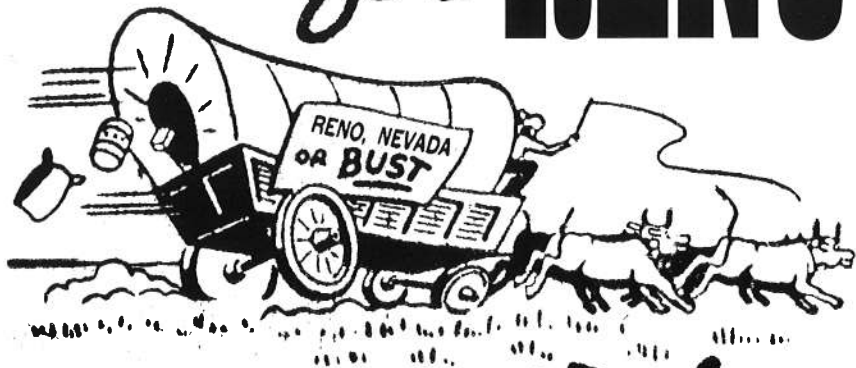


Headin'
for **RENO**



OR BUST!

*Sin & the
American Roadside*

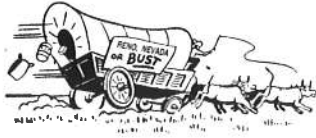
TOUR GUIDE

SCA 2002 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Reno, Nevada • Sept. 25-28, 2002

SCA

Society for Commercial Archeology



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- Nevada State Historic Preservation Office
- Comstock Historic District Commission
- National Automobile Museum (The Harrah Collection)
- Preserve Nevada
- Historic Reno Preservation Society
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- Heritage Tourism Coalition

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INTRODUCTION

“Sin and the American Roadside” is the theme for the 2002 SCA Conference. One might ask how the good people of Reno, Nevada came up with sin as a topic. Well, the answer is simple. Nevada has a history of embracing sin as a solution to the economic exigencies of its traditional boom-and-bust industries of mining and agriculture. As someone once said: “If you can’t do it at home, go to Nevada.”

Nevada’s sin solutions of legalized gambling, prostitution, prize fighting, and quickie divorces and marriages, helped temper the boom-and-bust cycles. In 1930, Reno’s mayor E.E. Roberts summed up Nevada’s legislative attitude:

You cannot legislate morals into people, any more than you can legislate love into the hearts of some professed Christians. You can’t stop gambling, so let’s put it in the open. Divorce is the only solution when marriages are unhappy. And if I had my way in this prohibition year, I as mayor of Reno would place a barrel of whisky on every corner, with a dipper, and a sign saying: ‘Help yourself, but don’t be a hog.’

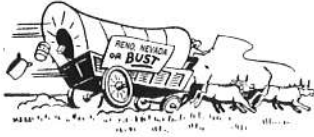
Although Nevada’s sin solutions were lucrative, many roundly criticized them. Paul Hutchinson, in a series of articles in *The Christian Century*, called Nevada a prostitute state, employing the dictionary definition of prostitution as “Openly devoted to lewdness, especially for gain.” In spite of the national moral outrage expressed against it, the Nevada legislature continued to legalize vice for the economic good of the state.

So, when we look at roadside resources, sin is just naturally represented, as in fact it is in other locales and along other roadsides. The two tours described below will lead us past some of the region’s more enduring and endearing resources, from auto courts that served the famous divorce trade, a historic town that gave itself over to television imagery, to a brothel with an international reputation.

Welcome to Nevada!

Bert Bedeau and Mella Harmon
Conference Co-chairmen





TOUR ONE

Meet at the National Automobile Museum, 1 Lake Street South



The National Auto Museum

The National Automobile Museum houses the William Harrah automobile collection. The architecture of this building highlights the smooth, rounded walls with chrome trim, reminiscent of automobile styling. The color is based on "heather fire mist," a popular 1950s automobile paint color.

The tour will head south on US 395 to the Mount Rose Highway and up the hill to Incline Village:





INCLINE VILLAGE



Ponderosa Ranch

100 Ponderosa Ranch Road, Incline Village

The Ponderosa Ranch opened to visitors in 1967. The ranch brought to life the legendary television show *Bonanza*, which aired 431 one-hour shows from 1959 to 1973. The Ponderosa Ranch, which is located on the exact spot seen on the “burning map” that opened each episode, features the Cartwright’s ranch house, a wedding chapel, and a hay wagon breakfast. The Ponderosa Ranch was founded by Bill and Joyce Anderson and was used for location shooting in later episodes. Rumor has it that the show was created to sell color televisions made by NBC’s parent company, RCA.



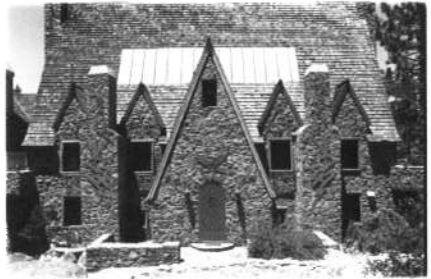
Leaving the Ponderosa, past the Whittell Estate to Spooner Summit and down Highway 50 to Carson City:



Whittell Estate/Thunderbird Lodge

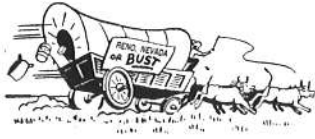
5000 Highway 28, Incline Village

Eccentric San Francisco millionaire George Whittell began construction on the Thunderbird Lodge in 1936. At the time, Whittell owned 30,000 acres and 25 miles of Nevada shoreline at Lake Tahoe and had plans to develop it into high-class summer properties, a ski run, and a \$1 million hotel-casino.



Courtesy of NV SHPO

The Thunderbird Lodge is one of the last and best examples of the great residential estates built on Lake Tahoe by prominent members of San Francisco society. Nevada’s pre-eminent architect, Frederic DeLongchamps, designed the estate, which includes the main house, a card house, cook/butler’s house, elephant garage, admiral’s house, and boat-house with adjoining 600-foot-long tunnel, gate, and gatehouse. DeLongchamps designed the estate to be in harmony with its Alpine setting.



CARSON CITY

The first Euroamericans to visit the Carson City area were John C. Frémont and his party of explorers in January 1843, during their survey of the Far West for the U.S. Topographic Engineers. While exploring and mapping the area, Frémont named the Carson River in honor of his scout and mountain man companion Kit Carson. Washoe and Northern Paiute people traditionally inhabited the area until the influx of Euroamerican settlers in the 1860s. The first Euroamerican settlement with permanent structures in Nevada was established 13 miles south of Carson City in 1851, at Genoa.



The original settlement in Carson City was known as “Eagle Station” after the initial trading post, which sported an eagle killed by the original settlers. Newly-arrived settler Abraham Curry bought the Eagle Station and Ranch in 1858 (with several business partners), established the town of Carson City, and had it surveyed and platted, including a ten-acre parcel for a capitol. Curry named his townsite Carson City, after the nearby Carson River and Kit Carson. The boom on the Comstock Mining District, beginning in 1859, brought hundreds and then thousands of settlers into the area.

The Comstock mining industry resulted in the development of related businesses and industry in nearby Carson City. The Virginia & Truckee Railroad, established between Carson City and Virginia City in 1869, made Carson City an integral link in transportation between mines, mill sites, equipment, and lumber from the Sierra Nevada. A wooden flume was built between the Sierra and Carson City to transport much-needed lumber on its way to the mining district. East of town on the Carson River, several mills were constructed to process Comstock ore. Soon Carson City was an industrial and commercial center, and the obvious choice for the seat of government. Carson City was the capital of Nevada Territory and the state capital when Nevada was admitted to the Union on October 31, 1864. The Capitol building was completed in 1870.

