

A Self-Guided Walking Tour
from the
State Theatre
to the
Easton Parking Garage

© 2007 by Richard F. Hope

If you parked in the Easton Parking Garage and rode the trolley to the State Theatre, you might want to consider walking the short 1-1/2 block back to your car. This short tour guide can draw your attention to some of the sights along the way – just a small sample of some of the hidden treasures in Easton’s historic district.

The **State Theatre** building itself was first built in 1873 as a bank. It became the Neumeyer Theater for vaudeville/silent films in 1910, and in 1914 was renamed the Colonial Theatre and began running silent films accompanied only by an orchestra.



- In 1925, it was redesigned as a vaudeville theater by architect William H. Lee, and opened the next year. The interior decoration was inspired mostly by the style of Old Spain, but included some Italian ornaments including painted wall treatments inspired by the Davanzanti Palace of Florence, Italy. In its run with vaudeville before 1929, the State Theatre hosted Milton Berle, Fatty Arbuckel, Eddie Foy, magician Harry Blackstone, and ventriloquist Edgar Bergen (with, of course, Charlie McCarthy).
- Remodeled again in 1929, it was used to showcase first run movies, sometimes run in connection with big bands or revues. Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra both sang at the State. The building was restored by a citizens group in 1985 – 1990, and continues to hold a full theatrical season each year.
- The building also includes the State Theatre Art Gallery (western wing to the corner of Fifth Street), which was renovated from the old Best Market building and opened in 1991.

As you leave the **State Theatre** look to your right (West on Northampton Street). At the corner, on the other side of 5th Street, is a small stone house partially encased in modern brickwork, and now being renovated. This was the home of Col. Robert L. Hooper,

Jr., one of three superintendents of Washington's Continental Army magazines nationally during the Revolutionary War, and the Deputy Commissary of Transportation for General



Sullivan's 1779 expedition that marked the demise of the Iroquois Confederacy in America. Some local tradition holds this building is the oldest in Easton, pre-dating the Bachmann Publick House (the stone tavern at the corner of Northampton and Second Streets, dating from 1753). Behind the **Hooper House** lie the **Rock Church** and the **Easton Area Public Library** (based on a Carnegie grant), built on top of an old cemetery still housing two of Easton's leading citizens – but that is beyond the scope of this tour!

Across Northampton Street from the Hooper House, at the SW corner of Northampton and 5th Streets, is the **Boyer Bldg.**, with its ornate roof cornice. Named for Harry J. Boyer, who operated a firm of hatters here in the 1880s, the building has also been used as the offices of Easton's Mayor and Treasurer, and during the 1870s as a newspaper office. On the SE corner, also under a modern brick facade, is the building that was



Heckman's Oyster Bar at the time of the Civil War. Next door was once the **Boas Beer Saloon and German Emigrant Boarding House** (now home of Phyl's Theatre Vue Antiques). Then, the 4-1/2 story red brick building with cream decorative window trim (third from the corner) across and somewhat West of the State Theatre entrance is the **Golden Swan Hotel**, opened at the time of the Revolutionary War, and operated through the 19th Century as simply The Swan. It was extensively remodeled in 1906 as the **Hotel Stirling**, and with the opening of the State Theatre offered "Specials" to "theatrical people".

Further down the block is a welcome modern addition to Easton: the **Villa Tempo Italiano**, an Italian garden with two bocce courts opened in 2001. On summer Sundays from 9 to 1, in particular, people gather during the broadcast of the "Tempo Italiano" radio show to play bocce and drink coffee.



As you walk down Northampton Street towards Centre Square, on the State Theatre (North) side of the brick building with a decorative is the **Lawall Drugstore Bldg.** in 1851 next to William Lawall's building in 1871 for his successful became the President of the Bank. During his funeral in 1892, the business buildings on the 400 block as a mark of their respect.



street you may notice a 5-story roof cornice (at No.437). This Cyrus Lawall started business Store (see above), but built this business. He ultimately Northampton County National local merchants closed all of

Next door (at No.433) is the **Clemens House**, named after physician B. Clemens who practiced in Easton at the time of the Civil war. His widow, Susan, was recorded as suffering from "nervous prostration" in 1880 – probably in part due to her artistic teenage son Maurice, then age 14. However, Maurice grew up to become a "musician of Easton", a choral leader, and in 1902 was elected the Captain of Company I of the 13th Regiment, Pennsylvania National Guard. No doubt his Mother would have been proud.

Looking across the street again, at 432 Northampton St., the 3-story white brick Victorian with elaborate buttressed roof cornice is the **Werner Bldg.**, built in approximately 1905 for watchmaker William Werner. He then co-owned the business with his brother from Bangor. William ultimately branched out on his own, added jewelry, luxury goods, and specially designed pianos to his wares, as well as becoming the nation's first wholesaler for Thomas Edison's new phonograph machines. The Werner business continued in this location until 1970, when it was replaced here by A&D Tile.



The Parking Lot at 418-26 Northampton Street had formerly been the **Green Tree Inn**, opened at the time of the Revolutionary War. In 1824, its owner operated stagecoach lines, including one to Philadelphia that competed on the basis of speed with another line operated from "Chippy" White's Hotel in Centre Square. A popular pastime in the afternoons was to gather in Centre Square to see which stage line would win the daily race to Easton back from Philadelphia.

