

The Future of the Lear and Riverside Drive...


It would be difficult to identify a building in Reno with greater architectural, historical, and cultural significance than what we know today as the Lear Theater. Completed in 1939 as the First Church of Christ, Scientist, the elegant structure has graced the north bank of the Truckee River at 501 Riverside Drive for more than 80 years. And yet its story has become one of repeatedly dashed hopes for its renovation and revitalization.

The building is back in the public eye today after years of inactivity with the announcement that the building's owner, the non-profit organization Artown, is considering a new proposal to restore it. This therefore seems an opportune moment to help the community understand what makes this building so significant, what protections are in place to preserve that significance, and what any new plan for it should keep in mind.

The history of the building and its architect, the brilliant Paul Revere Williams, have been documented extensively. This feature is dedicated to explaining the various issues related to historic preservation of this important historic and architectural landmark. Related documents are available on the HRPS website historicreno.org.

The current proposal that Ken Krater has brought to Artown makes the renovation of the theater dependent upon several other permanent alterations to the surrounding landscape that would directly impact the public. The plan would require permanently banning vehicles from the segments of Ralston Street and Riverside Drive that curve around the front and side of the Lear Theater, all the way from the intersection of Ralston and West 1st Street to the intersection of Bell Street and Riverside Drive. This would allow for his team to construct a new multi-story luxury apartment building on the section of riverfront where Ralston Street now runs, between the Lear Theater property and Bicentennial Park.

At press time, the specific plans for the historic building itself have not been made public. While we wait for the specifics of the plan, we are making available the elements that should go into the decision and any plan.

Our main goal with the article is not to rehash the basic history of the Lear and the story of Paul Revere Williams. Rather, we want to educate people about what's needed to responsibly preserve the building. 



The Lear Theater, taken in 2003.
Photo courtesy Max Chapman.



A view of the Lear from a sculpture in Bicentennial Park.

This spot is near the triangle of land purchased by the City with a Fleischmann Foundation grant in 1970.

A proposed multi-story apartment building would probably disrupt this view, as the building would be placed on the closed off Ralston Street land.

Photo courtesy David Lowndes.

The Lear Theater

by Stephani Voshall & Mella Harmon
from RenoHistorical.org

In a town traditionally known for “sinful” institutions, it should not go unnoticed that between 1870 and 1950, downtown Reno had a total of 24 churches. The First Church of Christ, Scientist, which began with a congregation of just four members, was one of those churches.

In the late 1930s, as membership of the First Church of Christ, Scientist grew, the congregation sought an architect to build them a new church. Luella Garvey, a wealthy widow from Southern California, donated funds for a new building and recommended legendary African American architect Paul Revere Williams for the project. Williams, also known as “the architect to the stars,” first achieved fame in Los Angeles during the Golden Age of Hollywood. Anna Frandsen Loomis, a wealthy member of Reno’s




The Church of Christ, Scientist in its prime c. 1945.
Courtesy of Special Collections,
University of Nevada, Reno.

Christian Science community, served as the chairperson of the building committee.

Located near the banks of the Truckee River, at the corner of Ralston Street and Riverside Drive, the First Church of Christ building was designed in the Neoclassical Revival architectural style and constructed with great attention to detail. Some of the architectural details include columns and pilasters, a double-curved portico, and side-window pediments. The main auditorium could hold up to 600 individuals and was designed to function as a community center. There were separate rooms for readings, singing, and even a caretaker’s apartment. The entire construction including furnishings cost \$140,000.

The building was used to hold church services from its completion on October 22, 1939, until the congregation built a new church and moved its services to that location in 1998.

For fear of losing such a valuable piece of history, Moya Lear, widow of aviation developer Bill Lear, purchased the building and donated it to the non-profit Reno-Sparks Theater Coalition in 1998. She hoped that the coalition would preserve the history and integrity of the building while promoting arts and education within the community.

In Lear’s honor, the building was renamed the Lear Theater. It closed in 2002. In 2011, Lear Theater Inc., the non-profit corporation that owned the building, gave the Lear Theater and two other nearby properties to Artown, a non-profit organization that hosts Reno’s month-long arts and events celebration each July. 

Credits and Acknowledgements for this Issue

Back in July of 2019, Artown made an announcement that they had an agreement with a developer who would announce a proposal for the future of the Lear. We await the proposal.

This was a team effort to pull this information about the Lear together. We recognize the team members:

Dr. Alicia Barber is a HRPS Board member, professional historian, author, and consultant and the editor of

RenoHistorical.org.

ZoAnn Campana is Vice-President of HRPS and a professional architectural historian.

Debbie Hinman is Editor of HRPS *FootPrints*, a researcher and writer of history by avocation.

Mella Harmon, retired from Kautz Environmental Consultants, Inc. and Nevada’s SHPO, now lives in Spokane,

Washington, continues to do research, contributed information to this issue.

Nettie Oliverio, one of the founders of the Reno-Sparks Theater Coalition, contributed information to this issue.

Mercedes de la Garza, Architect, contributed information to this issue.

Scott Gibson, Past President, Lear Theater Board of Directors, contributed information to this issue.

Timeline: Major Developments for the Lear

1938 Paul Revere Williams is hired and the cornerstone is laid.

1939 The First Church of Christ, Scientist is completed and opens for services.

1982 The building is listed in the Nevada State Register of Historic Places.

1993 Congregation member Edda Houghton Morrison hatches the idea of converting the church into a theater to support the local theater community.

1994 The Reno-Sparks Theater Community Coalition (RSTCC) is incorporated as a non-profit with the express purpose of working toward purchase and renovation of the church building.

1996 The RSTCC selects architects Dolven Simpson (later Fred Dolven and Associates) to design a master plan for adaptive reuse of the historic church.

1997 Moya Lear offers a donation of \$1.1 million toward the purchase of the building by the RSTCC, provided the organization match her donation, which they do. The Nevada Commission for Cultural Affairs (CCA) awards the building a grant of \$175,000, the first of several CCA grants received annually and totaling over \$1 million.

1998 The purchase of the church building by the RSTCC is finalized and it is named the Lear Theater. A small brick house at 528 West 1st Street that formerly served as the church's Reading Room and an L-shaped parking lot west of the church building are included in the purchase.

1999 The church building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the Reno Historic Register. The Wiegand Foundation pledges \$600,000 to the project as a matching grant.



