



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

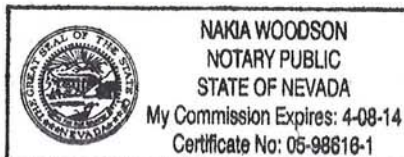
Katherine Duncan

Print Name Katherine Duncan

Subscribed and sworn before me Nakia Woodson

This 7 day of April, 20 14

Notary Public in and for
said County and State



FOR DEPARTMENT USE ONLY

Case #	<u>APC-53611</u>
Meeting Date:	<u>5/28/14</u>
Date Accepted:	<u>4/7/14</u>
Accepted By:	<u>C. MOONEY</u>

DIR-54568

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Harrison's Guest House

Other names/site number: n/a

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1001 F. Street

City or town: Las Vegas State: NV County: Clark

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☒
Public – Local ☐
Public – State ☐
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
District ☐
Site ☐
Structure ☐
Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Boardinghouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL/Cultural Center, Non-profit offices

WORK IN PROGRESS

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STUCCO

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

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, a modest bungalow, was built in 1942, although it is possible that it was built earlier. 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-Preddey interview 20 December 2013). Mrs. Harrison built several additions to the guest house between 1942 and her death in 1955. 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, added in the 1970s or 80s, extending off the north end of the front elevation. The earlier massing 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 1980s 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. Despite the changes made to the building in the 1970s and 80s, the physical features/characteristics of the building are the 1942 to 1955 additions, which convey the significance of the guest house.

Narrative Description

See continuation sheets.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1942-1960

Significant Dates

1942, 1946, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1960

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Unknown/Unknown

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Harrison's Guest House is being nominated to the National 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 at the local level of significance. 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 Jim Crow era in Las Vegas began with the influx of people from the American South to work on the Boulder Dam project in the 1930s. Up to that point, the various races and ethnic groups in Las Vegas lived more-or-less harmoniously. In the 1930s, Las Vegas's black population was essentially forced into an area literally across the railroad tracks known as Westside. Coincident with this relocation, Las Vegas was breaking new ground in the area of gaming and resort development. In 1942, El Rancho Vegas began offering stage shows featuring big-name entertainers, many of whom were black. Thanks to the new attitude in town, the black performers were not allowed to spend the night or even fraternize with patrons at the resort. Geneva Harrison and others like her, who had themselves been relocated to Westside, saw economic opportunity in these heinous policies, and offered housing to the well-known black performers. These Westside boarding houses also offered to other blacks, in particular divorce-seekers, who were in need a place to stay.

Las Vegas's racial segregation policies created much strife in the community and especially with in the gaming industry. The 1960 Moulin Rouge Agreement, named after a famous, albeit short-lived African-American casino, forced the beginning of integration in Las Vegas and effectively put an end to the need for separate housing for blacks.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

See continuation sheets

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

See continuation sheets

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): n/a

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.15 acre

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Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: Longitude:

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 11 Easting: 666385.93 Northing: 4005732.78

2.

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting: Northing:

5. Zone: Easting: Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of Harrison's Guest House National 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 (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary selected for Harrison's Guest House nomination is the historical legal boundary of Clark County APN 139-27-210-09.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Mella Rothwell Harmon, M.S.
organization: n/a
street & number: 2042 Meritage Court
city or town: Sparks state: NV zip code: 89434
e-mail mellaharmon@gmail.com
telephone: 775-322-2850
date: 03/01/14

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)
- **Floor plan showing dates of additions**
- **Assessor's Parcel Map**

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Harrison's Guest House

City or Vicinity: Las Vegas

County: Clark State: Nevada

Photographer: Mella Rothwell Harmon

Date Photographed: December 19, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 6: Front (east) façade of Harrison's Guest House facing west. NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_0001.
- 2 of 6: Front and north elevations, facing southwest. Multiple additions are visible in the right view. NV-Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_0002
- 3 of 6: Close-up of additions at northeast corner of the boardinghouse, facing southwest. At the far end is the "Guest House," where Pearl Bailey stayed. NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_0003.
- 4 of 6: South elevation of Harrison's Guest House, facing northwest. NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_0004.
- 5 of 6: The addition at the west elevation, facing northeast. This addition was appended to the original enclosed porch. NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_0005.
- 6 of 6: The front façade of the "Guest House," facing north. NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_0006.

