CHAPTER 5

SOUTHERN PAIUTES IN LAS VEGAS HISTORY

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Ethnohistory is a field of study that blends archaeology, ethnology, and history, using data from all three disciplines to reconstruct an aboriginal culture at the time of its first contact with literate outsiders (Voget 1975:549). The natural, cultural, and historical environments provide context for the observations of those outsiders, the cultural memory of the native peoples, and data from archaeology and the natural sciences.

Culture is the term anthropologists use to describe the way of life of any people. It is an integrated whole with pervasive influence on those born into it, incorporating ideas about behavior and relationships to others, including not just other humans, but all living beings and the physical world inhabited by all of them. All cultures exhibit patterns of behavior based on belief systems, adaptive responses to their social and physical environments, and historical influences. Without exception, the contact between literate and nonliterate societies had a negative, usually destructive impact on the aboriginal lifeway. The historical record consistently reveals major loss of life, shattered native economies, severely disrupted social and political organizations, and the decay of aboriginal belief systems. These effects were so swift and so pervasive and the resultant decline so rapid, that it is not possible to draw a complete picture of the native way of life at the time of contact.

The cultural memory of the group is generally conveyed orally by its individual members, whereas written sources are descriptions produced by people outside the culture: visitors, observers, conquerors. The ethnohistoric manifestation perceived by others is, of course, a lineal descendant of the cultural developments and interactions of the past. Some of these past cultural manifestations were deeply rooted in place, and they experienced influences from outsiders in remote times that left their mark on the culture in the past. Other cultures may be immigrants that displaced older cultures, or assimilated with them. The particular history of the groups encountered can only be discovered with deep research into the cultural and linguistic prehistory of the region.

Ethnohistorians examine the protohistoric or pre-Columbian and historic periods in an effort to describe the way of life of the native people encountered by Euroamerican trappers, traders, priests, and others just before the major changes effected by the their arrival. Since the native cultures had no written language, cultural memory and early historical documents contribute the preponderance of the information available to researchers. These sources, while incomplete and biased, nevertheless do provide a picture of a given culture at the time of first contact. This discussion focuses on the southern Great Basin people historically connected to Corn Creek.

In the southern Great Basin, the native people in protohistoric and historic times were known as Paiutes. They spoke a Numic language of the great Uto-Aztecan stock of western United States and Mexico (Madsen and Rhode 1994; Miller 1986:98-112). They were foragers with varying degrees of dependence on horticulture; they recognized territorial distinctions and had an uneasy relationship with neighboring Utes, Chemehuevis and Mohaves, but strong, mostly friendly ties to the Western Shoshone peoples to the north and in California (d'Azevedo 1986, Euler 1966, 1972; Kelly and Fowler 1986). Corn Creek was claimed by the Las Vegas Paiutes, whose territory, according to Kelly, included Pahrump and Las Vegas valleys, and part of Amargosa Valley, but Kelly excluded Las Vegas Wash and the Colorado River at the mouth of the wash. Kelly did acknowledge that there were kinship affiliations among the families of those different areas (Kelly 1934).

In southern Nevada, the cusp of the protohistoric and the historic periods is marked by the 20-year span of the Old Spanish Trail, an active channel for commerce between Santa Fe and Los Angeles between 1829 and 1848 (Hafen and Hafen 1954). This was a pack train route, blazed by New Mexican traders that linked the merchants of Santa Fe and Los Angeles to each other, and through trade, to outlets in St. Louis and Mexico City. The trail passed through southern Nevada, but the few documents that exist make little reference to southern Nevada Paiutes.

Most of the picture must be extrapolated from broadly focused histories. The information available to use in describing ethnohistoric Las Vegas Paiute culture specifically comes from reports filed after the middle of the 19th century by ethnographers, explorers, and travelers. The few details available from the very slim written sources of the early historic period contribute little to understanding the nature of Paiute life in Las Vegas Valley early in the 19th century. In fact, given the dearth of solid sources to examine, Southern Paiute life cannot be fully described for the Spanish Trail period, the first decades of contact. Recorded events that transpired later in the Historic period do make it possible, however, to make some deductions about 19th century Las Vegas Paiute life, although written descriptions are fragmentary. The few documents that exist make little reference to southern Nevada Paiutes, and they are virtually silent about the Las Vegas Valley Paiutes. They also are colored by the biases of the observers, who usually were not prepared by experience or training to understand the behavior they witnessed. Very rarely did observers understand the language of the native people they described.

The history of Spanish exploration and settlement of Mexico, Baja and Alta California has important ramifications for the native peoples of all these areas (Johns 1975, Cline 1988). Exploring parties from Mexico began to penetrate the Southwest as early as 1540, but in the Great Basin, the influence of Spanish conquest upon native culture was weak until the 18th century. Then the voracious appetite of Spanish/Mexican settlers for slave labor began to affect even the people living in areas remote from Santa Fe or Los Angeles (Warren 2001). In this portion of the Mojave Desert and adjacent southern Utah, the Ute Indians became slave traders, selling hapless Paiute captives to passing caravans of traders from New Mexico, who in turn disposed of their human cargo when they reached their intended destination in California or in New Mexico. The Southern Paiutes had no defense against the raids, perpetrated by armed and horse-mounted Utes and New Mexican traders.

