



STAFF REPORT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING DATE: 03/28/12

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING

ITEM DESCRIPTION: Report by Department of Planning regarding public outreach items

BACKGROUND

No relevant case history.

ANALYSIS

Please enjoy the attached articles.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

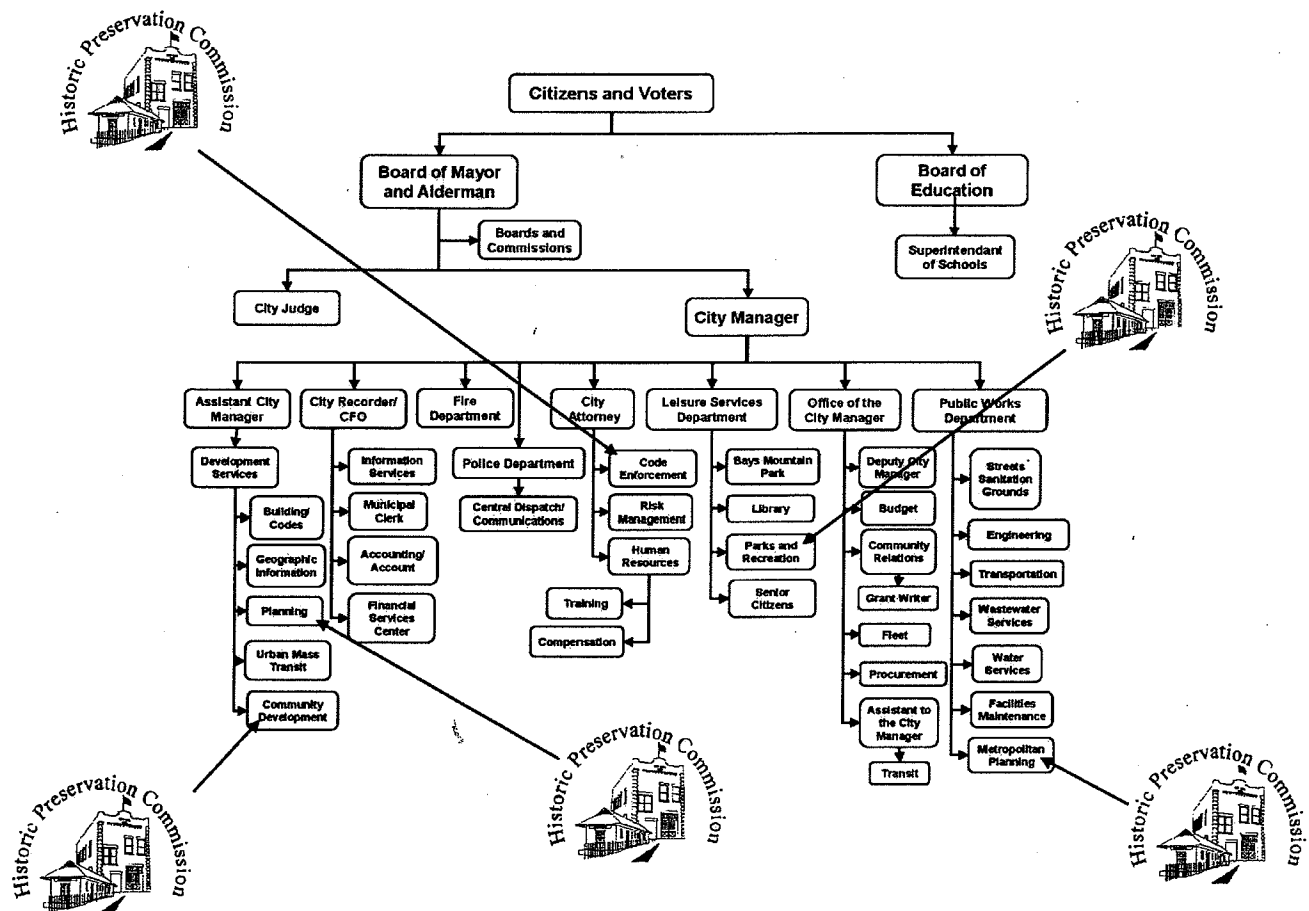
No action required.

BACKUP DOCUMENTS

- Newsletter, *The Alliance Review*, National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, Nov-December 2011
- Mob Ties, Las Vegas Sun, May 15, 2008.
- Mob, neon, nukes: Las Vegas museums capture unique history, Vegas, Inc., January 16, 2012.
- Aviation pioneer helped get North Las Vegas Airport off the ground, View-ReviewJournal.com, February 1, 2012.
- Prominent attorney's memory lives on in Las Vegas, View-ReviewJournal.com, February 7, 2012.
- Donations needed to update Nevada's historical markers, FOXS Vegas-KVVU, February 8, 2012.
- Kathleen Barrie, Vegas Seven, February 9, 2012.
- Man saves '60s Vegas party house, fills it with treasures, Las Vegas Sun, February 9, 2012.
- Why the Mob Museum Matters, Vegas Seven, February 9, 2012.
- Nevada virtually updates historical markers, Las Vegas Review-Journal, February 10, 2012.
- Effort launched to upgrade Nevada historical signs, The Associated Press, February 11, 2012.
- Effort launched to upgrade Nevada historical signs, www.ktnv.com, February 11, 2012.
- Boulder City brimming with history, attractions, Living-ReviewJournal.com., February 12, 2012.

- Dinosaurs looking for elbow room at natural history museum, Las Vegas Review-Journal, February 13, 2012.
- Las Vegas Embraces Bad Guys of Its Past, NYTimes.com, February 13, 2012.
- Mob Museum offers flashy exhibits, gory stories, Las Vegas Review-Journal, February 13, 2012.
- Nice Mob Museum you got there; it'd be a shame if it's not a hit, News-ReviewJournal.com, February 13, 2012.
- Sneak peek: Mob Museum set to open, with plenty of larger-than-life figures to greet you, Las Vegas Sun, February 13, 2012.
- Wander through mob history in Las Vegas- a self-guided tour of gangster landmarks, Las Vegas Sun, February 13, 2012.
- Arizona is 100, but where is the love, Las Vegas Review-Journal, February 14, 2012.
- Mob Museum a worthy Vegas attraction, Opinion-ReviewJournal.com., February 14, 2012.
- Shadow and light converge on Mob Museum, News-ReviewJournal.com, February 14, 2012.
- Deconstructing the good old days on display at the Mob Museum, Las Vegas Weekly, February 15, 2012.
- How Huntridge Learns, Vegas Seven, February 16, 2012.
- Mob Museum price is right, Vegas Seven, February 16, 2012.
- The Mob Museum is here. Deal, skinflints! Las Vegas City Life, February 16, 2012.
- City Hall, shiny and new, opens Tuesday, News-ReviewJournal.com, February 20, 2012.
- Vegas opens museum to examine its mobbed-up past, Las Vegas Sun, February 21, 2012.
- Vegas 'Paradise' lands on best neighborhoods list, FOX5 Vegas-KVVU, February 21, 2012.
- Historic Las Vegas Pharmacy Forced to Close, www.8newsnow.com, March 6, 2012
- Bob Taylor steakhouse namesake gained following as a beef chef, View-ReviewJournal.com, March 6, 2012.
- Karen Avenue named for Thomas & Mack co-developer's daughter, View-Reviewjournal.com, March 6, 2012.
- Kiel Ranch: A Historic Disgrace in North Las Vegas, www.8newsnow.com, March 14, 2012.

Historic Preservation Commissions and Local Government Structure



Examining the Role
and Placement of the
Preservation Commission
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Published bimonthly
by NAPC
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All current NAPC members who serve as city staff to preservation commissions are encouraged to distribute articles in *The Alliance Review* to commission members and other staff and elected officials within your member organization. Articles can be distributed via photocopies or scans distributed through file servers, intranets, and emails.

In this Issue

By Paul Trudeau, NAPC Program Director

This issue of The Alliance Review explores the role of historic preservation commissions in local government structures. Every municipality has its own arrangement of departments and agencies, and the way preservation commissions "fit in" depends on several factors, including availability of staff, developmental history of the commission and local ordinance, and details of the municipality's comprehensive plan. Even when a commission's departmental role is established, being included in other departmental jurisdictions and decision-making processes is a common challenge. In his article "Pervasive Preservation: Redefining the Role and Placement of the Preservation Commission in Local Government," Jeremy Wells provides a detailed analysis of these and other questions, while Mark Warren of the Village of East Aurora, NY offers a perspective on the threat of local government dissolution and its potential impact on historic preservation commissions. Picking up on NAPC's continuing theme of outreach and education, this issue also features two articles that can help commissions enhance their roles in local government structures while having a positive influence in the community. Mark Synatschk, CLG Coordinator for the state of Texas, offers several strategies in his article, "Beyond Certificates of Appropriateness: The Historic Preservation Commission's Role in Historic Preservation," while Jennifer Kenny from the City of Olympia, WA focuses on the theme of better communication with property owners in her article, "Hard to Say, Hard to Hear: Dealing with Challenging Conversations."

Enjoy, and have a healthy and happy holiday season!

From the Chair

Jo Ramsay Leimenstoll,
Chair, NAPC Board of Directors

Dear NAPC members,

Change has certainly been in the NAPC air this year and we appreciate your support. We have a new NAPC brand; an energetic, engaged board (with 10 new members); an improved committee structure; and a terrific program planned for the next Forum! To kick off 2012, we'll launch our new website in January. Paul Trudeau is at the helm in our UGA office and our board members hail from all across the country but keep communication flowing via emails and conference calls. I am confident that 2012 will be a productive and successful year for NAPC. I hope your new year holds great promise as well. Please join us in Norfolk, Virginia, July 18-22 for Forum 2012!

Happy Holidays to all,

Jo Ramsay Leimenstoll

WELCOME TO NAPC!

NEW NAPC MEMBERS: SEE PAGE 20

RENEWING NAPC MEMBERS:

NAPC would also like to recognize our recently renewing members.

➔ **CONTINUES ON PAGE 22**

Historic Preservation Commission	City of Biloxi Planning Office	Biloxi	MS
Historic Preservation Commission	City of Richmond Planning Division	Richmond	CA
Julian Adams	CLG Coordinator, New York SHPO	Watford	NY
Britta Bloomberg	Minnesota SHPO	St. Paul	MN
Leigh Burns	Georgia Historic Preservation Division	Atlanta	GA
Monica Callahan	Madison Historic Preservation Commission	Madison	GA
Stephanie Cherry Farmer	Preservation New Jersey	Trenton	NJ
Lisa Craig	Annapolis Historic Preservation Commission	Annapolis	MD
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Jeremy C. Wells, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at Roger Williams University where he specializes in historic preservation planning. He was formerly the historic preservation officer for the City and County of Denver.

PERMANENT

Pervasive Preservation: Redefining the Role and Placement of the Preservation Commission in Local Government

by Jeremy C. Wells

The historic preservation commission has a long tradition of helping to protect local historic resources through designation and design review. There are, however, a number of other services that a preservation commission and its staff can offer to internal customers that can potentially benefit all stakeholders and citizens. This article will explore some of these services in relation to how the structural placement of the preservation commission can impede or facilitate this goal. An argument can be made that the historic preservation commission should play a central role in all local government activities rather than being relegated to a small corner of the planning department.

The overall bureaucratic structure of many local governments—how agencies, departments, offices, boards, and commissions are charged with their tasks—has changed little since the early part of the twentieth century. One reason for this situation is that change in bureaucracies, such as local governments, can be difficult because these environments tend to “promote the sufficiency of mediocrity” and encourage a “don’t rock the boat” mentality.¹ City government tends to be organized into groups by primary function or service provided and so, across the country, it is common to have organizational entities that focus on planning, parks, human resources, public works, libraries, and fire safety among other possibilities. The stability of many of these entities has been remarkable over the past seventy-five years. For instance, a survey in 1935 of Pennsylvania local government found that a third-class city’s typical organizational structure consisted of departments of public affairs, accounts and finance, public safety, streets and public improvements, and parks. These entities were politically created and, as is the case today, the heads of these departments and agencies are

political appointees.² Even though the names of some of these departments have changed over the years—streets and public improvements became public works and public safety became planning and zoning, for instance—the overall duties of these departments have remained relatively stable over time.

In the past two decades, however, there has been an effort to consolidate activities across departments in order to reduce duplication and waste and to provide better customer service. Such change has been driven by critics such as Alan Karcher who wrote a scathing critique of New Jersey’s municipal framework that he characterized as being “the opposite of everything [we have] learned about effective management, efficient control [and] economy of scale.”³ In reaction, cities have created interdisciplinary departments and offices with the ostensible charge of working across departments, agencies, and offices toward common goals.⁴ Examples include the “development services” department that combines the functions of planning, permitting, zoning, inspections, and economic development as well

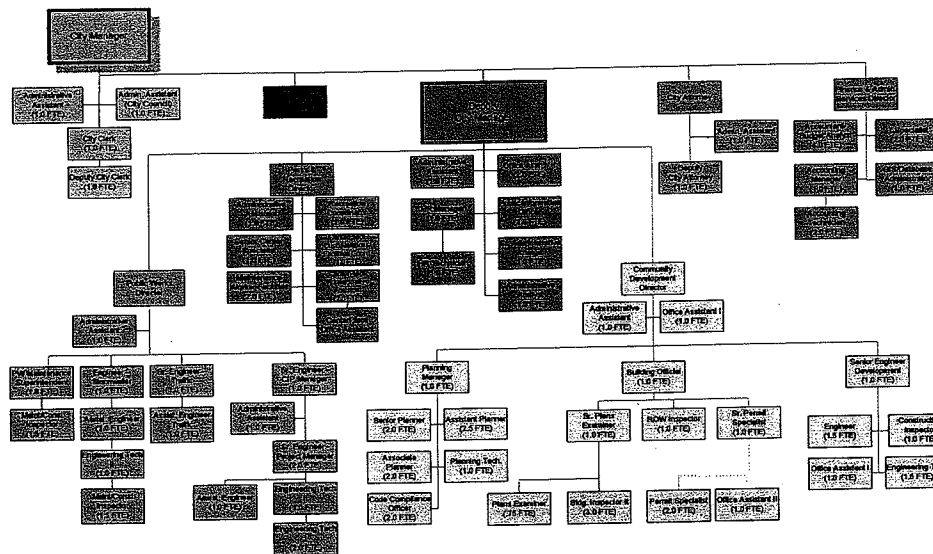


Photo 1: Traditionally, local government structure has been a complex network of departmental entities, often leading to inefficient operation

as sustainability offices created as part of cities' efforts to promote environmental leadership. Examples of these departments and offices can be found in Denver, San Diego, San Antonio, Phoenix, and Dallas among many other cities.

Historic preservation has always been an interdisciplinary activity, bringing disciplines as diverse as architecture, history, and materials science together. In city government, however, the typical home for the preservation commission is the planning department. There is an historical precedent for this placement as early preservation commissions, such as Charleston's in 1931

and New Orleans in 1933, were exclusively focused on designation and design review and as such, found natural alliances with the city agencies involved in planning and permitting. Today there are a few exceptions to this unwritten rule, such as in Milwaukee where the commission is located in the city clerk's office.⁵ As historic preservation diversified in the decades since the establishment of these early commissions, other activities, such as tax credits, arts and tourism, and sustainability are pushing the artificial bounds of the planning department into natural alliances with other city departments and agencies (see table 1 for details).

Preservation commission and staff activity	Closest affinity in city government
Historic resource surveys	Planning department
Designation of structures and districts	Planning department
Design review	Building permitting and inspections department
Tax credit reviews	Economic development department
Environmental (Section 106) review	Building permitting and inspections department
Cultural landscapes	Parks department
Changes to city-owned buildings	Building maintenance and operations department
Sustainability issues	Sustainability and "green" offices and commissions
Culture, arts, tourism	Arts and culture offices and commissions

Table 1: Preservation commission and staff activities and closest departmental affinities

Internal customers

For good reason, much of the focus of the work of a preservation commission and its professional staff is externally driven by the needs of stakeholders and constituents. What is lost in this emphasis, however, is the role that the preservation commission can play in providing internal services within city government. These activities happen to some extent with all commissions, but are rarely formalized much less officially acknowledged. Technically, the core of preservation expertise in city government is the staff that supports its preservation commission and then secondarily with the commission members themselves, yet outside of the home department in which the commission is based, this subject matter expertise may be rarely tapped. Typically, commissions are included at the very last stage of the intervention planning process, a point at which changes can be very difficult and costly to make. There exists, therefore, an opportunity for preservation commissions to provide internal customer service across departments, agencies, and offices within city government. Table 2 summarizes some possibilities.

Preservation commission and staff activity	Department that could benefit
Identification, planning, and treatment of historic resources (including cultural landscapes) within park systems	Parks department
Advisement of economic development incentives related to historic preservation	Economic development department
Preservation and sustainability	Sustainability offices and commissions
Advisement of issues with materials conservation and historic integrity	Building maintenance and operations
Promotion of a municipality's historic resources to citizens and visitors	Parks and culture and arts departments/offices

Table 2: Potential services to internal city clients

For instance, parks departments provide their citizens with recreational opportunities, green space, and often facilitate access to historic resources; they are also charged with maintaining these resources. Examples include the Beaux-Arts structures in Denver's Civic Center Park, the entirety of New York's Olmsted designed Central Park, and the cast-iron fountains in Portland's (OR) Washington Park. Unless there is a design review case that is required by ordinance to be processed, the preservation commission and its staff are usually only tangentially involved in these projects, if at all. One reason for this situation is the artificial separation between departments—the planning department and the parks department are separate entities with different enabling charters, different power structures, and separate levels of accountability. Not only is such collaboration difficult because of these boundaries, but staff who engage in cross-departmental engagement without high-level sanctions from management are putting themselves into difficult situations with little institutional support. Preservation staff could offer advice and assistance with the identification, planning, and treatment of historic resources (including cultural landscapes) within park systems. The preservation commission could be utilized in an advisory capacity where design review is not required by ordinance, and, in situations where design review is required, early collaboration could be beneficial in mitigating adverse effects at a stage where they are less costly to address.

Similar opportunities exist with partnerships between the preservation commission and the economic development department. There is a large body of knowledge on the links between preservation and economic development, including the relationship between “sense of place” and building an economy based on the creative class and restoration.⁶ Preservation staff are knowledgeable about these connections and can provide insightful advice that can inform economic development plans and individual projects. For instance, all development projects that may involve historic resources could benefit from expertise on preservation economic incentives such as federal and state rehabilitation tax credits, tax-abatement programs, and other funding opportunities that will vary from state to state and different municipalities.

A similar potential exists in collaboration with offices of sustainability and “green” operations, where preservation could play a leading role in making cities more sustainable. A leader in this kind of activity is the city of Boulder, Colorado, where historic preservation is being promoted as a way to integrate historic preservation and environmental sustainability across the city.⁷ Citizens receive a unified message from the city that unambiguously links preservation and sustainability; even city staff from other departments can

benefit through learning about how preservation and sustainability are linked and secondarily through becoming aware of the greater range of activities that their municipality's preservation commission conducts.

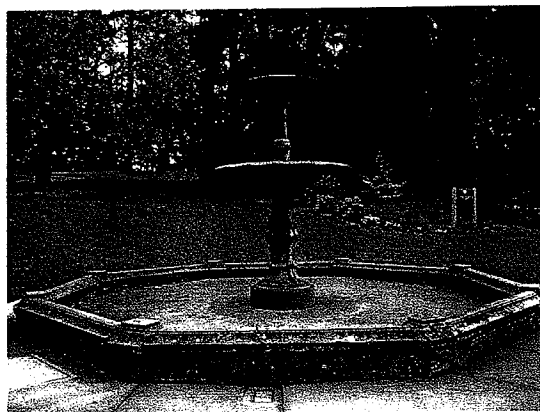


Photo 2: The historic cast-iron fountains in Portland's (OR) Washington Park are maintained by the city's Parks & Recreation Department

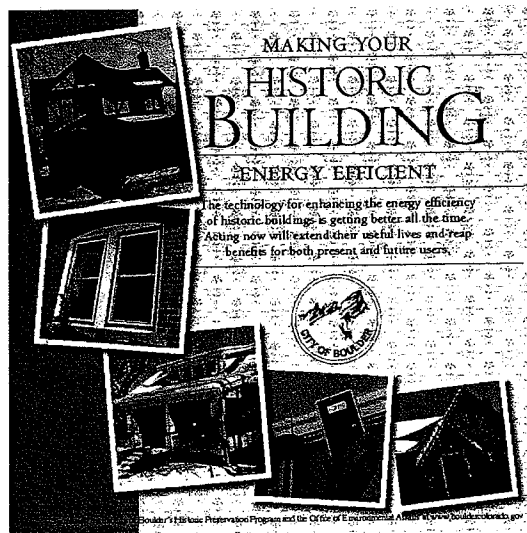


Photo 3: The City of Boulder, CO promotes historic preservation as an environmentally sustainable practice

Even in situations where cities own historic (or older) buildings, preservation staff and commissions could provide expertise and advice on materials conservation and design issues to preserve the historic integrity of buildings and places that are arguably iconic and of great importance to a community. As is often the case, however, the preservation commission and its staff tend to only be involved when there is a regulatory requirement to do so and at a late stage in the planning process. The early involvement of the commission could help facilitate creative solutions to issues with high profile, city owned buildings.

Lastly, agencies focusing on arts, recreation and tourism would benefit from a partnership with a preservation commission and its staff toward the common goal of promoting the historic buildings, structures, and places in a community. It is surprising how few city's arts and culture and parks web sites focus on promoting historic assets within their community. This activity could easily expand to partnerships with local preservation advocacy organizations that are often the only entity in a city that promotes these places for the enjoyment of its citizens and visitors.

The Future

The future of the preservation commission and its potential in city government brings us back to where we began: the structure of local government. It has long been recognized that departments in government tend to operate as "sovereign entities" that discourage rather than promote collaboration and information sharing.⁸ This overall trend in dissolving traditional barriers among departments is nearly universal among all types of organizations, including private business.⁹ While integrating planning, zoning, permitting, and inspections under the "development services" roof is one way of dealing with this issue, the larger question remains as to locating the best fit for the preservation commission and its staff within local government. If we recognize that planning is only a part of what a commission and its staff performs, the placement of a preservation commission within a planning department may not be the best option; indeed placing the preservation commission within any department may compromise its potential and ability by firewalling it from the rest of the city.

An example of a city that redefined the placement of its preservation commission is Boston. Boston's Landmarks Commission was created in 1975 in the Boston Redevelopment Authority office, but by the 1990s, had been moved into the Environment Department along with the Boston Conservation Commission, the City Archaeology Program, the Air Pollution Control Commission, and Environmental Review/Impact Assessment.¹⁰ Whether or not this has been more effective than the traditional placement in a planning department has

not been established conclusively—there does not appear to be any studies addressing this unique structure—but it does offer an alternate template that proves that the status quo is not necessarily the only option.

But even Boston's placement of its preservation commission is within another department and it is likely that any city that places a commission within an existing department will still encounter siloing issues between departments. One option is to organize the preservation commission into its own department or office, which, because of the political and power structures in city government, would help upper-level management to more regularly engage with preservation solutions and issues. A more radical change would be to do away with the concept of departments and instead organize people into teams addressing common issues, an idea that has been discussed within higher education organization, but has yet to be implemented to any significant degree. The concept works around self-directed dynamic teams that are reformed on a regular basis to address different problems and issues as they arise.¹¹

While it would be fallacious to think that a one-size-fits-all ideal structural placement for a preservation commission within local government exists, surely we can begin to question the traditional placement of commissions within planning departments. It is also time to recognize the broader scope of potential roles that the commission and its staff can provide to other departments, agencies, and offices within local government. ■

¹ Marc Holzer, Vache Gabrielyan, and Kaifeng Yang, "Five Great Ideas in American Public Administration," in *Handbook of Public Administration*, eds. Jack Rabin, W. Bartley Hildreth, Gerald J. Miller (Boca Raton, FL: Taylor & Francis, 2007), 85.

² H. F. Alderfer et al., "Report of the Pennsylvania Local Government Survey," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 25 (1935).

³ Alan J. Karcher, *New Jersey's Multiple Municipal Madness* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 17.

⁴ Two early examples of combining disparate functions of city agencies into a new department were driven by urban renewal in the 1960s. Both the cities of Milwaukee and Boston consolidated of their redevelopment authorities and planning commissions into departments of city development; see Mel Scott, *American City Planning Since 1890* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971), 570-72.

⁵ In Milwaukee, the historic preservation commission was originally located in the Department of City Development (which includes planning functions), but was moved to the city clerk's office in reaction to firing threats against the commission staff if they did not alter their reports; see Tom Daykin, "Council Shifts Historic Preservation Staff," *Journal Sentinel*, July 28, 2009.

⁶ Examples include Donovan D. Rypkema, *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide* (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2008); Richard L. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); and Storm Cunningham, *The Restoration Economy: The Greatest New Growth Frontier* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2002).

⁷ See http://www.boulder.colorado.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3501&Itemid=490

⁸ Roger L. Kemp, *Forms of Local Government: A Handbook on City, County, and Regional Options* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999), 222.

⁹ Richard L. Daft, *Management* (Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2010), 260.

¹⁰ Richard C. Collins et al., *America's Downtowns: Growth, Politics & Preservation* (Washington, DC: Preservation Press, 1991), 48; the Environmental Department is overseen by the Environmental and Energy Services Cabinet, whose mission is to "preserve and enhance the resources of [Boston's] built and natural environment" (from <http://www.cityofboston.gov/environmentalandenergy/>).

¹¹ Richard L. Daft, *Organizational Theory and Design* (Mason, OH: Thompson/South-western, 2007), 30.

Photo 1/image source: http://www.spokanevalley.org/filestorage/124/938/321/Organizational_Chart.JPG

Photo 2/image source: <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/52849314>

Photo 3/image source: http://www.boulder.colorado.gov/files/PDS/historicpres/HistoryPreservationBrochure_web.pdf

SAVE THE DATE

The National Alliance of
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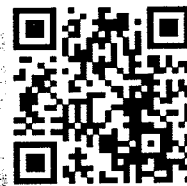
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National Alliance of Preservation Commissions 8th Biennial Forum

Mark W. Warren is a member of the Historic Preservation Commission for the Village of East Aurora (pop. 6,600). Mark and his large family live in a Roycroft bungalow built in 1911 for Frederick Kranz, Roycroft Leather Department Head. By day Mark is a lawyer in Buffalo.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISSOLUTION – AN EMERGING THREAT?

DISSOLUTION

By Mark W. Warren

Anti-government fervor has been heating up for a long time. In his first inaugural address, Ronald Reagan famously proclaimed that “government is the problem,” and that theme has been gaining traction ever since. It is on full display right now as political candidates debate the fundamental role of government in our lives. Big government? Too much government? Fewer local governments? Not since the New Deal have we witnessed such a critical re-examination of The Social Contract. Nor is the question simply philosophical. Confronted with unprecedented budget challenges, government job cuts lead all other sectors of the economy.

But this has nothing to do with historic preservation, right?

Wrong. As members of historic preservation commissions, let’s not forget that we are not merely preservation advocates, we are public officials, dependent upon government resources and political will to function and even exist. Many HPCs are supported by local government staff. What would happen if that staff were cut? Times of crisis can present a “gut check” for what matters most. Competing with other governmental functions, where would historic preservation fall on the cost/benefit scale in your community?

One emerging example of this existential debate is the issue of local government dissolution. The very existence of HPCs is dependent upon statutes and ordinances of local governments. If they go away, we go away. If we go away ... well, we all can imagine what that may mean in our local communities. As Tip O’Neill observed, “all politics is local,” and that is certainly true of preservation. We are the preservation front line.

A fanciful concern, you may say? Can’t happen here?

Wrong again. The genie has left the bottle and may be heading your way. It is already afoot in New York.

The New York Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act of 2009 was and remains central to the political agenda of then Attorney General, now Governor Andrew Cuomo. The statute makes it much easier to consolidate and dissolve local governments. Politically, it is an easy sell. By way of legislative justification, there are 10,521 "local government entities" in New York State. That's a staggering number. It also comes at a cost, of course, and that is what gives this movement its political potency. Wallet issues command voter attention, and this is what is driving the issue in New York.

My community is the Village of East Aurora, which is located in Western New York, near Buffalo. Our most significant historic resource is the Roycroft Campus, an Arts & Crafts community founded by Elbert Hubbard at the end of the nineteenth century. Our Village has a historic preservation ordinance, and our HPC provides local governmental

protection of that nationally important resource. What would happen if we were dissolved? Although that's a hypothetical question, the answer is not guesswork.

The Village of East Aurora is surrounded by the Town of Aurora. If there were to be a local government consolidation, the Village would be dissolved, and the Town would be the surviving political entity. Especially because the Town contains some Roycroft-related historic resources, several years ago our HPC approached the Town about possible establishment of a Joint Historic Preservation Commission for the Village and the Town. The Town Board had zero interest, questioning the existence of historic resources and citing unnecessary regulation. Sound familiar to anyone?

So is local government dissolution a possible threat to historic preservation? Yes, it is in our community, and in our case that's not fear of the unknown, but

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MATTERS — A ROYCROFT EXAMPLE



The Roycroft Mark, a cross and orb enclosing an "R". So important in the history of East Aurora that it is part of the official Village Seal.

All photos courtesy of the author.

The name Roycroft had a double meaning to its founder, Elbert Hubbard. It was an homage to seventeenth-century London printers Samuel and Thomas Roycroft, who crafted beautiful books. It also means "King's Craft", evoking medieval craft guilds. In the words of Fra Elbertus (as he was fondly known), "a Roycrofter is a person who makes beautiful things, and makes them as well as he can". The distinctive Roycroft mark, a cross and orb enclosing an "R", is reportedly an adaptation of a Benedictine monk design.

