

FootPrints

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

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Reimagining Reno's Mid-Century Motels

by Corri Jimenez and The Mid-century Motel Team

Mid-century motels, inns, and motor lodges are character-defining building types of many mid-sized communities across the United States; however, the Biggest Little City boasts these historic resources in an exceptionally large concentration. Historically, the first motel in America, the *Motel Inn*, was built in 1925 in San Luis Obispo, California. The *Motel Inn* set the standard for thousands of successive motels constructed along major thoroughfares throughout the country.

neighborhoods. Well-known architects designed some of the city's finest motels and their associated buildings, including the Los Angeles firm of Armet & Davis, as well as Nevada architects Russell Mills and David Vhay. In addition to architects and builders, financiers and investors participated in the motel boom. Known as the original "ad man" in town, Sidney Leggett financed and built both the Ho Hum Motel and the Sutro Motel in Reno.

During the post-World War II era of the 1950s and 1960s, droves of vacationers and other auto travelers journeyed the Lincoln Highway, overnighting in "mom and pop" motels throughout Reno and Sparks. In the same period, U.S. federal censuses recorded more than 88,000 people who relocated to our area. These motels provided the perfect temporary accommodations for newly-arrived residents.

Beginning as early as 1956, a handful of motel

associations supported the hundreds of motel owners at the state and local government levels. Motel associations were strong and backed by national automobile associations, like the American Automobile Association and Best Western Motels. The Nevada State Motel Association was the

largest motel owners'

NOTEL

The Donner Inn Motel from postcards. Before being demolished in September 2017, the motel still retained much of its historic integrity, as well as two exemplary neon signs. Postcards courtesy Cindy Ainsworth.

group in the state, and a big player in both the economy and political scene. In addition to the state association, there were three local motel associations. One such association was the Reno Motel Association, which had 57 members in 1957.

Construction of the motels during this period was feverish. Architecturally, these simple Contemporary Modern and swanky Googie-style motels are ubiquitous throughout Reno and Sparks, and they can occupy entire city blocks or dot older

Nevada Governor Grant Sawyer recognized the motel owners' role in Nevada's economy, which made up 25 percent of the state's working class in employment and directly impacted the tourism industry. Sawyer saw the "motel men" as valuable partners in state tourism. and he used the associations in securing the 1960 Olympic Games in Squaw Valley.

Low membership and an economic dip damaged the Reno Motel Association by the mid-1960s. The final blows for many "mom and pop" motels included competition with big

casino-hotels, motel chain franchises, and limited access from major interstate highways. Once out-of-business, the last resort for the small, independently-owned motel was to sell out to larger companies in the early 1970s. Today, property management companies, living trusts, and corporations own most of these motels, and around 34 percent of these entities own one or more of the motels in the area.

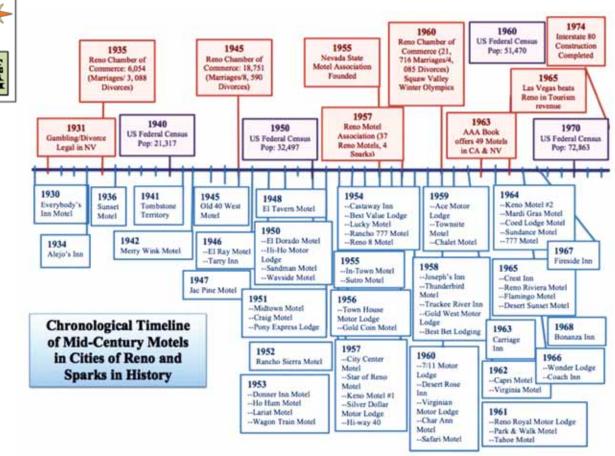
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Since August 2017, I have been leading five University of Nevada, Reno students in an architectural study that involves identifying, researching, and evaluating all of the mid-century motels in Reno and Sparks. The project is for the Principles of Historic Preservation course at UNR. All of the motels surveyed by our team are active businesses that function as a temporary residence and are labelled as "Motel," "Motor Lodge," or "Inn." Our team has identified 67 motels in the area built between 1930 and 1968—three from the 1930s, seven from the 1940s, 31 from the 1950s, and 26 from the 1960s. Eighty-five percent of the motels surveyed are associated with the motel boom that took place in the 1950s and 1960s. Additionally, our team has identified 13 motels built in the 1970s; however, these are not being studied because they are less than 50 years old and were built outside of the identified period of significance. We have determined that of the 67 motels surveyed, 50 motels (75 percent) retain architectural integrity as defined in the Natrional Register of Historic Places criteria. We have divided the survey into eight mostly linear study areas, such as "4th Street/Lincoln Highway" and "Virginia Street." Other motels are geographically grouped into specific study areas north of the Truckee River, such as "UNR" and "Downtown." We have evaluated an extraordinary number of motels in our survey that have historical significance and retain architectural integrity, and we are hopeful that they will

one day be listed to the National Register of Historic Places and take their rightful place as local landmarks.

In the past few years, the City of Reno has proactively sided with big developers razing these mid-century motels, and some motel owners may have been pressured to sell to developers by the City in an attempt to acquire valuable real estate. Most of the motels are referred to as "blighted" based on their reputation as hubs of illegal activity. However, they are used currently as low-income housing for families, students, pensioners and seniors. In recent years, these motels have garnered media attention starting with the Everybody's Inn Motel, the oldest standing motel in Reno, built in 1930, which closed in 2015 due to building code violations and has been unoccupied for more than two years. The Golden West Motor Lodge (1958) and Heart O Town Motel (1960) were demolished in 2016 by developers and Reno City officials under the banner of cleaning the city of blighted properties. Now there are six of our surveyed motels—the Donner Inn Motel (1953), Carriage Inn (1963), Stardust Lodge (1968), El Ray (1946), Keno No. 1 (1957) and Star of Reno (1957) —that have been demolished. Four more are on the chopping block—the Mardi Gras (1964), In-Town (1955), City Center (1957) and Keno No. 2 (1964). Even though they all retained their integrity and could have been repurposed or salvaged, they still ended up as piles of rubble destined for the landfill. The City appears to actively encourage the





erasure of prominent, character-defining buildings in the Reno downtown area when they should be looking to embrace this history.

On a more positive note, the Center Lodge (1964) was renovated, rebranded as "Center + Pine," and the Desert Sunset Motel (1965) and Coach Inn (1966) are currently in the process of being renovated.

