Wednesday, October 22, 7:00 pm. Auction and dinner served in the Western Heritage Interpretive Center. Dinner tickets are $50 per

Wednesday, September 24, 6:00 pm. HRPS’ Fall Social, celebrating HRPS’ 11th year with a theme the Holidays. Artists will be selling their wares, there will be seasonal music, refreshments, book

Saturday, December 13, 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm. Lincoln Highway across the U.S. with special focus on the journey across Nevada. The Historical Association will present a slide show of a collection of photos from 1913-1920 on the Lincoln Highway.

Wednesday, November 19, 7:00 pm. Importance of the Oral History Program. The Department will lead us through the archives of the Oral History Department and speak on the importance of the Oral History Program.

Fall Programs, 2008

Jack Hursh Jr. – Program Chair 346-3252

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, September 24, 6:00 pm. HRPS’ Fall Social, celebrating HRPS’ 11th year with a theme the Holidays. Artists will be selling their wares, there will be seasonal music, refreshments, book

Wednesday, October 23, 7:00 pm. Tom King of the University of Nevada Oral History Department will lead us through the archives of the Oral History Department and speak on the importance of the Oral History Program.

Wednesday, November 19, 7:00 pm. Jim Bonar, President, Nevada Sierra Chapter of The Lincoln Highway Association will present a slide show of a collection of photos from 1913-1920 on the Lincoln Highway across the U.S. with special focus on the journey across Nevada.

Saturday, December 13, 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm. Nevada Historical Society presents History for the Holidays. Artists will be selling their wares, there will be seasonal music, refreshments, book

Reno Halls, Theaters and Movie Houses: A History by Debbie Hinman

The Majestic…the Crest…the Granada… the Tower…

What do these exalted names call to mind? The awe of a plushly appointed theater, grand balls, and the wondrous wrought-iron staircase to the balcony, rich velvets and gilded wall decor? The anticipation of a long-awaited double feature, preceded by your favorite cartoon characters in a new, hilarious adventure? Or for live theater, do you picture your favorite local players on a brightly lit stage within the cozy confines of the red brick Reno Little Theater on North Sierra Street?

Live theater and movies have a long local history. The longevity and variety of the entertainment may be a surprise to those who think of it as a more recent institution.

Early Reno is perceived by most as a rough and tumble town populated by coarse, rowdy, uneducated men, who worked hard to eke out a living and relaxed by letting off steam and over imbibing at the nearest saloon. What few women there were in the young town were no doubt too preoccupied with trying to raise their children to worry about outside entertainment. While these perceptions have some validity, theater performances of many different types were popular with the townsfolk, and very early on, rudimentary halls and theaters were constructed to showcase these performances.

When Reno came into being that May 9, 1868, there wasn’t much in the downtown core but there was a building on the Truckee River, on the southeast corner of First and Virginia Streets. It was a large hall with a much bigger stage than previous venues, and it was put to immediate use. It became the site of the Grand Ball that year, celebrating the move of the Washoe County seat from Washoe City to Reno. Many traveling dramatic troops on their way to California from the East via the Central Pacific railroad stopped to perform at Dyer’s. It wasn’t long, however, before the Alhambra had competition from a new hall, Peters’ Pioneer Hall and Philadelphia Brewery, sometimes just referred to as Peters’ Theater on Virginia Street near Second. As a theater venue, though, Peters’ was far from satisfactory. Patrons complained that however good the performances, it was difficult to appreciate them while sitting on rough planks in the stuffy hall.

Local newspapers called for the construction of a new theater. In 1871, local resident L. H. Dyer, who ran a stage line between Reno and Carson City, obliged the townspeople by building an establishment known as Dyer’s Theater on the corner of Center and Plaza Streets. It was a large hall with a much bigger stage than previous venues, and it was put to immediate use. It became the site of the Grand Ball that year, celebrating the move of the Washoe County seat from Washoe City to Reno. Many traveling dramatic troops on their way to California from the East via the Central Pacific railroad stepped to perform at Dyer’s. The stage was enlarged in June of that year, and the seats were removable to allow for the new craze of roller skating, which was particularly popular as entertainment during the winter months.

Continued on page 2
Footprints Vol. 11 No. 4, Fall 2008

Footprints Vol. 11 No. 4, Fall 2008
From Your HRPS' President

July's Artown walks were a huge success this year! I want to thank all our current members for supporting us, our new members for joining us, and the wonderful homeowners who invited us onto their properties and into their homes. Participants on Bricks & Stones were invited into two historic Humboldt Street homes, and those on the Little Italy tour were greeted by four different homeowners, who shared their stories and their own little pieces of history with the group. This interaction with homeowners richly enhances the walking tour experience and is greatly appreciated by HRPS.

See the story below about Hawkins House, which soon will hold a HRPS' office upstairs.

Our annual party slated for Wednesday, September 24th, is shaping up to be one of our most fun events ever, withinteraction with homeowners richly enhances the walking tour experience and is greatly appreciated by HRPS.

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— Felvia Bentauregui, HRPS’ President

HRPS' Fall Social

Wednesday, September 24

Hoody Ya’ll! Please mark September 24, 2008, 6:00 pm on your calendars for HRPS' Fall Social, as we celebrate our 11th year and Nevada's Ranching Heritage with a Nevada-style BBQ at Bartley Ranch.

Appetizers, cocktails, and tours will be given of the outbuildings including Huffaker School House, with dinner being served in the Western Heritage Interpreter Center.