Moya and aviation pioneer Bill Lear, who designed the Lear Jet. Moya Lear is responsible for purchasing the building and donating the building to the arts.
Image courtesy of Lear Theater, Inc.

2000 A capital campaign is begun with the goal of raising \$9 million to fund the costs of renovation, an endowment, and first-year operating expenses. Construction activities begin.

2002 RSTCC purchases a small brick house adjacent to the Lear Theater office and sets it up as a rental. Barron Hilton makes a \$100,000 donation.

2003 IGT pledges \$600,000 to the project.

2004 The Lear Theater receives just short of \$400,000 from Save America's Treasures.

2005 Dan Rosenblatt takes on the role of Executive Director with a new vision to develop a professional theater company. The RSTCC is renamed Lear Theater, Inc. The Nevada Legislature grants the Lear matching funding for the Save America's Treasures grant of \$600,000.

2006 A new architect, JCJ Architecture, is hired and, over the next three years, designs a plan to drastically reconfigure the interior structure for a full theater experience.


2007 Around the end of the year, with declining success in fundraising, the Lear begins to explore pursuing Historic Tax Credits and New Market Tax Credits as a revenue source and hires a firm, BAC, to develop a Part 2 Application (Description of Rehabilitation).

2009 Architect Mercedes de la Garza designs a new plan with Dolven's 2000 built design and limited parts of JCJ's proposed design. This is the currently approved design for Historical Rehabilitation Tax Credits. This work provided 30% design development (DD) plans from which to obtain construction estimates and an updated and approved Part 2 application providing eligibility for Historic Tax Credits and New Market Tax Credits to offset up to 60% of the construction costs. This leads to a revived fundraising campaign with the strong support of Mayor Bob Cashell.

2010 The deepening recession stifles the fundraising campaign. Lear Theater Inc. announces significant debt, lays off its remaining employees, sells its rental property, and closes its administrative office.

2011 With reports that \$7.7 million has already been spent on the building to date, Lear Theater, Inc. donates the Lear Theater plus the adjacent brick house and parking lot to the non-profit organization Artown.

2018 Artown selects the Sierra School for the Performing Arts as the new owner of the building after soliciting proposals from the community.

2020 Artown announces it has ended negotiations with the Sierra School and is working with Ken Krater Consulting on a plan to renovate the theater, close the adjacent sections of Ralston Street and Riverside Drive to vehicular traffic, and construct an adjacent multi-story apartment building between the Lear Theater and Bicentennial Park to help serve as a revenue stream for the Lear's renovation. 

The Aristocratic Riverside Avenue Driveway, 1888-2020

by Debbie Hinman

Riverside Avenue, as it was first known, was created to be Reno's loveliest boulevard. Passengers traveling in horse-drawn buggies or in that newfangled contraption known as the automobile could, as they rode along, view the Truckee River in all its stages, full and frothing in winter and spring, calmer, lower and reflecting sunlight in summer and fall. The avenue was the southern boundary of the new Powning's Addition, where lots had just been platted by June 1888, and were being advertised for sale. Of course, those lots along what Powning called "the most fashionable driveway in the county" were highly desirable and were purchased by the movers and shakers of the fledgling town. Construction was sporadic however, and early photographs show scattered, moderately-sized Queen Anne Victorians dotting the landscape. The area had a rural feel, as the lots were good-sized with room for gardens and many residents kept chickens and other small animals.

The year 1891 brought more improvements to the area. One newspaper article noted, "Riverside Avenue, Powning's Addition, is being plowed and scraped by Dave Lodge, and in a week will be the great driveway of Reno." A month later, a follow-up article noted, "The rocks have all been taken out of the drive on Riverside Avenue. So take a drive up there and



1908, McKinley Park before the school was built on the property.

enjoy the beauties of the river." Also in 1891, The County Commission, by authority of an Act of the Legislature, purchased two sites for public parks or squares, one of which comprised Block Y in Powning's Addition, an area measuring 450 by 300 feet bounded by Riverside Avenue on the south, Jones Street on the north, Keystone Avenue and Vine Street on the west.

By 1893, it was reported that nearly all the lots in the Addition had been sold and that along the river front, there were only three corners left, with all but four sold on Second Street. Two significant homes had been constructed: that of architect M. J. Curtis (1887) on the first lot sold in Powning's, and that of Edward Barber, attorney (1891).

In May of 1894, it was announced that the new electric light on Riverside Avenue was lit for the first time. The newspaper reported, "It will enable anglers to fish at night if they are so disposed. Possibly the

electric light may be a great advantage in luring trout to take the hook."

All was not peaceful along the Avenue, however. It seemed that the original plan for the road to be 100 feet wide was being ignored by residents who pushed their fences out, encroaching on the road so that it was not more than 60 feet wide in places. There were still

incidences of garbage being dumped along the river and the road. In 1897, a plank sidewalk was laid from the Riverside iron bridge to the northwest corner of First and Virginia streets for pedestrians.

In 1902, the land that had been set aside for a park became McKinley Park, named for the nation's 25th president, William McKinley, assassinated in 1901. As Reno continued to grow, there was a movement to build new schools to accommodate the increasing number of children. A bond proposal to fund at least two new schools came before residents in late 1908 and was approved. The city agreed to deed McKinley Park to the School Board for one of the schools. Local architect George Ferris won the bid for the design of the new schools and the city was satisfied that there would be adequate space in front of the attractive new school for park space for the area. The school would bear the name of McKinley Park School.



A panoramic photo of the Truckee River and Riverside Drive. Visible are McKinley Park School on the left and on the far right on the bluff, the Newlands and Nixon mansions. Courtesy UNR Special Collections.

Apparently Powning's original plan that Riverside Avenue would be 100 feet wide was abandoned; in 1909 citizens petitioned the City Council to improve the Avenue by widening it to 60 feet. In 1912, both the Fulton and Barber families deeded portions of the front of their lots to the city, to be used as park space to further beautify the avenue.

As time went on, more homes materialized along Riverside Avenue. In addition to the early Victorians, brick Craftsman bungalows began appearing with generous front porches from which to take advantage of their river view. A surprising number of these original homes still grace the avenue today. In 1929, a very large home was commissioned by heiress Lora J. Knight, who also built a "castle" on Emerald Bay at Lake Tahoe which she named "Vikingsholm." Lora's Reno home was more of a complex, with a large main house, a caretaker's cottage to the rear and other small guesthouses on the property. A pool was later added. Reno architect Frederic DeLongchamps designed the property. Today only the main house exists and has been used as a business for many years.