This project began as a simple architectural reconnaissance survey to evaluate and record a prominent building type in Reno and Sparks. The survey has evolved into a study that is significant on a national, state, and local level, having the potential to elevate the historical significance of mid-century motels in

our beloved city. The completed study of these 67 resources will propose recommendations on how to preserve or reuse this building type, which will align with the City's recently adopted Master Plan. We anticipate that this report will be a valuable planning document for the City of Reno, the Historic Reno Preservation Society, and local citizens in preserving these places and securing the City's sense of place.

Having personally seen every one of these 67 motels, our Mid-Century Motel Team has identified one study area that could be the cherry on City of Reno's ice cream sundae. We have labeled this study area the "Mid-Century Motel District," and it could be the first of its

kind in America. This area is located downtown between West and Arlington Streets and is perpendicular to West 4th Street. The 12 motels in this area date from 1946-1968 and cover all aspects of our defined historic context, plus all of these motels retain their architectural integrity. Due to the recent increase in development, one of the motels in this potential historic district is threatened by demolition, and we plead with both the City and developer to listen openly to our ideas. Instead of demolishing and re-stamping the parcel with new, bland, cookie-cutter construction, our team envisions this potential historic district as a mixed-use development, illuminated by a functioning neon sign park and interpretive walking tour that highlights the city's history.

According to the City's Master Plan, historic districts, innovation, and walkability are valuable to the vitality of this area. Our proposal would be a perfect way to address the plan's concerns regarding historic preservation. In addition to addressing

issues raised in the Master Plan, the creation of a Mid-Century Motel Historic District would be a slam-dunk for the City's Certified Local Government status, elevating this city higher than any other in the country for this resource type. Because the properties would be income producing, the owners would potentially be eligible for federal tax credits incentives and Nevada Main Street grants. Using already existing historic fabric—specifically buildings—helps to retain a vibrant community, and it is the sustainable "green" option when compared to a demolition alternative. This reimagined mid-century motel district could be the first nationally recognized historic district of its type, providing a shining example to other communities when it comes to motels. To everyone, I urge and encourage you

to envision a commercial historic district emphasizing the post-World War II boom that directly contributed to the success of the Biggest Little City and its presence as a hub to auto tourism, travel, and innovation.

To the City of Reno: PLEASE think outside of the new development "box" and reimagine the ways historic preservation can benefit and beautify our downtown image by retaining the City's mid-century Googie and Contemporary Modern motels. We recognize that blight is a problem in all communities, especially when it comes to this type of resource; however, demolition is not the answer. Reno is unique when it comes to this building type and this uniqueness should be embraced,

rather than erased. Instead of transitioning to cookie-cutter, mundane Silicon Valley or Las Vegas-style developments, think "Mad Men" Martinis meets Reno! Think visually unique contemporary modern motels rather than boring, standard post-modern buildings that can be found in any new development! Our architectural study of the motels will put the city on the map while saving Reno's rich motel history and sense of place, which is so quintessential to feeling connected to what Reno is, and will always be.

For more information on our study or to contact our team and help us save these motels, please contact the author at Corri_Jimenez@yahoo.com.

Corri Jimenez is an architectural historian/historic preservation consultant with over 15 years experience in the field working in both California and Nevada.



Keno Motel-City Center Motel: "The Keno Motel (1964) and City Center Motel (1957) located on West Street in the potential Mid-century Modern Historic District. Currently both these resources are endangered by urban development by Jacobs Entertainment. They are, however, excellent examples of two historic resources in the district. Photo courtesy Corri Jimenez.

HRPS Advisory Advocacy Council Update, March 2018 Mid-Century Motels, Center Street Homes, Caughlin Ranch House

by Barrie Lynn, AAC Chair

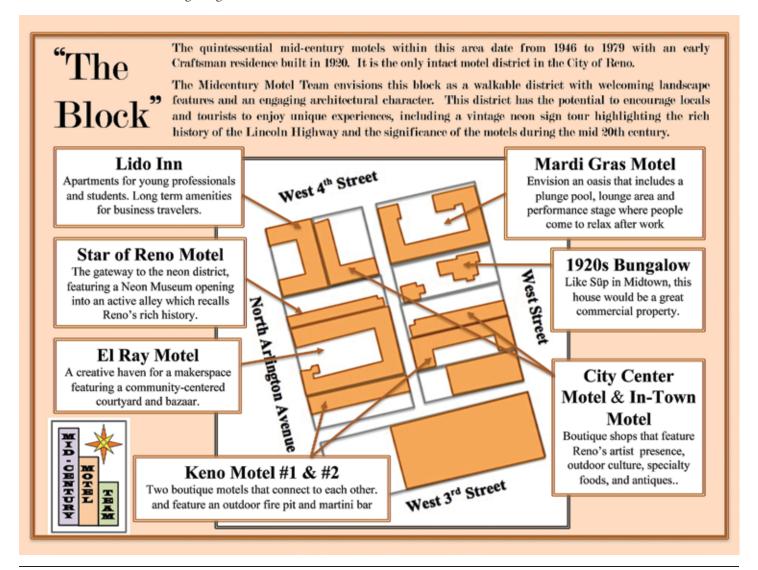
The AAC is committed to focusing on issues in which we have the power to make a difference. These are the three hot issues of the moment.

Reno's Vanishing Mid-century Heritage

e had an urgent situation in Reno that threatened one of the only intact blocks of mid-century motels and neon in the state of Nevada. This block is bounded by Arlington, 4th Street, West Street and Commercial Row and is anchored by the newly renovated Third Street Flats, formerly the Kings Inn. Colorado developer Jacobs Entertainment has purchased blocks of land in downtown Reno and is clearing them for a future development known as The Fountain District. We have no idea what their plans are as they have been very secretive, but there is a group of local citizens that has been fighting to save the resources on

this block. Corri Jimenez, leader of the Mid-century Motel Team, architectural historian and adjunct UNR professor has led her historic preservation students on a survey project over the last two semesters and they have produced an impressive draft study of mid-century motels in Reno.

There are several vacant lots on West 4th Street that used to be mid-century motels, and at the time of this article, two motels on "The Block" have been demolished. There are active demolition permits for three more. The Mid-century Motel Team reached out to the developer and their representatives and at the time of their most recent communication in December of 2017, they were told that plans for the block were not set in stone. Since then, the MCM Team reports that they have not obtained any response to their ideas or requests for a meeting. They gained community



and statewide support for the idea of "The Block" as an amenity that could complement the future development of the Fountain District and downtown Reno while helping to retain important character-defining elements of Reno.

