

The Historical Buildings of Downtown Birmingham and Five Points South

WALKING TOUR





About Birmingham

Birmingham is the state's largest city, a lively center for arts, entertainment, dining, and shopping. It is also rich in history, known for its post-Civil War industrial past and for its role in the Civil Rights Movement. The walking tours that follow invite you to explore some of the most interesting parts of the city –Upper Downtown, Downtown West, Lower Downtown, and the Heart of Five Points South. While you are discovering the buildings and the stories they tell, keep an eye out for popular restaurants and shops that are fun to browse. Feel free to combine tours or to pick and choose the sites that interest you most. Be aware that often the best view of a building's architecture is from across the street, looking above modern signs and ground-floor remodeling, to see ornamentation on the upper floors.

Featured Tours

- 1 UPPER DOWNTOWN**

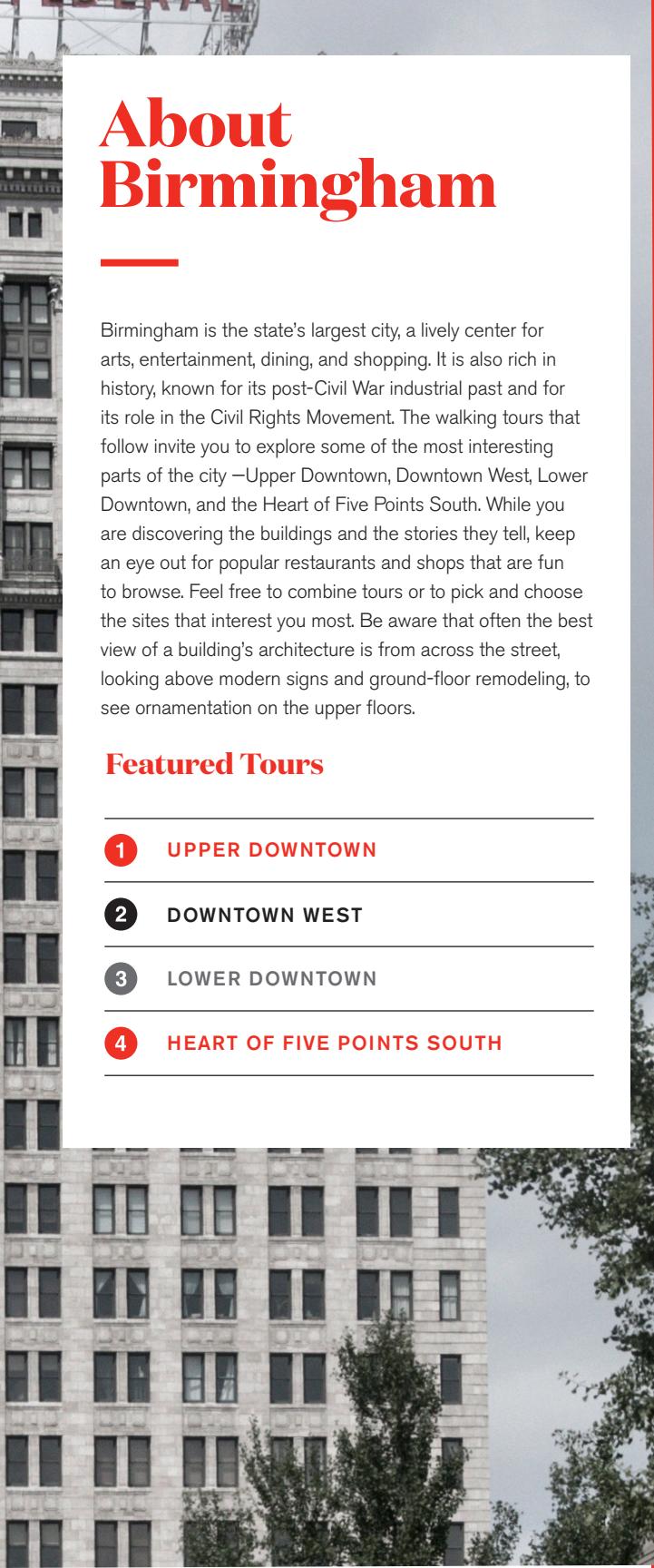
- 2 DOWNTOWN WEST**

- 3 LOWER DOWNTOWN**

- 4 HEART OF FIVE POINTS SOUTH**

Downtown Overview

In 1871 ten men bought some 4,000 acres of undeveloped land in north central Alabama, staking their futures on the promise of nearby mineral resources and the coming of two railroad lines. The minerals were the ingredients for making iron, the basic material driving the country's industrial economy. The men laid out a town and called it Birmingham. The early businesses and residences clustered within blocks of one another, starting near the railroad tracks, with fledgling industries nearby. As the city grew, newer and larger buildings replaced most of those structures. Today what remains from the city's first three decades are downtown churches built in the 1880s and '90s, in what used to be neighborhoods of Victorian houses; a scattering of warehouses and buildings of the same period that tell of the city's pioneer days; and Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, reminding us of the booming furnaces and foundries that once lined the tracks.



