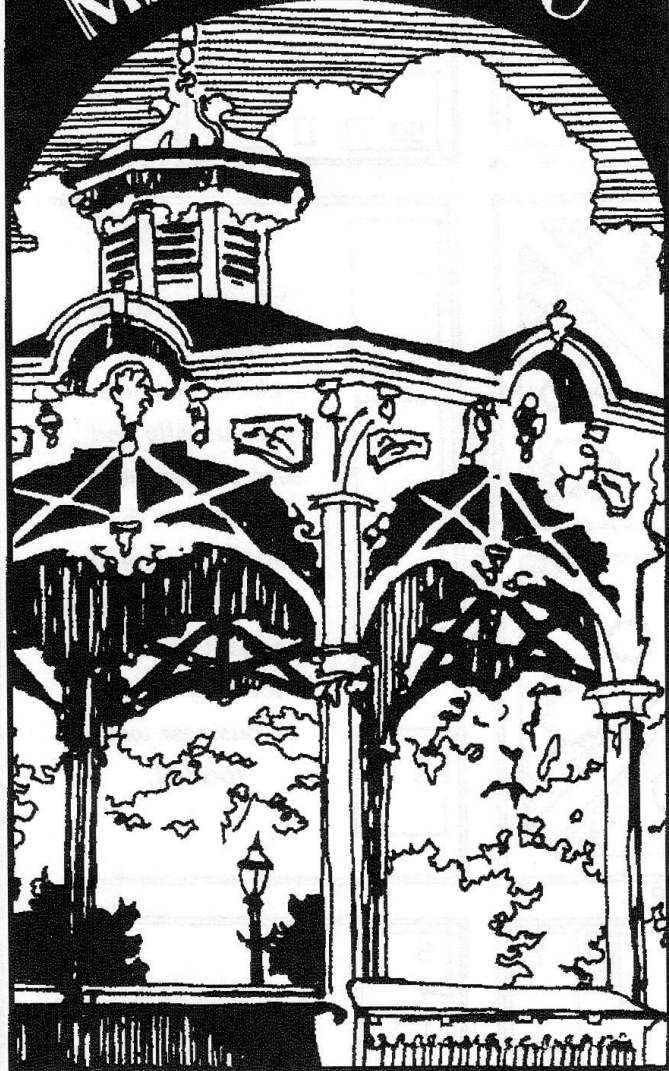


## THE PUBLIC SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT

# walking tour

## MEDINA, OHIO



*Medina*  
Community  
**DESIGN**  
Committee



Main Street  
**Medina**

In 1817, Elijah Boardman, the Connecticut land speculator who acquired the parcel of land destined to become Medina Township, assigned 227 acres for the purpose of creating a county seat. He donated four lots facing Public Square for public buildings, as well as land for the creation of Public Square Park, and for a cemetery.

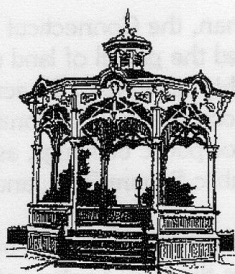
The village of Medina was originally settled by New Englanders and was built in the New England style with businesses, public buildings, churches and homes clustered around a spacious village green.

In 1848, the small rural village was struck by a devastating fire. Twenty two years later, in 1870, an even worse conflagration destroyed most of the downtown business district. This 1870 fire, however, created the impetus to rebuild quickly in solid, sturdy brick. Medina's mayor, the Honorable H.G. Blake led the effort, and the result was the graceful, esthetically pleasing Victorian Square that we see today.

