

Houses in Black Springs ca. 1965. Special Collections,
University of Nevada, Reno Libraries



Lifting the Voices of **Black Springs**

by Alicia Barber

To those who know it, this landscape is instantly recognizable as Black Springs. The telltale landmark is Peavine Peak, which looms behind the isolated neighborhood about six miles northwest of downtown Reno. Much of the scene has changed since those midcentury snapshots. The streets are paved, additional houses have filled in the gaps, and mature trees shade and even obscure many of the yards. The earlier sense of spaciousness is challenged by the busy rush of U.S. 395 on one side and massive warehouses closing in on two others. Even the name has been changed, from Black Springs to Grand View Terrace. Yet the heart of the neighborhood—dozens of houses, two churches, the fire station, the community center and park—has survived largely intact for more than 60 years. This is a place with many stories to tell.

And we'd like to help make sure that those stories are heard. To do that, HRPS has been collaborating over the past year with Our Story, Inc. and other community partners to help document and promote the history of this special place and the people who built it.

The Building Blocks of History

The story of Black Springs is unique in many ways but universal in others. It was spurred by a common desire, to own a piece of land and make a home, but hampered by a series of seemingly unrelenting obstacles. At its heart is the story of

several African American families who arrived in the Reno-Sparks area in the 1950s and 1960s only to find themselves prevented from purchasing or even renting property in many central neighborhoods due to restrictive racial covenants that explicitly prohibited them and other minorities from living there. The parcels that they were allowed to purchase in town were small and costly.

Only when they learned of land being sold several miles north of town by J.E. and Dorothy Sweatt in a rural area long known as Black Springs were they able to start the lives they wanted. But its lack of basic infrastructure like a sewer or water system, gas lines, or trash collection meant years of struggling to secure the resources and attention they needed. Still, they persevered, moving older houses to the neighborhood from town, building churches, raising children and grandchildren, and putting down roots in the unforgiving soil.

The history of a community is never written in one fell swoop. Some stories are passed down from one generation to the next through the power of personal memory, and sometimes that memory must be retrieved and restored. What I love most about local history is the opportunity to assemble those disparate pieces, drawing from a myriad of sources to rebuild narratives lost to time, gradually filling in the blanks to bring the past back to life. In the effort to do that, one of the most valuable resources we have is each other. It's easy to fall into the pattern of working in isolation, but these days it's more important than ever to choose bridges over islands, reaching out to learn from each other's knowledge, experiences, struggles, and victories.

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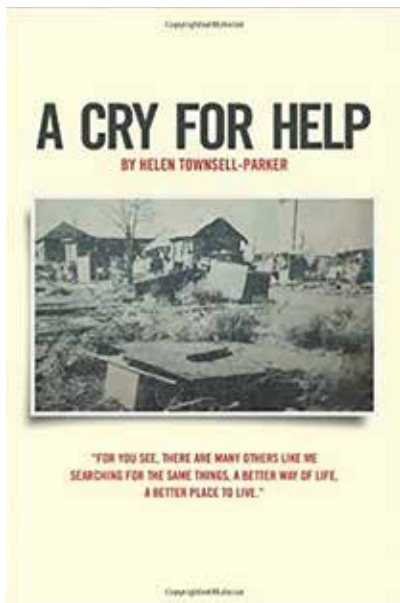
A swirl of activities conducted more than a decade ago laid the foundation for us to deepen our understanding of Black Springs today. In 2006, the Nevada Department of Transportation commissioned an architectural survey of properties adjacent to the U.S. 395 corridor in anticipation of widening the highway. To determine whether the proposed project might impact any historic resources, they set out to document all properties 40 years or older, which included 40 structures in Black Springs. Researchers C. Lynn Furnis and John W. Snyder wrote up thorough descriptions of the buildings and everything they could learn about them, speaking with some of the neighborhood's original residents, including Thurman Carthen, Sr. and his wife, Mae Ella, who bought land from the Sweatts in 1956, and Cecil Washington, who arrived in 1957.

HRPS Board member and frequent *FootPrints* contributor Debbie Hinman used information from that extraordinary resource, her own primary source research, and conversations with Mae Carthen and another former Black Springs resident, Dana Lobster-Harris, to write an article for the Winter 2010 issue of *FootPrints*. Her article, "Black Springs: A Colorful History," which traces one hundred years of Black Springs beginning with the 19th century origins of its name, can be accessed on the HRPS website (historicreno.org).

In 2010, Helen Townsell-Parker, who grew up in Black Springs, published her book, *A Cry for Help*. Helen's grandparents were Ollie and Helen Westbrook, who moved to Black Springs in 1954 and worked for decades to organize the neighborhood's residents to advocate for needed infrastructure. They left behind boxes of papers that Helen found in a shed on the

family's property and assembled into a valuable and moving narrative of the neighborhood's development. You can find Deb Hinman's profile of Helen and her book online in the Spring 2010 issue of .

