



Historical Sights

IN OLD TOWN CLOVIS



The pioneer family of Stephen H. Cole arrived in the area in 1872. Two years later, Stephen gave his sixteen year old son, Clovis, four horses. Clovis used the horses to haul lumber from the mountains on the "Early Road," now known as Tollhouse Road.

It was soon recognized that the grazing land would adapt well to dry grain farming, and Clovis M. Cole began to buy land to raise grain for feed and seed. He eventually farmed 50,000 acres and became known as the "Wheat King of the United States." In 1880, he purchased 480 acres that would eventually become the City of Clovis.



Olive & Alma Cole - home Clovis, about 1896
Built by son of Olive & Alma Cole
Swainside & Jefferson Ave. - burned about 1920



Visitor's Guide
Discover a spectacular array of activities, events and attractions throughout the year in Clovis!

Antiques and Collectibles Guide
Visit a charming, renewed turn of the century town filled with antique and collectible stores, family dining and more!

Guide to Dining Out
Enjoy an appetizing selection of restaurants and eateries in every corner of Clovis. This guide provides more than 100 choices!

Nature's Trails
Drive, bicycle or walk scenic trails from Old Town Clovis to the Blossom trail, the San Joaquin River, the Sierra Wilderness, Yosemite National Park and more!



Clovis Tourist Information and Visitors Center at Tarpey Depot
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Walk through history in a turn of the century town; see how Clovis began and the historical sites that continue to live in memory.



All About the Past of Old Town Clovis!

The first thoughts of settlement by a non-native in the area are credited to Padre Martin, who explored the area in 1806 while searching for a mission site. Some of the first permanent settlers were gold rush miners of 1849, displacing the many Native American tribes settled in the foothills and near the rivers. As the gold ran out, they established small farms in the foothills. After the Civil War, large cattle grazing lands were developed. One prominent cattleman was Jesse Blasingame, whose descendants are Clovis area ranchers to this day.



As the railroad trusts began charging higher rates, Valley farmers sought an alternative to shipping their grains to market. In 1890, a 26 year old Chicago railroad developer named Marcus Pollasky and a group of prominent Fresno citizens raised more than \$100,000 to build the independent San Joaquin Valley Railroad. The tracks extended from near downtown Fresno, north to Millerton (now Friant), and were planned to go on to Truckee and the world markets.

Clovis Cole donated most of the land that would be used by the railroad, including a site for a depot. As the first tracks were being laid, Pollasky and his investors founded the city in 1891 and named the new city after



the man who gave so much to the Valley, Clovis Cole. Cole's ranch headquarters were located near what is now the intersection of Third and Baron Streets.



The San Joaquin Valley Railroad was eventually purchased by the Southern Pacific Railroad and continued to operate profitably for decades.

At the same time the railroad was being constructed, a group of Michigan lumbermen began acquiring thousands of acres of timber in the mountains east of Clovis. Eventually, they built a dam on a creek and created Shaver Lake. From the foot of the dam, they built a 48-mile, 25-foot high, V-shaped flume to carry timber to the Valley floor.

A huge lumber industry grew in the empty fields of Clovis. A planing mill, box factory, warehouses, dry kiln, offices, workhorse stables, pastures and cottages were built. Saloons and other entertainment venues followed. This activity attracted more and more developers. The Shepherd and Teague Land Company was formed and gained control of much of the land around Clovis, which was subdivided and sold by the company's salesman, H.G. DeWitt.

In 1894, the first school opened in the waiting room of the Tarpey Depot. The next year, Clovis' first schoolhouse was built on the northeast corner of 2nd and Pollasky.



In 1900, the Hoblitt Hotel, now the Clovis Hotel, was built on the northwest corner of Fourth and Pollasky, three stories in height and very attractive. It had a small lobby, a nice dining room and boasted a bathtub and a lavatory on each floor.

Since its incorporation in 1912, Clovis has been known as the "Gateway to the Sierras."

Today, few structures besides the Clovis Hotel still exist from the rough-and-tumble town that Clovis was in 1900. The building that houses the Clovis Big Dry Creek Historical Society was built in 1912 and served as the first bank in Clovis. Other buildings of historical interest, including numerous beautiful homes, are listed in this special Historical Tour of Old Town Clovis.



You are about to enjoy an adventurous journey into the past of Clovis. Remember that almost all of these sites are private homes or businesses – please do not disturb the residents. This tour of historical sites can be accomplished at a steady pace in one or two hours.

Please note that some sites do not have sidewalks, so be careful when walking on or near the street.

