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# HURON

*Old Plat District* Ohio

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*H*ISTORIC  
HOME  
WALKING  
*T*OUR

# THE EARLY YEARS OF HURON

In 1792 the western section of New Connecticut, also known as the Western Reserve, was granted by the state of Connecticut to 1,870 families living in the Connecticut towns of Greenwich, Fairfield, Danbury, Norwalk, New Haven, East Haven, New London, Groton and Ridgefield, whose homes and property had been burned by the British during the Revolutionary War. This 500,000-acre tract of land, which was called the Firelands, encompassed the western most townships in the Western Reserve, including present day Huron and Huron Township.

It would be several years before any of the “fire sufferers” made their way from Connecticut to the Firelands. One deterrent was the presence of Wyandot Indians who still inhabited a few scattered settlements, living off the land and waters. Another was the geographical characteristics of the area. Much of Huron Township was heavily wooded, except for the prairie land of the western and southwestern portion of the township. Over a thousand acres of marsh land bordered the lake, river, and numerous coves, which was thought to be the source of disease.

Many of the “fire sufferers” never emigrated to the Firelands. Tired of waiting to claim their land or burdened with financial problems, many sold their rights for a pittance to land speculators in the East. One such man was William Winthrop, an enterprising gentleman from New York City, who bought the claims of many of the sufferers and eventually owned most of Huron Township. Because Winthrop was asking such a high price for the land, there were few buyers. After his death, his nephew inherited the property and lowered the price enough to attract prospective landowners.



*301 South Street*

Prior to the War of 1812, numerous pioneers journeyed west and settled in Huron Township, which by most accounts was formally organized in 1809. When the British and Americans did go to war three years later, the local Indians were encouraged by the British to terrorize and harass the settlers, a request they willingly fulfilled.

When the war ended in 1815, Indian aggression subsided, and Huron Township experienced a rapid growth in population and small business. Many people began to recognize the opportunities Huron and her harbor promised to those willing to invest in her future.

The town plat that forms the foundation of modern-day Huron was filed on June 14, 1824, in Huron County (Huron was in Huron County until 1838, when Erie County was created). According to the map, the main part of the village lay west of today’s Main Street and north of South Street. The public square was located where Lake Front Park is today, but instead of overlooking the lake, the square lay adjacent to Williams Street, which ran east and west (in the 1800s today’s Williams Street was known as Milan Street). North of Williams Street was a row of lots and another street, Lake Street, bordered Lake Erie. This area of Huron was known as Piety Hill, because of its location on a small knoll. Many of the town’s wealthier citizens lived on Piety Hill in houses that, according to a November 8, 1883 article in the Huron Reporter, were considered “models of architectural skill.” Huron residents referred to these expansive dwellings as the Piety Hill Castles.

Although the main commerce of the town in the early 1800s was centered further north, the years of erosion caused by Lake Erie dramatically altered Huron’s original boundaries and gradually pushed the town south. Most of the erosion occurred in the early 1880s, with the lake first claiming Lake Street and then the houses themselves.



*349 Center Street*

# THE EARLY YEARS OF HURON

## *Huron's Economy*

During the years following the conclusion of the War of 1812, numerous pioneers made their way west to Huron. Businesses such as dry goods and grocery stores, hotels and warehouses began to prosper, but it soon became apparent that the fledgling village's most important resource was its harbor. Because of its location on the southern most part of Lake Erie, Huron served as a popular dockage point for ships traveling up and down the lakes as they carried both passengers and freight east and west. The harbor enjoyed such popularity for many years, until the completion of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad, at which time the rails became a more preferable form of travel for passengers and freight.

In the late 1820s and 1830s Huron's shipbuilding industry surpassed that of any other town in Ohio. The newly improved harbor, the close proximity of the Huron River and the area's seemingly limitless supply of cheap timber all contributed to Huron's claim as "leading Ohio builder of steamships in the 1830s." The burgeoning shipbuilding industry in Huron attracted numerous carpenters, sailors, and ship captains, many of whom made their homes in the community.

Huron enjoyed a very prosperous economy until 1839, when the Milan Canal was completed. Unfortunately, Milan's boon proved to be Huron's demise. The completion of the canal dealt a severe blow to Huron's business community by shifting the focus of the shipbuilding industry from Huron to Milan. Many shop owners were forced to close, and had to sell their property to pay taxes. A rash of fires was reported, said in some instances to have been set to collect insurance money. It was during one such fire that the early records of Huron were destroyed.