The late-nineteenth century borrasca, or depression that reduced Virginia City to a mere shadow of its former stature also hit Carson City. The town became increasingly reliant on state government as its primary employer. Growth in the early twentieth century in other regions of the state produced limited growth of the capital. For instance, many wealthy elite who gained their fortunes during the mining boom in Tonopah and Goldfield moved to settle in Carson City. Nevertheless,

Carson City remained a branch-line backwater for much of the early twentieth century. Branch routes of the Lincoln Highway connected Carson City with Reno and Sacramento beginning in the 1910s, followed by US 50 and US 395 in the 1930s. Despite these infrastructure improvements, Carson remained a small town into the 1960s and did not gain much from the radical changes that swept Reno in the 1930s—gaming and divorce. The principal gaming halls in Carson City all trace their lineage back to the late 1950s or after. For many years Carson City held claim to being the smallest state capital in the nation.

Cactus Jack's Senator Club

420 North Carson Street

Originally opened by Pete Piersanti in 1971 with six blackjack tables, Cactus Jack's has grown over the years to encompass half a block



on the west side of US 395. Cactus Jack's most famous feature is the imposing porcelain enamel and neon sign of the Senator complete with extended waiving arm grasping a wad of greenbacks and emblazoned with the word "HOWDY." The sign was designed by Adart Inc. and erected ca. 1973. It has been a local landmark ever since.



Carson Nugget

507 North Carson Street



Opened by the Adams Brothers in 1954 as the Nugget Café, the Carson Nugget has also grown, expanding from a single storefront to cover a full block. The neon spectacular over the entry at the northwest corner of the building



was installed in the 1960s and designed as part of a much larger neon spectacular treatment. Subsequent remodeling projects have left only the entry from the earlier design.

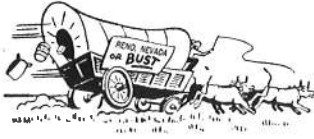
Lincoln Highway Boy Scout Marker

Nevada State Museum, 600 North Carson Street

This is the only intact commemorative Lincoln Highway marker known to remain in Nevada. Over 3,000 such markers were erected on September 1, 1928 by Boy Scout troops across the nation. This was the last activity undertaken by the Lincoln Highway Association before disbanding and was the brainchild of General Secretary Gale Hoag—a Nevada native. At some point, this marker was moved to its present site in front of the State Museum.



Head east on College Parkway to Dayton:

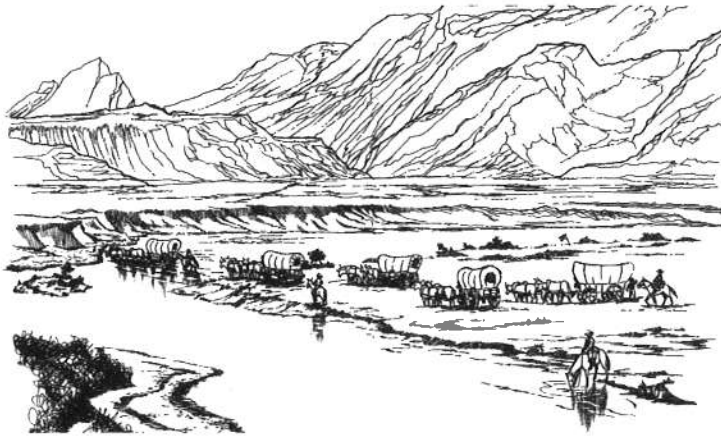


DAYTON

Gold was first discovered in Nevada in 1849 near the present town of Dayton. Unlike nearby Silver City, Gold Hill, and Virginia City, Dayton was always on a main transportation route. The Pony Express route and the Emigrant Trail passed through Dayton Valley. During the mining boom of the 1860s and 1870s, Dayton was a primary site for milling, owing to plentiful water from the nearby Carson River. As the mines waned, Dayton became a small agricultural community. In the 1920s, the Pioneer Branch of the Lincoln Highway was routed through Dayton. The Lincoln Highway Association mark can still be seen painted on the side of the Bluestone Building (now the Dayton Municipal Justice Court) located at 235 Main Street.



Head north on Highway 341 to Virginia City:





VIRGINIA CITY

Lunch at Fourth Ward School 537 South C Street

This prominent landmark sits at the southern entrance to Virginia City. It was built in 1876, in the “fourth ward” district, near the Gold Hill-Virginia City boundary. Architect S. M. Bennet drew the plans for the building and supervised its construction. Knight and McKay were the general contractors. Built in the Second Empire architectural style, the cost of the building was \$100,000, financed in part by contributions from mining companies and businesses, later by individuals and school benefits.



Courtesy of the Fourth Ward School Museum & the CHDC

Fourth Ward was a combination grammar and high school, designed to accommodate 1,025 students. Innovations included a “modern” heating system, and water that was piped to all four floors. The school was continuously used until the last class graduated in 1936. After being closed and neglected for 50 years, serious efforts to rehabilitate the Fourth Ward School as a museum and interpretive center for the Comstock began to take shape. Today the Fourth Ward School houses museum exhibits and interpretive displays showing the history of the Comstock. It has emerged as one of the premier interpretive sites in the community and one of Nevada’s outstanding rehabilitation projects. Grants from the National Park Service “Save America’s Treasures” program have assisted in the restoration of this important building. Museum hours are 10 am to 5 pm daily between May 1 and October 31. Call 775-847-0975 for further information.

Group is on its own to follow the guide of Virginia City:

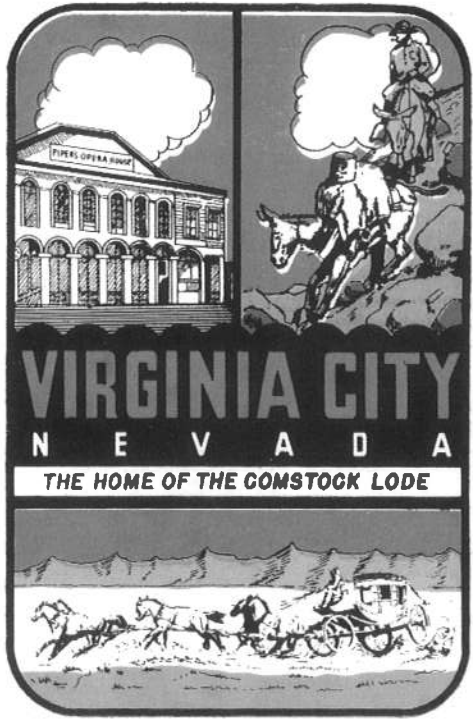
VIRGINIA CITY

In 1859, placer miners and prospectors in the western Great Basin made two remarkable strikes of gold and silver ore breaching a mountain slope near Virginia City. It was the culmination of regional discoveries and excitement that began a decade before with the famed California Gold Rush of 1849. The 1859 discovery in the Great Basin provides an epilogue for the California Gold Rush. It was not so much the end of a story, however, as it was an indication of how future mining would change an entire region.

The Comstock Lode, as people soon called the ore body, was distinct in the ways that it influenced subsequent development in the American West. First, the Comstock Mining District quickly became home to deep underground, hard rock mining. Although some California operations had also taken this direction, the Comstock established approaches to technology, corporate investment, and community growth that were imitated internationally for the next fifty years. For example, the Comstock had a huge labor force of salaried professionals, breaking from the California pattern of thousands of independent mining entrepreneurs digging for themselves in small groups.

The Comstock was unusual and will always be famous for the presence of silver as well as gold, and especially for the spectacular amount of wealth it generated. Miners retrieved what today would be billions of dollars in riches; the mines in and around Virginia City produced one-half of the nation's silver until 1886. However, corporations were necessary to exploit a resource requiring an immense, complex infrastructure. This meant that only a few people ultimately benefited most from the Comstock mines, but that did not inhibit a worldwide fascination with the discovery. In addition, during the flush times money flowed freely and many enjoyed the prosperity.

