

# BLACK SPRINGS, NEVADA -- One of the State's most intriguing historical sites.

One does not hear too much these days about Black Springs, Nevada -- a small intimate community about six miles north of Reno. It is tucked into the folding terrain just off the principal highway leading out of Reno. It can hardly be seen from the highway. However situated, proudly it stands. What's unique about Black

Springs? Early it was an all-black community which grew out of the movement of the Donna party who was moving West about a number of years ago. The party split up in Reno and others went through Black Springs on the way to Oregon.

Legend has it that the time period was late in the year that they made the trek to

avoid coming over the mountain. It was snowing heavily at the time.

As the party split up one half of them tried to go over the mountain. Here they became stranded in the snow, cut off from the original party. This group, a total of about 100, had to resort to cannibalism -- they ate cows, horses -- even people to survive. Only a few survived.

At that time, Black Springs was virgin territory.

The Sentinel-Voice publishers, Ed and Betty Brown, recently visited Black Springs and was able to talk

to Ollie Westbrook who came to the area about 32 years



Ollie Westbrook

ago from San Diego, California with his wife and one child.

"At that time," Westbrook said, "there were 10 houses and about 50 people. The backdrop of this whole area is Pivine Mountain," he continued.

Westbrook gave an explanation of why the area is known as Black Springs. He recalled that on the other side of the mountain is a small spring -- at that time it was said that the water was black -- thus accounts for the name of this community.

One of the reasons for the so-called wholesale migration into the area by blacks, Westbrook said that blacks, at that time, were not able to buy any land in Reno or the outlying areas, so they had to settle for the Black Springs area.

History has it that a white man, in those early days, bought about 36 acres of land and started selling parcels to blacks -- it sold for about \$250 a lot -- about 1/3 of an acre.

According to Westbrook, blacks started wholesale migration to Black Springs

from Herlong, Calif. Included were servicemen who had just been released from service. There was only menial work available to blacks in those days at some of the hotels.

Among the early business entrepreneurs in the Reno area was Bill Bailey who owned the Harlem Club at Commercial Road in Reno. The only other black businessman at the time was Sam Gibson who owned a trash hauling service called Poor Butterfly.

The first baptist church built in the Reno area was pastored by Rev. Dupree --, minister of the church (First Baptist Church) is Elder Glenn Taylor.

At present about 60 blacks live in Black Springs. Now there are more whites than blacks living at Black Springs.

Water remains a constant problem at Black Springs. There's a moratorium on water which prevents anyone from drilling a well unless one has at least an acre of

## Lizzie R. Hatcher, Esq.

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