

Welcome to your self-guided tour of Wright-Dunbar Village Historic District.

This walking tour will highlight some of the architectural and historical features of buildings in the Wright-Dunbar Village neighborhood. The tour takes approximately 90 minutes.

You may also want to allow additional time to tour the West Third Street Historic District and the many historical sites in the area. These include the Wright-Dunbar Interpretive Center and Wright Cycle Shop at West Third and Williams Streets. Wright-Dunbar is also the home of Dayton's Walk of Fame which honors more than 150 outstanding individuals and groups for their contributions to our region and the world. In addition, the Paul Laurence Dunbar Historic District and historic house museum are just a few blocks west.

Please begin your tour of the Wright-Dunbar Village at the Dayton Cultural and RTA Transit Center located at 40 Edwin C. Moses Boulevard. Please walk carefully, as streets and sidewalks can be uneven, and it's important to observe the terrain while you appreciate the area. If you have any questions about the neighborhood, please contact the Wright-Dunbar Village Neighborhood Association on Facebook at www.facebook.com/wrightdunbarvillage

Wright-Dunbar Village was designated as a local historic district in 2002. The neighborhood consists of a mixture of period homes and new housing designed to complement the historic architectural heritage of the community.

Before the 1840s most of the land in this area of Dayton consisted of scattered farmsteads surrounding a tiny commercial district along West Third Street, known as "Mexico." The area began developing around 1845 when the first lots were recorded. The small amount of frontage on the lots predetermined the area for residential development. The size of the lots also attracted a working-class population who built modest, unassuming houses.

The area remained largely undeveloped until well after the Civil War. In 1869, West Third Street became one of Dayton's first streetcar suburbs when W.P. Huffman and H.S. Williams built the Dayton Street Railway which linked the area to downtown. Commercial ventures sprang up along the rail line and more residential development followed.

African-Americans began moving to Dayton's westside in the 1870s. An 1880 census reveals that most of the residents were white, with a few black families living south of Fifth Street. Most of the residents were natives of Ohio and Kentucky, and predominantly members of the working class. By the turn of the century many African American families built or bought homes in the area around Mound and Horace Streets. Proximity to Dayton's central business district provided easy access to places of employment, and by about 1900 the area was home to a well-established residential community.

The period around World War I saw a shift in the population of the area. A widespread movement of African-Americans from the south to the industrial north coupled with housing segregation brought many black residents to West Dayton. Churches and other institutions were established to address this population's social and religious needs. The flood of 1913 also had an impact, as it reached past Broadway and heavily damaged both residential and commercial structures in the area.

From the 1920s through the early 1960s, the area became a vibrant center of residential, commercial, and social life for African Americans. Initially, black homes and businesses were located near West Fifth Street while Hungarian families and businesses were found on West Third Street. As the African-American population grew, the West Fifth and West Third Street commercial districts became the heart of black life in Dayton. In the 1930s, more than sixty diverse businesses and organizations served the community which was by far Dayton's largest African-American neighborhood.

In the 1960s and 1970s, more access to housing and shopping choices began to open up for African Americans. At the same time the neighborhood was increasingly challenged by highway construction, insurance and mortgage redlining, and disinvestment. The West Fifth Street business district began to weaken, and with it the adjacent neighborhood. Urban renewal took its toll. Absentee landlords were allowed to let properties deteriorate which were then demolished by the city, leaving many vacant lots.

According to, Consensus Organizing, a Community Development Workbook authored by Mary L. Ohmer and Karen DeMasi, neighborhood leaders tried to get funding to revitalize the Inner West Dayton area for many decades. A plan completed for the City of Dayton by McCormick and Barron called for a multi-million dollar urban renewal project to demolish most of the residential neighborhood and replace it apartments. That is until a group of community activists convinced the city to change course. Many life-long residents like Mary Ellington with the help of Dayton attorney, Sam Caras, worked to convince the city of the neighborhood's potential.

At the same time, other activists, including Jerry Sharkey, began promoting a plan to preserve Dayton's aviation heritage and the Wright Brothers neighborhood. The vision of Sharkey and other leaders eventually led to the creation of the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park. In addition, Dean Lovelace, a City Commissioner and long-time leader in the African-American community, persuaded his fellow commissioners and the mayor to work with stakeholders to create a new plan that called for historic preservation rather than demolition of the area.

The plan also included innovative policies to prevent gentrification of the area. The city provided funds for existing homeowners to improve their properties. Tax abatement was offered to retired homeowners so they would not be forced out of their homes as their property values and taxes increased. The city also created an unprecedented partnership with the Homebuilders Association, minority contractors, and tradespeople to develop historically compatible in-fill homes and to showcase the neighborhood in a CitiRama open house event in 2003.

Today, thanks to government, philanthropic, and private investment, Wright-Dunbar Village is a thriving and beautiful residential area with renovated historic homes and historically sensitive infill construction built on previously empty lots. As you tour the neighborhood, you'll be able to see how the newer, infill homes contribute to the historic streetscape with ground plans and architectural styles similar to those of the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Please begin your tour at 40 Edwin C. Moses Boulevard, the Dayton Cultural and RTA Transit Center. The building is the former Zion Baptist Church that was an important spiritual and cultural center for the African American community. The church was built in 1906 in the Romanesque Revival Style. Typical Romanesque features include the asymmetrical main facade with the raised entry and semi-circular lintels over the entry and windows. The small tower is capped with a battlement. The recessed gable wall dormer also emphasizes the main façade. The RTA Center has been renovated and is available for public events and gatherings. Facilities include a 120-seat theatre, a gallery area, and conference room. For more information, contact the City of Dayton Department of Recreation and Youth Services.



