

Historic Reno PRESERVATION SOCIETY

FootPrints

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

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Where is Horace's House?

by Kim Henrick

When Nevada became a state in 1864, the national scene was one of Civil War battles and skirmishes, the forced relocation of native people off their traditional lands, and the announcement that "In God We Trust" would be printed on our coins. It was an important, but dismal year. Since there will be plenty of sesquicentennial celebrating and history rehashing during 2014, let's look at an extraordinary family who homesteaded a good deal of our city in the early 1860s.

In our piece of the Nevada Territory (formed in 1861), miners were digging for gold and silver, ranchers were claiming large swaths of land, and entrepreneurs were charging tolls to cross bridges—but this isn't a story about Myron Lake. This is about the Countrymans, a large Iowan family who settled in the Truckee Meadows around 1862, homesteaded nearly 600 acres of prime land, dug ditches or bought water from others and helped build a quartz ore mill and a mill town. Then, just as fast, they sold all their lands and moved on, leaving behind them only the grave of a little girl and the first house built in Reno, or so some people say.

Horace Countryman was the first person to homestead land near what would someday become the heart of Reno at Virginia Street and the Truckee River. [Note: There were earlier homesteaders here like John Hunter and David Reed for instance, who settled in the west Reno area, and Amos Chubb and Granville Huffaker who both received their federal land patents on the same day as Horace Countryman, but their lands were south of the town's heart.]

In 1860, when Horace was 36 years old, he led a large wagon train from Iowa to Marysville, California, where his parents Peter and Margaret lived. On the trip with him were his wife

Elizabeth and their five children. It appears that in late 1861 Horace and his family, along with his parents and his younger brothers Alexander, Eli, Lewis and Dennis (some also with families) arrived in Nevada and jumped right into buying and selling mining property in the Washoe City, Pleasant Valley, and Steamboat areas. By the fall of 1863, the whole clan had gathered in the Truckee Meadows, near Myron Lake's operation on the Truckee, the "only" thing going on there at the time.



*Photograph of the Countryman house (no date),
possibly the first house built in Reno.
Courtesy of Nevada Historical Society.*

mill site and continuing east, through all of Peter's planned homestead land.

First Horace, then Dennis, Lewis and Peter started the process to homestead their chosen lands. All four brothers took advantage of the "proving up" option under the "...provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th of April, 1820," and paid cash (\$1.25/acre) for their lands. This released them from the standard homestead residency (five years) and improvement requirements and instantly gave them full legal right to their properties. Horace was awarded his patent on June 15, 1865, for 127.54 acres along the north bank of the Truckee River west of Lake's Bridge. Two months later, Myron Lake would get his patent on August 10, 1865, for 137.28 acres surrounding the bridge. The other

The Countrymans wasted no time and on October 10, 1863, Horace, Alex and two other men recorded a water survey outlining plans to build a dam across the river, west of Lake's Bridge, then run a ditch 3500 feet easterly along the north bank of the Truckee River to a proposed mill (the survey doesn't say what type of mill, but it would be near today's recycling plant between Wells Avenue and Sutro Street). It doesn't appear they were in the area long enough to have built their own mill. Then on December 5, 1863, Peter, Lewis, Eli and a John Wilsdorf recorded another water survey showing a ditch starting at that proposed

Continued on page 2

Where is Horace's House? (continued)

Continued from page 1

Countryman homesteaders would receive their patents within the next four years. In all, the extended Countryman family homesteaded 598.16 acres. (See "Early Homestead Lands in Reno" map below.)

Where is Horace's House

In 1918 (the year before she died), Horace's daughter Sarah Elizabeth Countryman Woody, wrote about her family's overland trek from Iowa to Nevada in 1860: "Finally we reached California, a tired but thankful lot of people. We, my father's family, remained there a few months, then took the back track for Washoe, Nevada, then in a few months went to Lakes Bridge on the Truckee River, just where Reno now is. Only four houses were there when we left for Montana, Lakes Hotel, Grandfather's and uncle's house and our own. Then in 1865, we sold our place there, and started for Montana." (**Note:** Horace didn't sell his property until February 1866, so they