The avoidance of travelers originally reported for the Southern Paiutes probably reflects the brutal encounters they experienced when raided by their powerful Ute neighbors and the foreign intruders from New Mexico. Despite the paucity of contemporary records, it is clear from post-Spanish Trail documents that the trade had strong impact on the Southern Paiutes of southern Nevada. During an 1873 visit to the area, John Wesley Powell, head of the United States Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region, recorded the refusal of the Paiutes and Chemehuevis, who lived south of Nevada's Muddy River, to join the Utes on the Uintah Reservation in Utah. This refusal was rooted in the still fresh memory of Ute slave raids, which had ended at least a generation earlier (Powell and Ingalls 1873). Still earlier, John C. Fremont, on his epochal 1844 trip through the area, did not encounter a single live Paiute after leaving Resting Springs until he reached the Muddy River. Fremont's path took him from west to east through territory claimed by the Southern Paiutes of the Pahrump and Las Vegas valleys. No Paiute people or evidence of camps at Las Vegas Springs and Creek were noted in his report (Fremont 1845).

Fremont's account did contain the story of the notorious Indian raid at Resting Springs in eastern California that caused him to leave the regular Spanish Trail caravan route to render aid to the horse traders who had ventured out in advance of the main body. His story told how scouts Kit Carson and Alex Godey tracked the New Mexicans' horses to an Indian camp, where the Indians were butchering the animals and drying the meat. The scouts killed everyone they found and retrieved the surviving horses, some of them having been slaughtered and butchered for food. Farther north along on the trail, Fremont ascended Mountain Springs Pass, where he reported finding unoccupied Indian huts, supporting Kelly's data that include this locality as important at different times of the year, when people would be collecting pine nuts and agave, and

hunting mountain sheep, deer, and small game. Fremont did not see any Paiutes, nor did he record any other camps, until he reached the Muddy River, although he spent one night in Las Vegas Valley at the Big Springs.

The Mormons who settled along Las Vegas Creek did not record any irrigation ditches or gardens made by the Paiutes there, although evidence of extensive gardening was reported by Mormons in southern Utah during this time period (Fowler 1995; Roberts 2002). Still later, the Euroamerican settlers who developed ranches along Las Vegas Creek and at Kiel Spring (Figure 5.1) also failed to note in their writings any evidence of Indian agriculture. The absence of any mention of Indian gardens and ditches may have been intentional, so that the newcomers could claim the land and water without interference. Yet, the absence of early historic evidence of use by the people later called the "Las Vegas Paiutes" is difficult to reconcile with Kelly's information, which purports to reflect native usage of water sources back to the earliest non-Indian settlements. However, given the late date at which Kelly collected her material, the specific agricultural practices reported by her informants for the springs and the creek indeed may have been historical rather than protohistoric developments. It is certainly conventional wisdom for desert environments, however, that water attracts not only flora and fauna, but people. How to explain, then, the paucity of information about Paiute use of these water sources?

Paiutes. As did the other ranchers in the valley, Kiel used Indian labor in his operations, but Indian ownership of the land was never acknowledged. Names of some of the people who worked for Kiel were remembered by the elders in 1974 (Paiute Tribal Archives) and in conversations with the elders at Corn Creek in 2002. Photographs of

Figure 5.1. Unidentified Native American, probably a Las Vegas Paiute at the Kiel Ranch ca. 1898 (Photo by Sadie Kiel George, private collection of Elizabeth v.T. Warren).

In part, the problem is rooted in the frenetic pace of construction in the area, which every year tears up many hundreds of acres of land in a permissive regulatory climate. Archaeology can offer the promise of reaching a better understanding of how the Paiutes used the water resources of Las Vegas Valley in the ethnohistoric period, but too often, sites are obliterated without any attempt to retrieve the cultural information contained in them. Given the rate of destruction of once-desirable human habitats, there may not be enough opportunity to do more than scratch the surface of the deep history of Southern Paiute occupation of Las Vegas Valley.

Habitable sites in Las Vegas Valley certainly were located at or near water sources. In Las Vegas Valley, where surface water was severely limited, mesquites grew in linear alignments that paralleled the creeks, in bosques that marked the occurrence of isolated springs and sand dunes, and in a vast forest that corresponded to the subsurface aquifer on the eastern side of the valley. When Seymour mapped the distribution of Patayan sites in Paradise Valley, the part of Las Vegas Valley drained by Duck Creek, he recorded their linear alignment. Seymour speculated that this distribution is evidence that the Patayans of Las Vegas Valley lived in mesquite groves and practiced agriculture much like their lower Colorado River relatives. He believes that the distribution of sites in Paradise Valley thus reveals the existence of long-gone mesquite groves (Seymour 1997: 94-108).

