Dam,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, April 24, 1941), 5.; Moehring and Green, 104.

magnesium plant near Las Vegas, an idea that had actually been around since 1935.⁶³⁸ Although the U.S. was not yet in World War II, the smart senator acted swiftly to make these deals for both Las Vegas, Nevada, and America.

These deals did come at a cost, sort of. The army insisted on the elimination of prostitution and limited hours for liquor stores and casinos, so the soldiers would keep proper focus. The cost ended up being nothing, as the troops spent more than enough gambling to cover any losses associated with the removal of prostitution. In fact, because McCarran was receptive to the army's demands, the army would later reward such patriotism and cooperation among the Las Vegas in 1947. With the senator's support, the U.S. Air Force, no longer an Army component, looked to transform the gunnery range into a base to train jet pilots for the Cold War. McCarran then pushed local officials to create a separate commercial airport which would eventually be named after him for many decades until another Nevada senator, Harry Reid, supplanted him.⁶³⁹ The airport would enable travelers from all over the world to visit Las Vegas to partake in its unique diversions.

Meanwhile, the air base endured. It originally had opened as "Las Vegas Army Air Field" in 1941 to house the gunnery range. It reopened as "Las Vegas Air Force Base" in 1949 to train the Air Force jet pilots after being deactivated in 1947. The base was finally given the name "Nellis Air Force Base" in 1950 in honor of First Lieutenant William Nellis, a World War II Army pilot. He died in the Battle of the Bulge in 1944 while firing from his P-47 Thunderbolt

⁶³⁸ Moehring and Green, 101.

⁶³⁹ Moehring and Green, 104-106.; Howard Stutz, "Tributes Pour In as Las Vegas' McCarran Airport Renamed After Harry Reid," *The Nevada Independent*, December 14, 2021, Accessed February 14, 2024, <https://thenevadaindependent.com/article/tributes-pour-in-as-las-vegas-mccarran-airport-renamed-after-harry-reid>.

fighter aircraft at a German convoy in Luxembourg. Originally a resident of Searchlight, a town about fifty miles south of Las Vegas, he was quickly recognized as a local Nevada war hero.⁶⁴⁰

McCarran did not stop there. He left no stone unturned when it came to exploiting World War II War Department initiatives to enrich the city of Las Vegas. Along with the Senior Nevada senator at the time, Key Pittman, and the former Nevada senator, Charles Henderson, he lobbied for federal funding for a much needed magnesium plant. The plant would be able to transform magnesium into flares, tracer bullets, bomb casings, and other critical defense products. Asking the federal government for a magnesium plant was no simple undertaking. Still, these resourceful senators understood their state and Las Vegas and were up to the task.⁶⁴¹

To move forward on this project, McCarran connected with Howard Eells, the owner of Basic Refractories, a Las Vegas company that made heat-resistant bricks used for lining high-temperature furnaces.⁶⁴² Eells and Major C.J.P. Ball, president of the British firm, Magnesium Elektron, Ltd., had been looking for a factory to help the war effort with magnesium and make a profit.⁶⁴³ Because Eells owned a large magnesium deposit in Gabbs, Nevada, about three hundred and fifty miles northwest of Las Vegas, and because the Hoover Dam provided low-cost power while Lake Mead provided the water necessary to cool the magnesium ingots, Roosevelt had no reason to deny McCarran.⁶⁴⁴ On July 5th, 1941, the contract for a Las Vegas magnesium plant was signed, and Basic Magnesium Inc. was established.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴⁰ Robert Dudney, "Namesakes: Billy Nellis," *Air & Space Forces Magazine*, May 1, 2020, Accessed August 24, 2023, <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/article/namesakes-billy-nellis/>.

⁶⁴¹ Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 33-35.

⁶⁴² Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 33.

⁶⁴³ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 33 and 34.

⁶⁴⁴ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 34.; Moehring and Green, 101.

⁶⁴⁵ Moehring, 34 and 35.

The new one hundred million-dollar magnesium plant opened on August 31st, 1942.⁶⁴⁶ By July of the next year, with an additional thirty million dollars added to its overall price tag, the plant was in “full production” and was expected to be “three and a half times greater than that of all the world’s other similar factories combined.”⁶⁴⁷ Much like how the construction of the Hoover Dam required enough laborers to build a new city, this plant required fourteen thousand workers and a new city between Boulder City and Las Vegas to accommodate them all.⁶⁴⁸ Also, like the Hoover Dam, this new town’s name evolved.⁶⁴⁹ First, it was “Midway” due to its location, but there was early speculation that it would soon change to “Pittman” to honor who was by then the late Senator Key Pittman.⁶⁵⁰ Eventually, the name of this city would be “Henderson,” named after the other Senator assisting McCarran.⁶⁵¹

After World War II, there was a concern that producing such high amounts of magnesium might be excessive given the decreased need for the war materials containing the metal.⁶⁵² Halting production at the plant could have been catastrophic for Henderson, so McCarran stepped in, once again.⁶⁵³ This time working with the Truman administration, he successfully implemented a clever solution.⁶⁵⁴ He essentially offered President Truman a way to preserve the enormous federal investment in magnesium plants.⁶⁵⁵ McCarran convinced the federal government to sell the plant to Nevada for the rent that firms would pay to utilize parts of

⁶⁴⁶ Associated Press, “Big Magnesium Plant Opens,” *New York Times*, (New York, September 2, 1942), 11.

⁶⁴⁷ Associated Press, “Magnesium Output Grows: Las Vegas Plant Now Operating at Triple World Capacity,” *New York Times*, (New York, July 13, 1943), 31.

⁶⁴⁸ Associated Press, “Magnesium Plant Rising in Desert,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, November 21, 1941), 19.

⁶⁴⁹ Associated Press, “Magnesium Plant Rising in Desert,” 19.

⁶⁵⁰ Associated Press, “Magnesium Plant Rising in Desert,” 19.

⁶⁵¹ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 36.

⁶⁵² Unknown Author, “Urges Magnesium for Civilian Uses,” *New York Times*, (New York, March 14, 1944), 12.

⁶⁵³ Moehring and Green, 106.

⁶⁵⁴ Moehring and Green, 106.

⁶⁵⁵ Unknown Author, “Urges Magnesium for Civilian Uses,” 12.

the plant.⁶⁵⁶ The plant could remain functional, and Truman was then able to weather the political firestorm calling for “prompt initiation of programs promoting wider use of magnesium.”⁶⁵⁷ Eventually, the tenant firms paid Nevada to take over the plant meaning Nevada never really had to pay anything.⁶⁵⁸

As Senator McCarran was busy betting on his political know-how, the local Las Vegas officials were looking for ways to boost the city’s tourism numbers. James Cashman and other members of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce started by contacting the California hotelier, Thomas Hull.⁶⁵⁹ Hull managed hotels in Fresno, Sacramento, and Los Angeles, two of which he called the “El Rancho.”⁶⁶⁰ Cashman’s reasoning was that a new El Rancho hotel, with a casino, would bring in greater profits than Hull’s other El Rancho hotels, and Hull’s customers might also make the trip to see what amenities the new Las Vegas hotel provided.⁶⁶¹ Cashman then took Hull to various sites in and around Fremont Street to settle on a location.⁶⁶² Hull had another idea.

Hull was certainly no novice in the hotel business, and his insightful business decision would permanently alter Las Vegas. Hull selected a spot along Highway 91.⁶⁶³ He purchased thirty-three acres for one hundred, fifty dollars per acre.⁶⁶⁴ This, of course, would allow California visitors to drive right up to the resort. Hull also escaped the city taxes on slot machines, whereas Clark County, where the highway ran, did not have any.⁶⁶⁵ The property was

⁶⁵⁶ Moehring and Green, 106.

⁶⁵⁷ Moehring and Green, 106.; Unknown Author, “Urges Magnesium for Civilian Uses,” 12.

⁶⁵⁸ Moehring and Green, 106.

⁶⁵⁹ Moehring and Green, 109.

⁶⁶⁰ David Clary, *Gangsters to Governors: The New Bosses of Gambling in America*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017), 82 and 83.

⁶⁶¹ Moehring and Green, 109.

⁶⁶² Moehring and Green, 109.

⁶⁶³ Clary, 83.

⁶⁶⁴ Robert McCracken, *Las Vegas: The Great American Playground*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997), 54.

⁶⁶⁵ Moehring and Green, 109.

also much cheaper there than on Fremont Street.⁶⁶⁶ Hull, then, holding all the aces, went all in. His El Rancho Vegas, which opened on April 3rd, 1941, was the first genuine full-service casino resort on the Las Vegas Strip.⁶⁶⁷

The resort set the standard for virtually all others that followed on the Strip. Because of the extra space provided out on the Strip, the resort had a spacious casino, a coffee shop, a pool, a gourmet restaurant, lush lawns and gardens, and ample parking.⁶⁶⁸ The El Rancho Vegas also displayed its signature roadside windmill tower and a neon sign for all to see.⁶⁶⁹ The resort was designed with a Spanish mission ranch-like motif.⁶⁷⁰ Similar to Cornero's Meadows Club, the casino had a craps table, two blackjack tables, and one roulette wheel.⁶⁷¹ Although that was not much, it was the model for casinos that followed.⁶⁷² As Pop Squires said, "now the ice is broken."⁶⁷³ Las Vegas knew Hull was really on to something. Unfortunately, when America entered World War II, though, gasoline rationing decreased travelers, and Hull would have to sell.⁶⁷⁴

By 1946, Americans were back on the road, and the El Rancho Vegas would produce another Las Vegas standard that would feed them: the buffet.⁶⁷⁵ The "Chuck Wagon Buffet" started out as an all-you-can-eat meal for just one dollar.⁶⁷⁶ Partially responsible for this innovation was the man who would also later be instrumental in bringing the Beatles to perform

⁶⁶⁶ Moehring and Green, 109 and 110.

⁶⁶⁷ Clary, 83.; Unknown Author, "Hotel Man, T.E. Hull, Dies," *The Sun*, (Baltimore, July 18, 1964), 9.

⁶⁶⁸ Moehring and Green, 109.

⁶⁶⁹ Moehring and Green, 109.

⁶⁷⁰ McCracken, 54.

⁶⁷¹ McCracken, 54.

⁶⁷² McCracken, 54.

⁶⁷³ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 44.

⁶⁷⁴ Clary, 83.

⁶⁷⁵ Moehring and Green, 109.; Unknown Author, "The Buffet is Born," *Incentive*, (April, 1999), 28.

⁶⁷⁶ Unknown Author, "The Buffet is Born," 28.

in Las Vegas.⁶⁷⁷ That visionary was Herbert Cobb McDonald, his middle name being a nod to his father's "fishing buddy," Ty Cobb.⁶⁷⁸ His role in this story was perhaps a bit less dramatic.



Figure 10 - Chuck Wagon Buffet⁶⁷⁹

McDonald laid out "some cheese and cold cuts" on the bar "to make a sandwich."⁶⁸⁰ After seeing the food on display, "[g]amblers walking by said they were hungry."⁶⁸¹ That was not exactly a moment of great revelation. Yet, it provided the answer to a burning question for Beldon Katleman, who had recently acquired the El Rancho Vegas.⁶⁸² He had been looking for ways to prevent customers from wanting to leave the resort.⁶⁸³ Only recently had the Swedish smorgasbord, a large setting of food designed in a specific order to prevent guests from grabbing everything all at once, debuted in the U.S. at the 1939 New York World's Fair.⁶⁸⁴ Whether or

⁶⁷⁷ Unknown Author, "Strip Visionary McDonald Dies," *Las Vegas Sun*, (Las Vegas, July 9, 2002), Accessed August 29, 2023, <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2002/jul/09/strip-visionary-mcdonald-dies/>.

⁶⁷⁸ Unknown Author, "Strip Visionary McDonald Dies."

⁶⁷⁹ Clark County Museum, Photo Archives Record, *The Buffet of the Chuck Wagon Restaurant at the El Rancho Vegas*, Accessed August 25, 2023, <https://clarkcountymuseum.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/3AAAAA7A-F917-4C58-B9EF-581001488007>.

⁶⁸⁰ Unknown Author, "Strip Visionary McDonald Dies."

⁶⁸¹ Unknown Author, "Strip Visionary McDonald Dies."

⁶⁸² Heidi Rinella, "Buffet Bonanza," *New York Times*, (New York, 2006), Accessed August 29, 2023, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/fodors/top/features/travel/destinations/unitedstates/nevada/lasvegas/fdrs_feat_87_7.html?n=Top%252FFeatures%252FTravel%252FDestinations%252FUnited+States%252FNevada%252FLas+Vegas.

⁶⁸³ Rinella.

⁶⁸⁴ Rinella.; Matt Blitz, "The History of the All You Can Eat Buffet," *Food & Wine*, June 22, 2017, Accessed August 29, 2023, <https://www.foodandwine.com/news/enlightenment-age-swedes-vegas-gamblers-history-all-you-can-eat-buffet>.

not McDonald or Katleman were aware of the smorgasbord, they recognized the need to feed and keep feeding the hungry gamblers. So it was that these two great innovators, McDonald and Katleman, took the Swedish smorgasbord to the next level and invented the “all-you-can-eat” buffet.⁶⁸⁵

The entertainment was another component of the El Rancho Vegas that really set it apart from other Las Vegas establishments at that time. The line-up included a chorus line of scantily clad girls from Hollywood. One versatile women, Gloria Dea, who was part of a song and dance revue, also was the first magician to perform a magic show in a Las Vegas casino.⁶⁸⁶ Also, to attract crowds and high rollers, massive stars of the day like Milton Berle, Jackie Gleason, Nat King Cole, Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, Sammy Davis, Jr, and more graced the showroom. Although Hull did not remain around for all of the successes of the Strip’s first resort, his contribution to the growth of Las Vegas was significant. He hit the jackpot with the El Rancho Vegas, and the city landscape and the Strip were never the same.⁶⁸⁷ In 1960, however, still under the sole ownership of Katleman, a fire “destroyed fashionable El Rancho Las Vegas Hotel’s main building,” and it was never rebuilt.⁶⁸⁸

It did not take long for others to follow. R.E. Griffith, whose family owned a large movie theater chain, and his nephew, William “Bill” Moore, chose to incorporate the old 91 Club into their new Hotel Last Frontier.⁶⁸⁹ Griffith purchased the old club from Guy McAfee for thirty-five thousand dollars at a thousand dollars per acre, substantially more than the cost of the El

⁶⁸⁵ Rinella.; Blitz.

⁶⁸⁶ Neil Genzlinger, “Gloria Dea, Magician Rediscovered Late in Life, Dies at 100,” *New York Times*, New York, April 18, 2023, Accessed January 11, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/18/arts/gloria-dea-dead.html>.

⁶⁸⁷ McCracken, 54.

⁶⁸⁸ Associated Press, “25 Flee Fire in Las Vegas Resort Hotel,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, June 18, 1960), 4.

⁶⁸⁹ McCracken, 56.; UNLV University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, *Guide to the Frontier Hotel and Casino Collection*, Las Vegas, Nevada, Accessed August 30, 2023, <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpajpcgleclefindmkaj/https://www.library.unlv.edu/speccol/finding-aids/MS-00297.pdf>., 4.

Rancho Vegas, but still not bad.⁶⁹⁰ It was a lucrative deal. The second resort on the Strip opened on October 30th, 1942.⁶⁹¹

Like the El Rancho Vegas, the Hotel Last Frontier was built in the western style. The guest room headboards looked like large oxen yokes, and cow horns and wagon wheel lighting fixtures were hung prominently throughout the hotel.⁶⁹² The mahogany-backed bar from the Arizona Club also contributed to make the place look like it was right out of the Old West.⁶⁹³ Further extravagances included bringing in talented Navajos to work with stone that had been quarried from the nearby Red Rock Canyon.⁶⁹⁴ Griffith's nephew would add one more final touch that would take advantage of the liberal marriage laws.

On the same grounds as the Hotel Last Frontier, Moore built a recreated frontier village, which he called, appropriately enough, "Last Frontier Village."⁶⁹⁵ One of the buildings in this village was a rustic chapel with a "green neon crucifix" called the Little Church of the West.⁶⁹⁶ In true Las Vegas fashion, the Riddle Scenic Tours Company offered "Tour 9-W," which was a "De Luxe Wedding at the Little Church of the West, including license fees, witnesses, corsage, organ music, hotel accommodations and complete service - \$45."⁶⁹⁷ In 1964, Elvis Presley and Ann-Margret were featured getting married in the movie *Viva Las Vegas* at this chapel.⁶⁹⁸ While not the first to cash in on marriage in Las Vegas, this chapel would go on to host "an estimated

⁶⁹⁰ Barbara and Myrick Land, *A Short History of Las Vegas*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 85.

⁶⁹¹ McCracken, 56.

⁶⁹² McCracken, 56.

⁶⁹³ McCracken, 56.; Moehring, 46.

⁶⁹⁴ Land and Land, 86.

⁶⁹⁵ McCracken, 56.

⁶⁹⁶ McCracken, 56.; Alistair Cooke, "A New Yorker Goes West V-Babylon in the Desert," *The Manchester Guardian*, (Manchester, September 19, 1947), 4.

⁶⁹⁷ Jack Goodman, "Desert Attractions," *New York Times*, (New York, March 16, 1947), X14.

⁶⁹⁸ George Sidney, *Viva Las Vegas*, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1964.; Frank Basile, "Visiting Vegas (While Steering Clear of the Tempting Slots)," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, (Indianapolis, Volume 34, Issue 45, December 30, 2013).

250,000 weddings,” and eventually would be part of an industry in Las Vegas taking in “\$2 billion annually.”⁶⁹⁹

Moore would hold onto this resort until 1951 when it was torn down and rebuilt under the name New Frontier. The chapel remained until it was moved around the city twice more.⁷⁰⁰ The cost of the transaction “was believed to be more than \$5,000,000,” and the buyers were none other than Guy McAfee and Beldon Katleman, along with a third partner, J. Kozloff.⁷⁰¹ The New Frontier notably housed a bar in its Cloud Nine Lounge that was rumored to be the world’s largest.⁷⁰² Ronald Reagan was booked for one act in 1954.⁷⁰³ Sammy Davis, Jr. performed there, too, in 1955.⁷⁰⁴ On April 23rd, 1956, the resort even hosted the first appearance of Elvis in Las Vegas.⁷⁰⁵

The third major resort built on the Strip was the Flamingo. The mob was deeply involved with this building. In fact, the origins of this resort involved the Genovese crime family, one of the “Five Families” of Italian-American gangsters.⁷⁰⁶ None other than Charles “Lucky” Luciano had an interest in the Flamingo.⁷⁰⁷ Luciano had worked his way up within the mob starting at the age of ten.⁷⁰⁸ In 1931, after he worked with others to “knock off” Giuseppe “Joe the Boss” Masseria and then Capo di tutti Capi (boss of bosses), Salvatore “The Duke” Maranzano,

⁶⁹⁹ Patrick Blennerhassett, “A Strip Icon: Little Church of the West Celebrates 80th Birthday,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, May 22, 2023, Accessed September 8, 2023, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/business/a-strip-icon-little-church-of-the-west-celebrates-80th-birthday-2781967/>.

⁷⁰⁰ McCracken, 56 and 59.

⁷⁰¹ Associated Press, “Last Frontier Hotel is Sold,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 25, 1951), 18.

⁷⁰² McCracken, 56.

⁷⁰³ McCracken, 59.

⁷⁰⁴ Associated Press, “Sammy Davis, Jr. Wows Patrons in Return to Las Vegas Hotel,” *The Chicago Defender*, (Chicago, June 25, 1955), 19.

⁷⁰⁵ Richard Zoglin, *Elvis in Vegas*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019), 2.

⁷⁰⁶ James Roman, *Chronicles of Old Las Vegas: Exposing Sin City’s High-Stakes History*, (New York: Museyon, 2011), 73.

⁷⁰⁷ Roman, 73.

⁷⁰⁸ The Mob Museum, Case Files, Notable Names, *Lucky Luciano*, Accessed August 30, 2023, https://themobmuseum.org/notable_names/lucky-luciano/.

Luciano announced himself as “the chairman of the board” as he took charge of the families.⁷⁰⁹ In New York, Meyer Lansky, a member of the Jewish mafia, had become friends with Luciano, and they formed a merger.⁷¹⁰ This merger between the Jewish mafia and the Genovese family was called the “Syndicate.”⁷¹¹ With legalized gambling due to the much looser laws in Las Vegas than in cities like New York, Chicago, or Detroit, the Syndicate could at least make their operations seem legitimate. The Syndicate did so with the Flamingo.

W.R. “Billy” Wilkerson, a *Hollywood Reporter* publisher and publicist, had owned restaurants and nightclubs in Los Angeles, including the Clover Club with Tony Cornero.⁷¹² Wilkerson was doing well for himself, running with the Hollywood elite, but he did have one major vice. He had an insidious gambling problem and ran up substantial debts.⁷¹³ Finally, he opened up about it to his friend, and 20th Century Fox chairman, Joe Schenck, over dinner.⁷¹⁴ Schenck told him, “If you are going to gamble that kind of money, be on the other side of the table. Build a casino. Own the house.”⁷¹⁵ He took Schenck’s advice and looked to open a casino of his own.⁷¹⁶ In February of 1945, Wilkerson quietly purchased thirty-three acres along Highway 91 for eighty-four thousand dollars.⁷¹⁷ He planned to build his resort on the Strip, so it would stand out from the others downtown.⁷¹⁸

⁷⁰⁹ Marc Mappen, *Prohibition Gangsters: The Rise and Fall of a Bad Generation*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013, 156.; The Mob Museum, Case Files, Notable Names, *Lucky Luciano*.

⁷¹⁰ Roman, 73.

⁷¹¹ Roman, 73.

⁷¹² Clary, 84.; W.R. Wilkerson, *Hollywood Godfather: The Life and Crimes of Billy Wilkerson*, (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2018), 113.

⁷¹³ Clary, 84 and 85.

⁷¹⁴ Wilkerson, 194.

⁷¹⁵ Wilkerson, 194.

⁷¹⁶ Wilkerson, 194.

⁷¹⁷ Clary, 85.

⁷¹⁸ Clary, 85.

Before this move in Las Vegas, Wilkerson learned about the casino business in several international locations. In 1934, he ventured to the Agua Caliente resort in Mexico, but the next year Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas outlawed gambling in the country.⁷¹⁹ Next, he considered opening up an operation in Cuba prior to the Communist revolution, but it was far from his home at the time in California.⁷²⁰ Moreover, conducting foreign operations was far more challenging than running a U.S. gambling establishment.⁷²¹ Wilkerson learned lessons the hard way in Monte Carlo when he gambled away seventy-five thousand dollars that Schenck had loaned to him to buy a hotel on the French Riviera.⁷²² Interestingly, Monte Carlo developed after a financial crisis, a loss of territory, and a decrease in taxable population.⁷²³ To save Monaco in 1863, Prince Charles III and his mother, Princess Caroline, modeled the town built around a casino after German spa resorts.⁷²⁴ Similar to early Las Vegas, Monte Carlo thrived once the French railroad brought in large numbers of gamblers.⁷²⁵ With his international experiences, Wilkerson was ready for vehicular traffic to jumpstart his casino.

Schenck was onto something, as his friend seemed to have a gift for this sort of venture. In fact, through his gambling experience, Wilkerson developed groundbreaking ideas for the Flamingo. He wanted space for ten stores that would include brands like Cartier and Chanel. He wanted lighting permanently dimmed and no clocks on the walls in order to keep customers focused on the gambling. “Never let them see light,” he said, referring to the important lesson he learned the hard way gambling away his money through all hours of the night. Wilkerson also

⁷¹⁹ Wilkerson, 110 and 111.

⁷²⁰ Wilkerson, 194.

⁷²¹ Wilkerson, 194.

⁷²² Wilkerson, 114.

⁷²³ Paul Franke, “‘Nobody Came to Monte Carlo to Be Bored’: The Scripting of the Monte Carlo Pleasurescape 1880-1940,” *Journal of Urban History*, (Volume 48, Issue 6, May 27, 2022), 1249.

⁷²⁴ Franke, 1249.

⁷²⁵ Franke, 1249.

wanted gamblers to be comfortable, so he added leather-padded cushioning around the table edges. Lastly, he wanted the class and sophistication found in Monte Carlo, where he fell victim to the urge to gamble that such a luxurious gambling center encouraged. To add that sort of refined style to the resort, he wanted to require a black-tie dress code for evening dress. These ideas were cutting-edge then, but would soon be commonplace in casinos all over the world. Wilkerson still had the good sense to leave casino management to others with experience.⁷²⁶

To run the day-to-day operations, he turned to mobsters Moe Sedway, Gus Greenbaum, David Berman, and Israel “Ice Pick Willie” Alderman, Lansky associates already running the El Cortez downtown.⁷²⁷ Although these were certainly callous individuals, hiring them was not at all out of character for Wilkerson, as he had fared well in his Hollywood mob partnership. Greenbaum had been an Arizona bookmaker and excelled at managing casinos.⁷²⁸ Sedway was a loyal Lansky associate.⁷²⁹ Berman had been in Capone’s “Detroit’s Purple Gang” and later ran the gambling rackets in Minneapolis for Frank Costello, Lansky and, Luciano.⁷³⁰ Alderman’s nickname was given to him because of his perfected method of murder which consisted of stabbing the victim in the ear with an icepick.⁷³¹ His claim was that he had executed eleven victims in that fashion.⁷³² This was not a crew to be messed with.

Wilkerson’s biggest concern at the time, though, was funding the Flamingo project. His gambling debts were a problem, again, and he was running out of money and options. He was

⁷²⁶ Wilkerson, 114, 196, 197 and 199.

⁷²⁷ Clary, 86.; Key Kidder, “It’s No Easy Street, Being Mobster’s Only Kid,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, October 27, 1981), B1.

⁷²⁸ Wilkerson, 199.

⁷²⁹ Wilkerson, 199.

⁷³⁰ Kidder, B2.

⁷³¹ UNLV University Libraries, Southern Nevada Jewish Heritage Project, *Israel “Icepick Willie” Alderman*, Accessed September 1, 2023, <https://special.library.unlv.edu/jewishheritage/people/israel-alderman>.

⁷³² UNLV University Libraries, Southern Nevada Jewish Heritage Project, *Israel “Icepick Willie” Alderman*.

able to get a two hundred thousand dollar loan from the famous aviator and business magnate, Howard Hughes, who at the time wanted nothing to do with the Nevada desert.⁷³³ That still left him four hundred thousand dollars short, and the mob, who had been standing by idly just waiting for Wilkerson's next streak of bad luck, swarmed in like sharks smelling blood in the water.⁷³⁴ Wilkerson was soon approached by Syndicate associate and prohibition bootlegger, G. Harry Rothberg.⁷³⁵ The mobster offered Wilkerson a deal he could not refuse if he still wanted the Flamingo built.⁷³⁶ Forced to give up two thirds of the profits to the Syndicate, as the deal required, he accepted.⁷³⁷

Wilkerson was back in business, but things were about to get worrisome. Sedway and Greenbaum escorted one of Luciano's triggermen, Benjamin "Bugsy" (a nickname given by fellow gangsters insinuating he was crazy as a bedbug, which he detested) Siegel, to the construction site to introduce Wilkerson to his new partner.⁷³⁸ Wilkerson had been familiar with Siegel, who also had a stake in the Clover Club.⁷³⁹ He was a violent and cutthroat gangster, but he also had an "easygoing charm," which enabled the partnership to go well at first.⁷⁴⁰ One incident that really epitomized this working, but dangerous, business relationship occurred as Wilkerson was venting about a crew member telling Siegel, "This guy's driving me nuts. I wish...someone would take care of him!"⁷⁴¹ When Siegel responded, "I'll take care of him, Billy," in a tone undeniably demonstrating he was ready to inflict grievous harm on the crew

⁷³³ Wilkerson, 143, 144, and 200.

⁷³⁴ Clary, 86.

⁷³⁵ Clary, 86.

⁷³⁶ Clary, 86.

⁷³⁷ Clary, 86.

⁷³⁸ Wilkerson, 205.; Associated Press, "Bugsy Siegel, Former 'Public Enemy,' Dies Gang-Style Death," *The Sun*, (Baltimore, June 22, 1947), A2.; The Mob Museum, Case Files, Notable Names, *Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel*, Accessed September 6, 2023, https://themobmuseum.org/notable_names/benjamin-bugsy-siegel/.

⁷³⁹ Wilkerson, 207.

⁷⁴⁰ Wilkerson, 207.

⁷⁴¹ Wilkerson, 201 and 211.

member, Wilkerson had to abruptly call him off saying, “Not like that!”⁷⁴² This time the enraged gangster relented.⁷⁴³

This partnership quickly began to sour, however, as Siegel started to resent Wilkerson for his talents.⁷⁴⁴ Siegel stopped taking orders from him, and slowly pushed Wilkerson out.⁷⁴⁵ It did not help Wilkerson that the liquor and gambling licenses were in Siegel’s name.⁷⁴⁶ Siegel set the opening date for December 26th, 1946, before construction was finished.⁷⁴⁷ After losing money the first week, he shut down until March 1st, 1947, when the resort was completely built.⁷⁴⁸ That day, the Flamingo opened for good and brought the Hollywood and Beverly Hills charm and high rollers to the Strip.⁷⁴⁹ The most expensive hotel ever built at that time at a cost of six million dollars quickly raked in profits.⁷⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Wilkerson signed over his share of the Flamingo on March 19th, 1947 and never gambled again.⁷⁵¹

Bugsy Siegel, on the other hand, should have been so lucky. Before Las Vegas, he was part of “Murder Incorporated,” Luciano’s New York enforcement and intimidation arm.⁷⁵² His reputation was such that New York governor, Thomas Dewey, labeled him a “public enemy.”⁷⁵³ In fact, he had been indicted for murdering New York mobster, Harry “Big Greenie” Greenberg, in 1940 with his hit squad boss, Louis (Lepke) Buchalter, also referred to as “public enemy No.

⁷⁴² Wilkerson, 201 and 211.

⁷⁴³ Wilkerson, 201 and 211.

⁷⁴⁴ Wilkerson, 211.

⁷⁴⁵ Wilkerson, 211.

⁷⁴⁶ Clary, 87.; The Mob Museum, Case Files, Notable Names, *Lucky Luciano*.

⁷⁴⁷ Roman, 80.

⁷⁴⁸ Roman, 81.

⁷⁴⁹ Roman, 81.

⁷⁵⁰ Roman, 81.

⁷⁵¹ Roman, 81.

⁷⁵² The Mob Museum, Case Files, Notable Names, *Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel*.

⁷⁵³ Associated Press, “Bugsy Siegel, Former ‘Public Enemy,’ Dies Gang-Style Death,” A2.

1,” much like Baby Face Nelson.⁷⁵⁴ The loose association between such dangerous and disreputable characters and the birth of the Strip which thrived on hospitality might have seemed a bit ironic, but it worked. Siegel got off on a lack of evidence, and Buchalter was later executed for another murder.⁷⁵⁵ Siegel also escaped justice in 1941 after New York dropped charges of him allegedly harboring Lepke, who was a fugitive at the time.⁷⁵⁶ Although unable to “earn” the No. 1, Siegel was not exactly a saint.

Siegel’s dubious background finally caught up with him in Las Vegas. On June 20, 1947, just a few months after opening the Flamingo, professional killers murdered Siegel.⁷⁵⁷ He was found with four slugs in his body, two of them in his head, shot from a .30 caliber carbine machine gun.⁷⁵⁸ The murder occurred at his friend Virginia Hill’s Beverly Hills mansion.⁷⁵⁹ The murder was never solved, but being a public enemy did not help his cause.⁷⁶⁰ In fact, police continued trying for years after.⁷⁶¹

In October of the next year, after getting a lead in the investigation, Beverly Hills Police Chief Clinton Anderson said, “There was big money behind it.”⁷⁶² The chief believed that this was done by “an international underworld syndicate” because Siegel allegedly threatened to talk.⁷⁶³ As one of Siegel’s mob associates, who interestingly asked to remain anonymous, said

⁷⁵⁴ Associated Press, “Bugsy Siegel, Former ‘Public Enemy,’ Dies Gang-Style Death,” A2.; Associated Press, “‘Syndicate Involved’: Police Chief Says He Knows Who Killed ‘Bugsy’ Siegel,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, October 18, 1948), 1.

⁷⁵⁵ Associated Press, “Bugsy Siegel, Former ‘Public Enemy,’ Dies Gang-Style Death,” A2.

⁷⁵⁶ Associated Press, “Bugsy Siegel, Former ‘Public Enemy,’ Dies Gang-Style Death,” A2.

⁷⁵⁷ Associated Press, “Bugsy Siegel, Former ‘Public Enemy,’ Dies Gang-Style Death,” A2.

⁷⁵⁸ Associated Press, “Bugsy Siegel, Former ‘Public Enemy,’ Dies Gang-Style Death,” A2.; The Mob Museum, Case Files, Notable Names, *Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel*.

⁷⁵⁹ Associated Press, “Bugsy Siegel, Former ‘Public Enemy,’ Dies Gang-Style Death,” A2.

⁷⁶⁰ The Mob Museum, Case Files, Notable Names, *Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel*.

⁷⁶¹ Associated Press, “‘Syndicate Involved’: Police Chief Says He Knows Who Killed ‘Bugsy’ Siegel,” 1.

⁷⁶² Associated Press, “‘Syndicate Involved’: Police Chief Says He Knows Who Killed ‘Bugsy’ Siegel,” 1; Gladwin Hill, “New Yorkers Cited in Siegel Slaying,” *New York Times*, (New York, February 28, 1951), 23.

⁷⁶³ Associated Press, “‘Syndicate Involved’: Police Chief Says He Knows Who Killed ‘Bugsy’ Siegel,” 1.

the day following the murder, “Ben was getting too big for his britches.”⁷⁶⁴ In February, 1951, the investigation was still moving, and there was a belief that Siegel would not conform with the partners at the Flamingo.⁷⁶⁵ The Fischetti brothers, who were a couple of Chicago gangsters, Moe Sedway, Frank Costello, and Frank Erickson were all implicated in the case.⁷⁶⁶ Eventually, it became a cold case. Other unproven theories developed, but nothing stuck.⁷⁶⁷ The original Flamingo endured until 1993.⁷⁶⁸

The Thunderbird was the fourth resort to manifest on the Strip.⁷⁶⁹ Los Angeles developer, Marion Hicks, and attorney and Nevada Lieutenant Governor, Cliff “Big Juice” Jones, organized its construction.⁷⁷⁰ Jones, an Army Lieutenant Colonel and World War II veteran, earned his nickname through his clout and connections.⁷⁷¹ Hicks had opened the El Cortez in 1941 with John Grayson, a Phoenix associate of Greenbaum and illegal gambling ship manager caught up in the Cornero boating showdown.⁷⁷² Hicks and Jones had also joined McAfee in owning the Golden Nugget.⁷⁷³ The Thunderbird was their attempt to expand and achieve success similar to Griffith and Siegel.⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁶⁴ Associated Press, “Bugsy Siegel, Former ‘Public Enemy,’ Dies Gang-Style Death,” A2.

⁷⁶⁵ Hill, “New Yorkers Cited in Siegel Slaying,” 23.

⁷⁶⁶ Hill, “New Yorkers Cited in Siegel Slaying,” 23.

⁷⁶⁷ The Mob Museum, Blog, *Seventy-Five Years Later, Debate Over Bugsy Siegel Murder Still Rages*, Accessed September 6, 2023, <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/seventy-five-years-later-debate-over-bugsy-siegel-murder-still-rages/>.

⁷⁶⁸ Roman, 83.

⁷⁶⁹ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 49.

⁷⁷⁰ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 49.; UNLV University Libraries, Digital Collections, *Thunderbird*, Accessed September 5, 2023, <https://special.library.unlv.edu/skyline/hotel/thunderbird.>; Erin Neff, “Political, Business Leader Jones Dies at 89,” *Las Vegas Sun*, Las Vegas, November 19, 2001, Accessed September 5, 2023, <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2001/nov/19/political-business-leader-jones-dies-at-89/>.

⁷⁷¹ Neff.

⁷⁷² The Mob Museum, *El Cortez, First Luxury Hotel-Casino in Downtown Las Vegas, Turns 80*, November 6, 2021, Accessed September 5, 2023, <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/el-cortez-first-luxury-hotel-casino-in-downtown-las-vegas-turns-80/>.

⁷⁷³ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 49.

⁷⁷⁴ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 49.

The Thunderbird came with a few new offerings. It welcomed guests with the Strip's first porte-cochere, a type of covered entryway for cars to pass through.⁷⁷⁵ The resort also had the Strip's only bowling alley.⁷⁷⁶ A large neon sign featuring the iconic thunderbird, an avian symbol based on an ancient Navajo legend, was perched on the main entrance.⁷⁷⁷ The rest of the resort, although designed mainly with modern architecture, was filled with the Navajo motif.⁷⁷⁸ Nat King Cole headlined the entertainment upon the resort's opening on September 2, 1948.⁷⁷⁹ Ella Fitzgerald, "The First Lady of Song," also appeared there in 1949 "for a two-week engagement."⁷⁸⁰ With these extras, the Thunderbird was a worthy rival of its three predecessors on the Strip.

The Thunderbird was sold in 1961 to a group led by a wealthy road builder, Joe Wells.⁷⁸¹ Wells was also the father of the actress, Dawn Wells, who played Mary Ann Summers on the well-known television sitcom *Gilligan's Island*.⁷⁸² By 1964, when she and her fellow castaways made their first appearance on that famous deserted island, the Thunderbird, somewhat ironically, had its own difficulties, running into "deep financial troubles."⁷⁸³ Del Webb, a ten-percent owner of the New York Yankees baseball team, bought it "for an amount in excess of \$10 million."⁷⁸⁴ Webb, then, was also in charge of "one of the largest and most successful

⁷⁷⁵ UNLV University Libraries, Digital Collections, *Thunderbird*.

⁷⁷⁶ UNLV University Libraries, Digital Collections, *Thunderbird*.

⁷⁷⁷ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 49.; UNLV University Libraries, Digital Collections, *Thunderbird*.

⁷⁷⁸ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 49.; Frank Wright, *Nevada Yesterdays*, (Las Vegas: Dorothy Wright and Stephens Press, LLC, 2005), 106.

⁷⁷⁹ UNLV University Libraries, Digital Collections, *Thunderbird*.

⁷⁸⁰ Unknown Author, "Ella's 'Lover's Gold' Causes New 'Gold Rush,'" *The Chicago Defender*, (Chicago, July 23, 1949), 26.

⁷⁸¹ Unknown Author, "Del Webb Buying Las Vegas Hotel," *New York Times*, (New York, September 19, 1964), 24.

⁷⁸² Unknown Author, "Del Webb Buying Las Vegas Hotel," 24.; Blake Apgar, "Former Miss Nevada, 'Gilligan's Island' Star Dawn Wells Dies," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, December 30, 2020, Accessed April 26, 2024, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/local-nevada/former-miss-nevada-gilligans-island-star-dawn-wells-dies-2236215/>; *Gilligan's Island*, Rodney Amateau, 1964.

⁷⁸³ Unknown Author, "Del Webb Buying Las Vegas Hotel," 24.; Apgar.

⁷⁸⁴ Unknown Author, "Del Webb Buying Las Vegas Hotel," 24.

construction companies in the country,” and was credited with building “most of the air stations and military installations in Arizona and Southern California” during World War II.⁷⁸⁵ His interest in the Yankees was consistent with the fact that he had been an “erratic minor league pitcher” gaining “some renown” in the 1920s until injuring himself sliding into home plate.⁷⁸⁶ He eventually won a bit further renown through the success of his construction company which would later build Las Vegas homes.⁷⁸⁷

Although Webb operated within the limits of the law, the Strip, like the downtown area, was undoubtedly shaped in large measure by the efforts of the mob. It was widely known that mobsters possessed valuable expertise in casino management, and they were able to provide the capital when others could, would, or even should not.⁷⁸⁸ Banks would not take such risks until the 1950s, and even then the bank leadership would look to people like Teamster Union president, Jimmy Hoffa.⁷⁸⁹ This early, heavy reliance on gangsters was a large reason for the historical narrative that the mob built Las Vegas. There is no doubt that the influence of the mob existed and was substantial. Yet, others figured in on the development of these early resorts, too. Developers and financiers like Hull, Griffith, and Hughes were not involved in organized crime, but they recognized the chance to make a big profit in Las Vegas. Similarly, well-connected Nevada politicians, like Senators McCarran, Pittman, and Henderson, brokered deals that were advantageous both politically and monetarily. In other words, the mob was not the only interested party trying to make a quick buck in Las Vegas.

⁷⁸⁵ Unknown Author, “Del Webb Buying Las Vegas Hotel,” 24.

⁷⁸⁶ Unknown Author, “Del Webb Buying Las Vegas Hotel,” 24.

⁷⁸⁷ Unknown Author, “Del Webb Buying Las Vegas Hotel,” 24.

⁷⁸⁸ Moehring and Green, 120.

⁷⁸⁹ Moehring and Green, 134.

Still, with their experience in running gambling operations and illegal casinos, mobsters did have a major, lasting impact on these new Las Vegas resorts and others that followed. The innovative ideas of Wilkerson remained signature elements in casinos in Las Vegas and beyond. The buffet, however, was the brainchild of McDonald and Katleman, two businessmen without any known direct ties to organized crime. Moreover, the airport, air force base, magnesium plant, and the city of Henderson were, in large part, the results of McCarran's commitment to boosting the local economy. By the end of the 1940s, the mob undeniably contributed to the casino and resort business, but so did others. Without the additions to Las Vegas in that decade outside of the hospitality industry, the resorts might have struggled to fill both their work forces and their customer bases.

Visitors did, in fact, come for other reasons. As the Strip arrived on the scene partially as an escape from the burden of city taxes and downtown crowds, so too did dissatisfied brides and grooms rush to Las Vegas hoping to use the local laws to unhitch their burdensome spouses. The liberal divorce laws in Las Vegas seemed to gain popularity during this decade, thereby enticing more people to visit the city to address their marital problems. In 1945, Marilyn Monroe, still Norma Jean Dougherty at the time, moved in with her foster mother's aunt for the purpose of claiming her six-month residency before filing for divorce from James Dougherty.⁷⁹⁰ Dougherty, a Merchant Marine, who did not like the idea of Monroe modeling said, "All those guys chasing after her, taking pictures of her...I wanted a normal life. She didn't."⁷⁹¹ She appeared once more the next year to complete the divorce process.⁷⁹² She was not the first

⁷⁹⁰ Roman, 60.

⁷⁹¹ Roman, 60.; Kathryn Dixon, *Marilyn*, (Charlotte: TAJ Books International LLC, 2013), 10 and 11.

⁷⁹² Roman, 60.

public figure to go this route, as Maria “Ria” Gable had famously divorced Clark Gable in 1939 using the same Nevada divorce laws.⁷⁹³ More would follow.

Las Vegas continued to attract tourists beyond the developing Strip, and certainly not just for divorces. In the downtown area, beginning to be referred to as “Glitter Gulch” because of the abundance of neon lighting, places like the Golden Nugget, El Cortez, and the Apache Hotel were the big draws.⁷⁹⁴ Cornero made another appearance in Las Vegas by putting a casino on the first floor of the Apache Hotel called the S.S. Rex after his former illegal gambling ship.⁷⁹⁵ Outdoor vacationing also gained steam, as tourists also wanted to visit scenic trails or take part in recreational activities. Joining Lake Mead in this new tourism were two developing ski destinations, like Mount Charleston and Lee Canyon, and the Valley of Fire, which was a “desert section centered around the Government Museum of Pueblo Indian relics and featured by vividly colored rock formations.”⁷⁹⁶ Red Rock Canyon would not be mined for much longer, as it would also later be preserved and visited, too.⁷⁹⁷ Meanwhile, the western flair remained in places like the nearby Bar W Dude Ranch.⁷⁹⁸ Certainly, trips to other major outdoor sites like Death Valley, Zion National Park, and the Grand Canyon often included Las Vegas as a convenient must-see stop.⁷⁹⁹ For this “New Vacationland,” there was no turning back now.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹³ The Mob Museum, *El Cortez, First Luxury Hotel-Casino in Downtown Las Vegas, Turns 80*.

⁷⁹⁴ Goodman, “Desert Attractions,” X14.; United Press International, “Guy M’afee, 72, Dies,” *New York Times*, (New York, February 21, 1960), 92.; Robert Klara, “Glow in the Dark,” *Adweek*, (New York, Volume 63, Issue 18, September 19, 2022), 30.

⁷⁹⁵ The Mob Museum, Blog, *The Stardust Hotel, Longtime Cash Cow for the Mob, Debuted 60 Years Ago on the Las Vegas Strip*, Accessed September 6, 2023, <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/stardust-hotel-debuted-60-years-ago-las-vegas-strip-dream-gambler-checked-past/>.

⁷⁹⁶ Goodman, “Desert Attractions,” X14.; Grady Johnson, “Lively Las Vegas New Vacationland is Growing Up Rapidly Around the Great Lake at Hoover Dam,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 14, 1948), X16.

⁷⁹⁷ Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management Press Release, *Red Rock Celebrates 25 Years as a National Conservation Area*, Accessed August 30, 2023, <https://www.blm.gov/press-release/red-rock-celebrates-25-years-national-conservation-area>.

⁷⁹⁸ Goodman, “Desert Attractions,” X14.

⁷⁹⁹ Goodman, “Desert Attractions,” X14.

⁸⁰⁰ Johnson, X16.

There was no turning back for Las Vegas now. Perhaps recognizing the steadily increasing impact the dam was having on Las Vegas, many decided to make the city their permanent home. Even by 1946, the population had risen to twenty thousand.⁸⁰¹ The 1950s would bring the atomic age to Las Vegas courtesy of Senator McCarran.⁸⁰² The mob still operated in the resorts. The Strip expanded, and entertainment exploded during this decade bringing the likes of Frank Sinatra, Liberace, and Elvis Presley to the city.⁸⁰³ With stars like that performing, the city was on its way to being the “entertainment capital of the world.” Las Vegas would not quite attain that title, yet, but it was getting close.⁸⁰⁴

⁸⁰¹ Ward Howe, “Las Vegas Vacation Center: Seeing Boulder Dam by Automobile,” *New York Times*, (New York, March 24, 1946), 57.

⁸⁰² Moehring and Green, 135.

⁸⁰³ Ed Koch, Mary Manning and Dave Toplikar, “Showtime: How Sin City Evolved into ‘The Entertainment Capital of the World,’” *Las Vegas Sun*, Las Vegas, May 15, 2008, Accessed September 8, 2023, <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2008/may/15/evolution-worlds-entertainment-capital/>.

⁸⁰⁴ Moehring and Green, 222.

Chapter Six – 1950s

Las Vegas emerged from the 1940s with the sense that their city had the potential to be a national vacation destination. With the railroad taking somewhat of a backseat to car and air passenger travel, they may have, in fact, needed that to be the case. Unsurprisingly, they were generally open to anything that might spur the economy, and local officials naturally continued their pursuits of such operations. The mob, which originally infiltrated Las Vegas because of such tolerance, remained heavily entrenched in the casino business. Some federal officials pushed back, perhaps fueled partially by political aspirations, but, for the most part, it was business as usual for the mob throughout the 1950s. With so many banking on the ascent of Las Vegas at that time, the Strip expanded beyond its four charter resorts and began to resemble what Las Vegas and others wanted in a vacation spot.

Meanwhile, the Hoover Dam was still as relevant as it had been since its construction. It was more popular than ever among tourists with over four hundred, fifty thousand visitors taking the guided tour of the dam and power plant in 1957.⁸⁰⁵ By that year, the dam energy delivery for those requiring power was just over 2.6 billion kilowatt hours.⁸⁰⁶ This was enough power “to light up seven cities the size of Minneapolis.”⁸⁰⁷ While Nevada received almost one quarter of this energy, Las Vegas received only a portion of that.⁸⁰⁸ Even so, from 1937 to 1955, the major

⁸⁰⁵ National Archives, Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor, Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California, *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History, 1957*, Accessed October 6, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/218518076?objectPage=5.>, 2.

⁸⁰⁶ National Archives, Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor, Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California, *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History, 1957.*, 5.

⁸⁰⁷ Horace Sutton, “Travel With Me: Hoover Dam ‘Shocks’ Million Visitors Yearly,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, February 6, 1955), A21.

⁸⁰⁸ Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam, Frequently Asked Questions and Answers, *Hydropower at Hoover Dam*, Accessed October 6, 2023, <https://www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam/faqs/powerfaq.html>.

source of power for the city was the Hoover Dam.⁸⁰⁹ Just as the Hoover Dam paid for itself, then, it also paid off by powering Las Vegas in its most formative years.

Las Vegas fully appreciated what the Hoover Dam was doing for their city. When a new lucrative proposition was put on the table that possibly risked the very existence of the dam, though, the temptation was too much for Senator Pat McCarran to resist. The Cold War was in full swing by this time with the Korean War breaking out in 1950, and the federal government was searching for the best location for its necessary nuclear testing. McCarran successfully lobbied for the site to be in Mercury, Nevada, just sixty-five miles north of Las Vegas. This would bring more federally funded jobs to Nevada and more money to Las Vegas. By 1951, the first bomb detonation was conducted at the new Nevada Proving Grounds, better known as the Test Site. A few meetings earlier that year had been enough for the local officials to declare that the detonations posed no threat to Las Vegas. Interestingly, a decade later, it was determined that only the prevailing westerly winds kept Las Vegas safe by blowing most of the radioactivity away from Las Vegas.⁸¹⁰

Local officials also feared that the explosions might pose a threat to the structural stability of the Hoover Dam. Before opening the Test Site, federal agencies conducted research and testing to determine the possible effects of exploding these powerful bombs. The Atomic Energy Commission “let it be known it wasn’t worried” as an atomic explosion would “maybe rattle gambling tables” but not hurt the dam. A spokesman from the Bureau of Reclamation added that the dam would withstand “any earthquake or earth shock,” and the spokesman further explained that it would avoid damage as long as the bomb did not land directly on it, “and maybe

⁸⁰⁹ NVEnergy, *Company History*, Accessed October 6, 2023, <https://www.nvenergy.com/about-nvenergy/our-company/history>.

⁸¹⁰ Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 135 and 136.

not even then.” As it was, then, the Hoover Dam and Las Vegas were both generally safe from the Test Site activities, and it actually offered new money-making possibilities for some enterprising Las Vegas locals.⁸¹¹



Figure 11 - El Rancho Vegas, Circa 1951, Atomic Bomb Mushroom Cloud in Background⁸¹²

The chance to see physical evidence of the atomic age up close was yet another reason for tourists to visit Las Vegas. Some resorts advertised the mushroom clouds that could be seen in Las Vegas.⁸¹³ Casinos threw “dawn parties” which consisted of partygoers waiting to see the flash from the explosion of the atomic bomb.⁸¹⁴ A special drink was even created, made with vodka, brandy, champagne and a dash of sherry, and it was called the “Atomic Cocktail.”⁸¹⁵ The Flamingo beauty parlor offered the “Atomic Hairdo,” and another resort even staged a contest to

⁸¹¹ Associated Press, “Big Dam Safe in Atom Test: Hoover Structure was Built to Resist Earthquakes,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore. February 4, 1951), 7.

⁸¹² Clark County Museum. Photo Archives Record. *El Rancho Vegas Opera House, Theater, and Restaurant During an Atomic Bomb Test*. Accessed August 25, 2023, <https://clarkcountymuseum.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/13C927A2-B8CF-4DB6-ACA2-499256789672>.; Land and Land, 113.

⁸¹³ Moehring and Green, 136.

⁸¹⁴ Atomic Heritage Foundation, The National Museum of Nuclear Science & History, *Nevada Test Site*, Accessed October 6, 2023, <https://ahf.nuclearmuseum.org/ahf/location/nevada-test-site/>; Ashley Powers, “Tourists Revisit the Cold War at Nevada Test Site,” *Los Angeles Times*, (Los Angeles, July 17, 2011), Accessed October 6, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/world/la-xpm-2011-jul-17-la-na-nevada-test-site-20110717-story.html>.

⁸¹⁵ Atomic Heritage Foundation, The National Museum of Nuclear Science & History, *Nevada Test Site*.

select “Miss Atomic Bomb.”⁸¹⁶ There was virtually no limit to what Las Vegans would do to drum up business.

Just before atomic fever invaded the city, the Desert Inn, the first major resort of the 1950s to appear on the Strip, opened on April 24th, 1950.⁸¹⁷ This hotel was set up by Wilbur Clark, who had been a bellman and a bar owner in California and partial stakeholder in the El Rancho Vegas.⁸¹⁸ Clark and his friends put up a quarter of a million dollars to fund this classy hotel, but construction had stalled since 1946 due to the lack of finances necessary to complete construction.⁸¹⁹ Clark turned to “new associates from Cleveland” for the “\$1.3 million more to finish the job.”⁸²⁰ These new associates had actually left Cleveland, first for Kentucky, but then onto Las Vegas, because an “energetic director of public safety in Cleveland had chased them out,” and “[h]is name was Eliot Ness.”⁸²¹

Among these new associates were mobsters like Moe Dalitz, also known as Moe Davis, Morris Kleinman, Lou Rothkopf, and Thomas McGinty.⁸²² Dalitz was a friend of the Teamsters Union president, Jimmy Hoffa, and benefited from the access that the friendship gave him to the millions of dollars in the Teamsters Central States Pension Fund.⁸²³ Later in the decade, Dalitz would also team up with Irwin Molasky, Allard Roen, and Merv Adelson to establish the Paradise Development Company, and they would go on to build Sunrise Hospital and later the

⁸¹⁶ Barbara and Myrick Land, *A Short History of Las Vegas*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 113.

⁸¹⁷ Robert McCracken, *Las Vegas: The Great American Playground*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997), 69 and 70.

⁸¹⁸ McCracken, 69.

⁸¹⁹ McCracken, 69 and 70.; Wallace Turner, “Las Vegas: Gambling Take Creates New Force in U.S.,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 18, 1963), 27.

⁸²⁰ Turner, 27.

⁸²¹ Turner, 27.

⁸²² Turner, 27.

⁸²³ UNLV University Libraries, Southern Nevada Jewish Heritage Project, *Moe Dalitz*, Accessed October 10, 2023, <https://special.library.unlv.edu/jewishheritage/people/moe-dalitz>.

Las Vegas International Country Club, the Boulevard Mall, and several UNLV buildings.⁸²⁴

Dalitz was the critical connection, though, behind getting the Desert Inn up and running.

The city of Las Vegas already had a somewhat notorious reputation throughout the U.S. largely due to its tolerant laws. Any association with Las Vegas at that time was risky for both the businesses and the business owners' reputations. As a result, large national banks or out-of-state banks were unwilling to finance casino-resort construction. Prior to 1954, Las Vegas relied on Teamster and syndicate loans. Such methods did little to discount the reputation of the city. It did not take long for these activities to garner the attention at the federal level.⁸²⁵

The federal government had been ramping up its operations against organized crime. Officials were concerned that mobsters were funding their illegal activities through their casino revenue. "Gambling produces nothing and adds nothing to the economy or society of our nation. America will be in a bad way if we ever have to resort to taxing crime and immorality for the purpose of raising revenue to operate our institutions." These were the words of Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee in 1951. He was leading a federal charge against the mob which landed him squarely in the heart of downtown Las Vegas in 1950. His opinion ran counter to that of FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover, who believed at that time it was a localized issue and denied the existence of the mob.⁸²⁶

On November 15, 1950, Kefauver held hearings in a second-floor courtroom in the Las Vegas Post Office and Courthouse to examine the mob's infiltration in gambling in the city. This building would eventually be transformed into the National Museum of Organized Crime

⁸²⁴ Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 238 and 239.; UNLV University Libraries, Southern Nevada Jewish Heritage Project, *Moe Dalitz*.

⁸²⁵ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 244.

⁸²⁶ David Clary, *Gangsters to Governors: The New Bosses of Gambling in America*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017), 103 and 104.

and Law Enforcement, or the Mob Museum. Kefauver held some political clout, and hoped this effort would propel him into the presidency. He did manage to run for Vice President in 1956, although he ultimately lost. In his Las Vegas hearing, he heard testimony from the Nevada Lieutenant Governor, Cliff “Big Juice” Jones, whom Kefauver pointed out for comingling casino money and politics. Kefauver would be proven correct when a scandal emerged a few years later involving Jones and the Thunderbird.⁸²⁷

After his nationwide investigation, Kefauver could only report back to Congress that the Mafia had control of gambling and other illegal activities.⁸²⁸ The report named a few mobsters among two major groups in New York and Chicago.⁸²⁹ The New York syndicate included Frank Costello and Meyer Lansky, while the Chicago organization included Jake “Greasy Thumb” Guzik, among others.⁸³⁰ Later, in 1957, Costello survived an assassination attempt, but was found with “a piece of paper bearing that day’s gross winnings from one of the Las Vegas Strip Casinos,” and he “was not an owner of record in that place.”⁸³¹ Nevertheless, Kefauver’s committee drew political criticism for its alleged sloppy work and mythical stories about the Mafia.⁸³² Still, his work did get the attention of many public officials.⁸³³

With the public on high alert for any suspicious mob activity, casino builders looked for an alternative approach. As a result, the Bank of Las Vegas was established in 1954 by local businessmen, including Nate Mack and his son Jerry, to help fund further Strip growth.⁸³⁴ Soon,

⁸²⁷ Clary, 104 and 105.

⁸²⁸ Clary, 107.

⁸²⁹ Clary, 107.

⁸³⁰ Clary, 107.; Turner, 27.

⁸³¹ Turner, 27.

⁸³² Clary, 107.

⁸³³ Clary, 108.

⁸³⁴ Moehring and Green, 134.

this bank was headed by E. Parry Thomas.⁸³⁵ The bank was willing to offer major loans for casino construction when other national banks would not.⁸³⁶ Thomas looked for money from anywhere he could get it, including even Jimmy Hoffa, who may have been hunting for a more discrete method of cash flow.⁸³⁷

Thomas and Jerry Mack would later be recognized for their financial role in the location selection and early design process of the Thomas & Mack Center, the modern sports and entertainment facility for UNLV.⁸³⁸ This bank, later named Valley Bank, was vital to raising the necessary funds to construct many of the Strip properties in the 1950s and also in following decades.⁸³⁹ Thomas would later tell an interviewer that Nevada was “looked down upon by all the other states” largely because of his bank’s “sinful business and so forth.”⁸⁴⁰ Some would hail him as the “real godfather of Las Vegas.”⁸⁴¹ One senior FBI agent stationed in Las Vegas referred to his bank as “the Mob’s bank.”⁸⁴²

The downtown area, sometimes referred to as Glitter Gulch because of its flashing lights, was still a booming gambling district at this time. The Texan, Benny Binion, who had been the partner of J. Kell Houssels, Sr. in the Las Vegas Club on Fremont Street since 1947 wanted to open his own casino and raise the stakes at the same time.⁸⁴³ Binion had a “deadly Wild West reputation” due to what he believed were “self-defense” killings, according to his son Ted, in

⁸³⁵ Moehring and Green, 134.

⁸³⁶ Moehring and Green, 134.

⁸³⁷ Moehring and Green, 134.

⁸³⁸ Thomas & Mack Center Website, *Our History*, Accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.thomasandmack.com/history/>.

⁸³⁹ Moehring and Green, 134.

⁸⁴⁰ Sally Denton and Roger Morris, *The Money and the Power: The Making of Las Vegas and its Hold on America, 1947-2000*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 167.

⁸⁴¹ Denton and Morris, 168.

⁸⁴² Denton and Morris, 168.

⁸⁴³ Jack Sheehan, *The Players: The Men Who Made Las Vegas*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997), 51 and 55.

1931 and 1936, and maybe one other allegation.⁸⁴⁴ In 1931, Binion shot a whiskey thief with a bad reputation, and, in 1936, he shot a rival who shot him first.⁸⁴⁵ His alleged rap sheet did not stop there.

Binion's name was also somewhat involved with a car bombing in a Dallas turf war allegedly between Binion and a man named Herbert Noble.⁸⁴⁶ Noble was certainly no stranger to this sort of violence. On March 28, 1951, Noble, a trained pilot, incredibly "survived an eleventh attempt on his life."⁸⁴⁷ A Civil Aeronautics Authority Inspector, J.V. Mathias, indicated that "jellied nitroglycerine was found...in two cylinders of the engine of Noble's private plane."⁸⁴⁸ In the tenth attempt, just six days before, "[e]xplosives – again believed to be a nitroglycerine bomb - blew up the engine of his plane as he switched on the ignition," and only "[a] steel plate between the engine and cockpit saved his life" on that occasion.⁸⁴⁹ More often the target of bullets, though, Noble drove "a bulletproof Ford" to protect himself.⁸⁵⁰ He had selected the Ford as he was certain that he was "not in the Cadillac class" when offered a bulletproof version.⁸⁵¹

In the case Binion was allegedly associated with, Noble's wife was killed in a car bomb meant for Noble.⁸⁵² Obviously, no matter who the target was, Noble was not happy. The

⁸⁴⁴ Sheehan, 53 and 54.; The Mob Museum, The Mob in Pop Culture, *Las Vegas Mob Stories Attract Hollywood Interest*, Accessed October 11, 2023, <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/las-vegas-mob-stories-attract-hollywood-interest/>.

⁸⁴⁵ Sheehan, 53 and 54.

⁸⁴⁶ Sheehan, 54.

⁸⁴⁷ Sheehan, 54.; Associated Press, "Noble Survives 11th Attempt on His Life," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, March 28, 1951), 8.

⁸⁴⁸ Associated Press, "Noble Survives 11th Attempt on His Life," 8.

⁸⁴⁹ Associated Press, "Noble Survives 11th Attempt on His Life," 8.

⁸⁵⁰ Associated Press, "Noble Survives 11th Attempt on His Life," 8.

⁸⁵¹ Associated Press, "Noble Survives 11th Attempt on His Life," 8.

⁸⁵² Sheehan, 54.

incident occurred in 1949, “when starting her husband’s car, she set off an explosion.”⁸⁵³ At the time, Noble had already faced three attempts on his life.⁸⁵⁴ Noble told a reporter “[a]ll the prior plans to kill me have been made by the same man – a kill-crazy man.”⁸⁵⁵ Noble believed that Binion was the culprit.⁸⁵⁶ He further claimed “[t]he fellow who is behind this is 1500 miles from Dallas right now but he operates several policy wheels here.”⁸⁵⁷

Binion’s son, Jack, admitted later that Binion “started the numbers business, and in Dallas it was referred to as “policy.”⁸⁵⁸ Although the reporters believed the culprit might be fifteen hundred miles away in New York, Noble may have been referring to Las Vegas which was only a couple hundred miles off the mark.⁸⁵⁹ The reporter may have been partially accurate, though, in that the Flamingo crowd was “the ‘Western headquarters’ for the Frank Costello gang of New York.”⁸⁶⁰ The Flamingo crowd “was unhappy about the publicity” of the car bombing and sent “the boys” to “avenge the death” of Noble’s wife.⁸⁶¹ Perhaps, the mob had concerns about the Texas oil money Noble was bringing in. Nevertheless, after the sixth assassination attempt on Noble, he seemed to believe Binion was trying to kill him, and a reporter wrote that he “said the gambler was in the West” where Binion had moved.⁸⁶²

⁸⁵³ Associated Press, “Dallas Woman’s Blast Death Ascribed to Far-Away Gambler,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, December 1, 1949), 8.

⁸⁵⁴ Associated Press, “Dallas Woman’s Blast Death Ascribed to Far-Away Gambler,” 8.

⁸⁵⁵ Associated Press, “Dallas Woman’s Blast Death Ascribed to Far-Away Gambler,” 8.

⁸⁵⁶ Sheehan, 54.

⁸⁵⁷ Associated Press, “Dallas Woman’s Blast Death Ascribed to Far-Away Gambler,” 8.

⁸⁵⁸ Sheehan, 52.

⁸⁵⁹ Associated Press, “Dallas Woman’s Blast Death Ascribed to Far-Away Gambler,” 8.

⁸⁶⁰ Associated Press, “Probers Hear of Vengeance [sic] Plot at Dallas,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, March 2, 1951), 18.

⁸⁶¹ Associated Press, “Probers Hear of Vengeance [sic] Plot at Dallas,” 18.

⁸⁶² Associated Press, “Gambler Hints at Own ‘Law,’” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, January 2, 1950), 9.

Because Binion refused to get involved with drugs and prostitution, he began driving a bulletproof Cadillac for protection from the mob when he was still in Texas.⁸⁶³ Noble must have known that because his associate, Raymond Laudermilk, attempted to shoot Binion in that car, only to miss and end up shot dead by someone other than Binion and left in an abandoned car.⁸⁶⁴ Noble's knowledge of the Cadillac also fully explained why his car of choice was a Ford. Seemingly obsessed with the idea that Binion was behind his troubles, he set out to avenge his wife's murder. To do that, Noble plotted to drop two large bombs from a plane on the Binion family residence.⁸⁶⁵ Noble was caught by police first, though, and eventually killed in 1951 by a "concealed 'land mine' planted in the road when he stopped at his mailbox."⁸⁶⁶ Binion denied any involvement.⁸⁶⁷

Binion bought the old Apache Hotel and opened the Horseshoe on Fremont Street in 1951.⁸⁶⁸ To bring in more customers, Binion raised the limits on games.⁸⁶⁹ In fact, games in his casino had no limit.⁸⁷⁰ Gamblers could win more with this rule, but the casino could also, and Binion did more often than not.⁸⁷¹ Other casinos were not quite as thrilled. Mobsters from the Flamingo, like Davie Berman who threatened Binion's life over the matter, sometimes helped the Texan understand that he might not want to compete with them so much.⁸⁷² Not wanting to

⁸⁶³ Des Wilson, *Ghosts at the Table: Riverboat Gamblers, Texas Rounders, Internet Gamers, and the Living Legends Who Made Poker What it is Today*, (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2008).

⁸⁶⁴ Wilson.

⁸⁶⁵ Sheehan, 54.

⁸⁶⁶ Sheehan, 54.; Associated Press, "Mystery Call Gives Lead in Noble Case," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, August 9, 1951), 12.

⁸⁶⁷ Sheehan, 54 and 55.

⁸⁶⁸ Sheehan, 49.; William Thompson, *The International Encyclopedia of Gambling*, (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, LLC, 2009), 298.

⁸⁶⁹ Sheehan, 55 and 56.

⁸⁷⁰ Thompson, 295.

⁸⁷¹ Thompson, 295 and 296.

⁸⁷² Thompson, 298.; Sheehan, 56.

upset the mob, Binion wisely relented for a while.⁸⁷³ Despite surviving the mob run-ins and avoiding arrest for the two self-defense killings and the entire Noble affair, Binion did manage to run into some trouble.⁸⁷⁴ In the mid-1950s, he was convicted of tax evasion and served forty-two months in prison.⁸⁷⁵ Nevada suspended his casino license as a result, but that was not enough to stop him.⁸⁷⁶ Binion simply passed management of the Horseshoe down to his wife and son, Jack.⁸⁷⁷ Binion essentially remained at the helm and continued to innovate.⁸⁷⁸

One Binion mantra was “[i]f you wanna get rich, make little people feel like big people.”⁸⁷⁹ Rewarding gamblers, especially frequent gamblers, by providing complimentary services like lower nightly lodging rates or free food, a casino device known as comping, was not new, but Binion put his own spin on it.⁸⁸⁰ One business associate of his, Leo Lewis, explained how “[e]verybody comped big players, but Benny Binion was the first...[he] even knew who comped little ones.”⁸⁸¹ Jack remembered also how his father “was the first in Las Vegas to have limousines” for picking up customers.⁸⁸² Later, in 1970, Jack would establish the World Series of Poker, calling on Jimmy “the Greek” Snyder, the future NFL prognosticator, to act as odds maker and publicist in the early years.⁸⁸³ Binion’s casino innovations and tactics certainly left a lasting mark on Las Vegas.

⁸⁷³ Thompson, 298.

⁸⁷⁴ Thompson, 298.

⁸⁷⁵ Thompson, 298.

⁸⁷⁶ Thompson, 298.

⁸⁷⁷ Thompson, 298.

⁸⁷⁸ Thompson, 298.

⁸⁷⁹ Sheehan, 63.

⁸⁸⁰ Thompson, 303.; Sheehan, 62.

⁸⁸¹ Sheehan, 62.

⁸⁸² Sheehan, 63.

⁸⁸³ Thompson, 298.; Ted Thackrey, “Single Ace, Nerve Win Poker Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, (Los Angeles, May 20, 1973), A5.

The next resorts to follow the Desert Inn on the Strip were the Sahara and the Sands.⁸⁸⁴ Milton Prell, who would also be a founding partner of the Mint Hotel downtown in 1957, looked to improve upon his Club Bingo, opened in 1947, by remodeling it with an African theme.⁸⁸⁵ Del Webb assisted for a stake in the resort when Prell came up short on cash.⁸⁸⁶ He then opened his resort up on October 7, 1952 as the Sahara, the tallest structure in the state at that time.⁸⁸⁷ The Sands, built by Jake Friedman, opened on December 15, 1952.⁸⁸⁸ Friedman gave it that name because of there being “so much sand” there during its construction.⁸⁸⁹ The Sands was also the only resort for a while “to have small, carefully placed TV cameras watching every wheel” where the proprietors could “sit in a back room somewhere and observe the play all over the casino.”⁸⁹⁰ These resorts truly did take the Strip to another level of both prominence and sophistication.

These two resorts also entertained big names while offering legendary entertainment. In the 1950s, stars like Cary Grant and Grace Kelly spent time at the Sahara.⁸⁹¹ The Beatles would later stay there when they performed two history-making shows at the Convention Center in August of 1964 in front of over “[s]even thousand yelping, sometimes sweltering teen-agers. [sic]”⁸⁹² From the late 1950s through the early 1960s, the Sands hosted the famous “Rat Pack,” which consisted of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Joey Bishop, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Peter

⁸⁸⁴ McCracken, 71 and 72.

⁸⁸⁵ McCracken, 71.; Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 75.

⁸⁸⁶ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 76.

⁸⁸⁷ McCracken, 71.

⁸⁸⁸ McCracken, 72.

⁸⁸⁹ McCracken, 72.

⁸⁹⁰ John Gunther, “Inside Las Vegas,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, August 26, 1956), AW12.

⁸⁹¹ McCracken, 74.

⁸⁹² McCracken, 73.; United Press International, “Beatles Gambling Lives in Las Vegas,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 21, 1964), 15.; Louella Parsons, “Vegas Took the Beatles in Stride,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, August 26, 1964), A18.

Lawford.⁸⁹³ These actors filmed *Ocean's Eleven* (1960) at the Sands, where “Frankie [Sinatra] owns part of the establishment,” during the day and partied in the showroom and lounge at night.⁸⁹⁴



Figure 12 - Rat Pack at the Sands⁸⁹⁵

With the downtown area and the Strip developing, William Moore, who had previously owned the Hotel Last Frontier with his uncle, put his trust in the 1954 survey to make his next move.⁸⁹⁶ The survey indicated the new hub of Las Vegas was actually two miles south of downtown along the highway leading to the Hoover Dam.⁸⁹⁷ His next project would be called the Showboat, and would be “built in replica of a Mississippi River showboat.”⁸⁹⁸ He opened the resort initially as the Desert Showboat Motor Inn on September 3rd, 1954, advertising it as the first resort hotel in Las Vegas, as the Strip hotels were technically outside the city limits in a

⁸⁹³ McCracken, 73.

⁸⁹⁴ McCracken, 72 and 73.; Lewis Milestone, *Ocean's Eleven*, Warner Bros, 1960.; Unknown Author, “Sinatra, Davis, Dean Martin in Film; Also Cabaret Act,” *Chicago Defender*, (Chicago, November 10, 1959), 21.

⁸⁹⁵ Unknown Author, “The Rat Pack,” *Las Vegas Sun*, Las Vegas, October 13, 2023, Accessed October 13, 2023, <https://lasvegassun.com/photos/galleries/1905/may/15/rat-pack/817/>.

⁸⁹⁶ McCracken, 75.

⁸⁹⁷ McCracken, 75.

⁸⁹⁸ Gladwin Hill, “The ‘Sure Thing’ Boom at Las Vegas,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 30, 1955), X29.

town called Paradise.⁸⁹⁹ Paradise was established in 1950 and somewhat conveniently did not have municipal taxes.⁹⁰⁰ The Showboat would be recognized later for its twenty-four lane bowling alley which opened in 1959.⁹⁰¹ For a time, though, the Showboat would remain the lone resort off the Strip and suffered as a result.⁹⁰²

In 1955, four more resorts opened in April and May.⁹⁰³ Three were on the Strip, and one on the west side.⁹⁰⁴ These resorts opened with mixed levels of success. The Royal Nevada, on the Strip, and the Moulin Rouge, on the west side, both closed that same year, with the Royal Nevada “\$1,500,000 in the red” and the Moulin Rouge “trailing debts of about \$1,352,000.”⁹⁰⁵ The other two, the Riviera and the Dunes, had better luck, although the Dunes did enter a dry spell in January of 1956.⁹⁰⁶ The locations were not behind the financial struggles. The Royal Nevada was on the Strip like the Riviera and the Dunes. The one difference that really mattered was that the mob had ties to the two successful resorts.⁹⁰⁷

The Riviera was the first high-rise resort on the Strip.⁹⁰⁸ The Miami investors group behind this venture were determined to make this project a success. Their first step, in December, 1954, was to sign Liberace, who was, at that time, “the greatest name in show business” for a record “\$50,000-a-week contract.”⁹⁰⁹ The previous recipient of the “highest

⁸⁹⁹ McCracken, 75.; Moehring, 77.; Jannelle Calderon, “Is the Las Vegas Strip Located in Las Vegas?” *The Nevada Independent*, December 4, 2023, Accessed February 23, 2024, <https://thenevadaindependent.com/article/fact-brief-is-the-las-vegas-strip-located-in-las-vegas>.

⁹⁰⁰ McCracken, 75.; Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 77.; Calderon.

⁹⁰¹ McCracken, 75.

⁹⁰² Moehring and Green, 139.

⁹⁰³ Gilbert Millstein, “Cloud on Las Vegas’ Silver Lining,” *New York Times*, (New York, March 18, 1956), 213.

⁹⁰⁴ Millstein, 213.

⁹⁰⁵ Millstein, 213.

⁹⁰⁶ Millstein, 213.

⁹⁰⁷ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 242.

⁹⁰⁸ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 78.

⁹⁰⁹ Associated Press, “\$50,000 Lures Liberace (And George) to Nevada,” *New York Times*, (New York, December 4, 1954), 15.

salary to be paid in the Nevada gambling oasis,” was Marlene Dietrich who earned twenty thousand less per week performing at the Sahara.⁹¹⁰ Still, business was only marginal at the Riviera in the opening months.⁹¹¹

As was typical in Las Vegas, the investors group turned to the mob to get operations running in the right direction; in this case, Flamingo executive, Gus Greenbaum, who had attempted to retire in Arizona, where he earned the reputation as the “kingpin of bookmakers in Phoenix.”⁹¹² Greenbaum agreed only after “Greasy Thumb” Guzik threatened him from Chicago to take care of his interests in this new resort.⁹¹³ Greenbaum brought in several of his Flamingo associates, including Davie Berman, and “Ice Pick Willie” Alderman to assist.⁹¹⁴ As Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris pointed out somewhat facetiously in their book, *The Green Felt Jungle* (1963), these were “[a]ll upstanding Nevada businessmen.”⁹¹⁵ Greenbaum and his mob henchmen were, in fact, successful in getting the casino back on its feet.⁹¹⁶ Greenbaum, and his wife, sadly were killed by having “their throats slashed with a carving knife.”⁹¹⁷ The mob would remain in control even beyond the demise of Greenbaum.⁹¹⁸

The Dunes opened next on the Strip, and it also suffered initially.⁹¹⁹ It was developed by Joe Sullivan, a restaurateur from Rhode Island, Al Gottesman, a theatre chain owner, and Bob Rice a costume jewelry maker based in Beverly Hills.⁹²⁰ The Dunes owners looked to Jake

⁹¹⁰ Associated Press, “\$50,000 Lures Liberace (And George) to Nevada,” 15.; Gunther, AW12.

⁹¹¹ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 78.

⁹¹² Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 78.; Associated Press, “Ex-Gambler, Wife Slain in Phoenix,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, December 4, 1958), 1.

⁹¹³ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 78.

⁹¹⁴ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 78.

⁹¹⁵ Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris, *The Green Felt Jungle*, (New York: Ishi Press International, 1963), 36.

⁹¹⁶ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 78.

⁹¹⁷ Associated Press, “Ex-Gambler, Wife Slain in Phoenix,” 1.

⁹¹⁸ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 78.

⁹¹⁹ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 79.

⁹²⁰ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 79.

Gottlieb, who was, again, a mob associate, and also a friend of Jimmy Hoffa, to save their operation.⁹²¹ Gottlieb made two important moves. First, he secured loans through the Bank of Las Vegas run by Thomas and Mack.⁹²² Once the loans “were recorded, the bank’s interest was assigned to the pension fund” run by the Teamsters and Hoffa.⁹²³ Second, Gottlieb brought in Major Riddle, a former associate of Al Capone, to save the resort.⁹²⁴ Riddle booked “Minsky’s Follies,” which starred Lou Costello, Bud Abbott’s comedic partner, for a six-week run.⁹²⁵ The show was the first topless girls production in Las Vegas.⁹²⁶ It was a hit, and the “Minsky-bedizened Dunes” was thriving.⁹²⁷

Not to be outdone by the Strip, the downtown area was the site of the next major hotel in the city. A former newspaper salesman, Ed Levinson, built what one contemporary *New York Times* reporter described at the time as the “\$7,000,000 Hotel Fremont in Las Vegas, which is not only the tallest building in Nevada but boasts the largest casino in the country.”⁹²⁸ This hotel was erected appropriately on Fremont Street, with “its sides paneled in random squares of beige and terra cotta, which make it look like a World War I battleship camouflaged and upended” as another *New York Times* reporter wrote about it as it neared completion.⁹²⁹ Its manager, Edward Torres, would give Mr. Las Vegas, Wayne Newton, his start in the city in the late 1950s.⁹³⁰

⁹²¹ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 79.; Gene Blake and Jack Tobin, “Teamster Loans Reach \$22 Million in Nevada,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, January 15, 1963), A5.

⁹²² Blake and Tobin, A5.

⁹²³ Blake and Tobin, A5.

⁹²⁴ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 79.; Moehring and Green, 151.

⁹²⁵ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 79.

⁹²⁶ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 80.

⁹²⁷ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 80.; Gladwin Hill, “Las Vegas Keeps the Wheels Turning,” *New York Times*, (New York, October 19, 1958), X35.

⁹²⁸ Diana Rice, “News and Notes from the Field of Travel,” *New York Times*, (New York, May 20, 1956), 147.

⁹²⁹ Millstein, 213.

⁹³⁰ Associated Press, “Wayne Newton May Not Sell Interest in Las Vegas Hotel,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, July 16, 1982), C9.; Jack Anderson, “Las Vegas is Changing - on the Surface: The Washington Merry-Go-Round,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, August 23, 1969), C11.; John Deiner, “Wayne’s World: In Las Vegas, Catching an Icon in Action,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, August 25, 2002), E1.

Torres had a reputation, as well, “as a ‘racketeer’ and was later charged with ‘skimming’ by federal authorities” although the charges were later dropped.⁹³¹

Skimming was “the process of removing cash from the day’s proceeds before those proceeds were totaled up and recorded on the books.” Each casino had a “Hard Count Room” where cash counting was done, and cameras watched to prevent any wrongdoing. The mob had a system in which “some wise guy would walk in with a box or a bag, stuff it with cash and then walk out.” The cameras would be blocked conveniently during this time. Susan Berman recalled when she joined her father, Davie, one of Greenbaum’s associates at the Flamingo and Riviera, watching skimming take place. She said, “I saw them go – ‘three for us, one for the government, two for Meyer [Lansky].’ I helped them count the bills. The skimming, of course, it was a crime. But it wasn’t a crime like having to kill people.” While that did not seem like a good way to live, it was the way to live, literally, for the mobsters in the Las Vegas casinos.⁹³²

In 1955, an Italian American group from the San Francisco Bay area took over the Sal Sagev, renaming it the Golden Gate Casino.⁹³³ Interestingly, in 1958, a pastor named Maurice Tulluch who had been missing, was found there acting “as a gambling casino shill.”⁹³⁴ A shill was “a casino employee who sits in at various games to keep the games active.”⁹³⁵ Apparently, Tulluch had disappeared due to “a pending divorce action” and “church problems.”⁹³⁶ Naturally, he was thrilled to be in this Las Vegas casino job.⁹³⁷ Another tactic the Golden Gate hotel used

⁹³¹ Anderson, C11.

⁹³² James Roman, *Chronicles of Old Las Vegas: Exposing Sin City’s High-Stakes History*, (New York: Museyon, 2011), 128 and 129.

⁹³³ Adrian Havas, Remodeling Prepares Golden Gate for Future,” *Las Vegas Business Press*, Volume 10, Issue 21, July 12, 1993, 11.

⁹³⁴ United Press International, “Missing Pastor Found Working as Shill in Casino,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, November 27, 1958), C6.

⁹³⁵ United Press International, “Missing Pastor Found Working as Shill in Casino,” C6.

⁹³⁶ United Press International, “Missing Pastor Found Working as Shill in Casino,” C6.

⁹³⁷ United Press International, “Missing Pastor Found Working as Shill in Casino,” C6.

to attract gamblers was its offer that would endure as the very inexpensive “99-cent shrimp cocktail.”⁹³⁸ In the 1990s, the hotel would later be restored to its original Hotel Nevada appearance, including the brass and wood paneling from 1906.⁹³⁹ The Golden Gate would eventually be the oldest hotel in Las Vegas.⁹⁴⁰

Back on the Strip, two more resorts opened. The Hacienda, which was originally going to be called Lady Luck Las Vegas, opened in early 1957.⁹⁴¹ Warren “Doc” Bayley led this construction.⁹⁴² The Hacienda was built two miles south of the other Strip hotels, and Bayley realized his resort would receive minimal foot traffic from any high-rollers at the other major resorts.⁹⁴³ To contend with this disadvantage, he implemented a new strategy. Unlike all previous Las Vegas resorts, Bayley took a chance on marketing itself as a family hotel, catering to children.⁹⁴⁴ One way it did this was with its kids’ go-cart track.⁹⁴⁵ With this innovative approach, the Hacienda eventually thrived after a bumpy start.⁹⁴⁶ The Tropicana, promoted as being “bigger than all of downtown Reno,” came next.⁹⁴⁷

The Tropicana opened in April of 1957 and was headed by Ben Jaffe, an insurance company owner linked to gangster, Sam Giancana.⁹⁴⁸ A former partner of Frank Costello, Philip “Dandy Phil” Kastel, indicated that he had stock options in this venture, but said that Costello

⁹³⁸ Susan Spano, “Las Vegas on a Small Stake,” *New York Times*, (New York, October 26, 1997), TR6.

⁹³⁹ Havas, 11.

⁹⁴⁰ Spano, TR6.

⁹⁴¹ UNLV University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, *Hacienda (Lady Luck) Hotel and Casino: Las Vegas, Nevada, 1954 July 21, 1968 September 5*, Las Vegas, Nevada, Accessed October 18, 2023, <https://special.library.unlv.edu/node/101530>.; Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 81.

⁹⁴² Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 80 and 81.

⁹⁴³ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 81.

⁹⁴⁴ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 81.

⁹⁴⁵ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 81.

⁹⁴⁶ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 82.; Hill, “Las Vegas Keeps the Wheels Turning,” X35.

⁹⁴⁷ Gunther, AW12.

⁹⁴⁸ McCracken, 78.; Unknown Author, “Jaffe Named Defendant in \$10 Million Suit,” *The Hammond Times*, (Munster, April 26, 1960), 17.

“has no interest in this” because he had “enough troubles.” Ironically, by June of that year, the public would begin to learn more when police found “the slip of paper found in Frank Costello’s pocket – with figures which tallied with the receipts at the Tropicana.”⁹⁴⁹ Kefauver suddenly looked good, although one year too late to help his failed Vice Presidential run, and Kastel perhaps did not look so good.

The last major resort to hit the Strip in the 1950s was the Stardust. Tony Cornero, who had owned the Meadows and the S.S. Rex, came up with the legendary name.⁹⁵⁰ Cornero looked to Dalitz to help him with cash flow issues to finish this project.⁹⁵¹ Dalitz would later be identified as one of the mobsters taking loans through Hoffa from the Bank of Las Vegas to assist Wilbur Clark who eventually took over the Stardust.⁹⁵² Perhaps Dalitz used similar Teamster money to assist Clark with the Desert Inn. The same could possibly be said about the Stardust assistance for Cornero, but Dalitz definitely assisted him at first, one way or another.⁹⁵³ Lansky also chipped in.⁹⁵⁴ However, when Cornero asked for another eight hundred thousand on July 31st, 1955, he mysteriously died later the same day at the craps table where “[h]e was at least \$10,000 behind.”⁹⁵⁵

Although the Stardust “stood unfinished for several years after the death of the Stardust promoter, Tony Cornero,” it finally opened up on July 2nd, 1958.⁹⁵⁶ At that time, with “[o]ne thousand and fifty-one rooms,” it was the largest hotel in the world and the most luxurious in Las

⁹⁴⁹ Dorothy Kilgallen, “Dorothy Kilgallen: Elvis Retains Tresses for ‘Con’ Role,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, June 19, 1957), C6.; Turner, 7.

⁹⁵⁰ Roman, 56.

⁹⁵¹ Roman, 56.

⁹⁵² Blake and Tobin, A5.

⁹⁵³ Roman, 56.

⁹⁵⁴ Roman, 56.

⁹⁵⁵ Roman, 57.; Associated Press, “Tony Cornero Dead; is Stricken at Dice,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 1, 1955), 38.; Associated Press, “A.C. Stralla, Gambling Figure, Dies,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, August 1, 1955), 20.

⁹⁵⁶ McCracken, 82.; Hill, “Las Vegas Keeps the Wheels Turning,” X35.

Vegas.⁹⁵⁷ John Factor, the brother of the cosmetics magnate, Max Factor, invested ten million dollars into the project to finish it.⁹⁵⁸ It was Factor who would sell it to United Resort Hotels Corporation led by Wilbur Clark.⁹⁵⁹ Factor's involvement in saving the Stardust was consistent with other 1950s Las Vegas casino saviors, as he was sometimes known as "Jake the Barber" and possibly had mob connections.⁹⁶⁰ The Stardust had an immense sign with over seven thousand feet of neon tubing and eleven thousand lamps.⁹⁶¹ Wayne Newton also took his act to the Stardust, after other runs at the Flamingo and the Frontier Hotel (previously the Hotel Last Frontier and the New Frontier), where he performed his iconic song "Danke Schoen."⁹⁶²

One other project was completed in this decade that had an impact on 1950s Las Vegas. Originally, a "7,500-seat convention hall" was planned, although its plans expanded to "seat about 10,000."⁹⁶³ This new Convention Center was the facility where the Beatles would later perform their two shows.⁹⁶⁴ Benny Goffstein, the Riviera Vice President, also recognized that, with this venue, Las Vegas was ready to host the big fights of the day.⁹⁶⁵ He indicated that the local hotel owners were determined "[t]o beat any offer by any promoter" to host the Sugar Ray Robinson – Carmen Basilio Middleweight Championship fight.⁹⁶⁶

⁹⁵⁷ Roman, 57.; Richard Coe, "Dam's Boom Town is Palace of Today," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, July 11, 1959), D5.

⁹⁵⁸ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 83.

⁹⁵⁹ Blake and Tobin, A5.; Associated Press, "Las Vegas Stardust Hotel is Sold to the United Corp.," *New York Times*, (New York, August 31, 1962), 33.

⁹⁶⁰ McCracken, 81.

⁹⁶¹ McCracken, 80.

⁹⁶² Deiner, E1.; Richard Zoglin, *Elvis in Vegas*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019), 161.

⁹⁶³ Millstein, 213.; United Press International, "Las Vegas Hotel Owners Seek Sugar Ray Title Go," *Daily Defender*, (Chicago, October 15, 1958), A22.

⁹⁶⁴ United Press International, "Beatles Gambling Lives in Las Vegas," 15.; Parsons, A18.

⁹⁶⁵ United Press International, "Las Vegas Hotel Owners Seek Sugar Ray Title Go," A22.

⁹⁶⁶ United Press International, "Las Vegas Hotel Owners Seek Sugar Ray Title Go," A22.

The first prizefight to take place in Las Vegas, once New York turned its attention to baseball and football was actually held in 1955.⁹⁶⁷ On May 2nd of that year, Archie Moore defeated Nino Valdez “by close decision.”⁹⁶⁸ The fifteen-round fight was promoted by Jack “Doc” Kearns, who arranged for it to be held at Cashman Field, named for James Cashman, the former Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce member.⁹⁶⁹ To guarantee the fight, Kearns raised one hundred thousand dollars from casino owners who saw the potential for attracting guests willing to spend money in their resorts.⁹⁷⁰ With the fight having a small crowd, estimated at around six thousand, Kearns’ stint as a promoter ended.⁹⁷¹ The Robinson-Basilio fight did not happen in Las Vegas, but the Convention Center would get a fight in 1960.⁹⁷² Boxing would remain in Las Vegas after that.

Interestingly, the idea for the Convention Center was rooted in a failed sports gamble of sorts. The Las Vegas Thoroughbred Racing Association, led by Joe Smoot, built a track in 1950.⁹⁷³ On the track’s opening day, the crowd was enthusiastic.⁹⁷⁴ Track issues emerged, including a lack of easily viewable betting results, though, and that enthusiasm soon waned.⁹⁷⁵ Also, Strip resort owners were not thrilled about possibly losing profits to the horseracing track, so the track closed within weeks.⁹⁷⁶ The city and county wanted a convention center to compete with other major cities like New York, Chicago, and Atlantic City, and the failure of this track

⁹⁶⁷ Richard Davies and Kathleen Szawoila, *The Main Event: Boxing in Nevada from the Mining Camps to the Las Vegas Strip*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2014), 178.

⁹⁶⁸ Jesse Linthicum, “Sunlight on Sports,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, May 7, 1955), 15.

⁹⁶⁹ Davies and Szawoila, 178 and 179.

⁹⁷⁰ Davies and Szawoila, 179.

⁹⁷¹ Davies and Szawoila, 180.

⁹⁷² Davies and Szawoila, 180.

⁹⁷³ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 93.

⁹⁷⁴ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 93.

⁹⁷⁵ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 93.

⁹⁷⁶ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 93.

offered them a chance to do just that.⁹⁷⁷ These local officials hoped to put a convention hall on the dormant land where the race track once stood, but they eventually chose the land behind the Thunderbird.⁹⁷⁸ Later, interestingly, in 1963 and also behind the Thunderbird, Thunderbird Downs, another track for thoroughbred and quarter horse racing, opened but was “closed down long ago” by 1974.⁹⁷⁹

In the 1950s, “Las Vegas’s population increased from 25,000 to 100,000, surpassing that of Reno for the first time, and its total property tax evaluations rose from \$30,000,000 to nearly \$150,000,000.”⁹⁸⁰ By 1956, local boosters were already calling Las Vegas the “entertainment capital of the world.”⁹⁸¹ One memorable new steakhouse, the Golden Steer, opened in 1958 and, for decades after, would be frequented by many of those responsible for such a title, like Elvis, Muhammad Ali, and Frank Sinatra.⁹⁸² The word “fabulous” became associated with Las Vegas when the famous “Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas” sign, designed by Betty Whitehead Willis, was installed on Las Vegas Boulevard near the Hacienda in 1959.⁹⁸³ The Hoover Dam powered this change, and, along with the local recreational areas, remained a significant draw for tourists. The mob continued to prosper under the lights.

⁹⁷⁷ McCracken, 83.

⁹⁷⁸ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 93 and 94.

⁹⁷⁹ United Press International, “Another Wheel at Las Vegas,” *New York Times*, (New York, October 5, 1963), 42.; Gerald Strine, “Only Nevada’s in the Race,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, October 22, 1974), D7.

⁹⁸⁰ Bill Becker, “Las Vegas Anticipating the Super Sixties,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 31, 1960), XX19.; Moehring and Green, 159.

⁹⁸¹ Gunther, AW12.

⁹⁸² Larry Olmsted, “Las Vegas’ Oldest Steakhouse Still Charms,” *USAToday.com*, August 18, 2016, Accessed February 12, 2024, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/columnist/greatamericanbites/2016/08/18/las-vegas-oldest-steakhouse-still-charms/88823166/>.

⁹⁸³ Becker, XX19.; National Archives, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Program Records*, “Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas” Sign, Clark County, Nevada, Accessed October 19, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/63816510>.



Figure 13 - Fabulous Las Vegas Sign⁹⁸⁴

Although Las Vegas qualified as a metropolitan area by 1960, the population was about to explode with over a one hundred percent increase over the next ten years.⁹⁸⁵ Mobsters were in no hurry to leave the city and its lucrative opportunities. Three millionaires were about to make their mark on the Las Vegas landscape.⁹⁸⁶ The next attractions on the scene were prizefights and motorcycle jumps, which by the 1960s were widely accepted as decent despite the inherent danger of both sports. Nevertheless, with Las Vegas rising in popularity for its entertainment, some outsiders began to wonder if some of that entertainment exceeded the bounds of acceptability. As a result, Las Vegas was about to receive a new nickname, “Sin City.”⁹⁸⁷ No strangers to cashing in on the vices of others, Las Vegans would embrace their town’s decadent reputation, while knowingly avoiding the temptations themselves.⁹⁸⁸

⁹⁸⁴ Becker, XX19.; National Archives, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Program Records*, “Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas” Sign.

⁹⁸⁵ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 108.

⁹⁸⁶ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 118.

⁹⁸⁷ Howard Taubman, “Mozart in Las Vegas: When Sun Comes Up in ‘Sin City,’ the Action Often Turns to Culture,” *New York Times*, (New York, December 6, 1966), 57.

⁹⁸⁸ Taubman, 57.

Chapter Seven – 1960s

Las Vegas went through another transformation during the 1960s. One reclusive millionaire singlehandedly bought out the mob's resort interests.⁹⁸⁹ Other millionaires built new resorts that ushered in a new era in the city. One legendary daredevil demonstrated how water had become secondary to Las Vegas's longstanding dependence on pushing limits. Boxing also found a home in Las Vegas. By the end of the decade, the same could also be said for "the first entertainer to popularize 'rock 'n' roll.'" ⁹⁹⁰ The growth of "Sin City" accelerated, and, by the end of 1966, Las Vegas city officials predicted the 1975 population would "be more than 500,000 and possibly closer to 750,000." ⁹⁹¹

With such expected growth, Las Vegans found themselves in circumstances not altogether much different than that of the Paiutes. There was a growing concern among residents that there would not be enough water in Las Vegas to support the population increase. In the mid-1950s, Las Vegas daily water usage was roughly thirteen million gallons, but, by 1960, it had risen to twenty million gallons. As communities formed around Las Vegas and spread out into the surrounding desert flats, the springs were no longer a viable solution. Unlike the Paiutes, Las Vegans had the massive luxury of the Hoover Dam. ⁹⁹²

In the early 1950s, plans were in the works to decrease the Las Vegas reliance on Hoover Dam electricity and move to power generated by natural gas piped in from El Paso, Texas. ⁹⁹³ By 1959, Las Vegas had begun receiving the bulk of its electric power from Southern

⁹⁸⁹ Jack Anderson, "Las Vegas is Changing - on the Surface: The Washington Merry-Go-Round," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, August 23, 1969), C11.

⁹⁹⁰ Mike Jahn, "Elvis Presley to Make Personal Appearances," *New York Times*, (New York, December 4, 1968), 51.

⁹⁹¹ Howard Taubman, "Mozart in Las Vegas: When Sun Comes Up in 'Sin City,' the Action Often Turns to Culture," *New York Times*, (New York, December 6, 1966), 57.

⁹⁹² Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 192 and 193.

⁹⁹³ Associated Press, "To Expand Gas System," *New York Times*, (New York, February 1, 1952), 36.

Nevada Power.⁹⁹⁴ In 1964, the Hoover Dam and the Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River were then generating more energy than necessary for their local regions.⁹⁹⁵ This provided an opportunity to spread power to other American locations. To push the U.S. ahead of the Soviet Union in being “the world leader in power transmission technology,” President Lyndon Johnson lobbied Congress to create a power grid for the American West.⁹⁹⁶ This network would be “the largest single electric transmission project ever conceived” in the nation.⁹⁹⁷ This further widened the impact of the Hoover Dam on the entire nation.

The Las Vegas energy transition, however, did not lessen the impact of the Hoover Dam on the growth of Las Vegas. The dam flood control was invaluable. In 1960, Floyd Dominy, Commissioner of Reclamation, assessed that “the annual inflow to Lake Mead in all but two years since 1935 would have been sufficient to have caused some flooding under pre-dam conditions.”⁹⁹⁸ In 1963, the amount of “[v]isitors taking the guided tour of Hoover Dam and Powerplant...numbered 564,594.”⁹⁹⁹ That was up over one hundred thousand from just six years earlier.¹⁰⁰⁰ The Hoover Dam was also visited by several foreign delegations, maybe to take some of the dam innovations to their nations.¹⁰⁰¹ Interestingly, William Warne, the Director of

⁹⁹⁴ Unknown Author, “Utility Offering \$5,500,000 Bonds,” *New York Times*, (New York, May 12, 1959), 52.

⁹⁹⁵ Unknown Author, “Johnson Requests \$45.5 Million to Start Western Power Grid,” *New York Times*, (New York, July 30, 1964), 33.

⁹⁹⁶ Unknown Author, “Johnson Requests \$45.5 Million to Start Western Power Grid,” 33.

⁹⁹⁷ Unknown Author, “Johnson Requests \$45.5 Million to Start Western Power Grid,” 33.

⁹⁹⁸ Unknown Author, “25th Year Noted at Hoover Dam,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 31, 1960), 40.

⁹⁹⁹ National Archives, Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor, Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California, *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History. 1963*, Accessed August 4, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/218518111>., 6.

¹⁰⁰⁰ National Archives, Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor, Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California, *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History. 1957*, Accessed October 6, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/218518076?objectPage=5>., 2.

¹⁰⁰¹ National Archives, Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor, Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California, *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History. 1963*., 6.

California's Department of Water Resources visited as well, indicating that Californians may have been looking for water, too.¹⁰⁰²

Las Vegas, though, needed to develop a water project quickly, while still having to align with the Colorado River Compact of 1922, which designated the amount of water from the Colorado River to be distributed to seven states including Nevada.¹⁰⁰³ Because of the rapid acceleration in population growth, city officials determined that the city would need enough water to support two million people.¹⁰⁰⁴ Nevada senators Howard Cannon and Alan Bible led the charge on legislation that would guarantee such voluminous water levels.¹⁰⁰⁵ As a Senator-Elect, in 1959, Cannon was already pressuring Congress "to act on programs for development of the nation's water resources and conservation."¹⁰⁰⁶ Curiously, he would later get caught up in a Teamster bribery scandal, although he was never charged of any wrongdoing.¹⁰⁰⁷ Bible managed to always stay above the fray and was committed to Nevada's best interests.

When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, Bible notably "proposed that 50 million silver dollars be minted with the President's likeness."¹⁰⁰⁸ Dating back as far as 1873, and the American demonetization of silver, the precious metal had once been "the most important issue in Nevada" because of the state's valuable silver mines.¹⁰⁰⁹ Pushing legislation

¹⁰⁰² National Archives, Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor, Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California, *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History*. 1963., 6.

¹⁰⁰³ Bureau of Reclamation, *Colorado River Compact, 1922*, Accessed October 30, 2023, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/pao/pdfiles/crcompct.pdf.; Moehring and Green, 193.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Moehring and Green, 193.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Moehring and Green, 193.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Associated Press, "Conservation is Urged: Western Democratic Senators Call on Congress to Act," *New York Times*, (New York, January 6, 1959), 20.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Unknown Author, "Ex-Teamster Chief Admits Lying in His '82 Trial," *New York Times*, (New York, November 3, 1985), 37; Adam Bernstein, "Former Nevada Sen. Howard Cannon Dies," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, March 7, 2002), VAB6.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Alfonso Narvaez, "Former Senator Alan Bible, 78; Nevadan Was Advocate of Parks," *New York Times*, (New York, September 14, 1988), B7.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Unknown Author, "The Champion of Silver," *New York Times*, (New York, May 13, 1890), 5.

like this, seemingly representative of Nevadan and Las Vegas values, for a national tribute was reminiscent of when his mentor, Senator McCarran, lobbied to make St. Patrick's Day a Washington, DC, holiday.¹⁰¹⁰ McCarran, who was once criticized as being "silver-haired, silver-tongued, and silver-minded," was enormously dedicated to the growth of Las Vegas and "the Silver State."¹⁰¹¹ Bible had the same mentality.

