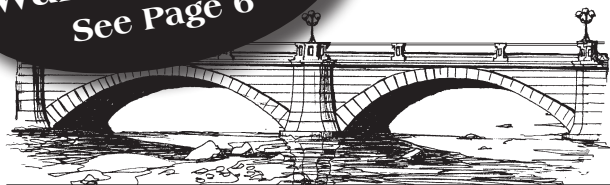


July
Walking Tours!
See Page 6



Historic Reno PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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FootPrints

Dedicated to Preserving and Promoting Historic Resources in the Truckee Meadows through Education, Advocacy and Leadership.

vol. 14 no. 3 ❖ Summer 2011

The Lure of Neon: An Interview with Will Durham

by Debbie Hinman

Will Durham collects art—big art. Tattered roadside signs with flickering neon tubes and sun-faded paint may be an eyesore to some, but to Will they are things of beauty.

Will's fascination with neon dates from his childhood. "I've always liked lights," Will states. "Like Christmas lights, just the glow and the warmth, they set a mood." Growing up in Reno near the center of town, Will recalls having trouble sleeping. The distant glow of the neon flickering beyond his bedroom window at night reminded him that there were things happening elsewhere, he says, and that he wasn't alone in the dark.

It was a special treat going to the Granada Theater as a child of six or seven, but it wasn't the movie that Will remembers—it was the ride afterwards. From West First Street through the center of town to the arch, the technicolor neon wonderland awed and amazed him. Even at that age, Will recalls the Mapes cowboys and the dazzling Primadonna ladies on their perches, far above the street, icons of another age. Today those Mapes cowboys reside in his collection.

In addition to the lights and colors, the clean lines of the neon designs appeal to Will. His love for neon didn't grow into a desire to collect until about 16 years ago when he saw a sign in an eclectic Seattle shop called *Ruby Montana's Pinup Pony*. The sign was from a Chinese restaurant, the Chop Suey House, featuring the stereotypical Chinese man with a pigtail. Will was drawn to the simple lines and the color, and it reminded him of the neon surrounding him in his early years in Reno.

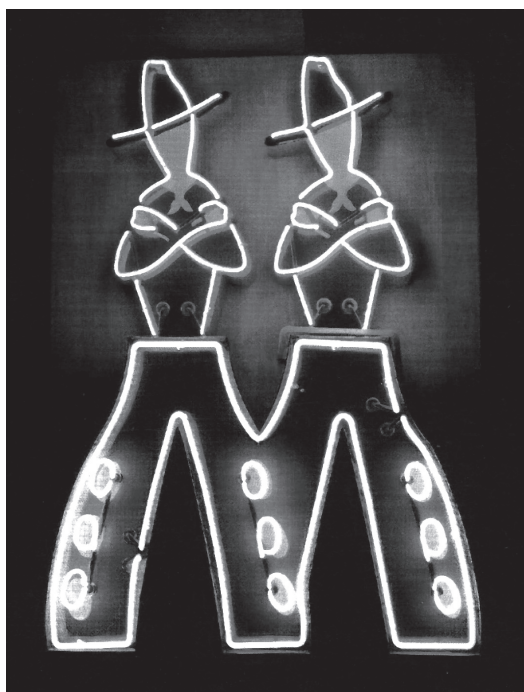
Durham reflected how so many iconic Reno landmarks were being torn down. Reno's history was disappearing before his eyes. Lost forever were Harolds Club, numerous small motels and businesses on Fourth Street and throughout Reno's core, and the Mapes Hotel's future was uncertain.

Saddened by the changes, it occurred to Will that perhaps he could in some way save remnants of this former era by saving the signs. It wasn't a conscious decision to begin a collection, Will relates. "It was more like no one was doing it and if I didn't try, they would be melted down and end up as a Honda chassis. I felt it was up to me to save them."

Will currently has about 30 signs, but some of the signs have many parts, such as the Nevada Club letters, which are four feet tall, with neon and bulb lights. The Harolds Club sign has seven letters with each letter seven feet in diameter. In addition to these and the Mapes cowboys mentioned earlier, Will has other signs from the Mapes and Nevada Club, the latter featuring Bucky Buckaroo, a sort of "mascot" of the longtime casino, his face in the shape of the state of Nevada on legs clad in furry chaps ending in tiny boots and a hat perched on the northeast corner of the state. He also has a sign from Parker's Western

Wear, the Buffalo Bar in Sparks, Reno's Holiday Hotel, the Merry Wink Motel in Washoe Valley and neon plumes from the Flamingo Hotel.

Some of his collection items, as with the Holiday sign, are actual porcelain. The porcelain signs produced in the 1930s and 1940s, says Will, were heavier and of better quality and



The Mapes Hotel twin cowboys, whose chaps form an "M" for Mapes. Courtesy Will Durham.

Continued on page 2

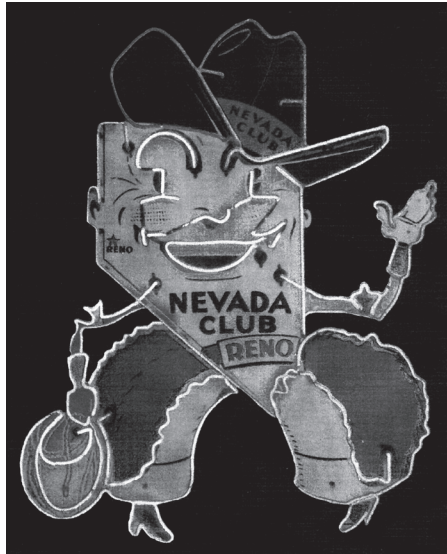
The Lure of Neon (continued)

Continued from page 1

can be polished to look like new again. Will calls his collection “The Light Circus,” an apropos term capturing the magic of lights and action beneath a circus Big Top.

