

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	NOV 29 1978
DATE ENTERED	<i>Increased approx 12/12/78</i>

Date Submitted: Nov. 22, 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE-NOMINATION AMENDMENT
Las Vegas Mormon Fort/Clark County, Nevada

Research by the City of Las Vegas staff and the local group, Preservation Association of Clark County, has tentatively established the old adobe outpost's original size was approximately 150-190 feet square. The existing portion of the fort which is now listed on the National Register (February 1, 1972) is believed to have comprised the southeast portion of the original walled compound.

Within the compound existed eight residences, a number of stables, and storage facilities. Within the immediate vicinity of the fort existed a blacksmith shop and vegetable gardens. However, an archeological survey of the area is needed in order to establish factual evidence of the fort's actual layout, its ancillary features, etc.

Presently, the fort sits on city property which is surrounded by private property. Because of the potential for recovery of historical data related to the fort, the original nomination is being expanded to include additional land surrounding the structure.

Total acreage of the additional property (parcels 1-A, 1-B, and 1-C) is .699 acres. Please see attached map.

References: Las Vegas Historic Survey, 1978
Nevada State Parks drawing by Stewart, 1971
Historic Structures Report: Las Vegas Mormon Fort
James Hinds, Chief Editor 1978

UTM References: zone 11/easting 667950/northing 4005360

FR, 125/18

Property Las Vegas Mormon Fort
State Nevada Working Number 7. 11. 78

BOUNDARY REVISION
INCREASE X
DECREASE _____
MOVE _____

TECHNICAL
Photos 3
Maps 2

~~Need map~~
~~" photos~~

TAX REFORM ACT
JUL 18 1978
CONTROL pl
HISTORIAN

Call for new map
~~would also be good~~

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN
Platt map Barham
O.K. 9.10.78

Recent research has apparently supported expectations of remains associated with the listed structure, ~~although~~ ~~the~~ ~~to~~ added areas have good potential for archeological research which could provide information on the spatial patterning of the complex.

ARCHEOLOGIST
Accept.
Jay Bush
12-1-78

All necessary documentation is ~~comp~~ complete: See new Continuation sheet with revised acreage of area to be added to NR listing. See photos of area to be added. See sketch map for Boundary Description (map drawn to scale). Defer to archeologist. USGS map now included, too. (checked by Pauline)

OTHER
Saxe 12/1/78

Additional land well justified as part of the original fort - potential to yield information.

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF
Accept
W. R. Luce
12/11/78

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS BOUNDARY REVISION IS ACCEPTED

Charles Atkinson

DATE 12.12.78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: W. Ray Luce
CHIEF, BRANCH OF REGISTRATION

DATE 12/11/78

THIS FORM IS TO BE FILED WITH THE NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION/
State notified ✓ Federal Register _____ Control Cards ✓ ADP _____

INT: 580-78



NOV 29 1978

CITY OF LAS VEGAS

PHOTO

NO.

07-96

~~#6~~ * 7

NOV 22 1978

VIEW LOOKING TO NORTH
LAS VEGAS MORMON FORT SEEN AT
LEFT SIDE OF PICTURE

SEEN ARE MAP PARCELS 1C & 1B
Clark Co Nevada



NOV 29 1978

CITY OF LAS VEGAS
PHOTO

NO. D7-96-8

NOV 29 1978

OVERALL VIEW OF AREA TO EAST
OF L.V. MORMON FORT

VIEW LOOKS NORTH

N/E WING OF ELKS LODGE
CAN BE SEEN AT LEFT OF PICTURE

Clark Co Nevada



OLD
MORMON
FORT

NOV 29 1978

CITY OF LAS VEGAS
PHOTO
NO. D7-96-6

NOV 22 1978

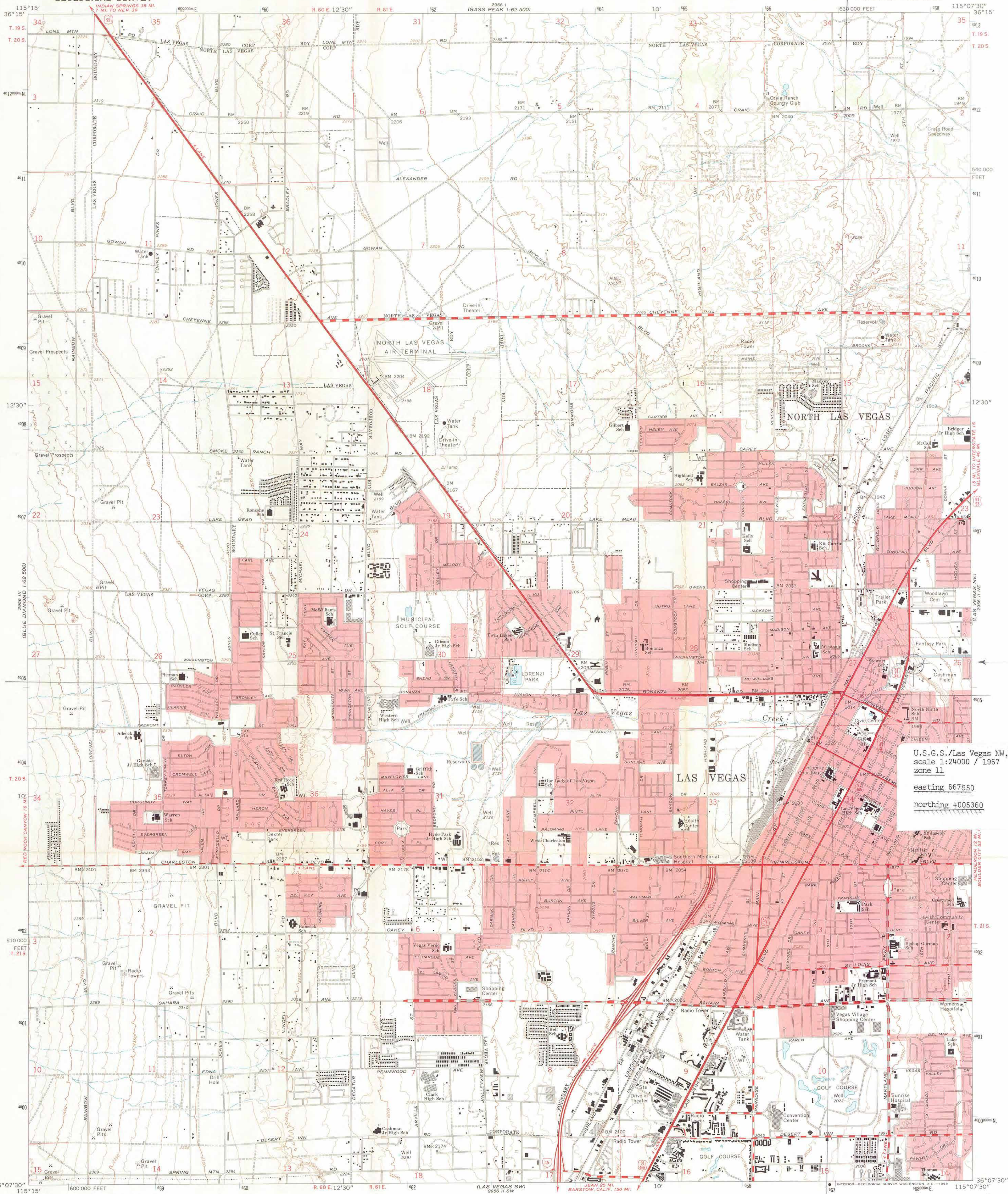
LAS VEGAS MORMON FORT
VIEW LOOKING TO WEST
(FROM PARKING/PICNIC AREA)
OR PARCEL 1C ON MAP
ELKS LODGE CAN BE SEEN AT
EXTREME LEFT OF PICTURE
Clark Co. Nevada

CORN CREEK SPRINGS
2994 IV
1:62,500

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

LAS VEGAS NW QUADRANGLE
NEVADA-CLARK CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
NW/4 LAS VEGAS 19 QUADRANGLE

2994 IV
1:62,500



U.S.G.S./Las Vegas NW, Nevada
scale 1:24000 / 1967
zone 11
eastings 667950
northing 4005360

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS

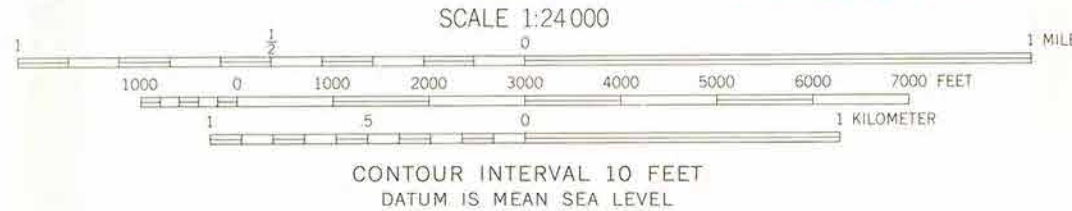
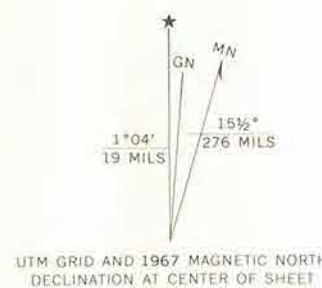
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1965. Field checked 1967

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Nevada coordinate system, east zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 11, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines

This map lies within a subsidence area



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
Interstate Route ——— U.S. Route ———



LAS VEGAS NW, NEV.
NW/4 LAS VEGAS 19 QUADRANGLE
N3607.5-W11507.5/7.5

1967
AMS 2956 II NW-SERIES V896

See Map of Nov. 29
(Revised)

TOTAL ACREAGE OF
1A, 1B, & 1C EQUALS
~~2.59~~ ACRES

Washington

132.25

265.11

Pct. 1-B

~~38,848 sq. ft.~~

365.12

Pct. 1-A

~~43,350~~

~~sq. ft.~~

190.87

137.72

MORMON FORT

56.38

Pct. 1-C

~~30,623 sq. ft.~~

218.74

170.91

Elks
Building
37,380 sq. ft.

Basement
4,743 sq. ft.

Pct. 1-D

~~5.37~~ Acres

483.87

483.76

NORTH



[NO SCALE]





Map Source: City of Las Vegas Engineering Department



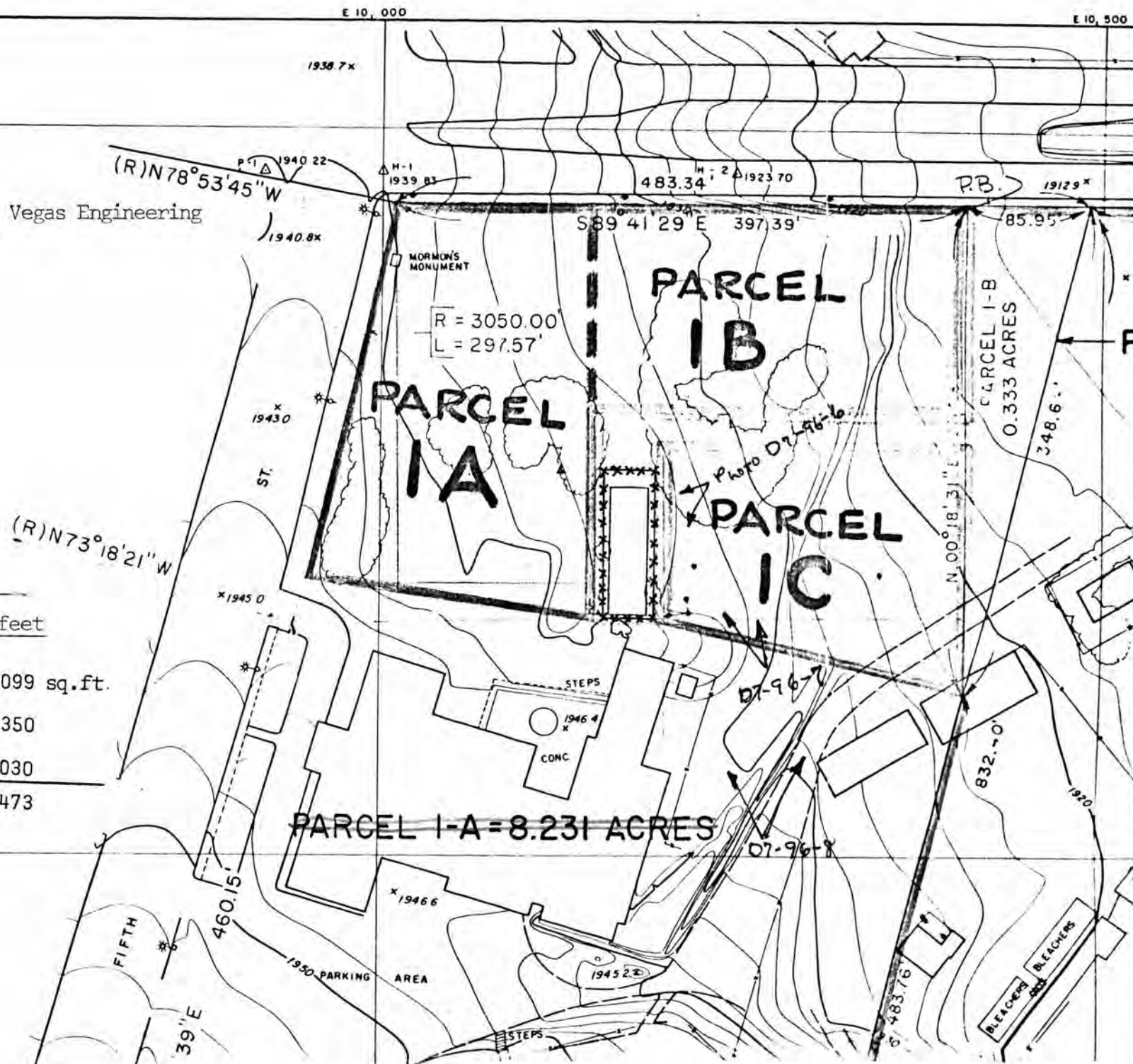
Map Scale: 1 inch = 50 feet

Acreage: Parcel 1A = 12,099 sq.ft.

acreage equals 1B = 10,350

,699 acre 1C = 8,030

30,473



National Register of Historic Places

Note to the record

Additional Documentation: 2026

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)Other names/site number: Las Vegas Ranch; NRIS 72000764 and 78003379

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A**2. Location**Street & number: 500 E. Washington AvenueCity or town: Las Vegas State: Nevada County: ClarkNot For Publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☒ D

		<u>07/24/2026</u>	
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date	
<u>Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer</u>			
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government			
In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.			
Signature of commenting official:		Date	
Title :		State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____



Signature of the Keeper

8/26/2026

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

- Private: ☐
Public – Local ☐
Public – State ☒
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

- Building(s) ☐
District ☒
Site ☐
Structure ☐
Object ☐

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada

County and State

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

1

1

3

Noncontributing

5

2

4

11

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1 (adobe)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/ranch

GOVERNMENT/research facility

Current Functions

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
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7. Description

Architectural Classification

NO STYLE

Materials:

ADOBE

STUCCO

CONCRETE

STONE

WOOD

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort is a Nevada State Park located in a developed urban area of Las Vegas. It consists of a large, open area anchored by an original adobe building and a partial reconstruction of the 1855 fort's walls and northwest bastion. Other buildings are modern, including a visitor center, two standalone restroom buildings, a maintenance building, and a large workshop. Landscape features are also modern, among them reconstructed caliche walls, a concrete-lined stream with wooden bridges, a garden and tortoise habitat, various shade and fig trees, picnic tables, and commemorative monuments. The property retains sufficient historic integrity to convey its significance, although some aspects of integrity – particularly those of setting, workmanship, and materials – have been diminished by the site's change over time.

Narrative Description

The Las Vegas Mormon Fort was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. The nomination included a description of the standing adobe building. The nomination does not specify a clear period of significance outside of the year 1855, although it identifies two areas of significance: Historic and Architecture. In 1978, the boundary for the listing was increased to include the entire site.

This additional documentation establishes a period of significance, applicable criteria, updated property description and inventory, and additional historical information and significance of the district.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Clark County, Nevada

Name of Property

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The Las Vegas Mormon Fort is centrally located in the urban sprawl of modern Las Vegas, Nevada at the corner of East Washington Avenue and Las Vegas Boulevard North. The site is accessed from Washington Avenue through a parking lot. There is a small car roundabout at the end of the parking lot; situated in front of the maintenance building is a Nevada State Historical Marker stating a brief history of the site. The land approaching the visitor center entrance reflects the quiet and modest desert landscape with grasses, mesquite trees, and rockwork.



Figure 1: Reconstructed fort walls and northwest bastion.

For centuries prior to the construction of the 1855 fort, the land was regularly occupied and utilized by the Indigenous Ancestral Puebloan peoples and later the Nuwuvi. This is confirmed by extensive archaeological research and excavations on the site. Before its dedication as a state historic park in the 1990s, that site had many different eras and uses: a stockade and missionary station, a ranch, a tourist resort and swimming pool, a concrete testing laboratory for the

Hoover Dam, and a recreational area. Despite its early and often repeated recognition as a historically significant site, decades passed before its preservation was guaranteed.

The southwest quadrant of the property includes the original adobe building, as well as the partially reconstructed fort walls and northwest bastion. These resources open onto a courtyard that replicates the historic appearance of the open area within the stockade (Figures 1 and 2).

To the north and east are non-historic buildings and landscapes associated with the state park. A reconstruction of



Figure 2: Original adobe building.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Clark County, Nevada

Name of Property

County and State

the Las Vegas Creek and wooden bridge crossings defines the southern portion of the property.



Figure 3: Blocks representing the Gass-Stewart Ranch House in foreground, caliche walls and fig trees at background right.

Modern buildings that occupy the site include the visitor center, two restroom buildings, a workshop, and a maintenance building. Some of these non-historic facilities were built to complement the different historic periods of the site. Other elements that occupy the site are the reconstructed creek, caliche rock walls, mesquite and fig trees, picnic tables, wooden bridges, a garden, a tortoise habitat, and concrete adobe

blocks that represent the Gass-Stewart Ranch House that once occupied the site (Figure 3).

Five commemorative monuments are in the district. Two are within the park's walls. One was installed by the International Society Daughters of Utah Pioneers at the park in 1939 and later rebuilt in 1994. Another monument from 1952 commemorates the Bringhurst Post Office (see photograph 0017). The third is outside of the park on the east side of the visitor center and was placed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1997.¹ The fourth is Nevada State Historic Marker #35, which was rededicated in the parking lot roundabout in 2008. The fifth, erected in 2015, is a monument consisting of a statue of Helen J. Stewart and a plaque detailing the contributions she made to the development of early Las Vegas. Of these, only the 1952 post office marker is contributing to the district. The other four are considered non-contributing objects.

Archaeological Features (Contributing)

The property includes intact archaeological deposits associated with five cultural periods – the Native American Period (Formative and Protohistoric, A.D. 300-c.1850), the Las Vegas Mission Period (1855-1857), the Ranching Period (1861-1902), the Railroad Period (1903-1955), and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Period (1929-1932). Major archaeological features from each period are summarized below based on previous archaeological studies of the site.²

¹ Lisa Leavitt Messenger, *The Old Ranch: A Brief History of the Las Vegas Ranch after 1902*, Second edition, (Self-published, 2023), 180.

² Robert G. Elston and Alvin R. McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort: Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*, (Carson City: Nevada State Parks, 1993); James R. Hinds, *One Hundred and Twenty-five Years at Las Vegas' Old Fort: A Historic Structures Report of Las Vegas Fort and Ranch*, Manuscript on file at

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
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Archaeological materials associated with the **Native American Period** (300-c.1850) include a pit structure and three discrete artifact scatters (Artifact Scatters 1, 2, and 3). The pit structure dates to the Protohistoric Period, likely representing intensified use of the site by Nuwuvi groups; more work is needed to determine the exact function(s) of this Native American feature. Artifact Scatter 1 represents a Protohistoric-age seasonal or permanent encampment, also a likely remnant of the Nuwuvi occupation of the site. Artifact Scatter 2 dates from the late Formative to early Protohistoric Periods, whereas Artifact Scatter 3 dates to the late Formative Period. The functions of Artifact Scatters 2 and 3 are less clear – they may represent encampments or midden areas.³

Las Vegas Mission Period (1855-1857) archaeological features include foundation elements of the northwest bastion, upper portions of the southeast bastion renovated during the Ranching and BOR Periods, the ruins of all four fort walls, a series of foundations along the southern interior wall of the fort believed to be the fort mess rooms, and the remnants of an adobe corral. Archaeological features from the **Ranching Period** (1861-1902) include the stone foundations of the Gass-Stewart Ranch House, the south wall during this period, two wooden bridges, a corral and stable, and a metal trough. A concrete septic tank and a redwood pipeline are features dating to the **Railroad Period** (1903-1955). Archaeological features associated with the **BOR Period** (1929-1932) include a wood septic tank, two concrete block/masonry rooms, and the standing adobe building, which, due to extensive modification, is most representative of the BOR Period rather than the Mission or Ranching Periods. Additional subsurface archaeological features have not been definitively assigned to any specific cultural period.⁴

Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, (Carson City: Division of State Parks, 1980); John W. Hohmann, *The Founding of Las Vegas, Nevada: Phase II Archaeological Investigations at the Old Las Vegas Mormon For State Historic Park, Clark County, Nevada*, Cultural Resource Group Research Report No. 24, (Las Vegas: Louis Berger & Associates Press, 1995); John W. Hohmann and James C. Lowe, *A Phase I (Class III) Archaeological Survey and Testing for a Proposed Temporary Parking Area Located on 1.1 Acres of the Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Historic Park, Clark County, Nevada*, Cultural Resource Group Clearance Report No. 43, (Las Vegas: Louis Berger & Associates Press, 1995); Tara S. McCarty, *Archaeological Reconnaissance of the Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, (Las Vegas: WESTEC Services, Inc., 1981).

³ John W. Hohmann, Don W. Ryden, and Margaret "Peg" Davis, *Preservation Plan for the Cultural Resources of the Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, (Carson City: Nevada Division of State Parks, 2000), 38.

⁴ Hohmann et al. 2000, 30-33, 60-61.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada

County and State

Adobe Building (Contributing/NRHP-Listed)



Figure 4: East and north elevations of adobe building.

The only extant architectural resource from the historic period is an adobe building on the site's southern edge (Figures 4 and 5). Its long, rectangular form measures approximately 74 feet long by 12 feet wide with a short ell taking shape at the southern portion of the building, extending to 18 feet in width. While not fully Spanish Colonial, the building evokes that style with its flat parapet roof. The roof is built from sawn, dimensional lumber joists with a wood plank deck resting on the adobe walls. The exterior and interior walls are

coated with a layer of mud plaster applied in 1980. Prior to that, the adobe brick remained exposed. Since 1980, a layer of new concrete plaster has been applied to the walls every few years by the State of Nevada. The adobe building consists of three rooms aligned on a north-south axis. The southern-most room is the surviving, though heavily modified, portion of the original southeast fort bastion.⁵

All fenestrations on the building feature modest casings painted in a rouge brown and date to the 1929 Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) extensive reconstruction and rehabilitation of the building. Eight openings are found on the east elevation. Moving from south to north, these include a five-panel wood door, a one-over-one single-hung sash window, an identical five-panel wood door, three individual windows all identical to the prior, another five-panel wood door, and a singular window again identical to its counterparts. Moving to the north elevation is one door, identical to its east elevation counterparts, centered on the short 12-foot span.