Around the same time, Our Story, Inc. hosted a conversation with several longtime residents of Black Springs and placed the transcript on their website (ourstoryinc.com). It was just one of the many documentation efforts conducted by the non-profit organization,



Book about Black Springs by Helen Townsell-Parker, called "A Cry for Help".



Members of the Black Springs youth group P.O.W.E.R. stand in front of the house that they purchased from the State of Nevada and had moved to the neighborhood in 1970 to serve as a community center.

Image courtesy of Andy Gordon.

which was founded by Kenneth B. Dalton in 1996 to "gather and share the history of Northern Nevada's unsung." This conversation, titled "A Study in Black Perseverance," featured Thurman Carthen, Sr. and Mae Carthen, Carrie Townsell-Fitz (Helen Townsell-Parker's mother), who also moved to Black Springs with her husband in 1956, and members of the Moore family, who came along thirty years later. Together, they reminisced about when and why they came to Black Springs, the conditions they experienced there, and how their neighbors helped them through. Be sure to visit the site (ourstoryinc.com) to take a look at that and their many other initiatives.

Researching the virtual tour

I first met Helen when her book came out back in 2010, but refreshed my memory of Black Springs nine years later while working on a project for Nevada's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Tasked with forming a statewide advisory board for a federally-funded historic context to document "The African American Civil Rights Experience in Nevada," I reached out to Our Story, Inc. Executive Director Demetrice Dalton, who enthusiastically agreed to participate. In December 2019, Demetrice and I led the advisory board on a tour of Reno sites that included a visit to Black Springs. We spent an hour or so at the First Baptist Church, where Thurman Carthen, Jr. spoke with us about its history and the role it played in the community.

The visit was powerful for everyone, and after the project was completed (you can access it through the SHPO website at shpo.nv.gov), Demetrice and I brainstormed ways to bring more of this history to the public. That's when I came up with the idea of creating a virtual tour of Black Springs on Reno Historical, and happily, she was as excited at the prospect as I was. After running it past the Boards of both HRPS and Our Story, Inc., we entered into a formal partnership to put the tour together, directing funds from the HRPS Reno Heritage Fund to Our Story, Inc. to support the composition of entries.

One of the strengths of Reno Historical is that as both a website and a mobile app, it can be used to explore Reno's history in person or from a screen anywhere. Those who visit the website (renohistorical.org) can explore sites, scroll through virtual tours, read stories, and search for keywords. Users of the mobile app can walk around Reno and learn about places as they move past them. Including a virtual tour of Black Springs literally expands our reach miles to the north, just as it expands our understanding of our region's history and its diverse populations.

Because the platform is map-based, the first step was to select which sites to include, knowing that we can always add more as we gather new information (another perk of a digital project). And for that, we needed to be able to connect families and stories to specific places. We could draw on several sources for that, from the NDOT architectural survey to the memories shared in the Our Story, Inc. interview, to Helen's wonderful book. Fortunately, Helen already had created a map of the neighborhood featuring the churches and community center and a dozen or so houses with the names of the families who lived (or continue to live) there and a line or two about each of them.

Helen had taken many photos of the neighborhood, and we found more in the Special Collections department of the University of Nevada, Reno Libraries. As we continued to build the tour, we also benefited from the unprecedented number of historical documents now available online. Astoundingly, the Washoe County Recorder's office has now digitized the original deeds of sale for historic properties, so we can learn exactly when the Sweatts sold property to each original family. Census records and city directories found on Ancestry.com and digitized historical newspapers have helped us to establish timelines, occupations, family connections, and much more.

And, of course, we could also draw upon the memories of community members who lived or continue to live in Black Springs. Piece by piece, we began to reconstruct the stories of some of the neighborhood's founding residents: the Turner,



Ollie and Helen Westbrook outside their house on Westbrook Lane in 1991. Special Collections Department, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries.

Jones, Westbrook, Townsell, Carthen, Chatman, Stevens, Osborne, Bufkin, Washington, Lobster, and Pettis families, and more.

Gaining Momentum

Efforts to spread awareness of Black Springs intensified in the summer of 2021 when an event at the Nevada Museum of Art brought together several of us from HRPS, the museum, Nevada Humanities, and Our Story, Inc. A series of casual conversations evolved into a fantastic online event jointly hosted by the Nevada Museum of Art and Nevada Humanities on January 21, 2022.

Titled "An Introduction to Black Springs," the 138-minute program (which you can view on YouTube) featured some geographical and historical context from me, photographs of the neighborhood through time, and firsthand recollections and commentary from Helen and Demetrice. Audience members contributed their own questions and comments, which we saved and compiled. Additional conversations and interviews followed on KNPR Radio and a podcast for Washoe County government.



