

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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The El Renos Today

by Debbie Hinman



Editor's Note: *The El Reno apartments at 1461 Lander are on HRPS Endangered Property List. Second, look for a list of the El Renos on the HRPS website blog.*

What is an El Reno? This is a question no doubt pondered by many prospective walking tour participants when they see this offering on a HRPS Walking Tour schedule. The subject was first raised by Karl Breckenridge in his *Reno Gazette Journal* columns some years ago and *FootPrints* followed up on the topic with a story in 2004. So what are they? How many are there? And why do those of us who know still care about them?

To answer these questions, it's best to begin in the 1936-37 timeframe. Reno was thriving, moving from a town to a full-fledged city. The population was around 24,000 and its area was about four square miles. Just five years previously, the residency requirement

for divorce had been lowered from three months to six weeks, the lowest in the nation, and those wishing to untie the bonds of matrimony were thronging to Reno for their "Renovation." These short-term residents (many of whom would end up staying to become permanent residents, finding a lifestyle or new spouse to their liking) needed temporary housing. Enterprising would-be landlords were casting about

for rental properties. One of these was Roland Giroux. In late 1936, he purchased Lots 1-8 in Block 3 of the Sierra Vista tract from John Canson. This tract was on the South Virginia Road, just outside the city limits. Instead of building a large structure containing apartment units or long rows of connected units, Giroux had a unique idea—creating a grouping of fifteen small, free-standing "kit homes."



*El Reno apartment on Lander Street near Mt. Rose Street, 2004.
Photo courtesy Sharon Walbridge.*

"Kit homes" first came into vogue in 1908 when Sears, Roebuck & Co. began offering house kits through their widely popular mail-order catalog. The kit would be delivered to a town via a train boxcar, then trucked to the construction site, to be assembled by the owner, friends or a hired contractor. Everything would be included: lumber (which beginning in 1916 would be precut to size), windows, hardware, doors, cabinets and every other item needed to complete the home. Other companies

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The El Renos Today (continued)

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would follow Sears' lead, but the Lea Steel Company of Los Angeles, California would provide a new take on the kit home, eschewing traditional building materials for—steel!

Enter a visionary architect. Many HRPS walks discuss the renowned "Architect to the Stars" Paul Revere Williams. Williams was known in Reno due to his residential projects, such as the Raphael Herman ranch house to the north of the city, and the Louella Garvey home on Nixon and California Avenues, but his crowning local achievement was the First Church of Christ, Scientist on Riverside Drive (today the Lear Theater). Williams' career spanned 50 years and his projects totaled 3,000. In 1936, Williams designed two homes for the California House and Garden Exhibition contest in Los Angeles. One was a three-room steel home. The idea of building a home of steel was not a new one; it had been experimented with since the 1890s but the cost was prohibitive. With Lea's innovative new process of manufacturing prefabricated steel components, it became an interesting option in the realm of home-building. Williams became a consulting architect for the company.

Roland Giroux ordered fifteen of the steel home kits, along with a building suitable for a laundry room/power plant and a block of garages. An ad for the development claimed it would be the largest collection of steel homes in the west. The block of lots mentioned above, for which Giroux had obtained a February 1937 building permit for an "auto court" estimated at \$50,000, would easily accommodate all of the structures. The lot comprised the 1300 block of the South Virginia Road, extending west to Tonopah Street and bounded by Arroyo Street to the north and Pueblo Street to the south. Local workers were hired to dig the foundations and assemble the homes, overseen by two representatives from Lea Steel Company. Plumbing and electrical work was locally contracted, and all appliance,



*Interiors of Ron Allen's "El Reno Museum" home, restored inside and out to the look of the 30s and 40s.
Photos by the author.*

es, blinds and paint were supplied by local merchants. A unique touch included furnishing blankets, towels and dishcloths with "El Reno Apartments" embroidered on them, and even supplying El Reno stationery.

The homes were laid out in an attractive formation: there was a semi-circle of seven homes facing a courtyard ending at the South Virginia Road, then two rows of four homes facing Pueblo and Arroyo. The development was beautifully landscaped and all of the homes were white with Imperial Green composite shingle roofs and matching green trim. The porcelain-coated exterior steel panels were styled to resemble board-and-batten siding. All units were not identical, in that some had a left-side entry and others were "flip-flopped," but they all had the characteristic Williams' decorative ironwork around the front entry. They all sported a jaunty spinning turbine for ventilation atop the roofs and their signature feature, the large, multi-paned bay window,

the side panels of which cranked out to admit fresh air. At least one existing unit has an optional small window in the living room next to the bay window. One interesting deviation is that while the apartments were advertised as two-bedroom units, at least one was a one-bedroom.

The framework was all steel; because of this, modern owners have run into serious challenges trying to modify the homes. The floor of the main living area was fir, a strong and resilient wood, with linoleum in the kitchen and baths. And baths plural is correct! Unlike the majority of two-bedroom homes of this vintage, there was a full bathroom in the master bedroom and a "half-bath" or powder room in the second bedroom. The Nevada Bell Directory touted the El Renos as: "Ultra-modern individual apartment homes with 24-hour heat by forced circulation of hot water from a central plant."

Although Giroux may have intended to house the 6-week residents of Reno, the apartment homes were so popular that permanent residents clamored to rent them as well. In September of 1937, just a month after the open house was held, well-connected newlyweds Betty Howell and William Woodburn Jr., whose wedding guest list read like a Who's Who of Nevada, announced they would be at home there, following their Southern California and Mexican honeymoon. Baroness Anne Sasse, mother of a Reno resident, moved into a unit soon after the El Renos were completed and in the summer of 1938 gave a party in the gardens which were described on the Women's Society page as "spacious and delightful." Also in 1938, a nationally famous golfer, Montague the Magnificent, was feted at the El Reno home of J. O. T. Cartwright, Director of Nevada Unlimited, an organization promoting all things Nevada. Bill Harrah occupied one unit from 1942-1944 and Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr., who spent a great deal of time in Reno throughout the 1930s and 40s, resided in one in 1944.

