

A VICTORIAN TOWN

Downtown Owensboro contains the major concentration of 19th and 20th Century buildings which reflect the city's development as a manufacturing, trade, transportation, and service center. The finest residences of the time as well as all of the early churches were built in the blocks surrounding the downtown.

Downtown commercial buildings have been subjected to the trend of the last fifty years. In an attempt to replace the 19th Century image of 2nd Street with a modern appearance, the rich ornament and architectural details have been covered or replaced. Grand old residences have been demolished, divided into apartments, or converted into offices. Some churches have been vacated as congregations moved to the suburbs.

This walking tour does not begin to include all of the notable architecture downtown, but includes a sampling of commercial, residential, and religious buildings within easy walking distance. Others which may be seen on longer walks or by car are listed below. Sources include the National Register of Historic Places and the former Downtown Owensboro Inc.

Smith-Werner Building

37° 46' 29.28", 87° 06' 42.96"

1850

116-122 E. 2nd St.

Main Street's architectural landmarks were probably built around 1850 with iron-fronts added in the 1880's. The impressive facade was manufactured by George L. Mesker and Co. and two of the original storeowner's names appear over the cornices. This building was destined to be torn down when Daviess County bought the building and shored up outside walls and put it back on the market. Larry and Rosemary Conder purchased and renovated the building into thriving storefronts with 2nd story condominiums. The building is a part of the Main Street Historic District which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Arnold Building

37° 46' 29.36", 87° 06' 42.21"

1888

112 E. 2nd St.

This Italianate Commercial building with a pressed metal cornice and hood moulds over each window has changed little over the years. The building is a part of the Main Street Historic District which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Bates Building

37° 46' 29.80", 87° 06' 40.84"

1895

101 E. 2nd St.

The Owensboro Savings Bank was built in the Moorish Revival Style in 1895 for \$15,000 and considered one of the finest buildings in the West. A third floor was added in the early 1900's. Renovated in 2000s by Terry Woodward and called Parkside 100, it now is home to a restaurant on the 1st floor and condominiums on its upper floors. The building is a part of the Main Street Historic District which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Solomon Wile and Sons Complex

37° 46' 29.88", 87° 06' 39.40"

1881 - 1889

101-107 E. 2nd St.

The brick Sol Wile corner building is a three-story, six-bay brick corner structure with Romanesque details has been simplified in front. While the front has been simplified, the Allen Street side retains the original windows of alternating red and yellow bricks. The two smaller buildings have round headed windows and free-standing colonnettes between the bays to make them some of the best examples of iron-front buildings in Kentucky. The buildings are part of the Main Street Historic District which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

The story of Solomon Wile is typical of Second Street's growth in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Wile was a German immigrant who started in business as a country peddler. He erected his first store with living quarters in the rear in 1865. When his business grew after the Civil War, the structure at 105 East Second in 1881 for his clothing store. Restored and renovated by Phil and Laura Clark in 1990s.

S.W. Anderson Building

37° 46' 29.54", 87° 06' 36.79"

1888

122 E. 2nd St.

Anderson's is the biggest 19th Century building on Main Street having been built as the Temple Theater in 1888 and remodeled for the growing Anderson Department Store in 1908. Now home to the Owensboro Museum of Science and History. The building is a part of the Main Street Historic District which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Miller Building

37° 46' 30.21", 87° 06' 34.40"

1887

207-211 E. 2nd St.

This three story brick Romanesque Revival Commercial building is trimmed with stone and pressed metal. The facade is visually divided into three sections of three bays each, with the central section displaying a pedimented round arch containing the date stone. The iron columns on the eastern building indicate the existence of a metal storefront. Renovated in the 1990s as the home of the Owensboro Symphony Orchestra. The building is a part of the Main Street Historic District which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Progress Building

37° 46' 30.53", 87° 06' 29.30"

1886

319 E. 2nd St.

One of the first downtown buildings to be restored, this former wholesale produce building has full iron columns on the storefront.

Mischel Building

37° 46' 30.18", 87° 06' 25.48"

1878

412 E. 2nd St.

The George Mischel Building is a one-story, perfectly symmetrical building with a six bay, limestone front. The storefront has two evenly spaced doorways and four display window spaces. The George Mischel Building stands as a magnificent testament to the stone carving talents of the George Mischel family. The complete limestone facade, and the building's simple and elegant front serves as an unobtrusive reminder of the skills of the company. The family has been in the monument business in Owensboro for over 100 years. This building which housed the George Mischel monument business for over 100 years. Mischel Monument Building is an unique example in which the original owners were able to express their skills in their building's architectural style and decoration.

