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# The Indian Reorganization Act in Nevada: Creation of the Yomba Reservation

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**P**RIOR to the 1930s, a small minority of Nevada Indians lived on reservations that provided them a means of livelihood. The largest number of Indians in the state did not live on any kind of trust territory at all. Another significant proportion was to be found on colonies—plots of land near towns or cities that provided housing sites but no resources for agricultural or other economic activities. Although the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) had provided various services to the colonies before this, not until 1938 was it determined legally that the colonies were reservations and therefore trust territory (*United States v. McGowan*, 302 US 535 [1938]).

An important activity of the BIA in Nevada during the Indian New Deal—one that was of great importance to the Native American inhabitants of the state—was to provide additional land for some Indians. Several reservations were created, agricultural lands were secured for two groups that previously had only colony lands, and in one case, allotted lands were reassembled into a viable economic unit. Three of the new reservations—Duckwater, South Fork, and Yomba—were in territory occupied aboriginally by Western Shoshones. This paper is about creation of the Yomba Indian Reservation.

## ABORIGINAL CONDITIONS

The Yomba Reservation is located along the upper Reese River Valley in central Nevada. Aboriginally, it was known as *Mahaquaduka bahunovi*, the valley of the eaters of a plant whose scientific name is *Mentzelia* (Steward

1938:100). The western border of the narrow valley is the Shoshone Mountains, a range with peaks averaging around 9,000 feet in elevation, and the eastern border is the Toiyabe Mountains, with peaks more than 2,500 feet higher. The Toiyabes are high enough to capture sufficient snowfall to sustain several creeks and the Reese River, which runs year-round in the upper valley, although it typically descends below the surface before reaching the Humboldt River, far to the north.

Because the Reese River Valley is well-watered and because the nearby high mountain ranges provide a variety of different food sources within an unusually compact area, population densities among Western Shoshones living in Reese River Valley were unusually high. Steward (1938:101-102) listed the names of 41 camps provided by one of his informants for the area from present-day Austin to Indian Valley, at the southern end of the Reese River Valley, although he rejected the estimate of 900 persons for the valley which had been derived from extrapolating from these camps as "too much" and said that the estimate by another informant of 1,000 to 2,000 persons for the same area was "certainly excessive."

However, more recent scholarship suggests that Steward tended to take estimates from the driest portion of Western Shoshone territory as the basis for his model. Where precipitation and food resources were substantially greater than in other areas of central Nevada, which is clearly the case for the Reese River Valley, it is probable that population densities were higher and that social organization was more complex

than Steward's nuclear-family-based model predicted (Thomas et al. 1986:277-278).

Sites within the upper Reese River Valley offered aboriginally not only ready access to piñon pine forests close by in the mountains bordering the valley but also opportunities for fishing and access to a wide variety of plants and animals in the four basic ecozones created by the great variations in altitude (Thomas 1987:111). In the valley itself, the Western Shoshones practiced a limited form of agriculture: seeds of the *Mentzelia* (little blazing star) and *Chenopodium* (goosefoot) were sowed in wet areas that had been cleared by burning. These plots were owned and harvested by villages (Steward 1938:105-106). *Mentzelia* was sufficiently important to provide the aboriginal name for the inhabitants of the valley, as noted above. *Yomba* is the Shoshone name for a wild carrot "found in abundance in the Reese River Valley," and in the 1930s the inhabitants chose this name for their new reservation (Crum 1983:222).

Clearly, the Reese River Valley in aboriginal times was a lush oasis. In 1863 the *Reese River Reveille* noted that "In the Valley of Reese River there is a long, green meadow having the appearance of a vast field of barley or wheat . . . only a few weeks elapse before haying commences." (Thomas 1987:115). These natural meadows provided extensive quantities of seeds for human consumption. In addition, cooperative rabbit and pronghorn antelope hunts were conducted by several villages, including some in nearby valleys, and there were bighorn sheep and deer in the nearby mountains and trout in the streams.

The exact outlines of political organization are not clear. Steward (1938:100) suggested that it is "probable that . . . Ione, Reese River, and Smith Creek Valleys were separate though not completely independent" (see also Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada 1976:89-90). These valleys lay to the west of Reese River Valley,

along the western edge of Western Shoshone territory. In early post-contact times, Steward (1938:100) believed, *Tu-tuwa* (or *Totoi*) acted as a "single, persuasive chief . . . over these and neighboring valleys, as far north as the Humboldt River." Apparently the practice of looking to a single leader, at least for purposes of dealing with Euro-Americans, survived for many decades; *Tu-tuwa* occupied a position analogous to that of *Te-moak* in areas north and east of what is now Austin. In 1862 Indian agent Warren Wasson met with *Tu-tuwa* and his people, whom he estimated as numbering from three to four hundred people. He wrote (Angel 1958:178-179) that

I had a very satisfactory interview with them. The chief assured me of his friendship for our Government, and that none of his band would, under any circumstances, molest the stage or telegraph lines, or any whites that might want to visit or reside in his country.

Although Wasson declined *Tu-tuwa's* offer "to go with me and assist in bringing about a settlement" with other Shoshones, he did recommend the creation of a reservation near the Reese River (Angel 1958:178-179; Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada 1976:90).

Another well-known 19th-century leader was *Kawich*. During the 1930s, the Carson Indian Agency believed that a wider group that had been united under *Kawich* still felt fundamentally united, as did the former followers of *Te-moak*.

### EURO-AMERICAN INTRUSION

During the 1860s, Euro-Americans arrived in the territory of the Western Shoshones and partially displaced the people living there. In the upper Reese River Valley, where the Yomba Reservation is located today, White settlers first took over the meadows and then diverted the creeks and the river to establish irrigated ranches, grazing their livestock in the surrounding mountains.

The impacts of this intrusion on Western Shoshones in the Reese River Valley have never been investigated fully but were clearly devastating. The new ranches destroyed the native plots of *Mentzelia* and *Chenopodium*, and the well-watered land in the valley itself (though not in the mountains) came to be owned by Euro-Americans. Grazing of cattle in the mountains, beginning in 1862, and later of sheep, beginning in the 1880s, not only reduced the numbers of game animals but decimated the wild grasses that had been a principal food source for aboriginal inhabitants. Mining produced a large demand for timber and fire-wood; the result was the destruction of the piñon pine forests. While mining temporarily provided employment for some Indians, the situation worsened dramatically for them in the 1890s, after the mines in the area failed, because

wage labor practically disappeared and the semi-aculturated Shoshoni were forced to learn to be Indians again. Three decades had dulled the hunting-gathering instincts so necessary for survival in such a harsh environment. To make matters worse, the old pinon groves had been reduced to eroding hills. The lush valley vegetation recorded by Simpson and others was now simply sage-dominated flats [Thomas 1987:116].

