



Nevada State Museum Newsletter

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New Division Administrator.

Marcia Britton Arrives From Cody, Wyoming

Marcia Wolter Britton, the recently appointed Administrator of the Division of Museums and History, joined the Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs in September.

"There is limitless potential to develop cultural opportunities in Nevada and I'm delighted to lead the museums and history team," stated Britton. A broad background of work in both public and private museums in Wyoming, North Dakota, and Montana has prepared her for this position.

As Division Administrator, she will work with Department and Division staff and public and private partners to enhance collections, to preserve and interpret Nevada's history, natural history, and culture for both state residents and visitors to the state.

Britton is committed to public outreach and to building statewide and regional constituencies and partnerships. With an academic background in public history, anthropology, folklife, and museum education, she has pursued specific interests in cultural/heritage/eco-tourism and regional culture, including American Indian culture.

Most recently, Britton was Chair of Education at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming, where she managed education efforts for a five-museum complex. She also served as a division director at the State Historical Society of North Dakota with responsibility for publications, visitor services, historic site interpretation, public programs, and work with statewide constituency groups such as the American Indian Advisory Committee and the Local History Council.

Britton holds a Master's degree in history museum studies and American folk culture from the Cooperstown Graduate Program, State University of New York, Oneonta, and an additional Master's degree in anthropology and folklore from Wayne State University in Detroit. A native of California, her interests in regional culture are derived from living and working in Minnesota, upstate New York, Michigan, Montana, North Dakota, Wyoming, and now Nevada.



The new Division Administrator took time off from her work to allow Museum photographer Scott Klette to photograph her for the Newsletter. Marcia Wolter Britton arrives with a variety of achievements that will foster Nevada's Division of Museums and History as a premier public history agency.

The Museum's North Building Was Originally a Bank Building



First National Bank's new building opened in March of 1959. It was later purchased in the 1990s by the State of Nevada and recently underwent remodeling and opened last April 2001 as the museum's North Building with a large Changing Gallery, Museum Store and the future home of the Hazel Bretzlaff Van Allen History Research Center. —Photo courtesy: Bruce Svensson of Carson City.

The Nevada State Museum's North Building, which opened to the public in April 2001, was originally completed as the First National Bank's Carson City branch in March, 1959. The opening of the building was within a few months of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the beginning of service to Carson City by First National Bank starting in July, 1934. The building was formally opened on March 14, 1959 by then Governor Grant Sawyer, First National Bank's president E. J. Questa and other dignitaries and friends.

The land for the bank site was purchased from the Laxalt family and construction was started immediately after the ground breaking ceremonies in July 1958.

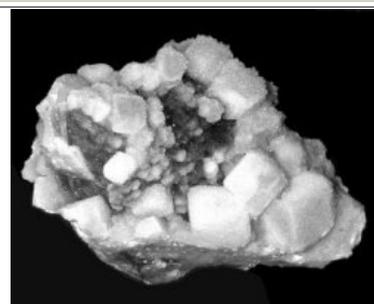
The reinforced concrete building on a steel frame was designed by the Reno architectural firm of Vhay & Associates and was built for a cost of \$160,000 by Carson contractor Sture Svenson. When completed the new bank cost over a quarter of a million dollars.

The architects originally designed the building to radiate an atmosphere of ease and friendliness. The color scheme of blue-green and white was picked as a cool contrast to the outside desert colors. There were several new innovations in the design which included window treatment in colored plexiglass and brass, and striped white terrazzo floors. The finish for the woodwork found in the counters, window frames and doors were walnut, which was also repeated in the furniture of the bank offices. The carpet was a complimentary gray.