There will be a silent auction again along with a good of raffle this year. Western attire is welcome, so dust off your boots, jeans, and hats and get ‘em on! It’s gonna be a great time!

Dinner tickets are $50 per person, with raffle tickets $5 each or for $20. Seats are limited so do the “boot scoot’n boogie” and get your reservations in before September 15! Contact Joan Dyer, (775) 329-8744 for tickets.

Hawkins House, Again

Street ends and Elin Court begins. The Hawkins house holds two historic distinctions: the dwelling was entered on the National Register of Historic Places on March 17, 1979, and the State Register of Historic Places on March 4, 1981.

The Hawkins family was considered one of the first families of Nevada, and worked as lawyers in the area for over a century. Prince Albert Hawkins was born January 1, 1871, in Tennesee, in a family of lawyers; his father was a judge and his four uncles were lawyers. Prince graduated in June of 1894 from Vanderbilt University with an LL.B. degree and practiced law in Tennesee for five years. With his wife Myrtle Ziemer and four children, Robert, Elin, Carson and Elizabeth, the family moved to Reno in 1910. A fifth child, Prince Archer Hawkins, was born December 28, 1918, in Reno.

On June 10, 1910, Prince Albert Hawkins joined the law firm founded by Amos E. Cheney in 1880. In 1927, his son Robert joined his father in practicing law. Prince Albert Hawkins died on April 10, 1939, at 68 years of age. Prince’s son, Prince Archer Hawkins then joined his brother Robert in the law firm, and it became Hawkins and Hawkins.

Following the death of Prince Hawkins, his son Robert lived in the Court Street mansion. Robert Ziemer Hawkins was married to Katherine Mackay, his son Robert lived in the Court Street mansion. Robert Ziemer Hawkins was married to Katherine Mackay, granddaughter of Clarence’s brother Howard. Jacob had died in 1900, leaving the management of Jacob's brother Howard. Jacob had died in 1900, leaving the management of Jacob’s brother Howard. Jacob had died in 1900, leaving the management of Jacob’s brother Howard. Jacob had died in 1900, leaving the management of Jacob’s brother Howard. Jennifer Dyer, (775) 329-8744 for tickets.

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Reno Halls, Theaters and Movie Houses (continued)

New York theater in terms of having a venue to attract the best theater and opera in the country. And attract the talented and famous it did—actress Sarah Bernhardt performed Camille at the Majestic in 1913. In 1911, according to long-time projectionist Mike Nelson, the Majestic purchased Thomas Edison’s invention, the kinetograph, and was the first local theater to feature a “talking picture.”

In 1925, the theater was completely renovated, the work of local architect Frederick Delongchamps, primarily to make it more suitable for motion pictures. At this point the theater was owned by K&B Enterprises, as were the Grand and the Rialto. The upper balcony was torn out and the edifice was converted to a Moorish design, a very popular look for theaters of that era.

The Majestic continued to serve Reno’s theater-goers until it closed in 1974 and was demolished. This theater, and others, didn’t have current building codes and was considered unsafe. The majestic structure came tumbling down in October of that year, but not without a fight. Karl Breckenridge said it best in his 2004 Homefinders story about the theater, “This fine edifice … was since its opening in 1910 so seismically sound that it took three days, two D-8 Caterpillar dozers and 30 pounds of dynamite to get the proscenium arch to fall when the theater was razed.”

The Rialto Theater, which has been converted to a Moorish design, a very popular look for theaters of that era.

The Nevada State Journal claimed that Reno could now hold its own with any...
Early Reno Fire Stations (continued)

District. This station was built of brick and was designed to fit in with the industrial character of the district. This station became known as the North Side Station (see bottom photo). The second new station was built at the corner of California Avenue and South Virginia Street, on the east side of Virginia Street. This station was built with wood siding and was designed to blend with the residential nature of the district. This station became known as the South Side Station (see bottom photo). These two bungalow-style fire stations used the same floor plans but were mirror images of each other. The North Side station had the apparatus bay on the right and the South Side station had the apparatus bay on the left, as seen when facing the front of each station. Both these stations had porches on the front of the buildings facing the main street.

When the station at California and Virginia opened, the larger station at Center and Ryland streets was no longer needed. The station was sold to the Reno School Board and used as an annex to the South Side School. It is interesting to note that when the City was considering what to do with this building, neighbors protested the proposed sale to the school board for fear it would lower their property values. Later it was used as a City of Reno Recreation building.

The old Central Fire Station, built in 1899, served the citizens of Reno until 1935 when a new Central Fire Station was built on the northeast corner of Second Street and Evans Avenue. The Second Street and Evans Avenue station was recently torn down to make way for the new baseball stadium. The North Side Station served until 1950 when a larger fire station was built at the corner of Fifth Street and Merritt Avenue.

The original North Side Station building is still standing and (as of early 2000) was occupied by Health Access Washoe County. The front has been extensively modified. The later South Side Station (California and Virginia) was torn down in the 1990's after the new station was built on Moana Lane. There was talk at the time of building an extension of California Avenue through to Center Street, which would have gone right through the fire station site.

Public Safety has always been a priority of local government. The importance of fire stations in that mission has been seen from Reno's first fire station on the Plaza to its newest. Fire Station #19, in the Somersett area on the west side of town. For more information on the history of the Reno FD, visit our web site at: http://www. iaff731.com/history/history.htm.

