

# FootPrints

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

SPRING 2021 vol. 24 no. 2

# About Powning and the Conservation District

by Carol Coleman (from articles by Debbie Hinman and Dr. Alicia Barber)

recently proposed development along Riverside Drive has brought attention to the peaceful tree-lined historic neighborhood known as Powning's Addition, creating concerns about street abandonment, building heights and styles. Powning is now a City of Reno Conservation District, but what protection does that offer, and how does it figure today in Reno's Master Plan?

#### Proposed Apartment Building on Riverside

There is a proposal to build an apartment building on Riverside and Jones, which includes building on what is now Washington Street. Unfortunately, the City Council voted to abandon Washington Street between Riverside Drive and Jones Street in 2006 for a project

that never came to fruition. That portion of the street was supposed to be used for parking for that project. HRPS and neighbors were unaware of the abandonment until a new project planned to build on that abandoned property. The proposal for the new four-story apartment building was put forth in June 2020, before the new Master Plan was approved in December 2020. The proposed building is out of scale with the surrounding neighborhood and has the potential to irreversibly change the character of the area. HRPS hopes that this proposal can be modified to better suit the Powning Conservation District and adhere to the City's recently-approved Master Plan.

#### The Powning Addition

From the time the first city lots were auctioned off on May 9, 1868, Reno residential neighborhoods began to spring up, beginning in the city core and radiating outward. Most of these









Vintage Powning in 2021. Clockwise from top left, Brick Craftsman bungalows, walkers and runners, a Queen Anne cottage that's now a business, a fiddle player by the Truckee. Photos courtesy Cindy Ainsworth.

subdivisions, or "additions," as they were commonly known, bore the name of their developer. In June of 1888, Powning's Addition touted large lots, "perfect sewerage," wide alleys and claimed to be a "healthy location and safe from fire." The Addition's north/south boundaries were the Central Pacific railroad tracks to the river and the east/west boundaries were Arlington (then Chestnut) to Keystone Avenue.

The early architecture of Powning's Addition was largely of the Queen Anne style, a late Victorian design. This was mostly a working-class neighborhood, and the majority of the homes were of moderate size. According to A Walk Through Time, construction in the neighborhood slowed in the 1890s due to an economic depression. This lag in growth was only temporary, and it wasn't long before new home

construction resumed in Powning's Addition, and a new style of home was in evidence—the Craftsman bungalow. This was a very popular and appropriate home style for Reno; the low profile and overhanging roof style, usually covering a wide front porch, made a practical home for the Reno climate. Most of these homes were constructed of brick supplied by several local brickyards.

In addition to the residential component of Powning's Addition, businesses sprang up there, primarily along Second Street, in response to the advent of the Lincoln Highway, just two blocks north. Today Powning's Addition remains a diverse sector of the city with many of the commercial elements of the area changing almost daily, while a great number of the original homes remain with their lawns and large shade trees. You can walk the blocks of Powning's Addition and still experience the flavor of an early Reno neighborhood.

#### **Surveying Powning**

In 2003, two HRPS members, Felvia Belaustegui and Cindy Ainsworth, undertook the overwhelming task of performing a survey of the sector of Reno known as Powning's Addition. The Winter 2004 issue of *FootPrints* introduced readers to Christopher Columbus (C. C.) Powning. That same year, HRPS published *A Walk Through Time*, a booklet conceived of by then HRPS President Patty Cafferata, to introduce local residents to this very early subdivision.

It is because of the history contained in Powning's Addition, amid the lovely setting of the Truckee River and the architectural integrity of its homes, that HRPS President Felvia Belaustegui and HRPS Administrator Cindy Ainsworth first embarked upon their neighborhood survey. Along with the necessary historic research into the origins of the area begun by Belaustegui back in the late 1990s while researching the neighborhood for her master's thesis, the pair painstakingly catalogued and photographed each significant property. At that time, they envisioned nominating Powning's Addition as a National Register Historic District. While many residents of the neighborhood supported this goal, others mistook the potential Historic Register listing as restrictive. (NOTE: Listing a property in the National Register is an honorary designation and has no effect on property rights.) Even with a National Register listing off the table, the survey, completed in 2008, served an important new purpose.

#### **The Conservation District**

In 2006, the City of Reno and the City of Reno Historic Resources Commission (HRC) began work to establish city-wide preservation policies. This "Historic Plan" was developed through a lengthy public involvement process. This Historic Plan was approved in 2008 by the Reno City Council and other governing commissions. A part of

the Historic Plan provides guidelines for establishing Conservation
Districts, a new concept in Reno.
Described as "a geographically definable area that conveys a distinct character that demonstrates its history and development patterns," a Conservation District provides a method for achieving preservation without the governing protections of a traditional historic district listed in a local city register.

A conservation district can include historic resources that share a similar form, character, unique elements and/ or visual qualities derived from a combination of topography, vegetation, space, scenic vistas, architecture, unique features, or a place of natural or cultural significance. These features create a district that exhibits stability, livability and specific identity.

The Conservation District designation does not impose on property owners any regulatory requirements other

#### Powning District (PD)

The Powning District is a stable and predominantly residential historic neighborhood located along the northern bank of the Truckee River at the west edge of the Downtown Regional Center. The district provides desirable housing options and a neighborhood feel within close proximity of the Entertainment District and Riverfront District. Design principles for this district are intended to support the retention of its residential character.



Powning District. The general boundaries of the Powning District are shaded in green.

#### DTRC-PD.1: DENSITY AND INTENSITY

Contrary to other districts within the Downtown Regional Center, intensification is not desired in the Powning District. Infill and redevelopment that does occur should be of a similar density and intensity as what exists today.

From the City of Reno Master Plan, December 2020



Powning Conservation District street sign topper at First and Vine.

Courtesy Cindy Ainsworth.

than those currently required through zoning. Conservation Districts can provide educational opportunities to residents and property owners. Simple design changes are often made by rights-of-way including signage, lighting, corner monuments, street signs, etc., and give the area a cohesive feel, while maintaining individual property rights.

In the words of the Historic Plan, "The establishment of Districts throughout the city increases public awareness, education, and visibility of Reno's historic resources and brings greater appreciation of the resources. These districts have the potential to create a greater sense of community and to create economic benefits for the area especially when linked with other areas and/or programs."

