

CHAPTER 6

CORN CREEK AND THE HISTORY OF LAS VEGAS VALLEY

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The Mojave Desert is a forbidding place, difficult to travel through and extremely hard to live in. From 17th century Spaniards to 20th century Americans, it remained a place to avoid or to get through quickly, full of menacing plants and poisonous snakes, unbearably hot and dry, and a major obstacle to settlement.

The desert's native peoples were adapted to its harsh demands and survived and even thrived in the desert. In historic times, the Hopis, Mohaves, and Paiutes conducted frequent trading expeditions to the Gulf of California and to the coast, creating a network of trails between permanent water holes. Some of these footpaths developed into the historical cross-Mojave routes known as the Old Spanish Trail, the Mormon Road, and the Government Road. The 19th century pack mule and wagon trails made it possible for the Spanish, Mexicans, and Americans to traverse the desert (Crampton and Madsen 1994, Steiner 1997).

Permanent settlement was not attempted until the War with Mexico ended in 1848. Then, in 1855, the Latter Day Saints (LDS) Church established a mission in Las Vegas Valley to serve travelers along the Mormon Road, which began to develop in 1850 when a link between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles became vital to the Mormon economy in Utah. The Las Vegas Mission was charged with befriending the Indians and teaching them Church doctrine and Mormon farming techniques. In 1856, the Las Vegas missionaries opened a lead mine on Mount Potosi, the first lode mine in Nevada and later a beacon to hordes of prospectors. Political problems caused the Mormons to abandon Las Vegas in 1857 (Jensen 1926, Roske 1986).

Prospectors located many valuable minerals in southern Nevada. Gold and silver, lead and copper were found in El Dorado Canyon and the Spring Mountains in addition to huge salt deposits along the Muddy and Colorado rivers (Longwell et al., 1965). Mining camps sprang up in the most out-of-the-way places. They were supported by isolated ranches built along the few permanent water sources found in the Mojave, but the high cost of transportation shadowed every mining company's balance sheet. Even quite rich ore bodies were not profitable given only wagon technology.

For a few years in the late 19th century, Colorado River steamboats hauled ores out to ships that took them to England, Wales, or eastern U.S. smelters, but still only the richest mines could support the high cost of shipping. In southern Nevada, the great ore bodies of El Dorado Canyon, discovered in the late 1850s, stimulated the growth of a cluster of small mining camps served by river steamers. Indeed, El Dorado Canyon was the head of navigation on the Colorado until steamship traffic ceased in the early 20th century. For those few decades, river ports offered a way to reach deep into the desert, but their dominance was challenged almost as early as it began, with the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. The Central Pacific Rail Road (now the Union Pacific [UPRR]) doomed the LDS settlement of Callville to abandonment and ghost town status in 1867. Founded by the Mormons as a river port in 1864, Callville was to be landlocked Utah's link to the sea, but the railroad rendered the steamers obsolete. Railroads offer mobility and speed of transport which river barges could not match, and the LDS Church switched its attention to cooperating on railroad construction (Roske 1986).

The first railroad built through the Mojave Desert was the Atlantic and Pacific Rail Road (APRR, later the Santa Fe, now the Burlington Northern Santa Fe [BNSF]) in 1883. Within 25 years of its completion, numerous long and short rail lines blanketed the desert. Long distance wagon roads fell into disuse; the railroad could take people and goods more quickly, more cheaply and more safely across enormous expanses of formerly inaccessible terrain. The APRR created the nucleus of communities at watering stations along the rails, some of which were important in the wagon road era. Barstow, near a Mojave River wagon road

campsite, and Needles, at a Colorado River crossing, matured into important towns in the western Mojave under the stimulus of railroad commerce (Myrick 1963).

The eastern Mojave experienced the growth of numerous but ephemeral mining camps in the period, but without affordable, dependable transportation, most bloomed very briefly. Only with the construction of the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Rail Road (SPLA&SLRR, now part of the UPRR), completed through the east Mojave in 1905, did the area attract permanent settlements. The railroad bought the old Las Vegas Ranch, whose nucleus was the historic Las Vegas (Mormon) Fort, taking its water and building a town to house its workers. Such was the humble beginning of Las Vegas, the self-described “entertainment capital of the world.”

Once the region was linked by rail to Los Angeles and Salt Lake, economic benefits grew exponentially. Along the line, the railroad stimulated development of quarries, mines and farms. In southern Nevada, shipments of fruits, vegetables, and alfalfa from the Muddy River Valley were hauled to market by the same engines that moved cattle from the Spring Mountain Ranch, gypsum from Blue Diamond, and lead and zinc ore from Goodsprings and Potosi. The relationship between the railroad and the boom in these products is direct and clear. Mine production increased as shipping costs lowered, and small railroad lines were built to connect mining camps with places that could process the ores.

Corn Creek came into this picture with the construction of the Las Vegas and Tonopah Rail Road in 1906 (Myrick 1963:455-503). Although the line lasted but 12 years, Corn Creek was an important stop along the old freight and stage line between Las Vegas and the newly developing towns of Rhyolite and Beatty. As a dependable watering hole on the long road between Las Vegas and Pioche, the county seat of the area until 1909, and the gold fields at Tonopah and Goldfield, Corn Creek was important to all who traveled to the north.

Corn Creek history divides naturally into three phases that overlap slightly: Railroad (1890-1919), Ranching (1914-1939), and Refuge (1939-1953). Use of the land and water through time changed with the economic focus of the region, and with decisions at the federal level about use of public lands. The history of Corn Creek presented below also overlaps the Ethnohistoric Period covered previously in this chapter. The threshold of change in land ownership and use is marked by the advent of mapping by the General Land Office (GLO) surveyors in the early 1880s. The systematic division of the open lands of the West into rectangles artificially applied to the landscape made the land available for Anglo-Europeans to claim, but at the expense of the Paiutes, whose points of reference were natural features. Things would never be the same thereafter.

RAILROAD PERIOD, 1890-1919

Industrial developments in southern Nevada, in railroad construction and the mines they sought to serve provided the most important stimulus to change at the end of the 19th and opening of the early 20th centuries. The isolated springs known as Corn Creek felt these impulses as much as any promising ledges of precious metals. Construction of railroads in southern Nevada in turn depended on locating the ore bodies and securing outside investment in transportation of the valuable ores. Since railroads of the period were steam powered, water sources must also be available at regular intervals along the route. Proposals to build a railroad between the harbor at San Pedro, California to the Union Pacific Railroad near Salt Lake City dominated discussions about transportation needs in the West during the 1890s (Myrick1963). The need to move unprocessed ores mined from the desert interior to mills, smelters, and shipping points on the coast sweetened the prospects for investors, who purchased stock in the rail lines and the towns built to serve them. Speculating in land was one of the major avenues to prosperity for the careful investor. The story of Corn Creek Springs and the land around them in the first decade and a half of the 20th century braids together all of these strands of southern Nevada history.

Land Use

Although the Paiutes did not return to Corn Creek, occupation and use “by the whites” at Corn Creek was continuous beginning early in the 20th century. In fact, before Roger Benn was born into the Whispering Ben family, several individuals filed on the land, but evidently no one took up permanent residence there until after 1900. Wheeler’s map of his Reconnaissance was the first to identify Corn Creek, which he named “Corral Creek,” but he found no one there in October of 1869 (Wheeler 1869) (Figure 6.1). The General Land Office surveyors, Woods and Myrick, did not find anyone or any structures there in 1882 (GLO 1882a) (Figure 6.2). By then, however, there was a link between Las Vegas Valley and Pahrump Valley, as well as to Belmont, the Nye County seat, via a wagon road to Indian Springs, thence west or north, depending on the destination (GLO 1881, 1882a). The road that passed Corn Creek was identified by Woods and Myrick as the “Road from Ash Meadows to El Dorado Canyon,” and two tracks from the north converged at Corn Creek, while only one continued south toward Las Vegas. The eastern fork was probably the wagon road that linked the Pahranaगत Valley and settlements north of it to Las Vegas. The Mormon Well Road through the Sheep Range was not depicted on the 1881 and 1882 GLO plats. Traffic may have passed via a rough trail approximating these roads, but they do not appear on maps until the 1908 Las Vegas Quadrangle (USGS) (Figure 6.3) and the Freudenthal map (1908) (Figure 6.4).

During the 1880s and until the end of the century, rumors were rife concerning construction of a railroad to link Salt Lake City with Los Angeles (Myrick 1963: 622-626). Although the specific route would not be known until surveys made in the early 20th century were completed, the prospect caused much interest in land located along any of several possible routes. In 1880, the federal government gave to the State of Nevada the land encompassing Corn Creek (21 Stat. 287). The first recorded filing at Corn Creek was made in 1893, when Abel E. Thomas of Keystone [Mine, near Goodsprings], Nevada contracted with the State of Nevada to purchase 40 acres located in the NW4 of the SE 1/4, Section 34, T17S, R59E (Nevada, State Lands Office, 1893). This land is located just south of Corn Creek Springs, which are in the north half of Section 34, T17S, R59E. There are no records of any competing claims for Corn Creek Springs, and it is not clear why Thomas did not file on them. Thomas, a miner, was well known in the Yellow Pine and El Dorado Canon mining districts. Very likely he thought he was filing on the land that contained the springs. If so, the inadequate General Land Office surveys and maps produced in the 1880s dashed his hopes. Not until the early 20th century would there be accurate surveys made, proving that the springs were located north of this filing.

Helen J. Stewart, then owner of the famous Las Vegas Ranch, is listed as “agent” for Thomas on the State of Nevada Land Agreement in 1893, witnessed by her son, William J. Stewart. H. J. Stewart made the payments on this parcel until the land was patented to Thomas in 1904 (Nevada State Lands, App. No. 11384). Thomas deeded the land to her in 1894 (Letter, Thomas to Stewart, 1894), although she did not record this transaction until 1905. Why Stewart did not purchase this land directly from the state is unknown. The parcel was not developed during this period, and whether or when Stewart discovered that she did not own the springs nearby is also not known.

Corn Creek Springs and 640 acres of land around them were filed on by Mary C. Godfrey and Horace S. Godfrey of Cook County, Illinois, on June 8, 1896. Each transacted separately. Mary Godfrey filed on the North ½ of Section 34, T17S R59E, and Horace contracted to purchase the abutting parcel to the north, the South ½ of Section 27. The Godfreys were both represented by an agent, G. C. Kirby, of Los Angeles, CA.