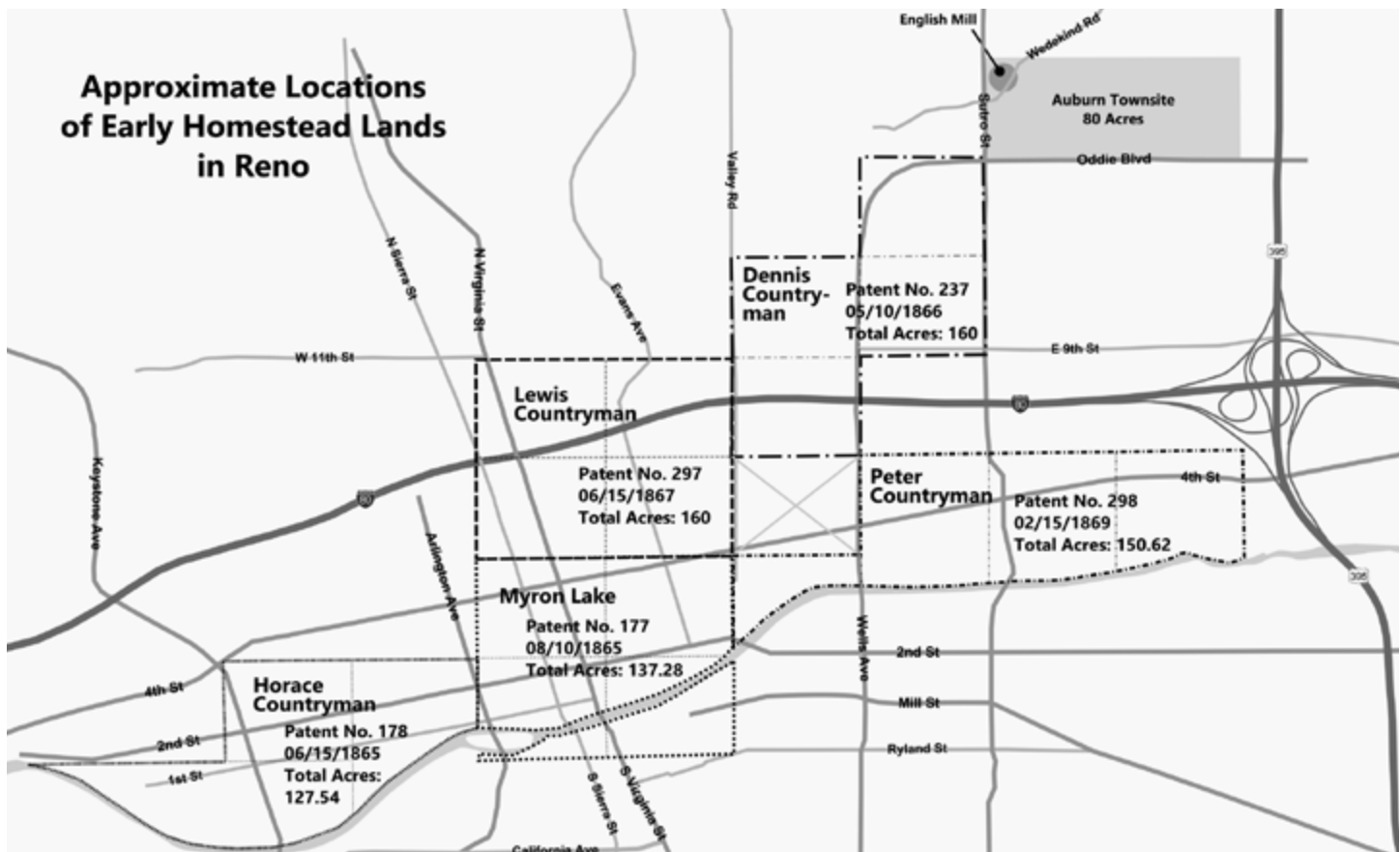
probably left after that and it is not clear which "uncle" eventually built a house.)

Annie Estelle Prouty wrote a Master's Degree thesis in 1917 titled, "The Development of Reno in Relation to its Topography," which was subsequently published in the *Nevada State Historical Society Papers, Vol. IV, 1923-1924*. She claims the house shown in the photograph is "the remodeled Countryman house" residing on a lot "at Sierra Street." Unfortunately, she doesn't tell us where on Sierra Street. For her thesis, Prouty interviewed Florence Thompson (Myron Lake's step-daughter, who was a young girl at the time) and Florence remembered "the cabin of Horace Countryman, where he lived with his family and a brother for a time." Florence remembered "playing with their children and that they had a parrot." Prouty also writes, "There were no other inhabitants north of the river when rumors of the railroad first were heard." Three Countryman descendants, over the last fifty years, have made the

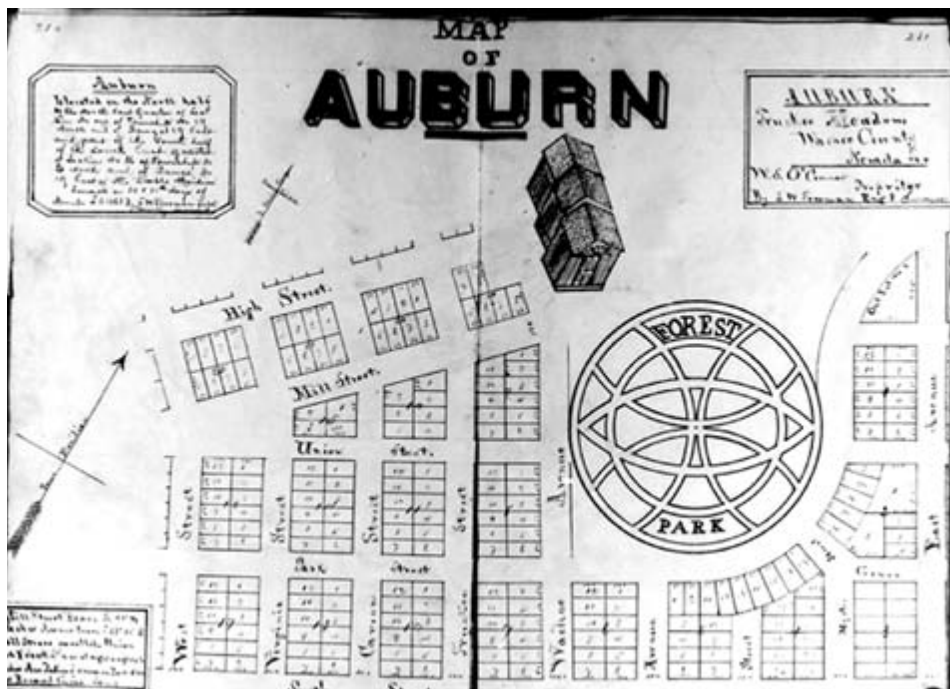
claim that Horace built the first house here, so it seems that was the story passed down by family members. In family-history postings online, one man claims that around 1990 he saw the house, having been directed to it by someone at the Nevada Historical Society, and another descendant claims that as recently as 2004 she was told by someone at the "archives" (*which archives?*) that the little house had been moved to "behind the museum," (*what museum?*) until it could be restored. We are trying to contact the family members to get more useful details about their search for Horace's house, and several local history hounds are skulking around the streets of Reno searching for it. We would appreciate any information about this historic house (contact khenrick@rtci.net) that you might have.

