

Louis Norris House
542/544 Kuenzli Street
Reno
Washoe County
Nevada

HABS No. NV-29

HABS
NEV
16-RENO,
5-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

LOUIS NORRIS HOUSE

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Location: 542/544 Kuenzli Street
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U.S.G.S *Reno, Nev.* 7.5' Quadrangle (1967, photo revised 1982)
UTM Coordinates: 259050mE/4378940mN

Significance: This building is an example of Reno brick duplex bungalow architecture, and is representative of a type of housing stock common to Reno during the early part of the twentieth century. Bungalow style architecture has been described as simple and modest, and this building is representative of the simplest form of bungalow present in the Reno area. Although architecturally undistinguished in detail and form, it still embodies the distinctive characteristics of the bungalow style (one story, rectangular mass, offset doors, low pitched overhanging gable roof, brick exterior, one-over-one windows, and porches with square posts on piers). Additionally, the duplex form clearly reflects its historical location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as a representative entity of a combined commercial and working class residential environment from the 1920s-30s in Reno. This type of residence represents the affordable housing alternative particularly popular for working-class neighborhoods at that time. Based on the above information, this residence was recommended to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C.

Description: This single story building, constructed in 1925, is a brick (common bond) duplex bungalow under a gable roof. It measures 33 by 33 feet. The gable end faces Kuenzli Street and both gable ends are stuccoed beneath the roof pitch. The roofing material is composition. The facade presents a door, window, window, door arrangement. The doors are solid-core wooden replacements, and the windows are mostly replacement one-over-one ribbon windows. Each front entrance has a small front porch consisting of concrete steps and attached gable roof. The building has outside chimneys along either eave side, as well as bilateral interior chimneys. A clapboard shed addition is located at the rear of each of the two units and extends nearly across the entire width of the building. The house rests on a concrete foundation.

The floor plan (Attachment 1) in the core of the house is typical of a mirror image duplex and consists of two primary rooms – living room and kitchen – as well as an ancillary bathroom off of the kitchen and closet off of the living room. The shed addition (constructed sometime between 1925-1947) contains a hall and bedroom for each duplex apartment, respectively. The one significant deviation from the duplex's bilateral symmetry is the configuration of the hall, back entrance, and porch.

The interior wood flooring is covered with a low-grade carpet in the bedrooms, halls and living rooms, and modern vinyl covers the floors in the bathrooms and kitchens. Walls and ceilings appear to be plastered and painted, although the shed addition ceiling has a more recent "popcorn" finish. There are no notable decorative details. The interior wall separating the addition from the primary cell is the original brick exterior which has been painted. Two original windows along this wall have been boarded over and also painted. Simple wide straight cut "stock" type moulding is used for casing around the doorways and closets throughout the house, as well as a narrower version along the ceiling in the shed addition. Closet doors appear to be original, representing the common mass-produced specimens typical of the period, and all have been painted. One of the bathrooms has been remodeled with a modern tub/shower, toilet, and sink/cabinet installed, and the walls refinished with wallpaper. The other bathroom has a new toilet but retains the original sink and enameled cast-iron rolled-edge bath. Generally, all hardware utilized in the house is simple and undistinguished. Although the lighting fixtures and heating unit are new, much of the more common hardware (hinges, doorknobs) appears to be original.

The building has architectural elements consistent with the simplest bungalow (Poppeliers et al. 1983) or craftsman style (McAlester and McAlester 1984). In addition to its massed plan, these include exposed rafters and tapered wooden porch posts on brick piers. The building's integrity is considered fair to deteriorated.

Historical Context: Reno lies in a valley bisected by the Truckee River where its tributary streams with associated lowland marsh and meadowland converge to form the Truckee Meadows. Initially welcomed by west-bound emigrants for its native grasses, water, and as a rest stop before the ascent of the Sierra Nevada Range, the Truckee Meadows eventually retained a few enterprising people. These pioneers offered amenities to travelers while charging for the use of their roads and river crossings. When the section of the Central Pacific Railroad through the valley was being surveyed in 1868, the area selected for a new station was located near (Myron C.) Lake's Crossing. This locale was chosen because it was distant from the hills to the west but before the eastern marshes. It also was a suitable site for the junction with the proposed

Virginia & Truckee Railway (V&T RR), joining the Central Pacific with the Comstock. Named for Union General Jesse L. Reno, the new station was situated on the north side of the Truckee River with the railroad tracks paralleling the river.

