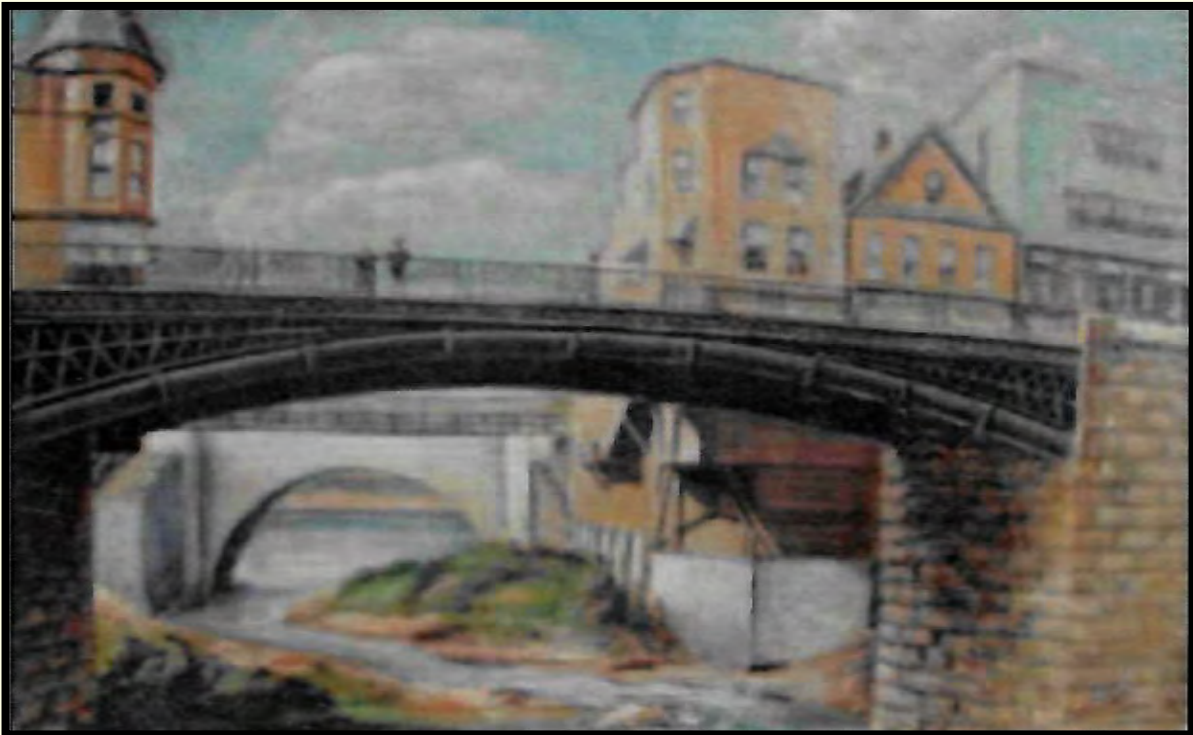


A Walking and Driving Tour of Historic Brownsville



Frank L Melega Art

DUNLAP CREEK BRIDGE - 1836

First Cast-Iron Bridge in the United States of America

BROWNSVILLE

FAYETTE COUNTY

PENNSYLVANIA



Welcome to the Historic Walking and Driving Tour Guide brought to you by the Brownville Area Revitalization Corporation (BARC).

Whether you're an avid traveler or someone who is embarking on their first adventure, this guide is designed to help you make the most out of your journey to Brownsville, PA and the surrounding Laurel Highlands of South Western Pennsylvania.

Visit the multitude of museums (Brownsville, alone, has four!) and historic locations in the area and immerse yourself in an absolute wealth of history and knowledge. Discover the Fertile Monongahela River Valley that has played a vital role in the birth of our great nation. Our area is blessed with TWO Frank Lloyd Wright homes (world-famous Fallingwater and nearby Kentuck Knob). Ohiopyle Falls, located close to the two homes, has its own attractions including world-class white-water rafting! There's so much to see and experience in our Laurel Highlands, you'll want to stay at one of the convenient hotels/motels (including the renowned Summit Hotel and our Four Star Nemacolin Woodlands) plus picturesque Airbnb's. Brownsville has an Airbnb in our town and a Hampton Inn a few miles away.

From the French and Indian War, the early expeditions of young George Washington, to the Whiskey Rebellion, the National Road (which opened Western movement), the Steam Boat and discovery of huge amounts of coal that fed the Steel Industry, our area has had a crucial role in the development of our Nation.

Traveling can be an incredibly enriching experience that broadens our horizons, exposes us to different cultures, and allows us to create memories that last a lifetime! This guide is packed with useful information that will help you plan your trip and make the most of your time during your visit to Historic Brownsville and the surrounding, nationally acclaimed, Laurel Highlands! Hoping to see you soon!

A Walking/Driving Tour of Historic Brownsville

The old and proud community of Brownsville cascades down a steep cliff side on the east bank of the Monongahela River. As America grew, so did the tiny borough, contributing keelboats for the Lewis and Clark Expedition, steamboats that made historic journeys on American waterways, and favorite sons, like John A. Brashear, Philander Knox, and James G. Blaine (West Brownsville). The town's history includes peaks and valleys. The key forces of the town's strength, derived from a major Boat Building Era to the Westward Expansion Era and the Industrial Coal Era for over 200 years, give the town a rich history and a story to be told.

The first known human inhabitants of this location were Native Americans, often referred to as the "mound builders," who established fortifications around the highest point of the town. Some historians claim it was the present location of Nemacolin Castle on Front Street while others claim it was high atop Shaffner Avenue where relics have been found. When early explorers discovered these ruins, they called them "old forts," so when a community developed near Redstone Creek, it was not referred to as "Whiskey Path," the name on the original tract, but as "Redstone Old Fort."

The Nemacolin Trail, from Wills Creek (Cumberland, MD) to Redstone Old Fort, was blazed by the Delaware chief Nemacolin. Redstone Old Fort's ideal location on the Monongahela River was known as the "end of the trail." According to tradition and the *History of Fayette County*, Nemacolin, who lived in Brownsville in a log cabin near the present day Nemacolin Castle, as well as Thomas Cresap of the Ohio Company of Virginia, whose son Michael was an early settler at Redstone Old Fort, helped blaze the trail from Wills Creek, Md. to Redstone Old Fort.

A few years later, Captain William Trent, on a mission to establish a fort (today's Pittsburgh) at the forks of the Ohio, built a storehouse called Hangard at the mouth of Redstone Creek (along Albany Road, near the P & LE railroad tunnel). In 1754, French troops en route to battle George Washington at Fort Necessity landed at the mouth of Redstone Creek to travel on foot. They paused at the nearby hilltop near the site of The Historic Church of St Peter to provide a religious service. This commemorative Mass that took place on July 1, 1754, is depicted in a stained-glass window in St. Peter Church. In 1759, the 200 men of Colonel James Burd's expedition completed Braddock's Road from Gist's Plantation to the banks of the Monongahela at Redstone Old Fort. Burd's Road widened the narrow Nemacolin Trail into a 12-foot-wide road to facilitate travel and commerce from Virginia and Maryland to points west. Burd chose the same site as the ancient peoples to establish his fort, which housed supplies for soldiers sent into the area to protect early English, German, and Irish settlers. From these early beginnings the community grew.

Today Brownsville is welcoming yet another type of traveler. No more the homesteader on the way west, no more the river traveler bound for destinations in this new land; rather, the leisure traveler in search of a sense of history and place. Through its historic buildings and legends, Brownsville's location clearly adds to the "Making of America" story.

Brownsville has two designated historic districts:

- ◆ **The Northside Historic District - c. 1785-1943 - contains the widest section of the National Road**
- ◆ **the Downtown "Neck" Historic District - contains the narrowest section of the National Road**

Brownsville has six individually listed historic sites on the National Register:

- ◆ **Nemacolin Castle**
- ◆ **The Historic Church of St. Peter - also recognized as a PA Landmark**
 - ◆ **Dunlap Creek Bridge - First Cast Iron Bridge in America**
 - ◆ **the Intercounty Bridge**
 - ◆ **the Thompson House**
- ◆ **Temple O'Have Israel Synagogue**

To begin our tour...

Traveling west on Route 40: At the corner of Market and Fifth (second traffic light), turn left. At the next intersection (Fifth and Brashear), turn right. Continue three blocks to the back entrance of Nemacolin Castle. Parking is available on the right side of the castle grounds.

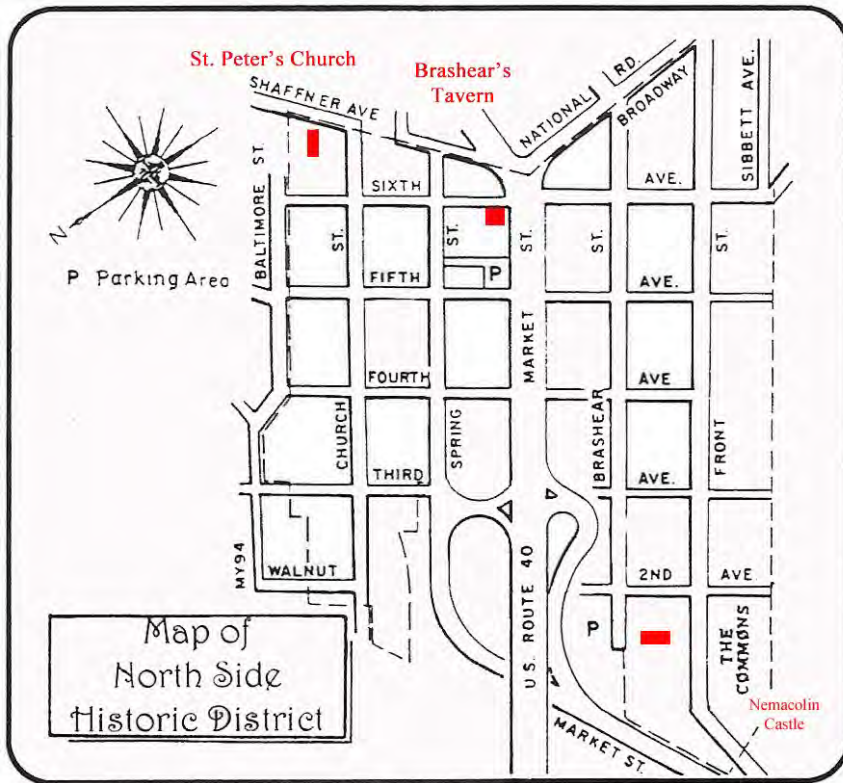
Traveling east on Route 40: Cross the high-level bridge and turn right on Fourth Avenue (the first side street after the service station). At the next intersection, turn right onto Brashear Street and continue two blocks to the back entrance of Nemacolin Castle. Parking is available on the right-hand side. The tour of the North Side Historic District is best done on foot; however, it can also be done by car. **Walking guided tours of Front Street are available. Call 724-785-8512.** Enter the castle grounds to begin your tour.