In brief, "An economic tradition with a local antiquity of at least 4,000 years was severely crippled in less than three decades of acculturation to Anglo influences" (Thomas 1987: 116).

Undoubtedly the native population in the valley declined dramatically. Certainly this was the case if the population figures derived from two of Stewart's informants have any merit at all. Another indication of relatively large populations aboriginally is that as late as 1873 Powell and Ingalls reported 530 Shoshones in seven groups in the Reese River Valley and Austin (Stewart 1974:7).

The Shoshone population in the valley was far below aboriginal levels by the 1930s. In

April 1937, employees of the BIA interviewed 12 families at "Reese River"; however, it is not certain that there was any attempt to make a complete census (Federal Archives and Records Center, Laguna Niguel, Record Group 75, Records of the BIA, Phoenix Area Office [hereafter Laguna Niguel], Division of Extension and Industry, General Correspondence, Box 302, Folder "Reese River Valley Shoshones . . .," "The Nye County Shoshone Project"). An attempt to be more thorough about Shoshone populations in all of northern Nye County in July 1936 came up with a total of 349 persons in 18 locations, although it omitted four locations listed in the 1937 survey (Laguna Niguel, Division of Extension and Industry, General Correspondence, Box 302, E. M. Johnston, July, 1936). This survey counted 15 families and 56 persons in the Reese River Valley, only a little over one-tenth the Shoshone population in 1873.

Life for the survivors after the 1890s was clearly modified, although the Shoshones did not lose everything. The ranches took up relatively narrow strips of land along the waterways, leaving places for Native American populations to live. The number of White ranches and ranchers was small; in 1881 it was reported that there were 18 ranches and 50 (White) inhabitants (Angel 1958:516). Apparently, there were only eight ranches in 1936, before land purchases for the reservation began (Federal Archives and Records Center, San Bruno, Record Group 75, Records of the BIA, Carson Indian Agency [hereafter San Bruno], New Records, Yomba, Box B163, Folder "Grazing, not Nat. Forest . . .," Richard B. Millin, Regional Forester, to Superintendent Alida C. Bowler, September 26, 1938; Folder "Miscellaneous," Douglas Clark, Field Agent, to Superintendent Ralph M. Gelvin, July 29, 1944).

A substantial amount of aboriginal food-gathering activity must have continued. Even

after the reservation was established, Indians continued to gather pine nuts and hunt deer (King and King 1942). Moreover, the Western Shoshones could earn money with which to buy products of the Euro-American economy by exploiting traditional resources or skills in untraditional ways. For example, a BIA report in 1940 indicated that 18 individuals on the Yomba Reservation had received income during calendar year 1939 from the sale of pine nuts and furs. Such income was small; individuals earned from \$35 to \$150 apiece for the sale of furs, for a total of \$1,750, and from \$40 to \$205 apiece for the sale of pine nuts, for a total of \$2,010 (San Bruno, Box B163, Folder "Credit Yomba/No. 10'/C'/correspondence, general," handwritten report, 1939). Indian women at this time made "rugs, baskets, and leather goods for sale in their spare time" (King and King 1942) and Indian men cut firewood in the mountains and sold it to Euro-Americans.

The loss of aboriginal resources was nevertheless substantial. This was partly compensated for by the partial participation of Western Shoshones in the wider Euro-American economy which extended far beyond the valley. The price was Indian involvement in the cash economy (Clemmer 1978). The White ranches in the valley provided employment for Indians, at low wages. Indian men became cowboys—herding, branding, dehorning, and rounding up the range cattle belonging to the ranchers and performing other types of labor on the ranches. Indian women became domestic workers in the ranch houses. Ranching was clearly the major activity of the Nye County Shoshones in the early 1930s. A listing of the sources of "cash income" for 71 Shoshones in 1936 gave "ranching and agriculture" as the principal source of such income for 45 persons (Laguna Niguel, "The Nye County Shoshone Project").

In other parts of Nye County, although there is no evidence for this in the Reese River Valley, Shoshones actually established ranches

of their own. Lingenfelter (1986) mentioned many such ranches in and around Death Valley, and Carson Indian Agency Superintendent Bowler reported in 1936 that "A few of them [Nye County Shoshones], industrious and able, have by their own efforts purchased small ranches" (Laguna Niguel, Box 302, Folder "Yomba Shoshone Tribe—Reese River . . .," "Social and Economic Information for the Yomba Reservation"). A 1937 study of Big Smokey Valley reported that

The [Indian] homesteads are located high on the valley rim at the base of the escarpment, to make use of the small streams that flow only a few hundred yards into the valley. These ranches are on very steep, rock [sic] soil, most of them having from 10 to 30 acres of alfalfa. The Indian squatters have been able to support from 30 to 60 head of cattle in good years only, and have thus eked out a meager subsistence. Perhaps an out-standing characteristic indicated by these homesteaders is a demonstration of the extent to which some people labor for a livelihood [Laguna Niguel, "The Nye County Shoshone Project"].

At the time that plans were being made for what would become the Yomba Reservation, "the Shoshone Indians [of Nye County north of Beatty] own[ed] about 300 head of cattle and perhaps 50 head of horses" (Laguna Niguel, "The Nye County Shoshone Project"). According to Crum (1938), before 1917 there had been even more Shoshone ranchers. However, in that year the Forest Service told them "that they could no longer graze their stock on forest land without paying taxes [sic]. Since the Indians did not have enough income to pay the required taxes, their stock was destroyed by the forest officials" (Crum 1983:38). Following this reversal, in the 1920s some Western Shoshones moved to western Nevada reservations set aside for Northern Paiutes (see below).

Undoubtedly the incomes of Indians dependent either on their own small ranches or on labor for White ranchers were low, and the Indian ranch employees were no doubt highly

dependent on their employers. Thomas 1987: 115) noted that "Individuals and families often attached themselves to ranches and mines in a pattern reminiscent of the antebellum Southern Negro." In 1937 Carson Indian Agency Superintendent Alida C. Bowler stated that the relationship between White ranchers and their Indian employees was essentially an exploitative one.

The Indian in Nevada . . . is still discriminated against socially and exploited economically. He is primarily the under-paid agricultural seasonal laborer upon whom the big cattle and sheep interests depend for cheap labor at certain seasons. . . . He lives on a sub-standard level, and his smug white employer asserts that the Indian is perfectly content at that level and neither desires nor deserves a hand up [National Archives Building, Records of the BIA, Record Group 75 (hereafter RG 75), Central Classified Files 1907-1939, Carson Indian Agency, File 9517A-1936-Carson-068-Te-Moak, Bowler to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 7, 1937].

