

Fremont Street Historical Facts

- **1905** - On May 15, 1905, the auction of lots takes place under a mesquite tree where the Union Plaza stands today, marking the birthdate of Las Vegas.

The Las Vegas Club opens as the Overland Park Hotel. It becomes the Las Vegas Club in 1931. Mel Exber and Jackie Gaughan bought it in 1961.

- **1906** - The Golden Gate originally opens as the Hotel Nevada in 1906 and becomes the Sal Sagev in 1931. In 1955, Golden Gate becomes a casino underneath the hotel and in 1974 Golden Gate assumes the entire operation and the property becomes the Golden Gate.
- **1907** - The first telephone in Las Vegas is installed at the office of Charles "Pop" Squires at the Hotel Nevada, now the Golden Gate Hotel and Casino. The second telephone is installed at his home four blocks east on Fremont.
- **1910** - Legal since 1869, gambling is outlawed.
- **1911** - The first moving picture is shown at the Overland Hotel where the Las Vegas Club is today. The original building burns down that year, partly because there is not enough water pressure in the hydrants. The disaster is a major stimulus to the incorporation of the City of Las Vegas in that year.
- **1912** - Where the Coin Castle and now a souvenir store stands today was the site of the Northern Club, opened by Lon Groesbeck of the Salt Lake City Brewing Company. He sold large glasses of American Beauty beer for five cents. In 1920 he was the first local casualty of prohibition when the district attorney found 23 pints of Old McBrayer in his room. He fled from the state to avoid a three-month sentence and died a few months later.
- **1913** - A new street lighting system is tested for the first time on Feb. 1. The Las Vegas Age reports, "The installation of the street lights will mark a long forward step in the life and business activity of the town and is the subject for much self- congratulation for our people."
- **1916** - W.L. James, business manager and secretary of the Nevada Film Company, selects the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad (now Union Pacific) property west of downtown Las Vegas as the site of a studio for the production of motion pictures released through World Film Corporation.

- **1919** - Capping a Fourth of July celebration featuring a parade and a welcome home ceremony for servicemen returning from World War I, a "street dance" complete with a full orchestra is held on Fremont Street. The festivities also feature a baseball game played at a brand new field constructed on the railroad property west of downtown.
- **1920s** - By the mid-1920s the Union Pacific Depot, which was built in 1906, has five through passenger trains running daily to L.A. In 1940 the old UP station is razed to make way for a mid-modern facility. In the late 1920s, the building where the western part of the Pioneer Club is today was operated as the Smokehouse. In 1930 it becomes the Las Vegas Club and receives one of the first gambling licenses in Clark County in 1931. In the late 1940s Kell Houssels, owner of the Las Vegas Club, moves it across the street to its present location.
- **1925** - Fremont Street is paved from Main Street to Fifth Street.
- **1929** - The Bureau of Reclamation visits Las Vegas to evaluate the city's potential as a housing center for the Hoover Dam workers.

The first long distance phone call to Las Vegas is taken at the Union Pacific dining room, fondly called the "Beanery" by locals. It was located next to where the Union Plaza stands today and was probably the town's most popular spot for social gatherings.

Will Beckley, who operated a clothing store where the Pioneer Club was and Circa is today, expands his building to three stories.

- **1930s** - In the mid 1930s, one of the city's hottest night spots was located on Fremont Street. The Barrel House Beer Garden had a full orchestra and dancing every night. There was a hole cut into the wall connecting it to the State Cafe, and patrons could order food through the hole. The State Cafe was opened during prohibition, but you could get a coffee pot full of whiskey if you knew the owner.

In the 1930s, the Elks, the Eagles and the Veterans of Foreign Wars had their meeting halls on Fremont Street between First Street and Second Streets. The Masons met on the second floor of the First State Bank at First Street and Fremont Street.

- **1931** - Gambling is legalized in Nevada. The first of only six original gaming licenses in Clark County is issued to Mayme V. Stocker at the Northern Club, 15 East Fremont Street, where the Coin Castle was & now a shop stands today.

The first traffic light is installed in Las Vegas on Fremont Street.

- **1932** - The oldest part of the Horseshoe Hotel and Casino opens as the Apache Hotel, with 100 rooms and the town's first elevator. It was a frequent stopover for Hollywood celebrities such as Clark Gable during the years of Boulder Dam construction. Before the Horseshoe opened, the casino has also been known as the Apache Club, S.S. Rex and Eldorado Club.
- **1933** - A Chinese restaurant opens called the Silver Cafe. It is operated by S.M. Fong and is located just north of Fremont Street and First Street. In 1955 the Fong family opened their new restaurant, Fong's Garden, on East Charleston.
- **1935** - Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicates Boulder Dam and has a motorcade down Fremont Street.

The Las Vegas Elks Club institutes Helldorado Days, a week-long celebration of Las Vegas' frontier heritage featuring a parade on Fremont Street.

- **1940s** - The emergence of neon begins to transform a drab Fremont Street into "Glitter Gulch." In 1957, the Southern Nevada Power Company reports a 57 percent increase in energy usage -- much of it attributed to the proliferation of colorful neon.
- **1941** - The El Rancho Vegas opens. The strip and the beginning of big name entertainment emerges.

The El Cortez opens.

Infamous Block 16, one block north of Fremont Street on First Street, became the town's red light district shortly after the city was founded. The brothels are more or less officially tolerated until the Army Air Force forces their closing with the opening of the air base in 1941.

