

Historic Reno PRESERVATION SOCIETY

FootPrints

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

vol. 15 no. 4 ♦ Fall 2012

The HRPS Harvest of Homes Tour 2012 Saturday, September 29, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Research and Article by Debbie Hinman, Photographs by Emily Rogers



Building on two successful years of home tours, we are back for a third year with six more exciting homes on display. They range from large and elaborate to small and tastefully simple, but they have two things in common: they all reflect the tastes and personalities of those who own them and they are all located in the Old Southwest part of Reno. What follows is a brief overview of the homes.

For more in-depth history and descriptions, please purchase a ticket and receive a program that will reveal the historical and architectural detail, as well as a little about the lives of those who inhabited them.

1000 Plumas Street

This graceful Queen Anne is our oldest home on the tour, circa 1911, and the only one without regular live-in owners. It is known as Plumas House and is rented out to those wishing a longer-term stay in Reno and preferring comfortable surroundings in a graceful, homey atmosphere to a standard vacation rental or condominium. It has a fascinating history of famous inhabitants, a remodel by a pre-eminent local architect, and a first life as a home for "women in distress." Plumas House is owned by Anthony and Nancy Palladino.

575 Ridge Street

Designed in 1927 by Frederic J. DeLongchamps for Edward Chism of the Chism Dairy and Ice Cream Company, this lovely Tudor Revival sits on a quiet, shady street in a lovely old neighborhood south of Court Street. It is clad in the rich, deep red brick that is so characteristic of the old Reno neighborhoods. The elegant entrance is arched and the home displays Tudor half-timbering. Careful examination reveals a porch high above the entry, nearly hidden from view. Owners Mercedes de la Garza and Scott Gibson are longtime HRPS members and Scott is the tour guide for the Newlands Neighborhood Tour.

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The HRPS Harvest of Homes Tour 2012 (continued)

Continued from page 1

640 California Avenue

This lovely home is a Tudor Revival style, but clad in stucco rather than brick. It has a fabulous double entry that creates a small, hidden courtyard in between. Built by William and Catherine Wagner in 1929, the owners soon moved on to a larger home on nearby Marsh Avenue. Now owned by Neil and Roberta Ferguson, the home has been very gracefully enlarged to the rear, but the Fergusons have maintained the wonderful curb appeal of the original structure. The furnishings are tastefully understated so the lines of the house are displayed to their best advantage and the front door is a work of art.



716 S. Arlington Avenue

This small Tudor Revival home is a gem in a neighborhood of eclectic designs. Constructed of both local and imported brick, the home was completed in June of 1931 and billed in local newspapers as "Mayfair, the finest furnished model home that has ever been opened in the City of Reno." It was called an "English design home" and was decorated in eighteenth-century appointments. Owned by local realtor Craig Sweeney, the home is set off by a beautiful garden in front and a picket fence. Its current furnishings are a lovely blend of quality antiques and striking art pieces.




775 California Avenue

This stately mansion, by design reminiscent of Mount Vernon, was built in 1939 on three lots by retired government employee and mahogany baron Irving Dexter. Dexter reportedly had come from the Philippines to sit out World War II in a secure location. Popular local architect Ed Parsons Sr. designed the home. The style is Neoclassical, a style characterized by a full-height front porch supported by classical columns. Parsons made a return engagement in 1948 to design a separate guest-house and pool for the estate. Current owners Stephen and Beth Brennan purchased this landmark Reno home in 2000 and carried out a major remodel and addition in 2001.



1080 Mount Rose Street

This fabulous structure, our fourth Tudor Revival home is clad in brick with half-timbering, and is obscured behind an impressive gate and numerous trees. In the early 1950s, the home was owned by Sam and Edith Ginsburg of Ginsburg Jewelers. In 1955, it was purchased by the University of Nevada to serve as the University President's residence. The first President to inhabit the new residence was Dr. Minard Stout. This lovely estate later became the home of well-known couple Rollan and Marilyn Melton. Current owners are Victoria Hines and UNR Professor Dr. Eric Rasmussen, so the university connection has been re-established. A pair of stone lions guard the entry of the home. 



Volunteering at the Nevada Historical Society



Would you like to assist the Nevada Historical Society (NHS) and its professionals by volunteering as a docent? Docents perform vital work in all areas of the historical society including in the galleries as tour guides, in the outreach services to area schools, in the

research library, artifacts, manuscript, and photography collections, and in the front office and museum stores.

To become an NHS Docent you complete a 4-hour training program, a minimum of two workshops, and attend at least three lectures. You must become a member of the Nevada Historical Society and the Docent Council and work a minimum of 48 hours per year.

The next docent training will be Thursday, September 27 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Nevada Historical Society, 1650 North Virginia Street, Reno, NV 89503. For information, please call 688-1190, and ask for Shery. You can email Sue Oddo, President of the Docent Council at granny2two@sbcglobal.net for information about being a docent.