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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N/A

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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, a modest bungalow, was built in 1942, although it is possible that it was built earlier. 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-Preddey interview 20 December 2013). Mrs. Harrison built several additions to the guest house between 1942 and her death in 1955. 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, added in the 1970s or 80s, extending off the north end of the front elevation. The earlier massing 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 1980s 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 earlier residence comprises the southeast corner of the building (see schematic). It was a modest bungalow laid out in typical fashion, 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, which 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 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 building, which apparently was unoccupied at the time, had been vandalized to the point that building 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,

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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.

Harrison's Guest House sits on the corner of F and Adam's streets. In addition to the building, there is a storage container on the parcel. This is considered to be a temporary element, which does not relate to the significance of the building. Historically, the blocks surrounding the Harrison Guest House comprised a mix of residential and commercial buildings. Presently, there are a few remaining houses from the early period, scattered modern apartment houses, numerous churches, and many vacant lots that reflect loss from fires and demolition over the past few decades. Harrison's Guest House is the last remaining resource of its type in Las Vegas's Westside.

Despite the 1970s and 80s modifications outlined above, the layout of Harrison's Guest House reflects both the original house and the additions Mrs. Harrison made to it in order to expand her boardinghouse business. Considering the fact that the 1942 to 1955 additions are part of the property's significance, it can be said to retain sufficient integrity of setting, feeling, association, location, design, materials, and workmanship to convey its significance as a boardinghouse run by a single black woman during a period of racial segregation in Las Vegas that required tenacity and entrepreneurship to survive.

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Section 8. Significance

Introduction

Harrison's Guest House is being nominated to the National 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 at the local level of significance. 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 Martin, 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 50 blacks in town (Moehring 1995:174). 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.).

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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 Hotel El Rancho Vegas. Soon to follow in the same vein was the Hotel 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 Hotel 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 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).

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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, listed in the National Register in 2001, 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 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 in 1944 of the popular and famous black entertainers.

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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:

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!

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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. (Other places associated with Westside are the Westside School, listed in the National Register of Historic places in 1979 and the Clark Avenue Railroad Underpass listed in 2004).

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 25, 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

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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 four and a half 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 Moulin Rouge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1992 in recognition of its significance in Las Vegas's civil rights history. The property was severely damaged by fire in 2009.

The Agreement effectively put an end to the need for places such as Harrison's Guest House and closes the 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.

Work in Progress

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. Harrison's Guest House will play a significant role in the revitalization of the neighborhood.

Harrison's Guest House, which serves as the headquarters for the Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce, will be undergoing some modifications in order to maximize its use as cultural center. Although the final plans have not yet been completed, the work, which will mostly be interior remodeling, will be directed by Rick Van Diepen, executive director of Green Chips, with a goal to become a state-of-the-art, net-zero energy, LEED-certified model demonstration home as well as a cultural and community resource center. The primary exterior changes will be to the windows (either repair or replacement) and the addition of a short handicap ramp without railings along the east entrance. The project must be approved by the City of Las Vegas's

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Historic Preservation Commission (a Certified Local Government) to ensure compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Summary

Harrison's 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 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 National Register of Historic Places. It is being nominated under Criterion A for its role in black ethnic heritage and entertainment/recreation areas of significance for the period 1942 to 1960.

Acknowledgements

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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.

