

A Look Back at the Judges in Mesquite, Nevada

~ 1903 to 2012 ~



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April, 2016*



Acknowledgments

Shortly after taking the bench in 2013 I learned that neither the state nor the county had a complete list of those who had served in Mesquite as Justice of the Peace. For several years I've gathered bits of information from various sources about former Mesquite judges. I have spoken with local historians as well as the family and friends of these individuals. The result of these efforts is this book, which I hope is both interesting and informative.

I wish to express my appreciation to Elspeth Kuta, Virgin Valley Heritage Museum director for her help with this project. Elspeth introduced me to court records that have been preserved at the museum that cover the first three decades of the twentieth century--truly a treasure. Geraldine Zarate, author of *Mesquite and the Virgin Valley*, has been extremely helpful and supportive of this project. Several of the individuals included in this book would not have been identified without her efforts. I would like to thank the members of the Virgin Valley Historical Society for their suggestions and insights. Dorothy Frehner Thurston's book *A River and a Road* and Vincent L. Leavitt's book *Mesquite Flats* were both great resources. I would like to express my gratitude to my brother Trent Toone and my wife Kena Toone for their assistance in editing this document. Finally, thanks to everyone that shared stories, dates, and pictures with me.

The information compiled in this book was accumulated from various sources. Filling in gaps in state and county election data has proven both challenging and exciting. It is very possible that new information and names may be located at some point. In any event, I have attempted to ensure that the information contained in this book is accurate. Any errors in this document are mine.

The images used in this book come from the Virgin Valley Heritage Museum, unless otherwise noted.

- Judge Ryan Toone

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Brief History of the Courts in Mesquite, Nevada

Mesquite (originally called Mesquite Flats),¹ Nevada is located in the northeast corner of Clark County in the Virgin Valley.² The city is bordered on the East by the Arizona state line and Lincoln County to the North. The Virgin River flows along the southeast border of the city on its path to Lake Mead. The desert terrain has beautiful vistas and the area is speckled with mesquite trees, sage brush, and other desert vegetation. Temperatures in this part of the Mojave Desert are temperate in the Fall, Winter, and Spring, but extremely hot during the Summer, sometimes approaching 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Occasional thunderstorms bring needed rain to the valley, but the life giving precipitation can also turn into destructive flooding.³

It was to this beautiful but harsh environment that Mormon pioneers arrived in the late 1800s. The area now known as Mesquite was first settled in 1880.⁴ Initial attempts to dwell in the area failed due to harsh weather and desert conditions.⁵ Mesquite was permanently settled on the third attempt.⁶ Census records indicate that by 1900, nineteen families resided in Mesquite.⁷

During those early days of Mesquite, the closest legal authorities were in Pioche, Nevada (approximately 150 miles away on modern roads).⁸ As a result, legal disputes were often resolved by local church leaders.⁹ As new residents gradually moved into the area, the need for formal law enforcement became evident.¹⁰ Shortly after the turn of the century Mesquite requested and received permission from the county to have a Justice of the Peace along with a Constable and Deputy Sheriff.¹¹ The Deputy Sheriff was an appointed position, while the other two positions were elected.¹²

Court records from the early 1900s reveal that Justices of the Peace certified school census records, made note of agreements and property conveyances, and handled

¹ City of Mesquite, "Pioneering With Pride", *Virgin Valley Heritage Museum*. Web. 2 Mar. 2016. ("In 1898, the town changed its name from Mesquite Flats to Mesquite.")

² Thurston, Dorothy Dawn Frehner, *A River and a Road*, 1994, 3. Print.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8-11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸ Leavitt, Vincent L., *Mesquite Flats: A History of Virgin Valley*, Cedar City, UT, ImagePro Printing & Copying, 2004, 46. Print. ("There was no law closer than Pioche, Nevada. All legal matters were left to the Bishop to untangle or enforce.")

⁹ *Ibid.*, 95-96. ("Bishop's Courts were held quite often. This was due to the fact that Bishops were also the town leaders and law enforcers. When someone in town had a complaint and they could not work it out with the other party, they would go to the Bishop and file a complaint. The Bishop would then call a Bishop's Court and the people involved would be officially notified to appear before the Bishopric. The people would present their case, with witnesses, if needed, and the Bishopric would consider the facts and the Bishop would determine the settlement.") Thurston, 32. ("There was very little need for civil action and jails.... The dispensation of justice was often carried over into church meetings, when in an effort to make amends an offender would stand up and ask forgiveness from fellow members.")

¹⁰ Leavitt, 175.

¹¹ Leavitt, 127.

¹² Leavitt, 127.

civil and criminal matters.¹³ Among the matters heard in Justice Court at the beginning of the twentieth century were disputes over the “flooding [of] others’ property, disturbing the peace, allowing livestock to wander on public streets, the unlawful misbranding of a calf, using language in a way and manner that might provoke assault, and stealing chickens.”¹⁴

Mesquite remained predominantly a farming and ranching community for most of the twentieth century.¹⁵ However, with the completion of the Interstate 15 system in 1973 and the arrival of casinos, shopping centers, and golf courses in the following decades, the community experienced significant growth and increased tourism.¹⁶ Town officials eventually decided that it was necessary to form a city in order for the community to have control over its future.¹⁷ On May 24, 1984 the City of Mesquite was incorporated.¹⁸ Accompanying the creation of the municipality was the appointment of a municipal court judge.¹⁹ About a decade later, in 1995, the current court building on Hillside Boulevard was completed.²⁰

What follows are brief biographical sketches of the judges that have served the Mesquite community. These individuals came from varied professions and backgrounds. While few arrived at the bench with formal legal training, they all stepped forward with a desire to serve, common sense, and a commitment to follow the law. It is with respect for their service that this book is dedicated.

¹³ Mesquite Justice Court, *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*, Mesquite, Nevada. 1904-1934. Handwritten.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ “Pioneering With Pride”.

¹⁶ Thurston, 222.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁹ Nevada Revised Statutes 5.010-5.020.

²⁰ Mesquite Justice Facility, Facility Dedication Plaque, Mesquite, Nevada, 29 June 1995.

Hyrum William Burgess



Hyrum W. Burgess

(Photo courtesy Ancestry.com)

Hyrum William Burgess was born in Hamilton Ohio to Horace Burgess and Almira Iona Pulsipher on May 25, 1837.¹ Burgess traveled west with Mormon pioneers around the year 1850.²

During the early 1860s Burgess was asked to help explore a wagon route from the St. George, Utah area to the Colorado River.³ His daughter recorded that he had frequent interactions with Native American Indians during his lifetime and stated that he always got along well with them.⁴ Family records indicate that during the late 1860s, Burgess moved his young family to California, where he worked as a blacksmith during the gold rush.⁵ Burgess eventually returned to Utah where he worked as a blacksmith and hauled freight.⁶ He was known for keeping his wagons, plows, and machinery in proper order and lived in various locations to find work, including Uintah County, Wayne County, and Iron County.⁷

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

² "United States Census, 1850," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCS6-188> : accessed 3 March 2016), Hyrum Burgess in household of Almira Burgess, Great Salt Lake County, Great Salt Lake, Utah Territory, United States; citing family 153, NARA microfilm publication M432 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.). (The pioneer company that Burgess traveled in is unknown. It is believed that he traveled in the 1850 Aaron Johnson Company with his older brother.)

³ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Hyrum Burgess and others directed by Erastus Snow to explore wagon route from St George to the Colorado" in FamilySearch.

⁴ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Biography of Sarah Ann Burgess Hughes" in FamilySearch.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Biography of Agnes Smith Burgess" from Daughters of Utah Pioneers in FamilySearch.

⁷ "Biography of Sarah Ann Burgess Hughes"; "Biography of Agnes Smith Burgess".

Burgess and his wife Agnes⁸ moved to the Virgin Valley sometime near the turn of the century, probably close to the time period when his daughter, Sarah Ann, and her husband, James Elmer Hughes, arrived in 1896.⁹ Burgess's home site is listed on a 1902 plot map of Mesquite.¹⁰ The couple raised a large family and lived the rest of their lives in Mesquite.¹¹

Burgess served as Mesquite's first Justice of the Peace from 1903-1905.¹² Court records during that time period include a legal transaction he likely recorded in 1904 in his capacity as Justice of the Peace.¹³ His name also appears in a court record a few years after his service as Justice of the Peace was completed.¹⁴ Burgess is listed as the attorney for defendants who were charged with Disturbing the Peace.¹⁵

Burgess passed away in Mesquite on September 25, 1924.¹⁶

July 30, 1904
one quit claim deed
from Sebastian Strasser
to Isaac Burgess

Hyrum Burgess
Attorney for Defendant

⁸ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: Hyrum William Burgess" in FamilySearch. "Biography of Sarah Ann Burgess Hughes". [Burgess married Eliza Jane Dykes in 1856. The marriage ended after a few years in divorce. Burgess married Mary Ann Hales in 1860. She became ill while the family was traveling near Elko, Nevada and passed away in 1870. Burgess married Agnes Smith in 1872.]

⁹ "Biography of Sarah Ann Burgess Hughes".

¹⁰ Leavitt, Vincent L., *Mesquite Flats: A History of Virgin Valley*, Cedar City, UT, ImagePro Printing & Copying, 2004, 99. Print.

¹¹ "Biography of Agnes Smith Burgess" (Hyrum and Agnes had six children. Burgess also had two children with his wife Mary Ann Hales.)

¹² Nevada Administrative Office of the Courts, "Nevada Judicial History Database: Hyrum Burgess", Nevada Judiciary, Web, 3 Mar. 2016. Mesquite Justice Court, *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*, Mesquite, Nevada. 1904-1934. Handwritten.

