

State Register Number:

Property Name: Aitken House

NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

901 S. STEWART STREET
CARSON CITY, NEVADA 89701



NEVADA
STATE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION OFFICE

NEVADA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES Nomination Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic name: Aitken House

Other names: Florence Crittenton Home, Mount Rose Hospital, Oreder Guest House

2. LOCATION

Street Address: 781 Mill Street

City or Town: Reno County: Washoe Zip: 89502

Original Location? ☒ Yes ☐ No. If no, date moved: _____

3. OWNERSHIP & CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property: private

Owner Name: Whitney and Scott Weed

Owner Address: 2552 Sharon Way Reno NV 89509

Number of Resources within Property

Buildings 2 (1 contributing, 1 non-contributing)

Sites _____

Structures _____

Objects _____

Total: 2 (1 contributing, 1 non-contributing)

FOR OFFICIAL USE:

Nomination Received Senate # _____ Assembly # _____

Listing Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E

A. BOARD OF MUSEUMS AND HISTORY

As the chair of the Nevada Museums and History Board, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for listing in the Nevada Register of Historic Places.

Signature of the Chair Date

B. STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

As the Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for listing in the Nevada Register of Historic Places.

Signature of the State Historic Preservation Officer Date

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5. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic Use/Function: DOMESTIC – Single Dwelling

Intermediate Use/Function: DOMESTIC – Institutional Housing, Boarding House

Current Use/Function: HEALTH CARE – Medical/Business/Office

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (select one or more from instructions)

☒ **Criterion A** - Property is associated with events or trends that have made a significant contribution to Nevada history.

☐ **Criterion B** - Property is associated with the lives of persons significant to Nevada's past.

☐ **Criterion C** - Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction significant to Nevada, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **Criterion D** - Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important to Nevada's prehistory or history.

☐ **Criterion E** - Property reflects cultural traditions important to historic or pre-historic peoples of Nevada. (Nevada State Register only).

Criteria Considerations (check only those that apply)

☐ **Criteria Consideration 1** – The property is religious in nature, but is primarily significant for its architecture, or is the only remaining or best remaining resource from an historic community.

☐ **Criteria Consideration 2** – The property has been reconstructed, but is an accurately executed reconstruction and is located in an environment that replicates its historic setting.

☐ **Criteria Consideration 3** – The property achieved significance within the past fifty years but is rare or exceptional.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Area(s) of Significance	<u>SOCIAL HISTORY – Women’s History</u>
Period of Significance	<u>1919-1930</u>
Cultural Affiliation(s)	<u>N/A</u>
Significant Person(s)	<u>N/A</u>
Architect/Builder(s)	<u>Unknown</u>

Narrative Statement of Significance:

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Aitken House is eligible for listing in the State of Nevada Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, for its significance in Social History under the theme of Women’s History, for its association with the Florence Crittenton Mission of Nevada, Inc., known as the Crittenton Home. The Aitken House is significant at the state level for its use as the Crittenton Home during the 1920s and for its association with Nevada’s women’s history. The National Florence Crittenton Mission was a non-profit organization that sponsored homes providing support to women and children in need in all fifty states. The Crittenton Home in Reno offered services to all women in the state and was the only home associated with this national organization in Nevada. Women-serving Institutions and Organizations are a recommended property type associated with Social History and historic trends related to women’s rights in *Historic Context for Suffrage and Women’s Rights in Nevada*.¹

The Aitken House was the family home of early Reno residents John Fulton (J.F.) Aitken and his wife, Annie E. Aitken. The construction date of the home is unknown, but it is estimated to be between 1892 and 1904. J.F. Aitken died in 1905, and Annie sold their house to the Florence Crittenton Mission of Nevada, Inc. in 1919. As the Crittenton Home, the property gained significance for its association with women-serving and child welfare institutions in the State of Nevada. The Crittenton Home provided housing, childcare, medical care, and counseling to unmarried mothers and their children, aiming to support their independence and empowerment. Following a decline in demand for the Home’s services, the Crittenton Mission sold the Aitken House to Dr. Theodore Koldewey and his wife, Ida, in 1930. Dr. Koldewey briefly allowed the property to be used for the Mount Rose Hospital during the 1930s and later as the Orender Guest House while the couple lived on the East Coast until the mid-1950s.²³ Ida inherited the house after her husband’s death in 1960.⁴ She resided in the house, renting out a small cottage

¹ Alicia Barber and ZoAnn Campana, *Historic Context for Suffrage and Women’s Rights in Nevada*, Kautz Environmental Consultants, Inc., 2021, p.125-127.

² “Personal Mention,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, August 12, 1943, p.10.

³ “The Orender Guest House” (Advertisement), *Nevada State Journal*, October 8, 1946, p.11.

⁴ “Deaths: T.W. Koldewey,” *Nevada State Journal*, December 13, 1960, p.13.

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built on the property in 1942, until she died in 1983.⁵ The period of significance corresponds to the time when the home was owned by the Florence Crittenton Mission of Nevada, Inc., from 1919 to 1930.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Aitken House Beginnings

Mill Street began as a “country lane” leading east from Virginia Street just south of the Truckee River to the site of the Eastman sawmill.⁶ Initial development in Reno began north of the Truckee River, surrounding the Central Pacific Railroad Depot. During the nineteenth century, the area along Mill Street, especially east of the Washoe County Hospital, was comprised of agricultural land with scattered ranch houses. Mill Street transitioned into Glendale Road at the Hospital, signaling the limits of southeastern Reno. John Fulton Aitken arrived in Reno from New Jersey in 1875, bringing with him his wife Annie, whom he had married a year earlier.⁷⁸ Aitken purchased the drayage business of Henry F. Rohrs in 1875 and operated it for several years, supplying Reno’s growing population with firewood, ice, coal, and other transported supplies by horse and wagon.⁹ Aitken was active in numerous social organizations and was occasionally interested in local politics, although he did not appear to have been elected to any official positions.

Aitken completed several land purchases during the 1880s and 1890s, including a small wood-framed farmhouse built in 1874 on Mill Street in Hatch’s Southeast Addition in 1892. He kept his wagons and horses on his property in East Reno and managed a homestead, operating an orchard, a rabbitry, and producing honey for sale out of state.¹⁰¹¹ At some point, Aitken built the larger, 9-room, Queen Anne family home at 781 Mill Street for his wife and five children, approximately 250 feet to the east of the little farmhouse.¹² First appearing in the United States on the East Coast in the 1870s, Queen Anne architecture gradually spread across the country and evolved to feature free classic adaptations.¹³ The style became popular in Reno between 1890 and 1910.¹⁴ Because J.F. Aitken became very ill and ultimately died in 1905, the home was likely constructed between 1892 and 1904.

⁵ Obituaries, *Reno Gazette-Journal*, December 29, 1983, p.4D.

⁶ John M. Townley, *Tough Little Town on the Truckee: Reno 1868-1900*, (Reno, NV: Jamison Station Press, 1983), 60.

⁷ “The Death of A Man Who Was Loved By All,” *Nevada State Journal*, April 25, 1905, p.1.

