

A GUIDE TO HISTORIC



LAS VEGAS



HISTORIC PRESERVATION
CITY OF LAS VEGAS

- 1. LAS VEGAS MORMON FORT ***, 908 Las Vegas Boulevard North. The Old Fort is a remnant of the complex of adobe structures built by Mormon colonists in 1855-1856. The story of the Fort reflects the growth of Las Vegas as its economy changed from ranching to railroading to gaming. The Old Fort is now the Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Historic Park. Listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.
- 2. DEPOT SITE**, Main and Fremont Streets. Now the location of the Union Plaza Hotel, the Union Pacific Railroad Depot was once the focal point of downtown Las Vegas, with its tree-shaded park in front. The original Mission-style depot was replaced in 1940 by a sleek Moderne-style building.
- 3. GOLDEN GATE HOTEL & CASINO**, 1 Fremont Street. Part of the first two floors of this building opened in 1906 as the Hotel Nevada. In 1931 it was expanded and became the Sal Sagev (Las Vegas backwards). In 1955 the Golden Gate casino was opened on the first floor.
- 4. VICTORY HOTEL**, 307 S. Main Street. Originally the Lincoln Hotel, this 1910 Mission-style building is one of the oldest remaining downtown hotels. Situated close to the depot, it catered to railroad passengers and employees.
- 5. VEGAS VIC ***, 25 E. Fremont Street. In 1951 the Pioneer Club erected this sign, using the "Howdy Pardner" trademark symbol of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce. Built by Young Electric Sign Company, it is one of the oldest, and certainly the best known, of the city's giant neon signs.
- 6. RAILROAD COTTAGES ***, Second to Fourth Streets, Garces to Clark Avenues. The railroad built 64 Bungalow-style cottages to house its workers. The houses were either four or five rooms, made of concrete block with hip roofs. The 600 block on Casino Center Boulevard still has two of the eight original cottages remaining. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 7. APACHE HOTEL/HORSESHOE**, 128 Fremont Street. Designed by noted architect A. L. Worswick in 1932, the Apache was for many years regarded as Las Vegas' plushiest hotel. It still stands behind the enveloping signs of Binion's Hotel and Casino.
- 8. POST OFFICE/FEDERAL BUILDING ***, 301 E. Stewart Avenue. This neo-classical structure was completed in 1933 as part of the federal government's massive building program begun under Herbert Hoover. It is now owned by the city of Las Vegas. Listed on the Local, State and National Registers of Historic Places.
- 9. EL PORTAL THEATER**, 310 E. Fremont Street. Constructed in 1928 by Salt Lake City builders Ryberg and Sorenson, the El Portal was Las Vegas' first modern movie theater. Owners Ernie Cragin and William Pike spent \$150,000 on the once-elegant and luxurious facility.
- 10. EL CORTEZ HOTEL & CASINO**, 600 Fremont Street. The El Cortez was downtown's first major resort, built in 1941 by Marion Hicks and John Grayson at a cost of \$245,000. It is the only downtown property whose exterior has remained substantially unaltered.
- 11. FIFTH STREET SCHOOL ***, 400 S. Fourth Street. This elaborate and graceful Mission-style complex was built by the WPA in 1936 to replace the elementary school that burned. In 1973 it was taken over and remodeled by the county as an annex to the court house. It is now owned by the city of Las Vegas. Listed on the Local and National Registers of Historic Places.
- 12. WESTSIDE SCHOOL**, 300 W. Washington Avenue. This lovely Mission-style school was constructed in 1922 for the children of Old Town, the original townsite on the west side of the railroad tracks. The building was resorted with federal funds and now houses offices and a public radio station. Listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

* Photo on map

13. MOULIN ROUGE HOTEL & CASINO *, 900 W. Bonanza Avenue. The only interracial resort in the '50s, the once-elegant Moulin Rouge was briefly in operation from May to October of 1955 until financial difficulties closed it down. The current owners are hoping to restore it. Listed on the Local and National Registers of Historic Places.

14. TWIN LAKES RESORT, 3333 W. Washington Avenue, in Lorenzi Park. Part of the original Twin Lakes Resort that operated in the '40s, the hotel buildings were part of a "dude ranch" for hopeful divorcees. The buildings are now owned by the city of Las Vegas.

15. BIG SPRINGS, Las Vegas Valley Water District property. The famous springs that John C. Fremont described in 1844 supplied water for the Las Vegas valley until the '50s, when Lake Mead water was tapped. Listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

16. MORELLI HOUSE *, 861 Bridger Avenue. This modernistic style house was originally built in 1959 on the Desert Inn Golf Course by Antonio Morelli, the orchestra conductor and music director for the Sands Hotel. The house was later sold to Mr. Kay Glenn, press secretary to Howard Hughes from 1951 to 1976. The house is in nearly original condition. It was moved to its present location in 2001 and is used as offices and meeting space by the Junior League. Listed on the State Register of Historic Places.

