



FootPrints

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

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HALT THE PLANS TO DEMOLISH THE HISTORIC HOUSES OF THE UNR GATEWAY!

An Open Letter to UNR President Marc Johnson

We collectively and strongly object to your plans to prematurely demolish the historic houses of the University Gateway in order to prepare the area for new construction that is years away.

Demolition of structures that are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, as many of the Gateway houses have been professionally evaluated, should only be considered after all alternatives have been exhausted and time has run out. Neither is the case.

The University can make plans and acquire donors before demolishing the houses. What is the hurry? We ask the University to give the community the time to for-

mulate a workable plan for preserving as many houses as possible in the interim.

A university is a guardian of culture, and a public university has an even greater responsibility to the state it serves. The six houses on the west side of Center Street between Eighth and Ninth Streets comprise Reno's last remaining intact block of 19th century residences.

You have demonstrated a commitment to preserving historic buildings constructed for the university. It is now time for you to extend that same respect to the heritage of the community that first welcomed the university to this city more than 130 years ago.

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS AN INDIVIDUAL?

Copy the above text, or write your own message, even if it's just "Halt the Plan to Demolish UNR Gateway"

Contact Key Decision Makers:

Marc Johnson, President
Heidi Gansert, Office of the President
Board of Regents, Representing Our Area:
Kevin Page, Chair
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Write Letters to the Editor:

Reno Gazette Journal
Reno News and Review

letters@rgj.com or longer opinion pieces at columns@rgj.com
<http://www.newsreview.com/reno/contactLetter2editor.html>

Go to HRPS Website: historicreno.org. Choose Advocacy to find a link to our petition. Please sign.

View a Gateway Tour on Reno Historical: <http://renohistorical.org/tours/show/9>

Fight for Center Street Historic Homes Intensifies

by Emerson Marcus

As Reno enters winter and foliage turns to dust in the City of Trembling Leaves, the last surviving row of 19th-century Victorian homes in the city — homes that Walter Van Tilburg Clark certainly laid eyes on — seem destined for the same, unless enough people raise their voices to object.

More than two years after University of Nevada, Reno President Marc Johnson told the Reno City Council, “We are committed to preserving the historic houses that are in the Gateway District,” Johnson now suggests that at least 10 of the 12 homes likely will be razed to make way for an expanding university.

“Until we have a secure site, we cannot move forward with the preliminary designs for the [university’s proposed business and life sciences] buildings,” Johnson was quoted as saying in a Nov. 27 report in *Northern Nevada Business View*. “If we can’t get the houses moved, then as a last resort we will have to take them down in order to create building sites.”

“Once UNR owns the land, which it does, they have already ‘secured’ the footprint for their new buildings. They don’t need to prematurely raze the existing structures in order to design what will replace them, or to raise money for a building. That’s not how it works. Just because the university’s unilateral efforts to relocate the houses have failed doesn’t mean that there aren’t plenty of other options that haven’t yet been explored.” according to historian Dr. Alicia Barber.

What frustrates preservationists most is the university’s complete rejection of potential adaptive reuse for the homes coupled with its alleged lack of fairness and transparency through the request for proposal process.

In April, the university opened the homes for bid. Bidders had only six weeks to write a proposal and prove they owned land where the houses would be moved. Of the seven bids for the houses, two were deemed “fully responsive,” according to the selection committee. Beth and Jerry Krug, who attended the university in the 1990s, were awarded 829 Lake Street with a plan to move the home to 743 Lander Street. Tim and Nancy Gilbert were awarded the “Humphrey House” on 127 E. Eighth St. The Truckee Meadows Heritage Foundation’s proposal to move the homes to Evans Park for the creation of a historic park was rejected by the selection committee.

“The lower ranking or non-responsive designation was the result of non-compliance with the RFP specifications or lack of sufficient proof of financial capacity and/or site ownership or contractual control,” according to the selection committee’s evaluation recommendation issued on June 27.

The remaining ten were awarded to Burning Man development group Common Ground Urban Development. Their plan was to move the homes to vacant land north of Gerlach, to form the crux of a planned arts education and learning center.

Four months later on November 1, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* first reported Common Ground’s intention to drop its proposal, leaving the ten houses without a clear destination.

“It wasn’t because of the amount of the homes. It was the timeline,” said Leiasa Beckham, Common Ground CEO. “We have always supported them with staying in Reno. Other people had similar problems. We looked at other partnerships with land owners. They ran into similar issues with the timeline.”

Meanwhile, UNR requested a private meeting with the chair and vice chair of the city of Reno’s Historical Resources Commission (HRC) last month. HRC instead suggested the meeting be held publicly at the commission’s next scheduled meeting on December 13. The university declined that offer, citing a conflict, and suggested three other times in January. HRC needs to be available at one of these times, and HRPS needs to attend the meeting. The university last met with the city’s Historical Resources Commission in September 2017.

In late November, members of Historic Reno Preservation Society and other preservationists in the community met to discuss saving these historic homes. We are certain the community cares about the Center Street homes, so are starting an eblast and petition to help the public make their voices heard. As part of the campaign, HRPS and other preservationists in the community have sent the page one letter to the university ~~and~~.

Emerson Marcus is the Nevada National Guard State Historian and Public Affairs Officer and a second lieutenant in the Nevada Air Guard.



Center Street between Eighth and Ninth streets. These late 19th century homes are in danger of being demolished by the University of Nevada, Reno. Photo courtesy Emily Nojera.

