



# FootPrints

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

vol. 14 no. 4 ♦ Fall 2011

## HRPS' Harvest of Homes Tour 2011

*by Debbie Hinman*

**T**his year's September 24, 2011 Harvest of Homes Tour promises to be every bit as exciting as our inaugural year 2010's was, with six distinctive and beautiful homes, one in our new conservation district, the Powning Addition, one in the University district, one in the West of Wells neighborhood and three in the Old Southwest. We hope you will enjoy viewing them as much as we have enjoyed selecting and getting to know them.

### 59 Winter Street – the Powning Addition

Our oldest home on the tour, circa 1906, this bright and cheerful little Queen Anne cottage will charm you with its many angles, lovely ceiling molding and baseboard, and unique period light fixtures and hardware. A small guesthouse occupies a corner of the backyard. One of the first homes on Winter Street, it has been lovingly restored by owners Mary Beth Goddard and Michael Powell. Photo courtesy Sharon Honig-Bear.

### 1127 Codel Way – the University District

Looking up at this fairytale home surrounded by a lovely, lush garden, you would imagine that an artist might live here, and you would be right. This home of Patty and Wayne Melton, constructed in the late 1920s, is an example of Period Revival eclecticism. The interior, with all of Patty's artistic touches and wonderful antiques is as eclectic as the architecture. You step inside and the outside world goes away, which is what we all want for our homes. Photo courtesy Emily Rogers.

### 137 Burns Street – the West of Wells Neighborhood

This is one of the several homes in Reno referred to by neighbors as "The Castle," but it is Moorish or Spanish in style—not at all Sleeping Beauty's castle. It has an exotic aspect that draws one's attention immediately. The architectural style is considered Spanish Eclectic but rather than using the usual stucco, this castle was constructed of imported brick, which is as golden and flawless as it must have been when it was built nearly 80 years ago. The longtime home of Phillip and Katie Curti, local business people, it has amazing original tile and stunning parquet wood floors throughout the interior. The home is now owned by Ivey and Lee Johnson. Photo courtesy Emily Rogers.

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## HRPS' Harvest of Homes Tour 2011 (continued)



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### 700 Monroe Street – the Old Southwest

As with the Burns Street house, the style of this lovely home is Spanish Eclectic but clad in a more traditional stucco exterior. It has the red tile roof and archways that are hallmarks of the style and sits on a portion of what was once the Patrick Ranch. Built circa 1937, it was the longtime home of Marce and Walter Herz and even had a short early tenure as a school featuring horseback riding and other sporting activities. The home has been beautifully maintained, the interior simple and elegant with mission and craftsman touches, another characteristic of this style of architecture. The home, now owned by Ellen and Gene Williams, is watched over by the couple's delightful collection of friars. Photo courtesy Emily Rogers.




### 835 S. Arlington Avenue – the Old Southwest

The tall, impressive Colonial Revival home has graced Arlington Avenue since 1937. Designed by E. L. Howard and built by local contractor Paul Manuel for heiress Susie Snyder, it features a Regency-style porch hood and an asymmetrical façade. Local attorney William Woodburn Jr. purchased the home in the late 1940s and it remained in the family for many years. Now owned by Jessica and Troy Schneider who purchased it from the Woodburns, its interior is fun and eclectic—a real contrast to the stately, conservative exterior. Photo courtesy Emily Rogers.



### 1155 Mark Twain Avenue – the Old Southwest

The youngster of the tour, this Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired home, was built in 1964 in the established Newlands Manor subdivision for Harold Hall and his family. Designed by architects Selden and Stewart of Reno in a classic, mid-century modern style, the glass walls of the backside of the home fill it with light, the pass-through entry with air and the wood walls with warmth and character. It has been changed very minimally since its construction. Current owner Carl Shogren is only the third owner and has augmented the intrinsic style of the home with his wonderful art and mid-century-style furnishings. Photo courtesy Emily Rogers. 

## HRPS' Harvest of Homes Tour 2011 Details

**What:** HRPS' second Reno Harvest of Homes Tour

**When:** Saturday, September 24, 2011 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Why:** Tour the interiors and gardens of six distinguished homes in four historic Reno neighborhoods

**How:** Tickets are \$25 in advance, \$30 on day of Tour. Tickets are available online at [historicreno.org](http://historicreno.org). or at retail

outlets: Sundance Bookstore, St. Ives Florist, Ryrie's Art and Home, Ince Jewelers, Zephyr Books and Junkee Clothing. Retail outlets accept cash or checks only. Tickets on sale beginning August 29th.

