


# Welcome to the Pottstown Historical Society 2017 Walking Tour!

Thursday, June 22, 2017, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm.

This short walk covers a block barely 500 feet long, a round trip of less than a quarter-mile. Packed with history, we have 20-stops along the way, covering each of the 9 buildings (and 2 parking lots) on the south side, with 13 buildings on the northside. Look for the old photographs and detailed histories posted along the way. *The Historical Society Walking Tour is along the exteriors of the buildings only. Please return to shop and visit the interiors.*

We hope you enjoy rubbing elbows with history as much as we do. We agree with the Pottstown Comprehensive Plan and other regional plans which highlight the value of the historical aspect of Pottstown; it is part of what makes our community unique and attractive to residents, visitors, and investors. Please share our enthusiasm with your friends, families, and colleagues.

Hanover Street	Stop -20	Stop -19	Stop-18	Stop-17	Stop-16	Stop-15	Stop-14	Stop-13	Stop-12	Stop-11	Stop-10	Stop-9	Penn Street	
	Argentos Pizza	bank bldg. (available)	New China Pan	office (available)	Mainline Finance	Brownstone Bldg	Coles Tobacco	Daniels Produce	office (available)	Ellis Mills Building (available)	Army Navy Store	Twice as Nice		Juan Carlos Mexican Rest
	#201	#205	#207	#209	#211	#213	#215	#219	#221	#223	#229	#233		#235
	<b>E. High Street</b>													
	#200	#204	#212			#216	#218	 parking lot	#226	empty lot	#232	#236		
	Audio-Visual	Memories n More	Video-Ray & PA Wine-Spirits Shop	Rich Ranieri & RAC	Amy.s Attic (future restaurant)	Cash Traders	Laser Worx							
	Stop -1	Stop -2	Stop-3	Stop-4			Stop-5	Stop-6	Stop-7	Stop-8				

**Stop 1. 200 High Street** - former site of St. Clair Mansion; recently AV Junction; available  
(See two photos)

This property was originally a 1700s-era home owned after the Revolutionary War by General Andrew St. Clair, first President of the Continental Congress. The building was razed in 1924, and replaced with the building standing today which has served many businesses, most recently the Audio-Visual Junction. Isaias Gutierrez of S&I General Contractor purchased the building in early 2017, and is currently renovating it for use as modern offices or shops. **For more information on the history, please see the sidewalk display along the curb, erected by the Pottstown Historical Society.**

**Stop 2. 204 High Street** – now Memories ‘n More

Originally part of the original St. Clair Mansion property (see photos for Stop 1), the current building on the lot was built as a mate to match the replacement on the corner in 1924. The National Iron Bank was organized in the original storeroom in 1881, with a temporary residence there until 1887 when it moved to the newly constructed Security Building at 152 High Street. Over the many years, it has been a cigar-manufacturer and cigar shop, Mary Jane Shoes, and Zipf Candies. It is now “Memories ‘n More”, a second-hand store full of treasures to explore.

**Stop 3. 212 High Street** – formerly Levitz Furniture; now VideoRay and the PA Wine and Spirits Store

The footprint of the building now housing Video Ray and the Pennsylvania Wine and Spirits Store was once four separate buildings housing jewelry stores, news shops, a saddle and harness dealer, photographer, post office, and an express company. The classic street clock was erected by Stone Jewelers, once a business on the site. The brick building at No. 212 remains, but the others were mostly razed in 1959-1960, then rebuilt to join together as one building designed for Levitz Bros Furniture. Levitz eventually left Pottstown in 2001, and the building went into receivership.

Scott Bentley purchased the building in 2011 and made enormous renovations and improvements to relocate his high-tech underwater-camera firm, Video-Ray, into Pottstown. The interior of the building now benefits from showcasing many

remaining historic attributes. Bentley has also made significant contributions and investments in other Pottstown entities and buildings, including the Ellis Mills Building at Stop 12 on this Tour.

**4. 214-216-218 High Street – now Rich Ranieri Paint & Flooring, and RAC** *(See Photo)*

The first known building on this site was built in about 1845 for the Mintzer hardware business. The building was sold to A.G. Saylor, then to Van Buskirk & Brother for their hardware store. The hardware business moved a few lots east on High Street to No. 226 in 1956; Robin Cards took the lease in 1957. An unfortunate and costly fire in 1958 destroyed the buildings on the site and damaged the near-by Hippodrome. The buildings were razed and a one-story building erected in their place, currently owned by Rich Raneiri and Harold Missimer, serving as home to Ranieri Paint & Flooring next to RAC Rent-a-Center.

