

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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Reno's Downtown Post Office

by Debbie Hinman

For more than 70 years, the city block between Virginia Street and Center streets, bordered on the north by the Truckee River and the south by Mill Street, has been graced by the elegant, soft-green presence of the downtown Reno Post Office. If you don't take the time to stop and really look at the building, it would be easy to dismiss it as just another rectangular, unimpressive federal building. However, its stunning but understated architecture, rich with thoughtful detail inside and out, reveal it to be a marvel of style and substance.

As the post office system was integral to society in the early part of the twentieth century, this building has become integral to the face of downtown Reno.

By the late 1920s, the growth of our exuberant young city caused the local postal service to outgrow its lovely, brick neo-classical home on the southeast corner of First and Virginia streets.

In 1927, local newspapers reported the United States government was looking at providing allocations for new federal buildings across the country. On May 28, 1928, an act of Congress provided \$565,000 to purchase a site and fund construction of a new federal building for Reno. A site for the new post office was as yet undetermined, but a location on the south side of the river on Mill Street was under consideration. As with all change, there was controversy. Many, in particular local businessmen, felt the existing First and Virginia location was the best choice, as Reno at that time sat primarily to the north of the river. Development to the south was growing, but was still in its infancy.

A newspaper account of the public hearing, held in August, reported that although there were a number of residents

speaking out against moving the post office to the south, no one present spoke in favor of the Mill Street site. And yet in October, it was reported that "Investigators from Washington" had recommended moving the post office.

The bulk of the land was obtained from Riverside Realty, owned by George Wingfield, for \$85,000. Another parcel of land to the east with an old two-story home owned by Mrs. Katherine Coughlin was acquired for \$47,000 through condemnation. The final segment

of land was the site of the Carnegie Library, built in 1904. This land was donated by the city and county.

Prolific local architect, Frederic J. DeLongchamps, would design the building. Working with him would be Edward Parsons, a young architect just out of graduate school, who also went on to become a noteworthy local architect.

As with all government buildings, there were guidelines and standards to be observed in their design, but architects were permitted to contribute their own ideas and design concepts.

DeLongchamps took full advantage of this opportunity.

The Art Deco style of architecture had boomed in the 1920s, and produced such notable structures as the Chrysler Building, Empire State Building and Radio City Music Hall. Spinning off this movement was the Art Moderne style, much plainer than Art Deco, and with a horizontal orientation rather than vertical. A subset of Art Moderne was ZigZag Moderne, featuring geometric designs and bands on buildings. This style best describes that used for the new post office.

Compared to DeLongchamps' Riverside Hotel (now Riverside

Continued on page 2



*Downtown Post Office, view from Virginia Street Bridge, ca 1936.
Photo courtesy of Jerry Fenwick.*

Reno's Downtown Post Office (continued)

Continued from page 1

Artists Lofts) and Washoe County Courthouse across Virginia Street, the post office's architectural style was a real departure for him, since many of his designs for residences and other public buildings are of a classical or traditional style. DeLongchamps' plans also deviated considerably from the classical facades of the designs of the U. S. Treasury Department's Supervising Architect's Office. DeLongchamps flew to Washington D.C. on a regular basis to persuade the Architect's Office to accept his plan—which they finally did.

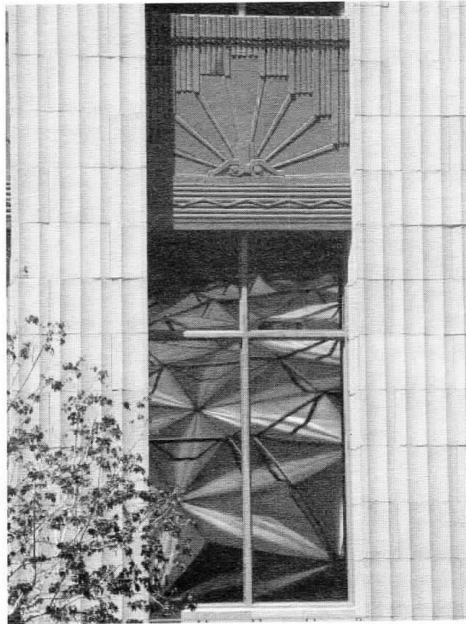
While plans were underfoot for the new post office building, the need for more space was still growing. The divorce residency requirement was reduced to six weeks in 1931, increasing the influx of temporary residents who used the mail to stay in touch with those back home. Reno Postmaster George F. Smith was quoted in the *Nevada State Journal (NSJ)* as saying he now had ten employees working the General Delivery windows.

In March of 1932, the *Reno Evening Gazette (REG)* reported that "a hole 180 feet long, 90 feet wide and eight feet deep will be excavated for the basement of the new Reno postoffice (sic)."

In October, the MacDonald Engineering Company won the bid for the construction of the new structure. The ground-breaking ceremony was held on November 15, 1932, with Governor Tasker Oddie turning the first shovel of earth, and Frederic DeLongchamps and others participating. Schools were dismissed early, and some businesses closed as well.

The activity surrounding the erection of the new post office is particularly interesting when viewed in the context of what was happening in Reno at this time. The effects of the Great Depression were somewhat delayed in this city, but were being increasingly felt throughout 1932. On October 31, 1932 (Nevada's 68th birthday), the *REG* reported that the Lieutenant Governor had declared a 12-day bank holiday because of the business and financial crisis in the state.

The only bank remaining open would be Richard Kirman's First National Bank. Because of local unemployment, the Reno Chamber of Commerce requested that local workers and contractors be given employment on the post office project. A later article stated that 75 men were employed in the project and over 50 percent of them were from the local area. However, the article also stated that most of the skilled labor came from other cities.



