

**SOUVENIR
CATALOG**



LIGHT CIRCUS
NEVADA NEON MUSEUM

This museum catalog is an homage to
Nevada, the Neon State.

Glowing appreciation and congratulations to Will Durham who is committed to
preserving and maintaining Nevada's vintage signs at the
Light Circus Nevada Neon Museum. His investment benefits us all.

SOUVENIR CATALOG LIGHT CIRCUS MUSEUM

Authors/Publishers:
Randall Ann Homan and Al Barna



A Neon Speaks Project
Published by Giant Orange Press, San Francisco
Book design, art direction, concept: Randall Ann Homan

First Edition 2026
ISBN
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 1 0
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Special thanks to Annie Saunders

For more information:
neonspeaks.org lightcircus.org



FOREWORD

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—Name of museum advocate and friend of Will

Title, Organization

August 2026



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

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—Will Durham

Founder and Director
Light Circus Nevada Neon Museum
August 2026



Plate 1 | Photo: Will Durham



Plate 2 | Photo: Will Durham



Plate 3 | Photo: Will Durham



Plate 4 | Photo: Al Barna



Plate 5 | Photo: Al Barna



Plate 6 | Photo: Will Durham



Plate 7 | Photo: Will Durham



Plate 8 | Photo: Will Durham



Plate 9 | Photo: Will Durham



Plate 10 | Photo: Randall Ann Homan



Plate 11 | Photo: Will Durham



Plate 12 | Photo: Will Durham



Dwight MacHutta paints Vegas Vic replica.
Photo: Will Durham



Removing the Rancho Sierra Motel sign.
Photo: Will Durham



Plate 13 | Photo: Al Barna



Need a caption/credit or another photo here.

AFTERWORD

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—Name of museum advocate and friend of Will

Title, Org

August 2026



Will Durham in the Light Circus Nevada Neon Museum
Photo: Randall Ann Homan

The Holiday

RENO-SPARKS

VINTAGE NEON GUIDEBOOK

A NEON SPEAKS BOOK

SANDMAN MOTEL



PONY EXPRESS LODGE

HORSESHOE MOTEL

SANDMAN



LIGHT CIRCUS MUSEUM

LIGHT CIRCUS
NEVADA NEON MUSEUM



CHAR ANN
MOTOR LODGE



RENO ARCHES



CAL-NEVA

CAL-NEVA

MID-TOWN MOTEL



BOAR'S NEST SALOON

TRUCKEE RIVER

MERRY WINK MOTEL



LF

RENO-SPARKS VINTAGE NEON GUIDEBOOK

Authors: Randall Ann Homan and Al Bara

**GIANT
ORANGE
PRESS**

A Neon Speaks Book published by Giant Orange Press, San Francisco

Book design, art direction, and concept: Randall Ann Homan

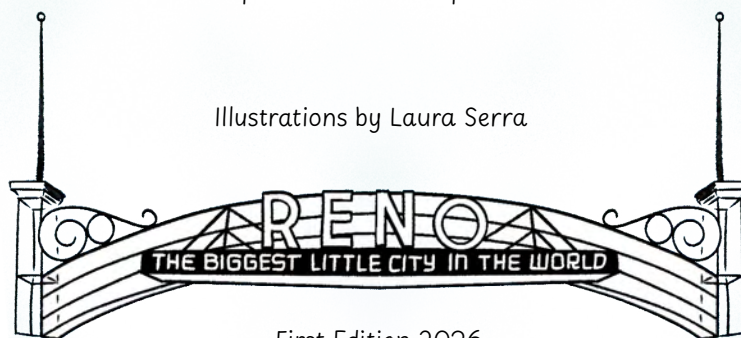
Reno Arch History: Cindy Ainsworth

Special thanks to Will Durham, Annie Saunders, Eric Lynxwiler, Debra Jane Seltzer,

Heather David, Stephen Coles, Laura Serra, and Katherine Rinehart

Dell mapback cover concept: Al Bara

Illustrations by Laura Serra



First Edition 2026

ISBN

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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For more information on saving vintage signs:

neonspeaks.org sfneon.org





Source: c. 1950s postcard artwork, collection of the authors

WELCOME! This guidebook is an homage to the neon of the “Biggest Little City in the World”. It is a sampling of neon signs that contribute to the character and sense of place in Reno and Sparks Nevada.