The 37-year-old Reno native has a natural soft spot for signs that were once a part of his hometown’s cityscape but his collection is not limited to local memories. He has an animated sign from the El Rancho in Wells, Nevada depicting a gambler with a moving arm, the Branding Iron neon from Elko, and signs from Las Vegas properties including the Domino Motel and the El Cholo Café, one of the first Mexican restaurants in Nevada. Will also has a few signs from California and even Tijuana.

Will admits to loving “the thrill of the hunt,” the process of seeking out the signs and trying to obtain them. As their popularity has increased, individuals are buying them for their own purposes. While Will does not feel he is in any way “entitled” to them, he feels they are far more effective as a collection. He also feels Nevada signs belong in Nevada. Another impediment to his collecting is the occasional neon owner’s lack of interest in preserving the local iconic signage. While Will leaves his number with an offer to purchase at some of the sign locations, he does not always hear from the owner. One even



Bucky Buckaroo's face is the shape of the state of Nevada in this Nevada Club neon sign. Courtesy Will Durham.

refused to sell a particularly desirable sign, saying he had decided to just blow it up as a publicity stunt, much to Will’s horror and consternation.

Will lives in Reno with his wife Nadia and baby daughter Ellie. He is fortunate that his parents and wife are supportive of his efforts, as are his friends, some of whom offer storage space for this unwieldy collection. Will is learning to renovate the signs himself, to rewire the transformers and to remove layers of faded paint to reveal the unblemished porcelain beneath.

Believing that a display of these bits of history would be a big draw in Reno for this year’s Artown, Will sent out sponsorship packets to many of the downtown properties, but as of yet has gotten little response. He is disappointed but will continue to try and interest businesses in his project. If all goes well for Will in July, The Light Circus will be displayed at the Montage Condominiums at 225 N. Sierra St. If that venue doesn’t work, Will plans to produce a one night show to treat Reno to at least a portion of this fabulous collection of “glowing” history.

One entity that has been very supportive of Will is the Nevada Museum of Art. In fact, the Mapes cowboys will be on display there beginning Tuesday, June 14 and on Friday, July 1 at noon, Will is scheduled to give a museum Art Bite presentation on neon and the cowboys.

Will’s eventual goal is to have a museum downtown to house his collection but for now he has what he terms a “pop-up museum” to display his Light Circus. As he puts it, “they’ve done their service outdoors and now they need to be inside, protected from the elements.”

Will intends to continue collecting and preserving these pieces of Nevada’s history. When asked if this was a hobby or an obsession Will responded thoughtfully, “It’s more like I don’t know how not to do it.” We can all be glad of that. 

Information for this article came from interviews with Will Durham. More information about “The Light Circus” is on Facebook.

Debbie Hinman is a HRPS Tour Guide, on the HRPS Editorial Board, and a past HRPS Board member.



Neon sign from The Buffalo Bar in Sparks, Nevada. Courtesy Will Durham.



Will Durham with his Light Circus neon in the background. Courtesy Nadia Durham.

Neon's Beginnings and History in Nevada

*Excerpts taken from Nevada Historical Society online Neon Nights Exhibit;
originally written by Peter Bandurraga, past NHS Director*

A distinctive symbol of the Silver State, neon — like jazz — is part of the culture America has presented to the world. Rather simple in concept, neon is composed of an electrically-charged gas enclosed in a glass tube. But the glass tubes may be bent into practically any shape, turning neon into liquid fire. Since neon was created, people have been fascinated by it for many reasons. The infinite variety of shapes it can assume, the subtle glow of its light, the jewel-like quality of its colors are all among the causes for its appeal. Today nostalgia is added to that list.

The origins of neon light are European. The British chemist Sir William Ramsay discovered the gas neon late in the late 1800s. Nikola Tesla, an Austrian-American inventor, is credited with the first application of neon lighting. It was in 1910, however, that the Frenchman Georges Claude perfected an electrode to charge the gas and patent the process. In 1923, Earl C. Anthony, an automobile dealer from Los Angeles, visited Paris and was so excited by the new signs that were all the rage that he ordered two to take home. They spelled out "Packard" in blue letters with orange edging. When the signs were first lit up, they literally stopped traffic on Wilshire Boulevard. The French had seen neon as somehow symbolic of American energy in the Jazz Age. Anthony brought it to the U.S. Its first great flowering was on Broadway in New York City. Times Square overnight became the brightest, most lit-up place on earth.

The California beginnings of American neon are important to note. Many elements of the country's popular culture have been nurtured in the Golden State and then spread along the roads and highways as well as by motion pictures, advertising and television. For Nevada, close proximity has always meant California's life style has had a strong influence on the more sparsely-populated Silver State. The shining art of neon is

part of that popular culture that has come to Nevada and become essential to our way of life.

Neon came to Nevada just after the first interstate highways were built. The first highway to be completed was the Victory Highway — later called U.S. 40 and now-days Interstate 80. The first documented neon sign in Nevada was for the People's Market in Elko in 1928.

Neon is as characteristic of the Silver State as slot machines and sagebrush.

Electric signs, composed of hundreds of incandescent bulbs, had begun to replace the older painted signs a few years before. *The Nevada State Journal* of January 21, 1924 blazoned forth, "Great White Way in Reno Shows Growth, Many New Electric Signs Are Installed in City." In Reno, the completion of both the Victory Highway and the Lincoln Highway (later U.S. 50) was the occasion for a grand Transcontinental Highway Exposition, preparations for which included the erection of the first arch across Virginia Street. In 1929, "Reno, The Biggest Little City in the World" was placed on the arch. In 1934, the incandescent bulbs were replaced with neon as an economy measure.