The early Barber home was converted to a boarding house in 1930 and continued as such, run by the Fuetsch family from 1932, catering to divorce seekers. It was later demolished and today the site is the attractive Bicentennial Park.

In 1939, two new large structures were added to the Avenue. The Loomis Manor Apartments were built toward the west end of the street and on the east end, a beautiful Neoclassical Revival church that would be the home of the Christian Science congregation for years to come.

As delightful as it must have been to sit on porches on a summer evening, enjoying the breeze wafting across from the murmuring river, the proximity to so much water was not always a good thing. There were floods that filled basements on a regular basis. Significant flooding occurred in 1907,

1928, 1937 and most notably, the large floods of 1950 and 1955. A news writer for the *Reno Evening Gazette (REG)*, Frank McCulloch, took a walk on November 21, 1950 and reported the following: *"Among the lovely old homes along Riverside drive and up the streets running into it, men and women stood and surveyed the havoc, most of them in stunned silence. In front of one house, a tangled mass of logs, uprooted trees and other debris blocked the steps. At another, the twisted wreckage of a child's tricycle lay against the front door. Lawns, among the best-manicured*



Touring Riverside Drive includes a Craftsman brick bungalow (above) and a 1900s Queen Anne.



in Reno, had disappeared under as much as a foot of silt. Shrubbery was gone from most yards. And the basements—the basements were pools of muddy, stinking water and floating family possessions." Residents paid a price for that usually lovely boulevard fronting their homes and the river view.

In July 1967, a local man with a long, much-lauded career in the U.S. Forest Service was, following his retirement, appointed Reno City Park Superintendent. The man was Ivan Sack. He was tasked with meeting the

requirements of the Corps of Engineers along Riverside Drive, officially changed from Riverside Avenue in 1954. The directive involved a section Sack referred to as a "rather rundown, eroded, worn-out strip between the street and the river." He was faced with either erecting a flood wall "two and a half feet high to carry 14,000 cubic feet of water per second during floods" or raise the height of the land. Not caring for the idea of a flood wall, Sack opted for "raising the elevation of the ground 2 ½ feet and placing a sidewalk along the top of the crown with some loose boulder riprap along the river's edge." Sack had the park personnel plant a number of oak trees along the sidewalk, a much more attractive solution than a wall to a problem area.

Later that year, during a fierce October windstorm, six landmark cottonwood trees were uprooted. Sack reported that they were a shallow-rooted species and both the felled and standing trees showed interior rot. Sadly, ten of the remaining trees would have to be removed for the safety of everyone. At 60-80 years of age, Sack explained, that was about the lifespan of an eastern cottonwood.

The 1970s brought a different kind of crisis to Riverside Drive. In August of 1970, the Reno Recreation and Parks Commission voted to close Riverside Drive from its intersection with First Street to Stevenson Street as a means of flood control. It was pointed out that closing a street is not the same as street abandonment; the city would still maintain control of Riverside Drive. Not placated by this, a group of concerned women formed under the name Truckee Meadows Tomorrow (TMT) to fight the decision. In poured complaints from residents via letters and numerous phone calls protesting the Commission's decision. A November 14, 1970 *REG* editorial titled *Spare that Drive!* supported the opponents to the August decision, stating "No avenue in Reno possesses so much grace and charm as beloved old Riverside Drive."

continued on page 6

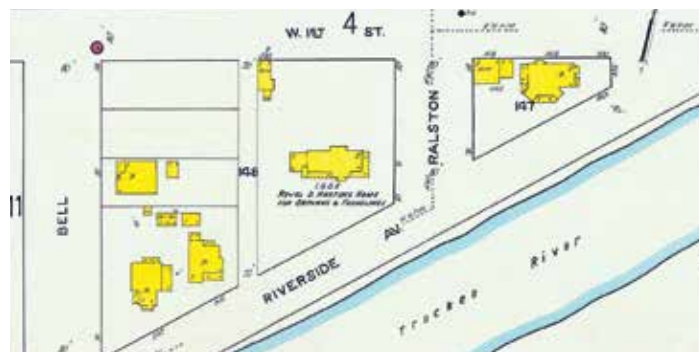
The Aristocratic Riverside Driveway

continued from page 5

Although the TMT group is not named, it is clear they are referenced in the statement, “They fear, with full justification, that if the initial block is removed, it will set a precedent that will eventually consume the drive.” The editorial goes on to speak of Reno and Riverside Drive in terms that have become prophetic: “Too much of its [Reno’s] beauty has been sacrificed in recent years to facilitate development. Too many of its beautiful tree-lined avenues have been transformed into shafts of shimmering asphalt in the interest of efficiency.” In early December, the Commission rescinded their vote and held the issue in abeyance pending further study. In addition to the flood issue, a contributing factor to the move to close the street was a developer with plans to build a six-story office building immediately north of the property proposed for closure.

Following this decision, the Fleischmann Foundation provided a grant to the city of Reno. With this grant, the city purchased the lot for which the office building had been proposed and instead created a park. In mid-1973, the issue arose again as the city wished to close the first block of Riverside Drive to enlarge the planned park and reduce the safety hazard of traffic. Once again, TMT opposed this plan, with President Patricia Cooke expressing the group’s contention that Riverside Drive is unique in Reno. Said Cooke, “Those first two blocks are the only two left where you can view the river at driving level.” She disagreed that keeping the street open would present a hazard for persons using the park, citing that traffic around Virginia Lake Park does not cause an issue for pedestrians. It was a bittersweet victory for TMT; on one hand, they avoided the unsightly intrusion of a large office building crowding the historic neighborhood but they did lose the first block of Riverside Drive. However, through the beneficence of the Fleischmann Foundation, the neighborhood gained another park.

So here we are, nearly 50 years later, facing this issue once again. The plan to rehabilitate the Lear Theater involves the construction of an apartment complex immediately to the east of the theater. This construction would—you guessed it—necessitate closing yet another stretch of Riverside Drive and




In this Sanford map, note the triangle on the right. A tall building was to be built on the site in 1970, but the City gained a new piece of the park thanks to Fleischmann Foundation, and Riverside Drive was closed at First Street entrance.

this time, a section of Ralston Street as well. Proponents of the plan wish to close the stretch between Ralston and Bell Streets to all but bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

“Sunday drivers,” both local and visitors, all wishing to see a beautiful, significant historic building and a close-up view of the river from their automobiles would be denied that pleasure. Not to mention that a modern apartment building would be utterly out of place next to the Lear Theater and the gateway to Reno’s most historic neighborhood. No doubt this was the same sentiment in the minds of The Fleischmann Foundation, when their grant made it possible for the city to create Bicentennial Park all those years ago.

