

Mathias Rinckel Mansion
102 N. Curry Street
Carson City
Nevada

HABS NO. NEV-13-17 HABS
NEV.

13-CARCI

16-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. NEV-13-17

MATHIAS RINCKEL MANSION

Location: 102 North Curry Street (NW corner of Curry and King Streets), Carson City, Nevada

Present Owner: Mrs. John Lindstrom, Redwood City, California

Present Occupant: vacant

Present Use: none

Statement of Significance: One of the most sophisticated and elaborate of Carson City's later nineteenth-century houses. Many of its original ornamental features, both exterior and interior, are well preserved.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1875-76.
2. Architect: Charles H. Jones of San Francisco, architect and builder.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Rinckel Mansion is located on lots 9 and 10 of Block 9 of Proctor and Green's Division of Carson City. (Frank M. Proctor and B.F. Green were two of the four original purchasers in 1858 of the Eagle Ranch, upon which Carson City was platted.) The following references tracing the title of these lots are found in the Ormsby County, Nevada, Deed Books.

1866: Deed September 7, 1866, recorded in Book 11, page 151. Anna E. Mooney bought lots 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Block No. 9 of Proctor and Green's Division from the United States Government.

1870: Deed March 22, 1870, recorded in Book 12, page 566. Edward D. Sweeney of Carson City bought from Isaac T. Mooney and Annie E. Mooney, his wife, of Downieville, Sierra County, California, the south one-half of Block No. 9 for \$325.00.

1875: Deed May 8, 1875, recorded in Book 16, page 292. Mathias Rinkel [sic] of Carson City bought from

MATHIAS RINCKEL MANSION
HABS No. NEV-13-17 Page 2

Edward D. Sweeney and wife of Carson City all of lots 9 and 10 and the east 17 feet of lot no. 8, all being in Block No. 9 of Proctor and Green's Division: frontage of 85 feet on north side of King St. and 80 feet on west side of Curry St. Rinckel paid \$1,500.

The property has been in the hands of members of the Rinckel family since 1875. Mrs. Rinckel lived in the house until her death in 1933. The Rinckels' daughter, Louise, and her husband, George F. Blakeslee, then lived in the house. After Mr. Blakeslee's death, his widow lived there until her death in 1960. The property is currently (1972) owned by Mrs. John Lindstrom of Redwood City, California. Mrs. Lindstrom is the granddaughter of the builder, Mathias Rinckel.

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Several of the original drawings, consisting of the front and side elevations, and the second floor plan, are in the possession of the owner, Mrs. Lindstrom.

Sandstone used in the foundation came from the Nevada State Prison quarry. The foundations extend six feet below grade. Lumber used in the house is of kiln-dried, knot-free Jeffrey and Ponderosa pine from Glenbrook, Nevada, on the shore of Lake Tahoe. Floor joists are 10" x 2", laid 10" on center.

The walls are of pressed brick, made at a kiln in Carson Valley.

5. Alterations and additions: A small one-story room at the northwest corner of the house appears to be a later addition. It contains a servant's room and a bathroom. The room can be entered through a former exterior door in the rear hall of the house, or from its own exterior door in its east wall.

The original roof was of wooden shingles. The present metal roof was installed c. 1916. Very few changes have been made on the structure, and the earliest known representation (see section C.1, Sources of Information, first entry) shows the house as built to be essentially as it is today. The balustrades on the curved steps leading from the front walk to the front porch have been removed.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Mathias Rinckel (1833-1879) was born in Altenheim in Germany. He was the youngest of a family of seven children. When he was nine months old, the family immigrated to America and settled in Warsaw, Illinois. In 1849, "Matt," then a sixteen-year-old farmer, joined a group of five young men and proceeded west to the gold fields. He remained in the Feather River district in California for ten years, by which time he had accumulated a degree of wealth in placer mining.

Leaving California, Rinckel came to Genoa in what was then Carson County, Utah Territory, and the next year, 1860, went to Virginia City, where he increased his fortune in mining.