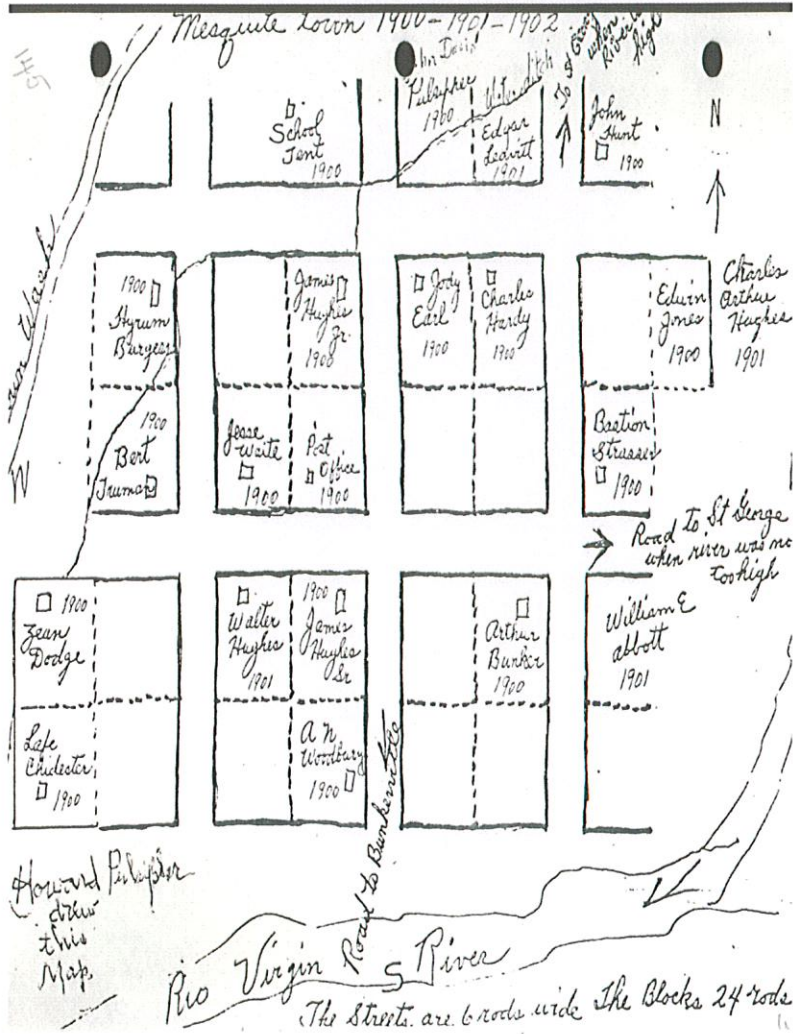
¹³ *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ U.S., *Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current*. "Biography of Agnes Smith Burgess" (Tragically his wife Agnes Burgess died in 1933. While loading her cabin's stove with chips, her apron caught on fire. She was severely burned and passed away after enduring significant pain.)

1902 Plot Map of Mesquite



(Courtesy of the Virgin Valley Heritage Museum)

John Martin Johnson



John Martin Johnson was born on October 16, 1864 in Mount Pleasant, Utah.¹ His parents, John Martin Johnson, Sr. and Maria Mathilda Nielson, were Scandinavian immigrants.² Johnson was raised on a farm and family records indicate that he and his brother Peter were taught to work hard at an early age.³ As boys they were sent to nearby canyons with an oxen team to gather loads of wood.⁴ Many times their mother would walk long distances to meet them when they were late coming home.⁵

Johnson's first wife Mary Tryon passed away in 1895.⁶ John married Mahala Melvina "Millie" Burgess on March 26, 1898 in St. George Utah.⁷ Johnson and Millie moved to Mesquite, Nevada shortly after their first child was born in Gunlock, Utah.⁸ According to census records, Johnson's family was one of 19 families living in Mesquite at the turn of the century.⁹

Like other residents in the Virgin Valley at that time, Johnson was a farmer.¹⁰ He served the community as Justice of the Peace from 1905-1907.¹¹ While serving in that position, he documented legal transactions and certified school census records.¹²

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: John Martin Johnson" in FamilySearch.

² Ancestry.com. *1870 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch. "Family Group Record: John Martin Johnson".

³ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Biography of Peter Alvin Johnson" in FamilySearch.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ "Family Group Record: John Martin Johnson". The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Wild Bunch Outlaw, "Etta Place", aka Mary Hazel Tryon" in FamilySearch (An unsubstantiated family legend suggests that rather than dying in 1895, that Mary was "Wild Bunch" outlaw "Etta Place" who ran off with Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.)

⁷ "Family Group Record: John Martin Johnson".

⁸ Ancestry.com. *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004. "Family Group Record: John Martin Johnson".

⁹ *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line].

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Nevada Administrative Office of the Courts, "Nevada Judicial History Database: J. Johnson", Nevada Judiciary, Web. 3 Mar. 2016. Mesquite Justice Court, *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*, Mesquite, Nevada. 1904-1934. Handwritten.

¹² *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*.

May 17th 190th.
James Hughes appeared
before me J. M. Johnson
J. P. Was sworn as
to correct School census
of Mesquite Lincoln Co. Nev.
of Board School year
J. M. Johnson J. P.

Johnson moved north shortly after completing his term as Justice of the Peace, living in Idaho and Montana.¹³ He eventually moved back to Nevada, passing away in Mesquite on April 14, 1932.¹⁴

¹³ Ancestry.com. 1910 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006. Ancestry.com. 1920 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010. Images reproduced by FamilySearch.

¹⁴ "Family Group Record: John Martin Johnson".

James Elmer Hughes



James Elmer Hughes was born December 16, 1860 to James Hughes and Carmelia Mariah Burgess, in Salt Lake City, Utah.¹ Hughes married Sarah Ann Burgess, on August 2, 1881 in Wayne County, Utah.² Sarah Ann was the daughter of Hyrum Burgess and Mary Ann Hales.³ The couple lived in various locations ranching, farming, and making butter and cheese to sell at local stores.⁴ However, they faced many challenges at each of these homesteads that prompted them to keep looking for a new place to make their home.⁵ At one point, their cattle were stolen by the infamous Robber's Roost Gang.⁶ In another productive valley, flood water buried their crops.⁷

The Hughes family moved to Bunkerville in 1896 and then Mesquite in 1897.⁸ They lived out of a tent their first year in Mesquite and worked hard to have their home ready before winter.⁹ The family farmed and raised fruit in an orchard that they shipped to Salt Lake City.¹⁰ They saved their money and were eventually able to start the first store in Mesquite around 1907. In the beginning, the store operated out of a large room in their house.¹¹ Hughes and his daughters performed the clerk duties. Eventually the family was able to build a nice brick store on their lot.¹²

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: James Elmer Hughes" in FamilySearch.

² "Family Group Record: James Elmer Hughes".

³ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: Sarah Ann Burgess" in FamilySearch. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Life Story of Sarah Ann Burgess Hughes" in FamilySearch.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

Hughes' tenure as Justice of the Peace was from 1909 to approximately 1911.¹³ It was during this time period that the Mesquite geographic area was transferred into newly formed Clark County from Lincoln County.¹⁴ A persistent problem in the community during that time period was the theft of watermelons and chickens by young men.¹⁵ When the young defendants ended up in court, Judge Hughes attempted to scare them straight, warning them that if it happened again: "by gad, I'll burn ya!"¹⁶ "The youth, however, were not bluffed because his bark was worse than his bite."¹⁷ Records suggest that consequences for theft at that time was a low fine or a day of work on the town road or the victim's fields.¹⁸

Hughes lived out his life in Mesquite working in the family store and serving his family and community.¹⁹ He passed away on August 4, 1928.²⁰

¹³ Nevada Administrative Office of the Courts, "Nevada Judicial History Database: James Hughes", Nevada Judiciary, Web, 3 Mar. 2016. Mesquite Justice Court, *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*, Mesquite, Nevada. 1904-1934. Handwritten.

¹⁴ Thurston, Dorothy Dawn Frehner, *A River and a Road*, 1994, 232. Print.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁸ *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*.

¹⁹ "The Life Story of Sarah Ann Burgess Hughes".

²⁰ *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current*. "Family Group Record: James Elmer Hughes".

In the Justice's Court of Mesquite Township
County of Lincoln State of Nebraska

No. 1

Walter W. Hughes Plaintiff

vs.
Eugene Barnum Frank Burgess
Earnest Leavitt Lyman Abbott
Clark Mc Knight Defendants

Action Criminal

Demand, \$5.00 each.

Arthur Bunker
Attorney for Plaintiff

Hyman Burgess
Attorney for Defendant

DATE	PROCEEDINGS
Feb. 13 1909	<p>Saturday Feb. 13, 1909 a complaint upon oath being made by Walter W. Hughes against Eugene Barnum, Frank Burgess, Earnest Leavitt, Lyman Abbott and Clark Mc Knight for willfully disturbing a school celebration in the town of Mesquite on the evening of Feb. 12, 1909. Summons was issued and prisoners were all in court at 10 o'clock A.M. Monday Feb. 15, 1909. Complaint was read prisoners put under oath and plead to the charge Eugene Barnum, Frank Burgess and Clark Mc Knight plead not guilty. Earnest Leavitt and Lyman Abbott plead guilty to the charge and were fined \$6.00 each after which Clark Mc Knight was released on account of there being no evidence to convict him after which Eugene Barnum and Frank Burgess changed their plea and plead guilty to the charge and were fined each \$6.00.</p> <p>The court adjourned. James Hughes Justice of Peace.</p>

George Hebron Bowler



(Photo Courtesy of Ancestry.com)

George Hebron Bowler was born on January 15, 1881 in Hebron, Utah (now a ghost town near Enterprise, Utah).¹ He was the son of James Samuel Page Bowler and Matilda Hill.² The couple immigrated to America from England in 1880.³ George was the only one of his parents' ten children that was born in America.⁴ The family was known as talented singers and they performed on occasion at public gatherings.⁵ Bowler developed a great passion for music at a young age.⁶ He took organ lessons at the age of 14 and learned to play well.⁷

Bowler married Nancy Elizabeth Holt in 1901.⁸ The couple lived for a time in the Gunlock, Utah area.⁹ Bowler obtained a teaching certificate and taught school in the same small school house he attended as a youngster.¹⁰ He also served a stint as Justice of the Peace in Gunlock.¹¹

In 1910 the Bowler family bought the Sylvester Ranch in Mesquite, which today is part of the Oasis golf course.¹² Bowler taught school for a number of years and shared his passion for choral and instrumental music with his children and students.¹³ He also farmed, worked as a principal at the school, served as a postmaster, worked on the railroad, and held various other jobs to provide for his family.¹⁴

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: George Hebron Bowler" in FamilySearch.

² Hebron, George & Holt, Nancy Elizabeth, *George Hebron and Nancy Elizabeth Holt Bowler Family Biography*, Compiled by Nancy Hughes Nelson, 9.

³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴ "Family Group Record: George Hebron Bowler".

⁵ *George Hebron and Nancy Elizabeth Holt Bowler Family Biography*, 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 37, 40.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹² *Ibid.*, 29., Las Vegas Sun, *Pioneer Educator Bowler Dies at 89, March 25, 2002*.

