Wednesday, May 23:

to restore the vehicle to be put on display for the public as an artifact of Reno's history.

existence in Portola Valley, California, the reacquisition of the vehicle and the ongoing attempts on the history of this vehicle's use with the City of Reno. He'll discuss finding the vehicle still in the Nevada Historical Society's Changing Gallery: The Central Pacific Railroad and the Comstock.

The Nevada State Railroad Museum and The Nevada Historical Society present an exhibition in March 23 through December 14, 2007:

coins found with the Redfield estate.

Redfield coins. The Reno Coin Club will share with us the history and rarity of a collection of

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HRPS Web Site: http://historicreno.org/

Virginia Street Bridge, The Bridge of Sighs

by Cindy Ainsworth

Virginia Street Bridge under construction in 1905. The Amonac Building has not yet been built. The building is probably the Amonac Building, (now the hotel) which housed then Real Weight Department Store. Courtesy of the Neal Cobb Collection.

Author’s Note: In September 1997, Pat Ferraro Klab and Charlotte Jones McConnell were assigned the task of selecting the new HRPS organization’s logo. They chose Loren Jahn’s rendering of the Virginia Street Bridge. As HRPS’ first president, Pat felt that this “historic symbol beautifully links both sides of our city, culturally and emotionally.”

Ten years have passed since HRPS adopted the bridge as its symbol. In celebration, we at FootPrints felt it was time to not only share the stories and myths surrounding the Virginia Street Bridge but to update our readers on its current status. An important decision to refurbish or replace the bridge as part of the Truckee River Flood Management project will come this year. It is a complex and difficult issue and I hope you will find this article to be informative.

Built in 1905, the Virginia Street Bridge has withstood countless floods and the wear and tear of daily traffic of every description from buggies to street cars and bicycles to automobiles. At the center of Reno’s early history, Nevada’s oldest functioning bridge is a significant part of our city’s heritage.

From Fuller to Lake’s Crossing

William Fuller, hoped he had found “his silver” in the guise of a primitive road, waystation and bridge. Coming to the Truckee Meadows from Honey Lake, California, in 1859, he claimed land along the Truckee upstream from the established emigrant river crossings and waystations near Glendale. Fuller cleared a road approximately from Panther Valley south to Huffaker, a route similar to the present Virginia Street.

By 1860, he had built a hotel and crude bridge and founded Fuller’s Crossing. According to one description, the low bridge was hardly substantial and had to be “fastened down during high water.”

But it would be shrewd businessman Myron Lake who would turn Fuller’s investments into silver and in the process help establish what would become the Reno township. Lake bought Fuller’s Crossing and the road in mid-1861. The lucrative business of travelers from California to the Comstock over Lake’s bridge and road contributed to Lake’s increasing wealth.

Lake rebuilt the flimsy bridge in 1862, after early spring rain flooded the valley, and he secured a franchise with the Nevada territorial legislature for the toll road and bridge. Although limited to ten years, the funds from this franchise along with the Lake House Inn and a grist mill north of the bridge, enabled him to buy the property that he would in turn sell to Charles Crocker and the Central Pacific Railroad in 1868 for a train depot and Reno town site.

Continued on page 2
Virginia Street Bridge (continued)

Continued from page 1

By the 1940s, Reno was moving away from its pioneer roots and into the modern world. The city was taking on a more metropolitan feel. Automobiles took to the dusty streets in their new steam or electric “devil wagons,” as one local newspaper called them. The new Carnegie Library popped up on the southern bank of the Truckee, on the east side of Virginia Street. Kitty-cornered from that, to the northwest of the bridge, was the Masonic building.

A beautiful brick Riverside Hotel would soon follow southwest of the bridge in 1900, In conjunction with the new Virginia Street Bridge, the picture of progress was complete.

The waters of the Truckee are at flood stage in 1907. Before the newly built U.S. Post Office Hall looks like it might be freshly built and maybe not yet finished. Courtesy of the Neal Cobb Collection.

Reinforced concrete bridge and the Oakland, California firm of Cotton Brothers and Company to build it.

Leonard was a firm believer in the designer of this type of bridge. According to a 1945 Reno Evening Gazette article, laborers also found on the river bed an old key-winding gold watch that “brought speculation amongst the bystanders about the origin of the timepiece.” Some thought it might have been lost thrown over by a robber being taken to jail several years before.

The contractor maintained a tight schedule with only a couple of exceptions. In August, a section of the south end abutment from the old iron bridge caves in, damming the water in a construction ditch. Terrified workmen jumped to avoid being caught. Luckily no one was injured.

The concrete work was completed ahead of the November 12th contract deadline, but there was a delay in delivery of the railings and electric light fixtures. Nevertheless, according to the November 15, 1905 Reno Evening Gazette, the bridge commissioners threw open the bridge for public use. The entire day, “long wagons, automobiles and pedestrians passed over it,” although “earth over the bridge is yet soft and bicyclists are unable to ride over it.”

The new structure pleased everyone...
Historic Maps Online — Next Best Thing

By Kim Henrick

I recently received an exciting email from Linda Newman, the Geosciences and Map Librarian in the Mary B. Ansari Map Library at the University of Nevada, Reno. Linda invites HRPS members to visit UNR's Nevada in Maps website. I jumped on the interactive website and within seconds (I have DSL now, obviously), I was immersed in a colorful visual Nevada history tour. Over 500 historic maps and atlases of Nevada (with geologic, geographic and topographic themes) were scanned and made available online to map lovers everywhere. These high-resolution maps are the next best thing to working with the exquisite but fragile originals.