Hosea and Johnnie Stevens and their children outside their house in Black Springs, ca. 1960s. Stevens family.

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Former and current residents of Black Springs sharing memories at the Homecoming event in May 2022. Photo by the author.


Black Springs

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All this time, Our Story, Inc. had been quietly working on a project to establish a center of community memory in the very heart of Black Springs, at its Volunteer Fire Department station. Now owned by Washoe County, the modest but pivotal structure was built by the community in 1970 to combat the periodic fires that repeatedly destroyed entire family homes before distant firefighting forces could arrive. Its first chief, Bill Lobster, is believed to have been the first African American fire chief in the state of Nevada. On April 23, 2022, after much tireless effort, Our Story, Inc. held the grand opening of the Northern Nevada African American Firefighter Museum, which celebrates Chief Lobster and all the volunteers who made up the force and came together to build the station (check the Our Story, Inc. website for current museum hours).

On May 14, 2022, Our Story, Inc. hosted the first ever Black Springs Homecoming, which reunited scores of former and current residents, many from out of town. We devoted a large room in the Westbrook Community Center to activities intended to encourage the sharing of memories and photos. Staff of the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency (TMRPA) designed a large satellite map of the neighborhood that we called a “Memory Map” and we encouraged people to take a pen and mark places that were meaningful to them. A running slideshow of historic photos prompted happy

cries of recognition as people viewed their family members and homes. Pens and paper were provided to write down favorite memories and fill in family trees, and we shared copies of the original deeds and scanned family photos. The conversations and memories flowed. To wrap up the day, the neighborhood’s “elders” gathered in a semicircle to share stories of life in this small, close-knit community, ending in a spontaneous outburst of joyful song.

You can check out the nearly twenty sites on the Reno Historical tour of Black Springs anytime, and we’ll be adding much more content as we continue to speak with residents, gather photographs, and conduct research. Stay tuned for news of a forthcoming Nevada Humanities documentary about Black Springs, and efforts to nominate its historic Fire Station to the National Register of Historic Places. This is just the beginning, as we foresee many more collaborations with Our Story, Inc. and other community partners to help amplify the formerly “unsung” stories of our community for everyone to hear. 

Alicia Barber, PhD, is an author and professional historian who serves on the Board of Directors of HRPS.



This QR code takes you directly to the Black Springs Tour in Reno Historical.

Nevada Museum of Art, 160 West Liberty Street, Reno, Nevada

Exhibit: Janna Ireland on the Architectural Legacy of Paul Revere Williams in Nevada

July 2, 2022 - October 2, 2022

This exhibition features the contemporary photography of Janna Ireland, who explores the important contributions of architect Paul R. Williams (1894-1980) in Nevada. Williams was the first licensed African American architect to work in the western region of the United States, designing buildings in the 1920s through the 1970s. His work in Nevada spans the 1930s through the 1970s. The exhibition will open at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno on July 2 and run through October 2, 2022, and will then travel to the Nevada State Museum Las Vegas from December 3rd, 2022 – May 30, 2023.

Paul Revere Williams' architectural contributions collectively helped to redefine the built environment of the region. Some of his most iconic structures are in Southern California, and include the Music Corporation of America headquarters, and the renovation of the Beverly Hills Hotel; he was deeply involved in the design of the master plan for the LAX Airport and Theme building in association with William L. Pereira and Associates. Williams' unique architectural creations earned him the name "Architect to the

Stars," as he designed the homes of twentieth-century entertainers, some of which include Frank Sinatra and Cary Grant.

Williams' architectural body of work in Nevada includes residential homes that were designed to enrich the lives of all community members, commercial properties, and religious institutions. His most notable buildings include the La Concha Motel (now part of the Neon Museum) in Las Vegas, and the First Church of Christ, Scientist (now known as the Lear Theater) in Reno.

Williams was first introduced to northern Nevada in the 1930s by Luella Garvey, for whom he designed a house in Reno in 1934. That commission was followed two years later by his design of the Ranch House at Rancho San Rafael Park. Other residential and lodging properties in northern Nevada



Lear Theater, designed by Paul Revere Williams.
Photo courtesy of Max Chapman, 2003.

designed by Williams include the El Reno Apartments in Reno, the Lovelock Inn and Tharpe/Brinkerhoff House in Lovelock, and E.L. Cord's Circle L Ranch House in the Fish Lake Valley.

In southern Nevada, Williams designed the Guardian Angel Cathedral, the Royal Nevada Casino (no longer extant) and Berkley Square—Southern Nevada's first African American suburban community.