Unlike the small settlements throughout the California Gold Country, the Comstock District was a highly urbanized, industrial setting. Again, this was the model that all future mining developments generally followed. By the early 1870s, the mining district's capital, Virginia City, together with its smaller neighbor, Gold Hill, reached a population of nearly 25,000, becoming one of the nation's larger communities.



Part of the nineteenth-century interest in the Comstock resulted from the millionaires it propelled into the international limelight. Wealthy men, from George Hearst and John Mackay to Adolph Sutro and William Ralston, made their fortunes while working or investing in the mines around Virginia City. The mines also spawned the successes of William Stewart, John P. Jones, William Sharon, and James Fair, who each served in the U.S. Senate.

Much of the historical treatment of the Comstock has focused on the impressive technology, the immense wealth, and the men at the center of both. Nevertheless, Virginia City and its mining district were exceedingly complex, attracting immigrants from throughout the world. People from North, South, and Central America, and from Europe, Asia, and Africa came to the district, hoping to capture some of the success that had become legendary.

For over a thousand Chinese immigrants it was Yin Shan, the Silver Mountain. Irish miners from County Cork, on the other hand, typically saw Virginia City as a chance to sidestep the oppressive Appalachian coalmines in favor of a better place to work and a higher wage. Similarly, a modest number of Spanish speaking people played an important role in the early development of the mining district. Samuel Clemens, who invented his Mark Twain persona while reporting for Virginia City's Territorial Enterprise, wrote, "...all the peoples of the earth had representative adventurers in Silver-land." Indeed, the mining district played a pivotal role in giving Nevada one of the largest percentages of foreign born in the nation throughout the nineteenth century.

Still, over half of the Comstock's population was born in North America. The Northern Paiutes, living in the area for centuries before the arrival of others, possessed a culture and society that thousands of gold and silver seekers severely disrupted.

Although they confronted oppressive prejudice and treatment, several hundred American Indians eventually settled around the mining district, and like others, they found various means

to exploit the many opportunities of the new society. African Americans also came to the Comstock seeking wealth and opportunity. Many became prosperous, well-respected business owners. Thousands of Midwesterners, together with many New Englanders and fewer Southerners, added to the social diversity and complexity of the place. Together these diverse groups wove the rich tapestry that made the Comstock the crossroads of the world. Initially women were rare on the Comstock, but within a few years much of the gender gap had been bridged. By 1880, one third of the population was under eighteen years of age, underscoring the fact that this had become more of a family-based community than a stereotypical mining boomtown.



PROBING "LAND POOL," VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA

Mining camps throughout the world pass through an evolution of boom, dramatic growth and excitement, and then decline. The size and nature of each district's ore body defined the duration of prosperity. The Comstock was remarkable both for the amount of wealth it produced and for the number of years it was able to thrive. By the early 1880s, it was becoming clear that the good times were over. It had been years since miners had discovered any new bonanzas, and thousands of people were leaving for better opportunities.

By the time of the Great Depression of the 1930s, Virginia City had been in decline for nearly 50 years—shrinking from a population of 25,000 in 1875 to a virtual ghost town of several hundred people. During the 1930s, however, several factors combined to begin a new economic life for the Comstock—one based on tourism. In 1931, gaming was re-legalized. In that same year, the residency requirement for divorce in Nevada was reduced to six weeks. This created a huge boom in the Reno divorce trade and vastly increased the number of visitors with time on their hands and a need for diversion. In 1933, national prohibition was repealed, resulting in the re-opening (or at least re-surfacing) of many of Virginia City's notorious watering holes. As a result of New Deal public works funding, all-weather roads were built from Virginia City to both Reno and Carson City thus increasing accessibility by automobile. All of these factors combined to revive what only a short time before had looked like another western ghost town in the making. It was also in the late 1930s that Duncan Emrich, a Harvard-educated writer and folklorist began to explore and promote the history of the Comstock.

Following World War II, the second phase in the tourist-driven revival of Virginia City arrived in the form of Lucius Beebe and his friend and lover Charles Clegg. Beebe was the scion of a wealthy Boston family who had been a syndicated drama and arts critic for the New York Herald-Tribune during much of the 1930s and early 1940s. As such, he had been a central figure in what came to be known as café society. The eastern elite had been coming to the area for many years to be “Reno-vated” as gossip columnist Walter Winchell called the Nevada divorce.



Beebe first visited Virginia City during a publicity blitz by Warner Brothers Studios for the 1940 film of the same name. He despised the film but was enchanted with the freewheeling and surprisingly tolerant atmosphere on the Comstock. As café society waned following the war, Beebe and Clegg packed up and moved to Virginia City. A coterie of other literati and bohemians followed. These transplants sometimes referred to as the “remittance kids” did much to promote Virginia City over the next 15 years by writing on its history or other aspects of life on the Comstock. Most importantly, Beebe and Clegg also revived the long dormant Territorial Enterprise newspaper. In 1952, they purchased the old home of the Enterprise on South C Street and began publishing a weekly edition that rapidly became an internationally read and quoted publication.

The increased exposure of the Comstock resulting from the literary efforts of the café crowd brought steadily increasing numbers of tourists to the area through the 1950s. This coincided with a general renewal of interest in the history of the West. Nowhere was the Old West more alive—and more distorted—than in Hollywood. The post-war years saw a resurgence of the western in both the movie theater and on the increasingly popular small screen. From its premier in 1955, Gunsmoke was one of the most watched programs on television and a gold mine for the CBS network. In 1959, NBC premiered a direct rival to Gunsmoke called Bonanza.



The adventures of the Cartwrights on their mythical Ponderosa Ranch wrought immediate change on the Comstock. The Ponderosa was supposed to be located on the east shore of Lake Tahoe. In the show, the nearest town was Virginia City—notwithstanding the two mountain ranges between. As soon as the burning map showing Virginia City in the opening credits hit the airwaves, tourism on the Comstock skyrocketed.

Local businesses were quick to cash in on the new Bonanza bonanza. Shops changed their names to reflect the television show—Bonanza, Ponderosa, Hop Sing Company, and the like. Victorian buildings were covered with rough-sawn wood planking in order to convey a Frontier-land atmosphere, and a host of new attractions geared to the ever-increasing car and busloads of tourists. Indeed, it appeared that a large portion of both the physical and historical character of the area might be subsumed by “Bonanza-fication.”

This gave rise to calls for preservation of the built environment and actual historical legacy of the Comstock. In 1961, all of the Comstock was declared a National Historic Landmark. In 1969, the Nevada Legislature created the Comstock Historic District Commission to oversee the preservation, regulation, and rehabilitation of the area’s built environment. While C Street continues to have its share of T-shirt and souvenir shops, the preservation and compatible development of the community has made much visible progress in the last 30 years. Recent major rehabilitation projects such as the Fourth Ward School and Piper’s Opera House will hopefully act as catalysts to spur continued development of a meaningful tourist experience in Virginia City and the preservation of one of our greatest historical treasures.



Chollar Mine

615 South F Street

The Chollar-Potosi claim was one of the early producers on the Comstock Lode and was worked into the twentieth century. Like the rest of the Comstock mines, activity waned at the Chollar beginning in the 1920s. As a result of the Bonanza tourist invasion of the 1960s, the Chollar’s owners decided to open a portion of the old mine for tours. Since 1965, the Chollar mine tour has offered tourists a glimpse of nineteenth century mining life. The Chollar Mine is open for paid tours during the tourist season.

A word about “mansions”: The term “mansion” has been liberally applied on the Comstock to include any large and vaguely residential building. This has been done for promotional purposes and is far from being an accurate characterization. Even the most elaborate dwellings in Virginia City would be considered no more than ordinary houses in any urban setting. In the case of the three properties listed immediately below, the term is a complete misnomer, having been applied to buildings that served primarily as offices for major mining companies.



