

Historic Reno Preservation Society's 2022 Watch List

In a rapidly changing city like Reno, one of the most difficult questions facing advocates of historic preservation is where to focus our attention. While the handful of properties listed on the city's historic register are closely monitored by the City of Reno's Historical Resources Commission, many others only receive widespread attention when facing imminent demolition—which is often too late to save them.

In an effort to help draw attention to some of the buildings we're keeping a close eye on, HRPS has assembled this "watch list" for 2022. These twelve properties have been selected not necessarily because they face any imminent threat (although some do), but because their future just seems uncertain, for one reason or another. Some of them have been vacant (or partially vacant) for years, while some have recently fallen into disrepair. Some are in use, but appear to stand in the pathway of new development. Some you may know well, some you may not.

With dates of construction ranging from Reno's first decade to the 1930s, these properties collectively help tell the stories of Reno's status as a bustling transportation center, the "Divorce Capital of the World," a thriving residential and business community, and more.

HRPS presents this list of historic properties not to point fingers or to raise alarms, but to generate awareness and appreciation. We want their owners, whether public or private, to know that we care about these places and that we consider them highly significant to Reno's history and worthy of preservation. Lastly, we want to offer our support to help ensure that they can remain safe and protected for years to come. **You can find a Tour of The HRPS 2022 Watch List on Reno Historical, including a full article on each entry and more photos, at <https://renohistorical.org/tours/show/18>.**

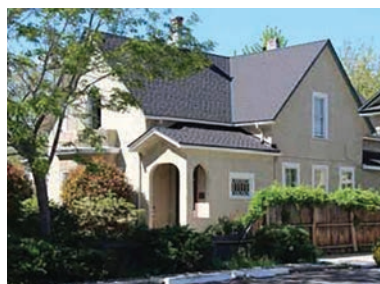
Benham-Beltz House (likely 1868/1869) 347 West Street

Recent research indicates that this house was constructed within a year of Reno's founding, most likely by its first owner, contractor Isaac T. Benham. Located on the western edge of the original Reno townsite, the single-family home serves as an irreplaceable link to Reno's original residential landscape. Over time it was surrounded by motels, which were purchased and demolished by Jacobs Entertainment several years ago.



Benham-Beltz House (2021)

Nystrom Guest House (1875) Just south of West 4th Street, between Vine and Washington Streets



Nystrom Guest House (2000)



Nystrom Guest House (2022)

This Gothic-style house was built in 1875 for John Shoemaker, Washoe County Clerk. In 1944, Estelle Nystrom began to operate it as a rooming house, catering specifically to visitors in town for a quick Reno divorce. It was listed on the National Register and the Reno Historic Register in 2000. Although originally located at 333 Ralston Street, it is currently on risers behind the Chapel of the Bells.

2022 Watch List

continued from page 1

I.O.O.F. Lodge/Reno Savings Bank (1877) 195 N. Virginia Street

This two-story building, with its ornate second-floor windows and intricate roofline, is one of Reno's oldest commercial structures, dating to 1877. It was designed by local architect John S. Sturgeon with rooms for the I.O.O.F. (Odd Fellows) lodge upstairs and the Reno Savings Bank and Sanders & Co. furniture store below. Later tenants included Ramos Drug Stores and Edises Jewelers.



1906



2022

Reno National Bank (1915) 206 N. Virginia Street

The 1915 Reno National Bank building was designed for George Wingfield by architect Frederic DeLongchamps. It is an exceptional Classical Revival style terra-cotta structure with extensive, low-relief sculptural ornamentation and Ionic columns, and housed various restaurants when owned by Harrah's Reno.



1920



2013

Howell/Sinai House (1916) 448 Hill Street

This lovely Colonial Revival house was designed by Nevada architect Fred Schadler and completed in 1916. It was home to five generations of the Howell family and later, like many of the larger houses in this central neighborhood, was adaptively reused as office space for attorneys, accountants, and other professionals.



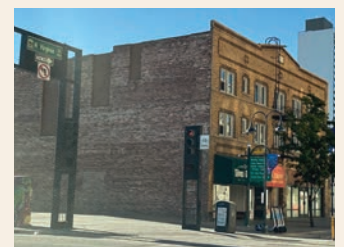
2022

Piazza Building (1925) 354 N. Virginia Street

The beautifully patterned brick Piazza Building was constructed in 1925 for Italian immigrant Santino Piazza, whose family ran a market on the first floor and the St. Francis Hotel upstairs. From 1938 to 1978, it was home to the popular hunting and sporting goods store The Sportsman, run by Santino's sons Chet and Link. In recent years, the historic buildings connected to it on either side were purchased and demolished.



2020



2022

Southern Pacific Railroad Depot (1926) 135 E. Commercial Row

Reno's Mediterranean-style Southern Pacific Railroad Depot, completed in 1926, is the fifth depot to have stood on this site since 1868. A new addition was constructed on its west side upon the lowering of the railroad tracks through downtown in 2005, leaving much of the original building unused. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2012.



1925



2012

Freight House (1931) North of Greater Nevada Field on Evans Avenue

The Southern Pacific Railroad Freight House, built in 1931, is one of the three historic railroad buildings grouped together on the south side of the tracks. The building was converted to commercial use in the 1970s and in 2009 it became the namesake of the Freight House District with the construction of the Aces Ballpark (now Greater Nevada Field).



1970



2012

El Reno Apartment Homes (1937) 1461 & 1471 Lander Street

In 1937, a group of 15 charming Lea Steel homes was assembled on 1307 South Virginia Street and offered for rent as the El Reno Apartments. The homes, made of prefabricated components designed by the prominent Los Angeles-based architect Paul Revere Williams, were later sold off individually. At least thirteen were relocated elsewhere in Reno, with these two grouped together on Lander Street.



2010



2022

Solari Building (1938) 1052 S. Virginia Street

From 1948 to 1974, this distinctive multi-colored brick building was the home of the Hansel & Gretel clothing store. Upstairs were the Solari Apartments, named for local decorator Camill Solari, who financed the building's construction in 1938. It was designed by the prestigious local architectural firm of Frederic DeLongchamps and George O'Brien.



1965



2015

First Church of Christ, Scientist/Lear Theater (1939) 501 Riverside Drive

Designed by Los Angeles-based architect Paul Revere Williams, known as "the architect to the stars," the First Church of Christ, Scientist was completed in 1939. After the congregation moved out in 1998, the Neoclassical Revival building was purchased and donated to the Reno-Sparks Theater Coalition to renovate into the Lear Theater, which never officially opened. In 2011, it was transferred to Artown, which recently sold it to the City of Reno.



