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NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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Prospective authors should send their work to The Editor, *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, State Mail Complex, Las Vegas, Nevada 89158. Papers should be typed double-spaced and sent in duplicate. All manuscripts, whether articles, edited documents, or essays, should conform with the most recent edition of the University of Chicago Press *Manual of Style*. Footnotes should be typed double-spaced on separate pages and numbered consecutively. Correspondence concerning articles and essays is welcomed, and should be addressed to The Editor. © Copyright Nevada Historical Society, 1983.

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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

*Views of Early Twentieth-Century Indian Life:
The Harry Sampson Photo Exhibit*



DURING THE MONTH OF MAY, the changing gallery of the Nevada Historical Society Museum in Reno featured an exhibit of the photographic work of the late Harry Sampson. Born to Paiute parents at Moundhouse, just east of Carson City, in 1892, Sampson lived through an eventful period, from the "Adventist" movement of Wovoka and the Ghost Dance, to the Indian activism of recent years.

At the time of Sampson's birth, Nevada Indians had neither citizenship nor any rights the white man was bound to observe. The failure of

Text and photo selection by Elizabeth Raymond, Assistant Editor.

the reservation system had been adequately demonstrated, and most Nevada Indians were living in and around the towns and ranches, wherever they were able to find work. But Indian culture had not by any means been suppressed. The language was still viable, and traditional ceremonies and customs endured. Hunting and pine nut gathering continued as subsistence activities rather than a way of life, though, and much had changed over the half-century since whites had entered the Great Basin. Alcohol, narcotics, and disease had taken a toll, as had White laws and practices. Indians had come to be a degraded minority, despised and rejected. Harry Sampson took advantage of the opportunities that were available, however, and engaged in a variety of worthwhile pursuits.

Taken from his parents at a young age and forcibly enrolled at the Stewart Indian School at Carson City, Sampson learned the printing trade. He also took up the clarinet and was a member of the All-Indian Band which played at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, in 1915. A life member of Reno Local No. 368, American Federation of Musicians, Sampson was active in state labor affairs for many years. As a professional printer, he worked for several Reno firms and was once a printing instructor at Stewart. Sampson was also a baseball player of some renown. He pitched for his school and later played semi-professional ball in Nevada and California. Shortly after his death in November, 1975, he was posthumously inducted into the Stewart Indian School's Sports Hall of Fame.



Groundbreaking for the first church at the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, early 1920's. Pictured left to right are Harry Sampson, John Scott, and Mr. Scott.



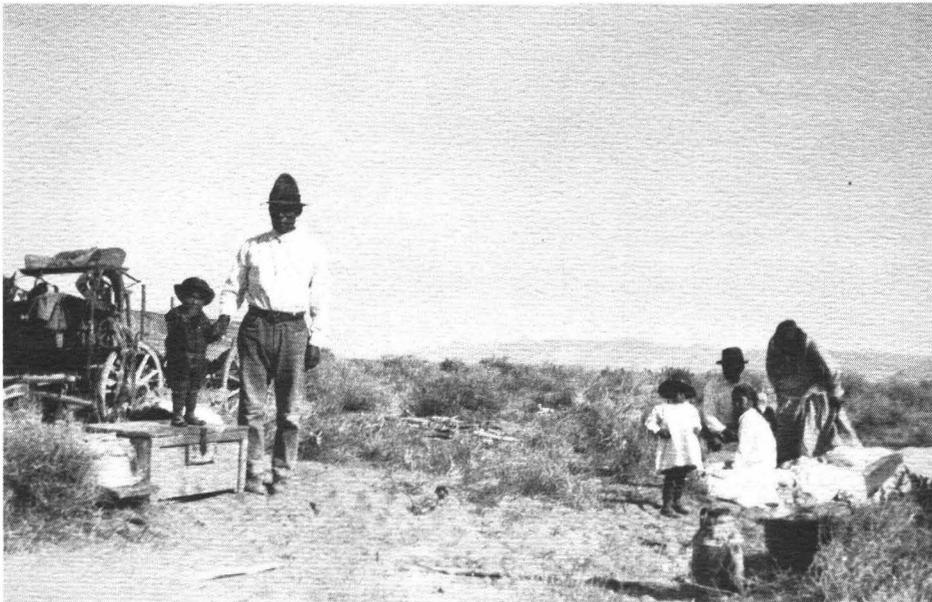
Indians gambling in downtown Reno.

Harry Sampson's dedication to the welfare of his own people was perhaps the most notable feature of his long life. In addition to speaking out on behalf of the Indian, he was one of several Paiutes who worked with the federal government in 1917 to purchase a twenty-acre tract of land which later became the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony. His knowledge of native plants used for medicinal purposes was put to use in a 1936 Works Progress Administration study of the subject. Sampson also worked with the Indian Claims Commission in connection with the Paiute people's claims, and he served as Chairman of the Reno-Sparks Colony Council, which was established under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Generations of students and scholars interested in Northern Paiute language and culture also benefited from Sampson's knowledge of his people.

Selections from the exhibit are reprinted here. The photographs featured represent Harry Sampson's efforts to document that part of Nevada's Northern Paiute history which he himself lived. Included are views of Indian life at Schurz, Stillwater, Nixon, Winnemucca Lake, Reno, and the Reno-Sparks Colony in Washoe County. The photos date from the 1910s and 1920s, and have been printed from the original negatives. They have generously been made available to the Society by Clayton Sampson, Harry's son.



Photo taken in the 1920's, in front of Harry Sampson's house in the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, looking toward the present site of the MGM Grand Hotel. The vehicle pictured is the taxi to town.



A mudhen drive on Winnemucca Lake, north of Nixon, Nevada. Pictured left to right are Conley Jones, Mark Jones, an unidentified baby, Sarah Moore, and Charlie and Ella Winnemucca.



These two photographs are both probably from the Stillwater Indian Reservation, in the early 1920's. Clayton Sampson identifies the bottom picture as possibly an Indian rodeo.

