

Newsletter

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

SEPTEMBER 1999

VOL. 2, NO. 3

TRAILING THE DONNERS

By Sharon Walbridge, Editor

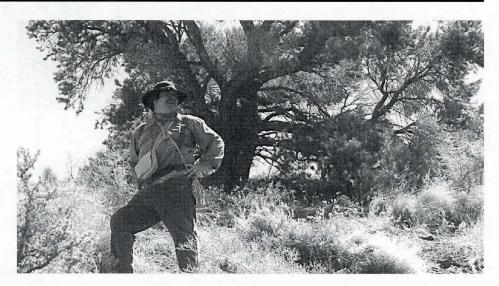
Fortunate I am to live across from the Virginia Range. Every single day I marvel at the beauty of those mountains and the wonderful way the Range changes color and shape in response to the play of light and shadow upon it. It is a view I never tire of.

Since joining HRPS on its' first bus trip, "Trailing the Donners," I will never again look upon the Virginia Range in the same admiring, but complacent way.

"Trailing the Donners" was an all-day expedition on Saturday, May 15th which actually traced the pathway of the Donner Party from the vicinity of Lockwood, east of Sparks to a location near Dog Valley west of Verdi.

Forty-one of us were fortunate to share the day with mountain man (and mountain of a man) Frank Mullen, Jr., colorfully and appropriately attired in period costume. One would expect the author of The Donner Party Chronicles: A Day-by-Day Account of a Doomed Wagon Train" to be a knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide. That's a natural. But I doubt if any of us anticipated the way Frank was able to make history come alive – make a wagon train cross the Truckee Meadows – in the midst of an urban area.

I have "known" about the Donner



"Trailing The Donners" Tour Guide and Donner Historian, Frank Mullen, Jr.

Party all my life, been well-versed in the "damn fools" legend, but I never had a "feel" for their experience. Oh yes, I've been to Donner State Park. I've looked at the statue and marveled at the incredible snow depth. I've thought about the horrors of privation and cannibalism.

I never knew about the challenge - the curse - of having to cross the Truckee River 27 times. I never thought of Steamboat Creek as much of anything except, perhaps, as dirty water, certainly not as a steep-sided obstacle to ford with heavy unstable wagons. I admit as a child I did curse the heavy willows down by the river when they freightened me and barred my way. It never occurred to me they forced the pioneers to travel the ridge lines of

our region.

Traversing the land the Donner Party struggled with was a very special experience. Standing in worn wagon ruts, ruts 150 years old, is humbling. Scrambling up the trail cut into the steep, erosion-scarred Virginia Range left me breathless, and awed. I was, after all, wearing sturdy shoes and Levi's, not a long dress, and my hands were unencumbered, no little ones clung to me in fear.

On this sunny, warm day the Truckee Meadows stretched westward before me; the Sierra's glistened in all their majesty. I tarried to study the narrow, precipitous trail I had ascended and marveled at the fortitude of Tamsen Donner and fellow travelers.

continued on the next page

TRAILING THE DONNERS,

continued from the front page

I was grateful I did not have to go on to Sutter's Fort. Truth is, I've never wanted to walk across the Sierra, let alone the continent. I don't think I have what it takes to leave Independence, Missouri and walk into the unknown.

At "trail's end" for our days journey we stood overlooking Dog Valley. In my minds eye I trudged the remaining distance to the lake that would be called Donner. A shiver crawled down my neck. I pulled the collar up on my jacket and turned to head for the bus and a cup of coffee.

HRPS will repeat this interesting trek through time, probably next spring. Don't miss it.



HRPS members take a break from hiking while on the "Trailing the Donners" tour.

HRPS RECEIVES PRESERVATION WEEK AWARD

By Pat Klos, Program Vice President

The 1999 National Historic Preservation Week culminated with a series of awards given by the Reno City Council and the Reno Historical Resources Commission. Along with the California Building, the UNR Historic District, and the Francovich Family, HRPS received recognition for its outstanding leadership in educating the people of Reno as to their historical resources.