Farewell to a Local Landmark: Masonic Building on Sierra and Commercial

by Debbie Hinman

This December, downtown Reno is losing yet another irreplaceable piece of history as the Masonic Building crumbles to the ground, stage by stage. Occupying the southeast corner of Commercial Row and Sierra Street for more than 146 years, the landmark has long enjoyed its status as our oldest downtown commercial building, notwithstanding its peeling paint and many years of demolition by neglect. Its demise will join the ranks of the Virginia Street Bridge, the Mapes Hotel, the Majestic Theater and the Medico Dental Arcade, to name a few other significant losses to the downtown core. To tell the story of this venerable structure, the building should be viewed in its historic context, beginning with those who built it—the members of the Masonic Lodge No. 13, chartered Sept. 23, 1869.

Freemasonry goes back to the Middle Ages, and the first Grand Lodge in the United States began prior to 1723. In the era when Reno was established, membership in a fraternal organization was almost a requirement for an adult male. There were Masons in Nevada for some years prior to the establishment of the Reno lodge. Many of those treasure-seekers who came to the Truckee Meadows in 1859 were Masons.

These early residents of what is now Reno, prior to forming a lodge, gathered at brethren's homes to informally discuss Masonic matters. In November 1868, a group of brethren met to draft a petition to the Grand Master, asking for permission to establish a Reno lodge. In mid-January 1869 the request was granted and until more appropriate space could be arranged, lodge meetings would take place on the first floor of Alhambra Hall, located on the southeast corner of No. Virginia and Front (First) Streets. The structure had been built by Myron Lake as a grist mill, though it was never used for that purpose. Alhambra had proven useful however, housing the Reno school in the basement before the Riverside School was built and the half-story above was used as a lodging house. The first floor provided a meeting place for a variety of local political and civic groups.

Soon the Masons had relocated their lodge to Chambers Hall on the east side of N. Virginia Street, middle of the block. But

before long, that location also became unsatisfactory. In the words of C. W. Torrence in his *History of Masonry in Nevada*, "Finally, after much discussion and planning, it was decided to erect a building devoted exclusively to the fraternity."



Reno's first Masonic Building housing Hagerman's Hardware on the ground floor, Commercial Row and Sierra Street c. 1874. Courtesy Nevada Historical Society.

They found their site on the corner of Commercial Row and Sierra Street which they purchased from Henry Menke, resident since 1870, who had previously had a business on that site. Commercial Row was the business district of Reno in its early days, due primarily to its proximity to the railroad. Business storefronts interspersed with saloons opened to a busy street that was dirt, until its paving in 1901.

A \$20,000 bond was authorized by the lodge to finance the building. Bids were taken the week of September 3-10, 1872. S. F. Hoole won the

bid. Hoole had been the architect and builder of the never-completed State Prison in Reno. On October 15, 1872, in the words of a Mason chronicler, "the Grand Lodge assembled to lay the corner stone, the impressive ceremony being performed by Most Worshipful W. A. Van Bokkelen and other grand lodge officers." At this time there were only 53 members. Monthly dues were raised from \$1 per month to \$2.50 to meet overhead expenses and to go toward paying off the loan on the building.

By November 5, the building was enclosed and despite weather delays, it was completed in the first week of January 1873. The finished structure was brick, 75 by 35 feet, in the Italianate architectural style with high arched windows on the upper level, each featuring a keystone at the center of the arch. The walls were hollow, 20 inches thick on the first floor, 16 inches on the second floor. The cellar ran the entire width and breadth of the building, with an 8' height. A wide flight of stairs led to the second floor which was the Masons' area with three large ante rooms, one of which was used as the library. The stylish arched windows of the second floor were a theme throughout the building. Upon completion, Hoole claimed the lodge was substantially built and prided himself on its construction. It was certainly one of the more impressive buildings of its day.

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Farewell to a Local Landmark

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Though it had only been in existence a short time, the “tough little town on the Truckee” was growing and flourishing. According to a retrospective piece written in 1888, “In 1870 the town enjoyed a thriving business and great prosperity. The population had increased to over 1,000. The hastily constructed shanties gave way to neat dwellings, and brick structures made their appearance. The town had spread beyond the limits as first laid out, and M. C. Lake annexed an addition on the south side, while J. J. Dunning did the same on the north.” All but one of the buildings facing north on Commercial Row between Virginia and Sierra Streets were brick, according to the 1874 Sanborn Fire Map, and the Masonic was the largest and most impressive.

The Masons occupied the top floor of the building, and to help defray expenses, rented out the ground floor for retail business. A January news item read “Moving – Hagerman has been busy the past few days moving his immense stock of goods from his present store to his new one in the Masonic building. He will be all moved in by next Wednesday.” By February, J. G. Hagerman was advertising “GROCERIES! Hardware, Etc., ... A wagon always in readiness to deliver Goods to any part of the city FREE OF CHARGE!” It seems that if you needed it, Hagerman’s would have it and get it to you posthaste.

James Hagerman was born in Virginia. He came from California to Nevada in 1867. Thompson and West’s *History of Nevada* lists him as “one of Reno’s most respected and prosperous merchants.” Hagerman was also briefly Reno Postmaster and was a Past Master Mason. Jerry Schooling, a Master Mason, soon joined him in business and it became known as Hagerman and Schooling. Schooling was Nevada State Treasurer from 1871 to 1879 and later

a state senator representing Washoe County from 1881 to 1885.

The new Masonic building escaped disaster in October of 1873 when a fire of unknown origin tore through town between Virginia and Center Streets, taking out 99 buildings. Though fire teams tried to contain the blaze, damage was estimated at one hundred thousand dollars.

