



## Self Guided Historical Walking Tour of Downtown Williamsport

**One mile, approximately 30 minutes.**

**Begin at the Visitors Information Center off William St. west of the Hampton Inn.**

Until urban renewal in the 1960's and 1970's, the area to the east of the Visitors Information Center was known as Little Italy because most of its inhabitants and storekeepers were Italian immigrants and their descendants.

**Go north on William Street to the intersection of William and Third Streets. On the northwest corner is site #1.**

### 1. The Grit Building, 200-222 West Third Street (1892)



The Grit began in 1882 as a Saturday afternoon supplement to the Daily Sun and Banner. Printer Dietrick Lamade bought out his partner in 1884 and turned the Grit into an independent Sunday newspaper that grew to become known as "America's greatest family newspaper." Avoiding the "yellow journalism" of post-Civil War newspapers and instead, catering to the rising Victorian middle class, the newspaper focused on the goals and values of a family-oriented audience. The paper remained in the Lamade family until it was sold and relocated to Topeka, Kansas, in 1992. The original building on the corner was renovated for re-use. With its rounded arches, deep window and door reveals, and contrasting bands of colors, the building's façade reflects the uniquely American Romanesque Revival style of architect H.H. Richardson (1838-1886)

### 2. The Old Jail, 154 West Third Street (1868)



On the northeast corner stands the second Lycoming County Jail, built after fire destroyed the original structure that has served the county since 1799. Impressive for its day, the 1868 jail, designed by York, Pa., architect Edward Haviland, could, if need be, hold as many as 138 prisoners. Hangings took place in the courtyard until 1914 when the gallows were removed and burned. The Old Jail shows the 19th century fondness for medieval architectural styles, though its original Norman-inspired battlements and keep (tower) have been removed. In 2001, the Old Jail was converted into The Cell Block, a club with live music in "The Gallows."

**Walk east on Third Street.**

### 3. A.H. Heilman Company Building, 101 West Third Street (1912)



In the 1990's, the removal of corrugated siding covering the front of this building, including the windows, revealed this attractive building designed by T.J. Litzelman. Heilman specialized in fine rugs and carpets and, before its 1929 closing, outfitted some of the grandest homes and hotels in the Northeast. The building subsequently housed a furniture company, then a dry goods firm, and then the Carroll House, a department store, which closed in 1977, following the movement of many downtown businesses to suburban malls. The building's restoration in the 1990's was a sign of hope for the revival of downtown Williamsport.

**Continue walking east on West Third**

### 4. First National Bank Building, 21-25 West Third Street (1913)



This was Williamsport's tallest commercial building when it was erected in honor of the bank's fiftieth anniversary. On opening day of Williamsport's first "skyscraper", citizens had an opportunity to ride up the elevator for their first aerial views of the city.

## 5. The Hart Building, 26-30 W. Third Street (1895)



The Hart Brothers ran a successful men's clothing store on this spot in the late 19th century. They hired Amos Wagner (an architect who designed two homes and Annunciation Church on Millionaires' Row) to design this existing Hart Building for commercial trade. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

## 6. The Charles C. Mussina Building, 18 West Third Street (1873)



Jacob Mussina (1807-1888), a trained watchmaker, opened a jewelry store in 1830. He was responsible for keeping the courthouse clock in working order and was the first leader of the group later known as the Repasz Band. Mussina became adept with new technologies, becoming Williamsport's first telegraph operator in 1851 with machinery he installed in his store. In 1858, he built a new store on the northeast corner of Market Square. After he retired in the 1870's, his son Sylvester took over the store and another son, Charles C. Mussina, built his own store on the northwest corner of the square. The exterior of the Charles C. Mussina building, now a cosmetic salon, was restored in 2003. The Mussina family has remained in the area over the generations; today the best-known member of the family, Mike Mussina, is a pitcher for the New York Yankees.