- ***Brownsville has four museums (Nemacolin Castle, Flatiron Heritage Center, Frank L. Melega Art Museum, and the Transportation Museum) operated solely by volunteers. If you wish to visit any one of them, please call the number listed in the museum's description to arrange a tour.***

A Walking Tour of the North Side Historic District

The North Side is the oldest intact commercial/residential district west of the Alleghenies. It encompasses a six-block area with 188 of 230 structures of historic significance. Although historic structures are found throughout the area, three streets dominate: Front Street (the original Nemacolin Trail), Market Street (the National Road *aka* U. S. 40), and Church Street, where Brownsville still worships. As immigrants came to live in

Brownsville, they brought their denominational faith with them and built architecturally significant churches. Brownsville was once known as a “town of churches.” **Some churches are available for interior tours. Call 724-785-9331 for more info.**



136 Front Street - Nemacolin Castle



is Brownsville's pride and joy. Jacob Bowman, born in Hagerstown, Maryland, opened a trading post at Redstone Old Fort in 1787 that is part of the castle. Mr. Bowman named the Towers in honor of his friend, Indian Chief Nemacolin, thus it was officially named Nemacolin Castle on the National Register. The castle displays many original furnishings including the post office desk Bowman used as postmaster

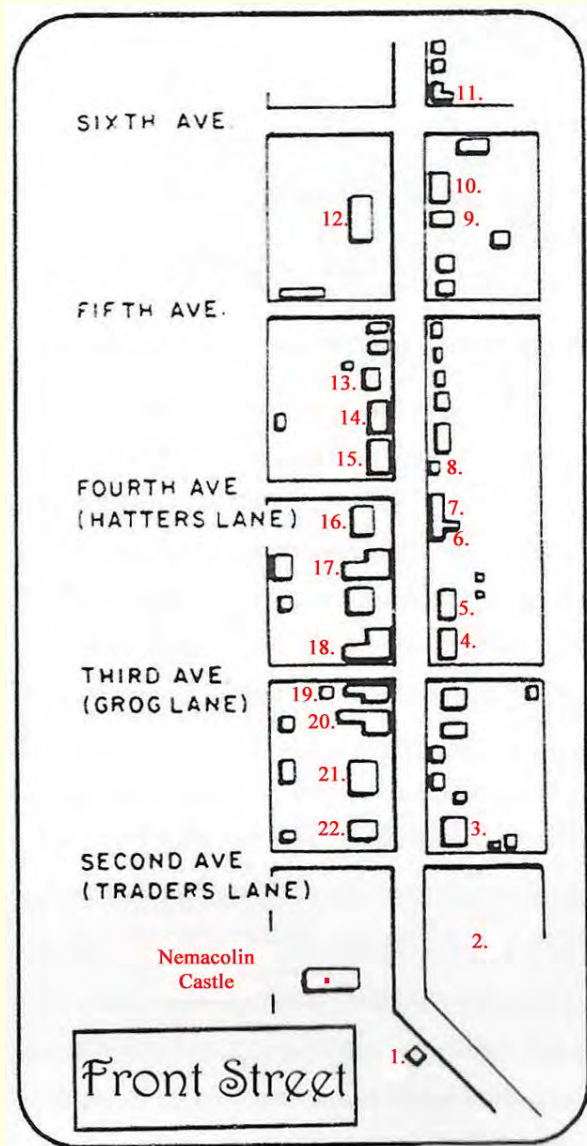
from 1795-1829. As Mr. Bowman's wealth grew, the 22-room house grew, as displayed in the different architectural styles from 1787 until the mid-1800's when the Italianate-style tower section was built. The structure is locally known as Bowman's Castle. Nemacolin Castle, on the National Register of Historic Places, is operated by the Brownsville Historical Society. Open to the public since 1962, visitors are welcome.

For entrance fee information, call 724-785-6882. Special rates for group tours. The tour lasts one hour.

We have selected homes that have significant historic and architectural interest. To save space and to refrain from repeating the same information, not all homes were included in this booklet.

*** Please respect the privacy of our homeowners by not littering or trespassing on their properties.**

To begin A Walking/Driving Tour of Historic Brownsville, descend the stairs on the south side of the castle (Front Street) and turn right. **If interested in a guided tour of Front Street, call 724-785-8512.**



Front Street

Front Street was originally part of the Nemacolin Trail and was the main thoroughfare of the community prior to the coming of the National Road. Many of the structures on Front Street date to the late 18th and early 19th centuries and most were first used as commercial enterprises and residences. When the National Road entered Brownsville, it bypassed Front Street for Market Street that became the commercial district. Today Front Street is residential. In small towns a home was often referred to by the name of the significant person who built it and/or lived in it. It was also interesting to note the many houses built right on the sidewalk in the early nineteenth century. Later the setback rule was enforced.



1. 131 Front Street

Built c. 1855 by Zachariah W. Carmack, a river boat captain, the house is a vernacular Gothic Revival two-story cross-gable brick dwelling on a stone foundation with a slate-covered roof. In 1910, a hexagonal-shaped room was added at back right and a front porch with square wooden half-columns on brick/stone piers.



2. The Commons

When Brownsville's founder, Thomas Brown, laid out the town, he designated this area to be for public use in perpetuity for the people of Brownsville. It is believed this may have been part of the site of "Old Fort." The land was once home to two public schools from circa 1910 until 1968. Currently it is public use, often used for overflow parking for Nemacolin Castle tourists.

- *As you walk up Front Street we will focus on the homes on the right-hand side.
The homes on your left will be addressed on your return to your car.*



3. 200 Front Street

Built circa 1890, the style is vernacular Queen Anne with shingle-covered front gables decorated with spindle work. This plot of land was owned by Captain Valentine Geisey, who served in the War of 1812 and was official host to the Marquis de Lafayette when he visited Brownsville in 1825.



4. 218 Front Street

218 Front Street -- This 1890, two-story, cross gable, vernacular house has Queen Anne and Colonial Revival elements. It is covered with asbestos siding, sits on a stone foundation. Plans are for it to be the future site of the Brownsville Historical Society Museum.



5. 300 Front Street - John L. Dawson House

on the corner of Front and Third. This c. 1851 vernacular brick house on a stone foundation is topped by a shingles-covered gable roof. Italianate influences include bracketed eaves and arched over windows with stone hoods. It has a full-width 20th century brick porch. Mr. Dawson, a congressman, owned many properties in town.



6. 306 Front Street - George Dawson House

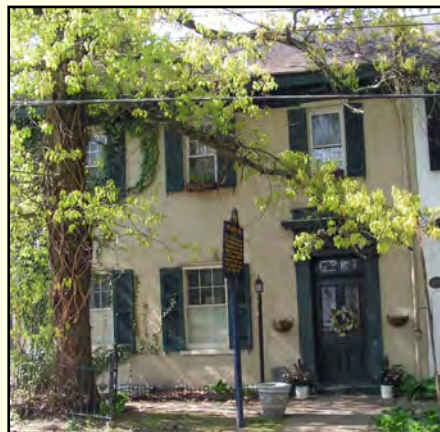
Built c. 1815 -1819, the building underwent major modification during the later part of the century, which accounts for its Victorian touches. Note the heavily bracketed cornice, and large windows with leaded glass transoms.

The metal-covered frontispiece features a central doorway framed by a transom with sidelights and a paneled reveal. George Dawson, salt agent and contractor on the National Road and son of property owner John Dawson, lived here until 1845. James Todd, steamboat captain, occupied the building until 1857, followed by many local residents including the town's burgess.



7. 320 Front Street

Built c. 1848 the home is a vernacular Greek Revival brick dwelling on a stone foundation. It has an ell with a two-story porch. The front and right gable ends have a cornice with dentils; the door is surrounded by a pediment frontispiece. It is joined to the Knox House (322 Front) by a common wall.



8. 322 Front Street - Philander Knox House

The house was originally built of field stone with stucco. It has a shingled gable roof. It was built c. 1810 by Jacob Goodlander, a clockmaker. It was recently restored, including the Greek Revival door frontispiece and bracket cornice. Philander Knox, born in this house, served as PA's Senator, U. S. Senator, Secretary of State to President Taft, and U.S. Attorney General

under President McKinley and President Theodore Roosevelt. He was a founding member of the Reed Smith law Firm in Pittsburgh.



9. 402 Front Street

The interesting thing about this saltbox building covered with asbestos siding is that at its core is a circa 1797 log cabin.



10. 512 Front Street

This two-story, three-bay vernacular red brick house on a rubble stone foundation was built c. 1848. It has an early 20th century brick porch and gable roof covered with shingles.



11. 514-516 Front Street - William Johnston

This c. 1848, two-story, four-bay, vernacular, brick house sits on a stone foundation and has double chimneys and curtain at both ends of its shingles-clad gable roof. Originally a single-family dwelling, it was converted into a duplex around 1905. Son of John Johnson of 600 Front Street.



12. 600 Front Street - John Johnston

Southeast corner of Front Street and Sixth Avenue. This c. 1834 vernacular two-story, five-bay brick house has Federal and Greek Revival elements. It has a shingles-covered gable roof, a dentil cornice, and an entrance porch supported by classical columns and ornamented with turned balusters. The one-story brick structure of the same period attached to the rear of the house was used as a summer kitchen. John

Johnson came to Brownsville in 1805 with his father George Johnson, a weaver. John worked as a carpenter and also served in public office.

