

Welcome

The Historical Society of Bay County and the Panama City Main Street Program hope that you enjoy this walking tour of our historic downtown. The focus of the tour is some of the remaining historical buildings. In particular, the area between McKenzie Park and the Courthouse is reminiscent of early Panama City.

Stately, moss-covered oaks, a gazebo and adjacent homes offer a glimpse into the past. Panama City was originally developed at the waterfront (present downtown Marina area) and around the Park area. Several earlier names for this area were Harrison and Park Resort. Panama City was incorporated in 1909.

Please respect each of these sites. While some are accessible to the public, many are privately owned. There is usually more than adequate parking at McKenzie Park and it is a good place to park if you wish to walk the complete route. The walk takes about 45 minutes at a leisurely pace. May this be an educational and fun adventure.

Legend

1. Jenks Home
2. City Park
3. McKenzie Home & Office
4. Judge Sapp Home
5. Wilson Funeral Home
6. Bay County Courthouse
7. Old City Hall
8. Stokes Building
9. Ritz Theatre
10. Wilson Furniture & Hardware
11. Ritz Theatre
12. Commercial Bank
13. Sherman Avenue
14. Judge Sapp Home
15. Van Kleeck Building
16. First National Bank
17. Ellis & Coleman Building
18. Post Office
19. Panama City High School
20. Bay County Jail & The Local History Room



1 JENKS HOME 36 OAK AVENUE

Want a glimpse of what the town looked like in the early 1900s? Start with the oldest developed section of the downtown - the Park area. First is the old Jenks Home, now the offices of a local attorney. This old home, built in 1907, is the oldest surviving structure in the downtown. The original owner was Marion B. Jenks, son of George W. Jenks, the first developer of the Downtown. The house eventually went to A.J. Gay, and then to the J.D. Blackwell family, who occupied the home from 1923 to 1979. The tower was added later.

2 CITY PARK

Originally called City Park, this is the oldest developed parcel that virtually remains as it was when it was established in 1887. Developers G.W. Jenks and C.J. Demorest named the surrounding area Park Resort. As the name implies, the Park was the focal point of this early community.

It was renamed McKenzie Park in 1964 after the first mayor of Panama City. Revitalization took place in 1986 under the direction of the Downtown Improvement Board. Concerts and other events bring back reminiscences of speeches, barbecues, bands and fish fries, especially on Independence Day.

3 MCKENZIE HOME & OFFICE (17 E. 3RD STREET)

On the opposite side of the park is the McKenzie home, completed in 1909 by Belle Booth, Post Mistress. In 1912, Belle married Robert L. McKenzie, the town's first mayor. This two-story clapboard frame dwelling is one of four homes in Bay County on the National Register of Historic Places. Please note the State Historical Marker out front. The building was purchased by the City and restored in 1997 by the Junior Service League, who maintains the home's interior.

4 JUDGE SAPP HOME (224 E. 3RD STREET)

This home was built in 1916 with scaffolding from the nearby courthouse for J. Mercer Sapp, one of the earliest attorneys in the city. His home was the first to have an elevator, two bathrooms and hot water. The front porch was a gathering place for citizens, politicians and attorneys to discuss the social and political happenings of the times. This is one of four homes in Bay County on the National Register of Historic Places.

5 WILSON FUNERAL HOME (301 MCKENZIE)

This Georgian Colonial Revival-Commercial architecture building, one of only two remaining, was built in 1940. It was the third location of the Wilson Funeral Home and was perhaps Panama City's first undertaker's parlor built for that purpose. The building is presently used as a Courthouse Annex.

6 BAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE (300 E. 4TH)

The Bay County Courthouse, completed in 1915, is one of only five original courthouses still in use in Florida. After a 1920 fire, it was rebuilt in 1921. The Courthouse is the largest example of Classical Revival architecture in Panama City. It made national news as the location of the famous *Gideon v. Wainwright* case. The final 1963 Supreme Court decision entitles an indigent criminal defendant to free, court-appointed defense counsel. A State Historical Marker at this site commemorates this event.

7 OLD CITY HALL (19 E. 4TH STREET)



The old City Hall at 4th & Laverne was completed in 1926. It was the home of city government, including the police headquarters with jail and fire department on the side until 1959. The building is considered significant because of its Mediterranean Revival architecture and its unique stuccoed surface with flecks of colored glass. It now houses the Visual Arts Center, offering exhibitions and classes.

8 STOKES BUILDING (18-20 E. 4TH STREET)

This brick building was originally one story, and was built by 1927 for law offices by owner J. Ed Stokes, a lawyer and State Representative. Stokes introduced legislation in 1925 to combine St. Andrews, Millville and Panama City into Greater Panama City. This legislation passed in 1926. In 1935 this building was the first home of Bay National Bank. A second floor was added later.

9 FOLKES BUILDING (318 HARRISON AVE)



This brick building was built in 1926 for owner Fleming Folkes and is one of the few remaining commercial facades left intact in Panama City's central business district. Upstairs were professional offices and downstairs were retail shops such as Rex Drug Store and Crawford's Beauty Shop.

10 WILSON FURNITURE AND HARDWARE (413 HARRISON AVE)

This three story building was originally owned by then Mayor J. S. Wilson. Built in 1926, the first story held a hardware department and the second displayed furniture. Like many of the establishments of the day, a funeral parlor was a secondary business of Wilson. This was located on the third floor. Today, this building is occupied by the Downtown Improvement Board and serves as a Visitor's Information Center.