⁵ Bureau of Reclamation, *Concrete Testing Laboratory Plan of Building*, 1929; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 78.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada

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Continuing to the west elevation, starting from the north and moving south, are two individual windows, identical to the east elevation fenestrations, a five-panel wood door, then two more individual windows before reaching the short jog of the ell shape at the southern portion of the building. The 13-foot span in the west elevation of the ell shape features a chimney extending from grade level to above the roof elevation. This feature was likely added by rancher O.D. Gass after 1865. On the south elevation, facing the Las Vegas Creek



Figure 5: West and south elevations of adobe building.

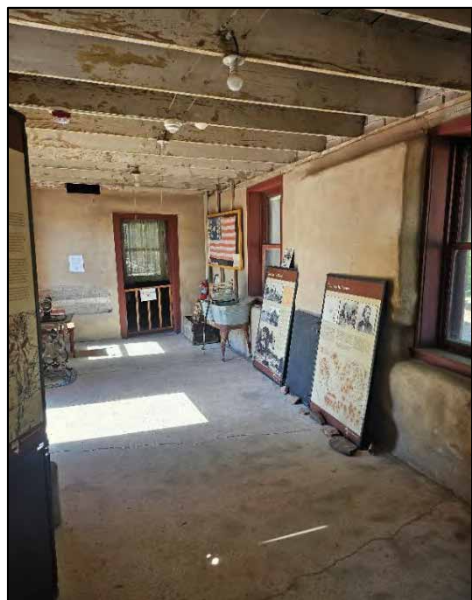


Figure 6: Interior of adobe building facing southwest.

replica, is a singularly centered, one-over-one, single-hung sash window. The entire interior is concrete slab flooring from the BOR work done in 1929 (Figure 6).⁶

The adobe building that stands today has changed since it was first constructed in 1855 as part of the fort's east wall and southeast bastion. Beginning in the 1860s and through the 1920s, it generally was used as ancillary storage on the ranch. In the late 1920s, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) leased the site, conducting major rehabilitation of the building. Although the original adobe building was in ruins when the BOR began their renovations, construction plans honored the resource's historic layout, scale, and construction materials. The thicker portions of the building's western wall are remnants of the fort's east wall. What remains of the building today is most representative of the 1929 to 1932 tenure of the BOR rather than the Mission or Ranch Period occupations, but some of the original 1855 fabric of the building remains, as well as the ranching era building additions.⁷

⁶ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 2000.

⁷ OLVMF Historic Photograph Collection.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Name of Property

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Reconstructed Northwest Bastion and Fort Walls (Contributing)

The northwest bastion and fort walls are reconstructions of the 1855 fort, rebuilt between 1997 and 2000. Archaeological features of the fort include foundation elements of the northwest bastion, the southeast bastion, the ruins of all fort walls (north, east, south, and west), and a series of foundations along the southern interior wall.



Figure 7: Overview of fort reconstruction looking southwest.



Figure 8: Courtyard (interior) view of fort reconstruction facing northwest.



Figure 9: Reconstructed north gate facing northeast.



Figure 10: Reconstructed northwest bastion facing northwest.

What stands today is a partial reconstruction of the original fort walls (west, north, and east) and a two-level bastion in the northwest corner of the reconstructed walls (Figures 7 and 8). The foundation, which maintains many of its original foundation stones, is constructed of stones and clay mortar. The rest of the wall construction is of concrete-stabilized adobe brick and clay mortar. Centered along the north reconstructed wall is the north gate entrance (Figure 9).

The gate is constructed and framed with wood. Along all three fort walls are small, strategically represented openings at the very upper parts of the walls. The fort's interior courtyard is represented in this partial reconstruction and includes a conjectural wooden

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

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perimeter breezeway. The reconstruction of the fort walls and bastion started in 1997 and was fully completed by 2000.⁸

The reconstructed northwest bastion represents one of the site's original bastions. Historically, a nearly identical second bastion stood at the southeast corner, which was eventually modified into the previously described single-story adobe building. The reconstructed northwest bastion is constructed out of the same stone and clay mortar foundation with stabilized adobe brick and clay mortar walls (Figure 10). It sits two levels tall with one small window opening at each elevation, four per level. The door into the bastion is found on the interior side of the fort on the south elevation. The roof is substantially low-pitched with extending timber eaves on all sides.⁹

Pumphouse Building (Non-contributing)



Figure 11: Modern pumphouse building facing south.

The pumphouse is a small, semi-dugout building located within the parking lot roundabout. It houses the pumps and external filtration for the creek and pond. It has a front-gabled roof with widely overhanging eaves. The eaves are open, revealing exposed rafter tails. It has concrete block walls partially clad with cultured stone. Constructed between 1998 and 2000, the building has a sign clarifying that it is not a historic building (Figure 11).

Restroom Building 1 (Non-contributing)

Restroom Building 1 is located in the southeast corner of the site, next to the modern visitor center and park entrance (Figure 12). It is a modern non-historic building, built in 2005 alongside the visitor center, designed to complement and blend in with the historic environment without creating a false sense of history. The building is only accessible once inside the park. The building is an elongated rectangular volume with a tall presence provided by the flat roof and extended parapet. It is constructed of reddish brown, square concrete blocks with poured concrete flooring throughout. Water fountains are located inside at the restroom entry points.

¹⁰



Figure 12: Restroom Building 1 facing southwest.

⁸ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 2000.

⁹ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 2000.

¹⁰ Historic Aerial Imagery, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2005.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Name of Property

Restroom Building 2 (Non-contributing)

Clark County, Nevada

County and State



Figure 13: Restroom Building 2 facing north.

Restroom Building 2 is located in the group use area just outside the fort gate on the northwest corner near the corner of Las Vegas Boulevard and Washington Avenue (Figure 13). It is a modern, non-historic building designed to complement and blend in with the historic environment. The roof is a primitive-looking timber and beam construction resting on two separate, small adobe-style structures, each housing one restroom. Both restrooms are accessed

through the open-air breezeway bisecting the two standing structures. Two water fountains are in the open-air breezeway with electric sconce lighting and concrete flooring throughout. The building was constructed between 1999 and 2000 to serve visitors to the state park, coinciding with the fort reconstruction project.¹¹

Shop Building (Non-contributing)

The shop building is located at the north side of the park near Washington Avenue and is accessed from inside the park (Figure 14). The building was built at the same time as Restroom Building 2, between 1999 and 2000. The building is a large, rectangular volume with a corrugated metal gable roof. Like Restroom Building 2, this building is a modern non-historic building designed to complement its historic surrounds and blend in with the site. The exterior wall finishes are a mix of stone similar to the stone foundations on the fort walls and bastion, concrete block, and a concrete veneer in imitation of adobe. It features small window openings on the north, south, and rear elevations of the building that resemble the reconstructed fort wall openings.¹²



Figure 14: Shop Building facing north.

¹¹ Historic Aerial Imagery, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2005.

¹² Historic Aerial Imagery, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2005.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Clark County, Nevada
County and State

Name of Property

Visitor Center (Non-contributing)

The visitor center is a large, modern building located at the east end of the park, also acting as the entrance point. The building was designed by Assemblage Studio, an architecture firm based in the local area, who described the design as:



Figure 15: Visitor Center facing northwest.

...an evolution of the fort typology – solid, concrete and CMU exterior walls, and an inward focus into a central courtyard. The wall's bastions enable occupants to view arriving visitors, creating a vantage point which connects the fort's interior to the view toward the valley's entrance [the visitor center] to the northeast. The materials were selected to participate in the narrative telling of the building's history. Component materials connected to the history of the fort are incorporated into the walls: concrete block to represent the stacked adobe, the poured concrete of the dam building era, steel to represent the mining of ore, the heavy wood trusses of the original fort, and canvas duct work to represent early shelters and wagons.¹³

The building was built in 2005 at the same time as Restroom Building 1. Its design is appropriately sensitive yet distinct from the historic site and its resources (Figure 15).

Creek Reconstruction (Non-contributing)

The Las Vegas Creek is a replica of what would have been once there, although its location is not historically accurate (Figures 16 and 17).

The natural Las Vegas Creek was a year-round water source creating an oasis in the desert. The creek was fed by a series of springs, the major being Las Vegas Spring, located a few miles to the west. The oasis created by this spring-fed creek was a lifeline for humans who occupied and traveled through the valley from prehistoric times until well after the founding of the City of Las Vegas.¹⁴



Figure 16: Las Vegas Creek reconstruction at right, facing east toward adobe building.

¹³ assemblageSTUDIO, "Old Mormon Fort Visitors Center," Accessed August 7, 2024. <https://assemblagestudio.com/projects/mormon-fort>.

¹⁴ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 2000, 14.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada

County and State



Figure 17: Creek reconstruction facing west.



Figure 18: Bridge replica over re-created Las Vegas Creek.

The original creek bed is no longer evident at surface level, as it was backfilled and constructed upon by the 1960s Elks Lodge building. Archaeological excavations have discovered evidence of multiple bed alignments and a small wandering creek.¹⁵

Today, the creek replica runs west to east along the southern portion of the park property, forming a small pond at the most eastern point.

Two modern wooden bridges span the creek to evoke the historic ranch environment. They are reconstructions of historic bridges found during archaeological investigations (Figure 18). One of the bridges discovered was originally part of the Mission Period canal alignment, and the second was found to the south of the site when excavations were in progress of the Las Vegas Creek re-creation. Riparian vegetation has been planted along the creek, and picnic tables are provided for visitors.¹⁶

Garden (Non-contributing)

Three small interpretive modern garden plots in the northeastern corner of the site are marked with a sign (Figure 19). This interpretation provides context for the site signifying the historical importance of agriculture to the pre-historic and historic era. The site today plants the same crops as were grown here historically. The gardens are planted in the spring and fall to produce fruits and vegetables throughout the year.



Figure 19: Overview of modern garden facing northeast.

¹⁵ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 2000.

¹⁶ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 2000.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☒ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☒ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

AGRICULTURE

CONSERVATION/HISTORIC PRESERVATION

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

ENGINEERING

ARCHAEOLOGY/HISTORIC-NON-ABORIGINAL

ARCHAEOLOGY/PREHISTORIC

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Period of Significance

C.E. 300 – 1976

Significant Dates

1855-1857 (Las Vegas Mission)

c.1865-1881 (O.D. Gass Ranch)

1882-1902 (Stewart Ranch)

1903-1955 (Railroad owns ranch, leasing to tenants)

1929-1932 (Bureau of Reclamation leases adobe building from railroad)

1955-1976 (Preservation and commemoration efforts)

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Ancestral Puebloan (Anasazi)

Nuwuvi (Southern Paiute)

Architect/Builder

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Las Vegas Mormon Fort is locally significant under Criterion A for its association with the exploration and settlement of Las Vegas. Established and occupied by the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1855 to 1857, it transformed into the Las Vegas Rancho under the auspices of the community's early founders, O.D. Gass and Archibald and Helen J. Stewart. In addition to functioning as a working ranch and homestead, the property served as a resting stop for travelers until Stewart sold the property to the railroad in 1902. A few years after acquiring the land, the railroad leased the property to numerous tenants who operated it as a successful ranch and occasional resort until 1955. It is additionally significant for its contributions to engineering for its role as a concrete testing facility for Hoover Dam when the Bureau of Reclamation leased and inhabited the remaining building on the site between August 1929 and March 1932. Efforts to commemorate, preserve, and interpret the site, culminating with the U.S. Bicentennial celebrations of 1976, also contribute to the significance of the district.

Because the adobe building is a recent reconstruction of a 1970s-era reconstruction of a 1930s-era reconstruction of a nineteenth century adobe building, the property is not eligible under Criterion C for Architecture. As a result, Criterion C is being removed in this update.

The district is additionally eligible under Criterion D for its archaeological potential. Archaeological investigations confirm its occupation and use by Indigenous people from A.D. 300 until the mid-1800s, when Euro-Americans arrived in the valley. The Ancestral Puebloan and Nuwuvi cultures are represented in the archaeological record at the site. Successive

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investigations have uncovered ruins and artifacts spanning from the prehistoric and protohistoric periods into the historic period, reflecting its occupation and use by missionaries, ranchers, railroad representatives, and the Bureau of Reclamation between 1855 and 1931. The potential for the Las Vegas Mormon Fort to yield new and important archaeological information is very high.

The period of significance for the district spans centuries, from 300 to 1976. This represents its prehistoric significance during its occupation by the Ancestral Puebloan and Nuwuvi cultures, and it continues through the Latter-day Saints' arrival in 1855, their two-year occupation of the site, and the next several years of the Fort ruins being used as a campsite by Indigenous people, travelers, and Latter-day Saints from other mission stations. The period of significance additionally encompasses the site's agricultural use by Euro-Americans, specifically when O.D. Gass acquired the property circa 1865 and began operating it as a successful ranch and rest stop for travelers. This proceeds through the Stewart Ranch era, as the site continued to serve as an important local ranch and rest stop from the time Archibald Stewart took over the property in 1882 until Helen Stewart sold it to the railroad in 1902. Its significance continued as the railroad leased the property to ranchers, farmers, and dairymen meeting the community's ever-growing demand for fresh meat, produce, and milk. The significant period ends in 1976, when U.S. Bicentennial celebrations recognized the contributions of local advocates and organizations to preserve and document the property after resisting intensive development pressures of the previous two decades.

Overall, the district retains sufficient integrity to express its significance. Although the property has experienced many modifications, some that date to the period of significance and others that postdate it, reconstruction and interpretation activities at the site allow it to convey its historical significance.

The property meets Criteria Consideration E as an accurately reconstructed feature located in a suitable environment that is presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan. No other local building or structure with the same associations has survived.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The 1972 nomination for the Las Vegas Mormon Fort summarizes the property's history from its establishment as a mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, through its Las Vegas Rancho Period under the ownership of Octavius Gass and then the Stewart family, until Helen J. Stewart sold the property to the railroad. It does not specify a clear period of significance nor significance criteria for the property. History and Architecture are noted as areas of significance for the site.

This additional documentation includes a cultural context for the Indigenous people who utilized the creek at the site, informing its significance as a prehistoric site. It also offers supplemental historical information from the Mission Period, Ranching Period, and Railroad Period, until the

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fort was partially reconstructed in 2000. Finally, this update defines a period of significance and significance criteria for the property.

Cultural Beginnings: The Native American Period (C.E. 300-c.1850)

Located on a spring-fed creek with a natural meadow and grove of mesquite trees, the eventual site of the Las Vegas Mormon Fort was known and used by local Indigenous people for centuries before the arrival of the first non-aboriginal explorers and settlers. As one of the only water sources for miles around, the creek and its grasses nourished the earliest inhabitants of the Las Vegas Valley. The Ancestral Puebloan (Anasazi) and Nuwuvi (Southern Paiute) cultures both left evidence of their activities at the site, which was used as a dependable water source and seasonal campsite for centuries before the arrival of Euro-Americans.¹⁷

Formative Period (300-1500)

The Formative Period begins with the arrival of Ancestral Puebloan people in the Las Vegas Valley around 300 C.E. However, Indigenous peoples have lived in southern Nevada since time immemorial, as is evidenced by multiple Clovis projectile points found in the area, as well as oral histories of the region. As a growing population seeking farmland for maize agriculture, Ancestral Puebloans sought proximity to water and arable land. This is reflected in a large Ancestral Puebloan encampment at what would become the Las Vegas Mormon Fort site, in addition to a variety of seasonal camps documented across southern Nevada. The available water made the area an appealing locale for farming. In addition to excelling in horticulture, the Ancestral Puebloans engaged in foraging. The Ancestral Puebloan encampment in this area is evidenced by two sherds of Moapa brownware dating to between 1100 and 1300 C.E., as well as chert and obsidian debitage. Additionally, the proliferation of the Ancestral Puebloan throughout southern Nevada is evidenced through archaeological sites like Lost City, in addition to oral history traditions of modern Indigenous peoples.¹⁸

The Ancestral Puebloans abandoned the area between 1200 and 1250 C.E., likely due to rising aridity in the region and increased difficulty in farming, although a definitive reason for their disappearance is unclear. Although the Patyan culture's presence in the region overlapped that of the Ancestral Puebloan, beginning in 500 C.E. and continuing until 1500, there is no evidence that they occupied the site at any point in time, despite being in the region.^{19 20 21}

Protohistoric Period (1500-c.1850)

The Protohistoric Period begins in 1500, when the Nuwuvi culture arrived in the area. This reflects the time immediately before European settlement in the region, although Spanish exploration and trading in California and the Southwest impacted the area long before permanent

¹⁷ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 2000, 14.

¹⁸ Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, 118.

¹⁹ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 2000, 15-16.

²⁰ Joe Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas: A Cartographic Journey*, (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2022), 25-26.

²¹ Elizabeth von Till Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs, A Disappeared Resource*, Dissertation, Washington State University, 2001, 27, 33.

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European settlement occurred. Importantly, an Indigenous burial has been recovered from the Mormon Fort area. The burial dates to either the late Formative Period or early Protohistoric Period and highlights the importance of this site to local Indigenous peoples. While the burial was excavated and reinterred, the discovery nevertheless reflects the cultural significance of the site.²²

Semi-nomadic and relying on a seasonal subsistence strategy, the Nuwuvi lived in small bands of several families, moving to different springs and elevations throughout the year across much of the Great Basin. While various Nuwuvi bands occupied the Las Vegas Valley, the Pegesits band was most prevalent in the area. The Nuwuvi grew crops along the Las Vegas Creek and Springs using irrigation ditches, in addition to hunting small game and gathering mesquite pods and other plants. The complex irrigation systems built and managed by the Nuwuvi were noted by early settlers, speaking to their prominence on the landscape. Mesquite beans were often ground on metates and cooked into cakes that were simple to transport, reflective of the semi-nomadic nature of the Nuwuvi.^{23 24}

The Nuwuvi camped at the Las Vegas Springs (Parampaiya) in brush wikiups, and the eventual Mormon Fort site served as an intermittent occupation site with its reliably clean and available water. Various archaeological materials from the Protohistoric Period evidence Nuwuvi activity at the site. The Protohistoric Period brought a proliferation of ceramic production and use by the Nuwuvi. This ceramic production is evidenced by precontact brownware recovered in excavations at the fort, including micaceous brownware. Additionally, chert, basalt, and obsidian debitage was recovered, including biface fragments. Such debitage demonstrates that Nuwuvi peoples stayed in this locale for varying periods of time and engaged in tool-making activities at the site. The Nuwuvi were present when the first Euro-Americans entered the valley in the mid-1800s, which marks the end of the Protohistoric Period and a time of significant change and difficulty for the Native people. In the words of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe: "White settlers and a booming railroad town brought an end to the Paiute's free movement and traditional way of life, making them landless laborers in their own land."²⁵

Explorers and the Spanish Trail (1829-1848)

Various routes of the Spanish Trail traverse the Las Vegas Valley; one of these crosses the site of the Las Vegas Mormon Fort. When New Mexican merchant Antonio Armijo led a sixty-man commercial caravan along the Spanish Trail to Los Angeles in 1829, the travelers became the first non-native people to pass through the Las Vegas Valley. While Armijo's party did not stop at the Las Vegas springs and eventual site of the Mormon Fort specifically, later travelers along

²² Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 2000, 15, 37.

²³ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 16-17; Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, "History & Culture," available at <https://www.lvpaiutetribes.com/history>.

²⁴ Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Nuwuvi: A Southern Paiute History*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1976), 119.

²⁵ Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, 107, 132; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 16-17; Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Nuwuvi*, 119; Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 34, 44; Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas*, 27.

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the trail did. The abundant artesian spring water discovered there shortened the distance between water stops on the route to Los Angeles and eased hardships for traders. Their diaries provide similar accountings of the verdant meadows and fast-running creek watered by four large springs.^{26 27}

The word “Vegas” first appears in reference to this area on explorer John C. Frémont’s 1844 map. On May 13, 1844, he camped at the Las Vegas Springs as he led an overland expedition west. He was not alone – the springs remained a popular resting place for both humans and animals passing through the region, offering grassy expanses shaded by willows and cottonwood trees and plenty of water for bathing and drinking. Las Vegas translates to “The Meadows” in Spanish, and the term “Vegas” described the meadow-like setting of this watered desert area, alerting travelers to the presence of water and grasses.²⁸

At its height, the Spanish Trail transported a steady volume of livestock, goods, and people. During the 1830s and 1840s, a profitable slave trade along the trail terrorized the Nuwuvi people, who were captured and trafficked by New Mexican and Ute slavers. The demographic impact of the trade is not known, although the transportation of enslaved Paiutes became ingrained in the annual trading caravans along the trail during this period.²⁹

Trade along the Spanish Trail abruptly ended in the spring of 1848 when the United States won the Mexican-American War, acquiring the territories through which the route traversed. While trade ended on the trail, travel did not. The Donner Party’s misfortune in the Sierra Nevada mountains over the winter of 1846 made many California-bound emigrants nervous about crossing those mountains. The former Spanish Trail presented an alternative to the northern California Trail and was heavily used by emigrants seeking their fortune in California from the late 1840s into the 1850s.³⁰

Indigenous occupants of the Las Vegas valley cautiously avoided contact with traders and emigrants during this period. After enduring years of slaving caravans throughout their territory, the Nuwuvi deliberately hid from foreigners, and there are no surviving accounts of direct contact between travelers and natives in the Las Vegas Valley. The local springs utilized by caravans and wagon trains were also traditional Nuwuvi hunting and gathering areas, campsites, and water sources, and the presence of non-native travelers inadvertently disturbed Nuwuvi access to these resources.³¹

²⁶ Stanley Paher, *Las Vegas: As It Began – As It Grew*, (Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1971), 13-15.

²⁷ Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas*, 32-34.

²⁸ Paher, *Las Vegas*, 15-16; Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas*, 34.

²⁹ Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Nuwuvi*, 36, 49; Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas*, 34.

³⁰ Paher, *Las Vegas*, 14-16; Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas*, 34-35.

³¹ Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 59-61; Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, 119.