⁸ “Thirty Years Wedded,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, February 26, 1904, p.6.

⁹ “Sold Out,” *Nevada State Journal*, December 29, 1975, p.3.

¹⁰ “Belgian Hares,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, June 18, 1900, p.1.

¹¹ “Nevada Honey,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 10, 1894, p.3.

¹² Based on information in the 1904 and 1906 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Reno, the house was renumbered sometime before 1918, likely when Aitken’s Addition was platted and Locust Street divided the block between Truckee and Washoe Streets in 1905.

¹³ McAlester, Virginia, and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. (New York, Knopf) 2003, p.268.

¹⁴ Harmon, Mella Rothwell. “The Pearl Upson House,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Washington, D.C., US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2003, Section 8.

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Aitken's Addition 1905-1919

J.F. Aitken subdivided his property, creating Aitken's Addition, in February 1905, three months before his death (Figure 1). Aitken died of kidney failure on April 24, 1905, after a long illness.¹⁵¹⁶ Annie inherited all of her husband's estate, valued at over \$10,000, including "real estate, securities, and other personal property."¹⁷ She began offering the 9-room family home for rent by 1909 while she traveled with her youngest daughter, Daisy.¹⁸

In 1910, engineers for the City of Reno installed sewers in Aitken's Addition and by 1911, the neighborhood was described as having "desirable building lots [that] are close in, being within ten minutes walk of the postoffice [sic] and on one of the main streets of the city, having already all necessary improvements, such as sewerage, city water, trees and cement walks."¹⁹²⁰ Mrs. Aitken began advertising building lots from the Aitken subdivision in 1912, using her own home as an example of "the costly homes [that] will be erected" (Figure 2). The Aitken home continued to be offered for rent, "fully furnished and without board," until Mrs. Aitken placed it for sale during the summer of 1919 for \$6,500.²¹²² Annie Aitken left Reno for Los Angeles, California, after selling the family home. She died there in 1933.²³

¹⁵ "John F. Aitken Is Sinking," *Reno Evening Gazette*, April 18, 1905, p.5.

¹⁶ "Death Relieves the Long Sufferings of J.F. Aitken," *Reno Evening Gazette*, April 24, 1905, p.1.

¹⁷ "Estate Goes to Mrs. Aitken," *Reno Evening Gazette*, May 1, 1905, p.5.

¹⁸ Advertisement, *Reno Evening Gazette*, August 4, 1909, p.2.

¹⁹ "Laying Sewers in Aitken's Addition," *Reno Evening Gazette*, September 28, 1910, p.3.

²⁰ "Hymes to Build Costly Dwelling," *Nevada State Journal*, November 15, 1911, p.2.

²¹ Advertisement. *Reno Evening Gazette*, September 13, 1910, p.5.

²² "Selling at Half Price," *Reno Evening Gazette*, August 8, 1919, p.7.

²³ "Old-Time Resident of Reno Succumbs," *Nevada State Journal*, April 13, 1933, p.8.

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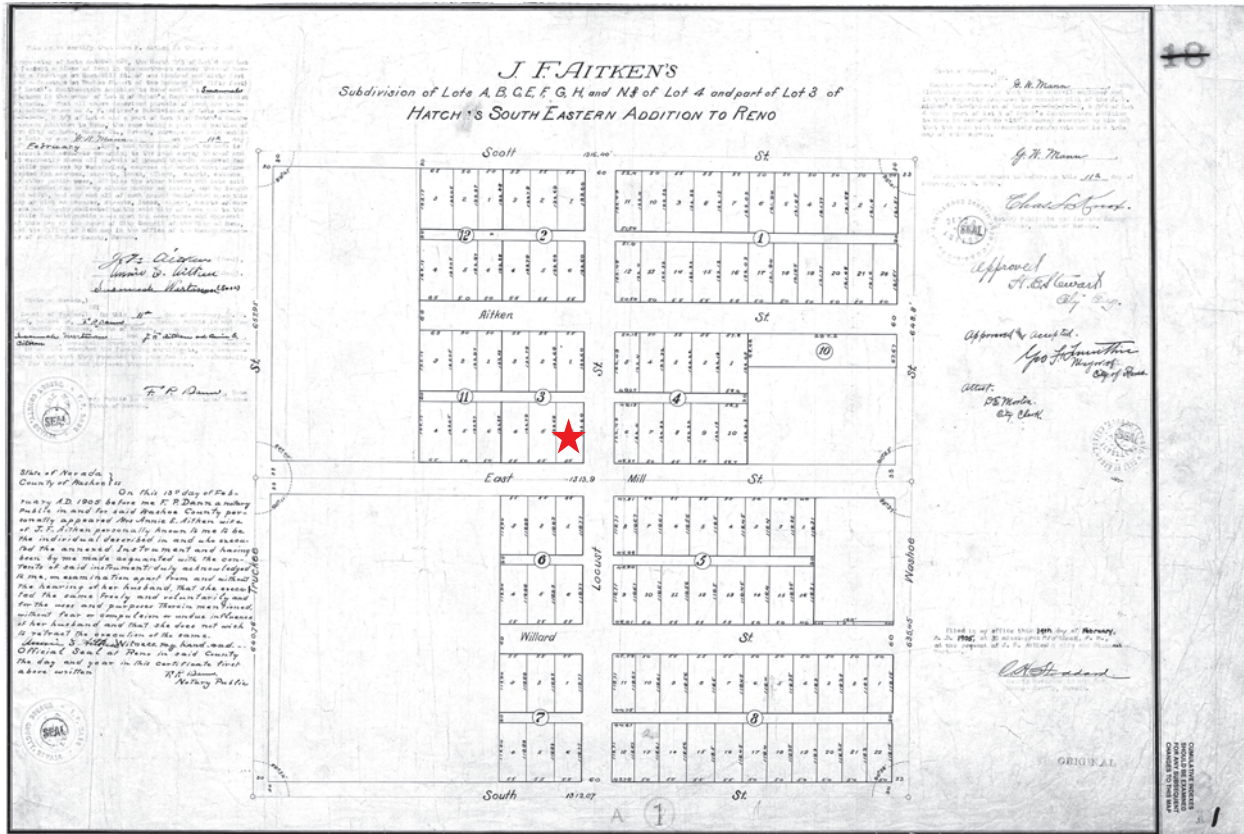


Figure 1: Location of the Aitken House marked on the Aitken's Addition tract map, 1905 (Washoe County Assessor)

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Although Aitken was never directly involved with the Crittenton Home, an interesting episode occurred in 1925 when both Annie Aitken and her daughter, Daisy, gave depositions in the case of Marie Calou, an unmarried mother who was seeking to have her daughter recognized as a natural heir of wealthy inventor John Holloway, with whom Ms. Calou had sustained a romantic relationship for several years while the couple lived together in Reno. Holloway was married to another woman who claimed his entire estate for herself and her children after his death.²⁴ The Aitkens supported Ms. Calou's case, attesting to the fact that Holloway recognized Ms. Calou's child as his natural daughter and that Ms. Calou was accepted "in the higher social circles of Reno and California."²⁵ By this time, the National Florence Crittenton Mission (NFCM) had been advocating that fathers be compelled to provide financial support to their illegitimate children, including that these children have a claim on their father's estate, for several years.²⁶ Crittenton workers urged unwed mothers to pursue court cases against fathers who failed to provide for their children financially. This attitude provoked a significant shift in how society viewed children born out of wedlock and was part of the larger strategy of the Crittenton organization to eliminate the "double standard" that allowed men to escape responsibility for their actions when it came to fathering children out of wedlock. The Aitken family's support of Ms. Calou's case demonstrates that at least some women in Nevada shared the views of the NFCM regarding the rights of children born out of