Now please cross the street and walk to the entrance of Oak and Ivy Park at the corner of Edwin C. Moses and West Fourth Street. Oak and Ivy Park is a gathering place for neighbors in Wright Dunbar Village and is named after Paul Laurence Dunbar’s first published book of poetry.

Walk one block down West Fourth Street and turn right on Horace Street.



Please notice 62 Horace and 56 Horace. At first glance, the newer brick porches may leave the impression that these two homes are similar in style and perhaps built around the same time. In fact, 62 Horace is the older of the two homes. This Free Classic Queen Anne home was built around 1885. It retains its narrow clapboard siding and window trim.

The next home **56 Horace** is an American Four-Square home. The Four-square became one of the most popular residential styles in America from the 1890s to the 1930s. Typically these homes were two stories with four nearly equal-sized rooms on each floor. According to *The Old House Journal*, these homes were marketed for their “Americanness.” Another defining feature of this style is the pyramidal roof with dormers.



Please proceed to 36 and 34 Horace. These two twin brick homes with their elevated porches and center stairs make a striking impression. Notice their matching hipped roofs and impressive three-sided turrets with bay windows. The stone lintels above the windows, hipped roofs, and dormers with two matching windows emphasize the vertical lines of the structures. A newer brick-patterned porch, like those at the beginning of the block, has been added at 36 Horace, while 34 Horace retains wooden porch columns and balustrades.

As you turn at the end of Horace, please notice 26, 20, and 14 Horace. These homes are nearly identical in their structure, roof lines, and window patterns, including the small square window in their gables. However, notice the differences in the porch roof lines, columns, and trim. This illustrates how even slight variations in exterior features can create a unique impression in a home's street presence. Notice that 26 Horace retains its fish scale trim in the gable. This is a common architectural detail that you'll see on both historic and infill homes in the neighborhood.



Now proceed back down Horace Street on the west side.



Our next stop is 39 Horace Street. This home was built in 1910 by John J. White, who owned a livery stable in downtown Dayton. The home has architectural elements of the Queen Anne style and the American Four-Square style. Tragically, John White died of injuries received in a train accident in Middletown before the house was completed. In 1918, his widow, Grace White who remarried as Grace Harcourt, sold the house to Herman Gerstner.

The Herman Gerstner family lived in the home until 1929. Gerstner was the business partner of his son, Harry Gerstner, who founded H. Gerstner and Sons. The company which makes finely crafted, wood tool cases was founded in 1906. The international company is still in business today and is located just a few blocks south off Edwin C. Moses Boulevard where the company relocated after the 1913 flood.

In 1929, Herman and Frieda Gerstner sold the house to John and Martha Day. The 1920 Census indicates that the couple was “mulatto” and that John worked as a night watchman and Martha worked as a domestic. Unfortunately, Martha died that same year of peritonitis at age 43. Two years later, in 1931, John Day, sold the house to Harry Gerstner, son of Herman Gerstner

In 1933, Harry Gerstner rented the home to Fitzpatrick Gorman, known as Fitz, and his wife Ella. Gorman was listed as a laborer in the city directory, and later as a waiter. Ella was an accomplished baker and made pastries for the Biltmore Hotel in downtown Dayton. Because the Gormans took such good care of the house, Gerstner offered to sell them the property. He also offered to carry the Gorman's mortgage at a time when financial institutions refused to approve loans for African-American families. In 1942, the Gormans closed on the sale and purchased the house from Gerstner. Their niece inherited the house and continues to live in the home that has been in her family for nearly 90 years.

This home is also the site of neighborhood meetings where residents rallied and organized with the help of attorney, Sam Caras, to stop the McCormick & Barron urban renewal plan for the area.

The home next door is 43 Horace, a newer infill home. This was originally the site of 41 Horace where John J. White and his wife Grace lived while they were building their new home at 39 Horace.



Now please walk to 47 Horace. This brick home is another Wright-Dunbar success. According to the photos in the Montgomery County Auditor's database, this home was boarded and vacant in 2001. By 2007, the property was occupied and brought back to life. Notice how the current owners have added period, Eastlake trim in the upper-story gable. The home retains its original stone window lentils and foundation.



Please pause at 59 Horace. This was the home of Carl P. Anderson one of the owners of the Classic Theater on West Fifth Street. The 1930 Census lists Anderson's address at 59 Horace and his occupation as a contractor. The 1930 *Dayton City Directory* lists the Classic Theater's address on West Fifth Street as well as 59 Horace. Anderson and his partner, Goodrich Giles, opened the Classic Theater on August 25, 1927. It is thought to be the first theater in the United States to be built, operated and managed by African-Americans. Anderson and Giles built the Classic Theater because African-Americans were discouraged from attending the downtown theaters. Unfortunately, the Classic was demolished in 1991.



This Folk Victorian home retains its original leaded-glass front door and sidelight. Notice the decorative trim in the second-story gable and on the porch pediment.



Please proceed across West Fourth Street and pause at 101 Horace. Here you see one of the many newer, infill homes which have revitalized the neighborhood. Notice the many features which are inspired by Victorian-era architecture. These include the impressive two-story bay with inset windows and the fish scale decoration in the upper gable.

Please pause next at the site where Lorin Wright lived. Lorin was the second son of Susan and Melville Wright. This historical marker, courtesy of the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, features a photo of Lorin and three of his children. Lorin kept books for the Wright brothers' printing and bicycle businesses. He was also the Wright family's "press agent" who shared the telegraphed news of the brothers' first flight with Dayton's newspapers on December 17, 1903. When the historic telegram arrived, Lorin waited until his family dinner

hour was finished before delivering the news to the press. Unfortunately, the Associated Press reporter at the local Dayton newspaper ignored Lorin's important news.

