Wondering about Thinking
by Sharon Adler Walbridge, Editor

Lately, I’ve been wondering how one can beneficially think about historic preservation in a region where many think history is something that took place “back east.” How do we think about it in a city where growth and change move at such a rapid pace that our mouths echo the shock our eyes record as we drive around once familiar land and cityscapes?

Just as multi-generational families collect old pictures, pieces of jewelry, cracked holiday platters, great grandfather’s pipe – the story of their family – cities and towns collect the gems of previous generations in the form of their homes and places of business. Some are truly architectural treasures. Some are as seemingly worthless as old dance cards or party dresses.

Grandma’s paste jewelry has a lot in common with our built environment. What seems junk to one sparkles with mystery and potential to another.

What one generation may choose to overlook, another will value. That’s one reason why we have to be careful about what we send to the landfill.

In Las Vegas an interesting phenomenon is underway. In Vegas they are busy replicating the treasures of places whose origins are light years from that city’s glitz. Virtual reality is not limited to the digital world. Indeed, it has crawled right out of the computers to create the strangest built environment on earth.

It’s curious isn’t it, when the place that you are strives to look and feel like a place that you aren’t?

In some ways that’s what our region seems bent on doing – making a little, old, desert town into something else. We’re not aiming for the ancient attractions, as in Las Vegas, but simply something modern and different; something vibrant and cosmopolitan.

Not only are growth and change inevitable, they are desirable. They give us a chance to shape an increasingly energetic, culturally and economically diverse future. Nevertheless, we treasure our sense of place.

The old and the new are not mutually exclusive. However, it is important to understand that once the old has been taken to the landfill, we do not recover it – ever.

So let’s take a look at the things we think make Reno a real place, not an imitation place. Reno is a place where leaves shimmer in the wind along a river that perpetually flows through our town to empty into a blue gem of a desert lake. It is a place where people left a record of their dreams and accomplishments in their homes and businesses, their schools and parks.

Let’s look with clear eyes at what can be re-used, adapted, given a new lease on life. Then let’s blend that tastefully with the entirely new so that we won’t have to wonder if we’re in Paris or Venice – we’ll know we’re in Reno.

By honoring our unique past we will create our unique future. And while we’re about doing this, let’s always remember we need allies to accomplish our objectives. We need to take those who live and work in the spaces and places we seek to conserve along for the ride, so that they too choose to add their piece to the inter-generational picture of “The City of Trembling Leaves.”
Elderhostel season 175 visitors from all over the country will have explored downtown Reno with Sharon and lunched at Louis’ Basque Corner.

Our tour guides are a valuable resource for the historic memory of our area. Each guide continues to remark about how many of the people who attend the walks are people who lived and/or worked in the neighborhoods and are willing and eager to share their memories with the guides. Each time a guide does a tour, it changes some based on previous information received. So even if you’ve gone on a tour before, you may want to go again to learn what’s been added.

There are several areas of town where we wish to develop tours. We have basic information available, we just need people to share their time and be a guide. The requests for specific tours, such as what Sharon is doing, are increasing as well. Any one interested in this most rewarding outreach, please call Leanne at 322-1638.

The last set of tours for this year will be offered during Architectural Awareness Week Oct. 1-7. We look forward to seeing you on a crisp fall day when the “trembling” leaves are turning.

Editors Note: I’m a member of the Newcomer’s Club, and I’ve been pleased to find others from that group joining the walks.

Sharon Lancaster is what is known as a “decliner,” a person who used to live at Incline but has now declined to Reno. I asked Sharon how many walks she’d been on.

“I’ve done all of them except one, I think. It’s a great way to learn about Reno. All the walks are interesting, but I have to tell you, the one that Mercedes (de la Garza) did for the kids that one was really great. I took my 12 year old grandson on that and he just loved it.”

“Actually, I’ve gone on the same walk more than once. Learn something new each time. It’s fun!”
Progress—At Last—On Good Old East Fourth Street  
by Gaye Canepa

The East Fourth Street Corridor is one of the most unique neighborhoods in the City of Reno. The Corridor once represented one of the busiest and most prosperous neighborhoods, connecting the cities of Reno and Sparks. Long before the street was called Fourth Street, it was Lincoln Highway, which stretches across the United States from the east to the west. But with the advent of the Interstate 80, Highway 40 was no longer heavily traveled, and the corridor started to lose its previous glory and fall into disrepair.