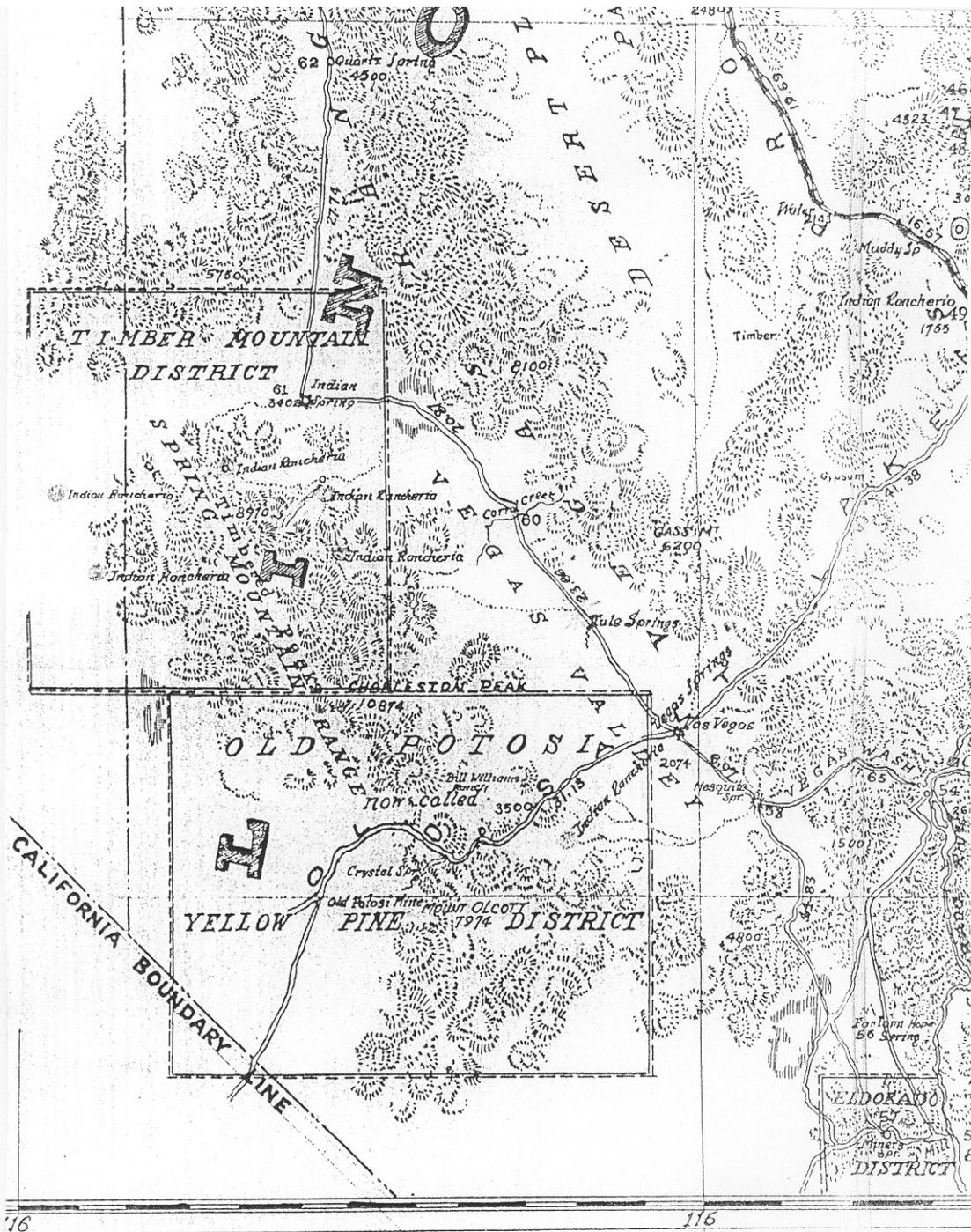


Figure 6.1. Wheeler map of 1869 with the location of Corn Creek.

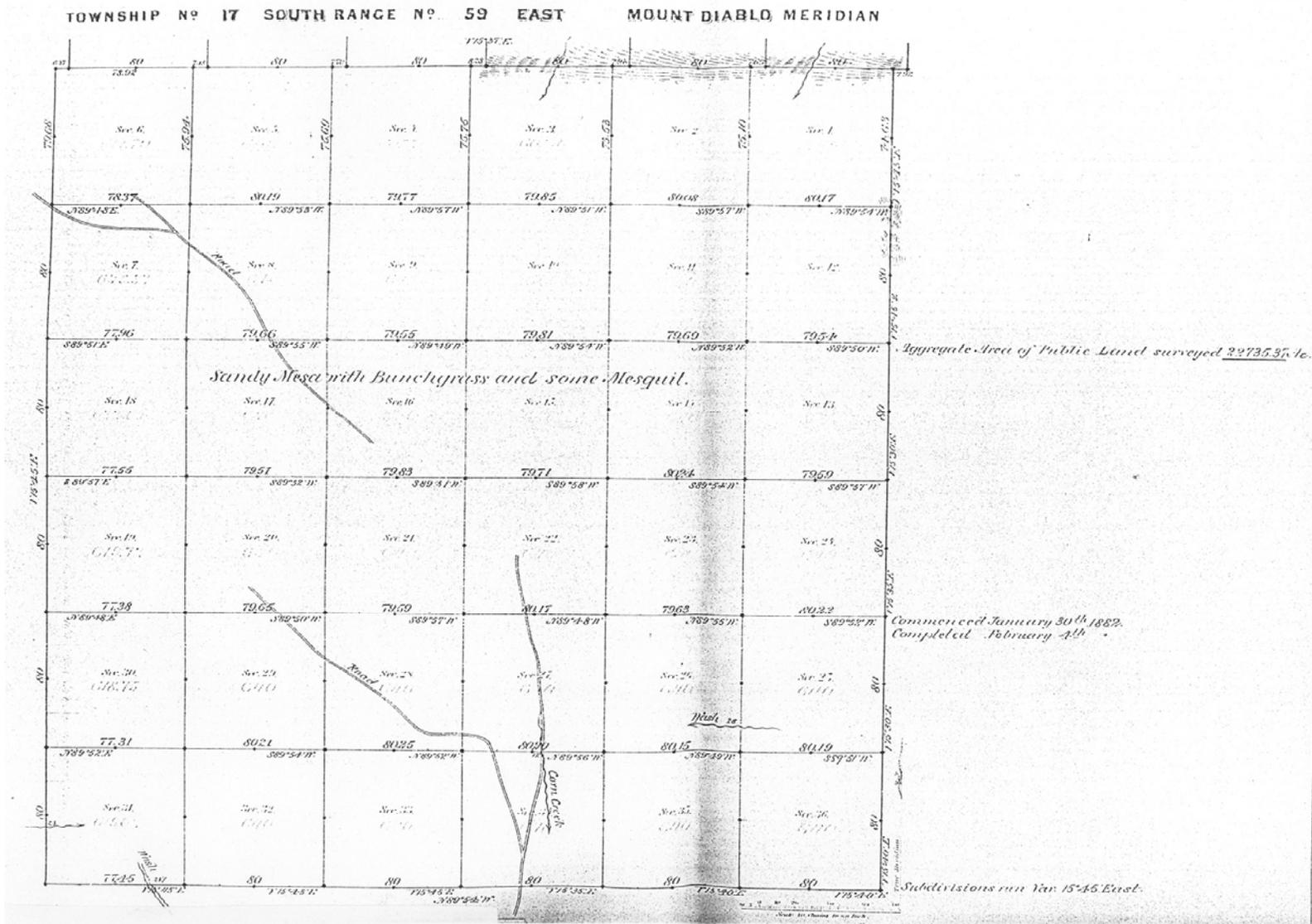


Figure 6.2. GLO Plat, 1882, T17S, R59E.

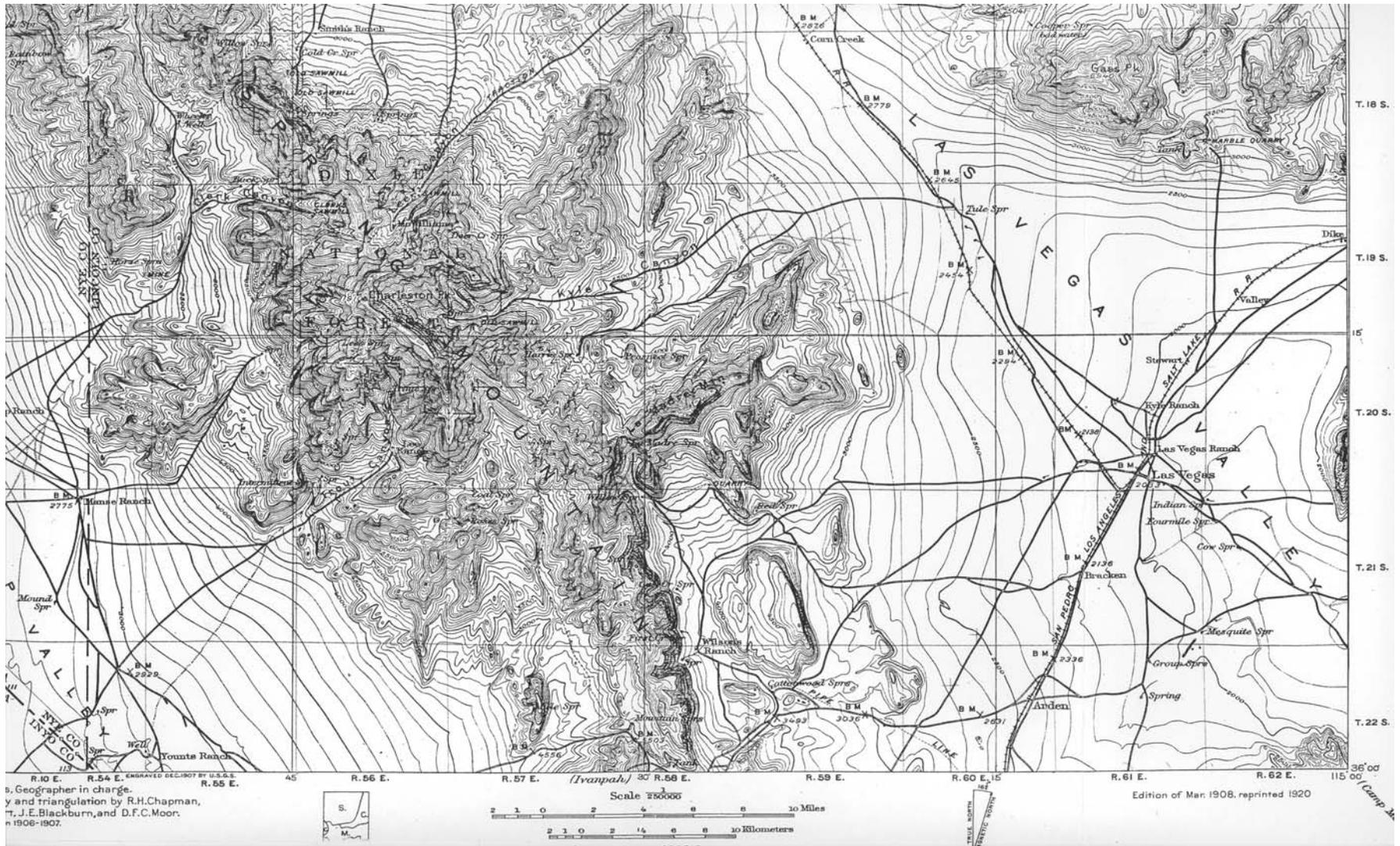


Figure 6.3. 1908 (Reprinted 1920) map of Nevada-California, Las Vegas Quadrangle.