11 RITZ THEATRE (409 HARRISON AVE)



The Martin Theatre, known earlier as the Ritz, was the most popular cinema through the 1960s. It was built in 1936 in Art Deco architecture. In 1976 it closed but was renovated and reopened in 1990 by the Downtown Improvement Board. It is both a live performing arts center and host to frequent public receptions.

12 COMMERCIAL BANK (227 HARRISON AVENUE)

Originally, this buff-colored brick and Indiana limestone building was the Commercial Bank. Built in 1926, it is one of only two examples of Georgian Colonial Revival-Commercial architecture downtown.

13 SHERMAN ARCADE (1228 HARRISON AVENUE)

This old Mission Revival style building was the Sherman Arcade. Built in 1934 by W.C. Sherman, one of Panama City's major promoters in the 1920's and 1930's, it is on the National Register of Historic Places. The only arcade building in Panama City, it has a central walkway with a two-story atrium and full length skylight. The building originally had offices upstairs and retail shops such as Powell & Co. and Every Woman's Store on the ground floor.

14 VAN KLECK BUILDING (131-B5 HARRISON AVENUE)

Built in 1933 and operated by Roy Van Kleck, then occupied by Surplus Sales Service from 1960 to 2002, this building held perhaps the longest continuously operating hardware store in the County. The original galleries and pine flooring are still intact.

15 BANK OF PANAMA CITY (100 HARRISON AVENUE)

This building was completed in 1911 and was the first brick building in the town and also the home of the first bank. The brick was locally made, the lobby had a mosaic tile floor and the fixtures were of Georgian marble, mahogany and brass. A fire in 1987 destroyed the building. The first floor was rebuilt in 1988 in the same style with the original brick.

16 FIRST NATIONAL BANK (101 HARRISON AVENUE)

This white enamel brick and terra cotta building was the second bank to open and was across the street from the Bank of Panama City. The First National Bank was erected in 1915, and with its famous clock (added in 1926), became a landmark in the Downtown. In fact the intersection became known as "Banker's Corner". Black Insurance Agency occupied the building from 1973 to 2002.

17 ELLIS & COLEMAN BUILDING (39 HARRISON AVENUE)

Erected in 1911, this was the second brick building in Panama City. It was the first to have a large plate glass display window and housed a general merchandise store with E.D. Ellis and Alf Coleman, proprietors. In 1933 it was remodelled for the Bay Theatre. The Western Union Office occupied this building from the mid-1940s until 1972.

ADDITIONAL POINTS OF INTEREST OUTSIDE OF THE WALKING LOOP:

18 POST OFFICE (421 JENKS AVENUE)

The U.S. Post Office was dedicated in April, 1938 with U.S. Postmaster James A. Farley in attendance. The second floor housed other government offices including Customs and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It is significant as a WPA building constructed in Panama City, and like the Ritz Theater of the previous year, was built in Art Deco architecture.

19 PANAMA CITY HIGH SCHOOL (100 E. 7TH ST.)

The Panama City High School was the first modern school in Bay County. It was built in the years 1914 and 1915 and designed by S. J. Welch of Pensacola. It housed all grades 1 to 12. After Bay High School opened in 1926, this building became Panama Grammar School with grades 1 to 6. In 1965 it was purchased by the First Presbyterian Church.

20 BAY COUNTY LIBRARY AND THE LOCAL HISTORY ROOM

The Bay County Public Library is located at 898 W. 11th Street and first began in 1915 in the Chamber of Commerce building (now the Elks Club) located at 101 W. Beach Drive. In May of 1967 the Library opened in a location only a few hundred feet from where it began along the bay over 90 years ago. In May of 2008 the Library moved to the new present location at 898 W. 11th Street. To learn more about Panama City and Bay County, visit the Local History Room at the Library, or visit us online at www.nwrils.com or www.photos.nwrils.com.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BAY COUNTY

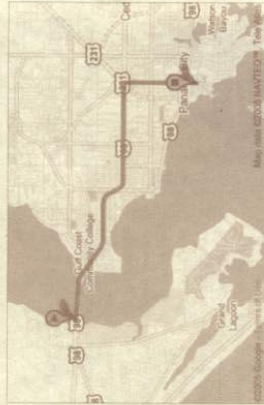
The Historical Society of Bay County was organized in 1936 to preserve the rich heritage of the area. This objective has been pursued for over 70 years through the efforts of its members and supporters. In addition to its various preservation projects, the Historical Society sponsors a lecture series featuring well known authors and lecturers. Meetings are held on the fourth Monday of each month September through May and the lectures are free and open to the public.

Historical Society of Bay County, Inc.
(850) 785-9036 - www.Bayhistory.org

PANAMA CITY MAIN STREET PROGRAM

The mission of the Panama City Main Street Program is to enhance and promote downtown's identity, economy and cultural spirit. The Main Street approach is a community-driven, comprehensive methodology used to revitalize older, traditional business districts throughout the U.S. Main Street is a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Florida Department of State. For more information on the Panama City Main Street Program, please call 850-785-2534.

Visit vintage buildings in the heart of downtown Panama City which house some of the area's finest antique shops, art galleries, and a delightful assortment of gift and specialty shops as well as famous restaurants, eateries and nightspots. All are located along tree shaded, brick lined streets and are within walking distance of each other. Downtown also offers a year-round schedule of performing arts, concerts and art exhibits interspersed with festivals and events among our waterfront venues and parks.



DIRECTIONS FROM THE BEACH:
Head east from W. Front Beach Rd. cross Hathaway Bridge, and go 3.4 miles; continue on W. 15th St., go 2.3 miles. Turn right on Harrison Avenue and go 1.3 miles to Harrison and 4th Street.

HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

of Downtown

Panama City



A project of

Historical Society of Bay County
and

Panama City Main Street Program