The year 1879 offered a replay of the 1873 disaster, with a much more seri-



Gallatin & Folsom's Mercantile offered a ground floor grocery and hardware business, with the Masonic Hall upstairs. Courtesy Nevada Historical Society.

ous fire threat to the building, and to all of Reno. In the early morning hours of March 2, sparks from a chimney landed on wooden buildings back of the Masonic block, with the assistance of a strong gale from the west, grew into an inferno that was beyond the ability of Reno's fledgling fire department to extinguish. All the townspeople could do was to grab what they could carry and flee. However, not the proprietors of the store housed in the Masonic Building—Hagerman and Schooling stayed with their goods, stuffing ventilators full of rags and putting out blazes started by falling debris. While the determined Hagerman managed to save the store, his own fine home was destroyed. The fire made national news. *The New York*

Times reported the following: “In three hours the whole business portion of the town was in ashes, with the exception of the Masonic Building, with Hagerman & Schoolings Grocery store, on its first floor, and John Larcomb's store....Reno is now a suburb without a town, and great fear is entertained as to its ability to survive the shock.”

New Yorkers underestimated Western strength and determination. Survive it did—rebuilding began around the Masonic Building. By mid-1881 the

Masons had outgrown the building and put out a bid for an addition to the rear. The addition added 25 feet in length, making the entire building 100 feet long.

By 1883, the ground floor grocery business had changed hands and was now known as Gallatin & Folsom. Daniel Gallatin and Lewis Folsom had teamed up some years back, running a successful store in Gold Hill; they now brought their goods and expertise to the growing city of Reno.

The Reno Mercantile Company would take over this prime location in 1895 and be the last grocery business to occupy the space. The company was comprised of the son and two protégés of well-known Reno businessman W. O. H. Martin: C. H. Eaton, E. Barber and H. M. Martin. The company would change hands over the years but Reno Mercantile prevailed on this corner until 1970.

In his book *As I Remember: a 1940s Childhood*, Gordon Chism describes the interior of the Mercantile through a young boy's eyes: “We always entered through the back door off Sierra Street. Upon entering, there was a period of adjustment. Going from the bright outdoors to the cavernous gloom of the interior stopped you in your tracks. I was fascinated by the hardwood ladders that ran on tracks, gliding back and

forth along the floor-to-ceiling shelves. If you were looking for a hardware item, it was surely there somewhere.”

The Mercantile gave way to a pawn shop—then the building was boarded up and used for storage for Fitzgerald’s Hotel Casino which had opened in 1976 and owned the block of properties.

Unoccupied structures rarely fare well in terms of longevity and this most historic building is no exception. Without the interior being monitored on a regular basis, there was leakage, and a window was broken, inviting all manner of birdlife to occupy the interior space. Still, when the hotel was converted to the Whitney Peak, management had good intentions to restore the building.

In 2012, Whitney Peak property owners engaged Paul Ferrari, P.E., a local engineer with a background in struc-

turally retrofitting and preserving historic structures, and A.C.E. Architects, Inc. to prepare a structural retrofit for the adaptive reuse of the building. Renovation plans were completed to 90%+ when the economic downturn forced postponement of the project.

During the winter of 2016/2017, a roof joist failed under the heavy snow load and no one was aware that significant rainfall was entering the building; the hole in the roof produced 4 inches of standing water on the floor of the second story. The significant water intrusion into the building caused dry rot in the floor joists and supporting beam. Ferrari was asked to assess the structural condition of the building. The entire internal structure of the building—roof and floor joists—had sagged 6” at the centerline of the building. It was necessary to shore the structure or it would collapse. At this time, the building owners spent around \$250,000 to install over 15,000 linear feet of wood shoring to prevent the outright collapse of the building floors.

By November of 2017, the National Weather Service had named the year the wettest on record, with a total precipitation of 13.40 inches. This drove yet another nail into the Masonic’s coffin. When Ferrari and a Whitney Peak representative entered the building one rainy afternoon, Ferrari said it was raining harder yet inside.

Recently Ferrari inspected the west wall from a lift and was shocked to discover that the bricks were basically anchored by 1/8” of latex paint on the exterior; the bricks could be freely removed by hand, with no mortar adhering to them at all. Ferrari said he had never found such a thing in all

his inspections of aged properties. The northwest corner of the building was so weakened it was leaning out over the sidewalk, which is when the city required Whitney Peak owners to build fencing around it for safety. “The building has basically collapsed,” said Ferrari, regret in his voice. “It just doesn’t know it.”

The only positive note in all this is that though the structure is [will be] gone, a heritage exhibit is being planned for the new building that will occupy this site. Hopefully there are some recoverable beams and bricks that can be incorporated into the new property.

There is a plan for an interpretive display chronicling the long, illustrious history of the Masons’ activity and that of the merchants who were key in providing goods and services to locals for 97 years. And a very special artifact may well be part of the display. The following is an 1880 news item: “J. C. Hagerman has a fine pair of platform scales in his new store. The platform is level with the floor so heavy goods can be wheeled on it. The scales weigh 3,700 pounds.” Apparently the scales were even too heavy to relocate—Ferrari reports that they still occupy the old Mercantile ground floor. 



The Masonic building at Commercial Sierra in October 2018, fenced off and awaiting demolition.
Courtesy David Lowndes.

Information for this article came from: *History of Masonry in Nevada* by C. W. Torrence; *A Remnant of Reno’s Past: The Masonic Hall* by Richard C. Datin; *Reno’s First Masonic Hall, Cornerstone* by Patty Cafferata; *As I Remember: a 1940s Childhood* by Gordon Chism; numerous newspaper articles 1870-present and an interview with Paul Ferrari, P.E.

Debbie Hinman is on the City of Reno’s Historical Resources Commission, is a HRPS Tour Guide, and Managing Editor of *FootPrints*.

Looking Back at 2018



HRPS held its Ninth Annual Harvest of Homes Tour on a lovely fall day—Saturday, September 29, 2018. Once again, our Home Tour can be recalled as a great day with perfect weather, a wonderful variety of homes and happy crowds. Despite major road construction on South Virginia Street, attendees made their way smoothly to the homes on both sides of South Virginia.

