A HISTORY OF CHURCHES IN WHEELING PARALLELS A HISTORY OF THE CITY ITSELF.

Fort Henry, constructed in 1774 as protection against Native American raids, served as the pioneers' defense during a siege in 1777, and again in a second siege in 1782, last battle of the Revolutionary War. It was shortly after the second siege that Presbyterian minister Thaddeus Dodd reportedly preached in the fort itself. The Princeton-educated Dodd is believed to have been only the second clergyman west of the Monongahela River. Organized in nearby Elm Grove in 1787, the Forks of Wheeling Presbyterian Church fostered establishment of First Presbyterian Church to meet the needs of a growing downtown population.

The first organized church in Wheeling, Fourth Street Methodist, was founded in what is now downtown Wheeling in 1785 on land donated by Noah Zane, son of Wheeling's founder, Ebenezer Zane. The original building no longer stands, but another early church building, First Presbyterian – built 1823-25 – is still in use. Its first minister, James Hervey, reportedly "rode into town on horseback, performed the office of janitor, rang the dinner bell for services, and preached the gospel." The town's population at the time was fewer than 1,000.

As the population grew, so did the number of churches. Waves of German, Irish, Greek, and Lebanese immigrants led to the founding of Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish congregations, with many of their 19th century buildings still standing today. This brochure features a few of those in downtown, East Wheeling, and Centre Wheeling and their more recent replacements.

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A walking tour of their history and architecture.
OLD ST. MATTHEWS ("The Blue Church")
1206 Byron Street
This 1837 Greek Revival-style church is one of the last pre-Civil War buildings remaining in Wheeling. Built as the third St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, it was constructed of brick, which has been covered in stucco. In May 1856, the First Baptist Church of Wheeling purchased the building from St. Matthew's. It was later the home of the Church of God and the Saints of Christ.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
1307 Chapline Street
This Greek Revival building was built between 1823 and 1825 on ground donated by Noah Zane. It is the oldest extant church and perhaps the oldest building still standing in downtown Wheeling. In 1835, a bell and clock tower were added. For many of the approximately 13,000 residents of Wheeling, this was the first time the accurate time was readily accessible.

ST. JOSEPH'S CATHEDRAL
1300 Eoff Street
Dedicated in 1926, this Lombard Romanesque style cathedral, which replaced an older cathedral (St. James) on the same site, was constructed entirely of Indiana limestone. It remains one of the largest churches in the state. The colorful Medieval Byzantine interior includes a primary dome filled with a depiction of heaven, and a mural of Christ fills the half-dome of the apse.

AGAPE BAPTIST
99 14th Street
This 1926 Colonial style, Roman-influenced building features four large stone Doric columns. Stone sills support eight large, opalescent geometric art windows, four on each side. The interior features a large hexed true cathedral ceilings, walnut woodwork, and a pipe organ donated by Mrs. Edward Stifel. From 1926 to 1994, the building was the home of Wheeling's First Church of Christ Scientist.

ST. JAMES EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
1409 Chapline Street
In 1891 members of the German immigrant congregation added a Gothic tower and bell to the original 1860 structure. In 1906, a new altar was installed. The anti-German backlash of WWI caused the church to stop offering German-language services. In the 1950s a chapel was constructed in memory of those who lost their lives in World War II.

ST. MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL
1410 Chapline Street
Established in 1819, St. Matthew's congregation conspired its current, Gothic Revival-style church building, designed by architect George A. Fuller. The memorial stained glass windows, ornate wrought iron rood screen, stone-carved altar, and carved wooden pulpit. A custom-designed St. Matthew's organ was installed in 1978.

ST. ALPHONUS
2111 Market Street
St. Alphonus Roman Catholic Church was founded by Bishop Richard N’Wheelan and the Redemptorist Fathers in 1856 to serve Wheeling’s large German Catholic population. A Romanesque Revival building was completed in 1858. The original church was demolished and the current church, designed by architect Edward Wells, was built in 1886.

OUR LADY OF LEBANON MARONITE
2216 Eoff Street
The only Maronite Catholic Church in West Virginia was built by Lebanese immigrants in 1922, with Father Paul Abraham ministering. A painting of Our Lady of Lebanon miraculously survived a destructive 1932 fire. It can be viewed above the main altar today. In order to raise funds to rebuild the church, the community organized a Maronian festival, still held annually at Oglebay Park.

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE GREEK ORTHODOX
2218 Chapline Street
In 1973, Wheeling’s Greek community established the first Orthodox Church in West Virginia in a converted two-story home. In 1921, the church opened a Greek school, featuring instruction in the Greek language and culture. The current church opened in 1991, and a fellowship center was added. Every August, St. John the Divine Church sponsors a Greek Food Festival, featuring traditional food, music, and dance.