



Elmira, NY Self-Guided Walking Tour

History

Up to the Revolutionary War, Chemung Valley had been the preserve of the Iroquois who were in alliance with the British. In 1779, under the order of George Washington, General George Sullivan drove out the Iroquois and destroyed their crops. Within a decade after the Sullivan Campaign, the settlers founded Newtown, Wisnerburg and Dewittsburg. Wisnerburg's width was one block between Water and Gray Streets; its length ran from Baldwin Street to the first few blocks of near Westside. The three villages merged into Newtown by 1815, and the name was changed to Elmira in 1825.

Most of the village's enterprises expanded west and north along Water Street. In 1827, Issac Baldwin built a dam across the river to power a flour mill at the foot of College Avenue (then Mill Street). This and the tannery operated in 1833 at the foot of Davis Street were the Near Westside's first known commercial structures. Meanwhile, William Hoffman, who was credited with creating "Hoffman Corn", operated a 140-acre farm bounded by Chemung River, Walnut, Hoffman and Seventh Streets. Along with these pioneers, many other entrepreneurs came to Elmira. The population grew from 1,915 in 1829 to 3,879 in 1835.

With the outbreak of Civil War in 1861, Elmira was selected as one of three Union Army Depots in New York State. In addition, a Civil War prison camp was built on a 30-acre tract off Water Street in May 1864. The local economy prospered as never before by supplying the Army. In 1864, Elmira became a full-fledged city.

By 1890, the City had a population of 30,893 with 539 manufacturers in more than 80 industries. One firm in the Near Westside was the Chase-Hibbard Flour Mill on Water Street between Columbia Street and College Avenue. Its flour was labeled "XXX", "Seal of Minnesota" and "Big 4". Another was the Frostilla plant founded at 410 West Gray Street by Clay W. Holmes. This plant supplied the United States, Canada and Europe with the scented pink skin lotion bearing the famous Frostilla label.

It was a time of exuberant architecture, gracious living and skilled craftsmanship, which combined to give the houses built in the Near Westside a character reflecting the prosperity of the time. However, despite its aristocratic heritage, the Near Westside from its earliest days has

been home to people of all social backgrounds, races and economic levels. Those of modest means built small dwellings while the middle-class citizens and professionals erected fashionable homes throughout the Near Westside area and beyond. More than 80% of the houses in the historic area were built before 1914.

In more recent past since the Depression, the Near Westsiders saw the gradual decline of economy, as industries shifted and fortunes waned. While many homes were subdivided into rental units, many others were turned into professional offices and stores. There was also the influx of absentee landlords. The tropical storm Agnes in 1972 further inundated the neighborhood. Becoming alarmed by the signs of deterioration, the concerned residents founded the Near Westside Neighborhood Association, Inc. in 1978 to eradicate blight, upgrade housing and promote historic preservation. With much hard work and cooperation from the concerned citizens, the Near Westside will once again be a thriving part of the Elmira scene.

Architecture

Near Westside's unique character stems from its architecture, a catalog of Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Italian Villa, Eastlake, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Tudor Revival, and Colonial Revival styles. All bear the stamp of 19th Century craftsmanship and technology, and share similar scale and settings.

Wood is the principle building material. New woodworking techniques introduced after the Civil War allowed an unprecedented variety of shapes and accents like the bargeboards on the "gingerbread" houses. Much of the brick used was made in the City's Eastside. Stucco and shingle siding came in during the later Victorian period.

Most of the houses were built as single-family residences. A few were designed for multiple tenancies, such as the Second Empire duplexes at 391-403 West Water Street, which were built for the executives of J. Richardson & Co. in 1877. Next door are the brick rowhouses for the workers at the Richardson shoe factory.

Most of the spectacular homes are located on Church, Water and Gray Streets, many distinguished by broad lawns and beautiful landscaping. Still evident are some of the hitching posts and carriage stones located at the curbside in front of these mansions. Yet even the modest buildings exhibit the fine detailing characteristic of those times. Only about five percent of the buildings intrude on the historic character of this area. One such example, yet a notable building in its own right, is the 20th Century "modern style" Coca-Cola plant at 413-415 West Second Street.

A local architectural firm of national prominence, Pierce and Bickford, designed many of the homes for the Near Westside's affluent, during the turn of the century. The firm also designed other local landmarks, such as City Hall, YMCA, old Steele Memorial Library, Country-Club, etc.