Janna Ireland approaches Williams' architecture from a fine arts perspective. She produces photographs that highlight the intimate interior and exterior details of his buildings, bringing her own poetic response to Williams' work. Ireland recently completed a photographic project on Williams' work in Southern California, which includes architectural styles ranging from Spanish Mediterranean to Modern.

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The Luella Garvey House, a duplex at the corner of California at Nixon, was designed by Paul Revere Williams in 1934, and placed in the National Register of Historic Places on January 28, 2004. Photos by Carol Coleman, 2004.



SYMPOSIUM:

Through the Lens: Honoring the Architectural Legacy of Paul Revere Williams

July 16, 2022, 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
\$30 General / \$25 NMA Members
\$25 Student

This symposium at the Nevada Museum of Art, 160 West Liberty in Reno, features contemporary photographer Janna Ireland in conversation with Daonne Huff, Director of Public Programs and Community Engagement at The Studio Museum in Harlem. Nevada historians Alicia Barber and Claytee White will present their most recent research on Paul Revere Williams in Nevada.

Doors open at 9 am with coffee. Lunch to follow the symposium and is included with registration. This event is presented in-person.



The courtyard of the Ranch House at Rancho San Rafael.

TALK:

A Look Inside the Historic Ranch House at Rancho San Rafael

August 27, 2022, 10 a.m. – noon
\$15 General / \$10 NMA Members
Pre-registration required.

In 1935, Dr. Raphael Herman, his brother Norman B. Herman, and Norman's wife, Mariana, jointly purchased the sprawling Jensen ranch located just northwest of the University of Nevada campus. With permanent residences in Beverly Hills and Hollywood, the trio hired Paul Revere Williams in 1936 to design a custom home in the Classical Revival style on the Reno property, which they renamed Rancho San Rafael. Join us for coffee in the courtyard of the Main Ranch House followed by a presentation by historian and author Dr. Alicia Barber.

Program will be held at the Main Ranch House, located in Rancho San Rafael Regional Park, 1595 N. Sierra Street, Reno NV 89503. 

For more information on the exhibit and to pre-register for related events, visit <https://www.nevadaart.org/art/exhibitions/paul-revere-williams/>



Two El Reno's moved to Lander Street in Reno. Photo by Sam Brackstone, 2010. Photo courtesy of Reno Historical.


ART BITE:

Alicia Barber on Paul Revere Williams' Architectural Legacy in Central and Northern Nevada

September 16, 2022, Noon to 1 p.m.
\$15 General / FREE NMA Members

To explore the work of Paul Revere Williams in northern and central Nevada is not only to gain insight into the remarkable breadth of his creative range, but to open a window into a transformational era in the state's history. Spanning the 1930s and 1940s, Williams' work in the region is deeply intertwined with the growth of its distinctive culture and economy, including its development into a divorce capital, tax haven, and national tourist destination.

Join Alicia Barber, Ph.D., award-winning writer, historian, and founder of the historical consulting firm Stories in Place at the Nevada Museum of Art for a look at the architectural legacy of Paul Revere Williams in northern and central Nevada.

Learn more about Paul Revere Williams four Reno properties at <https://renohistorical.org/tours/show/16>. 



Fifteen El Reno Apartment Homes, designed by Paul Revere Williams, opened at 1307 South Virginia Street on August 21, 1937. Each unit was furnished and fitted out with the latest Westinghouse kitchen appliances and metal kitchen cabinets. After World War II, the homes were sold and new owners moved them to different locations in Reno. Photo courtesy of Reno Historical.



Historic Reno Preservation Society and Artown July & August 2022 Historic Walking Tours



Tour cost is \$10 per person, free to HRPS members. Walks generally last from 1 ½ to 2 hours.

No dogs please. Reservations required and space will be limited.

Please go to www.historicreno.org to make your reservations, or email board@historicreno.org or 775-747-4478 for assistance 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.

Saturday
July 2
9:00 a.m.

MOVIE FOOTPRINTS IN RENO – 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 film 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 South Lake Street. **Tour guide: Robin Holabird.**



Tuesday
July 5
6:00 p.m.

CEMETERY TOUR – Join HRPS for an early evening visit to four of Reno's most historic cemeteries: Pythians, Hillside, 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 shoes suitable for rocky and uneven ground.

Tour guides: Bill Mardon, Steve Matles and Brett Banks.



Saturday
July 9
9:00 a.m.

NEWLANDS NEIGHBORHOOD – Enjoy an architectural walk through one of Reno's oldest and most prestigious neighborhoods. Newlands Heights Historic District was entered in the National Register of Historic Places in 2017. Meet at the Lander Street side of My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. **Tour guides: Sharon Honig-Bear, Derek Partridge, Matt Magaletti.**



Saturday
July 16
9:00 a.m.

