

Preserve Nevada  
2003 Site Lists

2003  
NEVADA'S 11 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES

Eleven Most Endangered

**Virginia St. Bridge**— Listed in the National Register in 1980. The Virginia Street Bridge in Reno was built in 1905. It did not take long following its construction for the bridge to gain a national reputation. When Reno was known as the Divorce Capital of the World, the Virginia Street Bridge was the symbol of the trade. Known as "Wedding Ring Bridge," the Virginia Street Bridge has been the subject of national folklore that continues to the present day. The legend holds that divorcées, upon receiving their final decree from the judge, exited the Washoe County Courthouse, kissed the columns supporting the portico and proceeded *post haste* past the Riverside Hotel to the Virginia Street Bridge, whence they cast their wedding rings into the Truckee River. The Virginia Street Bridge is nationally significant as the subject of the folklore involving Reno's famous divorce trade. The bridge is currently seriously threatened with demolition as a result of a Truckee River flood control project that seeks to replace three historic bridges in downtown Reno.

Following Preserve Nevada's announcement that this historic span over the Truckee River was to be added to our 11 most endangered properties list, various interested parties were invited to a meeting with Senator Bryan as coordinator. It was decided that a bridge task force would be formed to work with all interested parties to examine the possibilities for incorporating the Bridge into the broader Flood Management and Riverfront Redevelopment plans presently underway. The US Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal agency in charge of the Flood Project, agreed to hire a nationally known bridge rehabilitation team to develop a plan for the bridge. A local and national team of engineers, architects and planners was hired in March 2003 and will begin work with the task force and other parties and are expected to announce the results of their work in May. Preliminary discussions on the scope of this work have been undertaken and consultation is underway with all the concerned parties. The outlook is cautiously optimistic that the Virginia Street Bridge can be successfully incorporated into the Flood Management plan and into the Riverfront Redevelopment plan.

**Stewart Indian School**— Listed in the National Register in 1985. The Stewart Indian School in Carson City is an intact 83-building complex, which was established in 1887 as a facility for Native American education emphasizing self-reliance and cultural assimilation. Native American apprentice stonemasons under the direction of superintendent Frederick Snyder built a number of the surviving buildings. Ownership of the complex was transferred from the federal government to the State of Nevada 15 years ago. In the intervening years, little has been done to take advantage of the property as a historic site. Currently, the State is developing a plan for the campus, which should be encouraged to follow proper preservation practices.

Since its inclusion in Preserve Nevada's 2002 list, the first step has been taken to restore the Stewart Indian School. A group composed of individuals from the Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs, State Lands, Public Works, Building & Grounds, and the Nevada Indian Commission have formed a coalition and to prepare a comprehensive assessment of the property. Additionally, the Attorney General's office is working to recover artifacts that have been removed from the School's site.

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**Moulin Rouge** – Listed in the National Register in 1992. The Moulin Rouge in Las Vegas was built in 1955 to serve African American entertainers who, because of the Jim Crow policies of Las Vegas resorts, were not allowed to stay in the hotels where they performed, or to openly socialize with the patrons. Although the Moulin Rouge was only open for five months, it helped pave the way for open accommodations in Las Vegas. The Moulin Rouge is currently privately owned, and is located in an area that is currently undergoing redevelopment. Without adequate funding to preserve the building, the owner may be forced to sell the building for development.

Despite renewed interest in the property, the Moulin Rouge continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate. A new organization has taken an active interest in restoring the Moulin Rouge and is currently in the process of cataloging the building's historical elements and preparing a preservation plan to secure funding. At this time, the building's leaking roof threatens the structure and there are reports that water damage is accumulating within the building, threatening murals and other artifacts.

**Goldfield High School** – Part of the Goldfield Historic District, listed in the National Register in 1982. The school was built in 1907 in response to the burgeoning population that resulted from the gold and silver boom that began in 1902. Since the boom in Goldfield declined by 1910, and few modifications were needed, the large stone and brick school retains a high degree of integrity, although its condition has deteriorated severely. The Goldfield High School is currently privately owned. It suffers from structural instability and severe deferred maintenance. Lack of funding prevents preservation efforts and the building is at risk of collapse.

Goldfield High School continues to deteriorate. With its roof open to the elements, the wood inside the historic structure is becoming severely damaged. Lack of funding has prevented the owner of the Goldfield High School from making repairs that would lead to stabilization and preservation of this historic structure.