As well as detracting from the Lear and Bicentennial Park, the area would have increased traffic due to the new apartment dwellers. It is likely that once the plan is widely communicated, there will again be protests from residents and others who use this portion of the avenue on their regular routes through the city and appreciate its quiet beauty.

The previously-quoted editorial ends with a statement that was true in 1970 and continues to be true today: “Too few shady avenues remain, and none so splendid as Riverside Drive. It should be guaranteed to posterity.” Its creator, C. C. Powning, intended it as “the Aristocratic Riverside Avenue Driveway” in his advertising literature. And why shouldn’t drivers, walkers and bicyclists all continue to be welcomed along the stretch that remains? 



Stand close to the triangle that is now part of Bicentennial Park, and look southeast across the park to the Truckee River.

Information for this article came from the HRPS booklet, *A Walk Through Time*; University of Nevada Oral History Program publication, *Ivan Sack: Forester Lost in the Woods, Sailor Lost on Rocks and Shoals: My Careers with the Forest Service and the U.S. Navy*; and numerous local newspaper articles 1887-1975.

Color photos by Debbie Hinman and David Lowndes.

Historic Covenants on the Lear

Between 2005 and 2010, the Lear received more than \$1.5 million in grant funds from the Commission for Cultural Affairs (now the Commission for Cultural Centers and Historic Preservation). In order to ensure that buildings awarded these grant funds are appropriately maintained and preserved as cultural centers benefitting their communities, the grant requires recipients to enter into covenants with the State of Nevada. These covenants are recorded on the title and run with the property, binding the grant applicant as well as all successors, heirs, assignees, or lessees. They are public documents on file at the Washoe County Recorder's Office.

The covenants are essentially a set of agreements made by the owner for a certain period of time. In the case of the Lear, these covenants are binding through December 31, 2060, at which time they expire. With respect to the current condition and ever-evolving rehabilitation plans for the Lear, the covenants include the following:

1. The applicant (i.e., the Lear) agrees to assume the cost of continued maintenance and repair of the

property so as to preserve its architectural and historical integrity, in order to protect and enhance those qualities which make it historically significant.

2. The applicant agrees that no visual or structural alterations will be made to the property without prior written permission of the State.
3. The applicant agrees that the State has the right to inspect the property at any reasonable time to ensure that the conditions of the covenants are being met.

There has been confusion as to whether these covenants can be severed by simply paying back the grant funds to the State, the idea being that if the building owner pays back the grants, they are free to do whatever work they wish to the building without regard for preservation standards. According to the recorded covenants, the only way to sever this agreement is if the courts find any part of it to be illegal; in that case, only those provisions deemed illegal are severed, and the remaining agreements continue. Moreover, the State reserves the right to

file suit if the applicant is in violation of any of these covenants; the purpose of the suit would be to cure the violations or obtain the return of grant funds.

In any case, attempting to sever these covenants would be a grave error. Not only would this strategy be wasteful, squandering the preservation work that has been done, but it would likely bring irrevocable harm to the building. Rehabilitation of the Lear must be done properly, according to industry best practices for architectural conservation. The covenants ensure that all work done to the Lear adheres to the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties by requiring that the State Historic Preservation Officer review and approve any proposed construction or rehabilitation activities. The Lear is among Reno's most well-loved community buildings, its quality of design and construction unmatched, with ties to one of America's most significant architects.

It deserves to be done right. 


Preserving the Integrity of the Lear Building

The Lear Theater is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion C for its distinctive Neoclassical Revival style design by Paul Revere Williams. The NRHP recognizes seven aspects of integrity that are necessary for a property to convey its significance: location, setting, association, feeling, design, materials, and workmanship. The Lear retains integrity in six of the seven aspects, having lost its integrity of association when the use of the building changed from religious to theatrical uses. The remaining six aspects are critical to the historical and architectural significance of the building.

The Lear possesses integrity of location, as it remains in the place it was constructed and has not been moved. Integrity of setting, which refers to the character of a property's surroundings, is especially important to the Lear. The Lear is prominently sited on the north bank of the Truckee River, at the east end of Riverside Drive, and is set back from the road to allow passerby to fully appreciate the structure and its formerly

verdant landscaping. Preserving how the building relates to these natural and manmade features, from the river and its tree canopy to the scenic thoroughfare and the park to the west is extremely important, as it honors Williams' original intentions for the building. Integrity of feeling is related to setting, although it specifically refers to evoking the aesthetic or historic sense of a period of time. For the Lear, this 'feeling' is a gestalt of the setting, siting, and intact physical features of the building itself, which allows citizens to experience an awareness of its history and importance. Finally, integrity of design (i.e., the combination of elements that creates the form, plan, space, structure, and style, including rooflines, fenestration patterns, entrance and circulation routes), materials (i.e., character-defining physical elements, such as exterior cladding, original wood doors and windows) and workmanship (i.e., the quality of the craftsman's product, such as hand-tooling, carving, joinery) refer to the physical building itself. The Lear possesses all three, conveying Williams' original design

for the building, the original materials used in its construction, and the craftsmanship involved in producing such a beautifully-detailed building in the late 1930s.

The Lear is additionally listed in the Reno City Register of Historic Places. For this reason, any exterior work for the building must be approved for a Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) by the City's Historical Resources Commission (HRC), which is the official advisor on all matters relating to historic preservation. Composed of seven citizens with specific expertise in history, architecture, engineering, and preservation, the HRC ensures the preservation of City Register-listed properties by reviewing all CoA applications. All work must conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties, which guarantees that the property will be treated appropriately and therefore protected from work that could potentially damage its integrity. 

Historic Reno Preservation Society with Washoe County Library System

1st Tuesday 2021 Educational Programs

Virtual via Zoom

Co-Chairs: Sheryln Hayes-Zorn and Susan Mullen

Historic Reno Preservation Society's free educational programs offer topics related to Reno's history. **There will be NO program in December of 2020. Programs will resume in January.**

Zoom links for these programs will be emailed to HRPS members. They will be available on the HRPS website historicro.org and on the Washoe County Library System website under Events / Calendar / Historic Reno Preservation Society.