I found the Nevada in Maps website to be extremely user-friendly. Come with me on a few quick tours so you will get hooked on these incredible maps. First, type this internet address into your computer’s internet browser: http://www.delamar.unr.edu/maps/digimaps/ to get to the Nevada in Maps website home page. Now select Alex B. Ansari Map Library, University of Nevada, Reno. You can find the range and township numbers for your own areas of interest by consulting topographical maps and atlases, which are readily available at some libraries and for purchase at some local bookstores. Select the area you’re interested in and you’re ready to venture through the rest of Nevada’s map history on your own.

Don’t forget to visit the collections titled Nevada History in Maps and Highway maps (1937-2003).

You are welcome to download and print these maps, but be sure to give the appropriate credit with wording such as: “This digital map image is from the Mary B. Ansari Map Library, University of Nevada, Reno.” Good luck. Enjoy. I’m off to see if any wild PEA VINES will surround the springs on Peavine Mountain.

This map is called “Washoe Silver Region 1862” from the “Historic geologic and mining maps and atlases (1888-1950) collection.” It shows the traditional Comstock area and Washoe area, but it also shows caluna on the upper left. Courtesy of the Mary B. Ansari Map Library, UNR.

Now, at the extreme top left of your screen, select home. (You can do this any time you get lost or just want to start fresh.) Select View the Collections again, but this time choose Plats of Nevada State Lands (1867 to 1927). According to Linda, there are over 3,000 historic plat maps now on this site. Read the short introduction and now let’s select the plat map for this tour. (To view a plat map you need to know the range and township numbers designated for that area, but for this tour I’ll provide the correct numbers to view the plat map for downtown Reno in 1889.) Where you see Mount Diablo Meridian plots on the right of the screen, scroll up and select Range 19 East. When that range map appears, scroll down on the left side of the screen and select Township 19 North. This map shows the Truckee River running west to east through downtown Reno. Find Section 11 (below the bold name “RENO”) at the Virginia Street bridge and you’ll see “Lake’s Bridge” and “Lake’s Hotel,” both important structures in the history of Reno. You can find range and township numbers for your own areas of interest by consulting topographical maps and atlases, which are readily available at some libraries and for purchase at some local bookstores. Select the area you’re interested in and you’re ready to venture through the rest of Nevada’s map history on your own.

All information for this article came from the University of Nevada, Reno. “Nevada in Maps” website. I would like to thank Linda Newman, her staff, and the various Nevada geographers, for bringing these exciting Nevada atlases and maps to the general public.

Kim Henrick is a member of FootPrints Editorial Staff.

Virginia Street Bridge (continued)


For years, national magazines, newspapers and movies perpetuated the tale of the rings. Was it a myth or did the years of publicity actually turn this into a Reno tradition? Did those divorces pawn their rings at the conveniently located “End of the Trail” pawnshop and then proceed to the dime store to buy a cheap imitation for the ceremonial toss? One can only speculate but these rings certainly contributed to Reno’s national notoriety and to our heritage.

In 1980, the Virginia Street Bridge was nominated to the United States Department of the Interior’s National Register of Historic Places. The bridge was chosen because of its architectural, engineering and transportation significance. The fact that it was Nevada’s first reinforced concrete bridge and was the focal point of the small city during the early 20th century further helped in the selection.

When visitors interested in history or architecture come to town they want to know where to go to have a genuine historical experience. When in Reno, most will head toward history central, the place where Reno started as Fuller’s and then Lake’s Crossing. It is an area terming with our most important historical resources such as the Washoe County Courthouse, the Riverside Architecture Lofts, the Post Office and the Virginia Street Bridge.

Not only does the bridge stand as a testament to our past civic pride and a fine example of early concrete bridge technology, it is a part of Reno’s unique migratory divorce history. The bridge is also located on what was an important early north/south road leading through so too is its ability to withstand the sometime raging waters of the Truckee River that have caused major flooding in downtown Reno and Sparks. The Truckee has gone over its banks at the bridge in 1907, 1927, 1950, 1955, 1986, 1997 and 2005. The river will rise, no question. How best to protect the city against flooding is an issue.

Between 1992 and 1996, an environmental study was conducted to evaluate the Center and Virginia Street Bridges. The Center Street Bridge needed to be replaced due to advanced deterioration. The Virginia Street Bridge needed signs of deterioration but according to a Nevada Department of Transportation report, the bridge could be rehabilitated one year with a significant amount of reserve strength, and at the time it passed the 50 year flood protection level.

A 1996 agreement known as the Memorandum of Agreement was executed between the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office, Federal Highway Administration, Nevada Department of Transportation, City of Reno and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation that allowed for the replacement of the Center Street Bridge while requiring the rehabilitation of the Virginia Street Bridge.

The Center Street Bridge was replaced by 1998, but work was halted on the Virginia Street Bridge to further study its hydraulic capacity. In the meantime, necessary brick rehabilitation has been placed on hold while being reviewed as part of the Truckee River Flood Project.