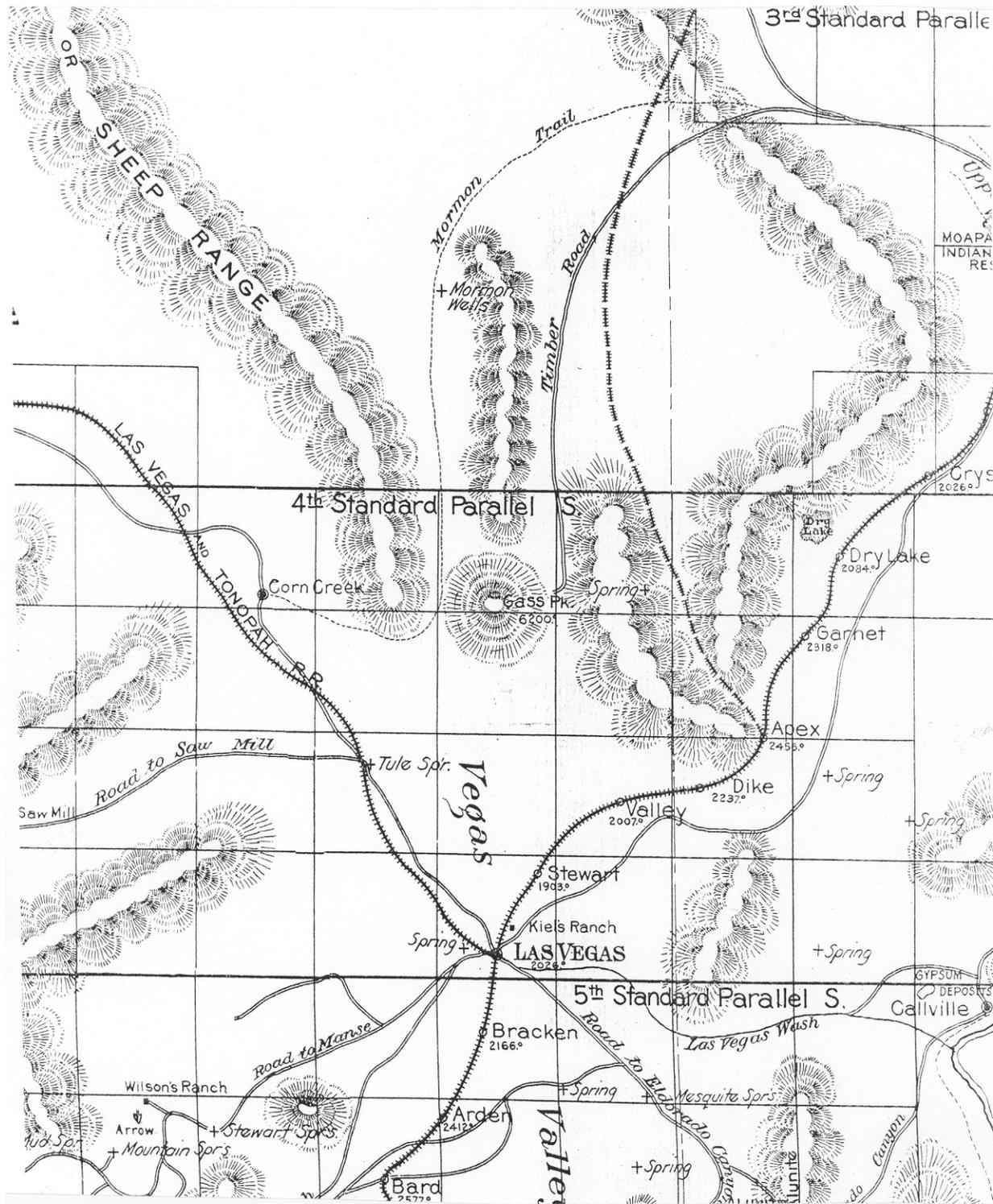


Figure 6.4. H.E. Freudenthal, comp., Map of Lincoln County, Nevada (1"= 6 miles), 1908.

Horace Godfrey made thirteen payments on his contract, which was dated April 27, 1899, but failed to make payment on the fourteenth installment, and forfeited the parcel (State of Nevada, Land Department, Contract No. 1915). Mary Godfrey paid faithfully on her contract (No. 9016, App. 12681, April 27, 1899). In 1916, she sold her parcel to George C. and Clara B. Richardson, who made the 1917 and all remaining payments, and received patent to the land on May 7, 1923. Their address was listed as Corn Creek, Las Vegas P.O., Nevada (State of Nevada, Land Department, Contract No. 1916).

Mary Godfrey sold Corn Creek to the Richardsons on condition they pay her \$1300 in gold coin, as well as refund to her the amount of the unpaid purchase, plus interest paid by Godfrey to the State of Nevada. Godfrey affirmed in the document (Instrument 14806, Clark County Records, Deeds 7: 246) that a survey and plat made by surveyor J. T. McWilliams on November 16, 1916 found that the springs were located on her land. Finally, Godfrey stipulated that the Richardsons were to pay to "one S. B. Nay" an amount agreed upon by Nay for the improvements previously made. The arrangements between Godfrey and Nay, and between Nay and the Richardsons, are obscure. No record of agreement among the parties referred to or implied by the 1916 indenture cited above has surfaced. The extent of the improvements by Nay remains unknown, and whether or not Mary Godfrey ever saw Corn Creek cannot be established. Her agent for this sale was located in Los Angeles, and she signed the indenture in Cook County, Illinois.

Between 1899 and 1916, there were many changes in the prospects for development of southern Nevada generally, and of Corn Creek in particular. By 1899, it was definite that a railroad would be built through southern Nevada, linking the area to Salt Lake and Los Angeles. Nevada's mining prospects improved immensely with the discovery of valuable gold deposits at Tonopah in 1900, and at Goldfield in 1903. Miners explored much of the desert between Las Vegas and Indian Creek and areas to the north and west, including Death Valley, central Nevada, and Oasis Valley. The famous Bullfrog claim was filed in 1904. The discoveries were too distant from markets to be profitable if the ores were hauled by wagon, but they were rich enough to entice investors to build railroads into the region. Competing investors eventually collided at Gold Center and Bullfrog, near modern Beatty. Three separate railroads were constructed into the area, although they did not arrive simultaneously.

Corn Creek increased in value as it began to serve the massive freighting teams heading north from Las Vegas with goods that arrived via the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Rail Road (SPLA&SL), which opened up southern Nevada in 1905. The very next year saw the beginning of rail line construction from Las Vegas to Indian Springs and then to Gold Center, depot for the mines at Rhyolite and Bullfrog. This rail line was constructed by Sen. William Clark and his brother, J. Ross Clark, separately from their interests in the SPLA&SLRR (Figures 6.5 and 6.6). They purchased right of way and graded roadbed previously developed for the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad by F. M. "Borax" Smith, and chose a site along the track near Corn Creek for a siding where steam engine boilers could be filled with water. This selection resulted in plans by others to develop a ranch, and even a resort, at Corn Creek Springs, located about one and one-half miles northeast of the siding. It also stimulated the first filing on water at the Springs, made by the railroad in 1907. This early period of development is sparsely documented, but enough can be gleaned to offer a picture of life at Corn Creek in the early 20th century.

The parcel of land described as the SE 1/4 of the S 1/2 of Section 34, T 17S, R57E adjoined the Mary Godfrey parcel along the south boundary. There were no springs located on the property, but nonetheless (or perhaps because no survey had yet been done to locate the springs precisely) a number of entrepreneurs began to take an interest in it once a railroad through the valley became probable (Myrick 1963: 455). Helen Stewart, a savvy local investor whose Las Vegas Ranch was the core property of the SPLA&SLRR, recorded the A. E. Thomas patent to the land at Corn Creek which she had owned since 1894, on March 15, 1905. On March 30, 1905, she sold the property to Gustave Werner (Lincoln County Records, Deeds: V: 325) for \$3000. In the first issue of the *Las Vegas Age* newspaper (April 7, 1905: 4),

MAY 1ST, 1910

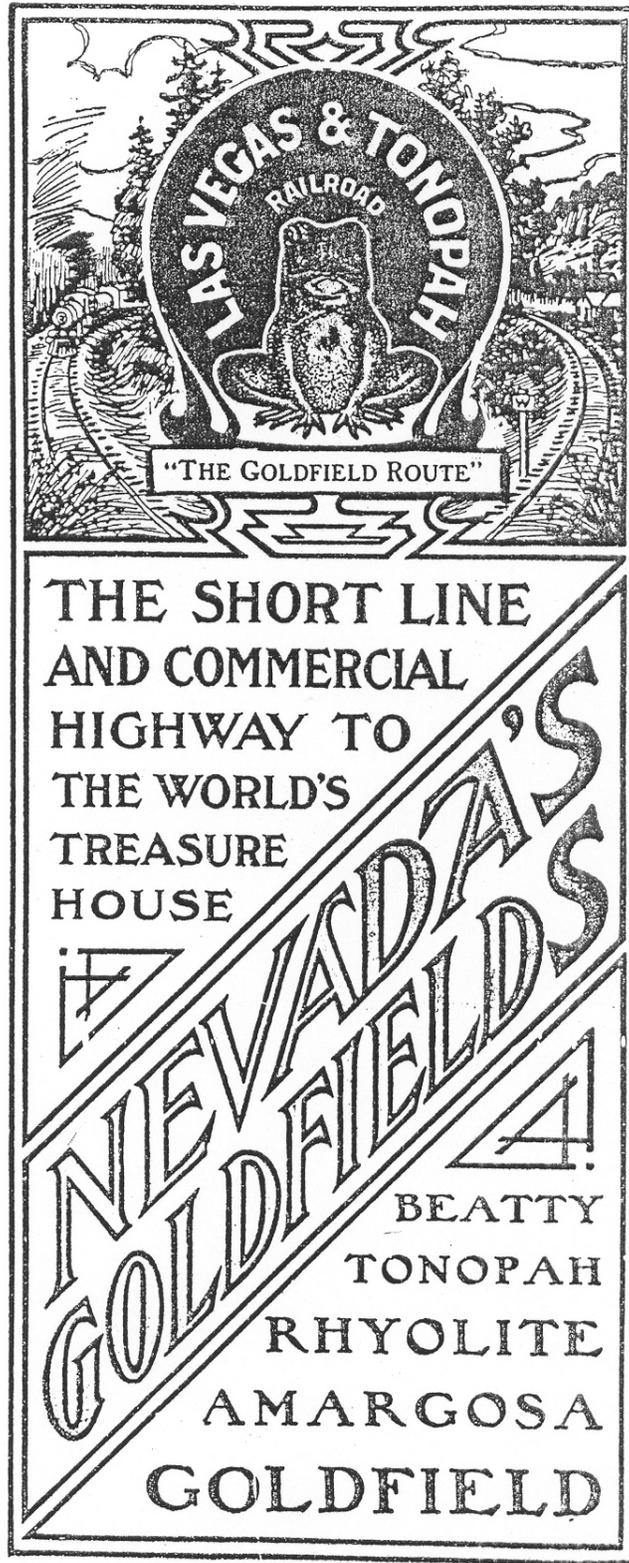


Figure 6.5. Las Vegas & Tonopah Railroad with the Bullfrog logo (Myrick, 1963).