**Building Lots Just
One Block From
Mill Street
\$200 Each**



AITKEN HOME IN TRACT

Here is an opportunity we offer the speculator or home builder never before equalled in the history of this city. The balance of April we place on sale a limited number of desirable building lots in the Aitken Addition located on Mill street and within ten minutes' walk of the post office. All city improvements on the property. Lots are 55x122 feet with alley in the rear. Costly homes will be erected by purchasers this summer. Buy now while the selection is good. Inspect this property TODAY. For full particulars see

Mrs. Annie E. Aitken
781 Mill Street
OR
TALK TO WATT
Office Phone 712. Residence 283

Figure 2: An advertisement appearing in the *Nevada State Journal* in April 1912, featuring a photo of the Aitken House.

²⁴ "Mother of Girl Bares Her Life," *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 4, 1925, p.4.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Katherine G. Aiken, *Harnessing the Power of Motherhood: The National Florence Crittenton Mission, 1883-1925*, Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1998, p.124-126.

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wedlock, and this may have been a factor in Annie Aitken selling her house to the Crittenton Home of Nevada.

Women's Organizations of Nevada

Women had been slowly gaining new rights and progressing toward suffrage in Nevada since the state's founding in 1864. During the Progressive Era, multiple active women's organizations existed in the state, including the Twentieth Century Club, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). These organizations were similar to the Florence Crittenton Home in that they were affiliated with national organizations and provided women with opportunities to participate in public life through social reform efforts. Nevada posed unique challenges for reformers, including legal gambling and the growing notoriety of the state's relaxed divorce laws after 1905. Women's organizations in Nevada took up a wide variety of causes during the Progressive Era, including women's suffrage, establishing schools, and advocating for alcohol prohibition, among others. Crittenton homes were distinct from these other organizations in that they focused on supporting women "in distress or need," as well as their children. The NFCM aimed to provide services to unwed mothers and prostitutes that would lead to self-supporting independence and acceptance in broader society.

National Florence Crittenton Mission

Charles Nelson Crittenton began operating a wholesale drug company in New York in 1861.²⁷ He was a successful businessman and grew wealthy, often described as a "self-made millionaire."²⁸ He married in 1859 and had three children. The youngest, Florence, died just after her fourth birthday in 1882. Grief-stricken, Crittenton turned to philanthropy and street evangelism. He opened the Florence Night Mission on Bleeker Street in New York City in 1883 to serve as a refuge for prostitutes. He dedicated himself to the success of this home for six years before illness forced him to take a year-long break. He traveled during this time and ended up in San Francisco by 1890, where he renewed his commitment to the welfare of "fallen women" by opening three new Crittenton Homes in Northern California.²⁹ Crittenton gave speeches in Reno about the Florence Crittenton Mission in early 1894.³⁰ At this time in the state's history, men outnumbered women in population by a factor of roughly two to one, and the overall population of the state was decreasing, a trend that began in 1880 and continued for two decades due to the decline of the Comstock.³¹ A Florence Crittenton Union began fundraising in Reno in 1894, remaining active through 1895, but there is no evidence that a home was established in Reno until the next century.³²

²⁷ Social Welfare History Project, "Charles Nelson Crittenton (1833-1909) – Business owner, evangelist, philanthropist and founder of the National Florence Crittenton Mission." *Social Welfare History Project*, 2012. Retrieved August 22, 2025, from <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/people/crittenton-charles-nelson/>.

²⁸ Katherine G. Aiken, *Harnessing the Power of Motherhood: The National Florence Crittenton Mission, 1883-1925*, Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1998, p. xvii.

²⁹ Sarah Martin, "Landmark Nomination Report Florence Crittenton Home of Seattle," SIM Cultural Resource Services, 2020, p.17-18.

³⁰ "Revival Services," *Reno Evening Gazette*, February 28, 1894, p.1.

³¹ Alicia Barber and ZoAnn Campana, *Historic Context for Suffrage and Women's Rights in Nevada*, Kautz Environmental Consultants, Inc., 2021, p.36.

³² "Lawn Social To-night," *Nevada State Journal*, August 22, 1894, p.3.

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Crittenton's focus in the 1890s was chiefly on the reform of prostitutes. He utilized his considerable wealth and growing influence as an admired evangelist to establish Crittenton Homes, which would welcome "fallen women" and support their reform and reintegration into polite society. His goal was to ensure that every geographic area of the country had a Crittenton Home. He rigorously promoted his conviction that "every Christian (regardless of gender) had a responsibility to aid fallen women."³³ Crittenton's charisma and emphasis on evangelism enabled him to gather wide and enduring support for his cause.

Crittenton formed a partnership with the national Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1892, striking a deal with the WCTU President, Francis Willard, to open five Florence Crittenton Homes in collaboration with the WCTU. This partnership ushered in a new era of rapid expansion for the organization.³⁴ Crittenton's gift was in public speaking and fundraising. He needed someone equally skilled in organization and management to run the growing National Florence Crittenton Mission (NFCM). His connection with the WCTU led him to Kate Waller Barrett, a mother, a doctor, and the wife of a minister. Barrett was already committed to rescue work for unfortunate women, particularly unwed mothers.

Barrett's husband died in 1896 just after moving his family to Washington, D.C., where Barrett began managing a rescue home for the WCTU.³⁵ Her views and commitment to rescue work aligned with Crittenton's, and soon she took over the operation and management of the NFCM, while Crittenton continued his evangelical and recruitment work around the country. Under Barrett's leadership, the NFCM began to dedicate more effort to assisting unwed mothers and their children. In addition to rescue work, the NFCM also pursued broader goals to support women's advancement toward equality. Barrett was particularly concerned with eliminating the double standard that blamed and punished women for "immoral" behavior that led to illegitimate pregnancies or sex work, while men remained anonymous and unaccountable for their behavior. Under Barrett's leadership, Crittenton Homes worked to advance women's equality by providing housing, medical care, domestic training, childcare, and employment services. Barrett invoked the moral authority of motherhood to insist that unwed mothers could be redeemed by raising their own children, and that the children themselves were entirely blameless and should be accepted by society, receiving the same opportunities for a productive life as children from legitimate homes. While Crittenton Homes regularly provided adoption services, Barrett emphasized that all mothers could recover from past errant behavior through motherhood, and Crittenton services were aimed at helping women achieve independence as single mothers.