- *Cross Front Street and begin your journey back to your car.*



13. 515 Front Street

Built c. 1922, this two-story, three-bay brick building is probably the best example of Colonial Revival in the district; brick quoins, classical cornice, stone/brick lintels with keystones, and full-width porch with a pedimented arch, columns, and pilasters. Built as a residence, it is currently a funeral home.



14. 417 Front Street

This 1929 three-story elegant red brick home with inlaid terra cotta tile front porch was built for Attorney Jacob Sherrard by architect Emil Johnson during Historic Brownsville's heyday of the Industrial Era. The house has three Tiffany-styled stained-glass windows and original mahogany woodwork. The third floor was living quarters for the Sherrard's maid and has the original claw foot bathtub. Mr. Sherrard was a well-known local attorney and lived here with his family until his death in 1974 when the house was sold.



15. 407-411 Front Street - Moorehouse Tavern

Two connecting vernacular houses with rubble stone foundations and shingles-clad gable roofs sat at this location. The house at 407 (the first four bays), was constructed around 1820 and is sheathed with clapboard. The house at 411 was constructed around 1845. Once serving as a tavern, it was renovated into a single dwelling with some Greek Revival influences including a partial gable return, frieze board, and flat-arched lintels and transoms. It is currently a single dwelling.



16. 401 Front Street - Brownsville Academy

Built around 1811, this vernacular stone structure with a shingles-clad gable roof once had a rear ell and porches. The center double-panel doors with carved floral designs are surrounded by a classical frontispiece. The sandstone porch is bordered with a decorative iron railing, and a stone coach step sits at roadside. It was a tavern during the National Road Era. The Brownsville Female Seminary was founded in this building in 1838.



17. 321 Front Street - Hogg House

Corner of Front and Fourth (Hatter's Lane- named in honor of a hat designer living here). This c. 1895 three-story brick building is Colonial Revival with a front gambrel and full-width brick porch on a stone foundation. The William Hogg family, one of the early families of Brownsville, migrated to this town in 1787 and had extensive holdings throughout the area. The

homes erected on this property remained in the family until this century.



18. 315 Front Street

Built c. 1851, this L-shaped brick dwelling sits on a sandstone-block foundation. It has a boxed cornice, decorative frieze with paired brackets, and an ornate metal clad Second Empire frontispiece framing the main entry.



19. 301-305 Front Street - Henry Shreve House

This 1815 vernacular two-story brick apartment complex with a stone foundation has a rear ell with a two-story porch. The original section is five bays in width, framed with a simple frontispiece central door, which was later replaced by a more elaborate Greek Revival frontispiece. Originally two

separate structures, 301 and 305 now share a common gable roof. The home of Henry Shreve, captain of the steamboat *Enterprise*, built in 1814 in Bridgeport (South Brownsville). The *Enterprise* was the first steamboat to navigate the Mississippi roundtrip on its own power. Shreve's involvement in LA resulted in Shreveport being named in his honor.



20. 221 Front Street - Monongahela Bank Building

Built in 1811, this L-shaped building was originally Federal-style. Built on a rubble stone foundation, it has a shingles-clad gable roof. The Monongahela Bank established by Jacob Bowman was opened in 1812 in this location as one of the first banks west of the Alleghenies. Three additional sites of

the Monongahela Bank are also found on this tour. The founding president, Jacob Bowman, served in this position for 29 years. This structure was converted to a residential home in 1872. In the 1900's, the doorway was moved to the left side elevation and all windows replaced.



21. 217 Front Street - William L. Lafferty House

This Federal L-shaped, brick dwelling on a stone foundation has a gable roof, a boxed cornice with paired brackets and large stone lintels with key-stones. The front section is c. 1808 and the ell is 1850. At the back is a circa 1850 gable-front brick carriage house. Physician William Lafferty was a practicing physician here for 30 years. Dr. Florence Matta, a midwife, used the building as a hospital for women in 1913. It was restored in the 1970s.



22. 209 Front Street - Samuel E. Taylor House

The original two-story brick dwelling, erected on a sandstone foundation, was L-shaped and built c. 1827. Through the years and under different ownership, it changed. At the turn of the century, it was enlarged with Victorian elements by Samuel E. Taylor, owner of the National Deposit Bank. The interior contains fifteen large rooms including a ballroom, smoking room, parlor, and library, seven fireplaces, mahogany wainscoting, a grand staircase, pocket doors, window seats, stained-glass windows, and a leaded beveled glass entryway. The carriage barn behind the house is a mid-19th century building of vertical boards with Gothic Revival elements. It is the last standing stable within borough limits.

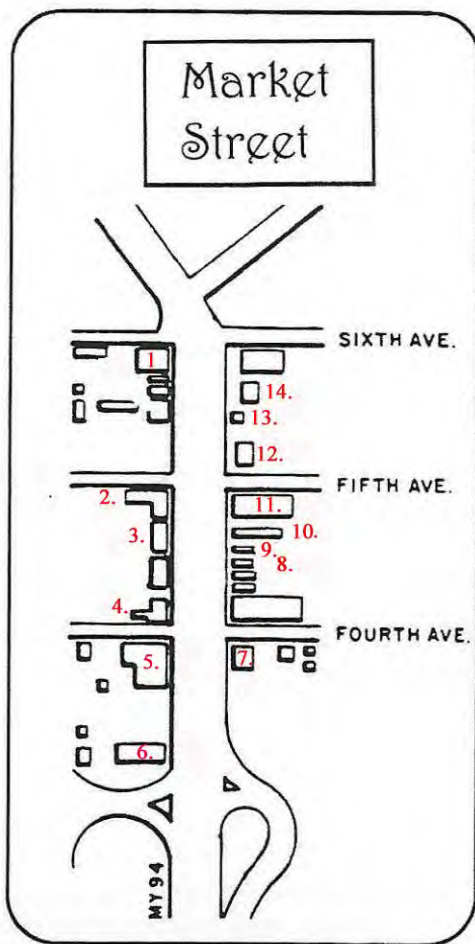


23. 203 Front Street - Black Horse Tavern Site

Located at the corner of Front and Second Street. The original Black Horse Tavern, established in 1780, was destroyed by fire in the early 1800's. This structure, built c. 1820 on the original stone foundation, is a vernacular stone dwelling with slate-covered cross gables and half-timbering under the gables. The façade has a two-story bay window and 20th century porch. The original Black Horse Tavern was the first and last meeting place of the rebels of the Whiskey Rebellion. On July 27, 1791, men from the surrounding area gathered in anger over the colonial government's tax on whiskey. Farmers in the region, eager to get their crops to market, found it cheaper to send

whiskey east instead of rye grain. A mule could carry only four bushels of rye, while five hundred bushels of grain produced fifty gallons of whiskey, much less to carry and more profitable. Thus, the first test of our Constitution was to be over taxation, the very issue that led to our successful rebellion against England. The Whiskey Rebellion ended here three years later on August 28, 1794.

- Turn right at the corner and return to your car. Drive up Brashear Street to the third intersection (Fifth Avenue).
Turn left, cross Market Street at the traffic light and pull into the parking lot on your right.



Market Street

Market Street is the National Road, the first highway built by the U. S. government from Cumberland MD to Vandalia IL (five hundred miles). From Cumberland, Maryland, it crosses into Pennsylvania and over the Allegheny Mountains, forming the main street of Uniontown, arriving in Brownsville, winding down Market Street to Dunlap's Creek and crossing over the Monongahela River on its way to Washington, PA and Wheeling, West Virginia. Brownsville is located mid-way of the ninety miles of the National Road in PA.

The National Road followed the pathways established by early explorers. The earlier routes blazed and cleared by Nemacolin, George Washington, William Trent, and James Burd, were incorporated into this highway, which linked the cities in the east with the expanding territories in the west.

In Brownsville, the National Road became a broad avenue, more like a town square than a roadway, and along its course were located mercantile establishments, physicians' and dentists' offices, taverns, and residences. "Upper Market" rose to prominence in the heyday of the road and yielded its importance to "the neck" until c. 1850 when the railroad provided an easier mode of transportation to the west.

- To begin this section of the tour, walk up Market Street to the second traffic light.
As you turn and face the bridge, the first building on your right is...



1. 519-523 Market Street - Brashear Tavern

These two parcels contain the oldest structure in Brownsville, The Brashear Tavern. The hipped roof western half of this two-story stone structure was erected c. 1797 by Basil Brashear; the gable-roofed,

eastern half c. 1804. Basil Brashear operated it as a tavern until 1846. Lafayette, on a grand tour of America in 1825, ate here and spoke to the citizens from the door of the tavern. John A. Brashear, grandson of Basil, was born in this house November 28, 1840. World renowned as an astronomer and educator, Brashear became the most eminent manufacturer and supervisor of astronomical instruments, spectroscopes, spectrographs and astrophysical instruments, and Army and Navy rangefinders in the U. S. He built his first telescope in 1875.

- *Continue walking down this side of the street.*



2. 419 Market Street - Hogg House

Corner of Market and Fifth, this vacant lot is the site of the home built c. 1820 for William and George Hogg, prominent regional merchants. It was converted into the Brownsville Hotel. It was demolished in 2018.



3. 413-415 Market Street Robert Rogers Commercial Building

Built between 1833 and 1841, this large, three-story vernacular brick set of buildings sits on a stone foundation and is topped by a gable roof. The facility originally had first-floor shops with residences above until c. 1860.

When the first floor was converted to residential use, the entrance was given a Greek Revival frontispiece.



4. 401 Market Street

This circa 1828 three-story yellow brick structure with a shingles-covered gable roof was constructed as a duplex and became two buildings. The eastern section was destroyed by fire in 2018. The iron balconies projecting from the upper story remain. Housed well-known local gathering pub known as Apone's bar.



5. 325 Market Street - Goodloe H. Bowman House

Corner of Market and Fourth. The building, c. 1828, is a rectangular-shaped, vernacular, brick structure with ell additions. It has a shingles-covered gable roof with stepped parapet and chimney at gable end. The property was owned by the Bowman family from 1819 until 1901. The building was converted to partial commercial/residential use in the early 20th century.



