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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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NATIONAL  
REGISTER

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 an 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 Piper-Beebe House

other names/site number Piper-Clegg House

2. Location

street & number # 2 South A Street  not for publication

city or town Virginia City  vicinity

state Nevada code NV county Storey code 029 zip code 89440

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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

meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant

nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ronald M. Jones SHPO 6/17/93  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State of 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 certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

Patricia Andrews 8/5/93  
Date of Action

Piper-Beebe House  
Name of Property

Storey County, Nevada  
County and State

**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	
one		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
one		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Virginia City Historic District

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

Building is a "contributing" property to \_\_\_\_\_ district.

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian/Italianate

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls wood

roof asphalt

other

**Narrative Description**

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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 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)

Performing Arts

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1876-1942

**Significant Dates**

1876-1942

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Edward Piper, Dan Connors

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

A.F. MacKay

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) 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:

Piper-Beebe House  
Name of Property

Storey County, Nevada  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** less than one

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	1	2	7	1	5	4	0	4	3	5	4	4	4	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

3 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

2 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

4 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

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

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Andria Sharon Daley/Michael Richard Taylor

organization (owners) date December 22, 1992

street & number # 2 South A Street telephone 702 847-0216

city or town Virginia City state Nevada zip code 89440

#### Additional Documentation

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)

#### Property Owner

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

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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The Piper-Beebe House is a large two-story Victorian Italianate residence constructed by a well-known Virginia City builder/architect A.F. Mackay in 1876. It is located in the Virginia City Landmark District and is a contributing building to this nineteenth-century mining/industrial district. Built after the Great Fire of 1875, this residence is representational of the elaborate houses built for the mine superintendents and wealthy businessmen. Its location, just behind Piper's Opera House and the Storey County Courthouse, provides an elegant street setting and rich historical associations.

The Piper-Beebe house, oriented east facing A Street, was built with a small setback. The rectangular structure has an elaborately terraced side garden to the south and in the rear. A tree-lined allee abuts the house to the north. A sidewalk, with trees and planters, along with an 1876 street light, were added to the front of the house in 1949 when author and bon vivant Lucius Beebe purchased the house. This residence along with its sister, also a post-fire Italianate building, are all that remain of this elegant 1876 streetscape of Italianate row houses. The building is located on Blocks 82 and 102 (A Street) of the Howard Range in the township of Storey County, Nevada (APN # 001-017-06).

The condition of the house is excellent and the integrity of the structure has been maintained throughout its 116 years of existence. Italianate in design, the fenestration and elaborate entry were crafted by Neuhaus and Co. of East Berkeley, California, and shipped to Virginia city aboard the Virginia & Truckee Railroad. Mackay designed and built several structures in town although the Piper-Beebe House appears to be the only remaining Mackay structure in Virginia City. The two-story, balloon framed house has exterior walls of shiplap. The two-bay front facade has a square bay window with three low-arched one-over-one lite double hung sash windows, and above the bay, paired one-over-one window; the adjacent bay includes the front door and above, a single window. The door has an arched transom and recessed, paneled vestibule with entry canopy and brackets. The asphalt shingled, hipped roof is finished with a boxed cornice, a paneled frieze, and paired brackets. A one-story shed adjoins the house in the back.

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The floor plan is asymmetrical with three rooms off the entry hall on the lower floor, a kitchen, and three rear rooms are tucked under a one-story shed roof. The second story also possesses an asymmetrical floor plan and is comprised of three bedrooms off the hall with a lady's sewing room/parlour adjoining the bedroom facing A Street. The interior workmanship remains in very good condition and interior details such as feathering, balustrades, moving pocket doors remain as a testament to Mr. Mackay's attention to detail. The silver doorhandles and other silver hardware unfortunately were lost to the years. The interior walls are lath and plaster with wallpaper or paint.

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The Piper-Beebe House is significant under criterion B because of its prominent owners for almost 100 years and under criterion C because of its excellent expression of Italianate architecture on the Comstock. It is also eligible under criterion D because the property represents an archeological site which contains information about an important residential district during the Landmark's period of significance from 1859-1942. Limited ground disturbance has yielded artifacts indicating that the resources which remain, protected from further disturbance, have the potential to yield additional information. Criterion B will be explored in this nomination.

This residence is associated with the socially prominent MacKay family (although not related to John Mackay, the bonanza king) as well as Edward Piper and Dan Connors, who ran the famous Piper Opera House. The house served as a venue for many important gatherings and social events. Perhaps the most important literary figure connected with the house during the twentieth century was Lucius Morris Beebe, the renowned author and boulevardier who purchased the house in 1949. Beebe along with his partner and collaborator Charles Clegg later revived the frontier newspaper of Mark Twain and Dan DeQuille, the fabulous "Territorial Enterprise." This paper became the most widely circulated weekly in the west. Beebe entertained elaborately at his house and many of the great writers, playwrights, and artists of their day, from Cole Porter to director John Huston, made pilgrimages to visit Beebe in his Camelot - Virginia City - and were entertained at his Elysian bode.