HRPS Harvest of Homes Tour 2012 Details

What:

HRPS third Reno Harvest of Homes Tour

When:

Saturday, September 29, 2012
from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Why:

Tour the interiors and gardens of six distinguished homes in Reno's Old Southwest neighborhood

How:

Tickets are \$25 in advance, \$30 on day of Tour. Tickets are available online at historicreno.org, or at retail outlets through September 28: Sundance Bookstore, St. Ives Florist, Ryrie's Art and Home, Ince Jewelers, Zephyr Books and L'Uva Bella Wine Gallery. Retail outlets accept cash or checks only. Tickets on sale beginning August 23.

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

Home Tour Funds Support Neighborhood Preservation Fund

While we're gearing up for the third Reno Harvest of Homes Tour, we like to think about the "good" that comes from the tour. Some aspects—the happy attendees, the proud homeowners, the capable volunteers—are apparent on the day of the event. But there's an on-going community benefit from the Home Tour that extends beyond the day it's held. We call it the Neighborhood Preservation Fund (NPF).


From the beginning, the Home Tour was conceived to generate income for this new HRPS venture. It was a way to express our commitment to preservation by creating a way to provide mini-grants for home improvement and rehabilitation of historic (over 50 years) buildings in Reno. The goal was—and still is—to

improve the curb appeal and the look of older neighborhoods. We focused on exteriors and projects that were authentic and in keeping with the original architectural style of the building.

We have now completed two funding cycles and will announce the four recent recipients of the most recent cycle in the next issue of *FootPrints*. The applications have been diverse, from grand public buildings like the First United Methodist Church to homes in the Wells Avenue, Southwest Reno and University neighborhoods. We've helped with windows, doors, foundations and light fixtures.

Like all of our operations, the NPF process is directed by capable

volunteers. We would like to thank Jack Hursh, who heads the strong panel of local experts in history, architecture and construction. He is ably supported by Mella Harmon, Melinda Gustin, Barrie Schuster, Lee Johnson, Cindy Ainsworth and Mercedes de la Garza.

Look for a future announcement of a new funding cycle. If you want to take a peek at our past Grant Guidelines, refer to the HRPS website at historicreno.org and go to the "Search" tab and enter "Preservation Fund." And in the meantime, grab some friends to enjoy the Home Tour. The more attendees, the bigger the pool of money to allocate for preservation! 

Literary Reno

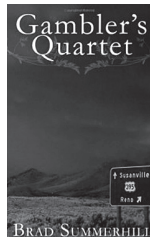
by Charlotte Voitoff, HRPS Tour Guide

When I was asked to take over the Literary Reno tour, I was honored. It combines two of my great loves—books and buildings. Nancy Manfredi, my co-tour leader, feels the same. She has lived here all her life and shares priceless recollections of places and events as we walk along. Her husband's uncle, Vincent Manfredi, worked in the grocery on the ground floor of the Mizpah Hotel. Her parents owned a restaurant in Sparks and she remembers festive family dinners at the Colombo Cafe.

Not having grown up in Reno, I have no such memories. But among the joys I find in reading is that it allows me to imagine places I may never actually see and to see familiar places through other eyes. Can you visualize the newly rebuilt Riverside Hotel as the tallest building in Reno in 1929 and imagine how that struck a cosmopolitan woman like Clare Booth Luce when she came here for a divorce? In her play *The Women*, a set description includes a window with a view of "Reno's squat rooftops... all very drab and ugly." My vision of Reno is different, of course. Reno had grown up some by 1967, when I arrived. More recent novels reveal a Reno physically familiar to me, but psychically far removed from my experience.

Downtown Reno is a gritty backdrop for Bernie Schopen's novels, *The Big Silence*, *The Desert Look* and *The Iris Deception*. His detective Jack Ross keeps different hours than I do. I have seldom found myself on "Virginia Street at 3:30 in the morning: the detritus of the day in the gutter, the detritus of

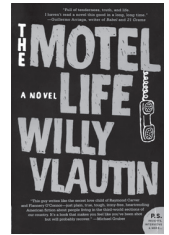
the night—glazed eyed drunks, crazed eyed derelicts, empty eyed tourists—on the sidewalk and in the streets, shuffling nowhere." Ross says he "fit right in." I know his late-night Reno exists, but I'm more comfortable in other places he frequents—Washoe Valley and Franktown Road, Windy Hill—in the sunshine.