Las Vegas Creek was bordered on both sides by extensive mesquite growth that began within one-half mile of the creek banks and extended in a wide band for the entire length of the flowing creek (Warren 2001). From the point where the creek trickled into the sand at the eastern side of the valley, a very large mesquite bosque extended south to the entrance of Las Vegas Wash. This expansive mesquite forest afforded ample opportunity for the Paiutes and earlier the Patayans to cultivate gardens of the sort reported for the Lower Colorado. If such plots existed, they were only rarely noticed or reported by travelers in the pre-1855 period, and not described by the Mormons during their occupation of the central valley from 1855 to 1857. In fact, the Mormons established an "Indian farm" at a spring site about one and one-half miles north of their own fort, and taught their Euroamerican agricultural practices to the Paiutes, who occupied their own camps a few miles from the Mormon compound. The Paiute camps were not sufficiently identified by Mormon diarists to enable anyone to locate them specifically.

The Indian Farm was apparently located at the spring later developed into a ranch by Conrad Kiel and his son, Edwin (Warren 2001). The Kiel Ranch, the third non-Indian ranch begun in the valley, was established at the site earlier used by Kana'gadi- and his kin (Fowler 1998). In 1875, when Kiel arrived in Las Vegas Valley, this water source, located away from Las Vegas Creek and its Euroamerican claimants, was deemed available for the taking. Paiute use of the lands and the spring was not recorded nor respected, despite the Mormon labors of 20 years earlier and the probable continuation there of farming by the Las Vegas some of the Las Vegas Paiutes who worked for Kiel are found in the Special Collection Department of the Lied Library at University of Nevada (Kiel-George Collection). At present, no identification of the people captured on glass plate negatives by Sadie Kiel George in 1900 has yet been made.

One archaeological site with prehistoric and historic components, recorded from the north end of Las Vegas Valley, suggests an ethnohistoric and historic Paiute residential pattern that also helps to explain the failure of many early diarists to record the presence of native people in the valley. Along the Eglington Escarpment, in an area that formerly featured numerous small seeps and springs, as well as isolated mesquite groves, there was both a prehistoric camp and a historic wattle and daub dwelling in a clearing surrounded by mesquites. The house was not visible from outside the mesquite grove. No evidence was found of planting of cultigens at or near the dwelling site, but the area had been badly disturbed before the survey located the feature in 1989 (White et al. 1989).

There is no historical record of Indian occupation at Corn Creek, although there is abundant archaeological evidence for it. Thus far, no diary of any historic traveler is known to include Paiute presence there. Lt. George M. Wheeler's report of his traverse of the territory for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1869 noted a stop at Corn Creek en route to Indian Springs from Las Vegas (Wheeler 1875:21). At Corn

Creek, the party found salt-grass, fair water, and no wood. At Indian Springs, the water was pure but warm, there was a little wood and scant grazing (Wheeler 1875:70). Wheeler did not mention Indians at Corn Creek.

Lt. Lockwood, sent by Wheeler to reconnoiter the area around old Potosi, southwest of Las Vegas Valley, found Paiutes in the southern Spring Mountains. Wheeler, who led a detachment along the foothills "to the northwest from the Vegas" (1875:21) noted several encampments, but not at Corn Creek. The Paiutes who were encountered lived at "rancherias," habitation sites where the Indians raised "small crops of grain, potatoes, and many melons." The Reconnaissance Map produced by this expedition notes rancherias located on the southeast flank of Mt. Olcott (modern Potosi), others on the valley floor in today's Red Rock Canyon, and at Indian Springs. The natives at Indian Springs "could speak Shoshone." From them Wheeler's guide learned how to travel north from Indian Springs, thereby materially aiding the party on "one of the worst forced marches of the trip" (Wheeler 1875:21). He recorded Corn Creek and Indian Springs by name on the Reconnaissance Map of this expedition (Wheeler 1869).

At the time of Euroamerican incursion, the Protohistoric period in the Mojave Desert was unsettled as well in respect to native occupation and use. Early historical records report hostilities between such groups as the Mohaves and Halchidomas, the Chemehuevis and the "Desert Mojaves," and the Southern Paiutes and the Mohaves and sometimes the Chemehuevis (Gass Daybooks 1876–1879; Kelly and Fowler 1986:378-379; Kroeber and Kroeber 1994). The Daybooks of O. D. Gass, proprietor of the Las Vegas Ranch from 1867 to 1882, contain numerous references to conflicts between Las Vegas Paiutes and "the river people" (never specifically identified). At the Big Springs in Las Vegas Valley, archaeologists have found Southern Paiute materials immediately above Anasazi remains (Warren et al. 1972), while in the south end of the valley, there is also a significant presence of Patayan ceramics. These observations lead to the hypothesis that during the Prehistoric period, Colorado River peoples from areas to the south were present for considerable lengths of time, although not resident at Las Vegas Springs (Seymour 1997). The precise nature of the interaction between the Numic peoples and the Patayans is not known for the Prehistoric and Protohistoric periods. The many similarities between these groups in the use of water and of plant and animals resources, in shared myths and dances, and in other non-material aspects of culture certainly suggest important interaction and cultural borrowing (see Fowler 1998:1.84-85; Fowler and Fowler 1971; Kelly and Fowler 1986:370).