The Society for Commercial Archeology has stated that Reno possesses one of America's most outstanding collections of mid-twentieth century roadside architecture. Past SCA president Michael Bedeau declared, "Reno's vintage motels and neon signs are a priceless part of our national heritage." The Mid-century Motel team has received letters of support for "The Block" concept from the Nevada Preservation Foundation of Las Vegas, the Nevada Chapter of the Lincoln Highway Association, and the Historic Reno Preservation Society.

While Reno has no shortage of midcentury motels, this particular block was the only solid, intact block of motels in the city and probably the state. The placement of these motels in such close proximity to one another created a natural walking district that cannot be duplicated with any other collection of motels in the city. The adaptive reuse potential of this block presented an incredible opportunity to create a walkable neon district that could feature the installation of other vintage neon signs as public art.

There is interest in developing a Nevada neon driving tour that stretches from Wells to Elko, to Reno and beyond, and "The Block" could be



The Mary Sherman House, 847 N. Center Street is a Free-Classic Queen Anne. This home is on the Nevada State Register of Historic Places, and the City of Reno Register of Historic Places.

the central hub of this statewide tourist draw. Events such as Hot August Nights bring in heritage tourism enthusiasts from all over the country (and world) who have a love of vintage cars, motels and neon. "The Block" could become a nationally famous attraction that would draw tourists and locals alike to explore downtown Reno. There is the possibility that the block will be completely gone by the time this arrives in your mailbox. This series of demolitions

has been a wake up call for the lovers of mid-century architecture and we hope the effort to save these resources will be ongoing.

The Mid-century Motel Team has a Facebook page (Mid-century modern Reno) if you would like further information.

The Ongoing Saga of the Center Street Homes

The plight of the dozen 19th and early 20th century homes near the southern end of the UNR campus is a topic that has been discussed in great detail over the past two years. For those that need a little background, UNR expansion will force the removal and relocation of approximately twelve homes that have shared a common boundary with the campus for over 100 years. These homes are on the 800 block of North Lake and Center Streets, with one

home on 8th Street facing the Interstate. While various nineteenth century homes are scattered around the community, these Center Street homes represent the last intact block of 19th and 20th century homes in Reno.

While efforts to convince the University to keep the homes in their original locations are ongoing, the University has already begun exploring relocation options. The current plan being explored involves moving approximately 5 of the homes to a narrow park



N. Center Street between 8th and 9th Avenues holds the last intact block of 19th and 20th century homes in Reno.

Photo courtesy Jack Hursh.

which is a remnant left over from Interstate 80 construction. This park is on 8th Street between Valley Road and Evans Avenue. The University, in collaboration with Washoe County, is identifying state funds that would help relocate the homes to this park where they would be used to house graduates of the Crossroads drug and alcohol rehabilitation program.

There are many who don't feel that a residential use, particularly on a narrow lot overlooking the Interstate, is the best preservation plan for these important historic resources. An alternative plan is in the very early stages of exploration and would involve moving the homes to the perimeter of nearby Evans Park. The Evans Family deeded Evans Park to the City of Reno in 1926 on the condition that it remain a park. The Evans Park relocation idea would keep Evans Park a city park. This idea involves the relocation of at least ten of the twelve homes (possibly all twelve) to a horseshoe shape around the perimeter of the park, facing inward. The remaining park land leftover inside the horse shoe "courtyard" is still quite large and would be a public gathering space. Evans Park is currently a very under-utilized park, and this idea could energize the park in the same way the small grass area in front of the Hub Coffee Shop on Riverside Drive is a people magnet. The homes would be repurposed for commercial use including coffee shops, retail, offices and services. The structures

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would be privately owned by a variety of people, but they would be on a land lease from the City Parks department. These annual land lease fees would create a perpetual care fund for parks, public pools, flat fields, and potentially fund the staff position of Historic Preservation Officer at the City, a post that is urgently needed.

A properly managed HOA type association would oversee the maintenance and management of the structures which would all be placed on the City's Historic Register to ensure their ongoing preservation. The great thing about this arrangement is that it allows for interpretation of the structures, with signage in the park, so it also has an educational element. Moving the homes only a block away from their original location would ensure that their context is not lost.

What do you think about this idea? Would you be interested in owning a piece of Reno history in a historic home park as either an owner-user or a landlord?

Caughlin Ranch House

On Tuesday, March 6, the City's Hearing Officer heard an appeal brought by Councilwoman Jenny Brekhus of the decision of the City of Reno's Planning Manager to allow the operation of professional offices

and general personal services on the property that contains the historic Caughlin Ranch House at 3636 Mayberry Drive. Ms. Brekhus' appeal was denied, and now that hearing officer's denial is being appealed by an aggrieved citizen. This appeal will likely result in a City Council hearing at a future date.

More on the Caughlin Ranch House here: http://renohistorical.org/items/show/165

The Caughlin Ranch House and its historic bunkhouse and well were listed on the City of Reno's Historic Register in 2008. That listing gave the property a Historic Landmark (HL) overlay designation, which allows the property to be used for purposes that the area's underlying zoning would not ordinarily allow (without a special permit), if that use would contribute to the preservation of the historic structure(s). At that time, the then owners gained approval to operate the Garden Shop Nursery, which closed in 2016. The existing underlying zoning designation in this area is Open Space (OS), and the parcel is surrounded by open land and the Betsy Caughlin Donnelly Park.

In August of 2017, the city's Historical Resources Commission recommended approval of the proposed new commercial operations to the

Planning Manager, who serves as the Administrator in these cases. At issue is whether the Planning Manager/ Administrator was justified in then approving the owner's request to operate professional offices and general personal services on this parcel, knowing that this would allow for the construction of 20,000 square feet of new office space in several new structures, on the same parcel as the Ranch House, in which these services and offices would operate. In their application, the owners submitted renderings of what these structures might look like.

The appeal of the Administrator's decision is based on the premise that regardless of the determination of the HRC that this use would not negatively impact the historic structures on the parcel, it might in fact have a detrimental impact on the adjacent parcel, which is zoned for Open Space, and should therefore not have been approved. There are also questions about whether there was sufficient public notice that this was even happening. At the time of the writing of this article, we have no details on any future hearing date for the appeal of the hearing officer's decision in this case.

Thanks to Alicia Barber for research on this issue.

HRPS Endangered Building Watch List

- · Freight House on Evans St.
- Nevada Brewing Works on 4th St.
- · Regina Apartments on Island Ave.
- First Masonic Building (Reno Mercantile) at Sierra and Commercial
- · Center Street Homes (Gateway)

- Buildings in the University Neighborhood
- The Hotel El Cortez at 2nd and Arlington
- · Hill/Redfield Mansion on Mt. Rose St.
- · Lear Theater
- · Flick Ranch House
- · Two El Reno Apartments at 1461 Lander St.