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

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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

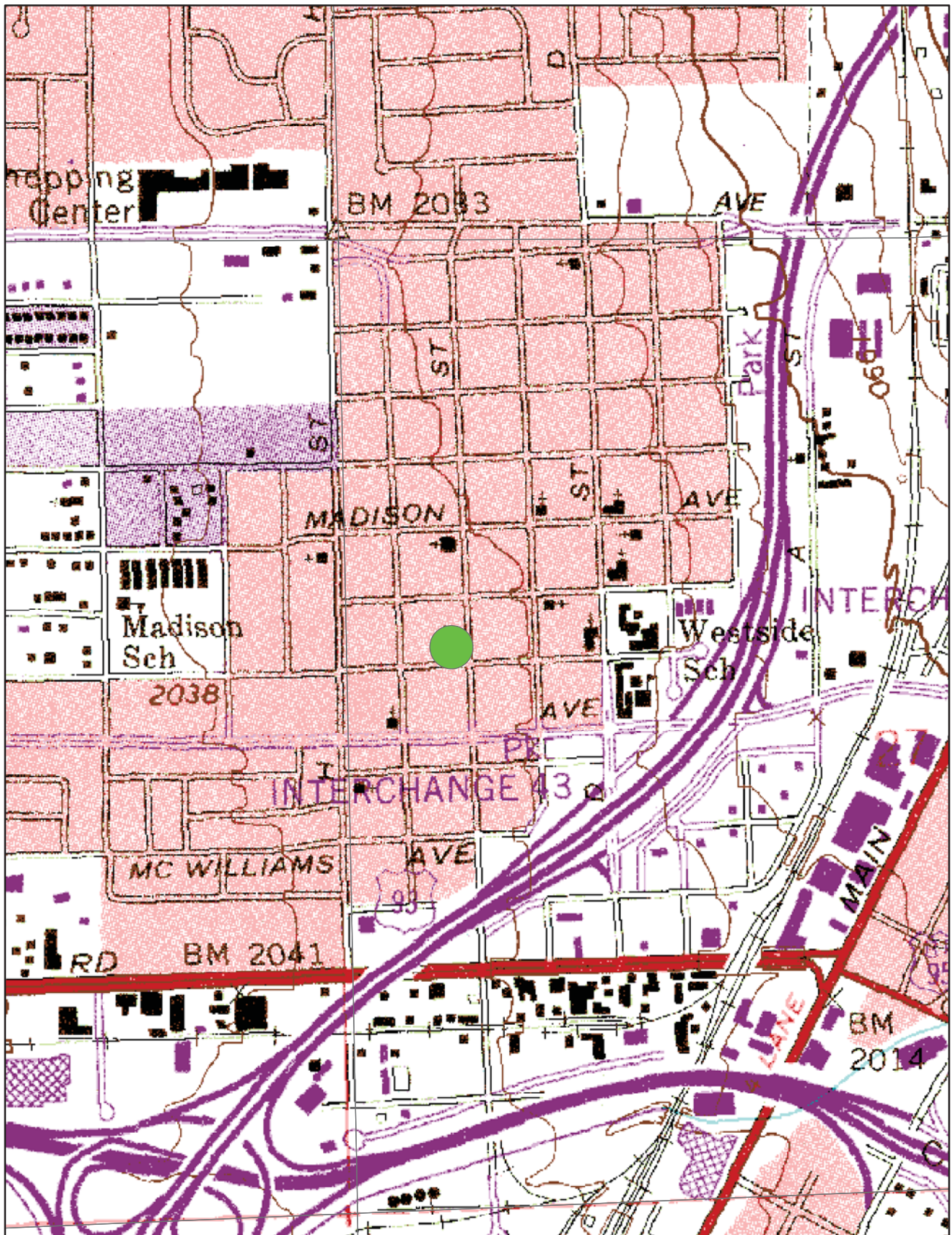


Harrison's Guest House, original stucco on rear façade, visible from the rear porch. 19 December 2013

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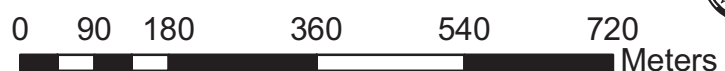