Reno Mayor Jeff Griffin, assisted by HRC Chairman Mella Harmon, and

HRPS Board Members (from L to R): Christine Fey, Pat Klos, Nancy Holmes, Cindy Ainsworth, Charlotte McConnell, Mark Taxer, Scott Gibson

Reno Planning
Department member
Christine Fey gave the
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ADVOCATE award to
HRPS President Pat Klos
and board members
Cindy Ainsworth,
Nancy Holmes,
Charlotte McConnell, Mark Taxer,
and Scott Gibson on May 11, 1999.

The preservation awards program

began in 1997 and focuses on people, buildings, and organizations which enrich the history of Reno. Mayor Griffin pointed

Mayor Jeff Griffin, Pat Klos (HRPS), Mella Harmon (HRC), and Christine Fey (City of Reno)



out the work HRPS has done with its walking tour program and "History of Reno" class to be offered to Washoe County School District teachers in grades K through 8.





WALKING TOURS REPORT:

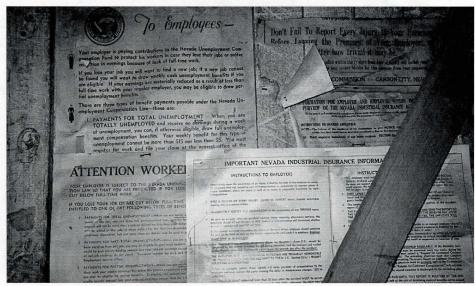
BLAST FROM THE PAST WALKING TOURS

By Cindy Ainsworth, President

East Forth Street is an interesting neighborhood. It is home to many old buildings, and a wide variety of businesses. When you travel with tour guide Gaye Canepa of the Reno-Sparks Corridor Business Association, you're bound to be surprised by what you see.

The May tour started with the Morris Hotel and moved to the Frederick DeLongchamps' designed Nevada, California and Oregon railroad depot. Then Gaye had arranged for us to tour the interior of the now vacant Reno Brewery bottling works. Built in 1940, this great arte-moderne brick one story building still features its original wooden catwalks, glass bricks and an outside artisan well.





Nevada Industrial Insurance notices posted throughout the years.

World War II had a negative impact on beer production for the Reno Brewery and losses mounted. Finally, in 1948 the brewery was mortgaged for \$125,000 to Laverne Redfield in order to buy new machinery. The Brewery never regained market share and Redfield foreclosed in 1954.

Moving on, we visited one of the last great western stores in Reno, the D Bar M. Then we moseyed down to Big Ed's and put back a couple of beers before checking out the Flanigan Building, which now serves as a location for Forever Yours Furniture.

Our tour ended at the Holiday Inn on Sixth Street where manager John McCoy graciously offered us champagne punch, cookies and rides back to our cars.

In July Gaye led another tour during Uptown, Downtown ARTown.The featured building for this tour was the Eveleth Lumber Company located off Fourth on Morrill Avenue. Originally this

Walkers enter one of the Eveleth Lumber Company buildings.

business was called the Reno Mill and Lumber Company Planning Mill and Door Factory. It was subsequently purchased by the Verdi Lumber Company, and then, in 1928 by A.T. Eveleth.

The building we toured may have been built before the turn of the century. The full dimensional heavy timbers and ceiling beams reportedly came from trees located on Peavine Mountain. The building still holds many of the original belt driven machines from the '20's. Most are still operational. Two large engines in the basement turn common drive shafts that power the belt drives for the machinery upstairs.

George Pimpl, whose family now owns the building, gave us a terrific tour of the finishing mill and a demonstration of the machinery. It was fascinating. The mill appeared to be frozen in time, as if the workers were on a lunch break. This would make a wonderful living history museum.

A special thanks to Gaye Canepa for making these "insider" tours possible.



