

# THE HISTORICAL CONNECTION



HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
CITY OF LAS VEGAS

A newsletter of the city of Las Vegas Planning and Development Department.

The Historic Preservation Commission is dedicated to saving the city's legacy and heritage.

## Fifth Street School

The 1936 Las Vegas Grammar School, also known as the Fifth Street School, is one of the most fully realized mission style structures remaining in Las Vegas from that era. The building was designed by Los Angeles architect, Orville Clark with George K. Thompson.

The Fifth Street School was in use until the 1960s, when it was sold to Clark County and converted to public offices. Its graceful arcaded walkways and interior courtyards are still in evidence in spite of this extensive remodeling. The city of Las Vegas now owns this architectural gem and is in the process of painstakingly restoring it to its original glory. A mix of public and private uses, with some city offices, non-profit groups and perhaps small-scale retail uses are planned.

The original grammar school burned in 1934, and was razed in early 1936 when construction of the new building started. The new



building housed the sixth, seventh and eighth grades, and the old high school building on Fifth Street was used for the lower grades. The first principal was K.O. Knudson.

An article in the Las Vegas Review Journal on Sept. 2, 1936, by reporter Florence Lee Jones, described the building as having French doors spanning the entire Fifth Street side of the building to provide light and ventilation. The building was painted white and decorated with Spanish colors of bright yellow, orange, blue and terra cotta. The main central courtyard boasted a fountain and fishpond with a tiled background of bright green and blue.

The building was constructed under the

...continued page 3

IN  
THIS  
FALL  
2006  
ISSUE

- Fifth Street School
- Biography Corner: Claytee D. White
- Preservation Updates
- Preservation News
- National Alliance of Preservation Commissions
- Upcoming Events
- Gone But Not Forgotten - The Green Shack

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Claytee D. White, was appointed by the City Council to the Historic Preservation Commission on May 17, 2006. The city and its citizens are most fortunate to have this lettered historian join its historic preservation efforts. Commissioner White is the inaugural

director of the Oral History Research Center at UNLV.

## Biography Corner: Claytee D. White

Commissioner White is currently working on several oral history projects about southern Nevada. She is working with the Blue Diamond History Group and the Historians of Henderson to collect the history of those two interesting areas of our region. She and volunteers are working on "UNLV @ Fifty," in preparation of the university's golden anniversary. The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral

History Project is nearing completion and it contains approximately 100 interviews and will continue to grow over the coming years.

Commissioner White also serves as the historian and secretary for the Las Vegas Black Historical Society, Inc. and is the Nevada representative to the Southwest Oral History Association.

Born in North Carolina, White has also lived in Washington D.C. and Los Angeles before moving to southern Nevada. She is working on her PhD degree from William and Mary in American History, her masters degree in American History from UNLV, and her bachelors degree in Sociology from California State University at Los Angeles. She is a published author, including African American and women's history in the west and the gaming industry.

# Preservation News

- **Courtney Mooney**, historic preservation officer has been appointed to the board of Preservation Action! [www.preservationaction.org/](http://www.preservationaction.org/)
- The city of Las Vegas is updating the 1992 **Historic Preservation Element of the Master Plan 2020**. If you are interested in participating, contact Courtney Mooney at 702-220-5260.
- **The design of the trail markers for the Pioneer Trail** received the 2006 APEX Award of Excellence for Exhibits, Displays and Signage.
- **The city of Las Vegas** was awarded a \$37,000 grant from the State Historic Preservation Office that will be used for historic resource surveys and educational materials.

## Preservation Updates

### State Historic Preservation Office Honors City

The city of Las Vegas and the Historic Preservation Commission were honored by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on June 7, 2006 for their extensive historic preservation efforts. The southern Nevada SHPO representative, Sali Underwood, presented the award to Mayor Oscar B. Goodman and HPC Vice Chair, Dorothy Wright.

The city was recognized for the Las Vegas Post Office restoration, the rehabilitation of the Fifth Street School, the relocation of the railroad cottages, the development of the Springs Preserve and numerous other projects in the community. Also present were Commissioners Jim Veltman and Ray Aikens.

### U.S. Post Office and Courthouse

The Las Vegas City Council approved the



Ninth Street Baptist Church

contract for the primary firms that will be included in the architecture and museum exhibit design team for the final phases of the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse transformation to the POST Modern Museum. The team includes the national architecture firm, Westlake Reed Leskosky and exhibit designers, Gallagher and Associates and Quatrefoil.

### Baptist Church

The former Baptist Church at Ninth Street and Bridger Avenue was recently renovated and opened as the Downtown Senior Services Center. The project included reversing physical deterioration of the 1946 Spanish style building, bringing each building to current Americans with Disabilities Act standards, and creating functional spaces for the new occupants. For more information, visit [www.lasvegasnevada.gov](http://www.lasvegasnevada.gov).

## Fifth Street School

continued from front page

auspices of the federal Public Works Administration at a cost of \$230,000, of which \$210,000 was from the federal grant and the balance from a local bond. Miss Maude Frazier, superintendent of schools in Las Vegas, worked with the federal government to oversee the completion of the project.

The city of Las Vegas acquired the building in 1996 and is rehabilitating the school with a projected completion date of 2008. The project, led by the city's Office of Business Development, is budgeted at \$9 million. Adaptive re-use and preservation of historic buildings are integral components of the city's downtown redevelopment efforts.

Several non-profit and governmental cultural agencies are expected to be housed in the facility, as well as the city's own Office of Cultural Affairs. "(The Nevada School of the Arts) is the perfect fit for what we are trying to achieve: rebuilding the Fifth Street School and turning it into a cultural oasis — an intellectual agora — in the middle of a Manhattanized downtown Las Vegas."