Lorin helped his brothers with a bit of competitive espionage during their patent disputes with Glenn Curtiss. Lorin secretly visited Lake Keuka in New York, where he filmed Curtiss' attempts to fly a modified 1903 model of Samuel Langley's Aerodrome. Curtiss's employees discovered Lorin and confiscated his film. Nevertheless, Curtiss failed to demonstrate that Langley's craft was capable of flight before Orville and Wilbur's historic flights in December 1903.



Lorin and the oldest Wright son, Reuchlin, ventured to Kansas after attending their parents' alma mater in Hartsville, Indiana. While Reuchlin made his life in Kansas, Lorin returned to Dayton in 1889 where he lived for the remainder of his life. In the 1920s and 1930s, Lorin became an owner and president of Miami Wood Specialties, which made wooden toys, including toy airplanes. He also served as a Dayton City Commissioner from 1920 to 1927. He died in 1939 and is buried at Woodland Cemetery.

Please notice 109 Horace. This is one of only a few in-fill cottages constructed of brick in the neighborhood. According to Montgomery County Tax Records, this home was built in 2000. The pattern of brick construction is one of the clues to help determine when a home was built. We know this is a newer home because of the way the bricks are laid.



Here are some clues for dating brick buildings. Before the late 1700s, brick buildings alternated one row of stretchers, the long side of the bricks, with one row of headers, the short side of the bricks. These patterns were known as English or Flemish Bond. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, Common Bond construction emerged. Common Bond bricks were laid in 3-courses; that is with three rows of stretchers between each row of headers. As brick and mortar construction improved, more long rows of bricks were added between the headers. Around 1825, five stretchers were laid between each row of headers. Five-course American Bond became the construction standard. Then in the 1850's, header courses began to move even farther apart with 6 and 7 rows of horizontal brick stacked in-between.

We know that 109 Horace is a modern home because the stretchers are stacked on top of each other with no intervening rows of headers.

Proceed next to 123, 127, and 131 Horace. Here you will see three charming infill cottages. The subtle differences in the porches and decorative details contribute to the unique appearance of each home. Notice the use of fish scales, the horse-shoe trim in the upper gables, and the carved porch columns inspired by the Eastlake style. Please pay special attention to the detailed



trim around the windows and door frames and notice how they vary in each of the individual cottages.

Please cross Anderson Goodrich and follow the lovely park and fountains on your left.

On your right, you see the Robert H. Mallory

House which faces 803 West Fifth Street.

This 1896 Queen Anne home was built for Mallory who served as Army Captain in World War I. Mallory also became Executive Director of the Linden Center in 1926, and directed fundraising for the Fifth Street YMCA. He later directed recreational activities for World War II African American soldiers at the Linden Center.



Here we see the asymmetrical design typical of Queen Anne architecture. Notice the large raised porch with Doric columns supported on stone bases. The large pediment over entry bay and hip roof add to the graceful presence of the home. The rear addition includes wooden shingle and clapboard wall treatments.



From here we can see the Linden Center where Mallory served as Executive Director.

The center is located at 334 Norwood Avenue and is one of the last vestiges of Dayton's original black business and cultural corridor.

The Linden Center was built in 1928 in response to the challenges faced by African American citizens in a segregated society in the early 20th century. It was financed by a municipal tax levy, which was politically encouraged by Black leaders. African-American leaders also conceived, created, and administered the center and its comprehensive services for more than 50 years. The Center's goal was to develop a mainstream model of community self-determination, autonomy, and integration through civic, cultural and recreational participation. Services included recreational programs, medical treatment, life skills and educational programming without regard to race or gender. As a central meeting place, the center also nurtured activists and community members who became leaders in Dayton's civic, economic, spiritual, and cultural advancement. Currently, the non-profit, Gem City-Hilltop Community Development and Housing is exploring adaptive reuses for the site. An architectural review has been completed and the non-profit feels that the property is a good candidate for rehabilitation.

Now return back down Horace on the east side of the street and pause at 134 Horace, the Johnson House. The current owners purchased their home in 1998 and were among the first new families to experience the revival of the district. Traveling to south Dayton by way of Edwin C. Moses Boulevard, they noticed the construction going on in Wright-Dunbar and stopped to take

a look. Two weeks later they owned the home they are now in, and have never regretted it. The owners have always lived in neighborhoods close to downtown, and moving to Wright-Dunbar has been one of their best decisions ever.



Our next stop is 128 Horace, The Shaw House.

The owners of this home became attracted to the neighborhood when they got to know their friendly next-door neighbors. The Shaw's home was built on a previously empty lot in 1999. The owner's father had lived in a double which originally occupied this site. Mr. Shaw has fond memories of the original home including shoveling lots of snow and helping his father

with yard work. Notice how the design of this new, single-family integrates historic features including the two matching bay windows, the large front porch, and the central entrance surrounded by side-lights and a transom.



The next three houses 126, 118, and 114 Horace were built in the late 1800s according to Montgomery County online property records. Property records typically provide a very rough estimate of when structures were built.

The cottage at 126 Horace Street was built around 1885. Notice how its ground plan and design inspire the three, newer infill cottages across the street.



118 Horace was built around 1888. The criss-cross patterned brick porch as well as the dormer were probably added at a later date. The rear of the home is connected with a unique sloped-roof. Notice the two doors on the front porch. This is another typical feature of historic homes. Perhaps one door was for visitors to enter the front parlor, while the other door was for daily use by the residents. The door entering the front parlor was also where visitors entered to pay their respects when wakes and funerals were typically held at home.

Multiple doors and windows also helped to circulate outdoor air through older homes before the advent of air-conditioning.



114 Horace was built around 1895. This vernacular Victorian home features a wrap-around porch. The unique front entrance and the stairs leading to the porch are set on a diagonal. Notice the fish scale siding and a small window in the second story pediment.

Now turn left and walk west down West Fourth Street until you come to Mound Street. Notice the prevalence of large lots in the neighborhood which provide plenty of room for detached garages and ample yards.