Tuesday, January 5, 5:30 p.m.

(first Tuesday)

**Speaker: Debbie Hinman presents
Alice Ramsey's Journey**

In 1909, intrepid 22-year-old Alice Ramsey made history as the first female cross-country motorist, driving a Maxwell DA from New York to San

Francisco in 59 days. Coming through Reno in August, she stayed overnight in the Riverside Hotel. Hear about her amazing journey in a time before interstate highways and before most women had even considered learning to drive.

Debbie Hinman is a Reno native and UNR graduate. Active with HRPS since 2004, she is a researcher and Editor of HRPS's quarterly *FootPrints* publication.



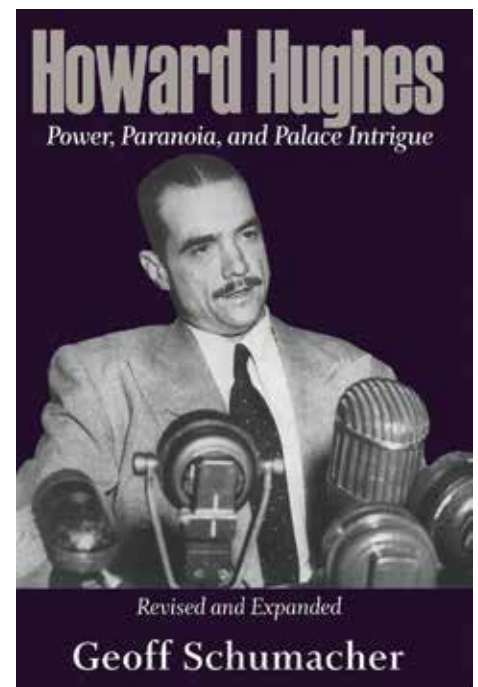
Tuesday, February 2, 5:30 p.m. (first Tuesday)

Speaker: Geoff Schumacher discusses Fact, Fiction and Howard Hughes

Howard Hughes, one of the most intriguing and accomplished Americans of the 20th century, had a profound effect on Las Vegas. His investments in the 1950s, 60s and 70s helped transform the city. But his secretive and reclusive nature has generated innumerable myths that obscure the true story. Geoff Schumacher, author of a new

biography of the billionaire, explains how truth is stranger than fiction in the life of Howard Hughes.

Geoff Schumacher is the Vice President of Exhibits & Programs for The Mob Museum in Las Vegas. He is the author of *Sun, Sin & Suburbia: A History of Modern Las Vegas* and *Howard Hughes: Power, Paranoia & Palace Intrigue*. He earned his bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Nevada, Reno, and his master's degree in American history from Arizona State University. He had a twenty-five-year career in journalism, with stops at the *Las Vegas Sun*, *Las Vegas CityLife*, *Las Vegas Mercury*, *Las Vegas Review-Journal* and *Ames (Iowa) Tribune*. He serves as associate editor of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*.



Historic Reno Preservation Society with Washoe County Library System

1st Tuesday 2021 Educational Programs

Virtual via Zoom

Co-Chairs: Sheryln Hayes-Zorn and Susan Mullen



Tuesday, March 2, 5:30 p.m. (first Tuesday)

Speaker: Heidi Swank, Executive Director Nevada Preservation Foundation

Topic: Rural Nevada Projects

The Nevada Preservation Foundation was founded in late 2013 by a small group of local Las Vegas preservationists. With the intent of educating the building industry and general public on economic, social, and environmental benefits of historic preservation, the Nevada Preservation Foundation has reached countless community members, worked with

local building professionals and organizations, and mobilized neighborhoods to obtain historic protections.

Our mission is to preserve and revitalize historic buildings and places in Nevada and to cultivate a presence around cultural heritage and tourism. Retention and restoration of our built environment fosters not only a sense of place but also helps to build an engaged community for residents and visitors alike. We know that preserving our buildings is as much about our collective history as it is about strengthening neighborhoods, creating jobs, diversifying tourism, and boosting conservation.

We accomplish this through our efforts in preservation, education and advocacy.

Dr. Swank received her doctorate in anthropology with an emphasis on history and language from Northwestern University in 2006. She has published and presented widely on the ties between history, placemaking, and every day lives. Dr. Swank is a member of the Nevada Assembly.



Tuesday, April 6, 5:30 p.m. (first Tuesday)

Speaker: Betsy Morse, Nevada Historical Society Docent

Topic: Before Reno and Sparks — Early Communities in the Truckee Meadows

Early settlers in the Truckee Meadows knew nothing of Reno or Sparks. Instead, they lived in communities like Eastman Mill and Brown's Crossing — villages whose names no longer appear

on modern maps. Like much of Nevada, the Truckee Meadows between 1855-1868 was dotted with small settlements. Most of these briefly boomed and just as quickly died. Some never boomed at all. Reno and Sparks simply beat the odds. This talk will look at a few of the early communities which today can only be found in historical archives. Pleasant Valley, Galena, Glendale, Huffaker, and Lake's Crossing are among the forgotten places to be discussed.



After a career as a National Weather Service meteorologist, Betsy Morse retired and moved to Reno. She has been a longtime volunteer with the Red Cross, and with Nevada Historical Society for the last decade, where she works in the research library and gives school tours. She loves learning about the history of the state and sharing what she has learned with others.

Before the Lear and the Church of Christ, Scientist: Royal D. Hartung Home for Orphans and Foundlings

by Debbie Hinman

Between 1908-1911, a stylish two-story Victorian house was built at 501 Riverside Drive. By 1913 it had become the Royal D. Hartung Home for Orphans and Foundlings, a project of the Daughters of Rebekah, originally the Ladies Auxiliary of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

The Home was the third orphanage to be created in Nevada. The first was the Sisters of Charity Home in Virginia City, which opened in 1867. Children were orphaned in this western environment—mining, the primary occupation of Virginia City men, was fraught with danger—mine cave-ins, explosions and tool-related accidents all occurred with frequency; mothers died in childbirth or from disease.

Several years later, the Nevada Legislature decided that taking care of homeless children was the State's job. They authorized a State Orphan's Home to be built in Carson City. A large Victorian dormitory was built and in 1870, the first child was admitted. This home operated until a fire destroyed it in 1902. It was soon replaced by a structure built of sandstone blocks quarried from the State Prison. The Children's Home survived until its demolition in 1963.