1940



2022

Regina Apartments, (1941) 260 Island Avenue

The Regina Apartments is a collection of eight three-room units encased in a lovely brick building designed by Joseph Tognoni and completed in 1941. The building's original owner, Jean Sigg, was a successful Swiss-born chef who ran the kitchen at a number of downtown restaurants and casinos including the Willows on South Virginia St., and the Riverside Dining Room. The building was named for the Siggs' daughter, Regina.



2017

THE EL TAVERN AUTO COURT: A HISTORY

by Brett Banks



Reno's West 4th Street has worn many faces in its long history as a thoroughfare through the city, continuing eastward to Sparks. From a country road with scattered commercial and residential buildings, in Reno's heyday it became famous as the interstate road connecting the west to the east, crossing directly through Reno and Sparks. In 1913, the Lincoln Highway Association was created and the road was designated as the Lincoln Highway, later the Victory Highway, again running through Reno.

Attractions for passing travelers began to emerge as rapidly as the highway and in the 1920s at 1801 West 4th Street, the Log Cabin appeared under ownership of Frank Sullivan. Sullivan, who gave his profession as dealer at a gambling table, was arrested in 1923 on a charge of being a "disorderly person." He was offered the option of leaving town but proclaiming he liked Reno and would be staying, received a 90-day jail sentence. He was again arrested in 1924 for serving Prohibition agents alcohol at his

establishment and by 1926 the spot was advertising sales of sodas, candy, sandwiches, hot dogs, and more. By 1927, newspapers indicate the business was named the Log Cabin Inn and was a dancing and entertainment spot, but by the fall of 1929, the business was purchased by Harry Hutton. Hutton rebranded entirely, naming the 10-year-old building Hutton's Hut, the same as his other eating establishment in Hirschdale, California, and selling steak and fried chicken prepared by Mrs. Hutton. In September of 1931, Hutton added Earl Cross to the management of the Hut.

In November of 1932, Nevada faced an enormous banking crisis when all but three of Nevada's banks shuttered their doors. It was stated that as a result, it was impossible to cash a check in Reno. Many local businesspeople lost their assets during this time, including Hutton. In 1936, Hutton, 60 years old, was driven to suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning in his automobile, presumably due to the loss of his businesses. His death certificate shows his profession as waiter at the Golden Hotel Coffee Shop, though his obituary states he was employed at the Grand Cafe.

On December 8, 1932, just six short weeks after Hutton had lost his businesses, four men (Jack Clark, Shorty Coppersmith, Shorty King and George Nelson) debuted a new nightclub, which would be known as The Tavern, on the site of Hutton's Hut, offering gambling, live music, dancing and dining. Gambling in the state had been legal for just over a year but prohibition would stay in effect until December 1933. During the next few years, The Tavern grew in popularity and size. A larger dining room, a club room, and a lounge were added as well as the neighboring two acres for a parking lot. The Tavern was well known for being open seven days a week, never closing for even one of them. Things were going well for many years until early 1937 when it closed for



Fire consumed the Tavern on May 4, 1941.

the first time, claiming it was due to remodeling. From there on it changed ownership four times and by 1939 the establishment ended up in creditors' hands. The two "Shortys" were arrested in July of 1939 accused of rigging a roulette wheel at the Dog House resort with an electric magnet system controlled by hidden buttons.

On November 20, 1939 at auction, Vic Partipilo purchased the site and reopened it on Thanksgiving Day. It had a successful run until on May 4, 1941, the building caught fire and was destroyed – the only thing surviving was, fortunately, the safe and its contents. Vic intended to rebuild the nightclub but instead he built the El Tavern Auto Court and Coffee Shop on the site the same year. No doubt, its location on the primary road in and out of Reno made it a great convenience for automobile travelers and a lucrative investment for Partipilo. Even with Interstate 80 bypassing the old highway, the El Tavern is still in operation today along the historic West 4th Street corridor.

Brett Banks is a HRPS Board member, HRPS Tour Guide, manages the HRPS Instagram account and is President of the Hillside Cemetery Preservation Foundation.





Renoites are rejoicing now that ground has been broken for the construction of a new aquatic facility at Moana Park. But few residents may realize that the location has been a mecca for swimming for well over 100 years, with the last pool being demolished in 2012. And even fewer may recall the area's connection to professional baseball. These are just some of the aspects of the fascinating history of the Moana Park complex.

Currently, on the corner of West Moana Lane and Baker Street is Moana Park. The small park consists of playground equipment and is part of 11.4 acres which includes the soccer fields and the future home

of an indoor pool. Next to the park and soccer fields is 8.2 acres of youth baseball diamonds, plus a Reno Fire Department substation and a VFW building.

This large complex was once home to sheep peacefully grazing on land above an underground artesian well of 180-degree water. But their lives changed when three entrepreneurs opened a resort at this location for residents and tourists to enjoy the healthful hot mineral springs in the largest pool in Nevada.

Moana Baths and Hot Springs

In the early 1900s, Reno “devotees of pleasure and health seekers” flocked to what was then the outskirts of town on dirt roads in order to relax in the baths and experience the entertainment of the “world famous” Moana Springs resort. Newspapers reported that “scientists from all parts of the country have agreed unanimously that the water of the Moana Springs possesses medicinal properties

instrumental in restoring health and prolonging life.”

The resort was owned, managed and incorporated by Charles T. Short, J. N. Evans, and Al North. The name is said to have come from Short, who had visited Hawaii in the early 1900s and came back to Reno to open Moana Hot Springs in 1905.

Moana has several different meanings in the Hawaiian language, but according to one theory, the translation Short accepted was, “ocean, open sea.” Another theory is that Short learned of the Hawaiian mythological princess with the same name who could heal the sick and return youth to the aged. No matter which story is true, it is easy to differentiate newcomers to Reno, since old-timers pronounce the area as “mo-ann-uh” rather than “mo-ah-na.”

The resort piped in hot mineral water from the spring to fill seven pools—one large public pool, plus six smaller pools for groups of six to eight catering to guests who wanted privacy. The large pool had a temperature of around 90 degrees, while the smaller pools had warmer temperatures and could reach as high as 120 degrees. As opposed to today's Peppermill Resort, which uses hot water from that same aquifer



Above: Advertisement in Reno Evening Gazette in 1905.
At Top: Bath House at Moana Springs, Courtesy Jed Black, The Western Nevada Historic Photo Collection, <https://wnhpc.com/details/fb1020116741444465>

continued on page 6

Moana Park

continued from page 5

to warm the fresh water in their swimming pool and hotel plumbing by way of a heat exchange system, the water for the Moana pools continually flowed from the hot springs in and out of the pool. This helped keep the pool water clean, along with a weekly scrubbing with lime and lye.

