

Welcome to the self-guided walking tour of the McPherson Town

Historic District. This walking tour will highlight some of the architectural and historical features of the buildings in the McPherson Town Historic District. Your tour begins at the corner of Riverview and McDaniel Streets.

The tour is intended to provide a leisurely walk through this historic community, allowing ample time to pause and appreciate the architecture, the streetscape, and the amenities of the area. We ask that you walk carefully, as streets and sidewalks can be uneven, and it's important to observe the terrain while you appreciate the beauty and the architectural heritage of the area. We recommend that you allow 90 minutes to complete the tour.

If you have any questions about this vibrant and close-knit community, please contact the McPherson Town Historic Society online at www.mcphersontown.com.

McPherson Town was designated Dayton's third historic district in 1977 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

McPherson Town is tucked into the corner of a horseshoe area formed by a bend in the Great Miami River. The neighborhood is located directly across the Main Street Bridge from Downtown Dayton's vibrant arts and business

center and is within walking distance of the Dayton Art Institute. McPherson Town is significant as one of Dayton's first suburbs and for its streetscapes of high style and Folk Victorian and Queen Anne architecture, popular during the late 19th Century.

McPherson Town was platted by Samuel McPherson in February 1845. The plat consisted of 34 swampy, wooded lots on both sides of the recently constructed Dayton and Covington Turnpike. Today we know the turnpike as Main Street. Even though a covered bridge had been constructed in 1836, few people chose to settle north of the river due to flooding in the low-lying area. Protective levees were eventually constructed, and in 1868, McPherson Town was annexed, along with Riverdale, a much larger area north of the river.

The later years of the 19th Century were good to McPherson Town. In 1871 Henry Herman and E.W. Davies filed for a subdivision in the area west of Main Street and north of Riverview to what is now Grand Avenue. McDaniel and Babbitt were the primary streets in the new plat. Meanwhile, the City made a number of physical improvements. They constructed an iron bridge to replace a covered bridge destroyed by an earlier flood. They also strengthened and enlarged the system of levees that surrounded the area. Several sections of the turnpike were paved during the 1890s. An old

man-made canal or 'race' had connected two sections of the Great Miami River north of Downtown, and it was called the Dayton View Hydraulic. It had isolated McPherson Town and contributed to its flooding woes, until 1906, when it was filled in and reconstructed as the Great Miami Boulevard.

Many of Dayton's middle-class citizens were attracted by these improvements and moved to McPherson Town. The more-affluent new residents built large single and two-family dwellings in the popular Queen Anne and Eastlake styles on the remaining vacant lots. Other residents replaced earlier, smaller structures with similar dwellings. In fact, most of the houses in the district were constructed between 1880 and 1900 and reflect the time when the neighborhood reached its maturity.

Like much of the City, McPherson Town was devastated by the Great Flood of 1913. Many homes were destroyed or badly damaged. When the waters finally receded, everything was covered with sticky, foul-smelling mud. Many weeks passed before the community returned to normal, but the flood had an even greater impact on McPherson Town than anyone could have predicted. Those who could afford to do so, moved to higher ground in the City, or to newer suburbs. By the 1920's, the residents of the neighborhood were predominantly blue collar.

McPherson Town in the 1920's and 1930's remained a pleasant, close-knit community. As in many neighborhoods of the day, local businesses offered most of the necessary goods and services to their residents. This helped to create a self-contained, village-like environment unheard of in today's sprawling suburbs. With the post-World-War-II flight to those suburbs, McPherson Town, like many inner-city neighborhoods, declined rapidly.

The neighborhood was slated for clearance and replacement by high-rise apartments and commercial development before being rescued by urban pioneers in the early 1970's. During the 1970's and 1980's, the pioneers who were re-discovering McPherson Town began renovating housing throughout the neighborhood. Several private developers saw the potential of the area and attempted large-scale renovation and restoration projects. These efforts were mildly successful. In addition to its local historic district zoning in 1977, McPherson Town was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.

In 1993, Dayton's first Rehabarama was held in McPherson Town. Seven homes were renovated by a coalition of public and private groups. These homes were open to the public for two weekends that September and attracted over 7500 visitors, including seven buyers.