Sts. Joseph's & Paul's Church

37° 46' 23.19", 87° 06' 18.54"

1886

4th at Bolivar Streets

St. Paul's, whose magnificent spire is the tallest in Owensboro, was constructed for an English speaking congregation of wealthy distillers with Irish roots.

Yewell House

37° 46' 11.46", 87° 06' 22.44"

630 Clay St.

This two-story, brick Queen Anne residence has the unusual feature of front, side and rear gables. A rusticated stone effect is used for the front wall and the foundation of the front porch. The Yewell House was built in 1894 by wealthy tobacco farmer Franklin Yewell who moved to Daviess County from Nelson County. Yewell constructed this house when he was 70 years old and lived in it only a few more years after its completion. His son Dr. A. S. Yewell, a prominent physician, who lived there thirty years. It remained in the Yewell family for a total of 72 years and is now being renovated for a multi-family residence.

Bogard House

37° 46' 22.51", 87° 06' 30.93"

1894

301 E. 4th St.

Dr. W. E. Fowlkes built this Queen Anne style home with its corner tower and polygonal bay.

This home was design by the Louisville firm of Drach, Thomas, and Bohne. The Bogard family assumed ownership in the 1930s. It is currently a private residence.

Miller House

37° 46' 18.59", 87° 06' 30.61"

1905

301 E. 5th St.

This home was built by Elmer and Lizzy Miller in 1905. The 1,800 artificial stone blocks were made in a mold from Sears, Roebuck, and Company using river sand. This home has beveled glass windows, magnificent woods, mantels with tile hearths, and had combination of electric and gas light fixtures.

Elmer was a prominent business man during his time. He founded the Miller Coal and Contracting Company in the late 1880s and expanded to transfer and hauling as well as road building. Elmer Miller laid several miles of roads in Daviess County. In the late 1960s and 1970s the home was turned into several apartments and housed various owners and tenants. Larry and Jeanne Kirk purchased the home in 2006 and restored the home, naming the restaurant The Miller House, for the original builders.

Third Baptist Church

37° 46' 15.62", 87° 06' 38.77"

1896

527 Allen St.

The most notable features of this Richardsonian church are its pyramidal roof and the multitude of stained glass windows.

Temple Adath Israel

37° 46' 18.66", 87° 06' 34.84"

1878

429 Daviess St.

This one-story brick and stone temple is built on a nave plan and has a three-bay facade with a central Gothic entrance and lancet windows. Classical pilasters support a simple cornice. The front parapet wall is decorated with elaborate windows and panels and topped with Moorish ogee domes. The front windows and side wall four bays are filled with turn of the century stained glass imported from Europe.

Temple Adath Israel is an outstanding example of eclectic architecture incorporating Classical, Gothic and Moorish details. The architecture is a fanciful combination of styles and details, possibly reflecting the various cultural backgrounds of the congregation.

James J. Sweeney/Birkhead House

37° 46' 18.28", 87° 06' 36.25"

1893

121 E. 5th St.

The James J. Sweeney house ranks among the finest extant examples of late nineteenth century domestic architecture in Owensboro, Kentucky. Constructed in 1893 by the Louisville architectural firm of Drach and Thomas, the building embodies the basic elements of the Queen Anne style, displaying a polygonal tower and projecting bays and also features a "necklace" theme in the stained glass throughout the house..

The original owner of the house, James J. Sweeney, was an Owensboro lawyer. He began his practice in partnership with his father William N. Sweeney, a prominent local attorney, and his brother William C. Sweeney. Having functioned as a residence for over seventy years, the house was converted into a restaurant during the 1970s. However the building is used as a private residence again.

Settle Memorial Chapel & Church

37° 46' 22.27", 87° 06' 35.12"

1881

201 E. 4th St.

Settle Memorial Chapel was built of tan brick with stone dressings in 1881 and the English Gothic sanctuary in 1907. The figures in the stained glass were painted by Lewis Millet, nephew of the famous French Impressionist.

Camden Riley House

37° 46' 21.56", 87° 06' 37.48"

1882

112 E. 4th St.

The Camden Riley house is a two story brick Italianate home with front and side gables. An original one-story partial width Italianate entrance porch is decorated with arches and double column supports. It was constructed in 1891 and is a handsome survivor of the row of Victorian houses that once lined 3rd and 4th Streets. The front and side doors are each one half of the double doors that originally hung on the Beaux-Arts facade of the Branch Banking and Trust building constructed ca 1900.

