

The original *State of Deseret* established by Brigham Young and the Mormons included portions of coastal Southern California. Mormon colonies were established in San Bernardino and Las Vegas.

In April 1855, Brigham Young, head of the Mormon Church, announced that a mission would be established in the Las Vegas Valley, then part of the New Mexico Territory. On June 14 of that year a party of thirty missionaries and forty ox-drawn wagons arrived in the valley and selected a site about 4 miles east of the Las Vegas Springs. The missionaries cleared the land of mesquite and brush and planted crops (alfalfa, squash, potatoes, beans, melons, grain, and turnips) and fruit trees, and they began the construction of the Las Vegas Fort. Today this site is at the southeast corner of Las Vegas Boulevard and Washington Avenue.

The United States Army had sent Lieutenants George M. Wheeler and D. W. Lockwood on a reconnaissance of the West in 1869. In their preliminary report to congress published in 1875 they commented on the practicalities and difficulties of moving freight between Southern California and Utah.

#### OLD SALT LAKE ROAD.

This was crossed by us in the field of our explorations at two points, one a little below West Point, on the Muddy, the other at Las Vegas Ranch.

This road, so much used at one time in the winter season by the Mormons in freighting into Southern Utah, is long, and sandy in the extreme. The stretches between waters from the Cajon Pass to Saint George are long and tedious, and the camps, at which grazing and wood are scarce, numerous. Its former uses no longer obtain, as it is found much cheaper to freight to the most remote and southern settlements in Utah from the Central Pacific Railroad.

Callville was established with the hope that water-facilities might lighten the extravagant prices of all supplies freighted in by land from the California coast, but before the completion of even a landing or a store-house, was abandoned.

#### ROUTES TRAVERSED BY MORMONS IN 1857.

The Mormons, looking forward to active operations with the troops ordered to their section under General Johnston in 1857, and for secure shelter in case of being driven from their mountain homes, sent out two expeditions to seek for fertile mountain retreats to the westward.

One party, consisting of twenty-six wagons, leaving Beaver City passed west to Hawaiah Springs, then across Desert and Lake Valleys, until the pass where the Patterson mines now are was found.

Beyond this point the route was the same as the one followed by our parties from Steptoe Valley, which inviting valley having been found by them, they returned upon nearly the same route.

The other party, leaving the settlements farther to the south along the valley of the Upper Rio Virgen, made their way into what is now known as Meadow Valley, thence to Pahranagat Valley, and, passing to the northward, reached Sierra Valley, an uninviting situation; thence they found their way to the tracks of the other parties, and made their return upon them.

Our return trip from Hawaiah Springs to camp in Cave Valley, followed their route very nearly.

Barclay  
SP, LA & SL Water Stop

Clover Valley was specifically mentioned in Wheeler's 1875 narrative.

CLOVER VALLEY

contains some eight or ten families and from fifty to seventy-five people. Its waters flow to the southwest and join Meadow Creek, that, farther on, seeks an underground channel to the Muddy. While following down a cañon leading from this valley and coming in below Meadow Valley Cañon, there was considerable pioneering to do; the animals were getting badly worn out, and the grain was exhausted and grass becoming very scarce. It was therefore necessary to push on ahead seventy-five miles to one of the lower settlements, to purchase grain and have it freighted to the train.

Las Vegas was just a remnant of a Mormon outpost in the years before the completion of the W. A. Clark's San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad.



*Las Vegas in 1904*

## **Edward H. Harriman and Senator Willam A. Clark**

The son of an Episcopal minister, Harriman disliked school and dropped out to become a broker's boy when he was 14. To the amazement of the stockbrokers on Wall Street, the young Harriman demonstrated an uncanny ability to pick winning stocks, and he had his own seat on the stock exchange by the age of 21.

Harriman's involvement with railroads began when he attempted to rehabilitate some tired old lines owned by his wife's relatives. He soon developed a passion for every aspect of railroads, from steam technology to traffic flow problems, and he particularly enjoyed reviving once great lines that had fallen on hard times.