Roycroft was transformative for the Village of East Aurora. Propelled especially by the wild popularity of "A Message to Garcia" (1899), Hubbard's paean to personal resourcefulness, Roycroft grew organically from print to furniture, copper and leather goods. The Roycroft Campus was constructed gradually as the business grew, employing hundreds

of people. Roycroft fame drew thousands of visitors to East Aurora, from Henry Ford to Clarence Darrow, and the Roycroft Inn afforded them lodging (as it does still today). Although Hubbard and his wife Alice perished aboard the Lusitania in 1915, Roycroft successfully married commerce with an Arts and Crafts aesthetic in East Aurora until 1938.



The Roycroft Inn. A national historic landmark, listed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in 1989. Restored and reopened in 1995.

rather fear of the known. Our Village recently entertained a flirtation with dissolution, but it has not come to pass (so far).

Not so in Seneca Falls, New York, former home of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and widely regarded as the birthplace of women's rights in America. The Village of Seneca Falls has a Heritage Preservation Commission. The surrounding Town of Seneca Falls does not. In 2010, the Village voted to dissolve on December 31, 2011. The dissolution plan states that the Village HPC will be "transferred" to the Town. The plan also states that the Town "will adopt" all laws pertaining to historic preservation. Moreover, the New York enabling legislation mentioned above even requires Village laws to remain in effect for two years following dissolution. However, the enabling legislation also states that the Town, nevertheless, has the power to amend or repeal grandfathered Village laws "at any time." In short, a dose of comfort undermined by a dose of uncertainty. The end has yet to be writ in Seneca Falls.

And yet this cause for concern is tempered by cause for hope. The attachment of people to places and the structures that uniquely define those places is persistent and powerful. How many HPCs can trace their inception to the threatened or actual loss of specific historic resources and the ensuing inevitable question: how can we prevent this from happening again? That debate has been playing out recently in Beverly Hills, California. Sensitized by a threat to Richard Neutra's iconic modernist Kronish House, Beverly Hills is considering adoption of a historic preservation ordinance.

The anti-government juggernaut, propelled by ever-increasing pressure for austerity, has already rolled beyond New York. For example, Princeton, New Jersey recently voted to consolidate. So be vigilant and be prepared. With governmental functions and the very existence of local governments being questioned as never before, we must be ready to make the case for historic preservation. ■

Be fitting its English craft guild inspiration, the Roycroft Campus evokes a pastoral English village. At the geographical and cultural heart of East Aurora, much of the Campus was constructed using field stone from surrounding farms, for which Hubbard paid one dollar per wagon load. In addition to some of the buildings on Campus, these stones were also used to construct the beloved Roycroft Stone Wall, which frames the Campus and sets it apart, both literally and figuratively. Generations of East Aurora children have held their parents' hands while proudly walking atop this low wall.

The Roycroft Stone Wall, which had deteriorated severely over the decades, was recently the subject of a heated preservation dispute. In connection with Main Street reconstruction, the New York State Department of Transportation engaged local input on the project. To better protect the Roycroft Wall from the effects of snow plows and

road salt, the local design originally called for restoration of the wall and elimination of a parking lane on Main Street, which would create a buffer between the road and the wall. Elimination of the parking lane drew vigorous local opposition, including signs to the effect that preservationists are against public safety.

In this case, it made a difference which local government made the decision. The Village of East Aurora, whose say it was, supported a restoration design that protected the wall. The surrounding Town of Aurora went on record as opposing it, and instead supported an alternative design that would have preserved the parking lane but destroyed key gateway elements of the wall. The restoration design favored by the Village prevailed.

So can dissolution of a local government negatively impact historic resources? In this case there

is nothing speculative about it. The Roycroft Campus, which is in the midst of a decades-long restoration, avoided a local scar thanks to a Village that stood up for its history.



The Roycroft Inn and a portion of the Roycroft Wall. Children cannot resist walking on top of it.

Illinois

History fans want to revive the memory of Fort Piggot

December 4, 2011

Source: <http://www.bnd.com/2011/12/04/1966276/history-fans-want-to-do-more-with.html>

Fort Piggot was an 18th century fort that housed 17 families and provided protection from Native American raids. Local members of the community want to revive the memory of Fort Piggot and are encouraging the local historical society to accept the donation of the site of the fort on Bluff Road. There is even talk of possibly reconstructing the two-story blockhouse, cabins, and surrounding stockade walls. Members from the Illinois War of 1812 Commission, the Columbia Area Historical Society, the Columbia Heritage and Preservation Commission, and the Sand Bank School Historical Society met in Columbia to discuss, publicize, and gather information about the fort.

New Jersey

Belleville commission aims to protect historic landmarks

November 30, 2011

Source: www.northjersey.com/community/134759538_Belleville_commission_aims_to_protect_historic_landmarks.html

After three and a half years of dormancy, Belleville's Historic Preservation Commission met to outline plans for protecting and venerating Belleville landmarks. The HPC was allowed to fall to the wayside in 2008 when Mayor Ray Kimble was reelected. But this summer, after Revolutionary War graves were accidentally desecrated in a cleanup project, former commissions publicly begged for Kimble to reinstate the HPC. In September, Kimble complied and appointed residents to the commission. New commission members were warned by the Township Attorney Thomas Murphy "not to be aggressive" in the first list of historic sites they recommend to the state and to "aim for designations that embody a sense of urgency and those at a higher tier of historic value first." But new commissioner, Patricia Nichols remarked, "just about everything is gone. What little we have left, we want to preserve."

Missouri

One historic Cape building saved; another to come down this week

December 6, 2011

Source: <http://www.semissourian.com/story/1791488.html>

Two century-old Cape Girardeau buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places are heading for opposite fates. A 105-year-old building at 501 Broadway was purchased earlier this year by the Trinity Lutheran Church and is slated for demolition. Nearby, the 107-year-old Jefferson School, the last segregated black

schoolhouse, seemed to be heading to the same fate as the building on Broadway until the Prodigy Leadership Academy took over the building the week of Thanksgiving. The schoolhouse, which was shut down after the Brown vs. Board of Education decision in 1954, is more than 60 percent damaged, but the Academy is looking to rehabilitate the building and potentially use it as a replacement for their existing school. City officials are willing to work with the new owners.

South Carolina

Hartsville Planning Commission approves historic preservation ordinance

December 2, 2011

Source: <http://www2.scnw.com/news/2011/dec/02/historic-preservation-ordinance-given-ok-hartsvill-ar-2787233/>

The Hartsville Planning Commission voted unanimously to send a proposed historic preservation ordinance for the city to Hartsville City Council with a recommendation for approval. The ordinance will protect designated historic properties in the city to preserve their historical character and features. However, the ordinance is also designed to enable the city to apply for Certified Local Government status from the state, which would make the city eligible to apply for grant funding for local historical sites. The ordinance designates five individual properties and no historic districts, and will establish an Architectural Review Board. It also places restrictions on alterations that can be made to properties that are specifically designated as historic properties. The ordinance will be presented later this month.

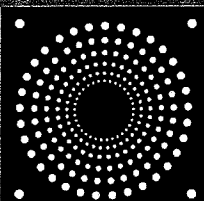
West Virginia

Commission votes 'no' on cement mill funds

December 2, 2011

Source: <http://www.journal-news.net/page/content.detail/id/571624/Commission-votes--no--on-cement-mill-funds.html?nav=5006>

In Charles Town, the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission turned down a \$25,000 request to assist with the purchase of historic property near Shepherdstown citing safety and maintenance expenses as primary declination reasons. The property is situated on sites that were a part of the Battle of Shepherdstown and is home to an historic cement mill. Currently the land is privately owned, with the purchase price now at \$375,000. Many local citizens voted in favor of the acquisition hoping to boost the economy through tourism, but the commission voted 3-2 against it. Commission member Patsy Noland said that the biggest factors against voting against the acquisition included the liability issue if the HLC, which is monitored by the County Commission, were to own the property and someone was hurt there, and while the HLC does have liability insurance it was not enough of a guarantee to secure enough commissioner votes. There were also issues of maintenance. Meanwhile, time is limited to complete the purchase as two \$100,000 grants the HLC has secured from the West Virginia Department of Transportation expire at the end of the year.



NAPC

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HARD TO SAY, HARD TO HEAR: *Dealing with* CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

By Jennifer Kenny, MURP

Heritage commissioners and their staff are often passionate people. We are passionate about wavy glass, turrets, parapets and many other “character-defining features” that others breeze by without a second look. And we are passionate about preserving these architectural gems, historic landscapes and of, course, keeping alive the stories of the people behind the sites.

It can be a challenge when we encounter people who don’t share our commitment to preservation or don’t subscribe to the basic preservation tenets when they are inconvenient. Property rights are paramount in our society, and government intrusion is rarely welcomed.

The conversations leading up to the all-important Certificate of Appropriateness can create anxiousness on all sides. If we are lucky, these conversations are an opportunity to educate a receptive property owner, a chance for the Commissioners to see an historic site, and, ideally in the end, consensus is reached.

However, the scenarios are frequently more contentious. This is especially true when meeting with property owners who don’t know their project requires special review, who already spent money on designs or materials, or who propose a project that the commission can’t possibly approve.

Olympia, WA Heritage Commission Vice-chair Chrisanne Beckner has had her own share of awkward conversations with homeowners. “Approach every conversation as collaboration, but firmly root your comments in the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards to avoid sounding arbitrary or subjective.” She adds, “I think commissions have to try and recruit professionals along with enthusiasts. I think we’re lucky to have professional architects and historians on our board.”

Commissioners and staff point to city codes and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards as the basis for their reviews. There is data to support arguments for keeping wood windows instead of replacing them with vinyl or aluminum. Data also documents that

intact historic houses retain their values and that there are persuasive cultural reasons for retaining our historic structures. But none of this matters much to a property owner who has other plans.

It should come as no surprise that what we say is as important as how we say it. "Slow the conversation down so that people can talk and be heard," advises Orianna Noel Lewis, Training Manager for the Dispute Resolution Center (DRC) of Thurston County, in Olympia, WA. She adds that advance preparation can also help the review meetings to be less contentious: "Be clear on the purpose and format of the meeting." For staff, this means explaining their role and that of the commission, how this review fits into the larger permitting process, and how this regulatory review serves the interests of the community. Letting the property owner know what to expect at the meeting, who will be there, whom they may want to invite, and what happens afterward are critical to setting the stage for a respectful dialogue.

The Center's mediators help people work through difficult conversations, and the basic approach is the same, whether it's a family in crisis or a property owner fixed on replacing historic wood windows.

A good approach, says DRC Executive Director Evan Ferber, "is three-fourths listening and one-fourth talking." He explains that it is important to listen to someone's concerns and repeat back what you heard them say. For a preservation commission, listening closely to a property owner is essential for understanding the underlying need they are trying to meet.

It's equally important for the staff and commissioners to explain their needs, be it to enforce city codes,

to follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, or to uphold the requirements of a historic district. "When you know each other's needs you can be on the same side to creatively solve the problem," Lewis says.

Often property owners think they know the right solution to their needs before meeting with the commission. Likewise, staff and commissioners may arrive at the meeting with their own solution or certain judgments about the proposed change. This dynamic is all-too-common according to Ferber. We need to "back up to what the problem is and not argue over the solution," he says. He cautions against getting stuck in a "frigid position."

Ferber himself owns a historic home and said that he ran into some friction with the commission when he applied for listing in the heritage register. "Don't argue against vinyl windows; talk about what the problem is...we are rational people trying to solve a problem."

Lewis adds, "People cling to the solution they've created." By stepping back, slowing down the conversation, and addressing the underlying problem,

you can "get people together so they aren't at cross purposes" she says.

Lewis notes that it's important to acknowledge the underlying value or need of the property owner, and even to admit that it's an awkward situation for everyone. She emphasizes that the property owner naturally wants a say

in what's done to her home as well as in how she cares for her family. In proposing new windows, is the home owner concerned about lead safety for her children? Is the family uncomfortable because their



The Rentfrow-Baldoz family had such a positive experience when their home was placed on the local register that Mark later joined the Heritage Commission. Sadly, not all interactions go so well

house doesn't hold heat? When contemplating an addition on a home or business, is it to create more space for future growth? Whether or not the property owners appreciate preserving historic integrity, their welfare and that of their family is going to be the priority. And thus, it's the underlying value that should be the focus of discussion.

However, acknowledging someone's feelings doesn't mean agreeing with them. You can hear them out respectfully without backing down. So the conversation might go something like, "I recognize that you need to keep your children safe and the preservation commission needs to maintain the integrity of the city's historic properties, so let's work together."

"It's sometimes tricky to strike the right tone. We want to be sensitive to the homeowner, but our goals are sometimes in direct opposition to theirs," says Vice-chair Beckner. "It helps to have a real negotiator on the team. Our chair is very good at diffusing tension and insisting that we're here to help the [individual] homeowner as well as the rest of the homeowners by preserving the historic district's character."

It may also be helpful to share that other property owners have faced the same dilemmas and offer ideas that have worked for them. The role for staff can be especially dicey since they are meant to be neutral and serve as a resource for the commissioners and the applicants.

Lewis notes that it's important for staff and commissioners not take on the emotional stress of the applicant. Whatever the underlying problem, it's ultimately the homeowner's, and the commission has their own job to do.

Beckner sees early interaction as key to improving the commission's review process. "It would help if collaboration with the heritage review committee were integrated into the very earliest steps of project planning somehow. We understand a homeowner's frustration when they've already paid for designs and have decided every detail and then realize they have to consult with us when they're ready to start work."

She adds, "We could do a better job of educating and interacting with historic homeowners and district residents in a fun, non-threatening way. We could mail a monthly or quarterly newsletter that reminds them of the pros of living in a historic district and celebrates sensitive restoration. We could host more events that really celebrate our historic districts. We could blog."

But the early interaction shouldn't be limited to property owners, says Beckner. "It might help if we collaborated more with other city staffers. I'm thinking of the farmhouse that was lost to neglect before the commission had a fighting chance of intervening and assisting the homeowner."



The Carlson House was one of the last homesteads in Olympia. It sat empty for a few years, becoming a haven for vandals. Sadly, by the time the Commission was alerted that it was proposed for demolition, the homeowners couldn't be persuaded to sell it or rehabilitate it

The code enforcement team may know more about some of our endangered historic resources than we do because they deal with neglected or vacant properties. Maybe we could do ride-alongs when older properties are at risk."

Ultimately, says Lewis, it's up to the staff and commis-

sioners to model the way you want the conversation to go. And her best advice? "Always hold out hope that there is a solution!" ■

Beyond Certificates

The Historic Preservation Commission's

By Matthew Synatschk

Many communities throughout the United States have realized the positive impact of local historic districts and the need for protecting their historic resources. These protections are achieved through the adoption of historic preservation ordinances. These ordinances establish a local historic preservation commission with the power to review building permits on specified properties and issue Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) to protect the character-defining features of these properties.

While reviewing and issuing a COA is an important facet of local preservation efforts, the true impact of the historic preservation commission lies in expanding the traditional regulatory role by engaging the community in activities to promote historic preservation and build the community's preservation ethic.

The timeline of historic preservation in the United States is driven by reaction to events and potential threats to revered places. During the late 19th century, local organizations like the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas were established, each focused on saving endangered properties with strong ties to our past. In the 1930s, Americans witnessed the adoption of the first preservation ordinances in New Orleans, Louisiana and Charleston, South Carolina in reaction to the loss of buildings and historical context. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 was signed into law in response to the loss of "historic properties significant to the Nation's heritage."¹ Continuing today, many local historic preservation ordinances are adopted in response to the loss of a significant historic resource. Where does this place historic preservation commissions?

Historic preservation commissions, through the powers and duties assigned to them through city ordinance, should actively seek opportunities to promote preservation and proactively take steps to ensure protection of significant properties. Most historic preservation ordinances list a variety of powers and duties for the historic preservation commission beyond the regulatory duties. These opportunities present themselves in a variety of ways, including programs offered through the National Park Service (NPS), the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP).

National Register of Historic Places

Identifying and nominating properties to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) honors the commitment made by property owners to protect their historic properties. Additionally, income-producing National Register properties may be eligible for federal tax credits to offset some of the rehabilitation costs. The historic preservation commission should make it a priority to identify and work with property owners to list properties on the National Register. A current historic

of Appropriateness:

Role in Historic Preservation

resources survey will identify properties of high integrity eligible for listing in the National Register. Moreover, municipalities often extend local designation to properties listed in National Register district, utilizing the existing boundaries.

Section 106 Federal Review

The Section 106 Federal Review process provides the opportunity for historic preservation commissions to join as a consulting party on projects using federal funds or requiring a federal permit. Overseen by the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation, Section 106 reviews are coordinated with the SHPO to minimize the adverse effect on properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register. As a consulting party, the historic preservation commission may make comments on Section 106 reviews and participate in any negotiations regarding the mitigation of the adverse effects. Participating in the consultation may enable the historic preservation commission to achieve a positive preservation outcome to offset the potential loss of a historic resource. More information regarding the Section 106 review process and consulting party status can be found through the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and your state SHPO.

Community Education and Recognition Activities

Historic preservation commissions often receive criticism for their role in approving or denying COAs. While frustrating, many times the criticism is the result of a lack of awareness of historic assets in the community. Education programs broaden this awareness and are vital to the success of historic preservation commissions and local preservation efforts. Education programs can range

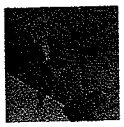
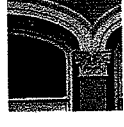
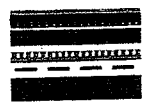
from a recurring column in the local newspaper highlighting historic properties and stories of the community to working with school groups and other organizations to develop educational curriculum for use in the schools. May is Historic Preservation Month and provides a perfect opportunity to introduce the role of historic preservation to the community.

Finders Keepers



Discover Historic Bastrop

Look along Main Street for images below. Write the name of the business/or name of the building in the blank spaces provided below each image. Hint: Use the map and look up and down.

		
1. _____	2. _____	3. _____
		
4. _____	5. _____	6. _____
		
7. _____	8. _____	9. _____

Historic architecture scavenger hunts are a great way to build awareness of historic resources. Courtesy of Bastrop, TX Main Street Program

Recognition plays a key role in encouraging continued preservation efforts in the community. Annual awards for the best rehabilitation project, best rehabilitation contractor, and other categories offer recognition for members of the community who have invested in preserving local history. A proclamation from the mayor's office and recognition at a city council meeting for the awardees sends a clear message to the community that historic preservation is important and those efforts are appreciated.

Preservation Training and Workshops

Historic preservation commissions may consider hosting preservation workshops featuring topics for historic property owners. In addition to providing a forum for property owners, the workshops also publicize the myriad of preservation-related activities taking place in the community. The City of San Antonio, TX Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) hosts a Historic Homeowners' Fair every year offering solution-focused training on common issues facing property owners. In addition, OHP hosts Window Repair Workshops designed to develop a skilled pool of local craftspeople for preservation projects.

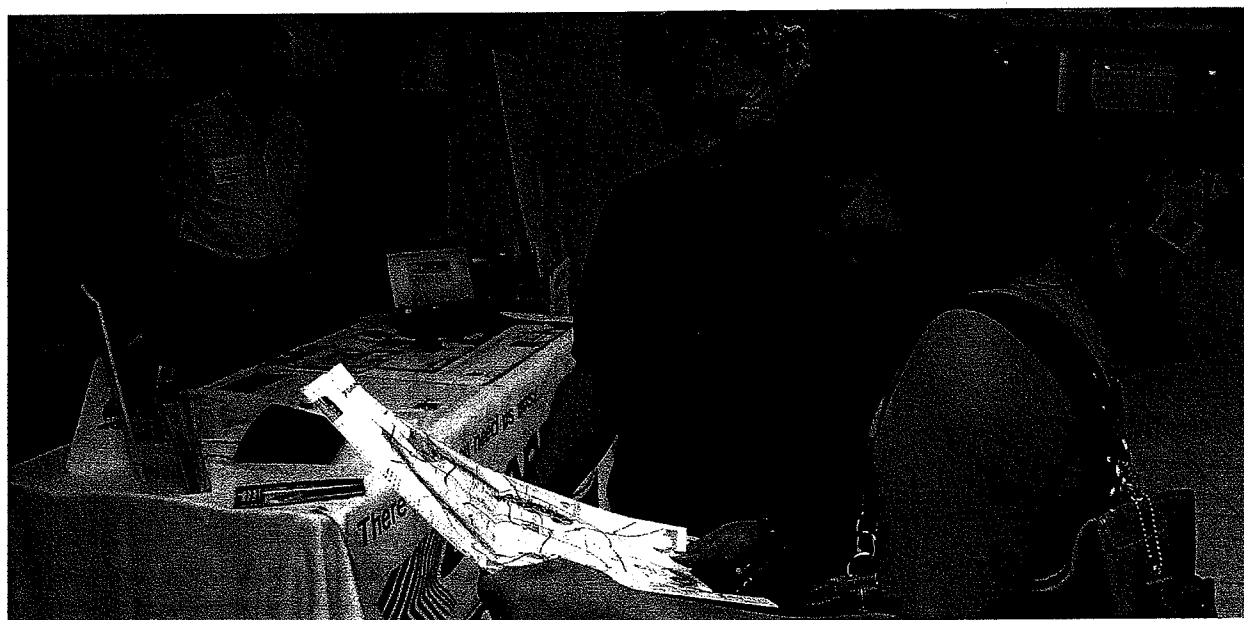
Incentives

Preservation incentives provide an opportunity for historic preservation commissions to further the preservation goals of the community. Incentives may include façade grants, property-tax freezes or abatements, and low-interest loans for approved preservation projects.

Incentives may also be in-kind support from local businesses or entities. Realizing that restoration projects are expensive, Owen Hardware in Corsicana, TX negotiated with the Corsicana Heritage Preservation Commission to offer paint and other restoration supplies at cost for approved projects. When combined with the City of Corsicana's façade grant and tax-abatement program, property owners enjoy considerable savings on their projects. The key to successful incentives is realizing that no single incentive will fully fund a restoration project. A combination of incentives is generally required to offset the overall restoration cost. Historic preservation commissions can also propose incentives for consideration by a local government.

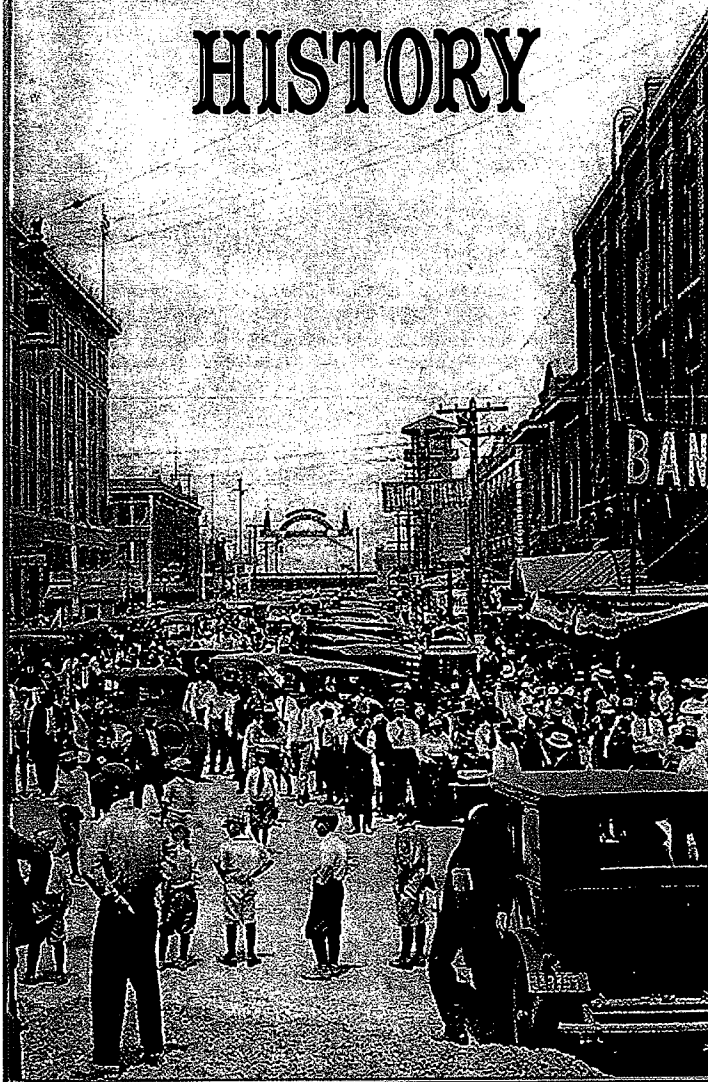
Certified Local Governments

Finding funds to support historic preservation activities can be challenging. With most preservation efforts occurring at the local level, the federal government developed the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program to support and grow local initiatives designed to achieve federal preservation goals. The CLG Program, a partnership between the National Park Service, the State Historic Preservation Office, and local governments, offers several opportunities to encourage the growth of local preservation efforts. Through the annual CLG grants, local historic preservation commissions have access to funding for a myriad of projects focused on generating a greater knowledge and understanding of historic resources.



Attendees at the City of San Antonio's Historic Homeowners Fair learn best practices and techniques for maintaining their historic homes. Photo courtesy of City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation

TOURING WICHITA FALLS HISTORY



A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME ...

The City of Wichita Falls, TX funded the publication of the Touring Wichita Falls History through a Fiscal Year 2010 CLG Grant.

CLG funding comes from the annual federal allocation of Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) monies to the SHPO. A minimum of 10% of HPF funds must be distributed as grants to Certified Local Governments within the state. While CLG requirements may vary by state, the minimum requirements for participation are established by the National Park Service. These requirements include the adoption of a preservation ordinance, establishment of a qualified historic preservation commission, development of a system for historic resource surveys, and public participation in the local preservation program. Once a city is certified by NPS, it is eligible to apply for annual grants.

CLG grants provide funding for a variety of projects designed to "enrich, develop and help maintain local historic preservation programs."² Eligibility for funding is determined based upon the criteria established by the Historic Preservation Fund Grants Manual, published by NPS, and program requirements established by each SHPO. Eligible CLG projects include historic resources surveys, development of design guidelines, National Register nominations, public preservation programs, and interpretive materials. In the previous three fiscal years, the Texas CLG Program awarded 31 grants for a total of \$380,500, resulting in the completion of preservation projects totaling over \$800,000 around the state.

Next Steps

Historic preservation commissions are strongly encouraged to contact their respective SHPO for additional information regarding Certified Local Government, National Register of Historic Places nominations, and their role in the Section 106 review process. In addition, the SHPO may offer other state programs to assist historic preservation commissions in their efforts. Historic preservation commissions are the leaders in local preservation efforts and should take advantage of every opportunity to further their goals and promote historic preservation in the community.■

Notes:

¹ National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

² U.S. Department of the Interior, Historic Preservation Fund Grants Manual (Washington, DC, 2007), 9-1.

continued from page 3



Welcome to NAPC!

Name	Last Name	City	State
Jocelyn	Admirah	City of Portsmouth VA Historic Preservation Commission	Portsmouth VA
Donna	Allen	Sales and Marketing, Visit Norfolk	Norfolk VA
Mason	Andrews	Hampton University School of Architecture	Hampton VA
Ron	Askew	Chesapeake Historic Preservation Commission	Chesapeake VA
Danielle	Bachant Bell	Bloomington Historic Preservation Commission	Bloomington IN
Kathy	Baker	Stafford County Architectural Review Board	Stafford VA
Susan M.	Borkland, Senior Development Manager	Department of Economic Development	Hampton VA
Bob	Carter	Virginia Department of Historic Resources	Richmond VA
Cathy	Coleman, President	Downtown Norfolk Council	Norfolk VA
Jerry	Creech	Historic Preservation Commission	Washington NC
Shanda	Davenport, Principal Planner	Department of Planning & Community Development	Suffolk VA
John	Davis, City Planner	Department of Planning	Newport News VA
Josh C.	Gillespie	Fort Monroe Authority	Fort Monroe VA
Saul	Gleiser	Senior Planner Urban Designer	Newport News VA
Tony	Goodwin	Development and Acquisition	Portsmouth VA
David	Hoggard	Double Hung, LLC, Historic Window Restoration	Greensboro NC
Joan	McInerney	Grant Neighborhood League	Norfolk VA
Megan	McGown	City of Sidney Historic Preservation Board	Sidney NE
Bernice Fay	Pope	Virginia Beach Historic Preservation Commission	Virginia Beach VA
Mac	Rawls	Virginia Beach Historic Preservation Commission	Virginia Beach VA
Wayne	Sanderson	Inspire Cedar Shale, EAPCO Group	Wixom MI
Mark E.	Shea, Senior Planner	City of Chesapeake, Department of Planning	Chesapeake VA
Martin	Sokolich	Talbot County Historic District Commission	Easton MD
David	Webb, President	Historic Pueblo, Inc.	Pueblo CO
Josh	White	City of Arkansas City	Arkansas City KS
Susannah V.	Winstead	City of Norfolk, Department of Planning and Community Development	Norfolk VA

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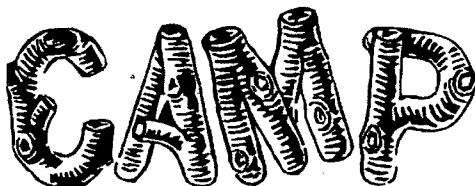


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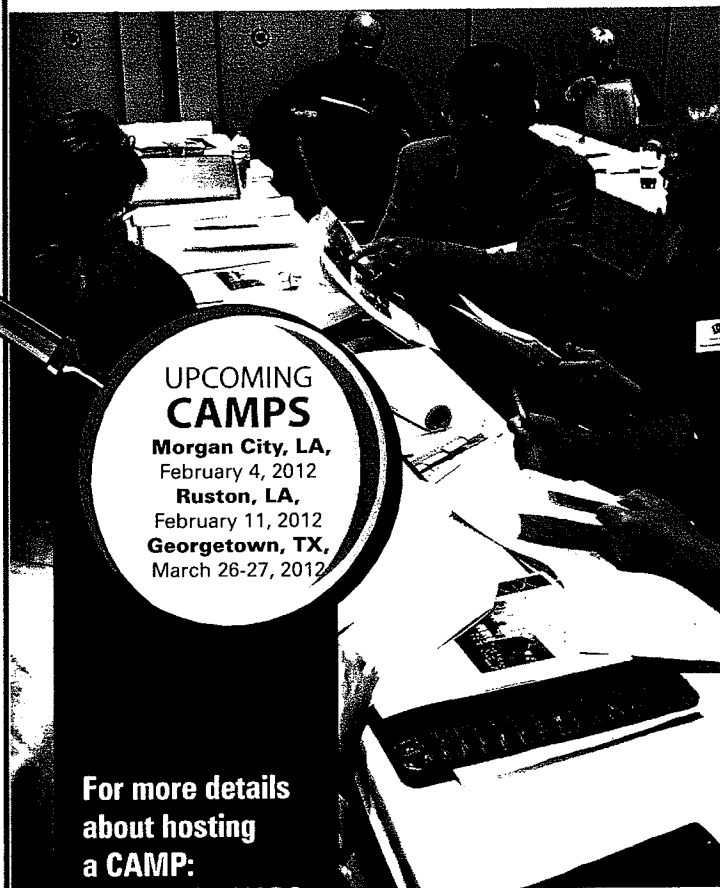
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MOB TIES

How Las Vegas' made men were connected



UNLV SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

By **Ed Koch, Mary Manning**

Thu, May 15, 2008 (3 a.m.)

