



2003 ANNUAL REPORT

Thunderbird Annual



Whittell's Tahoe Legacy



Situated on the pristine eastern shore of Lake Tahoe, the Thunderbird Lodge is an intact fabric of landscape and architectural features which tell a vibrant and rich story of one man and the early development of Lake Tahoe. The eccentric San Francisco real estate magnate, George Whittell Jr., built this magnificent Tudor Revival summer estate between 1937 and 1940. The property consists of a main lodge surrounded by three cottages, a card house, a boathouse, an elephant house, a lighthouse, three garages, and a gatehouse all nestled in a pine forest.

George Whittell was born in 1881 in San Francisco. Numerous legends surround Whittell's activities at his Lake Tahoe estate, including colorful parties and high-stakes gambling in the card house. The eccentric Whittell collected a veritable zoo of wild animals that made guest appearances at the Thunderbird Lodge each summer. Whittell's interest in new technology such as automobiles and airplanes catered to his desire for high speed and risk taking. Lake Tahoe was selected as the site of Whittell's new home because of the natural beauty and remote character of this alpine basin. George purchased 40,000 acres of east

shore property in 1936. Though his original intention was large-scale development, when he finished building his estate, Whittell changed his mind and decided to enjoy his privacy. Here he was able to indulge any appetite his active imagination could conceive. The resulting Thunderbird Lodge includes elaborate tree and granite boulder filled grounds with fountains, waterfalls, staircases, and paths. A 600-foot tunnel carved through solid granite connects the main lodge with the card house and the boathouse, home to his famous Thunderbird Yacht.

George Whittell owned the Thunderbird Lodge estate until his death in 1969. Before he died, Whittell sold a portion of his immense Tahoe land holdings to Crystal Bay Development, the State of Nevada, and the National Forest Service. Whittell had held onto this land for 3 crucial decades which greatly aided in slowing down development efforts on the Nevada side of the Lake. In 1972, the Lodge came under the ownership of New York financier, Jack Dreyfus who built an addition to the main lodge on the garage footprints in 1985. The legacy of this remarkable place remains a testimony to Whittell's idiosyncrasies, to his era, and to the genius of those who designed and built it.

Accomplishments in 2003: A Milestone Year in the History of the Lodge

Among the Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society's many achievements for the year, operating without subsidy from the Del Webb Corporation ranks among the highest. It is a remarkable feat for a new non-profit and historic site to be able to bring in 95% of income from earned sources. The Society was able to meet all necessary expenses for operating the Lodge with income gained through programs, fundraising and donations. In 2003, visitors to the Lodge totaled 10,000. An aggressive tour schedule was put in place. In addition, rental events numbered 20 at the Lodge during the summer season. The Museum Store was moved to the Cook Butler House (Guest House) and was upgraded with new merchandise as well as a rustic Tahoe atmosphere. Our popular "Castle in the Sky" book accounted for 37% of Museum Store sales. Two successful special events assisted with creating awareness and revenue generation. 106 new members joined the Society in 2003. Four new Society staff members came onboard beginning in March of 2003.

New Interpretive Program Brings Historic Accuracy to the Site

Important additions to our interpretive program in 2003 included a statement on the Thunderbird Lodge period of significance and a defining of the goals of the interpretive tour so as to upgrade the visitor's experience at the site. More authentic period rooms were created, historic photos were enlarged and exhibited, our volunteer history committee worked hard at researching information on Whittell and his family, an educational lecture series was implemented, and a number of collection artifacts were donated. A plantings and survey plan was created for the landscape to guide in the restoration of the grounds. Our volunteer garden group planted new native material and kept the grounds in top condition via clean up, weeding, and watering throughout the summer.

COLLECTION DONORS FOR 2003

Marie Boone
Liza Casey
Mickey Collins
Warren Crane
John & Sharon Kirby
John Lewis
Elizabeth Metcalf
Gary Pederson
Marshall Small
Pauline Tusher

Marketing Efforts Get the Word Out

Marketing and publicity efforts in 2003 laid the groundwork for our important task to get the word out about this Tahoe treasure. The Lodge received great coverage in local and regional newspapers, and we hosted tours for over 20 travel writers and 50 meeting planners. Other public relations efforts included a new tour brochure, a FAM (familiarization) tour for Tahoe area lodging and retail employees, Nevada Rural Roundup tour for CVB (Convention & Visitor's Bureau) staff, placement in PBS's Preserve Nevada series, a special feature on Channel 8 Reno on Ghosts at the Lodge, and a song location for the Music Across America video.



We Couldn't do it Without Our Volunteers

Thankfully, the Society is fortunate to have a committed volunteer corps. At the close of 2003, the Lodge's volunteer roster was 61 individuals strong. The contribution of time by volunteers was 5,966 hours in 2003. This is the equivalent of 3 full-time staff positions and would require an additional payroll of \$112,320 (if translated into the average hourly volunteer wage of \$18.00).

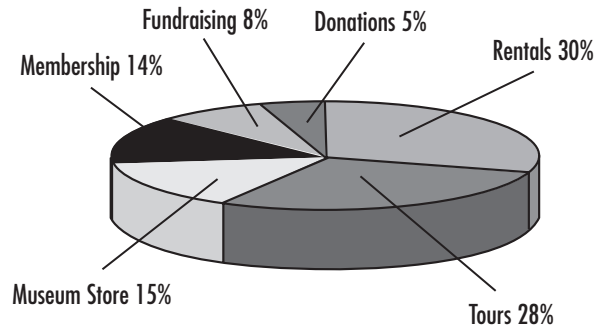
About half of the Thunderbird Lodge volunteers maintain regular schedules and perform specific duties. Volunteers operate in all program areas including gardening, building maintenance, event hosting, docents, researching, membership, special events and administration. All volunteers undergo continual training on site interpretation and operational procedures. Volunteer support is an essential sustaining element of the Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society's programs.