Since then, McPherson Town has undergone a renaissance rivaling the building boom of the late 19th century. Today, most of the homes in the area have been, or are being renovated by private individuals. New historically compatible infill homes have been added as well, and the historic Hawthorne School has been transformed into upscale condos.

We begin our tour at the corner of Riverview Avenue and McDaniel Street.

Our first stop is at 45-47 Riverview Avenue, the Elston House.



This Free Classic Queen Anne home was built in 1890.

The Elston House represents a subgroup of the Queen Anne style known as Free Classic which was common after 1890.

Free Classic Queen Anne preceded the revival of Classical and Colonial style architecture by nearly a decade, and the Free Classic style is characterized by the use of Classical columns rather than the turned posts and delicate spindle work usually found on Queen Anne houses.

We also see traditional features of the Queen Anne style in the construction of the Elston House. These include the asymmetrical façade and dominant

front-facing gable. We also notice the steeply pitched roof, tall chimneys and bay windows, which are traditional Queen Anne elements.

Let's continue west on Riverview Avenue, past Ed Smith Florist, to 241 West Riverview Avenue, on the corner of Riverview Avenue and El Morado Place.

Here we see a 1940's urban cottage, constructed decades after most of the buildings in



McPherson Town. Built during the 1940's, the cottage makes the most of the lot on which it sits. This structure is reminiscent of an English garden home. Typical areas of grass have been replaced with flower gardens and a side patio. Take note of the red clay-tile roof which is rare in residences in the area.

We turn right onto El Morado Place, and appreciate the large, multi-unit apartment named El Morado.



This remarkable structure was built in 1924 in the

Spanish Eclectic style and it's one of the few Mediterranean-inspired properties remaining in Dayton. It must have attracted a number of "sidewalk superintendents" during its construction.

During the early 1900's, new construction in McPherson Town consisted primarily of multi-family dwellings. Two prominent buildings constructed during this period were the El Morado, and the Floral Terrace Apartments at 118-124 McPherson Street.

The Mediterranean style originated in southwestern European countries including Spain, Italy, and France. In our country, the Mediterranean style is most common in the Southwest where original Spanish colonial construction occurred, but it should not be confused with the earlier Mission style inspired by California's Hispanic heritage.

The Mediterranean style is relatively rare in northeastern cities and particularly rare in 19th century neighborhoods. It first became popular when it was featured in the Pan-American Exhibition in San Diego in 1915.

The El Morado features many of the Mediterranean style characteristics, including a landscaped entrance court and a loggia or arcaded balcony.

Also notice the textured wall surfaces and decorative terra-cotta

entablatures. The casement windows, metal balconies, and of course the red-tile roof also are typical of this style.

We continue north to West McPherson Street where we turn right.

Our first stop is 220 West McPherson Street, The Ulrich-Boone House.

This Free Classic Queen Anne was built in 1897. This style is also described as a Queen Anne cottage because of its modest size.

Sometimes the history of a property overshadows its architectural significance, and so it is with the Ulrich-Boone House. In 1897 William Ulrich built this Free Classic Queen Anne for his family. His daughter



Katherine was born in the house, and she resided here until 1999, along with her husband Walter Boone. This unbroken family history in the Ulrich-Boone House, spanning more than 100 years, is truly significant.

Katherine shared vivid memories of the McPherson Town neighborhood. She recalled her mother's prize-winning yard, landscaped by Siebenthaler's Nursery, and carriage rides with her uncle Fred Withoft, Dayton's postmaster. Perhaps most significant in terms of Dayton history, Katherine

remembered the Great Flood of 1913, when she was stranded with her mother on the second floor of their home because the water rose so quickly. They were finally rescued by boat while standing in 21 inches of water on the second floor.

We can admire the architectural simplicity of the Ulrich-Boone House, with its Doric neoclassical porch columns and dentilled cornice – but what happened here and the memories shared of the lives of the Ulrich-Boone family, represent the most-treasured history of this home.

