

Tour the City with Reno Historical

with Dr. Alicia Barber

We are in unusual and difficult times, with all of the issues surrounding the COVID-19 virus. In the interests of protecting you and others from the virus, we are not offering our usual May walking tours, and instead are introducing you to tours you can take inside your home using your computer or your smart phone. Additionally, if you choose, you could do the walkable tours on your own.

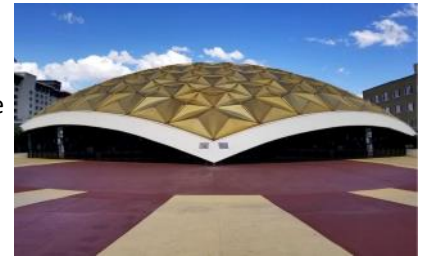
Whether you're staying inside or seeking a bit of fresh air, Reno Historical offers an engaging variety of tours to transport you across time and space. Just click Tours on the website (renohistorical.org) or app and you'll find a range of options for exploring the city's historic landscape.

Some tours feature groupings of historic buildings related to a common theme and scattered throughout the city, like schools and education, railroad history, or sites related to Reno's famous divorce and wedding industries. Others focus on a single walkable area, allowing for exploration either on screen or by foot. Those include tours of the historic Truckee Riverfront, East 4th Street, and the stately Mansions on the Bluff.

However you choose to enjoy them, from the comfort of your armchair or on a self-led stroll, Reno Historical's tours can keep you informed and entertained with hundreds of stories, photographs, maps and even audio and video clips, with more added all the time. Read the short descriptions below to whet your appetite for adventure, and you'll soon be on your way.

Reno Historical's Thematic Tours

Modern Movement — Some of Reno's most striking and glamorous architecture is found in buildings of the Modern Era. The Modern Movement (MoMo), broadly defined as spanning the 1930s through the 1970s, is associated with styles including Art Deco, Art and Streamline Moderne, Mid-Century Modern, International, Googie, New Formalism, and Brutalism. Some of these buildings were Reno's first high rise apartments while others were hotels, casinos, motels, and diners, as well as libraries, banks, and much more. A profusion of Modern Era buildings can be found on the University of Nevada, Reno campus and throughout downtown, from the Fleischmann Planetarium to the Pioneer Center



The Pioneer Center

Riding the Rails — Like countless cities in the American West, Reno was founded because of the railroad. It was the force that not only allowed Reno to benefit economically from transportation and commerce rather than mining (as with other northern Nevada railroad towns) but it eventually fed the city's lucrative "sinful industries" —divorce and gaming, in particular—and helped them prosper by bringing people from all over the country to Reno. Essentially, the railroad became Reno's lifeline, promoting its economy and ensuring that Reno would not be dependent on boom and bust industries like most other towns in the state. (6 locations)

Sacred Landmarks — From the beginning, Reno was a crossroads of cultures, and its religious landscape was accordingly diverse. Mainstream denominations with buildings in the original townsite included the Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Catholics. Around the turn of the twentieth century, even more churches and a synagogue were constructed, reflecting Reno's establishment as a solid little metropolis. The number and diversity of Reno's congregations of faith was often touted as a response to those who characterized Reno as a sinful town in the early 20th century. (5 locations)

Schools and Education — During its first few decades, Reno was justifiably proud of the schools and libraries that served its growing population. The town's schools were often at the vanguard of its architectural accomplishments, incorporating beauty and technological advancements with the latest thinking in how structural design could enhance learning. Over time, some of Reno's most dedicated educational leaders have been honored in the names given to the schools they helped establish, or to subsequent institutions of learning. (13 locations)



Huffaker School, 1898

Tying and Untying the Knot — For more than sixty years, Reno was the divorce capital of the world. The migratory divorce trade enabled anyone to secure a Nevada divorce after establishing state residency, a process that eventually took just six weeks. Reno's quick wedding business developed as the result of Nevada's lenient marriage laws, which required no waiting period. Landmarks related to Reno's wedding and divorce industries, from hotels and boardinghouses to government buildings and chapels, can be found throughout the city. (19 locations)

Reno Historical's Geographical Tours

East 4th Street Walking Tour — From manufacturing to tourism, railroads to restaurants, East 4th Street has played an important and multifaceted role in the history of Reno for more than a century. Once the route of the Lincoln Highway and later renamed U.S. 40, the street remained the primary east-west route through Reno until the completion of Interstate 80, three blocks to the north, in 1974. In recent years, the street has been experiencing a renaissance, infusing new energy into the corridor and its historic buildings, many of which can be viewed on this walkable tour. (20 locations)



NCO Building

Historic Midtown — While “Midtown” is a relatively new term for the popular Reno district it denotes, the neighborhood itself has been a busy commercial and residential area for nearly a century. Centered on South Virginia Street, roughly bounded by Liberty Street and Plumb Lane on the north and south, Arlington Avenue and Holcomb Avenue on the west and east, today’s Midtown District is a place of innovation and revitalization, but also of longstanding history and architectural charm. (30 locations)



Douglas Alley

Historic Downtown Alleys — Lincoln Alley, Douglas Alley, Fulton Alley, and Lover’s Lane. Some call Reno’s downtown alleys the heart of the city’s infamous past. Others say the alleys paint a vivid picture of early Western society. Either way, for decades the network of alleys that criss-cross downtown represented the heart of Reno’s gambling and demimonde activity. Today they may be overlooked and underused, but each has a vivid array of stories to tell. (4 locations)



Downtown Post Office

Historic Riverfront Walking Tour — This tour offers a taste of historic Reno, centered along the Truckee River corridor and surrounding blocks. All sites are within walking distance, and the tour may be started at any location, continuing clockwise or counter-clockwise. Learn about topics ranging from Reno’s origins to its flourishing divorce trade, churches, cultural and civic institutions, bridges and parks, and Chinatown. (18 locations)

Historic University Gateway — The area at the foot of the University of Nevada, Reno campus once housed one of Reno’s oldest and most charming residential neighborhoods. Beginning with the Victorian houses built on Center Street in the 1890s, the neighborhood had filled in by the early 1900s. In 2014, the university announced plans to replace the historic neighborhood with new buildings. A handful were slated to be relocated by private entities, and the University proceeded to demolish the rest in early 2020, but the full neighborhood can still be viewed in this virtual tour. (12 locations)



N. Center Street



McCarran Mansion

Mansions on the Bluff— This captivating enclave close to Reno’s downtown is probably the city’s best-kept secret. The title also is the name of one of the most popular walks sponsored by the Historic Reno Preservation Society (HRPS) during the months of May, June and July each year. The residences in this relatively small neighborhood, located between the south bank of the Truckee River and California Avenue, include the homes of three former U.S. Senators, prominent attorneys, local merchants, renowned doctors, and more—in short, the movers and shakers who helped to make Reno the Biggest Little City in the World. (28 locations)

University of Nevada — The establishment of a state university is specifically provided for in Article XI of Nevada's State Constitution, adopted September 7, 1864. In 1874, the State University of Nevada was founded in Elko, but that site proved to be impractical, with most of the state’s residents living in the western part of Nevada. In 1885, the state legislature approved the move of the University to Reno, where today, the ever-growing campus includes a National Register Historic District centered on the Main Quad. (18 locations)



Morrill Hall

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