

HELEN J. STEWART  
IN:

# DEAL WITH IT!

STORY BY  
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ILLUSTRATED BY  
THE FILLBACH BROTHERS

THE HISTORY OF THE WEST IS OFTEN FOCUSED ON THE EXPLOITS OF MEN, MEN, MEN. TAKE NEVADA HISTORY. TOTAL SAUSAGEFEST!



SURELY YOU'VE READ ABOUT THE EXPLOITS OF JOHN C. FREMONT — THE MAN WHO LITERALLY PUT LAS VEGAS ON THE MAP.



AND, OF COURSE, WE'VE ALL HEARD COUNTLESS TALES ABOUT THE MOB ERA IN LAS VEGAS...



WHETHER IT'S ABOUT BUGSY SIEGEL MUSCLING HIS WAY INTO LAS VEGAS HISTORY...



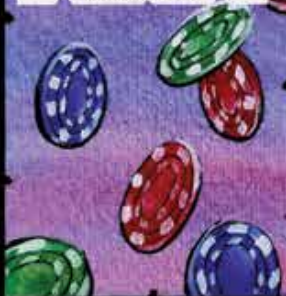
OR BRUTAL MOB ENFORCER TONY SPILOTRO LEADING BURGLARY SPREES WITH HIS "HOLE IN THE WALL GANG."



LAS VEGAS' CORPORATE ERA USHERED IN A WHOLE NEW PARADE OF RICH DUDES.



THEY REMADE SIN CITY INTO THE GLOBAL LUXURY PARTY-PALOOZA-O-RAMA IT IS TODAY.



TO BE SURE, THESE GUYS WERE TOUGH, WILY, RESOURCEFUL, ENTERPRISING...



... AND, IN MANY CASES, RUTHLESSLY SINGLE-MINDED.



BUT ONE OF THE MOST PIVOTAL—AND OFTEN OVERLOOKED—FIGURES IN THE HISTORY OF LAS VEGAS WAS A WOMAN. MEET HELEN J. STEWART.



HISTORIANS CALL HER THE FIRST LADY OF LAS VEGAS, BUT THAT DOESN'T DO HER JUSTICE. SHE WAS THE FIRST LADY OF TOTAL BAD-ASS DEALING WITH IT!



STEWART WAS A RANCHER...



...BUSINESSWOMAN...



...HISTORIAN AND MORE.



SHE OPERATED THE ORIGINAL RANCH WHERE LAS VEGAS WOULD EVENTUALLY TAKE ROOT AND SPRING FORTH.

BUT THIS ISN'T A BORING STORY ABOUT SOME BORED PIONEER LADY WITH A FEW HOBBIES! YOU SEE, HELEN J. STEWART DIDN'T INTEND TO BECOME A FOUNDING FIGURE OF LAS VEGAS. SHE HAD TO GROW INTO THE ROLE. SHE HAD TO LEARN TO DEAL WITH IT.



HER INTRODUCTION TO RANCH LIFE WAS HARSH. IT BEGAN WHEN HER HUSBAND WAS SHOT TO DEATH IN AN APPARENT MURDER PLOT BY THREE MEN, HANK PARRISH, CONRAD KIEL AND SCHYLER HENRY.



HIS RIVALS LURED ARCHIBALD STEWART TO A NEARBY RANCH AND - **BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!**



THEY SENT HELEN A NOTE THAT WAS CALLOUS, TO SAY THE LEAST: "MRS STURD SEND A TEAM AND TAKE MR. STURD AWAY HE IS DEAD, C. KIEL."



DID SHE CRY?  
**HELL NO!**



OKAY, MAYBE  
A LITTLE BIT.



FROM HER JOURNAL:  
*"I left my little children with Mr. Frazier and  
 Went as fast as a horse could carry me. The man  
 That killed my husband ran as I approached as  
 I got to the corner of the house I said O where  
 Is he O where is he and the Old Man Kiel and  
 Hank Parrish Said here he is and lifting a blanket  
 showed me the Lifeless form of my husband. I  
 knelt down beside Him took his hand placed my  
 hand upon his Heart and looked upon his face."*



EXHIBITING A QUIET STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION, HELEN J. STEWART RETRIEVED THE BODY OF HER HUSBAND. BAD-ASS POINTS: SHE HELPED LOAD HER HUSBAND'S BODY HERSELF!

SHE DIDN'T HAVE WOOD FOR A COFFIN, SO SHE HAD THE DOORS TAKEN OFF THE HOUSE TO MAKE ONE.

NOW WHAT WAS SHE GOING TO DO? SHE WAS ALONE.

SHE WAS NOW A WIDOW WITH FOUR KIDS - AND ANOTHER ON THE WAY.

INHERITANCE? WHAT INHERITANCE? HER MURDERED HUSBAND HADN'T LEFT A WILL.

AND THE PEACHES IN THE ORCHARD WOULD ROT IF THEY WEREN'T PICKED SOON.

AND WEARY TRAVELERS WERE STILL SHOWING UP AT HER DOOR, LOOKING FOR A MEAL AND A BED FOR THE NIGHT.