Please turn right and stop at 66 Mound Street, the Rosa Bauman Koellsch House.

The home was built in 1886 when Rosa Bauman Koellsch bought this lot from her father, Erhardt Bauman. Bauman was the owner of a nearby cracker factory. Rosa's husband, R.W. Koellsch, was a real estate broker. She lived in the house until 1927. A Mansard roof dominates this Victorian home with large decorative brackets and inset brick panels under the roof. Also notice the decorative surround on the second story window and the projecting side bay.

64 Mound Street, the Oscar Lehman House was built in 1886.

Lehman was a salesman who purchased the lot in 1885. The Victorian cottage features a small porch with a heavy balustrade, Doric columns, and a full entablature. The low gable roof includes a decorative barge board.



56 Mound Street, the Albert Shearer House was built in 1884. This Queen Anne style home remained in the family until 1923. Shearer was in the hardware business. Notice the shiplap siding, the porch with turned wooden columns and spindles, and the barge board at the end of the roof gable.

Our next stop is 52 Mound Street, a Folk Victorian brick home built around 1880. The brick is "pickling," or being allowed to return to its original color. The home features a raised foundation and paired windows on the main façade. The original wrap around porch is now missing. Notice the first floor window surrounds and the second floor windows with decorative metal segmented lintels, keystones, and gables. The braced gable-end with pendants and the decorative bracing on side-wall eaves are other Victorian features.



Now walk to 34 Mound, the A.C. and J. Manning House. This is another Folk Victorian style home. The lot was purchased in 1883 for \$375 and in the same year James Manning, a carpenter and builder, lived here. The house was sold that year for \$1,650. This home is also finished in



shiplap siding. The side entry porch features decorative shingles. Several bays, small pediments in the lintels, and corner boards all contribute to the Victorian style of the home.

Now cross the street and walk south back down Mound Street.

37 Mound Street, the Philipps-Fulton House was built in 1885. This

Victorian frame also features Queen Anne detailing. The lot was purchased in 1882 for \$450. Edward Philipps and his wife Elizabeth owned the home from 1894 to 1919. Philipps served as a Deputy Sheriff, City Auditor, and Second Vice President of the Market Saving Bank. Hattie Fulton purchased the home in 1938. Notice the two-story projecting bay and window lintels trimmed with small pediment caps.



Now stop at 47 Mound Street, the Edward P. Brennen House.

The lot for this Victorian cottage-style home was purchased in 1879 for \$350. It features a wrap-around porch with Classical detailing, including Doric columns and dentils. Notice the gable roof with its porthole window in the attic.

51 Mound Street, the Edward Philips House, was built in 1881.

This Victorian cottage was listed as the home of Edward Philips, a brass finisher, in 1881. He sold it in 1893 for \$2,150. The home is made of brick construction faced with stucco. The side porch includes Classical columns and decorative details.



Walk next to 57-59 Mound Street. This Victorian frame with Queen Anne detailing was built in 1880. It features various types of siding and shingling. The irregularly shaped wrap porch is supported with turned columns above the balustrade. One entrance door is set in a projecting bay with small-scale side windows. The mix of window types with low pediment lintels and small surrounds, plus the rectangular gable window adds additional interest to the design.

65-67 Mound Street, the Moses Crowell House is our next stop. Crowell, a machinist, lived in this Victorian frame home from 1881 to 1918. Notice the two-story porch treatment which is echoed in many of the neighborhood's in-fill homes. The first floor porch shows remnants of a

more elaborate Eastlake style porch. A first floor projecting bay, the asymmetrical main facade, and ornamental window surrounds are other interesting Victorian features.



69 Mound Street, the Wilson George House was built in 1881. George was a salesman and millwright. He sold the house in 1891 for \$2,000.

This Queen Anne home includes Stick-style detailing. The Queen Anne Style is known for an irregular plan and a variety of wall surface treatments. The Queen Anne style was popular from about 1880 until approximately 1910. The Stick-style utilized decorative board overlays on the exterior of a home which was typically asymmetrical in design and full of interesting angles and odd wings. Diagonal, vertical and horizontal boards function as decorative elements. The Stick-style was popular between 1870 and 1900.



Here wooden decoration abounds, including elaborate porch and window decoration. Notice the asymmetrical façade and bay roofs supported by brackets. The decorative porch is supported with turned spindles. The wall treatment mixes clapboard and shingles. The hip roof is decorated with bargeboard at the gables.

Please cross West Fourth Street and continue south on Mound Street. The 100-block of Mound Street consists of mostly in-fill homes that were built from 1999 to 2003 as part of the city's partnership with the Home Builders Association and a number of minority contractors.

103 Mound was built in 1999 by Prestige Construction, one of the developers who helped to rebuild the area. The design reflects several features of a typical Victorian Vernacular home built in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Victorian Vernacular or Folk Victorian is a subset of Victorian architecture named after the Victorian era and Queen Victoria who reigned from 1837-1901. Folk Victorian architecture was popular in the United States from approximately 1870 through 1910, although a few Folk Victorian homes were built well into the 1930s. Folk Victorian structures are relatively plain in construction, but embellished with decorative trim. Here we see a two-story, three-sided bay, with matching windows in each of the bays. Notice the bulls-eye window on the side and the porch embellished with turned posts and balustrades, also known as East Lake trim.



As you walk down the block, notice 109 Mound Street. According to the Montgomery County Auditor's online records, this home was built in 1885 and it may be one of the oldest homes on the block. However, please note that online property records frequently estimate the



year a historic home was built. Here the original window proportions and trim and the side porch are preserved which indicate that this is a historic home.