**Volunteers Needed** for Home Tour. Two shifts available. Volunteer for one shift and get free admission to all of the homes. Contact Jean at 746-5219 or [jeanmgreen@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jeanmgreen@sbcglobal.net).

# A History of Reno's Early Schools: 1868-1912

by Debbie Hinman

**Author's Note:** *The history of the Reno schools is a long, complex and ongoing one. This article deals with the early schools, or those constructed before 1912. A future article will chronicle the history to the present.*

“Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another,” said G. K. Chesterton. However wild and uncouth Reno was in its early days, it nonetheless had a soul that prized education and provided its children with quality school facilities and teachers to enable them to learn and grow. Those children who grew into adulthood in the area used that education to contribute much to the growth of the Truckee Meadows.

Prior to Reno becoming a town in 1868, there were numerous one-room schoolhouses in the various areas where enough of a population had gathered to necessitate a school. A schoolhouse was erected in Franktown in 1857, at Ophir in 1858, Washoe City in 1859 and both Mill Station and Galena in 1860 or 1861. The Glendale School that would earn the distinction of having the longest continuous use in Nevada—94 years—opened in April 1864, built on a corner of Henry Whistler's ranch.

Early Reno grew quickly after the auctioning of lots on May 13, 1868 and though there was no school building, a classroom was established in the basement of Alhambra Hall, formerly Myron Lake's grist mill, located on the southeast corner of Virginia and Front (First) Streets (later the site of the old Reno Post Office and Federal Building, and even later, the Mapes Hotel). Miss Lucy Scott was the first teacher for roughly a dozen students, which rapidly increased to 30, then 80 students.

To accommodate this rapid growth, a wood frame schoolhouse was built on the corner of Front and Sierra Streets. It was known as the Riverside School. The school was enlarged several times as the little town grew, more teachers were engaged and classes were sometimes held elsewhere to accommodate the growing

number of pupils. A *Nevada State Journal* article of 1894 describes the overcrowding at the school, with pupils turned away for the lack of available desks. Because the school could only provide the “Three Rs,” private classes in penmanship, art and the graces were offered in various family homes.

The more well-to-do families with daughters were offered a more genteel option in 1876 when Bishop Ozi Whitaker opened the Whitaker School for Girls, on the site of the present-day Whitaker Park at University Terrace and Washington Streets. The three-



*Riverside School at First and Sierra, with additions on both sides. Photo courtesy Nevada Historical Society.*

story frame structure was designed as a boarding school as well as educational facility and intended to serve the daughters of the Comstock or any families who could afford the hefty \$150 per semester tuition. In addition to the solid subjects, pupils were taught art, music and other ladylike pursuits of the Victorian era. Teachers were brought in from distinguished universities in the East. Locals were a bit ambivalent about the separation between the genteel elite of this school and the town children of the public schools; on the one hand they had some pride in establishing Reno as “the Athens of the West” scholastically, but had some resentment against those who considered themselves of a higher social standing and who could finance a fine education for their offspring.

By 1879, a solution was found to remedy the overcrowding at the Riverside School. A school known as Central School and later Reno High School was constructed at Fifth and West Streets to provide some relief. The new school was a fine brick two-story building with a handsome portico with pillars and a bell tower. The high school students met on the second story; overflow from the Riverside School occupied the first floor. In 1895, in response again to overcrowding, a large addition was built on the school.

By the 1880s, neighborhoods south of the river were springing up and there was a call to provide a school so those children would not have to walk so far. A small wood building known as the Southside School opened with 20 students in the early part of the decade. A later version of the Southside School, only multi-storied and in brick, would be built in 1903, occupying this same site.

As Reno continued to grow, the older students were shuffled among the existing schools. A newspaper notice in the fall of 1895 clearly dictated to parents where their children were to report: first and second grade students living south of the river were to report to Southside, those living between the river and the railroad tracks to the Riverside School, and all others were to report to the “brick building” (Central School or Reno High), first grades through high school.

In 1890, a kindergarten was opened at the Whitaker School for children aged four through six and longtime popular teacher Abby Nichols had a kindergarten class in the Riverside School. In 1897, a formal group organized by Hannah K. Clapp, university librarian, rallied to build a kindergarten building. After four years of fundraising and appealing to the school board, the association was able to purchase lots on Sixth Street to construct a fine brick structure that would be known as the Babcock Memorial Kindergarten named for Elizabeth Babcock, first kindergarten teacher in Reno and close friend

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## A History of Reno's Early Schools (continued)

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of Miss Clapp. The kindergarten was designed pro bono by a bay area friend of Miss Babcock, and was completed in 1901. The school was owned and operated by the association, not the school district, and served the youngest pupils for many years.