*Captain Montagues Bed & Breakfast*

Although Huron's shipbuilding industry declined, the village became one of the most successful commercial fishing centers on Lake Erie in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Fishing grounds off the mouth of the Huron River were noted for producing bountiful catches of the more desirable herring, whitefish, bass, sturgeon, pickerel, and ciscoes, as well as the less valuable mullets, suckers, perch and catfish.

At one time, Huron employed from 100 to 250 men in the fishing business. Several fish houses lined the street along the Huron River. It was not uncommon for the fish houses to freeze 500 tons of fish during the winter months and ship 2000 tons of salted fish during the fall and spring. The fishing season began in Mid-March and continued until Mid-November, at which time the fisherman pulled their nets and made any necessary repairs.

Fishing was not Huron's only source of commerce at the end of the nineteenth century. The owners of the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad, who wanted to connect the coalfields of southeastern Ohio and Wheeling, West Virginia with Lake Erie, recognized that Huron's deep-water harbor and easy accessibility would be an ideal location to do so. A coal dock was built and was soon followed by ore docks. The Huron docks were a symbol of the town's prosperity for 100 years before the coal and iron ore business declined in the 1980s.

Beginning in 1965, the buildings of downtown Huron were demolished to make way for urban renewal. Huron had received federal money to rebuild its downtown area, but for various reasons the majority of the buildings were never replaced. The focal point of today's downtown is the Boat Basin, which features a popular marina, and is host to concerts, festivals, and other events throughout the year.

Although the old downtown is now gone, the Huron Historical Walking Tour will give you a glimpse of Huron's past and the people who created our city's history. The homes, churches, and historic landmarks featured on the tour all have stories to tell about the courageous and determined men and women who settled this area.

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# HURON

*Old Plat District* *Ohio*

## SELF GUIDED WALKING TOUR

### Huron Light House

By an 1834 act of Congress, Huron was granted a beacon light. Since then three different beacons (1835, 1857, 1936) have stood guard over Huron's harbor. The present light is on the National Register.

### Boat Basin

In 1967, the City of Huron, with federal assistance, embarked upon a controversial urban renewal program demolishing 38 commercial buildings and private residences. A "letting in of the waters" ceremony was held in the fall of 1971. The Huron Small Boat Mooring Basin was the focal point of the proposed new downtown. However, further extensive redevelopment of the area did not occur as envisioned.

### 357 Main Street - (1)

First Merit Bank is the only remaining building of Huron's old downtown. The structure, built in 1892, once housed three businesses and apartments. The façade has changed several times throughout the years. Today it is also the Erie County's Habitat for Humanity headquarters.

### 410 Main Street - (2)

Originally a farmhouse built in 1876 by Frank Garritt, Wright Stein purchased the dwelling in 1924 at a sheriff's sale involving the Thomas Sprowl estate. Since then, it has served as Huron's only funeral home.

### 430 Main Street - (3)

St. Peter's Catholic Church was built in 1969. The original church, built in 1890, stood behind the present church on the corner of Huron and Van Rensselaer Streets where the school now stands. The sanctuary seats 900 and is often used for community gatherings. The ultra modern, twelve-sided structure has twelve arches that represent the Apostles.

### Main St. or Huron Cemetery

One block south of the Catholic Church lays the burial ground that is the final resting place for many of Huron's earliest residents, Revolutionary War veterans, the Huron Rangers of the War of 1812, shipbuilders, Jabez Wright, and Rev. Samuel Marks. The last burial was in 1937.



*319 Center Street*

### 107 Wall Street - (4)

Now a private residence, it once functioned as a fish house. Built in 1877 by William Heymann, a prominent fisherman, the once rustic, red-sided building was turned into a home in the 1950s. The last remaining fish house is located on North Main Street beside the Bait Store.

### Wall Street

Known as the Lightkeeper's House, the residence was completed in 1874. Later it served as a boarding house for the Coast Guard. Huron Parks and Recreation now use the brick station directly east of the home. The house has been vacant for many years.

### 125 Williams Street - (5)

This Greek Revival house, built in 1839, is best known as the home of Rev. Samuel Marks and his second wife, Emmeline Minuse, who purchased it in 1850. Father Marks served Christ Episcopal Church for over forty years. In 1866 he helped found Marks Lodge, a Masonic organization. The picket fence was a popular feature of early homes in the village.