1. The Tarpey Depot

Clovis Tourist Information and Visitors Center
Northeast corner of Clovis and Fourth



This original railroad depot was once located on the southeast corner of Ashlan and Clovis Avenues. Built in 1891 by the San Joaquin Valley Railroad, the Tarpey Depot has also served as a schoolhouse, a post office, a winery headquarters and a real estate sales office for Tarpey Village. This unique and irreplaceable Victorian structure was saved from destruction by the Fresno Historical Society in 1967. In 1998, the Historical Society moved and restored the structure. In 2000, the building was reopened as the Clovis Tourist Information and Visitors Center.

2. First National Bank of Clovis

Clovis Historical Museum
Southeast corner of Pollasky and Fourth
Fresno County Historical Landmark

Richard Norrish was born in England in 1844 and moved to Clovis in 1904. That same year, he founded Clovis' first bank. It was originally located in a boarding house on the alley just east of this location. This structure was built in 1912 and was declared a Fresno County Historical Site in 1987. Mr. Norrish served as bank president for 30 years.



On February 5, 1925, two men, Griffen "The Owl" and Sloper, robbed the bank at gunpoint and made off with \$31,000. Local merchants pursued them, but the robbers were able to slow them down by tossing nails onto the road as they drove off. One of the guns used in the robbery is on display at the Clovis Historical Museum.

The building was declared a Fresno County Historical site in 1987.

3. Carnegie Library Building

Clovis Chamber of Commerce
325 Pollasky
Fresno County Historical Landmark



Clovis' first library was founded in 1906 and originally located on Fourth Street east of Pollasky. Under endowment by the Carnegie family, this building was built in 1914 and served the community until 1979. It was declared a Fresno County Historical Site in 1967.

4. Hoblitt/Clovis Hotel

Northwest corner of Pollasky and Fourth

The hotel was built by Joshua Carmen Hoblitt in 1902. Hoblitt was born in 1832 in Ohio. He served in the Civil War and boasted that he had lived long enough to vote for 17 different presidents. The hotel was originally three stories tall, making it the tallest structure in Clovis. Fire destroyed the third floor in 1927. In 1942, Dr. Wilbur Lose converted it to the Sierra Vista Hospital. It was later reconverted to a hotel.



5. American Legion

Southeast corner of Fourth and Woodworth



The American Legion building was built in 1924 and was named in memory of Clovis' first World War I fatality, Cecil Cox.

6. Dr. McMurtry Home

431 Fourth



Dr. Milton Scott McMurtry was born in Batesville, Oklahoma in 1880. He visited Clovis in 1904 and decided to relocate and establish a practice here. He was an appointed physician for the Southern Pacific Railroad and helped establish the first hospital in Clovis in 1916. In 1914, his wife Lucrecia and Bessie Merriman started the Hometown Family Festival that later became the Clovis Rodeo. This home was built in the early 1920s and the McMurtry family purchased it in 1927. Many items from Dr. McMurtry's first practice are on display at the Clovis Historical Museum.

7. May Case Home

420 Woodworth



This home was built in the early 1900s and was purchased by May Case in 1922. As a child, May knew Apache Chief Geronimo and other historic western figures such as the Dalton Gang, the Doolins, and Belle Star. May Case started the Clovis Independent newspaper. In 1964, after 75 years of service, she was honored as the world's oldest active newspaperwoman.

8. Whiton Home

446 Woodworth



This property was first subdivided by the Shepherd and Teague Land Company and the first Abstract of Title was recorded on January 15, 1892. This home was built by Harry and Kate Whiton in 1926. The Whitons arrived in Clovis in 1906 and in 1918 opened Whiton's Cyclery at 631 Fifth. Harry was a civic leader and Fire Chief of the Clovis Voluntary Fire Department for 18 years until his death in 1944.

9. Burke Home

460 Woodworth



Clovis merchant John E. Good bought this property in 1907. His brother, Robert Good, had opened the first Clovis grocery store in 1894. John C. Burke married the sister of the Good brothers and lived in this home. Burke was elected Justice of the Peace in 1922. It is believed that this home was moved to this location from the Burke's southeast Clovis ranch in the early 1910s.

10. United Methodist Church

Valley Community Church
Southwest corner of Woodworth and Fifth



Early-day Methodists John Wesley Potter and J.W. Cate purchased the four lots that this church sits on for \$10 each. A wooden structure was erected and the first sermon was preached in 1894. Grain fields surrounded the entire area, and the church was the only building west of what is now Clovis Avenue. In 1900, the first church was destroyed by fire and a second church was built. The present sanctuary replaced it in 1920.

