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The Role of Credit in Native Adaptation to the Great Basin Ranching Economy

MARTHA C. KNACK

The broad results of political and economic processes are often far clearer in Native American ethnohistory than are the specific local mechanisms which brought them about. In the Great Basin, native groups lost control over land and the resources it contained between 1850 and 1870 through a relatively peaceful process without large-scale military conquest, and those groups were forced to find ways to adapt in order to survive. One common means of adaptation is often referred to in the literature as the "attachment" by Indian families to ranches and farms, where they performed wage work for non-Indians.¹ Yet there remains a great gap between our knowledge of this general cultural re-orientation and our understanding of the human actions which produced it, between the overall historical pattern and the specific human reality as it was lived by Indians themselves. Tokens of this period remain in the many Indian family names which were "taken" from ranch employers. Historic archaeology has uncovered the remains of a distinctively non-Anglo way of life on some ranch sites, such as the grinding of coffee on manos and metates, and circular willow houses associated with historic period tin cans, buttons, and broken leather harness.² This much we know, but little more. In an attempt to fill in some of the details of the relationship between white employers and Indian laborers, I have examined the account books of the

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Stewart Ranch, one of the earliest and largest in the Las Vegas area.

Helen J. Wiser Stewart is known to regional history as one of Las Vegas' most prominent citizens at the turn of the century. She assembled an outstanding collection of Paiute basketry, persuaded the Bureau of Indian Affairs to buy the Las Vegas Indian Colony land, and employed Indian laborers.³ The Stewart Ranch stood on the site of an original Mormon fort, the first non-Indian settlement in the Las Vegas Valley. It incorporated the springs whose overflow created the "Meadows," for which the white city was named; in the midst of a land of widespread scarcity these springs and their adjacent grasslands were valuable to both the native Southern Paiute economy and also the later non-Indian cattle raising. The Stewart Ranch was one of only three or four ranches within a fifty mile radius. Until well into the twentieth century, when people said "Las Vegas," they meant the Stewart Ranch.

Helen Stewart moved to the ranch in April 1882 with her husband Archibald, who was killed two years later by an irate white employee. Helen decided to keep the ranch and run it herself, which she did until 1902.⁴ During that time she expanded the property from 640 acres to 2,000, acquired additional water rights, and became one of the wealthiest persons in the area.⁵

During the years in which she actively managed the ranch, Helen Stewart kept a series of day books, four of which are still extant, covering primarily the 1890s.⁶ These annotated account books contain brief notes about visitors, happenings, deaths, and debts. Unlike a diary, which she apparently did not keep, the day books give us little detail about Indian lives or thoughts, but they do give us a great deal of information about the economic relationships between Stewart and her Indian employees.

Employment was stable, with the same Indians working steadily for the Stewart Ranch year after year. About ten names reappeared regularly in the accounts, although not all were on the payroll at any one time. About 25 Southern Paiutes lived at a small spring about one-fourth mile from the ranchhouse, including men, women and children.⁷ The only commodity which Helen Stewart bought from them was labor.⁸ It is immediately obvious from the records that she was an employer and they were employees; she bought their labor in a totally capitalistic relationship.

The jobs they did for her included the full range of tasks on a

diversified ranch/farm—grubbing sage; cutting, baling and hauling hay; herding, catching, delivering and butchering cattle; moving and breaking horses; pulling beans; building and repairing fences, ditches, stone walls, and roads; mining salt and lead; plowing; pruning; scrubbing; chopping wood; hunting for fence posts; carrying letters; and pulling steers out of winter muds.⁹ She employed men even for tasks usually associated with the female division of labor, such as washing dishes during spring housecleaning and peeling peaches for “wine.” She paid women only for washing clothes. Indian women gleaned the bean fields after harvest, but Stewart did not record any other information about women’s activities. She even failed to discuss basketmaking and did not record any purchases of baskets during this period.

Mrs. Stewart generally had three or four Paiutes working for her at any one time, along with one or two white men. She provided the tools and horses they needed for their jobs. Indians worked individually on tasks near the ranch or out in the pastures and canyons. Where teams of men worked together, there was always one white. In cases of technical tasks, such as pruning the fruit trees that were so precious in the desert, they worked under her direct supervision, but she designated no foreman, nor did she maintain any other formal hierarchical structure.

Not all workers were paid at the same rate. Indians were paid by the day, depending on the nature of the tasks done and the individual involved. Before 1890, standard Indian wage was 50 cents per day, with 25 cents for light and general work. After 1890, standard wage for reliable and steady employees rose to 75 cents, with a few getting 50 cents. This wage may have included a noon meal. Whites were paid \$20 per month, and several quit because of low wages. In 1890 Stewart increased the monthly rate for whites to \$30, or 75 cents to \$1.00 per day, keeping it consistently about 25 cents more than she paid Indian workers.

Unlike much agricultural employment, which tended then as now to be markedly seasonal, jobs were quite steady, slacking off most in June, July and August. Because of its low desert location, the Las Vegas Ranch began spring farm preparation, such as ditch cleaning and plowing, in December and January. Cattle required more tending during this winter season, when the minimal annual rainfall arrived and early spring grass enticed

stock to wander. Conditions were ideal for outdoor labor of all kinds, including the ever-available tasks of road, wall, and ditch construction and building and fence maintenance. Winter, therefore, did not lead to the lay-off of workers.¹⁰ On the other hand, fewer entries appear during the scorchingly hot summer, when daytime temperatures routinely reached 110° in the valley. The records do not make it clear whether Indians even stayed on the ranch. Under the traditional native economic cycle, they would have retreated to the cooler nearby mountains then, but the only time the ranch records explicitly state that Indians left the ranch was for fall piñon gathering in late September and October.

Like Helen Stewart herself, Indian laborers worked six days a week. Sunday was payday. They came to the ranchhouse for wages, which they usually received in goods. Stewart recorded each transaction individually in the day-books and was fairly systematic for one who, like most western ranch owners, was totally untrained in bookkeeping. I found incomplete records but no blatant irregularities; the figures tally. Amounts she owed Indians were just as carefully recorded as amounts they owed to her. Occasionally she wrote entries such as, "Ipats says he owes me \$9.00;" she trusted his word and entered that amount as his working debt.

Accounts were kept for each adult individually and by name, not by impersonal numbers or communally by family. Women who worked for her had their own accounts, separate from those of their employee husbands. When a debt was paid off, it was lined through in the ledger or marked "Even."

