

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED AUG 18 1987

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**HISTORIC Thematic Nomination of Properties Associated With the San Pedro, Los Angeles
and Salt Lake Railroad, Las Vegas, Nevada

AND/OR COMMON

Properties Relating to the Early Development of Las Vegas as a Railroad Town

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

See Individual Survey Forms

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Las Vegas

N/A VICINITY OF

1

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Nevada

NV

Clark

003

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☒ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE Multiple☒ BOTH Ownership

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☒ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☒ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☒ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Multiple Ownership - See Individual Survey Forms

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Clark County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

309 South Third Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Las Vegas

Nevada 89101

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Resources of Central Las Vegas

DATE

1984

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☒ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Nevada State Museum and Historical Society State Mail Complex

CITY, TOWN

STATE

700 Twin Lakes Drive

Las Vegas

Nevada 89158

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Thematic nomination of properties associated with the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad, Las Vegas, Nevada, includes three contributing buildings and one, 8-building historic district, associated with the founding and early development of Las Vegas. All buildings in the historic district are contributing elements. The nomination includes the two remaining industrial railroad buildings in the present Union Pacific Railroad yards (the 1910 storehouse building and the 1908 ice plant); eight bungalow-style cottages built by the railroad in 1910-1911 as worker housing and the 1910 Mission-style Victory (Lincoln) Hotel, designed and built by the local firm of Moore and Rhoads. The hotel provided accommodations to railroad passengers. All are in good condition and retain much of their integrity. Of the railroad buildings, the storehouse building is still in use, while the ice plant is closed. The Victory Hotel remains in use as a hotel. Of the railroad cottages, seven are residences and one has been converted to use as a professional office.

Las Vegas was established as a division point on the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad (later the Union Pacific) in 1905. Its subsidiary, the Las Vegas Land and Water Company, laid out a townsite and auctioned off lots. Clark's townsite encompassed 170.5 acres and was divided into forty blocks measuring 300 by 400 feet. (see map). As was common in railroad towns, Las Vegas was aligned with the railroad tracks (in this case running from southwest to northeast) rather than being oriented to the points of the compass. Streets were eighty feet wide and alleys were twenty feet across. With the exception of the commercial district along Fremont Street, each block was divided into thirty-two lots, 10 by 140 feet. In most instances, residential buildings required more than one lot.

From the beginning, Fremont Street was the heart of the town's commercial district, which stretched along both sides of the street for about two and one-half blocks. In that segment were shops, the post office, and the First State Bank. Most of the community leaders built their homes near Fremont Street or on Fremont itself, outside the commercial area. Main Street, laid out parallel to the railroad tracks, formed the other main commercial artery. Businesses on Main Street were usually more specifically related to the railroad.

The Victory Hotel

The area near the intersection of Main and Fremont Streets became a popular hotel district. Traditional hotels such as the Overland and Hotel Nevada were situated at that intersection, directly across from the railroad depot. They derived most of their business from passenger traffic. Additional, smaller, hotels stretched south along Main Street. The sole survivor of that era is the mission-style Victory (Lincoln) Hotel at 307 South Main.

The Victory has been in more or less continuous use as a hotel since it was opened as the Lincoln Hotel in 1910 and is only slightly altered from its original appearance.

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Union Pacific Railroad Yards

The Union Pacific Railroad Yards are located west of Main Street between Charleston and Fremont. Successive passenger depots, a Mission-style structure of 1905 and a streamline modern building of 1940, were the dominate features of Fremont Street for many years. The high-rise Union Plaza Hotel now occupies that location.

Most of the railroad's major industrial buildings were completed in 1911. These included (besides the Mission-style depot) the machine shops, storehouse (Hanson Hall), a round house, a power house (later the diesel shop), company agent's house (later the yardmaster's building), and ice plant. Of these buildings, only the storehouse building and the ice plant remain. Two of the others, the diesel shop and yardmaster's building, were demolished within the last year (1986).

The storehouse (Hanson Hall), 700 Dividend Drive, is a rectangular, two-story concrete block building whose second story was originally used as a meeting hall. It is currently under lease to Nevada Cartage Company, Inc. The ice plant, 612 S. Main Street, was built in 1908 to replace the original one which burned. Until several years ago, it was leased and used by Mr. Ice, a commercial ice manufacturer. It is now empty.

Railroad Cottages

In 1909, the railroad began building the first of a planned 120 houses for its mid-level workers. Ultimately, only sixty-four units were completed. Located on four square block (23, 24, 25 and 26) between Second Street (Casino Center) and Fourth Street, and between Garces and Clark, the small, concrete-block cottages were simple, comfortable and attractive.

Architecturally, the railroad cottages combine elements of the bungalow and square cottage designs. Each of them has undergone alterations, but retain sufficient integrity to allow observers to discern original design characteristics.

