

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 N/A

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic/single dwelling Sub: _____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic/single family Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian - Italianate Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

roof Wood - cedar shingles

walls wood - shiplap

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 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)

Commerce
Architecture
Social history

Period of Significance 1876-1947

Significant Dates N/A

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

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder N/A

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite 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 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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.5 acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>11</u>	<u>271440</u>	<u>4354380</u>	3	_____	_____
2	___	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

___ 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 Revised by: Mella Rothwell Harmon

organization State Historic Preservation Office date June 30, 1998

street & number 100 N. Stewart Street telephone (702) 687-7601

city or town Carson City state NV zip code 89701

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Don McBride, Sr.

street & number 26/28 South Howard Street telephone (702) 882-3931

city or town Virginia City state NV zip code 89702

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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Section 7 Page 1

King-McBride Mansion
Virginia City, Storey County, Nevada

7. Description

The King-McBride mansion is located on the eastern slopes of the Virginia Range, east of the Sierra Nevada mountains. It is situated within the boundaries of the Virginia City National Historic Landmark District and the Virginia City National Register Historic District. It is listed as a contributing building in the nineteenth-century mining and industrial Comstock Historic District.

Named for Virginia City banker, George Anson King, the ca. 1876 building embodies high-style elements of the Italianate style of architecture. The mansion, with its irregular floor plan, is a three-story, double-bay, wood-framed building sitting on a one-half-acre parcel. The two bays are symmetrically placed with the entrance filling the space in between. The structure is sheathed in wooden clapboards. The roof is hipped and clad in cedar shakes, with four gabled dormers and a flat nineteenth-century clear glass skylight. A decorative ironwork railing borders the edges of the two flat hips, forming a widow's walk. The four gabled dormers were added in the 1970s, two on the east facade and one each on the north and south sides, but these are in keeping with the overall appearance of the building. A boxed cornice with frieze and decorative brackets adorn the roofline. There are four brick chimneys, two each on the north and south sides of the building. The building is currently painted white with gold and black trim.

Fenestration consists of tall, narrow one-over-one double-hung sashes, with rectangular surrounds that are flat with a fluted recess and a bracketed rectangular hood. A wide belt course serves as a decorative divider between the first and second levels. A central portico projects between the two bays. The portico's four supporting columns are Doric with Corinthian capitals and classical entablature with dentils. Two square pilasters with Corinthian capitals bracket the front door. The columns and pilasters are joined by a knee-high, turned balustrade that matches the balcony on the roof of the portico. The entry doors have rectangular wooden panels in the lower half and etched glass panels above. A single-light transom of Tiffany-style leaded glass sits above the entry doors, which lead into a vestibule covered in Circassian walnut panels.

The first floor plan consists of a grand foyer with rooms to the sides and rear. An elaborate walnut staircase leads to the second and third floors. To the left of the foyer are double doors leading into the front parlor. The bronze gilt ceiling fixtures were replaced by the current owners with Swaroski crystal chandeliers from Austria. The original ceiling fixtures, which were manufactured by Mitchell and Vance and displayed in their nineteenth-century catalog, grace

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King-Mcbride Mansion
Virginia City, Storey County, Nevada

7. Description (continued)

the foyers of the Storey County Courthouse. The original velvet cornice, the top treatment to a set of velvet portieres, drapes the archway between the two parlors. Both parlors host elaborate marble fireplaces, and the foyer retains its frescoed ceiling.

To the right of the foyer is an extended dining room. This room was originally a series of chambers comprising a library, silver closet, and dining room. These spaces were converted to the present configuration in order to accommodate Diamond Jim Brady's lavish dining room suite. The two marble fireplaces in the dining room are significant for their association with the Connelly brothers, who repaired the damaged marble. The Connelly brothers were master stonecutters of the historic Comstock. One mantle was replaced with dyed slate embellished with gloriously absurd Victorian tromp l'oeil of malachite and gold leopard skin.

The kitchen is situated directly behind the dining area, and a windowed breakfast nook has been added. The kitchen retains an elaborate butler's pantry to the side. Detailed in mahogany, the pantry has been carefully preserved. The kitchen was the only room not to have shutters. Wooden shutters were a Comstock fashion of the period. An addition was built to the house some time soon after its construction and the current owner believes it may have been used as a housekeeper's apartment.

The second floor retains its original configuration of bedrooms. The large attic was originally undivided and lit by a large skylight. In the 1970s, the current owners converted the space to recreational use by adding four dormers, a kitchen and a bathroom. A large separate garage, built in the twentieth century, sits behind the main house, but it is considered to be a noncontributing element of this nomination.

Despite minor alterations over the past century, this structure retains a high degree of architectural integrity reflecting its high-style Italianate form. It also serves as a reminder of the opulence associated with the wealth of the Comstock during its period of significance.

8. Statement of Significance

The King-McBride mansion is considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C. The mansion was built by

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King-McBride Mansion
Virginia City, Storey County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

George King, an important participant in the mining success of the Comstock. As a result, the house reflects its association with this significant historical event of the middle to late nineteenth century. The mansion is also an excellent example of high-style Italianate architecture that was preferred by the scions of the Comstock following a devastating fire in 1875. The current owner has maintained the property in excellent condition, and it complements the National Landmark District of which it is a part.

Historical Background and Significance - Criterion A

The Comstock Mining District was established in 1859 after a strike of gold and silver catapulted the region into international fame. Thousands of hopeful miners moved into the area (Virginia City, Silver City, and Gold Hill), hoping to lay claim to a portion of the millions of dollars of ore that lay beneath the ground. The local economy experienced fluctuations, but generally prosperity reigned for the next twenty years. The most famous strike on the Comstock occurred in 1873, and was known as the "Big Bonanza." The Comstock Lode drew largely from miners who had inundated California's gold fields after the 1848 discovery at Sutter's Mill. However, men already accustomed to the wealth of gold, came to the Comstock to become richer from silver. Among the famous names that graced Comstock society were Hearst, Fair, Ralston, Mackay, and others from California banking concerns. A young writer and newspaperman, Mark Twain, gathered material for his stories and books from the colorful characters and activities on the Comstock.

Virginia City was the major metropolis of the Comstock and the site of the most significant discoveries. Its diverse population included a social elite, Irishmen, Welshmen and Cornishmen, Germans, Chinese, Mexicans, and Native Americans. In the initial settlement phase, Virginia City consisted of randomly-placed canvas-covered buildings, but as mining became more lucrative and larger-scale operations were established, the town developed. The first streets to be laid out were A and B, then C, terraced along the side of Mt. Davidson. The slope between these streets was great. Mt. Davidson's summit has an elevation of 7,775 feet and C Street sits at 6,205 feet. Before connector streets were built, getting from one street to another was tricky business. The initial business district was along B Street, but later the "best of it" was on C Street (Greever 1963:97). By 1860, Virginia City boasted 154 businesses and many miners. The mines started out as round holes in the ground, but within the first

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King-McBride Mansion
Virginia City, Storey County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance (continued)

five years, five major mining operations were established, the Ophir, the Gould and Curry, the Savage, the Chollar-Potosi, and the Yellow Jacket. It was these mining companies that attracted investments by a number of San Francisco's wealthy bankers and businessmen.

A number of bonanzas were discovered from 1859 to 1873, but the one that was great enough to be called the "Big Bonanza" was discovered in October 1873. It straddled the Consolidated Virginia Mine and the Ophir (mostly in the Consolidated Virginia). From the Big Bonanza, the Consolidated Virginia and the California secured \$150,000,000 in metals, and in twenty-two years paid out \$78,148,000 in dividends. Even with such reported wealth, the Comstock hit doldrums by 1878, and it was not until better methods were developed in the middle 1880s that a revival occurred. A major depression in 1890 put a virtual end to the nineteenth-century glory of the Comstock (Greever 1963).

Life in a mining town was perilous, and over the years there were numerous mine accidents ranging from collapses to mine fires. A severe above-ground fire hit Virginia City in the early morning of October 26, 1875. Two thousand of the town's three thousand buildings were destroyed, totaling more than ten million dollars worth of property. Within sixty days after the fire, however, Virginia City began to rebuild. The business district was restored with larger, finer buildings and reconstruction of the residential areas quickly followed. Social distinctions were made in the siting of homes in Virginia City. The elite built their homes on the higher land above C Street and furnished them with the best money could buy (Greever 1963).

Howard Street, where the King-McBride mansion sits, runs north-south above A Street. An exact date of construction for the mansion has not been found, but a photograph from the 1860s shows more modest vernacular structures on the parcel. Further, no mention of George King's home being destroyed in the 1875 fire was made in the newspapers, although the destruction of the neighboring homes of Bonanza king John Mackay, banker J.P. Martin, Judge Richard Rising, and mine superintendent Charles Forman were listed. The 1873-1874 Storey County Book of Deeds lists haberdasher Joseph Barnet and his wife as the owners of 26-28 Howard Street. George King owned the vacant land adjacent to the Barnet house for ten years prior to acquiring the property at 26-28 South Howard Street. Although the evidence is not clear, it seems likely that King acquired this parcel after the 1875 fire destroyed Mr. Barnet's modest house. This would put

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King-McBride Mansion
Virginia City, Storey County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance (continued)

the construction date of the King-McBride mansion between the fire of October 1875 and the date recorded for King's occupancy of the house, June 24, 1876.

Further support for the construction date comes from an undocumented association between the King mansion and a nearly identical structure in Carson City, known as the Rinkel Mansion. The Carson City house was built in 1874 and designed by Beaux Arts architect, Charles H. Jones. Although the Rinkel Mansion was rendered in brick and the decorative detail of the window surrounds more elaborate, the architectural style and building plan is remarkably similar to the King mansion. In addition, the interior plaster work, medallions, and frescoed ceilings are identical in both homes.

George King, who presumably came to Virginia City from San Francisco, served as the Internal Revenue collector, as well as director of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad (V&TRR). The V&TRR was the brainchild of California financier, William Sharon. Construction on a line from Gold Hill to Carson City was completed in November 1869, and completion of the extension between Virginia City and Reno quickly followed (Greever 1963:151). King served as the state Republican Central Committee's treasurer in 1878, and also established the Nevada Bank of San Francisco in Virginia City in 1877, an enterprise he headed for the next twenty years. George King, his wife Julia (both originally from Vermont), and their eleven-year-old son, George Jr., took possession of the house at 26-28 South Howard Street on June 24, 1876. The Kings moved back to San Francisco at some time prior to 1880, however, renting their mansion to Judge Richard Rising and his family. The Rising family is listed as renters at 26-28 South Howard Street in the 1880 census. Included in the Rising household were the judge, his wife, Belle, three daughters and a son, an Irish nurse, a Chinese cook, a mechanic, and Ellie Latham, who was possibly related to the San Francisco Lathams.

Richard Rising arrived on the Comstock in 1861 from Downieville, California. He immediately formed a law partnership with Moses Kirkpatrick and William Stewart. This firm organized the Comstock's first mining operation, the Ophir. William Stewart is known as the father of the landmark 1872 Mining Law. He was the drafter of Nevada's constitution and also served as Nevada's first U.S. Senator. Richard Rising did well in the practice law in what was known as, "the land of interminable litigation." Rising was elected to the First District Court at the young age of twenty-six. His brother, Franklin, came to Virginia City in 1862. Franklin had been sent there by the American Church Missionary Society, and he

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King-McBride Mansion
Virginia City, Storey County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance (continued)

built St. Paul's, the community's first Episcopal church. The fledgling Reverend Rising, a pale, fragile young man, was satirized by Mark Twain in the Buck Franshaw episode of *Roughing It*.

The King-McBride mansion was one of the show places of Virginia City and the scene of lavish entertainment in the "champagne and terrapin age." Situated high above the sooty stamp mills and mine offices, King's neighbors on Howard Street represented the "who's who" of Comstock society. Comstock life, like the opera *Aida*, was played on two stages: the nabobs above and those below on C Street. As soon as John Mackay made his first million in the Kentuck mine, he bought a house two parcels south of the King property. Mackay paid \$5,000 for a fairly modest home. Next door to Mackay was J.P. Martin, a banker and cashier of the mighty Bank of California (founded in 1864). Martin was in the process of purchasing the Mackay home when the fire of 1875 occurred. Mackay realized that his furnishings could not be saved from the fire's path and he told the town folk to take what they could carry away. Supporting the contention that more lavish structures were built following the fire, J.P. Martin soon after built a handsome Italianate residence on the site of the Mackay home. Next door to Martin, and flanking the King mansion on the north, mine superintendent, William Henry (Hank) Smith, built an elaborate Italianate home in ca. 1876. The Martin and Smith houses were so close that for parties, windows were removed and an enclosed, carpeted breezeway was installed joining the two houses. The Martin's dining room would host extensive midnight supper buffets. An 1870s photograph shows the three grand houses sitting "cheek-to-jowl."

The Smith home was purchased by Robert Fulton in the early 1880s and was transported on the V&TRR to Reno, where it served as the residence of the president of the Mackay School of Mines. From 1944 until it was demolished in 1951, it served as a rest home for World War II veterans. The Virginia City parcels where the Smith and Martin homes once stood are now occupied by a twentieth-century garage and landscaped grounds belonging to the King-McBride mansion.

While Judge Rising and his family were occupying the King home, records show that George and Julia King mortgaged the property on March 8, 1881 to W.G. Swain and W.E. Hudson of Marysville, California for the sum of \$2,940. The following year, the property taxes on 26-28 South Howard Street were paid by Whittier and Fuller, who continued on the tax rolls for the next seven years. In 1890, the King mansion was deeded to the Catholic Church. Over the years, the Diocese leased the house to a series of renters. The most famous person to lease the house from the Church was silent screen actress Bobbette Simpson, who endeared herself to Comstock children by hosting an annual Zaa Zaa Apso party, at which she served hotdogs, sauerkraut, and watermelon.

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King-McBride Mansion
Virginia City, Storey County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance (continued)

In 1944, Halvor and Virginia Smedesrude leased the property and renamed it the Bonanza Inn. The Bonanza Inn became an elegant retreat for eastern socialites awaiting their six-week residency for a Nevada divorce. The Inn boasted a world-class restaurant with a chef who had earned her culinary stripes in Paris. Chef Jinny Smedesrude made such an impression on visiting gourmet James Beard that her famed oatmeal bread recipe appeared in several of Beard's cookbooks. Socialites, writers, royalty, politicians, and other celebrities were entertained at the Inn, and New York writers Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg launched their book on Wells Fargo and Company at the Bonanza Inn in 1949. The property was sold in 1953 to Versal McBride, owner of the Bucket of Blood Saloon, and member of a socially-prominent Virginia City family. The house was eventually purchased from the McBride estate by Don and Jeanne McBride in 1969, who undertook extensive restoration. The mansion, today, is a private residence.

Statement of Significance - Criterion C

The King mansion appears to be the work of architect Charles H. Jones, who was trained at the Beaux Arts School in Paris, France. Jones was based in San Francisco, but is known to have built at least one other house in Nevada. The National Register-listed Rinkel Mansion in Carson City, Nevada, built in 1874, is remarkably similar to the King-McBride house. The interior plaster work, medallions, and frescoed ceilings of the King house are identical to those in the Rinkel mansion.

The King-McBride mansion is a prime example of High Victorian Italianate with a Classical Revival-style portico. As such, this house, was the height of architectural fashion and reflective of the social status of the owner. After the devastating fire of October 1875, that destroyed two-thirds of Virginia City's building stock, a conscious decision was made to upgrade the built environment. Buildings in the commercial district were constructed in grander architectural styles, many of them Italianate. The residential neighborhoods favored the Italianate style as well, ranging from modest homes to the ornate high-style versions in the "upper class" areas. The Italianate style was popular in San Francisco during the last decades of the nineteenth century, and it may be a result of the participation of so many San Francisco businessmen in Comstock operations that influenced Virginia City to embrace the style so fervently. Another Italianate example from Virginia City, the Parish House, is separately listed in the National Register, further demonstrating the importance of the style in the history of the Comstock.

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King-McBride Mansion
Virginia City, Storey County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

Summary

The King-McBride mansion has had a long and distinguished history. Built following a disastrous fire in 1875, the mansion was the epitome of the architectural style chosen to rebuild the town to demonstrate the wealth and worldliness of the Comstock. The house and those surrounding it, were associated with the movers and shakers of Comstock society and activities associated with the mining industry that made Virginia City famous. The mansion has undergone a major renovation in the 1970s, but it retains the original details that make it architecturally significant. It has been well preserved over the years and stands today as a representative of the glory days of the Comstock Lode.

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King-McBride Mansion
Virginia City, Storey County, Nevada

9. Bibliography

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1890 [Map] Virginia City including Gold Hill, Storey County, Nevada. Sanborn
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Section 10 Page 10

**King-McBride Mansion
Virginia City, Storey County, Nevada**

10. Geographical Data

Verbal boundary description

The King-McBride mansion is located in the NW 1/4 of Section 29, T.17 N., R.21 E., at APN 01-015-02.

Verbal boundary justification

The nominated property includes all the parcels historically associated with the King-McBride mansion.