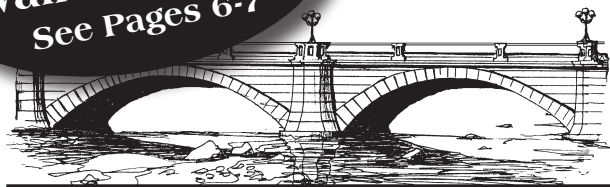


May-June 2014
Walking Tours!
See Pages 6-7



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 Library: A Mid Century Modern Jewel

by Sharon Honig-Bear

Editor's Note: To conserve space in this article, Library refers to Washoe County Downtown Reno Library and City Hall refers to Reno City Hall.

February 13, 2013. The day is notable as the date the Downtown Reno Library was added to the National Register of Historic Places. The designation added another jewel in the crown of distinguished downtown buildings. The building itself had marked a milestone in the path to the modernization of downtown, enhancing the area's beauty and distinction with its Mid Century Modern style.

It also struck me personally, having worked in this striking building for almost two decades. I thought I knew all about it, only to discover there were stories and history undiscovered. This national recognition prompted me to explore the Library's history more fully and to recognize its significance in the cultural fabric of downtown Reno.

A Symbol of the Growth of Culture in the Biggest Little City

The time was the early 1960s. Reno's population, like Nevada's overall, was growing and the Library needed to keep up. It had already outgrown its original site at the corner of South Virginia and Mill streets where, beginning in 1904, the Carnegie Free Public Library served residents until 1930. That building was demolished to make way for the Post Office. At that time, the Library found a larger space in the State Building in Powning Park across Mill Street. But soon that space was too small. Despite an editorial recommending that the Library expand in



The interior of Reno's downtown Library, 1966, shortly after it opened. Note how small the plants are and the former bank of card catalogs.
Courtesy Special Collections, Washoe County Library.

the State Building, the building was torn down to make way for the Pioneer Center.

The problem was solved early in 1962, in the form of a major pledge by the Max C. Fleischmann Foundation of Nevada to construct (\$1 million) and outfit (\$200,000) a new downtown library. The conditions included that the site needed to be downtown on donated land.

Reno and our cultural institutions were looking for a modern face. After the 1960 Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley attracted worldwide attention, the City responded with new growth. Interstate 80 between Reno and Sacramento opened in 1964. The

Fleischmann Atmospherium-Planetarium (as then known) was built in 1963 with a distinctly space-age look. The Reno Arch was replaced in 1963 with a "mod" design. A new City Hall on Center Street opened in 1964. The Pioneer Theater-Auditorium (the Performing Arts Center's original name) opened on the former State Building site in 1968. First National Bank of Nevada (now the "new" City Hall) built its sleek skyscraper in 1963. Things were moving in downtown Reno.

A Sign of the Times

The Downtown Reno Library is considered an example of the Modern Movement, when architects turned away from ornamentation towards a more organic environment, with natural lighting and landscaping. New materials such as glass, steel, plastic and reinforced concrete were used. The building also exhibits other characteristics of Modernism, such as the idea

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Reno's Downtown Library (continued)

Continued from page 1

that design should derive directly from its purpose and that there is no need to hide structural elements.

Hewitt Campau Wells (1915-1989), a partner in the famed architectural firm DeLongchamps, O'Brien and Wells, submitted the winning plans for the new Library. He received a degree in architecture from Princeton University and launched his career with stops in Detroit and the Bay Area before moving to Nevada. His other notable buildings in the area include the Clayton Middle School's campus, an addition to the Washoe County Courthouse and Reno City Hall. He was also an accomplished watercolorist and a series of his paintings still hang above the Library's north stairway, between the main and upper floors.

Wells had a wonderful opportunity to design the Library incorporating Modernist ideals. There are many features that were exciting, innovative and, yes, modern, in the new Library. The exterior was finished with brick, copper sheet and glass and was designed to harmonize with City Hall. Most prominent was the indoor garden court, including trees, plants and a pond. The "suspended platforms"—some called them pods, others called them mushrooms—rose up to different heights giving the interior a look

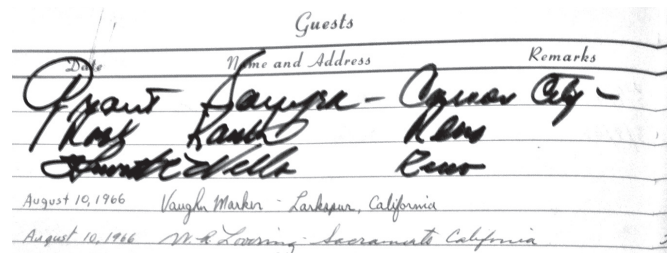
somewhere between Alice in Wonderland and the Jetsons. The book stacks occupied multi-tiers along the south wall of the building. And functionally, the building was three times the size of the State Building.

The building contains a less known "sign of the times," a time capsule of societal unrest: a bomb shelter. In a wall on the lower level, a locked grate still remains. This awkward gateway to the shelter was a necessary feature for a public building constructed during the height of the Cold War. Fortunately the shelter was never used and years later, Library staff removed unused and out-of-date provisions, medical supplies and other vestiges of nuclear fear.