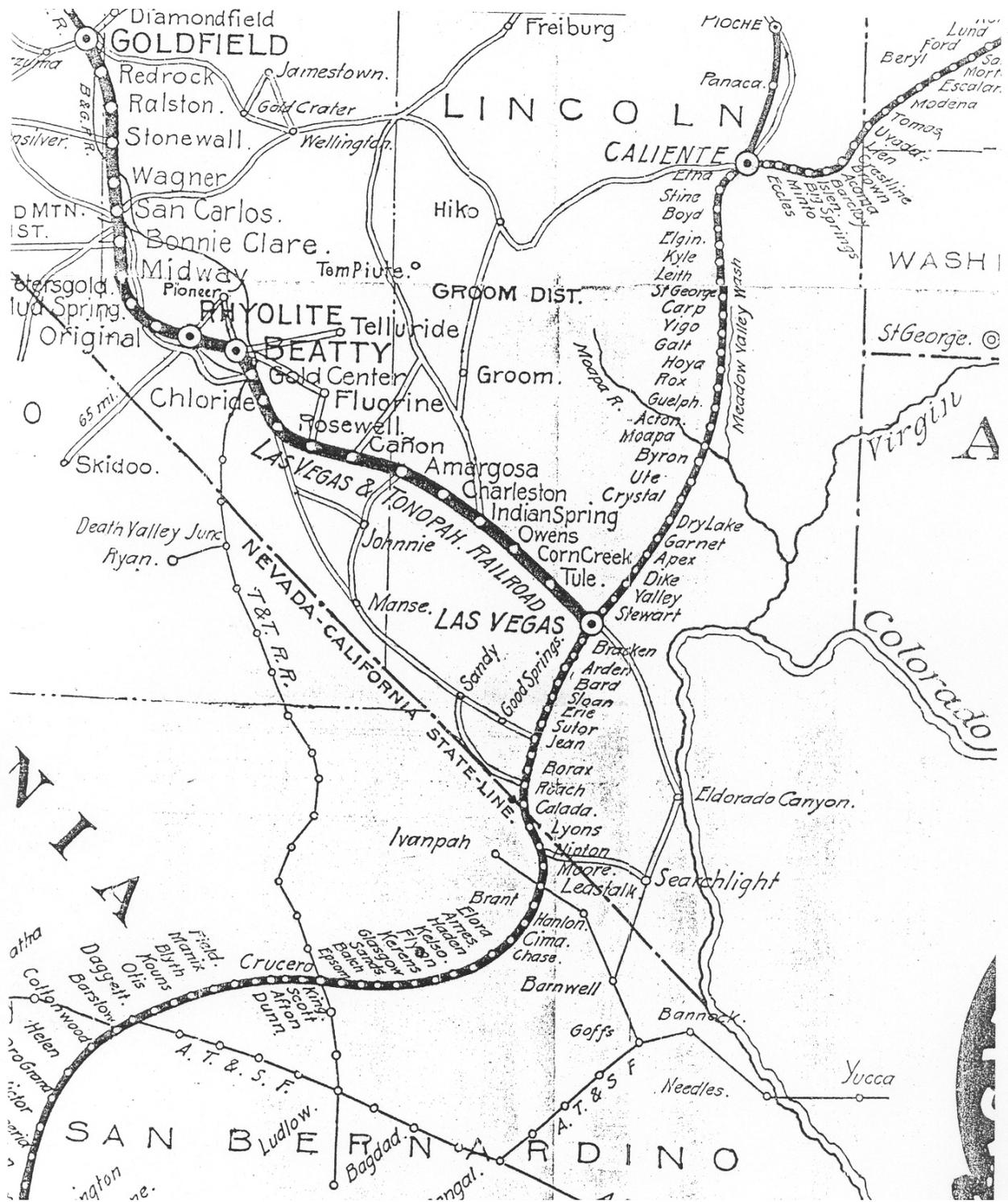


Figure 6.6. Route of the Las Vegas & Tonopah Railroad, circa 1910 (Myrick, 1963).

Wilhelm Werner announced plans to build a hotel at the site, but within two weeks, he was offering to sell because “other business matters were taking up so much of his time.” On page one of the *Age* for April 21, Werner offered a guarantee of the title, noting that the land was free from all encumbrances, and was “unsurpassed” as a “resort proposition.” The paper noted that the price would be cheap at \$10,000, but the asking price was “about half that amount.”

Werner undoubtedly had just learned that the springs were not located on his Corn Creek parcel, a fact that retarded its development. Although the *Age* believed Werner owned them (April 21, 1905:1) the springs actually erupted on the Godfrey parcel to the north. While Mary and Harvey Godfrey seem not to have pursued actively any plans to ranch or irrigate from the springs, others had plans for Corn Creek, which are faintly reflected in the public record and in the newspapers. Corn Creek was a “beautiful, fertile and restful halt camp” situated on the road between Las Vegas and “the Bullfrog,” the “richest mining district in the state,” according to the *Age* (April 21, 1905: 1). It was the “first night camp” for freighters, and until the railroad was in operation, hundreds of teams would be required to transport the tons of supplies needed in the mining boom towns to the north. The first issue of the *Age* featured numerous ads for freight forwarding, livery and transfer services, and the paper on May 6 noted that the freight business from Las Vegas overland was “enormous,” that the freight department of the railroad depot was “the busiest place in southern Nevada,” and that daily freight deliveries made the freight area “a congestion.” The paper stated “upwards of seventy freighters” were hauling supplies to Bullfrog; that on average they transported 20,000 pounds each, and traffic was increasing because of the great demand for additional supplies. In addition to all this, there were two stage lines: Kimball’s, a daily service between Las Vegas and Bullfrog that advertised “Eight Changes Horses Between Points,” and Prudden & Robbins, departing Las Vegas on Tuesday and Thursday, with an office at Ladd’s Hotel.

Wagons and stages carried an average of 25 gallons of water per animal between Corn Creek and Ash Meadows, the longest stretch on the Las Vegas-Beatty route (*Age* August 12, 1905: 1). In summer, this was barely sufficient for the two-day trip. With so many teams filling up at Corn Creek before jumping off for the north, there were valuable business prospects for anyone who could provide overnight accommodations and food—regardless of who owned the land or the water. An absentee owner was not an obstacle.

Simultaneously, there was great excitement about the possibility of an auto stage service between Las Vegas and Bullfrog. Under the headline, “Automobile Line Seems Assured,” the *Age* ran a short article on the first page of its April 14, 1905 issue, informing its readers that members of the Goldfield-Bullfrog and Las Vegas Transportation Company were on their way to Las Vegas by car, and that J. Irving Crowell, connected to local Las Vegas merchants Crowell and Allott, was one of the directors. On the same page, a “Shorter Route to Bullfrog” was touted in an article that briefly noted a new stage line would be operated from Las Vegas to Bullfrog when a new sixty-five mile-long toll road, under franchise to B. F. Miller, was completed. The new road was much shorter than the existing route, which went from Las Vegas to Indian Springs by way of Corn Creek, and then on to Ash Meadows before heading into Beatty. This road evidently continued to utilize the Corn Creek station, but from Indian Springs headed directly to Beatty, with water provided by Miller from wells he drilled along his toll road. The prospect of still another stage line reflects the fevered pitch of travel between Las Vegas on the SPLA&SLRR and the boomtown at Beatty to the north. Soon Miller was advertising the sale of water and feed at Miller Wells on the Vegas and Bullfrog Road (*Age*, April 21, 1905, Supplement: 1).

In the same issue, the *Age* responded (Supplement: 2) to an inquiry from a freighter in Hazen, Nevada who, interested in bringing his two outfits to Las Vegas to join in the lucrative business, asked about freight rates from Las Vegas to Beatty. The paper stated that freight rates from Las Vegas to Beatty varied from \$3.50 to \$6 per one hundred pounds, and that shipments took a week or ten days to reach their destination. The price of hay in Las Vegas was \$20 per ton, and grain sold for \$2.75 per one hundred. Water, obtained at Corn Creek and other stops, cost fifty cents a barrel. The *Age* noted that local trade prices were calculated by adding to the market prices quoted in Salt Lake City and Los Angeles the cost of freight and express. The

paper predicted that a “good business” will be enjoyed by freighters between Las Vegas and Bullfrog “until a railroad enters the field.”

The “good business” for proprietors of stage stops lasted, as forecast, until the Las Vegas & Tonopah Railroad opened in 1906. It is not clear exactly how much traffic continued to move to Beatty by stage and wagon, but even after the railroad began to operate, automobiles especially modified for desert road travel, were used throughout the region. They filled a demand for convenience that the trains could not meet.

The May 13 edition of the *Las Vegas Times* (1905: 1) recounted the “very disasterous results” (sic) of the trial run of these vehicles, when the cars, bearing only about half the number of passengers planned, traveled only ten miles from Las Vegas before one broke down. Charges (never investigated) were made that rival automobile makers tampered with one of the cars, which was towed back to town by the “well” one. The president of the company immediately headed from Beatty to Las Vegas, where he telegraphed an order to Los Angeles for other, stronger vehicles. On page two, the *Times* reported that the auto line backers were determined to succeed in this enterprise that they had thoroughly examined the road, and without any additional work on it, the trip from Bullfrog to Vegas and return could be made in one day. A week later, the company promised to have auto service running in thirty days (*Age* May 20, 1905: 1).

In June, the new, stronger vehicles arrived to “Battle Still With Desert Roads.” Although one broke down on the road to Beatty, the other was still making its way to the destination when the paper was printed (*Age* June 10, 1905: 1). Within a month, the paper listed watering places on the road from Beatty to Las Vegas, including Corn Creek at 96 miles from the town, Tule Springs at 105 miles, and Las Vegas, 124 miles. Travelers were advised they would find dining and sleeping accommodations at “Miller’s first well, Ash Meadows, Indian Springs, and Tule Springs” (*Age*, Supplement, July 1, 1905: 1). Then, in August, 1905, the *Age* (p. 1) reported that the new “hard mountain road” between Beatty and Las Vegas, just completed by the Utah & Nevada Express Co., B. F. Miller, Superintendent, and operating under a twenty year franchise, was using Corn Creek [Springs] as a station.

Miller was competing with the Las Vegas and Tonopah Rail Road of Senator William A. Clark, one of the primary backers and builders of the SPLA&SL, for the freight business between Beatty and Las Vegas. Possibly to avoid conflict with Clark, a tough competitor, Miller first established his accommodations at Tule Springs, farther south along the road. Only later in the summer of 1905, did Miller list Corn Creek and not Tule Springs on his advertised route.

As the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad’s surveyors had done earlier (*Age*, April 21, 1905: 1), the LV&T men camped at Corn Creek Springs, a little more than a mile north of the siding, while surveying and building the line. Once the Corn Creek Siding was completed, the railroad planned for its employees to stay there, probably in a rail car brought for the purpose. There remained the need for water, which the railroad company attempted to obtain from Corn Creek Springs, but the “price requested by the owner of the springs” was too high. The company decided it would be cheaper to dig a well (*Age* May 26, 1906: 4). The company drilled its deep well at Corn Creek [Siding] in June, and it produced a “plentiful supply of artesian water” (*Age*, June 16, 1906: 1).

The first train over the LV&T line ran only to Indian Springs on March 1, 1906 (Myrick 1963: 466), but it had considerable impact on freighting by wagon. The *Age* reported (May 16, 1906: 4) that Tule Springs, “on the main traveled wagon road to the Bullfrog Mining District, and at one time quite . . . important . . . to freighters and travelers at present [is] in a deserted condition. There is not a single person residing there now.”

Corn Creek Springs, meanwhile, was also explored for possible oil production (*Age*, July 22, 1905: 4) by a company whose president was A. I. Jones, Division Engineer of the SPLA&SLRR. Nothing further is recorded about this effort, but still other people became interested in the Corn Creek area when it became known that megafauna were eroding out of deposits nearby. In June of 1906, the *Age* noted that Judge Beal of Las Vegas exhibited in his office “a lot of bones, apparently belonging to some prehistoric animal . . .

unearthed in a mound near Corn Creek.” The writer advised the “owner” of the “mastodon” that he could claim the remains by “calling on Judge Beal, proving brands and paying costs.”

The information that there were major Pleistocene faunal deposits in northern Las Vegas Valley eventually made its way to eastern scientists. In December (*Age*, December 1, 1906:1), under the heading “Mastodon Bones,” an article reported that a Professor Bachtelle, “collector of crystals and minerals for Yale College,” investigated the deposit for what the paper called the “Ward Scientific Establishment of Rochester, New York.” Unfortunately, the microfilm of the newspaper is in very poor condition, and the details of Bachtelle’s expedition cannot be determined, except that a “great deposit of prehistoric bones and shells” was found near Corn Creek. Thirty years later, M. R. Harrington of the Heye Foundation’s Museum of the American Indian would be attracted to the area by these deposits, leading to the exploration of Corn Creek Springs by Harrington and Simpson in the 1950s (Harrington and Simpson 1961), in association with their investigation of Gypsum Cave on the eastern border of Las Vegas Valley, and Tule Springs Wash, in the north end of Las Vegas Valley.