The information in this article primarily came from stories of the time published in the Reno Evening Gazette and the Nevada State Journal.

The author of this article is Fire Captain Jon Wagner of the Reno FD and President of Reno Fire Antique and Classic Apparatus, Inc. Our current project in the restoration of the Reno FD's original motorized aerial ladder truck, a 1917 American LaFrance Type 17-6 85-foot tillered aerial ladder. For more information on this project visit our web site at: http://www.iaff731.com/history/Ap paratus/Motorized/1917%20ALF%20Aerial/1917%20Airdadder%20Truck.htm

Reno Halls, Theaters and Movie Houses (continued)

unfortunate when compared with its former incarnation. The Granada closed in the early 1940s and fell to the wrecking ball in 1997, the last of the downtown movie theaters to do so.

The 1930s saw a few more theaters open in response to Reno's growth due to the shortening of the divorce period. There was the Reno Theater on Center Street, and the State Theater, which became the Roxie in 1915. The Reno Theater was the last of the downtown movie houses to have a sound system installed, in April of 1930. The Tower Theater, on South Virginia Street, the last of Four Corners Street, made its debut in the early 1940s and was popular as an accomplishment to the bowling alley housed in the same building. The Tower, as well as other downtown theaters, had matinées where they would allow children to trade milk bottle caps for admission tickets.

While other theaters began as playhouses and transitioned to motion picture houses, there was one constant in Reno's dramatic life—the Reno Little Theater (RLT). Beginning as an organization in 1935, the local thespians finally found their home in 1941, when they were able to purchase Dania Hall, a small red brick structure at 60 North Sierra Street. The group’s first production in their new home was The Man Who Came to Dinner, in October of 1941.

The little brick playhouse and its stalwart members have the distinction of being the oldest continually operating performing arts theater in Nevada. In 1996, in order to expand northward, Circus Circons Hotel managed to get the RLT “condemned, ousted and the building demolished,” in the words of author Beth Miramont. Undaunted, RLT is still going strong, and in the decade since losing the Sierra Street theater, has borrowed space from friends: the Elks Club, Wooster High and Hugh High. After a 73-year history, RLT expects to build a new home on Pueblo at Wells Avenue by 2009.

The theaters of Reno today are quite a far cry from those of its past. While some have tried to incorporate some art deco and other historic design elements to the exteriors, the interiors, while comfortable and acoustically superior, are interchangeable and soulless. They are called by place names these days, i.e., The Summit Sierra, the Park Lane (of course future theatergoers will not recognize this as a place name), and the Riverside. It’s hard to imagine such monstrosities arousing the same excitement as the impressive names of theaters past; there is certainly not much that is grand or majestic about them. And they don’t accept bottle caps.

Information for this article came from newspaper articles in the Reno Evening Gazette, Nevada State Journal, and Reno Evening Gazette, 1872-1936; Tough Little Town on the Truckee by John Salmoni; Reno’s Raid—Historic Fourth Street by Beth Miramont. Debbie Himiman is a HRPS Board Member, a HRPS Tour Guide and a member of HRPS Editorial Staff.

High Noon at the Nevada Historical Society

The Nevada Historical Society invites you to a free documentary series in the Research Library at noon on the fourth Monday of each month. High Noon features a selection from the series Exploring Nevada, with a special guest speaker and director/producer Gwen Clancy on hand to present and discuss each film.

Date Topic Guest Speaker
25 August ............................D is for Dance ..........................................Martina Young
27 October ................................Building on the Past ................................Mella Harmon
25 September ......................Mining in Nevada ....................................John Gomes
27 November ........................D is for Dance ..........................................Martina Young

Theater Timeline

1868 – Albandera Theater/hall/First and Virginia Street
1868 – Peters’ Pioneer Hall and Philadelphia Brewery (on Virginia near Second Street)
1871 – Dyer’s Theater (Center and Plaza) January 1877.
1875 – McCleary’s Reno Opera House (Virginia near Center Street)
1877 – South’s Academy of Music (on same site as Dyer’s – burned 1879).
1878 – Reno’s Pavilion – Center and First streets.
1879 – Hammond and Wilson’s theater, site of later Overland Hotel, called Nevada Theatre.
1887 – McKinck Opera House (Plaza and Sierra) converted to hotel in 1900.
1890 – Wheelman’s Hall; had theater. Burned 1909.
1904 – Grand Theater, vaudeville and motion pictures. 1926 closed.
1906 – A Paris Theater (2nd and Montgomery, Merchants National Bank).
1907 – Hippodrome, tent on banks of Truckee, went broke in October 1907.
1916 – Aason Family Theater. No mention past early 1918.
1919 – Wigwam Theater (2nd and Sierra), 1942 - replaced by Nevada Theater. 1948 - converted to La Petite.
Historic Reno Preservation Society will present nine historic walking tours during the month of September. This will be our final series of walks for 2008. Walking Tours are $10 per person for non-members, free for HRPS members. Tours generally last about 2 hours. No dogs, please. We would appreciate it if you would call 747-HIST (4478) to reserve space so we can better plan for the appropriate number of guides.

Tuesday, September 2, 2008 6 p.m. MANSIONS ON THE BLUFF - View high-style architecture in Reno's most significant political neighborhood. Meet at the McCarran House, 401 Court Street. Tour Guides, Ed Wishart and Tracy Soliday.

Saturday, September 6, 2008 10 a.m. UNR HISTORIC DISTRICT - Visit Merrill 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.