### 201 Williams Street - (6)

Built for Captain Pearl and his wife, the home was finished in 1898. In 1861, he entered the Ohio Volunteer Army and had an illustrious military career during the Civil War. He was captured twice, but both times escaped a rebel prison and was also severely wounded. Later he served as the pension agent for Erie County.

### 210 Williams Street - (7)

Hand-hewn beams in the basement and attic reveal a home that dates back to 1834. Horatio Nelson Bang, who had a drug and medicine store on Main Street, built the home. Captain Charles Montague lived there prior to his move to 229 Center Street. Only five people have owned the property.

We welcome you to historic Huron's Old Plat.  
Thank You for staying on the sidewalk and respecting the privacy of the homeowner.

# HURON

*Old Plat District* Ohio

## SELF GUIDED WALKING TOUR

### 225 Williams Street - (8)

On February 10, 1835, a committee of Huron Presbyterian worshippers met in a schoolhouse on the NW corner of Lake Front Park. It was not until 1853 that the present church was built on the corner of Homan and Williams. The style, reminiscent of colonial churches found in New England, reflects those who came to Huron from that area.

### 317 Williams Street - (9)

The 1883 Folk Victorian home was built for Mrs. Myra Thomas and her daughter. Mrs. Thomas left her husband for unknown reasons and constructed this home. Her husband was granted a divorce from her in 1887 on the grounds of her willful absence. The front porch, though not original to the house, was added in 1927 and greatly contributes to the home's beauty.

### 325 Williams Street - (10)

This farmhouse style house was built by Horace K. Rand in 1883. The original stable/barn located behind the home still stands and was believed to be the stable for the fire and police departments.

### 333 Williams Street - (11)

In 1943, the library moved to its present location, then a school building owned by the Huron Board of Education. Parts of the original building are still visible on the north side of the building. A complete renovation and large addition was finished in 2002. The site where the library is now located was the location of several village school buildings.

### 338 Williams Street - (12)

Started by German-speaking settlers, the current sanctuary was erected in 1876 and was named St. John's Evangelical Church. The founding families were honored in 1910 with the addition of stained glass windows bearing their names. Today after a merger, it has become the United Methodist church. The church has a Schantz pipe organ, the original bell housed in the courtyard, and a Good Shepherd stained glass window above the chancel.

## LEGEND

1. 357 Main Street
2. 410 Main Street
3. 430 Main Street
4. 107 Wall Street
5. 125 Williams Street
6. 201 Williams Street
7. 210 Williams Street
8. 225 Williams Street
9. 317 Williams Street
10. 325 Williams Street
11. 333 Williams Street
12. 338 Williams Street
13. 110 Center Street
14. 116 Center Street
15. 120 Center Street
16. 304 Park Street
17. 128 Center Street
18. 132 Center Street
19. 301 South Street
20. 209 Center Street
21. 211 Center Street
22. 216 Center Street
23. 229 Center Street
24. 303 Center Street
25. 304 Center Street
26. 309 Center Street
27. 319 Center Street
28. 323 Center Street
29. 335 Center Street
30. 349 Center Street
31. 401 Center Street
32. 403 Center Street
33. 415 Center Street
34. 416 Center Street
35. 120 Ohio Street
36. 125 Ohio Street
37. 202 Ohio Street
38. 211 Ohio Street
39. 213 Ohio Street
40. 226 Ohio Street
41. 305 Ohio Street
42. 325 Ohio Street
43. 423/425 Ohio Street

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Southwest Corner of South Street and Ohio Street

### Shirley Street

The street was named after Abiather Shirley, a Huron pioneer, who in 1834 platted and owned what was known as South Huron or Shirleyville. He donated the land for the Huron Cemetery. The Shirley Homestead at 509 Center was built in 1833 and currently is the oldest known home in Huron.

### Southwest corner of Williams and Shirley Street

Now privately owned, the structure housed two congregations. The Huron Methodist Episcopal Church erected the church in 1871 but became a victim of the Depression and disbanded. In 1932 the church sold the property to the Grange, an agricultural society. From 1963-1967, the Aldergate Methodist Church rented the facility from the Grange but left when they merged with the United Brethren. In the early 1980s, the Huron Historical and Cultural Society purchased the building and remained there until 1997. The Society now leases rooms from the Huron Library.

### 110 Center Street - (13)

This c. 1852 vernacular house was constructed by Alexander Ledgard, a ship's carpenter and veteran of the War of 1812. The house was built of various types of wood, likely whatever was left over at the shipyard.

### Lake Front Park

A map of Huron village recorded in Huron County, June 15, 1824, designated the park as the public square. North of the square were two streets, Williams and Lake, both claimed by lake erosion in the violent lake storms of the 1880s. The land has always been used as a park.