*Downtown Post Office with the Pioneer Theater reflected in the window.
Photo by Kim Henrick.*

A headline in the March 21, 1933 *REG*, announced: "Steel Reaches Skyward at New Reno Postoffice." The story opened, "Long arms of bright, orange-colored steel began reaching skyward today as workmen started erecting the framework of the new Reno postoffice building." A week later another *REG* article reported, "Construction on the Reno postoffice has reached the unpleasant stage—pneumatic riveters start their noisy chatter. Despite the noise, however, the workers had a large audience on hand today for it is a great attraction when the man at the forge swings red-hot rivets a long distance."

By May 1933, the building was complete enough to hold a cornerstone ceremony, and it was a grand event with 2,500

locals in attendance. There was a formal march of the Masons, and Mayor Ed Roberts gave a speech tracing the history of carrying the mails from Pony Express days to the present, and concluded with the poem "Reno, Fair Reno, Bids Welcome to You." Senator Oddie spoke, as did Postmaster George Smith, who said he believed the building will prove a harbinger of good will and prosperity to Reno. And of course, DeLongchamps was on the program.

Following the speeches, the program was turned over to the Mason Grand Master and the symbolic rites of the order were carried out. During the ceremony, two historic trowels were used to spread the mortar for the cornerstone; one had laid the cornerstone at Morrill Hall, the first building at the University of Nevada, and the other was a replica of one used by George Washington in laying the cornerstone of the national Capitol in 1793. Some items placed in the cornerstone included various newspapers of the day, a list of postal employees, and memorabilia taken from the box in the cornerstone of the historic Masonic Temple at Gold Hill, items such as a U. S. 2-cent piece from 1867 and musket balls from a Mexican battleground.

Construction continued through the spring and summer, and in September the *NSJ* reported that the building was 80 percent complete. While the final McDonald bid for the project had come in at \$363,660, the *NSJ* reported that the cost of the project would be approximately \$800,000.

In late October, the *REG* reported that the two large granite American eagles were "given a secure perch" above both entrances of the building on the north side; two more were due to be placed over the south entrances later that week. Placing the eagles was a huge task, as the eagles' heads weighed 200 pounds apiece.

In February 1934, William Kinnikin replaced George Smith as Reno postmaster. Smith received credit, along with Senator Oddie, for securing the new post office. On February 26, the *REG* headline read "New Postoffice to be Opened Next Week."

Reno's Downtown Post Office (continued)

An entire litany of federal agencies would be occupying the new building. Two basement storerooms were actually vaults; one was for storage of stamps and receipts and the other claimed a much more intriguing purpose: "to harbor liquor belonging to the IRS."

In addition to the postal service, the main floor would accommodate the U. S. Postmaster and U. S. Assistant Postmaster's offices, and the general claims office. The U. S. Postal Inspector's office would occupy the second floor, which contained 24 offices. Along with the inspectors, would be offices for the U. S. District Attorney, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Water Conservation Department. Also on this floor would be a large room that could be used as a courtroom for various federal hearings. On the top floor were 23 offices accommodating the U. S. Weather Bureau, the U. S. Veterans Bureau, the Internal Revenue Bureau, the Biological Survey, the War Department and the Navy Department. Mention was also made of "penthouses" on the roof that would be used by the Weather Bureau and the Land Survey Department.

Along with this crush of non-postal federal employees came the 57 currently-employed postal workers. Two of these employees, Edna Seaman, supervisor of the money order department and Lauren Wood, dean of the mail carriers, started working in the former post office building when it opened in 1909.

James Sparks, the U. S. Treasury Department Construction Engineer supervising the project, was very impressed with the final product. "This plant is so equipped and so designed as to make it one of the finest of government structures," he stated. "Very few communities can boast of an equally fine building."

The building's exterior is pale green terracotta excised to resemble quarried stone and the elevation is primarily horizontal, though there are strong vertical elements,

such as the nine two-story window bays on the north and south sides. But it is the ornamental detail that gives the building its distinctive flavor. Zigzag metal work and deep green sunburst panels decorate the bays, and decorative grills add an Art Deco flavor to this Moderne building. Above the bays is a fretwork course that delineates the third story, with its thirteen window bays. The granite eagles mentioned earlier rest on a fluted cornice. The entry portals are double aluminum-framed glass doors. Above the doors are aluminum panels saluting transportation with an airplane on the left, and Mercury on the right.



*American eagle over door to Downtown Post Office.
Photo by Kim Henrick.*

The interior of the building is no less impressive. The floors are marble and terrazzo in the lobby area and the walls are dramatic with black Georgia marble ornamented with decorative aluminum medallions. The attention to detail in the lobby is remarkable. There are beautifully sculpted aluminum eagles, and a criss-cross design over the windows above the post boxes, adorned with aluminum rosettes. Not only are the walls and post office boxes decorated, but the writing tables and even the free-standing bulletin boards carry through with the design themes. The most controversial of these are the small "swastikas," which are actually a 3,000-year-old good luck symbol used in many civilizations.


In 1965, the center of the building, formerly open to a skylight, was enclosed to contain

the new heating and air conditioning system and ductwork. Other than this modification, today's building is very much the same as the day it opened for business.

The building functioned as Reno's main U. S. Post Office until 1975, when due to space considerations, parking and access issues, it was replaced by the modern Vassar Street complex. The lack of adequate parking and competition from more modern buildings has led to the exodus of other federal functions so that the building today is largely vacant, except for the mail station functions.

What does the future hold for this unique and historic property? In October 2007, the City Council approved a plan to purchase the building for \$3.2 million, to convert it into an emporium of shops and restaurants. The plan calls for the post office boxes to remain on the main floor, re-establishing the central atrium and adding shops on the two upper levels.

Adaptive reuse is one of the tenets of historic preservation. Preserving an older building that may have outlived its former use and adapting it for a different use is one way of preserving history and keeping these structures vital and functional. This conversion

may be a practical solution for this gem of a building, but care will have to be taken to preserve the historic and architectural integrity of the structure. Its quiet elegance adds permanence and stability to the city core and its magnificent interior detail needs to be preserved for future generations. 