Tuesday, September 9, 2008 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&T tracks, past the homes of the "Wells Avenue Gang." Meet at Southside School, Sinclair & Liberty Streets. Tour Guide, Mark Izer.

Saturday, September 13, 2008 10 a.m. POWNING ADDITION AND LITTLE ITALY - Discover one of Reno's earliest and most delightful vernacular neighborhoods, predominantly settled by northern Italian immigrants. Meet at McKinley Arts & Culture Center. Tour guide, Felicia Belasteguizi.

Tuesday, September 16, 2008 6 p.m. TRUCKEE RIVER CORRIDOR - Discover Reno's beginnings with a walk along the Truckee River through "Little Italy," noting historic churches, parks, hotels and motels, homes and other fine old buildings. Meet at Dreamer's Coffee House in the Riverside Artists Lots, 17 South Virginia Street. Tour guide, Joan Collins.

Saturday, September 20, 2008 10 a.m. LAKE ADDITION - Meander past divorce-trade dwellings and Victorian architecture, including a stop at the Lake Mansion. Meet at the Nevada Museum of Art, 160 West Liberty Street. Tour Guide, Debbie Hinman.

Tuesday, September 23, 2008 6 p.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. You will see the Hart House, the Patrick Ranch House, Greystone Castle and other distinctive homes. Tour guides, Elsie Newman and Anne Simone.

Saturday, September 27, 2008 10 a.m. UPPER RALSTON/NORTHERN LITTLE ITALY - Enjoy a walk in a residential neighborhood with a mix of architectural styles. Proximity to the University has traditionally determined the mix of residents, professors and students alike. Meet at the intersection of Washington Street, The Strand and College Avenue. Tour Guide, Jim Smith.

Sunday, September 28, 2008 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 guides, Scott Gibson and Bill Isael.

Time and tide wait for no man. In the case of the Reno Fire Department, the saying was not true. The Reno Engine House, built in 1879 (shown in top photo), was replaced in 1900 (see bottom photo). The new building was constructed with the advent of motorized fire engines. The motorized apparatus also lent itself to smaller, decentralized fire stations.
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September 2008
Fall HRPS’ Walking Tours

Tuesday, September 2, 2008
MANSIONS ON THE BLUFF - View high-style architecture in Reno’s most significant political neighborhood. Meet at the McCarran House, 401 Court Street. Tour Guides, Ed Wishart and Tracy Soliday.

Saturday, September 6, 2008
UNHISTORIC DISTRICT - Visit Merrill Hall, Mackay School of Mines, the Keck Museum, and learn the history of this beautiful campus. Meet at Honor Court, 7th and Center Street. Tour Guide, Jack Hurst.

Tuesday, September 9, 2008
WELLS AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD - Take a stroll through a working-class neighborhood along the path of the Wells Avenue streetcar, across from the V&T tracks, past the homes of the “Wells Avenue Gang.” Meet at Southside School, Sinclair & Liberty Streets. Tour Guide, Mark Izer.

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NEWLANDS NEIGHBORHOOD - An architectural walk through one of Reno’s oldest and most prestigious neighborhoods. Meet at My Favorite Muffin, 140 California Avenue. Tour guides, Scott Gibson and Bill Isael.

Fire was a frequent, dreaded visitor to Reno in its earliest days. Comprised of hastily-constructed wooden shacks and with no masonry buildings to speak of, the town was prime tinder for the showers of burning embers that regularly erupted from the charred mouths of stovepipes. These conditions were exacerbated by the arid climate and frequent high winds. When ninety-nine buildings in the downtown core were burned to the ground in October of 1873, it still took two years before an organized fire department was created to respond to this constant threat.

Reno Engine Co. #1 was established Nov. 10, 1875. J. L. McArthur was chosen unanimously as foreman. McArthur offered a vacant lot between the Nevada State Journal building and his blacksmith shop as a firehouse site. Construction on the new firehouse began in April 1876. The firehouse was 32 feet long by 18 feet wide, two stories tall, surrounded by a cupola and bell. The upper floor was used by the firemen for meetings and the ground floor housed the steamer and hose cars.

In 1879, the firehouse was moved to a site on the Plaza (later to become Plaza Street) owned by the Central Pacific Railroad. In August 1889, an addition was built onto the engine house to be used as a sleeping room. At the same time, a building was completed on the south side of the Truckee River to house a hose cart. In December of 1888, T. K. Hymer, who operated the Truckee Stables in Reno, was hired at $5 per occurrence to provide a horse to haul a steamser to fires. In March 1891, the Board of Trustees purchased a team of black horses and the engine house was enlarged to accommodate stables for them. By 1899, the engine house was in such disrepair that the Central Pacific Railroad wrote the city fathers, explaining how it had made Reno look to passengers arriving on the trains.

The city council decided Reno needed a larger, more modern firehouse. So instead of investing any money in the old firehouse on the Plaza, in October 1899, construction was started on the foundation of a new firehouse on the southeast corner of Commercial Row and West Street. By January 30, 1900, the old engine house was vacated and crews moved into the new station. The new station was built of brick and consisted of two stories, two apparatus bays and a bell tower. In August 1904, an addition to the fire station was completed. The two-story addition consisted of a third bay (for the new ladder truck) and a training tower on which the firemen could practice ladder operations (see bottom photo). When the two smaller stations were built in 1912, this station became known as the Central Fire Station.