About 630 people visited the delightful homes, and many thanks are extended to the generous folks who opened their homes for the Home Tour, to our 130 volunteers who are needed to make the tour a successful operation, and to the owners of the vintage cars that added interest to every home on the tour.

Some details about the Tour:

- The house most people selected to begin the tour was the Enchanted Garden on Mayberry and Sherwood. And it was unquestionably the favorite of the tour with its enjoyable and interesting gardens and charming home and patio.



Home Tour Host Jen Johanson (*above*) and Wonder Dog, who worked both morning and afternoon shifts at 619 Sinclair, met folks at the front door with an energetic history of the home. At 1300 Humboldt, Volunteer Karl Breckenridge (*top right*) held forth on the patio entertaining those present with local color and historical tidbits of Reno. At 2775 Mayberry, homeowner Tim

- We offered onsite ticket purchases by cash or credit card this year—and half the onsite purchases were by credit card. We'll be back with that option again next year.
- The net from the 2018 Home Tour will add almost \$13,000 to the Neighborhood Preservation Fund for our next grant cycle. We thank you all for helping HRPS to preserve the facades of Reno's historic homes.



- We made an extra effort this year to provide maps and driving hints in the Tour program and on the website. From your comments it appears that was a success.

A Big Thank You To:



Elam (*top left*) met guests in the gardens and relayed stories of the two cabins from the Siesta Motel on W. Fourth Street that are located on the Mayberry property. At 151 and 161 Wonder Street, homeowner Barrie Lynn met guests and described how she and husband Bryan have restored both homes to their 1920s and 30s working man's glory. Volunteer Debbie Zalmana, whose family once owned the Wonder Street homes, told the homes' history in one home during the afternoon shift while Barrie educated visitors in the other home. At 1118 Nixon, Home Host and HRPS researcher Debbie Hinman "worked the crowd" in the line outside the home beside Clay Carlson's beautiful 1941 Mercury (*bottom left*).

Many, many thanks to Linda Doerr, 2018 Volunteer Coordinator, for all of her efforts at herding volunteers this year! You will be missed.

If you would like to be a new volunteer for the Home Tour next year, please contact Carol Coleman. Volunteers are a critical component of the Home Tour.

We'll also be looking for homes for the 2019 Harvest of Homes Tour.

Next year's Tour will be either September 21 or 28, trying to avoid UNR Homecoming date. Be sure to save the date(s).

Carol Coleman,
2018 Home Tour Chair
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775-849-3380

Harvest of Homes Tour

Photos by
David Lowndes and
Cindy Ainsworth



Afternoon Host Karalea Clough greets attendees at Enchanted Garden, 2775 Mayberry.



Afternoon Hosts Kitty and Russell Umbraco tour a home before their shift at 151 & 161 Wonder Street.



Longtime HRPS member and Walking Tour Guide Mark Taxer (and friends) checks out the 1961 Ford Fairlane Wagon at 2775 Mayberry.



(Above) Longtime HRPS members Tom and Leanne Stone are out enjoying their ninth Harvest of Homes Tour.

(Left) Something interesting for everyone!



Two lovely vehicles for attendees to dream about at the Wonder Street homes.



Ticket Takers Donna and Paul Erickson take a break at the Wonder Street homes.

HRPS 2019 Third Wednesday Programs

Sheryl In Hayes-Zorn & Kimberly Roberts, Program Chairs

Historic Reno Preservation Society's free programs offer an assortment of Reno historical topics.
HRPS Third Wednesday Program events are held at Northwest Library, 2325 Robb Dr., Reno.
These Programs are held at 5:30 p.m. on third Wednesdays from January through May.
More HRPS information is at historicro.org or on Facebook.

Wednesday, January 16, (third Wednesday), 5:30 p.m.: **Jeff Auer** presents **"History of LGBTQ Reno."** Researchers of LGBTQ history in the United States have focused predominantly on major cities such as San Francisco and New York City. This focus has led researchers to overlook a rich tradition of LGBTQ communities and individuals in small to mid-sized American cities that date from at least the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century. Reno is one of many examples of a small but thriving LGBTQ community from this early period. As far back as 1882, Reno had an LGBTQ presence through the Great Recession, including the Reno Gay Rodeo and its effects on the world. Jeff Auer is an American History and Humanities instructor and LGBTQ Scholar. *Pictured at right: 1962 Riverside Reno—Jewel Box Revue*



Wednesday, February 20, (third Wednesday), 5:30 p.m.: **Jim Bertolini** presents **"Hooks, Hoses, and Houses: Nevada's Historic Fire Stations"** Firefighting and fire prevention have been at the center of Americans' definition of civil service since the early 1800s. Firefighting began as a volunteer effort, and remains a predominantly volunteer profession outside of the nation's larger communities that can afford professional fire departments. As firefighting progressed from the "bucket brigades" of the early 1800s to the engine companies of the Victorian age, the buildings that have housed firefighters and their equipment have evolved. This exploration of Nevada's historic fire stations will discuss the history of firefighting and firehouses in Nevada, and the ways these unique landmarks can be saved for future generations. Jim Bertolini is a Historian at the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (NVSHPO). *Pictured at left: Morrill & 5th Station, Reno*

Wednesday, March 20, (third Wednesday), 5:30 p.m.: **Neil Brooks** presents **"Model Dairy and the History of Ranching and the Dairy Industry"** Neil Brooks, a fifth generation Nevadan, offers a glance back into the history of Reno. His visual and comprehensive presentation shares the story of two pioneer families, the Peckhams and the Taylors, and how they helped establish the ranch and dairy industry in the Biggest Little City over a century ago. Brooks' presentation will focus on the development and operation of Rewana Farms, home to Model Dairy. Neil was born in Reno, and grew up on Rewana Farms on Peckham Lane, and is the "Neil" for whom Neil Road is named. *Pictured at right: Model Dairy*