#### **Powning Conservation District**

In 2008, HRPS President Felvia
Belaustegui announced that the
Reno City Council included the
Powning Addition in the City of
Reno Master Plan as a Conservation
District. Throughout the Powning
Conservation District, street signs
bear the street name and the Powning
Conservation District topper with
a unique identifying graphic of a



The Powning Pillar of History at Lundsford Park, a triangle formed by Riverside Drive, Jones and Washington Streets.

small Craftsman Bungalow, the most prevalent architecture of the Addition.

The Powning District has precise geographic boundaries that extend from Arlington Avenue to Keystone Avenue, and Riverside Drive to Second Street, encompassing slightly more than 127 acres. The area was first patented by Horace Countryman in 1865 and later conveyed by deed on February 20, 1866. Christopher Columbus Powning purchased the area in 1888 for \$7,500, and improvements, such as sewers and fire protection, were made.

Locals have long admired some of the more significant properties of Powning's Addition, such as the McKinley Arts & Culture Center (formerly McKinley Park Elementary School) and the Lear Theater (formerly the First Church of Christ, Scientist) but there are many smaller gems contained in the area that now garner recognition with the creation of the Powning Conservation District. For those of you unfamiliar with this neighborhood, take the time to stroll through some of its small streets, and pause to appreciate the unique and

varied architecture and large trees. Listen very closely and you may hear the faint clip-clop of horse hooves as carriages move slowly down "the aristocratic Riverside Avenue Driveway," with occupants enjoying a Sunday ride through the new Addition.

In 2009, HRPS, with the cooperation of the City of Reno, created an eight-to-ten-foot pillar to act as a boundary marker, commemorating the history of the Powning Conservation District. Loren Jahn created an enchanting design for the pillar, named the "Pillar of History," that is constructed of recycled river rock in a 1920s Craftsman style with a wrought iron top and a nameplate and dedication plaque. The pillar is lit at the top by a reproduction of a historic globe lamp and sited in Lundsford Park, where Jones meets Riverside.

## The Master Plan and the Powning District

The new Master Plan, adopted by the City of Reno in December 2020 after more than two years of community input, specifically discourages the abandonment of streets in the Powning District "to maintain pedestrian and bicycle connectivity through the site, utilities, and services." Although increased density, particularly for the sake of housing, is desirable in many areas of downtown, context is everything. **The new Master Plan** specifically singles out the Powning District as one of the neighborhoods where higher density is not encouraged, in order to retain compatibility with its historic character.

The Master Plan also specifies that any infill constructed within the Powning District must be compatible with its largely-residential, low-density surroundings. Powning is one of the oldest and least altered neighborhoods in Reno, with its southern border of historic, beautiful Riverside Drive and houses dating to the early 1900s. Accordingly, references to the

Powning District throughout the Master Plan repeatedly emphasize the need for reinvestment there to be "compatible with the historic character of this district" and for infill and redevelopment to be "of a similar density and intensity as what exists today."

The City's Master Plan provides a vision, a formal expression of guiding principles. But it's the City's Land Development Code that governs what can be built and where. And the newlyrevised Code (Section 18.02.306) finally puts into place guidelines for the Powning District that have been in the works for years, creating a new zoning district, labeled MD-PD, "to protect the historic character of this neighborhood within the downtown regional center."

Specifically, new development in Powning for sites not facing West 2nd or Ralston Streets can be no taller than 40 feet and/or 2-1/2 stories high. At four stories tall, the proposed building is almost double the allowed height per the revised Code and is not compatible with the surrounding Powning District. With this is mind, HRPS urges the developers to amend their plans, designing a building that will complement the surrounding neighborhood rather than compete with it.

Information for this article came from: News articles from back issues of the Reno Evening Gazette and Nevada State Journal; the City of Reno Historic Plan; HRPS publication "A Walk Through Time," 2004; FootPrints Vol. 11 No. 2, Vol. 12 No 2, Vol. 12. No. 3 by Debbie Hinman; City of Reno Master Plan, Dec. 2020; The Barber Brief by Dr. Alicia Barber.

Carol Coleman is President of HRPS, a docent at Nevada Historical Society, and Chair of Newcomers Learn about NV.

## A Letter of Concern about the Lear to Artown



April 1, 2021

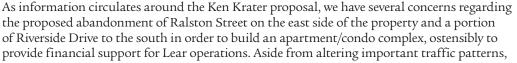
To: Artown Board of Directors

Fr: Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS) Board of Directors

Re: Current Lear Theater Proposal

The Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS) is a nonprofit organization with approximately 600 members. Our organization seeks to educate the public about the importance of historic preservation. The HRPS Board would like to go on record in opposition to any Lear Theater restoration proposal that would negatively impact the historical integrity of the theater building, alter streets or traffic flow, or construct new buildings that are inconsistent with the traditional scale and character of the neighborhood.

The Lear Theater, built as First Church of Christ, Scientist in 1939, is one of Reno's great cultural, historical, and architectural treasures. Designed by renowned architect Paul Revere Williams, the inspiring Neoclassical building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1999. Ralston Street and Riverside Drive provide access to the Lear, connecting it with the Powning Conservation District to the west, as well as to the scenic Truckee River corridor. Riverside Drive, established in 1888 as Riverside Avenue, represents the southern boundary of Powning Addition; it was created to be Reno's loveliest boulevard. It remains one of the few vestiges of Reno's nineteenth century heritage.



such a move would substantially alter the historical attributes of the building's setting, potentially blocking line of sight to the river and even full pedestrian access.

HRPS is also opposed to any substantial alteration to the building itself, such as creating apartments on the north side of the building. We strongly encourage that all proposed work to the theater and its site conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. These Standards offer a surprising amount of flexibility while also ensuring that the building's outstanding design, craftsmanship, and sense of place are preserved for future generations.