The El Renos Today (continued)

So how did such a desirable apartment complex last for only a ten-year span? From a contributor to one of Karl Breckenridge's columns came the story that Giroux needed to raise the rents due to rising costs. The rent control board refused to allow it, even though the El Reno residents understood and were willing to comply. The story goes that Giroux became angry with the board and made the decision to sell off the units one by one and be done with them. Giroux supposedly sold them for \$800 apiece (can you even buy a resin Tuff Shed for that price nowadays?) and the moving cost was \$100. Of the original fifteen, twelve of them are still scattered throughout Reno. Two units were moved just down the street and are currently joined by a center addition. Two of them crossed the Truckee, one in an active university neighborhood and one on a high foundation, looking westward. One unit has a long history as a local business. Dr. Lynn B. Gerow purchased a unit and installed it on Ridge Street;

it was used as his medical office for many years, then became an attorney's office and is now Royce, a beer and wine bar. Two units can be found on Plumas Street—one was said to have too much dry rot to retain the shell and now has a stucco exterior. The other is the one-bedroom unit mentioned above. A second bedroom was later added to the rear and it too sits on a high foundation to make room for an apartment below. Further south are two more: one on Country Club Drive and one a few streets away on Bonnie Briar. The latter has the original laundry room from the El Renos to the rear of the home. Three are near the corner of Mt. Rose and Lander Streets. The Mt. Rose unit is nicely maintained and retains its original color scheme of white with green trim and roof. It's sad to say the two units facing Lander Street are not being cared for the same way. They currently stand vacant, amid a weedy dying lawn. The two little structures have broken and boarded up windows, peeling paint and an air of abandonment.

An inquiry to the owners, a local property company, brought no response. A few years back, these two El Renos were in good repair, attractively situated on a cared-for lot where one could get a real sense of how they must have appeared in a grouping. It is a real shame that the owners think so little of these historic structures that they are seemingly destined for demolition by neglect.

A bright spot in the El Reno saga has been provided by Ron Allen, a local realtor. Ron is the owner of the "conjoined" El Renos nearest the original site, on

Tonopah and Pueblo streets. Ron has established a sort of "El Reno Museum" in the unit facing Pueblo. He has carefully restored the apartment with fresh paint and has refinished the lovely fir floors which now gleam with a red-gold patina. The bathrooms have their original porcelain sinks and tub and the kitchen has its original sink and metal cabinets. The casement windows and light fixtures are also original. The pull-down ironing board had been lost but Ron was able to salvage a replacement. Ron has furnished the unit with carefully selected furniture and memorabilia from the 1930s and 40s. Because of my longtime interest in the apartments, generous people have given me articles from the apartments, including the embroidered towels, a blanket and stationery. I couldn't think of a better place for them than Ron's "museum" and they look quite at home there. Ron graciously opens the home for my HRPS El Reno walking tours and most participants see it as the highlight of the tour.

So why do we care about these twelve little steel houses? Although they are no longer in their original context, they are still unique and historically significant, because of their place in the story of Reno's housing, their innovative all-steel construction and as part of Paul Revere Williams' legacy. We have lost three (two are reputed to have been destroyed and one exists only as an interior framework for a garage attached to a large house) and two more are seriously threatened. At a time when Reno stands to lose so much of its character and history, it is important that we remain aware of these endangered properties and give them a voice. Our community will be all the richer for it. 

Debbie Hinman is a member of the Historical Resources Commission, a HRPS Tour Guide, and a member of the HRPS Editorial Board.



The deteriorating El Reno apartment home at 1461 Lander Street in 2016 with chipped paint, broken and boarded up windows and dried up lawn and plants. The home is pictured on page one in 2004 in a much better state. Photo by the author.

Saying Goodbye to Boarding House Row

by ZoAnn Campana

On March 24, 2016, amid the University of Nevada, Reno Gateway District controversy, the Reno Gazette-Journal published an article confirming developer Landmark Property's plans to construct a \$50 million luxury apartment building for university students on a block located directly south of the Gateway District, on the south side of Interstate 80. The block is located in one of Reno's oldest sections and is bounded by 7th Street to the north, Lake Street to the east, 6th Street to the south, and Center Street to the west. Because the development will encompass the entire block, all of the existing buildings will be demolished, 13 of which are more than 50 years old.

The houses are in various states of neglect and have experienced different degrees of alteration; however, they illustrate an important, albeit overlooked, narrative of the development of Reno. Like the stunning Victorian-era homes that line the Gateway District, the land on which the soon-to-be-demolished homes are situated was originally owned by Alvaro Evans, who emigrated west from Defiance, Ohio with at least five of his brothers. In September of 1879, Alvaro sold lots 4, 5, 6 and 7 of his Evans Addition to sheep rancher John O'Brien. The North Evans Addition, as the plot of land would become known, was officially platted on December 16, 1879. The block bordered by 6th, 7th, Center and Lake streets was dubbed Block 8 ½ and accordingly subdivided into 16 lots, which were arranged in two rows of eight and divided by a narrow alley.

Between 1885 and 1890, five wood-frame dwellings appeared on the Block 8 ½, four of which fronted Center Street (known at the time as "Central Street") and one of which fronted East

6th Street. These dwellings include those extant at 650 N. Center Street, 626 N. Center Street and possibly the house at 610 N. Center Street. By 1899, two more buildings appeared on the block, one of which was located on Center Street (now a vacant lot), and the other fronting Lake Street (605 Lake Street). Several stables were arranged along the rear lot lines, skirting the alley. By the 1920s, the configuration of the block was largely as it exists today. All of the residences and outbuildings were of wood-frame construction and between one and two stories in height.