Many of you have no doubt followed the progress of the Truckee River Flood Project. The main goal is Continued on page 4
As a place, there is still federal Highway Administration money from the 1996 Center Street Bridge agreement that could be applied to the rehabilitation of the Virginia Street Bridge with the bypass design. On the other hand, the City of Reno would have to return this federal money if they decide to replace the bridge.

According to the Reno Gazette-Journal, on March 28, 2007, the Reno City Council unanimously recommended that the Virginia Street Bridge be torn down and replaced. The final decision by the Flood Project Coordinating Committee will be made April 13, 2007.

The good news is the LPP calls for the rehabilitation of the Virginia Street Bridge at all feasible. The staff and FCC are looking at alternatives to replacement of the bridge. The bad news is if these alternatives are not feasible due to costs or not meeting flood flow estimates, then the FCC could recommend replacement.

The bridge is a central feature of the Truckee River Recreation Plan. The Natural Resource Defense Council and the Sierra Nevada Conservation Council are both taking a hard look at the future of the bridge and what can be done to improve it.

The bridge is a critical link in the Truckee River Trail System, which is a part of the Tony Gaskill Management Area. The bridge is also a key feature in the Virginia Street Greenway, which is part of the City of Reno's multi-modal transportation plan.

The bridge is a valuable asset to the City of Reno, as it provides an important link between the downtown area and the East Bank. It also serves as a important landmark and historical artifact.

The bridge was originally built in 1913 and has been updated and renovated several times since then. The current design was completed in 1996 and has been in service ever since.
The Mapes Hotel & Casino (continued)

Continued from page 7

The fires that broke out in the building, all were contained to the rooms where the fires began. No deaths or serious injuries were reported.

The hotel/casino building contained about 145,000 square feet with the basement and first two stories larger than the upper floors. The smaller top 10 stories were shaped like a 3 along the river, North Virginia and First streets.

The townfolk watched as work covered the first two floors of the exterior of the hotel, but appeared to be by four by four cream colored terra cotta tiles. Actually, concrete was used for the tiles to save money. Rough textured red brick columns rose between the windows of the upper stories.

The estimated costs to complete the hotel ranged from $2,500,000 to $3,000,000. The construction was financed by the Bank of America, First National Bank of Nevada and the Reconstruction Finance Agency (R.F.C), a federal government agency.

The hotel catered to overnight guests and long-term residents. The eight residential floors were advertised to contain 100 rooms as well as 40 suites, each with a living room, dining room, kitchen, bedroom and tiled bathroom. Three of the suites on each floor were located at the east, west and south sides of the building. The top floor also featured Art Deco aluminum railings embedded in a concrete balcony that jutted out over the building like a hat brim.

The Sky Room was tastefully decorated following the Art Deco structure of the hotel. The floral carpeting harmonized with the wall and pillar coverings of stylized leaves and flowers in muted blues and greens. The walls were covered with crisp white tablecloth and matching napkins, and were illuminated by small table lamps or metal cylinder shades over flickering candles. Indirect lighting lent an air of romance to the room.

The food was served on fine porcelain plates; the guests ate with hollow handled silverware.

The guests could dance on the inlaid hardwood parquet floor of the Sky Room on the stage at the north end of the room. The Sky Room kitchen was capable of serving as many as 400 people at one meal, lunch and dinner were served daily. The hotel contained three kitchens that were equipped with stainless steel fixtures, electric ranges, charcoal broilers and the latest in modern dishwashing and sterilizing equipment.

The visitors had an opportunity to gamble in the casino area either along the

during the day. In every room the guest could pull back the white sheers covering their window for a glimpse of Reno. Because hotel rooms were nearly impossible to procure after the war, many of the hotel rooms only had stalls showers. The rest of the rooms and all suites contained a combination tub and shower unit.

The 1946 Rodeo Parade. Note the Mapes Hotel and Casino under construction on the right of the picture. Courtesy of the Neil Coffin Collection.

Using five different color schemes for the guest rooms and suites, Gladys Mapes and her daughter Gloria shopped for the furniture in a San Francisco showroom. In addition to the French style pieces they purchased, they furnished some suites with a few of the family’s Victorian antiques.

Construction began in January 1946 and when the hotel officially opened on December 17, 1947, the Mapes family invited everyone in Reno to attend in either full dress or cowboy boots and attire. As people swarmed into the hotel lobby, they saw across from the hotel registration desk the three elevators with operators. (The elevators were automatic, but the Mapes family preferred to employ operators during most of the hotel’s life.) No other structure in Nevada had as many elevators as the Mapes. The coffee shop was located directly off the north side of the building, but it was not serving food during the Gala Grand Opening.

The cosmopolitan night club, known as the Sky Room, located on the top floor was a must see on every guest’s list. At the time only a few hotels in the country offered dining on their top floors, and most of them had been remodeled to add this feature. Glass windows surrounded the top floor on the east, west and south sides of the building. The top floor also featured Art Deco aluminum railings embedded in a concrete balcony that jutted out over the building like a hat brim.

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Carol Coleman is the Managing Editor of FootPrints.

The forest around our house was clear cut in the late 1800s. Lumber cut on these hills was transported down the mountain in flames to V&T Railroad cars for shipment up to Virginia City.

We have a few of the stumps on our property and more in the 15-acre open space behind us. We have a stump that had fallen over in the open space—we saved it and brought it into the front of the house as “décor.” The stump is now standing again in a place of honor. The stumps are antiques and I collect antiques.

