

Columbus, Ohio Architecture

Columbus, Ohio is home to many impressive architectural landmarks. Many of them blend architectural interest with local and national historic significance.

From its earliest beginnings as a planned city to house the state government in 1803, through eras of growth and development, Columbus architecture reflects many architectural styles. Some styles are well represented for particular types of structures or specific eras during the city's growth and building spurts.

In the past, buildings used cast iron, as well as stone and brick, and reached three, four, and even five stories. Today, the city's tallest skyscraper is 41 stories, and innovative design and popular architectural styles continue to define the cityscape.

The people of Columbus have a legacy of beautiful buildings – designed as homes, houses of worship, workplaces, places of learning, and the seat of government. The following are just a few examples of what the city has to offer in architectural design.

PLACES TO LIVE

Columbus Club (Benjamin Smith House) is one of the finest buildings in Columbus and an outstanding example of the French Second Empire style. Built around 1865, it served as the Smith private residence. Smith, a successful railroad contractor and banker, specified in the contract for building his home that each of the bricks used in the structure was to be pressed in Philadelphia, wrapped separately in paper, and shipped to Columbus, Ohio. After Smith left Columbus, the house later was a home to two Ohio governors in the late 19th century. Since 1890, the building has been the home for the Columbus Club. Location: 181 E. Broad Street.

Governor's Residence (Jeffrey House) has been the official governor's residence for nine governors since the late 1950s. Built in 1925, the house represents the Jacobethan Revival style that has the feel of picturesque 16th and 17th century English architecture. Location: 358 North Parkview Avenue.

James Thurber House is one of the city's most significant literary landmarks. It is the restored modest brick home of author, humorist, and New Yorker cartoonist James Thurber and his family when Thurber was a student at The Ohio State University. Location: 77 Jefferson Avenue.

Other Notable Homes:

- Charles Frederick Myers House (French and German Renaissance influences), 1330 Bryden Road, completed around 1896.
- Columbus Foundation (Georgian Revival). Also known as the Old Governor's Mansion. 1234 E. Broad Street, completed in 1904.
- Eddie Rickenbacker House, 1334 E. Livingston Avenue, completed circa 1895.
- Sessions Village (French Provincial style), Sessions Drive off of E. Broad Street, completed in 1931.
- W. H. Jones Mansion (Queen Anne style), 731 E. Broad Street, completed around 1885.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

St. Joseph Cathedral, next to the Statehouse, is a fine example of the Gothic Revival style, with pointed arches and aged sandstone walls. Completed in 1878, the cathedral has been described as the most substantial and imposing edifice in Columbus. Location: 212 E. Broad Street.

Central Presbyterian Church (Second Presbyterian Church) is built of cut sandstone with an asymmetrical design and unusual tower roofs. Built in the Romanesque Revival style, the church was completed in 1859. Location: 132 S. Third Street.

Broad Street United Methodist Church (Broad Street Methodist Episcopal Church) was originally built according to the Akron Plan (a specific church design popular in the late 19th century) and was completed in 1885. It is designed in the High Victorian Gothic style, with a complex structural design and extensive detail work. Location: 501 E. Broad Street.

Other Notable Buildings of Worship:

- Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral (Byzantine style), 555 N. High Street, completed in 1990.
- Broad Street Christian Church, 1049 E. Broad Street, completed in 1907.
- Shiloh Baptist Church (Late Gothic Revival style), 720 Mount Vernon Avenue, completed in 1923.
- St. Mary's Church (Gothic Revival style), 684 S. Third Street, completed in 1868.
- Trinity Episcopal Church (Gothic Revival style), 125 E. Broad Street, completed in 1869.

BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

Leveque Tower (American Insurance Union Citadel) is one of the most identifiable and unique cityscape buildings in Columbus. Completed in 1927, it was the first Ohio building erected on a caisson foundation. At the time of its construction, it was the tallest building in the state. It has been called the "first aerial lighthouse" in the country because it served as a guide to aviators. The building has 55 floors with a 555.5 foot tall tower. The tower is an example of the 1920s Modernistic skyscraper. Belgian and Italian marble, bronze, and glass mosaic were used in the building's interior. A bronze plaque with the horoscope of the building and the positions of the planets at the time the cornerstone was put into place (Feb 12, 1925) was set into the lobby floor of the Leveque Tower. Location: 50 W. Broad Street.

Westin Great Southern Hotel is the most prominent building along S. High Street. The Great Southern Fireproof Hotel and Opera House was opened to the public in 1897 with much fanfare and high public expectations. Designed in the French Renaissance style, the building offers a spectacular lobby, containing decorative stained glass with the central panel forming a magnificent dome and an airy promenade on the second floor. The hotel, referred to as the Grand Dame, is the only historic downtown Columbus hotel still serving its original purpose. Location: 310 S. High Street.

Wyandotte Building was the city's first skyscraper, boasting 11 stories. Built in 1897, it is an example of Chicago School Skyscraper Commercial style. Its prominent features are the building's look of a classical column with nine stories of vertical rows of bay windows. Location: 21 W. Broad Street.

Other Notable Buildings:

- Flatiron Building, 129 E. Nationwide Boulevard, completed in 1914.
- Ohio National Bank (Neoclassical Revival), 167 S. High Street, completed in 1930.
- Toledo & Ohio Central Railroad Station, 379 W. Broad Street, completed in 1895.
- Union Station Arch (Beaux-Arts Classicism), standing in McFerson Commons near Nationwide Arena, completed in 1897.

