1. AUDUBON MILL PARK - RIVERFRONT
(Second St & Water) John James Audubon came to Henderson on a flatboat in 1810 to establish a retail business. He was far more interested in birds than business and his business did not prosper. He left Henderson with a determination to paint all the birds of America.

2. LATTA INSURANCE
(Second St & Main) This Bedford Stone building, completed in 1903, has a distinctive corner entrance. In addition to providing quarters for another bank, Farmers Bank & Trust, beginning in 1921, it was the temporary home of Henderson’s municipal government while the new Henderson Municipal Center was being completed in 1974.

3. THOMAS SOAPER BLDG - FRANK G SCHMITT
(231 N Main St) Known as the Thomas Soaper building in the 1890’s, it provides examples of Mesker Steel. Many buildings of the period had plain fronts and it became popular to decorate using prefabricated steel store fronts. Because Mesker Steel was an Evansville-based company, many Henderson businesses used their store fronts. The buyer sent in his building measurements, his choice of design and his money and the store front was delivered to him by rail or boat within 2 to 3 weeks.

4. FARMER’S BANK & TRUST
(221 N Main St) Henderson’s oldest bank, Farmer’s Bank & Trust, was located here as early as 1876. The National Sales Group firm moved here in 1974, it was the temporary home of Henderson’s municipal government while the new Henderson Municipal Center was being completed in 1974.

5. L&N BED AND BREAKFAST, LTD.
(223 N Main St) This large Queen Anne brick was built by William Soaper sometime between 1840 and 1880, and another owned by Judge Paul Alexander Blackwell, built in 1867, the same year that Main Street was paved from Sixth to Eighth. All the walls are solid brick, 13 inches thick.

6. KATTERJOHN-BRANSON HOUSE
(327 N Main St) Known as the Western and Southern Building, this Italianate house was built in 1867, the same year that Main Street was paved from Sixth to Eighth. All the walls are solid brick, 13 inches thick.

7. Jarvis-Sullivan House
(317 N Main St) This brick Victorian house was built just after the turn of the century by Arthur and Minnie Jarvis. Mr. Jarvis had come from England to operate a tobacco factory in Henderson at Third and Water.

8. Blackwell-vaughn house
(325 N Main St) Judge Paul Alexander Blackwell built this Chateauesque house in the 1890s. He owned a hardware, agricultural business. The original metal ornamentation remains on the house.

9. Milet Hill house
(711 N Main St) Built between 1855 and 1862, this house is located on Lot 20 of the original survey map of Henderson County. It contains a large basement where the family’s slaves may have lived.

10. Eisfelder-gravette house
(733 N Main St) Built in 1874 for $2,800, this simplified Queen Anne Style home has a unique hand-sawn and turned trim above the porch. Frederick Eisfelder, who built this house, managed a brewery at the southwest corner of 8th and Main.

11. Talbot-Gadient house
(626 N Main St) This Italianate house was built in 1867, the same year that Main Street was paved from Sixth to Eighth. All the walls are solid brick, 13 inches thick.

12. Rankin-Wilson house
(616 N Main St) The owner of an older structure at this site, James E. Rankin, uncle of General Adam Rankin Johnson, was shot by a band of outlaws at his store located at Second and Main Streets during the Civil War. He later died at his home. Although having nothing to do with the attack, two Confederate soldiers were executed for this crime. Before his death, Mr. Rankin, along with other Union sympathizers pleaded for their release.

13. Soaper-Esser house
(612 N Main St) This large Italianate house was built by William Soaper between 1884-1887. All the bricks for the house were made on the property. In 1991, it was used for scenes in the Columbia Pictures’ 1993-period film, “A League of Their Own,” starring Geena Davis, Tom Hanks and Madonna.

14. Soaper-esser-preston house
(Corner of Fifth and Main) This corner was the site of two tobacco factories, the Soaper Tobacco Factory (on the northeast corner), built sometime between 1840 and 1880, and another owned by John Barrett (on the southwest corner) which was dramatically destroyed in a 1974 tornado. The Soaper-Preston house was originally the tobacco factory’s office.

