

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED **JAN 24 1983**
DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

William J. Graham House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

548 California Avenue

n/a NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Reno

n/a VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

#2

STATE

Nevada

CODE

32

COUNTY

Washoe

CODE

031

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- n/a IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER: law office

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Robert and Joy Leland

STREET & NUMBER

548 California Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Reno

n/a VICINITY OF

STATE

Nevada 89501

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Washoe County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Reno

STATE

Nevada 89501

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

none

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on its original site at the corner of California and Gordon Avenues in Newlands Heights (see map), the William J. Graham house is situated on two lots, measuring 100 feet by about 140 feet, overall. The structure is 82 feet long and 30 feet wide, plus an attached one-car garage about 15 feet long. The tudor revival house is constructed of brick with half-timbered stucco gables (two on the north, three on the west and one on the south). The original wood shingle roof, leaded windows and an eyebrow window on the Gordon Avenue facade all are intact. Two brick chimneys punctuate the roofline. The house was designed by George A. Shastey (Architect-Designer) for Graham and his wife who occupied the structure until they died there in 1965 and 1968, respectively. The original building plans, dated September 1, 1927, are available. Baseboards, casings and other moldings are intact in the original portions of the ground floor.

The Graham's added a gable cover over a portion of the L-shaped front porch to provide cover for the entrance, plus the small garage at the rear. Another gable covering the east end of the front porch, housing a bathroom-dressing room addition, was constructed in 1971 (plans are available) for Robert Leland, who bought the house and its contents from the Graham estate in 1969 and still occupies it as a residence and law office. All three additions match the original style and materials, including the decorative rafter detail.

Between 1968 and 1971, the kitchen was relocated to occupy a back porch and laundry room; all the original glass-front and other cabinets were preserved. A bathroom also was added in part of the laundry room. The two sets of original bathroom fixtures, plus some decorative tile appointments, have been incorporated into the present bathrooms. A pantry and breakfast room were combined into a study. The front room contains the original tile-faced fireplace (about 78" wide and 49" high to the mantel, opening 41" wide by 28" high). The fireplace was never used until 1969; it was stuffed with 1929 newspapers. Most of the original furnishing have been retained.

The full attic is in the process of being converted to useable space so that more ground floor rooms can be used for law offices. An oak staircase, especially designed to be appropriate to the house, provides attic access, occupying the former hall to the bedrooms. The attic construction has not altered the three facades which are visible from the streets*, five flush skylight windows constitute the only changes to the fourth facade, which faces the private yard.

The grounds were attractively landscaped by the Grahams. The original plantings are almost all intact, including mature trees (blue spruce, norway maple, silver maples), many interesting shrubs, smaller trees, roses, vines and other perennials. One 5' x 8' wooden, garden-tool house, constructed about 1977, occupies the SE corner of the lot, about 45 feet from the house.

*except for small crawl-space vents on the north and south to be framed.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Nevada gaming
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Built in 1928, per BUILDER/ARCHITECT George A. Schastey,
Cty Assr's file Architect/Designer

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The house at 548 California Avenue is mainly significant because it was built for and occupied nearly 40 years by William J. Graham, a major figure in the history of Nevada gaming, who also was prominent in other colorful aspects of 20th century Nevada history. The tudor revival house is noteworthy for its solid construction, excellent craftsmanship and unusually good state of preservation, as well.

Graham's gaming career began at age 18 in Tonopah, where he ran the Big Casino Club. In 1922, he and lifelong partner James McKay bought and operated "The Willows" in Reno, which became nationally known as a gathering place for the divorce colony of the time. Later, Graham and McKay established the famous Bank Club at Center and Douglas Alley in downtown Reno. They also owned the Fordonia Building at East Second and Center Streets in Reno which housed the Club Fortune, plus the headquarters for both the Republican and the Democratic parties. Graham is said to have had influence with powerful politicians, including Senator McCarran, Governors Pittman and Russell and Reno Mayor Edwin E. Roberts.

The notorious Stockade ("cribs") red light district was built in 1923 by the Riverside Securities Company, of which Graham and McKay were the principal stockholders. They leased the site from George Wingfield's Riverside Mill Company for this venture, despite the fact that six months earlier the Reno City Council had enacted an anti-prostitution law. By the end of the year, the law had been liberalized and the Stockade began a thriving business which continued until World War II, even after 1938 when Graham and McKay were finally (after three tries) convicted of mail fraud. Senator McCarran obtained a full pardon for Graham from President Harry Truman.

Graham and McKay also were prominent bootleggers in northwestern Nevada and they promoted famous prizefights, including the 1931 Baer-Uzcudun Reno fight, in partnership with Jack Dempsey.