Although she paid her workers in goods, Stewart was not running a store, apparently, so much as providing a convenience for employees in an isolated location where no other market facilities existed. All purchase prices were rounded off, or amounts adjusted, to even multiples of 25 cents, the basic western "two bits," probably as a bookkeeping aid to reduce errors.¹¹ She charged Indian employees the same rate for these goods as she charged traveling non-Indians and borrowing white neighbors. Although the quantities were not always mentioned and hence rates were sometimes unclear, Stewart seemed not to have made a great deal of profit on these goods. She bought flour in bulk at 6.5 cents/pound, or \$3.25 for a 50-pound bag. She sold it to employees at \$4.00 a sack, or a fraction thereof. Ranch-produced beef was 12.5 cents a pound, bacon 20 cents, and dried beans five

cents. Dried and fresh fruit in season was 15 cents a pound, and included peaches and apricots.

While there was quite a range in the amount purchased by an employee on any one day, the modal value was 50 cents, and the mean was \$2.25 (see Figure 1). Much of this was in food.

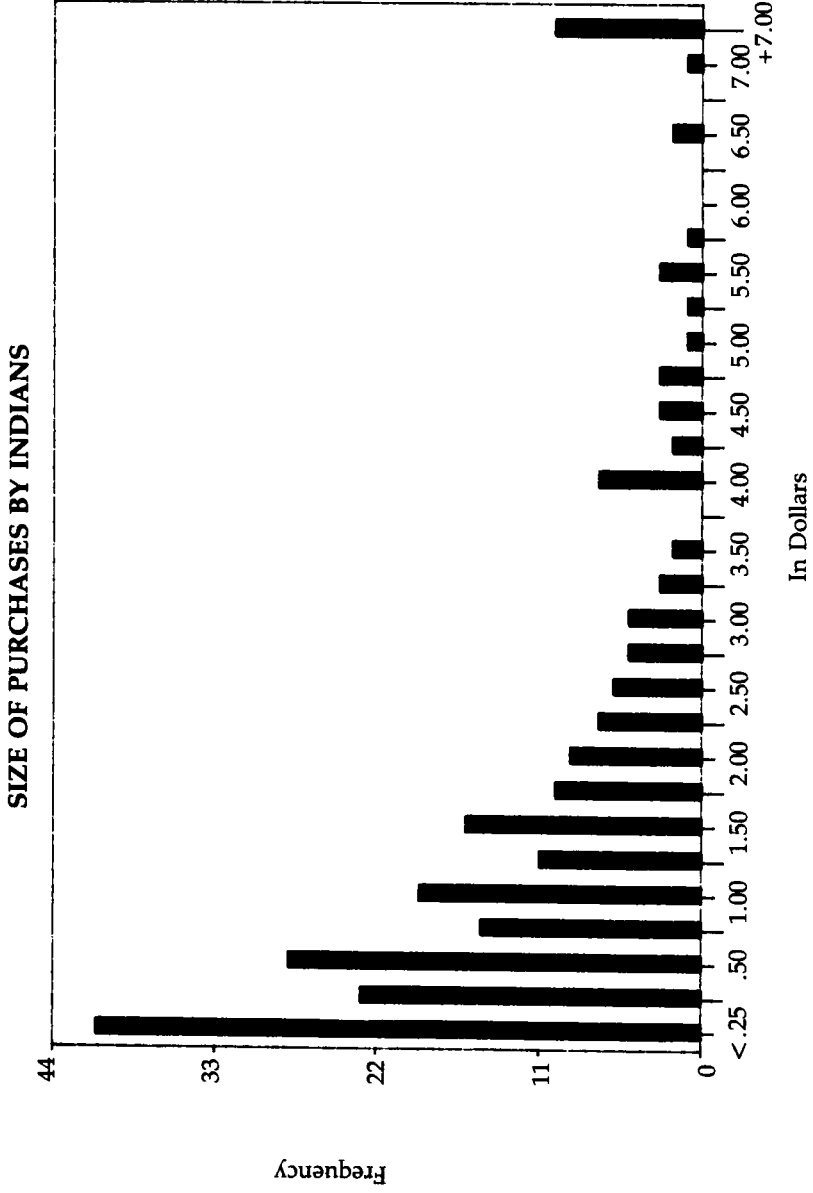
Judging by the types of goods purchased from the ranch, the outstanding feature of the Indians' diet was its monotony (see Figure 2). Indian workers lived on flour, beef, and beans. This repetitiousness was not totally the result of the unavailability of other foods, for Stewart's own household accounts reported that she could and did purchase a full range of vegetables and spices, as well as such exotic foods as honey, canned quince, dried cod, canned oysters, raisins, coconut, currants, citron, brandy, wine and rum.