Information for this article came from various *Reno Evening Gazette* and *Nevada State Journal* articles from 1927–1934; The National Registry of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1983, and Registration Form, 1989, courtesy of the State Historic Preservation Office.

Debbie Hinman is a HRPS Board Member, HRPS Tour Guide and a writer on the HRPS Editorial Staff.

50 Years Later, Memories of The Rosemount Lodge

by Kim Henrick

I was a ski bum. Simple as that. I spent my days plowing through the snow at Reno Ski Bowl, high on homemade chili and hot cocoa, and not bothered by a single thought of gainful employment. Well, I was only four years old, soon to be five, so there was plenty of time for me to get a job, but I really did skip kindergarten and ski that whole winter of 1957-58. What a great year it was—for me at least.

The Reno area was a going concern in 1957. Folks bought furs at Conklin's, and slacks at Gray Reid's, watched *Life of Riley* and *Danny Thomas*, read *Li'l Abner* and *Blondie*, and ate at the Carson City Nugget's Chuck Wagon Buffet for \$1.50.

The '50s were a time to dream and my father and mother, Harry and Jessie Vonderheide, along with their longtime friend Dennis Hill, dreamed of opening a rustic, comfortable ski lodge on the big curve of Mt. Rose Highway just below the Christmas Tree (now called Tannenbaum). It would offer fine dining, gaming, a huge lounge area with a cozy fireplace, and warm, affordable motel rooms, which were badly needed in that area.

In 1957, my father purchased several surplus army barracks from the army depot at Herlong and had them trucked up to the lodge property. My brother, Steve Vonderheide, was 11 years old at the time and remembers going along to watch the heavy, awkward barracks being loaded onto the big trucks and slowly making their way back to Reno and up the narrow and winding Mt. Rose Highway.

John Weaver, an old friend from Bishop, California, came up to the mountain to actually build the lodge. John was a great carpenter and found a way to strap together six barracks (or so it

appears from the current Washoe County Assessors' floor plan sketch) to form the foundation for the massive shingled roof built over them. The barracks were set at different angles and converged near the large central lounge and dancing area, which had a high ceiling above. One barracks unit was used for the cocktail lounge, backed up to another used for the dining room, and one jutted off to be the kitchen area. The inside of the lodge

recreational area will feature complete dining, cocktail lounge, gaming, and room accommodations."

Abby Schwartz (of the locally-famous Abby's Hiway 40 on 4th Street, which is now owned by his son Donny) was the maitre d'. We had a professional chef, talented local bartenders, and plenty of servers. Our customers dressed in

suits and party dresses or the latest ski fashions. The opening fare was a huge *smorgasbord* but the regular menu boasted broiled lobster tails for \$3.75 and filet mignon for \$4.50. The broiler was a huge mahogany-fed grill that filled the lodge with wonderful smells.

Life settled down for us. I began my daily ski trips up to Reno Ski Bowl (the Mt. Rose ski resort was not developed at that time). My sister Robin (nearly eight years old) and brother Steve, would be driven down to Brown School on Highway 395, not far from the Mt. Rose Highway. Usually, Warren Hart, who managed the Reno Ski Bowl, would load up his kids, Jim and Shirley Shepley's kids (Jim

worked at Sky Tavern), my brother and sister and any other kids needing to get to school and haul them down that narrow, treacherous ribbon of road in an underpowered Volkswagen bus.

The highway, an old logger's road, was named "Mount Rose Highway" in 1915 by the Reno Business Men's Association, which was intent on developing it from Reno to Lake Tahoe. In 1931, it was placed on the state highway system (from Reno Hot Springs to Incline Village) and probably around that time became Nevada State Route 27, followed by Nevada State Route 431. Many highway improvements were made in the late 1950s, but it was still a dangerous road.



Rosemount Lodge in 1957.

Unfortunately, a refrigerator made it into this photo, but behind it is one of the barracks units used for motel rooms.

Photo from the author's personal collection.

was paneled in wood and the exterior was finished in free pecky-cedar scrap wood from the Sierraville area. Most of the furniture for the dining room and cocktail lounge was purchased from a local club in Reno. Motel rooms were made out of sections of the northernmost barracks and rooms were also built in the roof area as well.

The lodge opened on December 20, 1957. Several *Nevada State Journal* articles reported the upcoming opening. One article on December 19, reports, "Located in the giant horseshoe bend below the Christmas Tree is the expansive new Rosemount Lodge. Built around a fabulous lounge and fireplace, the newest addition to the rapidly expanding Mt. Rose

Memories of The Rosemount Lodge (continued)

A poorly-designed corner near Galena caused numerous accidents for people coming off the mountain.

Sharon Walbridge (*FootPrints* Editor Emeritus) once wrote about the old places that she missed in the area and made this note about the lodge, "...the Rosemount, home of the best hot-buttered rums in the world. It had been conveniently located on the Mt. Rose Highway, just down from the local ski area. University students, lured like lemmings, gathered there after the lifts shut down."

Sharon must not have come up to the lodge on Easter Sunday, 1958. We had a huge, late-season storm and everyone on that mountain was buried in seven or more feet of snow in a very short time. There was no electricity, so there was no heat or water and soon the food began to spoil. My brother remembers skiing out with someone to meet the snowplow down the hill and guiding the driver to the lodge. Not surprisingly, my mother still staged a wonderful Easter egg hunt inside the lodge. My folks tried to make our time up there special.