¹³ *George Hebron and Nancy Elizabeth Holt Bowler Family Biography*, 29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

Shortly after Bowler moved to Mesquite, he was elected to serve as Justice of the Peace. While the exact dates of Bowler's service are unclear, court records indicate that he served in the position from approximately 1912-18.¹⁵ An ongoing problem at the time was the nighttime theft of melons and chickens by youth looking for a free meal.¹⁶ When Bowler took the bench he took a hard line on the problem. The word quickly spread that any person found guilty of this type theft charge would be fined \$60.00 or spend thirty days in jail.¹⁷ Local historians note that after the announcement the number of parties declined and "the theft of melons and chickens became much more clandestine."¹⁸ Some of the other cases Bowler handled involved charges for assault, battery, petit larceny, disturbing the peace, animal trespassing, and disputes over water damage and irrigation.¹⁹

Bowler continued to serve the Mesquite community in various capacities after his service as Justice of the Peace ended. Later in his life, he was appointed to be the first chairman of the Juvenile Delinquent Committee in Mesquite and served in that position for three years.²⁰

Bowler passed away on May 7, 1962 and was laid to rest in the Mesquite cemetery.²¹

¹⁵ Mesquite Justice Court, *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*, Mesquite, Nevada. 1904-1934. Handwritten.

¹⁶ Thurston, Dorothy Dawn Frehner, *A River and a Road*, 1994, 188. Print. Leavitt, Vincent L., *Mesquite Flats: A History of Virgin Valley*, Cedar City, UT, ImagePro Printing & Copying, 2004, 127. Print.

¹⁷ Leavitt, 127. Hughes, Walter W., "Handwritten journal of Walter W. Hughes", History of Mesquite Binder, Virgin Valley Museum, Mesquite, Nevada.

¹⁸ Leavitt, 127. "Handwritten journal of Walter W. Hughes".

¹⁹ *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*.

²⁰ *George Hebron and Nancy Elizabeth Holt Bowler Family Biography*, 29.

²¹ *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current*. "Family Group Record: George Hebron Bowler".

In the Justice's Court of Mesquite
County of Clark State of Nevada

LOWISAMP

Action Criminal

State of Nevada Plaintiff

Demand, \$.

vs.
Abraham J. Woodbury
Ira Leavitt Defendants

Attorney for Plaintiff

Attorney for Defendant

Civil 8 F. 4247

PROCEEDINGS

DATE
1914
Jan. 26

A. Complaint upon Oath having been filed in the Justice's Court of Mesquite, by Edgar Leavitt Constable, to the effect that the above named defendants were guilty of Disturbing the Peace by quarreling and attempting to fight.

A Warrant for Arrest was issued directing the Constable to arrest said Defendants and bring them before me in "Court."

The above named Defendants appeared before me in the Justice's Court and upon hearing the Complaint read, pled "guilty" to the charge.

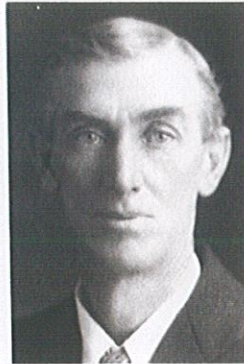
Said Defendants were there fore fined the sum of \$2.50 each, together with costs. The costs amounting to \$2.50 each the total fine was fixed at \$5.00.

In default of payment of said fine, said Defendants were granted the privilege of working said amount out upon the Public Roads of Mesquite.

Said work having been done, and approved of by the local Road Commissioner was receipted for and the receipt sent to the County Commissioners in lieu of said fine.

Geo. H. Bowler
J. P.

Stephen Augustus Waymire



(Photo Courtesy of Stephen Augustus Waymire family)

Stephen Augustus Waymire was born on May 18, 1875 in Illinois to David and Margaret Urmston Waymire.¹ Waymire enjoyed gathering nuts as a child and reportedly would walk over fences buried in snow on his way to school in the winter.² Waymire's family had a strong farming tradition.³ However, because of a lingering civil war injury suffered by his father, the family worked in the hotel business during Waymire's teenage years.⁴ Not much else is known of Waymire's childhood because he was a quiet child, but those that saw his handwriting acknowledged his beautiful penmanship.⁵

At the age of 20, Stephen moved from the Midwest to California to live on a farm with his uncle.⁶ He moved back to Illinois for a short time around 1895 to work on the family farm.⁷ It was at this time that Stephen met and courted Ada Maude Brissenden.⁸ The couple was engaged in about 1898 and eventually married after a long courtship in 1905.⁹ It was during this period that Waymire attended the Gem City Business College in Quincy Illinois.¹⁰ His tuition was \$85.¹¹ After finishing school, Waymire went into business running a hardware store back in California with his brother.¹² Ada left her friends and family and followed Stephen to California in 1905 where a wedding took place.¹³ The couple had 5 children while living in California.¹⁴ They enjoyed the

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: Stephen Augustus Waymire" in FamilySearch.

² Hills, Katherine Waymire, *Stephen Augustus Waymire and Ada Maude Brissenden*, Edited and Compiled by Donna Whitney Patten.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

temperate weather, the beach, fresh fruit, and having family in the area.¹⁵ Life changed for the Waymire family in 1917 when work opportunities started to slow down after the start of World War I.¹⁶

According to family records, it was during this time period when, “[A] man came into the store and said that he had just returned from a trip to Utah and had passed through a valley in southern Nevada where the alfalfa was knee high and that the farmers cut six crops a year.”¹⁷ Waymire became enthused and went to Mesquite to investigate.¹⁸ When he returned to his family, he announced that he had bought “twenty-three acres of the finest alfalfa land in the West.”¹⁹ Waymire’s friends thought he had lost his mind.²⁰ Nevertheless, the family picked up and moved to Mesquite where they hoped they might be self-sustaining should Waymire be drafted into to military service.²¹

Waymire raised chickens while living in California in a large 20x40 chicken house he constructed.²² Before departing for Mesquite, he deconstructed the chicken house and transported the materials to Mesquite, where it was reassembled as the family home.²³

Life in Mesquite was difficult for the Waymires and they undoubtedly missed the temperate California weather and the fertile soil of the Midwest, but the couple did much to contribute to their new pioneer community. Ada brought the first piano into the community.²⁴ When locals started to ask if she would help their children learn to play, Ada sent off for piano instruction books, began an earnest study of music and started teaching piano lessons.²⁵ She was paid with everything from flour to crocheted lace and embroidered pillow cases for lessons and the opportunity to practice on the Waymire piano.²⁶ Notably, a Waymire descendant continues to teach piano to children in the valley today.²⁷

Waymire was also quick to serve his new community. In 1919, Mesquite received recognition as an unincorporated town in Clark County, Nevada and Waymire was one of the three men appointed to Mesquite’s first advisory board.²⁸ Mesquite Justice Court

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Author’s Note: *Several of my children take piano lessons in Bunkerville from Jean Whipple, a descendent of Stephen and Ada Waymire.*

²⁸ Thurston, Dorothy Dawn Frehner, *A River and a Road*, 1994, 194. Print.

records also reflect his service as Justice of the Peace from 1919 to 1920.²⁹ Waymire presided over cases involving property damage, disputed amounts owed, and petit larceny as a result of “pilfered” cans of fruit.³⁰

It is unclear whether Waymire served more than one term as Justice of the Peace in Mesquite. However, we do know that the Waymire family left their little chicken coop house in 1924 and moved to Overton where Waymire found work with the school district.³¹ The family recorded that they looked back on their pioneer adventure in Mesquite with no regrets and believed that their lives were richer for the experience.³² The couple went on contributing to their new community in various ways including through music and construction.³³

Waymire passed away in Long Beach, California on March 16, 1942.³⁴

²⁹ Mesquite Justice Court, *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*, Mesquite, Nevada. 1904-1934. Handwritten.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Stephen Augustus Waymire and Ada Maude Brissenden*.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

No. 21
In the Justice's Court of Mesquite Township
County of Clark State of Nevada

State of Nevada
Harley Adams

Plaintiff

vs.
George Mitchell
John Stris

Defendant

Action Criminal

Demand, \$

Attorney for Plaintiff

Attorney for Defendant

DATE	PROCEEDINGS
1919 Aug 29	<p>On complaint sworn to by C. B. Adams of Bunkerville, Clark Co. Nevada, a warrant for arrest was issued for Geo. Mitchell alias John Doe and John Stris alias Richard Doe. The complaint was that the defendants had entered the house of Harley Adams of Bunkerville and did pilfer some jars of fruit and did disarrange the furniture and clothing that was stored in said house.</p> <p>Upon hearing the evidence, it was not sufficient in the mind of the court to hold John Stris, a lad of 12 yrs. so he was discharged.</p> <p>Geo. Mitchell acknowledged that he was in the house at the time he was accused i.e. about 3 o'clock P.M. on Aug 28, 1919 and did pilfer 1 jar of fruit.</p> <p>Therefore on his testimony and the testimony of other witnesses, he, was convicted of petit larceny and this court past sentence that he should pay a damage of \$5.00 to Harley Adams and a fine of \$10.00 and costs of court.</p> <p>Upon motion of Harley Adams the court remitted the fine and Adams the damage and the prisoner was allowed to go.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">S. A. Wayman J.P.</p>

Alfred Frehner



Alfred Frehner was born to Henry and Henrietta Reber Frehner on October 14, 1888 in a two room adobe home in Littlefield, Arizona.¹ Alfred learned the value of hard work on the family farm alongside his father.² He occasionally had opportunities for fun and enjoyed community events that were held on holidays and special occasions where races, wrestling, dancing, and picnics took place.³

Alfred worked hard and was able to acquire a herd of cattle, a piece of farming ground, and a little cash.⁴ He was anxious to marry his sweetheart Dorothy Ellen Abbott, but had to patiently wait until she turned 18.⁵ The couple was married on September 22, 1910 in Saint George, Utah and eventually had a family of six boys.⁶

In 1921, Alfred and his family moved to Mesquite where they continued to farm and ranch on property purchased from Dorothy's father, William E. Abbott.⁷ In addition to ranching and farming, Alfred served the community as Justice of the Peace for a period of time in the mid 1920s.⁸ Court records document one proceeding that took place before Frehner. In January of 1926, Frehner assessed a \$10 fine to a father that pleaded guilty to failing to send his son to school as required by Nevada's compulsory education law.⁹ The parent paid his fine and was allowed to go.¹⁰

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: Alfred Frehner" in FamilySearch. Larkin, Lana Kay Frehner, *Frehner, Anna Elizabeth Schoch Frehner, Henrich Frehner, Alfred Frehner, and Dorothy Ellen Abbott Frehner*, 1975, 43.

² *Frehner, Anna Elizabeth Schoch Frehner, Henrich Frehner, Alfred Frehner, and Dorothy Ellen Abbott Frehner*, 44.

³ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁸ Mesquite Justice Court, *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*, Mesquite, Nevada. 1904-1934. Handwritten.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Frehner farmed and ranched throughout his lifetime and it was a common sight for him to be seen riding a horse after a steer or driving a tractor.¹¹ Frehner also enjoyed spending time with his large posterity and loved to visit with his children and grandchildren.¹² He passed away on May 16, 1968 and was laid to rest in the Mesquite Cemetery.¹³

¹¹ *Frehner, Anna Elizabeth Schoch Frehner, Henrich Frehner, Alfred Frehner, and Dorothy Ellen Abbott Frehner*, 55.

¹² *Ibid.*, 56.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 56.

State of ^{Nev.} Nevada
 County of Clark
 J. M. Whiting
 Plaintiff
 vs.
 C. M. Hardy
 Defendant

State of Nevada
 Action Criminal
 Demand, \$
 Attorney for Plaintiff
 Attorney for Defendant

DATE 1916	PROCEEDINGS	\$10 00
Jan 26	<p>On Complaint sworn by J. M. Whiting of Bunkerville, Nev. a warrant for arrest was issued for one C. M. Hardy of Mesquite, Nev.</p> <p>The Complaint was of Violation of the Compulsory Education Law of Nev. by not having his son in attendance Lister Hardy.</p>	
January 27	<p>Now comes the Constable with said Defendant the Complaint was read. Said Defendant plead guilty and payed his fine of \$10.00 and was allowed to go.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">W. Fred Frohner J. P.</p>	

Richard Franklin Lowe



Richard Franklin Lowe was born October 20, 1881, in Austin, Sevier County, Utah.¹ He was the first child born to Richard Alvin and Charity Foreman Lowe.² He came from a large family with five brothers and six sisters.³ Throughout his life, he went by the name R. F. or Frank.⁴ In court records, he signed his name R.F. Lowe.⁵

Lowe married Lydia Orilla Yergensen on May 14, 1902 in Manti, Utah.⁶ They had seven children.⁷ During his early married life, Lowe was a jack-of-all-trades.⁸ He helped his father on the farm, where he raised large crops of sugar beets.⁹ He was also a bee keeper.¹⁰ Lowe attended teacher training school and secured a job teaching at a school.¹¹ According to family records, Lydia taught Lowe's students music, "because he couldn't carry a tune."¹² Lowe also worked as a builder, brick layer, and professional photographer.¹³ According to his family he had a box type Kodak camera with the front piece that looked like an accordion. Lowe enjoyed developing his own pictures.¹⁴

Lowe had a strong interest in local and national politics.¹⁵ Court records indicate that he served as the Mesquite Justice of the Peace from approximately 1927 to 1932.¹⁶ The detailed court records kept during this term indicate that Lowe was well versed in civil and criminal procedure and was committed to excellence in his service at the

¹ Yeakel, Irene Leavitt, *Fond Memories Of Grandparents*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: Richard Franklin Lowe" in FamilySearch.

² *Fond Memories of Grandparents*.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Mesquite Justice Court, *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*, Mesquite, Nevada. 1904-1934. Handwritten.

⁶ *Fond Memories of Grandparents*.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*.

court.¹⁷ Indicative of this commitment were the legal correspondence courses Lowe completed with the University of Chicago.¹⁸

Some of the matters that came before the court during this time included disputes over property damage from livestock, irrigation issues, unlawful killing of livestock, the drawing of deadly weapons, reckless driving, and chicken theft.¹⁹ On one occasion, Lowe presided over a case where an individual filed a complaint against himself for theft of chickens.²⁰ The court records indicate that the man acknowledged the theft and wanted to make things right.²¹ Lowe sentenced the man to pay a fine and fees of \$12.50 or to serve six days in jail if he failed to pay the fine.²²

In addition to serving as Justice of the Peace, Lowe served as the local coroner and presided over several coroner inquiries.²³

One of Lowe's favorite ways to escape the hot summers in Mesquite was to vacation at Fish Lake in central Utah.²⁴ Lowe loved to spend hours trolling for fish using lures he had made himself.²⁵ According to his family, he often would can the fish he caught if he couldn't eat them all, "not to waste any."²⁶

Lowe passed away in July 15, 1951 and was laid to rest in Monroe, Utah.²⁷

¹⁷ *Fond Memories Of Grandparents.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Fond Memories of Grandparents.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.* "Family Group Record: Richard Franklin Lowe".

In the Justice's Court of Mesquite Township
 County of Clark State of Nevada

Ben Knight

Plaintiff

vs.

Ben Knight

Defendant

Action

Demand, \$

Attorney for Plaintiff

Self
 Attorney for Defendant

DATE

PROCEEDINGS

Oct 3, 1928
Nov.

Ben Knight of Mesquite Nevada
appeared before me, R. H. Low Justice
of the Peace of Mesquite, complained upon
himself and said that he went and
took two chickens from the premises of
Thomas Abbott and that the Court fine
him without trial.

The time for passing sentence upon
Ben Knight was set for 12 noon
the 4th of November 1928

The Court fined the above named defendant
ten dollars and is to pay \$2.50 for the property
taken which totals the amount to be paid
at \$12.50. The same to be paid to the
justice not later than the 13th day
of Nov 1928 or serve six days in
the County jail.

William Elias Abbott



William Elias Abbott was born on October 16, 1869 in Ogden Utah.¹ His parents were Myron Abbott and Laura Josephine Allen.² Abbott had a large family, with four brothers and three sisters.³ When he was 8 years old, his family was among the first sent by Brigham Young to settle the Virgin Valley, arriving in a cart pulled by oxen.⁴

In 1890 Abbott married Mary Jane Leavitt in St. George Utah.⁵ Mary was the daughter of Dudley Leavitt and Mary Huntsman Leavitt.⁶ She arrived in the Virgin Valley at the age of four. According to family records, the Abbotts and Leavitts were well acquainted and Mary and Abbott grew up together in the small community.⁷ After Abbott grew to be a man, he came upon an opportunity to help Mary's father pull a loaded wagon over a difficult stretch of sandy road.⁸ Abbott agreed to help Leavitt if he gave him permission to court Mary Jane.⁹ A deal was made and the couple eventually married and had thirteen children.¹⁰

The couple was involved in all facets of the community. One cannot mention Abbott's service without mentioning the work of his wife Mary Jane. Accounts indicate that she epitomized the phrase "charity never faileth" and stood ready to help anyone in need.¹¹ A statue of the Abbotts stands in front of the Mesquite City Hall. A plaque memorializing Mary Jane's service below the statue states: "Her satchel, filled to the

¹ *History of Southern Nevada Linked With Life of LDS Leader W.E. Abbott*, Reno Evening Gazette, 24, February 24, 1949. Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: William Elias Abbott" in FamilySearch.

² *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current*.

³ "Family Group Record: William Elias Abbott".

⁴ *History of Southern Nevada Linked With Life of LDS Leader W.E. Abbott*.

⁵ "Family Group Record: William Elias Abbott".

⁶ *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: Mary Jane Leavitt" in FamilySearch.

⁷ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: Mary Jane Leavitt" in FamilySearch. "*Mary Jane Leavitt Abbott – By Dennis R Reber*".

⁸ "*Mary Jane Leavitt Abbott – By Dennis R Reber*".

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

brim with mustard plasters, castor oil, chaparral tea, and other supplies, sat by her door ready for any emergency. She delivered babies, cared for the sick, and brought hope to the disheartened, when a crisis occurred, the cry 'Get Aunt Mary Jane,' ricocheted across the Valley and any call for help stirred her to action."¹²

Abbott likewise provided a lifetime of service and was involved in virtually all aspects of the community. One local historian commented that "[n]othing took place without his input. Besides being a Mormon bishop and a member of the town board, he was chairman of the telephone committee, on the board of directors of the grape farm (the largest agricultural enterprise in the area), championed the road building cause, marked out the road across the country between Las Vegas and Littlefield, was a delegate from Clark County to the first International Irrigation Congress held in Salt Lake City, was himself a successful farmer, ran a motel and cafe, served for approximately 15 years as Mesquite's Justice of the Peace, and even took time out to be the local dentist."¹³

The bulk of Abbott's years as Justice of the Peace in Mesquite were in the 1930s.¹⁴ However, it is interesting to note that Abbott served many years earlier as the Justice of the Peace for the nearby Bunkerville Township from 1898 to 1901 before he moved to Mesquite.¹⁵ Abbott presided over numerous civil and criminal cases. Among the criminal cases recorded was a 1933 case that alleged that a defendant committed assault with a deadly weapon as a result of the victim being struck with board over the head.¹⁶ The Defendant entered a not guilty plea and a trial was scheduled for the next day.¹⁷ After weighing the evidence, including the testimony of an eye witness, Abbott concluded that the state had proven its case, but noted that "both parties were to blame."¹⁸ The Defendant was fined the costs of the court, which totaled \$6.00.¹⁹

Abbott "frequently was called to Las Vegas to preside in cases where the local justices had disqualified themselves or to fill in when they were absent on vacation or trips. He became widely known among Las Vegas attorneys and judges during this period of his service."²⁰ "He gave great attention to performing of marriage ceremonies when on duty in Las Vegas and combined with the civil ceremony some of the religious interest which predominated his life. Couples he married were impressed with the seriousness of the obligation which they took when he performed the rites."²¹

Abbott passed away on February 19, 1949 in Mesquite, Nevada at the age of 79.²²

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Thurston, Dorothy Dawn Frehner, *A River and a Road*, 1994, 194-95. Print.

¹⁴ Mesquite Justice Court, *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*, Mesquite, Nevada. 1904-1934. Handwritten.

¹⁵ *History of Southern Nevada Linked With Life of LDS Leader W.E. Abbott*.

¹⁶ *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *History of Southern Nevada Linked With Life of LDS Leader W.E. Abbott*.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

In the Justice's Court of Musquit Township
County of Clark State of Woods.

Deputy Sheriff
Al Hardy
Plaintiff
vs.
Marion Ezra Lewis
Defendant

Action: Criminal
Demand, \$ _____
Attorney for Plaintiff _____
Attorney for Defendant _____

DATE 1934	PROCEEDINGS
	<p>On the night of January 20th 1934 one Marion Ezra Lewis was arrested without a warrant and lodged in jail a complaint criminal was filed against him personally appeared before me this 22nd day of January 1934 Al Hardy of Musquit County, State of Woods who first being duly sworn complaining & says: That with his knowledge & information of being that on the night of January 20th 1934 one Marion Ezra Lewis of Mohave County Arizona did on the night of 20th of January A.D. 1934 on premises and before the filing of this complaint at and within the County of Clark State of Woods. Did while at a house in Musquit County of Clark State of Woods. Use vulgar language and call upon officers to arrest him. He the defendant refused to accept restraint and later resisted being arrested and after being arrested broke away and ran for some distance and was followed by officers and deputies all of which is contrary to the laws and effect of the statutes in such cases made and provided and against the peace and dignity of the State of Woods. Wherefore Complainant demands that the said Marion Ezra Lewis be dealt with according to law.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Al Hardy Subscribed and sworn to before me this 22nd day of January 1934 Wm E. O'Brien Justice of Peace</p>

HISTORY OF SOUTHERN NEVADA LINKED WITH LIFE OF LDS LEADER W. E. ABBOTT

Funeral Rites Conducted in Mesquite For 'Founding Father of Virgin Valley'

LAS VEGAS, Feb. 24.—William E. Abbott, 79, patriarch of the church of Latter Day Saints and the "founding father of Virgin Valley" was buried at the Mesquite cemetery Wednesday following funeral rites which were attended by residents and church leaders from throughout Nevada and Utah.