**Mineral County Courthouse** – Listed in the National Register in 1982. The Mineral County Courthouse in Hawthorne was built in 1883 as the Esmeralda County courthouse, which operated until 1907 when Hawthorne lost county seat status to Goldfield. In 1911, Mineral County was established and the courthouse was placed back in service. It is the only Nevada courthouse to have served two counties and one of only seven extant nineteenth century courthouses in the state. The Mineral County Courthouse has been vacant for years and it suffers from structural instability and severe deferred maintenance. The County views the building as a liability and there is currently no vision to preserve it.

In the past year, a preliminary assessment of the Mineral County Courthouse was performed that found the building structurally sound. A local non-profit organization has been formed to rehabilitate the building and there are plans to seek funding to restore the Mineral County Courthouse for use as a community center with a historical museum as its centerpiece.

**Las Vegas Railroad Cottages** – Railroad Cottage I Historic District listed in the National Register in 1987. The San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad built the Las Vegas Railroad Cottages between 1909 and 1912. The company offered homes in three styles to workers in the company's machine shops and rail yards. A total of sixty-four homes were built by the railroad. The Railroad Cottages are all privately owned and are located in an area with high ground values. There is extreme pressure to demolish the cottages for the development potential of the land, and in fact there are only a few cottages remaining in the historic district.

In response to a demolition plan, public agencies and concerned individuals recovered one of the most structurally-intact cottages by arranging for its removal to the Clark County Museum where it will be restored.

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**Nevada Rock Art Sites**—There are at least 11 Nevada rock art sites throughout the state listed in the National Register. Nevada rock art sites reflect the wide range of prehistoric cultures that inhabited the Great Basin and Sonoran desert regions of the state. Although the locations of rock art sites are kept confidential, they are threatened by urban development, transfer of land from federal to private ownership, and increased tourism.

Since Preserve Nevada drew attention to the endangered status of many rock art sites in Nevada, a new organization—the Nevada Rock Art Foundation—has formed with the result that professional and amateur archeologists are now stimulating statewide interest in these endangered treasures. The creation of the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area is good news for sites in Southern Nevada. Despite the failure of a Site Stewardship Bill to make it into law that would have allowed for the cataloging of archeological sites of all types throughout Nevada, Preserve Nevada was encouraged at the broad based support that initiative received—demonstrating as it does the mounting concern for these irreplaceable treasures.

**Nevada Northern Railway complex**—Listed in the National Register 1993. The Northern Nevada Railway complex in Ely consists of a depot, shops, yards, rolling stock, and trackage. The railroad was built in 1905 as a short line to serve the copper mining boom of the early twentieth century that helped pull Nevada out of an economic decline. The railway functioned from its original steam-powered beginnings to the diesel age of the 1980s. The Nevada Northern Railway complex is threatened by a general need for ongoing funding to maintain the complex and to keep it operational.

After being listed on Preserve Nevada's 11-Most Endangered List, the Nevada Northern Railway Complex has received funding from the Nevada Commission for Cultural Affairs to repair the Engine House and since its inclusion on Preserve Nevada's 11-Most Endangered List, has applied for further funding to perform structural repair and educational outreach.

**Million Dollar Courthouse**—Listed in the National Register 1982. The Million Dollar Courthouse in Pioche was built in 1871-1872 and served the people of Lincoln County for 66 years. The courthouse is called the Million Dollar courthouse because of the manner in which it was financed. It began with a contract of \$26,000, but through mismanagement and shady dealings, the final price tag for the building was in the \$800,000 range. The community values the Courthouse, but it is threatened by the hillside behind it that drains water into the building. Water damage and hillside erosion threaten the building, although the county has received grant funds from the Nevada Commission for Cultural Affairs to ameliorate the problem.

Since last year's listing on Preserve Nevada's 11 Most Endangered List, the Million Dollar Courthouse has made major progress. Under the direction of Lincoln County Grants Administrator, Phyllis Robistow, the County received grants from the Nevada SHPO to hire a structural engineer to work on the drainage problems that were undermining the building's foundation. The engineers came up with a plan to rebuild the roof with an improved slant and gutter system to funnel water away from the building. The county also received a large Federal Highways Administration grant to re-engineer the roadway above the building to ensure that runoff would not enter the foundation. The new road will have improved gutters, curbs, and drains to guarantee that even in the heaviest rains the courthouse should be safe. Enthusiasm from these successes led to the formation of a new community group and expanded efforts to find funding to restore the Thompson Opera House. Another grant from the Nevada Commission for Cultural Affairs is being used to fix the roof and stabilize the building.