As members of the Reno community, we sympathize with the need to find a financially sustainable use for this beautiful building while preserving its historical integrity. Collectively, HRPS board members have a wealth of knowledge that could be beneficial in any proposal review process and would gladly lend our support. We are all eager to see the Lear come back to life as a thriving cultural center. The City of Reno Historical Resources Commission and Nevada's State Historic Preservation Office are also invaluable resources to include. We encourage you to contact our President, Carol Coleman, at board@historicreno.org, for additional historical background on the Powning Conservation District, or to simply begin a conversation about how to best protect and revitalize this historic gem.

Sincerely,

Carol H. Coleman, HRPS President

CarolfCaleman

CC: City of Reno Historical Resources Commission City of Reno Parks & Recreation Department

# Mysteries at 2197 Plumas: First the Architect and then the Painting

by Debbie Hinman

Author's Note: Perhaps my favorite job in HRPS is that of "House Detective." Unlike the Newman family, I don't present homes for sale—I investigate the histories of homes in the Reno area. We often get calls into our Voicemail wondering about our local properties—how old they are, who built them, who lived there. Some people are just curious about homes they happen to notice but others want to know about a house they have just purchased, or a realtor may want to know about a listing they are offering for sale. The request will be passed to me and I will don my investigator's hat and begin a search for architects, builders, owners, and interesting tidbits about the houses. Aside from my innate nosiness and love of a mystery, I have an ulterior motive-some of these projects have made interesting (I hope) FootPrints' stories—here is one of my latest "investigations."

a large, skillful oil painting of your own house, painted some 30 years earlier, had magically appeared on your porch, with no mention of who left it or why? This unlikely scenario happened recently to a Reno couple. My involvement in the story began as follows.

2197 Plumas Street is a charming and distinctive home on a busy southwest Reno street. It has a "storybook" appearance, with a wood shingle roof, dormers and a small cupola topped with a weathervane. The original portion of the house has a brick fireplace on the front; an addition with garages is connected to the main house by a columned walkway. The house has been owned by Dr. Wade and Jan Exum since 2002. Recently Jan contacted HRPS, as she had been told the home may have been designed by prominent local architect, Russell Mills and was looking to have this confirmed.

I began my research. Yes, the home looked very much like a Mills design, as he built several homes in a similar style. Mills was partial to the English Cottage style and the era was correct. Although the Assessor's record shows the build date as 1936, a newspaper story from August 1933 announced the Short family "moving into their new home at 1925 Plumas Road." Various sections of Plumas were renumbered several times, as the street morphed from a quiet country lane to a main north/south thoroughfare; in 1942, the street number became 2197. In the 1930s, the area was well outside the city limits and any traffic was either to take a Sunday drive, visit the Moana Baths, or the Reno Golf and Country Club.

Mills was actively designing residences in the 1930s, and, in fact, built his own home at 803 Nixon Avenue in 1928 and others in the Old Southwest neighborhood throughout the 1930s. I received one more clue when I discovered that Mrs. Short and Mrs. Mills played in the same bridge club in 1932. How natural might it have been for Mrs. Short to mention that she and her husband were looking to build a home, and for Mrs. Mills to suggest her husband's services?



2917 Plumas Street — is this a Russell Mills design? And who left a painting on the doorstep?



The curved metal bannister and the hand-hewn beams are distinctive decorative elements of the Plumas Street home.

Just when I thought I was making progress on my quest, a wrench was thrown into the works. In checking deeds at the Assessor's Office, I did find a transfer of property to the Shorts but instead of in 1932-33 which was what I expected to find, the transfer occurred in 1936. But what about that 1933 newspaper notice? The seller was a Wade Wine, who was a popular local contractor at that time. According to his grandson Steve Williams of Reno, Wine owned a large parcel of property along Plumas Road. He recalls the name of Russell Mills in association with the Shorts' house, though he thinks it may have been built on spec or for another family first, but then was sold to the Shorts. Could the original sale have fallen

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through, so Wine leased the home to the Shorts, until they were able to make the actual purchase three years later? This was the era of the Great Depression and many people's hopes and dreams were dashed or at least postponed.

But that was not the only

building activity along the Plumas Road. In addition to that home, there was an old wooden farm house standing where the brick home to the immediate north of the Exum house now stands, complete with a hay barn out back. This was the Wine family home. Wine rebuilt the farm house, cladding it in the latest Reno Press brick and updating the structure to a transitional ranch style. At the time the remodel was done, it was considered very modern and cutting edge. To the north of this home, he built a traditional Tudor Revival home using a light-colored brick on the first story. According to Williams, this was used as a suburban boarding house for temporary residents. Williams thinks it's possible that Mills might have designed this home as well.

I provided the Exums with my research on their home which they found very interesting. In addition to the list of owners, I always like to include "fun facts" regarding the property such as the news item from 1962 where Sam the dog's doghouse burned when his electric blanket short

circuited (I was relieved to read that Sam was not at home at the time). They loved the detail that the land originally belonged to a man named Wade and 90 years later is owned by a man named Wade.

To my delight, I was invited for a tour of the house. The hewn beams in the original living room further added to my feeling that this was indeed a Mills home. In contrast to the beams, there is a curved painted metal bannister as a prominent decorative element. Jan Exum believes it is original to the house and feels it has an "Art Deco" look.

However, I still could find no absolute proof of the house's architect. Even Anne Simone, who has done extensive research on Mills had nothing about his possible involvement with this home. In a story she wrote about Mills



Local entertainer and artist Martin O'Conlon (below), who passed away in 2014 appears to have created the painting of 2197 Plumas Street, when it was painted white with a pink roof. But who brought it to the Exums' home in January 2021?



JOE MAIZE and Marty O'Conlon, top music and comedy team, are currently alternating with the Checkmates, Ltd., to provide the dusk-to-dawn entertainment in the Casino Show Room of the Mapes Hotel.

for FootPrints in 2006, however, she wrote the following: Mills owned several kinds of saws and power equipment and did much of the houses' decorative wood trim himself. Jan and I have remained in contact and text from time to time; I still regret that I wasn't more helpful in her quest to positively confirm Mills' design of her home, but I enjoy hearing from her.

Towards the end of January 2021, I received a very interesting text from Jan. She included a photo of a painting of her house done some years back, when it still had its pink roof (today the roof and siding are shades of gray); she said

it had been left on her porch—would I have any idea about that? Jan and Wade had been out of town and on their return had found the painting. I told her I knew nothing about it but was totally intrigued. I have since seen the painting and though I'm certainly no art critic, I think it's lovely, with vivid colors and exacting detail.