A women's group, The Twentieth Century or Century Club, was particularly active during this time period in the area of education. They had been urged the school board to augment "the three Rs" with what they called practical education in manual and domestic arts and in art itself. They found teachers to instruct high school students in these areas outside of regular school which, as the school board president admitted, was very successful, but he would not immediately commit to adding these pursuits as a regular part of the high school curriculum. Due in large part to the Club's efforts, this would eventually happen.

The year 1908 would prove to be a banner year for education in Reno. An educator would relocate to Reno from Prescott, Arizona who would leave a lasting mark on Reno's educational system. His name was Dr. Benson Dillon Billingshurst and he became superintendent of the Reno schools. According to his December 1935 obituary, in 1908, "he found the schools badly overcrowded, their buildings far from modern, and their teaching staff seriously overtaxed in its effort to take care of the increasing number of pupils."

In the fall of 1908, there were 1539 students in attendance in Reno schools with an average of 67 to a class. *The Reno Evening Gazette (REG)* reported that they were occupying rooms that were already crowded the previous year, when only 1187 students were in attendance. B. D. Billingshurst made it his mission to resolve this deficit.

In October 1908 in an "Appeal to Parents" published in the *REG*, Superintendent Billingshurst advised parents of a special election to be held on a Saturday at the Reno High School to issue \$100,000 in school bonds to construct

new grammar schools. Because of the overcrowding, the district was currently renting space for classrooms described as poorly equipped and uncomfortable for \$2,800 annually in Whitaker Hall, the Parish house and the Presbyterian Church. The superintendent made the argument that the interest on the bonds would be less than this amount. He said that this amount would not solve all of the overcrowding issues, but that it would be a good start and appeals for



*Central School, built in 1879 on West St. between 4th and 5th. In 1895, an addition on the right almost doubled the size. The school was later known as Reno High. Photo courtesy of Nevada Historical Society.*

more funding could be made later. The bond passed, demonstrating the locals' commitment to bettering local education.

Although the funds were now available to build the schools, Billingshurst and the School Board proceeded slowly, wanting to spend them wisely and provide the best facilities possible for students. Billingshurst and board president Walker visited schools in neighboring states to get ideas and have a basis of comparison for the proposed Reno schools. In May of 1909, George A. Ferris of Reno was selected as the architect for the schools. Ferris had been praised for designing the Governor's Mansion in Carson City, which

was at that time nearing completion. Another selling point for his selection was his project in California of an addition to the State Normal School in the Bay Area. Following the 1906 earthquake, Ferris' addition was the only part of the school left standing.

The two new schools would be named Orvis Ring, after Reno's first school superintendent and longtime educator, and McKinley Park, as this school would occupy land in the park of that name, the park having been named for President McKinley.

Construction began once Ferris' plans were complete, but it was not entirely smooth sailing. By December, accusations of faulty construction were being whispered throughout the town. An *REG* reporter was sent to interview school board president Walker, who denied all such accusations and explained that minor changes had been made to the original plans for the schools, due to efforts to meet the \$40,000 per school budgets, but insisted none of the changes impacted the structural integrity of the schools. The reporter then went to architect Ferris who echoed Walker's assertions and with Walker's permission, opened all of the paperwork on the project for the reporter's perusal. Ferris was angry at the suggestion of shoddy workmanship and claimed the assertions did not come from the Reno general population, but from some of the competing firms who had wanted the project themselves. At any rate, the protests were groundless, as evidenced by the fact that two of the schools have survived one hundred years.

In the latter part of February 1910, the schools opened and evening open houses were held in each so townspeople could view the schools fully lit. The schools were beautiful, built in the Mission Revival style, with large windows to admit light for bright, cheerful classrooms. The schools were basically one-story for fire safety reasons though there were basements housing a domestic science room for the girls and a manual training room for the boys. The assembly halls were 40 feet wide and 80 feet long, with a stage

## A History of Reno's Early Schools (continued)

at one end provided with two sets of scenery. Outside, there was a welcoming courtyard entry with a fountain spraying a column of water into a fishpond.

Because of the severity of the overcrowding at the Southside School, older students were moved to McKinley Park, so that two stuffy rooms in the basement and a small office would no longer need to be occupied at Southside.