Besides the trees, we also have sage and bitter brush and grass and Manzanita. These are low growing shrubs and grasses that are very flammable. With the fire risk in the West, our Homeowners Association has applied for grants to assist with clearing brush and dead trees in our open areas. This year, courtesy of a grant, a lot of the brush and dead trees were cut down by hand and/or chopped up with a machine called a masticator.

What has happened to our precious stumps? Despite my husband’s instructions, the crew-clearing brush and trees cut down many of the Comstock stumps. They perhaps didn’t understand about and certainly didn’t appreciate our “Comstock stumps.” The Comstock stumps are part of our history and they are all around us if we take a minute to look at them. So, we are doing our bit in historic preservation by saving the Comstock stumps. A Comstock stump is not ‘just a stump.’

A Comstock stump in the forest near the Mt. Rose Highway. The tree was probably cut down in the 1860s. Note the wide base of the stump. What use of the stump today is just the hearthwood. Photo courtesy of Sam Coleman.

In the Lake Tahoe Basin, a railroad was built from Glenbrook and took the line to Spooner Summit. By 1895, 47,000 acres of timber had been cut. Barely 950 acres of usable pine stands remained. During 78 years of logging activity, it is estimated that more than 750,000,000 board feet of lumber and 500,000 cords of wood were logged. In the words of Dan DeQuelle, “the Comstock lode was the tomb of the forests of Tahoe.”

Archaeologists have identified nineteen century lumber camps throughout the Sierra Nevada along with systems of roads, flumes, and narrow gauge railroad right of ways. It is not just a stump.

I live in a house in a forest (with my husband and a dog). It’s off the Mt. Rose Highway on the east side of the Sierra Nevada. There should be a sign to say Carson Range at the 6,000-foot level. We have beautiful, tall, three-needle pine trees called Ponderosa and Jeffrey Pine. In the early morning or early evening when you can smell the Jeffrey Pine—it’s a lovely vanilla, butterscotch like smell. Do bug a Jeffrey if you visit us. And, yes we love it here.

Among the trees around us, there are stumps. Some of the stumps are cut off at ground level. Others are tall, straggly and have weathered. The visitors to the hotel, my husband and Gloria shopped for furniture in a San Francisco showroom. Using five different color schemes for the guest rooms and suites, Gladys Mapes and her daughter Gloria shopped for the furniture in a San Francisco showroom. In addition to the French style pieces they purchased, they furnished some suites with a few of the family’s Victorian antiques.

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2007 HRPS Historic Preservation Month Walking Tours

Historic Reno Preservation Society will present nine historic walking tours and one bike tour during Historic Preservation Month this May. All tours are $10 per person; they generally last about 2 hours. No dogs, please. Helmets are required for the bike tour. If you would like to attend, please call 747-HIST (4478) to reserve space.

Tuesday, May 1, 2007 6 p.m. BRICKS AND STONES - A walk in the vernacular Humboldt and Lander Streets Neighborhood. Discover the architectural treasure trove of this area, a mix of bungalows, Tudor and mission revivals and cottage styles. Begins at My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. Tour guide, Tracy Soliday.

Saturday, May 5, 2007 10 a.m. BEYOND THE ARCHES - Learn Reno history with a walk through old and new downtown noting the historic banks, the railroad depot and the oldest existing commercial building. Meet at the National Automobile Museum parking lot (far southeast corner), 10 Lake Street. Tour guide, Sharon Honig Bear.

Tuesday, May 8, 2007 6 p.m. UNIVERSITY DISTRICT (CAPUS) - Visit Morrill Hall, Mackay School of Mines, the Keck Museum, and learn the history of this beautiful campus. Meet at Honor Court, 9th and Center Street. Tour guide, Jack Hursh.

Saturday, May 12, 2007 10 a.m. NEWLANDS NEIGHBORHOOD - An architectural walk through one of Reno's oldest and most prestigious neighborhoods. Meet at My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. Tour guide, Scott Gibson.

Tuesday, May 15, 2007 6 p.m. WELLS AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD - Take a stroll through a working class neighborhood along the path of the Wells Avenue streetcar, across from the V&I tracks, past the homes of the “Thoma Street Gang.” Meet at Southside School, Sinclair & Liberty Streets. Tour guide, Mark Taxer.

Saturday, May 19, 2007 10 a.m. FOURTH STREET CORRIDOR - Rediscover the historic origins of Highway 40 and the Lincoln Highway, stopping to appreciate the Barengo building, Flanigan Warehouse, and other vestiges of the corridor’s heyday. Meet at Louis’ Basque Corner, 301 E. 4th Street. Tour guide, Cindy Ainsworth.

Sunday, May 20, 2007 10 a.m. BIKE TOUR THROUGH OLD RENO - Ride along quiet streets under a canopy of trees in Reno’s oldest neighborhoods. Meet at My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Avenue. HELMETS REQUIRED, NO EXCEPTIONS. Limited to 20 bikers. Tour guide, Glee Willis.

Tuesday, May 22, 2007 6 p.m. UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORHOOD - A walk through an historic and possibly endangered neighborhood at the foot of the campus, with vintage Queen Anne homes, charming bungalows and intriguing stories. Meet at the base of the 9th Street university steps. Tour guides, Debbie Hinman & Jack Hursh.