Reno served as a hub for the distribution of beef to Sacramento and San Francisco while goods from those urban centers were redistributed to the Comstock and nearby ranches. Its location on the Central Pacific helped in establishing its importance in the Truckee Meadows. This was augmented in 1871 with the move of the county seat from Washoe City to Reno. The new county courthouse was built on land donated by Lake on the south side of the river. However, despite the importance of Reno as a railroad hub, the city was described as displaying a lack of permanence during the 1870s. According to Townley (1982:66-74), "For over a decade, Reno stayed an overcrowded, underbuilt, busy" community with no lack of work, particularly in construction. Much of the nature of the town could be attributed to the wealth coming from the Comstock, but the fear that the mines would bust – a tendency on all mining frontiers – curtailed the citizens' enthusiasm for putting money into real estate improvement. On the other hand, real estate and construction were second only to transportation as mainstays of the new community. By the end of the decade, several tracts had been subdivided and added to Reno increasing the size of the city on all sides.

Reno of the 1870s had as its primary business center Commercial Row, with some businesses on Virginia Street. The railroad served as a focal point for the businesses. Clustered around this downtown core were residential areas. In describing where people of differing incomes built houses in early Reno, Townley (1982:73) writes that "society" people built larger houses on West Street between First and Fifth streets, presently the site of motels and casinos. Working family homes and tenement housing were built on the cheapest lots located near the railroad tracks and yards. The final group of people, referred to as the "second grouping," built south of the river between High and Park streets. Some of these houses still remain. This area is where the structures under study are located (Attachment 2).

As part of the development of land beyond the downtown nexus of Reno, on December 3, 1878 a subdivision tract called the Haydon-Shoemaker Southeast Addition was surveyed and mapped. The area that includes the *Louis Norris House* is identified as Block H. The house is located on Lot 12 (Attachment 3). The block is bounded by Park and High streets on the east and west sides, respectively, and by Kuenzli (formerly North) and East Second (formerly Scott) streets on the north and south, respectively. Based on information in *Polk's Reno City Directory* (Polk v.d.), it was inferred that

Scott Street became part of East Second Street around 1930. North Street was changed to Kuenzli Street between 1970 and 1975.

An examination of Sanborn Insurance Maps dated between 1879 and 1947, suggests that development in Block H began between 1890 and 1899. However, no buildings appeared on Lot 12 (where the *Louis Norris House* is located) until the period between 1906 and 1918. The first building was located on the south end of Lot 12 (39 Park Street) and had rooms for rent but has since been torn down. The *Louis Norris House* (542/544 Kuenzli Street) was built a few years later in 1925, and at the north end of Lot 12.

Although early descriptions of the neighborhood between High and Park streets indicate its character as being strictly residential, the introduction of commercial property came early into the area. Located next to the river and south of East Second Street at the crossing for the railroad were the V&T RR yards (Townley 1982:205; Wurm and Demoro 1983:53). The yards were located there from ca. 1871 to ca. 1930s (Wurm and Demoro 1983:48-52, 112). By 1904, the neighborhood contained the Troy Laundry Company on High Street (Sanborn Map Company 1904). This company continued to operate, along with the Economy Laundry Company, until around 1930 (*Polk's Reno City Directory* 1930-1931). By 1946 (*Polk's Reno City Directory* 1946, Sanborn Map of Reno 1947), the City of Reno Corporation Yard had replaced the laundries. That same year, the Reno City Police Department and Municipal Court were built on lots that had recently contained residences. Departments located in the City of Reno Corporation Yard included the City Paint Shop and the City Sewer Department. By 1972, the Corporation Yard had become a parking lot (Johnson 1998:11).