The English Mill

Prouty tells us that the "Countryman brothers came to build the English Mill..." (which was located near the intersec-



Where is Horace's House? (continued)



Town of Auburn survey, recorded in Washoe County in 1863.

tion of Wedekind Road and Sutro Street, just north of Oddie Boulevard) and they did have mill experience. The 1863 *Second Directory of Nevada Territory* by J. Wells Kelly, shows Peter (a millwright), Alexander (a millwright), and Dennis (a teamster) all living at "E nr Fourth," (East Street near Fourth Street in pre-Reno, most likely). The English Mill (completed in 1865 and often called the Auburn Mill) was a 20-stamp quartz mill built with investment money from several—you guessed it—English men. The company name was the Washoe United Consolidated Gold and Silver Mining Company, but it was often called the "English Company." To support the mill, the town of Auburn (just below the mill) was surveyed in 1863, and developed to accommodate mill workers. William Boyle designed and managed the mill and Joseph Charles Ridge was the company attorney. On December 26, 1863, William Sydney O'Connor, the promoter of the mill, recorded a "Notice of Claim to Water Privilege, Truckee River," after locating the English Ditch which would carry water for about three and one-half miles from the northern bank of the Truckee River and flow in a northeasterly direction to the English Mill, to operate the machinery.

The English Company owned the mill and they owned the ditch (which was completed in June 1865), but their ditch crossed Horace Countryman's property on the way north. So they did the gentlemanly thing: Horace bought water rights off the English Ditch to irrigate his land and the English Company paid for the right-of-way to dig the ditch across Horace's land. Dennis and Lewis purchased water rights from Henry Orr for their properties and Peter had obtained the water he needed through the water surveys mentioned earlier. The Countrymans had a bright future in the Nevada Territory with plenty of land and water.

But, as if part of a grand scheme—Get in, Get the goods, Get out—in September 1865, shortly after the English Mill began operation, Dennis, Lewis and Peter sold the "claims" to their homesteaded properties (they hadn't been awarded the patents yet) and their acquired water rights for a combined total of \$3,800, to William Boyle and Joseph Charles Ridge, the men from the English Company. Early in 1866, Horace and his immediate family were ready to head to Montana.

This is what happened to his property: on

February 20, 1866, Horace sold his entire homesteaded property (127.54 acres) to Frank Frederick Osbiston for \$1,832. On February 24, 1866, Frank Osbiston sold "about five acres" of that property to Myron Lake for \$5, and on May 13, 1868, he sold the remaining 122.54 acres to Alexander Forbes for \$5,000. On July 14, 1886, the estate of Alexander Forbes sold approximately 114 acres to C. C. Powning for \$7,500 (Forbes had previously sold one acre to F. W. Cutts and "about seven acres" to James and Peter Burke, leaving the 114 +/- acres he sold to Powning, who later developed Reno's beautiful Powning Addition neighborhood along the north bank of the Truckee River).

Sadly, Horace Countryman left behind a grave with the remains of his daughter Rose Ann. A Countryman family bible reads, "Rose Ann Countryman, who died on the 8th day of April A. D. 1864 on Truckee River near Lakes Crossing Washoe County State of Nevada. Aged Five year six months and four days." The little girl's remains were discovered in Powning's Addition in 1889 and moved to the Hillside Cemetery. [Note: The undertaker who made the re-internment note in the death records mistakenly called the little girl Grace C. Countryman.]

Also left behind was Horace's House, which may be still be growing old somewhere in our fair city. 

Information for this article, sources not mentioned in the article: deeds, surveys, tract maps, homestead documents from the Washoe County Recorder's Office (WCRO); Nevada Historical Society's (NHS) city directories; area newspapers; NHS historical surveys; federal land office surveys and patents; Ancestry.com, *Tough Little Town on the Truckee* by John M. Townley. The Countryman House photograph is courtesy of the NHS. The Auburn town map is a survey map from the WCRO and is a public record. The homestead map on page 2 was created by Rosie Cevasco.

Kim Henrick is a member of HRPS and the HRPS Editorial Board.

Chism Ice Cream: An Early Reno Institution

by Debbie Hinman

Of my early years growing up in Reno, there are a few memories vividly etched in my mind, such as Chism Ice Cream with its polka dot packaging. I remember my mother dishing it up on summer evenings. We would sit on the back stoop and I'd slowly spoon the heavenly concoction into my mouth, spoonful by small spoonful, making it last. Other brands, including high-priced gelatos, have just never measured up.

The Chism family arrived in Reno in 1880, just 12 years after the first lots were auctioned off by the Central Pacific Railroad. Gardner Chism and his wife Alice purchased 115 acres west of town, in the area of W. Second Street for a ranch and farm, and constructed an elegant brick home. This was outside the city in those days; homesites in nearby Powning's Addition would not be developed until 1888.

Gardner and Alice's family began to grow, with four sons: John H., Edward W., Cyrus H. (Harry) and Gardner. The elder Gardner passed away in 1898, and Alice was left to raise her sons on her own. The elder sons, John and Edward would grow the family business. John became the proprietor of Chism Creamery from 1903 to 1912, which became Crescent Creamery from 1912 to the 1950s. By 1904, John would become Nevada's leading dairyman, with the largest herd of milk cows. Chism Creamery also produced ice cream, with younger brother Edward in charge. A year later, the brothers dissolved this brief arrangement.