As good as his word, Billinghurst successfully urged the passage of a second school bond, this time in the amount of \$250,000, providing funds to build two additional grammar schools and a new high school. All three schools were under construction simultaneously. Ferris had won the bid for the high school in 1911; his plans reflected a mission style, one-story structure with three units of partly-separate buildings joined by archways. The two grammar schools were Mt. Rose School and Mary S. Doten, named for a longtime Nevada educator and 25-year



*Orvis Ring Elementary School, built in 1910 on Peavine (now Evans) and 7th Street. Photo courtesy Nevada Historical Society.*


principal of Reno schools. The Doten School was completed in February 1912 in the Western Addition, on Fifth Street between Washington and Bell Streets. It is interesting to note that Mrs. Doten's name was not on the initial list of possible names for the new schools, nor was that of any other woman. The Century Club petitioned the school board to name one of the schools for this woman who was so influential in education in Nevada.

The Doten School was first occupied by high school students, awaiting the completion of their school in the fall. They had been occupying quarters in the old Whitaker School, referred to by Billinghurst as a firetrap. Later that month Mt. Rose School was completed for occupancy on Lander Street, in the Parkview Addition. The two schools were in the same style as McKinley and Ring, though the newer schools had two tall towers rather than a central parapet. It is fortunate for Reno that an example of each style was saved.

Due to a mild winter in 1912, construction on the high school progressed well. Ferris maintained his preference of using local labor as available; in

May, Ferris accepted local bids and Nevada Engineering Works provided the largest and heaviest steel girders ever used in a Nevada building, including, as reported by the *REG*, the courthouse and federal buildings. The reporter proudly stated that this level of structural support would enable the building to "last for generations." And it might have, had it been given the opportunity. The structure was razed in 1967, after a mere 55 years of service.

At some point Ferris must have altered his design for the high school as the completed structure bore no resemblance to the initial description of his plans. The completed school was a two-story structure in the Spanish Renaissance style, the exterior bearing a smooth finish of white cement with decorations in tile. There were two towers with rounded caps and three bowed second-story balconies; a large one in the center and smaller ones in each tower. The school accommodated 500 pupils.

The addition of five exemplary schools in the span of two years was only part of B. D. Billinghurst's admirable achievements as Superintendent. His 27 years of service to Reno's schools had barely begun; by the time his tenure ended, he had done more to improve Reno's schools than few, if any, have done since. 

Information for this article was taken from various *Reno Evening Gazette* and *Nevada State Journal* stories, 1869-present; *Tough Little Town on the Truckee* by John Townley; and a document entitled "*History of the Washoe County Schools 1857-1912*" by Rose M. Bullis.

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



*Reno High School, built in 1911 on West Street between 4th and 5th Streets. Photo courtesy Neal Cobb.*



## HRPS September 2011 Historic Walking Tours

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

Saturday  
September 3  
10:00 a.m.

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

Saturday  
September 10  
10:00 a.m.

LITERARY RENO - Take a tour of Writing from the "Underbelly." There is more to Reno's literary history than "City of Trembling Leaves!" Reno continues to be a mythical magnet for 'outsider' writers and characters...the misfits, outcasts and seekers. Let your imagination roam as we travel downtown streets encountered by traditional writers like Will James, Robert Laxalt and Joanne DeLongchamps, then walk the haunts of contemporary writers such as Bernie Schopen, Willy Vlautin and Susan Palwick. Meet at the Riverside Artist Lofts, 17 S. Virginia. Tour guides: Charlotte Voitoff and Nancy Manfredi.

Saturday  
September 17  
10:00 a.m.

MONROE STREET - Stroll along Monroe and Joaquin Miller Streets, savoring the history and architecture of this lovely residential area south of the Newlands Neighborhood. You will see the Hart House, the Patrick Ranch House, Greystone Castle, and other homes. Meet at the corner of Monroe and Manor Drives. Tour guides: Elsie Newman and Anne Simone.

### Where in Reno?

HRPS' tour leaders often focus attention on architectural details and we decided to play a little game! We invite you to identify a detail of a Reno landmark in each *FootPrints* issue.

Submit your guess by mailing it to:

HRPS  
P.O. Box 14003  
Reno, NV, 89507.

All correct entries will be placed in a ballot box and the winner will be drawn on October 15, 2011. The winning entry wins a free year of HRPS membership.

*In a building very deco  
Of its past you can see an echo  
Pass the Lowary Building slow  
Take a whiff and smell the joe.*

Where can you find this architectural feature?

The Summer *FootPrints* "Where in Reno?" image of a lion was the NCO/Western Pacific/Sierra Wine Building on East Fourth Street and correctly identified by five people. Hannah Hollad Satica correctly identified the building and won the drawing.