The neon signs in this guidebook are great examples of the art and craft that go into creating memorable signs that transcend today’s bland industry standard. We are thankful that many vintage signs still exist “in the wild” —and grateful that many of the best Nevada neon signs were rescued by The Light Circus Nevada Neon Museum founder Will Durham. See these vintage neon signs in person and feel the glow in the streets of Reno and Sparks.

When in Reno, don’t miss seeing the historic neon signs in the brilliant Light Circus Nevada Neon Museum, located here in downtown Reno inside the National Bowling Stadium.

— Al and Randall Ann

Al Barna & Randall Ann Homan
 Founders, Neon Speaks Festival & Symposium
neonspeaks.org



THE HISTORICAL BACKSTORY OF THE RENO ARCH

—Cindy Ainsworth

Historic Reno Preservation Society, historicreno.org



1926-1929



1929-1934

ORIGINAL 1926 ARCH

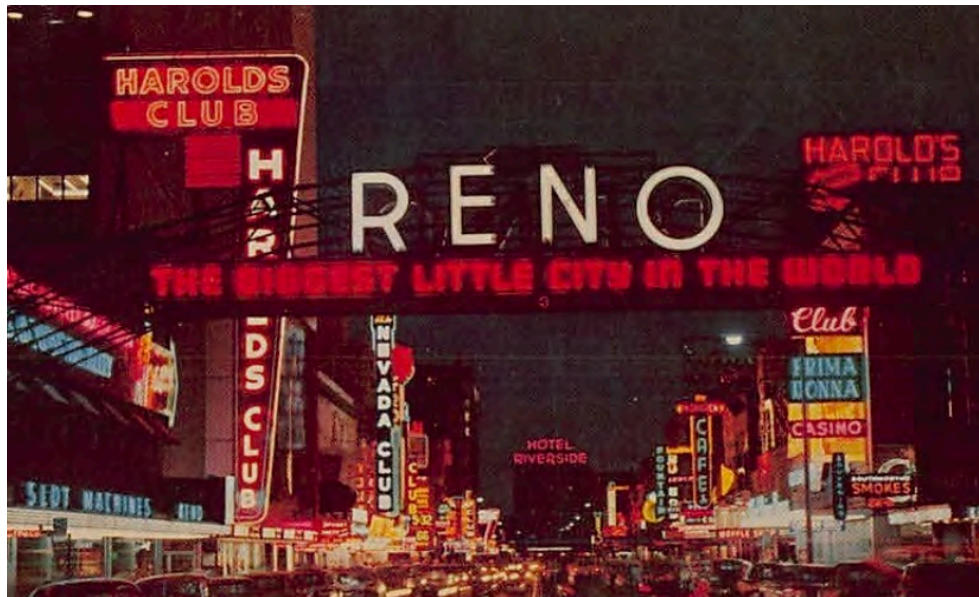
Reno's first arch was originally installed over Virginia Street in 1926. The steel arch was erected at the intersection of Commercial Row and Virginia Street to promote the 1927 Nevada Transcontinental Highways Exposition, commemorating the completion of the Lincoln and Victory highways. At a cost of \$5,500, incandescent light bulbs announced the exposition with blazing torches bracketing the name "RENO."

Photo source: Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries: 1926

ARCH SLOGAN

When the exposition closed, the Reno City Council voted to keep the arch as a permanent downtown gateway. The response to the mayor's contest for a slogan to place on the arch was overwhelming. When none of the entries proved acceptable, a prize of \$100 was offered, and awarded on March 14, 1929, to G. A. Burns of Sacramento for the winning slogan: "Reno, Biggest Little City in the World."

Photo source: Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries: ca. 1930



1934-1963

NEON COMES TO RENO

With the move to neon lighting in 1934, the slogan was thought to be outdated and was replaced with the single word "RENO" in green neon letters. In response to public protest, the slogan was returned to the arch, in new Art Deco neon lettering. The arch remained unaltered on Virginia Street for the next three decades on Virginia Street, Reno's most recognizable symbol.

