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NEWS RELEASE

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Las Vegas Strip Architecture, Neon Subject of Free History Discussion May 1

Historians, architects and sign designers will come together **Friday, May 1 at 6 p.m.** to discuss the fabulous history of the architecture and sign design of the world-famous Las Vegas Strip.

The fourth in a series of 90-minute roundtable discussions called "Centennial Stories: Examining Our Past" is free and includes an opportunity for those who attend the event to ask questions of the panelists.

The roundtable takes place in the County Government Center Commission Chambers, 500 S. Grand Central Parkway, and is aired live and later replayed on Clark County Television (CCTV) Channel 4 and viewers are able to call in with questions. All Channel 4 programming also may be viewed live on the county Web site at www.accessclarkcounty.com.

The event features Brian "Buzz" Leming, a YESCO sign designer; architect Eric Strain, a former board member for the Neon Museum; Helga Watkins, associate professor at the UNLV Art

Department; and David Schwartz, director of the UNLV Library Center for Gaming Research. It is moderated by Mark Hall-Patton, director of the Clark County Museum.

The Las Vegas Strip, located not in any city but rather in unincorporated Clark County, has gone through several architectural phases since the first hotel-casino, El Rancho Vegas, was built in 1941. The Western phase was followed by an elegant phase, when the Flamingo, the Desert Inn and the Sands catered to sophisticated tourists who dressed up in evening gowns and tuxedos. During the late '50s, the era of the gigantic sign that dwarfed the hotel began with the Stardust and its explosion of light. The mid-'60s saw the beginning of the theme casino, such as Caesars Palace and Circus Circus. More recently, condominium towers have started to dominate, with the open spaces on the Strip being filled in with projects such as City Center.

Architects have sometimes taken a back seat to neon sign designers, producing what Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown called, "the decorated shed" in their seminal work, "Learning from Las Vegas," where the building, such as the Stardust, is basically a box supporting the sign. Other times architects and designers have collaborated, for example, in the stunning "spectacular" wall at the Riviera designed by Marge Williams with architect Nikita Zukov, and the porte cocheres at the Mirage and other hotels.

"One of the goals of the county's year-long commemoration of our centennial is to engage the community and celebrate our common heritage," said Commission Chairman Rory Reid. "These monthly roundtables are a great way to do that." 2009 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Clark County, and the county is commemorating the event with a year of activities.

Discussions about Clark County's history are set for every First Friday in 2009, except in July when the event will be held Wednesday, July 1.

Roundtable discussions slated for later in the year are June 5, "The History of the Strip: The Early Years"; July 1, a Wednesday, "The History of the Strip: Howard Hughes and Beyond"; August 7, "The Mob and Las Vegas"; Sept. 4, "Hispanics in Clark County"; Oct. 2, "Entertainers on the Las Vegas Strip"; Nov. 6, "Military History in Clark County"; and Dec. 4, "Marketing Las Vegas." The discussions kicked off in February with a discussion of the history of segregation in Las Vegas. In March and April, the subjects were the history of women in Clark County and mining, respectively.

"I would hope that listeners will leave with a better understanding and greater appreciation of their community, by learning from those who were there," said Hall-Patton. "Hearing people tell their own stories, in their own words, is a wonderful and fun way to learn, and affirm, our history."

Other centennial celebrations will include a touring history exhibit about rural Clark County, the grand opening of the Candlelight Wedding Chapel and a 1910 railroad cottage at the Clark County Museum, the release of "Asphalt Memories: A Dictionary of Clark County Street Names," a book-length publication; the placement of historical markers, a Web-based history of Clark County commissioners, brochures, a mural at the Winchester Cultural Center, additional historical programming on Channel 4, and partnerships with the Clark County School District and the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District.

Clark County also has nominated the famous "Welcome to Las Vegas" sign to the National Historic Register. The Strip is located in unincorporated Clark County and is not part of any city. The Centennial Web site also will feature historical information, events listing, trivia contest, link to a geocaching project and a section where residents can share their historical stories.

Clark County was officially formed on July 1, 1909, out of what had been Lincoln County and is named for railroad baron William Andrews Clark. The city of Las Vegas, which includes

downtown and the area north of the Strip, was incorporated two years later in 1911. Those interested in additional information on Clark County's Centennial celebrations can visit the Web site at www.accessclarkcounty.com/100 or call 455-8200.

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Clark County is a dynamic and innovative organization dedicated to providing top-quality service with integrity, respect and accountability. With jurisdiction over the world-famous Las Vegas Strip and covering an area the size of New Jersey, Clark is the nation's 15th-largest county and provides extensive regional services to more than 2 million citizens and 44 million visitors a year. Included are the nation's 7th-busiest airport, air quality compliance, social services and the state's largest public hospital, University Medical Center. The county also provides municipal services that are traditionally provided by cities to almost 900,000 residents in the unincorporated area. Those include fire protection, roads and other public works, parks and recreation, and planning and development. In 2009, Clark County celebrates a "century of service."