

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 00000341

Date Listed: 04/06/2000

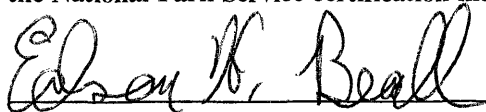
Withers Log House  
Property Name

Washoe  
County

NV  
State

N/A  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
Signature of the Keeper

7.6.00  
Date of Action

=====  
=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

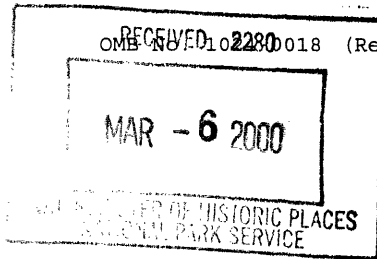
Section 8: Areas of Significance

To facilitate data searches, "Other/Tourism" is coded as "Entertainment/Recreation" in the National Register Information System (NRIS).

This information was confirmed by the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office.

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**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)



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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Withers Log Home

other names/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number 344 Wassou not for publication N/A

city or town Crystal Bay vicinity N/A

state Nevada code NV county Washoe code 031 zip code 89402

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination      request for determination of eligibility, meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide X locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ronald M. Jones SHPO  
Signature of certifying official/Title

28 February 2000  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

Elson H. Beall 4/6/00

[Signature]  
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing. N/A

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Rustic

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Rock  
roof Composition Shingles  
walls Log  
other Wood Shingle

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See continuation sheets.

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### 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Other/tourism

Period of Significance 1931

Significant Dates 1931

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Architect unknown/possibly Frederic DeLongchamps

Builder unknown/possible Norman Biltz

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See continuation sheets.

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### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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**Bibliography** See continuation sheet.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other: Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property 0.32 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing	
1	<u>11</u>	<u>0758823</u>	<u>4347115</u>	3	_____
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) See continuation sheet.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Bonnie W. Snyder, Principal  
organization P.S. Preservation Services date December 1999  
street & number P.O. Box 191275 telephone 916-736-1918  
city or town Sacramento state CA zip code 95819

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Carole Diamond Trust  
street & number 344 Wassou telephone 775-832-5242  
city or town Crystal Bay state NV zip code 89402

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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The Withers Log Home, built c. 1931, was originally a rustic vacation home that now serves as a year-round residence in the North Lake Tahoe community of Crystal Bay, Nevada. It is situated on a steep hillside overlooking Lake Tahoe (photo 8). The home is a one and one-half story structure with an attic story currently being converted into living space. A steep main side gable is crossed by lower gables of the same pitch giving the house a cruciform roofline (photo 1). The house is constructed of logs, with wood shingles cladding the framed gable ends, and unpeeled (bark-covered) half logs shirting covering the post and beam footing(photo 2). The logs are slightly squared and do not cross in a conventional manner; instead, where alternate layers cross the space is filled with a log that butts up to the crossing log (photo 3). The roof is clad in composition shingles, cut to a semi-octagonal decorative pattern. The window fenestration is typically grouped six-light wood casement. The original windows have been replaced with new windows that are accurate reproductions of the originals.

The house is set in a highly natural setting, surrounded by mature first- and second-growth pine and fir trees, and large granite boulders. Landscaping is minimal, comprised mainly of small landscaped terraces above the house; a small watercourse splashes diminutive waterfalls down the slope above the house in summer months. The home is entered at the west, street-facing, elevation after descending steep steps cut into the living granite boulders that comprise much of the setting uphill from the house. A two-story, shed-roof extension is centered in the façade (photo 4). The semi-octagonal entry door is situated to the right of the center of the west façade under a secondary shed roof, the southwest corner of which is supported on a log post (photo 5).

The north and south elevations are similar. The walls are on a single plane from the ground to the gable peak. Below the main log walls, the bark skirting meets the ground at an angle. On both elevations, the first and second floor windows are six-light wood casement, while the attic story has new window sash, topped by triangular clerestory windows that follow the line of the gable (photo 6).

On the east or lakeside elevation the bark skirting is being changed to native rock. A recessed verandah, supported on a log lintel and single and triple log posts, spans the first floor. Its balustrade and rail are of small diameter log pieces (photo 7). Behind the verandah are two French doors interspersed with three 18-light fixed pane "picture" windows. New windows have been inserted at the second floor, and at the attic level a new "picture" window is flanked by sash angled to fit the gable line. This large window, lighting new living space in the attic, is topped by triangular clerestory windows (photo 7).

#### Interior

The interior walls are of unsheathed logs set off with light-colored chinking. Vertical logs form corners, flank the windows and doors, and serve as corbels and knee braces supporting the ceiling beams (photo 9). The broad, clear-finished boards of the ceilings are finished with tooled textures whose patterns vary from room to room. The first floor is on

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two different levels with three steps leading from the entry vestibule down to the living room. The entry, kitchen, and study are on the upper level, while the living room and dining room are on lower portion. The centerpiece of the living room is a rock fireplace in an inglenook (photo 10). Doors between rooms are of log sections (photo 11). Original electric candle sconces hang on the log corbels (photo 12). On the north end of the first floor, stairs lead up to the second floor (photo 13).

