Modesto was founded as a village in October 1870, when the Central Pacific Railroad purchased approximately one square mile of land and began selling lots. Before the Central Pacific Railroad gave shape to the village, Americans had already settled in the area and began farming. Several villages sprang up to provide services to these people, among them cemeteries.

Modesto’s landmarks span different eras of the city’s history. There are tours of specific eras, which include summaries of the period highlighted. This tour, however, focuses exclusively on established landmarks.

More information about each Landmark is available at www.modestogov.com/1939/Landmark-Preservation-Program

Buildings, trees, and objects worthy of preservation are not limited to this list of landmarks. Indeed, as you walk or drive through Modesto you may see many buildings that represent Modesto’s rich history that are not on this list.
McHenry Mansion, 906 15th Street, 1883

Robert McHenry arrived in the northern San Joaquin Valley after the Gold Rush. He purchased the Bald Eagle Ranch, 4,000 acres of farmland north of town, and in 1878 moved to Modesto as a banker. He built his Italianate mansion in 1883 in 1884 became president of the First National Bank of Modesto. McHenry was also the first president of the Modesto Irrigation District Board.

Landmark 2: McHenry Museum, 1402 I Street, 1912

Originally used as a public library, the land and money for the library were donated by Oramil McHenry. Today this magnificent building houses a museum of artifacts related to Modesto’s history.

Landmark 3: Modesto Arch, I Street at 9th Street, 1912

In 1911, the Modesto Business Men’s Association proposed an “Ornamental and Electric Arch” and held a slogan contest. The second-prize slogan, “Water Wealth Contentment Health,” submitted by S.R. Harbaugh, was selected. The arch is the oldest slogan arch in the country and one of the few remaining.

Landmark 4: Modesto Ash Tree, 3d Street at Sierra Drive, before 1911

A new kind of ash tree was discovered in 1927 and determined to be compatible with Modesto’s climate. This tree is over 100 years old, well past its expected lifespan.

Landmark 5: Pump Station 9, 1930

Marking one of the few entrances to the City, the “Grecian Temple” design was modeled after the Sunol Pump Station. The pumphouse was designed by A. O. Carley, an employee of the city’s public works department.
Woolworth Company Sign, 1949
The sign was demolished with the Woolworth building in 1997 – 1998. The building site is now part of the Tenth Street Place Renovation project.

Landmark 6

Landmark 7: Fire Station 2, 629 2nd Street, 1924 (demolished)
The volunteer fire department was comprised of many of the wealthy and influential citizens of the town and was said to have "...always had able and efficient officers, and saved the town several times from the calamities of a fire."

Landmark 8: Cressey Manor, 915 17th Street, 1917
The Cressey family was one of Modesto’s most prominent families. Albert Cressey, an early Central California pioneer and strong advocate of irrigation, organized the Modesto Bank, was instrumental in securing the right-of-way for the Southern Pacific Railroad, and was president of the Stanislaus County Agricultural Association. George, the original owner of the house, continued to serve the community in various ways.

Landmark 9: Turner Hitching Post, 1104 14th Street, 1871
John D. Turner, original owner of the hitching post and adjoining house, was a member of the prominent Turner family, which made substantial contributions to Modesto’s early commercial development.

Landmark 10: Modesto News Herald Building, 726 14th Street, 1894
Built by J.D. Spencer, editor of the Modesto Daily Evening News, it remained a newspaper headquarters until 1920.

Landmark 11: Hawke Castle, 115 Magnolia Avenue, 1929
This Norman castle-inspired house was built by Edwin Hawke, the manager of J.C. Penney and owner of the Hawke Crop Dusting Service. He founded the E.R. Hawke Department store at 1013 10th Street in 1934.
McClure Country Place, 1500 N. McClure Road, 1882

Bailey Peyton Hogin, a Confederate army veteran, built the house, which was also the birthplace of Grafton Hogin, Stanislaus County sheriff from 1922 to 1949. Ernest McClure purchased the property in 1904, lured to the area by advertisements that promised water and plenty.

