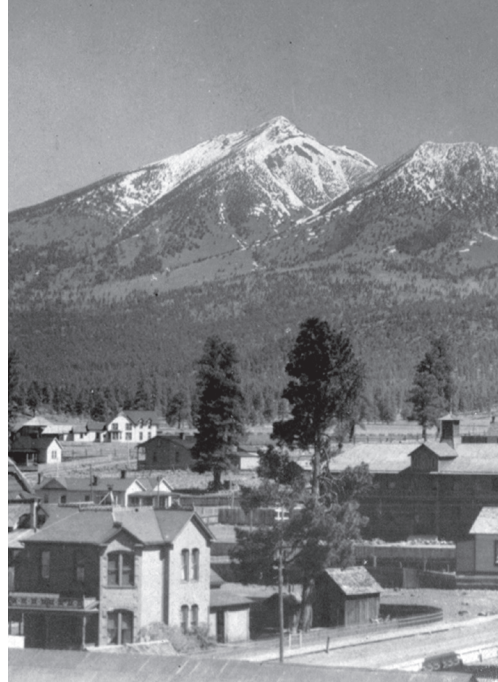


## 7 BRANNEN BUILDINGS

In 1881, as the railroad neared Flagstaff, a settlement cropped up east of present-day downtown to provide supplies and entertainment for the men of the railroad. One of the first entrepreneurs Peter Brannen, from Ottawa, Canada and nephew of a successful merchant in Prescott opened up a general store in a tent and dugouts on the slopes of Mars Hill, near a water source called Antelope Spring. Shortly after the streets were laid out for present-day Historic Downtown, Brannen purchased the northeast corner lot of San Francisco Street and present-day Route 66. He paid \$25 for the lot and spent \$10,000 on the stone building he had constructed in 1883, which makes it the oldest building downtown. His cousin, Dr. Dennis Brannen, established his practice in a building directly east. A saloon followed on the northwest corner of the intersection. What has become the established historic downtown was known then as New Town, while the development near Antelope Spring became Old Town. According to one account, Brannen had an "elegantly appointed store, featuring clothing of domestic and foreign manufacture, as well as Studebaker wagons, carriages, buckboards and implements." Brannen would be hit by hard times in 1895. He moved to California, where he found success selling hardware. By 1900, the Brannen building became home to a corner drug store run by W.H. Timerhoff. The store included a newsstand and soda fountain. It was known for its oddities in the window displays, including a live Gila monster. The lizard was once offered a live mouse as a meal (and locals gathered to watch the spectacle), but the mouse scratched at the Gila monster in a way he apparently liked. He never ate him.



# FLAGSTAFF HISTORIC DOWNTOWN WALKING GUIDE

Written by Seth Muller



## 8 1889 DEPOT

Arriving full circle back to the railroad on this historic walk, here is the 1889 Depot. It served as the location for people arriving and leaving in Flagstaff via train for around 27 years. The railroad initially kept three boxcars as a depot not far from this spot, and later replaced it with a wooden building. That structure was lost in the February 1886 fire that burned down most of New Town. The Atlantic and Pacific Railroad later established this stone building to welcome disembarking passengers. Much like the Babbitt Building, the colorful Moenkopi Sandstone was utilized in this simple, one-story construction. Today, it serves as offices for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway. A short walking distance east of the depot, the train engine Two Spot is also kept as a reminder of Flagstaff's past. It's a Baldwin 2-5-0 locomotive that gained its nickname from the water bags that hung below its engineer windows. The bags steadily wore off paint, leaving a spot where the 5 was next to the 2. The Arizona Lumber and Timber Company bought the locomotive in 1917, and it remained in Flagstaff its entire working life. When returning to the Visitors Center to complete the route, consider the role of the railroad in this important hub city of the American Southwest and how it led to early establishment of this mountain town.



### Welcome to Historic Downtown Flagstaff!

Few Arizona cities boast a classic downtown as rich and vibrant as this one. The history of Flagstaff began in earnest ahead of the arrival of the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad on Aug. 1, 1882. It quickly became the most populous stop on the railroad between Albuquerque and the California Coast. Flagstaff also catered to train passengers as part of its expansion of downtown commerce. Route 66 shifted the economics and brought a steep rise in tourism by automobile, particularly after World War II. A major makeover through the 1990s helped invigorate energy into these city blocks, with a focus on preservation. The restoration of the Babbitt Building, Hotel Weatherford and the development of Heritage Square joined other efforts in fortifying the town's character. Thanks in large part to those endeavors, visitors can enjoy a historic walk along the storied streets of Flagstaff.



### FLAGSTAFF VISITOR CENTER

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visitorcenter@flagstaffaz.gov  
discoverflagstaff.com

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## 1 VISITOR CENTER/TRAIN STATION

As a stop on the transcontinental Santa Fe Railroad, the train station once held its place as one of the most important buildings in downtown Flagstaff. Today, the main depot still operates as an Amtrak station. However, the station finds most of its bustle with the Flagstaff Visitors Center, which provides information and advice to tens of thousands of travelers each year. The building was first constructed in 1926 to replace the depot located one block east. Architecturally, the station stands as an example of the Tudor Revival style. Features include timbering in the exterior walls, large chimneys, high-pitched roofing and cross-gables. In the early 1990s, the city purchased the property from the railway for \$480,000 and transformed the west end of the building into the Visitors Center. Inside the Center, a model railroad provides people of all ages a chance to appreciate locomotives and Flagstaff's historic downtown on a smaller scale. The model captures how town would have looked from the railway in the 1920s. This includes the McMillan Building, the next stop on this tour. While leaving the Visitors Center, take time to visit the giant, wooden logging wheels near the the rail line and notice the shield that recognizes Historic Route 66 in the Visitors Center lot. And before crossing Route 66 to the next stop on the tour, note the sign for the Route 66 Trail—one of the city's first major urban trails and one cornerstone of its extensive Flagstaff Urban Trail System.

## 2 MCMILLAN

The building known as the McMillan first gained prominence in Flagstaff as the Bank Hotel. Construction of a bank building began here in 1886, but—ironically—the bank ran short of funds to complete the project. Thomas McMillan, who became one of Flagstaff's earliest ranchers after seeking gold in California and raising sheep in Australia, took over the project and finished the building. McMillan also is connected to the town's namesake. At a spring used by his sheep camp is where a "flag staff" was raised to celebrate the American centennial in 1876. One of the building tenants became the aptly named Bank Hotel. The building also offered commercial space for the Arizona Central Bank and later Wells Fargo. It became a hub for social events during the late 1800s, with the McMillan Opera House on the ground floor. The Bank Hotel building has remained a prominent part of the historic downtown streetscape.



## 3 WEATHERFORD HOTEL

The highly influential John W. Weatherford arrived to Flagstaff in 1886 and purchased lots on Gold Avenue (later renamed Leroux Street), with money from selling his horse and buggy. He operated several businesses, including the Parlor Saloon, a livery stable that rented horses and buggies and a furniture store. He ultimately transformed his corner property into a hotel that opened on January 1, 1900. It gained a strong regional reputation across the Southwest. Its other competitors downtown at the time were the Bank Hotel and the 34-room Commerce, which was across from the train station near present-day Flagstaff Brewing Company. Up through World War II, inns such as the Weatherford were often known as railroad hotels for their proximity to depots to cater to train passengers. Famous guests at the Weatherford included newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst, President Theodore Roosevelt and Western novelist Zane Grey—whose name adorns the hotel's upstairs bar and ballroom. The story of the Weatherford is not complete without highlighting the efforts of Sam Green and Henry Taylor, who have worked tirelessly to restore the historic hotel. It still hosts overnight guests and features three bars and a restaurant. The Weatherford, its own founding on New Year's Day, has hosted a "Pinecone Drop" to celebrate the New Year since 2000 (also the 100th anniversary of the hotel). Visitors around the holidays will catch a glimpse of the countdown clock and large metal pinecone poised for the lowering on New Year's Eve.