In 1897, E. H. Harriman took on his most ambitious railroad project ever: the salvation of the bankrupt Union Pacific Railroad, when a Harriman led investor group paid \$110 million. The first transcontinental line to link East and West, the Union Pacific had once been the queen of railroads but had become an outdated and inefficient money pit. Over 10 years, Harriman restored the Union Pacific to its glory days, transforming it into one of the best-built and -managed lines in the nation. In 1901, Union Pacific acquired a controlling interest in Southern Pacific Railroad.

In pursuit of efficiency and predictable profits, Harriman gradually gained control over many of the central western and southwestern lines in the United States. Alarmed by this concentration of control over a technology that was essential to the American economy, President Theodore Roosevelt sued Harriman for violation of federal antitrust regulations. In 1904, the Supreme Court directed that much of Harriman's system be dissolved.

In 1905, the battle for control of the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad route between Senator W. A. Clark and E. H. Harriman is resolved with Harriman owning fifty percent but Clark maintaining control of the line. The last spike is driven west of the newly platted town of Las Vegas which was auctioned off by Clark the same year. Clark and his railroad acquire rights to many of Las Vegas' newly discovered artesian water wells and organizes the Las Vegas Water and Land Company.

As a result of the antitrust litigation, Harriman became a favorite target for turn-of-the-century resentment of big business, and he was often accused of having built his railroad monopolies simply to increase his own profits. In 1913, the United States Supreme Court orders Union Pacific to sell Southern Pacific Railroad and relinquish control. The truth was more complicated. Harriman certainly sought good profits, but his brilliant transformation of the Union Pacific and other decrepit lines was motivated as much by a desire to maximize efficiency as profits. Frank to the point of bluntness, Harriman rarely deigned to explain and defend his complex ideas about railroads to the public, guaranteeing that he would be largely remembered as little more than a greedy robber baron.

This is the Union Pacific and the E. H. Harriman made famous in the movie *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, that had so much money it could be robbed righteously by Butch's gang.



PHOTO 20 - Trailer Stop



The windmill in the background, May 1911. The photo shows the first time that the windmill was used to pump water to the fields. The windmill was built by the U.S. Reclamation Service and is now owned by the U.S. Forest Service. Source: [The Virginia-Dominion Library Special Collections](#).



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The San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad was promoted as the "Salt Lake Route" displaying a prominent arrowhead in its logo circa 1905.

Artesian water was encountered when the railroad drilled wells looking to provide water for their steam engines in 1902. ". . . if artesian water can be obtained, the valley can be made a magnificent orchard district for apples, pears, plums, prunes, peaches, apricots, nectarines, figs, pomegranates, grapes, walnut, almonds and pecan nuts . . . the Vegas Valley is the most fertile spot along the proposed line of this railroad anywhere between Utah and California."

Clark County, Nevada was separated from Lincoln County and named in honor of William A. Clark, the wealthy former Montana Senator.



## **Harriman, Clark and Huntington**

Harriman and his Union Pacific Railroad, through its various regional subsidiaries such as the Oregon Short Line, needed a terminus for their transcontinental system on the west coast. Excluded from San Francisco (the Western Pacific railroad's terminus), Harriman and his chief rival in the southwest, Collis Huntington of the Southern Pacific Railroad, both maneuvered for control of Los Angeles. Huntington, while he was alive, successfully used his considerable influence in California and Washington to block any railroad from developing San Pedro, with its system of local railway lines, as a viable port and terminus that would compete with the Southern Pacific. Huntington died in 1900, leaving the powerful Southern Pacific Railroad in limbo just when Harriman was consolidating his Union Pacific system. Harriman, in an unexpected and bold move, acquired the Southern Pacific Railroad, removing any obstacle to his extending the lines from Ogden through Nevada to Los Angeles and San Pedro.

But while Harriman was preoccupied with the Southern Pacific deal, William Clark—Montana copper baron, U.S. Senator, and one of the wealthiest men in the United States—made a bold move of his own by acquiring the Los Angeles Terminal Railroad with its harbor property at San Pedro and incorporating a new railroad company to run a line from San Pedro across Nevada to Salt Lake City. Unlike Harriman, Clark was not primarily a railroad man, and his interest was not in running a railroad. Clark's interest was mining, and he recognized how he could tap into the bonanza strikes in Tonopah and Goldfield and the potential of older mines in Southern Nevada if he connected them by railroad to major markets. William Clark's younger brother, J. Ross Clark, who had settled in the burgeoning city of Los Angeles, had invested successfully in the California sugar beet industry. He was very aware of the potential for Southern California produce in the eastern markets and for Los Angeles as a major Pacific port for the export of raw materials.

The Clarks also saw the importance of Salt Lake City—under the entrepreneurial leadership of the Mormon Church—as an important entrepôt, a connection with transcontinental railroads, and a leader in pushing the development of mining and agriculture in southern Utah and southeastern Nevada. For both Clark and Harriman the value of the route across Nevada was freight: ore from the mines, supplies to the mining camps and towns, and California fruit to Salt Lake and the eastern markets.

The ambitions of Clark and Harriman clashed in Nevada. To counter Clark's new railroad, Harriman had the Oregon Short Line push its line south into Nevada, eventually to meet the Union Pacific in California. But the Clark brothers pushed just as hard and just as fast until there were two competing grading teams racing against each other through the narrow Meadow Valley (Las Vegas) wash. Throwing up physical and legal barricades against each other, the two sides quickly reached a stalemate. More important than the bottleneck in Nevada, Harriman and the Union Pacific could easily block Clark's access to Salt Lake City, but had no way into California from Nevada. A compromise was necessary and the two great egos reached an agreement: Harriman acquired half of Clark's railroad and let Clark finish the line, while effectively absorbing the Salt Lake Route into the Union Pacific System. Both men got what they most wanted: Clark, day to day control, publicity, image, and Harriman, ownership and a west coast terminus for Union Pacific.

Artesian Wells in Las Vegas



This 1910 postcard depicts the flowing wells that were found on “every ranch” in Las Vegas. Las Vegas was touted as a Desert Oasis and a future health resort.



Mr. & Ross Clark  
Los Angeles Cal  
Dear Sir,  
The first artesian well drilled on land west of the Big Spring was drilled in this morning at a depth of 208 feet with a flow of 60 million inches. This well is located about five miles from Las Vegas and one mile south of S.P. & S.L.R.R. tracks. I think it would be well to have some one keep in touch with this in connection with the flow at Big Spring there are other wells started there now and since this development more than likely will be many.  
Yours truly,  
Walter Bracken  
Sept. 15, 1912.

This letter written to J. Ross Clark, W.A.'s brother, by Walter Bracken (eventually president of the Las Vegas Land and Water Company, a subsidiary of the railroad) in 1912 cautions about the inevitable increase in the number of wells being drilled into the underground aquifer.

CITY OF LAS VEGAS  
NEVADA  
Howard W. Cannon, City Attorney  
Artesian Well in the Heart of this Desert Oasis  
April 17, 1951  
Mr. W. H. Johnson, Mgr.  
Las Vegas Land & Water Co.  
401 South 2nd Street  
Las Vegas, Nevada

The City of Las Vegas prominently displayed "Artesian Well in the Heart of the this Desert Oasis" on its letterhead during the 1950's.



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The Salt Lake Route was successful and profitable for decades after its completion in 1905.

This 1917 automobile map published in the Automobile Blue Book does not show a direct auto route between Los Angeles and Salt Lake because none existed in 1915, But by 1917 that was corrected, when the Arrowhead Trail was mapped and published by the Automobile Club of Southern California.

The selection of this automobile route did not follow the Los Angeles and Salt Lake railroad for much of its length. So Barclay/ Clover Valley was on the road to becoming the Ghost Town it is often classified as today.