I also recognize Brad Summerhill's description of East 4th Street in *Gambler's Quartet* as some of his characters come to a bad end in a dive there. I could name many of the businesses he describes; maybe you could, too: "The west side of the small, flat-roofed building faced an art supply store....Across the street behind them a tire store and a beauty college shared the block. Nearby were gay bars, topless bars, auto parts and army surplus stores and more bars. Rundown motels offering weekly rates interspersed the businesses. The Salvation Army ran a thrift store and homeless shelter nearby. Railroad tracks ran behind the building." Nevada Fine Arts has moved, and Summerhill didn't mention Feed World or Windy Moon Quilts, but I know the thrift stores and I love to forage for rusty bits and pieces in the yard of Twin City Surplus. I like things with patina. My forays down East 4th Street have all ended well.

In Willy Vlautin's *The Motel Life*, the young Flannigan brothers' motel residence is on West 4th Street. From there, their hard luck takes them to the

Halfway Club, the Coney Island, St. Mary's, the El Cortez and other familiar landmarks. "I got dressed, combed my hair and shaved, put on my coat and took the dog out the back. We walked quickly down First St., then over Virginia, then took the alley entrance to the Golden Nugget and I left him there, waiting outside near a row of trash cans. The counter was crowded and I stood in line and finally ordered a coffee and two orders of bacon to go. (One is for the dog.) Then me and the dog crossed Virginia St. and headed up Lake towards Seventh." I haven't ordered bacon at the Golden Nugget, but you can hardly find a better hamburger than I've eaten there. Go in from the alley.

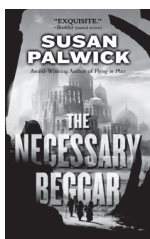


Kristina, an honor student who, like the Flannigan brothers, makes poor choices, is the subject of *Crank*, by Ellen Hopkins. She takes us to locations like Wild Waters and Reno High School, and, as she falls under the control of her addiction, she describes the Reno she sees: "High rise casinos, each with a 'got it rich' story or two and thousands of sad little secrets, gigantic glittering towers of glass and ungodly neon intruding upon the beauty of the July dusk, yet waving a welcome home midst a bayou of cement, asphalt shingles, tinted panes, fake wood siding, and lingering in the distance, an ocean



Literary Reno (continued)

of sage-embroidered plays, vast as time itself, those very seconds, hours, eons locked within the fringe of great crystals most call mountains." She and I see the same geography, but I don't know her world. She and the Flannigan boys help me understand what Willy Vlautin calls Reno's "great underbelly." Their world is real and I am grateful not to know it firsthand.



For a more far-out perspective, how about protagonists that arrive in Nevada as refugees from a third dimension? *The Necessary Beggar*, a fantasy by University of Nevada, Reno professor Susan Palwick, is

about a family physically exiled from their world, who walk through a blue door and find themselves in a detention camp in Gerlach, Nevada. When they move to Reno, they eat at the Pneumatic Diner, where my favorite entrée is a bayard (pronounced BY-ard). I can practically taste it. They park under the Keystone Bridge while they look for homeless Betty along Riverside Drive. Hot August Nights, with its wonderful old cars, is a favorite event and the Automobile Museum a favorite haunt. Next time you go, see if you can find the car the color of a Creamsicle. These characters may come from another world, but they occupy the world I know in a very concrete way.

Maybe my favorite books evoke a Reno that is gone forever. When we stand in front of the Santa Fe, a small brick building completely surrounded and

dwarfed by Harrah's, we are looking at the remnant of a time when Basque hotels provided homes for bachelor sheepherders who spent most of their lives in the hills. Across the street is the empty lot where the Mizpah Hotel (the Pincolini Building) used to stand. Robert Laxalt, a member of the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame and whose parents were first-generation Nevadans, describes the scene in *Child of the Holy Ghost*. "When the late day tangle of cars and horse-drawn buggies and freight wagons had thinned enough for him to pass through, Laborde turned his Cadillac off Virginia Street and made his way east to Lake Street.... This was the street of the foreigners, and it knew no distinctions of class. It was a street of Italian hotels, Spanish hotels, Basque hotels, Jewish clothing stores

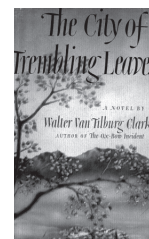


and Jewish pawnshops, Chinese laundries, and shabby, hole-in-the-wall restaurants of a dozen nationalities, all crammed together in no discernible pattern." In *Sweet Promised Land*, he says, "All of us together were of a generation born of old country people who spoke English with an accent...who drank red wine and cooked their food in the old country way." I can picture it.


I can also walk (or run!) with Tim Hazard in *The City of Trembling Leaves*, a novel that is almost a biography of Reno. Walter Van Tilburg Clark lets me see, feel, taste and touch the Reno of the 1920s. Reno is still roughly quar-

tered by the Truckee and Virginia Street. Now many of the homes described are gone. Did you know there used to be mansions along Mill Street, east of where the Automobile Museum is today? They are gone.

