

17 Midtown Towers
(originally the Keenan Building)
Thomas Hannah, architect, 1907

Active in Pittsburgh between 1899 and 1930, Thomas Hannah modeled the Keenan Building after the Spreckels [later Call] Building of 1898 in San Francisco. The Keenan Building was erected for Colonel Thomas J. Keenan, the chief owner of the *Penny Press* and a man with an eye for publicity. His skyscraper is decorated with portraits of 10 “worthies” associated with Pennsylvania or the Pittsburgh of his time, and the fancy dome was once capped with the figure of an eagle in flight. The building is now used as moderate-income housing; the exterior was repaired and cleaned in 2006.

18 EQT Plaza
(formerly Dominion Tower, originally CNG Tower)
Kohn Pederson Fox (New York), architects, 1987

Conspicuously Postmodern in its use of columns, arches, and keystones, this skyscraper is site-specific. Its distinctively treated lower portion recalls Victorian building heights; its principal section echoes the height of the adjacent Midtown Towers; and the greater height of many modern Triangle buildings is matched in EQT Plaza’s full height. In addition, the arched roof at the top is an allusion to Pittsburgh’s many bridges.

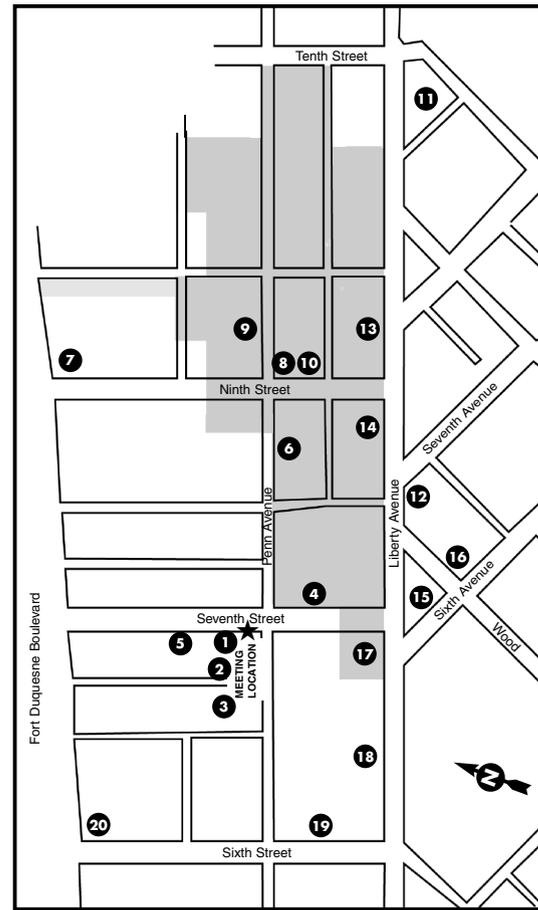
This development project required the demolition of several significant historic buildings and resulted in the agreement between preservationists and the Heinz interests that led to the creation of the Penn-Liberty Cultural District and the establishment of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust in 1984.

19 Heinz Hall
(originally Loew’s Penn Theatre)
Rapp & Rapp (Chicago), architects, 1926; remodeled, 1971

A motion-picture palace where live performances were also given, Loew’s Penn Theatre was chosen in the late 1960s as a centrally located home—at first temporary, then permanent—for the Pittsburgh Symphony. During remodeling in 1971, the last maker of architectural terra cotta in the United States was commissioned to match the warm off-white of the original facing.

20 Byham Theater
(formerly The Fulton)
Dodge & Morrison (New York), architects, 1904

Following its Halloween-night opening in 1904, the Gayety Theater, as it was originally called, became one of the country’s foremost stage and vaudeville houses. Ethel Barrymore, Gertrude Lawrence, and Helen Hayes performed there. The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust purchased the theater in 1990, restored it, and renamed it in 1995.



Shading indicates the boundaries of the Penn-Liberty National Register and City Historic Districts, designated in 1987. The City Historic District was expanded in 1999.