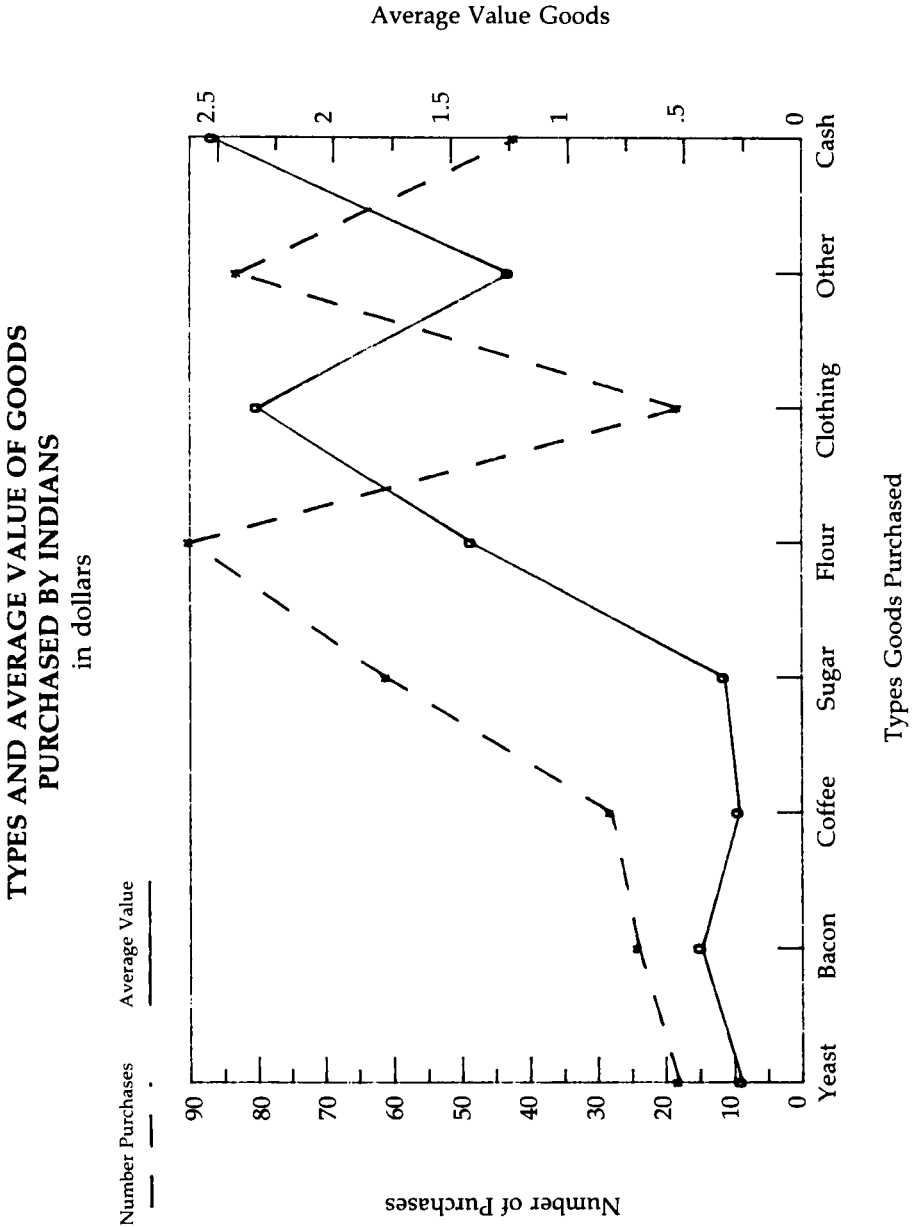
There were several unexpected items in the inventory. Indians purchased bacon and pork fully twice as often as the cheaper beef and jerky, despite the fact that only a decade earlier Paiutes at the nearby Moapa Reservation had refused to eat bacon offered by government agents and declared that pig products were fit only for white men.¹² Tea, while outstripped by coffee purchases three to one, was nonetheless popular.¹³ Paiutes on the Stewart ranch also regularly bought tobacco as early as 1890, rather than relying on the traditional wild product.

Clothing was the most expensive item that Indians regularly purchased. They bought men's overalls, hats, bandanas, and ready-made shirts, but no women's clothes. The account books showed purchases of calico and gingham in large lots of 15 yards or more, ample for even the full-skirted "mother hubbards" common at the time. The only shoes mentioned were one pair of "women's shoes" specially ordered from a catalogue; there were no boots or men's work shoes.

One young man laboriously worked off the cost of a horse at 50 cents per day. Helen Stewart sold no other work tools or weapons to Indians, with one exception. For several years a man named Mouse, locally infamous for later killing several white men, worked for her. By the time Mouse left her employ, he had developed a unique backlog of wages worth fully \$60, and he took some of the amount due him in "cartridges," the only mention of weaponry in the ledgers.

Because of the prominence of ground seed grains in the traditional native economy, wheat flour was particularly interesting



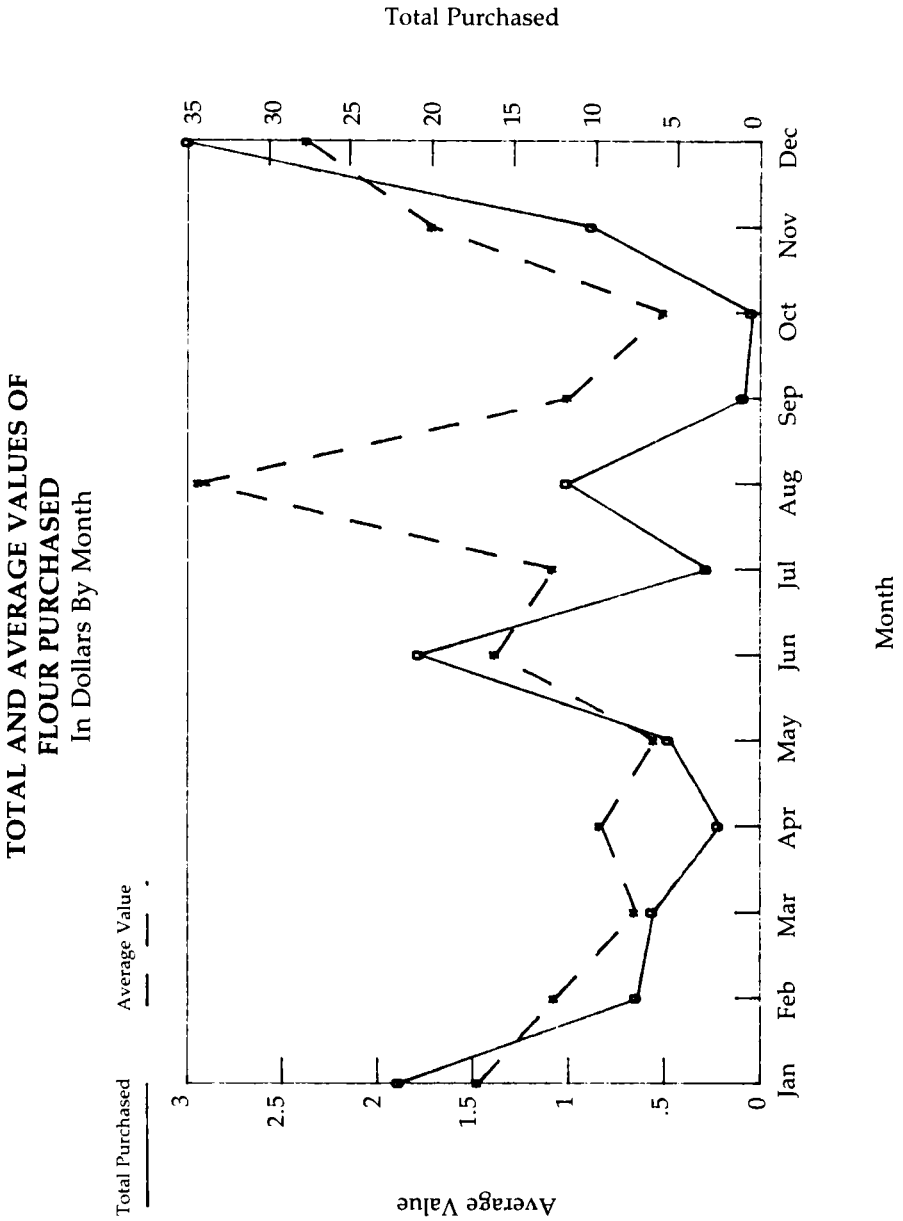


as a new subsistence staple. Flour was by far the item most frequently bought; of the 193 Indian purchases recorded in the ranch day-books, flour was bought in 90 cases. The total value of flour purchased exceeded that of any other category of goods and it had the highest average cost per purchase of any category other than clothing. Flour was definitely an important item in the southern Nevada Indian economy by the 1890s.