But some of Clark's Reno remains. You can walk along Court Street under trees whose branches meet over the road and shade the windows of the houses. You can still find a cool oasis at the tennis courts and the river in Wingfield Park. And the leaves of the cottonwoods and aspens still tremble in the breeze.



The authors I've mentioned are only a few of the creative residents of Reno. I hear about new ones all the time and it is always fun for me to recognize the places their characters inhabit. Look for a bibliography at HRPS website historicroeno.org and click on "Tours," then "Tour Descriptions," then "More articles," and then "Literary Reno."

We invite you to meet Nancy and me on Saturday, September 8, at the Riverside for the HRPS Literary Tour. You might also enjoy watching a documentary film in which Pat Klos and Sharon Honig-Bear tell you more about Reno authors. We'll have DVDs of the documentary available for purchase. 

Charlotte Voitoff is a longtime resident of Reno, a HRPS Lifetime Member and a HRPS Tour Guide.





Historic Reno Preservation Society's September 2012 Historic Walks

Tour cost is \$10 per person, free to HRPS members. Walks generally last from 1½ to 2 hours. No dogs please. **Reservations are required and space is limited.** Please call 747-4478 or go to www.historicreno.org for information and reservations.

Saturday,
September 8,
10:00 am

LITERARY RENO — Take a Tour of “Writing from the Underbelly.” There’s 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 15,
10:00 am

BRICKS AND STONES — Walk the Humboldt and Lander Streets Neighborhood. Discover the architectural treasures of this area, a mix of bungalows, Tudor and mission revivals and cottage styles. Meet at My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. Tour guide: Bill Isaeff.

Saturday,
September 22,
10:00 am

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 29,
10:00 am—3:00 pm

RENO HARVEST OF HOMES TOUR — HRPS gives you a chance for an inside look at six historic and distinguished homes in Reno. See pages 1-3 of this issue.

Where in Reno?



Photo by Cindy Ainsworth.

We all love the Downtown Post Office and this prompted many of our members to recognize it in our last Where in Reno.

Correct answers were received from Bob Krapp, Margie Cooley, Louise Gaedicke, Charlotte Voitoff, Marilyn Matylinsky, Ursula Wellman, Kathleen Brown Washmuth and our winner, Margaret Barthel.

Congratulations for knowing your Reno architecture!

Entries for the new puzzle are due, via email or snail mail, by September 17, 2012.

*Amid the bits of glamour and glitz—
Vestiges of days of yore,
Above the street this starburst sits
With shimmering rays and golden core.*

*If you're brave enough to creep behind
To Fulton, there's an awful treat.
You'll sate your thirst and hunger there—
The famous fare cannot be beat.*



Poem by Debbie Hinman. Photo by Sharon Honig-Bear.

Message From Your HRPS President

When it comes to historic buildings, there is “old” and there is “really old.” In Reno, we love what remains around town that is 100 (or so) years old and admire buildings that are barely 50 years old. Rightfully so. We have some lovely and significant structures and HRPS works continually to highlight them and share them with an appreciative public.

But then there is “really old.” I just returned from a month-long journey to Morocco and Spain that puts timelines into perspective, looking at structures and remains that span several millennia. I had a great time and left with two major observations about historic preservation:

1) designating something as “old” is a relative process. In the imperial city of Fez, Morocco, there are three sections of the city: Fes el-Bali (the “historic” town), Fes el-Jedid (“New Fes”) and the Ville Nouvelle (the modern city). We still laugh that Fes el-Jedid, the *New Fes*, was built in 1276! For the record, the “old” Fes can be traced to 789.

2) “adaptive reuse” is widespread worldwide and has saved many buildings, significant and modest. My favorite example was in Cordoba, Spain. Its Cathedral, *Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Asunción*, was the former Great Mosque of Córdoba (the *Mezquita*). Today it’s a World Heritage Site and a stunner of architecture and grand example of repurposing a building. The *Mezquita*, a functioning Catholic



Church, is regarded as the one of the most accomplished monuments of Islamic architecture.

Adaptive reuse! The history of the building is even more complicated. The site started as a Roman temple, then a Visigothic Christian church, before the Umayyad Moors converted the building into a mosque and then built a new mosque on the site. In 1236, Cordoba was conquered by King Ferdinand III, who turned the mosque into a Roman Catholic church, with the cathedral later inserted into the center of the large Moorish building.

This building was one I loved in photographs for years and I have always wanted to walk among its candy-caned striped double arches and absorb the beauty of the enormous spaces. I was not disappointed on my visit. Those 856 columns, by the way, are a great example of another good preservation principle: repurposing materials, instead of all new construction. These magnificent

columns are made of jasper, onyx, marble and granite and recycled from pieces of conquered Visigoth churches and other destroyed Roman buildings, such as the Mérida amphitheatre. Economical, practical and beautiful!



