

Historic Reno  
PRESERVATION  
SOCIETY

# FootPrints

*Dedicated to Preserving and Promoting Historic Resources in the Truckee Meadows through Education, Advocacy and Leadership.*

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## The Houses Time Forgot

*by Debbie Hinman*

On a short, lightly-traveled street just west of downtown Reno sit four very early vestiges of Reno's history. Here, three houses were built in the decade following Reno's establishment as a town, when horse-drawn wagons rolled down dusty, uneven dirt roads, children attended a one-room schoolhouse on Front (now First) and Sierra streets, and residents collected their mail at a designated storefront on Commercial Row.

Early Reno residents selected this neighborhood, one of Reno's first, in which to build their homes and raise their families. The neighborhood is contained within the Western Addition, which dates from 1874. Official papers were filed in Washoe County for the Western Addition in 1876. The addition was bounded by Chestnut Street (now Arlington Avenue) on the east, Vine Street to the west, W. 8th Street (now I-80 westbound onramp at Sierra Street) on the north, and the railroad tracks on the south.

The Western Addition has a very interesting railroad connection. The railroad had acquired land in the Truckee Meadows after President Lincoln signed into law the Pacific Railroad Act in 1862. This enabled the railroad to acquire land on either side of the soon-to-be established tracks which it could sell to help finance the railroad. In 1874, Washoe County Clerk J. S. Shoemaker purchased lots in the Western Addition from the Contract and Finance Company, the financial arm of the Central Pacific Railroad that was used to handle its land sales as well

as the complicated funding of the Transcontinental Railroad. The official date for the establishment of the addition was September 21, 1874, when Contract and Finance deeded the land from the Central Pacific.



*The Shoemaker/Nystrom House, c. 1875 at 333 Ralston. Built in the Gothic Revival style, its first residents were the Shoemaker family. Shoemaker was the Washoe County Clerk. Photos courtesy of David Lowndes (Above) and the 2000 National Register of Historic Places (At Right).*

The fledgling town of Reno was growing by leaps and bounds between 1870 and 1900, even though the Virginia City mining boom had ended. Reno's growth was primarily because of the railroad, but also from ranching and farming. Real estate prices doubled and Reno experienced a



land buying spree when additions such as the Western, Lake and Powning were established. In March of 1875 the *Daily Nevada State Journal* quaintly reported, "The western addition of the town is beginning to loom up considerable."

Early on, Reno's merchants and other professionals settled in the popular Western Addition, but that would change over the years and it would become more of a working class neighborhood.

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## The Houses Time Forgot (continued)

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Initially this neighborhood was popular and beautiful—the first to install concrete sidewalks in 1890. Its quiet tree-shaded streets were bordered by neat lawns and flower gardens. It had its own markets, and was close to the new two-story brick school between Fourth and Fifth streets on West, completed in 1878. The school was first known as Central, then later, Reno High School. After the turn of the century, a beautiful elementary school named for a local principal, Mary S. Doten, would be built in the addition.

### **The Shoemaker/Nystrom House — 333 Ralston Street**

The new Western Addition was where Washoe County Clerk, John Shoemaker, chose to have his elegant Gothic Revival-style house built in 1875. Rumors at the time reported it would be the finest residence in Reno, to cost \$4,000, a considerable sum in that day. When first constructed, it had wooden shiplap siding and faced south on a large lot near the corner of Ralston Avenue and Third Street. The shake-shingled roof was steeply pitched in the classic Gothic style.

In 1897, the Shoemakers sold their home and four additional lots to Elda Orr, wife of Reno attorney John Orr. She did not occupy the property but rented it out. Around 1900, Mrs. Orr had the house rotated 90 degrees to face east and subdivided the four lots into six parcels. Over the ensuing years, it and others on the same block became short-term housing for divorce seekers. In the 1930s the home was stuccoed and several remodels

occurred to better provide facilities as a multi-family dwelling.

In 1944, Victor and Estelle Nystrom relocated to Reno from San Francisco and purchased the house, wishing to take advantage of the lucrative divorce trade. According to historian Mella Harmon's entry in Reno Historical, "Victor Nystrom was a house painter by trade, but it was Estelle who ran the rooming house operation. The house had eight guest rooms on two floors. Mrs. Nystrom allowed no hanky-panky in her house; the women stayed on the top floor, and the men on the bottom floor. The sexes could interact only in the sitting room, where each morning Mrs. Nystrom served coffee, fruit, and toast to as many as 30 tenants."



*The Borland/Clifford House, c. 1875 at 339 Ralston. Built soon after the Shoemaker/Nystrom house, it too is in the Gothic style but a variation often referred to as Carpenter Gothic. Photos courtesy of David Lowndes (Above) and the 1987 National Register of Historic Places (At Right).*



By the end of the 1960s, no-fault divorce laws across the United States ended Reno's unique trade. Mrs. Nystrom then limited her clientele to single men. She continued to operate her rooming

house until her death in 1997, when her daughter took over the business, which still operates today. In 2000, the building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places within the context of early settlement and the divorce trade.

### **The Borland/Clifford House — 339 Ralston Street**

The second National Register home on this stretch of Ralston is the Borland/Clifford House, listed on the Register in 1983. An article in the August 29, 1875 *Nevada State Journal* announced: "The residence of J. H. Borland in the Western Addition will soon be ready for occupancy." By 1876, Borland had a garden of which he was very proud and horse chestnut trees in front of his vernacular residence. The basic style is considered a Gothic Revival cottage, but was also often referred to as Carpenter Gothic, with its pointed arch window in the large, front-facing gable. The home is one-and-a-half stories, wood frame, surfaced with shiplap siding. A shed-roofed extension has been

added along the rear of the building, but it appears to have been a fairly early addition.

James Howatt Borland was born in Pennsylvania in 1849 and moved with his parents to Placerville, California in 1856.