The pioneer valley resident died at his Mesquite home late Saturday following an illness of more than three months.

George F. Whitehead of St. George, Utah, president of the St. George LDS stake, and Bryan L. Bunker of Las Vegas, president of the Mesquite stake were principal speakers at final rites.

Abbott was born Oct. 16, 1869 at Ogden, Utah. At the age of eight years, he traveled with his father and brothers in ox-team wagons into Virgin Valley as part of the colony sent south to that area by Brigham Young.

Even as a small child he helped reclaim the land which was to become one of the most productive agricultural areas of southern Nevada. He helped fight the Virgin river on its annual rampages, which wiped out the dams and irrigation canals, on which the farmers were entirely dependent to produce their crops.

His sons recall, that he "wore out his body in the constant struggle against the river," working sometimes in water to his armpits to build brush and rock dams. He patrolled the river by lantern light in times of flood, supervising workers and looking for weak joints where the rushing water would get out of control.

He was married on March 20, 1890, in the LDS temple in St. George, to Mary J. Leavitt, who survives him. To them were born 23 children, of whom nine survive. He also had 60 grandchildren and 65 great-grandchildren.

He successfully filled two missions for the LDS church, the first of which was for two years in Illinois from 1895 to 1898, and the second for six months in California in 1930.

He held a deep interest in spiritual work, which was recognized by church leaders, and in 1901 he was called to preside as bishop of Mesquite, a position he filled for 27 years. He was ordained in 1935 as a patriarch of the church. He also served as a high councilman for many years, and extended his advice and help to any who requested it, it was recalled today by old-time friends. He had devoted half a century to active work for the LDS church.

Practically a self-educated man, Abbott had become one of the best authorities on the Scriptures and could quote them accurately. He was a great student of the prophecies in the Old Testament and interpreted them in the light of contemporary history, it was

recalled today by Mr. Bunker, who had worked with him in the LDS church and termed him "a true patriarch of the church."

He was one of the most successful of the Virgin Valley farmers and underwent many hardships in carving out a farm from the mesquite-covered terrain and struggling against the vagaries of the Virgin river for irrigation.

He pioneered with other Mesquite farmers in a seedless grape vineyard and won the first prize for seedless grapes at the 1915 world's fair in San Francisco. The grapes were dried and packed into 25 and 50-pound boxes and were hauled by wagon teams into southern Utah to be traded for potatoes and merchandise from stores which were available in the valley.

However, a blight attacked the vineyards, and the farmers were unable to save the plants. Modern machinery was adopted in other areas, which was too expensive for the southern Nevada farmers. With these two factors against them, the farmers saw the grape production drop off and fail to become a major industry as they had dreamed.

Abbott's home in Mesquite provided the only hotel accommodations in the town for many years. St. George was the head of the LDS stake for all of southern Nevada, and those traveling from Clark county to St. George on church affairs made the Abbott home a stopping place. It was a long trip by wagon, and often the travelers would stay for several days en route to and from St. George. In this way he developed a close friendship with most of the people of the entire southern Nevada-southern Utah area who are affiliated with the LDS church. In later years, when travel by automobile shortened the trip, his friends seldom failed to stop for a short visit as they traversed the area.

One of the early-day enterprises of Abbott was carrying mail by horseback from St. George to Eldorado Canyon, Nevada and White Hills and Chloride, Ariz. He crossed the Colorado river at Bonelli's ferry.

It was Abbott who laid out the route between Mesquite and St. George, Utah, which now is the paved highway 91 between the two points. Although having no engineering training, his practical experience had qualified him to

select the most likely route for the highway, his sons recall.

Along with other accomplishments, Abbott served as the only "dentist" in Mesquite, and he was called upon frequently to extract a tooth for an ailing neighbor who could not make the trip to Las Vegas or St. George for the extractions.

His family recalls that his methods were not the most highly developed, and his "patients" underwent considerable pain in the process, but he always managed to extract the tooth. Without any "pain killer," he went to work on the patient, who usually had to be held in the chair by a couple of friends.

All of his "dentistry" work was done gratis and as a "public service to his ailing neighbors."

Abbott's interests and talents ran the gamut of community life. He helped establish the school system in Virgin Valley, serving for many years on the school board. He worked on the irrigation system and canals, both manually and in planning and financing the system.

He served as justice of the peace in Bunkerville from 1898 to 1901, when he moved to Mesquite to remain for the rest of his life. For 15 years he was justice of the peace in Mesquite, completing his last term in 1938. He frequently was called to Las Vegas to preside in cases where the local justices had disqualified themselves or to fill in when they were absent on vacation or trips. He became widely known among Las Vegas attorneys and judges during this period of his service.

He gave great attention to performing of marriage ceremonies when on duty in Las Vegas and combined with the civil ceremony some of the religious interest which predominated his life. Couples he married were impressed with the seriousness of the obligation which they took when he performed the rites.

Abbott had been a patient at the Las Vegas hospital for two months recently. He had returned to his home in Mesquite two weeks ago and died quietly in his sleep Saturday afternoon.

Survivors include his widow, Mrs. Mary J. Abbott of Mesquite; three daughters, Mrs. John Jensen, Mrs. Alfred Frehner, and Mrs. Elmer Hughes of Mesquite; and six sons, Deputy Sheriff Oscar Abbott, Orval Abbott and Deloy Abbott, all of Mesquite, Anthon Abbott and Claude Abbott of Las Vegas, and Alan Abbott of San Francisco, all of whom are active in church work in their communities.

His six sons served as pallbearers at the services in Mesquite Wednesday.

More than 800,000 fires break out in the United States each year.

Stephen “Oscar” Abbott



Stephen “Oscar” Abbott was born to William E. Abbott and Mary Jane Leavitt on December 28, 1901 in Bunkerville, Nevada.¹ He was the sixth of their thirteen children. Oscar grew up in the Virgin Valley. His father was the bishop of the Mesquite Ward for the first 28 years of Abbott’s life and saw to it that there was no escape from attending church every Sunday.² His future wife, Mary Hughes, was one of Abbott’s playmates growing up.³ They attended school, dances, and other events together.⁴ They eventually fell in love and were married on May 31, 1921.⁵ The couple had five children, three daughters and two sons.⁶

One of Abbott’s first experiences with the legal system took place shortly after he married and bought twenty acres of land to farm with his father’s assistance. On several occasions the water ditch near Abbott’s property broke, damaging his crops.⁷ After the seventh water break, Abbott decided to file a lawsuit against the water ditch company.⁸ Abbott hired an attorney, prepared for trial, and was able to prove his case.⁹ “[T]he judge ruled that the water ditch company was accountable for their ditch and their water and ordered them to pay [Abbott] \$375 for the damage to [his] crops.”¹⁰

Abbott had a number of jobs before settling into a career in law enforcement. In addition to farming, he worked as a janitor, he drove a school bus, he worked on a government survey, and he worked on the county road department.¹¹ Abbott was

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Family Group Record: Stephen Oscar Abbott” in FamilySearch. Abbott, Stephen Oscar, “*Old Eagle Eye*”, iii.

² “*Old Eagle Eye*”, 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶ “Family Group Record: Stephen Oscar Abbott”.

⁷ “*Old Eagle Eye*”, 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 16-18.

elected to serve as the Justice of the Peace from 1939-1940.¹² According to his autobiography, he spent most of his term in office performing marriages and running the Justice Court.¹³ Like his father, William E. Abbott, he was sometimes invited to Las Vegas to assist their court.¹⁴

Shortly after completing his term as Justice of the Peace, Abbott started a long career in law enforcement as a Deputy Sheriff.¹⁵ He worked in Las Vegas for the Sheriff for about ten years.¹⁶ During that time he also worked as bouncer at several casinos and as a security guard at several businesses.¹⁷ The family also operated a small café and skating rink in North Las Vegas.¹⁸ After a decade in Las Vegas, the town boards of Mesquite and Bunkerville requested that Abbott be assigned as a full time deputy to serve their communities.¹⁹

Abbott had an uncanny ability to locate stolen cars and he apprehended a number of high profile criminals. As a result, he was given the nickname “Old Eagle Eye”.²⁰ Abbott was frequently the only law enforcement officer in the northeast area of Clark County and on occasion found his life in danger while investigating criminal activity.²¹ Abbott credited his wife, Mary, for his success. “[N]ight after night, my little wife stood by the two-way radio, taking the calls and then relaying them on to me. Many a criminal would not have been captured if it had not been for her. She did this without receiving one penny for it.”²²

According to FBI records, Abbott recovered more stolen cars than any other officer in the nation during his years of service.²³ He received numerous commendations during his career as a lawman. He received awards from J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, the Nevada Peace Officer’s Association (“Outstanding Nevada Officer” 1962-63), and the Las Vegas Police Department.²⁴

Abbott passed away on November 18, 1987 in Mesquite, Nevada.²⁵

¹² Reno Evening Gazette, “Many New Faces to Be Seen In County Court Houses in State When Officials Change Jan. 2”, December 10, 1938. “*Old Eagle Eye*”, 18.

¹³ “*Old Eagle Eye*”, 18.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²¹ Robinson, Jim, Deseret News, “Scanning The State For a Car Thief? Nevada Deputy’s Nabbed Thousands”. “*Old Eagle Eye*”.

²² “*Old Eagle Eye*”, not numbered.

²³ *Ibid.*, not numbered.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, not numbered.

²⁵ U.S., *Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current*. “Family Group Record: Stephen Oscar Abbott”.