## 4 THE ORPHEUM

The Orpheum Theater stands as another John Weatherford venture. In 1911, following an ill-fated and short-lived egg ranch, Weatherford reimagined this lot into what became the Majestic Opera House. It featured a stage, movie screen and hardwood dance floor. Only a few hours after New Year's Eve parties left the Majestic on the first day of 1915, the opera house collapsed under more than five feet of snow. Weatherford reportedly paid a boy to crawl in and pull the movie projector from the wreckage. The entrepreneur set up a temporary theater dubbed "The Empress" in a garage previously owned by the Babbitt family (see next stop). Two years later, in 1917, Weatherford opened a new theater at the site of the destroyed one. He christened it the Orpheum. It was much larger and grander than the Majestic. Even during the Great Depression, upgrades came to the theater in the form of a 1937 renovation. The local paper, the *Coconino Sun*, said it stood as one of the "most modern and attractive show-houses in the entire state." The theater remained an entertainment venue for decades to follow, until it shuttered in 1999. Three years later, the theater was again reborn by a group of local businessmen. The Orpheum continues to host concerts, films, events and community gatherings. Visitors should take their time to view *The Sound of Flight* mural by artists Sky Black and the Mural Mice—commissioned in 2015 in tribute to the arts at the Orpheum and throughout Flagstaff—on the eastern wall of the building.



## 6 MONTE VISTA HOTEL

Meaning "mountain view" in Spanish, the Hotel Monte Vista represented a next phase in downtown development and travel accommodations. The prosperity and progress of the 1920s led to a campaign to build a new-era, 73-room downtown hotel. City leaders organized the Flagstaff Community Hotel Corporation and raised \$200,000 in a stock-selling campaign. It finished ahead of the the original schedule and under budget. A "name the hotel contest" capped off the proceedings, and the property opened on Jan. 1, 1927. Along with the hotel, it featured an infamous speakeasy during Prohibition. The hotel remained a publicly held property until the 1960s, when it was sold to private investors. Today, the Hotel Monte Vista still greets overnight guests, and features the Monte Vista Lounge and Rendezvous Coffee House & Martini Bar. The Monte Vista also has some notoriety for its hauntings, from the mysterious "Phantom Bellboy" to the "Elevator Attendant," along with suspicious knockings and moving rocking chairs in Room 305 (Visitors can learn more about the specters throughout historic downtown with the self-guided Flagstaff Haunted Walking Tour). Famous guests to the Monte Vista include Bob Hope, Jane Russell, John Wayne, Bing Crosby, Clark Gable, Humphrey Bogart, Gary Cooper and Debbie Reynolds, among others. The towering Hotel Monte Vista neon sign remains an iconic feature of downtown Flagstaff's horizon.



## 5 BABBITT BROTHERS BUILDING

The Babbitt Brothers are one of the most prominent historical families in Flagstaff. These five siblings arrived in 1886 from Cincinnati to establish a cattle company and mercantile and trade businesses. In 1888, brother David constructed the Moenkopi Sandstone building on the northwest corner of Aspen Avenue and San Francisco Street. It was Flagstaff's first two-story structure. The design includes features of the Italianate style popular in the Victorian Era. The Babbitts operated their department store in the building through 1987. In the 1990s, the business district saw major transformations as part of by a streetscape project—and the Babbitt Building became the site of one of the early restorations. The family name remains with the current store, with Babbitt's Backcountry Outfitters. On the south wall of the building, visitors can see the original signage for "Babbitt Brothers Ranchers, Merchants & Indian Traders, Flagstaff Arizona."

