

Territorial Enterprise Building

STORY AND PHOTO BY MELODY HOOVER

“Home to the first newspaper in Nevada, the Territorial Enterprise (TE) building is the only remaining 19th century newspaper building, still standing today in Virginia City. The newspaper was founded in 1858. It covered the Comstock mining district and helped shape the world’s view of the American West. The Territorial Enterprise was known for its colorful reporting, common during that time, that blurred the line between seriousness and satire. This included “Quaints” or short fictitious stories that contained a grain of truth to make readers believe what they were reading was true. Some of the writers that worked at the paper included Mark Twain, Dan DeQuille, Joe Goodman, Denis McCarthy, Alf Doten and Wells Drury. The Territorial Enterprise’s early reporting gives a historical perspective for today’s concerns about false reports. While readers of the time took pleasure in being fooled, today’s fake news is more aimed at discrediting the profession and making journalists’ jobs more difficult.”
<https://www.spj.org/news.asp?ref=1661>

“The Territorial Enterprise building in Virginia City has been nominated for recognition by the Society of Professional Journalists as a Historic Site in Journalism. The nomination



Owners and Guests at Presentation

was submitted by Joey Lovato, a reporter, podcast producer, member of the KNPB “Wild Nevada” team, and also worked on an independent study project for the journalism school at the University of Nevada, Reno. In February, Barry Smith met with Joey and his professor, Patrick File, at the building while Joey interviewed Chic DiFrancia, who once worked as a printer at the Territorial Enterprise and had become a writer and historian on Comstock-era journalism. In 1864, the neighboring Nevada towns of Virginia City and Gold Hill — combined populations probably no more than 15,000 people — had six competing daily newspapers. They were among at least 20 newspapers born in the Comstock mining district during a booming decade of gold and silver fever in

the West. From that crowd, one rose to prominence that lasted through history — the Territorial Enterprise, famous as the place Mark Twain came into being, but even more remarkable for the influence it had on journalism, literature and politics across the reach of a nation. Twain and his brief time with the TE get much of the attention, but names that still reverberate around here include Dan De Quille, Joe Goodman, Denis McCarthy, Alf Doten, Wells Drury and a parade of other writers and editors who proved the lesson: Tell a good story, and the readers will flock.” Excerpts from: <https://nevadapress.com/wabuskamangler/territorial-enterprise-nominated-as-historic-site-in-journalism/>

The Society of Professional Journalists named the Territorial Enterprise Building in

Virginia City as a Historic Site in Journalism. The Historic Sites program honors the people and places that have played important roles in American journalistic history. A bronze plaque was presented to Tom and Deborah Hayward, owners of the TE building, and it will be placed in a location on the building to distinguish it as a National Historic Site in Journalism. Among the people that attended the presentation were Joey Lovato, Patrick File, Steven Saylor, Northern Nevada Ghost Hunters, Virginia City Silent Riders, and friends. Tom and Deborah have plans to bring the building back up to safe standards with a museum downstairs that contains many items from the working days of the Territorial Enterprise Newspaper.