The mines in areas close to the Reese River Valley also provided employment for some Indian men earlier in the century, but after the 1890s this source of income was very limited. Mining was the principal source of cash income for only six persons in 1936, comprising eight percent of the total number of persons for whom such income was reported (Laguna Niguel, "The Nye County Shoshone Project").

In short, by the time the Yomba Reservation was established, the surviving Western Shoshones in Nye County north of Beatty were well acquainted with ranching but impoverished. A 1946 BIA report said of the previous condition of the 20 families on the reservation: "Their income level was very low. Living conditions were poor" (Strait 1946:unpaginated). Although poor, they were wearing "citizen clothes" and living in frame houses (that were small and of poor quality by Euro-American standards), and many of them were driving "dilapidated" automobiles. No doubt they were

also continuing to fish, hunt, and gather where these resources were still available and when they could find the time to do so.

They also were continuing many aboriginal customs. After establishment of the reservation, it was reported that "Medicine Men" were still summoned from other reservations at time of illness by some residents, that withdrawal by a woman to a separate house to give birth was still being practiced, that a house in which someone had died was abandoned, that many crafts continued (rug-making, willow basketry, bead basketry, skin-sewing, and tanning were mentioned), and that an annual August Fandango was held where handgames were played and where there was Indian singing and dancing (King and King 1942).

#### IMPETUS FOR ESTABLISHING RESERVATIONS

The establishment of the Yomba Reservation was the result of the confluence of several developments. The appointment of John Collier as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1933 led to a dramatic attempted reversal of Indian policy. Instead of assuming that his task was to speed up the assimilation of Native Americans into general American culture, Collier sought to protect Native American cultures, because he saw these as valuable (Philp 1977; Kelly 1983). Some of the objectives of the Indian New Deal were embodied in the Indian Reorganization (or Wheeler-Howard) Act of 1934. Two of the important provisions of this act established a procedure by which the governments of tribes and/or reservations could be acknowledged formally by the United States Government and provided for appropriations to purchase land to bring new reservations into being or to add to existing reservations.

The Carson Indian Agency, which after 1935 had jurisdiction over Western Shoshones in this part of Nevada, was led from 1934 through 1939 by Superintendent Alida C. Bow-

ler, an able administrator who both understood and approved of Collier's objectives. The Carson Indian Agency sought aggressively to locate agricultural lands that could be purchased for Indians and to organize the groups of Indians settled on these lands.

At the same time, the Nye County Shoshone Committee, a voluntary group of Western Shoshones that had been organized on the Walker River Reservation, was requesting land for reservations for landless Shoshones. The existence of significant numbers of Western Shoshones on other reservations therefore turned out to be highly important. In 1936 Superintendent Bowler wrote that

A few of them [Nye County Shoshones] have bought allotments on the Walker River Reservation to which the original Paiute allottees have obtained fee patents. However, the other Paiutes resent the Shoshones' presence and will not permit them to run their cattle on the Reservation range [Laguna Niguel, "Social and Economic Information for the Yomba Reservation"].

In 1936, perhaps inaccurately, the "Nye County Shoshone Project" reported that the largest number of Shoshones in any one place outside the Duck Valley Reservation was the group of 59 persons in 13 families living on the Walker River Reservation. Also, "a few families" were settled on "irrigated farms provided on the Stillwater Reservation near Fallon" (Stewart 1974:5; Crum 1983:38). In July 1936, nine Shoshone families, totaling 31 persons, were reported to be living at Fallon (Laguna Niguel, "The Nye County Shoshone Project").

The Nye County Shoshone Committee was organized in response to the efforts of the Indian New Deal to gain support for the Indian Reorganization Act. In late 1934, Western Shoshones living at Schurz heard Organization Division representative George LaVatta (a Shoshone from Fort Hall Reservation) explain the IRA to Indians of the Walker River Reservation.

As a result, five of them—Dave Kawich Clifford, James X. Darrough, Bud Decker, Willie Bobb, and Alice Kawich Hooper—organized the Nye County Shoshone Committee in December of 1934. Their main objective was to persuade the federal government to set aside reservation land exclusively for the Shoshones [Crum 1983:210].

Three of the members of this committee—Bobb, Clifford, and Hooper—were descendants of Chief *Kawich*.

Several meetings of this committee were held in early 1935; on February 18, Clifford was elected President. The committee wrote Commissioner of Indian Affairs Collier and Nevada Senator Key Pittman, stating that, because of poor economic conditions, the Western Shoshone were "homeless and landless people drifting from place to place looking for work." They asked that the federal government make loans to them so that they could buy ranchland and cattle. At a meeting on April 20, 1935, with Walker River Superintendent Ray Parrett, who then had jurisdiction over the Walker River Reservation, they asked that land be bought for them in the Reese River Valley. Bureau officials promised at this meeting to explore whether White ranchers in the valley would be willing to sell (Crum 1983:210-213).

The initial effort to buy Reese River land sought to acquire 5,000 acres through the use of funds from the Submarginal Land Program of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads. Between the spring of 1935 and October of the same year, options were taken on these lands. However, it was discovered in the fall of 1935 that funds from this program would not be forthcoming (Crum 1983:213).

On October 1, 1935, the Walker River Agency was combined with the Carson Indian Agency, and Alida Bowler became the Superintendent with responsibility for central Nevada Indians. She

assumed that the Nye County Shoshone Committee was the representative political body

of all the Shoshones of central and southern Nevada. Because the committee wanted land in the Reese River Valley, she also assumed that the rest of the Shoshones favored this proposition [Crum 1983:214].

The original Submarginal Lands proposal for the Reese River Valley had been based on the assumption that a single reservation at that location would be large enough for and acceptable to all landless Shoshones of central Nevada. As noted below, Bowler also assumed that the Western Shoshones in this area felt unified to a degree that would make it easy to organize such a reservation.

In July 1936, a Bureau negotiator, George Wren, took options on six ranches in the Reese River Valley. In actuality, however, Shoshones living in other areas wanted reservations to be established nearer to their own homelands. For example, Dan Mike, a Shoshone living in Big Smokey Valley, wrote Bowler in August 1936, asking that a reservation be established in that valley. In September 1936, Bowler met with a group of Shoshones living in Big Smokey Valley and explained the IRA to them. She was told that they would like the Bureau to purchase two ranches in that valley, and she promised that this suggestion would be studied (Crum 1983: 216-217). Douglas Clark of the Sacramento Office of the BIA did conduct an inspection of Big Smokey Valley but recommended against purchase of land there on several grounds. He concluded that purchase of two ranches there would create a reservation for only 21 Shoshones, and he also foresaw difficulties with poor soil quality and the substantial distance between the ranches. After his report, evidently no further effort was made to buy land in that valley (Crum 1983:217-219).

