

## **By Roosevell Fitzgerald**

Nevada is called the 'Battle Born' state. It gained that motto because it entered the Union mid-way through the American Civil War. What about all of the events which occurred before? What was this place and how did it get that way? Were there any Black people here and if so, who were they and what did they do?

For the next several weeks. I will attempt to offer you a history of our state in which we will consider more than the presence and involvements of those inhabitants of Europear ancestry. We will pa particular attention + the presence of Blacpeople in Nevada history.

Nevada is located in ; place generally knowr as the Great Basin, A

hundred and fifty years ago it was designated on maps as simply being a part of the "Great American Desert''. Before the 1820s, no trails except those of the Paiutes, Shoshones and Washoes crossed the area. It almost carried the same epitaph as did maps used by ancient sailors and travellers-"Tierra Incognito" or unknown land.

The early Spanish conquistadores were directed away from the great desert. Even they explored though throughout the surrounding areas, their flags never unfurled over the sands and creosote bushes of Nevada was destined to become the last place, which was to become a part of the United States, to be gazed upon by the eyes

Americans.

While the Spanish were in the southwest and the French were in Canada and the valley of the Mississippi, the English were hugging the Atlantic seaboard. The latter had come to establish colonies. The former two, while establishing some settlements, had come primarily for either gold for the king and converts for the Church or simply for adventure. Those two were Catholic countries while the English were Protestant.

The North American continent became that one place on Earth where people of different races, religions, cultures and lifestyles would meet face to face and thereafter become locked in mortal combat for the control of the continent. Paiutes.

of any other than native Spanish, Ibo, French, results of the efforts of a Shawnee, Ashanti, English, Iriquois, Fulani, Shoshone, Ute, Washo and others-all vying for the same property in one form or another. Few realized that it could be shared.

The results of French and Indian Wars. which ended in the 1760s, set the boundaries in that part of North America which is east of the Mississippi River. The English were restricted to the tidewater areas of the Atlantic seaboard and the French were in Canada. The territory between the western slopes of the Allegheny mountains was Indian territory. There were intrusions in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys but there were no attempts at establishing permanent settlements.

Most of those were the

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### Indian women. They few individual adwere obviously required venturers and trappers. to be multi-lingual. They That geography

spoke their native

African languages, the

English which had been

required in order to func-

tion in an English-

speaking society and,

for course, they learned

to speak whatever Indian

languages their wives

Even after slavery was

begun, more Africans

became free. They

managed that by either

being manumitted (set

free), buying their own

freedom or simply run-

ning away. The latter

group had to, of

necessity, run far, far

away. Since they had to

remove themselves fro m

the possibility of being

recaptured, they ven-

tured far into Indian

The face of North

America continued to

experience cosmetic

changes. The English-

Americans were moving

into the Ohio and

Mississippi Valleys, the

Spanish were in and out

of the Florida penisula

and the southern parts

of what eventually

became Alabama and

Mississippi and they

were also in the south-

west. The French were

yet in Canada and some

of the Acadians (Cajuns)

had gone into the lower

Mississippi vallev

around the area of

the nineteenth century.

in 1803, the United

States acquired a large

piece of property which

almost doubled its size.

The Louisiana Territory

was purchased from

France even though it

was not their's to sell.

That land, as did the

land inhabited by the

new Americans, perhaps

with the exception of

Manhattan, belonged to

the Native Americans.

Few were concerned

about legalities or a sen-

se of right and wrong.

At the beginning of

Louisiana.

territory.

spoke

remained in effect, with minor changes, until 1803. During the interim, the American Revolution was waged and the new country, by 1785, had acquired what was then called the Northwest Territory. That area ultimately became Ohio. Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin. The years following the close of the war witnessed Americans going off into the western lands. Leading the way were the frontiersmen.

Frederick Jackson Turner, the historian of the West, wrote that one could stand at the mouth of the Cumberland Gap and watch civilization pass right before one's eves, Bernard DeVoto, another historian of the West, wrote that the new nation, by virtue of "manifest destiny" would ultimately extend from ocean to ocean. The movement of the new Americans was underway and, while it might have been a slow. drawn-out process, there would be no turning back.

Those Africans who had arrived here in 1619. had come, as did most other immigrants from Europe, as "indentured servants''. They were not slaves. They worked for their "benefactors' for a period of five to seven years and they were then set free. They, upon release. established farms and they were to become integral parts of their small communities.