A hotel, restaurant and bar added to the pleasure of guests, and the owners sold a bottled ginger ale made from the natural carbonated water of the springs. The bottled soft drink was distributed and sold throughout Reno and beyond.

Additionally, Jim Jeffries trained here for his 1910 heavyweight title fight against Jack Johnson, and Olympic sprint champion Jesse Owens ran against a horse at Moana.

Initially, patrons came by car or wagon down the unpaved Virginia Street, or they could take a bus from downtown Reno to the resort for only 25 cents. A few years later, local landowner, Louis Berrum, built a street car line to bring visitors from California Avenue, down Plumas Street, to the resort on Moana Lane. Nevada Senator Francis Newlands spoke in favor of this electric railroad, stating that Reno must offer the amenities of metropolitan life to attract those engaged in mining to take up residency in Reno.

After a few years, in 1913, Berrum, who was born in Denmark and came to Nevada in 1887, bought the entire resort. He made his home across the street from the resort so he could manage the pool. The resort offered more than swimming, such as dances, rodeos, boxing matches, trap shoots, circuses and aviation exhibitions. After his death in 1938, his son, Lou Jr., took control of the business. Lou Jr. sold the resort and land to the City of Reno in 1956. The buildings were demolished to create a recreational complex, which included a new indoor swimming pool.

Moana Baseball Stadium

On this unassuming 9.4-acre patch



Nevada State Historic Marker #234
at Moana Springs.

of land where the soccer fields and parking lot are now located, Reno's recreational, amateur, and professional baseball teams once hosted games. The ballpark saw famous players such as Satchel Paige, Reggie Jackson, and L.A. Dodgers' Fernando Valenzuela who gave up four unearned runs in his first U.S. professional appearance at Moana Stadium in 1979.

The first baseball diamond was built here in 1908, and in 1939 lights were added for Nevada's first night game. Professional baseball arrived in 1947 when the stadium was upgraded with facilities fitting of pro-ball. Disaster



UNR baseball at Moana Stadium.
Courtesy Special collections, University
of Nevada, Reno, Libraries.

struck on Halloween 1960 when the stadium burned to the ground. It was rebuilt (in a different orientation) in 1961 and improved over time, bringing fans to the University of Nevada, Reno's home games, as well as the Reno professional and semi-pro teams, including the Reno Padres, Silver Sox, Chukars, and Diamonds.

The last pro team moved away in 1999, leaving the well-worn stadium to recreational and adult ball games. People complained that the old stadium was an eye-sore, and by 2009 the Reno Aces were playing in a new stadium—Aces Ballpark (later renamed Greater Nevada Field). Finally in 2012 the old Moana Stadium was demolished and replaced with today's soccer fields.

Moana Aquatic Center

Besides the stadium, the Moana Park complex included the indoor swimming pool which replaced Moana Hot Springs and Baths, located near the corner of Moana and Baker Lanes. After the City of Reno purchased the property in 1956 and demolished the remaining buildings of the old resort, they built the aquatic center in 1960. As with the older resort, the new indoor pool used geothermal heating to warm the water.

The pool closed in 2007 after it experienced major equipment failure. Following the closure, fundraising efforts were made by community groups such as the Sierra Nevada Community Aquatics to repair or replace the pool. Unfortunately, the damage to the rusty old pipes was so extensive that repairs were out of the question. Between the effects of the 2008 recession and the fact that the Aquatics group didn't own the land, it was impossible for them to raise money for a new multiuse aquatic center. The pool was demolished in 2012, along with the old baseball stadium.

Soccer Fields

Following the demolition of the Moana Stadium and pool in 2012, plans were approved for a soccer complex to be built on the property. These fields were finished in an unheard-of 103 days, and

opened on March 30, 2013, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and soccer game. Many city leaders and local organizations worked together to transform the property into fields for soccer.

The soccer complex was named for Richard L. Jay, a prominent city leader who worked with the Reno City Council on the vision of replacing the old stadium with soccer fields and helping to raise \$400,000 in funding for the removal of the stadium. He was a promoter of youth soccer in the area and helped create the 7,500-member Great Basin Youth Soccer League. According to friends, he has had a positive impact on many youth in the community.

Jay played soccer back in the 1970s in high school. He graduated from Reno High School in 1979. Later he coached youth soccer, many of whom went on to play in college.

George Hamilton Memorial Children's Park

The playground equipment in the park on the corner dates back to 1996. The park is named in honor of George F. Hamilton, a prominent citizen. Hamilton arrived in Reno in 1939 and was involved in the Elks Lodge, Masonic Lodge, Lions Club, Reno Exchange Club, and many other organizations. He was named Distinguished Citizen of the Year by Reno Chamber of Commerce in 1967.

As owner of Hamilton Opticians, he was named to the Guild of Prescription Opticians Hall of Fame in 1992. The



Reno Host Lions named a service award in honor of Hamilton's voluntarism for the visually handicapped. Nevada Governor Bob Miller proclaimed March 9, 1993, as a day to honor George Hamilton. He passed away in 1993 at the age of 92.

Jack Tighe Memorial Fields

In the 1920s, the land where the youth baseball fields are located (as well as the soccer fields and fire station) was a ranch owned by the Baroli family, which bordered Louis Berrum's Hot Springs resort. Alessandro and Mario Baroli came from Genoa, Italy in the early 1900s and had many children while living on the ranch. He died in 1954 at the age of 76, and she died in 1976 at the age of 92. Their ranch stretched east to Lakeside Drive, which didn't formally exist as Lakeside Drive until the 1930s when Virginia Lake was constructed, and to the south to W. Peckham Lane.

The story of the youth ball fields begins in the 1950s when the City of Reno acquired the property for \$10. Plans were developed in the early 1960s: The first phase included a baseball diamond, as well as a picnic area to serve as a noise buffer between the fields and the neighborhood. Reno's Continental Little League was the first organization to use the ball park, and they still use it today. League officials, along with Reno city officials, sponsors and the public attended the dedication ceremony on May 18, 1964.

The park hosted the 1965 Little League Western Regional Tournament. By the next year, the ball field was upgraded with a second Little League field and a Babe Ruth ball field plus fencing, irrigation, and two scoreboards donated by a local business. The original lighting for night games was installed in 1968.

In 1969, the City expanded the park to eight acres by purchasing land behind the former Moana Aquatic Center (that 1960 pool which was demolished in 2012) and it is now part of the parking area. Over the years the city has installed new lighting, restrooms, concession stands, improved scoreboards, and a T-ball field. Artificial

turf was installed in 2016. Many local businesses have donated free services, equipment, or money for the upkeep and improvement of the field.


