TRAILING THE DONNERS

By Sharon Walbridge, Editor

Fortunate am to live across from the Virginia Range. Every single day I marvel at the beauty of those mountains and the wonderful way the Range changes color and shape in response to the play of light and shadow upon it. It is a view I never tire of.

Since joining HRPS on its’ first bus trip, “Trailing the Donners,” I will never again look upon the Virginia Range in the same admiring, but complacent way.

“Trailing the Donners” was an all-day expedition on Saturday, May 15th which actually traced the pathway of the Donner Party from the vicinity of Lockwood, east of Sparks to a location near Dog Valley west of Verdi.

Forty-one of us were fortunate to share the day with mountain man (and mountain of a man) Frank Mullen, Jr., colorfully and appropriately attired in period costume. One would expect the author of The Donner Party Chronicles: A Day-by-Day Account of a Doomed Wagon Train” to be a knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide. That’s a natural. But I doubt if any of us anticipated the way Frank was able to make history come alive – make a wagon train cross the Truckee Meadows – in the midst of an urban area.

I have “known” about the Donner Party all my life, been well-versed in the “damn fools” legend, but I never had a “feel” for their experience. Oh yes, I’ve been to Donner State Park. I’ve looked at the statue and marveled at the incredible snow depth. I’ve thought about the horrors of privation and cannibalism.

I never knew about the challenge – the curse - of having to cross the Truckee River 27 times. I never thought of Steamboat Creek as much of anything except, perhaps, as dirty water, certainly not as a steep-sided obstacle to ford with heavy unstable wagons. I admit as a child I did curse the heavy willows down by the river when they freightened me and barred my way. It never occurred to me they forced the pioneers to travel the ridge lines of our region.

Traversing the land the Donner Party struggled with was a very special experience. Standing in worn wagon ruts, ruts 150 years old, is humbling. Scrambling up the trail cut into the steep, erosion-scarred Virginia Range left me breathless, and awed. I was, after all, wearing sturdy shoes and Levi’s, not a long dress, and my hands were unencumbered, no little ones clung to me in fear.

On this sunny, warm day the Truckee Meadows stretched westward before me; the Sierra’s glistened in all their majesty. I tarried to study the narrow, precipitous trail I had ascended and marveled at the fortitude of Tamsen Donner and fellow travelers.

continued on the next page
I was grateful I did not have to go on to Sutter’s Fort. Truth is, I’ve never wanted to walk across the Sierra, let alone the continent. I don’t think I have what it takes to leave Independence, Missouri and walk into the unknown.

At “trail’s end” for our days journey we stood overlooking Dog Valley. In my minds eye I trudged the remaining distance to the lake that would be called Donner. A shiver crawled down my neck. I pulled the collar up on my jacket and turned to head for the bus and a cup of coffee.

HRPS will repeat this interesting trek through time, probably next spring. Don’t miss it.

HRPS RECEIVES PRESERVATION WEEK AWARD

By Pat Klos, Program Vice President

The 1999 National Historic Preservation Week culminated with a series of awards given by the Reno City Council and the Reno Historical Resources Commission. Along with the California Building, the UNR Historic District, and the Francovich Family, HRPS received recognition for its outstanding leadership in educating the people of Reno as to their historical resources.

Reno Mayor Jeff Griffin, assisted by HRC Chairman Mella Harmon, and HRPS Board Members (from l to r): Christine Fey, Pat Klos, Nancy Holmes, Cindy Ainsworth, Charlotte McConnell, Mark Taxer, Scott Gibson

Reno Planning Department member Christine Fey gave the HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVOCATE award to HRPS President Pat Klos and board members Cindy Ainsworth, Nancy Holmes, Charlotte McConnell, Mark Taxer, and Scott Gibson on May 11, 1999.

The preservation awards program began in 1997 and focuses on people, buildings, and organizations which enrich the history of Reno. Mayor Griffin pointed out the work HRPS has done with its walking tour program and “History of Reno” class to be offered to Washoe County School District teachers in grades K through 8.

Mayor Jeff Griffin, Pat Klos (HRPS), Mella Harmon (HRC), and Christine Fey (City of Reno)
WALKING TOURS REPORT:
BLAST FROM THE PAST WALKING TOURS

By Cindy Ainsworth, President

East Forth Street is an interesting neighborhood. It is home to many old buildings, and a wide variety of businesses. When you travel with tour guide Gaye Canepa of the Reno-Sparks Corridor Business Association, you’re bound to be surprised by what you see.

