

Bell of Nevada: A 'Long Distance' View

by Debbie Hinman

Few vestiges of early Reno remain in the downtown area. Two bank buildings and a few other scattered early structures still stand, but for the most part, Reno's downtown history has been erased. The lovely Arcade Medico-Dental building, a Spanish Revival structure that graced North Virginia Street when completed in 1927, came down in 1983 to make way for another Hotel Casino, The Virginian. In 1995, Reno lost its first telephone company structure, the stylish, ornamental Bell of Nevada building at 100 N. Center Street. Both buildings had been the work of Nevada's pre-eminent architect, Frederic DeLongchamps.

Telephone service surprisingly came to Nevada just one year after Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone in a rooming house in Boston, Massachusetts. The first Nevada telephone was installed in the Consolidated Virginia Mine in Storey County, Nevada. The year was 1877. In 1881, the telephone was introduced to Reno—well, we had “connections.” Frank Bell, local resident and Alexander's cousin, received two telephones with instructions. He connected his home on Sierra Street with the residence of his brother-in-law, well-known local C. C. Powning, editor of the *Nevada State Journal*. Powning lived at the corner of West Front (now First) and West Streets. In addition to being related to A. G. Bell, Frank was the sixth governor of Nevada. He established a telephone exchange in Reno to serve 15 subscribers in 1889 and in the following year, received a



Above: Looking over those who entered the Nevada Bell Building (c. 1929) was a female face which came to be called “Nevada Belle.”
Photo courtesy Loren Jahn.

Below: The Frederic DeLongchamps-designed Nevada Bell building facing N. Center St.
Photo courtesy Debbie Hinman.

franchise. But as with any great innovation, competition arrived in the unlikely guise of Jane and Charles Lake, former wife and son of Myron Lake, Reno's founder.

Jane and Charles established their own telephone service and later

acquired Bell's interest of about 250 customers. They continued to operate their telephone company until 1897. Between 1897 and 1906, the Lakes' interest was sold, acquired by a small company who soon sold its holdings to Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Co. By 1907, Pacific Telephone had acquired all of Sunset's stock and operated Reno's service until its holdings were transferred to Bell of Nevada in 1913. 1914 saw construction commencing on the Nevada portion of the transcontinental phone line which would connect the east and west coasts for the Panama-Pacific Exposition.

By July of 1920, Bell of Nevada had increased service to the point of outgrowing their location in a rented shop and began searching for an appropriate site on which to construct a new building. They soon found an excellent location on the corner of North Center and East First Streets which they purchased from Pierson & Cafferata, real estate brokers. There were a few old structures on the lot including one housing the Bred-to-Lay Poultry Company which sold chickens for delivery, and another, the Washoe County Cleaners, which advertised gents' suits cleaned for \$1.50 and ladies' suits for \$1.75.

Although the Bell Company had announced they would begin construction that summer, they reported they had to wait for definite plans. They must have run into some serious snags as ground was not

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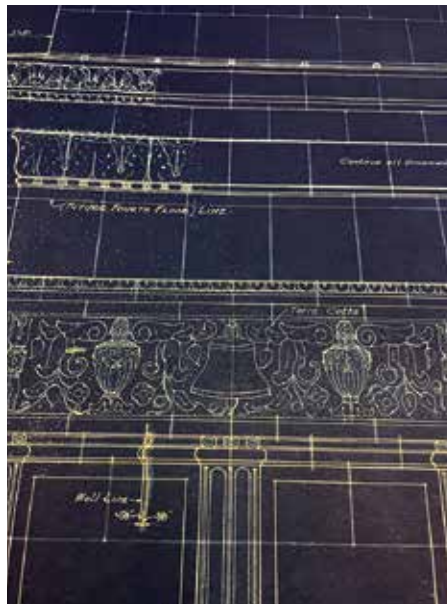
broken for the new building until June 22, 1928. It would accommodate Nevada's first dial system office.

In that era of Reno's development, the addition of a new building was big news. It was customary to hold a ceremony to celebrate the occasion. The groundbreaking for this significant addition to downtown was no exception. A host of Reno officials were on hand, as well as representatives from Pacific Telephone who opened the June morning event with speeches. Operating the steam shovel that was to turn the first shovelful of dirt was Reno Mayor E. E. Roberts who led the city for 10 years. The Chamber of Commerce issued the following statement: "Reno has been signally honored by the telephone company deciding to erect a building of such character in our city, and it will do much to mark our consequence, for no other city of anywhere the same size as Reno will have a building so imposing."

The Bell System hired Reno architect Frederic DeLongchamps for the project. Oddly, in announcements about the new building, DeLongchamps was alternately referred to as associate architect, supervising architect and chief architect for the building. Whichever title was correct, he was a major influence in the creation of the structure.

DeLongchamps' blueprints show artistic touches to the exterior. On the front page of the plans, the building is described as made of "structural steel with terra-cotta exterior highlighted with extensive, low relief, sculptural ornamentation. Fluted pilasters divide the exterior. Two decorated entrances." Each entrance featured terra-cotta garlands complete with oval medallions and facial masks.

The medallions were topped by the face of a lovely woman, possibly Themis, the Greek goddess of justice, known to some as "Nevada Belle." It was crafted of terra cotta, created in interlocking sections. The second and third floors had horizontal bands of bas-relief floral displays in vases and



DeLongchamps' blueprints of the second and third floor feature horizontal bands of bas-relief floral displays, and vases with a bell in the center representing the phone company logo. Courtesy of UNR Special Collections.

decorative squares featuring a bell in the center, a clever nod to the purpose of the building.

Rows of large, vertical windows adorned both the front and side of the building facing First Street. Once the steel framing was in place, a large sign was erected reading, "New \$186,000 Bell Telephone Dial Service." Its downtown location, right across the street from City Hall, would make it convenient for those needing to arrange for telephone service or to pay their bills.

In May of 1929, the new Bell of Nevada building opened to the public. The business office occupied the front portion of the main floor. It must have been a cheerful workspace with its spacious lobby, large windows, beautiful architecture and elegant furnishings. Public telephones were provided for the use of customers during working hours. Booth telephones in the building's vestibule were available after hours. Operators worked on the third floor, at 32 switchboard positions serving more than 6,000 telephones and providing interconnection through the Bell system to nearly 19 million in the nation.

However, as of June 2, 1929, promptly at 1 p.m., the cutover to the dial method occurred, eliminating the personal touch from the local system as customers could now dial their own local numbers without operator assistance. In addition to the four-digit numbers, an exchange number was added in front, making them five-digit. The second floor was manned by technicians, and the basement contained cabling and trunk facilities. While it could not compete with telephone buildings in other cities, such as the 26-story, lavishly appointed Pacific Telephone & Telegraph building constructed in San Francisco in 1925, it was a significant addition to downtown Reno.

As Reno grew, so did the need for additional and updated telephone services. From a general population of 18,529 in 1930, by 1950 Reno had grown to around 50,000. In 1954, two stories were added to the top of 100 North Center for additional office and equipment space. At some point, likely during the years of World War II, the windows of the building had been painted over. Operators would sneak out onto a small side-balcony off the break room to get fresh air and check the weather.

The building suffered no attacks during wartime, but nature took two swipes at it in the 1950s with serious floods, in 1950 and 1955. The floods threatened service with water seeping into the basement cable vault. Employees and other local volunteers spent long hours filling and stacking sandbags to protect Reno's telephone service.


Despite the 1954 addition to the Center Street building, with advances in technology, additional facilities were needed. In 1959, construction began on a modern toll and tandem building around the corner behind the existing building, at 195 East First Street. In stark contrast to the Bell of Nevada it was a tall modern structure with no ornamentation other than a band of blue-tinted windows enclosing the stairwell which ran up the front of the building, and large glossy brown tiles at street level. There were no other windows, and the building was designed to be earthquake proof.

In articles in the local papers, it was referred to as the “direct distance dialing” (DDD) building where this new, innovative service allowing customers to make long distance calls without operator assistance would soon be available. In September of 1959, Bell of Nevada featured a demonstration trailer at the Nevada State Fair to show locals how DDD worked. On January 16, 1960, at 11 p.m., DDD went into effect for customers in Reno, Sparks, Carson City, Lovelock, Hawthorne and Winnemucca.

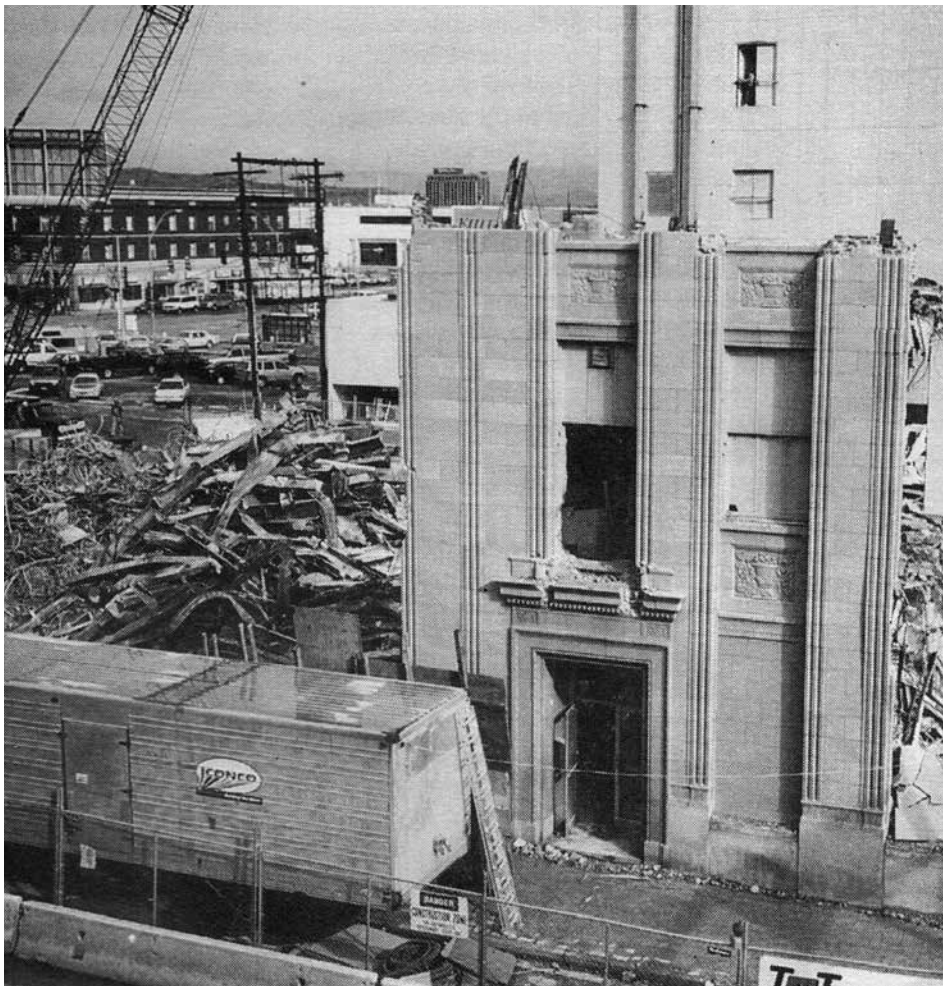
As large as this building was, only six years later two additional floors were added to 195 East First Street, to accommodate electronic switchboards. A walkway spanning the alley between the two buildings was built connecting the buildings at the third floor. Another change to Reno’s telephone service occurred in 1968 but it was a

change in name only—Bell of Nevada became Nevada Bell.

In the early 1990s, discussions began regarding the continuing safety of 100 North Center Street. Although the building was only 60+ years old and had withstood several floods, its many additions and modifications raised the question of its viability in the event of a serious earthquake. Engineers advised Nevada Bell that the cost of retrofitting the old building to withstand an 8.5 earthquake would be \$2.3 million. Nevada preservationists, including Ron James, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) director, expressed hope that the building could be saved or, at the very least, the façade kept intact. He cited the demolition of neighboring buildings such as the Stein Hof Brau. In 1992, Reno’s original telephone building was sold to Club Cal-Neva who had plans to build another parking garage.

It was a huge project to relocate all the equipment, cabling, circuits, and lines, and it took many months to complete. But finally, the lovely old building stood empty, awaiting its inevitable fate, which occurred in January 1995. When only one entrance and four pilasters still stood, Nevada Bell technician Kevin Cox was dispatched to the third floor of the original Cal-Neva parking garage to snap a photograph. Featured on the front page of the *Nevada Bell News*, the photo shows one entrance surrounded by a portion of the façade, a sea of debris in the background. All that was left was an empty space above the entrance where once Nevada Belle surveyed downtown Reno through the ages. 

Note: *I worked for Nevada Bell for nearly 37 years, starting as an operator at 195 East First Street. I remember being disappointed that I would be located there, rather than at what I thought of as the cool old building. As a clerk in the 1980s, I would run mail from my building to 100 North Center via the third-floor connector. I recall the old building being dimly lit and smelling of age. I had moved on in my career to the Plumb Lane building by the time of the demolition in 1995, so I was not present the day the building came down. It would have been difficult to watch, but I do wish I had been there to bid it a final farewell. It is unknown what happened to Nevada Belle. I hope she’s still in existence somewhere and may someday come to light.*



A photo taken by Nevada Bell technician Kevin Cox from the original Cal-Neva parking garage across the street from Nevada Bell captured the last moments of the building’s demolition.

Information for this article came from: Nevada Bell History 1913-1985, author unknown; Nevada Bell News; the Nevada State Journal and Reno Evening Gazette, 1913-present; and conversations with former employees of the Bell system. Special thanks to Kay Wilkinson Brown, former editor of the Nevada Bell News, for the loan of her collection.

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KILEY RANCH WETLANDS: *History & Future*

By Jill Richardson
with Photos from Nancy Hoffman and Megan Kiley

Nestled in an ever-growing subdivision in the Spanish Springs Valley north of Sparks is 200+ acres of open space that includes a large pond and wetlands. On December 30, 2022, this property was donated to the Nevada Department of Wildlife. Saved from housing development, the property, when opened, will provide visitors with opportunities for hiking, picnicking, fishing and birding. This is the latest chapter of land ownership in the story of this once-rural valley—now a Sparks suburb.

The story begins with the native people who originally lived in this area. They were the Northern and Southern Paiutes, Washoe and Shoshone Indians. White explorers began arriving in the 1840s, and by the 1850s, immigrants entered the Truckee Meadows at Stone and Gates' Crossing from the east. This area became the city of Sparks. Along the

Truckee River, George F. Stone and Charles C. Gates established a river crossing over the Truckee and settled in the valley. After the village grew sufficiently to have a post office, the town name changed to Glendale. The Central Pacific Railroad came through in 1868, and the name was changed again to Sparks, after then-Governor of Nevada, John Sparks.

The *Nevada State Journal* espoused the advantages of people buying railroad property in this Spanish Springs Valley to farm the land. They advocated for the “cultivation of the entire tillable portions of Nevada, particularly the choice spots, such as Spanish Springs Valley.” But farming the valley required water. The Orr Ditch was the solution. It brought irrigation through the valley’s center, allowing farmers to raise alfalfa, potatoes and wheat crops. These wetlands were the result of runoff water from the Orr Ditch. Details

Over 200 acres of the Kiley/Stead ranch in Sparks was donated in 2022 to the Nevada Department of Wildlife by the Kiley family for use as public open space. Photo by Nancy Hoffman.

from the *Journal* at this time included the mention of gophers and muskrats causing leaks in the irrigation ditches. As a result, the newspaper said young and old Native Americans alike caught and roasted gophers on sticks before a fire for a “very toothsome” meal. There was also mention of a long flume through the valley owned by Black, Roberts and Company.

To the south of Spanish Springs, the railroad heavily dominated industry, but several miles north of town, entrepreneurs were busy with mining and ranching. George Wedekind operated three mines for silver, gold and zinc. John Sparks was a cattle rancher before becoming governor, and he eventually bought the Wedekind mines. Other notable area ranching families included the Blaisdells, Boyntons, Cafferatas, Capurros, Dixons, Orrs, Praters, Peckhams and Wingfields. This 200+ acres wetland bears the name of the Kiley family.

As early as 1931, the Kileys had been farming north of Sparks. The ranch was known both as Nevada Hereford Ranch and the Stead Ranch. The matriarch of the family was Marian Kiley. According to her obituary, Marian was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1898. She attended Smith College in Massachusetts and married LeRoy Kiley in 1918. The couple had three children: Croston, William and L. David. Marian came to Reno with her boys in 1928 to divorce LeRoy and subsequently married James Stead in 1931. James came to Reno from Pleasant Valley, California, in 1929 at the age of 30. Over time, he purchased property in the Spanish Springs area including what was known then as the Troisi ranch.

Spanish Springs was so named for the early Mexican immigrants who

ranching in the area and for the spring-fed creek that meandered through the valley. The Spanish Springs Valley and nearby Spanish Springs Peak, located east of the valley in the Pah Rah Range, were named by Alces Blum. Sources from 1879 claim “Pah Rah” is the Shoshone word for river, while other sources translate it as Paiute for “Lake Mountain.”

Before the Kileys arrived, the Trosi family had extensive ranching operations in Washoe County and Plumas and Sierra Counties in California where they raised sheep and cattle. The family came from Switzerland and settled in Virginia City early in Nevada’s statehood. The Trosi family lived in Sierra Valley (north of Truckee) in the summer but

came to the Reno area in the winter so that the children could attend school.

As of 1913, the Trosi family was known as one of the wealthiest, with hundreds of acres of ranch property. The Trosi family is mentioned in news articles from the 1920s as having property and water rights to the Spanish Springs Valley Ditch. A 1986 obituary for Edna Trosi Dromiack lists her and her husband Andria Dromiack as prior owners of the “Old Stead Ranch.”

The Kiley/Stead family lived on the land in Spanish Springs purchased by James Stead. James became well-known as a cattleman in the area. He founded the Nevada Hereford Association and was a member of the

Elks and Masons. One of the earliest news story mentions of the ranch was about mules being stolen in 1933. A few years later, a representative of the American Hereford Association made a favorable report after coming to the ranch to “look over the Stead’s extensive Herefords.” At the Reno Rodeo and Livestock Show, the herd was “given all the comforts of home with air conditioning” provided by James.

Only seven years after buying the ranch, James turned his attention to raising cattle for show purposes, earning the title “the ranch of champions.” Newspaper reports from 1939 boast that the Hereford cattle from the Stead ranch were positive advertising for Nevada. James was cited as one of the best-known of the West’s cattle ranchers on his 3,000 acres, as evidenced by his “three large boxes crammed full of medals and prize ribbons.” James commented about the herd, “I used to raise most of them for commercial purposes, but now it’s my life work to breed the finest Herefords in the world.”

At this time, the ranch was reported to include two farmhouses of “the most modern construction and kept fresh with immediate repairs and paint,” as well as cattle corrals and a barn. The family’s ranch house was “typical of a western home, with the walls lined with deer heads, mounted fish, many kinds of rifles, trophies and lariats.”

Besides cattle, the ranch included prize-winning sheep, bird dogs, chickens and turkeys. A three-story bunkhouse on the farm partially burned down in 1944 in a fire started by an oil stove.

As the name suggests, there is a connection between the Stead family and Reno-Stead Airport. The current airport was originally the Reno Army Air Base before its reactivation after WWII. The name was then changed to the Stead Air Force Base in memory of Lt. Croston (Kiley) Stead, the son of LeRoy and Marian Kiley, of the



Above: James Stead poses with his award-winning Herefords. Stead founded the Nevada Hereford Association.

Below: William (Bill) and Croston Kiley pose atop one of their stepfather’s Herefords. Photos provided by Megan Kiley.

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Kiley Ranch

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192nd Flight Squadron of the Nevada Air National Guard, who died in a military plane accident in 1949 at age 27. In 1966, the name was again changed to Reno-Stead Airport when ownership transferred to Reno.

Croston's brother, Bill, was an airman and died in a plane accident in Florida in 1966 at 45. Bill enjoyed racing planes and helped start the Reno Championship Air Races, which were held at Stead Air Force Base through 2023. The youngest of the brothers, L. David Kiley, fought in the 99th infantry division in France, Belgium and Germany in WWII. He became a successful businessman.


The biological father of the boys, LeRoy (Roy) Kiley, died in Reno in 1991 at the age of 101. Like his sons, Roy was involved in aviation. He flew the world's first strategic bomber—an Italian Caproni Ca 36, designed for WWI. Roy trained with the Royal Italian Air Corp to fly the bomber in combat. He again served in WWII in the intelligence department of the U.S. Air Force reporting on Germany's most strategic sites. LeRoy is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

James died in 1964, and Marian died in 1978. Both are buried in Reno's Mountain View Cemetery. Following their death, L. David Kiley and his son, David, inherited the ranch. In 1998, the ranch became known as Kiley Ranch. In the mid-2000s, the Kiley family began planning the development of their Spanish Springs property. At this time the real estate market was hot. Before the housing market dropped a few years later there was talk of rezoning 361 acres of the ranch for a 310-home subdivision with a municipal golf course by Kiley Ranch LLC and Lazy Five Company. There was also talk of an 80-acre neighborhood with 3,000 homes. But these plans never came to fruition due to financial difficulties from the recession.

In 2011, the Sparks City Council

approved a proposed residential subdivision of 23.4 acres. The newspapers reported the Kiley Ranch sold for \$9.8 million to Rising Tides LLC. The construction of homes on the ranch was on again/off again for years, passing to Km2 Development in 2011. Then, in 2022, the Sparks City Council approved the development of another 88 acres for the Kiley Ranch North commercial and residential project. The nearby Kiley Ranch Golf Course opened in 2006. LPGA professional Patty Sheehan of Reno designed the nine-hole course.

Meanwhile, discussions of another residential community were taking place. So, the Kiley family sought to preserve 215 acres of wetlands for residents to commune with nature. In 2008 over 70 varieties of shorebirds and waterfowl were reported to call these wetlands home.

Through the generosity of the Kileys, the wetlands will be protected from development. The nonprofit Kiley Ranch Preservancy Foundation was organized to manage the preservation of the wetlands and the Foundation projects to add walking paths, including a \$1.7 million grant from a 2008 bond measure plus a matching donation by the Kiley family. Thanks to the hard work of many, birds and other critters, including humans, will have the Kiley Ranch Wetlands to enjoy for many years. 

Information for this article came from: Meg Kiley, granddaughter of Marian Kiley; Tina Nappe, Kiley Ranch Preservancy Foundation; Nancy Hoffman, the Reno Evening Gazette, the Nevada State Journal, History of Sparks: Centennial Edition, Reno Gazette-Journal and Nevada Place Names.

Jill Richardson is a HRPS member, Walking Tour guide and researcher. She is a member of the Nevada Historical Society and Board President and park history research volunteer for Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation.



Top: James Stead and Marian Kiley pose for the camera holding a trophy for their award-winning Hereford cattle. James was Marian's second husband and stepfather to her three boys. The boys sometimes used Stead's surname when in Reno.

Below: The Kiley boys, L. David, William and Croston, grew up to serve in WWII as airmen and infantry. Stead Airforce Base is named for the eldest son Croston who served as a lieutenant in the 192nd Flight Squadron of the Nevada Air National Guard. Croston died in a military plane accident in 1949 at age 27. The youngest son L. David along with his son inherited the ranch and donated several acres of its wetland for public use. Photos provided by Megan Kiley.

Out of the Throwaways:

Pathos and Romance on the Desert, 1907-1914

Story and Photos provided by Joëlie Fuetsch Pehanick

Suppose you read a handful of postcards written over 100 years ago to a young Irish immigrant named Jane Donoghue. They wouldn't reveal much. But what if you read 156 of them from both siblings and suitors working in Nevada's oldest mining towns? You'd gain insight into Jane and life in early 20th century Nevada.

These little paper treasures surfaced in the 1990s when Helen and Ray Oster of Carson City were clearing out his mother's Reno home after her death. Ray had a growing pile of 'junk' on a backyard picnic table when Helen, a woman respectful of family history, extracted a shoe box from the mix and lifted the lid. There were Ray's grandmother Jane's 156 postcards. The Osters lovingly stored them until 2022 when Helen passed the shoe box on to me, one of Jane's great nieces.

The Golden Age of postcards commenced in the early 1900s. Jane and her siblings were living life close to the bone in those years, but they kept in touch by dashing off their 'two-cents worth' via these cards, sometimes called postels. The cards' striking artwork, photographs, jokes and poems add depth to the collection.

However, the postcards only show one side of Jane's story because they do not include her responses to their authors. Therefore, I include tidbits of family oral history provided by descendants,



This photo illustrates the ratio of men to women in the Nevada mining towns of the early 20th century. Surrounded by 36 men are Jane (far right) and three other young ladies. The train is headed to a baseball game in Tonopah. Posing on the tongue of the train car is Jane's future husband, Mike Landers.

including Jane's daughter, Helen Handy. Here's what was revealed.

