

VILLAGE OF MEDINA SELF-GUIDED HISTORY TOURS

These tours are comprised primarily of private property. Please be respectful and responsible by staying on the sidewalks. Also, be sure to practice social distancing while out walking and be vigilant crossing streets. Alternatively, these tours can be done in a car or even by using Street View in Google Maps. Here is a link to [Google Maps Street View Instructions](#)

Tour 4 (Park Ave. from Main St. to Beach Dr. (0.7 mi one way))

Park Ave. was originally called Mill St. due to the mill at its eastern terminus across Main St. It was later renamed for the fact that there was a driving park (harness racing) at the west end.

1. The tour begins at what was ambitiously called City Hall when it was built in 1909. Going all the way back to 1848, William R. Gwinn sold this property to the village for the express purpose of building a fire engine house. This building ironically burned down in 1907. When the village built this red Medina sandstone building in 1909, they not only included the fire department, but the police department which was at 113 W. Center St., and also the village offices which were at 500 Main St. Today the police and fire departments continue to work out of this building, as well as the Code Enforcement officer. It is also the home of the Medina Sandstone Society's Sandstone Hall of Fame, on the second floor.
2. Across Park Ave. is the S.A. Cook Building. This block, known originally as the Brown Block, was also struck by fire in 1907. The old block was named after the builder, Col. Edwin F. Brown, who lost an arm in the Civil War. This did not slow him down, however. He was appointed military mayor of the city of Vicksburg, MS, by President Grant, and then later became the Inspector General of the National Soldier's Homes. When a hospital was built at the Soldier's Home in Dayton, OH, in 1931, it was posthumously named after him – the Colonel Edwin F. Brown Hospital. At the time the block included the E.H. Barrett Automobile Factory, the Waldorf Restaurant, J.D. Harrigan's harness shop, S.S. Pringle's photography shop, and W.J. Pringle's photography supplies. The current building was built in 1911, by S.A. Cook and was touted as the most modern commercial building in Western New York. Much of the second floor has historically been offices – particularly lawyers – and also dance studios. The first floor with a number of store fronts has been the home of Hewitt's Dry Cleaners, Curvin's Newsroom, a succession of pharmacies including Brown & Williams and Rosenkrans, New York State Gas Co., Niagara Mohawk Power Co., Bickle Restaurant and Adelaide Holtz (bookstore).
3. The parking lot behind the S.A. Cook Building was the former home of the Cook Auditorium and then the Park Theatre. The auditorium was originally constructed in 1915, for the purpose of leasing it to the school system for an auditorium and gymnasium (the old high school on Catherine St. had yet to be built). In the 1920s, it became the Park Theatre and showed motion pictures until it was bought by the rival Diana Theater (across from City Hall) in 1929. By 1937, it was reported in the newspaper that "Akin to the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylonia are the weeds in the roof troughs, on the old Park Theatre, best viewed from Attorney Neil Haitz' Cook Building office!" The building was torn down in 1958, despite efforts by local youth to turn it into a recreation center.
4. To your left is the parking lot for the Village of Medina. It was previously 109 Park Ave. and at times home to R.B. Achilles (electrical fixtures), F. Whittleton Co. Undertakers and Funeral Directors, Medina Dairy, Allen Winter Dairy Co., and Niagara-Orleans Dairy.
5. To your right is 112 Park Ave. It was the former home business of G.E. Smith (sewing machine repair). There used to be a home behind this house at 114. These two properties together were the location of Glenwood Furniture Co., a short-lived bunk bed manufacturer in the 1940s.

