

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Harrison's Guest House

Other names/site number: Harrison House

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 1001 F. Street

City or town: Las Vegas State: NV County: Clark

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

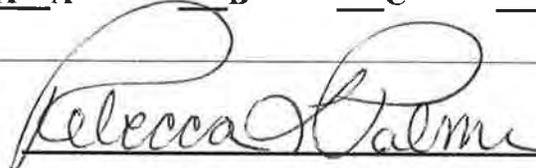
I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B ___ C ___ D

	March 8, 2016
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Nevada Northern Railway Depot
Name of Property

White Pine, Nevada
County and State

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:) _____

by Barbara Wyatt
Signature of the Keeper

5-3-16
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

Harrison's Guest House
Name of Property

Clark, Nevada
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u>2</u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Boarding house

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL/Cultural Center, Non-profit offices

WORK IN PROGRESS

Harrison's Guest House
Name of Property

Clark, Nevada
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS/Bungalow/Craftsman
OTHER

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STUCCO, BRICK

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Harrison's Guest House sits on a 0.15-acre lot on the corner of Adams Avenue and F Street in the Ham, Ferron, Martin, & Mildren (H. F. M. & M.) Addition in Las Vegas, Nevada, frequently referred to as the Westside neighborhood. The nominated area includes two contributing and two non-contributing resources. Anchoring the site is Harrison's Guest House, the main house developed between 1942 and 1954 to serve as a boarding house. Also contributing to the nomination is the Guest House, an additional but separate building Genevieve Harrison added to the property's northwest corner in 1955 to further expand bedroom space for her growing boarding business. Once completed, these two buildings formed a roughly U-shaped footprint, creating a small courtyard space in the rear of the property. The non-contributing Shed, constructed in c.1975 along the property's northern boundary, serves as a hyphen between Harrison's Guest House and the Guest House. A non-contributing Masonry Wall bounds the outer extent of the property's east and south boundaries along the public sidewalk. Although there are alterations dating to between the 1970s and 1990s, Harrison's Guest House and its contributing elements retain integrity to the historic period between 1942 and 1960, especially in overall design and floorplan, and in workmanship, materials, setting, feeling, association, and location.¹

The Clark County Assessor's records indicate that Genevieve Harrison constructed the modest bungalow known as Harrison's Guest House in 1942, although Craftsman-style elements on the southeast portion of the building suggest that it may have been built earlier. Harrison, an African American entrepreneur, operated a boarding house for African Americans at the site from 1942 to her death in 1957, with her sister continuing operations until 1960. During that time, she built several additions onto the main house, and constructed an additional Guest House to expand her accommodations. Currently, the house and its attachments encompass 1,716 square feet in a

¹ Dr. Sarann Knight-Preddy, interview by Mella Harmon, December 20, 2013, at the Harrison Guest House. Dr. Knight-Preddy is a long-time resident of Westside and was involved in the operation of the Moulin Rouge; A building permit for the property from the City of Las Vegas' Department of Building and Safety, dated August 22, 1955, outlines some additions to be made to the house, and identifies the materials to be used as "frame and stucco."

Harrison's Guest House

Name of Property

Clark, Nevada

County and State

rectangular L-shaped plan on what appears to be a concrete perimeter foundation, with a gable-roofed carport, added in the late 1990s, extending off the north end of the front elevation. The earlier massing and the additions are covered by a medium-pitched gable roof sheathed in composition shingles. The exterior walls of the two buildings and the additions vary between painted brick, or stucco over wood framing.

Narrative Description

Setting

Harrison's Guest House is located in the Westside neighborhood of Las Vegas, a historically African American neighborhood located northwest of downtown Las Vegas proper. This area has also been referred to by long-time residents as "Old Westside," and by the City of Las Vegas as "West Las Vegas." The neighborhood was historically bounded by Bonanza Road on the south, A Street on the east, Harrison Avenue on the north, and H Street on the west. The construction of Interstate Highway 15 destroyed much of the eastern quarter of the neighborhood between A Street and B Streets. From the 1940s through the 1960s, the blocks surrounding the Harrison's Guest House comprised a mix of residential and commercial buildings. Currently, there are few remaining houses from the early and mid-twentieth centuries. What few historic buildings are left are scattered among apartment houses, numerous churches, and many vacant lots that reflect building losses to fires, demolition since the 1960s, and recent new construction.

1. Harrison's Guest House. c.1942. Contributing Building

The east-facing, c.1942 Harrison's Guest House is a 1,700 square foot, one-and-one-half story bungalow with a mostly rectangular footprint, and a small ell extending the main building to the north. The main building is seated on a concrete perimeter foundation and topped with a medium-pitch, front gable roof with boxed and bracketed eaves. The walls are mostly stucco over frame, with some additions completed with painted brick over frame. A rectangular ell addition extends the main building to the north, and has a north-facing, gabled roof. The exterior walls on the earlier portions of the building are not visible, but inspection of the stylistic elements suggests the wall cladding underneath could be either brick or lapboard. However, the entirety of the building's exterior is currently covered in stucco, added by Mrs. Harrison by 1955. Fenestration is varied throughout, dominated by one-over-one wood sash windows. Nearly all windows are covered with decorative metal grates, added in approximately 1975.²

The interior of Harrison's Guest House follows a center hall plan on the interior, with the entry on the east façade, two bedrooms and a bathroom on the north side of the hall, and the living room, dining room, and kitchen on the south side (see attached floor plan).

Though records indicate the modest bungalow was built in 1942, features such as bracketed eaves suggest potential for earlier construction. According to building permit records, Mrs. Harrison constructed four additions to Harrison's Guest House between 1946 and 1954 to facilitate her boarding house business. These spaces added bedrooms and bathrooms to the

² Knight-Preddy interview, 2013.

Harrison's Guest House

Name of Property

building.

Clark, Nevada

County and State

The east façade is dominated by a one-story, full-width, hipped-roof porch on a concrete foundation, with metal bars and a gate enclosing its entirety. The four square porch posts are covered by stucco and have decorative imprints on the front (east side). The majority of the porch is an historic feature, but the porch's original poured concrete flooring was modified, likely in 1975, covering the concrete with red tiles, along with the addition of the decorative metal features. A south-facing picture window with decorative metal guard flanks the roughly-centered entryway. Above the porch roof in the east gable end are undecorated brackets at the eave and roof crest. There is a window port that is covered with particle board, and the historic window has been removed. Based on the period of construction, remaining stylistic elements, and a similarly-shaped window opening on the rear of the building, it is possible that this was originally a vent, or a small single-light or one-over-one window. The north addition to the north has a roughly centered entryway flanked by another picture window to the north with a matching metal guard. The east elevation of the north addition is almost completely covered by a carport, added in the late 1990s, with square posts and a low-pitched, front gable roof of a slightly lower pitch than the rest of the house.³

The south elevation is anchored by a blonde brick external wall chimney with a tin chimney cap near the southeast corner of the building. East of the chimney is a boxed bay window with an aluminum frame, which was added in 1985. Fenestration along the elevation varies, including a wooden sash window, an aluminum slider, and a modern panel door toward the west end of the elevation .

The west elevation is mostly unadorned except for fenestration, and is dominated by an historic painted brick addition from 1946 that has been lightly stuccoed. In that year, Mrs. Harrison constructed an 8" painted brick-over-frame addition onto this elevation to extend the rear by fifteen feet. It included three bedrooms and a bathroom, connected by a north-south running hallway along the rear of the original house, terminating at an exit centered in the south elevation. The northernmost bedroom in this addition was expanded in 1953, also with 8" brick. In that same year, Mrs. Harrison added a small extension onto the north of the sitting room at the northeast corner of the house. The following year, she further extended this addition to create a den. A door along the back exterior wall has been filled in with stucco. There are three wooden one-over-one sash windows of varying sizes with metal grates, as well as a small wood fixed window in the gable.

The north elevation includes several wall breaks that indicate additions made to this portion of the building. There is a single one-over-one wood sash window on the north elevation of the 1953 addition. Two windows remain on the original portion of the main house on this elevation, but they have been replaced with aluminum slider windows, likely in 1985 during a significant interior renovation.