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Las Vegas Mission (1855-1857)

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were the first non-indigenous people to settle in the Las Vegas Valley, although they followed a circuitous path to establishing their eventual outpost there. Fleeing religious persecution, the Saints founded Salt Lake City in 1847 and sent scouting parties into the Great Basin to explore potential settlement locations. In 1851, they purchased the Rancho de San Bernardino in Southern California to serve converts and missionaries from their Pacific missions. The Mormon Trail, formerly the Spanish Trail, connected these two important outposts to one another – and connected the Saints to the outside world.^{32 33}

During the 1850s, the Mormon Trail represented an important, well-traveled route. In addition to missionaries and emigrants, the road transported mail from Salt Lake City to Southern California. Beginning in 1852, mail from Salt Lake to California was rerouted south along the Mormon Trail to avoid the travails of the Sierra Nevada in winter, and Congress established a monthly mail route from Salt Lake to San Diego along the trail in April 1854. The same year, the U.S. government funded construction of a military road from Salt Lake City to the California state line, largely following the Mormon Trail.³⁴

Recognizing that the route was poised for renewed commercial traffic, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints established a string of forts along the Mormon Trail. The forts served as safe places for missionaries, mail riders, and other travelers along the road to rest and refresh their supplies. In addition, the outposts increased the Saints' influence over the route.³⁵

During a general conference held in Salt Lake City on April 6, 1855, Church leader Brigham Young called thirty Latter-Day Saints from the Utah Territory to Las Vegas to build a mission fort for the purpose of establishing a strategic waystation along the route to San Bernadino, with secondary objectives of spreading their religion to the local Indigenous population and establishing an agricultural community. At that time, the region was part of the New Mexico Territory, which had been organized as an incorporated territory of the United States on September 9, 1850. Appointed by Young, William Bringham led the party of faithful settlers on their journey. The travelers set out on May 10, 1855.^{36 37}

The missionaries arrived at the Las Vegas Springs on June 14, 1855. Following the creek several miles east, the party established their mission upon a natural terrace with a year-round water source. Work commenced immediately, beginning with a simple willow shade structure. By the

³² Fred E. Woods, *A Gamble in the Desert: The Mormon Mission in Las Vegas, 1865-1857*, (Salt Lake City: Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, 2005), 11-15.

³³ Paher, *Las Vegas*, 16; Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas*, 35.

³⁴ Paher, *Las Vegas*, 16-18.

³⁵ Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas*, 37; Woods, *Gamble in the Desert*, 11.

³⁶ Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas*, 37; Woods, *Gamble in the Desert*, 17-18.

³⁷ Michael S. Green, *Nevada: A History of the Silver State* (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2015), 70-72.

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third day, missionary John Steele surveyed the site, laying out fifteen five-acre farm lots with additional quarter-acre garden lots. Some men dug irrigation ditches; others cleared brush to prepare and plant their gardens in anticipation of a summer crop. On a slope of a scarp just south of the creek, a group of Saints marked the location of a 150-foot square fort to be constructed after they started their crops.³⁸

This sustained, disciplined activity and organized division of labor followed a general pattern of the Latter-day Saints' colonization during this time. After the missionaries arrived, they would prayerfully dedicate the land, construct a fort or stockade for shelter and security, and then organize themselves into groups to dig ditches, raise crops, and build roads and fences – and, eventually, homes.³⁹

With their fields of corn and vegetables well-established, the Saints shifted their focus to construction in mid-July. Bringhurst led a party of eight men into the mountains to procure timber, which was used to build three bridges over the creek. Next, the missionaries fenced their farms by digging trenches, filling them with thorny mesquite brush, and covering all but the tops with dirt. Finally, they built an adobe brick corral adjacent to the planned fort site to secure their livestock at night.⁴⁰

By August 1855, it was time to build the fort. With the mission's crops growing steadily and animals protected, the Saints turned their attention to their own permanent shelter and security. The men spent the month making sunbaked adobe bricks for the fort walls, commencing construction of those walls on September 4. Built on a stone foundation, the walls measured two feet thick at their base and one foot thick at the top. The 150-foot square walls were oriented with an entrance on the north side. This front-facing wall measured 14 feet tall, and the three remaining walls were nine feet tall. After the walls were completed, the men packed layers of clay around the base, creating a slope to facilitate drainage away from the fort. Bastions were added to the northwest and southeast corners of the fort enclosure (Figure 20).⁴¹

The missionaries simultaneously constructed adobe brick dwellings and storage buildings inside the fort walls. By February 1856, the fort had eight two-story houses, storage buildings, gates, and bastions on the northwest and southeast corners. The completed fort offered generous views to the north, east, and south. From the west, the mission was obscured from view until travelers along the Mormon Trail were only a hundred yards away.⁴²

³⁸ Green, *Nevada*, 70-72; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 19-22; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 18; Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas*, 37; Woods, *Gamble in the Desert*, 50-57.

³⁹ Woods, *Gamble in the Desert*, 57.

⁴⁰ Paher, *Las Vegas*, 23; Woods, *Gamble in the Desert*, 72.

⁴¹ Paher, *Las Vegas*, 23; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 18; Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas*, 37.

⁴² Paher, *Las Vegas*, 22-23; Weber, *Mapping*, 37; Woods, *Gamble in the Desert*, 89.

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and food, no single Nuwuvi band occupied Las Vegas on a permanent basis. Instead, the oasis formed by the springs and creek served as an intermittent camping, farming, hunting, and gathering site for most bands, particularly during the spring planting season when they would tend to their gardens. The local Nuwuvi had grown corn, pumpkins, tepary beans, and wheat for centuries. At least one band, the Pegesits, lived there longer during slow periods of emigrant travel through the valley.⁴⁴

Arrival of the missionaries signaled the first long-term disruption of the Nuwuvi's access to the Las Vegas Creek and Springs, as well as a permanent change in traditional concepts of land ownership. Of all the non-indigenous travelers who had stepped foot in the valley, the Saints were the first who intended to stay. The relatively small mission did not threaten or reduce the available water supply, but the settlement initiated the displacement of Nuwuvi farms and farmers, which would intensify in the decades to come. The newcomers did not recognize native rights to the land and water of the valley, and they did not permit Indigenous use of the springs or the creek near the fort. In order to teach the natives Euro-American methods of agriculture, missionaries laid out an "Indian farm" alongside an isolated spring about two miles away from the fort. This was also a strategy to prevent further loss of their own crops at the hands of the Indigenous people.⁴⁵

The Las Vegas Mission strived for permanence. The Saints planted shade trees and new crops, including grapevines and fruit trees from California. After 11 men returned to Utah in November 1855, Young replenished the ranks by calling 30 Saints to Las Vegas in early 1856, permitting them to bring their wives and children. In addition, the first group of Las Vegas missionaries sent for their families, and women and children began arriving in May of 1856. Babies were born, and 103 missionaries resided at the fort by July. The Saints expanded the agricultural fields and irrigation ditches accordingly, laying out additional farms for the new arrivals. In August, they started a school for both native and mission children.⁴⁶

In addition to its evangelical and community-building activities, the mission maintained its connections with the outside world as a waystation and mail stop along the Mormon Trail. Travelers – some alone on foot and others in large trains – stopped at the fort to rest and have their animals shod. In January 1856, the United States established an official post office at the fort, naming it after Bringham. Missionary John Steele had secured the mail grant, and Benjamin H. Hulse brought the official documents from Salt Lake City to officially appoint the post office. The legal address was "Bringham Post Office, Los Vegas County, Territory of New Mexico." Because the mission was in New Mexico Territory at the time, it was not called Las Vegas, as another town with that name existed in the eastern reaches of the territory.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Nuwuvi*, 119; Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 68.

⁴⁵ Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Nuwuvi*, 76; Warren, *History of the Las Vegas Springs*, 36, 71-72; Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas*, 26-28, 38; Woods, *Gamble in the Desert*, 121, 132.

⁴⁶ Paher, *Las Vegas*, 26-29; Woods, *Gamble in the Desert*, 78-81, 88, 150; Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 66.

⁴⁷ Paher, *Las Vegas*, 26-27; Woods, *Gamble in the Desert*, 95, 104-105, 111-117.

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While the mission made progress as a settlement, it faced hardships that eventually became insurmountable. The Saints constantly battled the heat, aridity, and poor soil of the area in their determination to raise crops. At one point, worms infested the cornfields. Although the missionaries never experienced direct conflict with local tribes, they never gained control over what they perceived as theft at the hands of the Nuwuvi. The missionaries experienced recurrent nighttime episodes of Indigenous people taking crops, animals, and other goods from the fort. Their efforts to convert the native population met with limited success. In addition, the mission was continually undersupplied, work duties were not shared equally, and there was a brewing distrust of mission leadership.⁴⁸

In February 1857, Church officials in Salt Lake City terminated the Las Vegas Mission. Brigham Young's letter releasing the missionaries from their service arrived at the fort on February 23. After two arduous years in a harsh and unwelcoming climate, the news was met with a general sense of relief and jubilation. The Saints prepared for their impending relocation back to Utah, and their exodus began on March 23.⁴⁹

The fort, with its adobe walls and dwellings, was left to deteriorate. In 1860, the government decommissioned the Bringham Post Office, which effectively closed when the missionaries left in 1857. Missionaries stationed at the Southern Indian Mission near present-day St. George, Utah, used the ruined fort as a campsite and rendezvous point during their explorations into Arizona and the Mojave. Local Nuwuvi people and travelers along the trail continued to use it as a shady resting stop, dismantling the mesquite fences for firewood, until a new wave of settlers reclaimed the property.⁵⁰

Military Associations (1858-1869)

Although not a defensive fortification in an official or traditional sense, the Las Vegas Mormon Fort has historical associated with the U.S. military. This period overlaps the Ranching Period detailed later in this document. Like many travelers along the trail, the Wells Fargo Company stage line used the Fort as a stop between 1858 and 1863. At times, the U.S. military used the property as a patrol base, and military officers traveling on the stage would stop at the Fort. This intermittent use meant that the U.S. military knew of the Fort and its potential utility when the Civil War broke out in 1861.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Paher, *Las Vegas*, 29-31; Woods, *Gamble in the Desert*, 162-167.

⁴⁹ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 18; Woods, *Gamble in the Desert*, 167, 173-175.

⁵⁰ Paher, *Las Vegas*, 31-32; Stoldal, personal communication, December 2024; Woods, *Gamble in the Desert*, 174-175.

⁵¹ John W. Hohmann, *The Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort: The Founding of a Desert Community in Clark County, Nevada*, Studies in Western Archaeology Number 4, Las Vegas: Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., 1996), 54-55.

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The U.S. military sought to control travel and communication in the country's far western reaches as the Civil War intensified. Southwestern supporters and outposts loyal to the Confederacy threatened the Union's strength in the West, and securing the Spanish and Mormon trails became a major priority for the Union. Acknowledging the old Fort's important position along a major trade route, Colonel James H. Carleton established a military post there in early 1862. Carleton designated it as Fort Baker, assigning three infantry companies and one cavalry company there. This information was leaked to the California press, which published the news about the new Las Vegas garrison.⁵²

Despite its designation as Fort Baker, the Fort was never used during the Civil War, and no military forces were stationed there during the conflict. The Union invented Fort Baker as a ruse to misdirect the Confederates while Carleton's California Column marched through Fort Yuma to New Mexico and into west Texas. The leaks to the California press were likely intentional. In addition to misleading the Confederates while Carleton planned his march, the ploy assisted the Washington War Department in detecting a suspected Confederate spy in their ranks. Captain George Price confirmed that no soldiers were present at the Fort while camping at Las Vegas in 1864.⁵³

The U.S. Army established a true presence at the Fort site after the war, in 1867, to address concerns put forth by area settlers, miners, and travelers about hostilities at the hands of members of the Mohave Tribe. The Mohaves had a reputation for attacking Euro-American settlers as well as other Indigenous groups – particularly the Nuwuvi. Although Mohave territory centered along the lower Colorado River, they were known to enter the Las Vegas Valley on occasion, and early settlers feared them. In May 1867, six men arrived at the old Fort site to find O.D. Gass and two other men living and farming there. The detachment lived in an adobe building and were joined by five additional men from Camp Eldorado in July 1867. The military ordered the post abandoned in May 1869, after concerns about Indian raiding largely subsided.⁵⁴

The final military presence at the Fort site took place during the U.S. Geological Survey led by Lieutenant George M. Wheeler of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Wheeler camped at the site in October 1869 while exploring and mapping the region. He returned with a second party in 1872 on another mapping expedition.⁵⁵

Ranching Period (1861-1902)

One of the original missionaries, Albert Knapp, returned to the fort site in 1861 and opened a general store. His business served miners who had reopened the former Potosi mine in search of silver, as well as the prospectors flooding into El Dorado Canyon seeking gold. Knapp adapted

⁵² Hohmann, *Desert Community*, 54-55; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 33-35.

⁵³ Hohmann, *Desert Community*, 55; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 35.

⁵⁴ Hohmann, *Desert Community*, 57-58.

⁵⁵ Hohmann, *Desert Community*, 58.

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the original fort for use as a dwelling and repurposed the central plaza as a corral. He cared for the existing grapevines and fruit trees, selling surplus foodstuffs to the miners. Knapp traveled to California in 1862 to collect payment on and record the sale of mining interests, leaving his brother, William, in charge of the ranch. Albert suffered an injury that prevented his return to Las Vegas and eventually died in Alameda County. Meanwhile, William successfully operated the store out of the old fort.^{56 57}

Octavius Decatur Gass acquired the ranch sometime between 1865 and 1867.⁵⁸ O.D. Gass came west from Ohio during the California gold rush, mining in El Dorado County before relocating to Los Angeles, where he learned Spanish and worked as a water steward overseeing the town's irrigation ditches. By 1863, he had traveled on to prospect at El Dorado Canyon on the Colorado River, about 50 miles south of present-day Las Vegas. He filed mining claims and invested in Callville, a prospective port on the river, using that locale as his address. Voters elected him to the Arizona Territorial Legislature in 1865, and he served as representative until 1869. O.D. Gass also became interested in ranching in the late 1860s, which led him to the old fort site.^{59 60}

O.D. Gass operated his property as a large-scale ranch, naming it the Los Vegas Rancho by 1868.⁶¹ Although Gass had a working knowledge of Spanish and understood that the correct article for the feminine noun "Vegas" would be "Las," he intentionally spelled the name with the masculine "Los" to differentiate it from Las Vegas, New Mexico. He repaired and rebuilt the fort buildings with the assistance of other men on the ranch, including his early partners Lewis Cole and Nathaniel Lewis. This work included reconfiguring the adobe fort's southeast bastion, extending it with an addition to the south and adding a fireplace. Gass retained and expanded the

⁵⁶ Green, *Nevada*, 70-72; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 18-19; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 31-35; Stoldal, personal communication, December 2024.

⁵⁷ James Schoenwetter and John W. Hohmann, "Landuse Reconstruction at the Founding Settlement of Las Vegas, Nevada," *Historical Archaeology* 31, no. 4 (1997), 44.

⁵⁸ Several sources (Land and Land 2004; Moehring and Green 2005; Paher 1971; Roske and Green 1988) assert that Gass acquired the ranch from his friend William Knapp in 1865, but Warren (2001:97n87, 98n90) notes that no documentary evidence exists to verify this. An 1867 item in the *Arizona Miner* (June 1, 1867:2) mentions that O.D. Gass was "ranching with a company of men at the Vegas ranch." Gass owned at least part of the ranch by 1868, when he advertised it for sale in a Utah newspaper. Apparently it did not sell, although it seems Gass did not reside there permanently until 1872. Historical accounts by William Henry Jackson in January 1867, Lieutenant Wheeler in 1869, and D.A. Lyle in 1871 all noted the site as abandoned when they passed through.

⁵⁹ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 19; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 37-38; Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 98-99; Webb, *Mapping*, 39.

⁶⁰ Ralph J. Roske and Michael S. Green, "Octavius Decatur Gass: Pah-Ute County Pioneer," *The Journal of Arizona History* 29, no. 4 (1988), 371-372, 376, 381-383.

⁶¹ "Correspondence," *Our Dixie Times*, April 15, 1868:1, <https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=30441437>.

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irrigation works, orchards, and vineyards put in place by the Las Vegas Mission. The Los Vegas Rancho operated as a farm, cattle ranch, store, and blacksmith shop. The operation was successful, serving travelers along the old Mormon Trail as well as nearby mining communities.

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During the 1860s, the Las Vegas Valley experienced major territorial shifts. Located in New Mexico Territory since the 1848 Mexican Cession, the area became part of the Arizona Territory—created from the western half of New Mexico Territory—in February 1863. During his time in the Arizona Territorial Legislature, O.D. Gass co-drafted a successful bill to create Pah-Ute County out of the northern portion of Mohave County that contained most of present-day Clark County in 1865. Although Nevada achieved statehood on October 31, 1864, this southernmost part of the state remained in Arizona Territory until 1866, when Congress shifted the state's borders south to include present-day Clark County and southern Nye County. Although the Nevada State Legislature accepted the land in 1867, the Arizona Territory disputed the transfer and continued to represent Pah-Ute County in their territorial legislature until 1871, ultimately recognizing that the annexation could not be reversed.^{63 64}



Figure 21: F.S. Dellenbaugh's 1876 painting of the Gass Ranch. The fort is depicted at left with shortened walls and a dwelling in its southwest corner (Nevada State Museum - Las Vegas).

O.D. Gass became the Las Vegas Valley's principal land and water owner, acquiring surrounding homesteads as they were either sold or abandoned throughout the 1870s. William Knapp had retained 49 acres to farm on after selling his business to O.D. Gass and his wife Mary V. Simpson Gass in March 1876. Gass eventually bought out

Lewis and Cole. After he bought the Spring Ranch in January 1878, he owned all the Las Vegas Springs - the area's primary water source. Wagon train emigrants along the Mormon Trail looked forward to camping at the Gass ranch with its abundant water, shade, and provisions. Gass boarded travelers, selling them produce, wine, and brandy from the ranch. He stabled and

⁶² Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 19; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 37-38; Roske and Green, *Octavius Decatur Gass*, 371-372, 376; Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 98n92.

⁶³ Green, *Nevada*, 96-97; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 50-52.

⁶⁴ Dean Heller, *Political History of Nevada*, Eleventh Edition (Carson City: State Printing Office, 2002), 114.

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pastured their animals. He operated a store and blacksmith shop on the premises, serving area miners as well as passers-by. Freighting operations traveling the road kept the ranches well-stocked with supplies.⁶⁵

In addition to repairing and repurposing the existing fort structures, O.D. Gass built himself a ranch house in the southwest corner of the fort stockade (Figures 21 and 22). The house was built atop the fort's original mess rooms. In 1879, he remodeled the residence into what would become the Stewart Ranch house. The back door of the house opened onto the unshaded, 150-foot square plaza, which continued to secure farm livestock overnight. O.D. Gass replaced what was left of the original adobe walls with rock walls. Animal stalls lined the west half of the north wall of the enclosure. Six adobe buildings and a blacksmith shop were arranged along the east wall.⁶⁶ The entrance to the enclosure was relocated to the south side, which was gated and braced with a large piece of wooden timber. The stockade ground remained bare, as agricultural fields and orchards were outside of the enclosure.⁶⁷



Figure 22: O.D. Gass (left) and Mrs. Gass (right) in front of their Las Vegas Rancho. The fort remnant is at left in the background (Huntington Library).

O.D. Gass employed the local Nuwuvi to complete assorted ranch tasks, notably harvesting and hulling beans. After being pulled from the fields, the beans were brought into the stockade, where the Indigenous workers cleaned and loaded them into storage sacks. In return, O.D. Gass paid them with provisions including beans, clothing, and sugar. The Gass family learned enough Paiute to communicate with their native neighbors, and relations between the two were amicable.⁶⁸

By all accounts, O.D. Gass ran a profitable operation at the ranch for nearly a decade before finding himself entangled in financial difficulties. He first mortgaged the property to William Knapp on the same day he purchased Knapp's field and water rights in March 1876. The \$3,000 mortgage included all land owned by the Gasses, including what they had just purchased from

⁶⁵ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 19; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 37-38, 46, 52; Roske and Green, *Octavius Decatur Gass*, 379; Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 100-102.

⁶⁶ This included the last extant adobe building that stands on the site at present. O.D. Gass remodeled it in the mid-1860s as a storeroom for beans and milk. Milk was also skimmed and churned there.

⁶⁷ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 19; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 38, 45.

⁶⁸ Paher, *Las Vegas*, 40-41.

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Knapp. O.D. Gass paid off this debt and regained title of his ranch by the following April, but his money troubles persisted. While his purchase of the 320-acre Spring Rancho in January 1878 consolidated his control of the Valley's land and water resources, his debts escalated. In 1879, he borrowed \$5,000 in gold from Archibald Stewart, a fellow rancher and businessman in nearby Pioche, with the Las Vegas Ranch and Spring Ranch properties as collateral on the one-year promissory note. Unable to repay the loan within the year, O.D. Gass lost the ranch to Stewart on August 2, 1880. The family remained on the property until June 1881.⁶⁹

The Stewart family relocated to the Las Vegas Ranch in April 1882. The previous summer, Archibald sold one-third interest of the holdings to George Hagerty, who moved to the property and made improvements ahead of the Stewart family's arrival. He managed to open a small store for travelers before Archibald took over the ranch operations after their partnership dissolved in March 1882. By all accounts, the ranch prospered under Stewart's tutelage until his untimely death two years later. In 1884, Archibald was shot and killed at a neighboring ranch owned by Conrad Kiel, a murky event that spawned countless myths and speculations about who fired the gun and why.^{70 71}

Helen Stewart, Archibald's widow, chose to stay with her children on the ranch. At the time of her husband's death, she was pregnant with her fifth child. Assisted by her father, sons, and hired hands, Helen operated the ranch for the next two decades. Like the Gass family before her, Helen befriended the local Nuwuvi and employed some on the ranch. When the Stewarts acquired the rancho, its orchards and fields boasted a variety of fruits, vegetables, and grains planted during the Mission, Knapp, and Gass periods. Helen also ran a store and roadside stop for travelers, permitting guests to make camp beneath the trees and take meals in the ranch house.⁷²

In response to increasing ranching, lumbering, and mining activity in the area, a post office opened on the property with Helen serving as Postmaster in 1893. The name "Los Vegas" remained in place until it officially changed to Las Vegas in December 1903. The post office remained at the ranch until February 1905.⁷³

During the Stewart period, the property experienced physical changes, as well as some functional changes. By 1885, the remodeled southeast bastion of the old fort was being used as a blacksmith shop, wine cellar, and camp outfit house. The ranch house, which O.D. Gass had rebuilt in the

⁶⁹ Roske and Green, *Octavius Decatur Gass*, 385; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 19; Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 101, 110.

⁷⁰ Green, *Nevada*, 156; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 19; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 55-57.

⁷¹ Carrie Townley, "First Lady of Las Vegas Part 1," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1973), 222.

⁷² Green, *Nevada*, 156; Hohmann, *Desert Community*, 11; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 19; Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 114-115.

⁷³ Helen S. Carlson, *Nevada Place Names* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1974), 153.

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New Mexico Territorial style in 1879-80, received porches on its east and west elevations. A bunkhouse was added immediately north of the main ranch house, with a breezeway connecting the two buildings. An enclosed privy was installed within the breezeway. Other buildings included an adobe chicken coop, an adobe storehouse, and a canvas storehouse.⁷⁴



Figure 23: The former Stewart Ranch site circa 1905. From left to right is the ranch house, south wall, and fort remnant (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).