Now please stop at 123 Mound Street. This is also another historic home. Online property records show a remarkable transformation of this home. In 2001, the right side porch and front entrance were completely enclosed. The home was covered with aluminum siding and aluminum awnings obscured the upper portions of the windows. Today the entrance, the open side porch with Eastlake trim, and the wooden clapboard siding reflect the home's design when it was built around 1900. Also notice the original wrought iron fence with its raised footing. Similar historic fencing is visible at 127 Mound Street which was built around 1890.



Now continue south down the sidewalk where Mound Street ends and walk to the front of the former YMCA at 907-915 West Fifth Street. This structure which features Neoclassical detailing was built in 1927. The YMCA was one of most popular West Fifth Street institutions, and one of the oldest African-American YMCAs in the country. It opened through the efforts of several leaders in the African-American community, including Captain Robert Mallory, Edward Banks, and Dr. Lloyd Cox. The YMCA operated here from 1928 until 1978, when the programming relocated to a new facility on Dayton- Liberty Road. The property was abandoned for many years and was rehabilitated in 1999 by Advanced Assembly Automation for use as its corporate headquarters. Today it serves as offices for a variety of organizations and businesses.



This Neo-classical building features a symmetrical main facade, with semi-circular door bays. Rectangular first floor window bays are decorated with brick lintels and brick quoins emphasize the corners of the main façade. Notice the decorative medallion on the facade inscribed with "YMCA." Names of important African Americans are also inscribed on the façade. Decorative

stone molding separates the first, second, and third floors. The Classically inspired entablature and low brick parapet are other Classical architecture elements.

Sadly the historic YWCA which stood at 800 West Fifth Street was lost to demolition. A group of local black women organized the Women’s Christian Association #2 in 1893 which was one of the oldest African-American YWCAs in the country. The group purchased the building that stood on West Fifth Street in 1909 for the home of YWCA House #22. The Dayton Y became affiliated with the national YWCA in 1918. It later moved to Dayton-Liberty Road.

Before we leave West Fifth Street, this is a perfect time to envision the once vibrant African American commercial and cultural district which prospered along this corridor. The area, also known as “The Nickel,” was home to thriving shops, restaurants, clubs, and theatres. Extensive research by Dayton historian, Margaret Peters, and a February 23, 2013 *Dayton Daily News* article by Amelia Robison and former *Dayton Daily News* librarian, Charlotte Jones, helps us imagine what it was like to “Walk the Nickel” during the decades when the area began to develop in the 1870’s and thrive through the 1950s.

For example, motorists and pedestrians traveling along West Fifth Street could stop at Ben’s Hamburgers, Hiram Poore’s Service Station, Lloyd Lewis’ Furniture, Cal’s Barbershop, Dr. Charles Johnson’s office, the Palace and Classic Theatres, Harris’ Cocktail Bar, Pop Mason’s Flamingo Club, William’s Cleaners, Preston Drugs, the McFall Hotel, the Owl Club, Mac’s Chicken Shack, Loritt’s Funeral Home and others.

West Fifth Street was also the original home of Shaw’s Cleaners, founded by Joseph Walter Shaw in 1910 at 620 West Fifth. Shaw was a skilled tailor from South Carolina, who left his day job as a train servant and opened his business in 1910. The business continues today on Germantown Street and is owned by fourth generation family member and current City Commissioner, Chris Shaw.

Sadly, two of the devastating losses on West Fifth Street include the Palace Theater and the Classic Theater.



Classic Theater on West Fifth Street, 1983 (photo by Dan Arnold)



Palace Theater on West Fifth Street, 1983 (photo by Dan Arnold)

The Classic Theater was located at 1125 West Fifth Street and was the first theater in the United States to be built and operated solely by African-Americans. Carl Anderson and Goodrich Giles built the theater in 1926. Anderson lived at 59 Horace, just a few blocks from the theater. The Classic was a major entertainment center for African-Americans who were barred from downtown theatres.

The Palace Theater, was even larger than the 500-seat Classic. The Palace was constructed the following year in 1927. It was part of a complex which included the Granada Ballroom on the second floor and the Cotton Club. The Palace hosted movies, stage shows, musical presentations and vaudeville acts. Several storefronts were located on the first floor.

The facade featured a continuous arcade with central keystones on the arches. Flat brick columns separated the arches and supported the decorative entablature. The low parapet at the roof was decorated with a blind frieze panel. The higher section of the building accommodated a fly that housed stage curtains and scenery. The main entry projected from the facade and incorporated a marquee. The entry bay rose above the rest of the roofline, and was capped with a decorative element. The interior was decorated with Spanish Mission details in stucco made to imitate building facades with tile roofs.

As “The Nickel” grew over the subsequent decades, West Fifth Street would see performances by many big-name acts. According to the website, “Cinema Treasures”, the Palace, near the intersections of Fifth and Williams Streets became one of the most popular theatres in Dayton’s predominantly black West side. For part of its history, the Palace was the equivalent of the Apollo Theatre in New York City’s Harlem, with Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, Dinah Washington, Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, and Billy Eckstine among the many stars that performed there. Stage shows ended in the 1950’s, but movies continued until the Palace Theatre closed in the 1970’s.

Despite dedicated preservation efforts in the following years, including a listing on the National Register of Historic Places for the Classic, both theaters were eventually demolished—the Classic in 1991 and the Palace in 2002. You can learn more about both theatres and see more historic photos in Andrew Walsh’s book Lost Dayton, and his website, “Dayton Vistas.”

Now return back to Mound Street and walk north down the east side of the block.

Montgomery County online property records indicate that historic homes are still present on this side of the street. 132 Mound Street may have been built around 1892.



130 Mound Street retains its original window trim and porches which are embellished with fish scale and turned posts. The two porches and irregular roof lines indicate that the rear of the house may have been added on, one or possibly two times. Property records indicate that the house may have been built in 1885. The narrow width of the wooden siding is another clue that this is an older, historic home.