In 1905, at age 24, Edward decided to venture out on his own in the production of ice cream. He began his business out of a milkhouse on the Chism property, purchasing the ice cream making equipment from John. He unhooked the grindstone from the property's water wheel on the Truckee River and powered a refrigeration system. He was a one-man business, delivering his product with his horse and wagon. For the summer, Edward hired two schoolboys to help, beginning a guiding principle that lasted throughout the history of the company. Many scions

of the Reno community found summer employment with Chism Ice Cream and some even stayed to become longtime, loyal employees. The *Nevada State Journal (NSJ)*, in a 1955 retrospective of the company reported, "The story of the Chism Ice Cream Company for the last 50 years is almost the story of Reno, for it is the chronology of a business that started when the town was young, founded by a youngster who grew up with the community."

The business prospered and by 1907 it was in operation right through the winter, with peddlers in wagons selling door

its inaugural year, this event was held in the Chism apple orchard and men were hired to hunt doves for the picnickers' repast, prepared by Mrs. Chism. 1916 was a year of a very hard winter—snowdrifts and icy temperatures stopped streetcars from running and impeded most of the town's traffic, but Chism Ice Cream continued to be delivered by bobsled and a large horse named George.

In 1918, Edward made the decision to expand his Chism Ice Cream—he added ten employees, three trucks and a large building in the business center of town at 247 West Street. By the end of that year, he was turning a profit and had increased his customer base to many outlying areas of Nevada. Chism Ice Cream was overwhelmingly popular; advertising of the era called it, "Pure and delicious" and touted the fact that many soda fountains sold it as their brand of choice. Edward continued to succeed due to the two guiding principles learned in his boyhood: quality and integrity.

As the business expanded, so did Edward's position in Reno's society. He continued his active role in the Congregational Church with his family, and joined Rotary. Edward also became an important force in the Chamber of Commerce and in supporting the YMCA.

By 1921, Chism Ice Cream was producing over 100,000 gallons of ice cream annually. The *NSJ* reported, "About half of this was sold in Reno, the rest was shipped by express to outside points extending from Carlin to Blue Canyon and from Lakeview, Oregon to Goldfield. The firm now had 18 employees and a fleet of five motor vehicles!" The following year, Edward enlarged the plant, doubling its size. There was always an open house for the community, with tours of the plant and speeches by local dignitaries. Reno was very proud of this hometown boy and his success.

On the home front, daughter Alice Jane had survived polio, leaving her with a limp she would have throughout her life, though with her father's determination



*Chism Ice Cream wagon delivering products c. 1910.
Courtesy Nevada Historical Society (WA01696).*

to door throughout Reno. Wilson's Drug Company became Chism's first fountain customer and that business relationship lasted many years. By 1910, Edward had hired his first ice cream maker and wagons were delivering Chism Ice Cream to Sparks, both to residents and a growing number of fountain businesses.

In 1915, Edward married Clara Butterfield of Newport Beach, California. Clara had graduated with a nursing degree. In 1917, the Chisms' only child, daughter Alice Jane, was born.

In 1916, a shiny new canvas-topped Model T Ford joined the wagons outside the milkhouse at the Chism Ranch. Edward hired more employees and enlarged the production building. This year saw the establishment of a company tradition—the annual employee picnic. In

Chism Ice Cream: An Early Reno Institution (continued)

and spirit, it never held her back. With the business' success, Edward and Clara chose architect Frederic DeLongchamps to design a lovely Tudor Revival home for them at 575 Ridge Street, completed in 1927 (this home, currently owned by HRPS members Scott Gibson and Mercedes de la Garza, was featured on the 2012 Harvest of Homes Tour).

Always forward thinking, in 1933, Ed installed a bottling machine and entered the soft drink field. At a time when other businesses throughout the U.S. were trying to get back on their feet following the stock market crash, Chism was so successful that diversification became a natural next step. The 7-Up franchise was acquired in 1936 and beverage sales were booming. By 1942, the plant had 65,000 feet of floor space, was producing 175 gallons of ice cream and 80 cases of soda pop every hour. In 1950, they won the first of ten annual volume awards from the parent company for the largest bottle per capita 7-Up sales.

Alice Jane Chism was now Mrs. Ray Frazer and had become Vice President of Chism Ice Cream, putting her Economics degree from Cornell University to good use in the family business. Not many women in Reno were high-level businesswomen but Alice Jane, or A.J., as she was called, proved her worth and excelled at the challenge. Devoted to her father, she followed his sound business practices as well as the way he treated his employees like family. In a 1975 interview looking back on the growth of the company, Alice Jane was quoted as saying, "I liked everything when it was a bit smaller. However, if businesses don't grow, the town doesn't grow."

Edward Chism passed away in 1956, leaving the company in the capable hands of his wife and daughter. Chism Ice Cream was sold to Carnation in 1960, a difficult decision for Clara Chism and Alice Jane Frazer. Alice Jane said, "The competition got so great that we could no longer make a profit." For the next 10 years, Carnation continued to market the ice cream locally under the name of Chism.

The bottling business continued to expand with a new 7-Up bottling plant constructed on Terminal Way off Mill Street in Reno in 1961. On a June Sunday, 4,000 Reno locals attended the Open House to view the new plant. In addition to 7-Up, the plant was to produce Hires Root Beer, Mission Orange and Royal Punch, Royal Crown Cola, Par-T-Pak, Ginger Ale and sparkling water. This building exists today, still a bottling plant.