A Centerpiece for a Community Struggle

An interesting part of researching this article was finding that one of my favorite quotes about the building may in fact be apocryphal. Early on, I heard that Wells said, "If I can't build the library in a park, then I will build a park in the library." Good story, although I haven't found it confirmed anywhere. What I can confirm is a long but interesting story about how the site was finally settled on, on South Center Street.

After the Fleischmann Foundation pledge, the City of Reno agreed to a long-term lease for about an acre in Riverside Park (what we call Barbara Bennett Park now, in Wingfield Park) in May, 1962. Then the trouble began and continued for a year and a half, with objections revolving



At the Dedication Ceremony of the Downtown Library on May 22, 1966, Governor Grant Sawyer and architect Hewitt Wells signed the guestbook. Guestbook from Washoe County Special Collections. Photo courtesy Sharon Honig-Bear.

around loss of park space, risk of flooding and lack of parking. It didn't help that in the midst of all this, there were City Council elections and new members were elected who opposed locating the library in the park.

Elmer Heward, described as a tennis enthusiast and instructor, spearheaded the opposition, concerned about the loss of two (some references claim it was four) tennis courts. On April 21, 1963, over 100 people opposing the site showed up at a Friends of Washoe County Library meeting. Mrs. J. B. Clinedinst said she represented several hundred members of the Twentieth Century Club, American Legion Auxiliary and Garden Gate clubs. Heward took the matter to Washoe District Court, claiming that a state law governing use and disposal of city park property had been violated. The Court, in a ruling on July 31 by Judge Thomas Craven, upheld the legality of the lease. Heward immediately filed a notice of appeal with the Nevada Supreme Court.

The City was stuck, needing to come up with alternative sites. On June 19, Mayor Hugo Quilici met with the Library Board at an informal luncheon that he said was held "in the spirit of cooperation on the part of everyone." On September 17, the Council offered the Library the north side of the Southside School site. A week later it added the "Husky Haven" site (where the Library is currently located at 301 South Center Street) diagonally across Center Street for consideration.

But in a letter dated October 8, Library Director William E. Andrews was still



Postcard view of the Downtown Library's multi-level stacks, sometimes called pods or mushrooms. Courtesy Special Collections, Washoe County Library.

Reno's Downtown Library (continued)



The downtown library celebrates its 20th Anniversary, with Bertha the Elephant from John Ascuaga's Nugget and Library Director Martha Gould. Courtesy Special Collections, Washoe County Library.

considering the options, claiming the main cause of delay revolved around the Nevada Supreme Court law suit.

The issue came to a showdown on November 12, 1963, when Chairman Lester D. Summerfield expressed the Fleischmann Foundation's dismay over the delay in selecting the site, also citing that this delay made the Foundation "vulnerable under the Federal laws governing the unreasonable accumulation of income." The Foundation Trustees agreed to absorb the \$10,000 which was already spent on architect fees if the Library Trustees abandoned interest in the Riverside site and accepted one of the sites being substituted by the City Council. Most surprisingly, the Foundation presented this as an ultimatum by giving the Library only two weeks to agree, saying, "In conclusion, if this offer is not accepted by November 25, 1963, then the grant offer of the trustees of the Max C. Fleischmann Foundation of Nevada dated March 22, 1962, is automatically withdrawn and it becomes null and void."

This ultimatum made things move. Library Board Chair Dr. John C. Becker announced that "beggars can't be choosers" and selected the Southside site on November 13, in a meeting described as "fiery, typified by flaring tempers

and angry exchanges." It looked as if the issue was finally settled but apparently the City didn't consult Rocco Spina, their Recreation Director, who took immediate and vocal objection, saying that the City recreation program would be set back ten years. He interjected an alternate site, offering Stewart Park as well as the Husky Haven site.

The City withdrew the offer of the Southside site and with options gone, the Library Trustees selected the Husky Haven site.

Finally on December 23, 1963, the City Council authorized the lease for the site for 99 years, at a cost of \$1 per year. Wells said the building plans would have to be done "from scratch."

Even with a site selected, things moved slowly. In June, 1964, the plans for the building were finally revealed with bids due during that summer. An anticipated opening date was summer, 1965. Noting that the surrounding neighborhood was not fully developed, "the architects have conceived the Library as a self-contained unit ... an enclosed interior includes reading platforms suspended in space, landscaping with full grown trees, natural lighting through skylights and a controlled atmosphere by complete air conditioning." The building contractors were L. E. Dixon Construction Company and J. A. Tiberti Construction Company, with Mitchell Serven brought in as the landscape architect.

The Library Flourishes

The doors finally opened with a Dedication Ceremony on Sunday, May 22, 1966. The *Reno Evening Gazette* noted, "The wars are over, the library is peaceful," followed by, "Its peaceful, forest-like interior belies a stormy beginning." The guest book from opening day included signatures of Governor Grant Sawyer, Wells and his family and names of many well-known Reno families like the Savitts, Quilicis and Llops. Comments in the book included J. Morgan Chadwell referring to the building as a, "garden of Eden," Mrs. Anita Abraham noting, "this library is the pride of Reno," and Mrs. Mabel Oliver saying, "God bless the Fleischmann Foundation." In the days and weeks to follow, citizens and library officials from all around California, the rest of the United States and countries such as Sweden, Germany and Canada visited and commented with admiration. Audrey Anderson of Incline Village probably captured the space-age-like interior the best when she described it as "literally out of this world."