Then in 1998-99, the corridor was heir to the opportunity to maintain its previous heritage, while being able to revitalize and rebuild. This was brought on by the corridor being rezoned utilizing the advantages of a Special Planning District, but at the same time, keeping the "Old Reno" ambiance. The SPD allows for new businesses and housing to be built within the neighborhood, but the builders have to meet the special building standards and conditions spelled out in the Plan. The standards and conditions are designed to maintain and promote a feeling of "stepping back into the past" by utilizing certain building materials, lighting, and landscaping. The flipside to the more restrictive and structured building requirements is the less restrictive requirement of Special Use Permits.

Many of the older buildings in the neighborhood which represent the last of Old Reno are now in the process of being revitalized—some with the newer business trends, and others with the original businesses previously housed there. Investors and developers are intrigued by maintaining "old atmosphere and ambiance," yet utilizing the latest technology to promote that image. Moreover, the residents and business owners within the corridor are again proud of this area, and have joined together to promote yet more revitalization while maintaining the Old Reno façade. This truly is a remarkable area, seeped in all the glory of a by-gone age, remembering how essential and important this corridor once was to the City, yet applying the modern know-how and technology to rebuild and nourish the area, not destroy it—and IT'S WORKING!!

HRPS Member, Gaye Canepa, is President of the Reno-Sparks Corridor Business Association.

Heritage Coalition Is Not Idle!  
by Nancy Holmes

A dedicated few have been working for over a year on the soon to be published Historic Reno-Sparks-Fallon Site Map. We have written three successful grants and have been working with a graphic artist since last December to make this map something we will all be proud of.

With good fortune and time, (we haven't given up our day jobs yet), we should publish by September 1; just in time for your perusal and purchase at our first HRPS meeting. See you then.

HRPS Sponsors First VIP Bus Tour  
by Nancy Holmes

On May 24, forty-four business and civic leaders, boarded a bus for an exciting, informative 90 minute tour of some of Reno's historic sites. Tour guides were the very talented and knowledgeable Pat Ferro Klos and Mercedes De la Garza. Joan Dyer, who had spent many hours creating and sending invitations, was a dynamite hostess. Scott Gibson, good-naturedly chauffeured many trips about town to help the coordinator determine the bus route! This was our first VIP bus trip, and I appreciate the willingness of the HRPS Board to take a chance on this venture. Thanks to all who helped make it such a success.

Nancy Holmes is Chair of the Heritage Tourism Coalition (HTC) and HRPS Vice President.
This past year I observed a very interesting phenomenon. I learned there is no generation gap when it comes to preserving Reno’s past. Gen X’ers, Baby Boomers, Tweeners all play a part in protecting what is so important to us.

For instance, at HRPS annual meeting at the Old Huffaker School at Bartley Ranch, former students, some in their 70’s and 80’s, shared tales about their days at the school. These ladies are carrying on the time-honored tradition of story telling. Then there was our host for the evening, Loren Jahn, a young man who never attended Huffaker, but who fought long and hard to move, preserve and rehabilitate this fine old school house. And recently, at a Historic Resources Commission meeting, I was introduced to a young man I take to be in his early 20’s who is making the effort to preserve old Reno’s lost neon signs. His dream is to one day open a Reno neon museum.

Each of these individuals has contributed in their own way to preserving Reno’s history. These people proved to me that there is a quiet, but powerful preservation movement happening here in the Truckee Meadows.

For the past three years, HRPS has been a significant part of this movement. As our mission statement declares, we’re “Dedicated to Preserving Reno’s Rich Past with Education, Advocacy, and Leadership.” We have already played an active educational role through our many informative preservation and historic programs, and of course, through our walking tours.

Now, as a maturing organization, we plan to increasingly turn our attention to Advocacy and Leadership. I know many of you are concerned about protecting the charm and character of Reno’s older neighborhoods. Your Board wants to be responsive to this concern.

As an organization we need to become much more knowledgeable about zoning codes and preservation ordinances. As we educate ourselves we can then begin to work with the City of Reno’s Historic Resources Commission in areas of common concern.

This is your organization. Our Board is active and involved, but we need your help to move forward. We need help with research, compiling information and -- eventually--attending meetings. Please become an active participant in the process. Help us help you help Reno.

