



MARINE GENERAL — The first Black U.S. Marine and the first Black Marine General greet Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) President Joseph E. Lowery at the 16th Annual National Convention of the Montford Point Marine Association. Lowery addressed the group recently in Atlanta. Pictured left to right are Sgt. Major E. Huff, USMC (R), Alabama Commissioner of the Dept. of Pensions and Security Gary Cooper, General Frank Petersen USMC, Dr. Joseph E. Lowery. Photo by Elaine Tomlin.



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History Of Las Vegas

Mexican traders traveling along the old Spanish Trail in the 19th century discovered a natural stopping place with abundant springs in a high desert valley. They called the place LAS VEGAS, Spanish for "the meadows," because of the water and life it supported. They found the valley a perfect spot to refresh themselves before again journeying through more arid regions.

A young scout for one of the early trading caravans, Rafael Rivera, was the first non-native to enter Las Vegas Valley. The date was January 1830.

Perhaps the best known visitor in those early days was a small, wiry explorer, John C. Fremont, who is memorialized with the name of Las Vegas' principal downtown street. He and Kit Carson, a scout for Fremont's expedition came and left in May of 1844.

Packers, muleteers, and explorers on this trade route continued to stop regularly at the springs of Las Vegas Valley until the United States acquired all of present-day southern Nevada in 1848 treaty with Mexico. Although under a new flag, the old Spanish Trail did not completely disappear. Soon Mormons, who had recently settled in the Salt Lake area, were using it on their way to the Pacific Coast. The '49ers used "The Mormon Trail," roughly paralleling today's Interstate 15, in their rush to California.

Mormon leader William Brigham attempted the first permanent settlement of Las Vegas in June 1855. He and his band of thirty men built cabins, fences, a small dam, and an impressive stockade located at what today is 900 Las Vegas Blvd. No. But difficulty

with cultivating the sage-covered land and co-existing with Indian neighbors forced abandonment a few years later.

In 1865, a gold miner named Octavius D. Gass established a ranch with a few dedicated partners. They got along with the Indians, rebuilt the Mormon settlement, and acquired water and acreage rights. The 160-acre Las Vegas Ranch became a major economic asset to the valley through the remainder of the nineteenth century, along with desert neighbors — the Sandstone Ranch, near Red Rock Canyon, and the Kyle Ranch, now in North Las Vegas.

In 1902, surveyors for the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad (later the Union Pacific) bought land and water rights as they laid rails through the valley. May 15, 1905 marked the start of a new era, as the railroad gave birth to the formal community of Las Vegas, an ideal depot because of the water. During a two-day land auction, twelve hundred lots were sold for \$265,000.

Soon a city of tents mushroomed on land where only sage and mesquite had flourished. Las Vegas grew fast as a trading center and distribution point for area mining camps — Bullfrog, Johnnie, Rhyolite, and Goldfield. On July 1, 1909, Clark County was born and Las Vegas became the county seat. The 1910 census showed 800 residents. For the next 20 years, though, the town grew slowly as the railroad remained the major economic base.

Construction of Hoover Dam in the 1930's sparked the next important boom in Las Vegas as it became a depot for the project.

Growth was also aided by two events of the 1931 Nevada legislature — a new six-week divorce law and the legalization of gambling. Still, as late as 1940 census takers found fewer than 8500 people in the valley.

During World War II a new boom got underway when a gunnery school, later renamed Nellis Air Force Base, was established just north of the city at the same time. Large chemical plants opened in nearby Henderson as a result of the defense effort.

Government programs continued to spark additional growth in the 1950s with development of atomic testing at the huge Nevada Test Site, 60 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

Overshadowed by the war effort at the time, but likely far more significant to the Las Vegas of today was the opening of two new hotels and casinos — the El Rancho Vegas in 1940 and the Last Frontier in 1941. Constructed along the main highway into Las Vegas from the southwest, the new hotels were an effort to attract southern Californians on their way into town. This was the start of the Strip, noted today for its world famous resorts. During the next three decades, casino and hotel construction continued with abandon both downtown and on the Strip.

Today millions of visitors learn what the Mexican traders and railroaders discovered — Las Vegas is an ideal stopping place. Some come to make a home. Las Vegas continues to grow as it develops into a major city and a year-round resort, "The Entertainment Capital Of The World" — an exciting and refreshing place to live or visit.

Metro Clears CETA Of Fraud

Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) officials last week said they have discovered nothing to support the allegations the director of a Latino vocational training agency mismanaged federal funds.

The executive director of the Service Employment Redevelopment,

37 year old Erma Garcia, was suspended two weeks ago after Metropolitan Police began an investigation of the agency's financial records.

"We have no indication that our funds are involved," said CETA spokesman Carmelita Douglas. "Our internal in-

vestigation showed no signs of irregularities."

About 85 percent of the agency's \$350,000 budget is supplied by the local consortium of the CETA.

CETA's internal monitoring unit conducts routine reviews of the expenditures of its funds by member agencies.