



STAFF REPORT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING DATE: 05/28/14

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING

ITEM DESCRIPTION: PUBLIC HEARING For possible action regarding the nomination of the Harrison House to the city of Las Vegas Historic Property Register, located at 1001 "F" Street (APN 139-27-210-091), R-3 (Medium Density Residential) Zone, Ward 5 (Barlow)

BACKGROUND

- 02/22/91 Las Vegas City Council adopted an amendment to the Municipal Code of the City of Las Vegas which added a historic preservation ordinance, and established the Historic Preservation Commission.
- 12/04/13 Las Vegas City Council adopted by reference (Ordinance 6289) (TXT-48048) an updated version of the city's Unified Development Code, including corrections, clarifications and updates identified as necessary or appropriate.
- 04/23/14 Historic Preservation Commission received the Application for City of Las Vegas Historic Designation from the Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce, property owner for the Harrison House, located at 1001 "F" Street.

ANALYSIS

The Las Vegas Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce has submitted an application for city of Las Vegas Historic Designation for the Harrison House, located at 1001 "F" Street in West Las Vegas.

Summary of Significance (taken from the attached draft State Register of Historic Places nomination):

Harrison's Guest House is significant for the important role it played in the ethnic heritage of blacks, in the history of entertainment in Las Vegas, and for exemplifying characteristics that Nevadans believe to be important. The period of significance begins in 1942 when Genevieve Harrison moved into the little bungalow on the corner of F Street and West Adams Avenue in Las Vegas' Westside and began renting rooms to black performers who played the Las Vegas showrooms where they were themselves forbidden to stay. The period of significance ends with the Moulin Rouge Agreement in 1960, which effectively ended the segregationist practices. There are many important facets to Las Vegas' black history. Harrison's Guest House reflects one aspect of that history and is a lone survivor of a particularly vibrant period in the history of the Westside, as well as the history of Las Vegas entertainment.

The Historic Preservation Officer has reviewed the attached nomination report for 1001 "F". Street and supports the determination of eligibility to the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register.

ACTION ITEM 5: HPC-53611

The Harrison House is considered eligible for designation as an Historic Building under Title 19.10.150 Section I. Designation of Historic Landmarks, Districts, Sites, Buildings, Structures and Objects under:

Subsection 1.a. It meets the criteria for listing on the State or national Register of historic Places; or,

Subsection 1.b. It is determined to be of exceptional local significance and expresses a distinctive character because:

1.b.i. A significant portion of it is at least 40 years old;

1.b.ii It is reflective of the City's cultural, social, political or economic past; and

1.b.iii.(A) It is associated with a person or event significant in local, state or national history.

Per Historic Preservation Commission Bylaws, as amended September 25, 2013, Section X. Duties and Responsibilities:

Review applications for the designations of Historic Landmarks, Districts, Sites, Buildings, Structures and Objects and make recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council concerning those applications in accordance with the Unified Development Code of the City of Las Vegas.

Per Title 19.0.150, Section G. Historic Preservation Commission - Powers, Etc.:

The powers, duties and activities of the HPC include the following:

1. Reviewing applications for the designation of Historic Landmarks, Districts, Sites, Buildings, Structures and Objects, and making recommendations to the Planning Commission concerning those applications. The review shall be in accordance with Subsection (I) of this Section.

If designated on the city of Las Vegas Historic Property Register, the HPC will be responsible for reviewing any work requiring a permit for 1001 "F" Street.

Staff recommends that the HPC approve the nomination of 1001 "F" Street to the city of Las Vegas Historic Property Register as an Historic Building.

If approved, the nomination for historic designation will be forwarded to the Las Vegas Planning Commission for consideration at the July 8, 2014 meeting, and the Las Vegas City Council at the August 20, 2014 meeting for final action. There is a ten-day appeal period following City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

APPROVAL

BACKUP DOCUMENTS

Application for City of Las Vegas Historic Designation.

CM



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

Application for City of Las Vegas Historic Designation

Name of Property Harrison's Guest House

Address (Location) 1001 F Street Las Vegas, Nevada 89106

Type of Designation (check one) Building ☒ District ☐ Site ☐ Structure ☐

Assessor's Parcel #(s) 139-27-210-091

Current Zoning Designation Residential

Additional Information Please see attached

APPLICANT/ REPRESENTATIVE <u>Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce</u>	Property Owner? ☒ Yes ☐ No
Address <u>1001 F Street</u>	Phone <u>702-490-2699</u> Fax: <u>N/A</u>
City <u>Las Vegas</u>	State <u>NV</u> Zip <u>89106</u>
E-mail <u>ward5chamberofcommerce@gmail.com</u>	

Required Submittal Material

FOR STAFF USE ONLY

Statement of Eligibility and Appropriateness for designation.....	☒
Photographs.....	☒
Letter of Property Owner Consent (if property owner is not the applicant).....	☐
Statement of Financial Interest.....	☒
Letter of Request for Action (if designation is for a district).....	☐
Deed/Legal Description.....	☒

Signature of Property Owner or Authorized
Representative of the City of Las Vegas

Katherine Duncan
Print Name Katherine Duncan

Subscribed and sworn before me Nakia Woodson
This 7 day of April, 2014

Notary Public in and for
said County and State



NAKIA WOODSON
NOTARY PUBLIC
STATE OF NEVADA
My Commission Expires: 4-08-14
Certificate No: 05-98618-1

FOR DEPARTMENT USE ONLY

Case # HPC-53611

Meeting Date: 5/28/14

Date Accepted: 4/7/14

Accepted By: C. MOONEY

Historic name: Harrison's Guest House

Street and Number: 1005 F Street

City or Town: Las Vegas

County: Clark

Zip: 89106-3311

Assessor's Parcel Number: 139-27-210-091 **Original Location?** Yes

Ownership of Property
Private

Category of Property
Building

Number of Resources within Property
1

Historic Function
Boarding House

Current Function
Offices

Eligibility Criteria: Subparagraph 1.b: It is determined to be of exceptional local significance and expresses a distinctive character because, i) A significant portion of it is at least 40 years old, and ii) It is reflective of the City's cultural, social, political or economic past.