³ Historic aerial imagery available from Historicaerials.com shows the carport as absent in a 1994 aerial but present in a 1999 aerial. Historicaerials.com is supported with aerial imagery from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Harrison's Guest House
Name of Property

Clark, Nevada
County and State

The building's interior retains its historic floorplan. Interior walls are largely undecorated gypsum drywall. Gwen Walker, director of the Walker African American Museum and Research Center, described some of the features of Harrison's Guest House that existed while in operation by Genevieve Harrison:

The interior of the house had a cozy Persian rug and patterned wallpaper complemented a roomy sofa and assorted chairs. There was an array of pictures and mementos. A desk was tucked conveniently in a corner between two windows, thus permitting a writer to have sunlight on either side of him. Guests, including Sammy Davis, Jr (then part of the Will Mastin Trio), Lena Horne, and Arthur Lee Simpkins, would often relax in this room and either take a nap on the roomy sofa or engage in lively conversations.⁴

Genevieve Harrison's sister, Agatha Wilson continued to operate the boarding house until approximately 1960. Wilson undertook the first set of post-1957 modifications when she received a building permit for "exterior remodel" in October of 1975. The inspection record signed off for framing, suggesting that it was at this time that the Shed was added between Harrison's Guest House and the c.1955 Guest House. It is likely that Ms. Wilson's exterior remodel also resulted in the addition of the metal enclosure around the front porch, and the addition of red tile flooring over the historic poured concrete porch foundation.

In 1979, Wilson sold the property, and it rotated ownership frequently until 2009 when it was purchased by the 5th Ward Chamber of Commerce. Many of the intervening owners made modifications and alterations to the building, although they retained the core historic characteristics of the boarding house. In 1983, the City of Las Vegas issued to owners Leandrew and Lounell McDaniel a "Notice and Order to Demolish, Remove, or Repair" the building. The order claimed that the building, which apparently was unoccupied at the time, had been vandalized to the point that it was substandard. The City gave the owners less than a month to remedy the problems or face demolition. How the situation was resolved is not known, but in 1985, a new owner, Andrew Bowie, undertook an interior rehabilitation, including electrical and plumbing upgrades. It appears that the interior remodel also replaced the interior walls with gypsum drywall, replacing the original materials but retaining the historic floorplan, corridors, and circulation pattern. Rehabilitation over the next two years included the addition of a bay window on the south elevation in 1985, and the replacement of one window on the north elevation of the original building facing the courtyard with an aluminum slider unit. In 1987, Mr. Bowie replaced the roof.

2. Guest House. 1955. Contributing Building

The Guest House is a contributing 1955 addition that is situated toward the northwest corner of the property, and is a modest, symmetrical, stuccoed building with a southern façade and a side-gabled roof resembling a salt-box. Gwen Walker described the Guest House as "a small, comfortable guest house situated at the back of the main house used by the likes of Pearl Bailey and her family." It has a centered, front-gabled porch with square posts and sits on a concrete

⁴ Gwen Walker, *History of West Las Vegas*, Unpublished manuscript, Walker African American Museum and Research Center, Las Vegas, Nevada, 2.

Harrison's Guest House

Clark, Nevada

Name of Property

County and State

foundation. There is a new panel door at the entry. The house was constructed as a frame building with stucco cladding, and retains this outer sheathing. There are two one-over-one, wood sash windows on the façade flanking the entry. The north elevation is unadorned except for a single one-over-one wood sash window.⁵

3. Shed. c.1975. Non-contributing Structure

A small, south-facing Shed opens into the courtyard between the main house and the Guest House. The Shed has unfinished plywood wall cladding on the exterior, with a small entry on the south elevation. The north (rear) elevation of the Shed is clad with what appears to be vertical board siding. The roof consists of asphalt composition shingling over wooden sheathing, and is in very poor condition. A building permit from the City of Las Vegas suggest this structure was added to the property in 1975.

4. Masonry Wall. 1993. Non-contributing Structure

A concrete masonry unit (CMU) wall with decorative metal fencing, added by Andrew Bowie in 1993, surrounds the . The wall runs along the interior of the public sidewalk, and consists of standard 16"x8" CMUs with CMU posts every eight feet that rise approximately 4'6" above grade. Arched decorative metal fencing intersperses the CMU posts, and is capped with steeple finials. On the east section of the wall is a decorative metal gate of matching style flanked by two CMU posts. Directly inside (west of) the gate is a small, wooden trellis with a rounded arch covering the concrete walkway that leads to the main house entrance.

Integrity

Harrison's Guest House retains sufficient integrity of location, setting, feeling, association, workmanship, and materials to convey its significance as a segregation-era boarding house for African Americans in Las Vegas. Modifications between the 1970s and 1990s have detracted from the building's integrity of design, but the historic building is still quite recognizable. The two contributing resources retain their historic massing, profiles, and footprints, as well as their stucco wall cladding. The footprint of Harrison's Guest House reflects the alterations made by Genevieve Harrison throughout the period of significance. The façade of the building contains two non-historic additions, specifically the c.1993 stone and metal wall around the front yard, and the c.1999 carport. Although it slightly alters the relationship of the house to the public street, the fence is of compatible design and materials, and its low profile and spacing retains clear views between the street and the house. Although of compatible design with the Gable-Ell plan of the house, the c.1999 carport disrupts the historic massing of the east facade. Other non-historic modifications include some window replacements on secondary elevations, the addition of metal detailing on the porch and most façade windows, and the 1985 addition of the bay window at the southeast corner. Despite several non-historic alterations to the building, including the carport and masonry wall additions, the Harrison's Guest House retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, association, design, materials, and workmanship. It reflects its importance as the only known surviving example of an African American boarding house in Las Vegas from the segregation era.

⁵ Gwen Walker, *History of West Las Vegas*, Unpublished manuscript, Walker African American Museum and Research Center, Las Vegas, Nevada, 2.

Harrison's Guest House
Name of Property

Clark, Nevada
County and State

Work in Progress

The current owners of Harrison's Guest House, the Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce, and others are working to develop a plan for the Westside neighborhood. Harrison's Guest House, which serves as the headquarters for the Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce will play a significant role in the revitalization of the area, and will be undergoing some modifications in order to maximize its use as a cultural center. Although the final plans have not yet been completed, the work, which will mostly be interior remodeling, will be directed by Rick Van Diepen, executive director of Green Chips, with a goal to become a state-of-the-art, net-zero energy, LEED-certified model demonstration home as well as a cultural and community resource center. The Harrison's Guest House complex is currently listed in the Nevada State Register of Historic Places, as well as the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register. Due to its local historic designation, the project must be approved by the City of Las Vegas' Historic Preservation Commission (a Certified Local Government) to ensure compliance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

Harrison's Guest House
Name of Property

Clark, Nevada
County and State

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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Harrison's Guest House
Name of Property

Clark, Nevada
County and State

Period of Significance

1942-1960

Significant Dates

1942 – Harrison opens boarding house

1957 – Harrison passes away

1960 – last documented use of property as a boarding house

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Harrison's Guest House is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage-Black as an African American boarding house that provided accommodations to black entertainers and divorce-seekers in Las Vegas during the mid-twentieth century. It is also significant at the local level in the area of Entertainment/Recreation for providing boarding services for some of the twentieth century's leading African American entertainers in Las Vegas and on the Las Vegas Strip, including Nat King Cole, Pearl Bailey, and Sammy Davis, Jr.. As in other cities in the West, African Americans who moved to Las Vegas during and after the Second World War faced racial segregation as a matter of law and social practice. Boarding houses became one of the few options available for African Americans who were new arrivals to a community or were traveling through the region. In Las Vegas, a section of the town developed as a distinctly African American neighborhood during the 1930s and 1940s, referred to as the

Harrison's Guest House

Name of Property

Clark, Nevada

County and State

Westside. This neighborhood was roughly bounded by Bonanza Avenue and U.S. Interstate 15 on the south, B Street on the east, Van Buren Avenue on the north, and H Street on the west. Harrison's Guest House stands as the only known surviving example of an African American boarding house in Las Vegas from the segregation era.