Wednesday, April 17, (third Wednesday), 5:30 p.m.: **Guy Clifton** presents **"Reno Rodeo 100th Anniversary in June 2019"** From a cattle rustler turned author to a world famous saddle rider to a rodeo clown turned movie star to a rodeo queen fit for all America, the Reno Rodeo has never lacked for great stories. Nevada history buff and author Guy Clifton will share some of the lesser-known stories in the 100-year history of the Reno Rodeo. Clifton is perhaps best known in Nevada for his work at the *Reno Gazette-Journal*, where he served for 22 years as a reporter, columnist, and editor. He is now a public relations specialist for the Nevada Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs. He is the author of eight books on Nevada history. *Picture at left: Paul Richards, Reno Rodeo Parade c 1974*

HRPS 2019

Fourth Sunday Programs

Sheryl Hayes-Zorn & Kimberly Roberts, Program Chairs

Historic Reno Preservation Society's free programs offer an assortment of Reno historical topics. **HRPS Sunday Program events are held at Downtown Library, 301 S. Center Street in Reno.** HRPS Programs are held at 12:30 p.m. on fourth Sundays from January to April, 12:00 p.m. in May. More HRPS information is at historicro.org or on Facebook.

Sunday, January 27, (fourth Sunday). 12:30 p.m.: **Dr. Engrid Barnett** presents **"50th Anniversary of the Reno Philharmonic."** Engrid Barnett holds a Ph.D. in cultural geography from the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). She teaches courses in cultural geography, humanities, and philosophy (including world religions) at UNR and Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC). She received the Nevada Regents' Teaching Award for 2015-2016. She has presented at the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers, the American Association of Geographers, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, the Fourth Ward School, and the Nevada Historical Society (NHS). She recently curated the Nevada Historical Society exhibit exploring history and culture in northern Nevada, namely the 50th anniversary of the Reno Philharmonic Orchestra. *Pictured at right: 50th Forever*



Sunday, February 24, (fourth Sunday), 12:30 p.m.: **Dr. Catherine Magee** presents **"Washoe Tribes and Tourism."** Dr. Magee's research explores the reciprocal relationship between cultural heritage preservation and tourism. Dr. Magee received her MS in objects conservation from the Winterthur/University of Delaware, Program in Art Conservation and her Ph.D. in Geography at the University of Nevada, Reno. She worked in Asia, Central America, the Mediterranean Basin and North Africa as an Archaeological Conservator on both terrestrial and marine sites. For 15 years, she worked at the Smithsonian Institution and in her own conservation business. She is currently Director of the Nevada Historical Society. *Pictured at left: Emerald Bay camp 1910*

Sunday March 24, (fourth Sunday), 12:30 p.m.: **Mark Demuth** presents **"ReTRAC Railroad Trench project archaeology and architecture."** Mark Demuth is an environmental consultant and University of Nevada, Reno adjunct faculty member. When the City of Reno decided in early 2000s to create a trench to lower the railroad tracks that ran through its center, archaeologists associated with the ReTRAC (Reno Transportation Rail Access Corridor) project had a unique opportunity to explore the evidence of thousands of years of human history. The trench – 2 miles long, 54 feet wide, and 30 feet deep at its lowest point – created a cross-section through the oldest part of the city and gave investigators access to eighty-three archaeological sites, two prehistoric and eighty-one historical. The sites record continuous human habitation along the banks of the Truckee River for over 5,000 years, allowing investigators to learn how the earliest inhabitants responded to changing seasons and long-term climate change, and to study the creation of Reno's early and modern infrastructure. *Picture caption: railroad conductor's pocket watch*



Sunday, April 28, (fourth Sunday), 12:30 p.m.: **ZoAnn Campana** presents **"Reno MoMo"** In the middle of the 20th century, Reno was experimenting with the architecture of the Modern Movement (MoMo). High-profile architects from around the country came to Reno to design some of our best known buildings during this time. Raymond Hellman arrived in town to become one of our most prolific and masterful modernist architects. Even preeminent local architect Frederic DeLongchamps, continually evolving throughout his career, contributed designs in the modernist mode. Come learn about the various hallmarks of the MoMo and how they manifested in our local built environment. *Picture Caption: Schulich Lecture Hall, Chemistry Building, and Mack Social Science, ca 1975*

Take a Walk on the Dry Side: Reno During Prohibition

by Debbie Hinman and Sharon Honig-Bear

The term “Prohibition” conjures up a wide array of visual images for most Americans—bands of self-righteous women with axes hacking up furniture in saloons, hidden speakeasies requiring secret knocks or passwords uttered through a slot in the door, and exploding stills, setting warehouses and residences on fire. These are true snapshots of the Prohibition Era but few people understand the many-faceted reasoning behind the 18th Amendment—did the government just decide to spoil everyone’s fun, because a few powerful people and leaders of various religions determined that alcohol was evil? Or was there more to it than that?

The reasons were varied and linked for the most part to legitimate concerns:

The Impact on Families

Men were the usual breadwinners of the American family. Too often, they might stop off at a local saloon after work on payday and end up drinking with the boys. The alcohol would erode their good sense and the cost of liquor coupled with gambling could quickly consume their wages, leaving their families to face a week with no income with which to buy food or pay bills. When faced with an accusing wife, a man’s guilt and anger often escalated to the point of wife beating and child abuse.

The Impact on the Work Force and Production

Industrialists such as Henry Ford were concerned about the impact of drinking on labor productivity. A fuzzy brain from a night of drinking could impair job performance, slow production lines and might cause a worker to take shortcuts and disregard safety measures.

