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AUSTIN AND THE REESE RIVER MINING DISTRICT:

NEVADA'S FORGOTTEN FRONTIER

by

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A DISSERTATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Between 1860 and 1920 Nevada consistently ranked as a leading silver producing region in the United States. When not ranked at the top of the list, it still remained as one of the highest ranking silver producers in the country. Nevada's output made it a significant United States' silver producer as well as a leading world producer of the precious metal. Thus, any major silver mining district in Nevada immediately became a significant part of western mining history.

Throughout Nevada's nineteenth century, only the fabulous Comstock Lode, the large silver-lead mines of Eureka, and the huge surface deposits at Aurora out-produced the mines of Austin and the Reese River District. Furthermore, the mines in and around Austin ranked seventh in total bullion production in Nevada for the eight decades between 1870 and 1940.¹ Yet this important segment of Nevada's nineteenth century history has been almost overlooked by historians of mining and of the West. More significant than the amounts of bullion produced by the Reese River District were the early discovery date and the isolated location of the Reese

PRINCIPAL FEATURES OF NEVADA

PRINCIPAL TOWNS OF NEVADA TERRITORY

Map 3

River mines. When the Reese River boom began in late 1862, only two large scale mining camps existed in Nevada. Both were on the far western fringe of the new Nevada Territory, at Virginia City-Gold Hill and at Aurora. The rest of the vast territory was essentially unsettled and undeveloped.

The rich silver discoveries in Pony Canyon, located in the center of Nevada Territory, altered this situation. During early 1863, thousands of gold and silver seekers poured into the uncharted wilds of central Nevada. Between six and ten thousand people trekked to the Reese River vicinity within twenty-four months of the first discoveries in May of 1862, and the town of Austin became a thriving and established mining camp by mid-1863.

During the next two decades the inhabitants of the Reese River District prospected, settled, and organized the central and eastern portions of the state. Austinites founded dozens of mining camps and districts between 1863 and 1910. Tuscarora, Treasure City and Hamilton, Eureka, Belmont, Ione, Cortez, Tybo, Union, and Tonopah are just a few of the more successful mining districts spawned by the hordes of miners, prospectors and speculators who called Austin their home.

Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, Austin and Reese River mines served as a catalyst

for new discoveries and new districts. Not until 1901 did the focus of central Nevada shift from Austin. The great Tonopah discoveries, ironically made and initially exploited by Austinites, led to Austin's permanent loss of its leadership position in central Nevada.

Therefore, because of its large production of silver, its early founding and development, its central role in opening up eastern and central Nevada to settlement and the resultant social and economic dominance of the area for almost four decades, Austin is a significant chapter in Nevada's nineteenth century history. Its history is an outstanding example of the development of the mining industry in the West during the last half of the nineteenth century.

In general, the history of Austin and the Reese River Mining District follows the pattern of the typical mining camp discussed by Rodman Paul in his Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1880. Paul points out that the mining frontier consisted of a feverish, disordered explosion of prospectors and miners in every direction, in marked contrast to Frederick Jackson Turner's orderly procession of westward settlement.² The Reese River Mining District is an excellent example of this type of chaotic, explosive development. Miners, prospectors, and town builders flooded eastward from California and western Nevada to a desolate region almost two hundred miles

from the nearest settled area. They poured into an area with no established agriculture, no abundant natural resources (other than rich silver ore), and with a hostile natural environment. Within months, several mining camps flourished, transportation routes teemed with traffic, farmers arrived to take advantage of the new markets, and mining activity developed on a large-scale.

Austin also closely paralleled Paul's general description of the typical Western mining town as it progressed from a wild frontier mining camp to a small city with a diversified economy revolving around transportation, agriculture, mining, milling, and service industries for the regional trade area. However, Austin survived long enough to develop alternate economic bases while the great majority of western mining camps simply faded away.³ In this sense, Austin exists as an atypical example of a Western mining camp.

As the history of Austin and the Reese River Mining District are recounted in this dissertation, several basic themes will emerge. The central trend or theme is the evolution of Austin over approximately six decades of existence. The wild mining camp of Austin, the center of the equally unruly Reese River Mining District, developed over a period of years into a small metropolis which dominated a large geographical area

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occupied by ranchers, farmers, and other even smaller towns and mining camps. This metamorphosis carried Austin through many stages of growth, then decline. From a new, raw city populated by thousands of miners, prospectors, capitalists, speculators, tradesmen, gamblers, and prostitutes Austin developed into a smaller, more ordered "company town" centered around the only surviving mining and milling company from the earlier boom years. Then, during the 1880s and 1890s, Austin declined precipitously because mining and milling ceased in the Reese River Mining District. However, the city survived, albeit as a small rural town, because other economic activities developed to replace the lost mining and milling industry.

A second theme is the effect which "outsiders" had on this seemingly isolated mining camp in the wilds of Nevada. These effects consisted mainly of the economic influences which absentee capitalists from San Francisco and the eastern United States had on the Reese River Mining District. The crucial role of capital from San Francisco, the eastern United States, and foreign countries surfaced early in the history of the Reese River Mining District. The lifeblood of the mining economy during both the developmental and mature periods depended on the steady influx of capital from external sources. This simple fact ruled the Reese River Mining

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District's economy from 1862 until 1920, when the last attempt by outside investors to exploit Austin's mines failed.

An issue which is closely related to the effect of outside capital on the district concerns the source of the outside capital which developed and exploited the Reese River Mines. Unlike the mines of California and western Nevada, the mines in the Reese River Mining District were owned and developed largely by eastern capitalists, especially New York investors. San Francisco capital appeared early in the rush to Reese River, during 1863 and 1864, but it was largely speculative in nature. Hard on the heels of the San Francisco speculator came the developmental capitalists who invested large sums to promote, organize, and exploit the Reese River Mining District's mineral resources on a more permanent basis. Available data prove that most of this capital came from New York and eastern United States investors. Hundreds of corporations formed in the east exclusively to take advantage of the riches found in the mines of Lander Hill and other Reese River mines.

A third theme which appears in this study is the evolution of a frontier mining camp into a small industrial "company" town. Within the realm of this discussion are the introduction of technology, the growth of an industrial plant, the arrival and evolution of the

work force and the impact of high capital requirements in the Reese River Mining District. As Austin matured and evolved, the consolidation of mining and milling ventures began to characterize economic activity in the district.

The rapid consolidation which took place in the mining and milling industry in the Reese River Mining District emerges as yet another theme. The thousands of "paper" mining companies and the dozens of serious mining and milling enterprises present in late 1863 rapidly dwindled to a handful of operations by 1870, two active operations by 1872 and only one, the Manhattan Gold and Silver Mining Company, after 1875.

Although consolidation occurred for many reasons the major cause can be listed as the collapse of fraudulent or poorly managed ventures which could not compete with their stronger neighbors. At the same time, the superior ore bodies and management techniques of the Manhattan Company led to its ultimate domination of the district. In less than one decade the Manhattan Company swallowed all its major competitors and purchased all claims worth owning on Austin's Lander Hill, by far the most productive area in the entire district. One motive for consolidation resulted from the necessity for smaller companies to join forces in order to create capital and streamline operations. In several instances litigation

led to a merger as part of out-of-court settlements. Consolidation also stemmed from a steady decrease in ore value over the years. As the ore quality decreased, the need for higher volume increased, leading to many consolidations in the early years of the Reese River Mining District. Perhaps the most important reason for this continuous consolidation was the technological and managerial superiority of the Manhattan Gold and Silver Mining Company. As this company grew in strength and efficiency of operation it quickly developed a position in the Reese River District which allowed it to expand at the expense of its less efficient competitors.

While the economic trends in the history of Austin and the Reese River Mining District followed their various paths, they helped shape the pattern of social and cultural life in the area. The transformation of a wild and unruly mob of prospectors, miners and other frontier types into a typical nineteenth century small town society characterizes the social and cultural development of Austin.

A broad discussion of the area's social and cultural transformation unveils the many varied aspects of life on the mining frontier. These topics range from the ethnicity, growth and then decline of the district's population to the feeble attempts at labor union organization in the Reese River Mining District. Other

topics which fall within this social realm are the rapid creation of social, fraternal, and religious organizations of all kinds, and the growth and development of local politics.

Recreation and entertainment blossomed in the radiance of the high silver output, as stage shows, theater, and traveling entertainers of all sorts played in Austin. Likewise, banquets, galas, lectures, and speeches occupied the citizens of Austin on many a night. Other types of recreation also could be found in Austin. Saloons, gambling houses, hurdy-gurdy houses, opium dens, and other types of establishments flourished side by side with the church socials and "legitimate" entertainment. For sports minded individuals, there were horse racing, prize fighting, billiard tournaments, and baseball games either to participate in or view from a safe distance.

With the town's growth came the appearance of a local newspaper, the Reese River Reveille. Although initially developed as an economic tool, the Reveille soon became more than a purely promotional newspaper. Beginning in May of 1863, this little weekly quickly grew into a daily and became the informational and literary soul of the Reese River Mining District and the entire central Nevada region. In its early years the Reveille circulated throughout Nevada, the West Coast, and even

to New York and the eastern United States. Its boosting of Austin and the mines lured capital to the Reese River Mining District and its seething and sarcastic rebuttals to would-be detractors of the Austin area bolstered the confidence of both investors and Austinites.

Of course, the negative forces of society appeared in Austin. Murders, assaults, rapes, and brawls of all kinds occurred over the years. Austin's most severe and pernicious crime problem, thievery and petty larceny, lingered from the very earliest days of the boom into the town's declining years. Anti-Chinese demonstrations were held in the 1880s, and Austin developed an anti-black outlook in the 1890s. The local Shoshone and Piute Indians received varying amounts of ridicule, abuse, and exploitation by Austin's white populace, but this was usually limited to lower pay for menial labor and the other manifestations of race prejudice which characterized Western society in the nineteenth century. Violence towards minorities was not a commonplace occurrence in the Reese River Mining District, but race prejudice certainly existed. As the population and economy declined, these problems disappeared to the point that Austin's major crime problem in the 1890s became juvenile delinquency and vandalism of the vacant, decaying structures in the city.

From these diverse economic and social trends a broad picture of the life cycle of a western mining camp will emerge. Simultaneously, the history of a significant but neglected portion of the western mining industry will be added to the body of western history.

While conducting the research for this work the author examined hundreds of books, articles, photographs, maps, and manuscript collections. After examining dozens of books and articles on the western mining frontier, an organizational format developed. The most manageable way to treat a subject so broad is to use a topical approach. By far the best example of this is Turrentine Jackson's Treasure Hill, Portrait of a Silver Mining Camp, first published in 1963. This book is a well written and well received study of a Nevada mining district over its entire history, from frantic rush to oblivion. Treasure Hill examines the day to day economic and social development and decline of the White Pine Mining District from its earliest days in 1868 to the closing of its mines in 1893.⁴

This study will follow the example set by Treasure Hill in order to present as broad and complete a picture of the history of the Reese River Mining District as possible, while also analyzing the relationship of Austin and the Reese River Mining District to western mining development as a whole. In this sense,

this work will be much more complete in its coverage than most of the works which it is meant to complement.

A thorough examination of the history of Austin and the Reese River Mining District will eliminate a large void in Nevada's frontier and mining history. Only a handful of authors have dealt with the history of Austin or Reese River. The most notable work, Oscar Lewis' The Town that Died Laughing: The Story of Austin, Nevada, Rambunctious Early-Days Mining Camp, and of Its Renowned Newspaper, The Reese River Reveille, is a lighthearted look at Austin's early days, centering on the antics of the local residents and the frontier mining-camp journalism of the Reese River Reveille.⁵ Lewis' work consists mainly of bits and pieces of social history and humorous tales extracted from the original copies of the Reese River Reveille. While entertaining, these vignettes of Austin's past are barely woven together by a skeletal historical narrative at the beginning of the book. The book is well written and fun to read, but not very informative.

Less entertaining, but more valuable works dealing with the Reese River Mining District are two masters' theses and a United States Geological Survey Bulletin. Rodney Smith's thesis, "Austin, Nevada 1862-1881" is a good study, but it primarily discusses the Austin of the early 1860s and is rather sketchy when

dealing with the later years. Smith provides very little analysis, and he ends his study more than three decades before the mining industry in Austin and the Reese River Mining District finally ground to a halt. Social aspects of Austin's history are glossed over and Austin's dependence on outside capital and other external forces is not mentioned at all.⁶

A second thesis, "The History of Lander County" by Buster L. King, also deals with Austin and the Reese River Mining District on a limited basis. Much attention is focused on the very early history of the area, but the work is vague when dealing with the later years of the Reese River Mining District's history. As in Smith's thesis, social aspects of the area's history are neglected. Also, because the Reese River Mining District is only a portion of Lander County's overall history, it does not receive sufficient attention in this county wide survey.⁷

Another valuable, but narrow, study is The Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District Lander County Nevada by Clyde P. Ross.⁸ This report not only discusses the geology of the area, it contains statistical data, corporate histories, and maps and diagrams which aid in understanding the confusing tangle of mining claims and mining terminology associated with any mining history. Ross' work is excellent, but limited

in scope. Analysis, social history and the development of Austin and the region are ignored. Only the mining industry is dealt with.

This dissertation will fill a void in Nevada's mining and frontier history, and will complement work already done in the field. For obvious reasons, the great majority of Nevada's history involves miners, mining and their impact on the state. A great number of these books on miners and mining revolve around places in Nevada. Because the mining business contained an inherent instability and because the mining frontier "hopscoched" all over the state, the location of the activity is a natural organizational tool for Nevada's mining historians. This tendency began in the nineteenth century and has continued to the present.

The pattern for the locational approach appeared in 1883 when Eliot Lord published Comstock Mining and Miners.⁹ This exhaustive study of the Washoe mines covered the economic, technological, corporate, and physical development of the mines and cities of the Comstock Lode, and thoroughly examined the growth of labor unions, mine safety, and the unusual engineering feats accomplished by the miners.

Since that time most books dealing with Nevada's mining history have used this geographic location theme to limit the scope of the study. Grant Smith's The

History of the Comstock Lode 1850-1920 and John Debo Galloway's Early Engineering Works Contributory to the Comstock both add to our knowledge of the Washoe area of western Nevada.¹⁰ Neither of these works is as complete or as broad as Lord's, but they carry the time frame much further.

Many other Nevada mining camps and mining districts are examined in histories written in recent years. Although the quality and scope of these studies vary significantly, they all contribute to the body of knowledge available on Nevada's mining industry. Of special note are the works of Russell Elliot, James Hulse, Hugh Shamberger, John Townley and, of course, W. Turrentine Jackson.¹¹

The "rush to Reese River" parallels dozens of similar rushes to remote but potentially rich mining districts which occurred throughout the mining West from 1849 into the early twentieth century. The first of these waves of mining activity came with the '49'ers to California. This tremendous flood of humanity to the gold fields of central California set the stage for the expansion of mining throughout the West. Social, legal, technological, political, and economic systems seemingly evolved overnight, then spread throughout the West, carried by thousands of itinerant and footloose prospectors. When the gold fields of California began

to play out, and large corporations bought up the few profitable operations, thousands of unemployed and restless miners and prospectors began to look for fresher fields to conquer.

The first wave of rushes by these men came in 1858-1859, with major discoveries on the Fraser River in British Columbia, on the Comstock Lode in Western Nevada, and on Cherry Creek in Colorado.¹² The Fraser River discovery fizzled by the end of 1859. However, the area around the newly established communities of Denver and Central City, Colorado, and the huge silver deposits of the Comstock Lode under Virginia City and Gold Hill brought tens of thousands of immigrants to both central Colorado and far western Nevada.

After the excitement waned in these regions, the seekers of wealth spread out across the landscape to find the next Comstock Lode or Gregory's Gulch. Small rushes and small camps appeared on the Humboldt River in western Nevada, and in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Montana during the years 1860-1862.¹³ A major strike at Aurora on the California-Nevada border in 1859 siphoned off many of the unemployed miners from California and the recently consolidated mines of the Comstock Lode. However, even the rich camp of Aurora began to solidify, consolidate, and level off by early 1863.

Miners and prospectors always were receptive to news of another strike, so word of the fantastically rich silver deposits found near the Reese River in Central Nevada spread like wild fire to California, the Washoe and the eastern United States in late 1862 and early 1863. Throughout 1863 and 1864 the Reese River Mining District became a vortex of activity. Towns were born and died, while fortunes were made and lost, then made again. During these first years, miners located the major productive mines and exploitation began. The cities of Austin, Upper Austin, and Clifton appeared almost overnight to join the original settlement at Jacobsville, the name given to Jacob's Station after the newly arriving populace developed it into a small town. Milling operations popped up all over the district, until there were almost as many mills as there were truly productive mines. Inevitably, as in all western mining booms, speculators swarmed into the district, spurring the boom frenzy with irresponsible and, many times, fraudulent mining deals.¹⁴

As with any unsound economic or financial activity, the bubble eventually burst. In 1864, a stock market panic in San Francisco caused the entire Pacific slope mining industry to slide into a depression. Mining and milling activity throughout the Far West came to a virtual standstill during most of 1864, and a trend

toward consolidation of interests began in early 1865. While the weaker and sometimes fraudulent mining and milling ventures collapsed, the stronger operations began to join forces, or to sell out to more cautious Eastern capitalists. A strong influx of eastern capital, which began in 1865, bolstered the move to consolidation which continued into the early twentieth century.

Following the economic slump of 1864 and early 1865, the fortunes of the Reese River Mining District steadily improved. The Manhattan Mining Company became a major factor in this development. In July, 1865, a group of New York investors formed the Manhattan Mining Company and purchased the property and claims of the Oregon Mining Company, one of the Reese River District's earliest and soundest mining endeavors. The claims initially purchased included four of the best in the district, the North Star, Oregon, Southern Light, and Blue Ledge. During the next twenty-two years this company dominated the Reese River Mining District. By 1875 the Manhattan Mining Company became the only producing mining and milling company in the district, and owned every worthwhile claim in the Austin area.¹⁵

However, silver ore is a finite resource, and over a long period of years Austin's mining industry declined. Only increased technology and lowered transportation and milling costs allowed the industry

to remain operable as long as it did. From 1865 until the early 1880s a relatively constant level of production was maintained in the Reese River Mining District, with the Manhattan Company producing the bulk of the ore. During this period the Manhattan Company eliminated all competition and purchased almost every claim on Lander Hill. However, the Manhattan Company's technology could not keep pace with the steadily decreasing ore quality. From 1880 to 1887 production remained profitable, but erratic. The end was in sight.¹⁶

As the result of a Sheriff's sale in December, 1887, the Manhattan Company's holdings transferred to a new company, the Manhattan Mining and Reduction Company. This company operated profitably for two years, then sporadically for two more years. The Manhattan Mining and Reduction Company sold out to the Austin Mining Company in September of 1891.¹⁷ The Austin Company attempted to overcome declining ore quality by large scale development of the numerous claims on Lander Hill. After two years of qualified success, the Austin Mining Company's efforts failed due to a combination of declining ore quality, the Panic of 1893, and the halting of federal silver purchases in 1893. Although many more companies attempted to mine on Lander Hill, no significant profitable ore production occurred in the Reese River Mining District after 1893.¹⁸

Following the collapse of the mining industry in the Reese River Mining District, Austin survived as a regional trade center for both the local agricultural community and for the many newly discovered mining districts in southern Nevada. By 1920, Austin's population and economy had stabilized, and the town has not changed a great deal since the 1920s.

Notes

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¹⁴Myron Angel, History of Nevada With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers. Oakland: Thompson and West, 1881, pp. 461-476; John Ross Browne, "The Reese River Country," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 33, (June-November, 1866), pp. 26-44.

¹⁵Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, pp. 38-40.

¹⁶Ibid.; Couch and Carpenter, Nevada's Metal and Mineral Production, p. 75.

¹⁷Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, pp. 38-42.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 40-47.

CHAPTER II

RUSH TO REESE RIVER

In 1859 the central Nevada region consisted of a vast unexplored wilderness inhabited by scattered bands of Shoshone and Piute Indians and a handful of Anglo-Americans sprinkled across the area. During the spring of 1859, Captain James Harvey Simpson, of the Corps of Topographical Engineers, surveyed and laid out an overland wagon route from Salt Lake City to the new Mormon settlement of Genoa, on the Carson River in far western Utah Territory.¹ Guided by John Reese, a Mormon frontiersman who had traversed central Nevada as early as 1851, the Simpson party spent the last five days of May, 1859, in what is now the Austin area. On May 27 they camped in Simpson's Park, and on May 28 they camped at Reese River. After leaving the Reese River, the Simpson party traveled westward to Genoa. As a result of this exploration, the rough wagon road constructed from Salt Lake City to Genoa passed through Simpson's Park, only a few miles from the present site of Austin.²

With the creation of the Pony Express system in early 1860, the path followed by Simpson became a

part of the overall route of the Pony Express. The Pony Express established a stop known as Jacob's Station on the Reese River, less than five miles west-north-west of Simpson's Park. Named for George Washington Jacobs, the division agent, Jacob's Station became an isolated frontier outpost located in the center of the region which soon developed into the Reese River Mining District.³ The station's role in central Nevada grew steadily in the early 1860s, as a small settlement developed around the Pony Express facilities. In the fall of 1861, Jacob's Station became an office on the first Overland Telegraph, and later that same year it became a stop on the Overland Mail, which had moved north because of the Civil War. This remote settlement remained the only point of activity in the Reese River area until late 1862.⁴

On May 2, 1862, William Talcott located an outcrop of silver-bearing quartz in Pony Canyon, approximately six miles southeast of the present town of Austin. Talcott, an employee at Jacob's Station, located the vein while hauling firewood for the stage station. Like thousands of frontiersmen in the Far West, Talcott was an inveterate amateur prospector, always looking for rich ore while carrying out other activities.⁵ Talcott, familiar with the rudiments of mining and geology, believed he had found

a worthwhile ledge and sent some samples of the ore to Virginia City to be assayed.⁶

While the ore samples were on the way to Virginia City, Talcott and his compatriots decided to organize a mining district to protect their claims. The Reese River Mining District was organized on May 10, 1862. The district's rather arbitrary boundaries encompassed a huge portion of central Nevada; north and south ten miles from the Overland Telegraph Line, east to Dry Creek and west to Edward's Creek.⁷

Because of the confusion over the eastern and western boundaries of the mining district, the bylaws were amended on July 17, 1862. The eastern and western boundaries were eliminated so that the district extended indefinitely in either direction, unless its boundaries conflicted with other districts.⁸ As soon as the district was created and William Talcott elected its first recorder, the discovery claims were filed. William M. Talcott, Felix O'Neil, James Farmer, Augustus Clapp, George Washington Jacobs, James R. Jacobs, A. P. Hawes, Joseph Town, Walter Cary, G. L. Turner, and T. L. Grubb filed claims on May 2, 1862. These claims, including Talcott's original find, the Pony Ledge, totalled 2,600 "feet" of location on the various veins in Pony Canyon.⁹

When Talcott sent the first ore sample to Virginia City for assay, he initiated a series of events

which led to the rush to Reese River. The samples first traveled to Felix O'Neil's ranch, near the Truckee River. While at O'Neil's ranch, the samples were examined by J. Q. C. Vanderbosch, known as "an intelligent Hollander, who had some knowledge of minerals."¹⁰ Vanderbosch believed the specimens to be valuable, and when assays conducted in Virginia City confirmed his belief, he immediately left for the Reese River area. John Frost, Felix O'Neil and George Buffet accompanied Vanderbosch to central Nevada.¹¹

This small party arrived in Pony Canyon on December 18, 1862. They found a Mr. Marshall and William Cole living in a cabin at the site where Clifton eventually developed.¹² The two miners were engaged in running what they called the Highland Mary Tunnel in Pony Canyon.¹³ The next day, the Vanderbosch party explored the Pony Canyon area and located the Oregon claim and worked it about twenty feet to test its potential. After establishing the value of the Oregon claim, other ledges were located. On December 29, the party located the North Star and Southern Light claims and a short time later they added the Blue Ledge to the list.¹⁴ In January, 1863, the party returned to Virginia City to spend the winter and assay their ore samples.¹⁵ The samples proved to be spectacularly rich, some of them yielding several thousands of dollars to the ton.¹⁶

Naturally, news of the rich ore samples collected by Talcott and the Vanderbosch party leaked out. The rush to Reese River resulted, especially after Vanderbosch's finds reinforced those of Talcott. Starting in mid-January of 1863, a small but steady stream of prospectors, merchants and speculators began to migrate into the Reese River region.

Unlike most western mining camps, those in the Reese River region operated under established territorial, later State, laws enforced by duly elected county officials. This unusual turn of events came about as the territorial legislature set about creating Nevada's original nine counties in November of 1862. The following month, perhaps due to rumors of rich silver deposits near the Reese River, or simply to strengthen local government administration in the central portion of the territory, on December 19 the Nevada territorial legislature created Lander County out of portions of Churchill and Humboldt Counties.¹⁷ The creative act made Jacobsville (Jacob's Station) the county seat until a census of the county could be taken and an election held to locate permanently the county offices. The territorial governor appointed county and townsite officers to serve until elections could be held. Since three of the nine county officers appointed in December of 1862 had filed claims the day the Reese River Mining District was organized, they had

a vested interest in a stable local government.¹⁸ When the hordes of miners finally did arrive at Reese River, their basic governmental and legal needs were met by territorial laws and not inadequate miner's codes. Thus, the Reese Riverites avoided the wild, lawless days of the California gold rush and the Washoe silver rush.

Throughout the spring of 1863, thousands of people streamed into the Reese River Mining District from California, the Comstock and the eastern United States to seek their fortune, or simply to pass through to other destinations. The area became a beehive of human activity. Perhaps the words of John Ross Browne best express the feverish rush to Reese River.

Ho, then, for Reese River! Have you a gold Mine? Sell out and go to Reese! Have you a copper mine? Throw it away and go to Reese! Do you own drygoods? Pack them up for Reese! Are you the proprietor of lots in the city of Oakland, California? Give them to your worst enemy and go to Reese! Are you merchant, broker, doctor, lawyer, or mule driver? Buckle up your blankets and off with you to Reese, for there is the land of glittering bullion, there lies the pay streak.¹⁹

As the grass greened in the spring of 1863, the roads into Reese River became choked with traffic. Both the Carson River Road and the longer, but better, Twenty-Six Mile Desert Road thronged with wagons, pack trains, stage coaches, individual riders, herds and herdsmen, and pedestrian traffic.²⁰ Among the thousands of Reese River bound travelers in the early

months of the boom were those who would shape the history of the Reese River Mining District. David E. Buel, I. C. Bateman, W. C. Harrington and E. Watson joined Marshall and Cole at the Clifton townsite early in 1863. In March of 1863, the Vanderbosch party, formally organized as O'Neil, Frost and Company, returned to Pony Canyon to develop their claims.²¹ Between January and December of 1863 these men and others like them created a thriving region of economic and social activity in the wilderness of Nevada.

In January of 1863, signs of civilization could barely be found in the Reese River area. Jacobsville consisted only of the residence of G. W. Jacobs and the green lumber and canvas Occidental Hotel.²² As the prospectors poured into the camp during the late winter and spring, adequate housing became a critical need. Tents, canvas-roofed shanties, sod or stone huts, dugouts, and even converted stock corrals sheltered the populace in the first frantic months of the rush.²³

Upon arriving in the new land the immigrants worked toward two major goals with all their energy. The first goal, to go into business, whether it be mining, retail merchandising, freighting, staging, or speculation, dovetailed quite well with the second goal; to build towns as fast as possible. This is precisely what occurred. Miners swarmed over the hills

around Pony Canyon, locating, then developing thousands of claims. Newly arriving miners located and registered over 1,000 claims in Pony Canyon alone. Thousands of other claims were located in the surrounding valleys and canyons within the first months of the rush.²⁴ This frenzied activity spawned several mining camps which boomed, then declined. Jacobsville flourished briefly, then gave way to Clifton, which in turn fell to the newest settlement, Austin.

Jacobsville's brief role in the district's history began when newly arriving miners located there because there was no place else to go. Jacobsville became the Lander County seat in December, 1862, but the little camp did not grow or prosper.²⁵ Although the population of Jacobsville may have reached 300 or 400 in early 1863, its location, seven miles west of Pony Canyon, allowed newer towns closer to the mining claims to undermine its position.²⁶

The initial usurper of Jacobsville's position was Clifton. This settlement, established in December of 1862 by Marshall and Cole, quickly assumed a leadership position. Five miles closer to Pony Canyon than Jacobsville, its proximity to the mines made it the favored settlement well into the summer of 1863. By May of 1863, Clifton had grown into a substantial mining camp. According to the Reese River Reveille,

Clifton contained numerous commercial and residential structures and a population of approximately 500 souls.²⁷ Jacobsville, which, on the same date, contained only a handful of structures and approximately fifty residents, had been outdistanced by Clifton.²⁸ Yet Clifton too was doomed, destined to be absorbed by a new and aggressive challenger, Austin.

The citizens and merchants of Clifton were convinced that they would control the Reese River Mining District through their strategic location and absence of competition. Yet Clifton lost both its power and its population within two years of its founding. Marshall and Cole, owners of the Clifton townsite, charged high prices for building sites as the immigrants poured into the area. They believed that because of both the topography and lack of a road into Pony Canyon no townsite could be organized closer to the mines. Cliftonites, in the flats a mile west of the mines, seemed content to reap their profits from afar. They did not realized that a new town, with more aggressive leadership, would not only usurp their economic and social position, but absorb their entire settlement.

Sometime early in 1863 E. Watson, W. C. Harrington, I. C. Bateman, and David E. Buel arrived in Clifton from Virginia City. They immediately trekked to Pony Canyon to locate claims. Buel located an extension of the North

Star claim already made by Frost, O'Neil, Buffet, and Vanderbsoch. It became known as the Buel North Star. As soon as the Buel party established a firm hold on its mining ventures, another more profitable activity attracted its attention. Within a matter of months this group, led by Buel and augmented by new arrivals, created a new camp on the barren slopes of Pony Canyon.²⁹

Unlike the citizens of Clifton, Buel and his cohorts believed that there was indeed room for a townsite in Pony Canyon. On February 5, 1863, D. E. Buel, W. C. Harrington, John A. Veach, and Frederick Baker hired S. F. Armstrong to survey boundaries for a new town in Pony Canyon. On March 17, they filed a townsite plat for the Town of Austin, Nevada Territory.³⁰ The plat was recorded on March 28, at the Recorder's Office in Jacobsville.³¹ These men also formed the Austin Town Company to promote their new settlement. Buel and the others controlled both the platted and surveyed Town of Austin and the unplatted (as of November, 1863) lands just north of Austin.³² Thus, a handful of men controlled a new townsite located in the most appropriate place in the district, amidst the mines of Pony Canyon. Their challenge, then, was to create a thriving, competitive mining camp on a site occupied only by prospect holes

and sagebrush. Buel and his associates proved more than able to meet the challenge.

The Town Company realized that its advantageous position near the mines would not be utilized unless a satisfactory road could be built between Austin, high up in Pony Canyon, and Clifton, on the plains a mile below. To achieve this goal, the Town Company offered to sell lots with surface rights for cash or to exchange them for labor on a road between Austin and Clifton. Consequently, laborers for the road flocked into Austin. Between March and June, the company built a substantial grade twenty feet wide between Clifton and Austin and then on eastward several miles to the Overland Trail. The first portion of the grade, that between Austin and Clifton, opened by May 16, while the eastern part, which linked Austin to the Overland Trail, was completed in July.³³ This project not only allowed freight, merchandise, and people to go directly to the mines in Pony Canyon, it put Austin directly on the Overland Trail, a major transcontinental route. Therefore, Austin, the easternmost Reese River city, benefited from both the local mining business and the seasonal, but profitable westbound Overland Trail traffic.

