

# Historic Reno PRESERVATION SOCIETY

# Newsletter

*Dedicated to Preserving Reno's Rich Past with  
Education, Advocacy, and Leadership.*

APRIL 1999

VOL. 2, NO. 2



## ARCHES & COLUMNS

*Excerpts reprinted with permission from the  
author—Guy Rocha, Nevada State Archivist*

### "Nevada's First Robber Baron" Nevada Magazine - March/April 1980

"His death was not so deeply deplored by the community at large as it should have been," wrote Allen C. Bragg, editor of the Reno Evening Gazette and a rare friend of Myron Charles Lake. The founder of Lake's Crossing (Reno) had made many enemies while he lived. As far as most people who knew him were concerned, his passing in 1884 went unmourned.

It wasn't that Lake lacked wealth, fame and prominence in his community. Through his early toll bridge and hostelry on the Truckee, he had guided commercial traffic between the northern Sierra and the Comstock. Later he enticed the Central Pacific to establish a station at his humble but busy crossing, and Reno was born.

He had been a shrewd man, with force and vision, and he did many things for Reno. His instincts, however, were not those of public service for which found-

ing fathers are so well known. His actions frequently hurt and angered citizens of the town he established, and they eventually turned against him. Some said that Lake had created a town in order to bleed it.

Lake clearly demonstrated his business acumen when he obtained a toll road franchise from the Nevada Territorial Legislature in 1862 affording him a monopoly on the use of the Sierra Valley Road (now Virginia Street) and its valuable Comstock traffic for the next 10 years.

Lake charged what must have been considered an exorbitant toll, \$1 for each horse-drawn vehicle, and other fees for larger wagon teams, horse riders, pedestrians, and domestic animals. His account books, editor Bragg tells us, showed toll bridge receipts totaling as much as \$2,500 per day. A check of Lake's records shows his average daily take to be about \$250 to \$300 – at a time when the Comstock's miners were among the highest paid in the world in their profession at \$4 a day. In all, Lake was earning more than \$100,000 a year.

From the community's inception popular sentiment in Reno called for the pur-

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING and PICNIC

Wednesday, May 26th, 6 pm, at the Lake Mansion (4598 S. Virginia St.)

Our theme will be "A Picnic on the Porch with Jane Lake." Pat Klos, in period costume, will portray Jane Lake and serve as our hostess for the evening. Bring your own picnic then sit back and enjoy a trip into the past.

This is our annual meeting. Elections for the board of directors will take place at this time, so please make a special effort to come.

chase of Lake's toll bridge. Lake, for obvious reasons, would not hear of it.

The Washoe County Commission challenged Lake's stranglehold on the area's main commercial artery. The toll road south from Lake's bridge was declared a public thoroughfare. Shortly thereafter the commissioners acting upon a grand jury report critical of county toll road operators, ordered Lake to repair his toll road from the Truckee River north to the California.

Finally on January 6, 1873, Washoe County Commissioners refused to grant Myron Lake an extension and declared the bridge and toll road a public highway.

A battle royal pitting Lake against Washoe County officials soon raged on the banks of the Truckee. Finally, in May 1873, the Nevada Supreme Court upheld a district court ruling in favor of the state. The justices declared that Lake's bridge would henceforth be "free."

Whether he is called the father of Reno or Washoe's first robber baron, this Nevada pioneer has left us a right and controversial legacy. ~~XXXX~~



## Goals of Historic Reno Preservation Society

1. Train Walking Tour Docents.
2. Develop educational programs for children and adults.
3. Build a strong membership.
4. Make available materials about preservation and lists of historic properties and issues.
5. Identify endangered sites.
6. Inform about local, state, and national preservation issues through timely programming.
7. Build partnerships between HRPS, Reno Historic Resources Commission, neighborhood councils, and other preservation groups.
8. Recognize and reward historic preservation projects.
9. Build a partnership with the local Native American community.
10. Purchase and develop a house museum in the Truckee River corridor.