Clara passed the presidency of the company to daughter Alice Jane in 1973. Alice and manager Jack Walther, one of the "summer schoolboys," ably managed the company



Open House at the Chism Ice Cream plant, 247 West Street, in the 1950s. Clarence Horsley, owner of the nearby Carlton Hotel and Ace Motor Lodge, looks on as Chism employees bag samples for the visitors. Photo courtesy of Jerry Fenwick.

in the years to come. Jack was employed by the firm for 49 years and managed the company from 1956 until his death in 1974. This was a painful year for Alice Jane, as her husband Ray Frazer also passed away. In 1975, Alice Jane's son Ed Frazer, a recent graduate of the University of Nevada, Reno, joined the family business. Still upholding her father's vision of how a company ought to be run, Alice Jane said, "It has not gotten any more impersonal here. We have a loyal bunch of employees and low turnover."

Alice Jane continued Edward Chism's legacy of service to the community. She was an active member of the First

Congregational Church of Reno and helped create the Nevada Self Help Foundation in the early 1980s, an organization assisting physically disabled young people to live independently. Alice Jane won a Service to Mankind Award from the Sparks Sertoma Club in 1986, for her efforts in establishing this foundation. Alice Jane retired in 1993, passing the leadership of the company to son Edward. She died in 2002 after a long career in a business that began in a milkhouse on her family's ranch in a "tough little town on the Truckee."

For over a decade following Alice Jane's death, the 7-Up Bottling Company continued under the leadership of president Edward R. Frazer, bearing the first name of his grandfather who started it all in 1905. Daughter Molly Vestal was named Executive Vice President in 2003 and both of her brothers had key positions within the company. The company had weathered over a century of change and witnessed the growth of Reno from a small stop on the Central Pacific to a full-fledged modern city. But all dynasties must eventually come to an end and on March 1, 2013, the Dr. Pepper Snapple Group announced its acquisition of the Reno-based 7-Up Bottling Company. Given the economic climate and a more health-conscious population, the Chism descendants decided it was time to let the company go.

Still, 108 years is a long run for any business and the Chism name will long be remembered for quality products with a hometown origin. 

Information for this article came from *Nevada State Journal* and *Reno Evening Gazette* articles 1908 through the present and conversations with Alice Jane Chism Frazer Clark's friends and daughter-in-law, Peggy Pulver.

Debbie Hinman is a HRPS member, a HRPS Tour Guide, and a member of the HRPS Editorial Staff.



Historic Reno Preservation Society and Artown
present

Historic Walking Tours July 2014



Put on your walking shoes – it's time for Historic Reno Preservation Society's summer tour season to begin. Tour cost is \$10 per person, free to HRPS members. Walks generally last from 1½ to 2 hours. No dogs please.

Reservations are required and space is limited.

Please go to www.historicreno.org for information and reservations or call 747-4478.

Tuesday
July 1
6:00 p.m.

TRUCKEE RIVER ALL THE TIME – “In The Spirit of Artown” Free Tour – This delightful summer walk along the Truckee River will kick off HRPS July Walks in Reno for Artown. See Reno's relationship with the Truckee over time, learn of the great floods and of Reno's architectural heritage, hear the Voice of the City, observe how the HRPS Walks in July relate to the Truckee and the history of Reno. Meet at the Wild River Grill at the Riverside Hotel. Tour guides: Jim and Sue Smith. **RESERVATIONS REQUIRED.**

Saturday
July 5
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.

Sunday
July 6
9:00 a.m.

BIKE TOUR THROUGH OLD RENO – A leisurely ride through the most historic parts of Reno. Meet at My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. Tour guide: Glee Willis. **HELMETS REQUIRED, NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Tuesday
July 8
6:00 p.m.

NEW TOUR – CEMETERY TOUR – Join HRPS for an early evening visit to three of Reno's most historic cemeteries: Hillside, The Grand Army of the Republic and the Hebrew Cemetery and “become acquainted” with some of their most notable residents. Meet outside the gates of Hillside Cemetery on Tenth Street, off the north end of Nevada Street; please wear closed shoes suitable for rocky and uneven ground. Tour guides: Debbie Hinman, Mac Wieland and Sharon Honig-Bear.

Saturday
July 12
9:00 a.m.

MANSIONS ON THE BLUFF – A historic 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 that made early Reno The Biggest Little City. Meet in the parking lot at the McCarran House, 401 Court Street. Tour guides: Bill Isaef, Joan Collins and Dave Vill.

Tuesday
July 15
6:00 p.m.

POWNINGS ADDITION AND LITTLE ITALY – Discover one of Reno's earliest and most delightful vernacular neighborhoods, predominantly settled by Northern Italian immigrants. This neighborhood is now the first City of Reno Conservation District. Meet in front of McKinley Arts & Culture Center, 925 Riverside Drive. Tour guides: Felvia Belaustegui and Steve Ellison.

Saturday
July 19
9:00 a.m.

DOWNTOWN SPARKS – Learn about the history of the rail city with a one-hour guided walking tour of Victorian Square and Downtown Sparks. This interactive tour is designed to show how this area has transformed itself from a railroad hub to a vibrant commercial district, to a rundown urban area, and finally to a successful redevelopment area that has changed the image and future of the city. The tour includes 17 buildings and sites that have played an important role in the history and development of Sparks and Nevada. Tour begins and ends at the Sparks Heritage Museum located at 814 Victorian Avenue, Sparks. Tour guide: Scott Carey. This tour is in collaboration with the Museum (www.sparksmuseum.org) but reservations need to be made through HRPS.