The “owner” of Corn Creek Springs in 1906 with whom the LV&TRR negotiated for water was probably Clarence C. Rand. How he came to be involved at Corn Creek is very unclear. Rand is not listed on the roster of purchasers of state lands in T 17SR59E, nor did he file on water. In Nevada, land and water may be filed upon separately. The appropriator who first uses the water holds the senior right to it. This practice is termed the Doctrine of Prior Appropriation. This principle was adopted in Nevada in the mid 1880s, but the office of Nevada State Engineer was only established in 1903. Initially, the state was concerned only with rights to surface waters, which were brought under official state control in 1905. Not until 1939 did the state begin to control the underground waters, which were tapped by wells (Shamberger 1991). The early wells drilled by water users at or near Corn Creek Springs consequently are not on record. Springs are considered surface waters, and use of them was monitored by the state. The record of filings on them is frequently incomplete, however, as many people who filed on land did not know that they had to file separately on the water. The recorded history of Corn Creek Springs reflects these policies and problems.

That anything at all is known about Clarence Rand is due to the fact that he hired professional mineral rights surveyor J. T. McWilliams in 1906, to prepare a plat of the land encompassed in Section 28, T27S, R59E, MDM and the N ½ of Section 34, T 17S, R59E (McWilliams, Book 13A: 3-5). McWilliams at the time noted the presence of a McDonald-Shankland tent at the springs, but these names are absent from other records. Most of the land surveyed for Rand was already held by the Godfreys, but there is no evidence that Rand knew of their claim. The McWilliams survey was classified as a Farm-ranch location by surveyor Ben Sweet, who obtained the McWilliams field records and used them in his own work later in the 20th century, but no record reveals how Rand intended to use the land. In 1906, he might have planned to develop a hostelry for travelers, but there is nothing in the file to tell the early 21st century reader, and no early newspaper accounts about Rand at Corn Creek Springs. Someone was there offering accommodations for travelers by February 3, 1906, however, when geologist F. L. Ransome stopped in on a reconnaissance of mines for the U.S. G.S. Geologic Division. Ransome was traveling from Beatty to El Dorado Canon by way of the well-established road via Corn Creek. He noted that the LV&TRR was under construction, and described Corn Creek as a “large, cold spring” near the east side of the valley. He enjoyed a “good meal” there in mid morning before moving down to Tule Springs and Las Vegas, where he boarded the train to Nipton (Ransome, Notebook 1, 1906: 6-7).

At Corn Creek, Rand did not file on the water but evidently assumed he controlled it. The LV&T initially thought the same thing; its well was drilled along the tracks in 1906 (LV&TRR Right of Way Map, 1915). In 1907 the railroad discovered no one else had filed (Letter, LV&TRR to State Engineer, 1907), and applied to use the springs at Corn Creek, thereby ensuring no one else could claim them. They filed on three miner’s inches, or roughly 50,000 gallons per day, the point of use to be 9,200 feet southwest of the springs, at the Corn Creek Siding. The water would be conveyed by pipeline to a tank at the siding. The water would

be used to fill steam engine boilers as well as available for use by station hands (Nevada, Water Resources Division, App. No. 570).

The distribution system to take the water from Corn Creek Springs apparently was not built, but the water right remained in force. Consequently, the State Engineer denied applications from other users, even though the LV&TRR did not receive a certificate of use entitling it to the water. In 1908, one Samuel Ward Green of Goldfield, Nevada asked to appropriate more than 107 cubic feet per second from Corn Creek Springs. He planned to put it to mining and domestic use “at the townsite” (Nevada, Water Resources Division, App. No. 1234). The application was denied by the State Engineer in 1909, because this was “The Same Water as was granted under permit #570.” By 1916, when the first serious ranching enterprise was established at Corn Creek Springs, the railroad was largely defunct and no protest was filed. There is no information about the townsite mentioned by Green, unless he meant the settlement at the Corn Creek Siding.

The railroad siding contained the only cluster of buildings in the area at the time. While no photograph or drawing of the facilities is known to exist, the LV&TRR Right of Way Map dated June 30, 1915 depicts a cluster of facilities there. The siding itself was located entirely in Section 10, T18S, R59E. Along the track in Section 10, were a Station Board, Pump House and Windmill and a Water Tank, the most northerly feature. South of the siding was a Rail Rack, located in Section 14. No station house is identified; most probably it was a rail car parked on the siding.

Plans for a townsite there may have been concocted by Sam Green in 1908, but his hopes for a water supply were dashed by the railroad’s earlier filing on Corn Creek Springs. The LV&T’s Corn Creek “town” received special attention in June, 1910, when a Special Correspondent to the *Las Vegas Age* filed a tongue-in-cheek article under the heading, “Corn Creek, Social Events in Our Thriving Suburb” and another describing the difficulty of gardening at the station (*Age*, June 25, 1910: 4). The reporter (not named, but probably C. P. Squires, editor of the paper) related that a party of “prominent mining men” arrived at the station at 3:15 a.m. on Tuesday, and “nearly doubled [its] population,” which in May of 1910 totaled five men, all of them single: Thomas Williams, age 28, Pumper; Mark Maloney, age not supplied, Section Boss, and three Mexican men (whose names are illegible because the microfilm copy of the census was poor), ages 32, 21, and 18, all speaking only Spanish, and all employed as Section Hands (Federal Census 1910, Las Vegas Township, Nevada: Sheet 9).

Tom Williams was identified by the correspondent as “Our worthy mayor” who entertained C. P. Squires, editor of the *Las Vegas Age*, that morning. He was also chief of police (and not a candidate for sheriff). As Mr. T. Williams, proprietor of the Red Onion Café, which “boasts of one of the best chefs in Corn Creek,” he hosted a dinner party Tuesday evening. The Hon. Thomas Williams, city attorney, went to Indian Springs by his touring car on Wednesday and Thomas Williams, “head of the Las Vegas & Tonopah road’s interests in Corn Creek, returned from a business trip to Indian Springs in his private car.” Col. Thos. Williams, the community’s leading banker, says “he is not contemplating the purchase of any more of Corn Creek’s gilt edged business property at the present time. . . . Section Boss Williams of the L.V. & T. claims that travel is good on his division, especially when going with the wind.”

Williams did file on land near the Corn Creek siding just a year later. This information is buried in the 1913 survey notes of J. T. McWilliams (Book 12: 3) who relocated particular corners of Williams’ 1911 filing on the NW 1/4 Section 4, T18S, R59E, MDM. McWilliams noted that Williams had “made proof of labor” in 1912. It is not clear at this time who or what agency received the proof of labor. In later years, this land was developed as the “Windmill Estates,” of concern to the Corn Creek Refuge Manager because of the common boundary between the Field Station and the Estate (Memorandum, Refuge Manager to Area Manager, April 4, 1978). There is still a small cluster of residences at this location.

The LV&T suffered severe reversal of fortunes after 1914. Passenger traffic never was profitable, as automobiles and auto stages competed very successfully for this business (Myrick, 1963: 498), and the declining output of the mines intensified the line’s competition with the Bullfrog and Goldfield Railroad. In February of 1917, the daily schedule changed to three times weekly, but things went from bad to worse in

December, when the country began to brace for war in Europe. All the nation's railroads were put under the control of the U.S. Railway Administration, and the LV&T's fortunes, never good, fell precipitously as a consequence of decisions made by the government in wartime. The LV&T was denied access to labor and could not maintain its equipment or tracks, because it was "not considered essential or necessary to the uses of the Government." The line ceased operations on October 31, 1918, and in 1919 the tracks were torn up. The rolling stock was dispersed, but the ties were piled at select locations. All along the old roadway, these ties were re-used for buildings, fence posts, foundations, lining pits, and every other conceivable use. A number of them still are found today at the Corn Creek Field Station. The roadbed itself was purchased by the Nevada Department of Highways and was upgraded to highway standards (Myrick, 1963: 502-3). In later years, the old railroad bed was abandoned in favor of a new highway paralleling the railroad. The Corn Creek Siding was abandoned and its windmill dismantled. Today the name Corn Creek is applied to the headquarters of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge, and the small settlement at the Windmill Estates development. The old railroad siding is largely forgotten.

RANCHING PERIOD, 1914-1939

The first Euroamerican to use the springs at or near Corn Creek to irrigate crops was Sylvester B. Nay. Nay was portrayed by writer George Lewis as one of a "wily lot" of brothers, who "took up squatters' rights" at Corn Creek (Lewis 1973). It is not known what agreement, if any, Nay had with Mary Godfrey, the legal owner of the land at Corn Creek (but not the water), nor has his legal ownership to the adjacent land, in Section 33, T 17S, R 59E, been established. There is, however, a record of Nay's efforts to secure rights to water in the vicinity.

Between the Williams tract and the Godfrey parcel at Corn Creek Springs was a small spring, unnamed and unclaimed until January, 1914, when Sylvester B. Nay filed with the State Division of Water Resources an application to put it to use. Nay stated that he lived in Las Vegas, and that he would put to use two second-feet of water (about 60 acre feet per year) from its source in the NE 1/4 of the SE 1/4, Section 33, T 17S, R 59E, MDB&M. The water would be used for "domestic purposes" and to irrigate about twenty acres of land in the SE 1/4 of Section 33, T 17S, R 59E. Nay remarked that the water was "running to waste at present and has for many years, does not look as it ever has been used" (Nevada, Water Resources, App. 2877). The proposed water works consisted of "small reservoirs" and a ditch to take the water to the land. The reservoir [sic, one, not two] would be located in the SE 1/4, Section 33, T 17S, R 59E, close to the irrigated acreage. He estimated it would take him seven days and cost him about \$60 to build the works. He noted that this hitherto unclaimed spring was the "only surface water for ten miles distant," but he must have meant the only available surface water, as Corn Creek Springs were a mile east, but already filed upon. The State Engineer gave Nay until October 15, 1916 to file proof of beneficial use.

Nay duly published the required Notice of Application for Permission to Appropriate the Public Waters of the State of Nevada (Age, March 28-April 25, 1914), and apparently constructed at least some part of the water system. However, when he failed to pay the statutory certificate fees, the water permit was cancelled by the State Engineer (Nevada, Water Resources, Notice of Cancellation or Withdrawal, App. No. 2877, June 10, 1971). While the exact date of this action against Nay's application is not indicated, the probability is that it occurred in 1916. By October 1916, when Nay was to file proof of beneficial use, the Richardsons were on the scene. Lewis (1973) relates that Richardson bought out the Nay interest for \$500. No official record of this transaction has been found in Clark County records, which may reflect the informal status of the Nay claims. The application to use water became moot and Nay did not finalize his water right.

Clara and George Richardson were farmers from Utah, who came to southern Nevada after the severe winter of 1915, when many of their stock animals died. Pleased with the potential at Corn Creek, they purchased Mary Godfrey's claim for \$3000 and, complying with her wishes, paid Sylvester "Ves" Nay \$500

for his work on the property. Nay had filed on a different spring to the west, but it is likely that he built some kind of dwelling on the Godfrey parcel, and perhaps developed its springs. Ves Nay was a fixture around southern Nevada for many years after he left Corn Creek. He took out a certificate to marry Ruby Laub in November of 1909 (Clark County Records, Misc. Book 1:250) but the actual ceremony was not performed until September 1913 (Clark County Records, Misc. Books, Inst. 5733). Ruby and Ves owned lots in McWilliams' Original Townsite of Las Vegas and elsewhere (Clark County, Records, Deeds, Books 7-13, 15, 21; Misc., Books 1-3, passim). Ruby Nay may well have lived with Ves at Corn Creek, but specific documentation is lacking. When the Richardsons took up residence, they found the existing buildings "unlivable," according to Lewis (1973: 30).