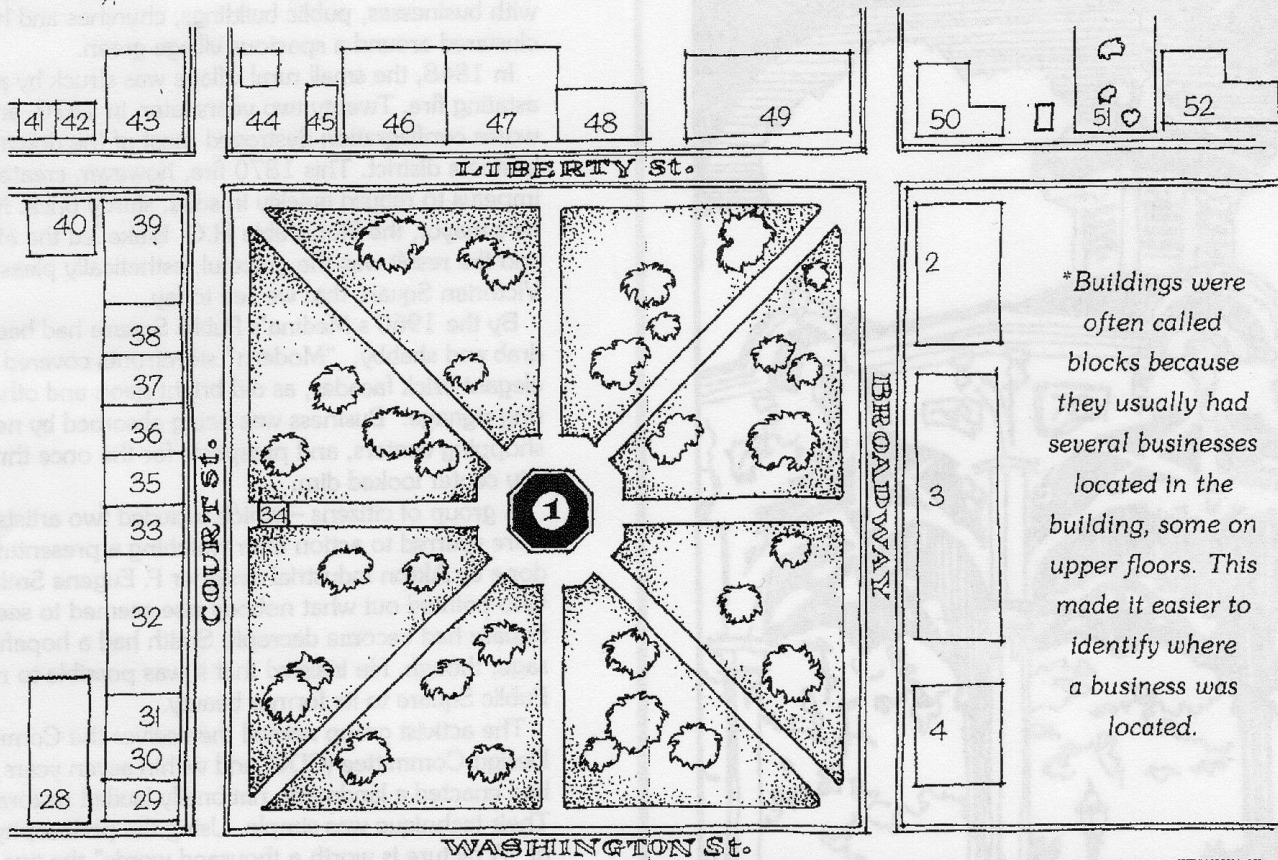
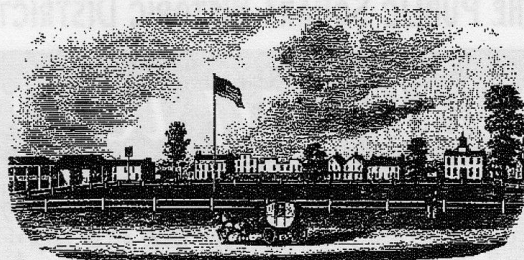
By the 1960's Medina's Public Square had become drab and shabby. "Modern" storefronts covered the elegant brick facades, as did bright neon and other jarring signage. Business was being absorbed by nearby shopping centers, and prospects for the once thriving city center looked dim.

A group of citizens – which included two artists – were spurred to action after watching a presentation done by Akron industrial designer F. Eugene Smith, who pointed out what nobody else seemed to see: The Square had become decrepit. Smith had a hopeful message, though. He insisted that it was possible to restore Public Square to its former beauty.