Florence Crittenton Mission of Nevada, Inc 1910-1930

Between 1893, when Crittenton opened the home on Bleeker Street, and 1909, over 70 Crittenton homes were established across the nation. The NFCM had become a leading voice in anti-prostitution efforts and advocacy on behalf of unwed mothers. Nevada was one of the last

³³ Aiken, p. 16.

³⁴ Aiken, p. 31-32.

³⁵ Aiken, p. 38-39.

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states to gain a Crittenton Home.³⁶³⁷ In 1909, Virginia Lee Brandt, a field secretary for the NFCM, stopped in Reno in late November on her way home to Washington, D.C., after attending the San Francisco funeral of Charles Crittenton.³⁸ She ultimately stayed in Reno several weeks, making speeches to women's organizations and multiple church congregations. Brandt spoke in front of packed audiences at the local branch of the Young Women's Christian Association, the University of Nevada, the Ladies' Aid Society, the multi-faith Ministerial Alliance, and other groups, espousing the values of the Crittenton mission and the need for a reform home for women in distress in Nevada.

Brandt described the mission of the Reno Crittenton Home for local newspapers in 1910:

The Crittenton home is established in Reno to aid and encourage destitute, homeless and depraved women and girls to seek reformation of character and respectability, and to reach positions of honorable self-support; and especially to provide for women and young girls who have lived profligate lives, or, having been betrayed from the path of virtue, are sincerely willing to reform... also designed to furnish a haven for those girls who, as strangers in a strange land, need the advantage and counsel of a mother's direction and sympathy- such as the matron of the home will give.

Brandt also mentioned providing childcare for "young mothers who, by working for small wages, are supporting little children, and who cannot care for the little ones during the day."³⁹

From the outset, the home was envisioned as serving the entire state. In keeping with the National program, Brandt described a "no questions asked" policy of accepting women seeking help for various reasons and emphasized that any woman, regardless of her past, could be rehabilitated in the family-like environment of the Crittenton Home. Kate Waller Barrett herself visited Reno that spring and gave "three powerful addresses" at the Methodist Church on March 13, 1910.⁴⁰ Reno's WCTU and the National Florence Crittenton Mission shared many of the same political objectives, focusing on "greater protections for women and girls in particular."⁴¹ In 1909, Reno's WCTU petitioned the state legislature to pass laws increasing the age of consent for girls to 16 and lobbied for the passage of the 1910 federal law prohibiting the transport of women across state lines for prostitution. These were likely among the topics that Brandt and Barrett discussed during their numerous speeches in Reno, as they were highly relevant to the Crittenton causes of ending the double moral standard and providing support for women who had been "ruined" by working as prostitutes or becoming pregnant while unmarried.

With a population of just over 10,000, Reno was by this time the largest city in the state and seemed more receptive to the effort to establish a Crittenton Home than it was in the mid-1890s. The effort gained the local Women's Christian Temperance Union's endorsement by the end of

³⁶ "Descendant of Old Southern General Will Do Rescue Work in Reno," *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 22, 1909, p.1.

³⁷ Board of Trustees, "Report of the Florence Crittenton Mission of Nevada, Inc. 1925," State Printing Office, Carson City, Nevada, 1926, p.5.

³⁸ "Descendant of Old Southern General Will Do Rescue Work in Reno," *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 22, 1909, p.1.

³⁹ "Reno's Crittenton Home," *Nevada State Journal*, January 3, 1910, p.6.

⁴⁰ "Mrs. Barrett Wins All Hearers," *Nevada State Journal*, March 14, 1910, p.3.

⁴¹ Barber and Campana, p. 47.

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1909.⁴² The Florence Crittenton Mission of Nevada, Inc was incorporated in early 1910. The home's first location was a rented house on South Street (Ryland Street), not far from the Aitken House.⁴³ Care was taken to ensure the location was on "the outskirts of the city, where privacy and seclusion can be maintained" (Figure 3).⁴⁴

The Crittenton Home was backed by some of Reno's most prominent residents. The original leadership consisted of an all-male "board of control" to guide business decisions and an all-female "associate" board to oversee the home's operations.⁴⁵ Members of the first board of control included George H. Taylor, Edward Barber, R.M. Price, H.J. Darling, Dr. J.E. Stubbs, Sol Levy, Walter J. Harris, and A.J. McCone. Dr. Morris Rollin (M.R.) Walker was the first President of the board, and he remained involved with the organization through the 1920s. The associate board members included Alice Chism and the wives of George A. Ferris, Edward Coffin, Charles Gulling, L. Twaddle, P.E. Groesbeck, and C.T. Bender. Dr. Walker spoke of the double standard to describe why Reno's community should support a permanent Crittenton Home in 1912, "One of the great, if not the greatest fault, of our social system is that the double standard whereby the girl must bear all the humiliation and stigma of wrongdoing, whereas the boy or man is excused and forgiven."⁴⁶ The first matron of the home was Mrs. F.G. Blum.⁴⁷ Matrons were paid a salary for their work at the home, but others involved were volunteers. There were many matrons during the roughly two decades that a Crittenton Home existed in Reno, but Mrs. Edith Stitt held the position for at least 13 years, from 1918 to 1930.⁴⁸

⁴² "W.C.T.U. Ends Convention," *Nevada State Journal*, December 2, 1909, p.3.

⁴³ "Miss Brandt Has Started Home In Reno," *Reno Evening Gazette*, January 3, 1910, p.2.

⁴⁴ "Crittenton Home an Actuality," *Nevada State Journal*, November 30, 1909, p.3.

⁴⁵ "Crittenton Home For Girls Now Established in Reno," *Nevada State Journal*, January 3, 1910, p.6.

⁴⁶ "Home Wants New Quarters," *Reno Evening Gazette*, February 14, 1912, p.5.

⁴⁷ "Miss Brandt Has Started Home In Reno," *Reno Evening Gazette*, January 3, 1910, p.2.

⁴⁸ "Crittenden Home May Erect New Building," *Reno Evening Gazette*, September 30, 1919, p.7.



Figure 3: Aerial photo of Reno in 1922, looking east northeast from above the Truckee River. Both the first and the last locations of Reno's Florence Crittenton Home would be roughly in the center-right of the image, near the city limits.⁴⁹

One of the strategies adopted by the NFCM was to publish stories about the women served by the organization, often in ways that evoked sympathy and were meant to demonstrate the organization's worthiness of support. Reno's Crittenton Home also occasionally turned to this strategy. In 1915, the *Nevada State Journal* published a brief article demonstrating the cooperation of the Crittenton Home with local police in a story about Ada Scaly, "a woman of splendid education" who reportedly was suicidal "because of her inability to obtain work and worry over her lack of financial resources."⁵⁰ After an unsuccessful attempt to purchase poison from a drugstore, a police officer followed Mrs. Scaly, while the Crittenton Home could be contacted and asked to "find the woman and care for her." Mrs. Scaly was found by the Crittenton "officials" who endeavored to find honorable work for Scaly.