Chollar Mine Office/Mansion

565 South D Street

The Chollar mansion was built between 1861 and 1863 as the head office of the Chollar Mine and the residence of the mine superintendent. The building was designed by N. J. Colman in an Italianate style, and constructed by H. S. Hill. It was discovered in 1870 that the building was sinking due to the settling of the terrain above the mine. At that time, the three-story structure was dismantled and rebuilt at its present location. It is anchored to its foundation with steel tie rods and contains a three-story cantilevered staircase.



Billy Chollar, discoverer of the Chollar silver lode in 1861, originally commissioned the mansion. He lost both his mine and his home to the newly established Bank of California, and left Virginia City in 1862. A special feature of the building is the 164-square-foot arched vault that once stored millions in gold and silver bullion. Another is the paymaster's booth, where each month the miners came to draw their pay. The building has served as a bed-and-breakfast, but is currently for sale.



Savage Mining Company Office/Savage Mansion

146 South D Street

The Savage Mining Company built this ornate building in 1861. The magnificent 21-room Second Empire structure is an excellent example of the architectural elegance associated with the offices and residences of the mining elite. The top two floors of the structure served as the mine superintendent's residence, while the ground floor was the mine office. The building has been restored in a historically correct manner with particular attention to its distinctive architectural features, such as the Mansard roof, dormer windows, and delicate gingerbread trim. The interior boasts 14-foot-high ceilings, a seven-foot copper bathtub, a Lincrista frieze in the main hallway, and early Victorian furnishings. Ulysses S. Grant is said to have stayed in the house in 1879 and addressed crowds in a speech from the porch. During this time, a certain Mrs. Monaghan, whose husband had been killed in the mine, served as a housekeeper to the superintendent. When the mines closed down in 1918, the Savage Mining Company deeded the land, house, and furnishings to Mrs. Monaghan. The building currently serves as office space and is privately owned.



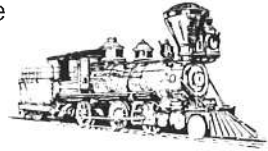


Virginia and Truckee Railroad

Ticket Office, 131 South C Street;

Virginia City depot: on F Street just south of Washington Street

By the late 1860s, it had become apparent to Comstock mine owners that a more efficient means to transport ore from the mines to the mills along the Carson River (as far as 15 miles away) was needed. The Virginia and Truckee Railroad (V&T RR) was built under the direction of William Sharon, manager of the Bank of California, which owned many mines and most of the mills on the Comstock. The V&T has been called the most famous of the American short line railroads. The Gold Hill Station on the V&T was completed September 1869, and the first locomotive passed through American Flat Tunnel on November 3 of that year. That day the engine Lyon, covered in garlands of flowers, pulled into Gold Hill Station where the mayor and other dignitaries were gathered to celebrate the completion of the railroad. The V&T was decommissioned by July 19, 1938, when the last V&T train pulled out of Virginia City and Gold Hill.



Reconstruction of the V&T between Virginia City and Gold Hill began in the late 1970s. The line now runs approximately 4 miles from Virginia City to the restored V&T Depot in Gold Hill. Excursion trains presently run several times a day during the tourist season and have become a mainstay of the tourist experience on the Comstock.



Bank of California/Ponderosa Saloon

106 South C Street

The Bank of California originally opened its Virginia City agency in 1864. Under the shrewd and often brutal guidance of William Sharon, the bank bought interests in virtually all of the mills and most of the mines on the Comstock, and by the late 1860s dominated the economic lifeblood of Virginia City. Following the Great Fire of 1875, this structure was built on the original Bank site.



Beginning in 1944, this building was the home of the Sazerac Saloon, a name with antecedents in nineteenth-century Virginia City. In the early 1960s, in the wake of Bonanza, the bar was renamed the Ponderosa. It features a "mine" tour, which is accessed from the original Bank of California vaults at the rear of the building. The Bank of California Building is open to the public.



Crystal Bar/Banner Brothers Store

86 South C Street

The retail-clothing firm of Banner Brothers operated a store in Virginia City, as well as a large facility in San Francisco, as early as 1868. Following the Great Fire of October 1875, Banner Brothers built this building and operated here until the late 1880s. E.J. Dwyer & Co. also operated a clothing store in this building in the early part of the twentieth century.

In 1934, Bill Marks moved his Crystal Bar into the vacant Banner Brothers building from its former home in the Washoe Club, thus establishing one of the first and most well known tourist-oriented businesses in Virginia City. The Crystal promoted its Victorian crystal chandeliers and encouraged guests to “solve the mystery of the Mystery Clock.” The Marks family operated the Crystal until the late 1990s when the building was purchased by the Virginia City Convention and Tourism Authority. The VCCTA is presently working to rehabilitate the structure, including the Crystal Bar’s interior fixtures, for use as a visitor’s center. The Crystal Bar is open to the public.



Territorial Enterprise Building

23 South C Street

This building was built in 1876 as the third and final office of Nevada’s first newspaper, the Territorial Enterprise. The Enterprise was established as a weekly in Genoa in 1858 and published in Virginia City beginning in 1860. An example of vernacular nineteenth century commercial architecture, the structure was constructed with a high decorative parapet and a cast-iron storefront with fluted Tuscan pilasters. The first steam-activated press in Nevada was installed in the building at the time of its construction. The Enterprise was known for the flamboyant style of journalism developed in its earlier years by such writers as Mark Twain and Dan DeQuille. William Sharon of the Bank of California purchased the paper in 1874 for an estimated one-half million dollars in order to silence the paper’s criticism of him. The paper suspended publication in 1893, but was revived a year later when the first Linotype west of the Mississippi was installed. It shut down again in 1916, only to be revived again in 1953 by Charles Clegg and Lucius Beebe, both New York journalists and prominent historians of the West. Beebe and Clegg using cast-iron pillars from an adjacent derelict building constructed the present porch. Despite impressions to the contrary, Mark Twain never worked in this building—having left Virginia City in 1864 twelve years prior to its construction. The Mark Twain Museum is housed here. Call 775-847-0525 for museum hours.



Bucket of Blood Saloon

1 South C Street

The two buildings that comprise the present day Bucket of Blood Saloon were reconstructed following the 1875 fire and originally housed the Fredericksburg Brewery (north) and Charles Mueller's Saloon (south). From 1934 until

1962, the north building was home to one of the Comstock's earliest tourist institutions, the Museum of Memories. Established in the late 1920s, the Museum of Memories offered historical information and sold Comstock-related antiques and memorabilia. Versal I. McBride and family came to Virginia City in 1931 and immediately opened the Senate Club in the south building. The more colorful Bucket of Blood name was adopted in the late 1930s. The Bucket did much to publicize Virginia City and its history including the promotion of 1860s prostitute and murder victim Julia Bulette as a legendary Comstock figure. For a small fee the saloon offered a telescopic view of Bulette's purported grave on Flowery Hill—visible from the rear window. The Bucket also owns a nineteenth century hearse original to Virginia City, which it maintains and uses in parades and for other special events. Three generations of the McBride family have operated the Bucket of Blood. The Bucket of Blood Saloon is open to the public



Delta Saloon and Sawdust Corner

18 South C Street

The first Delta Bar originated in Virginia City during the initial boom of the early 1860s. In the late 1940s, the Delta reopened at 4 South C Street. The Delta was a favored haunt of the "remittance kids," or café society transplants in the 1950s. It was the home of the "famous" globe originally presented by "silver baron" James Fair to the Virginia City Miners Union. It was here that folklorist Duncan Emrich conducted his oral histories, later published as *In the Delta Saloon*.

The Delta has gradually expanded to incorporate several other structures including, most notably, the Sawdust Corner Saloon. The Sawdust Corner also traces its ancestry to the

early days of the mining boom and was revived in the 1930s. The Sawdust was home to the "famous" Suicide Table, which is still displayed at the present day Delta. The Delta Saloon and Sawdust Corner Restaurant are open to the public.