Jack Tighe

The ball fields are named in honor of Jack Tighe, a prominent sports figure in Reno and friend to youth athletics, who died in a 1963 car accident, the year before the ball fields opened.

Tighe was native to Scranton, Pennsylvania, born in 1923. He had a very notable athletic career for much of his life. At Penn State College (now Penn State University) he was most known for his boxing prowess. As a welter- and middleweight boxer, he earned and defended his four titles as national champion in the 1940s. As one of the college's star athletes, he was awarded Outstanding Athlete in 1948.

After arriving in Reno in 1957 he became involved in youth sports as commissioner for Sierra Nevada Amateur Athletic Union and was appointed to the Nevada Athletic Commission. He was named Sportsman of the Year in 1959.

Park Grounds

The Cochran Ditch lies beneath the corner of the property by West Moana Lane and Baker Lane. Many ditches were dug by early settlers to bring water from the Truckee River to the agricultural fields of the meadows. Most of the Cochran Ditch is now underground as it winds through the urban areas of Reno and continues to supply water for Virginia Lake. 

Information for this article came from newspaper articles (1905 through 2022) from *Reno Gazette-Journal*, *Nevada State Journal*, and the *Reno Evening Gazette*.

Jill Richardson is a member of HRPS, Nevada Historical Society, and a volunteer history researcher and Board member for Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation.

Historic Reno Preservation Society *with* Washoe County Library System
In the Downtown Library Auditorium

HRPS Speaker Programs

2nd Sundays 2022, Noon

Co-Chairs: Sheryln Hayes-Zorn and Susan Mullen

Historic Reno Preservation Society's free programs offer topics related to Reno's history.
Programs are held at 301 S. Center St.



Date: Sunday, September 11, 2022, at noon
Topic: Exploring the El Reno Apartment Homes
Speaker: Debbie Hinman

The El Reno Apartment Homes are examples of the work of architect Paul Revere Williams. In 1936, Williams built a demonstration house made of steel for the Architects Building Materials exhibition in Los Angeles. A year later, Reno builder Roland Giroux had 15 of the homes shipped to Reno and

assembled at 1307 S. Virginia St. Ten years later, the units were sold off individually and moved to other spaces; twelve of the units still exist. Speaker Debbie Hinman will present an overview of the homes and some history of them and their occupants.



Debbie is a Reno native and a University of Nevada, Reno graduate. For the past 20 years, she has been involved with Historic Reno Preservation Society as a tour guide, and as a researcher and writer for the HRPS publication *FootPrints*. She is vice president and interim president of the HRPS Board of Directors, and chairs the City of Reno Historical Resources Commission.



Date: Sunday, October 9, 2022, at noon
Topic: The Great Truckee River
Speaker: Scott Carey

The Truckee River has provided the water needed for life along its banks and has literally shaped our region. Presenter Scott Carey will discuss the significance of the river to the Native American people of the Great Basin who have lived along the Truckee River since time immemorial. He

will also discuss the historic Truckee River floods of 1955 and 1997 and their impact on the entire region.

Scott grew up in Sparks, attended local public schools and used the Governor Kenny Guinn Memorial Scholarship to graduate from the University of Nevada, Reno. Scott is a lifetime member and volunteer of the Sparks Heritage Museum, and since 2009 has served on the museum's Board of Trustees.





Date: Sunday, November 13, 2022, noon
Topic: Mrs. Mackay and the Bonanza King: A Chautauqua Presentation
Speaker: Veronica Fraser

Born in New York City in 1843, Louise Mackay spoke four languages and became known for her quick wit, generosity and charm, and was a hostess of international fame in Paris and London. But her focus was always on her husband John Mackay, her children and extended family. Louise and John

met in 1866 and they were married in Virginia City. John's physical stamina and knowledge of Nevada's Comstock Lode, and his wise choices in partners, paid off when they hit the silver bonanza that made the mining district famous.

Veronica Fraser has been active in community theater for more than 30 years in three states. Shortly before the COVID 19 pandemic began, she enrolled in a class at OLLI called, "Be a Chautauquan." She had just finished reading "The Bonanza King" by Gregory Crouch, and about a hundred years of Nevada history opened up for her along with a connection to Louise and John Mackay.



Previous Speaker Programs Available on HRPS Website

HRPS has been offering its Speaker Programs since its inception back in 1998, usually a couple in the Fall and four in the Winter-Spring. Think of how many interesting presentations we have had no ability to capture. COVID has definitely interrupted our ability to offer in-person walks, talks and a home tour, but using Zoom we brought Speaker Programs (and Neighborhood Stories) to you on a regular basis, through your computer. Another amazing advantage is that we were able to record (and edit) the presentations and the questions / answers. The following are available to you to view on the HRPS website, historicreno.org, at your leisure:

- **What is Rodeo?**
with Dr. Michael Allen
- **Ghost Trails of Reno**
with Frank X. Mullen
- **Saints, Sinners and Sovereign Citizens**
with John Smith
- **The Lear Theater
(First Church of Christ, Scientist)**
with Dr. Alicia Barber
- **Hebrew Cemeteries in Northern Nevada**
with Sharon Honig-Bear
- **Suffrage, Women's Rights and Historic Preservation in Nevada**
with Dr. Alicia Barber and ZoAnn Campana
- **The Archaeology of Burning Man:
The Rise and Fall of Black Rock City**
with Dr. Carolyn White
- **The U.P. House**
with Loren Jahn and Neal Cobb
- **American Mountain Men**
with Larry Walker
- **Before Reno and Sparks**
with Betsy Morse
- **Fact, Fiction and Howard Hughes**
with Geoff Schumacher
- **Nevada Barn Heritage**
with Jack Hursh
- **Harolds Club**
with Neal Cobb

THE GREAT RENO SPORTS CAR RACE

by Debbie Hinman · Photos from Jerry Fenwick, Neal Cobb, and Bobbie Cuddy



It is a pleasant, leisurely drive around today's Virginia Lake. The speed limit of 15 mph ensures the safety of park patrons, as well as families of geese crossing the road, usually with a bevy of goslings scurrying along behind them. From their car windows, drivers can enjoy the slower pace, allowing them to view the peaceful park and the calm waters of the lake.

But on the weekend of Saturday and Sunday, October 20 and 21, 1951, it was a different story. The peace and calm were disrupted by the roar of motors revving, the smell of exhaust in the air, and the excited babble and shouts of hordes of both residents and non-locals who packed the area to observe Reno's first official sports car road race.