What a strange dichotomy. Traveling far from Reno but still getting regular updates via email about the status and sale of the Post Office. I would especially like to thank Kim Roberts, Barrie Schuster, Byllie Andrews, Rosie Cevalco and Cindy Ainsworth for spearheading HRPS’s efforts during my absence. I am proud that HRPS raised some important questions about the building and the Covenants that are designed to protect it.




In other news, I would like to welcome our two newest **Lifetime Members** to the HRPS family: Betty Easton and Jacqueline Black. They join the eight individuals and couples who have already stepped forward and demonstrated their commitment to and love of Reno. Monies from Lifetime Membership are used for our Neighborhood Preservation Fund grants. *It’s never too late to join this exclusive club!*

Sharon Honig-Bear
President

Update on Historic Kitchens

Two of our past Reno’s Historic Kitchens tour featured restaurants that have recently undergone a name change. The ownership and management is the same—the good food and careful stewardship of these older properties remain. So go out and try something new. The Hill Street Grill is now known as SoDo (South of Downtown) and you can read more about their menu at www.sodoreno.com.

There is also a new name (trademark conflict-caused) for Pie Face Pizza Co. in the wonderful El Cortez Hotel. It’s now known as PFP’s Noble Pie Parlor. Hard to say that name with a mouthful of pizza! As mentioned in the last issue of *FootPrints*, if you want to be contacted the next time we conduct one of these special tours, contact Sharon at sharonbear@sbcglobal.net. 

Mr. Payne Comes to Reno

by Debbie Hinman

The most popular of all of HRPS Walking Tours has long been “Mansions on the Bluff.” Locals and visitors to Reno alike are endlessly fascinated by the opulence of the Court Street/Elm Court/California Avenue homes and the stories of those who built and occupied them. One such couple was Frank R. and Hazel Payne, original owners of the lovely Tudor mansion at 745 California Avenue, on the bluff above the Truckee River. The Paynes quickly became popular members of Reno society. Their story echoes that of many of Reno’s early “movers and shakers.”

What drew Frank Payne to Reno for his retirement, after spending his working life in various large cities throughout the country? Locals have long known that Nevada, and in particular Reno, is a great place to live. But in the mid-1930s, a contingency of Nevadans including Governor Richard Kirman and civic leaders in Nevada, particularly those in Reno, set out to make sure the nation knew it as well.

These men called their initiative “One Sound State.” The purpose of the effort was to attract the wealthy to the state by highlighting the tax benefits—literature touted Nevada as a state with “no retail sales tax, no corporation tax, no state income tax, and no inheritance tax.” They especially targeted California millionaires, since the 1935 California legislature had raised the California state income tax. The initiative was wildly successful—scores of millionaires relocated to Nevada and purchased property, which increased the state coffers (Nevada did have property tax). The property tax had been raised by the 1937 legislature, creating such a surplus in the state that it was then reduced in 1939 by 20%. A San Francisco editorial remarked, “Unbelievable but it is true. These people just do not belong in the United States,” referring, no doubt, to the fact that most states were still striving to recover from The Great Depression.

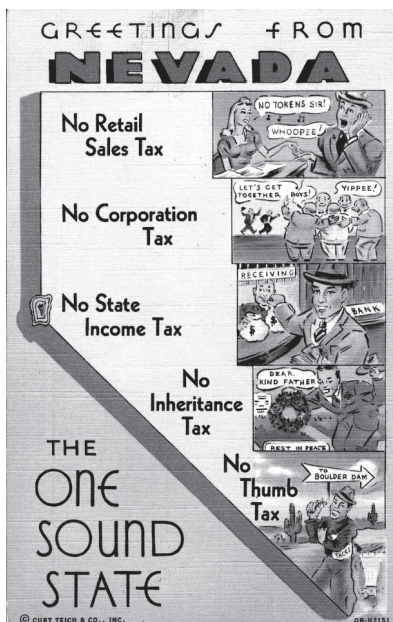
Frank Russell Payne, born in Missouri in 1869, was the epitome of the American

self-made man. He and his brother early on became the family wage earners; Frank began work in the hayfields at age 10 and left school at age 14 to work as a delivery boy for his uncle’s store. He set aside some of his wages and after a year or so was able to attend Washington University in St. Louis for one year. Frank decided he wanted to be a successful merchant and earn his father’s approval. He held several positions but left when

ranks of the J. C. Penney Co. in Murray, Utah. From there he was transferred to Midvale, Utah as manager, then was sent to open the Salt Lake City store in 1917. In 1919, he was elected a Director, a position he held until 1926. Frank retired from the company in 1929, but before he left he gave a generous grant to local Westminster College to build a gymnasium, which still bears his name. In his “Hail and Farewell” message published in the company newsletter that year, Frank ended by saying, “To my mind, the greatest satisfaction any man could have would be to say: I helped to build the J. C. Penney Company!”