GOVERNMENT

The focal point of Columbus is its seat of government. The Statehouse Complex includes the Statehouse, Senate Building (Old Statehouse Annex), and the Capitol Atrium. The Statehouse is a National Historic Landmark and is widely considered to be one of the country's finest examples of Greek Revival architecture. Construction began in 1839 to replace an earlier brick statehouse and it took 22 years to

complete it in 1861. The Senate Building was completed in 1901 and is built in a Neo-Classical Revival Style. The Capitol Atrium connects the two buildings.

The Ohio Judicial Center (Ohio State Office Building), completed in 1933, is one of the state's premier examples of the Modernistic style. This 14-story white marble building is dressed with a copper roof and six massive bronze doors that recount the history of North America. Particularly arresting are the two large bas-relief sculptures dominating the Front Street façade. Inside, the public spaces tell the history of Ohio and its industries, using bas-reliefs, painted murals, mosaics, and decorative metals. Location: 65 S. Front Street.

Bricker & Eckler Building (Old Post Office) is a fine example of Romanesque Revival and High Victorian Gothic styles. Completed in 1887, the building served as the city's first Federal building to house the Federal courts, post office, internal revenue and pension offices, and other Federal offices. Although a post office had been established in Columbus in 1813, no Federal post office had been erected until this one was built. The cornerstone of the Old Post Office was laid on October 21, 1884. In a cavity of the cornerstone were placed contemporary Columbus newspapers, various Masonic and political documents, current coins, and a historical sketch read on the occasion. The Old Post Office is on the National Register of Historic Places. Location: 121 E. State Street

Other Notable Government Buildings:

- Rhodes State Office Tower, 30 E. Broad Street, completed in 1975.
- Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts, 77 S. High Street, completed in 1989.

PLACES OF LEARNING AND EDUCATION

Central Ohio Fire Museum (Engine House No. 16) is one of the city's most ornate and best-preserved old fire stations. Built in 1908 and originally designed for horse-drawn steam engines, the building has a decorative hose tower and a Flemish gable parapet on the façade. Location: 260 North Fourth Street.

Cultural Arts Center (Old State Arsenal) sports four octagonal towers, small windows, and a forbidding brick wall, all befitting a building that was originally designed and used as the storage location for firearms for the state militia. Built with convict labor in 1861, on the site of the state's first penitentiary, it is one of the first Ohio State Arsenals, designed specifically for the storage of arms. Built in the Italianate style, it was used for military purposes into the 1970s, and now houses a center for producing and presenting artwork using a variety of media. A cast bronze shield and eagle from the U.S. battleship Ohio, which was decommissioned in 1900, is mounted at the entrance to the Cultural Arts Center. Location: 139 W. Main Street.

Orton Hall is one of the oldest remaining buildings on The Ohio State University campus. Built in 1893, it exemplifies the Richardsonian Romanesque style. From the clay tiles in the entrance hall to its walls and foundations, Orton Hall is built of forty different Ohio building stones. In the outside walls, these stones are laid in stratigraphic order according to their relative positions in Ohio's bedrock, and the capitals of the numbered columns in the entrance hall contain carvings of fossils. The bell tower bells can be heard regularly tolling across campus. Encircling the top of the tower are 24 columns with gargoyle-like figures which are restorations of fossil animals. Location: 155 South Oval Drive.

Other Notable Places of Learning:

- Columbus Department of Health (French Second Empire style).
- Institution for the Education of the Blind, 240 Parsons Avenue, completed in 1874.
- Columbus Museum of Art (Second Renaissance Revival), 480 East Broad Street, completed in 1932.
- Ohio Historical Center (Brutalist), 1982 Velma Avenue, completed in 1970.
- Old Deaf School (French, Gothic, Dutch, Jacobethan elements), 400 E. Town St., completed in 1899.
- Pontifical College Josephinum (Late Gothic Revival style influences), 7625 N. High St., completed in 1931.
- Stewart Alternative Elementary School (Italianate style). Originally known as New Street Schoolhouse. 40 East Stewart St., completed in 1874.
- Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, 30 West 15th Avenue, completed in 1989.

ENTERTAINMENT

Ohio Theatre (Lowe's Ohio Theatre) presents a Beaux Arts style exterior. Built in 1928, the theatre auditorium is the city's most ornate, including a 21 foot high chandelier, and opulent Spanish-Baroque architecture and design. The "Mighty Morton" theatre pipe organ (named for Robert Morton, its manufacturer) is one of the nation's finest and it is in excellent condition. The first movie shown in the Ohio Theatre was the silent film, "The Divine Woman," starring Greta Garbo. Location: 39 E. State Street.

Lincoln Theater (Ogden Theater) was a center of Columbus African American culture from the 1930s through 1950s. The theater first opened in 1928, and today is a multi-use, state-of-the-art performing arts and education center. Inside, this unique building in the Egyptian Revival style offers columns and a decorative plaster cornice that create the feeling of an Egyptian palace. The jazz classic "The Jersey Bounce" is said to have been written in the Lincoln Theater. Location: 777 E. Long Street.

Southern Theatre, completed in 1896, is the oldest theatre in Columbus and one of the few surviving authentic 19th century theaters in America. Constructed of "fireproof" tile, brick, iron, steel, and concrete, the theatre -- which originally seated 1,723 on three levels -- was praised for its plush seats, stylish boxes, excellent sight lines, and absence of posts or other obstructions. The Southern Theatre departed from the classical opera house by incorporating features considered very "modern" for its day. Most notable was the design of the audience chamber ceiling, creating an acoustic system that is still nearly perfect today. Location: 21 E. Main Street.

Look around Columbus. See the imprint of who we are and our history as a city, evident in the building materials, etched in the masonry, and painted on the murals.

Sources

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Compiler

Darlene Kerr

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