## The Houses Time Forgot (continued)

The elder Borland traded coal mining for gold mining; when James reached adulthood, he found employment in various clerical positions, even briefly working in Reno in 1871. By 1875, he had married and had a son and returned to Reno, purchasing the home on Ralston Street. The family owned the home until 1902, then moved to Rye Patch, Nevada. In 1907, following years as a rental, it was purchased by O. J. Clifford, originally from Michigan, then later Austin, Nevada. Clifford edited and published Austin's newspaper, the *Reese River Reveille*, and established a pharmacy business in town. Coming to Reno, Clifford became a partner of the Dalton, Clifford and Wilson drug store at First and Virginia streets. He died in 1932. Lucy Clifford continued to live in the residence until her death in 1945. Their son Oscar and wife Beth then occupied the home. Remarkably, the home remained in the Clifford family until 1991. On March 7, 1983, it was added to the National Register of Historic Places as the Clifford House. On June 24, 2008, additional documentation was added to include Borland's name in the listing title.

### **The Bender House/Ralston Apartments — 375 Ralston Street**

Shortly after John Shoemaker, James Borland and Arthur Higgins built their homes, Charles Bender prepared to settle his family on the same street. (Note: the Higgins home was just north of the Bender home and was demolished to make way for a service station in the 1930s.) According to Charles Bender's daughter Bertha, her father bought an acre of land and a house around 1876-77 in the area of what would become Ralston Street. Early Sanborn maps show several small outbuildings to the rear of the large house; possibly one of these

was an early dwelling. A June 2, 1877 newspaper article read: "Work is being rapidly pushed forward on C. T. Bender's new residence in the Western Addition, between the residences of Higgins and Borland. It is after the modern style of Gothic, has bay windows, is two stories in height, and has five rooms below and four above, with the usual bath room, closets, etc. The cost will be nearly \$5,000, and when completed it will be quite a fine house." Mr. Bender later added additional bedrooms to the home



*The Bender House, c. 1877. Originally built as a Gothic Revival, though the porch with its columns and other additions modified its style. Built for the Bender family, significant early Reno residents whose descendants still live in the area.*

*Photo courtesy of David Lowndes.*

and a front and side porch with Colonial Revival features. A striking feature of the home today is its clinker brick foundation under the front porch.

Charles Bender came to Reno as a boy, working as a telegrapher. Winning a \$5,000 lottery prize, he used the money to attend Heald Business College in the San Francisco Bay Area. Charles (or C. T. as he was often known) returned to Reno and with his brother D. A. Bender, opened the first independent bank in the state of Nevada, the Washoe County Bank. He was a teller, then manager for 44 years. C. T. married Julia Fasset, a New York lady; the Benders raised six

children, four girls and two boys, in the family home on Ralston Street. So respected was Bender, he was selected as the estate administrator for Reno's wealthiest resident, Myron Lake, upon Lake's death. Bender died in 1915, lapsing into a diabetic coma in his chair at the bank. His sons carried him home where he died soon after.

By 1920, Julia had sold the family home to Louella Chessman, who converted it to a rooming house, as was the case with so many of the large Reno homes. Julia moved in with her youngest daughter and her family. The house was later sold to Mary Ramsey who named it the Ralston Apartments, yet another of the popular woman-run boarding houses in the addition.

### **The Mathews House — 345 Ralston Street**

This stately Victorian home was a newcomer to the block, surrounded by those built some 25 years prior. Around the turn of the century, it took its place between the Nystrom and Borland/Clifford residences.

The Orrs may have built and occupied this home but an early resident was Joseph G.

McCarty, a bookkeeper at the Nevada Hospital for Mental Diseases. McCarty was shown at this address between 1900-1903. The house was originally a one-story Victorian which most likely had a steeply pitched front gable. From its rather boxy appearance today, it appears that the gable was extended laterally to provide more living space at some point in the home's history.

Later residents included the Mathews family, who occupied the home for several decades beginning around 1920. John Mathews was born in Beckwourth,

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## The Houses Time Forgot (continued)

*Continued from page 3*

California and moved to Reno with his brother, where the men established and operated the Mathews Grocery and Market on E. Second Street for the next 28 years. Mathews was a popular local musician, playing in both the Shriner and Reno City Bands. He died in 1939; his wife Ruth and two daughters remained in the home. Ruth passed away in 1966. This home, like its neighbors, has served as a boardinghouse throughout the years. A second house was built on this lot behind the main house and it exists today as well.

### Divorce-Era Housing

Housing for those awaiting their divorce decree was in high demand, particularly following the reduction of Nevada's residency period to six weeks in 1931. The Western Addition, with its proximity to downtown Reno, made it a very attractive neighborhood for divorce seekers. They could easily walk to town to meet with their attorneys, shop and dine. The boarding house operators acted as witnesses, verifying that those occupying their rooms were indeed Reno residents for that period of time. As well as convenient for the residents, it was also a lucrative proposition for owners of large homes or those who had extra rooms that could be rented. Many were able to keep their homes during the Depression era, thanks to the extra income. Today the character of the neighborhood is quite different. The Nystrom, Mathews and Bender homes are multiple-occupancy rentals for those who need economical housing.

### Zoning Changes

A big shift occurred in the Western Addition when zoning laws were changed in the 1960s to permit casino gaming. Pete Claudianos Jr. purchased the Sands Motel and began an expansion

that extended it from Arlington Avenue to Ralston Street. The Sands was joined by the Gold Dust West, the Sundowner and the Reef as gaming casinos. Down came numerous shade trees and nineteenth-century homes when residential blocks were consumed by these giant structures. The nearby schools were demolished. Only a very few remnants of the addition's early life remain—and this short block with its four homes is one of them.