DOWNTOWN SPARKS – Learn about the history of the rail city with a guided walking tour of Victorian Square and Downtown Sparks. This 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
July 19
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 guide: Anne Simone.**



Saturday
July 23
9:00 a.m.

TRUCKEE RIVER ALL THE TIME—See Reno's relationship with the Truckee over time, learn of the great floods and of Reno's architectural heritage, hear the Voice of the City, observe how the HRPS Walks in July relate to the Truckee and the history of Reno. Meet at the Wild River Grille at the Riverside Artists Lofts. **Tour guides: Jim Smith, Brad Carlson.**



Tuesday
July 26
6:00 p.m.

EL RENO APARTMENT HOMES — Visit the original site of these charming and unique homes designed by renowned architect Paul Revere Williams and view seven at their new locations. See other Sierra Vista Addition architecture, including the August Hill stone houses and the home of eccentric namesake LaVere Redfield. Visit a "hidden" enclave of historic homes collected by early county gardener, Jack Reeve. Meet at the northwest corner of the Statewide Lighting parking lot, 1311 S. Virginia. **Tour guide: Debbie Hinman.**



Saturday
July 30
9:00 a.m.

EAST FOURTH STREET – From a county road and railroad hub to the Lincoln Highway, U.S. 40, and beyond, Reno's East Fourth Street has always been a dynamic crossroads for industry, tourism, and commerce. Explore the historic roots of this corridor, where century-old brick hotels, warehouses, railway and manufacturing buildings have been preserved and revitalized to create one of Reno's most energetic districts. Meet around corner from Louis' Basque, 301 E. 4th St. **Tour guide: Alicia Barber.**



Tuesday
August 2
6:00 p.m.

MONROE STREET — Stroll along Monroe Street, originally one of the emigrant trails across the Truckee Meadows where later, notable Reno residents built their impressive homes. Savor the architecture and history of the south end of the Newlands neighborhood that features an eclectic mix of unique dwellings dating from the 1930s. Meet at the corner of Monroe and Manor Drives. **Tour guide: Debbie Hinman.**



Saturday
August 6,
9:00 a.m.

BRICKS & STONES — Take a walk through the Humboldt and Lander Streets Neighborhood. Discover the architectural treasures of this area: a mix of bungalows, Tudor, mission revivals, and cottage styles. Meet at the Lander Street side of My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. **Tour guide: Susan Mullen.**



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Fall Harvest of Homes Tour



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HEIDI'S HOUSE

by Debbie Hinman

On a quiet corner in the Newlands Manor subdivision sits a distinctive home that would not be out of place in the pages of a storybook. Built in 1928, it is of the English Cottage style, stucco with distinctive brickwork featuring a unique twisted chimney, and charming fascia cuttings. Even in a neighborhood replete with delightfully eclectic homes, 803 Nixon stands out. It's hard to believe it was the first project of a promising young architect named Russell Mills who would make it his home and go on to carve his place in Reno as a talented and prolific local designer of quality homes, schools and commercial buildings.



Russell, his wife Grace and son Rusty occupied the home for many years. Russell passed away in 1959, followed by Grace in 1979. Later that year, the home would go on the market and be purchased by a recently divorced woman, Ann McCarty. Ann was a longtime elementary school teacher, both at Mount Rose and after raising her three daughters, at Hunter Lake. She was also an active member of the



Top: It begins: Gradex Excavating delivers Truckee River stones to the front yard. Below left: The base of the wall is laid. Below center: Job foreman Chester surveys the progress. Photos courtesy Richmond Breen.



Nevada Historical Society and the Historic Reno Preservation Society. Her love of Reno's history made this home the perfect one for her. Ann passed away in 2010 and once again, the home sought a new resident. Ann's daughters chose Heidi Cooper out of

those prospective buyers. Like their mother, Heidi was recently divorced and her immediate enthusiasm for the lovely home told them she was the perfect third owner who would care for the home as had their mother. Daughters Molly and Meg wrote Heidi lovely notes, following the completion of the sale, wishing her happiness in her new home.

In 2012, Heidi took advantage of HRPS' program now known as the Reno Heritage Fund (RHF). The Fund provides matching funds to assist with making exterior repairs to historic properties. Heidi's application was approved for repairing the stucco exterior of the then 84-year-old home. It was a tricky proposition, in that today's stucco is a different composition (acrylic) from that of the 1920s (lime-cement). Said Jack Hursh, RHF member who was involved with the project, "Careful measures had to be taken to achieve an historic look." Stucco was hand-troweled with unique hand movements and then layered with

two different stucco materials to achieve the look of the original texture. The repair greatly enhanced the home's appearance and looks as fresh today as it did upon completion 10 years ago.


Originally, the home was surrounded by a privet hedge leading to two brick pillars with shingled caps and a rustic wooden gate.