Frank and Maud spent the next few years traveling, spending time in Florida, Seattle and finally making their home in Los Angeles. In a booklet called “One Sound State” distributed widely throughout the United States, Frank was interviewed as a new Reno resident. He told of his desire to leave California over its prohibitive taxes, explaining he and his wife would like to maintain their estate to pass on to their children. Frank stated, “I always liked Reno—that little river flowing through town was one thing I always remembered, along with the sunshine, dry air and pleasant people.”

The couple moved to Reno in the spring of 1936, taking a luxury apartment at The Belmont at California Avenue and Belmont Road (now Arlington Avenue). About this residence Frank said, “It’s as quiet and refined as a Berkeley residential district and we don’t have to fear that bandits will force our car up against the curb at night when we return home from a social call.” The couple’s daughter and son-in-law, Dorothy and Lloyd Waterman and young daughter Joyce accompanied the elder Paynes to Reno. Frank began buying property in Reno, several large tracts in the area of Arlington Avenue and Monroe Street. He was granted a building permit in September in the amount of \$12,000 to build a residence at 1201 Arlington Avenue. The Watermans built two brick homes across the street at 1122 and 1130 Arlington Avenue.



In the 1930s, Nevada state and business leaders, proud of the Silver State's unique fiscal situation and wanting to attract wealthy investors to Nevada, launched a nationwide promotional campaign entitled "One Sound State." Courtesy Nevada Historical Society.

he felt there was a lack of opportunity for advancement. He married Maud Bennett in 1897 and began working as a traveling salesman. He was able to save \$700 to start his own business. Frank and Maud worked tirelessly and were very successful; life was good for the Paynes, they had their business and now two children, Dorothy and Albert.

Frank soon became restless, however, and even studied law for a period. But his heart was always in retail business. In the spring of 1915, he joined the

Mr. Payne Comes to Reno (continued)

The Paynes' home was of a Spanish Eclectic style, the address of which is now 700 Monroe Street. This lovely home, now owned by HRPS Board member Gene Williams and wife Ellen, was featured on the HRPS Harvest of Homes Tour in 2011 and was a popular favorite of those touring the homes. On June 2, 1937, the Paynes celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary with a celebration at this house, attended by their son and daughter and families, and many friends.

Just eight months later, Maud Payne, who had been ill for a time, had a heart attack and died suddenly at home at age 64, leaving Frank alone in his retirement. Her obituary mentioned the many organizations she had been involved with, including the Nevada Sagebrush Chapter of the DAR. Maud was buried at Forest Lawn, in Glendale, California.

Frank continued to live in the Arlington Avenue home. In May of 1938, a *Nevada State Journal* article referred to him as one of Nevada's most enthusiastic golfers. He was said to be, at age 69, the oldest entrant in the championship tournament held at the Reno Golf Course. He also spent time fishing in local lakes.

It is lost in history how and when Frank met Hazel Sulisberry Davison; they both lived in Jasper, Missouri around 1910 so it is possible they knew each other from long ago. They had also more recently both lived in Los Angeles so perhaps they met there. However it happened, they came together, fell in love and were married in Reno by Reverend Brewster Adams at the First Baptist Church on May 15, 1939.

Hazel was born in Missouri in 1892, grew up there and married Lewis Davison in 1913. She and Davison had a daughter and son, Dorothy and William. Hazel, more than 20 years Frank's junior, nonetheless seemed to fit right into Frank's social circle and was welcomed by Reno society. The couple entertained frequently, even hosting a dance at their home for well-known California Avenue residents Mr. and Mrs. K. G. Foster and the Irving Dexters. She and Frank



The Payne Mansion, completed in 1941; a view from behind the wall on 745 California Street. Photo by Debbie Hinman.

continued to live in the Arlington house until mid-1941 when their lovely new home was completed at 745 California.

Frank and Hazel engaged popular local architect Edward Parsons to build their dream home. Parsons was no stranger to the "mansions on the bluff," having designed the home two doors to the west for Irving Dexter in 1939. Hazel had shown Parsons a photo of a home she told him she had in Los Angeles, saying, "This is what I like." The home is basically an English Tudor design though Parsons claims it was a mixture of several styles. Designing it was, in



Parsons described the entry to 745 California this way: "An arch, a stone arch, a flattened arch, more elliptical than round, all of cut stone." Photo by Debbie Hinman.

Parson's words, "rather a thrill." The entry hall is round, with doors to other rooms radiating out from it and a stunning stairway to the floors above. The house is brick to the first floor, then half-timber and stucco above. Large windows at the rear of the home take full advantage of the view of the river and mountains to the north. Said Parsons in his oral history, "It was just a fun house all the way through."

