A Walking Tour of Historic Downtown Concord, NH

Overview History of Downtown Concord

The buildings and streets of downtown Concord reflect a community steeped in tradition, yet well-adapted to change. Concord's first settlers laid out Main Street in 1726. Farmhouses on modest house lots, soon joined by a few small shops, lined the street; field lots lay in the Merrimack River floodplain below. In 1803 the First New Hampshire Turnpike opened, linking Concord with Portsmouth and thereby assuring the town's position as an important trading and transportation center. Scores of stagecoaches, wagons and animals traveled down Main Street daily, headed to Boston or Portsmouth.

Concord's central location within the state led to its designation as state capital in 1808 and secured the community's role as the heart of political and social life in New Hampshire. After the State House was completed in 1819, the center of community activity began to shift from farther north to present-day downtown. In 1842 the railroad came to town, and Concord became the gateway to northern New England, ushering in a half-century of major growth and prosperity. By century's end, the railroad, with dozens of passenger trains daily and immense repair yards, was the city's largest employer.

With the arrival of the railroad, the appearance of downtown Concord began to change, quickened following a fire in 1851 that destroyed many of the buildings on the east side of Main Street. Wooden houses and shops gave way to three and four-story buildings of brick and granite. These new buildings housed not only stores and offices, but hotels, theaters, meeting halls and apartment units. West of Main Street were some of New England's finest churches, public buildings and residences. East of Main Street were factories, warehouses, stables and, running parallel to the Merrimack River, the railroad and its yards.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, Concord supported a tremendous variety of manufacturing

enterprises, whose products were shipped worldwide and whose diversity sustained the community over the years – as one business or industry fell on hard times, another picked up the slack. Initially the river and early turnpikes provided the needed transportation for this successful manufacturing base; later it was the railroad. Musical instrument and sterling silverware production, furniture-making, printing, carriage manufacturing (led by the famed Abbot-Downing Company), harness and axle production, and granite quarrying numbered among the more prolific industries. In more recent years, state government and health care have been major employers. Since 1920 New Hampshire has hosted the country's first presidential primary elections, shining a spotlight on the capital city every four years.

Main Street was one of the state's principal highway routes until I-93 bypassed it in the mid-1950s. A few years later, a large shopping center emerged on the site of the railroad station. Feeling threatened by new trends in retail, Main Street owners responded by lopping off upper stories to reduce building heights, covering facades with sleek metal panels and installing wide sign bands. There was even an effort to install a moving sidewalk to lure shoppers from the shopping center up to Main Street. Federal funding programs and a shift in architectural tastes in the 1980s ushered in a new era of downtown rehabilitation, reviving the historic character of many buildings and leading to the listing of the entire downtown on the National Register of Historical Places.

Photographed ca. 1905 and looking east from the State House brick commercial buildings that still form a continuous line along northwest corner of Park and North Main until destroyed by fire the dead of winter. *Courtesy Concord Public Library*

The full tour is roughly 2 miles and takes approx. 1 ½ hours, but it can be enjoyed in smaller sections. Along the way, be sure to explore the many wonderful shops, galleries and restaurants scattered throughout downtown.

NB: The tour is designed to view many of the buildings from across the street. The buildings often display their name on the facade; look for it either at the cornice or above the first story.

1 NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE HOUSE 1819/1866/1910

The New Hampshire State House, with its gilded dome, is the focal point of downtown Concord. The State House was ready for occupancy in 1819, eleven years after Concord was officially designated the state capital. The State House acted as a magnet, drawing businesses and residences to this section of Main Street, thus creating the beginning of a true downtown area. Designed by architect Stuart Park, after whom Park Street is named, the building was initially only two stories high. It was built of local granite, quarried and hauled by inmates of the recently opened State Prison.

In 1866 the State House was remodeled with a mansard roof, enlarged dome, and a granite portico, all financed by the City of Concord. In 1910 the third story and west wing were added. New Hampshire has the only state capitol building whose legislature

toward North Main Street, this view shows the string of red-
the east side of the street. White's Opera House anchored the
in 1920. Note the arched crowns of the elm trees, graceful even in

still sits in its original chambers – no small feat as the 424-member New Hampshire General Court is the largest state legislative body and the third largest legislature among English-speaking peoples. *Open to the public.*

2 SHERATON BUILDING 1885-86

The Sheraton Building, across from the State House, is the southernmost of a group of four brick buildings that evolved over the second half of the 19th century. Note the decorative brickwork and the great variety of window sash on these buildings, particularly on the second from the left. The Sheraton Building was built for the New Hampshire Savings Bank, the first of three on this tour erected by that bank. The bank was established in 1830, the fourth savings bank in the state. When it moved into this building, the bank occupied the first floor, and the upper floors were divided into elegant apartment units—claimed to be the most luxurious north of Boston. The four-story building is faced with pressed brick and trimmed with sandstone, giving a rich texture to its walls. The architect, Amos Cutting, also designed the State Library (#60). In 1927 the bank vacated this building for a new granite building that stands across the street (#5).

3 EAGLE HOTEL 1852/1890

A downtown landmark for well over 150 years, the Eagle Hotel hosted important local gatherings and guests from all parts of the country until it closed its doors in 1961. Presidents Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford Hayes, and Benjamin Harrison all dined here, and New Hampshire's only president, Franklin Pierce, spent the night here before departing for his inauguration in 1853. Other well-known guests included Jefferson Davis, Charles Lindbergh, Eleanor Roosevelt, Richard Nixon, and Thomas Dewey. Strategically located directly across from the State House (its name purportedly was derived from the eagle atop the State House dome), the hotel was a vital center of political activity where legislators, lobbyists, and dignitaries discussed their business. The original pitched roof was removed in 1890 and replaced with the flat fifth story seen today.

A horse-drawn water sprinkler passes in front of the Eagle Hotel ca. 1878, when it still had its pitched roof.
Courtesy Concord Public Library

In 1927 Charles Lindberg greeted a large crowd from the balcony of the Eagle Hotel. Lindberg landed at the Concord Airport, at the time the state's only airport, during a national tour to promote aviation.
Courtesy William W. Upton

4 CLOCK TOWER & EAGLE SQUARE

The brick clock tower near the entrance to Eagle Square was built in 1998 when the clock and bell that once capped the bank across the street (#6) returned to Main Street. It was installed in the bank in 1873 where its position within a high, corner tower underscored the importance of an accurate timepiece to a community. The one-ton bell was installed a year later.