## 7. The Ulman Opera House, 2 E. Third Street. (1867)



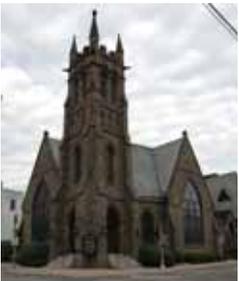
This cultural landmark was built in the imposing Second Empire style popular during the second half of the nineteenth century. On New Year's Eve of 1869, Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) appeared here to promote his most recent book, *The Innocents Abroad*. Among other popular entertainments presented here was Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Still-life artist Severin Roesen (1815-c.1872) had a studio in this building, and artist George Luks, one of the Ashcan Eight, was born in a building across the street.

## 8. Moose Lodge, 33 East Third Street (1940)



The first Moose Lodge on this site was a former doctor's office purchased by the group in 1917 and destroyed by fire in 1939. Longtime residents recall coming to this building in 1959 to receive Dr. Jonas Salk's new polio vaccine; the lines stretched in both directions around the corner as adults sought to avoid this terrible disease. After the Moose Lodge moved to South Williamsport in the 1990's three partners purchased the building, renovated it to emphasize its Art Deco features, and turned it into an upscale restaurant. The "33" medallion on the façade covers the original bas-relief sculpture of a moose.

## 9. First Presbyterian Church, 102 E. Third Street (1884)



The First Presbyterian Church houses what may be one of the unluckiest congregations in the area. The original structure, built in 1842 on the northwest corner of Market and Willow Streets, was destroyed by fire in 1849. A second church, built in 1849, burned down in 1859 and was replaced by a third structure that parishioners used until 1884 when the congregation decided to build the present church, which has remained intact at this location. Built for a congregation of prominent Victorians, the church's polychromatic exterior and pointed arches show their taste for Victorian Gothic.

**Walk north on Mulberry Street**

## 10. The Gamble-Reighard Residence, 330 Mulberry Street (c.1875)

This was the first of Mary White's wedding-gift houses; when she remarried after the death of her first husband, her new spouse built her a home on Millionaires' Row (835 W. 4th St.). Mary's first husband was Judge Gamble's son, James M. Gamble, Jr. During his short life – he died at age 44 – he served as president of the Williamsport Water Company, director of the Bald Eagle Valley Railroad Co., and director of the Lycoming National Bank. In 1889, another one of Judge Gamble's children, Elizabeth, moved into the house with her husband, Oliver H. Reighard, a Williamsport native and lawyer. With its slender proportions and flat, gently pitched roof with wide eaves and brackets, the house is an example of the Italian Villa style. The porches and cupola of the original house have been removed, and the house has undergone many changes since its "unwrapping" as a young bride's wedding gift.

## 11. Judge James Gamble House, 106 E. Fourth Street (1869)



This Greek Revival residence built by prominent Williamsport resident Judge Gamble displays later additions of Victorian trim. Born on a homestead farm near Jersey Shore, Judge Gamble enjoyed a successful career as a Congressman (1850-55) and as an attorney, moving to Williamsport in 1868 to serve as president judge of Lycoming County (1868-78). Judge Gamble presided over the controversial “Sawdust War” trial that followed a 22-day lumber mill strike during the summer of 1872. Striking workers hoped to reduce their workday from more than twelve hours to ten for the same amount of pay. Twenty-seven men were arrested during strike-related riots. Judge Gamble convicted 21 men to terms in the county jail and 4 leaders to one-year terms in the federal penitentiary. In response to a petition signed by community citizens, the Governor pardoned the men two days later and none served time.

## 12. Christ Episcopal Church, 426 Mulberry Street (1869)

Founded in 1840, the Christ Church congregation held its first service in this building in 1869. Both the interior and the exterior of the church are excellently crafted with hand carved woodwork and stained glass windows by Tiffany and Lamb. The church’s Reverend Dr. John Henry Hopkins, Jr., who served as rector from 1876 to 1887, penned the words and music of the famous Christmas carol, “We Three Kings of Orient Are.” The stumpy – but interesting – church steeple may not be a peaked European-style Gothic steeple, but the polychromatic exterior and interior details mark this magnificent edifice as a fine example of Victorian Gothic architecture.