Often, local Crittenton chapters were able to purchase land and occupy large homes, and this was the goal of the Crittenton Home in Nevada. Dr. Walker reported that despite being "a duly incorporated institution, a branch of a national organization and incorporated under the laws of Nevada, is doing good work in Reno, and is backed by some of Reno's most prominent citizens," it was "a struggle" to secure money to build a permanent home for the organization.⁵¹ Indeed, it would be almost a decade before the Crittenton Mission of Nevada owned a suitable

⁴⁹ "Aerial Photograph of Reno," Special Collections Photographs, UNRS-P1010-9, collection 803, Special Collections and University Archives Department, University of Nevada, Reno.

⁵⁰ "Despondent Woman Attempts Suicide," *Nevada State Journal*, May 25, 1915, p.8.

⁵¹ "Crittenton Home Asks Your Help," *Reno Evening Gazette*, December 15, 1910, p.5.

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home, and they never built a purpose-built facility, as was frequently the case elsewhere in the United States. The Crittenton Home rented a large house at 1000 Plumas Street from 1911 through 1915. In June 1915, the Crittenton Home purchased an empty lot in Burke's Addition at the corner of Wheeler and Thoma Streets, with the intention of constructing a building at the site.⁵² Nearby residents opposed having the home in their neighborhood and formed a committee to petition against the home's construction.⁵³ This effort must have been effective, as the Crittenton Home was operating at yet another rented property, 739 Forest Street (renumbered 737 Forest St by 1955) in early 1916, where it remained for the next three years.⁵⁴ The Florence Crittenton Mission purchased the home at 781 Mill Street in late 1919 from Annie Aitken for \$6,500. The purchase was financed in part through the sale of two properties the mission owned elsewhere on Mill Street, which raised \$2,400.⁵⁵ The Mill Street properties were also purchased initially with the intent to build a facility, but they were located in Burke's Addition, which may have been too close to the previously objecting neighbors.⁵⁶

Nevada's Crittenton Home received support from the State Legislature. The state provided \$2,400 a year to the Crittenton Home from 1911 until 1927. The Home continued to rely on donations of food and clothing, as well as on volunteered services from medical providers, to care for its residents throughout its existence.⁵⁷ The State appropriation was a key source of support for the home, helping the organization pay rent and later purchase the Aitken House.

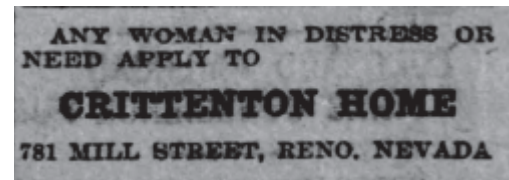


Figure 4: One of many identical advertisements for the Crittenton Home at 781 Mill Street. *Nevada State Journal*, December 1, 1919, p.5

During the 1920s, as women gained political power with the passage of equal suffrage in Nevada in 1914 and at the federal level in 1920, they also gained more influence in the leadership of the Crittenton Mission of Nevada. Maude Wheeler was the organization's president in 1919, succeeding Dr. Walker, who continued to serve on the Board of Trustees and volunteer his time to provide medical services to the home's residents. Susan Codd was the treasurer. According to reports submitted by the Crittenton Home to the Nevada Legislature during the 1920s, services provided at the home included childcare for infants and young children while their mothers worked or were ill, maternity care and birth services, employment assistance, sheltering victims of domestic violence, adoption services, and accommodations for women and children temporarily experiencing homelessness. The home could not accommodate "chronic invalids or dope fiends."

In early 1927, the *Reno Evening Gazette* reported that the State Legislature was considering withdrawing financial support from the Crittenton Home because "it had very few inmates and was called upon to render relatively slight service to the public."⁵⁸ Reports to the State

⁵² "Crittenton Home Site is Selected," *Reno Evening Gazette*, June 23, 1915, p. 8.

⁵³ "Residents to Protest Against Selected Site," *Reno Evening Gazette*, June 24, 1915, p. 8.

⁵⁴ "Any Woman in Distress or Need, Apply to Crittenton Home," *Nevada State Journal*, February 15, 1919, p.12.

⁵⁵ "Biennial Report of the Florence Crittenton Mission of Nevada, Inc. 1919-1920," Journals of Senate and Assembly, Legislature of the State of Nevada, Carson City, 1921.

⁵⁶ "Crittenden Home May Erect New Building," *Reno Evening Gazette*, September 30, 1919, p. 7.

⁵⁷ "Crittenton Home Seeks Donations," *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 29, 1924, p.8.

⁵⁸ "Assembly May Not Accept Proposed Mines Bureau; Amendments Discussed," *Reno Evening Gazette*, February 16, 1927, p.2.

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Legislature during the 1920s complained about the difficulty of improving awareness of the home's services and accessibility in a state as large as Nevada with a "sparse and scattered" population.⁵⁹ The 1925-1926 Biennial Report stated, "we have... cases coming to us from all parts of the State, but unfortunately, the provisions of the home and the very fact of its existence even, does not seem to be well known throughout the state." The Florence Crittenton Mission sold 781 Mill Street to Theodore Koldewey in September 1930. References to the Crittenton Home after 1930 are not found in either city directories or local newspapers.

The National Florence Crittenton Mission (NFCM) faced challenges during the late 1920s and into the 1930s. Kate Waller Barrett died in 1925, and two of her children succeeded her in leading the NFCM. Child welfare and social work were becoming increasingly professionalized, and the federal government began establishing social safety net programs under President Roosevelt's administration. These shifts presented challenges for the NFCM, which relied on volunteers who built relationships with women and their children in home-like environments, operating with the belief that women could be trusted to live respectable lives, raising their own children with peer support.⁶⁰ A key strategy of the NFCM was evangelism, placing the organization at odds with the emerging social work profession and government-sponsored programs. The NFCM ultimately evolved and adapted to these challenges. Some Crittenton operations survived into the current day, and the national organization continues to navigate for the benefit of "girls, young women, and families affected by violence and childhood adversity" under a new name, the Justice + Joy National Collaborative.⁶¹

The existence of the Crittenton Home in Nevada corresponds with and reflects ideas promoted during the Progressive Era in the United States. Women began to demand access to participation in public life, often by asserting their authority over domestic matters to form social welfare institutions that focused on caring for the less fortunate in home-like environments.

Women's entry into public advocacy for civic betterment was often described in terms of "municipal housekeeping," using domestic imagery to expand women's roles... The idea that women possessed a distinctive morality that should be applied to the world outside of the home was a central tenet of many women's clubs from the 1890s into the 1950s.⁶²

Though the Crittenton Home was not a women's club, its leadership was comprised of women serving women at the national and local levels. Nevada's Crittenton Home exemplified the national movement's advocacy by providing a range of support services to Nevada's women, including temporary housing, medical care, childcare, support for unmarried mothers who wished to raise their children, and arranging adoptions when necessary. Like women's clubs, the Crittenton Home provided a platform for women to exert their influence in the public sphere, engage in political activities, and develop professional skills. The Aitken House represents the

⁵⁹ "Biennial Report of the Florence Crittenton Mission of Nevada, Inc. 1925," Journals of Senate and Assembly, Legislature of the State of Nevada, Carson City, 1927.