The National Register currently recognizes four other sites associated with Las Vegas' African American history, including the Berkley Square Historic District (NRIS 09000846), the Westside School (NRIS 79001460), the Clark Avenue Railroad Underpass (NRIS 03001509), and the Moulin Rouge Hotel (NRIS 92001701) listed in 1992 but burned in 2009 and partially demolished in 2010.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

African Americans in the West and Las Vegas

Like many communities in the American West, Las Vegas experienced a tremendous amount of growth during and following the Second World War. Initially developed in the first decade of the 1900s, it remained a small town alongside the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad. In part due to the community's small size, opportunities for blacks in the West were generally limited, outside of specific urban areas including Los Angeles and Denver. Although some groups of black settlers used the Homestead Act to acquire land, or banded together in all-black settlement towns throughout the region, the lack of opportunity, and persistent segregation in western communities limited the presence of African Americans in most areas.⁶

Research and census records indicate that by the 1870s, a small but vibrant collection of African American communities were scattered throughout Nevada. The 1870 census shows just over 300 black residents in the state, which rose to nearly 400 in 1880 (there were 62,000 residents in the state in that year). The volatile nature of Nevada's population, heavily dependent on mining booms and busts, might have affected the representation of African Americans in the census. Although Nevada's nineteenth century black population remained small, many of the state's communities supported small numbers of black entrepreneurs, often without any apparent geographic segregation. However, both economic decline and the results of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* court case in 1896 appear to have reduced the African American population, which dropped to 134 in the 1900 census. Black communities remained small (below 1000) within the state until 1940, a trend significantly influenced by the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan throughout the nation in the 1910s and 1920s. Research by Nevada historian Elmer Rusco reveals that between 1890 and the 1920s, there was a general exodus of African Americans from the state, especially professionals, due to segregation, open racism in government leadership, and general exclusion of blacks from most meaningful employment opportunities. Though racial tensions appear to have eased by the 1920s, most communities such as Las Vegas still practiced

⁶ Elmer R. Rusco, "African Americans in Nevada, 1860s-1920s," in *Peoples of Color in the American West*, Sucheng Chan, Douglas Henry Daniels, Mario T. Garcia, and Terry P. Wilson, eds., (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Co., 1994), 323-328.

Harrison's Guest House

Name of Property

de-facto segregation.⁷

Clark, Nevada

County and State

During Las Vegas' first years as a railroad siding in the early 1900s, the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad employed several blacks on its local crews, leading to the growth of a small African American community in the town's Original, or McWilliams, townsite on the east side of the railroad tracks. The McWilliams Townsite, platted by J.T. McWilliams, was comprised of former ranch land owned by Helen Stewart, and attracted settlers until May 1905. At that point, Senator William A. Clark, a railroad investor, developer, and Clark County namesake, upstaged McWilliams with his own Clark's Las Vegas Townsite on the west side of the railroad tracks. Although it would become an almost exclusively black neighborhood after the Second World War, Clark's Las Vegas Townsite began as a mostly white area of the city. Senator Clark held the auction for lots in Clark's Townsite on May 15, 1905. Clark's Townsite achieved more success and popularity than McWilliams's Townsite, which later became known as West Las Vegas or the Westside.⁸

Between 1910 and 1940, lack of jobs and housing discrimination contributed to the small size of Las Vegas' African American community in the McWilliams Townsite. Most black men in the community worked for the railroad, while the women worked as housekeepers for white families. In the 1910s, railroad entrepreneur Walter Bracken commented on the ethnic landscape of Las Vegas, stating, "our colored population, Mexicans, etc. is growing very rapidly and unless we have some place for this class of people, they will be scattered all through town." De-facto segregation on the part of the fledgling town meant that most blacks in Las Vegas lived downtown in Block 17 of the Clark's Townsite, roughly bounded by First, Fifth, Ogden, and Stewart Streets. People in the community owned and maintained businesses, and frequently acquired homes that they then rented out, mostly to other blacks who were either temporary laborers or travelers. Segregation of the city's religious institutions compelled black Methodists to establish the Home Mission in 1916. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Las Vegas' community of roughly forty African Americans possessed some economic opportunities, as illustrated by early black residents like A.B. Mitchell, a railroad machinist and real estate entrepreneur. The solidarity of this small community is further demonstrated by the establishment of the Zion Methodist Church, the Colored Progressive Club, and the Colored Democratic Club, all in 1917, and the foundation of a chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in 1918.⁹

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, "Resident Population and Apportionment of the U.S. House of Representatives – Nevada," <https://www.census.gov/dmd/www/resapport/states/nevada.pdf>, accessed March 8, 2016; Elmer R. Rusco, "Good Time Coming?": *Black Nevadans in the Nineteenth Century*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975), 124; Rusco, "African Americans in Nevada," 326-327; Ron James, *The Roar and the Silence: A History of Virginia City and the Comstock Lode*, (Reno & Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1998), 97-99.

⁸ Moehring 1995, 4.

⁹ Eugene P. Moehring and Michael S. Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*, (Reno & Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 34, 53; Moehring, 1995, 174; Clarence Ray, *Black Politics and Gaming in Las Vegas, 1920s-1980s*, Helen M. Blue and Jamie Coughtry, eds., (Reno, NV: University of Nevada, Oral History Program, 1991), 22-24; Earnest N. Bracey, "The African Americans," in *The Peoples of Las Vegas: One City, Many Faces*, Jerry L. Simich and Thomas C. Wright, eds., (Reno & Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 79; Moehring, 1989, 174.

Harrison's Guest House

Name of Property

Clark, Nevada

County and State

While most venues and accommodations in Las Vegas remained segregated, there is some incongruity in historical accounts about the nature of the black experience in early Las Vegas. After statewide legalization of gambling in 1931, the competitive early casino market generally accepted black patrons openly into the late-1930s. Clarence Ray, an early black resident of the city, did not recall overt discriminatory practices until the 1930s, although other sources from the period, including Bracken and A.B. Mitchell, suggest otherwise. However, the majority of accounts indicate that black community members in Las Vegas faced segregation, declining housing conditions, and lack of employment by the 1930s. In 1931, many residents in the Westside lived in shacks or tents along unpaved roads with no municipal utility connections. It is clear that white attitudes toward blacks in Las Vegas changed in the 1930s as a result of various federal projects, such as the Boulder Dam project (more commonly known as Hoover Dam). These projects attracted thousands of workers of various ethnicities and nationalities from across the country. A significant number of these newcomers arrived from the southern United States, where racial segregation and discrimination had been a matter of course for generations. An influx of white southerners contributed to a shift in the City of Las Vegas' approach to segregation from de-facto practice to institutionalized policy, as many federal job supervisors either refused to hire blacks, or limited their presence in the workplace. It appears that local business owners soon followed suit.¹⁰

Faced with opposition from white officials, black residents began to leave downtown Las Vegas in favor of the Westside neighborhood, bounded approximately by A Street on the east, Bonanza Road on the south, H Street on the west, and Harrison Avenue on the north. Accounts differ as to whether this movement occurred voluntarily, or as a result of discrimination. Considering the timing of this transition in the 1930s and 40s, it is very likely that the opportunity to own homes and the increasing discrimination downtown both compelled black Las Vegas residents into the Westside. Recollections by Clarence Ray and George Ullom, early residents of the city, indicate that many African Americans began purchasing real estate in the Westside as early as the 1920s or 30s, and by the 1940s, the Westside was predominantly African American. Other accounts indicate that as segregation became more overt, Las Vegas city officials accelerated the process by refusing to renew business licenses to black business owners in the downtown area.¹¹

The Second World War complicated the trend of segregation in many western communities including Las Vegas, and historian Jacqueline Jones has called the era an historical watershed for black labor. Wartime industries with high paying jobs encouraged many minority ethnic groups, including African Americans, to move to production centers like Las Vegas. Though the social atmosphere was rarely more welcoming than the southern towns and cities they left behind, many African American families experienced improved working conditions and economic advancement as a result of President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802 of 1941 that banned discrimination in the defense industries. Despite this, black women often found themselves limited to positions in domestic labor and the service industries, a situation that worsened after

¹⁰ Walker, n.d.; Ray, *Black Politics*, 48-53; National Register of Historic Places, Clark Avenue Railroad Underpass, Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada, National Register #03001509, Sec. 8, p 11.

¹¹ Ray, *Black Politics*, 30; Claytee White, interview by Mella Harmon, December 21, 2013.

