Tracing the Las Vegas landscape through maps: A cartographic journey through Las Vegas history

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Tracing the Las Vegas Landscape through Maps
A Cartographic Journey Through Las Vegas History
By Kathy Rankin
University of Nevada, Las Vegas Libraries
Fremont Map--1844

• Traders on Spanish Trail probably discovered Las Vegas
• One of earliest maps of this area is the map drawn by Charles Preuss to accompany John C. Fremont’s *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842, and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-44*
• [http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4051_s12_1844_f742.jpg](http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4051_s12_1844_f742.jpg)
Mormon Fort Map--1855

- Facsimile of hand-drawn map of Mormon Fort, the first white settlement at Las Vegas. Originally drawn by colonist John Steele.
- Not drawn to scale. Shows mountains, desert, trees, “tooley” grass, and arrangement of settlement.
- [http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_i3_1855_b532.jpg](http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_i3_1855_b532.jpg)
Johnson Maps—1861 and 1867

• Even after Nevada Territory created in 1861, Las Vegas in New Mexico Territory as seen on 1861 map
• In February 1863, Las Vegas became part of Arizona Territory
• This part of Arizona Territory ceded to Nevada in 1867 as seen on 1867 Johnson map
• http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4300_1861_j63.jpg
• http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4300_1867_j62.jpg
General Land Office Survey Map—1881-1882

- Federal land holdings in Lincoln County surveyed so land could be conveyed to state and individuals
- One set of maps given to State Land Registrar’s Office in Nevada
- Copy conveyed to Lincoln County so the Assessor could prepare the tax rolls
- Lands that became part of Clark County transferred to Clark County Assessor
- [http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/STITCH~1.jpg](http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/STITCH~1.jpg)
Map of Clark’s Las Vegas Townsite--1905

- Stewart Ranch property bought by Senator William Clark of Montana’s San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad in 1902
- Tent settlement owned by engineer J.T. McWilliams grew up west of Las Vegas Ranch, and he registered it as a townsite
- Railroad established its own townsite east of the tracks, and the lots in it were auctioned on May 15, 1905, which is the birth of the town of Las Vegas.
- This official map was notarized on May 8, 1905
- http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_g46_1905_l36.jpg
Las Vegas Valley Showing Artesian Wells Map--1920

- May have been used to promote agricultural settlement as shows cultivated land and wells
- Large tracts of Carey Act land marked as open
- Future Strip marked as Federal Aid Highway
- Shows who largest landowners were
- Map by McWilliams—still shows his settlement as “original town of Las Vegas”
- Shows school district boundaries
- [http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_n44_1920_m28.jpg](http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_n44_1920_m28.jpg)
Map of the City of Las Vegas, Nevada, and Vicinity by R.C. Kenmir--1929

- Shows undeveloped land with names such as the Boulder Canyon Land & Development Co.—influence of construction of dam
- Has inset with location of both Boulder Canyon and Black Canyon, the actual dam site
- More housing developments springing up
- More lots being added to original townsites
- Shows wells and springs and distance of Las Vegas to nearby cities—maybe to attract property buyers
- Shows who owned land then
- Although map was drawn by R.C. Kenmir, the copyright is held by C.D. Baker, who was an engineer who surveyed much of Las Vegas
- [http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_g46_1929_k45.jpg](http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_g46_1929_k45.jpg)
Boulder Canyon Project: The Vicinity of Boulder Dam--1940

- Appearance of Lake Mead after dam finished in 1935
- Submersion of towns St. Thomas and Kaolin
- Shows Las Vegas Airport, which became Nellis Air Force Base eventually
- Still shows Las Vegas Ranch and locations of springs—agriculture still important
- [http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4352_m3_n2_1940_u55.jpg](http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4352_m3_n2_1940_u55.jpg)
City had embraced tourism
Arrowhead-Zion Park Highway has become U.S. 91
Portrays civic virtues of city
More subdivisions built
Doesn’t show El Rancho Vegas, Flamingo, or downtown’s El Cortez—does show Last Frontier

http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_1947_p67_front.jpg
http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_1947_p67_back.jpg
Campbell Realty Company’s General Map of Las Vegas--1957

- More casinos along the Strip, motels and service stations near McCarran Airport
- Civic development and recreational and tourist attractions
- Growth of residential development
- Convention Center
- Nevada Southern University
- http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_1957_c24.jpg
Front Boy Service Co.’s General Map & Street Guide, Greater Las Vegas…1968

- Quotations on map, comments on roads, long title with flowery positive comments about different cities—Las Vegas company
- Shows Sunrise Hospital, Foley Federal building and new casinos
- “Strip” first called “The Strip” on maps in the 60s
- Map shows topography and township and range
- Still shows ranches
- [http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_1968_f76.jpg](http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_1968_f76.jpg)
CreaTours Inc.’s Tourist Las Vegas Street Map--1979

- Tourist map, but also shows cultural activities and shopping centers in addition to casinos, etc.
- Pictorial map of Lake Mead Recreation Area on back with ads mostly for casinos and other places of interest to tourists

- [http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_e635_1979_c74_front.jpg](http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_e635_1979_c74_front.jpg)
- [http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_e635_1979_c74_back.jpg](http://ready.library.unlv.edu/klr/g_4354_l3_e635_1979_c74_back.jpg)
1980s—Decade of the Disaster

- Fire at the MGM Grand (now Bally’s) in 1980, fire at Las Vegas Hilton in 1981, Pepcon Explosion in 1988
- Mint and Horseshoe combined in 1988 to form Binion’s Horseshoe
- Las Vegas growing steadily
1990s—Era of the Mega-Resort

• Large casinos being built—Luxor, Bellagio, Paris, Excalibur, Mandalay Bay
• Old casinos being imploded
• Explosive growth
• Casinos trying to promote culture—adding art galleries, musicals in showrooms
New Millennium—Running Out of Land

- Not many casinos being built—some expanding
- Running out of private land to build on
- New types of maps for tourists