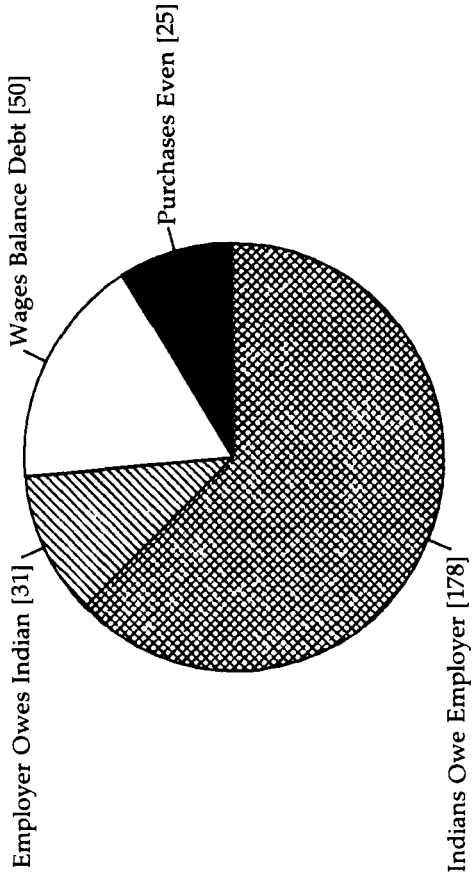
Even more interesting than the sheer volume of flour purchased was its seasonality (see Figure 3). As one would expect, the lowest point of flour purchase was during September and October, when the records frequently mentioned that Indians were away from the ranch gathering pinyon nuts and presumably also subsisting on them in mountain camps. As the Indians returned to the ranch, their purchases of flour began climbing in November, rising to a peak in mid-winter and easing off again toward spring. Purchases then plummeted, reaching another low point in April when the traditional summer food staple, Indian rice grass, ripened at this altitude. This seasonal pattern of flour purchases may be indirect evidence that rice grass was still being utilized to some extent as late as the turn of the century, as suggested by oral histories, in addition to piñon nuts, the continuing harvest of which was more visible to and recorded in white historical records.¹⁴

A curious thing about wheat flour was the mid-summer purchases, which, while noticeably erratic, reached amounts comparable to those in November and January. The greatest average size of flour purchase for the entire year came in August, when little ranch work was being done and little income was being earned. Flour constituted the major item of indebtedness for Indian ranch workers in this season. This may be a reflection of a continued traditional summer hospitality pattern, what Southern Paiutes today call "visiting around," when families host and in turn are hosted by families living in distant areas. The presence of this social pattern would account for the unusually large volume of summer purchases. The high cultural value placed on this reciprocal hospitality would explain the native willingness to incur significant debt for flour during a season of normal abundance in the traditional cycle.

Total indebtedness also had an interesting pattern (see Figure 4). In the 284 ledger entries dealing with wages, 50 stated that the worker was "even to date," meaning that his wages equally



**FINANCIAL STATUS OF INDIAN EMPLOYEES
ON PAYDAY**



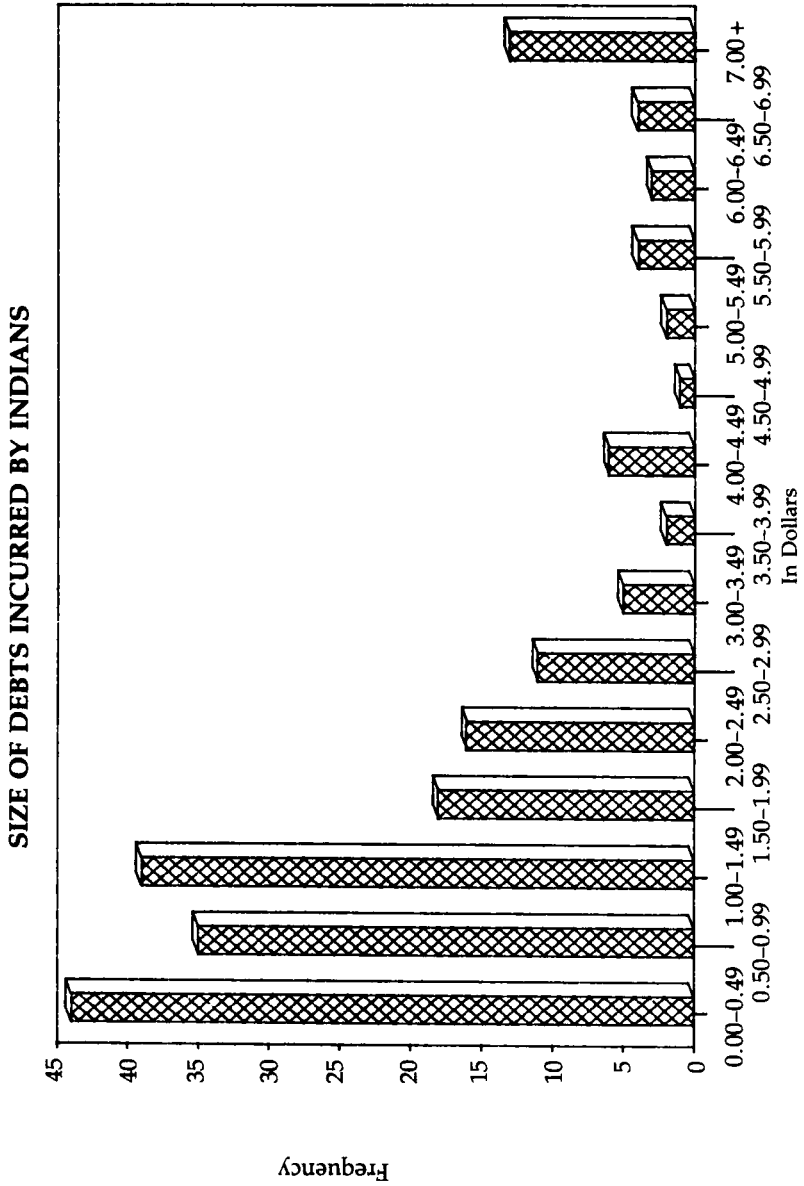
balanced his outstanding debt to the ranch without any additional purchases that week. In 25 cases workers received goods equal to wages earned that week, so there was no balance due. In 31 cases Helen Stewart owed her employees money, averaging \$3.70 per person; she held this on account, rather than paying them in cash. Indians owed her at the end of 178 paydays, or roughly two-thirds of the time. This indebtedness was important in the relationship of ranchowner to Indian employees.

