

# THE OLDEST HOTEL IN NEVADA



**O**n South Carson Street (Federal Highway 395) in the historic downtown district of Carson City, Nevada, stands a three-story, red brick building positioned right across from the Nevada Legislature. Standing impressively on this same spot since 1862, its well-preserved Italianate style harkens back to an era of gracious hospitality. This is the historic St. Charles Hotel, an establishment with a long and illustrious history as the oldest continuously operating hotel in the State of Nevada.

In 1862, Carson City was still in its infancy, but Congress had passed a bill establishing a branch mint in the Territory of Nevada. With the discovery of gold and silver, the economy boomed and Carson City quickly became a thriving commercial center. It was in this setting that two visionary twenty-year-olds, Albert Muller and George Remington, embarked on a daring business venture, betting on Carson City becoming the Nevada Territory capital.

In an effort to be ahead of blossoming opportunities, Remington and Muller, later joined by baker Daniel Plitt, set out to build the first grand brick building in Carson City — two hotels built side by side on a plot of land near where they anticipated the Nevada State Capitol would eventually reside. The northern building held three stories and opened on April 1, 1862, as the St. Charles Hotel, so named after many fine hotels in the East with

the same name. An 1862 edition of the *Silver Age* newspaper described it as “the most desirable and commodious first class house in Carson.” The construction of the smaller hotel — the Muller — began in May 1862.

The St. Charles boasted of being the first building in town to have electricity and gas utilities, and it soon became one of the hottest places in town, attracting the crème de la crème of society. The Pioneer Stage Company had its offices in the building and the famous stagecoach driver Hank Monk was a frequent guest. Other noted patrons included author Mark Twain, who was possibly a regular.

“I haven’t seen any specific documentation, but Mark Twain arrived in Carson City in late July 1861 as the hotel was under construction,” said current St. Charles Hotel co-owner Jenny Lopiccolo. “It would be hard to imagine that he didn’t frequent the hotel during his years in Carson City, as well as the restaurant, and especially the bar, as he was well-known

as a drinker in the town. The hotel is also within blocks of his brother’s [Orion Clemens] home on Division Street.”

When the State Capitol was completed on May 1, 1871, the ground floor bar of the St. Charles Hotel became a renowned watering hole for lawmakers when the legislature was in session, since it was just across the street.

The two adjoining hotels merged in 1894, and were renamed the Briggs House when Gilbert and Dorcas Briggs purchased the properties. This was followed by fourteen different ownerships and name variations that included the Golden West Hotel and the Pony Express Hotel. Throughout the 20th Century, the St. Charles underwent a period of deterioration characterized by cheap rent and structural neglect. That is, until 1993, when local businessman, Bob McFadden, bought the decrepit property and invested a quarter of a million dollars into renovations and restored the hotel’s original name.

Realtor Jenny and construction company owner husband Mark Lopiccolo, current and owners number 16, bought the hotel in 2004. The Lopiccolos share a passion for historical buildings, so when the St. Charles went up for sale, they couldn’t resist. In 2007, they partnered with Jim Phalan of High Sierra Food & Beverage to renovate the downstairs restaurant into the Firkin & Fox Pub, now titled the Fox Brewpub.

They then undertook a major restoration, bringing back the hotel’s original splendor. They installed new awnings, new signage, replaced the wooden boardwalk, and updated the rooms with modern amenities and conveniences.

“Restoring it has been a labor of love for my husband and I, and we love sharing it with our guests,” said Lopiccolo. “We are frequent travelers and history buffs and love to stay in historic hotels, so we’ve worked to create spaces that we would enjoy staying in ourselves.”

One hundred and sixty years after its construction, business is better than ever, and this old relic has earned its rightful recognition. “To my knowledge, it’s the oldest continuously run hotel/bar/restaurant in Nevada,” Lopiccolo said. “It’s listed as a landmark on the National Register [of Historic Places], and our government has always been supportive of restoring and rejuvenating our downtown corridors.”

This hotel isn’t going anywhere, anytime soon.