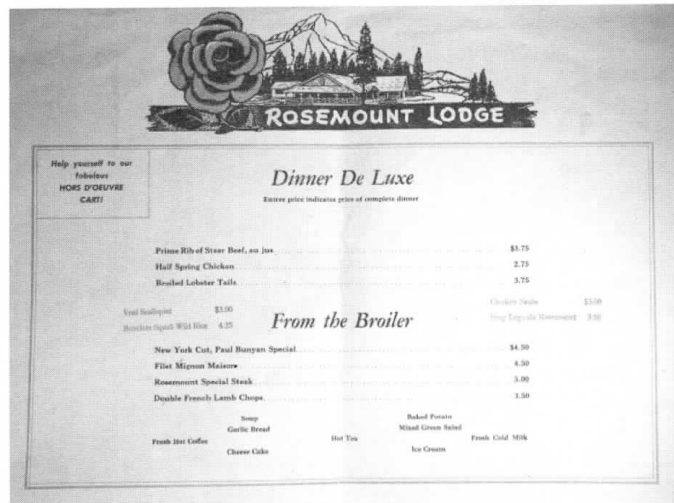
Unfortunately, the dream didn't last. The restaurant business is hard, especially on the side of a harsh mountain in the winter and skiers did not make the best

customers. My folks lost the business in 1959 and we moved to Reno. My mother continued to run the concession stand at Reno Ski Bowl for a few years, and I might add, made the best chili ever. My father managed the bar at Reno Ski Bowl. We soon settled into a "normal" life and the Rosemount Lodge became just a fond memory.

Our friends from the mountain remained close for years, so it is really more a story about these people than a ski lodge. There was Jim Jeffress and family, who owned the Christmas Tree around 1950 and later the Snowshoe Lodge near Sky Tavern. Warren and Jane Hart and family were at Reno Ski Bowl and our friends Jim and Shirley Shepley and family (Jim worked at Sky Tavern) are just a few I recall.

In my research I have come across names associated with the lodge during the next 49 years, getting some from newspapers, some from deeds. This list is incomplete and I don't claim to understand the legal relationship these folks had with the lodge. The years listed are general as more research needs to be done on that as well. Please use it as a basis for further research only.

- Harold and Margaret Luce, early 1960s;
- Franklin Mowery in 1966;
- Charles D. Mercer, George J. Machado and Wayne R. Elliot 1971-1976;
- Leon R. Phillips, December 1973;
- Gary R. Schmidt, mid-1970s?

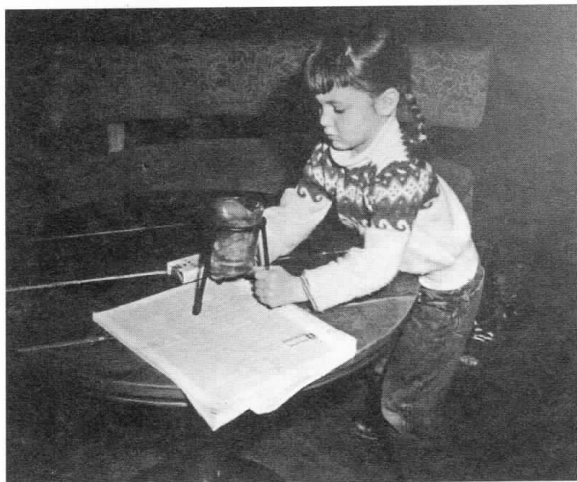


Menu from the Rosemount Lodge, 1957. The broiled lobster tail was \$3.75. Note the lodge and Mt. Rose sketch at the top. Photo from the author's personal collection.

The name was changed to Sundance Lodge around 1970 and then changed to the Reindeer Lodge in 1983, according to current owner Gary Schmidt. Schmidt says he has been "at the lodge since the early 1970s," in some capacity. He brought many big bands to the lodge in the 1970s, such as Bo Diddley, the Chambers Brothers, Leon Russell and Elvin Bishop. Gary considers the Reindeer Lodge something of an indoor/outdoor antique house but his neighbors consider it an eyesore. His latest claim to fame is that the Reindeer Lodge is "the longest continuously-operated road house in Nevada." It sounds to me like Gary Schmidt is here to stay. 🍷

My thanks for sharing their memories goes to Robin Andrews, Steve Vonderheide, Bud Schoenfeld (owner of the Tannenbaum from early 1960s until mid-1970s), and Gary Schmidt. My other sources were an old memory, family photos, local newspaper articles and deeds from the Washoe County Records Office. Please contact me with any other Mt. Rose stories, or if you have corrections to this article.

Kim Henrick is a writer on the HRPS Editorial Staff.



The author, four years old, setting out a candle in the lounge area of the Rosemount Lodge, 1957. Photo from the author's personal collection.

Walking Tours 2007

by Ed Wishart, HRPS Tour Director

HRPS had a very successful year of walking and biking tours due to our enthusiastic, hardworking and knowledgeable guides. We gave 892 people an enjoyable time learning the history and viewing eclectic architecture of some of Reno's historic neighborhoods. Attendance was almost evenly divided across the three months of May, July and September. The quality of our walks also attracted new members: 41 single and 34 family memberships. The total income from the walks was \$5,500.

There was one new walk and two new tour guides this year. Anne Simone and Elsie Newman, a new guide and former owner of the Hart House, initiated the Monroe Street walk, which was a great success. HRPS board member and long time HRPS supporter Sharon Honig-Bear did the Beyond the Arches walk for the first time in May.

Some of the joys of going on HRPS walking tours are the unexpected experiences that occur. Some examples:

- The graciousness of Bianca and Skye at the Daughters' Cafe in sharing the history of 97 Bell Street and providing cold water for us on Joan Collin's Truckee River Corridor walk.
- Brian Whalen, retired UNR Facilities Vice President, joining Jack Hursh on his University Historic District walk and relating intimate details of many historic buildings on the UNR campus.


- Melinda and Dan Gustin serving us cookies and lemonade on their lawn on Ed Wishart's July Mansions on the Bluff walk and then inviting all 38 of us inside the Newlands Mansion in September.



Cindy Ainsworth's Fourth Street Corridor Walk
Photo by Kim Henrick.

- Donny Schwartz opening his Abby's Hiway 40 Bar at 10:00 am so folks on Cindy Ainsworth's Fourth Street Corridor walk could view the photographs and neon art inside, and then the Scalzos taking the group for a ride on a 1925 freight elevator at Flanigan's Warehouse.
- Mary Ellen Horan, executive director of VSA, coming down Saturday morning and opening the Lake Mansion so walkers on Debbie Hinman's Lake Addition walk could tour the inside.