The average debt after an employee's weekly purchases was \$1.37, or roughly one half of his pay for the following week. This average is misleading, however, as most debts were small—less than a dollar at any one time (see Figure 5). Small as these amounts were, an Indian employee was seldom out of debt to his employer.

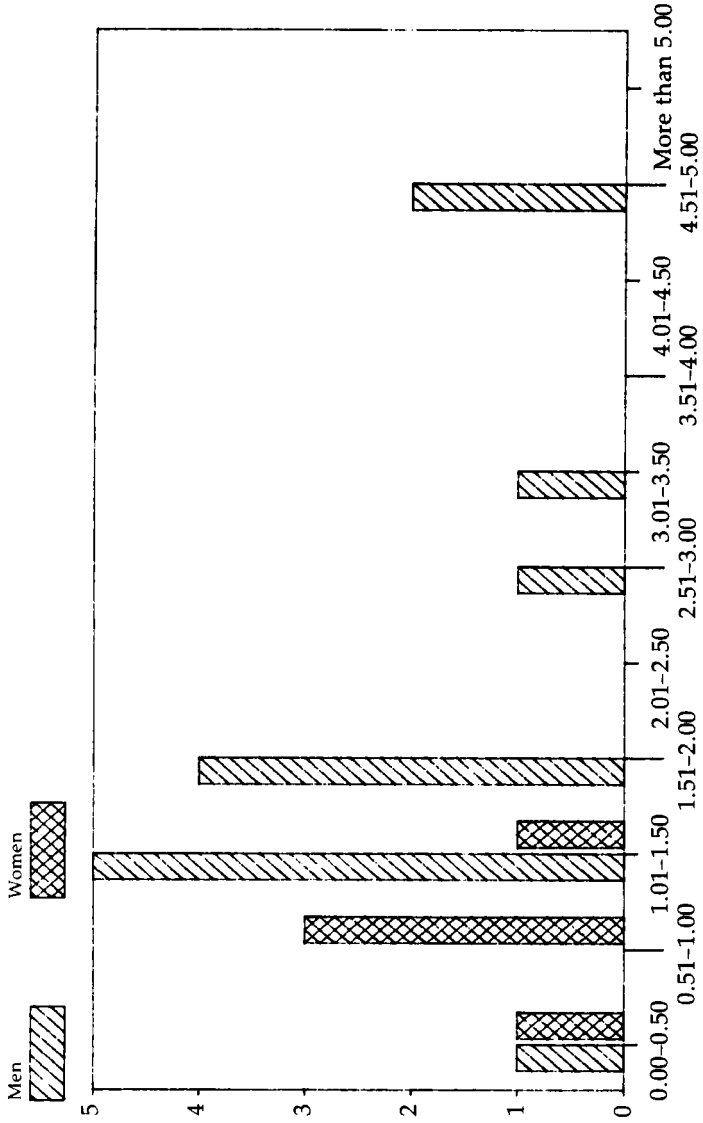
The range of credit Helen Stewart extended to her employees varied with the individual (see Figure 6). The modal average debt for regular male employees was between \$1.00 and \$1.50, and the mean debt was \$1.74. The average for women was much smaller, with 60% of women's accounts averaging between "four bits" and a dollar, with a mean of 74 cents.

There was a distinct seasonal pattern to this indebtedness (see Figure 7). For Indian employees, as for most persons in an agricultural economy, a major debt developed over the winter. Earnings were restricted and expenditures for food increased. The mid-summer flour purchases were evident in a secondary peak of debt around July.

The inverse side of such payment in kind and of Indian debt was the lack of cash circulating in the Paiute community. Of the nearly \$800 worth of accounts recorded in the ledger entries, half were payments in goods, but only \$106 was cash paid or advanced to Indian workers. Indians very rarely had coin in their jeans pockets. In part this can be traced to the general economy of ranching areas in the West. Unlike mining towns, ranches notoriously operated in a cash-short economy. Helen Stewart herself bought on credit from merchants in California, paying debts seasonally as crops or cattle were sold. She bought, bartered, and sold to neighbors, keeping accounts to the half penny. She said at one point that she had 37½ cents on the place, and "must pay them in flour or owe." Whether extended by wholesale merchant to rancher or owner to employee, credit was a fundamental reality of Western ranch life.