The railing of the second floor landing uses curved "twigs" as balusters (photo 14). The walls on the second floor are paneled in knotty pine, and doors on the east side of the hall are carefully set flush within the wall. Openings in the wall and floor provide overlooks to the first floor (photo 15). In the family room a cobblestone chimney face and hearth, laid up by Greg Beck, a well known mason in the area at the time, provides both flue entry for a heating stove and a reflective surface for the stove's heat. (photo 16). A bath and laundry room are ingeniously concealed behind hinged bookcases on the west side.

At present, the attic story is also being converted into living space.

#### Garage

A new two-story garage with a studio apartment on the second floor sits to the south west of the house at street level. Of frame construction with clear-finished wood exterior, its design compliments that of the house, while its placement at the edge of the setting is sufficiently removed from the house that it does not diminish the relationship between house and setting.

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### Historical Background/Context

The Withers home is both architecturally and historically significant. It is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C as an excellent example of the rustic tradition at Lake Tahoe. The house is a modest, but well-designed and beautifully detailed log vacation home. It is also eligible under criterion A, as one of the first such homes in the Crystal Bay Corporation's subdivision, a key factor in the growth of tourism on Lake Tahoe's north shore.

Man's intervention on Lake Tahoe in the historic period has manifested itself in three areas of endeavor: transportation, logging, and recreation. Transportation was the first, because it related to immigration to California in the years surrounding the Gold Rush. However, while the immigration routes around the lake were lower in elevation and shorter in distance, they were more difficult because they required two mountain crossings. Wagon trains coming west via these routes had to cross the Carson Range on the east side of the lake, then scale the Sierra on the west side. Thus other routes were more commonly used.

When immigration into California largely ceased as gold fever gave way to the Nevada silver boom, the immigration became emigration and roads *from* California to Nevada's Comstock took on greater importance. Of the several roads constructed during these early years, it was the Placerville Toll Road--often called the Bonanza Road--which had the most influence on the present-day settlement pattern of Lake Tahoe. The Bonanza Road was not a single road, but a system of toll roads that together formed a turnpike between Placerville, Genoa, Carson City, and the Comstock cities. This road constituted the primary route from California to the Comstock, and was the predecessor to the three main highways in Lake Tahoe: U.S Highway 50, California Highway 89, and Nevada Highway 19.

During the 1860s ranching, dairying and lumbering increased in the area. The Bonanza Road and the several other routes provided the transportation for goods to and from the mines. Soon inns that had served teamsters and miners began to accommodate seasonal visitors. Among the first to use the area for escape from the summer heat and the bustle of urban life were miners from Virginia City, Gold Hill, and Silver City. In 1864 the Bailey Hotel was built in Tahoe City. The Grand Central followed not long afterward. The hotels were also patronized by men from the Nevada lumber camps who returned with glowing tales of the fishing and hunting at the lake. This was the beginning of the resort industry in Lake Tahoe. It was not only the loggers who spoke glowingly of the virtues of Lake Tahoe as a resort area. Mark Twain and Thomas Starr King both added their sentiments in the public arena. Starr King, the noted San Francisco preacher, spoke of the lake in one of his sermons: "It is precisely as if we were looking upon an immense floor of Lapis Lazuli set within a ring of flaming emeralds."<sup>1</sup>

Logging operations around the lake primarily supplied lumber for the Comstock cities and mines. The Glenbrook logging operation, owned by the Bliss family, was the largest and most famous. In fact it became a point of interest for students of lumbering, businessmen, and sightseers. The sightseers particularly enjoyed the trips on the company's narrow

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<sup>1</sup> John and Ricky Warriner, *Lake Tahoe: an illustrated guide and history*, San Francisco: Fearon Publishers, 1958, p. 45.



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gauge railroad. Although it was primarily a lumber train without passenger accommodations, the spectacular views made up for the discomfort riding on top of a load of timber.<sup>2</sup> Loggers and their families from Glenbrook also took the train on weekends to have picnics in the area.<sup>3</sup>

When lumbering declined for the Bliss operation, one of the sons cleared away the traces of the mills and built a "handsome and commodious modern hotel on the most scenic point," and turned the Glenbrook Inn into a popular lakeside resort.<sup>4</sup> By 1871 vacationers to Tahoe could take the train from the Bay Area to Truckee and arrive by stage at the Grand Central Hotel in Tahoe City. In 1872 the steamer Governor Stanford met the travelers at the wharf in Tahoe City to transport them to other points on the lake. During the 1870s and 1880s, the steamer also provided recreation. Tourists could take all-day sightseeing trips around the lake, entertained by the ship's orchestra for dinner and dancing.<sup>5</sup>

The principal productive period of the Comstock ended in 1888, and by that time the resort industry was becoming increasingly important. The Southern Pacific Railroad, formerly the Central Pacific, brought tourists to Truckee and then by stagecoach (later by train) to Tahoe City, where they could travel by steamer to other lakeside sites.<sup>6</sup> The basic land-use pattern in the post-Comstock years (after 1890) was a "mixture of commercial resort business, agricultural production supplying food for the resorts and estates, the seasonal use of pasture lands for beef cattle, the growth of many large private holdings or estates, and the residual holdings of the old Comstock Era lumber companies."<sup>7</sup> With the waning of the Comstock and its need for resources supplied by the Tahoe Basin, the lakefront became the focus of true seasonal resort development. While during the 1880s over-water spur tracks and sawmills cluttered the water's edge, by the 1890s these gave way to an array of hotels and casinos, and over-water club houses and other fashionable structures dotted the shoreline.