The presence of industrial, commercial, and municipal land use in the neighborhood where the Kuenzli Street structures are located can be explained by the development and growth of the city of Reno. Until around 1945, there were no established zoning ordinances in effect in Reno. Without specific zoning ordinances to direct the development of growth, land could be developed however the owner wished and could afford. As a result, land in a given area could include a mix of agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Between 1945 and 1989, zoning was based on a hierarchical format, where industrial use was at the top and agricultural was at the base. Specific criteria were established for each type of land use, but an area zoned for one type of land use could include those that ranked lower in the hierarchy. The presence of the Troy, Economy, and other laundries, the nursery, and other businesses in the neighborhood are there because the people who owned the property could develop it as they wished. With regards to the city properties, the parcels that make up the area (2.12 acres) were purchased from the owners in 1946. The court, police department, and

yard probably were built there because it was a location with enough space for these buildings, as well as the close proximity to downtown Reno. The City Corporation Yard was moved later because more space was needed (Christine Fey, Community Development Department, City of Reno, personal communication, 1998; Brent Boyer, Community Development Department, City of Reno, personal communication, 1998).

How this affected the residents of the Kuenzli Street neighborhood is not known. Documentation available from the *Polk's Reno City Directory* series suggests that some residents lived there because of proximity to their work. Others purchased property for business and/or rental purposes.

In 1895 W. O'H. Martin acquired the lots that fronted Kuenzli Street in Block H of Haydon-Shoemaker's Southeast Addition. In 1917, the estate of W. O'H. Martin (Louise W. Martin, president, and Margaret Martin Mackay, secretary) sold Lots 5, 8, 9, and 12 to Joseph P. Schopper (Washoe County Deeds, Book 50, Page 132). Domestic buildings already existed on Lots 8 and 12, but not the building at 542/544 Kuenzli Street. From 1920/1921 to around 1924, Schopper and his family resided at 526 Kuenzli Street, to the west of Lot 12. Then the family moved to Park Street and lived at the same address as the Joseph P. Schopper Nursery (*Polk's Reno City Directory* 1920-1921, 1923, 1925-1926).

Schopper sold the Lot 12 property in 1922 to Annie Bodinna (Washoe County Deeds, Book 62, Page 22). She apparently used the residence at 39 Park Street for the purpose of maintaining an income property because she is not listed as living there. She sold the property to Louis Norris in 1924 (Washoe County Deeds, Book 64, Page 528). Norris built the house at 542/544 Kuenzli Street the following year (1925). There is no data indicating that Norris resided at this residence, and he, too, apparently used it as a rental property. In 1928, Harry H. Miller and his wife Helen, purchased Lot 12 from Norris (Washoe County Deeds, Book 72, Page 562), and by 1930/1931, they were living at the 39 Park Street residence. Although both the 39 Park Street residence and the building at 542/544 Kuenzli Street appear to have been present on Lot 12 at this time, there are no indications in any *Polk's Reno City Directory* from 1925 to 1934 that the building at 542/544 Kuenzli Street existed. However, by 1935 Miller and his wife were residing in the 542 Kuenzli Street property, and by 1939 had moved into the 544 Kuenzli Street half of the duplex (*Polk's Reno City Directory* 1935, 1937, 1939). In 1942, Miller and his second wife, Yetta, sold the property to Madeline Ann Borchgrevink (Washoe County Deeds, Book 148, Page 154). None of the subsequent owners (see Attachment 4) resided at the *Louis Norris House*; rather it became a maintained income property.

Miller's occupation, as listed in the *Polk's Reno City Directory*, was as a clerk. Occupations of other residents of the *Louis Norris House* ranged from chauffeur to dealer (probably casino) and included a clerk, an office worker, drivers, a station attendant, and a salesman. Some of the residents were married, but no children were listed. Children were listed only when they worked. People residing in other houses on the block worked at the Reno Street Department (laborer), Reno Engineering Department, Sunshine Laundry Co. (located southwest of the block on East Second Street), Economy Laundry Company, Washoe County General Hospital (laundry worker), Pleasant Grove Baptist Church (pastor), Bell Telephone Company of Nevada (telephone operator), V&T RR (brakeman), and as a mechanic, carpenter, janitor, nurseryman (Schopper's Nursery), drayman, construction worker, and bartender. Based upon this information, it can be argued that the neighborhood represented a working class milieu with many renting or purchasing their properties near where they worked.

