



MIDDLETOWN

HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

Union Street Business District



Reflecting the town's Early-American heritage, the Ferry House (tour site #28) is one of Middletown's oldest buildings.

Middletown, located halfway between Lancaster and Carlisle, was laid out in 1755 by Quaker George Fisher on the site of an earlier Native-American village. The original section of town encompassed the area between present-day Union and Vine Streets and High and Water Streets. The town was located west of Fisher's home Pine Ford, located near Swatara Creek. Incorporated as a borough in 1828, Middletown was an important 19th century manufacturing and transportation center located along the Union and Pennsylvania Canals and the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Today's Union Street business district was once part of the town of Portsmouth. Founded at the mouth of Swatara Creek in 1809 as Harborton, the town became Portsmouth in 1814. In 1857, Portsmouth merged with the nearby town of Middletown. Although the exact reason for the street's name is unknown, the road connecting the two towns appropriately became known as Union Street.

Tour begins at corner of Emaus and Union Streets and proceeds west on Emaus Street. Approximate tour time is one hour, thirty minutes with the option to discontinue after approximately forty-five minutes at site number 21. Note: all homes on this tour are private and are not open to the public.



1. Elks Building/ Elks Theatre

This building was constructed in 1911 by the Middletown Realty Co. after the Middletown fire of April 9, 1910 destroyed the previous structure known as the Auditorium Building. The 722-seat Realty (Elks) Theatre opened on October 25, 1911. Several businesses, including Doutrich's and Melman's clothing stores have occupied the building's storefronts since its construction. The Elks Lodge owned this building from 1930 until selling it to the Greater Middletown Economic Development Corporation in 2005. The Elks Theatre is thought to be one of the country's oldest operating movie theatres.



2. Borough Hall

This building was erected after the fire of 1910 on the site of the former Central Market Co. building. In 1917, the H.A. Romberger Knitting and Hosiery Mill moved here and operated until the Depression of the 1930s. In 1936, the building was remodeled as a municipal building and community center with the help of the Works Progress Administration.



3. 47-55 Emaus St.

The Triune Lodge of Odd Fellows, organized in 1848, constructed this building between 1886 and 1887 as their lodge hall. Completed on July 2, 1887, this Second Empire style building cost \$7,000. Like the Elks and other fraternal organizations, the Odd Fellows boosted civic pride, raising money for charity and encouraging the town's growth.

Tour turns right and proceeds north on Catherine St.



4. Middletown Public Library

The Liberty Steam Fire Engine Company, formed in 1874, used this building from 1891 until 1974. After renovations, the building was dedicated January 8, 1978 as Liberty House, home of the Middletown Public Library and Middletown Historical Society. The library was founded in 1926 by the Women's Club of Middletown and had been located at several sites before locating here. The Historical Society was founded in 1972.



5. Catherine St. homes

A mixture of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century homes characterize this section of Catherine Street.

Tour turns right and follows Water Street eastward.



6. 139 West Water St.

Constructed in 1924 by George Stark, this was the home of Seymour Cohen, a 1937 Middletown High School graduate and track and field star who set the U.S. javelin-throwing record in 1947. After changing his name to Steve Seymour, he won a silver medal in the javelin event at the 1948 Olympic Games. Seymour's family lived here ca. 1940 while he attended Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pa. After serving in the U.S. Army Medical Corps during WWII, Seymour moved to Los Angeles and became a noted physician, specializing in the treatment of alcoholism. He continued to compete and train Olympic hopefuls until his death in 1973.



7. 127-135 West Water St.

This row of handsome Craftsman-style bungalows was constructed in the early-20th century on the site of the former Rife Tannery. The tannery was located behind the Rife family home at 301 Spring Street.



8. 130-134 West Water St.

This duplex was once the site of the Performo Toy Company factory. Founded after the First World War by Rene Grove, the company manufactured a toy mouse named 'Micky' starting in 1926. In 1928, Walt Disney

created a similar cartoon character that surpassed Performo's version. The subsequent Depression resulted in the company closing in 1935. Previous to Performo, the site was used as the office of the nearby Rife Tannery, and later, the Philly Cigar Co.



9. 70 West Water St.

This building once housed the Brestle-Reber Funeral home. This building was constructed on the site of an earlier wooden structure that

housed the furniture repair, upholstery, wagon making and paint shop of Michael Brestle and his son George. George later became an undertaker. The Brestle family home can be seen nearby at 48 Water St. George's home, located next door at 262 Spring St., was once used as the town's telephone exchange. The business was later acquired by Woodrow Reber.

Tour turns right and follows Spring St. southward.

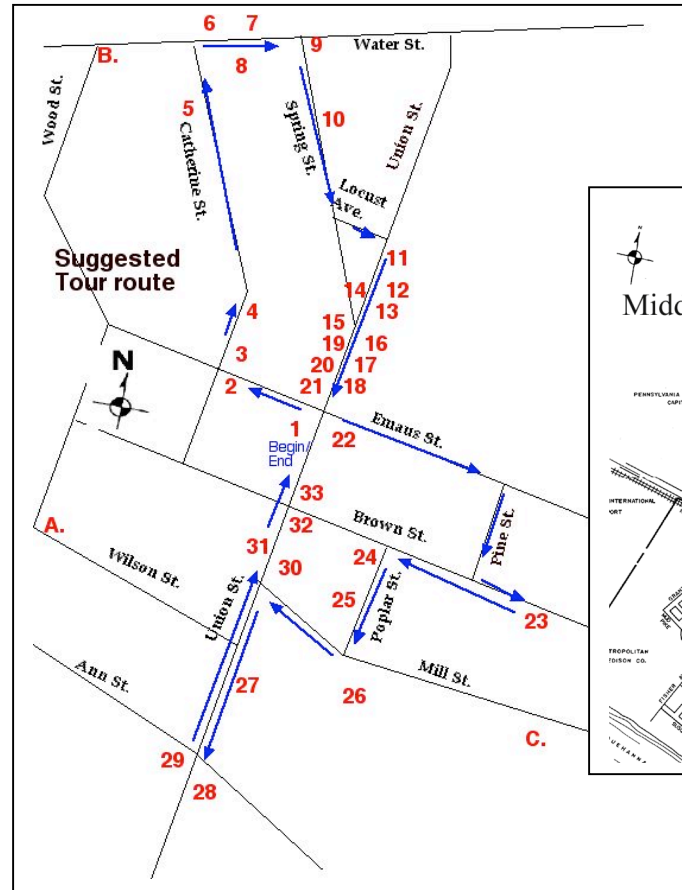


10. Spring St. homes

Along this street are several handsomely restored houses constructed in the mid-19th century. Number 254 was built in 1861 and was the home of five doctors through the years. Number

238 was once the Church of God parsonage (the church was located at the northeast corner of Water and Spring Streets). At one time, Number 236 was an ice cream parlor operated by Abraham L. Nagle.

Map of Tour Area



Tour turns left onto Locust Avenue and proceeds to Union St. Turn right on Union and proceed southward.



11. 134 North Union St.

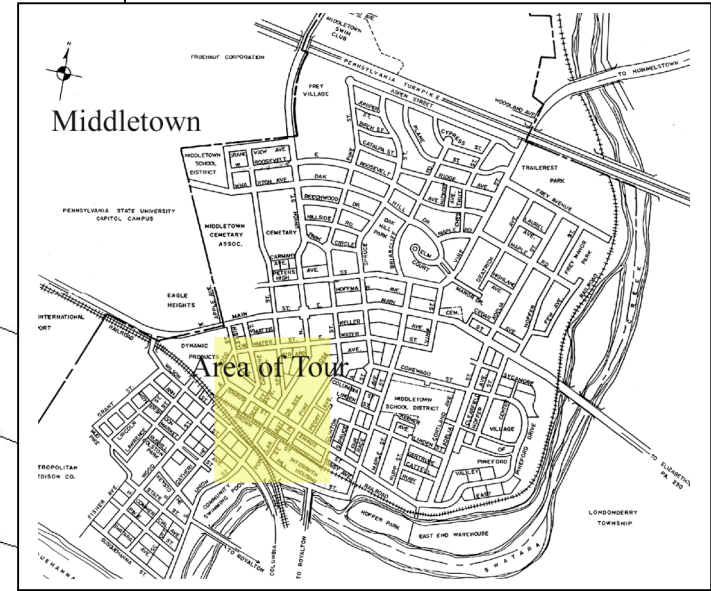
This section of Union Street is characterized by several fine mansions constructed in the 19th century by Middletown's most prominent business leaders. Lumber merchant Daniel

Kendig built this home around 1860, reputedly as a wedding present for one of his daughters. Kendig's sawmill, established in 1852 was located on Mill St. across from Frey Mill.



12. 120 North Union St.

Daniel Kendig constructed this Italianate-style house in 1862. In the early-20th century the home was used as the Wesley United Methodist Church parsonage and later hosted a kindergarten class.



13. 114 North Union St.

This home was constructed about 1900 by George I. King, superintendent of the Middletown Car Works. King was also an organizer of the Middletown Improvement Co., Citizens Bank, and the Middle-

town Country Club. In later years the home hosted the American Legion Post 594.



14. 100-120 Spring St.

This building has served many uses through the years. From 1876 to 1893 the Middletown Post Office was located here. From 1908 to 1909 the building housed a millinery shop. During the 1910s the building was owned by Jeremiah and Margaret Dimeler

who operated a grocery store. From 1923 to 1945 the building was owned by George and Nellie Knupp who also operated a grocery store, as well as an ice cream parlor.



15. St. Peter's Lutheran Church

By 1876, the St. Peter's congregation had outgrown its church on North Union St and elected to build a new church at the intersection of Spring and Union. Designed by New York architect S.B. Valk with William Ruhl and George Fisher as contractors, construction began on August 22, 1877. The new church was dedicated on February 2, 1879. The adjacent parish house was built in March 1929 at a cost of \$43,372 on the former site of the second Emaus Orphan House. It was replaced in 2002 by the new All Saints Building.



16. 60 North Union St.

This Colonial Revival home was once owned by Seymour Raymond, partner in the Raymond and Campbell Stove Works. He purchased the home in 1876 from the estate of Philip Zimmerman. The current frame house was built

on site of a 1760s log home. The original eighteenth-century outbuildings survived until 1941.



17. 48 North Union St.

This Queen Anne-style Victorian home was built in 1885 on land sold to Isaac O. Nissley by Simon Cameron. In 1945, the home was purchased by Harold Romberger, a local realtor. Today, it is one of Middletown's most beautifully restored homes.



18. 38 North Union St. (Alfred's Victorian)

Charles Raymond, partner in the Raymond & Campbell Stove Works, built this mansion in 1888. Designed by architect Joseph Dise of Spring Glen, Pa., the house is

constructed of brownstone from the Hummelstown Brownstone Quarries. Fine woodwork, wallpapers, and lighting fixtures remain in the restored house. It is listed (along with 37 North Union St.) on the National Register of Historic Places.



19. 37 North Union St.

This home, also designed by Joseph Dise, was built around 1880 for Joseph Raymond, the General Manager of the Raymond and Campbell Stove Works. From 1912 to 1922, the house was owned by Isaac Doutrich, owner of a mens clothing store and U.S. congressman. From 1922 to 1982 the house was owned by local attorney Maurice Metzger.



20. 19 North Union St.

This Italianate home was built in 1836 by James Campbell, who established a machine works in Middletown in 1856. James' son Joseph later became a partner in the Raymond & Campbell Stove Works. The house was used during WWII as the USO for military

and civilian personnel from nearby Olmsted Army Air Field.



21. 3 North Union St. (Brownstone Café)

Built in 1892-1893 as the National Bank of Middletown and Dauphin County Savings Trust and Safe Deposit Co., this building served as a succession of banks until the early 1990s when it re-opened as a restaurant. The building was

constructed in Romanesque-style with Moorish features. Like many other prominent buildings in Middletown during this time it was designed by architect Joseph Dise and constructed of Hummelstown brownstone.



22. Rewalt Building

The former buildings on this site, along with all of the area along Union St. between Emaus and Brown Streets, burned in the fire of April 1910. Thirty businesses, the

post office, three lodge halls, and eighteen homes were destroyed. The Rewalt Building (sometimes known as the Krauss building because of the clothing store located here) was constructed soon thereafter. Other stores such as A&P and J.J. Newberry's store also occupied this building at various times.

Turn left and proceed east on Emaus Street to Pine Street. Turn right onto Pine Street and proceed south to Brown St. Turn left and proceed east to next site.



23. Middletown and Hummelstown Railroad

Formed by local businessmen in 1888, the M&H Railroad was built along the old Union Canal towpath to connect the Pennsylvania Railroad at Middletown and the Reading

Railroad at Hummelstown. After it was completed in 1890, it became a branch of the Reading Railroad. In 1976 it became an independent short-line railroad hauling freight between the two towns. Passenger leisure excursions began in 1986 from the 1891 Freight Station. The original passenger station (since razed) was located on Union Street on the site of M&T Bank.

Turn around and proceed west on Brown Street.



24. 24 Brown St. (Kuppy's Diner)

Percy and Karl Kupp opened this diner in 1933 in a dining car they purchased for \$7,800. In 1938, the original dining car was sold and replaced by the current one manufactured by

Ward & Dickinson of Silver Creek, NY. It was enclosed in brick in the 1960s.

Turn left onto Poplar St and proceed south to Mill St.



25. Press and Journal Press Building

Joe and Louise Sukle are fourth generation family owners of this printing and publishing facility. The building was constructed of decorative

concrete block typical of 1930s construction. The printing plant stands not far from the Union Street business office of Press and Journal Publications. Although the newspaper has a long history dating back to 1854, the weekly community paper, now known as the *Press And Journal*, was first printed at the Poplar Street facility under the ownership of the Fox/ Graybill families.

Turn right onto Mill St. and proceed west toward Union St.



26. Pennsylvania Railroad line

Currently operated by Amtrak and Norfolk Southern Railroad, this line was once the P.R.R.'s main line operating between Philadelphia and Chicago. This

line first opened in the 1836 as part of the Harrisburg, Portsmouth, Mount Joy and Lancaster Railroad. In 1849, the recently formed Pennsylvania Railroad took control of the line and expanded service. The original passenger depot located here was torn down in the 1970s. A freight station can be seen nearby on Wilson St.

Turn left onto Union St. and proceed southward.



27. 214 South Union St.

The Keystone Hotel and Blue Room Tavern opened on this site in 1927. The name Blue Room is said to have been inspired by the blue smoke of customer's cigarettes filling the room.



28. Liberty Band Hall and Ferry House

The Liberty Band Hall was constructed in 1846 in Oberlin, Pa. as the Salem Lutheran Church. After a new church was

constructed in 1916, the old church was sold to the Middletown Liberty Band for \$130.00 and the building was moved to its current location. The band dissolved in 1966 and the building was sold in 1968 to the Borough of Middletown. The nearby Ferry House, sometimes called the Old Fort, was built around 1812 on the site of an 18th-century structure used as a frontier fort, and housed the operator of a ferry service across Swatara Creek. The Ferry House and Band Hall were purchased by the Middletown Area Historical Society on January 2, 1981 for \$3,200. The Ferry House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Turn around and proceed north up Union Street to Emaus St.



29. 1 West Ann St.

This structure was erected around 1850 as a commercial building. In 1852 it housed Mc Nair and Co. Dry Goods Store, and later the firm of Rambler and Moses. Around the year 1900 the store was

operated by Benjamin Peters, and his son Jerome, as B. S. Peters & Son and was one of the largest Dry Goods stores in lower Dauphin County. The store featured an innovative pneumatic tube system for sending money to the office.



30. 132-136 South Union St.

In the nineteenth century, this building was known as Kline House, a hotel catering to businessmen traveling on the nearby railroad. President William McKinley is believed to have stayed here in 1898 while visiting nearby Camp Meade. Note the keystone details in the brickwork.



31. 101 South Union St. (Karns Market)

This supermarket occupies an old factory building that was once the Raymond and Campbell Stove Works. Founded by Seymour Raymond in

1865, the Stove Works was a major 19th-century producer of cast-iron cook stoves. In 1910, the company was purchased by a Philadelphia businessman and renamed the Wincroft Stove Works. At its peak in 1920 the company employed 300. After the business closed in 1966, Leroy Fox operated a supermarket here until selling it to Karns in 2006. While the southern end of the complex was razed in the 1970s for the expansion of the market, portions of the original building can be seen on the northern end.



32. 100 South Union St. (Citizens Bank)

This building, constructed in 1941, is an example of Colonial Revival architecture. Of stone construction, its sturdiness, simplicity, and style evokes tradition and

stability. It replaced an earlier Citizens Bank building located nearby.



33. 26 South Union St. (Old Post Office)

This simple post office was designed under the supervision of government architect Louis A. Simon (1901-1964). Postmaster

General James Farley was present at the dedication of the building in 1934. Today it houses a local business.

Nearby Points of Interest



A. 160 Wilson St. (Woodlayne Court)

Looking southwest from the corner of Catherine and Emaus Streets you can see an old factory building now used for apartments. This building was erected in 1908 for the A.S. Kreider Shoe Co. with the help of the Middletown Board of Trade who raised \$107,200 from citizens to entice the company to open a factory in Middletown. By 1919, 282 men and 158 women worked here. After the Kreider Shoe factory closed in 1927, the Rough Wear Clothing Co. moved into this building. Rough Wear manufactured a line of sportsman apparel, as well as fleece-lined leather bomber jackets for the US military in WWII. The factory closed in the early 1980s. An example of adaptive reuse, the current name of the facility derives from its location on Wood Street and the name of former Middletown mayor Barbara Layne who helped realize the project.



B. B'nai Jacob Synagogue

Built between 1904 and 1906, by H.C. Hoffman & Sons, builders, this structure features an Eastern European-style interior designed by Samuel Krauss. It is the oldest operating synagogue in Dauphin County and is on the National Register of Historic Places.



C. Frey Mill

This grist mill was built in 1760 by John Fisher and later sold to John Hollingsworth and German pioneer George Frey. In 1789, Frey enlarged the mill from two to four stories. After his death in 1806, the Frey Trust leased the mill to many parties well into the 20th century, including Solomon Brinser and the Swatara Milling Co. The mill operated until 1957 when it was sold and converted into apartments.

Prepared by the Main Street Design Committee, Greater Middletown Economic Development Corporation. Thanks to the Middletown Area Historical Society and individuals who assisted with this project.