Remnants of many aspects of Graham's activities were still in the house when the Leland's acquired it: a champagne glass etched "The Willows", bootleg liquor and the makings, sawed-off shotgun holsters, photographs of prizefights and racehorses, marked ballots (with rubber stamp) for the 1926 general election, cards suspiciously arranged by face value rather than in decks, and many other items.

No information was found on George A. Schastey, the architect.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheets

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1
 UTM REFERENCES

Quadrangle scale 7.5'
 Quadrangle name Reno

A 11 257800 4378070
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING
 C

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING
 D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 6 and 7 in Block 1 as shown on the map of NEWLANDS COMPANY MARKER TRACT SUBDIVISION NO. 1, filed in the office of the County recorder of Washoe County, Nevada, on July 13, 1907.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
none			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Joy Leland

10/14/82

ORGANIZATION

DATE

548 California Avenue

323-2757

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Reno

Nevada 89509

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

James M. Hamrick

TITLE Alternate SHPO

DATE Jan. 13, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Linda McClelland

DATE 3/7/83

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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2/14/82 "Reno: State Prizefight Capital in Years Past" P. 4G.

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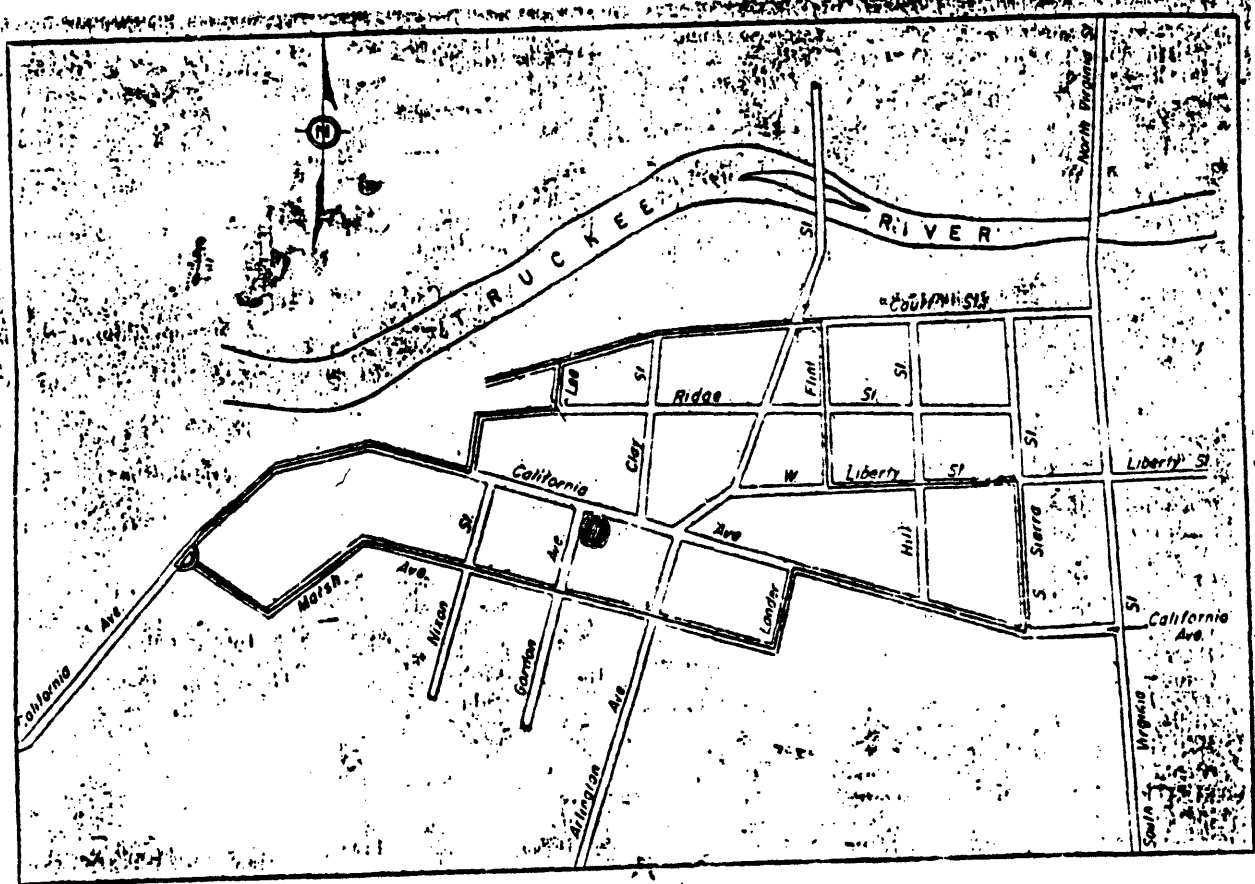
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NEWLANDS HEIGHTS
Reno, Nevada

WILLIAM J. GRAHAM HOUSE
548 California Avenue ●