610 N. Center Street, a Colonial Revival residence, built between 1885 and 1890.

When the block was first developed, its buildings were occupied by single families. However, by the 1930s, a number of the block's single-family residences had been converted into boardinghouses or divided into one or more flats. Several factors likely contributed to this trend, including the 1906 introduction of a tenement building to the block (636 N. Center, since demolished), as well as the block's close proximity to the downtown, industrial, and university areas of Reno. Additionally, Reno's migratory divorce trade—which peaked in the late 1920s and 1930s—created a local market for short-term housing and resulted in a

proliferation of rooming houses across the city. By the 1950s, the block earned a reputation as "Boarding" House Row." Newspaper advertisements promoting rooms and apartments for rent on the block abounded from the 1930s to the present.

Residents of the block were overwhelmingly members of the working class. According to city directories and United States Census records, occupants included carpenters, laborers, machinists, farmers, porters, bookkeepers, stenographers, clerks and students. Block 8 ½'s residents continued to consist of students and the working-class into at least the 1970s.

Overall, buildings on Block 8 ½ give the impression that they have been forgotten, and very soon they will have entirely disappeared from the landscape. The houses are vernacular expressions of a number of architectural styles, including Folk Victorian, American Foursquare, Craftsman, Colonial Revival, Ranch and Contemporary.

Below is a sampling of older, historically interesting resources found on the block:

610-612 N. Center Street

This stately Colonial Revival residence first appeared on Center Street between 1885 and 1890 as a two-story wood-frame dwelling with a rectangular footprint and full-width front porch. Between 1933 and 1947, the building was clad with red brick veneer, and the small side-porch projecting from the south elevation was added. It is not clear whether the c.1885-1890 building was demolished or simply remodeled. The Chan family, including kenowriter Wing Chan and bookkeeper Ruth Chan, lived here from 1964 to 1974.

Saying Goodbye to Boarding House Row (continued)

626 N. Center Street

Demonstrating the late 19th-century Folk Victorian style, this narrow, gable-roofed building would be at home in New Orleans. The porch features Eastlake detailing with turned spindles and a jigsaw frieze. The end gables are clad with gingerbread shingles, and the wood-sash windows are surrounded by molded wood casings. The residence was constructed between 1885 and 1890. By 1899, a two-story stable was constructed behind the main dwelling, which was converted into tenements by 1906. City directories suggest that the property served as a boarding house by the 1920s, housing a nurse, laborer, carpenter, and two dentists in 1920 alone.

650 N. Center Street

A two-story wood-frame dwelling appeared on this lot between 1885 and 1890. This is the same Folk Victorian building that exists on the lot today, complete with Gothic-influenced details such as spindlework in the gable peak and paired segmental windows topped with eyebrow arches. The Hodgkinson family, which included prominent pharmacists Lawrence and Samuel J. Hodgkinson, resided here until about 1920. Sometime between 1918 and 1933, the residence was converted into a boarding house and has accommodated a diverse parade of residents to the present day.

629 Lake Street

This Colonial Revival residence, constructed between 1906 and 1910, features a full-length Classical porch supported by Tuscan columns, a prominent gable dormer, and leaded-glass windows. At first glance, the walls of the house appear to be constructed of red brick; on closer inspection, one

is surprised to find that the exterior is covered with shingles that merely resemble brick. The residence served as a rooming house for divorce seekers in the 1920s and early 1930s. Between 1932 and 1933, the building functioned as the Delta Sigma Lambda sorority house. By August of 1935, Dr. T.M. Yee sited his Chinese Medicine practice in the building. The herbalist, who resided at 629 Lake Street with his family, also ran his business here until at least 1961.

653 Lake Street

This 1½-story Craftsman dwelling, constructed between 1906 and 1918,



626 Center Street, a 19th century Folk Victorian style, built between 1885 and 1890.

features a rectangular footprint and offset entry porch. The building's defining characteristics include a cross-gabled roof with wide, unclosed eaves, exposed rafter tails, knee braces, and beautiful Craftsman style windows. By 1933, the modest one-story dwelling facing the alley was constructed—also in the Craftsman style—and the main residence was divided into two flats.

661 Lake Street

First appearing on the block between 1899 and 1904, 661 Lake Street's original configuration consisted of a square block with a north-facing bay and porch wrapping around its northeast corner. Between 1906 and

1918, the house received a rear addition, and a carpenter's shop with electricity was constructed along the back portion of the lot. This reflects a period during which the house was occupied by carpenters, including Fred Burt in 1913 and Frank Decarie (with his wife, Rena) between 1917 and 1932. By 1933, the dwelling had been converted into a rooming house, and the shop was converted into an auto garage.

Block 8½ may seem like an unremarkable swath of Reno's built environment. Wedged between the University and Downtown areas of Reno, it has been equally developed and disowned over the past century. However, the block tells a story of Reno's working-class population: the carpenters, students, divorce-seekers and Chinese herbalists. The block also offers the narrative of a permanent residential neighborhood that evolved to fulfill a need for temporary lodging. This history may not be as alluring as that of casino magnates, divorce-seeking debutantes, and Frederic Delongchamps-designed estates, but it is just as significant to the development of Reno.

The next time you drive north on Center Street, approaching the I-80 onramp, take a moment to admire this block of vernacular history before it vanishes forever. 

Sources for this article include historic newspapers, city directories and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Photos courtesy of the author.

ZoAnn Campana is a local Historic Preservation Consultant who serves on the HRPS Board of Directors.

HRPS Announces the 2016 Neighborhood Preservation Fund (NPF) Award Recipients

by Cindy Ainsworth

Editor's Note: We've included photographs we have in our files. We'll include photos of the other properties in FootPrints as we have them and as we report on completion of the projects.

The Neighborhood Preservation Fund (NPF) panel announced the recipients of the 2016 grant awards at the May HRPS board meeting. This year's winners include many significant properties, including two listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The panel found it interesting that four of the properties have remained in family ownership for many years. Out of nineteen submissions, the panel awarded nine grants.