**Walk West on Fourth Street.**

## 13. Elks Lodge, 36 E. Fourth Street (1927)

The Williamsport Chapter of the Elks moved from their Victorian home on West Third Street to this building, which they occupied until 1971. It seems to have been Williamsport’s last major building project to be completed before the beginning of the Great Depression. With the conversion or destruction of the major theaters in town, the Elks auditorium provided the city’s largest space dedicated to live performances in the 1930s.

## 14. The William Howard Memorial Masonic Temple and Acacia Club



**South East Corner of E. Fourth and Market St, (1898, 1901, 1910)**

Further down East Fourth Street begins this group of interconnected structures extending across a quarter of a block south of the Brown Library. The Masonic Temple, which faces Market Street, was built in 1898. Local citizens were suspicious of the members’ vow of secrecy, and working and middle class people feared the group, comprised of Williamsport’s elite, would use the organization to control all factions of society. A prominent Mason, William Howard, born in Yorkshire, England moved to Williamsport in 1854 and became a successful lumberman. His will provided for the Howard Memorial Cathedral, facing East Fourth Street, which was built in 1901. The Acacia Club, built in 1910, is frequently booked for weddings and other receptions.

## 15. James V. Brown Library, 19 E. Fourth Street (1907)

Still a much-beloved cultural center of Williamsport, the James V. Brown Library was named after its donor, James Vanduzee Brown. Designed by architect Edgar V. Seeler (1897-1929) and built on the site of James’ brother Henry’s residence, thanks in large part to the efforts of Mrs. James V. Brown, the library opened its doors to the public on June 17, 1907. After graduation from M.I.T. architect Seeler studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and the library’s smooth stone finish and classical detail reflect the popular Beaux-Arts style.

**Turn right (north) on Market Street. Look across the street to the three buildings at the corner of Edwin Street.**

## 16. 433-445 Market Street



These structures may have been among the earliest brick buildings to be built in downtown. Their symmetrical design, with matching chimneys at either end, smooth brick facades, and lintel-type window heads are typical features of the Federal style. Whatever the exact dates of the buildings, these sites have been occupied at least since 1866, when the first city directories were published. In the 1880’s several doctors had their offices here, including one of the region’s first women physicians, Dr. Phoebe H.F. Hagenbuch. Number 445, which has modern brick facing, housed a German-owned bakery from about 1910 into the 1930’s. After a hiatus when it served as a real estate office and barber shop, it became Joanna’s Italian Bakery.

**Turn west onto Edwin Street and walk one block to Pine Street**

## 17. Rialto Theatre, 470 Pine Street (1927)



The Rialto was the most expensive movie theater in town and boasted the city's largest outdoor sign on its southern side. The architecture is a pastiche of neo-classical revival, art nouveau, and early art deco styles. In the late nineteenth century Miss Wilson's Private School for Young Ladies and children stood on the site.

## 18. Old City Hall, 454 Pine Street (1894)



A signature piece of the remarkable Eber Culver, the Old City Hall is located on the former site of the Ross Park Cemetery that was sadly neglected on the northwestern edge of the Victorian business district. During a tour promoting his new book, Mark Twain spotted it, and, disgusted by its neglect, wrote a newspaper article entitled, "Remarkable Dream," which records the thoughts of a disgruntled resident of the cemetery, though Twain omitted Williamsport's name. The remains in the cemetery were later moved. This beautiful Victorian Romanesque building is a fine example of 19th century taste. This building is also on the National Register of Historic Places. The statue in front is the Sailors and Soldiers monument erected as a tribute to the men who served in the Civil war. **Walk south on Pine Street.**

## 19. West Branch Bank Building, 102 West Fourth Street (1917)



With its Corinthian columns, monumental arched windows and entrances, and marble façade, this building is a fine local example of Beaux-Arts classicism. The building's original dome is gone, and the demolition of the J.C. Penney store to make room for a parking lot left the brick wall exposed on the western side of the building. The bank's president, Abraham Updegraff, was a prominent abolitionist active in the Underground Railroad.

