DISCOVER
THE
ARCHITECTURE
OF

HISTORIC NOB HILL

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO
A MAIN STREET COMMUNITY

NOB HILL HAS A HISTORY

The Rio Grande in the vicinity of Albuquerque nourished Pueblo Cultures for centuries before Europeans arrived. Francisco Vàzquez de Coronado was the first European to reach the area around 1540.

Juan de Oñate traveled here in 1598 along a route he called the *Camino Real de la Tierra Adentro*, running from Veracruz to Santa Fe. Albuquerque's 4th Street follows its route.

On April 23, 1706 Governor Francisco Cuervo y Valdés wrote: "... I have founded a villa on the banks and in the valley of the River of the North in a place of good fields, waters, pastures, and timber..." He was referring to the settlement of Albuquerque.

In 1880 the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway rolled into town. Businessmen developed New Town, a parcel of 1900 acres surrounding the planned railroad depot two miles east of Old Town. The railroad was soon to promote Albuquerque as a destination and provide the means for people to visit and to relocate. The University of New Mexico was established in 1889, serving as a catalyst for Albuquerque's growth onto the east mesa.

At the turn of the century, tuberculosis was killing thousands annually. It did not respond to drugs so doctors focused on "climatological therapy": forced rest in locations of medium altitude, unpolluted air, and sunshine. Albuquerque became one of the places where patients and their families came to "seek the cure."

COL. D.K.B. SELLERS PLATTED THE FIRST ADDITION IN NOB HILL IN 1916, ENCOURAGING PROSPECTS TO, "MOVE OUT OF THE LOW ZONE UP TO THE OZONE." (PHOTO)

Patients preferred the east mesa because it was higher, thus clear of the smoke generated by wood or coal heating and industry in the valley.

It has been said that the incline on Carlisle Blvd south of Central reminded Sellers of Nob Hill in San Francisco, and that he considered it a proper name for "the coming aristocratic section of Albuquerque."

Reprinted by Chris Lucas

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ROUTE 66 RUNS THROUGH IT

When Henry Ford introduced his Model T in 1908 roads were simple, designed for horse drawn traffic. By 1917 only 2% of the nation's roads were paved.

In 1926 the American Highway System was created by law. The law didn't build roads; it identified routes that tied together state highways into a system that motorists could follow to travel long distances.

In its original form Route 66 headed north about an hour east of Albuquerque at Santa Rosa, through Las Vegas, to Santa Fe. It then headed south following NM Highway 85 over the *Camino Real* to Los Lunas where it headed west. The trip across New Mexico covered 506 miles.

A group in Albuquerque saw opportunity in bringing the road through town over land ripe for development on the east mesa. In 1937 the new route was completed, and the commercial district along Central Avenue had a surge of transcontinental traffic. The new route through New Mexico covered only 399 miles.

THE MOST STORIED ROUTE WAS FROM THE CORNER OF JACKSON BLVD AND MICHIGAN AVE IN CHICAGO TO SANTA MONICA BLVD IN LOS ANGELES: ROUTE 66.

Motorists needed fuel, supplies, and service. Construction on the east mesa took off. Businesses built vibrant neon signs to attract motorists. Architects and builders employed the rich architectural vocabulary in use internationally at the time, seasoning it with exuberant revival styles drawn from local culture and tradition.

The 1930 Albuquerque City Directory lists just six buildings on Central Ave. from Girard to Morningside; two shops, a service station, two houses, and a vacant building. By 1939 there were forty-four structures on this section of the new Route 66.

NOB HILL IS UNIQUE

During the 60s interstate highways and shopping malls came into vogue. Interstate 40 was built through Albuquerque draining virtually all of the motorists away from Central Avenue. When the malls were built alongside the interstates, retail businesses in Nob Hill fell on hard times.

By the mid-70s much of Nob Hill housed second-hand shops, army surplus stores, and repair shops. In 1984, under the direction of Van H. Gilbert, AIA, the 1947 Nob Hill Shopping Center was sensitively remodeled, retaining its historic character. It became a catalyst for preservation-based revitalization of the district as many property owners followed suit.