The next year, in May and April 1937, agents of the Technical Cooperation-Bureau of Indian Affairs (TC-BIA) made a study of the land needs of central Nevada Shoshones. This report concluded that various groups of Shoshones preferred reservations near their present

residences and proposed creating new reservations in the Reese River and Duckwater valleys for Nye County Shoshones and the Fish Lake Valley for Shoshones living in the Beatty-Pahrump area (Crum 1983:218-219). The Carson Indian Agency thereafter established reservations at the first two locations but never tried to organize one in Fish Lake Valley.

For some time prior to this, a group of Western Shoshones, apparently chiefly based in northeastern Nevada, outside the Duck Valley Reservation, had been asserting territorial claims under the Ruby Valley Treaty of 1863. From 1934, they had been seeking legislation to permit them to sue the federal government for return of their lands and/or compensation (Rusco 1982; Crum 1987). It is not clear how strong this movement was among the groups being considered for settlement on what would become the Yomba Reservation, but at least some Agency officials were aware of the issue. The 1937 "Nye County Shoshone Project" report listed three questions about land that needed clarification. One of these was:

To what extent the present resettlement program should or should not satisfy the claims of the Shoshones, law suits for which are being agitated by Bill Gibson and Muchach Temoke, of the Elko and Ruby Valley Shoshones, but in which claim some of the Nye Co. Shoshones feel they have a share.

Finally, the effects of the Depression plus local conditions predisposed White ranchers to sell out. Once the Reese River Valley was decided upon as a site for a reservation, the BIA recommended purchasing all the ranches in the valley for this purpose; it was reported that only three ranches probably would not be available. One of these was in the middle of bankruptcy proceedings and the owner of one ranch was willing to sell but only if two other ranches outside the upper Reese River Valley 15 to 18 miles north of the area being considered by the Government also were purchased. Another ranch was "owned by a very old man and his



wife [who were] desirous of spending their remaining days on their ranch." In explanation of the availability for purchase of most ranches, this report stated that four of the ranching families consisted of people "between 65 and 80 years old [who] are no longer able to carry on the stock raising business." In another case "the heirs are anxious to sell in order to complete the settlement of the estate" and in still another case "The owners of the Doyle Ranch want to get out of the cattle business as they have outside investments that are of greater interest to them" (Laguna Niguel, "The Nye County Shoshone Project").

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE YOMBA RESERVATION

The initial appropriation available for the Reese River Reservation—\$65,000—was not quite large enough to permit purchase of two of the ranches in the valley. The Doyle Ranch consisted of 2,161.48 acres and was for sale for \$49,000, and the Bowler Ranch consisted of 1,560 acres and was for sale for \$19,600 (Crum 1983:219).

The Bowler Ranch was purchased in November 1937. On February 17, 1938 Superintendent Bowler wrote the Nye County Shoshone Committee that the Washington Office had just sent a wire to the effect that

the purchase of the Doyle Ranch has been finally approved and that they are now preparing to authorize us to make payment for it. This means that we should obtain the title to the Doyle property very shortly so that you may count on having its use during the coming agricultural season [San Bruno, Box B163, Folder "Yomba Reservation/Correspondence . . .," Bowler to Nye County Shoshone Committee, February 17, 1938].

Because no formal organization of the Shoshones who would live on the new reservation had yet taken place, Bowler met in January 1938 in Austin with the Nye County Shoshone Committee and other Shoshones. She was sur-

prised at the large number of persons present and that the two ranches were not large enough to provide homes for everyone.

Sixteen families of one-half or more Indian blood were chosen to move to the ranches. The Nye County Shoshone Committee essentially made the choices. It submitted to Bowler a list of 16 families to be given first choice, plus a second choice list. According to Bowler, "At this meeting . . . we and the committee approved their first choice list with a single exception, where we did make a change" (RG 75, Organization Division, Carson Indian Agency, Bowler to Daiker, January 24, 1938).

Several of the families chosen were residents of the Walker River reservation, including four committee members, Alice Hooper, Bud Decker, James X. Darrough, and Willie Bobb. . . . the remaining families selected were already living in and around the Reese River Valley" [Crum 1983:219-221].

A slightly different account of the selection process was given in a report written in 1946. According to this account, five families had been given assignments on the Bowler Ranch in 1937, nine more families received assignments in 1938, one more person was given an assignment in 1940, after the purchase of two more ranches, and another five assignments were made in 1942, for an ultimate total of 20 families with assignments on the reservation (Strait 1946). Because of a long delay in proclaiming the reservation and approving its constitution and charter (see below), it seems that some families were resident on the reservation before the bulk of formal choices were made, in early 1938.

Although the original plan had been to buy all the ranches in the valley, only the Worthington and Dieringer ranches, each 480 acres, had been added to the original two by 1950 (San Bruno, Box B160, Folder "Yomba-Land Description . . .," legal descriptions of four ranches). The Dieringer Ranch was purchased in 1940 for \$12,620 and the Worthington Ranch

was purchased in 1941 for \$6,683 (Crum 1983: 229-239).

A tabulation of households as of April 20, 1939, when there were 14 assignments, is interesting. An apparent total of 19 households is listed (some relatives of assignees lived just off the reservation). Of the 30 adults in those households for which the place of birth can be determined (one is unclear), the largest number was from Big Smokey Valley and Austin; 13 were born in Big Smokey Valley and nine in Austin. Of the remainder, two each were born in Monitor Valley and Potts, and one each in Belmont, Bull Spring, Ione, and Tonopah.

No data are available to indicate where the assignees were living just prior to moving to the reservation, although it has been noted above that Crum reported that most were living in or near the Reese River Valley at the time. The place-of-birth data undoubtedly underestimate the significance of the group that came from the Walker River Reservation. A description of the background of the six Council members in 1940 indicates that four of them, including Vice-Chairman Willie Bobb and Secretary Alice Hooper, had lived on the Walker River Reservation for periods ranging from two to nine years (Laguna Niguel, "Social and Economic Information for the Yomba Reservation;" Crum 1983:221).

Another factor is that two of the early leaders of Yomba, Willie Bobb and Alice Hooper, were descended from Chief *Kawich*. Dave Clifford, who had led the Nye County Shoshone Committee but ultimately decided not to move there and give up his assignment at Walker River, was also descended from *Kawich* (San Bruno, Box 167, Folder "003/Yomba Reservation," "Yomba Reservation Census 1939;" Crum 1983:210, 221). In the 19th century, *Kawich* headed a small band in the Kawich Mountains, south of the Hot Creek Range. Steward (1938:110-113) said that later in the 19th century the influence of *Kawich*

extended to Belmont, where some Shoshones lived after mining began there. Perhaps because of the prominence of these descendants on the Nye County Shoshone Committee, in the late 1930s at least, Bowler believed that

'old Chief Kawich occupied with them [Nye County Shoshones] much the same position that Te-Moak did with the Western Shoshones in the Ruby Valley area.' Bowler therefore wanted the Shoshones to organize under the Indian Reorganization Act and call themselves the 'Ka'wich Bands' of Shoshones 'to match the Te-Moak bands of Shoshones in the Northeast quarter of the State.' [Crum 1983:214].