This development was no doubt aided by the studies and writings about Lake Tahoe of John Le Conte, in 1883-1884. Le Conte was a professor at the State University at Berkeley (now the University of California, Berkeley). Le Conte made physical studies of the area as well as aesthetic observations. In flowery 19th-century language, Le Conte prophetically wrote of the Lake:

The shores of Lake Tahoe afford the most beautiful sites for summer residences. When the states of California and Nevada become more populous, the delicious summer climate of this elevated region, the exquisite beauty of the surrounding scenery, and the admirable facilities afforded for fishing and other

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<sup>2</sup> David F. Myrick, *Railroads of Nevada and Eastern California, Vol. I: The Northern Roads*, Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1990, p. 422.

<sup>3</sup> Myrick, p. 420.

<sup>4</sup> James, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> Warriner, p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> Victor Goodwin, *Cultural and Historical Significance of the Lake Tahoe Region*, South Lake Tahoe: Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1971, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Goodwin, p. 15.

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aquatic sports, will dot the shores of this mountain Lake with cottages of those who are able to combine health with pleasure.<sup>8</sup>

While the beauty of lake beckoned, transportation provided the key to tourism.

Whereas until the 1870's the lake had been the exclusive domain of tugboats and cordwood barges, it was now inundated with dozens of steamers and launches, passenger vessels and pleasure craft. The iron-hulled *Meteor*, once the fastest tugboat on the lake, was now decked out and pressed into service, while others like *Governor Stanford*, *Lily Van*, *Mamie* and the luxurious 85-foot *Tallac* continued to ferry guests around. And, launched in 1896, the 165-foot, 200-passenger, steel-hulled steamer *Tahoe* even captured the hearts of the Lake Tahoe community.

The 'Queen of the Lake', as the *Tahoe* was so fondly called, ruled the Lake Tahoe waters for 44 years, proudly showing its passengers around, and ferrying to various points on the lake—including Glenbrook, Brockway, Tahoe Tavern, McKinney's and Tallac; for during the 1890's these were the places of prominence at the lake.

On shore, well-heeled crowds flocked to 'Lucky' Baldwin's Tallac Hotel to sample opulence and the finest cuisine in the continent, and to revel in the widest selection of recreational activities on the lake, ranging from fishing, back-packing, hunting and promenading, to swimming, horse-back riding, tennis and racquet-ball. Guests were taken on excursion trips aboard the *Mamie*, a top-of-the-list pleasure craft with a flotilla of twenty-five fishing boats. Guides were provided for most fishing, hunting and hiking trips. And at the hotel, even illegal gambling flourished.<sup>9</sup>

The pace and spirit of the "Gay 90s" continued through the turn-of-the-century, and the decades that followed. Summer-home developments that had been fashionable since the 1880s, now mushroomed into full-fledged summer-home colonies.

Winter vacationing at the lake first began in 1908. Horse-drawn sleighs provided transportation from the railroad town of Truckee to the Tahoe Tavern (also built by the Bliss family), just south of Tahoe City, while the steamer *Tahoe* made the cross-lake connection to the south shore. The Tahoe Tavern was by then the most patronized resort at the lake, catering to the affluent San Francisco sets.<sup>10</sup>

When George Wharton James wrote his famous book about Lake Tahoe, *Lake of the Sky*, in 1914, he listed a twenty resorts around the lake. These included the three major resorts of Glenbrook, with the Glenbrook Inn, the Tallac House, and Tahoe City with the Grand

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<sup>8</sup> George Wharton James, *Lake of the Sky*, reprint of 1915 edition, Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1992, p. 205.

<sup>9</sup> *The Complete Lake Tahoe Guidebook*. Tahoe City: Indian Chief Publishing House, 1984.

<sup>10</sup> *The Complete Lake Tahoe Guidebook*.

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Central Hotel and later the Tahoe Tavern. The resorts were like small villages, largely self-sufficient and providing their own food, as did the larger estates.<sup>11</sup>

The first and best-known 20th-century railroads in the Tahoe-Truckee area was the narrow gauge Lake Tahoe Railway and Transportation Company. The LTR&TCo's miniature line ran between Truckee and Tahoe City. The railroad was constructed by the Bliss family of the Glenbrook lumber interests. They utilized excess material from various lumber railroads in the area, abandoned because of depletion of timber. The new line, which opened on May 1, 1900, was a tourist railroad from the outset, although it also hauled some freight--mostly forest products. It operated only during the tourist season, from May 15th to November 15th, and the mainstay of its business was "the great American tourist."<sup>12</sup> When they arrived at Lake Tahoe, "trains ran out on a long pier so passengers could be delivered right at boat side; then the graceful and stately steamer *Tahoe* would ply the waters for pick-ups and deliveries at the various resorts along the shore line."<sup>13</sup>

Passenger business on the LTR&TCo increased until improved highways allowed tourists to drive to the lake. The railroad ran four scheduled round trips daily in 1915, but by 1920 they had cut down to three. David Myrick writes:

Excursions were always a popular pastime; many were operated from Reno during the 1900's [sic], and by May 1923 a circle tour was evolved at an advertised price of \$7.25. Starting from Reno, the tourist took the SP to Truckee, rode the narrow gauge to Tahoe City, the steamer to Glenbrook, a bus to Carson City, then the V&T [Virginia and Truckee] back home--a variety not frequently encountered, either in transportation or in scenery.<sup>14</sup>