In 1905, Jane, 17, was the daughter of a struggling farm family in a country whose people left their tables still hungry most nights—Ireland. But Jane's family were a people of faith, hardy and often exceptionally witty. They spoke with a thick brogue, knew all their neighbors but had little knowledge of anything beyond their county. Amongst green rain-soaked hills they tended livestock and crops living in thatch-roofed stone houses warmed by peat fires.

It was in that year that Jane and her brother James packed sparse belongings and began their journey to America from the 700-year-old county of Tipperary. They left knowing they would not return.

Her parents had already bid farewell to five older children now living in Nevada. Those who immigrated were considered dead. That was Jane's answer decades later when her daughters asked why they never heard from their mother's kin in Ireland. As further evidence, there was not one card in Jane's vast collection from either parent or the five siblings who remained in Ireland.

By 1907, Jane and James had survived an ocean crossing and endured another 2,600-mile crossing of the North American continent. The two contracted typhoid fever enroute. It claimed James. Jane buried him in Virginia City then continued to Tonopah to connect with her 'American' siblings: Alice, Mary, Maggie, Ella and Arthur. They

or their spouses were employed there or in the surrounding towns and camps. That same year, adding to Jane's grief, her sister Mary's husband died leaving Mary with an infant son to raise.

Tonopah was parched and stark, a high desert frontier. It was alive with adventurers speaking the languages and lingo of cowboys, Europeans, Chinese, Paiutes, Shoshones and African Americans. Most lived in tent hotels and slapped-together wooden boarding houses. Jane quickly learned why there were so many benches lining the streets. They were for the miners who suffered from silicosis and needed to rest their clogged lungs.

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Out of the Throwaways

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She gradually tuned out the sounds of dynamite blasts and the clanking and rattling of hoist engines. A sound of a different sort awakened her at night--the howls of coyotes. Still, she was fortunate to begin work in Tonopah. It was more settled than many camps, with its brand-new courthouse, a grand hotel and Nevada's mainstays--gambling palaces and a red-light district.

In April that year Jane moved to Goldfield, receiving one of her first postcards at The Brown Palace Hotel. She was probably employed as a cook. Goldfield was the largest town in Nevada and was still buzzing over hosting one of the most celebrated prize fights of the era - the 1906 Nelson/Gans 42-rounder. The press and celebrities had gathered from throughout the country and had drunk from a bar so long it required 80 bartenders to keep the crowd happy.

Two months later she was in Columbia - a camp small enough that her mail was delivered with only the town's name and state for an address.

Jane enjoyed a social life wherever she was, but mainly limited to Sundays because of her work schedule. She was described in the cards as "quiet and dignified" but had no problem attracting suitors. One suitor, Marvin, wrote from San Francisco with a photo of its City Hall, noting its heavy damage in last year's earthquake. Another, Mike in Oakland, apparently didn't interest her, because he was quite miffed in his card, "If you don't want to write me, I want my old clothes and Dennie's also."

Judging by the number of suitors' cards received in 1908, her popularity had soared. Maurice, a frequent writer

keeping his foot in the door from New York City, was unfortunately short on imagination. For instance, his messages included photos of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Building, an image that would not conjure particularly affectionate thoughts. In contrast, Jos. Burns' messages featured flowers and romantic poetry and asked such things as, "You think I'm a flirt do you. What about last Sunday afternoon when I saw you with four or five boys?"

is Jane with three other young ladies all dressed in their Sunday bests--full length Gibson Girl frocks with snug bosoms and flowery hats perched over intricate bouffant hairdos. It was serendipitous that, hanging off the tongue of the train in a cocky pose, was a lad appearing to be looking back and down at our girl. He was 'Big' Mike Landers and wedded her six years later - but not before battling it out with determined competitors.

Jane moved about considerably in 1908, receiving postels in Goldfield, San Francisco, Tonopah, Schurz, Blair and Carson City. As to why the frequent moves, perhaps better pay, safer workplace or being closer to a sibling. A phrase from one of her sister Maggie's messages confirmed how Jane supported herself--"cooking for the boys."

Her typical day started at dawn, hauling in wood and water (one gallon weighing over eight pounds). She stocked the stove repeatedly, mixed, chopped, beat and handled giant kettles and hefty cast iron fry pans. The kitchens were often 100-plus degrees in the summer and bone chilling in the winter.

Jane helped serve the food she cooked, cleared the tables, hauled in and heated more water for scrubbing. Next, she tended to 'dinner pails,' lunch the miners carried to their job sites. Finally, there was supper preparation for the 'poor dabs' who had worked equally long hours but underground, constantly tuned to the rumble of a cave-in or the smell of smoke signaling a mine fire.

Sister Maggie wrote in July 1908 from Columbia with words of joy over their first baby. But she followed in August with, "I'm heartbroken after my dear little baby boy. I miss him at night the



Some of Jane' Donoghue's postcards from the shoe box found by her grandson and his wife.

Illustrative of the ratio of women to men in the area was a 1910 photograph capturing 36 Goldfield males in suits and fedoras. They're pictured on and around a train bound for a Tonopah baseball game. Surrounded by this mass of males

worst.” Philosophical over this death was a girlfriend’s message, “Well Jane, she has to be reconciled to God’s will. Better the lost baby than the father of it...have so many troubles in this world, what is life anyway. It is nothing in this world but all in the hereafter.”

In contrast, from Ireland a friend wrote, “Would you ever dream of paying a visit to the land of your birth at all?” The card depicted a map of Eire surrounded by shamrocks. A poem below ended with, “There’s no land so beauteous or fair on the earth.”

In 1909, sister Mary sent a card from Tonopah in care of the Blair Hotel embossed with a dance hall entertainer identified as *The Merry Widow*. The message included, “I heard Alice is up a tree.” Sister Alice, 40, lived nearby in Silver Peak with five youngsters and her husband John, a hoist engineer for the mines. (The term engineer was a bit grand as John had no formal education past age eight). It was never revealed what Alice’s issue was. Soon after, a succinct dispatch from Mary arrived, “I thought I’d drop you a line to see if you’re dead or alive. Goodbye.”

Despite the many cards from siblings, suitors’ missives outnumbered them. WPB sent a card portraying a couple kissing beneath a curious moon. Ed from Salt Lake City sent a postcard with 140 photographs of babies’ tiny faces with the caption, “Utah’s Best Crop, one that Never Fails.” On it he wrote, “Still thinking of you.” G. Burns wrote sarcastically, “Don’t write ‘too’ often.” Maurice asked, “What do you think of Rawhide?” He added he was going to go to “Bute and see what kind of camp that is.” His card featured a couple kissing on a park bench with this rhyme, “Our eyes have met, our lips, not yet. But oh! you kid, I’ll get you yet.”