We continue on West McPherson Street, we pass Floral Avenue and turn left down the alley between Floral and McDaniel Street.

This alley detour reveals an increasingly rare architectural artifact, an urban barn. This barn at **112 Floral Avenue** was built around 1875. Barns were once common along the back streets and alleys of America's cities, towns and villages. Unfortunately, these reminders have largely disappeared from urban environments, and we forget that our older residential areas were built to accommodate horses and horse-drawn vehicles.

Like their much larger country cousins, urban barns were excellent examples of form dictated by function. The first floor included a stable for

horses and a space for a wagon or buggy. A second-floor loft or 'mow' contained hay for the horse. By the early 1900's, many urban barns had been converted to garages, and most of the urban barns that remain today have been retrofit with overhead garage doors.

A few urban barns and accessory buildings remain in the St. Anne's Hill and South Park historic districts. Look for them on your walking tour of these neighborhoods.

Now we walk slightly farther down the alley and pause at 125 McDaniel Street, between Babbitt and McPherson streets.

Here we find an urban barn built in 1994 as a garage and loft studio. The building was designed to mimic the two-story carriage house or urban barn popular at the turn of the 20th Century. The first floor of the building contains a garage space, while the second floor serves as an artist studio.

We continue down the alley to Babbitt Street, then turn left and pass Floral Avenue.

We pause at 202-204 West Babbitt, built in 1917 as Chester Anderson's



Store. In the days before the automobile allowed us to travel from

our front door to nearly any place in the City, neighborhoods like McPherson Town functioned as small communities. People walked to school, to work, and to nearby shops which offered a variety of goods and services. “Mom and Pop” grocery stores dominated the entrepreneurial landscape of pre-automobile neighborhoods. Chester Anderson’s Store is a rare reminder of that era.

The structure is typical of the small neighborhood grocery store. The frame, gable-front building replicates the ancient shop house. In these structures, the merchant operated a business on the first floor and lived with his family on the second floor or rented that space for extra income.

The building has been converted into a two-unit residence. Though the display windows have been removed, we can easily imagine children from nearby Hawthorne School buying a supply of penny candy there after school.

We continue west on Babbitt, to 214-216 West Babbitt Street, built in 1902 as a two-family rental property.

Here we see an American Foursquare house. The former editor of Old House Journal, Clem

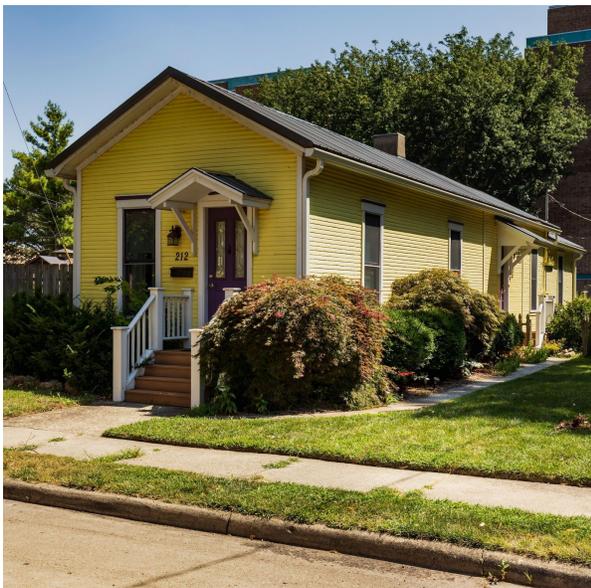


Labine, coined the term American Foursquare. The name stuck and rightly so, for the square block shape of the style is usually evident inside and out.

The style typically consists of four rooms over four rooms. The floor plan could be adapted easily to a two-family dwelling like the one we find here, simply by dividing the house in half. The American Foursquare was often promoted as the “most house for the least money” and was one of the most popular house types of the first two decades of the Twentieth Century.

Common features of this house style include its pyramidal roof and central dormer. Also notice the three-post or column porch with balustrade and dormer roofs. This duplicates the form of the main roof.

Now we turn around and proceed to Floral Avenue where we turn left and then stop at 212 Floral Avenue, the Spirk House. This



Shotgun-style house was built in 1875.

