

# Kangaroo Court Jail Has a Great History

The old jail which is one of the traditions of the Helldorado celebration is a real relic of the early west. It is kept at the Helldorado Village and is hauled to the corner of First street and Fremont every spring for the annual "kangaroo court" which is a part of the pre-Helldorado entertainment in the city of Las Vegas.

The old iron jail was presented to the Elks in 1940 by C. Hal-sell, who purchased the old Rock Springs Land and Cattle company at Barnwell, California. It has been used in the "kangaroo" court every since.

### Civil War Jail

The jail was built in Civil war days by a blacksmith in San Bernardino, California, according to Frank Gusewelle, who has traced its history.

Its first duty was in the rip-roaring mining camp at Vanderbilt, near Ivanpah. Many of the men incarcerated in this bleak calaboose made a one-stop trip from jail to the boot-hill cemetery nearby.

When the mining boom at Vanderbilt died out, the jail was moved to Barnwell, California, and was used in the boom there. It served as a bastle for unruly two-gun cowhands at Lanfair, where a dry farming area was developed. Later it was used in the cattle rustling era of that vicinity.

There is a legend that during the use of the old jail at Barnwell that two men were found shot to death in opposite corners of a cabin occupied by a belle of the district. When a perfunctory investigation of the case was made, the belle disclaimed any knowledge of the shooting, and officers determined that the rivals had come to her cabin, had backed into opposite corners "to shoot it out," and had fallen almost simultaneously with bullets in their hearts. So on one occasion at least the jail had a feminine occupant, but she was freed of blame in the double shooting.

When the jail first was brought to Las Vegas, it was covered in spots by several layers of whitewash which had been applied over a period of years.

### Message Written

Written in pencil on one of the whitewashed bars, was this terse message: "I spent five days of hell here, July 4, 1878."

In the blazing sun of the desert in the middle of the summer, the circumstances of those five days are not hard for one to imagine.

The jail is of solid iron, riveted

together, with iron roof and floor, and bars at the sides. In the floor are rings with leg irons to be applied to unruly prisoners.

The grim purpose of the jail now has been eliminated. Its use in the Helldorado celebration is strictly for fun and for a few minutes of imprisonment for "kangaroo court" victims.

However, the jail stands as a monument to the rugged boisterous, rip-roaring history of the early west.

## Establishments of City Once Closed On First Fete Day

In the early years of the annual Helldorado celebration, merchants of the city of Las Vegas were asked to close their establishments on Friday afternoon, which traditionally was the opening of the first rodeo events.

Almost unanimously the merchants and gambling club and bar operators responded to this civic enterprise, and it was not uncommon on Friday afternoon to find Fremont street almost deserted by people and automobiles.

Merchants, their employees and their potential customers all joined the throng to the rodeo grounds and sat through the exciting events of bulldogging, Brahma bull riding, calf roping, and all the other spectacular features of the show.

With the advent of the war, the policy of asking merchants to close was abandoned by the sponsoring Elks lodge. Instead night shows were scheduled in order that everyone, defense workers, military personnel, merchants and employes all might attend to their regular tasks and yet enjoy the fun of the show.

Success of previous night shows led the Elks to schedule three evening events this year. Rodeos will be held on the nights of May 18, 19, and 20, and on the afternoon of May 21.

The first rodeo is scheduled for 8 o'clock on the night of May 18 and will follow the annual old-timers' parade. On May 19 and 20, the rodeos will start at 7:30 o'clock, and on the afternoon of May 21, the final events will begin at 1:15 o'clock, according to the committee in charge, of which Mayor E. W. Cragin is chairman.



**RODEO QUEENS**—This bevy of beauties vied for the rodeo queen honors of the 1937 Helldorado fete. From left to right are Berniece Monhollen, Evelyn Jones, Alice Richardson, Mishie Stewart, "Buff" George, and in the rear, to the right, is shown Bonnie Crone. The other girl in the picture is not identified.

## Rex Bell Aided Boulder Elk Strays In First Big Fete

Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal, April 16, 1935 — Boulder City Stray Elks have spent the last several days "rounding up" atmosphere for the coming Helldorado which is being given soon by the Las Vegas Elks lodge and the Boulder City Strays.

Rex Bell, moving picture actor and southern Nevada rancher has allowed the Boulder organization to borrow four long-horn steers, three-year-olds, and promises that they will be four of the largest "critters" from his ranch which is located near the old mining town of Searchlight.

Bell in addition to the steers is lending four of the best riding horses, which have been used during recent months in moving pictures, for the occasion. The four steers and four horses will be at the Helldorado. Arrangements were made for appearance of the animals through the courtesy of Earl Simpson, Bell's manager.

## O'Donnell Takes Elks Ruler Post

Las Vegas Review-Journal, April 1, 1937—Frank Gusewelle, exalted ruler of the Las Vegas Elks lodge when the dedication of their new home was solemnized, will hand over the gavel of the local order this evening to Fred O'Donnell, newly elected chieftain of the lodge at the annual installation of officers.

John Graglia steps into the post of Leading Knight, Joe Ronnow, Loyal Knight, Bob Boyer, lecturing knight, Charles Bush as Tiler. Walter R. Bracken continues as treasurer, O. K. Adcock as secretary and James Cashman as trustee.

Arrangements were made for appearance of the animals through the courtesy of Earl Simpson, Bell's manager.

## Bill Morgan Vet Rider, Still Able To Seat Bronco

Seventy-five years old and still able to ride horseback with the best of them, that's Bill Morgan, pioneer resident of Las Vegas and southern Nevada, who was one of the early-day Pony Express riders.