In September 1966, the *Nevadan* printed a photo essay entitled, "Reno Library Is a Thing of Beauty." The article touts, "Believe it or not, the new Washoe

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Postcard view of the interior of the downtown Library's pond, landscaping and open interior. Courtesy Special Collections, Washoe County Library.

Reno's Downtown Library (continued)

Continued from page 3

County Library has already become one of the most talked-about attractions in the City."


Professional acclaim followed. The building would be recognized in the reference series *The Architecture of the United States* and was listed as a "designer's choice in 1966" in an architectural publication. Estey Library Shelving featured the inside book stacks on the cover of its catalog. The Texas Refinery Corporation produced a calendar entitled "The World's Great Libraries" in 1984 and the "Reno Central Library" was the choice for June. Martha Gould, Director of the Library System from 1984-1995, recalls that the building won the Institutional Landscaping Award from Lady Bird Johnson.

Gould also recalls, "I love the building, it's beautiful, but inefficient to use, expensive to maintain and full of problems, like the leaking roof. It was hell to operate." She also remembers the challenges of serving the homeless, replacing lights in a four story structure, asbestos abatement, lack of windows in the upstairs offices (Wells gave his permission to add several later on), children playing in the downstairs pond and serious air quality issues.

Changes have occurred over the years. An entrance on Ryland Street has been long closed. The "story hour" pit in the children's area was filled in, and eventually the entire children's collection was moved to another part of the Library. Electrical outlets, in short supply from the beginning, had to be added as computers dominated the landscape. The trees and plants, so small when old photos are examined, are now magnificent specimens. Although the County was supposed to pay \$1 annually to lease the land from the City, Library Director Martha Gould says she never saw it show up on any budget.

Researching this story got me to consider whether, in the long run, having the Library in Riverside Park would have been a better choice. This is an especially potent question when you consider efforts made in recent years to focus more attention on the River Corridor. Gould maintains the choice was the right one, also citing flooding and parking issues. Wells himself embraced creating a civic center focus on the river, echoed in an editorial in the *Nevada State Journal* which commended some "far-sighted residents" who embrace "the concept to utilize the banks of the Truckee within

the City as a setting for both cultural and recreational purposes."

Regardless of the final location, one of the best parts about working in the Downtown Library was entering its futuristic world of mushroom pods and verdant walkways. I loved the rich, fertile aroma that awaited me when the building was reopened after a long weekend. The building is a cultural icon for Reno but in telling its story here, I realized that I am also telling a personal love story. I couldn't agree more with Cicero when he said, "If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need." 

Editor's Note: You can spell it Mid Century, Mid-Century, Midcentury, or Mid-century. We've chosen Mid Century.

Information for this article came from the Downtown Library's application for National Register for Historic Places; extensive archives of Washoe County Library; interview with Martha Gould; and various articles in Reno newspapers.

Sharon Honig-Bear is a HRPS tour leader and a former HRPS President.

Mid Century Modern (MCM) Day May 20, 2014

HRPS is pleased to be part of the statewide effort to honor Mid Century Modern (MCM) Architecture, originating with Las Vegas Assemblywoman Hillary Shank, through a resolution in the 2013 legislative session. May 20, 2014, has been designated as Mid Century Modern Day.

HRPS is offering a special tour to join in the celebration. We will have in-depth, interior visits to the Downtown Reno Library, "old" City Hall (now the Discovery Museum), "new" City Hall and the Pioneer Center. Participants will also receive a list of other notable MCM buildings to visit on your own. Tour leader is Sharon Honig-Bear and the date is May 20. See page 6 for details.

High Noon: Shootout with Neal Cobb

High Noon is back at the Nevada Historical Society — at noon on the third Thursday of each month. This reorganized program will feature a variety of recorded television episodes and old movies about Nevada. Come enjoy this program and stay afterwards to "fire" questions at host Neal Cobb — learn about these topics and much more at the Nevada Historical Society.

High Noon: Shootout with Neal Cobb
Noon on the Third Thursday of Each Month
Nevada Historical Society
1650 N. Virginia Street
Reno, Nevada 89503
775-688-1190 x 0

In 1949, Win a New House with a 50-cent Ticket

by Joyce Cox

How many of us put our names in the hat hoping to win the HGTV “Dream Home” located in Truckee this year? In June 1949, residents of northern Nevada were given a chance to win a “new modern home” at the “Reno Better Homes Show.” Art Rule, a Reno businessman and general manager of Reno Better Homes, Inc., worked with the Reno Association of Architects and the Nevada Building Trades to offer a chance to win this completely furnished modern home with the purchase of a 50-cent admission ticket. The “Better Homes Show,” thought to be the first home show in Reno, was used to jump-start the building of homes in northern Nevada. A small plexiglass model of the home filled with new pennies, nickels and dimes was to be given to the person guessing the amount of money.