*The Mathews House, c. 1899-1901. A Queen Anne Victorian, with an upper-floor addition that altered its style. Longtime home of the Mathews family. Mathews was a musician and with his brother owned the Mathews Grocery and Market for 28 years. Photo courtesy of David Lowdes.*

### Now Demolish or Move

The Bender, Borland-Clifford and Mathews homes are all owned by the Ralston, LLC, a holding company of Jacobs Entertainment. Recently, Colorado-based casino operator Jacobs Entertainment announced its purchase of property along Fourth Street, as well as the Sands Regency Casino Hotel and the rest of the Gold Dust West Casino that was still retained by the Piazza family. Ralston and Washington Streets run between these two giant properties. According to Barrie Lynn of HRPS Advisory and Advocacy Council,

Jacobs Entertainment has expressed willingness to have the houses moved. Even if this could be arranged, however, the homes will lose their context within the Western Addition and the two on the National Register may lose their designation. As with the University Avenue historic homes, this will also be a “wait and see” situation. The outlook for saving the homes on Ralston's 300 block appears bleak at this time.

Jacobs Entertainment is also involved with the Reno Housing Authority, investing in Reno's affordable housing industry. While that effort is commendable, it would be beneficial for that company to consider the wise words of Jane Jacobs in *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*: “The original ‘affordable housing’ actually consisted of the constant recycling of used buildings, often of high-value when first built but of lower value when abandoned by their original owners. While they may be ‘used’ they are generally of higher-quality construction than those buildings constructed specifically as ‘affordable housing.’” And they are our history! 

Information for this article came from city directories, various newspaper citations 1875 to mid-1900s, ancestry.com, research on the Western Addition contributed by Cindy Ainsworth, the Reno Historical application, “A Tale of Three Cities” by Bertha Bender, and National Register Nomination forms for the Nystrom and Borland-Clifford properties.

Debbie Hinman is Vice-Chair of the Historical Resources Commission, a HRPS Tour Guide, and Managing Editor of *FootPrints*.



## Historic Reno PRESERVATION SOCIETY

# From HRPS AAC: Historic Preservation Issues in Reno

by Barrie Lynn, AAC Chair

*The role of the HRPS Advocacy Advisory Council (AAC) is to identify, research and obtain facts on current historic preservation issues in the Reno area and recommend a plan of action and outreach to the HRPS board. The AAC last met on April 24, 2017. The AAC is addressing the following issues:*

### Hillside Cemetery

**A** B. 203 passed the Senate and the Assembly and was signed into law by Governor Sandoval on May 23, 2017. It will help protect all Nevada's historic cemeteries from becoming targets for development, especially Hillside. Thanks to all of you who contacted the legislature with your support for A. B. 203.

### Caughlin Ranch House / Formerly, it was the Garden Shop Nursery.

This lovely property, on the City of Reno Historic Register, is up for sale and has applied for a both a zoning map amendment and a Master Plan amendment with the purpose of developing 25 two-story townhouses near the house, to be known as Mayberry Gardens. HRPS does not

support the master plan amendment and zoning change application. The City of Reno Historical Resources Commission voted not to support the rezoning amendment. As of June 5, the zoning request has been withdrawn.

### Ralston Street 300-Block Homes

Jacob's Entertainment is buying up several blocks in downtown for a large redevelopment project. The Ralston Street homes are threatened. Two are on the National Register. Jacob's is willing to work with people to move them and may consider grouping several homes into an "old home park". Unfortunately at this time, moving the homes seems imminent. Moving homes can often lead to a loss of context and may result in them losing their National Register status. Another aspect of this redevelopment project involves a major makeover/remodel of the Thunderbird Motel, which is one of Reno's finest examples of Mid-Century motel architecture.

### Historic Homes in The University Gateway

We are referring to the historic homes on Center Street between 8th and 9th

Streets as Historic University Avenue as this section was called University Avenue until about 1930. The University is still positioned to remove the historic homes from Historic University Avenue.

### Buildings in the University Neighborhood

The west side of N. Virginia Street across from UNR is rapidly changing. This has historically been a row of Craftsman and Period Revival style homes. The zoning was changed last year to allow for high density development. Drive along N. Virginia and you'll see the boarded up homes north of 14th Avenue. Because we are losing the historic landscape on the west side of the campus, it is important to mitigate this by retaining the Center Street homes in their original location.

### Hill / Redfield Mansion

The Redfield Mansion has closed escrow.

### El Cortez

The El Cortez's Trocadero Room is open, done in the style of the original. ~~REMOVED~~

## HRPS Endangered Building Watch List

- Freight House on Evans St.
- Nevada Brewing Works on 4<sup>th</sup> St.
- Regina Apartments on Island Ave.
- First Masonic Building (Reno Mercantile) at Sierra and Commercial
- Historic Homes on Historic University Avenue (Gateway)
- Buildings in the University Neighborhood
- The Hotel El Cortez at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Arlington
- Hill/Redfield Mansion on Mt. Rose St.
- Lear Theater
- Flick Ranch House
- Two El Reno Apartments at 1461 Lander St.
- Hillside Cemetery
- WPA Projects at Plumas, Stewart and Virginia Lake Parks
- Mid-century Motels
- Burke's, Belli and Mountain View Additions
- Caughlin Ranch House
- Ralston Avenue 300-block homes

# Architectural Elements—the Column

Article and Photos by ZoAnn Campana

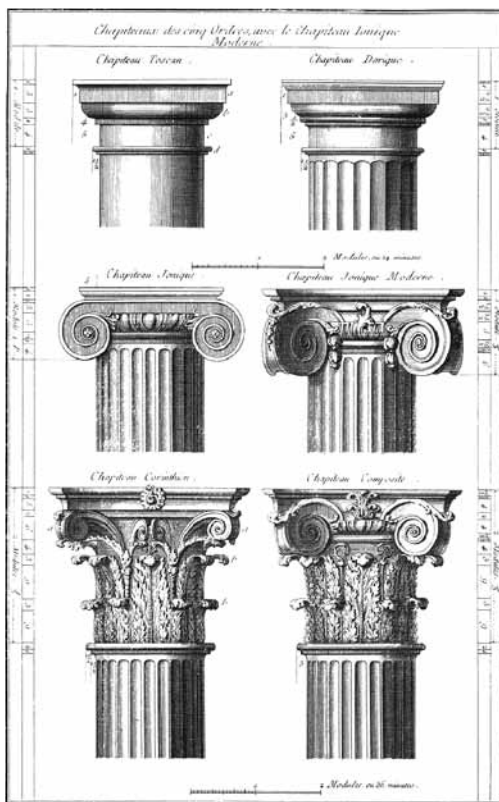
*This is the inaugural installment of “Elements,” a new architectural history-focused column in FootPrints. In this issue we are talking about a fundamental element of architecture; the column (yes, this will be a column on columns)!*

The column was initially developed to support weight-bearing loads in construction. Ancient Persians and Egyptians, among others, used interior posts or columns to support the roofs of their buildings, which is known as “post-and-lintel” construction. In fact, the Egyptians modeled their columns after bundles of sticks used to support the reed-covered roofs of vernacular residences along the Nile. The pharaohs’ impressive temples, a far cry from the huts of the common folk, were carved to resemble these bundles of sticks, as well as native lotus and papyrus buds and blooms.

The Ancient Greeks took it one step further, using columns as exterior elements. Little did they know that they would set an architectural precedent for millennia to come. Even the Romans, who moved away from post-and-lintel construction by innovating engineering techniques using concrete, arches, and vaulting, used exterior columns as a predominant decorative element. During this period, the Classical orders of architecture were developed, which were most completely described by Roman engineer Vitruvius in his treatise on architecture, appropriately titled *De Architectura*. Vitruvius explains the orders as we generally know them today: Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Composite, and Tuscan.

## Parts of a Column

Before we get into each order, it is important to understand the components of a column. Columns are made of three basic parts: the



*Classical Orders, as published in an 18th century French encyclopedia. Clockwise from upper left: Tuscan, Doric, Modern Ionic, Composite, Corinthian, and Ionic.*

bottommost element is the base, upon which the remainder of the column rests; the middle portion of the column is the shaft; and the topmost element is the capital, which rests atop the shaft.

## The Doric Order

Originating in mainland Greece as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the Doric order is characterized by a sturdy appearance, simple capital, and lack of a base. The column sits directly on the ground or foundation, and its shaft—which is typically fluted—is wider at the bottom, slightly tapering toward the top. The capital is round, consisting of a circular necking with a square abacus that connects it to the larger entablature. Due to its visual

heaviness and strength, Vitruvius associated the Doric Order with masculine virtues.

## The Ionic Order

More complex than the Doric that preceded it, the Ionic Order first appeared in Ionia in the middle of the 6th century BCE. The order is characterized by the scrolled volutes that decorate each corner of its capital. The fluted shaft is slenderer than that of the Doric Order, requiring a base that tends to be simple in form. Because of its slim form and volutes that resembled ringlets, Vitruvius attributed femininity—specifically that of the matron or married woman—to the Ionic Order.

## The Corinthian Order

The most ornate of the orders, the Corinthian was the last to develop in Greece, first appearing in Athens in the 4th century BCE. It consists of slender fluted columns set atop a simple base. The capital is richly adorned with stylized acanthus leaves and scrolls. Vitruvius also drew parallels between the Corinthian Order and femininity; however, unlike the more restrained and refined Ionic Order, the highly-decorated Corinthian was instead associated with a youthful and smartly-accessorized maiden.

## The Composite Order

As its name suggests, the Composite Order is a combination of earlier architectural orders. It appeared in Rome in the 1st century CE and is characterized by a capital that mixes Ionic volutes with Corinthian acanthus leaves. Aside from its capital, a Composite column follows the conventions of the Corinthian Order.

## The Tuscan Order

Invented by architects and architectural theorists of the Italian Renaissance,

## Architectural Elements—the Column (continued)

the Tuscan Order is viewed as a return to simplicity. Essentially, the details of its capital and shaft demonstrate a stripped-down version of that of the Doric Order, featuring a simple capital and smooth, unfluted columns. It differs from the Doric in its proportions, instead mirroring the slender form of the Ionic.

### Evolution of the Column

Classical columns fell out of favor as the more complex and structurally-flexible forms of the Gothic and Byzantine styles gained popularity. However, they reemerged during the Renaissance period and have remained a common stylistic feature in architecture ever since.

### Columns in Reno

In Reno, we typically see Classically-inspired columns used as porch supports in Colonial Revival and Neoclassical Revival style buildings. As with any revival style, these columns are not exact copies of Greek and Roman precedents. They have been modified to suit modern tastes and aesthetics, and do not strictly adhere to the rigorous proportions prescribed by architectural theorists of Ancient Rome and Renaissance Europe. Most of these are modified Ionic, Corinthian, and Tuscan columns. I



*Corinthian style columns grace the Washoe County Courthouse.*




*The Levy House (Sundance Book Store) displays a variation on Ionic columns.*



*The Giraud-Hardy House porch is supported by Tuscan columns.*

have yet to identify Doric columns on a building in Reno, but that doesn't necessarily mean they aren't out there.

Ionic columns can be found on the Levy House (Sundance Bookstore), as well as the Dexter-McLaughlin House, both of which are situated on California Avenue. The Washoe County Courthouse, designed by Frederic DeLongchamps, demonstrates Corinthian style columns. Tuscan columns are the most prolific style in Reno, and grace high-profile buildings such as the Giraud-Hardy House (Arte Italia) as well as modest residences throughout our historic neighborhoods.