Guide

1. 303 West Church Street, c. 1850

In 1916 a new façade was put on this house with Tudor Revival style features. During the 1860's Francis Hall lived here. He was briefly the US consulate to Japan, and was mayor of Elmira from 1852-1860,

2. 310 West Church Street, c. 1876

Eastlake style. This house was at one time owned by the Palmer family. Anna Campbell Palmer was instrumental in the formation of the Chemung County Historical Society.

3. Christ United Methodist Church

330 West Church Street, c. 1901

The building was designed by Pierce & Bickford in the Tudor style and has many Gothic details. The tiled roof together with the battlemented cornices and crockets, has made the building a visual landmark.



4. 351 West Church Street, c. 1877

Eastlake style; this house is notable for the intricate woodwork across the front of the house.

5. 353 West Church Street, c. 1877

Eastlake style; it features a rounded turret and ornate woodwork.

6. 355 West Church Street, c. 1874

This house is of the Queen Anne style with Eastlake detailing on the porch. Note the carved front doors.

7. 359 West Church Street, c. 1861

Additions and alterations have obscured many of the original features of this house, yet some of the outstanding features of the Second Empire Style building still remain. Notable features are the mansard roof and the rope molding around the doorway. A back annex was later added for apartments, but it was destroyed by fire in 2007. Because of this, the mansion was condemned and is now in the process of being restored. This is the former home of Jackson Richardson, president of the J. Richardson Boot and Shoe Company. From 1910-1958, the house was owned by Daniel Kennedy, president of the Kennedy Valve Company. In 1958, the house was purchased by Donald Pauldine and converted into a beauty salon and apartments. Note the hitching posts in front of the house.



8. 362 West Church Street, c. 1890

The house that once was on this site had Queen Anne and Colonial Revival style features including a stone chimney rising through a curved gable with carved swags. In 1901, this house was owned by Mathias Arnot, first vice-president of the Chemung Canal bank. The Arnot

family was influential in Elmira's History, donating the Arnot Art Museum and financing the Arnot Ogden Memorial Hospital. This site is now the home to the future "Victorian Row Park & Community Garden".

9. 363 West Church Street, c. 1908

A Tudor Revival style house. It has a cross-gabled slate roof with two interior chimneys. The exterior walls are stucco with a batten frame. Daniel Richardson, who once owned the house, was a baseball player with the New York Giants from 1884-1896. He became one of the three founders of the Sheehan, Dean & Co. department store that served Elmira from 1888-1963, a ski shop and bridal shop have also occupied the building which is now home to the Chalmers family and H. Strauss Clothiers.

10. 367 West Church Street, c. 1880

This house has Queen Anne and Colonial Revival style details. It was once owned by Guy Shoemaker, who was active in the Standard Oil Company during the 1880s. In 1906, he founded the Southern Tier Motor Company. The Shoemaker family was once involved in the Frostilla Cosmetics and Hygeia Refrigerator Company. In the Back of the house is a barn designed by Pierce & Bickford. The Daly family and Ireland's Own now call this home.



11. Grace Episcopal Church

375 West Church Street, c. 1904

This church is of the Tudor Revival style with typical Gothic features. It was designed by Otis Dockstader, the first partner of J.H. Pierce. Much of the woodwork was designed by the rector, Rev. Arthur B. Rudd. The interior features include oak statues carved by a German craftsman, Hans Mayr.

12. Gillett House

378 West Church Street, c. 1898

Designed by Pierce & Bickford, this Georgian Revival house is one of only 5 copies of the Longfellow House, in Cambridge, Mass. It has a symmetrical façade and a low hip roof. The portico has Ionic columns topped by a pediment, and framed by two pilasters. The home was built for Kate M. Gillett, widow of Solomon L. Gillett. Solomon Gillett was a prominent banker and industrialist in Elmira from 1840-1890. He was active with Chemung Canal Bank, Elmira Savings Bank, and Elmira Nobel Company.



13. Buchanan House

407 West Church Street, c. 1869

E. E. Buchanan, president of Elmira Bridge Company and an active community leader owned the house and converted the house and its carriage house to a Shingle style in 1900. In the 1940s-1950s, the carriage house was used as a factory for the manufacture of Dr. Darby's Rose Cereate, a local patent medicine, produced by Mrs. Hattie F. Buchanan.



14. Friendly House

411 West Church Street, c. 1890

A Queen Anne style house: this was built by Jacob Schwartz, a prominent Elmira attorney. A year after completion, it was the first home in Elmira to be wired for electricity in order to light Schwartz's funeral. The cameo head below the east gable on the façade is said to have been placed there because of its resemblance to a fiancée of Schwartz's who died before they were married. The house was later bought by Myer H. Friendly, president of the Friendly Boot and Shoe Company.

15. 414 West Church Street, c. 1895

This was the home of Edward G. Herendeen from 1894 to 1914. He was a prominent Elmira lawyer and one of the organizers of the Elmira Golf and Country Club. During this period, the house had a shooting gallery in the basement and a theatre on the third floor. In 1915, it was remodeled to a Tudor style by the new owner, William H. Snyder, who had also built the Snyder building on North Main Street in 1910.



16. 415 West Church Street, c. 1860

A Greek Revival Style, featuring a pedimented front porch, doric columns and a Dutch door. This is one of the oldest structures on West Church Street. In 1895, H.H. Bickford of the architectural firm Pierce & Bickford bought the house.

17. 420-422 West Church Street, c. 1869

The exaggerated pitch of the gables and contrasting brick and stone are characteristic of the Victorian Gothic Style. The house was built for James Lee Brown, operator of a pharmacy and oil manufactory. His daughter, Lena Gilbert Brown, graduated from Elmira College with a B.A. degree in 1887 and an M.A. in 1892. During World War I, she became a journalist and freelance writer in England, and wrote the lyrics to the song, "Keep the Home Fires Burning".

18. 421 West Church Street, c. 1906

This house is a mixture of Queen Anne and Tudor styles, with curved bay windows, stucco, half timbers and a tower with finial. Moses Rosenfield, owner of the Elmira Boot & Rubber Company, commissioned Pierce & Bickford to design the house. The carriage house has a slate roof and a cupola.



19. Colegrove House

423 West Church Street, c. 1860

This is a clapboard house with ornate Gothic-like trim at the porch and bargeboard at the roof. In 1899, Myer H. Friendly, the president of the Friendly Boot & Shoe Company bought the house before he moved to 411 W. Church Street in 1902. From 1902-1953, Dr. Larue Colegrove and his family owned the house.



20. 424-426 West Church Street, c. 1880

This house is of the Eastlake style. In 1894, it was owned by Theodore Friendly, brother of Meyer Friendly (not to be confused with Myer H. Friendly). Together they owned a carriage and wagon factory. They came from Bavaria, Germany and made their fortunes selling dry goods to the Indians on the western frontier in exchange for buffalo skins.

21. 454 West Church Street, c. 1904

This large home is an example of Colonial Revival style popular after the turn of the century. The prominent palladian window at the third story and the Roman Doric columns on the porch identify the style. There is a wide variety of building materials and windows, two half turrets without cones, an irregular roofline and several chimneys. A wide porch encircles the house featuring turned post and paired columns. In 1978, vinyl siding was added. In 1904, the house was bought by Justice B. Harris, co-founder of the Harris, McHenry, and Baker Lumber Co., established in 1883. In 1912, the company became a major lumber company, hiring 50 men and kept 4 teams of horses for deliveries.

22. Fassett House

460 West Church Street, c. 1860

This house is of the Italianate style, with two granite hitching posts and a loading platform in front. At one time, this was the home of the Honorable Jacob Sloat Fassett, before he moved to the Elmira estate, "Strathmont". Fassett was a state senator, a candidate for governor and a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.



23. 467-469 West Church Street, c. 1865

This three-bay Italian Villa style house was the home of David Hill, a two-term New York State governor, a U.S. senator, and former mayor of Elmira.

24. 509 West Church Street, c. 1895

Note the supporting brackets with maple leaves and scrolls on the west side of this Queen Anne/Colonial Revival style house. It was once the home of Hubert C. Mandeville, a prominent corporate lawyer in Elmira during the turn of the century.

25. Elmira Glove House
510 West Church Street, c. 1893



Of the Queen Anne style, this house is composed of a variety of materials. It features a turret, columns, and a carved pediment at the porch. It was originally the home of Meyer Friendly. In 1969, the house was bought by a group of citizens led by Charles Jennings, a former boxer. The group made it into a home for boys, and named it the Elmira Glove House in memory of Jennings.

26. Morrow House
525 West Church Street, c. 1920

This is a three-bay Colonial Revival Style house, designed by Pierce & Bickford. The house was built for Alexander Morrow, inventor of the famed Morrow Coaster Brake. Morrow merged with John Willys to form the Willys-Morrow Company, which was one of Elmira's largest industries during World War I. The factory produced cars, jeeps, and airplane parts.

27. Booth House
463 West Gray Street, c. 1876

The original house was of the Eastern Stick Style, designed by Eugene B. Gregory, a prominent local architect that specialized in stick style houses. In 1922, the house was remodeled to the Tudor Revival style. Irving Denman Booth, who bought the property in 1873, founded the I.D. Booth inc. furnishing heavy hardwares to heavy industries.



