

## **Early Settlement**

**1860's** - Yokut Indians' first introduction to Europeans. Bakersfield's original natural state was an alkali delta consisting mainly of grasses, cottonwood, and oak trees. Animals such as deer, antelope, elk and bear roamed the land.

**1770's** - Don Pedro Fages first white man arrives. Padre Fray Francisco Garces arrives with a group of Indian companions.

**1863** - Colonel Thomas Baker purchases swamp and overflow lands and constructs irrigation ditches damming Buena Vista Lake. Baker provides plants and irrigates crops, harnesses water power, provides building sites, and installs a sawmill and a do-it-yourself grist mill for grinding grain. Colonel Baker's greatest ambition was to make land available for ownership. Baker disliked small streets and developed a classical grid pattern designating 82.5 feet for street widths and 115 feet for avenues, seen in Downtown Bakersfield today.

**July 7, 1889** - Worst fire in the Bakersfield history takes place, most of the downtown is destroyed. The only structure saved was Scribner's Water Tower at 17<sup>th</sup> and Chester. As the new city grew out of the ashes, temporary wooden structures were replaced by brick buildings. Most bricks were supplied by James Curran who had started the Sandstone Brick Company in 1886.

## **The Growth and Development of Bakersfield**

**1899** - Kern River Oilfield is discovered.

**1901** - Electric street car service begins in Bakersfield - one of the first in the western U.S.

**1915-1916** - Auto stage lines between Los Angeles, Bakersfield and San Francisco begin.

**1925-1950** - Bakersfield experiences modest growth, adding 948 acres to its boundaries.

**1924** - Street car service ends downtown. Almost immediately complaints of traffic congestion and parking problems are heard.

**1952** - Major earthquake devastates Downtown. Virtually every major structure in the downtown receives damage. Many landmark buildings are damaged beyond repair.

**1953-1975** - Period of tremendous growth and expansion. City triples in size adding over 15,400 acres to its boundaries.

**1975** and beyond - Growth continues.

## **Bakersfield Historic Preservation Commission**

The Commission seeks to increase public awareness of historic properties by promoting their identification, protection, enhancement, and perpetuation. Historic items can be buildings, structures, signs, objects, features, sites, places and areas that reflect special elements of the City's architectural, artistic, cultural, engineering, aesthetic, historical, political, social and other heritage. A description of the Commission's functions can be found in the Bakersfield Municipal Code Chapter 15.72 Historic Preservation.

The Historic Preservation Commission invites you to take this walking tour to discover downtown's past treasures still with us today.

City of Bakersfield

Historic Preservation Commission

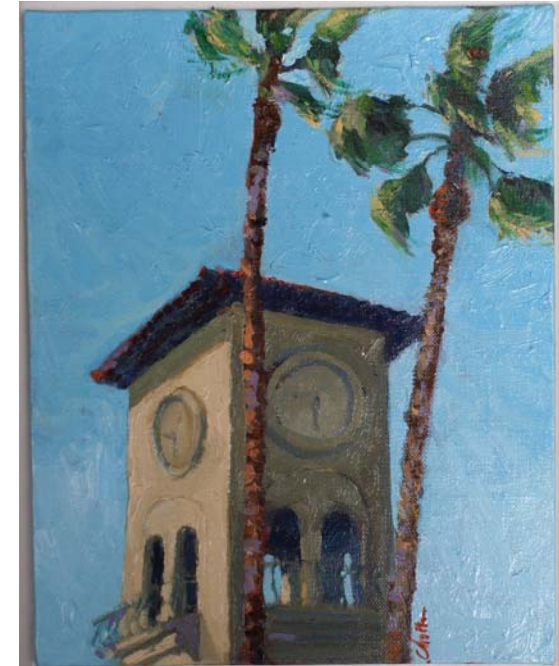


**BAKERSFIELD  
HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION  
COMMISSION**

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# Stepping into the Past

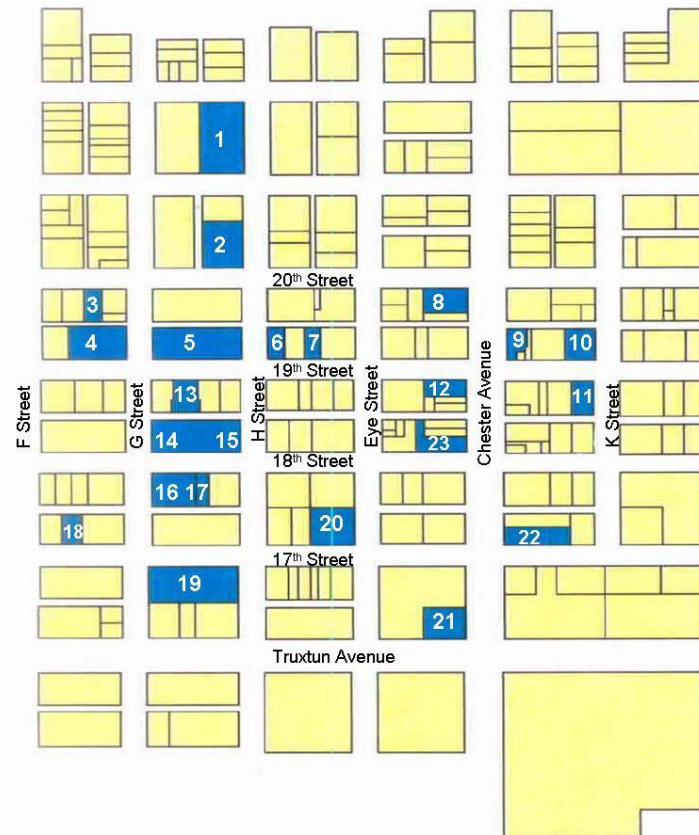
a historic walking tour  
of downtown  
Bakersfield



hosted by City of Bakersfield  
Historic Preservation Commission

Painting by Chella.

