

# INTRODUCTION

ON SEPTEMBER 17, 1901, THE FIRST STEAM-POWERED TRAIN, a spur line of the Santa Fe Railway, chugged its way from Williams, Arizona, north to the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. With the arrival of the train, the quiet area of the South Rim rapidly expanded into bustling Grand Canyon Village. The first decade of the Santa Fe Railway's arrival saw the construction of a high-end hotel, El Tovar, and other facilities for tourists, such as Hopi House and Verkamp's Curios (today's Verkamp's Visitor Center). The development of Grand Canyon Village took place over more than three decades following 1901, bringing the rise of stunning architecture that has long excited and intrigued visitors.

**1 SANTA FE RAILWAY STATION** — Pass through the main waiting area of the Santa Fe Railway Station and capture a sense of early tourism at the Grand Canyon. The waiting area today features historic photographs and information about the Grand Canyon Railway, now operated by Xanterra Parks & Resorts and running daily to and from Williams.

With the 1901 arrival of the railroad, the price of a ticket to get to the Grand Canyon's South Rim plummeted from \$20, via a long and bumpy stagecoach ride to Hance Ranch or Bass Camp, to \$3.95 from Williams to the South Rim on a more comfortable and faster train.

The 1909 depot, one of an estimated fourteen log depots constructed in the United States, was designed by architect Francis Wilson. Its timbers, flat on three sides, provide an even surface for adjacent logs and interior walls.

**2 EL TOVAR** — Walk about a hundred paces up the hill from the Santa Fe Railway Station to El Tovar Hotel and step inside.

El Tovar's dark-stained timber is adorned with moose, deer, and buffalo heads, as well as large paintings of the Grand Canyon. The Santa Fe Railway hired architect Charles Whittlesey to design El Tovar, which borrows styles from Swiss chalets and Norwegian villas. Completed on January 14, 1905, the hotel cost \$250,000 to build and featured steam heat, hot and cold running water, indoor plumbing, a septic sewage system, electric lights, a fire-suppression system, a large dining room, lounge,

barbershop, solarium, and art galleries. The hotel even had its own dairy herd to provide fresh milk and a greenhouse for fresh fruits and vegetables. Many visitors at the time considered El Tovar the most luxurious hotel west of the Mississippi River.

El Tovar stood in sharp contrast to earlier accommodations at the Grand Canyon, more spartan, and little else. To create a hotel that set a new standard at Grand Canyon, the Santa Fe Railway partnered with the Fred Harvey Company, which managed hotels and restaurants known for reasonably priced fine food along the rail line.

**3 HOPI HOUSE** — Take a one- to two-minute walk northeast from El Tovar to reach Hopi House for an experience in architectural contrasts. Famed architect Mary Colter, one of a few female architects working at the time, debuted Hopi House—her first building—

on New Year's Day in 1905. Colter modeled the red-sandstone, multi-story gift shop and cultural center after the buildings at Old Oraibi, an ancient village on the nearby Hopi Indian Reservation. Today, the building is a gift shop and purveyor of American Indian art and jewelry.

As visitors enter Hopi House, its story begins. The ceilings are low and the doorways even lower. The building is organic and uneven: Thatched ceilings and wood beams appear as if made by ancestral Puebloans, timbers are peeling bark, and branches still have their dried leaves.

Look closer at the beams to notice some are rounded and without bark. A sharp eye will spot the "W.U.T." stamped on one of the beams, the abbreviation for Western Union Telegraph, whose poles were repurposed by Colter. Colter's attention to detail make Hopi House an interesting place to explore.