Architectural Style (if applicable)
Mixed (bungalow/vernacular)

Materials
Foundation: concrete
Walls: Stucco
Roof: Composition
Other: N/A

Areas of Significance
Social History

Period of Significance (dates)
1942-1960

Cultural Affiliation
African-American

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Unknown

Acreage of Property: 0.15 acres

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary of Harrison's Guest House City of Las Vegas Register of Historic Places nomination encompasses the legal boundaries of Clark County Assessor's Parcel Number 139-27-210-091 as depicted on the attached Assessor's Parcel Map. The parcel comprises portions of both lots 5 and 6 on Block 18 of the H. F. M. and M. Addition to the City of Las Vegas, Section 27, Township 20, Range 61.

Boundary Justification: The boundary for Harrison's Guest House nomination is the legal boundary of Clark County APN 139-27-210-091.

FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Mella Rothwell Harmon, M.S./Historic Preservation Planner

Organization: N/A

Address: 2042 Meritage Court

City or Town: Sparks, NV 89434

Telephone Number: 775-322-2850

Date: 15 January 2014

**NEVADA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic name: Harrison's Guest House

Other names: N/A

2. LOCATION

Street and Number: 1001 F Street

City or Town: Las Vegas **County:** Clark **Zip:** 89106-3311

Assessor's Parcel Number: 139-27-210-091 **Original Location?** Yes

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property
Private	Building	1

4. CERTIFICATION

A. BOARD OF MUSEUMS AND HISTORY

As the chair of the Nevada Museums and History Board, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for listing in the Nevada Register of Historic Places.

Signature of the Chair

Date

B. STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

As the Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for listing in the Nevada Register of Historic Places.

Signature of the State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Property Name: Harrison's Guest House

5. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic Function
Boarding House

Current Function
Offices

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (select one or more from instructions)

Criterion A X Criterion B Criterion C Criterion D

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Style (if applicable)
Other

Materials
Foundation: concrete
Walls: Stucco
Roof: Composition
Other: N/A

On the continuation sheet, provide a narrative description of the property's present and historical physical appearance (include significant exterior and interior features). See continuation sheet

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Areas of Significance
Ethnic Heritage, Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance (dates)
1942-1960

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Unknown

On the continuation sheet, state the property's historical significance and justification for listing. See continuation sheets

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brown, Hannah

2012 Hannah Brown Oral History with Claytee White. 27 September 2012. Unpublished manuscript, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Oral History Program.

Burbank, Jeff

2008 McWilliams Townsite. Electronic document available at <http://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/mcwilliams-townsite>. Accessed 15 January 2014.

2010 *Clark's Las Vegas Townsite Auction*. Electronic document available at <http://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/clarks-las-vegas-townsite-auction>. Accessed 15 January 2014.

Cook, Kevin

2013 The Vegas Hotspot that Broke All the Rules. *Smithsonian Magazine*, January 2013. Electronic document accessible at <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-vegas-hotspot-that-broke-all-the-rules-16580>. Accessed 24 January 2014.

Coray, Michael

1989 Blacks in Nevada. In *Nevada Comprehensive Preservation Plan*. State Historic Preservation Office, Carson City.

Davis, Sammy, Jr., with Jane and Burt Boyar

2012 *Yes I Can: the Story of Sammy Davis, Jr.* Reprint 2012. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Geran, Trish

2006 *Beyond the Glimmering Lights: The Pride and Perseverance of African Americans in Las Vegas*. St. Stephens Press, Las Vegas.

Harmon, Mella Rothwell

2005 "500 Black Divorces Annually": The African-American Divorce Trade in Reno, Nevada. *Society for Commercial Archaeology Journal*, Fall 2005.

Las Vegas Review-Journal

1957 Vital Record. G. Harrison death announcement. *Las Vegas Review-Journal* 17 June 1957, 2:2.

G. Harrison Services Set for Wednesday. *Las Vegas Review-Journal* 18 June 1957, 2:5.

Moehring, Eugene. P.

1995 *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-1970*. University of Nevada Press, Reno.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES, continued

Paul Revere Williams Project, website developed by the University of Memphis Art Museum.
<http://www.paulrwilliamsproject.org>.

Suesov, Verna

1948 Top Negro Performers Entertained in Vegas. *Las Vegas Review-Journal* 28 September 1948, 5:1-2.

Walker, Gwen

n.d. *History of West Las Vegas*. Unpublished manuscript. Walker African American Museum and Research Center, Las Vegas.

Williams, Brenda

2013 Brenda Williams Oral History with Claytee White. 24 May 2013. Unpublished manuscript. University of Nevada, Las Vegas Oral History Program.

Interviews held December 20, 2013 at Harrison's Guest House

Hannah Brown (in person). Ms. Brown grew up on the Westside and knew Mrs. Harrison and her illustrious guests personally. There is a complete oral history of Hannah Brown at the Special Collections Library at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Trish Geran (in person). Ms. Geran is the author of the book *Beyond the Glimmering Lights*, which tells the story of the history of the blacks in Las Vegas through the eyes of her family.