In addition to the tours that follow,
you may want to visit these nearby sites:

(A)

Alabama Sports Hall of Fame

2150 Richard Arrington Jr Blvd N. The ASHOF is a magnificent state treasure, dedicated to the celebration and preservation of Alabama's exceptional sports heritage. Out of ESPN's list of the top 100 athletes of the century, five out of the top fifteen greatest ever are in the ASHOF: Jesse Owens, Hank Aaron, Joe Louis, Willie Mays, and Carl Lewis. With more than 5,000 sports artifacts elegantly displayed in the 33,000 square foot building, the ASHOF has become the benchmark for other sports museums across the country.

(B)

Greater Birmingham Convention & Visitors Bureau/Visitor Information Centers

*Offices – 950 22nd Street, North – Suite 550
Downtown Visitors Center – 2109 Richard Arrington, Jr., Blvd N.* The Convention & Visitors Bureau is the go-to place for travelers in the greater Birmingham area. Stop in one of three convenient Visitor Information Centers operated by the CVB for maps, brochures, and information from a well-versed staff. One center is located nearby along the ground floor of the Sheraton Hotel, with another at Vulcan Park and Museum, and a third at the Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport.

(C)

Oak Hill Cemetery

1120 19th St N: Pedestrian and automobile entrance off 19th St N, pedestrian-only off 11th Ave N. As the city's first cemetery, established 1871, Oak Hill became the resting place for most Birmingham pioneers and leading citizens, including the first mayor, entrepreneurs, industrialists, and governors, as well as a well-known madam. Leading civil rights advocate Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth is among more recent burials of note there. The Birmingham Public Library maintains searchable online data from Oak Hill interment records.

(D)

Railroad Park

Along 1st Ave S between 14th and 18th St. Railroad Park is an award-winning 19-acre green space downtown, running parallel to the tracks that gave birth to the city. This historical setting is a venue for recreation, family activities, concerts, and cultural events. The park is 30% water, with a lake, a rain curtain, a bio-filtration wetlands area, and ponds and streams, all irrigated by onsite wells. In addition to winding paths through the park, the Rail Trail extending the length of the park serves runners and walkers. At its highest point it affords impressive city views.



(E)

Regions Field

1401 1st Ave S. Birmingham's acclaimed minor league baseball park, which opened in 2013, is across 1st Ave S from Railroad Park. Home to the Birmingham Barons, Regions Field is a state-of-the-art 8,500 seat facility, with a backdrop of downtown skyscrapers and, to the south, of Red Mountain.

(F)

Negro Southern League Museum

At Regions Field on the corner of 1st Ave S and 16th St. Part of the Regions Field complex is the Negro Southern League Museum. This interactive facility tells the story of the Birmingham Black Barons and other baseball greats who played at Birmingham's Rickwood Field, the oldest ballpark in the country. Displays include the oldest Negro League trophy, along with uniforms and artifacts.

4

Birmingham Civil Rights Heritage Trail

In many locations downtown. In front of the courthouse is a pair of tall free-standing signs with life-sized photographs. Here and elsewhere in the park and downtown, signs like these mark places of importance in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement in the city. Be on the watch for the signs in other spots on Tours 1 and 2.

5

Linn-Henley Library

SE corner of the park. The Linn-Henley Research Library (1927) served as the central library for the Birmingham Public Library system until a new central library was built across Richard Arrington Jr Blvd N. Today the original building houses historical research resources in its rare books and maps collections and departments of Archives and Manuscripts and of Southern History, which, among other focuses, is a center for genealogical research. Go inside the library to enjoy Ezra Winter murals illustrating children's fairy tales (in the entrance area) and scenes from world literature (in the main reading room).

6

Central Library

2100 Park Place. Walk east to the corner of Park Place and Richard Arrington Jr Blvd N, stopping to view other Civil Rights Heritage Trail markers. On the NE corner of the intersection you will see the Central Library (1984) of the Birmingham Public Library system.

BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM OF ART



1

Linn Park

Bounded by Rev. Abraham Woods Jr Blvd, the park side of Richard Arrington Jr Blvd, Park Place, and 20th St N. Start the tour on the north side of Linn Park near Rev Abraham Woods Jr Blvd. When it was first laid out as a public park in 1871, it was surrounded by residences of early settlers. Today, Linn Park anchors a civic complex and is the site of festivals and special events. The park holds a variety of statues, monuments, and markers connected to the history of the city, including a marble sculpture of Mary Cahalan (facing the library entrance), a former school teacher and principal, by Giuseppe Moretti, who also created the statue of Vulcan on Red Mountain. A long-standing monument to Confederate soldiers was removed from the park in the wake of the 2020 killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

2

Birmingham Museum of Art

2000 Rev. Abraham Woods Jr Blvd. Facing the north side of Linn Park is the Birmingham Museum of Art, one of the finest regional museums in the United States. It houses a diverse collection of paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, and decorative arts, as well as a café and a museum store.