The 1930s and 1940s were a golden age for neon sign-making in Nevada and the whole country. Neon covered the fronts of nearly every store, restaurant, hotel and casino with bent glass tubing glowing in the dark. At first the signs were very much like their painted predecessors, showing representations of the products sold or proclaiming the name of the business. But when the creative artists grew tired of looking to the past for their inspiration, they took their cues from the

styles that were current: Art Deco, ZigZag and Streamline Moderne. The medium of neon itself became as indicative of the age as the styles it utilized. Commercial Row, Virginia Street, Center Street, Second Street in Reno all glowed.

From the 1920s on the automobile rapidly grew to dominate the patterns of civic life in America, especially in such western states as California and Nevada. The main arteries became the focal points of urban development, and signs were designed to reach passersby through their windshields. They had to be bright, and they had to be instantly effective. In the 1920s advertising became the driving force of American business. Getting the message across was the most important thing to do. Neon fit the bill perfectly.

After the legalization of gambling in 1931, clubs in Reno very cautiously began calling public attention to their presence. It was not long before Virginia and Center Street, between Second and Commercial Row, the area author Walter Van Tilburg Clark called the "ersatz jungle," were lined with fantastic images proclaiming the pleasures to be found in the Ship and Bottle, the Dog House, the Club Fortune, the Bank Club and the Palace Club. Both the main highways—US 40 and 395—and the back alleys—Douglas and Lincoln—had their share of neon glow.

The energy crises of the 1970s seemed to be the bearers of doom for neon. Where thousands of artists and craftspeople had been creating neon in the 1930s, only a few hundred still kept it up by 1980. Once merely the proletarian worker for American advertising, neon has become an art form in its own right. In Nevada, neon found an easily-traveled avenue with the gaming and entertainment industries. Neon continues to glisten in the night sky. It is as characteristic of the Silver State as slot machines and sagebrush. 

Reno's Lovers Lane

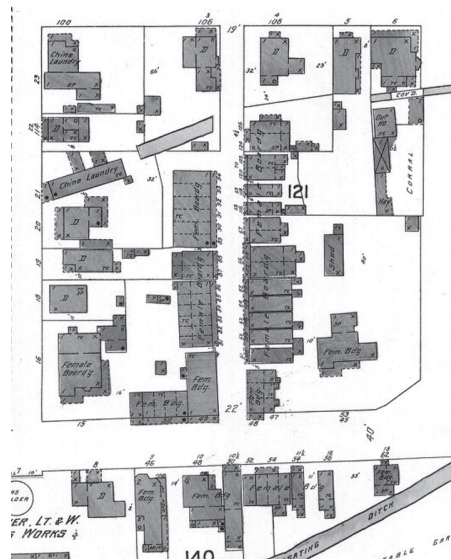
by Debbie Hinman

Editor's Note: Early newspaper references to Lovers Lane were done without an apostrophe, so we follow that policy in this article.

I grew up in Reno and until recently, was never aware that we had our own Lovers Lane right in the middle of downtown Reno. In fact, it ran between two telephone company buildings I worked in for over 15 years.

The term "Lovers Lane" for me evokes mental pictures of a winding country road, complete with a rustic fence and overhanging trees. Shy lovers walk hand in hand here, perhaps watched indulgently by a few cows munching thick, fragrant grass in a nearby meadow.

The dingy, concrete dumpster-lined alley running north/south from First to Second Streets, between Center and Lake Streets, would be the farthest thing from a Lovers Lane that I could possibly imagine. And yet that was the name of this passageway, right up into the 1970s. The Bell Telephone building formerly gracing 100 Center Street, a lovely DeLongchamps creation demolished in 1996, had been the western boundary of the alley since 1926 and the "new" Bell building adjacent to it at 195 E. First Street, built in 1958, was the eastern boundary. A "skyway" linking the two Bell buildings at the third-floor level further shaded the already creepy alley. Employees working the night shift regularly gave it a



Lovers Lane runs perpendicular to the Truckee River, and is the vertical strip with the narrow buildings marked Female Boarding. On Front Street, parallel to the river, the narrow buildings are probably Chinese prostitution houses.
Sanborn map courtesy UNR.

wide berth on their way to their cars and probably still do. But that is the present-day view. Let us roll back the clock 100+ years and see how this alley earned its name.

Mentions of Lovers Lane began appearing regularly in local newspapers in 1907. Because of its proximity to Chinatown, there were Chinese and Japanese residents along Lovers Lane. And there were certainly lovers to be found there, predominantly those for which "love" was a thriving business. The houses of ill repute lining this sector of the city were described as shacks or cabins and were frequently the sites of fires, robberies, assaults and murders, similar to any city's tenderloin district.

One of the most frequently mentioned "women's residences" was The Terrace. Also on the Lane were a restaurant, saloon and shop operated by a Japanese man named Toko, who was swiftly put out of business for not having a license for any of these activities; Toko claimed he didn't know he needed one. Opium dens also populated this area.

Since the first days of Reno, prostitution was pretty much tolerated in the town, as long as the traffic remained in the area of Front (now East First) and Second streets. Respectable citizens and women's groups objected to the trade, but law enforcement was reluctant to interfere. That is, until Reno's first long-term Sheriff entered the picture.

Charles P. Ferrel was born in Salem, Oregon in 1863 and graduated from Willamette University in 1878. He learned the horseshoeing trade and moved to Reno in 1888. He bought W. H. Caughlin's business and operated it until 1903, when he became interested in law enforcement. Ferrel was elected Sheriff in 1904, 1906, 1908 and 1910. In his 1910 book, *Notable Nevadans: Snap Shots of Sagebrushers Who Are Doing Things*, Arthur Buel writes, "Sheriff Ferrel took up his task of cleaning up Reno with a steadfast courage and he performed the job to admiration."