Jan said her husband hadn't seen a note but she'd have him check further the next day. Sure enough, when Wade turned the painting over, there was a packet on the back containing several photographs of a bespectacled dark-haired man and a neatly typed biography of a Martin Terrence Michael O'Conlon. Closer inspection of the painting revealed a signature: MO and a date of 1988.

So who was Marty O'Conlon? He was born in 1931 in Philadelphia to a hard-working Irish family. Described in the bio accompanying the painting he had "exceptional intellect, personality, curiosity and creativity that led him to lead a prolific life as an artist and scholar." He served in the Korean War as an engineer and bandleader, entertaining the troops. Following an honorable and decorated discharge, Marty, an accomplished musician who played numerous instruments and was also a natural comic, began a career as an entertainer, first in Atlantic City, then Las Vegas and Reno, which he made his home. Here, he "headlined in all of the key casinos in the area including Harrah's, Harvey's, the Mapes and the Holiday Hotel." When not performing locally, he also appeared in showrooms on the Princess Cruise line. The bio even included

the interesting note that Marty had once been engaged to singer Vikki Carr. And Marty was a skilled artist, a hobby he took up in his 60s. The bio reported that his paintings were in the form of collections of topics, such as "a collection of historic and iconic buildings and landscapes of Northern Nevada." Might this collection have included homes he felt worthy of notice?

This welcome but unexpected gift provoked even more questions. Now, along with "Did Russell Mills design this house?" we also have, "Who left this painting on the porch?" Martin O'Conlon had passed away in 2014. Presumably the "Why" is that the donor felt it belonged with the house but why didn't they leave a name and contact information? And to my mind, the most interesting question is, "What motivated Mr. O'Conlon to paint this particular house, of all the beautiful homes in Reno? Did he have a connection to the house or a former owner?" I again donned my virtual deerstalker hat and looked at what I could find of O'Conlon's life in Reno but was unable to find a link to a former owner, although there may certainly have been one.



View above the house shows the cupola and a second floor very private patio between the original house on the right and the garage on the left.

I did find an interesting tidbit from a report of the Board of County Commissioners, saying that a donation to the Washoe County Second Judicial District Court "in the form of a bequest of oil paintings, valued in the amount of \$25,000 from the estate of Mr. Martin O'Conlon" was accepted. In searching a list of paintings in the courthouse, there was no mention of any O'Conlons. I contacted local artist and historian Loren Jahn, as he had painted a mural there, and asked if he had seen any Nevada landscapes that could have been O'Conlon's but he had not. Loren, however, provided some of the above detail through his acquaintance with Steve Williams that was a big help with this story.

Even though I failed in my quest to ferret out definitive proof of the architect of this home, it was certainly a fun research project, and the postscript of the mystery painting made it even more so.

As of this writing, the Exums are in the process of framing the painting and finding the perfect spot for this lovely tribute. If the mystery donor should happen to see this story, the Exums would like them to know how much they appreciate this unique gift and that it will remain with the house, should they ever move.

Information for this article came from conversations with the Exums, local newspaper items 1930-2014, Architect Russell Mills by Anne Simone, FootPrints Winter 2006, minutes from the Board of County Commissioners, Washoe County, 4/21/2020, and information provided by Loren Jahn and Steve Williams.

Debbie Hinman is a Reno native and UNR graduate. Active with HRPS since 2004, she is a HRPS Walking Tour Guide, HRPS Board Secretary, Vice Chair of the City of Reno Historical Resources Commission, and a researcher and Editor of HRPS's quarterly FootPrints publication.

# Reno Heritage Fund Grants - RENOvation at Work

or the past eleven years, HRPS has awarded more than 47 building improvement project grants. Formally known as the Neighborhood Preservation Fund, the Reno Heritage Fund (RHF) continues our commitment to helping property owners rehabilitate their buildings through small 1:1 matching grants. Priority will be given to owner occupied projects that enhance

original historical neighborhood character and the original architectural style of the structure. Typical grants are under \$5,000.

This is a reminder that the RHF now has a rolling grant deadline; so you may apply anytime during the year. We first require a Letter of Intent which includes the applicant's basic information about the project. Once approved by the RHF committee,

the applicant will then fill out the full grant application. To streamline the process, we now ask that you scan and email all forms to the RHF administrator.

Information about the grants can be found at HRPS website at historicreno.org/resources/rhf-grants. Look for Grant Guidelines and Letter of Intent.

### Historic Reno Preservation Society

# **Annual Meeting & Proposed Bylaws Vote**

## Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom

our HRPS Board has completed a Bylaws review, with an eye to updating the HRPS Bylaws, last reviewed in 2015. Bylaws should be reflective of the way an organization operates and the proposed changes conform to how we are currently doing business as a non-profit. We have modernized many sections, allowing for virtual and other electronic forms of operation and management. We have cleaned up language from the original Bylaws that were modeled on a for-profit corporation.

Previously, the membership approved the Board slate at a (physical) annual meeting. As you know from experience, we are often adding Board members at different times throughout the year, prompted by resignations for various reasons. We propose a change in the Bylaws to have only the Board approve new Board members and at any time during the year.

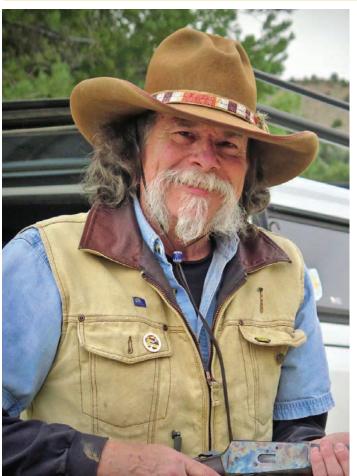
The current Bylaws require a vote of the Membership at the Annual Meeting to approve Bylaw changes.

This requirement is a component of Bylaws geared toward a corporate environment where members are also shareholders. As a non-profit, HRPS does not function that way and we propose a change to require only Board approval to make a change in the Bylaws.