In 1925 the LTR&TCo leased the railroad to Southern Pacific. SP advertised the line nationwide, announcing that the old "American Canyon Route" was now the "Lake Tahoe Route" and would be converted to standard gauge. The track conversion was completed May 1, 1926. A balloon loop at the Tahoe Tavern allowed for the trains to be turned. During the summer season, a tourist could ride an overnight Pullman from the Oakland Pier to Tahoe City.<sup>15</sup> By 1926 winter vacations at Lake Tahoe had gained such popularity that Southern Pacific introduced the "Snow Ball" specials to railroad-eager tourists from San Francisco. West of the Tahoe Tavern, where the Granlibakken ski area is now situated, a ski jump and toboggan hill opened up new opportunities for winter sports.<sup>16</sup> This line of the Southern Pacific operated until November 10, 1943, finally put out of business by automotive transportation and wartime exigencies.

At the end of 1928, the California Division of Highways summed up its recent improvements in the highways at Lake Tahoe in its publication *California Highways and*

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<sup>11</sup> James, *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> Myrick, p. 430.

<sup>13</sup> Myrick, p. 430.

<sup>14</sup> Myrick, p. 436.

<sup>15</sup> Myrick, p. 436.

<sup>16</sup> *The Complete Lake Tahoe Guidebook*.

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*Public Works.* At that point Lake Tahoe was accessible to Californians by two main routes: the Lake Tahoe Wagon Road via Placerville, discussed previously, and the highway that arrived at Truckee via Auburn. Once at the lake, 53 miles of highway went from the Nevada state line near Brockway, around the lake north west and south. Before 1913, when the roads became state highways, it had not been possible to drive through on the west side. The improvements in the road were given impetus by increased traffic. Over 1000% increases were seen in various areas from 1926-1927 and 1927-1928. From 1924 to 1928, traffic at the north end increased 1,530%.<sup>17</sup> In 1927, 14 miles of highway between Truckee and Tahoe City, and 12 miles between Tahoe City and the state line at Brockway were improved, as was the 11.3-mile stretch of road between Tahoe City and Meeks Bay.<sup>18</sup>

Tourists who then reach the lake on the improved roads, tended to stay for shorter periods and not only accepted, but sought, more primitive accommodations. This led to the establishment of new resorts and auto camps, such as Camp Richardson. Camp Richardson offered small rustic cabins to middle-class tourists for weekend or longer stays.<sup>19</sup> Improved road and acquaintance with the area afforded by the hotels and resorts undoubtedly played a large role in inspiring vacationers to build their own summer cabins at the lake. But this process was aided by the same sort of promotional schemes that railroads used to get settlers to their newly established California cities in the first place.

### Crystal Bay Corporation

In 1927, there arrived on the scene in north Lake Tahoe a young man named Norman Biltz. Biltz was born in Connecticut in 1902, of wealthy parents. He left the east coast for California in about 1920, where in his first few years of residence he held a wide variety of jobs, mostly menial. In 1927 he became associated with Robert Sherman, a wealthy San Francisco real estate promoter. As Sherman's partner in his Brockway-Tahoe Vista Corporation, Biltz embarked on selling land in north Lake Tahoe to San Franciscans, and acted as contractor for the original Cal-Neva Lodge in Crystal Bay.<sup>20</sup> Sherman built the Cal-Neva as a guest house for prospective buyers of his Lake Tahoe real estate. But Biltz' partnership with Sherman ended in 1928 when Sherman went bankrupt. Sherman gave Biltz the Cal-Neva in lieu of money Sherman owed him.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>W. Haselwood, "Improved Highways Aid Development at Lake Tahoe," *California Highways and Public Works*, (Nov.-Dec. 1928) p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Haselwood, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> C. Elizabeth Raymond, "A Place One Never Tires Of: Changing Landscape and Image at Lake Tahoe," in Peter Goin, *Stopping Time: a rephotographic survey of Lake Tahoe*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> "Norman Biltz," *Sierra Magazine*, Special Issue "Men Who Match Our Mountains" 1963, p. 50; W.K. Bixler, *A Dozen Sierra Success Stories: Twelve Individualists of Our Time*. A Sierra Publication, 1964. p. 28; Edward B. Scott, *The Saga of Lake Tahoe*, Volume II, Crystal Bay, Nevada: Sierra-Tahoe Publishing Co., 1973. P. 125.

<sup>21</sup> Norman Biltz, "Memoirs of 'Duke of Nevada:' Developments of Lake Tahoe, California and Nevada; Reminiscences [sic] of Nevada Political and Financial Life", vol. 1., Oral History Project, Western Studies

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Biltz borrowed \$50,000, incorporated the Crystal Bay Corporation, bought thousands of acres at north Lake Tahoe from the Blisses, and struck out on his own promotional odyssey. Understanding that the new tax laws in California and other states would tax the wealthy unduly, he saw the advantages to them in Nevada's far more lenient laws. He studied 200 multi-millionaires with an eye to selling them land in Nevada so they could escape the taxes in their home states. He got the support of then-governor Fred Balzar, who gave him a letter that essentially said that "he was sure [Biltz and his associates] would state the advantageous tax laws of Nevada honestly, but if [they] made a mistake, he would attempt to make [the state's tax laws] fit [their] mistake."<sup>22</sup> They produced and sent to each prospect a special magazine called *Nevada: The Last Frontier*, which they bound in leather and embossed with the prospect's name. Biltz learned the likes and dislikes of every one of the prospective buyers and after making the sale, worked to keep them happy so they would stay in Nevada.<sup>23</sup>

