

Hunt Janin and Ursula Carlson. *Historic Nevada Waters. Four Rivers, Three Lakes, Past and Present*. Jefferson, NC; McFarland Publishing, www.mcfarland-books.com, 2019. 216 pp., illustrations, chronology, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. US \$55, paper, ISBN: 978-1-4766-7261-8. (E-book available.)

Eight states in the USA make up the Mountain West region: Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico. Those states have an arid climate and water is the most precious commodity. With the driest climate of all, Nevada is viewed as all desert, especially by the majority of visitors who only go to its principal city, Las Vegas. But most of northern and central Nevada is mountainous and is fed by rivers and streams, while western Nevada has several lakes. In *Historic Nevada Waters. Four Rivers, Three Lakes, Past and Present*, authors Hunt Janin and Ursula Carlson detail the laws, environment, and social history of the rivers and lakes that feed northern and central Nevada.

Some understanding of water law in the American mountain west is necessary to understand this book. Because of their arid climate, the water that enters each of the mountain west states belongs to that state. While state laws vary somewhat, in general, a landowner with property by a watercourse—for example, a stream—does not have the right to take water from that stream. Rather, that landowner must apply to the state for permission to use that water (a water right.) The key to obtaining a water right is, generally, beneficial use of the water (for example, irrigation is a beneficial use of that water whereas water used in a decorative fountain is not beneficial.) Equally important is “first in time, first in right,” meaning that water rights can be sold but priority

in competing claims to water runs back to the first granted right to that water. Needless to say, water law in the American mountain west is VERY complicated and the subject of much litigation.

It is against this background of aridity, complicated laws, litigation, and history, that Janin and Carlson relate the stories of four Nevada rivers—the Walker, the Truckee, the Carson, and the Humboldt—and three Nevada lakes—Lake Tahoe (often featured in the famous 1960s western television show *Bonanza*), Pyramid Lake, and Walker Lake. The book starts out describing the rivers but then segues into Nevada history—the native tribes, exploration of the then-wilderness, transportation and communication, economic history of the famed Comstock Lode, which brought miners to the land, how the railroads brought immigrants from the east to what became Nevada, the contributions that Chinese immigrants made to creating Nevada, and a chapter on the more recent role of the Basque immigrants to Nevada who were renowned sheepherders and enriched Nevada’s diversity. For example, the family of one Basque shepherd, Dominique Laxalt, is famous for one son, Robert, who became a renowned writer, including writing the American Bicentennial History of Nevada, and his brother Paul Laxalt, who served the state as Lieutenant Governor, Governor, and a U.S. Senator from Nevada.

A chapter on Nevada water law follows and this is sufficiently detailed to relate the major provisions of Nevada water law while not bogging the reader down in legalistic detail. After that, the authors describe the various water projects, legal challenges, government agencies established, legal agreements formed, descriptions of Pyramid Lake, Lake Tahoe, Walker Lake, and because of the dry climate that firms Nevada

soil, the occasional floods that these rivers cause in years of heavy snowpack runoff and some unusually high rainfall. The reader interested in climatology and environmental issues will find these chapters of interest.

Interspersed with the water narrative are biographies of the men and women who were famous in along the rivers and lakes described in this book: the famed American author, Mark Twain, spent time in the mining camps of Nevada; explorers such as Alexander von Humboldt, Kit Carson (for whom Nevada's capitol, Carson City, is named) and John C. Fremont, a renowned native American basket maker, Dat Lo La Lee, Julia Bulette, a famed brothel owner, public servants such as William Sharon, Francis Newlands, and Paul Laxalt, all U.S. Senators from Nevada, and others, male and female, appear. The inclusion of these individuals adds a human dimension to the narrative.

The authors close with discussions of environmental issues, climate change and population growth, and what the future holds for these rivers and lakes. For many years Nevada has been a high population growth state, primarily in the Las Vegas area, but also in northern Nevada—the Reno-Sparks, Carson City and Lake Tahoe areas. Without more attention paid to the issues caused by excessive growth, the future for these rivers and lakes is not promising.

The authors clearly care about the state of Nevada and its water. The writing is easy to read, striking a balance between too much detail and not enough. The result is a surprisingly enjoyable and readable book about a seemingly narrow topic.

The authors themselves term this book, “multifaceted,” (4) and it certainly is that. Combining the history of Native Americans, exploration, economic

history, legal history, hydrology, and environmental concerns, this book is for students of the American west and of Nevada particularly.

Robert L. Shoop  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

John McKay. *Sovereign of the Seas 1637: A Reconstruction of the Most Powerful Warship of its Day*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2020. 296 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography. US \$68.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-52676-629-8. (E-book available.)

This book describes the author's graphical reconstruction of the seventeenth-century English warship *Sovereign of the Seas*. The ship was remarkable in that it was the first to mount 100 guns, was the largest of its kind at the time, was lavishly decorated, and was also extraordinarily expensive. These attributes attracted great attention during the ship's life and after and this is certainly not the first attempt to render the vessel in graphic detail. The history and principal documentary and visual sources—often contradictory—are explained in the first three chapters before the author lays out the basis of his reconstruction more thoroughly. The following twelve chapters cover the hull design and construction, fittings and internal arrangements, decorations, masts, sails and rigging, ordnance and boats. Each of these chapters refers the reader to the appropriate plates showing the reconstruction and, while it is a big book, they are designed to be read concurrently. The graphical reconstruction itself is presented as 68 black and white plates taking up much of the latter half of the book and 10 full colour illustrations in a centre section. The drawings are superbly executed and demonstrate