Located in the Virginia City National Historic Landmark District, this two-story Italianate residence was built by one of the town's "bonanza-era" builder-architects A.F. Mackay. He lived in this house with his wife, Catherine, and four daughters until the mid 1880s. During the lean times, Mrs. Mackay sometimes took in boarders. One of her "guests" was the well known journalist Allen P. Kelley. With its front door just across the street from the Opera House's stage door, the A Street property soon became the home of Edward and Lavinia Rablin Piper. Edward was the son of John and Louisa Piper, who had established a string of opera houses and theaters in the West. The Piper brothers were among the first settlers in Virginia City. The Pipers, German immigrants, brought to Virginia City a rich musical tradition,

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opera and theater, all the greats of their day from Lilly Langtry to Mark Twain. David Belasco began his career there and used Virginia City as backdrop for his opera - The Golden Girl of the West.

When Edward Piper died in 1907, his widow married the famous "bare-fisted" prizefighter Dan Connors, who had come to Nevada as a sportswriter in 1897 to cover the famous Fitzsimmons-Corbett prize fight which took place in Carson City. Connors upon his marriage to Lavinia took over the management of the Opera House and introduced silent films to Virginia City. The Opera House served many roles to the community from basketball court to roller-skating rink, until its establishment as a museum.

Introducing a period ~~of~~ associated with the house, in no way of less significance, Lucius Beebe (1902-1966) purchased the property on August 31, 1949. Beebe was born in Wakefield, Massachusetts to an established New England mercantile-banking family. He became a well-known theatre critic, columnist for the "New York Herald Tribune" and later the "San Francisco Chronicle." Beebe, along with Charles Myron Clegg, Jr. (1916-1979) authored dozens of books about railroads, Western history and folklore in the Virginia City residence. They also realized the dream of many railroad enthusiasts when they became owners of two private railroad cars, "The Gold Coast" and "The Virginia City." In 1952 they undertook their greatest literary challenge when they revived the Territorial Enterprise attracting the writings of the greatest writers, novelists, poets, and historians of their day.

Virginia City had become a thriving artistic community during the post World War II years; Beebe and Clegg's arrival in 1948 was simply the frosting on the cake. Beebe's relentless promotion of Virginia City through his books, and newspaper and magazine articles, helped more than any single factor to preserve the Victorian mining town. Beebe not only lead the cultural and literary revival of Virginia City but made Virginia City one of the most eagerly sought tourism destinations in the West. Beebe was instrumental in laying the ground work to establish the national landmark district and championed efforts to preserve the area including the restoration and preservation of the historic Virginia & Truckee Railway. The railroad owners, the Mills-Reid



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family, were then Beebe's employers at the New York "Herald Tribune." It is doubtful if there would be a Virginia City today without the intervention of Lucius Beebe, who truly fostered the preservation ethic there.

Beebe and Clegg wrote many of their books at the A-Street location. A Hollywood set-designer and interior decorator Robert T. Hanley was hired to re-do the house, according to Beebe "in a full explosion of Victorian vulgarity." It was in this house that Beebe and Clegg wined and dined royalty and literary figures throughout the world. Beebe died in 1966 and the house remained in his estate until the death of this partner, Charles Clegg, in 1979. Today it is a private residence.

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Primary Source Materials

Directories:

Nevada Directory 1868-9

Virginia & Truckee Railroad Directory of 1873-74

Bishops Directory 1878-79

Storey County Courthouse Records:

Storey County Recorders, Book of Deeds 40-224, 40-226, 40-3311

Storey County Death Book, December 7, 1907, number 264

1880 10th U.S. Manuscript Census

Sandborn Perris Fire Insurance Maps

Newspapers

Territorial Enterprise: May 22, 1873, July 25, 1877, April 23,  
1894

Virginia City News, September 3, 1949

Territorial Enterprises during Beebe and Clegg's tenure May 2,  
1952 - 1960

Books

Drury, Wells. An Editor on the Comstock.

Clark, Walter Van Tilburg. The Alfred Doten Journals.

Books and articles by Lucius Morris Beebe and Charles Myron  
Clegg.

Oral History

Comstock Memories, by Ty Cobb, John Zalac, Margaret and Bill  
Marks, University of Nevada, Reno Oral History Program.

Oral interviews by Andria Daley with Mrs. Louise Zimmer Driggs,  
Peter Kraemer, Joe Page, Clint Salmon, John & Jack  
Flannagan.

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Verbal boundary description

Legal parcel number 1-017-06.

Verbal boundary justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the house.

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 93000684

Date Listed: 8/5/93

Piper-Beebe House  
Property Name

Storey  
County

NV  
State

N/A  
Multiple Name

-----  
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.

Patrick Andrews  
Signature of the Keeper

8/5/93  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

Significance:

The nomination provides insufficient justification for significance under Criterion D (Archeology). The selection of this criteria was based on the significance of the larger National Register district. The nomination is amended to remove Criterion D.

This information was confirmed with Ronald James of the Nevada SHPO.

DISTRIBUTION:

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