COUNTY WORKS to RESTORE HISTORIC COURTHOUSE

(Courtesy of the "Washoe County Line")

In 1986, the Washoe County Courthouse was formally listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The County is currently involved in a project to restore much of the Courthouse's architecture and interior design to its original condition.

The challenge is extensive. There are only a few experts on old buildings available, original material is sometimes difficult to locate, and treatment to exterior and interior surfaces must be done properly so as not to accelerate deterioration.

In April 1871, shortly after the Washoe County Seat was moved to Reno from Washoe City, hotel owner Myron Lake donated \$15,000 to the county along with an acre of land on which the County Courthouse now stands. A brick Courthouse was built on this site in 1873. In 1905, construction began on a new courthouse. Designed by renowned Reno architect Frederic DeLongchamps, the 1905 construction added the columns and façade that currently occupy the Virginia Street side of the building. Several additions have been made to the courthouse since. Inside the east entrance (the section

designed by DeLongchamps in 1905) restoration efforts are clearly visible. Lead painter Joel Ellis says that his crew has tried to revive the original interior color scheme based on the colors in the tile mosaic on the second floor. The interior glass dome, grand staircase, columns, molding, chandelier (and other light fixtures), and ornate plasterwork now appear much as they did shortly after the turn of the century. Ongoing rehabilitation plans include the restoration of the Virginia Street façade and columns to their original limestone finish, removal of intrusive items (such as exterior air conditioning ducts) to reclaim the buildings original look, and cleaning of the copper dome.

HRPS Gives the History of Reno as a Gift to Our Children

As part of a HRPS goal to offer educational programs for children and adults, HRPS has written an inservice class for Washoe County School District (WCSD) K-7 teachers this fall. The sessions include the following lecturers and topics:

Neal Cobb, President of Westerners: Slide show of early Reno and discussion of Reno history and appropriate books for class.

Pat Klos, HRPS Member and retired WCSD: Walking tour of old Reno along

the Truckee River, Riverside Drive, and Court Street. Walk and historic data provided by HRPS.

Leanne Stone, HRPS Member and UNR Lecturer: Walking tour of historic UNR Campus including Heck Museum and Morrill Hall. Material provided by HRPS.

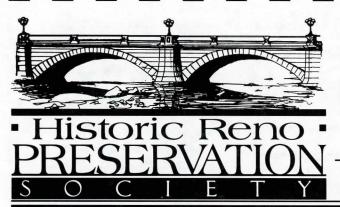
Christine Fey, HRPS Member and City of Reno Planning Department Assistant: Walking tour of historic sites in downtown Reno. Materials provided by HRPS.

Pat Klos, HRPS Member and retired WCSD: Living history performance of Jane Lake, wife of Myron Lake, founder of Reno. Living history materials provided by HRPS.

Rosemary McCarthy, Channel 5 staff and Donna Lage, retired WCSD: Viewing of video clips of Reno and how they may be used in the classroom; sharing of ideas for written projects. Materials provided by Channel 5.

Fran Breen Terras, HRPS Member and retired WCSD and Judge Peter Breen: Tour of the Washoe County Courthouse; lecture on the history of the courthouse and its architect, Frederic DeLongchamps.

For detailed information call Caroline Asikainen, HRPS Member and teacher of record, at 323-2402.



PROGRAM Calendar

1999-2000

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

Please note: regular meetings of HRPS are the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 at Mt. Rose Elementary School, 915 Lander St., Reno. Having said that, be alert to the change in November.

Please Save This For Future Reference!

September 22 "Zoning Ordinances in Reno"

Laura Tuttle

City of Reno Planning Manager

March 22

"The Chinese in Nevada"

Sue Fawn Chung, Ph.D. UNLV Humanities Scholar

October 27 "Great Basin

Native American Heritage"

Grace Dick

Reno-Sparks Tribal Council

Education Officer

April 26 "Reno's U

"Reno's Urban Forestry Program"

Jim Ross, Urban Forester Leanne Stone, Former Chair Urban Forestry Commission

November 17 "Retro at the Trocadero"

Social evening and dinner

at the El Cortez

Catered by Absolutely Michele

May 24 "An Evening at the Bartley Ranch"

Annual business meeting and barbeque. This is it podner; good grub, great setting.
Election of officers.