[Meyer Lansky](#) | [Benjamin Siegel](#) | [Moe Dalitz](#) | [Moe Sedway](#) | [Tony Accardo](#) | [Tony Cornero](#) | [Johnny Rosselli](#) | [Sam Giancana](#) | [Tony Spilotro](#) | [Frank Rosenthal](#) | [Joe Agosto](#) | [Morris Shenker](#) | [Sorkis Webbe](#) | [Herb Tobman and Allen Sachs](#)

They were law enforcement's pests and the casino industry's parasites, arriving in Las Vegas as the feds cracked down on gambling coast to coast.

They were the mob — gangsters, hoodlums, thieves, small men — Las Vegas' founding fathers. Their influence locally lasted about half a century, although their impact on those formative years will forever be threaded into the tapestry of Las Vegas' lore and history.

Some are long forgotten such as Tony Brancato and Tony Trombino of Kansas who pulled off a successful armed robbery at the Flamingo in June 1951. Both were later slain in Hollywood by Jimmy Fratianno, who was never convicted for lack of witnesses and evidence, according to Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris in "The Green Felt Jungle."

Some mobsters had the nicknames of pests — Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel and Tony "the Ant" Spilotro. (Neither guy liked the monikers: Siegel earned his early because of a tendency to "go bugs" whenever angered or thwarted. He preferred to be called Ben. The media adopted Spilotro's nickname after FBI agent William F. Roemer Jr. referred to him as "that little piss ant.")

Love 'em or hate 'em, mobsters played a major role in Las Vegas' rise to becoming a renowned tourist destination, although they took more from the town through casino skimming and money laundering schemes than they gave to the region's growth and the community's welfare.

In its heyday from about 1950 to the early 1980s, the mob controlled every Strip resort that was worth controlling, stealing untold millions of dollars in tax revenues that could have paid for schools, roads and other public services.

Mobsters found easy ways to take control of some casinos in Las Vegas. Billy Wilkerson, whose dream of an exotic gambling resort became the Flamingo, needed help from mob bosses Meyer Lansky and Siegel to fund the casino's construction. Moe Dalitz and the Cleveland Mayfield Road Gang bailed out the

original builder and owner of the Desert Inn, Wilbur Clark, after he ran short of construction. Even gambler Tony Cornero had to seek financial help from Dalitz and Lansky to finish building the Stardust.

Those and other mobsters were no heroes, despite claims by some Vegas old-timers that the town was much better when the mob ran it.

Mobsters were often vicious, ruthless men whose skimming operations funded gangster activities such as narcotics sales, prostitution, loan sharking and other nefarious ventures nationwide.

Yet a number of mobsters who came to Las Vegas gave up their evil ways and became model citizens, good businessmen, dedicated family men and civic leaders.

After a ban in 1909, gambling once again became legal in Nevada in 1931. But the mob was slow to see the potential of all forms of gambling in this small state, opting initially to focus on running horse racing parlors via control of the race results wire.

Although much attention is paid to Siegel, his role has been vastly exaggerated in stories and films. He wasn't even the first mobster to open a joint on the Strip.

That "honor" arguably goes to a cop who ran the Pair-O-Dice that opened on dusty Highway 91, today's Las Vegas Boulevard or the Strip. The club, operated by Guy McAfee, stood near where the Frontier (imploded in November 2007) was. McAfee, a Los Angeles Police vice squad commander, secretly owned illegal casinos in Southern California, according to Sally Denton and Roger Morris in "The Money and the Power."

Siegel, representing the East Coast mob interests of Frank Costello and Lansky, in effect stole the already under-construction Flamingo away from Hollywood Reporter Publisher Billy Wilkerson, who ran short of money to finish the resort.

But then Siegel so mismanaged the construction of the post-World War II project that it cost six times more than his projected \$1 million price tag, Reid and Demaris wrote in "The Green Felt Jungle." On top of that, Siegel's girlfriend, Virginia Hill, skimmed hundreds of thousands of dollars of the mob's money, helping to seal her boyfriend's fate, the authors said.

A torrential downpour, coupled with a lack of efforts to draw people to the middle-of-nowhere desert town for a Dec. 26, 1946, grand opening party further set back the mob's efforts to recoup its investment in the Flamingo.

As a result, Siegel was "retired" from the casino business in the early summer of 1947 with four blasts from a .30-30 carbine as he read a newspaper in girlfriend Hill's Beverly Hills, Calif., home, according to "The Green Felt Jungle."

But we are getting way ahead of ourselves.

To understand how organized crime truly got a foothold in Las Vegas, one must logically accept that one little publicity-seeking gangster could not have orchestrated such a task on his own. It is far more logical that the top figures of the Mafia had to be involved in orchestrating such a move.

Here's a look at those characters:

MEYER LANSKY

Born Maier Suchowljansky in 1902 in Grodno, Poland, Lansky fled at age 10 from czarist Russian troops with his family to Manhattan.

A math whiz, Lansky was naturally good at calculating the odds on craps games, Sally Denton and Roger Morris wrote in "The Money and the Power."

"There's no such thing as a lucky gambler. There are just the winners and losers," Lansky was quoted as saying by Robert Lacey in "Little Man: Meyer Lansky and the Gangster Life." "The winners are those who control the game ... All the rest are suckers."

Those closest to Lansky claimed that he accomplished the supreme blackmail in the 1930s, obtaining photographs of alleged homosexual acts by J. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI, and his supposed lover Clyde Tolson, but the claim was never proven.

Early on Lansky saw the value of gambling operations to the mob. In 1938 he traveled to Cuba to finalize a deal with Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista to take control of the island's lucrative gambling operations. Under Lansky's leadership, Cuba became a gaming mecca.



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Lansky

Batista lined his pockets with riches from his share of the gambling profits as his people starved, which planted the seeds for revolution. Batista's government was overthrown in 1959 when rebel communist forces under Fidel Castro came to power. Castro nationalized casino operations and kicked out the mob.

This left the mobsters with just Las Vegas, and they made the most of it.

In the early 1940s, Lansky and Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel drove across the desert from Los Angeles to the dusty railroad stop called Las Vegas. With temperatures soaring near 115 degrees, the wires in their Cadillac melted.

"There were times when I thought I would die in that desert," Lansky is quoted as saying in "The Money and the Power." "Vegas was a horrible place."

Lansky initially had dispatched Siegel to Las Vegas to take control of racetrack bets humming over the wires. Contrary to legend, it was Lansky, not Siegel, who envisioned what Las Vegas would become.

"What I had in mind was to build the greatest, most luxurious hotel casino in the world and invite people from all over America — maybe the high rollers from all over the world — to come and spend their money there," Lansky was quoted as saying in "Lansky: Mogul to the Mob," by Dennis Eisenberg, Uri Dan and Eli Landau.

Lansky was the financial brains behind the National Syndicate. He was trusted by every mob family in the country and handled the shares of profits to the penny.

Stories say the reason Lansky operated for so long in Las Vegas without close investigation by the feds was because he allegedly had those photos of Hoover.

Lansky was not indicted for a crime until 1970. Even then, it was the Internal Revenue Service that went after him, not the FBI. The tax case against Lansky eventually fell apart, and he remained a free man. He kept his hand in Las Vegas operations until his death from lung cancer on Jan. 15, 1983.

BENAMIN "BUGSY" SIEGEL

In early 1945, Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel approached the owners of El Cortez on behalf of Meyer Lansky and purchased the downtown property for \$600,000. Lansky also became a hidden owner in the Thunderbird on the Strip.

Siegel formed Nevada Projects Corp. to complete the Strip's second resort, the Flamingo, which the mob had taken away from Billy Wilkerson. Siegel's estimated cost was \$1 million.

After World War II, Siegel obtained lumber and pipe to build the club with the federal government and Wilkerson's help. For expensive marble and decorative woods, Siegel went through the Mexican black market, Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris wrote in "The Green Felt Jungle."

One of Siegel's friends was U.S. Sen. Pat McCarran, for whom McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas is named.

The senator reprioritized projects in Southern Nevada so that Nevada Projects Corp. could receive the copper fixtures and tiling to get the Flamingo up and running, according to "The Money and the Power," by Sally Denton and Roger Morris.

Siegel's Trans America Wire Service racing wire, operating out of Chicago and Los Angeles, was in place in every horse parlor in Las Vegas.

Despite all of that, Siegel's Las Vegas success hinged on the lavish grand opening of the Flamingo on Dec. 26, 1946, which turned out to be a disaster.

Things didn't go so well, according to Steve Fischer in "When the Mob



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The Flamingo's Champagne Tower and glittering marquee advertises upcoming entertainment acts at the swanky casino. Meyer Lansky was a major backer at the resort - both before and after his good buddy, Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, was murdered in 1947.



SUN FILE PHOTO

Siegel



Ran Vegas." Although Siegel had hired a dozen uniformed guards to watch the casino, many of the dealers helped themselves to money. Two rival casino owners, Tutor Scherer and Beldon Katleman, both won nearly \$100,000 that first night. Actor George Raft was the only well-known loser that night, dropping \$75,000 at baccarat. Even then, the house was still down nearly \$200,000.

In the showroom, Jimmy Durante played to less than 80 people. The following night was even worse as Rose Marie played to fewer than 20, Fischer wrote.

None of the hotel's 90 rooms were in any condition for guests because workmen were still installing individual sewer systems based on Siegel's orders. As a result, potential Flamingo guests stayed at El Rancho Vegas or the Frontier.

The Flamingo lost nearly \$700,000 during the 65 days it was open. On Feb. 6, 1947, Siegel told his two publicists — one was future Las Vegas Sun Publisher Hank Greenspun — to send out the word that the hotel would close and reopen in a month.

On March 1, 1947, the Flamingo reopened as the Fabulous Flamingo — billed as the world's most glamorous hotel.

The Andrews Sisters opened the front doors and later the sisters — Patty, LaVerne and Maxene Andrews — mingled with guests such as actress Joan Crawford and the comic Ritz Brothers.

Siegel had lost favor with his mob bosses and was killed by four bullets to the head in Hill's Beverly Hills home on June 20, 1947. Afterward Siegel's lieutenants Moe Sedway, Gus Greenbaum and David Berman walked into the executive offices of the Flamingo and announced they were taking over.

MOE DALITZ

After Wilbur Clark ran out of money building the Desert Inn, Dalitz and his Cleveland partners purchased controlling interest with Teamster loans in 1949, according to Steve Fischer's "When the Mob Ran Vegas."

Dalitz and many other questionable gaming figures were conveniently out of town when Sen. Estes Kefauver of Tennessee came to Las Vegas in November 1950 and held his one-day hearing on organized crime.

In a historical oddity, it was not until after that high-profile hearing into the inner workings of the gaming industry that the Chicago mob really began to establish itself in Las Vegas, according to a memoir by late FBI agent William J. Roemer.

Unlike Siegel, who was pretty much in the Las Vegas gaming business for himself, Dalitz was more like Sedway, becoming a community-spirited figure.

Dalitz, Allard Roen and Merv Adelson built Sunrise Hospital, the Las Vegas Country Club and the Boulevard mall.

Dalitz also helped charitable causes, often reaching into his own pocket to buy uniforms for local youth sports teams. He won many civic awards in Las Vegas for giving back to the community.

"He lived the mobster's dream, to get to Las Vegas and reinvent himself — and become a fabulous success," Fischer wrote. "He (Dalitz) was a quiet, reserved person — unless you got on his wrong side."

One person who did that was unheralded Las Vegas founding father Tony Cornero:

In March 1955 Cornero was desperately in need of money to finish building the Stardust so he made his pitch to Dalitz and Meyer Lansky, owners of United Hotels, the Desert Inn's operating company.

Cornero got a \$1.25 million loan from Dalitz. A second and a third loan followed, enough to finish the Stardust. Hardly a day went by that Dalitz didn't bug Cornero about the loans. Fretting over the payment of the debt to his mob pals apparently took its toll on Cornero. On July 31, 1955, at 11:20 a.m., Cornero died while shooting craps at the Desert Inn after a meeting with Dalitz. Drinking 7&7s and down \$37,600 at the table, Cornero fell over dead, according to Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris in "The Green Felt Jungle."

SUN FILE PHOTO
Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel's Flamingo Hotel is shown in this photo. Under Siegel's authority the hotel's construction was disorganized and the grand opening was a flop, forcing the hotel to close after less than a month of operation. Siegel's mismanagement of the Flamingo eventually cost him his life.



SUN ARCHIVES

Dalitz



COURTESY PHOTO

Left to right: Moe Dalitz, Elvis Presley, Juliet Prowse, Wilbur and Tom Clark, Cecil Simmons, Joe Franks, pose on the set of "G.I. Blues" in Hollywood in 1960.

Historians and others have speculated his death was caused by a heart attack brought on by Dalitz's insistent nagging. Another rumor circulated that Cornero had been poisoned. The county coroner's official report said it was a heart attack.

Regardless, Cornero's death put Dalitz in position to oversee operations at the Stardust along with Chicago mobster Murray "The Camel" Humphreys and the mob's clean frontman, Jake Factor, brother of cosmetics mogul Max Factor.

Humphreys had served as a lieutenant under Al Capone and later worked for Sam Giancana. When the Black Book was established in 1960 listing those so undesirable they could not step foot in a Nevada casino, Humphreys was one of the original 11 entries.

According to Sally Denton and Roger Morris in "The Money and the Power," the Chicago mob through the 1960s was able to add the Sahara, Hacienda (where the Mandalay Bay now stands) and the Fremont, which at the time was downtown's largest casino, to its list of Las Vegas holdings.

Denton and Morris detailed one event that was to change Las Vegas: The arrival of billionaire Howard Hughes.

Dalitz was still running the Desert Inn when Hughes came to Las Vegas during Thanksgiving weekend 1966 and took over the top two floors of the hotel, paying \$26,000 a day, but not gambling.

Hughes' right-hand man, Bob Maheu, called Johnny Rosselli, the Las Vegas enforcer for the Chicago mob after Dalitz asked that Hughes be removed to make the rooms available for high rollers who were coming into town for New Year's Eve.

Rosselli called in some favors and Hughes stayed a little while longer as a guest. In the mid-1960s there was no one who had more power in Las Vegas than Dalitz, but Rosselli apparently had significant clout, too.

That changed when Dalitz, a short time later, tried to oust Hughes only to be met with an offer to buy the Desert Inn as a tax shelter against the multimillion-dollar windfall Hughes got from his sale of Trans World Airlines.

Hughes needed more hotels as tax shelters. Lansky and Dalitz figured that the gravy train ride would soon be over for the mob. They reckoned it was a good time to dump Las Vegas gaming properties before the authorities, jealous over the mob's profits, would start cracking down.

Lansky directed his hand-picked boss at the Sands, Jack Entratter, to sell Hughes that resort for slightly less than \$15 million, giving Hughes a second hotel and putting a \$1 million profit into Lansky's pocket.

Although the mob's influence over Las Vegas casinos would continue for nearly 17 more years, six of its finest hotels wound up in Hughes' hands. By the time the mob got some of them back, the federal government was hot on its heels.

Dalitz continued to have an influence on Southern Nevada resorts well into the 1980s. He died of natural causes on Aug. 31, 1989, and was never convicted of a major crime.

MOE SEDWAY

Moe Sedway, a Genovese family associate, was well-liked in the Las Vegas community.

He served as Clark County alderman, was head of the United Jewish Appeal in Las Vegas and was on the board of directors of the Clark County Library.

When Sen. Estes Kefauver of Tennessee started his nationwide organized crime hearings in Las Vegas on Nov. 15, 1950, Sedway was the only one of the five witnesses to have had ties to the underworld, Sally Denton and Roger Morris wrote in "The Money and the Power."

According to the authors, Sedway, then 57, painted himself as an ailing, honest businessman who knew Lansky and his associate Frank Costello only in passing. He testified that he did not have ties to organized crime. In reality he was one of Lansky's lieutenants.

Sedway told the committee that his ailments included three major coronary thromboses, an ulcer, diarrhea, an abscess on his intestines and hemorrhoids.

"I just got out of bed and I am loaded with drugs," Sedway testified,



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Sedway

according to the authors.

He said that as a businessman, real estate investor and gambler he was not making a lot of money.

Sedway claimed he was unaware of any illegal activity in the casinos. He also testified that Lansky had once owned 100 shares of Flamingo stock while Siegel was alive, but that Lansky no longer held interest in any Las Vegas casino.

Sedway was chided by one committee member for having had any dealings at all with "scum of the earth" gangsters and asked how he would have lived his life differently, according to "The Money and the Power."

"We don't get as rich as you think we do," Sedway said. "This is hard work. I would not do it over again. I would not want my children to do it. ... The first thing I would do would be to get a good education like I am trying to give my children, and when I got real learned, I would become a United States senator like you."

Sedway's testimony apparently did not carry a whole lot of weight, as the final 11,500-page Kefauver Committee report included just four pages from the Las Vegas proceedings.

Before the local committee hearing, Las Vegas Sun editor Hank Greenspun wrote: "A sharp 10-year-old boy could have come to the conclusion that crime and politics in this state are on friendly terms."

Sedway's testimony, in effect denying the mob's involvement in Las Vegas, may have been a lie, but his claims about his bad health were genuine. He died in 1952 at age 58.

TONY "JOE BATTERS" ACCARDO

Anthony Accardo got his nickname (Big Tuna) for his strong-arm method of settling arguments.

According to Steve Fischer in "When the Mob Ran Vegas," Accardo was not a man to cross:

The Riviera, which opened in 1955, had lost money consistently for three months. Accardo, the de facto owner, knew that if a casino loses money for 90 straight days something more than bad luck was going on.

He gave the official on-site owners 15 minutes to leave. Then Accardo asked Gus Greenbaum, retired president of the Flamingo, who was living in Scottsdale, Ariz., to return to Las Vegas and save the Riviera. Greenbaum declined.

A few nights later, Greenbaum's sister-in-law was murdered in her bed. Gus changed his mind and came to Las Vegas to work for Accardo, Fischer wrote.

(Greenbaum initially was an associate of Meyer Lansky, a member of the Chicago mob and a syndicate accountant for Las Vegas casino operations. After Bugsy Siegel's death, Greenbaum helped run the Flamingo. With a \$1 million loan from the Chicago mob, Greenbaum soon turned the casino's fortunes around, according to Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris in "The Green Felt Jungle.")

On Dec. 3, 1958, a maid found the bodies of Gus and Shirley Greenbaum in their Phoenix home.

Fischer wrote that observers say the ever-smiling Greenbaum gambled, drank and womanized, creating too high a profile for the mob's taste. The Chicago syndicate also discovered that Greenbaum was skimming from the Riviera himself, thus sealing his fate.

In the late 1950s, Accardo called for a meeting of all mob leaders around the country who were making a comfortable living by skimming Las Vegas casinos. According to mob historians and FBI reports, the mob's take from those properties was about \$1 million a day.



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Moe Sedway plays Farabank (Old Tiger) at the Golden Nugget Casino. Sedway was a known associate and lieutenant for mobster Meyer Lansky.



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Accardo



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A 1960s aerial photo shows the Riviera. Tony Accardo was the defacto owner of the property, after taking control when he learned that the previous owners had been skimming from the casino.

Accardo suggested that there be only one outside man in Las Vegas who would oversee everyone's interests.

Accardo and Sam Giancana, Accardo's Las Vegas specialist, sat down to discuss whom they would send to Vegas. They chose Marshall Caifano — aka John Marshall — a brutal man who had a reputation for using a blowtorch on his victims. Giancana knew Caifano would keep everyone in Las Vegas in line, according to Fischer.

In 1956, with the IRS hot on his tail, Accardo turned the Chicago mob operations over to Giancana. When the heat cooled down 10 years later, he took it back, and Giancana went into hiding to avoid prosecution.

After a 1960 fire burned down El Rancho Vegas, the Chicago mob replaced Caifano with Johnny Rosselli.

After Accardo gained an interest in the under-construction Caesars Palace in 1965, he sent Tony Spilotro to Las Vegas to watch out for Chicago's interests, according to Fischer.

Accardo, who was also a hidden owner of the Sands in the 1960s, died of congestive heart failure at age 86 in Chicago.

TONY "THE HAT" CORNERO

One man left more than just memories in Las Vegas, according to Steve Fischer in "When the Mob Ran Vegas," and Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris in "The Green Felt Jungle."

In the 1920s Tony "The Hat" Cornero made a lot of money during Prohibition by running whiskey from Canada and rum from Mexico.

He sold liquor to speak-easies in Southern California. By the time he was 25, Cornero had made \$1 million. He got his colorful nickname from wearing a 10-gallon hat.

For unloading rumrunner boats beyond the three-mile limit off Southern California's coast, Cornero went to prison. When he got out in 1930, he and his two brothers, Frank and Louis, headed for Las Vegas.

Nevada Gov. Fred Balzar and the state Legislature were about to make gambling legal again, overturning a ban on gaming that was imposed for a second time in 1909. The state was going to allow Las Vegas and Reno to set up their own rules.

In 1931, Cornero bought 30 acres of desert property for \$10 an acre and built the town's first major casino, The Meadows, just east of Fremont Street and Charleston Boulevard. It burned down in 1943.

Cornero later built The SS Rex in downtown Las Vegas, which later became the Apache Casino, then the Horseshoe, and is now called Binion's.

In the early 1950s, Cornero bought a 40-acre parcel on Highway 91 to build the Starlight. In 1955, he renamed the project the Stardust and construction began with \$4.3 million in loans from Meyer Lansky and Desert Inn operator Moe Dalitz.

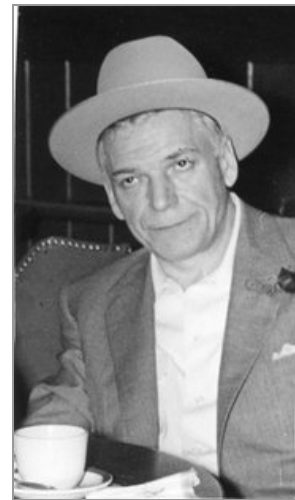
Two weeks before the Stardust was completed in 1955, Cornero went to Dalitz for more money. Less than two hours later, Cornero was dead of natural causes, listed as a heart attack by the county coroner. The opening of the Stardust was delayed for two years.

More than 1,000 mourners attended Cornero's funeral, including nearly all the Strip casino owners. His favorite song, "The Wabash Cannonball," was sung. The day he died, Cornero's bank account had only \$800 in it.

Actor Cary Grant played Cornero in the 1943 film "Mr. Lucky."

JOHNNY ROSSELLI

Johnny Rosselli was cut from the same material as Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel — dapperly attired, handsome and ruthless. Rosselli's business card read simply: "Strategist."



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Cornero



SUN ARCHIVES

Tony Cornero sits far left at The Meadows Casino. The owner of the Stardust Hotel and Casino, dropped dead on July 31, 1955 while shooting craps at the Desert Inn.

His first major deal in Las Vegas was building the \$50 million Tropicana. A hidden owner included Carlos Marcello, the don of the New Orleans mob.

Authors Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris described Rosselli in "The Green Felt Jungle" as living "the good life of a respected elder in the Mafia."

An excerpt from their book describes Rosselli's typical day:

"Between golf rounds, meals, steam baths, shaves and trims, twisting, romancing and drinking, there is time for private little conferences at his favorite table with people seeking his counsel for friendship. It may be a newsman, a local politician, a casino owner, a prostitute, a famous entertainer, a deputy sheriff, a U.S. senator or the governor of Nevada."

When Rosselli came to the United States in the 1920s, his name was Fillip Sacco. After joining the mob and migrating to Chicago, he took the name Giuseppe Rosselli. But friends called him by the more Americanized name "Johnny."

He caught the eye of guys like Anthony Accardo and Paul Ricca, two top men in Chicago, and Frank Costello, head of one of New York's five crime families.

Accardo initially sent Rosselli to Los Angeles to take charge of the mob's interest in the movie business. Rosselli managed to get Frank Sinatra the role of Maggio in "From Here to Eternity," for which he won an Oscar for an actor in a supporting role, rejuvenating his then-sagging career.

By early 1957 Rosselli was told to pack up and move to Las Vegas. Within a year, he got construction financing for the Tropicana and the Royal Nevada. The money came from the Teamsters Central States Pension Fund, controlled at the time by Chicago mobster Paul "Red" Dorfman, and later by his son, Allen. Both took orders from Rosselli, according to "The Green Felt Jungle."

In 1959, Rosselli was the ranking Mafioso in Las Vegas. He controlled the Monte Presser Talent Agency. In the 1960s nearly all major performers who played Las Vegas were booked through that company.

According to Reid and Demaris, Rosselli is believed to have introduced John F. Kennedy to Judith Campbell Exner, who was to become the president's mistress. They also wrote that Rosselli got a piece of the Royal Nevada, the Frontier, the Dunes and the Aladdin after they were opened.

Then Rosselli bit off more than he could chew, so says Sally Denton and Roger Morris in "The Money and the Power." The mobster allegedly got involved in international plots that led to the attempted assassination of Cuban dictator Fidel Castro.

After Castro came to power in Cuba, the CIA plotted Operation Mongoose to kill the communist leader with the help of organized crime figures.

Howard Hughes' right-hand man, Bob Maheu, an ex-FBI agent who today resides in Las Vegas, hooked up the American spy agency with Rosselli, who was allegedly offered \$150,000 to kill Castro. In turn, Rosselli introduced Maheu to Giancana of the Chicago mob and Santo Trafficante, who ran the Tampa, Fla., mob for 30 years. They met in Miami Beach to finalize details of Operation Mongoose.

Attempts to kill Castro with pills and guns went awry.

After the infamous failed Bay of Pigs attack by anti-Castro forces, the CIA cut off ties in 1961 with Rosselli and other gangsters, Denton and Morris wrote.

In a March 8, 1984, "Where I Stand" column, Sun Publisher Hank Greenspun detailed how he helped get Rosselli out of jail in Las Vegas in 1967 following a call from a high-placed source in Washington, D.C., and how Rosselli explained the plot to kill Castro.

"Between the source of the Washington call and Johnny's tale I realized I was sitting on one of the top stories of the era," Greenspun said.



UNLV SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Rosselli



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An aerial shot of the Tropicana. After initially being sent to Los Angeles to control the mob's interest in Hollywood, Johnny Rosselli was moved to Las Vegas to oversee the construction of the \$50 million Tropicana.

"As a result of Johnny's disclosure, I learned that Castro had gotten wind of the CIA plot and that he vowed that if the Kennedy brothers were trying to kill him, he would return the favor in kind."

Before the decade was over, both John and Bobby Kennedy were dead at the hands of assassins, neither of whom was officially linked to Castro.

In 1975 Rosselli was called before the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee to testify about the plot to kill Castro. Shortly after his testimony, Giancana was murdered, and Rosselli went into hiding.

A year later, Rosselli was again called before a congressional committee to tell what he knew about John Kennedy's assassination. He did not show.

A few months later, on Aug. 9, 1976, the decomposing corpse of 71-year-old Rosselli was found in a 55-gallon steel fuel drum floating in a bay near Miami, according to "The Money and the Power." He had been strangled, stabbed and had his legs sawed off.

It was long speculated that Trafficante had Rosselli killed because he was afraid Rosselli would reveal Trafficante's role in the conspiracy to assassinate Castro, the authors said. It also was long speculated that Trafficante sabotaged the CIA's Castro assassination plot after striking a deal with Castro, who in turn agreed to protect Trafficante's illicit narcotics operations in the area.

Trafficante died March 17, 1987.

In June 2007, CIA documents called "The Family Jewels" were declassified, revealing the CIA's involvement with Rosselli.

SAM "MOMO" GIANCANA

Salvatore "Momo" Giancana had a colorful career, according to an FBI report dated Sept. 12, 1960: He started out as a thief and killer in Chicago in the 1920s and was arrested for murder in 1925, but was not prosecuted because the state's case fell apart when Alexander Burba, a cabdriver and the main witness, was murdered.