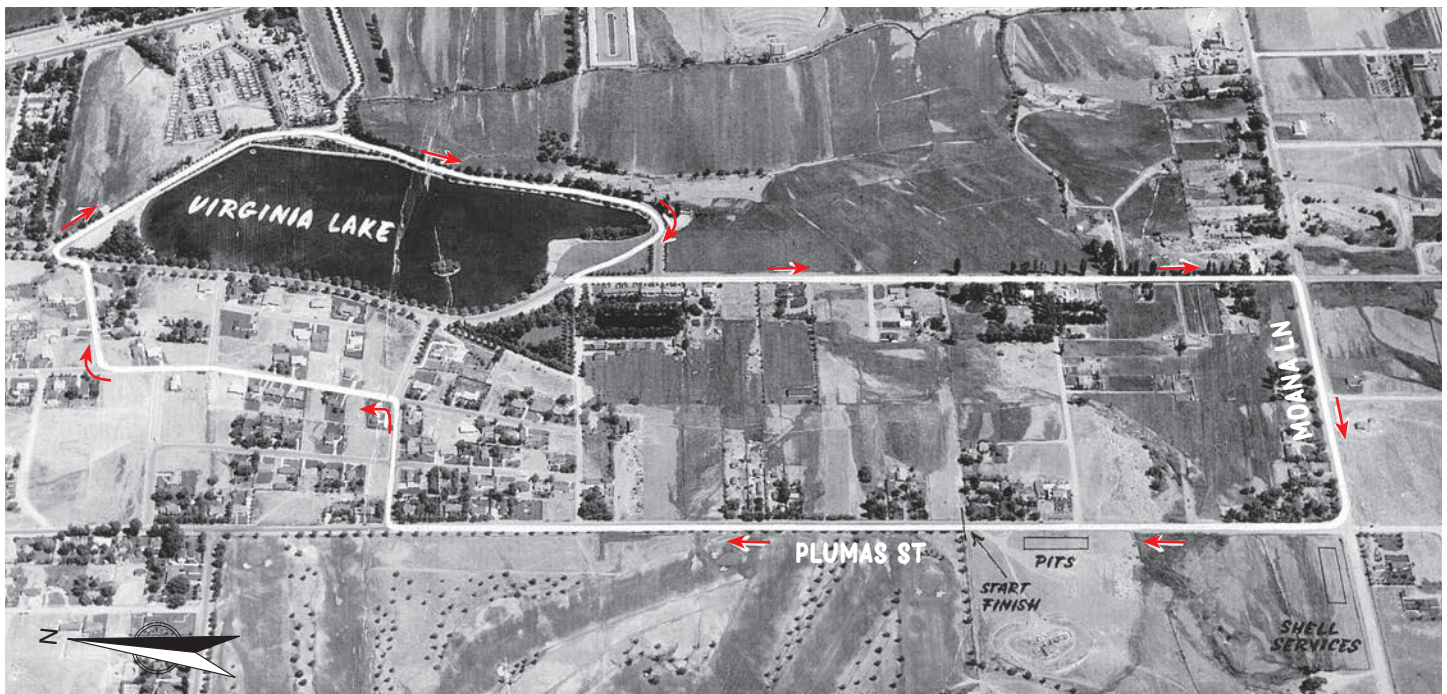
PREPARATIONS AND PLANNING

To start at the beginning, in mid-summer of 1951, president of the local Reno Chamber of Commerce William Cashill received a communication from William N. Breeze, San Francisco regional executive of the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA), suggesting that Reno might be awarded one of the major national sports car road races of the year.

Breeze explained that the races are strictly amateur affairs, open only to production model "catalogued" sports cars driven by their owners. Breeze made the point that "hot rods," stripped-down "souped-up jobs," and hand-made racing models are strictly barred—as well as professional race drivers. Acceptable automobile entrants were largely expensive foreign models such as British Jaguars, Rileys, Talbots and Allard cars (though powered by American engines), French Simcas and Renaults, and Italian Alfa Romeos and Ferraris.

All cars must be stock and were required to run on standard grades of gasoline. Wrote Breeze, "I feel sure that of all the communities I can think of, Reno would be the most desirable place for a European-type race." Breeze envisioned at least two annual events in the west under international sanction, writing, "One of these is the Pebble Beach contest, and the other would be a Reno race."

Immediately seeing the possibilities of such an event as a means of attracting larger crowds to Reno late in the fall after the normal tourist season had slowed, Cashill responded positively to Breeze's proposal. He then shared the letter with the Chamber's Sports & Special Events Committee chair,



The start and finish line are on Plumas, near Moana Lane, to accommodate the pits and gas station south of the Washoe Golf Course. The cars head north on Plumas, turn east on Country Club Drive, north on Watt Street, then east on Bonnie Briar to Lakeside. From there, the cars would travel around the north end of the lake, then head south on what is today Eastshore Drive, joining Lakeside and then to Moana Lane, and right onto Plumas.

Robert L. Stoddard, who appointed a subcommittee headed by Roy Powers, Jr. and composed of Harry Frost, Gordon Harris and E. R. "Bud" Oden.

The next communication came from William B. David, San Francisco theater executive who apparently had interests in Reno. Wrote David, "The location in Reno is a natural for these races due to weather conditions in the fall, and possible courses. I think...you will be amazed at the amount of response you will receive from participants and fans of the sport." He underscored that the desire of sports car racers was not for closed course speed events, but rather for short, winding courses offering tests of driving skill.

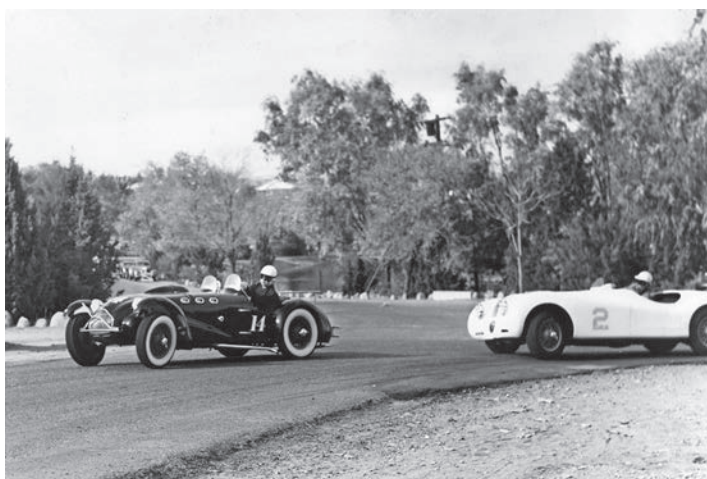
Powers' subcommittee immediately set to work researching races throughout the country to assess Reno's suitability for such an event. Safety, of course, was a primary concern. The SCCA required that every competing automobile be inspected before every race by their technical committee of experts, that driving rules were to be rigidly enforced and courses selected by the association to furnish tests of driving skill rather than emphasis on horsepower or speed. Curves and sharp turns had to be guarded by baled hay or similar devices to prevent accidents or damage to cars. The Chamber agreed to foot the expense for putting the selected course in shape for the race.

The Virginia Lake site as well as several other possible course areas in the Reno area were submitted to SCCA officials. By August 20, Virginia Lake had been selected as the site. The complete route of the 2-1/2 mile course was mapped out, with the start and finish line on Plumas Street, near Moana Lane, where there was room to accommodate the pits and gas station south of the Washoe Golf Course.

In late September, Clayton Phillips, local insurance agent, accepted the chairmanship of the Reno Sports

Car Road Races Committee. Phillips announced that any proceeds from the auto race would go to the 1951 Community Chest campaign.

William Breeze again wrote to the Chamber to let them know the following: "Interest in the Reno race is high throughout the country and though the official entry blanks have only been in the mail for ten days, applications have already been received from drivers



The winner in front in car number #14: Driver Bill Pollock in his Cadillac-Allard, winner of the Nevada State Cup Race.

in Boston, New York, Chicago and the entire Pacific coast." Chamber officials reported numerous requests for available lodging had been received.

In an October 5 article, the local newspaper reported that drivers from all over the country had begun to converge in Reno. A Boston driver, Sherwood Johnston, was cited as being "elated over the unique combination of fast straightaways and deceptive curves." Interestingly, the article reported that "a number of new American cars will be seen" but there was no further mention of this. Other well-known drivers highlighted were Roger Barlow of Los Angeles in his prize-winning Simca and William Friedauer of Glendale, California in a British Austin A-40, modified to resemble a miniature of the larger and racier English Allard. Sports car "addicts" would be watching the performance of the Nash-Healey, the only one in the race built by a major American company

(even if it was a hybrid with British running gear and frame).

You'd imagine that an event of this size and scope would have taken many months, even years, to prepare for but the SCCA and Reno's Chamber of Commerce pulled it together in a little over three months! One major concern was crowd control. The SCCA assisted Reno with this, using all the best features of previous race control measures.

Another concern was technical features. Inspection facilities were set up to guarantee safe functioning of all entries. Every driver was to have full opportunities to tune his car to peak performance at Reno's 4500-foot altitude. The Chief Marshal Jay Jones oversaw flagmen and other car controls. Barney Clark, vice chairman, was to handle all trophies for the race; there would be no cash prizes. Motor Clubs would be eligible for trophies as well as the drivers. Spectators would be given information sheets

for their guidance and safety and the entire track was to be patrolled by jeeps with radios to communicate with each other and mounted groups.

Bill Breeze provided a special treat for onlookers. He had a Formula III Cooper flown in from New York to "rocket around the course." The car would not be participating in the race because, as Breeze announced, there is no competition for the 650-pound auto which can achieve 100 mph from a standing start in 15 seconds. At that time, the Formula III cars were a British post-war development, designed to bring racing down to the low-income brackets.

By October 15, just five days before the start of the event, electric clocks to be electronically controlled were being installed at the start and finish lines and on the straightaways of the course, which would record lap times and maximum speeds. There were 63 cars

continued on page 12

Great Reno Race

continued from page 11

entered in the races. It was estimated crowds might range from as low as 5,000 to as high as 30,000. Lodging figures for the weekend were reportedly on a par with the Fourth of July and Labor Day holidays. More drivers than cars would be on hand for the two-day event, since some of the cars would be driven by different drivers in different races and each car would have a pit crew. Sherwood Johnston of Massachusetts was the first out-of-town participant to arrive in Reno. He towed his Jaguar to Elko and then drove it to Reno (presumably ignoring speed limits) in three hours, 16 minutes. Johnston's Jaguar would be driven by Warren Collins III in the novice race on October 22, which was scheduled to feature two Reno drivers, Dr. William A. O'Brien III and William (Bill) Harrah.

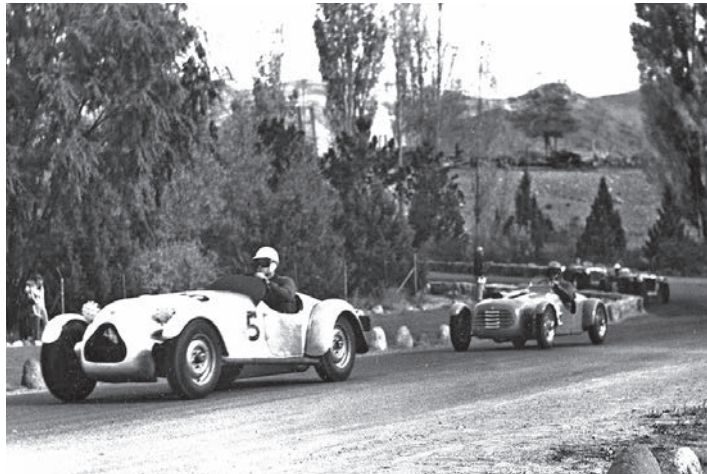
The schedule for the two-day event was as follows: on Saturday, the program was to get underway with the technical inspection of all cars and from 2-5 pm, the drivers were slated to compete in afternoon time trials. Winners of the trials could draw choice post positions. On Sunday, the morning events were to begin at 11:30 with the 15-mile novice dash, followed by the 50-mile Comstock Cup race at 12:30 pm. The "Big Event," the 150-mile Nevada State Cup race, was to begin at 2 pm.

The course would be closed to racing every hour on the hour to permit residents within the blockaded area to enter or leave their homes. Food, refreshments and restroom facilities were all arranged for as well as grandstands for reserved attendees and one for parents with children. Admission was \$1; \$2 for a reserved grandstand seat. 250 "Guardian Angels" were enlisted to control crowds along the 2-1/2 miles of city streets, keeping a particular eye out for dogs and children on the loose.

RACE DAY - SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22

An estimated 15,000 onlookers lined the two and one-half mile course that momentous Sunday morning. One excited observer was 15-year-old Jerry Fenwick (today a local prize-winning photographer), whose father's friend was in town for the race and invited the boy to join him.

Unfortunately, the Nevada State Cup race had to be shortened by 18 laps when three drivers experienced minor



Second place winner in car number 5, of the Nevada State Cup Race, Donald Parkinson in his Jaguar XK120.

mishaps that delayed the race. After the third accident, road race directors decided the full 60 laps could not be completed before dark. At the end of the 42nd lap, the winner was proclaimed to be Bill Pollock of Los Angeles in his slick Cadillac-Allard, leading the field with an average 61 miles-per-hour speed. Fellow Los Angeles resident Donald Parkinson trailed by seconds in his Jaguar XK120. Another Californian, Sterling Edwards of San Francisco driving an "Edwards Special," took third place.

As for the earlier Comstock Cup race, still another Angelino, Bill Carrigan, won the 15-lap race in a Singer SM 1500. Close behind were Californian Edward Oliver of Reseda in an MG-TD while Robert Zeirph of San Mateo took third in the same make of vehicle.


The novice event was won by Thomas Carstens of Tacoma, Washington driving Bill Pollock's Cadillac-Allard. Though

no Reno driver won a race, second place in the novice event went to Max Malchowski, driving one of Harrah's vehicles. Forest Edwards of San Jose, driving an MG-TC, finished third.

Two of the three drivers injured turned over on the southernmost corner of the track near the lake. Coincidentally, one of those was Bill Breeze who first suggested the race to the Reno Chamber; the other was Minnesotan Eddie Jones. The third injury occurred when guard Ray Brown, who was busy

keeping the crowds back from that southernmost corner just before the hairpin turn, had his hand struck by Breeze's hurtling Jaguar, lacerating it. Course officials credited Brown with possibly saving numerous onlookers by forcing them back from the turn as Breeze's car slid into it.

Fortunately, there were no fatalities except perhaps the damaged cars. However, the Virginia Lake Sports Car Race had its first and only run. A suitable date could not be agreed upon in 1952, then in 1953 it was suggested that

Stead Air Force Base might accommodate more spectators, thereby ensuring greater participation and of course, more revenue. Also, as the Virginia Lake area became more populated, it grew to be even less desirable for a crowd that would likely increase year over year. I'm sure those present for this event, however, remembered it fondly for many years to come. 

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.

Information for this article came from newspaper articles from 1951-1953 and discussions with Jerry Fenwick and Neal Cobb. Inspiration for the story came from Bobbie Cuddy, who gave me several photos she found at a garage sale.

Slot Machines

Fruits, Bars, and the Liberty Belle, Oh My!

by Sharon Honig-Bear · Adapted and reprinted from edible RENO-TAHOE

Did you ever wonder why slot machines, the quintessential symbol of Nevada, feature fruits and bars? If you—like me—write about local food history, this question is inevitable. The answer is buried in slot history and ultimately is connected to a long-popular restaurant in Reno, the Liberty Belle.

Chew on this

In 1887, San Franciscan Charles Fey—remember that name—designed the first mechanical slot machine. The device featured three spinning reels, using five symbols— hearts, diamonds, spades, horseshoes, and the famous Liberty Bell. It was a natural to dub the machine the “Liberty Bell.” Other manufacturers happily followed into this lucrative market.

By the early 1900s, the law cracked down on cash-paying slots and public gambling. San Francisco banned all 3,300 slot machines within the city in 1909. Nevada also instituted a prohibition in 1909. To circumvent the laws, the Bell Fruit Gum slots, manufactured by Industry Novelty Co., turned their devices into chewing gum dispensers. Card numbers and suit reel symbols were replaced with fruit reel images such as cherries, plums, oranges, lemons, and watermelons. The machines now spilled out packs of gum, the flavor matching the winning fruit reel symbol. The “bar” symbol we recognize today was introduced to slot machines at this time, and was based on the stylized company logo of Bell Fruit, designed to resemble a stick of chewing gum.

The Fey Family and the Liberty Belle

Back to Charles Fey, the designer of the Liberty Bell slot. His grandsons Marshall and Frank came to Reno and opened a restaurant in 1958 called (what else?) the Liberty Belle. It replaced the Li'l Red Barn in a prominent location in front of what is now the Reno-Sparks Convention Center.



The Liberty Belle Restaurant on Virginia Street in Reno.

Photo courtesy of Neal Cobb.

The restaurant was as famous for its Western memorabilia as for its food. The heavy bronze entry doors were salvaged from the Palace Hotel in San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. Marshall joked that it cost \$250 for the doors and two grand to adapt the Belle's front entrance to accommodate them. Large, ornate chandeliers, red flocked wallpaper, and vintage prints added to a nostalgic grandeur. The back bar was made of rosewood and birch and started life in the Owl Club in downtown Reno. Even the restaurant's roof got in the act, supporting a variety of horse-drawn wagons. And on a personal note, the first restaurant review that I wrote for the *Reno Gazette-Journal* in 1988 was about the Liberty Belle Restaurant and that began almost eight years of assessing the local food scene.




A slot machine's vintage reel would spin a variety of fruit and berries.

Classic food

The bar was the draw in the early years. Marshall, in an interview with Dennis Myers, explained, “And the way we got in the restaurant business is the maitre'd of the [Mapes] Sky Room—they closed down, so he phoned us up and wanted to know if he could run the kitchen, and we said, “Sure.”” After a few failed efforts, the Feys decided to run the operation themselves. It became known as a steak and prime rib restaurant, heavily visited by locals. Many considered the prime rib the best they ever ate. The menu included ribs, fried chicken, and a smattering of seafood. Portions were generous and prices were moderate.

The Liberty Belle stayed true to its classic menu and ignored food trends. It established its reputation as a meat-and-potato place and the restaurant rested on those laurels. The addition of spinach salad, dotted with bacon and egg, was as experimental as the menu got. Coffee was included in the cost of the dinner, a throwback to a time such as 1935, when 90% of restaurant customers ordered coffee with their meals.

As a bonus, the Feys created a museum with old slot machines. Marshall had no idea how much he spent acquiring the collection over the years but many of his purchases were made before inflated prices for collectibles drove ordinary people out of the market.

Those heavy bronze doors closed for the last time in 2006. Online blogs still lament the loss, especially of the prime rib. But all is not lost. Head to the Nevada State Museum in Carson City to see an original Liberty Bell slot—but you'll have to bring your own fruit or gum with you. 

Sharon Honig-Bear is a HRPS Tour Guide, Board Member, Lifetime Member, originator of the HRPS Home Tour and Reno Heritage Fund, and a HRPS Past President.

Message From Your HRPS Board

Hello HRPS Members and Friends,

A New Board Member

After several retirements and changes in the HRPS Board we are looking to increase the number of our Board. We are pleased to announce that our newest Board member is Tim Gilbert, who with his wife Nancy, has restored many homes in the Old Southwest, as well as moving the home at 127 E. Eighth Street from the UNR Gateway District across town to its new location on South Arlington and St. Lawrence. Tim is actually related to a former resident/owner of this delightful home and remembers visiting it as a small child. A note of interest: Tim's father's family came to Nevada Territory in 1862.

