

# Historic Hotels!

## XLVI: Reno's *Mapes Hotel*

When the Mapes opened its doors on December 17, 1947, it was the tallest building in Nevada and was the first hotel built in the U.S. after World War II. It was designed by F.H. Slocombe and constructed by a well-known firm specializing in hotel construction, Theodore P. Moorehead Engineering Co., an associate of H.L. Stevens Company. The Mapes was often compared to the New York Plaza Hotel, the Blackstone Hotel, and the St. Francis Hotel, during its long years of popularity before closing its doors thirty-five years later on December 17, 1982.

The popular Mapes became the prototype for modern hotel/casino designs. It was the first casino complex to include gambling, dining, lodging, and entertainment under one roof in a high-rise structure. When gambling was legalized in 1931, many buildings were retrofitted to become or include casinos. Casinos such as Harold's Club (1935) were simply casinos with no hotel facilities connected to them. Casinos, such as in the Riverside, were established on the ground floor of existing hotels. In Las Vegas, the early casino complexes were built in a "ranch style" fashion; sprawling two story buildings. This horizontal type was utilized by the El Rancho Vegas (1941), the Last Frontier (1942), and the El Cortez (c. 1941). It was only after the Mapes Hotel was built, that the three-part vertical composition high-rise was adopted by the casino industry. The casino industry was the only industry to use high-rise construction in the state until the early 70's. Now banks and office complexes are also built in a high-rise fashion in Reno and Las Vegas.

The Mapes had two floors at ground level serving as retail space, casino, restaurants, and hotel lobby; the body of the building served as guest quarters; and the uppermost floor provided space for entertainment, dancing, dining, drinking, and more gambling. Since 1947, almost all casino design in both Reno and Las Vegas has followed the Mapes' lead in the three part vertical composition high-rise within a urban location with multiple attractions: The modern destination resort.

The Mapes Hotel is a twelve-story reinforced concrete and brick clad building, built using advanced building techniques of the time. This important and rare Art Deco hotel was built after an eight-year delay due to WWII.

[courtesy of <http://geocities.com/dreamroad/mapes/mapes.html>]