- · Hillside Cemetery
- WPA Projects at Plumas, Stewart and Virginia Lake Parks
- · Mid-century Motels
- · Burke's, Belli and Mountain View Additions
- · Caughlin Ranch House
- · Ralston Avenue 300-block homes

Widespread Demolition is Irresponsible Planning

by Barrie Lynn, AAC Chair

Allowing widespread demolition in downtown Reno before any redevelopment plans are approved is risky urban planning. When the development code was written, it did not account for demolition on the scale downtown Reno is currently experiencing. While the leveling of one or two structures may not have a detrimental impact on the community if redevelopment plans never materialize, the clear cutting of such a large land area in the middle of downtown would.

Reno has had its cast of speculators over the years whose large, multi-block projects never broke ground. Fortunately, structures in those areas were simply boarded up, not demolished, and now we are seeing structures like the Coach Inn renovated. It takes deep pockets to develop raw land. The projects that have had the biggest impact on downtown in recent years have come from small, local developers who have taken boarded up and blighted buildings and turned them into things of beauty. If the King's Inn had been demolished, we would likely still be looking at a vacant lot and would have never seen the Third Street Flats.

Balancing the private property rights of large developers with the best interest of

the community is something the City of Reno should have policies to address. One of the things that has made Midtown such a vibrant district is the streetscape that incorporates the reuse of old buildings with local character alongside new construction, and the collective vision for neighborhood revitalization coming from a variety of stakeholders. With the vast proposed Fountain District stretching from Keystone to Arlington, we have one out-of-state developer's vision determining the downtown experience for all of Reno. And it will admittedly take decades to complete. It is difficult to understand the need to clear all of the land for the proposed Fountain District all at once. Why not demolish incrementally as redevelopment plans are approved for specific parcels? Structures such as Chapel of the Bells and their fantastic neon signs are part of our collective community memory. While this Reno icon will likely be demolished in the near future, the Donner Inn, Carriage Inn, Stardust Lodge, El Ray Motel and Star of

Reno have already come down. The Keno



The Town Aire Motel, later known as the Carriage Inn, was demolished in late 2017. Postcard courtesy Cindy Ainsworth.

#1 and #2 and the City Center Motel have active demo permits at the time of this article. The developer has not given any indication as to what will happen to the signs, only that they are keeping them.

A vintage neon district is an opportunity that has been overlooked by Jacobs Entertainment as they press forward with demolition at a rapid pace. Reno's vintage motels and eclectic neon signs have been called a national treasure by organizations such as the Society for Commercial Archaeology and American pop culture author Charles Phoenix. A district with welcoming landscape features, preserved neon signs and mid-century motels functioning as commercial enterprises would draw tourists and locals alike and would tie in perfectly with the Hot August Nights theme. The Lincoln Highway Association, Nevada Preservation Foundation and Historic Reno Preservation Society have all written letters to Jacobs Entertainment urging them to hold off on the demolition of any more motels until a plan such as this can be explored.



Everybody's Inn, the oldest motel in Reno, built in 1930, has in recent years sported a sign saying it would be converted to housing for senior citizens. It closed in 2015 due to building code violations. Postcard and photo courtesy Corri Jimenez.

Barrie Lynn is Chair of HRPS Advisory Advocacy Committee and spearheaded the West of Wells Conservation District.



Historic Preservation Month May 2018 HRPS Historic Walking Tours

Tour cost is \$10 per person, free to HRPS members. Walks generally last from 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 hours.

No dogs please. Reservations required and space is limited.

Please go to www.historicreno.org or call 775-747-4478 for reservations and information.

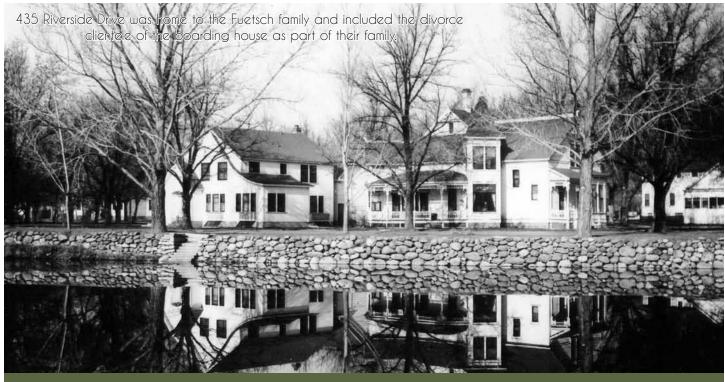
Access to HRPS Walking Tours varies according to venue. Certain areas may not be fully accessible to individuals with disabilities due to architectural barriers inherent in the historic construction of the structures or uneven walking surfaces.

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Saturday May 5 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.
Saturday May 12 10:00 a.m.	DOWNTOWN SPARKS — Learn about the history of the rail city with a guided walking tour of Victorian Square and Downtown Sparks. This interactive tour is designed to show how this area has transformed itself from a railroad hub, to a vibrant commercial district, to a rundown urban area and finally to a successful redevelopment area that has changed the image and future of the city. The tour includes 17 buildings and sites that have played an important role in the history and development of Sparks and Nevada. Tour begins and ends at the Sparks Heritage Museum located at 814 Victorian Avenue, Sparks. Tour guide: Scott Carey. This tour is in collaboration with the Museum (www.sparksmuseum.org) but reservations need to be made through HRPS.
Tuesday May 15 6:00 p.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: Shirie Wallace and Charlotte Voitoff.
Saturday May 19 10:00 a.m.	NEWLANDS NEIGHBORHOOD — Enjoy an architectural walk through one of Reno's oldest and most prestigious neighborhoods. Newlands Heights Historic District was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 2017. Meet at the Lander Street side of My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. Tour guide: Scott Gibson.
Tuesday May 22 6:00 p.m.	UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORHOOD — A walk through an historic and endangered neighborhood at the foot of the University of Nevada, Reno campus—with vintage Queen Anne homes and charming bungalows. Meet at the base of the 9th Street University steps. Tour guide: Debbie Hinman.
Saturday May 26 10:00 a.m.	MIDTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT — Take a walk through the emerging Midtown District and see how this area has changed over the past 100 years from a quiet country road lined with large homes to a bustling business district. The Midtown area has continually reinvented itself to adapt to the changing needs of our city. Learn about the exciting businesses and people that once occupied the familiar buildings you see today. Meet at the southwest corner of St. Lawrence Avenue and Virginia Street. Tour guide: Barrie Lynn.
Tuesday May 29 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 in front at the McKinley Arts and Cultural Center, 925 Riverside Drive. Tour guide: Joan Collins.
Saturday June 2 10:00 a.m.	MOVIE FOOTPRINTS IN RENO — PLEASE NOTE: THIS WALK WILL START AT 10:00 AM. Walk in the footsteps of Marilyn Monroe, Kirk Douglas, Kevin Costner, Clint Eastwood, Maggie Smith, Helen Mirren and more. The tour covers downtown Reno's rich filming history inspired by divorce, gambling and the city's distinct look in such movies as "The Misfits," "Cobb," "Sister Act," and "Love Ranch." Meet by the northeast entrance to the lobby of the National Automobile Museum, 10 S. Lake Street. Tour guide: Robin Holabird.

