

Preserve Nevada 2021 Most Endangered List

Lear Theatre

528 W. 1st Street, Reno

Renowned African American architect Paul Revere Williams, known as the "architect to the stars" and for Las Vegas's La Concha Motel (now part of the Neon Museum) designed the First Church of Christ, Scientist in the late 1930s. The Neoclassical Revival building stood on the north bank of the Truckee River, serving the Christian Science community from 1939 until the congregation constructed a new church in 1998. In an effort to preserve a priceless example of Reno's architectural heritage, Moya Lear, widow of aviation pioneer Bill Lear, bought the building and donated it to the Reno-Sparks Theater Coalition. Renamed the Lear Theater in her honor, it closed in 2002 and has remained empty for nearly two decades. The theater possesses one of the last original historic interiors in Reno.

Local arts organization Artown now owns the Lear Theatre. The organization has been exploring options for the property, including sales and redevelopment offers. Unfortunately, some of the proposals have included developments on Riverside Drive that might threaten both the Lear and that historic street. Until there is a concrete plan for adaptively reusing the building while adhering to historic preservation standards, the Lear Theater's future continues to hang in the balance.

<http://renohistorical.org/items/show/63?tour=4&index=3>



Link to image: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017779894/>

Owyhee Stone Buildings, Owyhee Reservation, Elko County

The town of Owyhee and the Duck Valley Reservation date to the late 1870s. The original office building and stone building on the reservation date back until the 1890s or early 1900s, and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 helped lead to construction of more stone buildings, including a hospital and a power house made of volcanic stone from the Owyhee area. These buildings represent the long history of Indigenous People in Nevada and the legacy of Native labor, but have declined with time and would benefit from attention.



Photo Credit: Northeastern Nevada Museum

Commercial Hotel, Elko

Today, the casino in Elko's Commercial Hotel opens only to maintain its gaming license. But its long history dates back to Elko's beginnings as a Central Pacific railroad town in 1869. Under owner Newt Crumley, also a Nevada political figure, it pioneered big name entertainment in the state in 1941, starting with legendary vaudevillian Ted Lewis and numerous others who went on to perform in Las Vegas and Reno as well. Today the building needs work, and the property receives attention for those interested in ghosts.



Photo Credit: Jan Peterson

Goldfield High School

Built in late 1907 at the apex of Goldfield's 5-year boom and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982, it is one of the few highly significant buildings to survive the great fires of 1923-24. Along with three grade schools, the 3-story Romanesque-style masonry structure, designed by Architect J.B. Randell, reflects the community's commitment to education. As mining and population declined, all schools were consolidated into the high school, where instruction continued until 1953. That year, a new school was built and the high school abandoned. A 2009 National Park Service Reconnaissance Survey found a high degree of historic integrity, although lack of maintenance had led to roof deterioration and rendered the high school's exterior walls unstable. Since being deeded to a state non-profit corporation, federal, state and private funding has allowed the exterior walls to be rebuilt, eliminating the ongoing risk of collapse. A current state Commission for Cultural Centers and Historic Preservation grant will allow work to begin on roof restoration, thereby preserving this important example of Goldfield life from its time as the last great gold mining boom in the West.



Photo credit: [UNLV Special Collections.](#)

Austin buildings

St. Augustine's is Nevada's oldest Catholic church building, a combination of Gothic Revival and Italianate architecture built in 1866 with native brick and stone fired at the Austin Brickyard and later renovated. It includes the only surviving Henry Kigen church organ that is still functional, and is now a cultural center. Also built in 1866, the Methodist Church is now the Emma Nevada Town Hall in honor of the opera singer who grew up in Austin. St. George's Episcopal Church, erected in 1878, still serves the denomination who built it. But Austin is a small town, and the buildings require constant attention.



Photo Credit: [Nevada Magazine, 2015](#)

Nevada's Indigenous Languages

The Endangered Languages Project and the First Peoples' Cultural Council warn that about 40 percent of the world's 7,000 languages are in danger of disappearing. These include the Northern Paiute, the Southern Paiute, Shoshone, and Washo. The more we can do to encourage the teaching of these languages to current and future generations, the better our chances of preserving these important parts of the cultural heritage of these people, and of Nevada.



Photo Credit: [Endangered Languages Project and the First Peoples' Cultural Council](#)

Tonopah Army Air Field

Tonopah Army Air Field (TAAF) was a B-24 Liberator training facility during World War II from 1942 to 1946. More than 6,000 military personnel were assigned to this base, including Chuck Yeager, the first man to break the sound barrier. A familiar Nevada name who was stationed there was Jackie Gaughan, the longtime Las Vegas casino owner. All that remains of the TAAF today are two hangars in various stages of disrepair, many acres of concrete foundations, and the original runways, which are still in use. A third hangar collapsed early in 2019. The property is owned by Nye County.



Photo Credit: Joni Eastley

Stewart Indian School

Opened in 1890, it was one of the many boarding schools designed to educate and force a different culture upon Native Americans. It closed in 1980, and is now a museum and historic site. The progress has been substantial and includes a cultural center and museum. But more remains to be done—the state has helped with funding, but money is needed to renovate and preserve some of its historic buildings, including the bakery building/post office, gymnasium, and auditorium.



Photo Credit: Bobbi Rahder

Huntridge Theatre

The Huntridge first opened in 1944 in the new neighborhood built when World War II was beginning. The theater became a community and entertainment center for the surrounding area at the time, and for all of Las Vegas. It was the first desegregated theatre in southern Nevada. The Huntridge served as a cinema while also hosting stage productions and concerts. The roof of the theatre collapsed in 1995, but it was repaired and the venue remained in use until 2004. Developer J Dapper has purchased it, and we have high hopes for The Huntridge's future and his plans, but its future remains uncertain.



Photo Credit: Billy Marino

Hawthorne, Tonopah, and Austin Courthouses

Although some offices at the Nye County Courthouse are in use, the rest of the building has been abandoned; a Brownfields grant allowed the county to perform a Phase I environmental assessment, which is needed before any stabilization and restoration can take place. Important Nevada figures such as Key Pittman and Pat McCarran once practiced law there. The Mineral County Courthouse in Hawthorne, the only courthouse in Nevada to serve two counties when it was originally part of Esmeralda County, is in danger; a two-story Italianate building, it has a five-sided circular entry porch and a balustrade. The Austin Courthouse, an 1871 Greek revival, still is in use and must be carefully taken care of.



Photo Credit: Joni Eastley

Historic Cemeteries and Burial Sites

Rural cemeteries are important sources of historical information both for what they contain, such as information on tombstones, and what they lack, such as marginalized groups whose members are buried in their own sites, such as the Jewish cemetery in Eureka. Many have worked to preserve the historic cemeteries in Virginia City and the Reno community has made great progress with Hillside Cemetery, but some cemeteries are on federal land (such as Round Mountain's and Belmont's), and others are left in disrepair. The concerns of Indigenous Nevadans about their burial sites require attention, as do the burials of Chinese workers in the Tonopah area in what is now a mining tailing dump.



Photo Credit: Joni Eastley