Saturday, May 26, 2007 10 a.m. MONROE STREET NEIGHBORHOOD - Stroll along Monroe and Joaquin Miller Streets, savoring the history and architecture of this lovely residential area south of the Newlands Neighborhood. See the Hart House, the Patrick Ranch House, Greystone Castle, and other distinctive homes. Meet at the corner of Monroe St. and Manor Dr. Tour guides, Elsie Newman and Ann Simone.

Tuesday, May 29, 2007 6 p.m. PRESTIGE RAVINE- A walk through one of Reno’s least known neighborhoods. Meet at the corner of Lake/Pine and Pine/McAfee. Tour guide, Tracy Soliday.

The Mapes Hotel and Casino, Reno’s Landmark Hotel

When the Reno City Council demolished the glorious Mapes Hotel on January 10, 2000, a significant era in Reno’s history and culture was destroyed. From December 1947 to December 1982, this hotel was the site where renegades and tourists celebrated important family and community occasions, shared meals, conducted business meetings, and were entertained.

The historic Mapes Hotel was the forerunner of later casino/hotel operations built specifically to offer gaming, rooms and suites, restaurants and bars, and entertainment all under one roof. A magnificent building, the twelve-story Mapes Hotel was the first building in Nevada and the first major high rise hotel built in this country after World War II.

The story of the Mapes Hotel can only be told by describing the Mapes family who built the elegant structure. The family was among the earliest settlers in the Reno area. The family patriarch George W. Mapes and his brother Ira were running cattle through the Truckee Meadows as early as in the 1860s. Later, George was active in Reno’s business and banking communities. He even owned the Palace Hotel on Commercial Row in the early 1900s.

After he died, his son Charles Sr. and his family decided building its dream hotel. When the hotel was built, it was considered not only the most elegant and luxurious hotel in Nevada, but also one of the finest in the country. Charles Sr. and his wife Gladys purchased the property from the City of Reno in 1937. At that time, the white columned, red brick federal post office stood on the property. Unfortunately, Charles Sr. passed away months later due to complications from an infection in his leg. His leg was broken when his horse slipped in the mud and fell on Charles. Because of World War II, his family was forced to delay the construction of the hotel.

Gladys and Charles retained the experienced hotel design architect I.H. Scooneree from Oakland, California, to design their hotel and they hired Theodore P. Moorehead, Civil Engineer, to manage its construction. The building plans were frequently changed, and construction was delayed due to the lack of materials in the post-war economy. The building was erected using reinforced concrete in a curtain wall and plate- floor style of construction. None of the exterior walls was weight bearing.

Building materials and labor were supplied by local businesses. For example, Alpine Glass furnished the windows; Flanigan Warehouse supplied the cement; Earl Gams excavated the property; Tom Lyon installed the canalization of the roof; Osborne & Kitchen delivered the kitchen equipment; Camille Sorel & Sons gained the metal doors; Yancy Roofing built the roof; Ready-Mix Concrete; Savers Electrical Products, Reno Press Brick and Commercial Hardware contributed materials.

In constructing the hotel, Charles sought the maximum in fire safety, so the rooms were built without transoms, and all metal window sashes and baseboards were of aluminum. The grained hollow metal doors and the fastener covered terra cotta column walls were intended to contain any fire to a single living unit with a four-hour fire resistance rating. The design was successful; of the three
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**PARSONS/MILLS ARCHITECTURE – Join us for a stroll in one of Reno’s most unique neighborhoods to view the distinguished designs of two famous local architects, Edward Parsons and Russell Mills. Meet at the corner of Marsh and LaRue Avenues.** Tour guide, Anne Simone.

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**The Mapes Hotel and Casino, Reno’s Landmark Hotel**

By Patty Cafferata

When the Reno City Council demolished the glamorous Mapes Hotel on January 10, 2000, a significant era in Reno’s history and culture was destroyed. From December 1947 to December 1982, this hotel was the site where Renoites and tourists celebrated important family and community occasions, shared meals, conducted business meetings, and were entertained.

The historic Mapes Hotel was the forerunner of later casino/hotel operations built specifically to offer gaming, rooms and suites, restaurants and bars, and entertainment and shopping. The first major high rise hotel built in this country after World War II.

The story of the Mapes Hotel can only be told by describing the Mapes family who built the most elegant hotel in Nevada, but also considered not only the most elegant and luxurious hotel in Nevada, but also the most important building in Nevada. The family were among the earliest settlers in the Reno area. The family patriarch George W. Mapes, and his brother Ira were running a land and a business in Nevada and the first major high rise hotel built in this country after World War II.

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The Mapes Hotel & Casino (continued)

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fires that broke out in the building, all were contained to the rooms where the fires began. No deaths or serious injuries were reported.

The hotel/casino building contained about 145,500 square feet with the basement and first two stories larger than the upper floors. The smaller top 10 stories were shaped like a J along the river, North Virginia and First streets.

The townfolk watched as work covered the first two floors of the exterior of the hotel, it appeared to be four by four cream colored terra cotta tiles. Actually, concrete was used for the tiles to save money. Rough textured red brick columns rose between the windows of the upper stories.

The estimated costs to complete the deluxe hotel ranged from $2,500,000 to $3,000,000. The construction was financed by the Bank of America, First National Bank of Nevada and the Reconstruction Finance Agency (RCA), a federal government agency.

The hotel catered to overnight guests and long-term residents.