Today, the neighborhood continues to reflect the combined commercial and residential environment present since the turn of the century. Many of the structures formerly on Block H are now gone, as are parts of the blocks bounded on the east by Wells Avenue (south to East Second Street) due to street widening. Adaptive reuse of existing structures in the neighborhood has occurred, particularly with the Creamery Building. Other structures have experienced changing use from nursery to apartments and single family dwellings to rooming houses. An apartment building at the corner of Kuenzli and Park streets was built on land that had formerly been single family dwellings. One characteristic apparent from examining the documents, and the neighborhood as it appears today, is that it is slowly moving to more commercial use, including rental residences. This Reno neighborhood is not unique in its composition of mixed commercial and residential buildings. Without specific zoning laws to govern development of the city and surrounding area, mixed land use became the norm rather than the exception. Therefore, industry, farming, and residential structures coexisted in close proximity. The pattern of the built environment in and around the 500 block of Kuenzli Street also may be explained by the neighborhood's proximity to downtown Reno and the presence of the Reno Police Department and Municipal Court.

Sources:

The following sources are considered applicable to either the building's architectural description or its historic context:

Fey, Christine A., Kristen Shields, Scott A. Nebesky, Elizabeth Kane, and Stuart M. Peters (1995). *City of Reno Historic Structures Handbook*. City of Reno, Community Development Department, Reno.

Johnson, Linda A. (1998). *Phase I - Environmental Site Assessment, APN 012-011-02, 03, 04, 05, and 06; 514-544 Kuenzli Street, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada*. Submitted to Kuenzli Partners, LLC by Summit Engineering Corporation, Reno.

McAlester, V. and L. McAlester (1984). *A Field Guide to American Houses*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

McDonald, Joseph F. (1971). *The Life of a Newsboy in Nevada*. Oral History Project, University of Nevada, Reno Library, Reno, Nevada.

Ossa, Rebecca R. (1998). Letter to Linda Johnson, City of Reno Housing Programs Administrator, dated May 25, 1998.

Petricciani, Silvio (1982). *The Evolution of Gaming in Nevada: The Twenties to the Eighties*. Oral History Project, University of Nevada, Reno Library, Reno, Nevada.

Polk, R.L. and Company (various dates). *Polk's Reno City Directory, Including Washoe County and Carson City*. R.L. Polk and Company, Publishers, San Francisco, California.

Poppeliers, John C., S. Allen Chambers, Jr., and Nancy B. Schwartz (1983). *What Style is it?: A Guide to American Architecture*. Preservation Press, Washington, D.C.

Rowley, William D. (1984). *Reno, Hub of Washoe County: An Illustrated History*. Windsor Publications, Woodland Hills, California.

Townley, John M. (1983). *Tough Little Town on the Truckee: Reno, 1868-1900*. Great Basin Studies Center, Reno.

Wurm, Ted and Harre Demoro (1983). *The Silver Short Line: A History of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad*. Virginia & Truckee Railroad, Virginia City, Nevada.

Project Information:

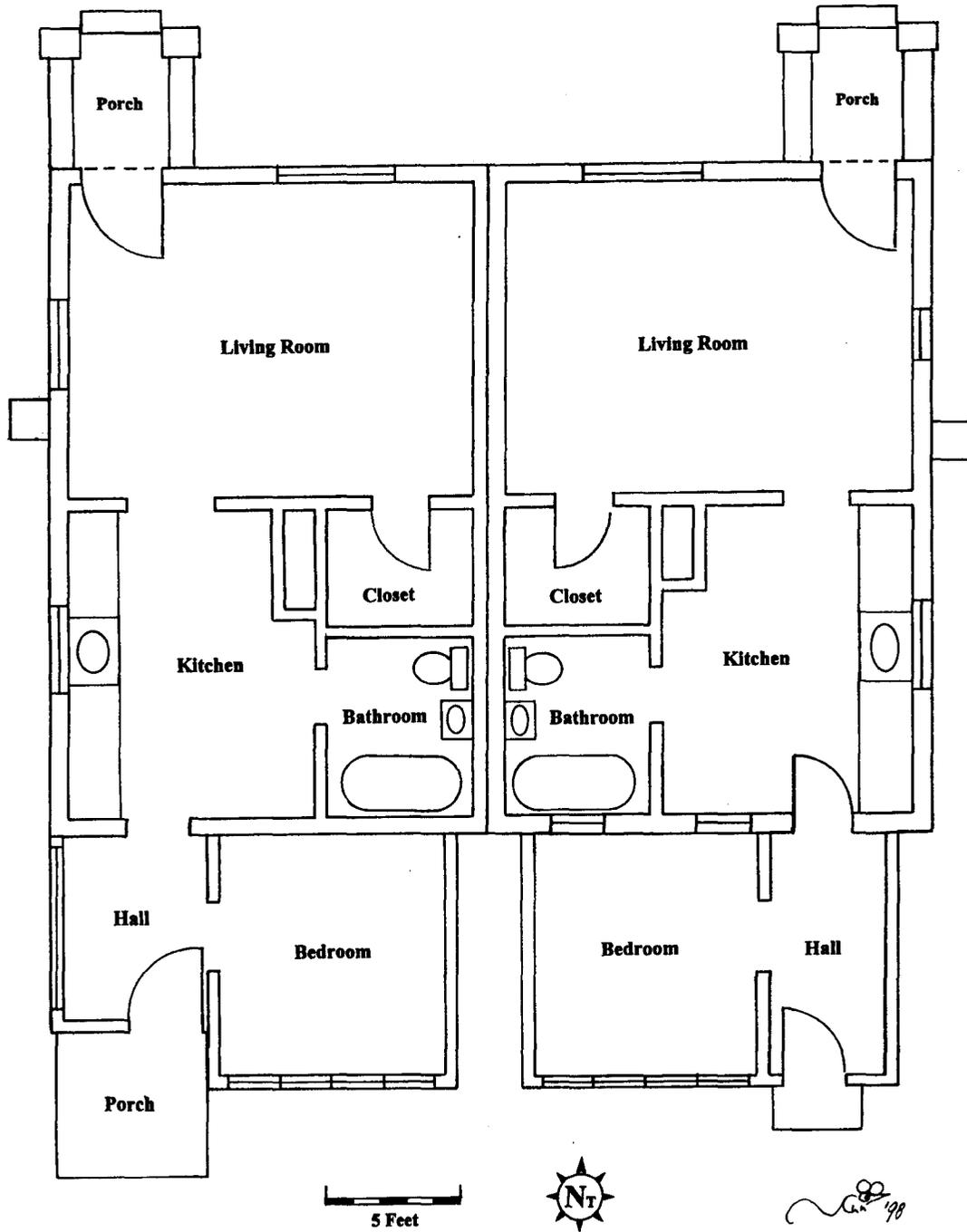
This HABS documentation is an outgrowth of a cultural resources assessment project performed in 1998 by Kautz Environmental Consultants, Inc. (KEC) of Reno preparatory to the construction of a HUD-assisted low income apartment complex. This building, and two others situated on the proposed construction site – 518 and 524 Kuenzli Street, Reno – were determined

eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places by the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office. The HABS documentation of these three buildings fulfills the terms of a *Memorandum of Agreement* signed by the Executive Director of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation on July 17, 1998. Other signatories include the Contracting Officer of the Washoe County HOME Consortium, a HUD program administered by the City of Reno, the Deputy Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer, and representatives of Kuenzli Partners, Ltd., the project proponent. This report was prepared by KEC Principal Investigator Dr. Peter Mires. Ms. Monique E. Kimball, KEC Historian, performed the archival research and prepared the historical context. The HABS photographs were taken by Ms. Kristi Hager, of Missoula, Montana, and were developed and prepared by Renewable Technologies, Inc. of Butte, Montana.

