



In the footsteps of historic Taos artists

Text by Steve Fuhlendorf

BACKGROUND FOR YOUR TOUR

Taos has been synonymous with art and artists for more than 100 years. Even before the many 20th century artists flocked to Taos in search of light, landscape and inspiration, Taos was famous as a trading center and Hispanic folk art and before that Native American pottery and other crafts were some of the main commodities. Today, with more than 80 galleries and seven museums, Taos is still a haven for artists looking to establish themselves and a home to many of the world's most famous artists as well. On this walking tour around the Taos historic district you will visit the homes of some of the artists that blazed the trail for the hundreds of artists that live and work in Taos today.

You may wish to combine this tour with *In the Footsteps of Historic Taos*. The order you visit the tour sites is up to you. Feel free to explore the area and find your own highlights amongst the many galleries and studios in the Taos Historic District. Special thanks to the Taos Project for its excellent brochure, "Historic Taos, A Self-Guided Walking Tour." Pick up a copy at the Taos Visitor Center and locations throughout Taos for a more detailed description of all the sites mentioned below.

Information: www.taoschamber.com

1. THE BLUMENSCHN HOUSE

222 LEDOUX STREET

According to legend, in 1898 Ernest Blumenschein was traveling through the Southwest with fellow artist Bert Phillips. The two men from the east were on a sketching trip from Denver to Mexico. While crossing

■ For Summer/Fall events go to www.taoschamber.com

the mountains of Northern New Mexico one of their wagon's wheels broke. Ernest rode into Taos to have the wheel repaired. He became so entranced with the beauty of the area that they stayed for two months and eventually decided to become full time residents. By 1915 they were joined by artists Joseph Sharp, Oscar Berninghaus, E. Irving Couse and W. Herbert "Buck" Dunton.



Together they formed the Taos Society of Artists, setting the stage for Taos to become a significant art colony. In 1919 Blumenschein bought a four room house on Ledoux Street. With wife Mary and daughter Helen, both also artists, the later acquired several adjoining rooms and adapted the home into its present layout in 1931. (One hour)

Information: 505-758-0505

2. THE HARWOOD MUSEUM

238 LEDOUX STREET

Ledoux Street, where the Harwood Museum stands, has a history of structures going back to early in the 19th century. In 1918 Burritt and Elizabeth Harwood acquired parcels and renovated buildings they call "El Pueblito" or The Little Pueblo patterning its architecture after the Taos Pueblo. A year after her husband's death in 1923, Elizabeth Harwood joined with members of the art and business community to create what would become one of New Mexico's most enduring art institutions, the Harwood Foundation. After a partnership with the Harwood Foundation, the University of New Mexico took over ownership in 1937. Elizabeth's vision of turning her home into an art center, cultural center and library for northern New Mexico had been achieved.

The museum now houses many originals from the Taos Society of Arts, works by the late Agnes Martin, as well as an extensive collection of Hispano Folk Art. (One hour)

Information: 505-758-9826

3. BERT PHILLIPS HOUSE

136 PASEO DEL PUEBLO NORTE

Bert Phillips, along with Ernest Blumenschein, broke the trail for the many artists who have made Taos

their home over the past century (see the Blumenschein House above). His house was built in the early 1800's and remodeled by Phillips in 1905 with the addition of a studio and square town loft. Until Phillips was able to firmly establish his own reputation as an artist, he supplemented his income by buying and selling Indian artifacts, developing mining interests at Twinning and working as a forest ranger. Through that later vocation he was instrumental in the establishment of the Carson National Forest. He was a charter member of the Taos Society of Artists and its first secretary. The Phillips house is located on Paseo del Pueblo Norte across the street from his brother-in-law, Doc Martin's, home which became the Historic Taos Inn. (One hour)

4. TAOS ART MUSEUM AND FECHIN HOUSE

227 PASEO DEL PUEBLO NORTE

Nicolai Fechin's home is one of the architectural treasures of Taos. Fechin, an established artist in Russia before his immigration to the U.S. in 1923, created a home that reflects some of the other examples of the art of Taos. The home incorporates interior carvings and hand-crafted furniture in a Pueblo-style structure what was built with the help of members of the Taos Pueblo tribe. After the death of Nicolai and his wife, their daughter, Eya, promoted the preservation of their home, acting as caretaker for 30 years. Following her death in 2002, it was acquired

by the Taos Art Museum. The museum has maintained many of Fechin's original carvings, while enhancing the beautiful surrounding with rotating exhibitions. (One hour)



Painting by Nicolai Fechin