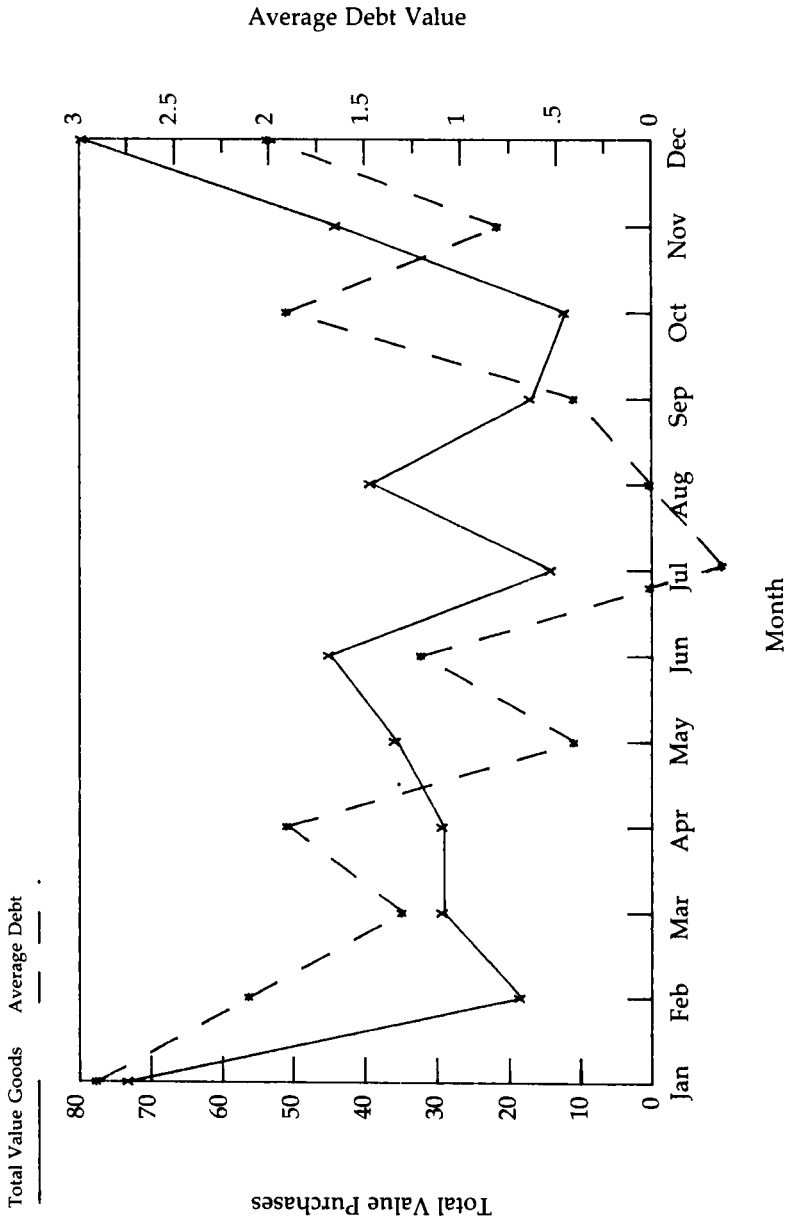


**AVERAGE DEBT, IN DOLLARS,
BY EMPLOYEE, BY SEX**



Mean Debt of Women = -\$0.77
Mean Debt of Men = -\$1.74

**TOTAL VALUE OF INDIAN PURCHASES
AND AVERAGE INDIAN DEBT**
By Month



Credit was also an intentional policy, and Helen Stewart never let it get out of hand; the amount any particular Indian owed remained remarkably consistent, constituting his credit rating, as it were. In trading situations elsewhere, credit was often used to tie customers to a particular trading post,¹⁵ but this seemed not to be the case here. Allowing an employee credit did not guarantee that he would not leave the ranch, for Stewart was often left carrying outstanding debts for months until a man returned. On the other hand, she surely was aware that, almost invariably, if an Indian came in to settle his account and demanded the balance due to him in cash, then he would be quitting within the next two or three days. Indians almost never left with wages due them.

The Stewart Ranch account books give little information beyond the economic relationship between Helen Stewart and her Indian employees. She referred to the men by name, not by initials or numbers, and occasionally recorded their native names. Women, on the other hand, were always entered as "Johnny's Squaw" or "Ipats' Squaw" rather than by their own names. Stewart apparently sponsored at least one feast or perhaps a memorial gathering, in May 1891, when \$15.00 worth of flour, beans, coffee, fruit, and meat were entered as "For the Indians, estimate," and not charged to any individual's account. Nevertheless, the relationship was personalized without being personal.¹⁶ Indians traveling through the valley stayed in the Indians' homes, not hers. She did not visit employees when they were sick nor record visiting their homes socially. While she must have been familiar with the details of their lives, she recorded none of the gossipy events of community interest, nor the structure or daily operation of the band which lived on her ranch. She was clearly their employer, not a personal friend.

Although infuriatingly without detail, the Stewart record does tell us enough to show that such a native community life did still exist at the turn of the century, quite separate from white society. That isolation was shown in the fear of unpredictable white retaliation, a legacy of the frontier past which Stewart's employees still carried. In January of 1887 Stewart recorded that an Anglo's wallet was stolen. Despite the recovery of the purse, the next morning she found that all the Indians had decamped "to gather pinenuts." The next sign of trouble was the killing of a neighboring white by another white man two months later, and again

the Indian employees fled "to gather pinenuts." Indians clearly felt their vulnerability to white anger and retained vivid memories of fifty years of frontier blame and suspicion consistently cast in their direction, which had often had violent and always unpleasant consequences. Avoidance was still the answer and pinenutting the justification offered whites who had, apparently, no familiarity with the seasonality of wild food production.

Within their separate community life, Indians incorporated white American cultural innovations into their traditional patterns. Flour took the place of native grains during seasons when wild foods were not produced or when unusually high demand made it easier to substitute the commercial product. Nevertheless, the ranch records give inferential support to the explicit oral history accounts that Paiutes continued to gather wild foods whenever convenient until well into the twentieth century.

Ranch employees adapted the traditional pattern of reciprocity in food and other resources by sharing their credit with one another. A number of entries recorded that one man bought flour or goods "for" another, whose responsibility it then was to pay off the debt as soon as possible. Again two employees would come in and buy a sack of flour, charging half to each man's account.

Indians socialized together. In January 1891 Mrs. Stewart wrote in obvious irritation: "*Indians not at work . . . Indians all on drunk—must pay for meals!*" (emphasis in the original). Gambling also was a social pastime; men got cash advances in order to gamble and sometimes covered losses by having their own outstanding wages paid toward the winner's ranch debt. Sometimes gambling so preoccupied Indian employees that no work got done on the ranch for days, again indicating the separate existence of a community life over which Helen Stewart, the white employer, had little control. Paiutes traveled frequently to Moapa, sixty miles east across the desert, where they bought horses, sold flour, owed gambling debts, and most likely had relatives. In choosing to work at the Stewart Ranch rather than to retreat into remote back country areas as other Paiutes had elected to do, these people clearly had not severed ties to their cultural past, kin, or community relations with other Indians living on reservations or in the valleys and ranches elsewhere.

Helen Stewart's employment of Southern Paiutes was a local manifestation of an eighteenth and nineteenth century cultural

process whereby non-Indian Americans gained control over Indians. As a means of domination, military conquest is easily understood and yet in much of the American West, indeed in much of the world as it experienced European expansion, effective control over native populations was accomplished without overt bloodshed.

Of the less violent techniques used, large-scale stock grazing appears repeatedly and with consistent results. Sixteenth century Mexican debt peonage is a good example. Under that system, indigenous populations were displaced from their own land and brought into the new ranching economy as landless wage laborers. As Eric Wolf describes the process:

They invited workers to settle permanently on or near their new estates. The entrepreneur would . . . offer to pay them wages, usually in kind. At the same time, he would grant the worker the right to purchase goods on credit or, as needed, advance him small sums of money. The worker's account would be debited to the extent of the sums involved, in return for a promise to repay the money through labor.¹⁷

Despite significant differences as cultural institutions, trading posts show impressive similarities to ranching, not only in their ultimate ability to draw natives peacefully into foreign economic systems, but also in the specific mechanisms utilized to bring that change about. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, fur trading centers in the northeast and Great Lakes areas of North America created a demand for European goods and a class of Indian employees. They utilized credit to bind hunters to particular posts, assuring a steady source of fur pelts.¹⁸

Trading posts on the Navajo reservation performed a similar function and utilized similar techniques in a time and place more closely related to the case under study here. Particularly in the isolated northwestern portion of the reservation, effective trade penetration and general participation in wage labor did not begin until the early 1900s.¹⁹

The differences between the Navajo trading post and the Las Vegas Ranch are many. The trading posts were located on a designated reservation, although effective Bureau of Indian Affairs control did not penetrate the northwestern area until after the turn of the century.²⁰ Also unlike the Stewart Ranch, the

posts were essentially entrepreneurial institutions, designed for the exchange of goods for a profit. In contrast, ranching in Las Vegas was fundamentally a subsistence occupation and the ranch a production unit.²¹ To a Navajo trader, Indians were producers of goods which he bought; he then had to find a resale market for these products.²² For Helen Stewart, Indians produced no commodity of value other than their labor, and she experienced no resale problem.