In 1863, he settled permanently in Carson City, where he engaged primarily in livestock and butchering. He gained contracts to furnish meat for Virginia City miners, the timbermen at Glenbrook on Lake Tahoe, and others. By 1875, he was able to begin construction on his mansion, which was finished in 1876. He built his house on the northwest corner of King and Curry Streets on the site of Carson City's first Post Office. Rinckel was to live there only three years. He died in October 1879 at the age of 46.

In addition to his previously mentioned activities, he owned and rented out many commercial structures in Carson City. A short biographical sketch of him on pages 561, 562 of Thompson and West's History of Nevada states that "Many monuments of his untiring energy are still visible in Carson, in the shape of fine buildings."

Mrs. Rinckel continued to live in the house until her death in 1933, after which it was occupied by the Rinckels' daughter, Louise, and her husband, George F. Blakeslee.

In addition to living in the house, the Blakeslees operated it as a house museum. They were induced to do so in 1941 at the urging of members of the cast of The Remarkable Andrew, a Paramount Pictures film which used the mansion as a backdrop in one of its scenes.

Louise Rinckel Blakeslee died in 1960 and the house continued to be shown as a museum until 1968, under the curatorship of Ronald Machado of Carson City.

MATHIAS RINCKEL MANSION
HABS No. NEV-13-17 Page 4

The house has been vacant since that time. A recent robbery resulted in the loss of the family silverware, some furnishings, and portraits of the builder and his wife. More recently, many of the furnishings have been sold, though the house still contains many of its original carpets, draperies, lighting fixtures and paintings.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: There is a lithograph of the house facing page 96 in Thompson and West's History of Nevada, (see bibliographical entry below).

The Nevada Historical Society in Reno has many photographs of a fairly recent vintage of the house in its "Ormsby County Homes" files. Several of these show the house as it appeared with its original furnishings.

2. Bibliography:

"The Pony Express," Vol. XXIII, No. 1, No. 265 (June 1956), Sonora, California.

Thompson, Thomas H. and Albert A. West. History of Nevada Berkeley, California: Howell-North, 1958. (Facsimile reprint of this volume which was originally printed in 1881).

Interview and visit to the house with Mr. Ronald Machado, former curator, November 1972.

Prepared by: S. Allen Chambers, Jr.
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
December 1972

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Merit and Interest: A representative late nineteenth-century house of pretentious character with well preserved ornamental features.
2. Condition of fabric: Fairly good.

B. Detailed Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions of main portion are approximately 40' x 40'. It is two stories and square with minor projections. The rear wing is 21' (2 bays) long and is one story.
2. Foundations: The low foundation is two courses of pick-dressed sandstone ashlar with plain projecting water table.
3. Walls: Pressed brick, repointed, and painted.
4. Porches: At the center of the east front there is a one-story wooden porch which is six-sided in plan and fills in the area between canted bays on either side. It presents on the front three arcaded bays, the two at each side. The columns, depending on their position, are polygonal or square in plan; they rest on pedestals and have moulded capitals with applied fleur-de-lis ornaments on the neck. Ornamental brackets with incised scrolls, above the capitals, give the openings the appearance of cusped arches. The cornice has a course of modillion-brackets. A deck roof has a balustrade with pedestals. The porch floor is of narrow pine boards; some repairs have been made to the flooring. A balustrade with turned balusters is above skirting of vertical boards between the porch floor and the ground. The skirting is enriched with a pierced design. Along the south wall of the west wing there is a two-bay wooden porch. Its columns are square in plan and are chamfered and rest on pedestals. The capitals are moulded below brackets. This porch has a sheet-metal shed roof.
5. Chimneys: There are three brick chimneys with patternwork ornamenting the caps. All are on the perimeter: one centered on the north wall, one about ten feet from the front on the south wall, and one on the west wall about the same distance from the south corner.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and Doors: The main entrance is located at the center of the east front, sheltered by the porch described above. The opening is rectangular; the cap or lintel appears to be cast iron, painted. A thin wooden casing is inside the brick opening. A transom with two lights, contains ornamental white etched glass. The transom bar carries incised ornamental scrolls.

There are double doors of walnut, each with a large glazed panel, the glass being treated ornamentally. Below this there is a moulded panel of composite shape: a vertical rectangle with a semicircular projection at each side.