The May tour started with the Morris Hotel and moved to the Frederick DeLongchamps' designed Nevada, California and Oregon railroad depot. Then Gaye had arranged for us to tour the interior of the now vacant Reno Brewery bottling works. Built in 1940, this great arte-moderne brick one story building still features its original wooden catwalks, glass bricks and an outside artisan well.

World War II had a negative impact on beer production for the Reno Brewery and losses mounted. Finally, in 1948 the brewery was mortgaged for $125,000 to Laverne Redfield in order to buy new machinery. The Brewery never regained market share and Redfield foreclosed in 1954.

Moving on, we visited one of the last great western stores in Reno, the D Bar M. Then we moseyed down to Big Ed's and put back a couple of beers before checking out the Flanigan Building, which now serves as a location for Forever Yours Furniture.

Our tour ended at the Holiday Inn on Sixth Street where manager John McCoy graciously offered us champagne punch, cookies and rides back to our cars.

In July Gaye led another tour during Uptown, Downtown ARTown. The featured building for this tour was the Eveleth Lumber Company located off Fourth on Morrill Avenue. Originally this business was called the Reno Mill and Lumber Company Planning Mill and Door Factory. It was subsequently purchased by the Verdi Lumber Company, and then, in 1928 by A.T. Eveleth.

The building we toured may have been built before the turn of the century. The full dimensional heavy timbers and ceiling beams reportedly came from trees located on Peavine Mountain. The building still holds many of the original belt driven machines from the '20's. Most are still operational. Two large engines in the basement turn common drive shafts that power the belt drives for the machinery upstairs.

George Pimpl, whose family now owns the building, gave us a terrific tour of the finishing mill and a demonstration of the machinery. It was fascinating. The mill appeared to be frozen in time, as if the workers were on a lunch break. This would make a wonderful living history museum.

A special thanks to Gaye Canepa for making these “insider” tours possible.
COUNTY WORKS to RESTORE HISTORIC COURTHOUSE

(Courtesy of the "Washoe County Line")

In 1986, the Washoe County Courthouse was formally listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The County is currently involved in a project to restore much of the Courthouse’s architecture and interior design to its original condition.

The challenge is extensive. There are only a few experts on old buildings available, original material is sometimes difficult to locate, and treatment to exterior and interior surfaces must be done properly so as not to accelerate deterioration.

In April 1871, shortly after the Washoe County Seat was moved to Reno from Washoe City, hotel owner Myron Lake donated $15,000 to the county along with an acre of land on which the County Courthouse now stands. A brick Courthouse was built on this site in 1873. In 1905, construction began on a new courthouse. Designed by renowned Reno architect Frederic DeLongchamps, the 1905 construction added the columns and façade that currently occupy the Virginia Street side of the building. Several additions have been made to the courthouse since. Inside the east entrance (the section designed by DeLongchamps in 1905) restoration efforts are clearly visible. Lead painter Joel Ellis says that his crew has tried to revive the original interior color scheme based on the colors in the tile mosaic on the second floor. The interior glass dome, grand staircase, columns, molding, chandelier (and other light fixtures), and ornate plasterwork now appear much as they did shortly after the turn of the century. Ongoing rehabilitation plans include the restoration of the Virginia Street façade and columns to their original limestone finish, removal of intrusive items (such as exterior air conditioning ducts) to reclaim the buildings original look, and cleaning of the copper dome.

HRPS Gives the History of Reno as a Gift to Our Children

As part of a HRPS goal to offer educational programs for children and adults, HRPS has written an inservice class for Washoe County School District (WCSD) K-7 teachers this fall. The sessions include the following lecturers and topics:

Neal Cobb, President of Westerners: Slide show of early Reno and discussion of Reno history and appropriate books for class.

Pat Klos, HRPS Member and retired WCSD: Walking tour of old Reno along the Truckee River, Riverside Drive, and Court Street. Walk and historic data provided by HRPS.

Leanne Stone, HRPS Member and UNR Lecturer: Walking tour of historic UNR Campus including Heck Museum and Morrill Hall. Material provided by HRPS.

Christine Fey, HRPS Member and City of Reno Planning Department Assistant: Walking tour of historic sites in downtown Reno. Materials provided by HRPS.

Pat Klos, HRPS Member and retired WCSD: Living history performance of Jane Lake, wife of Myron Lake, founder of Reno. Living history materials provided by HRPS.