TODAY NOB HILL IS A SHOWCASE FOR THE DYNAMIC EVOLUTION OF ARCHITECTURAL STYLES IN THE MIDDLE THIRD OF THE 20TH CENTURY. MANY BUILDINGS STILL FULFILL THEIR ORIGINAL PURPOSE; OTHERS HAVE BEEN REPURPOSED TO MEET TODAY'S NEEDS WHILE MAINTAINING THEIR HISTORIC CHARACTER.

Streamlined Moderne filling stations, Spanish Pueblo Revival motor courts, and intact retail blocks convey the scale and rhythm of the time.

Those who live and work in Nob Hill value its rich architectural legacy and strive to preserve and enhance its sense of place.

3500 block of Central Avenue circa 1940.

*Layout, design + 3D graphics by Mike Heighway @ Kobold Media. Primary research & writing by Gary Eyster with editing by Tony & Susan Hunt. Additional research & writing by Kim Deschampheleire & Spencer Nelson. Historic photographs assembled by Mara Schweikert. "Historic Nob Hill" logo & cityscape graphic by Elias Bruce Quinn. Photos courtesy of the Albuquerque Museum Photo Archives unless otherwise noted. De Anza image courtese of Idamarie Giusti. Aztec Motel photo by Maggie Lee.

HISTORIC NOB HILL

MONTE VISTA & COLLEGE VIEW HISTORIC DISTRICT

In 1935, in the depths of the Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt formed the Works Progress Administration which provided a grant of $14,300 toward the total cost of $24,000 for a fire station for Nob Hill. Constructed in 5 months in 1936, it resulted in an immediate 43% reduction in insurance premiums in the area.

Architect E.H. Blumenthal designed it in the Spanish Pueblo Revival style, making generous use of projecting vigas (round tree trunks), heavy wood beams over openings, elegant wood corbels, and undulating parapet walls. Like nearby pueblos, it features multiple building masses including the 3 story tower for drying fire hoses and retains the 14 ft high station doors and large metal wheels that allowed them to be quickly opened for an alarm.

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, it stands as a remarkable example of adaptive re-use, housing a restaurant and bar.

1935 MONTE VISTA FIRE STATION

MONTE VISTA AVE.

BRYN MAWR DR.

WELLESLEY DR.

CENTRAL AVE.

NEW MEXICO US 66

GIRARD BLVD.

Two years after Route 66 relocated to Central Avenue the Jones brothers were the first automobile dealers to leave downtown for the east mesa. Their building's curved walls and stepped tower are classic examples of the Streamlined Moderne style.

Ralph Jones built a long porch on the south side of the building so that people could unload the possessions from their overloaded vehicles so mechanics could do repairs.

In 1993, when it was nominated to the National Register, it was housing a body shop and army surplus store. Today it is a wonderful example of a historic building repurposed for a modern use that generates income to preserve it and improves its community.

1939 JONES MOTOR COMPANY

1947 NOB HILL BUSINESS CENTER

This mural depicts some general themes from the history of New Mexico and Route 66. You can easily find a train of the Santa Fe railroad, cars on Route 66, and Native Americans on a mesa. There are also an expedition of Spanish & Mexican conquistadors, a wagon train coming from the Mid West, balloons, and modern cars. A neon sun lights at sunset. There is a clever use of the building roof drains as telephone poles. The painting was done in 1989 by muralist Joe Stephenson. On the south edge of the mural there is a list of the sponsors and artists.

1989 MURAL

1933 AZTEC AUTO COURT

The Aztec Auto Court is thought to be the oldest tourist court on Central Avenue and one of the few that pre-date the relocation of Route 66 to this location in 1937. It is relatively unaltered and still gives a strong sense of a 1930s Route 66 tourist court.

It comprises a pair of one story lodging room groups and the 2 story office with residence above. Note the modest Southwest Vernacular elements like the stepped parapets and the slight red tile hoods over some of the entries. The guest rooms backing on Aliso Drive once had doors opening to the street.

The rear of the property was once a patio and playground. The metal canopy on the office structure was added in the 1950s. The sign is a replacement of the original.