**4 VERKAMP'S VISITOR CENTER** — Located about 500 feet (150 meters) east of Hopi House, Verkamp's Visitor Center relays a story of both perseverance and private enterprise at Grand Canyon Village. In 1898 John G. Verkamp opened the original Verkamp's Curios in a tent. He sold regional American Indian crafts and curios for the Flagstaff-based Babbitt Brothers' Trading Company. Verkamp left the Grand Canyon because of limited business, but in 1905 with the arrival of the train, he returned to build a shop, which he opened in 1906. The business was owned by the Verkamp family for more than 100 years, until 2008, when the National Park Service purchased the Verkamp's concession contract and converted the shop into a visitor center, pioneer history museum, and Grand Canyon Association store.

The interior still features the well-worn fireplace, creaky hardwood floors, and dark-paneled wood walls of the original structure. The building boasts a wood-shingled, modified-Mission design, its top floor with its canyon-facing balcony having once served as the home of the Verkamp family.



**5 BRIGHT ANGEL LODGE** — The five- to ten-minute walk along the paved Rim Trail from Verkamp's Visitor Center to Bright Angel Lodge offers a chance to take in views of the Grand Canyon. Built in 1935 by the Fred Harvey Company to provide moderately priced accommodations, Bright Angel Lodge stands as another Mary Colter masterpiece. It was constructed on the former site of Bright Angel Hotel and Camp, which consisted of a small hotel, cabin, and tents originally erected by James Thurber in the 1890s. The Bright Angel Hotel and Camp had been constructed around the time that the Bright Angel Trail, then a toll road, was being built a short distance away. The lodge's grand opening was celebrated with a barbecue attended by 2,000 people.

Walk in and spend time in the lobby to examine the craggy fireplace and notice the American Indian iconography adorning doors and panels. A second fireplace, in the History Room northwest of the lobby, features Colter's ten-foot-high geologic representation of the Grand Canyon rock layers. At the top is Kaibab Formation limestone and at the bottom are smooth river stones representing the strata of rock in the canyon. The room with the fireplace served as a lounge for long-ago visitors; today it houses the Fred Harvey Museum, displaying uniforms of the Harvey Girls—the famed hostesses of the Fred Harvey Company—and a pair of large binoculars once used to view the Grand Canyon from Lookout Studio.

**6 BUCKEY O'NEILL CABIN** — The Buckey O'Neill Cabin is significant for its first occupant and for being the oldest continuously standing structure on the South Rim. The cabin today is part of Bright Angel Lodge, functioning as a two-room suite for guests, and is not open to the general public. It stands as a reminder of an important figure in Grand Canyon history.

William "Buckey" O'Neill built the cabin for himself in the 1890s. Missouri-born O'Neill, who earned the nickname Buckey for his ability to buck the odds in the card game faro, moved to Arizona in 1879 at the age of 19 in search of a career and worked as a journalist, miner, politician, and judge. O'Neill advocated for the Santa Fe Railway's arrival at the park, and sold mining claims that eventually facilitated the creation of the Grand Canyon rail line. A volunteer in the Spanish American War, he also joined Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders, but died in sniper fire the day before the final assault on San Juan Hill.



**7 LOOKOUT STUDIO** — Just west of the Buckey O'Neill Cabin is Lookout Studio, also designed by Colter. Built of Kaibab Formation limestone, it blends with its environment on the teetering edge of the Grand Canyon. The uneven roofline adds to the effect of the studio appearing as if it rose from the Earth. Like Hopi House, Lookout Studio was designed to imitate the stone dwellings of the ancestral Puebloan tribes of the Southwest. The chimney's irregular stones have allowed soil and debris to collect between the cracks. In some of these fertile cracks, plants grow.

The canyon side of Lookout Studio features multi-level porches from which visitors can look out at the canyon, watch mule riders and hikers laboring on the trails, and spot endangered California condors soaring on the thermals or perched on the rocky ledges below. Inside, a rocky fireplace contributes to an inviting atmosphere.

**8 KOLB STUDIO** — Few buildings demonstrate the quirky personality traits of their original residents like Kolb Studio. Follow the Rim Trail another few hundred feet (about 75 meters) to reach the multi-roomed, multi-storied building.