Reno, Sparks and Washoe County’s population was growing rapidly after World War II and like the rest of the United States, the area was going through the “post World War II surge in homeownership.” Washoe County’s population in 1940 was 32,476, but by 1950, had grown to 50,205, an increase of 52.4 percent. This population boom caused a housing shortage. The “Better Homes Show” was to show new and innovative ways to build and furnish a home. An editorial in the *Reno Evening Gazette* on June 8, 1949, stated that, “The Better Homes exposition not only puts on display the latest designs in building and furnishing, but will be the inspiration for many to start construction of that long-awaited home.”

The Home Show had about 46 display booths that were set up in secret in the Civic Auditorium of the State Building. “Spectacular and surprising” displays with “up-to-date home features” never before seen in Reno were promised. The Reno Association of Architects and the Nevada Building Trades worked together to build a home on the corner of State and Sinclair streets that would be given away at the end of the show. The home was built to be moved to a location selected by the lucky winner. Art Rule reported that most of the building and home furnishing companies in the area were participating. The Yancey Company showed



**RENO'S MODEL HOME ... On the
Corner of State and Sinclair Streets
FLOOD-LIGHTED EVERY NIGHT UNTIL 9 p. m.
BE SURE TO SEE IT**

*Reno's Model Home ad from Reno
Evening Gazette, June 6, 1949, p. 3.*

Johns-Manville “blown” insulation, fire-proof roofing and siding and weather proofing. Sierra Furniture, with other local furniture dealers, displayed floor coverings and furniture. Paul Bunyon Lumber Company had wall panels made from California pecky cedar that were manufactured locally at their mill. Heating and air conditioning units were shown by Saviers Electrical Products (SEPCO). American Standard bathroom fixtures including shower, tub, toilet and basin in matching colors were displayed by Humes Plumbing and Heating. Bender Warehouse had the Thor “semi-automatic” washing machine at their booth. The National Coal Company had models of oil heaters and burners. Home Lumber showcased wood and aluminum window units.


Nevada Bank of Commerce and the First National Bank’s booths gave advice on acquiring home loans to remodel homes. The loans, insured by the Federal Housing Authority under Title 1 of the housing act, would pay for improvements such as painting, landscaping, cabinets, reroofing, or to add a garage. The Ray P. Smith Real Estate Agency gave local real estate listings along with ways to get titles, deeds of trust and contracts of sale.

The home was designed by ten Reno architectural firms, all members of

the Reno Association of Architects: DeLongchamps and O’Brien, Edward S. Parsons, Ferris and Erskine, Wheeler and Gray, David Vhay, Jack Means, Keith Lockard, Ralph Casazza and Walter Deedes. S. R. Szymanski was the heating engineer and Edward S. Parsons worked as the chairman. All of the firms submitted plans with one set of plans selected and then modified by the members.

The house had five rooms in more than 1,000 square feet and was estimated to cost \$10,000. A unique feature of the house was the large entry way or hallway that led to all of the other rooms. There was a living room with dining room set off in an L shape, a kitchen with utility room, two bedrooms, and one bath. Radiant heating was installed in the ceiling and the hot water heater was in an alcove off the kitchen. The living room had a large picture window and fireplace. Floor coverings included oak parquet that resembled a basket weave, carpet in the dining room and bedrooms and linoleum in the kitchen.

The lucky winner was A. L. Nichols of Verdi who had purchased two tickets. Mr. Nichols, owner of the Wishing Well Restaurant in Verdi, planned to move the house near his restaurant. The Wishing Well was on the north side of Highway 40 where Gold Ranch is today. The house may have been north of the Wishing Well near the current Taco Bell and Smoke Shop near Trelease Lane.

There are no houses in this area today and it is thought that the house may have been moved back to Reno when Interstate 80 was opened between Sacramento and Reno in 1964. This, of course, is all speculation and has not been verified. 

Information for this article came from numerous newspaper articles.

Joyce Cox is a member of the HRPS Editorial Staff and author of the book *Images of America: Washoe County*. She is a retired reference librarian and a researcher of Nevada history.



Historic Preservation Month May 2014 HRPS Historic Walking Tours



Put on your walking shoes – it's time for Historic Reno Preservation Society's spring tour season to begin. 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 go to www.historicreno.org or call 747-4478 for information and reservations.

Saturday
May 3
10:00 a.m.

BEYOND THE ARCHES – Witness downtown Reno as it has reinvented itself for 150 years. This tour links the downtown Reno arches with stories of the forces that shaped the town: railroad and mining, immigrants, as a notorious divorce and gambling mecca — and now as a livable cultural hub. Walk in the footsteps of Bill Harrah, Myron Lake, Baby Face Nelson, Frederic DeLongchamps and others. Meet at the National Automobile Museum, 10 S. Lake Street. Tour guide: Jim Smith.

Saturday
May 10
10:00 a.m.

LAKE ADDITION – Meander past divorce-trade dwellings and Victorian architecture, through one of Reno's earliest additions. Includes a stop at the Lake Mansion. Meet at the Nevada Museum of Art, 160 West Liberty Street. Tour guide: Debbie Hinman.

Saturday
May 17
10:00 a.m.