Giancana was rumored to be the driver and a gunman at the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, the bloody Prohibition era conflict between two Chicago gangs on Feb. 14, 1929, according to FBI files. He spent most of the 1920s and 1930s in prison for various crimes.

Giancana had close ties to Anthony "Joe Batters" Accardo, an ex-bodyguard of Al Capone and a rumored gunman in the St. Valentine's Day Massacre.

By the late 1950s, Giancana had risen to the top of the Chicago heap, controlling protection rackets, pinball betting, prostitution, numbers, narcotics, loan sharking, extortion, counterfeiting and bookmaking. He was arrested more than 70 times — three times for murder, the FBI report said.

While consolidating his power, Giancana ordered the deaths of more than 200 people, an unknown number of whom were tortured, according to the FBI.

Gradually he gained control of most major Las Vegas casinos through the 1950s and 1960s. Florida, Michigan, even Massachusetts mobsters all worked the casinos in the 1950s, but the Chicago mob was in charge, FBI reports said.

Giancana installed Marshall Caifano — aka John Marshall — as the "outside man," the go-to guy for all mob operations in Las Vegas in the 1960s. That included skimming at the Sands, Riviera and Desert Inn, which generated \$2 billion annually for the mob, including \$40 million to \$50 million for Giancana, the FBI said.

In 1957 an IRS investigation forced Accardo to step down and turn full control over to Giancana. Accardo stayed on in an advisory capacity and worked behind the scenes, biding his time until he once again could return to the top spot.

When the FBI released 1,275 pages on Frank Sinatra, more information became available on Giancana. From those FBI files, Americans learned that the ties between Sinatra and Giancana dated back to the 1960s.

Giancana liked entertainers and he counted several of them among his friends, including Joe E. Brown, Jimmy Durante, Dean Martin, Keely Smith and Phyllis McGuire of the McGuire Sisters. The 1995 film



UNLV SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Giancana



UNLV SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

An aerial shot of the Sands from 1966. It's alleged that Frank Sinatra was a casino front man for Sam Giancana in the mob-owned Cal-Neva Lodge in Lake Tahoe.

"Sugartime" linked a married Giancana romantically to McGuire, who today resides in Las Vegas.

The most consistent allegation binding Giancana and Sinatra is that Sinatra fronted for the mobster's ownership of the Cal-Neva Lodge in Lake Tahoe in the early '60s. Giancana in 1960 was included in Nevada's Black Book, which listed people who were not allowed in any Nevada casino. Whatever ownership interest he may have had in a gambling business had to be covered up.

Giancana's ownership of the Cal-Neva was confirmed by the FBI, which recorded a conversation between Giancana and Johnny Rosselli in which Giancana said, "I am going to get my money out of that joint (Cal-Neva)."

In the end, Sinatra voluntarily gave up all of his interests in Nevada casinos.

According to FBI files, the autobiography of Antoinette Giancana, Sam's daughter, and the testimony of Rosselli in 1975, Giancana conspired with the CIA to assassinate Castro in the early 1960s.

When Giancana was jailed for contempt of court in 1965, his power ended. After his release from prison, he was exiled to Mexico for most of the rest of his life.

Giancana was murdered in 1975 in Chicago after his role in the Castro plot came to light, but before he could testify at congressional hearings investigating the CIA.

TONY "THE ANT" SPILOTRO

The Las Vegas casinos of the Meyer Lansky-Benjamin Siegel-Sam Giancana era gave way in the 1970s and 1980s to a new generation of Chicago mobsters.

Tony Accardo sent Tony "the Ant" Spilotro to Las Vegas, replacing Marshall Caifano in 1971, ex-FBI agent William F. Roemer Jr. wrote in "The Enforcer: Spilotro: The Chicago Mob's Man Over Las Vegas."

Marshall Caifano previously had been replaced as the mob's Las Vegas enforcer by Johnny Rosselli in 1960, but eventually worked his way back into that position by the late 1960s. Caifano's effectiveness had somewhat been limited by his being placed in the Black Book. Caifano died in his sleep in a Minnesota federal prison in 2003 at age 92, according to Roemer.

In addition to making Spilotro the enforcer, the Chicago mob, to ensure a continuing flow of cash from Las Vegas casinos, installed a frontman with no criminal background, Allen Glick, who became known as "the golden boy" of gaming.

Glick was the owner of record of the Stardust, but bookmaker Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal, Spilotro's close friend, was the real boss of casino operations.

Although Spilotro started off overseeing the mob's interest in casinos, he noticed that street crime paid well, so he quickly spread tentacles into that arena. He was known as "King of the Strip" and even operated legitimate businesses such as a sandwich shop. Of course, Spilotro's bread and butter were his illegal operations such as the Gold Rush, a Sahara Avenue jewelry retail outlet that fronted his fencing operations, according to Las Vegas Sun files.

Spilotro, who was born in Chicago on May 19, 1938, got his tough-guy image for the brutal beatings in Chicago, FBI files said. He dropped out of Steinmetz High School at age 16 and made money shoplifting and purse-snatching. In 1955, he was caught stealing a shirt from a department store and fined \$5.

By his 21st birthday, Spilotro had been arrested 13 times. He caught the attention of Chicago mob enforcer Sam "Mad Sam" DeStefano, who got Spilotro into the mob, according to Roemer.

Roemer wrote that in 1962, two minor hoodlums, Billy McCarthy and Jimmy Miraglia, killed a couple of Chicago mob-connected guys — the Scalvo brothers — without permission. Spilotro caught McCarthy and tortured him for information on the whereabouts of his pal. Spilotro struck McCarthy in the groin with an ice pick and put his head in a vise. Each time McCarthy refused to give information, Spilotro tightened the vise until one of McCarthy's eyeballs popped out. McCarthy told all. Both men's bodies were eventually found in the trunk of an abandoned car.

Less than a year later, Spilotro was a "made man" in the Chicago mob. His first job was running



SUN ARCHIVES

Spilotro



AP PHOTO

Mobster Anthony Spilotro, left, and his brother, Michael, leave the federal building in Chicago after a bond hearing in 1986. In June of that year the bodies of the Spilotro brothers were found buried in an Indiana cornfield. Sand inside of the lungs of the bodies lead investigators to conclude that the pair had been buried alive.

bookmaking operations in northwest Chicago.

In 1964, the mob sent Spilotro to Miami to work as a muscle guy for sports betting genius Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal. That job lasted three years before Spilotro returned to Chicago where he did the mob's bidding for four more years, Roemer wrote.

After Spilotro, his wife, Nancy, and adopted son, Vincent, moved to Las Vegas in 1971, Tony opened a jewelry and gift shop at the Circus Circus. Using his wife's maiden name, Spilotro did business as Anthony Stuart Ltd. Concessions in major casinos were hard to snag, especially for people with ties to organized crime. Circus Circus owner Jay Sarno ignored those rules and let Spilotro open up shop, according to Roemer.

But in August 1972, Spilotro's efforts to establish himself in Las Vegas were interrupted by an indictment for the 1963 murder of Leo Foreman, Roemer wrote. Spilotro was arrested. He was released from jail on \$10,000 bail and shuttled back and forth between Chicago and Las Vegas as he prepared for trial. Spilotro was acquitted in 1973.

In 1974, the Los Angeles Times reported that in the three years Spilotro had been in Las Vegas, more gangland-style murders had been committed here than in the past 25 years combined.

According to Las Vegas Sun files, that same year Spilotro was one of six men indicted by a federal grand jury in Chicago in connection with defrauding the Central States Teamsters Pension Fund of \$1.4 million.

Among the defendants were Joseph "Joey the Clown" Lombardo, one of Spilotro's bosses in the Chicago mob, and Allen Dorfman, the go-between for arranging financial transactions between the pension fund and organized crime.

Dorfman had been convicted in a Teamster kickback case a few years earlier. The chief witness died of a shotgun blast as he ran from four attackers in a plastics factory. Spilotro again was acquitted.

About this time, Herb "Fat Herbie" Blitzstein followed good friend Spilotro to Las Vegas after a 1976 illegal gambling conviction in Chicago.

The world became smaller in 1978 when Metro Police Commander John McCarthy, head of the vice, narcotics and juvenile bureau, decided to challenge his boss, Sheriff Ralph Lamb, and won the election.

Kent Clifford became commander under McCarthy and was assigned to keep watch on Spilotro. The FBI also changed agents, beefing up its Las Vegas office, bringing in the likes of special agent Joe Gersky and Joseph Yablonsky, the new special agent in charge.

In 1978, Spilotro's name was entered into the Black Book, forbidding him from entering Nevada casinos.

In 1979 the FBI had enough evidence to raid Spilotro's Gold Rush jewelry store. However, the racketeering case that resulted from the raid was dismissed. A judge found FBI agents had overstepped their authority, the Sun reported.

Spilotro's attorney was Oscar Goodman, who would go on to become mayor of Las Vegas. In 1980 Goodman told the Sun that his client was a victim of police harassment.

"I think it's un-American," Goodman said. "These are really Gestapo-like tactics. It literally has become a police state in this community."

In the 1980s, the Sun wrote numerous stories on Spilotro's activities:

On April 9, 1981, shots rang out on the home and vehicle of Spilotro and the nearby house of his brother John. In August, John Spilotro contacted District Attorney Bob Miller and demanded an investigation. He told the Sun that he went to the DA because the police failed to do a thorough investigation and that he believed the shooters had actually been cops. Spilotro said that not only had his property been damaged, the shotgun blasts placed him and his family in personal peril. Some pellets barely missed his sons, he said. Nothing ever came of the incident.

The feds caught Spilotro's Hole in the Wall Gang — Frank Cullotta, Wayne Matecki, Larry Neumann, Leo Guardino, Ernie Davino and former cop Joe Blasko — during a July 4, 1981 hit at Bertha's, an upscale East Sahara Avenue furniture and jewelry store.

They were charged with conspiracy to commit burglary, attempted grand larceny and possession of burglary tools. Other Hole in the Wall Gang members Herbert "Fat Herbie" Blitzstein, Michael Spilotro and Joseph Cusumano were not arrested.

Cullotta had turned state's witness and testified against Tony Spilotro, but his testimony came up short, and "the Ant" was acquitted, the Sun reported.

In late January 1983, Richard Daley, state's attorney for Cook County, Ill., and a Chicago mayoral candidate, announced that Spilotro had been indicted for the 1962 torture killings of Miraglia and

McCarthy in a case that was dubbed "the M&M murders," Roemer wrote.

The indictment was based in large part on the grand jury testimony of Frank Cullotta. Spilotro was arrested in Las Vegas and jailed without bail. Goodman got Spilotro released on bail. The lawyer called Cullotta "King Rat."

Spilotro beat the rap once more. But more trouble awaited. Spilotro went on trial in 1986 for burglaries at homes and two businesses. That trial ended in a mistrial.

Spilotro and his brother Michael left for a meeting on June 14, 1986, two days before the start of the second Hole in the Wall Gang trial in Las Vegas. The Spilotro brothers were never seen alive again. Their battered bodies were found buried in an Indiana cornfield several days later. Tony Spilotro was 48 years old.

The Chicago Tribune reported that on Sept. 27, 2007, a federal grand jury in Chicago found three aging mobsters responsible for 10 murders, including Spilotro's. They were Frank Calabrese Sr., 70; Joseph "Joey the Clown" Lombardo, 78; and James Marcello, 65. Marcello, described by prosecutors as a top leader of the Chicago mob, was held responsible for Spilotro's murder.

Spilotro was the basis of the character Nicky Santoro, portrayed by Joe Pesci in the 1995 film "Casino."

FRANK "LEFTY" ROSENTHAL

Marty Buccieri was a pit boss at Caesars Palace and a distant relative of Chicago underboss Fiori "Fifi" Buccieri. He reportedly had connections to most of the Vegas crime figures worth knowing, the Las Vegas Sun reported in 1975. He used those connections to arrange a number of Teamster pension fund loans to Allen Glick, chief executive of Argent (Allen R. Glick Enterprises), the Chicago mob's installed owner of the Stardust, Hacienda, Fremont and Marina casinos.

In March 1975 Glick was summoned to Kansas City, Mo., to meet with Nick Civella. Glick was told he owed the Kansas City family \$1.2 million for its assistance in getting approval of the \$62.7 million Teamsters Central States Pension Fund loan to buy the Stardust, UPI reported in 1986.

And Chicago, Kansas City and Milwaukee mob representatives made it clear to Glick that he was not to interfere with Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal, UPI reported.

In summer 1975, law enforcement learned that Buccieri had approached Glick and demanded a \$30,000 finder's fee for his help in obtaining the loans. At one point, he is said to have physically threatened Glick. The Argent boss then informed Rosenthal of the incident.

A few days later, Buccieri was found shot to death. Authorities immediately suspected that Tony "the Ant" Spilotro was involved. Others in the know disagreed, citing the use of a .25-caliber weapon, rather than the .22 that was a supposed Spilotro trademark, according to the Sun.

Regardless of the identity of the perpetrator, it was logical to conclude that Glick was a dangerous man to argue with or threaten.

In an attempt to avoid going through the scrutiny of getting a key gaming employee's license — Rosenthal surely would have failed because of criminal convictions — he changed his official title a few times. He was a food and beverage director and later was entertainment director. But regardless of title, Rosenthal ran the casino and made sure the mob got its slice of the pie, according to the newspaper.

Gaming regulators and law enforcement officials never believed that Rosenthal confined his Stardust duties to ordering bulk foods or signing up entertainers, although he did briefly host a variety show on local television.

According to Sun files, authorities were sure Rosenthal was the mob's inside man and that Allen Glick was the frontman. In June 1978 the Nevada Gaming Commission told Rosenthal that his duties required him to obtain a gaming license.



SUN FILE PHOTO

Casino Executive Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal smiles for this portrait. Rosenthal secretly ran the Stardust hotel for the Chicago mafia and was famous for being the first to put a sports book inside of a casino. The movie "Casino" is based on the events surrounding Rosenthal's presence in Las Vegas.



SUN FILE PHOTO

Investigators examine the area surrounding the twisted remnants of Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal's car after a bomb destroyed the vehicle on Oct. 4, 1982. A metal plate directly underneath the driver's seat of the Cadillac diverted the explosion away from Rosenthal, saving his life.

During the hearing, Rosenthal became increasingly heated over his status and eligibility and verbally attacked the Gaming Commission and its chairman, Harry Reid, now the U.S. Senate's majority leader.

The episode was a disaster for Rosenthal. He was refused a license and in 1988 was placed in the Black Book of undesirables.

In numerous stories the Sun reported that federal agents launched in 1978 a major investigation into organized crime's influence in Las Vegas. Tapping telephone lines proved the key in ending the mob's last footholds at the Stardust and Tropicana. In December 1979, Argent was sold to Trans-Sterling Corp., another company with mob ties. The Kansas City mob continued to share in the skimmed proceeds without interference from the new owners. This arrangement continued until the early 1980s when indictments were issued against the Argent conspirators.

In the 1995 film "Casino," Rosenthal was the basis for the Sam "Ace" Rosenthal character portrayed by Robert De Niro. Glick was the basis for the Phillip Green character portrayed by Kevin Pollak.

Rosenthal lives in Florida and is still involved in the world of sports betting. Glick returned to California and today runs a real estate business.

JOE AGOSTO

Joe Agosto was born Vincenzo Pianetti in 1927. Information on his early years is vague. There are even conflicting reports as to exactly where he was born, Italy or Cleveland.

Agosto came to Las Vegas by way of Seattle. He got into the Tropicana by assuming the title of manager of the "Folies Bergere" show. He was an employee of the production company, not the hotel, according to a Court of Appeals document.

In April 1975, Agosto, by then an affiliate of Nick Civella's Kansas City crime family in Missouri, was arrested by U.S. Immigration Services as an illegal immigrant. He quickly obtained the services of attorney Oscar Goodman and beat the immigration charge, the Las Vegas Sun reported in 1975.

Once cleared, he sought help from Civella on how he could best infiltrate the financially troubled Tropicana. With Civella's backing, Agosto proceeded with his plans to gain influence over brothers Edward and Fred Doumani, who owned the Trop, Court of Appeals documents show.

Those documents said that a Teamster Central States Pension Fund loan, for which the Tropicana had applied, was denied. That left the property in a lurch and made the Doumanis susceptible to Agosto's overtures. Agosto soon had a voice in the Trop's management and operations.

Agosto maintained regular contact with Carl DeLuna for guidance and to report on his progress of setting up a skimming operation, the court documents said.

But before the skim started, a snag developed that would stall the gangsters' plans for more than two years. The cash-strapped hotel came under the control of a new majority owner when chemical heiress Mitzi Stauffer Briggs purchased 51 percent of the Trop's stock, the court documents said.

Briggs didn't trust Agosto. She curtailed his role in running the casino. That prompted an all-out effort by Agosto to gain her confidence. Briggs was never involved in the skim, according to the documents.

The official papers went on to say that by 1977 he had succeeded and was effectively running the hotel and casino.

Carl Thomas of the Kansas City syndicate was "in charge of the crew which stole the money at the Tropicana," the court documents read. The first \$1,500 was skimmed in April. When the operation got going, about \$50,000 to \$60,000 a month was being sent to the Kansas City mob's coffers.

The conspirators were unaware at the time that their homes and businesses were under electronic and visual surveillance by the government.

On Feb. 14, 1979, the day DeLuna's home was raided, the FBI nabbed a courier with \$80,000 in skim



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Agosto



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Mobster Joe Agosto graces the marquee of the Tropicana Hotel as the resort's "entertainment director." The Kansas City native pulled a lot more strings than the ones on his violin during his time in Las Vegas.

money. The 11-month run at the Tropicana was over.

Goodman got Civella's case separated from 10 others who were indicted in the Tropicana case. On March 1, 1983, Civella, who had cancer, was released to his family. He died on March 12, never facing judgment for his actions.

The remaining defendants stood trial in 1983. Three — Donald Shepard, Billy Caldwell and Agosto — entered guilty pleas before the trial. As a part of his plea agreement, Agosto became the government's key witness.

Carl Caruso pleaded guilty during the trial. Peter Tamburello was acquitted. Carl Civella, DeLuna (represented by Goodman), Charles Moretina, Anthony Chiavola Sr. and Carl Thomas were convicted.

Thomas' name was entered into the Black Book in 1986 (Anthony Civella, Carl's son and Nick's nephew, was put in the Black Book in 1997 for holding hidden interests in a Las Vegas casino and skimming).

DeLuna was sentenced to 30 years, Carl Civella got 35 years, Moretina was ordered to serve 20 years behind bars followed by five years probation and Chiavola drew 15 years.

Thomas was initially sentenced to 15 years. That term was later reduced to two years when he agreed to become a government witness at the Argent (Allen R. Glick Enterprises) Corp. trial involving skimming at the Stardust, the wire service UPI reported in 1986.

Agosto promised prosecutors he could incriminate numerous Nevada officials and implicate others, Court of Appeals documents show.

UPI reported Agosto told agents that syndicate leaders had asked him and Allen Dorfman to kill Glick with explosives, but that plot fizzled.

Agosto begged to go into the witness protection program so he wouldn't end up another corpse. But soon after giving testimony in the Tropicana case, Agosto died of an apparent heart attack in August 1983 in Kansas City, Mo.

MORRIS SHENKER

When the Dunes opened in 1955, the licensed owners were Sid Wyman, Kewpie Rich, Butch Goldstein, Major Riddle, Bob Rice and Howie Engel, according to Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris in "The Green Felt Jungle."

Wyman, who is enshrined in the Poker Hall of Fame, ran the Dunes' gaming operations, but was more of a gambler than a gamer. That is, he was an active casino player. In fact, state gaming authorities passed a regulation banning casino bosses from playing in their casinos because of Wyman's habits.

Morris Shenker, a noted attorney for the mob and the Teamsters Union, was also an owner of the Dunes with Ray Patriarca, the capo of the New England La Cosa Nostra.

Shenker came to Las Vegas the year the Dunes opened, but initially was an investor in the Royal Nevada. After Wyman died, Shenker took over at the Dunes, according to Sally Denton and Roger Morris in "The Money and the Power."

Shenker, who in the 1960s gained national attention for his defense of Teamsters boss Jimmy Hoffa, was dubbed by Life magazine in 1967 as the "foremost lawyer for the mob in the U.S."

The St. Louis Commission on Crime and Law Enforcement alleged Shenker had personal ties with the gangsters who operated in that city.

Shenker was investigated by the Nevada Gaming Commission and other state and federal bodies, but was not indicted until 1989. A federal grand jury accused him of conspiring to conceal hundreds of thousands of dollars from the IRS and creditors from 1967 to 1973 during bankruptcy proceedings. Shenker denied the charges. His failing health aborted any chance for a trial, The New York Times reported in 1989.

Shenker served as Dunes chairman until 1984 and remained a major shareholder until the next year when the company went into



Shenker

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A 1960s aerial photo of the Dunes. Shenker was a major shareholder of the resort until

bankruptcy.

it went bankrupt in 1985.

Shenker died in St. Louis of pneumonia in August 1989 at age 82, owing the IRS an estimated \$55 million. Four years later, the Dunes was imploded to make room for the Bellagio.

SORKIS WEBBE

The property on which the Aladdin long operated consistently failed for decades. The English Tudor-style Tallyho Motel — a resort without gaming — opened on that South Las Vegas Boulevard site in 1962 and closed in October 1963. In 1964 it became the King's Crown Tallyho Inn, and failed less than six months after it was denied a gaming license.

In 1966 Milton Prell purchased the resort. Its Arabian Nights theme befitted its name, the Aladdin. By 1969 Parvin Dohrman Corp. took over the Aladdin. In 1972, using the name Recrion Corp., the Aladdin was sold to veteran casino executive Sam Diamond, St. Louis politician Peter Webbe, attorney Sorkis Webbe and Richard Daly for \$5 million, the Las Vegas Sun reported in 1979.

Under the Webbes, the hotel got a \$60 million face-lift, including the addition of a 19-story tower and a new 7,500-seat performing arts center.

Sorkis Webbe was a longtime mob attorney and it did not take long for the Aladdin to get tainted as a mob joint.

In August 1979, James Abraham, Charles Goldfarb, James Tamer and Edward Monazym were convicted by a federal grand jury in Detroit of conspiring to allow hidden owners to exert control over the Aladdin.

The Nevada Gaming Commission then closed the hotel but U.S. District Judge Harry Claiborne opened it three hours later, saying he had "special powers" as a federal judge.

Webbe had his share of run-ins with the law.

In 1976 he was acquitted of tax evasion charges stemming from losses he claimed in a now defunct Hollywood film company.

Webbe's attorney argued that the Justice Department's organized crime strike force in St. Louis was "out to get" Webbe, although it had little or no evidence against him.

On Sept. 5, 1979, the Aladdin Hotel Corp., Sorkis Webbe and Del Webb Corp. were indicted along with five individuals on charges of conspiracy to defraud the Teamsters Union during the 1975-76 Aladdin remodeling, according to the Sun.

The indictment alleged that subcontractors were forced to pay kickbacks during the Aladdin construction project, including to Webbe, who allegedly got \$1 million.

A month later, five Clark County commissioners, sitting as the County Licensing Board, agreed to revoke the Aladdin's slot and unrestricted gaming license.

By Oct. 25, 1979, entertainer Johnny Carson and former Del Webb executive Ed Nigro offered to buy the Aladdin but were rejected, opening the door for entertainer Wayne Newton to buy the resort. That ended mob influence over the property.

Sorkis Webbe died in 1985.

HERB TOBMAN AND ALLEN SACHS

In the book "The Money and the Power" by Sally Denton and Roger Morris, an interesting event is described that laid the groundwork for the last great battle between the mob and law enforcement in Las Vegas.

Just after Joe Yablonsky became special agent in charge of the Las Vegas FBI office, he and a friend strolled into the Riviera coffee shop one day and saw casino men that Yablonsky considered undesirable.



UNLV SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Webbe



UNLV SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The marquee of the Aladdin hotel advertises the Jackie Mason Show in this Aladdin hotel postcard. Part owner Sorkis Webbe was indicted for a \$1 million scheme during the hotel's expansion in 1979.

The group included Moe Dalitz, Dalitz's Mayfield Gang partner Morry Kleinman and Stardust manager Herb Tobman.

Tobman walked up beside Yablonsky's companion and mused, "I guess you don't mind who you're seen with."

Yablonsky didn't find it funny. Soon after that, he ordered an investigation into Tobman and his partner Al Sachs, including their alleged skimming at both the Fremont and the Stardust.

It was the start of a full-scale law enforcement war that was to rage across Nevada, Washington, D.C., and other locales for more than four years.

That made for some uncomfortable social situations. Dalitz, Tobman and several of their associates were members of the local Temple Beth Shalom when Yablonsky joined.

Sachs and Tobman took over the Stardust in 1979 after Allen Glick and Frank Rosenthal were run out by state gaming authorities.

According to the Sun: By 1984, veteran gamer Sachs and businessman Tobman also were ousted by allegations of skimming — charges similar to the ones that doomed their predecessors. Sachs and Tobman were fined what was at the time a record \$3 million as part of the agreement to surrender ownership of the Stardust and their gaming licenses.

The resort was then taken over by Boyd Gaming, which ran it for 22 years before imploding the casino in March 2007 to make room for Echelon Place.

In court papers filed in 1985, Sachs and Tobman said they regretted taking a federal government deal "under duress."

In July 1985, U.S. District Judge Roger Foley dismissed Sach's and Tobman's civil suit that claimed the state violated their civil rights.

Sachs began his gaming career in the 1940s as a dealer in illegal Chicago gaming houses. He also worked in the legal pre-Fidel Castro casinos in Cuba.

Sachs opened the Royal Nevada in 1955. Three years later, he became a minor investor in the Tropicana. In the early 1970s, Sachs was president of the Stardust, but left in the mid-1970s because of disagreements with Glick and Rosenthal about how the casino should be operated and, in 1977, became the casino manager at the Aladdin.

Tobman and Sachs formed Trans-Sterling Corp. in 1979 to take over the Stardust. At one point in the 1980s, Sachs owned the Stardust, Fremont and Sundance (now Fitzgeralds) hotels.

Tobman had a more diverse career. He bought and sold real estate, ran a furniture store, operated the popular Mr. T's Diner on Industrial Road and was a longtime owner of Western Cab Co.

Tobman, who in his youth worked as a Catskill Mountains resort bellhop and was a Las Vegas gas station attendant in his late 20s, served on the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority board.

Tobman's gaming career began in the 1950s when he was appointed general manager of the Moulin Rouge on Bonanza Road, the town's first racially integrated casino. In 1971 he was hired as general manager of the Aladdin, where he instituted a champagne dinner buffet.

In 1974 Sachs, who was then Stardust president, promoted Tobman to vice president. Two months later, after Sachs quarreled with Glick and Rosenthal, Tobman succeeded Sachs as Stardust president.

Sachs died in 2002 at age 76, and Tobman died in 2006 at age 81. To the end they maintained they did not skim or otherwise work for the mob.



UNLV SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Sachs



SUN ARCHIVES

Stardust hotel-casino owners Al Sachs and Herb Tobman confer with their attorneys as they appear in 1984 before state gaming regulators who alleged that \$1.6 million had been skimmed from the casino on their watch. Sachs and Tobman eventually agreed to surrender their licenses and pay a then-record \$3.5 million fine.

Mob, neon, nukes: Las Vegas museums capture unique history



Las Vegas News Bureau

Photographers and reporters gather near Frenchman Flat to observe the Priscilla nuclear test, June 24, 1957. During the 1950s, the spectacle of nuclear testing attracted curious members of the public from all over the country. Today, the nuclear testing era is documented and remembered at the National Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas.

By **Richard N. Velotta (contact)**

It seems 2012 could well be the Year of the Museum for Southern Nevada.

Monday

16 January 2012

2:01 a.m.

Some may scoff at the notion that facilities dedicated to neon signs, organized crime and the development of nuclear weapons are worthy of museum status. But when you consider that by definition, a museum is “a place or building where objects of historical, artistic or scientific



Neon Museum/Westar Architects

An artist's rendering of the old La Concha Motel converted into the visitors center at the Neon Museum.



Richard N. Velotta

interest are exhibited, preserved or studied,” there’s no question that all three qualify for their preservation of significant elements in our region’s history.

While the Neon Museum, the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement and the National Atomic Testing Museum will never be mistaken for the Louvre, all three will offer exhibits that explain how Southern Nevada was shaped into what it is.

All three will be home to significant happenings in 2012, including the official openings of the Neon Museum and what has become known as the Mob Museum.

Southern Nevada often is criticized for being culturally adrift. Some Las Vegas casino companies have tried with mixed results to fill the void by building art galleries as a part of their amenities. They didn’t seem to work because they felt out of place. Would you rather spend an afternoon touring the halls of the Getty in Southern California or see a handful of Picassos and Monets just down the hall from the dollar slots?

We’ve had a recent good run with museums, thanks in part to the state’s consolidation of departments in October to form the Nevada Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, which is putting state museums and art under the stronger marketing capabilities of the Tourism Department.

Nevada magazine, long published by the Tourism Department, has a nice section in its January-February edition **about Southern Nevada’s museum scene.**

It not only profiles the Neon Museum, Mob Museum and National Atomic Testing Museum, but it also lists more than a dozen others, including the Lost City Museum in Overton, the Nevada State Railroad Museum in Boulder City, the Erotic Heritage Museum, the Hispanic Museum of Nevada and the Howard W. Cannon Aviation Museum at McCarran International Airport.

One of the first projects for the new Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs was to publicize the opening and dedication of the Nevada State Museum at Springs Preserve in November. It’s a beautiful facility, filled with displays dedicated to the geology and natural history of the state — a more conventional type of museum.

But on the unconventional side, there are big things ahead for the city.

