DEVALS
Will Reign
HOW NEVADA BEGAN
Sally Zanjani
“Remember that the outcomes were not foreordained—or, at least, they did not seem so to those who lived through them. With the benefit of hindsight, we may conclude that strong, fundamental forces produced inevitable results, but to the men of the 1850s, a broad range of possibilities—some of them quite mad to our eyes—seemed not merely visionary but likely. To study the early settlers, then, is not only to trace the lives they lived in this remote frontier outpost and the conflicts between them but also, and perhaps most important, to consider the variety and enormity of their ambitions. What Nevada did to them is a matter of record. What they expected of Nevada is the subtler issue that shades and defines their lives.”

From Devils Will Reign

Praise for Devils Will Reign

“Reading any book by Sally Zanjani is a pleasure, and this one is no exception. Dr. Zanjani once again has written a marvelous story combined with intelligent analysis and ample research, focusing on a subject in Nevada’s history that has long needed attention. No modern work has looked in depth at the years between the first trading post in what is now Nevada and the birth of Nevada Territory. This is a unique and welcome study.”

—Michael Green, co-author of Las Vegas: A Centennial History

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA PRESS
Nevada entered the Union in 1864 as the thirty-sixth state, a mere two decades after John Charles Frémont and his party undertook the first official American exploration of the Great Basin. The years between were exceptionally eventful—gold was discovered in California, the debate over slavery in the territories made the political future of the Far West a critical issue, and the Mormon establishment in Utah aroused national suspicion about the sect’s ambitions—giving the sparsely populated eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada an importance it probably would not have had in less turbulent times.

In 1849, more than 22,000 people traveled the emigrant trails across the Great Basin, and soon Mormons from Utah set up a trading station in the Carson Valley to profit from the emigrant trade and anchor the western periphery of what their leader, Brigham Young, envisioned as a Mormon inland empire. Miners in Gold Canyon (just south of what is now Virginia City) and settlers in the Carson Valley were pushing Native Americans out of their ancient homelands and vying with one another for control of choice land and rudimentary local governments.

In *Devils Will Reign*, acclaimed historian Sally Zanjani recounts the momentous early history of the territory that became Nevada, weaving the colorful saga of its rowdy frontier settlements into the larger story of national political crises and economic ambitions, rapid development in California, and antipathy toward the polygamous Mormons. Here are intrepid frontiersmen; beleaguered Native Americans; zeal-
ous Mormons; colorful characters like the Grosh brothers, who were the first to recognize that the heavy black ore that interfered with gold mining in the Virginia Range was actually a remarkably rich deposit of silver; and farmers including a group of African Americans who successfully settled in the Carson Valley.

Zanjani covers the lives of the pioneers, including women and their families, as well as the impact of the Comstock silver bonanza and the tenuous, halting efforts of the region’s residents to create a territorial, then a state government. Seldom has the process of western settlement and government-making been described with such detail and insight, or in such a readable, absorbing fashion.

Sally Zanjani is a member of the Department of Political Science at the University of Nevada, Reno. She is a former president of the Mining History Association and the author of eight books on the history of Nevada and the West, including The Glory Days of Goldfield, Nevada (University of Nevada Press) and a biography of Sarah Winnemucca.
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