Additional Documentation:

Sketch of Floor Plan (Attachment 1)
Project Location Map (Attachment 2)
House Location Map (Attachment 3)
Chain of Title for Lot 12 (Attachment 4)

Attachment 1



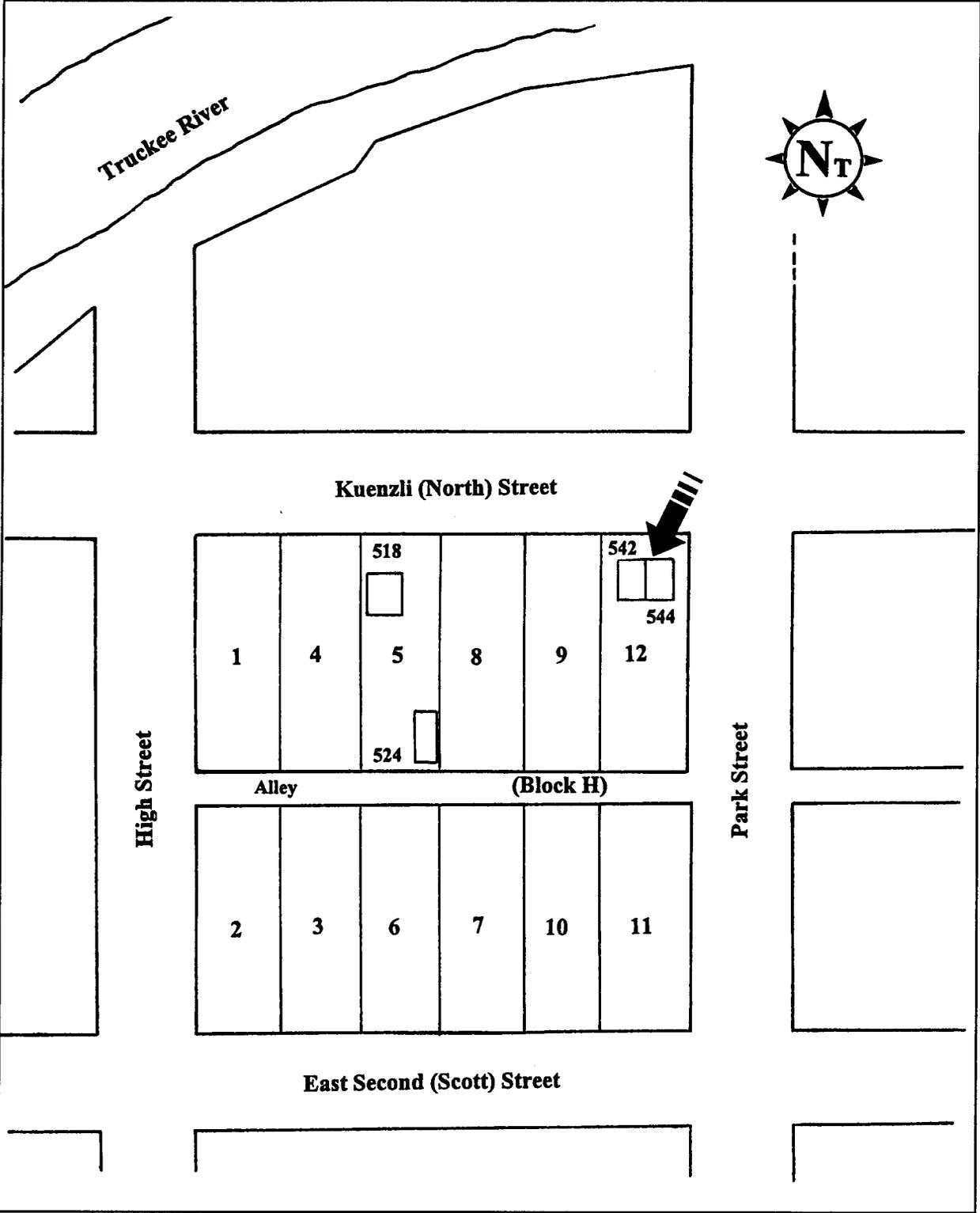
Attachment 2



Project Location Map

Base Map, Reno, Nev., 7.5' USGS Topographic Quadrangle, 1967
(Photorevised 1982).