Their Love of Reno History...

Once again we're repeating Sharon Honig-Bear's line, "Lifetime Membership is designed as a way for the community to proclaim their love of Reno history and to endorse the work of HRPS." Our newest Lifetime members are Anne Parten and Robert Nelson of Alexandria, Virginia. Why, you say, would someone living in Virginia join HRPS and become a Lifetime member? Last October Anne contacted HRPS to ask for a copy of the 2004 booklet about Powning's Addition, "A Walk Through Time" which we sent her along with a few other things about Powning. It



turns out that Anne is related to C.C. Powning through his wife Clara. Anne sent along a delightful picture of a young C.C. Powning. They are hoping for a Reno visit sometime.

And A Garden Party

On Thursday, August 18, HRPS celebrated its Lifetime members with a party in Tim and Joan Elam's Enchanted Garden. Kudos to Tim and Joan for providing the opportunity and for their good humor as we survived a downpour a short time before the party began. We appreciate the support and dedication of our Lifetime members and like to host a party every so often to tell them they are appreciated!



The delightful Enchanted Garden.

A John Ben Snow Grant

We received wonderful news from the John Ben Snow Foundation that we had been awarded \$12,000 for our proposal to expand the Reno Historical app to research and document minority populations, including the Black, Native American, Asian, and Latinx communities. This grant will run through June of 2023 and supports Dr. Alicia Barber as editor and researcher, along with other writers. As our Bylaws state that a Board member cannot be paid by HRPS, Dr. Barber must resign from the HRPS Board. She will be considered a Committee Chair as Reno Historical Editor. We thank Dr. Barber for her time on the Board and for her expertise.



Loren Jahn working with his "new" period-appropriate rain gutters. The home being restored is shown behind Loren.

Reno Heritage Fund

We continue to offer small grants to improve the facades of historic (think 50 years old) properties in the Reno area. We hope to raise awareness in our community about the importance of not only preserving historic buildings, but also preserving the history of what took place in those buildings.

We are pleased that we could offer \$10,000 towards the cost of renovating the façade of the Arlington Avenue entrance to St. Thomas Aquinas Cathedral's elementary school building.

We appreciate the efforts of Loren Jahn to restore the house he moved from 821 N. Center to its new location at 579 W. Taylor. His dedication to recreating a period-appropriate property is impressive. HRPS was pleased to donate \$5,500 to create rain gutters and downspouts to protect the exterior. We look forward to the day when we can show this property on the HRPS Home Tour.

Thanks again for your support,

HRPS Board of Directors
board@historicroeno.org

HRPS Lifetime Members

Darleen R Azizisefat
 Sharon Honig-Bear
 Sandi Bitler
 Jacqueline Black (*)
 Lynn Bremer
 Holly Walton-Buchanan
 Florence Ann Burgess
 George Burke
 Linda Burke
 Tom & Phyllis Cates
 Jan & Phil Chik
 Press & Delores Clewe
 Karalea Clough
 Neal & Mary Cobb
 Dr. Thomas & Mary Conklin
 Barbara & Ralph Courtney
 Joyce Cox
 Becky Czarnik
 Joan Dyer
 Betty Easton
 Diane & Dale Edwards
 Gail Ewart
 Fran Byrne Fricke
 Marilyn Fuetsch
 Susan Holly Gallup
 Francine & Ted Gray
 Melinda & Dan Gustin
 John & Susan Hancock
 Toni Harsh
 Carol Haydis
 Jacquie Foundation
 Alan Lee & Ivey Johnson
 Red (*) & Connie Kittell
 Larry & Chris Klaich
 Pat & Mike Klos
 Laurence & Linda Kutten
 Katherine Latham
 Jan & Jim Loverin
 David(*) & Laura Chenet Lowndes
 Linda Madsen
 Catherine Magee
 Francine Mannix MD
 Charlotte & Dick McConnell
 Wayne & Patty Melton
 Marilyn Melton
 John & Holly Muran
 Prudence Gould Muran(*)
 Anne Parten & Robert Nelson
 Peter & Renate Neumann
 Al & Nancy Pagni
 Butch & Susan Peachy
 Pioneer Center
 Marshall & Pat Postman
 Jonnie Pullman
 Hannah Satika (*)
 Rhonda Shooler & Jerry Sawyer
 Michael & Karen Smith
 Robert Stoldal
 Tom (*) & Leanne Stone
 Fran & Terry Terras
 Joyce Thompson
 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.

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.

PD 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 historicreno.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://historicreno.org>

RV 04-15-2021 / FO-DCD



P.O. Box 14003
Reno, NV 89507

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

RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED



Follow us on Facebook:
@HistoricRenoPreservation



Instagram
Follow us at:
@historicrenonevada



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES



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

Fall 2022 • Vol. 25 No. 4

- 1-3** HRPS 2022 Watch List
- 4** The El Tavern Auto Court: A History
- 5-7** Moana Park & Stadium
- 8-9** HRPS Fall Speaker Programs
- 10-12** The Great Reno Sports Car Race
- 13** Slot Machines: Fruits, Bars and the Liberty Belle, Oh My!
- 14** HRPS Board of Directors' Message
- 15** Lifetime Members Membership Form
- 16** Table of Contents and Board of Directors

Scan this QR code with
your smartphone to go
directly to Reno Historical



Support Us on Amazon Smile!



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

HRPS Officers

President: Vacant
Vice President: Debbie Hinman
Secretary: Vacant
Treasurer: Joy Orlich

Board of Directors
Brett Banks, Alicia Barber,
Bradley Carlson, Derek Partridge

Past President:
Carol Coleman

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

Administrator: Jessica Johnson

Programs:
Shery Hayes-Zorn, Susan Mullen
Membership: ZoAnn Campana

Walking Tours: Vacant

Webmaster: Rosie Cevalco

HRC Liaison: Debbie Hinman

Email Newsletter: Joy Orlich

RenoHistorical Editor:
Dr. Alicia Barber

RHF Administrator: Cindy Ainsworth

FootPrints Managing Editor:
Debbie Hinman, 775-762-5864

Editorial Staff:
ZoAnn Campana, Joyce Cox
Photography: Rob Crosswell

Editor Emeritus & *FootPrints* Founder:
Sharon Walbridge

FootPrints Graphic Design:
Double Click Design
dedreno.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. ©2022 Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS)