FootPrints

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

WINTER PROGRAMS 2007

Jack Hursh, Jr. – Program Chair: 746-3252

All program events are on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7 pm, at Mt. Rose School (Lander Street between Taylor and LaRue, just off Arlington), unless otherwise noted.

Wednesday, January 24

“Reading Reno.” A unique evening of entertainment with readers reciting from important literary works about Reno. Fine readers: Pat Ferraro Klos, Jim McCormick, Gwen Clancy, Pete Ernaat, and Barbara Swart Courtnay will tantalize you with their favorite reads. Works include excerpts from Cornelius Vanderbilts Jr.’s 1920s novel RENO, Walter Van Tilburg Clark, selected Basque based excerpts, and Will James (see page 10 for more information).

Friday, February 16

Closing date of the Nevada Historical Society’s exhibit in the Changing Gallery: The Art & Architecture of Frederic DeLongchamps.

Wednesday, February 28

Matt Fockler, a master’s student in geography at the University of Nevada, will present, “The Role of Irrigation on the Growth of Reno—the Cultural and Physical Development of the Truckee Meadows from the 1850s to about 1902.”

Wednesday, March 28

Dave and Sunny Minedew will present a two-part program, including both photographs and video, of the history of and residents’ reflections on Zephyr Cove, Nevada.

Editorial Staff Note: There is nothing more gratifying to an editorial staff than to know that their publication is being read, appreciated and is fulfilling its purpose of provoking thought and stimulating memories. That this is so of FootPrints becomes evident with the last issue, when we heard from so many readers about the arch we pictured with the caption “first Reno arch.” Those of you who contacted us were absolutely right—while the structure and framework of the pictured arch was that of the first arch, the design elements indeed belonged to a later version. In the interest of historical accuracy and as clarification, we offer the following story. Thanks to all of you who contacted us for your insightful and helpful comments—you keep us honest.

When I hear Paris I think of the Eiffel Tower. In London, it’s Big Ben. In Rome, the Colosseum and in Athens the Acropolis. In Reno, what else could it be but the Reno Arch? Many people from all over the world who may not know anything else about Reno know the slogan “The Biggest Little City in the World” and nearly all who visit Reno will drive beneath the arch. For those of you who may not know the story of the arch, I will share it: it was designed by Norman W. Prince and erected by the J. L. Stuart Company of San Francisco; the steel structure costs $5,500. Large block letters announce the Exposition and the dates, June 25 to August 1, 1927, and stylized torches surround the word “Reno.”

The bridge you see is an iron framework one, with high arches on both sides. The clip-clop of the passing horses’ hooves rings in the air as they move from the dirt road to the wooden planks of the bridge. Looking up you see a garland of juniper branches and a banner spanning the bridge—you tug at your mother’s skirt and ask her what it says and she reads “Welcome Home to Reno’s Soldiers,” referring to those returning from the Spanish American War. Our first “Reno Arch?” Possibly.

Now we move ahead 27 years. This Reno of 1936, while still small, is more sophisticated and cosmopolitan. It is an exciting time for Reno—the coast-to-coast motor routes, the Lincoln and Victory highways, have just been completed and run east/west, right through the town. A Transcontinental Highways Exposition is being planned for the following year and a flurry of preparations are underway. A commemorative arch is being planned to celebrate the event. It is decided that the arch will be fashioned after California city gateway structures and will be erected across Virginia Street at Commercial Row.

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On a crisp fall day, the 23rd of October, you stand in your Sunday finery, in a throng of excited onlookers waiting for the dedication ceremonies to begin. Suddenly there are the strains of a brass band in the distance. As the music soars you witness the spectacle—a 80-piece band accompanied by a 400-man marching unit moving down Virginia Street. Also present at the ceremonies are 1,500 Shriners from the San Francisco Shriners Temple. Speakers include the California and Nevada governors and Reno Mayor Ed Roberts, a local favorite. Suddenly the light bulbs blink on, illuminating the words on the arch, and the torches blaze. You and those around you emit “Oohs” and “Aahhs” and then erupt in an explosion of cheers and applause.

After the Exposition, the Reno City Council decides to keep the arch as a permanent downtown gateway. Mayor Roberts puts out a call to the citizens of Reno to suggest a slogan for the arch. Among the “Gems of Thought Hidden Away in 300 Envelopes” the note states that a couple hundred more entries are expected before the closing date of March 1. You and everyone you know get serious about your suggestions this time...if you have a good one you keep it to yourself and dream about what you will do with your $100 prize! Some catchier, more succinct entries reflect a greater depth of thought, such as “Reno: the Best Out West” and “In Progressive Reno, Loiter, Linger, Locate.” Many writers submit a slogan that has been used for some years but loses, for a time, the hard-won arch, and the torches illuminating the words on the arch go back on tonight!” You and your neighbor walk the short picket fence dividing the district that evening in the brisk, early spring air, along with many other friends and neighbors. Once again, a rousing cheer arises as the arch lights flicker and then blink into sudden illumination.