The Las Vegas Ranch exemplified agricultural productivity and economic success in the southern Nevada desert (Figure 23). Stewart hired a foreman to oversee the farm and ranching operations until her two eldest sons, Will and Hiram, took over in 1889. The ranch supplied miners in El Dorado Canyon throughout the 1890s, sending bi-monthly wagons loaded with beef, vegetables, fruit, grains, and hay. By 1901, the ranch totaled more than 2,000 fenced acres irrigated by 400 inches of water diverted from the Las Vegas Creek. The ranch focused primarily on raising

cattle and ran large herds, ensuring a continual supply of fresh beef. An accounting of farm holdings from 1902 counted 557 peach trees, 114 apple trees, other fruit trees, more than 1,500 grapevines, 40 acres of redtop grass, more than 6.5 acres of wheat, and 2.5 acres of sweet potatoes.^{75 76}

In addition to its agrarian pursuits, the Las Vegas Ranch functioned as a retreat for prospectors, miners, and travelers. Stewart permitted the men to sleep beneath the ranch's trees and charged board of about a dollar a day, which included fresh milk and beef served in a proper dining room, a welcome change from the visitors' regular fare. Freight teams traveling through Las Vegas stopped at the ranch for fresh horses and supplies. A party associated with the Death Valley

⁷⁴ Hinds, *One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years*, 51; Hohmann, *Desert Community*, 61.

⁷⁵ Fran Campbell, "Letters to Tiza: Helen Stewart Tells of Early Las Vegas," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2006), 212-213; Townley 1973, 237.

⁷⁶ Campbell, *Letters*, 312-313; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 19; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 57-58, 65; Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 117.

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Survey of 1891 stayed at the ranch during while in the Las Vegas Valley, camping at the springs while surveying local floral, fauna, and soil quality.^{77 78}

As more settlers established themselves in the Las Vegas Valley, the Stewart Ranch became a hub of local activity. Other ranches in the valley included the Kiel Ranch and the Sandstone Ranch. Farther-flung desert ranches were located at Indian Springs to the northwest, Pahrump Valley to the west, and Moapa Valley to the northeast. Nearby mines and lumber mills remained active, justifying the establishment of a voting precinct at the ranch in the early 1890s, in addition to the aforementioned post office. The ranch had served as a voting precinct under the ownership of O.D. Gass in the 1870s, counting four voters in 1872 and three in 1874. Such a diminutive voter population deemed the Vegas precinct impractical, and valley residents were made to travel to El Dorado Canyon between 1876 and 1886 to cast their ballots. A precinct returned to the valley at the Sandstone Ranch in 1888, then moved to the Las Vegas Ranch in 1890, where it would remain throughout the Stewart period. In addition to her official role as postmaster of the Los Vegas Post Office, Helen Stewart often received and passed messages for area occupants in an informal capacity. The ranch also hosted dances and holiday celebrations when enough visitors arrived to justify such festivities.⁷⁹

Despite its role as an economic, social, and political cornerstone of the community, the ranch remained relatively isolated, and Stewart was biding her time until she could sell it. Initially hoping to sell to developers, she put the ranch on the market as early as 1887, but none of the interested buyers would agree to her price. She focused on growing the ranch and expanding her land holdings. At the turn of the century rumors of a potential railroad circulated around the valley. Stewart again turned her attention to selling the ranch, this time to a rail company.^{80 81}

By 1901, two railroad companies competed to build a rail line connecting southern California and Utah through southern Nevada: the Oregon Short Line (OSL) Railroad Company, associated with the Union Pacific Railroad, and the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake (SP, LA & SL) Railroad, formed by U.S. Senator William Andrews Clark of Montana. The Las Vegas Valley presented an ideal division point with its natural springs and nearby wooded mountains, and a successful railroad would need to secure land with water rights for shop facilities and a town. OSL led the charge, optioning to purchase most of the Stewart Ranch for \$65,000 in May 1901 and putting up \$500 in earnest money. The railroad did not provide the remaining funds,

⁷⁷ Campbell, *Letters*, 212-213; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 57-58; Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 117.

⁷⁸ Carrie Townley, "First Lady of Las Vegas Part 2," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1974), 5.

⁷⁹ Paher, *Las Vegas*, 57, 62; Townley, *First Lady Part 2*, 4-5; Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 115.

⁸⁰ Campbell, *Letters*, 312-313; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 65; Townley, *First Lady Part 1*, 234-236.

⁸¹ State of Nevada, Land Patents, Patent No. 2794, 4882, and 4883, <https://lands.nv.gov/patent-search-tool>.

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forfeiting its option on the ranch. The prospect of selling the ranch was renewed when the two rival railroad companies agreed to merge construction and ownership of the southern Nevada line in July 1902.^{82 83}

In October 1902, Clark offered Stewart \$55,000 for 1,836 acres of her ranch and its water rights, and she accepted. Clark acquired all of Stewart's agricultural land spanning the old Las Vegas and Spring ranchos, although Stewart retained rights to four inches of water and the "Four Acres" family burial plot, as well as the traditional campsite used by her Nuwuvi workers – which she would sell to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1911 to create the Las Vegas Indian Colony. After the sale, Stewart spent time in Salt Lake City and moved to southern California before returning to the small settlement of Las Vegas, where her son built a house for her near the old family ranch. In addition to holding public education offices, she was an early member of the town's first women's organization, the Mesquite Club. By the time of her death in 1926, Helen Stewart had earned the title "First Lady of Las Vegas."⁸⁴

Railroad Period (1903-1955)

Senator Clark, a Montana copper baron, purchased Stewart's property for the SP, LA, & SL Railroad. The sale included water rights and all buildings on the property. He had begun construction on the railroad the year prior. The area met all his requirements for a town that would serve as a division point on the railroad: it was on a direct route to Salt Lake City, and it had plenty of groundwater to service the steam engines. Clark partnered with the Union Pacific Railroad, headed by Edward Henry Harriman, to construct the railroad between 1903 and 1905. Las Vegas was chosen as a division point for the trains to replenish supplies, crews, and water.⁸⁵

After the railroad purchased the ranch, Clark installed Dr. Joseph K.W. Bracken as caretaker of the property. The company intended to maintain the ranch until its long-term use could be determined. Bracken arrived in Las Vegas in April 1903, overseeing the daily operations of the ranch. His duties included hiring and managing staff, buying and selling livestock and crops, and overseeing the store. The frugality and firm hand of the railroad company made Dr. Bracken's two-year tenure a frustrating one, and his decisions were often overruled by his corporate bosses.⁸⁶

The railroad ultimately decided to dispose of the property's assets in preparation of leasing the ranch. It was moved with the tent post office in February 1905 to the intersection that would

⁸² Green, *Nevada*, 169; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 65.

⁸³ Townley, *First Lady Part 2*, 13.

⁸⁴ Green, *Nevada*, 156-157, 169; Hohmann, *Desert Community*, 77; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 20; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 65; Townley, *First Lady Part 2*, 13-14; Warren, *The History of Las Vegas Springs*, 118.

⁸⁵ Green, *Nevada*, 169; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 20; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 65.

⁸⁶ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 2-14.

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become Main and Fremont streets. The Bracken brothers operated the store until mid-March, when railroad representatives sold the store to Norman Kuhn. After the May auction, the store and post office were moved to a lot in the new Clark's Las Vegas Townsite. Other buildings sold included the restaurant, butcher shop, and tent houses. They sold the ranch's stock, selling some locally and shipping others to markets in Salt Lake City, as well as wagons, blacksmith tools, hay, and farming implements.⁸⁷

Walter Bracken won the inaugural one-year lease to the ranch in March 1905 (Figure 24). Walter was Dr. Bracken's brother and had worked at the ranch as its foreman. In addition, he served as the Las Vegas postmaster beginning in March 1904, working out of the post office at the ranch until it was moved to the new townsite.⁸⁸

Walter, his brother, and ranch butcher John Tuck became partners in a hay, grain, and meat business in 1905, coinciding with the railroad's auction of lots in Clark's Las Vegas Townsite. The ranch served as the base of operations. In preparation for their new enterprise, Walter had purchased pigs, chickens, and two tent houses from the railroad during the ranch liquidation. With Tuck, he purchased grain, hay, lumber, and a storage tent, and Tuck bought five milk cows. The partners eventually would open a lumber yard and embark on a forwarding business. They named this venture the Las Vegas Mercantile Company, which ran out of a storefront in the townsite on Fremont Street.⁸⁹



Figure 24: The Las Vegas Ranch House during the Bracken era (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).

In May 1905, another lease was approved for part of the ranch land. Harry Beale entered into a six-month lease on the roadside portion of the property, opening his Las Vegas Ranch Resort. He transformed the area into a luxury retreat "under the Cottonwood trees." Amenities included an open-air dance floor, dining room, drink and billiards hall, and swimming pool. Overnight guests could choose old adobe buildings or creekside tent houses as their accommodation. In addition,

⁸⁷ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 14-15; Stoldal, personal communication, December 2024.

⁸⁸ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 11-13.

⁸⁹ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 13-18; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 68.

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campsites were available for those who brought their own tents. The resort supplied groceries to guests who wished to cook for themselves.⁹⁰

The Las Vegas Ranch Resort, with its abundant shade and water, attracted visitors and locals alike. The large swimming pool was particularly inviting in hot weather. Created by a partial dam on the Las Vegas Creek, the pool measured 150 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 8-10 feet deep. While they waited for permanent housing in town, new Las Vegas residents camped along the creek on the old ranch. This represents a brief episode on the property, as the railroad did not renew Beale's contract. His resort operated for just one season: in November 1905, the railroad offered Walter Bracken a lease on the entire ranch in exchange for the removal of "all buildings, tents, and devices" built in association with the resort.^{91 92}

No longer operating as a privately-run resort, the ranch nonetheless continued to serve as a community space. The railroad renewed Bracken's lease for five years in 1906, and he ensured public access to the swimming pool and shady picnic areas of the property. Churches, public schools, and social clubs all held gatherings at the ranch. Consolidated Power and Telephone Company installed lighting and provided free electricity to power them. Tents erected near the pool served as bathhouses.⁹³

After living on the ranch for three years, Walter and his wife Anna moved into town in August 1908. In addition to his position as Las Vegas postmaster, Walter was appointed local agent of the powerful Las Vegas Land and Water Company and sold his share in the Las Vegas Mercantile Company. He assigned his ranch lease to the Las Vegas Mercantile Company, which became the Vegas Packing Company briefly in 1909 before it closed the same year.⁹⁴

The ranch's recreational uses continued after the Brackens departed. Community Fourth of July celebrations were held on the grounds. Another resort, Las Vegas Park, opened at the ranch in 1909. Locally known as "The Plunge" for its swimming pool, the venue held dances with live music twice per week on a newly constructed dancing pavilion between the road and swimming pool. Transportation to the dances from the post office was provided at 15-minute intervals.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 18-19; Paher, *Las Vegas*, 74.

⁹¹ "Celebration at the Ranch," *Las Vegas Age*, July 1, 1905:3-1; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 19-20, 26; "New Ranch Lease," *Las Vegas Age*, November 25, 1905:1-4.

⁹² The chronology and duration of Bracken's leases in November 1905 are murky. Correspondence to railroad executive Frank Grace suggests that Bracken's lease was extended by one year when Beale's resort closed, whereas newspaper accounts note that the railroad granted Bracken a two-year lease. This does not comport with Bracken's initial yearlong lease, which was not set to expire until March 1, 1906, at which time the railroad approved a renewal of his lease for an additional five years (Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 26).

⁹³ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 26-29.

⁹⁴ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 26-33.

⁹⁵ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 29, 34, 46.

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In 1909, Clark County was created from the southern half of Lincoln County with Las Vegas at its seat. The growing town depended on the ranch's steady production of meat, dairy, grain, fruit, and vegetables. Recognizing this, the railroad continued to lease the property to farmers, ranchers, and dairymen. John Lefurgey, a Californian, acquired the ranch lease after the Vegas Packing Company folded in 1909. He continued producing a bounty of crops, among them alfalfa, figs, apricots, black walnuts, grapes, apples, barley, corn, pumpkins, melons, pomegranates, pears, peaches, plums, and prunes. He took over the Vegas Meat Market ranch operation and storefront on Fremont Street. When the Las Vegas Park resort closed, Lefurgey turned the dance pavilion into a house. He sublet a portion of ranch to Orson Sanford for a dairy operation, which was taken over by Clio Mobley. Mobley purchased the remainder of Lefurgey's lease in 1914, managing the meat and dairy operations until 1917.⁹⁶



Figure 25: A man stands in front of the old adobe during the Bracken era. Ranch house is at left (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).

Throughout these years, the old adobe remnant remained an afterthought to the railroad and its lessees, used as ancillary storage (Figure 25). The first call to preserve the building occurred in 1915. On behalf of the Nevada Federation of Women's Clubs, Delphine Squires wrote to J. Ross Clark requesting that the building be recognized for its role in Las Vegas' heritage and protected by an iron fence. When asked about the building, Bracken recalled that it was used as a tool shed and

harness storage room since the railroad acquired it. The railroad suggested that the Federation of Women's Clubs could build a fence at their own expense. There is no evidence that such a fence was built. Nearly 15 years later, in 1929, the Chamber of Commerce and *Las Vegas Age* appealed for the adobe's preservation.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 28-36, 44-46, 50; Weber, *Mapping Historical Las Vegas*, 43-44.

⁹⁷ *Las Vegas Age* 7-11-1929:3; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 50, 153.

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The railroad's practice of leasing the ranch continued into the next decade. Dwight and Theresa Doolittle acquired the lease from Mobley in 1917, overseeing the ranch and the Vegas Jersey Dairy. In 1923, they turned their attention to the swimming pool and resort, enlarging the pool to accommodate more swimmers and subleasing the dairy to Joseph Foremaster (Figure 26). When they separated in 1925, Theresa took over the lease. The same year, the railroad leased a ten-acre portion of the ranch near its north boundary to the University of Nevada's Agricultural Experiment Station, supervised by field agent George Hardman.⁹⁸



Figure 26: Franklin Hardman pictured at the Las Vegas Ranch swimming pool in the 1920s (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).

In addition to leasing the ranch, the railroad investigated ways to be directly involved in the land's agricultural production. After plans to develop a cotton farm fell apart, the railroad decided to turn the ranch into a demonstration farm, giving notice to Theresa Doolittle and Joseph Foremaster in November 1925. These plans included restoration of the old adobe. The demonstration farm never materialized, and Foremaster acquired a lease for the entire ranch in November 1926. He made improvements to the water system and continued farming and dairying with the help of his family.⁹⁹

During this era, a significant change in the property's ownership occurred. After decades of involvement in planning a railroad and associated community in the Las Vegas Valley, William Clark sold his half of the Union Pacific railroad, along with the Las Vegas Ranch property, to his partners in 1921. He died four years later, in 1925, at the age of 86.¹⁰⁰

Bureau of Reclamation Period (1929-1932)

The Las Vegas Ranch was not immune to the excitement surrounding the impending construction of what would become Hoover Dam. Congress approved the Boulder Canyon Project Act in 1928. The massive public works project re-energized Las Vegas during the Great Depression. Setting up a local concrete testing laboratory was the first order of business, prioritized over establishing offices at the dam site. Engineers identified the ranch as a possible location, which seemed ideal with its abundant shade and relative privacy. Foremaster leased the last remnant of the Mormon Fort on the ranch, the 1855 adobe building, to the U.S. Bureau of

⁹⁸ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 51-53, 56.

⁹⁹ Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, 47; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 58-59, 75-78, 153.

¹⁰⁰ Green, *Nevada*, 211.

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Reclamation beginning August 1, 1929. The lease included 1,000 square feet of land north and east of the building and access to the creek.¹⁰¹



Figure 27: Adobe remnant in 1929 (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).



Figure 28: Fort remnant with chimney pictured in 1929.

The adobe building required extensive repair and reconstruction work before the Bureau of Reclamation could occupy it (Figures 27 and 28). After more than 80 years in the unforgiving desert climate serving as ancillary storage, the building had not been well maintained by the ranch's various tenants. The local Chamber of Commerce had recently written to the railroad asking them to take measures to preserve the

structure. The ruined east wall consisted of a pile of adobe bricks, and the roof had caved in the center (Figure 29). Cognizant of the adobe's standing as the oldest extant non-native building in Nevada, the government assured that the reconstruction would preserve historic materials to the maximum extent possible.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Green, *Nevada*, 224; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 20; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 80-83.

¹⁰² Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 20; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 83-84, 153.

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Figure 29: Braced adobe remnant in 1929 with rubble of east wall in foreground (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).

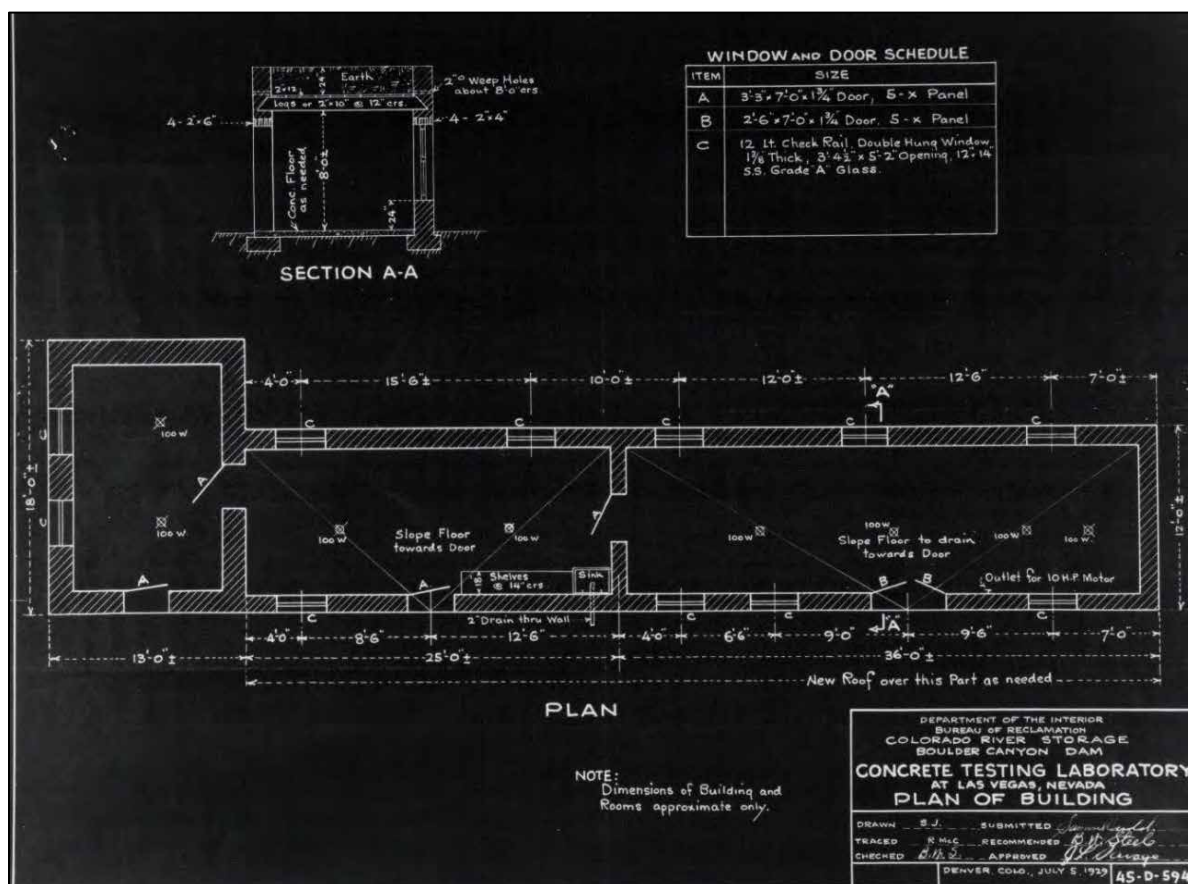


Figure 30: Bureau of Reclamation plans for renovating the old adobe into their concrete testing laboratory (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).

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Figure 31: Bureau of Reclamation renovation of the old adobe in 1929 (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).

The Bureau of Reclamation's reconstruction of the old adobe represents the cultural and interpretive value of the property to the community. Rather than demolishing the ruins and replacing them with a new building, the government opted to conserve as much historic fabric as they could while constructing a building that was suitable as a concrete laboratory. The resulting edifice displayed the distinctive medium gray bricks of the Mission era in a sensitive contrast to the whitish gray

bricks made by the Bureau of Reclamation. This conservation work is tied to the larger national context of 1930s New Deal projects that focused on documenting, preserving, and restoring important historic places. Like the New Deal projects that celebrated local histories and American achievements of the past, the Bureau of Reclamation's rebuilt adobe interpreted and preserved a physical representation of the origin of Las Vegas.^{103 104 105}

The government prepared a set of construction drawings to transform the old adobe into their concrete testing laboratory (Figure 30). The adobe consisted of a remnant of the fort's southeast bastion and a gable-roofed building from the Ranching Period that housed a blacksmith shop, storage rooms, and tack rooms. The crew installed a concrete foundation, poured concrete over the existing dirt floors, and rebuilt the walls. They reused about half of the original adobe bricks. New adobe bricks were differentiated from the old by their lighter color. The roof was replaced and raised by one foot. Plans called for new window and door openings, which were fitted with wood sash windows and paneled doors. The existing fireplace and chimney were repaired (Figures 31 and 32).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ SEA Incorporated, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Historic Park Master Plan* (Nevada Division of State Parks: Carson City, 1996), 4.24-4.25.

¹⁰⁴ Stephanie E. Gray, *Restoring America: Historic Preservation and the New Deal* (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2019), 1-2.

¹⁰⁵ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 84.

¹⁰⁶ Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, 47; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 20; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 86-90.

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Figure 32: Bureau of Reclamation renovation of the old adobe in 1929 (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).



Figure 33: Completed renovation of adobe by the Bureau of Reclamation with new curing room at right (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).

The interior plan consisted of three rooms, effectively consolidating the historically separate building units under a single roof. The smallest room, on the south end of the building, served as an office for engineer and laboratory supervisor Orin Patch. The middle room served as the mixing room, and the northern room served as the testing room with a hydraulic press. Workers wired the building for electricity, installing eight light fixtures and an electrical outlet. For plumbing, they installed a sink with a drain. The government added a 35-foot-long windowless curing room to the north side of the building (Figure 33). Not built to the same specifications as the rest of the building, the curing room began to collapse in 1944 and was removed by 1950.¹⁰⁷

As planned, the Bureau of Reclamation used the building as a concrete testing laboratory, running its first

tests in December 1929 (Figure 34). Specifically, testing involved analysis of local sand and gravel deposits to determine the best aggregate material to use in the concrete mix for the dam's

¹⁰⁷ Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, 47; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 86-90, 153, 162.

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construction. The government hoped that local aggregate could be used rather than shipping in material from elsewhere, as it would save them \$3 million in transportation costs. Testing determined that the aggregate would be sourced from an Arizona gravel pit not far from the planned dam. Later experiments examined the concrete's strength and compression. Testing at the ranch continued for more than two years, concluding on March 31, 1932, when engineers relocated to a concrete screening plant at the dam site.¹⁰⁸

While the Bureau of Reclamation occupied the old adobe building, Foremaster looked to sell his full ranch lease to a new tenant. As it turned out, subletting smaller parcels was more successful. He leased one area to Donald Bartlett and Donald Stewart, who opened a nine-hole golf course. Edgar Gates bought out the previous proprietors of the swimming pool and lodging business, Dave Holland and H.F. Bruce, in August 1930. Finally, that December, Foremaster transferred his lease to Edwin Carewe, a movie director with a ranching background. Carewe planned to rehabilitate the ranch, renaming it Rancho Grande, and implement a chicken feed production facility. His lofty ambitions were never realized. His tenure marked some improvements on the ranch but ultimately ended when Carewe filed for bankruptcy in 1933.¹⁰⁹

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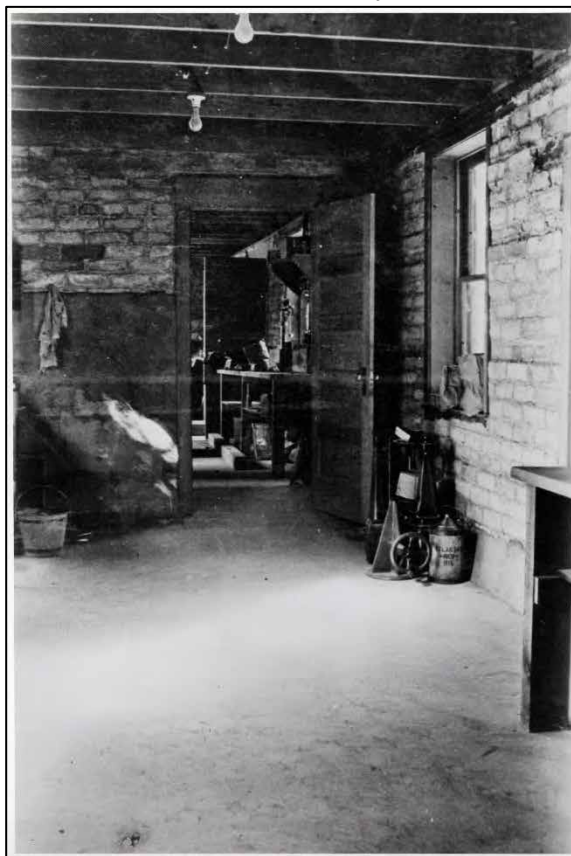


Figure 34: Renovated interior of adobe during Bureau of Reclamation era (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).

Final Ranch Leases under the Railroad (1933-1955)

For the next two decades after the Bureau of Reclamation departed, ranch leases characterized the property's history as the Union Pacific continued to lease the land. Albert Wittwer acquired a ten-year lease on the ranch during Carewe's bankruptcy trial in 1933. Wittwer operated the ranch while organizing the Southern Nevada Meat and Provisional Company cooperative with other area ranchers. He oversaw renovations to the old ranch house, completing them before his death in 1936. His brother William took over the lease, successfully operating the ranch and beef co-op with his family, until his death in 1942. During William Wittwer's tenancy, the Las Vegas

¹⁰⁸ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 80, 83, 92-96.

¹⁰⁹ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 81, 97-104.

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chapter of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers (DUP) installed a ten-foot-tall stone monument near the adobe building to commemorate the old Mormon Fort.¹¹⁰

The last ranch lessee under the railroad was Willie T. Stewart, whose tenancy ran from 1942 until 1955. Unrelated to Helen J. Stewart and her family, Willie grew up in Kanab, Utah and lived in Delamar, Nevada before coming to Las Vegas. A relative to the Wittwers by marriage, Stewart purchased the remaining year of the Wittwer lease after William's death, signing his own ten-year lease in 1943. He eliminated chicken- and pig-raising on the ranch, shifting its focus to cattle. In 1944, he added commercial horse stables to the ranch, followed by a wildly popular quarter-mile horse racetrack. He acquired the swimming pool and auto camp from Edgar and Marie Gates, inviting his daughter and son-in-law, Jesma and Carlyle Wilcox, to operate that side of the business. The Wilcoxes renovated the swimming pool, connecting it to city water, and added travel trailer parking, a bathhouse, and laundry facilities. They also ran the onsite grocery store.¹¹¹

The DUP continued their work to recognize and preserve the adobe fort building during the Willie Stewart years. The organization requested a lease for the building from the railroad, supported by Stewart. The railroad agreed on condition that the lessees would be responsible for building maintenance and improvements. Once they secured the lease in 1944, the DUP developed a museum, led tours, and hosted events at the old adobe. They rented the building to tenants who served as caretakers from 1947 until 1976. The DUP dedicated a new historical marker commemorating the 1856 Bringham post office in 1952. Nearly three decades after Delphine Squires appealed to the railroad to protect the building, steps were finally being taken to recognize its significance and conserve it for future generations.¹¹²

During Willie Stewart's tenancy, the railroad frequently altered his lease as it sold off parcels of the old ranch. Wartime defense industries and postwar growth contributed to explosive growth in Las Vegas, and various entities approached the railroad to purchase large and small tracts of land. Between 1947 and 1955, pieces of the old ranch became the Helldorado Days rodeo stadium owned by the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks #1468 (Elks), broadcasting towers for a local radio station, a municipal road, a recreation center for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Rancho High School, and an expansion of Woodlawn Cemetery on the site of Stewart's racetrack. When the City of Las Vegas straightened and widened Fifth Street in front of the ranch in 1953, it required a chunk of the railroad's land. The lease era was ending, and it was time to sell what remained of the ranch.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 20; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 105-116.

¹¹¹ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 119-127.

¹¹² Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, 49; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 133-134, 159, 162.

¹¹³ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 134-136.

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Ownership under the Elks (1955-1971)

The Union Pacific Railroad sold all its Las Vegas Ranch holdings in 1955. When the Las Vegas Valley Water District purchased the springs to the west, which supplied the creek running through the ranch property, the railroad lost its water rights and no longer needed the property. Sifting through multiple offers, the railroad sold to three buyers: the Elks, City of Las Vegas, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Elks acquired 20 acres, including the old fort remnant, cluster of ranch houses, and swimming pool. They leased the original Gass-Stewart ranch house to Carl Belding, who ran it as the Old Ranch Supper Club.¹¹⁴

Under Elks ownership, the DUP continued their work at the adobe. They hoped to secure a lease as they had under the railroad, but this never materialized. Determined to preserve the building, the group funded repairs and maintenance. After the building sustained damage from rain and hailstorms in 1955, the DUP replaced a door and threshold and repaired cracks in the walls. In 1956, they raised funds and built a wooden canopy to protect the building (Figure 35). The group continued to lease the adobe to tenant-caretakers despite not securing their own lease of the building from the Elks.¹¹⁵



Figure 35: Fort remnant with wooden canopy pictured in 1980 (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).

The Elks did not purchase the cluster of ranch buildings for their historical value and set to demolish them after building their new lodge in 1963. Public outcry ensued over the impending destruction of the Gass-Stewart ranch house. Former governor Vail Pittman asked the Elks to consider a demolition delay to ascertain the full history of the main ranch house, which the Elks contended was a twentieth century structure. The lodge refused postponement, carrying out the demolition by bulldozing the cluster of ranch structures into the swimming pool, then setting fire

¹¹⁴ Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, 49; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 20-21; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 141-144.

¹¹⁵ Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, 49; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 163-164.

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to the rubble. The Elks spared the old adobe, allowing the DUP to continue hosting tours and events there.¹¹⁶

The 1963 demolition did not inspire confidence regarding preservation of the adobe. The Daughters grew increasingly fearful that the Elks would destroy the old fort, as they refused to provide written assurances about its future. The DUP wrote to local and state politicians and consulted an attorney. Relief arrived in 1971, when the City of Las Vegas purchased the fort remnant along with nearby Cashman Field from the Elks.¹¹⁷

Preservation and Reconstruction (1972-2005)

Organization, Commemoration, and Planning, 1972-1976

Under city ownership, preservation efforts quickly mobilized. Historians, journalists, advocates, and the DUP joined together as the Las Vegas Committee for the Restoration of the Las Vegas Fort, providing historical data to architect Leo Borns to inform reconstruction and restoration plans. City employee Gene Amberg nominated the fort for the National Register of Historic Places, and it was officially listed in 1972. In need of a funding source, restoration efforts stalled. With the project on hold, the city granted a ten-year lease of the building to the DUP at a cost of \$1 per year.¹¹⁸

Relations between the DUP and the Elks did not improve after the City's purchase of the adobe building. One source of frustration stemmed from the fact that the city-owned parcel consisted of the adobe's footprint plus a 16-foot buffer, which was surrounded by Elks property on all sides. After the Elks installed grass with a sprinkler system, the adobe was inundated with runoff and mud. The lodge initially denied responsibility, but they built a retaining wall in 1972 under pressure from the mayor. The drainage issues continued, and the City dug a cross-trench in 1974 to mitigate the problem. Concurrently, University of Nevada professor Elizabeth Warren coordinated the first archaeological investigation of the site in an unsuccessful attempt to locate the original walls.¹¹⁹

Efforts to preserve and commemorate the site continued throughout the 1970s. The City of Las Vegas formed an Old Fort Replica Committee in 1972, designating the fort as a major Bicentennial project. Representatives from the Southern Nevada Historical Society, Southern Nevada Museum, DUP, City of Las Vegas, State Parks Commission, American Revolutionary Bicentennial Committee, and the Las Vegas Committee for the Preservation of the Las Vegas Fort created the Association for the Preservation of the Las Vegas Mormon Fort (APLVMF) in

¹¹⁶ Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, 49; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 148.

¹¹⁷ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 164-165.

¹¹⁸ Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, 49; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 165-166.

¹¹⁹ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 167-168.

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1974. Their mission was to renovate the fort remnant, reconstruct the fort's walls, and build a visitor center before the nation's 1976 Bicentennial. While these plans took an additional two decades to come to fruition, the property hosted multiple preservation and public history events in 1975 and 1976. These planning activities and events leading up to the U.S. Bicentennial echoed those taking place throughout the nation, as communities dedicated time, energy, and funding to recognize and restore their most cherished historic resources. During National Historic Preservation week in May 1976, Nevada State Historical Marker #35 was dedicated and installed at the site. The marker recognized the fort as Nevada's oldest building. The same year, the adobe's last tenant-caretaker, Janet Meyer, moved out of the building.¹²⁰

Initial Restoration Efforts and the Friends of the Fort, 1977-1990

Restoration efforts were complicated by land ownership between the City of Las Vegas and the Elks, as well as a lack of funds. Because the Elks owned the surrounding land and would not sell this property to the City, plans to reconstruct the original fort walls could not be carried out. In 1977, the City offered the Elks \$1,575,000 for the surrounding property. When the Elks counter-offered \$1,900,000, the city demurred.¹²¹

The City of Las Vegas owned the adobe building, and as a result, work could only be completed on that building. Anna Dean Kepper, APLVMF President, hired San Francisco architectural firm Bernardi and Emmons to complete a study for the restoration of the adobe using grant funds received by the organization. The firm recommended adobe brick repair, removal of cement patches, application of clear exterior sealant, and removal of the wooden canopy and chain link fence. Kepper began fundraising campaigns with the goal of eventually funding the work and hiring an adobe expert.¹²²

Conservation work began on September 22, 1980. The City hired Gilbert Sanchez, an adobe expert from San Jose, California, to assess the condition of the adobe and oversee the preservation project, which entailed removal of the wooden canopy and cement patches, repair and selective replacement of the underlying adobe bricks, and application of mud plaster to the exterior walls. On the interior, workers exposed the cement floors; removed drywall, wood paneling, and a false ceiling; and generally restored it to its appearance during the Bureau of Reclamation era. Work concluded in the spring of 1981 at a cost of \$250,000 (Figure 36). Achieving their mission, the APLVMF transitioned into the regional preservation group Preservation Association of Clark County.¹²³

¹²⁰ Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, 49; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 168-169, 171; SEA, Incorporated, *Master Plan*, 1.26.

¹²¹ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 171.

¹²² Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 168-171.

¹²³ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 171-172, 174.

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Figure 36: Adobe building with new mud plaster pictured in 1992 (Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park).

The adobe building was in good working order, but worries persisted about the fate of the property and surrounding Elks-owned land. The DUP's ten-year lease from the city expired in 1981, effectively closing the adobe to the public. A new nonprofit group, the Friends of the Fort, formed to fund the building's reopening. The city awarded a lease to the Friends in 1985, agreeing to pay \$2,500 in maintenance costs each year in exchange for the Friends to operate the museum. In 1987, the Elks sold their surrounding land to a developer, the deal contingent on the buyer acquiring the ¼-acre parcel on which the adobe stood. The Preservation Association of Clark County flew into

action, contacting agencies and representatives at the local, state, and federal levels. Senator Bob Coffin introduced a bill in the state legislature to make the adobe a state park. It passed in both the House and Senate. Meanwhile, the city made a deal with the new owner to secure the surrounding land. The Natural History Museum moved into the old Elks Lodge, and the city transferred ownership of the old fort property to the state in 1991.¹²⁴

State Ownership, Master Planning, and Reconstruction, 1991-2005

Nevada voters had approved a bond to fund state parks in 1990, and the Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park received \$2 million. Still intent on reconstructing the fort, the Nevada Division of State Parks hired an archaeological firm to determine the original location of the fort walls. Robert Elston supervised the excavations, which located the walls in 1993. Successive excavations by the Louis Berger Group, directed by lead archaeologist John Hohmann, located the foundations of the fort bastions, mess halls, and the Gass-Stewart Ranch House, in addition to a prehistoric pit structure and several artifact scatters. Hohmann's crew determined that the adobe remnant was part of the southeast bastion with a fireplace likely added by O.D. Gass. They concluded that the adobe building retained material from the 1855 fort, namely that the thicker part of its western wall originally formed a portion of the fort's east wall. In addition, archaeologists located the creek bed 32 feet south of the fort's south wall foundation.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*, 49; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 175-177.

¹²⁵ Elston and McLane, *Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 178-179.

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The Nevada Division of State Parks selected SEA, Incorporated to conduct research, analysis, and master planning for the Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Historic Park in December 1993. Led by project manager Rich Shock, the master planning team brought together a diverse coalition of cultural resource professionals, including historic preservation architects Don Ryden and Robert Graham, archaeologist John Hohmann, interpretive planner Rich Pulsipher, and historic landscape architect Walt Rodgers. Completed in June 1996, the master plan sought to re-introduce the “cool, oasis feeling” that first attracted humans to the site and led to its subsequent occupation. To this end, the team recommended re-creating the creek and shaded, tree-lined landscape. The plan included reconstructing a portion of the original fort, protecting the existing archaeology, and interpreting the site as a whole. It provided specifications for the reconstructed fort walls, bastion, and gate based on archival and archaeological evidence. It also highlighted the importance of preserving and interpreting the Bureau of Reclamation concrete laboratory, while recommending that the 1980 mud plaster be retained on the exterior walls to protect the historic adobe bricks. Finally, it laid out a plan to construct a new visitor center, parking lot, and maintenance facilities that would avoid archaeologically sensitive areas and complement the historic character of the property without imitating it.¹²⁶

The Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Park broke ground on December 13, 1997. It took two years to reconstruct the fort’s walls and northwest bastion, create corrals and a garden area, and add landscaping. The reconstruction followed the location of the fort walls confirmed by archaeological investigations. The adobe bricks used to reconstruct the walls and bastion incorporated concrete to ensure durability and long-term performance in the hot, dry, and sunny climate. A concrete-lined stream with running water and riparian vegetation was installed as a recreation of the Las Vegas Creek. Caliche rock walls were built to resemble what appeared on the site during the Ranching Period. The project also included new shop and restroom facilities north of the reconstruction. Officials dedicated the park on May 12, 2000.¹²⁷

A visitor center for the state park was completed in 2005, fulfilling the final piece of the park plan. Along with a freestanding restroom building, it was designed by architect Eric Strain. A dedication ceremony took place 150 years after the missionaries’ arrival at the site on June 11, 2005. The state park, with its visitor center, reconstruction, and old adobe building, remains open to the public with a variety of indoor and outdoor interpretive exhibits.¹²⁸

Summary of Significance under Criterion A

The fort site is inextricably linked to the history of the Las Vegas Valley, from precontact to the modern era. This creekside oasis has served as a resting area and source of refreshment for humans since their first appearance in the region. It sustained the Ancestral Puebloan and

¹²⁶ SEA, Incorporated, *Master Plan*.

¹²⁷ Beth Hewitt, personal communication, June 2024; Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 13; Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 181-182.

¹²⁸ Messenger, *Old Ranch*, 185.

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Nuwuvi people, travelers along the Spanish Trail and Mormon Trail, the Las Vegas Mission, and pioneer ranchers of the valley. Along with the nearby Las Vegas Springs, its very existence directly contributed to the railroad's establishment of a division point at Las Vegas, and the ensuing settlement and community development that created the city that exists today.

A personal author's note in the 1996 master plan summarizes the unique significance of the fort property:

Very few American cities can claim to possess still their community's very first building. It seems both amazing and ironic that modern Las Vegas, known for its general disregard for heritage, actually has managed to retain even this small remnant of its birthplace through a combination of luck and stewardship of a handful of spirited citizens. This is truly a rare and wonderful thing.¹²⁹

The adobe building is the oldest standing building in Nevada and the only remaining structure from Las Vegas's earliest days as a mission, ranch, and resting stop for travelers. It stands as a rare physical representation of the area's brief occupation by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1855 to 1857 and its legacy as a pioneer ranch under the founding Gass and Stewart families from the 1860s to 1902. During the railroad era, the property was leased to scores of tenants who developed its agricultural and recreational potential. The ranch was an essential supplier of fresh food for the growing city of Las Vegas until the railroad sold it in 1955. In addition, it served as a community space that hosted dances and picnics, as well as a swimming pool, throughout much of the railroad era.

The property achieved additional significance during the Great Depression as the Bureau of Reclamation's concrete testing laboratory for the Boulder (Hoover) Dam project from 1929 to 1933. The Bureau remodeled the standing adobe, which served as their first workplace while planning the dam. The adobe as it appears today is a result of the Bureau's renovations. Experiments conducted at the laboratory determined the content and composition of concrete used to build the dam, a national historic landmark and a major accomplishment of modern civil engineering.

Finally, the property represents locally significant historic preservation and commemoration efforts beginning in the 1950s and culminating in local celebrations of the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976. This includes the ongoing conflict between preservation advocates and the Elks Lodge over the fate of the old adobe throughout the 1950s and 1960s; associated public action that led to the City of Las Vegas acquiring it in 1971; the nomination of the property for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972; and the 1974 creation of the Association for the Preservation of the Las Vegas Mormon Fort (APLVMF) group to organize commemoration activities and conservation efforts in preparation for the U.S. Bicentennial.

¹²⁹ SEA, Incorporated, *Master Plan*, 4.25.

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Summary of Significance under Criterion D

The site is also being nominated for its archaeological significance. The archaeological significance of the Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort (OLVMF) has been established through multiple phases of investigations including site documentation, targeted site testing, and monitoring activities. The results of these investigations have identified that, although the resource has been adapted over time and subject to multiple phases of use, the OLVMF possesses extant archaeological elements from the periods of significance associated with the resource.

Archaeological materials identified on site have been assigned to the five cultural periods – The Native American Period (Formative and protohistoric), The Mormon Period, The Ranching Period, The Railroad Period, and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Period. Below, major archaeological features from each period are summarized from the following archaeological reports: Hinds 1980; McCarty 1981; Elston and McLane 1993; Hohmann et al. 1995; and Hohmann 1995. These previous investigations are collectively summarized in the *Preservation Plan for the Cultural Resources of the Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort*.¹³⁰ This preservation plan, in addition to summarizing the prior archaeological work, assesses integrity and the significance of archaeological features that have been documented on site.

Native American period themes able to be addressed by the archaeological deposits of the OLVMF include: (1) Chronology, (2) Settlement, (3) Lithic Technology, and (4) Trade and Exchange. The Chronology theme is applicable to resources that possess data to refine the overall chronological framework for the Mojave Desert and southwestern Great Basin. The Settlement theme focuses on the nature of living conditions and the evolution of land use patterns with respect to subsistence, prehistoric hunting, and prehistoric agriculture. The Lithic Technology theme examines material use, tool function(s) and how these conditioned tool manufacturing processes. The Trade and Exchange theme is focused upon the use of local as opposed to non-local tool stone, emphasizing obsidian and basalt sources, variability through time and space, and the regional dynamics of trade and exchange.

Historic research themes that are able to be addressed by the extant archaeological and architectural elements of the OLVMF include: (1) Settlement, (2) Ranching and Agriculture, and (3) Transportation and Communication. The theme of Settlement focuses research on the relations between social, religious and cultural groups, their settlement patterns, environmental adaptations, and the implications these factors have on the concept of community. Ranching and Agriculture involves land-use practices, transformation of the environment, development of the regional economy, and the adoption of new technologies. The Transportation and Communication theme is concerned with the various infrastructural networks such as transportation, communication and utility systems, that are developed to serve the remote communities of the Las Vegas valley. This theme centers on the movement of information, materials, and people, and the development trajectories of networks that existed historically. The

¹³⁰ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 2000.

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development of transportation and communication corridors was particularly important in these isolated communities.

Identified archaeological materials that support OLVMF significance associated with the Native American Period include four subsurface features including a pit structure and artifact scatters (Artifact Scatters 1, 2 and 3). None of these elements possess surface expressions. The pit structure (Figure 37, Map ID 1) dates to the Protohistoric Period, likely representing intensified use of the site by Paiute groups; more work is needed to determine the exact function(s) of this Native American feature.¹³¹ Artifact Scatter 1 (Figure 37, Map ID 2) represents a Protohistoric-age seasonal or permanent encampment, also a likely remnant of the Paiute occupation of the site. Artifact Scatter 2 (Figure 37, Map ID 3) dates from late Formative to early Protohistoric Periods, whereas Artifact Scatter 3 was assessed to date to the late Formative Period; however, this feature was likely impacted by subsequent development of the site parking lot and visitors center (Figure 37, Map ID 4). The functions of Artifact Scatters 2 and 3 are less clear – they may represent encampments or midden areas. The four extant features associated with the Native American Period possess a high degree of integrity and present data potential to address topics under the theme of Prehistoric research themes applicable to the site, thereby supporting eligibility of resources from this area under Criterion D.

Mormon Period (1855-1858) archaeological features include foundation elements of the northwest bastion (Figure 37, Map ID 5), the southeast bastion (Figure 37, Map ID 6), the ruins of all fort walls [north (Figure 37, Map ID 7), east (Figure 37, Map ID 8), south (Figure 37, Map ID 9), and west (Figure 37, Map ID 10)], and a series of foundations along the interior southern wall of the fort believed to be the Mormon mess rooms. These structural elements of the original Mormon Fort were identified through limited archaeological testing. With the exception of the northwest bastion foundation stones removed during the archaeological testing, the remaining subsurface foundational elements of the fort are assessed to have a high degree of integrity and present the ability to address research themes under Criterion D.

Previously identified archaeological features from the Ranching Period (1858-1902) include the stone foundations of the Gass-Stewart Ranch House (Map ID 11), the south wall during the Ranching Period, two wooden bridges, a corral and stable, and a metal trough. Of the ranching period, only the archaeological remains of the ranch house are known to be extant. Excavations revealed intact elements of the ranch house, and these deposits indicated a high degree of integrity and present the ability to address research themes under Criterion D.

The Railroad Period (1902-1928) possesses a concrete septic tank, a redwood pipeline, and a stucco modification to Gass-Stewart Ranch House (Map ID 11). The only extant elements of the Railroad Period known to be present are the archaeological remains of the Ranch House. Excavations at the ranch house revealed deposits with a high degree of integrity and possess the ability to address research themes under D.

¹³¹ Hohmann et al, *Preservation Plan*, 38.

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Previously identified archaeological features associated with the BOR Period (1928-1931) include a wood septic tank, two concrete block/masonry rooms, and the Mormon Fort adobe building itself (Map ID 12), which, due to extensive modification, is most representative of the BOR Period rather than the Mormon or Ranching Periods. Of the BOR period archaeological features, only the adobe building is known to be extant. The adobe is an architectural feature and is further evaluated under that class of resource.

The investigations confirm the OLVMF possesses intact archaeological deposits that are eligible under Criterion D of the National Register of Historic Places. Further, these resources are known through limited archaeological testing (representing less than 1% of the site area). Large portions of the overall site remain untested. Based on the previous testing results, despite the continued use of the resource and historic-to-modern reconstruction efforts, there exist known archaeological deposits and the potential for additional intact deposits.



Figure 37: Archaeological Features Location Map

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Criteria Consideration E

The reconstructed portion of the fort meets Criteria Consideration E as an accurately reconstructed feature located in a suitable environment. The reconstruction reflects its original configuration and location and is grouped with the remaining historic building. Interpretation of the site explains that the bastion and walls are not original but a reconstruction.

The reconstruction is presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan developed by SEA, Incorporated in 1996. The master plan noted that all work should comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and that reconstruction and new construction should occur where little to no archaeology was present to minimize impact on archaeological resources. The team identified the northwest bastion, north gate, north wall, and a portion of the west and southwest walls for reconstruction, as archaeological testing showed that fort foundations did not survive in those locations. The plan stipulated that the replicated structure should use modern techniques or materials to provide clarity of interpretation and ease of maintenance without presenting a false sense of history. It recommended specific measurements for the walls, gate, and bastion; elements like musket loopholes, bastion parapets, and brush shade porches; and other features. These recommendations were based on archival evidence found in missionary and pioneer diaries, sketches and paintings, and other historical documents.

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The reconstruction followed the recommendations set forth in the master plan. It is based upon a well-researched body of historic data. Successive archaeological, architectural, and archival investigations informed the reconstruction. The walls and bastion were constructed in their historic location and configuration. The overall plan, dimensions, and design of the features are historically accurate, as is the spatial relationship between the reconstruction and the historic adobe building. The reconstruction did not fully utilize traditional materials or methods, as the adobe bricks incorporated concrete material to ensure its durability in the desert climate as well as to discern historic versus modern fabric.

Finally, the fort reconstruction meets Criteria Consideration E as the only surviving property associated with the 1850s Mormon mission. Nothing comparable exists in Las Vegas.

Integrity

Overall, the site demonstrates sufficient levels of integrity to convey its significance. The property contains the oldest non-native standing structure in Nevada. The old adobe is all that remains of the 1855 Mormon Fort, and the reconstructed walls and bastion accurately capture the appearance of the original fort. In addition, the remaining adobe building generally reflects its historic appearance during the Bureau of Reclamation era (1929-1933) when the Bureau renovated it to contain their concrete laboratory.

¹³² SEA, Incorporated, *Master Plan*.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Clark County, Nevada

Name of Property

County and State

It has not been moved and retains integrity of location. Originally a remote outpost, it would become proximal to the growing town in Las Vegas by 1905, but even in the 1930s, it was removed enough from the city for Bureau of Reclamation employees to have a sense of privacy and refuge during their time there. After the railroad sold the property in 1955, the surroundings rapidly developed into an urban area, diminishing the property's integrity of setting. The site evokes the historic sense of an early Las Vegas resting stop and ranch and maintains its link with the settlement and development of the area, retaining integrity of feeling and association. The property's overall spatial organization of the adobe building, reconstructed bastion and walls, and open space reflects good integrity of design. While this is somewhat diminished by the introduction of modern buildings, those intrusions are peripheral to the character-defining core of the property (i.e., the adobe, fort reconstruction, and open space). Reconstruction and preservation activities introduced new methods and materials, including the use of concrete in reconstructed adobe bricks and the application of mud plaster to the adobe building's walls, impacting the property's integrity of materials and workmanship without completely destroying those aspects of integrity.

Important physical impacts to subsurface archaeological components include archaeological excavation, excavation for irrigation and construction, structural/landscape restoration, and natural decay and erosion. However, previous archaeological excavation (see Hohmann et al. 2000) has proven that substantial portions of the prehistoric and historic subsurface archaeological materials remain intact. Further, these archaeological components are protected from various environmental and human impacts as they have been capped by a variable-thickness layer of imported fill. Consequently, the archaeological components of this site retain sufficient integrity of location, materials, workmanship, and association to convey their significance under Criterion D.

Summary

The Las Vegas Mormon Fort is significant under Criterion A as a representation of the Las Vegas Valley's prehistoric and historical development, reflecting its role in the lifeways of the area's Indigenous cultures, as well as trends in early Euro-American settlement and agricultural activities that ultimately contributed to the growth and development of Las Vegas as a community. It is additionally significant for its association as the Bureau of Reclamation's concrete testing laboratory during the planning of nearby Hoover Dam, an engineering marvel that provided thousands of jobs during the Great Depression. As a long-appreciated commemorative site, the property is also significant for its associations with historic preservation and interpretation efforts.

The property is additionally significant under Criterion D for its information potential as an intact site that contributes to our understanding of human history and prehistory in the Las Vegas Valley, reflecting its successive occupations by the Ancestral Puebloan and Nuwuvi cultures, as well as Euro-American settlement and activity from 1855 to 1931.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
County and State

Finally, the property meets Criteria Consideration E as a partially reconstructed property reflecting historic accuracy in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan. The reconstructed portion of the fort is grouped with the remaining historic building and has been accurately recreated based on successive archaeological, architectural, and archival investigations. Associated interpretation clearly explains that the recreated features are a reconstruction and not original. The property's restoration master plan ensured that the reconstruction was carried out in a dignified manner, requiring that all work comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and ensuring historical accuracy of the location, configuration, dimensions, and design of the reconstructed features. In addition, the reconstruction meets Criteria Consideration E as the only surviving property in Las Vegas with these historic associations

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Hinds, James R. "Las Vegas Mormon Fort." National Register of Historic Places Nomination Amendment. NRIS #78003379. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1978.

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Hohmann, John W. *The Founding of Las Vegas, Nevada: Phase II Archaeological Investigations at the Old Las Vegas Mormon For State Historic Park, Clark County, Nevada*. Cultural Resource Group Research Report No. 24. Las Vegas: Louis Berger & Associates Press, 1995.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Clark County, Nevada

Name of Property

County and State

---. *The Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort: The Founding of a Desert Community in Clark County, Nevada*. Studies in Western Archaeology Number 4, Cultural Resource Group. Las Vegas: Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., 1996.

Hohmann, John W., and James C. Lowe. *A Phase I (Class III) Archaeological Survey and Testing for a Proposed Temporary Parking Area Located on 1.1 Acres of the Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Historic Park, Clark County, Nevada*. Cultural Resource Group Clearance Report No. 43. Las Vegas: Louis Berger & Associates Press, 1995.

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---. "New Ranch Lease." November 25, 1905:1-4.

---. "Should Preserve Old Fort." July 11, 1929: 3.

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---. "First Lady of Las Vegas Part 2." Nevada Historical Society Quarterly 17, no. 1, 1974.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Clark County, Nevada

Name of Property

County and State

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Doctoral dissertation. Pullman: Washington State University, 2001.

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University of Nevada Press, 2022.

Woods, Fred E. *A Gamble in the Desert: The Mormon Mission in Las Vegas (1855-1857)*. Salt

Lake City: Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, 2005.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☒ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☒ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.24 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 11	Easting: 667801	Northing: 4005641
2. Zone: 11	Easting: 667922	Northing: 4005645
3. Zone: 11	Easting: 667780	Northing: 4005563
4. Zone: 11	Easting : 667924	Northing: 4005532

Verbal Boundary Description

The Las Vegas Mormon Fort site consists of 3.24 acres including Clark County Assessor's Parcels (APNs) 139-26-301-002 and 139-26-301-003. It is bounded by Washington Avenue to the north, the Cashman Complex parking lot to the east, Las Vegas Boulevard to the west, and the Las Vegas Natural History Museum and Heritage Park to the south. It is in Section 26, Township 20 South, Range 61 East. It is located within the city limits of Las Vegas, Nevada.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Las Vegas Mormon Fort site were selected to include all Nevada State Parks-owned parcels that comprise the park with its architectural and archaeological components. The boundaries are based on property lines, modern roads, and archaeological evidence.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: ZoAnn Campana, Travis Hansen, Jason Spidell, Allyson Hinz, and Audrey Andrews
organization: Kautz Environmental Consultants, Inc.
street & number: 1140 Financial Boulevard, Suite 100
city or town: Reno state: Nevada zip code: 89502
e-mail: zcampana@kecnv.com
telephone: 775-829-4411
date: 6/12/2026

Additional Documentation

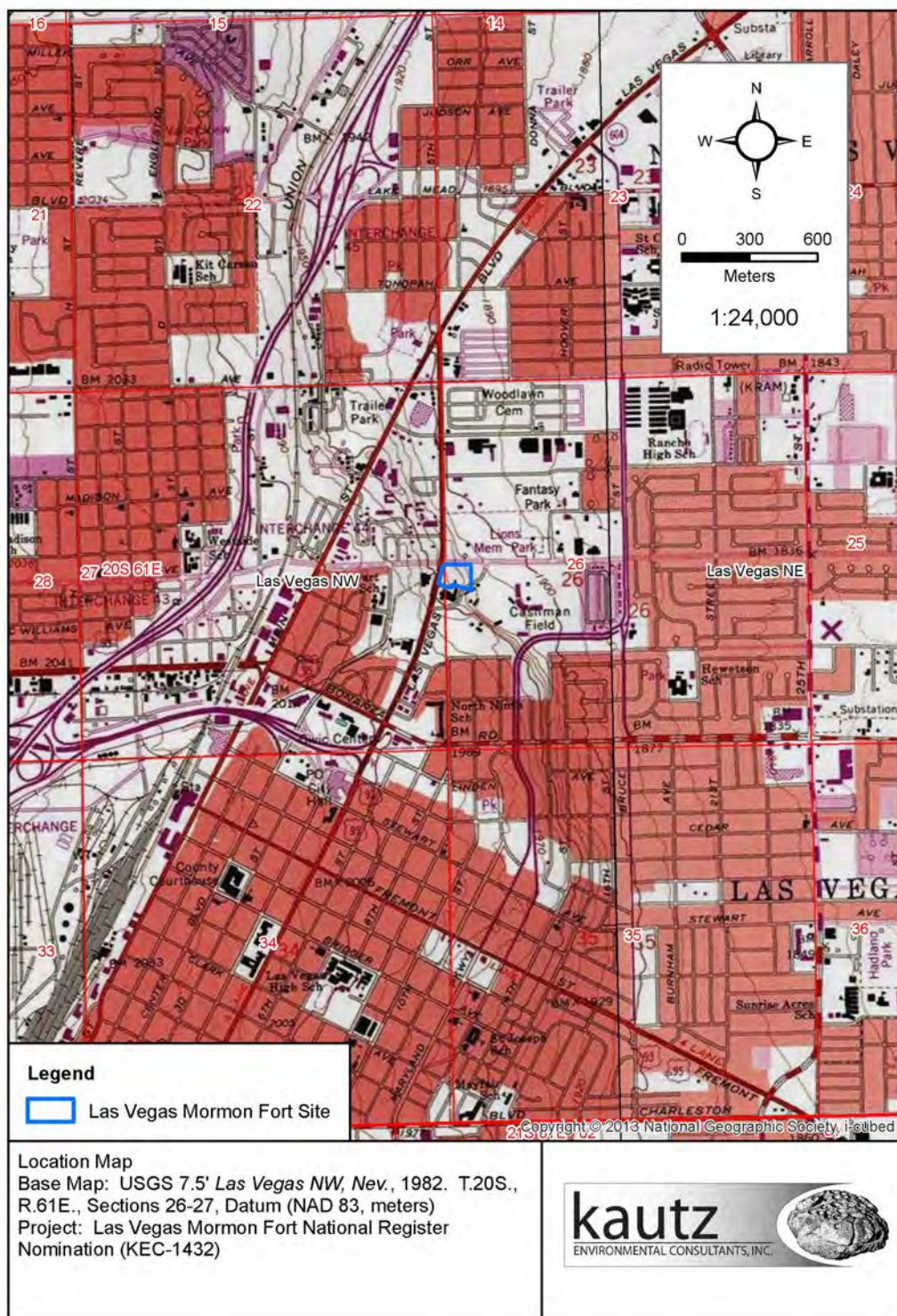
Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
County and State

Las Vegas Mormon Fort USGS Topographic Location Map



Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
County and State

Las Vegas Mormon Fort Aerial Location Map



Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
County and State

Las Vegas Mormon Fort Site Sketch Map – Current (2024)

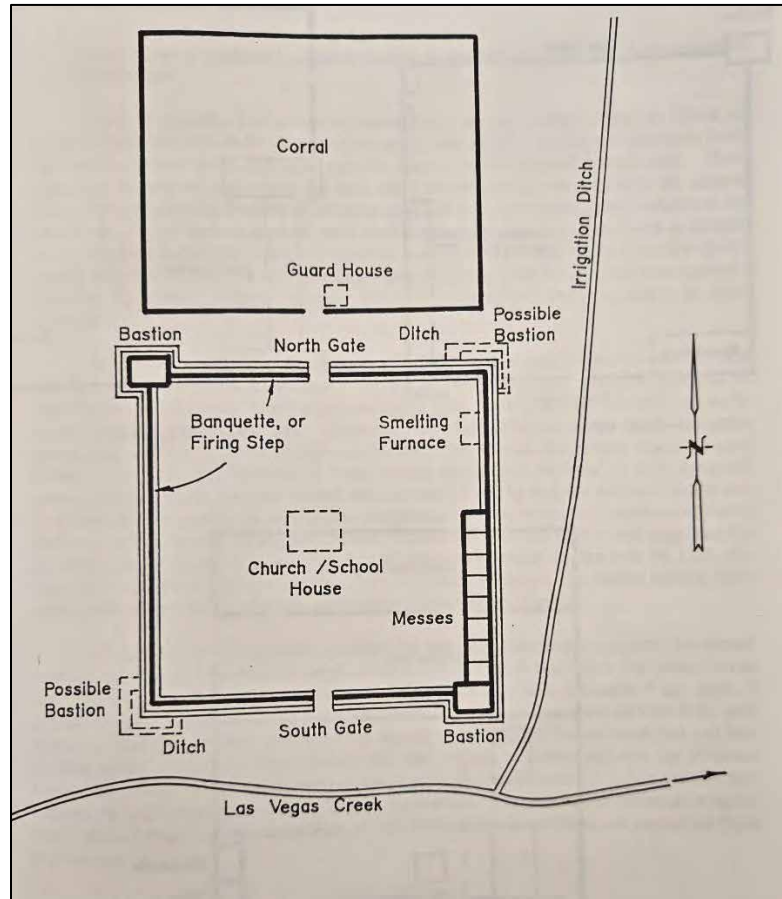


Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
County and State

Las Vegas Mormon Fort

Historical Sketch Map – Mission Period (1855-1857)



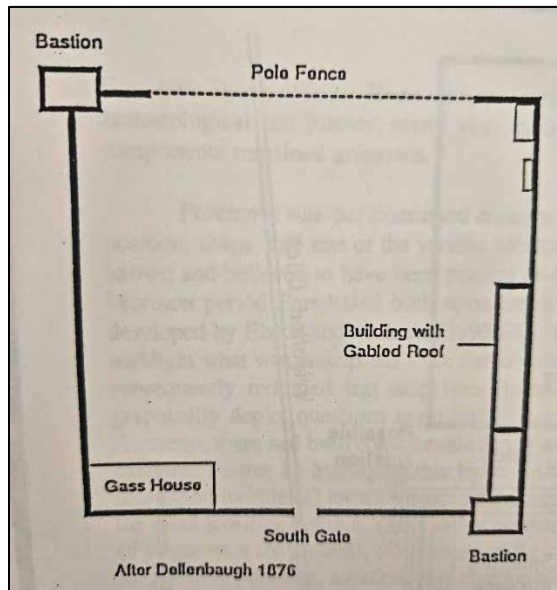
Schematic drawing of Mission Period Fort from Hohmann (1996)

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
County and State

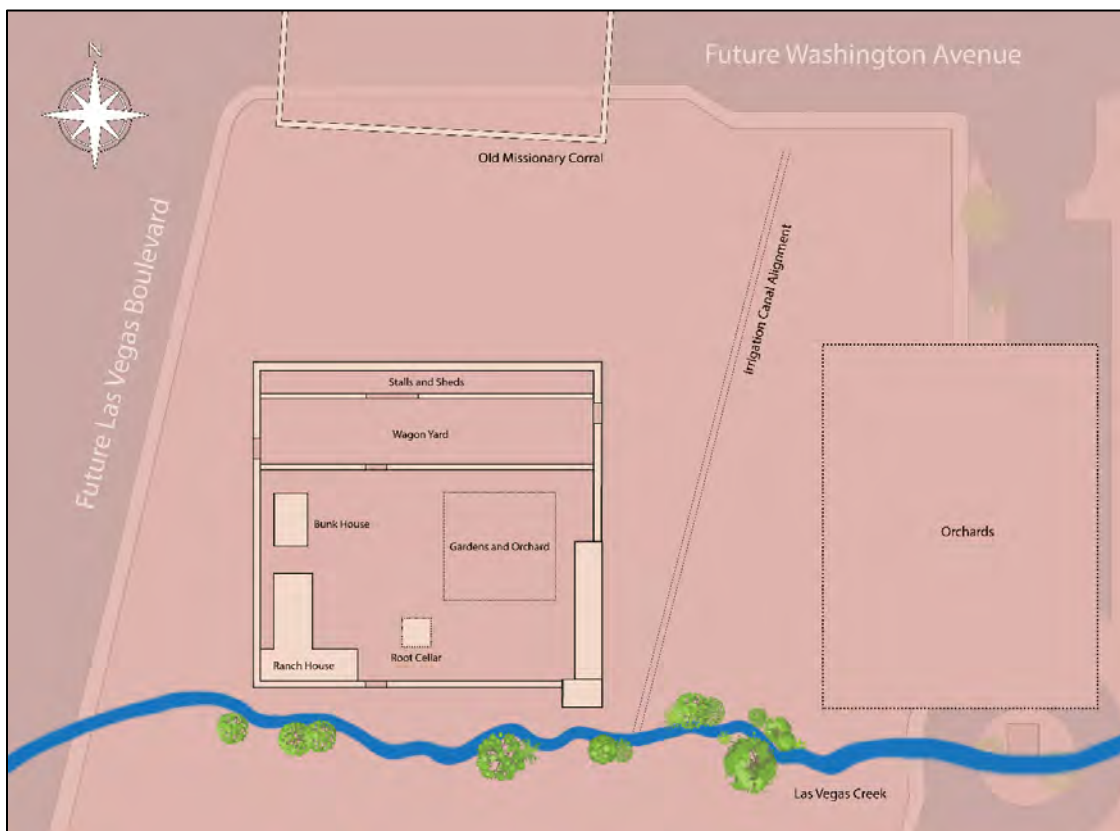
Las Vegas Mormon Fort

Historical Sketch Maps – Ranching Period (1860-1902)



Above: Schematic drawing of Gass property between 1876 and 1882 from Hohmann (1996).

Below: Site plan during Stewart Ranch era after 1883.



Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada
County and State

Las Vegas Mormon Fort Site Sketch Maps – Railroad Period (1903-1955)



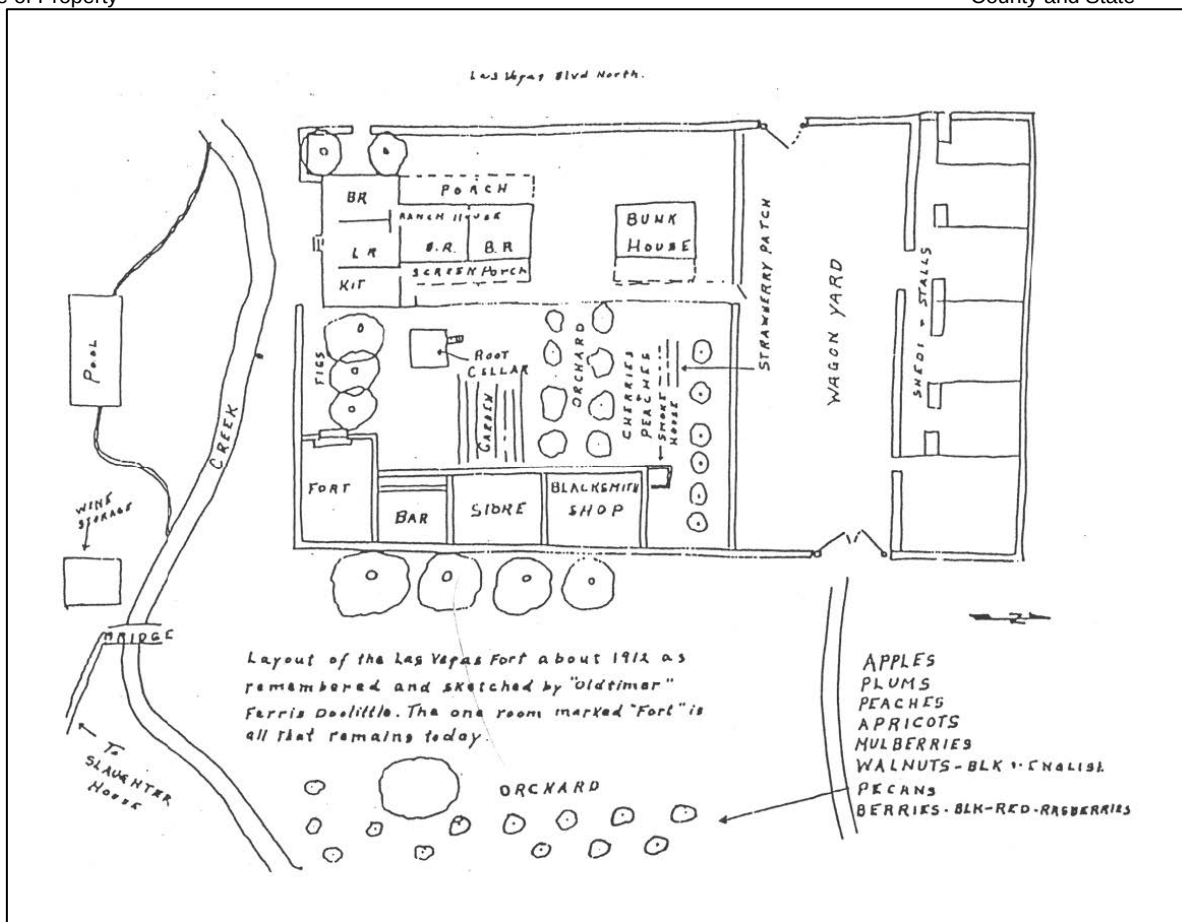
Conjectural site plan circa 1925 based on hand-drawn map by Ferris Doolittle.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Clark County, Nevada

Name of Property

County and State



Ferris Doolittle's drawing created by memory in 1965 and published by Hohmann (1996). Doolittle resided at the ranch in the 1920s during the Railroad Period.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Name of Property

Clark County, Nevada

County and State

Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: **Las Vegas Mormon Fort**

City or Vicinity: **Las Vegas**

County: **Clark**

State: **Nevada**

Photographer: **ZoAnn Campana and Travis Hansen**

Date Photographed: **June 18, 2024**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0001)

View of the corner of the west and north facade of the Adobe Building, camera facing southeast.

2 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0002)

View of east facade of the Adobe Building from the southern end, camera facing northwest.

3 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0003)

View of the corner of the south and west facade of the Adobe Building, camera facing northeast.

4 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0004)

Interior view from the southern end of the first room looking toward the north facade door of the Adobe Building, camera facing north.

5 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0005)

Interior view of the second room looking towards the southern portion of the Adobe Building, camera facing south.

6 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0006)

View of the Las Vegas Creek Replica, the Adobe Building, and a caliche rock wall, camera facing northeast.

7 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0007)

View of the Las Vegas Creek replica, camera facing west.

8 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0008)

View of the Fort walls and northwest Bastion, camera facing northwest.

9 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0009)

Partial view of the north Fort wall, view of the west Fort wall and northwest Bastion, camera facing northwest.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Clark County, Nevada

Name of Property

County and State

10 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0010)

Close up view of the gate opening in the north Fort wall, camera facing south.

11 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0011)

View of the east Fort wall and partial view of the north Fort wall, camera facing northeast.

12 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0012)

View of the corner of the east and north Fort walls, camera facing southwest.

13 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0013)

View of the west Fort wall and northwest Bastion, camera facing northeast.

14 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0014)

View of northwest Bastion, camera facing northwest.

15 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0015)

View of gate in north Fort wall, camera facing northeast.

16 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0016)

Close up view of the west Fort wall with the Adobe Building in view, camera facing east.

17 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0017)

View of the east Fort wall, the 1952 First Las Vegas Post Office monument, and a partial view of the Maintenance/Shop Building, camera facing northwest.

18 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0068)

Overall view including Ranch House remnants, picnic tables, Fort walls, and Adobe Building, camera facing northeast.

19 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0019)

View of Maintenance/Shop Building from north Fort wall, camera facing east.

20 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0020)

Angled view of Restroom Building 2, camera facing northwest.

21 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0021)

View of Visitor Center from parking lot, camera facing northwest.

22 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0022)

View of Visitor Center from near the Maintenance Building, camera facing southwest.

23 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0023)

View of maintenance building in parking lot roundabout, camera facing southeast.

Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Clark County, Nevada

Name of Property

County and State

24 of 24 (NV_Clark_LasVegasMormonFort_0024)

View of historic site from parking lot sidewalk with Visitor Center and the fort in view,
camera facing southwest.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.







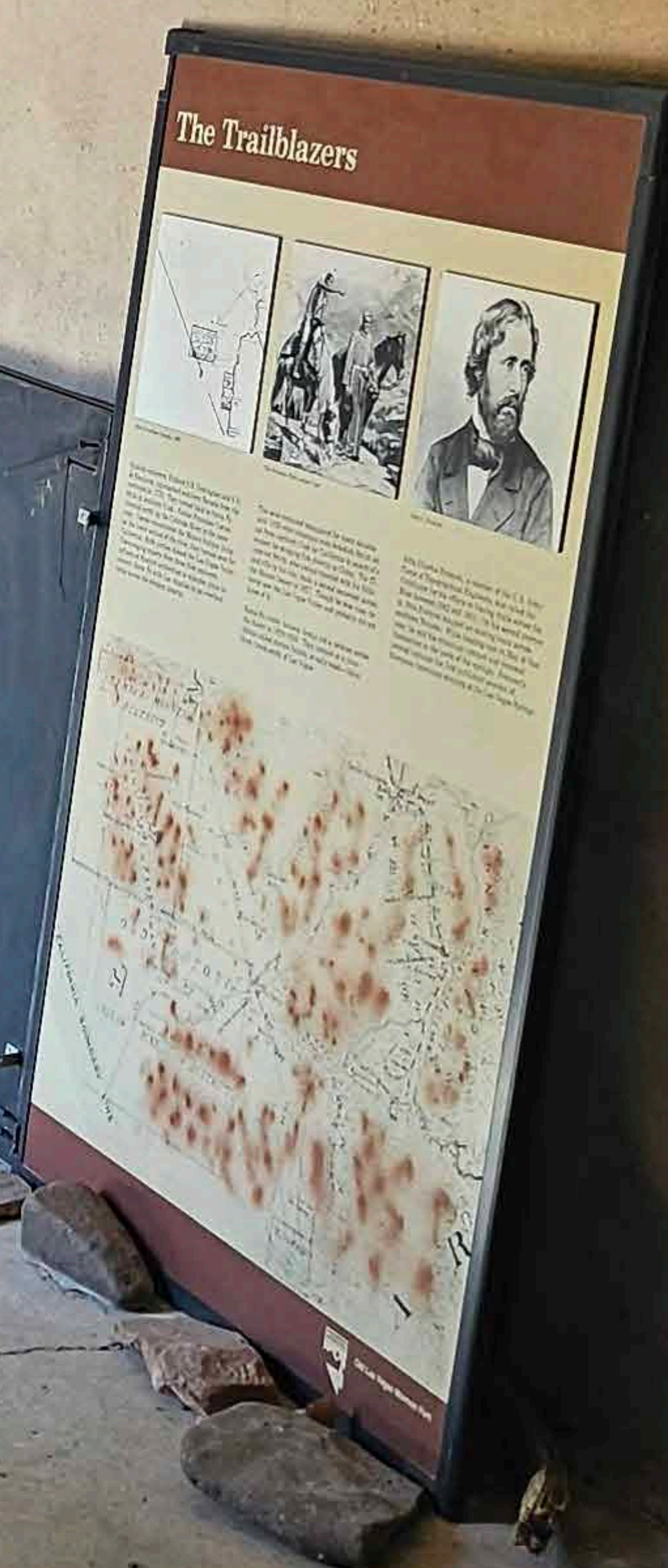
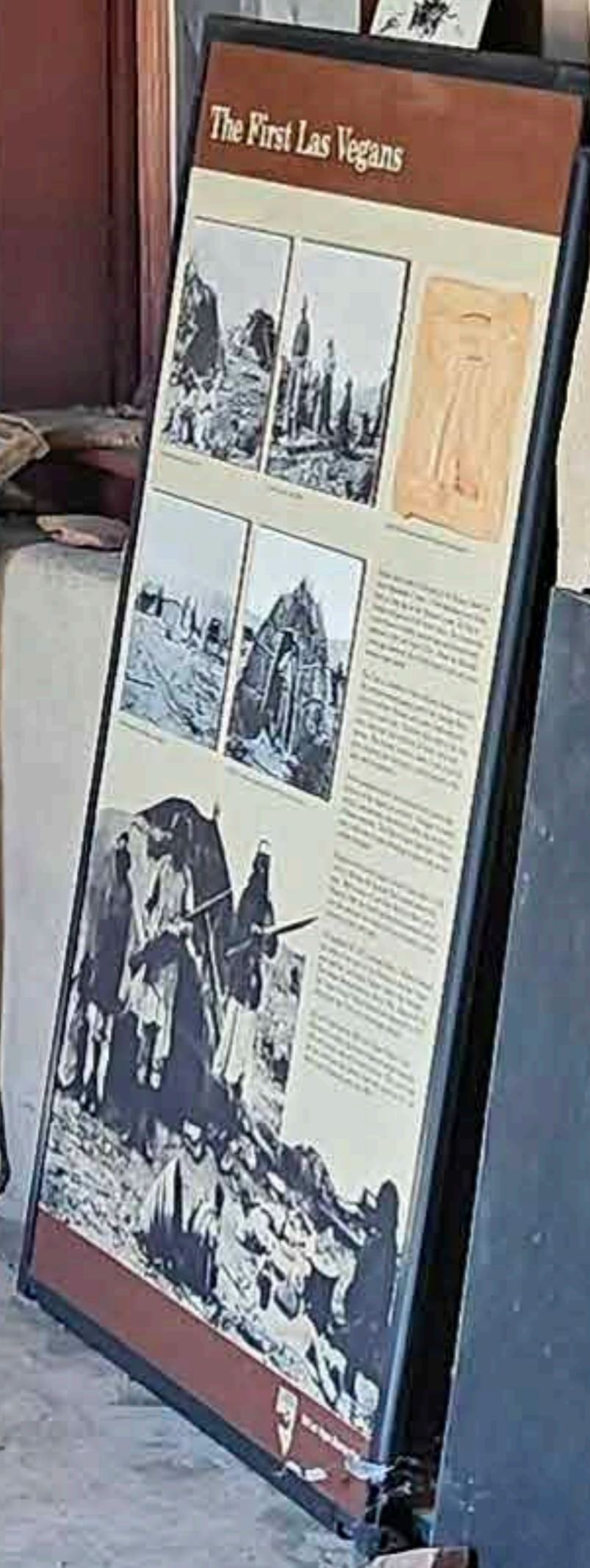




and others followed the Trail. This trail, known as the Mormon Trail, was used by the Mormons to travel from 1846 to 1847 to the Salt Lake Valley in Utah. The trail was a difficult journey, but it was the only way for the Mormons to escape persecution in Missouri and Illinois.



DO NOT ENTER



































 VISITOR CENTER

ENTRANCE
→





MAINTENANCE BUILDING
(THIS IS NOT A HISTORIC BUILDING)

172



National Register of Historic Places
Memo to File

Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.



THE NEVADA DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND ARCHEOLOGY
201 South Fall Street, Nye Building, Room 116, Carson City, Nevada 89710
KIMBERLY WOOD, Administrator Telephone (702) 885-5138

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

NORMAN HALL, Director

MIKE O'CALLAGHAN
GOVERNOR

July 6, 1978

William J. Murtagh, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Services
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Dr. Murtagh:

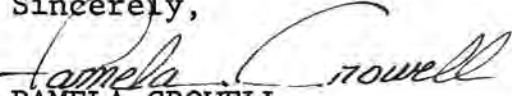
I am requesting an amendment to the Las Vegas Mormon Fort National Register listing. There exists considerable evidence to indicate that the original fortification was approximately 150 feet on a side; that the present structure represents the remains of the southeast corner of the original facility.

This amendment proposes to enlarge the original listing by 2.6 acres; the area of land surrounding the present structure on three sides. The land to the south of the fort is not included in this amendment since it has been altered by the presence of a large meeting lodge structure built during the decade of the 1960's.

Attached to this letter is a continuation sheet for the National Register nomination forms presently on file with your office.

The present owners, the Elks Lodge #1468, has been contacted and provided with information pertinent to the Register. As of this writing, the Lodge has not responded with their comments relative to the nomination.

Sincerely,


PAMELA CROWELL

State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosures: Continuation Sheet

PC:jr



Recycling
Nevada's Heritage



THE NEVADA DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND ARCHEOLOGY
201 South Fall Street — Nye Building — Room 113 — Carson City, Nevada 89710
PAMELA CROWELL, Administrator Telephone (702) 885-5138

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

NORMAN HALL, Director

MIKE O'CALLAGHAN
GOVERNOR

November 22, 1978

Ms. Emma Jane Saxe
National Register of Historic Places
Office of Archeology & Historic Places
Heritage Conservation & Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240



Dear Ms. Saxe:

Fortunately, the City of Las Vegas was able to respond immediately to my request for additional photos of the land surrounding the Las Vegas Mormon Fort; there I am able to send you the information which you requested.

In reviewing the Division's copies of the nomination amendment, I discovered that I had, via a map scaling error, miscalculated the land area. Originally, I figured the area to be 2.6 acres. In reality, the area is only .699 of an acre. To rectify the information, I have enclosed a retyped Continuation Sheet with the corrected figure.

Also enclosed is a U.S.G.S. map with the UTM coordinates of the Las Vegas Mormon Fort.

Please note that the City of Las Vegas did not have a photograph of "Parcel 1A". This area is part of the lawn of the adjacent Elk's Lodge. There are no structures on 1A and it has the appearance of a well-watered lawn. The area is filled in, however, to a height which I estimate to be approximately 15 inches higher than the area upon which the adobe "fort" sits. The resultant drainage problem to the structure is being considered under a current grant-assisted project.

I hope this data will satisfy your request of November 21, 1978, for additional information.

Sincerely,

Robert Fink, Architectural Historian

RF/cj

Enclosures: 3 B/W photographs
1 USGS top. map w/UTM's
1 City of Las Vegas eng. map(portion)
1 Continuation Sheet (revised 11/22/78)



Recycling
Nevada's Heritage

1/9/79

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE NEVADA

Date Entered

Name

Location

Las Vega Mormon Fort

Clark County

Boundary increase approved December 12, 1978.

Also Notified

NR

Byers/bjr

1/4/79

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUL 11 1978

DATE ENTERED

replaced by sheet dated Nov. 22, 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE-NOMINATION AMENDMENT
Las Vegas Mormon Fort/Clark County, Nevada

Research by the City of Las Vegas staff and the local group, Preservation Association of Clark County, has tentatively established the old adobe outpost's original size was approximately 150-190 feet square. The existing portion of the fort which is now listed on the National Register (February 1, 1972) is believed to have comprised the southeast portion of the original walled compound.

Within the compound existed eight residences, a number of stables, and storage facilities. Within the immediate vicinity of the fort existed a blacksmith shop and vegetable gardens. However, an archaeological survey of the area is needed in order to establish factual evidence of the fort's actual layout, its ancillary features, etc.

Presently, the fort sits on city property which is surrounded by private property. Because of the potential for recovery of historical data related to the fort, the original nomination is being expanded to include additional land surrounding the structure.

Total acreage of the additional property (parcels 1-A, 1-B, and 1-C) is 2.6 acres. Please see attached map.

References: Las Vegas Historic Survey, 1978
Nevada State Parks drawing by Stewart, 1971
Historic Structures Report: Las Vegas Mormon Fort
James Hinds, Chief Editor 1978

UTM References: zone 11/easting 667950/northing 4005360

JIM SANTINI
NEVADA

WASHINGTON OFFICE
1007 LONGWORTH HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
TELEPHONE: (202) 225-5965

DISTRICT OFFICE
SUITE 4-620 FEDERAL BUILDING
300 LAS VEGAS BLVD. SOUTH
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89101
TELEPHONE: (702) 385-6574

1139 FEDERAL BUILDING
300 BOOTH STREET
RENO, NEVADA 89509
TELEPHONE: (702) 784-5657

RURAL OFFICE:
TELEPHONE: (702) 784-5657

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

August 18, 1980

COMMITTEES:
INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEES:
CHAIRMAN, MINES AND MINING
OVERSIGHT AND SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS
PUBLIC LANDS
INTERSTATE AND
FOREIGN COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEES:
TRANSPORTATION AND TOURISM
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING
SUBCOMMITTEE:
HOUSING AND CONSUMER INTERESTS

Mr. Stephen Newman
Director
Office of Grant Administration
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

Dear Mr. Newman:

The State of Nevada Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology, on behalf of the City of Las Vegas, has applied for a grant amendment for Phase II of the Mormon Fort Project.

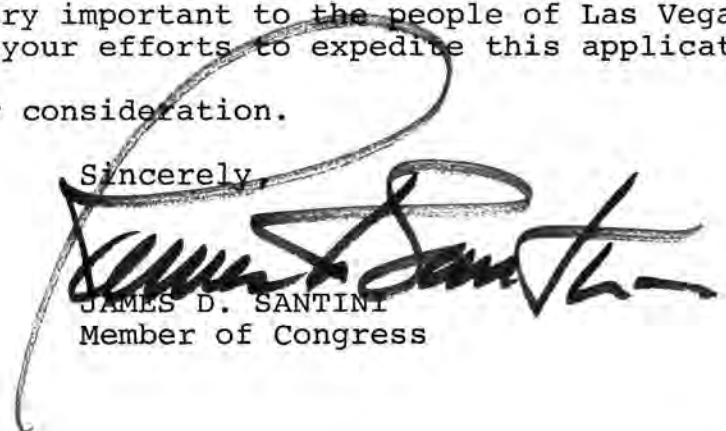
The amendment is being sought because of the higher-than-expected construction bid received for the project.

Time is of the essence now because of the deadline on the bid that was received. I am told that September 5, 1980 is the latest day that the city can receive an amendment and go forward on the project.

This project is very important to the people of Las Vegas, and I would appreciate your efforts to expedite this application.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


JAMES D. SANTINI
Member of Congress

JDS:sfc

BoR Mail Control No. 8800

442

SEP 3 1980

Honorable James D. Santini
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Santini:

Thank you for your inquiry of August 18 in behalf of the city of Las Vegas concerning an amendment to the Mormon Fort Project recently requested by the Nevada Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology.

We are pleased to announce that the amendment increasing the Federal share of the project by \$66,061 has been approved. We trust that these additional funds will enable the project to proceed to a successful conclusion.

We appreciate your interest in historic preservation.

Sincerely,

CHRIS T. DELAPORTE

Chris Thermal Delaporte
Director

cc: Mrs. Mimi Rodden
State Historic Preservation Officer
Division of Historic Preservation
and Archeology
Capitol Complex
Carson City, Nevada 89710

bcc: FW FHR-CL FHR-Lumpkin Assoc. Dir. for Cultural Programs
Deputy Assoc. Dir. for Cultural Programs Director's Reading File
Chief, GA

FHR:MAuer:cdw:8/28/80:x4941

BASIC FILE RETAINED IN GAD POR-8800

M. Over 8/28/80
R. Campbell 8/28
P. Kelly for Allen 8/28/80
W. Fraser for 8/29

Nelson for Moore
8/29/80

maguire
9/2/80

FEDERAL ASSISTANCE		2. APPLICANT'S APPLICATION	a. NUMBER	3. STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER	a. NUMBER
1. TYPE OF ACTION ☐ PREAPPLICATION ☒ APPLICATION (Mark appropriate box) ☐ NOTIFICATION OF INTENT (Opt.) ☐ REPORT OF FEDERAL ACTION		b. DATE 19 75 10 30			NV 76100261 b. DATE ASSIGNED 19 76 4 28
4. LEGAL APPLICANT/RECIPIENT				5. FEDERAL EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NO. 88-60000-22W	
a. Applicant Name : State Historic Preservation Office b. Organization Unit : Division of State Parks c. Street/P.O. Box : Nye Bldg., Capitol Complex d. City : Las Vegas e. County : Clark f. State : Nevada g. ZIP Code: 89710 h. Contact Person (Name & telephone No.) : Mr. Nolan F. Keil (702) 885-4370				6. PRO-GRAM (From Federal Catalog) a. NUMBER 1150904 b. TITLE Historic Preservation	
7. TITLE AND DESCRIPTION OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT				8. TYPE OF APPLICANT/RECIPIENT	
Las Vegas Mormon Fort Las Vegas, Clark County Source of nonfederal funds is in-kind services from Public Works Dept. and cash from the General Revenue fund of the City of Las Vegas. (see reverse side)				A-State B-Interstate C-Substate D-Country E-City F-School District G-Special Purpose District H-Community Action Agency I-Higher Educational Institution J-Indian Tribe K-Other (Specify): Enter appropriate letter ☒ A	
10. AREA OF PROJECT IMPACT (Names of cities, counties, States, etc.)				11. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PERSONS BENEFITING	
Las Vegas, Nevada				350,000	
13. PROPOSED FUNDING				12. TYPE OF APPLICATION	
a. FEDERAL \$ 30,000 .00 b. APPLICANT 30,000 .00 c. STATE .00 d. LOCAL .00 e. OTHER .00 f. TOTAL \$ 60,000 .00				A-New B-Renewal C-Revision D-Continuation E-Augmentation Enter appropriate letter ☒ A	
14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS OF:				15. TYPE OF CHANGE (For 12c or 12e)	
a. APPLICANT Las Vegas b. PROJECT Mormon Fort 16. PROJECT START DATE Year month day see #34 17. PROJECT DURATION 36 Months 18. ESTIMATED DATE TO BE SUBMITTED TO FEDERAL AGENCY 19				A-Increase Dollars B-Decrease Dollars C-Increase Duration D-Decrease Duration E-Cancellation F-Other (Specify): Enter appropriate letter(s) ☐ ☐ ☐	
20. FEDERAL AGENCY TO RECEIVE REQUEST (Name, City, State, ZIP code)				19. EXISTING FEDERAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
National Park Service, Washington, D.C. 20240				32-75-00043	
22. THE APPLICANT CERTIFIES THAT				21. REMARKS ADDED	
a. To the best of my knowledge and belief, data in this preapplication/application are true and correct, the document has been duly authorized by the governing body of the applicant and the applicant will comply with the attached assurances if the assistance is approved. (1) State Clearinghouse (2) Clark COG (3)				No response attached ☒ Yes ☐ No	
23. CERTIFYING REPRESENTATIVE				c. DATE SIGNED	
a. TYPED NAME AND TITLE John Richardson Alternate SHPO				Year month day 19 76 11 5	
24. AGENCY NAME				25. APPLICATION RECEIVED	
Department of the Interior				1976 12 16	
26. ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT				27. FEDERAL APPLICATION IDENTIFICATION	
National Park Service				Grants Administration Div.	
29. ADDRESS				30. FEDERAL GRANT IDENTIFICATION	
18th & C Sts., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240				32-75-00043-00	
31. ACTION TAKEN		32. FUNDING		33. ACTION DATE	
☒ a. AWARDED ☐ b. REJECTED ☐ c. RETURNED FOR AMENDMENT ☐ d. DEFERRED ☐ e. WITHDRAWN		a. FEDERAL \$ 30,000 .00 b. APPLICANT 30,000 .00 c. STATE .00 d. LOCAL .00 e. OTHER .00 f. TOTAL \$ 60,000 .00		Year month day 19 77 1 10	
				35. CONTACT FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Name and telephone number)	
				Peter D. Herrick (202) 523-5054	
38. FEDERAL AGENCY A-95 ACTION				37. REMARKS ADDED	
a. In taking above action, any comments received from clearinghouses were considered. If agency response is due under provisions of Part 1, OMB Circular A-95, it has been or is being made.				b. FEDERAL AGENCY A-95 OFFICIAL (Name and telephone no.) same as #35	

7. Title and Description of Applicant's Project

Preservation of the Las Vegas Mormon Fort

1. The Las Vegas Fort will be preserved by taking the following measures: readobing the exterior of the existing building, illumination of the exterior, preserving the interior exhibit area and bringing the building up to electrical, pumbing, and heating codes.
2. The purpose is to provide the community citizens and visitors the oportunity to view heritage of Las Vegas.
3. The general public of the Las Vegas area will be the benefi-
caries.

NATIONAL REGISTER DATA SHEET

1 NAME as it appears on federal register: Las Vegas Mormon Fort			2 OTHER NAMES: Fort Baker			3 date of entry: 12/12/78		4 county code: 03			
5 LOCATION street & number 900 Las Vegas Blvd., N.			city / town Las Vegas		vicinity of NV		state Clark		6 NPS REGION: W		
7 OWNER ☐ PRIVATE ☐ STATE ☐ MUNICIPAL ☐ COUNTY ☐ MULTIPLE ☐ FEDERAL (agency name)								8 ADMINISTRATOR:			
9 EXISTING SURVEYS ☐ NABS ☐ HAER ☐ NHL			10 FUNDED? ☐ YES ☐ NO		11 CONGRESS, DISTRICT		12 SOURCE of NOMINATION ☐ STATE ☐ FEDERAL		if state who prepared form?		
13 WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? ☐ YES, NAME ☐ NO			14 WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK? ☐ YES, NAME ☐ NO			15 ACREAGE		☐ LOCAL ☐ PRIVATE ORGANIZATION			
16 CONDITION ☐ excellent ☐ good ☐ fair			☐ deteriorated ☐ ruins ☐ unexposed ☐ unexcavated			☐ altered ☐ unaltered ☐ reconstructed ☐ excavated			17 features: ☐ original site ☐ moved ☐ unknown		
18 ACCESS ☐ YES-Restricted ☐ YES-Unrestricted ☐ No Access ☐ Unknown			19 ADAPTIVE USE ☐ YES ☐ NO		20 SAVED? ☐ YES		21 IS PROPERTY A HISTORIC DISTRICT? ☐ yes ☐ no				
22 AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE : ☐ ARCHEOLOGY-prehistoric-2 ☐ ARCHEOLOGY-historic-1 ☐ AGRICULTURE-3 ☐ ARCHITECTURE-4 ☐ ART-5			☐ ENGINEERING-11 ☐ ENTERTAINMENT-26 ☐ EXPLORATION-12 ☐ HEALTH-27 ☐ ECONOMICS-9 ☐ EDUCATION-10			☐ LANDSCAPE ARCH.-15 ☐ LAW-16 ☐ LITERATURE-17 ☐ MILITARY-18 ☐ MUSIC-19 ☐ PHILOSOPHY-20			☐ POLITICS / GOVT.-21 ☐ RELIGION-22 ☐ SCIENCE-23 ☐ SOCIAL / HUMANITARIAN-24 ☐ SOCIAL / CULTURAL-30 ☐ TRANSPORTATION-25		
23 functions WHEN HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT: CURRENTLY:			24 dates of initial construction: major alterations: historic events:			25 CLAIMS: explain 'first' ☐ 'oldest' ☐ 'only' ☐					
26 architectural style(s):			27 architect:		28 master builder:		29 engineer:				
30 landscape architect / garden designer:			31 interior decorator:		32 artist:		33 artisan:		34 builder/contractor:		
35 NAMES give role & date PERSONAL: EVENTS: INSTITUTIONAL:											
36 NATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP											

**NEVADA CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT
NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION REVIEW REPORT FORM**



Property Name: Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation)

Address: 500 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Clark County

Certified Local Government: Las Vegas

Date of public meeting at which nomination was reviewed: _____

Please check which Register this review is for:

☐ State Register ☒ National Register

National Register Eligibility Criteria: (Check applicable boxes)

☒ Criterion A ☐ Criterion C ☒ Criterion E
☐ Criterion B ☒ Criterion D

Please check the boxes below appropriate to the nomination review:

Commission/Board

- ☐ The commission/board recommends that the nomination amendment meets the criteria checked above.
- ☐ The commission/board recommends that the nomination amendment fails to meet any of the above criteria.
- ☐ The commission/board chooses not to make a recommendation on the nomination amendment. Attach an additional sheet explaining the lack of a recommendation.

Chief Elected Official

- ☐ The chief elected official recommends that the nomination amendment meets the criteria checked above.
- ☐ The chief elected official recommends that the nomination amendment fails to meet any of the above criteria.
- ☐ The chief elected official chooses not to make a recommendation on the nomination amendment. Attach an additional sheet explaining the lack of a recommendation.

Attach an additional sheet to make any further comments.

Certify this report with both signatures below

CLG Commission/Board Chair or Representative

Print name: MICHELLE LARIME

Signature: Date 8/27/25

Chief Elected Official or Designee

Print name: Shelley Berkley, Mayor

Signature: Date 8/19/2025

Attest By:
LuAnn D. Holmes, MMC, City Clerk

Joe Lombardo
Governor

JAMES A. SETTELMAYER
Director
Department of Conservation and
Natural Resources

Bob Mergell
Administrator
Nevada State Parks

STATE OF NEVADA



901 S. Stewart Street,
Suite 5005
Carson City, NV
89701-5248

Phone: (775) 684-2770
Fax: (775) 684-2777
stparks@parks.nv.gov
http://parks.nv.gov

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF STATE PARKS

08/28/25

Art Krupicz
State Historic Preservation Officer
Nevada State Historic Preservation Office
901 S. Stewart Street, Suite 3002
Carson City, NV 89701

Subject: Support for Amended Listing Las Vegas Mormon Fort on the National Register of Historic Places

Dear Administrator Krupicz,

On behalf of the Nevada Division of State Parks, I am pleased to offer our full support for the amended nomination of Las Vegas Mormon Fort to the National Register of Historic Places.

As the site of the first permanent non-Indigenous settlement in the Las Vegas Valley, Las Vegas Mormon Fort is a resource of exceptional historical significance. Constructed in 1855 by missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the fort served as a way station, agricultural outpost, and point of cultural exchange between settlers and the Southern Paiute people. Its strategic location on the Old Spanish Trail, and later its role in the development of Southern Nevada, underscore its importance in the broader history of the American West.

The Nevada Division of State Parks has had the privilege of stewarding this landmark as a state historic park, providing opportunities for visitors to experience its preserved adobe walls, interpretive exhibits, and educational programming. Inclusion on the National Register will bring further recognition to the site's historic value, enhance preservation opportunities, and strengthen our shared mission to protect and interpret Nevada's cultural heritage for future generations.

We commend the State Historic Preservation Office for advancing this amended nomination and look forward to continued collaboration in preserving and promoting the history embodied by Las Vegas Mormon Fort. Please accept this letter as our strong endorsement of its listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R Mergell".

Robert Mergell
Administrator
Nevada Division of State Parks

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:	Additional Documentation	
Property Name:	Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Boundary Increase) (Additional Documentation)	
Multiple Name:		
State & County:	NEVADA, Clark	

Date Received: 1/28/2026 Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: Date of 45th Day: 3/16/2026 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:	AD78003379
Nominator:	SHPO
Reason For Review:	

☐ Accept ☒ Return ☐ Reject 3/13/2026 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:	The Las Vegas Mormon Fort is a reconstruction of an adobe building surrounded by reconstructed fortification structures; several recently-constructed noncontributing buildings and structures; and several unaccounted-for historical markers or commemorative monuments, all within a boundary of less than four acres. This boundary remains unchanged from the prior Boundary Change (BC) for this property that was accepted by the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1978. The Las Vegas Mormon Fort Additional Documentation (AD) also adds archeological resources from five cultural eras considered as a single large contributing site. As submitted, the AD proposes to add several new areas of significance (AOS) under Criterion A—Agriculture, Engineering, and Exploration/Settlement— with a single period of significance (POS) of 300-1955. This single POS includes Criterion D under the previously accepted AOS of Archeology/Historic Non-Aboriginal and adds a new AOS of Archeology/Prehistoric to account for resources preceding the establishment of the fort. This additional documentation is being returned for both substantive issues and technical corrections. Please address the questions and comments in the following sections of the nomination form. Criteria Consideration E and Reconstructed Properties The Las Vegas Mormon Fort is a reconstruction, and as such must meet all three requirements of Criterion Consideration E, as stated at the top of page 37 of National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (available at: https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB-15_web508.pdf) (NRB 16A): “A reconstructed property is eligible when it is accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan and when no other building or structure with the same associations has survived. All three of these requirements must be met.” There are several phases or eras of reconstruction for this property; it would be helpful to clarify these different activities by adding subheadings to the context “Preservation and Reconstruction (1972-2005)” that begins on Section 8, page 45. This section mentions several different organizations and architects or designers over almost thirty years, without discussion of a master plan for this interpretive site; this could be improved.
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Classification and Resource Counts

The additional documentation under review classifies the property type of this resource as a site. However, with the introduction of several recent buildings and structures completed as part of the interpretive master plan, multiple commemorative markers (objects), as well as archeological resources from five distinct eras, this property is more appropriately classified as a district.

The Section 5 table does not count any of the commemorative markers as objects; four should be counted as noncontributing objects, while the 1952 marker for the post office could be counted as a contributing object. The “partial reconstruction of the original fort walls (west, north, and east) and a two-level bastion in the northwest corner of the reconstructed walls” (Section 7, page 10) might be more appropriately counted as a contributing structure and not as a building. The creek replica and the garden area are called “noncontributing” on pages 13-14 of Section 7; they should be added to the Section 5 table as noncontributing sites.

The nomination counts the entirety of the property as a single archeological site despite well-documented successive redevelopment across the property up until recent times. If archeological surveying indicates deeply buried archeological deposits across the entirety of the property or a notable lack of disturbance leading to the high potential for intactness throughout, then this approach is fine. Alternatively, if the components are spatially discrete and broken up by areas with a notable absence of archeological resources, the property should be treated as a district and spatially discrete components defined individually as contributing sites.

Criteria and Areas of Significance

Section 7, page 4 of the new AD under review incorrectly states that “The Las Vegas Mormon Fort ... nomination does not specify a clear period of significance outside of the year 1855, nor does it define significance criteria.” However, the nomination for this property, accepted for listing in 1972 (NRIS 72000764, available at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/63816428>), checks boxes for two AOS: Aboriginal-Prehistoric and Architecture. New historic contexts for the three new AOS that are proposed to be added under Criterion A and the one new AOS under Criterion D are included within the Section 8 Statement of Significance (Section 8), but the authors should also clearly state within Section 8 that Criterion C for Architecture is being removed—it is appropriate to do so, as this documentation makes apparent that the adobe building is a recent reconstruction of a 1970s-era reconstruction of a 1930s-era reconstruction of a nineteenth-century adobe building.

As a long-appreciated interpretive and/or commemorative site, the authors might consider adding the AOS of Social History or Conservation/Historic Preservation to the AD under Criterion A, as there seems to be sufficient historic contextualization to support this. The authors have traced the Las Vegas Mormon Fort’s use to include eras of tourism and recreation as well as use by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) as a testing laboratory for concrete; the contributing “adobe building” is, at its oldest, from this BOR era, as stated clearly in both Sections 7 and 8 of the form. Beginning with this BOR era, the adobe ruin or remnant building was reconstructed in its entirety, demonstrating the cultural, interpretive value of this place to the community. The authors could more strongly connect this BOR reconstruction project to other “preservation” projects of the 1930s, including architectural documentation programs, to explain how this property has been used to interpret the origins of Las Vegas. They could then connect this property’s second reconstruction era, which began in the 1970s, with the local celebrations to commemorate the US Bicentennial; communities around the country invested funds and efforts to document and “restore” their most cherished historic resources during this period. The revised AD could therefore extend the POS through the local celebrations of the US Bicentennial in 1976 if adding the AOS of Social History or Conservation/Historic Preservation—it could even include discussion of the initial National Register nomination of the property. This area of significance may be used to evaluate the numerous monuments around the property to determine if they contribute to the district’s capacity to convey this area of significance.

Period of Significance

As stated above, the POS for this property could extend beyond 1955 to include the era of preservation and commemoration efforts by local groups, beginning with the 1960s struggles with the Elks Lodge, and ending with the local celebrations of the US Bicentennial in 1976;

this would include the efforts to nominate this property for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

Criterion D – Archeology/Prehistoric and Archeology/Historic

The Criterion D argument could be improved by providing more detailed information about the significant archeological resources present along with scholarly contexts for each period proposed for listing under the Criterion. For example, the nomination contains only brief contextual information about Precontact occupations or scholarly research contexts to support the significance of the features present on the property. While the presence of these features and artifacts add to our understanding about the extensive continuous occupation on the present land parcel, more context is needed to indicate how these resources can uniquely inform upon local or regional understandings of indigenous settlement, subsistence, or other areas.

To strengthen the argument carrying the Criterion D significance of the property across the entirety of the period of significance (C.E. 300 to 1955), some scholarly contexts and research questions or queries that could be addressed by the study of features and objects dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Late Ranching, Railroad, and Bureau of Reclamation periods) would be useful. For example, the information potential of 20th century features such as wooden bridges, the corral and stable, metal trough, wood and concrete septic tanks, redwood pipeline, concrete block/masonry rooms, and standing adobe building should be outlined. Expanding on the description of artifact deposits associated with these contexts in terms of archeological character and integrity may help support these arguments.

Integrity

The integrity discussion should address the effects of construction, infrastructure development, parking areas, etc., on the subsurface integrity of archeological resources.

Photographs

More than 70 photographs were submitted with this AD, but the centrally-important resource for this property—the reconstructed adobe building—does not appear until Photo 13. When resubmitting these AD materials, please consider reordering the photographs to emphasize what is most significant about this property (the adobe building reconstruction should be Photo 1, certainly), and to reduce the overall number of photographs included in the package. Readers need to understand how the parts of the district relate to the whole and get a sense of the overall master-planned reconstruction, but multiple photographs of noncontributing bathrooms and maintenance buildings are not needed. Please consider resubmitting no more than 30 carefully selected photos.

Please feel free to contact our office if you have any questions.

Recommendation/
Criteria

RETURN

Reviewer Leibowitz, Rachel

Discipline NR

Telephone _____

Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

The United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Return/Evaluation Sheet

Property Name: Las Vegas Mormon Fort Additional Documentation (AD), Las Vegas,
Clark County, Nevada

Reference Number: 78003379 (AD)

The Las Vegas Mormon Fort is a reconstruction of an adobe building surrounded by reconstructed fortification structures; several recently-constructed noncontributing buildings and structures; and several unaccounted-for historical markers or commemorative monuments, all within a boundary of less than four acres. This boundary remains unchanged from the prior Boundary Change (BC) for this property that was accepted by the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1978. The Las Vegas Mormon Fort Additional Documentation (AD) also adds archeological resources from five cultural eras considered as a single large contributing site. As submitted, the AD proposes to add several new areas of significance (AOS) under Criterion A—Agriculture, Engineering, and Exploration/Settlement—with a single period of significance (POS) of 300-1955. This single POS includes Criterion D under the previously accepted AOS of Archeology/Historic Non-Aboriginal and adds a new AOS of Archeology/Prehistoric to account for resources preceding the establishment of the fort.

This additional documentation is being returned for both substantive issues and technical corrections. Please address the questions and comments in the following sections of the nomination form.

Criteria Consideration E and Reconstructed Properties

The Las Vegas Mormon Fort is a reconstruction, and as such must meet all three requirements of Criterion Consideration E, as stated at the top of page 37 of National Register Bulletin 16A: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (available at: https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB-15_web508.pdf) (NRB 16A): “A reconstructed property is eligible when it is accurately executed in a suitable environment *and* presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan *and* when no other building or structure with the same associations has survived. All three of these requirements must be met.” There are several phases or eras of reconstruction for this property; it would be helpful to clarify these different activities by adding subheadings to the context “Preservation and Reconstruction (1972-2005)” that begins on Section 8, page 45. This section mentions several different organizations and architects or designers over almost thirty years, without discussion of a master plan for this interpretive site; this could be improved.

Classification and Resource Counts

The additional documentation under review classifies the property type of this resource as a site. However, with the introduction of several recent buildings and structures completed as part of the interpretive master plan, multiple commemorative markers (objects), as well as archeological resources from five distinct eras, this property is more appropriately classified as a district.

The Section 5 table does not count any of the commemorative markers as objects; four should be counted as noncontributing objects, while the 1952 marker for the post office could be counted as a contributing object. The “partial reconstruction of the original fort walls (west, north, and east) and a two-level bastion in the northwest corner of the reconstructed walls” (Section 7, page 10) might be more appropriately counted as a contributing structure and not as a building. The creek replica and the garden area are called “noncontributing” on pages 13-14 of Section 7; they should be added to the Section 5 table as noncontributing sites.

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As a long-appreciated interpretive and/or commemorative site, the authors might consider adding the AOS of Social History or Conservation/Historic Preservation to the AD under Criterion A, as there seems to be sufficient historic contextualization to support this. The authors have traced the Las Vegas Mormon Fort’s use to include eras of tourism and recreation as well as use by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) as a testing laboratory for concrete; the contributing “adobe building” is, at its oldest, from this BOR era, as stated clearly in both Sections 7 and 8 of the form. Beginning with this BOR era, the adobe ruin or remnant building was reconstructed in its entirety, demonstrating the cultural, interpretive value of this place to the community. The authors could more strongly connect this BOR reconstruction project to other “preservation” projects of the 1930s, including architectural documentation programs, to explain how this property has been used to interpret the origins of Las Vegas. They could then connect this property’s second reconstruction era, which began in the 1970s, with the local celebrations to commemorate the US Bicentennial; communities around the country invested funds and efforts to document and “restore” their most cherished historic resources during this period. The revised AD could therefore extend the POS through the local celebrations of the US Bicentennial in 1976 if adding the AOS of Social History or Conservation/Historic Preservation—it could even include discussion of the initial National Register nomination of the property. This area of significance may be used to evaluate the numerous monuments around the property to determine if they contribute to the district’s capacity to convey this area of significance.

Period of Significance

As stated above, the POS for this property could extend beyond 1955 to include the era of preservation and commemoration efforts by local groups, beginning with the 1960s struggles with the Elks Lodge, and ending with the local celebrations of the US Bicentennial in 1976; this would include the efforts to nominate this property for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

Criterion D – Archeology/Prehistoric and Archeology/Historic

The Criterion D argument could be improved by providing more detailed information about the significant archeological resources present along with scholarly contexts for each period proposed for listing under the Criterion. For example, the nomination contains only brief contextual information about Precontact occupations or scholarly research contexts to support the significance of the features present on the property. While the presence of these features and artifacts add to our understanding about the extensive continuous occupation on the present land parcel, more context is needed to indicate how these resources can uniquely inform upon local or regional understandings of indigenous settlement, subsistence, or other areas.

To strengthen the argument carrying the Criterion D significance of the property across the entirety of the period of significance (C.E. 300 to 1955), some scholarly contexts and research questions or queries that could be addressed by the study of features and objects dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Late Ranching, Railroad, and Bureau of Reclamation periods) would be useful. For example, the information potential of 20th century features such as wooden bridges, the corral and stable, metal trough, wood and concrete septic tanks, redwood pipeline, concrete block/masonry rooms, and standing adobe building should be outlined. Expanding on the description of artifact deposits associated with these contexts in terms of archeological character and integrity may help support these arguments.

Integrity

The integrity discussion should address the effects of construction, infrastructure development, parking areas, etc., on the subsurface integrity of archeological resources.

Photographs

More than 70 photographs were submitted with this AD, but the centrally-important resource for this property—the reconstructed adobe building—does not appear until Photo 13. When resubmitting these AD materials, please consider reordering the photographs to emphasize what is most significant about this property (the adobe building reconstruction should be Photo 1, certainly), and to reduce the overall number of photographs included in the package. Readers need to understand how the parts of the district relate to the whole and get a sense of the overall master-planned reconstruction, but multiple photographs of noncontributing bathrooms and maintenance buildings are not needed. Please consider resubmitting no more than 30 carefully selected photos.

Please feel free to contact our office if you have any questions. We may be reached at Michael_Roller@nps.gov and/or Rachel_Leibowitz@nps.gov.

Michael Roller, Archeologist
Rachel Leibowitz, Historian
National Register of Historic Places
3/12/2026

Section 5

Page 2: Changed Property Category (checkbox) from Site to District.

Page 3: Updated resource table – reclassified reconstruction as structure, added five monuments as objects (1 contributing, 4 non-contributing), added archaeological site as contributing, reconstructed creek and garden as NC.

Section 7

Page 4: Updated first paragraph of Narrative Description to accurately reflect the two areas of significance identified in the 1972 nomination.

Section 8

Page 16: Extended POS to 1976; added 1955-1976 as a significant date for preservation/commemoration efforts.

Page 16, Statement of Significance Summary – added sentence to first paragraph about significance of preservation efforts; added paragraph that Criterion C is being removed.

Page 17: Second paragraph, changed POS to 1976 and added sentence about preservation-related associations; last summary paragraph addresses all 3 conditions under Criteria Consideration E.

Page 17, Narrative Statement of Significance: Updated first paragraph to accurately reflect the two areas of significance identified in the 1972 nomination.

Page 40: added paragraph connecting BOR “restoration” with other historic preservation activities happening during the 1930s.

Page 45-46: added paragraph connecting- Added subheadings to the “Preservation and Reconstruction” section to clarify periods of preservation. Added information connecting these efforts with the U.S. Bicentennial celebrations.

Page 48: added paragraph about the master plan activities and recommendations.

Page 49: added quote from the master plan about the property’s significance; added paragraph on significance for local historic preservation and commemoration efforts from the 1950s to 1976.

Page 50-52: completely rewrote justification for Criterion D significance and added a map within this section, rather than the map section, so it can be easily redacted if needed.

Page 53: Expanded Criteria Consideration E to include all three conditions (accurately reconstructed in a suitable environment, dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and the only surviving property with these associations). Added additional information about the master plan accordingly.

Page 54: Updated archaeological integrity paragraph. Added sentence in the Summary about preservation-related significance.

Page 55: Added other conditions of Criteria Consideration E in Summary.

Photographs

Reduced the number of photographs to 24, beginning with photos of the adobe building.

Pages 68-70: Updated photo log accordingly.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:	Resubmission	
Property Name:	Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Boundary Increase) (Additional Documentation)	
Multiple Name:		
State & County:	NEVADA, Clark	

Date Received: 7/15/2026 Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: Date of 45th Day: 8/31/2026 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:	RS78003379
Nominator:	SHPO
Reason For Review:	

 X Accept Return Reject 8/26/2026 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:	The Las Vegas Mormon Fort is a reconstruction of an adobe building surrounded by reconstructed fortification structures; several recently-constructed noncontributing buildings and structures; and several historical markers or commemorative monuments, all within a boundary of less than four acres. A draft nomination with Additional Documentation was submitted in early 2026 was returned for technical issues. The nomination was resubmitted in August 2026 and accepted. This boundary remains unchanged from the prior Boundary Change (BC) for this property that was accepted by the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1978. The Las Vegas Mormon Fort Additional Documentation (AD) also adds archeological resources from five cultural eras considered as a single large contributing site. As submitted, the AD proposes to add several new areas of significance (AOS) under Criterion A—Agriculture, Engineering, and Exploration/Settlement— with a single period of significance (POS) of 300-1955. This single POS includes Criterion D under the previously accepted AOS of Archeology/Historic Non-Aboriginal and adds a new AOS of Archeology/Prehistoric to account for resources preceding the establishment of the fort. The property meets Criteria Consideration E as an accurately reconstructed feature located in a suitable environment that is presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan.
Recommendation/ Criteria	The Las Vegas Mormon Fort (Additional Documentation) is accepted. The property is eligible for listing under Criterion A and D at the local level of significance and meets Criteria Consideration E as an accurately reconstructed feature.

Reviewer	<u> Mike Roller </u>	Discipline	<u> Archeologist </u>
Telephone	<u> </u>	Date	<u> 08/26/2026 </u>

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.