The eight residential floors were advertised to contain 100 rooms as well as 40 suites, each with a living room, dining room, kitchen, bedroom and tiled bathroom. Three of the suites on each floor were located at the three outside rounded corners, while the other two suites had a bay window for guests to gaze at the blue waters of the river. The corner suites were unique because their conference could be closed off and up to five additional bedrooms added. (Marilyn Monroe stayed in one of these suites during most of the film shooting.)

The Mapes family preferred to employ operators during most of the hotel's life. No other structure in Nevada had as many elevators as the Mapes. The coffee shop was located on the north side of the building, but it was not serving food during the Gala Grand Opening.

The cosmopolitan night club, known as the Sky Room, located on the top floor was a must see on every guest's list. At the time only a few hotels in the country offered dining on their top floors, and most of them had been remodeled to add this unusual feature. Glass windows surrounded the top floor on the east, west and south sides of the building. The top floor also featured Art Decor aluminum railings embedded in a concrete balcony that jutted out over the building like a hat brim.

The Sky Room was tastefully decorated following the Art Deco structure of the hotel. The floral carpeting harmonized with the wall and pillar coverings of stylized leaves and flowers in muted blues and greens. The tables were covered with crisp white tablecloths and matching napkins, and were illuminated by small table lamps or metal cylinder shades over flowering candles. Indirect lighting lent an air of romance to the room.

The food was served on fine porcelain plates; the guests ate with hollow handled silverware.

The guests could dance on the inlaid hardwood floor of a show floor a show floor on the stage at the north end of the room. The Sky Room kitchen was capable of serving as many as 400 people at one meal. Dinner and lunch were served daily. The hotel contained three kitchens that were equipped with stainless steel fixtures, electric ranges, charcoal broilers and the latest in modern dish washing and sterilizing equipment.

The visitors had an opportunity to gamble in the casino area either along the The 1946 Rodeo Parade. Note the Mapes Hotel and Casino under construction on the right of the picture. Courtesy of the Neal Cole Collection.

during the day. In every room the guest could pull back the white sheers covering their window for a glimpse of Reno. Because bathtubs were nearly impossible to procure after the war, many of the hotel rooms had only stall showers. The rest of the rooms and all suites contained a combination tub and shower unit.

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Continued from page 3

“management of flood waters to protect life and property.” This is a joint effort among the cities of Reno, Sparks, Washoe County, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other stakeholders. Ultimately, this project will determine whether to replace or rehabilitate the bridge.

Truckee River Flood Management is made up of staff, working groups, committees and the Flood Project Coordinating Committee (FPCC), which is a coalition of local officials. The community coordination has adopted a Living River Plan as the Locally Preferred Plan (LPP), which includes a more natural realignment of the river. Along with the Army Corps of Engineers’ National Economic Development plan, the LPP will eventually go before Congress for authorization for partial funding of the project.

The good news is the LPP calls for the rehabilitation of the Virginia Street Bridge at all feasible. The staff and FPCC are looking at alternatives to replacement of the bridge. The bad news is if these alternatives are not feasible due to costs or not meeting flood flow estimates, then the FPCC could recommend replacement.

The Ferrari-Shields Design is one of the alternatives to replace that the FPCC is reviewing. The design includes bypass channels around the bridge, replacing the aging flood walls at the north bank and widening the river channel to the narrowest part between Sierra Street and Virginia Street. This design offers flood protection to the downtown at the 100-year flood flow level, the level of protection the Living River Plan has already adopted.

As a plus, there is still Federal Highway Administration funding from the 1996 Center Street Bridge agreement that could be applied to the rehabilitation of the Virginia Street Bridge with the bypass design. On the other hand, the City of Reno would have to return this federal money if they decide to replace the bridge. According to the Reno Gazette-Journal, on March 28, 2007, the Reno City Council unanimously recommended that the Virginia Street Bridge be torn down and replaced. The final decision by the Flood Project Coordinating Committee will be made April 13, 2007.

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I recently received an exciting email from Linda Newman, the Geog raphy and Map Librarian in the Mary B. Ansari Map Library at the University of Nevada, Reno. Linda invites IRPS members to visit UNR's Nevada in Maps website. I jumped on this interactive website and within seconds (I have DSL now, of course), I was immersed in a colorful, visual Nevada history tour. Over 500 historic maps and atlases of Nevada (with topographic and cartographic themes) were scanned and made available on line to map lovers everywhere. These high resolution map images are the next best thing to working with the exquisite but fragile originals.

I found the Nevada in Maps website to be extremely user friendly. Come with me on a few quick tours so you will get hooked on these incredible maps. First, type this internet address into your computer’s internet browser: http://www.delamar.unr.edu/maps/dig collections/nvmaps/ to get to the Nevada in Maps website home page. Now select the Collections and when the introduction is over, then select View the Collections (in the upper right of your screen). Here we go.

Select the second item called Historic geologic and mining maps and atlases (1848-1950). The next, select Washoe County and G0. This will bring up 13 thumb-nail sized maps. Browse through them for your own enjoyment, but for this exercise, select the map called Washoe Silver Region 1862. This map shows the traditional Comstock area and Washoe area, but it also shows salina on the upper left.

This map is called “Washoe Silver Region 1862.” From the “Historic geologic and mining maps and atlases (1848-1950).” collection. It shows the traditional Comstock area and Washoe area, but it also shows salina on the upper left.