6. Next door at 116, in the early 1900s Daniel D. Holdredge erected a barn in back for an ice skating rink. The building burned in 1957, while being utilized as the Park Avenue Garage (auto repair) and storage for vehicles and furniture.
7. To your left at 119 Park Ave., the building was built in 1969 for Medina Savings & Loan. It is now the Village Clerk's office.
8. Next door, the empty lot used to be Maxol Service Station, Wespark Service Station, and Ward's then Bloom's Kendall Service (gas).
9. The Grace Baptist Church property across the street was purchased in 1942, by its precursor, the Fundamental Gospel Tabernacle – a group that split from the Shelby Baptist Church in 1931. The former residence and doctor's office burned in 1951, forcing the group to meet for the next two years at City Hall. The existing building was rebuilt and expanded beginning in 1952. After meeting in the basement as rebuilding continued, the church was dedicated in 1959, and the name was changed in 1964.
10. On the northwest corner is 200 Park Ave. which was the home and office of Dr. Angelo F. Leone, Mrs. Leone's Studio (ceramics), and Lee's Ceramics.
11. On your left at 201 Park Ave., was the home of W. Richard Curry, who owned Curry's Toggery Shoppe (women's apparel) at 541-543 Main St., in the building built by his father and namesake.
12. The Medina sandstone home at 204 Park Ave. was built for William R. Gwinn, large landowner and mill owner. It was later the Temperance Hotel and Edward's Beauty Salon.
13. The home next door at 208 Park Ave. was built for Frank H. Hurd and his wife, Delores, in 1885. He was the publisher and editor of Medina Tribune from 1871-1923. The next owner was Col. Sanderson A. Ross, jeweler and later optometrist, who was Captain of the 29th Separate Co. during the Spanish-American War and was also involved in the Mexican border dispute of 1916.
14. Again, staying on the north side of the street, 212 Park Ave was formerly the Poler Nursing Home.
15. To your left at 213 Park Ave. is the former home of Stephen Carter. In 1957, he and an accomplice were arrested for holding up several loan offices south and east of Rochester. The Medina Daily Journal reported that he had lived in Medina a couple of years and portrayed himself as a building contractor. He may have just been a con man because the same article said he was under investigation by the Buffalo Better Business Bureau for a building project he was trying to get financing to build.
16. Next door at 217 Park Ave. is the long-time home and office of Dr. James Gowan. It then became the Gladys Saj Fashion Plus Beauty Salon. It is now a private residence.
17. The next several homes will all be on the north side of the street. The home at 216 Park Ave. was built for Albert J. Hill in 1874. He was part owner of Weld & Hill Mill (flour) at Medina Falls and also involved in civic affairs and politics – three-time president (mayor) of the village. The home was inherited by his daughter, the wife of Gen. John S. Thompson who served during the Mexican border dispute and WWI, then on the military staff of Governors Nathan Miller, Al Smith, and Franklin Roosevelt. He also served as a NYS Assemblyman.
18. The home at 220 Park Ave. was built in 1901 by William U. Lee. He helped organize the Medina Savings & Loan in 1888, and became its first president – serving for thirty-six years. Lee was also on the board of the Bignall Company. He left an endowment to establish a public library, Lee-Whedon. The previous home on the lot was moved to an unknown location on Genesee St.

19. At 224 Park Ave is the former home of Mary E. Stratton and Lavinia Parish, long-time partners in Parish & Stratton Dry Goods. It was then owned by Henry W. Robbins, whose parents lived next door at 228. He arrived in Medina in 1901, to work as the secretary-treasurer at his brother's business, the Bignall Company at the northeast corner of Starr and Main Sts. He rose to be the president of the company. He was one of the founding members of the Medina Automobile Club in 1909, and also served two years at the top of the statewide organization. He is purported to be the first owner of an automobile in Orleans County. He was also the original treasurer of the Medina Hospital Corporation.
20. The home at 228 Park Ave. was built for Thomas B. Robbins. In the early 1950s it was known as the Cornell Restaurant. In the early 1960s, it became a funeral home run by Leo Houseman. It is currently a private residence.
21. At 232 Park Ave, this home was built in 1899, for Charles J. Brennan who was the brother-in-law of the Maher brothers and eventually ran their furniture company. Daniel Cleary, Jr. turned it into a funeral home. He died just two years later so his wife Mildred studied embalming and undertaking and became one of the first women in New York to be licensed. It eventually was sold to Dennis Bates and became Bates-Cleary Funeral home, and now a private residence.
22. The next home for you to look at is 300 Park Ave. on the northwest corner of Park and Prospect Aves. It was built in the mid-1850s for Myron P. Hopkins, a tailor on Main St. where Rotary Park is today. In his will he stipulated that his wife would have lifetime use of the home and then it would become the parsonage of the Presbyterian Church. The church took ownership in 1905.
23. You will need to look down the long driveway on your left between 321 and 325 Park Ave. to see the building at 327 Park Ave., which was built in 1976. It was previously the American Wick Co. According to its owner, Emery Brecht, in a speech to the Rotary Club, it was one of only two wick-making companies in the U.S. It only lasted a couple of years.
24. The home at 322 Park Ave., on your right, was built by William B. Robbins, owner of the Bignall Company (foundry was at the northeast corner of Starr and Main Sts.). He was also President (mayor) of the village in 1903, when it was discovered that the village water supply that was coming from Knowlesville was heavily supplemented by canal water due to drought. A new source was found by drilling wells east of Shelby Center which served the village until the 1960s, when the Niagara County Water Authority was contracted to pipe filtered water from the Niagara River. Another occupant was Francis O'Donnell, one of the owners of O'Donnell Brothers' Lumber Company (currently Medina Lumber & Hardware).
25. The property on your left, at 335 Park Ave. was the J.E. Kearney Coal Office and Yard, in the early 1900s.
26. The home at 406 Park Ave., on your right, was the home and office of Dr. Howard R. Lawrence. He earned the rank of Captain serving in the Medical Corps during WWII.
27. Now on your left at 413 Park Ave. is the former home of Albert Tucker, who owned the Tucker Foundry on Glenwood Ave.
28. The next home is half a block up. Just after Ann St is 500 Park Ave., built in 1899 or 1900, by D.A.A. Buck a watch and clock maker, who established the Medina Manufacturing Co. to build his Monitor clocks. Be sure to read the historical marker. The business was destroyed by a fire in 1903, in which he was credited with saving the lives of four young ladies by leading them out a window to the adjacent building where they were rescued by ladder.
29. Again, you are going up half a block, and on your left is 511 Park Ave. The home was built for John Maher, one of the brothers of Maher Bros. (furniture manufacturing and builders of 116-120 E. Center St.). Interestingly, upon his brother Francis's death, he testified that all four of the brothers always bought property in the name of all four. Their furniture factories were located behind 116-120 E. Center St. and on Orient St. near the railroad tracks.