6. Third and Market Street

Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church

The 1917 Saint Nicholas Greek Catholic Church, constructed of orange brick, sits on a faced-stone foundation, and is topped with a roof of red tiles. It has a mission-style parapet flanked by twin towers terminating in metal-covered onion-shaped domes. The onion dome reflects the Byzantine rites of Sub-Carpathian and Eastern Slovakian immigrants who founded the church in 1911. Contains unique glass *iconostases*. A two-story Colonial Revival brick rectory was constructed c. 1917 behind the church.

- *For safety reasons, the second half of this tour segment will continue from this side of Market Street. On your return trip to your car, note the following buildings that sit on the opposite side of Market Street.*



7. 320 Market Street - Monongahela National Bank

Corner of Market and Fourth. This remarkable building was constructed in 1872 as the second site of the Monongahela Bank until 1903 when it moved to the downtown section. It is Italianate and Gothic architecture resting on a sandstone foundation. It is topped with a bracketed frieze and metal covered hipped roof. Note the cut stone corner quoins, window moldings and sills, and entrance surroundings. The iron fence is original. Plans for the building include a Bed and Breakfast.





8. 410 Market Street

Erected c. 1850, the building is a brick vernacular structure with a stone foundation, a shingles-clad gable roof, and a dentil cornice. A modern classical frontispiece adorns the façade of the building. Mixed use commercial with upper floor residential.



9. 412 Market Street - Robinson's Pharmacy

This c. 1850 two-story, brick building has a new brick façade with modified replacement windows. Founded by Daniel Robinson, it served as Robinson's Pharmacy for nearly a century. Well known for pharmacist Ollie Mossett, who was loved by all for his many home remedies.



10. 416 Market Street - Brownsville Clipper Newspaper Office

Built c. 1853 as the *Brownsville Clipper* newspaper. There were over eighteen newspapers in Brownsville during the 1800's, many right here on Market Street. The current structure has a circa 1922 façade modified at street level.



11. 418 Market Street

Built in 1920 as a two-story, three structural bay, brick auto showroom and one-story repair garage. The center and right bay entrances and show windows are intact, as are the second-story, multi-pane, industrial-type windows. Currently a pizza shop.



12. 502 Market Street

A 1905 Colonial Revival brick building with shingles-clad, hipped-roof and full-width porch. The building sits on a concrete block foundation. Currently an antique shop.



13. 510 Market Street

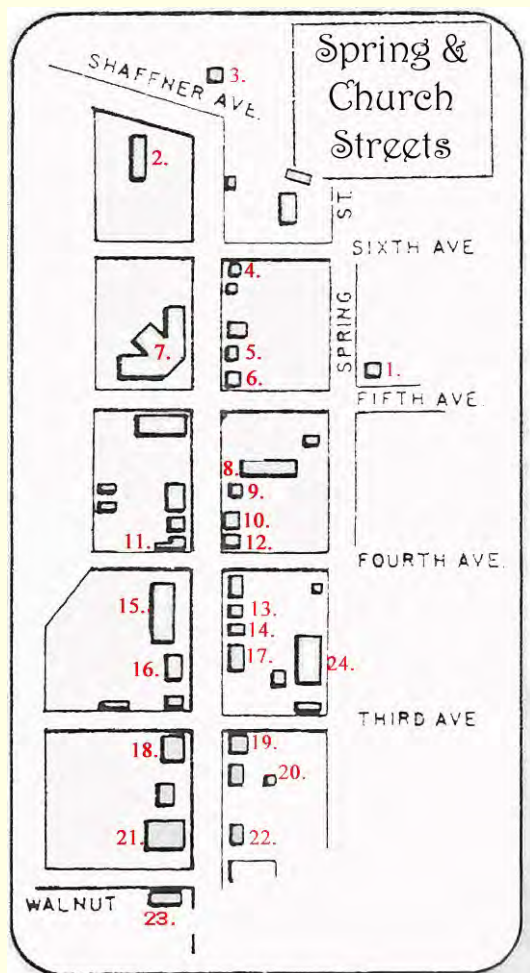
This brick building was erected around 1870. It has a stone foundation with a gable roof covered with shingles, original windows and a door surrounded by a period frontispiece.



14. 514 Market Street - George Dawson Building

Built c. 1855, this building has a slate-hipped roof with a Mission-shaped front parapet and dormer, and a full-width porch with center door surrounded by side-lights, transom, and classical pilasters. George Dawson, a successful lumber proprietor in Brownsville, used only the best materials for the home including hand-made inlaid parquet floors and wainscoting. This 18-room home has the original twelve stained-glass windows. The building was renovated in 1905 and recently served as a Bed and Breakfast. Now privately owned.

- *Return to the parking lot at the corner of Fifth and Market Street. Sharing the parking lot is the next site.*



Church & Spring Streets



1. 500 Spring Street - St. Ellien's Antiochian Church

Corner of Spring and Fifth. Built in 1919 as the Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Church, the interior has an exceptionally fine *iconostas* (separates altar from main body of church) and a hand-painted ceiling of icon images.



- Turn right out of the parking lot, through the first stop sign, and right at the second stop sign onto Church Street. Go to the top and park in the church parking lot.

2. 304 Shaffner Avenue - The Historic Church of St. Peter

This Roman Catholic Church is one of the finest examples of provincial Gothic architecture in America. It was built with hand-hewn locally quarried stone in 1845 by Irish stonemasons to replace a former red brick church built in 1823 and destroyed by fire in 1842. The red brick church replaced a white wooden church c. 1795. This church is the first Catholic parish in Fayette County and the oldest continuously operating Catholic Church west of the Alleghenies. It is known to be one of the finest examples of provincial Gothic architecture in America and was written in *Ripley's Believe It or Not* as having the only heated grave in the world. The interior restoration, which focused on the rich history of the church and area, began in 1932. A remarkable stained-glass window depicts a religious service held in 1754 by the chaplain of the French soldiers under Major DeVillier en route to battle George Washington at Fort Necessity. The historic graveyard surrounding the church contains the gravesite of James G. Blaine's parents, Emphraim L. Blaine, and Maria Gillespie Blaine. James G. Blaine was defeated by Grover Cleveland in 1884 in his effort to be US President. **Tours are available upon request by calling 724-785-7781.** Named to the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1980, and is also a registered PA landmark.



Note the former convent and rectory above the parking lot where the Brownsville Catholic School was located. The convent to the left currently serves as CrossKeys, a Senior Center. The rectory is the residence of the priest of St. Peter Church. The carved stone marker near the steps to the rectory was taken from the Catholic school when it was demolished c. 1976.



Former convent



Rectory



3. 700 Church Street

Located at the top of Church Street near the bottom corner of the parking lot. William C. Steele, born in 1857, built this American foursquare block home in 1915. He was one of Brownsville's young businessmen and a leading merchant. His forefathers came to Eastern PA in 1740. He was a tanner by trade and operated a large tannery until 1878. He was a partner with his father in Samuel Steele & Son, tanning one thousand hides per year. He also served on town council.

- *The rest of this tour can be done from your car, pulling over to park as you deem necessary. Please do not block the street.*



4. 516 Church Street - A. Swearer Home

Built around 1852, this two-story brick home on a stone foundation has a metal-covered roof with chimneys.



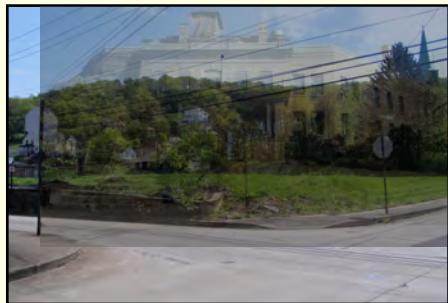
5. 506 Church Street

This c. 1927 two-story, brick Colonial Revival house has a slate-covered hipped roof, a stone foundation, a full-width porch, and an entrance surrounded by six-pane sidelights.



6. 500 Church Street

This c. 1850, two-story, three-bay, vernacular, brick dwelling with ell, sits on a rubble stone foundation. It has a shingled gable roof and Greek Revival frontispiece.



7. 501 Church Street - Brownsville General Hospital

This W-shaped brick building, built in 1915, served as the hospital until 1963-64 when a new facility was built east of town. The cornice has the name of the hospital carved in stone. About 1965 it was used as a personal care facility.



Across Fifth was the former Horner Memorial Nurses' Home constructed in 1928. The yellow brick, flat-roof building had a second story porch with brick arches. In the 1960s it served as the Colonial Manor Boarding House. Both the former hospital and nurses' home were demolished in 2021.



8. 412 Church Street – The Monongahela River, Rail and Transportation Museum

This site was the former Northside Firehall. It has been transformed into a Transportation Museum and is [open on Wednesdays or upon request by calling 412-582-7154](https://www.monongahela.org/visiting).



9. 408 Church Street

This c. 1939, two-story, three-bay, brick Colonial Revival house has a cement block foundation, a slate-clad gable roof and an eye-shaped hood supported on large brackets over the entrance.



10. 404 Church Street - P. Hunt House

This mid-19th century vernacular brick dwelling has a gable slate-covered roof, stone foundation, and period frontispiece.



11. 401 Church Street – James L. Bowman House

Situated on the northeast corner of Church and Fourth Streets, Bowman lived here from at least 1855 to 1872. The building is a circa 1840, L-shaped vernacular brick dwelling with a stone foundation and flat stone lintels.



12. 400 Church Street

Located on the southeast corner of Church and Fourth. The building is a c. 1905 Greek Revival brick dwelling with a stone foundation, shingles-clad gable roof, and elaborate period frontispiece.



13. 316 Church Street - William L. Wilkinson

The c. 1850 Greek Revival two-story, three-bay brick dwelling has a dentil cornice, stone foundation, shingles-clad gable roof and entrance with sidelights and transom. Above the door is a tripartite replacement window. William Wilkinson was Justice of the Peace in Brownsville.



14. 312 Church Street - George W. Wilkinson

Circa 1860, it is Greek Revival with a shingles-clad gable roof, double dentil cornice, large stone sills and lintels. The frontispiece is pronounced and has sidelights and transom door surroundings and a tripartite window above the entrance. George Wilkinson was a clothier in Brownsville.