## Message from HRPS President Sharon Honig-Bear

I love HRPS' logo which features the image of the Virginia Street Bridge. The logo is on my Tour Guide name tag, on our stationery and on the front page of *FootPrints*. Everyone recognizes that the bridge is one of the oldest and most enduring images of Reno. And now, it is an almost-gone icon.

As most of you know, the City of Reno, in partnership with the Truckee River Flood Management Project and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has implemented a plan to replace the bridge. The website mentions their intention to build a new bridge "while respectfully preserving its distinguished history."

Although we sadly acknowledge that the 1905 bridge will come down, HRPS is participating in aspects of the long process of new bridge selection. There have been two meetings of the Design Review Committee and at the last, nine bridge concepts were presented. Some designs were eliminated because they lacked the ability to accommodate the flow of water and debris during flood periods. A couple of designs were cut because their unique designs would dominate the historic buildings on either side of the river. If you




are interested in seeing the designs, visit the official website at [www.vsbreno.com](http://www.vsbreno.com).

Our greatest concern is that the bridge choice should be at "grade" (street) level. Several of the suggested bridge designs require a raised roadbed. We feel these designs will affect Virginia Street in many ways that are problematic (examples: reduced access to the Riverwalk and Riverside, possible increased safety issues, aesthetic impairment of streetscape, etc). Our biggest concern is the impact of the bridge design on the historic River Corridor, with the grand old Riverside the most affected.

We have already sent a letter voicing some of the priorities and issues that are important to us. We want our members to know that we continue to carefully consider appropriate action for our organization. Feel free to contact me if you

wish more information or want to personally comment about the Bridge.

On a lighter note: look for HRPS to shine more light on a trend in historic preservation: the "recent past" (also known as mid-century modern. For local buildings, think the Pioneer, downtown Library, old AND new Reno City Hall, etc.). Our desire to increase awareness about this overlooked architectural period is one reason we added a prime example of such a house to our Reno Harvest of Homes Tour this year. See 1155 Mark Twain and you will see why these buildings are worth preserving.

The "recent past" movement now has been designated with its own official section, *Modernism + Recent Past*, within the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Preservationists nationwide have come to the realization that if we do not develop a contextual understanding and appreciation for the design of the 1950s and 1960s, the prime examples of this period could be at serious risk. If you are interested in learning more, the best website I found was [www.recentpast.org](http://www.recentpast.org). See you at the Home Tour! 



### HRPS Schoolhouse Social & All-Class Reunion!


**Friday, September 23, 5:30-7:30 p.m.**  
**Huffaker School and Pavilion at Bartley Ranch**

Mark your calendar to join HRPS in celebrating Mt. Rose School's centennial and all of Reno's historic schools at the annual fall social and kick-off event for the 2011 Harvest of Homes Tour. There will be hors d'oeuvres from the 5th Street Bakehouse, last year's popular food vendor, drinks, music, and our annual favorite, the Silent Auction of cool stuff and Nevada memorabilia.

Doesn't matter where you went to school, it is HRPS' reunion, so wear your best school duds, bring along a small photo of yourself for your name badge (from any school year), then meet and greet your old and new friends. You

might even run into a schoolmate or two because Reno is, after all, still a small town!

*Tickets are \$30 and can be purchased on the HRPS website at [www.historicreno.org](http://www.historicreno.org) via PayPal, or you can send a check to HRPS Social, P.O. Box 14003, Reno, Nevada 89507. Please include the names of all ticket holders (women are encouraged to include their maiden names, i.e. Jane Smith Jones).*

*For questions about the event, leave a message on our voice mail at (775) 747-HIST. *

# The Old Ryland House

by Debbie Hinman

You never know what you're going to find when you're not looking. I live in the Old Southwest and love to walk my neighborhood. My dog enjoys it even more than I do, though he is singularly unimpressed with the charming and unique homes I stop to gaze at, as he pulls impatiently at his leash. A few months ago I went farther afield than I usually do, into the "newer" neighborhoods of the Sharon Way/S. Marsh Avenue area. I stopped in the 1400 Block of S. Marsh, intrigued by an overgrowth of greenery and a brick wall obscuring what appeared to be a very old home. It was yellow and a bit dilapidated, and unlike any other structure in this neighborhood, primarily comprised of sleek brick ranch homes with manicured lawns. The tugging on the leash awoke me from my reverie so I walked on but could not get the house out of my mind. I began digging and found an intriguing story of a surveyor from Nevada's territorial days, a prominent multi-generational Reno family and a home that someone loved enough to save.