15. Floyd-waughon house
(422 N Main St) This house was built in 1879 by the Floyd family and remained in that family until 1977. The porch has ball and spindle Victorian gingerbread architectural features.

Henderson’s unique place in world trade at the close of the 19th century, largely due to the tremendous dark tobacco exporting business started here, provided the setting for the construction of a rather surprising number of expensive homes, given the size of the community.

A location on the Ohio River above flood level, an unlimited fuel energy supply and fertile land were also attractive to settlers seeking a place to put down their roots.

The properties on this walking tour were chosen because of some unusual or special feature of architectural charm or for historic value. They represent pre-Civil War architecture, an Italianate building around the 1860’s and 1870’s and the fancier asymmetric Victorian built at the close of the century.

Material for this tour was drawn from “Old Henderson Homes and Buildings” edited by Boynton Merrill Jr. and Friends of the Henderson County Public Library and “Currents: Henderson’s River Book” written by Gail King and Susan Thurman.

The Audubon Mill Park - Riverfront, Jarvis-Sullivan House, Blackwell-Vaughn House, and Milet Hill House are featured in the Henderson County Tourist Commission’s Henderson River Book, by Gail King and Susan Thurman, which is available at the Henderson County Public Library.
16. THE BANK OF HENDERSON (208 S Main St) Opened as a bank in 1893, this building is located on land once owned by John James Audubon. The corner lot where the bank's drive-through sits was the site of Audubon's tobacco store.

17. OHIO VALLEY FINANCIAL GROUP (Corner of Second & Main St) Completed in 1904, this is the most imposing building of its type in Henderson. It was the city's first so-called "skyscraper," as there is no wood in the structure. The fifth floor was originally used by the city's first telephone company. The antique clock on the corner of the building was erected around 1917 by the bank and was restored to working condition in 1989.

18. PLANTERS STATE BANK-PLANTER'S COFFEEHOUSE (210 S Main St) Originally built for use as a bank, this distinctive Romanesque design was an attempt to resemble a fortress or castle to emphasize the bank's security. The original armoire has been restored.

19. WILKERSON BUILDING (114 N Main St) One of the oldest structures on Main Street, this Italianate building housed tailors in the decade after the Civil War. The terra cotta trim dates it to 1865 after the Henderson railroad bridge was constructed. Such heavy trim was generally shipped by rail.

20. SIMON'S SHOE STORE (100 N Main St) Built in the 1870's, this building gives another example of Mesker Steel storefronts. In the late 1800's, this building housed several businesses and a lodge.

21. CENTRAL PARK (Center of Washington, Main, Elm and First Streets) Central Park is believed to be the oldest municipal park west of the Alleghenies. The Transylvania Company, which founded Henderson, provided for it in the town's 1797 plat. This plat was laid out in a series of squares, which accounts for the symmetry of Main and Elm and the downtown cross streets. The original fountain was erected in 1892 and cost $2,400, while the present fountain, a replica, was erected July 25, 2003.

22. STONE-LAMBERT HOUSE (143 S Elm St) This house has been in the same family for more than 60 years, and was built on part of Lot 178 of the original plat of the town. The Green River limestone used in the house was probably quarried at Bowling Green, Ky.

23. PERKINS-WIDER HOUSE (116 S Elm St) This house was built in 1884 by Capt. Charles G. Perkins, who came to Henderson during the Civil War as the commander of the Union gunboat "Brillian." He courted and married, in 1883, Miss Annie Terry, whose family had settled on this land. He ran the Henderson-Evansville railroad transfer boat until the railroad bridge was completed in 1886.

24. INGRAM-LARAMIE HOUSE (226 S Elm St) Built around 1820 by Wyatt Ingram, who settled in Henderson in 1804, this is one of the oldest houses in Henderson. Mr. Wyatt was a successful tobacco merchant who shipped his goods down the Ohio by raft. He would ride down with the boat and walk back to Henderson. He made the trip 13 times. Ingram and his neighbors built here on Elm rather than on the river because it was higher ground. This house has served as an Episcopal manse and as a popular boarding house.