The ages of the men in a 1939 study ranged from 28 to 64, with a mean of 45, and the ages of the women ranged from 18 to 73, with a mean of 46. This report listed 44 children. Most of the Indians were full-blooded Shoshones (59 or 80 percent); 10 were seven-eighths Shoshone, four were three-quarters Shoshone, and one was one-half Shoshone.

After 1941, the reservation contained a total of 3,721.48 acres. An "administrative site" for Agency buildings totaled 32.8 acres. Of the rest, the largest amount was devoted to producing alfalfa or hay for cattle; 729 acres was devoted to raising hay, 169.1 acres was in alfalfa, and 14.5 acres was in pasture (for a total of 912.6 acres, or 24.5 percent of the total reservation land). Another 59.7 acres was in wheat or barley, 19.7 acres was in potatoes, 6.3 acres was in gardens, and 61.7 acres of the farming land was counted as "idle cultivated." The rest of the reservation, 2,628.7 acres, was almost entirely grazing land (San Bruno, Box B163, Folder "Miscellaneous," "Yomba Shoshone Reservation," March 24, 1942).

In 1946 the 20 assignees had varying amounts of land; the total acreages in assignments varied from 44 to 68 acres, with a mean of 58 acres. Crop land varied even more; there was a range of two to 50 acres, with a mean of 15. Meadow land varied from 15 to 63 acres, with a mean of 43, and "farmstead" land

varied from nothing (for 11 assignees) to 4 acres, with a mean of 1.1 acres. In addition, the Cattlemen's Association owned 25 acres of crop land, 46 acres of meadow land, and 2 acres of "farmstead" land, for a total of 73 acres (San Bruno, Box B161/Folder "Agricultural Conservation Ass'n," handwritten report).

Evidently the BIA had planned to encourage the Indians of the Yomba Reservation to grow a wide variety of foods and animals to provide for their subsistence and increase their cash income. However, the valley is quite high in elevation, and growing conditions are consequently poor for many crops. While determined efforts were made to raise various crops and livestock, cattle raising was the only significant agricultural activity possible.

The various ranches that comprise the Reservation are strung out for about 15 miles along the Reese River, with non-Indian ranches separating portions of the reservation. The Doyle Ranch, at the southern end of the reservation, averages 6,880 feet in elevation and the Bowler Ranch, at the northern end, averages 6,320 feet. In both cases, these are greater than the maximum elevation of Lake Tahoe (San Bruno, Box 129E, Folder "Regional Office . . .," "Brief Preliminary Survey of . . . Reese River," 1943). As a result, the growing season varies between 62 and 90 days; killing frosts may occur as late as July 3 and as early as September 3 (San Bruno, Box B163, Folder "Miscellaneous," "Yomba Shoshone Reservation," March 24, 1942). Because of the short growing season, the study concluded, the reservation produced feed for livestock, and gardens were used primarily to raise root and other cool weather crops.

Other data indicate grain was raised and that the Indian farmers engaged in a variety of other food raising efforts. In 1940 the reservation produced 344 tons of alfalfa, 710 tons of wild hay, 1,400 bushels of wheat, 1,586 bushels of barley, and 1,690 bushels of potatoes. Milk

cows produced 1,750 pounds of milk and chickens produced 520 dozen eggs (San Bruno, Box B162, Folder "Fallon and Yomba/Annual Extension Report 1940 . . ."). In 1942, it was reported that 16 families owned beef cattle, 16 owned horses, 13 owned milk cows, 12 owned swine, 10 owned turkeys, 14 owned chickens, and 7 owned waterfowl (San Bruno, Box B163, Folder "Miscellaneous," "Yomba Shoshone Reservation").

### ORGANIZATION

Initially, the Washington Office of the BIA delayed the organizational process, with the result that loan moneys to purchase cattle were not available to the new assignees on the reservation for two years. These delays were not the result of inactivity on the part of the Indians or lack of cooperation from the Carson Indian Agency. Undoubtedly the Nye County Shoshone Committee functioned informally as a tribal council during the early years, before formal organization could be accomplished. As early as July 1936, Don C. Foster, the Extension Agent of the Carson Indian Agency, reported that "the Yomba group . . . [has] submitted a tentative draft of the constitution and it is now awaiting approval. As soon as it can be put through, they plan to ask for a charter and for a credit plan" (Foster 1936).

Just after the purchase of the Bowler Ranch, Superintendent Bowler had written the Washington Office asking that the two ranches be declared an Indian reservation "so that the Indians who receive land assignments thereon may take the steps required for organization under the Indian Reorganization Act" (RG 75, Carson Indian Agency, Bowler to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 27, 1937).

Yomba was not officially proclaimed a reservation until a year later, on October 27, 1938. The delay was partly because the Washington Office had been unclear whether the Indians who were to be resettled on it were

“ward” Indians. If they were not, it would be necessary to certify them as Indians of one-half or more Indian blood, to whom the Indian Reorganization Act also applied. The problem was that there was great confusion in Washington about what constituted “ward” status. Bowler kept writing the Washington Office to the effect that the Indians involved had been carried on the rolls of the Carson Indian Agency for some time, but this was not considered a definitive fact in Washington.

In addition, Washington was confused about the relationship of the new assignees to members of the Te-Moak Bands. Assistant Commissioner William Zimmerman wrote Bowler on February 10, 1938, stating that “It was our understanding that these Indians who are about to be located on the Reese River lands were to become a part of the Temoak federation or group” (RG 75, Organization Division, Carson Indian Agency, Zimmerman to Bowler, February 10, 1938).

In reply to this letter, Bowler wrote that there was “no connection whatsoever” between the Te-Moak Bands and the Yomba group. She said that

The Indians whom we propose to settle on the Reese River tract are descendants of members of the bands who claimed occupancy of that territory now largely within Nye County. . . . As nearly as we can discover, one of the principal chiefs for these Indians was a man known by the name of ‘Kawich.’ The old Indians state that Kawich and other chiefs of theirs made an agreement with Government representatives which they thought was a treaty, but which evidently never acquired that status, and that this was done at about the same time that the more northern Shoshones made the Ruby Valley Treaty, and that they are therefore an aggregation of Shoshone bands about on a par with, but not affiliated with, the Te-Moak Bands [RG 75, Organization Division, Carson Indian Agency, Bowler to Zimmerman, February 17, 1938].