Saturday, September 27, Hold the Date!

Back by popular demand, the 5th annual Reno Harvest of Homes Tour is scheduled for Saturday, September 27th. We again have an interesting assortment of homes. Details will follow in the next *FootPrints*. If you would like to advertise in the Program, sponsor a house, or volunteer, please contact Chair Sharon Honig-Bear at sharonbear@sbcglobal.net.



Historic Reno Preservation Society and Artown
present

Historic Walking Tours July 2014



Put on your walking shoes – it's time for Historic Reno Preservation Society's summer tour season to begin. Tour cost is \$10 per person, free to HRPS members. Walks generally last from 1½ to 2 hours. No dogs please.

Reservations are required and space is limited.

Please go to www.historicreno.org for information and reservations or call 747-4478.

Tuesday
July 22
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 26
9:00 a.m.

MANSIONS ON THE BLUFF – A historic 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 that made early Reno The Biggest Little City. Meet in the parking lot at the McCarran House, 401 Court Street. Tour guides: Bill Isaef, Joan Collins and Dave Vill.

Sunday
July 27
1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL TOUR – DOWNTOWN CHURCH TOUR – Visit three of Reno's oldest and most architecturally significant downtown churches, Trinity Episcopal, First United Methodist Church and Saint Thomas Aquinas Cathedral. Meet at Trinity Episcopal Church, 200 Island Avenue. Tour guide: Mac Wieland. Please note special starting time at 1:00 p.m.

Tuesday
July 29
6:00 p.m.

WESTERN ADDITION – Visit vestiges of one of Reno's earliest residential neighborhoods, dating from the mid-1870s. Hear the stories of its early "movers and shakers," such as Fire Chief George Twaddle, businessman Frank Humphrey and banker Charles Bender. View the varying architectural styles, from the Carpenter Gothic Clifford House to the modest brick bungalows of the Smith-Petersen subdivision. Meet at the northwest Corner of 5th and Bell Street adjacent to JJ's Pie Co. Tour guides: Cindy Ainsworth and Debbie Hinman.

The Powning Plaque is Back!

HRPS would like to thank J. Drew Lawton from Sierra Memorial and Gavin Duffy from Sartorial Masonry for their help in the installation of the new plaque for the Powning Pillar. This plaque is made of a ceramic porcelain overlay which mimics the look of bronze but has no scrap value. This is an experiment which we hope can be utilized for other historic plaques. We'd like to thank Felvia Belaustequi and Drew Lawton for coordinating this effort.

The Friends of the Powning Addition
who contributed to this new plaque include:

Emma Kafoury & Richard Austin
Norm and Laura Dianda
Angie Ballardini Persigehl
Richard Pincollini
Natalie Reed
Matt Smith
John and Drew Lawton



The Reno Historical Website and App

by Alicia Barber

May 9, 2014 was an auspicious day for Reno history. First, it was the 146th anniversary of the original auction of Reno town sites by the Central Pacific Railroad. And second, it was the official launch date for Reno Historical, a new website and free smart phone app about Reno's history, created in partnership with the Historic Reno Preservation Society and a wide range of local organizations and individuals.

The Reno Historical website and app provide a number of ways to access information about Reno's heritage. One is through a map that displays markers indicating historic points of interest. Clicking on a point reveals the name of the site, and links to a brief description, photos, and when available, audio and video about that location.

Another option is choosing a thematic tour. These tours group together sites on a related topic that aren't necessarily in physical proximity to each other, and range from "Tying and Untying the Knot" (about Reno's wedding and divorce trades) to "Sacred Landmarks," about the city's religious heritage. Other tours describe schools and libraries, the University of Nevada, railroad history, and more.

On the app (available for both iPhone and Android), clicking on a compass icon reveals the user's location, in order to better identify nearby historical sites and encourage on-the-ground exploration. The website (renohistorical.org) provides the same historical content as the app, plus the option to view a list of all the sites, or a random story, for exploration of a different kind. The website is also optimized for mobile use, to accommodate all types of smart phones, tablets, and computers.

The conversation about creating a Reno history app began back in 2012, inspired by rising interest in Reno's past and the desire to create an accurate online source for the public to learn more about it. Donnie Curtis, head of Special Collections in the UNR Knowledge Center, offered to establish Special Collections as the administrative host and to write numerous grant proposals to get the project off the ground. Alicia Barber assumed the role of lead content editor, and assembled an editorial team

with community members including Mella Harmon, who has contributed much of the site's historical content.

Initial funding came in the form of grants from Nevada Humanities and the Institute for Museum and Library Services (as an LSTA grant administered through the Nevada State Library and Archives), as well as generous support from the Historic Reno Preservation Society. Those funds enabled

Mapes Hotel, and created new audio slide-shows about University of Nevada history. Audio clips range from original interviews to archival footage from the collection of the University of Nevada Oral History Program.

One of the project's major accomplishments has been the incorporation of so many historic images. To date, we have incorporated more than 1,000 photos, the vast majority being contributed free of charge from UNR Special Collections and University Archives. Other photos have been provided for free from sources including the Nevada Historical Society, area schools and churches, and individual photo and postcard collectors and photographers including Neal Cobb, Jerry Fenwick, Dick Dreiling, Max Chapman, and others.