The name Shotgun originates from folklore which claims that a shotgun fired through the front door would exit uninterrupted through the rear door.

The Shotgun is rectangular in plan and is one room wide and two more rooms deep. The main entrance is typically on the front-facing gable end, with additional entrances at the side or rear of the building.

The Shotgun is said to have evolved from houses originally introduced by African Americans into Haiti and New Orleans. It was later built as inexpensive company housing for workers. Thus, Shotgun homes are usually found in urban neighborhoods where they could easily accommodate narrow lots.

The Shotgun's function as worker housing is reinforced by some of the former occupants of the Spirk House. In 1882 it was occupied by a Mr. Pierpont, who identified his occupation as a "huckster," or one who peddles goods. In 1890, the owner was Charles Spirk – for whom the house is named – and he was employed as a machinist.

During the rehabilitation of the Spirk House for the 1993 Rehabarama, the architectural integrity of the house was maintained by constructing an addition off the back of the house, instead of at the side as might normally occur.

Now we retrace our steps, turn left on Babbitt, and proceed to McDaniel Street.



We pause at 201 McDaniel Street, the William Britton House, at the corner of Babbitt and McDaniel streets. This home was built in 1890.

The Britton House is another excellent example of the Queen Anne masonry construction, common in McPherson Town. Notice the plain brick walls. They accentuate the contrasting turned posts and bracketed cornice of the rear veranda, and the patterned shingles and decorative bargeboard of the two projecting gables.

The attention to detail common with the Queen Anne style extends to the slate roof. The roof features cresting and crockets along the roof ridge; crockets are an upward-facing ornament of Gothic origin.

A common characteristic of older houses is the alterations they have experienced through the years. The Neoclassical-style front porch of the Britton house appears to have replaced an earlier Eastlake-style porch. Notice the Eastlake style of the rear porch.

We turn left and follow McDaniel Street to 226 McDaniel, the Hawthorne School. The size of this former school building reflects the



large school-age population living in and around the McPherson Town

neighborhood in that time. Built in the Romanesque style in 1886, this is an excellent example of a large Victorian-era school building.

Significant features include a rusticated limestone foundation with a water table. The structure is dominated by a soaring multi-gabled roof and a louvered bell tower with double-round arched windows. We also notice the brick corbelling and the rounded-arch entrance bay with a keystone.

The interior of the building includes other reminders of the late-19th Century educational institutions, including polished wood floors and wainscoting in the classrooms. The structure has been beautifully renovated into luxury condominiums.

Now we turn around and proceed to the northeast corner of Babbitt and McDaniel streets, to 43 and 45 West Babbitt Street, where we appreciate the Miller-Leedom House, constructed in 1886.

The Miller-Leedom House is one of the most elaborate homes in McPherson Town. Its first owner, Joseph Leedom, worked for the *Dayton Daily Democrat* as the paper's business



manager. Joseph's daughter Mary taught at the Hawthorne School just behind their home.

The house has characteristics of both Queen Anne Style Victorian architecture and Stick Style architecture. In fact, the City of Dayton selected it to represent the Stick Style in its 1990 publication *Blueprint for Rehabilitation*. Characteristics of the Stick Style include flat horizontal or vertical planks, meant to reflect internal wood-frame construction.

The Miller-Leedom House offers a rich mix of historic influences. On the projecting bay, notice the Medieval influence in the gable window's stained glass. Features of the American Colonial period are evident in the decorative globes suspended on the right-hand porch. The mansard-like sloped and hipped roof of the left porch are influenced by the Baroque style.

The home also includes Eastlake features, based on the 19th-century style developed by British architect and writer Charles Eastlake. Eastlake advocated for skilled craftsmanship and inventive design, primarily in furniture. This style favors abstract and geometrical designs which nicely complement the Stick Style. Among the most striking Eastlake details on the Miller-Leedom House, we see the sunburst images on the side panels

of the bay. The sunburst design is creatively repeated as a negative shape on the brackets below. We also notice the extensive patterned medallions enclosed in squares on the lower story of the bay – and on the main door of the left porch, the stylized flower and leaf images.