The activist group named themselves the Community Design Committee (CDC) and within seven years, they had enacted a landmark, nationally lauded restoration. Their technique was simple. Using the philosophy of "A picture is worth a thousand words" the two CDC artists created renderings of what the buildings might look like and CDC members presented these renderings to building owners. In some cases all that was required was a coat of paint or the removal of an unsightly sign. The community rallied and the resulting transformation earned Medina's Public Square many accolades, including placement on the National Register of Historic Places as well as inclusion in NBC TV's Bicentennial coverage in 1976. Overlay zoning created the Public Square Historic District in the early 1990's and the Main Street Medina program began re-energizing economic prosperity in 2007.

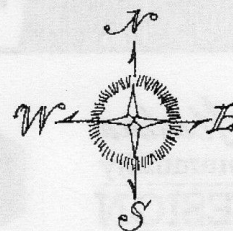


# MEDINA, OHIO PUBLIC SQUARE Historic District



\*Buildings were often called blocks because they usually had several businesses located in the building, some on upper floors. This made it easier to identify where a business was located.

Whiteway Street Lights installed in 1925, saved from removal in 1970 and restored in 1976 and 1995.

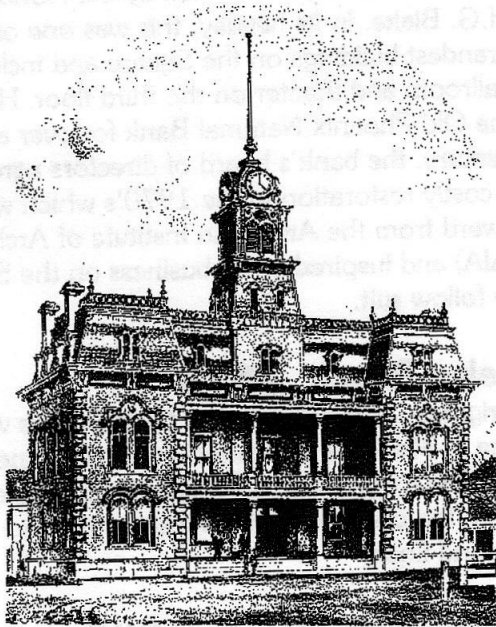


## 1. The Gazebo 1975

Dedicated in 1975, this is an exact replica of an 1879 bandstand in Bellville, Ohio. Chosen for its appropriate size and style, the bandstand was entirely funded by the Letha E. House Foundation. The gazebo quickly became the venue for Medina's summer evening band concerts, (a tradition going back to 1859), ice cream socials, weddings, and other community events.

## 2. The Courthouse 1841

The original 1841 courthouse was a rectangular Greek Revival building, two stories high and surmounted by a cupola topped by a gilt ball. In 1873, the building was enveloped by two large additions and topped by a large bell tower, transforming the architectural style of the courthouse into French Second Empire. Further additions were made in 1906, 1933 and 1952.



A scholarly restoration began in 1973 and the court house now appears almost as it did in 1873, with the exception of railings, posts and finials above the mansard roof, which were removed. The court house was the first building on the square to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. From 2013 through 2018, Medina County invested approximately 1.2 million dollars in repairs to the Old Courthouse building including the stabilization of the clock tower.

## 3. The New Courthouse 1969

In 1965 the Ohio Legislature created a second Common Pleas Court in Medina County. Since more room was required for courthouse business, the County Commissioners purchased land adjacent to the old Court House from the Strong family and the Eagles Club, and constructed this handsome Federal Revival style building which was dedicated in 1969.

## 4. The Sturgis House 1873

Once a physician's home and office, and later the Gensemer Funeral Home, this building was purchased and restored by the First Federal Savings and Loan in 1971. It is a fine example of the Italianate style which was popular in the nineteenth century. In 2000, the remodeled building became the County Prosecutor's offices with a connecting annex to the new Court House.

## 5. The Medina County District Library 1907

Franklin Sylvester, a Granger cattleman, donated \$10,000 for the construction of a public library that was to bear his name. It was built on the site of the grand 1833 David King home which was moved to the corner of North Broadway and Union Streets in 1905. Major expansions of the library were undertaken in 1975 and 2006.

## 6. Canfield Home 1829

Built in 1829 by Noah Bronson for the Canfield family, the house was moved in 1910 from the site of the Courthouse Commons Block. This classic example of Greek Revival architecture survived the fires of 1848 and 1870. Note the fan light above the porch.