In 1914, the arch enters the neon age but loses, for a time, the hard-won slogan that many townspeople argue is “small townish” and “boastful.” The arch’s new slogan, installed in 1929, is “Gems of Thought Hidden Away in 300 Envelopes.” The original stylized blowing torches show up well. Postcard courtesy of Cindy Ainsworth.

Evening Gazette article in February of 1929. “Gems of Thought Hidden Away in 300 Envelopes.” The article states that a couple hundred more entries are expected before the closing date of March 1. You and everyone you know get serious about your suggestions this time...if you have a good one you keep it to yourself and dream about what you will do with your $100 prize! Some catchier, more succinct entries reflect a greater depth of thought, such as “Reno: the Best Out West” and “In Progressive Reno, Loiter, Linger, Locate.” Many writers submit a slogan that has been used for some years but loses, for a time, the hard-won arch, and the torches illuminating the words on the arch go back on tonight!” You and your neighbor walk the short picket fence dividing the district that evening in the brisk, early spring air, along with many other friends and neighbors. Once again, a rousing cheer arises as the arch lights flicker and then blink into sudden illumination.

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The Anniversary of the Interstate (continued)

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travel from coast to coast without seeing anything. From the Interior, America is all steel guardrails and plastic signs, and every place looks and feels like every other place. But savvy travelers plan their trips to use the safe and efficient Interstate for the long hauls, leaving it every so often to take a less-traveled and more scenic route to “see the country.”

The Interstate system now includes 160,000 miles of roadway of critical importance to the nation’s economy, defense and mobility. The nation’s trans-
Reno’s Arches: The Whole Story (continued)

personal possession. In 1990, the Reno City Council gives the arch to Willits, California. You are not terribly pleased that the arch is leaving Nevada, but at least it will again be a public monument. And after all, it isn’t the one you secretly think of as “your arch.” Your neighbor mentions that the two of you could take a drive sometime to visit the arch at its new location in Willits, but you both know you never will.

It is now 1994, and though you spend more and more time dwelling in the past, you haven’t thought about that first arch in some time. There is a knock on your door and you open it to your neighbor, who stands there leaning heavily on her cane, shoulders heaving with the effort of her trip from next door, but her eyes are shining. “Have you seen the morning paper? A movie production company is going to pay to restore the old arch and have it installed on Fourth Street! A woman named Robin Hobdel of the state’s Commission on Economic Development has located it on a storage lot!” “No kidding! What’s the movie?” you ask, the same excitement leaping to your face. “Cobb!” she replies, with a grin. “It’s the story of leaping to your face. “Cobb!” she

The 1963 arch, with modifications after the incident with pigeons. This photo courtesy of Cindy Ainsworth.

sudden comprehension of your friend’s excitement—she is the biggest baseball fan you know.

After the filming, the arch is removed but a nostalgic public demands its return. A grassroots effort is spearheaded by Phillip I. Earl, then Curator of History at the Nevada Historical Society. The Reno Redevelopment Agency launches a campaign to find a permanent home for the historic landmark. Over afternoon tea you tell your neighbor, “I hope they find a place downtown. It shouldn’t be hidden away in a park, it should be somewhere everyone will see it.” A cooperative effort among the Agency, the Reno City Council, the Holiday Hotel (now the Siena Hotel and Casino) and the National Auto Museum secures a prime location on Lake Street near the truckee River where it once again will welcome visitors on their way through downtown Reno.

The dedication is over and the crowd has dispersed but for two elderly friends, standing on the Lake Street Bridge looking up at the steel frame structure with smiles on their faces and eyes toward the past.

This article was based on the following information:


Debbie Wissman is the HPRs Walking Tour Director and a member of the FootPrints Editorial Staff.

The Anniversary of the Interstate

by Carol Coleman

Recently, my husband mentioned that 2006 was the 50th anniversary of the Interstate Highway System. I didn’t believe him. What about the highway system that Congress approved in the late 1930s which resulted in the Lincoln and Victory Highways? Wasn’t that completion what the Transcontinental Highways Exposition and Reno’s California Building and the ensuing celebration were all about? What about Highways 10 and 40 and the immortal Route 66? Don’t they count?

I decided to do some research and found the following information, much to my surprise. The Interstate Highway System was actually a totally different concept. Although planning for an interstate system had occurred as early as the late 1930s, the National Highway Defense System was approved by Congress in 1956 for the strategic defense of the country. Quoting from Strategic Highway Network (STRAINET), “this is a network of highways which are important to the United States’ strategic defense policy and which provide defense access and emergency capabilities for defense purposes.” In the 1950s, my husband remembers wondering if people in their cars would ever use the system.