The first millionaire he brought to Lake Tahoe was Jim Stack, who had made his fortune in stock holdings of Quaker Oats. Biltz later recalled that first sale:

So what happens? We get a snowstorm--about eight inches of snow--and we can't move. And we need this sale so bad. So what the hell are we going to do now? I thought, 'Well, by God, I can carry him over there,' because Jim had had a stroke and was partially paralyzed on the left side. I said, 'Jim, get up on my back. By God, we've come all this way together to see this property!' So I packed him over there, and packed him back. We sold him fifty thousand dollars' worth of property that day.<sup>24</sup>

To get Stack to stay, Biltz lived with him for six months. This was typical of the lengths he went to convince his buyers of the advantage of living in Nevada. He took the buyers hunting, fishing, golfing. He spent day, weeks, even months keeping the buyers happy. He started a construction company and built their houses for them, even found them servants. The theory was that once sold on Nevada, the buyers would go back to their home states and become salesmen for the state themselves. Among the millionaires Biltz sold Tahoe property to were Max Fleischmann, of Fleischmann's yeast, E.L. Cord, creator of the Cord automobile, the family of E.W. Scripps, the newspaper publisher, Cornelius Vanderbilt III, Rex Bell and several other Hollywood stars.<sup>25</sup> All in all he sold Lake Tahoe property to approximately 75 millionaires.

In about 1930 Biltz married Esther Auchincloss, aunt to Jacqueline Kennedy. Over the years he became very influential in Nevada politics and very wealthy, with interests in numerous areas ranging from developing, to ranching, to mining and oil leasing. When

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Center, Desert Research Institute, University of Nevada System, Reno. MS,UNR Library Special Collections, p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> Barbara and Myrick Land, *A Short History of Reno*, Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1995, p.59.

<sup>23</sup> Land, pp. 59-60; Bixler, pp. 29-30.

<sup>24</sup> Land, p. 60.

<sup>25</sup> Land, p. 60.

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ranchers in Nevada lost their land during the depression, Biltz sold the ranches to wealthy men from out of state (including Bing Crosby), putting the land back in service and money back into Nevada's economy. He helped prepare and distribute the "One Sound State" program booklet, promoting Nevada nationwide, and produced a full color magazine-type publication, entitled "Nevada, The Last Frontier," to lure the nation's wealthy to the state.<sup>26</sup> He was close friends with many of the state's movers and shakers, as well as with influential men at the national level. When Fortune magazine wrote a story about him, they dubbed him the "Duke of Nevada."

On August 14, 1931, Biltz sold two lots of the Crystal Bay Corporation land to Katherine Withers of Reno. Mrs. Withers had come to Reno, Nevada in 1922, most likely to secure a divorce. Two years later she married T.L. Withers, a Reno attorney. She had two children from her former marriage, and she and T.L. had a daughter. Mrs. Withers was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1892. She graduated from Miss Chapin's School in New York City and was a member of the Junior League of Pittsburgh. As a Reno resident, Mrs. Withers continued her activities in volunteer organizations. She was founder of the Red Cross Canteen Corps during World War II, and a charter member of St. Mary's Hospital Guild. She started the gift shop at St. Mary's and was its manager during its first seven years of operation. She also originated the St. Mary's Ball program, which was one of the Guild's largest fund-raising projects.<sup>27</sup> Upon her death in 1967, Katherine Withers' husband inherited the Lake Tahoe property, then deeded it to their daughter, Janet Withers. Janet transferred it to Theodore and Jeri Powers in 1973.<sup>28</sup>

### Log Cabin Ethic

The choice of log construction for the Withers Home was likely a simple one. Several factors suggested the choice: there were log homes around the lake already; log construction fit into the natural environment, and during this period was considered "rustic" and appropriate for vacation cottages in forested areas; log houses and cabins were being featured in numerous magazines as the ideal vacation home; and the National Park Service was utilizing rustic architecture, including log cabins, in its park structures. Americans' love affair with the log cabin has a long history. The log cabin symbolizes and idealizes the pioneer spirit and the settling of our country. Its romantic nature speaks to our hearts.

The large homes that had by this time been built along the west shore--such as the Hellman/Ehrman Estate (1903), the Pope Estate (1894), the Heller Estate (1924), and the home of "Lucky" Baldwin's daughter, Dextra, (1923-24) at Tallac--utilized the rustic idiom.<sup>29</sup> The Hellman/Ehrman Estate, built on the site of the former "luxury hotel" Bellevue, was the summer home of wealthy San Francisco financier Isaias W. Hellman. While this sumptuous home, designed by San Francisco architect Walter D. Bliss, son of the Glenbrook Blisses, was not of log construction, the huge posts supporting the long porch are unpeeled (bark-clad) logs with set-in unpeeled log shoulders. The other

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<sup>26</sup> Bixler, p. 33.

<sup>27</sup> "Katherine Withers" Death Notice, *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 15, 1967, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> Title records for County of Washoe, Nevada.