During Ann's ownership, the hedge was removed but Ann saved the entry pillars and gate. Heidi left it as it was but this past winter, she and fiancé Richmond Breen came up with a new concept for the absent hedge. Richmond is owner of Richmond Breen

& Associates Landscape Design and Construction. The couple decided to build a low, dry-set stone wall to run from the brick pillars, curving around the front of the house. The curvature of the wall mimics that of the fascia. Another touch Richmond added is a twisted brick pillar on the northeast corner of the yard, echoing the chimney, with a shingled cap, to match those of the twin pillars framing the gate.

Most stone walls today are constructed using mortar. Dry-set or dry-stone walls are made by stacking stones without mortar to hold them together. This style of wall imparts an old-style character to the landscape. They can last for many years; in fact, the first settlers in America built walls this way, and many of those walls are still standing today. Another interesting fact about this type of wall is that it doesn't need a footing. It will flex as the earth moves due to freezing and thawing, but it won't fall down. Key to this is ensuring stones have as much surface contact between them as possible. Richmond's careful craftsmanship of this wall ensures it will stand for many years.

Local firm Gradex Excavating provided the stone, most of which was originally river stones from the Truckee River. Gradex delivered a 10-wheeled dump truck load, approximately 8-10 tons worth. Richmond hauled several smaller loads, also containing some nice pieces of a fractured granite from the site, in his pickup. He estimates that about 20 tons of stone were used in the project. Richmond had some help in the initial stages of the wall but did most of the construction himself, working on average 6 hours a day for an estimated total of 225 hours. He was fortunate that January was clear, cold and very sunny. "Very good working conditions," Richmond stated with a grin.

In addition to the river stones and bits of old brick and granite mixed in with them, two large granite blocks grace both ends of the wall. These blocks have great history and were fortuitously salvaged by Richmond in 2008 from a dump site along the river near Galletti Way. Reno's original City Hall was built in 1906 on the corner of E. First and N. Center Streets, today the site of the Cal Neva parking garage. It was demolished in 1965 and the brick and granite hauled away. It seems quite fitting that two of the historic blocks have found a home in the yard of this very historic home, just six years shy of its centennial year. One more wonderful piece of history is ensconced in the wall. Near the bottom on the right side is a yellowish fire brick imprinted "RICHMOND." The brick was given to Richmond by a neighbor and also has great history. The neighbor had salvaged the brick from a furnace in an 1880s home in Truckee, likely produced at a brickyard in Richmond, California during the same time period. He felt it rightfully belonged in Richmond's wall. I think we all can agree with that. 

Debbie Hinman is a HRPS Walking Tour Guide, HRPS Board Vice-President, Chair of the City of Reno Historical Resources Commission, and Editor of HRPS's FootPrints publication.



The sides of the wall rise to meet the original posts and gate. Photo courtesy Rob Crosswell. Center left: Look carefully to find the special 1880s "Richmond" brick. Photo courtesy Richmond Breen. Center right: Richmond's special touch: the "twisted brick" pillar. Photo courtesy Deb Hinman. Bottom: The completed wall, looking like it's always been there. Photo courtesy Rob Crosswell.

2022 City of Reno's Historical Resources Commission Awards

by Debbie Hinman

I'm happy to report that the City of Reno Historical Resources Commission Historic Preservation Awards made a reappearance this year, following two years of cancellation due to COVID-19. The awards ceremony was held on Thursday, May 12, 2022.

There are four categories for historic buildings, historical sites and projects: Residential, Non-Residential, Historic Landmark Award and Historical Project. Two categories honor individuals: Distinguished Service and Advocate. Because of the uncertainty surrounding health concerns this year, the awards submission request went out late and as a result, none were received for Residential, Non-Residential or Historical Project. However, there were three excellent and well-deserved nominations for Historic Landmark, Distinguished Service and Advocate awards.

Historic Landmark Award

The Historic Landmark Award is intended for "existing structures, landscapes, objects, etc. that are considered to be of citywide, state or regional significance." The 2022 award went to Trinity Episcopal Cathedral.