The strong, direct, negative influence on their numbers experienced by the Southern Paiutes in response to the very powerful assaults perpetrated in the 19th century by Ute and Navajo Indians, and by Spanish and New Mexican traders, pales in comparison to the impact of the arrival of the Mormon settlers from Utah in 1855 (Jensen 1926). This date marks the beginning of permanent change in concepts of land ownership imposed by non-Indians who came to establish their own community along the life-giving stream in Las Vegas Valley. The Mormon Mission signals the end of the sway of aboriginal culture over the resources of southern Nevada. While the Mormon use of the water did not diminish the supply, the displacement of native farms and farmers that began with this settlement grew increasingly pervasive throughout the early Historic period that opened in 1855. By 1873, less than 20 years after the arrival of the Latter Day Saints in Las Vegas Valley, many Southern Paiute native inhabitants had been banished to the Moapa Reservation on the Muddy River. While a substantial number remained off the reservation, they were tolerated only as long as they provided manual labor for the ranchers who replaced them. Water was developed exclusively for irrigation of large farms and orchards planted not for subsistence, but for cash income. The Las Vegas Springs would be "improved" to produce more water for the fields of these newcomers, and the native inhabitants of the valley would find their well-established subsistence pattern diminished and eventually untenable, as the newcomers claimed these water sources for their gardens and camps.

Water was liquid gold for the settlers of Las Vegas Valley. Without it, life could not be sustained, nor could there be dwellings, farms, and cattle ranches. Without water, there could be no safe haven for travelers along the trail to California. Although, in the Spanish Trail period, the Paiutes lost people, in the Mormon Mission and Ranching period, they lost their land and their water to newcomers who did not recognize the

rights of natives. From this time forward, water would become the most valuable resource to these new people who took up the land, and it would be shared only grudgingly with the people who were here first.

HISTORY OF ETHNOLOGY

John Wesley Powell was the first to collect systematic information about the life and culture of the Paiutes of the southern Great Basin. The 1873 date of Powell's visit to Las Vegas Valley established the threshold of systematic data collection on native culture (Fowler and Fowler 1971). Twice more in the next hundred years, the lifeway of Las Vegas Paiutes was examined, first by Isabel Kelly in 1933–1934 (Kelly 1934; Kelly and Fowler 1986; Fowler 1998), and by the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe itself, in 1974 (Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada 1976). In the mid 1930s, anthropologist Julian Steward studied the Shoshone-Paiute boundary region that included Pahrump Valley, Ash Meadows, and Oasis Valley (Steward 1938, 1941), but he did not include the Las Vegas Paiutes in his research. In the late 20th century, some information relative to Las Vegas Paiutes was included in a number of background studies performed in conjunction with major construction projects with federal involvement: Las Vegas Wetlands Park (Roberts and Ahlstrom 2000), Yucca Mountain (Stoffle et al. 1990), and the US 95 Multiple Investment Study (Berger & Associates, Inc. 1998).

Anthropologist Isabel Kelly of University of California, Berkeley, spent 18 months in Southern Paiute territory between 1933 and 1934, comparing Powell's data against materials she collected from elderly informants. The information gleaned by Kelly adds important detail to the historic record, but the specific information she acquired in respect to use of creek and spring resources for farming seems to reflect some differences from those recorded in neighboring areas occupied by other Southern Paiutes (Fowler 1995:99-117; Roberts 2002). Among the Las Vegas Paiutes, gardens irrigated from springs were surrounded by berms, to keep the water from running off. Such features seem to be absent in plots watered from running streams such as are found in southern Utah.

In 1974, the Las Vegas Paiutes decided to write their own tribal history, and they interviewed tribal elders. The information recorded (Las Vegas Paiute Tribal Archives 1911–1976) sheds additional light on aboriginal settlement patterns and farming practices. Finally, in 1998 a study was conducted of Southern Paiute and Chemehuevi use of water from several springs and creeks in Las Vegas Valley as part of an effort to document the history of the Las Vegas Springs site (Berger & Associates 1998). Integrating these studies and historical documents within the context of the historic water resources and vegetation of Las Vegas Valley, which stretches from the ranges that define the southern boundary of the valley northward to Indian Springs, permits some observations to be made about the significance of Corn Creek to the Southern Paiutes in the ethnohistoric period.

ETHNOHISTORIC SUBSISTENCE PATTERN

Las Vegas Paiute Gardening

Kelly interviewed tribal elders about Southern Paiute life in the Las Vegas Valley and southern Nevada as far back as memory could reach, estimated by Fowler to extend to the 1850s-1860s. She mapped camps at several important springs and the gardens irrigated from them, but it is not clear if there were any differences in technique of watering from a spring as opposed to a flowing creek. Fowler noted differences between the Las Vegas materials and the "system of planting at Moapa and at St. George and Shivwits, a point to be further explored" (Fowler 1995). Fowler's research into the southern Utah Paiute farming practices, and Heidi Roberts' study of agricultural techniques of the St. George, Utah Southern Paiutes uncovered important details for that area. The Southern Paiutes there burned fields to prepare them for planting, and left a field fallow when it became too weedy. Crops were planted to harvest sequentially

throughout the season. All crops were irrigated from streams, some dammed artificially. On the Santa Clara, one irrigation ditch ran for three quarters of a mile, "round the base of a rock mountain in some places cut & worn from 6 to 10 feet deep" (Roberts:2001). Kelly's Las Vegas Paiute informants did not mention these particular practices, although Fowler noted the double-cropping of corn (Fowler 1995:112).

The names of owners of the Las Vegas Valley springs were clearly identified by Kelly's Paiute informants, although in 1933 it had been over 50 years since Southern Paiutes could claim ownership of Indian and Kiel springs, and 70 years from the time the Big Springs at Las Vegas had been confiscated by non-Indian settlers. The Paiute elders consulted for this project (Chapter 1) object to the use of the term "owned" in connection with springs, indicating "this is not the way of the Paiute people. Springs were not owned, but a clan lived there and was associated with the spring and the location." In this report, the term "owned" will be used in connection with Kelly's work; the question of the presence of clans and the rights of these social groups is beyond the scope of this work.

Prior to Kelly's work, information about traditional Native American use of Las Vegas Valley land and water for gardens was very limited. Powell cited evidence that the Southern Paiutes were farmers (Powell and Ingalls 1874), but he did not include specifics of agricultural practices. He did collect vocabulary for tools and activities that reflected agriculture: hoe, plough, spade, corn, potato (domestic), chicken (domestic), horse and horse gear, and wagon (Fowler and Fowler 1971:152-160). He did not list specific place names for Las Vegas Valley features such as Big Spring.

The historical record for Las Vegas Valley is very scanty on the subject of Paiute subsistence. Most early settlers failed to note any Indian farming activities at all in the Historic period. Yet, when the Lincoln County, Nevada surveyor in 1872 recorded claims to land and water for non-Indian farmers of southern Nevada, he drew an "Indian Ditch" on the map of Las Vegas Springs and Creek. The ditch was located along Las Vegas Creek between the springs and the 'Los Vegas Rancho,' but no other information was included in the surveyor's notes (Surveyor's Record, Book B, Lincoln County, Nevada 1871–1886:91-106). The absence of information in the historical diaries of the period may simply reflect the prevailing attitudes of the time, which held that the land was vacant, unused; the value of Indian claims was not recognized, and in fact, the U.S. government was actively engaged in removing Indians to government controlled reservations. Another possible explanation is that the newcomers did not want any opposing claim to the land and water they were appropriating.

The presence of the ditch in 1872 tends to support Kelly's data, which indicate that Winigant, the Paiute owner of Big Spring, irrigated crops from the stream. The county surveyor depicted an L-shaped ditch, with a short leg running due north from the creek bank, and a longer segment at right angles to it, running parallel with the creek. Many families reportedly lived at this well-watered spring site: probably 25-30 people occupying from four to seven camps (Fowler 1998).

Different families owned other water sources, and Kelly's informants provided an outline of Las Vegas Paiute land tenure and farming practices. By extension, these can be applied to Corn Creek. Kelly obtained field diagrams for irrigated plots at several sites. Fowler believes that the several diagrams collected are similar enough "to suspect that the other sites were planted in a like manner" (Fowler 1998:1.92).

The Southern Paiute elders described two kinds of practices to Kelly. The gardens at Wipi and at Kwei-ntomant (Kiel Ranch), both spring sites, exhibit some differences between them. At Wipi (locality not known), there was enough water for two brothers to irrigate gardens. Xuku'nakaivats (Powell's Ku-ni-kai-vets in Fowler and Fowler 1971:104) owned this site, which a Kelly informant considered to be "an important agricultural center" (Fowler 1998: 1.87). The crops at Wipi were planted in two fields, termed "ponds" by the Paiutes, one belonging to each brother. The plots approximate rectangles, each irrigated from its own primary ditch that tapped the stream flow from the spring. Kelly failed to indicate whether this was a natural stream from the spring, or it if was a manmade canal. The notes on the diagram (Fowler 1998:Figure 47) state that the "stream was not dammed," which would make this pair of gardens probably much like those at Wi-iya, irrigated from Las Vegas Creek but not from the springs themselves.

A site known after 1875 as the Kiel Ranch, and at the time of Kelly's research in the 1930s as the Taylor Ranch, was called Kwei-ntomant by the Las Vegas Paiutes. It was another large, primary planting area for the valley. Kelly noted that this was an open site, not located along Las Vegas Creek. In aboriginal times, this water source was owned by Kana'gadi-. Sixteen camps occupied by about 52 individuals were located adjacent to the spring. The genealogy provided for Kana'gadi-'s kindred included Xuku-naikivets as a collateral relative of a granddaughter (Fowler 1998: Fig. 1-48). The detailed diagram for the sites at Kwei-ntomant reveals that the Southern Paiutes there planted a different crop in each "pond" and surrounded it with sunflowers (Fowler 1998: Fig. 1-49), whereas at Wipi, the brothers planted an assortment of vegetables in only two ponds, also surrounded by sunflowers.