HRPS Historic Walking Tours June 2018



Tuesday June 5 6:00 p.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, the 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 parking lot area, 10 S. Lake Street. Tour guides: Jim and Sue Smith.
Saturday June 9 9:00 a.m.	LAKE ADDITION — Meander through one of Reno's earliest additions, past divorce-trade dwellings, Victorian and ultra-modern architecture. Nowhere in Reno is the contrast between old and new more evident. Includes a stop at the Historic Lake Mansion. Meet in front of the Nevada Museum of Art, 160 W. Liberty Street. Tour guide: Debbie Hinman.
Sunday June 10 9:00 a.m.	BIKE TOUR THROUGH OLD RENO — A leisurely ride through the most historic parts of Reno. Meet at the Lander Street side of My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. Tour guide: Brandi Quaglieri. HELMETS REQUIRED, NO EXCEPTIONS!
Tuesday June 12 6:00 p.m.	PARSONS/MILLS ARCHITECTURE — Stroll one of Reno's most unique neighborhoods to view some designs of 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 guides: ZoAnn Campana and Teri Bartl.
Saturday June 16 9:00 a.m.	PROHIBITION IN RENO — We have turned back the clocks to the 1920s and 1930s. We will walk streets and alleys and visit significant buildings, recalling Reno's saloons and reformers (the WCTU and Anti-Saloon League). You might even get to see a dignitary from Reno's past. Tour starts at Amtrak's Reno Station, 135 East Commercial Row. Sign-in is across the street from the historic section of the train station on Commercial Row. Tour guides: Debbie Hinman and Sharon Honig-Bear.
Tuesday June 19 6:00 p.m.	CEMETERY TOUR — Join HRPS for an early evening visit to four of Reno's most historic cemeteries: Pythians, Hillside, The Grand Army of the Republic and the Hebrew Cemetery and "become acquainted" with some of their most notable residents. Meet at the Knights of Pythias Hall, 980 Nevada Street. Please wear closed-toed shoes suitable for rocky and uneven ground. Tour guides: Fran Tryon, Mac Wieland, Sharon Honig-Bear and Bill Mardon.
Saturday June 23 9:00 a.m.	CULTURAL CROSSROADS, WEST SIDE — Chinese herbal shops, Judaism's early days and a rich African-American heritage come alive on this tour. Includes an inside visit to the Lear Theater and the historic Bethel AME Church. Meet at West Street Market, located on West between First and Second Streets. Tour guide: Sharon Honig-Bear.
Tuesday June 26 6:00 p.m.	COUNTRY CLUB ACRES (NEW WALK) — Take a stroll through an area of southwest Reno steeped in history from the 1920s and 30s. Hear about the original Reno Golf Club, Reno's first airfield and the luxurious, ill-fated Country Club. With the growing popularity of the Washoe Golf Course and the newly-created Virginia Lake, the early 1940s saw the rise of a new neighborhood created for suburban living. The sale of lots rather than homes ensured an eclectic mix of architectural styles and homes of all sizes. Meet at corner of Bonnie Briar and Lakeside. Tour guide: Debbie Hinman.
Saturday June 30 9:00 a.m.	MANSIONS ON THE BLUFF — Walk past historical Reno homes located on Court, Ridge and upper California streets. Learn about the senators and merchants who made early Reno, <i>The Biggest Little City in the World.</i> Be sure to bring water and wear comfortable shoes for this uphill tour which begins at the McCarran House, 401 Court Street. Look nearby for mandatory sign-in/registration on Court Street. Tour guides: Donna and Paul Erickson, ZoAnn Campana, and Joan Collins.



When Bicentennial Park Was a Divorce House

by Joel Fuetsch Pehanick with Family Photos

Editor's Note: See on page 12 the accompanying article entitled Porch Light Burning, which puts the events of March 22, 1934 into context with this article.

t's a pleasure to wander through the Sculpture Garden in Bicentennial Park on Riverside Drive, to smile at the whimsical cigar smoking "Rhinoman," run your fingers over a curled up granite rat named "Winter Mouse" or puzzle over a yellow mosaic wave embedded with discarded keys. As you move through these and other artistic creations, contented birds sing and the adjacent Truckee flows freely. This delightful garden was spearheaded and financed by the City of Reno and the Downtown Reno Rotary Club (claimed to be the oldest in Nevada). The city had already provided this riverside park for its citizens in 1976. Three years ago it partnered with Downtown Rotary for the addition of the Sculpture Garden-a celebration of the club's 100th anniversary.

What a contrast to what was there before this tranquil park!

An elegant Queen Anne Victorian, built in 1905, graced this prime real estate, a part of the old Powning Addition. Bordered by Ralston and First streets, it was then known as 435 Riverside Drive, a family home until Nevada became the nation's divorce capital in the 1920s. The town needed rooms to rent. With that in mind, its first owners, the Edward Barber family, converted their barn, added an annex and opened its doors to roomers and boarders. Thus, a high end guest house was born, catering to affluent divorce seekers, mostly women, arriving from throughout the U.S. and abroad.

The home faced 165 feet of the river, the bluffs and the opulent mansions above. With its two stories of white peaks, turrets, gables and welcoming veranda, it was an architectural gem. And it had a practical advantage too: guests could reach the heart of town by a short stroll along the scenic Truckee with its stately aspens and friendly mallards quacking for bread crumbs.

In 1927, a man named Joe Fuetsch, age 27, fresh up from Tonopah, began working for George Wingfield's newly-opened Riverside Bank. Joe became a boarder at the Riverside address, one of few not seeking a quickie divorce. Edward Barber, "in consideration of the love and affection which he bears toward his son" had recently bequeathed the property to his son Neil, Joe's landlord. In 1930, when Joe married popular Reno legal secretary Alice Harrington, he moved on to a nearby apartment. But he kept in contact with the Barbers.