1937 MODERN AUTO COURT

Built in the same year that Route 66 was relocated to its new location, this was among the first tourist courts on Central Ave. It was built largely in the Southwest Vernacular with elements suggesting Streamlined Moderne influence. The neon sign dates to 1955, the year the property was renamed Nob Hill Motel.

In 2009 the property was repurposed and sensitively remodeled by the Nob Hill Development Corp as an office court. Due to its intact spatial arrangement, relatively unaltered scale, and well-preserved building materials it imparts a strong sense of an early Route 66 tourist court.

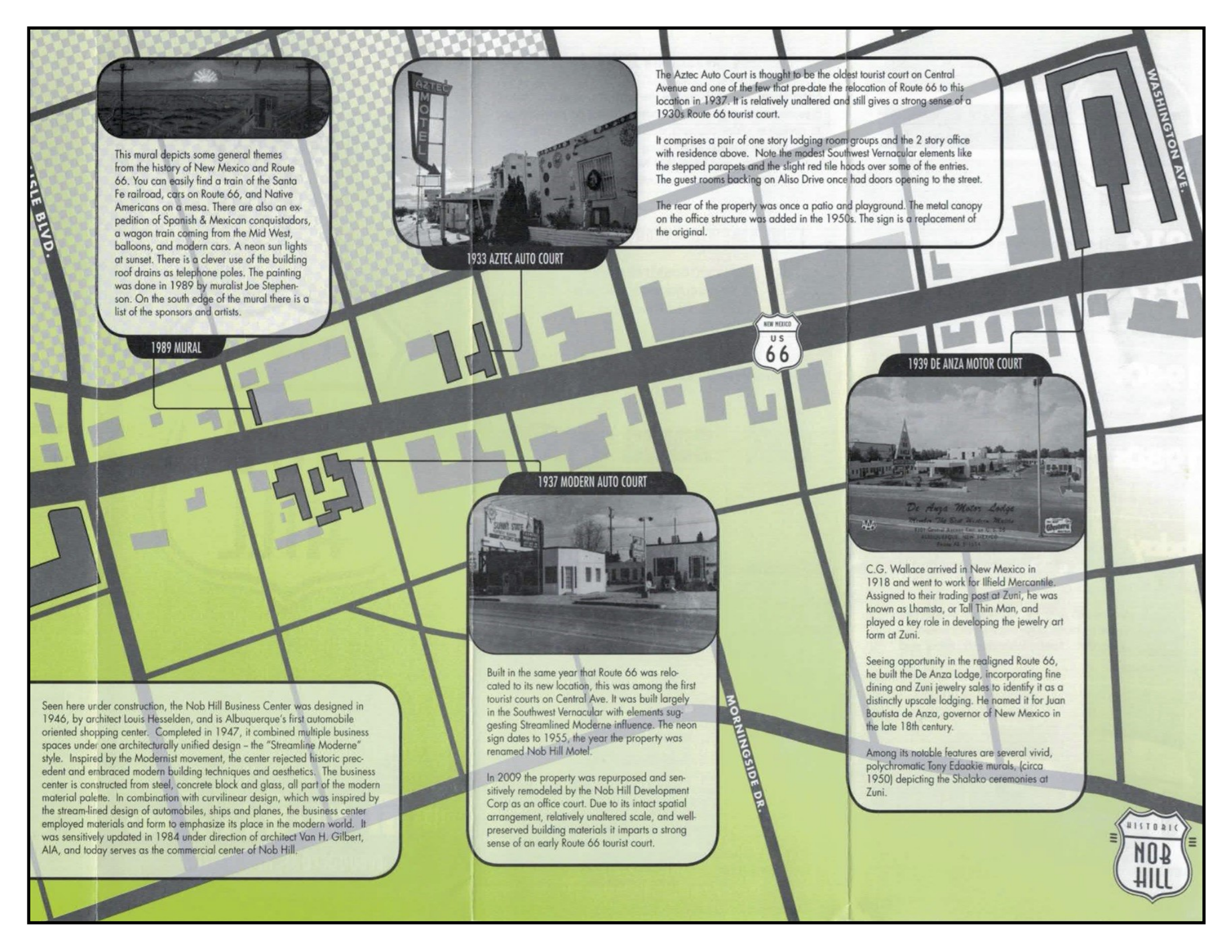
1939 DE ANZA MOTOR COURT

C.G. Wallace arrived in New Mexico in 1918 and went to work for Ilfield Mercantile. Assigned to their trading post at Zuni, he was known as Lhamsta, or Tall Thin Man, and played a key role in developing the jewelry art form at Zuni.

