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Cover photo: Tim Dunn
The remarkable story of two of Reno’s most iconic landmarks

The Genesis of Reno
The History of the Riverside Hotel and the Virginia Street Bridge

JACK HARPSTER

“This is a fascinating, well-told story, with an unforgettable cast of characters. It reminds us of what made Reno so unique and nationally prominent.”
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Over 157 years ago—before there was a Reno, Nevada; before there was a state of Nevada; and even before there was a Nevada Territory—there was a bridge over the Truckee River at a narrow, deeply rutted cattle and wagon trail that would one day become Virginia Street. There was also a small rustic inn and tavern occupying a plot of ground at the southern end of the log-and-timber bridge, catering to thirsty cowboys, drovers, and miners. The inn and the bridge were the first two structures in what would one day be a bustling metropolitan area, and to this day they still form the nucleus of the city. The Genesis of Reno, traces their history up to the present day. The 111-year-old concrete bridge that was replaced in 2016 by a magnificent new structure was honored for its longevity and unique character with placement on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

Jack Harpster graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a BS in journalism. He spent forty-three years working in the newspaper industry in both Southern California and Southern Nevada. Before retiring in 2002 Jack was the Executive Director of Advertising for the Las Vegas Review Journal and the Las Vegas Sun, and Director of New Media for the Stephens Newspaper group. He has published eight other books, along with dozens of essays and articles on history and biography in national and local journals and magazines. He lives in Reno, Nevada.

Of related interest
A Short History of Reno, Second Edition

September
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A detailed analysis of America’s first national recreation area

Lake Mead National Recreation Area
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This book examines the creation, characteristics, and tribulations of the first United States National Recreation Area. It also addresses the National Park Service’s historic role in managing reservoir-based recreation in a uniquely arid region.

First named the Boulder Dam Recreation Area, this parkland was created in 1936 by a memorandum of agreement between the National Park Service and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Over the course of its existence, the area has served as a model for a subsequent system of National Recreation Areas. The area’s extreme popularity has, in combination with changing public attitudes regarding preservation and safety, presented the National Park Service with tremendous challenges in recent decades. Jonathan Foster’s examination of these challenges and the responses to them reveal an increasingly anxious relationship between the government, the public, and special interest groups in the American West.

Of related interest
St. Thomas, Nevada: A History Uncovered

Jonathan Foster received his PhD in history from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. His research interests include the history of water-based recreation, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the American conceptualization of place. Foster is currently a professor of history at Great Basin College in Elko, Nevada, where he teaches courses on U.S. history, environmental history, modern Nevada, and history of the American West. He also serves as program supervisor for the Bachelor of Arts in Social Science degree.
An engaging review of the history of the mile-high city

A Short History of Denver

STEPHEN J. LEONARD AND THOMAS J. NOEL

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A Short History of Denver covers more than 150 years of Denver’s rich history. The book recounts the takeover of Native American lands, the founding of small towns on the South Platte River at the base of the Rocky Mountains, and the creation of a city, which by 1890 was among the nation’s major western urban centers. Leonard and Noel tell the stories of powerful economic and political leaders such as John Evans, Horace Tabor, and David Moffat, and delve into the contributions of women, including Elizabeth Byers and Margaret (Molly) Brown. The book also recognizes the importance of the city’s ethnic communities, including African Americans, Asians, Latinos, and many others.

A Short History of Denver portrays the city’s twentieth-century ups and downs, including the City Beautiful movement, political corruption, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, and the Great Depression of the 1930s. Here readers will find the meat and potatoes of economic and political history and much more, including sports history, social history, and the history of metropolitan-wide efforts to preserve the past.

Stephen J. Leonard, a third-generation Denverite, received his PhD from the Claremont Graduate School. Since 1966 he has taught in the History Department at Metropolitan State University of Denver. He has authored or co-authored half a dozen books on Colorado and Denver. Thomas J. Noel is a Professor of History and Director of Public History, Preservation & Colorado Studies at the University of Colorado Denver. He appears regularly on the NBC affiliate, Channel 9, in Denver as Dr. Colorado, and leads walking tours of Denver cemeteries, churches, historic districts, railways, and saloons. Noel is the author or coauthor of forty-seven books, many articles, and a Sunday history column for the Denver Post.

Of related interest

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An analysis of water rights issues in California

Drought, Water Law, and the Origins of California’s Central Valley Project

TIM STROSHANE

“Stroshane has exhaustively mined the public records and the extensive writings in this complex and much-studied field and has produced a fresh and intellectually compelling account that every student of California politics, land use, and environment will have to read.”

—Chris Carlsson, author of Nowtopia: How Pirate Programmers, Outlaw Bicyclists, and Vacant-Lot Gardeners are Inventing the Future Today!

This book is an account of how water rights were designed as a key part of the state’s largest public water system, the Central Valley Project. Along sixty miles of the San Joaquin River, from Gustine to Mendota, four corporate entities called “exchange contractors” retain paramount water rights to the river. Their rights descend from the days of the Miller & Lux Cattle Company, which amassed an empire of land and water from the 1850s through the 1920s and protected these assets through business deals and prolific litigation. Miller & Lux’s dominance of the river relied on what many in the San Joaquin Valley regarded as wasteful irrigation practices and unreasonable water usage.