It was two years later that one family's tragedy became another's good fortune.

Early in 1932, Neil Barber and his wife Florence died within months of each other, leaving two young children. Joe, the oldest of eight surviving offspring of Josephine and Carl Fuetsch, saw an opportunity for his remaining family in Tonopah: lease the Barber boarding house for his mother to manage and have the family - three sons already in Reno - move in and assist her. Joe's dad

Carl, a once successful saloon keeper, one of the rare ones who refused to bootleg, had been unable to support the family adequately since the state went dry in 1918 and the Great Depression descended in 1929. In truth, they were struggling. The employed siblings had contributed what they could; in fact, the oldest daughter Freda delayed her marriage for seven years, her paycheck assuring the family's basic needs.

It was a stroke of luck for the Fuetsches that, the year before, Nevada had lowered the residency requirement for a divorce decree to six weeks, unheard of in that era. The demand for

of in that era. The demand for rooms had shot up. So, with trepidation and determination, Josephine packed up their household and youngest children, Ed, age 18, Marguerite, 15 and Shirley, 13, left Tonopah and assumed managership of one of Reno's foremost guest houses. Josephine may not have realized that she had a 'resume' that would serve her well for this position. At age twelve, she had worked the family's fields and cooked in quantity and with quality for them in her native Mitterdorf, Gottschee (now Austria). In the late 1800s, at age 14, she had immigrated to the United States. Alone. She raised eight children - the ninth buried in the Tonopah cemetery - in hardscrabble mining towns for some 25 years. A woman of deep faith, she was good hearted and tolerant with a wide range of friends, even a former prostitute.

The family, now including sons Carl Jr., also a Riverside Bank employee, and Fred, studying mechanical engineering at the university, moved into the converted guest house with its two annexes. The property was valued that year at \$47,800; it totaled twenty bedrooms, two of them sleeping porches. Whoever rented the furnace room - yes, it was fully furnished must have gotten a price break, not to mention being quite toasty in the winter months. As to the furnishings, the Fuetsch family purchased, via a bank loan, the entire contents of the property for the sum of \$1,125. The included items were described in eleven legal-size pages of inventory. Only old

timers or history buffs would recognize some of those bygone items: thirty dresser scarves, an Atwater Kent radio, two washboards, one Ford Model T wheel puller, and two curtain stretchers. The Barbers had vacated in such a crisis that Mrs. Barber's wardrobe was still in a closet - much to the delight of the daughters Marguerite and Shirley who played 'dress up' with her garments until their mother needed the closet space and packed them up and donated them to Goodwill.

Josephine ran a tight ship. For instance, curfew was 9 p.m—no exceptions. Some



Joe Fuetsch in Tonopah, circa 1927.



Josephine Fuetsch (center) with family members and boarders at her dining table of an evening.

guests paid extra for breakfast, qualifying them as boarders, but Josephine was quite selective about which few could join them for dinner. It must have been a coveted position to achieve: the room was lit with elegant wall sconces, and there was always a pristine white damask table cloth and napkins in silver rings (one used the same napkin for a week; it was then replaced with a neatly-ironed fresh one).

A tiny, wispy-haired German cook named Delia scurried in with steaming

platters of sauerbraten, potato dumplings and other Rhineland delicacies. Dinner conversations were lively, fueled by guests' contributions from throughout the 48, particularly New York and sometimes Europe. The inordinate number of New Yorkers was partly due to certain Reno attorneys paying a 'finder's fee' to those steering prospective divorce seekers to their fair desert city and specific law offices. Occasionally there was a celebrity in the group – a Vermont governor, a San Francisco socialite, a Raskobthe latter to monitor his family's Nevada mining interests.

The accounts ledger reveals a wide range of rates for guests and is open to interpretation depending on what room one rented or if one shared it and for how long. Prices appeared to range around \$10 to \$20 per month for a single, while a 'with bath' garnered about \$35 to \$55. 'With meals' also altered the rate. Carl Jr. made his walking-around money by supplying \$4 a gallon hooch to a particularly well-to-do gentleman who commandeered the upstairs master bedroom, where he hosted nightly cocktail parties for the household.

Josephine, in addition to the stress of her many household responsibilities, became a confidante and consoler to many of the women guests, sometimes remaining up late at night listening to their woeful tales. Marguerite, while still a teen, was incensed that the men sent the women to get a divorce. "Why didn't THEY come if that's what they wanted?" she would exclaim. Josephine was also a Resident Witness; that is, she accompanied guests to the

court house when their decree was final and attested to their six weeks residency in the state, for which she was able to bank \$5 per appearance.

Sadly, this beloved mother was diagnosed with cancer in 1937 and died in November 1938 at age 58.

The grieving family in the home at this point totaled nine: Joe, wife Alice, their two daughters (ages four and four months), his father Carl Sr. and siblings

continued on page 12

Divorce House

continued from page 11

Carl Jr., Ed, Marguerite and Shirley. Joe had been the star witness for the three highly-publicized Graham and McKay trials which had just ended, finally with convictions. He had been carrying a gun and was under federal guard for four years but now could concentrate on a fulltime permanent job with Firestone, as well as co-managing the Fuetsch home; he and Alice accepted the challenge of filling Josephine's shoes.

Judging by the messages in the guest book for those departing, they became hosts extraordinaire. Alice especially took to her role as enthusiastically as the ducks did to the river across the street. One New Yorker wrote her, "May that well of laughter so deep within you continue to bubble over and cheer the weary hearts that come your way." Joe kept the books and offered financial advice to distraught middle-aged guests and Alice, taking up Josephine's role, comforted the emotionally distraught. The two had a rock solid marriage, a bulwark against their guests' marital morass. Another penned, "Here's to Alice and Joe, whose wit and charm made our evening meal the gavest part of the day." A Chicagoan said with nostalgia, "It is finally November 17, 1939, and I must go home. I arrived in Reno counting the days when I might leave. Now I almost want a reprieve. Alice, you took my tears away over my divorce, gave me gay smiles and a reason to think the future could be happy. I'll never forget either of you. You have meant a great deal to me and my life." One who described herself as the "Mad Russian" succinctly wrote, "You are the sweetest people I ever meet."

All this came to a screeching halt in 1940. Joe was promoted to the San Francisco division of Firestone. Yet another family was destined to become part of 435's history: B. F. and Lettie Boice with adult daughter Celesta Kunde. The Fuetsches were able to sublet and sell "all of the good will of the rooming and boarding house business in addition to its contents," for \$3500 to the Boices. Joe and family departed for California. There he lived to near 98 years old, Alice to 94. She died on their 68th wedding anniversary.