The NPF has allowed property owners the opportunity to apply for small grants for the rehabilitation of historical structures in a manner authentic to the original architectural style. Since 2010, the NPF panel has awarded 39 grants for a total of \$105,921. Plus, we have a major pending three-year grant that will help with the replacement of the roof for the Levy House/Sundance Bookstore property. Funding for the NPF comes from the Reno Harvest of Homes Tour, HRPS Lifetime category memberships and your donations. This year's Harvest of Homes Tour will take place on Saturday, September 24. (see page 11). NPF donations for NPF can be sent to HRPS, P.O. Box 14003, Reno, NV 89507.

The Historic Reno Preservation Society would like to thank the following NPF committee members for all their work and expert advice: Cindy Ainsworth, Sharon Honig-Bear, ZoAnn Campana, Jack Hursh and Scott Learey. Below are the 2016 recipients:



247 Court Street
Owner: Theresa Frisch

This very original 1907 house has been featured on many HRPS tours. The Frisch family has owned the house since 1918. It was the home of Roy J. Frisch, who had agreed to give state evidence in a Federal mail fraud case involving the Riverside Bank. He disappeared on March 22, 1934. For the next 50 years the family left the porch light on in hopes that he would someday return.

The committee felt that it is a lovely, highly visible and significant building. The committee approved \$4,500 toward painting the exterior.



549 Court Street
Owners: Melinda and Dan Gustin

The 1911 "Hawkins House" is on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of the important buildings located in the Newlands Heights neighborhood. The house was commissioned by Prince A. Hawkins and designed by prominent Los Angeles architect, Elmer Gray, whose major projects included the Beverly Hills Hotel. The Hawkins family was considered one of the first families of Nevada, prominent in Nevada's business and banking circles. The Robert Z. Hawkins Foundation has contributed greatly to the community. The Gustins, the present owners, are actively involved in many preservation projects and organizations.

The committee felt that this is a significant historic resource and made a note that the owners will utilize U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards for the project. The committee approved \$5,000 toward the painting of the property.

HRPS 2016 NPF Award Recipients (continued)

542 Lander Street

Owners: Michael and Mary Mentaberry

This brick c 1924 property (our Bricks and Stones tour information states 1903) was once a rooming house and is listed on



the Nevada Register of Historic Places. Although the owners received a grant in 2012 to repair the porch bricks, the committee felt this is a significant commercial property in a highly visible location and therefore the committee recommended \$2,000 toward painting the exterior.

842 Nixon Avenue

Owner: Loren Jahn

A handsome and well-maintained 1930 family owned home that is included on one of our walking tours. The committee awarded \$2,000 toward the installation of period-appropriate garage doors to reinforce keeping with the original look of the home.

333 Ralston Street

Owners: John and Sonia Kerin

This 1875 home is a significant property that is on the National Register of Historic Places. It is probably one of the earliest residential buildings in Reno and is still used as a rooming house. Included along this Ralston Street section are other important early homes. The house has a strong connection with the Reno divorce trade and at the height of the divorce trade, housed some two dozen women and men seeking the Reno cure. The Nystrom family bought the house in 1942. Estelle Nystrom also testified as a resident witness for her boarding house occupants. Present owner, Sonia Kerin, is the daughter of Estelle. The home is featured on our Western Addition tour.

The committee felt this is a significant property and recommended \$5,000 to replace the badly damaged roof.

401 Moran Street

Owners: Sharon Rachaw and Joyce Sharp

This unique 1926 brick bungalow was purchased by Teresa Cerveri from Charles Burke. The home appears to be in excellent condition. The committee recommended \$800 to stabilize the front porch.

619 Sinclair Street

Owners: Larry and Chris Klaich

This property was originally built in 1905 as a single family home for John and Vivian Butler. John was a prominent community member who owned the Reno Electric Company.

This home is located in a significant "up and coming" neighborhood. According to the owners, the home interior still has many of its original features. The owners are rehabilitating the exterior and remodeling the interior as four one bedroom/one bath luxury apartments. This will be an important neighborhood preservation project that is also an excellent example of adaptive reuse, especially during a period where urban renewal has threatened many vintage properties. The committee recommended \$5,000 to paint the exterior.

327 Wheeler Avenue

Owner: Dagny Stapleton

This 1912 West of Wells Craftsman home has some wonderful features, including the river rock chimney and fireplace and Arts & Crafts details throughout the interior. The owner has thoughtfully restored the interior and is now starting the exterior work. The committee felt this is an excellent project in a very popular neighborhood and recommended \$2,500 to help with the repair of the river rock chimney.

200 Island Avenue

Trinity Episcopal Church

This highly visible beautiful 1948 church located by the Truckee River is a true downtown jewel. The committee unanimously felt that this was a worthy community project and recommended \$2,880 toward refinishing various exterior doors.

Cindy Ainsworth is a Past President of HRPS and currently serves as HRPS Administrator and manages the Neighborhood Preservation Fund Awards. She is a HRPS Walking Tour Guide and developed the course House Histories 101, which she taught in 2014.

Photo of 247 Court (c 2008) by Kim Henrick; photos of 549 Court and 542 Lander Street (both c 2006) by Carol Coleman.



HRPS & Artown July 2016 Historic Walking Tours



HRPS is proud to be a part of the month-long Artown celebration. We offer a full roster of July walks. Tour cost is \$10 per person, free to HRPS members. Walks generally last from 1 ½ to 2 hours.

No dogs please. Reservations required and space is limited.

Please go to www.historicreno.org or 775-747-4478 for reservations and information.

Access to HRPS Walking Tours varies according to venue. Certain areas may not be fully accessible to individuals with disabilities due to architectural barriers inherent in the historic construction of the structures or uneven walking surfaces.

Saturday,
July 2
9:00 a.m.