<sup>29</sup> All are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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structures on the property have more rustic qualities than the main house. The most rustic is a woodshed with cedar bark exterior cladding, laid up vertically. Also on the property is the Phipps log cabin, the home of the first settler to the area, who homesteaded 160 acres in 1872.<sup>30</sup>

The Pope, Heller, and Baldwin Estates, located at Tallac, are also characterized by various degrees of rusticity, from sophisticated rustication to romanticized bark and log structures. Again on the main houses, large posts supporting porches are typically peeled or unpeeled logs. Dextra Baldwin used half logs for her home and full log construction for her guest cabins, while the other estates employed log construction mainly for outbuildings. The boat house on the Heller Estate is clad in cedar bark laid up vertically, while the "Honeymoon cottage" on the Pope Estate is of log construction, with curvilinear branches decoratively filling the gables over the porch.<sup>31</sup> The latter structure, especially, epitomizes the rustic romance of log construction in a mountain setting.

Tahoe Meadows, an early vacation home subdivision in South Lake Tahoe was subdivided in 1924 and incorporated in 1925. The modest homes and cabins built in this subdivision were generally rustic, and often of log. Two of these cottages were designed by Bernard Maybeck, one of California's most famous architects.<sup>32</sup>

During the years from 1929 to 1932 several popular magazines, including *The House Beautiful*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *American Home*, *Western Homes and Gardens* (*Sunset*), *House and Garden*, *Good Housekeeping*, and even *Popular Mechanics*, and *Popular Science* ran articles recommending log cabins as the ideal vacation home in the mountains.<sup>33</sup> The articles glorified the log cabin and several of them included not only plans, but also drawings of how to make notches and construct with logs.<sup>34</sup> In addition, in

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<sup>30</sup> Allen W. Welts, "Phipps Cabin-Hellman-Ehrman Estate District," Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, MS, State Office of Historic Preservation, Sacramento, California.

<sup>31</sup> Paula Boghosian, et al., "Baldwin Estate," Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, MS, State Office of Historic Preservation, Sacramento, California; Paula Boghosian, et al., "Pope Estate," Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, MS, State Office of Historic Preservation, Sacramento, California; Paula Boghosian, et al., "Heller Estate," Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, MS, State Office of Historic Preservation, Sacramento, California.

<sup>32</sup> Sally B. Woodbridge, "Tahoe Meadows," Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, MS, State Office of Historic Preservation, Sacramento, California.

<sup>33</sup> These were the years which were researched for this study, there may have been similar articles for the years before and after these dates as well.

<sup>34</sup> *The House Beautiful*, "A Little Cabin of Logs" May 1929, pp.622-625, "Log Camps" July 1929, pp. 67, 98; *Ladies' Home Journal*, "Log Cabins and Summer Cottages" April, 1931, p. 88, "Two Log-Siding Cabins" May, 1931, p. 93, "Summer Cottages and Cabins" June, 1932, p. 103; *American Home*, "A lodge in some vast wilderness" May 1929, pp.175-176, "How we built our log cabin. May 1929, pp. 187, 230, 234, "The lure of the log cabin" August 1930, pp. 495-496, 522, 524; *Western Homes and Gardens*, "From Saturday Noon to Sunday Night: There is no place like a log cabin" March 1929, pp.31-32, "The History of Our Cabin In the Hills" April 1930, pp. 13-14; *House and Garden*, "The ageless charm of log cabins" May 1931, pp. 86-87, 112, 114; *Good Housekeeping*, "Remodeling an Old Log Cabin for \$2500 Or Building a New One for Only \$4200," June 1931 pp. 66, 120; *Popular Mechanics*, "Our Second Most

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1935 the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service spelled out their ethic for building structures in the parks in a publication called *Park Structures and Facilities*. The main tenet of their philosophy was that the structures should be subordinate to, and in harmony with the environment in which they are set. This was to be accomplished, in part, by the use of native materials. In forested areas, those materials were logs, lumber, and rock. The publication covered all types of structures from buildings and bridges to picnic tables and drinking fountains, and included plans and detail drawings for most of the facilities illustrated. Also included was a discussion of log construction that gave detailed advice regarding the scale and type of logs to select.<sup>35</sup> Thus, property owners, their architects, and builders had good examples at hand in popular magazines and throughout the country's parks, of well-designed rustic architecture from which to draw their own inspiration, ideas, and designs.

### Craftsman Ethic

Log construction, although it is an independent ethic, also fit into the Craftsman ethic that was the fashion in the just-previous decades. While the Craftsman movement began in England as a reaction to the Industrial Revolution which had idealized mass production, it achieved its zenith in the United States. Craftsman homes were organic. The practitioners of Craftsman design espoused the use of natural materials and hand-craftsmanship. The homes exposed their structure and were carefully detailed. Craftsman interiors dispensed with unnecessary partitions and walls to introduce a free-flowing roominess. Of the Craftsman style house Gustav Stickley, leader of the movement in America wrote:

...a house, whatever its dimensions, should have plenty of free space unencumbered by unnecessary partitions or over-much furniture. Therefore we have made the general living rooms as large as possible and not too much separated one from the other. It seems to us much more friendly, homelike and comfortable to have one big living room into which one steps directly from the entrance door,--or from a small vestibule if the climate demands such a protection,--and to have this living room the place where all the business and pleasure of the common family life may be carried on. ...The big hospitable fireplace is almost a necessity, for the hearth-stone is always the center of true home life, and the very spirit of home seems to be lacking when a register or radiator tries ineffectually to take the place of a glowing grate or a crackling leaping fire of logs.