Families Associated With Corn Creek

Corn Creek is included in the Kelly notes as one of 14 primary settlements (Fowler 1998:1.85). Like many of the others, the Corn Creek settlement was located near springs in the foothills of nearby mountains (in this instance, the Sheep Range). Nearly all of the 14 primary camps were planted with a variety of native crops, including corn, beans, squash, amaranth, and sunflowers. In the Historic period, sorghum, wheat, watermelon and cantaloupe were added.

The Southern Paiute name for Corn Creek Springs is Pakoni- or Pakonapanti-. Coyote named the springs, but the name "doesn't necessarily mean anything, it is just the name" (Chapter 1). The family that owned Indian Springs (Kweinkoma in Southern Paiute) also claimed Corn Creek, and people planted at Corn Creek "because there was not enough land at Indian Springs" (Fowler 1998: 1.87). Powell named Pats-a'-gu-ruke as "chief" of the Kwi-en'-go-mats at Indian Springs, but also noted that Ku-ni'-kai-vets was "Chief of Alliance" of groups that comprised the Las Vegas Paiutes (Fowler and Fowler 1971: 104).

Xuku'nakaivats figured importantly in Las Vegas Valley in the mid to late 19th century. He was baptized "George" by the Mormon missionaries in Las Vegas in 1855. These men heard his Paiute name as "Ocoonaquibits" (Jensen 1926:195) and, according to missionary John Steele, it was this man who showed the Mormons the lead ore at Potosi in 1856 (Steele, cited in Paher 1971:26-27). Las Vegas Ranch proprietor O. D. Gass called him "Coonequinets" and apparently depended heavily on his good will in supplying Indian labor for herding and tending crops. When Coonequinets was killed at the Las Vegas Ranch in 1878, the Paiutes were very angry, causing Gass to flee in the middle of the night with his young family to the mining camp at Ivanpah, 70 miles away. How and why Coonequinets was killed is not clear from the historical record (Warren 2001:108-109).

Kelly names Patsaxarik (see Powell's rendering of the name, above) as the owner of Indian Springs and Corn Creek. In the early historical literature, including the federal censuses, he is called "Whispering Ben" or "Indian Ben" (for example, Federal Census, Pahrump Precinct, 1920), and his name was attached also to a small spring in Red Rock Canyon (McWilliams 1916), where he was related through marriage to Tweed Wilson of the Sandstone (now Spring Mountain) Ranch. Fowler believes Whispering Ben died and was buried at Corn Creek (Catherine S. Fowler, personal communication, 2002), a story corroborated by the Las Vegas Paiute elders during the consultation for this project (Chapter 1).

According to Rusco, who collected information from Southern Paiute elders in the early 1990s about Paiute occupation at Corn Creek (Mary Rusco, personal communication 2002), there were about 6-7 camps at Corn Creek. This number probably reflects a slightly larger population than Powell noted in 1873 at Indian Springs: 7 men, 6 women, and 5 children under age 10. Kelly reported 4-5 camps (Catherine S. Fowler, personal communication, 2002), which conforms more closely to the number reported by Powell.

The native consultants for this project included Roger Benn, Whispering Ben's grandson, who was born at Indian Springs. Roger visited Corn Creek when he was very young, about two years old (about 1920). He never spent any time there, because between one stop at Corn Creek and the next, "the whites" took over

the land, and so the Paiutes stayed away. In 2002, their alienation from Corn Creek was so complete that, for all of the other elders who participated in the consultation for this history, this was their first visit.

Gardening Practices

The Paiutes used spring and creek localities in a characteristic fashion. The planting site, up to an acre near or below a spring, was cleared, leveled, and banked with six to eight inches of dirt, just enough to keep the water from running off the garden. These banked lots were termed "ponds." Irrigation ditches then were excavated to bring water to the rows of crops planted inside the berm. Pond construction or renewal began in November and December, to ready the land for early spring planting. Gardens were thoroughly soaked before planting, using pre-sprouted seeds. The same pond would be used for two to three years, then another site was cleared nearby and the irrigation ditch extended to it. Ideally, each crop had its own pond.

Favored crops included two types of corn, two of pumpkins, two different squashes, tepary and spotted beans, sunflower, amaranth, small-kerneled (Sonoran) wheat, quail beans or chick peas, and a hard-shelled watermelon. The elders consulted at Corn Creek stated that besides corn, two kinds of squash were grown, one "like a pumpkin" and the other "like Italian squash" [Patahuang in Paiute] (Chapter 1). All that is known about gardening methods at Corn Creek is that water was taken from the creek. The cultivated crops were supplemented by native wild greens, seeds, and fruits, some of which were tended: pinyon pine, mesquite, agave, yucca, salt bush, rice grass, and grapes. At Corn Creek, the elders noted a number of important wild plants, some used for food, others for making tools such as needles: Indian spinach or prince's plume (two types), mesquite beans, cattail, watercress, hedgehog and barrel cactus, and yucca (Chapter 1). Insects, birds, reptiles, and mammals rounded out the diet.