## Join us for HRPS 1<sup>st</sup> Oral History Workshop

(GOAL # 2)

BY CINDY AINSWORTH

Mark your calendars for Saturday, June 26, 1999, as HRPS presents its first introductory Oral History Workshop. Vikki Ford, who spoke at our January meeting about UNR's Oral History Program, will offer this all day workshop. Whether you are interested in doing a house, neighborhood or family history, this is the class for you. Topics covered will include, research, equipment use, project design, choosing narrators and interviewing skills. A practice interview session will test our newly acquired skills.

The cost of the workshop is \$35.00. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. We will meet at 9:00 a.m. in the

lobby of the National Automobile Museum, 10 Lake Street South, Reno. You are on your own for lunch, but the Museum's cafe, Blue Skies, will be open. Let us know if you would like lunch so we can make reservations. They have a wonderful outdoor patio by the Truckee!

Be sure to bring pen and paper and Vikki asks that you bring any video or audio equipment that you will be using for your interviews.

Class size is limited so make your reservations early by calling Cindy Ainsworth at 747-0340. Reservation cut-off date is Friday, June 18, 1999.

## HERITAGE TOURISM COALITION

(GOAL # 7)

BY SHARON WALBRIDGE AND  
KATHRYN WISHART

On January 12, 1999, a group of like-minded people came together under the organizational sponsorship of HRPS, and chaired by HRPS President Pat Klos. The original purpose of this meeting was three-fold: (1) to gather the leadership of groups involved in historic preservation in the greater Truckee Meadows, (2) to assess each organizations area of involvement, (3) to focus and conserve the effort being made by all.

Following discussion, the group decided its best efforts would be in promoting historic and cultural tourism in Truckee Meadows, Virginia City, Carson City, and environs. Its goal is to enhance tourism by promoting the historic and cultural resources that exist but which are not fully utilized or advertised. Obviously, local residents would also benefit from the availability of promotional materials and events developed in the process.

Short-term projects include:

1. A benefits/impact statement which demonstrates the value of heritage and culture in attracting tourists to visit or extend their stay.

2. A directory of agencies which describes each organization involved in historic preservation and education.

The development of a quality brochure, for distribution to tourists

and residents, would describe all of the events and activities related to heritage and cultural tourism which are available locally. This would be a longer-term project, requiring the acquisition of funds sufficient to produce a first-rate publication.

The Coalition would work together to seek support, including funding, from corporate, private, and public sources, which would enable it to achieve its goal of providing informational, educational, and event-related services which would enhance the tourism experience in the area. It would also act as a resource to ensure that duplication of effort is eliminated among the member organizations.

## Walking Tour Training

(GOAL # 1)

BY LEANNE STONE

The HRPS walking tour committee is pleased to report a successful training workshop February 20 at the National Automobile Museum.

The committee members first introduced themselves. Nancy Holmes, Cindy Ainsworth, Mercedes de la Garza, Scott Gibson, and Leanne Stone each described their interest in presenting walking tours. Participants Lynn Allen, Tracy Soliday, Anne Simone, Robert Wexler, Margaret Oakley, Mark Taxer and Scott Nebesky shared their backgrounds and preservation interest.

The workshop began with a short video called "American House, a Guide to Architectural Styles", which highlighted eight popular housing styles. Mercedes presented how she and Scott did research for their tour of the Newlands Neighborhood. Leanne explained she had the information on the University of Nevada Reno Historic District and found this was a way to share it. Cindy continued with information about research sources and Nancy took the group on a walking tour of Museum streets focusing on ways to keep groups together while walking, and look. A slide show reviewed line drawings of major architectural housing styles and some slides of specific Reno buildings and homes. This workshop will be offered annually.



*In celebration of  
National Historic Preservation Week,*

HISTORIC RENO PRESERVATION SOCIETY PRESENTS...

**"TRAILING the DONNERS"**

This day long adventure through the Truckee Meadows will be led by Frank Mullen, Jr. author of the acclaimed book, *The Donner Party Chronicles*.

Saturday, May 15, 1999  
8:30 am to 6:00 pm

\$50.00 for HRPS members, prepaid  
\$60.00 for non-members, prepaid

Reservations for HRPS members and guests must be submitted by May 1.