In the time leading up to 1908, the area of Reno south of the Truckee River was growing. On October 10, 1908, a new fire station on the south side of the river, at Center and Ryland Streets, was accepted from the contractor. It was to be occupied within sixty days. This station was also built of brick and consisted of two stories, two bays and a training tower. This station was called the South Side Station (see top photo page 8).

By 1915, the Reno Fire Department was investigating the feasibility of purchasing a motorized fire apparatus. From the 1890s until 1915, the apparatus of the Reno FD had been pulled by horses and the fire stations were designed to accommodate them, with stalls and hay lofts.

A motorized fire apparatus was much less expensive to operate than horses. In his annual report to the Reno City Council for 1917, Fire Chief R. B. Hancroft stated the cost of maintaining a horse was $51.00 per month compared to the cost of maintaining the Reno FD’s new motorized apparatus at $8.84 each per month. It is said to note that Fire Chief R. B. Hancroft, who was largely responsible for the Reno FD’s transition from “horse power” to gasoline power was killed in a motor vehicle accident in 1928 while responding to a fire.

The motorized apparatus also lent itself to smaller, decentralized fire stations. In 1917, the Reno FD placed into service its first motorized fire apparatus; two Seagrave chemical engines. Coinciding with the advent of the motorized fire apparatus; the Reno FD opened two new button-box-style single-story, single-bay fire stations. One was located on east Fourth St. in the center of what was then Reno’s booming commercial/industrial district. The other was located on Fourth St. in the center of a 1904, an addition to the fire station was completed. The two-story addition consisted of a third bay (for the new ladder truck) and a training tower on which the firemen could practice ladder operations (see bottom photo). When the two smaller stations were built in 1912, this station became known as the Central Fire Station.

In the time leading up to 1908, the area of Reno south of the Truckee River was growing. On October 10, 1908, a new fire station on the south side of the river, at Center and Ryland Streets, was accepted from the contractor. It was to be occupied within sixty days. This station was also built of brick and consisted of two stories, two bays and a training tower. This station was called the South Side Station (see top photo page 8).

By 1915, the Reno Fire Department was investigating the feasibility of purchasing a motorized fire apparatus. From the 1890s until 1915, the apparatus of the Reno FD had been pulled by horses and the fire stations were designed to accommodate them, with stalls and hay lofts.

A motorized fire apparatus was much less expensive to operate than horses. In his annual report to the Reno City Council for 1917, Fire Chief R. B. Hancroft stated the cost of maintaining a horse was $51.00 per month compared to the cost of maintaining the Reno FD’s new motorized apparatus at $8.84 each per month. It is said to note that Fire Chief R. B. Hancroft, who was largely responsible for the Reno FD’s transition from “horse power” to gasoline power was killed in a motor vehicle accident in 1928 while responding to a fire.

The motorized apparatus also lent itself to smaller, decentralized fire stations. In 1917, the Reno FD placed into service its first motorized fire apparatus; two Seagrave chemical engines. Coinciding with the advent of the motorized fire apparatus; the Reno FD opened two new button-box-style single-story, single-bay fire stations. One was located on east Fourth St. in the center of what was then Reno’s booming commercial/industrial district. The other was located on Fourth St. in the center of a 1904, an addition to the fire station was completed. The two-story addition consisted of a third bay (for the new ladder truck) and a training tower on which the firemen could practice ladder operations (see bottom photo). When the two smaller stations were built in 1912, this station became known as the Central Fire Station.
Early Reno Fire Stations (continued)

The old Central Fire Station, built in 1899, served the citizens of Reno until 1915 when a new Central Fire Station was built on the northeast corner of Second Street and Evans Avenue. The Second Street and Evans Avenue station was recently torn down to make way for the new baseball stadium. The North Side Station served until 1950 when a larger fire station was built at the corner of Fifth Street and Merrill Avenue. The original North Side Station building is still standing and (as of early 2008) was occupied by Health Access Washoe County. The front has been extensively modified. The later South Side Station (California and Virginia) was torn down in the 1990s after the new station was built on Moana Lane. There was talk at the time of building an extension of California Avenue through to Center Street, which would have gone right through the fire station site.

Public Safety has always been a priority of local government. The importance of fire stations in that mission has been seen from Reno's first fire station on the Plaza to its newest. Fire Station #9, in the Somersett area on the west side of town. For more information on the history of the Reno FD, visit our web site at: http://www.iaff731.com/history/hyistory.htm.

South Side Station 1908-1917. Corner Center and Ryland streets, ca. 1908. Photo courtesy Reno Fire Department, illustrated, published 1908 and 1975.

The information in this article primarily came from stories of the time published in the Reno Evening Gazette and the Nevada State Journal.

The author of this article is Fire Suppression Captain Jon Wagner of the Reno FD and President of Reno Fire Antique and Classic Apparatus, Inc. Our current project in the restoration of the Reno FD’s original motorized aerial ladder truck, a 1917 American LaFrance Type 17-6 85-foot tillered aerial ladder. For more information on this project visit our web site at: http://www.iaff731.com/history/APParatus/Motorized/1917%20AERIAL/1917%20AERIAL%20Aerial/1917%20AERIAL%20Truck.htm


(uncontinued)

Reno Halls, Theaters and Movie Houses (continued)

unfortunately when compared with its former incarnation. The Granada closed in the early 1960s and fell to the wrecking ball in 1997, the last of the downtown theaters to do so.