17. WAIT HOUSE, 901 E. Ogden Avenue. Former Sheriff Frank Wait started building this stone cottage in the early '30s, incorporating petroglyphs, stalagmites, fossils, petrified wood and a framed photograph of himself into the structure. Listed on the Local Register of Historic Places.

18. OLD LAS VEGAS HIGH SCHOOL/LV ACADEMY *, 315 S. Seventh Street. Designed in 1930 by Reno architects George Ferris & Son, this is Las Vegas' only example of the Art Deco style. The elaborate detail carvings of flora and fauna and heroic figures over the portals contribute to the beauty of this edifice. Listed on the Local and National Registers of Historic Places.

19. J.D. SMITH HOUSE, 624 S. Sixth Street. Civic leader and dentist Dr. J. D. Smith built this showplace home in 1932. Designed by architects Nordstrom & Warner, the house was featured in full-page newspaper ads. It has been restored by the Smith family for use as professional offices. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

20. HENDERSON HOUSE, 704 S. Ninth Street. Designed by Worswick, this house was erected in 1930 for Judge A. S. Henderson for a cost of \$10,000. The building follows the Monterey tradition of Mission-revival. It is owned by the occupant, attorney Richard Segerblom.

21. WENGERT HOUSE/STATE BAR OF NEVADA, 600 E. Charleston Boulevard. This Tudor-Revival residence, built in 1936 by civic leader Cyril Wengert, has been carefully restored by the current owners, who designed the addition to blend with the original structure.

22. HUNTRIDGE THEATER *, Charleston Boulevard and Maryland Parkway. Opened in 1944, this Moderne-style building with its towering sign was once owned by movie star Irene Dunne. For several years it was operated as a performing arts facility by the Friends of Huntridge. Listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

23. JOHN S. PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT, bounded by Park Paseo Avenue and Franklin Avenue on the north and south, and Fifth Place and S. Ninth Street on the west and east. This neighborhood houses some of the earliest homes in Las Vegas, with a large collection of WWII Ranch style homes. Listed on the Local and National Registers of Historic Places. A walking tour brochure for this neighborhood is available, by calling (702) 229-6353.

24. WEE KIRK O' HEATHER WEDDING CHAPEL *, 231 S. Las Vegas Boulevard. This 1925 adobe residence opened as "Mrs. Webb's Wedding Chapel" in 1940, and is now one of the oldest continuously operating chapels.

25. NEON MUSEUM GALLERY *, On Fremont Street between Fourth Street and Las Vegas Boulevard. and at the Fremont Street Experience in front of Neonopolis. This collection of vintage Las

Vegas signs demonstrates the unique blend of history and art that neon represents.

NOT ON MAP:

CLARK COUNTY MUSEUM, 1830 S. Boulder Highway, Henderson. This museum features a collection of early Southern Nevada buildings that were moved here to escape demolition, and are now restored as house museums. For information call (702) 455-7955.

NEON MUSEUM "BONEYARD," 821 N. Las Vegas Boulevard. A three-acre site houses this collection of non-restored historic signs dating from as early as the 1940s. The Boneyard is open by appointment only, so please call ahead at (702) 387-NEON.



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In 1844, explorer John C. Fremont stopped at the big springs in the place known as Las Vegas (Spanish for “the meadows.”) At that time, the sole inhabitants of the area were the Native Americans whose ancestors had been there seasonally for hundreds of years. After Fremont’s published description of Las Vegas, travelers to California used the place as a watering stop on their route. Until the 20th century, however, the only additional population came from a few ranches that catered to the travelers and to miners in Eldorado Canyon and Ivanpah.

In 1855, Mormon colonists built a fortified mission that they hoped would provide a link between California and Utah. Although they deemed the mission a failure after two years, the subsequent owner, O.D. Gass, built a working ranch that flourished through the rest of the 19th century. In 1902 the owner at the time, Helen J. Stewart, sold the ranch to Montana Senator William J. Clark’s railroad. The adobe remnant of the original complex, now known as the Old Fort, is the oldest building in Nevada and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1905, after the last spike on the new railroad line was driven, the railroad auctioned off lots in Clark’s Las Vegas Townsite, an area bounded by Stewart and Garces Streets and Main and Fifth Streets. That auction was the birth of the modern city of Las Vegas.

There are now only a few traces of the railroad that once was a pervasive influence in the life of the town. The large Mission-style depot dominated the main business street, Fremont. The three-story concrete ice plant on Main Street could be seen from any vantage point. The massive machine shops, the storehouse building (Hanson Hall), the diesel shop and the company agent’s house formed a complex around which the town’s work and social life revolved. The railroad built sixty-four Bungalow-style cottages in 1910 to house its workers – Las Vegas’ first housing tract.

Mission style was the most popular architectural style for early businesses in Las Vegas. Fremont Street was once lined with arcade-fronted commercial buildings, whose covered walkways provided shelter from the blistering heat. One visual reminder of that era, the Victory Hotel on Main Street, recalls the prevalent style of the town through the '20s.

In the mid-'20s the railroad razed the machine shops in Las Vegas and laid off hundreds of its employees. But with the building of Boulder Dam, Las Vegas got a new lease and new look. Important public buildings were erected in different styles; the Art Deco Las Vegas High School and the neo-classical Post Office/Federal Building (both listed on the National Register.)