For additional information &/or last minute changes contact Nancy Holmes at 852-2094. Please be aware there will be only one bus, therefore, your early decision is essential. After May 1, seats will become available to the public.

"Trailing the Donners" includes:

- Transportation by Frontier Tours to and from the Alamo Casino, 1950 Greg Street, Sparks departing at 8:30 a.m. and returning about 6:00 p.m.

- Intransit refreshments
- Lunch at the Washoe County Golf Course (Donner Party Site)
- A detailed trail guide written by Donner Party historian, Frank Mullen, Jr.
- Short hikes to key historical sites.

Be sure to wear sturdy walking shoes and weather appropriate clothing.

Frank Mullen has agreed to autograph copies of his book, so bring your copy

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**"TRAILING the DONNERS" RESERVATION FORM**

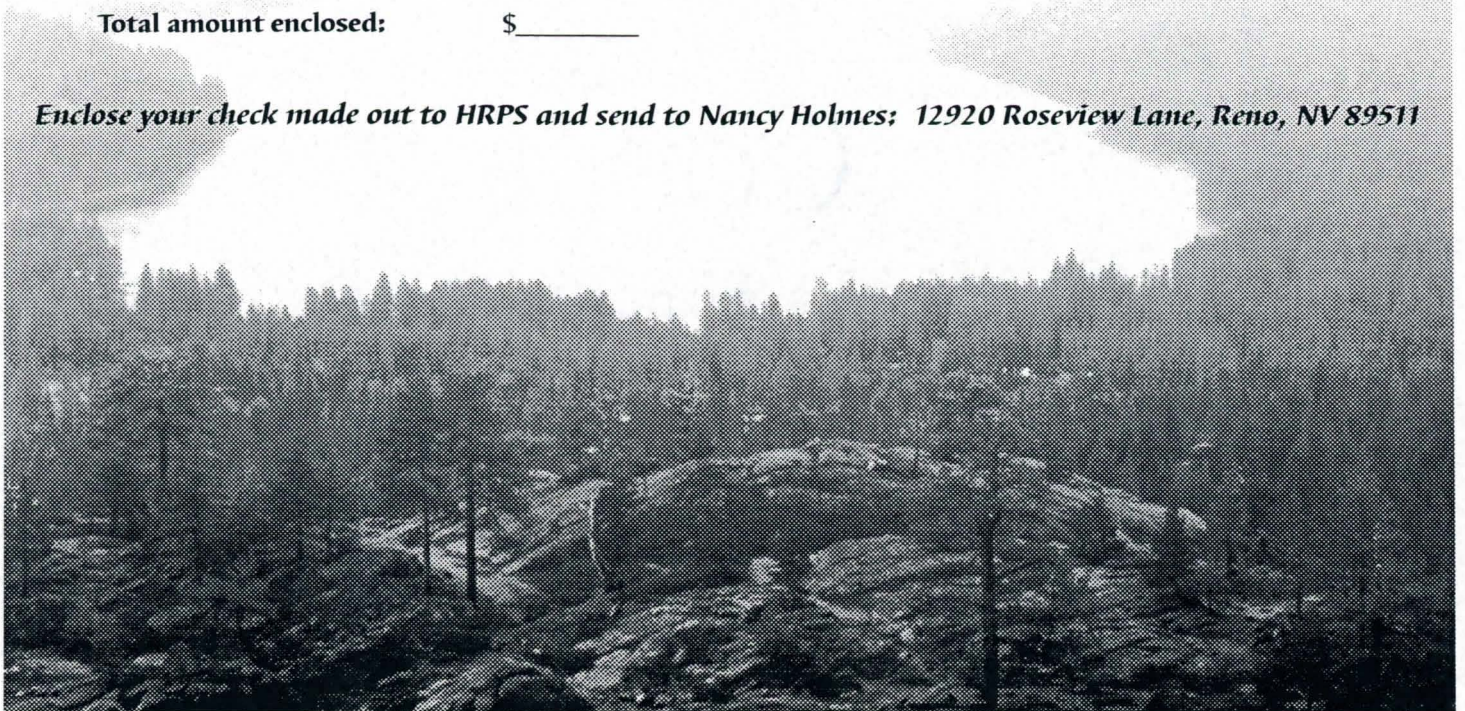
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of members attending: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of guests attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed for Members: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed for guests: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total amount enclosed:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Enclose your check made out to HRPS and send to Nancy Holmes; 12920 Roseview Lane, Reno, NV 89511**