World War I

But perhaps the best justification for enacting Prohibition was as a war effort. The grain used in alcohol production could be put to better use to provide



The 14-foot Women’s Christian Temperance Union fountain now resides in the lower level of the Amtrak Station in Reno.

Photo courtesy David Lowndes.

troops with necessary foodstuffs, and the brewery and distillery workers could be freed up for more productive labor, or to go to war.

Reno was a rough-and-tumble, anything-goes town in the days before Prohibition. Saloons outnumbered any other type of business, so much so that in 1908, a 14-foot fountain was placed on the southwest corner of Virginia and Plaza Streets by the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Dedicated on October 17 of that year, it honored

the veterans of the Spanish American War of 1898 and the Red Cross, and its intent was to “quench the thirst of all of God’s creatures.” In addition to providing water for thirsty townspeople (and keeping them out of saloons), there was a trough for horses and small ground-level basins for dogs and cats.

It apparently was not a very strong deterrent because ten years later, on November 5, 1918, Nevada enacted its own statewide Prohibition Law. The 18th Amendment, also known as the Volstead Act, was ratified on January 16, 1919 but would not go into effect until January 17, 1920. It’s important to note that the consumption of alcohol was not prohibited—just the sale, manufacture and transportation of alcoholic beverages.

So Nevada joined 32 other states in “going dry,” enacting Prohibition laws in advance of the Constitutional Amendment. However, the sale and manufacture of alcohol did not disappear; it simply moved to back rooms and cellars. Families who had always produced their own wine as an integral part of their culture, in particular those of Italian descent, continued to do so but were more circumspect about it. They were also more prone to being caught by the Prohibition Agents, known as “Prohi’s.” In 1921, a Reno newsman looking over the Grand Jury indictment list was moved to comment that it “looked like an Italian telephone book.”

Although the public was not supposed to be purchasing liquor, a warning went out to “know their source” if they chose to do so. With no type of controls, the risks of homemade liquor could be frightening. In 1920 in Carson City, it was reported that “some felt pressure in their head and slight paralysis of limbs...others went temporarily or permanently blind.” One man was reported to have gone crazy; taken

with the notion that he was a horse, he had hitched himself to a wheelbarrow. Pulling it through the streets of Carson, he had bolted at the sight of a fluttering piece of paper and had run two miles before he was stopped.

Reno's downtown alleys were bustling, allowing for back door entry to illegal drinking establishments. Douglas, Fulton and Lincoln Alleys were popular passageways up until the 1970s and 80s when they were brightly lit with a colorful swirl-pattern paint bonded into the aggregate flooring, but they never surpassed the clandestine activity of the Prohibition years. Hip pocket peddlers of booze operated there and did a fair business. Douglas Alley alone featured at least 19 "resorts," as they were called, including the National Club, the Mecca Club, the Reno Club, My Cellar, the State Club, the Casino, the Question Mark and the Rex Club. Prohi's were known to carry improvised "de-hingers," a curved iron bar designed to separate barred doors from their hinges. Not all of these raids were productive, however. One of the "takes" produced "a half-gallon of gin and some moppings from a sink," reported the *Nevada State Journal*. But big scores were also made. Reno Kingpin James McKay had \$75,000 in beer, wine and liquors seized by government agents from San Francisco. McKay was out of the country at the time and much of the liquor had been concealed behind secret panels in his residence on the South Virginia Road.

In retrospect, it's rather amazing there were as many busts and arrests as there were. Enforcement of the 18th Amendment in Nevada rested upon a tiny force: six federal agents, each with a beat equivalent to 15,000 square miles of land and containing 12,000 people. From 1922 to 1926, the U.S. Attorney prosecuting these cases with a lone assistant was George Springmeyer. Although he opposed temperance, Springmeyer

believed that unless it was enforced, the people would lose respect for the law.

A natural effect of the laws against gambling and alcohol in a formerly wide open town such as Reno was an expanded Black Market. Crime increased during the 1920s, involving everyday people, those looking to make money and not



The Willows on Verdi Road, owned by Graham and McKay, operated as a high class gambling club through Prohibition and the time when gambling was illegal.
Courtesy Nevada Historical Society.



Douglas Alley was still a busy social venue in 1940s Reno.
Courtesy Nevada Historical Society.

caring about the legality of it—even those who were supposed to "serve and protect." Stories focusing on lawmen "on the take" and enforcement officials who could be bribed to look the other way brought about disrespect for the law in general. Crimes of all sorts multiplied.

The aforementioned McKay and his partner William Graham did very well during this period, as they were involved in illegal activities most of the time anyway, having their fingers in most all of the lucrative "pies" in Reno. Some of their casino holdings were the Bank Club, the Rex Club, the Haymarket, the Monte Carlo, the Willows and the Cal

Neva Lodge. In addition, they owned a sizable interest in the local brothel, The Stockade. Due to Graham's business sense and McKay's financial wizardry, Reno was a booming place in the summer of 1932, when other U.S. cities were suffering the effects of the Depression.

In addition to the WCTU, there were other temperance organizations at work in America. Some of the more creative names were the Department of Scientific Temperance Instruction and the Flying Squadron of America.

But anti-temperance organizations were also at work, fighting for repeal of, in their minds, the abhorrent 18th Amendment. Once such group was the Order of Camels, who used the slogan "Join the Caravan" and took a libertarian stance, claiming the question at issue was self-government and the rights guaranteed to all...under the Constitution. The Camels held a meeting in Reno in 1920 at the Rialto Theater, predecessor of the Granada, their literature highlighting "ladies especially invited." 800 locals attended the meeting.