**5. 220-222-224 High Street –former Hippodrome and Slack Shack; now parking lot** *(See three photos)*

As early as 1845, two single-story white frame buildings on the right-hand side of this lot housed tobacconists and news agencies. They were razed in 1914 for the Hippodrome Theatre, which had a grand opening on Dec 26, 1914, later altered with a colorful modern marquee in 1934. The name was changed in about 1967 to the Towne Theatre, but it remained in business for only about another 8 years. It was eventually condemned and demolished.

A.G. Saylor built a home on the left-side of the what is now the lot, which was Pottstown's first public hall for entertainment. He eventually moved into the building and operated a dry goods store before leasing the storefront out. Tiny Tots moved into it in the 1950s, followed by Slack Shack in 1960s-70s. The Saylor estate sold the property in 1977; it, too, was later condemned and demolished.

The empty lot is now owned by Win and Sutida Soomboosong, recent investors in Pottstown, who have plans, subject to change, to use the space in conjunction with the restaurant and beer garden they propose opening at 226-228 High.

**6. 226-228 High Street – formerly Amy's Attic; future restaurant**

This incredibly beautiful brick building was built in about 1850 by Henry P. Engle as his home, and his wife's millinery shop. It later served as a bakery, a flour and feed business, and a restaurant. The building was originally only three stories tall, with the mansard roof and dormers added in the 1890s. It became the Montgomery Hotel and Restaurant. The property was home to Amy's Attic from 2004-2006.

It was purchased in 2016 for renovation by Win and Sutida Soomboosong, with plans, subject to change, to make it an addition to their Azie's line of Asian-fusion restaurants.

**7. 230 High Street – now a boarded-up lot**

A frame building was built here in about 1850, then leased by many businesses in cigars, printing, fruit, and fish. That 1st building was razed in 1902 for a 2<sup>nd</sup> building, in brick, which was then destroyed in a fire in 1956. The 3<sup>rd</sup> building was a single-story used for men's clothing store, however it too was destroyed in another fire in 1995. It has not been rebuilt by the current owner.

**8. 232-234-236 High Street - now LaserWorx and Pottstown Cash Traders**  
*(See Photos)*

The earliest known photographs of these lots show a lovely home with majestic trees, a full yard on the east-side of the property, inside a white picket fence on the corner of High and S. Penn Streets. That original home was built in 1818 by Jesse Ives, owner of the Roller Mill and a Burgess in Pottstown. It later became the home of Catherine Potts Gartley, grand-daughter of John Potts. She died in 1885, at which time the property was divided. After use as offices, the home was demolished in 1937 to build the first Sears, Roebuck & Co. in Pottstown. A restored Sears mural can be seen on the rear of the building. The building has housed Bell Telephone, and is now home to Pottstown Cash Traders.

The brick building on the corner opened in about 1880 as a grocery business, then in 1892 as Markley Confectionary. It was the Hoffman clothing store, then the Betty Lee Shop until the 1960s. In the 1980s, the owner uncovered and restored original architectural features including tin ceilings, beveled mercury mirrors, vaulted plaster entry-way ceilings, stunning stained glass, and walnut-inlay floors. Since 2010, it has been LaserWorx. The owner and local authorities continue to review the traffic-related issues created for the building by trucks entering S. Penn Street from High Street to access the service- and delivery-entrances of other buildings on High Street.

**9. 235 High Street – now Juan Carlos Fine Mexican Cuisine Restaurant** *(See Photo)*

This beautifully maintained and still-standing building was erected in 1867 by John Andre, one of the leading citizens in Pottstown until his death in 1890. He used this property for a jewelry store and a music shop, then it was sold for use as dry goods. The building was then sold to William Lamb in 1950 for the new location of his landmark music store which operated there until about 1980; an iconic earlier location was at 247 High Street with the inscription "Lamb's". Boyer's Shoes used it in the 1980s and 1990s. Owned by Jay Constantine of Constantine III LP, it has now operated successfully for several years as the Juan Carlos Fine Mexican Cuisine Restaurant.

**10. 233 High Street – formerly Bechtel's Sporting Goods, now Twice as Nice Shop**

A log structure first stood on the site, owned by Jacob Drinkhouse. In 1853, he was the last veteran of the American Revolution living in Pottstown to pass away. Drinkhouse's distinguished civic life included state legislator, postmaster, and justice of the peace.

