

Welcome to Bowling Green Ohio's Historic District!

Whether you're a long time resident or a visitor, you can enjoy the beautiful residential and commercial architecture in our city. Tour at your own pace and get some great exercise while taking in the sights!

Our map provides a less-than-2 mile route through the Boomtown Historic District.

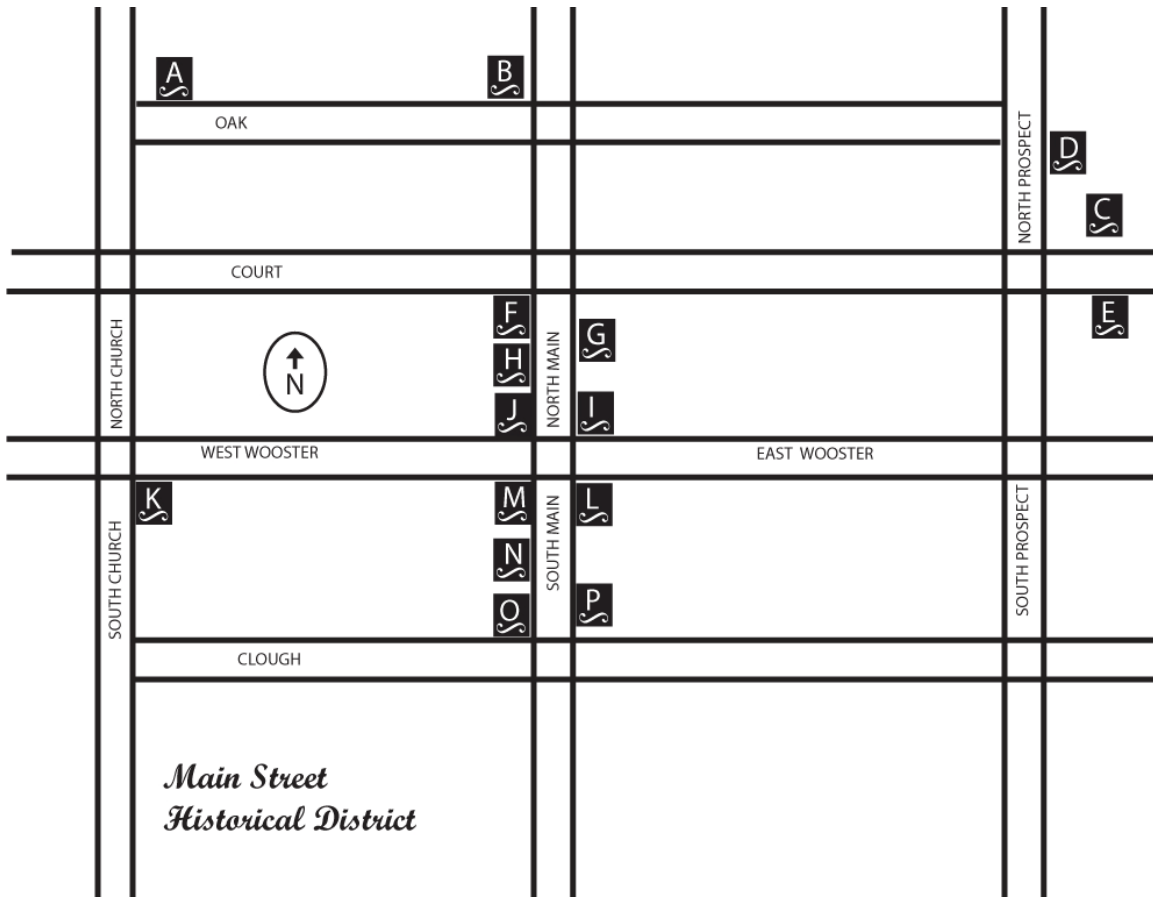
Main Street Historic District

The Main Street Historic District represents a record of commercial buildings erected in Bowling Green's brief "boom era" in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Originally known as Mt. Ararat, Bowling Green was first platted in 1835 and was named by Joseph Gordon, a regional mail carrier, after his favorite village – Bowling Green, Kentucky. Bowling Green was incorporated in 1855 and became the county seat of Wood County in 1867. Bowling green remained a small, healthy, agricultural community until late in the 19th century when the discovery of oil and natural gas in the county stimulated a sudden period of rapid growth.

The Wood County area soon became a forest of oil derricks. Industries, especially glass factories, were lured to Bowling Green by the prospect of cheap fuel. During this time, there were at least five glass factories in Bowling Green.

Two disastrous fires in August 1887 and October 1888 burned large sections of the commercial district. The fires destroyed more than one-quarter of the business blocks. Rebuilding began immediately, and the buildings in the Historic District are a result of the post conflagration period. By the early 1900's, the boom was over- most of the gas had been removed from the ground – and the town settled down to the agriculture county seat existence it previously knew. Bowling Green achieved city status in 1900. Very few important buildings were constructed after 1910. The population of the city in the 1990 census was 28,176. The Main Street Historic District includes 44 two- and three-story commercial buildings, four newer commercial buildings and several municipal structures. The central business district is a contiguous two- block grouping, which emanates from the central intersections of Main and Wooster streets, referred to as "the Four Corners."

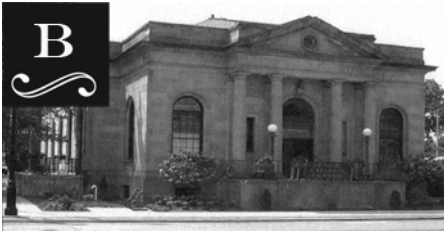
Many of the first-story storefronts have been altered, but the upper stories are generally intact. Queen Anne and Classical Revival Style building dominate the District, although other styles are also represented namely Italianate and Romanesque Revival. Rooflines are embellished with balustrades, tin cornices and moldings, brick corbeling, and date- name plaques. The beauty of the architecture in the Historic District gives the downtown area a special aura and creates an excellent historical environment for merchants and residents alike. Like many of the other downtown structures this building has a multi-use history; the Church Street School (1902-1957) and the Wood County Public Library (1956-1974). As the community continued to grow, the City Administration outgrew its West Wooster street location and moved its operations to this location in 1976.





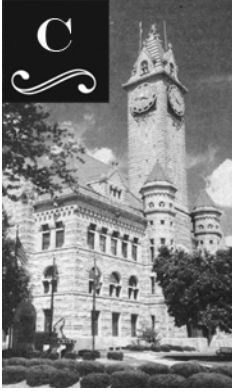
City Administration Building

This classical school building was constructed of red brick, stone and wood trim at a cost of \$30,000. The main entrances are Romanesque with original stonework. In 1932 decorative exterior stonework was added. Like many of the other downtown structures, this building has a multi-use history: the Church Street School (1902-1956) and the Wood County Public Library (1956-1974). As the community continued to grow, city administration outgrew its West Wooster Street location and moved its operations to this location in 1976.



Wood County Senior Citizens Center

This building served as the Bowling Green Post Office until the late 1970s. Its design was unique in relation to most post offices in the country. Constructed of native limestone, sandstone, and light brick, the arched windows of Neo-Georgian design, while the pedimented tetra- style portico shows Neo-Classical Revival influence. The front entrance is arched with a fanlight above the doors. The frame is iron with fluted pilasters and a Corinthian cornice. On the front façade of the vestibule, behind each of the smooth Ionic columns, are pilasters bearing Ionic capitals. Dentil molding appears below the cornice here and on the building proper.



Wood County Courthouse

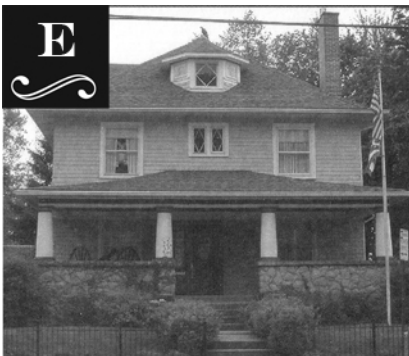
Constructed during 1894-1896 of Ohio sandstone and Vermont granite in the H.H. Richardson Romanesque style, the project was bid to cost \$225,747. The final cost topped \$300,000, not including the clock tower. Note the carvings above windows, along columns and at entrances. The springers at both sides of the main entrance are hand craved of sandstone. Allegorical subjects include one with a griffon holding a snake in its mouth “to represent the strong arm of the law crushing out vice and corruption.” Another interesting animal sculpture shows a lizard- like reptile being tied with a design of interlaced work and representing “evil in the meshes of the law.” The clock is 16 feet in diameter and the clock tower stands 195 feet tall. The tower was completed in 1897 at a cost of \$3,000. The hands of the clock were originally made of wood, but the pigeons would roost on these hands thus throwing off the time. The wooden hands were replaced by metal ones that have a slight electrical charge. Its bells contain more than 2,000 pounds of brass. The courthouse recently underwent a multimillion dollar restoration project on both the interior and exterior, leading to recognition by the Ohio Historic Preservation Office.



Wood County Jail

As you approach the Wood County Jail, you will be standing in the vicinity of Wood County's only public hanging. On October 12, 1883, Carl Bach was hung for the gruesome murder of his wife. This 'event' was considered a social gala, to which tickets for first class seating were sold. Built in 1901-1902 the existing structure was constructed of native sandstone at a cost of \$50,000. Replicating the Modern Romanesque style of the courthouse, the structure was hailed as the "most modern jail in Ohio." Throughout the structure note the carving above windows, along columns, and especially the gargoyles perched atop the structure. In its early days the jail also served as the sheriff's residence.

A new jail was built in 1989, and the old jail is the current home of the Wood County Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society, the law library, the Wood County archives and several county offices.



The Nearing House

Originally home Judge Charles Nearing who served at the Wood County Court, this house served as the judges' Chamber, jury deliberation and recess areas, and the place to be married. Following trends of time, Judge and Mrs. Nearing decorated rooms with large animal heads and bearskin rugs. One fire place has sculpted ivory elephants. The house has 53 windows, six staircases (inside), and two fireplaces.



McKenzie- Kabig Block

The Romanesque McKenzie –Kabig block was built by Frank Kabig and Allen Kabig in 1892. Kabig was a local butcher and large property owner who continued in business until 1907. It is not clear if this building actually housed Kabig’s shop but it apparently did serve as an interurban station and housed the Bowling Green Library. This two –story structure has a rough-hewn stone façade. A tin balustrade caps the façade, below which are the names McKenzie and Kabig. The first floor retains its double store front plan with central upper story entrance, but the store fronts themselves have been altered with vertical wood siding and smaller showcase windows.



Reed and Merry Block

This group of five two-story Queen Anne building is connected to an architecturally similar three –story building at the southern end of the series. These structures were built in 1899 for Edwin Reed and his business partners, Earl W. Merry and Joseph H. Sands, at a cost of \$25,000. The three-story section was built as an IOOF Lodge and still serves as the cornerstone of the entire block. Originally this block also housed a restaurant, the post office, a dry goods outlet, and a clothier. Below the central arched third- floor from the base of the second story. The first floors of all five buildings have been remodeled. Original second-story entry ways have been retained.



Cla-Zel Theater

The longest operating first-run movie theater in Ohio, the Cla-Zel Theater opened on April 21, 1926. The silent movie “Irene” was debuted on opening day. The total investment was \$150,000. In 1930, the Cla-Zel was adapted to talking pictures, and in 1941 became an Armstrong Theater, managed by Jack Armstrong. In the late 1980s it was sold again and has undergone some renovations in the interior. The brick two-story structure has a classical balustrade at the roofline. The marquee separates the first and second stories and covers the main entrance. The original box office in front of the recessed entrance and the original billboard frames have been retained. All ornamentation on the upper story is glazed terra cotta.



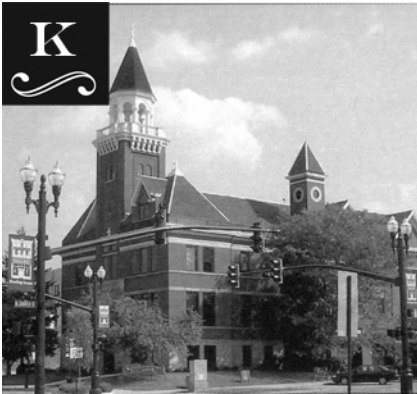
Lincoln Block

The oldest of the early Italianate-style structures is the Lincoln Block, built by Bowling Green pioneer Alfred Thurstin to serve as his general store with a residence at the rear. In 1889 it was remodeled for Dr. J.C. Lincoln, a prominent local physician and druggist, who operated a pharmacy for many years. The building has been known as the Lincoln Block since that time. Its house Urwin’s Centre Drugs of many years. The building features two distinct facades. The East Wooster Street facade is original, with its heavy projecting cornice. The Main Street facade was damaged on August 4, 1944 and rebuilt. A stone name block bears the name Lincoln and is centered between the two casement windows in the second floor surface. The entrance is angled at the corner.



Exchange Bank Building

The Exchange Bank, founded in 1871 by Edwin Reed and Frank Beverstock, was the oldest bank in Bowling Green. The Exchange Bank Building was constructed in 1883 by John R. Hankey and continued as a bank until it was absorbed by the Wood County Savings Bank. The three-story brick building is sparse in ornamentation. A simple cornice with plain, evenly spaced brackets springs from a bed molding which connects the brackets on both streets facades. A sight elevation in the center of the Main Street cornice frames the applied name and date. The building currently houses professional offices on the second and third floors, and retail space on the first floor.



Bowling Green Police Division Building

This building housed the city offices until 1976, and also served as the Wood County Courthouse from 1894 to 1896 while the present courthouse was being constructed. In Romanesque style, this building with its characteristic central stone arch, was designed by Toledo architect David L. Stine. The fire and police departments occupied the building until the fire department moved to new quarters at the corner of Thurstin and Court Streets. The police division is now housed in the building which was completely renovated in 1985-1986. The renovation retained the original walls on the north and west sides including three bays. The words “City Building” are carved into the stone just above the heavy stone arch, which forms the main entrance on West Wooster Street. A delicate central tower with a column-supported open belfry and balustrade rises over the main entrance.

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The Millikin Hotel

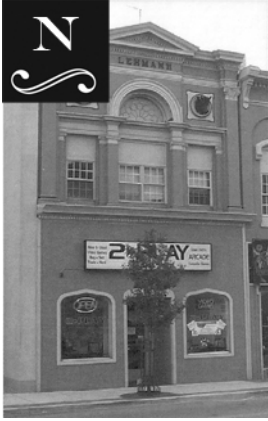
The Millikin Hotel, at the corner of East Wooster Street, was built by oil tycoon William H. Millikin in 1895-1897. The Millikin Hotel and business block cost between \$50,000 and \$60,000 to build. The Millikin were operated as a fine hotel until the 1950s. The hotel boasted a marble dining room, stained glass skylights, an elevator, and ornate oak molding and staircases throughout. Three stories in height and constructed of buff brick, the exterior of the building is relatively unaltered except for the removal of a small balcony on the East Wooster Street façade. The East Wooster Street first floor is rough-hewn stone with three arched entrances. The Main Street first floor facade has been altered with a vertical corrugated paneling on the upper section and new showcase windows below. Famous guests included Ernest Hemingway, H.J. Heinz, and Clark Gable.

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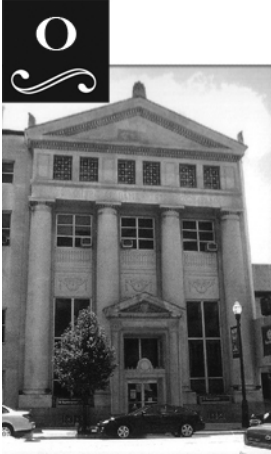
Union Bank

The Union Block, built in 1877 By Christoph Lehmann, Dr. Andrew J. Manville, and J.D. Bolles, was operated as the drug firm of Bolles and Manville until 1896. The Union Block then served as a pharmacy, Kiger's Drug Store, until 1987 when it was leased by new owners to other retail shops. The two-story building offers typical Italianate bracketed cornices. The brackets are delicate and paired in the center to support a tin name and date plaque. The second story features seven segmentally arched windows with keystoned hood molds set into several larger round brick arches.



Lehmann Building

The most exuberant expression of the frivolity of the Gay Nineties in Bowling Green is said to be the Classical Revival Lehmann Building in 1896-97. Christoph Lehmann, a native of Germany, settled in Bowling Green in 1871. He established himself as a butcher, a trade he had learned in Tiffin shortly after coming to the United States. The heavily classical features of the building are most likely influenced by the numerous classical structures of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Most notable is the pair of cattle heads flanking the central arch of the second story. For some years the structure housed the City Loan office. It then underwent major renovations and now houses a retail shop.



Commercial Bank and Saving Co.

The Commercial Bank and Savings Co. was founded in 1885 by Albert E. Royce, Wallace H. Smith, and J.J. Coon, and assumed its listed name in 1905. A contract for the building was made in 1924, at a cost of \$150,000. The structure, built by Leo Herman, was occupied on February 23, 1926. The bank closed in November 1929, one month after the stock market crash. It re-opened in November 1931 as the Bank of Wood County, which remained until 1975, when it merged with and took the name of, Huntington Bank. The design is a Neo-classical style based on Greek temple designs. It is built of gray Indiana limestones and is three stories high. The original carved stone name of the bank is just below the frieze and is supported by four round columns with egg and dart moldings in their Doric Capitals which separate the windows on the first and second stories.



Hankey Block

The Hankey Block was built in 1892 by John R. Hankey and possibly Louis Sanglier. Hankey typifies the entrepreneur of the oil booms days. He had interests in the local planting mill, gas and oil enterprises, real estate, a store, glassworks, and a foundry. The Hankey Block is a three-story buff brick structure with stone and classical trim. Classical tin work embellishes the roofline with 14 panels indented with an egg and dart design above a projecting cornice. Name and date plaques are centered just below this cornice. Two sets of paired windows flank a solitary central window. The first floor has been greatly altered with a mansard- like roof, and all but the entrances have been sealed with solid panels.

This brochure was adapted from one created by The Boomtown Preservation Society, Main Street Bowling Green, the Wood County Health District, the Leadership BG Class of 2003, and the Bowling Green Convention and Visitors Bureau. It was funded in part by a grant administered by the Bowling Green Community Foundation.