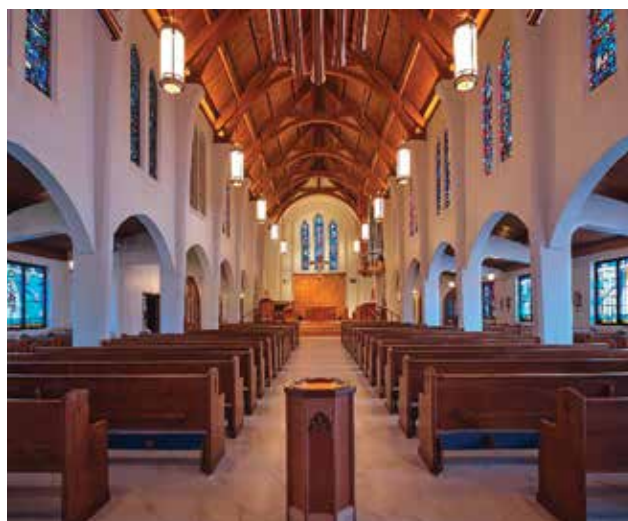
This lovely cathedral is on the National Register of Historic Places. It was constructed in two periods: the basement (affectionately referred to as the potato cellar) in 1929 and the cast concrete Gothic Revival above-ground structure in 1944. The recent remodel spanned the years 2018-2021 and was prompted, in the words of the submission documentation, by "the church's desire for spaces to serve their current liturgical purposes while preserving the integrity of the historic structure." The remodel was a collaboration of the Church Renovation Committee, the Architect, the Engineers and the Contractor. Said the team about the project, "We are pleased to have polished this historical gem that is at once functional, cheerful and welcoming to the City of Reno and her inhabitants." The HRC is pleased to have granted this award to Trinity. Receiving the award were the Very Reverend Stephen Brehe and James Lamb.



The Very Reverend Stephen Brehe and James Lamb accept the Historic Landmark Award for Trinity Episcopal Church awarded by Mercedes de la Garza. HRC Awards photos by Bradley Carlson. Trinity photos below courtesy Mercedes de la Garza.

Distinguished Service Award

The Distinguished Service Award recognizes an individual or group that has shown through their work a career in preservation that has resulted in the preservation of structures, education, and other related preservation activities. The 2022 Distinguished Service Award went to Tim and Nancy Gilbert.



The Gilberts began a career of rescuing historically significant homes in Reno's Old Southwest neighborhood with a neglected Mission-style home on Nixon Avenue in 2003. From there, they restored two wood-frame houses on Mark Twain Avenue in 2011, then two architecturally and historically significant homes on Joaquin Miller. Some of these homes required correcting later "remuddles;" others, such as 990 Joaquin Miller, were in such a sad state that they called for extensive work to return them to their original charm. From there they moved on to one on Bret Harte Avenue, two on Gordon Avenue and one on Patrick Avenue. They also restored Nancy's office, a bungalow on Jones Street. In 2019, they took on their largest challenge yet, purchasing a large corner lot on St. Lawrence and Arlington, where they built a new En Suite unit on one portion, and moved a large, historic home from the university gateway that was slated for demolition to the corner facing Arlington. The Gilberts' contribution to preserving these local treasures is huge; they richly deserve this Distinguished Service award.

Advocate Award

The Advocate Award goes to an individual or group that has through education, deeds, or specific historic restoration(s) increased the public awareness of historic preservation within the community. The 2022 Advocate Award went to Alicia Barber.

Alicia's contribution to local awareness of historic preservation is considerable. As a history professor for ten years at the University of Nevada, Reno, not only did she educate students on Nevada history, but she directed the Oral History Program and steered the creation of the online database so these important stories could be made available to all. She next turned her sights to co-creating a smart




Dr. Alicia Barber accepts the Advocate Award from Mercedes de la Garza.



Above, Tim and Nancy Gilbert accept Distinguished Service Award given by HRC Chair Debbie Hinman. Photo of 655 Arlington, a home moved from the UNR Gateway, once located at 127 E. 8th Street, which the Gilbert's moved and beautifully restored.

phone app, Reno Historical, to make local history accessible to anyone with a phone while out walking neighborhoods. Her latest major project is the creation of The Barber Brief; a newsletter to keep locals better informed about actions that impact our city's development. Alicia is the author of *Reno's Big Gamble: Image and Reputation in the Biggest Little City*, as well as numerous other articles for scholarly and popular publications. It would be difficult to find as committed an advocate for Reno and its history than Dr. Alicia Barber.

If you know of a committed individual or a local property that deserves recognition, please keep the annual Historical Resources Commission Awards in mind. A notice requesting nominations will come out in February 2023 or you can always find the information and forms at the City of Reno Historical Resources Commission website. 

Debbie Hinman is a HRPS Walking Tour Guide, HRPS Board Vice-President, Chair of the City of Reno Historical Resources Commission, and Editor of HRPS's FootPrints publication.



Message From Your Interim HRPS President

Debbie Hinman

Acronymity

I don't know about anyone else, but I am fed up with acronyms and abbreviations. Have we become so obsessed with brevity that we can't speak or write a few extra syllables? I finally came to terms with LOL, BRB and ROFL and now there are a whole host of diseases and conditions that no longer have names, such as IBS, CAD, CHF and COPD. My intention is not to explain those, because I can never remember what they are, but I do want to discuss four acronyms and abbreviations that are near and dear to the hearts of local preservationists and confuse everyone else. I'm talking about HRPS, NHS, HRC and SHPO.