28. Woodward Sister's House
424 West Gray Street, c. 1870

A three bay structure, this house is an example of the Italian Villa style, featuring wooden porches and brackets at the roofline.

29. 117 Walnut Street, c. 1874

This three-bay Italian Villa style house was built for Charles A. Collin, an Elmira attorney who later became a law professor at Cornell University, and N.Y. State Assemblyman. It features a double front door with a fan light and large moldings. The first floor windows are tall and narrow, reaching to the porch floor. There are lovely decorative scroll vents in the wide entablature, an eyebrow roof line, a second story bay supported by brackets in the rear, and a full front porch.

30. 201 Walnut Street, c. 1893

A Queen Anne house; this building features a double front door with sidelights, a rambling roof line with two towers, and an elaborate entablature with carved swags and bows and oval windows.



31. 107 Grove Street, c. 1898



This 2-½-story house with carved wood panels has finials on the slate roof and porch with fish scale shingles between the first and second stories. The shingle glazed entrance door has a glass doorknob and single long sidelights. Windows are wide fixed sash. There is an ocular window in the North Bay, which has stained glass windows, fish scale shingles and massive brackets.

32. 531 West Water Street, c. 1929

This unusual building has features of the Colonial Revival and Spanish mission styles including a copper domed portico with ionic columns and a tiled roof.

33. Arthur Clinton House

530 West Water Street, c. 1896

This house is a highly individual example of the Neo-Classical style. A Pierce & Bickford design, this house features balustrades, a tall chimney, a round tower, and a variety of building materials. Arthur Clinton was vice-president of the Merchant's National Bank. He was also a partner in the hardware business of Clinton, Rose, & Baker.



34. Hoffman House

528 West Water Street, c. 1832



Originally this was a federal style brick farm house built for William Hoffman, a prominent farmer who was credited with creating the "Hoffman Corn". Hoffman Street was named after him. The house was converted to an Italianate style in the 1870s, featuring a three-bay facade with porches, turned posts, balustrades, and shutters. Note the etched glass on the front door.

35. Elmira's Painted Lady

520 West Water Street, c. 1875

This house was built in the Second Empire style by Isaac Hobie. The parcel was originally owned by John Hoffman, son of William Hoffman. Hobie gained recognition for building a private water supply system to service businesses and houses on the Southside of the Chemung River in 1858. In 1878, the house was sold to Daniel R. Pratt, cofounder of the Second National Bank.

36. 465 West Water Street, c. 1890

Of a transitional Queen Anne-Colonial Revival design, this ornate home features a corner tower topped with a slate roof and finial.

37. 456 West Water Street, c. 1883

This structure is of the Queen Anne style. It has irregular roof lines with multiple gables, boldly paneled chimneys, and brick panels in a checkerboard design of the front façade. Samson J. Friendly, a boot and shoe manufacturer, hired J. H. Pierce to design the house.



38. 452 West Water Street, c. 1857

This imposing Greek Revival home features four fluted Doric columns. The transom and sidelights around the entrance are typical of this style. George McCann, a prominent Elmira lawyer, lived here during the 19th century. McCann was a Chemung County judge between 1910 and 1913 and a member of the New York State Supreme Court between 1914 and 1924

39. 413-413 ½ West Water Street, c. 1890

This Queen Anne style house was designed by J.H. Pierce. The corner tower and the variety of materials, including brick, wood, and several kinds of stone, typify this style.

40. 408 West Water Street, c. 1833

This 3-bay Federal style house is one of the area's earliest buildings. Major features include Ionic columns at the entrance portico and the stepped gable ends rising above the roof line. Local legend claims that runaway slaves were hidden in the cistern beneath the porch when the house was used as a station of the "Underground Railroad" during the Civil War.



41. 407 West Water Street, c. 1885

A Palladian window, stone porch, and decorative woodwork are some of the features of this transitional Queen Anne-Colonial Revival house.

