

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN HARRISONBURG WALKING TOUR

1) Craft House

This brick structure, built about 1848, is thought to be the second oldest house in Harrisonburg. Isaac Hardesty, who became the city’s first mayor, lived here. The building, which was renovated by the city, is now the Hardesty-Higgins House and Visitor Center, museum, offices and the Heritage Bakery.

3) People’s Bank Building

This six-story corner building, opened in 1916, was designed by Alfred Charles Bossom, one of the pioneer skyscraper builders. It was Valley National Bank’s headquarters until the 1960’s. Rockingham County’s school system had administrative offices there for many years. It’s now professional offices.

5) Friendly City Inn (Former Stonewall Jackson Inn)

A restored mansion dating back to 1885 has a feeling of an historic Civil War-era home. The mansion stands on two acres and is believed to have been built by a New England sea captain. There are three finished floors; first floor (now the basement) was used for food & fuel storage; main floor was devoted to dining, dancing, and ent ertainment; third floor (guest rooms now) provided bed quarters for the family. Techniques of construction in the house that are familiar to the shipyards are voice tubes for communication, distinctive beam structure, and separate family and servant living quarters and staircases.

7) Federal Building

With its six imposing columns, this three-story building, originally a post office, is now a federal courthouse. Built in 1939, it replaced the first federal building constructed on this site in 1886. A five-foot high historic mural in the lobby depicts “Country Fair, Trading, Courthouse Square” created by William H. Calfee under the New Deal.

9) Coca-Cola Bottling Plant

Now home to Brothers Craft Brewing and Trade Show Direct.

10) City Produce Exchange Building

This building’s construction began in 1911. The Exchange, which housed an ice-making and cold storage plant for the region’s booming commercial egg and poultry industry, was built alongside the Southern & Chesapeake-Western Railway tracks for efficient shipping access.

11) Wetsel Seed Building

This facility, erected in 1935, helped the Wetsel Seed Company become a key part of the Rockingham County economy. Today sections of the building are leased for commercial and retail space.

13) Rockingham Motor Company

Dating to the early 1920s, this L-shaped structure has distinguishing features like stained glass, colored tiles, arches and stone carvings. The building, which retains the Rockingham Motor Company name, now contains retail and office space and a theater.

15) Denton Building

Classical Revival four-story building with a buff stretcher-bond brick facade and a concrete foundation. There is also a free-standing sign with “Denton” spelled out in large metal letters. The Denton furniture business was established in 1905 and built this large store in 1921. The upper floors were converted into apartments in 1932.

17) Bank of America Building

The round corner tower and arches give this six-story limestone structure a castle-like appearance. Opened as the First National Bank of Harrisonburg with Joshua Wilton as president in 1904, it now houses Pendleton Community Bank.

19) Hostetter Building

The former Hostetter drugstore dates to about 1940 with high glass block windows and streamlined architecture. The building has had many uses, most recently as a gallery run by an artists’ cooperative: OASIS.

21) Harrison House

This stone structure from the late 18th century is one of the oldest buildings in Harrisonburg. The house served as a place of shelter and hospitality for early travelers. It is currently being restored.

23) Asbury United Methodist Church

This brownstone church dates to 1912. Charles M. Robinson designed the building, and an addition was added in 1954.

25) Smith House

In order to preserve it, this house was put on wheels and moved across a parking lot. Built in 1867 on part of the original Thomas Harrison land, this Victorian-style house has been home to many prominent community members. The house is now home to the Arts Council of the Valley.

27) St. Stephen’s United Church of Christ

The limestone building with red doors dates to 1931. Built as St Stephen’s Reformed Church, it includes a cornerstone from 1897. The congregation formed in 1894 but used a building on High Street before moving here.

2) Keezell Building

Constructed in 1907, this four-story tan brick building with arched windows housed the News Register newspaper, a music school, a business college, the public library, and the first offices of the language learning software company, Rosetta Stone. Recently renovated, it now hosts a deli, retail shops and apartments.

4) Newman-Ruddle Building

With its arched windows and structured steel, this distinctive building opened as Rockingham National Bank in 1900. In 1939, the third floor became the home of WSVB, the area’s first radio station. Don Ruddle bought it in 1946. The building has had various uses since then.

6) Woodbine Cemetery

This historic cemetery was founded in 1850 by community leaders as a non-denominational, non-profit community cemetery. According to Tommy Bassford’s 1944 book Landmarks & Personages of Old Harrisonburg, the first plot was bought October 11, 1850, and the first interment was George Conrad. Confederate plot was laid out in 1862, the Community Mausoleum erected in 1926, and the Colored cemetery plot purchased in 1868.

8) Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church

Built in 1906, the church was designed by T.J.Collins. The tower and stained-glass windows are elements of the Gothic Revival style. Charles J. Connick designed the windows, including the rose window above the entrance, between 1928 and 1948. A new wing was added in the 1990s.

10) City Produce Exchange Building (cont)

The City Produce Exchange operated until 1948. In 1949, the rapidly expanding Wetsel Seed Company purchased the building as a facility for cleaning seeds and for laboratory space, where it could test seeds and grains for purity, germination and moisture content.The majority of the City Produce Exchange building was converted into luxury condominiums in 2006. The Local Chop & Grill House occupies the remainder of the space and honors the history of the building with its connection to community and its commitment to offer locally produced fruits, vegetables and meat.

12) First Presbyterian Church

Established in the 1780s, the congregation built this church building in 1907. Designed by Philadelphia architect Charles Bolton, elements of his Gothic Revival style can be seen in the pointed arches, stained glass windows and bell tower. It is constructed of Indiana limestone which can also be seen in other buildings downtown.

14) Rockingham County Court House

This red-tiled roofed Indiana limestone building with its green dome and statue of Justice sits in the center of downtown Harrisonburg on 2.5 acres donated in 1779 by Thomas and Sarah Harrison, for whom the city is named. The current building, finished in 1897, was designed by T.J. Collins.

16) Grattan Building

Structure dates to at least the late 1800s, is the oldest office building on Court Square. A law office is in the building now.

18) Hirsch Livery Stables

This Victorian, two-story painted brick building was established by Ludwig Hirsch in 1871. The 1907 Sanborn map was the first to show the building and label it as “Hirsch Bro’s Sale Stable.” About 1910 Hirsch Bro’s advertised “sale and exchange of all grades of horses, cattle and cows” with a feed and hitch stables capacity of 300 animals. The building is now home to Bella Luna Wood-Fired Pizza and Loft apartments.

20) Jimmy Madison’s

This 1870s post-Civil War building is unique to downtown. Though it began as a farm supply retailer and later the first telephone company in Harrisonburg, the building has largely served as various restaurants.

22) Cassco Ice Plant (Ice House)

This building was built in phases. The core three-story section was built in 1934 with a reinforced concrete structure, stretcher-bond brick curtain wall, and a fire-proof concrete roof. The building also had a cold storage area, first-story loading dock, a roof-top elevator and metal cladding on the upper stories. Later a one-story addition was made extending to S. Liberty Street to house the office, ice machine, freezing tank and additional cold storage. This building now houses Drifters Café Hugo Kohl’s Museum of American Jewelry Design and Manufacturing, Pale Fire Brewing Company, Boboko Indonesian Café, Rocktown Kitchen, Ice House Studios, offices and apartments.

24) Warren-Sipe House

The Warren-Sipe House was built around 1855 by E.T.H. Warren. The George Sipe family made the house their home starting in 1894. The City bought the house in the 1950s before donating it to the museum.

26) Harrisonburg Municipal Building

This bluestone building designed by Charles M. Robinson, was constructed in 1908 as Harrisonburg High School. It became an elementary school in 1928 and has housed city offices since about 1960. In the early 1800s the tract had a barn for horses, and before the Civil War was the site of a school for girls. It served as a hospital during the war.

28) Joshua Wilton House

This brick, 25-room Victorian design house was built in 1888 for the Joshua Wilton family. It later contained apartments and served as a fraternity house before it was converted in 1988 to its use as a fine-dining restaurant and inn.