The strategy worked perfectly and Austin quickly outranked Clifton as the center of activity in the Reese River Mining District. By late May Austin contained two

hotels, two general merchandise stores, five saloons (with two more under construction), one billiard table, two meat markets, one bakery, two stationers (with two more under construction), three blacksmith shops, one wagon repair shop, one variety store, three laundries, two houses of ill repute, one lodging house (with one under construction), one livery stable, two lawyers, four notaries, two express companies, one barber shop, one tailor shop, one sign painter, four carpenters, four stone masons, two adobe yards, four gardens, one boot and shoe store, one dairy, one printing office, and a population of approximately 450.³⁴ Throughout the summer of 1863, settlers poured into Austin. Due to this flood of humanity, new businesses opened almost daily and many people began to move into Austin from Jacobsville and Clifton. From less than fifty structures and residences in late May, Austin grew to over 279 by July 15.³⁵

Austin's rapid growth led to its preeminent position among the towns in both the Reese River Mining District and the entire central Nevada region. As Austin grew, Clifton and Jacobsville declined. In May of 1863, Clifton and Austin appeared to be about equal in population and size, while Jacobsville's decline had been precipitous. However, by late August Austin had developed a clear predominance in size and

population; Austin's 279 structures and approximately 1,100 people far outnumbered Clifton's 87 structures and approximately 350 residents.³⁶

Austin's quick rise allowed it to extend social, political, and economic control over all of central and eastern Nevada. Austin's victory in the election to establish a permanent Lander County seat illustrates this dominance. Austin won this election handily, garnering 448 votes to Clifton's 216 and Jacobsville's 127.³⁷ Austin thus became the administrative center for a county which included approximately one third of the entire Territory of Nevada.

While the mining camps at Pony Canyon were popping up in early 1863, a mad, chaotic rush began to sweep across central Nevada. Throughout the winter of 1862-1863, hundreds of prospectors traveled into the Reese River Mining District. Living in tents, shanties, caves or, in one case, a modified sheep corral, these would-be magnates prospected, located, and claimed thousands of "feet" on hundreds of ledges and leads.³⁸

Although a small but steady stream of frontiersmen flowed into the Reese River area during March and April, the frenzied activity began in May.³⁹ Throughout the summer and fall thousands of miners, prospectors, capitalists, speculators, teamsters, merchants, gamblers, saloon keepers, and a sizeable number of "soiled doves"

trekked the 170 miles from Virginia City to the new mining camps.⁴⁰ According to M. J. Farrell, who arrived in Austin in April of 1863, the rush reached its zenith in September and October. As the mining excitement grew, the large and unstable population flowed in and out of the region like the tide. The permanent, resident population was considerably smaller. A census taken by the Reese River Reveille in July showed approximately 1,200 persons in all of Lander County, while the Reveille conservatively estimated the combined population of Austin and Clifton at approximately 1,450 in late August, 1863.⁴¹

The rapidity of the Reese River buildup startled even mining frontier veterans. A letter to the Reveille on May 16, 1863, favorably compared the rush to Reese River with those to California and the Northwest in the 1850s and early 1860s. This letter discussed the heavy flow of traffic to central Nevada from California, Washoe, Salt Lake City, and the eastern states.⁴² This pattern continued throughout the summer and fall, with the flow peaking at 75 to 100 arrivals per day in late September.⁴³ The rush became so intense that by late summer a shortage of stagecoaches from Virginia City developed. The Overland Mail Company deposited six to twelve passengers daily in Austin, yet left three to six more waiting in Virginia City.⁴⁴ Two weeks later, the Mining and Scientific Press noted:

The special excitement of the day appears to be Reese River. The daily reports from this interesting locality are really quite exciting. The rush thither, notwithstanding the near approach of winter, increases rather than diminishes. Not only from Washoe, California and Oregon, but also from Salt Lake, crowds of men and women and children are pressing into this new silver land. A late Virginia paper records the fact that the day previous not less than 60 names were booked at that point for Austin, the central point of the Reese River region. Many go there with limited means, in the hope of acquiring fortune by accident rather than by systematic prospecting or labor.⁴⁵

The flood to Reese River continued into October, and the fact that the traditional direction of frontier movement had reversed did not escape some observers.

Speaking of Reese River a gentlemen who has just come in from there says he passed 400 wagons in the distance of 70 miles, and as he had an eye to the fair, he says there were 72 women in the crowd, rushing onward. Verily the migratory wave which for so many years has been moving onward with the cry of 'Westward, ho!' having met the waters of the Pacific, now rebounds in its eagerness for new lands, and Eastward it moves, to fill up that uninhabited space which lies between the Sierra Nevadas and the western limits of the Western States.⁴⁶

Naturally, the flood of humanity left its mark on the area. Mining claims were legion, with 1,300 different mining companies located in the Reese River Mining District by September, 1863, and 2,500 separate locations on the books by March, 1864.⁴⁷ As ore began to emerge from the ground in large quantities, ore reduction mills appeared. The first mill, a five-stamp affair owned by D. E. Buel, opened in early August and

soon was joined by five more.⁴⁸ The town grew apace, to keep up with the demand. According to M. J. Farrell, 366 structures were built during the summer of 1863 to augment the already existing ranks of miners' shanties, tents and brush huts.⁴⁹

Although the expansion and the rush continued through the winter of 1863 and 1864, the pace slackened significantly. Harsh winter weather contributed to this slow advance, but other factors also played a part. The era of the individual prospectors who acted alone or in small groups began to end. After a year and a half of feverish economic activity the dust began to clear and the rush began to subside. The cutting edge of the rush had passed, and the prospectors and others who had failed to "strike it rich" began to drift on, to try again somewhere else. Town building and steady development of the mineral resources in the area was work for people with long-term plans and the capital to carry them out. The winter of 1863 and 1864 offered a time to pause, reflect, and plan for the spring.

When the spring arrived, the rush did not resume its former pace. A letter written from an Austin observer to the editor of the Mining and Scientific Press clearly summarized the changes.

Between the city of Austin to-day and six months ago there is a striking contrast presented. Then, it is true, it was as

large as it is now; but what were then brush houses and holes in the side of Austin Hill, have now become comfortable tenements of either wood or stone. The present population cannot however exceed 1,800; a great number of persons who went to California to winter, either not having returned or having directed their attention to the 'outside' districts. It has been storming almost continually for the last ten days, from the Sierra Nevada to Ruby Valley, and the hills around about present a wintry appearance. But few miners are working on their ledges since the 'cold term' set in, and millionaires in feet may be seen daily in the streets, their hands thrust deep into their breeches pockets searching for a 'piece' to get a 'square'.⁵⁰

As the rush waned, activity in the Reese River area became more orderly and stable. Although the Reese River economy did not actually stagnate in late 1863 and early 1864, it did cool considerably as steady growth replaced the wild rush of 1863.

The summer months of 1864 saw a continued cooling of the Reese River economy. As summer merged into fall, ominous rumblings began to shake the Reese River economy. The natural consolidation of the mining industry coupled with a rapid decline in local prospecting led to a reduction in the overall amount of mining activity in the area. Unfortunately, just when the Reese River mine owners most needed development capital, a stock market panic in San Francisco caused a crash of mining company stocks throughout the Pacific Slope mining region. This quickly led to a depression in the mining camps.

Economic stagnation began to manifest itself as early as July, 1864. The Reese River Reveille discussed the "present period of stagnation in business and panic in mining affairs . . ." on July 10, and in the next issue, July 13, discussed the depression in general and then pointedly issued a new advance payment policy for mining company advertisements.⁵¹ The July 17 Reveille examined the reasons for the declining economy and then roundly castigated the guilty parties, including the prospectors, mine owners, mill owners, nearby competing districts, and the lack of outside developmental capital.⁵² By September, the Reveille was angrily attacking other newspapers which were reporting the demise of the Reese River mines.⁵³

By January of 1865, the depression reached a bitter point. Families were in distress and the Reveille finally realized that the problem was a regional one, not just a temporary, local aberration.⁵⁴ These hard times led to harsh words in the Reveille, especially for the local mine owners and superintendents.

Pity the Poor.--We do not wonder that there is much privation and suffering among the poor of this region. God help them. The necessities of life are high and labor scarce. Add to this the fact that the majority of our laborers who depend upon the mines are kept out of their honest earnings for months by employers, and then paid-in-orders upon the Shylocks of the town, or what is still worse, in greenbacks at par. Not a day passes in which we do not record one or more lawsuits brought by miners to recover

money for labor, and almost invariably the managers of rich paying claims settle in greenbacks. Such men deserve the scorn and contempt of the entire community. The man who robs you on the highway, incurring the penalty of the law, is brave and honorable compared to these. The curse of God will surely descend on them for robbing the poor man and his family. We intend to make it our business in future to warn the public against these law-abiding thieves.⁵⁵

The economy did not improve as the winter progressed. A small amount of developmental work occurred on some mines and a few mills were built, as Eastern capital slowly began to trickle into the region,⁵⁶ but this activity did not alter the overall economic situation. Local wood gatherers even went on strike because they could not operate profitably.⁵⁷ During the month of February, 1865, the depression reached its worst level. The Reese River Reveille commented:

We know that the county is in debt, and that bitter hard times reign in the community. The narrow pages of this paper, the dearth of business advertisements, the numerous Sheriff's and Constable's sales, the appeals to charity by many suffering laboring families, all tell the story in language stronger than we can depict it.⁵⁸

Although the economic picture began to improve in mid-1865, the halcyon days of Reese River were over. The years immediately following 1865 were prosperous, more so than in the rush, but the excitement had ended and the "Rush to Reese River" was over.

While the Reese River Reveille bemoaned the fate of the district throughout 1864 and 1865, other observers

were assessing the situation more objectively. These outside observers, especially the highly reputable San Francisco journal, the Mining and Scientific Press, discussed two basic problems with the Reese River mines.

The first unavoidable problem involved the San Francisco stock market. Rampant, careless and many times fraudulent speculation in mining stocks, particularly Reese River stocks, throughout 1863 and early 1864 led to a crisis in the late spring of 1864. The San Francisco stock market collapsed and mining throughout the west came to a grinding halt. The Reese River Mining District, a relatively youthful and underdeveloped area, suffered especially severely in this economic slump. Not only did hundreds of borderline and fraudulent mining companies fail, the strong and legitimate companies faced a severe test. Not only were hundreds of miners laid off in the Reese River mines, desperately needed developmental capital became exceedingly scarce. The exploitation and development of the Reese River Mining District's truly rich mines were retarded at a crucial time in the district's history.⁵⁹

The second, and related, problem for the Reese River Mining District concerned a future source of capital once the depression ended. With the San Francisco financial community in a shambles and discredited at

home and abroad, a new source of capital had to be found. Reese Riverites quickly turned to the eastern United States, but this search for different money took time. Since mining had been practically at a standstill throughout the last half of 1864 and the first quarter of 1865, no solid evidence of profitable operation could be shown to prospective investors. It was not until the early months of summer, 1865, that eastern capital began to appear in the Reese River Mining District.⁶⁰ The arrival of this eastern capital signified the end of the "boom" in the Reese River and the beginning of serious planned economic development. The Mining and Scientific Press, perhaps, best sums up the end of the "Rush to Reese River."

We learn from Dr. DeGroot, and other sources, that favorable reports are constantly coming in from the outside districts of Reese River, especially to the south of Austin, where the lodes appear to be larger and equally numerous, and as rich as in the immediate vicinity of that city. The wild and speculative excitements which have hitherto prevailed in Reese River, though to a less extent there than in Virginia City and vicinity, have now pretty much passed away, and the mining interest is assuming the appearance of permanent prosperity, with evident indications of a more business-like management in future. Eastern Capital is flowing in abundantly, to aid in the development of the mines, and it is generally accompanied with a careful, though energetic superintendence, which speaks well for the future.⁶¹

Another important factor in the arrival of eastern capital in 1865 was the end of the Civil War. With the ending of the war vast human and financial resources could

be directed from the eastern United States to the West, particularly the mining West. The gold and silver needs of the nation would go up as the government attempted to redeem the "greenbacks" issued during the era. Tens of thousands of veterans, both Union and Confederate, would go west to seek their fortunes or adventure, or both. Capitalists, tied to the war effort until April, 1865, could move out of their wartime economy constraints and seek new opportunities in the western mining industry. More and more eastern capital began to filter into the western mining industry. The Reese River area received a considerable amount of this capital, and by the end of 1865 the district's "hard times" seemed to be ending.

The arrival of eastern capital did go far in alleviating the Reese River economic woes. The rampant speculation of 1863 and 1864 was replaced by a much larger, but more orderly, eastern investment by late 1865. With a solid economic base, the eastern investor could produce the direly needed developmental capital which San Francisco speculators either could not or would not produce in 1863 and 1864. Thus, the wild speculation in mining stocks, the lack of developmental capital, and the shortcomings in the region's milling technology which contributed to the slump of 1864-1865 were all counterbalanced by the arrival of a stable source of capital by late 1865.

As the economic plight of the Reese River began to ease with the arrival of eastern capital, the region around the Reese River Mining District received a positive boost also. Favorable reports coming in from the adjacent districts of Reese River indicate the widespread impact of the initial rush to the Reese River Mining District. As the mining industry moved outward from the Austin area in ever widening circles, a dual identity of the term "Reese River" becomes apparent. Geographically, the Reese River Mining District was a rather small area. Even after the bordering districts of Yankee Blade and Amador were made sub-districts of the Reese River Mining District, the entire area encompassed a somewhat square-shaped region roughly twenty miles on each side, with Austin in the middle. As all of the major silver producing mines were within a five-mile radius of Austin, the productive portion of the district was really very small.⁶²

However, the general term "Reese River Mines" or "Reese River Country" encompassed a much larger area. This was especially true during the 1860s before new discoveries gave identity to other mining districts. An early survey of Nevada mining explained:

The phrase 'Reese River Country', is catholic and comprehensive. It includes more thousands of square miles than mere conjecture could designate. It takes in more mines than the most imaginative mind could enumerate. It implies every variety

of physical and topographical structure, to which the caprices of nature have subjected the forms and dimensions of mountains, valleys, and plains.⁶³

Naturally, the thousands of immigrant-miners pouring into the Reese River Mining District in the initial rush had claimed and occupied all the worthwhile ground, as well as all the worthless ground, in the immediate area. Instead of returning to their homes, the footloose prospectors swarmed into the surrounding countryside to seek their fortunes in unexplored territory. They were relatively successful; by May of 1863 the region contained nine separate and distinct mining districts.⁶⁴

This process of outward migration from the Reese River District continued throughout the 1860s. By 1864 the Reese River Country contained at least ten distinct towns and villages and at least fifteen mining districts.⁶⁵ In March, 1865, the Reese River Reveille described the Reese River Country as a huge tract of land encompassing a portion of the state 250 miles square.⁶⁶ As this outward migration continued, Austin's role as the social and economic center of the area became more defined.

By 1865 Austin had developed a dual role as both a mining camp in its own right and as a major regional trade center. The Reveille made note of this in a lengthy article in late August, 1865.⁶⁷ Likewise, an article published in the Mining and Scientific Press

in March, 1866, described Austin as the commercial center for the Reese River Mining District and at least twenty outlying districts.⁶⁸ It was an area growing by leaps and bounds, with no end in sight.

By mid-1867, a rather definitive picture of the "Reese River Country" emerged in a series of articles in the Mining and Scientific Press. J. A. Howe, the author of these articles, described the region as that portion of Nevada which lay between the Humboldt River on the north, the Colorado River on the south, Utah on the east, and the western boundaries of Nye and Lander Counties on the west. This vast region encompassed over half of the state of Nevada. The author discussed the area district by district in order to differentiate the "Reese River Country" from the Reese River Mining District and its numerous sister districts.⁶⁹ Mining districts within this huge tract included the following:

Reese River Mining District--at the center of the
region

Big Creek Mining District--12 miles south of Austin

Washington District--34 miles south of Austin

Union District--55 miles southwest of Austin

Mammoth District--85 miles southwest of Austin

Last Chance District--90 miles southwest of Austin

Paradise District--100 miles southwest of Austin

Volcano District--130 miles southwest of Austin

Silver Peak District--130 miles south of Austin
 San Antonio District--90 miles south of Austin
 Twin River District--55 miles south of Austin
 Park Cañon District--43 miles south of Austin
 Bunker Hill District--25 miles south of Austin
 Smokey Valley District--10 miles south of Austin
 Northumberland District--52 miles southeast of Austin
 Philadelphia District--85 miles south-southeast of
 Austin

Danielle District--60 miles southeast of Austin
 Morey District--70 miles southeast of Austin
 Hot Creek District--100 miles southeast of Austin
 Empire District--110 miles southeast of Austin
 Milk Springs District--120 miles southeast of Austin
 Milk Springs District--145 miles southeast of Austin
 Cortez District--65 miles north of Austin⁷⁰

Each one of these districts contained at least one mining camp, and some of them possessed three or four separate camps.⁷¹ Austin, serving as the focal point for these districts either administratively, economically, or both, prospered accordingly.

Although the Reese River Mining District's mining economy had stabilized by 1865, the aura of the "boom" and the "rush" remained in these secondary districts. Because Austin dominated a vast mining region, "Reese Riverites" from Austin were involved in most of the

outlying districts. Also, as Austin's economy settled into a quiet, developmental period after 1865, many milling operations, merchants, prospectors and miners left Austin and the Reese River Mining District for greener pastures in the newer surrounding mining districts in the Reese River area.

As the outlying areas grew in size, numbers and importance, economic contacts between Austin and these districts became an everyday occurrence. These transactions were as simple as the running of the weekly stage from Austin to one of her sister districts or as complex as the removal of an ore reduction mill from the Reese River Mining District to a new location. Austin became the nerve center for the vast Reese River Country and when a district one hundred miles away prospered, Austin and the Reese River Mining District shared in the prosperity.⁷²

Examples of this far-reaching influence are found throughout Nevada's mining history, even after the Reese River Mining District ceased active silver production. In the 1860s, major rushes to Eureka, Treasure Hill, Belmont, Hot Creek and Tuscarora were initiated or exploited by Austinites. This trend continued throughout the next three decades, and fittingly, Austinites ended Nevada's ten year mining depression in 1900 by finding,

then publicizing, the huge silver deposits at Tonopah.⁷³

Austin played a pivotal role in the larger Reese River Country for such a long span of time because of its permanence when compared to other camps, its geographic position in the center of the region, its transportation network, and because so many of the prospecting parties and mining ventures were linked directly to Austin. Throughout the 1860s and early 1870s prospecting parties of Austinites left their homes to prospect all over the state and even into bordering states. Ranging in size from a lone prospector to as many as forty men, these parties ranged from the Humboldt River to central Arizona. They located claims from Tuscarora in northern Nevada to the Big Bug Mining District near Prescott, Arizona.⁷⁴

When a discovery was made, Austin usually benefitted economically. Often Austin mills processed the ore from the new district, Austin teamsters hauled ore and freight to and from the area, Austin merchants made new sales, and many Austin investors made large sums of money. The Reese River Reveille addressed this issue in August of 1866.

Austin, . . . was never more prosperous or more lively, in a business point of view, than at the present time. Money circulates freely, and every one is jubilant. The development of the mines in its immediate vicinity . . . have

given a great impetus to business in Austin, and every one engaged in trade or otherwise, is hopeful. Money is in abundance, and when this is the case no community can do otherwise than prosper.⁷⁵

Another article, in the same issue of the Reveille, asserted that "Austin is the chief and natural center" of a huge mining region and that "were there not a single mine within the limits of the city of this [Reese River Mining] district, the future wealth and prosperity of Austin, would be equally assured."⁷⁶

This optimistic, yet prophetic, assertion describes the position of Austin and the Reese River Mining District in the mid-1860s. The initial role of the Reese River Mining District, that of a mere provider of silver ore, had become the nucleus of a much larger entity. For decades, Austin remained a stable and permanent point of departure for those entering the bubbling, unpredictable cauldron of the central and eastern Nevada mining industry.

While Austin developed into a staging area for central Nevada, the mining and milling industry provided the economic basis for the district's long term impact and survival. For two decades life in the Reese River District revolved around the local mining and milling industry, even as it declined to a secondary economic status in its last years of operation.

Notes

¹Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 9; King, "The History of Lander County," pp. 7-10. What is now Nevada was a part of Utah Territory from 1850 until Nevada Territory was created in March 1861. Genoa is south and west of Carson City, just across the Sierras from Lake Tahoe.

²Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 9-15; King, "The History of Lander County," pp. 7-10; William H. Goetzmann, Army Exploration in the American West 1803-1863. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, pp. 399-403.

³Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 15-16.

⁴Ibid.; King, "The History of Lander County," pp. 7-10.

⁵Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 17; King, "The History of Lander County," pp. 7-10.

⁶Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 17-18; Angel, History of Nevada, p. 461.

⁷J. Wells Kelly, Second Directory of Nevada Territory: Embracing a General Directory of Residents of all the Principal Towns; Business Directory of Advertisers; Quartz Mills, Reduction Works, Toll Roads . . . Also the Reese River Region. Virginia City, Nevada: Printed by Valentine and Co., San Francisco, 1863, p. 477. The eastern and western boundaries of the Reese River Mining District were never settled because Edwards Creek and Dry Creek could not be located. The original members of the Reese River Mining District apparently did not know where they were and later arrivals certainly did not know. Therefore, the district boundaries were modified to encompass a more realistic area. By January, 1866, the district was, for all practical purposes, only eight miles long and four wide. Browne, "The Reese River Country," p. 36.

⁸Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 18.

⁹Ibid., Angel, History of Nevada, p. 461.

¹⁰Browne, "The Reese River Country," p. 28.

¹¹John Frost Collection, transcript of interview between Frost and H. H. Bancroft, 1885, Manuscript Collection, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California; Angel, History of Nevada, p. 465; Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 19.

¹²Angel, History of Nevada, p. 465.

¹³Ibid.; Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 19.

¹⁴Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 19-20; Frost Collection, p. 2.

¹⁵Angel, History of Nevada, p. 465.

¹⁶Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 20; Browne, "Reese River Country," p. 29.

¹⁷Angel, History of Nevada, p. 461; King "History of Lander County," pp. 11-13; Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 20-22. When Austin was voted the county seat of Lander County in 1863, the boundaries of the county were not surveyed. When they were, Austin was found to be outside the county. This was corrected on February 20, 1864, when the legislature moved the western boundary of Lander County westward approximately twenty miles; Effie Mona Mack, Nevada, A History of the State From the Earliest Times Through the Civil War. Glendale, Cal.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1936, pp. 236-242.

¹⁸Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 21; Kane Collection, Nevada Historical Society, Reno, pp. 1-4. George Washington Jacobs, the first County Sheriff, Augustus Clapp, County Treasurer, and James R. Jacobs (George Washington's son), County Assessor, were all signatories to the original laws of the Reese River Mining District.

¹⁹Browne, "Reese River Country," p. 30. Browne, by the late 1860s, had become a nationally known illustrator and author on events in the west, especially the mining industry. His reports for the federal government on mining in the west became models for others who followed in his footsteps. His humorous and insightful descriptions of the west

are tremendous resources for historians, as well as delightful reading.

²⁰Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 23, 26.

²¹Ibid., p. 28; Kelley, Second Directory of Nevada Territory, pp. 456-464; Angel, History of Nevada, p. 465.

²²Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 22.

²³Ibid., p. 23; Browne, "Reese River Country," pp. 30-31.

²⁴Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 27; Clyde P. Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, p. 25.

²⁵Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 43-44.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 26-27; King, "History of Lander County," pp. 82-83.

²⁷Reese River Reveille, (Austin, Nevada), 23 May 1863.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 28.

³⁰John Reys, Cities of the American West, A History of Frontier Urban Planning. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, p. 233.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Reese River Reveille, 16 May 1863; 29 July 1863.

³⁴Reese River Reveille, 23 May 1863.

³⁵Anthony J. Behm Collection, Manuscript Collection, Nevada Historical Society, Reno. Entire collection consists of a twelve-page typed manuscript entitled "A Story of Growth--Austin, 1863." Discusses Austin's growth from January to December, 1863.

³⁶Reese River Reveille, 29 August 1863.

³⁷Reese River Reveille, 5 September 1863; King, "History of Lander County," pp. 12-13.

³⁸Browne, "Reese River Country," pp. 30-31.

³⁹Angel, History of Nevada, p. 465.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Reese River Reveille, 29 August 1863; Angel, History of Nevada, p. 462.

⁴²Reese River Reveille, 16 May 1863.

⁴³Reese River Reveille, 30 September 1863.

⁴⁴Mining and Scientific Press, 6 (September 7, 1863), p. 6.

⁴⁵Mining and Scientific Press, 6 (September 21, 1863), p. 4.

⁴⁶Mining and Scientific Press, 6 (October 5, 1863), p. 4.

⁴⁷Mining and Scientific Press, 6 (September 21, 1863), p. 4; Reese River Reveille, 24 March 1864.

⁴⁸Angel, History of Nevada, p. 465; Reese River Reveille, 16 September 1863.

⁴⁹Angel, History of Nevada, p. 465.

⁵⁰Mining and Scientific Press, 8 (April 16, 1864), pp. 250-251.

⁵¹Reese River Reveille, 10 July 1864; 13 July 1864.

⁵²Reese River Reveille, 17 July 1864.

⁵³Reese River Reveille, 21 September 1864.

⁵⁴Reese River Reveille, 24 January 1865.

⁵⁵Reese River Reveille, 27 January 1865.

⁵⁶Reese River Reveille, 1 February 1865.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Reese River Reveille, 20 February 1865.

⁵⁹Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 31 (June-November, 1865), pp. 318-321; Mining and Scientific Press, 9 (July 2, 1864), p. 3; Mining and Scientific Press, 9 (August 20, 1864), p. 119; Mining and Scientific Press, 9 (September 10, 1864), p. 170.

⁶⁰Reese River Reveille, 22 July 1865; Mining and Scientific Press, 9 (September 10, 1864), p. 170; Marvin Lewis, Martha and the Doctor: A Frontier Family in Central Nevada. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1977, pp. 30, 35, 43-51.

⁶¹Mining and Scientific Press, 11 (December 30, 1865), p. 407.

⁶²Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 17-19.

⁶³Silver Mines of Nevada. New York: William C. Bryant and Co. Printers, 1865, p. 16.

⁶⁴Reese River Reveille, 16 May 1863. The first districts listed in the Reese River Reveille were: Reese River Mining District, Mt. Hope Mining District, Grass Valley Mining District, Ravenwood Mining District, Simpson's Park Mining District, Big Creek Mining District, Smokey Valley Mining District, Santa Fe (Guadalajara) Mining District, and the Shoshone Mining District.

⁶⁵William Knight, ed., Handbook Almanac For the Pacific States: An Official Register and Business Directory of the States and Territories of California, Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, and Arizona; and The Colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, For the Year 1864. San Francisco: H. H. Bancroft and Co., 1864, pp. 289-290. These districts were Big Creek, 12 miles south of Austin; Cortez, 70 miles north of Austin; Mt. Hope, 20 miles north of Austin; Reese River Mining District; Santa Fe, 30 miles southeast of Austin; Smokey Valley, 20 miles southeast of Austin; Summit, 15 miles southeast of Austin; Washington, 40 miles south of Austin; Union, Marysville and San Antonio, 90 miles south of Austin in Esmeralda County and Ravenswood, Augusta and Salinas west of Austin in Churchill County. Cities, towns and mining camps-- Austin (County seat) population 6,000; Amador, 7 miles, north of Austin; Cañon City, 12 miles south of Austin, population 200; Clifton, 1 mile west of Austin, population 500; Clinton, 15 miles southeast of Austin; Fort Ruby, in Ruby Valley, 120 miles northeast of Austin; Geneva, 20 miles southeast of Austin; Jacobsville,

6 miles west of Austin, population 200; Santa Fe, 25 miles southeast of Austin; Watertown, 12 miles south of Austin; and Yankee Blade, 4 miles northeast of Austin.

⁶⁶Reese River Reveille, 25 March 1865.

⁶⁷Reese River Reveille, 29 August 1865.

⁶⁸Mining and Scientific Press, 11 (March 3, 1866), p. 134.

⁶⁹J. A. Howe, "The Reese River Country and Its Mines," Mining and Scientific Press, April 20, 1867, p. 242; May 4, 1867, pp. 274, 279; May 11, 1867, p. 290; May 18, 1867, p. 306; May 25, 1867, p. 322; June 1, 1867, p. 38; June 8, 1867, p. 359; June 14, 1867, p. 370; June 22, 1867, p. 386; June 29, 1867, p. 402; July 6, 1867, p. 2; July 13, 1867, p. 18; July 20, 1867, pp. 34, 38-39; July 27, 1867, p. 50.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.; Jackson, Treasure Hill, pp. 5-21, 37, 123, 165; Townley, "Tuscarora," pp. 6-9; Reichman, "Early History of Eureka County, Nevada, 1863-1890," pp. 13-23; Elliott, Nevada's Twentieth Century Mining Boom, pp. 3-12; Lewis, Martha and the Doctor, pp. 82-87.

⁷⁴Reese River Reveille, 12 January 1866; 18 January 1866; 23 January 1866; 2 March 1866; 14 March 1866; 6 April 1866; 12 April 1866; 16 April 1866; 19 May 1866; 9 June 1866; 9 July 1866; 21 August 1866; 14 May 1867; 16 March 1869; 27 May 1872; Jackson, Treasure Hill, pp. 5-21, 37, 123; Townley, "Tuscarora," pp. 6-9; Reichman, "Early History of Eureka County, Nevada, 1863-1890," pp. 13-23; Elliott, Nevada's Twentieth Century Mining Boom, pp. 3-13; Lewis, Martha and the Doctor, pp. 82-87.

⁷⁵Reese River Reveille, 18 August 1866.

⁷⁶Ibid.

CHAPTER III

MINING AND MILLING IN THE REESE RIVER MINING DISTRICT

The mining and milling industry formed the backbone of the Reese River Mining District's economy from the initial discoveries in 1862 to the end of consistently profitable mining in 1897. The industry went through radical changes during these thirty-five years, from the chaotic days of the "Rush" to a placid era when Austin existed as a small, sleepy company town. Still, a steady progression occurred in Austin's economic history during this period. After the wild and unorganized rush ran its course, a depression began in 1864. This short but severe economic slump ended in the spring of 1865. An era of large scale development in the mining and milling industry began at this time and lasted into the late 1860s. The major aspects of this development were a continuing consolidation of mining interests and companies, coupled with and financed by a steady and significant influx of eastern venture capital into the Reese River Mining District. Thus, by the late 1860s only a handful of companies controlled mining and milling throughout the district. By 1870,

only two corporations survived, and by the mid-1870s only the Manhattan Company remained.

