

# BOOMTOWN

CASINO ☆ HOTEL  
Reno, Nevada

by Allan Anderson

Like all good tales of the West, the history of Boomtown Casino and Hotel is a colorful story of the American dream.

Despite what its name implies, Boomtown did not spring up overnight. In fact, it took more than 40 years for a small cafe to evolve into the full-service resort hotel-casino Boomtown is today.

It all started in 1945, when husband and wife Bill and Effie Holmes moved from Twin Falls, Idaho to Verdi, Nev. They bought an existing restaurant on the outskirts of Verdi named the Wishing Well Cafe. Within a few years, the couple bought another business in downtown Verdi, naming it Bill and Effie's Truck Stop. In 1960, Nevada's gaming commission began allowing small business owners to obtain gaming licenses. The Holmes decided to add a casino to their establishment. By this time, the cafe had 13 employees and 17 slot machines.

As construction began on the new interstate in the early 1960s, Bill and Effie saw an opportunity for more business. In 1964, they moved the cafe to the current Boomtown location to take

advantage of traffic on the Lincoln Highway (now Interstate 80). There, they built a 9,600 square-foot building that featured 94 slot machines and a 120-seat restaurant. The business quickly became a favorite stop for truck drivers and travelers, and expanded once again.

Bill claimed he would sell the successful business when it was worth \$1 million, and in 1967 a group of investors led by now-Reno mayor Bob Cashell offered to buy it. The couple sold their business and retired, leaving their roadside stop to expand beyond their imagination.



Bill and Effie's

Photo courtesy Howard Herz



On October 1, 1967, Cashell renamed the property Boomtown and throughout the next few years, made several improvements. In 1971, he added a bar and brought in the first Blackjack table the following year. It was so popular that six more tables were added in just six weeks. A craps table was introduced in 1973, and Keno came to Boomtown four years later. Boomtown's first hotel was built in 1978, a place for weary travelers to rest. Over the next several years, the casino would continue to slowly grow and change. Cashell sold the property to Timothy Parrot, Ken Rainen and the Merrill Lynch Corporation in 1988. The company became publicly owned, trading on the NASDAQ stock exchange in 1992.

Boomtown wanted to appeal to the entire family, and opened its popular Family Fun Center in May 1993, bringing with it 35,000 square feet of video and redemption games, rides and northern Nevada's only 3D Motion



Boomtown in the cities



Boomtown's new hotel

Theater- the first in the world to be all digital.

The company expanded with three additional properties in Biloxi, Miss., New Orleans, La. and Las Vegas, Nev. In 1996, the Las Vegas property was sold and in June 1997, Boomtown merged with Hollywood Park, Inc. to become a wholly-owned subsidiary. Hollywood Park then became Pinnacle Entertainment, Inc., the current owner of Boomtown.

With the addition of a six-story, 200-room hotel tower and high limit slot salon, as well as a #1 Blackjack and Video Poker rating, Boomtown continues to offer the perfect spot for the traveler, relying on the down-home friendliness begun in a little cafe all those years ago.



Chip scans courtesy Larry Hollibaugh