December No formal meeting

Participation in Step 2 Home Tour

HAPPY NEW YEAR - HAPPY MILLENIUM!

January 26 Nevada Land Conservancy Program

February 23 "Dispelling Myths"

Guy Rocha

Nevada State Archivist

HRPS wishes to thank Heritage Bank President & CEO Wayne N. Condon and Bank Directors for their generous underwriting of this issue of our Newsletter.

With this issue we are moving to a larger format with more photos and a much larger run – 1000 copies.

Demand for our information continues to increase, and, of course we're happy we can oblige. We thank Heritage Bank for helping make this opportunity possible.



Heritage Tourism Coalition

The second edition of the Heritage
Tourism Coalition Directory is being
distributed to Visitors Centers,
Libraries, Chambers of Commerce, and
the Washoe County School District
plus hotel/casinos in Northwestern
Nevada. The preface notes this
Directory is the idea and one of the
goals of the Historic Reno Preservation
Society and invites the readers to copy
and distribute the information
contained therein, in order to pursue
the enjoyment of our rich (if
somewhat undiscovered) heritage here
in the Truckee Meadows - NOW!

The following organizations have one page with background information, locations, mission statements, contact names, phone numbers, operating times and activities:

City of Reno Historic Resources Commission C.I.T.Y. 1000, Reno Arts Commission Fleishmann Planetarium

Harold's Club Pioneers

Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS)

Liberty Belle Saloon, Restaurant and Museum

National Automobile Museum

Nevada Historical Society

Nevada Humanities Committee

Nevada Museum of Art

Reno Urban Forestry Commission

Sierra Arts Foundation

Sparks Heritage Museum

State Historic Preservation Office

The Theater Coalition

Truckee Meadows Heritage Trust

Uptown Downtown ARTown

Very Special Arts/Lake Mansion

Washoe County Parks & Recreation

Westerners, Nevada Corral

CULTURAL TOURISM PRESENTATION AT THE GREAT BASIN BOOK FESTIVAL

David Mas Masumoto will be speaking at a luncheon presentation on Cultural Tourism at the Great Basin Book Festival. This presentation falls directly in line with the goals of the Heritage Tourism Coalition, and it would be great to have a nice turnout for this event.

What: Luncheon Presentation on

Cultural Tourism by David Mas Masumoto

Where: Great Basin Book Festival,

Harrah's Reno Convention Center

When: Friday, Sept. 24, 1999

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Cost: \$20.00

Info: For more information,

Call the Nevada

Humanities

Committee at 784-6587.

FALL WALKING TOURS

Saturday Sept. 18, 10:00 a.m.

Newlands Neighborhood

Leaders: Mercedes dela Garza & Scott Gibson Meet at Newlands Circle at California Avenue

Sunday Sept 19, 1:00 p.m.

A Walk Along the Historic

Truckee River Corridor

Leader: Joan Collins

Meet at McKinley Park School, Riverside Drive & Vine

Friday Sept. 24, 6:30 p.m.

Bricks and Stones:

Humboldt & Lander Streets

Leader: Tracy Soliday

Meet at My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Ave.

Saturday Sept. 25, 1:00 p.m.

A Blast from the Past: Fourth Street Corridor

Leader: Gaye Canepa, Reno-Sparks Corridor Business Association, will present elements of one of Reno's most historic streets – Old Highway 40. Meet at Louis' Basque Corner.

Sunday Sept 26, 12:00 noon

High Noon Walk in the

Wells Avenue Neighborhood

Leader: Mark Taxer

Meet at Southside School, corner Liberty and Sindair.

All tours: Please wear comfortable walking shoes and clothing appropriate for the weather. Any questions, call HRPS Tour Coordinator, Leanne Stone, 322-1638.