⁶⁰ Social Welfare History Project, "Florence Crittenton Homes: A History." *Social Welfare History Project*, 2014. Retrieved August 22, 2025, from <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/programs/child-welfarechild-labor/florence-crittenton-homes-history/>.

⁶¹ Justice + Joy National Collaborative website, accessed 12/16/2025, <https://justiceandjoynatl.org/our-history/>

⁶² Alicia Barber and ZoAnn Campana, *Historic Context for Suffrage and Women's Rights in Nevada*, Kautz Environmental Consultants, Inc., 2021, p. 36.

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Crittenton Home during the period when it had realized its goal of securing a permanent location and women were elevated into leadership positions at all levels of the organization.

Rooming House 1930-1983

Advertisements to rent 781 Mill Street began appearing in local newspapers in late 1930. Initially, the entire house was available (furnished), but later advertisements indicate that the home was operating as a rooming house. The 1932 City Directory lists the house as the location of the Mount Rose Hospital, but it appears to be a rooming house again in 1933.⁶³ According to city directories, during the 1930s, the home was often rented by doctors and nurses who worked at the nearby Washoe General Hospital. In the 1940s, ads began appearing for the “Oreder Guest House – Divorcees Only” at 781 Mill Street, though it is unclear whether this referred to a guest house built on the property in 1942. Theodore Koldewey died in 1960, leaving the property to his wife, Ida, who lived in the Aitken House until she died in 1983.



Figure 5: Aitken House (with guest house visible on the left), 781 Mill Street in 1977, courtesy of Nevada Historical Society (WA04715).

Following Ida Koldewey's death in 1983, the property was rehabilitated and converted into medical office space in the mid-1980s. The building's owner at the time was experienced in

⁶³ Mount Rose Hospital was founded in Reno between 1911 and 1915. Its original location was a large home at the corner of Liberty and Granite (Sierra) Streets. In 1928, the building was sold. “Mt. Rose Hospital Building is Sold,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, January 25, 1928, p. 6.

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historic preservation and claimed to be using federal preservation tax credits to finance the project, as well as pursuing National Register status for the home.⁶⁴⁶⁵



Figure 6: A story appearing in the Reno-Gazette Journal on March 29, 1986, showed renovations in progress at 781 Mill Street.

⁶⁴ "Victorian Home to Evolve Into Doctors' Office," *Reno Gazette-Journal*, March 29, 1986, p.6B.

⁶⁵ "Builders Program a Major Winner For Helping Youth," *Reno Gazette-Journal*, June 7, 1986, p.5A.

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8. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Style or Type: Queen Anne

Materials Foundation: Stone
Walls: Wood
Roof: Asphalt
Windows: Wood
Other: N/A

Narrative Description:

Summary Paragraph

The Aitken House, located at 781 Mill Street, is a two-story, wood-frame, Free Classic Queen Anne-style home that was rehabilitated for use as medical offices during the 1980s. It has a modified rectangular plan with a hipped roof with lower cross gables. The roof is asymmetrical, moderately pitched, and is covered in composite shingles with eyebrow dormers in the primary and rear elevations. There is a partial front porch supported by classical columns resting on a solid porch railing. The foundation is uncut stone. A small, minimal traditional cottage with a hipped roof was built in 1942 on the west side of the property at the back of the parcel. The cottage is a non-contributing resource. The Aitken House is in the Aitken's Addition neighborhood on Mill Street, a major east/west street connecting Reno and Sparks. The house is in excellent condition and retains sufficient integrity to convey its period of significance, despite a large single-story addition added to the building in 1985 and other minor alterations.

Narrative Description

Location and Setting

The Aitken House is located in Aitken's Addition in Reno, Washoe County, Nevada. The subject property fronts Mill Street, a major east/west roadway. Locust Street, created when Aitken's Addition was platted, lines the eastern boundary. An alleyway comprises the northern boundary of the property and divides the block between Mill Street on the south and Aitken Street on the north. A 1926 brick bungalow occupies the parcel to the west of the Aitken House.

The building sits on a 0.305-acre lot, shared with a second residential building located in the northwestern corner of the parcel, which was constructed in 1942. The secondary building is not associated with the Aitken House period of significance and is a non-contributing resource. Most of the remaining parcel is paved with asphalt for use as a parking lot, though a small, landscaped area remains along the south and east elevations of the Aitken House. The neighborhood features a diverse mix of building types and construction dates, including a

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nineteenth-century wood-framed farmhouse, pre-World War II bungalows, an RV park, and mid-twentieth-century office and apartment buildings. Many of the residential buildings have been converted into professional or medical offices. Renown Regional Medical Center, a Level II trauma center, is located one block east on Mill Street.⁶⁶

Historically, development in the area near the Aitken House was slower than elsewhere in the city until after J.F. Aitken's death and his wife's subsequent sale of parcels in the Aitken's Addition. The Virginia and Truckee Railroad, completed in 1872, ran roughly north/south, four blocks west of the Aitken House until it was demolished in the 1950s. One block east of the Aitken House was the Washoe County Hospital (now Renown Regional Medical Center), built in 1876, which provided medical services to the indigent and included a poor farm. Today, the area is in the middle of an urban center. Neighborhood streets are paved with concrete sidewalks, and dense urban development surrounds the property for many miles in every direction.

Exterior

The Aitken House is a two-story, Free-Classic Queen Anne house with a modified rectangular plan. It has a hipped roof with cross gables on the front and both side elevations. There is a red brick chimney punctuating the northeastern and southwestern slopes of the roof. The front gable is asymmetrically placed. The hipped ridge runs parallel to the side of the house. The asymmetrical front porch is supported by classical columns raised on a porch rail, and there are dentils along the cornice line on the lower level. The porch has been altered since the period of significance and is now constructed of poured concrete with a double staircase and intricate iron railings. The 8-foot, wood-front door appears to be original and is detailed with a single large pane of glass in the upper portion, etched with a large letter 'A'. The cladding is horizontal boards with shiplap joints. The original cladding was covered with a layer of siding during the 1980s renovation (Figure 7). The gable ends are covered with wood shingles laid in a fish scale pattern. The south and east elevations feature bay windows on the first and second levels; the upper levels are decorated with corner brackets. Some original one-over-one wood sash windows are retained, as well as an eyebrow window in the hipped roof on the front and rear façades, center bay windows with multi-light top sashes and textured glazing, and fixed, multi-light gable windows with colored glass in the stairway and gable ends.



Figure 7: Original shiplap cladding under a newer layer of siding. Photo credit: Melissa Hafey 10/02/2025.

The east elevation features a secondary entrance and a small, one-story porch with two pairs of classical columns raised on an enclosed porch rail separated by an iron railing. The first-floor cornice line is partially decorated with dentils. Bay windows repeat on this side, topped with a

⁶⁶ Renown Regional Medical Center was formerly Washoe Medical Center and Washoe Hospital, established in 1876 at the corner of Mill Street and Kirman Avenue (Washoe Street).

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side gable and corner brackets. The gable features a fixed, multi-light, stained glass window. The center window on the first-floor bay has an upper sash with multiple panes of textured glass. The one-story addition is mostly unornamented and extends to the north. The roof on the one-story addition is flat-topped and hipped with a balustrade. There is an unfenced landscape area at the east elevation, with a sidewalk and a planting strip between the sidewalk and the curb.

