TOUR

Laramie & Albany County, Wyoming

Historic Downtown Laramie

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Welcome

The city of Laramie was founded in 1868 as a major stop on the Union Pacific Railroad (U.P.) — a place where steam engines were fueled, repaired, and made ready to haul passengers and freight. Early arrivals on the first trains included a volatile mixture of respectable, hardworking citizens from the East and a mixed bag of thugs who rode the rails while trying to stay one step ahead of the law. Within a few months some of the West's most notorious criminals threatened the town's very existence, their rowdy and often murderous behavior driving away law-abiding people. Out of desperation, a citizens' vigilante committee was formed to take control, capturing and hanging some of the worst offenders and causing others to flee to the next end-of-the-tracks town. With law and order established, good people like businessman and philanthropist Edward Ivinson and trailblazing Louisa Swain — the first woman in history to cast a vote in a general election — began to build a prosperous community destined to grow into a progressive university town with a stable economic base.

We encourage you to explore Laramie's downtown area, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Enjoy the shops, restaurants and historic remnants of this former hell-on-wheels town. Learn about the places where Laramie's first citizens lived, worked, and made their mark on this historic town. If you're lucky enough to be close by when a train comes into town today, close your eyes for a minute when you hear its whistle and imagine you have just arrived in the "Gem City of the Plains" more than a century ago. Welcome to Laramie!

Cover photo: A coal-fired tarpot on 2nd St. before a 4th of July celebration.
University of Wyoming American Heritage Center (UW AHC)/Ludwig-Svenson collection

Laramie Main Street Alliance

www.laramiemainstreet.org

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1 Union Pacific Railroad Pedestrian Footbridge and Depot

Garfield and 1st St.

Built in 1930 to eliminate dangerous street-level pedestrian crossings and to give U.P. workers easier access to the rail yard, the footbridge spans one of the busiest railroad lines in the United States and is still used today by walkers and bicyclists. The original Laramie passenger depot was two blocks north of here. Destroyed by fire in 1917, its replacement is two blocks south at 1st St. and Kearney. Now a museum, the depot is a graceful reminder of railroading's glory days. For more information about the depot and museum visit www.laramiedepot.org

Be sure to pick up a free brochure near the base of the footbridge for a more complete story of the U.P. in Laramie. Also look in the grassy park area just south of the footbridge for the plaque commemorating the site of the world's first jury to include women. *Walk south on 1st St. to Custer St., then east on Custer St. to 2nd St., then turn left on 2nd St. and walk north.*

Original depot and Thornburgh Hotel, prior to 1917, two blocks north of footbridge.
UW AHC/Clarice Whittenburg collection

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2 Lovejoy's Novelty Works

412 S. 2nd St.

Laramie's mechanical genius, Elmer Lovejoy, built Wyoming's first automobile in his bicycle shop a few blocks north. On October 27, 1898 he demonstrated the new machine to a crowd of passengers on the Union Pacific, delaying the train for 20 minutes as the travelers inspected the first horseless carriage most of them had ever seen. He opened his Novelty Works at this location at this location in 1908; soon the street became the Lincoln Highway. *Continue north up 2nd Street.*

Franklin Service Station/Lovejoy's Novelty Works
UW AHC/Ludwig-Svenson collection

3 Triple Hanging

Between Custer St. and Garfield St.

In 1868, a gang of hoodlums led by notorious criminal Asa Moore declared themselves in charge when the newly-elected city council resigned. Two months of bloody rule followed before the townspeople took matters into their own hands. On October 18, 1868, they captured and hanged Moore and two of his henchmen near this site. A fourth troublemaker was hanged the next morning. *Note the plaque at 408 S. 2nd St. Continue north up 2nd St.*

4 Holliday Building

East side of 2nd St. between Custer St. and Garfield St.

As you look at this section of downtown, note that all the buildings are relatively recent. Prior to 1948 the immense 4-story Holliday Building took up most of the block and held a number of professionals' offices including dentists, doctors and lawyers, sales rooms and even an opera house. In 1948, the town's most devastating fire raged through the building, burning it to the ground along with a number of nearby buildings. *Cross Garfield St. and 2nd St. and continue north on 2nd St.*

Holliday Building showing large 1910 addition
UW AHC/Ludwig-Svenson collection

5 WY House for Historic Women

East side of 2nd St., north of Garfield St.

