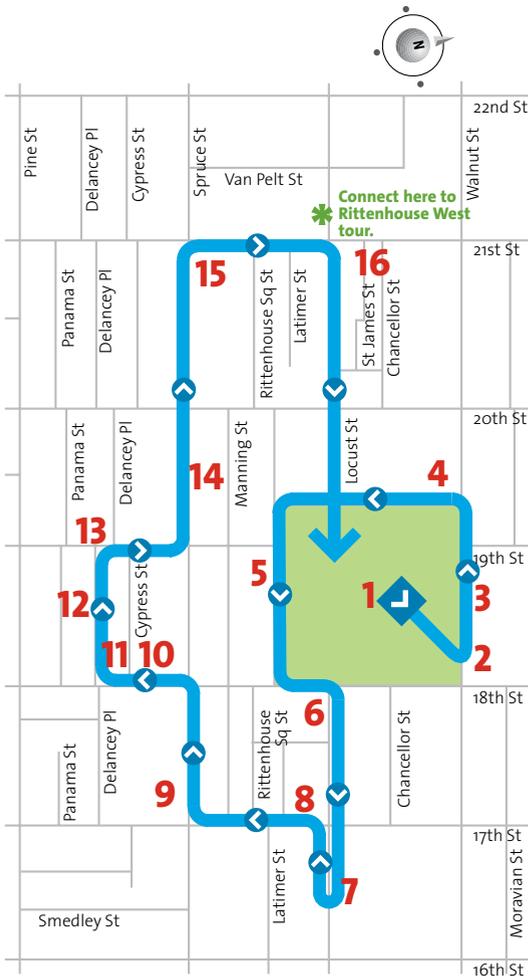


Rittenhouse East

Rittenhouse East is located in Center City Philadelphia.



The tour starts at Rittenhouse Square, bounded by Walnut, Locust, South 18th and South 19th Streets. To get there from City Hall to begin the tour, walk three blocks west from 15th Street and two blocks south from Market Street. The #9, 12, 21 and 42 buses along Walnut Street, and the #12 bus along Locust Street all stop at Rittenhouse Square. For more details, visit www.septa.org.

Please note that most of the properties on the tour are private residences and not open to the public, unless indicated with (OP).

Text by Paula Spilner. Photos #4, 7, 9 and 10 by Tom Crane; all other photos by James B. Abbott.

The Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District encompasses most of the southwest quadrant of the original city of Philadelphia. Within its boundaries, several thousand buildings contribute to a rich and varied tapestry of residential and institutional architecture. This extraordinary concentration, not only of individual buildings, but of significant streetscapes, documents the history of Philadelphia's period of rapid expansion in the 19th century. At the same time, it serves as a vital and cherished neighborhood for thousands of residents, as it has for almost 200 years.

In the 1830s, developers began to build speculative rows moving west from Broad Street. This process reached its peak between 1850 and 1870, when many blocks were lined with new Greek Revival and Italianate brick or brownstone townhouses. Soon Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist and other religious congregations followed to serve the new populations. John Notman, John McArthur and Frank Furness, among other distinguished architects, designed a host of new churches, mostly in the medieval revival styles then preferred for ecclesiastical buildings.

After about 1870, many well-to-do clients commissioned some of the best architects in Philadelphia—and a few from elsewhere—to remodel or rebuild existing rowhouses to suit their own tastes and current fashions. Furness, Horace Trumbauer, Wilson Eyre, Frank Miles Day and Theophilus Chandler contributed to this transformation, leaving a legacy that is a virtual encyclopedia of 19th-century architectural styles.

Shortly before World War I, a new building type appeared in the district. For the first time, a high-rise apartment building was constructed on Rittenhouse Square, previously lined by the sumptuous mansions of Philadelphia's elite. Since then, tall buildings both on the Square and nearby have changed the profile of the district, creating greater density and providing for a growing population.

The Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District was added to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 1995.

The tour begins in the center of Rittenhouse Square.

1

Rittenhouse Square (OP)

Bounded by Walnut, Locust, S. 18th and S. 19th Sts.