During the Richardson years, the ranch they developed pre-empted the name Corn Creek, as the railroad station of the same name faded into oblivion. The Richardsons built a new ranch house, and to it welcomed their daughter Ada, her husband Perry Young and baby son George, who arrived in 1917. They were housed in a separate cabin "brought down from Lee Canyon" (Lewis 1973: 30), where Tommy Young was born in 1918. Lewis recounted a tale of a hidden treasure found at the spring, buried there as part of a "great cache of fifty-cent gold pieces" which were stolen during a robbery in the 1880s (Lewis 1973: 31). There is at least a germ of truth to this story. J. T. McWilliams made a rubbing from a half dollar coined in 1864, which he noted was found in February 1918 in a cache at Corn Creek (McWilliams, Survey Notes, Book 13:83). The coins melted in a fire at the ranch house in 1922 (Lewis 1973: 31).

George Richardson drilled the first well at Corn Creek. Since the state still had no requirement that such wells be registered, documentation consists of a brief paragraph on page 4 of the *Las Vegas Age* for March 15, 1919. The well, drilled by B. R. Jefferson, proved to be an artesian source. The Richardsons used the water for irrigation and probably for household purposes as well, according to Ada Richardson Young (Affidavit, September 11, 1970, in Nevada Water Resources Division, App. No. 02806).

The Richardsons and Youngs continued their joint efforts at Corn Creek for a number of years. In February, 1920, the census for Corn Creek, included in Las Vegas Township No. 5, listed five households there, but it is unclear exactly who was living at the ranch. Richardson was described as a "stock farmer," living with his wife, Clara, and son, Delbert, then aged 19. Delbert listed his occupation as "trapper." Perry Young and Ada were in another household where they resided with their two sons, George, age 3 and Vernon, age 1. Perry Young was a laborer with the State Highway Department, which at the time was converting the old LV&TRR roadbed to a highway. Tom Williams was still in the area, living alone in still another household, and also a laborer working for State Highways. Edwin Bliss and his wife, Eleanor, lived in a separate household with their three daughters and a son, all five years old and under. Bliss was a farm laborer, "working out," which probably indicates that he did not have his own land to work. Possibly he worked for Richardson, but no documentation of such connection has been found. The final household was occupied by Nick Atahasich, age 42 and born in Serbia, Frank Barindo, native of Italy, age 19, and Orlando C. Byrnes, 43, native of Iowa. Atahasich was married but his wife was not living in the household. The other two men were single, and all were laborers for the State Highway Department (US Census, Nevada, Clark County, Las Vegas Township, 1920). Although the census does not reveal where at Corn Creek all these people were living, it is probable that the Richardsons and Youngs were at the ranch, Williams was at his own property north of the old Corn Creek Siding, and the others were living in buildings salvaged from whatever old structures remained from the railroad years.

Again in 1920, J. T. McWilliams was summoned to Corn Creek, this time to make a survey of land on which Richardson and Young attempted a "Desert Entry" under the "Pittman Act" (McWilliams, Book 20: 58 (35). Nevada Senator Key Pittman wrote this legislation, more formally known as "An act to encourage the reclamation of certain arid lands in the State of Nevada," which was adopted as a concurrent resolution of the Senate and House in 1919 (US Statutes at Large, May, 1919 to March, 1921, Vol. XLI, Part I, Chap. 77). The law authorized the government, within certain stipulated conditions, to grant to any citizen or association of citizens a permit giving the exclusive right, for a period not exceeding two years, to drill or otherwise explore

for water beneath the surface of up to 2,560 acres of land in Nevada “not known to be susceptible of successful irrigation at a reasonable cost from any known source of water supply.” Further, the law provided that at any time within two years from the date of the permit, the applicant must establish that there is sufficient underground water to produce at a profit agricultural crops other than native grasses, on at least 20 acres of land. Upon making such water available within the boundaries of the land included in the permit, the applicant was entitled to a patent for one-fourth of that land, with the remainder made available for entry under the Homestead Act of 1862.

Accordingly, on June 6, 1920, McWilliams made a boundary survey of Sections 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and part of 33, T17S, R59E. McWilliams noted the common boundary with Tom Williams H[omestead?] Entry in Section 4 of T18S, R59E. He also mentioned a “water mound,” which he did not include on the plat he made which identified Corn Creek in Section 34 of T17S, R59E. It is not certain that any wells were drilled, and the application apparently lapsed.

America’s experiment with prohibition in the 1920s and ‘30s touched Corn Creek Ranch, when a bootleg still was set up among the dunes on property to the north of the Richardson land. Such an illegal operation is not documented in official government archives, although there are physical remains still on the ground. The source of water for the still is not known, although there were small springs located in Section 27, T 17S, R 59E, and mound springs nearby as well. Whether or not the Richardsons and Youngs were involved in producing gin is unclear. The “Corn Creek Dry Gin” made there was supposedly so fine that it make Corn Creek famous. According to Lewis (1973: 31), a “California outfit” set up a large operation, with ten vats putting out 2,400 gallons per day. Who was involved in making and trucking this huge quantity to market in Los Angeles, how and by what route, are facts Lewis did not include in her article. She did mention that the “number of federal agents swarming around” fascinated the Young boys, who were “forbidden to go near.” Several individuals filed on the land in this part of the township during the 1920s, but all these applications lapsed, and were not even recorded until the 1920s. Perhaps these people were “moonshiners,” but solid documentation is absent.

Many questions about the bootlegging business are yet unanswered, but a full investigation of this ancillary activity is beyond the scope of this investigation. Prohibition was repealed in 1933, but no one knows just when gin-making at Corn Creek ended. The whole subject of bootlegging at the ranch and in the mountains nearby deserves further attention. One of the springs in the Sheep Range is called “Bootleg Spring.” In the 1940s, the Refuge personnel cleared the remnants of a structure there to make the water available for the bighorn sheep.

George Richardson died in the late 1920s, and the children signed over their interest to their mother on May 27, 1929 (USFWS, “Tenure of Corn Creek Station, “1972, in Nevada Water Resources, App. 02806). By then, Ada Richardson Young and her husband had moved to Las Vegas, so that the Young children could attend school (Hopkins 1984; Lee 1975). Every weekend, though, Vernon (Tommy) and his brother George rode bareback out to Corn Creek. After Perry Young died, Ada took a job operating a boarding house for a sawmill operation on Mount Charleston (Lewis 1973: 31). Eventually she and her son, Tommy, bought the property and formed a partnership to develop a ranch and store in Kyle Canyon. They named it “Mom’s Place,” for Ada (Hopkins 1984). Tommy became one of southern Nevada’s best known rodeo cowboys, winning numerous buckles for bronco and bull riding victories.

Clara Richardson sold Corn Creek Ranch in August 1936 (Clark County Records, Deeds, Inst. No. 75613), and she joined Ada at the boarding house in Kyle Canyon (Worts, R., 2002). The buyer was George Worts, a writer who was “flush at the time,” according to his son, Robert “Bob” Worts. The Worts family made many changes as they modernized the ranch facilities, added new ones, and expanded the area under irrigation while at the same time maintaining the orchards of fruit and nut trees planted by the Richardsons. Worts and his second wife, Janet, called “Tommy,” had Hollywood connections, and brought a taste of the luster of that fabled town to the still isolated spread at Corn Creek (Figures 6.7 and 6.8).

The Worts tenure at the ranch lasted only three years, but fortunately the family took numerous photographs. The photos are included here as a pictorial record, and reference will be made to them throughout the remainder of this report. In addition to being in possession of the family, Worts photographs are held in the photographic archives of the Special Collections Department at the Lied Library of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.



Figure 6.7. George Worts, Sr. (left) and friend Duncan Renaldo, the “Cisco Kid,” at Corn Creek Ranch, 1938 (R. Worts Collection).



Figure 6.8. Janet "Tommy" MacFarlane Worts at Corn Creek Ranch, 1937 (R. Worts Collection). Tommy Worts was the second wife of George Worts, Sr.

George F. Worts was a man of many interests whose first career was as a wireless operator, but whose fame came from putting pen to paper rather than tapping signals across the ether. Worts was largely self-taught but succeeded in making a name for himself writing for *Collier's* and *Argosy* magazines, and free-lancing. In a brief, humorous autobiographical sketch *Argosy* magazine published about "The Men Who Make the Argosy" (Jan 25, 1930), he revealed that he "didn't believe in higher learning" and left Columbia University in 1915. A year earlier, when he spent a week in Panama while working as a wireless operator on a "little steamer that creaked up and down the Central American coast," he met a free-lance writer. Worts was twenty years old then, and his drinking partner-author "painted the joys of free-lancing so vividly" that Worts could not resist "the call." Fifteen years later, when he wrote the sketch on which this paragraph is based, Worts was still "trying to catch up with all of those joys he mentioned" (G. F. Worts [Sr.], 1930).

During World War I, he wrote "high-pressure publicity to induce patriotic Americans to send books to Washington for camp libraries for soldiers and gobs." Books came in by the carload: McGuffey's readers, old almanacs, spellers, arithmetics, out-dated novels, and "just trash." Worts liked to claim that "practically single-handed" he had won the war, because his publicity brought in all those books, causing the soldiers and sailors who had to read them to hate the war "so bitterly that they promptly got busy and ended it." After the war, *Collier's* sent him to the Far East to write articles on China, the Philippines, India and Malaya (G. Worts 1930).

In the 1920s he began to write fiction as well, and when his income from it exceeded his salary as editor of a motion picture magazine (unnamed), he quit the job. He used the experience gained from all the places he landed while traveling the world, and from living in a Florida swamp town where he also functioned as postmaster, game warden, and deputy sheriff, to create fictional settings and characters. By the time he decided to try living in the desert, he had lived in Connecticut and New York as well, but he "would prefer to live in Honolulu." He took up flying, and was interested in horses and sailing, wrote mysteries and crime stories, and one about a wolf named Murg. He liked murder trials, and in his spare time he studied medicine

and law, subjects that were helpful him in his writing. He “never mastered” poker, a “noble game,” although he wrote a book about it (Worts et al.1925). This is the man who in 1936 brought his family to a rough ranch in the raw desert 25 miles north of Las Vegas, a town of fewer than 8,000 people.

George F. Worts, Sr. had three children: George F., Jr., called “Skip,” Robert “Bob” Worts, and Mary. George Jr. was attending Stanford University when the family moved to Corn Creek. He studied geology at the university, and eventually worked for the U.S. Geological Survey. He was assigned to the Carson City, Nevada office, and participated in numerous studies jointly made with the Nevada Division of Water Resources. As a consequence, he traveled all over the state, investigating water resources and water use. On one of his field trips to the southern part of the state, he stopped in at Corn Creek and talked to the people there. A hand written account of this visit, dated May 18, 1972, is unsigned, but probably was written and submitted by the refuge manager to his superiors (see USFWS 1939-1976, file No. 611.01.10).

Information provided by George F. Worts, Jr. in 1972 is compared below with that provided by the late Robert “Bob” Worts in 2002 (Bob Worts passed away in 2005) to obtain as complete a picture as possible of the ranch between 1936 and 1939. Notes from the informal interviews with Bob Worts made by this author on several occasions in 2002 were focused mainly on the Worts family photographs, and are included in the captions attached to each.