By the time slavery began, nearly sixty years later, there was a sizeable free Black population in the United States. Natural reproduction continued to increase that number. Most of these had been men and most of them established families with They functioned in ac-

**Greater The Votes. Greater The Power**  pened to Napoleon.

President Thomas Jefwas anything but a vacation.





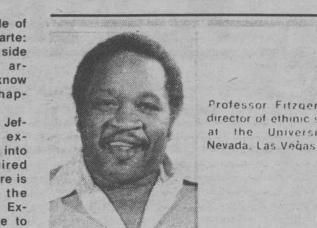
Las Vegas SENTINEL, Nov. 26, 1981

cord with a principle of Napoleon Bonaparte: "morality is on the side of the heaviest artillery". We all know what ultimately hap-

ferson sent an exploratory expedition into the newly acquired territory. That venture is commonly called the

Lewis and Clark Expedition. They were to make maps, collect data on flora and fauna (plants and animals), determine what Indian tribes resided there and determine suitability for the future establishment of settlements. The party of men who participated in that adventure was small. It would be a rugged mission and each had to pull his share. It was a "no frills" package and it

One of the men who made the journey was named York. He was Black. Like the others. he was called upon to perform numerous different tasks-hunting. been in the area of the cooking, collecting, gathering firewood and west.



water, hewing out canoes and warding off those Indians who sought to protect their homelands from the onslaught of the invaders. York also sometimes functioned as an interpreter. He was the first Black person that most of the Indians had seen. Some others were familiar with Black people due to the numbers of runaway slaves the who had gone west in order to escape the long tentacles of slavery, the presence of those 'runaways'', along with Frenchmen, were the such. only non-Indians to have

Professor Fitzgerald is director of ethinic studies at the University of

The presence of York, with the Lewis and Clark expedition, brought a unique quality to the expedition. Rarely had the Indians seen Blacks and whites together. That was particularly important because they knew about the enslavement of Black people and some were also aware of the enslavement of Indians by Spanish. On numerous instances, York served as a kind of middleman. He was the first, but he would not be the last Black man to be

TO BE CONTINUED.

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NAACP

Davis followed Burke's talk by telling the audience, "I have had the privilege of seeing great progress made in this city. That doesn't mean we don't need the NAACP. We need it desperately. I say this to those on both sides of the color spectrum. We can't allow ourselves to be lulled into a false sense of security." He con-"If there's tined. anybody here who doesn't understand those words, then I'll say them another way 'Dey out dere.' Nobody, but NOBODY can escape it. No one can live in a vacuum. As my brother goes, so shall I. If he is without food, somehow my dinner won't taste right

Wayne Newton, "The Midnight Idol'', was the Honorary Chairman of the Banquet. During the program he left for an engagement at his Aladdin Hotel, but returned later to the dais. He did not speak to the crowd.

National NAACP **Executive Director Ben**iamin Hooks was not

present due to the confrontation with the KKK in Anderson, Indiana, which had burned a cross in front of the building where Hooks was to meet the local chapter.

Proclamations were received from the State of Nevada, the Clark County Commissioners, the city of Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Los Angeles. Chicago. Detroit. A'lanta. Washington, D.C., New Orleans. Tuskegee. Alabama, Gary, Indiana and the State of Israel.

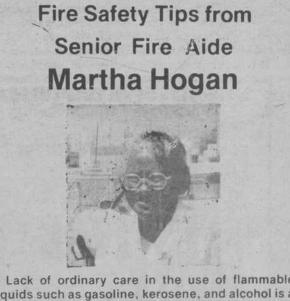
Rev. Jesse D. Scott handled the preliminary introductions and the black national anthem "Lift Every Voice and Sing" was led by Mrs. Mary Aderholt, accompanied on the piano Ms. by Grace

McGlothen

Lovell Gaines, Las Vegas Chapter President, saw the program as a complete success.

"I see this as a move from our previous complacency and a great desire to determine the direction of our destiny by not depending on others to support our cause in the form of giving us handouts." said Gains, "We will raise most of our monies ourselves in the future.

Entertainment for the evening included selections by the Love All People Youth Group, directed by Rev. Prentiss Minner; 9 year old Princess Kirkland; and the cast of the Tropicana Hotel's Cabaret Revue "Let Me Off Uptown.



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