CULTURAL CROSSROADS, WEST SIDE — Chinese herbal shops, Judaism's early days and a rich African-American heritage come alive on this tour. Includes an inside visit to the Lear Theater and the historic Bethel AME Church. Meet at West Street Market, located on West between First and Second Streets. Tour guide: Sharon Honig-Bear.

Tuesday,
July 5
6:00 p.m.

HISTORIC UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO CAMPUS — Visit Morrill Hall, Mackay School of Mines and the Keck Museum to learn the history of this beautiful campus. Meet on campus at the Honor Court just off 9th and Center Streets. Tour guides: Jack Hursh and Bob Shriver.



Morrill Hall (above left) c 1890, the first building built on what is now the University of Nevada, Reno campus. Mackay Hall of Science (above right) in 1908 at the dedication of the John Mackay statue (Photos courtesy Nevada Historical Society).

Saturday,
July 9
9:00 a.m.

TRUCKEE RIVER ALL THE TIME — 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.

Tuesday,
July 12
6:00 p.m.

DELONGCHAMPS RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE — This walk takes you on a neighborhood tour of homes, large and small, designed by Reno's notable architect, Frederic DeLongchamps. Hear about his life and what made him so unique to this area. Meet at the Hardy House/Arte Italia, 442 Flint Street. Tour guide: Sharon Honig-Bear.

HRPS & Artown July 2016 Historic Walking Tours

Saturday,
July 16
8:00 a.m.

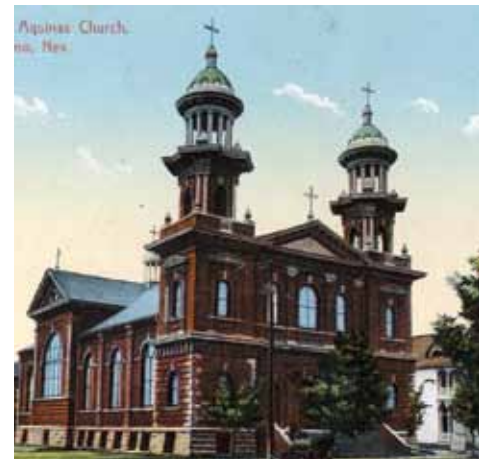
MANSIONS ON THE BLUFF — PLEASE NOTE: THIS WALK WILL START AT 8:00 AM. Walk past historical Reno homes located on Court, Ridge and upper California streets. Learn about the senators and merchants who made early Reno *The Biggest Little City in the World*. Be sure to bring water and wear comfortable shoes for this uphill tour which begins at the McCarran House, 401 Court Street. Look nearby for mandatory sign-in/registration on Court Street. Tour guides: David Vill, Joan Collins, and Donna & Paul Erickson.

Tuesday,
July 19
6:00 p.m.

POWNING'S ADDITION AND LITTLE ITALY — Discover one of Reno's earliest and most delightful vernacular neighborhoods, predominantly settled by Northern Italian immigrants. This neighborhood is the first City of Reno Conservation District. Meet at the McKinley Arts & Culture Center, 925 Riverside Drive, east side parking lot. Tour guides: Felvia Belaustegui and Jack Hursh.

Saturday,
July 23
10:00 a.m.

MOVIE FOOTPRINTS IN RENO — PLEASE NOTE: THIS WALK WILL START AT 10:00 AM. Walk in the footsteps of Marilyn Monroe, Kirk Douglas, Kevin Costner, Clint Eastwood, Maggie Smith, Helen Mirren and more. The tour covers downtown Reno's rich filming history inspired by divorce, gambling and the city's distinct look in such movies as "The Misfits," "Cobb," "Sister Act," and "Love Ranch." Meet by the northeast entrance to the lobby of the National Automobile Museum, 10 South Lake Street. Tour guide: Robin Holabird.



Trinity Episcopal Church (left) c 1960 (Photo courtesy Nevada Historical Society (NHS)). First United Methodist Church (center) c 1930 (Photo courtesy NHS). St. Thomas Aquinas (right) c1908, (Postcard courtesy Debbie Hinman).

Sunday,
July 24
1:00 p.m.

DOWNTOWN CHURCH TOUR — PLEASE NOTE: THIS WALK WILL START AT 1:00 PM. 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.

Tuesday,
July 26
6:00 p.m.

MIDTOWN RESIDENTIAL — Join us for a walk along shady streets in a quiet neighborhood comprising several early additions: the Litch Addition, part of the original 72-acre Litch Ranch, the McCarthy Addition and the Sierra Vista Addition. All of these were established around the turn of the 20th century. The homes are an eclectic mix of styles, most dating from the 1920s through the 1940s. A portion of this neighborhood could be considered yet another "Little Italy"! Meet at the northwest corner of Mary Street and South Virginia Street. Tour guides: Debbie Hinman and Rosie Cevasco.

Saturday,
July 30
9:00 a.m.

NEWLANDS NEIGHBORHOOD — Enjoy an architectural walk through one of Reno's oldest and most prestigious neighborhoods. Meet at the Lander Street side of My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. Tour guide: Scott Gibson.

HRPS 2016 Pat Klos Volunteer Award Winner:

Sharon Honig-Bear

by Pat Klos

Pat Klos was among the seven people who met in July 1997 to form a historic preservation society. Pat became the first President of Historic Reno Preservation Society and has continued to actively support HRPS in the ensuing years.

In 2014, Pat established the HRPS Pat Klos Volunteer Award. As she says: 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.”

HRPS runs on volunteerism, whether it is collecting money and serving as treasurer, working hours on a computer for membership, organizing walking tour leaders and volunteers, contacting people to assist the Home Tour, or helping out with walking tours.

At the April 27, 2016 HRPS Annual Meeting, Pat presented the 2016 Pat Klos Volunteer Award to Sharon Honig-Bear with these words:

“One of the worst statements I’ve ever made was telling Sharon I didn’t think an historic homes tour would work in Reno. What was I thinking? If Sharon thought this was a good idea, she would make it work. I already knew that about her.”