The first years of the mining industry in the Reese River area were chaotic, frenzied, and unorganized. Prospect holes and shallow trenches abounded, but serious mining ventures with a real chance for success were rare indeed. During early 1863 prospecting and claim filing predominated over deep level mining and developmental work. Thousands of would-be millionaires scoured the mountains and valleys of the region, with their greatest attention focused on Lander Hill's rich silver veins. Lander Hill, located in Austin, quickly became the most productive area in the Reese River district and remained so for four decades. In spite of all this activity, the entire Reese River Mining District produced only \$16,109 worth of bullion in 1863.¹ The fact that so much effort netted so little silver did not escape comment at the time. Throughout 1863 the Reese River Reveille announced the creation of new companies, reported sales of "feet"* and described all the local mining operations in detail, but rarely did it broach

*Western mining claims were divided into "feet," units which measured one linear foot in length. Thus a claim of 500 feet would consist of 500 linear feet on the vein, whether it followed the surface or went straight down. In financial centers feet sold just like stock and many times shares in a mine represented a predetermined number of feet on the vein.

the subject of actual production. Finally, by August, 1863, the Reveille began to advocate development of existing claims rather than more unprofitable prospecting.² The mines of the district finally began to produce silver, as all reported producing at least some amount of bullion by September 23.³

The Mining and Scientific Press noticed the same lack of production as the Reveille. Throughout early 1863 this journal discussed the promise of the Reese River mines, the new discoveries, and the frenzy of the rush. However, actual production figures are noticeably absent. The Mining and Scientific Press first reported a small amount of bullion production on September 14, 1863.⁴ A November letter to the editor of the Mining and Scientific Press from an Austinite pointed out that the Reese River Mining District was still in a period of exploration and could only promise great silver production.⁵ However, the letter stated that the potential of Reese River was far superior to that in any other area and that profitable developments were ahead.⁶

The slow development of the Reese River milling industry greatly retarded the progress of the entire district. From May, 1862, to the late summer of 1863 all ore mined in central Nevada had to be processed in Virginia City or the other Washoe towns. Since this

procedure was prohibitively expensive, only very small lots of unusually rich ore were sent west for processing. Therefore, mining companies and individual miners alike worked the rich surface veins and stockpiled their ore until mills appeared in the vicinity, or in some cases, until their own mills could be built.

The need for mills did not escape local and San Francisco millmen and speculators, even though the costs of building a mill in such a remote area were extremely high. A high quality twenty-stamp steam mill cost between \$125,000 and \$250,000, depending on the type of equipment in the mill and the type of mill building desired.⁷ Despite these costs and the difficulties involved in transporting, building, and operating a mill in the wilds of central Nevada, mill construction began in the early summer of 1863. The first mill to be completed in the Reese River Mining District opened on August 1. Owned by David E. Buel, this five-stamp affair produced the district's first locally milled and smelted bullion by August 22.⁸

Mill owners and speculators believed there would be enough rich ore to supply many more mills. Within weeks, three more five-stamp mills opened. Brook's Mill opened on August 19, the Union Company Mill on September 2, and Hildreth and Company's Mill

(Long Island Mill) on September 9.⁹ In December, Brady and Company's Mill, the Pioneer Mill, Farris' Mill and Oregon Mill joined this first group.¹⁰ Mills also appeared in surrounding camps. The Fountain Mill in Jacobsville opened in October of 1863, while another mill was under construction at Amador in December.¹¹

Just as it appeared that the mining and milling industry was verging on significant and profitable production, two severe problems developed which further hindered the growth of the district's economy. The first of these problems developed when the newly opening mills announced that their milling charges would be one hundred dollars per ton. Then, after a few weeks of operation it became apparent, due to the nature of the Reese River ores and the inexperience of the mill operators with these ores, that the new mills recovered only 60 percent to 80 percent of the silver locked in the Reese River ore. Within a few weeks, every mill in the Reese River Mining District lay idle as the miners and millmen argued, rather fiercely, about costs and acceptable returns from the milling.

The Reese River Reveille realized the severity of the problem and warned the millmen that their charges of one hundred dollars per ton would force the local miners to use the primitive arrastra to reduce

their ore.¹² In a letter to the editor of the Mining and Scientific Press a Reese Riverite explained that the millmen from California and Washoe were not familiar with the Reese River's "refractory" ores.¹³ He believed, though, that experience and time would solve the problem.¹⁴ However, it seems that time and experience could not quickly solve this dual problem. A letter from an Austinite to the Virginia City Union, carried in the Mining and Scientific Press, pointedly illustrated the situation in December.

There are three mills here in this cañon, and three more are being built; but they are pretty generally idle now, on account of the mill men and miners being at swords' points over the price of the crushing--\$100 per ton. The miners also say that the mills are not prepared to give the proper return's [sic] as they have not a sufficient number of pans. Whatever may be the merits of the controversy, the disagreement exists, and its consequences have been injurious to the country, much retarding its development.¹⁵

As the winter of 1863-1864 approached the miners and millmen agreed to continue mining and stockpiling ore until technology and economics could catch up to the local demands. At a miner's meeting held on November 14 over two hundred miners agreed to continue to extract and stockpile ore and develop likely looking prospects.¹⁶ They hoped that either the corporate or custom millers would solve their technological problems during the slow winter months and in the spring provide better results and lower costs.

Most of the silver ores in the Reese River district were quartz-based, and in many mines the quartz was linked to various sulfides, especially pyrite. Thus, the silver locked in the quartz and the complex silver bearing sulfides in the Reese River district resisted a simple milling process. Crushing the ore in stamp mills and using mercury to amalgamate the silver did not work with Reese River ores as it did in California or the Washoe. So, local miners and millers considered the ores as refractory ores, or ores which could not be efficiently or easily reduced. As a result, ores which assayed very high in the assayer's office would produce only a fraction of their potential silver values when milled. When the oxidized, easily milled, ores which extended downward about fifty feet from the surface ran out, only the "refractory" sulfide or quartz ores remained. It was the inability to process these ores which brought mining in the district to a halt in 1864. And, for all practical purposes, mining in the district could not proceed until the problem was solved.

Although the miners and millmen looked ahead to 1864 with optimism, their hopes turned out to be unjustified. During 1864 development work progressed on only a handful of mines. Those promising mines, which had been discovered in early 1863 and worked with vigor throughout the year, weathered the hard times of

1864 and 1865. By mid-1864 the Reese River millmen had learned how to process the district's ores, but the economic slump of 1864-1865 so retarded development that only a handful of companies were in a position to advance when times got better.

In March of 1864 a local mining and milling company solved the major technological problems involving the Reese River ores. The Oregon Company, owned by Frost, O'Neil, Vanderbosch, et al., erected a roasting furnace to operate in conjunction with its newly completed mill. The furnace passed its tests in March and the ores began to yield their silver.¹⁷ This technique, implemented at the urging of J. Q. C. Vanderbosch and John Veach, local assayers and partners in the Oregon Company, assured the success of the Reese River Mining District and the Oregon Company.¹⁸

The new roasting process added an intermediate step to the traditional stamping process. Crushed ores were taken from the stamp mills and roasted in a furnace to burn off sulfur components and melt the silver into a matte. Then, mercury was added to further amalgamate the silver so that bars of silver bullion could be poured.

Soon, all the mills in the district added roasting furnaces, and mills which had been idle for months began to crush ore again. However, the lack

of large amounts of developmental capital for the local mines hindered the growth of the milling industry because not enough ore surfaced to employ all the mills effectively. Although some mills remodeled or updated their operations, in addition to adding roasting furnaces, no new ones were built during 1864. In July, the same seven mills which were in place at the end of 1863 still pounded away in Austin, while only one new one had been built at Yankee Blade.¹⁹ The economic slump which followed the summer of 1864 prohibited any new mill construction, further hindering growth in the milling industry. While Reese River millmen sorted out their technological problems during 1863 and 1864, the local mining industry rapidly advanced through several stages of development.

The tumult which accompanied the rush to Reese River clearly left its mark on the local mining industry. Throughout 1863 and 1864 poor prospectors or equally destitute speculators owned the great majority of the mining claims and mining companies in the district. Both of these groups suffered from the same problem, a lack of capital necessary to develop a surface claim into a profitable mine. As the weeks and months passed these small time operators realized they had few options. They could sell out to larger investors and eliminate a need for money, or merge

their interests to try to more effectively use available manpower and cash. Just months after the rush began the process of consolidation started. The thousands of companies and mines then vanished almost as fast as they formed.

The process of consolidation in the district began as early as January, 1863. On January 23, the Mining and Scientific Press reported that the Reese River Mining Company of San Francisco owned all or part of fourteen ledges.²⁰ By April, the company owned sixteen separate claims and seems to have established a pattern of purchase and consolidation which continued for many years.²¹ These efforts at consolidation accelerated rapidly during 1864. Weak companies collapsed, adjoining claims merged, and ledges played out. The number of people, claims, and companies diminished as they were absorbed by their neighbors or simply allowed to lapse.

The San Francisco Daily Morning Call explained this situation in June, 1864. "The mines are owned by poor men, . . . but those [few] who have been fortunate enough to get below the water line, are now reaping a rich harvest."²² In July, the traveling correspondent of the San Francisco News Letter and Mining Journal wrote from Austin further documenting this trend:

About all the mines being worked here are owned by a few persons, who have combined the capital for working, and leave the management to one of their company who is a practical miner.²³

A report on the mineral resources of the Reese River Region, written in early 1865 by A. Blatchly, Mining Engineer, lists only fourteen serious mining operations in Austin, two in Yankee Blade, and only one in New York Cañon and Amador.²⁴ Although Blatchly's list probably is not comprehensive it does encompass the obviously productive mines and illustrates a rather remarkable drop in the number of working mines in the Reese River district. The precipitous decline from scores of potentially rich claims being worked in 1863 and 1864 to a handful a year later clearly illustrates the district's rapid consolidation.

While the Reese River District generally languished during 1864, certain individual companies prospered. Among these was the Oregon Company, which owned the Oregon, North Star, Blue Ledge and Southern Light claims as well as the Oregon Mill. The Oregon Company was founded in December, 1862, by John Frost, J. Q. C. Vanderbosch, Felix O'Neil, and George Buffet. Returning in March of 1863 to exploit their claims they found they had made some very rich locations. Throughout 1863 and 1864 they worked to establish their business. The company changed names, from Frost, O'Neil and Company

to the Oregon Company in the spring or early summer of 1863, and incorporated as the Oregon Mining and Milling Company in March, 1864.²⁵ The company soon prospered because it possessed rich claims and because it managed its resources very carefully.

Between March and September of 1863 the Oregon Company mines produced enough surface silver to pay for further expansion. In December the company opened a five-stamp mill and by March, 1864, it had solved the puzzle of the Reese River ores by erecting roasting furnaces to treat the ore. In April of 1864 the Mining and Scientific Press reported that the Oregon Company stood "at the head of claims" in the Reese River Mining District.²⁶ The company possessed four rich claims and a "first class" mill, all completely paid for by the partners out of their individual interest in the original mines.²⁷ So, only a year after actual production began, the Oregon Company and its mines occupied the premier position in the Reese River Mining District and were already in a position to dominate the future development of the area.

While the Oregon Company and a handful of the district's other more successful mining ventures moved to the fore in the district, others were not so fortunate. Throughout the dismal economic slump of 1864-1865 the lesser operations struggled to survive. Even the larger,

better established mining operations cut back as the economic times worsened. Wage earning miners were laid off, mills shut down, and bills left unpaid as things worsened throughout 1864. The small operator fared even worse. Although milling costs had dropped slightly from the one hundred dollars per ton charged in 1863, the rates still ranged from seventy-five dollars to one hundred dollars per ton. The individual mine owner or very small company could not afford these charges on their small batches of ore. So, many sold out to their neighbors, or merged with them to combine limited resources.

The small time miners and prospectors who wanted to make a go of it developed various methods which allowed them to hang on. By mid-summer of 1864 fifty or more Reese Riverites were busily at work with hand mortars and pestles. They made five to ten dollars per day by purchasing or mining small lots of high-grade ore and then "milling" it by hand.²⁸ The more ambitious hand millers developed small one- and two-stamp crushers operated by cams and a hand crank.²⁹ This small stamp mill idea blossomed, and by mid-August four- and five-stamp mills powered by hand or by horse were being built by many mine owners.³⁰ In this way small operators and unemployed miners weathered the hard times of 1864-1865.

The economic slump at Reese River extended well into the summer of 1865. In January, 1865, Austin contained seven stamp mills, five of which used the newly developed roasting furnaces. Since Austin possessed seven mills in December of 1863, it can be seen that the industry indeed stood still throughout 1864.³¹ The mines which possessed rich ore and a modicum of capital continued to work deeper into the earth. Shallow surface workings with no ore at the deeper levels faded away, and the mining industry entered a new developmental stage during 1865.

Beginning in mid-1865 a flood of eastern capital, much of it freed by the end of the Civil War, led to large scale development in the Reese River mining and milling industries. The last half of 1865 saw a dramatic increase in milling operations in and around Austin and a substantial increase in bullion production. This influx of capital led to increased activity on both large and small claims, a spurt in mill building, and, ultimately, to a half a decade of prosperity and promise for the district.

Austin blossomed during the second half of the 1860s and its fortunes rode on a substantial and businesslike mining and milling industry. The ranks of small time prospectors and one man mining operations faded from the scene. A few well managed and well

financed companies, often consolidated from many earlier ventures, survived to reap the rewards of Reese River. By 1866 only 133 producers of ore appeared in the Lander County Assessor's books,³² a dramatic decline from the hundreds of potentially rich claims being worked in 1863 and 1864. Since many of these latter producers leased their mines, or parts of a mine, from larger companies, it is unlikely that more than seventy or seventy-five mines were actually being worked in the entire Reese River-Amador-Yankee Blade area during this era of prosperity.³³

Clarence King's Report of the Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel sheds a great deal of light on the evolution of the Reese River Mining District's mining history during the 1865-1870 period. When King's expedition to explore and survey the territory between the Sierra Nevadas and the eastern front of the Rockies reached Austin in September, 1869, he found that the properties of the mining industry already were highly consolidated. A handful of companies operating a few productive claims controlled the district. Within a period of six years (1863-1869) the thousands of claims and hundreds of working mines had been grouped into three or four industrially-oriented corporate enterprises.³⁴

King pointed out that this consolidation occurred because the truly rich veins in the area were located

in a relatively small area of Lander Hill. After several years of surface mining and unorganized prospecting the great majority of working mines simply ran out of ore.³⁵ A few mines on Lander Hill continued to produce and they quickly gained a dominant position in the district.

By the time King viewed Austin in 1869 the only working and profitable mines in the Reese River Mining District were the Oregon and North Star, owned by the Manhattan Mining Company, and the Buel North Star, owned by a group of local mine owners who had consolidated their claims. All other mines in the district either lay idle or were being worked so sporadically that they could not be classed as producers.³⁶ King visited many of the idle claims which previously had produced huge profits and he discussed their rise and fall on an individual basis. The Troy Mine, on Lander Hill, still operated in 1869, but it was beginning to operate at a loss when King examined its books. The Florida Mine, worked by the New York and Austin Silver Mining Company, had been very profitable but suspended operations in early 1869. The Diana, one of the district's earliest successes, closed in the summer of 1868. The Savage, another very successful early mine, also failed in the summer of 1868. The Great Eastern closed in 1867 or 1868, never having

shown a profit. The Whitlach Union and Camargo mines, both very successful in 1863 and 1864, had been idle for several years by 1869.³⁷

In Yankee Blade the situation was even more limited. All the mines in this locale suspended operations in the depression of 1864 and 1865. Only one, the Yankee Blade, was being worked in 1869 and it was only open because A. A. Curtis, the manager of the Manhattan Mine, decided to reopen the mine as a speculative venture.³⁸

Although the Reese River mining industry went through great changes during the period of consolidation and industrialization between 1863 and 1870, the handful of mines which emerged produced millions of dollars worth of silver. The immediate Reese River area (including Amador and Yankee Blade after 1865) produced approximately \$7 million worth of silver bullion between 1864 and 1870, well over one third of the area's total production from discovery until 1940.³⁹ This bullion produced a permanent settlement where only a wild mining camp had existed before, and by the late 1870s an industrial economy based on large scale corporate mining was firmly established in the district.

While the mining industry followed a gradual course towards consolidation, the milling industry in the Reese River Mining District developed too quickly.

A frenzy to build mills swept the Reese River Mining District in 1865 and 1866, producing a milling capacity far in excess of the district's actual needs. As the outlying districts developed their own milling capacity this disparity became even more pronounced.

Due to the economic slump of 1864-1865, no new mills were built until mid-1865. Thus, the seven mills completed in Austin during 1863, and very early 1864, served the area's expanding mining industry quite adequately for almost two years. However, as the recession ended and eastern capital appeared in the district a flurry of mill construction began. John Ross Browne wrote in his first Report Upon the Mineral Resources of the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains that in late 1866 Austin and the nearby districts of Yankee Blade and Amador contained "seventeen steam mills, carry nearly two hundred stamps, and [are] capable of crushing and amalgamating one hundred fifty tons of ore daily."⁴⁰ Browne quickly pointed out that this capacity far exceeded the available ore supply, that not even a quarter of the mills ran steadily during the year, and that by late 1866 or early 1867 less than a quarter of the mills were in operation. Therefore, if less than one-quarter of seventeen mills were operating, only three, or perhaps four of the seventeen mills in and around Austin remained in operation by early 1867.⁴¹

This number of mills shrank drastically during 1867, as Browne's report of the following year lists only twelve mills in Austin and the immediate vicinity.⁴² Browne was more charitable in his second report and did not differentiate between working and idle mills, simply listing all those in operation or in a suitable condition to be put in operation.⁴³ Browne did say that some mills had been removed or dismantled, a statement which marked the beginning of a long term reduction in the number of mills and in the overall milling capacity of the district.⁴⁴

The rapid decline of the milling industry ended when the milling capacity reached a roughly equal balance with ore production. By September, 1869, this balance had been achieved. Clarence King reported that in September, 1869, Austin and the immediate vicinity contained "six or seven mills, having in the aggregate about 75 or 80 stamps."⁴⁵ However, only one mill in the district, the Manhattan, was running.⁴⁶ The Manhattan's only potential competition, the Keystone Mill, had burned in the spring of 1868.⁴⁷ The Manhattan Mill nearly had monopolized milling in the area, as it treated the ores of its own mines and also treated those of all the other producing mines in the vicinity.⁴⁸ Still, the other mine owners preferred a little competition, or the threat of competition, in the market place, so the

Lane and Fuller Company refurbished the Metacom Mill at Yankee Blade as a means to influence the price of milling at the Manhattan Mill.⁴⁹ They did not actually use the mill, they just kept it in operating condition. As a potential competitor to the Manhattan Mill the Metacom Mill served its somewhat threatening purposes perfectly.⁵⁰

Thus, by 1870, the mining and milling industry of the Reese River Mining District had completed its evolution from a wild and unruly mining economy to an industrial economy based on one or two large mining and milling companies. In 1870 only two mining companies controlled the Reese River Mining District and the surrounding districts such as Yankee Blade and Amador. The lion's share of this control belonged to the Manhattan Mining Company which became the lifeblood of Austin's mining and milling economy in the late 1860s and continued to dominate the area for twenty years.

Notes

- ¹Angel, History of Nevada, p. 64.
- ²Reese River Reveille, 22 August 1863.
- ³Reese River Reveille, 23 September 1863.
- ⁴Mining and Scientific Press, 6 (September 14, 1863), p. 2.
- ⁵Mining and Scientific Press, 7 (November 23, 1864), pp. 1, 4.
- ⁶Ibid.
- ⁷Angel, History of Nevada, p. 464.
- ⁸Anthony Behm Collection, Nevada Historical Society, Reno; Angel, History of Nevada, p. 464.
- ⁹Anthony Behm Collection, Nevada Historical Society.
- ¹⁰Ibid. The narrative of the Behm Collection states that the Pioneer Mill came to Austin from the Pike's Peak area of Colorado. This east to west movement of mining machinery at this early date is an unusual event.
- ¹¹Reese River Reveille, 1 December 1863.
- ¹²Reese River Reveille, 30 September 1864.
- ¹³Mining and Scientific Press, 7 (November 2, 1863), p. 2.
- ¹⁴Ibid.
- ¹⁵Mining and Scientific Press, 7 (December 14, 1863), p. 1.
- ¹⁶Reese River Reveille, 14 November 1863.
- ¹⁷Browne, "The Reese River Country," p. 33.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Silver Mines of Nevada, p. 18.

²⁰Mining and Scientific Press, 6 (January 23, 1863), p. 2.

²¹Mining and Scientific Press, 6 (April 27, 1863), pp. 2-4.

²²Silver Mines of Nevada, p. 29. As with other mines in the West, those at Austin experienced water seepage at greater depths. Pumping costs remained low until the shafts reached greater depths in the late 1860s, during the 1870s and throughout the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

²³Ibid., p. 60.

²⁴A. Blatchly, Silver Districts of Nevada. New York: Wm. C. Bryant and Co., 1865, pp. 23-27. Blatchly lists the following mining claims which he considered to be the premier operations in the area: the Oregon, on Lander Hill, owned by the Oregon Company; the North Star, on Lander Hill, owned by the Oregon Company; the Morgan and Muncy, on Lander Hill; the Diana, on Lander Hill; the Savage, on Lander Hill; the Revenue, on Lander Hill; the Whitlach, on Union Hill; the Silver Chamber, on Union Hill; the Byron, on Union Hill; the Mercedes, on Union Hill; the Summit King, on Union Hill; the North River, on Central Hill; the Hubbard, on Central Hill; the Capitol and Foster, on Central Hill; the Yankee Blade and the Whitlach Union at Yankee Blade; the Midas Mine in New York Canyon; and the Amador Mine at Amador. Although this is a promotional work, it does deal thoroughly with basic facts involving the Reese River mines.

²⁵Mining and Scientific Press, 8 (April 16, 1864), pp. 250-251.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Mining and Scientific Press, 9 (August 6, 1864), pp. 84, 89.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Mining and Scientific Press, 9 (August 20, 1864), pp. 113, 115, 119.

³¹Mining and Scientific Press, 10 (January 14, 1865), p. 23.

³²Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 70.

³³Clarence A. King, Report of the Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel. Professional Papers of the Engineer Department, U.S. Army, No. 18. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870, p. 33.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 350-382. Clarence King interviewed J. A. Boalt, General E. A. Wild, C. A. Stetefeldt, A. A. Curtis, C. F. Horn, and C. C. Rave during his six week stay in Austin. All these men were intimately related to the Reese River mining economy and to the mining industry in general and could provide accurate information about the Reese River mines, if they were disposed to do so.

³⁵Ibid., p. 351.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 350-379.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 350-375.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 374-375.

³⁹Couch and Carpenter, Nevada's Metal and Mineral Production (1859-1940, Inclusive), p. 75; Smith, "Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 63-64; Angel, History of Nevada, p. 464.

⁴⁰John Ross Browne, Report Upon the Resources of the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867, p. 129. (Covers the year 1866.)

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²John Ross Browne, Report Upon the Resources of the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868, pp. 400-403. (Covers the year 1867.)

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵King, Report of the Fortieth Parallel, p. 376.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE MANHATTAN MINING COMPANY

During the era of consolidation in the Reese River region the Manhattan Mining Company forged a position as the leading mining and milling enterprise in central Nevada. Following a brief period of turmoil during the company's first years it developed into a sound and profitable venture. For two decades after 1867 the Manhattan Company grew in strength. Shrewd managers, good ore bodies, and a long term willingness to update its technology allowed the company to maintain its dominant position in central Nevada as well as the Reese River District throughout the life of the company.

In July, 1865, a group of New York investors formed the Manhattan Silver Mining Company of Nevada.¹ The capital stock of the new company, \$1 million, was to be used to purchase controlling interest in the already proven and well-known properties of the Oregon Mill and Mining Company and to develop them further.² The new company's officers retained the reputable firm of Adelberg and Raymond, mining engineers and metallurgists, to examine the property of the Oregon Mill and Mining Company before the purchase, then to

make recommendations as to development of the property after the purchase.³

By early 1865, the purchased property already had won a reputation as a profitable and well-managed mine. The Manhattan Silver Mining Company purchased the following from the Oregon Mill and Mining Company:

1. A ten-stamp ore reduction mill, with roasting ovens and amalgamating apparatus, capable of working seven tons of ore daily

2. Eighteen hundred acres of woodland, to furnish nut pine logs to fuel the steam engines of both the mines and the mill

3. Four silver-bearing quartz lodes; the North Star (1,000 feet on the ledge), the Oregon (1,000 feet), the Blue Ledge (800 feet), and the Southern Light (900 feet)⁴

According to the firm of Adelberg and Raymond, when the Manhattan Company purchased the assets of the Oregon Mining and Milling Company, the company's books showed a profit of approximately \$240,000 in calendar year 1864.⁵ It seemed as if the newly formed Manhattan Company was a guaranteed success, as it had capital, intelligent advice from professional engineers, four rich mines, and a successful, working ore reduction mill.

Yet, for almost two years the company performed miserably, and it did not show a profit until 1867. Several problems delayed the growth of the Manhattan Mining Company. First, the company appointed an inexperienced and unqualified General Superintendent, John E. Boyd, whose duties included the overall management of the company's mining and milling operations. He appointed superintendents to manage the underground work and milling complex. Initially he retained John Frost, one of the original partners in the Oregon Company, to supervise the underground work.⁶ However, by early 1866 Frost had left the Manhattan Company and been replaced by Michael Kirnan.⁷ Kirnan, a well-known and experienced miner, left the company in May, 1866. During this period the production of the Manhattan Company's rich mines declined steadily. Apparently Boyd insisted on directing the underground work himself and he soon lost the vein. He alienated both Frost and Kirnan, two able miners and superintendents, in a matter of months and caused the Reese River Mining District's richest claims to almost fail.

To complicate matters further, Boyd spent a large amount of the new company's operating capital on above ground improvements. A new twenty-stamp reduction mill was built between September, 1865, and April, 1866, and new hoist houses and other structures

were also built to service the Oregon and North Star shafts.⁸ Although Boyd seemed to be doing everything possible to develop the claims, he was actually failing miserably. By spending all the available capital above ground, before adequate ore reserves were proven underground, the company soon found itself in possession of a splendid physical plant with no ore to process. In August or September, 1866, the situation became very serious for the Manhattan Company. The developmental capital had been spent, bills were mounting daily, ore production had almost ceased and the Lander County Sheriff announced that the company's assets would be sold to pay its debts.⁹

With the company teetering on the brink of bankruptcy and closure, the New York stockholders chose to reorganize the management structure. The company's most pressing debts were paid and the Sheriff's sale avoided. A new General Superintendent, James Bowstead, a well-known and experienced miner from Sacramento, California, arrived in mid-September to replace Boyd as General Agent.¹⁰ Bowstead resumed operations at the company and lured John Frost back from the new White Pine District to supervise the Manhattan Company's underground work.¹¹

Frost quickly proved his worth, as he immediately altered the line of deadwork Boyd had

followed for over a year and found the lost Oregon vein after only a few days of work.¹² Within a few weeks the Manhattan Company had turned the corner and was well on its way to becoming a profitable venture. General Agent Bowstead pushed ahead with vigor, and by December 11, 1866, enough ore had been gathered to reactivate the company's mill.¹³

Although the year 1867 began on a positive note for the Manhattan Company, the company faced a crisis in late January when General Agent Bowstead suddenly died.¹⁴ Fortunately, as far as the Manhattan Company was concerned, an able replacement could be found on the scene and in the firm's employ. Allen A. Curtis, the Manhattan Company's Austin-based accountant, stepped in to fill Bowstead's position.

Curtis, a New Jersey native, had arrived in Austin by way of California in April, 1865. He immediately became the bookkeeper for the Oregon Company, and when the property sold to the Manhattan Company in July, 1865, he became the bookkeeper for the new company.¹⁵ When the Manhattan Company faced financial hardship in late 1866 Curtis invested heavily in Manhattan Company stock, which not only helped save the company but made Curtis a significant minority stockholder.¹⁶ After Agent Bowstead died Curtis quickly stepped in and because of both his managerial

abilities and vested interests he became the General Agent of the company by the end of February, 1867.¹⁷

Curtis no doubt realized that Boyd's mistakes were well on their way to being remedied by Bowstead at the time of his death. Therefore, Curtis simply continued with the existing staff. He kept Frost in charge of the underground work and J. R. Murphy, another Bowstead appointee, in charge of the milling operation. This decision to continue a successful management team achieved positive results almost immediately. By the end of 1867 the Manhattan Company paid off its entire indebtedness and the company became the largest producer of ore in the Reese River Mining District.¹⁸

Production figures clearly illustrate the Manhattan Company's leap into its predominant position. In the quarter ending September 30, 1866, the Manhattan Company mines produced no ore at all. In the quarter ending December 31, 1866, (four months after Bowstead's arrival) the company produced 69 tons of ore. The following quarter, ending March 31, 1867, the company produced 384 tons of ore and the next quarter, ending June 30, 1867, the company produced 760 tons of ore. The quarter ending December 31, 1867, showed almost as good results with 725 tons of ore produced. By the end of 1867 the mines of the Manhattan Company

were far and away the most productive and profitable in the entire district, producing over a third of the entire Reese River Mining District's ore and over twice as much ore as any of its competitors.¹⁹

For the next several years the Manhattan Company continued to produce profitably and improve its production techniques. Throughout 1868 and 1869 the ore production of the Manhattan Company rose consistently while that of the other producing mines dropped steadily, leaving the Manhattan Company as the only significant producer of ore in the district. While other mines occasionally rivalled or topped the Manhattan Company's quarterly production, none could hope to compete on a year-in year-out basis.²⁰

Curtis realized in 1869 that eventually the Manhattan Company would be forced to depend on lower and lower grade ores for survival. He also believed that any process, no matter what the cost, that would lower reduction costs and increase efficiency could make the Manhattan Company's operations significantly more profitable. This point was driven home for Curtis in 1869 when costs of mining and reduction rose as ore quality declined. Although the rush to White Pine, seventy miles east of Austin, certainly contributed to the financial and mining slump in Austin in 1869, Curtis could see the real problem of rising

labor, materials, fuel, and transportation costs as the real foe. As ore quality declined, as Curtis knew it would, the situation would only worsen. The company made a very small profit that year, and Curtis believed it could have been much more with a more efficient method of ore reduction in place at Austin.²¹

While the Manhattan Company began to search for a more profitable ore reduction method, another Reese Riverite was inventing just such a process. C. A. Stetefeldt, a long-time Nevada miner with experience in the Reese River ores, built a test furnace near Reno in the summer of 1869. The Stetefeldt furnace was a type of roasting furnace which used a chloridizing agent, in conjunction with the heat of the furnace, to prepare silver ores for amalgamation. The finely ground silver ore passed down a shaft against a current of hot air. This resulted in a 90 percent chloridized product ready to be amalgamized. The Stetefeldt furnace, with a 90 percent product, was much more efficient than any other roasting furnace and possessed great potential. Backed by English capital, the experiment proved to be a great success.²²

Within a matter of months the management of the Manhattan Company began to inquire about the new process. As early as December, 1869, the President of the Manhattan Company advised Curtis to purchase the necessary patents

and royalties to guarantee its access to the Stetefeldt process.²³ In early March, 1870, the Manhattan Company sent ore samples to Reno to test the new process and in early April the company closed the Manhattan Mill in order to convert it to the Stetefeldt process.²⁴ By late June the new furnace was in operation.²⁵ In August, the Stetefeldt furnace cut roasting costs by 50 percent as it used less fuel and labor to produce more silver product, and allowed low and middle grade ores to be worked profitably.²⁶

Curtis and the Manhattan Company clearly understood the import of this technological breakthrough. Their original agreement with the Stetefeldt Company gave the Manhattan Company the exclusive use of the furnace in and around the Reese River Mining District. Thus the company acquired a technological monopoly in the district almost overnight. Even though the royalties to the process cost the Manhattan Company a fee of two dollars per ton of ore sent through the furnace it was well worth the expense.²⁷ This was especially true because the process increased the profits of the company's growing custom milling business. Since the company charged a set fee, per ton, to mill ore for other customers, any increase in efficiency showed as profit for the company, and was not passed on to the customers. While the Manhattan Company moved to establish

a monopoly in the milling industry, it also took steps to protect its mining interests.