The National Atomic Testing Museum got its “national” designation thanks to legislation shepherded by Sen. Harry Reid and Rep. Joe Heck, and it’s now one of 36 with the special tie.

Affiliated with the Smithsonian, the museum — one of two in the United States dedicated to nuclear weaponry — explains the development of the program at the Nevada Test Site and the stories of the hundreds of men and women who worked there.

The museum, open since 2005, will unveil a new temporary exhibit on March 26 that’s bound to draw crowds — “Area 51: Myth or Reality.” With the fascination the public has for the mysterious secret base north of Las Vegas, I’m thinking many will find their way there.

Sometime in mid-2012, the Neon Museum is expected to open the doors of its visitors center — the old La Concha Motel lobby, which was moved from the Strip to the Neon Boneyard in 2006.

The boneyard, a collection of more than 150 neon signs built by a number of different manufacturers and now maintained by the museum staff, is part history, part art. Seeing the signs up close gives one a better appreciation that they're works of art, worthy of preservation and an important piece of Las Vegas' past.

Finally, coming to downtown Las Vegas next month is the controversial Mob Museum. While some view it as a glorification of the glorification brought to Las Vegas by criminals, there's no question the mob played a significant role in the development of the city.

Opening Feb. 14 — yes, the 83rd anniversary of Chicago's St. Valentine's Day massacre — the museum and its organizers have promised to show the role of the mob, warts and all, and law enforcement's efforts to drive it out of town.

Hopefully, the museum's story will now drive tourists into town.

Aviation pioneer helped get North Las Vegas Airport off the ground



SPECIAL TO VIEW

Florence (aka Colanthe) Murphy was the first Nevada woman to receive a commercial pilot's license and the first woman in the United States to serve as vice president of a regularly scheduled airline. (*enlarge to view more photos*)

BY MAGGIE LILLIS
VIEW STAFF WRITER

Posted: Feb. 1, 2012 | 11:59 a.m.

When developer Lawrence McNeil was laying out the streets of a new subdivision, he wanted to pay homage to friend, longtime associate and fellow Bonanza Airlines board member Florence Murphy.

The businesswoman and aviation pioneer wanted nothing of it, said Mark Hall-Patton, administrator for the Clark County Museum system, which includes the Howard W. Cannon Aviation Museum.

"He thought highly of her, and she said she didn't want it," Hall-Patton said of the namesake.

But Florence met McNeil with compromise.

She would allow her birth name, Colanthe, be assigned to a roadway, if McNeil

name, Gilmary. Thus, Colanthe Avenue in the Spring Valley area was born.

"The idea would be nobody would know who these streets were named for," Hall-Patton said.

It was this tale, Hall-Patton added, that inspired him to pen "Asphalt Memories," a compilation of street names' origins.

Hall-Patton considered Murphy a friend until her death in 2006 at age 94. He interviewed and visited with her several times and said she routinely played down her mark on local and national history.

Murphy was the first Nevada woman to receive a commercial pilot's license and the first woman in the United States to serve as a vice president of a regularly scheduled airline. She helped get the now-North Las Vegas Airport off the ground and rounded out her career in real estate.

"She broke a lot of these barriers for women but never really thought of it," Hall-Patton said. "I asked her one time about breaking these barriers, and she said, 'I didn't really think of it as that.' She was just doing her job."

Her successes and superlatives were a far cry from her humble upbringing in Northern Nevada. Born Colanthe Jones in 1912 in Fernley, Murphy was a tomboy among a brood of brothers, according to the Nevada State Museum.

Around age 5, Murphy decided to ditch her disliked first name and go by Florence, the name of a favorite aunt.

Murphy held a position at the University of Nevada, where she met her future husband, John "Red" Murphy. He was a division engineer for the State Highway Division, and his job moved them to Southern Nevada around 1936. She would later go into the airport business with her husband and a business partner.

But when the couple rolled into town, Murphy had little to no experience with aviation, Hall-Patton said.

"She was a housewife," he said. "She came to town, and all of a sudden, she was part of society here. She got invited to parties. She had one dress. She came from a part of the state where they were snowed in six months of the year. Dresses weren't something she thought about."

Soon after moving south, Murphy had her first brush with flight.

In 1936, a small plane circled Las Vegas Boulevard, and its pilot offered short rides to the people gathered. Red and Florence Murphy were part of the crowd.

Murphy took a ride in the two-person aircraft and jumped on the pilot's offer for her to fly for a short period.

"I was up there about a half-hour, and I just loved it," Murphy said, according to Nevada State Museum records.

Two years later, the couple had their private pilot's licenses.

The only airfield in town at the time is now the site of Nellis Air Force Base. The couple, and partner Bud Barrett, purchased a lot off Tonopah Highway, Nevada State Museum records state, with intentions to host a charter service and flight school.

The day Sky Haven Airfield was introduced to Las Vegas was historic on two levels. The day was Dec. 7, 1941, and the Murphys and Barrett decided to host an air show for residents.

"There couldn't have been more than 7,000 people in town at the

Patton. "But we had most of them out there at the air show. And planes came in from all over -- from Los Angeles, from Salt Lake City. Anytime you had an air show, if it were at all possible for you to make it, you went."

Little did the crowd or event organizers know it, but all planes had been grounded because of the bombing at Pearl Harbor hours before.

A military airman stopped the Sky Haven Airfield show soon enough.

Murphy built the airport when Red Murphy and Barrett were away. She got her instructor's license and commercial pilot's license -- the first female in Nevada to do so -- and helped launch Bonanza Airlines, the first Las Vegas airline.

She worked exclusively for the airline after selling the airport. She kept company with Southern Nevada aviation bigwigs such as Howard Hughes and Pat McCarran. She was also a company executive, mother and politically active Republican.

A dispute led her away from aviation in the late 1970s, so Murphy moved her success into the real estate arena, Hall-Patton said.

"She never let anything stop her," he said. "She was a very neat lady."

Murphy's family had more to say.

Darcy Wellington was Murphy's granddaughter, and the pair spent countless hours together, including the moment Murphy died in 2006, Wellington said.

"She took more care of me than my mom did," Wellington said. "I spent most of my growing up years with Nana. She was there for my first everything. We were very close."

Murphy outlived her only child, Wellington's mother, and had two grandchildren and several great-grandchildren. Her grandson, Robin Sendlein, is a former linebacker with the National Football League's Minnesota Vikings, and his son Lyle Sendlein is a center for the Arizona Cardinals.

"She was extremely proud of us," Wellington said.

Two of her senior-aged nieces live in Las Vegas, as well.

The family intended to videotape Murphy talking about her life. She moved to Las Vegas in the mid-1930s, and her first phone number was A34, Wellington said.

She lived on 15th Street for years and sold the house to her daughter and son-in-law. Wellington grew up in the home.

"She talked about coming to town and what a small town it was," she said. "She knew everyone."

Wellington said the choice to sell the prime real estate that would become the North Las Vegas Airport was "bittersweet" to Murphy.

"She had a love of flight and loved the airport and loved what she was doing," she said.

Murphy was widowed in 1959 and never remarried.

"The older she got, she was running the show," Wellington said.

Murphy supported herself as a real estate agent and dealt in residential and commercial properties. She and Wellington were business partners for 10 years.

"She had a magnificent mind, and she was good with finances and investing," Wellington said.

She was the one of nine children and the last of the lot to die, Wellington said.

Murphy would have been 100 on Dec. 13, Wellington said.

"She continued to sell real estate almost until the very end," she

said. "She accomplished so much and was the matriarch of our family. She was just a great lady."

Contact Centennial and North Las Vegas View reporter Maggie Lillis at millis@viewnews.com or 477-3839.

Prominent attorney's memory lives on in Las Vegas

BY JEFF MOSIER
VIEW STAFF WRITER

Posted: Feb. 7, 2012 | 12:15 a.m.

Coulthard Drive near Rainbow and Charleston boulevards is named after a man who felt more at home on the dirt roads of rural Iowa.

George William "Bill" Coulthard was assigned to Las Vegas as the city's first resident FBI agent from 1939 to 1945. As a lawyer, Coulthard had a private practice from 1946 to 1972. He was a Nevada assemblyman from 1951-54 and president of the Nevada State Bar Association.

Those accomplishments are nice, but they did not garner Coulthard a street name.

Coulthard was a friend and associate of land developer Ernest Becker III of Becker Enterprises. Becker bought the original 250 acres that is Charleston Heights in historic West Las Vegas.

Becker developed more than 60 subdivisions, often naming streets after his pals.

"He was delighted, of course," said his wife, Diane Coulthard, on her late husband's reaction to the street. "We all drove up there and looked at it together."

Diane Coulthard also pointed out that nearby Hussey Drive was named for Coulthard's legal secretary, Elsie Hussey.

Coulthard was killed July 25, 1972, in a car bomb on the third floor of the parking garage at the former Bank of Nevada building, 300 S. Third St. Coulthard's law



SPECIAL TO VIEW

George William "Bill" Coulthard and his wife, Diane, smile at their wedding. Coulthard Drive near Rainbow and Charleston boulevards is named for the former FBI agent and prominent Las Vegas attorney.

office was inside the building. The investigation into the bombing is ongoing.

"When he was killed, it was a shock to a pretty important segment of Las Vegas," Diane Coulthard said. "It shook the town pretty hard."

Coulthard was born May 21, 1916. His first wife, Lena Silvagni, died in 1955. He married Diane, a native Las Vegan, in 1957. They had a daughter, Leslie, and two sons, William and James.

The Coulthards' first house was at 401 S. Sixth St. in the downtown area. With one child and another on the way, Coulthard started looking for a bigger place to raise a family and made a purchase before consulting with anyone, even his wife. The family finds humor in it more than ever.

"Dad came home one day and said, 'Well, we bought a new house,' " his son, William Coulthard, said.



George William "Bill" Coulthard SPECIAL TO VIEW

The family moved into the Rancho Circle neighborhood near Rancho and Alta drives. Their former home would be transformed into Andre's, a French restaurant frequented by local politicians and celebrities before closing in 2008.

Diane Coulthard owned the house in Rancho Circle for nearly 40 years and resides in Summerlin. Diane and her son both had the same favorite memories of when Coulthard was alive.

Every August until Coulthard's death, the family would spend the month in the same beach house in Del Mar, Calif., accompanied by several families, most of them colleagues or neighbors. The men would work Monday through Thursday in Las Vegas and drive to Del Mar for the weekends.

Coulthard was happiest, his family said, when back in his hometown of Modale, Iowa, farming and hunting ducks and pheasants.

The Coulthard family owns several farms in Iowa, and the sons still hunt every year on the same ground where their father first taught them.

Contact View education reporter Jeff

Donations needed to update Nevada's historical markers

Posted: Feb 08, 2012 1:53 PM PST

Updated: Feb 08, 2012 1:54 PM PST

Posted By Matt Guillermo, Web Producer - [email](#)

LAS VEGAS (FOX5) - Nevada is appealing to the public for donations to help update the dozens of historical markers placed throughout the state.

The state's Historic Preservation Office said it reviewed and made updates on the texts of nearly 260 signs.

Most of the markers, the office said, date to the 1960s and 1970s.

"Some markers seem insensitive by today's standards, and in other cases, there are historical inaccuracies, misspellings or grammatical errors," said Ron James, the state historic preservation officer.

The office said nearly 80 markers need to be replaced at a cost of \$1,000 per marker plate. The Nevada Department of Transportation maintains the markers but have no [funding](#) to change or install new markers.

[LINK: Nevada State Historic Preservation Office](#)

Clark County holds 28 historic markers ready for update.

If you would like to help in the effort to update the state's historical markers, call at 775-685-3440 or e-mail rjames@shpo.nv.gov.

The changes are being made in anticipation of Nevada's 150th birthday in 2014.

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Seven Questions

Kathleen Barrie

The Mob Museum curator on how the project came together, striking gold in a Vegas garage and meeting a notorious crime family



Photo by **Anthony Mair**

By **Stacy J. Willis**
February 9th, 2012

As a central part of the Mob Museum design team, Kathleen Barrie spent the last six years overseeing the development of research and content—essentially, the guts of the operation. Barrie is married to museum creative director Dennis Barrie, and she's the head of Barrie Projects, her museum-curating firm in Cleveland.

Barrie, who helped with the design and development of the International Spy Museum in Washington, D.C., started with the Mob Museum in 2006 and has traveled back and forth from her Cleveland home to Las Vegas since. It's the latest chapter in Barrie's three decades in the cultural-planning business—including a London display of Michael Jackson's wardrobe—and, she says, it's by far her favorite.

The museum is housed in the historic post office on Stewart Avenue, which also happens to be the old courthouse where the U.S. Senate's Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce held hearings in 1950. The doors open Feb. 14, the 83rd anniversary of the infamous St. Valentine's Day massacre in Chicago.

How do you even begin to create content for a mob museum?

The beginning was like fudge-making. There is no exact science to this at all. What the city did was convene 30 to 40 experts from across Las Vegas to really give us an intense, in-depth look at the city. From former sheriffs and Metro and FBI agents to people working at casinos to showgirls to oral historians to families related to key figures to cultural writers. They came in big groups to talk to us. There was usually someone from law enforcement who looked so uncomfortable—they're not used to talking about it because their job was to not ever talk about what they saw or to reveal methods. But for some people it was far enough in the past that a good story was still a good story.

Were you already fairly well-versed in mob history?

Well, I'm from Chicago, and the St. Valentine's Day massacre has a long life in the public imagination, so I'd say so. But you always worry that what you know is the lore and not the real stuff. So it's really fun to go back and fact-check what your orientation is. Lore is great, and people hate to have it disproven; they'd rather continue to believe it. But you can always go a little deeper and give people background on what the real truth is. And generally the truth of the matter is so much more interesting than the shortcut history that's evolved.

How did you go about acquiring artifacts?

Quite honestly the best stuff has come to us. We put feelers out, and there's been a fair amount of

publicity. Then there were people who had something that they weren't quite sure what they had, and weren't quite sure if it was significant, [come] to us and say, "I don't know if it's anything," and we're like, "Oh my goodness, yes, we could use that."

Like what?

We'd been trying very hard to buy one brick from the St. Valentine's Day massacre wall. And there was a woman living in Las Vegas who had pretty much inherited the wall. Her great uncle had purchased it when they tore it down in Chicago, and she had it in her garage. I had been searching and searching for just a single brick—there was supposedly someone in British Columbia who may have one, but no one's heard from him, on and on. And then—*voilà!*—there it was, spread out on the garage floor in a basic suburban house. Brick by brick by brick, all tagged, in a perfect grid. We're having great fun sorting out and reassembling it on the site.

What's been the biggest challenge?

It was really to distill it down. We have to be able to give somebody enough info all the way through that they don't feel overwhelmed by it, trying to keep these plot lines straight over many decades. That was the biggest challenge. We zeroed in on key figures ... Johnny Roselli pops up everywhere, and Bob Maheu [who was Howard Hughes' personal assistant] on the other side is one of the most interesting figures, so many characters.

It takes you right up to today, and it casts Las Vegas where it should be: in the middle of the national and international story. That was one of the most interesting developments for those of us not from Las Vegas, that, gee, all roads and runways do kind of lead here.

What were some of your favorite characters in doing the research?

We had so many great interviews. One is Joe Pistone, who went undercover as Donnie Brasco—that was really the first very long infiltration of a mob family, and we've interviewed him for one of the films in the museum. Also, there was a very well-respected agent from Las Vegas, Rick Bacon. This man was the master of disguise, master of aliases. He was involved in all these cases with Tony Spilotro and [the] Hole in the Wall Gang and other drug investigations and shady land investigations. I think this man has posed as about anything and everything under the sun. He's in a film in the museum where he and Oscar Goodman, then the defense attorney, are just having it out, and Rick's saying, "How could you represent these people?!" and Oscar's saying, "It's in the Constitution; you bet I'll represent them!"

Did you ever imagine the mob would absorb six years of your career?

Not in a million years! My degree is in studio art and art history. But it's been wonderful and so interesting.

I was home in Chicago a couple of years ago, and I was going to meet with some members of the Giancana family, and my mother was sitting at the kitchen table shaking her head, saying, "I can't believe you're doing this." Then when I was getting ready to go, she finally said, "Do you think I could go?" [Laughs.] I couldn't take her, I was working. But they turned out to be the nicest people.

FEBRUARY 9, 2012

Man saves '60s Vegas party house, fills it with treasures

Former county official ardent advocate of neighborhood preservation



BEVERLY POPPE

Backyard view into the 1964 home of Steve Evans.

By **Kristen Peterson (contact)**

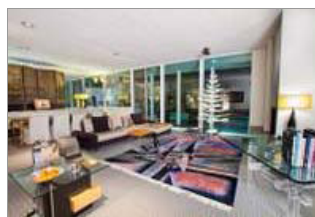
Thursday, Feb. 9, 2012 | 2 a.m.

Steve Evans has gone out for the evening. He's meeting friends at Oscar's steakhouse and shows us how to lock the door when we leave. Suddenly, we have the run of the place, and before we finally head out, we take one last look in amazement. Here is the gorgeous mid-century modern home of a Las Vegas icon, built by another—the late Flora Dungan, accountant, university regent and state assemblywoman.

Evans has had a long relationship with the home. As a teenager, he'd meet with Dungan and others in the living room as part of a teen organization, and he house-sat when Dungan was away.

The house is a perfect fit for the former planning commissioner (and son of the late Claude "Blackie" Evans, a noted union leader), who serves as an ardent advocate for the preservation of Las Vegas' older neighborhoods.

The house



BEVERLY POPPE

Inside the 1960s-era home that has been preserved by Steve Evans.

Vaulted ceilings, a freestanding fireplace and floor-to-ceiling windows define the interior of this 2,100-square-foot home, built in 1964. Custom built with all the perks of modern living, it includes speakers in the wall, electrical outlets in the flooring, a step-down tub and shower, a built-in book/magazine rack and a built-in buffet wrapping part of the dining room.

"I always loved this house," Evans says. "It's like living in a work of art. It's the best example of the great architecture of that era. It's clean. It's iconic."

The home overlooks the backyard pool and is a prime example of the era's indoor-/outdoor-living style. It's built to withstand the desert sun and heat—there are no windows on the west side. Clerestory windows wrap the rest of the house, letting in natural light, and a cantilevered roof shades the living room from the morning sun.

'60s party house

Sofas and chairs placed throughout the rooms and the long, ornate wooden dining table are misleading. Evans says he does very little entertaining other than the occasional charity event and political fundraiser. "It's a great party house," Evans says. "It was designed for that. I have this big, huge table. As you can see, there's only one place mat at the end."

The collector

As a collector, Evans has dabbled in a bit of everything—bronze sculpture, wood, art deco, art nouveau, arts and crafts and Victorian. He was even a lamp whore. Vintage lamps, Murano glass, modernist paintings and leather furniture fill the house. Norfolk pine bowls on display are from his wood phase. Evans says that he has a knack for sniffing out quality. "Things turn up in places that are so unlikely," he says, adding that he's bought from auction sites, antiques stores, thrift stores, friends and yard sales. "I don't have anything of particular value," Evans says, later correcting that by joking, "A lot of people have a 401(k). I have a vintage leather collection."

Favorite things

The two items Evans is most attached to are a bronze Jose Luis Sanchez cigarette case and an ashtray given to him by art collectors Wally Goodman and Patrick Duffy. A silk room divider, possibly from the 1800s, bought when Evans was 20 from an auction in an old barn outside of Carson City, is one of his longest-owned items. The other is an art deco table with mirrors he saw in a men's store window display in Georgetown that was once used for women trying on hats.

While at home

Most of his time is spent in the den, once Dungan's office, which is lined with photos of family and friends as well as political memorabilia. On the wall hangs an editorial cartoon featuring politicians throwing stones at Dungan, who, at the time of its drawing, was advocating prison reform. There are photos of her with her Democratic friends and a subtly scathing typed letter to Dungan from an angry politician after she sued the state.

In addition to her advocacy, Dungan was known for her fast cars and fancy clothes, Evans says. He'd like to write a book about her. "I have so many Flora stories. She was a remarkable woman."

The grounds

You know you've arrived at Evans' home when you see bowling balls amid the landscape, serving as "land mines" to keep foot traffic off the yard. Most important to Evans is his Downtown neighborhood. He has a copy of the original 1955 ad for the custom lots in the area, then referred to as Morning View Heights, that became home to prominent



BEVERLY POPPE

An art deco table once used in a milliner store is in the home of Steve Evans.



BEVERLY POPPE

Jose Luis Sanchez cigarette holder.

Las Vegans. “Everybody lived here. There’s a lot of history.

“I feel really uncomfortable when I go to the suburbs. I feel safer here, maybe because it’s familiar. Even when I know there might be better food options in the suburbs, I think, ‘I can’t go there.’”

Why the Mob Museum Matters

Sure, there will be a lot of pizzazz, but the new attraction will also tell an important story about who we are and where we're headed.

By **Michael Green**

February 9th, 2012



My integrity is at stake—and so is our community's.

I have been involved with the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, better known as the Mob Museum, from the outset. Reversing the claim that Las Vegas blows up its past, the federal government would have been happy to level the old post office at Third Street and Stewart Avenue. Las Vegas officials, led by then-Mayor Oscar Goodman, wanted to protect the building. Under federal regulations, for the city to take it over, the building had to serve a cultural purpose, and Goodman thought of the Mob Museum.

On Feb. 14, that dream becomes reality, and it's important to get it right, because this is part of our history, and it's time we come to grips with it:

- Las Vegans long have had a complex that our founding fathers had rap sheets. We tend to forget the pilgrims and Puritans who settled Massachusetts were unpopular back home, and John Smith did time in European jails before reaching Jamestown.

Las Vegans often overreact to criticisms real and perceived (note how Goodman, among others, behaved stupidly in response to President Barack Obama not telling people not to visit Las Vegas). It's understandable: Supposedly intelligent people have claimed that one in every eight women under 45 who

lives here is a hooker (that doozy's from former Colorado Gov. Richard Lamm) and that casino workers live in hotels. We don't distinguish enough between criticisms because the critics aren't terribly distinguished, and because the attacks tend to inundate us.

Few outsiders and too few insiders even try to understand Las Vegas in depth. But if tourists and locals visit this museum, they will see Las Vegas acknowledging and analyzing the good and bad of its past, and how that past connects to other places and developments. Then they might even want to learn more than the museum can tell them.

- What happens here doesn't really stay here. Organized crime, as the phrase suggests, was organized—a web of men and women involved in interconnected activities and histories throughout the world, flowing into and out of Las Vegas and Nevada. Understanding this helps us understand us.

The past two decades of growth, ending with the crash in 2007-08, have been mostly corporate-driven, yet the question Las Vegas experts are most commonly asked is whether the mob still rules—if, in fact, it ever did. These are the kinds of questions this museum can help answer by showing who comprised organized crime, who fought it and what happened.

- Las Vegas is a polyglot, 31 percent Hispanic, 11 percent African-American and more than 6 percent Asian, with significant numbers of Mormons and Jews. Its history includes opportunities unavailable to minorities elsewhere, and discrimination against (and by) some of the same minorities.

Organized crime has been related to ethnic and immigration history. Understanding its history helps us understand how America and Las Vegas have dealt—and not dealt—with our diversity.

- When Goodman was a defense attorney, he denied the mob's existence. That led to a variety of community leaders and citizens claiming the museum would be a whitewash.

From the first meeting, Goodman told city officials, museum staff and board members that he wanted the museum to be fun, but above all he wanted one thing: “the truth.” His claims and mine (especially

since I was paid for some of my work) might not convince you. Would it help to mention those involved include a respected former FBI agent (Ellen Knowlton), a legendary local TV journalist/historian who covered the mob (Bob Stoldal) and the curators of the International Spy Museum and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (Dennis and Kathy Barrie)?

Yet Goodman's request isn't easily fulfilled. Not that there's no such thing as the truth. But what constitutes being connected to the mob? I had a cousin who had to give up his gaming license over skimpering at his hotel but denied any involvement, and a known Chicago mobster used to bounce me on his knee. If I have supped at the mob's table, does that make me one of them? If so, where's my skim money?

Further, Woody Allen put it best when he said organized crime spends little money on office supplies. They didn't write down their plans or how they skimmed. A museum must be visual and tactile, but written sources for writing the mob's history are rare—unless they are government sources, which tend to favor the government, and media accounts. The latter, like a lot of the popular culture the museum surveys, often glorified mobsters because they were interesting and good copy.

More crucially, to invoke *A Few Good Men*: Can we handle the truth? Some of our founding fathers deserved those rap sheets. Many longtime Las Vegans lament “the good old days” without stopping to ponder: A smaller town always seems safer; racial and gender discrimination were far more rampant; and money that should have gone into our civic coffers went elsewhere to underwrite other mob operations. That doesn't make today perfect, but it means we need to think in a more nuanced way about yesterday.

Through interactive exhibits, displays, videos, photos and tightly edited text, that's what the Mob Museum is supposed to help us do. If it succeeds at enhancing our understanding of the past, we all benefit. If it fails, the question will be how much of the failure rests with all of us.

Nevada virtually updates historical markers



DAVID BECKER/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Historical marker No. 86 at Tule Springs at Floyd Lamb Park is one of those revised by the State Historic Preservation Office. The plaque still recognizes the archaeological site's mammal fossils from 14,000 years ago, but references to the presence of humans before 11,000 B.C. will be removed because that claim is unsupported. » [Buy this photo](#)

BY HENRY BREAN
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Posted: Feb. 10, 2012 | 2:05 a.m.
Updated: Feb. 10, 2012 | 8:16 a.m.

The virtual versions of Nevada's 260 historical markers have been revised and updated, but it will take some money to swap out the actual plaques scattered across the state.

About \$80,000 is needed to replace 80 or so markers that contain mistakes, offensive racial stereotypes or plain old "bad writing," according to state historic preservation officer Ron James.

The marker program, launched in 1964 for Nevada's centennial, was essentially "extinguished" by recent state budget cuts, James said.

In addition to cleaning up factual errors, misspellings and grammatical problems, an effort was made to rewrite potentially offensive language and characterizations drawn along ethnic divides.

"The fact is we're all Nevadans," James said. "The historical marker program shouldn't be about how 'we' interacted with 'them' in the past. It should be about how we interacted with each other."

Some problems were obvious. In Elko County, for example, the sign marking the mining camp of Tuscarora makes reference to the arrival of "Chinese hordes."

"It's not (about) political correctness," James said. "It's just hurtful, and that has to be corrected."

A handful of markers will be removed altogether as part of the update because "the sites just don't warrant being marked by today's standards."

James estimates that about half of the people who see the far-flung historical markers these days do so online as "virtual tourists." From now on, all they will see is the updated text.

Changes on the ground will come more gradually because each marker plate costs about \$1,000.

During the editing process, the revisions were ranked so the worst of the old markers can be switched out first as they wear out, fall victim to vandalism or as funding becomes available.

The Nevada Department of Transportation provides support to maintain existing markers, but no money is available to change marker text or install new signs.

The Nevada Foundation for Cultural Affairs is now accepting donations from individuals and businesses wishing to help pay for the updated markers.

"Basically, we're soliciting money," said James, whose own salary is paid for with a grant that expressly prohibits him from working on marker business while on the clock.

If you want to talk to him about historical markers, you better catch him during lunch or a coffee break.

The Nevada State Historic Preservation Office launched its review of the markers in anticipation of Nevada's 150th birthday in 2014.

James stressed that the effort was not meant as a criticism of the people who researched, wrote and erected the original signs, most of which went up in the 1960s and 1970s.

"It's not fair to be judgmental of the past," he said. "But times change, and history has to be current or it's, well, history."

Contact reporter Henry Brean at hbrean@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0350.

FEBRUARY 13, 2012

Effort launched to upgrade Nevada historical signs

The Associated Press

Saturday, Feb. 11, 2012 | 9:03 a.m.

Written snippets of Nevada history found on historical markers have been updated on the Internet.

Now officials hope to replace about 80 of the 260 markers around the state with new plaques in time for Nevada's 150th statehood anniversary in 2014.

Ron James, Nevada's historic preservation officer, reviewed all the text on all the markers, and graded them on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the worst.

"Most markers date to the 1960s and 1970s, and many things have changed since then," James said. "Some of it is inaccuracy, some of it is insensitivity and some is just bad writing.

"It gets a two or a three if it's just clumsy writing," James said.

The only 10 on the list is in Elko County. Marker No. 48 in Tuscarora mentions the "hordes" of Chinese who came to the mining camp.

Efforts were made to eliminate the notion of a "them" and "we" mentality, James said.

The old markers, "really talked about how `we' interacted with `them,'" he said. "Can you imagine being a 12-year-old member of an ethnicity that is being depicted that way?" he asked. "Changing that is a real critical thing."

Only the new language is now found on the state's historical marker website.

"We're not putting the worst of the worst on the web page to show how horrible the language is," James said.

Some monuments are being taken down because they are no longer relevant or are offensive in today's society. One referenced where the "first white child" was born.

"They're embarrassing, I think, for the state of Nevada," James said. "There was no way I could fix that marker and make it relevant to the 21st Century."

Others are just wrong, like Marker No. 86 at Tule Springs at Floyd Lamb Park, an archaeological site that references the presence of humans thousands of years before they were known to be there.

The Nevada Historical Marker Program began as part of the state's centennial celebration in 1964. The state Historic Preservation Office manages the markers, but most funding has been eliminated in recent years because of budget cuts.

James said the state Department of Transportation helps support existing markers, there's no funding to change the text or install new ones.

That's why the Nevada Foundation for Cultural Affairs is seeking donations from individuals and businesses to help. Each marker costs about \$1,000 to replace, and the foundation is hoping to raise \$80,000 to meet its goal.

James said the markers will be replaced as money becomes available.

