

by Malea Martin

RESTORED

HISTORIC FOURTH WARD SCHOOL MUSEUM

The walls of the Historic Fourth Ward School Museum in Virginia City, Nevada, contain nearly 150 years of history. Thanks to a recent exterior restoration, that history will remain preserved. The Second Empire–style schoolhouse was built in 1876 following a major discovery of silver in the region known as the Comstock Lode. But as the silver rush came and went, the population began to decline, and so did the Fourth Ward School’s enrollment. In 1936, the school graduated its last class. “It was not functionally used for essentially 50 years,” says museum staff member Taylor Hamby. Multiple grants allowed the building to be stabilized and then reopened as a museum in 1986. Since then, the Fourth Ward School Museum has required ongoing restoration. “Most of our events and fundraising [are] for the restoration of the building, and to keep up our programming [teaching] Comstock history to fourth and seventh graders,” says Executive Director Nora Stefu. The most recent restoration, which focused on the east and south exterior walls, was completed in the summer of 2023 and funded by state and county grants. “[In 2022], we had our biggest winter in almost 70 years. It really tested the building,” says Hamby. “We filled in any holes the precipitation found for us. We also have wooden filigrees on our building and decorative elements, so those needed to be filled in and restored.” With the exterior secured, Stefu says, the museum will be able to continue serving the community. “As a monument for Virginia City, this building has to be protected for the future.”



FROM LEFT: LIZ HUNTINGTON; ERIC SYLVIA

THREATENED

CHESTERTOWN ARMORY

A nearly century-old armory in Chestertown, Maryland, is under threat of demolition. Built in 1931, the two-story brick building resembles a medieval fortification, with a front facade featuring a tower-flanked central entranceway. For decades the armory housed the 115th Infantry Regiment of the Maryland National Guard. “The armory was used for training [during] World War II, and medics from the armory were then a part of the D-Day operations,” says Vicky Smith, chair of the Historic District Commission (HDC) in Chestertown, Maryland. “[It’s] not just local history, but American history.” The National Guard ceased using the building in 2005, and the armory was eventually transferred in 2013 to Washington College, which planned to renovate the building for educational use. But in 2022 the college submitted a demolition application to the HDC, making the case that reuse is financially unfeasible due to mold and structural issues, and citing plans to build a hotel and conference center in place of the armory. That application was approved by the HDC in October 2022, but rescinded after commissioners said they needed more time to review the situation. The college resubmitted a demolition application in September 2023, prompting the HDC to hold a first hearing on October 5 that was well attended by locals who want to see the structure saved. The commission passed a unanimous motion requiring further structural and mold studies by an independent company chosen from a provided list before it makes a final call.



LOST

PIONEER INN

Located on the edge of Maui's Lahaina Harbor, where whaling ships once took anchor, the Pioneer Inn was among the structures destroyed by the tragic August 2023 fire that ripped through the Lahaina Historic District and claimed nearly 100 lives. Declared a National Historic Landmark in 1962, the inn was founded in 1901 by George Freeland, a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer who came to Hawai'i in pursuit of a fugitive and never left. Freeland's eldest son eventually acquired the business and ran it until 1964, after which various caretakers took over operations and the building's condition deteriorated. In 1982 one of the inn's proprietors, Howard Lennon, purchased the master lease to the building and invested in preserving it. The Lennon family has owned and operated it ever since. In 2016, the Pioneer Inn became a member of Historic Hotels of America, a program of the National Trust. "It was just kind of the heart and soul of the town of Lahaina," says Becky Lennon, who currently owns the property with her husband, Jim Lennon, and his sister, Kelly Lennon. "It was such a gathering place for everyone." All hotel staff and guests were able to safely evacuate the inn during the fires, but the building was destroyed. Despite the devastating loss, Becky is optimistic that the Pioneer Inn will make a comeback. "We are very hopeful to rebuild," she says.

**SAVED****BEDFORD ELKS LODGE**

When a 1917 Elks Lodge in Bedford, Indiana, was put up for auction in mid-2023, the local historic preservation community waited anxiously. “The auction unfortunately did not include any stipulations ... to ensure that a preservation-minded buyer would be sought,” says Greg Sekula, director of the Indiana Landmarks Southern Regional Office. Sekula was concerned that the property, which was named to Indiana Landmarks’ 10 Most Endangered list in 2015, might be purchased by someone with plans to raze it. But the lodge sold in September 2023 to developers Allied Argenta, the 1930s Group, and the nonprofit Synergy Community Development Corporation, which are partnering to restore and reuse the century-old structure. The Italian Renaissance Revival-style building, designed by noted Indiana architect Elmer E. Dunlap, harks back to Bedford’s heyday as a major producer of limestone. “Although it’s not a full limestone building, [the Elks Lodge] has a lot of beautiful limestone detailing,” says Sekula. After being vacated in 2015 due to maintenance challenges, the lodge’s condition continued to worsen. But with the news of its sale, Sekula says, “the building is in the best possible hands to see a positive future.” The buyers have said the exact plans for reuse are still to be determined, but the historic building and property will likely take on some combination of residential and commercial uses. For now, the development team is focusing on stabilizing the building and preserving its original character.

**LOST****TAMPA TRIBUNE AND TARR FURNITURE BUILDINGS**

Two historic buildings in downtown Tampa, Florida, were razed in February 2023 to make way for a 42-story condominium tower. One of the destroyed buildings on Tampa Street was a three-story structure erected in 1895 as Hotel Arno, where historic records show American Red Cross founder Clara Barton stayed in 1898 after arriving in Tampa from Cuba just before the Spanish-American War. The now-defunct *Tampa Tribune* purchased the hotel to use as its headquarters in 1905, and in 1912 constructed the five-story, blond-brick building next door and leased it to the Tarr Furniture Company. “It’s a beautiful building,” says Peter Hauerstein, board president at the Center for Architecture & Design Tampa Bay, of the Tarr building (shown, during demolition). “It had large arched windows with marble sills, terra-cotta grilles, [and] decorative brickwork.” Developer Kolter Urban purchased the two structures in 2021 with the intention to demolish them and build luxury condos, sparking outcry from local preservationists. Tampa’s Historic Preservation Commission attempted to save the Tarr Furniture building, arguing that it met local historic landmark standards, but the Tampa City Council did not grant the designation, allowing Kolter Urban to move forward with demolition. The bottom five floors of the new tower will feature a facade mimicking the architecture of the Tarr Furniture building—a compromise reached between the developer and the city.