In November of 1907, Sheriff Ferrel, long seeking a way to remove what he termed "this evil and a dark blemish on the face of the city," found his way with a 1903 Nevada law stating that "It shall be unlawful for any owner or any other person, to keep a house of ill-fame or to rent or to let to any person whomsoever, for any length of time whatever, to be kept or used as a house of ill-fame, or resort for the purposes of prostitution, any house, room or structure situated within 400 yards of any school house or school room used for any public or common school, in the State of Nevada..." As Southside School was just a few blocks up Center Street, Lovers Lane fell within that parameter.

On a Tuesday, the Sheriff visited 141 women in the red-light district, ordering them to shut down their businesses and vacate the Lane by Saturday night. That day's *Reno Evening Gazette* reported, "Objections and pleadings were of no use and by three o'clock, every woman of the half-world knew that her illegal traffic in this city must at least be removed to a less shamefully public quarter." In an odd coincidence, the same thing would happen to the



Lovers Lane today is an unmarked alley between First and Second Streets.
Courtesy Debbie Hinman.

Reno's Lovers Lane (continued)

by Debbie Hinman

inhabitants of Chinatown just two years hence, only their exodus would be prompted without warning or legal reason by the burning of their homes.

This order, however, was not the end of the business of Lovers Lane. In June of the following year, two French women, Misses DuBois and Brunette, were arrested on a charge of running illegal houses, as was a Mr. Benoit, who also ran a saloon. Sheriff Ferrel again quoted the 1903 law and re-emphasized his commitment to driving these unsavory activities out of the downtown core. All three of these violators were found guilty and fined \$30.

Prostitution was not the only activity the Sheriff sought to eradicate. For the next twenty years or so, newspapers detailed busts of "hop joints" with arrests for opium use and public drunkenness in this downtown sector. Once Prohibition was enacted, federal agents raided many speakeasies such as the Royal Club, the Alley Club, the Shamrock Club, the Ritz Club and the Lucky Club—all located in Lovers Lane. Although Ferrel lost his job in the 1912 election, he was again elected Sheriff in 1914, 1916 and 1918. He was kept very busy prior to and on into the Prohibition Era.

In 1923, the Lane faced serious competition in the form of The Stockade, a collection of brick apartments on the north bank of the Truckee, east of Lovers Lane. Surrounded by a high wooden fence, the enterprise was permitted and regulated by the City of Reno. According to Eric Moody and Guy Rocha in their article *The Rise & Fall of the Reno Stockade*, "In 1925, Reno had the last legal redlight district of any major American city."

In 1932, the Reno City Council ordered the razing of the last row of wooden shacks in Lovers Lane, described as "once a famous alley." The article went on to say that these shacks "have remained intact and have withstood several attacks by fire as well as several attacks staged by firemen when fires have been in progress there." Because



Sketch of C.P. Farrel from the book Notable Nevadans: Snap Shots of Sagebrushers Who Are Doing Things, 1910 by Arthur Buel.

of their description as a "fire menace" and an "eyesore," the Council voted to act on Fire Chief Hawley's recommendation to destroy them. Apparently this order was never acted upon, or in full anyway, as in 1938 the fire department was called to extinguish a blaze "in one of the shacks in Lovers Lane." The effort to condemn the old buildings was described as unsuccessful.

Prostitution in the downtown core became a thing of the past for the most part with the advent of World War II. On January 7, 1942, exactly one month after Pearl Harbor, as Moody and Rocha point out, "Washoe County complied with a military request and ordered all



Sheriff C.P. Ferrel, back row center, and the staff of the sheriff's office c. 1910. Courtesy Nevada Historical Society.

redlight establishments to close." The lights went out at the Stockade forever.

Other types of businesses bore Lovers Lane addresses, such as Herman Bonta's Garage, Reno Auto Laundry, Sterling Appliance Company, and Therm-o-Matic Refrigeration Engineers. There was also a Lovers Lane entrance to the Greyhound Bus Depot. The lane also seemed to be a good place to abandon a stolen car, and notices of Lovers Lane police chases and personal robberies continued to make the newspapers. As late as 1977, the lane was mentioned as the location for a series of dumpster fires. Even in its latter years, there was always something happening in Lovers Lane.

Today, Lovers Lane bears no street sign and there is not a remnant of its sordid yet lively past. It is a utilitarian alley, with the aforementioned dumpsters, stained concrete, and usual alley litter. It has changed even since my time at the Ma Bell buildings, where there was often activity at the loading docks serving both buildings, employees coming and going, and by noontime, a delicious aroma of roast beef wafting from the back door of the Stein Hof Brau on Center Street. I walked this now nameless alley just the other day, trying to imagine shifty-eyed men darting into speakeasies and the sight of ladies of the evening receiving guests at the Terrace, or hastily closing the curtains as upright, mustachioed Sheriff Ferrel made his nightly pass down the lane. But there was nothing except a strong craving for a roast beef sandwich. 🥪

Information from this article came from Arline Laferry, docent at the Nevada Historical Society; newspaper articles from 1907-1977; "The Rise and Fall of the Reno Stockade," Eric Moody and Guy Rocha, *Nevada Magazine*, No. 2, 1978.

Debbie Hinman is a HRPS Tour Guide, on the HRPS Editorial Board, and a past HRPS Board member.