Cannon and Bible both looked to avoid a water crisis in Las Vegas. Their loyalty to President Johnson, who was on his own mission to improve the nation, put them in a good position to help the biggest city in their state.¹⁰¹² Johnson had developed a hopeful set of proposals aimed at improving the lives of American citizens and called it the "Great Society."¹⁰¹³ Certainly, delivering enough water for irrigation and municipal water usage to American locations facing the prospect of shortages, aligned with the Johnson plan. Consequently the two Nevada senators struck a deal with Johnson beneficial to all involved.

The result was a "\$72 million Southern Nevada Water Supply Project" that would "provide water for Las Vegas, Henderson, Nellis Air Force Base and neighboring communities in Clark County."¹⁰¹⁴ This project would include a large-diameter line that would draw water from Lake Mead.¹⁰¹⁵ Also, as part of Johnson's programs, "[t]he Federal Government would guarantee to the lower basin 7.5 million acre feet of water a year for consumption in Arizona, California and Nevada."¹⁰¹⁶ An acre foot of water was the amount necessary to cover an acre

¹⁰¹⁰ Unknown Author, "Irish Holiday," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, March 16, 1934), 3.

¹⁰¹¹ Associated Press, "Senator M'Carran is Dead in Nevada," *New York Times*, (New York, September 29, 1954), 1.; Cy Ryan, "Nevada Soon May be Known as Atomic State," *Chicago Daily Defender*, (Chicago, January 8, 1962), 9.

¹⁰¹² Moehring and Green, 193 and 194.

¹⁰¹³ Tom Wicker, "Johnson's Great Society - - Lines are Drawn," *New York Times*, (New York, March 14, 1965), E3.

¹⁰¹⁴ William Blair, "Plan for Water Development is Proposed for Colorado Basin," *New York Times*, (New York, February 16, 1964), 64.

¹⁰¹⁵ Moehring and Green, 194.

¹⁰¹⁶ Blair, 64.

with a depth of one foot.¹⁰¹⁷ The lower basin amount was divided up, “with California getting 4.4 million acre feet, Arizona 2.8 million and Nevada 300,000.”¹⁰¹⁸ Las Vegas would receive Nevada’s full share which would be enough for the projected population growth.¹⁰¹⁹

As Las Vegas, a town full of vices, was preparing to expand, one millionaire and future billionaire, believed it could still be built into a model city.¹⁰²⁰ Howard Hughes having been recognized as a “man of millions and mystery, daredevil flier, inventor and financier, entered the 1960s already well known as an “all-purpose Renaissance man.”¹⁰²¹ Hughes inherited his father’s tool company, which had a 1923 value of a half million dollars.¹⁰²² He also was a famous test pilot who set “a world speed record of 352 miles an hour in a 1935 flight,” and his interest in flight brought him to Hollywood in 1928 where “he produced ‘Hell’s Angels,’ one of the most successful aviation films ever made.”¹⁰²³ If anyone could reroute the trajectory of Las Vegas, it was Hughes.

He had gambled in Las Vegas before the 1960s, but he also learned of the favorable tax codes and decided to purchase “more than 20,000 acres of barren desert stretching from near the Strip to near the Spring Mountain Range about 20 miles west of Las Vegas.”¹⁰²⁴ This land for which Hughes paid less than three dollars per acre, would later be called “Husite,” and then the

¹⁰¹⁷ Blair, 64.

¹⁰¹⁸ Blair, 64.

¹⁰¹⁹ Moehring and Green, 194.

¹⁰²⁰ Robert McCracken, *Las Vegas: The Great American Playground*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997), 89.; James Sterba, “Howard Hughes Dies at 70 on Flight to Texas Hospital,” *New York Times*, (New York, April 6, 1976), 73.

¹⁰²¹ Unknown Author, “Fabled Mystery Man Howard Hughes,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 9, 1961), 43.

¹⁰²² Unknown Author, “Fabled Mystery Man Howard Hughes,” 43.

¹⁰²³ Unknown Author, “Fabled Mystery Man Howard Hughes,” 43.

¹⁰²⁴ Associated Press, “Howard Hughes Buys Desert Inn,” *New York Times*, (New York, March 15, 1967), 52.; David Clary, *Gangsters to Governors: The New Bosses of Gambling in America*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017), 120.

somewhat posh and “dream-like setting,” Summerlin.¹⁰²⁵ Then, several years later, in 1966 Hughes left his permanent residence in Boston and headed for Las Vegas.¹⁰²⁶ By this time, he had already become a recluse with an obsessive fear of the danger of germs from human contact.¹⁰²⁷ He arrived in Las Vegas with two private Pacific Railroad train cars which he paid for along with “a private engine...at an additional cost of \$17,000 to pull the cars” from his stop in Ogden, Utah.¹⁰²⁸ Hughes “had undergone major surgery, Nov. 23[,] aboard the private train” on his way to Ogden.¹⁰²⁹ In December, he began living in a Desert Inn penthouse, occupying the entire ninth floor with his wife, actress Jean Peters.¹⁰³⁰

Management complained that he was taking up space where high rollers could stay and then spend more money, especially during the upcoming New Year’s Day celebrations.¹⁰³¹ A few of the resort stakeholders at that time included the mobster, Moe Dalitz, and his associates, Morris Kleinman, and Allard Roen.¹⁰³² None of these guys wanted anyone messing up their casino profits. Hughes, of course, did not want to leave, so he asked his closest advisor, Robert Maheu, to figure out a solution.¹⁰³³ Maheu was essentially Hughes’ fixer of sorts.¹⁰³⁴ In that capacity, he had worked with mobsters and his old FBI and CIA associates.¹⁰³⁵

¹⁰²⁵ Wallace Turner, “Howard Hughes Captures Imagination of Las Vegas as He Fashions Nevada Empire,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 14, 1968), 69.; Herb Jaffe, “Hughes Originally Envisioned Summerlin as Site for Aircraft-Related Industries,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Las Vegas, February 14, 2014, Accessed November 7, 2023, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/local-columns/herb-jaffe/hughes-originally-envisioned-summerlin-as-site-for-aircraft-related-industries/>.

¹⁰²⁶ Associated Press, “Howard Hughes Buys Desert Inn,” 52.; Clary, 120.

¹⁰²⁷ Clary, 118.

¹⁰²⁸ United Press International, “Las Vegas Reports Howard Hughes III at the Desert Inn,” *New York Times*, (New York, December 2, 1966), 21.

¹⁰²⁹ United Press International, “Las Vegas Reports Howard Hughes III at the Desert Inn,” 21.

¹⁰³⁰ Associated Press, “Howard Hughes Buys Desert Inn,” 52.; McCracken, 89.

¹⁰³¹ McCracken, 89.

¹⁰³² Associated Press, “Howard Hughes Buys Desert Inn,” 52.

¹⁰³³ Clary, 119 and 121.

¹⁰³⁴ Clary, 119.

¹⁰³⁵ Clary, 121.

To fix this mess, Maheu turned to his old acquaintance, Jimmy Hoffa, who had already been on the radar of Robert Kennedy's Justice Department because of his association with the mob. Kennedy's involvement with the mob began when he fought against their control of the race wire, which was used to generate profits through off-track betting on horse racing. Kennedy believed this was necessary "because profits from illegal gambling are huge and they are the primary source of the funds which finance organized crime." He was not wrong when it came to the race wire, and, in fact, Bugsy Siegel first came to Las Vegas to dominate the race wire. Consequently, Kennedy's brother, Jack, pushed Congress to sign off on the Wire Act in 1961, which would ban the interstate transmission of betting information.¹⁰³⁶

Robert Kennedy was especially concerned with Hoffa. These two men both genuinely disliked each other. Hoffa had issues with the President's brother's moral political agenda, and Kennedy believed Hoffa was "absolute evilness." Kennedy was critical of Hoffa for using the union pension fund as his own bank to wield influence, especially in Las Vegas casinos and in connection with the mob. Hoffa received kickbacks for approving loans to the mob to fund the casinos. These transactions also enabled the mob to further solidify their position in the city, but Kennedy was ready to crack down on such activities. Nevertheless, Hoffa's Kennedy involvement did not stop him in this case.¹⁰³⁷

Hoffa, of course, had assisted the owners with the purchase of the Desert Inn and had the influence Kennedy accused him of having. Accordingly, Hoffa agreed to help Maheu and bought Hughes some time, getting him extended through New Year's Day.¹⁰³⁸ Maheu knew he still needed to act further, as this reprieve would not last long.¹⁰³⁹ His plan, which turned out to

¹⁰³⁶ Clary, 90, 111, 112, and 121.

¹⁰³⁷ Clary, 111 and 112.

¹⁰³⁸ Clary, 121.

¹⁰³⁹ Clary, 121.

have been Hughes' plan even before his move to Las Vegas, was for Hughes to simply purchase the Desert Inn, and that is what he did for a figure just above "\$13-million," with almost half being paid in cash.¹⁰⁴⁰ Part of the bargain was for Dalitz and his crew to stay on to manage the resort.¹⁰⁴¹

Hughes had initially wanted to acquire the Dunes Hotel, but the staff there "was unable to accommodate his requirement for a whole floor."¹⁰⁴² Also, in 1967, Hughes bought the Sands Hotel, the Castaways Casino, and the Frontier Hotel; the Silver Slipper the following year; and the Landmark, which opened as the tallest structure in the state in 1969.¹⁰⁴³ He actually bought the Frontier, across from the Desert Inn, just because he feared that the "million dollar sign would fall off and crash into his penthouse."¹⁰⁴⁴ Despite Hughes' idiosyncrasies, these purchases were welcome news to at least three prominent figures. Nevada Governor, Paul Laxalt, said about Hughes' casino involvement in Las Vegas, "Thus far, it's all been to the good."¹⁰⁴⁵ William Harrah, a large casino owner in Reno, also said, "It's all to the good. His people are a lot better operators than the ones he bought out."¹⁰⁴⁶ Banker E. Parry Thomas said, "I think this is terrific. He fits in very nicely...There are very few places in America he could afford to get caught dead in."¹⁰⁴⁷

¹⁰⁴⁰ Associated Press, "Howard Hughes Buys Desert Inn," 52.; Clary, 121.; Turner, 69.

¹⁰⁴¹ Clary, 121.

¹⁰⁴² Turner, 69.

¹⁰⁴³ Associated Press, "Howard Hughes Purchases Section in Las Vegas Strip," *New York Times*, (New York, September 23, 1967), 16.; Turner, 69.; Leroy Aarons, "Hughes' Las Vegas: Orgy of Acquisition," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, November 11, 1973), A1.; Associated Press, "U.S. Says Hughes Can Buy a 6th Hotel in Las Vegas," *The Sun*, (Baltimore, January 18, 1969), B9.; James Dilts, "They Opened Then Threw the Key in a Lake: The Doors Never Close at Caesars Palace, the Las Vegas 'ultimate' Where a Former Baltimorean Reigns," *The Sun*, (Baltimore, April 21, 1968), 23.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Aarons, A1.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Turner, 69.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Turner, 69.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Turner, 69.

These three opinions from January, 1968, were interesting for several reasons. As Hughes continued buying up casinos, some wondered if perhaps Laxalt was approving of “a near-dangerous monopoly.” Harrah’s comments may have been aimed at the mob’s involvement in Las Vegas. Whether or not Harrah knew that Hughes kept the same managers in place, at least at the Desert Inn, remained a mystery. Thomas had conducted routine business with the mob, and so, despite the ostensive tolerant tax codes connection, his remarks were somewhat scary in what they possibly predicted.¹⁰⁴⁸

Certainly, though, the more overt message was consistent. Hughes buying out the mob in Las Vegas was good for the city. When Laxalt was elected and found out what the FBI knew about the mob in Las Vegas, “[t]his scared the hell out of Paul,” as one of his friends said. One state gaming official indicated that as of early 1968, Las Vegas “now have only two places left” that had mob connections, but the official stopped short of naming the establishments. Harrah, who was “widely praised” for his integrity, may have seen a new opportunity in Las Vegas as Hughes cleaned it up. Perhaps Thomas wanted to work with less risk, as well.¹⁰⁴⁹

Meanwhile, in 1966, another millionaire brought together a group of investors to fund the construction for the first major resort built on the Strip in eight years.¹⁰⁵⁰ For this opulent project, Jay Sarno was joined by Nathan Jacobson, who once owned part of the Bullets professional basketball team, fellow millionaire, Kirk Kerkorian, who already owned the land for the hotel, and roughly fifty other investors.¹⁰⁵¹ Sarno’s group paid twenty million dollars to build Caesars Palace, “the largest multi-story hotel ever designed and planned initially as a

¹⁰⁴⁸ Turner, 69.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Turner, 69.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Jesse Glasgow, “Local Group Investing in Vegas Hotel,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, January 28, 1965), 32.

¹⁰⁵¹ Glasgow, 32.

complete unit for the Las Vegas strip.”¹⁰⁵² The mob had not completely vanished. Sarno “negotiated a \$17,000,000 loan from the Teamsters Pension Fund” to get the project started.¹⁰⁵³

The reports that “Sam ‘Momo’ Giancana, leader of the Chicago Mafia and two other mobsters, each held secret 10 percent interests in Caesars Palace” created “bad publicity” for the new resort.¹⁰⁵⁴ As early as 1963, Giancana was “one of eleven persons whom the Nevada ‘black book’ bars at any casino.”¹⁰⁵⁵ That year, Frank Sinatra, who held “a 50 per cent interest in the Cal-Neva” Lake Tahoe resort, was under fire when the resort reportedly hosted Giancana, an act inconsistent with the Nevada law that prohibited “catering to persons of notorious, unsavory reputation.”¹⁰⁵⁶ As a result, Sinatra had to sell his interest in the Cal-Neva, which was worth about three million dollars, and his interest in the Sands, worth three hundred, eighty thousand dollars.¹⁰⁵⁷ Despite the Giancana reports concerning a Caesars Palace interest, though, this monumental resort would endure.

The opening of this resort included a one-million dollar, forty-eight hour party.¹⁰⁵⁸ Possibly named with a nod to Julius Caesar positioning his fleet in the waters near Monte Carlo in 34 B.C., Caesars Palace also attracted big-name celebrities.¹⁰⁵⁹ Over a thousand notable guests were present for this event, including Adam West, who played Batman on television, Andy Griffith, Eva Gabor, and Jimmy Hoffa.¹⁰⁶⁰ The lavish celebration matched the resort

¹⁰⁵² Glasgow, 32.

¹⁰⁵³ Dilts, 25.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Dilts, 25.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Associated Press, “Gangster Called Sinatra’s Guest,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, September 12, 1963), 1.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Associated Press, “Gangster Called Sinatra’s Guest,” 1.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Associated Press, “Sinatra Set to End Role in Gambling,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, October 8, 1963), 3.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Peter Bart, “48-Hour Party Opens Newest Las Vegas Hotel,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 8, 1966), 22.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Catherine Masters, “Monaco: Lair of the Rich and Richer,” *New Zealand Herald*, October 5, 2017, Accessed May 13, 2024, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/travel/monaco-lair-of-the-rich-and-richer/3BLJFSPYJULSISED5HCSHKUI6Y/>.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Bart, 22.

which was “massively garish...with its fountains, colonnades, and rococo statuary.”¹⁰⁶¹ As the biggest celebrity acts had recently begun earning more money in the Eastern U.S. on one-night stands, entertainment in many Las Vegas hotels shifted to big revues like “Hello, Dolly!” and “Never Too Late,” with Milton Berle.¹⁰⁶² Still, Caesars Palace was able to ink Andy Williams, Jack Benny, and Andy Griffith to contracts to perform their acts in this new luxury resort on the Strip.¹⁰⁶³ One other future celebrity would also grace the Caesars Palace grounds soon after them.¹⁰⁶⁴

On December 31st, 1967, Evel Knievel was not yet widely known, but he had already established himself as a charismatic and fearless motorcycle daredevil. Both a showman and a skilled self-promoter, he convinced the owner of Caesars Palace to let him jump the fountains in front of the resort as a publicity stunt for the casino. This was a death-defying motorcycle jump over the fountains at a distance of one hundred, fifty-one feet. The legendary Knievel understood what a spectacle such a jump would be and asked the up-and-coming filmmaker, John Derek, to film the jump. This would turn out to be a smart move for the daredevil, as the footage would end up on *ABC's Wide World of Sports*.¹⁰⁶⁵

¹⁰⁶¹ Bart, 22.

¹⁰⁶² Bart, 22.

¹⁰⁶³ Bart, 22.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Bart, 22.

¹⁰⁶⁵ AMA Motorcycle Museum Hall of Fame, *Evel Knievel*, Accessed January 10, 2024, <http://hof.motorcyclemuseum.org/halloffame/detail.aspx?RacerID=48.>; *ABC's Wide World of Sports*, Roone Arledge, 1961.



Figure 14 - Evel Knievel Caesars Palace Jump¹⁰⁶⁶

The jump did not finish with a smooth landing. As Knievel remembered it, he said, “It was terrible, I lost control of the bike. Everything seemed to come apart. I kept smashing over and over and ended up against a brick wall 165 feet away.” Knievel suffered compound fractures of his hip and pelvis, a concussion, and other injuries, but the jump was still a success. In fact, it was the catastrophic wreck and his amazing fearlessness and endurance that led to the national sports broadcast and ultimately his fame. This sort of over-the-top, dangerous entertainment act that generated tremendous public interest truly reflected the spirit of Las Vegas.¹⁰⁶⁷

Caesars Palace did not plan it, but the resort leadership had the courage to let Knievel go through with such a risky stunt. This “no risk, no reward” attitude had been a vital part of the city’s earliest years. It was only fitting that this epic jump was over water, considering the role water had in Las Vegas history. The somewhat ironic fact that the wreck was instrumental in the

¹⁰⁶⁶ Las Vegas News Bureau, “Evel Knievel Jumps the Fountains at Caesars Palace on 12-31-67 in Las Vegas, Nevada,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Accessed January 10, 2024, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/sports/motor-sports/travis-pastrana-to-replicate-3-evel-knievel-jumps-in-las-vegas/attachment/evel-knievel-jumps-the-fountains-at-caesars-palace-on-12-31-67-in-las-vegas-nevada-photo-courtesy-las-vegas-news-bureau-evel-knievel-jumps-the-fountains-at-caesars-palace-on-12-31-67-in/>.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Phil Casey, “Evel Knievel, Daredevil: For Fun, Pain and Profit,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, September 3, 1970), C1.

success of the jump was in many ways a metaphor for why many people wanted to visit the growing city. Las Vegas held the promise of an adrenaline rush, win or lose. Perhaps, that is what made the photo of Knievel enjoying the ride in mid-air over the fountains so iconic.

Although the subsequent landing was a bit horrific to watch, the temporary pain was more than worth it for Knievel. In true casino fashion, Caesars Palace did alright, too, profiting off of someone else's pain.

Entering the 1960s, several decades had passed since Nevada or Las Vegas made any money off of another event, boxing, which had once been considered a painful sport in its own right. Boxing initially found a home in Nevada due to the tolerant laws that allowed for such a brutal sport. As the sport caught on throughout the nation, though, New York took the lead on being the sport's home for a time. With the advent of television and professional football and basketball, New Yorkers, many of whom were gamblers, turned their attention away from boxing. There was a more nefarious reason, too, for this rapid transition, however.¹⁰⁶⁸

In the 1950s, multimillionaire James Norris, along with fellow multimillionaire Arthur Wirtz, helped form the International Boxing Club (IBC) of New York. The two men had just previously taken over control of the National Hockey League (NHL) taking advantage of their ownerships of the Chicago Blackhawks, Detroit Redwings, and New York Rangers. Of course, these three cities were certainly no strangers to the mob. Norris, who became the public face of boxing during this time, worked closely in this endeavor with John Paul "Frankie" Carbo, who was believed to be a hit man in Lucky Luciano's Murder Incorporated. In New York, Carbo was considered the "czar of boxing."¹⁰⁶⁹

¹⁰⁶⁸ Richard Davies and Kathleen Szawoila, *The Main Event: Boxing in Nevada from the Mining Camps to the Las Vegas Strip*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2014), 175.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Davies and Szawoila, 173 and 174.

In 1958, Carbo, who had served twenty months for manslaughter in 1928, was indicted on ten charges of “illegal operations in the sport.” These charges included “one count of conspiracy, seven counts of undercover management of prizefighters and two counts of unlicensed matchmaking in fights whose official matchmaker was the International Boxing Club of New York.” Carbo was unable to hold a license due to his manslaughter conviction. Instead, he was “accused of scheming with Herman (Hymie the Mink) Wallman” who was a licensed front for Carbo. Carbo would then “use his influence to get matches for the fighters.”¹⁰⁷⁰ Carbo served two years at Rikers Island for these offenses.¹⁰⁷¹ In 1961, Robert Kennedy got involved personally with Carbo’s next crime of extortion, and issued the statement, “Frank Carbo has been a sinister figure behind the scenes in boxing for more than twenty years. This verdict will be a great aid and assistance to the Department of Justice and local law enforcement authorities in taking further action against the attempts of racketeers to control boxing and other sports.”¹⁰⁷² Carbo served twenty-five years on Alcatraz Island for that offense.¹⁰⁷³ Another effect of Kennedy’s work was that New York was tiring of such criminal activities.¹⁰⁷⁴

Boxing was ready to move to Las Vegas, but, after the Kearns debacle in 1955, and his subsequent departure from promoting for the sport, the city lacked other promoters willing to fill the void he left.¹⁰⁷⁵ This ended in 1960 with the Benny “the Kid” Paret – Don Jordan fight.¹⁰⁷⁶ The promoter for this fight was Tom Brenner, and although only around forty-eight hundred

¹⁰⁷⁰ Mildred Murphy, “Carbo is Indicted on Ten Counts of Undercover Ties to Boxing,” *New York Times*, (New York, July 25, 1958), 1 and 20.

¹⁰⁷¹ Davies and Szawoila, 175.

¹⁰⁷² Associated Press, “Carbo, 4 Others are Found Guilty,” *New York Times*, (New York, May 31, 1961), 42.; Davies and Szawoila, 175.

¹⁰⁷³ Davies and Szawoila, 175.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Davies and Szawoila, 175.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Davies and Szawoila, 175.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Davies and Szawoila, 175 and 180.

spectators showed up, he was happy, as the fight was televised on NBC and brought in forty thousand dollars.¹⁰⁷⁷ The next big fight, in 1961, featured Sugar Ray Robinson against Gene Fullmer, which raised over one hundred, fifty thousand dollars.¹⁰⁷⁸ Both fights generated substantially larger profits than similar fights in Miami Beach and Los Angeles.¹⁰⁷⁹ The next Las Vegas prizefight was a Fullmer – Paret 1961 middleweight match-up, in which Paret stood little chance of winning.¹⁰⁸⁰ While the fight at the Convention Center promised little in the way of excitement, the expectation was that it would “probably do well at the gate.”¹⁰⁸¹ Las Vegas was earning its reputation as “a good fight town capable of outdrawing larger cities.”¹⁰⁸² This National Boxing Association title fight was televised nationally and drew over six thousand fans.¹⁰⁸³ Las Vegas was quickly becoming a heavyweight site hosting these prizefights.

In fact, in 1963, the much-anticipated Sonny Liston – Floyd Patterson heavyweight rematch at the Convention Center raised the stakes. Al Bolan, the Championship Sports Inc. promoter, and Jim Deskin, the Nevada State Athletic Commission chairman, predicted a quarter million dollar profit at the gate. Ringside tickets in the first two rows sold for five hundred dollars each. Cashing in on a new money-making device, Bolan indicated that “the bout would be carried on closed circuit television.” The fighters were contracted to receive “30 per cent of both the live gate and the closed-circuit television revenues, with Championship Sports footing the cost of the promotion out of its 40 per cent of the total revenue.”¹⁰⁸⁴

¹⁰⁷⁷ Davies and Szawoila, 181.; Tommy Picou, “Tommy’s Corner,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, (Chicago, October 18, 1961), 23.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Picou, 23.; Davies and Szawoila, 181.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Picou, 23.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Picou, 23.

¹⁰⁸¹ Picou, 23.; Davies and Szawoila, 181.

¹⁰⁸² Picou, 23.

¹⁰⁸³ Associated Press, “Gene Fullmer Keeps Crown,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, December 10, 1961), 1D.

¹⁰⁸⁴ United Press International, “Liston to Box Patterson in Las Vegas June 27 at Top Ticket Price of \$500,” *New York Times*, (New York, April 25, 1963), 29.

By the end of the decade, Las Vegas had hosted several title fights and had established itself as one of the premier venues. While casino managers still did not quite figure out how to fully capitalize on these events, they understood that such fights did bring in money to their hotels. They offered seats as comps to those who would fly in from other cities to sit ringside. Meanwhile, the public recognized the opportunities fights in Las Vegas provided. They could watch the fight and partake in all of the other attractions in the city. This arrangement worked for everyone involved. The casinos and promoters made more money, and those who attended the fights also experienced the entertainment offered in the casino resorts.¹⁰⁸⁵

Casino owners also took advantage of boxing's financial opportunities in new ways. In 1969, Sarno sold Caesars Palace to Lum's restaurant chain owner Clifford Perlman.¹⁰⁸⁶ The purchase cost the Florida-based fast-service restaurateur sixty million dollars.¹⁰⁸⁷ Perlman, with his sharp business acumen, took the resort to the next level. He generated business and profits by advertising Caesars Palace in television, movies, and sporting events, including boxing.¹⁰⁸⁸ Ted Binion once commented that he knew "Sarno regretted selling it later."¹⁰⁸⁹ Sarno moved on to his next project which was Circus, the sixteenth casino on the Strip.¹⁰⁹⁰ With this resort, "[s]haped like a circus tent and with a row of fountains in front," Sarno hoped to bring a circus atmosphere to the casino with trapeze artists, a midway, and even a baby elephant.¹⁰⁹¹ The merry-go-round had a bar in it, and gamblers could enter the casino sliding

¹⁰⁸⁵ Davies and Szawoila, 188.

¹⁰⁸⁶ McCracken, 91.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Unknown Author, "Elgin May Solicit Chemetron Stock," *New York Times*, (New York, April 28, 1969), 58.

¹⁰⁸⁸ McCracken, 91.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Sheehan, 98.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Associated Press, "16th Casino for Strip," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, October 19, 1968), B11.; Sheehan, 98.

¹⁰⁹¹ Associated Press, "16th Casino for Strip," B11.; Sheehan, 98 and 99.

down a fireman's pole or slide.¹⁰⁹² Because high rollers did not want such distraction, Sarno missed on this resort.¹⁰⁹³

Meanwhile, Kerkorian took steps to open a resort of his own.¹⁰⁹⁴ His first move was to buy the Flamingo in 1967 at a price tag of twelve and a half million dollars.¹⁰⁹⁵ The Flamingo had still been under control of mob associates, as those selling the resort were Samuel Cohen and Morris Lansburgh.¹⁰⁹⁶ In 1973, along with underworld operator Meyer Lansky, they were given jail time for skimming off the profits of the Flamingo from 1960 to 1967.¹⁰⁹⁷ While Kerkorian finally brought reputable ownership to the hotel, his main objective was to use it as a training site for his loftier goal.¹⁰⁹⁸

That goal, which would not be his last, was the eighty-million dollar International.¹⁰⁹⁹ Opening in July of 1969 as the world's largest resort hotel and the tallest building in Nevada, it had twenty-four floors with fifteen hundred rooms.¹¹⁰⁰ It housed a "50,000-square-foot main convention hall," and its showroom was built as "the largest of its kind in the world, seating 1,200 for dinner."¹¹⁰¹ It was nineteen feet taller than the "346 feet" Landmark Hotel which opened in the same month, although looking down from "atop the Landmark, you seem[ed] to be looking down on the curving-rectangular International" which was "only a block away."¹¹⁰² The

¹⁰⁹² Sheehan, 99.

¹⁰⁹³ Sheehan, 99.

¹⁰⁹⁴ McCracken, 94 and 95.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Unknown Author, "News of Realty: Las Vegas Sale," *New York Times*, (New York, August 15, 1967), 61.

¹⁰⁹⁶ United Press International, "Four Sentenced in Flamingo Skimming Case," *Nevada State Journal*, (Reno, April 28, 1973), 2.; Unknown Author, "News of Realty: Las Vegas Sale," 61.

¹⁰⁹⁷ United Press International, "Four Sentenced in Flamingo Skimming Case," 2.

¹⁰⁹⁸ McCracken, 94.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Sheehan, 165.

¹¹⁰⁰ McCracken, 95.; Gladwin Hill, "Las Vegas Draws Pair of Hotels Back to Back," *New York Times*, (New York, July 20, 1969), XX23.; Joseph Fried, "Bubble-Top Hotel to Open in Las Vegas," *New York Times*, (New York, October 22, 1967), 360.

¹¹⁰¹ Hill, "Las Vegas Draws Pair of Hotels Back to Back," XX23.

¹¹⁰² Hill, "Las Vegas Draws Pair of Hotels Back to Back," XX23.

Landmark, which rivaled the Seattle Space Needle, was located just off the Strip.¹¹⁰³ It had been in the works since 1961, but did not open until Howard Hughes finally took over its construction after Frank Carroll and other previous prospective owners could not finish the job.¹¹⁰⁴

The Landmark had briefly eclipsed the Mint Hotel on Fremont Street as Nevada's tallest structure until the International arrived.¹¹⁰⁵ The downtown continued to grow, too, as the eighteen-story Four Queens Hotel also joined the Mint there.¹¹⁰⁶ The four queens in the name of this hotel that opened in 1966 represented the four daughters of the owner, Ben Goffstein, formerly of the Riviera, who opened the resort in 1966.¹¹⁰⁷ That same year, the Fremont Hotel was sold "for about \$20-million" to the Parvin-Dohrmann Company, who also owned the Stardust and the Aladdin on the Strip.¹¹⁰⁸ The Aladdin, previously called the Tallyho, which opened in the 1950s solely as a hotel, opened in 1966 adding a casino to the resort.¹¹⁰⁹

Interestingly, the Aladdin and the International both had a role in the life of Elvis Presley. On May 1st, 1967, Elvis Presley married Priscilla Beaulieu in the Aladdin.¹¹¹⁰ During the reception, a string ensemble serenaded Priscilla "with 'Love Me Tender,' one of Mr. Presley's hit records."¹¹¹¹ Elvis' manager, Colonel Tom Parker, had been searching "for something that

¹¹⁰³ Hill, "Las Vegas Draws Pair of Hotels Back to Back," XX23.; Fried, 360.

¹¹⁰⁴ Hill, "Las Vegas Draws Pair of Hotels Back to Back," XX23.; Fried, 360.

¹¹⁰⁵ Jack Goodman, "Las Vegas Makes its Point," *New York Times*, (New York, January 17, 1965), XX21.; Fried, 360.

¹¹⁰⁶ Goodman, "Las Vegas Makes its Point," XX21.

¹¹⁰⁷ Nevada State Museum, *Four Queens Hotel and Casino*, Accessed January 12, 2024, <https://www.lasvegasnvmuseum.org/four-queens-hotel-and-casino/>.

¹¹⁰⁸ Byron Porterfield, "News of Realty: Sale on East Side," *New York Times*, (New York, March 16, 1966), 69.; Associated Press, "Braves and A's Officials to Sell Holdings in Las Vegas Casinos," *New York Times*, (New York, June 20, 1969), 46.

¹¹⁰⁹ United Press International, "Aladdin Hotel Sold for \$16.5 Million," *Progress Bulletin*, (Pamona, February 18, 1971), 2.

¹¹¹⁰ Unknown Author, "Elvis Presley and Priscilla Beaulieu, Aladdin Hotel in Las Vegas, NV after Wedding on May 1, 1967," *Statesville Record and Landmark*, (Statesville, May 1, 2021), A2.; United Press International, "Elvis Weds," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, May 2, 1967), A3.

¹¹¹¹ Associated Press, "Elvis Presley Weds in Las Vegas," *New York Times*, (New York, May 2, 1967), 52.

would give Elvis new exposure,” and he found it at the International Hotel.¹¹¹² Elvis was a hit there, as “[m]any of Woodstock Nation’s most respected rockwatchers made the pilgrimage to Las Vegas to see Elvis’s come-back appearance there in August 1969.”¹¹¹³ Elvis was paid two hundred thousand dollars every week, and he was granted use of the “International’s seven-room Imperial Suite on the 30th floor.”¹¹¹⁴

That may have been a bargain for Kerkorian, though. According to news correspondent, Robert Kaiser Smith, who attended the show and interviewed Colonel Parker, “No one in history had ever brought in the crowds that Elvis had and Las Vegas wanted more.”¹¹¹⁵ For fourteen months leading into early 1970, Elvis “shattered every attendance record in Las Vegas.”¹¹¹⁶ He packed the “2,000-seat showroom,” which was “bigger than the Radio City Music Hall’s,” every night, and “the praise from the critics was universally enthusiastic.”¹¹¹⁷ It truly “was ‘the’ show to see,” and Kerkorian’s investment in the International of “\$16.6 million was worth \$180 million” in 1970.¹¹¹⁸ Elvis continued for over seven more years, but Kerkorian still had bigger plans.¹¹¹⁹

Many of those attending the Elvis performances and the bulk of those visiting Las Vegas made the trip from Los Angeles.¹¹²⁰ By the 1960s, the old Highway 91, later called “U.S. 91,” which had been completed in 1931, was no longer capable of handling the amount of traffic to

¹¹¹² Robert Blair Kaiser, “The Rediscovery of Elvis,” *New York Times*, (New York, October 11, 1970), 28 and 50.

¹¹¹³ Kaiser, 50.

¹¹¹⁴ Kaiser, 50.

¹¹¹⁵ Kaiser, 50.

¹¹¹⁶ Kaiser, 50.

¹¹¹⁷ McCracken, 95.; Hill, “Las Vegas Draws Pair of Hotels Back to Back,” XX23.; Robert Hilborn, “From Prince to Pauper and Back Again,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, March 17, 1970), B7.

¹¹¹⁸ Hilburn, B7.; Sheehan, 165.

¹¹¹⁹ McCracken, 95.

¹¹²⁰ Goodman, “Las Vegas Makes its Point,” XX21.

and from Los Angeles.¹¹²¹ A “four-lane freeway linking Las Vegas with Los Angeles” was completed in 1966, “putting an end to the region’s traffic confusion.”¹¹²² This new road, “Interstate 15,” enabled drivers to travel “[a]t better than a mile a minute” to make Las Vegas even more accessible.¹¹²³ The relatively short “284 miles” distance to Las Vegas from Los Angeles was cut even shorter by air travel between the two cities, and, of course, the railroad remained an option.¹¹²⁴ Certainly, residing in the same region as Los Angeles did not hurt business for Las Vegas.

Las Vegas, with its new extravagant resorts, legendary entertainment, and the return of boxing, combined with its new increased water supply, continued to grow to new heights. Just as the mob was being bought out of many of the casinos, *The Green Felt Jungle* (1963) depicted its involvement.¹¹²⁵ Perhaps, it was possible that the book had an effect on the mob’s apparent exit. Meanwhile, the Hoover Dam remained the biggest tourism draw of Las Vegas and the entire state of Nevada.¹¹²⁶ By the end of that decade, American travel and financial reporters began sharing their experiences in the city, along with travel and gambling tips, for the growing number of travelers, often frugal, who wanted to discover what made this city fabulous.¹¹²⁷ Visits to the Hoover Dam were often included in these travel tips, even those mainly geared toward saving money on food, lodging, and gambling in Las Vegas resorts.¹¹²⁸ As the 1970s

¹¹²¹ Gladwin Hill, “The ‘Sure Thing’ Boom at Las Vegas,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 30, 1955), X29.; Goodman, “Las Vegas Makes its Point,” XX21.

¹¹²² Goodman, “Las Vegas Makes its Point,” XX21.

¹¹²³ Jack Goodman, “Driver’s Choice on Way to Las Vegas,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 23, 1966), 364.

¹¹²⁴ Goodman, “Las Vegas Makes its Point,” XX21.

¹¹²⁵ Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris, *The Green Felt Jungle*, (New York: Ishi Press International, 1963).

¹¹²⁶ Moehring and Green, 210.

¹¹²⁷ Paulette Cooper, “‘Saving’ in Vegas,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, March 30, 1969), 191.; Charles Puffenbarger, “Beating the Odds: Victory in Vegas,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, May 19, 1974), K1.; Jack Goodman, “Las Vegas: How to Eat, Drink and Gamble on the House,” *New York Times*, (New York, April 20, 1975), 1.

¹¹²⁸ Puffenbarger, K1.; Goodman, Las Vegas: How to Eat, Drink and Gamble on the House,” 1.

approached, the average monthly tourist traffic in Las Vegas was “well over 1,000,000 people.”¹¹²⁹

The next ten years were only the beginning of an even larger growth rate.¹¹³⁰ Another millionaire was about to start his rise which would really explode beginning in the 1980s.¹¹³¹ Boxing would solidify its home in Las Vegas. Although, sports betting was found in the city, sports books spread through the casinos. With growing suburbs, casinos geared toward locals began popping up. Entertainment changed in the 1970s as new full-fledged magic acts began to appear in casinos. All of these changes would endure even beyond the next decade as Las Vegas continued to evolve.

¹¹²⁹ Hill, “Las Vegas Draws Pair of Hotels Back to Back,” XX23.

¹¹³⁰ Moehring and Green, 205.

¹¹³¹ Moehring and Green, 210.

Chapter Eight – 1970s

In many ways, the 1970s was a continuation of the previous ten years for Las Vegas. The Hoover Dam was still an impressive marvel, and gambling was still thriving. Yet changes beginning in this decade would transform the landscape of the city, resulting in the modern city it ultimately became. That included neighborhood additions on the west side of town, more grand resorts on the Strip, foreign tourism, a new take on betting, the reappearance of magic shows, and the city's solidification as "the boxing capital of the world."¹¹³² Also, as "tight national economic conditions" set in, resorts, once casino-driven, but, in this new era, increasingly more reliant on food and lodging for revenue, had to adjust.¹¹³³ As many news headlines might have put it, wittily referencing gambling to make a largely unrelated topic about the city more eye-popping, Las Vegas was beating the odds.

In fact, others wanted to share in the prosperity Las Vegas had demonstrated. New Jersey Governor Brendan Byrne signed a bill into law in 1977, "permitting casino gambling in Atlantic City."¹¹³⁴ He did so with a warning, though. He emphatically stated, "Organized crime is not welcome in Atlantic City. I warn them – keep your filthy hands out of Atlantic City. Keep the hell out of our state."¹¹³⁵ With the Gambino, Bruno, and Genovese families conducting business in the area, and the recent clean-up efforts in Las Vegas, his warning was justified.¹¹³⁶ Even as the first resort was in the works in 1978, FBI sources reported "that a longtime Atlantic City resident and associate of the Luchese crime family...has been promoted to the post of

¹¹³² A.S. Doc Young, "Good Morning Sports," *Weekend Chicago Defender*, (Chicago, July 11, 1981), 52.

¹¹³³ David Lamb, "The Las Vegas Game," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, November 22, 1970), E10.

¹¹³⁴ Howard Blum and Jeff Gerth, "The Mob Gambles on Atlantic City," *New York Times*, (New York, February 5, 1978), SM3.

¹¹³⁵ Blum and Gerth, SM3.

¹¹³⁶ Blum and Gerth, SM3.

consigliere in order to keep the peace among the families.”¹¹³⁷ The mob was making moves, and this promotion highlighted how even the crime bosses expected trouble in Atlantic City.

Still, Byrne moved forward despite the risk, but the effects of this new bill extended beyond the limits of New Jersey. Atlantic City started attracting the East Coast gamblers that would have otherwise gone to Las Vegas.¹¹³⁸ Notwithstanding, Las Vegas city officials were more fearful of Reno making a gambling comeback.¹¹³⁹ Statistics from 1977 demonstrated that Las Vegas took in most of its business from “Western states and Southern California in particular,” and garnered “only 12 per cent from the East Coast.”¹¹⁴⁰ One hotel spokesman admitted that New Jersey “could be the beginning of a long-term problem,” but also expressed that “Reno is today’s bad headache.”¹¹⁴¹

In 1960, Reno was a growing town with a new airport and a downtown gambling area. Still, a few factors tipped the scales in the favor of Las Vegas. The Strip started attracting gamblers with its luxury and entertainment in bigger and more opulent venues. Another issue was that skiing was becoming more popular, and ski resorts in towns like Aspen and Park City were taking customers away from Lake Tahoe. As a result, fewer gamblers visited Reno while on Lake Tahoe excursions. Reno also had a shorter tourist season compared to its southern counterpart, Las Vegas. Despite these difficulties, Reno was not ready to concede.¹¹⁴²

¹¹³⁷ Blum and Gerth, SM3.

¹¹³⁸ Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 206.

¹¹³⁹ Muriel Dobbin, “Old-timers Remember Las Vegas as a Desert ‘Paradise,’” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, July 18, 1978), B1.

¹¹⁴⁰ Dobbin, B1.

¹¹⁴¹ Dobbin, B1.

¹¹⁴² Eugene Moehring, *Reno, Las Vegas, and the Strip: A Tale of Three Cities*. (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2014), 12, 40, and 100.

In the late 1970s, MGM, Sahara, and Circus Circus opened in Reno. The problem was that Reno's population was only about half of that of Las Vegas. That was not a big enough tax base to fund the necessary expenses for increased tourism. Perhaps the largest issue was that the Truckee River system could not provide the water necessary for sustained growth, while Lake Mead was certainly providing enough water for Las Vegas residents, especially during this decade. Ultimately, the resulting decreased lack of local enthusiasm for rapid growth pushed investors toward Las Vegas.¹¹⁴³

Meanwhile, Las Vegas tourism continued to escalate, as did the population heading into the 1970s. The Las Vegas metropolitan area population had more than doubled over the previous ten years "from 127,016 to 273,288." The growth rate even exceeded that of Orange County, California. Compared to New York or San Francisco, the cost of living standards in Las Vegas were low and "probably about average by those of most middle American cities." Three or four bedroom homes sold "for \$27,000 to \$35,000." The population rise was not surprising, then, considering that nearly all residents also prospered off the gambling boom.¹¹⁴⁴

Conditions were not all perfect, however. The suicide rate in Las Vegas in 1972, was "double the national average of 11 for each 100,000 persons."¹¹⁴⁵ That was maybe more the result of gambling losses of those hoping to get rich quick than anything related to the quality of life.¹¹⁴⁶ In 1978, one self-identifying compulsive gambler claimed to be one of only fifty local members of Gamblers Anonymous, an organization dedicated to helping those with gambling addictions.¹¹⁴⁷ She further indicated that, out of an estimated ten million compulsive gamblers in

¹¹⁴³ Moehring, *Reno, Las Vegas, and the Strip: A Tale of Three Cities*, 71, 90-92, 97, 100, and 102.

¹¹⁴⁴ Douglas Kneeland, "Las Vegas Flourishes as Big Apple of the Desert Nurtured by Gambling and Tourists," *New York Times*, (New York, April 17, 1972), 66.

¹¹⁴⁵ Kneeland, 66.

¹¹⁴⁶ Kneeland, 66.

¹¹⁴⁷ Dobbins, B1.

the U.S., only six thousand joined the organization.¹¹⁴⁸ She argued that this was “an indictment of how difficult it is for a compulsive gambler to concede there is a compulsion.”¹¹⁴⁹ Yet, as had always been the case since Las Vegas’s inception, the only numbers that really mattered were the profits.

Casino managers did, however, discourage gambling among their employees.¹¹⁵⁰ This effort likely had less to do with a genuine concern for the welfare of the employees than it did the operations of the casinos. The managers, of course, recognized that “the house always – but always – emerges with a...profit.”¹¹⁵¹ They certainly did not want their employees getting into bad financial situations, or they would need to spend money on finding and training new hires. This was, after all, still a business. Even as the mob was being bought out, the casinos still existed primarily to generate tourism and income. Despite the casino managers’ true intentions, the dissuasion of gambling still had a positive effect on the employees.

Most Las Vegas residents were thriving as a result. The Nevada sales tax was only “3 per cent compared to California’s 6 per cent.” Nevada had no personal income tax. Supermarkets had lower prices, even with the city’s remote location, because there were slot machines in the markets to more than cover food distribution expenses. As long as residents could avoid gambling trouble, they had a good chance of making good money. Meanwhile, those vacationing hoped to win a jackpot of their own. They also usually accepted minor gambling losses as part of the experience and had fun playing the games of chance. In the 1970s, those that ran into gambling problems were usually “doctors, lawyers, bankers, businessmen,

¹¹⁴⁸ Dobbin, B1.

¹¹⁴⁹ Dobbin, B1.

¹¹⁵⁰ Dobbin, B1.

¹¹⁵¹ Joan Graham, “Betting is Better in Britain,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, February 25, 1973), K5.

schoolteachers – who all discovered that they had given more than they could afford.” Yet, they still managed to make it home. As a result, there was no “skid row” in Las Vegas.¹¹⁵²

Perhaps nothing reflected the stark difference in how Las Vegas treated its locals compared to its tourists than restaurant meal prices. Along Bonanza Road, for instance, a driver would begin seeing signs “advertising prime rib dinners at \$3.95 compared to the \$11.95 of the strip.” Continuing on further away from the Strip, the signs advertised “breakfast for 95 cents.” Las Vegas hoped to make money off the tourists, who often never strayed from the Strip and who were willing to spend their winnings on a nice meal. At the same time, locals were rewarded with yet another financial benefit, which was not inconsequential given the emerging national fuel crisis.¹¹⁵³

By the 1970s, Las Vegas received “just 6 per cent of its power” from the Hoover Dam.¹¹⁵⁴ “Coal, natural gas and fuel oil” were “burned to provide the bulk of Las Vegas power” which was somewhat of a concern with the energy crisis that existed at that time.¹¹⁵⁵ The Strip and downtown area turned off their exterior lights for at least close to a month, maybe longer, starting in November of 1973.¹¹⁵⁶ This may have been a symbolic gesture, though, as the concern was less about powering “the most brilliantly lighted three-block area in the world” than it was about Southern Californians having enough gasoline for the “five hour, 290-mile drive.”¹¹⁵⁷ The threat to tourism numbers was real, as even Jimmy “the Greek” Snyder predicted

¹¹⁵² Dobbin, B1.

¹¹⁵³ Dobbin, B1.

¹¹⁵⁴ Robert Wright, “A Dim Las Vegas Wonders What Its Odds Are in the Fuel Crisis,” *New York Times*, (New York, December 12, 1973), 49.

¹¹⁵⁵ Wright, “A Dim Las Vegas Wonders What Its Odds Are in the Fuel Crisis,” 49.

¹¹⁵⁶ Wright, “A Dim Las Vegas Wonders What Its Odds Are in the Fuel Crisis,” 49.

¹¹⁵⁷ Wright, “A Dim Las Vegas Wonders What Its Odds Are in the Fuel Crisis,” 49.

an economic downturn.¹¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Tourists still flocked to see the Hoover Dam, including the fifteen millionth visitor in 1972.¹¹⁵⁹

Gaming revenues in Las Vegas overcame the odds and “soared more than 17 per cent in 1974.”¹¹⁶⁰ The city began expanding out into the west side of the Strip during this decade.¹¹⁶¹ Until then, residents had travelled to the Strip to work from the east side along the main arteries like Sahara, Desert Inn, Flamingo, and Tropicana.¹¹⁶² As developers filled in the lots along these roads, they also inserted the necessary water mains and sewers.¹¹⁶³ Once these were established the plan had been to then expand similarly to the west.¹¹⁶⁴ With the Strip also firmly established as the major job center, the expansion to the west was finally able to happen.¹¹⁶⁵

As the entire valley began to take shape, one local developer set out to cater to the locals in one more way. Sam Boyd, from Oklahoma, got an early start in the gaming industry. First, he ran bingo games on one of the gambling ships off the coast of California, next a bingo parlor in Hawaii in the late 1930s, and then the bingo concession on Cornero’s infamous *S.S. Rex*.¹¹⁶⁶ He came to Las Vegas in 1941 and started his career in gaming that would last until his death in 1993.¹¹⁶⁷ Boyd arrived in time to witness the earliest days of the Strip, attending the openings of

¹¹⁵⁸ Wright, “A Dim Las Vegas Wonders What Its Odds Are in the Fuel Crisis,” 49.

¹¹⁵⁹ Bureau of Reclamation, Hoover Dam, *The Boulder Dam Canyon Project*, Accessed January 19, 2024, <https://www.usbr.gov/history/hover.html>.

¹¹⁶⁰ Linda Deutsch, “Inflation: Getting Along in Vegas,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, February 16, 1975), 189.

¹¹⁶¹ Moehring and Green, 231.

¹¹⁶² Moehring and Green, 231.

¹¹⁶³ Moehring and Green, 231.

¹¹⁶⁴ Moehring and Green, 231.

¹¹⁶⁵ Moehring and Green, 230.

¹¹⁶⁶ Associated Press, “Sam Boyd Built an Empire of Las Vegas Resorts,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, January 17, 1993), 5B.

¹¹⁶⁷ Robert McCracken, *Las Vegas: The Great American Playground*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997), 97.

the El Rancho Vegas the year he arrived and the Flamingo in 1946.¹¹⁶⁸ He made his first major casino purchases in the 1970s.

Before that, Boyd joined his son, Bill, and two other partners in purchasing the Wheel Casino in Henderson in 1962, when the mob was still active in the city.¹¹⁶⁹ He renamed it the Eldorado, and that was the first resort operated by his family.¹¹⁷⁰ In 1971, Boyd joined Jackie Gaughan in building the Union Plaza downtown.¹¹⁷¹ Gaughan, the owner of the El Cortez since he purchased it from J.K. Houssels, Sr. in 1963, had also pioneered video surveillance in casinos.¹¹⁷² Built on the site of the old Union Railroad Station, their joint venture's casino was the largest in town at sixty-six thousand square feet, more than double that of the International.¹¹⁷³

In 1975, Boyd built the California Hotel and Casino downtown, founding the Boyd Group, which would become "one of the largest privately held gaming companies in the world" within only a couple decades.¹¹⁷⁴ Traversing up and down Boulder Highway between his Eldorado and California casinos, Boyd recognized Las Vegas had one more untapped area.¹¹⁷⁵ In 1979, he constructed Sam's Town Hotel and Gambling Hall on the corner of Boulder Highway and Nellis Boulevard.¹¹⁷⁶ With Sam's Town, Boyd demonstrated that such a resort, away from the main thoroughfares and geared toward locals, could flourish.