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**Tonopah Main Street** – Tonopah Multiple Resource Area listed in the National Register in 1982. Tonopah came into existence in 1900 as the result of an accidental find by part-time prospector Jim Butler. The buildings along Tonopah's main street were built between 1900 and 1907, and reflect residential, commercial, and municipal buildings that quickly sprang-up in response to the mining boom. The threat to the historic resources in Tonopah is a general lack of economic stimulus in the downtown core, resulting in closed storefronts and deferred maintenance.

A group in Tonopah has formed the non-profit Tonopah Development Corporation to save Tonopah's Main Street. Applying a plan that has successfully worked in another state, they are encouraging main street restoration with a 75% reimbursement program to those who purchase a building and undertake its restoration and have applied for funding to begin their "Downtown Storefront Renovation Rebate Project" off the ground. They estimate that approximately \$50,000 will be needed for the initial funding of this effort. Of urgent concern are two buildings, one a stone bank building currently offered for sale by a private owner uninterested in preserving the structure and Tonopah's landmark – the Mizpah Hotel. Preserve Nevada has recommended that the Tonopah Development Corporation contact the National Trust for Historic Preservation in hopes that their Main Street Program might help to save Tonopah's Main Street.

**Silver State Lodge** – The Silver State Lodge was built in 1927 as an automobile tourist court catering to Reno's divorce trade. The property, which was originally located along the Lincoln Highway, consists of a main lodge building and a number of small log cabins. It is threatened with demolition or relocation. The owner wants to develop the property into higher density rental units.

The Silver State Lodge remains endangered. Since being listed as one of 2002's Endangered Sites, Preserve Nevada has been in contact with its new owners who were unaware and curious about the Lodge's history. The State Historic Preservation Office has contacted the owners in hopes that a permanent preservation solution might be found but at this time, it seems unlikely that the Lodge will be saved.

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Successfully Saved Sites

**Las Vegas Post Office**—Listed on the National Register in 1983. Construction began on the Second Renaissance Revival style structure in 1931 and it remains an excellent example of federal architecture built at the time Las Vegas was beginning to come into its own. Situated on the north side of Stewart Avenue, the Post Office is set back from the sidewalk in a small lawn and a wide granite stair ascends from the sidewalk to the raised first floor level. The first federal building erected in Las Vegas, the brick and terra cotta Post Office is the most refined of Las Vegas's Depression-era architecture, and represents the city's part in the Hoover administration's late 1920s building program. In 2002, the City of Las Vegas acquired the building and plans to preserve it for use as a cultural venue.

**Riverside Hotel**—Listed in the National Register in 1986. Nevada's pre-eminent architect, Frederic DeLongchamps, designed the 1927 version of the Riverside Hotel for Reno's most powerful man, George Wingfield. The hotel was built to capitalize on Reno's world-famous divorce trade. The Riverside Hotel had an international reputation and was the temporary home of many rich and famous divorce-seekers. Just as the demolition permit was issued, Art Space Inc. devised an elaborate financing scheme for the building's rehabilitation into artist lofts. It is one of the greatest success stories in Reno preservation history.

**Fourth Ward School**—Virginia City Historic District (Landmark District) listed 1966. The Fourth Ward School was built in 1876 in the Comstock mining boomtown of Virginia City. The school was a combination grammar and high school, designed to accommodate 1025 students. It was in part financed by contributions from mining companies and businesses, and later by individuals, and school benefits. The Fourth Ward School was reopened in 1986 as a museum, 50 years after it had closed. Through local funds, and grants from the Save America's Treasures Program and the Nevada Commission for Cultural Affairs, the Fourth Ward School is being restored to its former glory.

**Eureka Opera House**—Eureka Historic District listed in the National Register in 1973. The Eureka Opera House was built in 1880 on the foundation of the Odd Fellows Hall. Like many Nevada towns, Eureka began as a mining boomtown with the concomitant population increase. The town declined after 1910. In 1990, Eureka County acquired the building and began a three-year restoration project. In 1994, it received a National Preservation Honor Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Today, the Eureka Opera House is a full-service convention center and cultural arts center.

**Oats Park School**—Listed in the National Register in 1990. Architect Frederic DeLongchamps designed the Oats Park School in Fallon in 1914. It was enlarged in 1921 following his proposals for an addition. The school served the growing community of Fallon, which was prospering as a result of the Newlands Irrigation Project that opened thousands of acres to irrigated agriculture. In the 1990s, the Churchill Arts Council selected Oats Park School for its future visual and performing arts facility. In addition to a magnificent restoration of the historic school, a 350-seat proscenium theater was built at the back of the historic school building. Through grants from a variety of sources, as well as the Nevada Commission for Cultural Affairs, Oats Park School has been transformed into a world-class facility.