- Architect Kay Radzik explaining how she saved her home on Humboldt Street (originally from Virginia City) by moving it to the back of the lot, building a basement, and then moving it back, on Tracy Soliday's Bricks and Stones walk in September.
- The owner of the Barnard house on Monroe Street inviting Anne Simone's group (Monroe Street walk) inside for a tour of this unique home, featured along with its neighbor, Greystone Castle, on the KNBP television program: House with a History.
- Larry Pizorno inviting Felvia Belaustegui's group (Little Italy and the Powning Addition) to see the old wine cellar in his basement in September.

We finished the year with a special walk for Our Lady of the Snow's fourth-grade class, taught by Cynthia Kaufer. The class was treated to an abbreviated version of the Mansions on the Bluff walk on a beautiful October 16th morning. Tour Guide Ed Wishart stressed the architecture of several houses. We were invited into the McCarran Mansion and were told about the modernization while preserving the original character of the home. When we visited the Newlands Mansion, Dan Gustin told us about some of the restoration he and Melinda have done. The class learned about the six faces of a brick and how to recognize ashlar masonry. 

HRPS Film Night February 20, "Apartment for Peggy"


In 2003, HRPS held its first film night, showing "Margie" and "Charlie Chan in Reno." We all had such a good time that HRPS thought it was time to bring back our film night.

We'll restart our series with the charming "Apartment for Peggy," a film not available on home VHS/DVD. The 1948 Technicolor movie stars Jeanne Crain (who also starred in "Margie"), Edmund Gwenn and co-stars William Holden. The film is about a college

professor who is forced to retire and contemplates suicide. His life is turned around when he meets the chatty wife of a student. Filmed primarily on the University of Nevada, Reno campus, the movie includes scenes of a shabby student trailer park on the grass that fronted Manzanita Lake.

As a bonus, we'll be showing a vintage travelogue show from the Nevada Historical Society's Collection, "Holiday U.S.A.," featuring Reno and Lake Tahoe.

So grab a bag of popcorn and join HRPS for this special screening on February 20, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at the Sands Regency Casino Comedy Club, 345 N. Arlington Ave. Doors open at 6:30. Cost is \$8.00. Seating is limited, so please call Jack Hursh at 746-3252 for reservations.

HRPS would like to thank Steve Savage of Great Basin Film Society, the Sands Regency Casino Hotel and the Nevada Historical Society for co-sponsoring this event. 

River Corridor Vision

The City of Reno and the Truckee River Flood Management Project are launching a planning process to define an aesthetic and thematic vision for the Truckee River Corridor and the transportation infrastructure between Booth Street to the west and Lake Street to the east. Replacement of four bridge structures (Sierra, Virginia, Center and Lake Street bridges) and some of the adjacent flood walls is necessary to meet public safety standards. Two additional bridges, Booth Street and Arlington Avenue, are also being studied to determine if replacement may be necessary.

A study process, involving three sets of workshops, will produce a guidance document for planners and engineers involved in designing the replacement structures in the downtown. It is the City's goal to conduct a process that is collaborative, and blends the needs and ideas of the community as a whole.

Parameters for the Study are:

- Potential replacement of downtown bridges
- Compliance with state and federal flood control criteria
- Maintenance of local, state and federal roadway and bridge design standards
- To demonstrate consistency with the Downtown Riverfront Guidelines.

Workshop #1 was held in October, 2007. It engaged the community in defining the needs and interests for the downtown river corridor.

Workshop #2 will be held in January 2008. It takes the input from Workshop #1 and develops alternative concepts and themes for consideration.

Workshop #3 will be in March, 2008. It will be a time to fine-tune the guidelines.

The guidelines will be finalized in April. Public participation is important to this project. Check out the following website for dates and locations for Workshop #2:

<http://www.cityofreno.com/Index.aspx?page=1217>

Call for Proposals

2008 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

8th Biennial Conference on Nevada History

Alphabet Soup: The New Deal in Nevada

May 20-21, 2008

Nevada Historical Society
1650 N. Virginia Street
Reno, NV 89503

March 2008 represents the seventy-fifth anniversary of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's inauguration and the start of his New Deal program to fight the effects of the Great Depression. The Nevada Historical Society will present the Eighth Biennial Conference on Nevada History. *Alphabet Soup: The New Deal in Nevada* will take a look at the era of the Great Depression and FDR's legacy in the Silver State.

All interested persons are invited to submit proposals for papers to be presented at the conference. We encourage papers relating to this era and pertaining to the history and culture of the State of Nevada, the Great Basin, and the West. Students, consider sharing your latest research by giving a short talk on your "works-in-progress." Slides, PowerPoint, posters, and other visuals may be used.

Please submit a one-page proposal and a short biographical sketch to the Mella Rothwell Harmon, Curator of History at the Nevada Historical Society by March 15, 2008. Each proposal must include a mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address. Proposals will be reviewed by a committee and a program will be composed by early April. Please call or email if you have any questions.

Submission Deadline: March 15, 2008.

Mella Rothwell Harmon
Curator of History
Nevada Historical Society
1650 N. Virginia Street
Reno, NV 89503
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Nevada Women's History Project Conference

Mark your calendars! Coming next March 7-8, 2008 is the Nevada Women's History Project Conference. In honor of Woman's History Month, the theme is "On the Move, Women in Transportation." The conference will launch on Friday, March 7 with a reception from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at the Nevada State Railroad Museum in Carson City. The guest speaker is Susan Martinovich, Director, Nevada Department of Transportation. Entertainment, refreshments, beer and wine will be served.

The conference will continue on Saturday, March 8, 2008, at the Nevada State Library and Archives with registration and a continental breakfast at 8:00 am. Presentations start at 9:00 am and continue until 5:00 pm. Presenters' highlights include women school bus drivers, the first woman to obtain a Nevada drivers' license and many more. There will be nine presenters and guest tables for organizations and book sellers in the foyer.