The rear door is located on the west wall, approached through the porch on the west wing. It has four panels and a transom.

- b. Windows: Typically the windows are double hung with one light above one light. The openings have stone sills and ornamental, printed lintels of cast iron. A typical lintel consists of a cornice carried on a pair of acanthus-leaf brackets; above its central portion there is a paneled rectangular tablet with a semicircular projection at the center of the upper edge. The whole is decorated with incised and relief ornament. Above a double window at the second story over the main entrance, is a larger lintel of comparable design.

There are three two-story canted bays, one near the west end of the south wall and the others symmetrically located on the east front. Each contains three typical windows on each story.

7. Roof:

1. Hipped roofs extend over each portion of the house. The one over the main two-story portion is covered with stamped sheet metal in a hexagon pattern. Ornamental metal cresting extends along the sides of a deck and along the ridge of a smaller gabled roof above the projection of the southwest bay window. This metal-work appears to have been well preserved but it is now in need of repair.

There are no dormers.

2. Cornices: A wooden cornice consists of corona and cymatium supported on brackets. The brackets rest against a paneled frieze, one panel between each brackets. This woodwork, in common with much of it in other places on the house, needs painting.

C. Detailed Description of the Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

a. Basement: There is a cellar under the rear (kitchen) wing only. This is entered via a stairway opening off the kitchen, and was used for food storage. It has a dirt floor.

b. First Floor:

The double front doors open directly into the stairhall. To the left is the front parlor, and to the right, the master bedroom. All three of these spaces extend approximately half way through the depth of the main block. Behind the front parlor, and separated from it by screen walls and double sliding doors, is the rear parlor, which extends to half the width of the stairhall, through which it may also be entered. On the back wall of this parlor is a door leading to the rear porch. The dining room is to the right of the rear parlor, and behind the master bedroom, through both of which rooms it may be entered. At the rear of the dining room is a door leading into the rear, kitchen wing. The door leads directly to a small rear hallway. To the left is the pantry, to the right a bathroom (in a later addition) entered through a former exterior door, and behind the hall, the kitchen itself. There are two exterior doors in the kitchen, one to the rear porch and one behind the aforementioned bathroom.

c. Second Floor:

The second floor layout is a somewhat modified version of the first, having four large bedrooms at each corner of the house, over the four principle rooms below. Near the head of the stairs, a portion of the bedroom over the rear parlor is given over to a former "trunk room" now a bathroom.

4. Interior finish, general:

Walls are plastered, the plaster being one inch thick, and either painted or papered. All interior doors are four paneled, are of Ponderosa or Jeffrey pine, and have two-light transoms, hinged in the middle. Except in the parlors, where the doors and trim are painted white, all woodwork in the house is grained. The graining of the first and second floor stairhalls resembles walnut. In all other rooms it

simulates golden oak, except in the right rear bedroom on the second floor, where it imitates curly maple. The grain-
ing is beautifully done and in excellent condition. There is ornamental plasterwork in several rooms. Flooring is of pine boards but is covered with carpeting or linoleum in all cases. The first floor rooms are 11' 7" in height and the second floor rooms 10'. All rooms have a molded baseboard, 11" high, except the rear wing which has a 4' high wainscot of matched beaded boards.

5. Room Descriptions - First Floor:

- a. Stair Hall: The double, elaborately paneled and glazed entrance doors, with their surrounding trim, occupy the full width of the stairhall's eastern end. Immediately to the right is a door to the master bedroom, beyond which the stair begins its ascent. The stair takes up half of the width of the hall. To the left, several feet down the hall, is the door to the front parlor. At the rear on axis with the portion of the hall not taken up with the stair, is the door to the rear parlor. The walls are painted pink. All doors and trim in the stairhall are of pine stained and grained to resemble walnut. The stairway itself is of walnut. The stair consists of nineteen risers 7 1/2" high, and ascends in a straight run against the right wall for thirteen risers. At this point, the stair curves to the left and reaches the second floor at a 90° angle to the main run. The soffit of the stair is open from the fourth riser. The red velvet stair carpet and the gold plated holders are said to be original. The original gas chandelier is in place.

