

18 Milwaukee Street, 700 block between Wisconsin Ave. and Mason St., NR. A stroll down Milwaukee St. is a walk back into Victorian times when the many small commercial buildings that crowded the street vied with each other in displaying eye-catching architectural ornament on their facades. For 100 years Milwaukee St.'s shopkeepers sold a wide variety of goods ranging from groceries, sewing machines, hats, shoes and candies to plumbing and light fixtures, and artificial limbs. The upper stories housed the offices of physicians, lawyers and insurance agents, while a couple of the buildings had halls that could be rented for public gatherings, worship or entertainment.

On the west side of Milwaukee St. are several interesting structures. At the time of its completion in 1901, the 15-story Wells Building at 324 E. Wisconsin Ave. was the largest commercial building in the city. It was built for real estate magnate Daniel Wells, Jr. and designed by H. C. Koch and Co. Cast bronze ornament and hammered sheet copper sheath the lower two floors. Unfortunately, the rich terra cotta ornament and massive cornice which gave the building its imposing Beaux Arts character were removed from the upper floors in 1959.

The oldest building is Bowman's Block at No. 715-17 built by George Bowman in 1859. Its upper floor public hall was a famous gathering spot in its day. Bowman also built the adjoining building at No. 719-23 which was designed by Edward Townsend Mix in 1874. The Italianate style buildings both feature beautifully carved brackets.

The Lawrence/Conroy Block at No. 725-29 is the city's most outstanding example of a high style Queen Anne commercial building. Confectioner James Conroy was the building's most famous ground floor tenant. Note the terra cotta plaque with the sunflowers and the date 1881.

On the east side of Milwaukee St. is located the block's most recent structure, the Mariner Building at 409 E. Mason St. built in 1937. Local architects Eschweiler & Eschweiler designed the sleek Art Moderne style office structure with all the latest conveniences, including the city's first commercial central air-conditioning system.

Plumbing and gas fixture dealer John C. Stevens had the Stevens Block (No. 724-728) built in 1877. The adjacent Arcade Building (No. 718-22) was erected in the same year by Dr. John K. Bartlett and Sherburne Bryant. Both were designed by Edward Townsend Mix. The stone facades are outstanding examples of the Victorian Gothic style and feature elaborately corbeled cornices and beautiful incised designs.

Variations on the Italianate style can be seen in the three buildings to the south of the Arcade Block. Dr. D. J. Brown built No. 710 in 1866 to house his offices and constructed No. 714 in 1874 as a rental property. Attorney Simeon Small erected No. 704-08 in 1866.

Wholesale grocer A. J. W. Pierce and confectioner James Curry built two adjacent and nearly matching buildings at today's No. 700 (a.k.a. 400-428 E. Wisconsin Ave.) in 1866. The simple Italianate structure was dressed up by the addition of a fourth story and a mansard roof in 1879.

19 Newspaper Row, 200 block E. Mason St. Nicknamed Newspaper Row, this block was once home to some 15 periodicals including the German-language *Herold* and the *Milwaukee Journal*. The Romanesque Revival building at No. 225 served the *Sentinel* from 1892 to 1930 and the *Milwaukee News* was published in the Victorian Gothic structure at No. 222.



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Above: Noonan's Block and Birchard's Block, 300 Block East Wisconsin Avenue, 1867-1871. (Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library)

Front cover: Iron Block, 205 East Wisconsin Avenue, 1868-1870. (Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library)

Inside: Milwaukee City Hall, 200 East Wells Street, 1914. (Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library)

Inside: Curry Pierce Building, 700 N. Milwaukee Street, c. 1922-1934. (Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library)

Brochures in this series include:

Avenues West

Bay View

Juneautown: Preservation, Revitalization and Adaptive Reuse

Kilbourntown

North Point Neighborhood

Walker's Point: Residential Tour

Walker's Point: Commercial and Industrial Buildings Tour

West End

Yankee Hill

Key to symbols:

NR National Register of Historic Places

ML Milwaukee Landmark

HPC Designated by the Historic Preservation Commission of Milwaukee, successor to the Milwaukee Landmarks Commission

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Milwaukee Historic Buildings Tour

Juneau town



A self-guided

walking tour

of historic

buildings in the

Juneautown

neighborhood



Juneau Town: The Heart of Old Milwaukee

Juneautown traces its name to French-Canadian fur trader Solomon Juneau who built his trading post at the northwest corner of today's Water Street and Wisconsin Avenue in 1819 to become the community's first permanent Caucasian settler. A genial, honest and well-liked individual, Juneau was given considerable acreage by the local Native American inhabitants. Juneau's original 160-acre claim extended from the Milwaukee River to Lake Michigan and from Wisconsin Avenue to Juneau Avenue. With his partner, Morgan L. Martin, Juneau platted his land into a regular grid system of streets and rectangular blocks. Only Water Street deviates from the grid as it meanders northward to follow the course of the Milwaukee River.

The area's high, dry land quickly drew scores of settlers, especially Yankees and New Yorkers, who erected frame shops, warehouses, hotels, saloons and houses. The earliest commercial activity clustered along the river on today's N. Water Street. These crude pioneer buildings were soon replaced by substantial brick blocks, and maps from the mid-1850s show that Water Street was lined with a continuous row of buildings all the way north to Juneau Avenue. Juneautown quickly became the hub of the new community, and commission houses, banks and insurance companies soon clustered near or on Water Street. The nearby city hall and county courthouse made Juneautown the seat of government as well. Commercial activity spread east to Broadway, originally named Main Street, and later to Milwaukee and Jefferson Streets. East Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee's main thoroughfare today, remained largely residential east of Jefferson Street into the 20th century except for the few hotels and shops that clustered around the Chicago and North Western Railroad Depot at the east end of the avenue. The large scale office building development that is now found near the lake has taken place chiefly since the 1970s.

By the early 20th century, the center of retailing and entertainment had shifted across the river to Kilbourntown. Juneautown remained the center of finance, insurance and local government, however, and it retained many of its fine 19th century buildings. After a long period of decline, a renaissance of sorts began in Juneautown in the 1980s that has reestablished the commercial importance of the east side. The construction in the 1980s of such major office buildings as the "100 East Building," the "Milwaukee Center," and "1000 North Water Street" has once again made Water Street, in particular, a prestigious commercial address.