Camden Riley, Jr. was the nephew of Camden Riley, Sr., both prominent attorneys in the 19th century. The junior Riley built the house at the peak of his career, having made his wealth as a distiller at Yelvington, in eastern Daviess Co. He was influential in the establishment of Owensboro's public school system, serving on the first board of directors. At his death the house was sold to another distiller.

First Baptist Church

37° 46' 26.33", 87° 06' 32.84"

1924

230 J. R. Miller Blvd.

The Neo-Classical Revival sanctuary was constructed in 1924 to serve as the third building for this congregation.

Branch Banking & Trust

37° 46' 25.27", 87° 06' 42.40"

1900

100 W. 3rd St.

A Beaux Arts Classicism facade was applied to the old Presbyterian Church In 1900 when it was converted to a bank. It is all that remains of the older structure.

Odd Fellows & Breidenback Buildings

37° 46' 25.13", 87° 06' 45.17"

1895 and 1890

200-208 W. 3rd St.

Dominating the corner of St. Ann and Third St, the Odd Fellow Building is one of the most elaborate commercial building in the downtown. The three-story tan pressed brick building has an eclectic mix of Beaux-Arts and Italian Renaissance details. Architectural features are concentrated on the second and third floors and on the double facade of the building including terra cotta clay tiles in a variegated pattern under the eaves. It was constructed when secret societies were an important part of Owensboro's culture. The Brothers Lodge was organized in 1856 and had a steady growth until recent years. It had a membership of 125 men and owned half of the "Court Row" block when they built their present lodge in 1895. The first story has always been occupied by retail, the second floor by offices, and the third floor is the Odd Fellow lodge.

Breidenback building which was constructed in 1890 in the Romanesque Revival style. Edward H. Breidenbach, who was the light and water superintendent for Owensboro for over 50 years, constructed the building. He was also a distiller, city commissioner, and extensive land owner.

National Deposit Bank Building

37° 46' 24.67", 87° 06' 48.83"

1923

300-304 Frederica St.

\$250,000 in damages was caused by a 1965 fire to this structure which was constructed in 1923 by the National Deposit Bank. It has been extensively remodeled and found uses as an insurance company office, restaurant and, lastly, a bank.

Montgomery House

37° 46' 22.80", 87° 06' 52.84"

1870

326 St. Elizabeth St.

Restored to its original elegance in the mid-1980s, this Victorian home serves as an attorney's office.

Thorp Building

37° 46' 21.57", 87° 06' 47.63"

1893

335 Frederica St.

Once surrounded by three-story commercial buildings, this brick and metal structure is the only one from the 19th Century left at the intersection. This building is a three-story Italianate structure with a modern storefront on the first floor of the Frederica Street facade. The second and third floors of this front facade each have three windows surrounded by segmental arched stone lintels topped with keystones. The front facade is topped by a corner turret decoration and an elaborate sheet metal cornice with a central panel reading 1893. The West Fourth Street facade of this building is divided into seven sections, each descending in height as the building progresses along West Fourth Street.

Part of Doctors' Row this area is significant as an outstanding collection of late 19th century commercial architecture and because of its association with the early development of Owensboro as a Regional Medical Center. Doctors' Row had a drug store, Carn & Carpenter, in the building at 335 Frederica Street and the side entrance on Fourth Street lead to the second floor offices of four doctors. Each of the buildings facing West Fourth Street had between one and three doctors' offices.

Thacker Building

37° 46' 21.67", 87° 06' 45.60"

1880

207-209 West 4th St.

An interesting pair of Victorian town houses are located at 209 and 207 West Fourth Street. 209 West Fourth Street is a two-story brick and a Colonial doorway and bay added in 1970. 207 West Fourth Street is a two-story brick structure that retains its original one-story Victorian front porch, which has turned columns, a spindles balustrade, and decorative brackets. At the first floor facade is an arced front window and an asymmetrical front door with a larger central pane of original stained glass.

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Edwards

37° 46' 21.67", 87° 06' 44.50"

1890

201-205 West 4th St.

201, 203, and 205 West Fourth Street are a row of Italianate buildings constructed as a unit and sharing common details. 205 West Fourth has the most intact storefront, which is a four bay, post and lintel, cast-iron front. The front retains its iron threshold, pilasters, and sheet-metal cornice. 203 West Fourth Street retains its original cast-iron pilasters and cornice but the bays have been in filled with modern brick walls, windows and doors. The storefront at 201 West Fourth has been severely altered, with the central storefront being removed and replaced by a

brick wall and Colonial doorway. The only original details remaining are the cornice and corner pilaster. A unified second floor runs above the three storefronts.

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Wible Building

37° 46' 22.70", 87° 06' 44.25"

1912

322 St. Ann St.

The three-story brick structure at 322 St. Ann is framed by a three-story rusticated stone pilasters. A basement level has a double entranceway. Iron steps lead up to the main entrance on the first floor.

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Empress Theatre

37° 46' 19.09", 87° 06' 48.33"

1912

418 Frederica St.

This building was one of the first free-standing movie theatres in the country. Under its three different names (Bleich, Center and Malco), the theatre showed movies for 77 years. Only one movie-house in the country can claim a longer record of uninterrupted film showings. Currently it is used as a venue for Theatre Workshop of Owensboro

Callas Building

37° 46' 18.80", 87° 06' 48.33"

1921

420 Frederica St.

Squeezed between two larger structures is the elegant Beaux-Arts style Callas Building. The buff color terra cotta and tile decorative elements, such as brackets, shields, and cornices, create a simple, classical appearance. The original owner was typical of European immigrants families who came to Owensboro and operated families. He came to Owensboro as a young man and his first job was shining shoes. His fist shop was on Main St. in a rented building and called Progress Candy. In 1921 he built his Sweet Shop on Frederica, next door to the Empress Theater.

Federal Building

37° 46' 18.46", 87° 06' 47.35"

1919

423 Frederica St.

The Federal Building is the finest example of Beaux-Arts architecture in Owensboro. The structure, located on an impressive site on the town's main thoroughfare of Frederica Street, is also Owensboro's most architecturally significant civic building. The Federal Building/Post Office was constructed in 1909 on Frederica St. The site had formerly been the home of Ben Bransford, businessman, tobacco merchant and mayor. The three-story Federal Building has a symmetrical design that creates a balanced and monumental appearance. The front facade has five evenly spaced bays on each level. The central three bays of the front are contained in a slightly projecting portico. The United States government building is the site of Federal Court.

Gillim House

37° 46' 15.19", 87° 06' 47.08"

1880

517 Frederica St.

The Gillim House is a three-story brick building, with a central, three-story, mansard-roofed tower. The Campbell Club is an outstanding example of Second Empire architecture and one of the most important late Victorian structures in Owensboro. It is a surviving example of the impressive Victorian domestic architecture that once dominated Frederica Street, one of Owensboro's leading residential areas in the late nineteenth century. Most of these late Victorian structures have been replaced by twentieth century commercial buildings.

The elegant home was built by John S. Woolfolk, incorporator of the Peoples' Wharf-Boat and Transfer Company and sold a few years later to C.D. Jackson, one of the wealthiest men in Owensboro. Jackson was a distant relative of President Andrew Jackson and owned considerable land throughout the county. Dr. W. F. Gillim owned it for 31 years and the house is commonly remembered as the Gillim House. It became a boarding house for the upper class in the early 30's and many of its residents are now leading citizens of the community. In 1959 it was converted to a private dining club, which saved it from being razed and replaced with a commercial building. Frederica St. was once lined with majestic homes from 4th St. to Griffith Avenue. The Gillim House is the only one remaining north of 9th St. and one of two left north of Parrish Avenue.

Olde Trinity Church

37° 46' 17.36", 87° 06' 52.63"

1875

407 W. 5th St.

Erected in 1875, Old Trinity is the first brick church in Owensboro and the oldest example of Gothic architecture in Western Kentucky. It is a good example of the English influence on early church architecture in the United States. This church's heritage dates back to the early English style of the English Mediaeval Architectural period. The front of Trinity Church has the square and massive bell tower set to the west of the nave. Wall openings are of pointed Lancet arches. The window opening of the nave is glazed in tracery stained glass and cusps are let into the soffit of the Lancet arch in separate pieces to produce trefoil openings.

The building served as church until 1964, when the parish built a new building elsewhere. It housed the Cliff Hagan's Boys Club until 1972. It has been the home of Theater Workshop of Owensboro since then.

Stirman's Folly

37° 46' 14.75", 87° 06' 55.55"

1860

519 Locust St.

This Italianate style pre-Civil War residence has an original Tuscan Tower, enclosed porch added during the Colonial Revival era, and low modern additions that facilitates its use as a mortuary.

St. Stephen's Cathedral

37° 46' 11.00", 87° 06' 55.89"

1924

614 Locust St.

Intricate brickwork is the most unique feature of this Romanesque Revival church which also has a fine bell tower.

Carnegie Library Building

37° 46' 02.05", 87° 06' 45.80"

1909

901 Frederica St.

The Carnegie Building is a fine example of Beaux-Arts architecture and reflects the community's continual interest in cultural enrichment. In 1903 the Business Men's Association solicited a \$30,000 donation from Andrew Carnegie for a library building. City budgeted funds were added to public contributions to buy the lot at 9th & Frederica St. It was constructed in 1909 and converted to the Science Museum in 1968 when the library moved to a larger building. Nine years later it became the home of Museum of Fine Art. The two-story , yellow brick structure was constructed in 1909 on a portion of the front lawn of the Hampton Smith House. The classical detailing of the structure is common to the other Carnegie Libraries constructed in America after the turn-of-the-century.

Hampden Smith House

37° 46' 01.40", 87° 06' 45.80"

1860

909 Frederica St.

Constructed before the Civil War, this outstanding residence has Greek Revival and Federal features. The hipped roof is crested with ironwork, influenced by the design of widow's walks on seaport houses. At the time the Smith House was built it was virtually out in the country, and in 1876 it was still surrounded on the north and west by open land. The Smith house was built in 1859-61 as a late Greek Revival block; the exquisite cast iron front porch, balcony railing on the ground-floor windows, and widow's or captain's walk were added just after the Civil War. Major Hampden Smith, a prominent Owensboro citizen, was a respected tobacco merchant, and stock holder and director of the Deposit Bank of Owensboro. The house, in

remarkably intact condition, is an outstanding example of Greek Revival architecture with the Italianate influence which became popular just before the Civil War. It is now home to a wing of the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art.

Union Station

37° 45' 57.59", 87° 06' 45.42"

1905

1035 Frederica St.

Constructed in 1905, this one-story Victorian style depot is situated in a more spacious area than is the usual case for most city stations. The long rectangular building includes a waiting room with an entrance area at the west end and a two-story freight section at the east end. More architectural attention and detail was given to the entrance block, which is flanked by polygonal wings, than to the rest of the structure. The gabled entrance element is adorned by wooden barge boarding and brackets which give the structure a Gothic look. The hipped roof is covered by slate and there are consoles located in the soffit.

It was at this time that Union Station was constructed. Taking into consideration Owensboro's rapid growth, at that time, the station was designed to handle many passengers and much freight. During the early 1920s eighteen daily passenger trains served Owensboro. The Louisville, Henderson & St. Louis Railroad alone had eight trains which passed through every day. The last passenger train left the station in 1958. It has undergone major renovations and houses many businesses.

Medley/Thompson House

37° 45' 52.05", 87° 06' 45.97"

1883

1220 Frederica St.

This unique 19th Century home with an abundance of ironwork can be described as Vernacular Victorian. The 2 1/2-story frame structure embodies a T-plan with the major architectural elements being the Gothic and Italianate influenced detailing. Intricate wrought iron, the product of the Springfield Architectural Iron Works, forms a shallow balustrade along the porch roof.

The Medley House embodies distinctive design features which make it one of Owensboro's more notable residential structures. The Medley house is the best interpretation of the Italianate influence on Owensboro's residential architecture. Specifically, the abundance of elaborate sawn millwork in the Italianate and Gothic design and the intricate wrought iron detailing produce a rich visual composition.

The Medley House was built by George N. Thomson, a tobacconist, and later occupied by Marc Stuart and his father-in-law, the former mayor of Owensboro, Dr. J. H. Hickman. George E. Medley, the first of the Medleys to operate in Owensboro, bought it in 1910. It has remained in the possession and occupancy of this family since that time. The Medley family has for many years held one of the most outstanding reputations in the distilling of bourbon whiskey.

Although all of their distilling interests were sold to larger distillery concerns by 1970, for the greater part of half a century they were probably the best known firm in the western Kentucky area.

Triplett House

37° 45' 39.87", 87° 06' 44.83"

1868

1540 Frederica St.

A captain's watch tops this Steamboat Gothic style house which has copied after steamboat cabins by its builder Capt. Robert S. Triplett.