¹¹⁶⁸ Donnie Radcliff, "Nevada's Friendly Tradition," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, June 27, 1977), B1.

¹¹⁶⁹ Sheehan, 112.

¹¹⁷⁰ Sheehan, 112.

¹¹⁷¹ Sheehan, 127.

¹¹⁷² Sheehan, 126.

¹¹⁷³ Sheehan, 127.; McCracken, 97.

¹¹⁷⁴ McCracken, 97.; Associated Press, "Sam Boyd Built an Empire of Las Vegas Resorts," 5B.; Associated Press, "Sam Boyd, 82, a Roulette Dealer Who Became a Builder of Casinos," *New York Times*, (New York, January 16, 1993), 10.

¹¹⁷⁵ Sheehan, 117.

¹¹⁷⁶ McCracken, 97.; Associated Press, "Sam Boyd Built an Empire of Las Vegas Resorts," 5B.; Associated Press, "Sam Boyd, 82, a Roulette Dealer Who Became a Builder of Casinos," 10.; Sheehan, 117.

Interestingly, Boyd, proudly “the oldest active casino owner in Las Vegas,” claimed in 1977 that there was “no Mafia connection – I think Las Vegas has a real nice name.” These remarks came as federal investigations were ongoing. Senator Cannon defended Las Vegas admitting that there were “a lot of publicly-traded companies and there’s no way of telling who’s buying in.” Still, he asserted that someone had “to be absolutely clean to get a license. Bugsy Siegel could never get a license today.” Both men certainly had reasons to deny any mob casino infiltration, but it was true that the casinos were largely corporate-owned by that time.¹¹⁷⁷

Boyd was a “colorful character who was seldom seen around town without his cowboy hat.”¹¹⁷⁸ Given the western spirit of the city’s earlier days, his persona fit right in. He would go on to acquire the Fremont and the Stardust in the 1980s.¹¹⁷⁹ His legacy went beyond even casino resorts. Boyd was a benefactor to UNLV, resulting in its football stadium being named the “Sam Boyd Silver Bowl.”¹¹⁸⁰ Bill Boyd, proud of his father’s accomplishments, continued to ask himself “What would Dad do?” when making business decisions once he took over the reins of the company.¹¹⁸¹

Sam Boyd seemed to believe, at least publicly, that the mob was completely out of the Las Vegas casino business, and because of moguls like Sarno, Kerkorian, and Hughes turning the resorts corporate, he was not entirely wrong. Under mob control, “casinos carried the entire hotel operation and would have underwritten the \$35 million worth of complimentary rooms, meals and drinks that state officials say were given to gamblers and VIPS” in 1969. In the 1970s, casino-resorts in Las Vegas earned “about 70 per cent of its gross revenue from gambling,

¹¹⁷⁷ Radcliff, B1.

¹¹⁷⁸ Associated Press, “Sam Boyd Built an Empire of Las Vegas Resorts,” 5B.

¹¹⁷⁹ Associated Press, “Sam Boyd, 82, a Roulette Dealer Who Became a Builder of Casinos,” 10.

¹¹⁸⁰ Associated Press, “Sam Boyd, 82, a Roulette Dealer Who Became a Builder of Casinos,” 10.

¹¹⁸¹ Sheehan, 119.

20 per cent from food and beverage sales and 10 per cent from lodgings.” The days of living like “fat cats,” as one Sahara spokesman put it, were over. This could have had an adverse effect on the overall experience for visitors, but that was not to be the case.¹¹⁸²

In some ways, it did. Prices in casinos were forced to go up in the new corporate environment. That meant a dramatic price increase for “a dinner show for two at the 1,500-room International to nearly \$60 with drinks.” In 1965, “tourists could see stars like...Don Rickles...in casino lounges for the price of a 90-cent drink.” By 1970, the big entertainers were “performing in the more expensive showrooms.” Casino operators were savvy enough to deal with the new exorbitant costs, though. They found other ways to keep the customers satisfied with the return on their investments.¹¹⁸³

The casino operators did so through either creating or reviving special deals that had not been needed under the previous regime. The Sahara “saw the trouble coming” and “cut drink prices to 75 cents and gave away champagne during ‘happy hours.’” The Aladdin reacted by replacing “its gourmet restaurant with a less lavish Sultan’s Rib featuring \$4.95 roast beef dinners.” The Flamingo offered “a program of free movies.” The Stardust responded starting “a 24-hour breakfast for \$1.19.” These efforts paid off because, as the Golden Nugget Keno game owner, Harry Lyden, said, “man will always do two things with his money – Drink ‘til he gets drunk and gamble ‘til he loses.”¹¹⁸⁴

Las Vegas was no longer just a vacation destination for Americans by this time. With technological advances, global travel was much more practical. Foreign travel was rapidly increasing for several other reasons, too. Some foreign middle class began taking advantage of

¹¹⁸² Lamb, E10.

¹¹⁸³ Lamb, E10.

¹¹⁸⁴ Lamb, E10.

“reduced airfares and increased buying power.” The decline of the dollar at this time also had a role. Countries like then-West Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Mexico, and Japan all saw increases in the value of their currencies against the dollar. Foreigners wanted to experience American cities, and these conditions made such travel reasonably attainable.¹¹⁸⁵

While Los Angeles actually took in the largest increase in foreign tourists, Las Vegas certainly did all right, too, benefiting from its own substantial rise in monthly foreign visitor numbers. Las Vegas bank officials claimed that “14 percent more Japanese yen were converted to American dollars in February and March” of 1978 compared to just one year before. At the same time, “the number of German marks changed to dollars more than doubled.” About Town Tours President Josie Lietman remarked that “America has become a bargain basement.” For a town like Las Vegas, more spending, regardless of the currency or its value was always a good thing.¹¹⁸⁶

Meanwhile, Americans, more often than not from outside Las Vegas, remained in charge of the casinos in Las Vegas. One up-and-coming casino resort owner was Steve Wynn. Wynn got his start in the gaming industry at Wayson’s Bingo, a club opened by his father in Anne Arundel County, Maryland.¹¹⁸⁷ He wanted players to know his bingo hall was completely fair. A law student at the time, Wynn “posted a \$10,000 offer for any evidence turned up of a rigged or otherwise irregular game.”¹¹⁸⁸ He also knew how to attract players. Wynn purposely made his “\$1,000 pay-off” with “\$5, \$10 and \$20 bills” to let everyone see “somebody going home with a pile of money.”¹¹⁸⁹ Such methods served him well later. Although he worked at the

¹¹⁸⁵ Robert Lindsey, “Foreign Tourists Seek U.S. Bargains,” *New York Times*, (New York, April 5, 1978), A14.

¹¹⁸⁶ Lindsey, A14.

¹¹⁸⁷ Unknown Author, “Wynn-ingways,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, November 18, 1979), TV18.

¹¹⁸⁸ Ralph Reppert, “Bingo: As Many as 700 People at a Time Play at This Hall in Southern Maryland, for Prizes that Range All the Way from \$10 Up to \$1,000,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, March 12, 1967), SM16.

¹¹⁸⁹ Reppert, SM16.

Frontier in 1967, he did not own his first Las Vegas resort until 1973.¹¹⁹⁰ That is when he took ownership of the Golden Nugget.¹¹⁹¹

Wynn had been purchasing stock in the resort hoping only to make a profit. When he was approached with news that dealers, shift bosses, and other employees had been stealing cash from the casino, he wanted to do something to protect his investment. Wynn had learned to make connections, and one of those was E. Parry Thomas who worked to place Wynn as the casino's director. Next, Wynn bought out the owner Buck Blaine and then fired the employees who had been stealing money. Within a year, the casino's profits rose from just over one million dollars to nearly eight million dollars.¹¹⁹² Wynn was just getting started.

As Wynn was extinguishing crime from Las Vegas, another investor who was possibly not so straight-laced moved in hoping to make profits of his own.¹¹⁹³ Business associates of Allen Glick and his San Diego-based Argent Corporation would prove Boyd was not entirely accurate in his claim that the mob was finished in Las Vegas.¹¹⁹⁴ By 1974, two years after the release of *The Godfather* (1972), the legendary film about the mob and its operations (including in Las Vegas), Glick, known as "Genius" by the mob, purchased the Stardust, the Hacienda, and the Fremont.¹¹⁹⁵ The Teamsters Union pension funded the purchase of the Stardust and the

¹¹⁹⁰ Sheehan, 176.

¹¹⁹¹ Sheehan, 176.

¹¹⁹² Sheehan, 176 and 177.

¹¹⁹³ The Mob Museum, Blog, *The Stardust Hotel, Longtime Cash Cow for the Mob, Debuted 60 Years Ago on the Las Vegas Strip*, Accessed September 6, 2023, <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/stardust-hotel-debuted-60-years-ago-las-vegas-strip-dream-gambler-checkered-past/>.

¹¹⁹⁴ The Mob Museum, Blog, *The Stardust Hotel, Longtime Cash Cow for the Mob, Debuted 60 Years Ago on the Las Vegas Strip*.

¹¹⁹⁵ The Mob Museum, Blog, *The Stardust Hotel, Longtime Cash Cow for the Mob, Debuted 60 Years Ago on the Las Vegas Strip*.; Clare Reckert, "Teamsters Pension Fund Plans to Back Las Vegas Hotel Deal," *New York Times*, (New York, June 6, 1974), 55.; Francis Coppola, *The Godfather*, Paramount Pictures, 1972.; Jeffrey Sussman, *Sin City Gangsters: The Rise and Decline of the Mob in Las Vegas*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023), 122.

Fremont by lending over sixty-two million dollars to Glick.¹¹⁹⁶ The business affairs taking place at the Stardust were the stuff of movies.

In fact, in the movie *Casino* (1995), based on a book by the same name by Nicholas Pileggi, the Tangiers was the theatric version of the Stardust during Glick's tenure.¹¹⁹⁷ In the film, Kevin Pollack was Phillip Green, a character based on Glick.¹¹⁹⁸ Glick denied that he committed any crimes and was never charged in any.¹¹⁹⁹ By 1983, however, with his cooperation, fifteen men were charged with involvement in a skimming operation.¹²⁰⁰ Glick did understand why the public thought he was involved in criminal activities. He believed "[t]he taxpayers have probably spent more money investigating me than any other 33-year-old in the country" because "[b]eing involved in Las Vegas, being financed by the Teamsters and my age probably adds an element of intrigue to some people and makes me newsworthy."¹²⁰¹ Forced out of the casino business by the end of the decade, Glick was not wrong.¹²⁰²

The story really got interesting when he hired the "head of his 'Nevada operations.'" Glick was forced to hire Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal by Milwaukee mob boss Frank Balistrieri, who had arranged the Teamster loan. Rosenthal "started hiring and firing people without Glick's approval." Glick recalled a "confrontation in the Stardust Coffee Shop in October 1974."

¹¹⁹⁶ Reckert, 55.

¹¹⁹⁷ Martin Scorsese, *Casino*. Universal Pictures. 1995.; The Mob Museum, Blog, *The Stardust Hotel, Longtime Cash Cow for the Mob, Debuted 60 Years Ago on the Las Vegas Strip.*; Bruce Weber, "Lefty Rosenthal, Kingpin in Las Vegas, Dies at 79," *New York Times*, (New York, October 19, 2008), 31.; Nicholas Pileggi, *Casino*, (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 1995).

¹¹⁹⁸ John Katsilometes, "Casino Magnate Allen Glick, featured in 'Casino,' Dies at 79," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Las Vegas, August 5, 2021, Accessed January 19, 2024, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/entertainment/entertainment-columns/kats/casino-magnate-allen-glick-featured-in-casino-dies-at-79-2414340/>.

¹¹⁹⁹ Katsilometes.

¹²⁰⁰ Katsilometes.

¹²⁰¹ Brendan Riley, "7 Years Plus Teamster Loans Make a Las Vegas Millionaire," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, March 8, 1972), A2.

¹²⁰² Katsilometes.

Rosenthal said, “I think it’s about time we had a discussion, Glick.” According to Glick, he continued, “You’re not my boss. And when I say you’re not my boss, I’m talking not just from an administrative position, but [from the position of] your health. If you interfere with what’s going on here, you will never leave this corporation alive...Test me.” Balistreri backed his man, Rosenthal.¹²⁰³

Rosenthal then demanded Glick fly to Kansas City to meet him and Carl DeLuna, “the right-hand man and reputed enforcer for Kansas City crime boss Nick Civella.” Glick “was escorted to a darkly lit hotel parlor with two chairs set up in the middle of the room, one with a light shining on it.” Glick recalled that the scene was “like interrogating a prisoner in a police room.” Glick testified that Civella showed up and said, “in a cold, calculating way...that I should cling to every word he said. He said, ‘You don’t know me, but if it would be my choice, you wouldn’t leave this room alive.’” Civella let Glick know that the loan had been “his doing.” Glick did not know Civella was “a very powerful individual who was much more prominent in his circles than Mr. Balistreri.”¹²⁰⁴

This conversation with Civella would finally push Glick to leave the casino. Civella told him, “You have a commitment to us. You owe us \$1.2 million. I want that paid.” When Glick asserted that he could not produce such a large amount of money, Civella said, “We will let Mr. Rosenthal handle that.” The next morning in Las Vegas, Glick told Rosenthal that he “wasn’t willing to live under these circumstances. Rosenthal replied, “You are no longer in a position where you control your destiny with this company.” Glick did get out and never got another Teamster loan again.¹²⁰⁵

¹²⁰³ George Lardner, Jr., “Ex-Casino Owner Tells Court How Mafia Asserted Control” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, November 8, 1985), A1.

¹²⁰⁴ Lardner, A1.

¹²⁰⁵ Lardner, A1.

Rosenthal, whose *Casino* loosely-based movie character, Ace Rothstein, was portrayed by Robert DeNiro, contributed to Las Vegas history in a couple other ways, too.¹²⁰⁶ One indirect contribution was through his wife, Geri McGee, who had an affair with Tony “the Ant” Spilotro.¹²⁰⁷ This and other “professional tangles” ultimately “brought Mr. Rosenthal down.”¹²⁰⁸ Amazingly, Rosenthal did survive the explosion of his car a few years later outside an East Sahara Tony Roma’s where he had ordered take-out ribs.¹²⁰⁹ Despite this left-handed gangster’s misadventures, he did leave a more direct contribution to Las Vegas which was lasting and positive.

Until the 1970s, and Rosenthal, bookmakers operated outside of casinos in turf clubs. One such turf club was the Santa Anita Turf and Sport Club, which was located near the Desert Inn and Last Frontier.¹²¹⁰ Jimmy “the Greek” Snyder once operated there, where, in September of 1960, then-Vice President Richard Nixon was given nine-to-five odds to defeat the future President John F. Kennedy in the approaching Presidential election.¹²¹¹ Certainly, Las Vegas won on that bet. Still, odds written in chalk on a blackboard in an off-site club was not quite right for Las Vegas.

Even when Rosenthal first arrived in Las Vegas, the interest in sports betting was not exactly massive.¹²¹² Sports books and turf clubs operated outside the casinos.¹²¹³ It was Rosenthal, “a whiz with numbers, especially savantlike in figuring odds,” who developed the

¹²⁰⁶ Scorcese.; Weber, 31.

¹²⁰⁷ Weber, 31.

¹²⁰⁸ Weber, 31.

¹²⁰⁹ Weber, 31.

¹²¹⁰ Edward Folliard, “The Big Bettors Like Mr. Nixon,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, September 15, 1960), A20.

¹²¹¹ Folliard, A20.; Dave Anderson, “Vegas Analyst Dopes Out the Line,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 19, 1967), 220.

¹²¹² Weber, 31.

¹²¹³ Weber, 31.

prototype sports book for operation inside casinos.¹²¹⁴ He did so at the Stardust, “with plush seating and myriad television screens, bringing a comfort and glamour to the kind of betting that had always been treated as a little bit sleazy.”¹²¹⁵ Rosenthal’s innovation, of course, was really primarily due to a 1974 Nevada law change eliminating the ten percent sports gambling tax.¹²¹⁶ The new law led to an increase in sports gambling from nearly four-million dollars in 1974 to “\$26,170,328 in 1975.”¹²¹⁷ Unfortunately for Rosenthal, he was eventually barred from casinos due to his mob connections.¹²¹⁸ Ironically, because of the demonstrated sports gambling profits, many Las Vegas casinos installed sports books much in the same fashion as Rosenthal’s original prototype.¹²¹⁹

One of these casinos, the MGM Grand Hotel, was built by Kirk Kerkorian in 1973.¹²²⁰ Kerkorian had recently sold his International to the Hilton Corporation.¹²²¹ This new “\$106 million leviathan,” the MGM Grand, opened with great fanfare as “the biggest on the strip with 2,100 rooms.”¹²²² Like previous resorts did, including Kerkorian’s last one, this took casino resorts to another level. That was the hope of MGM executives who announced it was “quitting the motion picture distribution business,” as it maneuvered into the hotel space.¹²²³ This “26-story T-shaped tower of curtain wall glass” stood on “a 43-acre complex.”¹²²⁴ It boasted “the

¹²¹⁴ Weber, 31.

¹²¹⁵ Weber, 31.

¹²¹⁶ Placido Rodriguez, Brad Humphreys, and Robert Simmons, ed., *The Economics of Sports Betting*, (Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017), 26.

¹²¹⁷ Rodriguez, Humphreys, and Simmons, ed., 26.

¹²¹⁸ Weber, 31.

¹²¹⁹ Weber, 31.; Rodriguez, Humphreys, and Simmons, ed., 26.

¹²²⁰ Sheehan, 159.

¹²²¹ Robert Wright, “M-G-M Opens 2,100-Room Las Vegas Hotel,” *New York Times*, (New York, December 6, 1973), 71.

¹²²² Leroy Aarons, “MGM’s Tale of Woe and Wizardry,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, December 9, 1973), H1.; Wright, “M-G-M Opens 2,100-Room Las Vegas Hotel,” 71.

¹²²³ Wright, “M-G-M Opens 2,100-Room Las Vegas Hotel,” 71.

¹²²⁴ Wright, “M-G-M Opens 2,100-Room Las Vegas Hotel,” 71.

world's largest gambling casino, a 140-yard long array of roulette, blackjack and dice tables and 1,000 slot machines," all on the ground floor.¹²²⁵ It contained "four restaurants and a delicatessen and coffee shop operating 24 hours a day."¹²²⁶ The hotel had two showrooms that seated "1,200 and 800," and its "Lion's Den off the casino floor" also provided entertainment.¹²²⁷ Kerkorian did not stop there.

The main entrance was decorated with a "massive fountain" that had "a bronze copy of Lorenzo Giambologna's 16th-century statue of Neptune and the Sirens."¹²²⁸ The hotel's interior contained "[m]ore than 600 crystal chandeliers."¹²²⁹ "Forty-four marble statues sculptured in Italy of women holding the masks of comedy and drama" decorated the casino's columns.¹²³⁰ There was a movie theater, two nightclubs, two swimming pools, and twenty-four shops selling furs, jewelry, rugs, and t-shirts.¹²³¹ Four thousand employees were required to run this resort.¹²³² Certainly, no expense was spared, as was getting to be the trend in Las Vegas.

As the Las Vegas casino-resorts continued their never-ending revitalization process, a few courageous entertainers conjured up their own astonishing re-stylings of Gloria Dea's magic act from thirty years earlier. Magician Doug Henning burst onto the scene initially through his television show, appropriately called, "The Magic Show" and two also aptly named Broadway shows, "Merlin" and "Doug Henning and His World of Magic."¹²³³ The innovative Henning

¹²²⁵ Wright, "M-G-M Opens 2,100-Room Las Vegas Hotel," 71.

¹²²⁶ Wright, "M-G-M Opens 2,100-Room Las Vegas Hotel," 71.

¹²²⁷ Wright, "M-G-M Opens 2,100-Room Las Vegas Hotel," 71.

¹²²⁸ Wright, "M-G-M Opens 2,100-Room Las Vegas Hotel," 71.

¹²²⁹ Wright, "M-G-M Opens 2,100-Room Las Vegas Hotel," 71.

¹²³⁰ Wright, "M-G-M Opens 2,100-Room Las Vegas Hotel," 71.

¹²³¹ Robert Wright, "What's Doing in Las Vegas," *New York Times*, (New York, January 27, 1974), 484.

¹²³² McCracken, 95.

¹²³³ Jesse McKinley, "Doug Henning, a Superstar of Illusion, is Dead at 52," *New York Times*, (New York, February 9, 2000), B10.

was also booked to perform his magic in Las Vegas, and elsewhere, during the 1970s.¹²³⁴ Likewise, around this time, a pair of Germans, known by their first names, Siegfried and Roy, developed a unique combination “of magic, costumes, and exotic animals” that would capture the imagination of Europeans and eventually visitors to Las Vegas.¹²³⁵ Although the Germans’ Las Vegas debut was in 1967 at the Tropicana, they “made Las Vegas their base” in the 1970s performing “under contract at the MGM Grand.”¹²³⁶ Both of these revolutionary acts would dazzle Las Vegas audiences and influence countless other magicians.

Henning, a Canadian from Winnipeg, learned his magic from legendary performers like Dai Vernon and Tony Slydini.¹²³⁷ Slydini was considered one of the best magicians, and Vernon was regarded as “the most influential, compelling, and venerable figure in the venerable art of sleight-of-hand” by sleight-of-hand artist and magic historian, Ricky Jay.¹²³⁸ In fact, Vernon once “performed a card trick for Harry Houdini that the great escapist, who prided himself on being able to unravel any other magician’s work, could not decipher.”¹²³⁹ Henning’s career took off when he performed the dangerous “Houdini’s ‘Water Torture Escape’ on live television.¹²⁴⁰ Henning was known for wearing “jeans, flashy jumpsuits, and tie-dye T-shirts onstage” instead of the “black capes and magic wands.”¹²⁴¹ By 1986, he became increasingly obsessed with

¹²³⁴ Martin Gardner, “Doug Henning and the Giggling Guru,” *Skeptical Inquirer*, (Volume 19, Issue 3, May-June, 1995), 9.

¹²³⁵ Robert McFadden, “Roy Horn, 75, Who Dazzled Audiences as Half of Siegfried and Roy,” *New York Times*, (New York, May 10, 2020), 35.

¹²³⁶ McFadden, 35.

¹²³⁷ Gardner, 9.; McKinley, B10.

¹²³⁸ Katy Van Housen, “He Wheels, Deals, Just Like Magic,” *San Diego Business Journal*, (Volume 14, Issue 50, December 13, 1993), 8.; Lee Daniels, “Dai Vernon, 98; An Expert Magician Who Taught Others,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 29, 1992), 26.

¹²³⁹ Daniels, 26.

¹²⁴⁰ McKinley, B10.

¹²⁴¹ McKinley, B10.

transcendental meditation and sold his illusions to other magicians, including David Copperfield.¹²⁴²

Meanwhile, Siegfried Fischbacher and Roy Horn took danger to another level with their act. The two met while working on a German cruise ship in 1957. Siegfried had a magic act, and Horn had previously worked in the zoo at Bremen and owned a wolfdog and cheetah. Horn later recalled that he “told Siegfried if he could make rabbits come out of a hat, why couldn’t he make cheetahs appear.” Their act, which moved later to the Frontier Hotel, included levitating white tigers and putting white lions “[u]nder their spells.” The two would go on to perform their ten thousandth show when they opened at the Mirage, and then thousands more taking in “hundreds of millions of dollars.” Tragically, in 2003, Horn, who often slept with a tiger or leopard at home, “was mauled by a 400-pound white tiger that lunged at his throat and dragged him offstage before a stunned capacity crowd of 1,500,” at the Mirage, where the two magicians had “signed lifetime contracts.” After the attack, the chairman of the Mirage, J. Terrence Lanni, proclaimed that “[t]hroughout the history of Las Vegas, no artists have meant more to the development of Las Vegas’s global reputation as the entertainment capital of the world than Siegfried and Roy.”¹²⁴³

Las Vegas’s reputation was built on more than just magic, of course, as it also earned another world title during this era. Hosting “some of the most important title fights” and “more regularly scheduled, weekly boxing shows than any other city,” Las Vegas was dubbed “the boxing capital of the world.”¹²⁴⁴ While boxing had returned to Las Vegas in the 1960s, the

¹²⁴² Gardner, 9.

¹²⁴³ McFadden, 35.

¹²⁴⁴ Young, 52.

casino managers were still learning how to maximize profits.¹²⁴⁵ By the 1970s, that changed, as Las Vegas had several advantages over other cities. Certainly, hosting the fights of one particular fighter did not hurt.

While Muhammad Ali actually fought a few times in Las Vegas in the 1960s, by the 1970s each of his fights were enormous title fights that captured the attention of the public. His first fight of the decade came in 1972 against Mike Quarry. By then, casinos, restaurants, bars, and other businesses knew to prepare for an overflow of customers. The hotels on the Strip were booked solid. The biggest acts were scheduled to perform in the showrooms. Casinos prepared for more gamblers, especially the high rollers in town for the fight. Only Las Vegas had the wherewithal to offer such amenities all in one place.¹²⁴⁶

Another advantage Las Vegas had over other cities was its smaller population at the time compared to cities like New York.¹²⁴⁷ That meant television ratings would not suffer in local television blackouts.¹²⁴⁸ Promoters had “the other 49 more populated states available for TV” to make money on.¹²⁴⁹ Certainly, those who could not necessarily afford a trip to Las Vegas could afford the fee for closed-circuit television to view the fight. Ali received a half million dollars for the fight. He would fight a total of eight fights in Las Vegas, and Ali, his opponents, promoters, like Don King, and Las Vegas made more money each time.¹²⁵⁰ Boxing was in Las Vegas to stay.

¹²⁴⁵ Richard Davies and Kathleen Szawoila, *The Main Event: Boxing in Nevada from the Mining Camps to the Las Vegas Strip*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2014), 183.

¹²⁴⁶ Davies and Szawoila, 188 and 193.

¹²⁴⁷ Davies and Szawoila, 193.

¹²⁴⁸ Davies and Szawoila, 193.

¹²⁴⁹ Dave Brady, “Closed-Circuit TV Puts Bloom on Desert Boxing,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, June 25, 1972), E1.

¹²⁵⁰ Davies and Szawoila, 189 and 193.

The city's success also led to a continued population boom. In just ten years, the metropolitan population increased "about 70 percent, from 273,000 to 466,805."¹²⁵¹ Suburbs were expanding, and the valley was beginning to fill in. Las Vegas was more than just the downtown area and the Strip. Remarkably, despite the amazing resorts and the world class entertainment, the Hoover Dam was as relevant as ever, still providing power and flood control and remaining Nevada's biggest tourist attraction.¹²⁵² Incredibly, tourism was about to surpass the Hoover Dam elsewhere in Las Vegas. As extravagant as the MGM Grand was, even it was unable to boast that accomplishment, but Las Vegas was ready to take luxury to the next level.

The rest of the millennium was going to continue what the 1970s started. Las Vegas was about to be home to the "megaresort" as the Strip kept reinventing itself. More suburbs would be filled in and the population would continue to grow. One of the suburbs would even become the second largest city in Nevada. Atlantic City would threaten Las Vegas's standing as the U.S.'s largest gambling vacation spot.¹²⁵³ Downtown would get a makeover including the creation of the Fremont Street Experience. A new hotel located just north of the Strip would include a tower that took the idea of the tower-like Landmark and pushed it to extreme limits.¹²⁵⁴ Las Vegas was on a roll.

¹²⁵¹ Roberto Suro, "Sands Bloom with Growth in Las Vegas," *New York Times*, (New York, September 17, 1990), A1.

¹²⁵² Moehring and Green, 210.

¹²⁵³ Trader Horn, "Welcome to Glitter Gulch, Home of Video Poker and Incurable Eve-Anne," *The Guardian*, (London, October 9, 1982), 16.

¹²⁵⁴ Moehring and Green, 210, 212, and 213.

Chapter Nine – End of the 2nd Millennium

As the year 2000 approached, Las Vegas had established itself as a world-class resort. The valley was a far cry from the camping site John Fremont put on the map in 1844, or even from the railroad stop town established in 1905. In the 1980s, Atlantic City challenged Las Vegas as an American gambling mecca, so much so that at least one London reporter predicted that “nothing will be left but the carpets from Caesar’s [sic] Palace which, as soon as they are faintly scuffed, are taken away and left under the Joshua trees.”¹²⁵⁵ The Strip, as well as the downtown area, would ultimately survive the New Jersey threat, and would elevate to another level with even more glitz and glamour, including a resort with a tower rivaling the Empire State Building.¹²⁵⁶ This valley, once known solely for its abundance of water, was certainly not going through a dry spell.

In fact, in July of 1983, for the first time since a 1941 controlled test, water “fell more than 13 stories” down to the spillway tunnels at the Hoover Dam after “two weeks of the worst Colorado River flooding since the dam was built.”¹²⁵⁷ Due to “record mountain snow melt,” officials had to “reduce the amount of water being released in the normal way through the bottom of the dam into the power plant,” to ensure that the total released remained at or under “45,000 cubic feet per second.”¹²⁵⁸ The usual rate was “less than 20,000 cubic feet per second.”¹²⁵⁹ That meant that the power plant would need to be turned off temporarily, which

¹²⁵⁵ Trader Horn, “Welcome to Glitter Gulch, Home of Video Poker and Incurable Eve-Anne,” *The Guardian*, (London, October 9, 1982), 16.

¹²⁵⁶ Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 210, 213, and 216.

¹²⁵⁷ Jay Mathews, “Record Colorado River Flooding Breaches Hoover’s Spillways,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, July 4, 1983), A1.

¹²⁵⁸ Mathews, “Record Colorado River Flooding Breaches Hoover’s Spillways,” A1.; Jay Mathews, “U.S. Steps Up Flooding to Prevent Worse,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, June 22, 1983), A2.

¹²⁵⁹ Mathews, “U.S. Steps Up Flooding to Prevent Worse,” A2.

also meant a significant decrease in power to Southern California.¹²⁶⁰ Because most of the power for Las Vegas came from other sources, “the atmosphere was festive” at the Hoover Dam, as visitors watched the “spectacle” of the water rushing over the spillway gates and dropping.¹²⁶¹

Others, especially residents along the Arizona-California border, were somewhat fortunate the dam was doing its part.¹²⁶² While California and Arizona officials took major precautions to deal with the planned resulting flooding, the use of the Hoover Dam spillways meant a prevention of much worse.¹²⁶³ There was also still a national appreciation for the monumental dam. Back on July 4th, 1982, a patriotic incident of sorts occurred, as an enlisted Army soldier, Dirk Knipe, “rappelled 589 feet down the bare face of Hoover Dam, breaking out an American flag.”¹²⁶⁴ After receiving cheers, he proclaimed, “I did it for America” as officers escorted him away.¹²⁶⁵

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan signed a bill “authorizing \$77 million for visitor facilities and roadway improvements” there.¹²⁶⁶ The legislation, sponsored by Nevada Senator Chic Hecht, also authorized “increases in the dam’s power capacity.”¹²⁶⁷ In 1994, the cost of the dam visitor center, which included a new parking garage and two elevators that would carry visitors from the center into the dam, was “projected to hit \$119 million.”¹²⁶⁸ It actually opened the next year “at a cost of \$120 million.” Given the dam’s significance, that was still just a drop in the proverbial bucket. In 1997, the dam was further popularized in the movie, *Vegas Vacation*

¹²⁶⁰ Mathews, “Record Colorado River Flooding Breaches Hoover’s Spillways,” A1.

¹²⁶¹ Mathews, “Record Colorado River Flooding Breaches Hoover’s Spillways,” A1.

¹²⁶² Mathews, “U.S. Steps Up Flooding to Prevent Worse,” A2.

¹²⁶³ Mathews, “U.S. Steps Up Flooding to Prevent Worse,” A2.

¹²⁶⁴ Associated Press, “Human Flagpole on Hoover Dam,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, July 6, 1982), C2.

¹²⁶⁵ Associated Press, “Human Flagpole on Hoover Dam,” C2.

¹²⁶⁶ United Press International, “Hoover Dam Bill is Signed,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 20, 1984), B11.

¹²⁶⁷ United Press International, “Hoover Dam Bill is Signed,” B11.

¹²⁶⁸ Stephen Barr, “Cost of Hoover Dam Visitors Center Nearly Quadruples to \$119 Million,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, April 24, 1994), A13.

(1997), which included memorable scenes of Clark Griswold, played by Chevy Chase, climbing the Hoover Dam and attempting to fill in water leaks with his chewing gum while on the dam tour.¹²⁶⁹ The hilarity in these scenes was seemingly predicated on the fact that the dam, with which Griswold went toe-to-toe, was certainly by then, a massive American icon.

The film was also about a family working together in the hopes of making money in Las Vegas.¹²⁷⁰ After all, a family of a different sort did what they could do to make money in the city's casinos. Las Vegas remained the right place during this period to make money, even after the corporate takeover. Tourism in the city went "from 11.8 million visitors a year in 1981 to 20.3 million" in 1990.¹²⁷¹ Given the mob history in Las Vegas, though, parents were reluctant to bring their kids, and "only 5 percent of visitors to Las Vegas were children" as the millennium's last decade began.¹²⁷² MGM Grand, Inc., set out to change that with "a \$1 billion gamble that one day family vacationers...[would]...talk about the town in the same breath with Orlando, Fla., home of Walt Disney World."¹²⁷³ The plan in 1991 was to build the MGM Grand Hotel and Theme Park.¹²⁷⁴

Before that gamble, Las Vegas had to deal with competition from Atlantic City. By the end of the 1990s, the New Jersey city would have eleven casinos.¹²⁷⁵ (That number would actually go higher during that decade.¹²⁷⁶) Donald Trump owned three of them, and he actually

¹²⁶⁹ Stephen Kessler, *Vegas Vacation*, (Warner Bros., 1997).; Jane Horwitz, "The Family Filmgoer: Vegas Vacation (PG, 91 Minutes)," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, February 21, 1997), 44.

¹²⁷⁰ Kessler.

¹²⁷¹ Roger Cohen, "MGM Grand Tries to Give Las Vegas a G Rating," *New York Times*, (New York, October 2, 1991), D1.

¹²⁷² Cohen, D1.

¹²⁷³ Cohen, D1.

¹²⁷⁴ Cohen, D1.

¹²⁷⁵ John Curran, "In Atlantic City, a Long Shot Pays Off," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, May 25, 2003), A5A.; Patrick McGeehan, "New Jersey Board Approves a Takeover of Atlantic City," *New York Times*, (New York, November 10, 2016), A16.

¹²⁷⁶ Associated Press, "Giant Hotel Opens Doors in Las Vegas," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, June 23, 1990), E4.

saved them from bankruptcy in the last decade of the century when “he convinced bondholders that the properties would be worth less without his involvement.”¹²⁷⁷ Steve Wynn, owner of the Golden Nugget in Las Vegas, also invested in Atlantic City until 1987.¹²⁷⁸ It turned out that these two cities were on two different trajectories.

Still, there were some interesting similarities. By 1995, Las Vegas was welcoming “some 28 million people a year.”¹²⁷⁹ In the same year, Atlantic City was actually “the nation’s No.1 tourist destination, with about 30 million visits annually.”¹²⁸⁰ Although the mob was bought out of the Las Vegas casinos and New Jersey was able to keep their casinos clean, crime increased in both cities.¹²⁸¹ Part of this issue may have been what critics at the time found as “a link between casinos and higher personal bankruptcy rates.”¹²⁸²

Times were tough for the nation’s biggest casino towns. “Branches of the Bloods and the Crips, two big Los Angeles street gangs,” and other gangs, took to the streets of Las Vegas. Alan Balboni, a Community College of Southern Nevada professor, recalled, “If the mob was still in town, those gangsters who robbed the casinos would have been found dead in the desert.”¹²⁸³ Las Vegas violent crime went up since those days to “about 60 percent above the national average.”¹²⁸⁴ According to FBI statistics, “the crime rate per 1,000 residents” in Atlantic City peaked at “450.3 in 1988.”¹²⁸⁵ After casinos opened in New Jersey, “purse

¹²⁷⁷ Riva Atlas, “Market Place,” *New York Times*, (New York, October 31, 2001), C13.

¹²⁷⁸ Robert McCracken, *Las Vegas: The Great American Playground*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997), 102.

¹²⁷⁹ Thomas Heath, “In a Mafialess City, Some Las Vegans Don’t Like Their Odds” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, December 26, 1995), A3.

¹²⁸⁰ David Cay Johnston, “Coming Back to Atlantic City: Welcome Set for Wynn’s Las Vegas-Scale Project,” *New York Times*, (New York, June 27, 1995), D1.

¹²⁸¹ Curran, “In Atlantic City, a Long Shot Pays Off,” A5A.; Heath, A3.

¹²⁸² Curran, “In Atlantic City, a Long Shot Pays Off,” A5A.

¹²⁸³ Heath, A3.

¹²⁸⁴ Heath, A3.

¹²⁸⁵ Curran, “In Atlantic City, a Long Shot Pays Off,” A5A.

snatching, assaults, rapes, robberies and murders skyrocketed.”¹²⁸⁶ Similarly, jobless rates increased in both locales during the 1990s.¹²⁸⁷ Nevertheless, tourism did continue to thrive in both destinations.

In fact, despite the spike in crime, other American cities and states moved to cash in on the casino business. The first, Deadwood, South Dakota, an old mining town, legalized gambling in 1989.¹²⁸⁸ Deadwood was where Wild Bill Hickok was famously gunned down by Jack McCall on August 2nd, 1876, while holding what became known as “The Dead Man’s Hand,” pairs of aces and eights.¹²⁸⁹ Iowa followed with riverboat gambling in 1991.¹²⁹⁰ The casino was really just “an added attraction” on the river cruise, and the table games losses were double that of Las Vegas and Atlantic City.¹²⁹¹ Other states joined in soon after, although none were out to be bigger than Las Vegas.¹²⁹² Atlantic City still did.

The stark differences between Las Vegas and Atlantic City may have ultimately determined their fates. As Las Vegas continued growing, which provided adequate casino staffing, the Atlantic City population was spiraling downward with only about thirty-six thousand residents in 1993.¹²⁹³ Also, Atlantic City was “within a day’s drive of one-third of the

¹²⁸⁶ Curran, “In Atlantic City, a Long Shot Pays Off,” A5A.

¹²⁸⁷ Curran, “In Atlantic City, a Long Shot Pays Off,” A5A.; Robert Reinhold, “Long Viewed as Safe from Slumps, Las Vegas Finally Feels the Recession,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 2, 1992), A14.

¹²⁸⁸ Dan Moreau, “Travel & Leisure: Rollin’ on the River,” *Kiplinger’s Personal Finance Magazine*, Volume 45, Issue 8, August 1991., 69.; Frederick Chiaventone, “James Butler ‘Wild Bill’ Hickok,” *Cowboys & Indians*, January 16, 2018, Accessed May 20, 2024, <https://www.cowboysindians.com/2018/01/james-butler-wild-bill-hickok/>.

¹²⁸⁹ Chiaventone.

¹²⁹⁰ Moreau, 69.

¹²⁹¹ Moreau, 69.

¹²⁹² Moreau, 69.

¹²⁹³ Wayne King, “Casino Panel’s New Mission: Save Atlantic City,” *New York Times*, (New York, April 4, 1993), 35.

U.S. population.”¹²⁹⁴ This meant visitors would not be staying more than a day.¹²⁹⁵ Because, then, Atlantic City depended “on gambling for 90 percent of its revenue,” and seventy percent of that was from slot machines, the numbers were simply unsustainable.¹²⁹⁶ New laws allowing other nearby casinos to operate dealt another crushing blow.¹²⁹⁷ Meanwhile, Las Vegas derived “half of its income from non-gambling attractions and tourism,” and its Monte Carlo / Las Vegas-style casinos, “complete with craps and blackjack tables, baccarat and roulette” lured in more high rollers to fill up the other half.¹²⁹⁸

Although Atlantic City found rapid success during this era, it also dealt with decline. In fact, by 2006, Las Vegas would once again overtake Atlantic City as the premier national gambling destination.¹²⁹⁹ As Donald Trump said it so eloquently in 2016, “Atlantic City is a disaster, and I did great in Atlantic City.”¹³⁰⁰ His casinos failed, but he still made money.¹³⁰¹ Atlantic City would finally accept its role as being a different type of gambling city, and no longer focused on operations aimed at being like or beating Las Vegas.¹³⁰² As Jeffrey Vasser,

¹²⁹⁴ John Curran, “Boardwalk vs. Strip: The Odds are Clear East is East and West is West, and Atlantic City isn’t Las Vegas,” *The Washington Post*, Washington, April 16, 2006, Accessed January 24, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2006/04/16/boardwalk-vs-strip-the-odds-are-clear-span-classbankhead-east-is-east-and-west-is-west-and-atlantic-city-isnt-las-vegasspan/d8cb2ed6-5366-4f9d-8f68-7e6b22966284/>.

¹²⁹⁵ Johnston, D1.

¹²⁹⁶ Curran, “In Atlantic City, a Long Shot Pays Off,” A5A.; King, 35.

¹²⁹⁷ Curran, “In Atlantic City, a Long Shot Pays Off,” A5A.

¹²⁹⁸ King, 35.; Curran, “In Atlantic City, a Long Shot Pays Off,” A5A.; Bart Barnes, “Atlantic City: New Vegas?,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, November 5, 1976), A1.

¹²⁹⁹ John Curran, “Boardwalk vs. Strip: The Odds are Clear East is East and West is West, and Atlantic City isn’t Las Vegas.”

¹³⁰⁰ Russ Buettner and Charles Bagli, “How Trump Profited on Failed Casinos,” *New York Times*, (New York, June 12, 2016), A1.

¹³⁰¹ Buettner and Bagli, A1.

¹³⁰² Curran, “Boardwalk vs. Strip: The Odds are Clear East is East and West is West, and Atlantic City isn’t Las Vegas.”; Ronda Kaysen, “The Casino the State Saved,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 4, 2012), B1.

the executive director of the Atlantic City Convention and Visitors Authority said, “We need to stop saying we’re going to become like Las Vegas, because we’re not.”¹³⁰³

In 1987, Steve Wynn left Atlantic City after enduring a “bruising public inquiry” about one of his top executives having a social relationship with the Genovese crime family leader.¹³⁰⁴ His next move would start the transformation of the Strip into its modern version. He opened the “\$630 million Mirage Hotel” on November 22nd, 1989.¹³⁰⁵ Interestingly, he had moved the date up from December 26 to showcase the Sugar Ray Leonard-Roberto Duran championship fight on December 7th.¹³⁰⁶ Wynn, with an offer of “in excess of \$8 million,” outbid Trump, who had previously hosted the Mike Tyson-Michael Spinks fight in Atlantic City with a record eleven-million-dollar bid.¹³⁰⁷ It seemed that Sugar Ray preferred Las Vegas and opening the new hotel, saying, “Let’s go west.”¹³⁰⁸

The Mirage, the first hotel added to the Strip in fifteen years, was so spectacular that within one year, it attracted more visitors than even the Hoover Dam.¹³⁰⁹ Registering guests were “greeted with a flashy, glass-front \$1.2 million tank containing 20,000 gallons of water and four-foot-long sharks.”¹³¹⁰ On the five highest floors, Wynn put over a couple hundred penthouse suites for high rollers, and even “six private bungalows, each with its own swimming pool” next to the resort, for the “high-stakes ‘stratosphere’ players.”¹³¹¹ The casino would

¹³⁰³ Curran, “Boardwalk vs. Strip: The Odds are Clear East is East and West is West, and Atlantic City isn’t Las Vegas.”

¹³⁰⁴ Johnston, D1.

¹³⁰⁵ Associated Press, “Las Vegas’s Latest Eruption: Mirage Hotel & Its Pina Colada Volcano,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, November 23, 1989), D23.

¹³⁰⁶ Associated Press, “Las Vegas’s Latest Eruption: Mirage Hotel & Its Pina Colada Volcano,” D23.

¹³⁰⁷ William Gildea, “Leonard vs. Duran Planned for Dec. 7 at Mirage Hotel: New Las Vegas Facility Trumps Trump,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, August 1, 1989), C3.

¹³⁰⁸ Gildea, C3.

¹³⁰⁹ Associated Press, “Las Vegas’s Latest Eruption: Mirage Hotel & Its Pina Colada Volcano,” D23.; Moehring and Green, 210.

¹³¹⁰ Associated Press, “Las Vegas’s Latest Eruption: Mirage Hotel & Its Pina Colada Volcano,” D23.

¹³¹¹ Associated Press, “Las Vegas’s Latest Eruption: Mirage Hotel & Its Pina Colada Volcano,” D23.

feature a high roller room where thousand-dollar chips were the minimum bet allowed.¹³¹² Siegfried and Roy, and others, like Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton, and Cher, would also perform in the “1,500-seat, \$30 million showroom.”¹³¹³ One of the biggest attractions in this megaresort was the outdoor “flame-spewing, 54-foot-high volcano,” along with “three lagoons and waterfalls.”¹³¹⁴ Just six years removed from the opening of the Hoover Dam spillways, with this hotel, Wynn opened the flood gates for a stream of similar megaresorts to take over the Strip.¹³¹⁵

In June of 1990, Circus Enterprises, led by William Bennett, opened the Excalibur Hotel, the world’s largest hotel that also happened to be “a gargantuan castle.”¹³¹⁶ With more than four thousand rooms, it had over half as many as all of the casinos in Atlantic City combined.¹³¹⁷ Inside, the hotel featured “a Renaissance-era village,” and shows with “a medieval flair, with live jousting.”¹³¹⁸ With rooms starting at “a mere \$39,” the target customer was “the baby boom generation who want to bring their children” according to Excalibur Owner Glenn Schaeffer.¹³¹⁹ Some were not convinced that was a viable business strategy, including Wynn, who said, I wonder if kids’ rides, gambling and a hotel are really compatible.”¹³²⁰ The “old family clans, like the Boyds, Binions and Gaughans,” whose “Glitter Gulch” casinos, in the downtown area, were suffering due to the new family approach, talked highly of Wynn for his focus on the high rollers.¹³²¹

¹³¹² Associated Press, “Las Vegas’s Latest Eruption: Mirage Hotel & Its Pina Colada Volcano,” D23.

¹³¹³ Associated Press, “Las Vegas’s Latest Eruption: Mirage Hotel & Its Pina Colada Volcano,” D23.

¹³¹⁴ Associated Press, “Las Vegas’s Latest Eruption: Mirage Hotel & Its Pina Colada Volcano,” D23.

¹³¹⁵ Associated Press, “Las Vegas’s Latest Eruption: Mirage Hotel & Its Pina Colada Volcano,” D23.

¹³¹⁶ Associated Press, “Giant Hotel Opens Doors in Las Vegas,” E4.

¹³¹⁷ Associated Press, “Giant Hotel Opens Doors in Las Vegas,” E4.

¹³¹⁸ Associated Press, “Giant Hotel Opens Doors in Las Vegas,” E4.

¹³¹⁹ Cohen, D1.

¹³²⁰ Cohen, D1.

¹³²¹ Cohen, D1.

With the Strip's renaissance, the city's growth was becoming an issue. In 1990, one third-generation local, James Cashman, recalled that he "could not have imagined a traffic jam in Las Vegas even a few years ago," but he acknowledged that Las Vegas was "starting to get them – little ones compared to anywhere else" though.¹³²² In 1992, Las Vegas had "the fastest growing population of any US city – 8.5 per cent."¹³²³ The next year, only a decade after the Hoover Dam spillways were opened, Las Vegasans were becoming concerned with possible water shortages.¹³²⁴ Residents were running through "an average of 350 gallons a day" and were "more wasteful of water than any other desert city."¹³²⁵ Developers feared continued growth would be dependent on less waste and finding other sources of water.¹³²⁶ This would be a concern that would last, but, in 1993, the new resorts kept rising up out of the desert.¹³²⁷

That year, Circus Enterprises, having a near-hundred percent occupancy rate at the Excalibur, doubled down on the family-friendly resort concept with the Luxor.¹³²⁸ Opening on October 15, 1993, the hotel and casino had "5,000 bedrooms accommodated in a black glass pyramid as tall as a skyscraper and guarded by a Sphinx larger than the Egyptian original."¹³²⁹ Shooting straight up through the highest point of the pyramid was a light that was "the most powerful in the world[,]...bright enough to be seen on a clear night up to 250 miles away."¹³³⁰ To get from the registration desk to the elevators that "climb the pyramid at a 39-degree angle,"

¹³²² Roberto Suro, "Sands Bloom with Growth in Las Vegas," *New York Times*, (New York, September 17, 1990), A1.

¹³²³ Tim Cornwell, "Chips Down as Vegas Grabs Mormon Water," *The Observer*, (London, December 5, 1993), 18.

¹³²⁴ Cornwell, 18.

¹³²⁵ Cornwell, 18.

¹³²⁶ Cornwell, 18.

¹³²⁷ Cornwell, 18.

¹³²⁸ McCracken, 101.

¹³²⁹ Unknown Author, "Imagination Runs Wild at Las Vegas Resorts," *New York Times*, (New York, November 7, 1993), XX3.; Deyan Sudjic, "High Rollers Bet on Sphinx" *The Guardian*, (London, December 29, 1993), A4.

¹³³⁰ Tom Gorman, "For Las Vegas's Night Fliers, a Bargain Buffet," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, June 17, 2001), A18A.

guests travelled “by boat along the River Nile.”¹³³¹ Only slightly more upscale than the Excalibur, rooms in the Egyptian-themed resort went for the rate of “\$59 to \$99.”¹³³²

Twelve days later, Steve Wynn’s Treasure Island opened as the Dunes Hotel was about to be demolished with dynamite exploding as a “mock cannon-ball” was “fired from a plastic and styrofoam pirate ship.”¹³³³ Wynn, who was unsure the family concept was right for Las Vegas, perhaps, could not ignore the Excalibur’s success. That might have explained why he included an arcade and a sort of midway with “old carnival scams, like ring toss and knock-over-the-milk-bottle” to occupy the children.¹³³⁴ Outside, in the hotel lagoon, a ship battle ensued several times a day, as a British frigate engaged a pirate ship for all passersby to see.¹³³⁵ The battle, which included fire which generated very noticeable heat, always ended in a pirate victory.¹³³⁶ Another show, the Canadian act, Cirque du Soleil, took the stage in Las Vegas for the first time at Treasure Island.¹³³⁷ Still, overall, aside from the theme differences, the interior of Treasure Island was fairly comparable to that of the Luxor.¹³³⁸ (See Figure 124.)¹³³⁹

The next Strip addition, to put it mildly, was the enormous MGM Grand Hotel, Casino, and Theme Park.¹³⁴⁰ Kirk Kerkorian opened this billion-dollar resort on December 17th of the same year.¹³⁴¹ (MGM Grand, Inc. announced its construction four years earlier with a cost estimate of only “\$100 million.”¹³⁴²) Back in 1985, after a tragic 1980 fire in his original MGM

¹³³¹ Unknown Author, “Imagination Runs Wild at Las Vegas Resorts,” XX3.