All Jane’s cards in 1912 were addressed to the Comstock Lodging House in Tonopah. One Round Mountain beau wrote, “Oh Maiden Fair, why do you tarry? Tis Leap Year, you’ve a chance to marry. Hustle around, there’s one more chance: catch a man and wear the pants.” JMS from Goldfield sent a postcard with a woman holding an apple minus a bite

up to a man gazing at it solemnly. The caption read, “The cause of it all.”

In April 1910, brother Arthur lost his wife in childbirth leaving him with infant twins. Family lore has it that Jane mothered them full-time. However, when she left to marry, Arthur never spoke to her again. This was dispelled however by the cards.

In 1914, Big Mike Landers prevailed over all the other suitors. He took 26-year-old Jane to the altar. And, in view of the past misinformation, it was nice to read Arthur’s Christmas wishes that year, the last card of her collection, which included this wish, “Fond recollections of the happy past.”



Jane remained in Tonopah for 22 more years. During that time, she gave birth to three daughters: Helen in 1918, Margaret in 1920 and Kay in 1924. Meanwhile the mines dried up resulting in a town on the skids. In 1936 Jane decided to leave her husband and follow her sisters to Reno. One daughter stayed behind to care for her father and the other two daughters moved with Jane to Reno. The sisters lived in proximity: Jane and Mary lived next door to each other, Alice was across the street with Maggie and Ella living a block or so away.

Three of the sisters’ husbands had died of silicosis, and they still had children to raise. Not to be defeated, the five women discovered an income opportunity. Reno, the divorce capital of the nation, lacked housing. So, the sisters welcomed roomers and boarders.


Jane’s husband Mike and the one daughter who stayed to care for him eventually joined the family in Reno. Sadly Mike came with the silicosis curse that had taken his brothers-in-law. Jane nursed him until his passing at age 65.

Jane’s life never included a return trip to her homeland, but Ireland still held a surprise for her. Social Security began in 1935, and to qualify she had to obtain documentation of her birth. When her paperwork arrived, it revealed she was three years younger than she thought.



Mike Landers and Jane Donoghue on their wedding day in 1914. Jane was 26.

Her daughters married and gave her eight grandchildren. And she enjoyed what Reno offered: paved streets, a tree-lined river, water enough to keep greenery alive, a university for her girls and no howling coyotes.

Jane died suddenly at age 71. Those left to mourn remembered her as a woman of faith, who never owned a car, hid money in clothing and kitchen tins, played the nickel slots once a week and sung a poignant rendition of *Danny Boy* from her piano bench. Yet, there was more to her story than they knew. How fortuitous that seven years of it survived in a shoe box that a sharp-eyed lady married to her grandson rescued and shared. 

As stated in the story, Joellie is a descendant of Jane Donoghue. She wove this story from her great aunt’s postcards and family interviews. The cards’ messages were punctuated for readability. Joellie is also author of Porchlight Burning, a Mostly True Novel about her parents’ involvement in the 1930s Graham and McKay federal trials.

Historic Reno Preservation Society *with* the Washoe County Library System
present the 2023-2024

HRPS Speaker Programs

2nd Sundays at Noon

Co-Chairs: Sheryln Hayes-Zorn and Susan Mullen

Historic Reno Preservation Society's free programs offer topics related to Reno's history.

Held at noon on the second Sunday of the month, the HRPS's free programs offer topics related to Reno's history and culture. Please note: Programs are usually held at the downtown library located at 301 S. Center Street in the lower-level auditorium. However, the January and February programs will be held at the South Valleys Library, 15650 Wedge Parkway, due to elevator repairs at the downtown library."

Date: January 14, 2024

Presenter: DebiLynn Smith

Topic: Dr. Eliza Cook, Nevada's First Female Licensed Physician

Location: South Valleys Library, 15650A Wedge Parkway

One of Nevada's most prominent early women, Eliza Cook was the first Nevada woman to earn a Doctor's License to Practice. The fortitude and perseverance of her powerful story will bring you into her essence and presence as you see a young Carson Valley and Nevada through her eyes. In this Chautauqua performance, DebiLynn Smith portrays Cook with a warmth and dignity that befits this outstanding woman's life. Researched facts and anecdotes make her story come alive.

DebiLynn Smith performed her first Chautauqua at age 13 portraying Laura Ingalls Wilder. Self-described as a *living historian*, she specializes in portraying prominent, Sierra pioneer women. She creates her own period-correct attire, researches and immerses herself in the life and times of the women whose stories she chooses to personify. Smith has performed at the Nevada, Douglas and Alpine County Historical Societies, Piper's Opera House and many other venues and events.



Date: February 11, 2024

Presenter: Alicia Barber

Topic: New Research into Reno's Black History

Location: South Valleys Library, 15650A Wedge Parkway

Knowledge of Reno's historical African American community has expanded through recent initiatives by the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office, Our Story, Inc. and HRPS. This research deepened understanding of early African Americans' lives: the experiences of historic club and restaurant proprietors, rooming house operators, residents of Black Springs and more. Historian Alicia Barber will share stories and explain how historic preservation and interpretation can strengthen the

African American presence in Reno's historical record and public memory.

Alicia Barber, Ph.D., is an historian and writer specializing in the cultural history and build environments of Reno and the American West. Through her firm, Stories in Place, she researches,



writes, creates exhibits, records oral histories and produces multimedia projects. She served as community outreach coordinator and consulting historian for *The African American Civil Rights Experience in Nevada* (2020) and researched and wrote about the northern and central Nevada designs of architect Paul Revere Williams for the 2022 Nevada Museum of Art exhibit, *Janna Ireland on the Architectural Legacy of Paul Revere Williams in Nevada*. She manages and edits the *Reno Historical* website and app for HRPS.

Date: March 10, 2024

Presenter: Marilyn Newton

Topic: Photographing Nevada

Location: Downtown Library, 301 S. Center St.