The current owners have lived in the home since 1994, and they painted it with vivid colors and tonal contrasts to emphasize the home's great wealth of detail.

We continue south on McDaniel Street, and stop in front of 125 and 127 McDaniel Street. These two homes were built in 1890.



Sometime in the early 1900s, the

stucco salesman was a forerunner of the aluminum-and vinyl-siding

salesman. He visited these two houses and sold the owners on the advantages of the new product.

Stucco was promoted for its benefits, similar to those of asbestos and asphalt shingles known as Insulbrick. It provided insulation and a way to update the look of older buildings, and it could be applied over frame and masonry buildings and painted the desired color. Churches and commercial buildings were also stuccoed, but it is unusual to find these side-by-side stuccoed houses.

Now we turn our attention to 118, 120 and 128 McDaniel Street.



These homes were built in the 1890s and are known as the “Three Sisters”.

The wood-frame houses are very similar in size and style. In fact, two of the three could pass for twins. Note the ways the builder varied them slightly, using different fish-scale designs and slight architectural modifications.

121 McDaniel Street is our next home. This Folk Victorian was built around 1886.



As we view this small home, our eyes are immediately drawn to the porch, which fills the space formed by the house's L-shaped form, exactly as the builder intended. The elaborate porch is the home's only stylistic

pretension which is so characteristic of larger Victorian houses of the period.

Virginia and Lee McAlester, authors of [A Field Guide to American Houses](#), refer to houses like this as Folk Victorian. According to the McAlesters, Folk Victorian houses are identified by the presence of Victorian detailing on otherwise simple folk houses. The detailing is generally less elaborate, or more confined, compared with the high-style Victorian houses they

attempted to mimic. Inspired by the Italianate, Queen Anne, Eastlake and Stick styles, this detailing is usually applied to porch and cornice lines.

We notice the many Eastlake features on this porch, including the turned spindles and turned balusters in the porch railing and frieze. The lace-like spandrels which form a flat arch above the porch entrance are also typical of the Eastlake style.

The shaped lintels above the windows harken to the earlier Italianate style. The simple standing-seam metal roof and symmetrical façade are also obvious departures from the usual ornate eclecticism of this style.

Farther down the street we come to 107 McDaniel. Here we see the Hall House, a remarkable Stick Style house built in 1890. The house was once owned by C.R. Hall, a bank teller, and it's perhaps McPherson Town's best example of the Stick Style.



The most-defining feature of the Stick Style is the horizontal and vertical wood framing on the exterior wall. The Stick Style highlights what

architectural historians James Massey and Shirley Maxwell have called the “bones” or the internal construction of the house, and conceptually this feature sought to express the “truthfulness” of the internal construction. Since the decoration is largely cosmetic, however, and unrelated to the structure, it has never been clear what ‘truth’ was being expressed.

On the Hall House, the wood framing is particularly noticeable because of the highlights created by the contrasting paint colors. During the early part of the 20th Century, the revival of Classical and Colonial styles promoted the widespread use of white paint. As a result, the fine architectural details and ornamentation of many Stick Style and Victorian houses were concealed or obscured. The tasteful paint scheme on the Hall House brings out these features as originally intended.

Historian Roger Moss is largely credited with reviving the interest in the true colors of American Victorian houses. His book, Century of Color, Exterior Decoration for American Buildings 1820-1920, in which he draws on the historic color palates of the Philadelphia Athenaeum and archives of the Sherwin-Williams company, is a documentary and a practical guide to American exterior decoration.

Next door is 101 McDaniel Street, at the northwest corner of McDaniel and McPherson.



John Miller, a railroad man, built this duplex between 1900 and 1907. Historical records suggest that the house now at 115 McPherson Street was moved from 101 McDaniel to the back of the lot, to make way for this house,

which was built as a duplex. Later it was converted to a single-family home and it boasts nearly 5,000 square feet of living space.

This house represents a transition from Queen Anne to American Foursquare styles. The side of the house facing McDaniel Street is strongly suggestive of the American Foursquare style with little ornamentation, but it shows Queen Anne influences in the gable, wood shingles and the oval window. The side of the house facing McPherson Street is more suggestive of Queen Anne styling.