Now, at the extreme top left of your screen, select home. (You can do this any time you get lost or just want to start fresh.) Select View the Collections again, but this time choose Plats of Nevada State Lands (1867 to 1927). According to Linda, there are over 3,000 historic plat maps now on this site. Read the short introduction and now let’s select the plat map for this tour. (To view a plat map you need to know the range and township numbers designated for that area, but for this tour I will provide the correct numbers to view the plat map for downtown Reno in 1889.) Where you see Mount Diablo Meridian plats on the right of the screen, scroll up and select Range 19 East. When that range map appears, scroll down on the left side of the screen and select Township 19 North. This map shows the Truckee River running west to east through downtown Reno. Find Section 11 (below the bold name “RENO”) at the Virginia Street bridge and you will see “Lake’s Bridge” and “Lake’s Hotel,” both important structures in the history of Reno. You can find range and township numbers for your own areas of interest by consulting topographical maps and atlases, which are readily available at some libraries and for purchase at some local bookstores. Select some of the ranges and townships and you’re ready to venture through the rest of Nevada’s map history on your own.

Don’t forget to visit the collections titled Nevada History in Maps and Highway maps (1937-2003).

All information for this article came from the University of Nevada, Reno, “Nevada in Maps” website. I would like to thank Linda Newman, her staff, and the various Newman’s on campus, for bringing these exciting Nevada atlases and maps to the general public.

Kim Henrik is a member of FootPrints Editorial Staff.

Historic Maps Online — Next Best Thing

By Kim Henrik

Virginia Street Bridge (continued)

This bridge was nominated to the United States Department of the Interior’s National Register of Historic Places. The bridge was chosen because of its architectural, engineering and transportation significance. The fact that it was Nevada’s first reinforced concrete bridge and the focal point of the small city during the early 20th century further helped in the selection. When visitors interested in history or architecture come to town they want to know how to go to have a genuine historical experience. When in Reno, most will head toward history central, the place where Reno started as Fuller’s and then Lake’s Crossing. It is an area teeming with our most important historical resources such as the Washoe County Courthouse, the Riverside Hotel, the Post Office and the Virginia Street Bridge.

Not only does the bridge stand as a testament to our past civic pride and a fine example of early concrete bridge technology, it is a part of Reno’s unique migratory divorce history. The bridge is also located on what was an important early north/south road leading through so too is its ability to withstand the sometime raging waters of the Truckee River that have caused major flooding in downtown Reno and Sparks. The Truckee has gone over its banks at the bridge in 1907, 1927, 1950, 1955, 1986, 1997 and 2005. The river will rise, no question, but best to protect the city against flooding is an issue.

Between 1992 and 1996, an environmental study was conducted to evaluate the Center and Virginia Street Bridges. The Center Street Bridge needed to be replaced due to advanced deterioration. The Virginia Street Bridge showed signs of deterioration but according to a Nevada Department of Transportation report, the bridge could be rehabilitated at a cost of $8 million. While not significant by amount of reserve strength, and at the time it passed the 50 year flood protection level.

A 19% agreement known as the Memorandum of Agreement was executed between the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office, Federal Highway Administration, Nevada Department of Transportation, City of Reno and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation that allowed for the replacement of the Center Street Bridge while requiring the rehabilitation of the Virginia Street Bridge.

The Center Street Bridge was replaced by 1998, but work was halted on the Virginia Street Bridge to further study its hydraulic capacity. In the meantime, necessary bridge rehabilitation has been placed on hold while being reviewed as part of the Truckee River Flood Project.

Many of you have no doubt followed the progress of the Truckee River Flood Project. The main goal is...
Virginia Street Bridge (continued)

Continued from page 1

Reno's civic center emerged south of the bridge, when in 1871 the Nevada legislature transferred the county seat from Washoe City to Reno. A new courthouse was completed on land donated by Lake. It was turned over to Washoe County in 1871.

Lake's rickety wooden bridge was replaced by the county in 1873 at the site of the present bridge. Ironically, the iron bridge washed away in the 1905 flood.

According to the U.S. census, Reno's population more than doubled from 4,500 in 1900 to 10,867 in 1910. Reno benefited economically from the mining boom in Tonopah and Goldfield by being the wholesale transportation and shipping hub for supplies to southern Nevada. A more permanent, influential population of bankers, cattlemen's families and mine owners took up residence in Reno's new housing additions.

By the 1900s, Reno was moving away from its pioneer roots and into the more metropolitan feel. Automobilists took to the dusty streets in their new "devil wagons," as these cars were called. "Devil wagons," which used steam or electric to power them, were the forerunners to today's automobiles. Reno's new urban awareness.

The waters of the Truckee are at flood stage in 1907. Before the newly built U.S. Post Office Building, with its Beaux Arts style lights and railing complimented Reno's new urban awareness.

Building, about 1907. From the left, the old Riverside, the old Washington, the Masonic, and the Virginia Street Bridge. The Masonic building, the picture of progress was complete.

Beautiful Bridges, "A Sure Indication of a Progressive Community"

Proponents of the new civic improvement movement succeeded in having a bill passed in the 1905 Legislative session in support of building a new Virginia Street Bridge. The Washoe County bridge commissioners chose John Leonard, a civil engineer from San Francisco, to design the steel

A beautiful brick Riverside Hotel would soon follow southwest of the bridge, in 1906, its conjunction with the new Virginia Street Bridge, the picture of progress was complete.