Additionally, a special dinner will be held at the Silver Oaks Golf Course from 7:00-9:00 pm. An "Evening with Jean Rankin" will be the entertainment.

Costs:

\$60.00 Conference fees: Conference fees includes Friday's reception at the railroad museum and lunch by Molly's Catering on Saturday.

Optional \$40.00 Saturday night dinner: Conference attendees may bring guests to the dinner.

For reservations or more information, contact Lisa-Marie Lightfoot at 775-849-2050, lightfeet@charter.net or Isabel Espinosa at 775-883-9035, pt4andi@aol.com or send your checks to: NWHP 770 Smithridge Drive, Suite 300, Reno, NV 89502-0708.

Come join the fun!

Reno's First Shopping Center

by Debbie Hinman

Need a new sweater to wear to dinner with friends tonight? What about grabbing a bottle of wine and maybe a cheesecake, in case they want to come by later for dessert? Oh, and you need to pick up a refill on your prescription and oh yes, a card for your aunt's birthday. No time to go all the way out to the mall? No problem, it is only a short trip to the shopping center.

The neighborhood shopping center has been such a staple in our lives that it is hard to imagine that it did not always exist. In fact, the shopping center is a fairly recent addition to everyday life in Reno. Prior to 1955, if you needed to shop, you went downtown. Oh, there were small markets scattered throughout the city, but the concept of a group of stores serving multiple purposes located close by various neighborhoods was a foreign idea.

What happened in 1955 to change this? Builder Jack Hanson had a great idea. What if he were to invest, say, a million dollars, take a 7 1/2-acre plot of land on the west end of California Avenue and engage Walker Boudwin to create a long row of ten or more storefronts? What if he were to call it the Village Shopping Center? If he built it, would they come?

Build it he did, and yes, they came. Realizing that they would come in automobiles, he designed a parking lot that would accommodate 350 vehicles and placed a dozen light poles throughout the lot for the safety of the patrons. The Hansons were very "hands-on" and wanted their center to be perfect. A *Nevada State Journal* article reported prior to the grand opening that as Frank Hanson was dissatisfied with the traffic flow through the lot, he brought his own bucket of paint and unsnarled the "ins" and "outs" with arrows he painted himself.

The center's anchor would be his own family's Hanson's Market. It would be truly innovative—a self-service market where customers could select their own items from shelves, without asking the storekeeper for assistance!

The Center was 310 feet long, constructed of Redi-lite concrete masonry. Designed by structural engineer John Webster Brown, the building, even in 1955, was described as "earthquake resistant" with firewalls between each of the ten units.




*The barber pole outside Enzo Buonamici's Village Barber Shop, in place since 1957.
Photo by Debbie Hinman.*

It was fronted by a 14-foot walkway, covered by a 12-foot canopy. A truly innovative feature of the center was the "high fidelity" taped music provided by Art Rempel, issuing from speakers in Hanson's Market and along the walkway.

For the next few minutes, let's pretend it is opening day of the Village Shopping Center—Friday, November 4, 1955. It is a cold, blustery day so we need to walk quickly. We start at the west end, and travel east, along the walkway, humming "Mr. Sandman" along with the Chordettes. The first thing we notice is each business entrance has its own style. We first come to Shelly's Village Hardware, then Sprouse-Reitz Variety Store, and pass Village Records and TV. In the middle is the modern Hanson's Market, followed by the Village Bakery, the Village Drug, Inc., the Village Beauty Shop and the Village Restaurant. Around the corner towards the new Reno High School are Spezia Cleaners No. 2 and the Village Barber Shop.

As an amazing, cinnamon-scented aroma reaches our nostrils, we backtrack to the bakery and peek inside. We are captivated by cheerful pink and aqua walls, colorful wallpaper, white oak fixtures and a spotless pink-and-gray tile floor. The aromas of 25 varieties of bread, and Danish, Swedish and French pastries combine to tickle our taste buds.

While the Village Center is still in operation today, it is vastly changed. But some things don't change. When young Enzo Buonamici took over the Village Barber Shop in 1957, he likely had no idea that he would spend the next fifty years in that same shop, barbering many of the same heads, once luxuriant brown and black, now sparse gray and white. And yet there he is today, expertly wielding scissors, clippers and razor as though fifty years had not passed. The swirling red, white and blue barber pole, nearly an anachronism in today's world, still spins, and friends still meet in classic swivel barber chairs, arguing the day's events through frothy masks of lather. For this trip back in time, it's not even necessary to pretend.

Though the Village Shopping Center was Reno's first, other centers quickly followed—some successful, some not, but the concept remained and grew. And now it seems as if we may be entering a new era; the small shopping centers seem to be fading as we experience the Age of the Gargantuan Mall. From my own point of view, as a consummate shopper, I admit to liking the variety in the large malls; but I like the convenience of the small shopping center. If I had my choice though, I think I would pick Reno prior to the advent of the centers, when you could go downtown on a Saturday morning, pick up everything you need and see just about everybody you know. 

Information for this article came from *Reno Evening Gazette* and *Nevada State Journal* articles from October to November 1955.

Debbie Hinman is a HRPS Board Member, HRPS Tour Guide and a writer on the HRPS Editorial Staff.

Thomas Flyer Anniversary

Mike Thomas of the National Automobile Museum leads us in a celebration of the 100-year anniversary of the Great Race of 1908 from N.Y. to Paris and the Nevada connection to this race at our February 27, 2008 HRPS meeting.

There has only been one around-the-world car race in history, the "1908 New York to Paris Automobile Race." The only American car in the race won it! That car is the 1907 Thomas Flyer which is on display in the National Automobile Museum (The Harrah Collection) here in Reno. The car is in original condition and still runs. It is, arguably, the most significant car in history.