Finally, the Carson Indian Agency was forced to submit enrollment forms for each member of the

assignee group, a process that was not complete until the end of April, 1939.

Meanwhile, other complications had arisen over the proposed constitution and charter for the Yomba Reservation. Hearing nothing from Washington about the status of the assignees, in May 1938 Bowler called in George LaVatta of the Organization Division. She and LaVatta met with the assignees on May 24-25, “at which time organization and its benefits were carefully explained and discussed” (RG 75, Organization Division, Carson Indian Agency, LaVatta to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 23, 1938).

LaVatta submitted a draft constitution to the Washington Office on June 23, 1938. Again, there was a long delay. Not until December 15 was there a Bureau analysis of this document. Assistant Commissioner Kenneth Meiklejohn suggested a long list of important proposed changes in the constitution and again raised the objection that the assignees were not members of a tribe or reservation, but also found fault with various other provisions of the constitution. D’Arcy McNickle of the Organization Division made other criticisms of the constitution on December 20, but it was January 16, 1939 before Fred Daiker of the Washington Office wrote Superintendent Bowler with a long list of suggested revisions (RG 75, Organization Division, Daiker to Bowler, January 16, 1939).

George LaVatta worked on constitutional revisions until the end of March 1939. However, at the same time he had also been working on a charter for the group. On March 29, 1939, Bowler submitted the two documents to Washington and suggested that a simultaneous election be held to approve both documents. About two weeks later she also sent a letter from the Indians on the Yomba Reservation requesting quick action (RG 75, Organization Division, Bowler to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 29 and April 14, 1939).

Incredibly, Washington responded with still

more delay, in spite of urgent requests from Bowler to expedite matters. In June, Walter Woehlke of the Washington Office filed some new objections to the constitution. These were substantial, because they would have greatly increased the authority of the Washington Office over the Indians of the reservation. There is no evidence that these objections were forwarded to Bowler, however, and she continued to do her best to speed up the process. In September she made an unusual personal plea to Commissioner Collier to try to get action (RG 75, Organization Division, Carson Indian Agency, Bowler to Commissioner, September 6, 1939).

Collier replied a week later that he had discovered in April that "the land provisions in the constitutions were, like similar provisions in other tribal constitutions, lacking in machinery for controlling land assignments." He suggested that it was necessary for the Washington Office to have more authority over the assignment of land so that tribal councils could not deal "high-handedly . . . with the tribal members" (RG 75, Organization Division, Carson Indian Agency, Collier to Bowler, September 14, 1939).

Collier enclosed proposed amendments to the constitution. Evidence that these had been accepted by the Indians was sent to Washington on October 12, 1939, together with an urgent request for an election on both documents as soon as possible (RG 75, Organization Division, Bowler to Commissioner, October 12, 1939). Even at this late date the Washington Office indicated doubts about the constitution, but it finally approved the constitution and the charter, and scheduled an election for December 22, 1939. At this election both documents were approved 30 to 0 (RG 75, Organization Division, Carson Indian Agency, Foster to Commissioner, December 28, 1939, and Commissioner to Foster, January 9, 1940). More than two years after her initial request for quick action, the reservation was proclaimed and a constitu-

tion and charter approved.

The Yomba Indians and Bowler were concerned about the delay because loans to the Tribe to permit them to purchase cattle were not possible until a constitution under the IRA was approved. The Carson Indian Agency was able to approve the supply of reimbursable cattle to the Indians before this, but could make them no loans. In a letter to George LaVatta, about halfway through the slow process, Bowler wrote that the delay

makes it completely impossible for these people to have credit money this year. That may be quite serious for them unless we can again get reimbursable to help them. We had not asked for reimbursable because it never occurred to us that it would take almost a year to get action from our own group in Washington [RG 75, Organization Division, Carson Indian Agency, Bowler to LaVatta, February 1, 1939].

### EARLY PROBLEMS

In addition to the delays caused by the Washington Office, there were other problems in the early years of the Yomba Reservation in the effort to help the assignees increase their cattle herds. The amount of grazing land on the reservation was small, so it was necessary to secure permits to graze cattle on Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands surrounding the reservation. By 1942 the Tribal Council had Forest Service permits to graze 1,060 head of cattle and BLM permits to graze 730 head (San Bruno, Box B163, Folder "Miscellaneous," "Yomba Shoshone Reservation"). But there was much frustration in reaching this point, and occasional fears that even these limited grazing rights could not be secured.

The first attempts to take over grazing permits of the ranchers who were being bought out were not entirely successful. In August 1938 it was discovered that the owner of one of the two first ranches purchased had not grazed animals on the public domain since 1928 and had no water rights in the area. Consequently, no ap-

plications for permits were filed in his name (San Bruno, Box B163, Folder, "Grazing, not Nat. Forest . . .," M. L. Hannifan to Mr. Brooks, August 26, 1938; Millin to Don C. Foster, July 6, 1938; Bowler to Millin, August 3, 1938). At one point the regional Forester for the BIA, who was in Salt Lake City, reported that a large sheep outfit had purchased a ranch in the Reese River Valley and might file for large amounts of grazing land ahead of the Indians (San Bruno, Box B163, Folder "Miscellaneous," Millin to Foster, July 6, 1938).

Another problem concerned water rights. Most of the public domain lands on which grazing rights were sought and secured lie to the west and south of the Yomba Reservation. This area is very dry, and is not suitable for winter grazing without watering tanks at various locations. In 1937 it was planned that the Indians might file for water rights on 30 springs and wells within western Nye County, eastern Mineral County, and northern Esmeralda County. Applications for these 30 locations had been filed by a former owner of the Doyle Ranch, but it was discovered that he had not followed through with his applications and had not used many of the springs or wells for some years; consequently, it was feared that water rights could not be secured for them (San Bruno, Box B163, Folder "Miscellaneous," Douglas Clark to E. M. Johnston, July 23, 1937). By 1942, the reservation had water rights on only 21 locations in this large area, and lack of water was restricting expansion of cattle grazing (San Bruno, Box B163, Folder "Miscellaneous," "Yomba Shoshone Reservation").

In response to lack of water for livestock, the Tribal Council and BIA sought to drill new wells or enlarge existing springs. While there was minor success with this program, lack of money prevented extensive improvement of water sources.