The story of the system’s origins is enlightening. In an article from the June 2006 issue of American History magazine, author Logan Thomas Snyder reports: “In September 1919, following the end of World War I, an Army expedition was organized to traverse the nation from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco, leaving the nation’s capital on July 7. Joining the expedition as an observer was a young lieutenant colonel, Dwight D. Eisenhower.” Supposedly, this military caravan took several months of travel. This experience planted the seed of travel. This experience planted the seed of his grand idea, but the officer’s later experience in wartime Germany nurtured it. Snyder writes: “It was not until the Allies broke through the Western Wall and tapped into Germany’s sprawling autobahn network that Eisenhower saw for himself what Germany could do with an infrastructure capable of accommodating it.” Eisenhower wrote, “The old convoy had started me thinking about good, two-lane highways, but Germany had made me see the wisdom of broader ribbons across the land.”

As President, Eisenhower threw the full weight of his office toward achieving a plan for the military to have a better way to move from coast to coast and to evacuate cities quickly. With highways like 30 and 40 and 66, every farm and house could have an entrance onto the highway. Highways connected to the streets of towns and cities, like Highway 40 connected to Fourth Street in Reno.

The Interstate, however, was to be a Limited Access Highway, with a limited number of ways to get on and off the highway. And there would be no stop signs or stop lights in the entire span.

The 1956 Act proposed the length to be 41,000 miles, and established standards for the system: a minimum of two travel lanes in each direction, 12-foot wide lanes, 10-foot wide right shoulder, 4-foot wide left shoulder. Major interstates would have one- or two-digit numbers, with odd numbers running north-south, and even numbers running east-west.

Rest areas and interchange designs were specified. The Act stipulated the most complex aspect, how to fund the Interstate. All of the Interstate segments and interchanges must be approved by the Secretary of Transportation.

Quoting a June 2006 editorial in the Reno Gazette-Journal, “no development since the transcontinental railroad has had a bigger impact on life in the United States than the Interstate Highway System.” The impact of the Interstate on commercial transportation has been enormous. Prior to the Interstate, most cross-country movement of goods was done by train. Today, a container can be moved from Japan via ship and placed on a truck or train for rapid shipment across the United States.

As in many communities, the completion of I-80 through the Sierra Nevada contributed to the tourism boom of the 1970s, but it was also responsible for the decline of U.S. 40 (Fourth Street) east and west of downtown. Decline was similar in other towns on the route. On May 22, 1994, a 39-year contentious quest to put a freeway through the Truckee Meadows ended with the opening of the final leg of Interstate 80 through downtown Reno and Sparks. By 1956, a route through Reno and Sparks was chosen, after eliminating several other prospective routes around Reno and through Reno. By 1971, the Sparks portion of the freeway was complete. The Reno section, however, was beset with funding cuts, steel shortages, vandalism, welding flaws and major digs in the roadway until it was completed in 1974.

Thanks to I-80, the Reno-Sparks area has become a giant in the warehousing and distribution industry. And thanks to the Interstate, Americans travel all over this country with relative ease. However, nothing is gained without something else being lost, and that is certainly the case with the Interstate system. Snyder quotes the late CBS news commentator Charles Kuralt. “It is now possible to...”

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The Sanborn Maps of Reno (continued)

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down and was replaced by another frame dwelling, which was demolished to make room for a blacksmith shop, which was eventually razed to accommodate a two-story brick hotel. Each of these structures was updated on the Sanborn map. Today, you would only see the two-story brick hotel that is reflected in the last map correction. Sadly, master copies were not kept for each map revision.


This is certainly true of Sanborn maps. These fire insurance maps successfully served the insurance industry for over a century and then went on to serve historians, engineers, geologists, environmental agencies, architects, writers, city planners, fire departments—anyone with an interest in looking at a city frozen in time on the date that a Sanborn map was made.

The Nevada Historical Society has 11 Sanborn maps of Reno, ranging in dates from 1897 to 1922 (this includes revision dates) and approximately 75 maps of other Nevada communities. One of the oldest Sanborn maps of Reno, published in 1885, reveals far more in its black and white and you must subscribe for historical-map lovers and will help to complete a project in 2007, whereby all pre-1923 Nevada Sanborn maps that are made available to UNR, will be scanned in “color” and posted online for access by the general public. (There are digitized Sanborn maps online today, but they are black and white and you must subscribe to the database service to access them.) Since the color schemes used on the Sanborn maps were an integral part of the maps’ usefulness and now their desirability, the completion of another Sanborn map project will be an exciting milestone for historical map lovers and will help to preserve the delicate original fire insurance maps, some of which are being damaged due to constant use.

Information for this article came from:


Kim Henrick has written articles for the Senior Spectrum and the Sparks Heritage Museum Spotlight. We have joined her in her efforts to create a memory.

1918-1953 Sanborn map of E. 1st Street between N. Virginia Street and N. Center Street. Note the Maps Hotel (opened in 1947, demolished in 2000). The TWA C.A. was demolished in 1953, around the time of this Sanborn map revision.