The 1985-1986 one-story addition occupies the full width of the north elevation. There are five one-over-one windows along the lower-level addition. The second level (and original rear façade) has a single door for access to the roof of the addition and two one-over-one windows. There is an eyebrow dormer in the hipped roof section. The west elevation has a cross-gabled roof. A cement accessibility ramp leading to the front porch was added (date unknown) and features a decorative iron railing. There is a slider window and a utility door under the northernmost gable. The southern gable features a fixed, multi-light, stained glass window and a pair of double-hung windows on the first and second floors. A large, diamond-patterned stained-glass window in the stairwell has been covered with a storm window. An asphalt parking lot covers the west of the parcel.

Interior

The home underwent a major renovation in the mid-1980s to adapt the building for use as medical offices. The renovation included the construction of a one-story, 1,000-square-foot addition to the rear (north) elevation of the property, the installation of an elevator, and modifications to the ground floor plan. The house's square footage is 3,849 after the 1980s renovations. The owner at the time intended to preserve the building's historic character and expressed a desire to list the building on the National Register. The owner at that time also claimed to be pursuing federal preservation tax credits.⁶⁷

The front door of the house leads into a large living room with the original staircase leading to the second floor on the left. A diamond-patterned, rectangular, stained-glass window is in the wall halfway up the stairwell. The original stair railing and banisters are present. The first floor is covered in hardwood flooring. Many original double-hung, wood-framed windows are retained, and special windows in the bays on the first floor feature a multi-light upper sash with textured glass (east and south elevations).

Integrity

A photo of the home, published in the Nevada State Journal in 1912, demonstrates that the Aitken House remains recognizable to its period of significance, aside from the 1980s rear



Figure 8: Special window in first-floor bay with textured glass upper sash. Photo credit: Melissa Hafey 10/02/2025.

⁶⁷ "Victorian Home Renovated," *Reno Gazette-Journal*, March 30, 1986, p. 4C.

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addition (Figure 2). Essential aspects of integrity, including location, design, feeling, and association, are retained. The setting has undergone significant changes over the last century and is altered by changes to surrounding resources, development patterns, land use patterns, and infill. An asphalt-paved parking lot was added adjacent to the building's west elevation. Modern buildings have been constructed around the home, including a bungalow that was built on the property in the rear corner in 1942. Much of the original workmanship and materials remain visible on the exterior, including decorative shingles, pillars, and some original windows. Inside the house, the banister, stairway, hardwood floors, and trim around windows, doors, and baseboards are original.

The building has not been moved and retains the integrity of its location. It is located at the intersection of Mill Street and Locust Street, about 1 mile southeast of the original Reno townsite and outside of the original city limits, conditions that were desirable for the Florence Crittenton Mission. Development and infill have altered the setting as the city expanded over time; the character of the area and the setting is now densely urban. There are a variety of nearby property types dating from 1874. Design, feeling, workmanship, and materials are mostly intact as evidenced by the building's front porch configuration, porch columns, wood siding, decorative shingles, and remaining original windows. The original horizontal wood cladding exists under a new layer of horizontal siding added during the 1985-1986 rehabilitation. Alterations, such as replacement windows, a concrete accessibility ramp on the west elevation, and a one-story rear addition constructed during the 1980s, impact the integrity of materials and design. Still, overall, the building retains a substantial amount of original or matching replacement materials, making it recognizable to its period of significance, as demonstrated by photos of the home from 1912, 1977, and 1986 (Figures 2, 5, 6).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (include all sources of information)

Aiken, Katherine G. 1998. *Harnessing the Power of Motherhood: the National Florence Crittenton Mission, 1883-1925*. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, TN.

Barber, Alicia and ZoAnn Campana. 2021. *Historic Context for Suffrage and Women's Rights in Nevada*. Kautz Environmental Consultants, Inc. Prepared for the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office.

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Townley, J.M. 1983. *Tough Little Town on the Truckee: Reno 1869-1900*. Great Basin Studies Center, Reno, Nevada.

Washoe County Recorder's Office, Deed No. DE0016-0049, Book 16, p.49.

Washoe County Recorder's Office, Deed No. 17193, Book 53, p. 445.

Washoe County Recorder's Office, Deed No. 64670, Book 94, p. 440.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 0.305 Acres

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 5 and 6 in Block 3 as designated on the official map filed in the office of the County Recorder of Washoe County, on February 14, 1905, entitled J.F. Aitken's Subdivision of Lots A,B,C,D,E,F,G, and H, the North 2/3 of lot 4 and part of Lot 3 of HATCH'S SOUTHEASTERN ADDITION TO RENO, filed February 14, 1905. EXCEPTING THEREFROM that parcel of land described as follows: A portion of Lots 5 and 6 in Block 3 as shown on the map of J.F. Aitken's Subdivision of lots A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H and North 2/3 of Lot 4 and part of Lot 3 of Hatch's Southeaster Addition to Reno filed in the office of the County Recorder in the County of Washoe, State of Nevada, on February 14, 1905, being more particularly described as follows:

Begin at the Southwest corner of said Lot 5 and proceed Northerly along the Westerly line of said Lot 4, 50 feet to a point on the proposed Northerly line of Mill Street; thence proceed along said Northerly line, being 37.5 feet North of and parallel to the centerline of Mill St., a distance of 95.07 feet to the beginning of a 15.00 foot radius curve to the left; thence proceed along said curve through a central angle of 89°45'00" and an arc length of 23.50 feet to a point on the Westerly line of Locust Street (60.00 feet wide); thence proceed Southerly along the Westerly line of Locust Street 19.53 feet to the Southeast corner of the herein described Lot 6; thence Westerly along the Southerly line of Lots 5 and 6, a distance of 110.00 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary corresponds to the parcel boundary for APN 012-121-60.

Geo-Referenced Location (Use NAD 83 UTM's): **add more points if necessary**

Zone: 11N 259259 mE 4378903 mN

Source and method of UTM's: Google Maps, Montana State University Geographic Units Converter (rcn.montana.edu), accessed September 15, 2025

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Melissa Hafey

Organization: City of Reno

Address: PO Box 1900

City or Town: Reno

State: NV

Zip: 89505

Telephone Number: 775-481-5617

E-mail: hafeym@reno.gov

Date: 12-22-2025

Property Name: Aitken House

State Register Number:

12. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Include the following items with your submission:

 x **Photographs** (Provide one or more photographs of the building. At minimum, include one photograph of the front (façade) of the building. Please see guidance for this form for photograph specifications.

 x **Floor Plan and/or Site Map** (For individual buildings, provide a line drawing of the floor plan of the building. If there is more than one building, structure, or for sites, provide a scaled site map to show the relationship between nominated resources. See guidance for clarification.

 x **USGS Quadrangle Map** (provide a scale section of a USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle or current city street map with the property marked).

Photo Log (complete for all photos taken)

Name of Property: Aitken House

City or Vicinity: Reno

County: Washoe

Photographer: Whitney Weed

Date photographed: April 8, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: 1 of 4 . Primary elevation facing north.