Effort launched to upgrade Nevada historical signs

CREATED FEB. 11, 2012



CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) -- Written snippets of Nevada history found on historical markers have been updated on the internet.

Now officials hope to replace about 80 of the 260 markers around the state with new plaques in time for Nevada's 150th statehood anniversary in 2014.

Ron James is Nevada's Historic Preservation Officer. He says new language for the markers was written to correct inaccuracies, insensitivities and bad writing.

Some of the monuments are being taken down because they are no longer relevant or are offensive in today's society.

Replacing the large signs is expensive, so the Nevada Foundation for Cultural Affairs is seeking donations from individuals and businesses.

James says each marker costs about \$1,000. The foundation is hoping to raise \$80,000 to meet its goal.

Margo Bartlett Pesek | TRIP OF THE WEEK



Boulder City brimming with history, attractions



MIKE MILLER/FOR THE LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Boulder City was born in 1931 to house workers during the construction of Hoover Dam. » [Buy this photo](#)

Posted: Feb. 12, 2012 | 2:18 a.m.
Updated: Feb. 12, 2012 | 10:16 a.m.

The Boulder City Chamber of Commerce promotes the town with the slogan "a world away for a day." As those who explore Boulder City discover, it's a case of truth in advertising. Visitors find a relaxed atmosphere, historic surroundings, varied dining choices, plenty of places to browse and shop, special events and outdoor activities enough for many return visits.

Boulder City is 23 miles from Las Vegas on U.S. Highway 93 on the way to Lake Mead National Recreation Area and Hoover Dam. Follow U.S. 93/95 south toward Railroad Pass. Watch your speed after the U.S. 95 turnoff toward Searchlight and Laughlin, for highway speeds diminish as you approach Boulder City. U.S. 93 becomes Nevada Way through the historic downtown.

Boulder City was born in 1931 as a government plan to house management and workers on the Boulder Canyon Project. During the Great Depression, thousands of men flocked to Southern Nevada for jobs during the construction of Hoover Dam. Company towns are not unusual in Nevada, where mining camps often began that way, but this town was an early example of urban master planning.

The town centered on a main downtown area for business, commerce, services and government. Utilities were put in place

older communities. Planners set aside space for parks and recreation. Temporary mass housing went up in a hurry, but substantial homes for upper and middle managers were built to last along neighborhood streets fanning out from downtown. Prohibition of liquor was the law. Gambling was not allowed.

The government later relinquished control of the town to its citizens, who continue many of the original precepts. Today, Boulder City deserves its reputation for being clean and green. It limits development to what it deems to be beneficial to its residents, now numbering about 15,500. You still can't gamble in Boulder City, but liquor became legal in 1969, and the town now has a brewery.

In downtown Boulder City, many original structures and residences still stand, including vintage municipal buildings. Quaint houses and a few apartment buildings built 75 years ago grace shady side streets in the historical district. Parks create shaded open space for picnics, games, special events and quiet moments on a park bench. Compact Old Town invites strolling along landscaped sidewalks past restaurants, stores, boutiques and antiques shops and emporiums.

A growing collection of handsome statues of historical figures, dam workers, children at play, animals and other figures graces landscaped areas along Nevada Way and Arizona Street. Boulder City's Public Art Scape exhibit, begun in 2007, displays 35 pieces, including 13 new sculptures this year. Sculptors loan their work for a year in return for publicity, exposure and security. Many pieces end up in the city's permanent outdoor sculpture collection.

Built in 1933, the handsome white Boulder Dam Hotel on Arizona Street housed many dignitaries, including a few presidents. In later decades, it began a long decline. Listed in 1982 on the National Register of Historic Places, the hotel soon underwent restoration.

Today the hotel is once again a meeting place for locals, a center for special events and a charming place for overnight visitors. The Boulder Dam Hotel offers 22 rooms and suites ranging from \$70 to \$100, including breakfast in the main floor restaurant with its varied menu for breakfast and lunch. From the elegant lobby, step up to the next level that houses boutique shops, the Boulder City Art Guild's gallery and the Boulder City-Hoover Dam Museum, where interactive exhibits and a short film retrace history.

Boulder City offers many recreational pursuits, including golf at two public courses, walking and hiking trails, challenging mountain bike routes and thrilling zipline rides. Visitors can also take a weekend train ride at the Nevada Southern Railway Museum. Lake Mead and its many activities are nearby, and Hoover Dam draws crowds daily to tour the mighty structure that finally conquered the Colorado River, spurred regional growth and gave birth to an attractive desert oasis called Boulder City.

Margo Bartlett Pesek's column appears on Sundays.

Dinosaurs looking for elbow room at natural history museum



JERRY HENKEL/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Mountain View Lutheran School preschoolers Ellie Seol and Michael Kawan look at a life-size model of a Tyrannosaurus Rex on Wednesday at the Las Vegas Natural History Museum, whose officers hope to expand the museum across Las Vegas Boulevard. » [Buy this photo](#)

BY HENRY BREAN
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Posted: Feb. 13, 2012 | 12:06 a.m.

If they can drum up enough money, the folks at the Las Vegas Natural History Museum have grand plans to almost double the size of the facility and open a fossil lab that could attract dinosaur researchers from all over.

Right about now, some of you are probably thinking, "The Las Vegas Natural what now?"

Unless you have children of school field trip age, you might not be familiar with this collection of exhibits now in its 21st year on Las Vegas Boulevard next to Cashman Field.

Executive Director Marilyn Gillespie said the museum often seems to catch people by surprise.

"The building is sort of deceiving. It looks small from the street, and people drive by and dismiss us," she said. "I think we



Mountain View Lutheran School preschooler Greyson Sandefur on Wednesday checks out the moray eels -- and vice versa -- at the Las Vegas Natural History Museum. JERRY HENKEL/LAS

usually do surprise people when they come to visit us."

Now the museum is poised to pull off its biggest surprise yet: a major expansion and a partnership with Drexel University in Philadelphia that could bring dinosaur fossils to Las Vegas for study, including a handful of specimens that have been boxed up and waiting to be examined for more than a century.

Gillespie said museum officials are in talks to expand across Las Vegas Boulevard into the space now occupied by the Lied Discovery Children's Museum, which is set to move into the Smith Center downtown later this year.

The expansion could add roughly 34,000 square feet and some much-needed high ceilings to the museum, which is wedged into about 40,000 square feet on two floors of an old Elks Lodge built in the 1960s.

"The only thing that holds us back is space," Gillespie said.

"Money helps, too," added Joe Iacuzzo, a museum volunteer who has helped bring in new exhibits and is leading the push to partner with Drexel University.

Iacuzzo said one of the first things he did when he moved to Las Vegas in 1998 was go find the natural history museum. He started out taking his kids there and wound up volunteering.

Gillespie has been on board from the very beginning. She was part of a group that began campaigning for the creation of a natural history museum here in 1989. After the city agreed to give it a home, she became its first -- and so far only -- director.

A PRESTIGIOUS PARTNER

So why Drexel?

Last year, the private university teamed with the oldest natural history museum in North America, Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences.

The 200-year-old institution, now known as The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, is home to more than 17 million biological specimens, including the first dinosaur skeleton ever mounted for display and items collected by Thomas Jefferson, John James Audubon and the Lewis and Clark expedition.

"There are fossils in their collection that have never been taken out of the plaster field jackets they were placed in 150 years ago," Iacuzzo said.

He hopes to see some of those old fossils unwrapped and examined at a new lab across Las Vegas Boulevard, one that would become "part of the visitor experience," he said.

Noted geologist and Drexel professor Ken Lacovara is excited by the idea, though he said the discussions are in the "very, very preliminary stages." He envisions the establishment of a regional fossil lab in Las Vegas to process present-day discoveries from across the West.

He is even considering bringing his own work here, namely 16 tons of fossils he hopes to soon bring back from a massive field site in southern Argentina.

"I think it would be pretty awesome to bring students or even teachers from Philadelphia to the desert in Las Vegas. I think that's the real potential," said Lacovara, who led a team in Egypt that was

dinosaur ever found.

THE SPACE RACE

Iacuzzo said the current collection in Las Vegas hits the highlights most popular with the general public, namely dinosaurs, sharks and mummies.

There is a walkable reproduction of King Tut's tomb, and a new display where visitors can watch the development of real shark eggs.

It even has an exhibit -- the only one of its kind in the country -- devoted to a "dinosaur mummy" nicknamed Leonardo. The 23-foot-long plant eater from the late Cretaceous period was naturally mummified before it was turned into a fossil. It provides researchers with an extremely rare glimpse of skin texture, muscles, internal organs and the remnants of the animal's last meal.

"It's one of the most impressive dinosaur specimens ever found, and (the exhibit) is something you can only see here in Las Vegas," Iacuzzo said.

A room is dedicated to Nevada, but the museum mostly takes a global view. Gillespie said the aim is to describe the entire natural world, not compete with other local museums dedicated to the state or the region.

The museum rents its current space at 900 Las Vegas Boulevard North from the city of Las Vegas for a dollar a year.

Gillespie said they are extremely grateful for the arrangement, but the cramped floor plan of the 50-year-old building has forced them to get creative.

For example, their Tyrannosaurus Rex is hunched over, stalking a smaller dinosaur, because that's the only way it would fit in the room.

And instead of a replica of an adult ichthyosaur, Nevada's state fossil, they were forced to go with a baby version of the prehistoric fish.

"It's very difficult to do dinosaurs with an 11-foot ceiling," Gillespie said.

SEARCHING FOR AN AUDIENCE

Even after 20 years, the nonprofit museum is still struggling to make a name for itself in the community. It sees roughly 80,000 visitors a year, but more than 30,000 of them are school children on field trips, and about half of those youngsters get in for free. The museum even pays for buses to bring in school kids from time to time, Gillespie said.

She said museum officials were sad at first when they heard that the children's museum would be moving away. Then they saw the opportunity to expand their campus and use a new pedestrian bridge recently built over Las Vegas Boulevard to link it all together.

"We're busting at the seams over here," Gillespie said. "I've got 20 employees in five offices."

Considerable planning remains to be done, but Iacuzzo and Gillespie said early estimates indicate it could cost \$750,000 just to set up the fossil lab and as much as \$6 million to put exhibits in the new space.

That's more money than the museum has been able to raise in 20 years, though just last year the modest operation did land its first ever \$1 million gift.

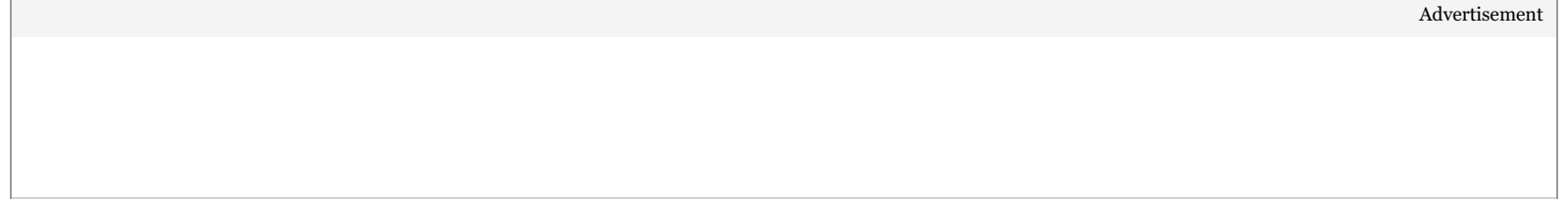
In other words, it will take a major investment by the community to bring these plans to life, Gillespie said.

As far as Drexel's Lacovara is concerned, this would be an investment in the community, not by it.

"Museums of natural history have a huge educational impact," he

said. "What kid isn't interested in dinosaurs? I call dinosaurs the gateway drug to the sciences."

Contact reporter Henry Brean at hbrean @reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0350.



MUSEUM REVIEW

Las Vegas Embraces Bad Guys of Its Past



Isaac Brekken for The New York Times

Mob Museum The Purple Gang members trying to avoid the camera in an exhibition at the new museum in Las Vegas. [More Photos »](#)

By **EDWARD ROTHSTEIN**
Published: February 13, 2012

LAS VEGAS — Lefty, Lucky, the Ant, Bugsy, the Snake, the Chin, Scarface, the Brain. The monikers of mobsters are like the nicknames of odd superheroes. They are two syllables of rat-tat firing, evoking creepy animals, physical protrusions or uncanny powers.



Multimedia



[Slide Show](#)
[The Mob Museum](#)

And now, here in a city where such figures were once as comfortably in their element as Zeus and his family on Olympus, they are finally getting something close to the museum they deserve: the Mob Museum, a \$42 million survey of the American gangster, unfolding in 17,000 square feet of exhibition space, on three floors of a 41,000-square-foot landmark building on Stewart Avenue.

With artifacts, clever interactive displays, atmospheric exhibits and photographs and videos, we learn how Las

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Like many things in mob-related American culture (even those nicknames), the museum mixes attraction and repulsion, sentimentality and hard-edged realism, relish and disgust. Like a gangster movie, it seduces us with these figures on the one hand, and with the other reminds us of the demands of justice. Its alluring, colloquial title, Mob Museum, is countered with a stern subtitle on the facade of this 1933 neo-Classical former post office and courthouse: the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement.

And while the museum seeks a kind of romantic appeal by opening on Tuesday, [Valentine's Day](#) — the 83rd anniversary, it points out, of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre in Chicago, where members of George (Bugs) Moran's gang were murdered by Al Capone's rival thugs posing as police officers — it also makes sure to deflate gangster romance by reminding us that this cold-blooded episode was so horrific that it led to a turning point, spurring expanded federal investigation. We even see part of the original brick wall where the massacre took place, pockmarked by circled bullet holes; it serves as an eerie screen on which one of the museum's many short films, "Bootleg Wars," is projected.

The tension between allure and disgust recurs throughout. We may be shocked by the description of Bruno Facciola's murder in New York City in 1990 (shot in both eyes, stabbed and a dead canary jammed in his mouth), but we also see photographs of 1950s celebrities in mob-run casinos and of glamorous film stars playing criminals. The mob is portrayed as weaving a web of evil (the museum believes John F. Kennedy's assassination was the result of mob involvement in the attempted assassination of Fidel Castro) but also as an object of fascination.

The exhibition designers, Gallagher & Associates, and the "content developers" Barrie Projects and the curator, Kathleen Coakley Barrie, begin their double-edged treatment soon after you enter the lobby, where the original post office boxes are still in place behind video screens and text panels.

You are lured in with an overused museological conceit: you are treated as a mobster "under suspicion." The elevator to the third floor, where the exhibitions begin, includes a video of a police officer sternly reading you your Miranda rights, and the first "gallery" is a police "lineup" where photos are taken (eventually to be sold at the museum shop).

That conceit, though, is soon left behind. The emphasis is ultimately placed not on the mysterious appeal of the mob, but on the fight against it. The museum's heart is a splendidly restored courtroom, where [the Senate's Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce](#) held its seventh hearing in 1950, led by Estes Kefauver, a Democratic senator from Tennessee. The Kefauver hearings were held in cities across the country, televised live and seen by 30 million people — the first media

Vegas developed out of the early-20th-century desert, and how workers on the nearby Hoover Dam gave the town its first population explosion. We see how the mob maneuvered into businesses of pleasure, not releasing its hold until late in the 20th century, when corporate casinos trumped their almost quaint predecessors.

We learn, too, of these Jewish and Italian immigrants who treated the "land of opportunity" as "the opportunity to grab what they could," and [by trafficking in blood and booze built up national empires](#), until they were brought down with wiretaps, informants and more blood.



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The fight club generation

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sensation. Here that courtroom becomes the backdrop to a film about the hearings.

This emphasis on enforcement grows as the exhibitions proceed, with accounts of bugged homes and telephone booths, informants marked for death, and undercover agents trying to prevent killings. The museum never leaves behind hints of mob romance — one gallery includes heart-warming family photos of mob figures — but such fascination is never allowed to go unanswered: the next gallery is a chronicle of thuggery and blood.

There can be no surprise in the ultimate emphasis. The president of the nonprofit governing board of the museum, [Ellen B. Knowlton](#), was an F.B.I. special agent for 24 years and had been in charge of the agency's Las Vegas division. Another board member and one of the forces behind the museum is Oscar B. Goodman, who served as Las Vegas mayor until term limits forced his retirement; he was then able to swear in his wife, [Carolyn G. Goodman](#), the current mayor, in his place.

Even Mr. Goodman has two perspectives: one as former mayor and the other as a former defense lawyer for many of the city's mobsters, including [Meyer Lansky](#) and [Anthony Spilotro](#). Las Vegas, not surprisingly, doesn't come off badly in this account of its mob-marred past. This museum is meant to be an anchor to revive the downtown area. The bulk of the financing has come from the city, with additional assistance from the state and federal government, including almost \$9 million in [grants for the restoration and preservation of the landmark building](#) by the architects, Westlake Reed Leskosky.

Does Las Vegas get off too easily? Maybe it always did. One comment cited here is credited to Tony Accardo, a Chicago mob boss: "We don't want no blood there," he said. "It's bad for tourist business." And in a gallery devoted to what is wryly called the mob's "greatest hits," the murders are mainly in cities other than Las Vegas. Besides, look around, outside of downtown: the economic veneer has chipped in recent years, but the legacy of mob-run spectacle and sensation is still astonishing.

But the gangster romance is far more dominant in another mob exhibition in town. Called "Las Vegas Mob Experience" [when it opened last year](#) at the Tropicana, it turned visitors into mob aspirants on a journey through various stage sets representing mob history, met along the way by moving images of James Caan, Mickey Rourke and other cinematic mob personas addressing them.

The show went [melodramatically bankrupt](#) but [will soon be revived under new ownership as "Mob Attraction](#) Las Vegas." Visitors will move through stage sets of mob history; at the center is a series of galleries of artifacts provided by local gangster families.

In a gallery labeled "To Meyer Lansky," there are his home movies, outfits and favorite poems; in another is living room furniture of Sam Giancana, Capone's "efficient and ruthless triggerman." We are indeed meant to be attracted by these figures, and a tour I took of the show's planned script suggests that it will turn the mob into an amusing entertainment, refusing to take itself too seriously.

The Mob Museum has entirely different interests, but the tension with mob romance remains. And to a certain extent, that may be unavoidable, partly because of where we are standing: "Las Vegas was an 'open city,' " the exhibition tells us, "meaning that no one syndicate dominated the town. That made it an exciting destination for mobsters nationwide who were eager to start fresh and launch new ventures."

The mob-run hotels even shaped Las Vegas culture as we know it. Sure, they were bad guys, but the appeal here was to the potential bad guy in everyone, while guaranteeing a degree of immunity: "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas."

In displays here, the hotels of the 1950s and '60s have an avant-gardish freewheeling style. We see a photo of Elvis Presley and Liberace clowning around in the 1950s, or of Marlene Dietrich performing with Louis Armstrong at the Riviera in 1962. One picture here from the Sands shows a floating crap game that puts Nathan Detroit to shame: it is being played on a pool raft.

Moreover, in their embrace of lawlessness and in their assertion of power over life and death, mobsters could seem masters of the very forces of chance to which gamblers here are in thrall. Their gestures and decisions were as swift and sure as the click of a ball falling into a slot on the roulette wheel; their killings as mechanically ruthless as the spinning fruit on one-arm bandits. They are still the gods of Vegas. And here, with great verve, they have become objects of both homage and retribution.

The Mob Museum opens on Tuesday in Las Vegas; themobmuseum.org.

A version of this review appeared in print on February 14, 2012, on page C1 of the New York edition with the headline: Las Vegas Embraces Bad Guys Of Its Past.

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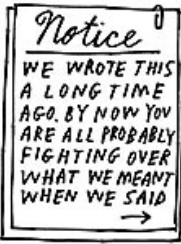
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Mob Museum offers flashy exhibits, gory stories



DAVID BECKER/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Former Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman appears during a media preview at the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement on Monday. The museum opens to the public today. (*enlarge to view more photos*)» [Buy this photo](#)

BY [BENJAMIN SPILLMAN](#)
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Posted: Feb. 13, 2012 | 9:08 p.m.

Think of it as all the excitement of life in the mafia with none of the annoying prison terms or gunshot wounds.

That's what organizers of the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, aka the Mob Museum, want to deliver when they open their doors to the public today.

The museum is supposed to tell visitors the truth about notorious mobsters in American history and the cops, prosecutors and undercover agents who beat them back.

It's also expected to juice visitation to a formerly forlorn part of downtown Las Vegas that's betting a nationally recognized museum will attract as many as 300,000 new visitors annually.

Whether the \$42 million museum at 300 Stewart Avenue can meet lofty expectations remains unclear.

But a sneak peek at exhibits provided to local media on Monday showed visitors will experience flashy displays, gory stories and details about mob life that are

wiseguys or FBI agents.

"This is very much designed as an experience in which people get to do something," said Jonathan Ullman, executive director of the museum.

The exhibits cover three floors of the former U.S. Post Office and Federal Courthouse building dedicated in downtown Las Vegas in 1933.

Although it was previously best-known as the only building in Las Vegas recognized as having historic value on a national level, many of its new exhibits are flashy and modern.

On the third floor, where visitors are expected to start their trip through the history of organized crime, the centerpiece of an exhibit on the history of Las Vegas is a series of touch screens embedded in a tabletop in a replica of the old Arizona Club, an early Las Vegas saloon.

It's next to another exhibit that combines new technology with an old-time artifact, the reassembled, bullet-scarred wall that was the backdrop for the "St. Valentine's Day Massacre," a 1929 mass murder of seven gangsters in Chicago at the hand of rival gang members, some of them dressed as cops.

The wall is behind glass onto which is projected video about the infamous shooting. It's the centerpiece of a section of the museum that deals with Prohibition.

"This is the time period in which these gangsters acquired immense wealth," Ullman said.

The most elaborate exhibit in the museum is also a multimedia experience and is on the second floor in the room that gives the museum building its historical significance.

That is the courtroom where in 1950 former Sen. Estes Kefauver of Tennessee held one of 14 hearings into organized crime in America. The room is restored to how it looked when Kefauver held the hearing in Las Vegas. It's outfitted with audio and video equipment that tells the story on a large projection screen.

The Las Vegas hearing wasn't televised, but others in the series were, and the video combines real footage with actors who use hearing transcripts.

The hearings were the subject of deep, national interest for as many as 30 million people who watched them on television, about 20 percent of the entire national population at the time.

"Literally businesses shut down when these hearings were on," said Ullman, explaining how the widespread interest managed to fuel the growth of Las Vegas by reducing competition for gambling and other vice spending elsewhere.

"There was significant public backlash," against organized crime, he said. "States that were considering legalizing gambling chose not to."

Other exhibits delve into the mob's infiltration of Las Vegas casinos from the 1960s into the 1980s.

Exhibits explain how mobsters skimmed money from casino count rooms and sent it back to bosses in the Midwest.

The whole process is summed up nicely by former casino operator Carl Thomas, who during a 1978 meeting with mob boss Joe Agosto explained how the skim worked, unaware that the FBI was listening in.

"The guys go back there and snatch the cash," Thomas can be heard saying on a recording played in the museum. "Now the bad

they could be taking \$2,400."

Additional exhibits focus on memorable police and FBI agents and on how organized crime is depicted in movies.

Ellen Knowlton, former FBI special agent in charge of the Las Vegas division and president of the board of 300 Stewart Avenue corporation, the nonprofit entity that will operate the museum, said the idea is to portray the reality of organized crime as accurately as possible.

She disputed the notion that Las Vegas was better off when casinos were under mob control and said that, in fact, the mob bosses were holding back progress that didn't catch on until they were driven out.

"When organized crime people are controlling a segment of the economy, honest, decent people are shut out," Knowlton said. "Anytime you have a business that is getting skimmed, it can't reach its full potential,"

Others, including Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman, saw the era through rosier glasses.

Goodman, who is married to former mayor, former mob lawyer and Mob Museum proponent Oscar Goodman, repeated a statement -- debunked as myth by the museum-- that mobsters only hurt other mobsters. She said that before a small number of corporations controlled nearly all the business on the Strip, there was more competition, which was good for Las Vegas.

"The casinos were privately owned; it was truly competitive, casino to casino, to do a better job than the casino next door," Goodman said.

Contact reporter Benjamin Spillman at bspillman@reviewjournal.com or 702-229-6435.



Nice Mob Museum you got there; it'd be a shame if it's not a hit

Posted: Feb. 13, 2012 | 12:06 a.m.

Once the hoopla dies down about Tuesday's opening of the Mob Museum downtown, it will take time to answer the question: If we build it, will they come?

Will the much-vaunted Mob Museum draw tourists and locals?

Estimates of visitors dropped from an initial optimistic estimate of 800,000 visitors annually to a current estimate of 300,000 visitors annually.

Perhaps the backers of the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement (the politically correct name destined for non-use) learned from the Springs Preserve, the \$250 million project built and operated by the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

The preserve now draws only about one-third of the 600,000 people predicted in 2007. The tourists who were supposed to find it a top-notch attraction just never turned out in droves.

Since the idea of a Mob Museum was first mentioned publicly by former Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman in March 2002, it's been controversial. When Goodman first floated the idea, it was bashed so much, he joked he had proposed a "mop museum."

But he was the primary instigator and pulled a lot of people on board what hopefully will not turn into a sinking ship.

Many object to the idea of glamorizing the mob, but they haven't seen it yet to judge for themselves; they're assuming.

Many don't like that the bulk of the \$42 million cost is borne by taxpayers. The money comes in many ways: general funds, bonds, state and federal grants and the largest sum, the \$11.5 million in city Redevelopment Agency funds. Almost all the money is from tax dollars in one form

Once it opens Tuesday, the city of Las Vegas turns the operation over to a nonprofit called The 300 Stewart Avenue Corporation, which holds the responsibility to operate the museum.

The nonprofit headed by Ellen Knowlton, former head of the FBI in Las Vegas, has about \$600,000 to start paying for operations -- about \$400,000 of the grant money in reserve and another \$200,000 in construction savings, according to city spokesman Jace Radke.

To cover operating costs estimated at \$5 million a year, museum officials will rely on admission fees, souvenir sales, facility rentals, memberships and grants. They also plan to raise money through sponsorships, donations and grants to pay for capital improvements, educational initiatives and building up the operating reserve.

Admission fees are \$10 plus tax for all Nevadans and staggered rates that go up to \$18 plus tax for non-Nevadans.

Since 2002, there have been numerical changes. At one time, the cost was \$30 million. Now it's \$42 million. The museum will employ 100 people, double the initial estimates.

A media tour today and the public opening on Valentine's Day (St. Valentine's Day Massacre, get it?) will provide answers about the quality and honesty of the Mob Museum.

I became optimistic about the quality when creative director Dennis Barrie came on board, since I'd heard only good about the International Spy Museum in Washington, D.C., and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, both projects where Barrie played prominent creative roles. Until I see it, I'll reserve my opinion about the honesty aspect.

One of the most thoughtful critiques about the concept came from the highly quotable late history professor Hal Rothman in 2007. "Nevada's peculiarity is not that we have vice; it's that we've made a virtue out of vice. And nothing would crown that more than having a Mob Museum. This is entirely consistent with what we do here, with the way we package the past and we make caricatures of things."

To critics, Goodman has responded curtly: "Don't come."

The Mob Museum has the potential to enhance Goodman's reputation as a visionary for downtown redevelopment. But the potential also exists that in a year we'll be complaining about a visitor shortage and blaming Goodman for building a boondoggle.

Jane Ann Morrison's column appears Monday, Thursday and Saturday. Email her at Jane@reviewjournal.com or call her at (702) 383-0275. She also blogs at lvj.com/blogs/Morrison.

FEBRUARY 21, 2012

Sneak peek: Mob Museum set to open, with plenty of larger-than-life figures to greet you



STEVE MARCUS

Former Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman and his wife Carolyn, the current mayor, pose in the lobby of the Mob Museum during a media preview tour of the museum in downtown Las Vegas Monday, Feb. 13, 2012. Oscar Goodman is also known as a former mob attorney for representing alleged mobsters such as Meyer Lansky, Frank Rosenthal and Anthony Spilotro. The museum, in a renovated former federal courthouse and U.S. Post Office, will have its grand opening Tuesday.

By [John Katsilometes](#)

Monday, Feb. 13, 2012 | 6 p.m.

When you walk into [the Mob Museum](#) in downtown Las Vegas, you are first met by a beyond-life-size portrait of J. Edgar Hoover holding a semiautomatic weapon trained at the entrance.

This sort of visage of old J. Edgar — for decades the overlord of the FBI — cutting down the bad

guys, is to be expected from the National Museum of Organized Crime & Law Enforcement, housed inside the old Las Vegas federal courthouse and post office.

What is unexpected as you make your way to the three-story museum's centerpiece, the courtroom where the Las Vegas series of Kefauver Hearings were staged in 1950, is the fragrance of Murphy's Oil wiped across the wooden benches. This unplanned, yet interactive sensation speaks to the real newness of upgrades to the old building, which opens to the public Tuesday at 10 a.m. Media members were allowed preview tours on Monday afternoon.

The grand opening for the public is in line with the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, an event marked inside the museum with a video description of the event and a segment of the wall from the shooting itself. Before the formal opening, seven couples will join in matrimony at the Mob Museum in a ceremony presided over by former Las Vegas mayor (and current Las Vegas romantic) Oscar Goodman. That lovefest starts at 8 a.m.

The three-story building is densely stuffed with artifacts. Visitors take in the information in self-guided tours that are aided by Mob Museum staffers. One room invites guests to take part in a simulated police lineup under a sign asking, "How Did It Come To This?" The embracing of Mob-pursuing law enforcement agents is depicted with images of such figures as Hoover and Eliot Ness, juxtaposed against a large cutout of Dick Tracy and glass cases of aged artifacts under the heading "Fighting Back."