Dee Dee Jasmin (by telephone). Mrs. Jasmin was the former actress Harriette Young. Her sister, Aida Smith stayed at Harrison's Guest House in 1949 while waiting for a divorce. Sammy Davis, Jr. was staying there at the same time.

Rolando Larraz (by telephone). Mr. Larraz is the founder and publisher of the *Las Vegas Tribune*. Mr. Larraz was friends with Sammy Davis, Jr. He recalled dropping him off at Harrison's Guest House after a night of clubbing following one of Sammy Davis's performances around Thanksgiving 1960.

Dr. Sarann Knight-Preddey (in person). Dr. Knight-Preddey is a long-time resident of Westside and was involved in the operation of the Moulin Rouge. There is a complete oral history of Dr. Knight-Preddey at the Special Collections Library at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Interview held December 21, 2013

Claytee White, Director of the Oral History Research Center, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Libraries.

Property Name: Harrison's Guest House

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 0.15 acres

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of Harrison's Guest House State Register nomination encompasses the legal boundaries of Clark County Assessor's Parcel Number 139-27-210-091 as depicted on the attached Assessor's Parcel Map. The parcel comprises portions of both lots 5 and 6 on Block 18 of the H. F. M. & M. Addition to the City of Las Vegas, Section 27, Township 20, Range 61.

Boundary Justification

The boundary for Harrison's Guest House nomination is the historically legal boundary of Clark County APN 139-27-210-091.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Mella Rothwell Harmon, M.S./Historic Preservation Planner

Organization: N/A

Address: 2042 Meritage Court **City or Town** Sparks, NV 89434

Telephone Number: 775-322-2850

Date: 15 January 2014

12. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Include the following items with your submission:

X **Photographs/Sketch** (provide one or more black-and-white photograph or sketch of the front elevation of the building, minimum size to be 5 inches by 7 inches. Multiple photographs showing additional angles and views would be preferable. Include the name of the photographer, date of photograph and direction the camera was facing).

X **Plan** (provide a line drawing of the floor plan of the building, if possible).

X **Map** (provide a USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle or current city street map with the property marked on it in pencil).

X **Continuation Sheets** (include continuation sheets, as needed, indicating appropriate section numbers).

CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7: Description

Harrison's Guest House sits on a 0.15-acre lot on the corner of Adams Avenue and F Street in the H. F. M. & M. Addition in Las Vegas, Nevada. The house faces east with the entrance on F Street. The Clark County Assessor's records indicate the house was built in 1942, although it is possible that it was built earlier and possibly moved to the site from another location. Certainly, 1942 is the year in which the house began its period of significance as a boarding house catering to black performers, divorce-seekers, and others (Knight-Predy interview 20 December 2013). There have been additions made to the house between 1942 and 1955, all within the 1942-1960 period of significance. Currently, the house encompasses 1,716 square feet in an irregular L plan on what appears to be a concrete perimeter foundation, with a gable-roofed carport extending off the north end of the front elevation. The original building and the additions are covered by medium-pitched gable roofs sheathed in composition shingles. The exterior walls are covered in modern stucco over wood framing. There is evidence on the back porch of the original textured stucco siding. The addition built to the rear of the original house is made of painted brick or concrete block. A door in the back wall has been filled in. In this addition, the gable ends are filled in with horizontal weatherboard. Fenestration is varied throughout from double-hung wood sash windows to modern aluminum. A greenhouse window and a door have been added to the south elevation. A small aluminum window in the kitchen has been placed in what appears to have been a larger opening. The area around the window is unpainted.

The original massing comprises the southeast corner of the building (see schematic). It was a modest bungalow laid out in a manner typical of the style, with the living room, dining room, and kitchen on the south side and two bedrooms and a bath on the north, divided by a long hallway. There was a covered front porch and a covered or enclosed back porch.

According to building permit records, five additions were built by the owner between 1946 and 1955, as shown on the attached plan drawing. These spaces added bedrooms and bathrooms to accommodate Mrs. Harrison's boardinghouse business. The latest, built in 1955, is a separate building, referred to as the Guest House, that is connected to one of the 1954 additions by a shed added at an unknown time. While building permits were issued for these additions, the work itself was likely not done by professional contractors. These additions were built to facilitate Mrs. Harrison's boarding house business, and in their own right convey the significance of the entire building.

The next building permit for the property was issued in October 1975, after the period of significance, to Agatha Wilson. Mrs. Wilson was Mrs. Harrison's sister and likely inherited the property when Mrs. Harrison passed away in 1957. The permit was for "exterior remodel only," with no further explanation. The inspection record signed off for framing, and may have referred to the carport structure. It may also have been at this time that the current stucco layer was applied.

In 1983, the City of Las Vegas issued to the current owners, Leandrew and Lounell McDaniel a "Notice and Order to Demolish, Remove, or Repair" the building. The order claimed the

CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7: Description, continued

building, which apparently was unoccupied at the time, had been vandalized to the point that it was substandard. The owners were given less than a month to remedy the problems or the City would have the building demolished. How the situation was resolved is not known, but in 1985, a new owner, Andrew Bowie, undertook an interior rehabilitation, including electrical and plumbing upgrades. In 1987, Mr. Bowie replaced the roof; and between 1993 and 1998, he installed walls and fences surrounding the property.

Despite the modifications outlined above, the layout of the building reflects both the original house and the additions Mrs. Harrison made to it in order to expand her boardinghouse business. Sufficient integrity exists for Harrison's Guest House to convey its historical significance.

CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8. Significance

Summary

Harrison's Guest House is being nominated to the State Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for the important role it played in the ethnic heritage of blacks, in the history of entertainment in Las Vegas, and for exemplifying characteristics that Nevadans believe to be important. The period of significance begins in 1942 when Genevieve Harrison moved into the little bungalow on the corner of F Street and West Adams Avenue in Las Vegas's Westside and began renting rooms to black performers who played the Las Vegas showrooms where they were themselves forbidden to stay (Knight-Preddey interview 20 December 2013). The period of significance ends with the Moulin Rouge Agreement in 1960, which effectively ended the segregationist practices. There are many important facets to Las Vegas's black history. Harrison's Guest House reflects one aspect of that history and is a lone survivor of a particularly vibrant period in the history of the Westside, as well as the history of Las Vegas entertainment.

The Westside

The H., F. M. & M Addition was platted in 1924 by Roy Marlin, Forrest Mildren, William Ferron, and A. W. Ham. The addition abuts the Original Townsite of Las Vegas to the north. Also known as the McWilliams Townsite, the Original Townsite was platted by J. T. McWilliams in 1904 west of the route of the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad that was being built by Montana Senator William Clark on lands he had purchased from Helen J. Stewart. The Original Townsite attracted settlers until May 1905, when Senator Clark upstaged McWilliams with his own Clark's Las Vegas Townsite on the opposite side of the railroad tracks. The auction for lots in Clark's Townsite was held on May 15, 1905 (Moehring 1995:4). The success of Clark's Townsite overtook McWilliams's Townsite, which became known as West Las Vegas or Westside. Westside, which included the McWilliams Townsite and the H. F. M. & M. Addition, would become the focus of racial segregation in Las Vegas in the 1930s.

Overt racial segregation was not practiced in the early years of Las Vegas. The black population was small; in 1925, there were only 25 blacks in town. Most of the men worked for the railroad, while the women worked as housekeepers and maids for white families. Because initially racial discrimination was not openly practiced, into the 1930s, the blacks lived downtown, mostly in Block 17 of the Las Vegas Townsite, roughly bounded by First, Fifth, Ogden, and Stewart Streets (Moehring 1995: 174).

However, things began to change in the early 1930s. Various major federal projects, such as Hoover Dam, attracted scores of workers, both whites and blacks, from across the country. A significant number of these newcomers were from the American South, where racial segregation and discrimination had been a matter of course for generations. As Las Vegas's population grew, a rift in what had been relatively harmonious race relations, grew also. Job discrimination and segregation in housing, hotel and restaurant accommodations began to develop (Walker n.d.).

CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8. Significance, continued

In 1931, the Nevada Legislature legalized casino-style gambling. Neither the new white tourists nor the white dam workers enjoyed the company of blacks as they engaged in the pleasures of Las Vegas. So gradually, blacks were forced out of Block 17 and over the tracks to the McWilliams Townsite and the H., F. M. & M Addition. Las Vegas city officials forced the process by refusing to renew business licenses to black business owners in the downtown area. If the owners wanted to keep their businesses going, they would have to move to Westside, where the City was all too happy to issue licenses (White interview 21 December 2013).

Over the course of the next decade, blacks settled in Westside, but real estate lending practices, known as redlining, limited the availability of mortgage loans in what was considered high-risk zones. Not surprisingly, these so-called high-risk zones often corresponded to areas where racial minorities lived. The new occupants of Westside were all hardworking people with jobs. Part of the irony of these discriminatory lending practices was that the blacks in the Westside could get car loans while being denied home loans. As a result many were forced to rent small, often substandard houses, outside of which they parked their Cadillac automobiles (Knight-Predy interview 20 December 2013).

After a decade of casino gaming in downtown Las Vegas, a new entertainment concept evolved, a resort that offered a wide array of entertainment from gambling, dining, and shopping to a showroom with top-name performers. Thomas Hull, who had developed resorts in other cities, launched such a property outside of town in 1941—he called it El Rancho Vegas. Soon to follow in the same vein was the Last Frontier, in 1942 (Moehring 1995:44-51).

Because Las Vegas's discrimination practices had become more overt since the 1930s, and the fact that a good number of the entertainers hired to perform at the new resorts were blacks, entrepreneurial opportunities presented themselves in the Westside catering to tourists, divorce-seekers, and performers who had no place else to stay, eat, or recreate. To this end, people such as Genevieve Harrison saw the economic benefit of operating boarding houses for blacks who were prevented from staying elsewhere.

At its peak, between the 1940s and 60s, there were several rooming houses on the Westside, including Harrison's Guest House, Mrs. Shaw's, and Mrs. Cartwright's (Moehring 1995:182). In his autobiography *Yes I Can*, Sammy Davis, Jr. described his first encounter with the policies of the Las Vegas Resorts. The first time the Will Mastin Trio booked into the El Rancho Vegas, Sammy Davis asked the stage manager if rooms came with the deal. The manager replied, "Sorry. We can't let you have rooms here. House rules. You'll have to find a place in the—uh, on the other side of town." The other side of town, of course, was Westside. Once in a cab on their way from the El Rancho, the cab driver said, "There's a woman named Cartwright over in Westside takes in you people" (Davis et al 2012:90). The cab pulled up in front of what Davis described as one of the few decent houses in the neighborhood. The proprietor, presumably Mrs. Cartwright, greeted the trio, assuring them she had three nice rooms for them, but adding insult

CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8. Significance, continued

to injury with the price: at least twice what they would have paid had they been able to stay at the El Rancho (Davis et al 2012:90; Moehring 1995:182).