Reno Historical is infinitely expandable, which gives us limitless options for adding new stories and tours. Sites include some of Reno's most historic places, clustered around the Truckee River and throughout downtown. The Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County (RTC) has funded the creation of content related to 4th Street, and the University of Nevada Communications office hired a student to help work on university sites. Other UNR students and recent graduates have helped craft additional stories, and readers will recognize the names of contributors such as Sharon Honig-Bear and Cindy Ainsworth.

The official launch on May 9, 2014, was part of a weekend-long celebration of Reno's birthday, planned by the City of Reno in conjunction with HRPS, the University of Nevada Libraries, and other collaborators. Anyone interested in contributing to this effort is encouraged to send an email to project headquarters at renohistorical@gmail.com or contact Donnie Curtis at (775) 682-5668.



The Historical App interface showing sites to select in downtown Reno.

the purchase of the license and the part-time employment of several assistants to accomplish some early tasks. HRPS webmaster Rosie Cevasco kindly donated her time and expertise, too.

We chose a platform called Curatescape with multimedia capabilities, in order to include short audio and video clips, to help bring history to life. We have incorporated video from existing documentaries on subjects ranging from the architect Paul Revere Williams to the Riverside Hotel. We have secured footage such as the implosion of the

Writer and historian Alicia Barber, Ph.D., serves on the City of Reno's Historical Resources Commission, the Board of Preserve Nevada, and the Nevada State Board of Museums and History. She is the author of *Reno's Big Gamble: Image and Reputation in the Biggest Little City*.

Pat Klos Volunteer Award Goes to Cindy Ainsworth

by Pat Ferraro Klos

About 1989, I was asked to become a member of the Lake Mansion Board of Directors, a group dedicated to enhancing, preserving, utilizing the mansion then located on South Virginia Street at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center. Mary Ellen Horan, then as now, oversaw the mansion and realized the role it could play in the history of Reno, so we began a series of events open to the public. During Historic Preservation Week in 1995, the board hosted an open house with tours of the mansion. Three great ladies, all of whom worked at the National Automobile Museum, came to our event: Cindy Ainsworth, Nancy Holmes, and Sandy Saunders. I met them at the door, gave them a tour through the mansion, and shared refreshments, never realizing what would happen in Reno for the next two decades.

In 1993, Mayor Pete Sferazza appointed me to the newly formed City of Reno Historical Resources Commission. At last preservation would take its place in Reno, or so I thought. Meeting after meeting led nowhere at that time, so I resigned and went out on my own. For several years I had been leading historic walking tours in Reno for service groups, school groups, and the State Historic Preservation Office. During 1997 Preservation Week, I led a walk I called "Bricks and Stones" in the Humboldt-Lander Streets neighborhood in Reno. At the culmination of the walk, we had muffins and coffee at My Favorite Muffin on California Avenue. Interested



people stayed and I talked about forming a Reno preservation group. Cindy Ainsworth and Nancy Holmes encouraged everyone to consider forming the group.

As Cindy and I spent more and more time talking historical resources and preservation, we grew to realize that talk is cheap and action necessary. In July 1997, seven people met to form a preservation society: Pat and Mike Klos, Cindy Ainsworth, Nancy Holmes, Sandy Saunders, Holly Young and Bill Thimmisch. HRPS had launched.

From that moment to this, Cindy Ainsworth has continued to be an active volunteer in Historic Reno Preservation Society. HRPS runs on volunteerism, whether it is collecting money and serving as treasurer, working hours on a computer for membership, or organizing activities and calling volunteers. It is all about volunteerism. In the beginning I served two years as president, then Cindy served two years as president; we each took our turns as program chair; we hauled refreshments

back and forth to Mt. Rose Elementary School for public meetings; we served on the HRPS Board of Directors, nominating committees, publicity committees, walking tour training sessions, and the never ending setting up and taking down of those damned chairs at meetings. We walked with most of the walking tours and collected the money, we wrote by-laws, we helped guide *FootPrints*, but as my interests moved to different endeavors, Cindy never left the fold. Not for one minute.

Ultimately Cindy became a paid employee of HRPS. Doesn't that sound grand? She became the Administrator, the person who administers the HRPS office. Yes, finally there was an office. What an advancement that was from the early days when she would leave notebooks on the front seat of my car in the McQueen Faculty Parking Lot, or simply waltz into the school and put HRPS information in Holly Young's box or Ginger Salcedo's box or my box. We laugh now.

Cindy spends paid time in the office, but she spends hundreds of unpaid hours doing work for HRPS. Most recently she organized a workshop called "House Histories 101" with lots of volunteer time on that. Her six years on the City of Reno Historical Resources Commission as the HRPS representative cut deeply into her personal time. And today, she too, leads walking tours. No task has been too menial for Cindy Ainsworth if she deemed that something needed to be done.

I respect volunteerism, and I also know what the hundreds of HRPS volunteers have accomplished since September of 1997. My Statement of Purpose to the HRPS Board for this award reads, "Renoites love Reno and are willing to volunteer and work together to preserve our heritage. It is my intention as founding president of HRPS to reward that spirit of dedication by annually acknowledging a person who has shown commitment, enthusiasm, and innovation as a member of HRPS."

First and foremost the person who deserves the first Pat Klos Volunteer Award is Cindy Ainsworth. 

Wednesday Free Tours of Historical Society during Artown

The Nevada Historical Society, 1650 N. Virginia Street, on the UNR campus, will offer Free tours on Wednesdays during the month of July as part of Artown.

On the 1st, 3rd and 5th Wednesdays, on July 2, 16, and 30, at 10:00 am and at 2:00 pm a PowerPoint presentation will be followed by a docent-led tour of the Reno Gallery to cover Reno from 1868 to the 1950s.