The 1930s saw a few more theaters open in response to Reno’s growth due to the shortening of the divorce period. There was the Reno Theater on Center Street, and the State Theater, which became the Roxie in 1913. The Reno Theater was the last of the downtown movie houses to have a sound system installed, in April of 1930. The Tower Theater, on South Virginia Street, between Mack and First Streets, made its debut in the early 1940s and was popular as an accommodation to the bowling alley housed in the same building. The Tower, as well as other downtown theaters, had matinées where they would allow children to trade milk bottle caps for admission tickets.

While other theaters began as playhouses and transitioned to motion picture houses, there was one constant in Reno’s dramatic life—The Reno Little Theater (RLT). Beginning as an organization in 1915, the local thespians finally found their home in 1941, when they were able to purchase Dania Hall, a small red brick structure at 690 North Sierra Street. The group’s first production in their new home was The Man Who Came to Dinner, in October of 1941.

The little brick playhouse and its stalwart members have the distinction of being the oldest continually operating performing arts theater in Nevada. In 1996, in order to expand northward, Circus Circus Hotel managed to get the RLT “condemned, ousted and the building demolished,” in the words of author Beth Miramont. Undaunted, RLT is still going strong, and in the decade since losing the Sierra Street theater, has borrowed space from friends: the Elks Club, Wooster High and Hugh High. After a 73 year hiatus RLT expects to build a new home on Pueblo at Wells Avenue by 2009.

The theaters of Reno today are quite a far cry from those of its past. While some have tried to incorporate some art deco and other historic design elements to the exteriors, the interiors, while comfortable and acoustically superior, are interchangeable and soulless. They are called by place names these days, i.e., The Summit Sierra, the Park Lane (of course future theatergoers will not recognize this as a place name), and the Riverside. It’s hard to imagine such monikers arousing the same excitement as the impressive names of theaters past; there is certainly not much that is grand or majestic about them. And they don’t accept bottle caps.
Reno Halls, Theaters and Movie Houses (continued)

the elaborate permanent Hippodrome, although there was a Goldfield Hippodrome erected about the same time the Reno tent was being set up. Because a canvas structure was not practical in terms of Reno’s winters and floods, it closed in the fall. There was not enough backing by investors to support further expenditures, and in October of that year, creditors were grabbing whatever they could salvage from the tent theater on the river, to try and minimize their losses.

In 1908, a new theater opened at Second and Sierra Streets known as the Wigwam. It was stylish, small and intimate, and instantly popular. The theater boasted the newest film innovation, the Actophone, which was billed as a machine that, unlike the cinematoscope, “presents a picture that actually sings and talks as in real life.” But live acts were still popular, as evidenced by a reporter’s hilarious backstage interview with twelve performing monkeys and their trainer in 1910.

The theater was modeled several times, and became a long lasting piece of Reno history. In 1952, it became the Nevada Theater, and in 1958, underwent a complete remodel, with only the walls and roof remaining the same, becoming the well known Crest Theater. The Crest closed in 1977 and was demolished, along with other storefronts on the block, to make room for the Money Tree expansion. Its famous neighbor, the old Wigwam, Circa 1940s. owned by T&D Enterprises, as were the Grand and the Rialto. The upper balcony was torn out and the edifice was converted to a Moorish design, a very popular look for theaters of that era.

The Majestic continued to serve Reno’s theater-goers until it closed in 1974 and was demolished. This theater, and others, differed from their current building codes and was considered unsafe. The majestic structure came tumbling down in October of that year, but not without a fight. Karl Breckenridge said it was in his 2004 Homefinders story about the theater, “This fine edifice was still standing in 1910 so seemingly unsound that it took three days, two D-8 Caterpillar dozers and 30 pounds of dynamite to bring it down to the ground level at which point the building was razed.”

The Rialto Theater, which has been mentioned above, was built on West First Street, near Sierra Street in 1915. It was built on the site of the Hammersmith homestead, which dated from 1869. It was referred to as the “home of road shows, and a civic auditorium.” It could not compete with the grandeur of the Majestic, but it fulfilled a need for a smaller venue for certain events including fundraising shows. The theater was remodeled in 1930s and in the process, the acoustics were improved for motion pictures. It acquired an exterior facelift and a new name as well—the theater would be known from that time as the Granada. The theater suffered a fire in 1953, but was rebuilt in a more modern style, New York theater in terms of having a venue to attract the best theater and opera in the country. And attract the talented and famous it did—actress Sarah Bernhardt performed Camille at the Majestic in 1911. In 1913, according to long time projectionist Mike Nelson, the Majestic purchased Thomas Edison’s invention, the Kinetophone, and was the first local theater to feature a “talking picture.”

B uilt in 1877 and the home of VSA arts of Nevada, the Lake Mansion is one of the oldest buildings in Reno and listed on both the State and National Register of Historic Places. HRPS’ board meetings are held once a month in the Lake Mansion dinner room. Several HRPS’ members volunteered at the mansion for a number of years when it was on the grounds of the Riverwalk Convention Center and now volunteered at its location on the corner of Court Street and Arlington Avenue. Information: 786-6100, www.vsanevada.org, www.lakemansion.com.

River Walk Merchants Wine Walk features the Lake Mansion

Upcoming dates: September 20, October 18, November 15, December 20.