The project was not without its challenges, however, due to the unavailability of some materials in this pre-war era and Hazel's capricious nature. Parsons was forced to redesign the entire house due to Hazel's insistence that she needed a larger wing to accommodate a particular piece of furniture. But Parsons' fondness for Hazel showed through in his comments about her. Related Parsons, "Mrs. Payne would come to my office dressed in her white riding habit with a crop and parade around that office, with her polished boots. Other times she'd come in with her fur coat and turn her back slightly toward me and indicate, 'You can take my coat off now.' I learned how to be a butler [laughs]! Oh, it was fun."

Parsons went on to say that they had many good times in the house afterwards, and that Hazel threw wonderful parties. Of the couple he said, "She bossed her husband. All he wanted was a playgirl. He got her. He wanted to sit in his house and relax and enjoy the view of the river." Sadly, Frank Payne was only able to enjoy the view of his beloved river from his magnificent home for two years. He died October 19, 1943. He was buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale, California.

Hazel continued to live in the mansion, though she spent winters in Palm Springs. She remained active in the Reno community, establishing a lecture series on current topics called the Reno Town Hall in 1945. She worked to line up speakers on global topics and secured the venue, the Granada Theater. Hazel also had the company of her daughter and husband, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie

Continued on page 10

Mr. Payne Comes to Reno (continued)

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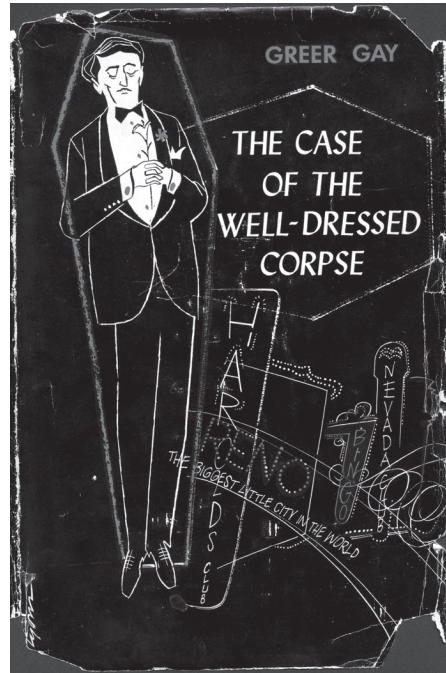
Winfield Smith, and their two children who had moved to Reno in 1942.

In December of 1953, an advertisement appeared in local papers reading, "Give a Mystery for Christmas 'THE CASE OF THE WELL-DRESSED CORPSE' by Greer Gay – Suspense, Humor and Romance – Reno Locale – At Your Booksellers." Many puzzled society ladies of Reno received copies at their homes, personalized for them and signed by Greer Gay.

The society column was filled with speculation as to the author's identity; it seemed to many as if too much was known about the community for it to be written by someone outside the local circle. The book remained a frequent topic of discussion. In February of 1954 the writer of a local column entitled *Reno Roundup by the Buckaroo* wrote, "Many people have ideas as to the identity of the 'Whodunit' author or authoress...but they're only guessing and not talking out loud. Who is Greer Gay? That is the mystery." Finally on March 18, Hazel Payne acknowledged her authorship of the book but not to a Reno publication. She gave the story to the *Evening Press* of Carthage, Missouri. Local papers picked it up and Hazel became the talk of the town.

On March 27, Hazel continued in the spotlight by marrying Edmund Herrick Sherman in Palm Springs, California. Sherman was a New York resident, retired and a free-lance writer in the field of economics. The couple returned to Reno but their union only lasted 13 months. In April of 1955, Hazel served divorce papers on Sherman, citing grounds of extreme cruelty. The divorce was granted in September and Hazel returned to being known as Hazel Payne.

In 1961, Hazel re-engaged the services of Ed Parsons to convert a wine cellar in the basement to a fallout shelter. Again, from his oral history, Parsons relates a conversation with Hazel following the construction: Said Hazel, "Well now,



*The Case of the Well Dressed Corpse,
Greer Gay, 1953*


"Julie sobered for once, stood upon the terrace, gazing at the subdued sunset upon Peavine Mountain across the valley. All the luminous lavenders and purples of the desert atmosphere touched its numerous ravines, while the gold of the dying sun high-lighted its ridges. But none of its peace and glory touched Julie's troubled soul; nor did the charm of the park below with its entrancing line of slender poplars, nor even the beautiful Truckee River at the foot of the slope."

what about my maid, where will she go?" Parsons said, "Well, right here." Hazel countered, "But she's black, you know." Parsons responded, "It won't matter! When it's dark you won't see any difference!" According to Parsons, that ended that discussion.

Hazel continued to spend winters in Palm Springs. Hiring a young music student from the University of Nevada,

Ron Williams, now well-known local music teacher and pianist, to house sit during her time away. Never one to sit at home, in the 1970s, Hazel became fashion director at The Fashion in Park Lane Mall. Hazel passed away June 13, 1975 at her California Avenue home at the age of 83.