- b. Front Parlor: The front parlor is entered through a door from the stair hall, and is connected to the rear parlor by double sliding doors. The front (east side) of the room is taken up with a large triple bay window. The south wall has two single windows, between which is an ornate Eastlake type pier mirror said to have come from the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876. All the windows have gold valances. All trim in this room is painted white, as are the walls. The floor is covered with the original carpet. The most elaborate features of the parlor are the ceiling and cornice. Just below the cornice is a thin gold leaf picture mold. The cornice members are picked out in shades of pink and pale green. The ceiling itself is painted pale yellow.

MATHIAS RINCKEL MANSION
HABS No. NEV-13-17 Page 9

In the center of the ceiling is a medallion from which hangs the original chandelier. Four ribs radiate from the center to meet ribs parallel to the cornice forming a decorative panel in the ceiling. The ribs and medallion are painted pink.

- c. Rear Parlor: The east wall of this room is taken up with doors - the double sliding doors leading to the front parlor, and a single door leading to the rear of the stairhall. On the north wall, close to the door to the stairhall, is a door leading to the dining room. On the rear wall is a door to the back porch. This door has been closed for some time, and is fitted with bookshelves below the transom. The south wall is, like the east wall of the front parlor, given over to a triple bay window. Trim in this room is white, the walls pink, the floor is carpeted. As in the front parlor, the most elaborate feature here is the ornamental plaster ceiling, similar in design and color to that in the front parlor. The chandelier in this room is a three part composition - the center part of which may be lowered independently of the others, to serve as a reading light. There is an ornamental wood stove in this room, which served to heat both the front as well as the rear parlor.

- d. Dining Room: The primary entrance to the dining room is the door from the rear parlor, which is in the south wall, near the SE corner of the dining room. There is also a door in the east wall, near the south east corner of the room leading through a short passage to the master bedroom. The north wall of the dining room has two windows, between which is a marble mantel shelf hung on brackets. There is a wood stove in front of the shelf. There was never a fireplace; the shelf was placed there to hold a clock. On the west wall is a door to the rear hall and kitchen beyond. All the trim, and the doors, in this room are grained to resemble golden oak. The walls are painted a deep ox-blood red. A thin gold leaf picture mold at the intersection of wall and ceiling, serves in lieu of a cornice in this room.

- e. Kitchen Wing: The kitchen wing is entered through the door in the west wall in the dining room. This door leads directly into a small hall, with doors in each wall.

MATHIAS RINCKEL MANSION
HABS No. NEV-13-17 Page 10

That to the left, or south, goes into a pantry. To the north of the hallway is a door leading to the bathroom. This door was at one time an exterior door, and the bathroom floor is one step lower than the rest of the first floor. The east wall of this room has an exterior door and a window. This addition is said to have served as the quarters for a Chinese servant prior to having been made into a bathroom. It is said that this bathroom was installed in the 1880's but the present fixtures, while old, are not of that vintage.

The rear door of the hallway leads to the kitchen itself. The north wall of the kitchen has an outside door at the northwest corner of the room. The rear or west wall has no openings. The south wall has a window and a door, both opening to the rear porch. The stairway to the basement is entered through a door near the door to the rear porch. The kitchen has a wainscot of matched beaded boards, approximately 4 feet high. This too, was originally grained to resemble golden oak. It has since been painted an off-white. The center of attention in the kitchen is the cast iron cook stove, labelled "Delmonico" and made by Rathbone Sard and Company of Albany, New York. It is elaborately decorated with garlands, cupids, etc. The "Delmonico" was the gold medal winner in the American Range Display at the Philadelphia Exposition, and it is there that the Rinckels are said to have seen it.

- f. Master Bedroom: The master bedroom occupies the right front corner of the first floor. It may be entered through a door from the front hall, or from the dining room. The east or front wall of the room is given over to a three part bay window. The north wall has a single window near the north west corner. The west wall has two doors, that on the right leading to a closet and that on the left leading through a passage, in which there are shelves for linens and closet space, to the dining room.

Trim in this room is also grained golden oak, and a thin gold leaf picture mold serves as a cornice. The walls are painted a bright green.