On the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, on July 9 and 23, at 10:00 am and 2:00 pm, a docent-led tour of the Nevada Gallery will be offered. Topics covered on this tour will be Pre-Statehood Nevada, Mining, Passing Through Nevada, and Neon Lights/Federal Presence in Nevada.



Message from Your HRPS President Byllie D'Amato Andrews

“History is hot.” That was the message from HRPS Administrator, former President, and volunteer extraordinaire Cindy Ainsworth upon her return from presenting at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Public History this spring. With the celebration in 2014 of Nevada’s sesquicentennial, history is definitely hot in Nevada. The growing interest in local history has not only brought record attendance to HRPS’ Wednesday monthly meetings, but also to our historic walking tours. On Saturday, May 3, almost 60 people turned out for our first walking tour of this season. This increased visibility is also increasing awareness about other opportunities we offer, evidenced by the increased number of applications we received for the 2014 Neighborhood Improvement Grants.

On May 9, HRPS, the City of Reno, the University of Nevada Libraries Special Collections, VSA Nevada, the Riverwalk Merchants Association, and others officially launched the Reno Historical App (www.renohistorical.org) at a press conference at the Lake Mansion. Reno Mayor, Robert Cashell, was introduced by master of ceremonies Myron Lake (impersonated by Allan Reinap). The celebration ended with a reenactment of the May 9, 1868 auction when the Central Pacific Railroad auctioned off the 400 lots that was the beginning of the town of Reno.

With the City of Reno and Artown, HRPS is a sponsor of the Parks Rephotography Project, an exhibition of historical and contemporary photographs of local parks. The project will be available for public viewing afternoons, every Friday through Monday in July, at Bicentennial Park on the Truckee River in Downtown Reno. Many HRPS members turned out the morning of May 10 to be a part of the recreation of the iconic photo taken at the 1927 dedication of the California Building. The first public showing of the Parks

Rephotography Project in the California Building followed the photograph.

On May 10, we celebrated the Biggest Little Birthday Party. Volunteers were stationed at twelve historic sites surrounding the Virginia Street Bridge, each site marked by an historic picture and a QR code for the Reno Historical App. There were bands, gold panning, antique cars, performances by the Young Chautauquans, and more birthday cake!

On Friday, May 30, HRPS and VSA Nevada participated in the Creative Coalition of Midtown’s Sundown in Midtown. HRPS offered two one-hour walking tours through midtown. We are working on an interactive game to test participants’ knowledge and engage the public in the history of Midtown Reno.

HRPS is working on a partnership with Washoe County Library System to offer presentations of our more popular programs, and the Downtown Reno Library is working with the presenters of our February and March programs for their celebration of Nevada 150 this fall. HRPS will keep members informed of these upcoming opportunities through our website and via email to our members. If you would like to receive HRPS email updates and have not yet shared your email address, please visit www.historicreno.org to sign up.

Because HRPS is becoming so visible in the community, more organizations are inviting HRPS to present to their members. These opportunities allow even more people to know about our activities and programs, and they provide an additional window into how HRPS impacts our community. We have heard from people who know recipients of HRPS’ Neighborhood Improvement Grants and share what wonderful opportunities their friends or relatives have had to improve their homes.

History is hotter than ever in the Biggest Little City, but that doesn’t mean we don’t need to remain vigilant



*HRPS President Byllie D'Amato Andrews at the Powning Monument dedication.
Photo by Jack Hursh.*

in protecting our local history. The HRPS board has identified five historic Reno buildings to relaunch our Endangered Historic Building Watch List. Please keep an eye on these valuable structures and report any activity – good or bad, and let us know of other buildings that should be included.

- Lear Theater, Riverside Drive and 1st Street
- Freight House, Evans Avenue north of the Aces Ballpark
- Nevada Brewing Works, Southeast corner of 4th Street and Morrill Avenue
- The Regina Apartments (Iliescu’s old office building), 260 Island Avenue
- First Masonic Building (Reno Mercantile), Sierra Street and Commercial Row

Our growing visibility and new collaborations are increasing awareness of local history and HRPS, and that means a need for more and more volunteers. We are working on a comprehensive plan to better organize our volunteer needs and utilize those of you who have already come forth and indicated your willingness to volunteer. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities with HRPS, please email byllie@gmail.com. 

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

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NEW! Pay online at www.historicreno.org

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- ☐ Additional donation to help our Pat Klos Volunteer Award Fund \$ _____

Thank you for joining HRPS.

As a supporter, you have the opportunity to learn more about the history of this community and make a difference in its future. There are many areas in our organization where your enthusiasm, skills and dedication will be invaluable to us. We currently need help in the following committees. Can you help?

- ☐ Communications
Media, public relations, newsletter, website
- ☐ Special Events
Fundraising, planning, organizing, soliciting in-kind donations
- ☐ Outreach/Education
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- ☐ Preservation Issues
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Time to Renew in July

We would like to thank all our members for your belief in and continued support of HRPS while we continue to define our growing role in determining Reno's historic legacy. July is the time to renew your membership, which supports our many programs and *FootPrints*. Please find enclosed a membership renewal envelope with this issue, for your convenience.



You will notice included on the envelope that we are asking our members whether they would like to continue to receive a mailed hardcopy of *FootPrints* or, in an effort to go green, an emailed electronic copy. In the future, we will be implementing an email option so please select your favorite method of delivery.

Your support of our organization has given us the credibility and courage for a preservation voice in our community.



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