Memories of the Mizpah by Debbie Hinman

Last May I exercised my prerogative as Walking Tour Director and remarked one of our “tried and true” walks, “Beyond the Arches,” which covers the downtown Reno core. I also decided to try leading it myself. One thing that makes this tour special is that unlike the walks through residential areas, we have numerous opportunities to see the insides of some of the historically significant public buildings along the way. One of these special places is, or should I say was, the Mizpah Hotel.

On that Saturday morning, eighteen of us trooped into the hotel reception area and were greeted by the friendly desk clerk who seemed genuinely glad to see us. He showed the group the unique message box located on the wall, pointed out the original woodwork adorning the spacios area, and the large black safe where he explained proudly, was salvaged from the Overland Hotel.

When asked about the meaning of the word “Mizpah,” the clerk pointed to a yellowed clipping on the wall bearing the words “Mizpah is an emotional bond between people who are separated either physically or by death.” The word “mizpah” can often be found on headstones in cemeteries and on other memorials.

As we moved into the next room, a few residents of the hotel who were seated comfortably in the large lobby looked up. The clerk treated them and pleased at our open appreciation of the quaint and well preserved interior.

As Lloyd’s final sentence was poignant and meaningful, and seemed to sum up the feeling of many of us: “This fire was such a tragedy on so many fronts; loss of life for some, loss of hope for others, and certainly a loss of history for the entire community,” he wrote. Thank you, Lloyd, for a worthy epitaph for an other grand piece of old Reno, reduced to rubble and memories.

Debbie Hinman is the HRPS Walking Tour Director and a member of the Historical Society: Lloyd’s final sentence was poignant and meaningful, and seemed to sum up the feeling of many of us: “This fire was such a tragedy on so many fronts; loss of life for some, loss of hope for others, and certainly a loss of history for the entire community,” he wrote. Thank you, Lloyd, for a worthy epitaph for an other grand piece of old Reno, reduced to rubble and memories.

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Shangri-La was Home to Shaws, the Mission and Seach Family

As this issue goes to press, the editorial staff notes with great regret the loss of another piece of local history to fire. The stately white colonial at 1405 S. Arlington, once known as Shangri-la, was the childhood home of Virginia Shaw Henningsen who recorded her memories of the property in FootPrints Volume 6 No 2. When Virginia’s family bought the home in 1935, it sat on 10 acres of land just south of the Reno city limits. Upon the death of Virginia’s father, her mother Ruth converted the lovely home to a comfortable, welcoming guest ranch for the divorce trade, calling the ranch Shangri-la, after the land popularized in a favorite novel, Lost Horizon. Our sympathies are with the Seach family who lost their home–we join you in mourning this terrible loss.
The Sanborn Maps of Reno
by Kim Henrick

In 1867, while John Wesley Powell studied geographic maps to prepare for his famous 1869 expedition down the Colorado River, a cartographer received congressional approval to survey the Great Basin region, a civil engineer from San Francisco would commence producing maps for our cities for mapping opportunities. He recognized the specialized market for fire insurance maps and established the D.A. Sanborn National Insurance Diagram Bureau. In New York City, his company published colorful, detailed maps for the exclusive use of insurance companies. In her book Fire Insurance Maps: Their History and Application, Diane Oswald describes fire insurance maps this way: “With uniformity and clarity, these maps relay architectural details of residential, commercial and industrial buildings. They provide a glance, through the use of symbols, colors and labels, a snapshot of the built environment. For countless underwriters, who were unable to personally inspect properties, fire insurance maps were a vital part of their fiscal survival.”

The fire insurance map industry dates back to the late eighteenth century in London and for a time some American insurance companies even insured properties on the east coast of the United States. You can imagine the difficulty these companies had in assessing insurance risks across a vast ocean. Several important events primarily, the War of 1812 between Great Britain and the United States, and changes in laws concerning insurance companies in reaction to devastating city fires—led to the establishment of fire insurance companies here in the United States by the mid-nineteenth century.

In 1850, George T. Hope, the secretary of the Jefferson Insurance Company in New York City, was charged with the task of making a record 33,901 map sheets in a single week. The Coloring Department hand colored each map, the Print Department printed the index for the map, and finally the Stock House stored the maps until the maps were sold. A Sanborn map sold for $20 to $200 depending on its size and complexity.

Corrections (revisions) to each Sanborn map were usually made every year or two, and in cities of extreme change, this meant hundreds of variable-shaped correction slips might be made to update just one map. The 1918-1953 Reno map at the Nevada Historical Society had 25 revisions in that 35-year period. For large correction jobs, a Sanborn map employee might have been sent to the insurance company to glue the correction slips in, in addition to leaving the huge task to the customer.