The Hartung Home was not created out of a need for an orphanage in Reno; rather, it came from the heart of a grieving father, a local businessman named Otto Hartung. In 1900, Hartung's adopted son Royal died of diphtheria. The boy was a foundling, left in a basket one night on the steps of the Depot Hotel, today the site of the train station. A local newspaper reported, "Under the tutelage of Hartung and his wife, the lad became, at six years of age, a most polished little gentleman. He was universally loved and admired and his death was a fatal blow to Hartung's home and happiness." Another article read, "As the result of the boy's death, it is said, his wife left him and the two calamities together brought about Hartung's end."

Otto Hartung's death was reported as insomnia, brought on by his grief. He wrote his will on April 2, 1909 in Berkeley, California where he passed early in 1910, leaving an estate




c. 1910 The Hartung Orphanage is bottom right. The old Reno High (demolished August 1911) with its bell tower can be seen mid-distance and at the base of the hills are the university buildings (see Mackay School of Mines, built in 1908). Courtesy Jerry Fenwick collection.

valued at \$28,000. His will stipulated that he be buried in the Reno Odd Fellows cemetery by the side of his son Royal and brother William. He wished \$2,000 to be given to the lodge to see the graves would be cared for in perpetuity. His will also directed that if the Odd Fellows Lodge No. 14 built an institution to bear the name the Royal D. Hartung Home for Orphans and Foundlings within five years of Hartung's death, they would receive the income from his estate. But if the home was not built within that time, the income would go to the Reno School District to create an Industrial Arts

program in Royal's name. However, the district would need to construct a building for the program with their own funds. If they chose not to do so, the funds would then go to the University of Nevada.

The Odd Fellows passed the project to the Rebekahs who complied with the terms of the will, being as determined as their predecessors, the Sisters of Charity. The home was dedicated in September of 1914, within the 5-year time limit set by Otto Hartung. The dedication was a grand affair. The newspaper reported, "Hundreds wearing regalia assembled at the hall then formed a long procession and marched to the home at Ralston Street and Riverside Avenue, on the Lincoln Highway."

The University, exhibiting sour grapes, took the Odd Fellows to court, claiming it was a subsidiary lodge creating the home and therefore the terms of the will were not met. Reno Schools could not afford the required building so the university should receive the funds. Court battles continued throughout 1915-16 with the High Court finally ruling in favor of the Odd Fellows.

The Home operated for 25 years, but in 1938 it closed and the building was sold and demolished to create a site for a small gem of a church, the project driven by two influential women, Anna Frandsen Loomis and Luella Garvey. A renowned California architect was brought to Reno to design the church. It is sad that such a beautiful building as the Hartung Home could not have been moved, but we are fortunate to have what later became the Lear Theater. Let's hope this building can be saved, and continue to grace this lovely and historic site on Reno's beautiful Riverside Drive. 

Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Treatment of Historic Properties

Any work on the Lear Theater building should follow the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties. These guidelines offer strategies for preserving, rehabilitating, restoring, and reconstructing historic buildings. In the case of the Lear, either preservation or rehabilitation would be the most appropriate treatment methods. Of the two, rehabilitation offers more flexible solutions for adaptively reusing the building while maintaining its historical integrity.

The Rehabilitation Standards acknowledge the need to alter or add to a historic building to meet continuing or new uses, as well as meeting code requirements, while retaining the building's historic character. When applying for funding including State grants and Federal Historic Tax Credits, these standards must be followed.

There are ten standards, as follows:


1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.



Remodeling c. 2002. Construction to increase the stage and back stage area of the Lear Theater.
Photo courtesy of Lear Theater, Inc.



New stage 2002. Building the stage structure for the theater; the view is from the auditorium.
Photo courtesy of Lear Theater, Inc.

5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired. 



Paul Revere Williams: Buildings in Reno

There are four confirmed Paul Revere Williams designs in Reno. All were initiated in the 1930s, when Reno society had many strong ties to the wealthy enclaves of Los Angeles, where Williams had many clients.


Luella Garvey House (1934): This lovely duplex at 599 California Avenue, with its Classical Revival style and French Regency accents, was one of Williams' first Nevada commissions and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Rafael Herman House (1935): Located at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park, this Classical Revival house was built for Dr. Rafael Herman and his brother Norman, who ran cattle on the property and visited infrequently from their permanent homes in Los Angeles. Now owned by Washoe County, the house is used for special events.

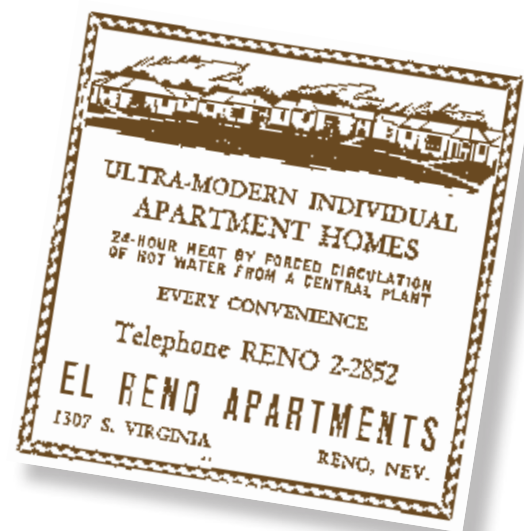
El Reno Apartments (1937): Fifteen of these individual pre-fabricated steel housing units, for which Williams served as consulting architect, were originally grouped together at 1307 South Virginia Street. Many of them were later moved

throughout Reno, including one at 711 Mount Rose Street that is listed on Reno's Historic Register.

First Church of Christ, Scientist (1939): Located at 501 Riverside Drive, the Neoclassical Revival church building is listed on the City of Reno, State of Nevada, and National Registers of Historic Places. It is commonly known as the Lear Theater.

While the design of the Loomis Manor apartment building at 1045 Riverside Drive has sometimes been attributed to Paul Revere Williams, available evidence suggests that might not be the case. 

The El Reno Apartments, built in 1937 at 1307 South Virginia Street, is now the site of Statewide Lighting. The architect was Paul Revere Williams who specified fabricated steel for the units that were considered very technically advanced at the time. The El Reno (*right*) at 711 Mount Rose Street is beautifully maintained in the colors and décor of the original units.



The property known as the Luella Garvey House at 599 California Avenue was built in 1934 as a duplex, with the front unit facing California and the rear two-story unit on Nixon and California Avenue. .