In early 1868 the Manhattan Company began to shield its underground interests from their greatest threat, litigation. A lawsuit over claim boundaries between the Timoke and Manhattan Companies was settled out of court by agreeing to new, well established boundary lines. A similar agreement with the owners of the Buel North Star settled the Manhattan Company's western boundary. In this manner, the companies avoided costly litigation and the mine's profit went to the mine owners and not the lawyers.²⁸ As the fortunes of the Reese River Mining District declined, many of the local mines were abandoned or worked only enough to maintain title. Curtis feared that new owners of these idle claims would attempt to expropriate Manhattan Company veins through legal action involving boundary questions or other complicated issues of mining law. So, the Manhattan Company initiated a policy of purchasing any and all claims which might interfere with the company's operations or produce ore on a profitable basis.

The first of these defensive purchases came in July, 1871, when the Manhattan Company purchased the entire holdings of the Reese River Consolidated Company.²⁹ The Reese River Consolidated owned over

forty separate claims located on Lander and Union Hills. This number included many of the most well known and most productive mines from the district's early years.³⁰ This purchase gave the Manhattan Company undisputed possession of nearly all of Lander Hill and left only a half dozen, or fewer, producing mines outside the company's control.³¹ Once the Manhattan Company established this commanding position in the district, the mining industry in the area stabilized, with the fortunes of the area tied to the success or failure of one company.

Over the next fifteen years the Manhattan Company quietly and continually expanded its operations in the region. Curtis purchased contiguous and non-contiguous claims as they became available over the years, so that the company became a huge mining complex when compared to its original holdings. When the Manhattan Company purchased the four claims of the Oregon Company no one could have predicted the eventual growth of the new venture. The Manhattan Company's holdings grew from 3,700 feet on the four original ledges in 1865 to over 70,000 linear feet on 68 different claims by 1872.³² This process of acquisition continued throughout the 1870s. At the end of the decade the Manhattan Company owned 129,810 feet of Lander Hill ledges on approximately 150 different claims.³³

While the Manhattan Company steadily expanded during the 1870s changes within the company also occurred. In the summer of 1874 San Francisco capitalists purchased control of the stock in the Manhattan Company.³⁴ Capital stock in the company jumped from \$387,500 to \$1 million and the main office moved from New York to San Francisco.³⁵ However, these changes had no noticeable effect in Austin, as Curtis remained the General Agent and retained his hand-picked staff.³⁶

The Manhattan Company entered the 1880s in a seemingly impregnable position. The steady and profitable ore production of the 1870s continued for the first half of the 1880s while the company's custom milling business flourished. To the casual observer the Manhattan Company, with an inexhaustible ore supply and excellent facilities, appeared to be a permanent institution. Yet, in 1887 the company went bankrupt and the assets of the historic mining operation were sold at a sheriff's sale.

In 1881, Allen A. Curtis stepped down as General Agent of the Manhattan Company and installed his brother, Melville Curtis, in the position.³⁷ Although Allen Curtis continued to keep in close contact with the company's operations, his other business ventures occupied most of his time. Melville Curtis arrived in Austin in mid-1875 and became the U.S. Deputy Mineral

Surveyor. He worked the Reese River Mining District and central Nevada region and listed his office in the Manhattan Mill.³⁸ Melville apparently learned the mining business well, for only six years later Allen gave him complete control of the company's operations.

From 1880 to 1884 the company's profits remained constant. However, the quality of the Lander Hill ores deteriorated drastically after 1884, and profits declined in a like manner.³⁹ During 1885 and 1886 the Manhattan Company mined less ore than it had since the mid-1860s and its yearly gross yields were likewise the lowest the company had experienced in almost two decades.⁴⁰

In January, 1887, the Manhattan Silver Mining Company sold its assets to a group of investors headed by L. J. Hanchett, who was to supervise the mines, and R. M. Whipple of Chicago, who financed the venture.⁴¹ The asking price for the entire Manhattan Company complex was \$200,000, but the final sale price was \$175,000.⁴² The new enterprise retained the old company's name, but brought in an entirely new staff headed by Hanchett.

Legal problems developed almost immediately for the new company. Apparently the new company's stockholders could not agree on how to run the operation or how to finance it. Litigation soon killed the fledgling venture. The works and all assets of the Manhattan Silver Mining Company were sold at a sheriff's

sale in December, 1887.⁴³ The successors to the original Manhattan Company had failed in less than a year, and were only the first in a long line of companies which foundered on the rocks of the Reese River.

Following the failure of Hanchett's venture, a new company, the Manhattan Mining and Reduction Company, was formed. This new company, owned by the lienholders who had backed Hanchett's attempts, purchased all the property of the Manhattan Company (valued at \$300,000) at the sheriff's sale for \$41,000.⁴⁴ The new company began to develop various shafts on Lander Hill in 1888, but litigation again began between stockholders and lienholders. As a result, the mines produced little ore in 1888.⁴⁵ In 1889, after the internal legal battles had ended, the company produced 12,429 tons of ore, an all time high for the Manhattan Company mines.⁴⁶ Still, costs exceeded yield by roughly six thousand dollars and the company realized it could not make a profit.⁴⁷ During 1890 and 1891 the Manhattan Mining and Reduction Company did very little work on Lander Hill. Total production for both years amounted to only 2,398 tons in 1890 and 217 tons in 1891.⁴⁸ After a dismal year in 1891 the owners of the company decided to sell their holdings. Declines in ore quality and in silver prices during these years negated increases in mining and milling efficiency.

On September 8, 1891, the Reese River Reveille reported that all the property of the Manhattan Mining and Reduction Company had been purchased by the Austin Mining Company.⁴⁹ This company, with P. T. Farnsworth as manager, immediately poured large amounts of money into its operations. In 1893 the company began to work on the Clifton tunnel, a drainage and ventilation tunnel started in the 1860s, which was pushed forward periodically in the 1870s and 1880s, but never finished. It was hoped that the tunnel would drain the Lander Hill mines and lower operating costs, i.e., pumping costs, enough to make mining profitable. This was a growing problem as shafts went deeper into Lander Hill, and the pumping expenses grew every year. Although pumping costs did decline, silver prices fell faster, so the project ultimately failed. The company also built a large new mill near the mouth of the Clifton tunnel after its completion in 1896.⁵⁰

Although the Austin Mining Company expended large sums to open the six thousand foot Clifton tunnel, to expand operations in other Lander Hill shafts, and to build a new and modern ore reduction mill, the company never made a profit. The company roughly broke even for the period 1891-1899, but following 1899 the company cut back operations drastically.⁵¹ The operations of the Austin Mining Company also were

clouded by litigation. The major stockholder in the company, J. G. Phelps Stokes, sued his manager, P. T. Farnsworth, in 1901. Stokes alleged that Farnsworth had drained a large amount of money out of the Austin Mining Company's coffers for his personal use.⁵² The suit, which dragged on for over a year, paralyzed the Austin Mining Company. Almost no work was done in 1901 and 1902, and finally in June of 1902 Stokes ended all company operations and turned the works of the Austin Mining Company over to lessors.⁵³

Between 1902 and 1905 various mines on Lander Hill were worked by local lessors who conducted all the mining. In June, 1905, this situation changed. A Chicago syndicate known as the Austin-Hanopah Mining Company purchased the Austin Mining Company's holdings for \$70,000.⁵⁴ Apparently this company attempted to mine its stockholders and not Lander Hill. By the end of 1906 all mining and milling work ceased.⁵⁵

The last major attempt to exploit the riches of Lander Hill came between 1908 and 1914. In January, 1908, a group of investors from Chicago purchased the holdings of the Austin-Hanopah Mining Company, as well as many individual Reese River mines.⁵⁶ This new company, the Austin-Manhattan Consolidated Mining Company, boasted in its advertising literature and in its prospectus that the company had acquired 164

claims on and around Lander Hill.⁵⁷ The new company immediately began clearing out the Clifton tunnel and reestablishing the mining operations.⁵⁸

In 1909 two entirely new mining companies entered the area. The Austin-Nevada Consolidated Mining Company started to work on the eastern, underdeveloped, edge of Lander Hill while the Maricopa Mines Company initiated work in the old Patriot Mine at Yankee Blade, under a lease from the Austin-Manhattan Consolidated Mining Company.⁵⁹ All three of these companies attempted to succeed where others had failed and they quickly joined the ranks of the failures. In 1912, after four years of unprofitable production, the Austin-Manhattan Consolidated Mining Company suspended operations and fell into a receivership. In 1914 one of the company's largest creditors, H. C. Fownes, purchased the company.⁶⁰ Fownes formed the Austin-Manhattan Consolidated Silver Mines, but very little work was ever done by this company.⁶¹

The Maricopa Mines Company failed in April, 1913, and the Austin-Nevada Consolidated Mining Company finally failed in 1920.⁶² A newcomer, the Austin-Dakota Development Company, entered the Reese River Mining District in 1914, went into a receivership in 1916, and finally shut down in 1920.⁶³ By 1920 only lessors and local prospector/miners remained to pick over

the hundreds of abandoned shafts in the Austin area.

Occasional attempts to form mining companies occurred in the 1930s and early 1940s, but none proved successful.⁶⁴ One such venture, the Austin Silver Mining Company, attempted to reopen mines on Lander Hill and at Yankee Blade between 1935 and 1938, but was only marginally profitable. This operation ended in 1938, and once again the mines of Lander Hill were closed.⁶⁵

Therefore, upon examining the entirety of mining in the Reese River district the predominance of the Manhattan Mining Company emerges. This company, through its managerial and technological expertise, coupled with good fortune, came to dominate not only the Reese River area, but the entire central Nevada region. Its high quality custom milling work tied nearly all surrounding mines and camps to Austin and the Reese River. When ore quality and silver prices declined, the Manhattan Mining Company management saw the end in sight and sold the operation before the local mining industry collapsed completely. The Manhattan Company opted to leave the final agonizing days of the Reese River mining industry to those with more faith and less judgement than they.

The closing of Austin's mines also ended another interesting aspect of Reese River mining. Throughout

the mining history of the district, the recruitment of developmental and operating capital was as important and challenging as the silver mining itself. As the Spanish proverb says, it takes a mine to make a mine, and the Reese River certainly fit the age-old pattern.

Notes

¹Reese River Reveille, 17 July 1865.

²Prospectus, Manhattan Silver Mining Company.
New York: William C. Bryant Company, 1865, pp.
13-20; John Frost Collection, Transcript of
Interview, H. H. Bancroft with John Frost, 1885.

³Prospectus, Manhattan Silver Mining
Company, pp. 1-21. Note--President of the company
was H. Augustus, Taylor, Secretary and Treasurer
was Charles G. Taylor, Resident Superintendent
was John E. Boyd, and Thomas N. Dale, E. Put, H.
Augustus Taylor, John J. Osborn, E. Reed McIlvaine,
and Charles V. Martin were trustees.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁶John Frost Collection, Transcript of
interview, H. H. Bancroft with John Frost, 1885.

⁷Reese River Reveille, 26 February 1866; 3
March 1866.

⁸Reese River Reveille, 5 September 1866; 12
April 1866; 4 May 1866.

⁹Reese River Reveille, 1 September 1866; 12
September 1866; 11 October 1866.

¹⁰Reese River Reveille, 1 September 1866.

¹¹Reese River Reveille, 12 September 1866;
11 October 1866.

¹²Reese River Reveille, 11 October 1866.

¹³Reese River Reveille, 12 December 1866.

¹⁴Reese River Reveille, 12 January 1867;
2 February 1867; 28 January 1867.

¹⁵Angel, History of Nevada, pp. 469-470; John Frost Collection, Transcript of an interview, H. H. Bancroft with John Frost, 1885.

¹⁶Angel, History of Nevada, pp. 469-470.

¹⁷Reese River Reveille, 2 February 1867; Angel, History of Nevada, pp. 469-470.

¹⁸Angel, History of Nevada, pp. 469-470.

¹⁹Browne, A Report Upon the Mineral Resources of the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains, 1868; Engineering and Mining Journal, 5 (March 7, 1868), pp. 147, 152-153.

²⁰Quarterly returns are available in John Ross Browne's Report Upon the Mineral Resources of the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains, 1868, and in Rossiter W. Raymond's similar Reports Upon the Mineral Resources of the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains, issued yearly in 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1875, 1876, and 1877. Also, the Reese River Reveille carried the official quarterly returns as they were issued, and every January, the Reveille published the previous year's annual production broken down on a quarterly basis. The Engineering and Mining Journal and the Mining and Scientific Press also carried many of these quarterly return statements.

²¹Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 75.

²²Engineering and Mining Journal, 8 (October 19, 1869), p. 245.

²³H. Augustus Taylor to Allen A. Curtis, December 29, 1869, Manhattan Silver Mining Company Collection, Bancroft Library.

²⁴Reese River Reveille, 8 March 1870; 9 April 1870.

²⁵Engineering and Mining Journal, 10 (July 26, 1870), p. 52; Reese River Reveille, 29 June 1870.

²⁶Engineering and Mining Journal, 10 (September 27, 1870), p. 196.

²⁷B. J. Burns to Allen A. Curtis, November 20, 1874, Manhattan Silver Mining Company Collection, Bancroft Library; Engineering and Mining Journal, 10 (November 1, 1870), pp. 281-282.

²⁸Engineering and Mining Journal, 5 (April 18, 1868), p. 244.

²⁹Engineering and Mining Journal, 12 (August 1, 1871), pp. 74-75; Rossiter Raymond, Statistics of Mines and Mining in the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains, 1871. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872, p. 170.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid. This purchase included the following claims: "Apollo Ledge, Blue Ledge, Black Ledge, Camargo, Congress Independent, Jo Lane, Eclipse, Whitlach Yankee Blade, Wall and Isabella, Beard and Seaver Nos. 1 and 2, Hornet, Chicago, Harker, Honest Miner, Union No. 2, first northerly extension, Union No. 2, first southerly extension, Yosemite, Silver Cloud, Goranom, Seymour, Isabella, Wall Ledge, Mossiter Ledge, Nevada Ledge, Peerless Ledge, North Star, second extension west, Gale and Beckwith Company, Yosemite Ledge, Jefferson Ledge, Madison Company, first location northwest, Jefferson Ledge, Madison Ledge, Sally Davis Ledge, Oregon Ledge, Wall Company, first westerly extension, Oregon Ledge, second westerly extension, Diana Ledge, Eclipse Ledge, Consolidated Union Tunnel." Total cost was \$60,000.

³²Ibid., p. 138.

³³Engineering and Mining Journal, 29 (January 31, 1880), p. 89.

³⁴Rossiter Raymond. Statistics of Mines and Mining in the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains, 1874. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875, p. 232.

³⁵Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, p. 31.

³⁶Raymond, Statistics of Mines, 1874, p. 232.

³⁷Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, p. 32.

³⁸Reese River Reveille, 7 July 1875.

³⁹Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, p. 33; Manhattan Silver Mining Company Collection, Bancroft Library.

⁴⁰Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, pp. 33-35.

⁴¹Reese River Reveille, 14 January 1887; Mining and Scientific Press, 54 (January 29, 1887), p. 69; Manhattan Silver Mining Company Collection, Bancroft Library.

⁴²Manhattan Silver Mining Company Collection, Bancroft Library. Corporate officers were A. N. Rutherford, President; J. M. Roberts, Vice-President; John Crockett, Secretary; L. J. Hanchett, Superintendent; R. M. Whipple, Director and F. B. Reynolds, Director.

⁴³Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, p. 37; Mining and Scientific Press, 55 (December 31, 1887), p. 417.

⁴⁴Engineering and Mining Journal, 45 (June 7, 1888), p. 25.

⁴⁵Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, pp. 38-39.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 38.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 38-39.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 39-40.

⁵²Ibid., p. 39.

⁵³Reese River Reveille, 21 June 1902; Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, pp. 39-40.

⁵⁴Reese River Reveille, 28 June 1905.

⁵⁵Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, p. 40; Reese River Reveille, 28 June 1905. The new company purchased the Austin Mining

Company property for \$70,000, and incorporated the same year with a stated value of \$2 million. Backers came from Chicago, except for one man from Salt Lake City.

⁵⁶Reese River Reveille, 4 January 1908; 15 January 1908.

⁵⁷Austin-Manhattan Consolidated Mining Company Collection, Nevada Historical Society, Reno. This small, one box collection primarily consists of advertising literature and prospectuses for the new venture.

⁵⁸Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, p. 41.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Walter Henry Weed, International Edition, The Mines Handbook: An Enlargement of the Copper Handbook. New York: W. H. Weed, 1920, p. 1015.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, p. 41; A. J. Stinson, Biennial Report of the State Inspector of Mines, 1919-1920. Carson City, Nevada: State Printing Office, 1921, p. 35.

⁶³Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, pp. 41-42; Robert D. Fisher, ed., Marvyn Scudder Manual of Extinct or Obsolete Companies, Vol. III, 1930. New York: the author, 1930, p. 39.

⁶⁴Ross, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Reese River District, p. 42.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 42-44.

CHAPTER V

CAPITAL FOR THE REESE RIVER MINES

The Reese River Mining District, although isolated in the wilds of central Nevada, was significantly affected by people in the distant financial centers of the world. The fortunes of the Reese River Mining District rested upon San Francisco, eastern United States and English investors almost as much as they rested on the silver ores of Lander Hill. Without large amounts of money, mines could not be developed, mills could not be built, miners could not be paid, and supplies could not be purchased. The mines, prospectors, and even the mine owners in the Reese River area simply could not supply the capital necessary to develop their property. As a result, Reese Riverites looked elsewhere for funds, especially after the richest surface deposits had been exhausted and the miners had to sink shafts to reach the ore.

Initially the central Nevadans turned to San Francisco for the needed capital. This was logical, since San Francisco was closer than any other major financial center and San Franciscans already had shown a marked interest in mining investments. By early 1863

San Francisco capitalists controlled the Comstock Lode in western Nevada and these people continued to search for new fields of investment. Soon after the Reese River excitement began the miner/promoters of Austin tapped the seemingly abundant financial resources in northern California.

Although San Franciscans, spurred by word of mouth and newspaper stories, began to investigate the Reese River area immediately, large scale investments did not begin until the end of 1863 and the beginning of 1864. An uncontrolled amount of speculation occurred during this period and the resultant economic slump which developed in the winter of 1864-1865 ended San Francisco's fascination with the Reese River mines.

Not only did the overspeculation by San Francisco capitalists lead to a financial depression on the "Pacific slope," it caused a shift in the source of capital used in Great Basin mines. Eastern capitalists soon took advantage of the disaffection between San Francisco and the rest of the western mining regions. Reese River mine owners led the way in the search for eastern money.

Following the slump of 1864-1865, Reese River mine owners shifted their search for capital to the eastern United States. Eastern capitalists, especially New York, Boston, and Philadelphia investors, organized

and backed most of the corporations in the Reese River area between 1865 and 1870. Also, a number of English companies invested in Reese River property, although their numbers never rivaled that of the New Yorkers.

Around the turn of the century Chicago, Pittsburgh, South Dakota and, to a lesser extent, Austin area capital found its way into the Lander Hill mines. However, the possibility of profitable operations had passed. These investors lost their entire investment and became the last group of capitalists to venture into the Reese River Mining District.

The Reese River region apparently attracted San Francisco capital as early as March, 1863, when the Mining and Scientific Press reported that the Reese River Gold and Silver Mining Company had been formed.¹ This company, owned by San Francisco promoters who purchased property in many Nevada mining camps, consisted of 1,200,000 shares of capital stock with a par value of one hundred dollars per share, one share equaling one foot on a ledge.² If this company had actually owned 1,200,000 "feet" of ledges in Nevada, it would have owned most of the mines in the entire state. This patently speculative venture was not heard from again, but many like it were.

By early summer 1863 the Reese River mines had captured the imagination of the San Francisco

capitalists, as this item from the Territorial Enterprise illustrates.

At the present moment, next to our own section of Washoe, Reese River occupies the most prominent position before the speculative San Francisco eye. Esmeralda and Humboldt have had their day of excitements, and have settled down into the comfortable dog trot of acknowledged worth and secured independence, but Reese River has only recently begun to blaze. Several mills for that District are now under contract here and several more have already been shipped.³

Between the summer of 1863 and the spring of 1864 San Francisco money found its way to the Reese River Mining District. California investors purchased valuable and significant properties, or portions of properties, throughout the Reese River area. A portion of the Morgan and Muncy mine, a major ore producer in 1863 and 1864, was sold to San Franciscans in August. D. E. Buel transferred his ore reduction mill, the district's first mill, to a San Francisco company in September, less than two months after it opened.⁴ Indeed, so much capital flowed into the Reese River area that workers could not be found to do all the work desired by the investors.⁵ By early 1864, "feet" in many of the Reese River mines were being traded on the San Francisco Stock and Exchange Board.⁶ As the winter of 1863-1864 progressed the Reese River frenzy in California grew and investors in San Francisco actively pursued Reese River stocks.⁷

While the interest of San Francisco capitalists was welcomed in the Reese River area, cash was what the Reese River mine owners needed. For the most part San Francisco capital remained in the Bay area. Speculators purchased Reese River claims or "feet" in mines, and they madly bought and sold Reese River stocks, but they forwarded little developmental capital to the area. As time progressed the value of San Francisco attention diminished.

As a result, the optimism and cheerful relations between the Reese River Mining District and San Francisco capitalists dissolved in mid-1864. In April, 1864, the Reese River Reveille was referring to San Francisco capitalists as "the curse of Reese River" and as "the San Francisco leeches who incorporate mining companies but who do not develop the mines."⁸ The Reveille charged the San Francisco companies with wasting most of their resources on lavish offices and useless officers in San Francisco and not spending nearly enough money developing the mines in Reese River.⁹

The San Francisco capital situation worsened in the summer of 1864. Hundreds of these speculative incorporations and poorly managed mining companies collapsed and disappeared during the summer. In August the Reveille concluded that California capital had

disappeared and Austinites would have to look elsewhere for capital.¹⁰ The crash of the San Francisco stock market and the resultant abandonment of mining investments in the Reese River Mining District caused consternation as far away as New York.

While the San Francisco investor rose and fell during 1864, eastern observers carefully monitored the western mining industry. By late 1865 the economic situation in the far western mines had cleared up enough to permit long-distance analysis. In November, 1865, Harper's New Monthly Magazine published a lengthy article about Nevada, which among other things, examined the stock market crash in San Francisco and the resultant bursting of the Reese River "bubble."¹¹ The author of the Harper's treatise summed up the situation by saying "the distrust and disgust [with San Francisco speculators and capitalists] was as widespread as the disaster it [they] brought."¹²

With San Francisco lost as a source of capital, the Reese Riverites quickly turned to other regions to find the needed funds. The Reese River Reveille announced in the early part of the summer of 1864 that a number of Reese River claims were being advertised in New York.¹³ Almost immediately New York capital began to filter into the Reese River region. The New York and Reese River Company (also known as the Midas Silver

Mining Company) purchased a number of Reese River claims in September, 1864.¹⁴ The company began construction of its own mill, the Midas Mill, in Telegraph Canyon by the end of the same month.¹⁵ Within a matter of months capital from New York and other eastern states began to pour into the region.

By the end of 1865 the arrival of needed eastern capital could clearly be seen in the district. As the Reveille put it: "The mines of Reese River stand well in the New York market, and much capital is now finding its way thither for the great Atlantic emporium."¹⁶ Throughout 1865 eastern capitalists investigated and invested in the Reese River area. One such venture, the Keystone Silver Mining Company, backed by New York investors who made their money in the Pennsylvania oil industry, began to purchase properties and build a mill in March, 1865.¹⁷

By April it seemed that many easterners were going to invest in Reese River mines. The Reveille, wanting to avoid the fraud and exploitation of earlier years, warned eastern capitalists to be very careful when investing money.¹⁸ Furthermore, the Reveille urged all investors to send trusted agents to the Reese River Mining District to inspect all properties before purchasing them.¹⁹ The Reveille clearly wanted the Reese River Mining District to avoid earning a

bad reputation in the east, since a tarnished image could deter investment in the local mines.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1865 eastern capitalists invested in the Reese River Mining District. Almost every issue of the Reese River Reveille and the Mining and Scientific Press reported some new purchase or venture backed by easterners. In June, the prestige of the district received a boost when Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House, a leading Radical Republican politician, and later a Vice-President of the United States, toured the Reese River mines and gave a speech in Austin.²⁰ This trend continued throughout the summer and was capped by the visit of General William S. Rosecrans in September and October.²¹ This well known veteran of the Union cause during the just ended Civil War came to the Reese River Mining District to purchase mining properties for himself and his eastern business partners. He even circulated a questionnaire to learn more about the mines of Nevada.²² Rosecrans, who later became heavily involved in the Southern Pacific Railroad and in railroad projects in Mexico, was one of many influential speculator/investors interested in mining in the 1860s.

The publicity given the Reese River Mining District during this period attracted some of its most successful mining investors. The Manhattan Silver

Mining Company, already discussed, was backed by New York capital, as were the Keystone Silver Mining Company and the Confidence Mining Company.²³ Dozens of lesser known and less successful eastern-financed mining and milling ventures appeared in the Reese River Mining District.

AUSTIN.--Just about the liveliest place on this coast--San Francisco not excepted--is the city of Austin. Having occasion to visit that place a few days since, we were surprised to witness the amount of business transacted there, and the greatly improved appearance of the place within the last few months. Everybody appears busy, money plenty, and no one complains, not even the saloon-keepers. New York capital has been largely invested all through the Reese River country, and the result is, that while we are prospering, opening our mines and developing the country, other portions of the State seem to be at a stand still for the want of capital. Many new mills are being erected in the vicinity of Austin, . . . most of them by the aid of Eastern capital, and we predict for that place a long season of prosperity.²⁴

As eastern capital continued to flow into central Nevada, the Reveille published numerous editorials, explaining why eastern companies should invest, but also repeatedly warning the companies to be very careful in their investments. Apparently the Reveille's concern was justified. Throughout the autumn of 1865 the Mining and Scientific Press chastized those eastern investors who purchased Reese River mining interests, then badly managed them so that the ventures failed.²⁵ Yet, the flow of eastern capital

continued unabated and the Reveille described the impact to its readers in October, 1865:

The Revielle [sic] apprehends that but few even of Austin are aware of the extent and character of the work that has been undertaken and carried on in the Reese River region, under the direction of eastern capital. Whole districts have been surveyed and mapped; hundreds of ledges in each have been examined and traced, and their character determined. Large numbers of descriptive specimens have been collected and properly classified to exhibit the character of the veins of silver, copper, tin and lead, which abound there, the value of which the Revielle [sic] thinks will eventually be incalculable.²⁶

During 1866 and 1867 the movement of eastern capital into central Nevada continued, although the pace steadily slowed as time went by. As the weeks and months passed, many of these new ventures failed, or at best did not perform as anticipated. As early as February, 1866, the Mining and Scientific Press published accusations of fraud.²⁷ Apparently, though, these charges did not daunt the eastern investors, as the Reese River Reveille and the Mining and Scientific Press reported new ventures and new companies almost weekly during 1866 and 1867. These same sources also revealed almost daily that many Reese Riverites were in the east soliciting capital for their mines. This was especially the case for those mine owners with potentially rich, but unproven, claims and for those who had proven mines but no capital to work them.

After several years of heavy investment, rumblings of uncertainty began to sound in relation to the future of mining in the Reese River. Observers realized that eastern capital, the key to success in the Reese River area, was not faring too well. A letter written to the Mining and Scientific Press in April, 1866, expresses these realities and fears:

Reese River is at present in a worse condition, in respect to the development of mines, than it was three years since. . . . Eastern capitalists were induced to interest themselves in our midst merely as a venture. And from that time to the present, with all the capital that has been expended, we have been pretty much at a stand still, . . . Eastern capitalists have interested themselves by degrees to such an extent that they are the virtual owners and possessors of the whole section; and to them alone in the future must we look for succor and the development of our mineral wealth. . . .

. . . Some companies have expended all their working capital on their mills, and consequently have no means with which to prospect; others having money are prospecting after their own ideas of mining, and generally with but little if any judgment or success.²⁸

As this letter implies Eastern capital finding its way to Reese River was not being used effectively. Poor management by mine superintendents, the construction of mills before any ore even reached the surface, and building mills which did not efficiently reduce the ores all contributed to a high degree of waste which soon translated into abandoned mines and mills and failed companies. The writer of the letter continued, and discussed successful New York backed Reese River mining operations and stated

that a well managed venture could possibly succeed, but a poorly managed one had no chance at all. As far as the author was concerned, it was the responsibility of the companies to manage well. To manage skillfully, the newly organized company needed to avoid unjustified capital expenditures, such as a mill or expensive surface workings, hire skilled and proven miners and managers and avoid rapid expansion or over expansion. If they did not manage skillfully, then they were at fault, and when they failed they should not blame the Reese River Mining District for their errors.

This problem of unprofitable mines continued to worsen as 1866 progressed. By autumn many eastern capitalists decided to halt work and cease spending money on worthless, or unprofitable, mines.²⁹ The era of widespread eastern investment ended by early 1868. The truly productive mines and mills, already owned by eastern capital, continued to pay dividends, while valueless or unprofitable claims were simply abandoned to the sheriff's gavel.³⁰

While capitalists from the eastern United States rushed to invest in the Reese River, a number of English companies also attempted to profit from Lander Hill ores. Although the English investments in Reese River only amounted to a fraction of those of New York and the eastern United States, certain ventures are

significant. The first English enterprise to surface in the district, the Reese River Silver Mining Company, Ltd., did not succeed. Registered in London, under "The Companies Act of 1862," in June, 1865, this venture failed miserably.³¹ Although well-capitalized, mismanagement and the purchase of non-productive mines doomed the company.³²

Reese River mine promoters traveled to England to find capital and, likewise, many Englishmen traveled to the Reese River Mining District to inspect potential purchases.³³ Apparently, London investors were very interested in the Reese River Mining District. The Reese River Reveille was a sought after publication and the London papers reported favorably on the Reese River mines.³⁴ As experienced investors, the English usually purchased carefully. They did not all succeed, of course, but at least one major Reese River mining venture was a result of English investment.