Rosemary McCarthy, Channel 5 staff and Donna Lage, retired WCSD: Viewing of video clips of Reno and how they may be used in the classroom; sharing of ideas for written projects. Materials provided by Channel 5.

Fran Breen Terras, HRPS Member and retired WCSD and Judge Peter Breen: Tour of the Washoe County Courthouse; lecture on the history of the courthouse and its architect, Frederic DeLongchamps.

For detailed information call Caroline Asikainen, HRPS Member and teacher of record, at 323-2402.
Please note: regular meetings of HRPS are the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 at Mt. Rose Elementary School, 915 Lander St., Reno. Having said that, be alert to the change in November.

Please Save This For Future Reference!

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<tr>
<th>September 22</th>
<th>“Zoning Ordinances in Reno”</th>
<th>March 22</th>
<th>“The Chinese in Nevada”</th>
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<td>Laura Tuttle</td>
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<th>October 27</th>
<th>“Great Basin Native American Heritage”</th>
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<th>“Reno’s Urban Forestry Program”</th>
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<td>Grace Dick</td>
<td>Jim Ross, Urban Forester</td>
<td>Leanne Stone, Former Chair</td>
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<td>Reno-Sparks Tribal Council Education Officer</td>
<td>Urban Forestry Commission</td>
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<th>November 17</th>
<th>“Retro at the Trocadero”</th>
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<th>“An Evening at the Bartley Ranch”</th>
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<td>Social evening and dinner</td>
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<td>at the El Cortez</td>
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<th>December</th>
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HAPPY NEW YEAR — HAPPY MILLENNIUM!

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<th>January 26</th>
<th>Nevada Land Conservancy Program</th>
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<th>February 23</th>
<th>“Dispelling Myths”</th>
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<td>Guy Rocha</td>
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<td>Nevada State Archivist</td>
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HRPS wishes to thank Heritage Bank President & CEO Wayne N. Condon and Bank Directors for their generous underwriting of this issue of our Newsletter.

With this issue we are moving to a larger format with more photos and a much larger run - 1000 copies. Demand for our information continues to increase, and, of course we’re happy we can oblige. We thank Heritage Bank for helping make this opportunity possible.
Heritage Tourism Coalition

The second edition of the Heritage Tourism Coalition Directory is being distributed to Visitors Centers, Libraries, Chambers of Commerce, and the Washoe County School District plus hotel/casinos in Northwestern Nevada. The preface notes this Directory is the idea and one of the goals of the Historic Reno Preservation Society and invites the readers to copy and distribute the information contained therein, in order to pursue the enjoyment of our rich (if somewhat undiscovered) heritage here in the Truckee Meadows - NOW!

The following organizations have one page with background information, locations, mission statements, contact names, phone numbers, operating times and activities:

- City of Reno Historic Resources Commission
- C.I.T.Y. 1000, Reno Arts Commission
- Fleishmann Planetarium
- Harold’s Club Pioneers
- Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS)
- Liberty Belle Saloon, Restaurant and Museum
- National Automobile Museum
- Nevada Historical Society
- Nevada Humanities Committee
- Nevada Museum of Art
- Reno Urban Forestry Commission
- Sierra Arts Foundation
- Sparks Heritage Museum
- State Historic Preservation Office
- The Theater Coalition
- Truckee Meadows Heritage Trust
- Uptown Downtown ARTown
- Very Special Arts/Lake Mansion
- Washoe County Parks & Recreation
- Westerners, Nevada Corral

FALL WALKING TOURS

Saturday Sept. 18, 10:00 a.m.
Newlands Neighborhood
Leaders: Mercedes dela Garza & Scott Gibson
Meet at Newlands Circle at California Avenue

Sunday Sept. 19, 1:00 p.m.
A Walk Along the Historic Truckee River Corridor
Leader: Joan Collins
Meet at McKinley Park School, Riverside Drive & Vine

Friday Sept. 24, 6:30 p.m.
Bricks and Stones: Humboldt & Lander Streets
Leader: Tracy Soliday
Meet at My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Ave.

CULTURAL TOURISM PRESENTATION AT THE GREAT BASIN BOOK FESTIVAL

David Mas Masumoto will be speaking at a luncheon presentation on Cultural Tourism at the Great Basin Book Festival. This presentation falls directly in line with the goals of the Heritage Tourism Coalition, and it would be great to have a nice turnout for this event.

What: Luncheon Presentation on Cultural Tourism by David Mas Masumoto
Where: Great Basin Book Festival, Harrah’s Reno Convention Center
When: Friday, Sept. 24, 1999
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Cost: $20.00
Info: For more information, call the Nevada Humanities Committee at 784-6587.