HRPS & Artown

July 2011

Historic Walking Tours



Tour cost is \$10 per person, or free to HRPS members. Walks generally last from 1½ to 2 hours. No dogs please. **Reservations are required and space is limited.** Please visit www.historicreno.org or call 747-4478 for information and reservations. **Cut-off date for reservations is the day before the tour.**

Saturday,
July 2,
9:00 a.m. NEWLANDS NEIGHBORHOOD - Enjoy an architectural walk through one of Reno's oldest and most prestigious neighborhoods. Meet at My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. Tour guide: Scott Gibson.

Tuesday,
July 5,
6:00 p.m. EL RENO APARTMENT HOMES - Visit the original site of these charming and unique homes and view seven of them at their new locations. Other examples of the Sierra Vista Addition architecture will be seen. Meet at the Statewide Lighting parking lot, 1311 S. Virginia. Tour guide: Debbie Hinman.

Saturday,
July 9,
9:00 a.m. ETHNIC RENO - Experience the influence of Chinese, African-American, Jewish, Italian and Basque cultures on Reno history. Sites include a Chinese herbal shop, Bethel AME Church, Lear Theater, reform Judaism's beginnings in the Masonic Building, and Lake Street as a center for Italian and Basque life. Meet at the National Automobile Museum, 10 Lake Street, Reno. Tour guide: Sharon Honig-Bear.

Tuesday,
July 12,
6:00 p.m. POWNING ADDITION AND LITTLE ITALY - Discover one of Reno's earliest and most delightful vernacular neighborhoods, predominantly settled by Northern Italian immigrants. Perhaps meet some of the descendants of the Italian families who settled in the early 20th century. Meet at McKinley Arts & Culture Center. Tour guide: Felvia Belaustegui.

Saturday,
July 16,
9:00 a.m. BEYOND THE ARCHES - Witness downtown Reno as it has reinvented itself for 150 years. This tour links the downtown Reno arches with stories of the forces that shaped the town: railroad and mining, immigrants, as a notorious divorce and gambling mecca—and now as a livable cultural hub. Walk in the footsteps of Bill Harrah, Myron Lake, Baby Face Nelson, Frederic DeLongchamps and others. Meet at the National Automobile Museum, 10 S. Lake St. Tour guide: Jim Smith.

Tuesday,
July 19,
6:00 p.m. HISTORIC TRUCKEE RIVER WALK - Take a relaxing stroll along the Truckee River and learn about the eclectic architecture grounded in rich political histories and spiced with colorful anecdotes. Meet at McKinley Arts and Cultural Center, 925 Riverside Drive. Tour guide: Joan Collins.

Saturday,
July 23 RENO'S HISTORIC KITCHENS - Savor a taste of Reno restaurants in historic structures. Meet the chefs, savor the restaurants' signature dishes and learn about the buildings' history and architecture. Registration is limited for this special tour. We will walk between downtown restaurants including Wild River Grille, Pieface Pizza, Old Granite St. Eatery, Men Wielding Fire and Louis' Basque Corner. Eat and learn! Cost is \$35 and requires pre-payment. For reservations, call Sharon at 843-3823 or email her at sharonbear@sbcglobal.net. Tour guide: Sharon Honig-Bear.

Tuesday,
July 26,
6:00 p.m. MANSIONS ON THE BLUFF - A historical walk that looks at some of the most notable homes in Reno: Court, Ridge and upper California streets, home to three senators and the merchants who made early Reno The Biggest Little City. Meet at the McCarran House, 401 Court Street. Tour guides: Ed Wishart and Bill Isaef.

Saturday,
July 30,
9:00 a.m. BRICKS AND STONES - A Walk in the Humboldt and Lander Streets Neighborhood. Discover the architectural treasure trove of this area, a mix of bungalows, Tudor and mission revivals and cottage styles. Meet at My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. Tour guide: Bill Isaef.

Message from HRPS President Sharon Honig-Bear

Editor's Note: This is the third in a series of President's Messages discussing HRPS's mission. Previous columns addressed our Education activities and Preservation efforts.



These are significant times, from HRPS's viewpoint. In a city that has already lost so many of its landmarks, we find ourselves looking on as forces—individuals, businesses and government—consider the fate of some of our remaining iconic structures:

- Is there a way to create a new Virginia Street Bridge that is historically consistent with—and as aesthetically pleasing—as our current one?
- What is the effect of the Flood Project on downtown?
- Which older schools in Reno are worth fighting for, in the face of severe district cutbacks and the

reduction in funding available for improvements of existing schools?

- Will the Freight House, the supposed centerpiece of the Aces entertainment district, actually be developed?
- How will the multi-levels of Reno zoning and planning affect older neighborhoods?

These issues top the list that the Board and I wrestle with—but the list could go on. Critical issues, critical times.

That is why we want to hear from you, our members. As a board we continue to debate what role we should be taking in the community. We consider whether taking public stands on issues is the direction in which our organization should be moving. We ponder whether moving into the political and public arena is our next move. We wonder, “if not HRPS, then who will be the champion for preservation?” Help us answer these important and pressing questions!

To make it easy for you to provide your impressions, we've developed a very short and simple survey. We've been distributing them at our walking tours and they're also available on our website www.historicreno.org. If you haven't yet completed a survey, I encourage you to do this soon. If you don't have access to the Internet, call our office and we will send you one. Your viewpoint is important to us.

We're nearing the deadline for HRPS's first round of mini-grants from the Neighborhood Preservation Fund. We're excited about the potential of this new initiative, assisting property owners and improving neighborhoods. We'll be announcing the recipients in the next *FootPrints*.

So now we need your help. Your response to our survey will help us clarify what level of involvement we pursue in advocacy. If you would like to discuss this in more detail, please contact our office and I would welcome your remarks. 

July 31 Deadline for HRPS Neighborhood Mini-Grants

The time has finally come! Historic Reno Preservation Society is pleased to announce the availability of funding to help property owners in Reno rehabilitate historical structures. The new grant process is underwritten by HRPS's Neighborhood Preservation Fund.

It is extremely satisfying and exciting to see the Neighborhood Preservation Fund ready to accept applications. The mini-grants will enhance our older neighborhoods and contribute to their beauty and pride. The Fund will allow HRPS to play a direct role in preserving

buildings and to feel that our funding can really make a difference

These mini-grants must be matched by funding from the property owner. Work is limited to the exterior facades of buildings and must be designed in a manner authentic with the original architectural style of the structure. Grants generally will not exceed \$2,500.

Grant applications are due July 31, 2011. We are providing all the information you should need with the Grant Guidelines and Application. If you have specific

questions, email our office by using the “contact us” page of our website historicreno.org or by calling (775) 747-4478. Help HRPS by spreading the word about the mini-grants to people who will benefit.

The Neighborhood Preservation Fund began with proceeds from HRPS's 2010 Reno Harvest of Homes Tour. The Tour date for 2011 is September 24. We hope to increase the funding available for community improvement by seeking additional donations. 

Reno's Beginnings in *Early Reno* Book

by Debbie Hinman

Move over Reno books, there is a new contender in town! The Docent Council of the Nevada Historical Society, under the expert guidance of David Kennedy and Carol Coleman, has produced a wonderful chronicle of The Biggest Little City in the World. The *Early Reno* book has 128 pages with superb photographs from the archives of the NHS, interwoven with text telling the story of our city from its very rough-and-tumble beginnings to its coming of age in the mid-20th century.

Docent Council President David Kennedy brought the idea of the book to the Council, after having been contacted by Arcadia Publishing editor, Debbie Seracini. He was responsible for selecting and scanning the photographs and DC Bee Editor Carol Coleman took on

a town or region, bringing to life the people, places and events that define the community." Established in 1993, Arcadia already has over 6,000 titles in print. There are fifteen Arcadia books on Nevada currently, with four more in progress, including *Washoe County* (available May 31, 2011), *Austin* (available July, 2011), *The Chinese in Nevada* and *Nevada Northern Railway*.

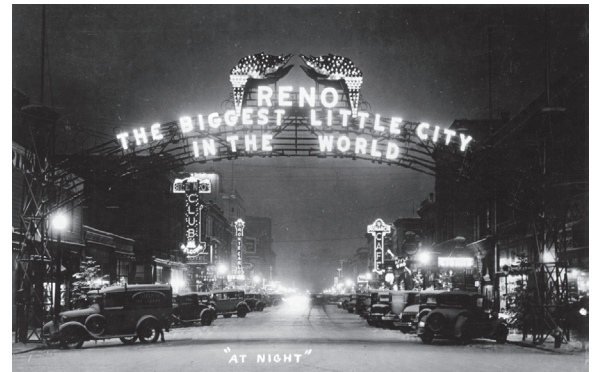
Although the format for each book is identical, with all books having 128 pages, three to twelve chapters and the same introductory pages, they can vary greatly, depending on the quality of the images, the scholarship of the research and descriptiveness of the writing. *Early Reno* excels in all of these areas.

Carol relates that David began gathering photographs in October 2009 and she began in January 2010 by reading Nevada history books and making notes. Back issues of *FootPrints* and the NHS Quarterlies were a great resource, as were local historians Patty Cafferata, Mella Harmon, Neal Cobb and Jerry

Fenwick. The 18,000-word text and 212 photographs were submitted to Arcadia in August of 2010.

In addition to wonderful photographs of Reno's early days, the book is made even more interesting through the use of old maps and newspaper clippings. The photographs are large and the best of the NHS archives' 30,000 historical images of Reno.

The book begins in 1868 with the arrival of the transcontinental railroad and the auction of lots for the new town of Reno, and follows the rough railroad town through the mid-1940s. The impact on Reno of the boom and bust periods of the Comstock lode and later the Tonopah



In 1929, the first arch bearing the name "Reno" appeared on Virginia Street. Courtesy Nevada Historical Society.

and Goldfield mines is also detailed. The history of the divorce and gaming industries are, of course, described, but unlike some local histories, equal treatment is given to the schools, churches, hospitals and other significant elements of life in Reno through the years. Important local people are also included, providing a well-rounded view of all that made our town The Biggest Little City in the World. The book ends with "How Reno Plays – Entertainment and Recreation," a fun retrospective of the activities and places that have always made this such a special place in which to live.

A huge vote of gratitude is owed to David, Carol, all of the Docent Council, and the Nevada Historical Society staff who made this wonderful chronicle possible. Pick up a copy—you will quickly lose yourself in our colorful and intriguing past! 



The elegant speakeasy, the Willows, c 1925. Courtesy Nevada Historical Society

the task of writing the accompanying text and doing the layout. As editor of *FootPrints* as well, Carol has years of experience with editing local history and access to many knowledgeable resources. The project took close to a year from beginning to end. The book was released for sale in January of 2011.

If the format and cover of the book looks familiar, it is because *Early Reno* is part of Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series. According to their website, "Arcadia is best known for its popular Images of America series, which chronicles the history of communities from Bangor, Maine, to Manhattan Beach, California to Hawaii. With more than two hundred vintage black-and-white photographs, each title celebrates



The Reno Wheelmen bicycle team, c1900. Courtesy Nevada Historical Society.

Mt. Rose Elementary Centennial Approaches

by Jenny Brekhuis

Alumni, student families, neighbors and anyone with a love of Washoe County School District's oldest school are invited to participate in a series of events planned to celebrate Mount Rose Elementary School's centennial. Events are planned for 2011-2012 school year that marks 100 years that the school has educated Reno's southwest and downtown young. The highlighting event will be an old-fashioned-themed picnic planned for October 2, 2011 on the school grounds located at 915 Lander Street. An open house with displays of archived photos, newspaper clippings and worldly events from the era is also planned.

Individuals who attended the other sister schools – McKinley, Mary S. Doten and Orvis Ring, are also encouraged to help celebrate this remarkable event of the last of the Spanish Quartette still operating as a school and the region's oldest school. Join us for One Hundred Years of Educating Reno's Downtown and Old Southwest Neighborhood Young!

Mount Rose Elementary School is one of only two remaining "four sisters," a grouping of schools approved by 1908 and 1910 voters that commissioned schools built in a similar Mission Revival architectural style. The other remaining school now houses the City of Reno's McKinley Arts and Culture Center.

Mount Rose's centennial is of notable importance because in the 1980s Mount Rose Elementary School almost met the same doomed fate as her two sisters, Orvis Ring and Mary S. Doten. The school was saved from the wrecking ball by the advocacy of neighborhood parents who understood as urban writer Jane Jacobs wrote in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, "successful neighborhoods improve their schools

by fighting for them." The committed resident activists persuaded the school district Board of Trustees to reverse a decision to close the school and rather to renovate the building that had fallen into disrepair. Because of this, urban Reno children would have a school within their neighborhood.

Newlands neighborhood resident Ted Schroeder was one of the leading proponents to save the school. "The neighbors felt the school was the heart of the neighborhood and to close the school, would rip out the neighbor-



Mt. Rose Elementary School, c 1915. Courtesy Nevada Historical Society.

hood's heart." Schroeder explains that old southwest Reno residents advocated for a school improvement bond that was approved by the voters and secured funds for Mt. Rose's renovation and for that of other schools. "So in that way, other neighborhoods won by our activism, in also having their schools improved."

In celebrating the centennial, efforts are planned to document the school's history. Efforts include a three-part rotating exhibit in a display cabinet at the school's entry to be curated by Nevada Historical Society staff. The first exhibit, installed last year, explored the school's construction at the far edge of 1911 urbanized Reno. The second exhibit, planned for this spring, will focus upon Mount Rose's golden years of the post-war era when social life of old southwest Reno and downtown families centered around the school's community.

Former teacher Clarissa Crisologo, who taught there from 1995 to 2010, remembers that on Halloween children would parade around the school grounds that encompass the entire block bound by Arlington Avenue, Lander Street, La Rue Avenue and Taylor Street. "The annual Spook Walk was a community event. Parents and neighbors would line the other side of the street and watch the children parade. Both teachers and the principal dressed up as well." There are numerous accounts of school events like teas, installation dinners for the newly-elected PTA leadership and a

fundraising event called the "Mother Goose Bazaar."

Veteran principal Krissy Brown is in her first year at Mount Rose Elementary School. She hopes to bring back some of the school's special events like the Spook Walk and notes that the discussion of school reform nationally

focuses upon urban schools like Mount Rose. "As the oldest school in the district, Mt. Rose has gone through the full cycle from being the central focus of community life for the downtown and old southwest neighborhoods, to near demolition and years of changed population demographics. The pendulum is now swinging back with families recognizing that the small school size, unique building and grounds, a multicultural population, and proximity to cultural amenities, makes Mount Rose an attractive educational environment."

Individuals who would like more information or to help with the centennial celebration are directed to the school's website at www.washoecountyschools.org/mtrose/ or contact the school directly at 333-5030 or contact Jenny Brekhuis, 544-1694 or jennybrekhuis@gmail.com.

Nevada Humanities Chautauqua June 26 - 30

Nevada Humanities presents the 2011 *Nevada Humanities Chautauqua* festival, June 26 - 30, at the Robert Z. Hawkins Amphitheater at Bartley Ranch Regional Park, 6000 Bartley Ranch Road, Reno.

Each night begins with a musical performance featuring a local band. Music starts at 6:00 p.m., and Chautauqua performances begin at 7:00 p.m. There are plenty of comfortable chairs as well as a lawn area for those who prefer to sit on a blanket. Some people bring picnics while others take advantage of the excellent food offered for sale by Men Wielding Fire. Parking is plentiful and free. Doors open at 5:00 p.m.

Nevada Humanities Chautauqua Evening Programs Tickets are available for sale at <http://nevadahumanities.org> and at the gate on the evening of the performance.



Dr. Clay Jenkinson
will perform as
Thomas Jefferson.

Sunday, June 26: An Evening of Young Chautauqua: Failure & Success. Featuring performances by local youth. FREE

Monday, June 27: Anne and the King. Alyssa Foster as Anne Boleyn and Frank X. Mullen Jr. as Henry VIII.

Tuesday, June 28: America's Artist and the Little Black Dress. Doug Mishler as Thomas Hart Benton and Annette Baldwin as Coco Chanel.

Wednesday, June 29: A More Perfect Union. Fred Blanco as César Chávez and Marvin Jefferson as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Thursday, June 30: The Indispensable Man. Clay Jenkinson as Thomas Jefferson.

Nevada Humanities Chautauqua blends the insightful depth of historical research with the fun of theatrical entertainment. The Chautauqua format is simple: a performer, in the guise of a historical figure, such as Mark Twain or Thomas Jefferson, tells "first-hand" stories about important episodes in the character's life. After the monologue, the audience and performer engage in a lively give and take. Finally, the performer emerges from character to respond to questions that could not be answered in character. *Nevada Humanities Chautauqua* was created by Nevada Humanities in Reno in 1992 and is one of the longest running Chautauqua festivals in the country.