Eagle Square was so named in the early 1980s following a major urban revitalization project that converted the Eagle Hotel into retail and office space

and removed part of the adjacent Merchant's Exchange Building to open this back area up to Main Street. Dimitri Gerakiris' sculptural iron gate was designed to maintain the line of the street. Can you find the hiding elf? As you enter the Square, note the plaque about Isaac A. Hill and the architectural artifacts displayed along the south wall which came from former local buildings. The relocated granite blocks on the ground were horse and carriage mounts.

The focal point of the Square is a stone warehouse built in 1870 for hardware merchant David Warde, whose retail store was on Main Street. (Warde's name and the building date are carved into the granite keystone over the entrance.) Except for thirty years when it was used for manufacturing, the building served as a storage warehouse until the early 1990s, when the New Hampshire Historical Society purchased and renovated it, now using it for collection care and staff offices. (The Society's museum and library are at 30 Park Street, #59.) The octagonal roof tower was designed to recall one of the state's many mountain top fire towers.

To the left of the stone warehouse is the former Eagle Stable. The front portion housed coachmen and attendants of hotel guests, while the rear portion sheltered horses, carriages, wagons and later automobiles.

> *Before you return to Main Street, gaze down the rear alley, which is lined with former livery, stable and warehouse buildings.*

5 NEW HAMPSHIRE SAVINGS BANK 1926

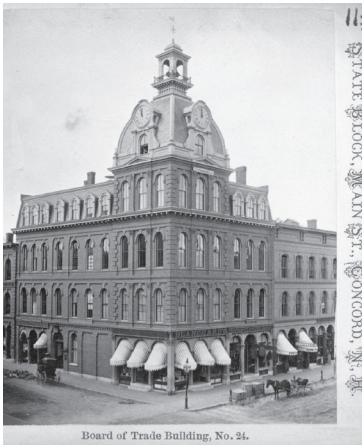
Once back on Main Street, another New Hampshire Savings Bank building is across the street. The bank erected this granite building to provide more space and improved light and ventilation. It instructed its architects to design a building that would be unpretentious, yet would not suffer from comparison with the best the city already had. The resulting building is simple and elegant—appropriate to the stature of a bank. It also provides an effective bridge between the brick commercial blocks to the

south and the granite institutional and governmental buildings to the north and west. Its arched entrance features a heraldic cartouche flanked by lions. Two-story arched windows, carved leaf-like ornament, and original doors that are secured by iron grills are among the noteworthy features of this building made from local granite.

The bank remained here until 1959, when demand for parking and a drive-through window initiated the construction of yet another new building a block to the west. After housing retail shops for nearly 30 years (the dressing room was in the vault), the ground floor returned to banking use in 2014. Law firms have continuously occupied the upper floors.

6 MERRIMACK COUNTY SAVINGS BANK 1873/1950

The Merrimack County Savings Bank occupies what was originally a four-story building that sported a convex-roofed tower at the street corner. The 90-foot tower was one of downtown Concord's most conspicuous architectural features, particularly with its illuminated clock faces and a one-ton bell cast in Sheffield, England. The building was designed by Concord architect Edward Dow for the newly formed Concord Board of Trade, the predecessor of the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce. The Board had its office here and leased the remaining space to



The Board of Trade Building (now home of Merrimack County Savings Bank), with its four full stories and clock tower, ca. 1885. *Courtesy Concord Public Library*

other businesses. The Merrimack County Savings Bank has been in this building since 1889, making it the city's longest tenant in a single building. However, as the fashion for ornate, four-story, Victorian-era buildings waned, the tower and top two floors were removed in 1950. (Many years later, the clock and bell returned to Main Street: see #4)

7-11 SCHOOL TO WARREN STREET

At one time nearly all the buildings in this block were associated with the James R. Hill family (no relation to Isaac). Hill had a flourishing harness-making business, among the more significant of the many local industries that spun off from the Abbot-Downing coach manufacturing enterprise. Both the Gold Rush and the Civil War created a huge demand for harness equipment, and Hill was among the first to take advantage of these and overseas markets. Among the better known of his customers was Barnum & Bailey's Circus. At the time of his death in 1884, Hill was the largest landowner in Concord, and many of downtown Concord's commercial blocks had been erected by him.

Hill built the **State Block** (#7) on the corner of North Main and School streets in 1862 on the site of his family residence and leather shop. The mansard roof was then the latest fashion. Portions of the cast-iron ground-floor arcade are original, but some sections were replicated in fiberglass during a major redevelopment in 1984-85 that involved this building and the two adjacent ones.

The **James R. Hill Building** (#8) was built by Hill's children in 1902 on the site of their father's manufacturing and retail shop. The mid-1980s redevelopment retained only the colorful, fanciful façade and converted what had been storefronts into openings leading to a new plaza in the rear. The building to the left was also part of this redevelopment; it replaced Hill's Centennial Block with a well-designed infill building that used traditional materials and maintained the proportions and setback of the streetscape.

The next building south is the **Morrill Brothers Building** (#9), completed in 1876 and whose parapet proclaims the goods once sold within: "Watches, Clocks, Jewelry and Solid Silverware." The three-dimensionality of the facade, with its incised, leaf-like carving on the window caps and sculptural brackets at the eaves, was the work of local and noted architect Edward Dow.

The city's oldest commercial building and its first two-story, brick commercial building is the **Concord National Bank Building** (#10), erected in 1808. It is also perhaps the most altered building. The third story and Italianate window caps were added in 1869. Various 20th century alterations included a Moderne-style granite storefront and plate-glass second-story windows (1937), an aluminum panel that fully covered that story (1966), removal of all those elements and a new storefront arcade (1979). The building housed Concord's first bank and subsequent banks on various floors until 1958.