Brothers Ellsworth and Emery Kolb arrived at the Grand Canyon in 1902, one year after the train came to the park. In 1904, they went to work building their home and studio near the head of the Bright Angel Trail. The brothers became famous for their photographs of Grand Canyon visitors on mule rides, as well as for their explorations of the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River.

Between 1904 and 1926, Ellsworth and Emery expanded and rebuilt their studio, with the upper level nestled on the canyon's rim. The brothers, however, separated over a business dispute in 1924 and Ellsworth left the South Rim. Emery stayed at the park until his death in 1976 at the age of 95. For years, he showed the film he and his brother made from running the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon in 1911.

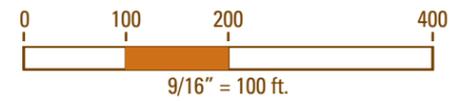


This *Self-Guided Walking Tour of the Grand Canyon Village Historic District* is part of a multimedia educational project, "Nature, Culture, and History at the Grand Canyon," which includes a digital audio tour, Grand Canyon history website, and *Travelin' Trunks* education materials for K–12 teachers. This project is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Additional funding provided by Arizona State University, the Grand Canyon Association, and Xanterra South Rim, L.L.C.

**Additional resources:**  
<http://grandcanyonlodges.com>  
<http://grandcanyonhistory.clas.asu.edu>  
<http://www.nps.gov/grca/index.htm>  
<http://www.grandcanyon.org>

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All of these buildings are part of the Grand Canyon Village Historic District and are included in the National Register of Historic Places.



8 KOLB STUDIO



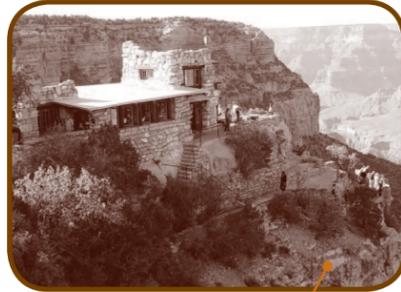
3 HOPI HOUSE



4 VERKAMP'S VISITOR CENTER



7 LOOKOUT STUDIO



6 BUCKEY O'NEILL CABIN

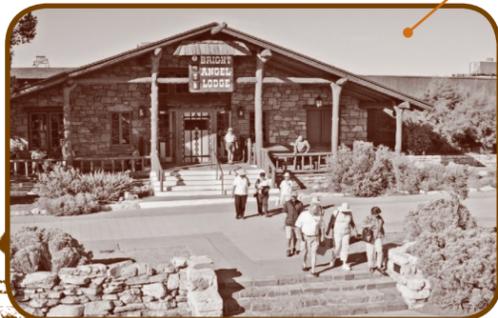


**CANYON RIM**

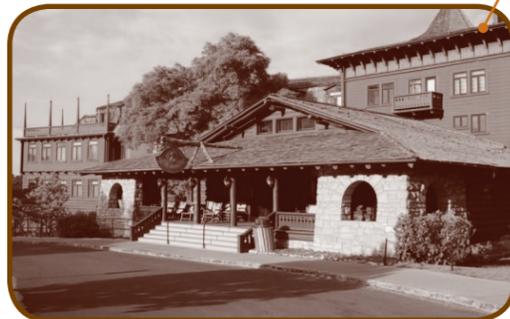
1 SANTA FE RAILWAY STATION



6 BRIGHT ANGEL LODGE



2 EL TOVAR HOTEL



**Accessibility:**

The stairs between the Santa Fe Railway Station (Point 1) and El Tovar (Point 2) are not accessible to persons with mobility impairments. Assistance is highly recommended for the steep downhill slope between Lookout Studio (Point 7) and Kolb Studio (Point 8). Kolb Studio is not accessible. Accessible restrooms are available at Bright Angel Lodge and El Tovar Hotel.

# GRAND CANYON

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## SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF THE Grand Canyon Village Historic District