William Leh, a jeweler, had purchased the property from Drinkhouse in the 1840s, and demolished the log building to be replaced by a brick building. Leh sold all of his properties to John Andre in the 1850s. After Andre's death in 1880, his widow demolished the building in 1893, and replaced it with a new brick building remaining to this day. Tenants over the years included Merritts Lumber, McCarraher's Appliances, and Andre's Photography. "Mush" Bechtel purchased the building in 1960 for his sporting goods store, which remained until 1994. The building, now owned by Jay Constantine of Constantine LP, houses the Twice as Nice store.

**11. 229-231 High Street – formerly A.G. Saylor's House, National Iron Bank; now Army Navy Store  
(see Photos)**

These two lots were combined into one single-story building in about 1956, after the previous buildings were razed. Occupants since that time have included the Darling Shoppes and Goodwill Industries. It has now operated for several years as the Army-Navy store.

No 231 had been part of the Drinkhouse-owned property described under the No. 233 listing. As with No. 233, it was sold to Leh (who built a small structure on the site), and subsequently by Leh to Andre in the 1850s. Horace Carter bought it in 1879 for his book and variety store, which it remained until 1918. National Iron Bank bought the property in 1930, leasing it out.

No. 229 has had four separate buildings on its ground, perhaps the most of any lot in this section of High Street. First was A.G. Saylor's home, which he built in about 1845. By 1880, Saylor had begun to purchase properties on the other side of High Street, and sold in 1881 to Daniel Hatfield, a jeweler who demolished the home for a business building. Then it was destroyed in the massive December 1890 fire that also destroyed the 4 properties to the west of it at Nos. 227, 225, 223 and 221. Jacob Fegely bought the property and erected a new brick building. It was used by the National Iron Bank until 1958 before it was demolished for the current building.

**12. 223-225-227 High Street – Ellis Mills Building (See Photo)**

In 1838, Daniel Herr Beecher came to Pottstown and started a dry goods business; in 1852 he built a store at 223 High Street. Daniel retired in 1883, turning the business to his son and nephew. Meanwhile, other merchants had erected buildings at 225 and 227 High St. The entire line of buildings, along with No. 229, were consumed in the disastrous fire of December 1890. After the fire, the Beechers purchased Nos. 225 and 227, combining with No. 223, into a much larger store.

Ellis Mills purchased the site in 1899, which served as dry goods, hat store and department store until 1984. The site briefly served as "Jazzie's Lounge", a night club, in 2003. Scott Bentley and Montco Tech Center LLS, purchased the building in 2016 and immediately began major renovations to prepare it for use as a restaurant or other high-end use. Some of the renovations included removing the second floor which had been added in the 1960s, which then exposed the original 1890s skylights and barrel ceiling.

**13. 221 High Street – offices, available**

The first structure in 1858 was for Samuel Kline, a furniture manufacturer, who operated there until shortly before his death in 1867. The property passed in succession to Dana Edleman, for a shoe shop, then to Isaac Fegely, and then in 1888 to R. Morgan Root.

This building was also a casualty of the Dec 1890 fire, after which Root had it rebuilt where he ran a dress factory on the upper floors. Following Root's death in 1930, Milton's childrens clothing business acquires the buildings and operates until about 1980. Beautiful renovations were made to the façade and interior in 2008, for occupancy by Affinity Property Management Co.

The storefront was then the law office for David Garner before he relocated his practice to King Street. The building is currently available.

**14. 219 High Street – Daniel King’s Produce**

This lovely building dates from 1858, when it was owned by a bookseller. In 1925, under Cole Tobacco who operated there for many years before moving to other locations at No. 213 and 215. It now operates as home to Daniel King’s fresh produce store, serving veggies and fruit year-round.

**15. 213-215-217 High Street – The Brownstone and Cole’s Tobacco**

(See 2 Photos)

Samuel Potts built the original structure for his sister-in-law, Sarah May, possibly as early as 1790. George Leaf obtained it in 1814, and sold it in 1833 to George Richards, a retired businessman. Mark Richards, his son, divided the east-side of the home into storerooms for leasing. His sister, Annie Richards, lived in the home until her death in 1917.

Aldes Bernhardt razed the building and built the current brownstone at No. 213 in 1921, which served as home to McCrory’s for many years until 1949 when they obtained their own property on the 300-block of High Street. It also housed Sun Drugs and Cole’s tobacco among others. The Brownstone has recently been renovated and is available.

No. 215 is Cole’s, relocated there in 2006 from No. 213. Cole’s had previously been at No. 215 for a long time in the 60s and 70s under George Fisher.