An unfortunate result of the corrected maps is that you can’t see beneath the correction slips to view what has been covered up. For jobs involving large corrections, the addition of one busy city lot a frame house burned.

The Sanborn Maps of Reno (continued)
The Sanborn Maps of Reno

by Kim Henrick

The young man stepped out of the Southern Pacific Railroad passenger building, pulled his heavy winter coat closed against the sharp westerly wind and hurried down the street. Before entering the Overland Hotel on the corner of Commercial Row and N. Center Street, he glanced back at the unimpressive train depot and made a mental note: one story, brick-lined frame building with a slate roof. He was weary from his long, cross-country trip from the east, but his observational skills were still sharp. He looked forward to a hot bath and a good night’s sleep but was eager to start his survey of this new town of 8,000. He examined the wood for stone, and noted that except for the Reno Power business on this central river-front property and a few small structures near it (“Calaboose,” “Dog Pound,” and “Coke Shed”) this city block was bare.

The surveyor could not have known that this prime piece of land on the river would eventually host some of Reno’s most historic buildings: the Reno U.S. Post Office, the Reno Y.M.C.A., the Majestic Theatre, and the Mapes Hotel. Also, he could not have known that by the year 2000, with the demolition of the Mapes Hotel, this core city block would once again stand bare—a stark contrast to an elegant period in Reno’s past. In 1867, while John Wesley Powell studied geographic maps to prepare for his famous 1869 expedition down the Colorado River as leader of the U.S. Geological Survey, he recognized the specialized market for fire insurance maps and established the D.A. Sanborn National Insurance Diagram Bureau. Based in New York City, his company published colorful, detailed maps for the exclusive use of insurance companies.

In her book Fire Insurance Maps: Their History and Application, Diane Owoade describes fire insurance maps this way: “With uniformity and clarity, these maps relay architectural details of residential, commercial and industrial buildings. They provide a glance through the use of symbols, colors and labels, a snapshot of the built environment. For countless underwriters, who were unable to personally inspect properties, fire insurance maps were a vital part of their fiscal survival.”

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In 1850, George T. Hope, the secretary of the Jefferson Fire Insurance Company and William Perris to map a large portion of New York City. That was the beginning of the U.S. fire insurance map industry. Hope is also credited with establishing a committee of fire insurance officials that set the standards for fire insurance maps (colors, cartographic symbols, format and scale) that would serve fire insurance companies throughout the Great Basin region, a civil engineer from Somersworth, New Hampshire. There were many other successful fire insurance mapmakers, among them Henry Browne, William H. Martin, Ernest Hexamer, and William Lochner, but no name came to be associated with these maps like Sanborn. D.A. Sanborn died in 1883, but his company continued on—expanding and shrinking with economic conditions, merging with and acquiring other businesses, operating under a myriad of corporate names—and is still doing business today as The Sanborn Map Company, although they no longer publish fire insurance maps.

In 1981, Walter W. Ristow (then Chief of the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress) explained that the library's Sanborn Map collection “includes some fifty thousand editions of fire insurance maps comprising an estimated seventy-five thousand individual sheets.” Various contain claim between 12,000 and 13,000 American towns and cities were mapped by The Sanborn Company. Diane Owoade obtained access to The Sanborn Map Company’s historical records and wrote, following several paragraphs are a summary of her research on the map giant’s operations, including several interesting firsthand surveyor stories.

Also called strippers, troopers or pacers, these well-trained, respectable professionals were at times accused of being tax collectors and bounty hunters and everything in between. With those false accusations (in spite of surveyors carrying ample company identification) came charging dogs, police chases and general bad behavior from some of our cities’ citizens. At times Sanborn surveyors were fired by the brightest sun and at other times they suffered from frost bite. But, for the most part these were ambitious, well-trained men who loved their jobs.

Within a town’s or city’s core area (of most interest to insurance companies) the Sanborn surveyor would complete his detailed survey, having noted in prescribed fashion such things as: the exact dimensions of all structures, the number of stories, the layout of interior walls and stairs, the location of water pipes and fire hydrants, the type of heating source and the street addresses. But most important was used for brick and the color blue was used for stone.

The surveyor would send his completed package of standardized notes and diagrams to a home office where several departments would do their part to produce a quality fire insurance map. Here is an abbreviated process flow: the examining and indexing Department checked the survey for errors and omissions; the Drafting Department drew symbols and letters on the maps; the Proofreading Department checked every detail of the map including sheet numbers, water pipes and house numbers; the Lithography Department transferred the maps to lithographic stones for printing (In 1923, seventeen employees and two presses were credited for printing a record 35,901 map sheets in a single week); the Coloring Department hand colored each map; the Print Department printed the index for the map; and finally the Stock House stored the maps until they were sold. A Sanborn map sold for $20 to $500 depending on its size and complexity.

