



THE PRESERVATION PULSE

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From NPF's Executive Director
Dr. Figanbaum

Preservation is always about connection, and this fall we are reminded of the ways it ties us to both people and places. This season brings inspiring examples of that work. The **Clark County Museum** has completed

the restoration of the **Candlelight Wedding Chapel**, securing the building and adding exhibits that highlight its role in shaping Clark County's wedding history. Stories from both celebrities and everyday couples remind us that preservation is about memories as much as architecture.

At the same time, our research into **Woodlawn Cemetery** reveals how cemeteries can serve as living archives.

They connect us to the city's earliest residents and show us how Las Vegas grew through times of triumph and challenge. By learning these stories, we deepen our understanding of our community.

Thank you for being part of this work. Together, we ensure that Nevada's history continues to be preserved, shared, and celebrated.

PRESERVATION SPOTLIGHT

Candlelight Wedding Chapel

The **Clark County Museum** has completed a significant preservation project on one of its most beloved landmarks, the **Candlelight Wedding Chapel**. Originally opened in 1966 and relocated to the museum after its closure in 2004, the chapel has now been secured against water damage and enhanced with new exhibits that showcase its important role in Clark County wedding history.

Inside, visitors will find the chapel much as it once appeared, with exciting new additions. A celebrity wedding timeline highlights stars such as Frank Sinatra, who helped transform Las Vegas from a Western outpost into a glamorous destination, and Michael Jordan, whose 1989 wedding renewed attention on the city as a wedding capital. Other famous couples include Michael Caine, Whoopi Goldberg, Bette Midler, and even the Lone Ranger.

The museum also features personal stories from couples who married at the chapel, many still together after more than 20 years, demonstrating that Las Vegas weddings can be lasting unions. Artifacts such as marriage certificates, brochures, price lists, and souvenirs illustrate ceremonies that ranged from modest \$45 packages to elaborate \$500 celebrations with flowers, photographs, and champagne.



The museum invites the community to share photographs, certificates, and memorabilia to preserve this history for future generations. Their work reflects the heart of preservation, protecting historic places while sharing the stories that give them meaning. To learn more, visit the [Clark County Museum's YouTube video](#) on the Candlelight Wedding Chapel restoration.

Photo: Las Vegas News Bureau Collection, LVCVA Archive.

NPF'S LEGACY: PAST PROJECTS

Woodlawn Cemetery, Las Vegas's oldest surviving burial ground, offers a unique window into the city's past. Established in 1914 on land gifted by the Union Pacific Railroad, Woodlawn reflects a turning point in cemetery design as one of the first "memorial park" style cemeteries in the region. Its progressive layout emphasized open lawns, flat markers, and landscaped grounds, creating a place for the living as well as the dead. In recognition of this significance, Woodlawn was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2006.

NPF's research has shown that cemeteries like Woodlawn are far more than sites of mourning. They preserve the stories of the city's earliest residents, from surveyor

J.T. McWilliams, who laid out Las Vegas's first townsite, to Sheriff Sam Gay, known for his larger-than-life role in law enforcement. The cemetery also contains the reinterred remains from earlier, now-lost pioneer cemeteries, linking Woodlawn to the earliest days of U.S. settlement in Southern Nevada.

By exploring these graves and the stories behind them, we gain insight into Las Vegas's growth, struggles, and resilience. Woodlawn stands as both a sacred space and



a living archive, reminding us that preservation is about honoring people as much as places.

UPCOMING PROGRAMMING

Docomomo National Tour Day: Las Vegas Sacred Spaces

Saturday, October 11th at 10am \$35

Tickets at nevadapreservation.org

Join us for the Docomomo US National Day Out

This walking tour highlights the bold Modern churches that helped shape Las Vegas during its postwar boom.

More than houses of worship, these sanctuaries became the center of community life, hosting education, fellowship, meals, performances, and outreach that connected neighbors across the city.

Step into a cluster of sacred spaces that showcase both architectural daring and civic purpose. Discover the clean lines of St. Anne Catholic Church, the welcoming spirit of Christ Church Episcopal, and the geometric character of Trinity Life Center.

Today, as congregations evolve, these churches remain cultural landmarks—reminders of a time when Las Vegas embraced modern design and created a community in these sacred spaces that were more than simply a place of worship.

Proceeds from ticket sales will directly support the participating houses of worship.





MEET THE TEAM

Mitch serves on the Executive Committee of the board for the Nevada Preservation Foundation. He is a retired attorney, independent museum professional, and longtime volunteer with the organization. Originally from Boston, Massachusetts, he has called Nevada home for more than forty years. After a career as a deputy district attorney representing Clark County government agencies, Mitch shifted his focus to local history. He began as a tour guide at The Neon Museum, where he later worked as an education specialist and oral historian.

Since 2014, Mitch has been an active volunteer with the Nevada Preservation Foundation, developing and leading



neighborhood tours and supporting a wide range of events. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, a Juris Doctor from the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law, and a master's degree in museum studies

from Johns Hopkins University.

Mitch also serves on the board of the Nevada Museums Association and will soon join the board of the Henderson Historical Society. He and his wife, Debra, live in Henderson, Nevada.



COMING IN NOVEMBER

🌵 HISTORIC GARDEN TOUR

This November, join us for a special garden tour through historic neighborhoods, where you'll explore the beauty of desert landscaping in front and backyards. Along the way, you'll discover gardening traditions, learn about sustainable practices, and see how these outdoor spaces reflect the history and character of Las Vegas' historic neighborhoods.