Harrison's Guest House

Name of Property
the war.¹²

Clark, Nevada
County and State

Wartime production in magnesium processing, the establishment of what became Nellis Air Force Base, and the federal efforts to end segregation in wartime industry precipitated a massive increase in Las Vegas' African American population during and after the war years. In 1940, there were only 178 blacks living in Clark County, but by 1955, over 16,000 blacks lived in the Westside neighborhood of Las Vegas alone. As a result of the social networks that enticed African American job seekers out of the South, a significant percentage of new arrivals in Las Vegas came from Fordyce, Arkansas, and Tallulah, Louisiana. Fordyce was a segregated community, but one remembered by contemporary blacks as relatively harmonious despite offering few job opportunities. In comparison, Tallulah was notorious for its racial violence, dubbed by some black residents as the "lynching capital of the South." The recruitment of employees for the Basic Magnesium, Incorporated (BMI) facility in nearby Henderson, Nevada, along with Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802, encouraged many to settle in the quickly expanding western towns of Henderson and Las Vegas. BMI's Carver Park provided some residential units for newly arrived African Americans, but most had to look elsewhere for housing. In many cases, the male head of household would travel first to secure employment and seek housing, with his spouse (and children, if applicable) following within several weeks. In cases like these, boarding houses became an important first accommodation while men sought permanent housing for their families. As black men were displaced from factory jobs after the war due to production draw downs, and the return of white soldiers, Las Vegas' growing service sector became an increasingly important source of wage labor for African Americans in the city.¹³

Alongside defense-related development, the legalization of gambling in Nevada in 1931 contributed to the overt segregation begun in the Hoover Dam work camps. The popularity of Nevada's gambling meant that national attitudes on racism began to dictate the social strata of Las Vegas. Like other entertainment venues throughout the country, the largely white audiences of Las Vegas' casino resorts demanded performances by black entertainers at the same time that those venues practiced strict segregation in their overnight accommodations. In 1942, El Rancho Vegas began offering stage shows featuring nationally known performers such as Pearl Bailey and Nat King Cole. While downtown casino owners frequently headlined black entertainers such as these, they also refused to provide lodging for them, forcing many of the twentieth century's leading artists to seek accommodations in the hotels and boarding houses in the Westside. There, they competed for rooms along with travelers, temporary workers, and out-of-state lodgers taking advantage of Nevada's liberal divorce laws, a popular trade in Nevada until other states

¹² Jacqueline Jones, "Shifting Paradigms of Black Women's Work in the Urban North and West: World War II to the Present," in *African American Urban History Since World War II*, edited by Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 298.

¹³ Albert S. Broussard, *Expectations of Equality: A History of Black Westerners*, (Wheeling, Illinois and Cody, Wyoming: Harlan Davidson, Inc., and the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 2012), xiii-xiv, 102; Claytee D. White, "'Eight Dollars a Day and Working in the Shade': An Oral History of African American Migrant Women in the Las Vegas Gaming Industry," in *African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000*, Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, eds., (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 277-278; Claytee D. White, "The Roles of African American Women in the Las Vegas Gaming Industry, 1940-1980," Master's thesis, University of Nevada – Las Vegas, 1997; Jones, 298; Moehring & Green, 162-163.

Harrison's Guest House

Name of Property

Clark, Nevada

County and State

loosened restrictions in the late-twentieth century. This reality suggests that without lodgings such as Harrison's Guest House, Las Vegas may have lost several of its major African American entertainers and not attained its status as one of the country's leading entertainment cities.¹⁴

The Westside neighborhood that greeted these short-term residents was one of increasingly limited economic opportunity by the 1940s. Real estate lending practices known as redlining restricted the availability of mortgage loans in what were considered high-risk zones, usually areas where racial minorities lived. As it combined with increasing discrimination in the private workforce, redlining limited the housing options for many Westside residents who had moved there in the 1940s and later. It was common for black service workers to rent small, substandard houses in the neighborhood. Conditions became poor enough in the Westside that the City of Las Vegas razed 375 buildings between September 1944 and April 1945. The City made no efforts to house dislocated residents. Despite the conditions and poor investment in public services, oral history accounts and existing buildings indicate that a business community began to develop along Jackson Street (four blocks north of Harrison's Guest House) by the mid-1940s. These businesses included beauty shops, dry cleaners, barber shops, restaurants, and popular nightclubs like the New Town Tavern, the Cotton Club, the El Morocco, and the Ebony Club. The community formed its own Westside Chamber of Commerce in 1948 to support this entrepreneurship. However, city services continued to lag. Westside was without a municipal fire station until 1951. Las Vegas established regular street maintenance and utility services in the mid-1950s only after white-only neighborhoods began to develop north and west of the Westside.¹⁵

Unlike other western cities that saw their African American residents leave once wartime industries closed, postwar Las Vegas provided ample employment for African Americans in its hotels, clubs, casinos, and other tourism-based businesses. The city's black population grew to over 5,000 people by 1950 and continued climbing, which necessitated the expansion of housing and employment opportunities. This growth compelled state legislators to make several unsuccessful attempts to integrate Nevada's hotels and casinos in 1939, 1949, 1953, and 1957. For Westside residents, housing continued to be a primary concern for the neighborhood, but lack of concerted action meant that the community was largely on its own. The independence fostered among black leaders in the Westside contributed to the development of a modest middle class within the neighborhood. Through activism and lobbying efforts, federal housing programs took the first actions in the 1950s to address the housing shortage among black residents. In 1952, the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) opened Marble Manor on the Westside, a 40-acre housing tract of 154 two-bedroom houses "for colored people." Private investors followed suit, building the Berkley Square neighborhood to the north in 1955, and the Highland Square project in 1956. Berkley Square became another predominantly black neighborhood in Las Vegas, bordering the original Westside area to the north, and designed by internationally renowned

¹⁴ Walker, n.d.; Ray, *Black Politics*, 48-53.

¹⁵ Knight-Predy interview 20 December 2013; National Register of Historic Places, Berkeley Square, Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada, 09000846, 8-4; White, "Eight Dollars a Day," 279-280; Bracey, "The African Americans," 81; Moehring & Green, 163-164.

Harrison's Guest House

Name of Property

Clark, Nevada

County and State

African American architect Paul Revere Williams.¹⁶

Las Vegas experienced modest successes in the provision of housing for blacks, however, racial discrimination persisted through much of the mid-twentieth century. In 1949, Stanley Hunter attempted to turn the Biltmore Hotel into an all-black establishment, leading to the revocation of the hotel's liquor and gaming license by the City. However, the opening of the Moulin Rouge Hotel and Casino in the Westside on May 24, 1955 had a profound impact on the lives of African American residents and visitors in Las Vegas. The Moulin Rouge was the brainchild of several white businessmen who billed it as "America's First Interracial Hotel." Possibly encouraged by national civil rights successes such as the desegregation of the U.S. military by President Truman in 1948, and the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954, the Moulin Rouge hired black waiters, waitresses, and dealers. The former heavyweight boxing champion Joe Lewis was given a small share of the ownership to serve as the Moulin Rouge's official greeter. Both whites and blacks frequented the Moulin Rouge, which offered three nightly stage shows. The experiment lasted only five months. Its closure in October of 1955 was a shock and a disappointment to employees and patrons alike. Though most sources point to lack of profit leading the owners to close the hotel, the precise reason for its sudden end is unknown. Historian Michael Green suspects it was a mix of bad management, bad location, bad timing, and bad luck. Though the hotel-casino re-opened in 1957, controversy plagued its subsequent management.¹⁷

Despite its short life, the example set by the Moulin Rouge strengthened the Civil Rights movement in Las Vegas. Within a decade, activists successfully pressured city and state officials to end segregation in downtown Las Vegas and the Las Vegas Strip. In 1960, under threat of a downtown protest march against racial discrimination by Las Vegas casinos, Nevada's governor, Grant Sawyer, called a meeting between hotel owners, city and state officials, and local black leaders, including Dr. James McMillan, the president of the Las Vegas chapter of the NAACP. Mediated by local newspaper owner Hank Greenspun, the group held the meeting on March 26 at the closed Moulin Rouge, resulting in the Moulin Rouge Agreement, which called for the desegregation of Las Vegas' casinos. While most hotels and casinos began to accept black customers after 1960, some continued to bar African American patrons from their businesses until the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 forced integration. The opening of overnight accommodations throughout the city to African American patrons closed the door on the need for boarding houses like Harrison's Guest House. With more options in downtown Las Vegas, as well as in the Westside, Agatha Wilson appears to have shut down Harrison's Guest House by 1960. Despite these gains in the early 1960s, it was not until 1971 that African Americans in Las Vegas made serious gains against discriminatory housing and employment practices. The

¹⁶ NRHP, Berkeley Square, Sec. 8, p6; Jeffrey J. Sallaz, "Civil Rights and Employment Equity in Las Vegas Casinos: The Failed Enforcement of the Casino Consent Decree, 1971-1986," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 47, No. 4 (Winter 2004), 286; Hal Rothman and Mike Davis, "The Many Faces of Las Vegas," in *The Grit Beneath the Glitter: Tales from the Real Las Vegas*, Hal K. Rothman and Mike Davis, eds., (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 10-11; Moehring & Green, 165.

¹⁷ Cook 2013:1-7; National Register of Historic Places, Moulin Rouge Hotel, Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada, 92001701, 8-4; Earnest N. Bracey, *The Moulin Rouge and Black Rights in Las Vegas: A History of the First Racially Integrated Hotel-Casino*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., Inc., 2008), 56-58.