I’m anxious to hear from you on any subject. Call me, Cindy, at 747-0340. Many hands make work light. Besides, in this group, we have lots of fun!

In parting, I would like to welcome our new board members; Felvia Belaustegui, Debra Perry Lockwood, and Leanne Stone.

We introduce Felvia to you in this issue of the newsletter and Debra and Leanne in subsequent ones.

Felvia Belaustegui has been a Reno resident since 1959. She is a graduate of the University of Hartford with a degree in Marketing and Accounting. Just this last May she received her Master’s degree in Land Use Planning and Historic Preservation from the University of Nevada. (Please see October program notes.)

She has been a Partner in A & F Business Services, a bookkeeping and accounting firm, and was Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of Service Group Inc., a computer sales firm. Both businesses were located in Reno.

Felvia is married to Reno native, Dick Belaustegui, a retired UNR administrator and professor. They have four children, Lauren, Merri, Patrick and Karol.

Check out her interests! Preservation, preservation, preservation -- particularly in Reno and Washoe County.

“My early years were spent in New England where history is a way of life. Some of the homes I lived in as a youth were built before Nevada became a state. It is my opinion that Reno residents need a wake up call before all our historic resources are destroyed.”

HRPS Presents Its First Ever Preservation Award

Dan Richards accepts HRPS 2000 Preservation Award from President Cindy Ainsworth on behalf of the Reno Quakers for the restoration and adaptive reuse of their meeting house located at 497 Highland Avenue, Reno.
RECYCLING OLD BUILDINGS
Historic Preservation And Adaptive Reuse
by Mella Rothwell Harmon

America has been called a throw-away society. New products become obsolete almost immediately, leaving an inordinate amount of discarded goods. No one would think to find a new use for their Commodore 64, or that burned-out microwave from the early '80s. Buildings, though, never really become obsolete. Humans have sought shelter for their activities since cave-man days. The shelters for human activity we call buildings are the most enduring artifacts of our culture. For that, and for economic reasons, recycling older buildings (especially those deemed historic) is good for all of us.

The obvious benefit of reusing historic buildings is that they physically link us to our past, which helps maintain our sense of place. Economically, adaptive reuse saves demolition costs, the high cost of new construction materials, and land acquisition costs. Such projects also contribute to the local employment rate and provide tax advantages.

Fortunate historic buildings get to continue their original use for many years. Some buildings, however, stake their very existence on finding a new way to be useful. Finding a new use for an old building is called Adaptive Reuse. Although preservation principles range from the pure to the practical, in general, adaptive reuse seeks to allow an older building to fully function within the context of the present, while retaining the aspects of its historicity that make it significant. Significance can be reflected in a building's architecture, or its associations with historic people and/or events.

The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation provide guidelines for rehabilitating historic buildings. They also apply to projects that involve adaptive reuse. The full text of the Secretary of Interior's Standards are published in Department of the

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Mary Sherman House - Reno
This building on North Center Street started life in the 1890s as a residence. In the 1940s, it was adaptively reused as a church and in 1998 was converted to a day care center.

RECYCLING
OLD BUILDINGS (CONT)

Interior regulations at 36 CFR Part 67, or at the National Park Service’s webpage at: www2.cr.nps.gov. Of the ten basic standards the following pertain to adaptive reuse projects:

A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment:

The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided:

Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken:

New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment:

New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Preservationist do not always agree on the appropriateness of adaptive reuse. Some believe that the only proper use for a historic building is its historic one. A current example of this dispute is the proposed adaptive reuse of the Reno Downtown Post Office. Built by the Public Works Administration, the post office has served the downtown community for more than 60 years. There are proposals afoot to convert the building to a blues club, while retaining its historic architectural features. Some believe that adaptively reusing a building helps preserve it, but others believe that any change in use is tantamount to losing the building altogether.

Prominent examples of successful adaptive reuse projects include Union Stations in various cities that have been converted into retail centers (e.g., Washington D.C. and Saint Louis), Faneuil Hall Market in Boston, and Ghiradelli Square in San Francisco. Several adaptive reuse projects are currently going on in Reno. The Riverside Hotel is being converted from a hotel/casino to artists’ lofts and studios, and the former First Church of Christ, Scientist has been converted to the Lear Theater. A not-so-good local example is Landrum’s Diner that until recently retained its 1947 diner interior. Sadly, all of the diner furnishings and fixtures have been removed and the building turned into an automobile title loan office.

Adaptive reuse should follow good preservation principles to maximize the economical and cultural value of the property. Zoning and money, more than human imagination, limit the possibilities for adaptive reuse, but where all three come together the results can reap widespread benefits. Awareness of the intrinsic value of historic buildings should be promoted, along with creative ideas for adaptively reusing those buildings facing a change of use or perceived obsolescence. Adaptive reuse makes good economic and social sense. Consider it before you call the wrecking ball.

Mella Harmon is a historic preservation specialist with the State Historic Preservation Office, the current chairman of the Reno Historical Resources Commission, and a HRPS member. Ms. Harmon holds a master’s degree in land use planning and historic preservation from the University of Nevada, Reno.
ONE REGION
ONE VISION
And Historic Preservation

by Charlotte Jones McConnell

One Region. One Vision (OROV) is a unique project begun in early 1999 by a number of organizations and concerned individuals who believe that our region is a special place to live and work. The overall objective of the project is to create a vision of the future from a regional viewpoint in clear, dynamic, achievable terms and to create a structure to achieve that vision. The project has grown into the most comprehensive, most widely supported effort of its kind in northern Nevada's history.

A Steering Committee representative of the region's diversity was established to guide the vision effort into the future. The Steering Committee created five Sub-Committees (Economy, Education, Environment & Land Use, Health & Human Services, and Safety) to develop goals and action plans in line with the vision. Today more than 85 regional businesses, organizations and governing bodies, including HRPS, are listed as official sponsors of One Region. One Vision. Draft vision statements have been created for 2010 and for 2025 and beyond.

In addition to being an official sponsor, several HRPS members are actively participating in the Arts and Culture Sub-Committee, known as the Arts Consortium, which is under the umbrella of the Economy Sub-Committee. The Arts Consortium has established a vision for cultural planning that "demonstrates a commitment to arts and culture as essential components in economic and community development, tourism, health and human services, the education of our residents and our overall quality of life."

Regional cultural priorities identified by the Arts Consortium include several key historic preservation projects and plans for the future: conversion of the Riverside Hotel; McKinley Park renovation; Lear Theater renovation; Lake Mansion as an art center for children and youth with disabilities; Oats Park School renovation in Fallon; a regional cultural/heritage tourism resource book; and a map of cultural and historic attractions for walking and driving tours of the area. Through our participation in the Arts Consortium, HRPS hopes to ensure that the vision, goals and action plans include the preservation of our historic past.

For more information about One Region. One Vision, visit their website at www.oneregion.com, or call the OROV Hotline at 327-0220. We encourage HRPS members and others interested in historic preservation to provide input to the project through the many meetings, surveys, focus groups and other opportunities offered by the Steering Committee and the Sub-Committees.

Charlotte McConnell is a Reno native, and a graduate of Reno High School & Stanford University. Charlotte has returned to Reno after many years in the east with IBM. She is a HRPS board member and serves on several other community boards as well.
Adaptive Reuse, Artfully Done

by Sharon Adler Walbridge, Editor

There is a small, historic, brick building at 627 Mill Street that has a lot of story associated with it.

Shortly after the turn of the 19th century, Monsieur Escallier purchased the Wedekind town house on the corner of Mill Street and Wells Avenue. He had a brick building erected at the rear of the property to serve as the site of his business.

From 1909 until 1966, the building housed the French hand laundry of Cyril Escallier. The laundry was famous around the area for the artistry with which lace curtains and frilly shirts were hand pressed. None compared to Escallier's.

Among its patrons were actress Barbara Hutton, Bill Graham and James McKay of the old Bank Club, and the men of the cloth at St. Thomas Aquinas. In addition to their distinguished clientele, the laundry boasted the first Model A delivery truck ever to careen the streets of Reno. The gold leaf lettering on the side panel advises: French Laundry, Phone 726, 627 Mill Street.

In 1966, the bonnet puffers, the fluters, the 8 to 12 pound irons, and the gas heater gave way, as the old building took on new life as the Artists Co-operative of Reno, turned it into their Gallery.

It was October 12, 1965, when nineteen artists gathered at the home of well-known area artists, Lyle and Ester Ball, to discuss their vision of finding a place to showcase their work and to hold their meetings. Lyle Ball told the gathering about the broken-down ex-French Laundry building on Mill Street near Wells.