Is there an architectural element that you've always wondered about? If so, send HRPS a letter or an email, and your suggestion may be used in a future installment of this column. 

ZoAnn is a local Historic Preservation Consultant who serves on the HRPS Board of Directors, the HRPS Editorial Board, and as the architectural historian on the City of Reno's Historical Resources Commission.

## January 1 the New Date for Membership Renewal

Your HRPS Board has approved changing our "fiscal year" and our membership renewals to the calendar year January 1 to December 31 from its current July 1 to June 30. We've found it too complex to have membership renewals in the middle of our busiest months—the June and July Walking Tours. So, how will this affect you as a renewing member?

- Your renewal date has been extended 6 months for free — check your mailing label on FootPrints.
- You will actually get an 18-month "year" this renewal period — but just this once.
- Fall FootPrints, which arrives about August 20, will have a separate membership renewal form inside. Renewals will now be due on January 1.



# HRPS & Artown July 2017 Historic Walking Tours



HRPS is proud to be a part of the month-long Artown celebration. We offer a full roster of July walks. Tour cost is \$10 per person, free to HRPS members. Walks generally last from 1 ½ to 2 hours.

**No dogs please. Reservations required and space is limited.**

Please go to [www.historicreno.org](http://www.historicreno.org) or 775-747-4478 for reservations and information.

Access to HRPS Walking Tours varies according to venue. Certain areas may not be fully accessible to individuals with disabilities due to architectural barriers inherent in the historic construction of the structures or uneven walking surfaces.

**Saturday, July 1 9:00 a.m.** **TRUCKEE RIVER ALL THE TIME** — See Reno’s relationship with the Truckee over time; learn of the great floods and of Reno’s architectural heritage; hear the Voice of the City, observe how the HRPS Walks in July relate to the Truckee and the history of Reno. Meet at the Wild River Grille at the Riverside Artists Lofts. Tour guides: Jim and Sue Smith.

**Saturday, July 8 9:00 a.m.** **PROHIBITION IN RENO** — We have turned back the clocks to the 1920s and 1930s. We will walk streets and alleys and visit significant buildings, recalling Reno’s saloons and reformers (the WCTU and Anti-Saloon League). You might even get to see a dignitary from Reno’s past. Tour starts at Amtrak’s Reno Station, 135 East Commercial Row. Sign-in is across the street from the historic section of the train station on Commercial Row. Tour guides: Debbie Hinman and Sharon Honig-Bear.

**Tuesday, July 11 6:00 p.m.** **EL RENO APARTMENT HOMES** — Visit the original site of these charming and unique homes and view seven of them at their new locations. Other examples of the Sierra Vista Addition architecture will be seen. See the Redfield home and hear about its eccentric, wealthy namesake: LaVere Redfield. Meet at the northwest corner of the Statewide Lighting parking lot, 1311 S. Virginia. Tour guide: Debbie Hinman.

**Saturday, July 15 9:00 a.m.** **MIDTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT** — Take a walk through the emerging Midtown District and see how this area has changed over the past 100 years from a quiet country road lined with large homes to a bustling business district. The Midtown area has continually reinvented itself to adapt to the changing needs of our city. Learn about the exciting businesses and people that once occupied the familiar buildings you see today. Meet at the southwest corner of St. Lawrence Avenue and Virginia Street. Tour guide: Barrie Lynn.



*Truckee River All the Time Tour:  
Lear Theater*



*Prohibition in Reno Tour:  
1872 Masonic Building*



*El Reno Apartment Homes Tour:  
An El Reno home*





*Mansions on the Bluff Tour: Hawkins House*



*Western Addition Tour: Humphrey House*



*Powning's Addition and Little Italy Tour: 121 Vine St.*



*Powning's Addition and Little Italy Tour: 105 Vine St.*

## HRPS & Artown July 2017 Historic Walking Tours

Tuesday,  
July 18  
6:00 p.m.

**CEMETERY TOUR** — Join HRPS for an early evening visit to four of Reno's most historic cemeteries: Pythians, Hillside, The Grand Army of the Republic, and the Hebrew Cemetery. Come "get acquainted" with some of their most notable residents. Meet at the Knights of Pythias Hall, 980 Nevada Street. Please wear closed shoes suitable for rocky and uneven ground. Tour guides: Fran Tyron, Mac Wieland, Sharon Honig-Bear and Bill Mardon.

Saturday,  
July 22  
8:00 a.m.

**MANSIONS ON THE BLUFF** — Walk past historical Reno homes located on Court, Ridge and upper California streets. Learn about the senators and merchants who made early Reno *The Biggest Little City in the World*. Be sure to bring water and wear comfortable shoes for this uphill tour which begins at the McCarran House, 401 Court Street. Look nearby for mandatory sign-in/registration on Court Street. Tour guides: Donna and Paul Erickson, ZoAnn Campana and Joan Collins.

Tuesday,  
July 25  
6:00 p.m.

**POWNING'S ADDITION AND LITTLE ITALY** — Discover one of Reno's earliest and most delightful vernacular neighborhoods, predominantly settled by Northern Italian immigrants. This neighborhood is the first City of Reno Conservation District. Meet at the McKinley Arts & Culture Center, 925 Riverside Drive, east side parking lot. Tour guides: Felvia Belaustegui and Jack Hursh.

Saturday,  
July 29  
9:00 a.m.

**RENO FOR KIDS (New Tour)** — Visit some of downtown Reno's historic landmarks with your child/grandchild (child must be 9-12 years old). Together gain an appreciation for Reno's history and make your own memories by sharing this walk. Please Note: Each child must be accompanied by an adult; child is free. Meet at the National Automobile Museum parking area at 10 South Lake Street. Tour guides: Donna and Paul Erickson and Denise Kolton.

Saturday,  
July 29  
9:00 a.m.