In planning the bank building the First National's building committee adopted a one-of-a-kind design in the United States for the vault. The frame was so modern for its time that it was completely different from anything installed. Designed by Herman Safe Company of San Francisco, the plans were drawn only for the bank building in Carson City and would not fit any other bank. The vault was burglar proof, fire proof, and blast proof. The shell of the vault, constructed of reinforced concrete and steel, was the first thing built following the ground breaking ceremony. The frame is fabricated of high tensile strength open-hearth steel. Half inch thick plates are welded at all corners and all exposed surfaces of the inside of the vault are overlaid with sixteen-gauge grained stainless steel plates. The vault door is 3 1/2 inches thick made of torch-resistive plate combined with a solid plate of 99% pure electrolytic copper. These materials were designed to protect the combination lock and timelock against the oxyacetylene torch, in addition, new material used also protected them against carbide-tipped drills. The design of the vault door was also innovative in that it was the first fully automatic door between San Francisco and Denver.

The type of construction done on the vault was so strong that the safe company said that it could withstand even an atomic blast!

This Sugarcube barite crystals with quartz specimen was recently donated to the Nevada State Museum by AngloGold (Jerritt Canyon). It came from the Murray Mine, Labor Day Pocket, Zone 4, Level 175. The mine is located in Elko County. Barite comes in a surprising array of light colors and crystal shapes. You can view this specimen in our Earth Sciences gallery and compare it with other Nevada samples. —Photo by Sue Ann Monteleone



Museum Opens to the Public 60 Years Ago

In March 1939 the Nevada State Museum and Art Institute was organized in accordance with an Act of the Legislature and in December of the same year the Carson City Mint building was purchased from the United States Government by the State Museum Board for the State of Nevada to become the home of the new Nevada State Museum. The building officially opened as the Museum on Nevada Day, October 31, 1941. The following short article about the opening of the Museum comes from the *Biennial Report of the Directors of the Nevada State Museum and Art Institute To the governor of the State of Nevada*, January 27, 1941 to December 1, 1942.



The Nevada State Museum opening day visitors looking at exhibits on the second floor of the old Mint building on October 31, 1941.
--Photo by Nevada Works Progress Administration, Nevada State Museum Collection.

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Since our report to you under date of January 27, 1941, the Nevada State Museum has made rapid strides in remodeling and renovating the Mint Building, both under the W.P.A. Project and through donations from private individuals. The building is now practically remodeled, except for a heating plant.

The reconstruction and remodeling of the building had progressed sufficiently far by September 1941 to plan an official opening, so that upon Admission Day, October 31, 1941, the formal dedication and opening to the public took place. More than five thousand persons passed through the building upon this first day. To say that we are proud of the work performed, both by those in charge of the W.P.A. Project and Major Fleischmann's contractor, would be putting it lightly. The building is worthy of every praise in its present condition, and, if and when a heating system can be installed, while it will be not a perfect set-up for a museum, nevertheless, when the cost of remodeling is compared to the original cost of the building of many thousands of dollars, it places the State Museum in a position to procure, house, and properly display worthwhile "State" exhibits, for many years to come.

Coming Events

NEVADA STATE MUSEUM

November 27: *Rock Art of the Great Basin*, by Alanah Woody, Ph.D., Collections Manager at the Nevada State Museum.

December 25: No program.

These programs are part of the Museum's Frances Humphrey evening lecture series held on the fourth Tuesday of every month from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. There is no charge for the programs. The Loftin Park entrance on the north side of the Mint building will be used for all programs. For more information call 687-4810, ext. 239.

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NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM

November 14: *The Central Pacific Railroad Across Nevada 1868 and 1997, a Photographic Comparative* by Larry Hersh.

December 12: *Western Nevada Railroads and Mining* by Stanley Paher.

Programs at the Nevada State Railroad Museum are held in the Interpretive Center at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, and are sponsored by the Friends of the Museum. Admission is free.

Other events:

November 23, 24, 25: Tentative; steam train operation.

December 8 and 9: Annual running of the Santa Train from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with Santa aboard.

'Tin Cup Tea & Chuck Wagon Social' Held

By JAN LOVERIN
NSM Curator of Textiles and Clothing



Left to right on the staircase is the Winter's family gold brocade dress and Mrs. Coffin's black and red ball dress.
—Photo by Sue Ann Monteleone

The last few months have been incredibly busy at the Marjorie Russell Textile Center. In the beginning of September, Christine Farlow, registrar specialist, Sue Ann Monteleone, registrar, and I presented a program at the Nevada Museums Association conference in Eureka.