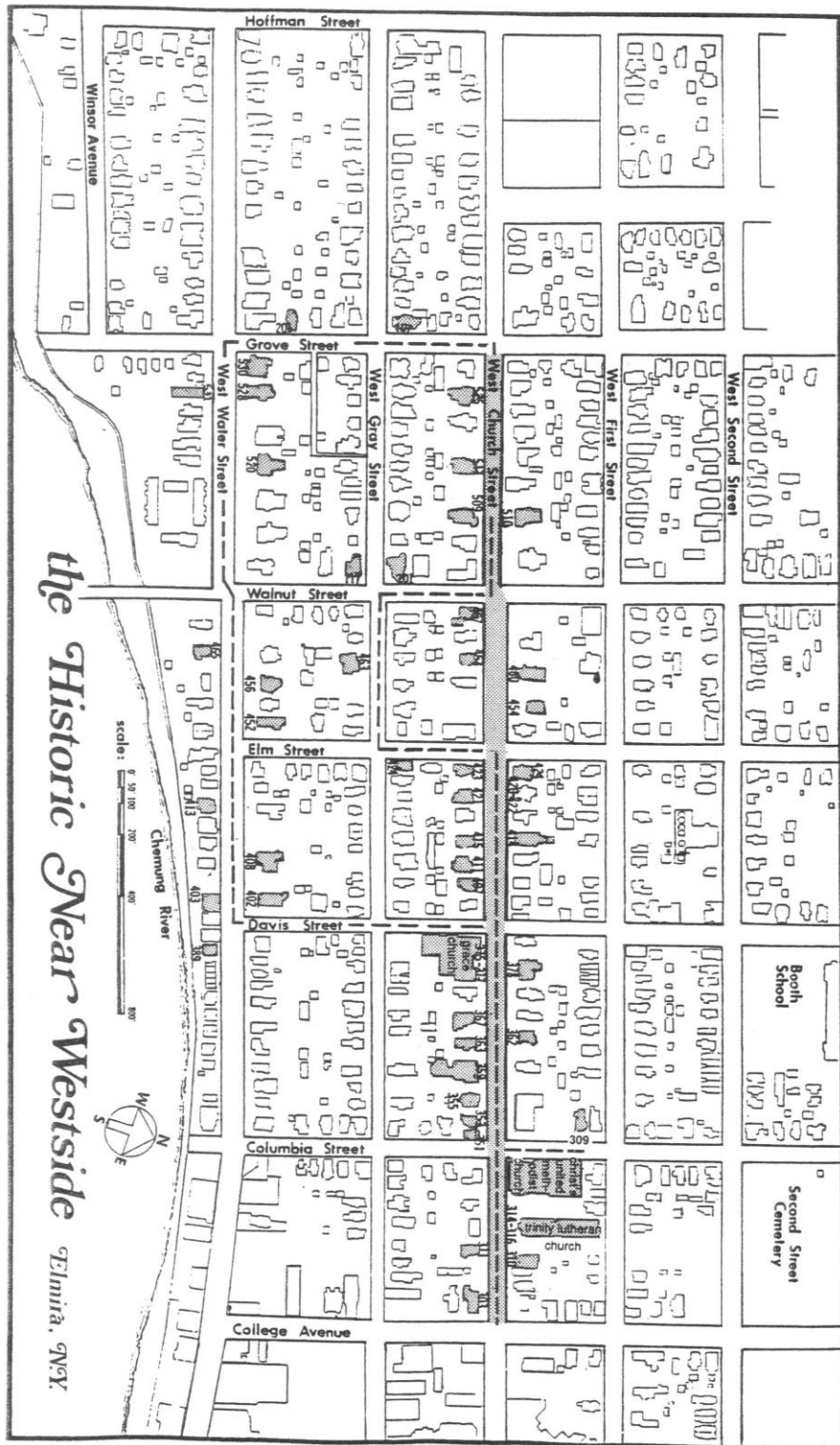
42. 402 West Water Street, c. 1852



This is a fine example of the Greek Revival style. Note the Doric columns and entrance with side lights and transom window. John Davis, a farmer and stagecoach owner, originally owned the land, (Davis Street was named after him). The house was built for Isaac Baldwin who owned a mill and built a tannery at a location that is now the Richardson Houses. Later, the house was owned by Dan Builder, influential in the building of the Chemung Canal, and by Warren F. Beck, patentee of a duplicating sales book, Moore Business Forms.

43. 389-403 West Water Street, c. 1877

Very similar in style, these row houses feature patterned slate mansard roofs with projecting dormer windows. These houses were built for the management of the J. Richardson Shoe Factory. They are significant in that they were among the first houses in Elmira to include running water and gas for heating and lights.



Long Tour: 1 hour and 15 minutes

Short Tour: 40 minutes

Map

The Purpose of the NEAR WESTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC. is to enhance the quality of life in our Community through the development and revitalization of housing and the preservation of historic structures within the City of Elmira.

Near Westside Neighborhood Assoc., Inc. is a 501 (c) 3

Donations can be sent to 353 Davis St., Elmira, NY 14901, or can be made via PayPal on our website:

www.nwnainc.com

Thank you!