All tours: Please wear comfortable walking shoes and clothing appropriate for the weather. Any questions, call HRPS Tour Coordinator, Leanne Stone, 322-1638.
THE FIRST HOTEL BUILT IN THE WORLD AFTER WORLD WAR II

By Guy Rocha, Certified Archivist

Nevada hotel mogul Charles W. Mapes, Jr., who died on May 13, 1999, was credited for "building the first hotel in the world after World War II," according to an article in the Reno Gazette-Journal. Opened on December 17, 1947, the twelve-story Mapes Hotel, poised on the Truckee River overlooking downtown Reno, was Nevada's first true skyscraper. The tallest buildings prior to the Mapes were the Hotel Nevada in Ely and Reno's El Cortez Hotel, both six stories.

Today historic preservation advocates are trying to save the high-rise, art deco building that changed Reno's skyline and ushered in an era when Reno thrived as America's gambling mecca. But was the Mapes, with its Sky Room casino, really the first hotel built in the world after World War II?

Not quite. War restrictions on building prevented the erection of new hotels. With war's end in August 1945, much of the world, and particularly Europe, had to rebuild. Building materials were in short supply. Industrial plants, civilian housing, and public works were first priorities, not hotels. Existing hotels in the US, virtually filled to capacity during the war, by 1947 were deluged with tourists. After so many years of war, people were excited about traveling again.

Charles Mapes clearly saw the opportunity for a resort hotel/casino in post-war Reno, however so had William "Billy" Wilkerson in southern Nevada. The Flamingo Hotel on the LA highway, now the world-famous "Strip" was Wilkerson's vision. It was only after his getting into financial difficulties during the construction of the lavish hotel, that mobster Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegal, of "Murder, Incorporated" fame, coerced Wilkerson to give up his interest in the venture. Siegal, with his mob money and political connections, opened the Flamingo Hotel & Casino on December 26, 1946. Cost overruns and the Mafia bosses' belief that he and his girlfriend, Virginia Hill, were pocketing some of the money ultimately cost "Bugsy" his life. On June 23, 1947, Siegal was gunned down at Hill's house in Beverly Hills.

"Bugsy" Siegel beat Charles Mapes to the punch. In all probability, the Flamingo Hotel, and not the Mapes, was the first hotel constructed in the world after World War II, although its highest feature was only three stories.

In the end, it appears that the Mapes Hotel was the first high-rise hotel completed in the world after World War II. And while not the first post-war resort hotel/casino, the Mapes Sky Room casino on the twelfth floor was unique in its day. Charles Mapes deserves to be remembered as a pioneer in the hotel industry.
WALKING TOURS REPORT:
WELLS AVENUE
BEHIND THE SCENES

By Mark Taxer

Editors Note: So far in 1999, HRPS Walking Tours have served over 367 people on a wide variety of walks including the University District, East Fourth Street, the River Corridor, Wells Avenue, and the ever popular Newlands District.

September adds five more walks and it is possible the number of people served by “walking history” will grow to 450 or perhaps 500 walkers. In case you’ve missed the pleasure of one of our walks, read on, then join us in the fall to hear the stories, meet the people and have the fun.

When I started preparing a walking tour of the Wells Avenue area I was not quite sure what to expect. After living in the area for ten years I had accumulated a few stories of my own, but I was just not sure if I could discover information of real interest to a tourgoer.

After the first tour in June I realized that people not only were interested, but also seemed as though they couldn’t get enough of it. Tourgoers had many questions.

“What makes a bungalow a bungalow?” “Why do old houses have big porches?” “Why is the strip of grass between the sidewalk and the curb such a good thing?” Tourgoers were full of answers too, and when they weren’t, I replied as best I could. We all learned something new along the way.

One of the best things about doing neighborhood walks is the interest of people who live on or near the tour. People come out of their homes to see what is going on. Once they feel comfortable we are harmless they launch into their own stories and recollections!

One woman told us of living in the old Model Dairy home, which is now divided into apartments and a good example of adaptive reuse at work. Behind the house on the alley is the old Model Dairy warehouse which was once busy with the coming and going of milk and delivery trucks.

Another house site on our tour burned in the 1920’s due to - legend has it - a still explosion in the basement. The neat thing is that every neighborhood tour seems to have at least one great story like this one. Real stories for real people. That’s what these tours bring us.

For me, putting this tour together has turned out to be an incredibly positive experience. I cannot wait until the next one on Sunday, September 26th.