No. 217 entrance is for a studio, part of No. 215 complex and owned by Cindy/Courtney

**16. 211 High Street – now Mainline Financial**

This building dates to 1874, built by Frank Auchy for his clothing and tailoring business. Upon his retirement in 1895, it is leased to Miller & Sons, clothiers. Miller later purchases the building and operates there until 1978. Note the Miller name added to the façade. Oldtown Jewelers obtained the building in 1987 and operated there until they moved to Sanatoga in 2016. Mainline Financial, an investment firm, purchased the building in 2005, operating in Pottstown until the present. The building is now available.

**17. 209 High Street**

Erected in the 1850s by John Andree for renting; by 1875, owned by Daniel Beecher, then leased to Scheffey’s stationary who later in 1880 buys the property from Beecher.

Later it will be home to Burdan’s dew drops and restaurant. In 1914 Quicksell’s restaurant leases the building and in 1920 buys the property and continues there until 1938.

Marjorie’s Rose Singer Shop was a tenant from 1972-1984.

**18. 207 High Street – now New China Pan Chinese Restaurant**

A small frame structure stood there in the 1860s which was owned by the Richards estate. George Harrison came here in 1869 and leased this building from Richards for his millinery business. He purchases the property from Richards in 1873.

The frame structure is razed in 1874 for a one-story brick building and in 1880 he works out of the rear of this building while he has the additional floors built. George retires after serving several years on our school board and in business in 1896 and sells his property to Samuel Mosheim, a clothier. His son, Maurice, takes over the business and later he also involved in the beginnings of Krause and Ludwick, as a partner in the dealership. The business is sold to a Philadelphia group and is open until 1957 when Harold Wolf purchases the property for his china and glass store and that closes about 1982. A Chinese Restaurant has operated here since 1987, currently the New China Pan Restaurant.

**19. 205 High Street – formerly National Bank of Pottstown, Continental Bank and PNC Bank; now available. (See Photo)**

This was part of the properties at Nos. 201 and 203, the location of a rambling low white plastered building in the 1840s, later a feed store and marble dealer.

The National Bank of Pottstown purchases the three lots at 201, 203 and 205 to the corner in 1862 for \$5,500. They then sell the corner portion to Samuel Bunting, and build their bank building at No 205. Extensive renovations were made to the building in 1915, essentially replacing most of the previous building. National Bank also purchased a property on N. Hanover, eventually linking the two buildings for an “L” shaped wrap-around.

The National Bank of Pottstown merges with the National Iron Bank take in 1952, and branches are built in Stowe and in the east end. The National Bank of Pottstown ceased to exist in 1960, at which time Continental Bank moved in and later PNC Bank. The property has been for sale several years.

**20. 201-203 High Street** – formerly *Buntings Hats*; now *Argento's Pizza*

*(See Photos)*

Beginning in 1830 at this corner and No. 205, John Hartranft's white-plastered home stood on a slight hill, with a stone wall along the front. John, who died in 1860, was the first person to be buried in Pottstown Cemetery on N. Hanover Street. Hantranft's son sold the three lots to the National Bank of Pottstown, which then resold the two lots closest to the corner to Samuel Bunting in 1863. (Samuel's son, Isaac, settled in the wild west of Grand Junction, CO, where he rose to prominence as a newspaper publisher and Mayor.)

Samuel razed the home and erected a large brick building, with his initials on its façade, for his hats, clothing and jewelry businesses. Following Samuel's death in 1886, his widow in 1888 added the rear portion of the building along N. Hanover Street for additional apartments. The business operated until 1964, under the Shutes, who are related to the Buntings.

Household Finance was on-site from 1965-1995. Argento's Pizza has operated at this core of Pottstown since 2000.

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David Kerns, President and Historian of the Pottstown History Society, has conducted hundreds of hours of research reviewing available records in preparation for this tour. Other volunteers have assisted with document- and photograph-searches, additional internet research, and editing.

The Walking Tour is a labor of love. We acknowledge the limitations of the information provided here, particularly in the earliest years. We have not explored every possible source of information, perhaps a project for another sleuth. The available records are sometimes inconsistent, street numbers were not widely used until the 1870s, and buildings were subject to many unrecorded expansions, remodeling, and renovations. Source documents do not always exist, replaced instead by less reliable secondary writings and personal recollections. Dates of photographs can be uncertain, often determined by the period clothing and hair styles, automobiles, road surfaces, door and window design, and other clues.

We welcome your comments, corrections, and most importantly, additional information. Please do not allow the history contained in the documents and photographs in your grandmother's attic or your grandfather's barn to be lost to time. Please contact us regarding any 'finds' you may come across.

The Pottstown Historical Society is an all-volunteer non-profit 501 (c)3 organization, entirely dependent financially upon contributions and donations, including membership fees, honorarium, memorials, and your generous gifts. We invite your support, interest and participation.

Check our newly redesigned website!

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