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An unfortunate result of the corrected maps is that you can’t see beneath the correction slips. You will see how the corrective slips have been placed to make the map more current, but you won’t see the old corrected map sheets. The Sanborn Maps of Reno (continued)
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Last May I exercised my prerogative as Walking Tour Director and reworked one of our “tried and true” walks, “Beyond the Arches,” which covers the downtown Reno core. I also decided to try leading it myself. One thing that makes this tour special is that unlike the walks through residential areas, we have numerous opportunities to see the insides of some of the historically significant public buildings along the way. One of these special places is, or should I say was, the Mizpah Hotel.

On that Saturday morning, eighteen of us trooped into the hotel reception area and were greeted by the friendly desk clerk who seemed genuinely glad to see us. He showed the group the unique message box located on the wall, pointed out the original woodwork adorning the spacious lobby, and the large black safe which had recently been proudly salvaged by the Overland Hotel.

When asked about the meaning of the word “Mizpah,” the clerk pointed to a yellowed clipping on the wall bearing the words “Mizpah is an emotional bond between people who are separated (either physically or by death).” The word “mizpah” can often be found on headstones in cemeteries and on other memorials.

As we moved into the next room, a few residents of the hotel who were seated comfortably in the large lobby looked up. A black BMW pulled up and paused at our open appreciation of the quaint and well preserved interior.

We walked outside on that beautiful spring day and admired the handsome brick exterior. I told the group how the hotel had been built in stages, in 1922, 1925 and 1930, and that it had been originally known as the Pincolini Hotel. Pincolini was the name of the brothers who built it with the profits from their agricultural holdings, and who still have family in Reno. We talked about how that area of town was a center of early Nevada ethnic diversity. Establishments catering to Basques, Chinese, Japanese, and African Americans as well as Italians were prevalent. Walkers noted how the architecture allowed for storefronts on the ground level, with the rooms above.

The old building gave us a real sense of what many of the downtown structures must have looked like in the 20s and 30s.

As I stood in my front yard on Halloween evening watching the following smoke from downtown fill the air, I recalled that May morning and my thoughts strayed to those gracious residents we met that day, with a fervent hope that they were fortunate enough to have survived the fire. I wondered if any of them on that walk the day that were thinking similar thoughts as they heard the news of the Mizpah fire.

As if in answer to my musings, just a few days later I received an e-mail from Lloyd Walker, an Oregon resident who took the walk with us in May. (Lloyd had previously written to me, thanking me for the walk and telling me how he enjoyed learning a little more about Reno. He wrote to say he was following the story on the fire with great sadness. We commiserated on the catastrophe in another exchange of mails, and I reflected that here was yet another justification for the HRPS walking tours. How many other people have seen public buildings or homes on our walks that a long lost due either to calamity or “progress”? As the walking tours, they were able to experience a little bit of transient history and create a memory.

Lloyd’s final sentence was poignant and meaningful, and seemed to sum up the feelings of many of us: “This fire was such a tragedy on so many fronts; loss of life for some, loss of hope for others, and certainly a loss of history for the entire community,” he wrote. Thank you, Lloyd, for a worthy epitaph for another grand piece of old Reno, reduced to rubble and memories.

Debbie Hinman is the HRPS Walking Tour Director and a member of the FootPrints Editorial Staff.
Reno’s Arches: The Whole Story (continued)

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personal possession. In 1990, the Reno City Council gives the arch to Willits, California. You are not terribly pleased that the arch is leaving Nevada, but at least it will again be a public monument. And after all, it isn’t the one you secretly think of as “your arch.” Your neighbor mentions that the two of you could take a drive sometime to visit the arch at its new location in Willits, but you both know you never will.

It is now 1994, and though you spend more and more time dwelling in the past, you haven’t thought about that first arch in some time. There is a knock on your door and you open it to your neighbor, who stands there leaning heavily on her cane, shoulders heaving with the effort of her trip from next door, but her eyes are shining. “Have you seen the morning paper? A movie production company is going to pay to restore the old arch and have it installed on Fourth Street! A woman named Robin Holbald of the state’s Commission on Economic Development has located it on a storage lot!” “No kidding! What’s the story of the movie?” you ask, the same excitement—she is the biggest baseball fan you know. After the filming, the arch is removed but a nostalgic public demands its return. A grassroots effort is spearheaded by the Nevada Historical Society. The Reno Redevelopment Agency launches a campaign to find a permanent home for the historic landmark. Over afternoon tea you tell your neighbor, “I hope they find a place downtown. It shouldn’t be hidden away in a park, it should be somewhere everyone will see it.” A cooperative effort among the Agency, the Reno City Council, the Holiday Hotel (now the Siena Hotel and Casino) and the National Auto Museum secures a prime location on Lake Street near the Truckee River where it once again will welcome visitors on their way through downtown Reno.