AND, TRUTH BE TOLD, SHE HATED RANCH LIFE. IT WAS BORING AND THERE WAS NO ONE TO TALK TO.

THE ONLY REASON SHE HAD AGREED TO LIVE HERE WAS BECAUSE HER HUSBAND HAD TOLD HER IT WAS ONLY TEMPORARY. SHE PROBABLY WANTED TO SCREAM!

BUT NO. SHE BUCKED UP AND DEALT WITH IT. HELEN PUT THE RANCH'S FINANCES IN ORDER, LEARNING AS SHE WENT ALONG.



SHE FOUND SHE HAD A KNACK FOR BUSINESS, IMPROVING THE LAND AND EXPANDING THE RANCH.

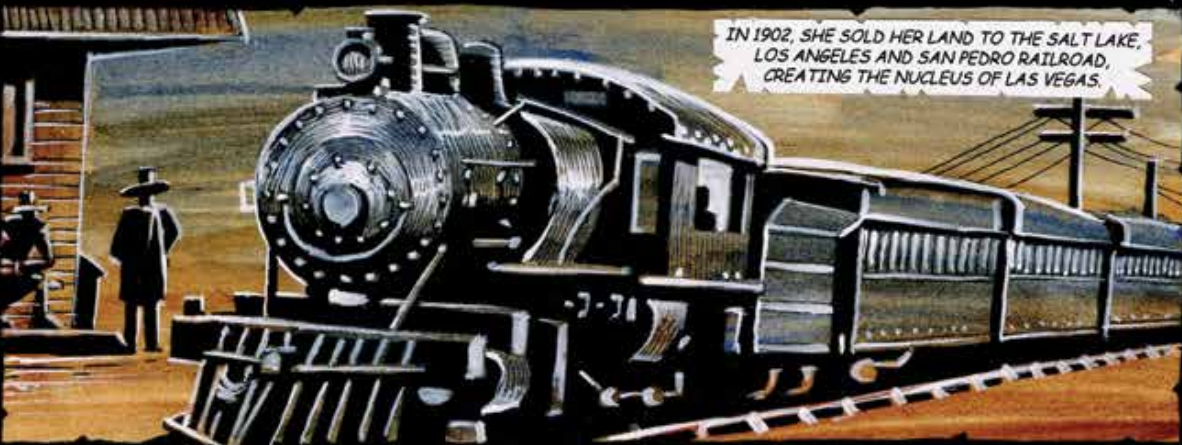
SHE BECAME SOMETHING OF A REAL ESTATE EXPERT, TOO. SENSING THAT LAS VEGAS WOULD BE A REAL CITY SOMEDAY, SHE BEGAN BUYING LAND AROUND HER RANCH. BY 1890, SHE WAS THE LARGEST LANDOWNER IN THE COUNTY.



ISOLATION WASN'T A PROBLEM, EITHER. SHE FORMED MANY STRONG FRIENDSHIPS, INCLUDING WITH PAIUTE WOMEN IN THE AREA, AMASSING A COLLECTION OF THEIR BASKETS THAT WAS LATER PRIZED BY HISTORIANS. SHE BECAME THE TOWN'S POSTMASTER IN 1893.



IN 1902, SHE SOLD HER LAND TO THE SALT LAKE, LOS ANGELES AND SAN PEDRO RAILROAD, CREATING THE NUCLEUS OF LAS VEGAS.



BUT STEWART DIDN'T JUST CASH OUT LIKE SOME DOT-COM MILLIONAIRE AND SIT AROUND DRINKING CHAMPAGNE. AFTER BUILDING A SWEET NEW HOUSE, SHE STUCK AROUND LAS VEGAS. FROM A ONCE-REMOTE RANCH STIRRED THE YOUNG HEART OF A REAL COMMUNITY, SHE WANTED TO BUILD ON TO THAT.



SUCCESS HAD AFFORDED HER THE TIME AND RESOURCES TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE TOWN'S BUDDING CIVIC LIFE. SHE DONATED LAND FOR THE LAS VEGAS GRAMMAR SCHOOL.



SHE HELPED FOUND CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, AND WAS THE FIRST WOMAN TO SERVE ON THE CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD.



PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, SHE WAS A CHARTER MEMBER OF THE MESQUITE CLUB, A CIVIC ORGANIZATION THAT DID EVERYTHING FROM IMPROVE THE ROADS TO ESTABLISH THE LIBRARY SYSTEM.



SHE CONTRIBUTED TO HISTORY BOOKS ABOUT SOUTHERN NEVADA AND HELPED FOUND THE LOCAL BRANCH OF THE NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.



HER LONGTIME FRIEND DELPHINE SQUIRES PROBABLY PUT IT BEST:

*"Her frail little body housed an Indomitable will, a wonderful strength of purpose, and a Courageous heart, and she Faced death as she had faced the Every day problems of life, with Sublime fortitude."*



IN FACT, SQUIRES WAS THE ONE WHO DECLARED HELEN J. STEWART THE "FIRST LADY OF LAS VEGAS."

IN OTHER WORDS, A TOTAL DEALING WITH IT BAD-ASS.



FILLBACH BROTHERS 2013