Next we turn left onto West McPherson Street.

As we pass 39 McPherson, note that the land was purchased in 1884, and the home was built in 1885. The original owners were Ben and Silla Knecht, who owned a saloon in Dayton. They had two children, Earl and Pearl. Earl was ten at the time the home was completed, and Pearl was eight.

We pause next at 41 West McPherson, to see the Hartley House built in 1885.



Like the Hall House on nearby McDaniel Street, the Hartley House incorporates features of the Stick Style. Most notable are the horizontal and vertical boards intended to mimic the house's internal construction.

Unlike the Hall House, however, the surface treatments have more in common with the Queen Anne style which was also popular at the time. Here Queen Anne features dominate the house, including decorative wood shingles and the unusual sunburst design in the gable above the porch.

The home was built for James Hartley, who owned Hartley and Company Merchant Tailors located at the northeast corner of Third and Jefferson Streets. This home also shows us how multiple paint colors enhance and highlight the myriad architectural details of Victorian-era houses.

Our eyes are drawn next to a Queen Anne home at 35 West

McPherson Street. This home was built in 1886, and if porches could talk, the inviting design of this one would say “Welcome.” Realtors would say this house has curb appeal.



The horseshoe-shaped porch entrance, enclosed with latticework and topped with imbricated or overlapping wood shingles, is one of the most iconic porch designs in Dayton. It illustrates the decorative complexity and occasional whimsy found in the Queen Anne Style.

Next we make our way to the first block of West McPherson Street where we find the “Triple Twins.”

Here we view not one, but three sets of twin structures, at 30 and 35 West McPherson, 34 and 39, and 40 and 27 West McPherson Street. You will quickly notice that some of the porches have been modified or expanded, but the basic architectural features of these unusual homes remain intact. Perhaps they were built by one individual or builder. Regardless, these three sets of twins are a unique find.

We return now to the southwest corner of McDaniel and McPherson streets, and turn our attention to 39 McDaniel Street.



The Bates House was built in 1886 and represents Eastlake and Stick-style architecture. It's a good example of the large single-family and two-family dwellings built in McPherson Town by members of Dayton's middle class during the last decades of the 19th Century. The dominating architectural feature of the

house is its porch or veranda, which is entirely visible along the corner lot. The porch on this corner home shelters nearly half of the property and

obviously was designed to impress. The porch is also unusual for its arcaded arches supported by turned table-leg posts.

In addition to the influence of the Eastlake style in its notable porch, the Bates House exhibits elements of the Stick Style, alluding to its internal structure. We note the vertical, horizontal, and diagonal wood framing of the two-story bay window and the lattice work of the porch railing.

The Bates House was subdivided in the 20th Century, but it was returned to a single-family residence as part of Dayton's 1993 Rehabarama.

We turn left and continue to 25 McDaniel Street, the John Caufield

House. This Dutch Colonial Revival structure was built in 1882, but early in the 20th century, it underwent an extensive re-design to incorporate the gambrel roof,



which is a major element of the Dutch Colonial Revival Style that was popular among middle-class families especially in the 1920s. Typical

features of the style on the Caufield House include the central chimney, gabled dormer, and thin classical porch columns.

Later the home was divided into five apartments, but it was returned to a single-family dwelling thanks to the 1993 Rehabarama.

A garage has been added to the vacant lot next to the home. Notice that the architect utilized some architectural features of the home in the design of the garage, including the fish scale shingling and the unique window.

This concludes our tour of the McPherson Town Historic District. If you have any questions about our friendly and neighborly community, please contact the McPherson Town Historic Society online at mcphersontown.com.

We hope you will join us on our other walking tours to explore all of Dayton's vibrant, locally protected historic districts which are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

This walking tour is a project of Preservation Dayton, Inc. Preservation Dayton is a grassroots historic-preservation alliance of neighborhoods and

individuals who actively promote preservation and historically sympathetic revitalization of the Dayton community. For more information, visit www.preservationdayton.com

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