The most successful English venture in the Reese River Mining District began in October, 1869. The Pacific Mining Company, Limited, purchased the mines and mill of the Lane and Fuller Company, which included the rich Buel North Star mine. Lane and Fuller sold their proven and profitable silver mine to the Pacific Mining Company for \$200,000 in cash.³⁵

The Pacific Company immediately initiated a development program, improved the workings in their mines, and completely overhauled the reduction works in their mill, the Metacom [Mettacom] Mill. By 1871, after a year or so of experimentation, the Pacific Company's operations had progressed so that its ore production and profits were second only to the Manhattan Company in the Reese River Mining District. The annual report of the company's superintendent for the year 1871 claimed that the company's mines produced substantial amounts of ore and that the firm was buying up potentially profitable or litigious claims.³⁶

By late 1872 the company had reached a break-even point in its operations. Lowered production in late 1872 and 1873 caused the company's dissolution in August of 1873, but immediately a number of stockholders formed the New Pacific Mining Company and operations resumed in 1874. During 1874 the New Pacific Company worked a small force of men and leased much of its property to "tributors," or lessors. Throughout this period the company lost approximately one thousand dollars a month. The years 1875 and 1876 were equally unproductive and in late 1876 the company closed down. The Manhattan Company then acquired its holdings.³⁷ Other attempts by English companies to mine on Lander Hill between 1865 and 1875 ultimately proved

equally unsuccessful. Companies such as the Austin-Consolidated Silver Mining Company, the King Alfred, the Lander City, and the Reese River Silver Mining Company all faded away within a year or two after they started.³⁸

Although the great majority of capital invested in the Reese River Mining District originated in financial centers far removed from Austin, local investors risked a limited amount of capital over the years. As early as January, 1869, Allen A. Curtis and John Frost of the Manhattan Company acquired mines at Yankee Blade and worked them as the American Mining Company.³⁹ Although this was not a particularly successful venture, the pattern of local involvement set by Curtis and Frost continued for decades.

The following year, another group of local investors attempted to establish a successful enterprise. This group of local businessmen, comprised of mine owners, merchants, and bankers believed that the Manhattan Company charged too much money to reduce custom ores. However, since there were no other mills in the district that could do custom work, the Manhattan Company possessed a monopoly in the local industry. In September, 1870, these Austinites began discussing the possibilities of building a new ore reduction mill to compete with the Manhattan Mill.⁴⁰ After several months of debate the investors purchased the abandoned

Knickerbocker Mill at Ione.⁴¹ On March 21, 1871, the backers of this venture formally organized themselves as the Citizen's Mill Company with capital stock of fifty thousand dollars.⁴² In late July the new mill opened and the Reveille praised the new venture as a boon to the community.⁴³ The Citizen's Mill ran steadily during the last half of 1871, but operated only sporadically in the first half of 1872.⁴⁴ Apparently the superiority of the Manhattan Mill, coupled with a general decline in available ore supplies, led to the failure of this venture. By the summer of 1872 the mill lay idle and the company had failed.⁴⁵

The most unusual investment scheme in the Reese River Mining District developed in 1865. The pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Rev. J. Lewis Trefren, had arrived in Austin in May, 1865.⁴⁶ His desire to build a church structure was thwarted by a dire lack of cash donations. Although many Austinites indicated a willingness to contribute, they had no money, only mining claims. After a number of miners offered to donate mining claims in lieu of cash, the Reverend Trefren decided that he would accept these rather unusual offerings and convert the claims into cash to build his church.⁴⁷

To accomplish this fact, Trefren organized the Church Enterprise and Silver Mining Company of Austin,

Nevada (called the New England and Nevada Silver Mining Company by Myron Angel).⁴⁸ This company possessed thirty different mining claims, aggregating thirty-one thousand "feet" of ledges located in both the Reese River Mining District and in surrounding mining districts.⁴⁹ The company's price for its claims was \$250,000, offered as 500 shares to be sold at \$500 apiece. Once the stock was sold, the accumulated capital would be used to build a church in Austin (\$50,000), to develop 30 mines (\$25,000) and to build a mill (\$50,000). The remainder of the money would go for additional mine purchases and the payment of initial mining expenses.⁵⁰

During 1866 stock sales in the Church Enterprise moved ahead. Construction of an impressive brick church building and a seven-room brick parsonage began in July, 1866. At the same time the company started to build a thirty-stamp mill at Kingston.⁵¹ However, the enterprise attempted, unsuccessfully, to sell too many unproven, and probably worthless, claims to a skeptical public. Income from the project simply did not reach expected levels. By the end of 1866 the Church Enterprise collapsed. Although the church building had been completed, the church owed six thousand dollars to various lien-holders.⁵² Lander County purchased the property, intending to use the edifice as a courthouse,

but public sentiment and an offer by the Church Extension Service of the Methodist Episcopal Church to pay off all indebtedness redeemed the new building for the local Methodists.⁵³

While these local adventures into the world of mining investments are interesting, they cannot numerically compare to the truly significant amounts of capital which entered the district from San Francisco, the eastern United States and England. Although comparatively little capital entered the Reese River mines after 1875, that which did come from the established money markets in the East. New York capital controlled the destiny of the Reese River Mining District from the mid-1860s into the late 1880s, while, Chicago, New York again, then finally South Dakota and Pittsburgh capitalists controlled events from the late 1880s until mining finally ended in the 1920s.

Although those investors who became involved in the Reese River area between the late 1880s and the early 1920s contributed much toward keeping the district solvent, in reality they wrote the ending chapters in the mining history of Reese River. The major contributions to the area's mining industry came between 1865 and 1875, when numerous Eastern companies invested the necessary capital to make the Reese River district a major mining center for over two decades. Without this influx of

capital, whether eastern or foreign, the Reese River district would have remained an unproductive mining camp for years, perhaps even decades. While the colorful denizens of frontier society made a very interesting picture, the quiet absentee investor made it all possible.

As investment poured into the Reese River area, and as the entire region prospered, Austin grew in both stature and importance. The city became one of the state's leading municipalities and soon grew to dominate a huge geographic area in central Nevada. As this domination grew, Austin prospered. Soon Austin ranked as one of the state's largest trade centers, outranked only by the cities of the Washoe in western Nevada.

Notes

¹Mining and Scientific Press, 6 (March 23, 1863), p. 1.

²Ibid.

³Reese River Reveille, 4 July 1863.

⁴Reese River Reveille, 5 August 1863; 23 September 1863.

⁵Reese River Reveille, 23 September 1863.

⁶Reese River Reveille, 16 January 1864.

⁷Reese River Reveille, 9 February 1864.

⁸Reese River Reveille, 16 April 1864.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Reese River Reveille, 16 August 1864.

¹¹"Nevada." Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 31 (June to November, 1865), pp. 318-319.

¹²Ibid., p. 319.

¹³Mining and Scientific Press, 9 (July 16, 1864), p. 39.

¹⁴Reese River Reveille, 16 October 1864; 22 October 1864; Browne, "The Reese River Country," p. 39.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Mining and Scientific Press, 10 (January 14, 1865), p. 23.

¹⁷Browne, "The Reese River Country," p. 39; Reese River Reveille, 22 March 1865.

¹⁸Reese River Reveille, 20 April 1865.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Reese River Reveille, 24 June 1865.
Apparently Schuyler Colfax was so impressed with the Reese River that he and many of his business associates invested in the area. By November, the Colfax Mill, located in Yankee Blade Canyon, was in operation. (Reese River Reveille, 27 November 1865.)

²¹Mining and Scientific Press, 11 (October 14, 1865), pp. 230, 232.

²²Sample of Rosecrans's questionnaire, Manhattan Silver Mining Company Collection, Bancroft Library.

²³Browne, "The Reese River Country," pp. 35-39.

²⁴Reese River Reveille, 3 July 1865.

²⁵Mining and Scientific Press, 11 (August 5, 1865), pp. 65-66; Mining and Scientific Press, 11 (August 12, 1865), pp. 81, 86; Mining and Scientific Press, 11 (August 19, 1865), p. 97; Reese River Reveille, 22 August 1865; 31 August 1865; 5 September 1865.

²⁶Mining and Scientific Press, 11 (October 21, 1865), p. 247.

²⁷Mining and Scientific Press, 12 (January 13, 1866), p. 22.

²⁸Mining and Scientific Press, 12 (April 21, 1866), pp. 242-243.

²⁹Mining and Scientific Press, 13 (August 24, 1866), p. 114.

³⁰Engineering and Mining Journal, 5 (February 2, 1868), pp. 131-132.

³¹Clark Spence, British Investments and the American Mining Frontier, 1860-1901. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1958, pp. 133-134, 255; Articles of Incorporation, Reese River Silver Mining Company, Limited, Manuscript Collection, Bancroft Library.

³²Spence, British Investments, pp. 133-134.

³³Reese River Reveille, 13 July 1865.

³⁴Reese River Reveille, 13 July 1865; 21 August 1865.

³⁵Reese River Reveille, 13 October 1869; Engineering and Mining Journal, 8 (November 2, 1869), pp. 276-277.

³⁶Raymond, Statistics of Mines and Mining in the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains, 1871, pp. 167, 170.

³⁷Raymond, Statistics of Mines and Mining, 1872, pp. 167-170; 1873, p. 142; 1874, p. 198; 1875, pp. 238-239; 1876, pp. 136-141; 1877, pp. 177-178; Nevada, State of, Biennial Report of the State Minerologists of the State of Nevada for the Years 1871 and 1872. Carson City: State Printing Office, 1873, pp. 60, 64; Nevada, State of, Biennial Report of the State Minerologists of the State of Nevada for the Years 1873 and 1874, pp. 59-60; Biennial Report of the State Minerologists of the State of Nevada for the Years 1875 and 1876, p. 75.

³⁸Spence, British Investment, pp. 135, 242-255.

³⁹Reese River Reveille, 13 January 1869; 16 January 1869; Engineering and Mining Journal, 8 (November 9, 1869), p. 292.

⁴⁰Reese River Reveille, 2 September 1870.

⁴¹Reese River Reveille, 13 March 1871.

⁴²Reese River Reveille, 22 March 1871; Engineering and Mining Journal, 11 (April 11, 1871), p. 229; Engineering and Mining Journal, 11 (April 4, 1871), pp. 212-213.

⁴³Reese River Reveille, 4 July 1871; 29 July 1871.

⁴⁴Raymond, Statistics of Mines, 1872, p. 167; 1873, p. 142; Nevada, State of, Biennial Report of the State Minerologists, 1871 and 1872, p. 60.

⁴⁵Raymond, Statistics of Mines, 1873, p. 142.

⁴⁶Smith, "A History of Austin; 1862-1881," p. 78.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 78-79.

⁴⁸Reverend J. Lewis Trefren, Prospectus for the Church Enterprise and Silver Mining Company of Austin, Nevada, Boston: Rand and Avery, 1865, pp. 1-7; Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 79.

⁴⁹Trefren, Prospectus, p. 7.

⁵⁰Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 79; Trefren, Prospectus, pp. 7-9.

⁵¹Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 79-80.

⁵²*Ibid.*, pp. 80-82.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 82.

CHAPTER VI

REESE RIVER--ECONOMIC HUB OF CENTRAL NEVADA

While the mining and milling industry received the lion's share of attention and capital during Austin's early days, other economic development occurred. So, the end of mining did not mean the end of economic activity in the district. Because of its central location, its early and relatively successful mining and milling industry, and the general development of central Nevada, the Reese River Mining District became the economic hub of a huge area. As the mines of the Reese River Mining District declined during the 1870s and 1880s, Austin's role as a regional trade center became essential to the city's survival.

Between 1862 and 1880 the greater part of Nevada was explored and settled. A great deal of this activity originated in the Reese River Mining District, as those who traveled to Austin expanded their area of interest. As Reese River prospectors spread out across central, eastern, and northern Nevada, Austin became the hub of an economic trade area over 100 miles wide and 250 miles long. Although the completion of the Central Pacific Railroad in 1869 removed the northern portion

of Austin's trade area, as well as the substantial Overland Trail trade, Austin remained as the major trade center for central, east-central and southern Nevada.

Exploring parties, forced out of the Reese River district by a lack of opportunity or lured out by sheer wanderlust, moved outward from Austin and established mining camps in every direction. By late 1863 prospecting parties roamed far afield from Austin. One party forayed sixty miles north of Austin, to the Union Mining District.¹ In January or February of 1864 a party of Austin prospectors traveled south to the Colorado River, a distance of approximately 250 miles from Austin.² Another party, led by David Buel, also trekked to the Colorado, spending a total of seven weeks in the field.³ This ever-widening circle of exploration culminated in mid-1866 when a party of forty-one Austin prospectors left the Reese River Mining District to travel and prospect their way to Arizona.⁴ This party created an unusual sight as it passed through El Dorado Canyon several weeks later.

Miners are continually passing through here from Nevada to the mines in different parts of this [Arizona] Territory, traveling in large companies. On the 3 inst. a saddle and pack train passed through here, which numbered forty-one miners and eighty animals. They were from Austin, and armed to the teeth, also well mounted.⁵

As these prospectors explored the wilds of Nevada they located claims and created mining districts.

If the returns warranted it, mining camps were established. Invariably, these mining camps looked to Austin for sustenance, services, and population. In 1866, Harrington's Directory of the City of Austin listed fifty-six mining districts in the Reese River area, ranging from as near as six to as far as 250 miles from Austin.⁶ Each of these fledgling camps was linked to Austin by some sort of crude road, so that by 1866 Austin was the center of a complex road network which tied the Reese River region together.⁷ The fact that the main route of the heavily traveled Overland Trail passed directly through Austin further bolstered Austin's role as a centrally located transportation hub.⁸

For a period of six years (1863-1869) Austin and the Reese River Mining District profited greatly from the seasonal westbound traffic on the Overland Trail. This traffic, combined with the freighting and staging involved with mining, milling, and town building in the Reese River Mining District, not only created a spectacular scene on the city's streets but insured Austin's role as the major transportation center in central Nevada.

Stage coach lines began operating in and around the Austin-Clifton-Jacobsville area as early as May, 1863, and as this area grew, these lines multiplied.⁹ By January, 1864, stages loaded with passengers, mail, and light freight arrived and departed every day. Daily

arrivals included several Overland Mail stages, the Big Creek stage, the Amador stage, the Washington (Nevada) stage and the local Clifton-Jacobsville stages.¹⁰ In February, 1864, a stage line began to run twice daily between Austin and Canyon City and in March the Overland Mail Company added another complete line of stages to its overcrowded Virginia City-Austin run.¹¹

The mining industry in the Reese River area continually expanded through the mid-1860s, and by late 1864 local stages ran regularly to Watertown, Canyon City, Big Creek, Washington, Ione, Yandleville, Yankee Blade, Butte City, Geneva, Coral City, Jacobsville, Lander City, Unionville, and Star City.¹² The staging business slowed in 1865 as many small mining camps faded away. Still, in 1866 Austin stages carried passengers and mail to Virginia City, Ione, and most of the surviving camps, such as Twin River, Cortez, Kingston, and others.¹³

Although the heyday of the Reese River staging industry ended in the mid-1860s, it remained an important regional business well into the 1920s. Each new mining district or each new mining camp developed an attendant stage line, which ran at least as long as the camp remained profitable. As the years passed stage lines ran from Austin to the White Pine district (1868-1870s), Hot Creek (1866-1870), Belmont (1866-1890s), Berlin

(1890s), and numerous other camps in the outlying districts. As these camps waned, the stage lines shifted to the next new camp being developed. This situation continued into the early twentieth century, until the building of a relatively permanent automobile-oriented road system, coupled with the disappearance of most of the area's mining camps, eliminated the need for inter-camp staging.

A burgeoning freight industry developed alongside the staging business. Huge amounts of food, liquor, lumber, mining and milling machinery, and the thousand and one other things needed by a developing society traveled to Austin from California via the Washoe or from the east via Salt Lake City. A large and profitable freighting industry developed almost overnight as the thousands of pilgrims to Reese River began to clamor for goods of all kinds. The first large train of wagons, carrying mostly foodstuffs, arrived in Austin in May, 1863.¹⁴ This ten wagon train, owned by Walker and Diaz, made good time between Virginia City and Austin and was a welcome sight to Austin's hungry miners.¹⁵

Occasional shortages and odd quirks in the supply and demand situation caused problems in the Reese River Mining District. According to the Reveille, by August, 1863, flour was hard to find and expensive, while whiskey

seemed to be plentiful and cheap.¹⁶ However, these problems dissolved as freight volumes increased and the freight industry stabilized. By October, 1863, over four hundred wagons choked the road between Virginia City and Austin, carrying tons of supplies to sustain the Reese Riverites through the upcoming winter.¹⁷ This bustling freight business was augmented by Mormon owned trains from Salt Lake City, which eventually accounted for approximately one-third of the freight hauled to the Reese River Mining District.¹⁸

Throughout 1863 and 1864 articles of every kind rolled into Austin. Lumber, foodstuffs, clothing, weapons, tools, mining and milling machinery, liquor, salt, and hundreds of other items appeared in the Reese River Mining District, hauled from either Salt Lake City or Washoe.¹⁹ According to Myron Angel, then an employee of the Reese River Reveille and editor of W. P. Harrington's Directory of the City of Austin, the pace of freighting did not slow during 1865.

What we Pay for Freight.--We have been furnished by Mr. Angel, editor of Harrington's "Austin City Directory," with the following data respecting the amount of freight received in this city during twelve months--from November 15th, 1864, to November 15th, 1865. The statement will be read with interest, and the figures will surprise many. Of groceries and provisions there were received 2,886 tons; machinery, 1,192; California lumber--special orders for mills and hoisting works, 915; California lumber for yards, 875; hardware, 731; dry goods, 279; drugs, 75; express freight, 180; miscellaneous 200; making a total of 7,620 tons. This amount

does not include the freight carried through to Egan Cañon and Salt Lake City, and a large amount for the Overland Mail Company, the whole estimated at 600 tons: making a grand aggregate of 8,220 tons. The rates of freight on the 7,620 tons of merchandise and machinery, and lumber, brought to this city, and the amount of each are as follows: merchandise and machinery, at an average of ten cents per pound, \$1,166,000; lumber, at an average of six cents per pound, \$214,800: total, \$1,380,800. This is a large sum to be paid by our small community in the course of a year for the single item of freight.²⁰

At the peak of the Reese River rush teamsters pressed into service a wide variety of freighting outfits. Mule trains, Conestoga wagons, buckboards, stagecoaches, buggies, and carriages traveled to Reese River. The most unusual means of transportation used in this era, the bactarian camel, appeared in Austin during 1863.²¹ These animals, acquired from the United States Army as surplus property, served to carry freight from Virginia City to Austin and first appeared in the city in May, 1863.²² From that date until late 1866 or early 1867 these animals visited Austin on a regular basis.²³ They carried salt, silver ores, and miscellaneous freight, and seemed to be an efficient means to haul just about anything. However, by the late 1860s they faded from the Reese River scene, although they did appear in many different places in the west for the next several decades.

As with staging, the freighting industry followed the expanding mining frontier throughout central Nevada. Every new mining camp, no matter how large or small,

needed the services of freighters. As the only established trade center, Austin became the core of this expanding industry, just as it did for the staging industry. With the expansion of mining in central Nevada this freighting industry became a major factor in the local economy. In some instances local firms supplanted the earlier western Nevada companies in the area. For example, by mid-1864 local freighters were hauling lumber to Austin from surrounding areas, not from the Washoe region in the western part of the state.²⁴ Thus the local industry expanded at the expense of the western Nevada companies. The potential of the freight business drew the comments of the Reveille, which urged local freighters to get involved in the lucrative Rocky Mountain trade in the northern Rockies to further enhance the Reese River economy.²⁵

By mid-summer 1866 the practice of sending ore to Austin for reduction added a new dimension to the freighting scene. Ore from the Twin River, the Reveille, the Milk Springs, the Cortez, the Hot Creek, the San Antonio, the White Pine, the Newark, the Mineral Hill, and the Philadelphia districts, as well as many others, was shipped into Austin between 1866 and 1870. Thus, Austin added another profitable activity to its freighting and milling economy. Oddly enough, Austin's most lucrative era as a freighting and ore milling center came as a result

of the great rush to White Pine, a rush which eventually damaged many sectors of the Austin economy.²⁶

The White Pine "excitement" of 1868-1870 came as the next great "rush" on the Nevada mining frontier to follow Reese River. The riches of Treasure Hill, found and initially exploited by Austinites, drew thousands of immigrants, just as Reese River had done only five years before. For the first year or so of this new rush, Austin benefited greatly as a steady stream of travelers passed through Austin on the way to White Pine. By February, 1868, wagons passed through Austin from morning till night on the way to White Pine.²⁷ Throughout 1868 Austin profited from the White Pine boom. Nearly all roads to White Pine passed through the Reese River Mining District and Austin served as the major shipping point for White Pine throughout its boom period, 1868-1870.²⁸

Not only did the freighting industry profit from White Pine, the milling industry also benefitted. For almost a year the closest mills to Treasure Hill could be found in Austin, seventy miles to the east. Shipments of White Pine ores to Austin continued until early 1869, when mills finally were erected at Hamilton and Treasure City, two White Pine mining camps.²⁹ Many Reese Riverites profited from White Pine in other ways, too. Many of the truly profitable mines in the White

Pine were located and owned by Austin citizens. For example, both Frank Drake and John Appelgarth of Austin owned half interest in the Eberhardt Mine, one of the new district's richest finds.³⁰ Many other Reese River investors, millmen and miners profited from the rush to White Pine and much of the wealth from that district found its way to Austin.³¹

However, in early 1869 the rush to White Pine temporarily damaged Austin's economy. Local businesses found it difficult to stay open after hundreds of miners and prospectors left the Reese River district to go to White Pine. Both mining and milling operations in the Reese River area closed for varying lengths of time as they waited for their labor force to reappear.³² Although Austin did suffer a temporary economic setback because of White Pine, it quickly rebounded. By the summer of 1869 the rush to White Pine had eased and the situation in Austin began to return to normal. Business began to improve, especially as the labor force drifted back after failing to "strike it rich" in White Pine.³³ However, as one sector of the Reese River economy improved another faced a disaster.

Completion of the Central Pacific Railroad in 1869 caused a severe setback to Austin's position as a regional trade center. In 1865 the Reese River Reveille urged the Central Pacific to complete the transcontinental

route as fast as possible, believing the route had to pass through Austin.³⁴ In July of 1866 the Reese Riverites received quite a shock when the railroad announced it would follow the Humboldt River across Nevada and bypass the older, Overland Trail route through Austin.³⁵ According to the railroad, the Humboldt Route was much easier to follow and it provided a steady water supply. The temporary nature of all mining camps, including Austin, did not warrant passing up the inherent advantages of the Humboldt route. Throughout 1866 the Reveille decried this decision in editorial after editorial. The paper pointed to Austin's rich mines, its central location, the growth of the entire central Nevada region and to the already established markets of the Reese River in its efforts to alter the route of the railroad, all to no avail.³⁶ By early 1867 the railroad had progressed up the Humboldt to a point of no return and the Reveille remained virtually silent on the issue for the next eighteen months. Not surprisingly, Austinites did not share in the national joy unleashed upon the completion of the road on May 10, 1869. One citizen's dramatic actions were perhaps the most eloquent.

Frank Drake has on exhibition in his window the veritable last spikes--a gold and silver one. He has, besides, a villainous looking hammer, labelled as follows: 'The hammer that drove the last spike and killed Austin.'³⁷

Although Austin was not dead, it did suffer from the completion of the Central Pacific. The northern portion of Austin's trade area turned to new railroad towns such as Battle Mountain, Carlin or Elko as its source of supplies. Even worse, Austin lost its position as an important rest stop and supply point on a major transcontinental route.

The Reese River Mining District had benefitted greatly from the west bound emigrant traffic on the Overland Trail almost from the earliest days of the district's existence. In the first season after the rush, large numbers of California-bound emigrants began to stop in the Austin area to rest their animals and to buy needed provisions. Throughout the summer of 1864 wagon trains from Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Kentucky, Wisconsin, and numerous other states poured through Austin.³⁸ The emigrant parties usually camped in the canyons just east of Austin, where grass and water were abundant and free.³⁹ Some emigrants, especially those arriving late in the season, wintered at Austin, to rest stock or to find short-term employment.⁴⁰ Austin profited from this yearly influx of travelers and in May of 1865 the Reveille urged the Austin citizenry to do everything possible to attract the trade.⁴¹ The emigrants came for five summers, from 1864 to 1868, and they left valuable

dollars in the local coffers before they rolled on to California.

The completion of the Central Pacific Railroad in May of 1869 eliminated this pass-through trade at the same time the rush to White Pine culminated. For several months the Reese River economy suffered a depression as severe as that of 1864-1865, but by late 1869 it had fully recovered. By 1870, Austin's greatest days of prosperity and prestige had ended, but the city remained an important regional trade center, primarily for the areas south and east of the Reese River Mining District.

While the economic importance of certain industries declined in the 1860s and 1870s, others developed and flourished. In particular, agriculture and railroading, on the local level, matured between the 1860s and the 1880s to help the Reese River Mining District retain a certain amount of economic power and diversification. Indeed, these facets of the Reese River economy endured much longer than the original triumvirate of mining, milling, and freighting-staging.

Farmers came to the Reese River area to produce crops of foodstuffs and fodder for the Reese Riverites and their animals. In May, 1863, the Reveille commented that many people in and around Austin were planting various crops such as oats, barley and potatoes.⁴²

By June, an established agricultural community had developed in Grass Valley, eighteen miles northwest of Austin.⁴³ Seventeen surveyed ranches of 180 acres each were producing hay (about 700 tons the first year), potatoes, corn, barley, and truck crops such as lettuce, onions, cabbage, peas, turnips, watermelons, and sugar cane.⁴⁴ West and southwest of Austin a significant haying industry developed by the late summer of 1863, with four hundred or more tons cut the first season.⁴⁵

Following the first successful years of production, the farming operations continued to develop steadily and profitably. As time passed a varied agricultural economy developed, based on truck farming, hay growing, and livestock. Since central Nevada is an arid region, the climatic conditions quickly forced the Reese River agriculturalist to rely more and more on haying and stock farming, especially the raising of sheep. Between 1865 and 1867 cattle outnumbered sheep two to one, yet by 1870 the situation had been reversed.⁴⁶ The change from cattle to sheep raising came about for various reasons. As the population in the area declined so did the demand for edible beef. Also, the arid nature of central Nevada took its toll on the cattle. Sheep, which thrive in an arid climate and which produce a dual harvest (wool/mutton), were a natural choice to replace the less efficient cattle. Also, as stock

farming grew in importance the amount of cultivated land declined precipitously. By the early 1870s, hay production (utilizing natural prairie grasses) outnumbered all other grain production three and four to one.⁴⁷

As mining declined in importance in the Reese River region, especially in the 1880s, farming and ranching grew in economic importance. By the end of the nineteenth century the Reese River area counted agriculture as its major industry, while mining had become a sporadic, but welcome, supplement to the regional economy. While agriculture grew steadily, but quietly, through the decades, another more glamorous and sought-after industry appeared.

When the Central Pacific Railroad bypassed the Reese River area in 1869, Austinites were outraged. They vowed to find some method of acquiring their own railroad link to the outside world. During 1873 civic, commercial, and industrial leaders pushed for a railroad between Austin and Battle Mountain, a station on the Central Pacific about ninety miles north of the city.⁴⁸ As a result, several local businessmen, including J. F. Rooker, Allen A. Curtis, and M. A. Sawtelle, began to acquire right-of-way in early 1873.⁴⁹ At the same time they filed an act of incorporation for their project with the state legislature.⁵⁰ After the legislature had approved

the act of incorporation, Governor Lewis Bradley vetoed it in March, and a political battle erupted over the issue.⁵¹ In the ensuing biennial legislative session (1874-1875), Austin's State Senator, M. J. Farrell, led a successful movement in the legislature to override the veto.⁵² The act of incorporation established the Nevada Railway and also authorized Lander County to grant \$200,000 of its bonds as a subsidy to anyone actually completing a railroad from Austin to Battle Mountain.⁵³

Although the legislative barrier had been hurdled, other problems developed. No investors could be found to provide the needed funds for the new venture. Farrell searched for three years before he even found an engineer who would survey the route. Finally, in 1877 Farrell recruited Colonel Lyman Bridges, a Chicago engineer of some repute, to survey a route and recommend it to investors. The Nevada Railway was then formally organized, in March, 1878, and the search for capital continued. By July the entire route had been surveyed and staked out, but no investors had come forth.⁵⁴

For over a year the project remained at a standstill. Then, Anson Phelps Stokes, grandson of Bechtuel Phelps and a partner in the growing Phelps Dodge Mining empire, became interested in central Nevada. Stokes intended to develop his many central Nevada silver properties on a large, unified scale. To do

this, he would need rail connections to the outside world. Thus Austin would have to be linked to the Central Pacific Railroad at Battle Mountain.⁵⁵

Consequently, in August, 1879, a new company was formed. It utilized virtually the same executive and management personnel as the Nevada Railway, but for appearances' sake the name of the company was changed to the Nevada Central Railway. The transfer of franchises and surveys took place on September 15, 1879.⁵⁶

Construction began immediately, in order to complete the line before the offer of \$200,000 in county bonds expired on February 9, 1880. Racing against time, distance, the elements, labor problems, and material shortages the project moved rapidly forward. Finally, at ten minutes before midnight, February 9, 1880, the last tracks were laid just inside the Austin city limits.⁵⁷ The \$200,000 subsidy had been saved, and Austin at last had been linked to Battle Mountain by a 93.75 mile long railroad. The completion of the Nevada Central not only linked Austin with the Central Pacific, it lowered transportation costs for the mining and milling industry, allowing lower grade ores to be worked more profitably. It also enhanced Austin's position as a regional trade center and added another element of stability and permanence to the Reese River economy.

However, the saga of the Nevada Central continued. Although the line operated on a stable and uninterrupted basis on the local level, financial and ownership changes occurred periodically. In 1881 the Union Pacific Railroad purchased the Nevada Central as a part of its attempt to expand into Nevada. The original stockholders cheerfully sold and pocketed substantial profits. By 1884 the Union Pacific's financial situation had deteriorated, and Charles Francis Adams, Jr., had been appointed President to straighten out the company's affairs.⁵⁸

One of the first things Adams did as the Union Pacific's new executive was get rid of the Nevada Central. The Union Pacific unloaded the Nevada Central by simply refusing to pay the required payments on the mortgage bonds owed by the little railroad. As a result, the Nevada Central went into receivership in 1885 and was sold at bankruptcy to its bondholders. Ironically, this placed it right back into the hands of the original stockholders, including Anson Phelps Stokes. The company was reorganized and renamed the Nevada Central Railroad, but by 1885 it was owned essentially by its original set of stockholders.⁵⁹

Throughout its existence the Nevada Central operated on a shoestring. As mining declined in the 1890s and in the early twentieth century, livestock

shipments grew. Over the years, services gradually were curtailed in hopes of remaining profitable. However, competition from automobiles and trucks, coupled with the complete cessation of mining in the Reese River district, spelled doom for the little railroad. On January 31, 1938, the Interstate Commerce Commission approved the road's application for abandonment. After 57 years of service (32 profitable years, 25 unprofitable years) the entire line was ripped up by scrap dealers.⁶⁰

An interesting offshoot of the Nevada Central Railroad developed in Austin. The Austin City Railway, a 2.8 mile long, narrow gauge railroad, was built from the terminus of the Nevada Central, located in Clifton, up the steep grade through Austin to the Manhattan Mill. This diminutive rail line was the brainchild of Allen A. Curtis, who wished to link the Manhattan Mill directly with the Nevada Central. So, in March of 1880 Curtis received a permit and a right-of-way to build his road to any point in Austin.⁶¹

Work on the project began in May and the rail line opened in October. Initially, mules pulled the ore cars up Lander Hill. It required eleven mules to haul a loaded car up the steep grade of Lander Hill to the mill. After approximately a year of mule-powered operations, the company decided to experiment with steam-powered locomotion. A small locomotive ordered

from the Baldwin Company arrived in Clifton on May 31, 1881. Although the steep $7\frac{1}{2}$ percent grades of Lander Hill had been thought to be too steep for a steam locomotive, the "Mule's Relief," as the engine was called, had no trouble in making the climb.⁶² Thus, Austin became the first city in Nevada to possess an intra-city rail line. The Austin City Railway continued to perform as long as the Manhattan Mill remained open. When the mining and milling industry began to deteriorate in 1888 and 1889, the need for the little railway diminished. In 1889 the line was abandoned, and in 1894 the track was removed.⁶³

Throughout the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, Austin remained a significant regional trade center. With a growing agricultural economy, a complex network of roads radiating out from the city, and a rail link with the outside world Austinites consistently profited by their advantageous situation. This ability to draw economic sustenance is clearly illustrated by the events which occurred in central Nevada between 1900 and 1920. Mining in the district stopped completely, yet Austin continued to survive as a trade center for numerous newly established mining camps.