TLPS VOLUNTEERS – 50 PLUS HOURS IN 2003

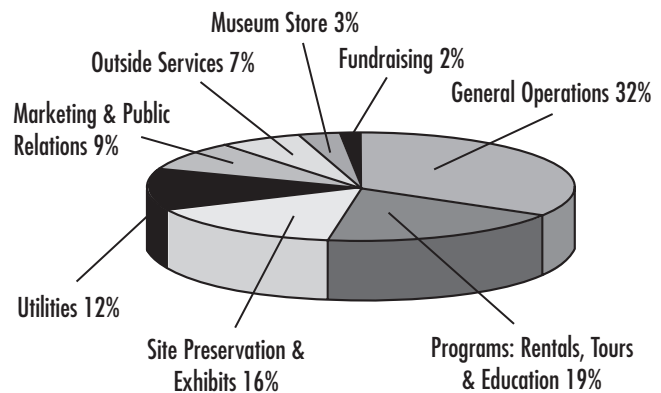
- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Karen Barney | Jean Hamilton |
| Hal Bernheisel | Diane Hudson |
| Sue Bernheisel | Marge Jones |
| Darlene Boggeri | Nancy Joslin |
| Bob Boggeri | Diane Kinney |
| John Bugge | Rick Lambretti |
| Earl Burton | Tom McAllister |
| Sue Burton | Marnie McArthur |
| Tim Callicrate | Sherry McConnell |
| Mary Jane Cross | Joanne McGrail |
| Jay Dahm | Marian McNulty |
| Bill Dohrmann | Sheri Pohle |
| Penny Dupin | Tricia Rebuck |
| Linda Dyer | John Ross |
| Jim Egan | Marjorie Smith |
| Joy Egan | Elly Stickney |
| Donna Erickson | Ron Stickney |
| Kathleen Gardiner | Dee Taylor |
| Patty Glenn | Suzanne Webb |

Financial Statement 2003

Total Income: \$419,662



Total Expenses: \$403,067



The Road Ahead, Managing the Resource for the Future

In 2004, the Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society will continue its important work of laying a solid foundation for the future of the Thunderbird Lodge. To better enable the Society to effectively preserve and interpret this important community resource, certain plans must be developed. Over the course of 2004, the Society will produce planning documents which will both strengthen the organization and the Lodge itself and thus provide the roadmap for the future. The Society's vision for the Thunderbird Lodge is large but readily obtainable - a dynamic historic site which provides historical, cultural, and environmental education to a geographically large and diverse public.

During the next several years the Society will move forward, building constructively off of our past accomplishments. As a private non-profit organization, the Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society continually works at maintaining and developing revenue sources so as to sustain operations and programs. The Society will make every effort to nurture new relationships with grant making agencies and private and corporate donors to ensure financial assistance for future preservation projects and critical capital improvements. The inspiration needed for the Society to carry on its vision can readily be found at this magical site on the shores of Lake Tahoe.

Stewardship & Service

The Thunderbird Lodge is a magical historic site which possesses an extraordinary sense of place. The historic context of the Lodge is well preserved thanks to the eccentricity and conservation minded actions of the Lodge's founder George Whittell Jr. Today, the Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society is dedicated to preserving, interpreting, and sharing this important Nevada cultural resource with visitors and community members. The Society's role is one of stewardship and service. For all those who are enabling the Society to carry out our mission and preserve this remarkable Tahoe treasure, we thank you.

The Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society was conceived as part of a complicated land swap between the U.S. Forest Service and the Del Webb Corporation. In 1998, the Del Webb Corporation purchased the Thunderbird Lodge and surrounding 140 acres on the east shore of Lake Tahoe. In 1999, Del Webb negotiated a land-swap deal with the U.S. Forest Service which allowed Del Webb to acquire development land in Clark County. Because the Forest Service did not wish to own or operate the Thunderbird Lodge, the Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society was formed to administer the Whittell Estate, a National Register Historic District. The Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society received 501(c)(3) status in 2000.

Old Friends are Worth Keeping!

Please assist the Society by becoming a TLPS member. A membership brochure is enclosed. If you were a member and your membership has lapsed, please take the time today to fill out the enclosed form. If you are currently a TLPS member, THANK YOU for your continued support. We invite you to pass the membership brochure onto a friend and encourage them to join, helping to preserve one of Lake Tahoe's significant cultural treasures.

The Thunderbird Staff

BOARD:

Joan Gibb <i>President</i>	Riley Beckett
Joe Bourdeau <i>Past-President</i>	Shirley Dale
Nazir Ansari <i>Vice-President</i>	Bill Dohrmann
Diane Kinney <i>Vice-President</i>	Nancy Fennell
George Ashley <i>Treasurer</i>	Carol Meehleis
Scott Higginson <i>Secretary</i>	Roger Norman
	Janet Pahl
	Steve Podesta
	Larry Tiller
	Dick Wilson

OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS 2003

Linda Dyer	Patty Glenn
Jim Egan	Allegra Wilison

TLPS STAFF:

Michelle Schmitter <i>Executive Director</i>	Skip Martin <i>Maintenance Engineer</i>
Mary Ellen Houston <i>Director of Operations</i>	Sara & Evan Larson <i>Caretakers</i>
Susan Hoefler <i>Business Manager</i>	

OUTGOING TPLS STAFF 2003

Donna McKay <i>Administrative Assistant</i>
Patty Savage <i>Bookkeeper</i>
George Savko <i>Maintenance Engineer</i>



**THUNDERBIRD LODGE
PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

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www.thunderbirdlodge.org

