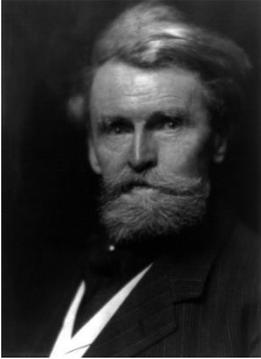


THE MOB MUSEUM

National Museum of Organized Crime & Law Enforcement®

The Las Vegas Townsite

William A. Clark



William A. Clark (1839-1925) was a politician and business owner. He owned mines, banks, newspapers, and railroads in Montana, Arizona, and Nevada.

In 1902, he and his brother J. Ross Clark decided to build a new railroad line from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles. They chose Las Vegas, Nevada as the halfway point and began building the train tracks.

Clark bought over 1,800 acres of land and water in the Las Vegas valley for \$55,000. Clark's San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake railway was completed on January 30, 1905.

The Townsite & Auction

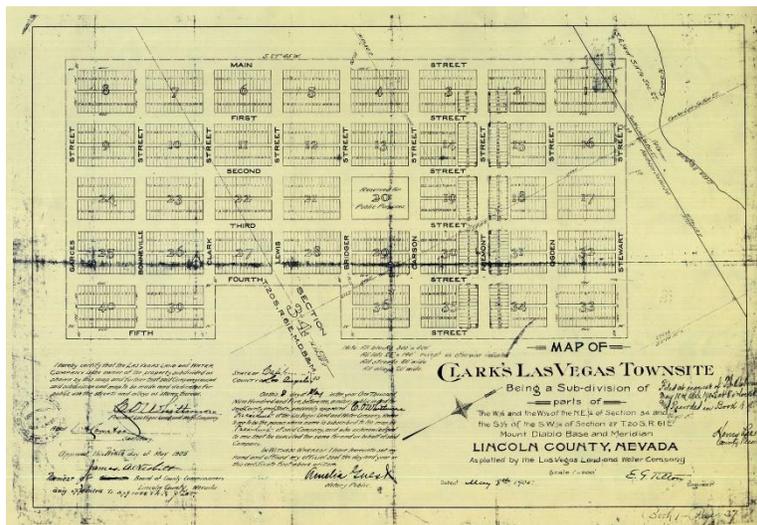
When Clark purchased the land in Las Vegas, less than 25 people lived in the area.

To encourage people to move to the new town, Clark began to lay out a townsite. He advertised a land auction to sell land in this new town. He advertised the auction in Salt Lake and Los Angeles. He offered cheap train fares for \$16 from Los Angeles and \$20 from Salt Lake. He also offered to refund the fares for anyone who purchased lots.

On May 15 and 16, he hosted the land auction. Over those two days, about half of his 1,200 lots were sold. Clark made \$265,000. Many people began to lay out their new businesses that very day!



William A. Clark and party on a private rail car. Photo courtesy of UNLV Special Collections.



Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Why did William A. Clark develop the town of Las Vegas?
2. Why do you think William A. Clark wanted more people to move to the area once he finished the railroad?
3. How did William A. Clark get people to move to Las Vegas?
4. If William A. Clark purchased the land for \$55,000 and sold half of the lots for \$265,000, how much of a profit did he make from selling those lots?

Optional Activity: Make Your Own Townsite

Clark created the town of Las Vegas out of nothing. When he arrived, there were few people and even fewer businesses. Imagine yourself in his shoes and create a new townsite.

1. Brainstorm what types of businesses, services, and buildings your new town will need. What are **necessities**? Would towns have different needs in 1905 than they have now?
2. Make a list of what your town needs to succeed. Some ideas include: homes, stores, schools, parks, a police station, and a library.
3. Once you decide what your town needs, draw and decorate a map of your new town. **Remember!** Every map needs a title, key, scale, and labels.