



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Prestigious Architect Award goes to Paul Revere Williams**

The 2017 American Institute of Architects (AIA) Gold Medal has been awarded to Paul Revere Williams, one of the most successful and well-known African American architects in the United States. Williams completed several projects in Nevada, three of which are recognized in the [National Register of Historic Places](#), and one that is listed in the [Nevada State Register of Historic Places](#).

AIA's highest annual honor, the Gold Medal, recognizes individuals whose work has had a lasting influence on the theory and practice of architecture. Considered one of the most prestigious awards in the architecture world, it is bestowed to an individual, living or deceased, who has created a singular body of distinguished architectural work.

Over his 60-year career, Paul Revere Williams designed over 3,000 residential, governmental and commercial buildings, including the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. He earned the moniker "Architect to the Stars" for designing residences for such well-known actors and musicians as Frank Sinatra, Lucille Ball and Lon Chaney. Born in Los Angeles in 1894, Williams was orphaned by age four and was raised by a foster mother who encouraged him to pursue education and his artistic interests. He enrolled in the Beaux Arts Institute of Design and later attended the University of Southern California. From a young age, Williams understood that he would have to outperform his competitors to succeed in a field dominated by white men in an era of legal segregation.

Williams worked with a number of architectural firms until 1924, when he started his own company. He joined the AIA in 1923, and was inducted into the AIA's College of Fellows in

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1957, retiring from the profession in 1973, and passing away in 1980. During his career, Williams used dynamic styles from traditional Neoclassical to Modern genres such as Googie.

#### Historic Places in Nevada associated with Paul Revere Williams

- **La Concha Motel Lobby** – Williams designed the La Concha as a rare use of Googie style and thin-shell concrete arch engineering in his project palette. The Motel was demolished in 2004, but the Lobby was saved by an alliance of architects and preservationists and relocated to North Las Vegas Boulevard in 2007, now serving as the lobby for the [Neon Museum](#). It is arguably the best known example of Googie architecture in Nevada, and was listed in the Nevada State Register in 2015.
- **Berkley Square** – Intended to meet the housing crisis for Las Vegas’ African American community in the 1950s, Berkley Square is a 148-home historic district in the city’s Westside designed by Williams and constructed in 1954. It was listed in the National Register in 2009.
- **First Church of Christ, Scientist (Lear Theater)** – One of downtown Reno’s best known historic landmarks, this church turned local theater venue is an excellent example of Williams’ Neoclassical work in Nevada. It was listed in the National Register in 1999.
- **Luella Garvey House** – Among the stand-out commissions of Reno’s well-known Newlands neighborhood, Williams’ design for the Garvey House represents a rare inclusion of French architectural influences in this Rio Vista Heights duplex. It was listed in the National Register in 2004.

The nominations for these places and others can be found on the website of the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) at [shpo.nv.gov/historicplaces](http://shpo.nv.gov/historicplaces). SHPO is a state agency that encourages the preservation, documentation, and use of historic places around the state. Property owners in Nevada with resources designed by Paul Revere Williams are encouraged to contact the state’s National Register Coordinator, Jim Bertolini, at [jbortolini@shpo.nv.gov](mailto:jbortolini@shpo.nv.gov) or (775) 684-3436.

#### About the AIA

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) was founded in 1857 with the goal of forming an organization to promote architects and architecture. Today, the organization has nearly 88,000 members in 250 chapters worldwide. AIA functions as the voice of the architectural profession

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and the resource for its members in service to society. Through a culture of innovation, the AIA empowers its members and inspires creation of a better built environment that elevates the profession and safeguards the health, safety, and welfare of the public. In Nevada, AIA has a state organization and individual chapters in Las Vegas (est. 1956) and northern Nevada (est. 1959) that together, support hundreds of Architects, Associates, Emeritus and Allied members representing a diverse cross-section of the profession. To learn more about the AIA in Nevada, please contact: Caron Richardson at [crichardson@aianeveda.org](mailto:crichardson@aianeveda.org) or 702-895-0936.

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**The Nevada State Historic Preservation Office** encourages the preservation of Nevada's historic and prehistoric heritage through federal and state programs. It provides federal grants from the National Park Service to fund historic preservation activities in Nevada. The Office assists federal and state agencies, local governments, private nonprofit organizations and private citizens to preserve buildings and archaeological sites.