### 116 Center Street - (14)

From 1908-1940, Sears, Roebuck and Co. sold more than 100,000 homes through their mail order program. Built in 1938 by Perrie and Anna Brown, the house is believed to be "The Martha Washington" model.

### 120 Center Street - (15)

This home was built c. 1852 by John and Julie Sprague. Originally built in the Gothic Revival style, it has been significantly altered. The house features steeply sloping roofs and pointed gables, vertical siding that has been covered by aluminum siding and wooden verge boards under the eaves that were cut with medieval motifs that are still visible.

### 304 Park Street - (16)

Horace Waite, local bank cashier, purchased the home in 1938 from the widow of Frank Krellick, a baker. Located originally on Main Street where the BP Station is today, the 50-ton house journeyed slowly north on Main Street to its present location. An article in the Erie County Reporter said the move was the biggest social event of the season.

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# HURON

*Old Plat District* Ohio

## SELF GUIDED WALKING TOUR

### **128 Center Street - (17)**

Sidney Detro, wife of builder Dana Detro who built this Cape Cod style home, sold it to Christopher and Marion Huttenlocker in 1939. It is one of the few structures in the area that feature Berea sandstone. The house replaced another that was torn down.

### **132 Center Street - (18)**

The home of Eldon Roswurm, a Huron postmaster and photographer for many years, was built by C.J. Miller in 1903. Huron graduates recall having their senior pictures taken here. The Queen Anne home features ornate oak woodwork and pocket doors.

### **South Street**

The street was so named because it was the southern most street of the original plat surveyed and platted by Jabez Wright in the early 1800s.

### **301 South Street - (19)**

Built in 1875 by Ramone and Sarah Shepherd, the house was best remembered as the McQuillen House. Mrs. McQuillen had a very popular lunch room and restaurant near the railroad depot. Various members of the Hugh F. McQuillen family lived here from the mid 1920s until 2002. The McQuillens added the wraparound porch.

### **209 Center Street - (20)**

The circa 1839 Greek Revival has retained its original architectural features, an entry porch with columns, and a front door with narrow windows. It is said much of the wood in the house was harvested from Cedar Point. John Wickham, a prominent Huron businessman, lived here with his wife and two sons.

### **211 Center Street - (21)**

Yet another variation of Greek Revival, the home was built in 1854 by John Burgess. An addition was added in 1903. Features of the home include an Ionic porch colonnade that creates an airy feeling and colored windows on the side of the front door that represent the four seasons. John D. Peterson, a lake ship captain, and John McCormick, founder of Huron Cement, also owned the home at one time.

### **216 Center Street - (22)**

For many years, the residence was called the Hudson House. In 1850, Benjamin Hudson, a ship's carpenter, built the home. The home has been altered many times from its original form.

### **229 Center Street - (23)**

Now Captain Montague's Bed and Breakfast, the dwelling has been a tourist home, an apartment and office building, and a private residence. John and Lucy Wickham built the Italianate style home in 1881. A written account refers to the newly built home as "an elegant structure the equal of which is seldom seen in Huron". Although much of the original exterior architecture has disappeared, it still features a bay window and a heavily molded, double entrance door. The interior foyer has a magnificent walnut hand-carved staircase, and the front inside doors have ruby glass panels that were made with gold. The bed and breakfast is named after Captain Charles Montague, a lake captain, who purchased it in 1900 and did extensive remodeling.

### **303 Center Street - (24)**

Built in 1875 for John and Ocela Aicher, hotel owners, the home was once a single family, but the Aichers converted it into a two-family dwelling. A large safe still remains in the home. The house features a Widows Walk.

### **304 Center Street - (25)**

For over 85 years, this home was a doctor's office and private residence. The home was built in 1855 by Andrew Brainard, a carpenter, and was sold to Dr. Joseph Esch in 1881. Next to own the house was Dr. H. L. Judge from 1892-1898. Dr. William Pollack owned the property until 1921 when he sold it Dr. Carl Swanbeck. Dr. Swanbeck and his wife Ethel, who served twenty-two years as a representative to the 13th Congressional District, lived there until the early 1980s.

### **309 Center Street - (26)**

One of the most unique and beautiful homes of the Old Plat, this Second Empire home was likely constructed using house plans published by Philadelphia architect Isaac Hobbs. Hobbs named this plan "An American Cottage". The house was built in 1876 by local builder Frank Garritt.