Three hand-drawn plat maps of the ranch at Corn Creek, two sheets drawn by “Skip” Worts in 1937, and one by Bob Worts in 2002, provide invaluable information about the state of development in 1936-37. Skip Worts made one drawing to record the entire ranch as it appeared when the Worts family took possession in 1936, before any changes were made (Worts 1937) (Figure 6.9). On a second sheet, he drew a plat of the ranch core, illustrating proposed changes in fence alignments (Worts 1937) (Figure 6.10). Bob Worts sketched a map (Figure 6.11) in 2002 of the ranch as he remembered it in 1936-37. Bob Worts’ map was produced in 2002; Skip Worts’ renderings were discovered at Corn Creek Field Station in the land acquisition files (USFWS 1939-1976:Land Acquisition files, Worts 611.01). Skip’s maps are undated; Bob Worts had never seen them, but believed they date from 1937, when his brother spent some time at the ranch. The detail and the names assigned to the features on the ranch support that assessment.

Corn Creek Ranch in 1936 was characterized as “primitive” when Bob Worts described it in 2002. Photographs of the buildings that date from that period support that description: access only via a very rough wagon road (Figure 6.19), no electricity, no indoor plumbing. Perishable foods were stored in a cellar built of railroad ties, located next door to the ranch house, which was a small board and batten structure (see Figure 6.15). All of the farm equipment was drawn by horses (Figure 6.20), although there was an old steam traction engine parked close to a cabin built of railroad ties (Figure 6.21). This venerable engine apparently was rigged with a pulley, which may reflect its use to power a saw to trim logs from the Ponderosa pine forests in the Spring Mountains and the Sheep Range east of the ranch. It may even have been the traction engine once used at Sandstone Quarry in Cottonwood Valley (now Red Rock Canyon). In November of 1906, that machine was delivered to the Lincoln County Lumber Company Sawmill on Mount Charleston, where it was used to haul lumber to the LV&TRR at Owens Siding, located between Corn Creek Siding and Indian Springs Station (*Las Vegas Age*, November 24, 1906:1).

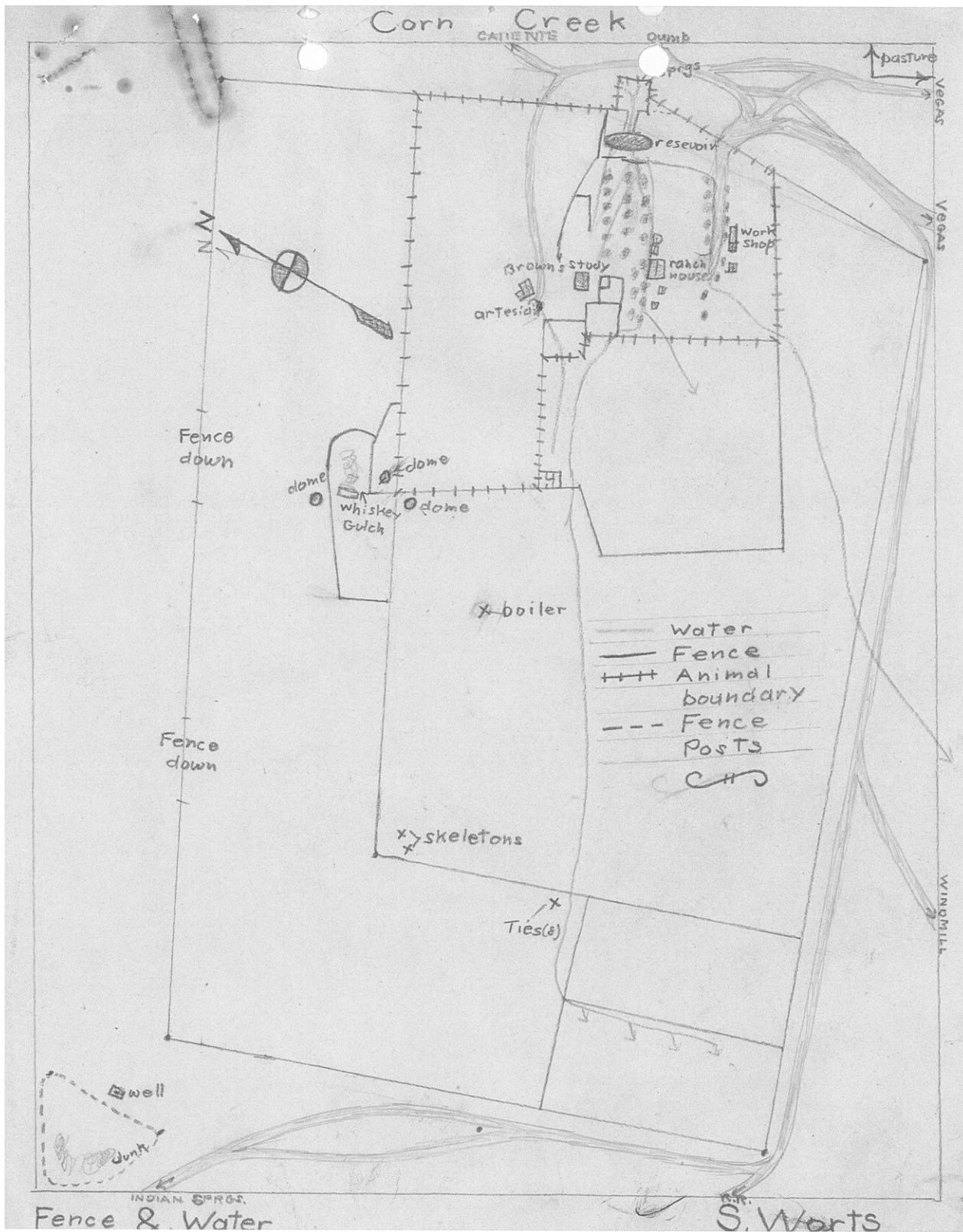


Figure 6.9. "Fence and water" map of the Corn Creek Ranch, 1937, by George F. "Skip" Worts.

Fence & Water Map

The Skip Worts maps of the entire ranch property in 1937 (Figures 6.10 and 6.11) reveal details not otherwise retrievable from the historical record. The configuration of features shown on the maps helps to interpret documents and newspaper articles previously cited. The features that have significance for understanding the archaeological and historical record of the site are described here.

1. *Fences*: demarcate an irregular parabola; several sections were down along the northern perimeter. “Animal boundary” fences were distinguished from others, indicating which parcels were set aside to corral animals within the larger developed ranch. The perimeter fence would keep away open range animals. It is interesting to note that pasture land was located across the Las Vegas-Caliente Road south of the springs, which were fenced off. The exact location of this pasture and its relationship to the ranch is shown on a drawing found in the USFWS Tract 5 file, Portland. There was a fence stretching from the enclosed reservoir nearly to the Worts Study, with an L projecting from it on the south. The purpose of this fence is not known.
2. “*Whiskey Gulch*” was fenced off from the core of the ranch, and some sort of structure was evidently on the site. Whiskey Gulch certainly is the name by which the bootlegging operation was identified. Fences separated Whiskey Gulch from three “domes” drawn on the map. These domes represent active mound springs, with open pools of water at the top of each. The fence layout suggests that these sources of water were not available to the bootleggers for their operation, but a definitive statement to that effect cannot be made on this basis alone.
3. *Boiler* - purpose unknown, not otherwise recorded. Possibly was a relic of the bootlegging operation.
4. *Skeletons* - unknown species and activity represented by these remains, and any relationship to the boiler, in same field, in also unknown.
5. *Ties* - a substantial stack of railroad ties from defunct LV&TRR, taken up in 1919. The Richardsons must have retrieved a sizable number, which they used to construct the storage cellar and cabins, and for fence posts. Worts used them to line irrigation ditches so they would not cave in, and to build the study and workshop.
6. *Well and pile of junk* - outside perimeter fence at northwest corner of the property. This well is in Locus 4, and most likely was drilled by Rand, who had filed on this property in 1906. Since the State Engineer did not monitor wells until 1939, there is no record of the work done here.
7. *Road network* - Worts identified the road to Indian Springs, heading north past the well and junk pile, and joining the Caliente-Las Vegas road just outside the southeastern corner of the ranch. Worts also depicted the offshoot of this road that led to the windmill at the old Corn Creek Station. The complex intersection south of the springs reflects then current and still earlier accesses to the springs and north-south roads, tracing on the ground the changing pattern as the ranch developed and fences were erected. The Caliente destination recorded by Worts has replaced Alamo in importance by 1937. The road also leads to the ranch dump.

Skip Worts drew a road that left the “Caliente-Las Vegas Road” just east of the fence marking the eastern perimeter of the ranch, and entered the ranch to reach the artesian well site via “Brown’s” house (the Tie Cabin). (Bob Worts remembers that a trapper lived in that building, but he does not recall the name.) Finally, there was an old trail leading from the ranch core southwesterly, probably pre-dating the wider unpaved road that also linked the ranch to Corn Creek Station.
8. The site labeled “*artesian*” apparently is the locus of the Richardson well, drilled in 1919. Worts drew a line indicating a ditch from the well to the fenced fields and a corral in one corner of the larger one, depicting use of the artesian water for irrigating fields and watering animals.
9. The *reservoir* shown close to the eastern boundary of the ranch was filled by the ditch that linked it to the springs. Worts drew lines, indicating ditches, which reflected the distribution system of reservoir water. The orchard and alfalfa field were watered from this source. One of these ditches ran close to the ranch house, and served to carry away the waste from the privy, which was set over the ditch west of the ranch house but seldom, if at all, used after the bath room was installed in the main ranch house (Figures 6.12 and 6.13).
10. *Orchard* - Richardson period, well-kept, pruned and very productive (G. F. Worts, 1972). Many peach trees, some almonds (Lewis 1972) watered from the “old Corn Creek” which “flowed from the pipe at the base of the large willow down to the orchard” (G. Worts, 1972). The source of the “Old Corn Creek” was not identified by Worts, but it may have been the large, cold spring at Corn Creek described by Ransome in 1906.