Property history after this is a little sketchy. There is evidence showing the Boices still owned the home in 1942. But one close Reno relative, Helen Handy, doesn't recall a boarding house operation there for very long after the Fuetsches' departure. Assessor's records show a succession of owners: e.g. Celesta Kunde (the Boices' daughter), later a title insurance and trust company. In 1957, there was a Robert Allen, Nevada representative for J. Hemy Helser Co., who had his office and home at that address. John and Margery Cavanaugh owned it (unoccupied) for a brief time in the early 70s. They brought in a demolition crew then sold the land to the City of Reno.

At the time, preservationists probably didn't have the organizational clout or the funds, as they would now, to save this near eighty-year-old architectural and historical treasure. Bicentennial Park, a lovely spot to explore, peruse and ponder, has replaced it. The park is also a place to pause and remember with warmth these families and guests of 435's past who lived, loved, made their mark and moved on.

Porch Light Burning

by Joel Fuetsch Pehanick Article by Debbie Hinman

robably the greatest



unsolved mystery in
the history of Reno occurred the evening of
March 22, 1934, when Riverside Bank cashier Roy
J. Frisch disappeared while walking home along
the upscale, residential street that led to his family home, never to be seen again. It was a fortuitous event for Reno crime kingpins Bill "Curly"
Graham and James "Cinch" McKay; they had been indicted for mail fraud and the chief witness for the federal prosecution was to be none other than
Roy Frisch. Many people are familiar with this story but what most don't know is that there was another cashier at the bank who worked alongside
Roy, also a witness to the illegal goings-on there.
This young man was Joseph Fuetsch.

Porch Light Burning by Joel Fuetsch Pehanick, published in 2012, tells the story of Joe Fuetsch from an intensely personal point of view as he was Ms. Pehanick's father. Though only a young child during the years the trials occurred, Ms. Pehanick has carefully researched the details of the era and the events impacting her family. The result is an enthralling portrayal of the climate of 1930s Reno. It is also an inside view of and tribute to the principled, courageous young man who risked his own life and those of his family members to do what was right. It was a four-year ordeal, as it took three trials, two that ended in mistrials, to finally convict the pair who had a long history of local law enforcement looking the other way from their nefarious activities. The book reveals the strength exhibited by all of the Fuetsch family members to support Joe and continue to run their family business during this frightening and stressful period.

The accompanying article details more of the history of the Fuetsch family and the beautiful home that once rose impressively on Riverside Drive, fronting the river. Once the crown jewel of the Powning's Addition, the residence transitioned to a comfortable boarding home for locals roomers and divorce seekers run by the tireless Josephine Fuetsch who treated her boarders like her own family, who also called 435 Riverside Drive home.

For more on Roy Frisch, see FootPrints, Vol. II, No. 3, Summer 2008, "Roy Frisch – The Man Who Knew Too Much."

HRPS 2018 Educational Programs

SheryIn Hayes-Zorn & Kimberly Roberts, Program Chairs

Historic Reno Preservation Society's free programs offer an assortment of Reno historic topics.

More HRPS information can be found at historicreno.org or on Facebook.

Wednesday, April 18, 5:30 p.m. (third Wednesday), Location: Northwest Library, 2325 Robb Dr. Reno: Joyce Cox, Author and Research Librarian, presents "Visit Reno on the Way: the History of the Reno Chamber of Commerce." The Reno Chamber began as the Reno Improvement Society in 1898 and the Reno Commercial Club in 1906. The goals of these two groups, typical for any small community, were to support local businesses and to make Reno, Sparks, Lake Tahoe, and Northern Nevada a good place to live. But the way the Chamber promoted the area was unique and innovative with such slogans as "You'll Like Reno" in 1924, "Visit Reno on the Way" in 1939, "Reno, Let's Tell the World" in 1949 and "Reno Gateway to Wonders" in 1968.

Sunday, April 22, 1:30 p.m. (fourth Sunday), Location: Sierra View Library, 4001 S. Virginia Street, Reno: ZoAnn Campana, Historic Preservation Consultant and HRC Architectural Historian, presents "Reno's Early Meatpacking Industry." Reno's early meatpacking industry will be described by the rise and fall of the Nevada Packing Company on E. 4th Street. Founded by Patrick Flanagan as the Nevada Meat Company in 1902, the Nevada Packing Company grew into Nevada's only Federally-inspected packing plant. More than just a slaughterhouse, the company manufactured butter and ice, distributed beer and liquor, and smoked its own bacon and hams. Most notably, the company foreshadowed the locavore movement as we know it today, sourcing its animals and other materials from local ranches and farms.

Wednesday, May, 16, 5:30 p.m. (third Wednesday), Location: Northwest Library, 2325 Robb Dr., Reno: David Hansen, Emeritus Director of Hot August Nights, presents "The Hot August Nights Story." During an evening on August 1, 1986, the Reno-Sparks Convention Center was bursting at the seams with hundreds of revelers who were partying, cheering and pushing to be let in to a first-time event of a magnitude yet to be realized. Inside, 10,000 spectators were massed together in anticipation of seeing and hearing a live event of the Righteous Brothers, Wolfman Jack, and Jan & Dean! It was that night when nostalgia was unleashed among an audience who excitedly relived their childhood years of the 50s and 60s—a time of innocence, prosperity, cars and the birth of Rock and Roll. The weather was HOT, the month of AUGUST was right, therefore, HOT AUGUST NIGHTS was born! The memories flooded back and so did the desire for more!

Carol Needs Volunteers — Do You Have Some Free Time?

e have a wonderful set of volunteers who work the Home Tour—thanks to you all because you make the Home Tour happen. And we have a good crew who help with Walking Tours, but we could use a few more people. But there are other things we do or try to do that we really need some help on. I've discovered that I can't accomplish all that I sign up for without your help. Some of these tasks are relatively large and some are quite small. Do you have the time to help out with some of this work?

Contact Carol Coleman at carol@galenaforest.net or give her a call at 775-849-3380. And thanks.