1. **Bakersfield Fire Department** (Charles Biggar) 1939  
2120 H Street - PWA Moderne replaced an aging 1904 two-level red brick fire station.
2. **Fox Theater** (Charles Lee, Charles Biggar) 1930  
2001 H Street - Spanish Colonial Revival with a tall clock and bell tower designed in the atmospheric style Mediterranean village auditorium with electric stars, listed on the local register.
3. **Jastro House** (architect unknown) 1875  
1811 20<sup>th</sup> Street - Gothic Victorian Cottage house of Henry Jastro, head of the Kern County Land Company & Chairman of the Kern County Board of Supervisors for 24 years.
4. **Standard Oil Building** (Everett Hinshaw) 1917; 1921  
1800 19<sup>th</sup> Street - Late Second-Renaissance Revival listed on the federal, state and local registers.
5. **Kern County Land Company** (Henry Schultze) 1893  
1712 19<sup>th</sup> Street - Second Renaissance Revival, a classic listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
6. **Tegeler Hotel** (architect unknown) 1914  
1908 H Street - Originally four levels, with a basement cafe and a roof that was later converted to a garden. A fifth floor was added and then removed after the 1952 earthquake.
7. **Hayden Building** (architect unknown) 1915  
1622 19<sup>th</sup> Street - Second Renaissance Revival brick structure was the Continental Hotel, listed on the local register.
8. **Old Bank of America** (Swasey and Hayne) 1930  
1931 Chester Avenue - PWA Moderne with some Egyptian Revival features, now Stars Dinner Theater.
9. **Hopkins Building** (architect unknown) 1904  
1916 Chester Avenue - Former site of the original Hockheimer & Co., reconstructed in 1919 after a fire gutted the building.
10. **Woolworth** (architect unknown) 1939  
1400 19<sup>th</sup> Street - Art Moderne rounded-corner with vertical cement panels; previously Owl Drug Store.



11. **Kress Building** (Edward Sibbert) 1931  
1401 19<sup>th</sup> Street – Bakersfield’s best example of Art Deco constructed of reinforced steel and masonry.
12. **Fish Building** (Charles Biggar) 1938  
1831 Chester Avenue - PWA Modern, Ribbon Style made of reinforced concrete and steel with a deep basement.
13. **Nile Theater** (B. G. McDougall) 1906; 1938  
1721 19<sup>th</sup> Street - Art Deco/Art Moderne was the Bakersfield Opera House in 1906.
14. **Post Office, Federal Building** (architect unknown) 1925  
1730 18<sup>th</sup> Street - Mission architecture constructed of masonry and concrete, reinforced with steel, was the official federal government center for many years.
15. **Padre Hotel** (built by John M. Cooper) 1928

16. **Vincent’s, Padre Garage** (McMahon Development Co.) 1930  
1723 18<sup>th</sup> Street - Mission Revival originally designed as a six-story building, the garage was built for the Padre Hotel.
17. **Porterfield Hotel, Smartt Apartments** (Samuel Smartt) 1911  
1715 18<sup>th</sup> Street - Plastered structure unique type of architecture for Bakersfield.
18. **Amy Holdroyd House** (architect unknown) 1937  
1822 17<sup>th</sup> Street - Several Spanish Colonial Revival houses were built in Bakersfield in the 1910’s and 1930’s, though very few in the downtown area.
19. **First Presbyterian Church** (George Rible) 1913  
1705 H Street - The cornerstone from the original 1913 building remains in the current building completed in 1955 after the 1952 earthquake. Church’s roots trace back to 1889.
20. **Bakersfield Californian** (Eissler, Biggar) 1926; 1936  
1707 Eye Street - Italian Renaissance Revival an architectural landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1983). Alfred Harrell, the newspaper’s publisher from 1897 to 1946, was well respected locally, state and nation-wide.
21. **Kern Co. Hall of Records** 1908; 1940  
1655 Chester Avenue - Originally constructed in a Beaux Arts Architectural Style (Train & Williams), the architecture was altered in 1939-40 (Frank Wynkoop) into a PWA Moderne style.
22. **Haberfelde Building** (Charles Biggar) 1927-29  
1706 Chester Avenue - A five-level, Sullivanesque structure constructed of masonry reinforced steel.
23. **Sill Building** (Ernest & Franklin Kump) 1939  
1500 18<sup>th</sup> Street - Art Moderne style, three-level building constructed of reinforced concrete and steel.
24. **McKamy Davis House (McKamy)** 1904  
2124 “E” Street – Late Queen Anne Victorian style, home of one time constable and City Marshall of Bakersfield. (Not on map.)