Although mining and milling in the Reese River Mining District had become a questionable industry by

1900, and remained so throughout the next several decades, Austin and Austinites profited greatly from and actively participated in the silver and gold rushes to Tonopah, Manhattan, Gold Park, Millet, and San Juan which occurred in the early years of the century.⁶⁴ An editorial entitled "How Austin Prospers," published in the Reese River Reveille, aptly explains Austin's economic role in the early twentieth century.

It is the common remark of visitors, coming to Austin for the first time to ask: 'What is it that keeps up Austin? What is there in this part of the State to maintain an even course of prosperity in a place like this? Where does Austin's trade come from?'

It is a sufficient answer to say that Austin would be prosperous if there was not a mineral ledge within a hundred miles of the town. The stock and agricultural interests in nearby valleys are sufficient to support a lively town. But fortunately, the town of Austin does not depend alone on these resources for its [sic] up-keep. The best mining country in the state is tributary to Austin. Many mines are being worked in this region and the steady stream of traffic to and from the mines centers in this old town.

The wheels turn noiselessly. The transient observer sees little of the total activity of the place and is apt to get into his head that the town of Austin is dull. The occasional man who fails to get a job here goes away with the conviction that Austin is a back number.

But facts are quite to the contrary. Austin is prosperous with a prosperity that goes right along in spite of the changing fortunes of any one line of business.⁶⁵

Thus Austin continued to survive into the twentieth century, although in a diminished way, as a result of its ability to utilize its geographical situation in conjunction with the economic dominance the townspeople

had established during the boom years in the 1860s and 1870s. As Austin's economic circumstances changed over the years the appearance, population, and character of the city also changed.

Notes

- ¹Reese River Reveille, 2 January 1864.
- ²Reese River Reveille, 25 February 1864.
- ³Reese River Reveille, 31 March 1864.
- ⁴Reese River Reveille, 28 July 1866.
- ⁵Engineering and Mining Journal, 1 (July 28, 1866), p. 276.
- ⁶Harrington, W. P., ed. Directory of the City of Austin. Austin, Nevada: Daily Reese River Reveille Book and Job Printing Office, 1866, pp. 57-58.
- ⁷Reese River Reveille, 17 June 1864; 28 March 1867; 25 April 1867; Mining and Scientific Press, 14 (January 12, 1867), p. 18.
- ⁸Harrington, Directory, pp. 58-60.
- ⁹Reese River Reveille, 13 June 1863; 5 August 1863.
- ¹⁰Reese River Reveille, 16 January 1864.
- ¹¹Reese River Reveille, 11 February 1864; 3 March 1864.
- ¹²Angel, History of Nevada, p. 465.
- ¹³Harrington, Directory, pp. 58-60.
- ¹⁴Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 33.
- ¹⁵Ibid.
- ¹⁶Reese River Reveille, 22 August 1863.
- ¹⁷Anthony Behm Collection, Manuscript Collection, Nevada Historical Society, Reno.
- ¹⁸Angel, History of Nevada, p. 465.

¹⁹Mining and Scientific Press, 6 (October 12, 1863), p. 4; Reese River Reveille, 26 January 1864; 2 February 1864; 13 February 1864; 10 May 1864.

²⁰Reese River Reveille, 29 November 1865; Harrington, Directory, pp. 49-50.

²¹Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 35.

²²Ibid.; Reese River Reveille, 16 May 1863.

²³Reese River Reveille, 16 May 1863; 30 July 1864; 9 April 1866; 10 September 1866.

²⁴Reese River Reveille, 10 June 1864.

²⁵Reese River Reveille, 6 March 1866.

²⁶Reese River Reveille, 16 July 1866; 12 January 1867; 2 February 1867; 15 April 1867; 28 September 1867; Engineering and Mining Journal, 4 (October 5, 1867), p. 212; 4 (November 30, 1867), p. 340; 5 (February 22, 1868), p. 115; 6 (August 29, 1868), p. 131; 6 (September 19 1868), p. 179; 6 (October 3, 1868), p. 212; Reese River Reveille, 2 February 1869; Engineering and Mining Journal, 8 (August 24, 1869), p. 119; 9 (February 15, 1870), p. 101.

²⁷Jackson, Treasure Hill, p. 19.

²⁸Engineering and Mining Journal, 6 (September 19, 1868), p. 179; 7 (March 27, 1869), pp. 270-274.

²⁹Engineering and Mining Journal, 7 (January 9, 1869), p. 18.

³⁰Jackson, Treasure Hill, pp. 11-20.

³¹Engineering and Mining Journal, 6 (September 19, 1868), p. 179; 6 (October 3, 1868), p. 212; 6 (October 24, 1868), p. 259; 6 (December 12, 1868), p. 373; 7 (January 9, 1869), p. 18.

³²Reese River Reveille, 6 February 1869.

³³Reese River Reveille, 7 August 1869.

³⁴Reese River Reveille, 2 February 1865; 18 July 1865.

- 35 Reese River Reveille, 26 July 1866.
- 36 Reese River Reveille, 6 August 1866; 31 August 1866; 13 September 1866; 22 November 1866; 27 November 1866.
- 37 Reese River Reveille, 22 May 1869.
- 38 Reese River Reveille, 29 June 1864; 30 June 1864; 16 July 1864; 22 July 1864; 26 July 1864; 27 July 1864; 28 July 1864; 31 July 1864.
- 39 Lewis, Martha and the Doctor, p. 25.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Reese River Reveille, 6 May 1865.
- 42 Reese River Reveille, 23 May 1863.
- 43 Reese River Reveille, 13 June 1863.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Reese River Reveille, 29 July 1863.
- 46 Angel, History of Nevada, p. 139. A dramatic increase in sheep production occurred in Lander County, in the Reese River Mining District area, during 1870. The Reese River Reveille reported (on September 2, 1870, and on September 10, 1870) that thousands of sheep were being brought to the area to be located on local ranches. A Major Bradley brought in 4,000 head of sheep from San Luis Obispo, California, while two local Reese Riverites, Messrs. King and Watt, established 6,000 Merino ewes from Salinas, California, on their land.
- 47 Angel, History of Nevada, p. 140.
- 48 Reese River Reveille, 25 February 1873.
- 49 Reese River Reveille, 10 March 1873.
- 50 Reese River Reveille, 10 March 1873; 18 March 1873.
- 51 Reese River Reveille, 18 March 1873.
- 52 David Myrick, Railroads of Nevada and Eastern California. 2 vols., Berkeley, California: Howell-North Books, 1962, 1963, vol. 1, p. 66; Angel, History of

Nevada, p. 283; H. H. Bancroft, History of Nevada, Colorado and Wyoming. Berkeley: The History Company, 1889, p. 238.

⁵³Myrick, Railroads of Nevada, Vol. I, p. 66; Angel, History of Nevada, p. 283. The legislative act which established this venture allowed Lander County to sell \$200,000 in bonds to be used as a subsidy for the railroad. However, the bonds had to be issued, thus the railroad completed, within five years. Therefore, a railroad had to be completed between Battle Mountain and Austin by 12:01 a.m., February 10, 1880, or the bonds could not be issued. Corporate officers in this venture were as follows: President, W. S. Gage of San Francisco; Vice-President, R. L. S. Hall of New York; Treasurer, Allen A. Curtis of Austin; Secretary, J. D. Negus of Battle Mountain; Chief Engineer, Lyman Bridges of Chicago; Directors, D. B. Hatel of New York, Byron Angel of Battle Mountain, James H. Ledlie of Utica, New York, M. J. Farrell of Austin, and A. Nichols of Austin.

⁵⁴Myrick, Railroads of Nevada, Vol. I, p. 66.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 66-67.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 67-70. Local legend, as well as some histories, maintain that the Austin City Council extended the city limits on the night of February 9, 1880, to enable the track to actually be in Austin by midnight. Myrick points out that this cannot be verified and that Bert Acree, Lander County Recorder and local history buff looked in vain for years trying to find some written record of the last-minute city limit expansion.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 72.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 72-73.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 72-73, 78.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 83.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 83-84.

⁶³Ibid.; Reese River Reveille, 4 July 1894.

⁶⁴Reese River Reveille, 18 January 1902; 26 August 1905; 9 May 1906; Engineering and Mining Journal,

81 (April 14, 1906), p. 718; Reese River Reveille, 19 May 1906; 22 December 1906; 23 January 1909; Reese River Reveille, "Special Industrial and Mining Number," January 1910; 2 February 1911; 24 June 1911; 9 December 1911; 4 October 1919.

⁶⁵Reese River Reveille, 24 June 1911.

CHAPTER VII

POPULATION, POLITICS, AND TOWN BUILDING IN THE REESE RIVER MINING DISTRICT

Between 1863 and 1920 the economic fortunes of the Reese River Mining District rose and fell. During those years the social and cultural institutions of a growing mining camp developed. The population grew rapidly, then dropped quickly. The ethnicity and character of the population changed drastically as time passed and the economic base of the district shrank. Like many western cities and towns of the period, racial problems developed with the influx of Chinese workers that occurred in the 1860s and 1870s. During the same period, the residents of the area quickly evolved a political system much like those in the older parts of the country. A city government formed, ties between industry and the municipality grew and party politics flourished. A small yet impressive city grew in the Reese River area, with substantial business and residential districts built on the floor of Pony Canyon.

The size and composition of the population of the Reese River region is both a matter of conjecture and fact. Since the many mining camps born in the

Austin area died long before the 1870 federal census, no solid data is available on the size of these camps. Even the peak population of Austin is an unknown element in the history of the Reese River Mining District. By early 1865, numerous estimates of the population of the Reese River Mining District were being widely circulated. These unfounded and inaccurate "estimates" often ranged as high as ten thousand people, or 25 percent of the state's entire 1870 population. Obviously, this number is absurd, but it is still widely-circulated as fact, as local tourist literature will attest. Therefore, a discussion of the growth and decline of the Reese River Mining District population is in order.

Certain reference points for the population growth in the Reese River Mining District can be located. In May, 1863, the Reese River Reveille calculated the total population of the Austin-Clifton-Jacobsville area to be almost one thousand people.¹ In August, another informal "census," taken by G. F. Allardt, a local civil engineer, estimated that approximately 1,450 persons lived in Austin and Clifton (1,100 in Austin, 350 in Clifton).² When the rush burst forth in the fall of 1863, attempts to keep track of the area's permanent population became futile. Throughout the last part of 1863 and most of 1864 thousands of persons migrated into and out of the Reese River Mining District. This transient population

so totally confused the scene that few observers even attempted to estimate its numbers during that year.

In late November, 1864, the Reese River Reveille attempted to estimate the population of both Lander County and Austin. Basing its estimates on the voter turnout for the presidential election of 1864, the newspaper translated a total county vote of 2,500 into a county population of 7,500. Likewise, the Austin vote of 1,993 translated into a population of 6,000 for the four wards of the City of Austin.³ Other descriptions and directories also attempted to place a number on the Reese River's seething population during 1864, and many of these settled on the same six-to-eight thousand estimate the Reveille had made.⁴

During the hard economic times of late 1864 and early 1865, the population of the district dropped faster than it had risen. By the end of 1865 most observers credited the Austin vicinity with a population of three to four thousand.⁵ The situation remained fairly constant throughout 1866, and the Reese River Reveille reluctantly admitted in August that "the population of Reese River has not increased for a year or more. . . ."⁶ Thus, by late 1866 the population still ranged from three to four thousand. The Lander County voting results in the elections of 1866 further confirmed the drop in population. The total county vote had dropped to 1,153, and only 1,536

had registered.⁷ Even considering a lack of interest in an off-year election, these returns represent a startling drop in population when compared to the 1864 election returns.

The Reese River population continued to drop in 1867, as the April city elections in Austin illustrate. Only 562 votes were cast in this election, an even more significant drop when compared to 1864.⁸ Furthermore, a correspondent writing from Austin in August, 1867, reported that the population of Austin had dropped by at least 600 during 1867 alone, as many Austinites moved south to the new camp at Belmont.⁹

The downward trend in the population continued throughout the rest of the 1860s. From three to four thousand in 1866, the population dropped to roughly 1,400 in 1870. The continued decline of the Austin mining economy coupled with the lure of new districts, such as Mineral Hill and White Pine, led to this steady decline of the Reese River population. The census of 1870, Austin's first federal census, gives the Austin vicinity a population of 1,380 (Austin 1,324, *Yankee Blade*, 56).¹⁰ Total Lander County population also dropped, to 2,185.¹¹ Thus by 1870 Austin was simply a small industrial town whose glory days already were long gone.

Following 1870, Austin's population figures clearly illustrate the decline of the Reese River Mining District as a populous mining region. Only the activity generated by the Manhattan Mining Company, coupled with the temporary work force used in the construction of the Nevada Central Railroad and events in the surrounding area, allowed the post-mining rush population to peak in 1880, and not a decade earlier. By the 1920s Austin's role as a small regional trade center was clearly reflected in its diminished population.

Another aspect of the Reese River populace, its highly ethnic composition, also rose and fell as did the population. During the "Rush to Reese River" adventurers of many nationalities arrived in the region. By the end of 1864 Chinese, French, English (including the Cousin Jacks from Cornwall), Canadians, Germans, Irish, Scots, Danes, Swiss, Norwegians, Swedes, Italians, and members of various Slavic groups rubbed shoulders with the Anglo-Americans, Indians, blacks, and Hispanics who already claimed citizenship (or American residence). Also, a number of Jews, of various nationalities, arrived during the rush. The Reese River Mining District became, if not a melting pot, a collection of nationalities, all attempting to make a go of it in the new "Eldorado" in central Nevada.

Unfortunately, census data can be utilized only to illustrate this ethnic mix after 1870. Contemporary

TABLE 1
POPULATION OF LANDER COUNTY AND AUSTIN 1860-1920

	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920
Lander County	--	2,815	3,624	2,266	1,534	1,786	1,484
Austin	--	1,380*	1,679	1,215	702	755	666

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled From the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior. (By Joseph C. G. Kennedy, Supt. of Census), Washington: G.P.O., 1864, pp. 562-565.

U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, The Statistics of the Population of the United States, Embracing The Tables of Race, Nationality, Sex, Selected Ages and Occupations To Which Are Added The Statistics of School Attendance and Illiteracy, of Schools, Libraries, Newspapers and Periodicals, Churches, Pauperism, and Crime, And of Areas Families and Dwellings, Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior. (By Francis A. Walker, Supt. of Census), Washington: G.P.O., 1872, pp. 48, 198-199.

U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census Embracing Extended Tables of the Population of States, Counties, and Minor Civil Divisions, with Distinction of Race, Sex, Age, Nativity, and Occupations; Together with Summary Tables, Derived From Other Census Reports Relating to Newspapers and Periodicals; Public Schools

TABLE 1--Continued

and Illiteracy; The Dependent, Defective, and Delinquent, Classes, Etc. Washington: G.P.O., 1883, pp. 71, 256, 401, 439, 520, 687.

U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part I, Population. Washington: G.P.O., 1892, pp. 30, 273, 498, 520, 525, 534, 628-629.

U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part III, Population: State or Territory of Birth, Country of Birth and Citizenship (Analysis only), Foreign Born Parentage, Conjugal Condition, Ages, School Attendance, Illiteracy, Can Not Speak English, Occupations, Soldiers and Widows; Agriculture; Manufacturers; Fisheries; Transportation; Wealth, Debt, and Taxation; Real Estate Mortgages; Farms and Homes; Indians. Washington: G.P.O., 1897, pp. 156, 228, 790.

U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900, Population, Part I. Washington: G.P.O., 1901, pp. 30, 264-265, 463, 512, 548, 568, 572, 593, 770, 990.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Vol. III, Population, 1910, Reports By States, with Statistics For Counties, Cities and other Civil Divisions. Nebraska-Wyoming, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Washington: G.P.O., 1913, pp. 78-87.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Vol. II, Population 1920, General Report and Analytical Tables. Washington: G.P.O., 1922, pp. 240-241.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Vol. I, Population, 1920,

TABLE 1--Continued

Number and Distribution of Inhabitants. Washington: G.P.O., 1922, pp. 164, 255, 519, 1351.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Vol. III, Population 1920 Composition and Characteristics of Population By States. Washington: G.P.O., 1922, pp. 612-621.

*Including 56 at Yankee Blade.

sources, such as the Reveille, Myron Angel, the Mining and Scientific Press, and others, discuss this matter over and over, but in a piecemeal fashion. Thus, the size and impact of ethnic groups in the Reese River area must be ascertained through inference before that date as there are no available statistics to prove the matter. (See Table 2.) Although this chart represents Lander County as a whole, the Reese River Mining District population comprised the great majority of the country's entire population until 1900. Thus, the figures are representative of the Reese River population's ethnicity, even though they may not represent the actual Reese River Mining District numbers, which cannot be found.

Table 2 also shows that certain ethnic groups outnumbered others. Germans, Irish, English, Chinese, and Canadians make up the bulk of the foreign-born Reese Riverites during the nineteenth century, while Japanese, Italians, and Basques begin to arrive in larger numbers after 1900. The native-born American Indians remain as one of the largest ethnic groups found in the area throughout its entire history. Naturally, the ethnicity of the Reese River Mining District's population made for a more interesting and cosmopolitan atmosphere. Also, ethnicity led to occasional friction between the district's residents, especially the Caucasian and non-Caucasian groups.

TABLE 2

POPULATION STATISTICS FOR THE LANDER COUNTY/
REESE RIVER MINING DISTRICT 1860-1920

	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920
Nevada	6,857	42,491	62,266	45,761	42,335	81,875	77,407
Lander County	---	2,815	3,624	2,266	1,534	1,786	1,484
Austin	---	1,324	1,679	1,215	702	755	666
Battle Mountain	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Lander County	---	---	224	382	160	94	206
Civilized Indians	---	218	387	87	71	24	13
Chinese	---	---	---	---	178	44	15
Japanese	---	31	16	1	10	7	10
Blacks	---	288	328	105	51	33	20
Irish	---	27	---	---	---	2	14
Mexican	---	83	434	166	78	67	28/6
English Welsh	---	150	106	42	23	20	4
Germans	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Canadians	---	91	116	52	7 Fr Can 17 Eng Can	26	18
Scots	---	24	54	19	19	12	8
French	---	26	20	16	12	20	16
Swiss	---	15	*	41	24	10	8
Danes	---	12	*	5	10	24	12
Swedes and	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Norwegians	---	19	23	12	8	19	11
Italians	---	*	22	28	34	74	27
Finns	---	---	---	---	---	---	1

TABLE 2--Continued

	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920
Greeks	---	---	---	---	---	---	1
Yugoslavs	---	*	*	*	*	*	3
Portugese	---	---	---	---	---	---	6
Spanish [Basques]	---	---	---	---	---	---	61
White Native Born	---	1,580	2,070	1,627	1,115	---	---
White Foreign Born	---	1,235	1,554	639	419	430	---

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled From the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior. (By Joseph C. G. Kennedy, Supt. of Census), Washington: G.P.O., 1864, pp. 562, 565.

U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, The Statistics of the Population of the United States, Embracing the Tables of Race, Nationality, Sex, Selected Ages and Occupations To Which Are Added The Statistics of School Attendance and Illiteracy, of Schools, Libraries, Newspapers and Periodicals, Churches, Pauperism, and Crime, And of Areas Families and Dwellings, Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior. (By Francis A. Walker, Supt. of Census), Washington: G.P.O., 1872, pp. 48, 198-199.

U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census Embracing Extended Tables of the Population of States, Counties, and Minor Civil Divisions, with Distinction of Race, Sex, Age, Nativity, and Occupations; Together with Summary Tables, Derived

TABLE 2--Continued

From Other Census Reports Relating to Newspapers and Periodicals; Public Schools and Illiteracy; The Dependent, Defective, and Delinquent, Classes, Etc. Washington: G.P.O., 1883, pp. 71, 256, 401, 439, 520, 687.

U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part I, Population. Washington: G.P.O., 1892, pp. 30, 273, 498, 520, 525, 534, 628-629.

U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part III, Population: State or Territory of Birth, Country of Birth and Citizenship (Analysis only), Foreign Born Parentage, Conjugal Condition, Ages, School Attendance, Illiteracy, Can Not Speak English, Occupations, Soldiers and Widows; Agriculture; Manufacturers; Fisheries; Transportation; Wealth, Debt, and Taxation; Real Estate Mortgages; Farms and Homes; Indians. Washington: G.P.O., 1897, pp. 156, 228, 790.

U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900, Population, Part I. Washington: G.P.O., 1901, pp. 30, 264-265, 463, 512, 548, 568, 572, 593, 770, 990.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Vol. III, Population, 1910, Reports By States, with Statistics For Counties, Cities and other Civil Divisions. Nebraska-Wyoming, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Washington: G.P.O., 1913, pp. 78-87.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Vol. II, Population 1920, General Report and Analytical Tables. Washington: G.P.O., 1922, pp. 240-241.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Vol. I, Population, 1920,

TABLE 2--Continued

Number and Distribution of Inhabitants. Washington: G.P.O., 1922, pp. 164, 255, 519, 1351.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Vol. III, Population 1920 Composition and Characteristics of Population By States. Washington: G.P.O., 1922, pp. 612-621.

*Not enumerated in the census that decade.

The pages of the Reese River Reveille are filled with encounters between the region's ethnic groups and with stories detailing the activities and problems of these people. Members of the local Shoshone and Piute tribes quickly arrived in the district from the surrounding mountains to observe the new arrivals and perhaps profit from the melee under way. In June, 1863, the hundreds of Indians roaming the streets of Austin and Clifton were labeled a public nuisance by the Reveille.¹² The Reveille took a rather harsh view of the Indians, particularly after the local Indian leadership demanded decent wages and treatment for Indians doing day-labor for the whites.¹³

In June of 1864 the Hebrew Benevolent Association, Lander County, Nevada Territory, filed papers of incorporation.¹⁴ By the end of 1864 at least sixty-three Jews lived in and around the Reese River Mining District, as the Reveille reported that number attended Day of Atonement services in the local Masonic Hall.¹⁵

Other ethnic groups also made their presence known. In August, 1865, many of the Irish populace met in Judge Logan's courtroom and organized a Fenian Society, the Circle of the Fenian Brotherhood.¹⁶ This society, founded by "the friends and sympathizers of downtrodden and oppressed Ireland," continued to meet regularly throughout 1865 and 1866.¹⁷ The Irish presence

culminated in a widely advertised St. Patrick's Day Parade held on March 18, 1867.¹⁸ Naturally, the Fenians played a prominent role in the organization of the event.¹⁹

The Hispanic community also celebrated its traditional holidays in Austin. Periodically, the Mexican residents of the Reese River Mining District celebrated the diez y seis, or the September 16 holiday. The Reese River Reveille reported these celebrations on at least two occasions, September, 1865, and September, 1872, and there is no reason to believe they did not occur in other years.²⁰ An insight into the decline of the Mexican community in the Austin area can be gathered by the Reveille report of the diez y seis celebration in 1872. The Reveille described the Hispanic community as "the few Mexican residents of Austin," inferring that they were a steadily dwindling group.

As in most western mining camps, the Chinese community arrived very early in the "rush" and remained a constant source of political and social turmoil. The first Chinese arrived in the region during 1863 and they quickly became an everyday part of the Reese River scene. They established a Chinese quarter, located north of Court Street and west of Pine Street, and began to operate laundries and stores, cook in local restaurants, sell vegetables, cut and sell firewood, and perform many

other menial tasks and service functions.²¹ Initially, the Chinese, whites, and Indians formed an uneasy truce, working together and gambling together, but separated in most other areas of social contact.²² Throughout the year, the Chinese held their traditional celebrations, especially New Year's and religious events, which usually irritated the white community which in general did not appreciate or understand the ceremony and noise involved in Oriental traditions or culture.²³

In Austin, because the town contained a large Chinese population, the Chinese "company" developed. The major "companies" were based on the laundry business. Led by local Orientals, such as Fat Chung, Yong Woh, and Hop Wah, these "companies" dominated the Chinese community. They settled disputes, made laws for the local Chinese, administered the affairs of their members, and, occasionally, the "companies" made war on one another.²⁴ One such confrontation between "companies" erupted into violence in October, 1866, leaving one Chinese man dead and a woman seriously wounded.²⁵ These confrontations occurred infrequently, but they did happen occasionally throughout the 1870s and 1880s and only ended when the Chinese population began to decline in the second half of the 1880s.

The uneasy peace between the whites in the Reese River district and the Chinese lasted until the mid-1880s.

Although the Reese River Reveille had editorialized throughout the 1860s about the evils of Chinese labor in the mines, no problems developed because no Reese River mine ever employed any Chinese.²⁶ By the 1870s the Manhattan Company had solved the wage issue by switching to the "tributor" or lease system, thereby avoiding either a pay reduction or the need for cheaper Chinese labor. However, in the mid-1880s the entire state of Nevada slid into a severe mining depression which lasted until 1900. Likewise, the mining industry in the Reese River Mining District began to disintegrate in the mid-1880s and the growing anti-Chinese clamor of California and the Washoe spread to central Nevada.²⁷

By March of 1886 Austin had joined the growing number of Nevada cities with an anti-Chinese club.²⁸ The Reese River Reveille then intensified its campaign against Chinese labor and the anti-Chinese movement soon passed into a violent stage in May when an unknown arsonist attempted to burn down the Chinese quarter of the city.²⁹ It is not known if the local Chinese were intimidated by the clamor and violence, or by a failing local economy, but it is clear that the Chinese population decreased drastically between 1880 and 1890, from 387 to 87.³⁰ Thus, the Chinese portion of the Reese River's ethnic heritage faded quickly and was almost gone by the early twentieth century.

As the years passed and the Reese River population declined the general ethnic diversity of the district diminished. The mining industry ground to a halt and other districts lured many Austinites away. The Cornish and Irish miners, the German mining engineers, the Chinese laundrymen, and those of many another ethnic background drifted away to more profitable areas. The economic decline especially affected the immigrant population because it was comprised mostly of younger single males, or of persons related directly to the mining industry. This dual characteristic of the immigrant population accounts for the drop in ethnicity, as does the passage of time and the assimilation of many descendents of immigrants into the mainstream society. Although vestiges of the Reese River district's earlier ethnicity remained for decades, the heaviest impact of foreign peoples had occurred in the 1860s and 1870s. The only numerous and identifiable ethnic group remaining in the area by the turn of the century was the local Shoshone Indian tribe, whose members lived and worked on Lander County ranches. Yet, as time passed even these people became more and more a part of the established Lander County society.

While Austin and the Reese River Mining District grew, then declined economically, the cities in the area expanded then contracted to parallel the economic situation. Construction in the town of Austin began in May, 1863,

roughly a year later than Jacobsville and six months later than in Clifton. Under the energetic leadership of David Buel and the Austin Townsite Company the town of Austin soon rivaled its neighbors.³¹ The town grew so fast that lot-jumping, or land-jumping, became a severe problem during the summer of 1863.³²

In August a local civil engineer, G. P. Allardt, counted and described the structures in Austin and Clifton. His tally, reported in the Reveille, gives a good picture of the area in mid-1863.

Allardt wrote that the two towns of Austin and Clifton contained approximately 1,450 souls, 1,100 in Austin and 350 in Clifton. The two communities stretched up Pony Canyon for two miles, from Clifton at the mouth of the canyon to Austin near the head of the canyon. Of the 366 structures counted by Allardt, the great majority were of a temporary nature. The two towns combined possessed only 34 stone structures and no brick buildings at all. Adobe brick accounted for 61 buildings, while 58 structures were of the frame-type construction. Sixty-two buildings were of log or pole construction while 55 were of canvas, 51 were simply tents, and 45 were made of brushwood.³³ As Allardt's description indicates, the structures in Pony Canyon represented a wide spectrum of appearance, building materials, and permanence. Naturally, since many of these early

structures were purely temporary, the "skyline" of Pony Canyon constantly changed over the next few years.

By October, with the rush in full swing, a construction boom began. Adobe became the primary building material as it was cheap, at thirteen dollars per thousand, and available in Pony Canyon from several adobe yards.³⁴ Lumber, freighted in from the Sierras, cost three hundred dollars per thousand feet, making lumber the building material used by those with money, but not by the newly arrived immigrant.³⁵ Surrounding the larger structures, which occupied the floor of Pony Canyon, were scores of miner's shacks. Most of these shacks were small, one room, canvas-roofed, half-dugouts with stone walls and a front facade of vertical poles sunk into the ground.³⁶ These tiny, crudely-furnished dwellings often contained all of the worldly possessions of the owner and served quite well as a temporary residence.

As the development of Pony Canyon moved forward by leaps and bounds the editors of the Reese River Reveille began to call for civic improvements. In May, 1864, the Reveille urged the local citizens to consider providing for a sewage and drainage system, sidewalks and crossings, regularly-platted and named streets and alleys, the numbering of lots and blocks, and a public square.³⁷ The paper similarly called for more

uniformity and thought in the location and construction of new buildings in town in the future.³⁸ As the "Rush to Reese" continued and throughout the summer of 1864, the building boom flourished. The Reveille periodically ran descriptions of new construction and made a quarterly report on the numbers and types of new buildings being erected in Pony Canyon. By late 1865 the camp of Austin had become a substantial little city. As the Reveille described it:

Like most mining towns, Austin struggles for two or three miles down a deep crooked cañon. On each side of its narrow principal street, ashen, treeless hills rise abruptly for several hundred feet. They are excavated like a mammoth prairie-dog town. Hundreds and hundreds of apertures surrounded by piles of reddish earth, attest the the [sic] industry of searchers for silver ore. The fortifications of McClellan on the Peninsula, the fifty miles of breastworks which commemorate Halleck's stupendous failure before Corinth, dwarf in comparison. The proverb assures us truly that it requires a gold mine to work a silver mine, and often to find one.