6. Room descriptions - Second Floor

- a. Stairhall: This space corresponds to the stairhall below

MATHIAS RINCKEL MANSION
HABS No. NEV-13-17 Page 11

and has the same trim grained to resemble walnut. All four bedrooms, as well as the former Trunk Room, now a bathroom, open from it. The stairway reaches the hall near its rear wall and because of the curve, lands at the second floor level facing west. The stairhall is lit by a double window in the east wall, one portion of which is hinged at the side to act as a door leading to the deck over the front porch. The walls here, as in the stairhall on the first floor, are painted pink.

- b. Guest Bedroom: (left rear bedroom). This bedroom is over the rear parlor, though not as large as that room. It is entered through a typical transomed door in its east wall from the hall. Its south wall is occupied by another of the three windowed bays. Trim in this room is stained to resemble golden oak. A portion of the floor of this room which had been taken up at the time of the recorder's visit for the installation of electric wiring, revealed the floor joists to be of 2" x 10" pine laid 10" on center. The walls are painted light green, and a maroon stenciled pattern near the ceiling takes the place of a cornice. A door in the southeast corner of this room leads through a closet-passage to the left front bedroom.
- c. Left Front Bedroom: This room is entered by way of a door in its east wall from the hall, or at its south west corner through a door leading to the guest room. There are two windows on the south wall, and a three part bay window on the east wall. All the window heads are several feet below the ceiling level, but curtain rods and draperies are hung several feet above to give an impression of added height. In place of a cornice in this room is a picture mold. Again the trim is of pine stained to resemble golden oak, while the walls are pale pink. A closet opens off the west wall of this room.
- d. Right front bedroom: This room is entered through the hall and is over the master bedroom. The east or front wall, has the last of the three windowed bays, and there is a window near the rear of the room on the north side. Next to this is another marble mantel shelf, though this room was heated by a stove. There is a hand stencilled yellow cornice pattern in this room. The floor is covered with a Brussels carpet. The closet to the rear of this room has an early linoleum floor, and formerly

MATHIAS RINCKEL MANSION
HABS No. NEV-13-17 Page 12

had porcelain hooks for clothes. The walls are painted a pale ivory. A second door in the west wall gives access to the right rear bedroom.

- e. Right rear bedroom: This room, entered through the hall or the right front bedroom, was originally the nursery. Alone in the house, its pine trim is grained to resemble curly maple. The original circulating drum stove, designed to catch the heat from the dining room stove below, bears the mark "S.M. Ransom and Company, Albany, New York, Patented 1858".
 - f. Trunk Room: At the rear of the stairhall, and entered only from it, is the Trunk Room, now a bathroom. The attic is entered through a small opening in the ceiling of this room. This bathroom is said to have been installed in the 1930's.
- D. Site and Surroundings: The Rinckel Mansion stands on a corner lot, with Musser Street to the south and Curry Street to the east, toward which the house faces. The ground is level and the yard is planted with trees. It is enclosed by an old picket fence having simple pedestals and gates, resting on a low sandstone base. This wooden fence is deteriorating.

Exterior Description Prepared by:

Harley J. McKee
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
Date of visit: August 19, 1972

Interior Description Prepared by:

S. Allen Chambers, Jr.
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
December 1972

PART III. Project Information

These records are part of the documentation made during the latter half of 1972 and the summer of 1973 in a project undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Nevada State Park System to record structures in Carson City and nearby areas.

MATHIAS RINCKEL MANSION
HABS No. NEV-13-17 Page 13

The project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey. Eric R. Cronkhite, Administrator, Nevada State Park System, and Mrs. Marshall Humphreys of the Nevada Landmarks Society assisted the HABS recorders in Nevada. Professor Harley J. McKee, Supervisory Architect, National Park Service, selected the subjects and provided architectural data for the sixteen Carson City structures which were recorded. Historical documentation for these buildings was prepared by S. Allen Chambers, Jr., Architectural Historian, Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor for the 1973 Nevada Summer Team, which produced the measured drawings, was Robert L. Hartwig of Harvard University. Student assistant architects were John T. M. Creery (University of Utah), Robert P. Mizell (University of Florida), and Jack W. Schafer (University of Cincinnati). Photographs were made by Aaron A. Gallup of Sacramento, California.