## 7. Courthouse Commons 1981

One of the newest additions to the Square, this replica of a Victorian period structure was completed in 1981. It boasts ornamental brackets above the doors and a mansard roof. Originally the site of the Canfield House, it replaced a Shell gas station which stood there for many years.

## 8. Canfield Building c.1830

This is the only wood frame structure that remains on the Square today. It survived both the 1848 and 1870 fires and over the years has served as the law offices of Canfield and Kimball, a mercantile shop, the office of the Nichols family of dentists and an insurance agency.

## 9. The Gazette Building 1895

Although the Medina Gazette was established in 1832, owner and editor, Charles D. Neil did not erect this building until 1895. This Romanesque building demonstrates interesting stonework arches over the doorway and an oriel bay window.

## 10. Town Hall and Engine House 1878

Despite two devastating fires, the village did not create an organized fire department until a third fire in 1877 which damaged three buildings. One year later the Medina Town Hall and Engine House was completed. The building also served as the governmental Town Hall until the early 1950's. This was also the first building on the Square to be restored by the CDC. The mayor was presented with a rendering done by a CDC artist and he allocated funds for painting the Engine House, which was transformed from dingy beige brick to striking red, accented with black and white trim and gold lettering. In 1985 the city, CDC and the Letha E. House Foundation joined to replace the missing bell tower, or cupola, as documented in historic photos. Since 2013, the first floor has served as a museum of the community's history.



## 11. Reinhardt Block 1880

Once a restaurant and bakery, deliveries were made from this location in a horse-drawn wagon. An unusual feature is the broken pediment arch in the elaborate ornamental cornice.

## 12. Munson Building 1879

This fine example of late Victorian architecture featuring ornate brick and decorative tin work originally housed a family hardware business from 1879 through the 1940's.

## 12A. Arcade Victoria

In the early 1970's, an inventive renovation of the first floor area between these two buildings opened the interior for several specialty shops and a restaurant.

## 13. Leach Block 1880

Partially restored, the Leach Building is missing its original ornamental cornice. Built by O.N. Leach, it housed his clothing shop.

## 14. Phoenix Block 1870

One of the first buildings to rise from the ashes of the 1870 fire, it was built by the Honorable H.G. Blake. In its heyday, this was one of the grandest buildings on the Square and included a ballroom and theater on the third floor. Home of the Old Phoenix National Bank for over a century, the bank's board of directors agreed to a costly restoration in the 1970's which won an award from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and inspired other business on the Square to follow suit.

## 15. Asire Block 1873

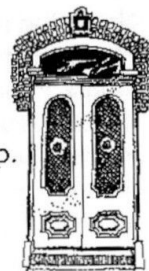
Originally a furniture store, by 1898 this was one of Medina's most modern establishments complete with electric lights and an elevator. Note the change of window styles on the second floor.

## 16. Griesinger Block 1898

Built by William E. Griesinger as an investment, it was known for its "modern steam heating."

## 17. Brenner Hotel c.1870

Once a hotel, this building was owned by Ephraim Brenner who operated a harness and saddle shop. Note the keystones above the rounded doorway and windows.



## 18. Methodist Church

The 1880's Methodist Church building had numerous additions during the 20th century. In 2013, after the church moved to a new location, the building was converted to a private business.

## 19. Tap Room Building c.1879

Note the cast iron store front and decorative bay window. The building housed a popular tavern for many years.

## 20. Mechanics Block 1870

Built by E. Renz, E. Brenner and A. Griesinger, this block includes two main storefronts. The first housed the Renz & Brenner harness and saddle shop and the second, Griesinger's shoe store. Note that the second floor windows and the cornice tie the two lower separate store fronts into one block. It is believed that the 1870 fire began in this area.

## 21. Oatman Block 1872

This was built for the Oatman family meat market. Note the chain link detail in the cornice.

## 22. Oatman Block 1872

Also built by S.S. and O. Oatman, this building has continuously been a community hardware store from its 1872 opening, first for the Oatman family and since for the Stephenson family.

## 23. Whipple Block 1873

The original storefront still exists today. Once the Whipple and Sipher grocery and crockery store, it then became the C.M. Cannon grocery store in 1926. Ida Cannon, C.M.'s daughter, ran the business for more than forty years after her father's death. Note the dentils or block-like brackets in the upper cornice, the connected window hoods and the stone lintels.