**Midas School**—Midas School was built in 1928 to serve the 20<sup>th</sup> century mining boom in Elko County. The school retains a high degree of integrity, down to the playground equipment in the schoolyard and the boys and girls outhouses behind the school. Midas Joint Venture, a mining group, acquired the building in 1996. As a gift to the community the mining company deeded the building to Friends of Midas and provided funding for the restoration of the school. The building now serves as a museum for the small town of Midas.

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**Boulder Dam Hotel**—Listed in the National Register in 1982. The Boulder Dam Hotel was built in 1932, and added onto in 1934. The hotel was built in the “government town” of Boulder City, which was created to accommodate workers on the huge Hoover Dam project. The dam construction project became a destination for high-level government officials and prominent visitors, and the hotel filled a need for accommodations that would fit their stations in life. The Boulder Dam Hotel was the first Nevada hotel to be accepted into the National Trust for Historic Preservation Historic Hotel’s list. Over the course of eight years, the hotel has been restored into a bed-and-breakfast facility.

**Las Vegas High School**—Listed in the National Register in 1986. The firm of George A Ferris and Son designed the school buildings, which were completed in 1931. The school is the best example of Art Deco architecture in Las Vegas. The decoration consists of cast concrete reliefs and friezes depicting animal and vegetal forms. A new high school was built in 1993, but rather than give up on the old one it was given a new purpose and a new name, the Las Vegas Academy for the Performing Arts. Surrounded by Ferris’s graceful Art Deco designs, students experience a creative and innovative learning environment.

**Tonopah Mining Park**—Tonopah Mining Park is listed on the National Register. It is comprised of Tonopah’s original mining claim—a claim that started the rush to Tonopah and secured its subsequent role as Queen of the Silver Camps. Belle and Jim Butler’s strike in the year 1900 brought the United States into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and many mining and processing techniques developed there are still in use today. Tonopah Mining Park has set aside 100 acres that include 14 mining structures that demonstrate the mining technology developed in 1900. These structures have been restored to through a variety of grant sources including the Nevada Commission for Cultural Affairs. After its inclusion on Preserve Nevada’s 2002 list, the Tonopah Mining Park has received another grant from the Commission for Cultural Affairs.

**Las Vegas Mormon Fort**—Listed in the National Register in 1972. The Las Vegas Mormon Fort is one of Nevada’s oldest extant buildings, dating to 1855. The Fort was settled by Mormons who were asserting their interests in this part of the West, which was the conversion of Native Americans to Mormonism, and to establish a way station for travelers along the Mormon Trail. The Fort was located adjacent Las Vegas Springs, which was one of a very few sources of good water in the Las Vegas Valley. The Las Vegas Mormon Fort is operated by the Nevada State Park system. The park includes historic sites and recreations and historic interpretation. The original fort adobe is maintained in a state of arrested decay.

**Adams House**—Listed in the National Register in 1999. The Adams House in Carson City was built in 1922. It is a pristine example of a Craftsman bungalow that embodied all the spirit of the Craftsman movement. The Adams House was slated for demolition to make room for a parking lot for Carson-Tahoe Hospital, when local preservationists appealed to the Hospital to save it. In response, the Hospital turned the building over to the Hospital Foundation, which has completed an exemplary restoration project. The building now serves as the Foundation office and as a resource center for cancer patients. The Adams House is an outstanding example of successful local preservation.

**Pioneer Building**—The Pioneer Building in Elko was built in 1913 and immediately became the largest retail and office building in Elko County. The building was designed by leading Intermountain West architects Ware and Treganza, known for their Prairie style and Arts and Crafts buildings in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Pioneer Building is a typical Arts and Crafts commercial building of its era. Although there are numerous residential buildings in the Arts and Crafts style in Nevada, the style was rarely used for commercial structures. The Pioneer Building saw general decline in the 1970s and 1980s, but in 1991 the building was purchased by the Western Folklife Center, which among other things directs the popular annual Cowboy Poetry Gathering. Phase six of a major restoration project is currently underway with funding from the Nevada Commission for Cultural Affairs and other grant sources. Since being listed by Preserve Nevada as one of the successfully saved sites, the Pioneer Building has received another grant from the Commission for Cultural Affairs for continued restoration.