15. 319 Church Street

Christ (Episcopal) Anglican Church

Corner of Third Ave and Church Street, the building was constructed in 1859 of cut sandstone with a steeply pitched slate-covered roof, stained-glass tracery windows, stone buttresses, and a crenellated bell tower. Original Tiffany stained-glass windows adorn the church. The graveyard, located behind the church, contains the remains of many prominent Brownsville citizens, including Jacob Bowman, who established the first trading post,

and the headstones of Thomas Brown, the founder of Brownsville, and John H. and Archibald Washington, who both died of "brain fever" in 1818. The remains of the latter three are still buried on Front Street. **To tour the interior of the church, call the rectory at 724-785-7958.** The grounds are open daily during daylight hours to tour the graveyard.



16. 305 Church Street

Erected c. 1840, it is a vernacular, brick building with a stone foundation, double chimneys, and flat stone lintel. This is the parsonage for the church.



17. 310 Church Street - Christ Episcopal Parish House

A circa 1873 stone church-like structure with a steeply pitched slate-covered gable roof and opaque glass gothic windows, with a c. 1908 stone addition in the back. Formerly Christ Episcopal Church Chapel and social hall, now privately owned.



18. 221 Church Street - Captain Isaac Woodward House

This c. 1844 vernacular Colonial Revival building has a stone porch, dentils at windows, and a classic frontispiece. Isaac Woodward, boat builder, occupied this house.



19. 222 Church Street - William Dean House

Circa 1844 two-story, five-bay, L-shaped, vernacular brick building sits on a stone foundation and is topped with a gable slate-covered roof. Above the windows and center doorway are stone lintels with carved dentil cornices. William Dean was a stonecutter.



20. 218 Church Street

Circa 1928, two-story, brick Colonial Revival house with a cement block foundation, a hipped shingles-clad roof, and a full-width brick porch.



21. 215 Church Street - First United Methodist Church

This c. 1861 brick structure sits on the stone foundation of the 1806 church. The front tower entrance has a modified replacement door, and stained-glass windows are found throughout the church. The Methodist community in Brownsville can trace its history to 1776 when the first meeting of local Methodists was held under the direction of Chad Chalfant in a log meeting house on the site of the present church. It is believed to be the first church in Brownsville. In 1806 a stone building replaced the log structure. Its prominent members included: John A. Brashear, the astronomer, and Philander C. Knox, statesman.



22. 118 Church Street– St. Peter Parish Office

The 1914 rectory is a two-story, four-bay, yellow brick Colonial Revival structure on a stone foundation with a hipped metal roof: approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the full-width porch at the rear of the building has been enclosed with composite stone siding and casement windows. Currently it houses the offices of the Historic Church of St. Peter. Originally used as the convent for the Vincentian Sisters for St. Mary's School. To the right was the site of Saint Mary's Catholic

Church, established in 1905 by Slovakian immigrants. It was demolished in 2005. Attached to 118 Church Street is St Mary's Social Hall.



23. 203 Walnut Street - Gottlieb Schmid House

This c. 1850 Gothic Revival dwelling sits on a rubble stone foundation. It has elaborate narrow-paired windows, and a one-story bay window with bracketed eaves projects from the left side elevation. Gottlieb Schmid was a shoemaker by trade and well known as an actor and poet. He wrote poetry about Brownsville and the river (see last page).

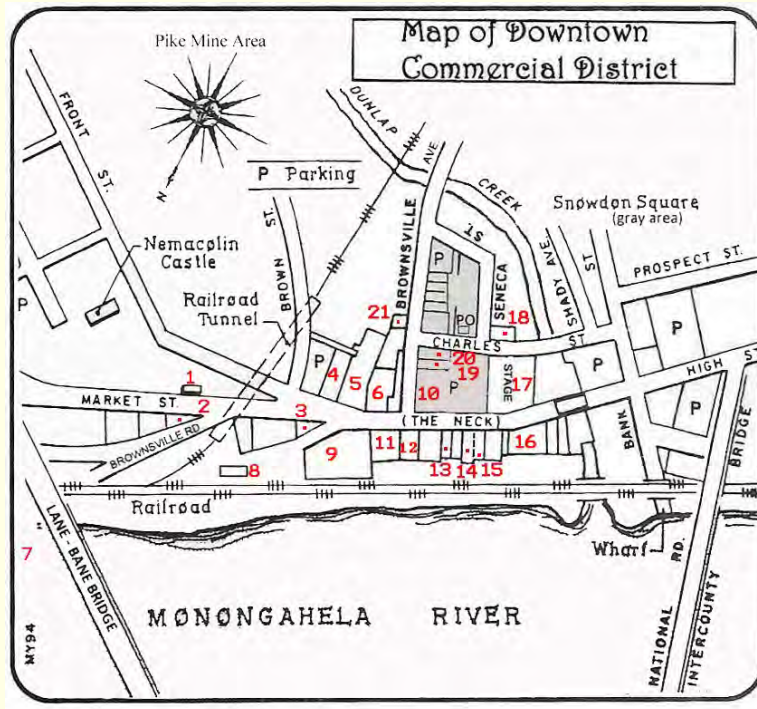
- Turn around and head back up Church Street, turning right at the first intersection.
Pull into the parking lot on your left. You are now sitting behind...



24. 307 Spring Street - Calvin United Presbyterian Church

This 1908 church is red brick on a stone foundation with a shingles-clad hipped roof, stained-glass windows, and corner tower with entrance and stained-glass transom with title "The Hungarian Presbyterian Church." The social hall was constructed in 1961.

- Turn left when leaving the parking lot. At the stop sign, turn right onto Market Street and go under the bridge.
Market Street is met by Brownsville Road, the first road to your right, across from the First Baptist Church.
Turn right onto Brownsville Road and park in the left-side parking area.



A Walking/Driving Tour of Brownsville's Downtown

The modern road passes under the Lane-Bane High Level Bridge, moves down the hill between Nemaquin Castle and the Monongahela River.



1. 128 Market Street at Brownsville Road First Baptist Church

The Baptist Church first held services on Church Street. In 1843, they purchased this property. The current structure, c. 1899, has been vacant since the mid to late 1990's.



2. 161 Market St. - Former Borough Building

The first police station/council meeting room and police department for the Borough of Brownsville. The original jail cell is still in the basement of this building. This attached block of buildings is under construction with plans to include condominiums, commercial space, and a display of antique cars.

- Return to your car. Turn right onto Market Street.

At the traffic light, turn left onto Brownsville Avenue and then right to park in the Snowden Parking Lot.

Market Street continues, passing through "the neck" and over Dunlap's Creek Bridge into former Bridgeport. The street is Market Street until it reaches the Dunlap Creek Bridge and then it becomes High Street. The creek/bridge was the dividing line between the two communities of Brownsville and Bridgeport, which were combined into one borough in 1933.

Covering twelve acres with 61 historically significant buildings, the downtown commercial district thrived as an industrial (coal and coke) and transportation (road, river, and rail) center until the 1950's. The end of World War II began the decline of the Industrial Era for this community. Additionally, malls became fashionable and replaced the older type of downtown shopping.

Although some buildings are gone now, the reason the district is called "the neck" becomes apparent as one descends the narrow street, once described as "a canyon of stone façades rising like cliffs to dominate the ribbon of road." This is a far cry from the ample space on upper Market Street.

The average eye may miss its beauty, but the keen observer will relish the hundred-year-old architecture and be pleased that many of the buildings on the west side are relatively intact, beginning with the c. 1830 Flatiron Building. The east side of Market Street, across from the Flatiron Building, has three remaining vacant buildings; the Second National Bank, the 100-room Monongahela Hotel, and the fourth and final site of the Monongahela Bank. From Brownsville Avenue to Bank Street all the architecturally significant buildings have been demolished. Much of the area here was created with landfill and space was extremely limited. It now serves as the Snowden (municipal) Parking Lot.

- *Leave your car, cross Market Street, and walk to the Flatiron Building.*



3. 69-73 Market Street Flatiron Building

The starting point of the Downtown Historic District. Circa 1830 Flemish-bond brick with a fieldstone foundation. The walls are five bricks thick. The building is called Flatiron because of its unique curved corner façade and unusual peaked roof which resemble the old-fashioned clothing irons used in colonial days. As the town grew, so did the building, and additions were added until 1930 when the last small addition completed this block of buildings. Jacob Bowman was the first postmaster from 1795 until 1829 and operated a post office out of his trading post in what is now Nemaquin Castle. However, the first U.S. designated post office in Brownsville was in the Flatiron building. Martin Tiernan was appointed as the postmaster and served that position in this building until 1920. The Flatiron building is the oldest structure in the downtown Historic



District. As a commercial building, it housed multiple businesses and eateries. The last streetcar stop was in front of the building. The building was donated to Brownsville Area Revitalization Corporation (BARC) in 1990 and was restored as an interpretive museum **and** visitors' center named Flatiron Heritage Center Museum. It houses the Frank L. Melega Art Museum, the only art museum in Fayette County. BARC operates both museums and houses their offices in the building. Additionally, BARC rents commercial and residential spaces in the building to help sustain the operation. Additionally, there is an Honor-Memorial brick sidewalk at the rear of the building. Open to the public since 1992, there is no admission charge. Free-will donations are accepted.



For a guided tour of the Heritage Center Museum and Frank Melega Art Museum, call 724-785-9331.

- *Looking up Market Street, note the brick road coming from the castle.*

It is part of the original Nemacolin Trail (Front Street) that at one time went to the river.

At this point, it joins the National Road (Rt 40), Market Street in downtown Brownsville.

It is also the beginning of "the neck," that narrow piece of land bound by the river to the west and the hillside to the east.

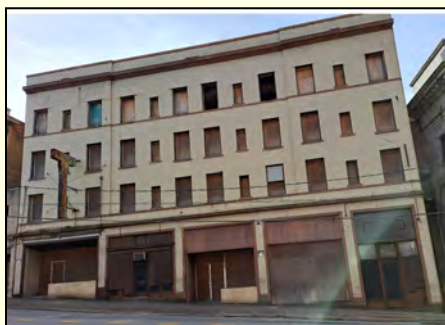
It is the narrowest section of the National Road. It determined the size and shape of growing Brownsville through the centuries.