Photo source: Vintage postcard, collection of -the authors



1964-1987

MID-MOD ARCH

By 1963, the community launched a campaign to raise \$100,000 to replace the arch in honor of Nevada's 100th birthday. The old arch was moved to Idlewild Park and replaced with a futuristic model in time for the 1963-64 New Year's Eve celebration. That arch now stands in Willits, California, modified to reflect its new home.

Photo source: Vintage postcard, collection of the authors



1994 "COBB" FILM

SAVED BY "COBB" FILM

A street widening project forced the move of the original arch to Paradise Park in 1969, then in 1988 it moved to the city's storage yard because the cost of repairs was too high. It languished in disrepair until 1994, when a movie production company came to its rescue. Seeking to recreate a historic version of Virginia Street for a biopic about Ty Cobb, the producers for the film "Cobb" restored the arch and placed it over East 4th Street near Valley Road for four days of filming.

Film still from "Cobb" 1994



1995-CURRENT LAKE ST & TRUCKEE RIVER, RENO

RETURN OF THE ARCH

No sooner had the film company removed the arch than the public clamored for its permanent return. A community-wide grassroots effort was launched in 1995 to bring back the arch. It was reconstructed on Lake Street where it welcomes all visitors to downtown Reno once again.

Photo: Randall Ann Homan 2026



RENO ARCH 1987-CURRENT VIRGINIA ST & COMMERCIAL ROW, RENO

This current version of the Reno Arch is the third arch, installed by YESCO in 1987. All of the 2,076 incandescent 11-watt bulbs in the Reno Arch were replaced with 2.5 watt LED bulbs in 2009. The old incandescent bulbs were given away as souvenirs to spectators at a celebration of the arch. This arch was repainted blue and the gold towers were changed to silver in 2017