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pleasing outline and appropriate use of ornament." Beautiful bridges "are a sure indication of a progressive community." This is reflected in the design of the Virginia Street Bridge with Leonard's use of graceful and scribed concrete to look like masonry. The Beaux Arts style lights and railing complimented Reno's new urban awareness.

Construction began in July of 1905. A temporary wooden bridge was erected for traffic over the Truckee. Some of the old heavy timbers from an earlier bridge were found just below the streambed during the excavation stage of construction. According to a 1905 Reno Evening Gazette article, laborers also found on the river bed an old key-windig gold watch that "brought speculation amongst the bystanders about the origin of the timepiece." Some thought it might have been lost thrown over by a robber being taken to jail several years before.

The contractor maintained a tight schedule with only a couple of exceptions. In August, a section of the south end abutment from the old iron bridge caved in, damming the water in a construction ditch. Terrified workmen jumped to avoid being caught. Luckily no one was injured. The concrete work was completed ahead of the November 12th contract deadline, but there was a delay in delivery of the railings and electric light fixtures. Nevertheless, according to the November 15, 1905 Reno Evening Gazette, the bridge commissioners threw open the bridge for public use. The entire day, "long wagons, automobiles and pedestrians passed over it," although "earth covering the bridge is yet soft and bicyclists are unable to ride over it."

The new structure pleases everyone who looks at it. A new structure for public use. The entire bridge was moved east to Rock Street, following the construction of the present bridge. Ironically, the iron bridge washed away in the 1905 flood.

The waters of the Truckee are at flood stage in 1907. Before the newly built U.S. Post Office Building, with its Beaux Arts style lights and railing complimented Reno's new urban awareness.

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SPRING 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, April 25:
917 American LaFrance fire truck. First motorized hook and ladder truck for the City of Reno. Jon Wagner, president of the Reno Fire Antique and Classic Apparatus will make a presentation on the history of this vehicle's use with the City of Reno. Jon Wagner, president of the Reno Fire Antique and Classic Apparatus will make a presentation on the history of this vehicle's use with the City of Reno. He'll discuss finding the vehicle still in existence in Portola Valley, California, the reacquisition of the vehicle and the ongoing attempts on the history of this vehicle's use with the City of Reno. He’ll discuss finding the vehicle still in the Nevada Historical Society's Changing Gallery: The Central Pacific Railroad and the Comstock. The Nevada State Railroad Museum and The Nevada Historical Society present an exhibition in March 23 through December 14, 2007: Spencer Wells: On the Trail of the Redfield coins. The Reno Coin Club will share with us the history and rarity of a collection of Redfield coins. The Reno Coin Club will share with us the history and rarity of a collection of Redfield coins.

Wednesday, May 23:
Redfield coins. The Reno Coin Club will share with us the history and rarity of a collection of coins found with the Redfield estate.


Virginia Street Bridge, The Bridge of Sighs
by Cindy Ainsworth

Virginia Street Bridge under construction in 1905. The Masonic Building has not yet been built. The building is probably the Masonic Building, (not the hotel) which housed Tony Real Weight Department Store. Courtesy of the Neal Cobb Collection.

Author’s Note: In September 1997, Pat Ferrari Klna and Charlotte Jones McConnell were assigned the task of selecting the new HRPS organization’s logo. They chose Loren Jahn’s rendering of the Virginia Street Bridge. As HRPS’ first president, Pat felt that this “historic symbol beautifully links both sides of our city, culturally and emotionally.”

Ten years have passed since HRPS adopted the bridge as its symbol. In celebration, we at Footprints felt it was time to not only share the stories and myths surrounding the Virginia Street Bridge but to update our readers on its current status. An important decision to refurbish or replace the bridge as part of the Truckee River Flood Management project will come this year. It is a complex and difficult issue and I hope you will find this article to be informative.

Built in 1905, the Virginia Street Bridge has withstood countless floods and the wear and tear of daily traffic of every description from buggies to street cars and bicycles to automobiles. At the center of Reno’s early history, Nevada's oldest functioning bridge is a significant part of our city’s heritage.

From Fuller to Lake's Crossing

Fuller’s Crossing and the road in the mid-1860s, the Truckee Meadows from Honey Lake, California, in 1859, he claimed land along the Truckee upstream from the established emigrant river crossings and wagon trails near Glendale. Fuller cleared a road approximately from Panther Valley south to Huffaker, a route similar to the present Virginia Street.

By 1860, he had built a hotel and cradle bridge and founded Fuller’s Crossing. According to one description, the low bridge was hardly substantial and had to be “fastened down during high water.”

But it would be shrewd businessman Myron Lake who would turn Fuller’s investments into silver and in the process help establish what would become the Reno township. Lake bought Fuller’s Crossing and the road in mid-1861. The lucrative business of travelers from California to the Comstock over Lake’s bridge and road contributed to Lake’s increasing wealth.

Lake rebuilt the flimsy bridge in 1862, after early spring rain flooded the valley, and he secured a franchise with the Nevada territorial legislature for the toll road and bridge. Although limited to ten years, the funds from this franchise along with the Lake House Inn and a grist mill north of the bridge, enabled him to buy the property that he would in turn sell to Charles Crocker and the Central Pacific Railroad in 1868 for a train depot and Reno town site.

Continued on page 2