HRPS will send everyone with an email address the May email newsletter with a link to the Zoom meeting. The link will also be available on the HRPS website.

#### HRPS presents

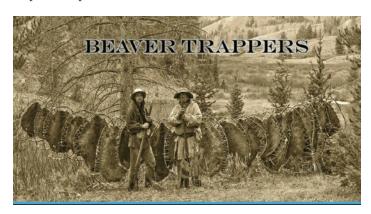
# American Mountain Men with Larry Walker



arry Walker first became interested in shooting sports in the late 1980s. That led to muzzleloader competitions and cowboy action shooting. These sports led him to an interest in the history of the western fur trade era, what we sometimes call Mountain Men. In 2000, he connected with the *American Mountain Men* who, as an organization, study, in earnest, the lifestyles and equipment of the fur trappers, with an emphasis on authenticity.

Larry's main focus of research has been on the firearms used in the late 18th and first half of the 19th centuries. He currently builds recreations of the JJ Henry trade rifles that were the most commonly used by the mountaineers.

Larry will speak on the beaver trappers of the "fur trade era" (1800-1840) and how the *American Mountain Men* research and teach the skills and history of these important pathfinders.



# On the DeLongchamps Trail to Fallon Or: A History Geek Coping with the Pandemic

by Sharon Honig-Bear



uring the endless pandemic, I thought a field trip might be the cure to cabin fever. The goal was Fallon to check out some of Frederic DeLongchamps' buildings. The pandemic meant it would be a "drive-by" tour, but it offered a change in scenery and a chance to play detective. My able driver (and HRPS Tour Guide) was Charlotte Voitoff, with her son Sasha—both part of my COVID "pod."

#### Frederic DeLongchamps Was the Motivation

DeLongchamps and I go way back, with HRPS walking tours, renohistorical.org contributions and even food tours in some of his buildings, now adapted into restaurants. I feel I know the man well enough to call him "Fred."

You probably know him, too. Frederic Joseph DeLongchamps (June 2, 1882 – February 11, 1969) was one of Nevada's most prolific architects. Many of his buildings are listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. In Reno, think the Downtown Post Office, the Riverside Hotel, and the County Courthouse-- but his career spanned nearly sixty years. Between 1907 and 1964 his firm produced architectural drawings for more than 500 structures in Nevada, including more than 20 in Fallon alone. His designs have played a significant role in shaping the architectural character of Nevada in the twentieth century.

#### Why Fallon?

Fallon grew at the intersection of two well-traveled roads in the Lahontan Valley. Locals knew it as Jim's Town until Mike Fallon and his wife Eliza settled there in 1896, adding a post office to their ranch—and a name to the community.

The story changed radically with the passage of the Reclamation Act of 1902. Agriculture and development followed. Mike Fallon sold his ranch to Warren W. Williams, who subdivided the property and sold lots. Williams named the east-west street after his native state of Maine. He named the north-south road after himself, and other streets in his subdivision were named after his friends. The intersection of Maine and Williams is the core of city

and county government. On June 16, 2019, the Maine Street Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

For this article, I'm focusing on four of DeLongchamps' most significant buildings. The descriptions are not intended to be scholarly and that depth can be found on the nominations to the National Register. These vignettes are written to whet your appetite to discover these treasures for yourself.

## First Stop: Fallon City Hall, 55 W. Williams Avenue

We arrived at this impressive red brick building on a cold, windy afternoon. The building is closed to the public because of the virus, but we donned our masks and examined it close up. In the sunlight, it glowed warm and inviting.

Frederic DeLongchamps designed the structure in the Mission/Spanish Revival style, as a 14,000 square foot one-story building to serve City government and as a home for the Fire Department. It opened in April, 1931 with a total construction cost of \$68,212.28. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004 and considered significant for its association with local politics and government and "as a rare example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style in Fallon...."

The walls are constructed of fired brick laid in stretcher courses. There's a hipped roof and a gabled entry bay. The side facing South Carson Street has two projecting wings. A concrete walk surrounds the building on three sides with landscaping and an energetic fountain.

There was a 50-foot tower until a devastating earthquake on July 6, 1954 damaged it severely. Today's 30-foot-high version was built with bricks salvaged

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Fallon City Hall, 55 W. Williams Avenue, built in 1931. View (above) of building and tower from Carson Street. Courtesy Archipedia. View from Williams Street (at top). Courtesy National Register of Historic Places.

### On the DeLongchamps' Trail to Fallon

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from the original tower. We moved in closer, enjoying the details of the building: a white shield-shaped tablet emblazoned with FFD (I assume for Fallon Fire Department), six light fixtures fabricated in metal and glass, the subtlety of the brick work.

Returning to the car, we noticed the spectacular Queen Annestyle house across the street. It is NOT by Fred but was built around 1904 for Robert L. Douglass. Remember the name—it will come up later in this story!

City Hall has provided stability as the seat of government for 90 years. And to think that DeLongchamps' fees were only \$2,465.90. That's been a pretty good investment for Fallon!

#### Second Stop: Oats Park Art Center, 151 E. Park St.

This building inspired this excursion since I somehow missed it on other trips to Fallon. It's not on a main street and even more surprising, it actually is on a park! Oats Park is a pretty setting, with the DeLongchamps' building dominating the eastern side plus a community swimming pool, ball field and a senior center. Small, mostly well-kept bungalows lined the other sides. It's a wonderful slice of life from a bygone era.

Now known as an Art Center, it was first built as a school after John and Nellie Oats sold the lot to the Board of School Trustees in July 1914, for \$500. Oats Park Grammar School was designed that same year by DeLongchamps, and opened in 1915. The original budget – including purchase of the real estate, furnishings and architect's fees– was \$20,000.

The School is a one-story, symmetrical brick building. After completion, the community experienced rapid growth – almost doubling in size between 1909 and 1912, due to the impact of the Newlands Reclamation Project. The School was enlarged in 1921, adhering to DeLongchamps' proposals for adding north and south classroom wings. The expansion also included a theater but it was never built because of budget limitations.