> *Take a moment to glance into the alley on your left to notice the ghost signs for Coca Cola and Gold Medal Flour on the north wall of Phenix Hall (#12). And make a mental note of the window caps, sills and wood siding that intentionally resembles stone block on the one-story building on the opposite side of the alley.*

The final building in the group you are viewing across Main Street, on the corner of Warren Street, is another former bank building (#11), built by **Concord National Bank** in 1958 when it vacated the adjacent

The original mid-century architectural design of Concord National Bank, photographed 1977.
Courtesy Concord Public Library

structure. (Note the polished-granite date stone.) It was designed as a Mid-Century Modern building with blue metal panels on the facade, but was substantially renovated thirty years later as that style fell out of favor.

Now cross Main Street and look back at Phenix Hall.

12 PHENIX HALL 1895

Phenix Hall replaced "Old" Phenix Hall, which burned in 1893. Both the old and new buildings featured auditoriums on the top story used for political speeches, lectures, theater productions, boxing and wrestling matches, agricultural fairs and firemen's dances. The existing 500-seat theater has a stage that rolls out into the audience. Abraham Lincoln spoke at the old building in 1860; Theodore Roosevelt spoke at the new building in 1912.

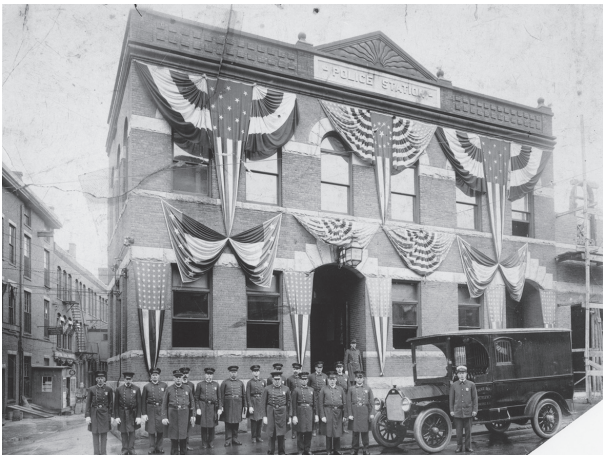
Across the alley from Phenix Hall, and once connected to it by a bridge, was the Phenix Hotel, a four-story building until 1954, when the three upper stories were removed. The faux masonry siding and window trim you saw on the alley wall were part of the original building. The hotel was one of three important hostelries on Main Street. To the left of the hotel is the E. & P. (Eagle and Phenix) Hotel Company, whose upper floors functioned as an adjunct and were connected to the Phenix Hotel. The northernmost building in this group was also once allied with the hotel. Notice the arched window openings and decorative brick cornices.

The diminutive scale and crookedness of Warren Street set it apart from the rest of the business district. The street is still a mix of brick and wooden buildings, many of which have retained their historic storefronts.

13 POLICE STATION 1890

At the time the police station was built, officers spent most of their time handling arrests due to drunkenness, returning lost children to their parents, and cautioning boys to attend school. When the police department

built a new facility adjacent to City Hall in 1975, this building nearly met the wrecking ball. Instead, the brick and granite structure became a restaurant in which former jail cells offer intimate dining.



Police officers pose in front of the station decorated for Memorial Day, 1915. *Courtesy Emile Simard*

14 MCSHANE BLOCK 1886

This Queen Anne structure is among the best-preserved commercial buildings in the city. Cast-iron columns divide the wooden storefronts, and stained glass transoms top the recessed entrances. Over the years a variety of local organizations have met in the top floor meeting hall (since divided into apartments). Granite State Candy Shoppe has been a fixture in downtown since 1927 when Peter Bart, a recent immigrant from Greece, opened the business.

> *As you pass between #13 and #14 into Bicentennial Square, take a moment to read the plaque on the wall of the police station. Before the square was developed into a pocket park in 1976, it was a maze of narrow passageways lined with small brick sheds and shops, many of which were devoted to servicing automobiles. Follow the meandering walkway, keeping an eye out for the turtle sculpted by Chance Anderson. Exit through the cut in the building to return to Main Street and look across at the Statesman Building.*

15 STATESMAN BUILDING 1867

This was erected to house the *Statesman*, one of Concord's three important newspapers of the period. Within a few years, it combined forces with the *Monitor*, a Republican paper and Concord's first daily (introduced in 1864). Under the auspices of the Republican Press Association, both emanated from this spot for over 25 years. (The Democratic Press Company published its own newspaper, the *Patriot*, eventually absorbed by the *Monitor*.)

Arched windows, a truncated corner and a bracketed cornice lend interest to this distinguished building. When first built, it had balconies at the corner windows and a cast-iron arcaded storefront. The Statesman Building was the first in Concord to be lit with electricity, in 1886.

Installing lightning conductors on the Statesman Building, ca. 1901. *Courtesy New Hampshire Historical Society*

Cross Main Street but before continuing south, look back across the street at the Central & Chase blocks.

16 CENTRAL BLOCK 1860

Like many of Concord's 19th century commercial buildings, the Central Block had a meeting hall (in this case two) on the top floor used by a local fraternal organization. The arcaded cornice, arched third-floor windows and cast-iron columns are original

facade features. The arched, leaded-glass transoms of the storefronts are early 20th century, as is the rare Luxfer prism-glass transom at #31. A less sympathetic alteration is the concrete-tile facing applied to the once-matching adjacent building ca. 1940.

17 CHASE BLOCK 1887

Lowell architect F.W. Stickney designed the Chase Block, built in 1887. Its top-story, centrally positioned arches contain infill decoration, including unusual raised circular knobs. The rusticated sandstone adds contrasting texture to the walls. The 1994 addition at the south blends well with the original building.

When you arrive at the Pleasant Street intersection, head down the hill.

18 RAILROAD SQUARE

Until 1960 the view down Pleasant Street Extension would have been of Concord's handsome railroad station. In fact, this widened segment of Pleasant Street was designed as the chief approach to the station. After the railroad arrived in Concord in 1842, the city's population nearly doubled within a decade. In the late 19th century, Concord became the largest and most important rail center north of Boston, with a large machine shop, extensive repair yards, and no fewer than three separate lines that branched out to the north. Twenty-five passenger trains departed from Concord daily, and the Boston & Maine Railroad was the largest employer in the city, with 1,300 people on the payroll.

Four different stations graced Railroad Square over time. The final and very grand station was built in 1885 at the then-impressive cost of $250,000; its architect was nationally known Bradford Gilbert, who designed stations around the country, including New York's first Central Station. Train service began to decline during the 1920s and, in 1960, the Concord station was demolished and replaced by a shopping center. (In a touch of irony, the shopping center was renovated in 2002 to recall features of the railroad station.) Only

Depot Street, which also led to Railroad Square, and the various warehouses behind many Main Street buildings, remind us that this was a hub of railroad activity.

Concord's railroad station was one of the largest and grandest buildings in northern New England.
Courtesy Concord Public Library

19 MONITOR & STATESMAN BUILDING 1912

The Monitor & Statesman Building was the early 20th century solution for space needs for a growing newspaper company. Its location took advantage of the nearby railroad station, and passersby could gaze through the lower-level windows (now blocked-in) and watch the press in operation.

> *Cross Pleasant Street and head back up the hill to turn left onto South Main Street.*

20 ACQUILLA BUILDING 1894

The Acquilla Building across the street is believed to be Concord's first structure to use an internal steel skeleton, a radical departure from the more traditional masonry-bearing-wall structural system. Steel-frame construction, developed in Chicago in the mid-1880s, not only made skyscrapers possible, since walls and windows no longer had to support the building, but it also allowed larger expanses of glass. (Architect Bradford Gilbert designed the first such building in New York City.)

Portions of the metal framing system of the Acquilla Building are visible in the steel sign bands. The large, plate-glass windows on the second story exemplify the benefits of this new construction technique. Manchester architect William Butterfield's use of buff brick and decorative terracotta panels is a nice contrast to the red-brick and granite-trimmed buildings along the rest of Main Street.

The delivery wagons lined up outside Norris' bakery were a familiar sight ca. 1898. The long building in the rear was a stable for the company's horses. *Courtesy Beverly Estabrook*

21 NORRIS BAKERY/CONCORD THEATER 1860/1934

James S. Norris operated one of the largest bakeries in the state out of this building. The shop occupied the front, and the bake ovens were in the rear. Norris made bread, crackers, and confectioneries from 1860 until the late 1920s. During the Civil War, his business reportedly supplied two tons of bread each day to local military camps. In the mid-1930s, the building was converted into a theater, and for the next sixty years, residents watched motion pictures here. The Concord Theater added the yellow-brick front. Peek into the recessed entrance to see floor tiles spelling "Concord Theater." The small, wooden building attached to the south end was a diner.

22 NORRIS HOUSE 1860

The mansard-roof house next door to the bakery was Norris' residence. South Main Street was once lined with similar elegant, mid-19th century residences. As

Concord's business district extended southward and auto traffic increased, many were razed and replaced with commercial buildings. As you continue down South Main Street, you will see a few more handsome survivors.

The Concord Food Co-op building has been a grocery store since it was constructed in 1940 for the First National grocery chain. Now turn left and walk a short way down Hills Avenue.

23 EDSON HILL CARRIAGE HOUSE ca. 1895

This elaborate brick carriage house located a short way down Hills Avenue is a reminder that, until World War I, cities like Concord were dependent on horses to pull carriages, delivery wagons, street sprinklers, snow rollers, and even streetcars. Many carriage houses, built of both wood and brick, survive in Concord's neighborhoods.

This structure stood behind Edson J. Hill's spacious house, which fronted on South Main until ca. 1960. The opening located within the gabled dormer was for hay, and the ventilator atop the roof ensured adequate air circulation. Like his father, James R. Hill, Edson was a leading citizen who, after his father's death, assumed responsibility for the family's extensive real estate holdings and managed the Eagle and Phenix hotels.

Return to South Main Street and turn left. Before the 2015-16 project, Concord last reconstructed Main Street in 1953-54. Prior to that time, the sidewalk along the west side of South Main was at the level of the granite retaining walls. The project brought it down to the level of Main Street and added flights of concrete stairs to access the upper granite stairs that you'll see further down the street.

24 DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY BUILDING 1927/1958

The aluminum-framed wall construction of this building was one of several erected downtown in the late 1950s and early 1960s. What makes this example

unusual is that it was applied to an older brick building that is still visible in the rear.

The brick building was St. Mary's School for Girls, a private Episcopal school—now the White Mountain School and coed. After the school relocated to Bethlehem, NH, the building housed various state agencies. In 1958 the state added the glass and aluminum front, selected to "express the modular space disposition" in the words of the architectural firm, Koehler & Isaak, which also explained the choice of a polished-granite base was to relate to other civic buildings in the city. The side walls transition to brick to match the 1927 building. The embankment on this side of the street was cut into to provide an at-grade entrance—a feat only possible due to the recently lowered sidewalk.

25 LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR (2013) & SMILE (2011) BUILDINGS

These two retail and office buildings continue the transformation of the east side of South Main Street from the commercial strip oriented toward automobile sales and repairs it became in the 1920s. Go into each lobby for exhibits on the history of South Main Street's evolution and the industries that were once on the site. The Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center is in the Smile Building.

Arthur Purington's automobile garage was one of many along South Main Street in the early-mid 20th century. It stood on the site of the Smile Building.
Courtesy Concord Public Library

26 JFK APARTMENTS 1964

Across the street is the first housing project completed by the Concord Housing Authority, which was established in 1961 to oversee the city's urban renewal work, as well as provide low-income elderly housing. As with the Employment Security Building (#24), construction included removing the granite retaining walls and cutting into the slope to bring the building front to street level. At nine stories, it was dubbed Concord's first skyscraper. Three days after President Kennedy's assassination, the Authority announced its choice of name for the building, making it one of the first of many government-funded buildings to thus memorialize him.

> *Pause before crossing South Main Street to look southward at more of the 19th century houses with their terraced front lawns and upper granite retaining walls.*

27 BENJAMIN KIMBALL HOUSE (1825/ca. 1885) & CAPITOL THEATER (1927)

Benjamin Kimball was a major force in the development of New Hampshire railroads and, indirectly, the development of the state. One of Concord's wealthiest citizens, Kimball was a founder or director in a number of key local businesses, including a foundry on the site of #25 which made castings and wheels for railroad cars. In addition to the railroad station, Kimball masterminded the construction of the New Hampshire Historical Society and State Library.

His house, located only a few blocks from the site of that station was another design by Bradford Gilbert, also the architect for the Vanderbilt Mansion in New York City. Gilbert actually enlarged and remodeled an existing Federal house built in 1825—the date is inscribed in the granite keystone above the front door. His Romanesque Revival renovation added round-headed arches, towers, corbeled cornices, and varied masonry textures and colors. Kimball's carriage house still stands in the rear on South State Street (now home to a glass company).

Kimball willed his house to the state for use as a governor's mansion, but the state declined the gift, citing the expense of upkeep. Instead, the property was purchased by the Masonic Order, which used the house for the state headquarters of the Grand Lodge and built the Capitol Theater in 1925-27.

The theater, completed during the boom period of theater construction, remains one of the largest theaters north of Boston. Its interior featured the most technologically advanced systems and equipment for its time. Walls and ceiling were exotically decorated with Egyptian motifs, widely popular in the 1920s after the discovery of King Tutankhamen's tomb. Two shows a night, accompanied by up to ten musicians and a splendid Wurlitzer organ, offered vaudeville, comedy and animal acts, a newsreel and a feature film.

By 1990 the theater had fallen into terrible disrepair. Resurrected as the Capitol Center for the Arts, it represents the power of a community when it comes together. More than 250 people contributed over 3,000 hours of volunteer labor and raised the money to create this non-profit, regional performing arts center.

The Kimball House is shown at the far right as it appeared in the 1830s. The extended wing to the left was for a short-lived botanic hospital that offered steam baths, herbal remedies and other controversial practices.
Courtesy Concord Public Library

28 THEODORE FRENCH HOUSE 1842

Capt. Theodore French came to Concord in 1818 to assume charge of the Concord Boating Company and was probably the first man to run a freight boat up the Merrimack River to Concord. After the railroad brought an abrupt cessation to river freight traffic, French

became an agent for the railroad. It was then that he moved here from the brick house at 10 Water Street.

As chief engineer for the Boston, Concord & Montreal Railroad, French's son-in-law and next owner, Charles Lund, oversaw railroad construction in the White Mountains and laid out Concord's Horse Railroad, the predecessor to its streetcar. In 1922 the French family sold the house to St. Mary's School.

Original Greek Revival details from 1842 include a pedimented front gable and a classical entry surround that frames a recessed door flanked by sidelights and a transom.

29 FARRINGTON HOUSE ca. 1844

Local merchants Samuel and Philip Farrington hired Concord's noted master builder John Leach to design their double house. It is unusual in that the two units share a single entrance, which leads into parallel hallways each with a curved staircase. Leach's Greek Revival design features a two-story, pedimented entry pavilion. The corner pilasters, full-length sidelights on either side of the front entrance, wide frieze board and window surrounds are typical Greek Revival details, but the simulated stone blocks of the entry pavilion, as well as the flushboard siding, are less common and display Leach's architectural sophistication.

30 HALL BROTHERS GARAGE 1921

By the 1930s, there were more than a dozen garages along the east side of South Main Street. Hall Brothers Garage across the street was a Ford repair shop and dealership, and its facility was considered state-of-the-art. The salesroom was finished in oak, and an elevator transported cars from one floor to the next. The building on the other side of Hills Avenue owes its deep setback to its original use as an auto servicing garage.

> *The Capital Commons complex, just north of #30 and completed in 2006, brought an independent movie theater to Concord but removed Freight Street, which once connected Main Street to Railroad Square.*

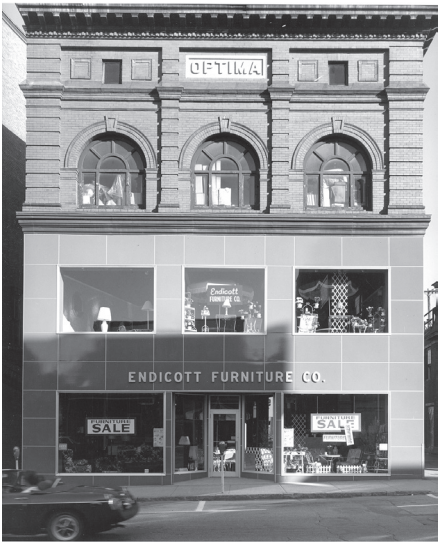
31 ENDICOTT HOTEL 1894

The turreted corner of the Endicott Hotel has been a Main Street landmark since 1894. (Corner towers were a popular means of accentuating these prized sites, yet this is the only one in Concord to survive.) Within easy walking distance of Railroad Square, the hotel catered to the many people coming to Concord on business. The building was the first large commercial structure erected on Main Street south of Pleasant Street, effectively stretching the downtown core southward and transforming Pleasant Street into a major commercial cross axis. It was also the first downtown structure to be wholly devoted to business use, rather than incorporating private apartments or a meeting hall on its upper floors.

In 2013 the hotel reopened following an extensive rehabilitation that introduced the first group of market-rate apartments into downtown Concord in nearly a century.

Turn left up Pleasant Street

32 OPTIMA BUILDING 1901



For sixty years, the Optima Building sported metal panels installed in the mid-20th century to modernize its facade.
Courtesy Concord Public Library

The Optima Building on the left was so-named to reflect the claim of the grocery store within that its goods were unsurpassed. The shop occupied the entire building and offered a new concept for Concord – a "lounging apartment" where patrons could rest from shopping and wait for the streetcar. Note the granite nameplate, copper cornice and arched third floor windows.

33 ODD FELLOWS (IOOF) BUILDING 1888

The Odd Fellows Building across the street housed shops on the first floor, offices and apartments on the second, and a large meeting hall on the third used by the Odd Fellows fraternal organization. The façade, one of the most distinctive in the city, features pressed brick and storefronts with brick piers and granite caps. A copper-roofed oriel window with curved glass is located above the second story. The elongated arched windows on the third story reflect the meeting hall within. The building is crowned with an arcaded cornice that originally had a crenelated roof parapet with projecting minarets (the bases remain) and steep decorative gable.

The Odd Fellows Building, showing the original crenelated parapet, tops of minarets and steep gable. Photographed ca. 1895. *Courtesy New Hampshire Historical Society*

As you cross State Street, look to the left. This was a favored location for the city's more prominent citizens, and the houses lining the street reflect how the area immediately

surrounding the business district looked 140 years ago. The Kearsarge (1911), on the east side of the street, was a gracious apartment building with a fireplace in each parlor.

34 SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH 1860

South Congregational Church was one of three Congregational churches that emerged over a ten-year period as the community's original meetinghouse became inadequate. Its first building, erected in 1836, stood on the corner of Main and Pleasant Streets. When it burned, the church chose this larger site and hired Charles Parker of Boston (the minister's brother) to design this church. (The church moved the pre-existing house—in which Marquis de Lafayette once stayed and Ralph Waldo Emerson was married—to 24 So. Spring Street.) The brick church, with its round-arched openings and cornice arcades, reflects the influence of the medieval Romanesque style. Its steeple cross, long deemed a Roman Catholic symbol, was one of the first on a New England Protestant church and aroused considerable controversy at the time. Three of the windows on the west wall of the sanctuary came from Louis Tiffany Studios.

The upper section of this street features stylish houses built in the wake of the railroad's arrival, which pushed residential development to the west.

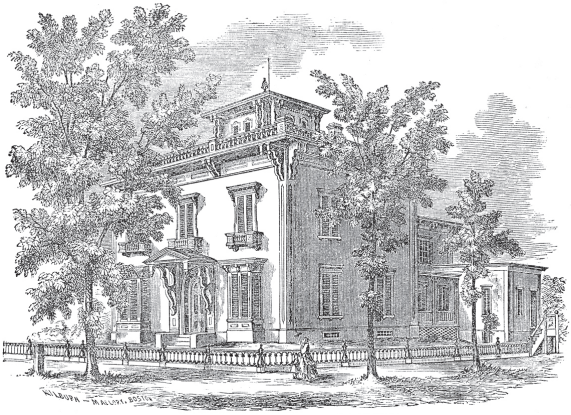
35 LEWIS DOWNING JR. HOUSE 1851

Lewis Downing Jr., for whom this Italianate house was erected, followed his father into the stagecoach manufacturing business. The elder Downing produced New Hampshire's first stagecoach and founded the Abbot-Downing Company, a major local employer throughout the 19th century. The younger Downing succeeded his father as president, a position he held until his death in 1901. The company's coaches were internationally famed for their superior construction and artistic decoration.

Lewis Downing Jr. house and gardens, ca. 1925.
Courtesy New Hampshire Historical Society

36 BENJAMIN GROVER HOUSE 1854

Local merchant Benjamin Grover spent $7,500 on his new Italianate-style residence, considered by many at the time to be the best in the city. While the paired cornice brackets, paneled frieze and heavily molded window caps are common features of the style, the ornamented square cupola and arched entry door and surrounding lights lend particular distinction to this prominent house.



Benjamin Grover's house as it appeared in 1854.
Courtesy New Hampshire Historical Society

37 PLEASANT STREET BAPTIST CHURCH 1853

For about 100 years this served as a Baptist church. Its founding congregation split off from the First Baptist Church on North State Street (#51) in 1853. The building originally had a cupola and steeple.

When it was renovated for the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation's office in 1993, the late 19th century stained-glass windows were carefully saved and relocated to the newly constructed lobby of the City Auditorium on Green Street (#55).

38 JAMES CLEVELAND FEDERAL BUILDING 1966

Though Concord started postal service in 1792, it lacked a permanent home until 1890, when what is now the Legislative Office Building (#54) was completed. Nearly eighty years later, the post office moved into this building where it served the public for only a few decades. When postal operations no longer required a major downtown presence, it relocated to a shopping center. This is Concord's best example of Brutalism, a mid-century style that emphasized massiveness, an imposing scale and raw concrete. It was a favorite style for government buildings in the 1950s-70s, though its utilitarian, drab appearance brought it few fans at the time.

Cross Pleasant Street and walk back on the other side.

39 SACRED HEART CHURCH 1934

Sacred Heart Church was founded to serve the local French-Canadian population; this building replaced a small chapel. The Catholic diocese recently consolidated its three downtown churches into a single campus and put its surplus property on the market, including Sacred Heart Church and its adjacent rectory.

40 ROBERT CORNING HOUSE ca. 1850

This is one of only two Italianate villa houses in Concord, so identified by the L-shaped plan and three-story, inset square tower. (The other is at 76 School Street.) Robert Corning, the probable original owner, was a stagecoach driver, railroad conductor, and later postmaster. It became Sacred Heart's rectory in the 1920s.

41 ISAAC A. HILL HOUSE ca. 1852

Very few brick, flat-roof Italianate houses were built in Concord. Arched window openings, paired brackets, double entry doors with arched glass panels, and an interior elliptical staircase are among the notable features of this residence. Isaac A. Hill lived here between ca. 1870 and 1916. Like his namesake father, he played a major role in the development of downtown Concord; he was instrumental in erecting the Board of Trade Building (#6) and in extending Pleasant Street easterly down the hill to Railroad Square.

42 LANGMAID-STRATTON HOUSE ca. 1863

Like his neighbor to the east, Albert Langmaid was employed by the railroad. Successor owner, George Stratton, was a flour and grain merchant. With its mansard roof, gabled dormers, bracketed cornice, and heavily-molded window caps, the house is an excellent example of the Second Empire style. Granite steps with curved side walls often accompany Concord's more prominent houses of this era. A small barn still stands in the rear.

43 CHAMBERLIN HOUSE 1886

Horace E. Chamberlin was the superintendent of the Concord Railroad (later a division of the Boston & Maine) when he built this house. The Chamberlins probably used mail-order plans to build their Queen Anne house, notable for its steep, slate-clad hipped roof with varied gables and copper cresting, round corner turret, porches and decorative gable shingles.

Nellie Chamberlin was active in civic and social affairs. In 1919 the widow, who had often hosted club events, bequeathed her house to the Woman's Club of Concord, which continues to use it for its headquarters.

Early on, the club strove to serve the community and encourage women to accept a responsible role within society. Among the noted speakers brought here were Jane Addams of Hull House, Booker T . Washington, and Harvard President Charles W. Eliot. Community

projects have included founding the Concord District Nursing Association and the local branch of the Red Cross, organizing a free dental clinic, developing a school milk program, sponsoring the restoration of White Park, and raising funds to preserve Franconia Notch. During the Depression, the club set up an employment office here and placed 400 women in jobs.

44 WONOLANCET CLUB 1901

At its height, fifty men belonged to the Wonolancet Club, a social club founded in 1891 that quickly became the most prestigious of the several downtown men's clubs. Frank Rollins, later governor and founder of Old Home Day, was the club's first president.

Clubs were an integral part of life for men and women at the turn of the century, and the city abounded with them. Many were founded as part of the "back to nature" movement, which promoted outdoor and athletic activities as diverse as cycling, boating, dancing, snowshoeing, golf and nature study. Others were fraternal, philanthropic, literary or purely social.

45 CONCORD MONITOR BUILDING 1929

Under the leadership of publisher James Langley, the *Concord Daily Monitor* moved to its final downtown location in 1929, a few years after it had absorbed the city's other major newspaper, the Democratic *Patriot*. Langley directed Harold Owen to design a traditional Georgian Revival building with oversized brick from Virginia intended to reduce the scale of the structure. Since newspapers were often marginal operations, the upper floors were leased to boost revenue. The rear addition (1968) was for a modern press and related equipment. The *Monitor* remained here until 1990.

46 FELLOWS BLOCK 1909

This is one of the more distinctive apartment buildings built along State Street in the years before World War I. The rounded corners admitted additional light into the two eight-room apartments on each

floor, while the crenelated roof parapet and recessed, arched entrance offered a sense of fortified security to the occupants.

47 ENOS BLAKE HOUSE ca. 1833/1868

The brick ell of this former residence predates the front section and originally fronted on North State Street. Its Federal style entrance, replete with fanlight, partial sidelights and delicately reeded pilasters, now serves as a secondary entrance. Enos Blake moved into the brick house in 1835; behind it was his tanning and currying shop. About 1868 Blake rotated and moved the house back to accommodate a new two-story, Second-Empire front block built to face State Street. (Converting an earlier house into an ell and building a new, more stylish house in front was not uncommon during the 19th century.)

48 KIRKWOOD-KIMBALL HOUSE 1835/1877/1928

The Kirkwood sisters erected this building in 1835 for their residence. They ran a private girls' school in the ell. By 1850 the building was home to John Kimball, treasurer of the Merrimack Savings Bank who, in 1877, remodeled it into the Stick Style, elements of which are still visible on the upper floors. Unlike many of Concord's early downtown residences, which were demolished or moved to make way for commercial or civic buildings, this building was instead adapted. In 1928 a storefront was added onto the two street sides.

Kirkwood-Kimball House before it received its 1920s storefront. *Courtesy New Hampshire Historical Society*

For the next 75 years, French's Radio, later French's Toy Shop, occupied the retail space.

49 YMCA 1905/1966

Established in 1852, Concord's YMCA was the sixth in the country. The organization provided a reading room to allow young men to spend their leisure time in "warmth and companionship, away from temptation." In 1905 it moved into new quarters on this site designed by Bradford Gilbert, a leading designer of railroad and YMCA buildings. (You can see the surviving portion of that two-story building as you walk up Warren Street.) The large front addition constructed in 1966 and enlarged a few decades later accommodated a shift in the YMCA's mission and space needs, as well as its commitment to remaining in a central downtown location.

50 CENTRAL FIRE STATION 1875

In the days of wooden commercial buildings, fires were a significant problem, and downtown Concord had its full share of disasters. In 1851 fire destroyed much of the east side of Main Street. The city responded by encouraging new commercial development in brick and by building four fire houses spread throughout the city. The centrally located Warren Street building served as the department's headquarters.

The gilded weathervane atop the hose tower—a replica of the rare original now in the fire department's museum—depicts a horse-drawn steamer. The department vacated the station in 1980; it is now part of the YMCA complex.

51 FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH 1825

In the first half of the 19th century, Concord was home to a growing number of churches and religious societies. The Baptists were among the first to challenge the monopoly of the Congregational Church. Local master builder John Leach erected this church, dedicated in 1825 and now the city's oldest

surviving religious building, though it has undergone many additions and alterations. The steeple, rebuilt after the 1938 hurricane, features a bell purchased by the church in 1826 from the Revere foundry in Boston.

First Baptist Church, ca. mid-1940s.
Courtesy Concord Public Library

52 FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST 1903-04

Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, donated $100,000 toward the construction of Concord's church, and the cornerstone was laid on her birthday. Built of Concord granite, it features an iconic 165-foot tower, making it the tallest building in the capital city.

Eddy had long associations with this area. She was born in nearby Bow in 1821 and returned to Concord in her sixties. It was during her residency that she formulated the spiritual framework of the Christian Science faith, which brought her international fame and made her one of the country's most influential and wealthy women.

> *You now enter the Civic District, an impressive collection of eight buildings and many commemorative statues designed by prominent architects. The district's cohesiveness is derived in part from the predominance of granite and generous, landscaped setbacks.*

53 STATE HOUSE ANNEX 1938-39

The State House Annex, built to accommodate a growing state government, is typical of many public buildings funded by the Work Projects Administration, a program introduced by Franklin Roosevelt to employ architects and construction workers during the Depression. The plain, flat building is Moderne in style, with granite walls enlivened only sparingly through three-story, fluted pilasters and low relief carvings of the state seal, stars, eagles and other patriotic motifs.

Turn left up Capitol Street

54 U. S. POST OFFICE 1884-89

This large granite building was built as a U. S. Post Office and Courthouse. After the post office vacated it in 1967 to move to #38, the landmark building came close to demolition. Instead, the state renovated it for legislative offices in 1973-75 and enlarged it with a rear addition also of local granite that incorporates a parking garage and recalls the steep slate roof and gables of the original building.

The earlier building is a true example of Victorian eclecticism. Gothic pointed-arched openings, Richardsonian Romanesque windows grouped in horizontal bands, carved leaf-like ornament, and a Chateauesque roofline capped by finials and iron

Delivery wagons pull up to Concord's imposing Post Office and Courthouse as postal employees pose for a photograph. *Courtesy Concord Public Library*

cresting are successfully combined. The triple-arched entrance is divided by polished granite columns topped with carved capitals. It is said that a visit to Concord, and particularly to this building, convinced federal officials to use Concord granite for the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

55 CITY HALL 1902-03

Ironically, Concord's City Hall is the only building in the civic district not built of granite. Though the use of local stone was proposed, in the face of a lawsuit brought by residents who objected to the extra cost, the city instead opted for brick and granite trim. The building is a free interpretation of Georgian Revival architecture, with its pedimented entry portico, voussoirs of alternating granite and brick around the second-story windows, solid balustrade and cupola. The granite panels between the arched windows commemorate the founding of Pennycook, the original name for Concord, and Concord's incorporation as a city.

Prior to 1903, local government was headquartered in the Merrimack County Courthouse, close by on North Main Street. Its relocation to this spot marked the final stage in uniting local, state, and federal government in a single geographical area.

Cross Green Street and walk along the left side of City Hall

56 STATE ARMORY 1908

Tucked behind City Hall is this former state armory building in which militia met and trained. Architect William Butterfield used heavy masonry forms and arched openings to convey an appropriate fortress-like feeling. In 1959 the state gave the building to the city, which uses it as a community center.

Continue behind City Hall to pass through the arcade and admire the stained-glass windows which were salvaged from the Baptist Church (#37) and installed in the new lobby of the city auditorium in 1993.

57 CONCORD PUBLIC LIBRARY 1939-40

The library was the city's second major building financed by the Works Progress Administration. The Moderne style, which emphasizes interior function over exterior ornament, was used for many urban WPA projects. Like its local counterpart the State Annex (#53), the library was built of Concord granite with a base of darker, polished stone. It has streamlined surfaces and is devoid of the columns and cornices typical of classical buildings, yet incorporates a Greek fret along the top. Note the two-story glass-and-bronze entrance with its rounded, reeded jamb of polished granite. Concord's public library was founded in 1855 "to promote intelligence among all the classes." *Open to the public.*

After you cross Green Street onto Park Street, look back at the Diocesan House.

58 EPISCOPAL DIOCESAN HOUSE 1894

For over 50 years, this was the residence of the Episcopal bishop for New Hampshire. It originally stood behind the New Hampshire Historical Society. When the Society developed plans for an art gallery as an adjunct to its library on that spot, the house was moved to its present location in 1917. (The gallery was never built.) Since 1948 the building has been headquarters for the diocesan office.

The building's Colonial Revival features include Palladian windows in the gables and a two-story, pedimented portico with a frieze of classical swags.

59 NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1909-11

The New Hampshire Historical Society was founded in 1823 to collect and disseminate information relating to New Hampshire's past. It started as a gentleman's organization open by invitation only. Since then, the society has vastly broadened its outreach and welcomes all inside to explore its exhibitions on New Hampshire history and its research library of books, manuscripts, maps and other materials.

Architect Guy Lowell was a preeminent designer who had just completed the Boston Museum of Fine Arts when benefactors Edward and Julia Tuck asked him to design a fireproof library for the Society "embodying the best of its kind." The Neo-Classical building, with its exterior of granite from nearby Rattlesnake Hill and resplendent interior of Italian marble, intentionally recalls ancient architectural principles and expresses restrained beauty and dignity as befits its use.

The Tucks also commissioned New Hampshire native Daniel Chester French, the country's most respected monument sculptor, to design the intricate frontispiece over the main entrance. Carved from a single block of granite, the allegorical group depicts ancient and modern history and demonstrates the sculptural characteristics of the local stone. *Open to the public.*

60 NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE LIBRARY 1891-94

This imposing building, constructed of rough-faced, pinkish granite from Conway and trimmed with Concord's gray granite, was built to house the New Hampshire Supreme Court (in the west half) and state library (in the east half). The library was the first state library in the country; since 1970 it has been the building's sole occupant.

The influence of the Richardsonian Romanesque style, highly popular for public buildings, is seen in the arched window and door openings and textured masonry surfaces, though like many structures of the Victorian era, it includes elements of different styles. The southwest corner sported a square tower until 1966, when Governor John King, proclaiming it an "architectural monstrosity," called for its removal. The interior reception hall is worth a peek for its opulent use of marble. *Open to the public.*

> *Don't miss the row of square tiles on the lawn that identify each party's winner in the New Hampshire primary since 1952.*

NH State Library, ca. 1940, with its corner tower intact.
Courtesy New Hampshire Historical Society

61 UPHAM-WALKER HOUSE 1831

Nathaniel Upham, for whom this house was built, was a Superior Court justice. After the railroad arrived in Concord, he resigned to become superintendent and later president of the Concord Railroad. Upham's descendants lived here until 1978, at which time the house was the sole surviving private residence in an area once dominated by homes. Its last occupant was rector of Christ Church in Portsmouth; the fact that for years he commuted from Concord attests to the importance he attached to the family homestead. After his death, the State of New Hampshire acquired the property.

The exterior of the house has remained nearly unaltered since its construction and is one of the best examples of late Federal architecture in the upper Merrimack Valley. The blind arch that encloses the gable window, fanlights over the doors and gable window, and splayed window lintels are traditional Federal features, while the pedimented front gable and granite entrance portico herald the emerging Greek Revival style. The interior offers a rare look at the lifestyle of successive generations of a prominent Concord family.

62 ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH 1859/1987

In the mid-19th century, Gothic Revival was the style of choice for many American churches, and St. Paul's Church was no exception. The Gothic mode, with its emphasis on verticality, lent itself well to ecclesiastical buildings; pointed-arch openings, quatrefoils and steep gables are hallmarks of the style.

In 1984 the church suffered major damage from an arson-set fire, but an overwhelming response from the community led to its rebuilding. The cast-iron fence, once a common feature of front yards throughout Concord, is a rare survivor; it was likely produced in a local foundry.

The present church was rebuilt following the 1984 fire on the footprint of the original church, shown here ca. 1900. The front and tower had emerged relatively unscathed, allowing architect Clinton Sheerr to retain the form of the earlier building. Inside, however, the sanctuary was reconfigured to admit far more light than the earlier Gothic Revival building. *Courtesy Concord Public Library*

As you return to the beginning point of the tour, stroll through the State House grounds where works by Daniel Chester French, Carl Conrads, Thomas Ball and Augustus Lukeman appear in one of the foremost displays of sculpture in the state. The statues commemorate veterans and prominent New Hampshire men, including Daniel Webster, General John Stark, U.S. President Franklin Pierce, Commodore George Perkins and John Parker Hale.