Leo Milton “Jack” Hardy



Leo Milton “Jack” Hardy was born on March 16, 1895 in Bunkerville, Nevada to Charles Milton Hardy and Emma Lorena Leavitt.¹ According to his autobiography, he was the first child born in the area to the group of white settlers when the permanent settlement was started.² Hardy had seven siblings.³ The family worked very hard to survive and make a living in the valley. As with other pioneer families, they had to be largely self-sufficient. They raised their own garden and livestock.⁴ When the chores were done, Hardy enjoyed playing games with his friends (run sheep run, jump rope, steal sticks, mumblety-peg, jacks with rocks for marbles, and hopscotch), singing, and building bonfires.⁵ Family records indicate that he would attend church if his dad could catch him.⁶ Hardy also enjoyed community dances as he grew older.⁷

Hardy married Carmelia Barnum on December 5, 1917 in Salt Lake City, Utah.⁸ Not long after the couple wed, Jack was called to serve in the Army during World War I and rose to the rank of corporal.⁹ He returned home to his wife and the Virgin Valley as soon as he could after the Armistice was signed ending the war.¹⁰

Hardy enjoyed the outdoors and worked as a rancher, trapper, and miner.¹¹ He especially enjoyed working with horses throughout his life.¹² Hardy built and ran a Shell

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Family Group Record: Leo Milton Hardy” in FamilySearch.

² Hardy, Leo Milton, “Leo Milton Hardy”, 1.

³ “Family Group Record: Leo Milton Hardy”.

⁴ “Leo Milton Hardy”, 2-3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7-12, 21, 24.

¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

gas station called Jack's One Stop.¹³ He enjoyed his customers and would tell them, "if you stop once and I don't get you again, it's my fault."¹⁴

No definitive documentation has been located regarding Hardy's dates of service as the Mesquite Justice of the Peace. However, multiple sources indicate that he served in the position during the 1940s. Newspaper articles in 1940, 1944, and 1946 indicate that he was a candidate for the judicial office. Longtime Mesquite resident, Howard Pulsipher also stated that Hardy served the community as Justice of the Peace in correspondence that is archived at the Virgin Valley Heritage Museum.¹⁵

After Hardy's first wife passed away, he married Martha Vilate Hughes in 1978.¹⁶ Hardy loved the Virgin Valley area. In his autobiography he told his family, "I think this is the best valley and the best climate to live in that you can find."¹⁷ He passed away on December 19, 1991 in St. George, Utah and was laid to rest in the Mesquite cemetery.¹⁸

¹³ Ibid., 26.

¹⁴ Ibid., 27.

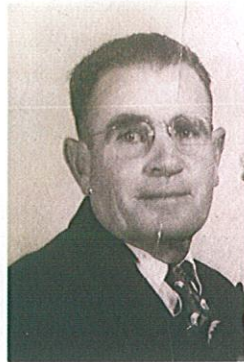
¹⁵ Leavitt, Vincent L., *Mesquite Flats: A History of Virgin Valley*, Cedar City, UT, ImagePro Printing & Copying, 2004, 127. Print.

¹⁶ "Leo Milton Hardy", 33.

¹⁷ Ibid., Title Page.

¹⁸ U.S., *Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current*. "Family Group Record: Leo Milton Hardy".

William “Lamond” Hughes



William Lamond Hughes was born on August 9, 1897 in Bunkerville to William Burgess Hughes and Mary Ann Burgess.¹ Hughes was raised in the Virgin Valley. After dating his future bride for several years, Hughes married Lenna Grace Bowler on October 13, 1919.² Notably, Lenna’s father, George Hebron Bowler, served as Justice of the Peace for a number of years.³ The couple’s first residence in the Mesquite area was a large tent.⁴ For the majority of his life, Hughes supported his family by farming and ranching.⁵ The couple had 10 children.⁶

While exact dates are unknown, family and newspaper records indicate that Hughes served as Justice of the Peace in the 1940s and 50s.⁷ According to his family, Hughes was affectionately called the “little judge” because he was small in stature.⁸ Although not a large man, he was considered wise in office.⁹ Hughes was known as one who would not play favorites, even for his family.¹⁰ “If a wrong was committed, the person had to make it right.”¹¹ An example of one of the cases that Hughes presided over in 1955 involved two men who unlawfully shot a chicken from their vehicle, stole

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Family Group Record: William Lamond Hughes” in FamilySearch.

² *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current*. “Family Group Record: William Lamond Hughes”.

³ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Family Group Record: Lenna Grace Bowler” in FamilySearch.

Mesquite Justice Court, *Mesquite Justice Court Records 1904-1934*, Mesquite, Nevada. 1904-1934, Handwritten.

⁴ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Lenna Grace Bowler”, Life Sketch in FamilySearch.

⁵ “Lenna Grace Bowler”, 48-49.

⁶ “Family Group Record: William Lamond Hughes”.

⁷ Leavitt, Vincent L., *Mesquite Flats: A History of Virgin Valley*, Cedar City, UT, ImagePro Printing & Copying, 2004, 127. Print. Jones, Nancy, “Memories of William Lamond Hughes”, 2016, Handwritten. Reno Evening Gazette, “Two Las Vegas Boys in Trouble”, March 28, 1950.

⁸ “Memories of William Lamond Hughes”.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

the dead chicken, and then fled through a police blockade.¹² Law enforcement eventually apprehended the pair. Hughes sentenced each of the men to 30 days in jail.¹³

Hughes' family recalls that Court was held in their family home.¹⁴ If a case was to be tried and Hughes felt that he knew the defendants too well, he would recuse himself from the matter and an out of town judge was called in to handle the case.¹⁵ Even in those cases, the trial would take place at the Hughes' residence.¹⁶ In addition to presiding over criminal and civil matter, Hughes' family recalls that he performed many marriages, often for couples from out of town.¹⁷ Hughes' monthly pay was \$25 per month for his work at the court.¹⁸

Hughes passed away on May 21, 1957 in Mesquite.¹⁹

¹² "Two Las Vegas Boys in Trouble".

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "Memories of William Lamond Hughes".

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Lenna Grace Bowler". *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current*. "Family Group Record: William Lamond Hughes".

Two Las Vegas Boys in Trouble

Shoot Chicken, Land in Jail

LAS VEGAS, March 28.—Two Las Vegas youths were sentenced to jail today for a 30-day term each by Mesquite Justice of Peace Lamond Hughes and appeared to have more trouble in store for them.

The youths are John Ledgere, 20 and Glenn Leavitt, 21, who were chased all the way up to Castle Cliffs in southern Utah by Deputy Sheriff Oscar Abbott after they shot a chicken from their car in Bunkerville and then ran through Abbott's blockade.

After they were apprehended, they were charged with operating a car without the correct license plate, discharging firearms in Bunkerville and stealing the chicken which they stopped to retrieve after shooting it.

Deputies found several cases of beer in their car and said the same amount was stolen the night before from a local store. City police are investigating to determine if they are implicated in the burglary.

They apparently were not connected with another charge, reported by a hitch-hiker on highway 91 Friday morning. The man, George Fry of Hawthorne, California, said a pair of young fellows drove by him near the air base, and one of them threw a beer bottle at him from the moving car. Fry threw his hands up before his face, and the bottle broke on one wrist, breaking and cutting him seriously, the report said.

Fry, however, was unable to positively identify Ledgere and Leavitt as the youths in the moving car.

(Reno Evening Gazette)

Phillip Alma Abbott



(Photo courtesy of Ancestry.com)

Phillip Alma Abbott was born August 3, 1916 in Delta, Utah to Edward Lawrence and Josephine Bennett Abbott.¹ Some of Abbott's favorite activities in his youth were hunting, looking for wild horses, singing, swimming, and boxing.² According to his family, he was quite strong and won most of his boxing matches.³ He attended college at Brigham Young University and San Mateo College.⁴

Abbott married Laurleen Peterson on August 7, 1939.⁵ The couple had four children.⁶ They lived in Delta, Utah for a year before moving to San Mateo, California.⁷ While in California, Abbott enjoyed working on the Berkeley Police Force and at the Berkeley Juvenile Department.⁸ Tragedy struck the family in 1946 when Laurleen passed away in 1946 due to complications during childbirth.⁹

Abbott remarried Thelma McKnight Abbott, a widow with three children, in 1947 and settled in Mesquite, Nevada.¹⁰ The large family worked together to operate a motel in the community (the first in the area to have a swimming pool).¹¹ Abbott was actively involved in the Mesquite community over the next decade and was known to be honest and trustworthy in all of his business dealings.¹² He was elected by the community as

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: Phillip Alma Abbott" in FamilySearch.

² The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Phillip Alma Abbott", Autobiography in FamilySearch. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Phillip Alma Abbott (Short Story)", in FamilySearch.

³ "Phillip Alma Abbott (Short Story)".

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Leavitt, 210. "Phillip Alma Abbott (Short Story)".

¹² "Phillip Alma Abbott (Short Story)".

Justice of the Peace in 1956.¹³ He resigned the position in 1957 so that he could take a job working for New York Life Insurance.¹⁴ The family sold the motel in Mesquite and moved to Las Vegas.¹⁵

Abbott did well in the insurance business in Las Vegas, receiving many awards and serving in many leadership positions during his career.¹⁶ He passed away on May 20, 1985 and was buried in Delta, Utah.¹⁷

¹³ Reno Evening Gazette, "124 Seek Offices in Clark County", July 17, 1956 (Abbott ran unopposed in the election). Nevada State Archives, Email from Elizabeth C. Moore, September 8, 2015.

¹⁴ Reno Evening Gazette, "Board to Fill Township Post", September 7, 1957. "Phillip Alma Abbott (Short Story)". Las Vegas Review Journal, Obituary of Cindy Abbott, Accessed 10/1/2015 (Abbott's daughter's obituary indicates that one of the reasons the family moved to Las Vegas was so she could attend "Variety School, a special school for developmentally disabled children.")

¹⁵ "Phillip Alma Abbott (Short Story)".

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ U.S., *Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current*. "Family Group Record: Phillip Alma Abbott".

and 31 kindergarten children.

Board to Fill Township Post

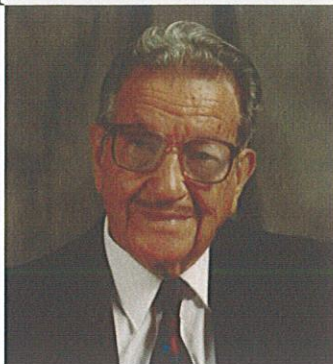
LAS VEGAS—Members of the board of county commissioners are expected to fill the vacancy in the post of justice of peace in Mesquite township today.

The post has been vacant since Phillip Abbott resigned last Spring when he moved to Las Vegas. Two prospects for the post are Norman Snoreen and Deloy Abbott, but neither are reported as active candidates for the post because of the low salary and comparatively few chances to perform marriage ceremonies.

Las Vegas Justice of Peace Art Olsen told board members that he would probably be able to use a qualified justice here about once a week. That proposal may make the Mesquite post more inviting.