Bonanza Land & Cattle Company

27 North C Street

The several buildings hidden behind the present façade of the Bonanza Land & Cattle Company can be traced to the late 1870s. This site at various times played host to a carpenter's shop, a saddlery, a livery stable, and beginning in the 1930s, the Virginia City Garage. Following in the wake of the Bonanza tourism boom, this building was given a new "buckaroo revival" style false front and converted into the Bonanza Land and Cattle Company, which has operated as a casino, restaurant, and saloon here since 1964. It is the best surviving example of "Bonanza-fication" and with its rough board siding, wagon wheel light fixtures, and stylized plate glass doors is an excellent representation of this period in Virginia City's history. The Bonanza Land & Cattle Company is open to the public.



Red Dog Saloon

76 North C Street

This building, which dates to 1876, was for many years a hotel and saloon known as the Comstock House. In the early 1960s, however, the saloon changed management and became the Red Dog. This institution had a direct connection to the emerging San Francisco counter-culture and early psychedelic bands such as the Charlatans, and Big Brother and the Holding Company were regular features at the Red Dog. Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters also came through the Comstock and hung out at the Red Dog. It can justifiably claim to be the birthplace of psychedelic music—highlighting both the Comstock's continuing connection to San Francisco and that history was still being made in Virginia City 150 years after the discovery of gold. The Red Dog Saloon is open to the public.



The Way It Was Museum

113 North C Street

As large numbers of tourists began to invade Virginia City in the early 1960s, a wide variety of businesses emerged to meet their needs and tourism expectations. Many of these institutions had little connection to the real mining history of Virginia City—relying instead on the false cowboy image of the Bonanza television series. In 1960, Abe and Margo Kendall created a museum attraction to counter that image of the Comstock, defiantly named "The Way It Was." This attraction attempted to show the touring public something of the actual history of Virginia City with an emphasis on its mining industry. Many of the original displays installed in 1960s continue to serve tourists at "The Way it Was." "The Way it Was" Museum is open for paid tours during tourist season.





Storey County Courthouse

12 South B Street

The Storey County Courthouse was built the High Italianate style that embodies nineteenth-century ideals of decorative opulence as well as law and order. The first county courthouse was destroyed in the Great Fire of October 1875. Reconstruction began in 1876 and the present building, designed by the San Francisco architectural firm of Kenitzer and Raun and built by contractor Peter Burke, was completed in February 1877. The total cost of construction, including fixtures and the jail, was \$117,000, a remarkable sum even for the Comstock boom years. A life-sized figure of Justice stands as sentry at the entrance, but she is not blindfolded, a rare occurrence in our national symbology.



This courthouse is the most lavish of those built in Nevada in the 1800s. Far exceeding the cost of its counterparts, the building served the state's richest community. Ironically, the county built the courthouse at a time when the boom economy of Virginia City was on the verge of collapse. Perhaps due to the inevitability of a downturn, local leaders rebuilt their town following the devastating 1875 fire in grand style. The Storey County Courthouse remains a vivid example of this community's rebirth in the face of economic decline. A portion of its restoration was funded through a grant from the National Park Service. Today the courthouse still serves in its official capacity and is open to the public 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday.



Piper's Opera House

1 North B Street

During the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, Piper's Opera House served as one of the centers of cultural activity on the Comstock and in the West. John Piper originally constructed his brick saloon and office on this site in 1862. The front portion of the current building incorporates remains of the original building that were reused, following fires in 1875 and 1883. The original Piper's Opera House was built in 1877 to the rear of his saloon building. The first auditorium burned in 1883. The current structure was built in 1885, with suspended balconies and a floor mounted on springs. John Mackay, a wealthy mining magnate and one of the Comstock's "kings," was an honored guest, with a private



box and staircase for his exclusive use. The hallmark of late nineteenth-century stage performances was variety. A typical season at Piper's included performances of Shakespeare starring prominent American and British touring actors, in addition to acts by popular chanteuses, and other performers.

On-going restoration work on the opera house began in the 1960s by John Piper's great granddaughter, who offered tours to the public as well as a small museum. Much of the interior furnishings and stage equipment, such as the beautiful hand-painted backdrop scenery, remains intact. An archaeological excavation was conducted in 1998 at Piper's Old Corner Bar, a business located at the southeast corner of the structure. Nearly 100,000 artifacts related to the saloon business were uncovered. Rehabilitation work continues today, thanks to a "Save America's Treasures" grant and other funding from the National Park Service and the Nevada Commission for Cultural Affairs. Call 775-847-0433 for tour appointments or a current schedule of shows.



Graves House/The Castle

190 South B Street

This Italianate-style home was originally built in 1867. It was the home of R.N. Graves who was for many years the superintendent of the Gould & Curry Mining Company works. Unlike most of Virginia City's Victorian period dwellings, the Graves house remains intact. The house includes many original furnishings. It was this level of preservation that made the Graves House, renamed The Castle, one of the first and most successful house museums in Virginia City. The Castle is open for paid tours during tourist season.



Piper-Beebe House

2 South A Street

The Piper-Beebe House is a large two-story Italianate residence constructed in 1876 by pioneer Virginia City architect-builder, A. F. Mackay. Built after the Great Fire of 1875, this house is representative of the elaborate homes built for mine superintendents and wealthy businessmen. The Italianate style found strong favor following the fire, as Virginia City sought to rebuild and present itself in a grand fashion. The Italianate style, exemplified by a vertical design orientation, heavy cornice brackets, and elaborate turned wooden decorative treatments, was the height of fashion on the Pacific slope in the 1870s, and the Piper-Beebe house would feel quite at home on a fashionable Victorian street in San Francisco.



Occupied by Mackay and his family until the mid-1880s, this house was later owned by John Piper, who built nearby Pipers Opera House in 1876. In the 1950s, after years of neglect, Charles Clegg and Lucius Beebe—revivers of the Territorial Enterprise, purchased the house. Beebe and Clegg were two of the leading figures in a café society exodus to Virginia City that began during the Second World War. Together they operated the Enterprise as a weekly paper and published numerous books on the Comstock and railroad history. They figured prominently in the revival of interest in Virginia City that began in the 1930s and culminated with the airing of the Bonanza TV show and resulting tourist boom of the 1960s and 1970s. The Piper-Beebe House is under private ownership.



King-McBride House

26/28 Howard Street

The King-McBride house is an excellent example of High Italianate architecture, replete with bay windows and a widow's walk. It is believed to have been designed by architect Charles H. Jones, who designed a nearly identical house on Curry Street in Carson City. George Anson King, a banker who established the Nevada Bank of San Francisco in Virginia City and served as director of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad, built the King-McBride mansion in about 1870.

Several famous and wealthy Comstock characters owned homes near George King's mansion, including John Mackay, banker J. P. Martin, Judge Richard Rising, and mine superintendent

Charles Forman. King's home was spared in the Great Fire of 1875, while these others burned to the ground. Judge Rising rented the King mansion in the 1880s (the King family had returned to San Francisco), and in 1890 it was deeded to the Catholic Church. The Church leased the mansion to a series of renters, including silent screen actress Bobbette Simpson. In 1944, it was leased to Halvor and Virginia Smedesrude, who operated it as the Bonanza Inn, which served as an elegant retreat for eastern socialites waiting their six-week residency period for a Nevada divorce. In 1953, the property was sold to Versal McBride, owner of Virginia City's Bucket of Blood Saloon. The residence is inhabited and owned by Don McBride, current owner of the Bucket of Blood Saloon on C Street.