Every third Saturday from 2-5 pm, if you start the River Walk Merchant’s Wine Walk at the Lake Mansion, VSA art receives $5 of the $20 purchase to assist with programs and maintenance. At the Lake Mansion enjoy a one of a kind sensory wine glass you keep, snacks, music, tours, unique artwork for sale, and a map to the 30 plus “eat, shop, drink, enjoy” participating merchants, each featuring a taste of wine. Most months HRPS’ members Cindy Ainsworth and Debbie Himman are the wine pourers and “answerwomen” for Lake Mansion and Reno history questions.

HRPS’ Website

Upcoming dates: September 20, October 18, November 15, December 20.

Join 25 northern Nevada artists at “Reno’s First Address” to celebrate the holiday season with quality arts and crafts for sale while supporting VSA arts of Nevada. VSA arts is the non-profit arts organization, who conducts over 3,000 workshops each year while operating the Lake Mansion, Free admission. Information: www.vsanevada.org, 775-826-6100.

Mary Ellen Horan VSA arts of Nevada at the Lake Mansion, since 1986, a non-profit organization providing arts opportunities for All Nevadans.

The Nevada Historical Society has an eclectic collection of unique documentary short films, many of which have been seen by only a few people. Each month, a different short will be shown following the feature film. We hope you will enjoy the rare opportunity to view these gems.
From Your HRPS' President

July's Artown walks were a huge success this year! I want to thank all our current members for supporting us, our new members for joining us, and the wonderful homeowners who invited us onto their properties and into their homes. Participants on Bricks & Stones were invited to two historic Humboldt Street homes, and those on the Little Italy tour were greeted by four different homeowners, who shared stories and their own little pieces of history with the group. This interaction with homeowners richly enhances the walking tour experience and is greatly appreciated by HRPS.

See the story below about Hawkins House, which soon will hold a HRPS’ office upstairs.

Our annual party slated for Wednesday, September 24th, is shaping up to be one of our most fun events ever, with beautiful Bartley Ranch Park as our venue. I hope to see all of you there in your western finery!

— Felvia Belaustegui, HRPS’ President

HRPS’ Fall Social
Wednesday, September 24

Hey ya’ll! Please mark September 24, 2008, 6:00 p.m. on your calendars for HRPS’ Fall Social, as we celebrate our 11th year and Nevada’s Ranching Heritage with a Nevada-style BBQ at Bartley Ranch.

Appetizers, cocktails, and tours will be given of the outbuildings including Huffaker School House, with dinner being served in the Western Heritage Interpretive Center. There will be a silent auction again along with a good of raffle this year. Western attire is welcome, so dust off your boots, jeans, and hats and get ‘em on! It’s gonna be a great time!

Dinner tickets are $50 per person, with raffle tickets $5 each or $20. Seats are limited so do the “boot scoot’n boogie” and get your reservations in before September 13th. Contact Jean Dyer, (775) 329-8744 for tickets.

An early 1920s shot looking north on Sierra Street. Note the streetcar in the distance, and the McKissick Hotel on the corner. Photo courtesy Jerry Fenwick.

From Your HRPS’ President

Hawkins House, Again

Street ends and Elm Court begins. The Hawkins house holds two historic distinctions: the dwelling was entered on the National Register of Historic Places on March 17, 1979, and the State Register of Historic Places on March 4, 1981.

The Hawkins family was considered one of the first families of Nevada, and worked as lawyers in the area for over a century. Prince Albert Hawkins was born January 1, 1871, in Tennessee, into a family of lawyers; his father was a judge and his four uncles were lawyers. Prince graduated in June of 1894 from Vanderbilt University with an L.L.B. degree and practiced law in Tennessee for five years. With his wife Myrtle Zerner and four children, Robert, Elma, Carson and Elizabeth, the family moved to Reno in 1910. A fifth child, Prince Archer Hawkins, was born December 28, 1918, in Reno. On June 10, 1910, Prince Albert Hawkins joined the law firm founded by Amos E. Cheney in 1880. In 1939, his son Robert joined his father in practicing law. Prince Albert Hawkins died on April 10, 1939, at 68 years of age. Prince’s son, Prince Archer Hawkins then joined his brother Robert in the law firm, and it became Hawkins and Hawkins.

Following the death of Prince Hawkins, his son Robert lived in the Court Street mansion. Robert Z. Hawkins was married to Katherine Mackay, granddaughter of Clarence Mackay, a benefactor of the University of Nevada. Clarence’s father, John Mackay, was owner of the famous Virginia City mines bearing his name, and the founder of Commercial Paciﬁc Cable Company which was bought by International Telephone & Telegraph Corporation in 1928. After Robert’s death in September, 1939, a charitable trust was established under the terms of his will. The Robert Z. Hawkins Foundation was formed, and has contributed greatly to the community, i.e. the Robert Z. Hawkins Amphitheater at Bartley Ranch Regional Park.

The Hawkins family owned the house from 1911 until it was purchased by the Sierra Nevada Museum of Art in 1978.

Reno Halls, Theaters and Movie Houses (continued)

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The institution’s first three college degrees were awarded to male graduates in 1974. The University of Nevada, Reno Wheelmen, 1896–1909, a bicycle club formed in 1896, won the American Wheelmen’s National Championship in 1902. The year 1904 would see the establishment of three new movie theaters, two small ones and one “Grand” one. The two small theaters were the Vitagraph and the Capitol, both on Second Street. Both theaters regularly featured various vaudeville acts. The Grand Theater on the east side of Virginia Street between First and Second Streets was open for business on April 11th.