¹³³² Unknown Author, “Imagination Runs Wild at Las Vegas Resorts,” XX3.

¹³³³ McCracken, 103.; Peter Watson, “Nevada’s Big Bang for the High Rollers,” *The Observer*, (London, October, 1993), A7.

¹³³⁴ Stephen Drucker, “Las Vegas, Theme City,” *New York Times*, (New York, February 13, 1994), XX15.

¹³³⁵ Drucker, XX15.

¹³³⁶ Drucker, XX15.

¹³³⁷ Unknown Author, “Imagination Runs Wild at Las Vegas Resorts,” XX3.

¹³³⁸ Drucker, XX15.

¹³³⁹ McCracken, 103.

¹³⁴⁰ McCracken, 104.

¹³⁴¹ Watson, A7.

¹³⁴² Unknown Author, “New MGM Grand Complex,” *New York Times*, (New York, September 20, 1989), D20.

Grand hotel that “killed 84 people,” Kerkorian sold it to the Bally Manufacturing Corporation, which renamed it Bally’s Grand.¹³⁴³ The theme park in the new hotel, a clear signal of the transition to family-oriented resorts, was also a point of contention for one major entertainment company. Another public battle subsequently erupted, but this time the fireworks were destined to be in the courthouse rather than the lagoon.

By this time, Las Vegas began to recognize their city’s “future as a rival to Orlando, Florida, home of Disney World.”¹³⁴⁴ The sea change to “a place for genuine family entertainment,” certainly reflected some philosophical similarities to that of Disney.¹³⁴⁵ MGM Grand wanted its name for the theme park, but Disney had leased the MGM name for its Orlando Disney-MGM Studios theme park.¹³⁴⁶ The Walt Disney Company may have felt pressure to act, and, in fact, did voice its objections.¹³⁴⁷ MGM Grand sued Disney and moved forward, as MGM Grand was not the same as MGM.¹³⁴⁸ Along with the theme park, the MGM Grand had over five thousand rooms, an indoor stadium, “a replica of the Emerald City of Oz,” and “[a]n 88-foot reproduction of the MGM lion” for the resort’s entrance.¹³⁴⁹

As these megaresorts continued their Strip takeover, local casinos were catching on elsewhere in the valley. Frank Fertitta, Jr. built the Bingo Palace back in 1976, which was really the first significant casino to cater to the locals.¹³⁵⁰ After that, three companies emerged as major players in the locals market.¹³⁵¹ Stations Casinos Inc. took over the Bingo Palace, naming

¹³⁴³ Unknown Author, “New MGM Grand Complex,” D20.

¹³⁴⁴ Watson, A7.

¹³⁴⁵ Watson, A7.

¹³⁴⁶ Unknown Author, “New MGM Grand Complex,” D20.

¹³⁴⁷ Unknown Author, “New MGM Grand Complex,” D20.

¹³⁴⁸ Unknown Author, “New MGM Grand Complex,” D20.

¹³⁴⁹ Unknown Author, “New MGM Grand Complex,” D20.; Watson, A7.

¹³⁵⁰ Jamie McKee, “Neighborhood Casinos Go Posh,” *Las Vegas Business Press*, (Volume 11, Issue 37, September 19, 1994), 1.; McCracken, 117.

¹³⁵¹ Stowe Shoemaker and Dina Marie Zemke, “The ‘Locals’ Market: An Emerging Gaming Segment,” *Journal of Gambling Studies*, (Volume 21, December, 2005), 387.

it Palace Station, and also built several casinos throughout the valley, including Boulder Station, Sunset Station and Green Valley.¹³⁵² Coast Resorts built Gold Coast, Suncoast, the Orleans and more.¹³⁵³ Boyd Gaming Corporation had its Sam's Town and the Eldorado; a host of casinos downtown, including the California, the Fremont, and Main Street Station; the Stardust on the Strip; and also the Jokers Wild Casino on Boulder Highway.¹³⁵⁴

Just off the Strip, on January 15th, 1990, Bob Maxey, a new member of MarCor Resort Properties, Inc. and future MGM Grand Inc. CEO, opened the Brazilian-themed Rio Hotel.¹³⁵⁵ After a “lackluster” start in the first year, the leader at MarCor, architect Tony Marnell, with his consultant Lud Corrao, replaced Maxey and, almost instantaneously, the all-suites hotel took off.¹³⁵⁶ The demand was high enough to warrant two expansions including a new thirty-seven-million-dollar tower.¹³⁵⁷ With Marnell at the helm, MarCor Properties, also known as Marnell Corrao Associates Inc., was “known as the world’s largest designer and builder of resort hotel-casino properties,” and, in 1997, the Rio was “the 13th largest hotel in the world.”¹³⁵⁸ In fact, Marnell’s imprint dominate[d] the Las Vegas Strip,” as he headed “the construction and design” of the Mirage, Excalibur, Caesars Palace, Treasure Island,” as well as the Stardust and many other megaresorts in Las Vegas and beyond.¹³⁵⁹ Still, while taking a break at “Mama Marie’s, a restaurant named after his mother,” Marnell declared about the Rio, “This ranks right at the

¹³⁵² McKee, 1.

¹³⁵³ Shoemaker and Zemke, 387.

¹³⁵⁴ McKee, 1.

¹³⁵⁵ Adrian Havas, “Rio: Now It’s on a Roll,” *Las Vegas Business Press*, (Volume 10, Issue 18, June 21, 1993), 3.; Associated Press, “‘Rio’ Theme is Expanded in Las Vegas,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, February 15, 1997), E11.; Sheehan, 203.; Jeff Burbank, “Rio Kicks Off the ‘90s,” *Las Vegas Sun*, January 15, 1990, Accessed January 26, 2024, <https://m.lasvegassun.com/news/1990/jan/15/rio-kicks-90s/>.

¹³⁵⁶ Havas, 3.; Associated Press, “‘Rio’ Theme is Expanded in Las Vegas,” E11.

¹³⁵⁷ Havas, 3.

¹³⁵⁸ Havas, 3.; Associated Press, “‘Rio’ Theme is Expanded in Las Vegas,” E11.

¹³⁵⁹ Havas, 3.; Associated Press, “‘Rio’ Theme is Expanded in Las Vegas,” E11.

top.”¹³⁶⁰ In 1998, Harrah’s Entertainment Inc., which took over the 1973 Strip addition, the Holiday, and renamed it Harrah’s in 1992, purchased the Rio “for \$518 million.”¹³⁶¹

In 1995, another off-strip casino, the Hard Rock Hotel, opened at a cost of eighty-eight-million-dollars.¹³⁶² The Hard Rock catered to visitors, rather than locals, but mainly the younger crowd.¹³⁶³ Forty percent of the resort was owned by Harvey’s Casino Resorts who said that the Hard Rock “would produce revenues of about \$100 million in the first year.”¹³⁶⁴ Hard Rock, chaired by Peter Morton, owned the other sixty percent.¹³⁶⁵ The Hard Rock would be a model for other restaurant businesses later.

The downtown area, in much need of a revitalization as the Strip transformed, was, likewise, reinvented in 1995.¹³⁶⁶ The aim for this project was to “recapture some of...[the downtown’s]...original quirky charm.”¹³⁶⁷ The seventy-million-dollars funded “walkways shaded by palm trees, outdoor cafes, shopping and entertainment, all beneath a canopy comprised of more than a million light bulbs.”¹³⁶⁸ The casinos in the area also upgraded as part of the downtown revival.¹³⁶⁹ In an effort to distinguish itself from the Strip, the target audience of this newly named Fremont Street Experience was not families.¹³⁷⁰ Mark Brandenburg, the managing partner of the Golden Gate, said, “This is where adults come to play.”¹³⁷¹

¹³⁶⁰ Havas, 3.; Associated Press, “‘Rio’ Theme is Expanded in Las Vegas,” E11.

¹³⁶¹ Unknown Author, “Harrah’s is Buying Big Las Vegas Hotel,” *The Sun*, (Baltimore, August 11, 1998), 2C.; Jay Jones, “Harrah’s Las Vegas Marks 80th Year with a \$140-million Renovation of its Guest Rooms,” *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles, March 19, 2018, Accessed January 31, 2024, <https://www.latimes.com/travel/lasvegas/la-tr-las-vegas-harrahs-turns-80-20180316-story.html>.

¹³⁶² McCracken, 117.

¹³⁶³ James Sterngold, “Turning Rockers into High Rollers,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 1, 1995), D1.

¹³⁶⁴ Sterngold, “Turning Rockers into High Rollers,” D1.

¹³⁶⁵ Sterngold, “Turning Rockers into High Rollers,” D1.

¹³⁶⁶ McCracken, 110.

¹³⁶⁷ Kenneth Noble, “Las Vegas Upgrading Dowdy Fremont Street,” *New York Times*, (New York, April 23, 1995), XX3.

¹³⁶⁸ Noble, XX3.

¹³⁶⁹ Noble, XX3.

¹³⁷⁰ Noble, XX3.

¹³⁷¹ Noble, XX3.

As the Fremont Street Experience lured more gamblers, The Stratosphere Corporation, “43 percent owned by Grand Casinos, Inc.,” took the Strip to new heights.¹³⁷² Its new Stratosphere Tower, Casino and Hotel, a “1,149-foot-high hotel,” was “the tallest building west of the Mississippi.”¹³⁷³ At the top, the tower held a roller coaster, and a “heart-stopping slingshot ride called the Big Shot.”¹³⁷⁴ A 12-story structure, located just short of the tower’s highest point, also included a revolving restaurant and other facilities, including three wedding chapels and an observation deck.¹³⁷⁵ The cost of such an over-the-top casino was “a mere \$550 million.”

Bob Stupak, came to Las Vegas from Pittsburgh and opened the Vegas World in 1974.¹³⁷⁶ Stupak was a bit of a risk-taker, having once been in a five-week coma after a motorcycle wreck.¹³⁷⁷ He also “won \$1 million on one bet on the 1989 Super Bowl.”¹³⁷⁸ His initial plan, which was not quite as chancy, was to build an enormous sign for Vegas World that would far outdo the large Stardust sign.¹³⁷⁹ His plan then evolved into a more dicey sign combined with a restaurant, and then finally into the full-blown skyline dominating tower with a restaurant.¹³⁸⁰ This sensational tower opened on April, 30th, 1996.¹³⁸¹

¹³⁷² James Sterngold, “The Stratosphere in Las Vegas Comes Down Out of the Cloud,” *New York Times*, (New York, June 28, 1996), D6.

¹³⁷³ Sterngold, “The Stratosphere in Las Vegas Comes Down Out of the Cloud,” D6.

¹³⁷⁴ Sterngold, “The Stratosphere in Las Vegas Comes Down Out of the Cloud,” D6.

¹³⁷⁵ Sterngold, “The Stratosphere in Las Vegas Comes Down Out of the Cloud,” D6.; Verne Kopytoff, “A New, Dazzling Las Vegas Downtown,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 28, 1996), R9.; McCracken, 106.

¹³⁷⁶ McCracken, 105.

¹³⁷⁷ George Vecsey, “Casino Owner is a Globetrotter for a Moment,” *New York Times*, (New York, February 18, 1996), S4.

¹³⁷⁸ Vecsey, S4.

¹³⁷⁹ McCracken, 105.

¹³⁸⁰ McCracken, 105.

¹³⁸¹ Sterngold, “The Stratosphere in Las Vegas Comes Down Out of the Cloud,” D6.

Less than two months later, the Monte Carlo opened.¹³⁸² With its “French Victorian-theme,” this casino was built at a cost of “\$325 million.”¹³⁸³ The combined venture between Wynn and Circus Circus’s development company, Gold Strike, was “understated” compared to the other Strip resorts, but it had an “Old World” charm to it.¹³⁸⁴ The resort, with just over three thousand rooms and built on some of the same grounds where the Dunes once stood, also boasted a casino that rivalled those in Monaco.¹³⁸⁵ With a restaurant named after magician, Harry Blackstone, and a lounge named after Houdini, it followed that the headlining act was the magician Lance Burton.¹³⁸⁶

On January 3rd, 1997, such understated style went out the window with the ostentatious New York-New York Hotel and Casino.¹³⁸⁷ Like the Monte Carlo, this was a joint venture, too, between MGM Grand, Inc. and Primadonna Resorts.¹³⁸⁸ The Primadonna Resorts president, Gary Primm, claimed, “You’re going to feel like you’re in New York-without the noise and the traffic.”¹³⁸⁹ The hotel was constructed to mimic the New York City skyline, with an imitation Chrysler Building, “a 47-story imitation Empire State Building,” other New York skyscrapers, and even a replica of the Statue of Liberty.¹³⁹⁰ This resort also included themed restaurants and amusement rides to continue the courting of families.¹³⁹¹

¹³⁸² McCracken, 107.

¹³⁸³ Kopytoff, R9.

¹³⁸⁴ McCracken, 107 and 108.; Joseph Siano, “Las Vegas in Spades,” *New York Times*, (New York, December 8, 1996), XX14.; Kopytoff, R9.

¹³⁸⁵ McCracken, 107.; Siano, “Las Vegas in Spades,” XX14.; Kopytoff, R9.

¹³⁸⁶ Siano, “Las Vegas in Spades,” XX14.

¹³⁸⁷ Paul Goldberger, “New York-New York, It’s a Las Vegas Town,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 15, 1997), B1.

¹³⁸⁸ Associated Press, “In Las Vegas, A New York State of Mind,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, August 13, 1994), E5.

¹³⁸⁹ Associated Press, “In Las Vegas, A New York State of Mind,” E5.

¹³⁹⁰ Associated Press, “In Las Vegas, A New York State of Mind,” E5.; Goldberger, B1.

¹³⁹¹ Associated Press, “In Las Vegas, A New York State of Mind,” E5.

Steve Wynn struck again on October 15th, 1998 with the Bellagio, “[t]he world’s most extravagant and expensive casino, costing \$1.9 billion.”¹³⁹² The opulence in this resort, which stood next to the Monte Carlo on the space once occupied by the Dunes, radiated with “paintings by the old masters” and “fountains costing \$30 million, mosaic-tile floors in the lobbies, [and] etched glass ceilings.”¹³⁹³ This level of luxury hinted that Wynn may have noticed the “family-friendly” experiment was not necessarily the way ahead for the city.¹³⁹⁴ Wynn certainly qualified to be a good judge of this, with his growing empire on the Strip. In fact, he found himself “addressing his employees at other properties to reassure them that his older casinos...[were]...as important to him as Bellagio.”¹³⁹⁵

On March 2nd, 1999, the Mandalay Bay opened where the Hacienda had been.¹³⁹⁶ It opened with the Four Seasons as a separate hotel on its top floors.¹³⁹⁷ This resort, built by Circus Circus, was another move away from the “family oriented” Las Vegas from earlier in the decade.¹³⁹⁸ Luciano Pavarotti opened the “12,000-seat concert, entertainment and sports complex.”¹³⁹⁹ The Mandalay Bay would later become more famous for another concert in the next millennium.

¹³⁹² Mark Tran, “It’s Renoir and Chip at \$1.9bn Casino,” *The Guardian*, (London, October 15, 1998), 21.

¹³⁹³ Tran, 21.; Kopytoff, R9.

¹³⁹⁴ David Segal, “With Loopy Bellagio, Vegas Raised the Stakes- and the Tab,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, May 2, 1999), E1.

¹³⁹⁵ Tran, 21.

¹³⁹⁶ Unknown Author, “Mandalay Bay Celebrates 2 Decades on the Las Vegas Strip,” *8NewsNow.com*, Las Vegas, March 1, 2019, Accessed January 30, 2024, <https://www.8newsnow.com/news/local-news/mandalay-bay-celebrates-2-decades-on-the-las-vegas-strip/>.

¹³⁹⁷ Brett Pulley, “What’s Doing in Las Vegas,” *New York Times*, (New York, March 7, 1999), TR10.

¹³⁹⁸ Pulley, TR10.; Andrew Pollack, “Tough Odds as Casinos Multiply,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 1, 1998), BU7.

¹³⁹⁹ Pulley, TR10.

Sheldon Adelson, “who made his fortune from the Comdex computer trade show,” followed suit, opening the Venetian May 3rd, 1999.¹⁴⁰⁰ This magnificent resort was installed on the old site of the Sands which closed in 1996.¹⁴⁰¹ This masterpiece included a replica St. Mark’s Square and gondolas for the waterways inside the resort.¹⁴⁰² This hotel, with over three thousand rooms, contained “Renaissance frescoes that...[were]...so painstakingly applied to the gilded ceilings.”¹⁴⁰³ It had all the charm of Italy right on the Strip, and it, too, would later get an addition that changed the shape of theaters.

The final resort to hit the Strip before 2000 was the Paris. Hilton Hotels was behind this French-themed hotel and casino that opened on September 1st, 1999.¹⁴⁰⁴ The most noticeable landmark for the Paris was its “50-story half-scale copy of the Eiffel Tower” and its “restaurant 100 feet up and an observation deck near the top.”¹⁴⁰⁵ Similarly, an Arc de Triomphe and “facades of the Louvre and the Paris Opera” graced the hotel grounds.¹⁴⁰⁶ A monorail, using two trains that once ran at Walt Disney World, was installed to connect the Paris with Bally’s and the MGM Grand.¹⁴⁰⁷

Real estate developers considered other big changes as well, and some happened. Caesars Palace expanded in 1997, adding a “1,200-room tower,” and “doubling the retail space

¹⁴⁰⁰ Pollack, BU7.; Unknown Author, “Venetian Resort Turns 20: A Look at How the Property Has Evolved Over the Years,” *8NewsNow.com*, Las Vegas, May 3, 2019, Accessed January 30, 2024, <https://www.8newsnow.com/news/local-news/venetian-resort-turns-20-a-look-at-how-the-property-has-evolved-over-the-years/>.

¹⁴⁰¹ Florence Fabricant, “Odds of a Good Meal in Las Vegas are Rising,” *New York Times*, (New York, July 29, 1998), F8.; McCracken, 113.

¹⁴⁰² Peter Marks, “Playing Poker with the Medicis,” *New York Times*, (New York, June 13, 1999), TR11.

¹⁴⁰³ Marks, TR11.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Pollack, BU7.; Unknown Author, “Vive Las Vegas! The Strip’s New Hotel,” *New York Times*, (New York, September 12, 1999), 220.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Unknown Author, “Vive Las Vegas! The Strip’s New Hotel,” 220.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Unknown Author, “Vive Las Vegas! The Strip’s New Hotel,” 220.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Unknown Author, “Vive Las Vegas! The Strip’s New Hotel,” 220.; Unknown Author, “Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority Acquires Assets of the Las Vegas Monorail,” *Exhibitor*, December 9, 2020, Accessed April 9, 2024, <https://www.exhibitoronline.com/news/article.asp?ID=21191>.

at the Forum Shops,” the shopping venue that really “started the mall-within-the-casino craze.”¹⁴⁰⁸ Harrah’s Casino also upgraded.¹⁴⁰⁹ In 1996, at the tail end of the family-oriented version of Las Vegas, the Las Vegas Hilton added “a big Star Trek themed casino and amusement area.”¹⁴¹⁰ Caesars Palace and Harrah’s endured, while, in the next generation on the Strip, the Hilton did not.

Meanwhile, other bold plans never made it off the shelf. International Thoroughbred Breeders, Inc., planned a billion-dollar space-themed resort called the Starship Orion located at the site of the original Thunderbird, which spent time as another El Rancho.¹⁴¹¹ The out-of-this-world project failed to take off.¹⁴¹² In 1989, a dreamer named Norm Jansen once pitched a “21-story working slot machine” as a resort.¹⁴¹³ A company called Entertainment Network Inc. tried twice to make use of the old Thunderbird site with Countryland USA, a resort consisting of two cowboy boot-shaped towers.¹⁴¹⁴ Even ITT-Sheraton had an idea for a “\$750 million, 3,000-room Desert Kingdom resort.”¹⁴¹⁵ These ideas failed, as would others in the next millennium, possibly just due to bad timing. (Las Vegas was certainly one city where even the most imaginative ideas had a chance.)

Other companies looked to capitalize on the Strip, too. M&M’s World was “a four-story cathedral of candy and consumerism.” Similarly, World of Coca-Cola Las Vegas was a “two-

¹⁴⁰⁸ Jane Levere, “Expanded Caesars Palace Enlarges Its Ad Campaign,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 28 1997), D6.; David Hochman, “Temples of Blessed Excess,” *New York Times*, (New York, June 13, 1999), TR10.; McCracken, 115.

¹⁴⁰⁹ McCracken, 115.

¹⁴¹⁰ Sterngold, “The Stratosphere in Las Vegas Comes Down Out of the Cloud,” D6.

¹⁴¹¹ McCracken, 115.; Wes Rand, “400-foot Cowboy Boots and Dueling San Franciscos: The Strip that Could’ve Been,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Las Vegas, November 28, 2022, Accessed January 31, 2024, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/the-strip/400-foot-cowboy-boots-and-2-san-franciscos-the-strip-that-couldve-been-2680462/>.

¹⁴¹² McCracken, 115.; Rand.

¹⁴¹³ Rand.

¹⁴¹⁴ Rand.

¹⁴¹⁵ Associated Press, “In Las Vegas, A New York State of Mind,” E5.

story Coca-Cola store” with “an elevator ride in ‘the world’s largest Coke bottle.’” While these stand-alone shops catered to a more universal crowd, Las Vegas had something for everybody. Like many of the Forum Shops targeting “lucky high rollers,” the Bellagio had a mall with “Gucci, Tiffany, Prada, Chanel, Armani, [and] Hermes,” and the Venetian also had stores like “Movado and Davidoff.”¹⁴¹⁶

With high-end shopping came high-end dining. The Venetian offered the “Delmonico Steakhouse, with which the television chef Emeril Lagasse...[was]...affiliated.”¹⁴¹⁷ The famous chef also had the “New Orleans Fish House in the MGM Grand.”¹⁴¹⁸ The well-known Wolfgang Puck had “Chinois and Spago” at Caesars Palace.¹⁴¹⁹ A second generation of chefs also began to flood the high-end dining market during this era.¹⁴²⁰ This generation included Giada De Laurentiis, Bobby Flay, and Guy Fieri, as well as Gordon Ramsey and his Hell’s Kitchen.¹⁴²¹ Still, the reasonably-priced, but increasingly more appealing, buffets remained a more frugal option for those gamblers on a budget.¹⁴²²

This period was also a forerunner for the next form of entertainment that would finally gain a foothold and then explode out of the blocks in 3rd-Millennium Las Vegas. While the city had taken over prizefighting due to the unique circumstances in Las Vegas, it also had recently held bowling, golf, and even tennis tournaments, including a 1995 Davis Cup match featuring

¹⁴¹⁶ Hochman, TR10.

¹⁴¹⁷ Marks, TR11.

¹⁴¹⁸ Fabricant, F8.

¹⁴¹⁹ Fabricant, F8.

¹⁴²⁰ Fabricant, F8.

¹⁴²¹ Unknown Author, “Celebrity Chefs’ Restaurants on the Vegas Strip,” *USAToday.com*, June 23, 2016, Accessed April 9, 2024, <https://www.usatoday.com/picture-gallery/travel/experience/food-and-wine/2016/06/23/celebrity-chefs-restaurants-on-the-vegas-strip/85000434/>; Las Vegas Magazine Staff, “Hell’s Kitchen is Back and Open for Business,” *Las Vegas Magazine*, June 4, 2020, Accessed April 9, 2024, <https://lasvegasmagazine.com/dining/2020/jun/04/hells-kitchen-caesars-palace-gordon-ramsay-dining/>.

¹⁴²² Segal, E1.; Susan Spano, “Las Vegas on a Small Stake,” *New York Times*, (New York, October 26, 1997), TR6.

Las Vegas's native son and "No. 1 U.S. player," Andre Agassi.¹⁴²³ Coach Jerry Tarkanian also led the UNLV Runnin' Rebels men's basketball team to a national championship in 1990.¹⁴²⁴ For the time being, however, due to the somewhat universal hold on the sportsbook market and the associated fears of fixed games, professional sports franchises and leagues avoided Las Vegas. A couple racing leagues were the exceptions to that rule. Formula 1 and NASCAR brought the biggest names in auto racing to the valley.¹⁴²⁵

The first Las Vegas Grand Prix was held October 17th, 1981, on a new "\$3 million road course" on the Caesars Palace "parking lot and some adjoining land- 75 acres in all." The race was the last race on the circuit. The track was somewhat controversial, as it was "built to conform with a concept unknown in other venues- to make all or nearly all of the racing visible to spectators in three grandstands with a total capacity of 45,000." Because the retaining walls had to be high enough to protect the racing fans, they could barely see the cars zipping by, and, likewise, the drivers could not see over the walls for reference points. The drivers' other complaint was that the fourteen turns were excessive. The race was still scheduled for the next year.¹⁴²⁶

The second Las Vegas Grand Prix took place on September 25th, 1982.¹⁴²⁷ The course remained the same, but the date, scheduled earlier in the year than the previous race, did have an effect.¹⁴²⁸ As it turned out, Las Vegas happened to be warmer in September than October. The temporary course "track temperature was more than 120 degrees when the race started."¹⁴²⁹

¹⁴²³ J.A. Adande, "In Vegas, Caesar Hails Tennis," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, September 22, 1995), F1.

¹⁴²⁴ William Rhoden, "Las Vegas Hits Jackpot in a Record Runaway," *New York Times*, (New York, April 3, 1990), A1.

¹⁴²⁵ John Radosta, "Grand Prix Racing in Las Vegas Debut," *New York Times*, (New York, October 17, 1981), 21.

¹⁴²⁶ Radosta, 21.

¹⁴²⁷ Associated Press, "Alboreto Easily Wins Las Vegas Auto Race," *The Sun*, (Baltimore, September 26, 1982), 7.

¹⁴²⁸ Associated Press, "Alboreto Easily Wins Las Vegas Auto Race," 7.

¹⁴²⁹ Associated Press, "Alboreto Easily Wins Las Vegas Auto Race," 7.

Despite the hot track, “the attrition rate was not unusually high.”¹⁴³⁰ Still, this would be the last Formula 1 race at this track and the last one in Las Vegas for over forty years.¹⁴³¹

The 1978 Formula 1 champion, Mario Andretti, still believed “[i]t was a darn good reason to go to Vegas.”¹⁴³² These two Formula 1 races were not the only grand prix races in Las Vegas before 2000. In 1966, for instance, the Stardust Grand Prix at Las Vegas was a Canadian-American Challenge Cup race on a raceway “built on the outskirts of Las Vegas” the year before.¹⁴³³ The track’s inaugural race was also run that year with Parnelli Jones winning.¹⁴³⁴ Andretti competed in two Indycar races held the two years after the 1982 Formula 1 race.¹⁴³⁵ He finished first and second, respectively, in the 1983 and 1984 Caesars Palace Grand Prix.¹⁴³⁶ As it was, Las Vegas did have a limited motorsports tradition, but racing really gained traction in the city with stock cars.

In 1996, Richie Clyne, built a hundred-million-dollar “mile-and-a-half oval” on a “low profile” tract of “scrub land” near Nellis Air Force Base.¹⁴³⁷ He was able to build this “107,000-seat track,” with funding from his former father-in-law and the original owner of the Imperial Palace Hotel and Casino, which opened on the Strip in 1979, Ralph Engelstad, and the owner of the Sahara, Bill Bennett.¹⁴³⁸ Soon after, Clyne also installed a nearby drag strip.¹⁴³⁹ On August

¹⁴³⁰ Associated Press, “Alboreto Easily Wins Las Vegas Auto Race,” 7.

¹⁴³¹ Alec Newboles, “Looking Back at F1’s Caesars Palace Grand Prix in Las Vegas,” *Fox5Vegas.com*, November 20, 2023, Accessed January 31, 2024, <https://www.fox5vegas.com/2023/11/21/first-las-vegas-grand-prix/>.

¹⁴³² Newboles.

¹⁴³³ Frank Blunk, “Race at Las Vegas Next Sunday Ends Canadian-American Tests,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 6, 1966), 243.

¹⁴³⁴ Frank Blunk, “Hall’s Chevrolet Leads Qualifiers,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 13, 1965), 22.

¹⁴³⁵ Newboles.

¹⁴³⁶ Newboles.

¹⁴³⁷ Joseph Siano, “An Even Faster Crowd Arrives at Las Vegas Speedway,” *New York Times*, (New York, September 18, 1996), B11.

¹⁴³⁸ Siano, “An Even Faster Crowd Arrives at Las Vegas Speedway,” B11.; Associated Press, “Harrah’s Buys Imperial Palace for \$370 Million,” *NBCNews.com*, August 23, 2005, Accessed February 1, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna9055061>.

¹⁴³⁹ Siano, “An Even Faster Crowd Arrives at Las Vegas Speedway,” B11.

12th, 1997, in front of some showgirls and race cars, Michael Buffer, the renowned boxing announcer who became famous at recent Las Vegas prize fights, thundered, “Let’s get ready to rumble!”¹⁴⁴⁰ This spectacle was the announcement of the first NASCAR race to be held at the speedway on March 1st, 1998.¹⁴⁴¹ Such an extravagant celebration could only happen in Las Vegas.

Las Vegas finished the millennium with one more dramatic achievement when it “surpassed Mecca as the most visited place on earth” in 1999.¹⁴⁴² That same year, “mob lawyer” Oscar Goodman, who won cases for mobsters Meyer Lansky and Tony “The Ant” Spilotro, was elected mayor.¹⁴⁴³ The Las Vegas population exceeded one million by 1995, and, three years later, “300,000 people per day walked along the Strip.”¹⁴⁴⁴ Much of the Las Vegas Strip and Fremont Street built at the close of the century would remain prominent fixtures in the centerpiece of the twenty-first century version of the Las Vegas valley and its surroundings. The Hoover Dam would, too.

2000 and beyond would present new challenges and world-leading applications of new technologies. A new virtual threat would replace the city’s old rivals, Atlantic City and Disney.¹⁴⁴⁵ A provocative new advertising slogan would attract countless tourists hell-bent on finding out what happens in Las Vegas. Sports, entertainment, and new modes of transportation were about to take Las Vegas by storm. Meanwhile, a devastating tragedy was about to befall

¹⁴⁴⁰ Associated Press, “Nascar Adds Las Vegas,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 13, 1997), B10.

¹⁴⁴¹ Associated Press, “Nascar Adds Las Vegas,” B10.

¹⁴⁴² Hal Rothman, *Neon Metropolis: How Las Vegas Started the Twenty-First Century*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), XIX.

¹⁴⁴³ Rothman, XXV.; Todd Purdum, “A Colorful Lawyer is Running for Mayor,” *New York Times*, (New York, May 2, 1999), 25.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Rothman, 3 and 26.

¹⁴⁴⁵ David Schwartz, *Suburban Xanadu: The Casino Resort on the Las Vegas Strip and Beyond*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 213.

the Strip, but it would also strengthen Las Vegas like never before. No city on earth shined like Las Vegas.

Chapter Ten – 3rd Millennium

With “a population of 1.4 million,” Las Vegas entered the third millennium as “the fastest-growing region in the country.”¹⁴⁴⁶ Still, this city, hugely dependent upon tourism, struggled to find its true identity in the early 2000s. Meanwhile, even though the valley was thriving like nowhere else, the locals, largely “retirees and service industry workers,” remained, in many respects, somewhat isolated in the rather remote desert location.¹⁴⁴⁷ The physical isolation began to be less significant, however, as technological breakthroughs altered business and transportation. Ironically, in the wake of such growth and development, the local populace faced new challenges as the city’s much older problems of limited water resources and senseless gunfire suddenly re-emerged. As the first quarter of the twenty-first century neared expiration, Las Vegas continued to roll.

A few years before 2000, though, Las Vegas faced a new rival. The accelerated public use of the internet opened the door to online gambling. This led many in the nation to revisit the old morality issues about gambling that enabled Las Vegas to thrive as a gambling town in the first place.¹⁴⁴⁸ Even by 1997, there were “about three dozen sites on the World Wide Web,” a relatively new concept at the time.¹⁴⁴⁹ While some of these sites were legitimate, others seemed “to be con operations.”¹⁴⁵⁰ In either case, state and federal officials fought to outlaw these virtual casinos, arguing that they “make it easier for those with gambling addictions to sink

¹⁴⁴⁶ Timothy Egan, “Las Vegas Bet on Growth But Doesn’t Love Payoff,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 26, 2001), A1.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Ken Belson, “In a Surprise, the N.H.L. Has Been a Hit in Las Vegas,” *New York Times*, (New York, February 28, 2018), B7.

¹⁴⁴⁸ David Schwartz, *Suburban Xanadu: The Casino Resort on the Las Vegas Strip and Beyond*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 213.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Beth Berselli, “Gamblers Play the Odds Online Despite Calls to Outlaw It, Internet Gambling Takes Off,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, August 19, 1997), A8.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Berselli, A8.

deeper in debt and despair because all they have to do is sit down and log on.”¹⁴⁵¹ The government officials eventually relented, as Americans outside Las Vegas feared missing out again on the casino business as they had decades before.¹⁴⁵²

Initially, Las Vegas also perceived internet gambling as a threat. Gambling was, of course, critical to the Las Vegas economy, so the possibility of losing business to websites that did not require travel or lodging was a concern, especially for casino operatives and owners. When internet gambling was in its infancy in the late 1990s, these casino professionals joined many government officials in their call for a ban on internet gambling, which at the time seemed quite impossible to regulate. By 2001, Las Vegas and Nevada reversed their positions, arguing the ability of these sites to use “foreign-based Internet service providers...which the United States cannot regulate” put Americans at an unfair disadvantage. Casinos like “MGM, Harrah’s and Park Place Entertainment, which operate[d] Caesar’s Palace and Bally’s...[had]...already established sites where players...[could]...gamble, not for money but for prizes” until the legality and enforcement of online gambling could be determined.¹⁴⁵³

As this battle ensued, gambling inside the casinos was changing, too. Slot machines were being replaced by “video gaming terminals,” although the “slot machine” term remained. These machines took advantage of technology to lure gamblers into spending more money. The games offered “second-screen bonusing,” to make the games more fun and to increase betting. They also replaced coin payouts with paper tickets which alleviated players getting their “fingers

¹⁴⁵¹ Berselli, A8.

¹⁴⁵² Schwartz, 215.

¹⁴⁵³ Matt Richtel, “Las Vegas Casinos, In Shift of Position, Back Online Betting,” *New York Times*, (New York, May 17, 2001), C2.

dirty” and eliminated carrying the heavy coins around in the casino. These changes drove dramatic increases in slot machine gambling as was intended.¹⁴⁵⁴

Harrah’s pioneered another rewarding casino innovation.¹⁴⁵⁵ The system of evaluating gameplay of gamblers evolved from casino personnel physically watching players, to computerized tracking systems in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁴⁵⁶ The next step in this evolution was the player card, which was made possible with the new slot machines.¹⁴⁵⁷ A gambler could be tracked across the Harrah’s national properties.¹⁴⁵⁸ This enabled the casino to have a better sense of the player’s gambling amount and tendencies, and it also enabled the player to gain access to rewards and better comps.¹⁴⁵⁹ Despite some early concerns about these new technologies, Las Vegas casino operators found a way to reap the rewards as they usually did. Even as the world was going virtual, the odds always seemed to be “stacked in favor of the house,” and perhaps the player card helped.¹⁴⁶⁰

Meanwhile, Las Vegas was dealing with a very real, but unfamiliar, danger. For the first time, water was becoming scarce in the valley. In 2000, Lake Mead and Lake Powell, also a “constructed reservoir” on the Colorado River, were “92 percent full” holding “47.6 million acre-feet of water.”¹⁴⁶¹ By 2023, that number had dropped to “12.9 million acre-feet of water.” The decades-long drought threatened the functionality and energy production of the Hoover

¹⁴⁵⁴ Martha McNeil, “More Flash, Less Cash,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, January 17, 2003), E1 and E4.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Schwartz, 215.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Schwartz, 215.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Schwartz, 215.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Schwartz, 215 and 216.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Schwartz, 216.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Susan Spano, “Las Vegas on a Small Stake,” *New York Times*, (New York, October 26, 1997), TR6.

¹⁴⁶¹ Joshua Partlow, “The Colorado River Drought Crisis: How Did This Happen? Can It Be Fixed?” *The Washington Post*, Washington, February 5, 2023, Accessed February 6, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/02/05/colorado-river-drought-explained/>.

Dam.¹⁴⁶² Lake Mead risked reaching “dead pool,” which was the water level sinking too low to pass the Hoover Dam which would interfere with energy production.

Las Vegas had already developed concerns in the 1990s because of the accelerated population growth, which by 2010 had reached “1.9 million.”¹⁴⁶³ The drought compounded the problem and required Las Vegas to implement aggressive water conservation measures.¹⁴⁶⁴ One of two existing intake valves providing “70 percent of Nevada’s population with water” risked inoperability as the Lake Mead water level continued to drop in 2014.¹⁴⁶⁵ The installation of a third intake valve, which could operate until the lake was down to a thousand feet, was completed by the end of that year.¹⁴⁶⁶ The Southern Nevada Water Authority “spent \$147 million on a program to encourage homeowners and businesses to eliminate their lawns in favor of the rock, grass, and cactus landscaping known as xeriscaping.”¹⁴⁶⁷ Because “[m]ore than 70 percent of household water usage” was for “outdoor use,” residents were restricted to watering their lawns “three days a week.”¹⁴⁶⁸ Heavy advertising was implemented to encourage compliance.

As of 2024, the drought continued. The heavy snows falling in the Rocky Mountains that melted into the Colorado River helped buy time.¹⁴⁶⁹ (Maybe appropriately, the word “nevada” roughly translated from Spanish into English as snow covered.¹⁴⁷⁰) Meanwhile, the seven states

¹⁴⁶² Felicity Barringer, “Water Use in Southwest Heads for a Day of Reckoning,” *New York Times*, (New York, September 28, 2010), A14.; Partlow.

¹⁴⁶³ Barringer, A16.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Barringer, A16.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Michael Wines, “States in Parched Southwest Take Steps to Bolster Lake Mead,” *New York Times*, (New York, December 18, 2014), A26.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Barringer, A16.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Barringer, A16.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Barringer, A16.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Partlow.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Adam Nagourney, “Hopes for Easy Economic Jackpot Quickly Evaporate,” *New York Times*, (New York, December 23, 2010), A19.

from the 1922 Colorado River Compact continued to develop plans that could keep Lake Mead from hitting dead pool.¹⁴⁷¹ What such urgent efforts demonstrated was that the Hoover Dam remained critical to powering the American West. The dam was also just as critical as ever locally, providing “2 percent of the [Colorado] river’s allocated deliveries” to the valley, and also still holding back Lake Mead which provided “90 percent” of the Las Vegas water supply.¹⁴⁷² Interestingly, the dropping water levels of Lake Mead revealed a number of dead bodies.¹⁴⁷³ One of these bodies was found in a barrel in May, 2022, and was reported to have been a man killed in a mafia hit in the 1970s.¹⁴⁷⁴

Given the longstanding relationships that the mob and the Hoover Dam had with Las Vegas, it was only appropriate to have a museum and visitor center for them. Along with the Hoover Dam visitor center and the Mob Museum, Las Vegas contained the Neon Museum, preserving “the city’s castoff signage,” the Pinball Hall of Fame, and the Atomic Museum, celebrating the Nevada Test Site.¹⁴⁷⁵ The Mob Museum, though, focused on organized crime in the very building where mob hearings were held.¹⁴⁷⁶ Mobster Frank Cullotta, “granted immunity for his testimony,” was once part of Tony “The Ant” Spilotro’s “Hole in the Wall Gang,” which derived its name from its members breaking into homes and buildings “by drilling through walls

¹⁴⁷¹ Partlow.

¹⁴⁷² Barringer, A16.

¹⁴⁷³ Caleb White, “How Many Bodies Have Been Found in Lake Mead? Hundreds Waiting to Be Discovered as Water Level Continues to Drop,” *The Science Times*. August 22, 2023, Accessed February 6, 2024, <https://www.sciencetimes.com/articles/45548/20230822/many-bodies-found-lake-mead-hundreds-waiting-discovered-water-level.htm>.

¹⁴⁷⁴ White, “How Many Bodies Have Been Found in Lake Mead? Hundreds Waiting to Be Discovered as Water Level Continues to Drop.”

¹⁴⁷⁵ Elaine Glusac, “Squeezing Value Out of a Las Vegas Vacation,” *New York Times*, (New York, February 2, 2020), TR8.; Atomic Museum, *Our Mission*, Accessed February 6, 2024, <https://www.atomicmuseum.vegas/about-us/mission/>.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Glusac, TR8.

and ceilings.”¹⁴⁷⁷ He committed hundreds of robberies and was involved in four murders, but, until his death in 2020, he gave tours at the Mob Museum.¹⁴⁷⁸ Cullotta was certainly a valuable resource for information on the last generation of known mobsters in Las Vegas.

In fact, Cullotta believed one man was responsible for bringing Spilotro’s gang down, effectively ending organized crime in Las Vegas. In 1981, Cullotta needed some money, so he approached Spilotro with his idea to rob the cash and jewelry stashed in a vault in Bertha’s Gifts and Home Furnishings. The plan, of course, involved the gang “going through the roof right over the vault.” Spilotro “gave [Cullotta] the go-ahead on Bertha’s,” and Cullotta was going to get a large enough cut to be ok. To the utter dismay of Cullotta, Sal Romano, a “burglar alarm guy from Chicago,” who “installed alarms in Tony’s house,” was asked to join in on the job by Ernie Davino, one of the gangsters.”¹⁴⁷⁹

“Tony liked him,” but did not completely trust him. Cullotta voiced his opinion of him to Spilotro saying, “I don’t want any part of him,” but, by then, Romano knew too much anyway to do anything about it. When Larry Neumann, another member of the gang, “told Sal to move the station wagon closer to the building so it could be loaded quickly,” Sal indicated that the car “wouldn’t start.” Cullotta went to the car, but “[t]here was no sign of Sal” and the car “started right up.” Cullotta asked, “Where’s Sal?” As it turned out, Sal was an FBI informant, and, as Cullotta put it, “Bertha’s was the beginning of the end for us.”¹⁴⁸⁰

While Las Vegas museums exhibited such a rich and diverse cultural past, the city also specialized in hosting conventions, bringing together visitors from all over to discuss or celebrate

¹⁴⁷⁷ Julia Carmel, “Frank Cullotta, 81: Monster and Memoirist,” *New York Times*, (New York, August 29, 2020), A28.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Carmel, “Frank Cullotta, 81: Monster and Memoirist,” A28.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Frank Cullotta and Dennis Griffin, *The Rise and Fall of a ‘Casino’ Mobster: The Tony Spilotro Story Through a Hitman’s Eyes*, (Newburyport: Wildblue Press, 2017), 155, 156, and 158.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Cullotta and Griffin, 119, 156, and 158-162.

what was important to them. Until 2002, the original Las Vegas Convention Center “hosted an average of about 1.1 million visitors and 52 events annually,” bringing together groups from all over to collaborate on their specific business or interest. Then, the city opened the addition of “1.3 million square feet of new meeting space” as part of an upgrade aimed at attracting even more visitors. Through 2008, Las Vegas was then able to host “at least 67 events and 1.48 million visitors each year.” This was yet another win.¹⁴⁸¹

The Las Vegas Strip certainly did not rest on its laurels either. The casino boom continued during the first decade of the millennium. MGM Mirage acquired Mandalay Bay and Bellagio in 2004.¹⁴⁸² Harrah’s chief executive Gary Loveman responded that same year by purchasing Caesars.¹⁴⁸³ The monorail was also expanded that year to “a four-mile route” with seven stations from the Sahara to the MGM Grand, and was expected to haul “[t]wenty million riders” per year.¹⁴⁸⁴ In April of 2005, Steve Wynn, whom MGM Grand Inc. had bought out of the Mirage in 2000, built the “\$2.7 billion Wynn Las Vegas resort.”¹⁴⁸⁵

Donald Trump’s luxury condo tower was under construction in 2007.¹⁴⁸⁶ That same year, Bruce Willis and Sylvester Stallone teamed up to put Planet Hollywood Casino where a second Aladdin had been built in 2000.¹⁴⁸⁷ (Arnold Schwarzenegger had moved on from the

¹⁴⁸¹ Lisa Halverstadt, “Fact Check: Leaving Las Vegas’ Convention Center,” *Voice of San Diego*, November 25, 2013, Accessed February 7, 2024, <https://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/11/25/fact-check-leaving-las-vegas-convention-center/>.

¹⁴⁸² Ben White, “Consolidation on the Strip Faces Antitrust Scrutiny,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, July 16, 2004), E1 and E5.

¹⁴⁸³ White, “Consolidation on the Strip Faces Antitrust Scrutiny,” E1 and E5.

¹⁴⁸⁴ William Taafee, “Las Vegas Monorail Rolls Above Strip Traffic,” *New York Times*, (New York, July 25, 2004), TR3.

¹⁴⁸⁵ John Deiner, “Vegas’s Newest Big Thing,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, June 26, 2005), P2.; Associated Press, “MGM Grand to Buy Mirage Resorts, Create Casino ‘Juggernaut,’” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, May 7, 2000), E4.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Rivlin, “In Las Vegas, Too Many Hotels Never Seem to Be Enough to Fill the Need,” *New York Times*, (New York, April 24, 2007), C1.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Richard Siklos, “Savor Those Curly Fries: Planet Hollywood is Back (Again),” *New York Times*, (New York, September 24, 2007), C1.

franchise.)¹⁴⁸⁸ Also, in 2007, Fontainebleau Resorts started work on its “\$2.8 billion, 3,900-room resort.”¹⁴⁸⁹ William Weidner’s Las Vegas Sands, heavily funded by Sheldon Adelson, added a new tower named the Palazzo next to the Venetian in 2008.¹⁴⁹⁰ The next year, Steve Wynn added the “\$2.3 billion” Encore, a tower near and similar to the Wynn.¹⁴⁹¹ The Aria Resort and Casino was added in 2009 as part of an “\$11 billion City Center complex.”¹⁴⁹² As the next decade approached, the German financial company Deutsche Bank opened the “\$4 billion” Cosmopolitan in December of 2010.¹⁴⁹³

These were some big names building high-end casinos. The family-friendly Las Vegas was fading, but not gone. The Blue Man Group brought their unique blend of “blue-headed guys” playing music on “plumbing pipes” to the Luxor in 2000, and became a fixture in Las Vegas.¹⁴⁹⁴ In 2008, the fairly wholesome singing siblings, Donnie and Marie Osmond, who also became Las Vegas royalty of sorts, began an eleven-year run performing at the Flamingo.¹⁴⁹⁵ In 2003, though, Cirque du Soleil created its new show, “Zumanity,” which was an adult cabaret-style show created to “push everybody’s limits and buttons.”¹⁴⁹⁶ Reminiscent of the old Block 16, “gentlemen’s clubs,” like Sapphire and others, were also open for business.¹⁴⁹⁷ A real signal

¹⁴⁸⁸ Siklos, C1.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Gary Rivlin, “In Las Vegas, Too Many Hotels Never Seem to Be Enough to Fill the Need,” C1.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Gary Rivlin, “In Las Vegas, Too Many Hotels Never Seem to Be Enough to Fill the Need,” C1.; Gary Rivlin, “When 3rd Place on the Rich List Isn’t Enough,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 17, 2008), C1.

¹⁴⁹¹ Rivlin, “In Las Vegas, Too Many Hotels Never Seem to Be Enough to Fill the Need,” C1.; Brooks Barnes, “Check In/Check Out: Las Vegas the Basics,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 15, 2009), TR4.

¹⁴⁹² Nagourney, A19.

¹⁴⁹³ Susanne Craig, “Deutsche Bank’s Las Vegas Bet: A \$4 Billion Casino with Few Gamblers to Pay the Bills,” *New York Times*, (New York, April 19, 2011), B1.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Vicki Goldberg, “Blue Man Joins the Vegas Collection,” *New York Times*, (New York, April 30, 2000), AR5.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Matt Kelemen, “Donny Osmond Return to the Las Vegas Strip,” *Las Vegas Magazine*, January 20, 2023, Accessed February 6, 2024, <https://lasvegasmagazine.com/entertainment/2023/jan/20/donny-osmond-returns-to-las-vegas-strip-harrahs/>.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Guy Trebay, “After Nice, A Return to Vice,” *New York Times*, (New York, June 8, 2003), 5.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Trebay, 5.

that Las Vegas was changing was the replacement of the Treasure Island pirates with “scantly clad ‘sirens.’”¹⁴⁹⁸

With these entertainment changes, Mayor Goodman, a shrewd politician and businessman, thought up a new idea to attract business. His new city ad campaign really tapped into the spirit and excitement of Las Vegas while also setting it apart from other locations. Goodman’s new slogan for Las Vegas was “What Happens Here, Stays Here.” As Goodman put it, “The bottom line is that people can come here, go to the brink of whatever’s legal without having anyone look over their shoulder.” Eventually, the slogan became “What Happens in Vegas, Stays in Vegas,” and it worked like a charm.¹⁴⁹⁹

In fact, quite a lot was happening in Las Vegas, until a nation recession hit in 2009.¹⁵⁰⁰ As Americans struggled to pay their bills, their ability to travel was somewhat weakened, so naturally, the tourism industry did not fare well.¹⁵⁰¹ The Convention Center numbers told this story, as the visitor totals for 2011 and 2012 were roughly the same numbers as from before the 2002 expansion.¹⁵⁰² There was also a lull in casino building on the Strip until the nation recovered. Even the iconic Sahara was closed in 2011, as it was replaced with the SLS Las Vegas.¹⁵⁰³ However, this would be just a temporary setback.

