

4-2004

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

Katherine Rankin

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, katherine.rankin@unlv.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/libfacpresentation>



Part of the [American Popular Culture Commons](#), [Cultural History Commons](#), [Library and Information Science Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Rankin, K. (2004, April). Tracing the Las Vegas landscape through maps: A cartographic journey through Las Vegas history. Presentation at Western Association of Map Libraries, Spring Meeting, Chico, CA.

Available at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/libfacpresentation/65>

This Presentation is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Presentation in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Presentation has been accepted for inclusion in Library Faculty Presentations by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

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



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_l3_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>



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



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



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



Map of Las Vegas, Nevada by Porter & White Agency--1947

- 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



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_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

