

# walking our mainstreets: some architectural terms

## What's the name of that thing?

Naming is the beginning of caring. Here are some of the details that give character to historic mainstreet buildings.



finials



dome



pediment



bracketed cornice



datestone



mansard roof



rose window



window hood



arch and keystone



arched corbel table



terra cotta ornament



corbelled brick



Doric column



brackets



Ionic column

Photos courtesy of PHLF and Erin Shilling.

Our neighborhood business districts are the heart and soul of our communities. Revitalization programs like Mainstreets Pittsburgh drive investment to and create jobs in our neighborhoods.

—Mayor Luke Ravenstahl

Pittsburgh's buildings have stories to tell. Sometimes, we just get too caught up in the daily grind to listen.

The Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation is helping us reconnect to our urban environment. The organization has long hosted walking tours of Downtown Pittsburgh, and now—this fall—they'll be adding other neighborhoods to the repertoire.

—Caralyn Green, *Pop City* (August 12, 2009)

## Ten Free Walks

Always from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.

Reservations are **required**. Tours are limited to 25 people unless otherwise noted.

- Sept. 5:** Mt. Washington
- Sept. 12:** Friendship/Garfield
- Sept. 19:** Lawrenceville
- Sept. 26:** Downtown (45 people max)
- Oct. 3:** Strip District
- Oct. 10:** West End Village
- Oct. 17:** Bloomfield
- Oct. 24:** South Side
- Oct. 31:** Northside/Historic Deutschtown
- Nov. 7:** East Liberty

For meeting locations and reservations:

[marylu@phlf.org](mailto:marylu@phlf.org)

412-471-5808, ext. 527

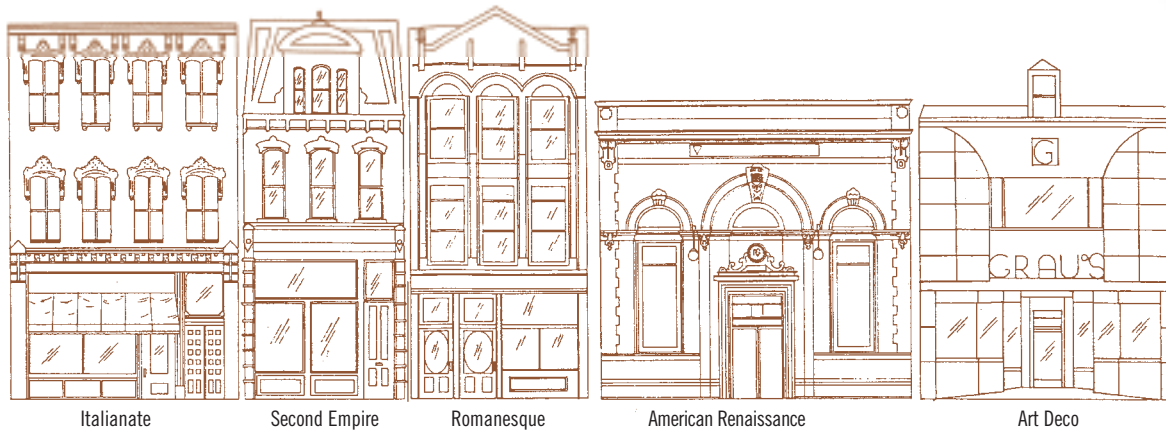
[www.phlf.org](http://www.phlf.org)



Offered by the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation in cooperation with the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh and Mainstreets Pittsburgh.



# walking our mainstreets: some architectural styles



Renderings by  
John Martine.

*The architectural styles are described in their purest forms. In practice, most structures are a combination of several different styles. Also, numerous remodelings and modernizations make the original lines difficult to discern. This chart, should, however, allow you to identify the architectural styles of some historic main street buildings.*

## Italianate: 1840–1880

Adapted from Italian Renaissance palaces, these buildings have a square body topped by a level roof line. At the roof line are deep eaves decorated with large brackets. Window shapes may vary from floor to floor, with a rounded top as the most common shape.

## Second Empire: 1865–1885

Borrowed from France, this style is square and boxy with massive ornamentation. Windows of many sizes and shapes decorate the façade. The most identifiable feature is the mansard roof, named for 17th-century French architect François Mansart. A full story tall and shaped like a flat-topped pyramid, the roof is often accented by a central tower structure and dormers. Painted in dark colors, often reds and deep greens.

## Romanesque: 1875–1900

Characterized by massive walls and arched windows and doorways, the façades of these buildings are often ornamented with short columns and squat towers. Always built of brick or stone, they are sometimes decorated with terra cotta. The finest example of this style in the country is the Allegheny County Courthouse on Grant Street in downtown Pittsburgh.

## American Renaissance: 1880–1920

American Renaissance architecture (also known as “Beaux-Arts”) was based on the revival of Classical architectural forms from the Italian Renaissance (roughly 1400-1580), as taught at the École des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine Arts) in Paris. Parisian training methods were followed at almost all of the architectural schools established in the United States in the late 19th- and early 20th-centuries, including Carnegie Technical Schools (CMU), established in Pittsburgh in 1904. The style often exhibits double columns; arches with decorative keystones; decorative balustrades (railings) around roofs; and cartouches (ornamental plaques), medallions, and relief (two-dimensional) sculpture on the façade. Stone is often used and the grandest buildings may have domes and three-dimensional sculptures. Banks, post offices, and museums built during this period wear the style proudly.

## Art Deco: 1925–1940

Art Deco is characterized by its rounded shapes, parallel lines and chevrons, and streamlined look. Many Art Deco buildings are new fronts on old buildings. They often are made of stucco and concrete. Store fronts were usually colored glass or enamel on metal. Art Deco colors were red, black, coral pink, and turquoise.