THE NUGGET

233 N VIRGINIA ST, RENO



Photo: Randall Ann Homan

EL DORADO HOTEL-CASINO

345 N VIRGINIA ST, RENO



Photo: Al Barna

CIRCUS CIRCUS HOTEL-CASINO

500 N SIERRA ST, RENO



Photo: Al Barna

Photo: Al Barna



CLUB CAL-NEVA CASINO

38 E 2ND ST, RENO



LF

Photo: Al Barna

MID-TOWN MOTEL AND BOAR'S NEST SALOON

601 W 2ND ST, RENO

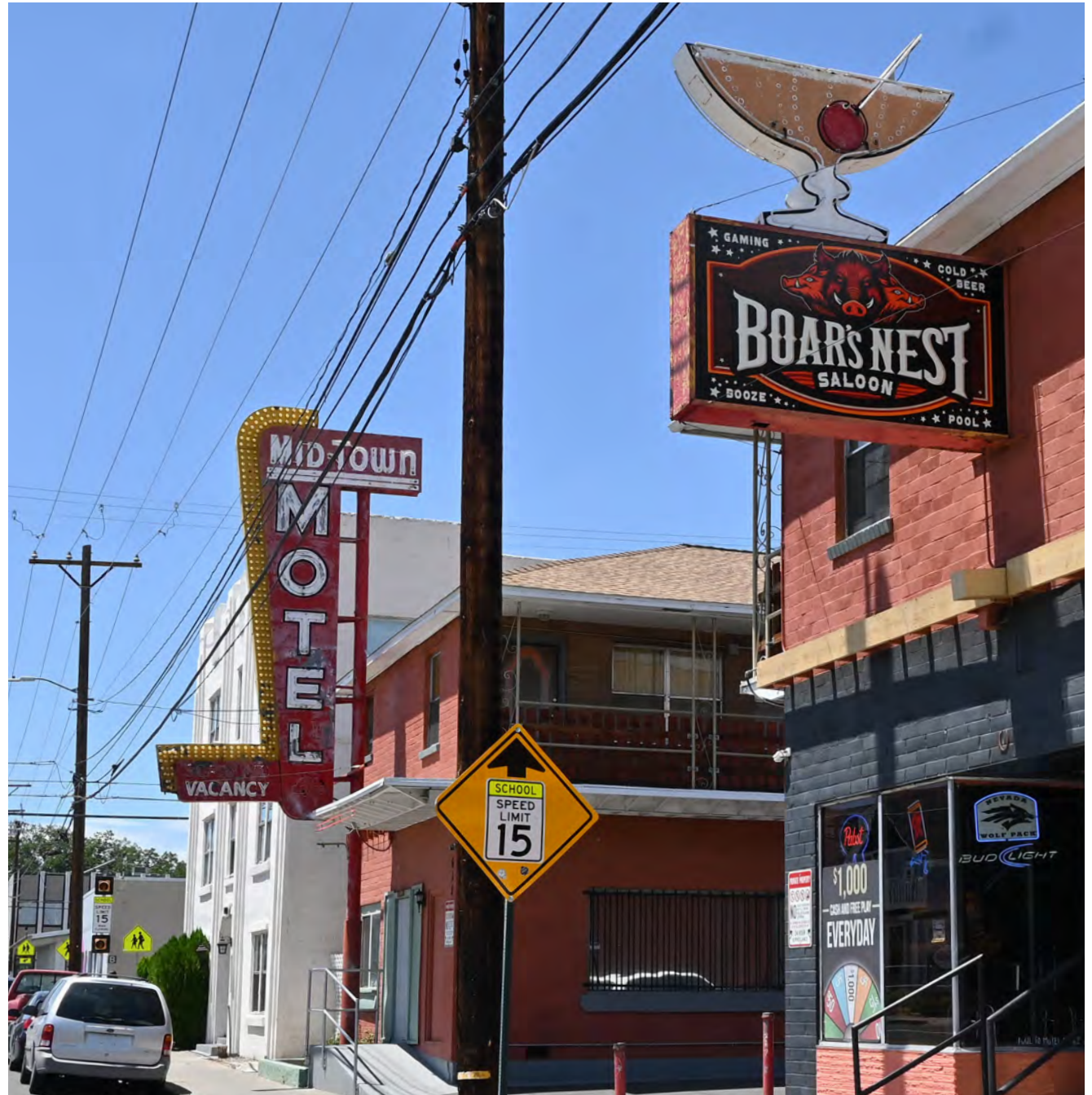


Photo: Al Barna



Photo: Al Barna

CHAR ANN MOTOR LODGE

140 E VICTORIAN AVE, SPARKS



GOLD 'N' SILVER INN

790 W 4TH ST, RENO