Despite such differences of purpose, there were striking similarities in detailed economic processes between the early twentieth century Navajo trading posts and the Stewart Ranch. In both cases, the most common native purchases were foods, specifically flour, coffee, and sugar. The second most popular purchase in both cases was clothing, and of identical types—men's ready-made shirts and pants and women's shoes, but no ready-made women's dresses or blouses—only voluminous yards of fabric.²³ The far greater variety of goods offered by the trading post inventories probably reflected their essentially entrepreneurial function, not shared by Mrs. Stewart's ranchhouse ware room.

The use of credit by trading posts and the ranch were also strikingly similar. At Shonto, the Navajo trading post from which we have the most detailed quantitative data, only 25–30% of the sales involved cash, mostly from transient tourists. Forty to 50% of sales were by means of unsecured credit, and another 10–20% by means of secured credit (pawn). Although Paiutes did not possess personal property valuable to whites and hence acceptable as security for loans, the total proportion of credit transactions was remarkably similar at Shonto and at the Stewart Ranch. "Low volume of cash sales within the community is in a sense deliberate," Adams, the ethnographer of Shonto, declared. "The total amount of cash actually circulating in the community is kept to a minimum by allowing advance credit against all predictable earnings. . . [A good trader should] be able to tie up 75% of [future earnings] in advance credit."²⁴ Helen Stewart held her employees to debts of about 50% of their next predictable earnings.

Adams further said that "Securing payment of account is the trader's greatest single challenge . . . The threat of withholding future credit is the trader's one consistently effective sanction

against default."²⁵ He reported that traders threatened to garnish wages or get people fired, but in reality self-interest encouraged them to help Navajos acquire jobs. Helen Stewart could have withheld credit or fired delinquent Paiutes, but she then would have lost any chance of repayment. She appears never to have fired an employee for non-payment of debts. Similarly, she never called for legal assistance against her employees, even though the historical record clearly shows that civil authorities in southern Nevada at the time claimed jurisdiction over Indians, arresting and jailing them regularly on charges ranging from public inebriation to murder.

Also like the Shonto trading post, Helen Stewart's accounts show that she served a number of ancillary functions beyond that of simple employer and payer of wages. She acted as a savings bank, holding moneys on account for regular employees. She was a moneylender, financed purchases and projects for Indians, and regulated their purchases, debts, and budgets.²⁶ She was a point of introduced culture change, bringing in exotic goods like tea, and undoubtedly a wide range of information and advice about American culture and behavior. The familiarity with white culture which her employees gained, and their resulting effectiveness and influence, was historically important; for instance Jack, a regular employee throughout Stewart's management of the ranch, was by 1908 an influential man in the Las Vegas Paiute community and non-Indians generally acknowledged him to be the "chief."²⁷

The full scope of the Stewart Ranch as a mechanism of instituted cultural change can be seen best through the interrelated factors of credit and flour. As productive resource areas were lost to Paiutes, such as the Stewart Ranch itself with its large springs and associated meadows, the ability to subsist through wild plant harvesting decreased. Since 1870 this ranch alone had run 300-400 head of cattle on the sparsely vegetated desert ranges, grazing off the very plants which Paiutes had previously harvested for themselves.²⁸ White property owners fenced out Indians from water sources and grasslands and guarded their lands with guns. Paiutes had to find substitutes for this lost productivity, and wage work rapidly became one of those. By accepting jobs Paiutes limited their own mobility, thus further reducing their access to wild foods. Through selling their labor, however,

Paiutes gained access to flour, a major subsistence substitute. The degree of dependence on white-provided subsistence necessities, such as flour and beef, as replacements for Indian rice grass and rabbit, reflected the extent of penetration of the market system and of white American control of resources, with their corresponding loss by Paiutes.

Credit is a measure of that white American control. Helen Stewart, like the hacienda owner of Mexico or the Shonto post trader, extended credit only to workers she knew and was reasonably sure would remain, work for her, and pay off the debt. Her use of a full system of credit by 1890 indicates that she believed she had a reasonably stable work force, one that was bound to her, and not liable to go off hunting and gathering independently in the mountains and valleys. They simply no longer could do so. The predominance of flour purchases in the account books demonstrates the Indians' dependence.

Credit coupled with subsistence dependence was the mechanism which brought white control over natives in southern Nevada, for Indian workers could not risk defaulting on their debts, risk having their credit cut off, risk losing their jobs, or risk losing access to the now necessary food staple, flour.

By keeping workers always mildly in debt, Helen Stewart and ranchers like her also ensured that Paiutes would be incorporated into the wage system in a very specific role: as employees. They would never get far enough ahead financially to buy ranches of their own in a market regulated by exclusive private ownership of productive resources. They could not become entrepreneurs and competitors. They would remain her employees, the proletariat, landless laborers in their own land.

NOTES

Previous, shorter versions of this paper have been presented at the Great Basin Anthropological Conference, Las Vegas, October 1986; Southwestern Anthropological Association annual meetings, Bakersfield, CA, March 1987; and University of Nevada, Reno, Anthropological Colloquium, March 1987. The author wishes to thank all of the participants at these meetings as well as the excellent and very helpful anonymous reviewers for this journal for their stimulating suggestions and comments.

1. Robert C. Euler, *Southern Paiute Ethnohistory*, University of Utah Anthropological Papers No. 78 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1966), 96;

Catherine S. Fowler and Don D. Fowler, "Notes on the History of the Southern Paiutes and Western Shoshonis," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39(1971): 95-113, at 111-112; Intertribal Council of Nevada, *Nuuuvi: A Southern Paiute History* (Provo: University of Utah Printing Service, 1976), 120; Carling Malouf, "Ethnohistory in the Great Basin," in *The Current Status of Anthropological Research in the Great Basin: 1964*, Social Sciences and Humanities Publications No. 1 (Reno, NV: Desert Research Institute, 1966), 1-38 at 28-29.

