

VILLAGE OF MEDINA

SELF-GUIDED HISTORY TOURS

These tours are comprised primarily of private property. Please be respectful and responsible by staying on the sidewalks. Also, be sure to practice social distancing while out walking and be vigilant crossing streets. Alternatively, these tours can be done in a car or even by using Street View in Google Maps. Here is a link to [Google Maps Street View Instructions](#)

Tour 2 (Four corners of Main St to Locust St - 0.9 mi one way)

1. This tour begins at the four corners where Main St. and (E. and W.) Center St. bisect. Being in the heart of downtown, there is plenty of history surrounding you. We will begin by looking at the four corners and then proceed west down W. Center St. The northwest corner was originally known as Bent's Hall or Bent's Opera House. This fine example of Medina Sandstone was built in 1865, by Don C. Bent. The corner of the first floor was used for quite a while by a succession of drug stores, most prominently, Wright & Ross and then Armstrong's Drug Store. W.T. Grant Co. also occupied the rest of the first floor for decades. It also served as a bank for many years. The second floor was traditionally occupied by offices, but also featured a bowling alley, meeting space for fraternal organizations, as well as the original location of the Medina Daily Journal (Journal Register). Originally, a flight of stairs ran from the W. Center St. entrance to the second floor. This served as the entryway to the opera house that occupied the third floor. Generations of Medinans were entertained and feted in the opera house. The building is currently being restored by Talis Historic Renovation. The plans are to have a restaurant on the first floor, a boutique hotel on the second, and an events space on the third.
2. Our next stop, even though we do not have to move, is the northeast corner of the intersection. This building was built in 1871, and was the long-time home of Landauer's (clothing), then J.C. Penney's, and since 1996, Blissett's Specialty Shop.
3. Now looking at the southeast corner, you see what is today known as Rotary Park. For approximately 130 years there was a commercial building at this site. The last businesses to occupy the site were DiGuilio's Family Shoe Store, H & R Block, and Medina (Meat) Market. However, in 1971, the building burned and had to be taken down. In 1985, the Rotary Club spearheaded an effort to turn the site into a park, which came to fruition in 1991.
4. The last corner we will look at before moving on is the southwest corner. This site was originally occupied by the Medina House, later renamed the American Hotel, which burned down in 1856. A new hotel was built on the site that went by a succession of names – the Paddock House, Moore's Hotel and then finally back to the Medina House. In 1875, this parcel was bought and occupied by the Union Bank which operated at this location until falling victim to the Great Depression in 1931. The next business was A & P grocery store. In 1940, it became Jay's Drug Store, which operated until 1984. It then became Mark & Dale's Clothing, and is now Avanti Pizza.
5. Now, begin moving west on W. Center St. The next building you approach on your left is the Robert H. Newell building. This was originally a hotel – the Gorton House and then the Hart House. In its early days, the First Baptist Church met on this site in a converted barn. The hotel was popular for political meetings and rallies, and even housed the Medina Police Department for a few years in the early 1900s. In 1917, the property was converted into the Robert H. Newell Shirt Factory which operated at this location until 2004, and had many famous customers including Winston Churchill and Bob Hope. Today it houses the Shirt Factory Coffee to Cocktails, 810 Meadworks in a previous barbershop, law offices on the second floor and the Hart House Hotel on the third floor.
6. To your right, across the street, is currently The Sandstone apartment building, originally known as the Downs and Kearney building and then the Odd Fellows building. Before this was built in 1900, the First Baptist Church had relocated here from across the street after erected a frame structure in 1832. Over the years many businesses have occupied space in this current building including Medina Savings & Loan, Case's Paints and Wallpapers, and Grant-Pollard Insurance. In the early 1900s the Post Office was also at this location.