THE FIRST HOTEL BUILT IN THE WORLD AFTER WORLD WAR II

By Guy Rocha, Certified Archivist

Nevada hotel mogul Charles W. Mapes, Jr., who died on May 13, 1999, was credited for "building the first hotel in the world after World War II," according to an article in the Reno Gazette-Journal. Opened on December 17, 1947, the twelve-story Mapes Hotel, poised on the Truckee River overlooking downtown Reno, was Nevada's first true skyscraper. The tallest buildings prior to the Mapes were the Hotel Nevada in Ely and Reno's El Cortez Hotel, both six stories.

Today historic preservation advocates are trying to save the high-rise, art deco building that changed Reno's skyline and ushered in an era when Reno thrived as America's gambling mecca. But was the Mapes, with its Sky Room casino, really the first hotel built in the world after World War II?

Not quite. War restrictions on building prevented the erection of new hotels. With war's end in August 1945, much of the world, and particularly Europe, had to rebuild. Building materials were in short supply. Industrial plants, civilian housing, and public works were first priorities, not hotels. Existing hotels in the US, virtu-

ally filled to capacity during the war, by 1947 were deluged with tourists. After so many years of war, people were excited about traveling again.

Charles Mapes clearly saw the opportunity for a resort hotel/casino in postwar Reno, however so had William "Billy" Wilkerson in southern Nevada. The Flamingo Hotel on the LA highway, now the world-famous "Strip" was Wilkerson's vision. It was only after his getting into financial difficulties during the construction of the lavish hotel, that mobster Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegal, of "Murder, Incorporated" fame, coerced Wilkerson to give up his interest in the venture. Siegal, with his mob money and political connections, opened the Flamingo Hotel & Casino on December 26, 1946. Cost overruns and the Mafia bosses' belief that he and his girlfriend, Virginia Hill, were pocketing some of the money ultimately cost "Bugsy" his life. On June 23, 1947, Siegal was gunned down at Hill's house in Beverly Hills.

"Bugsy" Siegal beat Charles Mapes to the punch. In all probability, the Flamingo Hotel, and not the Mapes, was the first hotel constructed in the world after World War II, although its highest feature was only three stories.

In the end, it appears that the Mapes Hotel was the first *high-rise* hotel completed in the world after World War II. And while not the first post-war resort hotel/casino, the Mapes Sky Room casino on the twelfth floor was unique

in its day. Charles Mapes deserves to be remembered as a pioneer in the hotel industry.

HERITAGE BANK UNDERWRITES CUR-RENT NEWSLETTER

HRPS wishes to thank Heritage Bank President & CEO Wayne N. Condon and Bank Directors for their generous underwriting of this issue of our Newsletter.

With this issue we are moving to a larger format with more photos and a much larger run – 1000 copies. Demand for our information continues to increase, and, of course we're happy we can oblige. We thank Heritage Bank for helping make this opportunity possible.



HRPS Uptown Downtown ARTown Tour

100+ people from the Saturday, July 10th Walking Tour led by Ron James of the State Historic Preservation Office ("A Walk Along the Historic Truckee River Corridor") pose in front of the Mapes Hotel.



WALKING TOURS REPORT:

WELLS AVENUE BEHIND THE SCENES

By Mark Taxer

Editors Note: So far in 1999, HRPS Walking Tours have served over 367 people on a wide variety of walks including the University District, East Fourth Street, the River Corridor, Wells Avenue, and the ever popular Newlands District.

September adds five more walks and it is possible the number of people served by "walking history" will grow to 450 or perhaps 500 walkers. In case you've missed the pleasure of one of our walks, read on, then join us in the fall to hear the stories, meet the people and have the fun.

When I started preparing a walking tour of the Wells Avenue area I was not quite sure what to expect.

After living in the area for ten years I had accumulated a few stories of my own, but I was just not sure if I could discover information of real interest to a tourgoer.

After the first tour in June I realized that people not only were interested, but also seemed as though they couldn't get enough of it. Tourgoers had many questions.