**WESTERN ADDITION** — Visit vestiges of one of Reno's earliest residential neighborhoods, dating from the mid-1870s. Hear the stories of its early "movers and shakers," such as Fire Chief George Twaddle, businessman Frank Humphrey and banker Charles Bender. View the varying architectural styles, from the Carpenter Gothic Clifford House to the modest brick bungalows of the Smith-Petersen subdivision. Meet at the Northeast Corner of Fifth and Bell Street by JJ's Pie Co. Tour guide: Debbie Hinman.

## We Won't Be Here Long: Anticipated Mobility in the Rabbithole Mining District

by Kristen Tiede

Though the Great Depression is a well-studied period of American history, most people are unaware that many Americans abandoned their homes for remote gold mining districts during the 1930s. The terrible effects of the Depression resulted in many people struggling to provide for their families. Federal mining regulations created the perfect opportunity for small-scale miners to make a living in the American West during hard times. But the novice miners of the Great Depression had no intention of making permanent homes in remote mining districts, such as the Rabbithole Mining District in northwest Nevada. Using a model of anticipated mobility, or how long people think they will stay in one place, mining communities can be analyzed to see how long the miners expected to be at a site.

During the Great Depression, rates of unemployment rose to 30% and many people could not afford food or housing. Even as sources of local aid dried up, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his predecessor, Herbert Hoover, were reluctant to provide federal aid, as they were concerned people would become dependent on it. There was also a stigma placed on those accepting federal aid, and as a result many Americans sought alternatives to being on the "government dole."

Then, in 1934 the U.S. government passed the Gold Reserve Act, which raised the price of gold to \$35 an ounce. This piece of legislation became the catalyst for the Automobile Gold Rushes. Entire families loaded up their belongings and supplies into their cars and traveled to gold mining districts. The Rabbithole Mining District in Pershing County, Nevada is one such place where

Americans sought shelter from the effects of the Depression.

Today, the site is mostly deserted, and all that is left of the Depression-era community are the remains of scattered adits, shafts, can dumps, and dugouts. The community originated when the Landis Mining Company acquired claims in the Rabbithole District in 1931 in one of the first large-



*Dugout occupied by "snipers" during the Depression.  
Courtesy Melody Zionich.*

scale efforts to work the placer gold deposits. The soil required more water to process the gold, a hard commodity to come by in the desert. The Landis Mining Company went out of business in 1935, leaving the employees stranded in the desert with no money and no other work opportunities. As the Coarse Gold Group and the Associated Royalty Mining Company entered a legal battle over the ownership of the claims, the former Landis employees began working the placer gold deposits for themselves. Pershing County officials encouraged the people on their relief roles to join the former Landis employees, going so far as to host classes on gold panning and providing supplies and gas.

As the Great Depression years continued and the legal battle over who rightfully owned the claims raged on, the miners, called snipers, continued mining the placer gold deposits and eking out a living in the desert. The snipers built a community of rough dugouts, cabins, and tent platforms to live in while they worked the placer gold deposits. The actual mobility of the community in the Rabbithole Mining District was far longer than expected, since the community was occupied for seven years. The snipers likely thought they would leave either when the gold ran out or they were forced from the property, neither of which happened until 1941, resulting in a longer stay than they had originally thought. The anticipated mobility of the community can be discussed through an examination of the residential architecture, pattern of trash disposal, and recovered artifacts.

There are twenty-four residential features scattered across the site. By only constructing simple tent pads and rough dugouts or cabins, the snipers made their intent to abandon the site very clear. Most of the dugouts and cabins have a single room with a dirt floor and many have no evidence that a stove had been present inside the dwelling. Furthermore, over half of the dugouts have collapsed, probably a result of their poor construction or scavenging. These small dwellings are uninhabitable by today's standards, but the snipers and their families were simply making do with the materials they had. Rather than invest time, money, and resources into a place that they did not legally own and would abandon, the snipers used the various materials available to them, such as railroad ties, utility poles, car panels, and fruit boxes.

## We Won't Be Here Long (continued)

The way that the snipers disposed of their trash also signaled their intent to only stay for a short time. Instead of designating certain areas for dumping trash, the entire site is scattered with a mix of industrial and domestic refuse. When no longer useful, items were dropped or thrown out the door of the residence, resulting in trash strewn across the site, associated with recorded features, and in large concentrations. During the seven years the site was occupied, the snipers relied upon canned foods brought back from the nearby towns of Sulphur, Lovelock, or Gerlach, as the area is poor in food resources. Their dependence on canned food is visible through the hundreds of cans still present at the site. Though there are thirteen can dumps recorded at the site, they are often associated with residential features. For seven years, the snipers disposed of their trash nearby the dugouts, since they thought they would be leaving soon. Even though the snipers stayed years longer than they had anticipated, they continued to follow a pattern of




*Depression-era dugout buried by later mining activity.  
Courtesy Melody Zionich.*

behavior as if they would only be at the site for a short time.

The importance of work in everyday life in the Rabbithole Mining District is apparent through the vast majority of industrial or work related artifacts recovered at the site. Since the snipers and their families thought they would be at Rabbithole for only a short time, they may have been hesitant to bring a large

amount of domestic items to the site, such as glassware, teaware, or tableware. But as their stay lengthened, the snipers may have brought these items to their dugouts in the desert to make them feel more like home. Also, the presence of personal hygiene items, such as combs, toothbrushes, and a razor head show the snipers continued to care about their appearances even though they lived in the remote desert.

We are fortunate in Nevada to still have these remnants of mining camps which can teach us so much about our state's history and those who were determined enough to stay, at

least for a while, and scratch out the best living they could for their families. No doubt many hopefuls were still looking for that big strike! Progress has erased so much of our history, but sites such as Rabbithole bring us an understanding of a time gone by we could not gather simply from words on a page or even photographs. 