U.S. Post Office and Federal Building, 1125 I Street, 1932-33

Plans for the new post office were prepared by the office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department and the building opened in October 1932. In 1936, artist Ray Boynton, assisted by local artists, painted pastoral murals in tempera for the public lobby of the building. Most of the original murals remain.
Seventh Street Bridge, 1916
Using “canticrete,” a new type of construction, this foot bridge replaced two bridges and a ferry at the same site. The bridge has been known as the “Lion Bridge” for the recumbent lions at its thresholds.

Landmark 15: Fire Bell, 1894
Originally installed in the tower at the old 10th Street fire station, the bell has been moved several times and is now in front of Fire Station 2 on Chicago Avenue.

Landmark 16: Enslen Park, 1906
After donating Graceada Park to Modesto, James Enslen donated this property for another park. Planned by John McLaren, who designed Golden Gate Park, it once held a small zoo. The Modesto Women’s Improvement Club supervised construction and landscaping.

Landmark 17: Graceada Park, 1914
Thomas Beard and T.J. Wisecarver gave the Modesto Woman’s Improvement Club 10 acres of land for a park, named for their wives, Grace and Ada. John McLaren, designer of Golden Gate Park, consulted on the park’s plans. The Mancini Bowl honors Francesco Nicolo “Frank” Mancini, Modesto High School music teacher and organizer of the Modesto Symphony Orchestra in 1931.

Landmark 18: Rammed Earth House, 1027 Enslen Avenue, 1934
Owen and Adriene Bradley designed and built the house, made of adobe dug from the back yard. The house is cool in summer and warm in winter, an early demonstration of environmental construction principles.
Southern Pacific Transportation Center, 9th and J Streets, 1915
This classic Mission Revival building replaced an older depot, and served railroad passengers until 1971.

Landmark 20: Ralph Brown Residence, 309 Magnolia Avenue, 1923
Ralph Brown, an attorney who was elected to the State Assembly and became Speaker, is best known for the open government law known as the Brown Act. Brown grew up in this California bungalow.

Landmark 21: Gallo Founders Building, 101 11th Street, 1928
This vine-covered warehouse is the site of the original E & J Gallo Winery.

Landmark 22

The State Theater, 1307 J Street, 1934
The Art Deco State Theater, built for George Mann and Morgan Walsh of San Francisco by Harry Brown of Modesto, opened on Christmas Day, 1934. The marquee was replaced with an electronic message board and the façade was updated in 2005; walls, murals, seating, and sound system were preserved.

Landmark 23: Graham Residence, 206 Roselawn Avenue, 1921
(demolished) Civil War veteran Harvey Graham rode with William “Wild Bill” Cody. The Grahams moved to Modesto from Nebraska in 1920. Their son made all the bricks for the bungalow—about 32,000—in the back yard.

Landmark 24: Masonic Temple, 1500 J Street, 1917
This Neoclassical building was originally a Masonic Hall serving Stanislaus Lodge No. 206, Modesto Chapter No. 49, and Electa Chapter No. 72, O.E.S.
Landmark 25: Stockton Savings Bank, 1101 J Street, 1937
This is one of Modesto’s few commercial Art Deco buildings. For many years a bank, it is now a restaurant.

Landmark 26: H Street Façade, Modesto High School, 18 H Street, 1918
A new high school was needed to accommodate the growing population. The opening celebration included the senior class play, Green Stockings.

Landmark 27: Wissner Medical Office Building, 901 Mehenry Avenue, 1937
The one-story Mission Revival medical building and private hospital was also the residence of Dr. Leonard O. and Margaret V. Wissner.

Landmark 28: Elks Lodge, 1222 I Street, 1927
Built for Modesto Lodge No. 1282 of the Brotherhood of the Protective Order of Elks, the basement held a boxing ring that was donated and dedicated by World Heavyweight Boxing Champion Jack Dempsey.

Landmark 29: First Church of Christ Scientist, 1328 H Street, 1922
This two-story structure is Modesto’s only remaining public building which reflects the early 20th century vogue for classical building forms.

Landmark 30: Acacia Memorial Park, 301 Scenic Drive, 1872
Originally a Masonic cemetery, the first graves came from the Westport area.

Landmark 31: Modesto Pioneer Cemetery, 905 Scenic Drive, 1852
This land belonged to a land grant signed by President Abraham Lincoln, originally a family cemetery. In 1872, the Wildley Lodge, I.O.O.F. purchased five acres for its use.

Landmark 32: Modesto Cemetery, 1001 Scenic Drive, 1855
An 11-acre cemetery, this is the burial site of many of the County’s first settlers. It contains 70 Civil War veterans’ graves.

Landmark 33: St. Stanislaus Catholic Cemetery, 1141 Scenic Drive, 1870
The cemetery now known as St. Stanislaus Catholic Cemetery was renamed in 1875, after the St. Stanislaus Parish was organized.

Landmark 34: Stanislaus County Cemetery, 1001 Scenic Drive, 1929
This is the County’s pauper cemetery.

Landmark 35: Dr. Donald Robertson Home, 211 Elmwood Court, 1929
This French Normandy building was home to Dr. Donald Robertson, the son of Dr. J.C. Robertson, who founded the private Robertson Hospital in Modesto.
Modesto’s City Christmas Tree, 19th and H and Burney Street
The City’s first designated Christmas tree was lighted every year for more than 40 years beginning in 1960.

Landmark 37: Stanley Home, 225 Stoddard Avenue, 1927
Built by Carl Jessup Stanley and Harriet Kirkman Stanley, Mr. Stanley served in World War I, was a local businessman and a director of the Modesto Bank, and served on City Council from 1935 to 1951. Their daughter, Colleen Stanley Bare, is a historian and author of children’s books.

Landmark 38: John M. Walthall Home, 118 Sycamore Avenue, 1911
This shingled bungalow was the home of John Walthall, a great nephew of President James Madison. He served as Stanislaus County District Attorney for two years and later was in private practice. Walthall was active in various civic organizations.

Landmark 39: Pacific Telephone Building, 1012 11th Street, 1922
Modesto’s first telephone arrived in 1887. Public service and a switchboard were housed nearby, but moved to this larger Italianate building as the demand for service continued to expand.

Landmark 40: Gundlach Home, 410 Elmwood Avenue, 1937
This Provincial building is clad primarily in plaster with a brick-covered front gable.

Landmark 41: Lish Residence, 125 Poplar Avenue, 1890
The original owner of this Craftsman bungalow, W.H. Howell, was appointed Modesto’s postmaster in 1910. The Howell family were early settlers who dry-farmed in the Turlock area.
Landmark 42: Guzman Residence, 215 Stoddard Avenue, 1927
This residence is an excellent example of a Craftsman bungalow building. This style is recognized by the deliberate use of natural materials, its emphasis on structural form, and a casual relationship with the outdoors.

Landmark 43: Ayres Residence, 319 Elmwood Avenue, 1923
This residence is an excellent example of the Craftsman Bungalow “airplane” style building.

Landmark 44: M.D. Harris Home, 230 Sycamore Avenue, 1934
M.D. Harris, the owner of Plato’s Men’s Store, built the house. An excellent example of the Mission architectural style, it is characterized by arches, red tile, and stucco or plaster siding.

Landmark 45: Wheat Barge Tree, Tuolumne River Regional Park
This magnificent valley oak is more than 150 years old. Folk history suggests this tree is where barges tied up on their way down the Tuolumne River, transporting wheat to market from Waterford. The tree may have been in use as early as the 1860s and 1870s.

Landmark 46: Bunya Bunya Tree, Graceada Park, 1916
The tree, a native of New Zealand, was a gift to the community from the Native Sons of the Golden West in 1916.

Landmark 47: Balmannos Residence, 207 Elmwood Court, 1927
Lloyd Gross, the original owner of this Tudor house, served during World War I as a pilot and later became an aerial photographer. His aerial views of Modesto in the early 1920s are in the McHenry Museum archives. His wife, Ida Foote Gross, became a well-known local artist after her retirement from teaching in 1961.

Landmark 48: Casa de Cadrett, 201 Hintze Avenue, 1921
This Mission Revival, white stucco house with a red tile roof and wood detailing is surrounded by a white brick fence enclosing a large garden.

Landmark 49: Montrie and Robinson Residence, 1001 Magnolia Avenue, 1930
The California/Spanish Eclectic house, similar to those in Los Angeles, was built for Mr. and Mrs. L.H. Hathaway. Hathaway operated the Modesto Grocery at 927 10th Street.

Landmark 50: Earl Anderson Residence, 501 Magnolia Avenue, 1922
This is a Craftsman bungalow with hipped gables. A wrap-around porch was added after the house was built but it blends well with the style of the structure.

Landmark 51: Scully Residence, 124 Sycamore Avenue, 1925
This stately structure successfully combines Colonial and Classical elements. The original owner, Warren S. Tillson, was the son of the founder of the Modesto Lumber Company and later its president.
Landmark 52: Municipal Golf Course, 400 Tuolumne Boulevard, 1933
The Municipal Golf Course was constructed in the mid-1930s; the land was originally part of the Modesto Aviation Field. When the airport moved, the property became the golf course.

Landmark 53: Foy Apartments, 1418 – 1430 I Street, 1912
This Neoclassical building contains 16 studio units advertised as the most modern apartments in Modesto when it opened. Each apartment was equipped with two Murphy beds, one behind a leaded-glass china buffet in the dining room and the other behind a beveled wall mirror in the bedroom.

Landmark 54: Centenary Methodist Church, 201 Needham Avenue, 1920
This two-story Classical Revival building with Romanesque features was constructed in 1920 for the Centenary Methodist Church and was occupied by that congregation until 1960.

Landmark 55: Johnson House, 503 W. Morris Avenue, 1927
This English Tudor-style house was built for Clarence and Birdella Johnson. Mr. Johnson owned the Clarence Johnson Insurance Company in downtown Modesto and Mrs. Johnson was very active in community events and organizations.

Landmark 56: Robertson House, 215 Elmwood Court, 1933
This two-story, Mediterranean-style house is sheathed in stucco with red tile, wood, and iron details. The rear yard supports the Mediterranean style of the house, with flagstone paving and wood pergola. Dr. J.C. Robertson, the founder of Robertson Hospital, contributed tremendously to the local medical community.

Landmark 57: Lundgren House, 218 Elmwood Court, 1928
This Provincial-style house is part of the Coldwell subdivision, which was formed on August 24, 1903, and owned by Virginia Coldwell.

Landmark 58: Silva House, 216 W. Morris Avenue, 1925
This California bungalow with wrap-around porch was originally owned by William J. “Billy” Silva and his wife Evelyn D. Silva. Billy Silva became the local Studebaker dealer in 1919 in partnership with Claude Shackelford. In 1946 he was appointed to the California Fish and Game Commission.

Landmark 59: Dr. John Kennedy “Doc” Ransom House, 305 Magnolia Avenue, 1906
The Shingle style was an unusually free form and variable style with details that are strictly classic and grounded in the Colonial Revival tradition, with a raised first story and a recessed front porch. Its distinctive A-frame shape, shingle surfaces, and gigantic gable are typical. “Doc” Ransom was a leading member of the medical community in Modesto from, 1920 to 1965, and served as County Coroner for over three decades.