The school served the community for many years. The school was closed in the early 1970s but continued to be used for





Fallon Theater was built in 1920 as a vaudeville venue during the era of silent movies. It was remodeled for "talking pictures" in 1930. It is now owned by The Fallon Community Theater and used for movies, special events and a local community theater group. Courtesy Pinterest and Facebook.



as Oats Park Grammar School in 1915, with side additions built in 1921 according to DeLongchamps' plans. In 1999, the building was part of Save America's Treasures. Courtesy National Register of Historic Places and nevadatravel.com.

both storage and classroom space for the then-fledgling Western Nevada College. About that time, the school district commissioned a feasibility study about restoring the building.

The structure was added to the Nevada and National Registers of Historic Places in 1990. In 1995, the City of Fallon designated the block on which the school is sited as the Oats Park School Historic District. At that time, the City Council approached the Churchill County School District with a proposal for the adaptive re-use of the building and in 1996 the School Board voted unanimously to turn the building over to the Arts Council under a long-term lease. Construction and renovation began that year.

In July 1999, prospects improved dramatically when the School was designated as an Official Project of Save America's Treasures — a public-private partnership of the White House Millennium Council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Initial efforts focused on structural stabilization.

With steady progress on the renovation and completion of \$4 million worth of construction and remodeling, the School District turned full title to the building over to the Churchill Arts Council in 2006. Grants and donations played a significant part.

The Center is now full service. A 350-seat proscenium theater was constructed in the footprint originally proposed by DeLongchamps. There's the E.L. Wiegand Gallery, a boardroom, and the south wing permanent collection gallery. With the renovation and adaptive re-use of the building, the Churchill Arts Council has been able to enhance the cultural and social life of the community—while preserving one of Nevada's architectural treasures.

#### Third Stop: The Fallon Theater, 71 South Maine Street

If we hadn't done our homework, we would never have guessed that this down-at-the-heels building was a DeLongchamps creation. It is listed on the Nevada State Register of Historic Places, but it's a challenge to imagine its past glory.

Designed in 1920 as the Rex Theater, it was a vaudeville venue and the brainchild of Fallon entrepreneur J.W. Flood, who hired DeLongchamps to design the theater to seat 1,150 people, with a balcony, a pipe organ, and a Steinway piano. The façade was a Classical Revival style. The L-shaped Theater stands two and a half stories high with a narrow, two-story lobby. When it opened in December of that year, notables from around Nevada gathered to enjoy the Theater's first shows.

The years brought changes and in 1930, Flood renamed the venue the Fallon Theater, now showing talking pictures, or "movies." DeLongchamps' original front was modified to a Mission Revival style, under the direction of prolific Great Basin architect W.C. McCuddin. After the remodel, the 500-seat Theater was still considered one of the largest in the state. The Art Moderne front that you can see today—in a somewhat dilapidated state—resulted from fires in the 1940s. This façade is dominated by concrete stucco above the marquee, an angled neon marquee sign, and glass block infill in the second story windows. Another remodel in 1984 split the auditorium into two theaters. Despite changes, the State Register recognized the building. The structure and layout of the building retain many of the features of the original DeLongchamps design.

The Theater is now owned by a nonprofit, The Fallon Community Theater. They've undertaken some restoration and serve the community with an interesting selection of movies, special and comedy events and a community theater group. It's the kind of organization that I would visit and support if I lived in Fallon. Fund raising remains a priority and you can visit www. FallonTheatre.com to donate or to receive the Theater's newsletter.

For nearly a century, the Fallon Theater has stood as an important icon of downtown Fallon and an entertainment anchor for the community. We can only hope they are successful in restoring it to its former beauty.



Douglass Frey Ranch, also known as Churchill Vineyards and Frey Ranch Distillery, was built in 1906. Courtesy National Register of Historic Places and the National Park Service.

#### The Last Stop: The Douglass-Frey Ranch, 1075 Dodge Lane

Many people know this historic property as the home to Churchill Vineyards and Frey Ranch Estate Distillery. Owner Colby Frey has won many awards for his libations but what brought HRPS colleague Debbie Hinman and me there some years ago was the outstanding DeLongchamps house on the property. Feeling brave, Debbie and I introduced ourselves to the Freys and they took us on a personal tour of the house.

First, about the land. The property sits near the center of "Island Ranch," an enormous tract of land owned and operated by William Bailey, one of the early ranchers in the Lahontan Valley. Economic disaster in 1893, combined with drought and harsh winters, forced Bailey to sell much of the land to Joseph Douglass in 1891.

In 1906, Joseph's nephew, Robert Douglass (remember him from the description of City Hall?), took over operation of the ranch and developed a reputation as an early 20th century entrepreneur in Churchill County. He wanted a change from the Queen Anne house and hired DeLongchamps to design a Prairie-style house, an architectural style hailing from the American Midwest and popularized by Frank Lloyd Wright. DeLongchamps, a master of adapting to his client's taste, conceived a home characterized by its generally low, horizontal profile, open interior space and increased number of windows. Prairie-style homes are extremely rare in Nevada, according to the Historic Register, and the Douglass Mansion stands as the only known project of that style completed by DeLongchamps. The Mansion was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2015.

The two-story house, often referred to as the Mansion, was built between 1918-20. Its exterior is stucco over terracotta brick, supported by a wood frame. The south façade is dominated by a sun room enclosed with tall, multi-light French windows. A porte-cochere adds importance to the exterior and sports, on its northeast pillar, an imprinted cornerstone that reads "RLD XVIII."

Douglass sold the property in 1944 to Charles Frey, Sr. and the third generation of Frey family, Colby and Ashley Frey, continue the agricultural traditions today, adding a winery to the ranch in 2001 and a craft distillery in 2014. When the tasting room is open, this alone is worth a visit. The house isn't open to the public, but who knows what will happen if you ask for a tour in advance?

#### **Headed Home**

Maybe when you read this, the world will be reopened and a pandemic diversion may not seem important. But nice weather is on its way and Fallon still makes a good day trip for history lovers...and if you're an ice cream lover, you might want to build in a quick stop in Fernley. Steve's Ice Cream is waiting there to top off your mini-history excursion with one last sweet memory.

Sharon Honig-Bear is a HRPS Board member, Tour Guide and a Past President of HRPS as well as a past Chair of the City of Reno Arts & Culture Commission.

# Window Types & Configurations

## Architectural Elements

Article and Photographs by ZoAnn Campana, Architectural Historian

n the last installment of Elements, way back in 2020, we discussed window anatomy and defined the terms used to describe the basic components of a window. This issue, we are identifying the different types of windows. Thanks to our friends at the Vieux Carré Commission Foundation (VCCF) in New Orleans, this article includes drawings to create a visual dictionary that will allow you to identify different window types and configurations in your own neighborhood. Window types also give clues as to the overall architectural style of a building. Please note that the associated styles listed below are not exhaustive, but instead give a general idea of what we find in our unique region. For more information, I recommend consulting the references listed for this article.

#### **Window Types**

**Sash** – If you recall the last article, a sash is the framework into which panes and muntins are set. Sash windows consist of two or more sashes, with at least one sash moving on a vertical plane. Sash windows are divided into four categories based on their operation: single-hung, double-hung, triple-hung, and slip-head.

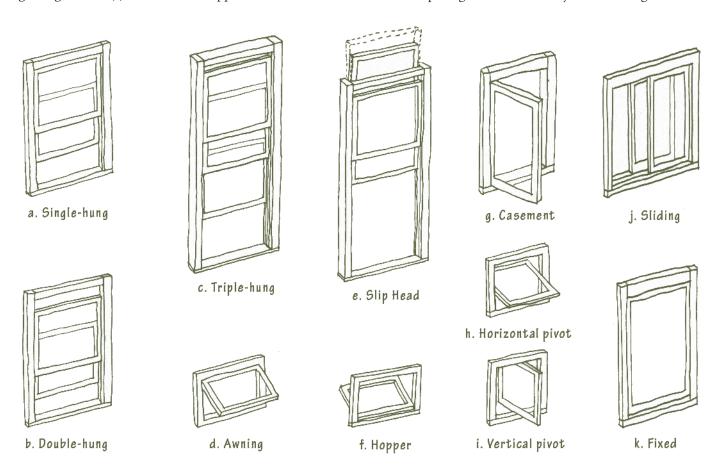
Single-hung windows (a) exhibit a fixed upper sash and an

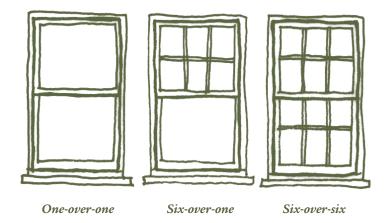
operable lower sash that moves on a vertical plane. This is the most typical category of sash windows found in Reno. Associated styles: Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Neoclassical, Tudor, Ranch, and Minimal Traditional.

Double-hung windows (b) consist of two sashes, both of which are operable, moving up and down separately within the frame. The term "double-hung window" has become, mistakenly, a catchall term for sash windows. Keep in mind that all double-hung windows are sash windows, whereas not all sash windows are double-hung. Associated styles: Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Neoclassical, and Tudor.

*Triple-hung windows* (c), as the name implies, consist of three sashes, all of which are individually operable and move vertically. These windows typically extend to the floor, allowing passage through the window opening. This type of sash window is typical to early 18th century buildings and is therefore rarely seen in Northern Nevada.

*Slip-head windows* (e) are comprised of two sashes, both of which are separately operable. The lower sash is taller and can "slip" into a pocket at the top of the window, allowing passage through the window opening. These are also very rare in our region.





Casement windows (g) are hinged on one side, operating by swinging in or out. This is the second most typical window we see in Reno's historic houses. They include single configurations and can also be paired to form a double-casement window. Associated styles: Prairie, Tudor, Spanish Revival, Mission Revival, Ranch, and Contemporary/Mid-Century Modern.



716 Arlington, this period revival cottage displays a trio of six-over-six, single hung sash windows. Courtesy David Lowndes.

Sliding windows (j) are comprised of a horizontally-sliding sash with a fixed panel, or two horizontally-sliding sashes. Sliding windows gained prominence in the 1950s and is the most common window used in modern buildings. Associated styles: Ranch.

Fixed windows (k) are nonoperable, consisting of glazing within a frame. These are typically seen in storefront display windows, or as smaller, decorative windows in residential buildings.

Awning windows (d) are hinged at the top and open, or "flip up," at an angle.

Hopper windows (f) are the opposite of awning windows, being hinged at the bottom and opening by "flipping down" at an angle.

*Pivot windows* are exactly what they sound like: they operate by pivoting. They can pivot on a horizontal axis (h) or a vertical axis (i).

#### Window Configurations

In general, the older the window is, the smaller its panes of glass are. The earliest windows, dating to the seventeenth century, feature a lot of tiny panes of glass, either square or diamond-shaped, which are attached to wooden or metal frames with strips of soft lead. As technology improved



619 Sinclair has cottage-type windows with diamond-patterned upper sashes and single-light lower sashes.

Courtesy Steve Ellison.

and became less expensive, window panes increased in size throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

By the mid-1800s, it became possible to glaze a sash using one or two panes of glass. Of course, smaller panes continued to be used in windows, but this was driven by aesthetic tastes and historical precedents, not by the limitations of technology. Different glazing configurations, in combination with different window types, indicate architectural periods and styles.

Glazing configurations are named by counting the panes, or lights, of glass in each sash. If you're looking at a singleor double-hung sash window with six lights in the top and bottom sashes, it is called a six-over-six window. If it has six lights of glass in the top sash and one light of glass in the bottom sash, it is a six-over-one window, and so on. There are also windows with patterned upper sashes or transoms, including cottage windows, which do not subscribe to this descriptive pattern. They may be described based on the pattern (e.g., diamond pane), or simply called "patterned pane" or "patterned light" windows. These are typical to the Queen Anne, Neoclassical, and Craftsman styles.

Information for this article include Gottfried and Jennings' American Vernacular: Buildings and Interiors, 1870-1960 (2009), McAlester's A Field Guide to American Houses (2013), and Phillips' The Old House Dictionary: An Illustrated Guide to American Domestic Architecture, 1600 to 1940 (1992). Illustrations are from the Vieux Carré Commission Design Guidelines (2015). The Vieux Carré Commission Foundation generously granted HRPS permission to use these illustrations.