The population of Austin is from three to four thousand. Far up the hillsides little dwellings of stone, brick, wood, and adobe are curiously niched and scattered. In this thin air, six thousand feet above the sea, climbing to them is no light labor. Among the ravines huge quartz mills thunder incessantly; and some of the busiest blocks are large and substantial. At night the brilliantly lighted drinking and gambling saloons, with open fronts, are filled with a motley crowd.³⁹

When the rush to the Reese River began to slow in late 1864, a period of consolidation began in and around Austin. The physical growth of the area slowed. Fewer structures were built in 1865 and 1866, but many that were

built were large brick and stone structures which replaced the adobes which had not lasted through the harsh, wet winters of Pony Canyon.⁴⁰ Many structures still standing in Austin date from this era of consolidation. The large brick Methodist Church (1866), the equally large brick Catholic Church (1867), the Lander County Courthouse (1872), the brick Episcopal Church (1878), and many of the substantial brick commercial structures and residences date from the late 1860s and 1870s.⁴¹ In January, 1867, Austin received gas lights for certain structures, such as the International Hotel.⁴² However, the results were not as good as expected and it is not known if this convenience became permanent.⁴³

As the 1860s came to a close Austin's growth began to slow.⁴⁴ New construction in Austin generally consisted of replacement of deteriorated structures and renovation of existing sound buildings.⁴⁵ Throughout the 1870s the city maintained a static appearance and a consistent and stable size. As occupied and sound structures aged, poorly built miner's shacks and other deteriorated buildings were cannibalized for materials which were used in routine maintenance. As a result, Austin's housing supply remained very close to the demand, even as the population dropped. Thus, the cheaply built and surplus structures left behind after the rush simply disappeared, leaving a town that looked about

the same as years earlier, but which did not have dozens of shacks and ruins interspersed throughout the city. One outstanding example of this evolution of the city is the International Hotel. The International was moved to Austin from Virginia City in 1863, by David E. Buel, I. C. Bateman, and a Mr. Paul, to fill a crying need for a local hotel. This building was torn down in 1873 and a new International Hotel built on the site.⁴⁶ Thus, the size of Austin did not change even though new construction occurred.

During the 1880s and 1890s, however, Austin's appearance began to change. The town actually began to shrink. As the economy and population declined real estate values fell. Abandoned houses, mills, commercial buildings, and miner's shacks fell prey to fires, floods, vandalism, salvage crews, and the elements. A major fire in August, 1881, eliminated fifteen buildings in Austin, while a major flood in August, 1878, inundated all structures on Main Street and permanently damaged many of them.⁴⁷

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Austin, made in January, 1886, October, 1890, and July, 1907, bear witness to this deterioration. In 1886 there were already numerous vacant, dilapidated, and deteriorated structures in the city.⁴⁸ Four years later, in 1890, this trend was much more noticeable, as the ranks of the

vacant and dilapidated structures swelled significantly.⁴⁹ By 1907 the trend was clear, as not only were there many more vacant and dilapidated structures, but many dwellings and some commercial structures had disappeared from the 1907 map.⁵⁰ Thus, Austin's declining economy and shrinking population were manifested in the contraction of the city and in the removal of unused or unsafe buildings. This trend has continued to the present, with several older structures destroyed every decade.

The only significant construction to take place after 1886 came in the mid-1890s, with the building of a large mill for the Austin Mining Company in 1895 and the construction of "Stokes Castle" in 1897. The mill, built at Clifton, failed miserably and was abandoned shortly after it opened. "Stokes Castle," a three-story stone summer house built for J. G. Phelps Stokes, sat empty from the day it was finished. Its remains stand today as a silent, haunting reminder of lost dreams and a vanished past in the Reese River Mining District.⁵¹

During the 1860s and the early 1870s the Reese River Mining District developed into one of Nevada's most politically powerful and influential areas. With Austin as one of the state's largest cities and with the Reese River mines pouring out bullion, the Reese River area was a power to be reckoned with. Only the fact that the Washoe region was more powerful economically

and politically than Reese River kept the Austinites from wielding political power on the state level. Still, Austin did dominate central Nevada politics for decades. As time passed the area's economic and political status declined and Austin became a pastoral village of little political or economic consequence. However, as long as Austin remained a city of consequence, its politicians played an important role in both the regional and local level.

In anticipation of the rush to Reese River, and central Nevada in general, the Nevada Territorial Legislature created Lander County on December 19, 1862, with Jacob's Springs (Jacob's Well) as the county seat.⁵² This new county occupied almost one-third of the entire territory, and was not reduced in size until 1864, when the legislature created Nye County to the south of Lander.⁵³ In 1864 the legislature also moved the western border of the county further westward about twenty miles, as it was learned that Austin, the county seat, did not lie within the county's boundaries.⁵⁴ In the years following 1864, three new counties evolved out of Lander: Elko County and White Pine County in 1869, and Eureka County in 1873.⁵⁵ Further boundary adjustments during 1873 established the current borders of Lander County, which can be seen in Maps 4 through 11.

TERRITORY OF NEVADA
1861

by Bancroft

STATE OF NEVADA

1871

by Bancroft

Map 11

Political life in the town of Austin closely paralleled that of Lander County between 1863 and 1873. Significant political events occurred on the local level during Austin's early years, but as time passed the city's political importance waned. When the rush to the Reese River developed during 1863 Austin quickly came to the fore. In September, Austin became the county seat, which added to the town's prestige.⁵⁶ In January, 1864, the citizens of the Austin area approved a petition asking the Territorial Legislature to combine Clifton, Austin and upper Austin into one incorporated city, the City of Austin.⁵⁷ On February 20, Governor Nye signed the Act of Incorporation creating the new municipality of Austin which consisted of four wards for administrative purposes.⁵⁸

The citizens of Austin made headlines in April, when they conducted their first city elections. As with many mining camps in the first half of the 1860s, the issues of the Civil War were keenly felt by the local citizenry. National political issues influenced the city's first mayoral election, as Austin's population contained a large number of Southerners and southern sympathizers. One candidate, the very popular David Buel, ran as a Democrat.⁵⁹ His opponent, a local merchant named Charles Holbrook, ran as a staunch Unionist.⁶⁰ The events concerning this election made the

Reese River a household topic of conversation in the west for years.

During the election campaign feelings ran high, especially because North-South and Civil War issues were so prominent in the people's minds. Also, a great deal of wagering on the outcome took place, so that nearly all citizens had either a political or an economic interest in the outcome. One wager in particular caught the attention of the Reese Riverites. R. C. Gridley, a local Democrat, challenged a local Republican, Dr. H. S. Herrick, to bet on the outcome of the race. The loser would be required to carry a fifty pound sack of flour from Austin to Clifton. After the wager had been made, the good doctor suggested that the sack of flour should be auctioned to raise funds for the Sanitary Fund.* On April 19 the Republican, Holbrook, defeated Buel, the Democrat. The following day Gridley carried the sack of flour, decorated previously by the doctor with small American flags, from his store in upper Austin to Dr. Herrick's office in Clifton, a distance of over a mile. Following Gridley was a motley procession of onlookers consisting of a band, flag bearers, and curious onlookers. Gridley

*The Sanitary Fund was an association created during the Civil War to provide aid and comfort for wounded or sick Union soldiers. In essence, it was a precursor to the Red Cross as it exists today.

delivered the sack to the Bank Exchange Saloon, instead of Herrick's office, much to the approval of all concerned. After formally receiving the sack of flour, Herrick opened the floor to speeches and drinking. A short while later the party returned to central Austin where the sack was auctioned for \$350. The new owner immediately donated the sack for another round of bidding. By the end of the day the sack had been sold countless times, raising over \$4,500 in gold coin for the Sanitary Fund.⁶¹

Following the election, Gridley and the sack of flour toured Gold Hill and Virginia City where even more money was raised. Then, Gridley went on to California, thence to New York where he continued to raise money for the Sanitary Fund. By the end of the war he had raised approximately \$175,000 for the fund and made Austin and the Reese River Mining District a familiar and recognizable entity for thousands of Americans throughout the nation.⁶²

Lost in all the hullabaloo and excitement of the campaign were the actual results of the election. The Unionists (Republicans) made a clean sweep of the elections, but a large minority voted for the Democrats. For example, of the 1,411 votes cast, 761 were for the Unionist Holbrook and 650 went to the Democrat, Buel.⁶³ Thus 46 percent of the vote went to an opposition party

political candidate during the Civil War, an indication that the Reese Riverites certainly were interested in the political process and probably very aware of both local and national political issues.

Throughout the rest of the 1860s Lander County (i.e., Austin and the Reese River Mining District) played a prominent role in regional and state politics. From 1864 to 1871 Lander County was second only to Storey County (Virginia City and Gold Hill) in the number of state senators and assemblymen sent to Carson City.⁶⁴ However, after 1871 a steady decline in population began and by the 1890s the county was apportioned only one senator and one assemblyman, the legal minimum.⁶⁵ Thus, the Reese River Mining District lost its political influence after only a short period of ascendancy and by the early 1870s the region had no particular political success or dominance.

Following the excitement of 1864, the county and municipal governments dealt with typical municipal and local political issues. Between 1863 and 1865 city and county police forces were created, a county hospital was funded, a fire company formed in Austin, an embryonic school system began, and a municipal water company was formed. By the end of 1865 the local governing bodies had established all the traditional small-town-America institutions found in nearly any

small city in the east.⁶⁶ For the next several decades the city and county continued to carry out these basic functions just as any traditional industrial or commercial town in the east would have done.

However, as time passed the need for both a city and a county government became questionable. As the town became more and more dependent on the Manhattan Company, a strong link between the city government and the company developed. The Manhattan Company integrated its water system and reservoirs with those of the city to insure adequate fire protection for the entire town. Thus the Austin Water Company, a private, franchised, venture received substantial aid from the Manhattan Company, another private venture.⁶⁷

During this same time period many officers and employees of the company served as city officials. John Frost, the Manhattan Company supervisor for underground work, served several terms as Mayor in the late 1860s and 1870s, while Allen Curtis, the company's General Agent and Supervisor, served as an alderman for several terms in the early 1870s, as well as two terms as County Treasurer at the same time. This blending of interests spread to the state level also, as M. J. Farrell and Andrew Nichols, both business associates of Curtis, served as State Senator and/or Assemblyman from Lander County in the 1870s and 1880s.⁶⁸

This blending of company and public interests is easily understandable. The Manhattan Company, as the town's biggest landowner, taxpayer and employer, had a vested interest in local affairs. Likewise, the company was the city's greatest benefactor as it provided revenue and jobs, as well as aiding the city in maintaining services such as water and fire protection while employing most of the members of the hose companies. The majority of the Austinites applauded the close city-company relationship because they believed the city's and the company's interests to be essentially the same.

As the population of the district declined throughout the 1870s, and as the linkage between the Manhattan Company and the city and county governments grew stronger, the need for municipal government diminished. By 1880 many citizens in Austin believed the time had come to eliminate the seemingly redundant city government. As a result, in May, 1881, the Nevada Legislature repealed the Austin City Charter and abolished all city offices.⁶⁹

While the Reese River district's fortunes rose and fell between the Civil War and World War I the area remained relatively isolated from national economic, political and social movements. However, during these five decades of development two major national issues of a socio-economic nature were felt in the Reese River.

These two, the use of silver as currency by the United States and the growth of labor unions in American industry, surfaced in the remote areas of central Nevada, as they did in nearly every silver and gold mining camp in the west.

Notes

- ¹Lewis, The Town That Died Laughing, p. 12; Reese River Reveille, 23 May 1863.
- ²Reese River Reveille, 29 August 1863.
- ³Reese River Reveille, 22 November 1864.
- ⁴Knight, Handbook Almanac For the Pacific States, p. 288; Samuel Bowles, Our New West. Hartford, Conn.: Hartford Publishing Co., 1869, p. 279; Samuel Bowles, Across the Continent: A Summer's Journey to the Rocky Mountains, the Mormons, and the Pacific States with Speaker Colfax. Springfield, Mass.: Samuel Bowles and Company, 1865, p. 142.
- ⁵Knight, Handbook Almanac For the Pacific States, p. 288; Bowles, Our New West, p. 279; Bowles, Across the Continent, p. 142; The Silver Mines of Nevada, p. 8; The Silver Districts of Nevada, pp. 10-11.
- ⁶Reese River Reveille, 28 August 1866.
- ⁷Reese River Reveille, 8 November 1866.
- ⁸Reese River Reveille, 30 April 1867.
- ⁹Engineering and Mining Journal, 4 (August 10, 1867), pp. 82-83; carrying an article originally published in the San Francisco Bulletin.
- ¹⁰U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, The Statistics of the Population of the United States, Embracing The Tables of Race, Nationality, Sex, Selected Ages and Occupations To Which Are Added The Statistics of School Attendance and Illiteracy, of Schools, Libraries, Newspapers and Periodicals, Churches, Pauperism, and Crime, And of Areas Families and Dwellings, Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior, (By Francis A. Walker, Supt. of Census), Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872, pp. 48, 198-199.

- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Reese River Reveille, 27 June 1863.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Reese River Reveille, 13 February 1864; 16 June 1864.
- ¹⁵ Reese River Reveille, 11 October 1864.
- ¹⁶ Reese River Reveille, 5 August 1865.
- ¹⁷ Reese River Reveille, 5 August 1865; 28 April 1866.
- ¹⁸ Reese River Reveille, 15 March 1867.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Reese River Reveille, 16 September 1865; 18 September 1872.
- ²¹ Reese River Reveille, 8 January 1869; Lewis, The Town That Died Laughing, p. 111.
- ²² Lewis, The Town That Died Laughing, pp. 111, 113-115.
- ²³ Ibid., pp. 116, 119.
- ²⁴ Ibid., pp. 119-120.
- ²⁵ Reese River Reveille, 22 October 1866.
- ²⁶ Reese River Reveille, 23 July 1864; 24 November 1869.
- ²⁷ Gary P. BeDunnah, A History of the Chinese in Nevada: 1855-1904. San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1973, pp. 56-57.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 57.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p. 64; Reese River Reveille, 3 May 1866.
- ³⁰ U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census Embracing Extended Tables of the Population of States, Counties, and Minor Civil Divisions,

With Distinction of Race, Sex, Age, Nativity, and Occupations; Together With Summary Tables, Derived From Other Census Reports Relating to Newspapers and Periodicals; Public Schools and Illiteracy; The Dependent, Defective and Delinquent, Classes, Etc. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883, pp. 72, 256, 401, 439, 520, 687; U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part I, Population. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892, pp. 30, 273, 498, 520, 525, 534, 628-629; U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Census Office, Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part III, Population: State or Territory of Birth, Country of Birth and Citizenship (Analysis only), Foreign Born Parentage, Conjugal Condition, Ages, School Attendance, Illiteracy, Can Not Speak English, Occupations, Soldiers and Widows; Agriculture; Manufacturers; Fisheries; Transportation; Wealth, Debt, and Taxation; Real Estate Mortgages; Farms and Homes; Indians. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1897, pp. 156, 228, 790.

³¹Reese River Reveille, 30 May 1863; 17 June 1863; 29 August 1863.

³²Reese River Reveille, 4 July 1863.

³³Reese River Reveille, 29 August 1863.

³⁴Mining and Scientific Press, 6 (October 12, 1863), p. 4; Reese River Reveille, 10 March 1864.

³⁵Reese River Reveille, 10 March 1864.

³⁶Mining and Scientific Press, 8 (January 30, 1864), p. 70.

³⁷Reese River Reveille, 14 May 1864.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Reese River Reveille, 5 September 1865.

⁴⁰Reese River Reveille, 18 March 1865; 10 September 1866.

⁴¹"Austin, Nevada," History of Engineering Manuscript file, History of Engineering Program, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas; Reese River Reveille, 10 September 1866.

⁴²Reese River Reveille, 12 January 1867.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Reese River Reveille, 28 August 1869.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Reese River Reveille, 14 August 1873.

⁴⁷Lewis, Town That Died Laughing, pp. 214-217.

⁴⁸Sanborn Map & Publishing Co., Austin, Nevada, January, 1886. New York: Sanborn Map & Publishing Co., 1886.

⁴⁹Sanborn-Perris Map Co. Limited, Austin, Nevada, October, 1890. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co. Limited, 1890.

⁵⁰Sanborn Map Company, Austin, Nevada, July, 1907. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1907.

⁵¹"Austin, Nevada," History of Engineering Manuscript file; Reese River Reveille, 28 August 1897.

⁵²William D. Swackhamer, Political History of Nevada. 6th ed., Carson City, Nevada: State Printing Office, 1974, p. 100.

⁵³Edith S. Harris, Manuscript Collection, Nevada Historical Society, Reno, Nevada. This small collection consists of a term paper and maps detailing the evolution of Nevada counties.

⁵⁴Angel, History of Nevada, p. 461.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 462.

⁵⁶Reese River Reveille, 15 September 1863.

⁵⁷Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 45.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 45-46.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 48.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Angel, History of Nevada, pp. 268-270.

⁶²Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 52.

⁶³Reese River Reveille, 21 April 1864. Buel went on to run for Governor of Nevada as a Democrat in November of 1864 and lost again.

⁶⁴Swackhamer, Political History of Nevada, pp. 140-142.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 52-61.

⁶⁷Angel, History of Nevada, p. 467.

⁶⁸Reese River Reveille, 3 August 1870; 28 April 1874; 29 April 1873; 13 January 1869; Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 59-60, 107-111, 139-146; King, "History of Lander County, Nevada," pp. 70-73, 85-199; Angel, History of Nevada, pp. 462-470.

⁶⁹Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," p. 125.

CHAPTER VIII

LABOR AND SILVER: NATIONAL MOVEMENTS IN THE REESE RIVER

Although the Reese River Mining District remained geographically isolated during the years between the Civil War and World War I, certain national issues of the era were keenly felt in the area. The most significant of these issues are the silver question and the organization of labor into unions. The question of labor organization arose in the district during and after the period of consolidation, when the individual mine owner/miner gave way to the wage earning miner working in the corporately owned mine. Over the years the strength of organized labor in the Reese River region rose and fell with the strength of the local economy, the mood of the local populace, and the inclination and strength of the company employing the workers.

Comparatively speaking, labor prospered in the Reese River area, whether it was organized or unorganized in nature. This is especially true of the boom years of the 1860s and early 1870s. During these years the demand for labor remained so great that a standard wage equal to or above "union scale" could easily be earned in the

Reese River Mining District. Throughout the boom years at Reese River, the Reveille bemoaned the shortage of workingmen and trumpeted the high wage being paid.¹ In general, the average working miner earned four dollars a day, plus board of ten dollars per week, while the more skilled workers, mechanics, and artisans could expect to make six to eight dollars per day plus board.² Even common day laborers could expect to make fifty to sixty dollars per month and board.³

With wages such as these, it is no wonder organized labor faced a severe organizational challenge. To compound the problem, many of the early day prospector-miners represented both labor and management in their individual situations. These men did not employ large numbers of workers, many employed none at all. If they needed extra help, they often gave a percentage of their claim in return for labor. However, these small time operators did occasionally have complaints to voice, either about legal matters or matters of local concern such as milling costs, wage standards, or claim boundaries. As a result, most early "labor" organization took the form of miners' leagues rather than true labor unions, a format which allowed the property owner/workers to form a common front to face their common problems.

Throughout the 1860s numerous "miners' rallies" occurred and miners' leagues formed whenever a crisis

loomed on the horizon. In September, 1864, a Miners' League, patterned on those in Virginia City and Gold Hill, formed in Austin.⁴ Initially, seventy-five miners joined the league.⁵ However, the great majority of the miners preferred to rely on the "Miners' Rally" or mass meeting to discuss issues or protest various corporate policies, such as high milling costs. A series of these rallies took place in early 1865, to protest a rumored wage cut by San Francisco companies and to demand payment of back wages owed to some miners.⁶ One of these rallies led to the formation of a "Miners' Association" to investigate and report upon the issues then under discussion.⁷

Apparently, these early attempts at organization were short-lived as the Reese River region was too unstable and changing to support them. A third attempt to form a league illustrates the point. On March 15, 1868, a new "Miners' League of Austin" was organized.⁸ Within a matter of months the association collapsed as its members flocked out of the Reese River Mining District to the new camps at White Pine.⁹ During the "White Pine excitement" of 1868 and 1869, the labor situation in the Reese River district began to change. Consolidation of mining interests and growth of the Manhattan Company had removed much of the competition from the area.

By the late 1860s most Reese River miners were wage earning miners working for the few surviving companies in the district. This turn about in the make-up of the labor force soon led to more traditional confrontations between the workers and management. Beginning in September of 1869, the Manhattan Company tried to force a reduction in wages and taxes in order to lower operating costs and increase profits. Sixty of the company's miners were laid off, leaving only 125 on the payroll, and the company president, H. Augustus Taylor of New York, directed Allen A. Curtis to close the company's mines and mill in an effort to reduce wages and taxes.¹⁰ When this attempt met furious opposition from the local press, the local miners, and the local taxing body, the company altered its strategy.¹¹ The management converted from the day-wage system to the contract or "tributor" method of working the mines.¹²

The "tribute" system was actually a system of mine leasing which occurred throughout the mining west in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Essentially the mine lease was a contract between the mine owner and one or more persons to work all or a portion of a mine for a stated period of time. The lessees received a percentage of the returns on the ore which they mined and delivered to the mill. The system closely resembled the "tribute" system which

had been used in Cornwall, England, for generations. In Cornwall, the laborers often kept a portion of the ore they mined for themselves as partial or full payment for their work. When these Cornishmen appeared in American mines they may have brought the system with them. Whether they did or not, they quickly adapted to the mine lease so that within a few years the terms tributor and lessee had come to mean the same thing.¹³

Many western mining companies preferred the leasing system for various reasons. Mine owners believed it would save them money and increase profits by eliminating a large number of wage earners from the payroll. The risk and expense of mining could be shifted to the lessee; and if he wanted to pay his wage-earning help four dollars per day that was fine, because the company was not involved. Thus, without tying up any large amount of capital in the work force the mine owner could simply wait and reap his profits from the percentage of the ore retained by the company. And, if the company owned its own mill, it charged the lessee to mill his ore, so the company could make even more profits in its mining operation. Many mining companies also believed the leasing system could remove them from a direct involvement with organized labor, thus preventing strikes and other labor-management conflicts. To a point, this was true, and companies which used the leasing method were fairly

well isolated from strikes. Although strikes could occur, striking against the contractor simply could not be as effective as striking against the company itself.¹⁴ So, the leasing system became the favored system to reduce the cost of labor and to shift the risk of finding the mineral to the worker. Costs of safety precautions were shifted to the lessee and the leasing system also became a fairly effective anti-union tool.

By 1871 the Manhattan Company used this system almost exclusively, with 94 of 112 miners working as "tributors."¹⁵ Thus, the company avoided both paying a high daily wage and the threat of unionization. This point was brought home in 1871 and 1872 when approximately one-third of the district's miners (130 men) formed the Miners' Union of Austin.¹⁶ This group demanded that all Reese River Mining District companies reinstitute the four dollar per day wage for all day labor.¹⁷ The Manhattan Company, with only eighteen day laborers, agreed since it would not affect their tributors at all, thus the daily costs would be trivial.¹⁸ However, Henry Prideaux, the superintendent of the other major Reese River mining enterprise, the English Pacific Mining Company, refused to increase, as all of his workers were day laborers.

On February 17, 1872, the local miners' union, led by its president, Daniel Holland, sent a party of

forty miners to the Pacific Company's works. Captain Prideaux hoisted up his crew and as they came to the surface they were induced into joining the union. Only one man of the Pacific Company's crew did not sign up. To retaliate, Prideaux filed a complaint against the local union alleging that he and his miners had been intimidated by the "excited and dangerous crowd" which had come to his works. The Union leaders, Daniel Holland, and twenty-eight others were arrested by the Lander County Sheriff and charged with "unlawful assembly, with stopping the miners from working by 'violence and intimidation,' and with forcing the miners, to their 'great terror' to sign a pledge not to work for less than \$4 per day." The case came to trial the next week and charges were dropped against all but Holland and four other union officers. After examining fifty jurors, a jury was finally seated. But, it could not reach a decision so the case was dismissed. Prideaux grudgingly accepted the union demands, but a new mining rush to Pioche drained away so many local miners that the union collapsed by the end of the year.¹⁹

For several years labor in the Reese River Mining District remained unorganized. Then, in 1875, the reconstituted local Austin Union joined with those of the Comstock, White Pine, and Ruby Hill in an embryonic attempt to unite all local unions into a state-wide

organization.²⁰ This plan reached fruition in 1877, when all miners' unions in Nevada agreed to form a confederation. As soon as the state's largest unions had joined the new organization, it announced that only union men would work underground in Nevada, and that they would work for no less than four dollars per day. Demands for a closed shop led to a brief strike by Austin miners at the Manhattan Company when one shift boss refused to join the union. Pressure by the company superintendent, since the men already made four dollars a day and since the tribute system would thwart most union demands anyway, led to a change of heart by the shift boss, so the closed shop came to the Reese River Mining District in November of 1877.²¹

The labor union movement in the Reese River Mining District peaked in the late 1870s and early 1880s. The Manhattan Mining Company, by that time the only company in the district, accepted the closed shop and the four dollar per day minimum. However, the company also maintained and expanded the tribute system so that the Manhattan Company actually paid very few day laborers directly. Of course, if a tributor or contractor wished to hire local miners to carry out his contract with the Manhattan Company he was forced to use union miners at four dollars per day.

The crowning achievement for Austin's local union came in 1881 when it enforced the closed shop and the four dollar per day wage at Lewis, ninety miles north of Austin. In early 1881 the hundred or so miners at Lewis, a small mining camp, learned that their wages would drop to \$3.50 per day. The miners struck, and within a week Martin Igo, the president of the Austin union, arrived to organize a union. By early March violence erupted at Lewis between the strikers and newly arriving non-union replacement workers, or "scabs." The Lewis union wired its Austin brethren for aid and the Austin Union voted to go "en masse" to Lewis to adjust the situation. Approximately 250 heavily-armed Austin miners boarded a special train and left for Lewis. When the Austinites arrived they learned that the local mine superintendent, hearing of their approach, had capitulated to the union's demands of a closed shop at four dollars per day and then packed his family and left for San Francisco. The victorious Austin union, successful just through the threat of intervention, returned to Austin in triumph after a wild celebration in Lewis.²²

By the mid-1880s the widening mining depression in Nevada led to a series of wage reductions for miners throughout the state. Many companies ended the four dollar per day wage rate by going exclusively to the tribute system and issuing contracts to individual miners

instead of general contractors. On June 10, 1884, the Manhattan Company cut wages to \$3.50 per day, although they had not used day labor for months. The Austin Miners' Union, rather than repudiate their pledge to work for no less than four dollars per day, disbanded on June 18.²³

For the next quarter of a century the organization of labor in the Reese River Mining District remained at a standstill. By the end of the 1880s the mining industry was in serious trouble, both at the Reese River and throughout the state. The Austin Miners' Union lingered, as a disbanded and inactive unit, until the mid-1890s, then it faded away entirely.²⁴ Mining remained depressed for the rest of the century and did not revive until the early twentieth century. A brief period of union activity occurred during a resurgence of mining activity in the district in the years before World War I. The Western Federation of Miners appeared in the Reese River Mining District in late 1909, and by 1910 the new Austin Union Number 30 had a membership of about seventy.²⁵ This union functioned for approximately two years, but when the local mines began to fail again, in 1911 and 1912, the union disintegrated.²⁶ Thus, organized labor in the Reese River Mining District faded from the scene permanently before World War I, living and finally dying with the local mining industry.

Another problem of national scope which directly affected the Reese River region was the silver question, a burning political and economic issue from the early 1880s until 1900. In Austin, the fate of profitable silver mining hung in the balance, and when the United States government turned away from silver, the Reese River region suffered for it.

When the issue of silver coinage developed on a national level in the 1870s Nevada naturally became deeply involved in the controversy. During the late 1880s numerous western congressmen began to clamor for more silver coinage. By 1892 their efforts had failed and the many supporters of silver made the question a campaign issue in the presidential elections of the 1890s. Throughout the West politicians rallied supporters of silver, and in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, and Nevada "silver clubs" or "silver leagues" were organized on the grassroots level to marshal support for the cause. For the next ten years silver dominated local and state politics in Nevada.²⁷

The silver issue was vital in the Reese River Mining District. The local miners believed that the district could once again prosper if only silver prices would rise. If silver prices would rise, lower grade ores could be mined profitably. Since Austin's ores were declining steadily in quality, a rise in silver

prices was essential for mining's long-term success. This could only happen, though, if the United States government purchased more silver for distribution as currency. Thus, politicians in the Reese River Mining District stood squarely in favor of the silver coinage question. In April, 1892, a mass meeting held at the Lander County Courthouse resulted in the organization of the Lander County Silver League Number 2, whose sole function in life was to promote the free coinage of silver by the United States government.²⁸

Later in the year the local Democratic and Republican party organizations disbanded and jointly formed the Silver Party of Lander County to join with other Nevada county silver parties in unanimous support for James B. Weaver, the pro-silver Populist presidential hopeful.²⁹ After the defeat of the Silverites in 1892, the local political machines in Nevada continued to work even harder for free silver, especially when it appeared that no major political party would support silver and that all government purchases of silver might end. In Austin, the local women took up the silver challenge and in August, 1893, formed "The Women's Silver League of Austin" dedicated to "the free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1."³⁰ Women's Silver Leagues developed in many Nevada mining camps and were an attempt to draw support for silver and at the same time publicize

the growing sentiment for women's suffrage in the state. Unfortunately, the cry for remonetization of silver was not heard in Washington. In October, 1893, the Sherman Silver Purchase Act was repealed, ending all government purchases and support of silver. The price of the metal immediately plummeted, renewing urgent efforts by westerners to reinstate government price supports. Throughout the rest of the 1890s the silver question dominated Reese River politics and did not die out fully until the presidential election of 1900, when the silver issue faced its final and bitterest defeat.

Thus, the Reese River Mining District entered the twentieth century still fighting for silver, when in reality the truly productive life of the area had ended. The declining economy, the shrinking population, and the silver politics of the area all clung to the same ever-diminishing resource. However, it was to take several more futile mining revivals and two more decades of delusion for the Reese Riverites to realize the mining industry and their dreams were equally played out.

NOTES

¹Reese River Reveille, 20 September 1863; 23 November 1863; 16 January 1864; 16 October 1865; 14 July 1866; Mining and Scientific Press, 12 (January 20, 1866), p. 44.

²Mining and Scientific Press, 12 (January 20, 1866), p. 44.

³Ibid.

⁴Reese River Reveille, 16 September 1864.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Reese River Reveille, 9 January 1865; 11 January 1865.

⁷Reese River Reveille, 11 January 1865.

⁸Richard Lingenfelter, Hardrock Miners: A History of the Mining Labor Movement in the American West, 1863-1893. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, p. 67.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Reese River Reveille, 4 September 1869; 14 October 1869; 15 October 1869.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Lingenfelter, Hardrock Miners, pp. 76-77.

¹³Joseph King, A Mine to Make a Mine: Financing the Colorado Mining Industry, 1859-1902. College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 1977, pp. 155-160.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Lingenfelter, Hardrock Miners, p. 76.

¹⁶Ibid.; Reese River Reveille, 19 February 1872; 20 February 1872.

- ¹⁷Lingenfelter, Hardrock Miners, p. 76.
- ¹⁸Ibid.; Reese River Reveille, 7 April 1873.
- ¹⁹Lingenfelter, Hardrock Miners, pp. 76-77; Reese River Reveille, 19 February 1872; 20 February 1872; 7 April 1873; Engineering and Mining Journal, 13 (March 12, 1872), p. 169.
- ²⁰Lingenfelter, Hardrock Miners, p. 79.
- ²¹Ibid., pp. 128-130.
- ²²Ibid., pp. 159-160.
- ²³Ibid., p. 179; Engineering and Mining Journal, 39 (June 6, 1885), p. 393.
- ²⁴Reese River Reveille, 21 February 1894.
- ²⁵Reese River Reveille, 26 February 1910.
- ²⁶Reese River Reveille, 24 September 1910; 11 February 1911.
- ²⁷Mary Ellen Glass, Silver & Politics in Nevada, 1892-1902. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1969, pp. 1-24.
- ²⁸Reese River Reveille, 29 April 1892.
- ²⁹Reese River Reveille, 23 September 1892.
- ³⁰Reese River Reveille, 12 August 1893; Mining and Scientific Press, 67 (September 2, 1893), p. 146.

CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE REESE RIVER MINING DISTRICT

While Austin, the center of the Reese River Mining District, evolved from a wild-and-wooly frontier mining camp into a quiet, industrially-oriented company town during the last half of the nineteenth century, its society retained several vestiges of the area's colorful past. Although the town and its residents generally came to conform to late Victorian moral codes, there were always the exceptions; practices and beliefs which lingered from the camp's earlier days and which the more open Western outlook accepted easily and logically. Thus, a small company town with all the "traditional" and "acceptable" societies and fraternal orders of the day found no great moral dilemma in its numerous saloons, gambling halls, and brothels. Likewise, the citizens of the Reese River Mining District usually acted reasonably and civilly towards one another in their business and social dealings. Rampant crime, murders, gunfights, and other types of serious anti-social behavior rarely occurred in the Reese River area on the scale that they did in California and on the Comstock. Although isolated

incidents occurred to mar the scene, for the most part Austin was a quiet and orderly company town, industrious and relatively serene after the chaos of the rush had passed.

Even though the Reese River Mining District contained boisterous and rambunctious mining camps in its early days, various religious denominations established an early foothold in the area. In May, 1863, church services were being held in Austin and Clifton.¹ Within a matter of months services were being held by several denominations in various localities throughout Austin and Clifton. The Lander County Courthouse, Bradford's Hall, the Odd Fellow's Hall, and other structures often rang with sermons and hymns.² By early 1864 congregations of Presbyterians, Catholics, Methodists, Episcopalians, and a non-denominational Austin Christian Association met on a regular basis.³

Several of these churches grew in strength from the mid-1860s on through the 1870s. The most successful denominations were the Methodists, Catholics, and Episcopalians. The Methodists, under the leadership of the resourceful Reverend J. L. Trefren, financed the building of their church and parsonage by selling stock in a church-sponsored mining company. Although the company failed, the Methodist congregation occupied its new stone and brick edifice in late 1866.⁴

The Catholic congregation soon became very numerous. The local Catholic population in the district rose so fast that the parish was organized in December, 1864. In late 1865 construction of a two-story brick structure began under the direction of Reverend Edward Kelly. Although the building was used for services as early as September 29, 1866, it was not dedicated until September, 1867, and not finished until early 1870.⁵

The Episcopalians, although in evidence early in the scramble to Reese River, got a late start in formally establishing the church. Bishop Talbot held services in Austin and Clifton in 1863 and a layman, D. M. Godwin, led a group of Reese River Episcopalians regularly from 1863 to 1873. After 1866, services were held in the Lander County Courthouse. In 1868 the Reverend Marcus Lane established Saint George's Mission in Austin, but it lasted only one year. Then, in September, 1873, Saint George's Parish was established. By 1878 churchmen finally gathered together the money necessary to build a house of worship, with Allen A. Curtis contributing ten thousand dollars of the total cost of \$15,500. The church was consecrated on Trinity Sunday in February, 1878. The vicarage, built in 1874, was sold in 1884, and then a new one, the brick Dunlap Home, was purchased in 1887.⁶

These congregations no doubt played a role in the "taming" of the district, as they provided a place of worship as well as a reminder that traditional morals were not to be left behind when moving west. Likewise, various civic, social, and fraternal organizations formed to serve the community and, as a fringe benefit, channel the activities of many rambunctious Reese Riverites into more acceptable behavior patterns. These social and fraternal organizations varied in their approach. Benevolent societies, fire companies and many of the traditional lodges and orders quickly found a place in the Reese River society.

In November, 1863, this development began with the organization of the Hebrew Benevolent Society.⁷ During the next several months and years many other organizations formed. In March, 1864, the Free and Accepted Masons organized Lander Lodge Number 8 and one year later, on April 1, 1865, the Masons established Austin Lodge Number 10.⁸ The International Order of Odd Fellows appeared in the Reese River area in January, 1864, when Austin Lodge Number 9 convened.⁹ Several years later a second I.O.O.F. chapter, the Alpha Lodge, Number 11 organized; it was disincorporated in the 1870s.¹⁰ The Independent Order of Good Templars, a temperance organization, took root in the Reese River Mining District at an early date, April, 1864.¹¹ A

rather unusual group, the Society of Reese River Pioneers, organized in October of 1864.¹² Nine years later, in June, 1873, the Society was reorganized with better results.¹³ The Fenian Brotherhood, Austin Circle, formed in August, 1865, and for the next several years conducted both political and social activities.¹⁴

Other, civic-oriented groups also formed during this era. The Lander Guard, a local military company, formed in October of 1864 to serve as an Indian fighting force.¹⁵ Likewise, the Pioneer Hook and Ladder Company, Austin's first volunteer fire department, formed at this time.¹⁶ Organized in January, 1864, this fire company served both a civic and a social function, as did the two other fire companies, the Manhattan Fire Company and the Eagle Hose Company, which organized in the late 1860s.¹⁷

Less well known societies also formed in these early years. In March, 1864, a Ladies Benevolent Sewing Society organized in Jacobsville.¹⁸ Although short-lived, it served a social function for the small number of female residents in the Jacobsville area. Another rather unusual society, the Merry Bachelors of Austin, formed in September, 1865.¹⁹ This society allowed eligible types of both genders to meet in a socially-acceptable forum and, hopefully, to make suitable matches for all concerned.²⁰

Thus, at a very early date in the history of the Reese River Mining District the local citizenry could join many of the social institutions available to their brethren in California and the East. For those evenings not filled with lodge meetings and fire drills, there were other entertainments for the Reese River populace, both "legitimate" and "illegitimate."

The Reese Riverite of the 1860s could partake of numerous forms of entertainment. Theater, of all kinds, played in Austin during the boom years of the 1860s and the 1870s. Minstrel shows, Shakespearean works, operettas, comedy, bell ringers, and magicians played Austin. For many years Austin remained a profitable stop for the various kinds of touring entertainment in Nevada.²¹ In January, 1864, the residents of the area were treated to the talents of the well-known comedic lecturer, Artemus Ward, who performed in Austin and Big Creek.²² Over the next decade and a half a myriad of performers visited the Reese River Mining District to entertain the citizenry, as well as to pocket a tidy profit.

Similar to the theatrical performances were lectures of various kinds. Learned and respected visitors, as well as local personages, lectured to interested Austinites on a wide assortment of topics. In February of 1866 Reverend Edward Kelly, of the local

Catholic church, spoke on "The Origin and Perpetuity of the Classics," while two years earlier the local Methodist minister lectured on "Personal Reminiscences of Public Men."²³ Visiting celebrities made the most widely attended lectures. In September, 1864 Professor Benjamin Silliman, a nationally respected scholar from Yale, spoke on the mineral wealth of the Reese River mines.²⁴ Another well-known personage, J. Ross Browne, the author of several federal reports on precious-metal mining in the West, lectured to the Reese Riverites in Bradford's Hall in June of 1865.²⁵

Of course, when theatrical troupes or lecturers were not available, the Reese Riverites generated their own entertainment. Many kinds of galas, balls, celebrations, and parades were arranged by the various social orders and fraternities to enliven the social life of the local residents or to celebrate important local events or national holidays.

As the economy of the Reese River Mining District deteriorated and the population declined, professional entertainment stopped playing the Austin area, so locally generated events became more and more important. The annual Fireman's Ball, numerous concerts by the local glee club or brass band, Fourth of July, Christmas and New Year's celebrations, St. Patrick's Day parades, and even a gala to celebrate the opening of the town's

newest quartz mill livened up the Reese River social scene.²⁶

For those who preferred to participate in their entertainment, picnicking, sporting events, contests, and tests of skill abounded. Horse racing, athletic contests (baseball, boxing, or billiards), and shooting matches took place continually during fair weather, while sledding down the steep, icy grade in Austin occupied the more active souls during the winter.²⁷

Billiard matches became fashionable in the Reese River area in early 1865 and several touring professionals, as well as proficient local players, exhibited their skills.²⁸ Baseball appeared in the Reese River Mining District in 1870, with the formation of the district's first squad in March of that year.²⁹ As the years passed baseball developed into a major part of the Reese River social scene, and baseball games dominated the news. The Austin teams battled among themselves, as well as playing other local teams from Eureka, Battle Mountain, and interestingly, various Indian teams which appeared every year.³⁰ One local team, sponsored by the Austin-Manhattan Mining Company, seems to have won an amateur baseball club tournament held in Chicago in August of 1909.³¹

The "Sport of Kings" also had a local following in the Reese River region. By June, 1864, a race track

for horses existed three miles west of Austin.³² By August the track was in operation and it seemed to be doing quite well.³³ Throughout the rest of the century, and well into the next, horseracing remained a very profitable and popular part of the Reese River social life. By 1873 the older circular track had given way to a short, straight track located in what had been Clifton, and short races for the range-bred quarter horses became popular.³⁴ In 1890 the Reese River Jockey Club began holding annual races in conjunction with a gala ball sponsored by the Club.³⁵ For many years these races, sponsored by a succession of local "jockey clubs," were very popular social affairs.³⁶

As in any other town or city, a portion of the population preferred entertainment of a different sort. In the Reese River area a sizeable number of the population enjoyed the social freedoms afforded the western miner, and saloons, gambling halls, and bordellos prospered in Austin. These places of business arrived in the district early in the "Rush" and remained a part of society until the early twentieth century. By the time the Reese River Reveille published its first editions, saloons, gambling halls, and bawdy houses were all well established.³⁷ Within a few months, in order to be closer to their clientele, the "frail fair ones" moved out of the bawdy houses and into the local saloons.³⁸

By 1865 the masses of hard working and hard living miners could quite easily find diversions of the "lower" sort almost anywhere in Austin.

At night the brilliantly lighted drinking and gambling saloons with open fronts are filled with a motley crowd. Women conduct the game at several monte tables, shuffling the cards and handling the piles of silver coin with the unruffled serenity of professional gamblers; while men of all classes "fight the tiger" with the usual earnestness of that infatuating pursuit.³⁹

Prostitution and gambling remained a part of Reese River life throughout the nineteenth century, even though there were periodic attempts to limit or end both institutions, especially the prostitution.⁴⁰ However, it was the general belief that the local governments would be overstepping their bounds if they attempted to legislate morality or infringe on any of the rights of the vigorous Reese Riverites.⁴¹ Not until 1911 did the state and local governments infringe upon the free practice of prostitution in Austin. In May of that year the greatly diminished red light district moved as a result of a new state law forbidding houses of prostitution within eight hundred yards of a school.⁴² Then, in June, 1912, an Austin Town Ordinance forbade "lewd or dissolute female persons" from entering local saloons to practice prostitution.⁴³ This damaged an already declining endeavor and over the next several decades

the "oldest profession" faded away from a lack of interest and profitability.

Oddly enough, gambling fell prey to moral legislators when prostitution did not. Although a mainstay of Nevada's, and the Reese River's, social life, gambling attracted the ire of "reformers," and eventually these people forced an anti-gambling law through the Nevada legislature. Thus, in 1910 the licensing of gambling halls ended, and the "last roll of the wheel" was made in Austin on September 30, 1910.⁴⁴ The importance of gambling to the Reese Riverites and the dissatisfaction of the locals with the new law were clearly expressed by the Reveille which gave the event front page coverage with a headline proclaiming "Last Roll of Wheel Made in Austin." The Reveille reported:

Gambling in Austin is a thing of the past. That is as far as licensed gambling is concerned. Of course, it is only reasonable to believe that some of the boys will congregate in some secluded nook, and on occasions indulge in the pleasures and excitement of the great American game.

At the Palace saloon, at 11:50 p.m., Friday, September 30, the last roll of the wheel was had in Austin under the licensed gaming act. On the layout were two bets, one of twenty-five cents on number 33 and one of fifty cents on 34. The little white ball spun around the whale bone track and dropped in number 25. Croupier Cooper gathered in the scheckles and cried "all over." There was considerable play the last few hours, all eager to make a winning.

The saloons look deserted now, where formerly was found a good natured gathering of solo or cribbage players around each table, the chairs are now vacant. Most people built on liberal lines denounce this part of the law as unjust.⁴⁵

Like all western mining camps, the Reese River towns witnessed a certain amount of crime, ranging from murder to petty theft. Overall, though, the Reese River district did not suffer from the wanton and lawless activities which characterized the Mother Lode in California, and the Comstock, Pioche and other areas in Nevada. For various reasons the Reese River populace remained relatively law-abiding. The early formation of county and city governments, especially city and county police forces, and the rapid growth of social, fraternal and religious institutions no doubt played an important role in containing crime and violence. Unlike many mining camps, those in the Reese River either possessed, or quickly developed, so many of the traditional civil and social institutions that moral codes and legal systems did not have to be rebuilt after a long period of chaos and lawlessness. The Reese River area certainly had its share of chaos, but compared to its predecessors and contemporaries, it was not a lawless and ungoverned region. However, some criminal activity did occur. Much more illicit activity occurred in the early years of the district's life when the population was much larger and less stable. As the Reese River Mining District aged, and the population decreased, crime declined drastically and by the end of the century was almost nonexistent.

During Austin's first wild years shootings, stabbings, and other types of assaults occurred regularly, though few were fatal. Most disputes involved politics (during and just after the Civil War), drunkenness, gambling, or the ladies of the red light district.⁴⁶ The peak of lawlessness came between the summer of 1863 and the summer of 1865, when the scene began to calm somewhat. During that two-year period the Reveille reported at least twelve fatalities resulting from shootings, stabbings, and suicide.⁴⁷ However, as time passed the daily crime reports became more and more mundane. Thievery, drunkenness, disturbing the peace, or disorderly conduct soon became the most common types of crime.⁴⁸ One rather lengthy crime report in the Reveille summarizes Austin's typical crime activity:

There have been 33 arrests made by the Marshal and Police since the establishment of our City Government, on the 21st day of April last till June 30th, 1864 on the following charges: malicious mischief, 4; assault and battery, 3; disturbing the peace, 2; drunk and disorderly, 9; fighting in the streets, 8; dead drunk, 5; petit larceny, 1; shooting pistol in city, 1. The Recorder has paid into the City Treasury \$165, the amount of fines collected in the above cases, which shows a very fair business, and ere long the Recorder's Court will rank as one of the institutions of our young and growing city.⁴⁹

Although an occasional serious crime problem developed in the late 1860s and early 1870s, by the end of the latter decade the most prevalent crimes being

reported were vandalism of empty dwellings and businesses by the town's juvenile delinquents and an occasional row or brawl in a local tavern or in Chinatown.⁵⁰ Even an outbreak of highway and stage robberies by road agents in 1870 did not alter the generally peaceable nature of the district.⁵¹ Thus, as the century progressed the initial reputation of Austin as a raw and primitive mining camp quickly evolved into an image of a small, stable, peaceful city.

Throughout the decades of chaos, turmoil, mining development and decline, then finally small town routine, one constant remained for the denizens of the district--the Reese River Reveille. This little newspaper, first published during the rush in 1863, was the voice of central Nevada for well over a half a century. As the "Rush to Reese River" accelerated and the Reese River excitement spread across the country, the Reveille became a widely-circulated publication. Within a matter of months the paper was regularly available in western Nevada, the major cities of California and in the eastern United States. The major nationally circulated mining weeklies, the Mining and Scientific Press and the Engineering and Mining Journal, regularly quoted the Reveille when discussing affairs in the Reese River Mining District.

The Reese River Reveille first appeared on May 16, 1863, as a six column, four page paper published weekly on 11½-by-15½-inch sheets.⁵² Initially sponsored by the Austin Town Company, the paper prospered and quickly expanded into a bi-weekly in June and into a tri-weekly by November, 1863.⁵³ Due to ill health the Reveille's first owner, a staunch Unionist named W. C. Phillips, leased the little paper to his assistant, O. L. C. Fairchild and O. L. C.'s brother, J. D. Fairchild, in October, 1863.

The Fairchilds engaged Adair Wilson as editor and Myron Angel as an assistant editor. In February, 1864, Angel became the editor, a position he held until January, 1868. In May, 1864, the steadily declining Mr. Phillips sold the Reveille to the Fairchilds. On May 21, 1864, the Reveille became a daily paper. In October, 1868, J. D. Fairchild sold his interest in the paper to his brother O. L. C. In August, 1871, the Reveille was sold to Andrew Casamayou and John H. Dennis. Dennis sold his interest to John Booth in September, 1873, and Casamayou became the editor. Casamayou died in December, 1875, and Booth purchased the entire operation. Booth then hired Fred H. Hart as his editor.⁵⁴

In January, 1889, John Booth's widow sold the Reveille to G. A. Carpenter, and in January, 1890, she took it back. Six months later, in June, Mrs. Booth

sold the Reveille to the Lander Publishing Company, and this company made G. W. Rutherford the new editor. One month later, in July, two local men, Messrs. Hinchliffe and Dennis bought the paper. Due to the declining economy in the Reese River Mining District the Reveille became a weekly, in November, 1890. Simultaneously, Alfred H. Phillips became the paper's new editor and business manager. Three years later, W. D. Jones, the editor of a competing journal, the People's Advocate, (published in Austin from 1890 to January, 1893) purchased the Reese River Reveille and began publishing it as a bi-weekly. Jones sold the Reveille to a local partnership, Dalton and Clifford, in 1899 or 1900 and they in turn sold to Lester W. Haworth in June, 1908. In July Haworth reduced the Reveille to a weekly. Haworth died in May, 1917, and his widow carried on with J. R. Hunter as editor. During late 1926 the Reese River Reveille and a Battle Mountain paper merged. In January, 1927, the Reese River Reveille and Nevada Progressive, Combined hit the newsstands. This venture lasted only a few years, and in 1933 a local citizen, William M. Thatcher, purchased the Reveille and published it until 1949.⁵⁵

Perhaps the most entertaining interlude in the history of the Reveille came during the editorship of Fred Hart (1873-1878). Hart, realizing that Austin had

become a relatively dull and newsless burg, created the imaginary Sazarac Lying Club, named for the local Sazarac Saloon. Whenever Hart needed to fill space or needed a local story he reported on the activities of the "Sazarac Lying Club," in a humorous, almost Twainian style. Eventually other papers around the country, particularly in California, began to pick up Hart's stories. Finally, in 1878 a San Francisco publisher asked Hart to compile his Sazarac stories into book form. Hart did, and the book went through two editions in 1878 alone. When Hart left Austin in early 1878 the Sazarac Lying Club held its last meeting and quickly became a memory in the minds of the Reveille's readers.⁵⁶

Throughout its tenure as the voice of the Reese River, indeed of central Nevada, the Reese River Reveille publicized the virtues of the area while at the same time it informed its readers, both local and far removed, of the day-to-day events in the district. Like most western newspapers of the day, the Reveille was an enthusiastic booster of the area. Indeed, the paper was originally financed by the Austin Townsite Company and its sole function was to promote Austin over Clifton and Jacobsville. However, the series of owners and editors of the paper felt that the Reveille should do more than just promote Austin. The paper served the district best by acting as a clearinghouse for local and regional

information, especially mining information. Because the Reveille made a conscious effort to report accurately on all stories it soon developed a sound reputation throughout the nation's mining circles. By regularly reading the Reveille an investor or mine owner in New York could acquire a relatively accurate knowledge of what was going on with his property and in the region in general. Thus the Reveille became a trusted and credible journal, a fact which added credibility to the entire area.

Besides serving as a clearinghouse for local mining news, the Reveille also served a valuable social function. Since Austin was on the Overland Telegraph, the Reveille received world and national news on a next day basis. As a result, Reese Riverites were remarkably well informed about the news of the day, and their isolation was not so total as it might have been otherwise. Also, the Reveille provided all sorts of public service functions, by printing announcements for theatrical productions, lectures, sporting events, political rallies, fire company meetings, and balls and a host of other activities. In time, the Reveille became almost indispensable for the Reese Riverites, a part of their daily lives that they would pay almost any price for. And, for those interested in central Nevada the paper is still available, still reporting events in

a greatly diminished portion of the state, but a portion of the state which still survives to this day.

The society created by the Reese Riverites filled the needs of an evolving frontier mining community quite nicely. The needs and interests of the entire society were met by a variety of institutions. As the chaos of the "rush" gave way to a more ordered society, Austin's social and cultural appearance and attitudes came to resemble any other small industrial city in the eastern part of the country. Perhaps the only aberration in this setting is the existence of legalized gambling and prostitution well into the twentieth century. Of course, these institutions also existed in other western cities, but they were not usually legal and not so readily accepted by the general populace. In this realm Austin differs from its eastern cousins, but in most aspects of day-to-day living Austinites could look forward to a life quite similar to that found in any small industrial or company town anywhere in the country.

Notes

¹Reese River Reveille, 3 July 1866.

²Reese River Reveille, 9 January 1864; 11 February 1864; 13 February 1864; 26 April 1864; 1 July 1865; 5 August 1865; 18 August 1865; 3 July 1865; Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 61-63.

³Reese River Reveille, 9 January 1864; 3 July 1866; Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 61-63, 76-82, 95-96; Inventory of the Church Archives of Nevada: Protestant Episcopal Church. Reno, Nevada: The Nevada Historical Records Survey Project, 1941, pp. 21-22; Inventory of the Church Archives of Nevada: Roman Catholic Church. Reno, Nevada: The Nevada Historical Records Survey Project, 1939, pp. 17-18; Angel, The History of Nevada, p. 216.

⁴Reese River Reveille, 3 July 1866; Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 76-83.

⁵Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 95-96; Inventory of the Church Archives of Nevada: Roman Catholic Church, pp. 17-18.

⁶Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 95-96; Inventory of the Church Archives of Nevada: Protestant Episcopal Church, pp. 21-22.

⁷Reese River Reveille, 2 January 1864; 13 February 1864; Harrington, Directory of the City of Austin, p. 43.

⁸Harrington, Directory of the City of Austin, p. 41; Bancroft, History of Nevada, Colorado and Wyoming, p. 303.

⁹Harrington, Directory of the City of Austin, p. 42; Bancroft, History of Nevada, Colorado and Wyoming, p. 303; Reese River Reveille, 28 January 1864.

¹⁰Bancroft, History of Nevada, Colorado and Wyoming, p. 303.

¹¹Harrington, Directory of the City of Austin, p. 42.

¹²Ibid., p. 43; Reese River Reveille, 18 November 1864.

¹³Bancroft, History of Nevada, Colorado and Wyoming, p. 303.

¹⁴Harrington, Directory of the City of Austin, p. 44; Reese River Reveille, 15 March 1867.

¹⁵Harrington, Directory of the City of Austin, p. 44.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁷Ibid.; Reese River Reveille, 13 February 1864; Angel, History of Nevada, pp. 466-467.

¹⁸Reese River Reveille, 10 March 1864.

¹⁹Reese River Reveille, 14 September 1865.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Robert Edward Ericson, "Touring Entertainment in Nevada During the Peak Years of the Mining Boom, 1876-1878," unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oregon, 1970, pp. 24-27, 38-40, 48-54, 70-71, 117-122, 133-135, 140-142, 238-241, 295-296, 337-338, 363-364, 371-372, 376-377, 409-411, 474-475, 481-488; Margaret C. Watson, Silver Theatre, Amusements of the Mining Frontier in Early Nevada 1850 to 1864. Glendale, Cal.: Arthur Clark Company, 1964, pp. 132, 175, 234-237, 242-243, 283, 314-315.

²²Irving McKee, "Artemus Ward in California and Nevada, 1863-1864," Pacific Historical Review, 20 (1951), pp. 20-23; Reese River Reveille, 5 January 1864.

²³Reese River Reveille, 15 February 1866; 5 March 1864.

²⁴Reese River Reveille, 20 September 1866; Watson, Silver Theatre, p. 315.

²⁵Reese River Reveille, 15 June 1865.

²⁶Reese River Reveille, 7 June 1864; 30 September 1892; 19 May 1864; 3 June 1864; 8 July 1863; 5 July 1865;

19 March 1864; 20 March 1867; 30 June 1865; 23 February 1864; 2 January 1909; 9 January 1897; 2 February 1914; 3 April 1909; 4 March 1916; 6 February 1864; 6 July 1864.

²⁷Ericson, "Touring Entertainment in Nevada," pp. 70-71.

²⁸Reese River Reveille, 24 February 1865; 28 February 1865.

²⁹Reese River Reveille, 1 March 1870.

³⁰Reese River Reveille, 1 September 1891; 28 August 1891; 21 August 1891; 7 July 1894; 20 June 1900; 25 July 1908; 12 June 1909; 7 August 1909; 22 August 1914; 24 April 1915.

³¹Reese River Reveille, 7 August 1909.

³²Reese River Reveille, 14 June 1864.

³³Reese River Reveille, 16 August 1864.

³⁴Reese River Reveille, 31 March 1873.

³⁵Reese River Reveille, 17 July 1891.

³⁶Reese River Reveille, 17 July 1891; 9 October 1891; 23 September 1892; 30 September 1899; 3 October 1903.

³⁷Reese River Reveille, 16 May 1863; 23 May 1863; 30 May 1863; Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 58-59.

³⁸Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 58-59.

³⁹Reese River Reveille, 5 September 1865.

⁴⁰Reese River Reveille, 7 May 1864; 4 January 1866.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Reese River Reveille, 6 May 1911.

⁴³Reese River Reveille, 8 June 1912.

⁴⁴Reese River Reveille, 8 October 1910.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 56-59.

⁴⁷ Reese River Reveille, 26 August 1863; 16 September 1863; 7 December 1863; 21 January 1864; 20 February 1865; 7 September 1866; 10 September 1866; Mining and Scientific Press, 7 (December 14, 1863), pp. 1-4.

⁴⁸ Reese River Reveille, 20 February 1864; 1 July 1864; 7 July 1864; 25 October 1864; 10 September 1866; 9 April 1869.

⁴⁹ Reese River Reveille, 1 July 1864.

⁵⁰ Reese River Reveille, 6 May 1869; 2 April 1874.

⁵¹ Reese River Reveille, 29 November 1870.

⁵² Lewis, The Town That Died Laughing, p. 13.

⁵³ Smith, "History of Austin, Nevada; 1862-1881," pp. 35-38; Behm Collection, Manuscript Collection.

⁵⁴ Angel, History of Nevada, p. 304; Lewis, Town That Died Laughing, pp. 13-15, 41-45, 52-53.

⁵⁵ Lewis, Town That Died Laughing, pp. 219-224; Reese River Reveille, 27 June 1908; 4 July 1908; 19 May 1917; 18 December 1926.

⁵⁶ Lewis, Town That Died Laughing, pp. 52-84.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

In 1980 an election held in Lander County, Nevada moved the county seat from Austin to Battle Mountain. For over 115 years Austin had retained its rank of county seat against numerous challenges. County seat status was significant to Austin, for even as a village of three or four hundred it remained the administrative center of a large geographical area. A certain number of county employees had to live in Austin, and county activities, such as criminal and civil trials or the civil functions of tax collection and tax disbursement all brought a certain amount of money and stability to the old Reese River district.

The silver, and silver mines, are gone now, as are the outside forces which played such a vital role in Austin's past. Money, which once found its way into the Reese River district in the form of investments in silver mines, now goes into more modern commodities such as oil, heavy industry or, locally, into gambling casinos or ski resorts. Austin will survive only as a small regional trade center, a position it developed during better days. However, the history of the Reese

River Mining District and its rowdy mining camps will live on.

The Reese River district will serve as an example of the precious-metals mining industry in the American West. The economic evolution in the Reese River region coincides with that found in other mining districts. A rush to the area followed the initial discovery, and, more importantly, the initial assay. The rush, lasting only a year to eighteen months, swept thousands of people into central Nevada who otherwise would not have gone to the area. During the rush, the greatest amount of activity centered around prospecting and townbuilding. Prospectors and merchants alike rushed in to lay out their "claim." Soon, prospecting yielded to underground mining, as proven ore bodies attracted developmental capital, while worthless or marginal claims languished.

The real story of the Reese River Mining District lies in the development of the silver resources after the rush was over. Once those mining ventures worth of pursuing could be discerned, large scale investment and development took place. Capital, first Pacific Slope, then eastern United States and foreign, came to the Reese River district. Corporations formed around the few productive mines, and a milling industry quickly developed to process the mounting silver ore. As time

passed, consolidation in the local mining industry led to the domination of the district by one firm, the Manhattan Mining Company. The Manhattan Company, working numerous mines and shafts, controlled mining in and around Austin for almost two decades. All competitors were absorbed by the company and Austin developed into a "single industry" or "company town" early in its history.

As the Manhattan Company grew to dominate mining in central Nevada, it fostered an economic and social system throughout the region. An economic infrastructure developed to serve the mining industry, a system which ultimately made Austin the leading trade and transportation center in central Nevada. The mining and milling industry drew settlers to the region as employees, or as merchants who sold goods and services to the local workers. A transportation network evolved, linking Austin with other mining camps and with the outside world. Agriculture, both ranching and farming, grew as a market for foodstuffs had appeared in the region almost overnight. The urban growth of Austin also accelerated as a result of the mining and milling industry. A substantial city, with brick and stone commercial structures, many fine residences, and city services such as water, sewer, fire, and police protection, developed in the central Nevada desert. This infrastructure, made possible by the

mining industry, remained in place long after the silver ore of Lander Hill had been exhausted.

When mining finally ended in the Reese River area, life went on. Although the prosperity of the district had been based on silver mining and milling, that industry survived long enough for other economic resources to develop. Austin survived, albeit under much reduced circumstances, without mining.

In this sense, Austin represents a minority of its sister mining camps in the West. The great majority of the mining towns or camps built in the west disappeared after only a few years of life. Most of them did not possess large enough ore bodies to sustain large scale or long term mining. Some camps which did see large-scale mining, such as Aurora, either did not exist long enough to develop alternate economic resources, or the populace was not shrewd enough to pursue economic diversification until it was too late.

Austin's fortuitous location in the center of a much larger mining area allowed it to become an important city early in its life. Austin's shrewd and tenacious citizens turned that early advantage into a durable and diverse economic system which far outlasted the mining industry which brought it to life. While most mining camps lived short hectic lives, Austin matured from its early uproarious years into a long-lived western town.

Thus, the Reese River district embodies characteristics common with most western mining areas, yet it also represents a minority of the mining camps in the west because of its longevity and diversified economy.

The once unruly and unsettled society of the Reese River, likewise, evolved into a typical small town social system. The large, cosmopolitan population, and the free-wheeling prospectors which characterized the early day Reese River society, have been long since replaced by a smaller, more homogenous group of farmers, merchants, and civil servants. Churches, schools, and an occasional bar and grill with a slot machine in the corner have replaced the hurdy-gurdies, bawdy houses, saloons, and gambling houses of old. Only the decaying commercial buildings on Main Street, the mine dumps on Lander Hill, and the elaborate churches and Victorian era houses interspersed throughout the town remain in what was once called the "Queen City of the Toiyabes." An even sadder note is that the traveler today, speeding across Nevada, will pass through Austin and briefly wonder about the town, but never know of the excitement, activity and life which once overflowed Pony Canyon.

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