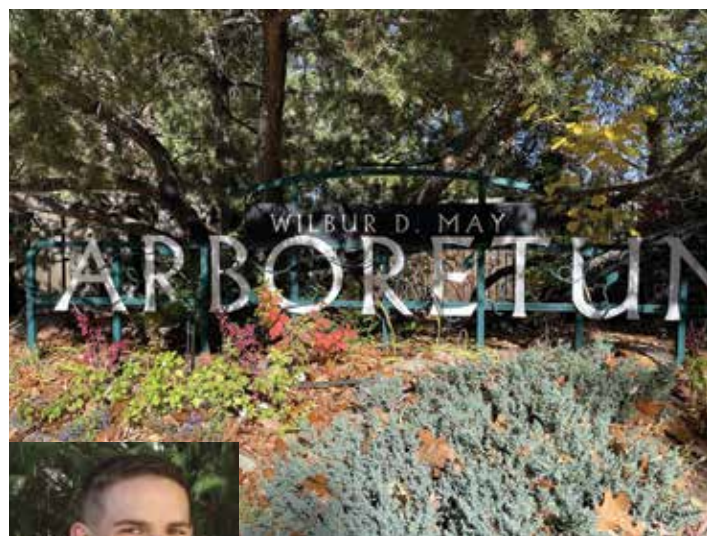
For more than 50 years, Marilyn Newton has made her career as a chronicler of everything Nevada. Her work has been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, appeared in books and she's won hundreds of awards. Reno residents know her for her decades of work as a newspaper photographer covering breaking news, special events and everything in between. In her program she will talk about her work and share a selection of favorite photographs and the stories they represent.



Marilyn Newton worked for the *Reno Gazette-Journal* for more than 52 years beginning in 1963. However, she started her journalism career six years earlier at the age of 12 when she and her twin sister were hired by the *Carson City Nevada Appeal* as papergirls. Her first story was a two-paragraph sports story written at age 12, and her first photo was published a year later.



Marilyn has won nearly 400 awards for her photography and was named Nevada Photographer of the Year in 1992. In 2002, she was inducted into the Nevada Newspaper Hall of Fame and in 2022 into the Women of Achievement Hall of Fame. Marilyn's photos are featured in several books, and she is the writer and photographer of the book *Alkali Angels*, a journey through historic Nevada graveyards. Marilyn also is an honorary colonel in the Nevada National Guard.



Date: April 14, 2024

Presenter: Luke Sorenson

Topic: Wilbur D. May Arboretum & Botanical Garden: A Reno Gem

Location: Downtown Reno Library, 301 S. Center Street

Established in 1983, the Wilbur D. May Arboretum and Botanical Garden houses more than 4,000 native and non-native plant species on nearly 23 acres inside Rancho San Rafael Regional Park in Reno. It's a showplace for plants and wildlife in the transition zone between the Sierra Nevada and the Great Basin.

Luke Sorenson, the arboretum's horticulturist, will talk about the day-to-day challenges of maintaining this local gem and some of its history as a Reno showplace. He'll also reveal his next big project.

Luke Sorenson was born and raised in the Reno area. He spent many hours walking in the May Arboretum as he grew up, and now is the horticulturist in charge of maintaining the grounds. Luke graduated Cum Laude from Brigham Young University, Idaho, with a BS in Horticulture and Plant Sciences. He obtained his certification as an arborist through the International Society of Arboriculture.

He is skilled in arboriculture, tree identification, soil management, pruning, irrigation management, lawn care and the German language. Before coming to the arboretum, Luke worked for Brightview as a Tree Care Manager, Reed Landscaping as an Operations Manager/Arborist and worked an internship at AgReserves, Inc. as an Agronomist Assistant.

Harvest of Homes Returns After Three-Year Hiatus

Article and Photographs by Amy Burton

This year marked the triumphant return of the *Harvest of Homes* tour. After a three-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the public response was strong. Approximately 700 visitors purchased tickets, raising \$20,000 dollars for the society's work.

The home tour was created in 2010 to recognize Reno's older neighborhoods. A group of volunteers under the leadership of Sharon Honig-Bear designed the day as an intimate and engaging way to experience the stories and hidden gems throughout Reno. "It brought people together to celebrate Reno and its architectural history," said Sharon.

Held on Saturday, September 23, 2023, over 100 volunteers made the event possible. They served as registrars, home hosts, room guides, storytellers, organizers and publicists. They served under the direction of Carol Coleman with Karalea Clough and Marilee Watts.

The tour featured six historic homes: a stone mansion, three family bungalows, a tiny storybook home and one house possibly cobbled together from 1800s mining cabins. One of the bungalows was an adaptive reuse example of a modern business keeping a home's historic facade in harmony with the neighborhood. The tour would not be possible without the



While all the tour homes were popular, the crowd favorite was the Hill/Redfield House (c. 1931). The stone mansion was once the home of one of Reno's colorful characters, LaVere Redfield.

generosity of these historic homeowners. (These homes are described in detail in the Fall 2023 *FootPrints*.)

Twenty percent of the attendees provided evaluation feedback. While all six homes received first place rankings, the Hill/Redfield House at 370 Mount Rose Street was the biggest draw. Thank you to HRPS founding member Pat Klos for contacting the owners and securing the home.

Many participants shared how they had always wanted to see inside this distinctive Reno home. Others remembered visiting the house as a child and enjoyed seeing the updates the current owners had made. One of the owners shared that she grew up admiring the home from afar. It was her dream to someday own it, and her dream came true.

Almost all the visitors noted they would be back to attend the event in 2024. In addition to the homes' architecture, participants appreciated the furnishings and art in the homes as well as the gardens. They also enjoyed meeting the homeowners who shared stories and answered questions.

Perhaps the best way to share the 2023 home tour story is through the visitors' own words:

- Appreciated the "knowledgeable guides."
- Impressed with the "respect given homeowners and participants."
- "Everyone was welcoming, friendly and organized."
- "Your volunteers were SOOOO vibrant and lovely."
- "Kudos on how traffic moved very well through each house."
- "Thanks to all the volunteers and homeowners for sharing these with us."
- "The booklet that included valuable historic information was super."
- "Love the tour, glad it's back."
- "Harvest of Homes is a wonderful event."

Amy Burton is the HRPS Administrator and a Walking Tour guide.

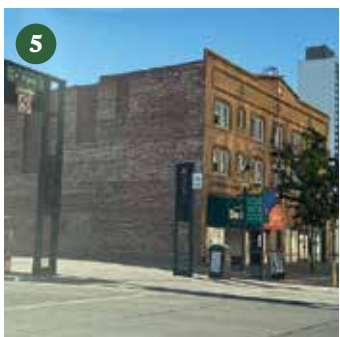


Visitors line up to enjoy the Melton Manor (c. 1929).