HRPS

HRPS is the organization that produces the quarterly publication you are holding right now. It stands for Historic Reno Preservation Society. We pronounce the acronym as "harps," though there is no "A". Otherwise, it would sound too much like the name of—ahem—a disease. HRPS is a 501c3 non-profit organization that has been in existence for 25 years. There has always been a quarterly, though it was more of a "flyer" in its early days. We have increased its length over time, and several years ago we found that improving its quality through a better grade of paper and adding color would not cost as much as we thought so here we are today, looking stylish and modern. During nonpandemic times, HRPS offers walking tours throughout the spring and summer. Walks are free to members and memberships are very reasonable. Since 2009, there has been an annual Harvest of Homes Tour, where participants can view the

insides of our historic homes. We are still considering whether we can come back this Fall. We'll keep you posted! HRPS also offers monthly programs with notable speakers on local topics September through April. During COVID, we began offering virtual programs which have been archived on our website, historicreno.org. We have an active board and are currently searching for a new President to relieve the current interim one who would prefer to just chase stories.

NHS

HRPS is most frequently confused with the NHS, an abbreviation for the Nevada Historical Society. They are a totally separate entity from HRPS. We like and admire each other and occasionally cooperate, but the NHS is part of the State of Nevada Division of Museums & History and has been in operation since 1904, making HRPS look like the new kid on the block. Their mission is to collect, preserve, and educate the public about our shared history through exhibition, artifacts, books, photographs and manuscript materials relating to the state of Nevada, the Great Basin, and the West. The NHS has a museum, a store, an extensive research library and offers changing exhibits and events. It has an active docent council that offers regular talks on local history and personages. It is well worth a trip up the hill to visit it—don't let the construction and roundabout deter you! But do check the website for days and times. You can once again spend time in the library doing research or poring over wonderful old photos of Reno but you need to make an appointment in advance.

HRC

This abbreviation stands for Historical Resources Commission, for the City of Reno. It is a small commission, currently with seven members with backgrounds in architecture, engineering, work experience relating to history, or historic preservation or related expertise. But their job is important—they act as the official advisor to the city on matters relating to the historic preservation of cultural resources and buildings. They

review plans for changes to historic properties to ensure they are appropriate and suggest replacements if they are at odds with the historic integrity of the structure. They also issue Certificates of Appropriateness (of course known as COAs) to those wishing to modify an historic resource listed on the City Register of Historic Places or located within the boundaries of a local historic district, including alterations, demolitions and new construction. The HRC generally meets monthly on the second Thursday at 4pm and the public is welcome to attend.

SHPO

SHPO is the acronym for the (Nevada) State Historic Preservation Office, pronounced "shipo." Located in Carson City, the organization encourages the preservation, documentation, and use of cultural resources. SHPO educates the public about the importance of our cultural heritage so that Nevada's historic and archaeological properties are preserved, interpreted, and reused for their economic, educational, and intrinsic values and for future generations to appreciate. They also assist federal, state and local governments to meet their historic preservation obligations. SHPO also maintains a list of the state historical markers. The Nevada Department of Transportation has contributed considerable funding to maintain the markers for the last decade. So the next time you pull alongside a Nevada highway to read a marker, you can thank SHPO and of course, the NDOT.

So now that you have increased your knowledge of these shortened terms, please take advantage of the services offered by the four entities. All four are critical to preserving our past for current residents and future generations. And keep in mind that while these language "shortcuts" can be annoying, eventually many make their way into the English lexicon as words, such as "Laser" and "Radar." And how could you ever get cash from an ATM without a PIN? Something tells me this trend is here to stay.

HRPS Lifetime Members

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 Jacqueline Black (*)
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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.

HRPS offers Walking Tours during the summer, Speaker Programs during the winter, and a Home Tour in fall as a fund-raiser to support our Reno Heritage Fund grants. As a member, you receive our monthly email newsletter and our quarterly publication, FootPrints, to keep you informed about HRPS events, places of historical interest as well as items of concern. HRPS information is on our website, Facebook and Instagram.

☐ 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 _____

Ways to become a member or renew your membership in HRPS:

- 1) Join or renew on HRPS website historicroeno.org using credit or debit card
- 2) Fill out the above form and mail with a check to address below
- 3) Fill out the above form and credit/debit info below and mail to address below

Visa/MasterCard Credit or Debit Card # _____

Exp. Date _____ CVV _____ Name on Card _____

Address (include City, State, Zip) _____

Phone Number _____

Historic Reno Preservations Society, P.O. Box 14003, Reno, NV 89507

<https://historicroeno.org>

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