## Heads Up

### "Railroad Project Threatens Historic Rail Depot"

ARTICLE FROM THE RENO  
GAZETTE-JOURNAL, MARCH 1999

Reno's old downtown train depot may be historic, but if the railroad tracks are lowered, it will have to find a new home or be demolished, say those involved with the railroad project ReTRAC. The Amtrak depot is one of the oldest buildings in downtown Reno.

"Amtrak will not be in its present location," said Mark Demuth of MADCON Consultation Services. Demuth manages the environmental project connected with lowering the tracks.

The strip of land between Center and Lake streets on the south side of the tracks must become a temporary detour for trains while the trenches are being created, he said. It has yet to be

determined whether the building can physically and structurally be moved or whether it has to come down.

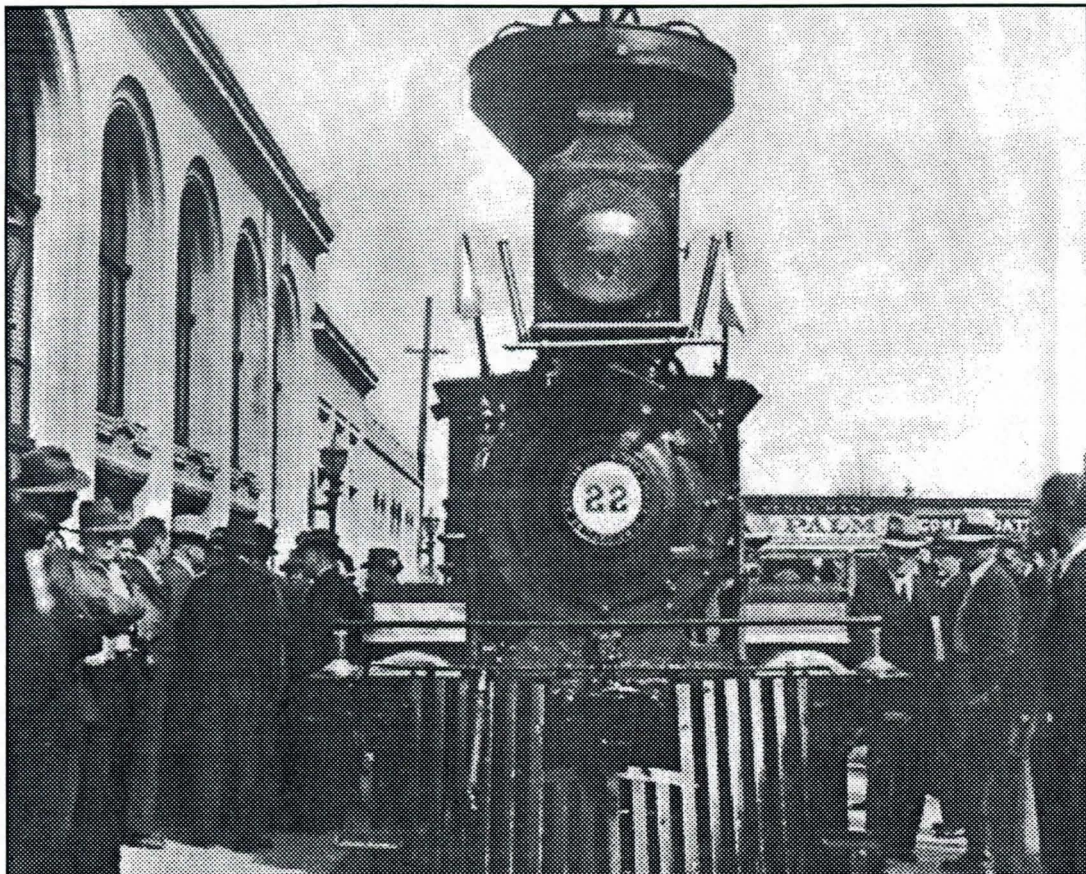
"Right now we're doing everything we can to preserve the building," he said. "If that's not possible, then we'll make certain that the building's history is documented and preserved."