The Caesars Entertainment Corporation spearheaded the Las Vegas comeback, timing it perfectly with the opening of the Linq Promenade in 2014.¹⁵⁰⁴ This was “an open-air retail,

¹⁴⁹⁸ Trebay, 5.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Trebay, 4.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Halverstadt.

¹⁵⁰¹ Halverstadt.

¹⁵⁰² Halverstadt.

¹⁵⁰³ Ed Komenda, “Iconic Sahara Name Will Soon Return to Las Vegas Strip,” *Reno Gazette-Journal*, June 28, 2019, Accessed February 12, 2024, <https://www.rgj.com/story/news/2019/06/28/las-vegas-sahara-hotel-soon-return/1594783001/>.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Joe Gose, “A Change of Luck in Las Vegas,” *New York Times*, (New York, November 18, 2015), B1.

dining and entertainment district” stretching from the Linq Hotel and Casino, which replaced the Imperial Palace, to a new, “550-foot High Roller Las Vegas Ferris wheel.”¹⁵⁰⁵ Also that year, the Delano replaced “THEhotel at Mandalay Bay,” as a “non-gaming tower” with “new restaurants and a nightlife space.”¹⁵⁰⁶ Although the “nearly complete but long vacant” Fontainebleau project remained stalled in 2015, the “Malaysian gambling giant” Genting Group broke ground on the “\$4 billion Chinese-themed Resorts World Las Vegas.”¹⁵⁰⁷ Certainly, Las Vegas was experiencing good fortune and prosperity again. The major players in the desert oasis were about to take another gamble, this time placing a chilling wager.

At least as early as 2007, Mayor Goodman was giving “[g]uaranteed-even money” odds on “getting a major league franchise...in Vegas.”¹⁵⁰⁸ He had even tried in 2005 to bring in a Major League Baseball team.¹⁵⁰⁹ The two biggest arguments against this were the long-held fears of illicit game-fixing and the concern that the local population was full of “unlikely candidates to spend thousands of dollars on season tickets.”¹⁵¹⁰ National Football League Commissioner Roger Goodell commented on the first issue before Super Bowl XLI, saying he had “his personal views about gambling,” and that he didn’t “think it’s in the best interests of the N.F.L. to have any association with sports betting.”¹⁵¹¹ Meanwhile, Jerry Tarkanian’s success in the 1990s demonstrated that, at least at the NCAA level, Las Vegas was “a true basketball destination.”¹⁵¹² At the time, Las Vegas was “the country’s 40th largest television market,” and

¹⁵⁰⁵ Gose, B1.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Anthony Curtis, “Delano Las Vegas Opens on the Strip,” *AZCentral.com*, September 19, 2014, Accessed February 12, 2024, <https://www.azcentral.com/story/travel/2014/09/20/delano-las-vegas-opens-strip/15855517/>.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Gose, B1.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Liz Robbins, “For Las Vegas, It’s Showtime: City Has Got the Game; It Wants a Team,” *New York Times*, (New York, February 11, 2007), G1.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Richard Sandomir, “Las Vegas’s Mayor Tries to Attract a Pro Team,” *New York Times*, (New York, July 17, 2005), G8.

¹⁵¹⁰ Belson, “In a Surprise, the N.H.L. Has Been a Hit in Las Vegas,” B7.

¹⁵¹¹ Robbins, G1.

¹⁵¹² Robbins, G1.

Joe Maloof, whose family owned the Sacramento Kings and the Palms Casino in Las Vegas, argued “It’s one of the great last cities that doesn’t have a franchise, and it needs one.”¹⁵¹³ The somewhat remote location of Las Vegas also raised concerns that if the locals could not fill the sports arenas, regional out-of-towners might be too far away to take a genuine interest in any Vegas team.

There were also other challenges. Because Maloof’s family ownership, the Palms was not allowed to offer betting on NBA games. Casinos did not allow betting on UNLV basketball games for decades, either. Nevada’s Gaming Control Board overturned that in 2001, possibly leaving the door open for betting on local professional teams in Las Vegas. The Deputy NBA Commissioner, Bill Daly seemed open to the idea and was willing to consider a “flexible approach.” One idea was a partial betting ban on only the games involving a Las Vegas team.¹⁵¹⁴

The other major roadblock was that the Thomas & Mack Center was twenty-three years old, and a new arena would be necessary. Rory Reid, the Clark County Board of Commissioners chairman, set up a task force with Goodman to consider new arena options. Still, Reid was less enthusiastic about it than Goodman because of other pressing local issues that needed funding. Many of the NBA owners, looking to make a profit in the untapped market, welcomed the idea of a franchise in Las Vegas. At the time, though, the issue remained unsettled.¹⁵¹⁵

Then, in 2014, MGM Grand Resorts and Anschutz Entertainment Group began construction on a new sports arena on the Strip that would later be called T-Mobile Arena. The arena did not necessarily need to be the home of a professional sports team, as the city had

¹⁵¹³ Robbins, G1.; Belson, “In a Surprise, the N.H.L. Has Been a Hit in Las Vegas,” B7.

¹⁵¹⁴ Robbins, G1.

¹⁵¹⁵ Robbins, G1.

enough entertainment to justify such a structure. Nevertheless, the arena was “being built with the idea of someday serving as home to an N.H.L. or N.B.A. franchise, or both.” The venue would have “a capacity of 20,000 for concerts, about 19,000 for basketball games and 17,500 for hockey games.” It would be hockey to break the ice first.¹⁵¹⁶ In fact, the quote from Pop Squires about casinos in the 1940s, “now the ice is broken,” was soon going to be applicable again.¹⁵¹⁷

That same year, Bill Foley, a West Point graduate, built a team that included Maloof and his brother and approached NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman about bringing an expansion team to Las Vegas.¹⁵¹⁸ Bettman had always downplayed the gambling reservations because “the casinos’ take on hockey games...[was]...quite small.”¹⁵¹⁹ He also went a step further, asking to “test the market’s worth with a season-ticket campaign.”¹⁵²⁰ This was to determine if it made financial sense given the “transient population and vast entertainment options.”¹⁵²¹ In just a month-and-a-half, Foley had received “deposits of \$150 to \$900” for “11,500 seats, plus 735 suite seats and another 1,000 unpaid commitments from businesses.”¹⁵²² Bettman was impressed, as was, interestingly, the Oakland Raiders owner, Mark Davis, who later visited the valley searching for a location to move his football team in early 2016.¹⁵²³

T-Mobile Arena opened April 6th, 2016 with a Wayne Newton and the Killers concert, both Vegas legends.¹⁵²⁴ NBA Commissioner Adam Silver tapered the gambling concerns

¹⁵¹⁶ John Branch, “N.H.L. Seems Likely to Boldly Expand Where No Pro Team Has: Las Vegas Strip,” *New York Times*, (New York, June 22, 2015), D1.

¹⁵¹⁷ Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 44.

¹⁵¹⁸ Stockton.

¹⁵¹⁹ Belson, “In a Surprise, the N.H.L. Has Been a Hit in Las Vegas,” B7.

¹⁵²⁰ Branch, D1.

¹⁵²¹ Branch, D1.

¹⁵²² Branch, D1.

¹⁵²³ Branch, D1.; Pat Pickens, “To Las Vegas, Hockey in the Desert Isn’t So Strange: A Gambling Town Bids for Hockey,” *New York Times*, (New York, January 30, 2016), D1.

¹⁵²⁴ Pickens, D1.

throughout the sports world when he recently “endorsed the expansion of legalized sports gambling.”¹⁵²⁵ Mayor Carolyn Goodman, who succeeded her husband, Oscar, said she “never believed there was a taboo about Las Vegas.”¹⁵²⁶ By that time, the population had risen to “2.1 million residents,” and the valley also recently became home to “aviation and technology companies.”¹⁵²⁷ According to Foley, who had even taken the colors from his old alma mater of “black, gray and gold” for the team, “Las Vegas...[had]...done its job.”¹⁵²⁸ NHL approval would be the final goal.

On July 20th of that year, Las Vegas was awarded an NHL expansion team. As Davis considered taking advantage of this NHL move, Goodell did show small signs of backing down from his firm stance against a comparable NFL move. The NFL Commissioner stated that “[i]f people feel like it’s going to have an influence on the outcome of the game,...[he and the league were]...absolutely opposed to that.” The Dallas Cowboys owner, Jerry Jones, called Las Vegas “one of the crown jewels of communities in the United States.” He believed that the “gambling aspect to it ...[was]...far overshadowed by the entertainment value.” Davis, meanwhile, was already collaborating with the Las Vegas Sands on a “proposal to build a \$1.4 billion domed stadium.”¹⁵²⁹

The NFL, still led by Goodell, “softened” by March the next year, especially when Davis “ended his dalliance with Sheldon Adelson...who offered to pay for part of a new stadium in Las Vegas.” Although Adelson was also instrumental in gaining the approval of public funds for building the new stadium, the removal of the Las Vegas Sands Corp. chief executive from the

¹⁵²⁵ Pickens, D1.

¹⁵²⁶ Belson, “In a Surprise, the N.H.L. Has Been a Hit in Las Vegas,” B7.

¹⁵²⁷ Belson, “In a Surprise, the N.H.L. Has Been a Hit in Las Vegas,” B7.

¹⁵²⁸ Branch, D1.

¹⁵²⁹ Belson, “In a Surprise, the N.H.L. Has Been a Hit in Las Vegas,” B7.

stadium financing deal eliminated NFL gambling interference concerns.¹⁵³⁰ On the 27th, the NFL approved the Raiders' move to Las Vegas. Davis had been "complaining openly about his team's stadium" in Oakland. Interestingly, in Oakland, the Raiders were the last remaining NFL team to share a stadium with a baseball team, the Oakland A's. Las Vegas, meanwhile, suddenly had two professional sports franchises.¹⁵³¹

Just as the NHL team, named the Vegas Golden Knights, began their first season in October, 2017, the San Antonio Stars, in the WNBA, moved to Las Vegas after being purchased by MGM Resorts International.¹⁵³² The new Las Vegas Aces would begin play in the Mandalay Bay Events Center the next year.¹⁵³³ Davis, whose father Al was famous for saying "Just win, baby," later purchased the team in January 2021.¹⁵³⁴ The Aces did just that winning back-to-back WNBA championships in 2022 and 2023.¹⁵³⁵ They took their second championship just a few months after the Golden Knights won their first Stanley Cup.¹⁵³⁶

The Las Vegas Raiders began their first season in their brand new, "\$2 billion home," Allegiant Stadium in 2020.¹⁵³⁷ At the time, state officials expected "35 percent of fans for events

¹⁵³⁰ Ken Ritter, "Casino Mogul Adelson Pulls Out of Raiders-Vegas Stadium Deal," *APNews.com*, January 30, 2017, Accessed April 10, 2024, <https://apnews.com/general-news-aff33311772b4aa3b41083a7258f63ae>.

¹⁵³¹ Ken Belson and Victor Mather, "Die is Cast: Owners O.K. Raiders' Move to Las Vegas," *New York Times*, (New York, March 28, 2017), B7.

¹⁵³² Associated Press, "WNBA's San Antonio Stars Moving to Las Vegas," *CBSNews.com*, October 17, 2017, Accessed February 7, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/texas/news/wnbas-san-antonio-stars-moving-to-las-vegas/>.

¹⁵³³ Associated Press, "WNBA's San Antonio Stars Moving to Las Vegas."

¹⁵³⁴ Analis Bailey, "Raiders Owner Mark Davis Set to Expand His Sports Empire in Las Vegas with Purchase of WNBA Team," *USAToday.com*, January 14, 2021, Accessed February 7, 2024, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/wnba/2021/01/14/las-vegas-raiders-owner-mark-davis-purchase-wnba-aces-team/4163709001/>; Malcolm Moran, "The Davis Secret: 'Just Win, Baby,'" *New York Times*, (New York, January 23, 1984), C4.

¹⁵³⁵ Associated Press, "Aces Celebrate 2nd WNBA Championship, Say More Are on the Way," *ESPN.com*, October, 23, 2023, Accessed February 7, 2024, https://www.espn.com/wnba/story/_/id/38729812/aces-celebrate-2nd-wnba-championship-say-more-way.

¹⁵³⁶ Associated Press, "Aces Celebrate 2nd WNBA Championship, Say More Are on the Way."

¹⁵³⁷ Ken Belson, "Starting Next Year, the Raiders Will Happen in Vegas," *New York Times*, (New York, December 15, 2019), SP3.

in the stadium to come from outside Las Vegas.”¹⁵³⁸ At least through 2019, the Golden Knights played in front of sellout crowds. Even before the Raiders played their first game, the NFL selected Las Vegas to host a draft which they did in 2022.¹⁵³⁹ The arrival of these three franchises was just the beginning.

Las Vegas soon welcomed other franchises and hosted other major events. The National Finals Rodeo drew “about 170,000 fans,” and “Las Vegas ha[d] always been the home of [Dana White’s Ultimate Fighting Championship] UFC,” as boxing evolved into the more brutal mixed martial arts.¹⁵⁴⁰ The NBA held its first In-Season Tournament Championship in 2023, and it seemed to be a slam dunk that an NBA franchise could finally make the jump to Las Vegas.¹⁵⁴¹ The Las Vegas Desert Dogs, a National Lacrosse League expansion team owned in part by hockey legend Wayne Gretzky, began play at the Michelob ULTRA Arena inside Mandalay Bay in December, 2022.¹⁵⁴² The brand new Pro Volleyball Federation positioned the Vegas Thrill in Las Vegas, too, with their first game in February of 2024 at the Dollar Loan Center Arena in Henderson.¹⁵⁴³ The Major League Baseball franchise, the Oakland A’s, officially agreed to

¹⁵³⁸ Belson, “Starting Next Year, the Raiders Will Happen in Vegas,” SP3.

¹⁵³⁹ Belson, “Starting Next Year, the Raiders Will Happen in Vegas,” SP3.; John Breech, “NFL Draft 2022 is Going Full Las Vegas, But Will Be Missing One Key Detail from Original Plan,” *CBSSports.com*, April 28, 2022, Accessed February 8, 2024, <https://www.cbssports.com/nfl/news/nfl-draft-2022-is-going-full-las-vegas-but-will-be-missing-one-key-detail-from-the-original-plan/>.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Ray Hagar, “Las Vegas Reinvents Itself as ‘Sports Capital of the World,’” *Reno Gazette Journal*, November 14, 2023, Accessed February 8, 2024, <https://www.rgj.com/story/news/2023/11/14/las-vegas-reinvents-itself-as-sports-capital-of-the-world/71579719007/>; Lance Pugmire, “UFC, T-Mobile Arena Strike Multiyear Exclusive Deal for Las Vegas Fight Cards,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 3, 2017, Accessed February 22, 2024, <https://www.latimes.com/sports/boxing/la-sp-sn-ufc-t-mobile-arena-las-vegas-exclusive-20170303-story.html>.

¹⁵⁴¹ Hagar.; Pugmire.

¹⁵⁴² Unknown Author, “New Las Vegas Lacrosse Team Named ‘Desert Dogs,’” *ColoradoMammoth.com*, April 26, 2022, Accessed February 8, 2024, <https://coloradomammoth.com/news/new-las-vegas-lacrosse-team-named-desert-dogs/>.

¹⁵⁴³ C.C. McCandless, “Pro Volleyball Federation Reveals ‘Vegas Thrill’ Name, Other Team Details,” *Fox5Vegas.com*, November 27, 2023, Accessed February 8, 2024, <https://www.fox5vegas.com/2023/11/28/pro-volleyball-federation-reveals-vegas-thrill-name-other-team-details/>.

move to Las Vegas to play in another new Strip stadium in the 2028 season at the earliest.¹⁵⁴⁴

The delay was only necessary for the construction of a “\$1.5 billion ballpark,” set to be built on the site held by the Tropicana, one of the last Strip casinos from the mob era, which closed April 2nd, 2024.¹⁵⁴⁵

Even world-class events took the main stage. Formula 1 returned with its first race in Las Vegas in several decades, this one right down the Strip in November of 2023. The race was projected to have a “\$1.3 billion” economic impact. Local authorities predicted “over 100 million people watching” the Saturday night race. Then, less than eight years after the arrival of the Golden Knights, Las Vegas, having won over Roger Goodell, took the title of “Sports Capital of the World” when it hosted Super Bowl LVIII on February 11, 2024 at Allegiant Stadium.¹⁵⁴⁶

One event, on October 1, 2017, that shocked the nation would bring together sports with music in a very unexpected way. During the Route 91 Harvest Festival, a country music festival taking place across the street from Mandalay Bay, a crazed shooter opened fire from a hotel room in the resort.¹⁵⁴⁷ This shooting was “the worst mass shooting in [m]odern U.S. [h]istory,” with “58 killed,” and over four hundred shot and wounded victims.¹⁵⁴⁸ Just a week later, at the first Vegas Golden Knights home game, defenseman, Deryk Engelland, spoke to the fans from the ice, saying “To all the brave first responders that have worked tirelessly and courageously throughout this whole tragedy, we thank you.”¹⁵⁴⁹ The Golden Knights retired the “number 58”

¹⁵⁴⁴ Hagar.; John Shea, “Tropicana, Site of A’s New Las Vegas Stadium, Will Close April 2,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 29, 2024, Accessed February 8, 2024, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/sports/athletics/article/tropicana-site-a-s-new-las-vegas-stadium-close-18635929.php>.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Hagar.; Shea.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Hagar.; Shea.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Ash Ngu, Julie Turkewitz, K.K. Rebecca Lai, Anjali Singhvi, and Sergio Pecanha, “After the Las Vegas Shooting, the Nation Moved On,” *New York Times*, (New York, October 2, 2018), A14.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Ngu, Turkewitz, Lai, Singhvi, and Pecanha, A14.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Tricia Kean, “Vegas Born, Vegas Strong: A City’s Healing After Tragedy Continues Through Its Golden Knights,” *KTNV.com*, June 15, 2023, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.ktnv.com/news/golden-knights/vegas-born-vegas-strong-a-citys-healing-after-tragedy-continues-through-its-golden-knights>.

honoring those that lost their lives, and the city bonded, including taking pride in the spirited “Vegas Strong” motto.¹⁵⁵⁰

Las Vegas also had an attachment with some of their local business owners who also made history of sorts. In fact, a few businesses in the city were featured on the History Channel. *American Restoration* was a show about Rick Dale’s restoration shop.¹⁵⁵¹ Danny Koker’s Count’s Kustoms shop flipped cars for profits on his show *Counting Cars*.¹⁵⁵² Dale and Koker got their shows as a direct result of providing their professional services to another local celebrity. Rick Harrison starred in maybe the most widely known show, *Pawn Stars*, along with his son, Corey, and family friend, Chumlee, and also with his father, known as “the Old Man,” not to be confused with Frank Crowe, who opened the world famous Gold & Silver Pawn Shop in the 1980s.¹⁵⁵³

On the Strip, several new entertainers became mainstays enjoying extended residencies. Celine Dion, famous for singing the theme from *Titanic* and other hits, decided to move to Las Vegas on January 1st, 2000, and, by 2003, she had a three-year contract performing at Caesars Palace “worth \$45 million.”¹⁵⁵⁴ Her residency would go on for sixteen years.¹⁵⁵⁵ Carrot Top,

¹⁵⁵⁰ Kean.

¹⁵⁵¹ F. Andrew Taylor, “Much of Rick’s Restorations Duo’s Relationship Has Taken Place on TV – Video,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, February 12, 2016, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/local-las-vegas/downtown/much-of-ricks-restorations-duos-relationship-has-taken-place-on-tv-video/>.

¹⁵⁵² Christopher Lawrence, “Danny Koker of Count’s Kustoms Keeps Going Hard as ‘Counting Cars’ Resumes,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, April 7, 2013, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/entertainment/tv/danny-koker-of-counts-kustoms-keeps-going-hard-as-counting-cars-resumes/>.

¹⁵⁵³ Ahjane Forbes, “A Look at ‘Pawn Stars’ Creator Rick Harrison and Family Following Tragic Death of Son,” *USAToday.com*, January 24, 2024, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/tv/2024/01/24/pawn-stars-adam-death-rick-harrison-family/72324977007/>.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Paul Brownfield, “My Show Will Go On,” *The Washington Post*, (Washington, March 20, 2003), C8.; James Cameron, *Titanic*, 20th Century Studios and Paramount Pictures, 1997.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Andrea Dresdale, “Celine Dion’s 16-year Vegas Residency Comes to an End Saturday with Final Show,” *ABCNews.com*, June 7, 2019, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Culture/celine-dions-16-year-vegas-residency-end-saturday/story?id=63545085>.

the famous prop comic, began his decades-long stay in Las Vegas at the Luxor in 2003.¹⁵⁵⁶ Penn & Teller had the most magical run, starting their headlining residency at the Rio in 2001.¹⁵⁵⁷ They also had a television show, *Penn & Teller: Fool Us*, and they broke “the record for the longest-running residency in Vegas history.”¹⁵⁵⁸ In 2024, they had no illusions of stopping any time soon.

In 2016, developers on the Las Vegas Strip still had a few tricks up their sleeves. In June of that year, MGM Resorts International announced it would transform the Monte Carlo, targeting “a younger, well-traveled demographic,” renaming it the Park MGM.¹⁵⁵⁹ This adjustment made sense considering the proximity to T-Mobile Arena. The SLS Las Vegas owner, Alex Meruelo, upgraded his resort and brought back the old name of Sahara.¹⁵⁶⁰ Resorts World Las Vegas was completed and opened in June of 2021.¹⁵⁶¹ The “cherry-red tower” had “a 100,000-square-foot LED screen, one of the largest in the world,” and the resort’s final cost was “\$4.3 billion.”¹⁵⁶² Resorts World Las Vegas led the way in Las Vegas and the world. It was “the first cash-free Las Vegas casino,” and the first to have a “partnership between a Las Vegas casino-resort and a cryptocurrency exchange.”¹⁵⁶³ To spend that money, the resort had a

¹⁵⁵⁶ Jason Zinoman, “How Carrot Top Still Wins in Vegas: Despite Ridicule, the Comic Has Had 13 Years of Sold-Out Shows,” *New York Times*, (New York, May 7, 2018), C1.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Matt Kelemen, “Penn & Teller Continue to Amaze and Amuse Las Vegas Audiences,” *Las Vegas Magazine*, January 21, 2020, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://lasvegasmagazine.com/entertainment/2020/jan/31/penn-teller-continue-to-amaze-and-amuse-las-vegas/>.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Kelemen.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Larry Olmsted, “Bye Bye Monte Carlo: Las Vegas Casino Resort Being Replaced,” *Forbes.com*, June 6, 2016, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/larryolmsted/2016/06/06/bye-bye-monte-carlo-las-vegas-casino-resort-being-replaced/?sh=835a60185d52>.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Komenda.

¹⁵⁶¹ Jennifer Kester, “Resorts World Las Vegas Makes Big Debut,” *Forbes.com*, June 24, 2021, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestravelguide/2021/06/24/resorts-world-las-vegas-makes-big-strip-debut/?sh=64679f2cced0>.

¹⁵⁶² Kester.

¹⁵⁶³ Kester.

“70,000-square-foot, two-level shopping area,” called “The District.”¹⁵⁶⁴ Plans were also in the works in The District for another first, and, in fact, this would be a world’s first.¹⁵⁶⁵

By 2020, traffic, which was rare in Las Vegas as late as 1990, was all over the city. Taxi fleets and ride shares were “a tangle to transit.”¹⁵⁶⁶ Las Vegas officials, who had already extended the monorail, were open to other ideas. As a new “\$1 billion, 1.4 million square foot West Hall” was being added to the Convention Center in 2021, which would bring more congestion, the idea came from the visionary billionaire, Elon Musk.¹⁵⁶⁷ The first deployment of this idea was included in the Convention Center to connect the West Hall with the North and South Halls, a twenty-minute walk away.¹⁵⁶⁸

The idea was his Tesla Loop which at a cost of “\$52.5 million,” was “two one-way vehicular tunnels” forty feet underground, through which passengers would be driven in his Tesla vehicles in “less than two minutes.”¹⁵⁶⁹ Musk owned both Tesla and “The Boring Company,” which was the company that installed the loop.¹⁵⁷⁰ The city also announced plans for what was also called the “Vegas Loop” to be expanded to reach from the downtown area to the Strip and as far as Allegiant Stadium.¹⁵⁷¹ Resorts World’s The District included plans for a station for the Vegas Loop.¹⁵⁷² The Tesla vehicles were estimated to have the capacity to “transport thousands an hour.”¹⁵⁷³

¹⁵⁶⁴ Kester.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Kester.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Glusac, TR8.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, “\$1 Billion Las Vegas Convention Center Expansion Debuts with First Major Convention Post-Pandemic,” *PRNewswire.com*, June 8, 2021, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/1-billion-las-vegas-convention-center-expansion-debuts-with-first-major-convention-post-pandemic-301308548.html>.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

¹⁵⁷¹ Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

¹⁵⁷² Kester.

¹⁵⁷³ Kester.

The next Strip resort was the “\$3.7 billion” Fontainebleau, which finally opened in December of 2023.¹⁵⁷⁴ Jeffrey Soffer’s company, Fontainebleau Development, partnered with Koch Real Estate Investments to finally complete this sixteen-year project.¹⁵⁷⁵ Previous owners had been unable to complete the giant casino resort before that partnership.¹⁵⁷⁶ At sixty-seven stories high, Fontainebleau was “the largest occupied building in all of Nevada.”¹⁵⁷⁷ Paul Anka, who “wrote and pitched” the song “My Way” to Frank Sinatra at Miami’s Fontainebleau, performed the song at the opening.¹⁵⁷⁸

Fremont Street was not finished either. In December of 2020, developer Derek Stevens opened the “Circa Resort & Casino. It was the “first Las Vegas resort-casino built from the ground up in four decades” in the downtown area. The resort was “adults-only” and featured “the world’s largest sportsbook.” This continued the Fremont Street effort to separate itself from the Strip which still welcomed families, although that was not necessarily a focus there either. The resort also had “Stadium Swim,” which was six temperature-controlled pools, two “swim-up bars,” and “a 143-by-40-foot, 14-million-megapixel LED screen.” Vegas Vickie, an iconic neon sign first appearing downtown in 1980, was also brought in to pay homage to the downtown area’s history.¹⁵⁷⁹

¹⁵⁷⁴ Ashlyn Messier, “After Nearly 2 Decades, Fontainebleau Officially Joins Las Vegas Strip with Lavish Opening,” *FoxNews.com*, December 14, 2023, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.foxnews.com/lifestyle/after-nearly-2-decades-fontainebleau-officially-joins-las-vegas-strip-lavish-opening>.

¹⁵⁷⁵ Messier.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Messier.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Messier.

¹⁵⁷⁸ Allison Mitchell, “Inside Fontainebleau Las Vegas’ Celeb-Filled Grand Opening,” *Vegas Magazine*, Las Vegas, December 14, 2023, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://vegasmagazine.com/fontainebleau-las-vegas-celebrity-opening>.

¹⁵⁷⁹ Ron Donoho, “Casino Openings and Expansions Continue in Southern California and Las Vegas,” *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, December 13, 2020, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/entertainment/casinos/story/2020-12-13/circa-resort-casino-opens-in-downtown-las-vegas>.

As these new resorts and the Vegas Loop project indicated, Las Vegas was at the cutting edge in sports, entertainment, and travel. In 2023, the MSG Sphere opened as a one-of-a-kind venue like nothing else in the world. With standing room for twenty thousand and “4D Technologies,” this “\$2.3 billion venue...[was]...366 feet tall and 515 feet wide...and feature[d] the highest resolution LED screen on earth.”¹⁵⁸⁰ It also included “10,000 immersive seats that...[had]... an infrasound haptic system” that would let audience members “feel the music.”¹⁵⁸¹ The inside was no less extraordinary, with the “exosphere’s 580,000 square feet LED exterior” displaying “256 million different colors on the skyline,” often transforming “the sphere into things like the moon, a basketball or even the human eye.”¹⁵⁸² The sphere was stunning on the inside and out.



Figure 15 - MSG Sphere¹⁵⁸³

¹⁵⁸⁰ Joe Toppe, “Inside the Las Vegas MSG Sphere,” *FoxBusiness.com*, November 18, 2023, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.foxbusiness.com/lifestyle/inside-las-vegas-msg-sphere>.

¹⁵⁸¹ Toppe.; Melinda Sheckells, “Las Vegas \$2.3 Billion ‘Sphere’ Makes Media Debut,” *Los Angeles Magazine*, July 24, 2023, Accessed February 12, 2024, <https://lamag.com/entertainment/las-vegas-sphere-experience-sound>.

¹⁵⁸² Toppe.

¹⁵⁸³ Anthony Robledo, “Las Vegas Teased Its Record-Breaking MSG Sphere on July Fourth. Here’s What to Know About It,” *USAToday.com*, July 6, 2023, Accessed February 13, 2024, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/2023/07/05/msg-sphere-las-vegas-what-to-know/70385946007/>.

Plans for the magnificent theater, developed and built by James Dolan, included art exhibitions, sporting events, and concerts.¹⁵⁸⁴ The MSG Sphere opened on September 29th, 2023, when the rock legends U2 performed in front of a star-studded audience.¹⁵⁸⁵ The group played “Love Me Do” to honor one familiar face in the crowd, Paul McCartney.¹⁵⁸⁶ During one song, Bono, the group’s lead singer, seemingly awestruck, himself, by the Elvis Presley video footage playing along with one of their songs on the sphere’s giant high resolution screen, bellowed, “Look at all this stuff...Elvis has definitely not left this building.”¹⁵⁸⁷ UFC also announced it was going to host the first sporting event in the state-of-the-art venue.¹⁵⁸⁸ The MSG Sphere was a hit for sure.

On February 7th, 2024, Maison Des Champs climbed the exterior to the top of the Sphere making widespread news. This was reminiscent of the patriotic Dirk Knipe rappelling down the Hoover Dam in 1982. This was more about Des Champs gaining publicity than demonstrating any sort of patriotism, as this was not the first structure he had climbed. Also, unlike the rappelling incident, this act caused “\$100,000 in damage.” However, just like Knipe, Des Champs was detained. Perhaps the fact that such acts of demonstration went full circle and drew such attention signaled an appreciation of the most magnificent structures associated with Las Vegas.¹⁵⁸⁹

¹⁵⁸⁴ Toppe.; Jonathan Landrum, Jr. and Associated Press, “U2 Concert Opens \$2.3 Billion Sphere in Las Vegas with Oprah, LeBron James, and Paul McCartney Among Star-Studded Audience,” *Fortune.com*, October 1, 2023, Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://fortune.com/2023/10/01/u2-concert-opens-2-3-billion-sphere-in-las-vegas/>.

¹⁵⁸⁵ Landrum, Jr.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Landrum, Jr.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Landrum, Jr.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Prince Grimes, “The Las Vegas Sphere Tabs UFC in 2024 as Its Potential First Live Sporting Event,” *USAToday.com*, November 13, 2023, Accessed February 22, 2024, <https://ftw.usatoday.com/2023/11/ufc-vegas-sphere-live-sports-2024>.

¹⁵⁸⁹ C.C. McCandless, “Police: Man Who Climbed Sphere Caused \$100,000 in Damage,” *Fox5Vegas.com*, February 9, 2024, Accessed February 12, 2024, <https://www.fox5vegas.com/2023/11/28/pro-volleyball-federation-reveals-vegas-thrill-name-other-team-details/>.

A new transportation project was also on the horizon. Not long before, there was that concern that the remote location of Las Vegas might prevent major league sports teams from succeeding. While the concerns turned out to be fairly unwarranted along with other arguments on the matter, this new project would make such a concern a distant memory. Las Vegas was going to dramatically cut the travel time to Los Angeles. The new project was high-speed rail. Brightline would be the company handling this “\$12-billion project.” The line would run from Rancho Cucamonga to Las Vegas with stops at Hesperia or Apple Valley. The trains would “reach speeds of 200 miles per hour” and would take just over two hours to complete a one-way trip. Brightline indicated that “passengers may ultimately be able to check into their Las Vegas hotels at the train station.” The company planned to begin construction in 2024, with the rail being positioned on the Interstate 15 median.¹⁵⁹⁰

Another project in the works was the move of the Hard Rock Hotel to the Strip. In 2022, Hard Rock announced it would be renovating the Mirage, transforming it into the new Hard Rock Hotel, adding a “guitar-shaped hotel tower” to the Strip.¹⁵⁹¹ The move marked the end of the first megaresort in Las Vegas, a move likely only possible as a result of continued growth and revenue. Virgin Hotels Las Vegas took over the original Hard Rock resort in 2021.¹⁵⁹² Billionaire and English entrepreneur Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin brand, was the

¹⁵⁹⁰ Rachel Uranga, “SoCal to Vegas in Two Hours? High-Speed Rail Comes Closer to Reality with \$3-Billion Award,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 2023, February 9, 2024, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-12-05/socal-to-vegas-in-two-hours-high-speed-rail-comes-closer-to-reality-with-3-billion-award>.

¹⁵⁹¹ KTNV Staff, “Hard Rock Takes Over Operations of the Mirage Hotel-Casino on the Las Vegas Strip,” *KTNV.com*, December 19, 2022, Accessed February 12, 2024, <https://www.ktnv.com/news/hard-rock-takes-over-operations-of-the-mirage-hotel-casino-on-the-las-vegas-strip>.

¹⁵⁹² Donoho.

driving force behind this move just off the Strip.¹⁵⁹³ As was the trend, billionaire developers found it difficult to resist the charm of Las Vegas.

More projects were also on the drawing board. After the Durango Casino and Resort, the newest Station casino, opened in Southwest Las Vegas in late 2023 to cater mainly to locals, the company planned to redevelop other previously held sites.¹⁵⁹⁴ Meanwhile, other companies had more plans for the Strip. Dream Las Vegas, a “531-room boutique hotel” to be located on the south end of the Strip, was one of these, and a “43-story casino-resort” on the southeast part of the Strip, backed by billionaire Tilman Fertitta, was also in the developing stages.¹⁵⁹⁵ A new Atari Hotel, a new hotel brand from the video game system company, remained a possibility, while the Best Western Casino Royale, which opened in 2012 on the Strip, was also under consideration for redevelopment.¹⁵⁹⁶ Wynn Resorts, no longer led by Steve Wynn, contemplated a third tower north of the Fashion Show Mall, a mall built on the Strip in 1981.¹⁵⁹⁷ Howard Hughes Holdings had an idea for a casino above the Fashion Show Mall, and a project was still under consideration for what had been referred to as the “Historic Westside.”¹⁵⁹⁸

¹⁵⁹³ Associated Press, “Richard Branson Marks Opening of Virgin Hotel in Las Vegas,” *APNews.com*, June 11, 2021, Accessed February 12, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/richard-branson-las-vegas-health-coronavirus-pandemic-business-c869a2e82886d9c61eb34158bc07adae>.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Greg Morago, “New Casinos, Projects Restore the Thrill to Las Vegas Tourism,” *HoustonChronicle.com*, April 27, 2023, Accessed February 12, 2024, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/lifestyle/hcmagazine/article/las-vegas-travel-new-hotels-attractions-17870899.php>; Sean Hemmersmeier, “From the Atari Hotel to Dream Las Vegas, Here are Projects to Watch in 2024,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, January 16, 2024, Accessed February 12, 2024, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/business/casinos-gaming/from-the-atari-hotel-to-dream-las-vegas-here-are-projects-to-watch-in-2024-2982364/>.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Hemmersmeier.

¹⁵⁹⁶ Hemmersmeier.; Unknown Author, “Best Western PLUS Casino Royale Becomes Only Chain Hotel on Las Vegas Strip,” *HotelExecutive.com*, December 27, 2012, Accessed February 12, 2024, <https://www.hotelexecutive.com/newswire/43538/best-western-plus-casino-royale-becomes-only-chain-hotel-on-las-vegas-strip>.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Hemmersmeier.; Daniel Kline, “Las Vegas Strip’s Fashion Show Mall Will Add a Casino,” *Longview News-Journal*, October 7, 2023, Accessed February 12, 2024, https://www.news-journal.com/arena/thestreet/las-vegas-strips-fashion-show-mall-will-add-a-casino/article_3e82ccd3-867a-5dae-ba8d-2deb34cfb358.html.

¹⁵⁹⁸ Hemmersmeier.

While it was a safe bet that many of these proposals would move forward, the odds were higher that these newest and shiniest resorts, if built, would eventually be replaced. The shelf life for resorts in Las Vegas was generally relatively short, with a few exceptions like the Golden Gate on Fremont Street and the Flamingo on the Strip. Las Vegas reinvented itself many times in its first hundred and twenty years. Mayor Oscar Goodman's ad campaign really tapped into why so many people liked to visit Las Vegas. His essential take on the city was that it provided a safe place to release all inhibitions and, in fact, such behavior was encouraged.

To put it another way, Las Vegas was about pushing limits. Nothing was done half way in Las Vegas. Certainly, the Hoover Dam reflected that idea in its construction and in its form and function. The city pushed limits, too, as more and more people stayed in Vegas. By 2022, Southern Nevada's population was "approximately 2.33 million residents."¹⁵⁹⁹ UNLV's Center for Business and Economic Research projected that year, that by 2040, that number would surpass the three million mark, and rise to "an estimated 3.39 million by 2060."¹⁶⁰⁰ Certainly, Lake Mead's water would be as important as ever.

Without the Hoover Dam, Lake Mead would not have existed. For almost ninety years, the Hoover Dam controlled the Colorado River and, during the city's formative years, delivered its power, making modern Las Vegas and the Strip possible. As the decades-long drought continued, the urgent concern for the water levels at Lake Mead highlighted the vital role the Hoover Dam had in the city's survivability. Las Vegas's dependency upon the dam since its inception changed over the years, but the dam's importance to the city did not. The Hoover Dam

¹⁵⁹⁹ UNLV, "Staying on Track: UNLV's Population Forecast Continues to Predict 1M More Residents in Southern Nevada," *News Center*, August 12, 2022, Accessed February 12, 2024, <https://www.unlv.edu/news/release/staying-track-unlvs-population-forecast-continues-predict-1m-more-residents-southern>.

¹⁶⁰⁰ UNLV, "Staying on Track: UNLV's Population Forecast Continues to Predict 1M More Residents in Southern Nevada."

was also going to remain important to the city upon the arrival of the large numbers of new residents forecasted by the UNLV 2040 and 2060 projections. As Las Vegas prepared to enter the second quarter of the twenty-first century, already a world-class destination, the mighty Hoover Dam seemed primed to operate for centuries into the future.

Chapter Eleven – Analysis/Conclusion

By 2024, Las Vegas was drawing more than forty million visitors annually, or about seventeen times the metropolitan area formidable population of “approximately 2.33 million.”¹⁶⁰¹ When MGM Resorts purchased a tract of land on the Strip between the Bellagio and the Cosmopolitan in May of 2023, the company paid fifty-four million dollars for “1.62 acres.”¹⁶⁰² That equated to thirty-three-and-a-third million dollars per acre, or twenty-six-and-two-thirds million times the dollar-and-a-quarter price Asenith Roach paid per acre in the valley in 1892.¹⁶⁰³ It was even over two-hundred thousand times the hundred, fifty dollars per acre that Thomas Hull paid before he opened the El Rancho Vegas in 1941.¹⁶⁰⁴ Hull got in just in time, as R.E. Griffith had to pay a whopping thousand dollars per acre to get the land for the second Strip resort soon after.¹⁶⁰⁵ Billy Wilkerson had to pay over twenty-five hundred dollars an acre in 1945 for the land for the Flamingo.¹⁶⁰⁶ It was quite remarkable how these prices shot up so quickly, especially since the location was a remote desert valley just a hundred, twenty years ago or so.

The history of Las Vegas was every bit as fabulous as the city itself. The valley’s spring water was the main reason for the earliest inhabitants and visitors staying there for any length of

¹⁶⁰¹ Howard Stutz, “In 2023, Las Vegas Saw Its Highest Visitation Totals Since Before the Pandemic,” *The Nevada Independent*, January 25, 2024, Accessed February 14, 2024, <https://thenevadaindependent.com/article/in-2023-las-vegas-saw-its-highest-visitation-totals-since-before-the-pandemic>; UNLV, “Staying on Track: UNLV’s Population Forecast Continues to Predict 1M More Residents in Southern Nevada,” *News Center*, August 12, 2022, Accessed February 12, 2024, <https://www.unlv.edu/news/release/staying-track-unlvs-population-forecast-continues-predict-1m-more-residents-southern>.

¹⁶⁰² Patrick Blennerhassett, “MGM Resorts Buys Sliver of Land Between 2 Major Strip Properties,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, January 10, 2024, Accessed February 14, 2024, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/business/casinos-gaming/mgm-resorts-buys-sliver-of-land-between-2-major-strip-properties-2979578/>.

¹⁶⁰³ UNLV University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, *Marriage Certificate of Helen and Frank Stewart and Tiza Stewart Land Patents*, Las Vegas, Nevada, Accessed July 3, 2023, <https://special.library.unlv.edu/ark%3A62930/d17941439>.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Robert McCracken, *Las Vegas: The Great American Playground*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997), 54.

¹⁶⁰⁵ Barbara and Myrick Land, *A Short History of Las Vegas*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 85.

¹⁶⁰⁶ David Clary, *Gangsters to Governors: The New Bosses of Gambling in America*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017), 85.

time. The location of the valley also happened to be along a possible route from Utah to San Diego, and, given the abundance of water there, it was the ideal spot for a railroad stop. Maybe even more serendipitously, the location was also within thirty miles of Black Canyon, where the Hoover Dam would stand. The mob and the casinos came next, followed by sports and entertainment. Still, the Hoover Dam was the most significant factor behind Las Vegas attaining those massive numbers in size, tourism, and land value and becoming a modern world-class resort destination.

Undeniably, anything that happened in Las Vegas before or after the Hoover Dam's construction, of course, contributed to the city's founding and growth in some measure. The springs and the railroad, for instance, were critical to the city's founding. The presence of the mob in Las Vegas certainly lifted the casino business to new heights, heights that corporate magnates took even higher. Sports, entertainment, gambling, hasty weddings and divorces, and the tolerant laws that allowed such vices all enabled visitors and locals to have the best time possible during their stay. The military, relative proximity to Los Angeles, air travel, and even magnesium were part of the growth, too. Without the Hoover Dam, though, the small railroad-stop city would have been really hard-pressed to develop into anything close to its modern version.

Without the springs, the valley would have been essentially uninhabitable. In fact, the first inhabitants disappeared when the climate became too arid until 3000 B.C. Still, had there been no springs in the valley after that, the Archaics, Anasazi, and Paiutes almost certainly would have inhabited other locations where water was available. Rafael Rivera, then, might not have even visited the valley. John Fremont probably would not have written anything about the valley and may have left it off the map. Nathaniel Jones might not have recovered, meaning

Brigham Young might not have sent William Bringhurst to settle in the valley. Attempting to live in a remote desert valley without somewhat immediate access to a water source would have been a challenge, and perhaps even a fool's errand.

It just would have been utterly impractical to make a living in such difficult conditions. That would have been the end of the story. That seemingly would have made it easy to argue that water, then, was the most significant factor in the development of Las Vegas. Undoubtedly, the spring water did attract the inhabitants, visits, and settlements. With the people filtering in, the railroad magnates were then able to add the railroad stop to the valley, knowing the new residents could run the operations there. In fact, Las Vegas was able to grow into a town in 1905 and even a small city in 1911. That argument would not hold water though.

While the water and railroad did lead to the incorporation of the city, Las Vegas required another push from elsewhere. The construction of the Hoover Dam in Black Canyon beginning in 1931 immediately had an enormous impact on the growth of the city, and would continue to do so into modernity. While it was true that the close proximity of the Las Vegas railroad stop was beneficial to getting the dam built, it was not a necessity. The dam was required to control the Colorado River, and the 1922 Fall-Davis report recommended it be built in Boulder Canyon, or a nearby location.¹⁶⁰⁷ Moreover, the industrious Frank Crowe could have built a spur to another stop or found some other means to get the dam built. As it so happened, the Black Canyon had the right rock strength, and the Las Vegas railroad stop would still be useful during construction.¹⁶⁰⁸

¹⁶⁰⁷ Michael Duchemin, "Water, Power, and Tourism: Hoover Dam and the Making of the New West," *California History*, (Bowling Green, Volume 86, Issue 4, 2009), 62.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Barbara and Myrick Land, *A Short History of Las Vegas*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 52.

The significance of the springs and the railroad stop was not to be overlooked. Nonetheless, their impact lessened as the city grew. By the 1960s, the twenty million gallons of water daily use required more water than what the springs could handle. In effect, the large-diameter line pulling water from Lake Mead, a lake created by the Hoover Dam, all but nullified any dramatic impact from the springs moving forward. Similarly, Highway 91, completed in 1931, and later, in 1966, Interstate 15, along with the Las Vegas airport that Senator McCarran acquired in 1940 and the commercial one he pushed for in 1947, enabled car and air travel to drive railroad travel to the background.¹⁶⁰⁹ By the 1960s, then, the impact of water and the railroad on the growth of Las Vegas was minimal, and Las Vegas would need to look elsewhere for further growth.

The popular narrative was that the mob moved in and built Las Vegas, and while the mob did contribute, the Hoover Dam was really the ultimate factor. When construction began on the Hoover Dam at Black Canyon, Las Vegas was nothing more than a railroad whistle-stop. Because of the financial depression, Frank Crowe, in charge of building the Hoover Dam, had no problem getting five thousand workers from all over the nation looking for work.¹⁶¹⁰ His first order of business was to build a city, Boulder City, to house these workers and their families for what was expected to be a seven-year project.¹⁶¹¹ The five thousand workers needed a place to eat and to get away, and Las Vegas, thirty miles away was such a place. The city was already feeling the effects of the Hoover Dam.

¹⁶⁰⁹ Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 11.; Jack Goodman, "Las Vegas Makes its Point," *New York Times*, (New York, January 17, 1965), XX21.

¹⁶¹⁰ Richard Wiltshire, David Gilbert, and Jerry Rogers, ed., *Hoover Dam: 75th Anniversary History Symposium*, (Las Vegas: American Society of Civil Engineers, 2010), 311 and 314.

¹⁶¹¹ Wiltshire, Gilbert, and Rogers, 310 and 311.

In 1931, when construction on the dam began, several other key events happened. All of these events were by design and were related, either directly or indirectly, to the dam construction. Nevada made gambling legal after having outlawed it in 1909.¹⁶¹² The Boulder Highway and Highway 91 were completed, enabling workers to drive their cars right up to Fremont Street.¹⁶¹³ That was also the year when Tony Cornero opened the Meadows Club along Boulder Highway intending to fully capitalize on these fortuitous circumstances.¹⁶¹⁴ Frank Detra also opened the Pair-O-Dice Club that year on Highway 91.¹⁶¹⁵ The appearances of Detra and Cornero signaled that the mob was very interested in Las Vegas.

Also, as a result of the news of the Hoover Dam, the downtown area expanded in the early 1930s. The residents must have recognized this would be a boost for their city, as they had even held an impromptu parade upon learning of the dam's approval.¹⁶¹⁶ The Union Pacific upgraded their facilities, a courthouse addition was built, and roads were widened.¹⁶¹⁷ A hospital and post office were also constructed.¹⁶¹⁸ Even just the construction of the Hoover Dam had a massive impact on Las Vegas's growth. For the national public, this was a monumental project that was going to control and harness the energy of a mighty river. Americans wanted to witness such an immense undertaking and showed up in droves as a result. Once the dam was ready, it created Lake Mead, which became a vacation spot for recreational tourists overnight. The

¹⁶¹² James Hulse, "W.A. Clark and the Las Vegas Connection," *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, Volume 37, Number 1, Winter, 1987, 49.; Keith Wyatt, "'Wide Open,' Las Vegas Surprises the Easterner With Open Gambling, Licensed Joints, Nevada Town Recalls Frontier Days," *The Sun*, (Baltimore, May 1, 1938), SM3.

¹⁶¹³ Moehring and Green, 87.; Jack Goodman, "Las Vegas Makes its Point," *New York Times*, (New York, January 17, 1965), XX21.

¹⁶¹⁴ Moehring and Green, 87.; James Roman, *Chronicles of Old Las Vegas: Exposing Sin City's High-Stakes History*, (New York: Museyon, 2011), 51 and 52.

¹⁶¹⁵ Griffith.

¹⁶¹⁶ James Roman, *Chronicles of Old Las Vegas: Exposing Sin City's High-Stakes History*, (New York: Museyon, 2011), 43.

¹⁶¹⁷ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 19.

¹⁶¹⁸ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 19.

Hoover Dam also continued to draw tourists as new generations wanted to see such a magnificent dam.

Las Vegas, just thirty miles away, was just a short trip on Boulder Highway from the construction site. This proximity was ideal for generating business. Dam workers needed a place to eat, relax, and have fun, and they were definitely welcome in Las Vegas. The city, with Nevada's tolerant laws, provided restaurants, gambling, and other forms of entertainment. Tourists to the dam and Lake Mead also began journeying out to Las Vegas to partake in the celebratory atmosphere. Clearly, the Hoover Dam had a significant and immediate impact on Las Vegas. Las Vegas residents picked up on the growing number of visitors and began expanding and catering to them.

The first Helldorado Festival in 1935 was one such effort that aimed to generate tourism based on the city's spirit of the "Old West."¹⁶¹⁹ With Highway 91 open, more and more Los Angeles residents began making the trip to Las Vegas. These Southern Californians made the trip for the gambling and entertainment, but also to see the massive dam that was going to power their city. The Hoover Dam generated 1.85 million horsepower of electrical energy that powered several western cities, enabling a city like Los Angeles to flourish.¹⁶²⁰ While the bulk of power and water furnished by the Hoover Dam went elsewhere in the American West, Las Vegas received enough of both valuable resources from their meager share to develop further, too. Somewhat ironically, the Hoover Dam was in effect killing the Old West.

¹⁶¹⁹ Keith Wyatt, "'Wide Open,' Las Vegas Surprises the Easterner With Open Gambling, Licensed Joints, Nevada Town Recalls Frontier Days," *The Sun*, (Baltimore, May 1, 1938), SM3.; Associated Press, "Las Vegas Ready to Go 'Wild West,'" *The Washington Post*, (Washington, April 25, 1935), 4.

¹⁶²⁰ National Archives, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Hoover Dam.*, 4.

