

17 Gulf Tower

*Trowbridge & Livingston (New York), architects;
E. P. Mellon, associate architect, 1932*

This 44-story tower, originally constructed for the Gulf Oil Corporation, was the tallest in Pittsburgh until 1970. The architects went down 90 feet to find a proper footing for their great tower, then raised it in a sober Modernistic manner that began and ended with allusions to Classical architecture: a colossal doorway with a 50-ton granite entablature on Seventh Avenue and a limestone stepped-back pyramidal top that recalls the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus and now serves as the KDKA Weather Beacon, when illuminated at night.

18 Federal Courthouse and Post Office

*Trowbridge & Livingston (New York), architects,
with James A. Wetmore (Washington, D.C.), 1932*

During a \$68-million renovation in 2004–05, the exterior stonework was cleaned, six new courtrooms were added in the original building light wells, and an atrium was constructed to allow natural light to illuminate the new third-floor lobby space and historic fourth-floor courtrooms.

19 U.S. Steel Tower

Harrison & Abramovitz (New York), architects, 1971

At 841 feet high, U.S. Steel Tower was the tallest building between New York and Chicago when completed. (In 1987 Philadelphia's One Liberty Place Building at 945 feet became the first to surpass it.) U.S. Steel Tower has an exposed frame of Cor-Ten weathering steel (a U.S. Steel patent).

The 18 exterior columns that run the full height of the building are filled with a mixture of water, anti-freeze, and an anti-corrosive. The purpose of the fluid is to maintain a column temperature below a dangerous level during a fire.

There is an acre of space on each floor; approximately 9,000 people work in the building; and there are 54 elevator cars, 11,000 windows, and 64 stories.

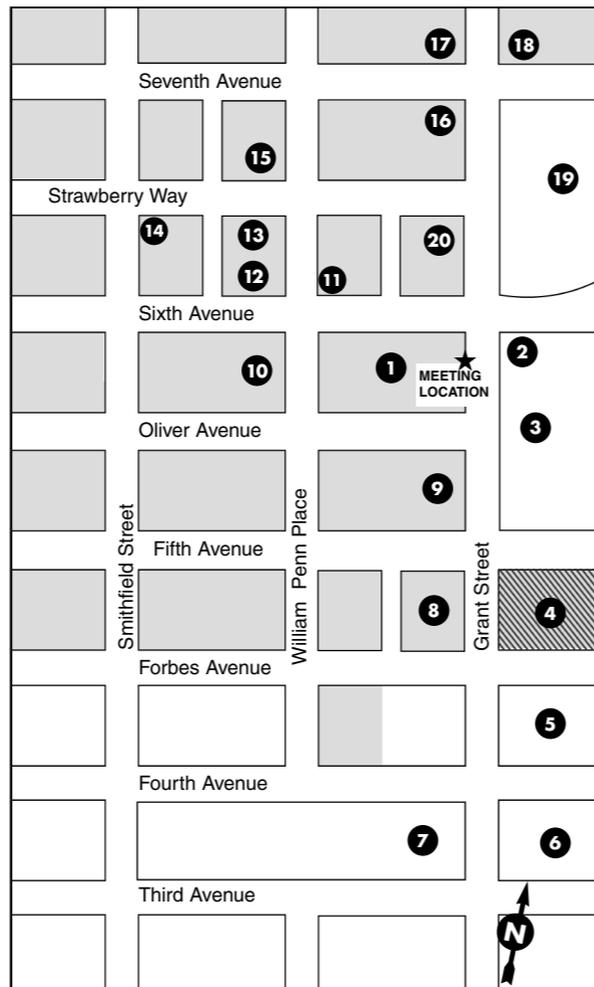
U.S. Steel Corporation and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) are headquartered here. UPMC is a major tenant and has branded its name on the exterior.

20 First Lutheran Church

Andrew Peebles, architect, 1888

When this church was built, Grant Street still had the air of a small-town main street, with Henry Hobson Richardson's new courthouse and St. Paul's Cathedral (now demolished) by far its most imposing objects. The graceful dimensions of First Lutheran Church complement the massive courthouse, and details of the church (such as the red mortar) echo Richardson's buildings. Services on weekdays begin at 12:10.

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The shaded blocks of buildings are in the Pittsburgh Central Downtown National Register Historic District. The Allegheny County Courthouse is a National Historic Landmark.

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|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. Omni William Penn Hotel | 12. The Residences at the Historic Alcoa Building |
| 2. BNY Mellon Green | 13. Allegheny HYP Club |
| 3. BNY Mellon Center | 14. Smithfield United Church |
| 4. Allegheny County Courthouse | 15. Verizon Building |
| 5. City-County Building | 16. Koppers Building |
| 6. Grant Building | 17. Gulf Tower |
| 7. One Oxford Centre | 18. Federal Courthouse and Post Office |
| 8. Frick Building | 19. U.S. Steel Tower |
| 9. Union Trust Building | 20. First Lutheran Church |
| 10. Mellon Square | |
| 11. Hotel Monaco | |

The salvation, the rejuvenation of Pittsburgh in my lifetime, has to my mind been one of the stunning accomplishments in our country and deserves more attention and credit.

—David McCullough, Excerpt from "Through the Place,"
PHLF's 50th-Anniversary Documentary

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Open Mondays through October (11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)
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- **July:** Grant Street & Mellon Square
- **August:** Bridges & River Shores
- **September:** Penn-Liberty Cultural District
- **October:** Fourth Avenue & PPG Place

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Not free. A guidebook is included.

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July 30: Aspinwall Urban Hike

Aug. 20: Uptown Urban Hike

Sept. 17: Bus Tour to the City of Butler, PA

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Visit a host of buildings that are opening their doors and providing behind-the-scenes access and unique experiences. For details: doorsopenpgh.org

Oct. 22: East End Urban Hike from Schenley Park through CMU to Rodef Shalom

FOR DETAILS & RESERVATIONS

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DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH WALKING TOUR GRANT STREET & MELLON SQUARE



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MEETING LOCATION

Grant Street near Sixth Avenue, at the Omni William Penn Hotel entrance



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GRANT STREET & MELLON SQUARE

Pittsburgh especially is a city of monuments to its great industrialists who left behind them not only steel mills, factories and banks, but also a number of huge buildings which perpetuate their names. Frick, Carnegie, Oliver and Phipps resound in the city’s architectural as well as its financial annals. Like the princes of the Renaissance, the masters of these great fortunes loved to build. In steel, marble and granite is memorialized much of the history of Pittsburgh’s Age of the Moguls.

—James D. Van Trump, *“The Skyscraper as Monument”* (*The Charette*; 43:4, April 1963)

With its concentration of major historic buildings and modern skyscrapers, Grant Street is downtown Pittsburgh’s showcase thoroughfare. In 2012, the American Planning Association named Grant Street one of America’s ten “Great Streets,” because of its exceptional character.

Grant Street takes its name from Grant’s Hill—once 60 feet high and occupying the area between Oliver and Fourth avenues. Grant’s Hill was named for British Major James Grant, who was defeated there by the French and Native Americans in September 1758. Two months later, on November 25, 1758, British General John Forbes succeeded in wresting control of this area from the French. Forbes named Pittsburgh in honor of British statesman Sir William Pitt the Elder, who devised the military strategy so the British could beat the French in this region and around the world.

Grant’s Hill formed a natural eastern boundary to 18th-century Pittsburgh, but its height was an impediment to development. In the late 1830s, in order to accommodate construction of a new County jail and courthouse and to provide access for fire equipment and public transit, the top of the hill—“the Hump”—was lowered; by 1911 some 45 feet of earth had been removed, and by 1913 the remaining 15 feet had been excavated.

The oldest surviving buildings on Grant Street are the present Allegheny County Courthouse (1884–88) and the First Lutheran Church (1887–88). They would be joined in the first decades of the 20th century by “monumental” buildings devoted to industrial management, commercial activity, banking, hospitality, and government. Grant Street was widened in 1929, and in 1990 an end-to-end scheme of paving, planting, and lighting was completed.

1 Omni William Penn Hotel

Janssen & Abbott, architects, 1916; Janssen & Cocken, architects, 1929; Urban Room, Joseph Urban, 1929

This classic big-city hotel is distinguished by the Art Deco Urban Room on the 17th floor. Deep light courts (easily noticed from Mellon Square) allow the maximum number of guest rooms to have natural ventilation and outdoor views. During a \$22 million renovation in 2004, many of the building’s original elements were restored.

2 BNY Mellon Green

Burt Hill Kosar Rittelmann, architects, and MTR Landscape Architects, 2002

Privately owned but open to the public, this greenspace gives a campus feel to the BNY Mellon Financial Center complex and provides an amenity for Pittsburgh’s central business district. The fountain was designed by Geoffrey L. Rausch. The granite monoliths symbolize the strength and stability of Pittsburgh. A tree-lined promenade of rustic terrazzo and granite paving leads to one of four downtown “T” (transit) stations.

3 BNY Mellon Center

Welton Becket Associates (Los Angeles, later New York), architects, 1983

The steel-plate walls help brace the frame of this 54-story skyscraper, respectfully designed to pay homage to Henry Hobson Richardson’s Allegheny County Courthouse.

4 Allegheny County Courthouse

Henry Hobson Richardson (Brookline, Mass.), architect, 1884–88; alterations

The Allegheny County Courthouse and former jail are among Pittsburgh’s most famous buildings. Richardson died in 1886, two years before the courthouse was finished. On his deathbed Richardson is reported to have said: “If they honor me for the pigmy things I have already done, what will they say when they see Pittsburgh finished.” The courthouse and former jail are his most impressive surviving buildings.

The jail was renovated between 1999 and 2001 to house the Allegheny County family and juvenile courts.

5 City-County Building

Henry Hornbostel, with Edward B. Lee, architects, 1917

Hornbostel (NYC) won the 1904 competition for Carnegie Technical Schools (now CMU). More than 50 of the buildings and monuments he designed for Pittsburgh remain.

His City-County Building is Classical in style—vaulted, columned, measured—although his detailing is very largely original. The ground-floor corridor is one of Pittsburgh’s great interior spaces. The 43-foot-tall by 150-foot-long passage is lined with bronze columns crafted by Tiffany Studios. Elevator doors show figures holding the three Allegheny County courthouses and the three Pittsburgh city halls.

6 Grant Building

Henry Hornbostel and Eric Fisher Wood, architects, 1930

This building has lost some exterior detailing and inner space, but its neon beacon continues to flash P-I-T-T-S-B-U-R-G-H in Morse code for the benefit of aviators.

7 One Oxford Centre

Hellmuth, Obata, Kassabaum (New York), architects, 1983

This 46-story skyscraper was built as a cluster of octagons to maximize the number of corner offices.

8 Frick Building

D. H. Burnham & Co. (Chicago), architects, 1902

Henry Clay Frick made a number of major real-estate investments that resulted in construction of a close-set group of buildings in the Grant Street area: the Frick Building, the Frick Annex (now the Allegheny Building), Union Arcade, and the first part of the William Penn Hotel. In the Frick Building, the earliest of these, he created a personal monument and the location of his own office. The tall new building that was finished in 1902 put an end to the 14-year dominance of the Pittsburgh skyline by the courthouse directly across the street.

Look inside for a marble bust of Frick by Malvina Hoffman, bronze lions by A. Phimister Proctor, and *Fortune*, in glass, by John LaFarge.

9 Union Trust Building

Frederick John Osterling, architect, 1917

Note the roof: Flemish Gothic realized in virtuosic terra cotta work. Originally called the Union Arcade, it had space inside for 240 shops, facing two four-story open arcade spaces, and about 700 offices. See the dramatic interior space: a ten-story atrium with an art-glass skylight.

10 Mellon Square

Mitchell & Ritchey, architects; Simonds & Simonds, landscape architects, 1955

The Mellon family donated a block of downtown real estate in 1949 to create this one-acre park with terrazzo walks, fountain cascades, and granite benches above a six-level underground parking garage. Mellon Square was the world’s first urban space to incorporate a park, shops, and underground garage in one design. It was restored by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.

Mellon Square also serves as a fine architecture-viewing platform. Notice the old Gimbel’s department store, now Heinz 57 Center (Starrett & Van Vleck, 1914); the Henry W. Oliver Building (D. H. Burnham & Co., 1910) that terminates in a pilastered arcade; the Park Building (George B. Post, 1896) with crouching figures of Atlas beneath its cornice; and the former Mellon Bank building (Trowbridge & Livingston, 1924) whose magnificent interior was destroyed for the short-lived Lord & Taylor’s. The PNC Financial Services Group has renovated the building for employee offices.

11 Hotel Monaco

MacClure & Spahr, architects, 1902–03; enlarged by Joseph F. Kuntz, architect, 1924

Hotel Monaco brings new life to the classically inspired Philadelphia Company Building, later known as the James H. Reed Building. The interior is a welcome surprise, full of contemporary style and connections to Pittsburgh’s history.

12 The Residences at the Historic Alcoa Building

Harrison & Abramovitz (New York), architects, 1953

Originally constructed for Alcoa, this corporate headquarters building was intended to show off as many applications of aluminum as possible. Here, aluminum siding made its debut in high-style construction. In 1998, Alcoa constructed a new building on the North Shore along the Allegheny River and donated this building to serve as the headquarters for various nonprofit organizations. The idea failed, and the skyscraper now houses apartments in the upper stories, with offices and retail below.

13 Allegheny HYP Club

Enlarged by Edward B. Lee, architect, 1930

1890-period workers’ houses were remodeled to provide a gracious courtyard and cozy interiors for what was originally the Harvard-Yale-Princeton Club. The club membership is now open to graduates from any college or university. The rose window of the Smithfield United Church makes an impressive backdrop ornament to this picturesque scene.

14 Smithfield United Church

Henry Hornbostel, architect, 1925

Hornbostel finished off an eclectic Gothic composition with an openwork spire that represents a very early architectural use of aluminum. Sunday worship begins at 11:00 a.m.

15 Verizon Building

Alden & Harlow, 1905 addition; James T. Windrim (Philadelphia), 1915, 1923, 1931 additions

This building complex, begun in red brick c. 1890 by Frederick John Osterling for the Bell Telephone Company, was greatly expanded with several additions faced in stone and brick. The building façade has been beautifully restored.

A one-story covered walk at Strawberry Way, with shallow vaults in green-and-cream Guastavino tile and limestone piers, is not only a handsome space in itself, but frames the view of the old and tiny houses opposite.

16 Koppers Building

Graham, Anderson, Probst & White (Chicago), architects, 1929

The successor firm to D. H. Burnham & Co. designed a suave Art Deco headquarters for a progressive industrial firm. The tall lobby spaces within the limestone building feature colored marbles and ornamented bronzework. The crowning chateau roof, being made of copper, can be taken as a pun, while the lobby mailbox is a doll’s house version of the whole building, roof included.