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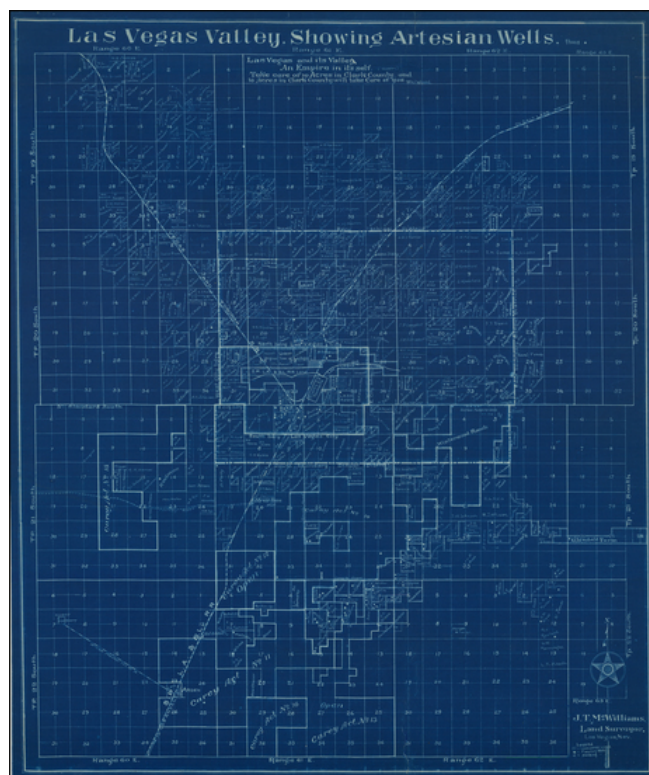
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Las Vegas Valley, Showing Artesian Wells

Stock#: 63109
Map Maker: McWilliam
Date: 1910 - 1920
Place: Las Vegas
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 21 x 25.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

"Las Vegas and its Valley -- An Empire in its's Self" -- JT McWilliams Map of Las Vegas and Vicinity

Rare early cadastral map of Las Vegas, Nevada, drawn by "J.T. McWilliams, Land Surveyor, La Vegas, Nev.", one of the two earliest real estate promoters of the modern Las Vegas area.

The focal point of the land, at its center, are the lands of the "Original Town of Las Vegas" on the North Side of Las Vegas Creek, and "Clark's LV Townsite." Surrounding the two town sites and encompassing the larger area is an irregular rectangular area delineated as "Las Vegas City," with West, North, South and East boundaries noted. Beyond this rectangle, a larger rectangle denote the "School District" boundary, which may relate to the establishment of the first school in the area in 1902, which was later renamed Clark County School in 1911. This would become the epicenter of the future city of Las Vegas over the course of the next several decades, as Las Vegas grew from the original 240 acre Las Vegas Ranch to a future urban metropolis.



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The map is filled with early land owner names, railroad lines, the location of wells and other important information.

The present map is one of the earliest surviving maps of Las Vegas, drawn by one of its most important promoters and land surveyors. At the time the map was created, Las Vegas had approximately 100 artesian wells, and the success of McWilliams efforts to promote his land relied upon these wells.

As noted below, McWilliams, along with William Clark, were the first two promoters to launch real estate ventures which would become the modern city of Las Vegas, with Williams site failing for lack of reliable water.

As noted in *A Cartographic Journey through Las Vegas History: Tracing the Las Vegas Landscape through Maps*:

As construction of the SP, LA & SL railroad line into the Las Vegas Valley began in summer 1904, a crude tent settlement quickly grew just west of the Las Vegas Ranch. As the tracks reached Las Vegas and train service was established in late October of that year, engineer J.T. McWilliams, owner of the tent settlement, officially registered his town site at the Lincoln County courthouse in Pioche. With the rapid growth of the McWilliams' Las Vegas Townsite on the west side of the railroad tracks . . . , it was left to the railroad to establish its own town site just east of the tracks. . . . Competition between the two sites ensued, and although the McWilliams' Townsite was the first to include businesses such as a bank, general stores, drug stores, furniture stores, and blacksmiths, it eventually could not compete with Clark's Las Vegas Townsite for one very important reason: water. The railroad owned the water rights to the Stewart Ranch and McWilliams had to make do with whatever wells he and other residents could dig on the property. Many of the buildings on the McWilliams' Townsite were later destroyed by fire in September 1905. . . .