ROADS AND RAILS, HISTORIC FOURTH STREET CORRIDOR – Discover the historic origins of the Lincoln Highway and the Nevada, California and Oregon Railroad, stopping to appreciate the Barengo/NCO building, Flanigan warehouse, and other vestiges of the corridor's heyday. Meet at Louis Basque Corner, 301 E. 4th Street. Tour guide: Cindy Ainsworth.

Tuesday
May 20
3:00 p.m.

NEW! – MID CENTURY MODERN – Be part of the statewide effort to honor Mid Century Modern architecture! The Nevada Assembly passed a resolution designating May 20, 2014, as MCM Day. HRPS is celebrating by offering a special tour with in-depth, interior visits to the Downtown Reno Library, "old" City Hall (now the Discovery Museum), "new" City Hall (formerly FIB building) and the Pioneer Center. Participants will also receive a list of other notable MCM buildings to visit on their own. Tour begins in the Lobby at 3 p.m. at City Hall, 1 East First St. at N. Virginia St. Reservations are a must. Tour guide: Sharon Honig-Bear.

Saturday
May 24
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.

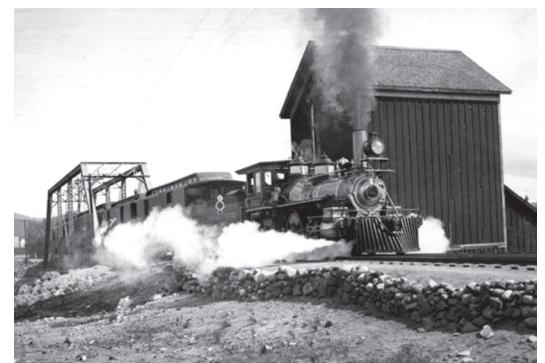
Saturday
May 31
10:00 a.m.

PARSONS/MILLS ARCHITECTURE – Stroll one of Reno's most unique neighborhoods to view some designs by Reno architects Edward Parsons and Russell Mills, who sometimes collaborated on designs. Hear about the families who first lived in these homes. Meet at the corner of Marsh Avenue and LaRue. Tour guide: Anne Simone.

The Virginia & Truckee Railroad: An 80-Year Reno Institution

The Virginia & Truckee Railway's beloved 1872 locomotive No. 11 named Reno pulls the V&T's daily early-morning winter passenger train out of Reno around 1909. The engine had recently been converted from wood to burning fuel oil.

The locomotive and four passenger cars have just crossed the Truckee River and are passing the V&T's Reno Water Tank as they head south for an on-time arrival in Carson City and later Virginia City. (Stanley G. Palmer photo)





Historic Preservation Month

June 2014

HRPS Historic Walking Tours



Put on your walking shoes – it's time for Historic Reno Preservation Society's spring tour season to begin. 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 go to www.historicreno.org or call 747-4478 for information and reservations.

Tuesday
June 3
6:00 p.m.

UNIVERSITY HISTORIC DISTRICT CAMPUS – Visit Morrill Hall, Mackay School of Mines and the Keck Museum to learn the history of this beautiful campus. Meet at Honor Court, 9th and Center Street. Tour guides: Jack Hursh and Bob Shriver.

Saturday
June 7
10:00 a.m.

PROHIBITION IN RENO – We've turned back the clocks to the 1920s and 30s. We'll walk streets and alleys and visit significant buildings, recalling Reno's saloons and reformers (the WCTU and Anti-Saloon League) and feature a guest appearance by a local dignitary of the area. Tour starts at Amtrak's Reno Station, 135 East Commercial Row. Tour guides: Debbie Hinman and Sharon Honig-Bear.

Tuesday
June 10
6:00 p.m.

WELLS AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD – Take a stroll through a working-class neighborhood along the path of the Wells Avenue streetcar, across the V&T tracks, and past the homes of the "Thoma Street Gang." Meet at Southside School Annex, Sinclair and Liberty streets. Tour guide: Mark Taxer.

Saturday
June 14
10:00 a.m.

HISTORIC NEVADA STATE HOSPITAL TOUR – Visit the site of Nevada's first state hospital (originally the Nevada Insane Asylum) at Galletti Way and Glendale Avenue in Sparks, one of the state's oldest institutions. The tour will include a look at the remaining Frederic DeLongchamps' buildings, a walk through the approximately 110-year-old "Stone House," and a visit to the hospital cemeteries. Park in the circular driveway on the Galletti Way side. Tour guides: Rosie Cevasco and Kim Henrick.

Tuesday
June 17
6:00 p.m.

HISTORIC TRUCKEE RIVER WALK – A relaxing stroll along the Truckee River from the McKinley Arts and Cultural Center to the Lear Theater reveals eclectic architecture grounded by rich political histories and spiced with colorful anecdotes. Meet at McKinley Arts and Cultural Center, 925 Riverside Drive. Tour guide: Joan Collins.

Saturday
June 21
10:00 a.m.

UPPER RALSTON/NORTHERN LITTLE ITALY – Enjoy a walk in a residential neighborhood with a mix of architectural styles. Proximity to the University has traditionally determined the mix of residents, professors and students alike. Meet at the intersection of Washington Street, The Strand and College Avenue. Tour guides: Jim and Sue Smith.

Tuesday
June 24
6:00 p.m.

UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORHOOD – A walk through an historic and endangered neighborhood at the foot of the campus—with vintage Queen Anne homes and charming bungalows. Meet at the base of the 9th Street university steps. Tour guide: Debbie Hinman.

Saturday
June 28
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: Anne Simone and April Kempler.

Saturday, September 27, Hold the Date!

Back by popular demand, the 5th annual Reno Harvest of Homes Tour is scheduled for Saturday, September 27th. We again have an interesting assortment of homes. Details will follow in the next *FootPrints*. If you would like to advertise in the Program, sponsor a house, or volunteer, please contact Chair Sharon Honig-Bear at sharonbear@sbcglobal.net.

The Monday Club

by Debbie Hinman

Do you approve of clubs for women, Uncle?" "Yes, but only after every other method of quieting them has failed."
Punch – 1928

The above quip, while meant as a joke, nonetheless illustrates many men's attitudes toward women's organizations in the early 1900s. Church societies were the only generally accepted avenues for women to organize and meet and their purpose was primarily to plan church social or fundraising events. Most men felt women's time was better spent taking care of the home and family and feared women's groups would interfere with these duties and give women "unwelcome" ideas.

In spite of these attitudes, women in early Reno did organize, in church groups but also in other groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The WCTU formed a local chapter in 1883 and fought to end the manufacture and sale of alcohol, but also to establish distance restrictions on immoral houses from churches and schools and to pass anti-gambling laws. As you can imagine, these were not popular ideas among many Reno men. In 1894, the Twentieth Century Club was founded, announcing its purpose as, "for personal improvement and the public good." The Century Club, as it later came to be known, focused on civic issues and education and brought about much positive change in the fledgling town.

In 1911, a different kind of women's club was organized in Reno, known as the Monday Literary Club, later to simply be known as the Monday Club. Other Monday Clubs existed throughout the United States, such as in Fairhaven, Washington (est. 1892) and Prescott, Arizona (est. 1896) which was the oldest women's club in Arizona. Reno's Monday Club was organized by Emma H. Kalenborn; presumably she was acquainted with the concept and wished to engage like-minded women of Reno society. Emma, 24 with two young children, was successful in attracting a group of intelligent, inquisitive women who were able to absent themselves from the home every other Monday

from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. and create an organization that would still be active and thriving 103 years later.

The stated purpose of the Monday Literary Club was to form an organization of intelligent, educated women who were interested in topics larger than Reno life and prompt them to learn more to enrich their lives. Monday may have been chosen as the meeting day



Home of Mrs. A. S. (Emma) Kalenborn, first president and organizer of the Monday Club. The first meeting was held at this Lander Street home on January 19, 1911. Photo courtesy Debbie Hinman.

because in these times Monday was wash day, and these women were of sufficient means to have "help" who took care of chores such as this. The women may have wished to get away for the afternoon and escape the mundane.

To put the Monday Club in the context of its day, Reno of 1911 had a population of about 13,000. It was growing rapidly, though still just had one downtown bridge across the Truckee at Virginia Street, the nice new concrete double-arched bridge that was erected in 1905. Two new elementary schools had just been erected, lovely structures in the Mission Revival style of architecture, named Orvis Ring and McKinley Park. The University of Nevada had been moved from Elko to Reno in 1885 and boasted an enrollment of 275 students, but would have no library until 1913. There was a downtown library, built with funds donated by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, and dedicated in 1904.

The Club's original bylaws provided for a membership of 18, though that was

soon amended to 24, a number which remains the same today. Meetings were held in members' homes, in alphabetical order. The Club adjourned for the summer and resumed in October, with new officers. The group was quite select; they spent many meetings refining their membership selection, which amounted to a unanimous agreement before a new member was invited to join. Rarely did members leave the Club, except to relocate or due to other upheavals in their lives. It was so rare to have a vacancy, in fact, that upon being invited to join the Club, early member Emma Lou Humphrey exclaimed, "Who died?"

Monday Club members were expected to present papers on any number of worldly and esoteric topics, though an occasional guest speaker was also welcome, sometimes the spouse of a member or a university professor. For instance, on several occasions, Jeanne Wier, creator of the Nevada Historical Society, spoke to the group on Nevada history. When a Reverend Lowther addressed the Club in 1916, the Club secretary included in her minutes, "The Reverend proved himself a brave man, when with head erect and with unfaltering steps, he entered the room filled with women." But it was predominantly the members who gave the presentations. Soon after the Club was created in 1911, a program committee was appointed and the following topics were assigned: Child Labor; Modern Drama; Modern Tendencies in Music; Pure Food; Modern Tendencies in Art; Initiation Referendum and Recall; Japanese Emigration; and Suffrage. Considering the reference facilities available to these women, it seems amazing that they were either worldly enough or had resources at hand to use in preparing their talks.

But while the Monday Club was predominantly a literary and educational group, they did at times become involved in the causes of their day. During World War I, Mrs. Sam Wheeler urged members to join her in the workrooms, assembling "comfort bags" for the Red Cross. During that period, members also voted to forego their usual meeting refreshments and to donate the money

The Monday Club (continued)

they would have spent to the Monday Club War Fund. Knitting and conversation took the place of refreshments. Dues were often donated to international causes, such as the Belgian Relief Fund and the Armenian Relief Fund or to Reno's Crittendon Home for "women in trouble." Oddly, the December 15, 1941 minutes contained no mention of Japan, Hawaii or war.