Reno's three-term mayor during the Prohibition Era was Edwin E. Roberts. Mayor Ed had a "live and let live" attitude and felt government had no right to attempt to legislate morals. He believed that criminalizing prostitution, gambling and the manufacture and sale of liquor only attracted the criminal element and led to more graft and corruption. Upon hearing the Director of the Methodist Board of Temperance refer to Reno as "Sodom, Gomorrah

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Reno During Prohibition

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and perdition” from the pulpit of our Methodist Church in 1931, Roberts demanded equal time and delivered a speech that nearly fried the teletype wires throughout the nation. “Prohibition is unenforceable,” he declared. “If the city officials raided one joint and missed another, I would be accused of being as big a grafter as some prohibition officers are accused of being. The only way to put the bootleggers out of business is to place a barrel of good corn whiskey on every downtown street corner, with dippers attached, and signs inviting passersby to help themselves to all they want, free of charge. The only condition is that they’d have to drink it there, and couldn’t take any away. That is the way to eliminate the problem of whiskey and graft, and it is the only way.”

Prohibition has often been called a failure of a grand experiment. In the book, *Ain’t Nobody’s Business if You Do* by Peter McWilliams, he lists 12 bad effects of Prohibition, including:

- Created disrespect for the law – people saw the law as whimsical and unimportant instead of something good and protective.



A look through Douglas Alley today offers no reminders of its once active population and businesses.
Photo courtesy David Lowndes.

- Created organized crime – it took significant organization to construct a bootlegging operation to provide the quantities called for, from manufacture to distribution.

- Caused many physical harm – because alcohol was not legal, its purity was not regulated.

- Changed the drinking habits of America – because you couldn’t as easily go out to drink, people drank at home. When they did go out, they consumed more because they couldn’t be seen with a bottle, so they finished it. Hard liquor became popular because it was more concentrated and cheaper to smuggle. In the words of Will Rogers, “Prohibition is better than no liquor at all.”

The 21st Amendment repealing the 18th was ratified on December 5, 1933. Support for the repeal of Prohibition was overwhelming and only the South Carolina convention voted against repeal. Following the end of Prohibition, speakeasies and saloons were forced to get licenses and go legit. The night of repeal, Reno was quiet on the streets with no rise in drunkenness noted. Drinks were being offered for between 25¢ and 50¢.

Liquor supplies were adequate by New Year’s Eve and prices came down. Renoites did the occasion up properly with processions of automobiles filled with jubilant celebrants jamming the downtown streets all night long. There were eight auto accidents with three passengers or drivers hospitalized. Ads in the newspapers for New Year’s Eve on Dec. 30, 1933 included “The Overland Café and Bar special New Year’s dinner party. Eat and dance as much as you like. Fine wines and liquors served.” The next day, the *Nevada State Journal* reported “Enthusiastic Welcome is Given the New Year. The New Year is here. And it



Douglas Alley today is surrounded by tall modern buildings. Photo courtesy David Lowndes.

was given a royal welcome by Renoites last night.”

Eighty-five years after Repeal, Americans still face a legacy left by National Prohibition, including Blue laws, package stores, distribution limitations, and high taxes. It took 13 years for the U.S. to realize prohibition of alcohol wouldn’t work, though it has been an enduring lesson. An interesting parallel can be drawn with the recent legalization of recreational marijuana in Nevada; it’s a pretty sure bet Ed Roberts would approve. 

Information for HRPS’ Prohibition Tour and for this Prohibition article came from: *Ain’t Nobody’s Business if You Do* by Peter McWilliams; *Boom Town* by Sally Zanjani, Nevada in the West; and numerous newspaper articles 1918-1933.

Debbie Hinman is on the City of Reno’s Historical Resources Commission, is a HRPS Tour Guide, and Managing Editor of FootPrints.

Sharon Honig-Bear is a tour leader with Historic Reno Preservation Society, founder of the annual Reno Harvest of Homes Tour and Chair of the City of Reno’s Arts and Culture Commission.

HRPS 2019 Neighborhood Preservation Fund (NPF) Grants

by Cindy Ainsworth, NPF Administrator

HRPS is pleased to announce its ninth round of grants for the enhancement of older structures. Applications will be accepted starting January 1, 2019 for the NPF grant to help Reno owners rehabilitate historic properties. The structures should be at least fifty years old and priority will be given to owner-occupied projects that enhance the original historical neighborhood character. Typical grants are under \$5,000. Proposed work is limited to the exterior improvements of buildings and must be designed in a manner authentic with the original architectural style of the structure.

Grant monies must be matched by funds on a 1:1 ratio by the property owner. Exceptions may be made by the judgment of the awarding jury. The level of match may be reduced if the applicant can demonstrate extenuating circumstances.

Grants from the NPF are generated primarily from the proceeds from HRPS' Reno Harvest of Homes Tour and HRPS Lifetime memberships.

Grant guidelines, timeline, and the applications are available through the HRPS website at historicreno.org or by calling (775) 747-4478. 



A 2014 NPF grant enabled the owners of 637 Saint Lawrence Avenue to replace 100 panes of broken, stained and poorly glazed glass while retaining the original metal windows.

Reno at the Crossroads: A Sesquicentennial Exhibit, 1868-2018

On May 9, 2018 Reno turned 150, and this momentous occasion prompted the Special Collections and University Archives Department of the University Libraries to launch a major exhibit in honor of the city's sesquicentennial. On Saturday, January 26, 2019 at 10:30 a.m., the final lecture and tour of this exhibit will take place – if you have not visited the exhibit yet, here's your last chance.

Spanning all five floors of the IGT Knowledge Center building, "*Reno at the Crossroads: A Sesquicentennial Exhibit, 1868-2018*" explores Reno's colorful evolution from its founding in 1868 to the present through photographs, maps, documents, and objects. The goal of this exhibit is to expose people at the University and throughout the community to many sides of Reno they might not have known, and encourage them to learn more.