February is the 100th anniversary of the race. It covered 13,500 miles on land and a total of 22,000 miles counting the sea voyages. Half the countries it went through didn't even have a single car in the country, and hundreds of thousands of people who saw it had never even seen a car before. The Thomas Flyer crossed Nevada and had an interesting encounter with Indians at Cherry Creek (Eastern Nevada). This and many other adventures will be covered in the presentation, which also includes 80 slides of photos taken during the race.

Mike Thomas is Docent Chairman at the National Automobile Museum, trains docents, and gives tours. He is an amateur astronomer and president of the Western Nevada Astronomical Society, based at the Davis Observatory above Carson City. He is a retired Police Officer and a Lake Tahoe native, now living in Reno.



Your Historical Resources Commission

by Cindy Ainsworth

Did you know that the City of Reno has a Historical Resources Commission (HRC)? The Commission was established with the city's historic preservation ordinance by the Reno City Council in 1993 and its goal is to preserve, protect and maintain the important and unique historical resources for this and future generations.

HRC consists of seven Commissioners who represent design, history and preservation professionals. The purpose of the HRC is to act as the official advisor to the City of Reno on matters relating to the historic preservation of cultural resources and buildings. The Commission recommends to the City Council possible uses and funding options for historic buildings, sites and places and suggests to the Council policy and ordinance changes relating to historic buildings and sites.

The duties of the HRC do not end there. The Commission educates the public about the cultural and economic benefits of historic preservation by providing assistance, as well as assisting with publications that promote Reno's valuable historic resources. The HRC is responsible for collecting survey data needed to identify Reno's historic neighborhoods and significant architectural and archaeological resources. The Commission's annual awards program recognizes individuals, property owners, organizations and businesses that have made major contributions to preserving our city's historic resources.

Because Reno is a Certified Local Government, the HRC reviews and comments on any National, State and City Register nomination. The HRC encourages HRPS' property owners to list their home or business on the City Register of Historic Places. Do you think you live or work in a historic property? Little do you know, but your property may be an important part of the built environment because of its association with the city's development or is associated with significant Reno events or people. Basically, you could be eligible if your domestic or commercial property

is at least 50 years old and reflects cultural values and economic, political, or architectural historic qualities.

The nomination process is not that complex. You can download the City Register form and find valuable information about filling out the nomination at cityofreno.com/res/histres.

Besides the prestige and recognition associated with listing your historic building on the City Register, there are other added benefits. Once listed and to encourage adaptive reuse, the property is zoned a Historical Overlay (HL). This is done at no cost to the owner. You may do any interior changes but the HRC ordinance requires a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior changes. The process is simple and is designed to help you preserve the historic character of your property.

In exchange for maintaining the building's integrity, the City Register HL property may be eligible for uses other than those allowed in your current zone. Other incentives include parking requirements, landscape compliance, uses, lighting, signage, etc.

Many preservation issues are discussed at the monthly HRC meetings. The Commission and the City encourage HRPS members to attend. The HRC meets at 3:00 pm on the second Thursday of every month in the boardroom at the McKinley Park Culture Center, 925 Riverside Drive, Reno. You can view meeting agendas at the main branch of the Washoe County Library, the Reno Community Development Building at 450 Sinclair Street, and the McKinley Arts and Culture Center. The agenda is also available at cityofreno.com under the Government and Boards & Commissions headings. For more information, please contact HRC staff liaison Donald Naquin at 775-326-6675.

Cindy Ainsworth is a founding member of HRPS, a past-President of HRPS, and currently serves on the Historical Resources Commission. She is a past recipient of the HRC's Distinguished Service Award.

From Your HRPS President, Felvia Belaustegui

Our annual party this year was a bit of a departure for HRPS, as we had the capable staff of the Siena take care of nearly everything. The mouth-watering dinner selections pleased everyone. The silent auction, always a popular attraction, gave attendees varied and unique items to add to their collections.

Our theme for our annual party was HRPS tenth anniversary. To commemorate this milestone the five past presidents, Pat Ferraro Klos, Cindy Ainsworth, Kathryn Wishart, Patty Cafferata and Joan Dyer were introduced and honored. Notable speakers for the event included Dr. Alicia Barber and HRPS Founder Pat Klos. Jack Hursh and Kim Henrick collaborated on a wonderful visual retrospective of the walking tours, entertaining attendees as they mingled and dined.

The evening was a tremendous success—many thanks to all our members who attended. I also want to thank Joan Dyer, Phyllis Cates and Marilyn Turville for all their efforts in putting the affair together.

We have great news on our University




*Felvia Belaustegui
HRPS President
Photo by Debbie Hinman.*

of Nevada, Reno Scholarship Endowment. I am thrilled to report that the endowment is fully funded with \$13,888.00, as of the first of November, 2007. This undertaking could never have been accomplished without the support of our loyal membership. When the endowment reached the \$3,300 level, longtime members Earl and Wanda Casazza

generously donated \$10,500. The \$500 of the Casazza donation will be immediately available for an undergraduate student with a major/minor in Historic Preservation for the academic year of 2008. The Casazza pioneer family in the Truckee Meadows dates back to 1869. The scholarship/internship will include research projects or other creative tasks under the direction of Don Hardesty, head of the Historic Preservation Program.

The Powning project continues, with the painstaking identification of the significant properties in preparation for creating an historic district. The Powning Addition dates from the 1880s when Christopher Columbus Powning laid it out and sold lots, touting safety from fire, rich soil and perfect sewerage (*sic*). The project will hopefully be completed in early spring 2008.

We look forward to another year of informative programs each month, our *FootPrints* publication each quarter, walking tours in May, July, and September, a sponsored local movie in February and a New Deal bus tour in the spring. 

