Larimer Square is an area as rich in history as it is in fine shopping and dining. As the Mile High City’s oldest and most historic block, its buildings vividly tell the story of the birth and early years of Denver. The Walking Tour offers you a peek into the past of Larimer Square and the people who were part of it.

one

The lobby of the Granite Building is the perfect place to start, as it is sits on the site that was the birthplace of Denver. In 1858, gold was discovered on the front range and in the Colorado mountains, and people flocked to the area as news of the discovery reached the east. Green Russell’s group made the first gold strike at Cherry Creek that summer, and settled at the point where Speer Boulevard meets Cherry Creek, just a block away, calling their camp Auraria. Soon after, another group settled on this side of the Creek where the Granite Building now stands, calling their camp St. Charles. Unfortunately for the St. Charles settlers, General William H. Larimer, Jr. arrived soon thereafter, and liking what he saw, and claimed the spot for himself, instructing his lackeys to race to Leavenworth to record the claim. They beat the St. Charles party to Leavenworth, and jumped the claim, but for good measure, they decided to call the town site Denver City after James Denver, territorial governor of Kansas. Larimer named main street after himself. Take a moment to enjoy the lobby which was restored in the 90s and look over the authentic maps and photographs of Denver.

After taking in the history of the Granite Building lobby, exit, take a left and proceed to the corner of 15th and Larimer.

two

William Larimer built the first house in Denver at this very site, a 16 x 20 foot cabin, which featured such luxuries as front doors made from coffin lids, and the city’s first window, which was made of a semi-transparent glazed material.

In 1882, George W. and William N. Clayton erected the current four-story building, entirely of Colorado materials except for the glass and hardware, to house the MacNamara Dry Goods store, predecessor of the Denver Dry Goods Company. During the 1860’s, William served as mayor of Denver and George served as a city councilman, and their names still stand on the corner roof pediment of the building. During this time, Larimer Street boasted 25 buildings, and grew substantially when the rival town of Auraria merged with Denver into one city during a torch-lit ceremony on the Larimer Street Bridge spanning Cherry Creek in the summer of 1860. After the turn of the century, the Clayton Building became the Granite Hotel, which is the origin of its current name, the Granite Building. Its restoration in the 1960’s uncovered huge plate glass and stained glass windows, cast iron pillars stamped "Colorado Iron Works,” and a grand staircase that had been locked in.

three

Look down Larimer towards 14th Street. You are looking at Denver’s first main street, home of the first bookstore, post office and bank. It was here that the first major business was undertaken, the building of a printing press. A number of people were involved in this enterprise, including Larimer, his brother George, and John H. W. Howard. The press started publishing the "Denver Democrat and Denver Weekly Times", which was later renamed the "Denver Republican", and the "Denver Daily News".

William Larimer was elected mayor of Denver in 1859 and re-elected in 1860. He was a member of the Territorial Constitutional Convention and was the first speaker of the Territorial House of Representatives. He was also a member of the Territorial Senate and was a delegate to the First Continental Congress.
In order to save landmarks during this period, the Denver Landmark Commission was created in 1969, with the purpose of designating and preserving historic sites in Denver. The first historic district to be designated was the 1400 block of Larimer Street in 1971 and it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. Larimer Square was sold to its current ownership group in 1993.

There have been several characters to grace Larimer Square over the years. In November of 1859, Count Henri Murat and his wife set up the first barber shop, and claimed to be a royal descendant of the King of Naples, charge exorbitant prices for his services. His wife, Countess Katrina Murat, fashioned the first American flag for the community using her red, white and blue undergarments.

Square, and refer to the "bull" and "bear" cycles of the stock markets.

four

Stroll down Larimer past the newest Building on Larimer, the Noel Building built in 2001 to accommodate The Capital Grille, and past the red-brick Baerger and Süsses Buildings. Turn left into the Kettle arcade. As you walk through, look at the ceiling which features paintings of some old west celebrities who frequented Larimer Street:

Chief Hosa (Little Raven) has an eagle beside him and was a chief of the old west celebrities who frequented Larimer Street.

The woman riding the two horses is the famous markswoman Annie Oakley, a native of Farmington, Ohio, who made her name traveling with Buffalo Bills Wild West Show, which toured all over the world.

To calm themselves, customers would drink hurricane margaritas, which were mixed six gallons at a time every day at 9:30 am and 2:30 pm.

five

Continued on to 1402 Larimer where Dog Savvy is located. The Hope Building, built in 1888, and housed J.H. Howard's Jewelry shop in 1890 and the City Hall Pharmacy from 1896 to the 1940s, and was the long-time home of the Hope Hotel. A one-story addition was made to the building in 1993, and at that time, the adjacent building where Starbucks is located, the Neveland Building, was constructed.

Cross the street to 1401 Larimer. On the corner where Dog Savvy is located is the Hope Building, which was built in 1888, and housed J.H. Howard’s Jewelry shop in 1890 and the City Hall Pharmacy from 1896 to the 1940s, and was the long-time home of the Hope Hotel. A one-story addition was made to the building in 1993, and at that time, the adjacent building where Starbucks is located, the Neveland Building, was constructed.

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seven

Continue down 14th Street to Euclid Hall—1317 14th Street. Euclid Hall was constructed in the late 1880’s. This three-story building has been home to the Maconos, the Colorado Women’s Relief Corp, a variety of social clubs, Maudie’s Flea Market, and it is even rumored to have once been the very fancy headquarters of a brothel catering to government officials, law enforcement and members of the media. Perhaps its most memorable occupant of Euclid Hall was Soapy Smith. The building was a long-time gathering place for good food and live entertainment.

It was in front of this building where there was one attempt at reform by governor Davis H. Waite. Waite called in 400 militia, but the bar was a long-time gathering place for good food and live entertainment.

eight

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nine

The building standing next to the clock is the Gallup-Standbury Building, constructed in 1873 by merchant Avery Gallup and political aspirant, Andy Standbury, replacing the false front building which previously housed Andrew Standbury’s favorite Tanbark Saloon.