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Pinyon pine trees do not grow at Corn Creek, but extensive stands flourish in the Spring Mountains, the Sheep and Las Vegas ranges, and other mountains within the Las Vegas Paiute territory. While the harvest of pine nuts was very important to the Paiute people, they also needed to tend their gardens, planted at the springs and creeks of the valley foothills and valley floors. Tending gardens and harvesting nuts at the same time of year required that the people split their work force in the fall, with some moving into the mountains and others remaining at the valley camps.

Double Loop Subsistence Strategy

The subsistence pattern reflected in the incomplete record of the late prehistoric and protohistoric Southern Paiute people suggests that the Las Vegas Paiutes adopted a different strategy than the commonly pictured, exclusively nomadic lifeway. Las Vegas Valley Southern Paiutes lived in an unusually productive eco-zone, with ample water resources that supported a wide variety of edible native plants and, most importantly, numerous and sometimes very extensive mesquite forests. Within the short distance of 20 miles from the valley floor, in the foothills of the Spring Mountains and other nearby ranges, grew substantial numbers of pinyon pines (*Pinus monophylla*), agaves (notably *Agave utahensis*), and Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) forests, interspersed with Mojave yuccas (*Yucca schidigera*) and other higher elevation plant resources, along with their associated fauna. The soil adjacent to the creeks and springs of the valley was suitable for horticulture, and the mesquite groves nearby produced a never-failing supply of edible, storable beans. The combination of rich resources located on the valley floor, which stimulated the growth of horticulture, and the collectible wild flora and fauna of the mountains close at hand made it possible to diverge from the seasonally based collecting rounds anthropologists usually portray for this area.

The seasonal round of the Las Vegas Paiutes had two fulcrums, one based in the valley, the other in the mountains. The loop based in the valley was dictated by the need to prepare and plant gardens, tend them, and harvest the produce, all augmented by the seasonal ripening of mesquite beans. Las Vegas Paiutes would camp at their spring sites during planting season, visiting their gardens to irrigate and control predation by animals and others. The second loop describes the period of movement to the foothills and higher mountain elevations in the warmer months and early fall, to gather, process, and store wild foods, including agave and pine nut "crops." The excursions to the mountains headed to particular groves of trees or clusters of agaves or yuccas, entailing seasonal use of the same camps over many years. At the same time, the tie to the valley camps would also be maintained, and there, too, the campsites previously used would be revisited. Archaeologist Claude Warren termed this a "double loop" subsistence strategy (Warren 1981). Fowler recognized the difference between the seasonal rounds of the Southern Paiutes, who had mesquite resources, and the Northern Paiutes, who had none, but she did not give a name to the pattern (Fowler 1995). The elders consulted for this project remembered that, "although people would be up in the mountains gathering pine nuts, someone would be left to watch the fields near the springs" (Chapter 1).

Shelter and Household Furniture

The lifeway of the Southern Paiute people necessitated that they be mobile and that any shelters they built be only as ample and sturdy as required to give itinerant people some protection from the sun, wind, and cold. A number of social factors, such as the abandonment of a camp upon the death of a member and the burning of personal possessions of the deceased, also mitigated against building more permanent structures. Practical factors included that shelter be fabricated from whatever resources the camp area offered. The shelters favored by the Southern Paiutes thus were either natural rockshelters and caves or the simple "wickiup," made of brush (Figures 5.3 and 5.4). Kelly and Fowler described the brush structures and illustrated the variety of shelters built in the region historically (Kelly and Fowler 1986:371-373, Figure 3). Las Vegas Paiute elders described shelters of these types, adding that in the summer everything was moved outside. In recent times, when tables and stoves became part of the domestic furniture, the legs of stoves and tables were placed in a can of water "so the ants wouldn't walk up the table. Water was sprinkled over the ground to cool it off" (Chapter 1).

Kelly reports that the Las Vegas Valley Paiute houses were used by a single family and were built near springs (Fowler 1998:121):

> Winter houses were dome-shaped and tall enough to stand upright inside. To construct them, first the ground was cleared then postholes (4 or more) for the uprights were dug along the walls for the mesquite supports. If the houses were smaller, a central post forked at the top was set in the ground. Additional posts of willow were leaned against the central dome of whichever type. A covering of cane, arrowweed or grass, depending on what is at hand, was added for the walls, and perhaps some mud along the base. The doorway faced east and the house had a central firepit, although consultants differed as to whether the house had a smoke hole. A cliffrose bark mat covered the doorway and additional mats were on the floor. This house would be used for two to three years or longer, being renewed periodically" (Fowler 1998:121).