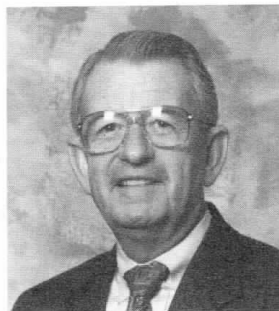
Longtime HRPS Treasurer Bill Walbridge Passes

Longtime HRPS Treasurer Bill Walbridge, Jr. passed away on Sunday, November 11, 2007, succumbing to metastatic melanoma, completing a journey that started in 2001. Bill is survived by his wife, Sharon Adler Walbridge, HRPS *FootPrints* Editor Emeritus, two sons and three grandchildren.

Bill was a third generation Californian, descendant of pioneers who reached California via wagon train. After graduating from high school, Bill joined the Navy, serving time on the USS Rogers in the electronics "gang."


Bill graduated from the University of Nevada, in Reno in 1959, having obtained his BSEE with Honors. He was a member of Sigma Nu Fraternity, Sigma Tau engineering honorary, and Phi Kappa Phi scholastic honorary. While at UNR, he met his wife-to-be, Sharon Adler, whom he married in June, 1960. They have been "steadies" for fifty years. Bill obtained an MBA in 1963 from the University of California, Berkeley.

Bill spent his career in the electric utility industry. He was the CEO of the Sacramento Municipal Utility District from 1975 to 1982 and CEO of the Seminole Electric Cooperative Inc., headquartered in Tampa, Florida from 1982 to 1996. During his long career he experienced managing almost every known form of power production: hydro, geo-thermal, nuclear, coal, co-generation and photovoltaics.



*William Clyde "Bill"
Walbridge, Jr.
1933 - 2007*

He and Sharon retired to Reno in 1996. They were among the first members of HRPS. Over the fifty years they were together they hiked, backpacked, sailed, and enjoyed scuba diving, sports cars and camping. They traveled widely in North America and Europe.

Bill had a long list of service to his community and the electric industry. He was an ardent history buff who really enjoyed his membership in Historic Reno Preservation Society and served as its treasurer until the onset of his final illness. 

HRPS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please check your mailing label! Renew your membership and help HRPS preserve historic Reno!
Please make checks payable to **Historic Reno Preservation Society**, and mail along with this application to:
P.O. Box 14003, Reno, NV 89507

- ☐ New Member
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Name(s) _____
Mailing Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
Phone (H) _____ (W) _____ Best time to call: _____
Occupation: _____ Employer: _____
Fax _____ E-Mail: _____

Annual membership includes: Footprints (HRPS Newsletter) • Free participation in walking tours

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

Additional donation: _____

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

**FOR OFFICE
USE ONLY**

PAID: ☐ Check ☐ Cash Amount: _____ Membership # _____ Renewal Date: _____

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Membership Report August 22, 2007 - November 29, 2007

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Michelle Attaway
Alicia Barber
Trip & Margaret Barthel
Karen Benna
Dana Bennett
James Blakely
Patricia Blanchard
Fred & Marilyn Bonenfant
Sarah Britt
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Marshall & Shirley Fey
Gary & Jane Foote
Doris M Fry
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Chuck Fulkerson
Fritz & Evelyn Grupe
Millie Guinn
Melinda & Dan Gustin
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Roger & Joanne Hildahl
Liz Howe
Duke & Beverly Hubbard
Kenneth Johnson
Jeanne Harrah Johnson &
Jerry Johnson
Ginnie & Bob Kersey
Katherine Latham
Anne MacFarlane
Doug Marx

Brenda McCarthy
Robert & Kay McDonald
Lawrence Meeker
Lauri Northway
Sue Oddo
Geno Oliver
Harrell & Patti Oxner
Deedee Carter Pace
John & Bridget Peck
Anne Pelish
Daryl Pelizzari
Bert Pincolini
Millard & Irene Reed
Cathy Ringer
Len & Carolyn Rogalla
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HRPS Bus Tour, Walls of Wrath, May 31, 2008

The year 2008 will mark the 75th Anniversary of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs. In celebration of this momentous period in U.S. history, HRPS is offering a bus tour featuring some of Reno's important New Deal treasures.

The New Deal was a comprehensive series of social and economic programs enacted during the Great Depression by the Roosevelt administration. The Works Progress Administration (WPA), which employed among others, laborers, artists, authors and architects, created some

wonderful community improvement projects. The WPA and other public work programs built bridges, roads, sewer lines, schools, parks and yes, walls. Thus, with HRPS' apology to John Steinbeck, our tour name is *Walls of Wrath*.

Mark your calendars for May 31, 2008. Hours for the tour will be 9 am to 3 pm and lunch will be provided. This tour will fill up fast and space is limited, so call Cindy Ainsworth at 747-0340 to place an early reservation.

And buddy, can you spare a dime?



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WINTER PROGRAMS, 2008

Jack Hursh Jr. – Program Chair: 746-3252

All program events are on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7 pm, at Mt. Rose School (Lander Street between Taylor and LaRue, just off Arlington), unless otherwise noted.

Wednesday, January 23, 7:00 pm. Richard Rossi offers three short parade films from his collection of video of old Reno parades, from 1947, 1959, and 1961. Two are rodeo parades and one is a Shriner Parade. Join us as we stand on the corner watching the parade go by.

Wednesday, February 20, 7:00 pm. HRPS Film Night special showing of "Apartment for Peggy" at the Sands Regency Casino Comedy Club (see page 6 for details).

Wednesday, February 27, 7:00 pm. Mike Thomas of the National Automobile Museum leads us in a celebration of the 100-year anniversary of the Great Race of 1908 from N.Y. to Paris and the Nevada connection to this race (see page 9 for details).

Wednesday, March 26, 7:00 pm. Bruno Coli from the Verdi History Preservation Society will narrate a slide show called "Verdi: Then and Now" and Tom Trelease will present "Verdi Senior Interviews" featuring oral histories from several Verdi residents.

Wednesday, April 23, 7:00 pm. Leanne Stone offers a slide presentation of the preservation, restoration and reconstruction of the Mackay School of Mines, including digging out a new basement and setting the building on a base isolation system. Leanne took periodic photos from the beginning of the project, November 1990, to its completion, July 1993.

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