

WALKING



AROUND

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To celebrate BYU's 150th anniversary, the Humanities Center published a series of walking tours, showing users many unique sites across campus and around Provo.

PROVO



Imagine a city where centuries-old brick buildings sit flush to modern-day homes; where vibrant murals decorate countless establishments, both tucked away in parking garages and on the front of buildings for all to see; and where nods to the city's history can be found in parks, on school grounds, and in business names in the area. Did you notice that Provo fits this *exact* description?

Provo has been transformed into the vibrant city it is by numerous individuals, communities, and institutions—including BYU. To celebrate the university's 150th anniversary, a campaign known as Beacons of Light was initiated by the university, inviting colleges, departments, and other campus units to develop projects that would showcase the unique light BYU sheds in the world. The College of Humanities sponsored 10 projects. One by the Humanities Center features the campus and the broader Provo community in "Provo Walks." Students and professors collaborated on this initiative to create dozens of walking tours that highlight many of Provo's unique features, including its timeless architecture, statues on BYU campus, and the Provo River Delta. These walks can now be accessed on the BYU Walks app (formerly the BYU Walks Abroad app).

Professor Rex Nielson (Luso-Afro-Brazilian Literature and Culture), director of the Humanities Center, believes the walks will help people "understand the history, complexity, and context of the place they live in," teaching residents and visitors alike more about the history and cultural landscape of Provo, Utah.

Following are descriptions of several of the walks now ready in the app.

Students at the Provo River Delta.



Maren Kennedy viewing a portrait of Alice Louise Reynolds in the Harold B. Lee Library.

The Women of BYU

"The Women of BYU" walk—created by Associate Professor Marlene Hansen Esplin (American Literature and Migration), Adjunct Professor Cristie Cowles Charles (Global Women's Studies), and their Global Women's Studies class—focuses on influential women who walked the grounds of BYU as administrators, professors, staff, and students. "There has been no shortage of women in BYU's history, but it's astounding how few we know about," Esplin notes. This tour puts users in some of the exact spaces where women of BYU have walked for 150 years, discussing topics ranging from the University's first basketball team—a women's team—to some of the first women enrolled at BYU Law School to individual women who left their mark on campus.

The tour makes stops at almost every building on campus, starting with the library, which houses an auditorium named after the first woman professor at BYU, Alice Louise Reynolds. "Reynolds loved books—she *collected* books—and she ended up donating over nine thousand books to BYU," says Maren Kennedy (French '25), a senior who helped develop this tour. "She's the one who actually started the library."

The trailblazers mentioned on this walk "worked as musicians, scientists, artists, and

professors in every field," Esplin explains. As such, the tour takes users across campus, introducing a myriad of women who have walked the halls of BYU. Esplin hopes "that people going on the walk or reading the stories and bios we've curated will realize that women have *always* been vital contributors

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to BYU." She believes that highlighting these leaders and their experiences will bring a renewed sense of belonging to students within the BYU community.

Making Peace with History

Though Provo Walks features several tours of BYU campus, it does not exclusively focus on the university. Associate Professor Mike Taylor (Indigenous American Literatures), and a handful of students, created a walk that offers insights into the culture and history of the Indigenous peoples of Utah Valley. This 17-mile tour introduces important sites for Native people before pioneer settlement as well as areas where conflict occurred between the Latter-day Saint settlers and Native peoples of

the valley. Most importantly, this walk highlights the modern-day Native community and some of their contributions to Provo today.

The walk starts at the Hinckley Mounds—the archeological village of the Fremont Tribe—and ends at Provo’s very own Kyhv Peak. In between these locations, app users stop at the battle site Fort Utah, see the centuries-old petroglyphs at the BYU botany pond, and visit the Timpanogos Utes village site, to name a few.

“As a Native American student, it’s been incredibly meaningful to learn about the events that happened here and how their impacts are still felt today,” says undergrad Gabby Hinds (Human Resource Management ’27). “I’m grateful for the opportunity to study American Indian Studies at BYU and help share this knowledge with the broader community.”

The walk aims to create a sense of belonging for the Native community, as can be seen in the walk’s concluding stop: Kyhv Peak. For decades, this landmark was known as “Squaw Peak,” named after a common ethnic slur for Indigenous women. Taylor explains that the peak’s name change in 2022 came from “women wanting to restore a different type of narrative around Native women for their girls who go to school in and are being raised in our community.” Taylor hopes that including Kyhv Peak in the tour will help highlight the Native community’s ongoing efforts to honor the peoples who have been stewards of this area for centuries, and that the walk will act as “an invitation to build better relationships in the *present* and into the future instead of just focusing on the past.”

Painting Outside the Lines

Murals in Provo decorate the sides of dozens of businesses, yet without descriptive plaques, onlookers often know little about them. To provide more context to these murals, two recent graduates, Desirae Kammerman (English ’25) and Breann Eardley (English ’25), helped develop an art walk in the downtown area that covers nine of the over 30 murals in Provo.

The walk starts on the corner of 300 N and University Avenue, where a brightly painted Volkswagen Beetle sits covered in gum. The tour passes murals painted by BYU

alumnae, such as the *Musicians Mural* on the side of June Audio Recording Studio at 39 W 200 N. Other murals in the tour were created by famous artists, including Louis Masai—who painted *The Birds and the Bees* on the Nu Skin headquarters—and children’s book author Dallas Clayton, artist of *The Best Gift Is You*, located on 52 N 100 W.

“We hope that the walks help us create a sense of place.”

—Rex Nielson



One mural painted by local artist Jake Reedy stands out to Kammerman: “This mural is black with big white paint brush strokes in it, and there are three hidden figures within the white paint strokes doing tai chi.” Kammerman says that this mural, titled *The Dialogue With Everything*, becomes more intricate and captivating the more you learn about it—just like Provo itself, a living gallery in plain sight.

To Provo and Beyond

Though each walk represents different sides of Provo’s history, the perspectives come together to create a more complete view of the city. For all those contributing to Provo Walks, the goal is much bigger than simply showing off Provo: “We hope that the walks help us create a sense of place,” Nielson explains. “The walks are intended to help people learn to navigate their own city and to offer a sense of wayfinding.” Whether accessed by visiting students, longtime residents, or casual passersby, the app brings the multidimensionality of Provo to life; for the professors and students who helped develop the walks, it already has. 📍

A statue of Chief Massasoit stands outside of the Harold B. Lee Library.



BEACONS OF LIGHT



This two-minute video features how the “Provo Walks” were created. (bit.ly/byuprovowalks)