### **319 Center Street - (27)**

Addison H. Winchell purchased Lot 49 in 1874 but did not build his opulent Queen Anne home until 1887. The house has original Tiffany lamp fixtures and the same hand-carved, walnut stairwell as Captain Montague's. Winchell, a grain, lumber, and fish dealer, owned the home for only a short time.

### **323 Center Street - (28)**

In 1894 Horace and Minnie Rand built this home. Rand was at one time an agent for the Lake Shore Electric Railroad, a cashier for the Huron Banking Co., and a partner for a dry goods and hardware store on Main Street. The large Queen Anne was built for only two people.

### **335 Center Street - (29)**

This circa-1897 Folk Victorian was built for Charles and Cora Heymann. Mr. Heymann was part of the W.C. Heymann Fishing Company of Huron and amassed a great fortune fishing in both Lake Erie and Lake Michigan. Another former owner, Bud Slocum was quite versed at playing pool. His achievements afforded him the opportunity to play with pool greats, Jackie Gleason and Willie Mosconi. In the early 1970s. Mr. Slocum turned his garage into a pool hall for local teens. The current owners have done much to restore this home to its original splendor.

### **349 Center Street - (30)**

A unique architectural style in the Old Plat, this Gothic Revival home was constructed in 1852. In 1872, the home was purchased by Captain Charles Peterson. Captain Peterson met an unfortunate death in the waters of Lake Superior in 1890 when his ship, The Comrade, was lost during a violent storm. The home remained in the Peterson family for many years.

### **401 Center Street - (31)**

The Queen Anne style house was built by Christopher and Lutie Ray in 1903. Mr. Ray, an attorney, was mayor of the village of Huron and also served as a state representative in Columbus. Although Mr. Ray sold the house in 1945, he continued to live here as a boarder until his death in 1948.

### **403 Center Street - (32)**

Another example of Queen Anne architecture, the home was completed for C. A. (Ada) Wikel in 1898. Although smaller than most Queen Anne's, there is still a turret. The interior has original moldings, stairwell, and pocket doors.

### **415 Center Street - (33)**

As American as apple pie and just as popular, the American Foursquare was popular from the mid 1890s to the late 1930s. Dormers, pyramidal hip roofs, and covered front porches that span the full house were common characteristics. Miss Mary Kriss built the home in 1910.

### **416 Center Street - (34)**

The extensively renovated home was built by Edgar Shephard in 1897 for \$450.

### **120 Ohio Street - (35)**

Christ Episcopal Church was erected in 1838 and is on the Historical Register. It is one of the oldest buildings in Huron. In the beginning, the entrance was on what is now Park Street. Extensive remodeling took place in 1876 and 1963.

### **125 Ohio Street - (36)**

Ben J. Wentworth, a ship's carpenter, built this home in 1880.

### **202 Ohio Street - (37)**

Now a privately owned duplex, the Greek Revival dwelling was purchased in 1850 by the Huron Board of Education to serve as a high school. In 1886, a new school was built where the Huron Public Library on Williams Street is today.

### **211 Ohio Street - (38)**

The home was remodeled for the 1957 Cleveland Home and Flower Show to demonstrate how homes built by Cleveland tradesmen could be refurbished. The home, formerly located in the Hough area of Cleveland, was transported to Huron by barge. The move was documented in the August 1957 issue of Life magazine.

### **213 Ohio Street - (39)**

In 1887, Canaris Scott moved this house from Piety Hill because of lake erosion. An 1887 Erie County Reporter article recalled it as being one of the oldest homes in the village at the time. The Scott family has had four generations of fishermen and still owns the home.

### **226 Ohio Street - (40)**

Built in 1916, the home is a mixture of architectural styles. It features a steep Victorian-style roof without fancy gable detail, a near column porch, and a Romanesque style gable window.

### **305 Ohio Street - (41)**

Built in 1930 by much beloved Huron band director and elementary teacher James and Stella Hoffman respectively, the home features a Plantation style entryway that was added after the house was built.

### **325 Ohio Street - (42)**

McCormick School at one time housed grades 1-12. The art moderne style building was constructed in 1943, and an annex was added in 1952. The unique architecture features a flat roof, smooth rounded walls, and a "stucco-like" appearance.

### **423 and 425 Ohio Street - (43)**

Early newspaper accounts refer to this area as the Cole Addition, one of Huron's early subdivisions. Built by Angus Cole, an English immigrant carpenter, the two homes were built in 1907 and 1908 respectively.