7. Next door is Rudy's Diner. It was the former site of a home which also served as Fred Flagg's Service Station until 1936, when the Sinclair Oil Company tore down the existing house and barn and put up a modern station. George Wolcott then converted it into a dairy bar. Later it became a diner and today remains a diner.
8. Moving just next door to Rudy's is the Post Office which was opened in 1932. The site was the former home of Isaac K. Burroughs who helped raise his nephew S. Mainville Burroughs, in that house, through his teen years. S. Mainville Burroughs went on to start a pharmaceutical business in England that grew into GlaxoSmithKline.
9. Across the street where the former drive-thru bank, and current Canal Village Farmers' Market is located, was the original burying ground in the village. As the village expanded, the bodies were removed to the new burying ground (current Gwinn St. Park). A home was built here by Asa Stanford, the brother of Leland, who built Stanford University. He eventually sold it to John R. Weld, his business partner in the Medina Falls Mill. Weld also helped found the Union Bank, which at one time employed his future son-in-law, George Kennan as a cashier. Kennan and his wife, Emeline, retired to this home, but not before George made a name for himself as the nation's foremost nineteenth century expert on Russian affairs after having spent time there mapping a route for a telegraph to connect Europe with North America, and later writing an exposé on the Russian exile system. The house diagonal was owned by George's brother John, who was president of the Union Bank.
10. Last, but not least at this corner is the First Baptist Church, built of Medina sandstone and dedicated in 1872. The bell was moved from the previous church (see 6 above) but after forty years of service, it was melted down and used in the making of the new bell. Then in 1890, the basement was excavated to provide more space for church activities.
11. Continuing west, at 215 W. Center St. is Cooper Funeral Home. The house was built in 1908, by Daniel D. Holdredge, who was in the furniture and undertaking business – a common combination at the time. Eventually occupying the house was Irving L'Hommedieu's family. He was a lawyer and state senator, credited with originating the idea of licensing automobiles, and turning it into the first state law in the nation to do so. From 1943-1987, Dr. Clayton Thomas lived here and ran his eye, ear, and throat business out of the basement. Tim Cooper bought the place and opened it as funeral parlor in 1987.
12. The home on your right at 216 W. Center St. has been in the same family since 1867.
13. Next door, is the former United Methodist Church. After their previous church burned down at what is now 428 Main St., the congregation used the proceeds from insurance money and selling the lot to purchase this lot. The church was completed in 1876. In 1889, the 235-foot spire came down in a wind storm and crushed a shed attached to the house next door at 216.
14. Across from the church at 223 W. Center St. is the former home of both H. Augustus Acer and Oscar Whedon. Whedon was Acer's father-in-law. Together they formed a hardware, and eventually sheet metal business, known as Acer & Whedon. Whedon's daughter-in-law, Mary Lee Whedon is credited with using an endowment left by her father, William U. Lee, to establish the Lee-Whedon Memorial Library.
15. Moving on, to your left is the World Life Institute, an organization dedicated to running humanitarian and educational programs in several countries. The building was built in 1922, by the Christian Science Church. The interior was gutted in a 1928 fire. After being refurbished, it served the church members for the next forty years. The next occupants were the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, who used it for nearly three decades. It was then turned into a Masonic Lodge for twelve years, before becoming the World Life Institute in 2016.
16. Heading west once again, stop at the corner of Prospect Ave. and W. Center St. This is a prominent corner as indicated by the architecture. Prospect Ave. was originally the western boundary of the village. At 503 Prospect Ave, on your left, there is an historic marker explaining the significance of this home. It is two-sided, so be sure to read both sides. For many years this was also the Maple Crest Inn.

17. To your right, at 238 W. Center St. is the former site of the Casey Nursing Home, owned and operated by Helen K. Casey in the 1950s and 1960s. It was built in 1890, along with the house to the east at 234, by William G. Skinner, who is given credit for the start of the 29th Separate Company militia, the precursor to Company F.
18. As you carefully cross Prospect Ave., to your left, at 303 W Center St., is the former home of S.A. Cook. He began in business wholesaling tobacco, cigars, and confections. When the cheap furniture he was giving away as premiums for buying his products proved popular, he began manufacturing furniture and became a prominent furniture manufacturer in Medina.
19. To your right, at 304 W. Center St., is a pink Medina sandstone home built by Augustus Ives, a produce dealer. It was then owned by Homer Luther, the vice-president of the Union Bank. It is currently being restored into a boutique hotel and events center by Talis Historic Restoration.
20. The next house you come to on your left is 307 W. Center St. This is the former home of Col. John Parks, whose careers included: being a packet boat captain on the Erie Canal, assistant superintendent of the Erie Canal, various jobs with the local railroad, NYS Assemblyman, and then appointed by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, to be in charge of Confederate railroads for the US Army.
21. The home across the street at 308 W. Center St. was built by George A. Bowen in 1909. He led the planning and financing of the Medina Memorial Hospital on Ohio St., and was the Chairman of the Board of Directors for twenty years.
22. Moving along a couple houses, you arrive at 315 W. Center St. on your left. This house was built for Herbert S. Olmstead in 1903, after removing the previous home. Olmstead was in the milling business and also was part of a group who built the cold storage at 630 Main St. After selling the home in early 1912, to move to Albany, he returned just seven months later and built the house across the street at 318 W. Center St.
23. The house next door made of Medina sandstone, at 321 W. Center St., was the previous home of Patrick Horan, a quarryman, and later Morton A. Bowen, who edited and published the Medina Register for thirty-eight years.
24. Moving down to the middle of the next block, on your right is 410 W. Center St. This home was built in 1908 for Samuel Landauer who had a store where Blissett's Specialty Shop is on Main St. It was then sold to Alonzo Waters, long-time editor and publisher of the Medina Journal-Register.
25. Next door, the house at 416 W. Center St. was also built in 1908. This is the former home of A.L. Swett, who made his money in iron works and electricity generation. He is responsible for damming Oak Orchard Creek to make Glenwood Lake (Medina) and Lake Alice (Waterport).
26. Proceeding to the end of the block, on your left is 421 W. Center St. This house was built in 1907, for Watson F. Barry who was in the coal and oil business, and also served as President of the Central Bank. He sold it to Charles Dye who was in the cold storage business – having built both 613 and 630 Main St. The next owner was Robert H. Newell, famous shirt factory owner.
27. The house across the street at 422 W. Center St., was the Mary Louise Hospital from 1907-1908, run by Myra Coon.
28. Crossing Ann St., the large apartment building on your left was originally a home built for Watson F. Barry in 1900, before he built the one across the street at 421. It has been apartments since 1946.
29. Heading to the corner of W. Center St. and Ohio St., the red brick home at 604 W. Center St. was built in 1880, by Albert M. Berry, who had purchased the ten-acre lot of farmland. Part of the land is where the hospital is today.

30. Moving up the block, on your left at 607 W. Center St. is a home built most likely by Benjamin Jackson. When he purchased the land in 1848, the property was bounded by W. Center St to the north, Ann St. to the east, the Town of Shelby line to the south (approximately where the railroad tracks are) and Salt Works Rd. to the west. By 1860, when Orrin Heath – builder of 447-449 Main St. – bought the property, the property line to the east was Ohio St. He added the second story. It was then sold to Russell Fuller in 1898, who subdivided the near area around Pine and Olive Sts. to open it for development – known as the Russell M. Fuller Sub-division.
31. The density of prominently-owned homes starts to thin here, which might be a good time to mention that when the Buffalo, Lockport, and Rochester Trolley was begun in 1906, the prominent citizens of W. Center St. objected to the trolley running down their street and successfully lobbied to have it turn north at Main St. then run down Commercial St. and follow a right-of-way that still exists from the end of Commercial St. to Salt Works Rd. It is reported that the homeowners on Commercial St. rioted in protest, to no avail. Trolley service ended in 1931.
32. As you reach the end of Olive St., to your right is 640 W. Center St. This home was built in the early 1870s by Darius Fuller, who, along with his cousin Darwin Fuller, built the Fuller Block at 430 Main St. and also converted 500 Main St. into commercial business space. It was also the home of his adopted son, Judge Fred L. Downs, who helped organize the Medina Savings and Loan in 1888, was elected President of the Village ten times, served in the state Assembly, was County Judge, and helped finance the building of the Downs and Kearney building.
33. On your left at 727 W. Center St. is a home that was built for Irving S. Bowen in 1917. Bowen was the president of Medina Savings and Loan, and following in his father's footsteps (George A. Bowen), he was the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Medina Memorial Hospital in the 1950s, when the hospital first expanded.
34. Next door was the home of Charles A. Ingersoll, who came to Medina in 1904, to make the preliminary survey for the enlargement of the Erie Canal. He then did construction work, including building this house. He also laid out State St. Park and helped establish the Medina Trust Company after both the Union and Central banks succumbed to the Great Depression.
35. On your right is 730 W. Center St. This brick house was built in 1925, for William J. Gallagher. He first made money being an early-adopter of motorized trucking, starting in 1913, at the current location of the American Legion on Main St. He also made money paving over 300 miles of roads in Western New York and building a 400-foot bridge over Oak Orchard Creek at The Bridges in Carlton. In addition, he was a horse and cattle breeder, owning four farms, including the one on N. Gravel Rd. where generations have sledged in winter.
36. Crossing over Erie St., the property at 801 W. Center St. was bought by Darwin Fuller from his brother, Russell. He planned to farm the area, since the parcel extended to the Shelby line. He also was in the building and real estate business with his cousin Darius (see 30 above). The house was built in 1861.
37. You are now going to take a nice stroll for 2.5 blocks. The house on your right at 1008 W. Center St. was built for Henry (Harry) Robbins, in 1925. He arrived in Medina in 1901, to work as the secretary-treasurer at his brother's business, Bignall Foundry at the northeast corner of Starr and Main Sts. He rose to be the president of the company. He was one of the founding members of the Medina Automobile Club in 1909, and also served two years at the top of the statewide organization. He is purported to be the first owner of an automobile in Orleans County. He was also the original treasurer of the Medina Hospital Corporation.
38. Across the street, to your left, is 1009 W. Center St., built for J. Cornelius Posson in 1922. He started in the grocery business in Millville, then became the owner of the Medina Iron & Brass Co. After selling that business, he became part-owner of the Medina Cold Storage Co. which was located along the railroad tracks on the Olde Pickle Factory property. Only one of the two buildings remain after a fire in 1973. The company also, eventually bought the cold storage at the corner of Main St. and North Ave. out of foreclosure. His 1971 obituary stated that he was "an avid sports fan and in earlier years entertained several prominent sports figures at this home."