HRPS presents this list of historic properties not to point fingers or to raise alarms, but to generate awareness and appreciation. We want their owners, whether public or private, to know that we care about these places and that we consider them highly significant to Reno's history and worthy of preservation. Lastly, we want to offer our support to help ensure that they can remain safe and protected for years to come. You can find full entries for each property listed below on Reno Historical at <https://renohistorical.org/>.

1. **Reno National Bank (1915)**, 206 N. Virginia Street
2. **I.O.O.F. Lodge/Reno Savings Bank (1877)**, 195 N. Virginia Street
3. **Nystrom Guest House (1875)**, Formerly in 300-block on Ralston Street, now up on blocks off 4th Street, between Washington and Vine Streets
4. **Benham-Beltz House (likely 1868/1869)**, 347 West Street
5. **Piazza Building (1925)**, 354 N. Virginia Street
6. **Southern Pacific Railroad Depot (1926)**, 135 E. Commercial Row
7. **Freight House (1931)**, North side of Greater Nevada Field on Evans Avenue
8. **Regina Apartments (1941)**, 260 Island Avenue
9. **First Church of Christ, Scientist/Lear Theater (1939)**, 501 Riverside Drive
10. **Solari Building (1938)**, 1052 S. Virginia Street
11. **El Reno Apartment Homes (1937)**, 1461 Lander Street



A Message From Your HRPS Acting President

Carol Steps Down After Eight Years Of Leadership

Hello HRPS Members and Friends,

A Changing of the Guard

December marks the end of my eight-year term as president of this wonderful organization. I have enjoyed my leadership position and the opportunity to play to one of my strengths—organization.

HRPS has accomplished much in the past near decade. One of our main improvements has been the acquisition of membership management software. Rosie Cevalco, ZoAnn Campana and Joy Orlich were integral to this accomplishment. It helps us collect data to better serve and communicate with our membership. It also allows for event registration online using credit card payments. We worked out the kinks with our 2023 walking tours and used it with much success for this year's Harvest of Homes.

It was interesting, not to mention challenging, being president during the three years of the COVID-19 pandemic. The inability to meet in person drastically changed our modus operandum.

However, our leadership stepped up and found alternatives to keep our society and events going. The result was over 60 videos of our walking tours and speaker programs that now reside on our website in the archive section for all to enjoy.

It was quite satisfying to preside over the reintroduction of our in-person walking tours and Harvest of Homes tour this year. We had a record year with the home tour, earning a \$20,000 profit to support our work. The walking tours were well attended and sparked lots of new memberships.



During my presidency, HRPS added the *Reno Historical* app to our website and took on its stewardship. *Reno Historical* is a free mobile app and website that lets you explore the history of Reno, Nevada through location-based stories, images, audio clips, and short videos. An editorial board, led by historian Alicia Barber, PhD, is responsible for the content of *Reno Historical*. The project is dependent on archives and volunteers who supply essays, historical images, interviews and expertise.

Development partners and supporters include Special Collections at the University of Nevada, Reno Libraries, Nevada Humanities, the Institute for Museum and Library Services, the Nevada Historical Society, the City of Reno Historical Resources Commission, and the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County. The project was made possible in part by Nevada Humanities and the Institute of Museum and Library Services grant awarded by the Nevada State Library and Archives.

Stay tuned for a future HRPS partnership similar to *Reno Historical* but focused on the Reno divorce industry.

As we move into the new year, I look forward to supporting the new HRPS president Joy Orlich. Congratulations to Joy. However, her taking on the presidency leaves a treasurer vacancy that we need to fill. I hope to continue my work coordinating our quarterly publication *FootPrints* as I always need an outlet for my love of organizing.

Lifetime Membership

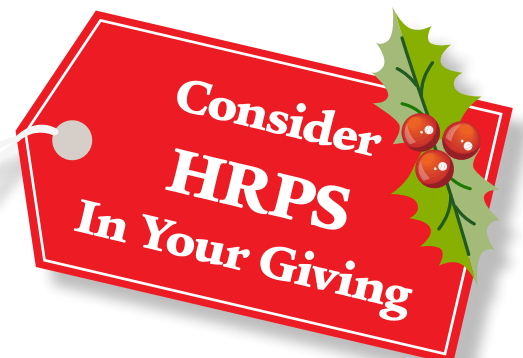
Dave and Rosemary Pressler, HRPS members since 2021, became Lifetime members on October 31, 2023. Rosemary is a third generation Nevadan, and she brought Dave here 55 years ago from the Bay Area. The Presslers join our list of distinguished donors shown on page 15. One becomes a lifetime member through a one-time donation of \$1,000.

Vanguard Donation

We recently received a \$5,000 donation from the Three Owls Fund sponsored by Vanguard Charitable, as recommended by HRPS members Walter and Josephine Sanborn. This is an unrestricted gift, which will help support HRPS operations and outreach. We are extremely grateful for their support.

Thanks to you all of you for your continued support of HRPS,

Carol Coleman
board@historicro.org
775.560.0602



HRPS Lifetime Members

Darleen R Azizisefat
 Sharon Honig-Bear
 Sandi Bitler
 Jacqueline Black (*)
 Lynn Bremer
 Holly Walton-Buchanan
 Florence Ann Burgess
 George Burke
 Linda Burke
 Tom & Phyllis Cates
 Jan & Phil Chik
 Press & Delores Clewe
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 Betty J. Watts
 Kathy Williams
 Reg & Shelley Willison
 Catherine Coscarelli Zugar

(*) *deceased*

HRPS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

By joining **Historic Reno Preservation Society**, you are a member of a community group that celebrates Reno's history by sharing information and advocating for our endangered properties.

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

<input type="checkbox"/> New Member <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing		My Additional Donation:	
Membership Levels:		\$ _____ Pat Klos Annual Volunteer Award Fund	
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<input type="checkbox"/> \$45.00 Family	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100.00 Supporting	\$ _____ Overall Program Support	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$200.00 Business	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250.00 Preservation Patron	HRPS Quarterly FootPrints Preference (Please check one):	
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HRPS respects your right to privacy. We will **NOT** share your email address.

WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO WORK ON:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Home Tours	<input type="checkbox"/> Walking Tours	<input type="checkbox"/> Board	<input type="checkbox"/> Research
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____			

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

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

Visa/MasterCard Credit or Debit Card # _____

Exp. Date _____ CVV _____ Name on Card _____

Address (include City, State, Zip) _____

_____ Phone Number _____

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

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