Harrison's Guest House

Name of Property

Clark, Nevada

County and State

NAACP filed a complaint with the Las Vegas federal district court judge, Roger Foley. Under pressure from Foley, many Las Vegas venues signed a consent decree that effectively ended employment discrimination for many non-white workers, including African Americans. That same year, also under pressure from Foley, Nevada Governor Mike O'Callaghan led the Nevada legislature in adopting legislation against housing discrimination.¹⁸

The social mobility afforded to black workers after 1971 led to further economic decline in the Westside. African American families with additional income moved to better-maintained communities in the Las Vegas metropolitan area that could no longer legally bar them from purchasing homes. Regional and city planning decisions, especially for the Interstate Highway 15 corridor between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles, compelled others to leave the Westside. Similar to highway projects in other urban areas across the country, the federal government and the City of Las Vegas condemned large sections of property in the Westside to provide land for the route. Research indicates that local officials in many urban areas throughout the United States took advantage of federal highway construction projects to eliminate predominantly African American neighborhoods, especially those that had become "ghettos" due to lack of public infrastructure and private development dollars. Collaboration between federal, state, and local officials often meant that highway projects destroyed significant components of black communities through the nation, including homes, churches, businesses, and schools. During the late-1960s and 1970s, Interstate 15 development severed most of Westside as through-streets closed and isolated the remnants of the community from downtown. In 1968, the City closed seven streets, despite protests from hundreds of Westside residents, many of whom termed the new highway the "concrete curtain" once completed. Despite incremental infrastructure improvements in the 1970s through the 2000s, Westside remains somewhat isolated from downtown Las Vegas with few passageways across Interstate 15. The neighborhood is still primarily composed of poor and working class families. In 2016, the remaining buildings are a mixture of small urban homes, multi-family housing, and sweeping expanses of vacant lots.¹⁹

Harrison's Guest House and African American Boarding Houses

Boarding houses like Genevieve Harrison's arose from a nation-wide need to house traveling African Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In cities across the country, segregation in public accommodations required the creation of separate facilities and social networks to inform travelers of those facilities. Despite the need, accommodations were notoriously limited throughout the country into the 1950s, especially in the West, and continued to be limited until the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. In many communities, boarding houses provided the only overnight accommodations available to African Americans traveling between cities in the West. Throughout the western United States, boarding houses such as the Harrison's Guest House that addressed this need were often in low-income areas that suffered from neglect. Redevelopment has changed many of these neighborhoods and many former boarding houses have been demolished. Harrison's Guest House stands as the only known

¹⁸ Moehring & Green, 201-202; Moehring, 2nd ed. 199-200.

¹⁹ Moehring & Green, 148; Robert J. McKee, *Community Action Against Racism in West Las Vegas: The F Street Wall, and the Women Who Brought It Down*, (Lanham, Mass.: Lexington Books, 2014), 14; Mark H. Rose and Raymond A. Mohl, *Interstate: Highway Politics and Policy since 1939*, 3rd ed., (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 103.

Harrison's Guest House

Name of Property

Clark, Nevada

County and State

example of its type remaining in Las Vegas, and potentially the only remaining in Nevada.²⁰

Due to the rigid segregation of Las Vegas' housing and public accommodations in the 1940s and 1950s, only a few hotels and boarding houses in Las Vegas' Westside neighborhood provided housing to temporary visitors and travelers. There was massive growth in the city's African American population during and after the Second World War. Due to this expansion, Las Vegas' boarding houses provided housing to these newly arrived blacks who hoped to work in the city's wartime industries, or in entertainment venues in downtown. New arrivals to Las Vegas discovered a generally inadequate housing market for African Americans, forcing many into temporary housing, either in boarding houses or frequently in tents in the neighborhood until home construction caught up with demand.²¹

Genevieve Harrison established one such boarding house for African American travelers and recent arrivals when she purchased the property at 1001 F Street in the Westside neighborhood in 1942. At this time she began renting rooms to African Americans, accommodating black men and women seeking divorce under Nevada's relatively loose divorce laws. More famously, she provided lodgings for some of the twentieth century's most renowned African American performers who played the Las Vegas showrooms in hotels and casinos where they were forbidden to stay. Entertainers such as Pearl Bailey, Nat King Cole, and Sammy Davis, Jr., stayed at Harrison's Guest House and other boarding houses on the Westside from the 1940s into the 1960s, when civil rights agreements and legislation opened the hotels and casinos of downtown to black patrons.

Like many of Las Vegas' African American residents, Genevieve Harrison arrived in the 1940s as defense industries attracted Americans from throughout the country to new communities where defense-related facilities were located. Harrison was born on March 28, 1902 in Marshall, Harrison County, Texas.²² She and others like her who had also relocated to the Westside, took advantage of the economic opportunity and offered housing to the wartime laborers as well as black entertainers performing at the nearby casinos and resorts. Harrison's Guest House and other Westside boarding houses also catered to black divorce-seekers establishing residency in Nevada to take advantage of Nevada's liberal divorce laws. Since the early 1900s, Nevada, Wyoming, Idaho, and Arkansas had softened restrictions on process, and reduced the residency period required to obtain a divorce. Nevada became a popular location, with an entire sector of the economy dedicated to the divorce trade, which remained until other states began to loosen their divorce restrictions in the late 1900s. For African Americans in states with strict divorce

²⁰ At the time of this nomination, there are no other known African American boarding houses remaining in Nevada. Both the Westside in Las Vegas, and the African American community west of downtown Reno, experienced significant demolition in the mid and late-twentieth centuries. Future survey work may uncover other former boarding houses related to this context, but based on what is known, their discovery is considered unlikely. Lyell Henry, Accommodations 'For Colored,'" *SCA Journal*, 23 (No. 2) Fall 2005, 5.

²¹ Brenda Williams, interview by Claytee White, May 24, 2013, transcript, p280, Las Vegas Oral History Program, University of Nevada – Las Vegas; Claytee White, "Eight Dollars a Day and Working in the Shade": An Oral History of African American Migrant Women in the Las Vegas Gaming Industry," in *African American Women Confront the West*, edited by Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 279.

²² "Genevieve Harrison," obituary, *Las Vegas Review Journal*, June 18, 1957.

Harrison's Guest House

Clark, Nevada

Name of Property

County and State

laws, cities like Reno and Las Vegas provided an opportunity for a quick end to their marriages. Boarding houses that catered to blacks in those communities became welcome accommodations for these temporary visitors to Nevada. It is not clear what percentage of Mrs. Harrison's business came from Nevada's divorce trade, but divorce-seekers were a portion of her income. Aida Smith, the sister of current Westside resident Dee Dee Jasmin, stayed at Harrison's Guest House along with her young daughter for six weeks in 1949, while awaiting her divorce. She found the guesthouse to be a lovely place, and Sammy Davis, Jr., who was staying there at the time, would play with her child.²³

Harrison's Guest House became one of a small number of boarding houses operating on the Westside between the 1940s and 1960s, which also included Mrs. Shaw's, and Mrs. Cartwright's operations.²⁴ In his autobiography *Yes I Can*, noted African American entertainer Sammy Davis, Jr. described his encounters with the policies of the Las Vegas resorts and what motivated him to stay at boarding houses in the Westside like Harrison's Guest House. The first time the Will Mastin Trio booked a show at the El Rancho Vegas, Sammy Davis asked the stage manager if rooms came with the deal. The manager replied, "Sorry. We can't let you have rooms here. House rules. You'll have to find a place in the—uh, on the other side of town [Westside]." Once in a cab on their way from the El Rancho, the cab driver said, "There's a woman named Cartwright over in Westside takes in you people."²⁵ The cab pulled up in front of what Davis described as one of the few decent houses in the neighborhood. The proprietor, presumably Mrs. Cartwright, greeted the trio, assuring them she had three nice rooms for them, but adding insult to injury with the price: at least twice what they would have paid had they been able to stay at the El Rancho. Prices may have been high due to the lack of available accommodations in the Westside in the 1940s and 1950s. Mr. Davis stayed at the house frequently at least as late as 1960. After 1960, there is no confirmation that the property continued to operate as a boarding house. Due to neglect and redevelopment efforts mentioned previously, Harrison's Guest House is the only known example remaining in Las Vegas of these once well-known boarding houses.²⁶

By all accounts, Harrison's Guest House was a popular place to stay. Among the more endearing stories of Harrison's Guest House and its famous occupants comes from Hannah Brown, a prominent businesswoman and community activist who grew up on the Westside. She tells of being a young girl when the stars stayed at Harrison's Guest House. She was especially enamored of Nat King Cole, who would sit on the porch and smoke. The local children, Hannah included, would do all they could to get his attention. He would ask how they were doing in

²³ Mella Harmon, "Reno: Twentieth Century Divorce Capital," *Online Nevada Encyclopedia*, September 17, 2009, <http://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/reno-twentieth-century-divorce-capital>; Dee Dee Jasmin, telephone interview by Mella Harmon, December 20, 2013. Rolando Larraz, telephone interview by Mella Harmon, December 20, 2013. Mrs. Jasmin was the former actress Harriette Young. Her sister, Aida Smith stayed at Harrison's Guest House in 1949 while waiting for a divorce. Sammy Davis, Jr. was staying there at the same time. Mr. Larraz is the founder and publisher of the *Las Vegas Tribune* and was friends with Sammy Davis, Jr. He recalled dropping him off at Harrison's Guest House after a night of clubbing following one of Sammy Davis's performances around Thanksgiving 1960.