Courtesy of Library of Congress



Silver Terrace Cemeteries

End of North E Street,
northeast of the C Street business district

The Silver Terrace Cemeteries are located at the northern terminus of E Street, northeast of the C Street business district. The most dramatic feature of these cemeteries is their location on the steep, windswept hillside. Among the various fraternal, civic, and religious groups represented are the Masons, Pacific Coast

Pioneers, Knights of Pythias, Firemen, Wilson and Brown, Improved Order of Redmen, Roman Catholic, and the city and county. The characteristic features of this burial place demonstrate that cemeteries are good representatives of the period, style, and design. Nearly every plot is fenced or bordered in a grand Victorian motif.



Palm Reader

6870 S. Virginia Street

The palm reader operates from this 1931 brick bungalow with a fine neon sign announcing her business.

Merry Wink Motel

12901 S. Virginia Street

The Merry Wink dates to 1942. At the time, it was well outside of the Reno city limits on the Lincoln Highway route that led to Carson City and Lake Tahoe. The Merry Wink advertised itself with a series of Burma Shave-type highway signs that read: "He who drives half asleep / is now buried / Six Feet Deep / Merry Wink Motel."

Zanzibar

2890/2910 S. Virginia Street

The Zanzibar was built ca. 1947, and its tropical neon sign is one of Reno's most interesting. It is sought after by neon collectors, but the owners are not ready to quit their business nor relinquish their sign.

Return to the National Automobile Museum.



CARDS





TOUR NO. 2

RENO



RENO: BIGGEST LITTLE CITY IN THE WORLD

Meet at the National Automobile Museum

When the first white men passed through in the 1840s, Washoe and Paiute peoples inhabited the land along the Truckee River. In the late 1840s and 1850s, thousands of travelers on their way to the California gold fields lingered a few days in the Truckee Meadows to allow their animals to feed on the native grasses before crossing the Sierra Nevada. The first permanent white settlement along the Truckee River was Jamison's Station. Jamison reportedly was among the contingent sent in 1855 by Brigham Young to establish agricultural settlements in the western part of Utah Territory.



The discovery of the Comstock Lode in 1859 brought a reverse migration from California in the "Rush to Washoe." What began as a gold strike in an isolated canyon soon became one of the richest silver strikes ever discovered. Boomtowns like Virginia City, Gold Hill, Silver City, and Dayton sprang up overnight and flourished as thousands of miners flocked to the area. The growth of the Comstock resulted in the development of towns in the outlying area, including Carson City, the Nevada state capital, and Reno, which had become an important agricultural center, and transportation hub for people and goods to and from the Comstock.



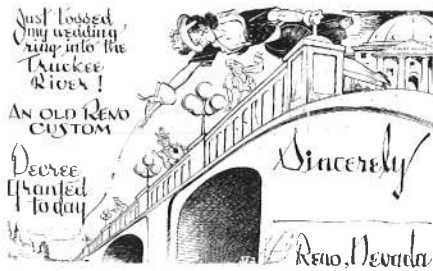
In 1859, C.W. Fuller built a bridge across the Truckee River upstream from Jamison's Station, but annual flooding repeatedly swept it away. Myron Lake purchased Fuller's Crossing in 1860, and after building a sturdier toll bridge, he opened an inn on the south side of the river. The spot became known as Lake's Crossing. When the Central Pacific Railroad was pushing east in the late 1860s, Lake deeded 160 acres to the railroad in consideration of building a depot there. This became the Reno townsite, officially established on May 13, 1868. Reno was to be named Argenta, after the wealth of Comstock silver to be shipped from the new station, but the

name Reno won out, in keeping with the current fashion of naming train stops after Union military officers. General Jesse Reno was a Civil War hero who died in 1862 at the battle of South Mountain. The town of Reno quickly became an important freight and passenger center, and grew rapidly.

Although gaming now plays a key role, historically Nevada's economy was tied to mining and agriculture, and inherent in these industries is the inevitable cycle of booms and busts. Over the years, Nevada has found several creative means to support itself through the down times, and early on Reno earned the title "Sin City." It was a wild-and-woolly town that placed few restrictions on human behavior. Prostitution was permitted under the state



constitution, and its control was left to the local jurisdictions. Until the U.S. Army petitioned City fathers to ban prostitution in 1942, Reno boasted several legal brothels. Nevada attempted to control gambling from the beginning, and although numerous laws were passed, it managed to flourish in back streets and alleys. Seeking ways to survive the Great Depression, the Nevada Legislature legalized gambling in 1931. Casino gaming, as we know it today, developed in Reno.



The birth of the Reno divorce colony can be traced to its first celebrity divorce in 1906, when the wife of the President of United States Steel, William Corey, came to Reno to obtain a divorce from her philandering husband. The event was scandalous and widely publicized. Except for a two-year period, when the residency requirement was increased to one year, the waiting period for a Nevada divorce was a generous six

months. In 1927, during a period of competition among several states for the migratory divorce trade, the Nevada legislature shortened the residency period to three months. This act boosted the industry and divorce-seekers flocked to Reno. In 1931, Nevada was beginning to feel the effects of the Great Depression, and seeing an economic opportunity, the Nevada legislature revised its divorce law once again. This time, it shortened the residency requirement to six weeks, thereby opening the divorce floodgates. Over the ten years between 1929 and 1939, more than 30,000 divorces were granted at the Washoe County Courthouse, and Reno was known as the divorce Mecca of the world.

From the beginning, transportation has been an important theme in the history of Reno and the Truckee Meadows. The emigrant trails, stage roads, the Pony Express, and the railroad have all served to bring people and goods through the region. By the early twentieth century, however, a new means

of transportation was making an impact on the area's development. The Lincoln and Victory Highways came through Reno, generally along Fourth Street, on their way to the California state line. A branch of the Lincoln Highway led south along Virginia Street, and on through Carson City and the communities on the Lake Tahoe shore. In 1927, the two highways were inaugurated with an exposition held at Idlewild Park in Reno. With the establishment of the national highways, automobile tourism became an economic force in the region, and by the end of World War II, easy automobile access to Reno's gambling halls thrust that industry into the forefront of the local and state economy. Drawn by gambling, divorce, and its beautiful natural setting, automobile tourists flocked to the area, and businesses catering to the automobile tourist sprang up and flourished.



Recognizing the importance of automobile tourism to the local economy, the Reno City Council in 1928 decided the town needed a permanent slogan to go on the lighted arch constructed for the highway exposition the previous year. The arch was not Reno's first, but it would become its most famous following the motto competition, which promised \$100 to the winner. After reviewing numerous entries, from "Reno: A City of Sunshine with Warm Welcomes to all" to "Reno: If You Are in a Rush, We Will Get You a Divorce in Three Months." G.A. Burns of Sacramento won the prize, however, with "Reno: Biggest Little City in the World." The winning motto was installed on the arch, and on June 25, 1929, Nevada Governor Fred Balzar pulled a ceremonial switch lighting the logo and launching it into history.



Divorce, gaming, and Reno's other attractions, kept the town afloat during the Depression. Services catering to the automobile tourist (as well as the divorce seeker) proliferated during the 1930s, as hotels and auto camps popped up along the highways. Reno even managed to attract tourists during World War II, when the auto camps began to call themselves motels, and Harolds Club declared "Reno or Bust!" Masters of highway imagery

that they were, Harolds Club owners Pappy and Harold Smith commissioned a huge mural to be installed on their downtown casino. The 40-by-70-foot mural, which depicted a pioneer scene, was made of 180 porcelain-over-metal panels, replete with a flickering campfire and a waterfall. "DEDICATED IN ALL HUMILITY TO THOSE WHO BLAZED THE TRAIL" was spelled out in ruby-glass neon atop the mural. "Reno or Bust" and the mural were Reno's first foray into gaming advertising and the success of the campaign ensured Nevada the title of America's gambling capital for many years.

Since World War II, there has been a steady increase in the population of the Truckee Meadows. Modern subdivisions began to fill former ranch lands, stimulated by growing reliance on the automobile. As the Truckee Meadows grew, the historic landscape began to change. Casinos changed from storefront operations to large high-rise resorts. The Lincoln Highway and other roads became multi-lane federal highways, wiping out earlier neighborhoods and businesses in their path. Old schools were replaced with new modern ones, and downtown shops and services moved into the suburbs. This guidebook will lead you past a few remnants of Reno's colorful past. We hope you enjoy the trip.