"What makes a bungalow a bungalow?" "Why do old houses have big porches?" "Why is the strip of grass between the sidewalk and the curb such a good thing?"
Tourgoers were full of answers too, and when they weren't, I replied as best I could. We all learned something new along the way.

One of the best things about doing neighborhood walks is the interest of people who live on or near the tour. People come out of their homes to see what is going on. Once they feel comfortable we are harmless they launch into their own stories and recollections!

One woman told us of living in the old Model Dairy home, which is now divided into apartments and a good example of adaptive reuse at work. Behind the house on the alley is the old Model Dairy warehouse which was once busy with the coming and going of milk and delivery trucks .

Another house site on our tour burned in the 1920's due to - legend has it - a still explosion in the

> Tour Guide Mark Taxer points out some of the features on the old Southside School Gymnasium.

basement. The neat thing is that every neighborhood tour seems to have at least one great story like this one. Real stories for real people. That's what these tours bring us.

For me, putting this tour together has turned out to be an incredibly positive experience. I cannot wait until the next one on Sunday, September 26th.

(See Walking Tour Schedule for details.)



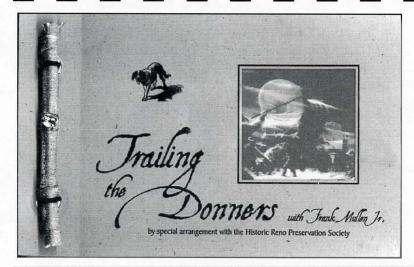
HRPS Renewing Members: Our Strength

Lynn Allen
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Mary Beedle
Andrea Daley-Taylor
Jon Dewey
Judy & Steve Dollinger
Ron, Clair & Mary Evenson

Mercedes de la Garza & Scott Gibson Pam & David Ginsbury Mary Ellen Horan Andi & Steve Kaylor Mike Keller Carole Maupin Ann McCarty

Charlotte & Dick McConnell
Darla McKenna
Joe McKenna
Crystal Metzenheim
Madeline Murray
Sandra Saunders
Mark Taxer

Judy Vaughn Shirie Wallace Angela Whited Gene & Ellen Williams Kathryn & Ed Wishart Hilda Wunner



Trailing the Donners with Frank Mullen, Jr. is a first class publication produced by HRPS to be used in conjunction with the bus trip. HRPS members Hillary Velázquez and Frank Ozaki, representing Double Click Design, worked with Frank Mullen to produce this hand-bound trail guide, complete with text and maps. Surely it will become a collectors item.

Frank Mullen's advice to all: "Don't take no shortcuts."

We Welcome New Members

Hildegarde Alvarado Mark Antunovich Robert & Sandra Backus Nancy Bissonnette Kay Wilkinson-Brown & Kinsey Brown Patricia Cafferata Prof. Samuel Chapman Judy & Steve Dollinger The Crossland Family Doug Marx & Denise Dovell The Erlach Family Don Finley Joan Forssell Donna Fulkerson Commissioner Jim Galloway Penny Gilbert
Jeff Goldsmith
Dan Greco
Fritz & Evelyn Grupe
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Dale & Sandy Tyson
Eleanor & David Wheeler
Bonnie Woods
Robert & Peggy Wright
Mary Yeargin

Toni-Anne Zive

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

Membership Application

-	the Historic Reno Preservation Society. Annual membership includes:	Historic Reno Preservation Society
	HRPS newsletter	□ New Member□ Renewal
	Walking Tour brochureFree participation in walking tours	Name(s)
	Student\$8.00	
	Individual\$10.00	Address
	Family (children 18 and under)\$15.00	CityStateZIP
	Supporting\$100.00	Telephone
	Additional Donation\$	Best time to call
Ple	ase detach and return to: Historic Reno Pres	ervation Society, P.O. Box 33444, Reno NV 89533

Mark your calendar!

In celebration of Architectural Awareness Week, The Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS) Presents

FALL WALKING TOURS

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