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|---|---|
| 1. Agnes R. Katz Plaza | 12. Baum Building & “Space” Gallery |
| 2. Theater Square | 13. 900 Block, Liberty Avenue (north side) |
| 3. O’Reilly Theater | 14. 800 Block, Liberty Avenue (north side) |
| 4. Benedum Center for the Performing Arts | 15. Wood Street Station & Wood Street Galleries |
| 5. Century Building | 16. Granite Building |
| 6. 800 Block, Penn Avenue (south side) | 17. Midtown Towers |
| 7. Pittsburgh CAPA | 18. EQT Plaza |
| 8. Wm. G. Johnston Building | 19. Heinz Hall |
| 9. 900 Block, Penn Avenue (north side) | 20. Byham Theater |
| 10. 209 Ninth Street | |
| 11. August Wilson Center for African American Culture | |

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—Rupert Cornwell, ‘Steel Town’ shows US the art of survival
(*The Independent*, February 27, 2011)

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PENN-LIBERTY WALK

The Penn-Liberty Historic District is one of the best preserved and most nearly intact portions of Pittsburgh’s...retailing district [from the late 19th and early 20th centuries]. The character of the buildings demonstrates the vitality of Pittsburgh commerce after the Civil War, when much American trade passed through the city into the Midwest via the rivers and railroads that bordered the district to the north.

—Pittsburgh Cultural Trust plaque, 1993

Pittsburgh’s streets were laid out in 1784 by George Woods and Thomas Vickroy, who were working on behalf of the Penn family in Philadelphia. By 1900, the Penn-Liberty area was widely varied in content and included many buildings designed by important *local* architects. Commercial buildings large and small, theaters, hotels, office buildings, and some heavy industry were mixed together in that time before zoning. A rail line ran down Liberty Avenue at the district’s southern edge, and an elevated rail line was soon due to run along the Allegheny River shore. The ongoing century saw construction continuing until the Depression, then a half-century of deterioration.

A reversal of circumstances began in 1971 with the restoration and opening of Heinz Hall (formerly a motion-picture palace) for the Pittsburgh Symphony, and continued with the establishment of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust in 1984.

Since then, the Trust has helped transform a blighted section of the city into an arts and entertainment district visited by more than one million people each year. Now designated a National Register District and a City Historic District, the Penn-Liberty area includes handsomely restored performance halls and hotels, and renovated commercial buildings housing galleries, schools, restaurants, one-of-a-kind stores, and residences.

1 Agnes R. Katz Plaza

Daniel Urban Kiley (Vermont), landscape architect; Michael Graves (Princeton), architect; Louise Bourgeois (New York), sculptor, 1999

Here is a refuge from the street, with remarkable contents: 32 linden trees, a bronze fountain cascade 25 feet high, and three pairs of benches in the form of eyes, as well as 22 benches of more conventional form.

2 Theater Square

Michael Graves (Princeton), architect, with WTW Architects, 2003

This colorful ten-story building has a JumboTron on its corner with the latest information about cultural events in Pittsburgh. Along with 800 parking spaces, Theater Square includes a satellite studio for WQED-FM, a centralized Box-Office, the 250-seat Cabaret at Theater Square, and a restaurant.

3 O’Reilly Theater

Michael Graves (Princeton), architect, 1999

The overhanging copper-covered roof makes a dramatic statement and has a practical use: it encloses a full-size rehearsal space. A local critic characterizes the theater as “pure Graves—smooth, polished, pared-down classicism.”

4 Benedum Center for the Performing Arts (originally the Stanley Theatre)

Hoffman-Henon Company (Philadelphia), architects, 1927; remodeled and enlarged, 1987, MacLachlan, Cornelius & Filoni, architects

A grand movie house from the silent period, the Stanley had stage and orchestral facilities, and in 1987 was adapted for opera, light opera, and ballet. The exterior was preserved and the grand foyer and auditorium have been largely restored to their original grandeur.

5 Century Building

Rutan & Russell, architects, 1907; renovated, 2009, Moshier Studio and Koning Eizenberg Architecture, Inc. (Santa Monica)

Architects Frank Rutan and Frederick Russell were trained in the office of H. H. Richardson, designer of Pittsburgh’s Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail (1884–88) and the leading American architect of the 19th century. They formed a partnership in 1896. Their Century Building is faced in matte white or near-white materials, while the solids around the windows are in glossy bronze-green terra cotta. TREK Development Group has converted the office building into 60 apartments.

6 800 Block, Penn Avenue (south side)

The Irish Block, named after the family who developed the space in the early 1900s, is a gracious row of buildings, rich in pattern and color.