Heading south on Reno's main thoroughfare, Virginia Street, the tour passes:



Osen Motor Service Company

600 S. Virginia Street

Nevada's pre-eminent architect, Frederic Delongchamps, designed this one story brick commercial building in 1923 for the Osen Motor Company, which was the dealer for Dodge Brothers automobiles. The building has a decorated brick surface that was achieved through the use of raised and recessed bricks. Rows of bricks were laid in decorative horizontal patterns with ornamented foliated pilaster capitals and medallions of terra cotta.



777 Motel

777 S. Virginia Street

The 777 Motel dates to ca. 1960.



Barnes Radio

888 S. Virginia Street

The Barnes Radio building was built in 1941.



Ox Bow Lodge

941 S. Virginia Street

The Ox-Bow Lodge was built ca. 1958. The name may derive from the book *The Oxbow Incident*, which was published in 1940. The book's author, Walter Van Tilburg Clark, lived and wrote in Reno, Washoe Valley, and Virginia City.



Ho Hum Motel

1025 S. Virginia Street

The Ho Hum Motel was built ca. 1953.





Landrum's Diner

1300 S. Virginia Street

Landrum's Diner arrived in Reno on a rail car in 1947. It is a "Little Chef" model of diner by Valentine Manufacturing Inc. of Wichita, Kansas, and one of few in the West. Landrum's Hamburger System No. 1 seated six and was open "round the clock." It was a popular dining spot for more than three decades, serving Reno citizens and tourists. Its original Valentine interior was intact until 1999, when the tiny building was converted into an automobile title loan office.



Courtesy of City of Reno Planning Dept.



Lowary's Market

670 Mt. Rose Street

Lowary's Market opened in 1941 and served Reno's expanding southwest neighborhood. It was also in a prime location to cater to the divorce-seekers staying at the El Reno Apartments.



El Reno Apartments

Mt. Rose and Lander Streets

The El Reno Apartments were built in 1939 on Mt. Rose Street near Virginia Street. The complex consisted of 16 three-room units and was built for Reno's famous divorce trade. Noted architect Paul Revere Williams designed the buildings after a demonstration house (called the Steel House) he submitted for the Architects' Building Materials Exhibition in 1936. The little El Reno houses used the newest materials in such a way as to appear traditional. The steel walls (interior and exterior) resembled wooden boards. In the intervening years, some of the units have been demolished, and many have been moved to other locations in town.



The tour leads us from Virginia Street down Plumb Lane to the McCarran Loop and onto Interstate 80 west:

Lincoln Highway Bridge at Mogul

The little eponymous road bridge railing was originally located on West Fourth Street where it crossed an irrigation ditch. At some point, it was moved to its current location by the Nevada Department of Transportation.

Heading east on old Highway 40 (West Fourth Street), the tour passes:

Jacpine Motel

W. Fourth Street

The motels along W. Fourth Street generally date to the 1940s, either just before or just after World War II.

Siesta Motel

Demolished

The Siesta Motel (built ca. 1942) was demolished in 2002 and is worthy of mention as the first of Reno's tourist accommodations to accept African-American travelers. Reno was not welcoming of black tourists or residents and had earned the title "Mississippi of the West" for its segregationist policies.

Westerner Motel

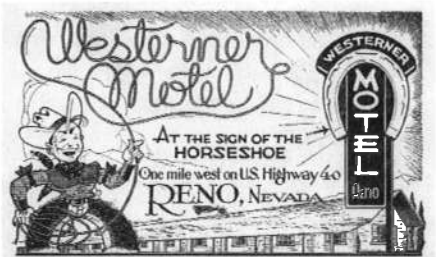
"One mile west on U.S. Highway 40"

The Westerner was built in the 1940s one mile west of Reno's city limits.

Summit Motel

3001 W. Fourth Street

The Summit Motel was built ca. 1950.



Tombstone Territory Motel

2255 W. Fourth Street

This motel was built in 1941.



Sunset Motel

2091 W. Fourth Street

The Sunset Motel was built ca. 1936 and started life at the Sunset Auto Court. A general change in terminology occurred in the 1940s, when auto courts and camps were called motels.



El Tavern Court

1801 W. Fourth Street

The El Tavern Motel was built after World War II to replace a popular nightclub called The Tavern that burned down in 1942. Due to the shortage of building materials during the war, little new construction was undertaken until the war's end, at which time a flurry of residential and commercial construction began. America was ready for a respite following years of war and depression and Reno's automobile tourism industry boomed, resulting in the proliferation of motels, diners, gas stations, and other tourist accommodations.



Silver State Lodge

1791 W. Fourth Street

The Silver State Lodge was built in 1927 for the divorce trade. It offered rustic, yet comfortable (and discreet) housing for Reno's temporary residents. By the late 1930s, automobile tourism increased, and the Silver State was in a good location, along the Lincoln Highway, to serve that industry as well.

Several additions were made to the property to attract the traveler. In the past few years, the little cabins have been operated as low-income housing, and there was even talk of moving them to another location.



Skateland

1345 W. Fourth Street

Skateland was a roller rink and was built ca. 1935.



Donner Inn

720 W. Fourth Street

The Donner Inn was built in 1953.



Chapel of the Bells

700 W. Fourth Street, 1940

Reno was known as much for its quickie marriages as it was for divorces. The first wedding chapel opened across from the Washoe County Courthouse in the mid-1950s. It was not long before others appeared on Reno's landscape. The Chapel of the Bells has been in business since the 1960s.

This building, which was built in 1940, was formerly a residence.



Candlelight Wedding Chapel

600 W. Fourth Street

If you were traveling along the Lincoln Highway and had a sudden need to get married, you had your choice of the Candlelight Wedding Chapel or the Chapel of the Bells. Each would supply organ music, wedding attire, silk flowers, and a witness.



Rancho Sierra Motel

411 W. Fourth Street

The Rancho Sierra Motel was built ca. 1952. It billed itself at "one of the west's finer motels."



Continuing south on Arlington,
the tour passes:

 **El Ray Motel**

330 N. Arlington Street

The El Ray was built ca. 1946.



 **Sands Motor Inn**

345 N. Arlington Street

The Sands Motor Inn, which has subsequently been subsumed by the Sands Casino expansion, was built in 1964. The only remaining element of the original Armet and Davis design is the sign, which still stands along Arlington Street.



 **Star of Reno Motel**

360 N. Arlington Street

The Star of Reno was built ca. 1957.

 **Keno Motel**

332 West Street

The Keno Motel was built in 1964, just after completion of Interstate 80.



 **Townhouse Motor Lodge**

303 W. Second Street

The Townhouse Motor Lodge was built ca. 1956.



 **In-Town Motel**

260 W. Fourth Street

The In-Town Motel dates to the 1970s.

 **Mardi Gras Motel**

200 W. Fourth Street

The Mardi Gras was built in 1964 just after completion of Interstate 80.



Heading west on Second Street:



Downtowner Motor Lodge

150 Stevenson Street

The Downtowner was built in 1959.



7-11 Motor Lodge

465 W. Second Street

The 7-11 was built ca. 1960, in anticipation of the construction of Interstate 80.



Mid-Town Motel and Lounge

611 W. Second Street

The Mid-Town Motel and Lounge was built in 1951. The lounge sports one of Reno's best cocktail-glass neon signs.



Chism's Auto Camp/Trailer Park

1300 W. Second Street

The locally prominent Chism family built the Chism Auto Camp in 1927. The auto camp opened just in time for the Transcontinental Highway Exposition that was held across the Truckee River at Idlewild Park. Its location along the river was both picturesque and convenient to the highway traveler. The auto camp also served the divorce trade for a number of years. Following the construction of Interstate 80 in the 1960s, Chism's made the minor conversion from auto camp to trailer park, which it continues to be today.