- In 1872, the hotel (then known as the **Franklin House**) hosted Horace Greeley, who made a speech from the balcony while running for U.S. President. In the 20th Century, the Franklin House claimed to be the "oldest continuous hotel" in Easton, but it was forced out of business in 1919 by the Prohibition of alcoholic beverages.

At 404 Northampton St. (second from the corner at Fourth Street), is the **Odenwelder Bldg.**, an ornate, 3-story structure now housing the Utopia store. It was named for Odenwelder's Drug Store, which was begun (under a prior owner's name) in 1824, acquired by Asher J. Odenwelder, Sr. in 1871, and later moved to a small frame house at this location. The present ornate building was built by Asher J. Odenwelder, Jr. after 1905. Both Odenwelders were also Directors of the Easton National Bank.



At the SW corner is the **Northampton National Bank Building** (now The National office building). This 7-story, Beaux-Arts building (with a mural of "Labor" in the foyer) now houses *The Morning Call* Easton Bureau and other businesses. It was opened in 1909, when the Bank moved to this address from the building that has now become the **State Theatre**.

Looking back on the North side of Northampton St., the short modern nightclubs **Latino Heat** and **Club Jungle** are located where boxing heavyweight champion **Larry Holmes** began his club in Easton. This location was the original location of the **Field Bldg.**, which as Easton's F.W. Woolworth Store burned in a terrible fire in 1926. Next door, 407 Northampton Street is the striking 6-1/2 story **Rosenbaum Bldg.**, with its elaborate roof façade with two towers and peaked roof. It was named for milliner Levi Rosenbaum, who established his business here in the 1870s.



Next door, at No.403, is the 6-story cream brick building (until recently the Galaxy of Gifts) at No.403. This is the **Old Newspaper Building**. In the late 1850s-1860, the first floor held the office of the Northampton Correspondent newspaper; the second floor housed the Easton Argus; and on the third floor were briefly located the offices of the fledgling Easton Daily Express.

- This was probably the original location of the Easton Express.
- In 1855, it was also probably the location of G.W. Hope's "Sky-Light Daguerrean Gallery", where pictures could be "taken equally well in all weather at prices varying from 75 cents to \$10."
- A mural in the upper windows of this building reflect the Northampton National Bank Bldg. (The National) across the street. The mural was painted by Easton artists Donna Thatcher and Kim Hogan.

At the corner of Fourth Street across from the Northampton National Bank Bldg. is the **Pomp/Bixler Bldg.**, a small 4-story white brick building with a dental cornice. Peter Pomp and another member of his family operated the P. Pomp "Pure Drugs" store there by the 1850s, when it was numbered 143 Northampton Street. The Bixlers acquired the building from the Pomp family in 1919, and briefly used it for their "oldest jewelry store in America", which moved to Centre Square in 1925. After their brief tenure, the "Bixler Building" legend was placed above the Fourth Street entrance.

Caddy-corner from the Northampton National Bank Bldg. stands the **Hotel Lafayette**. This somewhat faded hotel stands on property that once was the location of a frontier home and tavern, owned by Jacob Hoffman, that may have occupied the north part of this site as early as 1728, well before the town of Easton was founded. The first well in Easton was built on this site in 1752. A stone house and tavern was built on the site in 1754.

- During the French and Indian War, Adam Yohe first leased and (in 1757) purchased the land, and built the **Red Lion Tavern** at the corner of Northampton St., which became Easton's principal inn. It was also known as **Adam Yohe's Hotel** (not to be confused with Adam Yohe's Inn, on the opposite corner). Pennsylvania Governor Morris used it as his residence during the Indian Conference of 1756; Delaware Chief Teedyuscung sometimes drank here during the Indian Conference of 1758.
- This tavern became Jacob **Opp's Inn** during the Revolutionary War, and was the residence of Continental Army officers during the time of General Sullivan's campaign. Opp also placed a wooden Indian outside the hotel to attract the Indian trade, in particular.
- A hostelry has been operated on the site ever since that time, under various names, although the building may have been "razed" and remodeled.

As you cross Fourth Street towards the Square, you will find the relatively modern **Lafayette Ambassador Bank** building at the corner, built in 1933 and (despite the Great Depression) still in operation today. From this corner, take a short walk down Fourth Street to the infamous Pine Street, where (as you look West, to the right) was the Prohibition Era location of brothels that brought Friday night crowds to Easton from New York City's Madison Square Garden, and had a reputation in the Navy that extended from coast to coast. At the other social extreme, the corner of Pine and Fourth Streets is



the **Wagner Mansion**, today the location of the **Pomfret Club**, the oldest private club in the Lehigh Valley, first organized as “The Crypt” (at another location) in 1885. Just South of the Club, at the corner with Ferry Street, you can also see the domed spire of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church. You may also decide to take a quick look at the SE corner, where stands the stone Parsons-Taylor House, where an Easton founder (William Parsons) died in 1757, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence (George Taylor) died in 1781.



To get to the Easton Parking Garage, however, you will want to turn left (East) on Pine Street (or on Ferry Street – either will work!). Walk past the rear of the old Sigal’s and Laubach’s Stores (on the North side of Pine Street), and enter the Garage on the South side of Pine Street (or the North side of Ferry Street). Have a safe trip home!

We in Easton welcome you to return and take a walking tour of the many other historical sights in town. We would love to show them all to you one day: please come back and see us! More historical detail about these and many other sites in Easton, as well as references to our sources, are available at the website WalkingEaston.com.