Sharon’s involvement in HRPS has been above and beyond: her 3-year presidency from 2010 to 2013, creating many unique walking tours, establishing the community grants program (HRPS



Pat Klos (left) with Sharon Honig-Bear as Pat presents the 2016 Pat Klos Volunteer Award to Sharon.

NFP Grants), and, of course, the hugely successful Harvest of Homes Tour.

Sharon’s energy seems to be boundless and so are her culinary skills. Do not pass up dinner at Sharon’s. Be sure to read her new column in *Edible Reno*.

Those of us dedicated to historic preservation have developed our interests in many different ways. I asked Sharon how she came to be involved and I want to share it with you.

She was born in Brooklyn, New York, but when she was a child the Honig family moved to newly developed Levittown NY. Levittown was founded by Abraham Levitt in 1929 and later developed as the first truly mass-produced suburb in the United States. It was regarded as the archetype for post-WWII communities. Here in Reno Westfield Village near Reno High School was developed using the Levittown model in the 1950s.

Sharon credits growing up knowing about the significance of this well-designed, affordable built environment and then going to Buffalo NY as a

student at SUNY at age 16. Buffalo boasted Louis Sullivan homes and Frederick Olmsted parks, two of the greats in American architecture and landscape design. Sharon said to me, “Buffalo was my incubator for a lifelong interest in urban planning and design.”

Sharon was installed as HRPS President in early summer of 2010. In September of 2010, she chaired the first Reno Harvest of Homes Tour, an effort that had been underway for some time. This was surely a planning and organizing feat and the Home Tour she chairs continues in its 7th year.

By Summer 2011, Sharon had established the HRPS Neighborhood Preservation Fund (NPF) to offer mini-grants to help property owners rehabilitate historical structures. The grants would be in the neighborhood of \$2,500, require matching funds from the property owner and be used for the exterior facades of buildings, and required that the work be authentic with the original style of the structure. At last HRPS was actually doing something (besides educating) about preserving our older properties. The funds for the very successful Home Tours would be used as income flow for the NPF grants. Not only is Sharon a planner and organizer, she is creative and determined.

In summer 2011, the HRPS Advocacy Advisory Council was formed. Its role is to “identify, research and obtain facts on current historic preservation issues in the Reno area and recommend a plan of action and outreach to the HRPS Board.” Now Sharon had established a method of identifying to possibly save endangered buildings.

HRPS and the City of Reno owe much to Sharon for her efforts and volunteerism. 

7th Reno Harvest of Homes Tour — Saturday, September 24

Be Sure to Save the Date!

Article and Photos by Sharon Honig-Bear

The days may be warm but HRPS Home Tour Committee is hard at work planning the fall season's highlight: the 7th annual **Reno Harvest of Homes Tour** will be held this year on Saturday, September 24 and should be another crowd pleaser for Reno history buffs.

"It's both fun and challenging identifying an interesting lineup of houses," said event chair Sharon Honig-Bear. "This year contains some real surprises, opening up two historic areas of Reno that haven't appeared on previous tours." The houses include:

- A downtown location, in the old area known as the Western Addition: one of Reno's oldest homes, the 1890 "Farmhouse" at 507 West 6th Street.
- Two homes are along the "Old Verdi Road" (Mayberry) on the west edge of town: The Caughlin Ranch House and a mid-century beauty at 175 Juniper Hill Road.
- The ever-popular Midtown neighborhood will be featured with two wonderful stone houses on the same property at 373 Arroyo Street.



Come September 24, watch for the HRPS Home Tour signs to help you locate homes in Reno neighborhoods.

- The stately Newlands neighborhoods will be represented by a beauty at 887 Marsh Avenue.

More information about the homes and the Tour will be available in the next issue of *FootPrints* and online at historicro.org later this summer.

Tickets will be available in August and will again be \$30 in advance and \$35 on the day of the event. There are some slight changes in ticket outlets this year. They include Sundance Bookstore, St. Ives Florist, Ryrie and Me, Rail City Garden Center, Napa-Sonoma Grocery Company, Moana Nursery, The Freckled Frog—and new this year, Labels Consignment Boutique. Tickets may also be ordered online through the website.

Proceeds from the **Reno Harvest of Homes Tour** are used for the Neighborhood Preservation Fund, offering grants for community improvement projects. Ms. Honig-Bear says, "We know that the public will enjoy this rare opportunity to get an inside peek of Reno's unique residential history."

Additional information is available at historicro.org or by calling (775) 747-4478 or (775) 843-3823. 



Besides being able to preregister online and in local stores, volunteers will assist you in registering onsite.

July 1 is Time to Renew Your HRPS Membership

We would like to thank all our members for your belief and ongoing support of HRPS while we continue to define our growing role in determining Reno's historic and preservation legacy. Your support of our organization

has given us the credibility and courage for a preservation voice in our community.

July is the time to renew your membership which supports our many programs and *FootPrints*. Just a reminder, our fiscal year runs

from July 2016 through June 2017.

For your convenience, we have included a membership renewal envelope in this issue. You could use page 15 of *FootPrints* or renew online at historicro.org.

The Proposed West 2nd Street Project and Historic Preservation

by Sharon Honig-Bear

Reno has been buzzing with talk about the huge redevelopment project called West 2nd District (it has also been referred to as Secundo Vita, or “second life”). The company’s vision statement indicates:

“The West 2nd District mindfully integrates with, and reactivates, its surrounding historical and architectural environs.”

The *Reno Gazette-Journal* and other media have reported, “It’s bordered by Washington Street on the west, Arlington Avenue on the east, West 1st Street on the south, and the City of Reno’s ReTRAC train project on the north.”