Now please pause at 118 Mound. This remarkable in-fill home was built in 2000. The home emulates many Victorian features including the irregular ground plan and massing. Notice the bay windows on the lower story and the two, offset pediments on the second story. Stick-style features emphasize the pediments with square shingle siding and horizontal and vertical wooden trim on the larger pediment.



108 Mound Street is one of the few Gothic Revival cottages remaining in Dayton.

Between 1840 and 1880, Gothic Revival became a prominent architectural style for modest residences and churches throughout the United States. The style became widely popular in 1838 when architects Andrew Jackson Downing and Alexander Jackson Davis built the famous Lyndhurst mansion overlooking the Hudson River in Tarrytown, New York. Their pattern books inspired vernacular, local adaptations of the style in more modest homes. Here we see

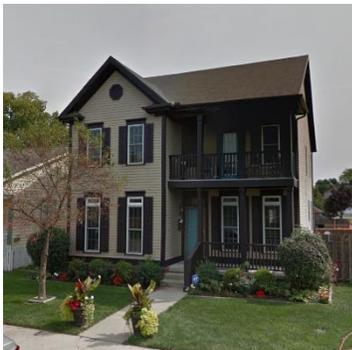
several Gothic Revival features including the steeply-pitched roof and pointed windows with tracery. The long narrow, lower-story windows add to the welcoming feeling and coziness of the home. When you tour the Huffman Historic District, you will be able to see another of Dayton's rare Gothic Revival homes on Linden Avenue.



Now continue left on West Fourth Street until you come to Shannon Street and turn right.

According to Sanborn maps and U.S. Census records, Shannon Street was previously known as Olive Street and Baxter Street. This block of Shannon Street consists largely of historically compatible in-fill homes built from 1995 to 2003.

54 Shannon is a historic home that has been lovingly restored. Notice the striking façade which includes two rows of four symmetrical windows on the first and second stories. The upper pediment is decorated with fish scale siding. The right side features a front porch and a second story porch both with Eastlake trim.



Please notice 40 Shannon Street. This infill home was built in 2004 and utilizes several historic architecture elements. The narrow windows and proportionate shutters emphasize the verticality of the structure which was a common feature of many Victorian Vernacular homes. The first story windows are topped with glass transoms and the open second story porch is reminiscent of Federal style architecture. The current owners have expanded their garden to include the lot next door. When you walk by 120 Shannon later on in your tour, you'll notice that these two homes have the same ground plan and scale, but with very different aesthetics.

38 Shannon is our next stop. This home was built in 2000 for the Citirama grand opening of Wright-Dunbar's revitalization. It skillfully mimics a simple version of a "Carpenter Gothic" single story home with a wide porch across the entire front. The "Downing" colors are also authentic to the period when American architect, A. J. Downing popularized this style. The current owners, both school principals, are raising their family in Wright Dunbar after moving here from downtown. They chose Wright Dunbar because they needed more space and a yard for their growing family. They also enjoy the close proximity to downtown, right across the West Third Street bridge, and the diversity and friendliness of the neighborhood.



Notice 20 Shannon, the last house on the right. Here we see an entirely different design of the two-story front porch which dominates the façade. The porch and window proportions echo the Colonial Revival style of architecture.

Now turn left back down Shannon and stop at 35 Shannon. This is another striking infill home with an expansive garden on both sides and a deep back yard. This infill clearly relies on Victorian architecture elements. These include the two story, three-sided bay with three windows on each level. The long front porch features ornately carved balustrades and upper-level trim.



As we return down Shannon, notice the historic wrought iron fence surrounding the home at the corner of Shannon and West Fourth.

The property records for 103 Shannon show that this historic home was completely boarded and abandoned prior to 2001. The front porch was missing and a single, large picture window had been carved into the front façade. Here we see all the original window proportions have been restored and gingerbread trim has been added in the pediment. A newer interpretation of the wrap-around porch includes large Classical pillars.





Next door, 107 Shannon Street retains its Victorian Vernacular features. The home was probably built in the late 1800s. Notice the detailing in the window trim and the delicately carved brackets which support the roof of the front bay.

At the end of the street, please pause at 129-131 Shannon. This beautiful residence has been transformed from a double into a single-family home. 1905 census records listed the owners as Oliver Filbert and his wife. Differing census records have recorded Mrs. Filbert's name as both Clara and Clara. The Filberts may have owned this home before 1905. They may have also owned a different home on Olive Street. Curt Dalton, Dayton's renown local historian, provided the current owners with a newspaper article that refers to a funeral which may have taken place in "the Filbert residence on Olive Street in 1902."



One of the more interesting former tenants of the home was Sherman Potterf. Potterf was the widowed brother of Mrs. Filbert. Sherman, a man of short stature, was the manager and namesake of the Midget Theatre until 1917. You'll learn more about Potterf and the historic Midget Theatre on your tour of the West Third Street Historic District. The Theatre still stands today and is ready to be brought back to life.

Now turn left back down Shannon Street.



120 Shannon is another striking in-fill home. In fact, it has the same ground plan and basic design as 40 Shannon, the house we saw earlier on the block to the north. Here we see the same second story porch and long narrow windows with transoms and shutters. However, the addition of round porch pillars instead of square pillars and horizontal fish scale siding on both levels adds a more dominant Victorian aesthetic to this home.

Now turn left down West Fourth Street and walk one block west to Hawthorne Street.

4 Hawthorne Street is a replica of the Wright family home and was built as a new, private residence. The original Wright family home stood across the street on the empty lot at 7 Hawthorne. The Wright's home and the bicycle shop the brothers occupied from 1897 to 1902 were moved to Henry Ford's Greenfield Village in 1937. Orville Wright helped Ford locate original family furnishings, books, and equipment to outfit both buildings.



7 Hawthorne Street is the site of the Wright brothers' family home. Milton Wright's expanding role in the Church of the United Brethren drew him to Dayton. In 1869 Wright was named the editor of the church's newspaper, the *Religious Telescope*. He decided to move his family to Dayton where the church's publishing enterprise had been located since 1835. He was also instrumental in forming the nation's first United Brethren seminary in Dayton which began in a church at West Third and Summit Street, now known as Paul Laurence Dunbar Street. The family first rented a home at 114 Summit while waiting for their new home at 7 Hawthorne to be ready. They were one of the first families to build a new home in the area.

Even though Wright's expanding role in the church took him to Iowa in 1878, the Wrights continued to own the home. They returned to Dayton for the last time in 1884 and lived here on Hawthorne Street until 1914 when Bishop Wright, Orville, and Katherine moved to Hawthorne Hill in Oakwood. Hawthorne Hill is part of the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park and is open to the public.

The original Hawthorn Street home was a modest, two-story Victorian frame dwelling that stood out due to its Victorian porch that wrapped around the front and one side of the house. The lot was less than forty feet wide. Wilbur and Orville built the porch, using a lathe that Orville had made from scrap metal and wood. The lot includes a replica of a portion of the front porch and an outline of the home's original floor plan. Please enjoy the several interpretive panels about the Wright family and their lives in the neighborhood, courtesy of the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historic Park.

The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum website describes what a deep influence Milton Wright and Susan Catherine Koerner Wright had on their children's curiosity, love of learning, and values. Milton Wright was born in Indiana. His father was an ardent abolitionist and supporter of the temperance, anti-alcohol movement. Despite long hours working on the farm, Milton was a voracious reader who prided himself in learning and training his mind. In 1846, Milton joined a Midwestern Protestant sect called the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. He was drawn to the church more because of its stand on moral and political issues such as slavery, alcohol, and Freemasonry, rather than its theology.

Susan Catherine Koerner Wright was born in Virginia and also grew up on a farm in Indiana. She joined the Church of the United Brethren in Christ as a teenager. Susan and Milton met at Hartsville College in Indiana where they were studying literature. Going to college was a rare opportunity for a woman of Susan's era. She also had considerable mechanical talent and became skilled with tools while working with her father in his carriage shop on the family farm. Once Susan had her own home, she designed and built simple appliances for herself and her family. As boys, Wilbur and Orville would seek their mother's advice whenever they needed mechanical assistance.

Now continue down Hawthorne until you reach Mike Sells Way. The three homes at the end of the street are infill homes that replicate structures associated with three famous American innovators.

The tall brick home at 39 Hawthorne is a replica of Thomas Edison's brick laboratory at Menlo Park, New Jersey. Edison is often called America's greatest inventor. Edison's research in his Menlo Park lab and his later laboratories led to the development of the telegraph, phonograph, and electric light bulb.



The Craftsman inspired home at 1020 Mikesell Way replicates the home of astronaut John Glenn. Glenn was born in Cambridge, Ohio and grew up in Concord, Ohio. He was the third person and the first American to orbit the Earth, circling it three times in 1962. Following his retirement from NASA, he served from 1974 to 1999 as a Democratic United States Senator from Ohio. He flew into space again at age 77 in 1998.

1016 Mike Sells Way recreates the home of Neil Armstrong, astronaut and Wapakoneta, Ohio native. On July 20, 1969, Armstrong and Apollo 11 Lunar Module pilot Buzz Aldrin became the first people to land on the Moon. When Armstrong stepped onto the lunar surface, he famously said: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." The three Apollo astronauts were awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Richard Nixon.



These homes were part of the larger public-private initiative to redevelop the empty lots in Wright-Dunbar Village. A later phase of the plan was launched in 2010 with the non-profit, Improved Solutions for Urban Systems or ISUS. ISUS included a trade and technology preparatory school whose students helped to build these replica homes. County Corps and private developers finished the John Glenn home in 2016.



Now return north down Hawthorne Street and pause at 23 Hawthorne. The house was completely gutted and renovated before the current family purchased it in 2005. They love the community and appreciate the size of its yards, the feel of the neighborhood, its economic and racial diversity, and the tax abatement.

The owners like to imagine what their little street and neighborhood was like more than 100 years ago. They can say with near certainty that Milton and Reuchlin Wright were in this house. They had the opportunity to talk with author,

Louis Chmiel who stopped by their house when he was doing research for his book, Ohio: Home of the Wright Brothers. The owners and Chmiel spent several hours sitting at their kitchen table trying to figure out the history of their house. Based on Chmiel's previous knowledge, they determined that their house was built around 1880 when most of the other houses on this block of Hawthorn were built.

Chmiel's research indicated that Milton Wright would visit his friends, the Billheimers, at 21 Hawthorn Street. Chmiel also determined that this house used to be numbered 21, but was changed to 23 Hawthorne at some point. The Billheimers lived here for some time. Reuchlin Wright, the eldest child of Milton and Susan Wright, married one of Bellhiemers' daughters, Lulu in 1886 in Westerville, Ohio. In 1889 Reuchlin found employment with a lumber company and later the railroad in Kansas City. In 1901, he moved his family to farm near Tonganoxie, Kansas. Over time, Reuchlin grew distant from his family in Dayton. In 1912, he tried to return part of his \$50,000 inheritance from Wilbur's estate. But his father, Orville, and Katharine refused. Reuchlin died in 1920.

Now turn left when you reach West Third Street and stop at the corner of Williams and West Third.

Please pause at 105 South Williams Street, the Daniel Grant Fitch House. This Greek Revival home was built in 1856 and is one of the finest examples of Greek Revival residential architecture in Dayton. Fitch was a lawyer who was associated with publishing the *Western Empire* newspaper from 1848 to 1870. This is one of the earliest homes on the west side.