Name of Property: Aitken House

City or Vicinity: Reno

County: Washoe

Photographer: Whitney Weed

Date photographed: April 8, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: 2 of 4 . West elevation facing east.

Name of Property: Aitken House

City or Vicinity: Reno

County: Washoe

Photographer: Whitney Weed

Date photographed: April 8, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: 3 of 4 . East elevation facing west.

Name of Property: Aitken House

City or Vicinity: Reno

County: Washoe

Photographer: Whitney Weed

Date photographed: April 8, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

4 of 4 . Rear elevation facing south.

Property Name: Aitken House
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Photo 1 of 4: Primary elevation facing north

Property Name: Aitken House
State Register Number:



Photo 2 of 4: West elevation facing east. The home's two-story Queen Anne massing is still evident. The 1980s single-story addition for office space is at the far left.

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Photo 3 of 4: East elevation facing west. The home's original Queen Anne two-story massing has been preserved. The 1980s single-story office addition on the right was respectfully added to the residence.

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Photo 4 of 4: Rear elevation facing south. The 1980s first-floor addition is in the foreground, while the original home's second floor and eyebrow window are still visible.

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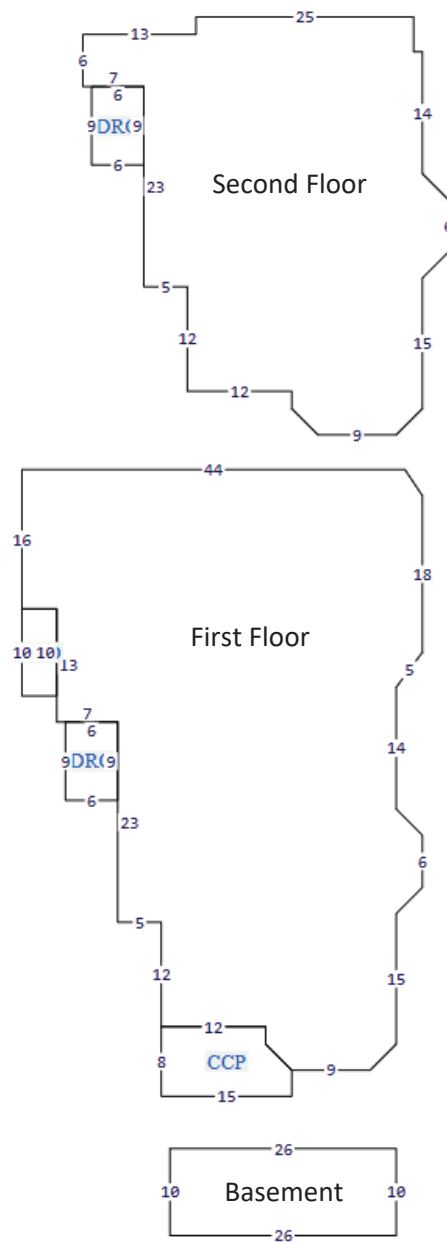
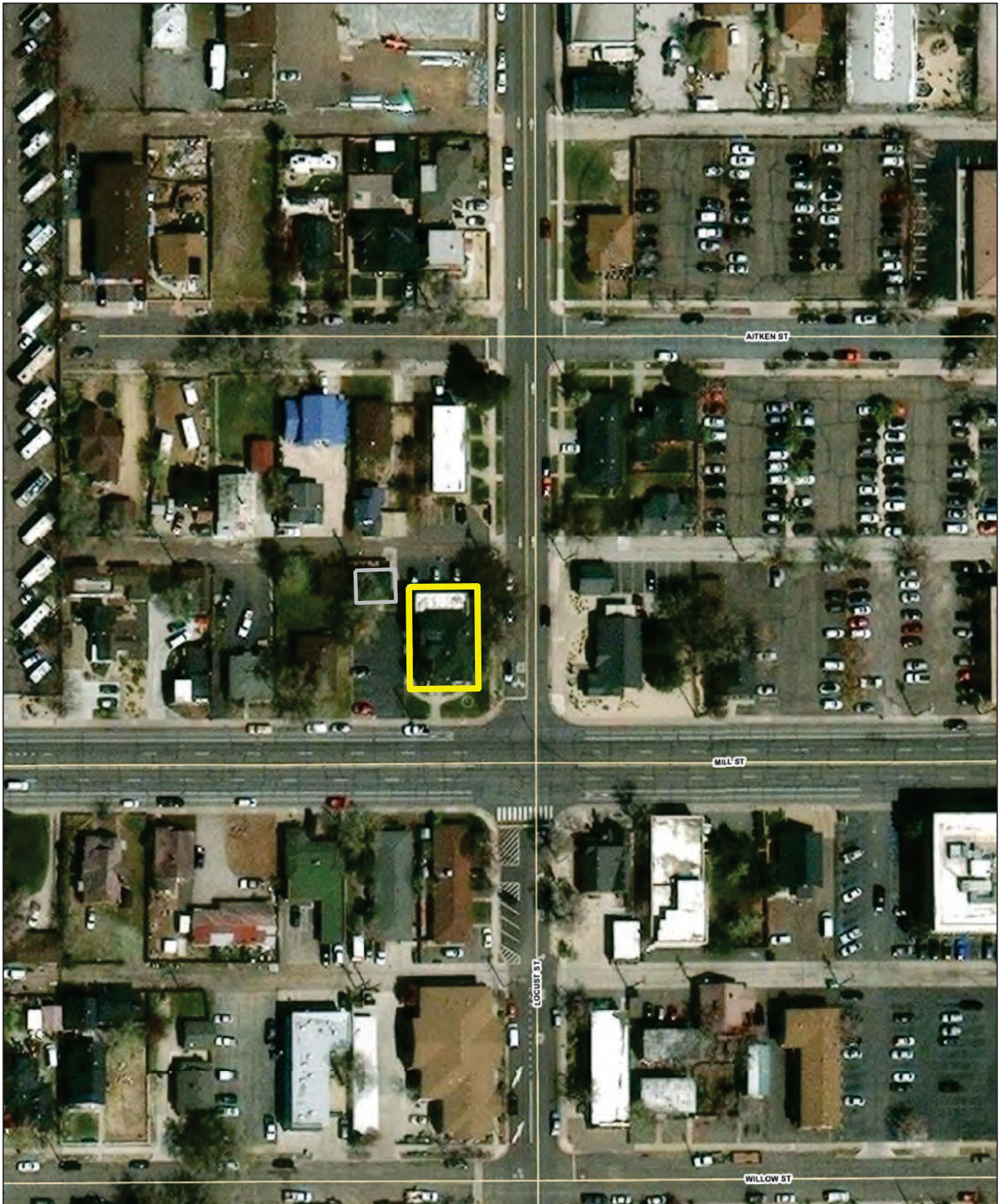


Figure 9: Plan for 781 Mill Street, Washoe County Assessor

Aitken House



12/23/2025, 8:33:59 AM

- Streets
- Aitken House
- Guest House (non-contributing)