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Kristen Tiede is HRPS 2016-17 Scholarship recipient, who is completing her Master's Degree at the University of Reno, Nevada

## HRPS Announces the 2017 Neighborhood Preservation Fund (NPF) Award Recipients

by *Cindy Ainsworth, NPF Chair*

The NPF panel announced the recipients of the 2017 grant awards at the May HRPS board meeting. This year's line-up of homes represented many historic neighborhoods, including the Powning Addition and the newly-listed Newlands Historic District. The panel was pleased to see that home owners are making an effort to restore and not replace the original windows—a feature that is critical when maintaining the original look of a house.

The NPF has allowed property owners the opportunity to apply for grants for the rehabilitation of historical structures in a manner authentic with the original architectural style. Since 2010, the NPF panel has awarded 43 grants for a total of \$147,771. Plus, we have a major pending three-year grant that has contributed to the replacement of the roof and other maintenance improvement projects for the Levy House/Sundance Books property.

Major funding for the NPF comes from the Reno Harvest of Homes tour along with our Lifetime category memberships. Additional NPF donations can be sent to HRPS, P.O. Box 14003, Reno, NV 89507.

### 2017 NPF Recipients

#### 127 & 127 ½ Winter, Owners Celia Barnett & Jason Nickle

A grant request for various projects including painting of the back unit and repair of the windows. The home is a Queen Anne Revival ca. 1910-1915. Committee members Cindy Ainsworth and Jack Hursh spoke to Celia Barnett and were impressed with the owner's enthusiasm in buying an older home in the historic Powning Addition. There is a possibility that the back unit is the Horace Countryman home (see Kim Henrick's article, Summer 2014, *FootPrints* issue), which would make

it one of the earliest Reno houses. More research needs to be completed to verify this. The committee recommends \$4,000 toward the repair of the original windows.

#### 617 Roberts Street, Owners Derek J. Partridge & Matthew Macaletti

A grant request for the labor to repair the vintage windows. This home has an interesting history. Built in 1934, it was a Reno High School shop class project house. The home was purchased by a teacher and she and her husband remained in the home until they passed in 2002. Their daughter then rented the home for 15 years. The goal of the owners is to restore the original features of the home. The window project requires taking apart and repairing the original weight and pulley system to correct function. The committee recommended \$2,500 towards the restoration of the windows.

#### 842 Nixon Avenue, Owner Loren Jahn

A grant for the replacement of rain gutters with period-appropriate reproductions of the originals. This is a very nice 1930s family home included on one of our walking tours. It is also located in the Newlands Neighborhood National Register District. The gutters are visible from all sides of the house and it was determined that contemporary gutters would not be appropriate. This will be



842 Nixon Ave. Photo by Cindy Ainsworth.

part of an ongoing preservation project which will include the summer replacement of the roof. The committee recommended \$2,000.

#### 571 Ridge Street, Owners Tim and Blair Morgan

A grant request for various projects that include contractor site work, carpentry and stucco work, painting, and gutter replacement. This is a very nice original 1931 Newlands Heights craftsman-style home. The home still has the original 40 casement windows. The exterior of the house has suffered due to "years of neglect including the leaking roof which has resulted in water damage to the plaster soffits and adjacent wood trim." The committee applauded the Morgan's efforts in rehabilitating the home. The committee recommended \$6,000 towards the soffit repair work. 



571 Ridge St. Photo courtesy owners.

## HRPS 2017 Pat Klos Volunteer Award Winner: Debbie Hinman

**P**at Klos was among the seven people who met in July 1997 to form a historic preservation society. Pat became the first President of Historic Reno Preservation Society and has continued to actively support HRPS in the ensuing years.

In 2014, Pat established the HRPS Pat Klos Volunteer Award. As she says: I respect volunteerism, and I also know what the hundreds of HRPS volunteers have accomplished since September of 1997. My Statement of Purpose to the HRPS Board for this award reads:

“Renoites love Reno and are willing to volunteer and work together to preserve our heritage. It is my intention as founding president of HRPS to reward that spirit of dedication by annually acknowledging a person who has shown commitment, enthusiasm and innovation as a member of HRPS.”

HRPS runs on volunteerism, whether it is collecting money and serving as treasurer, working hours on a computer for membership, organizing walking tour leaders and volunteers, contacting people to assist the Home Tour, or helping out with walking tours.

At the April 30, 2017 HRPS Annual Meeting, HRPS President Carol Coleman presented the 2017 Pat Klos Volunteer Award to Debbie Hinman with these words:

“This year’s Volunteer Award Winner is the ultimate volunteer—she’s been on the HRPS Board, does Walking Tours, was Walking Tour Chair, is a writer for HRPS FootPrints and now its Editor, and serves as HRPS Liaison to the Historical Resources Commission. I proudly present this year’s Pat Klos Volunteer Award to Debbie Hinman.”

Debbie joined HRPS in 2003 and that year was involved in Walking Tours—her first tour project was rewriting the Lake Addition tour (at Pat Klos’ urging, since much of the original route had lost its history). She then created the El Reno and the University Neighborhood tours. With Sharon Honig-Bear she wrote the Prohibition in Reno tour, with Cindy Ainsworth she created the Western Addition tour, and with

Rosie Cevasco she wrote the Midtown Residential tour and then the Hillside portion of the Cemetery Tour. She gave the Bricks and Stones Tour last year when Dave Vill was injured. So Debbie can give a minimum of six unique walking tours in a Walking Tour season—quite amazing!

Developing new tours demands an excellent researcher, which Debbie definitely is. For the years 2005 through 2007, Debbie took on the task of Walking Tour Chair where she coordinated all of the Walking Tours.

During the years 2005 through 2011, Debbie served as a Board Director on the HRPS Board, representing the Walking Tours and HRPS quarterly publication FootPrints.