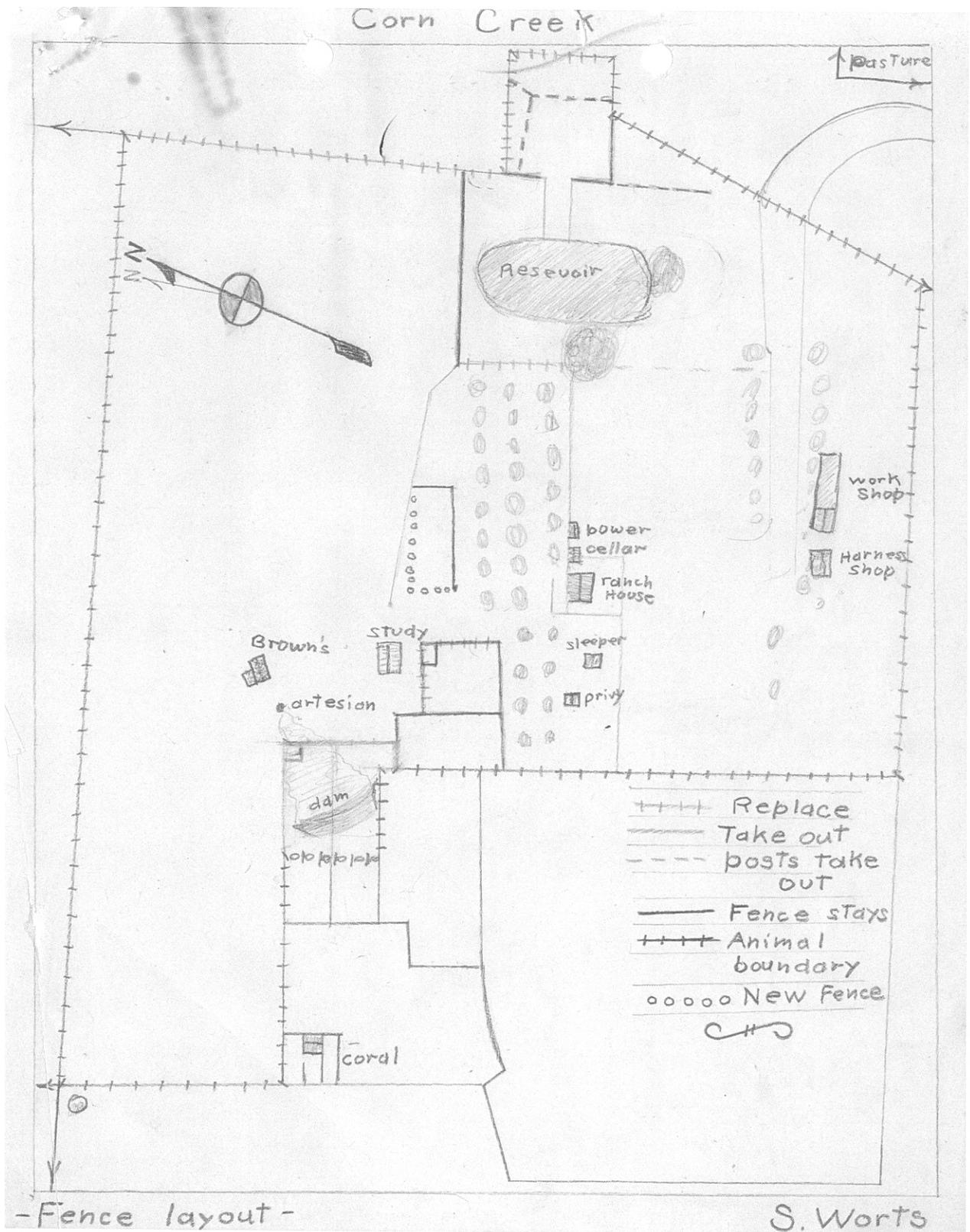


Figure 6.10. "Fence Layout" map of the Corn Creek Ranch core, 1937, by George R. "Skip" Worts.

Fence Layout Map

The southeast corner of the ranch is the ranch core, locus of the springs and improvements for domestic use and irrigation, of the ranch house and out buildings, and where the most intensive animal management practices were carried on. Skip Worts made a detailed sketch (1937b) of this part of the property; discussion of the remainder of the features of the ranch will be based on this map, which presents planned changes in land use and irrigation. Comparison of the two maps indicates the relevant fence layout changes. Below is a list only of the new information that can be gleaned from this map.

1. Water features - represented as on the Fence & Water map, but with addition of a “dam” located in the northernmost of several corrals which were created by realigning fence layouts in the irrigated portion of the property. This dam apparently was intended to catch the water flowing from the artesian well, and prevent it from wetting some of the land previously irrigated. Since animals would be held in the pens, wet ground there was no longer desirable.
2. The buildings in the ranch core were more completely identified on this map. Except or the Study, all the buildings shown were built by the Richardsons, and are depicted in their original locations. Subsequently, some of these were moved or replaced. The original names and uses are listed below:
 - a. *Bower* - a shade shelter constructed east of the ranch house and cellar; used seasonally for outdoor activities.
 - b. *Cellar* - Building constructed of railroad ties (Figure 6.14). Excavated cellar, used for food storage.
 - c. *Ranch House* - Re-built by Richardsons after 1922 fire. Four room board and batten house (see Figure 6.15)
 - d. *Sleeper* - a screened structure used seasonally as sleeping quarters (Figure 6.16).
 - e. *Privy* - wooden structure, formerly next to the ranch house, set by Worts over the irrigation ditch from the reservoir (see Figures 6.12 and 6.13).
 - f. *Workshop* - structure which housed tools and equipment used on ranch located south of the trees lining the ranch drive.
 - g. *Harness shop* - housed tack for draft and saddle animals.

Skip Worts did not depict a “blacksmith shop” near Brown’s house (later called the Tie House). He also did not show a blacksmith shop, which Bob Worts in 2002 stated was the westernmost of three (not two) buildings: workshop, harness shed, and blacksmith shop (see Fig. 6.17). Bob Worts said the structure was torn down soon after they arrived at the ranch, and Skip may not have seen it. Bob spent a lot of time there in 1936-37, but Skip was there only rarely, and for but a few days at a time.

Worts made the following changes to these buildings before the ranch became the Corn Creek Headquarters of the Desert Game Range:

1. *Ranch House* - rebuilt and modernized.
2. *Sleeper* - moved to west side of reservoir (see Figure 6.16). Bob Worts reminisced about sleeping there in good weather.
3. *Privy* - moved away from house and placed over ditch.
4. *Work shop and harness shop structures* were replaced with new building, erected in 1938. The new building, a portion of which still exists at the Field Station and is now called the “Carpenter Shop,” housed a workshop at the east end, a tack room at the west end, and an open sided “bunk house” in the center (Figure 6.18). The two Richardson (or earlier) period structures remained standing on their original sites until either modified or dismantled in the Refuge Period that followed.
5. *Perimeter fence* - on the proposed Fence Layout map, there is no entrance to the ranch through the fence that stretches from the southeast corner of the ranch core to the springs. It is not clear where Skip Worts thought the ranch access should be.
6. *Cottonwoods* - along the “YCC fence,” were planted between 1936 and 1939 by the Worts family (G. Worts 1972). The YCC fence was constructed as a Youth Conservation Corps project in 1972.

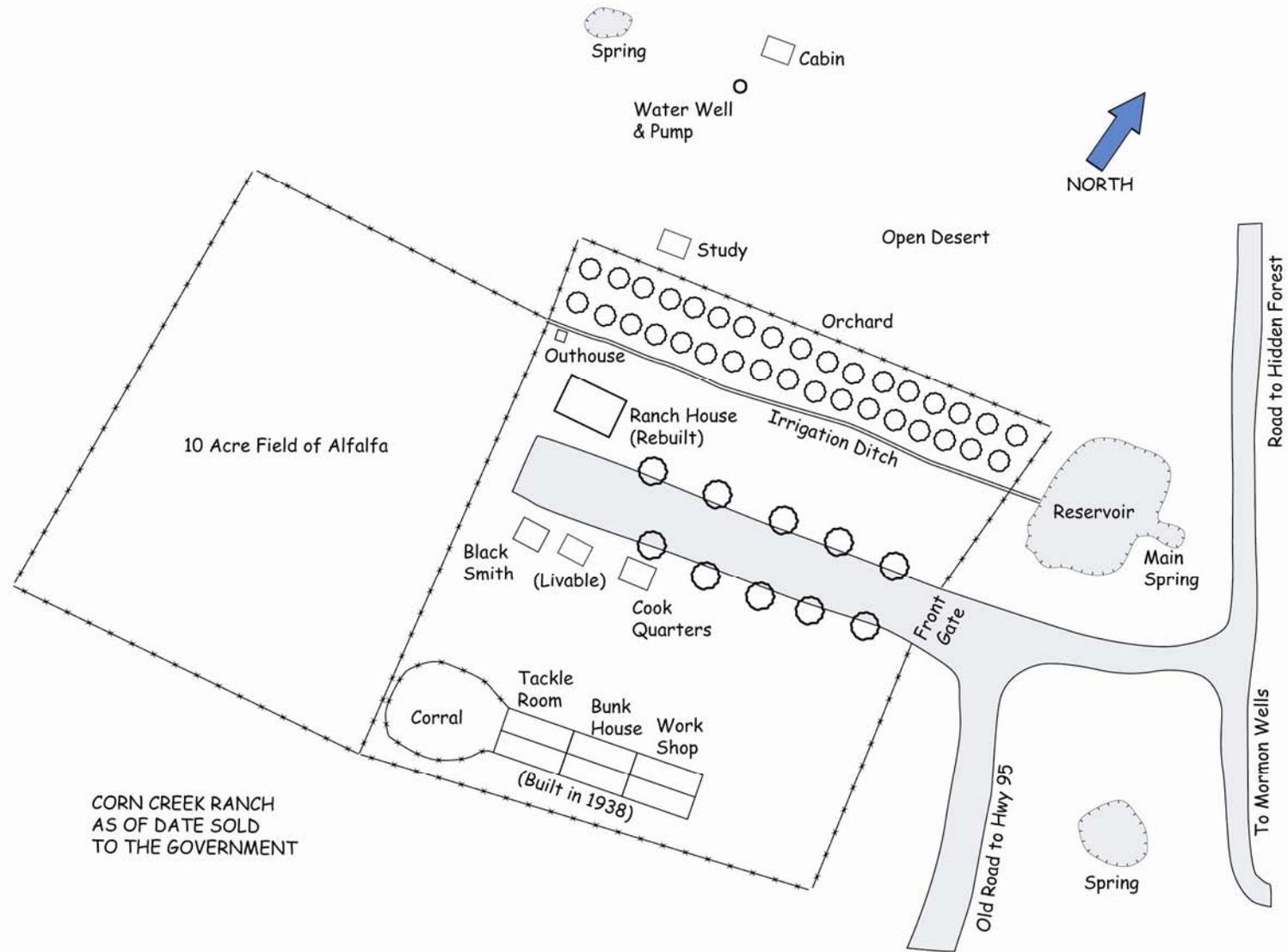


Figure 6.11. Drawing of the Corn Creek Ranch made by Bob Worts in 2002. (Digitized version of hand-drawn map.)



Figure 6.12. Moving the privy at the Corn Creek Ranch, 1937 (Courtesy of Worts Collection, Special Collections, Lied Library, UNLV).



Figure 6.13. The new location of the privy at the Corn Creek Ranch over an irrigation ditch (Courtesy of Worts Collection, Special Collections, Lied Library, UNLV).



Figure 6.14. “Tommy” and Tom Allan at the Corn Creek Ranch in 1937. Tom is clearing the area between the Ranch House and the Reservoir. The building to the left is a storage shed and cellar (Worts Collection).



Figure 6.15. The Ranch House when purchased from the Richardsons in 1936 (Courtesy of Worts Collection, Special Collections, Lied Library, UNLV).



Figure 6.16. Corn Creek Reservoir and sleeping shed, 1938 (Courtesy of: Worts Collection, Special Collections, Lied Library, UNLV)



Figure 6.17. Three small buildings located at the end of and south of the tree-lined entrance to the ranch core, 1936. The building on the left served as a blacksmith shop, the middle cabin was habitable, and the structure on the right was a ramshackle tool shed (Worts Collection).



Figure 6.18. Workshop and tack room at the Corn Creek Ranch, 1938 (Courtesy of Worts Collection, Special Collections, Lied Library, UNLV).



Figure 6.19. A view of the Corn Creek Ranch in 1936 taken from the top of the Corn Creek Railroad Tower looking north to the Ranch (Courtesy of: Worts Collection, Special Collections Department, Lied Library, UNLV).



Figure 6.20. George Worts and Tom Allen building a flood control dike in the wash above the Corn Creek Ranch, 1938 (Worts Collection).



Figure 6.21. Railroad Tie House, steam traction engine in the foreground, 1936 (Worts Collection).