Immediately after returning from Eureka, we began working on Governor and Mrs. Guinn's annual fund-raising event, called the Tin Cup Tea and Chuck Wagon Social. This year we featured historic fashions from Nevada families, including the two gowns we had restored from the proceeds of last year's event. The two restored gowns, the Winter's family gold brocade Second Day dress and Mrs. Trenmor Coffin's red and black ball gown from Virginia City, were both on the grand staircase of the Governor's Mansion. Strategically placed in other areas within the Mansion, were Mrs. Jessie Hobart Leonard's reception gown from 1896, an early pioneer dress from 1846, the going away outfit of Mrs. Florence Meder in 1889, and Mrs. Linnehan's two piece dress worn when she was a teacher at the Glendale School. In addition to the gowns, we also had hats, shoes, purses and even baby shoes displayed on the dining room table. Thank you, Edna Henner, for so graciously displaying these objects for the patrons of this event. A very special thank you to Governor and

Mrs. Guinn for their generosity, for sharing their home and grounds of the Mansion, and for assistance with the food and all the preparations. Over \$8,500 was raised for the Clothing & Textile Center, exhibits, and new Museum signs.

As most of you know, we have been working on computerizing the costumes and textiles at the Center (the University collection). The results of this project, although it is far from completion, is to be able to access photographic images and cataloging data for select objects via the Internet. Our program illustrated the cataloging capabilities of Past Perfect using the museum software program. This program also allowed us to feature select objects for an online Virtual Exhibit. This means that once you are on the [Marjorie Russell website](http://nevadaculture.org) (nevadaculture.org or type in Marjorie Russell at any search engine) click on Virtual Exhibit—it is highlighted. This will take you to a group of six categories of objects: jackets, shoes, purses, fans, etc. Click on one of these and you will see six more of that type of object. Thus, we are actually displaying 36 museum artifacts, without leaving your house! This is an incredible accomplishment and I wish to thank Cheryl Mathwig, webmaster of the Department of Cultural Affairs for her wonderful assistance in developing our site. Thank you also to the Horn/Bohmont Foundation for funding this project.

Nevada State Museum baskets featured at the Great Basin Native Basketweavers Gathering in Reno, Nevada, September 28-30, 2001.—Photo by Sue Ann Monteleone

"We'll Be Back Next Year"

That the Museum's annual Coin Show was a resounding success was evident in the dealers' response of "*We'll Be Back Next Year.*" The two day event on Sept. 8-9 ran smoothly, interested crowds both days, and filled the museum building and the outdoor pavilion. The food booth was staffed by the Carson City Mavericks Lions Club. Museum's

wares were sold outside by members of the Docent Council who staffed the sales table.—All photos were taken by the staff.



Under One Sky Is Under Way

By DOROTHY NYLEN
Exhibit Preparator II

The Nevada State Museum's Exhibits and Anthropology staff had a very successful research trip in the Fallon area in mid-August. We went first to Carson Lake where state Wildlife Division employee Mike Brown took us out in groups of two on an airboat where we were able to photograph and experience the world of the marsh.

Indeed a wetland is a world unto itself. Bulrushes can grow quite high. They quickly blot out views of the desert and open to vast tracks of placid water. American avocets were the dominant bird that day and there seemed to be billions of them. White pelicans who unknowingly selected the same pathway as the watercraft beat in patient formation until the persistent drone of the airboat became unbearable and they peeled away to either side. The pelicans seemed huge in the context of the thick forests of rushes and cattails, pterodactyl-like, ancient. Great blue herons and egrets dragging delicate-looking stilt legs floated about like giant mosquitoes.

The average wingspan of a white pelican is 8-9 1/2 feet. The great white swan in Paiute stories has a somewhat smaller wingspan of 6-7 feet. It was too early in the year to see swans, but it was easy to imagine that swans would have an formidable presence there.