Many of Reno's most popular and significant community leaders belonged to the Monday Club (members will be mentioned using their Christian names, although for many years, they would be referred to by their husbands' names, such as Mrs. Charles Bender). Julia Scrugham was a longtime member and wife of Nevada Governor, James Scrugham; during her tenure as First Lady, meetings when she hosted were held in the Governor's Mansion in Carson City. Elizabeth "Bess" Robinson was married to popular physician J. LaRue Robinson but had her own lineage as the daughter of John Newton Evans, early Reno pioneer. Some members brought family into the Club; Myrtle Hawkins, wife of Prince A. Hawkins became a member in 1918 and introduced her daughter-in-law Katherine "Kay" Mackay Hawkins, daughter of Clarence Mackay and niece of John Mackay, into the Club in 1939.

In her unpublished manuscript, *Reno Passage*, reporter Marian Arnold Belford made the following observation: "The eastern seaboard social register had no

clout with Reno people. Reno society was based around the University of Nevada. Overdoing this stance, they called Reno 'Athens on the Truckee.' The Monday Club remained the ladies' epitome of social acceptance, with the members taking turns presenting papers on topics of the day."




Kimberly Roberts, Special Collections at UNR (and HRPS Board member) standing with minutes and documents detailing the history of The Monday Club. Photo courtesy Debbie Hinman.

Addendum from the Author:

In my role as tour guide and writer, I had come across the Monday Club numerous times in researching historic homes and those who inhabited them. But until a participant approached me after a tour one day, telling me she was in fact a member of the Monday Club, I had no idea the Club was still in existence. I was extremely flattered when she asked if I would speak to the Club, offering me access to the newly-transcribed 49 years of minutes.

I met the amazing women of the 2013 version of the Monday Club in November 2013. A few of them I knew, being a lifetime Reno resident, and others I certainly knew of. All were warm, welcoming and delightful and seemed to appreciate my interest in their organization. I recognized Ellie Humphrey Riley, a fourth-generation Monday Clubber who I'd known at Reno High and was thrilled to meet Club Secretary Linda Williams who was spending countless hours bent over fragile ledgers filled with spidery handwriting, transcribing them into electronic form to allow members greater access to their history. I sat at a beautifully-set luncheon table flanked by nonagenarians Elizabeth Lenz and Elise Hall and would have been too awed to speak except for their cordiality and way of putting me entirely at ease.

Both from reading 49 years of minutes and from meeting the members of today, I have gathered not only a sense of how this Club has been and continues to be an integral part of Reno's history, but how deeply these women are connected to one another, some by blood but all by something just as compelling—love, respect and a shared sense of continuity. May the Monday Club flourish for another 103 years. 

Debbie Hinman is a Member of the HRPS Editorial Staff and a HRPS Tour Guide.

Update on Saving the Flick Ranch

On November 22, the Army Corps of Engineers submitted their Section 106 Review to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) stating the 1725 S. McCarran Blvd. properties (Flick Ranch) were NOT historic. Kelly Rigby submitted comment to SHPO expressing disagreement. On December 20, 2013, SHPO released their response, requesting more information from the Corps in order to complete its review. This may take a while, giving Kelly and others time to get their mission to save the main building out to the community and to develop a plan to save it.

It is important to show the historical significance of the Flick Ranch and the main building in particular. If you could provide information please do: Here are a few of the different historical

concepts SHPO wants to know more about:

- the Education and Social History of the Catholic Diocese
- The Ranch History in the area
- The Flick Family and their contributions to the Truckee Meadows, their relationship to the Catholic Diocese and what prompted them to sell the land
- the Mapes Family and their connections to the Flicks, the Diocese and the community

There's a tour of the property on April 21 at 11:30 a.m. If interested, please RSVP by April 20 to: Kelly Rigby, 223-4450, KellyRigby@FlickRanchProject.com.



Message from Your HRPS President, Byllie D'Amato Andrews

Over the past year, I have realized that HRPS is experiencing a growth spurt much like that of a teenager, and I have heard some of my predecessors make that same observation. In fact, the seeds of HRPS were sown when Patricia Ferraro Klos led the first HRPS Walking Tour to celebrate National History Week in May 1997, almost 17 years ago.

HRPS is not the first nonprofit organization run by volunteers to fit this analogy. In her book, *The Five Life Stages of Nonprofit Organizations*, nonprofit consultant Judith Sharken Simon lays out these stages of growth that all nonprofits go through as they mature. According to Simon's definitions, HRPS is hovering overall between stage three: "Ground and Grow" and stage four: "Produce and Sustain." Depending on the category, like marketing, financing, or services, HRPS may find itself at a different stage.

In the Products and Services category, HRPS is in stage four, which means we have well-designed programs that are functioning at a high level. For example, the move to the Laxalt Auditorium in the Warren Nelson Building at 401 West Second Street was a move to not only a better facility, but a facility that has double the capacity of our previous location at Mt. Rose Elementary School. Our February program proved the need for such a move, with standing room only and some guests turned away to avoid exceeding the fire safety limit. Attendance at our annual September Harvest of Homes is hovering around 1,000 attendees, and our Historic Walking Tours are usually full.