A replica of the turn-of-the-century Arizona Club saloon setting, replete with old slot machines and roulette wheels, takes guests back to the city's origins. An entire room is dedicated to Vegas history, where old film footage of Fremont Street hotel-casinos and Strip implosions plays on a seamless loop. Slot machine reels land on images of such Las Vegas figures as Piero's owner Freddie Glusman, Nevada Ballet Theatre co-founder Nancy Houssels and former Sheriff Ralph Lamb. Press the person and a video plays interviews of these folks talking about the Mob's influence on Vegas.

The tour is interesting at every turn and highly educational without being boring. There is no genuine blow-your-mind technology, no use of hologram figures or live actors as used by the other mob attraction in Vegas, which now happens to be called the Mob Attraction, set for a reopening in March at Tropicana.

The centerpiece of the Mob Museum is that Kefauver courtroom, where projection screens drop to play scenes of actors portraying federal officials – including Kefauver – questioning such reputed mobsters as Moe Dalitz and Frank Costello, who are shown in real film footage. Costello's infamous walk away from questioning, a move that bought him 18 months on a contempt-of-court charge, is played out.

Goodman is featured prominently, of course, with a glass case displaying items he donated to the museum. The courtroom itself is a Goodman landmark, the spot where, in March 1967, he won his first case in Vegas — then promptly retched from acute anxiety on the courthouse's front steps.

Goodman was on hand Monday, thrilled that his vision of a renovation of the old courthouse, originally dedicated in November 1933 as the city's first federal building, has finally been realized.

"I think it's terrific, it's a great museum," Goodman said of the attraction assembled by Dennis and Kathy Barrie, the designers of the Spy Museum in Washington D.C. and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland. "I think when people are walking around here and look at what's on the walls, they'll love it."

Goodman then glanced back at a series of photos displaying notorious "Made Men" in Mafia history.

"I have a couple of former clients who are going to be very ticked off that they are not on that wall," he said. "I am not kidding." (Goodman actually made that point once more, moments later, to Dennis Barrie,



[STEVE MARCUS](#)

The barber chair, in which mobster Albert Anastasia was assassinated, is displayed in the Mob Museum in downtown Las Vegas Monday, Feb. 13, 2012. Anastasia was killed in New York in 1957. The museum, in a renovated former federal courthouse and U.S. Post Office, will have its grand opening Tuesday.

who asked that his response to Goodman not be recorded.)

Goodman was in no mood to discuss complaints among some civic activists that spending public money on the \$42 million project was an unwise use of taxpayer money.

"I am annoyed at the people who are criticizing us for using redevelopment money for this," said Goodman, who added that there had been several public meetings prior to the museum's construction where dissenters could be heard.

"What do they want me to use it for?" he asked in exasperation. "A sewer?"

Current Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman was also on hand. She said she is comfortable with being "mobbed up," in a manner of speaking.

"It fascinates me at how people are so taken with the mob influence, especially here," she said. "I can't believe it's finally happened. This marriage of law enforcement and the mob will be a great entertainment and educational experience."

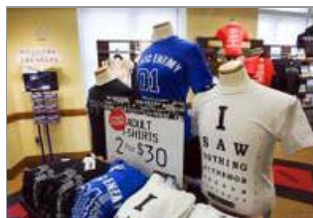
Asked what would have to happen for the Mob Museum to be deemed a financial or business success, Mayor Goodman put the number at 300,000 visitors annually.

"I think it is going to be an explosion of visitors," she said.

The price is not particularly steep — \$18 for adults ages 18-over, \$14 for seniors (ages 65 and over), teachers, military and law enforcement; and \$12 for children ages 5 to 17 and for students ages 18 to 23 with valid ID; and \$10 for Nevada residents, also with a valid ID. Children ages 13 and younger must be in the company of an adult.

"People who are worried about us aggrandizing the mob should forget about it," Oscar Goodman said.

"We have some pretty vicious pictures of some pretty ugly heads being blown off, and we don't want young children to see that."



[STEVE MARCUS](#)

Mob-themed T-shirts and other items are displayed in the gift shop of the Mob Museum in downtown Las Vegas Monday, Feb. 13, 2012. The museum, in a renovated former federal courthouse and U.S. Post Office, will have its grand opening Tuesday.

FEBRUARY 21, 2012

Wander through mob history in Las Vegas — a self-guided tour of gangster landmarks

Fill up the tank and drive to these nearby mob landmarks



DAVID BROWN / LAS VEGAS SUN / SUN FILE PHOTO

Investigators examine the area surrounding the twisted remnants of Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal's car after a bomb destroyed the vehicle on Oct. 4, 1982. A metal plate directly underneath the driver's seat of the Cadillac diverted the explosion away from Rosenthal, saving his life.

By **Jackie Valley** ([contact](#))

Monday, Feb. 13, 2012 | 6 p.m.

It's no secret the mob heavily influenced Las Vegas in the 1940s and '50s as the city rose to prominence, but many famous mobsters had Vegas ties well into the early '80s.

Nearly 30 years later, the fascination surrounding Vegas' organized crime days hasn't died. In fact, some could argue it has intensified with recent attractions, such as the temporarily shuttered Las Vegas Mob Experience at Tropicana. (The interactive attraction recently got a [new name and manager](#) after its previous owner filed for bankruptcy.) In the meantime, there's a new attraction in town — the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, or [Mob Museum](#) for short — opening Tuesday in downtown Las Vegas.

The museum's slogan gnaws at the public's curiosity: "There are two sides to every story — and then there's the truth."

The 41,000-square-foot museum boasts mob artifacts, theater presentations and interactive displays. If you're waiting for the crowds to die down (and hoping to save a few bucks), take a self-guided tour to view the following mob landmarks in the city. Consider it your primer for an eventual trip to the museum.



[LEILA NAVIDI](#)

Frank Rosenthal's former house

Frank “Lefty” Rosenthal, the Chicago mob boss who secretly ran the Stardust contrary to what his food and beverage director title implied, lived near all the casino action in the ritzy Las Vegas Country Club gated community.

The two-story house at 972 Vegas Valley Drive, built in 1970, features more than 3,200 square feet of living space and a pool overlooking the golf course. The home sold for \$615,000 in May 2011.

Rosenthal died at age 79 in Miami Beach, Fla., after suffering a heart attack in October 2008. Nevada authorities had placed him in the state’s notorious Black Book in 1988, banning him from being in casinos.

Arizona is 100, but where is the love?



BY HENRY BREAN
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Posted: Feb. 14, 2012 | 1:12 a.m.

One hundred years ago today, Arizona was admitted to the union as the 48th state.

To mark the centennial of our southeastern neighbor, we called up historian Dennis McBride from the Nevada State Museum in Las Vegas to talk about the rich history between our two states.

McBride's response: "I can't say Arizona has given us much of anything."

OK. That seems a little harsh for Valentine's Day. Surely there must be something that unites us as a people.

Well, McBride said, the states are certainly more connected now than they were a century ago, when the comparatively tiny populations of Southern Nevada and northwestern Arizona seemed hopelessly divided by harsh desert, steep canyons and the untamed Colorado River.

"There was some mining, but it was isolated on both sides of the river," he offered. "There was a lot of bootlegging on the Arizona Strip and rum-running into St. Thomas."

got?

"Anything significant has come (here) from Southern California and from the mobs in the Midwest when they came out," McBride explained. "There was hardly any reason for people in Arizona to come to Nevada before Hoover Dam was built, and there's still hardly any reason for it."

Come on, Dennis, you're killing us. Please, just give us something -- anything -- to make this century-old relationship seem worth the bother.

Two words, McBride said: "Lottery tickets."

Happy birthday, Arizona!

Here's a look at our cross-border bond by the numbers:

48: years between Nevada's admission to the union in 1864 and Arizona statehood in 1912.

145: The number of years that have passed since the area including present-day Clark County was removed from the Arizona Territory and added to Nevada.

2,700,551: The total population of Nevada, according to the 2010 census. More than 72 percent of the population lives in the Las Vegas Valley.

4,192,887: people living in the Phoenix metropolitan area, which accounts for about 66 percent of Arizona's total population.

0: ways of driving across the Colorado River between Nevada and Arizona before the highway across the top of Hoover Dam opened in December 1935. Until then, motorists had to drive to Needles, Calif., or cross the river by ferry.

15,000: The rough number of vehicles that now cross the river every day using the Hoover Dam bypass bridge, which opened in 2010.

\$330 million: How much the Southern Nevada Water Authority agreed to pay in 2004 for Arizona to bank water from the Colorado for future use in Nevada.

22.5: The average number of flights each day from McCarran International Airport to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, Las Vegas' second-most popular destination behind Los Angeles.

7: percent of Las Vegas visitors who come here from Arizona, according to the most recent data from tourism officials. California accounts for 30 percent of our total visitor volume. Southern California accounts for 26 percent.

30-17: UNLV's combined record in men's basketball against Arizona, Arizona State and Northern Arizona universities.

Contact reporter Henry Brean at hbrean@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0350.

Mob Museum a worthy Vegas attraction

Posted: Feb. 14, 2012 | 2:00 a.m.

Las Vegas thrives on buzz. Major hotel-casino openings. Cutting-edge entertainment. Branding and messaging that convey a unique visitor experience.

Although the city has managed to maintain its place as a preferred business and vacation destination, the past few years of economic turmoil have been a buzz kill. Gone are the headlines touting job growth and huge construction projects. In their place are references to unemployment and foreclosures. Big splashes have been smaller and less frequent.

But with today's opening of the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, Las Vegas appears to have some of its media mojo back. This attraction, years in the making and the favorite project of former mayor and mafia defense attorney Oscar Goodman, won't suffer from a lack of free publicity.

Almost from the moment Mr. Goodman first pitched his idea of turning a historic post office into a museum of mob history, some citizens and civic leaders have worried that such a place might reflect poorly on the community. The intention of the project was never to glorify crime and the shocking acts of violence that mobsters have carried out in pursuit of power and wealth, but to acknowledge their place in American and Las Vegas history, as well as the police work that brought mafia members to justice.

The popularity of mob movies, TV shows and books reflect an ongoing public fascination with organized crime. The high-quality, reality-based experience put together by the museum's creative team would seem to have broad appeal.

But if the content of the Mob Museum's exhibits wasn't controversial enough, the funding of the museum's construction sure was. Taxpayers picked up almost the entire \$42 million bill, through state and federal grants, city general funds and redevelopment revenue. The museum became a lightning rod in Washington when it appeared it might receive federal stimulus funding (ultimately, it didn't).

before even opening? Yes, it does seem like a perfect fit for Las Vegas. The curious won't be able to resist it.

Here's hoping they come in large numbers, paying full admission. Because now that the Mob Museum is open, the nonprofit entity that operates it will face a challenge all too familiar to downtown Las Vegas employers: attracting enough customers to stay in business.

As long as the Mob Museum is open, it will be a source of controversy. But it should strive to avoid one scandal in particular: using tax dollars to subsidize operations. The City Council and the museum must make a solemn pledge to the public that, in these times of fiscal sacrifice, taxpayers won't be subjected to yet another shakedown. That would make the Mob Museum experience a little too real.

John L. Smith



Shadow and light converge on Mob Museum



JESSICA EBELHAR/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

George Ormsby pretends to fire a tommy gun during the opening day Tuesday of the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, also known as the Mob Museum. Ex-mobsters, former FBI agents and the general public toured the new attraction at the former U.S. post office and federal courthouse. lu25B6 slide show lvvj.com/multimedia » [Buy this photo](#)

Posted: Feb. 14, 2012 | 11:49 p.m.

No one can blame the guy for being curious.

It turns out not all the mobsters were in display cases Tuesday morning at the grand opening of the sparkling National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement. The Mob Museum does a spectacular job of hauling into custody the major elements of the violent American criminal subculture, but it appears one tough customer slipped the dragnet.

Moving from shadow to light through the crowd of well-wishers, reporters and gawkers was none other than New England mafia figure Vinny Ferrara. The man once known as "the Animal" kept a low profile during the ceremony.

With his background, Ferrara could have taught a doctoral seminar on organized crime. Educated on Hanover Street in Boston's North End as well as at St. John's University, Ferrara gained infamy as capo in the Patriarca crime family.

His presence at the museum opening was like seeing a shark fin in a kiddie pool and added a certain realistic face-slap to the nostalgic vaudeville show that featured the "Jersey Boys" (the Four Seasons impersonators, not members of the DeCavalcante family), vintage automobiles, flashy flappers, and costumed cops and robbers.

The Jersey Boys were finger-popping good. Former FBI Special Agent in Charge Ellen Knowlton was her usual impeccably credible self. And Mayors Carolyn and Oscar Goodman continued their popular routine as the Nick and Nora Charles of Las Vegas.

But Ferrara provided a reminder to the gangster groupies that this mob business isn't all fun and games and interactive exhibits. Every now and then, someone gets put to sleep.

Ferrara wasn't alone among the retired street guys -- he is retired, right? -- who were drawn to the Mob Museum's opening. There were former mobsters and noted government witnesses and authors Frank Cullotta and Henry Hill. The G-men were represented, too. Among several were ex-Las Vegas FBI agents Dennis Arnoldy and Gary Magnesen, who helped take down the Chicago Outfit's tough-guy contingent here in the 1980s.

The mix of infamous characters and law enforcement veterans provided the ideal metaphor for the Mob Museum's theme, and for Las Vegas generally: shadow and light. We are the great American crossroads of acceptable sin. Without Las Vegas, salvation in civilized society would be downright mundane.

Maybe the light and shadow worlds were destined to mix here. I suspect they were. College of Southern Nevada history professor Michael Green, who consults for the Mob Museum, reminds me of a story that reflects the existence of those two forces at work back in the early 1930s when the federal government was considering constructing the post office and courthouse at 300 Stewart Avenue. Although unconfirmed, the tale is so good it has to be true.

The proposed construction site was adjacent to Block 16, Las Vegas' infamous row of brothel cribs. The government's message: "Get rid of the red-light district and we'll build you the building." City fathers, mindful of the revenue and kickbacks the whorehouses generated, replied, "Give us the building, and we'll get rid of the red-light district."

The federal government eventually relented, and Block 16 faded from existence -- 10 years later.

"It was one of the great bluff moves," Green says. "If you want to talk about bluffing in a poker game, that was it."

Although the Mob Museum's theme and \$42 million price tag have

million went into restoring the historic building. Instead of standing empty or crumbling in ruins, it sparkles with a new purpose and can't help but increase the vitality of the downtown economy.

The museum itself is meant to inform and entertain, not serve as the last word on organized crime investigation. It's just a rumor, but I hear not all of America's gangsters want to be relegated to the museum's walls.

If officials are looking for a testimonial from an authentic source, maybe they should ask Vinny Ferrara.

John L. Smith's column appears Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Email him at Smith@reviewjournal.com or call 702-383-0295. He also blogs at lvj.com/blogs/smith.

Deconstructing the good old days on display at the Mob Museum

J. Patrick Coolican

Wed, Feb 15, 2012 (4:36 p.m.)



Goodfellas gallery: The Mob Museum puts organized crime in perspective.

Photo: Steve Marcus

Things were better when the Mob ran this town. We hear this often enough to make it almost a cliché, and with this week's opening of the Mob Museum, er, the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, it seems like an argument worth examining.

Here are the commonly heard supporting statements:

The old guys were part of the community

"They wanted to be engaged in the community because they came to a place that allowed them to operate legally, and they appreciated that," Mike Sloan, gaming lawyer and ultimate old-timer, told me.

Now, many of our casino executives live elsewhere or spend half their time globe-trotting. By contrast, the old-time operators lived here, and you might run into them at the country club, coffee shop, church or synagogue. America has always had a fascination with outlaws, and Las Vegas residents got to live among them. "They certainly were more colorful people," Sloan said,

employing his rich skill with a euphemism.

And, they gave back. Moe Dalitz and partners famously built, with a Teamsters loan, Sunrise Hospital. Nevada historian Michael Green also noted Dalitz gave UNLV money for the first furniture in the first building. Sloan recalled stories of casino operators generously paying hospital bills for the sick children of employees. (I should note, of course, that many casino operators in old Vegas were not Mob-connected, and those that were unfairly tarnished the entire city.)

Better schools, less crime, less traffic

Perhaps true, but not because the Mob was invested in good government. Educational challenges, crime and traffic are the result—at least in part—of growth, not Mob-free corporate ownership of hotels. Of course, you could argue that once corporations were allowed to own casinos, they would bring massive capital to bear, which would lead to bigger resorts and therefore rapid population growth. But really, growth vs. no growth is a different argument.

Also, think of the extreme irony of claiming there was less crime when the Mob ran the town. “They were out doing burglaries!” Green quipped, referring to the “Hole in the Wall Gang.”

As I learned at the museum, which opened Tuesday Downtown on Stewart Avenue, the skim at the Stardust was \$7 million per year; at the Flamingo, it was \$36 million from 1960 to 1967; at the Tropicana it was \$150,000 per month. That money was stolen from the community and sent to criminal gangs back East.

(Given the events of the past few years, I can appreciate that, for many people, banks vs. organized crime is a close call.)

Cheaper food, better shows, and you could make a good living

As Sloan notes, cocktail waitresses, bartenders and maitre d’s made great money in Mob days, in part because the IRS wasn’t as rigorous about collecting taxes on tips. The casinos didn’t have to report when someone won a big jackpot, and let’s remember that there was no competition from Atlantic City or anywhere else.

As for the food? If you look hard, you can still find a \$7 prime rib dinner, though I’m not sure why you would. Our food these days is more expensive, but it’s also far better.

Finally, yes, I would love to see Frank Sinatra. And I would take Sinatra over any show currently in Vegas. But so what? I would take Frank Sinatra over any performer at any time in the history of the planet. Unfortunately, he’s dead, so it’s a little unfair to say we had it better when Sinatra was here. Of course we did. The human race had it better when he was alive.

But our entertainment lineup here is rich and getting more diverse.

Green summed it all up: “In some ways it was better. In some ways it was worse. But there’s too much mythology” about the past.

In any case, the question is academic. As Oscar Goodman said at the museum this week when asked who won the war between law enforcement and the Mob, “Who won? There ain’t no Mob.”

Indeed, all we have now is the Mob Museum, a remarkably restored neo-classical building with impressive historical artifacts inside that detail Las Vegas’ gangster past.

But if it’s in a museum, that usually means it’s dead.

How the Huntridge Learns

It is OK for a civic monument to evolve into just another building?

By **Bob Whitby**

February 16th, 2012

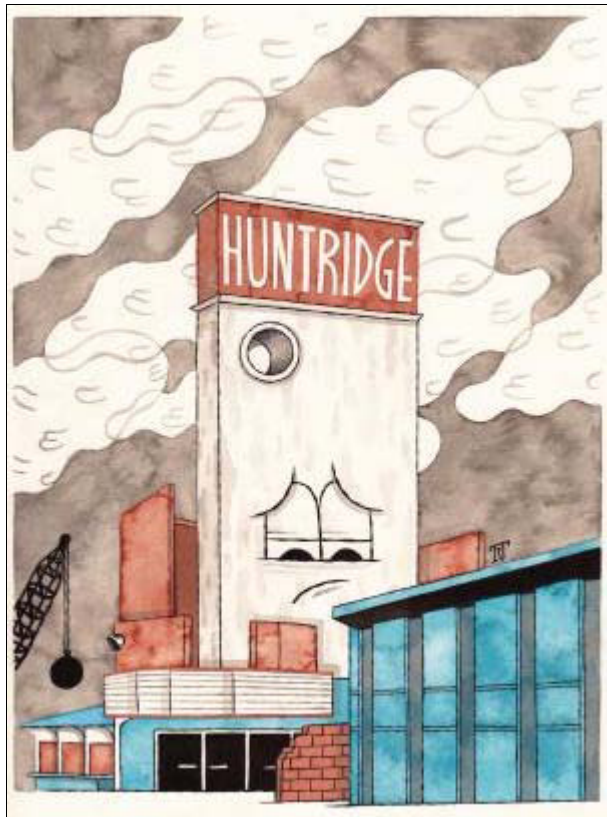


Illustration by Travis Jackson

While the fate of the Huntridge Theater has been in question for at least a decade, the most recent squabble over what constitutes an appropriate use of the gutted and dilapidated landmark illustrates an important point: Buildings change. Structures are not finished when they are built; they're just getting started. The ones that evolve and adapt to the needs of people who use them are eventually integrated into a city's identity; those that don't are swept away.

In January, the Las Vegas Planning Commission voted 7-0 against a request by the Huntridge's owners to put a second-hand store on the site. At the heart of the commission's argument was the idea that the future of the Huntridge Theater should be as a theater.

But the Huntridge hasn't been a theater for years. Built in 1944 in the streamline moderne style, the Huntridge was a movie theater for 40 years until suburban multiplexes made it unprofitable. In the early 1990s it began a second life as an indie music venue that lasted about 10 years. When that proved unprofitable, part of it became retail space—Big's Furniture—and most of the building was left empty. The building's owners saw the second-hand store as a way to keep the building relevant. It's zoned C-2 for general commercial use, so it could be many other things: a store, office space, a club, etc. But nearby residents want the Huntridge to be something it will probably never be again, a vision the owner doesn't

share.

It is protected as a historic site until 2017, but then the state covenants preventing its destruction expire. It's an odd notion, that historic protections can expire, but so be it—the fact is that if the building can't be repurposed, it will probably be razed. In short, it must learn or die.

The idea that structures evolve is the basis of an excellent book (and BBC series viewable on YouTube) by Stewart Brand called *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built*. If the author's name is familiar, you're probably old enough to remember Brand as the cultural theorist behind the Whole Earth Catalog. Since the late 1960s, Brand has been writing about how we can remake the world on a more human scale, whether the topic at hand is business, culture or architecture.

Brand believes the worst kinds of buildings are those that can't or don't adapt to the needs of people who use them. Such “monuments” are often architectural showcases built for a purpose—a library, for instance, or a Strip casino. The people who build them don't think hard enough about how they'll be used the day after they are complete, let alone three decades later. “All buildings are predictions,” Brand says. “All predictions are wrong.”

Then there are the buildings he calls “low road.” These are the almost invisible warehouses, factories, shacks, mobile homes, tract houses, strip malls and other boxes put up cheap and fast. Low-road buildings are where the real after-the-fact creativity takes place because nobody cares what occupants do to them once they're finished. Partition them into little pieces, turn them into artists' space, refashion a big-box store into a school, it doesn't matter. What's important is that they are inexpensive to occupy and offer space to experiment.

The low road is where revitalization and gentrification begin, Brand writes. A typical cycle goes something like this: Artists move in because the rent is cheap, independent business such as coffee shops and nightclubs follow, a neighborhood becomes fashionable and exciting, developers move in to build live/work studios and apartments for the relatively wealthy, goodbye artists. The process happens again and again: Seattle's Belltown, Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco, Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C., etc.

The Huntridge exists somewhere between “monument” and “low road”—the city has traditionally thought of it as a monument, but it is no longer the building it once was. Both the culture surrounding it and the physical plant itself have changed. It was substantially rebuilt after its aging roof collapsed in 1995. And over the years, the interior has been stripped of seats, the once-grand murals removed and the auditorium floor leveled. Outside, the iconic 75-foot tower and neon sign still stands—a source of

neighborhood identity in a town short on it—but the sign is dark, and the paint is chipped and fading.

So the theater should be seen as a classic low-road opportunity—it's no longer suited for its original purpose, but it's cheap and malleable. It should be ready for Phase 4, whatever that may be. The city's planning department thought as much when it recommended approving the second-hand store, saying it was "appropriate for the site and can be conducted in a manner that is harmonious and compatible with surrounding uses." But the planning department (composed of experts) can only pass its advice along to the planning commission (composed of political appointees). The commission, in turn, passes its decisions along to the City Council, which ultimately makes the call. (The Council was to discuss the issue Feb. 15, after *Vegas Seven* went to press.)

Residents in the Huntridge neighborhood didn't agree with the planning department's notion that buildings can learn. They favor skipping a few steps along the road to gentrification and going right to upscale, boutique-commercial stage. And returning the Huntridge to its original purpose seemed a good way to get there.

"Personally, what we would like to see is it returned to its original glory and it be used as a theater again," says area real estate agent "Downtown" Steve Franklin.

• • •

It's a fine vision; the problem is that it's not feasible. The Huntridge can turn back into a glorious theater just as soon as someone comes up with several million dollars to sink into a dilapidated venue in a sketchy neighborhood with a history of failed attempts as a theater.

Ironically, the state has already spent \$1.6 million to keep the building from falling down completely, taxpayer money the city's planning commission now feels obligated to honor by ensuring any future use is consistent with the past. "We can't just let the taxpayer's investment be ignored," commission member Glenn Trowbridge says. "That wasn't done to let it be used for some other purpose." In other words, the same funds used to preserve the Huntridge will likely lead to its demise when the state's restrictions on its use expire in 2017.

And so we arrive at a stalemate. If the Huntridge can't evolve, it won't survive. And it can't evolve if the city and its neighbors won't let it. It could be many things, but in the end it will probably be gone.

Mob Museum price is right

By **Anthony Curtis**

February 16th, 2012

Feb. 14 marked the opening of downtown's National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, better known as the Mob Museum. Where's the deal in that? In order to understand completely, you have to consider what's transpired recently in the Mafia-museum biz.

This isn't exactly the first time someone's built an attraction based on the mob and tried to make money with it. Just last year, the Mob Experience at the Tropicana gave it a go. The idea sounded good, and there was a decent amount of anticipation leading up to its debut. That is, right up till the time ticket prices were announced. *Forty bucks!* Sorry, but that kind of tariff in a town where you can see dancing fountains and laser light shows for free just ain't gonna fly. Predictably, the Mob Experience didn't draw, and subsequent financial and legal turmoil has derailed it,

at least for the time being.

Meanwhile, someone at mob attraction No. 2 went to school on mob attraction No. 1, and the Mob Museum opened with a kinder and gentler \$18 ticket. But that's just for the tourists paying retail. There are \$4-\$6 discounts in place for kids, seniors, military, teachers, students and law enforcement. And the biggest discount of all is for locals. Show a Nevada ID and it's just \$10.

That's a good relative price, but \$10 isn't a deal if what you're paying for is no good. Don't worry, that's not the case. I took a pre-opening tour and was surprised and impressed by the comprehensiveness of the exhibit. It's amazingly well thought out, and it's supported by lots of vintage photos and interactive experiences. Want to listen in on a real wiretap or feel what it's like to fire a tommy gun? You can do it here, and it's all included in the price. Heck, just walking around the building itself—the old post office and federal courthouse dating back to 1933—is almost worth the price of admission.

I like to put a per-hour number on entertainment, and this looks like about a two-hour exploration,

making it a \$5-per-hour play. That's pretty cheap these days, and there figures to be more in the way of related deals if you pay attention. For example, the Mob Bar around the corner on Third Street isn't affiliated, but it's been leveraging the museum opening with various libations specials. Ladies drank free for two hours on a recent Saturday evening. That made for a nice little museum-and-bar parlay, the kind of which I expect more to come.

The Mob Museum is here. Deal, skinflints!

Oh, the humanity. Oh, the audacity. By now we've all had our fill of the hand-wringing, the teeth-gnashing, the melodramatic caterwauls worthy of *The Perils of Pauline*, emanating from the usual skinflints who think tax money should never be spent for anything.

Let me clarify that. They think tax dollars should never be spent for anything ... except warplanes, bombs or anything else that benefits defense contractors ... or to subsidize oil and pharma companies, Wall Street banks or agricultural conglomerates ... or for tax cuts for rich people. Those are fine uses of public dough. Anything else is just waste, probably imposed on us by pinkos.

And so we come to the latest wave of mournful wails and faux outrage about public support of the Mob Museum. Lordy, Lordy, the apocalypse must be near: Public dollars were spent on a mob museum.

Like many of you, I am pretty much fed up with the bitching about spending public dollars on anything that isn't directly beneficial to huge corporations. If we're talking about public money that is supposed to help stimulate the economy as well as preserve historic buildings, I am hard pressed to think of a better use for the \$42 million that went into the museum.

Maybe the initial projections about visitors were inflated. So what? Backers have adjusted their projections based on more recent economic realities, and given the worldwide fascination with organized crime, it is not a stretch to predict the Mob Museum will be a popular draw. It certainly is more reasonable to assume that people will travel downtown to learn about mobsters than to assume they would haul their butts out to the Springs Preserve. Most tourists don't give one hoot about the history of our water resources, but they most certainly are interested in Bugsy and Lefty and Tough Tony. (Side note: I think Springs Preserve is wonderful and worthwhile, but was overdone and oversold.)

Will the museum save downtown? Of course not. But it is an important piece of the puzzle, a timeless draw that will bring tens of thousands of visitors to the area to shop, eat, drink and gamble. It has already created dozens of permanent jobs and is the very definition of an economic stimulus, a picture-perfect use of funds put aside for that purpose.

The museum also received money slotted for historic preservation. There isn't a more deserving structure in downtown. The old post office is the genuine article, a former courthouse that not only hosted the Kefauver hearings into organized crime (cementing a connection to its current theme) but was used by many giants of Vegas history. It is a magnificent structure and deserved to be saved.

"People forget that we were given the building by the National Park Service, but there were conditions attached," says museum-backer Jeff Silver. "The Park Service gave us the place for a dollar but wanted us to fix it up and to put some kind of museum inside. What better museum could there possibly be?"

Silver is not exactly an uninterested bystander. At the height of the mob's power in Las Vegas, he was a courageous regulator on the Gaming Control Board when that body took the first steps to force the Mafia out of Vegas casinos. His life was literally on the line back then. He is not someone who thinks the Mafia should be glamorized, but is more than comfortable with the approach taken

by the museum.

