



Policing Las Vegas: A History of Law Enforcement in Southern Nevada

Denny Griffin

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After being established in 1905 as a railroad town, most of Las Vegas' population was made up of tough railroaders, ranchers, and miners who worked, drank, and fought hard. Sam Gay, the first police chief, as well as the first elected county sheriff, broke up the numerous scuffles by grabbing the combatants by the scruff of their necks and banging their heads together—it was the beginning of a long legacy of law and order in America's most explosive boomtown.

Over the years, Las Vegas left behind its rough and tumble beginnings to become the gambling and entertainment capital of the world. Naturally, the influx of residents and visitors—and their money—brought crime. From prostitutes to street gangs, mobsters to drug dealers, robbers to cheats, Sin City has seen it all. And law-enforcement efforts have had to adapt accordingly.

Policing Las Vegas follows the evolution of law enforcement in Las Vegas and Clark County from the days of night watchmen and cops who carted drunks to jail on horseback to today's acclaimed Metropolitan Police Department. The transition wasn't always smooth. There were plenty of power struggles, political battles, and rogue cops. But there were also many acts of valor and heroism, and a number of officers made the ultimate sacrifice.

This book is filled with stories about the colorful characters and events on both sides of Las Vegas law enforcement: cops and criminals, deeds and misdeeds. They're drawn from history, legend, and the personal accounts of many people who policed Las Vegas. *Policing Las Vegas* also contains more than 100 photographs, some of which are being made public for the first time.



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