



In the footsteps of Taos history

Text by Steve Fuhlendorf

BACKGROUND FOR YOUR TOUR

The Taos Valley can trace inhabitants back about 9,000 years. From the ancestral Pueblo Indians (known as the Anasazi), to the residents of the still inhabited Taos Pueblo, to the conquistadors traveling north from Mexico, to the artists of the past century, Taos has been a place of sharing of goods and knowledge. The Taos Historic District gives us many reminders of this fascinating past and all within easy walking distance of the Taos Plaza. Join us as we walk in the tracks made over hundreds of years.

You may wish to combine this tour with *In the Footsteps of Historic Taos Artists*. The order you visit the tour sites is up to you. Feel free to explore the area and find your own highlights. 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 the Taos Historic District for a more detailed description of all the sites mentioned below. For more information on art festivals and events highlighting the rich artistic



history of the Taos Valley go to www.taoschamber.com.

1. GOVERNOR BENT HOUSE 117 BENT STREET

Charles Bent was a highly respected, much loved figure of the Old West. He was a trader, owned wagon trains and also owned trading posts in Santa Fe and Taos. He was appointed the first Governor of New Mexico in 1846 when New Mexico became an American territory during the war between the U.S. and Mexico. On a visit to his home in January 1847, he was killed by an angry mob that was protesting American rule. It was the result of a clash of cultures and a reaction against the upstart Anglo-Americans who took over what had been Native American, then Spanish, and briefly, Mexican. Find out the fascinating details of the life and death of Charles Bent at the Governor Bent Museum, which is open to the public. (One hour)
Information: 505-758-2376

2. MANBY HOUSE 133 PASEO DEL PUEBLO NORTE

Arthur Rochford Manby came to the U.S. to search of fortune. Using what were thought to be unscrupulous methods, he acquired major tracts of land in northern New Mexico. The story of his life is details by the late Taos author Frank Waters (see also "In the Tracks of Taos Literature") in "To Possess the Land." Due to his many shady dealings, Manby was not a popular man. In 1926, a beheaded body was found in his home. To this day it is uncertain whether this was Manby or whether he staged his own death and left town. Today, the Manby House includes the Stables Gallery, Caffe Renato, Farnsworth Gallery and offices of the Taos Center for the Arts. (30 min.)
Information: 505-758-2052

3. THE HISTORIC TAOS INN 125 PASEO DEL PUEBLO NORTE

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Taos Inn, although the original building dates back to the early 1800s. The town's beloved doctor, T.P. Martin, set up shop here in the early part of the 20th century. The buildings were once surrounded the community well. Doc Martin and his wife Helen lived in the northern part of the complex and rented rooms to some of the artists who would go on to form the Taos Society of Artists. When Doc Martin died in 1933, Helen took advantage of the increasing flow of visitors to the

area and remodeled the Martin Apartments into the Hotel Martin. Over the years the hotel lodged many celebrities, including such notables as Greta Garbo, Thornton Wilder and Anthony Quinn. (30 min.)
Information: 505-758-2233

4. EL RINCÓN TRADING POST 114 KIT CARSON ROAD

The histories surrounding the occupants of El Rincón Trading Post make it an important stop on your Taos walking tour. Built in 1809, this was the home of La Doña Luz in the mid-1800's. It later became the home of Ralph and Rowena Meyers, who opened the Mission Shop in 1909. This was the first trading post in Taos that carried Native American arts and crafts of the region. Ralph, whose son Ouray is a prominent artist still living in Taos, traveled to regional reservations, buying and trading with knowledge and understanding. Few white men were as well loved and accepted by the Taos Pueblo Indians. Ralph Meyers was responsible for adding much to Taos by preserving the costumes and traditions of the time within his collections. He also developed a wonderful photographic archive of Taos history. Much of his collection is on display at El Rincón Trading Post. (30 min.)
Information: 505-758-4874

5. KIT CARSON HOUSE 113 KIT CARSON ROAD

Kit Carson was the most famous of the "mountain men" to settle in Northern New Mexico. These fur trappers were the first Anglo-American to explore the American west. Born in Kentucky in 1809, Carson was a trapper, guide, Indian agent and Army officer. In 1861, Carson began the final stage of his career as a military officer, first in the Civil war and later in the campaigns of the Indian Wars. In 1843, when he married Maria Josefa Jaramillo, daughter of a prominent Taos family, Carson bought a single-story adobe house on what was to become Kit Carson Road. At least six of his eight children were born there. The Carson house is a fine example of Spanish Colonial and Territorial architecture. (Two hours)

FOR SUMMER/FALL EVENTS GO TO www.taoschamber.com

