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Cover: Ahwahnee Motel, "Stoic Roadside Cheiftain," U.S. 40, Aurora, Colorado, by Warren Anderson. Read more starting on page 6.

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Editor's Word

By Douglas C. Towne



The old highways through the Mile High City ~ Colfax Avenue (U.S. 40), Santa Fe Drive (U.S. 85), and Federal Avenue (U.S. 287) ~ were lined with funky mom and pop motels whose slightly ragged appearance merely added to their allure.

AS DAY TURNED TO NIGHT several years ago at the Torch Club in Sacramento, I ventured outside to photograph its stunning vintage neon sign in the changing light. Returning to my seat at the bar, I was surprised to find a complimentary drink awaiting me courtesy of a stranger. He acknowledged my unique passion and told me about his own—photographing fire escapes. “What an odd hobby,” I distinctly recall thinking. But since this chance meeting, I’ve had a newfound appreciation of these dangling staircases.

An intriguing aspect of our organization is the wide range of member’s interests. Our membership brochure for potential recruits lists over 90 fields of interest. Certainly diners and Route 66 are popular topics, but it’s refreshing to be exposed to more obscure subjects such as window decals and Little America.

In celebration of the “vive la difference” of SCA members, I’m delighted to follow on the heels of Bert Bedeau’s groundbreaking “segregation” special issue with another oriented towards perhaps that most American of all roadside establishments, the motel.

We all have personal reasons for our commercial archaeology interests. Many are able to connect it to some specific event; others have a more amorphous basis. Mine comes from growing up in the 1970s in Denver. The old highways through the Mile High City—Colfax Avenue (U.S. 40), Santa Fe Drive (U.S. 85), and Federal Avenue (U.S. 287)—

were lined with funky mom and pop motels whose slightly ragged appearance merely added to their allure. These lodges were mysterious places that I frequently passed, but never experienced. Later in college, when “road trip” became part of my lexicon, great fun was had selecting overnight accommodations based on the wildest architecture, strangest themes, and amount of neon tubing—indices that would make the journey even more memorable.

For some time, I thought my interest unique. Then, I began encountering kindred spirits who shared my passion for vintage motels; they have graciously offered to contribute to this issue. Andy Wood, an assistant professor in the Communications Department of San Jose University, starts us off with a fascinating overview of the evolution of the motel. Andy, with his wife Jenny, operates the website *Motel Americana* and recently authored the book, *Motels in America*. Canadian geographer Peter Glaser, a frequent SCA contributor, presents an intriguing history of a Toronto motel strip. The special issue is capped off with motel artwork created by the late Warren Anderson, the former University of Arizona art professor and author of the groundbreaking book, *Vanishing Roadside America*.

I owe heartfelt thanks to these tremendously talented individuals and hope their work brings you as much pleasure as it does me. ●

Opposite: Lakewood Lodge, 5601 West Colfax Avenue, Lakewood, Colo. **This page:** Mile High Court, 1770 South Santa Fe Drive, Denver (razed); Torch Club, 904 15th Street, Sacramento; Sunset Village Motel, 5730 West Colfax, Denver (razed); Rocky Mtn Motel, 6001 West Colfax Avenue, Lakewood, Colo. — All photos and ephemera, D.C. Towne



A giant cowbot at the entrance to Rustic Ranch Mobile Home Park, 5565 Federal Avenue, Denver; Eddie Bohn Motel, Pig'n Whistle, and gas station entrance, 4801 West Colfax Avenue, Denver (all closed); Big Bunny Motel (formerly Bugs Bunny Motel), 6218 West Colfax Avenue, Lakewood, Colo. All photos and ephemera, D.C. Towne



Chuck's Corner Featuring photos from the collection of artist and photographer Chuck Biddle.



Avenue Cafe, _____, _____

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