- *At the point in front of the Flatiron Building, look across the street for the next three buildings on our tour.*



4. 64 Market Street - Second National Bank

This building, an intact three-story, five-bay brick edifice c. 1916, has a limestone front with rounded Tuscan pilasters and a temple-like columned first floor façade. A town housing three banks reflects the wealth of the town. The Monongahela Bank was organized in 1812; the First National Bank organized in 1863 and reorganized as the Second National Bank in 1916; and the National Deposit Bank at 100 High Street.



5. 56-60 Market Street - Monongahela Hotel

This four-story, twelve-bay, ivory brick with terra cotta trim hotel with 143 rooms was completed in 1925, when more space was needed for the bustling town. A third-floor bridge was added to join the hotel to the existing smaller tavern/hotel. The building to the right of the hotel was originally a residence/turned tavern/hotel and later sold to the bank. The busy town of Brownsville had travelers de-

scending via the National Road from points east, via the river from points west, and via the railroad from north and south bringing travelers from all directions. In its prime there were nine hotels. The Monongahela Hotel, originally called the Monongahela House, boasted: "Stages running in every direction leave this House on the arrival of boats from Pittsburgh, good stabling and private conveyance at all times." As the town declined the hotel was used for college dorms. The town is in dire need of a hotel.



6. 46 Market Street - Monongahela Bank (fourth and final site)

The original building was constructed by Samuel Krepps as a private home in 1832. It was soon converted to a tavern/hotel when the waterfront began to thrive. The façade of this tavern/hotel was replaced with a monumental neo-classical temple in front of Indiana granite with pairs of massive 40-ton ionic columns and large steel-framed windows with metal medallions. The original Monongahela Bank that was founded in 1813 was short lived in this site. Dedicated in 1926, it closed its doors forever during the great Depression a few years later. Later the building served another Bank.

- *Return to the brick road behind the Flatiron Building.*

The railroad was an important industry in the development of Brownsville. Established by the Pennsylvania and P & L E railways, it serviced sixty-one mines and 13,000 coke ovens in the vicinity. Only three buildings remain that are directly related to the railroad's role in the community.

Beyond this site archeologists have unearthed the remains of the Snowden Foundry, well-known for boat building and for the making of the first cast iron bridge in America. Beyond that site is the Freight Depot, out of site from this location.



7. Freight Depot

Warning: DO NOT TRESPASS.

This building is located a distance along the railroad and is unsafe for visitation.

The railroad came to Brownsville in the late 1850's and provided a greater mode of transportation than the National Road Conestoga wagons and diminished the 'heyday' of Brownsville's Westward Expansion Era. Built in 1927, this red brick, one-story, rectangular building served as a depot for the Monongahela Railways. The façade had Art Deco tiles. The depot has a concrete platform with a steel frame and wooden canopy.



8. Railroad Express Office -

Warning: DO NOT trespass. The building is unsafe.

The building sitting beside the railway tracks is the railroad express office. It is a one-story brick structure with a tile-covered gable roof. In the past it was used for larger parcels delivered via the train. On the back side is where the mail truck would pick up the merchandise to deliver. Beyond this site archeologists have unearthed the remains of the Snowden Foundry, well known for boat building and also for the making of the first cast iron bridge in America.



9. 53 Market Street - Union Station Building

Constructed in 1927-28 by the Monongahela Railway Company, which moved its offices to Brownsville from Pittsburgh. It replaced the smaller Union Station building built in the late 1800's. Upon its completion, it was Brownsville's most glorious building. Passenger trains left the depot every 20 minutes for destinations all over the United States. The brick, granite, and marble building is five stories high with twenty bays and a curved façade. It was the last building erected on lower Market Street. Conrail used the building until 1992. It was privately owned and used for commercial use until 1993. Vacant and currently owned by the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette (RACF).



- *Return to Snowden Parking Lot.*

This parking lot where you are standing was once a swamp. Charles Snowden, in the early 19th century, had the area filled to provide more retail space for shops and businesses. The area is known as Snowden Square. Shops used to line this side of the street until the latter half of the twentieth century.



10. Snowden Square

Installed in 2022, the arched Snowden Place sign over Brownsville Avenue is a recreation by the Perennial Project of the original arch placed here in the early 1900's to honor Charles Snowden. Snowden Square was opened to the public in 1916 on a parcel of land known as Krepps's Bottom. Snowden had purchased the land in 1907 and allowed community activities such as skating, racing, and Chautauqua

events to thrive. He leveled the land and laid out a square street system that locals called Snowdon Square. He installed utilities, and lured businesses with his private funds. As we have seen, Charles L. Snowdon was a moving force in Brownsville. President of the Monongahela Bank from 1893 to 1931 and President of the town council, he pushed Brownsville into the 20th century. He played a pivotal role in bringing the railroad to the community and was the main force behind the redevelopment of "the neck," the narrowest point of the National Road.

During Brownsville's heyday there were three theaters downtown, a skating rink and bowling alleys. Today all the theaters are demolished. The Plaza Theater dominated Snowdon Square with its vaudeville, silent pictures, and the "talkies." It went on to become the home of beauty pageants, minstrels, a small community theater, a third-floor ballroom, and a basement which housed a billiard parlor and bowling alley. The building, built in the 1920s, was demolished.

- *Look toward the Flatiron Building. We will start this portion of the tour with the grassy area located across Market Street next to the Union Station Building.*

11. 43-47 Market Street - Snowdon Building



In 1906, Charles Snowdon erected this white brick and stone building as the first steel-framed structure in the town. It contributed significantly to the 20th century development of the district. The building has eleven window bays in width, is three stories with mezzanine, and crowned with a scalloped cornice of pressed metal. It became a hub of activity during Brownsville's Industrial heyday. It housed multiple businesses and offices as well as a ballroom on the third floor. This building was demolished in 2021.



12. 41 Market Street –Monongahela Bank (third site)

Next to the Snowdon Building and directly across from Brownsville Avenue is the third location and the first "neck" location of the Monongahela National Bank founded in 1812. This glorious building was erected in 1902. Its brick, Italian Renaissance façade was elaborated in red and pink terra cotta with columns, pilasters and a second story Palladian window. When the building was given a new storefront in c. 1925, the first-floor façade- large bay window on an elaborately carved stone base, flanked by paired Corinthian

an columns was removed to Seneca Street where it became the façade for the Brownsville Free Public Library. The building was demolished in 2021.



13. 31-33 Market Street - Odd Fellows Building

Directly across from the parking lot is the Italianate designed, three-story Odd Fellow Building, erected in 1876. Above the street door is found the insignia IOOF 51 and at the top of the building is the three-ring Odd Fellows emblem representing Fraternity, Love and Truth. The Odd Fellows were founded in the United States in Baltimore. The Brownsville Odd Fellows received their charter in 1832 and closed their doors in 2004. Privately owned and currently for sale.



14. 27 Market Street

This c. 1875 building is built of red brick with an early 20th century façade that is intact. Upper store windows are modified and/or replacement windows. Currently houses a pharmacy.

The "Neck"



15. 25 Market Street - Brownsville Trust Company Building

It was built in 1910 of orange brick with terra cotta ornamentation and cornice. When it was built, it was joined to 27 Market Street by a common staircase. The storefront has since been modified. Currently a business.

Working with local bottler ABARTA Coca-Cola, Mayor Ross Swords has been able to bring life back to this Coca-Cola sign that dates back to the early 1900's. You can view this sign on the left outer wall of 25 Market St.





16. 5 Market Street – Iron Bridge Crossings

The taller red brick building to the left was built in 1922. The three-story, two-bay brick commercial building has a storefront with a marbleized Carrara glass base, two pairs of one-over-one double sash windows at each level and white terra cotta cornices above the storefront and third-floor windows. To the right are three buildings built over the former site of the GC Murphy Store, which was demolished to make way for the apartments. Currently houses 24 affordable-living apartments for seniors.



17. Cast Iron Amphitheater

Wanting to provide a gathering place for residents to entertain and to be entertained, the stage was the brainchild of local high school students, who entered a competition by the Jefferson Awards program. The Students in Action (SIA) were able to raise \$400,000 and the stage was built in 2017. The SIA won 1st place regionally, 2nd place in the state of PA, and 1st place nationally for their plan. Their efforts sparked the interest of another local resident who initiated the Perennial Project, plantings, and art in the area. Note the flagpole behind the stage. This is the site of a veterans' memorial.

- Continue looking to the left.



18. 1 Seneca Street - Brownsville Public Library

Built in 1927 by Charles Snowdon, the façade includes the pillars from the first downtown location of the Monongahela Bank. Mr. Snowdon requested that they remain on this building or be returned to the building from which they came. Brownsville Free Public Library has been a strong pillar for the town. Currently the Students in Action completed the addition of a 'teen room.'



- Note the Post Office, the red brick building, as you turn toward the American Legion Building.



19. 119 Brownsville Avenue - American Legion Building

Built in 1921 for the American Legion, it is two stories in height, has four bays in width of brick with a black and white Carrara glass, first-story façade. Closed as an active American Legion in 2018 and re-opened by a veteran husband and wife team for a community service building. Currently owned by the Mon Valley Academy for the Arts, Inc.



20. 121 Brownsville Avenue – The Sandwich Shop & Deli

Built at the same time as the American Legion, it is owned and operated by a local family. Serving soups and sandwiches.

Call to verify if they are open. 724-785-4089.



21. 107 B Brownsville Avenue

The Leaning House Fine Cigars

The Mardorff building, constructed in c. 1922, is a three-story brick structure with recessed center doors leading to the upper story apartments. It is flanked by intact storefronts above which is a pent roof covered with Spanish tiles. The building originally housed the Mardorff Printing Company and residential apartments. The Leaning House Fine Cigars is located on the main floor.

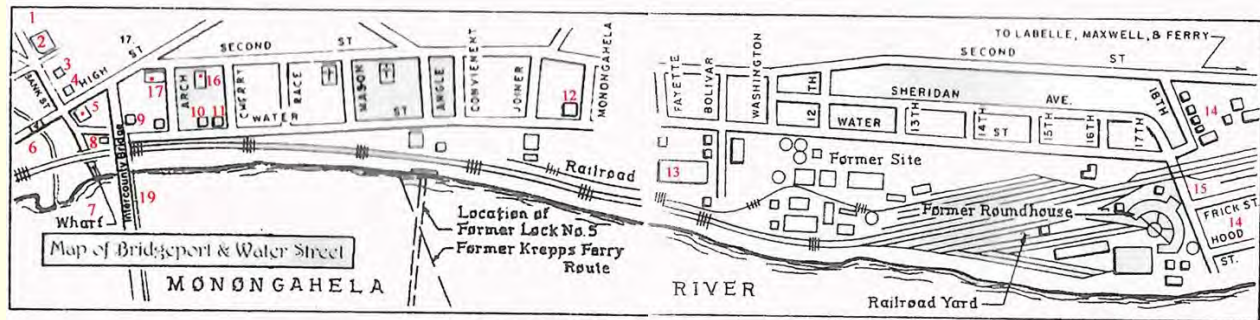
- *Charles Street is the street that passes in front of the Post Office built in 1936.*

Turn right out of the Snowdon parking lot onto Charles Street and continue across the one-lane bridge.

After crossing the bridge, you are in what was once the borough of Bridgeport but since 1933

it was incorporated into the borough of Brownsville. Turn right onto Bank Street

and make an immediate right into the parking lot there.



Bridgeport

Bridgeport was a separate community until 1933. The first permanent settler in Bridgeport was Rees Cadwalader in 1783, who immediately built a home and mill on Dunlap's Creek. He laid out the town of Bridgeport in 1794. It was incorporated into a borough in 1814. With the creek and river so close at hand, industry thrived along High and Water Streets; a paper mill, a cotton factory, a card factory, a wire factory, a pottery, a steel works (1810), several distilleries, a brewery, and steamboat yards. Bridgeport had its own Market House, fire department, newspapers, doctors, and school. Its prominent citizens included the Krepps family with ferries and property; John Herbertson and sons, owners of a foundry; Samuel Thompson, a distiller, and the Crawford family, owners of Bridgeport Coal Works.

- Exit your car and look toward the upper end of Bank Street at the red brick building with the corner entryway and the white "Maria's Lovers" house behind it.



1. 208 Bank Street

This 1940's house was a key location in the filming of the movie "Maria's Lovers." Currently an Air B & B.



2. 200 Bank Street

Corner of Prospect and Bank Streets. Original c. 1850 structure was a residential home. This building, renovated in 1950 as a commercial structure, housed the Water Company. Privately owned as a commercial/residential site.



3. 108 Bank Street - Crawford House

This Italianate building was the Crawford family residence. Erected in 1880, the features to note are brick quoins, elongated windows, bracketed eaves, and an elaborate frontispiece. The Crawford Family, owner of Bridgeport Coal Works, established their business office here.



4. 101-105 High Street - Crawford Building

Corner of High and Bank. Built in 1908 by the Crawford Family. This square three-story brick and stone building is three structural bays in width with pressed metal covering the upper-story bay windows as well as the storefront and terminating cornices. It has been altered over the years, but still retains the one-over-one upper story double sash windows and part of the original terminating cornice. This

block of three adjoining buildings has been recently purchased and has become the "Pickers Pub and Grub Restaurant."



5. 100 High Street - National Deposit Bank

Built in 1923, this 6-story building, with a brick and stone façade and stone and terra cotta cornice, is the tallest structure in Brownsville. Large Tuscan pilasters adorn the High Street entrance. Past use has been as a bank. Currently National Deposit Bank Apartments. The first floor is currently available for commercial use. For more information, call Larry Broker at 206-854-8610.

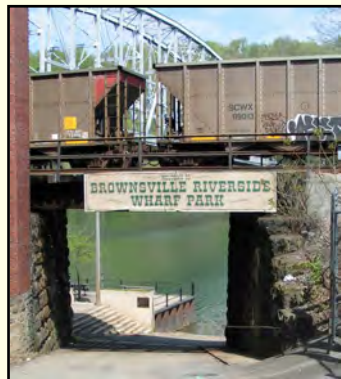
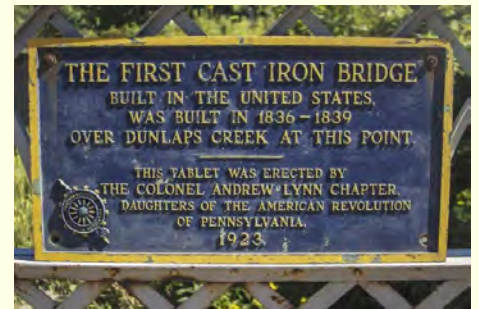
- Move as close to Market Street as you can. The segment of Market Street, to your right, bounded by iron railings is our next stop. **This is the most famous structure in Brownsville, Dunlap's Creek Bridge, and the first cast iron bridge in America dedicated in 1839. It is also the point where Brownsville once ended, and Bridgeport began.**



6. Dunlap's Creek Bridge

First Cast Iron Bridge in America

Market and High Streets. The first structure over Dunlap's Creek at this point was wooden and was in existence as early as 1794, but in 1808 it was swept away by flood waters. Next was a chain bridge, which collapsed one day with a freight wagon on board. Horses, load, and driver tumbled into the creek. The chain bridge was replaced with a wooden bridge. Finally, in 1836-39 under the auspices of U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the local Snowden Foundry erected this First Cast Iron Bridge in America, officially named Dunlap Creek Bridge. It is the first rib-fixed metal arch bridge erected in the United States. The bridge is a single-span structure eighty feet long and thirty feet wide. One hundred and eighty years later, with few structural changes, it is still being used. Good views of both the decorative iron railings and the understructure are possible from the parking lot or the parklet on the opposite side of the street. The bridge, a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and has received the prestigious International ASM award in 1988. This award has also been bestowed on the Eiffel Tower in France and the Statue of Liberty. In 2020 renovations began to design a pedestrian bridge to the east of the bridge that will display the awards and give a greater view of the bridge from the east, an added attraction for tourists. Currently waiting for PennDOT to continue renovations.



- *Cross the street and walk toward the river. Turn around to look back at the Dunlap's Creek Bridge structure. Next stop is at the river's edge. Cross under the railroad bridge to access the Wharf.*

7. Monongahela Wharf

Bank Street and Monongahela River. The Monongahela River was at the heart of inland river navigation. Here in Brownsville, river industries built flat-boats, keelboats, steamboats, towboats, and barges that pushed civilization and its commerce across the continent. When the early settlers arrived at the mouth of Dunlap's Creek, they often had to build their own vessels for the journey down river. When steamboats conquered upriver navigation, an increasing number of travelers used the river. When the

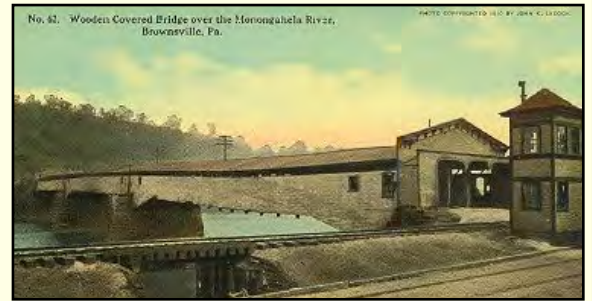


National Road was usurped by the railroad, the river remained Brownsville's link to the future. The Pittsburgh, Brownsville, and Geneva packet companies were born, carrying people, mail, and cargo as far as Pittsburgh and Morgantown, WV. From the death of the National Road to the arrival of the railroad in Brownsville, the river was the most important means of transportation. Brownsville Riverside Wharf was renovated in 1994. It has become a multi-use facility encouraging fishing, relaxing, or docking your boat to visit the historic town. Summer events are held here.



8. Intercounty Bridge

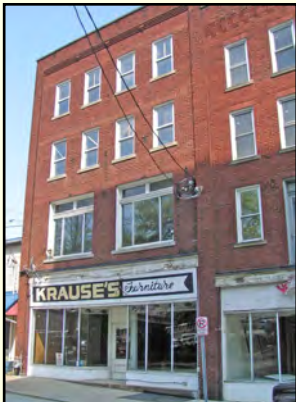
A covered bridge was erected near here by a private enterprise in March of 1830. The contractor was the Monongahela Bridge Company. Costing \$32,000 the bridge was a 630-foot structure with three spans. It was formally opened on October 14, 1833. A two-cent toll was taken from each walking passenger, while a horse and buggy had to pay five cents. When steamboats began traveling the river, they had to tip their stacks to pass under the bridge. In 1910, the covered bridge was condemned by the War Department and a steam ferry took over while the construction of a new bridge was begun. The new bridge made of steel is the current structure. This is a 519-foot metal truss bridge. It was refurbished in 1987. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.



- *Return to your car and retrace your steps toward the wharf. Follow the road as it curves to the left. This is Water Street.*

Water Street

Water Street, with its access to the river, always played an important role in the development of the community. At last, there was space; no more narrow confines of "the neck." Water Street only stretches south along the banks of the river today, but prior to the railroad, it also ran north, out of Bridgeport and into Brownsville.



9. 4-6 Water Street – Krause's Furniture Store

Two four-story, red brick buildings with an integrated façade constructed c. 1909 occupy this parcel. One is four bays in width and the other, three bays. Both have altered storefronts and intact upper-story façade. Krause's was originally established

elsewhere in the mid 1800's as a general merchandise business. In 1921 these two structures were combined as a furniture store maintaining the original name, with the current distinction of being the oldest furniture store in PA. Privately owned.



10. 103 Water Street - Fiddles Diner

Built in 1910, Fiddle's Confectionary has been a staple of childhood memories in Brownsville for over a century. Well known for its hotdogs and hand carved initials in the booths, the original "Fiddle," Fadell Hallal, ran his popular business with great success. When his barber asked him about his great tasting food, he readily told him his "secret." Nightly he covered his griddle with salt, and then scraped it off in the morning before making what were considered the best hot dogs in town. Johnny Mitchell became the next great cook at the little diner under the bridge. He spent a lifetime (55 yrs.) working at Fiddle's until he retired in 1990. Through all the years and owner changes, Fiddle's has remained largely unchanged. The Fiddle's tradition continues today. Built in 1910, Fiddle's has seen many generations fill its old wooden booths (not to mention leaving their names behind) and old-fashioned counter space to sip a root beer and munch on a grilled hot dog. Privately owned and still in operation.



- *This concludes the business section of Brownsville.*

11. 215 Water Street- Brownsville Elks

The building was completed in 1923. Ten railroaders started the Brownsville Elks in 1917 with help from Charleroi. Membership rose to 2,000 in Brownsville's prime. Today the organization has dissolved. Building is storage for a business.



12. 219 Water Street - Underground Railroad Station

Built c. 1850, it has arched window cornices and is surrounded by a low stone wall. Its most distinctive feature is an underground six-foot-high, brick arch, brick-lined tunnel leading from the basement to the river. Brownsville also played a role in the Underground Railroad system developed by families willing to help escaping south-

ern slaves make their bid for freedom. Many buildings along viable routes had hidden rooms, trap doors, and other facilities to protect the terrified travelers. This brick building with a stone foundation is reputed to be one of them. When a sawmill existed on this lot, the tunnel was used to roll logs to the river. When a distillery occupied the site, the workers rolled barrels to awaiting barges. Once the railway came into existence, the tunnel was no longer needed. The portion of the tunnel directly under the tracks collapsed.



13. 815 Water Street – The Thompson House

This elegant building was built in 1906 by architect Henry Summers Estep and contractor Sebastian Ramella. The house contains two magnificent 6-foot-wide oak staircases, eleven fireplaces and exquisite beveled glass. The stunning Spanish-style tiled roof sits atop a limestone and brick three-level Classic Revival building. It was the home of Thomas H. Thompson, whose father, Sam, owned Thompson's Distillery, located directly across the river. (Distillery closed during Prohibition). The building was restored in 1990 and won the Outstanding Achievement Award of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission for the best preservation restoration, and rehabilitation of a single residence building in 1994. The building housed a restaurant and shops.

Currently closed. Privately owned.



14. 3 Bolivar Street - Brownsville Brewery - Water Street

Right side of 900 block, c. 1904. The Brownsville Brewery, owned by George Edel, brewed its first beer labeled Brownsville Beer in 1904. The beer, in addition to regional consumption, was shipped by rail as far as Washington D. C. Closed during prohibition. The brewery consisted of a brew house, an ice plant, and stables. Converted to commercial and residential use. Privately owned.



15. Bridgeport Coal Mine and Patch Houses

At the end of Water Street, the Bridgeport Coal Mine and patch houses are a sample of patch towns. The patch houses owned by the mine and rented to the miners are on the right along the river. Beginning on 18th Street are the bosses' houses. The mine complex is ahead, where Water Street dead ends. Still standing are the machine shops and washer house. The mine entrance and tipple are beyond the building complex. The mine was

closed in 1918 but reopened during World War II. It closed for good in the 1950's. The Hiller Patch, located atop the hill, was another housing location for workers of this coal mine. The men had to walk over 100 steps down in the morning and back up after working a 12-hour day. This was a very large mine, as evidenced by the number of bosses' houses and the number of patch houses to house the miners working at this site.



16. Heartland Construction - Paul Thomas Boulevard

Formerly known as Hillman Barge & Co., established in the 1800's. Barge building facility. One of the largest employers in town. The

boat building industry is still active in our town. Current owners continue to build barges and launch them into the river. **Prearrangements must be made to view the launches.**

- Turn left off Water Street in front of the mine buildings and left again onto Second Street. Retrace your journey back toward "The Neck," passing the National Register Synagogue and the National Register Intercounty Bridge.

17. 210 Second Street - Temple O'Have Israel Synagogue



Constructed in 1919 as the Temple O'Have Israel Synagogue in late 19th/early 20th century Revival styles. The large brick building with reinforced concrete construction is a modified two-story rectangular plan with a full basement. The main entrance arch is set within a cast stone, Classical pediment that includes simple Doric pilasters with panels of multi-colored brick and glazed buff brick, arranged in a geometric pattern on either side. The fixed sash, stained-glass windows on the east and west were designed and fabricated by Pittsburgh Stained

Glass Studios, memorializing deceased congregants. Although the Jewish population represented about 30% of Brownsville's total population in 1930 and 10% in 1940, a third to half of all businesses in Brownsville in the first half of the twentieth century were Jewish owned. The synagogue closed its doors in 1979 when the town went into a decline. It has been privately owned as a computer-based business and has grown to include multiple businesses. In 2015, the Synagogue was accepted to the National Register of Historic Places.



18. 200 Second Street - Borough Building

The building on the left as you are sitting at the traffic light is the current Borough/Police Station. Built in 1940, it is an intact two-story, rectangular-shaped structure of red brick sitting on a concrete foundation. An art moderne façade of cut stone surrounds the front entrance and a second-story, glass block window. Cut stone with art moderne elements surround second story casement windows.



19. 135 High Street - Masonic Lodge

Formerly the Cumberland Presbyterian Church constructed in 1878 with a 1907 addition. The sixty-foot-high steeple was destroyed in a storm in 1936 and was never replaced. Currently houses the Masonic Lodge.

- This concludes A Walking/Driving Tour of Historic Brownsville.
You can cross the bridge and head out of Brownsville to follow the National Road west or continue through "the neck" to other locations along U. S. 40 east.
-
- *To reach Pike Mine Patch, refer to the Commercial District Map.
Turn onto Brown Street (across from the Flatiron Building.)*

This street will lead you through Pike Mine and circle back to the Northside where you will meet Front Street.



Pike Mine Patch - With abandoned coke ovens that are barely visible and situated along Dunlap's Creek, this small community was one of the dozens of coal patches around Brownsville. Pike Mine was credited with having the longest tipple in SWPA. It extended under Market Street to the Mon River behind the Flatiron Building.

Thank you for visiting.

Architectural Terms

Bay - part of building marked by vertical elements.

Beveled - cut at an angle, like the edges of glass.

Clapboard - long, narrow board with one edge thicker

Cornice molding - at the top of a building.

Dentil - series of protruding blocks

Double chimney with apron - chimneys joined.

Eil - smaller addition attached to a building.

Frontispiece - frame surrounding door.

Gable - triangular section of pitched roof.

Gambrel - roof of two slopes, lower slope steeper pitch.

Keystone - center stone of arch.

Leaded - framed, covered, or weighted with lead

Lintel - horizontal beam above window or door.

Pilasters pillar - with capital and base set into a wall.

Quoins - any of the stones or bricks forming an external angle of a wall or building; a cornerstone

Spindle work - notched sticks forming adornment.

Stucco - durable cement finish applied wet.

Transoms - small hinge window over door or window.

Vernacular - native to the area.

Circa - approximate date

Maps used in this book by Mark Yarris

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Updated for Website use 2023 by Shane Ronzio, Norma Ryan, and Caroline Fecek.

This is a work in progress. Your comments and contributions, especially accompanied by documentation, are welcome.

Look for new and expanded editions as our research continues.

Other sites to visit:

- ♦ golaurelhighlands.com
- ♦ nationalroadpa.org.
- ♦ discovertheburgh.com/frank-Lloyd-wright-in-laurel-highlands
- ♦ pabucketlist.com/must-see-attractions-in-fayette-county-pa/

You may also want to visit the Arabia Museum in Kansas City, MO, dedicated to the steamboat Arabia, built here in Brownsville in the 1800's. It sank in the Missouri River in 1856, was recovered in a field in 1988, and now has its own museum. <https://www.1856.com>

Sources

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Halvonik, Norene A. **The Commercial and Architectural Development of Brownsville, Pennsylvania**. Master's Thesis. George Washington University 1991.

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Updated from the previous version of **A Walking and Driving Tour of Historic Brownsville** by Cassandra Vivian.

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Brownsuille at Sunset

By Gottlieb Schmid

*What lovely view of grandeur greets the eye,
In gazing here on scenes that are sublime,
No artist skillful touch, or poets pen
Can paint or note the things before us lie.
The lofty hills with woods and meadows green,
The mountain-tops that all but touch the sky,
And river calm which flows majestic on,
Whose waters sparkle like a silver queen.*

*The orb of day, now sinks into the West,
And roseate tints gild all the landscape o'er,
"How beautiful" we cry, as shadow's throw
Their light and shade, from hill-top's lofty crest,
Old Dunlaps creek, with many crook and wind,
Glides on, o'er rocks, by forest, field and wood
St. Peter's gothic church, with spire so high,
Crowned with a cross that points to heaven's blue,
O'er looks the town, like some lone sentinel,
And greets the scenes, that all around it lie.
Oft have we stood and viewed the buttressed wall,
Of this quaint structure, and memorial stones,
That mark the spot of those that here have prayed,
Now dwelling where no evening shadows fall.*

*The vine rose clinging to the belfry tower,
Of Christ Church, looking sadly down upon
The tombs and dust of many noble ones
Now sleeping on in deaths relentless power.
No deep-toned bell calls them to worship more,
But massive shafts of granite decks them o'er,
And mark where rest some Brownsuille's oldest
sons, Who oft did worship here in days of yore.*

*Old Nemacolin Castle with round tower,
Stands a proud landmark of a time gone by,
When Jackson, Clay, and LaFayette were here,
And stages moved along from hour to hour.
The commons mark a spot wherein there lies
The dust of Brown, "once owner of the town,"
His tombstone stands, but all defaced by time,
Sad witness of man's wealth and earthly ties.*

*And Krepp's knob looms up before our sight,
Decked 'round about with meadows and with woods,
From off its crest we can behold Lock Five,
With roaring dam, and seething waters white.
Also four counties greet the gazers view,
From off its summit near and far away,
The Mong'ahela winds from South to North,
Along its base, with steamers fine and new.*

*The evening shades around are falling now,
The sun has bid farewell to all the scene,
Bright gold and silver linings fringe the clouds,
More fair than crown upon a kingly brow.
O, sunset rare, in living words you write
Jehovah's law, upon the scroll of heaven,"
That like your tints man's works reflect and shine,
When he departs to where there is no night.*

Gottlieb L. Schmid

May 1899

Dear Friends, I know that the foregoing composition is faulty in many respects, but it is a sort of a panorama of what came to my mind as I looked over Brownsuille, upon the high hill above the Catholic Church one evening in the Spring of 1899. I thought it might be of some interest to you to keep...

Your sincere Friend,

Gottlieb L. Schmid

Uniontown, Pa. Jany 11, 1928