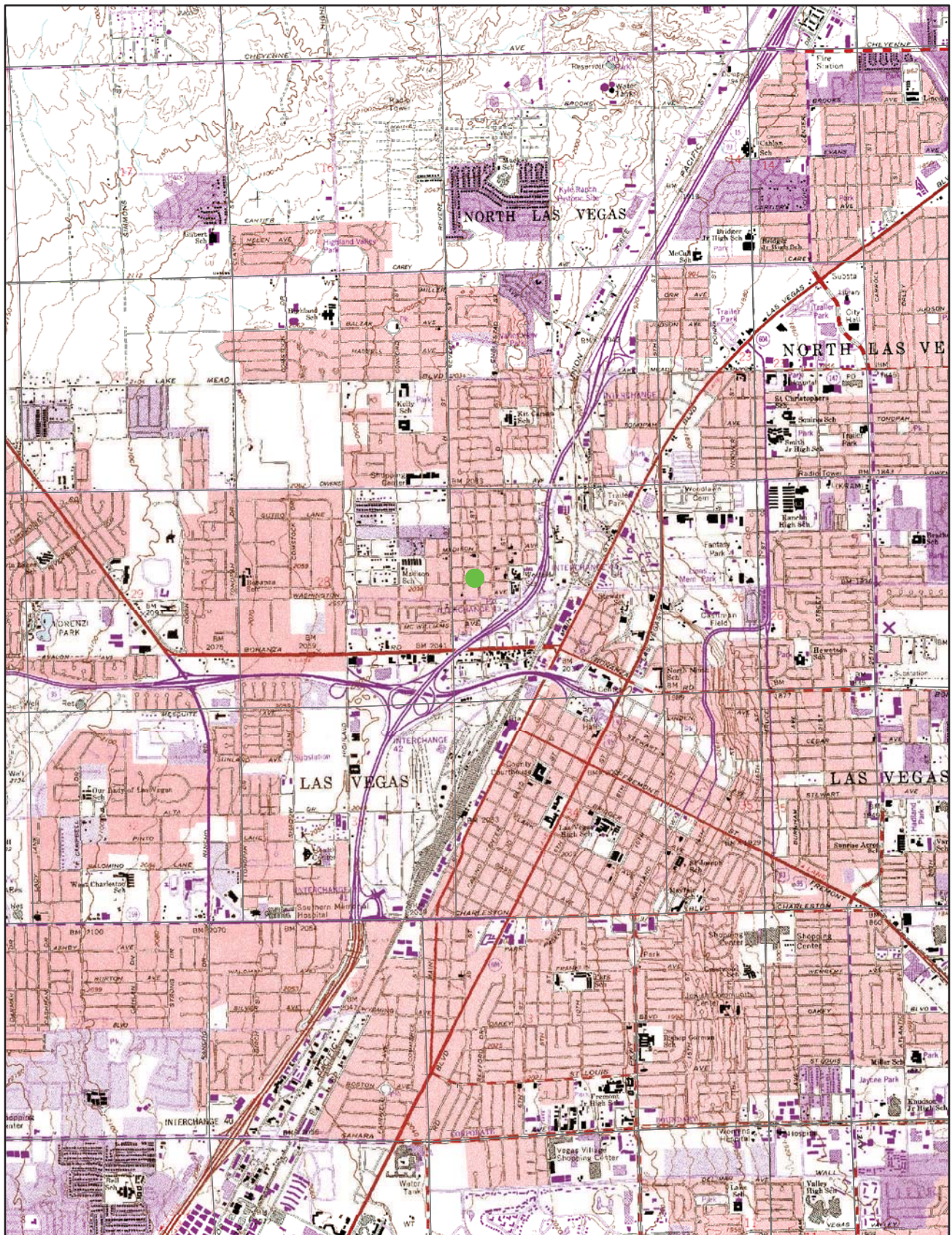
Pioneer Trail Marker at Harrison's Guest House on wall facing Adams Avenue.
19 December 2013



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