Andrew Jackson Hatch was a U. S. Deputy Surveyor of the Utah Territory prior to Nevada becoming a state. Once the Central Pacific Railroad selected Lake's Crossing/Reno as its depot location, in addition to his surveyor duties, Hatch became very active in the new town, purchasing a great deal of land. He owned 34 acres from the east side of Virginia Street south of the river eastward, where he raised alfalfa. He also owned land south of California Avenue, west to present-day Arlington Avenue, which was known as the Hatch Addition, adjacent to the Lake Addition. Hatch's office was advertised as "Virginia Street south of the river, across from the Lake House (predecessor of the Riverside)."

It is probably no wonder that when Hatch came to build his fine residence, he chose to do so on the southeast corner of S. Virginia and Pine Streets. Many of the scions of early Reno chose lots along S. Virginia, just south of the brick courthouse, erected in 1873. The house that Hatch built, according to later newspaper accounts sometime in the 1870s (and dated 1869 in the Washoe County Assessor's records), was none other than the yellow house that



The old Ryland house at 1495 S. Marsh Avenue.  
Photo courtesy Debbie Hinman.

now sits at 1495 S. Marsh Avenue in a neighborhood born when most homes of this age were long gone.

In 1886, Hatch sold his home and surrounding land to Richard and Elizabeth Ryland, who had moved to Reno from Eureka, Nevada the previous year with their two young children, Richard W. and Nevada (also referred to as Kitty or Katie). Both New Yorkers originally, the elder Rylands remained in the west for the rest of their lives. Ryland was an attorney and real estate investor and accrued a great deal of land and buildings throughout his lifetime. Elizabeth, who was only 18 when she came to Nevada to marry Richard, was a linguist and musician and became involved in the cultural and social life of early Reno.

The purchase of the Hatch property by the Rylands attracted sufficient attention that it was used by the local newspaper to show how attractive Reno property was becoming as an investment. The *Reno Evening Gazette* reported in 1902: "R. Ryland bought what was known as the A. J. Hatch property, on the South Side, sixteen years ago paying therefore \$5,000. Since that time, he has sold lots, to the value of \$14,000, and what he has left is valued at \$20,000. This perhaps tells the story of Reno's advancement as well as it can be told."

In 1904, Nevada (Kitty) Ryland married Lieutenant Horace Dodd, U. S. N., at her parents' residence. The article detailing her wedding called the bride "one of the most beautiful and charming young ladies in the state." The Dodds had two sons, Richard Ryland Dodd and Onslow, and a daughter, Novia Kate.

Richard W. married and became a druggist at a downtown shop in one of his father's properties.

Richard Sr. became ill while in San Francisco in 1911 and passed away at age 75. One year later, Richard W. became ill while traveling in the East, traveled back to the west coast and died at the young age of 31. Elizabeth, who was 21 years her husband's junior, died in 1929. Kitty/Katie Dodd was left to run the considerable Ryland holdings, later with the assistance of her three children. But she was not content to administer just her existing property. In 1930, she built a beautiful brick building on Ryland and So. Virginia, which she leased to Scott Motor Company. Not satisfied to build a generic auto dealership, Katie built a fully modern structure, touted as one of the largest on the Pacific Coast. The building stretched 100 feet on S. Virginia and a block long

## The Old Ryland House (continued)

on Ryland, extending to Center St. The grand opening held in January 1931 included such festivities as a speech by Governor Fred Balzar to 10,000 locals, intent upon viewing the impressive building, as well as the twenty Cadillacs, Buicks and LaSalle's on display. Upon Katie Dodd's death in 1938, sons Richard and Onslow and daughter Novia assumed responsibility for the Ryland real estate holdings.

Onslow Dodd attended Stanford University and graduated with a law degree, being admitted to the bar in both California and Nevada. However, according to newspaper accounts, he spent the majority of his time administering the family business rather than actively practicing law. He served in the South Pacific in World War II and upon being released to inactive duty, returned to Reno. Like his mother, Onslow was interested in acquiring new properties as well as maintaining the family holdings. One of his last major projects was the construction of the "new" Ryland Building (called "new" to distinguish it from a much older Ryland building in the center of town), a four-story, reinforced concrete building that was located on S. Virginia and Pine Streets. The building was completed in 1951 and its major tenant was Sierra Pacific Power Co. One of the innovative features of this building was a "drive-in cashier's window at which local customers can pay their bills without leaving their automobiles." There were a few other offices on that site, as well as Onslow's own office.

But before the groundwork could begin on this new monument to Onslow's family heritage, a monumental task had to be undertaken to clear the land. Onslow had decided to move the family home to a site he owned in Fairfield Heights, in southwest Reno.

We have come full circle to the beginning of this story. The yellow grand lady of a home has quietly occupied its incongruous spot in a mid-century neighborhood for the past 60 years. The home's new address was initially

1495 Harris Ave. Around 1957, Harris was joined to Marsh Avenue, which became the name of the entire stretch, even across Plumb Lane. The house number remained the same.

Obviously a sentimental man with pride in his heritage, Onslow remodeled the home in its new location and called it his residence. Unfortunately




he was not able to enjoy it long. Onslow died unexpectedly in 1953 at the age of 45 in San Francisco, as had his grandfather and uncle. Just as his mother Katie Dodd had gone to her son's deathbed, Onslow's sister Novia, often called Katie or Topsy, went to her brother's. She took charge of the estate upon his death, with the assistance of her brother Richard. She also lived part of the year in the family home, and part in California.

Onslow Dodd was not forgotten, however. In 1954, local FM station owner Jerry Cobb began calling KNEV "the Onslow Dodd Memorial Station." Cobb explained that it was out of respect for his good friend Mr. Dodd, who

was also a friend of good music. Dodd had been a generous benefactor to the fledgling station (the first successful FM station in the city). This was a touching tribute to a generous man.

In 1976, plans were created for a new hotel casino on N. Virginia St., on land that was in the Ryland assets, formerly the site of Hilp's Drugs. Ground was broken in May of that year, the owners donning gold-plated hardhats and smashing glasses of champagne against the heavy equipment in honor of the new Onslow Hotel Casino. The original name selected was Kit Carson, but at Katie Dodd's request, explained hotel president Conrad Priess, the hotel would now be named in memory of her brother. A newspaper article mentioned an informant's story of a price discount for the renaming. Whatever the reason, the Onslow it was, with a gay-90s theme, though it had a fairly short-term existence and then sat empty for years.

In stories of the move of the Ryland home from the early 1950s, it was stated over and over that this residence was one of, if not the oldest home in the city of Reno. And 60 years later, it still may be; there is a chance it predates the Nystrom House of 1875. The following was a sentiment expressed by the *Nevada State Journal* in 1949: "And so one of Reno's old landmarks is just now beginning a new era in a location where business is not likely to encroach upon it again." And it has not. 

Information for this article was taken from various *Reno Evening Gazette* and *Nevada State Journal* stories, 1870-present and a conversation with Neal Cobb.

Many thanks to super researcher Arline Laferry for her assistance in compiling information on the Ryland and Dodd families on a very short deadline. Debbie Hinman is a HRPS Tour Guide and on the HRPS Editorial Board.

## HRPS Helps a Wells Avenue Neighborhood

by Dagny Stapleton, West of Wells Group

**Sartorial Masonry and the Historic Reno Preservation Society help a Wells Avenue neighborhood park restore an historic rock wall!**

On Saturday, July 2, 2011, volunteers from the West of Wells Neighborhood Group gathered at Stewart Park to work on restoration of the 1930s-era terraced rock wall that provides the backdrop to one of Reno's smallest and most well-used parks. About thirty volunteers worked five hours, completing about 2/3 of the lower terrace and a quarter of the upper wall.

Stewart Park, built in the 1930s as one of the country's depression-era New Deal projects, has long been a center of family activity for the park at the corner of Wheeler Avenue and Stewart Street. "On

any given day you can see soccer games, family picnics and dog walkers fill up the park. It is rare to see that park empty and it is neat to see such a well-used neighborhood asset get a facelift as a result of work that our neighbors are doing," said Ray Duffy, Executive Director of the Family Promise organization, whose day center is directly across from the park.

Sartorial Masonry of Reno sponsored the repairs to the wall and donated labor and masonry to the project. Sartorial

is a local, family-owned company that makes it a priority to give back to the community. Historic Reno Preservation Society also sponsored the event, through a donation that was used to buy the mortar needed for the repairs. The rock wall at the park is an example of construction that was done by hand, using local rock and mortar to build a set of terraces that form the backdrop to the park. The West of Wells Neighborhood Group (WOW) organized the project.



Volunteers work to repair the 1930s-vintage rock wall at Stewart Park. Photo courtesy of Susan Mantle.

In addition to the repairs at Stewart Park the group had a neighborhood-wide clean-up on August 20, 2011, and has spearheaded an historic Conservation District designation that will recognize and catalog hundreds of historic structures throughout the Wells Avenue neighborhood. Barrie Schuster, one of the organizers of the project said, "Not only is this an infrastructure improvement for our neighborhood, this is also an historic preservation project, so, we achieved two goals through one effort."

The West of Wells Group lives up to its mission: "Neighbors uniting to foster community pride through the preservation of history, promotion of safety, and responsible development." Contact the West of Wells Group through their website, [www.westofwells.com](http://www.westofwells.com).



Barrie Schuster, one of the organizers of West of Wells, works to remove old mortar in preparation for repairing of the old rock wall at Stewart Park. Photo courtesy of Susan Mantle.

## HRPS Endowment Scholarship Awarded



The HRPS Endowment Scholarship was awarded this semester to Morgan Waldrup, pictured at left, who is studying Historic Preservation at UNR. Morgan is continuing the work that last semester's recipient, Ashleigh Best, started on the Wells Avenue Neighborhood Conservation District project.

Morgan is editing five thick three-ring binders worth of surveys and photos and comparing the data with the Washoe County Assessor's data to ensure that every structure within the proposed boundary was recorded correctly. This final step of the editing process will prepare the neighborhood to receive its official designation as a Conservation District. The boundaries of the proposed district are Ryland and Vassar from north to south, and Holcomb and Locust from west to east.

## HRPS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

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

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## Next Nevada Historical Society Docent Training

Docent training is scheduled for Wednesday, September 22, 2011 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Nevada Historical Society, 1650 North Virginia Street, Reno. Your help is very much needed. The NHS Docent Council supports the mission and activities of the Nevada Historical Society, by acting as gallery guides, giving school tours, working in the research library, helping with the artifacts,

the museum, the photography collections, the front desk, and the museum store. The training session will cover all the areas a docent can work in, followed by individual mentoring when the docent chooses an area of interest. Please call 775-688-1190 ext. 231 or email shayeszorn@nevadaculture.org if you are interested in being a docent.



*Barrie Schuster, winner of a National Jefferson Award, an organizer of the West of Wells Group and Secretary of HRPS Board of Directors.*

## Barrie Schuster Receives National Jefferson Award

Barrie Schuster was recently awarded a Jefferson Award for community service at a ceremony in Washington DC. The Jefferson Awards are a prestigious national recognition system founded by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Sam Beard in the 1970s, honoring community and public service in America, both on the local and national level. Channel 4 in Reno is a media partner to the Jefferson Awards and nominated Schuster for the award. In nominating Schuster, Channel 4 stated:

the idea of re-establishing the area as an historic neighborhood. Barrie Schuster spearheaded the effort and formed the group which calls itself "West of Wells." Together they have organized neighborhood clean-up efforts, planted more than 175 trees in public areas and worked to limit the number of liquor stores there. The group has also organized a study of the area aimed at highlighting some of the historic homes.

Schuster says she is thrilled with the progress she has seen. "It is amazing, and it has far exceeded any expectations that I had when our group formed. This neighborhood has the strongest sense of community of any neighborhood that I have experienced in Reno," Schuster told News 4.

In honor of her hard work and dedication, Schuster was presented with the Jefferson Award for community service in Washington DC. News 4 and Wells Fargo are proud to honor the unsung heroes in our community who go out of their way to make our city a better place.



For many years the area west of Wells Avenue in Reno was neglected. But a few residents came together recently with



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See Pages 1-2

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## FALL 2011 PROGRAMS

**Jack Hursh Jr. – Program Chair; [Jack.Hursh@gmail.com](mailto:Jack.Hursh@gmail.com)**

*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.*

**Friday September 23, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. HRPS Annual Social at Huffaker School in Bartley Ranch Park, celebrating the History of Reno's Schools. See page 7.**

**Saturday, September 24, HRPS' Harvest of Homes Tour** runs from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
See pages 1-2.

**Wednesday, October 26: Will Durham presents "Light Circus."** Come see a slide show illustrating the vintage Nevada neon signs Durham has rescued and collected over the years. You will see the twin cowboys of the Mapes Hotel, the chilled martini of the Buffalo Bar, Bucky Buckaroo from the Nevada Club, the 12-foot tall leprechaun from Fitzgeralds among others. Will Durham has worked hard and sacrificed a great deal of his time and storage space to keep the neon lights still shining.

**Wednesday, November 16: Jim Bonar with "The Fremont Cannon, Where is it?"** Bonar will try to answer a few of these questions: Is the Nevada cannon the same cannon John Fremont dragged across the county in 1844? What happened to the cannon after Fremont left it in the Sierra that cold January? Hear the tale of the possible answers to these questions and how it affects our lives and beliefs today.

Opinions expressed in *FootPrints* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial staff, the Historic Reno Preservation Society executive board or the general membership. *FootPrints* is a quarterly publication printed in Reno, Nevada. All rights reserved.  
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