Recently, a group of local historic preservationists were invited to meet with—and walk the area with—Don Clark and Colin Robertson, principals of the massive project. The session clarified a number of issues relating to the fate of historic properties:

- The footprint of the project is smaller than stated in the media. When describing the western border as Washington Street, the only part that actually reaches this border is at the train trench. The footprint leaves intact historic structures like the Deco apartment

building at 623 West 2nd Street and the building designed by the architectural firm of DeLongchamps, O’Brien & Wells (now housing Labels Consignment Boutique) at 601 West 1st Street. The Bethel AME Church on Bell Street will also remain.



*Twentieth Century Club c 2006 on First Street is among the buildings that will remain undisturbed.
Photo courtesy Carol Coleman.*

- Much of the area covered by the project is now vacant. Several of the rundown motels in the area will be demolished. Every effort is being made to save important neon signs.
- Both the Gibson apartments at 441 West 2nd Street and the Victorian adjacent on Ralston will remain, as will St. Thomas Aquinas Cathedral (pictured on page 9), its surrounding buildings and the Twentieth Century Club building.

- The two-story brick Lane Building at 425 Church Lane was built by Andrew Lane in 1905. Lane operated his fuel business from this building. The plan for this structure is to move it temporarily to construct a water treatment plant below the site and then move the building

back, reglazing the windows and perhaps making it a greenhouse for the community.

- Some significant structures will be lost: the Greyhound Bus station, designed by famed architect William Pereira; the Nelson Building; the interesting brick house at 541 West 2nd Street.

- The work will be done in phases, building by building. A condo project will begin immediately on vacant land on Ralston Street near the trench.

- Lots of parking is being planned, including large garages closest to the railroad trench (the least desirable land for housing or commercial).

For details about the plan, refer to their website www.westseconddistrict.com. The group was conducting regular tours through May but they may continue these if interest remains high.

HRPS Endangered Building Watch List

- Freight House on Evans St.
- Nevada Brewing Works on 4th St.
- Regina Apartments on Island Ave.
- First Masonic Building (Reno Mercantile) at Sierra and Commercial
- Historic Homes in The University Gateway District
- Buildings in the University Neighborhood
- The Hotel El Cortez at 2nd and Arlington
- Hill/Redfield Mansion on Mt. Rose St.
- Lear Theater
- Flick Ranch House
- Two El Reno Apartments at 1461 Lander St.
- Hillside Cemetery
- WPA Projects at Plumas, Stewart and Virginia Lake Parks
- Mid-century Motels
- Burke’s, Belli and Mountain View Additions

Historical Resources Commission (HRC) Gives Award to HRPS and the Neighborhood Preservation Fund (NPF)

by Debbie Hinman, HRPS Representative to the HRC

In a time when the face of Reno is changing dramatically and so many historic structures are threatened, it is rewarding to know that there are individuals and organizations out there doing all they can for the preservation of our history and the beautification of our neighborhoods. These efforts should be recognized and rewarded and the City of Reno's Historical Resources Commission (HRC) is continuing its tradition of doing so.

The HRC first introduced its Historic Preservation Awards in 1997. Previous recipients include the Chism House, the Lake Mansion, neon sign collector and restorer Will Durham, the Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS), and the Depot Craft Brewery and Distillery, to name a few. This year, there were so many worthy nominations that two of the categories have two winners. The categories and those receiving awards are as follows:

Residential: 310 Thoma Street
– Mike & Deb Lander

Mike has worked tirelessly on this 1906 home, undoing bad remodels and restoring its original style and grace. It is now a gem of the Wells Avenue Conservation District.

Residential: 235 Ridge Street
– The Ames Family

The Ameses have taken a conservative old home and made it a true family home for themselves and their children. The home is now lively and cheerful, with beautiful landscaping.

Non-Residential: 900 S. Center Street – The Brasserie St. James

Formerly the old Crystal Springs Water Plant, clever adaptive reuse is at work here. The building has taken on new life but retains its history with reused timber and even an old wall safe in the entry.



Byllie Andrews, (center) President of HRPS, Sharon Honig-Bear, (left) who created the Neighborhood Preservation fund (NPF), and Carol Coleman, (right) incoming President of HRPS, accept the HRC Award at a Reno Planning Commission/HRC meeting at City Hall.
Photo courtesy Scott Powell.

Historic Landmark:
98 W. Commercial Row
– Masonic Lodge #13/Reno
Mercantile Building

Though it sits vacant and in dire need of renovation and repairs, this is Reno's oldest standing commercial structure, erected in 1872. The owner, Whitney Peak, has no plans to demolish the building.

Historical Project:
Historic Reno Preservation Society/Neighborhood Preservation Fund

Established in 2009 in conjunction with HRPS' Harvest of Homes Tour, The Neighborhood Preservation Fund has now completed six funding cycles and the applications have been diverse, from grand public buildings to classic bungalows. The fund has aided in the preservation of almost 40 buildings! The selection committee is comprised of Jack Hursh, Cindy Ainsworth, Sharon Honig-Bear, Scott Learey, Kimberly Roberts and ZoAnn Campana. In addition to the benefits to the buildings and the neigh-

borhoods, the projects also bring much-needed employment to local masons, painters, woodworkers and roofers. The Fund also brightens our streets and cityscapes, one step at a time.

Historical Project:
Reno Then and Now

by Neal Cobb & Jerry Fenwick

The local duo has produced two wonderful volumes of photographs chronicling Reno's past and present. Rephotography is the act of repeated photography of the same site, with a time lag in between. Through this device, these longtime Reno residents have shown us our own history.

Distinguished Service:
Felvia Belaustegui

Felvia is a longtime HRPS member who has distinguished herself as a board member, board president and tour guide. With Cindy Ainsworth, Felvia performed a survey of the Powning's Addition, carefully researching and cataloguing the structures within the addition. Felvia also wrote her Master's thesis on the Italian settlers in Reno and "Little Italy." She was largely responsible for the placement of the Powning Pillar and today leads tours for HRPS' Fourth Grade History project.