"The fact is, we couldn't have done something like this 30 years ago because we were still going through it," he says. "We've come so far in the years since, and the museum is a testament to how much our community has matured. It's an important story to tell."

The skinflints will gripe about spending public dollars on something as frivolous as a museum. But museums, like universities and schools, are essential to a civilized society. There is value in learning about the past, just as there is value in reading literature or listening to music, things that enrich our lives as human beings -- even if they do not contribute to a corporation's bottom line or a CEO's massive bonus.

City Hall, shiny and new, opens Tuesday



JOHN LOCHER/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman talks in the council chambers of the new City Hall while final work is done Thursday on the ceiling. City Hall will open for business for most of the public at 10 a.m. Tuesday. » [Buy this photo](#)

BY BENJAMIN SPILLMAN
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Posted: Feb. 19, 2012 | 11:38 p.m.
Updated: Feb. 20, 2012 | 12:18 p.m.

It won't have that new-building smell when it opens for business Tuesday morning, and that's just how the builders of Las Vegas' glittering new City Hall want it.

The shiny structure at 495 S. Main St. is short on pungent chemicals and solvents and long on high-tech features and conservation.

It's being hailed by city officials and builders as a gem that's brightening a formerly forsaken part of downtown, even if critics have questioned the cost and some features that insulate city officials from the public.

During a recent tour of the seven-story structure, Mayor Carolyn Goodman and others raved about energy and environmental features they say will save money and make workers more productive, and downplayed concerns about the approximate \$185 million in borrowed money used to finance the project.

Standing in her brightly lit, seventh-floor office, Goodman swept her arm across the skyline vista visible through floor-to-ceiling windows on the south and west sides of the room.

"Our city will be making a real statement here," she said. "This is our beautiful city and our mountain ranges and the feeling of everything pulling together through the view that is here."

EXTERIOR: FUNCTION AND FORM

The statements start in the plaza on the building's south side before visitors even get to the entrance.

That's where 33 solar trees, small towers covered with power-generating solar panels, sprout from the desert landscaping.

The trees, along with more solar panels on the roof, are expected to generate 10 percent to 15 percent of the power needs in the 310,000-square-foot building.

Between the solar power and other high-efficiency features such as reflective exterior surfaces and an interior lit largely by the sun and LED lighting, the building is expected to cut energy costs from as much as \$700,000 annually in the 39-year-old city hall on Stewart Avenue and Las Vegas Boulevard to as little as \$300,000.

"We will be cutting that energy bill quite a bit," said Tom Perrigo, the city's sustainability officer.

It's not all function, though, as architects and designers who worked on the structure made sure to include plenty of symbolic features in the form of the building.

Michael Crowe, co-president and director of JMA Architecture Services, pointed out a raft of design features flowing from the outer shell and into the center of the structure aimed at highlighting the past, present and future of Las Vegas.

For example, undulating walls on the outside of the council chambers and 52 vertical feet of smooth, tan Italian marble in the main entrance represent the canyons early explorers would have found near Southern Nevada springs.

LED-lined vertical fins on the building's south face represent water flowing over Hoover Dam, a main source of energy in the region.

And windows tinted to mimic sun rays hitting the solar trees represent the renewable energy many expect will power much of Southern Nevada in the future.

"We wanted this building to be cost-efficient but yet to reflect what everybody who lives here wants it to be, a place they are proud of," Goodman said.

One notable feature of the southern plaza

that's unexpected is intense heat from three directions of sunlight, which hits visitors directly from the sky, reflected off the building's shiny surface and upward from the concrete.

Even in winter months, and especially when the wind is calm, the plaza is considerably warmer than the surrounding area.

Crowe said it's an issue that will eventually be corrected by the installation of new trees to provide shade, something visitors will probably appreciate greatly during hot summer months.

"We are aware of the problem and we are working on it," Crowe said. "That was one reason these solar trees are so high, so that we are able to add whatever we need to" without blocking sunlight used for energy.

INTERIOR: AIR AND MARBLE

The inside of the building is striking for what's missing.

That is, even though it's just been completed, there are no odors from fresh paint, new carpet or even adhesives.

That's because as part of an effort to attain LEED Gold certification, a rating that quantifies the environmental health and sustainability of a structure, developers Forest City and building contractor Whiting Turner eschewed traditional construction materials and used nontoxic alternatives instead.

"We kind of like that smell because it is new but that is stuff you shouldn't be breathing in," Perrigo said of the volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, that can give fresh paint or new cars a distinctive odor. "All the materials in here are low VOC, the paint, the carpeting, the glue. In a lot of buildings they have to run (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) for weeks and weeks and weeks to get the air quality up. This one they turned it on and it met all the requirements and even better."

Perrigo said the health benefits of low-toxin materials and abundant natural light will improve the function of city government in large part by increasing worker productivity and reducing sick days.

"You have a healthier building, a better indoor environment; you have much more productive workers," he said.

Another striking interior feature is the marble, seemingly acres of marble, covering the floor and walls inside the main entrance.

David Phillips, vice president for Forest City Commercial Construction Co. Inc., flew three times to Italy to select the stone.

Phillips and others said the surface was chosen for its attractiveness and durability.

To save money and maximize efficiency, the marble on the walls is a sheet that's just a quarter of an inch thick and laminated to an aluminum, honeycombed backing that makes for panels so light it was possible to hang them on standard wall structures despite the weight of the stone.

The marble on the floor comes in planks an inch and a half thick, Phillips said. The cost of the stone, he said, was reasonable considering its durability.

"It will be here forever," Phillips said.

PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS

For the public the building will provide a vastly different experience than the old city hall, which was dedicated in 1973 and shows every bit of its 39 years of age.

Members of the public who drive can park for up to two hours free, with validation, in a separately financed, \$15 million parking structure across Main Street from the new City Hall.

Once they cross the street and walk inside, they can use touch screens embedded in the walls to navigate where they need to go to accomplish city business.

There will be separate panels to display the building's energy generation and consumption so the public can evaluate the cost and benefits of the renewable energy and efficiency features.

Visitors who attend City Council meetings will be in for a vastly different experience as well.

To begin with, the new council chambers are larger and better lit than the dark, nearly subterranean chambers where the council held its last meeting Feb. 15.

Several 103-inch flat screen displays above the council dais will make it easy for the gallery to see documents posted and voting results.

And advanced acoustic features will make it easier to hear discussion among speakers and the council while a rear entrance for the public will reduce ambient noise.

The chambers will also accommodate about 150 more people than the old chambers, which could hold about 300 residents.

When the chambers aren't in use for meetings, the dais and speaker stand can be broken down and removed for small performances or community events.

"This building was designed to be completely inviting to the public," Crowe said.

Accommodating, but not too accommodating.

While the new building is certainly more comfortable than the old one, it's arguably less inviting in terms of public access to elected officials.

In the old building council members walked across a public plaza to access their private entrance to the council chambers, an area where members of the public or reporters could catch up with officials for an interview or casual conversation.

The new building is equipped with private, secure elevators that will allow council members and the mayor to access the building and the council chambers without ever venturing into an area of general access.

It adds another layer of insulation between council members and the public that some say is troubling.

Barry Smith, executive director of the Nevada Press Association, said new waves of government buildings frequently include an increasing number of features that allow elected officials and public workers to wall themselves off from members of the public who vote them in and pay the bills.

"It has been a trend, it has been coming for many years," Smith said. "The more you do that the more it kind of cements in people's minds these people are somehow different than you and me. That is against the fundamental basis of our democracy. They aren't any different than you and me. They represent you and me."

Crowe defended the private access as a security feature and said council members will be free to use the public elevators and entryways if they want to mingle with the public.

He also noted that members of the public can freely roam the building and exterior plazas without encountering restrictive security measures.

Residents aren't likely to encounter security until they actually get to the front offices of whatever department they're visiting.

"So it is a very, very user friendly building," he said.

COST: LEASE TO BUY

According to a city fact sheet, the cost of the building is about \$146.2 million.

Of that, about \$109 million is for construction, or hard costs, and another \$32.2 million in soft costs that include a \$6.3 million fee for the developer and \$11 million in furniture, fixtures and equipment.

It's being financed with an approximate \$185 million in bonds, and the city and developer Forest City created a lease-purchase structure to pay for the project.

Under the setup, the city financed the project, which took advantage of low-interest, "Build America" bonds, and will hand it over to Forest City to own and lease back to the city.

It allows the city to have lower payments on the front end of the lease as the economy rebounds from recession and pay more near the end of the term.

Under the plan the city makes no payments until fiscal year 2013, when a \$3.5 million annual payment comes due. The annual payment increases to \$9.3 million in fiscal year 2014 and \$13.4 million beginning in fiscal year 2017.

At the end of the lease the city will own the building without making any additional payment.

Goodman said the cost is justified for several reasons.

Not only did the project employ an estimated 1,900 people during construction, it will bring more good paying government jobs to a corner of downtown that until recently was known mainly for vacant lots and empty storefronts.

It also makes room for Zappos.com, an online shoe and apparel seller, to move into the old city hall and bring that property back to the tax rolls, Goodman said.

She also said the energy-saving features and increased productivity from workers will pay off in the long haul for taxpayers.

"I certainly understand anybody's concern about spending money," Goodman said. "But I also learned a lesson a long time ago -- in order to make money you have to spend money."

Others aren't so sure.

Val Sharp, president of the Las Vegas City Employees Association, which represents city workers, said the fact city management has laid off personnel and sought employee pay and benefit concessions in recent years is reason to think employees will bear the burden of paying for the new building.

"We are having a lot of trouble with anything the city is doing," Sharp said of city spending on projects. "Whatever they are paying for is going to come out of our wages the way we see it."

Contact reporter Benjamin Spillman at bspillman@reviewjournal.com or 702-229-6435.

FEBRUARY 21, 2012

Vegas opens museum to examine its mobbed-up past



STEVE MARCUS

Members of the San Diego Police Museum Association pose on a 1928 Ford Model A before the Mob Museum's grand opening in downtown Las Vegas, Tuesday February 14, 2012. The building, a former federal courthouse and post office, was completed in 1933 and is listed on the Nevada and National Registers of Historic Places. It is also one of 14 sites in the nation that hosted the 1950-51 U.S. Senate Special Committees to investigate Crime in Interstate Commerce, also known as the Kefauver hearings.

By [Gregan Wingert \(contact\)](#)

Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2012 | 2 a.m.

Visitors doing time inside the newly opened [Mob Museum](#) on Tuesday were in no rush to escape and a few even relaxed — in an electric chair.

"I had fun with the machine gun," said Valerie Landau, 58, of Las Vegas.

"I thought it was incredible and as soon as I get people back to visit, I'm taking them here," Landau said of her relatives in New York.

Landau wasn't the only one who thought the exhibits were to die for.

"The shovel for a weapon, that was dope," said Anthony Tagle, 20, whose favorite aspect of the

Mob Museum Opens



museum was, “the graphic part where I can see a lot of death and gore.”

Other exhibits on display inside the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement included interactive displays, films and photographs of mobsters from the historic era.

The museum at 300 Stewart Ave. was set up inside a renovated post office and federal building, a project that used \$42 million in federal and state tax dollars.

Supporters of the museum and City Council members [who secured the funds during a down economy](#) expect the downtown museum to attract tourists.

“It was interesting,” said Darla Poe, a 50-year-old visiting from Oklahoma. “I liked that the courtroom was original and restored.”

Those who live in Las Vegas, like 38-year-old Luke Littell, hope the museum is just another step in the redevelopment of the downtown area.

“I think it’s great to see the rehabilitation of downtown coming to life,” Littell said. “Getting to see rumors turned into reality is a fantastic thing.”

Visitors exiting the museum after the grand opening weren’t all raving.

“I got a short attention span and there’s a lot of reading,” said John Sanders, 55, of Las Vegas, who while inside posed for a picture in the electric chair on display.

Those looking to break up the wordage found a way to eavesdrop on exhibits.

“I like the headsets of the audio recordings of the FBI wiretaps,” said Las Vegas resident Tom Delahunty, who wasn’t entirely satisfied with the museum.

“There wasn’t enough Vegas mob stuff,” said the 45-year-old.

Visitors such as Phyllis White, a resident originally from Chicago, was pleased with the offerings.

“It was amazing,” she said. “There were more artifacts than I could imagine.”

Other fans of the museum were more concerned with quality not quantity of artifacts in the 41,000-square-foot museum.

“It was very realistic,” said 58-year-old resident Robin Martinelli. “I didn’t think it would be so authentic.”

Many of the exhibits favored by visitors were interactive, similar to those that have been featured at the competing mob-related attraction the [Mob Experience at the Tropicana](#).

The Mob Museum is not affiliated with the Tropicana operation that went bankrupt and shut down the interactive portion of the museum in September. The museum portion of the attraction remains open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. There are plans of [reopening the Mob Experience's entire attraction under a new name](#), the Mob Attraction Las Vegas.

Competition or not, the Mob Museum seems to be a hit.

Connie Bobo, a Las Vegas for more than 40 years, has seen her share of Vegas history.

“The good and the bad with the history,” she said, praising the museum’s ability to capture the time period. “I love it, I’ll be back.”

Delahunty, who walked away craving more Las Vegas Mob action, said his overall experience was good.

“Well worth the price,” he said.

Admission into the Mob Museum for Nevada adults and children is \$10. Regular price for adults is \$18 and \$12 for students and children ages 5 to 17.

Seniors, teachers, military and law enforcement are admitted for \$14. Sorry, no discount for mobsters.

Vegas 'Paradise' lands on best neighborhoods list

Posted: Feb 21, 2012 3:45 PM PST

Updated: Feb 21, 2012 3:45 PM PST

Posted By Jason R. Latham, Continuous News Manager - [email](#)

LAS VEGAS (FOX5) - [Home improvement](#) magazine "This Old House" has named Las Vegas' Paradise Palms community to its [2012 list of "Best Old House Neighborhoods."](#)

Paradise Palms' mid-century modern homes were constructed in the early 1960s east of the Boulevard Mall, with many [houses](#) located along the historic Las Vegas National Golf Course.

Debbie Reynolds, Dean Martin and Johnny Carson were among the celebrities that lived in the neighborhood.

Famed Las Vegas mobster Tony "The Ant" Spilotro also owned property in Paradise Palms, and one home was featured in the movie "Casino," which was partly based on Spilotro's life in Las Vegas.

In recent years, the neighborhood has attracted more young professionals and fans of mid-modern architecture looking to retain the "futuristic" look of the properties.

Residents meet monthly for "Paradise Palms Social Club" mixers and maintain a [website](#) that details the neighborhood's famous history.

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Historic Las Vegas Pharmacy Forced to Close

POSTED: MAR 05, 2012 3:18 PM PST

UPDATED: MAR 06, 2012 11:27 AM PST

By Chris Saldana, Reporter - [bio](#) | [email](#)

By Kash Cashell, Photojournalist - [email](#)



LAS VEGAS -- A Las Vegas pharmacy that has been around for decades is closing its doors. White Cross Drugs on Las Vegas Boulevard can no longer stay in business after its supplier cut them off from ordering prescription drugs.

White Cross has been at the same location for 60 years. It has served locals, tourists, and even the stars performing on the Las Vegas Strip. It was also the first 24-hour pharmacy in the valley.

On Tuesday at 7 p.m., the pharmacy will be no longer. For store employees and customers, the sudden news is something of a shock.

"It's a family. You come in and they know who you are. It's not a Walgreens, it's not a CVS, not a Rite Aid, it's a neighborhood pharmacy," said George Goodman who has been a customer for more than 30 years. He's had knee replacement surgery, throat cancer, and others illnesses.

His story is just one of many since the pharmacy opened in 1960.

"We use to service Elvis, the Rat Pack, everybody came here, the showgirls," said White Cross Drugs owner Marcie Davis.

She has worked at the pharmacy for 21 years. Eight years ago, she bought the pharmacy, and never expected she would be closing it.

"Our supplier Cardinal Drugs cut us off from ordering controlled drugs. And they also cut off quite a few other local pharmacies and pharmacies across the United States."

Davis blames prescription drug abuse in the Las Vegas area for her suppliers sudden decision.

"There's a lot of problems with a local pharmacy getting in trouble that Cardinal also serviced. That did not look good for any of us," she said.

"When this is gone, it's the last of it's kind. I don't know of another one," Goodman said.

The store will stay open until the end of the month. Tiffany's Cafe, which is also housed inside, has a different owner and plans to remain open.

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Bob Taylor steakhouse namesake gained following as a beef chef



MAGGIE LILLIS/VIEW

Dotti Taylor holds a 1960s-era photograph of her late husband, Bob, who founded the Ranch House Supper Club in 1955. The eatery, where Bob Taylor cooked beef dishes, is now called Bob Taylor's Original Ranch House & Supper Club, 6250 Rio Vista St

BY MAGGIE LILLIS
VIEW STAFF WRITER

Posted: Mar. 6, 2012 | 12:18 a.m.
Updated: Mar. 6, 2012 | 9:21 a.m.

Bob Taylor made headlines for just another exercise of his larger-than-life persona.

In the 1960s, Taylor ventured to the stockyards of Chicago hellbent on buying a grand champion steer for his restaurant, the Ranch House Supper Club in Las Vegas.

When it came time to pay for the prized animal, Taylor pushed a wheelbarrow of silver dollars up to the sellers, his widow Dotti Taylor said.

"He got publicity all over the world, but he didn't need it," she said. "People stood in line for his food."

Bob opened his steakhouse, now known as Bob Taylor's Original Ranch House &



Supper Club , on 80 acres of untouched land in Centennial Hills in 1955 .

"An evening at the Ranch House meant you took a trip 'way out of town,' " his obituary read.

A blinking light alerted customers that the Ranch House Supper Club was open for business.

He didn't have a phone on property and didn't take reservations, Dotti said, and he relished a healthy bar business, thanks to patrons waiting for a table.

"He told friends, 'Come early or come late but never come at 8 (p.m.),' " she said.

He had a simple menu with lobster, shrimp , steaks and no desserts.

"If you wanted something sweet, you had an after-dinner drink," Dotti said.

Servers offered one salad dressing option.

"He went to the grave with the recipe," she said.

Bob cut and cooked his own steaks over a mesquite coal fire until 1980 , when he sold the restaurant. It wasn't until after the purchase that his name was added to the marquee .

His exit from the service industry ended a lifelong career.

Bob was born in Long Beach, Calif. , in 1922 . His father was in the produce business until the Great Depression , dashing his hopes of opening a market in Los Angeles, Dotti said.

"They kind of moved around when things got bad," she said.

The family moved to Kansas City, Mo. , and opened a restaurant.

"His mom got up early and rolled out fresh fruit pies with apples and berries and peaches," Dotti said. "They sold for 10 cents a slice, and they were gone by 1 p.m."

Bob learned his knack for restauranteering there and at family restaurants later in Bakersfield and Ventura, Calif. .

He was a World War II U.S. Army veteran who served as an airplane armored gunner and mechanic.

He bought property in Las Vegas for his business and trap and skeet fields and in Jackson Hole , Wyo. , for a vacation cabin.

His Las Vegas acreage was the background for two notable events.

When Elvis Presley and Ann-Margret were filmed shooting skeet in the movie "Viva Las Vegas," it was Bob who was actually breaking the clay targets just out of the frame in place of the actress, Dotti said.

In the 1970s, Bob added 20 trap and skeet fields to his property and hosted popular trapshooting tournaments, awarding dozens of automobiles and some of the largest cash purses. He hosted an NFL Pro-Am tournament in 1977, which featured a representative from each of the 26 National Football League football teams.

He sold the land little by little, and now none of the original 80 acres belongs to his estate , Dotti said.

"A wife got some in the divorce and it split off from there," Dotti said.

Bob married multiple times but didn't have children, she said.

Dotti met her husband in 1980, but said she remembered him from a visit to his Ranch House Supper Club decades before. After a tiff with her former beau, the Taylors became a couple, she said.

"I invited him for Thanksgiving and he never left," she said.

The couple indulged in busy retirement years.

They traveled Europe , the United States and Australia . Each year, they'd hitch their trailer to one of Bob 's trucks and salmon fish on their boat in a Canadian bay . The couple would feast on their catches -- most notably on the 42-pounder Bob once snatched -- throughout the year.

The couple went on a hunting expedition in South Africa, and the stuffed heads of a springbok , wildebeest and gemsbok hang in the family living room. Bob and Dotti , whom he called "Queen," used to cuddle on a fur-lined love seat carved into a tree stump from Redwood National Park .

Bob wore his signature cowboy hats and Western-style shirts with silver dollar tips most everywhere.

He was a member of the Elks Club for more than 55 years and was elected as a life member in 1986 .

His love of cooking never waned, and he even catered his own 85th birthday party .

"He loved to cook, but he always had me in the kitchen with him," Dotti said.

He'd cook the meat, and Dotti would dish the vegetables and salad, she said.

In his 80s, Bob developed emphysema , which Dotti suspects was influenced by years of standing over coal fires. He had a bout with prostate cancer and showed signs of dementia before his death, Dotti said.

"We didn't know these golden years would be like this," she said.

He died on March 14, 2010 , eight hours shy of his 88 th birthday, she said.

Dotti refers to his funeral as his "celebration of life."

She also calls the Summerlin house that they shared "a museum to his life." Pictures of historical moments in her husband's life line the walls and bookshelves. Dotti still drives his Dodge truck with a double-barrel rifle soldered in half and affixed to each door . Two beige recliners are still perched together in the living room.

"I'm holding onto everything of his," Dotti said.

A snapshot of Bob donning a chef's hat and fussing over a smoking grill hangs in the kitchen.

"He loved to entertain," she said. "He loved to make people happy."

Contact Centennial and North Las Vegas View reporter Maggie

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Karen Avenue named for Thomas & Mack co-developer's daughter

BY [LISA CARTER](#)
VIEW STAFF WRITER

Posted: Mar. 6, 2012 | 12:18 a.m.

The partnership between Parry Thomas and Jerome D. Mack, two Las Vegas pioneers, began with a land development downtown and in Paradise that -- in some ways -- centered around Karen Avenue.

"I had always heard that piece of property was the beginning of the Thomas and Mack partnership," said Karen Mack Goldsmith, Mack's daughter and Karen Avenue's namesake.

Thomas said the partnership began with a deal from Mack's father, Nate Mack.

"Nate Mack arranged for us to buy the acreage on San Francisco Street, which is Sahara (Avenue) now," Thomas said. "There was a street in the back, and (Mack) wanted to name that street after his daughter, Karen."

The property runs from Paradise Road to Maryland Parkway, according to Goldsmith. Though she is the middle sister among Mack's three daughters, Goldsmith said the street was named for her because the property already included Barbara Way, the name of her youngest sister, and Maryland Parkway, which sounded close enough to Marilyn, the name of her eldest sister.

Goldsmith said she doesn't remember how old she was when her father first pointed out where the street would be, "in the middle of the desert," but she has gained an appreciation for the gesture throughout the years.



SPECIAL TO VIEW

Karen Mack Goldsmith is the namesake for Karen Avenue in Paradise.

"I didn't appreciate the significance of the street until I was older," Goldsmith said. "It's the very first thing they did as partners."

Thomas and Mack worked together for more than 45 years in business and land development. The men ran the Bank of Las Vegas in 1954, currently known as the Valley Bank of Nevada, and co-founded Nevada Southern College, which is now the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The partners added 400 acres to the UNLV campus in 1967, starting its land foundation, and developed the 100-acre McCarran Center, a business park, in 1991. They are the names behind the Thomas & Mack Center, which is home to UNLV Runnin' Rebels men's basketball games and other events.

Mack, who moved to Las Vegas with his family in 1929 at age 9, was among the first graduates of Boulder City Grammar School, was a 1938 alumnus of Las Vegas High School and a 1941 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. Throughout his life, Mack was active in the Las Vegas Valley's Jewish community and served as president of the Four Queens Hotel and the Riviera. He died in 1998.

Goldsmith, who, like her father graduated from UCLA, is an author and executive film producer in Los Angeles. Her novels, "Literacy and Longing in L.A." and "A Version of the Truth," are Los Angeles Times bestsellers, and she has won awards for several television shows and movies.

Her name may appear on books and in film credits in Los Angeles, but the significance of Goldsmith's family centers around Thomas and Mack's 80-acre property in Las Vegas. Apartment buildings, Commercial Center and Jerome D. Mack Middle School are among the buildings and businesses on Karen Avenue.

But Goldsmith sees something beyond the buildings on a development that sparked one of the most influential partnerships in the valley.

"That piece of property is important from an historical standpoint," Goldsmith said. "When I go on that road (Karen Avenue) and I look

at Thomas & Mack arena, I think about that partnership."

Contact Paradise/Downtown View reporter Lisa Carter at lcarter@viewnews.com or 383-4686.

GEORGE KNAPP, INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER

Kiel Ranch: An Historic Disgrace in North Las Vegas

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Ask the mayor and city council in North Las Vegas why Kiel Ranch can't be preserved and protected, and then the *I-Team* will ask them too. Here are the phone numbers:

Mayor's Office: 633-1007

Parks & Recreation: 633 1171

City Council: 633-1012

[City Council E-mail link](#)



Preservationist Corinne Escobar talks with the I-Team's George Knapp.



North Las Vegas Parks and Recreation have allowed Kiel Ranch to become a dumpsite.



The City of North Las Vegas has spent hundreds of thousands of public dollars to preserve one of the most important historical sites in our entire state. Unfortunately, you wouldn't know it from looking at the place. The Kiel Ranch is overgrown with weeds, infested with trash, and sealed off from the public. So, where did all that money go?

(Scroll down for Kiel Canyon-related links)

Thirty years of neglect and incompetence on the part of North Las Vegas officials, that's what's happened to the Kiel Ranch. Every promise that's been made has been broken; every plan that's been commissioned has been tanked. The booming City of North Las Vegas, so awash in tax dollars that it wants to give money back to the public, has gone out of its way to ignore what was once a green oasis in our valley and the place where civilization took root here.

As some critics have alleged, it's a downright disgrace. "After 150 years, it's still here," said Corinne Escobar with the Clark County Preservation Association.

Like the Kiel Ranch itself, preservationist Corinne Escobar is hanging on by her fingernails, clinging to a thin hope that it isn't too late to save a small sliver of the past.

The crumbling adobe house on the property may be Nevada's oldest building, possibly built by the first Mormon settlers in the valley who used it to teach farming to the Paiutes. Abundant spring water made it an oasis of green in a hostile desert. It's one of the birthplaces of Las Vegas itself and is on the National Historic Registry. So, how does Kiel Ranch go from historic treasure to forgotten eyesore? The answer is it took a lot of work.

Thirty years ago, thanks to federal bicentennial funds and generous donors, the City of North Las Vegas was given 27 acres of the Kiel Ranch. It was a major event. Political leaders vowed to create an historic park with campgrounds and trails. A mere 7 months later, a young councilwoman named Mary Kincaid led the charge to sell off the land to pay for other projects.

Eventually, a generous campaign donor named Ray Vega bought 22 of the 27 acres for a modest \$1.1 million. He did build a park -- an industrial park -- consisting of several warehouses. City leaders had to ignore a clause in the original deed, which specified the land could only be used for public purposes. But they agreed the money from the sale would be earmarked for the ranch. More than \$600,000 has been spent so far, along with tens of thousands of dollars in state grants. But there is little to show for any of it.

An upper parking lot was built and immediately padlocked. A rickety canopy meant to protect the adobe house from the elements is itself in disrepair. Fencing erected to keep vagrants out isn't much of a barrier. Much of the ranch is covered with trash. The springs are choked with overgrown weeds, and most of the buildings have been completely destroyed. And \$200,000 went to consultants who drew up plans and conducted studies that went nowhere.

Preservationist Corinne Escobar continued, "But nothing, as you can see, nothing has happened except decay and neglect."

In 1992, city staffers made a pitch to the state to help save the ranch, but they were stopped in their tracks when a mysterious fire wiped out the mansion that would have been the centerpiece of the proposed park. Fire investigators found accelerant in six places.

News stories continued to tout the great progress North Las Vegas was making at the ranch, even as the property fell apart. The Kiel Ranch funds could have earned an extra \$40,000 per year, but amazingly, city officials put the money in a non-interest bearing account. Was all of this done on purpose?

Historian and author Michael Green said, "Here's a key part of the identity of North Las Vegas and it's as if it's something out of a James Bond movie where they erase the fingerprints. They seem to be doing their best to forget their past. It's unconscionable."

Mike Henley, the current director with North Las Vegas Parks Department, says the Kiel Ranch simply isn't a priority in his fast growing city. Parks with ball fields are what the public wants. He says \$450,000 is left in the ranch fund and is being used for maintenance.

How does Henley describe the current state of the ranch? "It's in a state of, uh, not being developed," he said.

So adamant is the city about not preserving the ranch that it recently rejected an offer by the Bureau of Land Management that would have sent \$2.4 million into preservation efforts. The city council would prefer to move the adobe house, so it said no thanks to the money.

The *I-Team* asked Parks director Henley if he had anything else to say about the future of the ranch. "Yeah. Leave me alone," he replied.

I went back over all of my notes and questions and couldn't find one single thing about the Kiel Ranch story that would inspire laughter or anything else that's even remotely funny. At a minimum, the City of North Las Vegas has badly mismanaged the ranch itself along with hundreds of thousands of public dollars.

The city council seems to think it's feasible to move what remains of the adobe house somewhere else, but it seems more like they just want it gone.

Several other experts say trying to move the adobe house would destroy it considering how fragile it is. More importantly, there's intrinsic value of having it at this site. It sits on the ground from which the adobe bricks were made. We don't have that anywhere else. Kiel Ranch is it.

As for Mr. Henley's request that we leave him alone? Afraid not.

Email Investigative Reporter George Knapp at