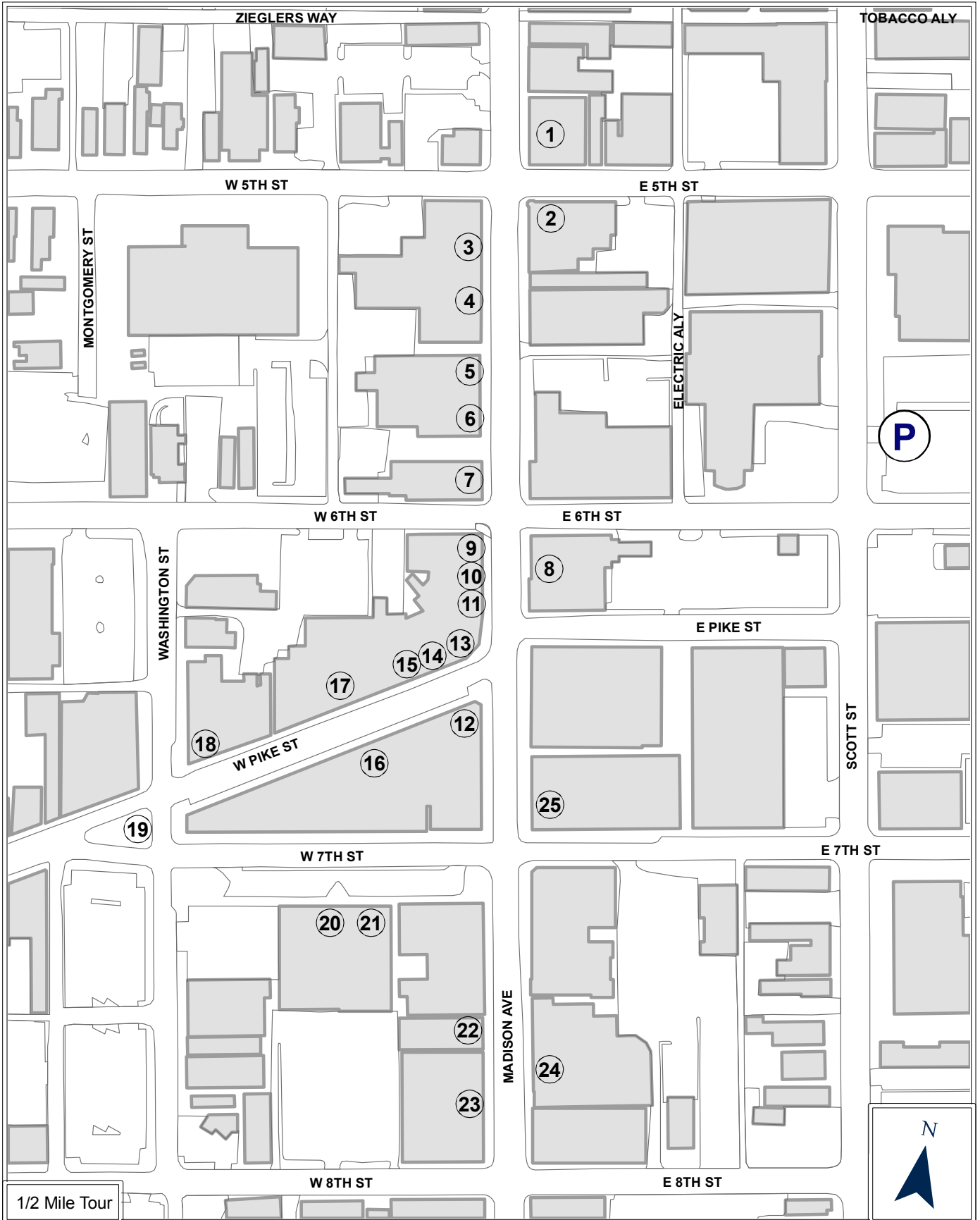




DOWNTOWN COVINGTON WALKING TOUR



Downtown Walking Tour

The City of Covington would like to welcome you, as you embark on one of seven tours designed to celebrate our thirteen National Register Historic Districts. The National Register of Historic Places, established under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, is a listing of "districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects significant in American History, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture." The City of Covington is proud of its abundant collection of important structures; they are a treasure that we wish to share and keep alive, both for our citizens and the many visitors who come to our city each year. We thank you for your interest and are confident that you will find your experience in the Downtown Commercial Historic District to be informative, enjoyable and positively memorable!