2. E.g., C. William Clewlow, Jr., and Mary Rusco, eds., *The Grass Valley Archeological Project: Collected Papers*, Research Paper No. 2 (Reno: University of Nevada Archeological Survey, 1972).

3. Intertribal Council of Nevada, *Personal Reflections of Shoshone, Paiute and Washo* (Provo: University of Utah Printing Service, 1974), 19-20.

4. Cathy Luchetti and Carol Olwell, *Women of the West* (St. George, Utah: Antelope Island Press, 1982), 151-152; and Carrie Miller Townley, "Helen J. Stewart: First Lady of Las Vegas," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 16(1973): 215-244 and 17(1974): 3-32.

5. Florence Lee Jones and John F. Cahlan, *Water: A History of Las Vegas* (Las Vegas: Las Vegas Valley Water District, 1975), 9-11.

6. These now reside in the Nevada Historical Society branch in Las Vegas. The help and cooperation of the NHS staff is gratefully acknowledged. A fifth day-book survives in the Special Collections of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Library, but dates from a period after Stewart sold the ranch and was no longer involved on a daily basis with Indian employees.

7. W.D.C. Gibson, Letter to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 20 August 1885. Reprinted in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1885* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1886; microfiche reprint edition, Washington, D.C.: Microcard Editions, n.d.) 142-147, at 143. The earlier 1880 U.S. Census recorded fourteen Indians at "Vegas Rancho," of whom ten were adults (U.S. Department of Commerce, *10th U.S. Census: Nevada*, microfilm edition [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, n.d.], frame 798). The 1890 Nevada census was, unfortunately, burned and the original local records lost. By 1900, the census entries included two Paiute families in Las Vegas, one extended and the other nuclear in structure. Of the twelve people documented, all were adults and nine were males, of whom all were listed as "farm laborers" (U.S. Department of Commerce, *12th U.S. Census: Nevada*, microfilm edition [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, n.d.], no frame numbers). Since the Stewart ranch day-books specifically name regular employees not recorded by the census-takers, it may be assumed safely that those records are incomplete and that the Indian population of the town of Las Vegas was at least twice that indicated, and did include significant numbers of women and children.

8. The sole exception to this commodity relationship was the very occasional purchase of pinyon nuts. There are four such purchases in the record, one in the late winter of 1890 and the remainder in mid-winter of 1891, in each case in amounts valued between \$1.25 and \$1.50. Although cattle sales are meticulously recorded, there is no mention of resale of pinyons. While the quantity of pinyons these transactions represent is not indicated, I strongly suspect that the nuts were for Stewart's own consumption and that she was not

wholesaling them on a large scale. I believe the overall significance of pinyon harvesting and sales to be minimal in proportion to the importance of direct labor as a commodity of intercultural exchange here.

9. Cf., Robert N. Lynch, "Cowboys and Indians: An Ethnohistorical Portrait of Indian-White Relations on Ranches in Western Nevada," in Donald R. Tuohy (ed.), *Selected Papers from the 14th Great Basin Anthropological Conference*, Ballena Press Publications in Archaeology, Ethnology and History No. 11 (Socorro, NM: Ballena Press, 1978), 52-59.

10. I am indebted to Henry Dobyns for his very fine observations on the seasonal patterns of ranch tasks.

11. Cf., William Y. Adams, *Shonto: A Study of the Role of the Trader in a Modern Navaho Community*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin No. 188 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 182.

12. "The Indians," *Pioche Daily Record*, 25 June 1873, 3.

13. I am grateful to Dr. Fawn Dixon of Truckee Meadows Community College, Carson City, Nevada, for the observation that, although white frontiersmen historically were coffee drinkers, brewing herbs was definitely part of the Paiute cultural tradition. Hence tea may have constituted only a modification of an old cultural habit, whereas roasting and grinding coffee beans may have been far more alien.

14. E.g., fn. 9 *supra*. It was very likely that such continuation of limited wild food gathering constituted one of the attractions of Indian labor for ranch owners. Stewart could hire Paiutes by the day but had to guarantee work and pay white employees by the month. Indians could be hired daily when good weather conditions or expediency required their labor, but otherwise could be expected to fend for themselves. They did not have to be housed or fed at ranch expense; the overhead for their employment was minimal.

15. Adams, *Shonto*, 154.

16. Eric Wolf, *Sons of the Shaking Earth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 207.

17. Wolf, *Sons*, 204.

18. E.g., Harold Hickerson, "Genesis of a Trading Post Band: The Pembina Chippewa," *Ethnohistory* 3 (1956): 289-345; Edward H. Hosley, "Intercultural Relations and Cultural Change in the Alaskan Plateau," in June Helm (ed.), "Subarctic," Vol. 6 of William Sturtevant (gen. ed.), *Handbook of North American Indians* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 546-555, at 549; Catherine McClellan, "Intercultural Relations and Cultural Change in the Cordillera," in Helm, "Subarctic," 387-401, at 393-394; Leonard Mason, "The Swampy Cree: A Study in Acculturation," National Museum of Canada, *Anthropological Papers* no. 13, 1967, 20.

19. Adams, *Shonto*, 152, 237-238.

20. Frank McNitt, *The Indian Traders* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962).

21. This remained the situation until after the railroad arrived in 1904. The non-Indian population of Las Vegas in 1880 had been 18, of whom seven were children, and remained absolutely stable at this level until 1900 (U.S. Department of Commerce, *10th Census*, frame 797, and *12th Census*, no frame numbers). By 1910 the non-Indian population had risen dramatically to 800, by 1920

to 2,304, and by 1930 to 5,165 (Jones and Cahlan, *Water*, 42, 23, 65), thereby creating a local market for food products for the first time.

22. Adams, *Shonto*, 168, 260.

23. Adams, *Shonto*, 181; Richardson Gladwell, *Navajo Trader* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), 104; Elizabeth Compton Hegemann, *Navaho Trading Days* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1963), 272; McNitt, *Traders*, 79.

24. Adams, *Shonto*, 187.

25. Adams, *Shonto*, 192.

26. Adams, *Shonto*, 217–222.

27. John Alley, *The Las Vegas Paiutes: A Short History* (Las Vegas: Las Vegas Tribe of Paiute Indians, 1977), 11.

28. Stanley Paher, *Las Vegas: As it Began—As it Grew* (Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1971), 37; Townley, "Stewart," p. 236–237.