The '30s saw Las Vegas becoming a tourist town. Gambling, easy divorce and the completed dam attracted more visitors and brought new wealth. The town’s leading citizens began building substantial homes near the high school. This neighborhood, located roughly between the high school and Charleston, from Sixth to Ninth, is now on the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District.

In 1929, A. L. Worswick, an architect from San Francisco, came to town. For the next 20 years, his firm designed many of Las Vegas’ most important public and private buildings, including the adobe Las Vegas Hospital, the Apache Hotel (now the Horseshoe) several public schools and the imposing S. R. Whitehead house. Worswick preferred the Mission style for its simplicity and grace, as well as its suitability for the desert climate.

In the '50s Las Vegas began its spectacular growth, fed by tourism, which still continues. With the growth and the glitter came the loss of many of the town’s early buildings, and the alteration and covering up of others. The neon sign wars, both downtown and on the Strip, have caused Las Vegas to periodically recreate itself over the last few decades. The remaining early buildings are an important link to the past for this swiftly changing 20th century town.





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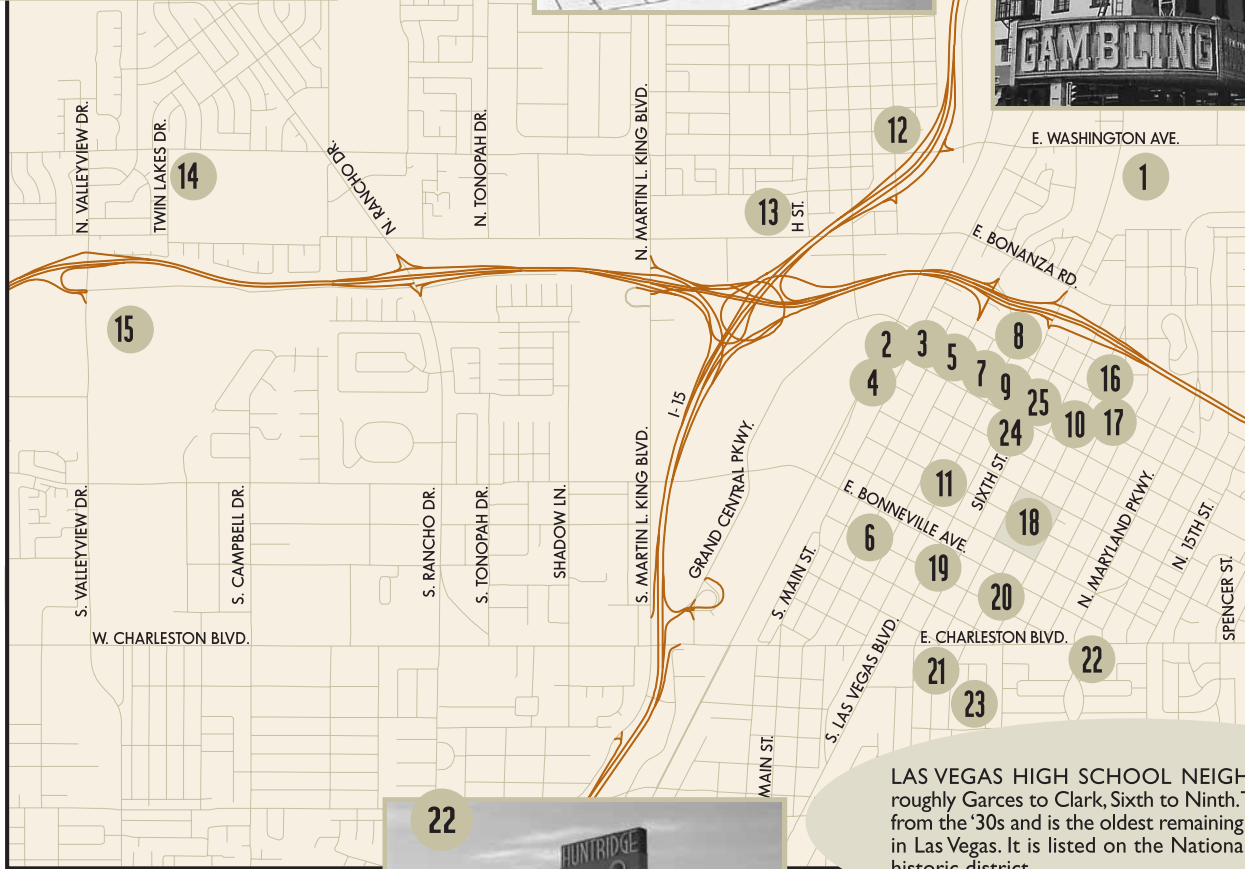
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LAS VEGAS HIGH SCHOOL NEIGHBORHOOD, roughly Garces to Clark, Sixth to Ninth. This area dates from the '30s and is the oldest remaining neighborhood in Las Vegas. It is listed on the National Register as a historic district.



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