When it comes to Finances and Funding, HRPS falls between the third and fourth levels. We generate money for operating expenses from membership dues and fee-based programs, which puts us in the third stage. We ease into the fourth stage by applying for grants such as the Nevada Humanities Grant we recently received and which will be used to



HRPS President Byllie D'Amato Andrews at the Powning Monument dedication.
Photo by Jack Hursh.

help cover some of the following costs: rent for the Laxalt Auditorium, buses for our 4th Grade Education Program, and a portion of the production costs for *FootPrints*.

The HRPS Scholarship Endowment Fund at the University of Nevada, Reno places our organization at a more mature level. Each year a scholarship is awarded to a student studying in an area related to historic preservation. Our most recent recipient is Laura Sechrist, a graduate student in Anthropology. Laura gave a short presentation on her research to the HRPS board in February, and she will be presenting her research at our November 2014 program. Laura is working on an M.A. in Anthropology, with a focus in Historical Archaeology.

Our maturity is also demonstrated by our diverse and creative fundraising

efforts. One example is the sale and donation of salvaged artifacts from the restoration of the Newlands Pillars, three of which were in pristine condition. HRPS donated two of the pieces to the Nevada Historical Society where they will be displayed in the Reno Room. Dave Aiazzi successfully bid for the third artifact in our online auction, and the remaining artifact, slightly damaged, was purchased by a HRPS member. The revenue from these sales was used for the Pillar restoration.

Because our board is a working board (i.e. not entirely devoted to governance), we are still emerging from our adolescent growth spurt, but I am pleased to announce that HRPS was recognized by the Community Foundation of Western Nevada with a 100% Giving Board Award. This recognition is given to nonprofit organizations only when 100% of board members also contribute financially to their organizations.

Our least developed category in the Five Life Stages system is with respect to staffing. This is because we rely almost 100% on volunteers to implement our programs, and it is because of this dedication that HRPS has become the vital and growing organization it is today. As we head into 2014, HRPS continues to grow and do good things in the community, and will continue to need to recruit new volunteers to help accomplish its mission. I never cease to be in awe of all that the volunteers of this organization accomplish, and I look forward to progressing with you through the evolution of HRPS.

Byllie D'Amato Andrews

Join the Parks Rephotography Project on Saturday, May 10, 2014, at 10 am to help recreate this iconic photo from the 1927 dedication of the California Building in Idlewild Park. Become a part of history! Check out www.tmparksfoundation.org to learn about the Parks Rephotography Project, sponsored in part by HRPS.



Photo courtesy of the University of Nevada, Reno Special Collections

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

Name(s) _____

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NEW! Pay online at www.historicreno.org

Annual Membership Includes:

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- ☐ New Member ☐ Renewal
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- ☐ HRPS Angel \$250.00
- ☐ Lifetime Member \$500.00
- ☐ Additional donation to help our
Neighborhood Preservation Fund \$ _____

Thank you for joining HRPS.

As a supporter, you have the opportunity to learn more about the history of this community and make a difference in its future. There are many areas in our organization where your enthusiasm, skills and dedication will be invaluable to us. We currently need help in the following committees. Can you help?

- ☐ Communications
- ☐ Special Events
- ☐ Outreach/Education
- ☐ Preservation Issues

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SPRING 2014 PROGRAMS

Jack Hursh Jr., – Program Chair: Jack.Hursh@gmail.com

Historic Reno Preservation Society's free programs offer an assortment of Reno historic topics. All program events are on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm at The Laxalt Theater in the Nelson Building at 401 W. Second Street, Reno. For more program information contact Jack Hursh at Jack.Hursh@gmail.com or call 747-4478 and leave a message. More organization information can be found at www.historicreno.org or on Facebook.

April 23: More on the Lincoln Highway – The Lincoln Highway was 100 years old as of October 31, 2013, and in celebration historian Jim Bonar will look at the inspiration behind the creation of the first transcontinental highway and address the issues around why highway organizers chose the overland stage route through central Nevada as opposed to the more obvious Humboldt corridor roadway.

May 28: The Virginia & Truckee Railroad: An 80-Year Reno Institution – Stephen Drew presents an illustrated look at this longtime Nevada fixture, its people, operations, facilities, and legacy in Reno. The speaker has been researching the V&T for more than 45 years. He has been a railroad consultant to the State of Nevada since 1974 and recently retired after 35 years as Chief Curator of the California State Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento. He is the author of the new 128-page book entitled *Nevada's Virginia & Truckee Railroad*, released in March 2014 by Arcadia Publishing. See page 6 for photo.

Saturday, May 10, 1:00 pm, Nevada Historical Society, Photographer Diane McCallister speaking on "Nevada Birds through Photography, 1650 N. Virginia St., Reno, 688-1100, x 0, <http://www.museums.nevadaculture.org/>.

Saturday, May 31, 1:00 pm, Nevada Historical Society, birder Alan Gubanich speaks on "Nevada Birds in your Backyard," 1650 N. Virginia St., Reno, 688-1100, x 0, <http://www.museums.nevadaculture.org/>.

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