There's nothing like walking to get you in touch with a place. You see, hear, notice, explore, and discover.

—Lawrence A. Glisco, author, historian, and PHLF Trustee

FREE TOURS & EVENTS

Old Allegheny County Jail Museum
Open Mondays through October (11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.) (except for court holidays)

Downtown Pittsburgh and Oakland: Guided Walking Tours

Every Friday, May through October
• Two different free walking tours are offered each month: one from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. and another from Noon to 1 p.m. Join us for one, or both.
• Advance reservations are appreciated (see below).

DOWNTOWN’S BEST

Special Places and Spaces in a 2 1/2-Hour Walk
Not free. Advance paid reservations are required (see below).

June through August: every Thursday, 9:45 a.m. to Noon. Other dates by appointment for groups of 10 people.

SPECIAL TOURS & MEMBERSHIP

Visit www.phlf.org and click on Tours & Events to find out about neighborhood walking tours in the Pittsburgh region, April through October.

Members of PHLF receive discounts on tours and free admission to workshops and presentations at the Landmarks Preservation Resource Center (see below), among other benefits. To join, visit www.phlf.org and click on Take Action/Membership.

WORKSHOPS & PRESENTATIONS

Visit www.phlf.org and click on Tours & Events for programs on selected Tuesdays and Thursdays.

FOR DETAILS & RESERVATIONS

412-671-5808, ext. 527 or marylue@phlf.org

Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation

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A self-guided walking tour, compliments of the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation

STARTING LOCATION
Katz Plaza, at the corner of Penn Avenue and Seventh Street
PENN-LIBERTY WALK

The Penn-Liberty Historic District is one of the best preserved and most nearly intact portions of Pittsburgh’s ... retailing district [from the late 19th and early 20th centuries]. The character of the buildings demonstrates the vitality of Pittsburgh commerce after the Civil War, when much American trade passed through the city into the Midwest via the rivers and railroads that bordered the district to the north.

—Pittsburgh Cultural Trust plaque, 1993

Pittsburgh's streets were laid out in 1784 by George Woods and Thomas Vickroy, who were working on behalf of the Penn family in Philadelphia. By 1900, the Penn-Liberty area was widely varied in content and included many buildings designed by important local architects. Commercial buildings large and small, theaters, hotels, office buildings, and some heavy industry were mixed together in that time before zoning. A rail line ran down Liberty Avenue at the district's southern edge, and an elevated rail line was soon due to run along the Allegheny River shore. The ongoing century saw construction continuing until the Depression, then a half-century of deterioration. A reversal of circumstances began in 1971 with the restoration and opening of Heinz Hall (formerly a motion-picture palace) for the Pittsburgh Symphony, and continued with the establishment of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust in 1984.

Since then, the Trust has helped transform a blighted section of the city into an arts and entertainment district that attracts more than two million people each year. Now designated a National Register District and a City Historic District, the Penn-Liberty area includes handsomely restored performance halls and hotels, and renovated commercial buildings housing galleries, schools, restaurants, one-of-a-kind stores, and residences.

1. Agnes R. Katz Plaza
   Daniel Urban Kiley (Vermont), landscape architect; Michael Graves (Princeton), architect; Louise Bourgeois (New York), sculptor, 1995
   Here is a refuge from the street, with remarkable contents: 32 linden trees, a 25-foot-high bronze fountain cascade, and 3 pairs of benches in the form of eyes, as well as 22 benches of more conventional form.

2. Theater Square
   Michael Graves (Princeton), architect, with WTW Architects, 1993
   This colorful 10-story building has a Jumbotron on its corner with the latest information about cultural events in Pittsburgh. Along with 800 parking spaces, Theater Square includes a centralized box-office, the Cabaret at Theater Square, and a restaurant.

3. O'Reilly Theatre
   Michael Graves (Princeton), architect, 1999
   The overhanging copper-covered roof makes a dramatic statement and has a practical use: it encloses a full-size rehearsal space. A local critic characterizes the building, that is home to the Pittsburgh Public Theater, as "pure Graves—smooth, polished, pared-down classicism."

4. Benedum Center for the Performing Arts
   (originally the Stanley Theatre)
   Hoffman-Honan Company (Philadelphia), architects, 1927; remodeled and enlarged, 1987, MacLachlan, Cornells & Filoni, architects
   A grand movie house from the silent period, the Stanley had stage and orchestral facilities, and in 1987 was adapted for opera, light opera, and ballet. The exterior was preserved and the grand foyer and auditorium have been largely restored to their original grandeur.

5. Century Building
   Rutan & Russell, architects, 1907; renovated, 2009, Musser Studio and Konig Eisenberg Architecture, Inc. (Santa Monica)
   Architects Frank Rutan and Frederick Russell formed a partnership in 1896. They were trained in the office of H.H. Richardson, designer of Pittsburgh's Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail (1884–88) and the leading American architect of the 19th century. Their Century Building is faced in matte white or near-white materials, while the solids around the windows are in glossy bronze-green terra cotta. (Terra cotta is a heat-stable medium that is molded and can be glazed.) TREK Development Group has converted the office building into 60 apartments.

6. 800 Block, Penn Avenue (south side)
   This gracious row of commercial buildings, constructed between 1900 and 1915, is rich in pattern and color. The building materials are brick and terra cotta. Here you can see the raw red color of unglazed terra cotta and green- and white-glazed terra cotta.

7. Pittsburgh CAPA (Creative and Performing Arts)
   MacLachlan, Cornells & Filoni, architects, 2003; Charles Bickel, architect, 1915; renovated as part of CAPA in 2003/2009
   CAPA is an $80 million state-of-the-art facility for City students (grades 6–12), built largely through the generosity of The B. P. Foundation. The design of the new building plays off the design of the adjacent historic structure of 1915 by Pittsburgh architect Charles Bickel. (Bickel opened an architectural firm in Pittsburgh in 1885 and was, by all available records, the most frequently hired architect in the Penn-Liberty area.) Classrooms flow from one building into the other.

8. Wm. G. Johnston Building
   Deeds & Brothers, builder, 1883; remodeling, 1915
   This is an example of the brick-layer's craft, with much fluting and paneling. William G. Johnston & Co. were printers and stationers. The building, now housing apartments in the upper stories and a ground-floor restaurant, is protected by an easement with the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation.

9. 300 Block, Penn Avenue (north side)
   This block includes possibly the last building built Downtown as a single-family residence (903 Penn, c. 1870) and two buildings designed by Charles Bickel: 911–13 Penn (1905) and 915–21 Penn (1906, now the Penn-Garrison apartments. 945–49 Penn Avenue, erected in 1905 by the Phipps Trust and renovated in 2004, houses the 182-room Courtyard by Marriott.

10. 209 Ninth Street
    Charles Bickel, architect, 1895; renovated, 1985, L. P. Perdomo Associates
    Constructed as the Presbyterian Publications Building, this structure reflects both the fading of the Richardsonian Romanesque style, as shown in the capital of the central cast-iron column on the ground floor, and the coming into fashion of Classicism: note the rectangular framing of groups of windows and the use of golden brown Roman brick.

11. August Wilson Center for African American Culture
    Perkins & Will (San Francisco), 2009
    Allison G. Williams was the principal and design director of this state-of-the-art facility at 980 Liberty Avenue, housing a 479-seat proscenium theater, exhibition galleries, dance studio, and rehearsal center. The facility is named after Pittsburgh-born Pulitzer-prize-winning playwright August Wilson (1945–2005), who set nine of his ten plays about the African American experience in Pittsburgh's Hill District.

12. Baum Building & "Space" Gallery
    (originally the Liberty Theater)
    Edward B. Lee, architect, 1912; remodeled, 1925
    This Beaux-Arts gem at 812 Liberty Avenue was purchased, cleaned, and renovated by the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust in 2003. The terra-cotta-clad building includes "Space," a 4,000-square-foot gallery for changing exhibits.

13. 900 Block, Liberty Avenue (north side)
   This handsome block includes two Richardsonian Romanesque buildings by Charles Bickel: the Magnin Building of 1891 at 915 Liberty Avenue and the Ewart Building of 1892 at 925 Liberty Avenue. A parking lot is between them.

14. 800 Block, Liberty Avenue (north side)
   Another notable block. The tall, suave, corner building was originally the Federal Reserve Bank, designed in 1911 by Alden & Harlow; the builder was Thompson Starrett of New York whose most famous contract was the Empire State Building. Frank E. Alden and Alfred B. Harlow dominated the local architectural scene from 1896 until Alden's death in 1908, but the firm continued, under Harlow's direction, until 1927. Also notice 813 Liberty (c. 1895), with a trio of metal awnings; the Harris Theatre at 809 Liberty (1931); and the cast-iron façades of 805–07 Liberty (c. 1870). The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust is headquartered at 803 Liberty Avenue.

15. Wood Street Station/Wood Street Galleries
    (originally the Monongahela Bank)
    Edward Stott, architect, 1927
    After apprenticing with notable local architects and touring Europe, Edward Stott opened his own firm in 1899; it continues today as MacLachlan, Cornells & Filoni. Originally the Monongahela Bank, this triangular building now houses one of Downtown Pittsburgh's four "T" stations and an art gallery. Notice the metal canopy designed by Jeffrey DeNinno, with gargoyle leaf patterns etched in the glass.

16. Granite Building
    (originally the German National Bank)
    Bickel & Breneman, architects, 1890; remodelings c. 1930, late 1960s, and 2006
    Former New York Times style editor Holly Brubach (a Pittsburgh native) is renovating the Richardsonian Romanesque Granite Building for use as a hotel. Brubach's interest is in "incorporating historic architecture in a contemporary context, creating a conversation between the past and present." Originally constructed for the German National Bank, founded in 1860, the eight-story building was intended primarily to serve Pittsburgh's German-speaking community.