(See Walking Tour Schedule for details.)

HRPS Renewing Members: Our Strength

Lynn Allen
Carolyn & Dan Asikainen
Mary Beedle
Andrea Daley-Taylor
Jon Dewey
Judy & Steve Dollinger
Ron, Clair & Mary Evenson

Mercedes de la Garza & Scott Gibson
Pam & David Ginsbury
Mary Ellen Horan
Andi & Steve Kaylor
Mike Keller
Carole Maupin
Ann McCarty

Charlotte & Dick McConnell
Darla McKenna
Joe McKenna
Crystal Metzenheim
Madeline Murray
Sandra Saunders
Mark Taxer

Judy Vaughn
Shirie Wallace
Angela Whited
Gene & Ellen Williams
Kathryn & Ed Wishart
Hilda Wunner
We Welcome New Members

Hildegard Alvarado
Mark Antunovich
Robert & Sandra Backus
Nancy Bissenette
Kay Wilkinson-Brown &
Kinsey Brown
Patricia Cafferata
Prof. Samuel Chapman
Judy & Steve Dowling
The Crossland Family
Doug Marx & Denise Dowell
The Erlach Family
Don Finley
Joan Forssell
Donna Fullerton
Commissioner Jim Galloway

Penny Gilbert
Jeff Goldsmith
Dan Greco
Fritz & Evelyn Grupe
Francis Hartigan
Karen Hume
William & Connie Hunt
Judith Inskip
Madelon & Hank Isbell
The Kleinsasser Family
John Johnson & Teresa Wachs
Jennie Fagan & Kaitlyn Cole
Richard Kearney
Barbara Keller
Marilyn King

Ginger Kinsey-Manna
Liz & John Knott
Eric Lerude
Denise & Albert Martinez
Marty, Steve, Molly & Bernie Mattes
Nancy Mawson
Joyce McCarty
Michele Donald
Claire & Don McFall
Doris Newman
Donna Odell
Hal & Francine Oleck
Marlene Olsen
Shirley & Richard Post
Sharon Rachow

Richard & Rose Sanborn
Joyce Sharp
Kathleen Shea
Joanne Shively
Fran & Paul Skoroski
Nan Spina
Karen Starrett
Dale & Sandy Tyson
Eleanor & David Wheeler
Bonnie Woods
Robert & Peggy Wright
Mary Yeurgin
Toni-Anne Zive

Reminder: Don’t let your membership expire! Check your mailing label on your newsletter.

Membership Application

☐ Yes, I want to become a member of the Historic Reno Preservation Society.
Annual membership includes:

- HRPS newsletter
- Walking Tour brochure
- Free participation in walking tours

☐ Student .................. $8.00
☐ Individual ................ $10.00
☐ Family (children 18 and under) .. $15.00
☐ Supporting ................ $100.00
☐ Additional Donation ........ $ ______

Please make checks payable to: Historic Reno Preservation Society

☐ New Member
☐ Renewal

Name(s) ____________________________

__________________________________

Address ____________________________

City __________________ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone __________________________

Best time to call ____________________

Please detach and return to: Historic Reno Preservation Society, P.O. Box 33444, Reno NV 89533
In celebration of Architectural Awareness Week, The Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS) Presents

FALL WALKING TOURS

Saturday Sept. 18, 10:00 a.m.
Newlands Neighborhood
Leaders: Mercedes dela Garza & Scott Gibson
Meet at Newlands Circle at California Avenue

Sunday Sept. 19, 1:00 p.m.
A Walk Along the Historic Truckee River Corridor
Leader: Joan Collins
Meet at McKinley Park School, Riverside Drive & Vine

Friday Sept. 24, 6:30 p.m.
Bricks and Stones: Humboldt & Lander Streets
Leader: Tracy Soliday
Meet at My Favorite Muffin, 340 California Ave.

Saturday Sept. 25, 1:00 p.m.

A Blast from the Past: Fourth Street Corridor
Leader: Gaye Canepa, Reno-Sparks Corridor Business Association, will present elements of one of Reno’s most historic streets – Old Highway 40. Meet at Louis' Basque Corner.

Sunday Sept 26, 12:00 noon
High Noon Walk in the Wells Avenue Neighborhood
Leader: Mark Taxer
Meet at Southside School, corner Liberty and Sinclair.

All tours: Please wear comfortable walking shoes and clothing appropriate for the weather. Any questions, call HRPS Tour coordinator, Leanne Stone, 322-1638.