30. Just across the street at 516 Park Ave, was the home of Francis Maher.
31. The home at 515 Park Ave., on the corner of Orleans St., was at one time the residence of Fred Babcock who was on the original Board of Directors for Medina Memorial Hospital and one of the first Medinans to own a car. A later resident was Alice Dayton who was the local recruiter for the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) during WWII. In 1948, a tree in the yard was taken down by a tornado that hit Medina!
32. Just past Ohio St. on your right is 600 Park Ave., built in 1908, by Bertram E. Harcourt who was village attorney for several years, then Orleans County Judge and finally elected to the 8th Judicial District of the State Supreme Court. He then sold it to Charles White, the owner of the White Bros. Rose Corp. who purportedly started growing his plants in his garage.
33. As you continue up Park Ave., the parking lot entrance on your left used to be Niagara St. This street used to be connected to Orleans and Genesee Sts. by Heinz Alley, which ran behind the houses you just passed. It also connected to Fuller Ave., to the west, by this alley. Fuller Ave. extended south of Park Ave. off the end of Pine St., likely named for the person who developed the areas of Pine and Olive Sts. – Russell N. Fuller. The Medina Foundry was on the west side of Fuller Ave.
34. The alley was named for the company that developed the factories you see here. The Heinz Pickle Factory began in Medina in 1899. It was a branch of the H.J. Heinz Co. of Pittsburgh. Its earliest buildings were near where Genesee St. crosses over the railroad tracks. Over the years they continued to expand westward on the property. They later processed other vegetables and made a strained baby food line here as well. During WWII, Italian and then German POWs were used in the plant. They were housed in barracks where the parking lot on the west side of the property is today. In 1963, it was announced that most of the operations were being transferred to other plants. A can line continued to operate for a few years. The facility did not sit empty for long. In 1970, Fisher-Price Toys began production here. Fisher-Price continued to expand the footprint of the facilities to what you see here today. In 1993, Fisher-Price became part of Mattel, Inc., which closed down most production in 1995. The next occupant was Sigma International, which was later bought by Baxter. They make medical equipment.
35. The park on your right is Pine St. Park. It was created in 1935, on property donated by then mayor, Claude Grinnell. The same year the PWA (Public Works Administration – part of the New Deal) built an ice-skating rink there. Tennis courts and playground equipment were added, and a softball diamond laid out. The tennis courts fell into disrepair and were removed. Recent revitalization efforts include an upgraded playground and the addition of a splashpad.
36. Moving past the Olde Pickle Factory complex, as mentioned earlier, the POW barracks were in what is now the parking lot at the west end. The Medina Central Schools opened the “Park Avenue School” here in 1966, signing a three-year lease to alleviate overcrowding. Approximately 190 third graders were taught here the first year in eight classrooms. In 1968, four kindergarten classes were added. Towne School was opened for the 1969-1970 school year so the building was no longer needed. BOCES then rented the building from 1970-1976, until its new facility was completed on Shelby Basin Rd.
37. The Park Avenue Apartments on your right just after the parking lot, at 816 Park Ave., were built from 1938-1940, using stone that came from Ward’s Quarry (Medina Conservation Club property on Bates Rd.) and a quarry on Fruit Ave. The limestone window sills are from the New York Central Railroad car barn in Depew.
38. In the distance to your left is Associated Brands who make private label dry goods. This was formerly part of the Fisher-Price complex.