²⁴ Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt*, 182.

²⁵ Davis et al 2012:90.

²⁶ Davis et al 2012:90; Moehring 1995:182; City of Las Vegas, *West Las Vegas Historic Resource Survey and Inventory*, by Courtney Mooney, Las Vegas, September 2003, 16-17; Dee Dee Jasmin interview, 2013..

Harrison's Guest House

Name of Property

Clark, Nevada

County and State

school. Hannah, who was a star student, was ready and eager to answer that question, presenting Cole with her latest report card. These exchanges went on until Hannah went off to high school and got a job at a local record store, Larry's Music Bar. Larry's was also popular with entertainers, who would come in and buy records. One day, several years after Hannah had visited with Cole at Harrison's Guest House, she saw him getting a haircut in the barbershop next to Larry's Music Bar. Finding an excuse to cross paths with Cole, Hannah greeted him and to her utter delight he recognized her and remembered her name and her stellar academic accomplishments.²⁷

The local newspapers provided some coverage of the Westside and its residents, providing a filtered vignette into the social life of Harrison's Guest House:

How would you like to nonchalantly have Clark Gable, Gregory Peck, Betty Hutton, and maybe Sophie Tucker as dinner guests some evening? (And some smelling salts for yourself?) Mrs. G. Harrison, 1001 North "F" Street in the Westside, can boast the counterpart of such notables, having hosted last week the top Negro performers in the entertainment world all at one time! The interesting array of guests came to pass as Eddie (Rochester) Anderson, Bob Parrish, the Edwards Sisters, the Jubalaires, and Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Lee Simpkins all chanced to be in town at one time. Mrs. Harrison, resident of Las Vegas for 15 years, maintains a boarding house, which is comfortably claimed by many noted Negro entertainers whenever any of them happens to be in town. "We're just one big happy family," Mrs. Harrison declares as she reported that her guests dine together and later gather in her ample living room to swap entertainment gossip and stories. Anderson, who concluded a week's engagement at the Thunderbird hotel, planned to return to Los Angeles to join Jack Benny again as "Rochester" over the radio show, which begins October 8. Parrish, a well-known singer, performed at Club Bingo and en route to Europe, while the Edwards Sisters arrived in Las Vegas for a nightclub engagement. The Jubalaires were Flamingo hotel headliners. Rounding out the list of notables was Arthur Lee Simpkins and his wife, who stopped here overnight en route to New York for a fall engagement. Mrs. Harrison disclosed that her musical household this time was without a piano and thus no song fests materialized. "Arthur Lee usually brings his piano with him, but he didn't this time," she added. (Traveling light, eh?).²⁸

The Moulin Rouge Agreement of 1960 effectively put an end to the need for places such as Harrison's Guest House. Black entertainers, tourists, and divorce-seekers were free to stay where they wished. However, racial discrimination continued well into the 1970s, in particular in education and employment. Nevada's notorious divorce trade also came to an end by 1970, as other states liberalized their divorce laws. As an indication of how renowned Genevieve Harrison had become in the community, when she applied for a divorce in 1957 while suffering from cancer, the judge, her attorney, the court clerk, and a court reporter came to her bedside to grant her divorce. The May 10, 1957 *Las Vegas Sun* article explained that such service was warranted

²⁷ Hannah Brown, interview by Claytee White, September 27, 2012, transcript, Las Vegas Oral History Program, University of Nevada – Las Vegas. Hannah Brown, interview by Mella Harmon, December 20, 2013, at Harrison Guest House. Ms. Brown grew up on the Westside and knew Mrs. Harrison and her illustrious guests personally.

²⁸ Verna Suesov, "Top Negro Performers Entertained in Vegas," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, September 28, 1948, 5:1-2.

Harrison's Guest House

Name of Property

Clark, Nevada

County and State

because Mrs. Harrison had long been a "friend, counselor, and housemother to visiting Las Vegas entertainers." Harrison's Guest House had been a second home to the entertainers for 15 years. Genevieve's sister, Mrs. Agatha Wilson, lived at 24 Stewart Avenue in Las Vegas. She inherited Harrison's Guest House and operated it for several years after Mrs. Harrison's death in 1957, with the last documented use of the property as a boarding house in 1960. Wilson was the owner of record of the house until she sold the property to Hazel Ferguson in 1976. From that point onward, the house rotated through various owners on a frequent basis until the 5th Ward Chamber of Commerce acquired the property in 2009.²⁹

Summary

Harrison's Guest House is eligible under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage-Black, and Entertainment/Recreation. The boarding house provided accommodations for African Americans during the developmental period of both Las Vegas' casino and resort economy, and during the city's black civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s. During the segregation era, the boarding house hosted some of the twentieth century's most renowned black entertainers including Pearl Bailey, Nat King Cole, and Sammy Davis, Jr. The significance of the site within the broader history of Las Vegas is recognized locally. It is stop No. 8 on the Las Vegas Pioneer Trail, which "celebrates the early history of Las Vegas by offering glimpses of the people and places that made Las Vegas thrive." It is also the only known African American boarding house that survives in Las Vegas to reflect this important period in the city's history.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to the following people who provided information, assistance, and support for this nomination: Katherine Duncan and Stanton Wilkerson of the Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce; Claytee White, UNLV Oral History Program; Courtney Mooney, City of Las Vegas; Bob Stoldal, City of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission; and Dr. Sarann Knight-Predy, Hannah Brown, Trish Geran, Dee Dee Jasmin, and Rolando Larraz, who shared their personal experiences relating to Genevieve Harrison and Harrison's Guest House.

²⁹ Obituary of Genevieve Harrison, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, June 17, 1957, 2:2; "G. Harrison Services Set for Wednesday," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, June 18, 1957, 2:5; "Ownership History," Clark County Recorder, records for parcel #010-552-08, accessed March 8, 2016.

Harrison's Guest House
Name of Property

Clark, Nevada
County and State

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Harrison's Guest House
Name of Property

Clark, Nevada
County and State

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government

Harrison's Guest House
Name of Property

Clark, Nevada
County and State

University
 Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____ B5886 (NV SHPO) _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _____ 0.15 acre _____

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: 11 Easting: 666385.93 Northing: 4005732.78

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of Harrison's Guest House National Register nomination encompasses the legal boundaries of Clark County Assessor's Parcel Number 139-27-210-091 as depicted on the attached Assessor's Parcel Map. The parcel comprises portions of both lots 5 and 6 on Block 18 of the H. F. M. & M. Addition to the City of Las Vegas, Section 27, Township 20, Range 61.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary for Harrison's Guest House conforms to the historical legal boundary of Clark County APN 139-27-210-091.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: _____ Mella Rothwell Harmon and Jim Bertolini _____
organization: _____ Nevada State Historic Preservation Office _____
street & number: _____ 901 S. Stewart St., Suite 5004 _____
city or town: _____ Carson City _____ state: _____ NV _____ zip code: _____ 89701 _____
e-mail _____ jbertolini@shpo.nv.gov _____
telephone: _____ 775-684-3436 _____
date: _____ January 21, 2016 _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Harrison's Guest House

Clark, Nevada

Name of Property

County and State

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)
- **Floor plan showing dates of additions**
- **Assessor's Parcel Map**

Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: Harrison's Guest House

City or Vicinity: Las Vegas

County: Clark

State: Nevada

Photo 1 of 12; NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_01

Photographer: Mella Rothwell Harmon

Date Photographed: December 19, 2013

Description: East façade of Harrison's Guest House, looking west.