25. DALLAM-NORMENT HOUSE (208 S Elm St) This Italianate house was built immediately after the Civil War by a Henderson banker and farmer, L.C. Dallam. Legend has it that the 12 x 12 feet floored room in the northwest tower was used to signal riverboats. Many interior features are original to the house.

26. POWELL-CAVANAH HOUSE (216 S Elm St) This house, known as the "Governor Powell" house, was built around 1816-1820 by Captan Lazarus Powell, father of Lazarus Powell who was the governor of Kentucky 1851-55. The one-story addition on the south side was built by Gov. Powell for his law office. The Powell family recalled the ex-governor pacing back and forth in this room as the nation became embroiled in the Civil War.

27. WILSON-EARGOOD HOUSE (226 Elm St) Begun in 1818, the two-story south wing of this house is one of the remaining structures in Henderson, having been built by James Wilson before his death in 1821. Wilson's grandson, Young E. Allison, established Henderson's first newspaper, "The Chronicle." The house originally faced Clay Street.

28. MCCULLOUGH-NALLY HOUSE (304 S Main St) This house was built somewhere around 1847 as the personal residence of Mr. John McCullough, a Presbyterian, who organized Sunday Schools through the South. His daughter, Mary, established the Henderson Female Seminary in the same block and served as principal of the school from 1880-1886.

29. FARMER-LACKEY HOUSE (365 S Main St) This house was built between 1865 and 1873 by John and Elizabeth Pernier. Pernier helped found Holy Name Catholic Church and left $100 "to the poor of Henderson." The tall porches brackets on the cornice were made from hand-sawn and turned wood.

30. OBERDORFER-MASON HOUSE (235 S Main St) This house was built in 1880 by Hanna Oberdorfer, a German Jew who had come with her husband through the port of New Orleans up river to Henderson. He ran a hotel here, and after his death she built this house. The meeting to organize the Jewish congregation was held in her parlor.

31. BACH-MCCOLLOM HOUSE (211 S Main St) This Victorian shingle house was built in 1891 by Professor J.M. Bach, a native of Switzerland, who had come to Henderson in 1883 to take a position as the organist for the First Presbyterian Church and as the music director for the Henderson Female Academy. The Bachs led the 200-member German Singing Society. W.C. Handy served as the Bach's gardener.

32. TOWLES-SASSEEN HOUSE (252 S Main St) Mary Towles Sasseen probably lived here some time between 1861 and 1890. While teaching school in Henderson she decided that others should be honored with a special day. The Kentucky Legislature, in recognition of her work, passed a resolution acclaiming her as the "originator of the idea of Mother's Day nationally". Mary died in childbirth and her child did not survive.

33. HENDERSON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY (101 S Main St) This is the oldest public building left standing in Henderson. Not only is it in good repair, but is still being used for its original purpose, for the library was established in 1894. Edward Asher Jonas, the publisher of the Henderson Journal, secured a $20,000 donation from the Carnegie Foundation for a building with a library, auditorium and gym. The rotunda ceiling has an octagonal stained glass skylight. The walls of the rotunda are adorned with murals depicting the Greek muses of art, science, music and literature. Ten original Audubon prints are on display in an upstairs meeting room.

34. KLEE-MARTIN HOUSE (232 S Main St) William A. Klee built this house at the corner of Washington and Main in 1899 to be convenient to his undertaking business next door. The 2 1/2 story Queen Anne was built on an asymmetrical glass, with stone, wood and terra cotta exterior details of notable quality and with both square and octagonal towers. The double entry door has an excellent sampling of leaded glass.

35. LIBER-HOMECRAFTERS (129 N Main St) Built in 1873, this Italianate commercial property features a good sampling of Mesker Steel storefronts, made in Evansville.

36. SOAPER HOTEL (226 S Main St) In 1924, Richard Henderson Soaper, a tobacco processor, began construction for an up-to-date and modern hotel in downtown Henderson at the cost of $285,000. This six story structure with 104 rooms had every convenience of the most modern hotel, including a coffee shop, assembly hall, ballroom, barbershop, drugstore and beauty parlors. In 1997-98 the hotel underwent a major renovation. This neoclassical building has been the home of many downtown businesses throughout the years. This was the site, during the Civil War, of James Rankin's store.