- · Greeters for Educational Programs, handle sign-in sheets, FootPrints, membership forms
- · Additional volunteers to help with HRPS Walking Tours at Registration and some to walk with the tour as a safety precaution
- · Stuff envelopes for mailing Membership Renewals in Fall / same for second notice in February

- Email blasts: we have a new (free) program for this, but need regular entry of updates from Membership, new templates, and a person to send out notices as requested by Carol
- · Help with documents to be saved in the HRPS archive
- · Help Carol with thank you letters and such
- Organize our collection of FootPrints
- · Someone to enter our Education Programs, Walking Tours, and the Home Tour in the various digital calendars in the Truckee Meadows and in the state.
- · Help with distribution of FootPrints and brochures to sites in the area
- Are you a writer who'd love to research and write about the history of the area? One of FootPrints long-time contributors, Kim Henrick, has retired and we're looking for an interested party
- Help with preparation of Home Tour materials



Hello HRPS members and Friends,

HRPS Education Programs

HRPS' season of Educational Programs is in full swing—I hope that you are able to take advantage of the wonderful speakers we have had. In October, November, January through April, and this year May, we offer Programs in collaboration with the **Washoe**County Library System—this year at Sierra View Library, 1:30 pm on the 4th Sunday and at Northwest Library, 5:30 pm on the 3rd Wednesday. The last programs for 2017-18 are announced on page 13. Thanks to Co-Chairs Kim Roberts and Sherlyn Hayes-Zorn for organizing the programs.

HRPS Annual Meeting

The HRPS Annual Meeting will precede the May 16, 2018 Educational Program at **Northwest Library**. Beginning at 5:00 pm, we'll give you a short State of HRPS report, and ask you to elect proposed Board members.

HRPS Walking Tours

The HRPS Walking Tour season begins officially on May 5, with the first walk of the May, June, July and September tour season. Thanks to the efforts of the Tour Guides, walking tour volunteers and chairs, this year we offer 30 walks spread over those four months. As a member, you are entitled to attend any and all walks—do plan to get out there and enjoy the season and a HRPS walk.

Message From Your HRPS President Carol Coleman

Bill Kolton and **John Farrow** will be Chairing the Walking Tours this year—big thank you to them.

Harvest of Homes Tour

The date of our 9th Annual Harvest of Homes Tour has been set for Saturday, September 29, 2018. We currently have three homes selected and are diligently working towards a total of six— whose build dates cover the time window from 1905 to 1948. Sharon Honig-Bear is spear-heading the home search, while I'm still acting as Chair. Dianna Kreuger and **Linda Doerr** have stepped up to be the Volunteer Coordinators for the Home Tour—and thank you both. They will soon be reaching out to previous Home Tour volunteers who are interested in working with us again. We'll tell you in Summer FootPrints (in the mail June 15) how to sign up to volunteer.

Memberships and Donations

Your membership in HRPS is what supports this organization. We offer relatively low cost basic memberships, which we hope will allow anyone to join us. Your rewards for that membership are our free-to-member walking tours, four issues of *FootPrints* a year, your education programs announced in *FootPrints*, and the knowledge that you are helping an important missionguided organization. Whether your membership and/or donation is small or large, you are important to us and we appreciate what you give.

On February 28, 2018, in the afternoon, at the Reno City Council meeting, the Council made a donation of \$500 to HRPS at the request of HRPS member and City Council member Naomi Duerr, to honor HRPS good works. The only time to offer a verbal thank you to the Council was to sign up for a 10:00 am Public Comment, which I did, with a duly-prepared exactly 3-minute speech. Once again, thanks to Council member Duerr and the Reno City Council for this honor.

Last Fall we had a get-together with HRPS Lifetime members, something of a fireside chat with hors d'oeuvres. It was a great opportunity to meet HRPS friends and to reminisce. Lifetime members give a large sum of money (now it's \$1,000) to support HRPS and receive a membership for life. I would be remiss if I didn't note that following our evening, HRPS received additional donations from Lifetime members: Jonnie Pullman, Joan Dyer, Pat Klos and Francine Gray. The ongoing support of our members is both heartening and helpful. First, it says they believe in HRPS' mission and second, they believe the organization is working toward that mission. Thanks to all of you.

Another surprise and one very much appreciated: late in 2017, after the death of HRPS Lifetime member **Jacqueline Black**, we received a request to add the **Jacquie Foundation** as a Lifetime member. Early in 2018, the **Jacquie Foundation** administrator called to say that the donation would be an enduring donation. This month, we received another check from the **Jacquie Foundation**. Special Thanks to **Jacqueline Black** and her Foundation for her belief in HRPS.

And thanks to two new HRPS member-couples who have decided to support HRPS with a Lifetime membership:

Reg and Shelley Willison and Bob and Fran Fricke both signed up for their HRPS Lifetime membership this spring. To the Willisons and the Frickes, you are very much appreciated. HRPS is pleased to have 44 Lifetime Memberships which include 65 individuals (or Foundations). Going along with an earlier Board decision, your \$1,000 membership is split half to the Neighborhood Preservation Fund grants, and half to the operation of HRPS.

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

HRPS Lifetime Members

Darleen Azizisefat Jacqueline Black (*) Jacquie Foundation Laurie & Greg Boyer Lynn Bremer Florence Ann Burgess Phyllis & Tom Cates Jan Chik Becky Czarnik Joan Dyer Betty Easton Bob & Fran Fricke Marilyn Fuetsch Ted & Francine Gray Melinda & Dan Gustin John & Susan Hancock Carol Haydis Sharon Honig-Bear Lee & Ivye Johnson Mike & Pat Klos Laurence & Linda Kutten Katherene Latham Jan & Jim Loverin Jon & Linda Madsen Dr. Francine Mannix Charlotte & Dick McConnell Marilyn Melton Patricia & Wayne Melton Prudence Gould Muran (*) Al & Nancy Pagni Butch & Susan Peachy Marshall & Pat Postman Jonnie Pullman Hannah Satica Michael & Karren Smith Robert Stoldal Tom & Leanne Stone Terry & Fran Terras Mike & Karen Traynor Charlotte Voitoff Sharon Walbridge Betty Watts Kathy Williams Reg & Shelley Willison (*) deceased

HRPS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Historic Reno Preservation Society celebrates its 20th anniversary as an all-volunteer non-profit organization in September 2017. The **Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS)** is "dedicated to preserving and promoting historic resources in the Truckee Meadows through education, advocacy and leadership."

All Membership Levels include the HRPS quarterly historical publication, FootPrints; HRPS walking tours during the summer months; and educational programs in fall and winter.

You may pay by check, cash, Paypal or credit card. To pay by Paypal or credit card, please log on to our HRPS website: www.historicreno.org.

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Thanks to the following HRPS Business Members who are supporting the works of HRPS

Harold & Alice Jacobsen

John H. Johnson

Jennifer Lazovich



Scan this QR code with your smartphone ato go directly to the HRPS website

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