Morgan was born in Ogden, Utah, April 1, 1869, and since that time he has led an exciting and romantic life. His life might be termed a sequel to that of Buffalo Bill Cody.

He won the world championship for breaking wild horses to harness at the Chicago fair in 1893.

He carried the mail by horseback from Moapa to Vanderbilt, a point on the Santa Fe railroad, in 1905, but when the railroad was extended to Moapa, his job was done. However, for several years he traveled over some of the roughest terrain in the west.

Buffalo Bill Cody hired Morgan to work as a horse wrangler in his wild west show which toured the United States. Morgan, in the absence of Cody, acted the part of the famous frontiersman and thrilled crowds with his deadly shooting and his skilled riding.

In 1901 Morgan started a tour of the middle west with 50 Piute Indians and named his company "Bronco Bill's Wild West Show." He still carries the name of Bronco Bill.

He first came to this area in 1895 to work for Mrs. Bill Stewart of the old Stewart ranch as foreman. There were then 4,000 cattle on the ranch. He worked off and on for 10 years at the ranch.

During the big boom at Tonopah, Morgan drove 16-horse team freighters with supplies for that district.

He returned to Las Vegas in 1907 after spending two years in California, where he sold horses.

In 1926 he handed mail pouches to the first Western Air Express pilot to carry mail by plane through here.

For 12 years Morgan operated a 120-acre ranch in Red Rock canyon.

Arriving in Las Vegas a decade before the establishment of the town in 1905, Morgan has viewed the progress from a big ranch to the modern thriving community of today.

He always is a featured entry in the old-timers' parade and will be in the lineup again this year for Helldorado, opening May 18.

## "The Drunkard" Is Casualty of War This Helldorado

Military service and war work have combined to deplete the ranks of the Las Vegas Community Players, so the "gay '90" melodrama which had become an outstanding feature of the annual Helldorado celebration is listed as a casualty of the war. Not enough members of the cast remain in the city to permit the production this year, according to the Elks Helldorado committee.

For the past several years "The Drunkard" had been featured as one of the outstanding entertainments at the Helldorado Village. A tent housed the show, and provided one of the greatest difficulties for the Players. One year the tent was late in arriving, and the first performance had to be cancelled. Another time a huge gust of wind took the tent down just before the crowds started assembling. The show was about two hours late in starting that night, but the show went on to the end despite the difficulties encountered.

Many Las Vegas residents have been featured in the show over a course of years. Their performances provided much entertainment for the Helldorado fans.

## Tourists Pay Fee For Visit to Dam

Las Vegas Review-Journal, April 1, 1937—Today tourists started paying a 25 cent fee to see the inside of the Boulder dam and power houses.

Herman Classen, of Strayton, Oregon, was the first tourist to pay the fee for the guide service, according to Ranger David M. Laughery who was on duty at the dam this morning.

## Nevadans Always "Crap Shooters" History Reveals

Nevadans have been "crap shooters" practically always, according to information contained in the archives of the Southwest museum at Los Angeles, it was learned here a few years ago.

The gambling spirit of the west was born early in history of this area. Concrete evidence of this fact has been discovered by M. R. Harrington, well known scientist, who spent many years in this area unearthing artifacts of a "lost civilization" of early Indian tribes.

Beard-growing, a feature of the annual Helldorado celebration, also was a fetish with those early tribes, the archaeologist reports.

Dice, sometimes elliptical in shape and otherwise conforming in design to those rolled in present day gambling houses, were known to native tribes or aborigines who dwelt along the muddy Colorado river 1,000 and even 15,000 years ago.

Today samples of that form of "culture" are on exhibit at the Southwest museum, Highland Park, Los Angeles.

Many specimens of dice were unearthed at the Pueblo Grande de Nevada or Lost City in the Moapa Valley area.



**HELLDORADO SWEETHEART**—Miss Jeanne Godshall, of Victorville, California, who presided for several years as the sweetheart of the Las Vegas Helldorado. She and her father, Cal Godshall, were annual visitors until the war.

## Lake Storage Is One Third Full

Las Vegas Review-Journal, April 2, 1937—The storage of water in Boulder lake reached the 10,000,000 acre feet mark yesterday, according to reports made by Otto J. Littler, assistant engineer for the bureau of reclamation.

Maximum storage of the huge reservoir is 30,500,000 acre feet, which indicates that the lake now is almost one-third full.

## Medicine Men of Old "Voodoos"

Medicine men of the early Piute tribes in the Las Vegas area mystified their fellow tribesmen with a dialect all their own which was handed down from one generation to another.

With this dialect and weird motions and dances, the medicine men were supposed to drive disease from the sick person's body. The sick were laid on the ground, and the medicine man would dance in circles around him administering a kick every now and then. The kick was to drive the evil spirits or the devil from the sick man.

A medicine man was given three chances by the tribe. He had to predict the fate of the sick man, whether he was to die or live. If he misjudged, it was counted against him. Three failures meant death for the medicine man at the hands of the tribe.

## Offices of City To Have Contests

Las Vegas Review-Journal, April 3, 1937—Contests developed for all city offices becoming vacant this year, with the exception of city clerk.

Surprise filings for the commissioner posts included those of Joe Ronnow, who will oppose James H. Down, Sr., and Jim Powers, who entered the race with Herb Krause.

Guy E. Baker was a last minute entry in the city attorney race, and will oppose George E. Marshall, William L. Scott and Roland Wiley.

In the race for city judge T. M. Carroll, William Gore, Joe Hufford, Jack Lewis and John P. Wagner were entered.

Viola Burns was the only entrant for city clerk.

She's a-Goin' to Be a Rip-Snortin'

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