1683, Southwest Square; 1913, remodeled, Paul Cret



One of five public squares mapped in Thomas Holme's 1683 plan of Philadelphia for William Penn, this was originally known as Southwest Square. In 1825, it was renamed in honor of David Rittenhouse (d. 1796), a renowned astronomer, clockmaker and supporter of the American Revolution. Paul Philippe Cret designed the current scheme of diagonal walkways, interspersed with flowerbeds, grass and trees. Trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, Cret was a practitioner of the formal French Classical manner. In 1903, he was recruited to join the architecture faculty at the University of Pennsylvania, where he inculcated generations of students with French principles of design.

Leave the Square at the corner of Walnut and 18th Sts.

2

1801 Walnut St./ 134-50 S. 18th St. (OP)

Fell-Van Rensselaer Mansion

1896-98, Peabody & Stearns



Sarah Drexel Fell, whose family once owned several elegant houses on Rittenhouse Square, built this house for her future husband, Alexander Van Rensselaer of New York. Peabody and Stearns, a Boston architectural firm whose clients were the social elite of Boston, Newport and Philadelphia, created a masterpiece of the Beaux Arts style, which draws primarily from classical models and their Renaissance and Baroque descendants. Here, the paired columns and ornamental sculpture, the strict symmetry of the main facade with its curved bays, and the white Indiana limestone facing reinforce the aura of French Neo-classicism. Inside, the ceiling of the onetime "Doges' Room" on the second floor is covered with medallion portraits of the popes.

Continue on Walnut St.

3

10 Rittenhouse

1901, new facade of Rittenhouse Club, Newman, Woodman & Harris; 2007, facade incorporated into new construction, Robert A.M. Stern



The new retail-and-residential development at 10 Rittenhouse by Robert A.M. Stern incorporates a 33-story tower with the facade of the Rittenhouse Club. Constructed in 1901 to unify three adjacent buildings, the Club's limestone facade is a splendid example of the Beaux Arts style. The perfectly balanced composition is nonetheless dynamic, animated by the curving, three-story bays that frame the central axis. The roof-line balusters and deep cornice are the principal ornaments. The building, which had stood empty for 15 years, was demolished in 2007, but the facade was preserved and integrated with the new complex.

Continue to 19th St. Turn left on Rittenhouse Square West.

4

200 West Rittenhouse Square at Walnut St. (OP)

Church of the Holy Trinity

1857-59, John Notman



The construction of Holy Trinity signaled the westward migration of the fashionable and well-to-do families who made up its congregation. John Notman, one of the most distinguished American architects of the 19th century, introduced a number of sophisticated European architectural styles to the United States. This church was one of the first accurate renditions of the Romanesque style in the country. The three, deeply recessed doorways are carved with geometric and foliate designs typical of this medieval revival style. The building material is brownstone, first used in Philadelphia by Notman at the Athenaeum on Washington Square.

Continue on Rittenhouse Square West. Turn left at the corner onto Rittenhouse Square South and continue to 19th St.

5

1830 Rittenhouse Square South

Apartment House for Samuel Wetherill

1913, Frederick Webber



This 18-story, limestone-sheathed Beaux Arts apartment building marked the end of Rittenhouse Square as an exclusive enclave of private mansions and townhouses. Occupying the former site of the 52-room mansion of Thomas A. Scott, a president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, the first high rise constructed on the Square was soon followed by ever taller apartment buildings and hotels. Factors in the transformation were the exodus of well-to-do families to the suburbs, newly accessible by automobile, and the new social acceptability of apartment living. With its elegant cast-iron-and-glass canopy and classical detailing, 1830, as it is known, remains after almost a century the *grande dame* of Rittenhouse Square.

Continue on Rittenhouse Square South to 18th St. Turn left for 1/2 block, turn right and cross 18th onto Locust St.

6

1722–36 Locust St.

