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Wheeling played an important role during the Civil War, even though no battles were fought here.

North Centre Market House
309 Centre Market
Built in 1853, the north section of the Centre Market pair is believed to be the oldest cast iron market still in existence in the United States.

Residents of the Centre Market area were strongly supportive of the Union during the Civil War. On May 6, 1861, an area man was almost hanged for saying, “Hurrah for Jeff Davis,” and on May 23 only 5 of 517 votes from the area were for secession from the Union. Even after the war, feelings can high, with residents passing a resolution to remove returning residents who were rebels.

Slaves were never sold at this market house.

The market house was open-air until the 1890s, when it was enclosed with wood clapboard. The market house continues to serve the needs of the community, with antique and restaurant options replacing produce vendors.

Civil War Memorial
Top of Hill in Wheeling Park
This memorial is dedicated “to the defenders of the Union 1861-1865.” The monument specifically lists six battles – Rich Mountain, Antietam, Gettysburg, Vicksburg, Chancelor, and Appomattox – all of which could be claimed as Union victories.

Both Union and Confederate sympathies were common in Wheeling during the Civil War, but no comparable memorial to the South exists in the area. Neighbors and even families had split loyalties, and men served with distinction on both sides of the conflict. The state itself was born during the war, when the interests of those in western counties of Virginia ran counter to those in the east. Although slavery existed in Wheeling at the time, the county’s population in the 1860 census showed only 100 slaves, representing 0.4% of the population.

First Presbyterian Church
1307 Chippewa Street
The First Presbyterian Church building, the oldest structure in downtown Wheeling, has stood since 1825 on land donated by Noah Zane. The Greek revival, stucco façade with its massive columns welcomed slaveworkers and abolitionists alike during the Civil War years. (The 1836 belfry, shown in the picture, was dismantled in 1906.)

One of the members of the congregation during the war years was Dr. John Cox Hupp, life-long friend of Dr. Julius LeMoyne, the noted abolitionist of Washington, Pennsylvania. He shared the sanctuary with Miss Adeline Caldwell, who kept a family of slaves. At the end of the war, Miss Caldwell bought a pew for the slave family who had previously sat in the gallery.

The divisive force of the slavery issue actually split the Presbyterian church into northern and southern branches, as it did with other denominations.

First State Capitol
1413 Eoff Street
The building today known as the First State Capitol was originally the home of Linsly Military Institute. The building was constructed in 1838 and served as the first capitol of West Virginia from June 20, 1863 to April 1, 1870. Two legislative sessions of the Restored Government of Virginia were held here, though their official offices were located in the Custom House.

The Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution (1865, calling for the abolishment of slavery), the Fourteenth Amendment (1868, prohibiting states from depriving any person of life, liberty or property without “due process”), and the Fifteenth Amendment (1870, prohibiting the abridgment of the right to vote on the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude) were ratified in this building.

Site numbers correspond to locations indicated on map printed on back page.