7 Pittsburgh CAPA (Creative and Performing Arts)

MacLachlan, Cornelius & Filoni, architects, 2003; Charles Bickel, architect, 1915; renovated as part of CAPA in 2003/2009

CAPA is an \$80 million state-of-the-art facility for City students (grades 6–12), built largely through the generosity of The Bitz Foundation. The design of the new building plays off the design of the adjacent historic structure of 1915 by Pittsburgh architect Charles Bickel. (Bickel opened an architectural firm in Pittsburgh in 1885 and was, by all available records, the most frequently hired architect in the Penn-Liberty area.) Classrooms flow from one building into the other. Student work is displayed on a four-story JumboTron on the Fort Duquesne Boulevard façade.

8 Wm. G. Johnston Building

Deeds & Brothers, builder, 1885; remodeling, 1915

This is an example of the brick-layers’ craft, with much fluting and paneling. William G. Johnston & Co. were printers and stationers. The building now houses apartments in the upper stories and a ground-floor restaurant.

9 900 Block, Penn Avenue (north side)

This block includes possibly the last building built downtown as a single-family residence (905 Penn, c. 1870) and two buildings designed by Charles Bickel: 911–13 Penn (1905) and 915–21 Penn (1906), now the Penn-Garrison apartments. 945–49 Penn Avenue, erected in 1905 by the Phipps Trust and renovated in 2004, houses the 182-room Courtyard by Marriott.

10 209 Ninth Street

Charles Bickel, architect, 1895; renovated, 1985, L. P. Perfido Associates

Constructed as the Presbyterian Publications Building, this structure reflects both the fading of the Richardsonian Romanesque style, as shown in the capital of the central cast-iron column on the ground floor, and the coming into fashion of Classicism: note the rectangular framing of groups of windows and the use of golden brown Roman brick.

11 August Wilson Center for African American Culture

Perkins + Will (San Francisco), 2009

Allison G. Williams was the principal and design director of this state-of-the-art facility at 980 Liberty Avenue, housing a 479-seat proscenium theater, exhibition galleries, dance studio, and education center. Named for Pittsburgh-born playwright August Wilson (1945–2005), the center includes works by Charles “Teenie” Harris (1908–1998), an accomplished photographer, and sculptor Thaddeus Mosley, among others.

12 Baum Building & “Space” Gallery

(originally the Liberty Theater)

Edward B. Lee, architect, 1912; remodeled, 1925

This Beaux-Arts gem at 812 Liberty Avenue was purchased, cleaned, and renovated by the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust in 2003. The terra-cotta-clad building includes “Space,” a 4,000-square-foot gallery for changing exhibits.

13 900 Block, Liberty Avenue (north side)

This handsome block includes two Richardsonian Romanesque buildings by Charles Bickel: the Maginn Building of 1891 at 915 Liberty Avenue and the Ewart Building of 1892 at 925 Liberty Avenue. A parking lot is between them.

14 800 Block, Liberty Avenue (north side)

Another notable block. The tall, suave, corner building was originally the Federal Reserve Bank, designed in 1911 by Alden & Harlow; the builder was Thompson Starrett of New York whose more famous contract was the Empire State Building. Frank E. Alden and Alfred B. Harlow dominated the local architectural scene from 1896 until Alden’s death in 1908, but the firm continued, under Harlow’s direction, until 1927. Also notice 813 Liberty (c. 1895), with a trio of metal awnings; the Harris Theatre at 809 Liberty (c. 1925); and the cast-iron façades of 805–07 Liberty (c. 1870). The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust is headquartered at 803 Liberty Avenue.

15 Wood Street Station/Wood Street Galleries

(originally the Monongahela Bank)

Edward Stotz, architect, 1927

After apprenticing with notable local architects and touring Europe, Edward Stotz opened his own firm in 1889; it continues today as MacLachlan, Cornelius & Filoni. The former bank now houses one of downtown Pittsburgh’s four “T” stations and an art gallery on the upper floors. Notice the metal canopy designed by Jeffrey DeNinno, with ginkgo leaf patterns etched in the glass.

16 Granite Building

(originally the German National Bank)

Bickel & Brennan, architects, 1890; remodelings c. 1930, late 1980s, and 2006–10

Former *New York Times* style editor Holly Brubach (a Pittsburgh native) is adapting the Richardsonian Romanesque Granite Building for new uses. Brubach’s interest is in “incorporating historic architecture in a contemporary cityscape, creating a conversation between the past and present.” Originally constructed for the German National Bank, founded in 1860, the eight-story building was intended primarily to serve the German-speaking community.