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Joseph LeGrand “JL” Bowler



(Photo Courtesy of Bowler Family)

Joseph LeGrand “JL” Bowler was born January 23, 1909 in Gunlock, Utah to Francis Joseph & Annie Parthenia Holt Bowler.¹ Bowler’s early life was spent in the Gunlock community.² He enjoyed going to school and was active in speech and drama.³ In addition to completing his school studies, he worked during his seventh and eighth grade school years as the school janitor.⁴ He received \$6.00 per month for his work.⁵

Bowler was the Valedictorian of his Dixie High School graduating class and he attended Dixie College where he served as the student body president.⁶ During college Bowler was active in speech, debate, and drama.⁷ He had plans to pursue higher education, but returned to Gunlock because of health problems.⁸

In Gunlock, Bowler worked as the local postmaster and started a small store.⁹ On June 20, 1940 he married LaBerta Woodbury in St. George, UT.¹⁰ In 1946, the couple moved their family to Mesquite, Nevada where they operated the JL Bowler Department Store.¹¹ One of Bowler’s most frequently requested food items was cheese.¹² Many make the trip to Mesquite over the years to purchase “Bowler cheese”.¹³

In addition to operating the JL Bowler Department Store for the next four decades, Bowler was very active in the community.¹⁴ Among other activities, he was

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Family Group Record: Joseph LeGrand Bowler” in FamilySearch.

² Hafen, Gary Bowler, *The Francis Joseph Bowler and Annie P. Holt Family*, “Autobiography of J.L. Bowler, Mesquite, Nevada”, 1971, 87.

³ “Autobiography of J.L. Bowler, Mesquite, Nevada”, 87.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹² The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Obituary for Joseph LeGrande “JL” Bowler”, in FamilySearch.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

involved with the chamber of commerce, the town board, and the water board.¹⁵ He also volunteered as a fireman and served as scout master, and local coroner.¹⁶

In 1957 the Mesquite Justice of the Peace position became vacant when Phillip Abbott resigned his office and moved to Las Vegas.¹⁷ Bowler was approached by the Clark County Commission as a candidate to complete Abbott's term due in part to Bowler's previous service as a grand jury member in Clark County.¹⁸ Bowler was very hesitant to accept the appointment.¹⁹ He initially told the commissioner "you couldn't run fast enough to give me that job."²⁰ In private conversation, LaBerta told her husband, "I think we'd make more enemies than anything else and it'd be bad for business."²¹ The couple mulled it over for several days and Bowler finally agreed to accept the appointment.²²

Bowler received judicial training from Las Vegas Justice of the Peace Art Olson.²³ Bowler carefully listened to the instruction on civil and criminal procedure and reviewed his training materials.²⁴ After a few days of training, Bowler presided over his first court session in Las Vegas.²⁵ After the session, one of the court staff members asked him where he had been serving as a judge.²⁶ Bowler responded that the court hearing that had just concluded was his first experience.²⁷ The staff member commented that she couldn't believe it.²⁸ Credited Judge Olson's training, Bowler replied, "Well, I just followed the book and was very careful."²⁹ The staff member continued to compliment him, remarking, "You acted like a judge that had been in court for some time."³⁰

Bowler found the work in the courts interesting and ran for Justice of the Peace in Mesquite when the next election arrived.³¹ He went on to serve in the position for six years.³² During that time period, Bowler handled a variety of cases and was often invited to fill in for the judges in Las Vegas Justice Court.³³ One of the assignments Bowler was frequently given when called to help in Las Vegas was the assignment of performing wedding ceremonies.³⁴ During the 1950s marriage ceremonies made the Las Vegas Justice Court one of the busiest courts world.³⁵ On a normal day in Las Vegas, Bowler performed 20 marriages. On an unusually busy day, he performed 86

¹⁵ Obituary for Joseph LeGrande "JL" Bowler".

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 94, 97.

¹⁷ Reno Evening Gazette, "Board to Fill Township Post", September 7, 1957.

¹⁸ "Autobiography of J.L. Bowler, Mesquite, Nevada", 96.

¹⁹ Bowler, J.L., Interview by Family, Date Unknown.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.* Las Vegas Review Journal, "J.P. School", November 23, 1957.

²⁴ Bowler, J.L., Interview by Family.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ "Autobiography of J.L. Bowler, Mesquite, Nevada", 98.

³² *Ibid.*, 98.

³³ *Ibid.*, 98.

³⁴ Buchmiller, Golden, Deseret News, "20 Hitches A Day", September 5, 1963.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

weddings!³⁶ One of Bowler's best known wedding ceremonies involved the late actor James Coburn who at the age of 83 surprised the public by flying to Las Vegas and marrying 41-year-old Winifred Natzka.³⁷ Other notable weddings involved Eva Gabor and Russ Tamblyn.³⁸

Bowler handled a variety of criminal and civil matters. His common sense was evident in one case involving a husband with a gambling problem.³⁹ The man's wife described him as a good person, but explained that every time he got a paycheck, he would gamble the money away before he got home.⁴⁰ To assist in resolving the problem, Bowler made a ruling that the paycheck had to have both the husband and wife's signatures before it could be cashed and he ensured that the employer was notified of the requirement.⁴¹ Among Bowler's memorable preliminary hearings in Las Vegas was a burglary case where night club singer Pearl Bailey provided testimony about her stolen jewelry.⁴²

Bowler's three terms on the bench prompted him to pursue the dream of becoming a lawyer.⁴³ He felt that the county had a need for strong, conscientious attorneys.⁴⁴ In 1963, Bowler moved to Salt Lake City and enrolled in the University of Utah. Bowler described his schooling as "difficult, challenging, and rewarding."⁴⁵ While he desired to complete his coursework and receive his legal degree, he was unable to find someone to buy his property in Mesquite.⁴⁶ The family returned home to Mesquite where Bowler continued to operate his store and serve the community.⁴⁷ In his autobiography, Bowler stated "I still dream that favorable conditions, the good Lord willing, might come about allowing me to return to the pursuit of my law degree – that my scope of service to my fellow men might find new horizons, but until that time I shall do my best where I am to give comfort and aid to my fellow man."⁴⁸

Bowler had a large family and enjoyed his posterity.⁴⁹ After his first marriage ended in divorce, Bowler married Sildona Jenson Easton in 1975.⁵⁰ She passed away in 1989.⁵¹ In 1990 he married Anna Scow Hardy in Mesquite.⁵²

Bowler was honored for his many years of service in the valley when a new elementary school in Bunkerville was given the name "JL Bowler Elementary School".⁵³ Bowler passed away on October 4, 2004 and was laid to rest in Mesquite, Nevada.⁵⁴

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ "Autobiography of J.L. Bowler, Mesquite, Nevada", 98.

³⁸ "20 Hitches A Day".

³⁹ Bowler, J.L., Interview by Family, Date Unknown.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "Pearl Bailey, Husband Testify at Theft Hearing", December 16, 1960.

⁴³ "Autobiography of J.L. Bowler, Mesquite, Nevada", 98.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 99.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 99.

⁴⁹ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Obituary for Joseph LeGrande "JL" Bowler", in FamilySearch.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

NEVADA PIONEER NAMED JUDGE AT MESQUITE

LAS VEGAS (Special)—J. L. Bowler, pioneer southern Nevada resident, was appointed Mesquite justice of the peace Monday by the board of county commissioners. He took office immediately.

Bowler, operator of a general merchandise store in Mesquite, is expected to sit for Las Vegas Justice of the Peace Art Olsen when the latter is absent from justice court.

(Reno Evening Gazette)

2A Las Vegas Review-Journal

Friday, Nov. 22, 1955



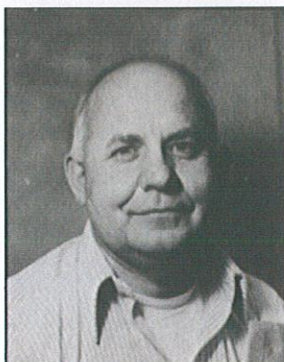
J. P. SCHOOL — Justices of the peace from outlying communities in southern Nevada were receiving "training courses" in civil and criminal procedures this week from one of the nation's busiest jurists, Justice of the Peace Art Olsen of Las Vegas, center. With Olsen are J. L. Bowler, justice from Mesquite, left, and Walter Harris, Overton justice, right, Olsen, who frequently calls in both men to relieve him, has prepared manuals on justice court procedures.

REVIEW-JOURNAL PHOTO

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ U.S., *Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current*. "Family Group Record: Joseph LeGrand Bowler".

Michael James Clarke



(Photo courtesy of Virgin Valley High School)

Michael James Clarke Sr. was born on August 6, 1927 in Logan, Utah.¹ He was the sixth of Lester Lavern Clarke and Bertha Henderson Clarke's eight children.² Clarke grew up in Cannonville, Utah where he was educated in a one room school building.³ He graduated from Tropic High School in Utah and also attended and graduated from a machinist school in California.⁴

Clarke was drafted into the military at the end of World War II.⁵ He served in the Army as a tank commander in the First Infantry Division, First Reconnaissance Company.⁶ He was stationed in Germany.⁷ After completing his military service, Clarke attended the Rocky Mountain School of Photography in Salt Lake City.⁸ Clarke put that training to use when he was recalled into service during the Korean War where he served as a photographer.⁹

Clarke married Erma Bybee on March 22, 1952.¹⁰ The couple had eight children.¹¹ Clarke enjoyed spending time with his family and loved to be in the outdoors.¹²

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: Michael James Clarke" in FamilySearch.

² "Obituary for Michael James 'Jim' Clarke, Sr.", Available at *Find A Grave (Michael James Clarke, Sr)*. Find A Grave. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>.

³ "Obituary for Michael James 'Jim' Clarke, Sr.". Minutes of the State Board of Education, December 16, 2008, "Recognition of Jim Clarke".

⁴ "Recognition of Jim Clarke".

⁵ "Memories of Michael James Clarke", Compiled by Arthur Clarke for the Virgin Valley Heritage Museum, March 7, 2016.

⁶ "Memories of Michael James Clarke"

⁷ "Memories of Michael James Clarke". "Recognition of Jim Clarke".

⁸ "Memories of Michael James Clarke". "Recognition of Jim Clarke".

⁹ "Memories of Michael James Clarke".