3

Jefferson County Courthouse

716 Richard Arrington Jr Blvd N. The Jefferson County Courthouse (1929-32) followed on the heels of the library in beginning to transform the park from residential to a civic center of public buildings. Bas-relief panels over the park-side entrance depict aspects of the state's and county's history, including ties to Native Americans; the Spanish, French, and English; and early American settlement.



7

Tutwiler Hotel

SW corner Park Place & Richard Arrington Jr Blvd N. Turning south on Richard Arrington Jr Blvd N, note the Tutwiler Hotel (1914), which was originally the Ridgely Apartments. It was renovated

in 1986 and renamed for the city's premier hotel, which had been demolished about a decade earlier.



8

Whilldin Building

513 & 517 Richard Arrington Jr Blvd N. In the next block is the Whilldin Building (1924). Its north half (517) has a recessed brick-and-terra-cotta façade.

Look for the name of the architect, D. O. Whilldin, incised in the terra cotta above the windows to the left of the door that led to his office. The southern half of the building (513) has a limestone façade. On the building's south wall is a mural celebrating the New York Yankees, commissioned by the lawyer (and Yankees fan) who owns the building.

9

Redmont Hotel

2101 5th Ave N. On the SE corner of 5th Ave N, the Redmont Hotel (1925) is a remnant of what was once, during the heyday of train travel, a six-block stretch of hotels, from the Terminal Station to the heart of the city. The hotel is named for Red Mountain, on the southern edge of the city, where iron ore was mined for Birmingham furnaces and today the statue of Vulcan stands. The singer Hank Williams spent the night here on Dec. 30, 1952, on his way to perform in West Virginia and Ohio; he died two days later, on Jan. 1, 1953, at age 29.

10

Age-Herald Building

2107 5th Ave N. Next to the Redmont Hotel stands the Age-Herald Building (1910), originally home to one of the city's leading newspapers. The sculptures on the façade—owls flanking the globe-topped entrance pediment and owls and globes at the cornice—are said to signify the wise publication of news gathered from all over the world.



11

Cathedral Church of the Advent

SE corner of 20th St & 6th Ave N. Walk a block west on 5th Ave N and then turn right to walk a block north on 20th

St to the Cathedral Church of the Advent (1893), one of several pioneer churches that maintain an active presence downtown. In 1982 this parish church became the cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama. The nave is usually open during the week, as is the Rector's Garden that links the church and the Diocesan headquarters to the south. There is a bookstore and a school (K-8) within the complex.



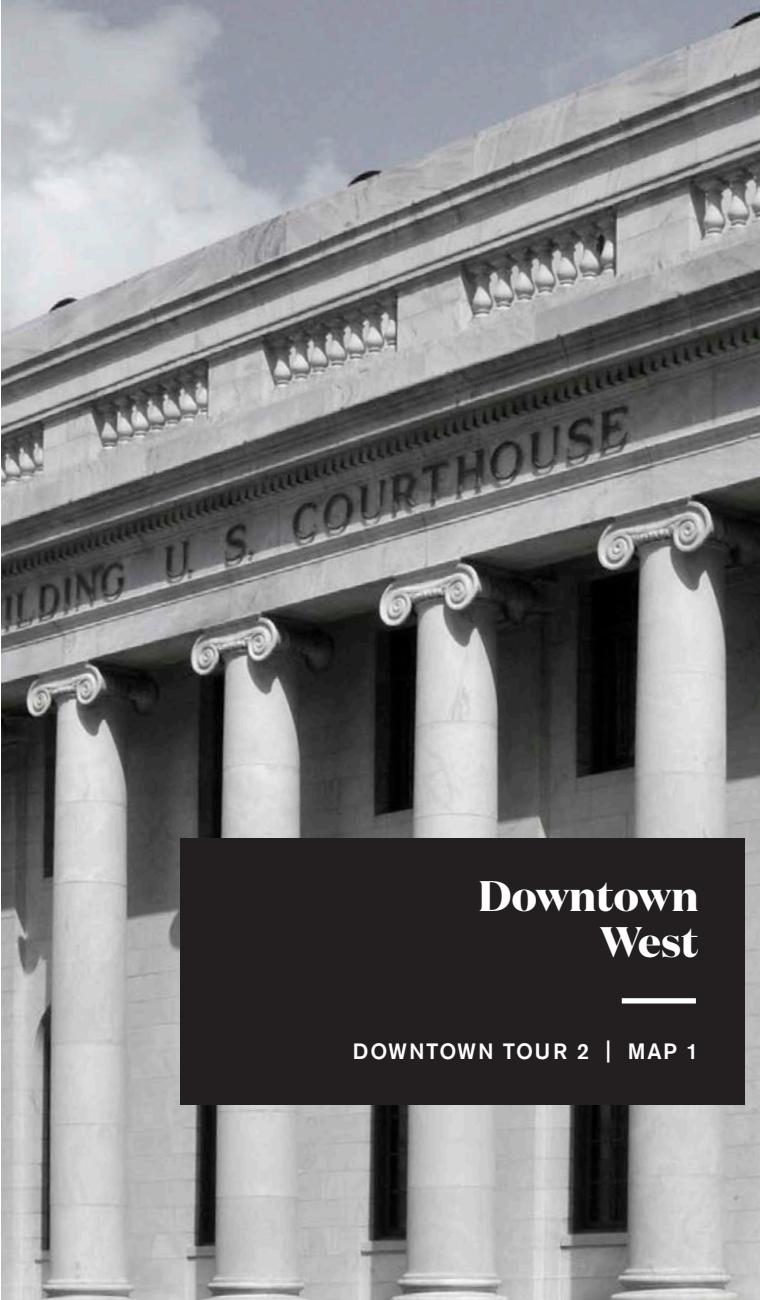
12

First United Methodist Church

SW corner of 19th St & 6th Ave N. Walk a block west on 6th Ave to 19th St N to find another pioneer church,

First United Methodist (1893). An example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style, it characteristically features textured brownstone, rhythmic curves, and bold, deep-set arches. The interior centers on a large auditorium with striking rose windows.

From First United Methodist Church, return to your starting point in Linn Park by walking north to Park Place, turn right to walk to the park, and then return along the west side of the park. Or if you wish to continue with Tour 2, walk 2 blocks west on 6th Ave N to Kelly Ingram Park.



Downtown West

DOWNTOWN TOUR 2 | MAP 1

1

Kelly Ingram Park

Bounded by 6th Ave N, 17th St N, 5th Ave N, and 16th St N.

Start the tour at the corner of 6th Ave and 17th St N. Kelly Ingram Park is another of the city's three original parks, best known as the staging ground for large-scale civil rights demonstrations in 1963. Walk around the park to see sculptures commemorating heroes and historic events from this time, as well as Birmingham Civil Rights Heritage Trail markers. You may want to access a free guided audio tour of the park available through mobile phones by dialing 205-307-5455.



2

Sixteenth Street Baptist Church

1530 6th Ave N. Sixteenth Street Baptist Church (1911) is where four little girls died when the church was bombed during the civil rights protests of 1963.

Designed by a local African-American architect and built by a local black-owned construction company, its sophistication makes it an architectural landmark as well as a landmark in civil rights history. Tours of the facility can be scheduled.



3

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

520 16th St N. Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (1992) is an interpretive museum and research center dedicated to civil and human

rights. Its moving multimedia exhibits provide a self-directed journey from the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and '60s to the human rights struggles of today. In addition, changing exhibits cover a variety of related topics.

4

Fourth Avenue Historic District

1600-1800 blocks of 4th Ave N & parts of the 300 blocks of 17th & 18th St N. Walk around to the south side of Kelly Ingram Park and take 17th Street a block to the Fourth Avenue Historic District. The district, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is a remnant of what was once the heart of Birmingham's black social, cultural, and professional life, during the Jim Crow era of racial segregation.



Building (1922) was designed by two black architects (one, the first black graduate of MIT, 1892, taught at Tuskegee Institute). Lawyers, doctors, dentists, journalists, and other influential members of the African-American community had their offices here. This includes the office of attorney Arthur Shores, who prepared milestone civil rights cases that helped end legal segregation. The building's second-floor ballroom, where jazz greats such as Duke Ellington and Count Basie played, was a center of black social life as well.



5

Masonic Temple Building

1630 4th Ave N. Built by the same African-American construction company as Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, the Masonic Temple

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6

Carver Cinema / Jazz Hall of Fame

1631 4th Ave N. The Carver Cinema/Jazz Hall of Fame (ca. 1941) is notable for its Art Moderne architecture as well as exhibits that tell the story of jazz and the well-known musicians with ties to Birmingham and Alabama.

7

Eddie Kendrick Memorial Park

SW corner 4th Ave and 18th St N. Walking on the south side of the street to get a flavor of district life, go a block east to the corner of 4th Ave and 18th Street to find Eddie Kendrick Memorial Park, honoring the Birmingham native and Temptations lead singer. Step inside the park to fully enjoy the lively sculpture. (Kendrick added an "s" to his name for the stage.)

8

Alabama Penny Savings Bank / Pythian Temple Building

310 18th St N. Mid-block to the south on 18th Street is the Alabama Penny Savings Bank (1913; later Pythian Temple), also designed by an African-American architect and built by a black construction company. A pastor of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was among the founders of the Alabama Penny Savings Bank, the state's first black-owned bank and the second largest African-American bank in the country in 1907. The building initially housed the offices of The Birmingham Reporter and the Colored Citizens' League of Birmingham, as well as the offices of the first black attorney to practice in Birmingham. The building was later acquired by the Knights of Pythias, a fraternal organization.

9

Lyric Theatre

1800 3rd Ave N. At the corner of 18th Street and 3rd Ave N, the Lyric Theatre (1913) recalls the entertainment district that once boasted a dozen or more theaters within a few blocks of here. The Lyric opened in January 1914 as a vaudeville venue, where stars such as Will Rogers, Jack Benny, Mae West, and the Marx brothers, among others, played in its elegant interior. When vaudeville declined, it became a movie house. After years of neglect and deterioration, an \$11 million restoration has given the Lyric a new life. The Lyric and Alabama Theatres are part of the Birmingham Theater District, which also includes the nearby Sidewalk Film Center + Cinema showing independent and arthouse films. Sidewalk Cinema is located in the basement of the Pizitz building (12).



10 Alabama Theatre

1817 3rd Ave N. Mid-block on the opposite side of the avenue is the Alabama Theatre (1927), a magnificent movie palace that today hosts a variety of movies, concerts, dance recitals, and special events. If you are able, visit the lavish interior to see its

ornate decoration and grand spaces, and, if you are lucky, hear someone playing its Mighty Wurlitzer organ. On the sidewalk in front is a historic marker and a walkway of stars with names of famous Alabamians connected to movies, television, and the theater.



11 3rd & 19th Retail Intersection

3rd Ave & 19th St N. At the end of the block, at the intersection of 3rd Ave and 19th St, is the retail corner that was once the heart of downtown shopping. Three

structures built during the Great Depression make this one of the city's most memorable expressions of urban design (others being the Heaviest Corner and Five Points Circle). To best appreciate the sensitive way the buildings compliment and relate to each other's streamlined forms, stand on the corner with your back to the parking lot. Look at how the three buildings "talk" to one another, how their corners are canted or curved to acknowledge one another. They're all different, but their scale, orientation, materials, and coloration are compatible, knitting them together to create a unified backdrop for life on the street. McWane Science Center *SW corner* (originally Loveman's Department Store; 1935) is today full of hands-on, science-learning experiences for children of all ages. The Kress Building *NE corner* (1939) was renovated by the law firm that now occupies it. Meanwhile, the Woolworth Building *SE corner* (1939) awaits renovation.

12

Pizitz Building

SW corner 2nd Ave & 19th St N. Before you leave the intersection, look south to see another former department store, Pizitz (1923, 1926), which now houses a the popular Pizitz Food Hall on the first floor and the Sidewalk Cinema + Film Center in the basement of the building.

13



Old U.S. Post Office/now Robert S. Vance Federal Building & U.S. Courthouse

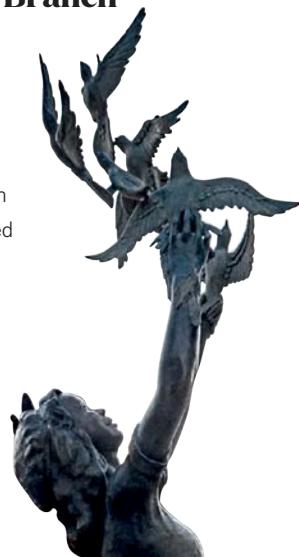
1800 5th Ave N. Walk two blocks north on 19th Street to the Old U. S. Post Office (now the Robert S. Vance Federal Bldg & U.S. Courthouse; 1921). This dignified government building of white marble, with its monumental row of Ionic columns, occupies the entire block along 5th Ave between 18th and 19th Streets. In 1990, the building was dedicated to Federal Judge Robert S. Vance, who was assassinated in 1989.

14

Old Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta Birmingham Branch

1801 5th Ave N. An example of 20th-century classicism with Art Deco influences, the former Birmingham Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta (1926) is awaiting adaptation to a new use. The building was designed by the same architects as the Alabama Power Company building, the next stop on the tour.

FOUR SPIRITS STATUE,
KELLY INGRAM PARK





15

Alabama Power Company

600 18th St N. Walk a block north on 18th Street to see the headquarters of Alabama Power Company (1925, 1985). In its old and new headquarters buildings, the company has given the state some of its finest urban architecture. Prominent local firm Warren, Knight and Davis designed the Art Deco 1925 skyscraper, with its eye-catching form and colorful brick-and-tile ornamentation near the top. New York sculptor Edward Field Sanford created the three limestone figures at the building's main entrance, representing power, light, and heat, and, crowning the building, the gilded statue of Electra holding sheaves of lightning bolts. The huge 1985 addition goes out of its way not to overwhelm the historic 1925 structure while it meets the office needs of one of the state's largest companies. A slanted glass atrium full of light on the interior aids the transition between old and new.

Return to your starting point at Kelly Ingram Park by walking one block west to 17th St and 6th Ave N.



Lower
Downtown

DOWNTOWN TOUR 3 | MAP 1



1

Morris Avenue at 20th Street

Start the tour at the corner of Morris and 20th St N. Take time to read both sides of the historic marker. Then explore a block or two of the city's first warehouse district, built along the railroad tracks that connected the city to markets and fed its growth. You may want to stop in The Peanut Place for boiled and roasted peanuts and to admire the old roasting machinery. (To see more of the trains that sparked the birth of the city, visit award-winning Railroad Park, some three-to-four blocks south and west.)



2

Heaviest Corner on Earth

20th St & 1st Ave N. A block north of Morris on 20th Street is a group of

buildings that tells about Birmingham emerging as an urban center in the early 20th century. It's easy to imagine how the nickname Heaviest Corner on Earth came about as, in the span of a single decade, four steel-frame towers rose to dwarf the city's existing two-to-four-story buildings, and thriving businesses filled them to capacity. This is the most distinctive concentration of skyscrapers in the city. The oldest, the Woodward Building *SW corner 20th St & 1st Ave N* (1902), expresses clearly the structural frame that characterizes what is known as the Chicago school. The Brown-Marx Building *NE corner 20th St & 1st Ave N* (1906, 1908) has suffered from remodeling, including removal of an exceptionally large and handsome cornice and of architectural treatment on the lower floors. The Empire Building *NW corner 20th St & 1st Ave N* (1909) showcases the decorative versatility of architectural terra cotta in its twisted columns, sculpted busts, and molded details. Notice how the multicolored accents enliven the glazed white surface near the top, and look for the E's (for Empire) along the edge of the cornice. The American Trust & Savings Building *SE corner 20th St & 1st Ave N* (1912), also faced in white terra cotta, with marble pilasters at its base, is the last and the tallest of the four buildings. The building's clock was a popular meeting place.

3

McAdory and Caldwell-Milner Buildings

2013 1st Ave N and 2015 1st Ave N. Walk east on 1st Ave. About mid-block (best seen from across the street) are two of the city's finest remaining Victorian buildings: McAdory (1888) and Caldwell-Milner (1887). Look above the ground floor for the date and owners' initials on one of the facades and the owner's name on the other. These buildings show the scale of the city before the Heaviest Corner was built.

4

Steiner Building

2101 1st Ave N. At the end of this block, on the SE corner where Richard Arrington Jr Blvd crosses, stands another Victorian structure, the Steiner Building (1890). It is the city's only Richardsonian Romanesque style commercial building, distinguished by its fine brickwork and massive rough-cut masonry arches. It was built to house the banking offices of Burghard and Sigfried Steiner.

5

Birmingham Railway, Light & Power Building

2100 1st Ave N. The Birmingham Railway, Light and Power Building (ca. 1928; now called the Landmark Center) is another downtown structure faced in gleaming white terra cotta with classical details.



STEINER
BUILDING

6

Old Protective Life Building

2027 1st Ave N. The old Protective Life Building (1928), on the SW corner of the intersection, is an Art Deco skyscraper with Gothic influences designed by the talented firm Warren Knight and Davis.



7

Phenix Insurance Co. Building and Dewberry Drugs Building

118 Richard Arrington Jr Blvd N and SW corner
Richard Arrington Jr Blvd & 2nd Ave N. Near the next

intersection, one block north, read the historic marker about two of the oldest buildings downtown, Dewberry Drugs (ca. 1880) and Phenix Insurance Co. (ca. 1884).



8

City Federal Building

2024 2nd Ave N. Across the street, on the NW corner, stands the City Federal Building (1913), the last and most monumental of the city's early skyscrapers. At 25 stories, it claimed the title of tallest in the South for decades and held Birmingham's record until 1969.

9

Florentine Building

2101 2nd Ave N. On the SE corner, the Florentine Building (1927) exemplifies 1920s exuberance, with its rich use of terra cotta and marble and abundant classical Renaissance references.

10

Denechaud Building

2107 2nd Ave N. Walk along the north side of 2nd Ave to get the best view of the Victorian buildings in this block. Next to the Florentine Building stands the Denechaud Building (ca. 1887), built as a European-style restaurant and hotel.

11



Zinszer Building

2117 2nd Ave N. The magnificent cast-iron-front Zinszer Building (1889), originally Peter Zinszer's Mammoth Furniture House, had rooms to rent above the ground floor. It is a great example of how cast iron can be formed in molds to create classical columns and ornamentation.

12

2121 2nd Ave N.

2121 2nd Ave N. Next door, an elaborate pressed metal cornice crowns the brick and stone striped façade of 2121 2nd Ave N (1889), which, like several other buildings of the same age nearby, originally had retail uses on the ground floor and rooms for boarders on the upper floors.

13

Levy's Fine Jewelry Building

2116 2nd Ave N. Across the street, Levy's Fine Jewelry Building (1883) is one of the oldest remaining downtown, along with Dewberry Drugs and the Phenix Insurance Co. Notice the narrow door between the two storefronts, which originally led to residential rooms on the second floor. Though the building is modest, there are decorative hood molds above the windows. Look for the mark of a Birmingham foundry near the base of a cast-iron column attached to the building.

14

Waters Building

211 22nd St N. Continue east to 22nd Street and then turn left to walk toward 3rd Ave N. Midway up the block is the Waters Building (1888), which like others just viewed, was built as the city was beginning to prosper in its second decade. Like others, the building originally had retail on the ground floor with rooms for boarders above. Note the hood moldings above the windows and the finely detailed cornice at the roofline.

15



Cathedral of St. Paul

2120 3rd Ave N. Continue north to 3rd Ave, where the Cathedral of St. Paul (1893) anchors the northwest corner. Built as a church for Birmingham's Catholic population, it became the cathedral of the Catholic

Diocese of Birmingham in 1969. This bold Victorian Gothic structure, with sharply pointed twin spires and contrasting red brick and white stone, featured prominently on the city skyline until more recent times when high-rise buildings came to dominate. Adjacent to the cathedral stands what was originally the rectory (1922) and buildings behind the cathedral originally housed a school (1925) and a convent (1935).

16

Massey Building

SW corner 3rd Ave & Richard Arrington Jr Blvd N. At the western end of the block, at the intersection of 3rd Avenue at Richard Arrington Jr Blvd, you will see the ornate roofline of the 10-story Massey Building (1920). The main entrance is even more elaborate, with twisted columns and grand classical motifs in molded terra cotta.



17

Title Building

NW corner 3rd Ave & Richard Arrington Jr Blvd N. On the north side of 3rd Ave is the city's second steel-frame skyscraper, the nine-story Title Building (1903). Designed by the architect of the first two buildings at the Heaviest Corner, it has fine brickwork but is regrettably missing its cornice, removed in 1956.

18

First Presbyterian Church

2100 4th Ave N. A block north, at Richard Arrington Jr Blvd and 4th Ave N, First Presbyterian Church (1888) is the oldest church building downtown. Its red pressed brick,



terra cotta tiles, and multicolor slate roof are characteristic of the Victorian Gothic style. The church's most distinctive feature, its handsome bell tower, marked the original entrance off what is now Richard Arrington Jr Blvd. In 1921 the entrance was relocated to 4th Ave because of street widening. You can still see the terra cotta decoration and broad arch that marked the old entrance on what is now the side of the church. In 1924 a 25-bell carillon was installed in the tower.

19

Birmingham Green

20th St. N. Walk west one block to 20th Street, and turn left again to return to your starting point. Historically 20th Street served as the city's primary north-south axis, running from the railroad tracks to the park. In the 1970s the street was landscaped as part of a downtown revitalization effort and became known as Birmingham Green.

20

Age Building

212 20th St N. Along the way, you pass the Age Building (ca. 1889) a narrow structure of tall, elegant proportions, molded classical decoration, and large areas of glass characteristic of cast-iron-front façades, one of only two that survive downtown.

Return to your starting point by continuing south to Morris Ave.



ALABAMA POWER COMPANY



Heart of Five Points South

FIVE POINTS TOUR | MAP 2

Five Points Overview

Nowhere in Birmingham, outside of downtown, is there such a rich concentration of historic buildings and design quality as Five Points South. It grew up as a "streetcar suburb," as people who had come to Birmingham to seek their fortunes began moving south to what was often called South Highlands because of its location south of downtown and its higher elevations. They sought to escape the dirt, noise, and crime of the raw, young industrial town, aided by early street railway connections. In 1887 the area incorporated as the Town of Highland and in 1893 it was annexed into the city of Birmingham. In the 1920s retail stores in the latest trend-setting architecture began changing the residential character of the Five Points Circle and nearby streets. The Great Depression and post-World War II suburban flight brought setbacks, but in recent decades Five Points has begun reclaiming its vitality, thanks to renewed investment and the appeal of urban life, its restaurant and entertainment scene, and its varied architecture.

On this walk you will see turreted Victorian houses, handsome skyscraper apartments, buildings with Art Deco motifs, and historic places of worship, all within a few blocks. One house and two churches on the tour date from the short-lived Town of Highland period.



1

Five Points Circle

Intersection of 11th Ave, Magnolia Ave & 20th St S. The buildings around the Five Points Circle create a sense of place resembling a sophisticated European plaza. By encircling the land where five streets converge, the buildings' bending and curving facades relate to the center (once a traffic circle) and to one another. Similarities in form and materials add to the visual unity.



5

The Storyteller Fountain

Eastern side of the circle. In front of the church is The Storyteller Fountain (1991), the work of acclaimed Alabama artist and long-time Birmingham resident, the late Frank Fleming.

2

Studio Arts Building

NW corner of 11th Ave & 20th St S. The Studio Arts Building is a 1994 interpretation of the 1910 building that it replaced after the latter suffered severe fire damage. The original building's curving façade responded to its circular setting and established a precedent for future buildings.



6

Highlands United Methodist Church

Eastern side of the circle, behind the fountain. Highlands United Methodist Church (1909; bell tower 1921) provides the circle's dominant

focus. The architect of Birmingham's grand Terminal Station (1907; demolished 1969) designed the church shortly after Terminal Station's completion. (He designed Atlanta's Fox Theatre some two decades later).

7

Spanish Stores

SE corner of 20th St & 11th Ave S. To the right of the church—echoing its red tile roof and stucco walls—are the Spanish Stores (1926, 1930). The way the building sits on its site helps define the circle as a plaza.

8

Munger Building

SW corner of 20th St & 11th Ave S. Across 20th Street the Munger Building (ca. 1929) also reflects the curves of the circle in the way its façade bends away in reverse. Notice the use of such popular Art Deco motifs as sunflowers, chevrons, and plant forms, some of which recur on other nearby buildings.



4

Ware Building

NE corner of 20th St & Magnolia Ave S. The Ware Building (1930) features materials and mid-to-late-1920s Art Deco motifs similar to those of other buildings on and near the circle.

9

Terrace Court Apartments

NW corner of Highland Ave & 20th St S. A block down 20th Street from the circle, the Terrace Court Apartments (1907) brought apartment living, along with heightened sophistication and a more urban scale to the character of the neighborhood. It was the first skyscraper apartment house built in Birmingham and possibly the Southeast. Tenants had a roof garden for entertaining, a dining room on the first floor, and card and billiard rooms on the ground floor.

10

St. Mary's-on-the-Highlands Episcopal Church

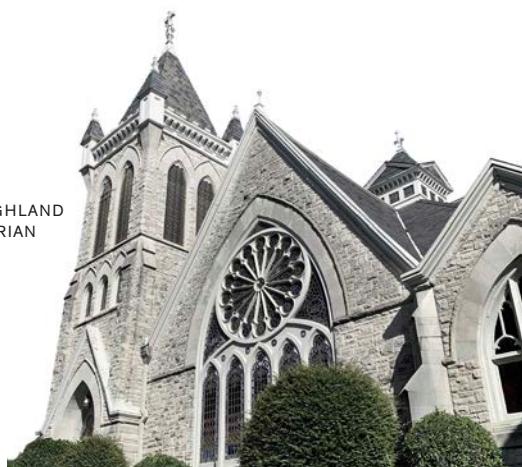
NE corner of 12th Ave & 19th St S. A block up the hill from Terrace Court (Highland Avenue becomes 12th Avenue South) is St. Mary's-on-the-Highlands Episcopal Church (1892), built in the heart of some of the finest residences (now demolished) in the Town of Highland. The church was designed by an Englishman to resemble an English parish church.

11

Shepherd-Sloss Building

SE corner of Highland Ave & 20th St S. Retrace your footsteps down the hill to Highland Ave, where the Shepherd-Sloss Building (1928) stands caddy-corner from Terrace Court. It was inspired by a trip to California, where one of the developers had seen some of the first shopping centers that provided parking.

SOUTH HIGHLAND
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH



12

Hassinger-Daniels House/Carousel Carving School

2028 Highland Ave. Walk east on Highland to view the Hassinger-Daniels House (1898), now a bed and breakfast.



13

Richmond Apartments

2030 Highland Ave. Next door is another early apartment building, the Richmond Apartments (ca. 1914), one of the best examples of a Craftsman style apartment building in the city. Attractive features include the grassy courtyard, open balconies, and spacious apartments that provided a suitable housing alternative for those who could not—or chose not to—own a home.

14

South Highland Presbyterian Church

2035 Highland Ave. South Highland Presbyterian Church (1892), like St. Mary's, dates from the Town of Highland. Built of split-faced limestone, it features a magnificent rose window within a pointed arch facing Highland Avenue.

15

Temple Emanu-El

NE corner Highland Ave & Richard Arrington Jr Blvd S. Caddy-corner across Highland is Temple Emanu-El (1913), built for Birmingham's Reform Jewish congregation. The handsome historic structure was designed by the architect of Terrace Court Apartments and several downtown skyscrapers.

16

Southern Life and Health Building

2121 Highland Ave. Across Highland, the Southern Life and Health Building (1927) brought the first large office building (for an insurance company) to residential Highland Avenue. The building draws on classical architecture for its symmetry, proportions, columns, and ornament.

17

Bradshaw House

2154 Highland Ave. The Bradshaw House (ca. 1890) exemplifies the Queen Anne style, with its trademark exuberance and variety, expressed here in vertical massing, steep roof and gables, cupola, scalloped shingles, and gingerbread trim. Along with the Hassinger-Daniels House, the Bradshaw House reminds us that Highland Avenue was, in its earliest days, the city's grandest residential boulevard.

18

Temple Beth-El

2179 Highland Ave. At the end of this block on the other side of the street is Temple Beth-El (1927), built for the city's Conservative Jewish congregation.



19

First Church of Christ, Scientist

2031 11th Ave S. Go back down Highland to Richard Arrington Jr Blvd and turn to head north a block. At 11th Ave turn left toward the Five Points Circle. On the corner is an office that was originally First Church of Christ, Scientist (1911).

20

Dulion Apartments and LaSalle Apartments

2030 11th Ave S & 2028 11th Ave S. Directly across the street are the Dulion Apartments (1920), the first of several 1920s skyscraper apartments built on the city's Southside, and to the west, the LaSalle Apartments (1926).

21

Fred Jones Building

1901 11th Ave S. Continue west beyond the circle intersection to the corner of 11th Ave and 19th St S. On the SE corner of the intersection is the Fred Jones Building (1928; now Golden Temple), another of the Five Points retail buildings sporting sunflowers and other Art Deco style motifs. The original owner, Fred Jones, was the proprietor of a popular delicatessen and ice cream shop. The second floor, where baking, salad making, and ice cream freezing took place, now houses the Birmingham Festival Theatre.

22

Southside Baptist Church

Convergence of 19th St & 10th Court S, facing 11th Ave S. Across the street, Southside Baptist Church (1911) rises impressively as an imposing Roman Ionic temple.

From here you can make your way back to the starting point or explore the Five Points neighborhood further.

SOUTHSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH







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