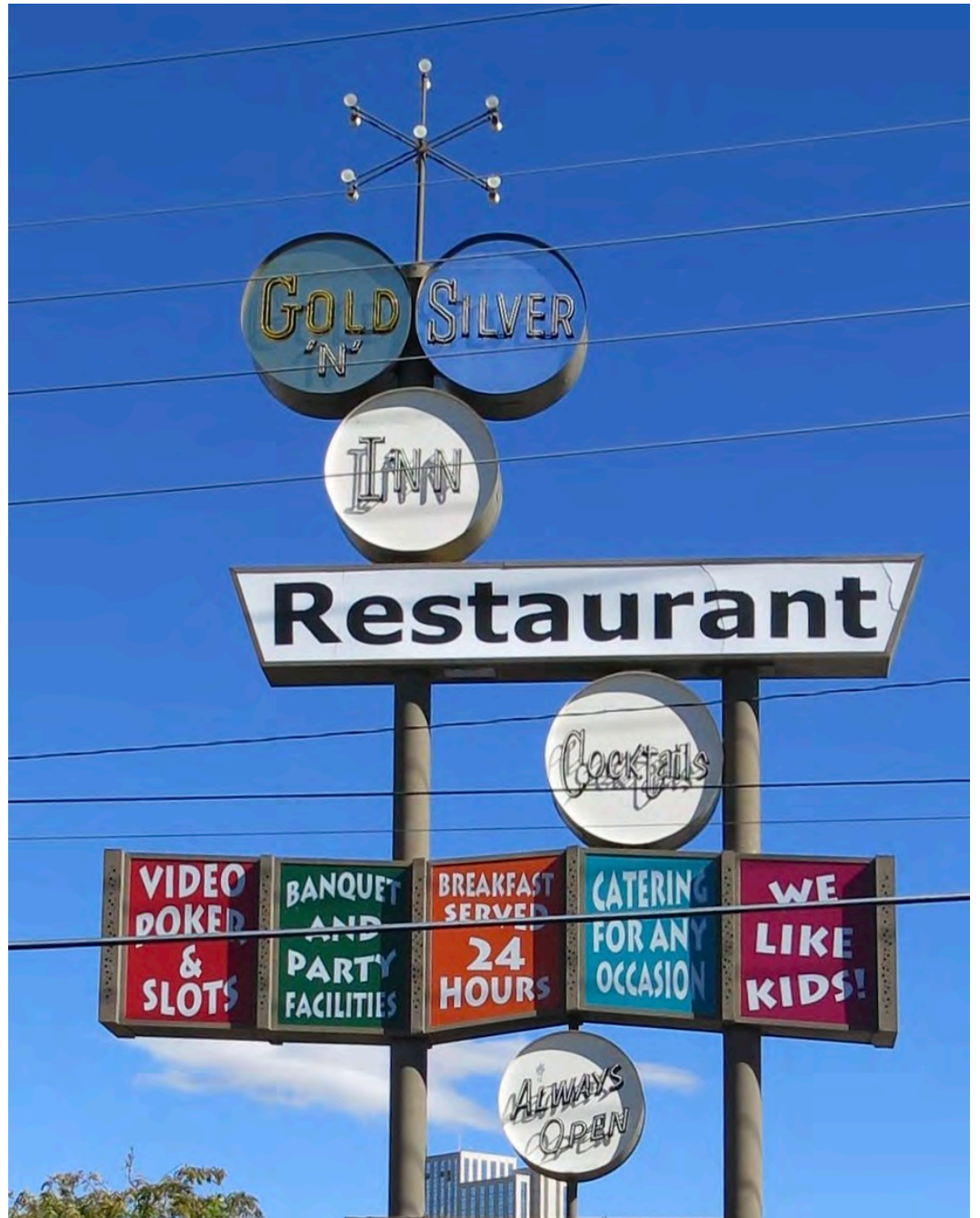


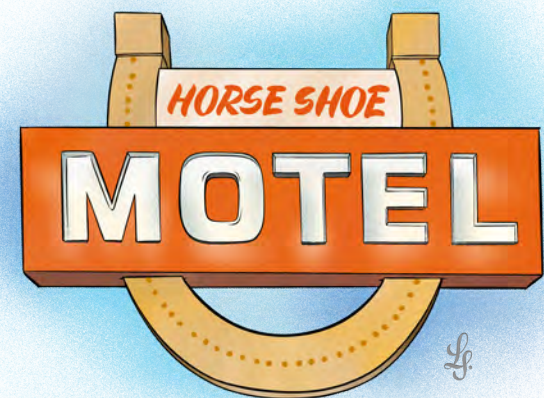
Photo: Heather

HORSE SHOE MOTEL

490 LAKE ST, RENO



Photo: Debra Jane Seltzer



THUNDERBIRD MOTEL

420 N VIRGINIA ST, RENO

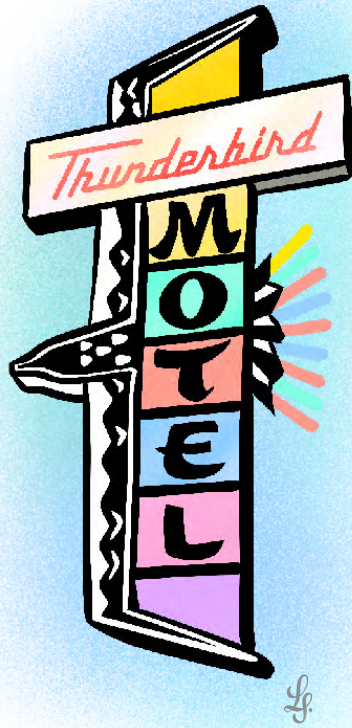


Photo: Al Barna



Photo: Heather

SANDMAN MOTEL

1755 E 4TH ST, RENO



EVERGREEN TRAILER PARK

12955 S VIRGINIA ST, RENO



Photo: Al Barna

MERRY WINK MOTEL

12901 S VIRGINIA ST, RENO



Photo: Randall Ann Homan



CASALE'S HALFWAY CLUB

2501 E 4TH ST, RENO



Photo: Al Barna