* * *

*It is probable that **J.T. McWilliams' map of the "Las Vegas Valley Showing Artesian Wells"** . . . from 1920 may have been used as a means to promote agricultural settlement in the area. Just below the title are the captions "Las Vegas and its Valley An Empire in its self" and the even more telling slogan -- "Take care of 10 acres in Clark County and 10 acres in Clark County will take care of you." Scattered throughout the map are symbols representing pumping and flowing wells, as well as shading designating cultivated land in the Las Vegas Valley. Also of interest are the large tracts of "Carey Act" land marked "open" that are strewn*



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throughout the southern portion of the map; Highway 91, the future Las Vegas Strip, is noted on the map as the "Federal Aid Highway." In addition, property ownership is detailed on the map, providing an interesting glimpse into who the city's (and surrounding valley's) largest landowners were just fifteen years after its founding. One other curious detail is that the map's creator, land surveyor J.T. McWilliams, continues to mark his settlement as the "Original Town of Las Vegas" while Clark's Las Vegas town site is marked as "Clark's LV Town Site." A minor detail, but one that might have led potential settlers to believe that his was the legitimate town site!

Las Vegas History

The first settlement in the Las Vegas area was a Mormon Mission establish at the direction of Brigham Young in 1855, as part of the Mormon Corridor between San Bernardino and Salt Lake City. However, by 1858, the settlement had failed. The next chapter of its early history was under Octavius Decatur Gass, who with two partners took over the abandoned Mormon Mission in 1865, establishing the Las Vegas Ranch. Financial issues between 1879 and 1881 resulted in the transfer of the Ranch to Archibald Stewart, a rancher from Bristol, Nevada.

Beginning in the early 1880s, the General Land Office began surveys of then Lincoln County, with the land divided into sections, townships and ranges for homesteading. In 1902, the Las Vegas Ranch was purchased by the the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad, then being built across southern Nevada. The railroad was a project of Montana Senator William Andrews Clark. As noted in *A Cartographic Journey . . .*

By 1900, the Stewart Ranch's prime location (along with its proximity to water and timber) within the Las Vegas Valley had also made it attractive to the two companies vying for the chance to build the first railroad line into southern Nevada. Although the Oregon Short Line was the first to option the property for sale in June 1901, it was Senator William Clark of Montana whose San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake line successfully secured the ranch property (and springs) for \$55,000 in October 1902.

* * *

After much publicity and preparation, the SP, LA & SL offered the lots in "Clark's Las Vegas Townsite," initially slated for sale by application, at auction on May 15, 1905, owing to the overwhelming number of interested parties. The blistering hot day saw over a thousand



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bidders (many from Los Angeles) vying for the choicest lots in the town site. And while not all of the 1200 lots on offer sold that day, most generally view the day as the birth of the city of Las Vegas. . . An official map of Clark's Las Vegas town site . . . notarized on May 8, 1905 just seven days prior to the auction, shows the layout of the forty city blocks as platted by the Las Vegas Land and Water Company, a subsidiary of the SP, LA & SL Railroad. The proximity of the Las Vegas Creek to the town site (running through the map in the northwest corner) is obvious; not so obvious to the casual observer is the fact that all liquor sales were limited to Block 16 (neatly laid out on First Street between Ogden and Stewart Streets) which soon led to its rather unsavory reputation as the "red light district" of early Las Vegas.

Early Las Vegas certainly gave little indication of its promising future as a resort city; its promise in those early days was centered on its value as railroad center (it was also the only icing station for the railroad between Salt Lake and San Bernardino), and its plentiful water supply, much of it from artesian wells sunk throughout the city. In fact, in those early days, the city's agricultural potential was widely promoted in newspapers and Chamber of Commerce publications. Boosters proclaimed that not only the water supply, but also the soil and climate were ideal for most of the crops grown in Southern California.

Rarity

OCLC locates a single copy (also blue print) at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Detailed Condition:

Several minor tears, repaired on verso.