Paul Revere Williams and His Legacy

According to the National Register nomination for the First Church of Christ Scientist, the building derives its significance from both its distinctive Neoclassical Revival architectural style and its status as the work of a master, renowned architect Paul Revere Williams, widely recognized as the most important African American architect of the 20th century. The life and work of Williams has been the focus of heightened attention in the past few years, further demonstrating the need to rehabilitate this treasured building responsibly.

Williams designed more than 2,000 private homes, many for wealthy business people and Hollywood stars. He was part of the LAX planning and design team. Yet he also designed affordable homes, public housing, and a host of civic, commercial, and institutional buildings. He was well regarded for his mastery of various architectural styles. Modern interpretations of Tudor-revival, French Chateau, Regency, French Country, and Mediterranean architecture were all within his vernacular. Here are just some of the recent national developments recognizing Williams' legacy.

AIA 2017 Gold Medal

The Board of Directors of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) voted to posthumously award the 2017 AIA Gold Medal to Paul Revere Williams, FAIA, whose portfolio of nearly 3,000 buildings during his five-decade career was marked with a number of broken barriers. These included being the first black architect ever admitted as a member of the AIA. The Gold Medal honors an individual whose significant body of work has had a lasting influence on the theory and practice of architecture.

Architect's rendering. Architect Paul Revere Williams' rendering of the Church of Christ, Scientist was published in the Reno Evening Gazette on October 12, 1938 to mark the commencement of work on the new structure. Image courtesy of Reno Evening Gazette and Reno Historical.

Regarding Paul Revere Williams:

A Photographer's View (Angel City Press, 2020)


Janna Ireland, an award-winning photographer, explores the work and legacy of Williams through a series of stunning, intimate black-and-white photographs of his designs.

Hollywood's Architect: The Paul Revere Williams Story

(PBS SoCal and RKR Media, LLC, 2020)

This hour-long documentary, released in 2020, chronicles Williams's storied life as well as his prolific career spanning over five decades. It can be streamed online. Visit <https://hollywoodsarchitect.org/>.

Paul Revere Williams Archive

In June 2020, the Paul Revere Williams archive was jointly acquired by the Getty Research Institute and the USC School of Architecture, both in Los Angeles. Documenting the entirety of Williams' career, from his early residential commissions during Los Angeles' housing boom of the 1920s to landmark mid-century civic structures, the archive includes approximately 35,000 plans, 10,000 original drawings, blueprints and project diazotypes, hand-colored renderings, vintage photographs, correspondence, and other materials. 





Message From Your HRPS President

Carol Coleman

Hello HRPS Members and Friends,

Here we are at the end of another year; 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic, has been an awful year for the world and its people. It has changed how individuals of all ages live and survive. And how organizations survive. Yet we can be grateful for lots of things as an organization – members like you who continue to support HRPS with your memberships, the CARES grants that we received from the Nevada Humanities and the Nevada Arts Council, donations small and large from people, like the one Sandy and Jo Sanborn arranged through Vanguard Charities, from Flick Ranch Project thanks to Kelly Rigby and Joyce Cox, and the Lifetime memberships that came through for us this year.

But it's not just money, it's support for our new projects such as the Neighborhood Stories and the monthly email newsletter, that makes everything we do worthwhile. Thank you all. We really appreciate you.

New Website with Membership Management System

We took a big step into technology by including a Membership Management System (MMS) called Wild Apricot in our website. Why?

First, to save on volunteer time. Last December to March, both our Membership Director and Treasurer were out of commission. As HRPS' Jack-of-all-trades, I filled the gap during our largest number of membership renewals. I can tell you it's a time-consuming process. But

that's not all. Our email blast software was separate. Updates take time and sometimes didn't happen. That software was also not very user friendly. Thank you notes from the President didn't happen – haven't happened because of task overload.

Second, MMS is advantageous for our members. It carries a more responsive credit and debit card processor. You get an immediate email confirming renewal paid or application paid. You can change your own information when you need to do so. You can verify that your membership is Active and when renewal is due.

Third, we actually did a merge of a Joomla and Wild Apricot website. Rosie Cevalco put together a new Joomla site while I brought up Wild Apricot with our user data. Rosie did the merge – it didn't work as advertised, but Rosie had the expertise to solve the problems. We have asked for volunteers and actually had good responses. We have high hopes of putting together a team that works on these merged websites and is knowledgeable about them. Rosie has been the one and only on the website for ten years! It's time she had backup and can be in advisory mode. We owe Rosie a bundle of thank yous for all of her work with HRPS!

New Treasurer

First, I want to thank Robert Harmon, Sr. for all of his work on the HRPS Board as Treasurer since 2017. He was a great person to work with and we had a great system as we were all (with Katy Phillips our Membership Chair) volunteering at the Nevada Historical Society. That was until COVID.

Back in July, I asked Joy Orlich if she would be Treasurer. When she sent me her resume' I realized I needed her right then as an Executive Director (E.D.) – she agreed. As E.D. she was personally responsible for initiating the monthly newsletter (currently done in Constant Contact), a rewrite of our Bylaws (with Sharon Honig-Bear) and getting us going on the Membership Management System. Her three-month contract, paid

for with CARES funding is complete. At the November Board meeting, she was voted in as HRPS Treasurer, which she is imminently qualified to do. She has asked to continue producing HRPS monthly email newsletter, but with Wild Apricot – agreed! Thank you, Joy.

Annual Meeting in May

Our Bylaws require an Annual Meeting of our members. It's a time for a State of HRPS discussion, and membership voting on new Board members and change in the Bylaws. Given the COVID situation we won't be holding a physical meeting, but we'll have a Zoom meeting with members. Let's tentatively set the First Tuesday in May to be the HRPS Annual Meeting.

Giving Tuesday

Through this international day of giving, members and friends assist their favorite non-profits. It's such a wonderful thought and has done great work over the years. This year we asked people to support HRPS Reno Heritage Fund (RHF) on Giving Tuesday, since our usual fund-raiser for RHF, the Harvest of Homes Tour, had to be cancelled due to COVID. We thank all of you who donated this year through Giving Tuesday to support RHF.

New Lifetime Members

A big thank you to David Lowndes for becoming a Lifetime member – David has been HRPS' official photographer for several years. HRPS also welcomes new Lifetime members Rhonda Shoolroy and Jerry Sawyer and thanks them for their membership. Rhonda's note is special, "I enjoy reading FootPrints ever so much and learning about the neighborhood and city I live in and love so much!" That was much appreciated, Rhonda. Half of Lifetime membership dollars go to the Reno Heritage Fund and half to Operating Reserves.

