

# Indeed, there's a prize to be won

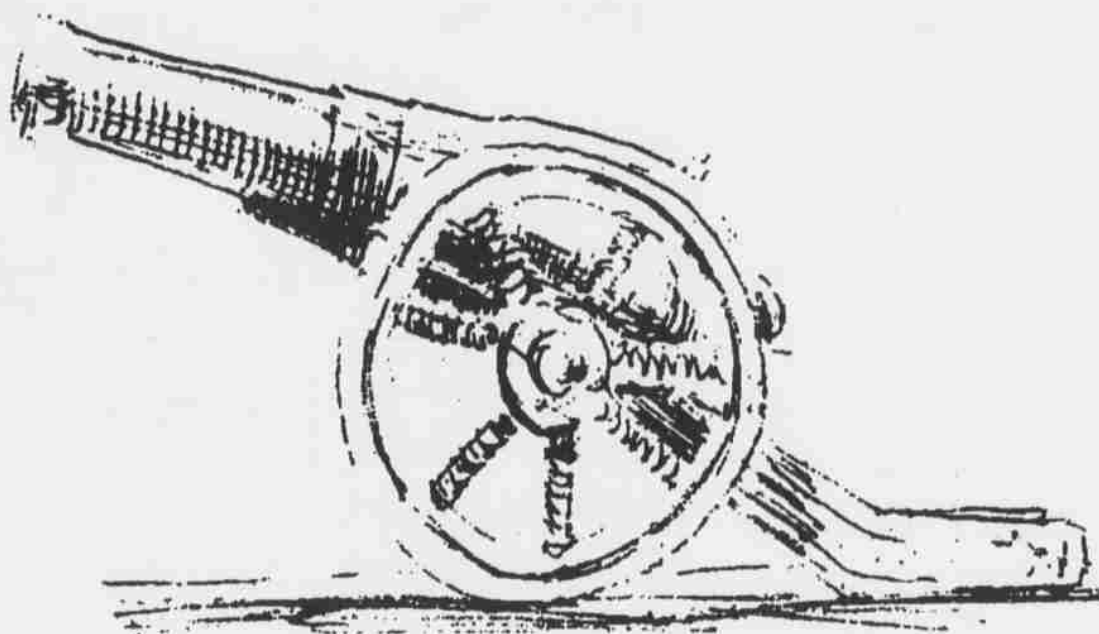
by Wray Halterman

The "Battle of the Fremont Cannon," sounds like a sequel to an old John Wayne movie, "The War Wagon." WRONG!

The "Battle" really is the interstate football game between the UNLV Rebels and the UNR Wolf Pack. The winner of the game will take home the coveted Fremont Cannon. However, the cannon used today is a replica of the original cannon that was brought out west by John C. Fremont in 1843.

Two stories circulate today as to where the real cannon is. One story is that the cannon was lost in a Sierra-Nevada snow drift. The other is that the Howitzer brought by Fremont is in storage in Carson City.

Many stories circulate today as to where the real cannon is. Some say it is in storage up in



The Fremont Cannon

Carson City. "No one really knows what happened to it (the cannon)," commented Guy Rocha, State Archivist For Ne-

vada. "There is no evidence that it was ever found."

The contest started in 1970 on Thanksgiving Day. UNLV

won the first match-up for the cannon, 42-30. In its history, the Rebels have won the rights to the cannon nine times, UNR has

won it seven.

Although UNLV still holds a slight edge, the cannon has not been in the south since 1989 when the Wolf Pack routed the Rebels 45-7.

In any rivalry, there must be a tradition. The tradition in this game is that if the owner scores, then the cannon fires. These hallowed sounds haven't echoed within the Sam Boyd Silver Bowl in support of UNLV since 1989.

The cannon itself is painted by the winner in their appropriate colors. Since both teams have a similar color, silver, the muzzle is not painted. This leaves only the wheels to be painted in scarlet or blue.

The Fremont Cannon is more than a prize for the football game; it is an honor bestowed upon the best team in the state of Nevada.

## Turn back the clock



The Rebel Yell

The 1978 Rebel football team looks on in disbelief as the Wolf Pack ended UNLV's four-year dominance dating back to 1974 with a 23-14 win in the then 10th-annual Silver Bowl Game. Coach Tony Knap's stunned Rebel squad only amassed 163 yards in total offense against Nevada-Reno. It was the Rebels' only loss at home in its first season as a Division I club.

## Story of failed '79 heist attempt still stands out

In the rivalry between UNLV and UNR no story stands out more in the mind of Guy Rocha than this:

In the fall of 1979, before the Fremont Cannon game, two gentlemen dressed as Kennecott Mining Co. employees driving a Kennecott van came to pick up the cannon to have it polished for the game.

"Everything looked good, but there was no documentation in regards to the cannon being picked up," said Rocha. (Kennecott fabricated the replica that is used today.)

Rocha and the other employees working at the Nevada Historical Society in Reno were ready to let the two gentlemen take the cannon. "We decided that without the proper documentation we couldn't let the cannon go," he added.

After much debate, the two gentlemen left without the cannon. The two gentlemen were really UNLV students trying to steal the cannon.

"Those guys must have had some connections at Kennecott to try to pull off that heist. They really went to a lot of trouble to

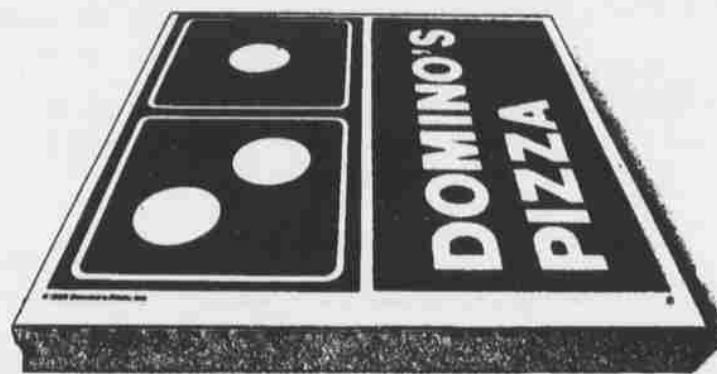
make it look that good," Rocha said.

UNLV ended up with the cannon that year anyway. UNLV won the game, 26-21.

Every time Rocha hears people talking about the Fremont Cannon game, he remembers the heist that almost worked. "That sticks out more in my mind than anything else."

— Wray Halterman

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