

Cambria Historical Self-Guided Tour

Your tour begins at the east end of Main Street.

2581 Main Street

The west portion of the private residence at 2581 Main Street is the first structure built in Cambria. In 1865, before there was a town, George Lull operated his general merchandise store in the lower level of the building and lived upstairs.

The Olallieberry Inn, 2476 Main Street

The Manderscheid brothers, pharmacists from Germany, built the Olallieberry Inn in the 1870s. Later, the Smithers family, who operated a successful dairy farm in the Leimert area, lived in the house.

2420 Main Street

The Leffingwell family built the residence at 2420 Main Street in the 1880s. William Leffingwell, Sr., settled along the Central Coast in 1858, establishing a beach landing, the first flour mill, and the first sawmill in the county. His sawmill produced the rough slabs of local pine that went into building "Slabtown," Cambria's early nickname.

The Old Santa Rosa Chapel, 2353 Main Street

The Old Santa Rosa Chapel, built in 1870, was the first church in the county built outside mission grounds. A walk through the cemetery behind the chapel reveals the names of many of the Italian-speaking Swiss who settled in the area in the mid-1870s and established thriving dairy farms.

Now turn right onto Bridge Street.

4286 Bridge Street

The charming little house at 4286 Bridge Street was built around 1880, and was once occupied by members of the Thorndyke family. Captain Thorndyke was the first lighthouse keeper at Piedras Blancas.

The First Presbyterian Church, 4314 Bridge Street

The little white church at 4314 Bridge Street was built in 1874 as the First Presbyterian Church, and has been the home of several Protestant denominations. Calvin Coolidge once attended this church while in the area to visit Hearst Castle.

Follow Bridge Street out of town approximately one mile to the end of the country road to the old community cemetery.

Community Cemetery

The Leffingwells deeded this land in return for family plots. It is interesting to stroll through the cemetery and read the history revealed on the headstones.

Now turn back into town along Bridge Street to Main Street and turn right.

The Bank of Cambria, Corner Main & Bridge Streets

The recently restored brick building at the corner of Main and Bridge Streets was built in the 1930s as the Bank of Cambria.

Camozzi's, 2262 Main Street

Camozzi's is the only saloon left to remind us of the many that were here in the old days. Take a step into Camozzi's and enjoy the wide range of historical memorabilia lining the walls.

Soto's Market, 2244 Main Street

Joaquin "Jack" Soto established Soto's Market, originally located on Bridge Street, in 1917.

Continue along Main Street to Burton Drive and turn left.

Carroll's Blacksmith Shop

The board and batten redwood building, probably built after the turn of the twentieth century, was once Carroll's Blacksmith Shop. This false-fronted building is an excellent example of what many commercial establishments looked like in the Old West.

Heart's Ease, 4101 Burton Drive

During the 1870s, Cambria was described as having a neat, New England-style appearance. Heart's Ease, which offers "a bit of nineteenth century New England," has found an appropriate home in the house built by prominent local businessman G.W. Proctor in the 1870s.

Turn left onto Center Street.

The Bianchini House, Corner of Burton and Center Streets

In 1882, a merchant named Samuel Guthrie built the old house sitting on the corner of Burton and Center Streets. In 1914, the house sold to Eugenio Bianchini, a Swiss immigrant who came to this country in 1878 in search of opportunity--and found it. After farming, mining, dairying, and running a butchery, he retired to this home. The property has been unoccupied since 1970 due to legal problems and disagreement among the Bianchini heirs.

2261 Center Street

The tiny blue house at 2261 Center Street was built in the 1890s and was home to Louis Maggetti, the town cobbler, who added the second story in 1900 to make room for his six children.

The Red House, 2264 Center Street

Referred to as the "Red House," the structure at 2264 Center Street sits on what was once Cambria's Chinese Community Center. Comprised of three separate buildings, the Red House was joined together around 1920 by Will Warren. The square front portion was the B.F. Franklin building, used as Cambria's first high school around 1890. The portion that extends on the right was a Joss House, built in 1899, and is considered to be the oldest remaining Chinese temple in Southern California. A building believed to have been a laundry is joined to the back.

2276 Center Street

P.A. Forrester, a man of considerable influence, built the house at 2276 Center Street in 1868. In 1877, after becoming wealthy through his mining interests, Forrester left town to become mayor of San Luis Obispo. In 1883 he was appointed State Commissioner of Immigration.

The Bucket of Blood Saloon, Center and Bridge Streets

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Bucket of Blood was located in the building on the corner of Center and Bridge Streets. Built around the turn of the century, this structure has also housed a blacksmith shop, a skating rink, an art studio, and a newspaper print shop.

Retrace your steps back along Center to Burton Drive and turn left.

Robin's Restaurant, 4905 Burton Drive

Robin's Restaurant was a residence built in the 1920s by Frank Souza, a construction supervisor for William Randolph Hearst.

The Squibb House, 4063 Burton Drive

Fred E. Darke, a former Civil War drummer boy who became a teacher after moving to the Central Coast, built the Squibb House in 1877. The structure to the right of the house was a carpentry shop built by Alex Paterson in 1889. Paul and Louise Squibb, founders of the Midland School of Santa Ynez Valley, purchased the property in 1953 and lovingly preserved the house and grounds.

4022 Burton Drive

The building at 4022 Burton Drive stands on the site of the two-story house once occupied by Rufus Rigdon, one of the town's original settlers. His son, Elmer Rigdon, became a California State Senator and in 1917 won approval for the construction of the coast highway between San Simeon and Monterey.

Brambles Restaurant, 4005 Burton Drive

The front right-hand portion of the Brambles Restaurant, built in the 1880s, was first occupied by the Mora family. In the early 1900s, Dr. Lowell lived in the house and ran his practice from a porch added on to the left side.

Cambria Pines Lodge, 2905 Burton Drive

According to local legend, an eccentric European baroness built Cambria Pines Lodge's original Main Lodge building because she wished to have a personal resort near the opulence of Hearst Castle. After receiving an ultimatum from her husband to return to Europe or live forever without him, she sold the Lodge to the Cambria Development Company, which used the property as a headquarters and gathering place for prospective buyers of land on Lodge Hill. By 1932, thirty-one log cabins had been added to the property. During the Great Depression, the Lodge was known as a fashionable destination resort for those who could afford to travel. More cabins were added in the 1940s and 1960s, and modern hotel-style guest rooms and suites made their appearance in the 1980s. In January 1991, a fire destroyed the historic Main Lodge building, which was replaced with a new structure that is faithful to the ambiance of the original. Cambria Pines Lodge now boasts 126 cabins, guest rooms, and suites, as well as a Main Lodge building housing a restaurant, lounge, and conference center.