The Wyoming House for Historic Women commemorates the important role Laramie played in the Equality State's early history. On December 10, 1869, the Wyoming Territorial Legislature guaranteed women political equality, the first state or territory to do so. Three months later, in March 1870, Laramie earned the distinction of being the first city in the world to include women on a jury. Later that same year, on September 6, a 70-year-old housewife, Louisa Swain, cast her ballot in Laramie and became the first woman anywhere in the western world to vote in a general election. For more information about this facility, visit www.thelouisaswainfoundation.com
Continue north up 2nd St.

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6 Jensen Building

313 S. 2nd St.

This Italianate building was built about 1900 by the Jensen family and remained in the family for over 90 years. Willis Jensen, a coal dealer, started a furniture store here in 1907 and sold coal as well. When the last Jensen (who had converted it to a gift shop) sold out in the mid-1980s, it had a variety of businesses until purchased by a Laramie businessman who removed modern decorations and restored it to its earlier appearance. *Look across 2nd St.*

7 Home Bakery

304 S. 2nd St.

For over 100 years the smell of bread and pastries emanated from this location, tempting the appetites of residents and visitors alike. Although not owned or operated by the same proprietors, a kitchen or bakery at this site is one of Laramie's most long standing traditions. Now the building houses a candy kitchen. Before 1901, in an earlier building on this site Western humorist Bill Nye housed the presses of the Laramie Boomerang here, the town's oldest newspaper. A plaque on the building describes its history. *Continue north up 2nd St.*

304 S. 2nd, Home Bakery, around 1930
UW AHC/Ludwig-Svenson collection

8 305 S. 2nd St.

Built initially in the late 1880s then again in 1907, this structure has housed an unusually wide variety of businesses including: a sausage factory, meat market, boarding house, pool hall, doctor's office, Laramie's first Safeway store, appliance shop, candy store, billiard parlor, soda fountain, craft/fabric stores and today is home to a photography gallery and old fashioned optician shop Optical Fashions. *Continue north, across Grand Ave. and turn east on Grand.*

Modern Cash Market (now Optical Fashions)
UW AHC/Ludwig-Svenson collection

9 Wagner Building

209 Grand Ave.

Built in 1924, this five-story multi use building housed offices on the first four floors, and apartments on the top floor. Note the materials used in its construction: blended shades of iron-spot tapestry brick; window sills and other horizontal elements of cream-colored terracotta; a sheet-metal cornice; and cubed prismatic glass in the transom windows (which were meant to throw light farther into the building's interior). These were top quality materials popular in the first decades of the 20th Century.

This building now houses residential units for students and young professionals as well as the office for the Laramie Main Street Alliance. *Continue east to 3rd St.*

10 CONNOR HOTEL

NE corner of 3rd St. and Grand Ave.

Following the death of her husband, real estate agent Fannie Connor established the Connor Hotel in 1913 as the most luxurious hotel in Laramie. Many weddings, fraternity/sorority dinners, as well as important meetings took place in the Connor. Generally, if anyone of importance visited Laramie the Connor was the place to stay. It is rumored that German born American writer, political scientist, diplomat and businessman Henry Kissinger stayed at the Connor Hotel while visiting the University of Wyoming.

Today the hotel rooms have been converted into apartments while the street front retail space is home to several Laramie businesses. *Cross 3rd St. and continue east to 4th St.*

Connor Hotel lobby around 1930 – UW AHC/Ludwig-Svenson collection

11 CARNEGIE LIBRARY (CITY OFFICES)

NE corner of 4th St. and Grand Ave.

For 75 years this building was home to Laramie's Carnegie Library but today houses offices for the City of Laramie. One of many such libraries paid for by the industrialist and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie, it was built in 1906 in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. (The elevator on the west side is a recent addition). On July 4, 1981, when the library was ready to move out, residents of Laramie lined the streets passing books one-by-one down to the library's new location at Grand and 8th St. *Walk north towards Ivinson St., looking across 4th St.*

Carnegie Library – UW AHC/Ludwig-Svenson collection

12 CITY HALL & FIRE STATION

SE corner of 4th St. and Ivinson St.

Built in 1938 in the Art Deco style, the original main entrance is visible on 4th St. While renovations moved the entrance to its current location on Ivinson, the buildings still house the main city offices and fire station. *Continue north on 4th St.*

13 MASONIC TEMPLE

NE corner of 4th St. and Ivinson St.

Built in the Greek Revival style with classic low pitch roof and front pediment, this building was designed in 1911 by Wilbur A. Hitchcock and constructed by W.H. Holliday and Company. The Greek Revival style, which includes such national icons as the U.S. Capitol Building, had largely fallen out of style by the 1850s throughout most of the rest of the world. The yellow coloration and bright highlights of the building are true to the later years of the movement, when mimicry of the Greek polychrome decorative style became popular. *Cross Ivinson St. and walk west.*

14 St. Matthew's Episcopal Cathedral

NE corner of 3rd St. and Ivinson St.

Laramie has been the official home of an Episcopal bishop since Bishop Ethelbert Talbot selected the city to be his See in 1887. The main cathedral building was built in 1896 in the Gothic Revival style and the clock tower and chimes were added in 1916. The limestone for the cathedral was quarried nine miles north of Laramie and is the same stone used for the Edward Ivinson Mansion and many University of Wyoming buildings. Donations of many pieces of art from around the world, most notably the stained glass windows, are also prominent features of the building. Open daily; enter for more information. *Head west on Ivinson and cross 3rd St.*

St. Matthew's Episcopal Cathedral before 1916
– *UW AHC/Ludwig-Svenson collection*

15 First Interstate Bank

NW corner of 3rd St. and Ivinson St.

Prior to 1962, Laramie's sixth post office stood here. Torn down to make way for the construction of the present First Interstate Bank, this site highlights the changing regard society has had for older buildings. *Look across Ivinson St.*

The photo on the next page shows the Laramie Post Office that was in use here from 1905 to 1962. As the building was demolished in 1962, some of the sandstone elements were saved. The elaborate cornice was donated to the city by the Stickley family, descendants of former post master Dean Stickley. It has been given a place of honor in the northeast end of the Depot parking lot at First and Garfield (somewhat ironic, since the lack of parking was one of the reasons why the Post Office was moved to 5th Street).

Laramie Post Office around 1932 – *Laramie Plains Museum collection*

16 Ludwig Photo

SW corner of 3rd St. and Ivinson St.

Built in 1925 by Henning Svenson to hold his photo studio, this building occupies the site of Laramie's first jail. Calamity Jane spent some time in the jail, as did Frank McCall, murderer of Wild Bill Hickok. Henning Svenson arrived in Laramie in 1905 with only his equipment and a dollar in his pocket. To establish himself in the community he made it his goal to photograph every family in Laramie during his first winter here. While he did not complete this task, he did take pictures of 900 people during that short time. His efforts to document the town continued throughout his career and over time he produced nearly 125,000 photos. Many of these pictures have been preserved and can be viewed by the public in the Ludwig-Svenson Studio Collection of the University of Wyoming's American Heritage Center. *Continue west down Ivinson St. for half a block, look across Ivinson St.*

Ludwig Building – *UW AHC/Ludwig-Svenson collection*

17 Melville C. Brown Building

204 Ivinson St.

This building was built around 1890 to house the law offices of Melville C. Brown, Laramie's first mayor. After Brown had been in office only six weeks, he resigned, along with the rest of the elected City Council whom he called "incompetent." A successful lawyer, Brown was appointed a federal judge in Alaska, but returned to Laramie in the early 1900s. The city required the current owners of the building to move the front steps from the exterior where they blocked part of the sidewalk, to the interior. *Continue to the corner of Ivinson St. and 2nd St., then look across 2nd St.*

18 NW corner of 2nd St. and Ivinson St.

This Italianate style building, built in the late 1870s, was once a three-story structure; the top floor was removed when it was discovered that Laramie's strong west winds were causing it to shake. The iron stars on the east façade, a common feature of 19th century architecture, are the ends of tie rods which extend through the building and strengthen the second floor joists. *Continue north up 2nd St. for half a block.*

19 Empress/Fox Theater

Center of block, west side

The Empress Theater was built by the Holliday Construction Company in 1912 with a neoclassical façade of cut stone; it originally hosted vaudeville, music performances and silent film. In 1938, the Fox Theater Group purchased the building, changing both the name and the façade. When the building opened in 1939 with an Art Deco look, the Laramie Republican ran a special issue which detailed every aspect of the theater's modern, state-of-the-art design, including a new sound system and rayon carpeting. By 1980 the theater had closed and the building was abandoned and was taken over by pigeons. In 2008 it was determined that the building could not be saved and sadly was demolished in 2009. *Continue north on 2nd St. to University.*

Empress Theater/Fox Theater – AHC/Centlivre Family collection

20 Elks Lodge

SE corner of 2nd St. and University Ave.

The Elks Lodge was constructed in 1910. It once housed the Elks Apartments along with the club, where out-of-town railroaders could stay when spending the night in Laramie before catching a train home.

21 Methodist Episcopal Church

NW corner of 2nd and University Ave.

One of the oldest church buildings in Wyoming, the Methodist Episcopal Church was built in 1869 on the southeast side of 2nd St. In the early 1900s, the church was purchased by the Elks Lodge, which chose to build on that lot and therefore moved it diagonally across to the northwest corner. As the building was not rotated, the current 2nd St. façade is the original back of the church building. A plaque on the east side relates its history. *Return south on 2nd St. to Ivinson St., walk west down Ivinson St.*

22 BUCKHORN BAR

114 Ivinson St.

As an early railroad town, Laramie has a long history of supporting saloons and bars, from temporary dance halls to modern microbreweries. While the tent saloons and dance halls of 1868 are long gone, other more permanent establishments remain. In 1913, this building housed Blair and McCune's Saloon. During the 1930s the Buckhorn Bar settled in and still retains relics of Laramie's past, including a bullet hole in the mirror put there by a jealous lover in 1971. *Continue west.*

Buckhorn Bar
UW AHC/Ludwig-Svenson collection

23 KUSTER HOTEL

106-110 Ivinson St.

Built in 1869 at a cost of $5,000, the Kuster Hotel building is the oldest stone building in Laramie. In the early days of Laramie, the Hotel served as a depot for the Ft. Collins and Walden Stage Line; later, and until the 1960s, it was a depot for the Continental Trailways Bus Lines. Extensive remodeling has resulted in the loss of cornices, lintels and arches over the windows. From the alley on the east side you can glimpse the side and rear of the original building. *Continue west on Ivinson St.*

Kuster Hotel
UW AHC/Clarice Whittenburg collection

24 HESSE HALL

NE corner of 1st St. and Ivinson St.

Built in 1889 by J.F. Hesse, this building operated as a dance hall until George Phillips purchased it and converted it into the Phillips Hotel. As with many early railroad hotels in Laramie, the upstairs portion was partitioned into several small rooms and used as a brothel. Later renovations removed most of these rooms, but several were retained by the bookstore which now occupies the second floor. *Cross to the other side of Ivinson St. and return east to 2nd St. Look across 2nd St. and note buildings on the east side of 2nd St.*

25 FIRST STATE BANK BUILDING

SE corner of 2nd St. and Ivinson St.

Built in 1885 to house one of Laramie's first banks, the building still contains the original vaults. While no longer a bank, the building now serves as a continuation of downtown Laramie's long tradition of supporting local artisans and entrepreneurs. Today a gunsmith operates in the building.

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26 Simon Durlacher Building

203 S. 2nd St.

This building, built in 1872, is among the oldest on the block and features an iron storefront shipped in on the railroad. Simon Durlacher came to Laramie just before the railroad as the manager of a dry goods store. He opened his own store in 1871 in a log cabin, selling men's clothing on one side and tobacco and jewelry on the other. A year later, the cabin was torn down and construction began on the two-story brick building. In 1883, Durlacher added a basement, plate glass windows, a drinking fountain, and gas lights to his building. Durlacher died in 1893 and by 1897 the store had failed. The Temple of Economy, another local retailer, purchased the store and though it changed hands several times, the building remained a clothing store until the 1980s. Unlike other business owners who utilized the second story of their property as a residence, Durlacher and his family lived in a prominent house at 501 S. 5th St.

Simon Durlacher Building second from left c. 1925 when it had become Terry Clothing Store. LPM/Ludwig-Svenson Collection

27 Midwest Block Building

SW corner of 2nd St. and Ivinson St.

During the spring of 1868, this was the site of the "Big Tent", a gambling and saloon hall which moved from each end-of-tracks town to the next, as the railroad was constructed. This building was built in the 1870s. It was remodeled around the turn of the century to include the words "Miller Block" in the cornice; later updates produced the current façade, which reads "Midwest Block".

28 206 S. 2nd St.

This was the site of Edward Ivinson's First National Bank, established in 1873. In the old building, Bill Nye met upstairs in Ivinson Hall, with the "40 liars club", a men's social group. In 1901 it was Paul Bath's Billiards. It became Woolworth's around 1937; after Woolworth's went out of business, it became an antique store and later a gift shop. *Continue south on 2nd St. to the corner of Grand Ave. and 2nd St. Look across 2nd St.*

29 Albany Mutual Building Association

NE corner of 2nd St. and Grand Ave.