## 24. Walter Block 1872

This was originally home to three stores, including a shoe shop below and six offices above.

## 25. Central Block 1873

Site of the J.D. Dannley grocery and provisions store.

## 26. Miller-Chamberlin Block 1870

This was the first building completed after the 1870 fire. The Gazette newspaper was located on the second floor. During the 1970's the original cast iron columns were uncovered and restored.



## 27. Gooden Building 1927

Hershey's Barber Shop. Parts of this building may go back to the 1800's. In 1950, Clyde C. 'Shorty' Gooden sold his barbershop to Carl Hershey of Grafton, Ohio who had been working for him. Hershey's has four barber chairs that date back to 1926.

## 28. Warner Block 1899

C.E. Warner and Son built this as an extension of their dry goods store on South Court Street.

## 29. Albro Block c.1875

This building was originally built by local pharmacist Willis Albro. Known as the Corner Drugstore, a pharmacy remained at the site well into the 1970's. Medina's first public library was located on the second floor in the late 1800's.

## 30. Yoder Building 1871

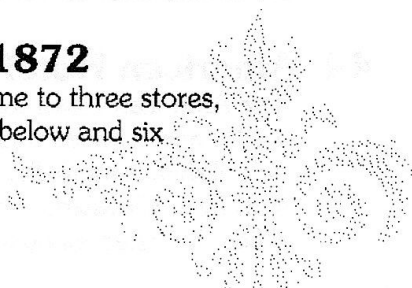
This was once the location of the Yoder Brothers Shoe Store.

## 31. Smith Dental Block c.1871

The Smith Dental building has seen many businesses in its history including a boot and shoe business, drug store, millinery shop and wallpaper store to name a few. Jeweler Russell Rapp and Son remodeled the store with enlarged show windows, blond fixtures, new lighting in 1948.

## 32. Union Block 1871

This two story building was originally divided into three store fronts. Extensive renovation in 1968



and 1982 exposed previously covered second story windows and added valuable retail space. One of the early businesses was a jewelry store run by Amos Ives Root, founder of the A.I. Root Co., before he discovered his avocation. Please read the plaque which describes Root's experience with a swarm of bees which inspired him to become the "Father of Modern Bee-Keeping." In the twentieth century this building housed Ziegler's clothing store, a well-known landmark in Medina.

### 33. Longacre Building 1871

At one time a furniture store, this building boasted a Tiffany-style stained glass sign, which is now in the possession of the Medina County Historical Society. Although the building has been remodeled, it blends with the period streetscape through appropriate signage, paint and awnings.

### 34. Cooley Fountain 1907

Mrs. Lathrop Cooley donated this drinking fountain as a tribute to her husband, Reverend Cooley, to extol the virtues of clean, clear water. Both the Reverend and Mrs. Cooley were noted for their involvement with the Temperance Movement.

### 35. Ferriman Building c.1872

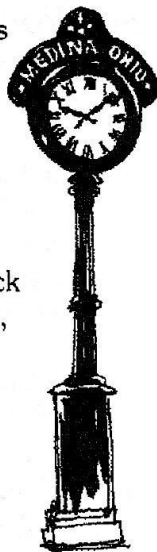
Once a prominent men's clothing store operated by a former county sheriff, the original façade of this classic building was replaced with a new storefront in 1934. The building was renovated into a restaurant in 1987.

### 36. High Building 1871

Built as one block, the south half was the site of the George F. High jewelry store. He erected the cast iron clock located in front of this building in 1911. The clock was renovated by a joint effort of the city, the Letha E. House Foundation and the CDC in 1993. The north half, once a "five and dime" store underwent renovation in 1987.

### 37. Commercial Block Site

Originally designed in 1871 by T. D. Allen,



a Medina architect, the original building burned down in the 1920's. It was rebuilt in the architectural style of the time.

### 38. B.H. Wood Block 1888

This is Medina's only brownstone and was once home to the E.W. Woodruff furniture store. Note the intricate detailing between the floors, in the cornice and around the windows.

### 39. Original Courthouse 1821

This Federal style building – Medina's first brick courthouse – was begun in 1818 and completed in 1821. It was the first public building constructed in Medina and one of the few left standing after the 1870 fire. Foundation stones came from the nearby Champion Creek. Note the stepped gables and flanking chimneys. "Victorianized" in 1895, this building housed Whitey's Army-Navy Store, a Medina institution, during the second half of the 20th century.

### 40. Hallock/Morse Building 1924

This site originally housed the town's first brick jail built in 1833.

### 41. 107 W. Liberty Street

The current 1921 building replaced the original 1888 Steeb Block. For over the last 80 years, the building has housed a barber shop.

### 42. Young and Gish Bldg. 1910

### 43. Barnard Block c.1877-78

The present day structure was built by Samuel G. Barnard. It replaced the 1847 Empire Block that burned in 1877. The first building to occupy the site was a two story log cabin built by Alonzo Hickox and Austin Badger in 1818. The first floor housed a tavern and community center and the second floor served as a court.

### 44. American Hotel Site

The American Hotel was built on this site in 1830, and survived until 1954, when it was demolished. Originally, it was a stagecoach stop from Cleveland, and the local post office. It hosted many famous guests of the day,

including presidents and well-known actors. In 1979, Ameritrust purchased the lot and built a drive-through bank branch. In 2014, the City of Medina turned the drive through into a visitors' center and public restrooms. This pocket park was named Bicentennial Commons in honor of our 2018 bicentennial celebration.

#### **45. T. J. Farr Building 1887**

The building was constructed between the American House Hotel and the Spitzer Block bank. It was incorporated as a part of the hotel for many years but was left standing when the hotel was razed. A fire in 2011 gutted the interior. It was renovated in 2014.

#### **46. Spitzer Block 1892**

The Savings Deposit Bank was the first bank in the county to pay regular interest on deposits. It was founded by the Spitzer family. The building front includes Berea stone windows and exterior walls of pressed firebrick clay in black mortar. Much of the original bank building is intact, including the crown molding, the filigreed bank teller wall, the security portholes where armed guards sat watching the doorway during the bank-robbing days of the Depression, and the original vault and its safety deposit boxes. The vault seats four and is the only area in the current restaurant where reservations are required.

#### **47. I.O.O.F. Block 1904**

This is the home of the Medina Morningstar Lodge 26 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Built by Curtis and Brown and noted for its use of Georgia pine in the interior.

#### **48. Hale Block 1956**

Long known as Hale's Restaurant, a popular gathering place for local businessmen in the mid-twentieth century, it was originally the site of two Greek Revival homes.

#### **49. Princess Block 1912**

Originally the Princess Theater, Medina's first movie theater, this building was renovated in 1973.

#### **50. United Church of Christ, Congregational c.1880**


This congregation first gathered in a log cabin a few miles east of the city in 1817. The present sanctuary was completed in 1882 with extensive additions built in 1950 and 1972. Note the meridian stone at the corner of East Liberty and North Broadway. A second stone is a block north. The stones were set in 1832 and they are believed to be the oldest remaining pair in the nation.

#### **51. Old Town Graveyard c.1818**

The beautifully cut tombstones in this cemetery include those of Medina's early settlers. Many stones are marked with war veteran stars, some dating from the Revolutionary War.

#### **52. St. Paul's Episcopal Church 1884**

The first congregation met in a log cabin a few miles east of Medina in 1817. This stone gothic-style church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1996, the sanctuary underwent alterations, including the widening of the altar steps, repair of the ceiling and painting throughout. The rose window was added to the existing displays of stained glass windows.

 Thank you for your interest in Medina's history. For an even more complete history, please visit [www.medinasquare.org](http://www.medinasquare.org), a gift to the community from local historian Bob Hyde.

To learn more about the past and current work of the Medina Community Design Committee, visit: [www.medinacommunitydesigncommittee.org](http://www.medinacommunitydesigncommittee.org)

For Historic District events, accommodations, resources, shopping, dining and economic opportunities, go to [www.mainstreetmedina.com](http://www.mainstreetmedina.com) or call **330-722-6186**.

This edition of the Public Square Historic District Walking Tour has been created as part of Medina's Bicentennial Celebration. The Bicentennial Celebration Committee's many events may be found at [www.medina200.com](http://www.medina200.com) along with more information about the 1818-2018 celebration.