ZoAnn Campana is a HRPS Tour Guide, Vice-President of HRPS and a professional architectural historian.



#### Hello HRPS Members and Friends.

We've seen several surprises in developments in Powning District and areas around Lakeridge. Do you feel like they just crept in without our or your knowledge? I highly recommend that you sign up for The Barber Brief at https://thebarberbrief.substack. com. Dr. Alicia Barber, originator of Reno Historical and author of Reno's Big Gamble, sends out The Barber Brief email maybe once a week or less with updates on developments, City Council, Planning Commission, Historical Resources Commission agendas and more. Get The Barber Brief and stay informed.

#### Annual Meeting

We'll be holding our Annual Meeting on May 4 via Zoom. Please join us as we'll have a proposed Bylaws vote and need enough members there to vote. We'll have a presenter, Larry Walker discussing America Mountain Men immediately following the meeting. You'll be able to get the link for the meeting on the HRPS website and in the monthly email newsletter.

## Looking for a few good people...

HRPS has a couple of vacancies on its Board of Directors. We are a working board so we're looking for folks willing to put in time and perhaps chair a committee. We meet on first Mondays at 4:00 pm, these days by Zoom. If being a working Board member and first Mondays fit your schedule, give me a call or email me and let's talk.

## Message From Your HRPS President

Carol Coleman

#### Thank Katy Phillips, Membership Chair

Katy Phillips served as Membership Chair for HRPS since 2017, as she and Bob Harmon and I volunteered at the historical society. It was so convenient with the UNR Post Office next door where memberships arrived. We saw each other at least once a week to exchange envelopes or checks. Until COVID, that is. Thanks Katy for all the time you spent working with HRPS.

#### Giving Tuesday

In Winter *FootPrints*, I mentioned Giving Tuesday, and that all funds would go to support Reno Heritage Fund. Moneys donated through Facebook for Giving Tuesday, come through Network for Good and it's a number of months before a check arrived. Facebook donations amounted an amazing \$1538.48, that combined with other donations brought the total to \$2,202.98 for our grant program.

#### A Fidelity Charitable Grant

A surprise \$500 Fidelity Charitable grant, with no strings attached, arrived in late December from a Richard Kessler. I couldn't figure out who that would be, but I got a response from my thank you letter. Let's thank Richard and his fiancée Sandy Kelly, whose home at 1895 Plumb was on the 2019 Home Tour.

#### HRPS monthly email Newsletter

If we have an email address for you, we are sending you our monthly email newsletter on the first of every month. If you haven't seen it, check your spam. It's full of information we think will be of interest to you plus links to may Zoom events.

#### Thank the Jacquie Foundation

HRPS friend and longtime Lifetime member Jacqueline Black died in 2017, but created a Jacquie Foundation that continues to support non-profits like HRPS. We want to thank Jacquie and the Foundation for the \$1,500 they so generously send us annually. We hope we are fulfilling Jacquie's trust in us.

#### Lifetime Member Surprises

We do so appreciate those who can help sustain HRPS for the future and we have new Lifetime Members to thank:

On December 28, 2020, John and Holly Muran, members since 2017, became Lifetime members. Holly's father was Wilton Frederick Herz of R. Herz & Bros Jewelers founded in Reno in 1885. John is related to the Muran, Gould, and Hymers families who are buried in Hillside Cemetery.

Also on December 28, Susan Holly Gallup, member since 2014, became a Lifetime member. I've also known her as Holly and know her from Newcomers, Nevada Historical Society and HRPS. Holly worked with HRPS Past President Byllie Andrews to review boxes and boxes of AAUW history at NHS to prepare for AAUW Reno's 100th anniversary.

The third late December 2020 entry to Lifetime membership is Sandi Bitler, member since 2009, who answers the HRPS phone line and volunteers for the HRPS Home Tour and Walking Tours. Born in Reno, Sandi was a management analyst for the U.S. Office of Government Ethics in D.C. for 25 years.

Starting the new year, Toni Harsh, member since 2014, joined the Lifetime members. Toni is a former Reno City Councilwoman (2000-2004), a partner in Valley Building Company, and proudly claims baseball hall of famer Casey Stengel as her great uncle.

Dale and Diane Edwards, members since 2009, became Lifetime members on January 7, 2021. Diane's grandmother was the District Representative for Nevada's first Congresswoman, Barbara Vucanovich.

On March 10, Dr. Thomas and Mary Conklin, members since 2015, became Lifetime members. He's a UNR grad who became a ophthalmology specialist. Their home was on the HRPS Home Tour in 2015.

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

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

### HRPS <u>Lifetime M</u>embers

Darleen R Azizisefat Sharon Honig-Bear Sandi Bitler Jacqueline Black (\*) Laurie & Greg Boyer Lynn Bremer Holly Walton-Buchanan Florence Ann Burgess George Burke Linda Burke Tom & Phyllis Cates Jan & Phil Chik Press & Delores Clewe Karalea Clough Dr. Thomas & Mary Conklin Barbara & Ralph Courtnay Joyce Cox Becky Czarnik Joan Dyer Betty Easton Diane & Dale Edwards Fran Bryne Fricke Marilyn Fuetsch Susan Holly Gallup Francine & Ted Gray Melinda & Dan Gustin John & Susan Hancock Toni Harsh Carol Haydis Jacquie Foundation Alan Lee & Ivye Johnson Larry & Chris Klaich Pat & Mike Klos Laurence & Linda Kutten Katherene Latham Jan & Jim Loverin David & Laura Lowndes Linda Madsen Catherine Magee Francine Mannix MD Charlotte & Dick McConnell Wayne & Patty Melton Marilyn Melton John & Holly Muran Prudence Gould Muran(\*) Peter & Renate Neumann Al & Nancy Pagni Butch & Susan Peachy Pioneer Center Marshall & Pat Postman Jonnie Pullman Hannah Satica (\*) Rhonda Shooler & Jerry Sawyer Michael & Karren Smith Robert Stoldal Tom & Leanne Stone Fran & Terry Terras Mike & Karen Traynor Charlotte Voitoff Sharon Walbridge Betty J. Watts Kathy Williams Reg & Shelley Willison Catherine Coscarelli Zugar

## 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.

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