- **1942** - California gamblers Chuck Addison and Tutor Scherer open the Pioneer Club.
- **1945** - Wilbur C. Clark opens the Monte Carlo Club where the Northern Club used. In the 1950s he went on to build and become part owner of Wilbur Clark's Desert Inn Hotel and Casino.
- **1946** - The Golden Nugget opens. It is the first structure designed from the ground up to be a casino. Steve Wynn takes it over in 1972 and builds the first tower in 1977. The hotel now has 1,900 rooms.
The Eldorado Club is built.
- **1947** - A Texas gambler named Benny Binion comes to town and goes into partnership with Kell Houssels at the Las Vegas Club. When Houssels moved the Las Vegas Club to final location, Binion took over the old premises and opened the Westerner Club.

- **1950s** - The pharmacy and hotel located for many years on the northwest corner of First Street and Fremont Street is torn down. The Silver Palace Casino opened on the same site in 1956, but closed three years later.
- **1951** - Benny Binion purchases the Eldorado Club and renames it the Horseshoe.

Vegas Vic, the waving, winking cowboy who greets downtown visitors with a hearty "Howdy, pardner! Welcome to Las Vegas!", is erected on the Pioneer Club. The 48-foot tall sign quickly becomes the most recognized symbol of Las Vegas.

The U.S. Government begins above-ground nuclear testing at a proving ground 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas. Eager to capitalize on the tests, downtown hotels serve "Atomic Cocktails" at rooftop parties timed to coincide with the blasts, and Las Vegas reaps worldwide publicity from photographs of mushroom clouds rising in the distance above Fremont Street. The radioactive festivities end in 1962, when the government orders all testing done underground.

- **1952** - "The Las Vegas Story," starring Victor Mature, Jane Russell and Vincent Price, marks its world premiere in downtown Las Vegas.
- **1956** - Sam Levinson opens the first high rise in Nevada, the Fremont Hotel/Casino.
- **1959** - Wayne Newton opens at the Fremont with his brother, Jerry, and a group called The Jets. Too young to legally walk through the casino, the teenage entertainer and future Las Vegas superstar spends his breaks between shows having a soda at White Cross Drugs across the street from the Fremont.
- **1964** - Lady Luck opens.
- **1965** - The Mint opens on the site of the Apache Hotel.
- **1966** - Ben Goffstein opens the Four Queens, named for his four daughters.
- **1969** - The Mint 400 takes place downtown.
- **1971** - A group of businessmen including J.K. Houssels, Jr. and Jackie Gaughan open the Plaza.
- **1974** - Sam and Bill Boyd open the California on New Year's Eve. It remains as one of the Boyd Group's several properties.

The Golden Nugget provides an all-expenses paid trip to Las Vegas for eight retirees who were arrested for playing penny ante poker in a San Francisco residential hotel. The "Alexander Hotel Eight" are treated to a day of dining and gambling at the Golden Nugget.

- **1975** - The Four Queens places on public display a collection of exact replicas of the Crown Jewels of England. The display includes reproductions of the Orb of England, the Imperial State Crown, and a knighting sword.
- **1978** - The city approves reconstruction plans for Fremont Street from Main to Seventh streets, including new curbs and storm drains, street lights, and gambling symbols embedded in each of the eight intersections.
- **1980** - The Sundance opens as the highest building downtown. In 1988 it becomes Fitzgeralds and is currently The D.
- **1983** - Cashman Field opens.
- **1984** - The neon is removed from the Golden Nugget and the spa tower is built.
- **1986** - Hoping to revitalize the business core of Las Vegas, the City Council forms a downtown redevelopment agency.
- **1988** - Binion's Horseshoe purchases the adjacent Mint Hotel from Del E. Webb Corp. for \$27 million, doubling the size of the Horseshoe's casino and adding a 24-story, 296-room high rise tower.
- **1989** - A parade honoring the memory of slain civil rights leader Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. is staged on Fremont Street and other downtown thoroughfares.
- **1990** - Thousands of people line the streets of downtown Las Vegas for a victory motorcade honoring NCAA basketball champions, the University of Nevada- Las Vegas Runnin' Rebels.
- **1991** - Two enlisted personnel from each branch of the military serve as grand Marshalls for the Operation Desert Homecoming parade on Fremont Street honoring veterans of the Persian Gulf war.
- **1992** - "Monday Night Jazz" marks its 10th anniversary at the Four Queens. The shows are recorded and syndicated to more than 140 public radio stations across the country.
- **1994** - Ending a 60-year tradition, the final Helldorado Days Parade is held on Fremont Street. Later in the year, the street is permanently closed to vehicular traffic to make way for construction of the Fremont Street Experience.
- **1995** - Las Vegas celebrates 90 years downtown -- where it all began.
- **Other Interesting Facts** - Fremont Street was named after John Charles Fremont, a 19th century general and explorer who camped an expedition near the headwaters of the Las Vegas Springs in 1844.

When the railroad sold lots in the new Las Vegas town site, businesses could not sell liquor except on Block 16 and Block 17, between First Street and Third Street and between Ogden and Stewart Avenue. But, hotels could sell liquor. Hence, the saloons along Fremont Street, like the Northern and Las Vegas Clubs, added a few rooms and called themselves hotels.

The northeast corner of First and Fremont streets was where the First State Bank building was located until the Mint Hotel expanded. The First State Bank was a direct ancestor to First Interstate Bank. Clark County Sheriff Sam Gay used to sit in a chair in front of the bank where he could see Block 16, the gambling clubs along Fremont Street and the train station. "No need to chase the bad guys," he said. "Everybody passes this corner sooner or later."

The town's only indoor movie theater after the fire at the Overland Hotel was the Majestic Theater on the south side of Fremont Street, just west of Second Street. During the summer, movies were shown at the Airdome outdoor theater on the northeast corner of Third Street and Fremont Street. When it rained, patrons would help the projectionist carry the equipment back to the Majestic.