In 1945 Superintendent Ralph M. Gelvin sought help outside the BIA by requesting funds

from the Range Development Service to develop springs on public domain lands near the Yomba Reservation. He was turned down on the ground that the BIA had funds for "soil and moisture operations." Gelvin protested to no avail that there was not enough money available in this account (San Bruno, Box 111, Folder "Annual Narrative Report 1935-36," G. P. Howell to Gelvin, March 29, 1945, Gelvin to Howell, April 10, 1945, and Gelvin to Walter Woehlke, April 10, 1945). In 1947 there was a new request for a special allocation of \$3,000 to drill five wells to expand winter grazing for the Yomba Reservation. This letter indicated that while there were 200,000 acres of public domain in Nye County available for grazing, in practice only 40,000 acres "could be utilized for winter range due to the lack of properly located stock water structures." Although the Cattlemen's Association at Yomba had paid for drilling a new well in Gabbs Valley, it could not afford further expenditures for this purpose (San Bruno, Box B163, Folder "Grazing, not Nat. Forest . . .," Gelvin to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 5, 1947).

In spite of these difficulties, cattle production at Yomba did expand substantially, although not as much as the Indians had hoped. Indian ownership of cattle was encouraged in two ways. By July 1938 the BIA had issued 266 "repayment" cattle to 17 individuals, including 42 head from Pyramid Lake and 98 head from the Walker River Reservation. These were cattle that were to be paid for by returning to the Government some of their offspring (San Bruno, Box B162, Folder "Yomba Res. Miscell. Discription [sic] . . .," Yomba Business Committee to Superintendent Bowler, July 28, 1938). In addition, individual assignees and the Cattlemen's Association were issued loans with which to purchase cattle and horses after the first part of 1940.

By 1945 the Indian cattlemen at Yomba owned 1,537 head of cattle (San Bruno, Box

B160, "Plan of Management" for Cattlemen's Association; see also O'Harra and Strait 1946). More important, from all sources (though primarily cattle) incomes of Indians of the reservation had increased. A BIA report asserted that "per family average net income" of assignees increased from \$117 per year in 1938 to \$2,363 per year in 1945 (O'Harra and Strait 1946).

The isolation of the reservation restricted services that could be provided to them in the early years. In November 1941 the Tribal Council adopted a Law and Order Code. But this action did not bring a tribal police officer to the reservation; if necessary, one had to be summoned from the Fallon Reservation. Also, according to a 1942 report, "If court is held, it is necessary to have a judge come from some other regularly organized tribe in the Carson jurisdiction" (King and King 1942:unpaginated).

A very important organization was also established informally before adoption of a basic constitutional document, the Reese River Shoshone Livestock Association. This organization borrowed \$556.50 from the Government under a "reimbursable agreement" in 1938 in order to purchase four bulls for the assignees on the reservation. Not until seven years later did the Tribal Council formally approve this organization; on June 8, 1945, it adopted a resolution formally approving articles of incorporation of what had become the Yomba Cattlemen's Association, citing authority under the Constitution to charter "subordinate organizations." Advice on the organization of cattlemen's associations and copies of articles of incorporation from other reservations had been provided to the Carson Indian Agency in 1940 by J. E. White, the regional Credit Agent of the BIA, whose headquarters were in Salt Lake City (San Bruno, Box B160, "Yomba Livestock Asso. . . .," J. E. White to Foster, October 16, 1940).

The Cattlemen's Association was incorporated under Nevada law as a cooperative; all

20 assignees were incorporators. A set of by-laws was approved at the same time. These documents provided for annual election of five directors, who would then elect a President, Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer. The principal functions of the Cattlemen's Association were to manage the tribally-owned meadow land, to purchase and maintain good-quality bulls, to improve the quality of the range cattle owned by individual assignees, to pay the range fees for use of Forest Service and BLM grazing lands, and to organize joint activities ranging from branding, vaccinating, and dehorning to conducting the annual auction at which cattle were sold. The Association assessed members to secure income for these purposes. One of the first steps the Association took after incorporation was to apply for a \$10,500 loan to buy bulls.

Many cattle-raising activities were conducted cooperatively in the 1930s and 1940s. For example, a report in 1942 noted that

The Indians of Yomba Reservation run their herds of cattle on the range and take their turn helping see after the herd for several days at a time, or all pay their share of herding expenses if a herder is hired. At round up, branding, dehorning, and vaccinating time, they assist each other. The Indians at the upper [Doyle] ranch with the exception of one family usually work together. At haying and harvest time the Indians assist each other [King and King 1942: unpaginated].

It also was necessary to provide an infrastructure for the new reservation. Although details of this process are unclear, substantial advances were made in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Fifteen new concrete block houses were built for assignees and their families, and one of the old ranch houses was renovated for use by Indians. The houses were small; seven had three rooms, five had four rooms, and three had five rooms. Apparently the toilets were outside the houses (King and King 1942). They were built with BIA Rehabilitation funds; tribal

members were paid to work on them. Informally the device of "sweat equity" was used, although apparently that was not formally a part of housing programs at that time. On March 7, 1938 the Yomba Indian Council adopted a resolution urging members of the Tribe to "donate a portion of their labor" to complete the houses. The resolution pointed out that only about \$3,500 remained per house to complete the work, but suggested that if each member would request payment for half the time actually spent working, this money might actually be enough (San Bruno, Box B163, Folder "Yomba Reservation, Correspondence, Miscell. Business Committee").

By 1942 there were several other buildings owned by the Tribe or the Agency. A frame house containing a large meeting room and a kitchen functioned as both a community building and a school, another frame building was used as a blacksmith shop and "community repair shop," there was a concrete block granary with space for each assignee to store grain, an Agency building housed the teacher's family and also served as a dispensary and office, and evidently there were also a barn, a shed, a chicken house, a coal house, a wood house, an engine house, and a cold storage house (King and King 1942).

One of the biggest early problems is that water for homes came mostly from the Reese River or irrigation ditches; only four families had wells, and one got water from a spring. The Agency buildings and some families living nearby were served by a well. Only the Agency headquarters had electricity, provided by a generator (King and King 1942).

Two schools served the reservation in its early years and only dirt roads connected it with surrounding communities. A dirt road led through the valley and 35 miles to the north connected with U.S. Highway 50; Austin was another 15 miles north. Dirt roads led south out of the valley to Tonopah, about 90 miles away,

and Ely was 197 miles to the east. The nearest town, though small, was Ione, about eight miles to the west over the Shoshone Mountains. The Reese River Telephone Company provided telephone service to the agency and at least some families, and connected with the Bell Telephone Company of Nevada (King and King 1942).

The principal Agency employee did not live at Yomba but had headquarters at Fallon, 120 miles away. In 1942 a teacher and his housekeeper-wife were the only Agency employees living on the reservation. Medical service was provided for emergency purposes during the late 1930s by an Indian Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp in the valley, but otherwise residents were dependent on supposedly monthly visits by an Agency physician and an Agency nurse. Because of poor roads and not infrequent storms, especially in the winter, these health professionals actually averaged visits about six times a year (King and King 1942).

How effectively the residents of the Yomba Reservation actually governed themselves and how many decisions were in fact made by Agency personnel are difficult matters to determine. A report in 1942 (King and King 1942) stated that the Tribal Council had "full charge of the affairs of the reservation," but it is certain that this is an exaggeration. For one thing, some BIA activities were not even nominally under Tribal Council control. For example, in March 1940 Superintendent Foster wrote Willie Bobb, the Chairman of the Council, that he had been told that "the Tribal Council now feels that they are to run all matters at Reese River." Foster hastened to assure the Council that this was not true with respect to choosing employees for the CCC camp. Foster bluntly told Bobb:

The whole thing boils down to this, Willie, when the Government puts up the money, we will name the man to be in charge of the work and there will be no argument about this. If your tribe does not want to use this procedure,



we will use the money some where else. If your tribe wants to follow the advice of agitators and men of the type of . . . , you can expect very little assistance from the Government [San Bruno, Box B163, Folder, "Yomba Reservation/Correspondence . . ." Foster to Bobb, March 6, 1940].

Even where there was no question of tribal jurisdiction, the Carson Indian Agency sometimes interfered with a heavy hand. For example, in the spring of 1938 Superintendent Bowler sent the "Yomba Reservation Committee" a two-page letter saying that she was "very much disturbed at the reports that are reaching me relative to the dire threat to the success of your people's use of the lands purchased for them by reason of the bad attitude of one particular member of your new community." She went on to say that the Agency expected the Council to do what the majority wanted rather than to be dominated by one person, and she made it clear that "we expect you to take strong steps to control or to eliminate trouble-makers from your group." She advised them that they could not expect purchase of additional lands for the reservation unless the Agency was satisfied that the Council was behaving as the Agency expected (San Bruno, Box B163, Folder "Yomba Reservation/Correspondence," Bowler to Yomba Reservation Committee, March 23, 1938).

On the other hand, the Agency under Alida Bowler's leadership was committed in principle to the idea of Indian self-government, however much it may also have wished to enforce other policies of the BIA and respond to the survival needs of the Agency itself, and so incidents such as this probably were few and far between. Also, Yomba was a long way from Carson City, where the Agency headquarters was located, and even from Fallon. On a day-to-day basis, most decisions must have been made by the local Indians.

There is no evidence that the Tribal Council or Cattlemen's Association were reluctant to

request additional land, improvement of their winter grazing areas, or other things needed to improve their condition. For example, in July 1938, during the first agricultural season on the reservation, the Yomba Business Committee sent a request to Bowler asking for 500 head of repayment cattle, so that all families on the reservation could "get into the cattle business as soon as possible." At that time, according to the resolution, assignees owned 135 head of cattle, but most of these were owned by only four individuals. Six persons owned one or two head each, and six owned no cattle at all (San Bruno, Box B162, Folder "Yomba Res. Miscell. Discription [sic] . . . ," Yomba Business Committee to Bowler, July 28, 1938). In 1944 the Tribal Council asked that the Keough Ranch in Indian Valley be purchased for an addition to the reservation (San Bruno, Box 111, Folder "Annual Narrative Report 1935-36", Resolution of Yomba Shoshone Tribal Council, October 13, 1944).

## CONCLUSIONS

Some overall conclusions about the effectiveness of the creation of the Yomba Reservation from the standpoint of Indian goals and objectives are justified. Some of these goals have to be inferred, but it should be remembered that the BIA in this case responded specifically to requests of the Nye County Shoshone Committee for a reservation in the Reese River Valley and gave it a leading role in creating the reservation.

First, there can be no doubt that the families that moved onto the reservation increased their standards of living significantly by doing so. Many, if not most, of them had been extremely hard-working people previously, but their conditions did not allow them to rise above extreme poverty. But on the new reservation they acquired more cattle, lived in better houses, and enjoyed higher cash incomes. Further, by living on trust territory, they acquired advantages,

such as some government services and freedom from property taxes, that they had not enjoyed before. No matter how skimpy the services, this represented an advance over their previous conditions.

Second, there also is no doubt that the reservation did not provide help for as many people as needed it, that the help with establishing the cattle industry was substantially delayed by the Washington Office, and that the standards of living of its residents did not rise as fast or as far as they desired. As noted above, the "Nye County Shoshone Project" report had suggested a plan to acquire all of the ranches in the valley; at one point it was estimated that if this plan succeeded, the reservation could enable approximately 349 scattered Shoshones to become self-sustaining. Instead, by 1939 there were only 74 Indians living on the reservation, and this number rose only slightly with the addition of two more small ranches in 1940 and 1941. The other new Shoshone reservations also accommodated fewer Indians than anticipated, with the result that there were still quite a few landless Western Shoshones by the 1940s. Another problem was noted above: the livestock industry was the primary means of making a living and was limited not just by the amount of land on the reservation but also by the amount of winter grazing land with adequate water for livestock.

Third, although the Agency was somewhat aware of the wider land claims being made by many Western Shoshones, it did not pursue these nor make any allowance for them. No court had ruled at that time that the bulk of Western Shoshone lands had in fact passed into the hands of the federal government (partly because the issue had never been raised in court) but significant numbers of Western Shoshones were asserting the land claims that in the 1970s led to extensive litigation. From the standpoint of many Western Shoshones, the small reservations must have rankled even more because of

their belief that they were still the aboriginal owners of most of their former territory.

Fourth, no matter how much the BIA interfered with Indian self-government, there can be no doubt that Indians had somewhat greater control of their lives on the new reservations than they had enjoyed previously. As minorities in a wider society which was often prejudiced against them, they had almost no control over any government before adopting their own organization. While there is no specific documentation that greater self-government was an objective of the Western Shoshones involved in this case study, there is no reason to doubt that this goal was important to many, if not most, Nevada Indians.

Fifth, it is of interest to know how the creation of the reservation affected the acculturation process, but data on this are scarce. Because they had lived among Euro-Americans for decades before the reservation was created, and because the process of partial expulsion from aboriginal lands and loss of resources had forced changes in their way of life, the Western Shoshones who took assignments at Yomba in the late 1930s were different in many ways from the first members of their society to see non-Indians approximately 80 years earlier. Undoubtedly they continued to make changes after creation of the reservation; whether this process then accelerated is not known.

Today, however, it is evident that Western Shoshones are still different in many ways from White (or Black) Nevadans and that they still are identified as Western Shoshones. Indeed, the 1970s and 1980s have seen the creation of a political entity called the Western Shoshone Nation.

While it would be foolish to claim that establishment of the Yomba Reservation solved all of the previous problems of the Indians, there can be no reasonable doubt that it substantially helped some Western Shoshones. Since their previous experience with non-Indian

government and society had been one of assault upon their means of livelihood and on their right to be culturally different, the change represented by the new policy was dramatic.

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