Seeing opportunity in the realigned Route 66, he built the De Anza Lodge, incorporating fine dining and Zuni jewelry sales to identify it as a distinctly upscale lodging. He named it for Juan Bautista de Anza, governor of New Mexico in the late 18th century.

Among its notable features are several vivid, polychromatic Tony Edaakie murals, (circa 1950) depicting the Shalako ceremonies at Zuni.

Seen here under construction, the Nob Hill Business Center was designed in 1946, by architect Louis Hesselden, and is Albuquerque's first automobile oriented shopping center. Completed in 1947, it combined multiple business spaces under one architecturally unified design – the "Streamline Moderne" style. Inspired by the Modernist movement, the center rejected historic precedent and embraced modern building techniques and aesthetics. The business center is constructed from steel, concrete block and glass, all part of the modern material palette. In combination with curvilinear design, which was inspired by the stream-lined design of automobiles, ships and planes, the business center employed materials and form to emphasize its place in the modern world. It was sensitively updated in 1984 under direction of architect Van H. Gilbert, AIA, and today serves as the commercial center of Nob Hill.



HISTORIC NOB HILL

NOB HILL HIGHLIGHTS

1916 The first addition in Nob Hill was platted.

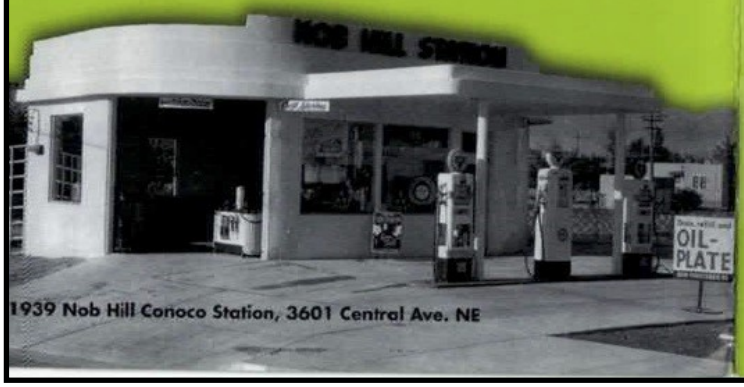
1937 ***Commercial building in Nob Hill took off in response to the relocation of Route 66 along Central Avenue that year.***

1940s Roadside motor courts and other businesses created vibrant neon signs to attract the attention of passing motorists.

1980s ***Nob Hill fell on hard times in the 60s but by the 80s the value of its architectural legacy and pedestrian friendly character were recognized.***

Today Nob Hill is a showcase of the dynamic evolution of architectural styles in the middle third of the 20th century.

The people of Nob Hill love its historic character. Visitors love its rich sense of place. Everyone loves the sense of excitement found in diverse restaurants, retail, and entertainment.



1939 Nob Hill Conoco Station, 3601 Central Ave. NE

ABOUT MAIN STREET

Main Street is an initiative of the National Trust for Historic Preservation that provides a community-driven methodology to revitalize older business districts. Nob Hill Main Street is the locally created effort using Main Street tools to foster actions that create a future that benefits merchants, property owners, and our entire community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT NOB HILL

rt66central.com
rediscovernobhill.com
nobhill-nm.com

THESE BUSINESSES MADE THE PRINTING OF THIS BROCHURE POSSIBLE

La Montanita Co-Op

SoMa Interiors

O'Niell's Pub

SMPC Architects

Kelly's Brew Pub

Zinc

Kobold Media

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