While the top-name performers were the more interesting of the boardinghouse tenants, it should be noted that the Westside boarding houses would also cater to customers of another of Nevada's signature enterprises, the migratory divorce trade. The key to the quick divorces was the residency period, which at this time was six weeks. With blacks unable to finding housing in other parts of the city, it would fall to the Westside hotels and boardinghouses to provide the necessary housing and the resident witness who would testify in court on behalf of the divorcee (Harmon 2005).

Reno, which pioneered Nevada's divorce trade, had an African American divorce trade described in some detail in a 1950 *Ebony* article. Reno, like Las Vegas, practiced segregationist policies, and blacks coming to divorce would have to find the local black boardinghouses. The local AME Church in Reno was the social hub and the place where a visiting divorce-seeker would turn for guidance and support (Harmon 2005). Studying the black divorce trade is problematic, because like much of black history it is invisible in the records and it received little in the way of press coverage. We can assume that Las Vegas's divorce trade operated similarly to Reno's, likely attracting blacks from southern California. We do not know what percentage of Mrs. Harrison's business came from the divorce trade, but we do know that Dee Dee Jasmin's sister, Aida Smith, along with her young daughter, stayed at Harrison's Guest House for six weeks in 1949, while awaiting her divorce. She found the guest house to be a lovely place, and Sammy Davis, Jr., who was there at the time, would play with the child (Jasmin telephone interview 20 December 2013).

Mrs. Harrison, who had been married to Roy Dawson, a porter and shoe-shiner at the Fremont Hotel for a short time, contributed her own unique story to Las Vegas's divorce history. In 1957, Genevieve Harrison was suffering from a malignant disease and was unable to make the trip to court for her divorce. Instead the judge, her attorney, the court clerk, and a court reporter came to her bedside to grant her divorce. The May 10, 1957 *Las Vegas Sun* article explained that such service was warranted because Mrs. Harrison had long been a "friend, counselor, and housemother to visiting Las Vegas entertainers." Harrison's Guest House had been a second home to the entertainers for 15 years. The importance of this fact was acknowledged by this unusual judicial service.

Mrs. Harrison and Her Guest House

What little else is known about Mrs. Harrison herself comes from the obituary that ran in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* on June 18, 1957. Genevieve Harrison was born on March 28, 1902 in Marshall, Harrison County, Texas. She was survived by a brother in New York City, and sisters Mary Clark and Hettie Middleton of Los Angeles, M. B. Wise of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and M. J. Johnson of Dallas. One sister, Mrs. Henry (Agatha) Wilson, lived at 24 Stewart Street in

CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8. Significance, continued

Las Vegas, and it was she who inherited Harrison's Guest House and operated it for several years after Mrs. Harrison's death. According to building permit records, Agatha Wilson was the owner of record of the house as late as 1975. Apparently, Mrs. Harrison, possibly with her sister Agatha, came to Las Vegas in the early to mid-1930s. It is conceivable that Mrs. Harrison settled in Westside in the 1930s. However, her notable association with Westside and this particular house came as the result of the opening of the resorts in 1942 and arrival of the popular and famous black entertainers.

From all accounts, Harrison's Guest House was a popular place to stay. Mrs. Harrison made a comfortable home-away-from-home spot for all of her guests. Gwen Walker, director of the Walker African American Museum and Research Center, described some of the features of Harrison's Guest House:

The interior of the house had a cozy Persian rug and patterned wallpaper complemented a roomy sofa and assorted chairs. There was an array of pictures and mementos. A desk was tucked conveniently in a corner between two windows, thus permitting a writer to have sunlight on either side of him. Guests, including Sammy Davis, Jr.—then part of the Will Mastin Trio, Lena Horne, and Arthur Lee Simpkins, would often relax in this room and either take a nap on the roomy sofa or engage in lively conversations. One of the extras of the Harrison Guest House was a small, comfortable guest house situated at the back of the main house used by the likes of Pearl Bailey and her family. (Walker n.d., 2)

Probably the most endearing story of Harrison's Guest House and its famous occupants comes from Hanna Brown, the prominent businesswoman and community activist who grew up on the Westside. She tells of being a young girl when the stars stayed at Harrison's Guest House. She was especially enamored of Nat King Cole, who would sit on the porch and smoke. The local children, Hannah included, would do all they could to get his attention. He would speak to them and ask how they were doing in school. Hannah, who was a star student, was ready and eager to answer that question, presenting Cole with her latest report card. These exchanges went on until Hannah went off to high school and got a job at a local record store, Larry's Music Bar. Larry's was also popular with entertainers, who would come in and buy records. One day, several years after Hannah had visited with Nat Cole at Harrison's Guest House, she saw Cole getting a haircut in the barbershop next to Larry's Music Bar. Finding an excuse to cross paths with Nat Cole, Hannah greeted him and to her utter delight he recognized her and remembered her name and her stellar academic accomplishments (Brown interview 20 December 2013).

The local newspapers provided little in the way of positive coverage of the Westside and its residents. While the following article by Verna Suesov, which ran in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* on September 28, 1948, lauds the events at Harrison's Guest House, the opening paragraph makes it clear that it is written for the majority audience:

CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8. Significance, continued

How would you like to nonchalantly have Clark Gable, Gregory Peck, Betty Hutton, and maybe Sophie Tucker as dinner guests some evening? (And some smelling salts for yourself?)

Mrs. G. Harrison, 1001 North "F" Street in the Westside, can boast the counterpart of such notables, having hosted last week the top Negro performers in the entertainment world all at one time!