Take a house planned in this way, with a big living room made comfortable and homelike and beautiful with its great fireplace, open staircase, casement

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Popular Plan Now Developed for Log Cabin," May 1929, pp.879-880; *Popular Science Monthly*, "Log Cabins Anyone Can Build," July 1931, pp. 92-93.

<sup>35</sup> United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Park Structures and Facilities*, 1935. Passim.



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windows...fill this room with soft rich restful color, based upon the mellow radiance of the wood tones and sparkling into the jeweled high lights....<sup>36</sup>

Stickley's ideals, published in *Craftsman Magazine* beginning in 1901, quickly spread from coast to coast. Craftsman designs and ideals were featured in mainstream American architectural periodicals and were the subject of numerous books.

The Craftsman philosophy, based as it was on natural materials and rusticity, also fit very well into building in the mountain and lake setting. Craftsman ideals were easy to incorporate with log construction, and even Stickley saw fit to espouse log cabin construction in *Craftsman Homes* in 1909. The book featured two log house designs. One, first published in *The Craftsman* in 1907, featured a living room entered from a vestibule, with a large stone fireplace with inglenook, and a broad porch in the place of the balcony of the Withers Home. Of this design Stickley wrote:

So many people like log houses for summer homes that we give here a design that would harmonize with the most primitive surroundings. At the same time it is so carefully planned and so well constructed that it could be used as a regular dwelling all the year round. ...It is essentially a log house for woodland life, and it looks just that; yet it is a warm, comfortable, roomy building....<sup>37</sup>

The rustic mountain home became an individual subject within the first decade of the 20th century, as the editors of *Architects' and Builders' Magazine* published *Bungalows, Camps and Mountain Houses*. The book's subtitle reveals the nationwide aspect of the interest in the subject:

Consisting of a large variety of designs by a number of architects, showing buildings that have been erected in all parts of the country. Many of these are intended for summer use, while other examples are of structures erected in California and the Southern States for permanent residences; also Camps, Hunters' Lodges, Log Cabins, etc., are included, suggestive for vacation use in woods and mountains.

The book features a number of log house designs, all of which reflect Stickley's Craftsman ethic. Several exhibit features included in the Withers Home two decades later: log construction, open living room with great stone fireplace, open staircase, shingle siding, casement windows, and the like, and reflect the notion that log house design was of sufficient stature to be the work of professional architects.<sup>38</sup> By the time the Withers Home

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<sup>36</sup> Gustav Stickley, *Craftsman Homes: Architecture and Furnishings of the American Arts and Crafts Movement*, 1909, reprinted 1979, New York: Dover Publications, p.196.

<sup>37</sup> Stickley, p.74.

<sup>38</sup> *Bungalows, Camps and Mountain Houses*, New York: William T. Comstock, 1908. "A Log House of Modern Plan," J. Calvin Stevens, Architect, Portland, Maine, pp.38-9; "Log Houses Along the Lake Short, with the Evergreen Background of the Woods," p.73; "Log Cabin, Great River, N.Y.," J.H. Green, Architect; "A Lodge of Bungalow Type--This is a Mansion of the Woods," pp.78-9.

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was built in 1931, the Craftsman ethic was well established at Lake Tahoe: the buildings on the Heller and Baldwin Estates at Tallac incorporated Craftsman styling, while no less a West Coast Craftsman master than Bernard Maybeck had established it in his designs at Tahoe Meadows.

### Architecture of the Withers Home

The Withers home is an outstanding example of log architecture in a residential structure. It spans the distance between large estates and small cabins. Its understated primitivism conveys the appropriateness and romance of the rustic in its forest setting, while providing the occupants with the charm and coziness demanded of a vacation home. The detailing of both the exterior and the interior is expertly designed and executed. This is displayed in the mixture of exterior cladding materials (log, wood shingle, and bark), the slight squaring of the logs, the soldier-coursed log muntins between the grouped windows, and the shaped composition shingles on the roof. The interior is a showcase of carefully-designed rusticity that perfectly reflects Gustav Stickley's Craftsman ideals: the open yet intimate living room entered from a vestibule, the centerpiece of which is a massive stone fireplace with inglenook; light-colored chinking accentuates the rich warmth of the clear-finished log walls; the door surrounds are vertical log posts; the stair balustrades utilize curved natural branches; ceiling boards are tooled to enhance the rustic effect, and those in the living room become a myriad of sparkling facets reflecting firelight from the fireplace; throughout the house, original wrought-iron electric candle sconces provide a soft glow appropriate to the warmth of the log walls; the upstairs wood stove sits in front of a chimney face of cobblestones laid up by a well-known local craftsman; interior walls of clear-finished knotty pine add their warm color and add to the naturalness of the whole. Coupled with the balcony, banks of casement windows provide a constant link to the beauty of the site and setting--carrying on the ethic of indoor-outdoor living that had begun and flourished in the Craftsman period.