HISTORY

The Downtown Commercial Historic District developed as the commercial and industrial center of the city following the completion of the Kentucky Central Railway and the Cincinnati-Covington Suspension Bridge in the late 1860s. These advances in technology made it unnecessary for the city center to continue to be located near the riverfront. Seeking a location near the new railroad station, the business sector shifted and found a new home in the current downtown near Sixth Street and Madison Avenue. From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, Madison Avenue thrived as Covington's commercial center, until another advance in transportation, the automobile, drew the people away again to a new frontier: the suburban mall.

In terms of architecture, this district boasts a substantial and cohesive representation of nineteenth century commercial structures. Although you will notice a great variation in size, design and age of the buildings, these differences do not detract from the continuity of the streetscape. The majority of the structures were built as mixed-use; two or three story structures with storefronts on the first floor and either apartments or office space on the upper floors. Despite the apparent uniformity of this district, almost every architectural style from the 1850s to the 1930s is represented. From the early simple Greek Revival structures found on Pike Street, to the former Woolworth store on Madison Avenue built in the late 1940s, Covington's Downtown Commercial Historic District has much to offer.

As you approach the downtown area your journey will begin at the 500 block of Madison Avenue and continue south to Eighth Street. At the midpoint between these two cross streets you will find Pike Street, a charming little promenade off the main thoroughfare. Originally called Turnpike Street, this was the start of the old Lexington Turnpike dating from the 1830s. As you meander down Pike Street then continue south on Madison Avenue, try to imagine downtown as it was in the late 1800s and early 1900s: the bustling and viable commercial and retail center of Northern Kentucky.

As you begin your tour at the corner of Madison Avenue and Fifth Street, your first point of interest will be the building at the northeast corner, the old Odd Fellows Hall.

1. 432-440 Madison Avenue c. 1856
This mixed-use commercial structure was once hailed as the most impressive and magnificent building of its kind in all of Kentucky. Especially noteworthy is its method of construction. In order to accommodate the large unbroken interior spaces required for the second floor meeting hall without the use of columns, iron tie rods were hung from the roof trusses to support the floors. Built in a traditional style combining elements from both the austere Greek Revival and the more ornate Italianate, this building proves to be an interesting addition to the streetscape, with its cast iron storefronts, decorative cornice, and colossal pilasters that extend from the first floor to the cornice. In addition to its architectural merit, the structure is well known as the center for Covington's civic and social activities for the better part of one hundred years.

The 500 Block of Madison Avenue:

The first block to be covered on this tour has been the focal point of the Madison Avenue commercial district for well over a century. Both sides of the street are lined with various commercial structures dating from before the Civil War to the early twentieth century. Although many of the facades have been altered or aged by time, there still remains a visible record of architectural detail from almost every stylistic period and decade.

2. 502 Madison Avenue c. 1905
Erected in the Neo-Classical style, this building provides an interesting and eclectic, yet not uncommon solution, to the aesthetic challenges of a corner structure. Note the cylindrical bay present on the second and third floors.

3. 507 Madison Avenue c. 1850
This pre-Civil War structure is a rare example of the Greek Revival Style. Notice its small scale and austere, simple façade that is in direct contrast to the neighboring buildings.

4. 513-515 Madison Avenue c. 1929
This large structure, erected in a style reminiscent of the Chicago School of Architects, is a prime example of the more simplistic buildings built on Madison Avenue in the twentieth century. Important as the home of "Modern Furniture" from 1929-1988, this building is now used for office space.

5. 521 Madison Avenue c. 1890
This building, done in the Queen Anne style, is noteworthy both for the brick arches found on its façade that are indicative of the style, and the unusual use of stained glass found in the second story windows.

6. 527 Madison Avenue c. 1860
This Italianate building was remodeled after the turn of the century. The addition of such elements as the decorative cornice brackets that appear to be draped with garlands are indicative of the Classical Revival style.

7. 535-539 Madison Avenue c. 1900
The former Farmers & Traders Bank Building is exceptional for its low relief foliate carving, indicative of the Beaux-Arts style. This was probably the first high rise building of modern steel frame construction built by the city. Situated on the northeast lot of this intersection, this structure is one of three banks that have historically comprised Covington's center of commerce.

The 600 Block of Madison Avenue:

This block, intersected at its midpoint by Pike Street, includes some of the major buildings and institutions found in the City of Covington. Once again, the buildings are varied in scale, style, and material, but remain largely intact and provide a virtual museum of nineteenth and twentieth century architecture.

8. 600-608 Madison Avenue c. 1896
This twentieth century structure, known as the Eilerman Building, was erected in the Neo-classical tradition. Designed by architect Dan Segar, it featured a corner bay window which culminated in a tower and spire (see attached). The tower was removed after a fire in 1921. The building's 500 light electric sign was the first in the city. The Eilerman store was closed in 1973 and the building sold to Peoples-Liberty Bank. The building sported elaborate metal scrolls at the corner for over 75 years proclaiming "Eilerman's Corner" and "Kentucky Best" - clothing for men and boys. Unfortunately the scrolls and several decorative leaded glass "E" windows has since been removed from the windows. Note the monumental quality of the building, reminiscent of a Roman temple, and the steel tracery that adorns the commanding full story windows.

9. 601-603 Madison Avenue c. 1870
This Italianate structure boasts a number of distinctive features. Note the handsome hood molds with carved keystones that surround the windows, the striking geometric carved cornice, and the alternating stone quoins that grace the façade on its corners.

10. 607 Madison Avenue c. 1873
This Italianate structure is also noteworthy due to its stone façade and Romanesque colonnettes set into the window recesses.

11. 609 Madison Avenue c. 1890
Originally the German National Bank building, this unusual structure is probably the finest example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture left in the city. Faced in yellow sandstone, this structure incorporates an array of carved detail surrounding large rounded arches that are indicative of the style. Though modest in scale, it appears somewhat massive as it attempts to break the horizontal roofline with its commanding gable.

Before rounding the corner onto Pike Street, notice the Madison Avenue façade of 627-629 Madison Avenue.

12. 627-629 Madison Avenue c. 1917
This three-story building of fireproof construction is faced

with tile in what appears to be a Neo-Classical tradition. Notice the abundant use of columns and colonnettes, the rounded arches of the second and third floors, and the cast iron storefronts that grace the façade at street level. Always a multi-use structure this important corner location once housed a casino theater complete with an elaborate recessed façade.

Pike Street

As you stroll down west Pike Street, now called Old Town Plaza, you are following the route of the old Lexington Turnpike. Established around 1830, this thoroughfare was the first to connect Northern Kentucky to Lexington. Along this route, many commercial areas developed to service the travelers on their long journey. Old Town Plaza is one these areas, housing commercial buildings that are among the oldest in the city.

13. 2 West Pike Street c. 1900
This unique corner building with its rounded façade is another example of how the Italianate style was adapted to commercial use.

14. 6 West Pike Street c. 1890
This Italianate is noteworthy both for its unusual high Victorian incised brick façade and its unique Art Nouveau storefront that was added sometime in the early twentieth century.

15. 8 West Pike Street c. 1860
Also of the Italianate style, this building presents a limestone façade, complete with decorative hood molds and cornice, indicative of this style. Of special interest is the use of stone quoins on the outer edges.

16. 11-17 West Pike Street c. 1890
This cluster of Italianate commercial buildings with cast iron storefronts, known as "New Shinkle Row" was another investment made by Covington's nineteenth century entrepreneur, Amos Shinkle.

17. 18 West Pike Street c. 1910
This building was home to the J. C. Penny Company until its closing in the late 1970s. Several times altered, this structure served as an anchor for Covington's prosperous retail market for over 60 years.

18. 40 West Pike Street c. 1890
This large commercial complex is unusual for its Second Empire style which is characterized by the uniform façade and slate polychrome mansard roof.

19. Duveneck Triange
The statue of Frank Duveneck, commissioned by philanthropists Oakley and Eva Farris and created by Matt Langford, stands in the Covington Arts District in a small triangular-shaped garden between Seventh, Washington and Pike Streets. It shows Duveneck, one of Covington's most celebrated artists, holding a portrait of his wife, Elizabeth. Born the son of German immigrants in 1848, Duveneck served an art apprenticeship with the Benedictine monks before

attending an art academy in Germany. He opened an art school in Florence, Italy, but when his wife died, Duveneck returned to Covington. Although he became director of the prestigious Cincinnati Art Academy, he always lived in Covington. Duveneck died in 1919, but his legacy lives on through his art in such places as the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption and the Cincinnati Art Museum.

At this point you will turn east on onto West Seventh Street.

Before crossing Seventh Street, look to the west for #20 and you will see another plaza type of area. For at least a century this wide section of road served as an open air farmers market, providing greater Covington with a vast selection of fresh fruits and vegetables.

20. 23-25 East Seventh Street c. 1939

This Art Deco institutional structure houses the Covington Board of Education Administration. Reminiscent of many such buildings constructed during the Depressing years by the WPA, this example marks the beginnings of modern architecture. Elements to note are the aluminum marquee and light fixtures at the entrance that offset the overall verticality of the building.

21. 15 West Seventh Street c. 1935

Built for the Sears & Roebuck Company in the Art Deco style, this building was an important fixture in Covington's commercial center for many years. Originally built as a one-story building, the store was so successful that a second floor was added in 1937, just two years after the store opened. Sears remained in Covington until relocation to the suburbs in the late 1970s. Note the decorative tile work that adorns the façade of this simple yet elegant structure.

Precede down East Seventh Street to Madison Avenue and head south on Madison Avenue.

The 700 Block of Madison Avenue:

As you cross over Seventh Street and continue south on Madison Avenue, you will notice that the character of this block differs considerably from that of the previous two. Most of the buildings are far more modest in scale and style. A few exceptions do exist, however, that relate more to the core area to the north.

22. 717-719 Madison Avenue c. 1890

This commanding High Victorian Gothic structure with its incised brickwork and acute center gable, is truly a landmark of the block. Built as a livery and boarding stable, the building still retains a vestige of its previous use, a horse head done in high relief and positioned on the arch in the central bay of the façade. This structure now houses the Storer Cable Company.

23. 721-731 Madison Avenue c. 1940

This unusual building, originally built for Montgomery Ward, flanks the corner of Madison Avenue and Eighth Street. It presents a unique array of decorative tile work, adorned with a butcher typ motif. Note the addition of urns atop the roofline that further enhance the eclectic nature of the building.

Cross the street and head back north on Madison Avenue

24. 730-732 Madison Avenue c. 1948

The former Madison Theater occupies a site that has housed a theater since 1912. It is a fine example of the Art Deco style, with its vertical marquee faced in terra cotta that was remodeled after a fire in 1946. This premier theater was a Covington institution for over 50 years.

25. 636-638 Madison Avenue c. 1910

This architectural monument at the intersection of Seventh Street and Madison Avenue was once home to Coppin's Department Store, a local fixture for over a century. The plan for the seven story building was inspired by the Chicago School of Architects. Evidence of this can be seen in its classical base and capital type of construction, with a concave cornice boasting a series of cartouches adorned with "C"s. The old retail structure has recently been remodeled and now serves as Covington's City Hall.

Now that you have completed your tour of Downtown, you may want to continue south on Madison Avenue until you reach Eleventh Street. As you travel this distance of three blocks you will find more commercial structures similar to those included on the tour, yet each unique in its own right.

Other points of interest:

Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption c. 1895

This commanding gothic structure that dominates the streetscape of Madison Avenue for several blocks, was inspired by the great Notre Dame in Paris. Though not one of the city's oldest churches, this structure at Eleventh Street and Madison Avenue is one of the great Covington landmarks.

Trinity Episcopal Church c. 1860

This church in the 300 block of Madison Avenue is a typical example of American Gothic church design. Set apart from the harshness of the street with a well kept lawn and gardens, this National Register Historic Site is well worth your visit.

This ends the Downtown Walking Tour. Please stop by the Economic Development and Community Relations Department at 638 Madison Avenue, Rm. 407, to pick up the other Walking tours. There are seven tours in all and each is unique in its own way.

*Downtown
Latonia
Licking Riverside
Main Strasse
Mutter Gottes
Seminary Square
Wallace Woods*