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NEVADA HISTORY

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The Browder Building

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The Browder Cafe and Dining Room, built in late 1931, was the first permanent business structure to be built in Boulder City, Nevada. The Browder building, located at the corner of Ash and Nevada Highway, is in the heart of downtown Boulder City. (See MAP 1)

The original owner and builder, Ida M. Browder, a widow, came to Boulder City with her two children in 1931. She was a Countess from Austria and had been married to an Army Officer. She was wealthy, influential and had quite a way with men. She took care of herself and depended on no-one.

The Browder Cafe was the place to eat for the men of the town, who were at that time working on Hoover Dam, only seven miles away. Boulder City grew rapidly to over 5,000 people, and was at one time the third largest city in the state, and bigger than Las Vegas.

Mrs. Browder had to lease the land from the Federal Government and obtain a building permit. She had to follow Federal requirements for building construction. The building had to be built of cement blocks and must have had an arcade (an arched covered passageway) for some shade from the blistering heat. All permanent structures had to follow the same requirements.

During construction, which started in October of 1931, Mrs. Browder and her two children lived in a tent behind the building. The Browder Cafe was built before the road in front was paved because at that time it was just a narrow dirt road. The main street was a block long north and south and one block east and west. Later when the road was paved steps had to be added to the cafe because the street was lower than the building. That street is now Highway 93 (Nevada Highway), which stretches from Fairbanks, Alaska to Sonora, Mexico a length of 4,200 miles. It is the longest highway in North America and can be traveled as far as Panama, in Central America.

The building originally had three bathrooms, two were added later. There were no fireplaces. The heating was done by portable electric heater and cooling by a desert cooler. Electricity was run from southern California till the dam was completed. The floor and ceiling were wood and the roof was shingled.

The cafe opened with great success. The local news paper, the Boulder City Journal, a part of the Las Vegas Review Journal, and printed in Las Vegas, but operated in Boulder City by the editor, Mr. Elton M. Garrett, ran a front page story with the headline, "Mrs. Browder Will Feed E'm Now".

Mrs. Browder lived in the back of the cafe with an entrance by the driveway on the north side of the building. She entertained many influential and prominent persons in her apartment, including Congressmen and Senators. She was a Democratic organizer and a member of the School Board.

She planted some athol tamarisk trees in the back yard which still flourish today. They are a desert climate tree and can stand hot weather and need very little water to survive. They are quite common in southern Nevada.

The Browder building has housed a wide variety of businesses. There has been a dentist office, a chiropractic office, an electric store, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Reining Research office. Dr. Henry Reining, a public administration professor from the University of Southern California, opened a research office in 1949 to gather information and opinions to see if Boulder City should become a township or stay Federally controlled. Boulder City was made a Town in 1960, eleven years later, when the land was bought from the government. The Browder building sat on a triangular shaped piece of land, which was purchased by Mrs. Browder in 1960.

Additions to the Browder building were built in stages over the years and exact dates are not known. The first addition was to the south when the porch was added and a root beer stand opened. The next addition closed in the root beer stand with the arches built right into the walls. You can still see where the arch is in front of the Garrett Realty Office. The next addition to the south was a new cafe. Above the cafe a cupola (an upstairs room), was built, which is still there but no longer in use. To the cafe was added a new root beer stand (under the cupola) that had a hinged door that lifted up when in use. Mrs. Browder's daughter ran the root beer stand. The next addition closed in the new cafe and made the front even with the rest of the building. There are also steps up to the cafe which is now the Coffee Cup Cafe, with Elton M. Garrett Realty in the middle and LaVera's Dress Shop in the original Browder Cafe on the north end.

Mrs. Ida Browder died in 1963 leaving her daughter Mrs. Ida Browder Kelly, of Sherman Oaks, California as the present owner. She has authorized Mr. Elton M. Garrett as legal trustee.

The Browder building still stands, a landmark in the history of Boulder City.

The preceding information was obtained from Mr. Elton M. Garrett of Elton M. Garrett Realty, 554 Nevada Highway, Boulder City, Nevada, phone number 293-3333. Mr. Garrett has been a leading citizen of Boulder City since the town began in the early 1930's. My thanks to Mr. Garrett for his time and information given.

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