Photo 2 of 12; NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_02

Photographer: Mella Rothwell Harmon

Date Photographed: December 19, 2013

Description: Front and north elevations, facing southwest. Multiple additions are visible in the right view.

Photo 3 of 12; NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_03

Photographer: Mella Rothwell Harmon

Date Photographed: December 19, 2013

Description: Close-up of additions along north elevation of the boarding house, facing west. At the far end is the "Guest House."

Photo 4 of 12; NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_04

Photographer: Mella Rothwell Harmon

Date Photographed: December 19, 2013

Description: South elevation and street context of Harrison's Guest House, looking northwest.

Photo 5 of 12; NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_05

Photographer: Jim Bertolini

Date Photographed: September 10, 2015

Description: East façade of Harrison's Guest House

Harrison's Guest House

Clark, Nevada
County and State

Name of Property

Photo 6 of 12; NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_06

Photographer: Jim Bertolini

Date Photographed: September 10, 2015

Description: South elevation of Harrison's Guest House, looking northeast

Photo 7 of 12; NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_07

Photographer: Jim Bertolini

Date Photographed: September 10, 2015

Description: West elevation of Harrison's Guest House, looking northwest. "Guest House" is in left background at northwest corner of property.

Photo 8 of 12; NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_08

Photographer: Jim Bertolini

Date Photographed: September 10, 2015

Description: North elevation of 1953 addition onto rear of Harrison's Guest House, facing courtyard; looking west.

Photo 9 of 12; NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_09

Photographer: Jim Bertolini

Date Photographed: September 10, 2015

Description: West elevation of 1953 hyphen and 1954 den addition onto Harrison's Guest House, looking east.

Photo 10 of 12; NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_10

Photographer: Jim Bertolini

Date Photographed: September 10, 2015

Description: Harrison's Guest House main hallway, looking west from entrance.

Photo 11 of 12; NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_11

Photographer: Jim Bertolini

Date Photographed: September 10, 2015

Description: South elevation of the "Guest House," looking northwest.

Photo 12 of 12; NV_Clark County_Harrison's Guest House_12

Photographer: Mella Rothwell Harmon

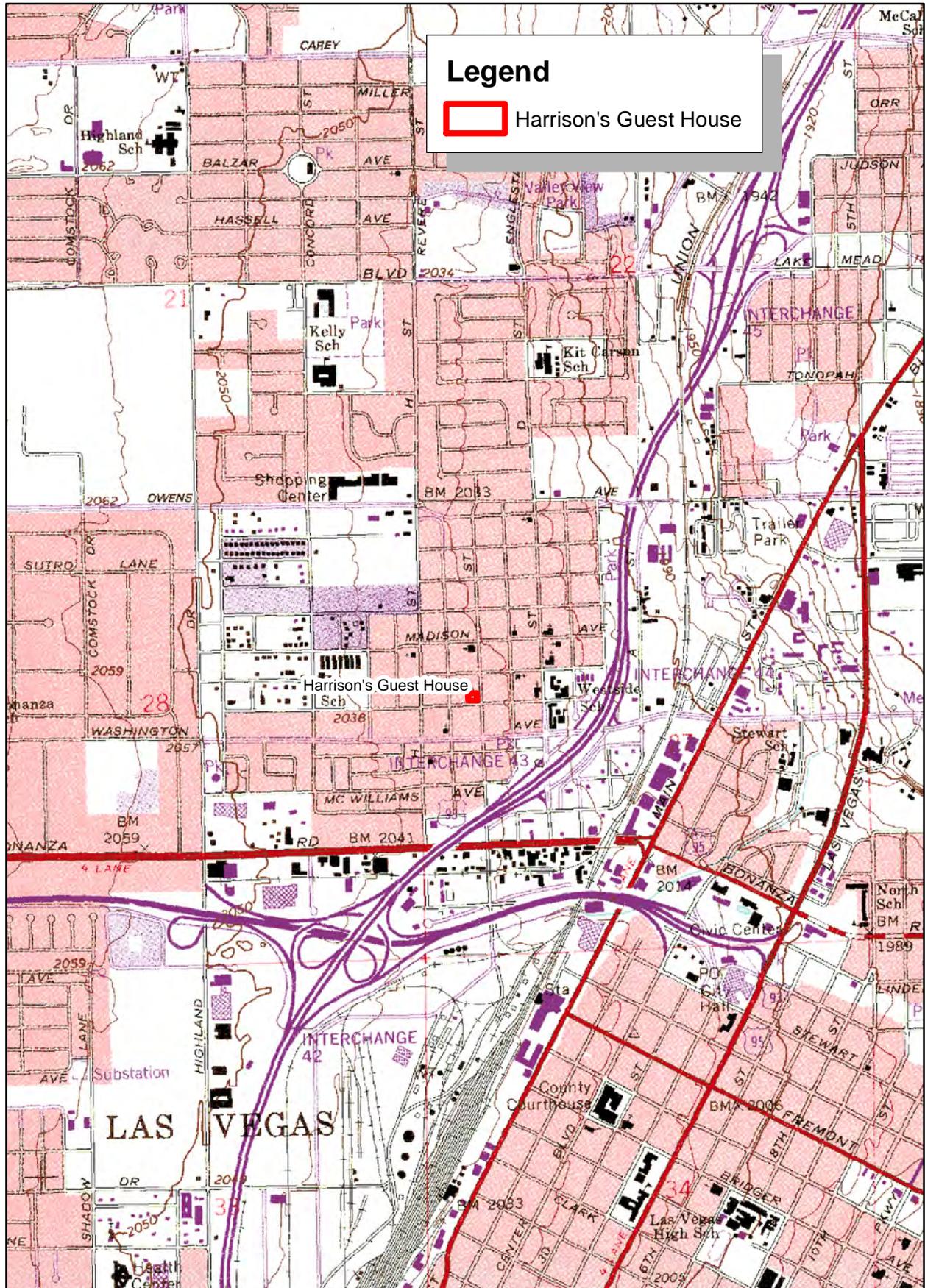
Date Photographed: December 19, 2013

Description: South entry to the "Guest House," looking north.

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Harrison Guest House and Las Vegas Westside USGS - Las Vegas Quadrangle (large extent)