While the building is a favorite of many historic preservationists, it is not listed on the national or state registers of historic places. "The papers were filed because of the owner's (then Southern Pacific Railroad) objections," said Mella Harmon, historic specialist with the state Historic Preservation Office.

The present building, with its lovely arched windows, four glass and wrought iron chandeliers and magnificent heavy walnut carved ceiling and moldings, was built in 1925. The rectangular, one-story, flat-roofed, stucco sided structure has decorative elements

taken from the Mission/Spanish styles. It is the fourth building on the site with the first being built in 1969 for Central Railroad when Reno served as the north terminus of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad. The Reno-Carson City link was built in 1872, connecting to Virginia City. The first station was destroyed in the Great Reno Fire of 1879 and an ornate three-story depot was built on the site in 1889. It also later burned and a smaller structure was later replaced by the current building in 1925.

The depot was a bustling station in the late 1920s and 1930s. "In 1927, the required stay for a divorce was lowered to three months," Harmon said. "Then in 1931, it was lowered to six weeks. People were coming in droves to get divorces. Lawyers stood outside the station waiting to meet their clients. Lawyers and boarding house owners wanting to pick up new clients also lined up to meet people at this station."



A preliminary design shows the temporary detour going through the depot site, but examining options for the depot must wait for the release of the environmental-impact statement. The first draft will be presented in January 2000 and the final draft planned for July 2000. Opportunities for public input are anticipated at both these presentations and prior to the presentations. Digging is scheduled to begin November 2001 with completion of the project by August 2004.

Left: Crowds gather around a V&T steam locomotive at the Reno depot, circa 1930s.

*Nevada Historical Society*



HRPS wants to thank Nancy for making arrangements to use the classroom in the National Automobile Museum and for providing refreshments from My Favorite Muffin.

## "The History of Reno"

A GIFT FROM HRPS  
TO OUR CHILDREN.  
(GOAL # 2)

The Washoe County School District (WCSD) will support an HRPS sponsored inservice class for K-7 teachers titled "The History of Reno." HRPS member Caroline Asikainen will be the teacher of record, with HRPS President Pat Klos the assistant. The program will begin in mid-September and shall consist of eight sessions that are each two hours long. Six teachers are joining Asikainen and Klos in organizing the program. Each member of the committee is in charge of one class. HRPS will provide necessary instructional materials consisting of a binder on the history of Reno and a packet for each class. One class will become a permanent, ongoing element of HRPS programming. Class is open to WCSD teachers first, and other teachers on a first come, first serve basis. Since there has never been a class on the history of Reno this promises to be an outstanding contribution from HRPS to the community. We all know

education is part of the answer in the effort to understand just what it is we're trying to conserve and why.

## BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

(GOAL # 7)

The Reno Philharmonic is planning a decorator showcase June 5th to 20th at the Newlands Mansion. HRPS has been invited to participate as docents for one room. The Board enthusiastically agreed to be involved as structures such as the Newlands Mansion tell so much about the history of Reno. Please contact Charlotte McConnell at 828-5125, for information &/or an offer to assist.

This is our first newsletter since the very successful "Home for the Holidays" home tour sponsored by Step Two. Cindy Ainsworth wishes to thank the following HRPS members for their assistance with the tour. Lynn Allen, Charlotte McConnell, Mark Taxer, Kay Wilkinson-Brown, Theresa Frisch, Kathryn Wishart, Leanne Stone, Clair Evenson, Tracy Soliday, Sue Broderdorf, Ellen Williams, Mercedes de la Garza, Scott Gibson, Sharon Walbridge, Sara Coney, Nancy Hardy, Phyllis Gladding, Vivian Kirckof, Jan Pederson, Lita Rabinstine, and Caroline Asikainen.