ELBOW ROOM BAR

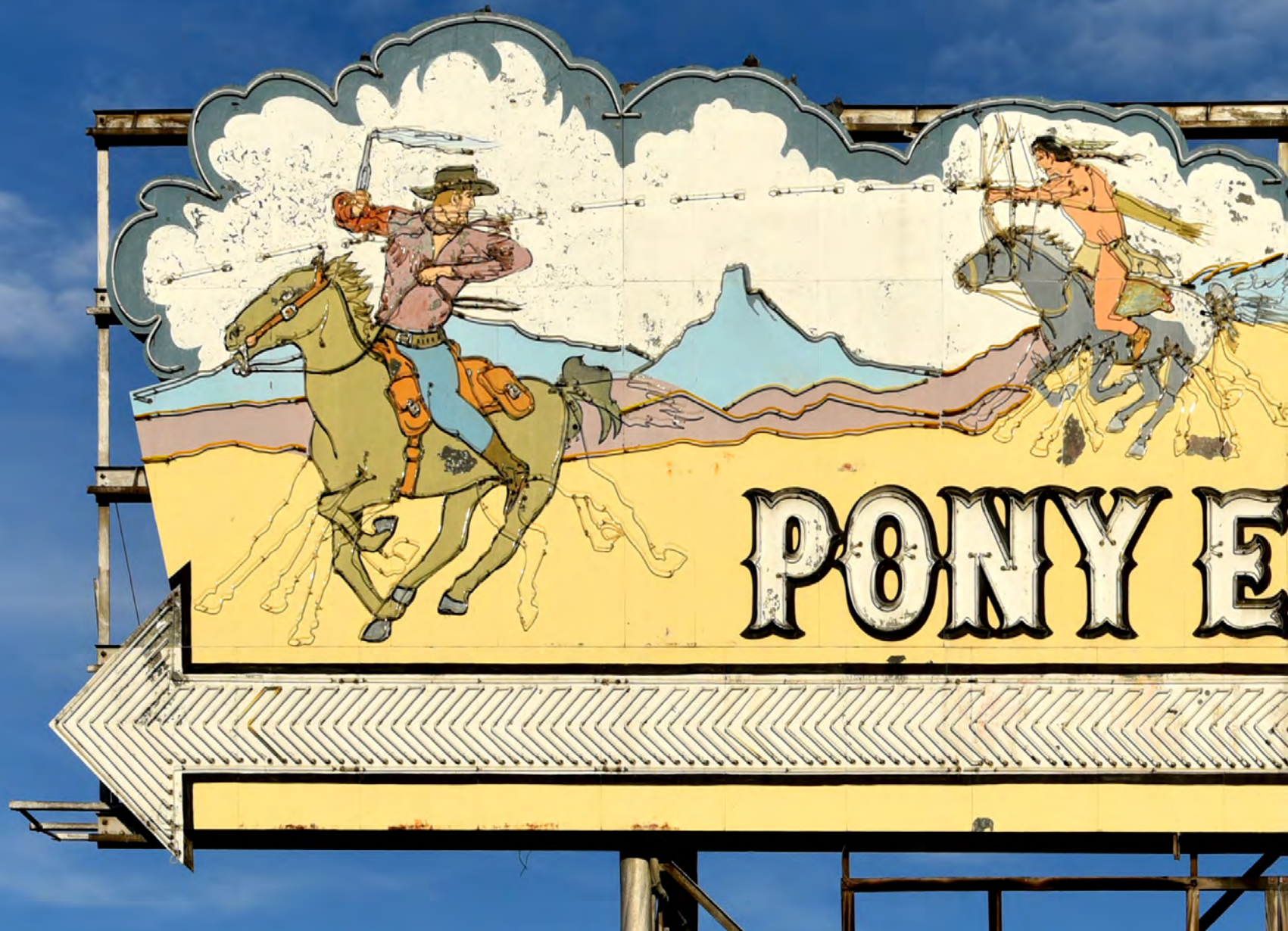
2002 VICTORIAN AVE, SPARKS



Photo: Eric Lynxwiler

KESHMIRI'S PONY EXPRESS LODGE

2406 PRATER WAY, SPARKS





KESHMIRI'S
EXPRESS LODGE

The image shows a vintage roadside sign for 'Keshmiri's Express Lodge'. The sign is primarily yellow with a blue mountain range graphic at the top. The text is in a stylized, outlined font. The sign is mounted on a metal frame against a clear blue sky. Below the main sign is a horizontal section with a repeating chevron pattern.