The property was sold several times and stood vacant and in disrepair when Gerald and Dottie Alderson purchased it in 1994. They have painstakingly worked to restore the home to its former glory, furnishing it in lovely period pieces, contributing their own exquisite taste to the décor. It is easy to imagine that Frank and Hazel would approve. The Aldersons have utilized the massive granite boulders found in the yard by incorporating them into the landscaping design and in the wall that separates the house and yard from the traffic of California Avenue. The terraced rear yard provides an unobtrusive but perfect setting from which to view the river and mountains to the north.

Though the people who built these Mansions on the Bluff are long gone, it is fortunate for Reno that their legacies remain intact and have been carried on by new owners who value these unique homes and understand the importance of preserving them. We all owe them a debt of gratitude. 

Information for this article came from numerous *Nevada State Journal* and *Reno Evening Gazette* articles, 1936-1974; records from Ancestry.com; conversations with Gerald Alderson; *One Sound State*, 1937; an article called, *One Sound State, Once Again*, by Geoffrey Lawrence of the Nevada Policy Research Institute; the Oral History of Edward S. Parsons, UNR Oral History Program, 1983; and *The Dynamo*, 1929, employee magazine, published by J. C. Penney Co.

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

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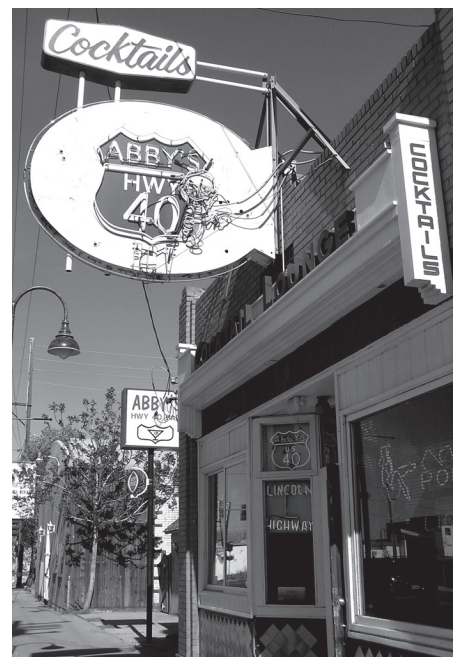
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Neon and Other Roadside Attractions Bus Tour, Saturday November 10


If you enjoy Reno neon and our roadside heritage then be sure to mark your calendar for our special Saturday, November 10th bus tour.

Cost is \$50 per person and includes dinner at Casale's Halfway Club on 4th Street. We will board the bus at 3:45 pm and the tour will leave promptly at 4:00 pm. We will be meeting the bus at the Washoe County Court House parking lot, located south of the Court House at Court Street and Sierra Street. Free parking is available on Saturdays at the parking lot. From there we will begin our roadside adventure. Please call 747-4478 by Friday, November 2 for reservations.

HRPS is celebrating the Nevada Museum of Art's exhibit, "The Light Circus, Art of Nevada Neon Signs" featuring Will Durham's neon collection.



Neon sign on Fourth Street in Reno, part of the November 10 Neon Tour.

The exhibit will run from October 13, 2012 through February 10, 2013. HRPS encourages all tour participants to view the exhibit prior to November 10 to get in the neon spirit! 





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WINTER 2012 PROGRAMS

Jack Hursh Jr. – Program Chair: 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.

Saturday, September 29, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm, HRPS Harvest of Homes Tour, see pages 1-3 in this issue of *FootPrints* for details.

Wednesday, October 24, “Images of America: Reno.” Guy Clifton dug deep into the photographic archives of the *Reno Gazette-Journal* for images rarely or never seen in print for his new book, “Reno,” one of Arcadia Publishing’s Images of America series. The book features more than 220 photos, the vast majority of them from the newspaper archives and private collections. Readers will recognize many familiar and famous faces who lived in or visited Reno.

Saturday, November 10, “Neon and Other Roadside Attractions Bus Tour.” Please call 747-4478 by Friday, November 2 for reservations. See page 11 in this issue of *FootPrints* for details.

Wednesday, November 28, “History of Reno, 1868 to ca 1920 as Shown on Postcards.” Dick Dreiling presents a PowerPoint presentation with postcards of Reno. The postcards are part of Dick Dreiling’s personal collection of old Reno post cards, which include lithographed, hand-colored, printed photos and real-photo postcards. Dick’s post cards are displayed annually at the Nevada State Fair. He graduated from Reno High School and has been a resident of Nevada since 1947. He has been a volunteer at the Sparks Heritage Museum since 1999, and has served two two-year terms as President of the Board of Trustees of the museum.

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