The dedication is over and the crowd has dispersed but for two elderly friends, standing on the Lake Street Bridge looking up at the steel frame structure with smiles on their faces, the celebration was all about. What about Highways 10 and 40 and the immortalized Route 66? Don’t they count? I decided to do some research and found the following information, much to my surprise. The Interstate Highway System was actually a totally different concept. Although planning for an interstate system had occurred as early as the late 1930s, the National Highway Defense Systems Act approved by Congress in 1956 was for the strategic defense of the country. Quoting from Strategic Highway Network (STRAH.NET), “this is a network of highways which are important to the United States’ strategic defense policy and which provide defense access, security and emergency capabilities for defense purposes.” In the 1950s, my husband remembers wondering if people in their cars would ever use the system.

The story of the system’s origins is enlightening. In an article from the June 2006 issue of American History magazine, author Logan Thomas Snyder reports: “In 1919, following the end of World War I, an Army expedition was organized to traverse the nation from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco, leaving the nation’s capital on July 4. Joining the expedition as an observer was a young lieutenant colonel, Dwight D. Eisenhower.” Supposedly, this military caravan took several months of travel. This experience planted the seed of travel. This experience planted the seed of this grand idea, but the officer’s later experience in wartime Germany nurtured it. Snyder writes: “It was not until the Allies broke through the barbaric Wall and tapped into Germany’s sprawling autobahn network that Eisenhower saw for himself what America could do with an infrastructure capable of accommodating it.” Eisenhower wrote, “The old convoy had started me thinking about good, two-lane highways, but Germany had made me see the wisdom of broader ribs across the land.” As President, Eisenhower threw the full weight of his office toward establishing a plan for the military to have a better way to move from coast to coast and to evacuate cities quickly. With highways like 30 and 40 and 66, every farm and house could have an entrance onto the highway. Highways connected to the streets of towns and cities, like Highway 40 connected to Fourth Street in Reno.

The Interstate, however, was to be a Limited Access Highway, with a limited number of ways to get on and off the highway. And there would be no stop signs or stop lights in the entire span. The 1956 Act proposed the length to be 41,000 miles, and established standards for the system: a minimum of two travel lanes in each direction, 12-foot wide lanes, 10-foot wide right shoulder, 4-foot wide left shoulder. Major interstates would have one- or two-digit numbers, with odd numbers running north-south, and even numbers running east-west. Rest areas and interchange designs were specified. The Act stipulated the most complex aspect, how to fund the Interstate. All of the Interstate segments and interchanges must be approved by the Secretary of Transportation.

Quoting a June 2006 editorial in the Reno Gazette-Journal, “no development since the transcontinental railroad has had a bigger impact on life in the United States than the Interstate Highway System.” The impact of the Interstate on commercial transportation has been enormous. Prior to the Interstate, most cross-country movement of goods was done by train. Today a container can be moved from Japan via ship and placed on a truck or train for rapid shipment across the United States. As in many communities, the completion of I-80 through the Sierra Nevada contributed to the tourism boom of the 1970s, but it was also responsible for the decline of U.S. 40 (Fourth Street) east and west of downtown. Decline was similar in other towns on the route. On May 22, 1954, a 19-year contentions quest to put a freeway through the Truckee Meadows ended with the opening of the final leg of Interstate 80 through downtown Reno and Sparks. By 1961, a route through Reno and Sparks was chosen, after eliminating several other prospective routes around Reno and through Reno. By 1971, the Sparks portion of the freeway was complete. The Reno section, however, was beset with funding cuts, steel shortages, vandalism, welding flaws and major dips in the roadway until it was completed in 1974. Thanks to I-80, the Reno Sparks area has become a giant in the warehousing and distribution industry. And thanks to the Interstate, Americans travel all over this country with relative ease. However, nothing is gained without something else being lost, and that is certainly the case with the Interstate system. Snyder quotes the late CBS news commentator Charles Kuralt, “It is now possible to...


**The Anniversary of the Interstate (continued)**

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travel from coast to coast without seeing anything. From the Interstate, America is all steel guardrails and plastic signs, and every place looks the same and smells like every other place. But savvy travelers plan their trips to use the safe and efficient Interstate for the long hauls, leaving it every so often to take a less-traveled and more scenic route to “see the country.”

The Interstate system now includes 160,000 miles of roadway of critical importance to the nation’s economy, defense and mobility. The nation’s transport system has come a long way in 50 short years.

The interconnectedness of the American economy, which was so important in the early years of the interstate system, continues to grow. The interstate network is now a vital part of the nation’s economic infrastructure, providing a critical link between cities and industries.

**HRPS Annual Party October 25**

And Thanks to Silent Auction Donors

“Reno 89501: A Postcard Revue” was the theme of this year’s annual HRPS party which was held October 25 in the spacious and historic California Building, Around 140 guests mingled and marveled easily, thanks to the large, open space, accompanied by Big Band music. Colorful Ernst Reno served as emcee. The arches containing placemats and the centerpieces were comprised of bright mahogany filled with festive greenery and decorated with tiny cards.