Now, 34 years later, that vision is intact. But it wasn't "a piece of cake." Heavy laundry equipment had to be removed. Repairs were required to the walls, the floors, the ceiling, and the roof. Furniture and fixtures were obtained through contributions and the traditional method of scavenging.

A little known, but interesting fact, is that their toilet was obtained when the Orvis Ring Elementary School was demolished. It was one of the four mission style schools designed by George Ferris in the early part of the 20th century.

Initially, narrow, horizontal slats were affixed to the walls, and four painting from each artist were hung by means of hangers fashioned from bent shirt hangers. (How appropriate in an old laundry.)

As time went on more exhibit space was needed, and the mangle was removed from the third room. This time pegboard was affixed to the walls to provide ease of hanging. Shirt hangers became obsolete.

Eventually the time came to finish off the fourth room. Arthur Kleppe, friend of Lyle and Ester Ball, offered wood from his barn, which was about to be demolished. Since 1972, that room has been the feature room, beautifully accented with Kleppe barn wood.

The Kleppe Ranch was located in the east part of what is now Sparks. Today, warehouses occupy the site. The original ranch house was built when Abraham Lincoln was president. The barn was built in 1873, and stood for 99 years without the benefit of nails or bracing.

Some of our readers will know Arthur Kleppe's son, John, a 1957 graduate of Reno High School, a 1961 graduate of the University of Nevada, and the current Dean of the Electrical Engineering Department at UNR.

Stop by the gallery sometime to appreciate all that has taken place in this remnant of old Reno. Think about the incredibly fussy lace curtains laundered and pressed here. Think about the multitude of art exhibits held here in 34 years. Think about the huge number of volunteer hours of the dedicated Co-op artists. Take a look at the wall of barn wood and know that you're looking at some real old wood. Wonder where the trees grew that provided the wood, and how old they must have been. Envision a time when transportation was by means of horse drawn wagons and old Model A's.

And by all means, browse the art.

The Artists Co-operative of Reno is open seven days a week from 11 to 4. They feature work in all media: oils, watercolors, pastels, pen and ink, pencil, you name it they've got it. Look for their lovely pottery, baskets, gourds, photographs, and note cards. It's a great place to get an original gift.

By the way, isn't this a nice adaptive reuse of an old building?
Talk About Adaptive Reuse!

Try dancing on old buildings! Project Bandaloo amazed the crowd during the final days of Artown by using the vertical walls of the old Riverside Hotel as their performance space.

Learn more about historic preservation and adaptive reuse of old buildings by reading the article located on the insert of this issue.

Renewing Members


We Welcome New Members


Dues Are Due: Check your mailing labels. Renew your membership and help HRPS preserve historic Reno.

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
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Name(s) ___________________________ ___________________________

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City __________________ State ______ ZIP ______

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Best time to call ____________________

Please detach and return to: Historic Reno Preservation Society, P.O. Box 33444, Reno NV 89533
MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

PROGRAMS 2000--2001

MARK TAXER
Program Chair (826-7070)

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

September 27, 2000
Reno Television personality Dick Stoddard kicks off our Fall program schedule with his very popular postcard slide show presentation. Dick will share with us a selection from his very extensive collection of historic Reno area postcards covering much of the previous century.

October 15, 2000
HRPS Board Member, Felvia Belaustegui, presents a lively discussion of the history of the Italian community in early Reno in the historic Ralston neighborhood, and the potential impact of the railroad trench on this area. The information for this evening's program comes directly from Felvia's research for her Master's thesis: “The Evolution of an Ethnic Community, Emigration of Italians to Reno.”

November 15, 2000
Mystery Dinner and Social. Save the date now for the fun, and keep an eye on your mail for details!

START THE NEW YEAR RIGHT.
COME TO HRPS PROGRAMS!

January 24, 2001
Learn what it was like during the Depression in Northern Nevada. Join us for “Walk in their Shoes,” a living history presentation featuring four prototypical citizens of the era. An Influential Politician will be performed by Stan Warren, a Nevada Rancher will be performed by Ken Coverston, a WPA Foreman will be performed by former Reno Mayor, Sam Dibitonto, and a Depression-Era Man will be performed by Bob Lindsey, Jr.