The cottages included three separate designs. Common design elements can be identified in all three design types. They were rectangular in plan with a two-bay, entrance porch recessed into the right-front corner of the main block. The three different roof designs were all variations on the hipped roof. The enclosed flared eaves lent an oriental flavor to the overall appearance; this was popular in the Craftsman tradition. The roof was supported by square brackets and provided a wide overhang. Porches featured a railing with balusters. The porch posts employed capitals which can be best described as a backward "C". Lugsills and extended lintels adorned the windows.

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These common characteristics gave the houses a general cohesion, but the individual styles lent some distinction. One style, designated Type I, is the simplest variant. The plain hip roof is relieved by a single venting-dormer. Type I is represented by 605 and 621 South Casino Center. A Type II cottage's roof featured a gablet with a ventilating panel in the gable. Type II examples are 613 and 629 South Casino Center. Type I and Type II cottages measured twenty-four by thirty-two feet and contained four rooms. Type III cottages were somewhat larger, twenty-four by thirty-six, and were more architecturally elaborate, featuring a cross gable with a ventilating panel. They contained five rooms. This type is represented by 601, 609, 617 and 625 South Casino Center.

Structurally, the railroad cottages have several common characteristics. Some features were designed to help insulate the interiors against the desert heat; porches and eaves for shade, concrete block walls, and carefully ventilated attics. Individually, the cottages have been modified with modern windows, rear additions and stucco over the concrete blocks. The most common alteration has been the enclosing of porches to increase interior space.

METHODOLOGY

The majority of the data upon which this nomination is based is derived from a survey of historic buildings in Clark's Las Vegas Townsite conducted in 1984. Coordination of the initial survey work and research was carried out by historians, Kim Geary and Jane Kowalewski, under the supervision of Gary K. Roberts, Assistant Director of the Nevada Historical Society. Most of the research was carried out at the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society in Las Vegas, repository for the data and documentation generated by this project. Preparation of this nomination was financed in part through a Historic Preservation Survey and Planning grant-in-aid from the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended and as administered by the Nevada Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology.

Some of the initial data were to be found in the Historic Preservation and Planning Guidelines volume prepared by Charles Hall Page and Associates for the City of Las Vegas in 1978. The 1984 survey was built upon the Page inventory, amending and correcting it where necessary. The on-site survey was conducted by teams of trained volunteers and specialists in southern Nevada history. Each team consisted of two persons who completed survey forms and took photographs of individual buildings.

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Other major sources consulted include the Clark County Assessor's Office, the Real Estate Developers Index, and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Las Vegas for 1923, 1928, and 1959-1961. Newspaper research in the Las Vegas Age and Las Vegas Evening Review Journal was greatly facilitated by the indexes of these newspapers prepared by the Nevada Historical Society. General city directories and telephone directories provided considerable information concerning residents, their occupations, and various uses and names of properties.

Descriptions of most of the buildings were provided by Dr. Cathie Kelly, Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Dr. Kelly also analyzed and classified the properties and interpreted major trends in local architecture. Information on the specific buildings was updated through a re-survey conducted in July 1986 by Margaret Wallace of the Volunteer and Docent Council of the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society, Las Vegas. Nomination forms were prepared by Frank Wright, Curator of Education of the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society and by Dorothy Wright, working as a volunteer for the same institution.

The following inventory forms describe and discuss the significance of the three individual buildings and historic district. Individual forms are keyed to the accompanying maps.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1908-1911

BUILDER/ARCHITECT See Individual Survey Forms

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Criteria A and C

The three individual building and one historic district related to the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad in Las Vegas, Nevada are historically significant for their association with the early settlement and development of the community. The buildings are architecturally significant as examples of domestic, industrial and commercial design associated with an early-twentieth-century, western railroad town.

The early development of Las Vegas depended entirely on its role as a major transportation center. In 1905, Las Vegas was chosen as a division point for the Los Angeles, San Pedro and Salt Lake (later the Union Pacific) Railroad. The railroad became the primary employer, it controlled the water and electricity, and it owned the land which became the core of Las Vegas. The town's commerce was dependent on the railroad through providing services to passengers and railroad employees. The buildings which are part of this thematic group nomination date from the period 1908-1911. They relate either directly to the railroad's activities, to its employees, or to railroad-dependent commerce. Architecturally, adaptations of two of the most important styles of the period are represented: Mission and Bungalow.

Eleven buildings are included in the nomination. Two relate directly to the railroad's activities: the ice plant, the oldest building associated with the railroad, was completed in 1908, replacing the original Armour Ice Plant which burned the previous year. It was used until 1983 to manufacture ice. The storehouse, the only surviving example from the original complex of buildings in the railroad yards, was built in 1910. It was used as a warehouse for the machine shops and is currently leased to a trucking firm. Another building relates to railroad-derived commerce: the 1910 Victory Hotel served overnight passengers on the railroad. It is located one block from the site of the depot. It has been in almost continuous use as a hotel since it was built. The other buildings relate to railroad employees: of the eight railroad cottages included, seven are currently used as residences and one is in use as a professional office.

Historical Background

Las Vegas was established as a division point on the railroad in 1905. It was chosen because of the abundant water found at Las Vegas Springs. Before that time, the area included a few scattered ranches. The railroad, through its subsidiary, the Las Vegas Land and Water Company, established Clark's Las Vegas townsite and auctioned off lots. The LVL&W Company owned the springs and water rights in the area. It set up a system of redwood pipes and charged residences and businesses a monthly rate. The Company also provided electricity to the town.

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The town grew slowly until 1910, when the railroad built machine shops and associated buildings. Upon their completion, the railroad built a tract of cottages to house a hundred new employees. At the same time, several hotels, restaurants and saloons opened to accommodate overnight passengers travelling between Salt Lake and Los Angeles.

The Las Vegas Land and Water Company, represented by its agent, Walter Bracken, exercised enormous power in the town long after the railroad had ceased to be the dominant economic force. Bracken, who was appointed in 1906 and remained in that position for forty years, had the power to set rates, answer complaints about service (there were many), and decided who would get service. He also fended off several attempts to establish competing water services.

The early fortunes of the town rose and fell with those of the railroad. In 1906 and 1907, floods interrupted train service. A severe flood in 1910 tore out bridges and halted train service for five months. Workers were laid off and businesses closed.

In 1921, a nationwide railroad strike closed the machine shops in Las Vegas. By the time it was settled, the railroad management had decided to relocate the shops. Hundreds of men were laid off, and went with their families to Los Angeles to find work. The town fell into a serious depression.

As the railroad ceased to be a dominant force in Las Vegas, exploration for the site of the federal government's most ambitious public works project was underway. The site ultimately selected for the Boulder Dam project was nearby Black Canyon. Providing services related to the Dam construction filled the economic void left by the departure of the railroad.

Architecture

Las Vegas architecture dating from the railroad (pre-1922) era is characterized by modest, utilitarian design, lacking grandeur or ornamentation. The larger residences of community leaders were plain by later standards. Mostly in the Bungalow style, they were built for comfort rather than aesthetics. These residences, grouped around Fremont Street, were all demolished as the commercial center grew. (One exception is the home of Will and Leva Beckely, 120 S Fourth Street, which was moved to the Clark County Museum). The cottages reflect, albeit in a humbler fashion, the preference for Bungalow style for residences.

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The other predominant style, favored for commercial buildings of the time, was Mission Revival style. (Later, in the thirties, many fine private residences employed this style.) The imposing depot at the head of Fremont Street was Mission Revival, and set the tone for the town owing to its high visibility. The majority of the hotels and public buildings were of similar style. With its use of arcades and shaded verandas, the style was eminently suited for the desert climate.

Current Situation:

Because the town is still so young and has grown so rapidly, and because its beginnings were modest, most of the early buildings associated with the railroad period are gone. Two major buildings from the railroad yards have been demolished in the last year (1986). There are very few connections to the town's railroad heritage. For this reason, these eleven buildings assume an added significance.

Las Vegas downtown commercial area is spreading rapidly. This growth has eroded the residential feeling of the railroad cottages neighborhood. Among the original four square blocks, there are now high-rises and other large buildings, which differ in scale with the modest cottages.

The cottages are more significant for their value as Las Vegas' first housing tract, planned and built by the railroad, than as individual structures. Individually, they are not distinguished, but as a group, they are a powerful visible remainder of the pervasive influence of the railroad in all aspects of the early life of the town. There are other cottages still standing and in good condition, but they are so overshadowed by new buildings that their integrity is severely damaged. For that reason, only the one remaining intact block is included.

The following inventory forms describe and discuss the significance of the three individual buildings and historic district. Individual forms are keyed to the accompanying maps.

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University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Dickinson Library, Special Collections Department
San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad Collection.

8.18.87

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name Properties Associated with the San Pedro,
Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad TR
State Clark County, NEVADA

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

Cover

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Linda M. Clellan 10/2/87

1. Railroad Cottage Historic District

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Linda M. Clellan 12/22/87

Attest

2. Hansen Hall

~~Substantive Review~~

Determined Eligible

Keeper

Eligible / Linda M. Clellan 10-2-87

Attest

DOE/OWNER OBJECTION

3. Ice House

~~Substantive Review~~

Determined Eligible

Keeper

Eligible / Linda M. Clellan 10-2-87

Attest

DOE/OWNER OBJECTION

4. Lincoln Hotel

~~Substantive Review~~

Determined Eligible

Keeper

Eligible / Linda M. Clellan 10/2/87

Attest

DOE/OWNER OBJECTION

5.

Keeper

Attest

6.

Keeper

Attest

7.

Keeper

Attest

8.

Keeper

Attest

9.

Keeper

Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest