

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.

When the Ohio river roared 19 feet out of its banks during the 1937 flood, Henderson claimed to be the only completely dry river town between Point Pleasant, W. Va., and Cairo, Ill., thus the saying: "Henderson: On The Ohio River, But Never In It." During the flood, a flotilla of Coast Guard vessels and private boats brought people and animals to Henderson's high ground for safety.

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

(*213 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

(*223 N Main St*) Henderson's oldest bank, Farmer's Bank & Trust, was located here as early as 1876. The National Sales Group firm now operates from this location.

5. L&N BED AND BREAKFAST, LTD.

(*327 N Main St*) The L&N Bed and Breakfast, Ltd. was built in the 1890's by John O'Byrne, an Irish immigrant building contractor. The other houses on the same block have a similar floor plan and were built about the same time.

6. KATTERJOHN-BRANSON HOUSE

(*503 N Main St*) Paul Semonin built this house around 1858, shortly after he constructed the steamboat, "Governor Powell." The Greek Revival front door was added after a fire in 1894. During the Civil War, according to legend, a cannon ball from a river boat went in a side window, out a front window and the only damage was broken window glass.

7. JARVIS-SULLIVAN HOUSE

(*517 N Main St*) The yellow 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

(*525 N Main St*) Judge Paul Alexander Blackwell built this Chateausque house in the 1890's. He owned a hardware, agricultural business. The original metal ornamentation remains on the house.

9. MILLET HILL HOUSE

(*711 N Main St*) Built between 1855 and 1862, this house is located on Lot 26 of the original 1797 survey map of Henderson County. It contains a large basement where the family's slaves may have lived.

10. EISFIELDER-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 Eisfielder, 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 Queen Anne brick 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' 1943-period film, "A League of Their Own," starring Geena Davis, Tom Hanks and Madonna.

14. SOAPER-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 1914 tornado. The Soaper-Preston home was originally the tobacco factory's office.

15. FLOYD-WAUGHON HOUSE

(*422 N Main St*) This home 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.

MORE ABOUT OUR HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

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 built 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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Henderson County Tourist Commission
101 N. Water Street, Henderson, KY
(270) 826-3128 • 1-800-648-3128
www.hendersonky.org

TAKE A WALK THROUGH HISTORIC DOWNTOWN HENDERSON



A DOWNTOWN WALKING TOUR GUIDE

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