In the 1940s, the magnesium plant was only possible because the Hoover Dam provided the low-cost power for its operation.¹⁶²¹ Similarly, the water from Lake Mead was necessary to cool the magnesium ingots.¹⁶²² Much like the Hoover Dam leading to the founding of Boulder City, the magnesium plant led to the founding of Henderson which became quite a substantial city. As it turned out, the Hoover Dam was influential in the history of several cities. By 1957, the Hoover Dam was putting out 2.6 billion kilowatt hours.¹⁶²³ While the Hoover Dam was still very much vital to the rest of the West, it was less so for Las Vegas. By the beginning of the next decade, Las Vegas was powered mainly by Southern Nevada Power, and, through the Southern Nevada Water Supply Project, the city was drawing most of its water from Lake Mead.¹⁶²⁴ Still, without the Hoover Dam, which created Lake Mead, Las Vegas would have stopped developing due to the limited capacity of its water supply from springs. The Hoover Dam would also continue to be the largest draw for Las Vegas tourism until Steve Wynn's Mirage.

By the 1980s, the Hoover Dam's power capacity was expanded, as was its visitor's center.¹⁶²⁵ Unlike the mob in this decade, the Hoover Dam was not going anywhere. It continued to provide critical flood control. The megaresorts did bring Las Vegas to the forefront, as the new centerpiece of a Las Vegas vacation, but the Hoover Dam remained a huge draw for these tourists. In the 3rd Millennium, the drought demonstrated just how important the

¹⁶²¹ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 34.

¹⁶²² Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 34.

¹⁶²³ National Archives, Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor, Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California, *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History. 1957*, Accessed October 6, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/218518076?objectPage=5.>, 2.

¹⁶²⁴ Unknown Author, "Utility Offering \$5,500,000 Bonds," *New York Times*, (New York, May 12, 1959), 52.; William Blair, "Plan for Water Development is Proposed for Colorado Basin," *New York Times*, (New York, February 16, 1964), 64.; Moehring and Green, 194.

¹⁶²⁵ United Press International, "Hoover Dam Bill is Signed," *New York Times*, (New York, August 20, 1984), B11.

Hoover Dam was to Las Vegas. The urgent need to add a third intake valve in Lake Mead to keep the city from drying up was the next step in the evolution of the Hoover Dam. The dam consistently impacted Las Vegas in different, but consistently valuable, ways as the city transformed. Certainly, the Strip was flashier than the Hoover Dam, as larger and more luxurious resorts replaced older ones. However, the Hoover Dam remained virtually the same; a rock-solid monument standing the test of time.

The rise of the megaresorts that took over the Las Vegas skyline, which included the planetary-like glow of the MSG Sphere, was noteworthy though. The change was so remarkable that an argument could have been made attributing modern Las Vegas to the corporate giants who built such revolutionary resorts. These wealthy developers certainly funded these structures on their own. They also managed to finally make Las Vegas a larger attraction than the Hoover Dam. These real estate magnates were an important part of the Las Vegas story, but without the water from Lake Mead the city simply had no business operating at such a grand scale.

Another theory included the significance of gambling in the rise of Las Vegas. This was, after all, virtually synonymous with Las Vegas, perhaps more so than anything else. Gambling in some fashion was happening in the city before construction of the Hoover Dam. In fact, it was a large reason for dam workers and tourists to visit Las Vegas once Nevada legalized it fully. It also remained a sizeable amount of the city's revenue. This theory was ultimately a bust, though, as the legalization only happened when the Hoover Dam was being built. Such gaming could not continue in so many megaresorts anyway, without the water from Lake Mead.

Other factors impacted the city's development enough to make their cases, too. Nearly as long as the city existed, hasty weddings and divorces were possible in Las Vegas due to the morally tolerant laws of Nevada. Likewise, the entertainment, which went from a young Judy

Garland to Elvis Presley, was an integral part of the city's history. In many ways, entertainment was as much a part of Las Vegas as gambling was. Weddings and entertainment both made Las Vegas their capitals, but entertainment, more universally attended, was probably a larger factor than the marriage laws. In any case, they were secondary to the casino owners whose resorts typically included both.

The military was also significant. From the early gunnery ranges that led to an airport to Nellis Air Force Base, the military was very much a part of Las Vegas. Air travel, leading to large numbers of tourists, was a direct result, and the iconic Thunderbirds certainly represented the best pilots in America. The atomic testing site was absolutely an impactful part of the city's military history as well. The ominous destructive power demonstrated there sent shockwaves even into the casino resorts. While the military and the atomic test site were important, the fact remained that the Hoover Dam was more important. After all, Camp Sibert was a military camp created to guard the dam, and the testing site was only used after officials were convinced the explosions would be harmless to the Hoover Dam.

Lastly, professional sports became a strong influence on Las Vegas. Boxing, and to probably a much lesser extent, auto racing, were the first sports to break in to the gambling mecca. Once ice hockey ended the freeze on major franchises calling Las Vegas home, many others broke through. In fact, the sports onslaught was so swift that the city was gaining recognition as the "Sports Capital of the World" just over half a decade later. As exciting as this was for the city, the impact on the rise of Las Vegas was only felt in those few years. Las Vegas became that hot commodity in sports because it was already showing signs of greatness as a city. There were other smaller influences on Las Vegas's development, but those with the most

compelling arguments, already mentioned, were truly worthy of a genuine discourse on the matter. Still, none of the factors were as significant as the Hoover Dam.¹⁶²⁶

Because of the Hoover Dam, Las Vegas was able to develop into its modern version. Meanwhile, other American cities that attempted to surpass Las Vegas to be the nation's entertainment mecca failed. They likely never fully figured out why Las Vegas of all places succeeded when they could not. Reno and Atlantic City were at the top of the list of these hopeful cities. Other places like Deadwood or Iowa and Mississippi with their river boat gambling, and later several other states added gambling to boost their local economies, but they never had any real aspirations of outdoing Las Vegas. Certainly, the late-comers were at a greater disadvantage than the two largest competitors.¹⁶²⁷

Atlantic City actually did find brief success and was actually the nation's largest tourist destination in 1995.¹⁶²⁸ Its laws were aimed at keeping the mob out.¹⁶²⁹ Given its location along the Atlantic Ocean, like Las Vegas, it had the necessary water to expand. Still, there were a few issues that never allowed Atlantic City to match the success of Las Vegas. The first was the downward spiral of the local population which made staffing the resorts a challenge.¹⁶³⁰ The second was that Atlantic City was critically dependent upon the revenue from gaming and mostly from slot machines.¹⁶³¹ High rollers wanted to gamble at the table games and were less inclined

¹⁶²⁶ Hagar.; John Shea, "Tropicana, Site of A's New Las Vegas Stadium, Will Close April 2," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 29, 2024, Accessed February 8, 2024, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/sports/athletics/article/tropicana-site-a-s-new-las-vegas-stadium-close-18635929.php>.

¹⁶²⁷ Dan Moreau, "Travel & Leisure: Rollin' on the River," *Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine*, Volume 45, Issue 8, August 1991., 69.

¹⁶²⁸ David Cay Johnston, "Coming Back to Atlantic City: Welcome Set for Wynn's Las Vegas-Scale Project," *New York Times*, (New York, June 27, 1995), D1.

¹⁶²⁹ Howard Blum and Jeff Gerth, "The Mob Gambles on Atlantic City," *New York Times*, (New York, February 5, 1978), SM3.

¹⁶³⁰ Wayne King, "Casino Panel's New Mission: Save Atlantic City," *New York Times*, (New York, April 4, 1993), 35.

¹⁶³¹ John Curran, "In Atlantic City, a Long Shot Pays Off," *The Washington Post*, (Washington, May 25, 2003), A5A.; King, 35.

to make a trip for slots.¹⁶³² The third reason was that a third of the nation's population lived within a day's drive, so visitors had less reason to stay overnight in the hotels.¹⁶³³ Finally, Atlantic City accepted it could not compete with Las Vegas.

The Hoover Dam enabled Las Vegas to thrive in these same issues. The valley had room to expand, so the population kept growing. Without the Hoover Dam in Las Vegas, growth would have been limited. The table games, from where small-time gamblers tended to shy away, were possible because Las Vegas had the staff to deal and run the games of chance. Again, the Hoover Dam supported the staff numbers. The location of Las Vegas, in a remote desert valley, required more overnight visits, meaning more resort guests and more gambling during all hours. The Hoover Dam ensured these resorts could operate in such a remote location.

Reno had the same tolerant laws as Las Vegas, yet it was not able to overtake its southern neighbor. Reno had less disadvantages than Atlantic City, but still had a couple. Skiing elsewhere took its customer base away as Lake Tahoe gained competition. The larger problem for Reno was that the Truckee River system could not support growth like Lake Mead. Without growth, Reno could not match Las Vegas. Worse yet, Reno lost momentum due to slower growth which led to a lack of public enthusiasm in the gaming and resort industry. Las Vegas had the Hoover Dam and Lake Mead and was never hugely dependent upon skiers for business. Instead, the Hoover Dam attracted tourists, and the continued resulting population increase and resort development meant Las Vegas were willing to fund even more.¹⁶³⁴

¹⁶³² Curran, "In Atlantic City, a Long Shot Pays Off," A5A.

¹⁶³³ John Curran, "Boardwalk vs. Strip: The Odds are Clear East is East and West is West, and Atlantic City isn't Las Vegas," *The Washington Post*, Washington, April 16, 2006, Accessed January 24, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2006/04/16/boardwalk-vs-strip-the-odds-are-clear-span-classbankheadeast-is-east-and-west-is-west-and-atlantic-city-isnt-las-vegasspan/d8cb2ed6-5366-4f9d-8f68-7e6b22966284/>.

¹⁶³⁴ Eugene Moehring, *Reno, Las Vegas, and the Strip: A Tale of Three Cities*. (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2014), 12, 71, 100, and 102.

Other cities like New York, Detroit, and Chicago, with nearby bodies of water capable of supporting large metropolitan areas and also where the mob had a strong presence before moving into Las Vegas, never emerged as the entertainment hub that Las Vegas did either. Their major problem was that, in the early twentieth century, they did not have the tolerant laws that Nevada and Las Vegas had. The local governments had enough crime to deal with in these heavily populated cities, and the local citizens were also likely unwilling to support such immoral activity in their cities. The local laws aligned with these attitudes, as the local populaces simply were not willing to sacrifice their values in the name of monetary gain. In all fairness, they did not have a Hoover Dam in their locations that would generate a tourism boom to support such gain. Meanwhile, the mob, which was still working in the shadows, did not dare run illicit operations out in the open. At the turn of the millennium, gambling was finally legalized in the home states of these cities as American values changed, but not until long after Las Vegas had fully established itself.¹⁶³⁵

Early twentieth-century Nevada officials, on the other hand, were willing to put money over values. Accordingly, they passed the morally tolerant laws when the construction of the Hoover Dam began. Nevadans recognized what such a monumental structure and technological wonder meant to the state and the nation. Americans from all over were going to make the trip to see such an impressive dam. Nevadans hoped to profit off of such cross-country trips, and these laws made that possible. As a result, the mob and the casinos took hold leading to more profits and more tourism. While each of these locations shared many of the same developmental factors with Las Vegas, none of them had the most significant one, the Hoover Dam. Fortunate

¹⁶³⁵ Associated Press, "Major Crimes in Cities Reported on Increase," *The Sun*, (Baltimore, May 16, 1937), 6.

enough that the Hoover Dam was built in their backyard, Nevadans, more specifically, Las Vegas, took full advantage of it and never looked back.

As Las Vegas prepares for the future, the Hoover Dam remains the most integral part of sustainment and growth. Nevertheless, the city's other key figures and functions remain as relevant as ever. Gambling, entertainment, the military, and real estate magnates are not done in the city by a longshot. These entities feed the economy of the city and the loss of any of them could be a major setback. Perhaps, even the mob could find new ways to make a fast buck in Las Vegas. Still, none of these very significant elements are absolutely critical to the city's survival. Meanwhile, barring any profound innovations, without the Hoover Dam, Las Vegas would likely fold.

These conclusions were important for the city and beyond. Such a study on the history of Las Vegas possibly provided some answers to local residents who may or may not have taken issue with the idea that their city was essentially built by the mob. While the Hoover Dam had not exactly been ignored in Las Vegas history, some probably would have still been gratified that a more complete story was told and that the Hoover Dam was given the most credit. Although some sensitive outsiders may have perceived a trace of irresponsibility in open condonation of such activity, some locals, maybe many, took a fair amount of delight in the idea that "upstanding" citizens like Lucky Luciano, Al Capone, or their associates had a hand in building their city.¹⁶³⁶ While these conclusions assigned a larger share of responsibility to the Hoover Dam, they by no means discounted the involvement of the mob. In fact, this study highlighted the mob presence.

¹⁶³⁶ Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris, *The Green Felt Jungle*, (New York: Ishi Press International, 1963), 36.

Many outsiders believed as much. Mayor Oscar Goodman likely recognized this and also likely would have appreciated a study such as this one. Once a mob attorney, he both represented such involvement and likely would not have gone out his way to dispute any such notions. This study could be good for business in Las Vegas. Mayor Goodman would most probably have welcomed these conclusions which also happened to highlight more than ever the significance of the Hoover Dam. A significant Hoover Dam was also good for business.

Residents of other states or cities may have also wondered why their states did not or might not have cities with similar successes. Certainly, Atlantic City and Reno citizens may have been interested in why the two gambling cities developed differently. Similarly, New Yorkers, Detroiters, or Chicagoans might have wondered why the mob moved to Las Vegas to run casinos rather than in their home cities. Residents of still other cities likely were simply curious why Las Vegas was built in the middle of a desert valley of all places. The odds were certainly more in favor of it happening elsewhere, and that was what made this study so interesting and worthwhile. Federal government officials probably would also welcome the results, albeit for different reasons. Such answers would possibly be useful in the decisions of government officials about future projects or renovations concerning Southern Nevada and the Las Vegas vicinity. Whether or not that would also affect decisions on the possibilities of other cities handling new projects remains a question. Perhaps federal officials have something to gain from this study concerning organized crime. In fact, maybe many cities might be open to studying the results for lessons applicable to the causes and effects of criminal activity.

Holding on to the mob narrative could have negative consequences. For instance, if those qualified to make environmental or energy decisions overlook the importance of the Hoover Dam, Las Vegas could be put at risk, even if that possibility is admittedly seemingly

somewhat remote. However, less consequential decisions and actions are possible, too. As an example, historical comparisons to other cities could result in misidentified reasons for differences or other misleading conclusions, which could matter particularly in, again, cities like Atlantic City and Reno. Another more menacing possibility is that children could emulate such figures as Icepick Willie or Greasy Thumb Guzik as role models. Dismissing the questionable traits and influences of such figures, while still maybe explaining why some of their work was a bit fascinating, might be beneficial to the formulation and actions of future generations. Some of these reasons seem more significant than others, but, ultimately, simply understanding the history of such a special city like Las Vegas is entertaining much like the city itself.

As Las Vegas pushes through 2024, closing in on its 120th year, its story is legendary. Already the capital of so many fabulous obsessions, speculating on its next conquest is next to impossible, but an exciting proposition nonetheless. Las Vegas has the potential to be even more extravagant and can expand as long as water remains available. Considering the hand Las Vegas was dealt, given that it was a remote desert valley just a few generations ago, not many would have gone all in on such a triumphant rise, except maybe for some enterprising mobsters. Still, for almost eighty years, the Hoover Dam was the driving force most responsible, defying nature as Las Vegas beat the odds. As it stands, Las Vegas seems destined to extend its lucky streak for many years into the future.

Bibliography

Archival Sources

- Arizona Museum of Natural History. *The Hohokam*. Accessed April 3, 2024.
<https://www.arizonamuseumofnaturalhistory.org/plan-a-visit/mesa-grande/the-hohokam>.
- Cattoir, Andy. *Hatch Cover Fragment*. Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850. Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum. Accessed June 1, 2023.
<https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#15025>.
- Cattoir, Andy. *Incised Stone*. Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850. Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum. Accessed June 1, 2023.
<https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#3901B>.
- Cattoir, Andy. *Magnesium Silicate Beads*. Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850. Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum. Accessed June 1, 2023.
<https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#3332>.
- Cattoir, Andy. *Milling Stone or Metate*. Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850. Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum. Accessed June 1, 2023.
<https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#3481>.
- Cattoir, Andy. *Olivella Shells*. Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850. Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum. Accessed June 1, 2023.
<https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#3302>.
- Cattoir, Andy. *Painted Wood Fragment*. Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850. Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum. Accessed June 1, 2023.
<https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#3356>.
- Cattoir, Andy. *Pendant*. Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850. Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum. Accessed June 1, 2023.
<https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#3323>.
- Cattoir, Andy. *Pendant*. Prehistoric Period 10,000 BC-AD 1850. Lake Mead National Recreation Area Virtual Museum. Accessed June 1, 2023.
<https://www.nps.gov/features/lake/museum/artifacts-prehistory.html#3472>.
- Clark County Museum. Photo Archives Record. *El Rancho Vegas Opera House, Theater, and Restaurant During an Atomic Bomb Test*. Accessed August 25, 2023.
<https://clarkcountymuseum.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/13C927A2-B8CF-4DB6-ACA2-499256789672>.

Clark County Museum. Photo Archives Record. *The Buffet of the Chuck Wagon Restaurant at the El Rancho Vegas*. Accessed August 25, 2023.

<https://clarkcountymuseum.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/3AAAAA7A-F917-4C58-B9EF-581001488007>.

National Archives. Department of the Interior. National Park Service. *National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Program Records*. “Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas” Sign, Clark County, Nevada. Accessed October 19, 2023.

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/63816510>.

National Archives. Department of the Interior. National Park Service. *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form*. Hoover Dam, Clark County, Nevada.

Accessed August 3, 2023. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/63816442>.

National Archives. Department of the Interior. National Park Service. *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form*. Mormon Fort, Clark County, Nevada.

Accessed August 3, 2023. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/63816428>.

National Archives. Department of the Interior. National Park Service. *Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs, 1970-79. 80th Congress, Hoover Dam – Public Law 80-41*.

Accessed August 4, 2023. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/280985242>.

National Archives. Department of the Interior. Office of the Solicitor. Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California. *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History*.

Beginning to 1931. Accessed August 3, 2023. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/218518040>.

National Archives. Department of the Interior. Office of the Solicitor. Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California. *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History*.

1947. Accessed August 3, 2023. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/218518060>.

National Archives. Department of the Interior. Office of the Solicitor. Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California. *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History*.

1957. Accessed October 6, 2023.

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/218518076?objectPage=5>.

National Archives. Department of the Interior. Office of the Solicitor. Office of the Regional Solicitor, Los Angeles, California. *Boulder Canyon Project Annual Project History*.

1963. Accessed August 4, 2023. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/218518111>.

National Archives. Franklin D. Roosevelt. Franklin D. Roosevelt Master Speech Files. *Hollywood Bowl Speech*. Accessed August 4, 2023.

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/122176774>.

National Archives. Milestone Documents. *Boulder Canyon Project Act (1928)*. Accessed July 24, 2023. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/boulder-canyon-project-act>.

- Nevada State Museum. *Four Queens Hotel and Casino*. Accessed January 12, 2024. <https://www.lasvegasnvmuseum.org/four-queens-hotel-and-casino/>.
- The Mob Museum. Blog. *Seventy-Five Years Later, Debate Over Bugsy Siegel Murder Still Rages*. Accessed September 6, 2023. <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/seventy-five-years-later-debate-over-bugsy-siegel-murder-still-rages/>.
- The Mob Museum. Blog. *The Stardust Hotel, Longtime Cash Cow for the Mob, Debuted 60 Years Ago on the Las Vegas Strip*. Accessed September 6, 2023. <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/stardust-hotel-debuted-60-years-ago-las-vegas-strip-dream-gambler-checkered-past/>.
- The Mob Museum. Case Files. Notable Names. *Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel*. Accessed September 6, 2023. https://themobmuseum.org/notable_names/benjamin-bugsy-siegel/.
- The Mob Museum. Case Files. Notable Names. *Lucky Luciano*. Accessed August 30, 2023. https://themobmuseum.org/notable_names/lucky-luciano/.
- The Mob Museum. *El Cortez, First Luxury Hotel-Casino in Downtown Las Vegas, Turns 80*. November 6, 2021. Accessed September 5, 2023. <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/el-cortez-first-luxury-hotel-casino-in-downtown-las-vegas-turns-80/>.
- The Mob Museum. *Gangster-Built Golden Nugget Turns 70*. August 30, 2016. Accessed August 17, 2023. <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/gangster-built-golden-nugget-turns-70/>.
- The Mob Museum. Prohibition: An Interactive History. *In Las Vegas, Prohibition was Sporadically Enforced*. Accessed July 21, 2023. <https://prohibition.themobmuseum.org/the-history/prohibition-in-las-vegas/las-vegas-and-prohibition/>.
- The Mob Museum. The Mob in Pop Culture. *Las Vegas Mob Stories Attract Hollywood Interest*. Accessed October 11, 2023. <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/las-vegas-mob-stories-attract-hollywood-interest/>.
- UNLV Special Collections and Archives Portal. Octavius Decatur Gass. *Scrapbook of O.D. Gass, 1870*. Accessed June 15, 2023. <https://special.library.unlv.edu/ark%3A/62930/d10k26r95>.
- UNLV. “Staying on Track: UNLV’s Population Forecast Continues to Predict 1M More Residents in Southern Nevada.” *News Center*. August 12, 2022. Accessed February 12, 2024. <https://www.unlv.edu/news/release/staying-track-unlvs-population-forecast-continues-predict-1m-more-residents-southern>.
- UNLV University Libraries. Digital Collections. *Thunderbird*. Accessed September 5, 2023. <https://special.library.unlv.edu/skyline/hotel/thunderbird>.

- UNLV University Libraries. Southern Nevada Jewish Heritage Project. *Israel "Icepick Willie" Alderman*. Accessed September 1, 2023. <https://special.library.unlv.edu/jewishheritage/people/israel-alderman>.
- UNLV University Libraries. Southern Nevada Jewish Heritage Project. *Moe Dalitz*. Accessed October 10, 2023. <https://special.library.unlv.edu/jewishheritage/people/moe-dalitz>.
- UNLV University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives. *Guide to the Frontier Hotel and Casino Collection*. Las Vegas, Nevada. Accessed August 30, 2023. <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://www.library.unlv.edu/speccol/finding-aids/MS-00297.pdf>.
- UNLV University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives. *Hacienda (Lady Luck) Hotel and Casino: Las Vegas, Nevada, 1954 July 21, 1968 September 5*. Las Vegas, Nevada. Accessed October 18, 2023. <https://special.library.unlv.edu/node/101530>.
- UNLV University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives. J. Ross Clark/Los Angeles Office Files. *Las Vegas Ranch, Nevada (1 of 4)*. Las Vegas, Nevada. Accessed July 5, 2023. <https://special.library.unlv.edu/ark%3A/62930/d1w37m>.
- UNLV University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives. J. Ross Clark/Los Angeles Office Files. *Townsite*. Las Vegas, Nevada. Accessed July 10, 2023. <https://special.library.unlv.edu/ark%3A/62930/d1v379>.
- UNLV University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives. *Marriage Certificate of Helen and Frank Stewart and Tiza Stewart Land Patents*. Las Vegas, Nevada. Accessed July 3, 2023. <https://special.library.unlv.edu/ark%3A/62930/d17941439>.
- UNLV University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives. *Stewart Family Real Estate Documents*, Las Vegas, Nevada. Accessed July 7, 2023. <https://special.library.unlv.edu/ark%3A/62930/d1kp7v19t>.
- White House Press Releases. Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum. *Boulder Canyon Project Construction Start*, West Branch, Iowa. Accessed August 2, 2023. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/19086664>.

Primary Sources

- Aarons, Leroy. "Hughes' Las Vegas: Orgy of Acquisition." *The Washington Post*. Washington, November 11, 1973., A1.
- Aarons, Leroy. "MGM's Tale of Woe and Wizardry." *The Washington Post*. Washington, December 9, 1973., H1.
- Adande, J.A. "In Vegas, Caesar Hails Tennis." *The Washington Post*. Washington, September 22, 1995., F1.

- Aikman, Duncan. "Nevada Now Awaits Dam and Dry Regime." *The Sun*. Baltimore, October 14, 1930., 13.
- Aikman, Duncan. "New Pioneers in Old West's Deserts: The Prospect of Work at Hoover Dam Lures Men from Many States, and They Trek in Ramshackle Autos New Pioneers in the Desert." *New York Times*. New York, October 26, 1930., SM4.
- AMA Motorcycle Museum Hall of Fame. *Evel Knievel*. Accessed January 10, 2024. <http://hof.motorcyclemuseum.org/halloffame/detail.aspx?RacerID=48>.
- Anderson, Dave. "Vegas Analyst Dopes Out the Line." *New York Times*. New York, November 19, 1967., 220.
- Anderson, Jack. "Las Vegas is Changing - on the Surface: The Washington Merry-Go-Round." *The Washington Post*. Washington, August 23, 1969., C11.
- Apgar, Blake. "Former Miss Nevada, 'Gilligan's Island' Star Dawn Wells Dies." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. December 30, 2020. Accessed April 26, 2024. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/local-nevada/former-miss-nevada-gilligans-island-star-dawn-wells-dies-2236215/>.
- Articles of Consolidation and Agreement between the Oregon Short Line Railway Company, the Utah and Northern Railway Company, the Utah Central Railway Company, the Salt Lake and Western Railway Company, the Utah and Nevada Railway Company, the Ogden and Syracuse Railway Company, the Idaho Central Railway Company, and the Nevada Pacific Railway Company*. New York: Burgoyne. 1889.
- Associated Press. "Aces Celebrate 2nd WNBA Championship, Say More Are on the Way." *ESPN.com*. October, 23, 2023. Accessed February 7, 2024. https://www.espn.com/wnba/story/_/id/38729812/aces-celebrate-2nd-wnba-championship-say-more-way.
- Associated Press. "A.C. Stralla, Gambling Figure, Dies." *The Washington Post*. Washington, August 1, 1955., 20.
- Associated Press. "Alboreto Easily Wins Las Vegas Auto Race." *The Sun*. Baltimore, September 26, 1982., 7.
- Associated Press. "Army Planes Begin Tests in 5 States." *New York Times*. New York, July 22, 1935., 6.
- Associated Press. "Betting Ship Man Taken." *New York Times*. New York, August 11, 1939., 15.
- Associated Press. "Big Dam Safe in Atom Test: Hoover Structure was Built to Resist Earthquakes." *The Sun*. Baltimore, February 4, 1951., 7.

- Associated Press. "Big Magnesium Plant Opens." *New York Times*. New York, September 2, 1942., 11.
- Associated Press. "Braves and A's Officials to Sell Holdings in Las Vegas Casinos." *New York Times*. New York, June 20, 1969., 46.
- Associated Press. "Bugsy Siegel, Former 'Public Enemy,' Dies Gang-Style Death." *The Sun*. Baltimore, June 22, 1947., A2.
- Associated Press. "Carbo, 4 Others are Found Guilty." *New York Times*. New York, May 31, 1961., 42.
- Associated Press. "Collapse of Big Dam Blamed on Builders." *The Washington Post*. Washington, March 28, 1928., 3.
- Associated Press. "Conservation is Urged: Western Democratic Senators Call on Congress to Act." *New York Times*. New York, January 6, 1959., 20.
- Associated Press. "Dallas Woman's Blast Death Ascribed to Far-Away Gambler." *The Washington Post*. Washington, December 1, 1949., 8.
- Associated Press. "Discount Death of Magnate." *Los Angeles Herald*. Volume 36. Number 345. September 11, 1909., 1 and 3.
- Associated Press. "Elvis Presley Weds in Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, May 2, 1967., 52.
- Associated Press. "Ex-Gambler, Wife Slain in Phoenix." *The Sun*. Baltimore, December 4, 1958., 1.
- Associated Press. "F.T. Crowe Dead; Built 19 U.S. Dams." *New York Times*. New York, February 28, 1946., 19.
- Associated Press. "Gambler Hints at Own 'Law.'" *The Washington Post*. Washington, January 2, 1950., 1 and 9.
- Associated Press. "Gaming 'Flagship' Defeats Officers." *The Sun*. Baltimore, August 3, 1939., 6.
- Associated Press. "Gangster Called Sinatra's Guest." *The Sun*. Baltimore, September 12, 1963., 1.
- Associated Press. "Gene Fullmer Keeps Crown." *The Sun*. Baltimore, December 10, 1961., 1D.
- Associated Press. "Giant Hotel Opens Doors in Las Vegas." *The Washington Post*. Washington, June 23, 1990., E4.

Associated Press. "Harrah's Buys Imperial Palace for \$370 Million." *NBCNews.com*. August 23, 2005. Accessed February 1, 2024. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna9055061>.

Associated Press. "Hoover Dam Strikers Pitch Camp in Desert." *The Sun*. Baltimore, August 13, 1931., 4.

Associated Press. "Hoover's Speech at Dam: President Hails Fulfillment of His Work Begun Decade Ago." *New York Times*. New York, November 13, 1932., 16.

Associated Press. "Howard Hughes Buys Desert Inn." *New York Times*. New York, March 15, 1967., 52.

Associated Press. "Howard Hughes Purchases Section in Las Vegas Strip." *New York Times*. New York, September 23, 1967., 16.

Associated Press. "Human Flagpole on Hoover Dam." *The Washington Post*. Washington, July 6, 1982., C2.

Associated Press. "In Las Vegas, A New York State of Mind." *The Washington Post*. Washington, August 13, 1994., E5.

Associated Press. "Last Frontier Hotel is Sold." *New York Times*. New York, August 25, 1951., 18.

Associated Press. "Las Vegas Ready to Go 'Wild West.'" *The Washington Post*. Washington, April 25, 1935., 4.

Associated Press. "Las Vegas's Latest Eruption: Mirage Hotel & Its Pina Colada Volcano." *The Washington Post*. Washington, November 23, 1989., D23.

Associated Press. "Las Vegas Stardust Hotel is Sold to the United Corp." *New York Times*. New York, August 31, 1962., 33.

Associated Press. "Magnesium Output Grows: Las Vegas Plant Now Operating at Triple World Capacity." *New York Times*. New York, July 13, 1943., 31.

Associated Press. "Magnesium Plant Rising in Desert." *The Sun*. Baltimore, November 21, 1941., 19.

Associated Press. "Major Crimes in Cities Reported on Increase." *The Sun*. Baltimore, May 16, 1937., 6.

Associated Press. "MGM Grand to Buy Mirage Resorts, Create Casino 'Juggernaut.'" *The Washington Post*. Washington, May 7, 2000., E4.

- Associated Press. "Mystery Call Gives Lead in Noble Case." *The Washington Post*. Washington, August 9, 1951., 12.
- Associated Press. "Nascar Adds Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, August 13, 1997., B10.
- Associated Press. "Noble Survives 11th Attempt on His Life." *The Washington Post*. Washington, March 28, 1951., 8.
- Associated Press. "President's Talk at Boulder Dam." *New York Times*. New York, October 1, 1935., 2.
- Associated Press. "Probers Hear of Vengeance [sic] Plot at Dallas." *The Washington Post*. Washington, March 2, 1951., 18.
- Associated Press. "Richard Branson Marks Opening of Virgin Hotel in Las Vegas." *APNews.com*. June 11, 2021. Accessed February 12, 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/richard-branson-las-vegas-health-coronavirus-pandemic-business-c869a2e82886d9c61eb34158bc07adae>.
- Associated Press. "'Rio' Theme is Expanded in Las Vegas." *The Washington Post*. Washington, February 15, 1997., E11.
- Associated Press. "Sam Boyd Built an Empire of Las Vegas Resorts." *The Sun*. Baltimore, January 17, 1993., 5B.
- Associated Press. "Sam Boyd, 82, a Roulette Dealer Who Became a Builder of Casinos." *New York Times*. New York, January 16, 1993., 10.
- Associated Press. "Sammy Davis, Jr. Wows Patrons in Return to Las Vegas Hotel." *The Chicago Defender*. Chicago, June 25, 1955., 19.
- Associated Press. "Secretary Ickes Orders Big Colorado River Project to be Called by its Original Title, Disregarding Wilbur's Christening." *The Sun*. Baltimore, May 13, 1933., 2.
- Associated Press. "Senator M'Carran is Dead in Nevada." *New York Times*. New York, September 29, 1954., 1.
- Associated Press. "Sinatra Set to End Role in Gambling." *The Sun*. Baltimore, October 8, 1963., 3.
- Associated Press. "Start Air Canyon Hunt." *New York Times*. New York, November 28, 1927., 12.

- Associated Press. “‘Syndicate Involved’: Police Chief Says He Knows Who Killed ‘Bugsy’ Siegel.” *The Washington Post*. Washington, October 18, 1948., 1.
- Associated Press. “To Expand Gas System.” *New York Times*. New York, February 1, 1952., 36.
- Associated Press. “Tony Cornero Dead; is Stricken at Dice.” *New York Times*. New York, August 1, 1955., 38.
- Associated Press. “U.S. Says Hughes Can Buy a 6th Hotel in Las Vegas.” *The Sun*. Baltimore, January 18, 1969., B9.
- Associated Press. “U.S. Will Not Balk Las Vegas Resort.” *The Washington Post*. Washington, June 7, 1931., M6.
- Associated Press. “Wayne Newton May Not Sell Interest in Las Vegas Hotel.” *The Sun*. Baltimore, July 16, 1982., C9.
- Associated Press. “WNBA’s San Antonio Stars Moving to Las Vegas.” *CBSNews.com*. October 17, 2017. Accessed February 7, 2024. <https://www.cbsnews.com/texas/news/wnbas-san-antonio-stars-moving-to-las-vegas/>.
- Associated Press. “16th Casino for Strip.” *The Washington Post*. Washington, October 19, 1968., B11.
- Associated Press. “25 Flee Fire in Las Vegas Resort Hotel.” *The Sun*. Baltimore, June 18, 1960., 4.
- Associated Press. “\$50,000 Lures Liberace (And George) to Nevada.” *New York Times*. New York, December 4, 1954., 15.
- Atlas, Riva. “Market Place.” *New York Times*. New York, October 31, 2001., C13.
- Atomic Heritage Foundation. The National Museum of Nuclear Science & History. *Nevada Test Site*. Accessed October 6, 2023. <https://ahf.nuclearmuseum.org/ahf/location/nevada-test-site/>.
- Atomic Museum. *Our Mission*. Accessed February 6, 2024. <https://www.atomicmuseum.vegas/about-us/mission/>.
- Aztec Ruins. National Monument New Mexico Website. *Antonio Armijo*. Accessed May 26, 2023. <https://www.nps.gov/azru/learn/historyculture/antonio-armijo.htm>.
- Bailey, Analis. “Raiders Owner Mark Davis Set to Expand His Sports Empire in Las Vegas with Purchase of WNBA Team.” *USAToday.com*. January 14, 2021. Accessed February 7, 2024. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/wnba/2021/01/14/las-vegas-raiders-owner-mark-davis-purchase-wnba-aces-team/4163709001/>.

- Barnes, Bart. "Atlantic City: New Vegas?" *The Washington Post*. Washington, November 5, 1976., A1.
- Barnes, Brooks. "Check In/Check Out: Las Vegas the Basics." *New York Times*. New York, November 15, 2009., TR4.
- Barringer, Felicity. "Water Use in Southwest Heads for a Day of Reckoning." *New York Times*. New York, September 28, 2010., A14 and A16.
- Barr, Stephen. "Cost of Hoover Dam Visitors Center Nearly Quadruples to \$119 Million." *The Washington Post*. Washington, April 24, 1994., A13.
- Bart, Peter. "48-Hour Party Opens Newest Las Vegas Hotel." *New York Times*. New York, August 8, 1966., 22.
- Becker, Bill. "Las Vegas Anticipating the Super Sixties." *New York Times*. New York, January 31, 1960., XX19.
- Belson, Ken. "In a Surprise, the N.H.L. Has Been a Hit in Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, February 28, 2018., B7.
- Belson, Ken. "Starting Next Year, the Raiders Will Happen in Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, December 15, 2019., SP3.
- Belson, Ken and Victor Mather. "Die is Cast: Owners O.K. Raiders' Move to Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, March 28, 2017., B7.
- Bernstein, Adam. "Former Nevada Sen. Howard Cannon Dies." *The Washington Post*. Washington, March 7, 2002., VAB6.
- Berselli, Beth. "Gamblers Play the Odds Online Despite Calls to Outlaw It, Internet Gambling Takes Off." *The Washington Post*. Washington, August 19, 1997., A1 and A8.
- Blair, William. "Plan for Water Development is Proposed for Colorado Basin." *New York Times*. New York, February 16, 1964., 64.
- Blake, Gene and Jack Tobin. "Teamster Loans Reach \$22 Million in Nevada." *The Washington Post*. Washington, January 15, 1963., A5.
- Blennerhassett, Patrick. "A Strip Icon: Little Church of the West Celebrates 80th Birthday." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. May 22, 2023. Accessed September 8, 2023. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/business/a-strip-icon-little-church-of-the-west-celebrates-80th-birthday-2781967/>.

- Blennerhassett, Patrick. "MGM Resorts Buys Sliver of Land Between 2 Major Strip Properties." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. January 10, 2024. Accessed February 14, 2024. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/business/casinos-gaming/mgm-resorts-buys-sliver-of-land-between-2-major-strip-properties-2979578/>.
- Blum, Howard and Jeff Gerth. "The Mob Gambles on Atlantic City." *New York Times*. New York, February 5, 1978., SM3.
- Blunk, Frank. "Hall's Chevrolet Leads Qualifiers." *New York Times*. New York, November 13, 1965., 22.
- Blunk, Frank. "Race at Las Vegas Next Sunday Ends Canadian-American Tests." *New York Times*. New York, November 6, 1966., 243.
- Brady, Dave. "Closed-Circuit TV Puts Bloom on Desert Boxing." *The Washington Post*. Washington, June 25, 1972., E1.
- Branch, John. "N.H.L. Seems Likely to Boldly Expand Where No Pro Team Has: Las Vegas Strip." *New York Times*. New York, June 22, 2015., D1.
- Breech, John. "NFL Draft 2022 is Going Full Las Vegas, But Will Be Missing One Key Detail from Original Plan." *CBSSports.com*. April 28, 2022. Accessed February 8, 2024. <https://www.cbssports.com/nfl/news/nfl-draft-2022-is-going-full-las-vegas-but-will-be-missing-one-key-detail-from-the-original-plan/>.
- Brownfield, Paul. "My Show Will Go On." *The Washington Post*. Washington, March 20, 2003., C8.
- Buettner, Russ and Charles Bagli. "How Trump Profited on Failed Casinos." *New York Times*. New York, June 12, 2016., A1.
- Burbank, Jeff. "Rio Kicks Off the '90s." *Las Vegas Sun*. January 15, 1990. Accessed January 26, 2024. <https://m.lasvegassun.com/news/1990/jan/15/rio-kicks-90s/>.
- Bureau of Reclamation. *Colorado River Compact, 1922*. Accessed October 30, 2023. <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/pao/pdf/s/crcompct.pdf>.
- Bureau of Reclamation. Hoover Dam. Frequently Asked Questions and Answers. *Hydropower at Hoover Dam*. Accessed October 6, 2023. <https://www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam/faqs/powerfaq.html>.
- Bureau of Reclamation. Hoover Dam. *The Boulder Dam Canyon Project*. Accessed January 19, 2024. <https://www.usbr.gov/history/hoover.html>.

- Bureau of Reclamation. Hoover Dam. The Story of Hoover Dam – Articles. *Chronology*. Accessed August 2, 2023. <https://www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam/history/articles/chrono.html>.
- Bureau of Reclamation. Hoover Dam. The Story of Hoover Dam – Essays. *Cofferdams*. Accessed August 2, 2023. <https://www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam/history/essays/coffer.html>.
- Calderon, Jannelle. “Is the Las Vegas Strip Located in Las Vegas?” *The Nevada Independent*. December 4, 2023. Accessed February 23, 2024. <https://thenevadaindependent.com/article/fact-brief-is-the-las-vegas-strip-located-in-las-vegas>.
- Camp, Charles and George Yount. “The Chronicles of George C. Yount: California Pioneer of 1826.” *California Historical Society Quarterly*. Volume 2. Number 1. Berkeley. April, 1923., 3-66.
- Carmel, Julia. “Frank Cullotta, 81: Monster and Memoirist.” *New York Times*. New York, August 29, 2020., A28.
- Casey, Phil. “Evel Knievel, Daredevil: For Fun, Pain and Profit.” *The Washington Post*. Washington, September 3, 1970., C1.
- Coe, Richard. “Dam’s Boom Town is Palace of Today.” *The Washington Post*. Washington, July 11, 1959., D5.
- Cohen, Roger. “MGM Grand Tries to Give Las Vegas a G Rating.” *New York Times*. New York, October 2, 1991., D1.
- Cooke, Alistair. “A New Yorker Goes West V-Babylon in the Desert.” *The Manchester Guardian*. Manchester, September 19, 1947., 4.
- Cornwell, Tim. “Chips Down as Vegas Grabs Mormon Water.” *The Observer*. London, December 5, 1993., 18.
- Craig, Susanne. “Deutsche Bank’s Las Vegas Bet: A \$4 Billion Casino with Few Gamblers to Pay the Bills.” *New York Times*. New York, April 19, 2011., B1.
- Curran, John. “Boardwalk vs. Strip: The Odds are Clear East is East and West is West, and Atlantic City isn’t Las Vegas.” *The Washington Post*. Washington, April 16, 2006. Accessed January 24, 2024. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2006/04/16/boardwalk-vs-strip-the-odds-are-clear-span-classbankheadeast-is-east-and-west-is-west-and-atlantic-city-isnt-las-vegasspan/d8cb2ed6-5366-4f9d-8f68-7e6b22966284/>.
- Curran, John. “In Atlantic City, a Long Shot Pays Off.” *The Washington Post*. Washington, May 25, 2003., A5A.

- Curtis, Anthony. "Delano Las Vegas Opens on the Strip." *AZCentral.com*. September 19, 2014. Accessed February 12, 2024. <https://www.azcentral.com/story/travel/2014/09/20/delano-las-vegas-opens-strip/15855517/>.
- Daniels, Lee. "Dai Vernon, 98; An Expert Magician Who Taught Others." *New York Times*. New York, August 29, 1992., 26.
- Deiner, John. "Vegas's Newest Big Thing." *The Washington Post*. Washington, June 26, 2005., P2.
- Deiner, John. "Wayne's World: In Las Vegas, Catching an Icon in Action." *The Washington Post*. Washington, August 25, 2002., E1.
- Dellenbaugh, Frederick. *Fremont and '49*. New York: The Knickerbocker Press. 1914.
- Dellenbaugh, Frederick. *The Romance of the Colorado River*. Project Gutenberg. 2002. Accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4316/4316-h/4316-h.htm>.
- Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management Press Release. *Red Rock Celebrates 25 Years as a National Conservation Area*. Accessed August 30, 2023. <https://www.blm.gov/press-release/red-rock-celebrates-25-years-national-conservation-area>.
- Deutsch, Linda. "Inflation: Getting Along in Vegas." *The Washington Post*. Washington, February 16, 1975., 189.
- Dilts, James. "They Opened Then Threw the Key in a Lake: The Doors Never Close at Caesars Palace, the Las Vegas 'ultimate' Where a Former Baltimorean Reigns." *The Sun*. Baltimore, April 21, 1968., MA20, 21, 23, 25, and 27.
- Dobbin, Muriel. "Old-timers Remember Las Vegas as a Desert 'Paradise.'" *The Sun*. Baltimore, July 18, 1978., B1.
- Dresdale, Andrea. "Celine Dion's 16-year Vegas Residency Comes to an End Saturday with Final Show." *ABCNews.com*. June 7, 2019. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Culture/celine-dions-16-year-vegas-residency-end-saturday/story?id=63545085>.
- Drucker, Stephen. "Las Vegas, Theme City." *New York Times*. New York, February 13, 1994., XX15.
- Du Puy, William Atherton. "Construction of Hoover Dam is Uncle Sam's Biggest Job: How Giant Hoover Dam Will Look." *New York Times*. New York, March 8, 1931., 126.
- Egan, Timothy. "Las Vegas Bet on Growth But Doesn't Love Payoff." *New York Times*. New York, January 26, 2001., A1.

- Fabricant, Florence. "Odds of a Good Meal in Las Vegas are Rising." *New York Times*. New York, July 29, 1998., F8.
- Folliard, Edward. "The Big Bettors Like Mr. Nixon." *The Washington Post*. Washington, September 15, 1960., A20.
- Forbes, Ahjane. "A Look at 'Pawn Stars' Creator Rick Harrison and Family Following Tragic Death of Son." *USAToday.com*. January 24, 2024. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/tv/2024/01/24/pawn-stars-adam-death-rick-harrison-family/72324977007/>.
- Fried, Joseph. "Bubble-Top Hotel to Open in Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, October 22, 1967., 360.
- Fremont, John. *Narrative of an Exploration of the Country Lying between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2016.
- Gallagher, James. "Strike Ties Up Hoover Dam Construction at Boulder." *New Leader*. New York, Volume 13. Issue 7. August 15, 1931., 1.
- Garces, Francisco. *On the Trail of a Spanish Pioneer: The Diary and Itinerary of Francisco Garces in His Travels Through Sonora, Arizona, and California 1775-1776*. Translated by Elliott Coues. New York: Francis P. Harper. 1900.
- Genzlinger, Neil. "Gloria Dea, Magician Rediscovered Late in Life, Dies at 100." *New York Times*. New York. April 18, 2023. Accessed January 11, 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/18/arts/gloria-dea-dead.html>.
- Gildea, William. "Leonard vs. Duran Planned for Dec. 7 at Mirage Hotel: New Las Vegas Facility Trumps Trump." *The Washington Post*. Washington, August 1, 1989., C3.
- Glasgow, Jesse. "Local Group Investing in Vegas Hotel." *The Sun*. Baltimore, January 28, 1965., 32.
- Glusac, Elaine. "Squeezing Value Out of a Las Vegas Vacation." *New York Times*. New York, February 2, 2020., TR8.
- Goldberg, Vicki. "Blue Man Joins the Vegas Collection." *New York Times*. New York, April 30, 2000., AR5.
- Goldberger, Paul. "New York-New York, It's a Las Vegas Town." *New York Times*. New York, January 15, 1997., B1.
- Goodman, Jack. "Desert Attractions." *New York Times*. New York, March 16, 1947., X14.

- Goodman, Jack. "Driver's Choice on Way to Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, January 23, 1966., 364.
- Goodman, Jack. "Jackpot Jamboree: Small-money Slot-Machine Gamblers in Nevada Have Struck a Bonanza." *New York Times*. New York, August 15, 1948., SM30.
- Goodman, Jack. "Las Vegas Makes its Point." *New York Times*. New York, January 17, 1965., XX21.
- Gorman, Tom. "For Las Vegas's Night Fliers, a Bargain Buffet." *The Washington Post*. Washington, June 17, 2001., A18A.
- Gose, Joe. "A Change of Luck in Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, November 18, 2015., B1.
- Graham, Joan. "Betting is Better in Britain." *The Sun*. Baltimore, February 25, 1973., K5.
- Grimes, Prince. "The Las Vegas Sphere Tabs UFC in 2024 as Its Potential First Live Sporting Event." *USAToday.com*. November 13, 2023. Accessed February 22, 2024. <https://ftw.usatoday.com/2023/11/ufc-vegas-sphere-live-sports-2024>.
- Guggenheim Museum. *Form Follows Function*. Accessed April 11, 2024. <https://www.guggenheim.org/teaching-materials/the-architecture-of-the-solomon-r-guggenheim-museum/form-follows-function>.
- Gunther, John. "Inside Las Vegas." *The Washington Post*. Washington, August 26, 1956., AW12.
- Hafen, LeRoy and Antonio Armijo. "Armijo's Journal." *Huntington Library Quarterly*. Volume 11. Number 1. San Marino, November, 1947., 87-101.
- Hagar, Ray. "Las Vegas Reinvents Itself as 'Sports Capital of the World.'" *Reno Gazette Journal*. November 14, 2023. Accessed February 8, 2024. <https://www.rgj.com/story/news/2023/11/14/las-vegas-reinvents-itself-as-sports-capital-of-the-world/71579719007/>.
- Hall, Chapin. "Los Angeles Game for Racket Leader." *New York Times*. New York, April 5, 1931. Accessed August 17, 2023. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/99089896/D0B42394887B42EAPQ/136?accountid=12085>, 53.
- Halverstadt, Lisa. "Fact Check: Leaving Las Vegas' Convention Center." *Voice of San Diego*. November 25, 2013. Accessed February 7, 2024. <https://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/11/25/fact-check-leaving-las-vegas-convention-center/>.

- Havas, Adrian. "Rio: Now It's on a Roll." *Las Vegas Business Press*. Volume 10. Issue 18. June 21, 1993., 3.
- Heath, Thomas. "In a Mafialess City, Some Las Vegans Don't Like Their Odds." *The Washington Post*. Washington, December 26, 1995., A3.
- Hebner, Logan and Michael Plyler. *Southern Paiute: A Portrait*. Logan: Utah State University Press. 2010.
- Hemmersmeier, Sean. "From the Atari Hotel to Dream Las Vegas, Here are Projects to Watch in 2024." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. January 16, 2024. Accessed February 12, 2024. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/business/casinos-gaming/from-the-atari-hotel-to-dream-las-vegas-here-are-projects-to-watch-in-2024-2982364/>.
- Hill, Gladwin. "Desert 'Capital' of the A-Bomb." *New York Times*. New York, February 13, 1955., 212.
- Hill, Gladwin. "Las Vegas Draws Pair of Hotels Back to Back." *New York Times*. New York, July 20, 1969., XX23.
- Hill, Gladwin. "Las Vegas Keeps the Wheels Turning." *New York Times*. New York, October 19, 1958., X35.
- Hill, Gladwin. "New Yorkers Cited in Siegel Slaying." *New York Times*. New York, February 28, 1951., 23.
- Hill, Gladwin. "The 'Sure Thing' Boom at Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, January 30, 1955., X29.
- Hochman, David. "Temples of Blessed Excess." *New York Times*. New York, June 13, 1999., TR10.
- Hoover, Herbert. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States Herbert Hoover Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President January 1 to December 1930*. Washington: United States Government Printing Office. 1976.
- Hoover, Herbert. *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover (1874-1920)*. London: Hollis & Carter. 1952.
- Horne, Flora Diana Bean. *Autobiography of George Washington Bean: A Utah Pioneer of 1847 and His Family Records*. Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company. 1945.
- Horn, Trader. "Welcome to Glitter Gulch, Home of Video Poker and Incurable Eve-Anne." *The Guardian*. London, October 9, 1982., 16.