In *Under One Sky* we hope to capture a spiritual as well as physical sense of the marsh as the Paiute knew it, before and somewhat after their contact with Euro-Americans. To assist us in this endeavor we have co-curators from the Stillwater tribe. Unfortunately, because of the drought, most of the Stillwater Marshes are dry.

Staff also visited Hidden Cave. The interior was photographed and measured, rock-types in and outside noted, for the development of a special archeology exhibit within *Under One Sky*.



Left to right: Doug Southerland, Mike Brown and Gene Hattori head out to the world of the Carson Lake marsh.
—Photo by Scott Klette

Books, Books, Books

Here Are Three for Gift Giving This Christmas

Books in the Museum Store are also available by phone or mail from the Nevada State Museum, 600 N. Carson St., Carson City, NV 89701. Visa and MasterCard only are accepted in telephone orders at (775) 687-4810. Postage and handling is \$4.00 for each book ordered. A membership discount of 15% applies.

Reviewed by MARION VOGLER
Nevada State Museum Docent

PRECIOUS DUST *The Saga of the Western Gold Rushes* by Paula Mitchell Marks

This book cannot be classified within what is usually understood as western adventure. It is a superior example of multi-layered American social history beginning with the gold rush to California in 1848 on through to the end of the century in Nome, Alaska.

Marks explains in her introduction that this is the story of Gold-seekers, "—a chronicle of what propelled them westward, how they lived, how they met the challenges of the journey and search, what kept them going or separated them from their dreams, and what sense they made of the whole enterprise." She goes on to say, "It demonstrates how the rush provided the major impetus for the initial development of the western regions in the mid- to late-

nineteenth century and how they served as a "safety valve" for restless dreamers and a laboratory for the American democratic experiment."

The focus is on people working placer mines—a type of mining allowing individuals a degree of initiative and latitude seldom available in the America of increasing big business.

The writing skills evident in the narration are so generous and encompassing that the reader is comfortably situated within the broad spectrum of lives lived both inside mining communities as well as those lives dependent upon "mining the miners." Diaries and letters straight from the diggings bring a familiar and authentic voice to that place and time.

Excellent vintage photographs are included. There are notes, a selected bibliography, and an index.

448 pages **\$17.95**



TEMPLES OF JUSTICE County Courthouses of Nevada by Ronald M. James.

The author chronicles the construction of Nevada courthouses from inception as symbols of heritage and permanence to each individual county's choice of location and materials expressing its own unique image in Nevada history. A chapter is devoted to each county with discussions of first and later built courthouses; why the architectural style was chosen; and how its size and design met the county's needs. The chapters have photographs of the buildings as well as some of the architects' drawings.

James says, "It is reasonable to see the construction of Nevada's county courthouses as a response to four different local, state, and national factors." He states that population, economy, ideal of monumentality, and architectural style contribute to building decisions. James looks at Nevada within the larger context of traditional local government coming from England into the New World as a background for his short history of each county.

A map showing locations of county courthouses and a glossary of architectural, structural and decorative terms with diagrams are helpful. There are informative notes, a bibliography, and an index.

199 pages **\$19.95**



A SIERRA NEVADA FLORA By Norman F. Weeden

"It is critical that we recognize the vegetation of the Sierra as a resource of immense value, not just in direct economic criteria but also in terms of quality of life and value to future generations. This flora is now threatened by the seemingly inexorable pressure of civilization and burgeoning population." In the foreword, Weeden emphasizes the need for appreciation and protection of the still abundant flora around us.

This field guide is specific for vegetation found above 3500 feet on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada and above 8000 on the eastern side. In the "How to Begin" section, readers are introduced to the use of a dichotomous key where one decides between two choices at each of the several steps required to identify an unknown plant.

There are five keys to navigate: to Ferns and Related Genera; to the Conifers; to the Dicotyledon Families; to the Dicotyledon Genera; and to the Monocotyledon Families.

Amy David provides copious and cleanly executed linear drawings to illustrate the text. These drawings are wonderful to look at in their own right.

Light to carry and easy to use, this book's comprehensive plant descriptions will satisfy the experienced and novice botanist. Included are a glossary, bibliography, and index.

259 pages **\$15.95**