A few days before its opening, as the scaffolding was removed, the Reo Evening Gazette extolled the stunning new building as “the finest vaudeville theater west of the Rockies.” Built by investors John Wagner, Senator William Westerfield and Richard Kirman, the playhouse was first managed by lessors Mr. Funge and Mr. Lobel, Lobelski had the following to say about the theater, “Reo is now on the largest vaudeville circuit in the world, comprising eighty-five houses and the same attractions precisely will be presented here as in all the other leading cities of the west.”

While it began as a vaudeville house, as motion pictures came into vogue, the Grand expanded to accommodate them by featuring three small movie theaters (Reo’s first: multiplex). In July of 1926, the Grand Theater was razed in preparation for the construction of the six-story Aerial Building. The same year, the Rialto Theater was in the process of being remodeled, and the Grand’s electric organ found a home there.

The years between 1904 and 1908 saw a rush to open new theaters in Reno, although not all of the elaborate plans came to fruition. In March of 1907, a group of investors led by the Nevada Hippodrome Circuit Company proposed the building of an $850,000 first-class theater that would seat 5,000. The Reno Hippodrome would be a combination of the Goldfield and Josephine Hippodromes. By June, the first phase, a large canvas tent theater, was erected behind the Rialto, on the river. Plays were held there throughout the summer, but no ground was broken for the hall that would burn to the ground just a little over a month later.
In 1879, 2 a traveling Doctor of Phrenology gave a demonstration of the art of reading the bumps on one's head, using several local townspersons, to the delight of the crowd. However, not all entertainment was positively received. A scathing article in the Reno Gazette of March 9, 1872 castigated the local troupe, the Reno Amateurs, for being “silly drunk” in their third performance, which was “exceeded in its gross vulgarity” only by its utter lack of point in wit or humor. Meanwhile, Peters’ Hall was put to a more serious use—it was the scene of the first district court held in Reno, as the new courthouse was still under construction.

In 1879, a structure known as Reno's Pavilion was erected on the northwest corner of First and Center Streets. This hall became the venue for social events and McGinley’s became exclusively a theater. An interesting备注 about the Pavilion is that it was apparently so noisy that it interfered with the doings at the Alhambra Hall, down the street. Myron Lake had the Alhambra picked up and moved closer to the edge of Virginia Street, nearer the Truckee, to put a little more distance between the two. The Pavilion was later moved to the fairgrounds and race track, north of the city.

Another theater opening in September of 1875 was Hammond & Wilson's, built on their own land. The theater, later known as the Alhambra, was located on Commercial Row and North Second Street, on the site where what later would be the Arizona State Opera House, and other local painters included J. J. Lukacs was working on the town's new opera house, as the title of Gilbert And Sullivan's comic opera “The Mikado” was adapted as the June 12, 1880 Reno Evening Gazette. The paper rapturously

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As of July 1, 2008, HPUS converted its membership to a fiscal year cycle. All memberships will run from July 1 of one year through June 30 of the following year. Have you renewed your membership? Check the website www.historyreno.org for a membership form.

Membership Report—Renewed through July 1, 2009

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Membership Report—New Members paid to July 1, 2009

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

**Reno Halls, Theaters and Movie Houses: A History**
by Debbie Hinman

The Majestic...the Crest...the Granada...the Tower...
What do these excited names call to mind? The awe of a plushly appointed theater, grand balls, and the wondrous wrought-iron staircase to the balcony, rich velvet curtains and gilded wall decor? The anticipation of a long-awaited double feature, preceded by your favorite cartoon characters in a new, hilarious adventure? Or for live theater, do you picture your favorite local players on a brightly lit stage within the cozy confines of the red brick Reno Little Theater on North Sierra Street?

Live theater and movies have a long local history. The longevity and variety of the entertainment may be a surprise to those who think of it as a more recent institution.

Early Reno is perceived in many different types were popular with the townsfolk, and would imagine, to worry about outside entertainment. While many different types were popular with the townsfolk, and would imagine, to worry about outside entertainment. When Reno came into being that May 9, 1868, there wasn't much in the downtown core but there was a building on the Truckee River, on the southeast corner of First and Virginia Streets. It had begun life three years earlier as Myron Lake's grist mill, but was soon transformed into a lodging house, saloon, and upstairs, an all-purpose hall, known as the Alhambra. This hall was quickly put into service for such diverse uses as 4th of July celebrations, grand balls, and the occasional dramatic presentation by traveling performers. In April 1869, an actor named Stark gave a reading of Hamlet, to the great delight of locals.

It wasn't long, however, before the Alhambra had competition from a new hall, Peters’ Pioneer Hall and Philadelphia Brewery, sometimes just referred to as Peters’ Theater, on Virginia Street near Second. As a theater venue, though, Peters’ was far from satisfactory. Patrons complained that however good the performances, it was difficult to appreciate them while sitting on rough planks in the stuffy hall.

Local newspapers called for the construction of a new theater. In 1871, local resident L. H. Dyer, who ran a stage line between Reno and Carson City, obliged the townspeople by building an establishment known as Dyer’s Theater on the corner of Center and Plaza Streets. It was a large hall with a much bigger stage than previous venues, and it was put to immediate use. It became the site of the Grand Ball that year, celebrating the move of Washoe County seat from Washoe City to Reno. Many traveling dramatic troupes on their way to California from the East would imagine, to worry about outside entertainment. While these perceptions have some validity, theater performances of many different types were popular with the townsfolk, and very early on, rudimentary halls and theaters were constructed to showcase these performances.