The interesting array of guests came to pass as Eddie (Rochester) Anderson, Bob Parrish, the Edwards Sisters, the Jubalaires, and Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Lee Simpkins all chanced to be in town at one time.

Mrs. Harrison, resident of Las Vegas for 15 years, maintains a boarding house, which is comfortably claimed by many noted Negro entertainers whenever any of them happens to be in town.

"We're just one big happy family," Mrs. Harrison declares as she reported that her guests dine together and later gather in her ample living room to swap entertainment gossip and stories.

Anderson, who concluded a week's engagement at the Thunderbird hotel, planned to return to Los Angeles to join Jack Benny again as "Rochester" over the radio show, which begins October 8.

Parrish, a well-known singer, performed at Club Bingo and en route to Europe, while the Edwards Sisters arrived in Las Vegas for a nightclub engagement. The Jubalaires were Flamingo hotel headliners.

Rounding out the list of notables was Arthur Lee Simpkins and his wife, who stopped here overnight en route to New York for a fall engagement.

Mrs. Harrison disclosed that her musical household this time was without a piano and thus no song fests materialized.

"Arthur Lee usually brings his piano with him, but he didn't this time," she added. (Traveling light, eh?)

Westside 1950 to 1960

By 1950, Las Vegas's black population had grown to 5,000; and while there were hotels, nightclubs, and stores on the Westside, it was clear that something needed to be done to improve the area and the lives of those who lived there. In 1948, the Westside Chamber of Commerce was formed, and a group of investors and the City of Las Vegas petitioned the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) to develop a 40-acre housing tract of 154 two-bedroom houses "for colored people" (Paul Revere Williams Project). This development came to fruition in 1955 as Berkley Square, located north of the McWilliams Townsite and the H., F. M. & M Addition. (Berkley Square Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2009.)

CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8. Significance, continued

Despite these efforts, racial discrimination continued. In 1949, Stanley Hunter had attempted to turn the Biltmore Hotel into an all-black establishment. The City responded by revoking the hotel's liquor and gaming license. In 1955, however, an event took place that would change life for Las Vegas's African American residents and visitors. The event was the opening on May 24, 1955 of the Moulin Rouge Hotel and Casino in Westside. The Moulin Rouge was the brainchild of several white businessmen who billed it as "America's First Interracial Hotel." No doubt influenced by national events such as the desegregation of the U. S. military by President Truman in 1948 and the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the Moulin Rouge hired black waiters, waitresses, and dealers. The former heavy-weight boxing champion Joe Lewis was given a small share of the ownership to serve as the Moulin Rouge's official greeter. Both whites and blacks patronized the Moulin Rouge and thrilled to the three nightly stage shows. The brilliant experiment lasted only five months. Its closure in October of 1955 was a shock and a disappointment to employees and patrons alike. While the reason for the sudden end is unknown, Professor Michael Green suspects it was a mix of bad management, bad location, bad timing, and bad luck (Cook 2013:1-7).

Despite its short life, the Moulin Rouge boosted the civil-rights movement in Las Vegas, ultimately providing the impetus to end segregation on the Las Vegas Strip. In 1960, under threat of a protest march down the Strip against racial discrimination by Las Vegas casinos, Nevada's governor Grant Sawyer called a meeting between hotel owners, city and state officials, local black leaders, and Dr. James McMillan, the president of the Las Vegas chapter of the NAACP. The meeting, mediated by local newspaper owner Hank Greenspun, was held on March 26 at the closed Moulin Rouge. The outcome of the meeting was the so-called Moulin Rouge Agreement, which called for the desegregation of all Strip casinos.

The Agreement effectively put an end to the need for places such as Harrison's Guest House and represents the end of its period of significance. Black entertainers, tourists, and divorce-seekers were free to stay where they wished. However, racial discrimination continued well into the 1970s, in particular in education and employment. The divorce trade also came to an end by 1970, giving way to liberalized divorce laws in other states.

Summary

Over the years since the Agreement, buildings in Westside have been demolished or have suspiciously burned. Harrison's Guest House is the last remaining boarding house that catered to the black entertainers. The current owners of Harrison's Guest House, the Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce, and others are working to develop a plan for the historic Westside. Harrison's Guest House, which serves as the headquarters for the Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce, is undergoing a remodel directed by Rick Van Diepen, executive director of Green Chips, with a goal to

CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8. Significance, continued

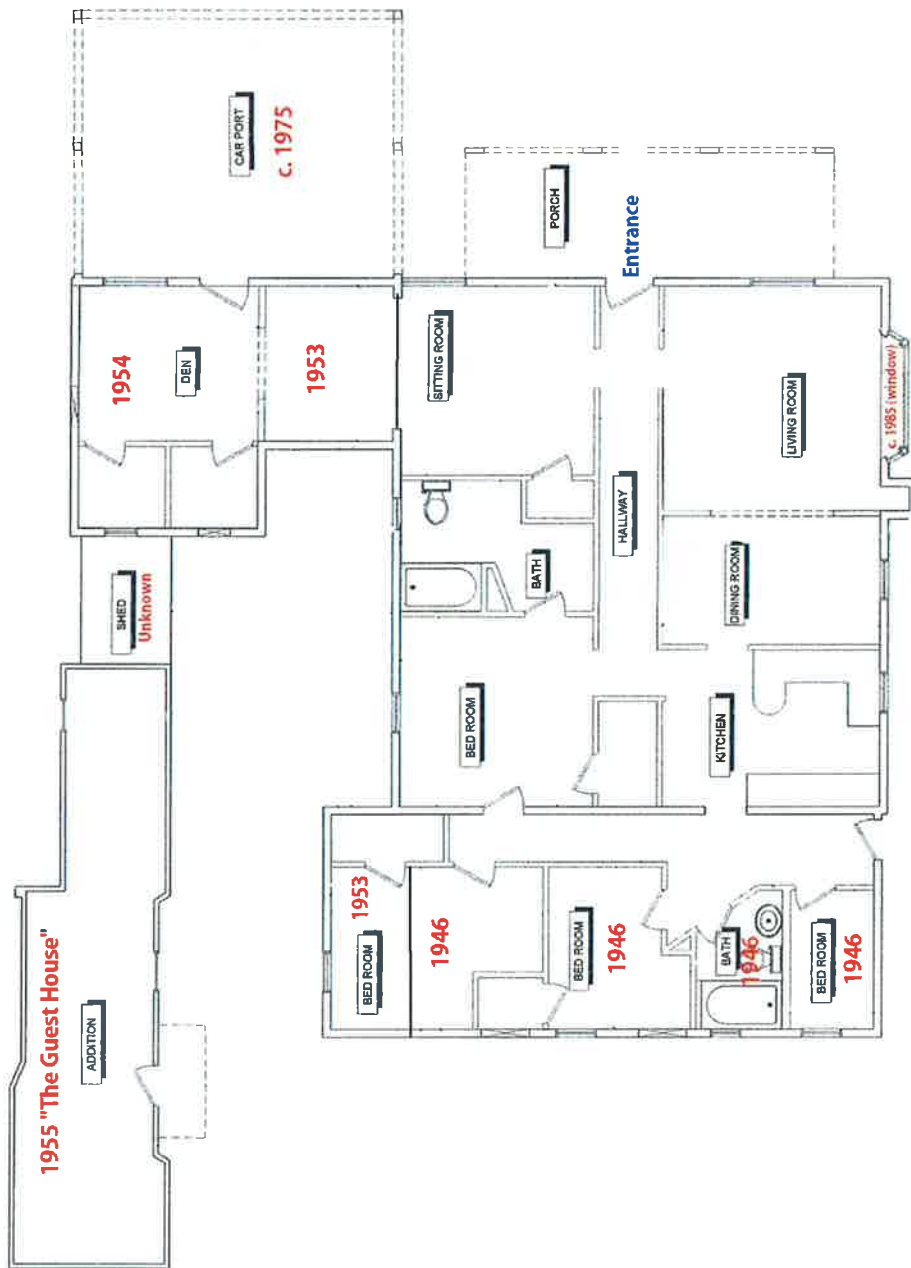
become a state-of-the-art, net-zero energy, LEED-certified model demonstration home as well as a cultural and community resource center.

The Harrison Guest House served several important functions in Las Vegas. It provided housing for a group of people who were prohibited from staying, eating, or being entertained in those places that catered to the general public (i.e., whites). It also served two enterprises important to the reputation and economy of Las Vegas, the casinos, clubs, and resorts, and the divorce trade.

Harrison's Guest House is recognized locally as an important historic site. It is stop No. 8 on the Las Vegas Pioneer Trail, which "celebrates the early history of Las Vegas by offering glimpses of the people and places that made Las Vegas thrive." As the last remaining example of a Westside enterprise developed to cope with segregation as it was practiced in Las Vegas, Harrison's Guest House is a worthy candidate for listing in the Nevada State Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for the important role it played in the ethnic heritage of blacks and in the history of entertainment in Las Vegas as well as for exemplifying characteristics that Nevadans believe to be important.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to the following people who provided information, assistance, and support for this nomination: Katherine Duncan and Stanton Wilkerson of the Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce; Claytee White, UNLV Oral History Program; Courtney Mooney, City of Las Vegas; Bob Stoldal, City of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission; and Dr. Sarann Knight-Preddey, Hannah Brown, Trish Geran, Dee Dee Jasmin, and Rolando Larraz, who shared their personal experiences with Genevieve Harrison and Harrison's Guest House.



Harrison's Guest House, 1001 F Street, Las Vegas, NV

Dates of additions Indicated in red
Original house built 1942 or earlier



Harrison's Guest House, facing southwest. 19 December 2013



Harrison's Guest House, front elevation, facing west. Original bungalow to the left of the carport.
19 December 2013



Harrison's Guest House, south elevation, facing northwest. Original bungalow in front view.
19 December 2013



Harrison's Guest House, north elevation showing additions, facing southwest. The guest house is in the rear view. 19 December 2013



Harrison's Guest House, west (rear) elevation showing the first of the additions, facing northeast.
19 December 2013



Harrison's Guest House, connector between guest house and northernmost addition, facing north.
19 December 2013



Harrison's Guest House, south elevation of original bungalow showing modern modifications, facing northeast. 19 December 2013



Harrison's Guest House, original stucco on rear façade, visible from the rear porch. 19 December 2013



Pioneer Trail Marker at Harrison's Guest House on wall facing Adams Avenue.
19 December 2013

NOTES

This map is for assessment use only and does NOT represent a survey. No liability is assumed for the accuracy of the data delineated herein. Information on roads and other non-assessed parcels may be obtained from the Road Document Listing in the Assessor's Office.

This map is compiled from official records, including surveys and deeds, but only contains the information required for assessment. See the recorded documents for more detailed legal information.