Other structures built were semi-circular brush-walled shade kitchens, flat-roofed shades with four posts, and storage platforms. Households were furnished primarily with baskets (Figure 5.5), made by women from natural grasses, bark, willow branches, and seed pods. Pottery vessels were also made, but basketry comprised the more important class of goods. Both baskets and pots were used to carry water and to cook in, although obviously the techniques of cooking differed. Tightly woven baskets, coated on the inside with pine pitch, were used to carry water on journeys. Cooking in baskets was accomplished by heating pebbles in a fire and then dropping them into the basket containing the gruel or soup, replacing the stones as they cooled. The heat from the stones cooked the foodstuff. Meat could be cooked directly over the fire, and flat cakes made of

mesquite flour were cooked on flat stones placed in the fire. Plants with tough, woody stems, such as the agaves, were roasted in earth ovens built near the collecting sites. Limestone rocks were heated and placed in the pits with the raw foods, then covered and left for 24-36 hours. The cooled rocks were thrown out of the pit when the cooked foods were retrieved. Pits were used repeatedly over many years; the resulting characteristic cone-shaped structures are a common feature of the foothills of southern Nevada. There are no agave roasting pits at Corn Creek, but large ones are situated north of Corn Creek in the mountains, within the boundary of the Desert Wildlife Refuge but outside the geographic scope of this project.

The way of life of the Southern Paiute people changed dramatically and permanently with the arrival of outsiders in Las Vegas Valley. Paiute hegemony over the land, water, and resources was displaced by Euroamerican settlers and miners in the 19th century, and by railroad developers and city dwellers in the 20th. A consequence of these changes was the severe depletion of the natural resources of the region, notably of the native bighorn sheep. In 1936, concern for the survival of these animals resulted in the creation of the Desert Game Range. The evolution of its Corn Creek facility is the primary focus of this historical research.

Figure 5.2. A Las Vegas Paiute encampment at Indian Springs or Cactus Springs around 1900 (Photo by Sadie Kiel George, private collection of Elizabeth v.T. Warren).

Figure 5.3. Unidentified Las Vegas Paiute resting under a brush shelter next to a "wickiup," ca 1900 (Photo by Sadie Kiel George, private collection of Elizabeth v.T. Warren).

Figure 5.4. A Las Vegas Paiute encampment around 1900. Note the baskets and rabbit skin robe in the foreground (Photo by Sadie Kiel George, private collection of Elizabeth v.T. Warren).

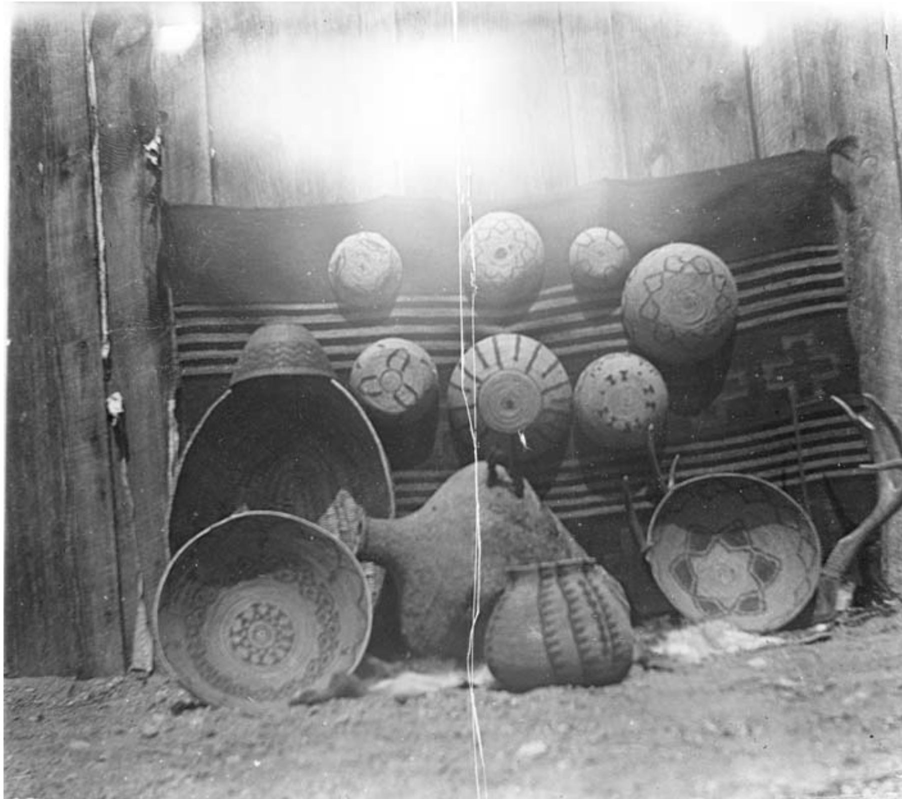

Figure 5.5. Southern Paiute baskets photographed at the Kiel Ranch ca. 1900 (Photo by Sadie Kiel George, private collection of Elizabeth v.T. Warren).