The University of Nevada Las Vegas Downtown Design Center and the UNLV Modern Letters and Writers in Exile program will return as tenants.

An additional 12,600 square feet of the refurbished school will showcase a shared performance and gallery space in the historic gymnasium. A new downtown Las Vegas visitors and information center, is proposed to be located in the school.

## National Historic Preservation Month

This past May was National Historic Preservation Month and the city of Las Vegas and its Historic Preservation Commission observed the occasion with a special proclamation given by Mayor Oscar B. Goodman on May 3, 2006. Mayor Goodman and the Chairman of the HPC, Robert Stoldal, recognized the Springs Preserve, Rotary Club of Las Vegas, Cashman Foundation, and the American Public Works Foundation for their contributions toward the preservation of the historic railroad cottages. Also honored were James Barbarite and Andrew Katz for their unique adaptive reuse of the historic First Methodist Church site in downtown Las Vegas.

Later in the month, the HPC exhibited at the Cultural History Fair at the Springs Preserve on May 20, 2006. There were about 60 exhibitors and over 2,500 people attended the community event. The commission also sent letters to owners of historic properties in the city about the commission, the city's Historic Property Register, and the permit review process for construction projects on historic buildings.

## Conference: National Alliance of Preservation Commissions – NAPC

by Claytee D. White Commissioner

July 27 – 30, Baltimore, Md.

Downtown Baltimore is the ideal walking city with lots of coffee shops, joggers, a few hills, and beautifully restored buildings. The conference proved to be exciting, packed with facts and people who love the work of preserving the treasures of their towns and cities.

The 436 attendees hailed from places of less than 500 people to cities the size of Las Vegas and New York. Only four states were not represented and the state of Arkansas sent the largest delegation.

The preservation short course stressed that preservation is keeping buildings in active use, protecting key features that make areas unique and accommodating change. It is not freezing a district in time, presenting

a false history or petty policing. We preserve to maintain a sense of place, stabilize property values, educate the public, ensure environmental responsibility, promote tourism, preserve history, and create jobs.

One interesting session dealt with the legal issues that historic preservation commissioners face and how the first, fifth and fourteenth amendments grant powers to perform the important work of historic preservation and to protect the public. Commissioners must be fair, impartial, follow the rules and uphold ethical standards.

Other sessions emphasized projects in poor communities, information about The National Trust, hints on how to work effectively with developers and architects, and ideas on preserving cultural and ethnic resources.

## Upcoming Events

Oct. 31

thru -11/5  
National Trust  
Conference  
"Making  
Preservation Work!"  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

## HPC Meetings

Nov. - No Meeting

Dec. 6, 2006

Jan. 25, 2007

Feb. 22, 2007

Mar. 23, 2007

# Gone But Not Forgotten – The Green Shack

**The Green Shack Sign Read “Cocktails, Steak, Chicken,” and Has Been Donated to the Neon Museum.**

In 1929 Mrs. Mattie Jones began operating the Colorado Restaurant out of her home across the street from the location of the former Green Shack Restaurant. Mattie sold bootleg whiskey, fried chicken and biscuits from a window. The original building was razed in 1930 and, as the story goes, the restaurant was moved across the street into fine new digs in the form of a railroad barracks building provided by the Union Pacific Railroad Co.

The Green Shack served the food that fueled the construction of Hoover Dam and Las



Vegas through its unlikely Depression-era growth. An improbable cross-section of Las Vegas, politicians, lawyers, and dam workers stopped to dine and throw back a few drinks on the way home. Families and fraternal groups made it their spot for celebrations. The eatery was the city's oldest restaurant when owners Jim and Barbara McCormick, whose family operated it for nearly its entire existence, closed the doors in May 1999.

In March 2005, the property was purchased with plans to build a banquet hall for weddings and other celebrations to the rear of the property and keeping the Green Shack for use as a small shop. But in the six years the building had been vacant, it had fallen prey to vandalism, theft, and significant structural deterioration. There was fire damage and mold, and the foundation had sunk several feet in some areas. The city Building Department found that most of the building would have to be rebuilt to bring it to current code standards and accommodate the new use.

The new owners now faced a hard decision. They were fond of the building and were looking forward to incorporating it into their plans. In the end, they went before the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to seek approval for a demolition permit.

At the meeting, the owners presented extensive photographs of the damage, as well as findings from an engineer they hired to assess the building's condition. The HPC voted to approve the demolition, with the recommendation that the architects of the new building incorporate some element of the original Green Shack into the new design.

The owners agreed to donate the historic quarter-round sign that read, “Cocktails, Steak, Chicken” to the Neon Museum, and keep the pylon sign for their new business. Commissioner Dave Millman and HPO Courtney Mooney toured the building before demolition to collect any remaining historic artifacts. What little was recovered is stored at the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society in Las Vegas. A Centennial marker was installed on the site to remember the Green Shack and its contribution to Las Vegas history.



The Historic Preservation Commission is an 11-member board made up of community members appointed by the Las Vegas City Council. The board is responsible for hearing and making recommendations regarding the designation of historic landmarks, properties and districts to the city's historic register; overseeing alterations and new construction of designated historic properties and making recommendations to the City Council. Meetings: 4th Wednesday of each month, 12:15 pm, 731 S. Fourth Street, Las Vegas, NV 89101 except in November and December which are typically held on the 3rd Wednesday of the month.

Bob Stoldal, chairperson  
Dorothy Wright, vice-chair  
Ray Aikens  
Bob Bellis  
Mary Hausch  
Janet White  
James Ueltman  
Richard Cuppett, P. E.  
Pat Klenk  
Claytee D. White  
Andrew Kirk  
Dave Millman, Ex-Officio

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