USE THIS SCALE FEET WHEN MAP REDUCED FROM TEXT ORIGINAL

0 100 200 300 400 500 600

MAP LEGEND

PARCEL BOUNDARY
SUB BOUNDARY
PMLD BOUNDARY
ROAD EASEMENT
MATCH/LEADER LINE
HISTORIC LOT LINE
HISTORIC SUB BOUNDARY
HISTORIC PMLD BOUNDARY

CONDOMINIUM UNIT
AIR SPACE PCL
RIGHT OF WAY PCL
SUB-SURFACE PCL

ASSESSOR'S PARCELS - CLARK CO., NV.
Michele W. Shafer - Assessor

T20S R61E

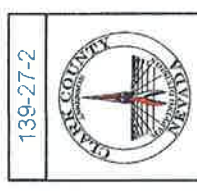
BOOK 27 **MAP** S2 NW 4

139-27-2

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001 PARCEL NUMBER
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202 PARCEL SUBSEQ NUMBER
Pg 24-45 PLAT RECORDING NUMBER
5 BLOCK NUMBER
5 LOT NUMBER
04.5 GOV LOT NUMBER

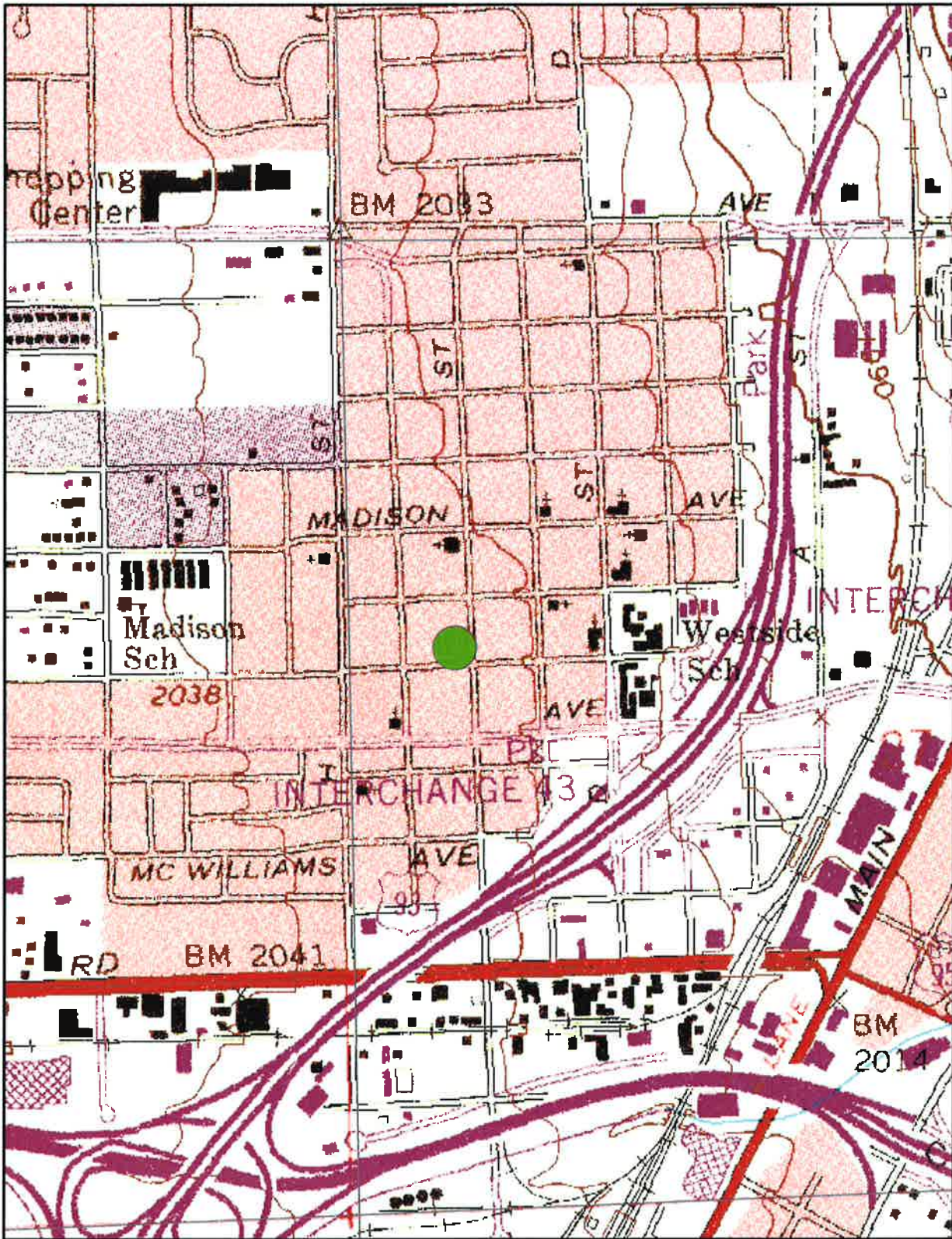
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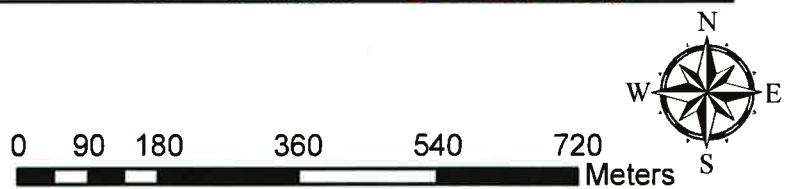


TAX DIST 200,204

Harrison's Guest House
1001 F Street, Las Vegas, Clark County, NV
APN 139-27-210-091



Harrison's Guest House
1001 F Street, Las Vegas, NV
Easting: 666385.93
Northing: 4005732.78



Harrison House
1001 F Street, Las Vegas, Nevada
Application for City of Las Vegas Historic Designation
April 23, 2014



0 35 70 140 Feet



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