Cost of Tickets: General admission is \$15 per night/\$45 per weeklong pass of four shows. General admission allows first come/first served access to unreserved seats and lawn. Reserved seating is \$30 per night/\$90 per weeklong pass of four shows. Admission for the Sunday, June 26, evening program is free.

Reserved seating is only available for purchase online. Reserved seating tickets allow access to a block of seats in a prime location held for reserved ticket holders. With reserved seats you can arrive any time you want and get a great seat. 

Teacher's Summer In-Service Course

The Nevada Historical Society and the Fleishmann Planetarium have put together a Washoe County School District one-credit course called *Social Studies, Science and Strategies: Interdisciplinary Resources for 3rd thru 5th Grade Teachers*. It is scheduled for July 12-14, 2011. Nevada Historical Society will host 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.; lunch on your own 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.; Fleishmann Planetarium will host 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

This is an excellent way to learn how to meet curriculum standards in science and social studies. Each day will begin with a special presentation by a Nevada historian, including Gene Hattori, Nevada State Museum Director speaking about Early Native Americans; John Reid of TMCC speaking about mountain men and pioneers; and Ron James, Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer speaking on Comstock mining. Some of the fun things you will learn during this workshop include:

Nevada History at the Nevada Historical Society:

- Early Native Americans
- Mountain men, Explorers, Pioneers
- Comstock Mining and Mining
- Galleries: Docent-led Tours and hands-on objects for learning
- In-house Resources. Research Library, Photography and Artifact archives
- Outreach programs for your classroom

Science at Fleischman:

- Up and Away: Balloon and Space Projects for the 4th grade
- Exploring our solar system and extra solar planets
- Exploring Mars by studying Earth; Campus renewable energy technologies
- Planetarium programs—Solar System, Ice Worlds
- Hands-on Lego Robotics, Solar Cars, Sun Ovens

There is limited space for this course. Sign up at: www.solutionwhere.com/wcsdregistration 

HRPS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Join HRPS or renew your membership and help HRPS preserve historic Reno!

Please make checks payable to **Historic Reno Preservation Society**, and mail along with this application to:
P.O. Box 14003, Reno, NV 89507

- ☐ New Member
☐ Renewing Member

Name(s) _____
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Annual membership includes: Footprints (HRPS Quarterly) • Free participation in walking tours

- ☐ Student \$15.00 ☐ Individual \$25.00 ☐ Family (Children 18 yrs and younger) \$40.00
☐ Business Contribution \$50.00 ☐ Supporting \$100.00 ☐ HRPS Angel \$250.00

Additional donation: _____

Thank you for joining HRPS. An organization is only as strong as its members. There are many areas in our organization where your enthusiasm, skills, and dedication will be invaluable to historic Reno and future generations. The goal of the Historic Reno Preservation Society is to preserve the historic resources of our community. What would you like to contribute to HRPS?

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USE ONLY**

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HRPS Offers Lifetime Membership Option

HRPS is pleased to announce the creation of a new membership category: Lifetime Member. We offer two levels, one for an Individual (\$500) and one for Family (living within one household, \$750).

Show your commitment to Reno's history and ensure that future generations will also enjoy this heritage. Beyond your support of HRPS's work, your membership will mean:

- No need to renew membership annually
- Annual receipt of walking tour passes (2 for Individual / 4 for Family levels)
- Special recognition in *FootPrints*, meetings and at other HRPS events
- Special invitations to all HRPS Events

To enroll as a Lifetime Member, please use the enclosed envelope and simply add: Lifetime Member. If you wish to discuss this further, please contact Carrie at 624-1076. This is a perfect way to show your love of our town! 

NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUMMER 2011 PROGRAMS

Saturday, June 11, 2:00-3:00 p.m., Archaeological History of Reno, Mary Ringhoff and Edward Stoner, Nevada Historical Society, 1650 N. Virginia St. *The River and the Railroad* traces the people and events that shaped the city, incorporating archaeological findings to add a more tangible physical dimension to the known history. It offers fascinating insights into the lives of many different people from Reno's past and helps to correct some common misperceptions about the history of the American West.

Saturday, July 16, 2:00-3:00 p.m. Basque Aspen Art of the Sierra Nevada, Jean and Phillip Earl, Nevada Historical Society, 1650 N. Virginia St. During the height of the sheep industry, sheepherders, largely Basque in origin, brought their sheep for summer grazing in the high meadows of the Sierra Nevada. Many herders filled the summer hours by carving images on aspen trees.

Saturday, August 6, 2:00-3:00 p.m. Virginia City's Police Force Takes on Opium Smoking in the Late 19th Century, Dr. Diana Ahmad, Nevada Historical Society, 1650 N. Virginia St. Dr. Diana L. Ahmad is an Associate Professor of History at the Missouri University of Science and Technology. In 2007, Ahmad published *The Opium Debate and Chinese Exclusion Laws in the Nineteenth Century West* with the University of Nevada Press. Her field of study is history of the American West and the history of the Pacific. 



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**July
Walking Tours!**
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Where in the World (of Reno)?



HRPS's tour leaders often focus attention on architectural details and we decided to play a little game! We're introducing a new feature—to identify a detail of a Reno landmark in each *FootPrints* issue.

Submit your guess by mailing it to:
HRPS/P.O. Box 14003, Reno, NV, 89507.
All correct entries will be placed in a ballot box
and the winner will be drawn on July 15, 2011.
The winning entry wins a free HRPS membership
for the 2011-12 year.

*Some think the architecture that's the best
Is only found in the Old Southwest
This lion north of the river does slumber
On a street designated by a number.*

Where can you find this architectural feature?

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