

# Couse-Sharp Historic Site: Come See Where It All Began



***"A Friendship" by Josh Elliott, oil, 15 by 30 inches, \$7,000. Portrayed is the Couse home with E.I. Couse and his favorite model, Ben Lujan.***

TAOS, N.M. — In 1915, six painters formed the Taos Society of Artists (TSA), with the shared vision of creating authentically American art. Focusing on the vibrant Native American and Hispanic cultures set in the dramatic landscape of the Taos valley in northern New Mexico, the group grew to include 12 full members.

The more than two-acre Couse-Sharp Historic Site campus in the heart of Taos' central historic district features the former homes and studios of E.I. Couse and J.H. Sharp, two of the American-born, European-trained artists who formed the TSA. Visitors are astonished that such a well-preserved — and charming — complex of period buildings, gardens, furnishings and associated art collections still exists.

The early Taos art colony forever changed people's perceptions of the American Southwest and its native residents. They continue to influence the world of American art,

nationally and internationally, more than 100 years after it was founded. In 2022, the Lunder Research Center for the study of the TSA and early Taos art is slated to open on campus, in a building that incorporates the remnants of Sharp's home.

In the Couse home, with sections built at various times between 1839 and 1930, visitors see how these pioneer painters lived. In the Couse studio, the artist's easel, tools, furniture, cameras and darkroom remain largely as he left them upon his death in 1936. Couse's collections of local Hispanic religious art, Pueblo pottery, Native beadwork and artifacts are breathtaking, and the home and studio includes significant representation of his own work.

Sharp's 1915 studio features a permanent rotating exhibition of Sharp's paintings, collections of Native art and ephemera from his life.

The Gibbey Couse workshop brims with



***The Couse Studio remains much as the painter left it in 1936 and contains his Native art collections and a significant number of his original works.***

period tools. The Couses' son was a gifted mechanical engineer and inventor, and the shop and laboratory are presented largely as he left them in 1936.

Because of the nature of the site and buildings, in which little is labeled or under glass, all tours are docent-led and take up to two hours. Volunteer docents are scheduled especially for each group, so as much notice as possible is appreciated. Available appointment hours May-October are Monday to Saturday 9 am to 5 pm, subject to limitations imposed by the pandemic. Admission is free but donations are gratefully accepted. Schedule via the website or phone.

Couse-Sharp Historic Site is owned and managed by the Couse Foundation. The

mission of the foundation is to preserve and interpret the site, its buildings, grounds and collections, and the archives of the TSA, through education, collaboration and scholarly engagement.

The foundation celebrates its 20th year in 2021. You can join in and show your support in two ways: bid on one of our lots in a May 6 Hindman Auction (see information in the CSHS ad in this issue); or buy a ticket to a virtual commemoration featuring a June 12 drawing for a Josh Elliott painting of a scene at the site. To find out how to participate, visit the CSHS website.

The Couse-Sharp Historic Site is at 146 Kit Carson Road. For more information, 575-751-0369 or [www.couse-sharp.org](http://www.couse-sharp.org).