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

Clarke was a talented artist. He earned an associate's degree from Dixie College.¹³ He also obtained his Bachelors' and Masters' of Fine Arts degrees at Utah State University.¹⁴ After graduation, Clarke accepted a position at Virgin Valley High School teaching art.¹⁵ While in Mesquite, he became well known for an award winning program he developed called "Art by Telephone". This program allowed students in remote areas of the state to receive quality art instruction through the use of available technology.¹⁶

In addition to his efforts in the classroom, Clarke served the Mesquite community as the Justice of the Peace from the Mid 1960s until the mid 1970s.¹⁷ Clarke, a motorcycle enthusiast, enjoyed telling people about a wedding he performed as Justice of the Peace.¹⁸ The couple getting married belonged to a motorcycle club.¹⁹ Clarke performed the wedding at the community park in front of hundreds of club members, each standing next to their bikes.²⁰

Clarke moved to Garfield County Utah in 1976 where he continued to teach art to students for the rest of his life.²¹ Altogether, Clarke completed over 50 years as a high school art teacher.²² He is remembered for believing in his students and teaching them to "be their best selves."²³ In addition to teaching, Clarke served in his church, organized and carried out annual motor cycle trips, supported high school athletic programs by volunteering to film the games for the teams, and served on various city councils and as a mayor.²⁴ He was recognized for his achievements by the Utah League of Cities and Towns for his lifetime of service to his community.²⁵

Clarke passed away on April 6, 2014 in Enoch, Utah.²⁶

¹³ "Memories of Michael James Clarke". "Recognition of Jim Clarke". "Obituary for Michael James 'Jim' Clarke, Sr."

¹⁴ "Memories of Michael James Clarke". "Recognition of Jim Clarke". "Obituary for Michael James 'Jim' Clarke, Sr."

¹⁵ "Memories of Michael James Clarke". "Recognition of Jim Clarke".

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Nevada Administrative Office of the Courts, "Nevada Judicial History Database: Michael J. Clark", Nevada Judiciary, Web. 3 Mar. 2016.

¹⁸ "Memories of Michael James Clarke".

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "Memories of Michael James Clarke". "Recognition of Jim Clarke".

²² "Obituary for Michael James 'Jim' Clarke, Sr."

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Memories of Michael James Clarke".

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Obituary for Michael James 'Jim' Clarke, Sr."

Brent V. Walker



Brent V. Walker was born on October 13, 1923 in Mesquite, Nevada to Ernest Albert and Julia Reber Walker.¹ He was raised in the Virgin Valley. He was involved in school activities and excelled in basketball.² Walker was a hard worker and was committed to his family. According to one account, as a young man he often agreed without argument to do the chores for his brother Brady, while his brother practiced basketball.³ Perhaps due in part to his brother's help, Brady went on to play professional basketball for the Boston Celtics and Baltimore Bullets.⁴

Walker served his country overseas in the U.S. Army during World War II.⁵ He fought with Patton's Third Army in the European Theatre in the 395th Infantry Regiment.⁶ He returned home to Mesquite from Europe in 1946.⁷

Walker graduated from Brigham Young University in 1950 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics.⁸ He performed work on the police force in Las Vegas and in private security, but eventually returned to Mesquite to help care for his parents and a sibling.⁹ Walker was known as a talented bricklayer and helped build a number of buildings in the Mesquite and Moapa communities.¹⁰

¹ Obituary of Brent V. Walker, Virgin Valley Mortuary, 2003.

² Thurston, Dorothy Dawn Frehner, *A River and a Road*, 1994, 127. Print. Reno Evening Gazette, "Future Farmers End Conclave in Reno", April 17, 1940.

³ Reber, Sam, "Remarks at the Funeral of Brent Walker", Mesquite, Nevada, January 17, 2003.

⁴ "Remarks at the Funeral of Brent Walker". Thurston, 125.

⁵ U.S. Army, "Enlisted Record and Report of Separation, Honorable Discharge", Brent V. Walker, 1946.

⁶ Obituary of Brent V. Walker. "Remarks at the Funeral of Brent Walker". "Enlisted Record and Report of Separation, Honorable Discharge".

⁷ Reno Evening Gazette, "Two From Nevada Return From Europe", February 20, 1946.

⁸ Obituary of Brent V. Walker.

⁹ "Remarks at the Funeral of Brent Walker".

¹⁰ Young, Lovina K., "Local Judge Keeps Busy With City Issues", *The Spectrum*, April 17, 1996. Obituary of Brent V. Walker.

Walker served as Justice of the Peace in Mesquite from 1976 until he retired in 1998.¹¹ Walker also occasionally traveled to Las Vegas to help handle court matters when requested.¹² During his time in office, he witnessed significant growth in the valley and growth in the caseload of the court.¹³

Walker applied common sense in resolving the cases that came before the court. In one case involving a dispute between farmers over water, he ordered the litigants to show up near their fields the next day for what might be called an informal mediation.¹⁴ The next day Walker gave the men some directions about who would do what to resolve the issue, they shook on it, and that was the end of the matter.¹⁵

In addition to handling criminal and civil matters, Walker performed many marriages for couples over the years. On one occasion he performed a marriage ceremony for a woman and a man who was an FBI agent from California.¹⁶ Every year on their wedding anniversary the couple came back to Mesquite to have dinner with Walker.¹⁷ The story is also told that during another wedding ceremony, Walker offered a couple a \$10 speech or a \$100 speech.¹⁸ The couple opted for the \$10 speech. When the ceremony concluded, Walker removed a \$10 bill from his wallet, handed it to the bride and groom and encouraged them to use it to purchase their first meal as a married couple.¹⁹

Walker also served as Mesquite's first municipal court judge on a temporary basis in 1984 while the newly formed city went through the process of selecting a permanent judge for the position.²⁰

Walker died at the age of 79 in his home in Mesquite on January 14, 2003.²¹ He was laid to rest in the Mesquite cemetery.²²

¹¹ Nevada Administrative Office of the Courts, "Nevada Judicial History Database: Brent Walker", Nevada Judiciary, Web. 14 Mar. 2016. Obituary of Brent V. Walker. "Local Judge Keeps Busy With City Issues".

¹² "Local Judge Keeps Busy With City Issues".

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "Remarks at the Funeral of Brent Walker".

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Local Judge Keeps Busy With City Issues".

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Remarks at the Funeral of Brent Walker".

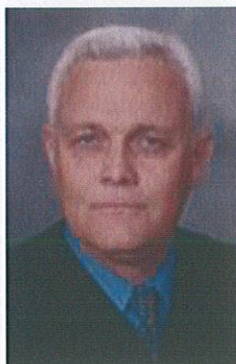
¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "Local Judge Keeps Busy With City Issues".

²¹ Obituary of Brent V. Walker. Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Family Group Record: Brent V Walker" in FamilySearch.

²² *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current*. "Family Group Record: Brent V Walker".

Ron L. Dodd



(Photo courtesy of Mesquite Municipal Court)

Ron L. Dodd was born in 1951 and raised in Nevada and Idaho.¹ He and his wife Sharon have six children and many grandchildren. Dodd is an outdoorsman and loves spending time with his family.² Over the years he has been a Virgin Valley Bulldog fan and a supporter of the youth in the Mesquite community.³

Dodd graduated from college with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from Boise State University.⁴ Before settling in Mesquite, he worked as a police officer in Boise, Idaho.⁵

Dodd was appointed as the Municipal Court Judge for Mesquite in 1985.⁶ As the municipal court judge, Dodd handled traffic violations and misdemeanor criminal charges. In addition to his duties in the municipal court, Dodd was appointed as Mesquite Justice of the Peace in 1998 when Brent Walker retired.⁷ He was twice re-elected to the position and served there until his retirement.⁸

In the mid-1990s, Dodd and others collaborated with the Clark County Family Courts and arranged for local juvenile cases to be handled in the rural communities, rather than in Las Vegas.⁹ This new arrangement allowed the rural Clark County communities the opportunity to have input in resolving many of the juvenile problems in their own communities.¹⁰ Dodd was appointed as a Juvenile Hearing Master for

¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S. Public Records Index, 1950-1993, Volume 1* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

² Ellestad, Barabara, Mesquite Citizen Journal, "Judge Dodd Retires as Mesquite Municipal Judge and JP", 1/11/2013.

³ "Judge Dodd Retires as Mesquite Municipal Judge and JP".

⁴ Mellinger, E. Beverly, Valley Herald, "Virgin Valley News", May, 1985.

⁵ "Virgin Valley News".

⁶ Mellinger Beverly, [W. Co. News], "Mesquite Makes Judge Appointee", September 6, 1986

⁷ Nevada Administrative Office of the Courts, "Nevada Judicial History Database: Ron L. Dodd", Nevada Judiciary, Web. 14 Mar. 2016. Nevada Administrative Office of the Courts, "Nevada Judicial History Database: Brent Walker", Nevada Judiciary, Web. 15 Mar. 2016.

⁸ "Nevada Judicial History Database: Ron L. Dodd".

⁹ Las Vegas Sun, "Mesquite, Moapa Valley Now Handle Own Juvenile Cases", December 28, 1996.

¹⁰ "Mesquite, Moapa Valley Now Handle Own Juvenile Cases".

Mesquite and worked for nearly two decades to improve the safety of the community as well as the lives of the juveniles that appeared in his court in that capacity.¹¹

During Dodd's tenure in office, he witnessed Mesquite grow from a rural community with a population of a couple thousand residents to a city with over 15,000 residents.¹² As the population grew and the number of tourists visiting the city increased, so did the number of court cases.¹³ In the mid-1990s, Dodd provided insight and direction with the construction of a new justice facility that now houses the municipal and justice courts. The project was completed in 1995.¹⁴

Dodd's decades of service in the Nevada Judiciary was recognized on several occasions. He was voted Judge of the Year by the Nevada Judges Association in 2000.¹⁵ He also served as president of that association in 2001. In 2012 he received a lifetime Jurist Achievement Award by the Nevada Judges of Limited Jurisdiction.¹⁶ Dodd completed over 1,000 hours of continuing judicial education hours during his career.¹⁷ He retired on January 6, 2013 after serving 27 years on the bench.¹⁸

In addition to his work in the courts, Dodd served the community in other capacities. He served as a member of the Board of Directors for the Mesquite Chamber of Commerce and as a Commissioner for the Boy Scouts of America.¹⁹

¹¹ "Judge Dodd Retires as Mesquite Municipal Judge and JP". "Mesquite, Moapa Valley Now Handle Own Juvenile Cases".

¹² "Census of Population and Housing". *Census.gov*. Retrieved March 15, 2015.

¹³ Deseret News, "Mesquite Judge Thinks Court Load In 1996 Was Heavy For A Small Town", January 15, 1997.

¹⁴ Mesquite Justice Facility. Facility Dedication Plaque, Mesquite, Nevada, 29 June 1995.

¹⁵ "Judge Dodd Retires as Mesquite Municipal Judge and JP".

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*