Thank you all for your support of Historic Reno. Please stay safe and well.

Carol Coleman, 775-849-3380
board@historicroeno.org

HRPS Lifetime Members

Darleen R Azizisefat
 Sharon Honig-Bear
 Jacqueline Black (*)
 Laurie & Greg Boyer
 Lynn Bremer
 Holly Walton-Buchanan
 Florence Ann Burgess
 George Burke
 Linda Burke
 Tom & Phyllis Cates
 Jan & Phil Chik
 Press & Delores Clewe
 Karalea Clough
 Barbara Courtney
 Joyce Cox
 Becky Czarnik
 Joan Dyer
 Betty Easton
 Fran Bryne Fricke
 Marilyn Fuetsch
 Francine & Ted Gray
 Melinda & Dan Gustin
 John & Susan Hancock
 Carol Haydis
 Jacquie Foundation
 Alan Lee & Ivy Johnson
 Larry & Chris Klaich
 Pat & Mike Klos
 Laurence & Linda Kutten
 Katherine Latham
 Jan & Jim Loverin
 David Lowndes
 Jon & Linda Madsen
 Catherine Magee
 Francine Mannix MD
 Charlotte & Dick McConnell
 Wayne & Patty Melton
 Marilyn Melton
 Prudence Gould Muran(*)
 Peter & Renate Neumann
 Al & Nancy Pagni
 Butch & Susan Peachy
 Pioneer Center
 Marshall & Pat Postman
 Jonnie Pullman
 Hannah Satika (*)
 Rhonda Shoolroy & Jerry Sawyer
 Michael & Karren Smith
 Robert Stoldal
 Tom & Leanne Stone
 Fran & Terry Terras
 Mike & Karen Traynor
 Charlotte Voitoff
 Sharon Walbridge
 Betty J. Watts
 Kathy Williams
 Reg & Shelley Willison
 Catherine Coscarelli Zugar
 (*) deceased

HRPS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

By joining **Historic Reno Preservation Society**, you are a member of a community group that celebrates Reno's history by sharing information and advocating for our endangered properties.

In the summer, you may attend as many as 25 different Walking Tours. In winter, twice a month we bring you Educational Programs. You receive our quarterly, *FootPrints*, to keep you informed about HRPS events, articles about endangered properties, people and homes of interest. HRPS' information is on our website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and occasional eblasts.

You may pay by check, cash, credit card or PayPal. To pay by credit card or PayPal, please log on to our website: www.historicreno.org. We use PayPal to process your payment. They will accept your credit card on our behalf; we will send you a confirmation email.

☐ New Member ☐ Renewing

Membership Levels:

- ☐ \$15.00 Student
☐ \$25.00 Individual
☐ \$45.00 Family
☐ \$100.00 Supporting
☐ \$200.00 Business
☐ \$250.00 Preservation Patron
☐ \$500.00 Benefactor
☐ \$1,000.00 Lifetime Member

My Additional Donation:

\$ _____ Pat Klos Annual
 Volunteer Award Fund
 \$ _____ Reno Heritage Grant &
 Marker Fund
 \$ _____ Overall Program Support

HRPS Quarterly *FootPrints* Preference (Please check one):

☐ Hard Copy ☐ Email Only

Name(s) _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____

E-Mail _____

HRPS respects your right to privacy. We will **NOT** share your email address.

I'D LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO WORK ON:

- ☐ Home Tours ☐ Walking Tours ☐ Board ☐ Research
☐ Other _____

Please make your check payable to:

Historic Reno Preservation Society

and send with this form to:

HRPS
 P.O. Box 14003
 Reno, NV 89507

RV 12.10.2019 / FO-DCD



P.O. Box 14003
Reno, NV 89507

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
RENO NV
PERMIT NO. 20

RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED



**Check us out on
Facebook!
Give us a Like!**



BULK RATE MAIL

Bulk Rate mail is not forwarded. FootPrints is mailed using a Bulk Rate Mail permit. If your address changes, please notify us at HRPS, P. O. Box 14003, Reno NV 89507, with your address change, to keep *FootPrints* coming.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Winter 2021 • Vol. 24 No. 1

- 1 The Future Lear and Riverside Drive...
- 2 Reno Historical: The Lear Theater
- 3 Timeline: Major Developments for the Lear
- 4-6 The Aristocratic Riverside Driveway, 1888-2020
- 7 Historic Covenants on the Lear
Preserving the Integrity of the Lear Building
- 8-9 First Tuesday Educational Programs
- 10 Before the Lear: The Ophanage
- 11 Sec. of Int. Guidelines for Historic Properties
- 12 Paul Revere Williams: Buildings in Reno
- 13 Paul Revere Williams and His Legacy
- 14 HRPS President's Message
- 15 HRPS Lifetime Members
- 16 Board of Directors



**Support Us on
Amazon Smile!**
amazonsmile



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

HRPS Officers

President: Carol Coleman
Vice President: ZoAnn Campana
Secretary: Debbie Hinman
Treasurer: Joy Orlich

Board of Directors
Brett Banks, Alicia Barber,
Elizabeth "Libby" Cook,
Sharon Honig-Bear, Bradley Carlson,
John Farrow, Alexis Thomas

HRPS Phone:
775-747-4478 (775-747-HIST)
Sandi Bitler

Executive Director:
Open

Programs:
Shery Hayes-Zorn, Susan Mullen

Membership: Katy Phillips

Walking Tours:
Alexis Thomas

Webmaster: Rosie Cevalasco

HRC Liaison: Debbie Hinman

RHF Administrator: Cindy Ainsworth

FootPrints Managing Editor:
Debbie Hinman, 322-9400

Editorial Staff:
ZoAnn Campana, Joyce Cox

Photographer: David Lowndes

**Editor Emeritus &
FootPrints Founder:**
Sharon Walbridge

FootPrints Graphic Design:
Double Click Design
dcdreno.com

Opinions expressed in *FootPrints* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial staff, the Historic Reno Preservation Society executive board or the general membership. *FootPrints* is a quarterly publication printed in Reno, Nevada. Articles may be reprinted in print or electronic formats only with permission of the HRPS Editorial Board. All rights reserved. ©2021 Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS)