DURING MUCH OF THE 19TH CENTURY, Wheeling was the Gateway to the West. lumbering Conestoga wagons carried people and supplies from the east, coming down Wheeling Hill to 7th Street and finally turning onto Main Street. After rest and resupply, travelers crossed the Historic suspension bridge and kept moving west, or boarded steamboats to travel south on the Ohio River. During the same period, North Wheeling became a center of pioneering industries including iron making, shipbuilding, steam engine manufacturing and glass working. Nearly all of those factories are now gone, but the homes of their owners remain.

North Wheeling, or Old Town, was the portal to opportunity, with North Main and Market streets the centers of trade and ultimately the location of fine Victorian homes for many of the innovators and industrialists who helped transform Wheeling before and after the Civil War. The North Wheeling Historic District has Victorian and early 20th century homes with details to delight the informed observer. This guide highlights some of these structures that are easy to appreciate during a single hour walking tour.

An easy way to see Old Town Wheeling is to walk north from the L-70 expressway along the east side of Main Street. Examine the details of the homes on the side you are walking and look across the street at the full facades of these places. As you walk, look at all the houses, not just the ones described here, for each has trim or design features to enjoy. At 6th Street, cross over to the west side of Main Street, walk south, and then back toward the expressway to find restaurants for a drink or meal.

#5 Sweeney-Winter House
742 Main St
Thomas Sweeney, Wheeling glass house, bought this land in 1845 and probably built a house soon thereafter. However, the ornate Italianate facade was probably added later in the 1870s. It was most likely added by merchant Phillip Winter, who purchased the house in the late 19th century. The heavy styled hoops over the windows and doors, as well as the cornice, demonstrate the Italianate style.

#6 Johnson Apartments
738-740 Main St
This eclectic apartment building built in the 1890s for T. Johnson, has distinctive golden colored bricks that glow in the afternoon sun. There are many lovely architectural features including the metal finials at the roofline, arched windows of the top story, bay windows and sparsely porches. The third floor cornice has modifications, egg and dart and Greek key trim. Be sure and look at the filigree-like terracotta molding at eave level.

#7 Hedges-Meyer House
734-736 Main St
Spectacular stained glass windows highlight the lower level of this twin townhouse, one of the most beautiful buildings in Victorian Wheeling. Built in the 1890s for Joseph Hedges and H. Meyer, the eclectic houses are distinguished by limestone arches, embossed brick and classic triangular pediments over extended oriel windows. Metal finials and a parapet distinguish the roofline of this fabulous building.
# Williams Tenement
730-732 Main St
This tenement house was built in the Italianate style for C.L. Williams. It is a perfect example of middle class housing during the 1880s. The hoods and pediments over the windows and doors are adorned with Eastlake detailing. The continuous cornice stretches across both houses and has matching brackets and details, with only the paint colors differentiating the separate sides.

# Vigilant Firehouse
649-650 Main St
Marvelous terracotta and corbeled brick surround the doors and windows of this 1891 eclecticism-style building. Local resident W.A. Wilson paid $9,900 for its construction to ensure nearby fire protection for his home. It was a restaurant and has been empty since 2005. The central bell tower was shortened and the bell now sits in front of the new fire station at Main and 8th Streets.

# Jonathan Zane Building
406 Main St
Named for a founder of Wheeling, the history of this attractive building is undocumented. This is a beautiful building with a projecting corner and bold brackets, two-story oriel windows and three levels of ornamental balconies and doors. The details of this house are Italian Renaissance Revival with a colorful flair. There are six, two bedroom units in this 3-story rental structure.

# Roberts House
632 Main St
Built circa 1890, the 3-story, Queen Anne duplex has a distinctive brick facade with sandstone details. The house boasts a slate, cross-gabled roof, a stone foundation and a fabulous view of the waterfront. Both sides have identical second-story oriel windows and charming recessed entryways.

# William Goering House
705 Main St
Built in the Second Empire style, this house has a mansard roof, high style details and three dormers with pediments. A second floor oriel window tops the entrance door. All of the windows are tall with arched hoods. Built by William Goering, treasurer for Central Glass Works, this 1883 house has a small front court enclosed within one of the few remaining iron fences in North Wheeling.

# Meier's Tavern
717 Main St
Beautifully faced, green and gold decorated stone hotels are found above each window and door. The same motif in wood occurs above the oriel bay window on the second floor and along the cornice. The house was built circa 1894. The stained glass upper sash in the first floor window dominates that floor and can be viewed from the sidewalk.

# Morris Apartments
717 Main St
Like 604 Main, this building is dominated by its projecting second story and topped with decorative metal outsets of what appear to be pilasters. The top 2 floors on the right have bay windows balanced with small balconies surrounded by metal railings on the left. The narrow, rounded-top door at bottom left may have been a served entrance if this ca. 1900 building was originally a single-family home.

# Mathieu House
737 Main St
Vernacular is the architectural term for simple and little-decorated buildings. This one, like 735 next door, seems to date from the 1850s, before an exuberance of trim denoted social status. In 1893, George Mathieu lived here with his shoe business partner Seaton Alexander next door. In 1928, the house was used as a funeral home.

# Alfred Paull House
793 Main St
This structure was built about 1883, with a Moorish keyhole front window and tall, ornate wooden doors. The right side of the building is capped with a heavily decorated front gable. The left has an oriel window topped with an ornamental frame. Alfred Paull was an important insurance executive and a loyal Republican. His descendants carry on his business legacy in the form of Paull Associates Real Estate and Insurance Company.

# 741 Main St
This Italianate style house was built in the 1860s. Several wonderful features include a stained glass window from Sacred Heart Church, the kitchen and great room with tin ceiling and old brick fireplace, and spectacular views of the Ohio River. The present owners purchased the house next door for additional space — including a North Wheeling rarity — a parking garage.

# Coldwell House/Waterworks Inn
793 Main St
Built in the 1870s as the Waterworks Inn and named for the nearby city water facility, this house was modified in the 1870s when its and adjacent buildings were bought and combined by Alfred Coldwell, an attorney in a prominent pioneering Wheeling family. A hexagonal tower and mansard roof were added about the time of the building's Esplanade. It is currently the home of Uncle Pete's, a popular restaurant.

# Riefenstach House
607 Main St
This 3-story brick building was a fashionable area in the 1890s, with the fine homes of Wheeling's successful businessmen built stately homes. This house was built for George Stiff, who owned one of the largest dry goods stores in Wheeling. Later, famous Wheeling photographer George Kossuth lived here. The mansard roof has curved corners of opposite design, complimented by a dormer window.

# House
801 Main St
The Christian House is an outstanding example of French Renaissance Revival style. One of only a few Wheeling buildings of this architectural style, the house looks much as it did when contractor Benjamin Easley built it in 1876. The stone quoins at the corners give the building a monumental look. The wrought iron fencing and window box are reminders of Wheeling's metal working history.

# John List House
821 Main St
This house was built by Henry List for his son, John List, in 1893. The Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival house has a Palladian window set within a front gable. The recessed entranceway has stained glass windows commemorating Columbus arrival in America. The interior boasts a grand inglenook off the foyer and a large stained glass skylight situated over the 3-story staircase.

# Jessie List Huelett House
821 Main St
Like 821 Main Street, this house was built by Henry K. List for his daughter, Jessie, who married W. H. Huelett, a prominent Wheeling banker and investment broker. A combination of Romanesque and Queen Anne styles, the house has both curved and straight sides, and a small hexagonal tower that adds interest. Inside, the staircase has one of a kind fretwork.

# Henry List House
827 Main St
Home of Henry K. List, this mansion was built in 1856 with an offset rear wing added 9 years later. List was a wealthy wholesale grocer who might have shipped his shipments arrive on the river from the helvedore located on top of the house. He built homes for his children nearby at 821 and 823 Main Street. Spectacular limestone, stained glass, inlaid floor and artistic plaster work abounds inside this house.