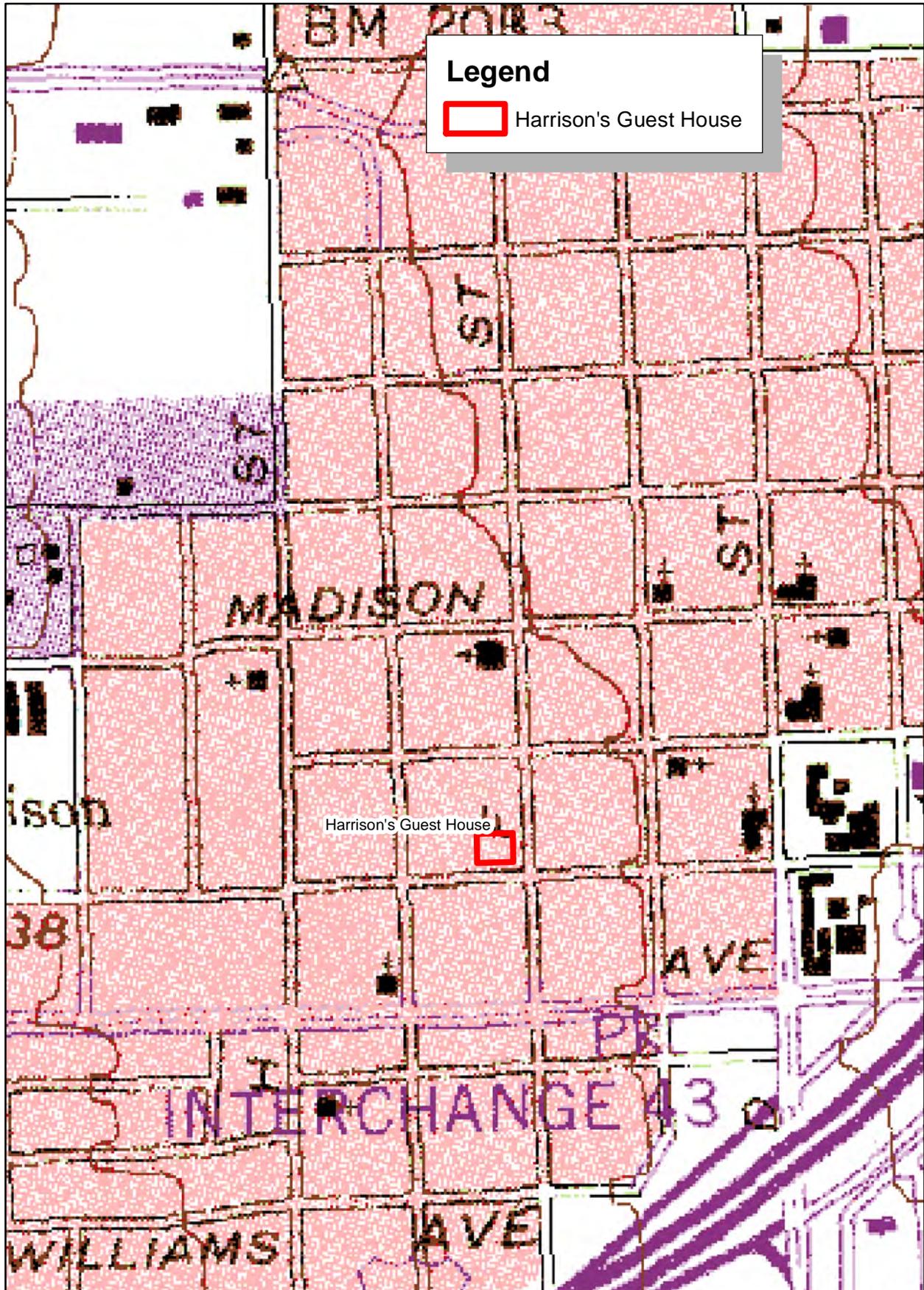
Legend

 Harrison's Guest House



Datum: NAD 83, Zone 11 North
Author: Jim Bertolini
Nevada State Historic Preservation Office
Date: March 8, 2016

Harrison Guest House and Las Vegas Westside USGS - Las Vegas Quadrangle (small extent)



0 75 150 300
Meters



Datum: NAD 83, Zone 11 North
Author: Jim Bertolini
Nevada State Historic Preservation Office
Date: March 8, 2016

Harrison's Guest House Aerial Site Map



Legend

 NRHP Boundary

Property Type

 Building

 Structure

Guest House

Shed

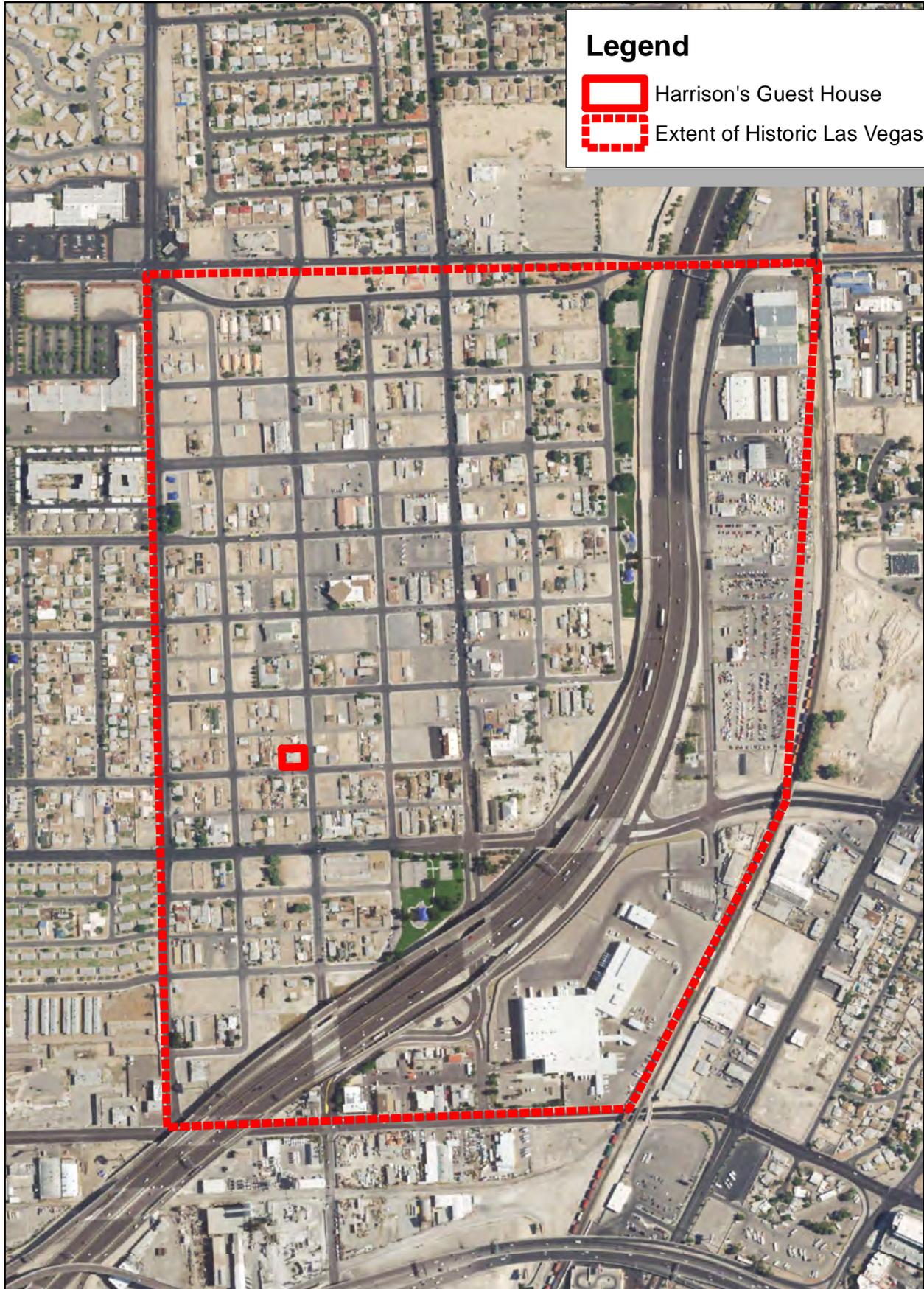
Harrison's Guest House

Masonry Wall



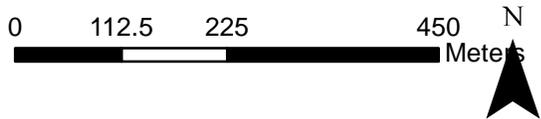
Datum: NAD 83, Zone 11 North
Author: Jim Bertolini
Nevada State Historic Preservation Office
Date: January 21, 2016
Source: NAIP 2015 (National Agricultural Imagery Program)

Westside Las Vegas Aerial Overview



Legend

-  Harrison's Guest House
-  Extent of Historic Las Vegas Westside



Datum: NAD 83, Zone 11 North
Author: Jim Bertolini
Nevada State Historic Preservation Office
Date: January 21, 2016
Source: NAIP 2015 (National Agricultural Imagery Program)

This map is for assessment use only and does NOT represent a survey.

No liability is assumed for the accuracy of the data delineated herein. Information on roads and other non-assessed parcels may be obtained from the Road Document Listing in the Assessor's Office.

This map is compiled from official records, including surveys and deeds, but only contains the information required for assessment. See the recorded documents for more detailed legal information.

USE THIS SCALE (FEET) WHEN MAP REDUCED FROM 11X17 ORIGINAL



NOTES

ASSESSOR'S PARCELS - CLARK CO., NV. Michele W. Shafe - Assessor

BOOK T20S R61E

SEC 27

MAP S 2 NW 4

139-27-2

- PARCEL BOUNDARY
- - - SUB BOUNDARY
- P.M.D. BOUNDARY
- - - ROAD EASEMENT
- - - MATCH / LEADER LINE
- - - HISTORIC LOT LINE
- - - HISTORIC S/L BOUNDARY
- - - HISTORIC P.M.D. BOUNDARY
- - - SECTION LINE
- CONDOMINIUM UNIT
- AIR SPACE PCL
- RIGHT OF WAY PCL
- SUB-SURFACE PCL

138	139	140
163	162	161

8	4	3	2	1	
7	8	9	10	11	12
17	16	15	14	13	12
18	20	19	22	23	24
20	28	27	26	25	24
31	32	33	34	35	36

8	4	8	4
5	1	5	1
6	2	6	2
7	3	7	3
8	4	8	4
5	1	5	1



Scale: 1" = 200'

Rev: 10/21/2013



Harrison's Guest House
1001 F Street, Las Vegas, Clark County, NV
APN 139-27-210-091

TAX DIST 200,204



PROHIBIT PROPERTY
KEEP OUT

PARKING RAMP DEN









1001



POSTED
NO TRESPASSING
KEEP OUT





POSTED
NO ENTRY













No Smoking / No Warning

SINCE
KAGGLVORG