11. Mayo/Flume House

406 Fifth Street



The Shaver Mill and Flume was established in 1891. This home, and several like it, was originally located on the 48-mile flume that started at Shaver Lake and ended in Clovis. These "flume houses" served as dormitories for employees who monitored the flume. After the Clovis mill closed in 1914, the flume was shut down and Mayo Redford relocated this home to this site. Parts of the original flume are on display at the Clovis Historical Museum.

12. Masonic Temple

Northwest corner of Fifth and DeWitt



Formed in 1898, the Presbyterian congregation built a church nearby that no longer exists. They built this church during the early 1900s. The first minister was Ed Underwood, a veteran of the Civil War and the first well driller in Clovis. The church was sold to the Clovis Lodge #417 Free & Accepted Masons in 1931.

13. The Jackson/Brandon Home

406 DeWitt



This home was built by Perry Rockwell Jackson in the early 1900s and sold in 1936 to Samuel Brandon, a high school science teacher. It is known as "The Christmas Wish House" because it houses a holiday boutique each December.

14. Clovis M. Cole Home

304 Harvard



Clovis Cole farmed 50,000 acres of wheat and in 1891 donated land to the San Joaquin Valley Railroad for right of way for the first railroad in this area. Cole was a school trustee and public-spirited citizen. Railroad officials named the growing city Clovis in honor of his donation and civic leadership. This home was built in 1903.

15. Blasingame House

406 Oxford



Alfred "Sonny" Blasingame owned a large cattle ranch east of Clovis where he worked and lived. In 1918 he built this house for his wife and two daughters. Alfred continued to live on the ranch during the week but on weekends he would drive a horse-drawn carriage to this home to be with his family. The carriage house and horse stable still stand behind the house.

16. Richard Norrish Home

36 Pollasky



Richard Norrish emigrated from England and founded the First National Bank of Clovis in 1904. He served as president of the bank for 30 years. This home was built in 1923 at the extravagant cost of \$25,000.

17. Agnes G. de Jahn House

6 Pollasky



Agnes de Jahn was Richard Norrish's step-daughter. She had this home built in 1910. In 1923, Mr. Norrish moved this house from its original location at 36 Pollasky to make room for his new home that still stands. Ebert and Catherine Franck then purchased the home in 1934. Mr. Franck served as Clovis City Clerk for many years. Legend has it that no children have ever been born to couples living in this house.

18. Gibson Home

940 Third Street
Fresno County Historical Landmark



This home was built in 1912 for Lewis Willis Gibson, who was elected mayor of Clovis in 1921. The original carriage house/stable still stands on the property. It is believed that the crepe myrtle and aleppo pine trees are the largest in California. Katherine Bell purchased the house in 1920. She served as postmistress of Clovis from 1909 until her death in 1926.

19. Clovis Union High School

901 Fifth



Designed and built in 1920 by William Henry Weeks, this was the only high school in Clovis until 1969. It is now the San Joaquin College of Law.

20. Clovis Water Tower

Southeast corner of Clovis and Fifth



The structure was built in 1913 and remains in use with a capacity of 60,000 gallons. Hot rivets in the entire structure were hand-driven.

21. Nestor Freitas Hall

500 Club
Southwest corner of Clovis and Fifth



Built in 1900 by Nestor Freitas, the second story housed the Clovis Concordia Chapter of the Eastern Star in 1913. Their rent was \$5 monthly. Downstairs was one of Clovis' many pool halls.

22. John Good Building

Northwest Corner of Clovis and Fifth

This 1900 building replaced the Good store that had previously burned down. The Good family remained prominent merchants and civic leaders for many years.



23. McFarland Building

Southeast Corner of Fifth and Pollasky



Early-day rancher George McFarland built this brick building as a garage in 1919. During the 1940s and 50s, this building served as the Clovis Movie Theater.

24. Lewis Gibson Store

Northwest corner of Fifth and Pollasky



Built in 1900 by Lewis Gibson as a general merchandise store. Carl Merriman purchased it in 1920.

25. Ingmire House

Seventh and Pollasky



Built in 1882 and eventually relocated to this site from the west side of Pollasky between Third and Fourth streets.

26. Macias House

931 Pollasky



Pete Macias was born in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1895. He emigrated to Clovis and in 1913, at the age of eighteen, purchased this house for \$800 cash. In 1930, he became the foreman on the Harry Balfe ranch. He managed 1,000 acres and helped raise thoroughbred horses. The ranch was purchased in 1942 by movie star Victor McLaglen.