Advocate: Fran Tryon

Fran is a local unsung hero. She observed the neglect and desecration of Reno's oldest cemetery, Hillside, and made it her purpose to do something about it. Fran can be found there nearly every Saturday, weeding and clearing away bottles, cans and abandoned furniture. When she's not at the cemetery, she's researching those buried there and creating a permanent record of their lives.

Every one of these awards was richly deserved and the HRC is gratified to be able to honor those who work unfailingly to make our city a nicer place to live. Thanks to all of you—we're so lucky you're here! 

Message from Your HRPS President Byllie D'Amato Andrews

I was drawn to the HRPS organization because of my love for Reno and a desire to know more about my city's history. I became involved because I learned how important it is to foster this same love and desire in others. As a non-historian, my learning curve has been steep since joining the HRPS board five years ago, and serving as its president has frequently taken me out of my comfort zone. When I joined the board in 2011, I heard other members using unfamiliar terms: "Shippo," HRC, CLG. I have since learned more than I thought possible, including the meanings of the acronyms that peppered board discussions, but I have much still to learn about Reno's history and about historic preservation. (And it is still on my master "to-do" list to put together a glossary for new board members.)

With our improving regional economy we have seen a rise in development, sometimes jeopardizing Reno's historical resources. The year 2016 has turned out to be an extremely busy one for the HRPS Advocacy Advisory Council (AAC), as we continue working as part of a community-wide grassroots effort to raise awareness about the need to preserve the row of historic Victorian homes in the University's Gateway District. The message is spreading across print and social media, with positive coverage in the *Reno News & Review* and the *Reno Gazette-Journal*. You can stay current on the Gateway Victorians by liking and following "Preserve the Historic UNR Gateway" on Facebook, and I encourage you to learn more about the history of many of the homes at Reno Historical (reno-historical.org/tours/show/9).

In 2014, I wrote about the stages of growth of non-profits and set a goal to move HRPS out of the adolescent stage and into full maturity. We continue to make progress, although the journey is not without struggles. As awareness of historical preservation becomes more

widespread, our organization continues to grow. But as with many volunteer-led organizations, we frequently find ourselves in a state of fluidity. People come and go and we are always looking for a volunteer or two to chair a major project. As HRPS works toward a future as a "fully mature" organization, there are even greater opportunities to shape and evolve how our city experiences its history.

HRPS Walking Tours, our most visible and popular offering, are often people's first introduction to HRPS. Each year we see record attendance and the diverse tours are more popular than ever. Creating opportunities to expand this program and allow more people to experience a walking tour will be one of the challenges moving forward, but as I write this message, we are without a Walking Tour Coordinator. Although we have found temporary volunteers to get through the season, it is critical to find a permanent coordinator to oversee the program.

We are also without a chair for our educational programs. Traditionally held on Wednesday evenings, HRPS has partnered with Washoe County Libraries to offer each program a second time on the Sunday immediately following the fourth Wednesday. This season has seen a decline in attendance on Wednesday evenings and an increase in attendance on Sunday afternoons. The Nelson Building, our Wednesday home for the past two seasons, will be sold by the University to make way for the West Second Street Development. Consequently, the HRPS Board has decided to offer our programs the fourth Sunday of the month at the Downtown Library this year. A challenge for the coming year is deciding if our education programs are the best use of our limited resources. While we were once one of the few organizations to offer historical programs, excellent programming is also offered by the

Nevada Westerners Corral, the Good Old Days (GOD) Club, OLLI and the Nevada Historical Society.

I am extremely happy to announce that Carol Coleman will be stepping into the HRPS presidency this summer. Carol is exceptionally capable and I have every confidence that she will take HRPS to the next level of development. Also providing strong leadership for HRPS going forward is Barrie Lynn, who is doing an outstanding job serving as chair of the Advocacy Advisory Council, my first "job" with HRPS when the AAC was formed in 2011 by then-president Sharon Honig-Bear. Under Barrie's leadership, the AAC will continue to raise awareness of local preservation issues and build a close working relationship with the City of Reno's Historical Resources Commission. While I am leaving the presidency, I look forward to staying involved with the AAC and working to recruit and train a new Walking Tour Coordinator, and to working closely with Carol during my last year as a member of the board.

I want to end my last President's Message to you with thanks to all of you who support HRPS, advocate for preservation, and volunteer your time and energy to this important effort. In addition to Carol, Barrie, Sharon, the entire HRPS Board, and all of our various volunteers, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Constance Hanson and JoAnn Newbury for stepping up and joining me in coordinating one month of this season's walking tours. If you would like to follow the example of Barrie, Constance, or any of these dedicated volunteers and get involved at any level, please contact Carol, or me or any board member. I hope to see you on a walking tour! 

(PS: SHPO is the State Historic Preservation Office, HRC is the Historical Resources Commission, and CLG is Certified Local Government.)

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 Jacqueline Black
 Laurie & Greg Boyer
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HRPS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The **Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS)** is “dedicated to preserving and promoting historic resources in the Truckee Meadows through education, advocacy and leadership.” In 1997, a small group of people interested in Reno’s history created HRPS as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We have been an all-volunteer group ever since! As a HRPS member, you can learn about Reno’s history and make a difference in its future.

All Membership levels include the HRPS quarterly historical publication *FootPrints*; HRPS walking tours during the summer months; and education programs in the fall and winter.

You may pay by check, cash or credit card. When paying by credit card, please visit our website, www.historicreno.org. We use PayPal™ to process your payment. Don’t worry if you don’t have a PayPal™ account. They will accept your credit card on our behalf; we will send you a confirmation email with the information you provide.

Membership Levels:

- ☐ \$15.00 Student
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☐ **YES, I want to get involved.**
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HRPS Fall and Winter Programs

HRPS offers great speakers at the HRPS meetings in October, November, January, February, March and April. Beginning with the October 2016 meeting, meetings will be held on the 4th Sunday of the month at 1:00 pm at the Downtown Reno Library.



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