*Carol Coleman, on the right, presents Debbie Hinman the HRPS Volunteer Award for 2017.  
Photo courtesy David Lowndes.*

Debbie became a writer for *FootPrints* in 2003, and from that day forward almost every issue of *FootPrints* has had at least one article by Debbie. Her first article for *FootPrints* was “Tough Little Church on Second Street,” the history of the Baptist Church in Reno. Then-Editor Sharon Walbridge had asked her if she would be interested in writing for *FootPrints* and tasked her with that story. Although she didn’t choose the topic, it turned out to be interesting and taught her how to do her excellent research. Her writing style, her research ability and her knowledge in a wide range of topics has made *FootPrints* a high-quality publication.

For the last seven years, Debbie has done the research on the homes for the HRPS Home Tour and written the portion of the program that describes the neighborhoods and relates the history of the homes and those that inhabited them. Owners of tour homes look forward to receiving Debbie’s thorough research of their property – sometimes it even convinces them to participate!

Debbie now serves on the City of Reno Historical Resources Commission (HRC) as HRPS Liaison, and has recently been voted Vice-Chair of HRC.

Congratulations Debbie Hinman! And thank you for all you have done and continue to do for HRPS. 🍷



## Message from Your HRPS President Carol Coleman

days to commemorate Reno's 150th birthday which happens May 9, 2018.

### Walking Tours in Progress

We're through with our May and almost through with our June Walking Tours! Many thanks to the Walking Tour Captains: Constance Hanson for May and a twosome, Charlotte Voitoff and Caroline Asikainen for June, and to the many tour volunteers who come out to help and support HRPS Walking Tours. And special thanks to the Walking Tour Guides. Without these great folks, our Walking Tours couldn't happen!

### Historical Resources Commission Awards

Earlier in the day on May 9, the City of Reno's Historical Resources Commission (HRC) handed out their 2017 Historic Preservation Awards in a ceremony led by Councilman Bobzien.

Awards are given in six categories. Two categories — Distinguished Service and Advocate — are given to an individual or group. Three categories recognize outstanding work related to the preservation of Residential or Non-Residential properties and Historic Landmarks. One category honors an outstanding Historical Project, such as a publication,

research project, media production, or other initiative.

**Residential;** Bryan and Barrie Lynn for the Pecetti / Lynn House, 161 Wonder Street

**Non-Residential;** Harry and Carla Hart for the Nixon Mansion at 631 California Avenue

**Non-Residential;** 50 South Virginia LLC for the former Reno Downtown Post Office to Bernie and Tim Carter

**Historic Landmark;** Historic University Avenue

**Historical Project;** The Genesis of Reno: The History of the Riverside Hotel and the Virginia Street Bridge by Jack Harpster

**Distinguished Service;** Sharon Honig-Bear

**Distinguished Service;** The Reno Rose Society

**Advocate;** Barrie Lynn

We especially want to congratulate HRPS members Bryan and Barrie Lynn, Jack Harpster and Sharon Honig-Bear for their well-deserved awards.

Carol Coleman, 775-849-3380  
carol@galenaforest.net

Greetings HRPS members  
and friends,

### Reno 150

**R**eno's Sesquicentennial celebration, named Reno 150, got underway on May 9, 2017 in the Downtown Plaza on First Street, bounded by South Virginia on the west, Center Street on the east, and the Truckee River on the south. That spot has seen a lot of Reno history: the Mapes, YMCA and Majestic Theater occupied the land once; prior to that the 1908 Federal Building (and Post Office) and before that Alhambra Hall, which housed the very first schoolroom in Reno. On May 9, many community groups and HRPS were there to celebrate the first of 365

## Save the Date: September 23, 2017 Harvest of Homes Tour

**B**e sure to save the date for HRPS fall highlight: the 8th annual Reno Harvest of Homes Tour—Saturday, September 23.

The 2017 Tour will include:

- Two southwest locations: 1680 Greenfield with a natural pond and wonderful garden, and 205 Urban overlooking the Washoe County Golf Course, which in the 1920s was the original Reno Airport.
- Three Newland's Historic District National Register properties: 548 California, now a business, once

the home of Bill Graham, one of the kingpins of Reno's 1920s-30s underworld; 643 Manor, a delightful brick bungalow built in 1935, and 785 Manor, a minimal traditional property built in 1936.

- Off Old Verdi Road (Mayberry) to the west, a beautiful mid-century home at 7090 Aspen Glen influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright, with the Truckee River on one side and Hunter Creek on the other.

More information about the homes and the Tour will be available in the next issue of *FootPrints* and online at [historicreno.org](http://historicreno.org) later

this summer. Tickets will be available in August and will again be \$30 in advance and \$35 on the day of the event. Tickets will be available at specified local businesses and may also be ordered online through the website.

Proceeds from the Reno Harvest of Homes Tour are used for the HRPS Neighborhood Preservation Fund, offering grants for community improvement projects.

Additional information is available at [historicreno.org](http://historicreno.org) or by calling (775) 747-4478 or (775) 560-0602.

## HRPS Lifetime Members

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 Kathy Williams

(\* Deceased)

## HRPS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

**Historic Reno Preservation Society** celebrates its 20th anniversary as an all-volunteer non-profit organization in September 2017. The **Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS)** is “dedicated to preserving and promoting historic resources in the Truckee Meadows through education, advocacy and leadership.”

All Membership Levels include the HRPS quarterly historical publication, *FootPrints*; HRPS walking tours during the summer months; and educational programs in fall and winter.

You may pay by check, cash, Paypal or credit card. To pay by Paypal or credit card, please log on to our HRPS website: [www.historicreno.org](http://www.historicreno.org).

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  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Neighborhood Preservation Grant Fund  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Overall Program Support

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

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

### I'D LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO WORK ON:

- Home Tours     Walking Tours     Board     Research
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to:  
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