Built in 1887 as Albany County National Bank, this building was remodeled in 1919 by noted local architect Wilbur A. Hitchcock. Look on the south side to see the original siding. Initially the building contained the Albany National Bank and later the Albany Mutual Building Association, for which Hitchcock served as director. Hitchcock was a prolific architect; by the time of his death in 1930 he had designed over 300 of Laramie's buildings and homes.

30 NW Corner of 2nd St. & Grand Ave.

W.H. Frazee built this red brick building in 1898 to house his mercantile store, the Leader, where he sold dry goods, clothing, furniture, carpets, boots and shoes. This Italianate building has some Romanesque touches, such as semi-circular windows with a matching decorative brick pattern; the energetic projecting cornice and massive chimney suggest that it was built to last. *Walk west down Grand Ave.*

NW Corner of 2nd St & Grand Ave. - UW AHC/Ludwig-Svenson collection

TOUR

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31 111 and 107 Grand Ave.

111 Grand has had many different uses, brothel, hotel, bakery, cigar factory, saloon, retail shops and art gallery. It sports one of Laramie's most elegant second-story residences, once featured on HGTV. The upper façade is the same as when it was built in 1893. Luckily, the building was spared the hit that took out the front of the building two doors down pictured below.

32 107 and 105 Grand Ave.

These buildings and the one around the corner had become dilapidated by the late 20th century. With the updating project called "Landmark Square" addresses were changed. The 1-story building in the photo was 109 Grand; now as 107 Grand, it boasts a large glass second story. The problem with 105 Grand can be seen in the photo, when the front was demolished by a runaway truck in 1949. The truck carried a load of corn which is seen spilled on the sidewalk. Grand Avenue was the main east-west highway into town; at 3rd Street drivers turned north. When the sidewalk collapsed under the weight of the truck, an illegal prohibition-era liquor still was discovered in the portion of the basement that was under the sidewalk. Luckily, no one was killed, but there was an arrest having to do with the still.

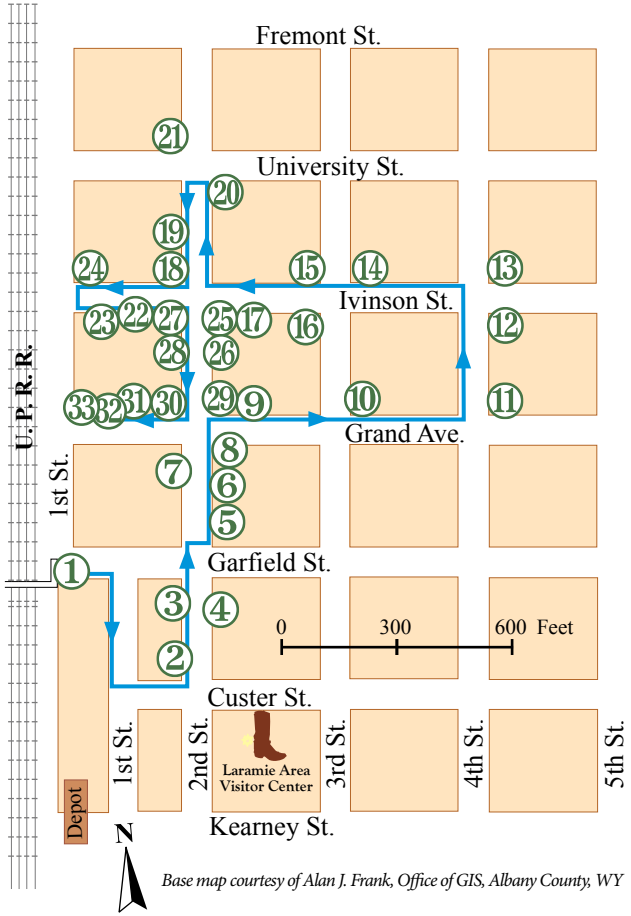
105 Grand "New Canton Chop Suey Café" demolished in 1949 accident.
LPM/Charles Peterson Collection

33 Johnson Hotel

NE corner of 1st St. and Grand Ave.

Built close to the original Union Pacific Depot by John Johnson in 1900 to catch the rail travelers' attention, the Johnson Hotel was considered one of Laramie's finest. (The original depot, shown in the photo on page 1, was across 1st St. where the tracks are now.)

This ends your tour of our wonderful downtown. Walk south on 1st St. to return to the tour's starting point.



Base map courtesy of Alan J. Frank, Office of GIS, Albany County, WY

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THE TOUR GUIDES PROJECT
of the
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