A designated grant from IGT brought in the talents and knowledge of a guest curator, Dr. Alicia Barber, a public historian, scholar, and author of the book *Reno's Big Gamble: Image and Reputation in the Biggest Little City*, to serve as the exhibit curator. She developed the vision for the entire exhibit and selected materials, mostly from Special Collections, to illustrate Reno's development in six thematic areas:

- The city's relationship to the environment (5th floor)
- Communities and cultures in Reno (4th floor)
- Reno's economy (3rd floor)
- Reno's status as major transportation crossroads (2nd/main floor)
- Reno's growth as a university town (1st floor, Whittemore gallery, outside the Wells Fargo auditorium)
- Visions of Reno's future (1st floor, Whittemore gallery, ramp)



#Nevada's
Big Give -
March 21, 2019

Support your favorite causes, like Historic Reno Preservation Society, during #Nevada's Big Give. You can impact Reno's future by educating our community about the value of preserving our historic properties. It's a time of Giving – please remember HRPS, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, with a gift on March 21, 2019. Do put the date on your calendar. 



Message From Your HRPS President

Carol Coleman

Historic Center Street Block

On October 26, we learned that Common Ground (think Burning Man) withdrew its application to relocate 10 of the UNR Gateway District houses. UNR will not renegotiate the contract, nor select any other proposals from the earlier Request for Proposals. President Johnson announced UNR will go ahead with demolition of the houses!

What a helpless feeling hearing this! What can HRPS do? What can you do?

HRPS and other activists have begun a campaign to try gain time to save the houses. The articles on pages 1-2 are the beginnings of that effort. Please respond to requests to send an email or make a phone call. Together we can make a difference!

HRPS Board member Jen Johanson

At an EDAWN luncheon in September, Jen received the Outstanding Washoe County School District Teacher in the Arts Award, Jen is the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) Educator and Facilitator for Kendyl Depoali Middle School. Jen is also a Doral Academy Board Member. Congratulations Jen!

It's Membership Renewal Time

The current window for HRPS' membership is the calendar year January 1 to December 31. Check your address label on *FootPrints* to see if your membership renewal date is January 1, 2019. We've

sent you a membership renewal form via the postal service this year—that will be a first for HRPS! Please support us again!

Thank you to New Lifetime Members

Many thanks to Catherine Magee, Director of the Nevada Historical Society, who has chosen to support HRPS with a Lifetime membership. HRPS Board member Holly Walton-Buchanan, a HRPS member since 2000, chose to become a Lifetime member this December. You both are very much appreciated. HRPS is pleased to now have 46 Lifetime Memberships which include 67 individuals (or Foundations). Going along with an earlier Board decision, your \$1,000 membership is split half to the Neighborhood Preservation Fund grants, and half to the operation of HRPS.

Consider HRPS in Your Giving

We've joined Amazon Smile! Actually some of you must have suggested HRPS as a beneficiary of Amazon Smile as we were notified that Amazon Smile had \$9.72 for us—we just had to sign up. The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of purchases to the charitable organization selected by the customer. And you have the same great selections of products and low prices as on Amazon.com. So please choose AmazonSmile, and remember HRPS.

HRPS thanks you for your support.

Carol Coleman, 775-849-3380
carolc@galenaforest.net

Greetings HRPS members and friends,

Historic Fourth Street Brewery Tour

On October 7, HRPS Board members ZoAnn Campana and Eric Broili hosted a **Historic Brewery Tour** on Fourth Street, and along with Jim Bertolini from SHPO, gave a walking tour of the area with stops at three local breweries. The tour was sold out. Conclusion: do it again!

Old Movie Night

You may remember that HRPS offered an **Old Movie Night** some years back. We did it again on Wednesday, November 28, showing the 1948 flick *Apartment for Peggy*. HRPS Past-President Cindy Ainsworth hosted the sold-out event, telling the history of the movie and its filming in Reno. Thanks to Reno Little Theater for hosting the event, handling the ticketing, the refreshments, the ushers and generally making it easy for HRPS to sit back and enjoy the movie. Conclusion: do it again and we'll try for August!

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
- Center Street Homes (Gateway)
- 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
- Caughlin Ranch House
- Ralston Avenue 300-block homes
- Levy House/Sundance Books

HRPS Lifetime Members

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Jacquie Foundation
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*Thanks to the following HRPS
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supporting the works of HRPS*

Harold & Alice Jacobsen
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Jennifer Lazovich

HRPS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

By joining **Historic Reno Preservation Society**, you are a member of a community group that celebrates Reno's history by sharing information and advocating for our endangered properties.

In the summer, you may attend as many as 25 different Walking Tours. In winter, twice a month we bring you Educational Programs. You receive our quarterly, *FootPrints*, to keep you informed about HRPS events, articles about endangered properties, people and homes of interest. HRPS' information is on our website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and occasional eblasts.

You may pay by check, cash, credit card or PayPal. To pay by credit card of PayPal, please log on to our website: www.historicreno.org. We use PayPal to process your payment. They will accept your credit card on our behalf; we will send you a confirmation email.

☐ New Member ☐ Renewing

Membership Levels:

- ☐ \$15.00 Student
☐ \$25.00 Individual
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My Additional Donation:

\$ _____ Pat Klos Annual
Volunteer Award Fund
\$ _____ Neighborhood Preservation
Grant Fund
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HRPS Quarterly *FootPrints* Preference (Please check one):

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Mailing Address _____

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HRPS respects your right to privacy. We will **NOT** share your email address.

PD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO WORK ON:

- ☐ Home Tours ☐ Walking Tours ☐ Board ☐ Research
☐ Other _____

Please make your check payable to:

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