Economic and political power in California’s present water system was born of this monopoly on water control. Stroshane tells how drought and legal conflict shaped statewide economic development and how the grand bargain of a San Joaquin River water exchange was struck from this monopoly legacy, setting the stage for future water wars. His analysis will appeal to readers interested in environmental studies and public policy.

Of related interest

Water Politics in Northern Nevada, Second Edition

Tim Stroshane received his MA in city planning from the University of California, Berkeley. An independent scholar who has studied the water, economy, and environment of California since 1980, he has worked professionally in environmental consulting, for the city of Berkeley in housing economics and policy, and most recently with environmental nonprofit organizations focused on California and its Bay-Delta Estuary. He lives in Albany, California.

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Throughout history, Basque men and women have made contributions in navigation, education, science, fashion, politics, and many other fields. Too often these achievements have been overlooked, or have been claimed as the accomplishments of others. Basque Firsts: People Who Changed the World profiles seven remarkable Basques who were the first in their fields to do something—something extraordinary—that had a dramatic impact on others who followed them.

The profiles use primary sources to tell fresh stories and offer a wonderful variety, showing the astonishing breadth of Basque contributions. They include Juan Sebastián Elcano, the first person to circumnavigate the earth; St. Ignatius of Loyola, the first Jesuit to seed a worldwide movement in education; Santiago Ramón y Cajal, the Father of Neurology and a Nobel laureate; Cristóbal Balenciaga, the king of haute couture; Paul Laxalt, one of Ronald Reagan’s closest friends in politics; and Edurne Pasaban, the first woman to climb the world’s fourteen tallest mountains.

Basque Firsts provides a rare look at a culture’s people, revealing the significant contributions they have shared.

Of related interest
Back to Bizkaia: A Basque-American Memoir

Vince J. Juaristi, a native of Elko, Nevada, earned an MA in public policy from Harvard University at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. He is the president and CEO of a management consulting company in Alexandria, Virginia. Juaristi is the author of Back to Bizkaia: A Basque-American Memoir. He often returns home to Nevada to support local Basque programs.

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The Cortez Hills Expansion Project archaeological excavations uncovered a wealth of information about the Cortez Mining District, from its beginning in 1863 to the government-mandated end to the mining of precious metals in the district during World War II. Obermayr and McQueen use archaeological data as a foundation to tell the story of life in one of Nevada’s most intriguing, long-lived mining districts. Archaeologists excavate and analyze many thousands of artifacts, uncovering the homes and workplaces—and even trash dumps—of prospectors and miners, mill workers, charcoal burners, brickmakers, blacksmiths, teamsters, and families. They present an archaeological view of everyday life: how Cortez was populated by a variety of ethnic groups, how they lived, what products they bought or consumed, what their social status was, and how, even in this remote location, they created their own version of lives exemplifying the era’s Victorian ideals.

Readers interested in the archaeology of the West, mining history, and the history of Nevada will find this book fascinating.

Of related interest

The Roar and the Silence: A History of Virginia City and the Comstock Lode

Erich Obermayr received a BA in anthropology and creative writing from the University of Arizona. He has many years’ experience in archaeology as an itinerant field technician, crew chief, project manager, and principal investigator. He currently owns a firm specializing in historical and archaeological public interpretation. Obermayr lives in Silver City, Nevada.

Robert W. McQueen received his MS in industrial archaeology from Michigan Technological University. He is Principal Investigator with Summit Envirosolutions, Inc., an environmental and cultural resources consulting firm in Reno, Nevada. McQueen has spent the last decade actively surveying and researching the Cortez District and directed the archaeological excavations that led to the publication of this book.

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At a time when university presidents must find their way through a minefield of increasingly heated debates over issues such as free speech, curriculum, faculty diversity, and the specter of “political correctness,” Crowley’s book provides a sense of history to those striving to understand the demands of the position. It is an invaluable resource for scholars.

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Joseph N. Crowley was the president of the University of Nevada, Reno, from 1978 to 2001. His twenty-three years as president mark the longest single tenure of any of the university’s chief executives. California State University, Fresno, and the University of Iowa have both presented Crowley with distinguished alumni awards and he has also received five honorary degrees. He has continued to live in Reno, Nevada, since his retirement from education.

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Born to a devout Mormon family in a small farming community in southwest Utah, Cannon served in the U.S. Air Force during World War II and emerged from the war as a hero. Soon he was part of the postwar migration of ambitious and adventurous Americans to the booming desert city of Las Vegas, where he practiced law and entered local politics. In 1958 he was elected to the U.S. Senate and joined a group of influential young Democratic senators who were to play a major role in shaping the country’s future.

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Of related interest

David W. Gilcrest is an assistant professor of English at Carroll College in southeastern Wisconsin, where he teaches rhetoric, romanticism, and environmental studies. Gilcrest lives in Waukesha, Wisconsin.
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