Gas Station

100 Winter Street

This is most likely Reno's oldest existing gas station. Although its exact construction date is not known, some sources place it at 1914, an early date for automobile travel through town.

Cross the Truckee River on the Booth Street Bridge and enter Idlewild Park (built for the Transcontinental Highway Exposition):

Lunch at the California Building

1000 Whitmore Drive

The California Building was the gift of Nevada's neighboring state for the Transcontinental Highway Exposition held in Reno the summer of 1927. Located in Idlewild Park, the exposition honored the completion of the Victory and Lincoln Highways, which converged along Fourth Street in Reno. A large gold-colored bronze bear, the California state mascot, stood in front of the California building during the exposition. The bear disappeared at some point and its whereabouts are unknown. Anyone with information leading to the recovery of this bear is urged to come forward. No reward is offered, but we will all pitch in for a roll of quarters redeemable in any of Reno's casinos.



Courtesy of the Nevada SHPO

Head north on Keystone to McCarran, then south on North Virginia:

Fleischmann Atmospherium

N. Virginia Street, UNR Campus

The Fleischmann Atmospherium was built in 1963 and designed by Reno architect Raymond Hellmann. The Atmospherium was the first of its kind in the world. Whereas other planetaria featured views of the night sky and the solar system, the Fleischmann simulated both day and night conditions and a full range of atmospheric phenomena including cloud formations, thunderstorms, and rain-



bows. The Fleischmann Atmospherium is also an outstanding example of Populuxe architecture.





Silver Dollar Motor Lodge

817 N. Virginia Street

The Silver Dollar was built ca. 1957.



Savoy Motel

705 N. Virginia Street

The Savoy was built ca. 1961.



Reno Vulcanizing

590 N. Virginia Street, 1951

Automobile related businesses filled the commercial blocks along Virginia Street fairly early in the twentieth century. Reno Vulcanizing was one of the few to endure the onslaught of high-rise casinos. This building dates to 1951, but the business was established before that.



Uptown Motel

570 N. Virginia Street

The Uptown was built ca. 1956.



Heart-O-Town Motel

520 N. Virginia Street

The Heart-O-Town was built ca. 1960.



Thunderbird Motel

420 N. Virginia Street

The Thunderbird was built ca. 1958.



Eastbound on East Fourth Street:



Louis' Basque Corner/Lincoln Hotel

301 E. Fourth Street

The Lincoln Hotel, which houses the renowned Basque restaurant, Louis' Basque Corner, was built in 1922 for the Lincoln Highway trade. On the corner next to the building is a pole that once held Reno's unique traffic signaling device — a horn.



 **Marion Hotel**

306 E. Fourth Street

The Marion began in 1908 as the Royal Rooming House.



 **NCO Depot**

325 E. Fourth Street

The NCO Depot was built in 1910 to serve the Nevada-California-Oregon Railroad. The N-C-O was one of the twentieth century's longest narrow gauge railways. This depot was designed by Nevada's pre-eminent architect Frederic DeLongchamps.

 **Morris Hotel**

400 E. Fourth Street

The Morris Hotel was built in 1929 to cater to the Lincoln Highway trade.



 **Abby's Highway 40 Bar**

424 E. Fourth Street

Abby's Highway 40 Bar warrants a visit to view the collection of historic photographs on the walls. The building that houses the bar was built ca. 1900.



 **El Rancho Motel**

777 E. Fourth Street

El Rancho No. 2 dates to the mid-1950s. El Rancho No. 1 was located south of Reno on Virginia Street.



 **Denny's**

777 E. Fourth Street

Armet and Davis designed this building for Denny's in 1961.





Farris Motel

1752 E. Fourth Street

The Farris Motel was built in 1949. Note the unique little tower over the entrance of the motel office.



Everybody's Inn Motel

1756 E. Fourth Street

Everybody's Inn is probably one of the best motel names ever conceived. This property is reported to have been built ca. 1930, before the use of the word motel in Reno. It may have started life as an auto camp.



Restwell Auto Camp sign

Across from 2500 E. Fourth Street

This is the site of the Restwell Auto Court, which operated along the Lincoln Highway beginning in ca. 1927. Although it was one of many auto camps and courts along this route, the Restwell also played a role in Reno's divorce trade. It was listed as the place of residence for a number of divorce-seekers in the 1930s.



Casale's Halfway Club

2501 E. Fourth Street

As its name implies, Casale's Halfway Club (built in 1930) was originally located halfway between Reno and Sparks on the Lincoln Highway. Serving drinks and food, Casale's remains a popular nightspot.





Star Motel/Auto Court

E. Fourth Street

The Star Motel began life as the Star Auto Court ca. 1927, when the route was the famed Lincoln Highway. Like the Restwell Auto Court, the Star served the divorce trade in the 1930s. The auto court's conversion to a motel most likely occurred after World War II.

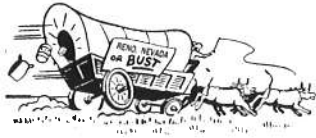


Coney Island Bar

2644 Prater Way

Coney Island was located between Reno and Sparks along the Lincoln Highway. In the general vicinity were a number of auto camps and recreational facilities. The bar is the last remnant of this area.





SPARKS

Established in 1904 as a division point on the Southern Pacific Railroad, the town of Sparks developed when the railroad shops were moved here from Wadsworth. The town was to have been named Harriman, after Edward H. Harriman, president of the railroad, but he declined the honor. Instead it was named Sparks after John Sparks, who was Nevada's governor at the time. The railroad drove Sparks's economy through the 1950s.



Jack's Coffee Shop

2200 Victorian Avenue

Jack's is one of the area's finest Goochie buildings. Built ca. 1970 as a Sambo's Coffee Shop, Jack's is still a popular local hangout and favorite breakfast spot. The building's construction likely corresponded to the completion of the Sparks off ramp on Interstate 80.



Pony Express Sign/Motel

2406 Prater Way

The Pony Express Motel started out ca. 1933 as Cremer's Auto Court. In the 1951, it became the Lincoln Highway annex for Reno's famous Harolds Club under the name Pony Express Motel. The neon sign, probably the biggest and most elaborate in the area, was built ca. 1951 by the Young Electric Sign Company.



Park Motel

1500 Prater Way

The Park Motel, with its wonderful little bellboy neon sign, was built in 1947.





Scoopers Drive-in

1356 Prater Way

Scoopers, conveniently located around the corner from Sparks High School, was built in 1961 as an A & W Rootbeer stand. It became Scoopers in 1979, and is known for its malts and excellent hamburgers.



China Clipper

495 Greenbrae Avenue

The China Clipper opened in 1971 as Cap'n Bill's Fish and Chips. From 1972 to 1981 it operated as Neptune's Galley, becoming the China Clipper in 1982.



Last Chance Joe at the Nugget

1100 Nugget Avenue

Dick Graves opened the first Sparks Nugget, a restaurant chain, in 1955. John Ascuaga, a young, hardworking Basque, worked for Graves and by 1958 was able to acquire the business from his boss. Ascuaga expanded the business to include gaming, and was so successful that he expanded into Sparks's first skyscraper.



East on Highway 80 to Mustang Exit:



Mustang Ranch

Exit 23 of I-80

The Mustang Ranch was Nevada's largest, most elaborate, and notorious brothel from the initial trailers brought in by Joe Conforte in the 1960s to the hot-pink stucco compound (replete with guard tower) he built in 1976. Prostitution is legal under the Nevada constitution, but permitted by local option. Where it is practiced, it is highly regulated. The Mustang Ranch was closed in 1999 by the federal government and is now under the control of the U.S. Treasury Department.



Return to the National Automobile Museum.



RENO

SCA 2002 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