Attachment 3



House Location Map

After *Sanborn Map of Reno, August 1947*, Sanborn Map Company, New York.

Attachment 4

References to the Chain of Title to the land upon which the structure called the *Louis Norris House* (542-544 Kuenzli Street) stands are in the Office of the Recorder, Washoe County Administrative Complex, Reno, Nevada.

- 1895 Deed, December 6, 1895, recorded in Book 18, p. 253. Daniel Hutchinson, Julia H. Tracy, Hiram T. Hutchinson, Charlotte E. Morgan, Ellen N. Cook, LeRoy Hutchinson, Mary Adelaide Phelps, with attorney Mary H. Sibley, to W. O'H. Martin.
- 1917 Deed, July 5, 1917, recorded in Book 50, p. 416. Estate of W. O'H. Martin (Louise W. Martin, president, and Margaret Martin Mackay, secretary) to Joseph P. Schopper.
- 1922 Deed, December 5, 1922, recorded in Book 62, p. 22. Joseph P. Schopper and Leonora A. Schopper sold to Annie Bodinna.
- 1924 Deed, May 26, 1924, recorded in Book 64, p. 528. Annie Bodinna to Louis Norris.
- 1928 Deed, January 11, 1928, recorded in Book 72, p. 562. Louis Norris to Harry H. Miller.
- 1942 Deed, June 9, 1942, recorded in Book 148, p. 154. Harry H. Miller and Yetta Miller to Madeline Ann Borchgrevink.
- 1945 Deed, January 19, 1945, recorded in Book 166, p. 482. Madeline Ann Borchgrevink to M. John Gallagher and Martha Gallagher.
- 1945 Deed, June 30, 1954, recorded in Book 171, p. 76. M. John Gallagher and Martha Gallagher to George A. Smith and Lillian M. Smith.
- 1946 Deed, July 6, 1946, recorded in Book 184, p. 364. George A. Smith and Lillian M. Smith to Lewis M. Carlisle and Edith A. Carlisle.
- 1958 Decree of Court, March 28, 1958, recorded in Volume 26, p. 151. Lewis M. Carlisle and Edith A. Carlisle to Edith A. Carlisle.
- 1963 Deed, March 11, 1963, recorded in Book 674, p. 111. Edith A. Carlisle to Darol L. Cline and Barbara J. Cline.
- 1966 Deed, February 10, 1966, recorded in Book 152, p. 39. Darol L. Cline, Barbara J. Cline, and Amelio O. Beck to Edward R. Beck.
- 1966 Deed, April 21, 1966, recorded in Book 170, p. 653. Edward R. Beck to Jonacina Company.

Attachment 4 (cont.)

- 1966 Deed, May 6, 1966, recorded in Book 174, p. 728. Edward R. Beck to John Higdon, Sil Giudici, and Edward R. Beck as Jonacina Company.
- 1979 Deed, March 7, 1979, recorded in Book 1365, p. 558. Jonacina Company, comprised of John R. Higdon, Ann N. Higdon, Silvio Giudici, Charles Giudici, Catherine V. Giudici, Edward R. Beck, and Amelia O. Beck, to Arthur G. Lindley.
- 1985 Deed, March 21, 1985, recorded in Book 2145, p. 241. Arthur G. Lindley to Wanda M. Dowdy.
- 1985 Deed, December 5, 1985, recorded in Book 2261, p. 311. Wanda M. Dowdy to Robert F. Lusk and Marilyn L. Rusk.
- 1986 Deed, December 24, 1986, recorded in Book 2466, p. 510. Robert F. and Marilyn L. Rusk to F.C.Barnego.
- 1996 Deed, May 15, 1996, recorded in Book 4572, p. 585. Robert F. and Marilyn L. Rusk to Robert F. and Marilyn L. Rusk, Trustees of The Rusk Family Trust.