- Horwitz, Jane. "The Family Filmgoer: Vegas Vacation (PG, 91 Minutes)." *The Washington Post*. Washington, February 21, 1997., 44.
- Howe, Ward. "Las Vegas Vacation Center: Seeing Boulder Dam by Automobile." *New York Times*. New York, March 24, 1946., 57.
- Jahn, Mike. "Elvis Presley to Make Personal Appearances." *New York Times*. New York, December 4, 1968., 51.
- Johnson, Grady. "Lively Las Vegas New Vacationland is Growing Up Rapidly Around the Great Lake at Hoover Dam." *New York Times*. New York, November 14, 1948., X16.
- Johnston, David Cay. "Coming Back to Atlantic City: Welcome Set for Wynn's Las Vegas-Scale Project." *New York Times*. New York, June 27, 1995., D1.
- Kaiser, Robert Blair. "The Rediscovery of Elvis." *New York Times*. New York, October 11, 1970., 231.
- Katsilometes, John. "Casino Magnate Allen Glick, featured in 'Casino,' Dies at 79." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Las Vegas, August 5, 2021. Accessed January 19, 2024. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/entertainment/entertainment-columns/kats/casino-magnate-allen-glick-featured-in-casino-dies-at-79-2414340/>.
- Kaysen, Ronda. "The Casino the State Saved." *New York Times*. New York, January 4, 2012., B1.
- Kean, Tricia. "Vegas Born, Vegas Strong: A City's Healing After Tragedy Continues Through Its Golden Knights." *KTNV.com*. June 15, 2023. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://www.ktnv.com/news/golden-knights/vegas-born-vegas-strong-a-citys-healing-after-tragedy-continues-through-its-golden-knights>.
- Kelemen, Matt. "Donny Osmond Return to the Las Vegas Strip." *Las Vegas Magazine*. January 31, 2020. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://lasvegasmagazine.com/entertainment/2023/jan/20/donny-osmond-returns-to-las-vegas-strip-harrahs/>.
- Kelemen, Matt. "Penn & Teller Continue to Amaze and Amuse Las Vegas Audiences." *Las Vegas Magazine*. January 21, 2020. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://lasvegasmagazine.com/entertainment/2020/jan/31/penn-teller-continue-to-amaze-and-amuse-las-vegas/>.
- Kennan, George. *The Salton Sea: An Account of Harriman's Fight with the Colorado River*. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1917.

- Kester, Jennifer. "Resorts World Las Vegas Makes Big Debut." *Forbes.com*. June 24, 2021. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestravelguide/2021/06/24/resorts-world-las-vegas-makes-big-strip-debut/?sh=64679f2ccced0>.
- Kidder, Key. "It's No Easy Street, Being Mobster's Only Kid." *The Sun*. Baltimore, October 27, 1981., B1-B2.
- Kilgallen, Dorothy. "Dorothy Kilgallen: Elvis Retains Tresses for 'Con' Role." *The Washington Post*. Washington, June 19, 1957., C6.
- King, Wayne. "Casino Panel's New Mission: Save Atlantic City." *New York Times*. New York, April 4, 1993., 35.
- Kline, Daniel, "Las Vegas Strip's Fashion Show Mall Will Add a Casino." *Longview News-Journal*. October 7, 2023. Accessed February 12, 2024. https://www.news-journal.com/arena/thestreet/las-vegas-strips-fashion-show-mall-will-add-a-casino/article_3e82ccd3-867a-5dae-ba8d-2deb34cfb358.html.
- Kneeland, Douglas. "Las Vegas Flourishes as Big Apple of the Desert Nurtured by Gambling and Tourists." *New York Times*. New York, April 17, 1972., 66.
- Komenda, Ed. "Iconic Sahara Name Will Soon Return to Las Vegas Strip." *Reno Gazette-Journal*. June 28, 2019. Accessed February 12, 2024. <https://www.rgj.com/story/news/2019/06/28/las-vegas-sahara-hotel-soon-return/1594783001/>.
- Kopytoff, Verne. "A New, Dazzling Las Vegas Downtown." *New York Times*. New York, January 28, 1996., R9.
- KTNV Staff. "Hard Rock Takes Over Operations of the Mirage Hotel-Casino on the Las Vegas Strip." *KTNV.com*. December 19, 2022. Accessed February 12, 2024. <https://www.ktnv.com/news/hard-rock-takes-over-operations-of-the-mirage-hotel-casino-on-the-las-vegas-strip>.
- Lamb, David. "The Las Vegas Game." *The Washington Post*. Washington, November 22, 1970., E10.
- Landrum, Jr., Jonathan and Associated Press. "U2 Concert Opens \$2.3 Billion Sphere in Las Vegas with Oprah, LeBron James, and Paul McCartney Among Star-Studded Audience." *Fortune.com*. October 1, 2023. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://fortune.com/2023/10/01/u2-concert-opens-2-3-billion-sphere-in-las-vegas/>.
- Lardner, Jr., George. "Ex-Casino Owner Tells Court How Mafia Asserted Control." *The Washington Post*. Washington, November 8, 1985., A1.

- Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. "\$1 Billion Las Vegas Convention Center Expansion Debuts with First Major Convention Post-Pandemic." *PRNewswire.com*. June 8, 2021. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/1-billion-las-vegas-convention-center-expansion-debuts-with-first-major-convention-post-pandemic-301308548.html>.
- Las Vegas Magazine Staff. "Hell's Kitchen is Back and Open for Business." *Las Vegas Magazine*. June 4, 2020. Accessed April 9, 2024. <https://lasvegasmagazine.com/dining/2020/jun/04/hells-kitchen-caesars-palace-gordon-ramsay-dining/>.
- Las Vegas News Bureau. "Evel Knievel Jumps the Fountains at Caesars Palace on 12-31-27 in Las Vegas, Nevada." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Accessed January 10, 2024. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/sports/motor-sports/travis-pastrana-to-replicate-3-evel-knievel-jumps-in-las-vegas/attachment/evel-knievel-jumps-the-fountains-at-caesars-palace-on-12-31-67-in-las-vegas-nevada-photo-courtesy-las-vegas-news-bureau-evel-knievel-jumps-the-fountains-at-caesars-palace-on-12-31-67-in/>.
- Lawrence, Christopher. "Danny Koker of Count's Kustoms Keeps Going Hard as 'Counting Cars' Resumes." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. April 7, 2013. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/entertainment/tv/danny-koker-of-counts-kustoms-keeps-going-hard-as-counting-cars-resumes/>.
- Levere, Jane. "Expanded Caesars Palace Enlarges Its Ad Campaign." *New York Times*. New York, November 28 1997., D6.
- Lindsey, Robert. "Foreign Tourists Seek U.S. Bargains." *New York Times*. New York, April 5, 1978., A14.
- Linthicum, Jesse. "Sunlight on Sports." *The Sun*. Baltimore, May 7, 1955., 15.
- Marks, Peter. "Playing Poker with the Medicis." *New York Times*. New York, June 13, 1999., TR11.
- Mathews, Jay. "Record Colorado River Flooding Breaches Hoover's Spillways." *The Washington Post*. Washington, July 4, 1983., A1.
- Mathews, Jay. "U.S. Steps Up Flooding to Prevent Worse." *The Washington Post*. Washington, June 22, 1983., A2.
- McCandless, C.C. "Police: Man Who Climbed Sphere Caused \$100,000 in Damage." *Fox5Vegas.com*. February 9, 2024. Accessed February 12, 2024. <https://www.fox5vegas.com/2023/11/28/pro-volleyball-federation-reveals-vegas-thrill-name-other-team-details/>.

- McCandless, C.C. "Pro Volleyball Federation Reveals 'Vegas Thrill' Name, Other Team Details." *Fox5Vegas.com*. November 27, 2023. Accessed February 8, 2024. <https://www.fox5vegas.com/2023/11/28/pro-volleyball-federation-reveals-vegas-thrill-name-other-team-details/>.
- McFadden, Robert. "Roy Horn, 75, Who Dazzled Audiences as Half of Siegfried and Roy." *New York Times*. New York, May 10, 2020., 35.
- McGeehan, Patrick. "New Jersey Board Approves a Takeover of Atlantic City." *New York Times*. New York, November 10, 2016., A16.
- McKee, Jamie. "Neighborhood Casinos Go Posh." *Las Vegas Business Press*. Volume 11. Issue 37. September 19, 1994., 1.
- McKinley, Jesse. "Doug Henning, a Superstar of Illusion, is Dead at 52." *New York Times*. New York, February 9, 2000., B10.
- McNeil, Martha. "More Flash, Less Cash." *The Washington Post*. Washington, January 17, 2003., E1 and E4.
- Messier, Ashlyn. "After Nearly 2 Decades, Fontainebleau Officially Joins Las Vegas Strip with Lavish Opening." *FoxNews.com*. December 14, 2023. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://www.foxnews.com/lifestyle/after-nearly-2-decades-fontainebleau-officially-joins-las-vegas-strip-lavish-opening>.
- Millstein, Gilbert. "Cloud on Las Vegas' Silver Lining." *New York Times*. New York, March 18, 1956., 213.
- Mitchell, Allison. "Inside Fontainebleau Las Vegas' Celeb-Filled Grand Opening." *Vegas Magazine*. Las Vegas, December 14, 2023. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://vegasmagazine.com/fontainebleau-las-vegas-celebrity-opening>.
- Morago, Greg. "New Casinos, Projects Restore the Thrill to Las Vegas Tourism." *HoustonChronicle.com*. April 27, 2023. Accessed February 12, 2024. <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/lifestyle/hcmagazine/article/las-vegas-travel-new-hotels-attractions-17870899.php>.
- Moran, Malcolm. "The Davis Secret: 'Just Win, Baby.'" *New York Times*. New York, January 23, 1984., C4.
- Mosier, Jeff. "Nathaniel Jones Park Steeped in Southwest Valley History." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Las Vegas, October 1, 2012. Accessed June 23, 2023. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/uncategorized/nathaniel-jones-park-steeped-in-southwest-valley-history/>.

- Murphy, Mildred. "Carbo is Indicted on Ten Counts of Undercover Ties to Boxing." *New York Times*. New York, July 25, 1958., 1 and 20.
- Nagourney, Adam. "Hopes for Easy Economic Jackpot Quickly Evaporate." *New York Times*. New York, December 23, 2010., A19.
- Narvaez, Alfonso. "Former Senator Alan Bible, 78; Nevadan Was Advocate of Parks." *New York Times*. New York, September 14, 1988., B7.
- Neff, Erin. "Political, Business Leader Jones Dies at 89." *Las Vegas Sun*. Las Vegas, November 19, 2001. Accessed September 5, 2023. <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2001/nov/19/political-business-leader-jones-dies-at-89/>.
- Ngu, Ash, Julie Turkewitz, K.K. Rebecca Lai, Anajali Singhvi, and Sergio Pecanha. "After the Las Vegas Shooting, the Nation Moved On." *New York Times*. New York, October 2, 2018., A14.
- Noble, Kenneth. "Las Vegas Upgrading Dowdy Fremont Street." *New York Times*. New York, April 23, 1995., XX3.
- NVEnergy. *Company History*. Accessed October 6, 2023. <https://www.nvenergy.com/about-nvenergy/our-company/history>.
- Olmsted, Larry. "Bye Bye Monte Carlo: Las Vegas Casino Resort Being Replaced." *Forbes.com*. June 6, 2016. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/larryolmsted/2016/06/06/bye-bye-monte-carlo-las-vegas-casino-resort-being-replaced/?sh=835a60185d52>.
- Olmsted, Larry. "Las Vegas' Oldest Steakhouse Still Charms." *USAToday.com*. August 18, 2016. Accessed February 12, 2024. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/columnist/greatamericanbites/2016/08/18/las-vegas-oldest-steakhouse-still-charms/88823166/>.
- Parsons, Louella. "Vegas Took the Beatles in Stride." *The Washington Post*. Washington, August 26, 1964., A18.
- Partlow, Joshua. "The Colorado River Drought Crisis: How Did This Happen? Can It Be Fixed?" *The Washington Post*. Washington, February 5, 2023. Accessed February 6, 2024. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/02/05/colorado-river-drought-explained/>.
- Pattie, James Ohio. *The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie of Kentucky*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc. 1966.
- Pickens, Pat. "To Las Vegas, Hockey in the Desert Isn't So Strange: A Gambling Town Bids for Hockey." *New York Times*. New York, January 30, 2016., D1.

- Picou, Tommy. "Tommy's Corner." *Chicago Daily Defender*. Chicago, October 18, 1961., 23.
- Pileggi, Nicholas. *Casino*. New York: Open Road Integrated Media. 1995.
- Pollack, Andrew. "Tough Odds as Casinos Multiply." *New York Times*. New York, November 1, 1998., BU7.
- Porterfield, Byron. "News of Realty: Sale on East Side." *New York Times*. New York, March 16, 1966., 69.
- Pugmire, Lance. "UFC, T-Mobile Arena Strike Multiyear Exclusive Deal for Las Vegas Fight Cards." *Los Angeles Times*. March 3, 2017. Accessed February 22, 2024.
<https://www.latimes.com/sports/boxing/la-sp-sn-ufc-t-mobile-arena-las-vegas-exclusive-20170303-story.html>.
- Pulley, Brett. "What's Doing in Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, March 7, 1999., TR10.
- Purdum, Todd. "A Colorful Lawyer is Running for Mayor." *New York Times*. New York, May 2, 1999., 25.
- Radcliff, Donnie. "Nevada's Friendly Tradition." *The Washington Post*. Washington, June 27, 1977., B1.
- Radosta, John. "Grand Prix Racing in Las Vegas Debut." *New York Times*. New York, October 17, 1981., 21.
- Reckert, Clare. "Teamsters Pension Fund Plans to Back Las Vegas Hotel Deal." *New York Times*. New York, June 6, 1974., 55.
- Red Rock Canyon Website. Accessed May 25, 2023.
<https://www.redrockcanyonlv.org/la-madre-spring/>.
- Reinhold, Robert. "Long Viewed as Safe from Slumps, Las Vegas Finally Feels the Recession." *New York Times*. New York, January 2, 1992., A14.
- Reppert, Ralph. "Bingo: As Many as 700 People at a Time Play at This Hall in Southern Maryland, for Prizes that Range All the Way from \$10 Up to \$1,000." *The Sun*. Baltimore, March 12, 1967., SM16.
- Rhoden, William. "Las Vegas Hits Jackpot in a Record Runaway." *New York Times*. New York, April 3, 1990., A1.
- Rice, Diana. "News and Notes from the Field of Travel." *New York Times*. New York, May 20, 1956., 147.

- Richtel, Matt. "Las Vegas Casinos, In Shift of Position, Back Online Betting." *New York Times*. New York, May 17, 2001., A1 and C2.
- Riley, Brendan. "7 Years Plus Teamster Loans Make a Las Vegas Millionaire." *The Washington Post*. Washington, March 8, 1972., A2.
- Ritter, Ken. "Casino Mogul Adelson Pulls Out of Raiders-Vegas Stadium Deal." *APNews.com*. January 30, 2017. Accessed April 10, 2024. <https://apnews.com/general-news-aff33311772b4aa3b41083a7258f63ae>.
- Rivlin, Gary. "In Las Vegas, Too Many Hotels Never Seem to Be Enough to Fill the Need." *New York Times*. New York, April 24, 2007., C1.
- Rivlin, Gary. "When 3rd Place on the Rich List Isn't Enough." *New York Times*. New York, January 17, 2008., C1.
- Robbins, Liz. "For Las Vegas, It's Showtime: City Has Got the Game; It Wants a Team." *New York Times*. New York, February 11, 2007., G1.
- Robledo, Anthony. "Las Vegas Teased Its Record-Breaking MSG Sphere on July Fourth. Here's What to Know About It." *USAToday.com*. July 6, 2023. Accessed February 13, 2024. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/2023/07/05/msg-sphere-las-vegas-what-to-know/70385946007/>.
- Ryan, Cy. "Nevada Soon May be Known as Atomic State." *Chicago Daily Defender*. Chicago, January 8, 1962., 9.
- Sandomir, Richard. "Las Vegas's Mayor Tries to Attract a Pro Team." *New York Times*. New York, July 17, 2005., G8.
- Segal, David. "With Loopy Bellagio, Vegas Raised the Stakes- and the Tab." *The Washington Post*. Washington, May 2, 1999., E1.
- Shea, John. "Tropicana, Site of A's New Las Vegas Stadium, Will Close April 2." *San Francisco Chronicle*. January 29, 2024. Accessed February 8, 2024. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/sports/athletics/article/tropicana-site-a-s-new-las-vegas-stadium-close-18635929.php>.
- Sheckells, Melinda. "Las Vegas \$2.3 Billion 'Sphere' Makes Media Debut." *Los Angeles Magazine*. July 24, 2023. Accessed February 12, 2024. <https://lamag.com/entertainment/las-vegas-sphere-experience-sound>.
- Shoaff, Roseanne. "The Art of Hoover Dam." *Boulder City Magazine*. December 2010/January 2011. Accessed April 11, 2024. https://www.bouldercitymagazine.com/past_issues/2010/2010_decjan/history.html.

- Shoemaker, Stowe and Dina Marie Zemke. "The 'Locals' Market: An Emerging Gaming Segment." *Journal of Gambling Studies*. Volume 21. December, 2005., 379-410.
- Siano, Joseph. "An Even Faster Crowd Arrives at Las Vegas Speedway." *New York Times*. New York, September 18, 1996., B11.
- Siano, Joseph. "Las Vegas in Spades." *New York Times*. New York, December 8, 1996., XX14.
- Siklos, Richard. "Savor Those Curly Fries: Planet Hollywood is Back (Again)." *New York Times*. New York, September 24, 2007., C1.
- Simonds, Wm. Joe. Bureau of Reclamation. Reclamation History. *The Boulder Canyon Project: Hoover Dam*. Accessed July 24, 2023. <https://www.usbr.gov/history/hover.html>.
- Smith, Jedediah and C. Hart Merriam. "Earliest Crossing of the Deserts of Utah and Nevada to Southern California: Route of Jedediah S. Smith in 1826." *California Historical Society Quarterly*. Volume 12. Number 3. Berkeley, October, 1923., 228-236.
- Spano, Susan. "Las Vegas on a Small Stake." *New York Times*. New York, October 26, 1997., TR6.
- Sterba, James. "Howard Hughes Dies at 70 on Flight to Texas Hospital." *New York Times*. New York, April 6, 1976., 73.
- Sterngold, James. "The Stratosphere in Las Vegas Comes Down Out of the Clouds." *New York Times*. New York, June 28, 1996., D6.
- Sterngold, James. "Turning Rockers into High Rollers." *New York Times*. New York, November 1, 1995., D1.
- Stout, Wayne. *Hosea Stout: Utah's Pioneer Statesman*. Salt Lake City. 1953.
- Strine, Gerald. "Only Nevada's in the Race." *The Washington Post*. Washington, October 22, 1974., D7.
- Stutz, Howard. "In 2023, Las Vegas Saw Its Highest Visitation Totals Since Before the Pandemic." *The Nevada Independent*. January 25, 2024. Accessed February 14, 2024. <https://thenevadaindependent.com/article/in-2023-las-vegas-saw-its-highest-visitation-totals-since-before-the-pandemic>.
- Stutz, Howard. "Tributes Pour In as Las Vegas' McCarran Airport Renamed After Harry Reid." *The Nevada Independent*. December 14, 2021. Accessed February 14, 2024. <https://thenevadaindependent.com/article/tributes-pour-in-as-las-vegas-mccarran-airport-renamed-after-harry-reid>.
- Sudjic, Deyan. "High Rollers Bet on Sphinx." *The Guardian*. London, December 29, 1993., A4.

- Suro, Roberto. "Sands Bloom with Growth in Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, September 17, 1990., A1.
- Sutton, Horace. "Travel With Me: Hoover Dam 'Shocks' Million Visitors Yearly." *The Sun*. Baltimore, February 6, 1955., A21.
- Taafee, William. "Las Vegas Monorail Rolls Above Strip Traffic." *New York Times*. New York, July 25, 2004., TR3.
- Taubman, Howard. "Mozart in Las Vegas: When Sun Comes Up in 'Sin City,' the Action Often Turns to Culture." *New York Times*. New York, December 6, 1966., 57.
- Taylor, F. Andrew. "Much of Rick's Restorations Duo's Relationship Has Taken Place on TV – Video." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. February 12, 2016. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/local-las-vegas/downtown/much-of-ricks-restorations-duos-relationship-has-taken-place-on-tv-video/>.
- Taylor, Frank. "He Puts Rivers to Work: Meet Frank T. Crowe, Who Can Make Rivers Stand Still-Or Run Backwards-To Play a Vital Part in America's Defense Program." *The Sun*. Baltimore, September 14, 1941., MA4.
- Thackrey, Ted. "Single Ace, Nerve Win Poker Title." *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles, May 20, 1973., A1 and A5.
- Thomas & Mack Center Website. *Our History*. Accessed October 5, 2023. <https://www.thomasandmack.com/history/>.
- Toppe, Joe. "Inside the Las Vegas MSG Sphere." *FoxBusiness.com*. November 18, 2023. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://www.foxbusiness.com/lifestyle/inside-las-vegas-msg-sphere>.
- Tran, Mark. "It's Renoir and Chip at \$1.9bn Casino." *The Guardian*. London, October 15, 1998., 21.
- Trebay, Guy. "After Nice, A Return to Vice." *New York Times*. New York, June 8, 2003., ST1 and 5.
- Turner, Wallace. "Las Vegas: Gambling Take Creates New Force in U.S." *New York Times*. New York, November 18, 1963., 1 and 27.
- Turner, Wallace. "Howard Hughes Captures Imagination of Las Vegas as He Fashions Nevada Empire." *New York Times*. New York, January 14, 1968., 69.
- United Press International. "Aladdin Hotel Sold for \$16.5 Million." *Progress Bulletin*. Pamaona, February 18, 1971., 2.

- United Press International. "Another Wheel at Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, October 5, 1963., 42.
- United Press International. "Beatles Gambling Lives in Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, August 21, 1964., 15.
- United Press International. "Elvis Weds." *The Washington Post*. Washington, May 2, 1967., A3.
- United Press International. "Four Sentenced in Flamingo Skimming Case." *Nevada State Journal*. Reno, April 28, 1973., 2.
- United Press International. "Guy M'afee, 72, Dies." *New York Times*. New York, February 21, 1960., 92.
- United Press International. "Hoover Dam Bill is Signed." *New York Times*. New York, August 20, 1984., B11.
- United Press International. "Las Vegas Hotel Owners Seek Sugar Ray Title Go." *Daily Defender*. Chicago, October 15, 1958., A22.
- United Press International. "Las Vegas Reports Howard Hughes III at the Desert Inn." *New York Times*. New York, December 2, 1966., 21.
- United Press International. "Liston to Box Patterson in Las Vegas June 27 at Top Ticket Price of \$500." *New York Times*. New York, April 25, 1963., 29.
- United Press International. "Missing Pastor Found Working as Shill in Casino." *The Washington Post*. Washington, November 27, 1958., C6.
- Unknown Author. "Arizona Loses." *New York Times*. New York, May 24, 1931., E1.
- Unknown Author. "Army Asks to Keep 85 AAF Stations: Lists Fields, Depots, Schools and Other Installations It Wants in America." *New York Times*. New York, October 6, 1945., 12.
- Unknown Author. "Army to Send 850 to Guard Boulder Dam." *The Washington Post*. Washington, April 24, 1941., 5.
- Unknown Author. "Best Western PLUS Casino Royale Becomes Only Chain Hotel on Las Vegas Strip." *HotelExecutive.com*. December 27, 2012. Accessed February 12, 2024. <https://www.hotelexecutive.com/newswire/43538/best-western-plus-casino-royale-becomes-only-chain-hotel-on-las-vegas-strip>.
- Unknown Author. "Dam Boosters on Coast Trip." *Imperial Valley Press*. El Centro, July 21, 1923., 1.

- Unknown Author. "Del Webb Buying Las Vegas Hotel." *New York Times*. New York, September 19, 1964., 24.
- Unknown Author. "Describes Battle with Canyon Rapids." *New York Times*. New York, December 4, 1927., N1.
- Unknown Author. "Elgin May Solicit Chemetron Stock." *New York Times*. New York, April 28, 1969., 55 and 58.
- Unknown Author. "Ella's 'Lover's Gold' Causes New 'Gold Rush.'" *The Chicago Defender*. Chicago, July 23, 1949., 26.
- Unknown Author. "Ex-Teamster Chief Admits Lying in His '82 Trial." *New York Times*. New York, November 3, 1985., 37.
- Unknown Author. "Fabled Mystery Man Howard Hughes." *New York Times*. New York, August 9, 1961., 43.
- Unknown Author. "Fitzsimmons-Sharkey Fight: About the Only Topic at San Francisco: The Battle Being Fought Over and Over Again by Men in Almost Every Vocation of Life." *Sacramento Daily Union*. Sacramento. Volume 92. Number 106. December 5, 1896., 1.
- Unknown Author. "Gambling Ship Owner Still Blocks Raiders." *New York Times*. New York, August 3, 1939., 3.
- Unknown Author. "Harrah's and Caesars Seeking to Sell 4 Casinos to Protect Merger." *New York Times*. New York, August 31, 2004., C4.
- Unknown Author. "Harrah's is Buying Big Las Vegas Hotel." *The Sun*. Baltimore, August 11, 1998., 2C.
- Unknown Author. "Hotel Man, T.E. Hull, Dies." *The Sun*, Baltimore, July 18, 1964., 9.
- Unknown Author. "Hurricane Sweeps Arizona Film Camp." *New York Times*. New York, November 30, 1927., 22.
- Unknown Author. "Imagination Runs Wild at Las Vegas Resorts." *New York Times*. New York, November 7, 1993., XX3.
- Unknown Author. "Irish Holiday." *The Washington Post*. Washington, March 16, 1934., 3.
- Unknown Author. "Jaffe Named Defendant in \$10 Million Suit." *The Hammond Times*. Munster, April 26, 1960., 17.
- Unknown Author. "Johnson Requests \$45.5 Million to Start Western Power Grid." *New York Times*. New York, July 30, 1964.,33.

Unknown Author. "Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority Acquires Assets of the Las Vegas Monorail." *Exhibitor*. December 9, 2020. Accessed April 9, 2024. <https://www.exhibitoronline.com/news/article.asp?ID=21191>.

Unknown Author. "Las Vegas Ranch Resort." *Las Vegas Age*. Las Vegas, Volume 1. Number 27. October 7, 1905.

Unknown Author. "Local Intelligence." *The Pioche Weekly Record*. Pioche, July 26, 1884, Accessed April 23, 2024, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86091346/1884-07-26/ed-1/seq-3/>, 3.

Unknown Author. "Local Intelligence." *The Pioche Weekly Record*. Pioche, August 2, 1884, Accessed April 23, 2024, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86091346/1884-08-02/ed-1/seq-3/>, 3.

Unknown Author. "New Las Vegas Lacrosse Team Named 'Desert Dogs.'" *ColoradoMammoth.com*. April 26, 2022. Accessed February 8, 2024. <https://coloradomammoth.com/news/new-las-vegas-lacrosse-team-named-desert-dogs/>.

Unknown Author. "New MGM Grand Complex." *New York Times*. New York, September 20, 1989., D20.

Unknown Author. "News of Realty: Las Vegas Sale." *New York Times*. New York, August 15, 1967., 61.

Unknown Author. "Pat and the President." *New York Times*. New York, July 15, 1938., 16.

Unknown Author. "Primary Election." *The Pioche Daily Record*. Pioche, October 1, 1872, Accessed April 23, 2024, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84022048/1872-10-01/ed-1/seq-1/>, 1.

Unknown Author. "Senator McCarran Reminisces About 'America's Sweetheart.'" *The Washington Post*. Washington, March 23, 1934., 13.

Unknown Author. "Sinatra, Davis, Dean Martin in Film; Also Cabaret Act." *Chicago Defender*. Chicago, November 10, 1959., 21.

Unknown Author. "Strip Visionary McDonald Dies." *Las Vegas Sun*. Las Vegas, July 9, 2002. Accessed August 29, 2023. <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2002/jul/09/strip-visionary-mcdonald-dies/>.

Unknown Author. "'The Bookie'." *The Pioche Weekly Record*. Pioche. November 9, 1906. Accessed April 24, 2024. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86091348/1906-11-09/ed-1/seq-2/>, 2.

- Unknown Author. "The Celebration Yesterday." *The Deseret News*. May 12, 1869. Accessed March 26, 2024. <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/desnews2/id/39884/rec/48.>, 7.
- Unknown Author. "The Champion of Silver." *New York Times*. New York, May 13, 1890., 5.
- Unknown Author. "The Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight: Heavy-Weight Championship of the World: Victory for the Australian: A Severe Contest." *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Sydney, March 19, 1897., 6.
- Unknown Author. "The Hoover Dam: Why is it Art Deco?" *HighEndWeekly.com*. June 13, 2012. Accessed April 11, 2024. <https://www.highendweekly.com/the-hoover-dam-why-is-it-art-deco/>.
- Unknown Author. "The Los Vegas Silver Mines." *The Deseret News*. April 3, 1861. Accessed March 25, 2024. <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=Aul-kAQHnToC&dat=18610403&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.>, 2.
- Unknown Author. "Truman Signs Bill Naming Hoover Dam." *The Washington Post*. Washington, May 1, 1947., 7.
- Unknown Author. Untitled. *The Farmers' Cabinet*. Volume 67. Number 43. Amherst, May 13, 1869., 2.
- Unknown Author. "Urges Magnesium for Civilian Uses." *New York Times*. New York, March 14, 1944., 12.
- Unknown Author. "Utility Offering \$5,500,000 Bonds." *New York Times*. New York, May 12, 1959., 52.
- Unknown Author. "Vive Las Vegas! The Strip's New Hotel." *New York Times*. New York, September 12, 1999., 220.
- Unknown Author. "Wynn-ingways." *The Washington Post*. Washington, November 18, 1979., TV18.
- Unknown Author. "25th Year Noted at Hoover Dam." *New York Times*. New York, January 31, 1960., 40.
- Unknown Author. "4,000 Airports Built, But New York City Owns None of Them." *New York Times*. New York, June 27, 1927., 1.
- Unknown Photographer. *Petroglyph Wall*. Red Rock Canyon. Accessed May 25, 2023. <https://www.redrockcanyonlv.org/petroglyph-wall-trail/>.

- Uranga, Rachel. "SoCal to Vegas in Two Hours? High-Speed Rail Comes Closer to Reality with \$3-Billion Award." *Los Angeles Times*. December 5, 2023. February 9, 2024.
<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-12-05/socal-to-vegas-in-two-hours-high-speed-rail-comes-closer-to-reality-with-3-billion-award>.
- Vecsey, George. "Casino Owner is a Globetrotter for a Moment." *New York Times*. New York, February 18, 1996., S4.
- Watson, Peter. "Nevada's Big Bang for the High Rollers." *The Observer*. London, October 1993., A7.
- Weber, Bruce. "Lefty Rosenthal, Kingpin in Las Vegas, Dies at 79." *New York Times*. New York, October 19, 2008., 31.
- White, Ben. "Consolidation on the Strip Faces Antitrust Scrutiny." *The Washington Post*. Washington, July 16, 2004., E1 and E5.
- White, Caleb. "How Many Bodies Have Been Found in Lake Mead? Hundreds Waiting to Be Discovered as Water Level Continues to Drop." *The Science Times*. August 22, 2023. Accessed February 6, 2024.
<https://www.sciencetimes.com/articles/45548/20230822/many-bodies-found-lake-mead-hundreds-waiting-discovered-water-level.htm>.
- Wicker, Tom. "Johnson's Great Society - - Lines are Drawn." *New York Times*. New York, March 14, 1965., E3.
- Wilkerson, W.R. *Hollywood Godfather: The Life and Crimes of Billy Wilkerson*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press. 2018.
- Winchell, Walter. "Walter Winchell...of New York: Memos About Las Vegas." *The Washington Post*. Washington, May 1, 1953., 53.
- Wines, Michael. "States in Parched Southwest Take Steps to Bolster Lake Mead." *New York Times*. New York, December 18, 2014., A26.
- Wright, Robert. "A Dim Las Vegas Wonders What Its Odds Are in the Fuel Crisis." *New York Times*. New York, December 12, 1973., 49.
- Wright, Robert. "M-G-M Opens 2,100-Room Las Vegas Hotel." *New York Times*. New York, December 6, 1973., 71.
- Wright, Robert. "What's Doing in Las Vegas." *New York Times*. New York, January 27, 1974., 484.
- Wyatt, Keith. "'Wide Open,' Las Vegas Surprises the Easterner With Open Gambling, Licensed Joints, Nevada Town Recalls Frontier Days." *The Sun*. Baltimore, May 1, 1938., SM3.

Young, A.S. Doc. "Good Morning Sports." *Weekend Chicago Defender*. Chicago, July 11, 1981., 52.

Zinoman, Jason. "How Carrot Top Still Wins in Vegas: Despite Ridicule, the Comic Has Had 13 Years of Sold-Out Shows." *New York Times*. New York, May 7, 2018., C1.

Secondary Sources

Journal Articles

Basile, Frank. "Visiting Vegas (While Steering Clear of the Tempting Slots)." *Indianapolis Business Journal*. Indianapolis. Volume 34. Issue 45. December 30, 2013.

Blitz, Matt. "The History of the All You Can Eat Buffet." *Food & Wine*. June 22, 2017. Accessed August 29, 2023. <https://www.foodandwine.com/news/enlightenment-age-swedes-vegas-gamblers-history-all-you-can-eat-buffet>.

Britsch, R. Lanier. "Church Beginnings in China." *Brigham Young University Studies*. Volume 10. Number 2. Winter, 1970., 161-172.

Broxmeyer, Jeffrey. "The Boss's 'Brains': Political Capital, Democratic Commerce and the New York Tweed Ring, 1868-1871." *Historical Sociology*. Volume 28. Issue 3. September, 2015., 374-403.

Chiaventone, Frederick. "James Butler 'Wild Bill' Hickok." *Cowboys & Indians*. January 16, 2018. Accessed May 20, 2024. <https://www.cowboysindians.com/2018/01/james-butler-wild-bill-hickok/>.

Clements, Kendrick. "Herbert Hoover and Conservation, 1921-33." *The American Historical Review*. Volume 89. Number 1. February, 1984., 67-68.

Clendenen, Clarence. "General James Henry Carleton." *New Mexico Historical Review*. Volume 30. Number 1. January 1, 1955., 23-43.

Duchemin, Michael. "Water, Power, and Tourism: Hoover Dam and the Making of the New West." *California History*. Bowling Green, Volume 86. Issue 4. 2009., 60-78, 87-89.

Dudney, Robert. "Namesakes: Billy Nellis." *Air & Space Forces Magazine*. May 1, 2020. Accessed August 24, 2023. <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/article/namesakes-billy-nellis/>.

Dumke, Glenn. "Mission Station to Mining Town: Early Las Vegas." *Pacific Historical Review*. Volume 22. Number 3. 1953., 257-270.

- Franke, Paul. “‘Nobody Came to Monte Carlo to Be Bored’: The Scripting of the Monte Carlo Pleasescape 1880-1940.” *Journal of Urban History*. Volume 48. Issue 6. May 27, 2022., 1247-1260.
- Gardner, Martin. “Doug Henning and the Giggling Guru.” *Skeptical Inquirer*. Volume 19. Issue 3. May-June 1995., 9.
- Gragg, Larry. “Las Vegas: Who Built America’s Playground?” *History Today*. February, 2007., 51-58.
- Grinder, Brian and Dan Cooper. “William Andrews Clark and the War of the Copper Kings.” *Financial History*. Issue 106. Spring, 2013., 10-12.
- Havas, Adrian. Remodeling Prepares Golden Gate for Future.” *Las Vegas Business Press*. Volume 10. Issue 21. July 12, 1993., 11.
- Hulse, James. “W.A. Clark and the Las Vegas Connection.” *Montana The Magazine of Western History*. Volume 37. Number 1. Winter, 1987., 48-55.
- Illia, Tony. “Battle Born State.” *Southwest Contractor*. Phoenix. Volume 65. Issue 1. January 1, 2003.
- Jensen, Andrew. “History of Las Vegas Mission.” *Nevada State Historical Society Papers 1925-1926*. Nevada Historical Society., 207.
- Jones, Karen. “‘The Old West in Modern Splendor’: Frontier Folklore and the Selling of Las Vegas.” *European Journal of American Culture*. Volume 29. Number 2. July 1, 2010., 93-110.
- Kirby, Leo. “A Civil War Episode in California – Arizona History.” *Arizoniana*. Volume 2. Number 1. Spring, 1961., 20-23.
- Klara, Robert. “Glow in the Dark.” *Adweek*. New York. Volume 63. Issue 18. September 19, 2022., 30.
- Kroeber, A.L., Clifton Kroeber, R.C. Euler, and A.H. Schreoder. “The Route of James O. Pattie on the Colorado in 1826: A Reappraisal by A.L. Kroeber.” *Arizona and the West*. Volume 6. Number 2. Summer, 1964., 119-136.
- May, Allan. “The History of the Race Wire Service.” *Crime Magazine*. October 14, 2009.
- Moreau, Dan. “Travel & Leisure: Rollin’ on the River.” *Kiplinger’s Personal Finance Magazine*. Volume 45. Issue 8. August 1991., 69.
- Mueller, Meg. “Helen Stewart: First Lady of Las Vegas.” *Nevada Magazine*. May-June 2020. Accessed July 5, 2023. <https://nevadamagazine.com/issue/may-june-2020/13327/>, 1.

- National Park Service. Lake Mead National Recreation Area. *The Lost City*. Accessed June 25, 2023. <https://www.nps.gov/lake/learn/the-lost-city.htm>.
- Parish, John. "Jedediah Strong Smith-Pathfinder." *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California*. Volume 13. Number 3. Berkeley. 1926., 267-269.
- Rafferty, Kevin. "The Virgin Anasazi and the Pan-Southwestern Trade System, A.D. 900-1150." *Kiva*. Volume 56. Number 1. 1990., 2-24.
- Rogers, J. David. "How Boulder Canyon Dam Ended Up in Black Canyon as Hoover Dam." *World Environmental and Water Resources Congress 2020: Nevada and California Water History*. May 14, 2020., 66-80.
- Roske, Ralph and Michael Green. "Octavius Decatur Gass: Pah-Ute County Pioneer." *The Journal of Arizona History*. Volume 29. Number 4. Winter, 1988., 371-390.
- Rothschild, Mark. "The Anasazi Petroglyphs of the Red Rock Canyon." Mark Rothschild Photography. <https://www.markrothschildphoto.com/blog/2015/3/8/the-anasazi-petroglyphs-of-the-red-rock-canyon>.
- Starr, Kevin. "Watering the Land: The Colorado River Project." *Southern California Quarterly*. Volume 75. Number 3/4. Fall/Winter, 1993., 303-332.
- Townley, Carrie. "Helen J. Stewart: First Lady of Las Vegas Part 1." *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*. Volume 16. Number 4. Winter, 1973. Reno., 215-244.
- Unknown Author. "Elvis Presley and Priscilla Beaulieu, Aladdin Hotel in Las Vegas, NV after Wedding on May 1, 1967." *Statesville Record and Landmark*. Statesville, May 1, 2021., A2.
- Unknown Author. "The Buffet is Born." *Incentive*. April, 1999., 28.
- Van Housen, Caty. "He Wheels, Deals, Just Like Magic." *San Diego Business Journal*. Volume 14. Issue 50. December 13, 1993., 8.
- Winkler, Albert. "The Circleville Massacre: A Brutal Incident in Utah's Black Hawk War." *Utah Historical Quarterly*. Volume 55. Number 1. Salt Lake City. 1987.

Monographs

- Ainlay, Jr., Thomas and Judy Gabaldon. *Las Vegas: The Fabulous First Century*. San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing. 2003.
- Balboni, Alan. *Beyond the Mafia: Italian Americans and the Development of Las Vegas*. Reno: University of Nevada Press. 1996.

- Clary, David. *Gangsters to Governors: The New Bosses of Gambling in America*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 2017.
- Cullotta, Frank and Dennis Griffin. *The Rise and Fall of a 'Casino' Mobster: The Tony Spilotro Story Through a Hitman's Eyes*. Newburyport: Wildblue Press. 2017.
- Davies, Richard and Kathleen Szawoila. *The Main Event: Boxing in Nevada from the Mining Camps to the Las Vegas Strip*. Reno: University of Nevada Press. 2014.
- Denton, Sally and Roger Morris. *The Money and the Power: The Making of Las Vegas and its Hold on America, 1947-2000*. New York: Vintage Books. 2002.
- Dixon, Kathryn. *Marilyn*. Charlotte: TAJ Books International LLC. 2013.
- Endy, Eric. *Paul S. Endy Jr.: Las Vegas Casino Gaming Legend*. Meadville: Fulton Books. 2022.
- Gragg, Larry. *Bugsy's Shadow: Moe Sedway, "Bugsy" Siegel, and the Birth of Organized Crime in Las Vegas*. Albuquerque: High Road Books. 2023.
- Hirth, Kenneth. *The Aztec Economic World: Merchants and Markets in Ancient Mesoamerica*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2016.
- Land, Barbara and Myrick Land. *A Short History of Las Vegas*. Reno: University of Nevada Press. 2004.
- Littlejohn, David, ed. *The Real Las Vegas: Life Beyond the Strip*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1999.
- Mappen, Marc. *Prohibition Gangsters: The Rise and Fall of a Bad Generation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 2013.
- McCracken, Robert. *Las Vegas: The Great American Playground*. Reno: University of Nevada Press. 1997.
- Meltzer, David. *First Peoples in a New World: Colonizing Ice Age America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.
- Moehring, Eugene and Michael Green. *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*. Reno: University of Nevada Press. 2005.
- Moehring, Eugene. *Reno, Las Vegas, and the Strip: A Tale of Three Cities*. Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press. 2014.
- Moehring, Eugene. *Resort City in the Sunbelt, Second Edition: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*. Reno: University of Nevada Press. 2000.

- Paher, Stanley. *Las Vegas As it Began – As it Grew*. Las Vegas: Nevada Publications. 1971.
- Papa, Paul. *Boulder City: The Town that Built the Hoover Dam*. Charleston: The History Press. 2017.
- Reed, T.A. *The Blue and White: A Record of Fifty Years of Athletic Endeavour and the University of Toronto*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1945.
- Reid, Ed and Ovid Demaris. *The Green Felt Jungle*. New York: Ishi Press International. 1963.
- Renshaw, Patrick. *Franklin D. Roosevelt*. London: Routledge. 2004.
- Rodriguez, Placido, Brad Humphreys, and Robert Simmons, ed. *The Economics of Sports Betting*. Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing. 2017.
- Roman, James. *Chronicles of Old Las Vegas: Exposing Sin City's High-Stakes History*. New York: Museyon. 2011.
- Roth, Barbara and Maxine McBrinn. *Late Holocene Research on Foragers and Farmers in the Desert West*. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press. 2016.
- Rothman, Hal. *Neon Metropolis: How Las Vegas Started the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Routledge. 2002.
- Sanchez, Joseph. *Explorers, Traders and Slavers: Forging the Old Spanish Trail, 1678-1850*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press. 1997.
- Schwartz, David. *Suburban Xanadu: The Casino Resort on the Las Vegas Strip and Beyond*. New York: Routledge. 2013.
- Sheehan, Jack. *The Players: The Men Who Made Las Vegas*. Reno: University of Nevada Press. 1997.
- Sussman, Jeffrey. *Sin City Gangsters: The Rise and Decline of the Mob in Las Vegas*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield. 2023.
- Thompson, William. *The International Encyclopedia of Gambling*. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, LLC. 2009.
- Weber, David. *The Spanish Frontier in North America: The Brief Edition*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2009.
- Wehr, Kevin. *America's Fight Over Water: The Environmental and Political Effects of Large-Scale Water Systems*. New York: Routledge. 2004.

- Wilson, Des. *Ghosts at the Table: Riverboat Gamblers, Texas Rounders, Internet Gamers, and the Living Legends Who Made Poker What it is Today*. Philadelphia: Da Capo Press. 2008.
- Wiltshire, Richard, David Gilbert, and Jerry Rogers, ed. *Hoover Dam: 75th Anniversary History Symposium*. Las Vegas: American Society of Civil Engineers. 2010.
- Wright, Frank. *Nevada Yesterdays*. Las Vegas: Dorothy Wright and Stephens Press, LLC. 2005.
- Zoglin, Richard. *Elvis in Vegas*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2019.

Other Materials

- ABC's Wide World of Sports*. Roone Arledge. 1961.
- Cameron, James. *Titanic*. 20th Century Studios and Paramount Pictures. 1997.
- Coppola, Francis. *The Godfather*. Paramount Pictures. 1972.
- Green, Michael. "A Prehistory of Vegas Visits." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Las Vegas. March 11, 2023.
- Gilligan's Island*. Rodney Amateau. 1964.
- Griffith, Martin. "Descendant: Capones Paved Way for Nevada Gambling." *Tahoe Daily Tribune*. South Lake Tahoe. May 28, 2012. Accessed August 17, 2023. <https://www.tahoedailytribune.com/news/descendant-cazones-paved-way-for-nevada-gambling/>.
- Hopkins, A.D. "John C. Fremont." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Las Vegas. February 7, 1999. Accessed June 22, 2023. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/john-c-fremont/>.
- Horwath, Brian. "Oldest Las Vegas Casino, Golden Gate, Celebrates 115 Years on Fremont Street." *Las Vegas Sun*. Las Vegas. January 15, 2021. Accessed January 29, 2024. <https://m.lasvegassun.com/news/2021/jan/15/oldest-las-vegas-casino-golden-gate-celebrates-115/>.
- Jaffe, Herb. "Hughes Originally Envisioned Summerlin as Site for Aircraft-Related Industries." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Las Vegas. February 14, 2014. Accessed November 7, 2023. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/local-columns/herb-jaffe/hughes-originally-envisioned-summerlin-as-site-for-aircraft-related-industries/>.
- Jones, Jay. "Harrah's Las Vegas Marks 80th Year with a \$140-million Renovation of its Guest Rooms." *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles. March 19, 2018. Accessed January 31, 2024. <https://www.latimes.com/travel/lasvegas/la-tr-las-vegas-harrahs-turns-80-20180316-story.html>.

Kessler, Stephen. *Vegas Vacation*. Warner Bros. 1997.

Koch, Ed, Mary Manning and Dave Toplikar. "Showtime: How Sin City Evolved into 'The Entertainment Capital of the World.'" *Las Vegas Sun*. Las Vegas, May 15, 2008. Accessed September 8, 2023. <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2008/may/15/evolution-worlds-entertainment-capital/>.

Masters, Catherine. "Monaco: Lair of the Rich and Richer." *New Zealand Herald*. October 5, 2017., Accessed May 13, 2024. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/travel/monaco-lair-of-the-rich-and-richer/3BLJFSPYJULSISED5HCSHKUI6Y/>.

Milestone, Lewis. *Ocean's Eleven*. Warner Bros. 1960.

Newboles, Alec. "Looking Back at F1's Caesars Palace Grand Prix in Las Vegas." *Fox5Vegas.com*. November 20, 2023. Accessed January 31, 2024. <https://www.fox5vegas.com/2023/11/21/first-las-vegas-grand-prix/>.

News 3 Staff. "92 Years Ago Gaming Got its Start on the Las Vegas Strip." *News3LV.com*. November 26, 2022. Accessed August 16, 2023. <https://news3lv.com/news/local/92-years-ago-gaming-got-its-start-on-the-las-vegas-strip>.

Powers, Ashley. "Tourists Revisit the Cold War at Nevada Test Site." *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles, July 17, 2011. Accessed October 6, 2023. <https://www.latimes.com/world/la-xpm-2011-jul-17-la-na-nevada-test-site-20110717-story.html>.

Rand, Wes. "400-foot Cowboy Boots and Dueling San Franciscos: The Strip that Could've Been." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Las Vegas. November 28, 2022. Accessed January 31, 2024. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/the-strip/400-foot-cowboy-boots-and-2-san-franciscos-the-strip-that-couldve-been-2680462/>.

Rinella, Heidi. "Buffet Bonanza." *New York Times*. New York. 2006., Accessed August 29, 2023. https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/fodors/top/features/travel/destinations/unitedstates/nevada/lasvegas/fdrs_feat_87_7.html?n=Top%252FFeatures%252FTravel%252FDestinations%252FUnited+States%252FNevada%252FLas+Vegas.

Scorsese, Martin. *Casino*. Universal Pictures. 1995.

Shoro, Mike. "Nevada's Oldest Casino Turns 90." *Las Vegas Review Journal*. Las Vegas. July 30, 2021. Accessed August 4, 2023. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/business/casinos-gaming/nevadas-oldest-casino-turns-90-2410326/>.

Sidney, George. *Viva Las Vegas*. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. 1964.

Unknown Author. "Celebrity Chefs' Restaurants on the Vegas Strip." *USAToday.com*. June 23, 2016. Accessed April 9, 2024. <https://www.usatoday.com/picture-gallery/travel/experience/food-and-wine/2016/06/23/celebrity-chefs-restaurants-on-the-vegas-strip/85000434/>.

Unknown Author. "Las Vegas Known for its Trendy, Ultrachic Nightclubs." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Las Vegas. July 16, 2009. Accessed August 17, 2023. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/las-vegas-known-for-its-trendy-ultrachic-nightclubs/>.

Unknown Author. "Mandalay Bay Celebrates 2 Decades on the Las Vegas Strip." *8NewsNow.com*. Las Vegas. March 1, 2019. Accessed January 30, 2024. <https://www.8newsnow.com/news/local-news/mandalay-bay-celebrates-2-decades-on-the-las-vegas-strip/>.

Unknown Author. "The Rat Pack." *Las Vegas Sun*. Las Vegas. October 13, 2023. Accessed October 13, 2023. <https://lasvegassun.com/photos/galleries/1905/may/15/rat-pack/817/>.

Unknown Author. "Venetian Resort Turns 20: A Look at How the Property Has Evolved Over the Years." *8NewsNow.com*. Las Vegas. May 3, 2019. Accessed January 30, 2024. <https://www.8newsnow.com/news/local-news/venetian-resort-turns-20-a-look-at-how-the-property-has-evolved-over-the-years/>.