A delicious buffet-style meal, catered by the Elegant Herbf, included an assortment of tasty chicken, pasta and shrimp dishes.

The popular silent auction (featuring donated books, historic photos and postcards, gift baskets and many other quality items) brought in $11275 for the organization.

Entertainment for the evening was a sure thing as Jack Hursh and Jerry Fenwick put on an informative and nostalgic PowerPoint presentation of historic Reno postcards.

Thanks are due to the party committee, capably and creatively led again this year by board member Marilyn Turville. Assisting Marilyn were Phyllis Bates as menu coordinator, Carrie Young and Mark Tazer as silent auction chairs, and others who worked very hard to make this year’s party so successful.

Many thanks also to the generous people and organizations who provided silent auction items for the HRPS Annual Party:

- **Blythe Forman**
- **Debbie Himman**
- **Jack Hush**
- **Pat Klein**
- **Beth Miramon**
- **Anne Simone**
- **Jim Stim**
- **Marilyn Turville**
- **Sharon Walbridge**

**January Program: “Reading Reno”**

“Reading Reno,” a tantalizing program designed to make you want to curl up with a good book about Reno on a cold winter’s evening, will be held on January 24th of next year. The readers are Pat Ferraro Klos, founding president of HRPS; UNR retired art professor Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr.’s; a panel of five readers will share some of their favorite reads about the city, including Walter Van Tilburg Clark, Barbara Swart Courtnay. The readers are:

- **Beth Miramon**
- **Carrie Young**
- **Jack Hursh**
- **Marilyn Turville**
- **Sharon Walbridge**

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**Correction, Corrections...**

In FootPrints, Vol. 9 No. 4, page 7, the photo caption of Mayor Roberts erroneously identified him as Edward E. Roberts. Roberts’ first name was Edwin, as stated in the body of the story. Good catch, Guy Rocha!

Also in FootPrints, Vol. 9 No. 4, in the story on Reno Press Brick Company, it was stated that the Riverside Hotel was constructed by Reno Press Brick. Author and researcher Beth Miramon has since discovered that the Riverside bricks were not RPB, they were produced by the Ward Brothers (who also built the Mizpah Hotel) and were common brick, not pressed. Thanks, Beth.

**Reno’s Arches: The Whole Story (continued)**

1955 redesign of the arch, replacing the lights with green neon tubes. This was the fourth and last change for the old arch, to keep the stylin’ arches dark. Years after it was remodeled, it was reconstructed for the movie Cabb, and later placed at Hill and St. James in 1996. The Reno Historical Resources Commission placed an interpretive plaque on the arch in 2009.

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Reno's Arches: The Whole Story (continued)

After the Exposition, the Reno City Council decides to keep the arch as a permanent downtown gateway. Mayor Roberts puts out a call to the citizens of Reno to suggest a slogan for the arch. "Gens of the "Brightest City in the West" are invited to join in the effort to find the slogan that will best express our civic pride, our progress, and our future." The slogan contest is opened to the public, and entries pour in from all over the state.

One day in April of 1933, your neighbor calls to you from her side of the street. "Have you heard the news? The Mayors Council has voted to install the slogan on the arch!" You rush over to the center of town and see the arch in all its glory. "Reno: the Gateway to Prosperity and Happiness" now adorns the arch.

The slogan contest was a success, and it is now the official slogan of the city. It is used in various advertising campaigns and has become a symbol of Reno's progress and prosperity.

The post-Exposition arch with its new slogan, installed in 1929. The original stylized blowing torches show up well. Postcard courtesy of Cindy Aimsworth.
Reno’s Arches: The Whole Story

by Debbie Hinman

The bridge you see is an iron framework one, with high arches on both sides. The clip-clop of the passing horses’ hooves rings in the air as they move from the dirt road to the wooden planks of the bridge. Looking up you see a garland of juniper branches and a banner spanning the bridge—you tug at your mother’s skirt and ask her what it says and she reads “Welcome Home to Reno’s Soldiers,” referring to those returning from the Spanish American War. Our first “Reno Arch?” Possibly.

Now we move ahead 27 years. This Reno of 1936, while still small, is more sophisticated and cosmopolitan. It is an exciting time for Reno—the coast-to-coast motor routes, the Lincoln and Victory highways, have just been completed and run east/west, right through the town. A Transcontinental Highway Exposition is being planned for the following year and a flurry of preparations and activity underway. A commemorative arch is being planned to celebrate the event. It is decided that the arch will be fashioned after California city gateway structures and will be erected across Virginia Street at Commercial Row.

The arch is designed by Norman W. Prince and is erected by the J. L. Stuart Company of San Francisco; the steel structure costs $5,500. Large block letters announce the Exposition and the words “Welcome Home to Reno’s Soldiers” reading “Welcome Home to Reno’s Soldiers,” referring to those returning from the Spanish American War.

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