George Childs Drexel House, now Curtis Institute of Music

1893, Peabody & Stearns, Boston; 1924, remodeled H. W. Sellers



In 1894, George W. Childs Drexel, a member of one of the most prominent families in Philadelphia, became editor and publisher of *The Public Ledger* newspaper. His imposing Beaux Arts mansion, sheathed in limestone, is distinguished by three graceful arches on the 18th St. facade. The deep jambs of the central doorway and flanking windows are embellished with delicate relief carving, echoed in the ornamental panels under the windows. In 1924, under the sponsorship of Mary Louise Curtis Bok, daughter of the founder of the Curtis Publishing Company, it was remodeled to house the Curtis Institute of Music, now world famous for its many distinguished alumni.

Continue on Locust St. to the 1600 block.

7

1600 block Locust St. and St. Mark's Episcopal Church (OP)



This block of Locust St. is one of the most architecturally distinguished in the district. In 1850, John Notman designed St. Mark's Church with the advice of the English Ecclesiological Society on proper architectural settings for Anglican worship. The result is one of the finest examples of archaeologically correct Gothic Revival churches in the US. Set back from the street and nestled in a garden, St. Mark's and its parish house evoke the atmosphere of an English country village. The houses on the western half of this block illustrate the wide-ranging architectural tastes of Philadelphia's elite in the later-19th century, as realized by the city's finest architects. The earliest is the Lea House (1622, c. 1855), a Renaissance Revival brownstone attributed to Notman. Also represented are Horace Trumbauer, who designed the white limestone Beaux Arts Knight House at 1629 (1900), Frank Miles Day, designer of the medieval-style Yarnall mansion at 1635 (1908), and Cope and Stewardson, architects of the Georgian Revival Markoe house at 1630 (1900).

Return to 17th St. along Locust St. and turn left onto 17th.

8

242 S. 17th St.

Harry Lewis House

1894, W. Whitney Lewis



This is the only known building in Philadelphia by Whitney Lewis, a British born MIT graduate who was among the most prominent designers of his day in Boston. The material is a golden-toned Pompeian brick. Molded brick and terra cotta form the window surrounds and cornices. Unusually, the corners of the facade above the ground floor are beveled. Perhaps because the building lot was uncomfortably shallow, the designer extended the floor area by supporting the upper stories on a massive arcade resting on sturdy brick corbels.

Continue on 17th St.; turn right onto Spruce St.

9

**1700–12 Spruce St.
(OP)**

10th Presbyterian
Church and Parish
House

1854, John McArthur, Jr.



This was the first Presbyterian church constructed west of Broad St., an offshoot of the original 10th Presbyterian at 12th and Walnut. The architect, John McArthur, is chiefly remembered for designing Philadelphia City Hall (1871-1901) in the then-fashionable French Second Empire style. Like many of his contemporaries, however, McArthur worked in a variety of styles, as is evident at 10th Presbyterian. Here the colorful facade evokes the Italian Romanesque with round-headed arches and windows, highly decorative limestone window surrounds and an elaborate corbel-table under the steep triangular gable. The delicate wrought iron gates are original. Adjoining the church to the right, two adjacent houses (c. 1870) serve as the Parish House and exhibit Gothic Revival features, including Tudor arches framing the door and windows.

Continue on Spruce St. to 18th St.

10

**1800–04 Spruce St.
(OP)**

Temple Beth-Zion Beth-
Israel Synagogue, formerly
Church of the Covenant

c. 1895, Thomas Preston
Lonsdale; 1954, interior
remodeled, Beryl Price



The church was built to house a new Methodist congregation, the Church of the Covenant. Typical Gothic Revival forms are the massive buttresses along the 18th St. flank and the pointed-arch windows in the aisles and clerestory. In 1954, Beryl Price remodeled the church to serve a recently formed Jewish congregation. The renovation included the installation of new, vividly colored stained-glass windows representing important aspects of Jewish history and worship.

Turn left on 18th St. and continue to Delancey Place.

11

**320 S.18th St./
1801–03 Delancey
Place**

Joshua Husband House

1857, Joel McCrea,
Builder; c. 1876,
expanded



This rambling Second Empire mansion was built for a sea captain. The brick body is capped with a steep, slate mansard roof with iron cresting on the ridge line. The entrance is through the four-story tower, probably a later addition, on the east side. At the corner, a second tower with a pyramidal roof is turned at a 45-degree angle to the main house, an unusual and picturesque massing of forms. The slight setback from the lot lines allows for a fringe of greenery around the house, enclosed by iron railings.

Turn right on Delancey Place.

12

**1800 block
Delancey Place**



This mid-19th-century residential development has retained its visual character in spite of subsequent remodeling of some of the houses. Opened in 1853 on a parcel of land once owned by Christ Church, it was originally lined with Italianate and Greek Revival townhouses constructed by various speculative builders between 1854 and 1880. Many of these still stand virtually unchanged. On the south side, 1804, one in a row of four, four-story brick houses constructed in 1856 by Joseph Hancock, typifies the Greek Revival with its marble basement, steps, door frames and lintels. In the late-19th century, many mid-century rowhouses were fitted with new facades more suited to the tastes of the time. Wilson Eyre, for example, remodeled 1824 in the newly popular Georgian Revival style. The dark brick is laid in Flemish bond, the trim is limestone. The unusual double-height bay window dominates the composition.

Continue on Delancey Place. Turn right onto 19th St.

13

318–22 S. 19th St.

Dr. Horace Jayne House
1895, Frank Furness



Furness may have undertaken this project as a labor of love for his favorite niece Caroline, the wife of Horace Jayne. Dr. Jayne's medical office with his library above was located on the left side and the family area on the right. These separate functions are signaled by the asymmetrical composition and by the distinctly different window treatments of the facade. The rather modest main door, set off-center, is nevertheless emphasized by a large oval window framed with exuberant ornament and flanked by robust brackets supporting a balcony. Terra cotta swags and ribbons festoon the upper facade and musical putti perch in the three triangular gables.

Continue on 19th St. Turn left on Spruce St.

14

**1900–2000 blocks
Spruce St.**

Like many of the main east-west streets in the area, these blocks were largely developed by speculative builders in the 1850s and '60s with rows of essentially identical brick and brownstone houses. Varying in detail, they nevertheless form a harmonious ensemble with a continuous street wall and consistent proportions. The exceptions that add variety to the streetscape belong to a second phase of development. These are the architect-designed facades applied to existing houses in the 1890s for clients who could afford to express their individual tastes. An example is the Welsh House at 1923 Spruce which clamors for attention with its golden-pink Pompeian brick and rusty-red terra cotta ornament. Over the entry, infant caryatids support a Dutch gable with heraldic devices.

Continue on Spruce Street.

15

21st and Spruce Sts.

At this intersection are four of the finest Victorian houses in the city. The three brick houses were designed by George Hewitt. Those at the northeast and southwest corners feature half-timbered bays on brackets above the main doors and slate mansards with dormers. The house at the southeast corner is also essentially Second Empire in form, but the vivacity of its ornament—windows, doors and corners framed by applied pilasters composed of alternating bands of red brick and white stone, decorative ironwork, an elaborate cornice and carved window frames—sets it apart. At the northwest corner, an imposing three-story bay ornamented with carved panels dominates a Renaissance Revival brownstone.

Turn right onto 21st St. Continue to St. James St.

16

235 S. 21st St.

Hockley House
c. 1875, Frank Furness



This early Furness house for lawyer Thomas Hockley includes many elements of the conventional French Empire: mansard roof, dormers and projecting bays. What impresses, however, is the bold use of texture and pattern: cut, pressed, diapered and diagonally laid brick beguile the eye. Several of Furness's favorite elements appear on the entrance porch. The compact columns, famously compared to driving pistons, and the over-scaled vegetal reliefs under the pointed arches became hallmarks of his idiosyncratic style. Furness's way with materials would be copied but never equaled by Philadelphia developers for decades to come.

Return to Locust St. and turn left to return to Rittenhouse Square. Alternatively, return to Locust St. and turn right to join the route of the Rittenhouse West self-guided tour at 22nd and Locust Sts.