

From: [Alicia Barber](#)
To: [Washoe311](#)
Cc: [Kerfoot, Lacey](#)
Subject: Public comment - October 20, 2022 Regional Street Naming Committee
Date: Tuesday, October 18, 2022 9:50:31 AM
Attachments: [Litch Court History.pdf](#)

[**NOTICE:** This message originated outside of Washoe County -- **DO NOT CLICK** on **links** or open **attachments** unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Dear members of the Regional Street Naming Committee,

I am a professional historian specializing in the history of Reno and the state of Nevada, and I am writing today specifically to oppose Item 5 on your October 20th agenda, but also with a general comment about the dire need for your committee to update your policies regarding street renaming in general.

This committee recently has recommended approval of two highly problematic street renaming requests that were proposed for the sole purpose of marketing or commemoration, not taking into account the historic nature of the existing street names and the erasure of history that your recommendations promoted.

Your approval of the renaming of North Center Street in Reno to "University Way" not only breeds confusion with "University Terrace" and broke the continuity of the name of Center Street from Ninth Street all the way south to its intersection with Virginia Street in Midtown (two things that this committee is not supposed to do, due to the potential impact on public safety) but erased the name of one of the 13 street names on the original Reno townsite, as named by the Central Pacific Railroad in 1868.

Your committee consulted with no historians and conducted no public outreach to determine whether the historical information provided to you by UNR President Brian Sandoval and his staff was even correct (it was not). The Reno City Council used your approval as justification for waving the change through with no additional public process or historical consultation. I wrote about that entire debacle here: <https://aliciambarber.com/an-open-letter/>

Your recent recommendation to approve renaming Litch Court in Reno to Fasani Avenue similarly completely ignored the historical significance of the Litch family name and again, solely relied upon the information provided by the applicant about the existing street name. Attached is a complete history of the name that I compiled once I heard about it and sent to the members of the Fasani family, who fortunately withdrew their request to rename the street before it could be heard by Reno City Council.

Today you have before you another request to change the existing name of a street to honor a person and their business. Please note that my comments here do not have anything to do with the person whose name is being proposed. But the simple proposal brings up many problems that you need to consider when revamping your procedures.

The first, of course, is that there has been no problem identified with the existing name. This was true for Center Street and for Litch Court as well. Renaming is always to be discouraged due to the break in historical continuity and the confusion it creates (in addition to the costs

associated with renaming). I don't know whether you have even determined the origins of the name of Larkin Circle, but as my previous examples demonstrate, you must not rely solely upon an applicant to provide you with that information. These are public streets, and you need to do everything possible to make sure that you have all the information required to make informed decisions.

Second, a street should never be renamed for a living person. Other public bodies have long recognized this, as of course it is only posthumously that we can be reasonably certain about the full sweep of a person's life and the advisability of commemorating it in such a permanent manner.

The recommendations that your committee sends forward to the municipalities are taken very seriously, as though your committee has thoroughly reviewed all aspects of renaming, so it is critical that you do not just leave all of these considerations to those public bodies. You have a responsibility to address them at this level. There are no "street naming emergencies."

I would like to draw your attention to the great care that was undertaken by Clark County upon hearing the request to change the name of Swenson Avenue to "University Center Way" in 2019, a process that took four years from start to finish. At UNLV, "Students were involved over the four years of the project, with a student leader always working closely with [John] Osborn [the assistant dean for external relations at the business school], a faculty member and an adviser, conducting research, including focus groups and comparing how other cities recognized their universities through street names...After coming up with several possible names, UNLV worked with McCarran, tourism and city and county officials and other area stakeholders, Osborn said." You can read all about that thoughtful and informed process here: <https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/traffic/swenson-street-near-unlv-renamed-university-center-drive-1891128/>

This is a serious issue, as I see these requests coming to you more frequently. I would be happy to assist in the process of revising your procedures about renaming. In doing so, please look to other public bodies who have already recognized the need to subject any renaming requests to a comprehensive examination, and discourage any that are undertaken solely to replace a historic name for purposes of commemoration.

Sincerely yours,

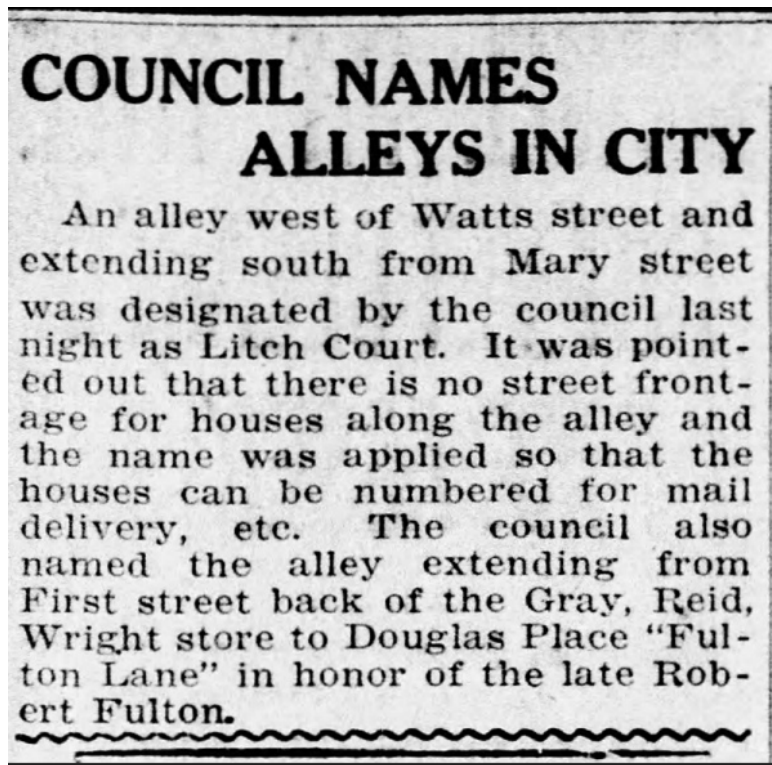
Alicia Barber

Alicia Barber, Ph.D.
Stories in Place LLC
Phone: (775) 771-3975
storiesinplace.com

A Brief History of Litch Court in Reno, Nevada

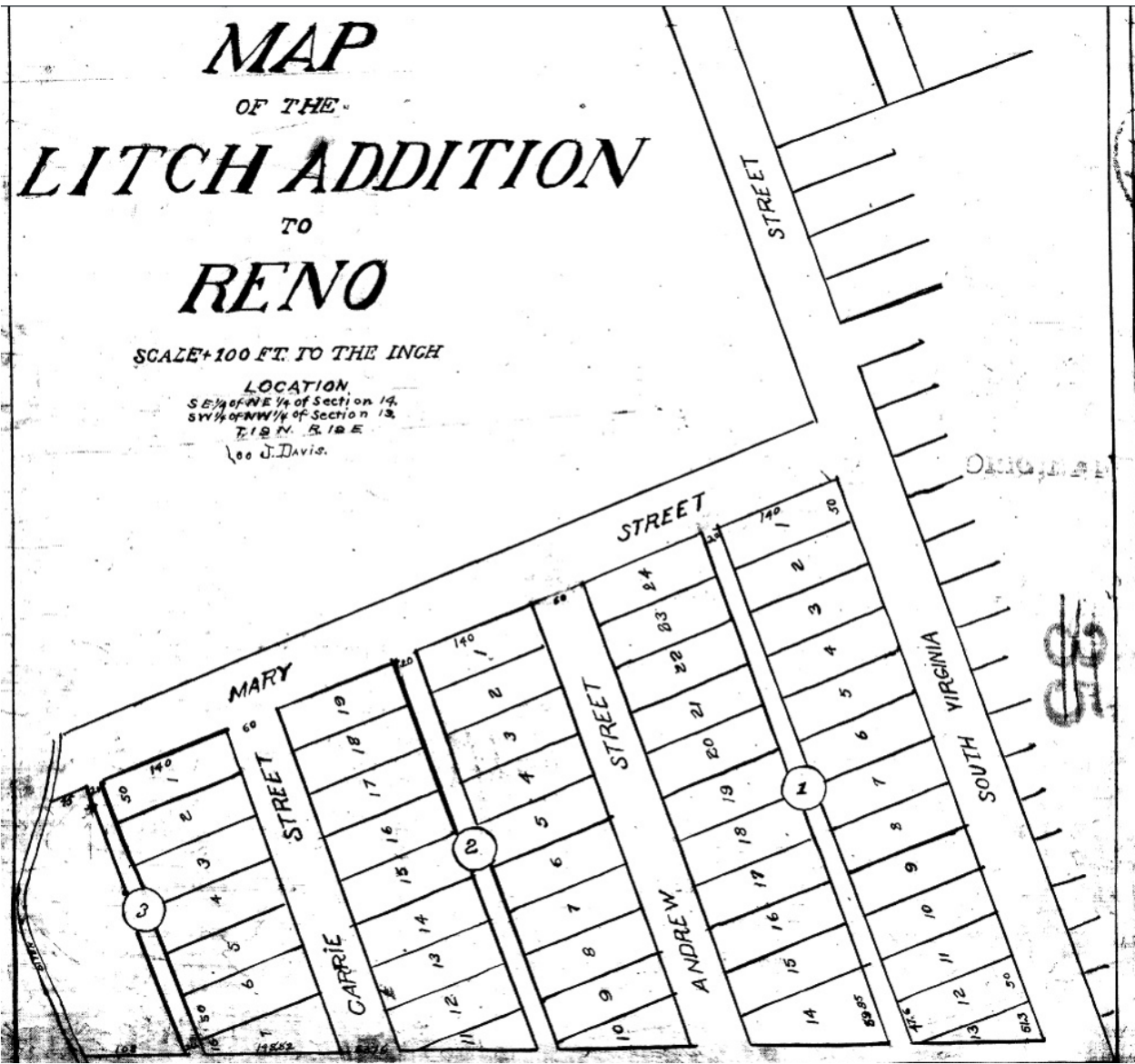
Compiled by Alicia Barber, PhD, Stories in Place LLC

Litch Court was named by the City of Reno in 1925 in recognition of its location in the Litch Addition. The alley had existed since 1902 but needed a formal name in order for the houses that were being built along it to have mailing addresses.



Reno Evening Gazette, November 24, 1925

The Litch Addition was laid out in 1902 (officially filed in 1903) by Reno pioneer Andrew Litch.



The plat of the Litch Addition was officially recorded in 1903. *Washoe County Recorder*

The addition originally had three street names: Andrew Street (for Andrew Litch), Mary Street (for his wife, Mary), and Carrie Street (reference unknown, presumably another relative).

In 1909, the names of Carrie and Andrew Streets were changed to Watt and Haskell, respectively, in order to match their continuations to the north in the Martin Addition, which was officially platted in 1907.

At the meeting of the city council held Monday night, H. B. Maxson, city engineer and superintendent of streets and sewers, submitted his final report, covering the work of his department thoroughly in every detail. The report also included a number of recommendations of importance, which were as follows:

- 1—All streets be graded and gutters made at the same time and place where any property owner is constructing a sidewalk.
- 2—That Carrie street and Andrew street in Litch addition, be changed to Watt and Haskell street as shown in the Martin addition, as they are one and the same streets extending through those two additions.

Reno Evening Gazette, May 26, 1909

The Litch (sometimes spelled Leitch) family had moved to the Reno area from Lassen County, California in 1883 and bought the expansive Sellers Ranch, south of town. The ranch had been purchased shortly before that by Alvaro Evans, and appears to have extended approximately from present-day Forest Street eastward to the other side of Humboldt Avenue, and from Mary Street southward to Mt. Rose Street.

Alvaro Evans has sold the Sellers ranch to Andrew Leitch, of Susanville, for \$7,200.

Weekly Nevada State Journal, May 12, 1883

By the time they moved to Reno, the Litch family had seven members: Andrew Litch and his wife, Mary, three sons (Tom, George, and Fred), and two daughters (Clara and Minnie).

053333	Leitch	Andrew	M.	M.	47		1	Farmer
		Mary A.	W.	F.	31	Wife	1	Keeping house
		Clara C.	W.	F.	7	Daughter		
		Fredrick	M.	M.	6	Son		
		Thomas	M.	M.	5	Son		
		Minnie	W.	F.	2	Daughter		
		George	M.	M.	2 1/2	Feb. Son		

1880 U.S. Census, Lassen County, California



Litch family ca. 1888. From left: Clara, Andrew, Tom, George, Fred, Mary, Minnie. Photo from Jim Litch.

Andrew Litch continued to assemble more property in the vicinity, where he grew alfalfa and wheat and raised dairy cattle.

A LITCH

Owens the old Sellers ranch just outside the town limits on the Virginia road. He cultivates 90 acres and has 50 acres in alfalfa that produces three tons to the acre, the ranch having been a long time seeded. Mr. Litch is re-seeding and will soon have it up to the high degree it is capable of. He has 25 acres in wheat that will yield 35 bushels to the acre. Mr. Litch runs a dairy of fifteen cows and makes butter for the Reno market, which takes all he can make at fifteen cents per pound. He usually feeds his surplus hay to beef cattle. The ranch is one of the best small farms on the meadows, as it is near town and desirable for feeding, and also near market.

Weekly Gazette and Stockman, September 9, 1897

The family also became known for the fruit trees on their property.

Mrs. Litch of Reno, now living on the Sellers ranch, makes an exhibit that she can justly feel proud of in the way of fruits.

Reno Evening Gazette, October 2, 1889

Andrew Litch utilized the latest machinery available to make farming more efficient, employing the use of a "Deering all-steel self-binder" in 1890.

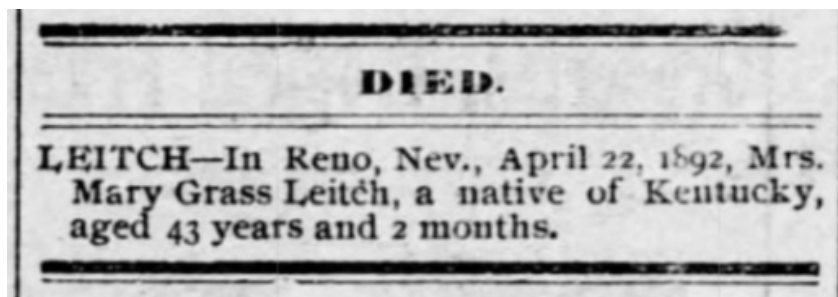
FARMING MACHINERY.

Recent Wonderful Improvements In the Same.

A visit this morning, in company with Seymour Bryant, to the ranch of Andrew Leitch, on the Virginia road, where a "Deering all-steel self-binder" was at work in a field of wheat, made this reporter realize that the agricultural world is rapidly passing him. The above machine was manufactured in Chicago and belongs to Mr. Bryant, who, besides his own grain, is able to cut the crop of many of his neighbors. Not having time to make an examination of this remarkable invention, this scribe is unable to give it the notice which its wonderful work merits, but it is safe to say that a more ingenious piece of machinery was never invented for the use of the farmer. It can be so adjusted that it binds straw from one to five feet in length, and the part of the machinery which ties the knot is simply marvelous. Those who have never seen a self-binder work should not fail to visit a field where this or some similar one is in active use.

Reno Evening Gazette, August 21, 1890

Andrew Litch's wife, Mary, died in 1892 of pneumonia.



Reno Evening Gazette, April 23, 1892

DEATH OF MRS. LEITCH.

An Old Honey Lake Resident's Untimely Taking Off

The friends of A. Leitch will be pained to learn of the death of his wife. The good lady passed away at about 7 o'clock last evening. She was taken down with pneumonia twelve days ago and although everything was done for her that medical science was able to command and kind friends could do she was taken off by the dread disease. Mr. Leitch moved here from Honey Lake Valley with his family ten years ago. Mrs. Leitch was well known in Honey Lake, where many of her relatives and friends reside. She leaves five children—three boys and two girls and a kind and loving husband to mourn her untimely taking off. The funeral will take place Monday at 10 o'clock from her late residence.

Reno Evening Gazette, April 23, 1892

Andrew and Mary Litch's daughter Minnie married Isaac Jewell in 1897 and moved into the family home up on the hill. The Litch House, now 124 Wonder Street, is the original portion of the longtime Silver Peak Brewery building. View the Reno Historical entry on the Litch House here: <https://renohistorical.org/items/show/249>.



Minnie Litch's husband Isaac Jewell drives a wagon with their daughter Crystal at his side, ca. 1908.
Photo courtesy of Snowshoe Thompson



The house is still a visible portion of the Silver Peak building, pictured here ca. 2020.

Andrew Litch sold off the rest of his ranch property in 1906 and moved into a house on California Avenue. The land was combined with others to establish the Sierra Vista Tract, which was officially platted in 1907 and extends just south of the Litch Addition to either side of Mt. Rose Street.

\$200,000 DEAL UNDER WAY IN REAL ESTATE

A real estate deal involving \$200,000 is under way. A syndicate of Reno and California parties have contracted to purchase, according to authentic rumors, the DeRemer, Gibson and Litch ranches lying immediately south of Reno, which will be subdivided and converted into a residence district. The money has been paid in part.

There is a total of 420 acres in the three ranches which lie on either side of the Virginia road, extending from the city limits to the Moana road. The bulk of the land is on the north side of the highway and is admirably suited for residence purposes.

According to the story which is afloat today the men interested in the deal propose to build a car line running through the tracts and connecting with the Nevada Transit Company's line on South Virginia street.

In all probability the line will be built and owned by the transit company which has signified its willingness to aid in the development of all new additions to the city.

The firm of F. J. Peck & Company is credited with promoting the sale but this afternoon the members of that firm declined to make a statement, saying that while there might be an interesting transaction that could be made public in the near future nothing could be given out at this time.

Reno Evening Gazette, November 1, 1906

Andrew Litch died just months after completing that transaction, in December 1906.

ANDREW LITCH IS CALLED BY DEATH

Pioneer of Nevada Victim of Pneumonia—Member of Eagles at Nome, Alaska, Dies Here After Short Illness—Son of Pioneer Very Ill

Andrew Litch, a representative man of Reno and since 1862 a resident of this state, died at his home, 118 California avenue, at six o'clock last night. Sick for three weeks with pneumonia, his death was not unexpected.

Litch's life work was completed several years ago, when he retired from active work and lived at ease on his farm below Reno. The place was sold several weeks ago to the Development company, and he removed to town to reside.

The deceased was born in Germany in 1833. He came to California by way of the Isthmus of Panama in 1850, settling at Bidwell's Bar. Later he removed to Honey Lake Valley. He owned the property there at the time of his death.

Litch married Miss Mary Crass, a native of Kentucky, in 1870. Five children were born to them, the family circle being untouched by death until the wife passed away. Those surviving of the children are: Mrs. Mary Gibson, Mrs. Minnie Jewell, Fred Litch Thomas Litch and George Litch.

The latter is said to be severely sick at his father's home here.

Nevada State Journal, December 2, 1906

Many families have lived on Litch Court throughout its history, some for generations.

LITCH COURT—South from 224
Mary to Caliente
1021 Caprio A R
1021½ Allred D A
1029 Denuit R V
1036 Dent R L
1037 Pelizzari Humbert (o)
1045 Gavin Robt (o)

1932 Reno City Directory

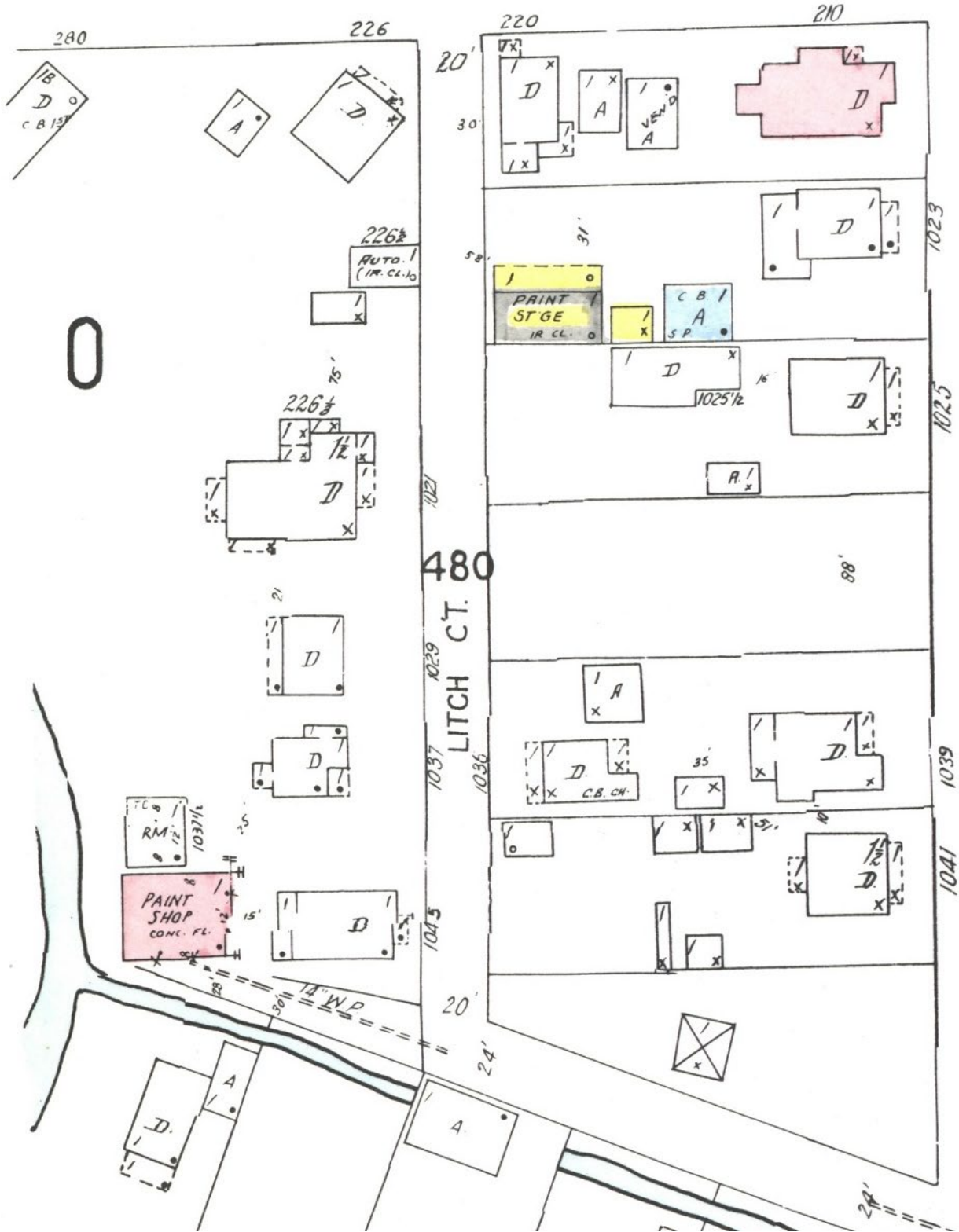
LITCH COURT — South from 220
Mary, 2 east of Plumas
1021 Luposi Geo
Pease Donald
Rastelli Tony P © 3-3290
1025½ Devincenzi Jos 2-2302
1029 Eccles Harry M © 3-7608
1036 Baker Herman P 2-3678
1037 Lehnert Grace M Mrs ©
2-2757
1037½ Graham Arth R
1045 Vacant

1957 Reno City Directory

LITCH CT —FROM 220 MARY ST
SOUTH

ZIP CODE 89502
1021 Rastelli Tony P © 323-3290
1025½ Wesolowski John W
1025★Chestnut Melvin
1029 Saxon Geo A ©
1036 Baker Herman P 323-7779
1037 No Return
1037½ Durkee Clyde
1045★Davis Lonnie L
1047 Vacant
1049 Casselli Julius © 322-3790

1974 Reno City Directory



The 1955 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Reno shows a number of addresses on Litch Court.

A biography of Andrew Litch was included in *A History of Nevada: Its Resources and People* by Thomas Wren (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1904), pp. 425-426.

<https://archive.org/details/ahistorystatene00wrengoog/page/n513/mode/2up>

ANDREW LITCH is a representative self-made man of Reno, and since 1862 he resided in Nevada, having come here when a young man, hoping that the natural resources of the west and the business development would give him opportunity for the acquirement of a comfortable competence. In this hope he has not been disappointed, and he is now a substantial citizen of Reno. He was born in Germany on the 16th of November, 1833 his parents being Michael and Lena (Longhurst) Litch, who were also natives of the fatherland, in which country they were reared and married. After the birth of four of their children they emigrated to the new world, crossing the Atlantic to New Orleans. Thence they made their way north to Indiana, where Mr. Litch purchased two hundred acres of land near Louisville. This he improved, continuing its cultivation until his death, which occurred in 1889, when he was eighty-four years of age. His wife had passed away in 1879.

Andrew Litch is now the only survivor of the family. He was but a boy when brought to the United States, and in 1850 he made a trip to California by way of the Isthmus of Panama, being then a youth of seventeen years. He engaged in mining at Bidwell's Bar, receiving two dollars and a half per day and his board for his services, but not much gold was taken out there, and he afterward went to the Sacramento valley nine miles below the city of Chico, where he purchased a squatter's claim of six hundred acres of land. There he engaged in raising hay and grain, continuing in that business for six years, but his ranch proved to be a Mexican grant, and, after being paid for the improvements which he placed upon it, he gave it up. Mr. Litch then returned to Honey Lake valley in Lassen county, making the journey with an ox team, and afterward went to Humboldt county in the year 1862. In the latter county he engaged in teaming with oxen, hauling fruit from Oroville and Marysville, California, to Humboldt, Nevada. It required a month to make the trip, and he re-

ceived from five to six hundred dollars for each trip. In 1864 he went to Granite creek, where he established a trading post, and during the two years of his residence there he made considerable money, but the Indians caused him annoyance, stealing his goods, and they also killed his partner, Lucius Archelaus. Others were also killed in the settlement, and the Indians burned the trading post. Mr. Litch undoubtedly would have been murdered by the red men had not he been away at the time of the massacre. He rebuilt the trading post and remained there an additional two years, but eventually he abandoned his place because of the depredations of the Indians. The Piutes stole everything that he had. He then went to Honey Lake and purchased a ranch, containing between six and eight hundred acres. On this he raised hay and also kept a station. For five years he remained upon that place, at the end of which time he sold the property and removed to the old Erickson ranch only a mile distant from his former farm. Again he met with prosperity while living on the Erickson ranch and in 1882 he bought his present ranch a mile and a half south of Reno, containing ninety acres, upon which stands a good residence. Thereon he carried on general farming until 1900, when he retired from active business life and built a good home in Reno, which he now occupies, while his son-in-law, Ike Jewell, is living upon the farm.

Mr. Litch was married in 1870 to Miss Mary Crass, a native of Kentucky. He returned to the east for his bride, and the wedding was celebrated on the 22nd of February. Five children have been born to them, and the family circle yet remains unbroken by the hand of death. These are Clara, now the wife of Frank Gibson, who resides on Mr. Litch's ranch at Honey Lake; Fred, a stockman; Thomas, who conducted a barber shop in Reno; Minnie, the wife of Ike Jewell; and George, also a resident of Reno. There are now seven grandchildren. In 1892 Mr. Litch was called upon to mourn the loss of his wife, who had indeed been a faithful companion to him and a devoted and loving wife and mother, putting forth every effort in her power to advance the interests of her family. Mr. Litch has always been a stalwart Republican, but has never sought or held office. He gives his support, however, to measures for the public good, and in religious faith is a Roman Catholic. His life has been characterized by industry, and because of this he well merits the success which has come to him.