## We Welcome New Members

Steve G. Atcheson, M.D.  
Marilyn Bonnenfant  
Fred Bonnenfant  
Rusty Hinman  
Margaret Oakley  
Gene Oakley

## Membership Renewals

Cindy Ainsworth  
Tom Ainsworth  
Trudy Brussard  
Peter Brussard  
Lois Crocker  
Len Crocker  
Joan L. Dyer  
Theresa Frisch  
Nancy Hardy  
Inge W. Jahn  
Dr. Robert O. Johns  
Pat Klos  
Mike Klos  
Susan Lombardi  
Laurance Lyons  
Crystal Metzenheim  
Ginger Salcedo  
Pete Salcedo  
Leanne Stone  
Tom Stone  
Fran Terras  
Terry Terras  
Judy L. Vaughan  
Sharon L. Walbridge  
Diane Watterson  
Frankie Williams

**Reminder:** *Don't let your membership expire! Check your mailing label on your newsletter.*

## Membership Application

- ☐ **Yes**, I want to become a member of the Historic Reno Preservation Society. Annual membership includes:

- HRPS newsletter
- Walking Tour brochure
- Free participation in walking tours

- ☐ Student .....\$8.00  
☐ Individual .....\$10.00  
☐ Family (children 18 and under) ...\$15.00  
☐ Supporting .....\$100.00  
☐ Additional Donation.....\$\_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to:  
Historic Reno Preservation Society

- ☐ New Member  
☐ Renewal

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Best time to call \_\_\_\_\_

Please detach and return to: **Historic Reno Preservation Society, P.O. Box 33444, Reno NV 89533**



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

HRPS HAPPENINGS (GOAL # 6)  
BY CINDY AINSWORTH

*Regular meetings of HRPS are the  
fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 at  
Mt. Rose Elementary School, 915 Lander St.*

### MAY

**Saturday, May 8** - "Blast From The Past," a walking tour of Fourth Street. Gaye Canepa and Rick Macauley from the Reno/Sparks Corridor Business Association will be the tour leaders for this walk along one of Reno's most historic streets. Meet at 1 p.m. at Louis' Basque Corner. HRPS members free, non-members \$5.00. For information call 747-0340.

**Wednesday, May 12** - "An Evening Walk of the University of Nevada Historic District." Meet at 7:00 p.m. at the Honor Court adjacent to Morrill Hall. The tour leader is Leanne Stone. HRPS members free, non-members \$5.00. For information call 322-1638.

**Thursday, May 13** - "Newlands Neighborhood," a walking tour with Scott Gibson. Meet at 7 PM at My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. HRPS member free, non-members \$5.00. For information, call 322-6406.

**Saturday, May 15** - "Trailing the Donners." Please see article in the insert of this issue for complete information.

**Wednesday, May 26** - Annual Meeting and picnic at the Lake Mansion. Please see front page of this issue for details.

### JUNE

**Saturday, June 5** - "A Walk Along the Historic Truckee River Corridor." Meet at 10 a.m. on the steps of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church. The tour leader is Carol Winans. HRPS members free, non-members \$5.00. For information, call 329-3894.

**Wednesday, June 23** - "An Evening Walk in the Wells Avenue Neighborhood." 7:00 p.m. Meeting place to be announced. HRPS members free, non-members \$5.00. Tour leader Mark Taxer. For information, call 826-7070.

**Saturday, June 26** - Oral History Workshop. 9:00 in the lobby of the National Automobile Museum. Cost \$35.00. Reservation cut-off date is Friday, June 18th. Space is limited! For information, call 747-0340. See the article in middle of this issue for more details.

### JULY

**Saturday, July 10** - "A Walk Along the Historic Truckee River Corridor." (See June 5th for more details)

**Tuesday, July 20** - "An Evening Walk of the University of Nevada Historic District." (See May 12 for more details)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Nancy Holmes  
Charlotte McConnell  
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Celebrating Historic Preservation/Archeological Awareness Week May 9 - May 15, 1999