## 20. Updegraff Hotel, Southeast corner of W. Fourth and Pine Streets (1892)



Daniel Updegraff (brother of abolitionist Abraham) built this hotel, the largest of its day in the city, on the site of the old Hepburn Inn, where abolitionist Fredrick Douglass spoke when he came to Williamsport in the 1870's. The old structure may have provided temporary shelter to runaway slaves before the Civil War. The Updegraff family eventually sold the building which became the Ross Hotel. In the 1920's the Ross Hotel became an annex of the Lycoming Hotel to handle its considerable overflow of as many as 150 tourists a night. The hotel is now the Center City Building, but its distinctively Second Empire-style façade and gabled roof remain. **Turn right onto West Fourth Street and walk west.**

## 21. The Genetti Hotel, 200 West Fourth Street (1922)



The Lycoming Hotel, as it was originally known, held an opening ball for invited dignitaries, including a Pullman car full of guests from New York City, on June 21, 1922, just one of a three-day slate of activities to celebrate the completion of the most modern hotel in Pennsylvania. The hotel was built as a community project through the efforts of the Williamsport Board of Trade, which hired New York architect Willam Lee Stoddart, who went on to design hotels in North Carolina and Virginia that are on the National Register of Historic Places.

## 22. Community Arts Center, 220 West Fourth Street (1928; façade, 1992)

The Capitol Theatre, the grandest movie theatre of its day, was built on the site of the historic Sterling Hotel, damaged by a 1924 fire. The first local theater to be equipped for "talkies," it opened with *The Singing Fool* starring Al Jolson, accompanied by a visiting organist. It went through several owners and closings for the next few decades and finally closed for good as a movie theater in 1990. In the early 1990's, Dr. Robert Breuder, president of the Pennsylvania College of Technology, led a campaign to raise \$11 million to restore the theater to its previous elegance as a performing arts center. Hayes Large, Architects, of Altoona designed a new five-story structure to replace the outer lobby. The new post-modern, two toned brick façade blends in with the older buildings on the street, while the bold marquee is a modern interpretation of the streamlined Art Deco style of the theater's original era.

### 21. Williamsport Sun-Gazette Building, 252 West Fourth Street (c. 1912, 1926)



Originally built for the Williamsport Sun, an afternoon daily established in 1870 by Levi Tate, the corner building was erected in the early 1900's and the old press building at the rear in 1926. Another paper, started by William F. Buyers in 1801, was the Lycoming Gazette. In the 1860s, the Gazette merged with the West Branch Bulletin to become the Gazette and Bulletin, an afternoon daily. In 1955 the Sun merged with the Gazette and Bulletin, creating the Sun-Gazette. Based on this lineage, the Sun-Gazette is the twelfth oldest newspaper in the nation and the fourth oldest in Pennsylvania. Art Deco terracotta sculptures add color and interest to the façade.

### 22. City Hall, 245 West Fourth Street (1891)



Originally built as a U.S. Post Office and Federal Building, construction began in 1888 according to the design by William A. Ferret in the Richardsonian Romanesque style with semicircular windows and entryways, squat stone columns, and gargoyles. Ferret also designed at least two other public buildings now on the National Historic Register.

**Walk past City Hall and turn left (south) onto West Street.**

### 23. Williamsport Municipal Water Authority Business Office, 253 W. Fourth Street (c.1915)



This is one of several flatiron buildings built in the city to make full use of wedge-shaped tracts of land, all squat emulations of New York City's twenty-story Flatiron Building (1902). The blocked-off garage doors and plate-glass windows betray the building's origins as an auto dealership.

**Continue south on West Street, turning left on West Third Street, go one full block to Williams Street, turn right, and head south to return to the Visitors Information Center.**

The information above is a condensed version taken from a beautifully written and illustrated article  
"Historical Walking Tour of Downtown Williamsport"  
published in *The Journal of the Lycoming County Historical Society*, Volume: XLI 2003  
written by Penelope Austin, Alison Hirsch and Michele Miller  
available at the Visitors Information Center and  
the Thomas Taber Museum Store, 858 West Fourth Street, for \$5 each