It appears that the log house on the property was constructed for Mrs. Withers following her purchase of the property from the Crystal Bay Corporation in 1931. A 1931-1932 map of Crystal Bay depicts the Withers home was one of the largest of only about ten then extant in the subdivision. The plan of the house and the detailing of both the interior and exterior suggests it was designed by an architect. Since Biltz established a construction company to build houses for his clients, it is likely that his company built this house. As Biltz later retained one Nevada's most renowned and prolific architects, Frederick DeLongchamps, to design a stillborn ski resort project at Cal-Neva, it is possible that Biltz may also have earlier employed DeLongchamps for his vacation home construction business at Crystal Bay, and the Withers house may be attributed to him. DeLongchamps is known to have designed several homes at Lake Tahoe in the "resort rustic" style,<sup>39</sup> including one for Senator (later, Governor) Tasker L. Oddie, in 1932. That home utilized many of the same features as the Withers home, such as bark cladding and grouped casement windows. In 1935, two years before Biltz' ski resort project, DeLongchamps

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<sup>39</sup> "Resort rustic" was DeLongchamps' term.

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designed a two-story home at Lake Tahoe for O. Alexander in the same style that featured cedar bark siding and a verandah with log railings.<sup>40</sup>

**Conclusion**

In spite of some recent changes to the interior, the addition of windows in the third floor (former attic) area, and alteration to the skirting, the Withers Home retains its integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. Sited in one of the few areas in the Crystal Bay/Incline areas of North Lake Tahoe that was not clear-cut to feed the mining and building needs of the Comstock, the house is still surrounded by first- and second-growth native timber and granite rocks. The new studio and garage are located uphill on the street side and do not interfere with the historical view of the house in its setting. The view of the lake from the house is still intact. The overall integrity of design is unaffected by the alterations because of the strength of the design and the retention all of the character-defining features, except the bark skirting on the downhill (south) side. While the new rock skirting alters the historical appearance of that portion of the structure (seen mostly from the downhill side), the use of native materials for the new work mitigates this alteration such that this is a compromise to, rather than a loss of integrity. [It should be noted that while adding to the picturesqueness of the house, the practice of leaving bark in place on exterior logs runs counter to accepted practice (even at the time the house was built) in that it induces rot. This was the case with the Withers Home, requiring selection and use of a suitable replacement material.] Both the exterior and the interior retain the original design details that make the home architecturally unique and significant. Neither an estate home nor a cabin of humble proportions, the house is a modest but well-designed and beautifully detailed log vacation home, and reflects the growing practice of the period that saw wealthy urbanites seek refuge in scenic recreational areas in their own homes rather than resort hotels. The Withers Home also appears eligible under criterion A as one of the first such homes in the Crystal Bay Corporation's subdivision, a key factor--together with its developer, Norman Biltz--in the growth of tourism in Nevada on Lake Tahoe's north shore.

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<sup>40</sup> Database of holding in the collections at Special Collections, University of Nevada Reno Library, Reno, Nevada.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Assessor's Parcel Number: 123-152-06

**Parcel 1**

Beginning at a point in the westerly right of way line of the State Highway from which the southwest corner of Lot III of Section 19, Township 16 N, Range 18 E, bears south 14°19' west 65.15 feet and 50" west 246.05 feet; thence west 148.73 feet; thence north 62°48' east 20.71 feet; thence north 4°06' east 40.62 feet; thence east 140.17 feet to the said westerly right of way line of the said State south 75°41' north 40.00 feet and south 14°19' west 1235.11 feet and south 89° 05' Highway; thence south 14°19' west 51.60 feet along the said right of way line to the place of beginning.

**Parcel 2**

Beginning at a point in the westerly right of way line of the State Highway from which the southwest corner of Lot III of Section 19, Township 16 N, Range 18 E, bears south 14°19' west 166.75 feet and south 75°41' east 40.00 feet and south 14°19' west 1235.11 feet and south 89° 05' 50" west 246.05 feet; thence west 140.17 feet; thence north 4°06' east 33.31 feet; thence north 13°49' east 17.28 feet; thence east 146.42 feet to a point in the said westerly right of way line of the said State Highway; thence south 14°19' west 51.60 feet along the said westerly right of way line to the place of beginning.

All of the above being Lots 5 and 6 of Block 9 of the unofficial map of CRYSTAL BAY PARK SUB-DIVISION of Lake Tahoe in Nevada.

**Boundary Justification**

Boundary described follows the legal description of the property.

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Photographer: John W. Snyder  
Date: October 28, 1999  
Original negatives located at P.S. Preservation Services  
P.O. Box 191275  
Sacramento, California 95819

**Photo List:**

- 1 Withers Log Home from terrace, view to northeast.
- 2 Detail of north elevation, view to south.
- 3 Detail of log construction, view to northeast.
- 4 Withers Log Home from landscape feature above house. View to southeast.
- 5 Detail of entry and front door. View to east.
- 6 North elevation of house, view to south.
- 7 East elevation, view to west.
- 8 Detail of porch showing view of lake. View to east.
- 9 Detail of interior, showing dining area. View to northeast.
- 10 Detail of interior, showing inglenook and fireplace. View to northwest.
- 11 Detail showing door of partial logs.
- 12 Detail of wall sconce on log corbel.
- 13 Detail of stairs to second floor. View to west.
- 14 Detail of second floor hall showing "twig" baluster. View to south.
- 15 Detail of second floor showing opening to below.
- 16 Detail of chimney breast in upstairs family room.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number: Sketch map Withers Log Home, Crystal Bay, Washoe County, Nevada  
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Sketch Map of Property  
344 Wassou Road,  
Crystal Bay Park Subdivision  
Crystal Bay, Nevada

