



Nevada History

BY DAVID G. SCHWARTZ

The Real Experience

Early Fremont Street and its role in shaping Las Vegas

Today, Fremont Street is best known for its glittering canopy—it's not just a thoroughfare, it's an experience. But when commercial gaming was first re-legalized in Nevada in 1931, Fremont was much less grand.

Las Vegas's first four gambling establishments, the Northern, Boulder, Exchange, and Las Vegas clubs, were clustered along that street, near the train station at Fremont and Main.

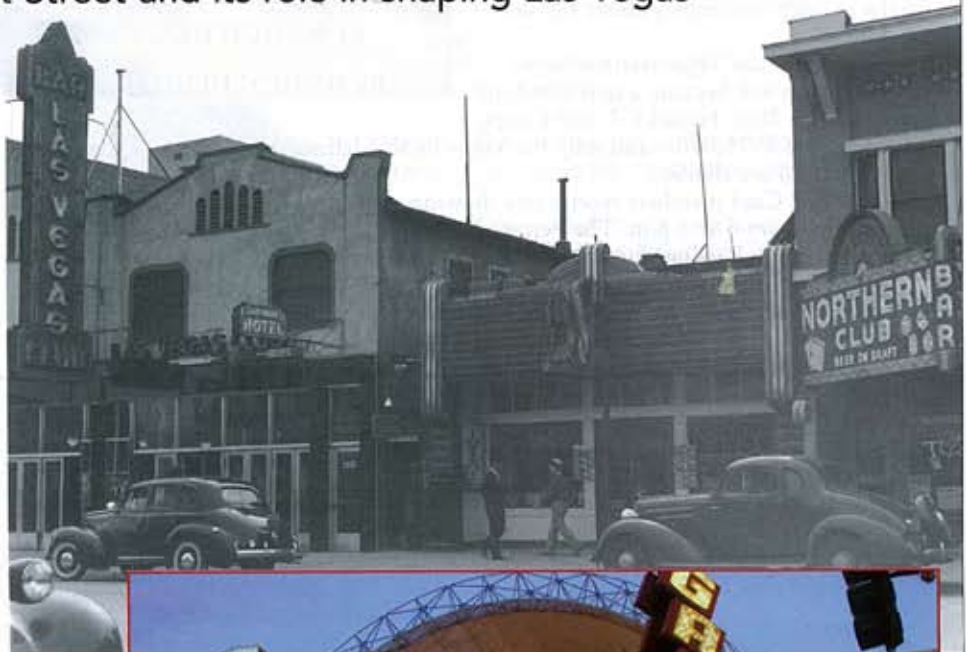
This photograph shows two of those clubs, the Northern and the Las Vegas. For reference, the Northern is in the spot that is today occupied by La Bayou, a small slots-only club.

The Northern is best known today because its owner, Mayme Stocker, was the first woman to hold a gambling license in Las Vegas. And the Las Vegas Club was historic, too. Benny Binion and J. Kell Houssels were at one time part-owners of the club before splitting up. Binion went on to open the Westerner and the Horseshoe, while Houssels, whose family was one of the city's most prominent in gaming, invested in other casinos, most importantly, the Showboat at the foot of Fremont Street.

Though much has changed, the basic idea of the Fremont Street clubs—affordable fun for all—is still with us. The Fremont Street Experience is one of the icons of modern Las Vegas and offers visitors the same benefits as the early days of the avenue.

SOURCE: *Manis Collection, UNLV Special Collections*

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Top: Fremont Street 1939
Middle: The Fremont Street Experience today
Left: The entrance to Fremont Street 1969