The Greek Revival style gets its name from the use of columns and moldings from classical Greek architecture. It was popular from 1825 until 1860, and often features an elaborate door surround with a transom. A wide cornice usually caps the structure, just under a low pitched roof. Here we notice the shallow-pitched, hip-roof which is supported by a heavy projecting cornice with brackets, dentils, and blind panels. The original frame construction has been fully restored. The flat porch roof is supported with square wood columns, brackets and dentils. The windows are emphasized by bracketed lintels and wide wooden surrounds. The six-over-six windows and pilasters at the corners and also surrounding the entrance are typical of the Greek Revival style. Also notice the large historic addition at the rear.

Now look across the street at 110 South Williams Street. This large Victorian home was built in 1895. The front of the home still features the original siding and fish scales which were lovingly restored. The home is painted in bright blues, grays and purples which historically represent Victorian color choices. In the 1970-80s a concrete block addition was made to the front of the house which was used as a hair salon. The current owners still get hair magazines at the house. In the 1980s-2000s, the house fell into disrepair and was abandoned. Fortunately, the



home was restored in the early 2000s. In addition to buying the home in 2004, the current owners also purchased the adjoining lot and have planted an oak tree, cherry trees, apple trees and several large lilac bushes. They take pride in their raised bed vegetable garden and love living in and raising their children in the district.

100 WILLIAMS Street is another infill home that features a two-story porch. The

narrow shutters, transom lights above six-over-six windows with mullions, and the bullseye window all add to the Victorian aesthetic of the home.



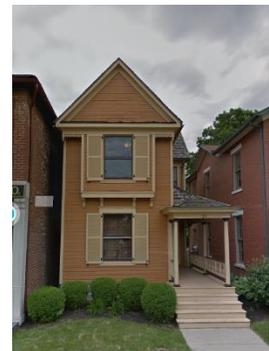
Now walk north on Williams Street and cross West Fourth.

Here you will see a majority in-fill homes which complement the historic period of the district and echo the streetscape from the late 1800s and early 1900s . Preserving fine architectural details like windows, doors, iron fencing, limestone hard scaping, and exterior trim contributes to the character and value of a historic district. Even in these newer homes, we see the contributions of features like the ornate window trim at 46 Williams, the turreted porch at 34 Williams, the turned porch posts at 37 and 43 Williams, the bulls-eye window at 31 Williams, and the restored brick street on the block.



Please stop at 30 Williams, the Headquarters for the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park which commemorates the legacy and recognizes the national significance of the Wright brothers and Paul Laurence Dunbar. The house was built around 1869 in the Victorian Vernacular style. Victorian Vernacular or Folk Victorian are terms used to describe structures which have some detailing typical of high style architecture but do not follow all of the rules for a particular style. The buildings are frequently quite simple in plan with a single elaborate architectural feature such as a porch cornice.

26 Williams Street, next door is also owned by the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park. The frame Victorian home has a unique shallow, second story bay with triangular dentils along the soffit. The large supporting brackets also emphasize the bay. Notice that authentic, original hardware has been restored to the shutters which provided weatherization and insulation for homes before modern heating and cooling.



22 South Williams Street is The Wright Cycle Company Building. The shop was built in 1886 in the Victorian style. The building served as grocery store, feed store, saloon and boarding house before the Wrights rented it. Wilbur and Orville Wright operated their



printing and bicycle sales, repair, and manufacturing business here from 1895 to 1897. This site enabled them to move their printing business from the Hoover block and combine it with the growing bicycle business. The new space was big enough to allow the brothers to begin to manufacture bicycles, which enabled them to gain skills critical to their aviation experiments. It was in this building that the Wright brothers began to consider the problems of powered flight. It, along with a portion of the Gem City Ice Building on West Third Street, are the last remaining sites in Dayton related to the brothers' cycle business.

This concludes your walking tour of Wright Dunbar Village.

Please contact the neighborhood association on Facebook at www.facebook.com/wrightdunbarvillage if you have any questions or would like additional information about the residential area.

If your schedule allows, please take the West Third Street Historic District walking tour and also visit the Wright-Dunbar Interpretive Center and Wright Cycle Shop—all right before you here at the corner of Williams and West Third Street. Wright-Dunbar is also the home of Dayton's Walk of Fame which honors outstanding individuals and groups for their contributions to our region and the world. In addition, the Paul Laurence Dunbar Historic District and historic house museum are just a few blocks west. As you can see there is a wealth of history, amenities, businesses, and friendly neighbors who will have you returning to the area again and again.

This walking tour is a project of Preservation Dayton, Inc. PDI is a grassroots alliance of neighborhoods and individuals who actively promote historic preservation and historically sympathetic revitalization of the Dayton region. For more information, visit www.preservationdayton.com We hope you'll join Preservation Dayton and explore Dayton's other exciting National Register neighborhoods.

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Content for the history of Wright-Dunbar Village and the Wright family was summarized from the following resources:

- [Consensus Organizing, A Community Development Workbook](#), by Mary L. Ohmer and Karen DeMasi, Sage Publishing, 2009, Case Study C: Revitalization without Gentrification: Wright-Dunbar Village, Dayton, Ohio
- The Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park website: History & Culture: People, Places, Stories, and Collections
- The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum website, "The Wright Brothers, the Invention of the Aerial Age, Who Were the Wright Brothers?"
- [Lost Dayton](#) by Andrew Walsh, The History Press, 2018, and Andrew Walsh's website "Dayton Vistas"
- Heritage Ohio's website, description of the Linden Center

- The website, “Cinema Treasures”
- Research by Dayton historian, Margaret Peters
- “A Timeline: Black History in the Miami Valley 1798 to 2001,” February 23, 2013
Dayton Daily News, Amelia Robison and former *Dayton Daily News* librarian, Charlotte Jones

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