

Jurors' Walking Tour

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Directions	Site or Building	Description
<p>Start from the Courthouse west steps on Swede Street</p>	<p>The Court House</p>	<p>The current Court House, replacing a smaller one of 1786, was built as the result of a competition of 1849 between Thomas U. Walter (architect of Girard College and later of the U.S. Capitol dome) and Napoleon LeBrun, (designer of Philadelphia's Academy of Music and Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul). LeBrun's successful design originally featured a steeple which was even higher than the Presbyterian church's to the east, but this was criticized as being out of keeping with the Greek Revival style. The steeple was replaced by the dome in a substantial renovation of 1904.</p> <p>The interior of the Court House dates largely from 1904, when the stained glass ceilings in courtrooms A, B, and C were installed. The murals in courtrooms D and E are by WPA artist Harding, who also painted the WPA murals in the Philadelphia Customs House.</p>
<p>Walk North to Airy Street</p>	<p>Montgomery Plaza Southwest corner of Airy and Swede Streets</p>	<p>Across Swede Street, where the high-rise office building now stands, previously stood the First Baptist Church (1833) which had a steeple added by Thomas U. Walter in 1850. This contributed, along with a gothic cottage used as a rectory, to the gothic ensemble along Airy Street. This was an abolitionist church, where many famous orators, such as Frederick Douglass, are known to have lectured. It is documented as a stop on the Underground Railroad.</p>
<p>Turn East on Airy Street Look North</p>	<p>Stinson House Northeast Corner of Airy and Church Streets</p>	<p>Church Street terminates from the north on Airy; at the NE corner stands the 1856 Greek Revival home (by Elijah Thomas) of Dr. Mary Stinson, thought to be the first female professionally accredited psychiatrist in America. She left her fortune to found a home for elderly women.</p>

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Look South	Courthouse Addition	To the east of the Court House is the addition (1920's) which blocks off Penn Street from the east. In the space between the addition and the Post Office formerly stood the Reformed Church of the Ascension, also in the gothic style.
Look North	Saint John's Episcopal Church	This is the oldest church in Norristown (organized 1812, dedicated 1815). Visit the quiet churchyard at the rear to see graves of illustrious Norristonians, and of veterans of the Revolutionary, 1812, Civil, Spanish American, and later wars.
Look South	Post Office	This Art Deco structure (1932) by James Wetmore and Harry McMurtie is adorned with WPA murals by Paul Mays and (then novel) aluminum Deco/Classical metalwork.
Look North	Prison	The prison was constructed as part of the same plan as the Court House, but in the gothic style. The original competition drawings show versions of both buildings in both gothic and classical styles, but gothic was chosen here. The facade is of solid granite, and there is an underground tunnel for conveying prisoners from the Court House.
Look South	Law Offices of High, Swartz, Roberts, & Saidel	At least one of the houses west the corner of DeKalb was in the gothic style, and is documented to be by the famous architect John Notman. These were colonialized and converted to offices by G. Edwin Brumbaugh.
Northwest Corner of DeKalb and Airy	Parking Lot	This site, now the County parking lot, previously held Norristown's old Dutch Renaissance style Borough Hall and before that, a covered market along DeKalb Street. The center of the site along Airy Street contained the Italian Villa Style Veranda House Hotel (1859).

Directions	Site or Building	Description
Northeast Corner of DeKalb and Airy Streets	First Presbyterian Church of Norristown	<p>The First Presbyterian Church (1854) by Joseph Hoxie (who also built the Arch Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia) incorporates the spectacular spire visible from many miles away. It stands on the site of a previous (1834) church which was in the Greek Revival style. The current church marks the transition from Greek Revival to Italianate. But Hoxie loved spires; he even put one (since removed) on top of the dome of the Arch Street Church. The interior was remodeled in the 1880's in the Romanesque style, and the church was painted brown in imitation of the then-fashionable New York Brownstone. It is still commonly referred to as "The Brown Church."</p>
Look North of the church on the east side of DeKalb Street	Former Norristown Library	<p>This tiny building with the legend "Library" over the door was provided by the Presbyterians as a permanent home for the Norristown Library. The Library, founded in the 1790's by subscription (David Rittenhouse and General Andrew Porter were subscribers) is thought to be the third oldest public library in the United States. It originally was quartered in the librarians's home, then in various temporary and wood frame buildings. It later evolved into the Montgomery County Library.</p>
Look farther North on the east side of DeKalb Street	Faith Tabernacle Church 542 DeKalb Street	<p>This church (1857) to the north of the Presbyterian Church was a branch of the Presbyterian Church formed during the Great Schism. The church originally had an Italianate facade of brick, later faced with gray Valley Forge Marble, and was later used as the Norristown Public Library when the library outgrew the space noted above, until being returned to ecclesiastical duty.</p>

Directions	Site or Building	Description
<p>Turn Right (South) onto DeKalb Street</p>	<p>William Jamison House Southeast Corner Airy and DeKalb Streets</p>	<p>This house (1850) was built in the Greek Revival style for the son of Samuel Jamison who founded the Jamison Mills near the river. Considered huge and astonishing in its day, it originally sported a widow's walk and stables and out-buildings extending all the way to Green Street. There is a story that the house was originally to be only three stories, but when Mr. Jamison heard of the plans for the vast church tower to be erected across Airy Street, he feared his manse would be dwarfed (as in fact it is)! So he had another story added in such haste that it was one big room. This was used as a ballroom for the rest of the century except when used by the children for roller skating. The architectural offices on the first floor contain an 1857 wall map of Norristown; interested parties may apply to view this map when the office is open.</p>
<p>Walk South on DeKalb Street</p>	<p>St. George Coptic Orthodox church Northwest Corner DeKalb and Penn Streets</p>	<p>The beautiful Greek Revival was built in 1863 as Trinity Evangelical Lutheran church, replacing an 1849 church on the same site (note date stones in facade). This building was renovated at the turn of the century by Louis Comfort Tiffany and boasted Tiffany stained glass windows, a Tiffany glass mosaic, and an alabaster and gilt-bronze altar rail.</p>
<p>Walk South to Main Street</p>	<p>The Tone Building Northeast Corner DeKalb and Main Streets</p>	<p>The Tone building incorporates the stone structure of a blacksmith's shop which survived the British burning of Norristown during the Revolution. It is thought to be the oldest surviving building in Norristown.</p>
<p>Look South to the Large Building on the East side of DeKalb Street</p>	<p>Montgomery County Cultural Center 208 DeKalb Street</p>	<p>Originally the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Hall (1850), this Greek Revival building had a mansard fourth story applied in 1858; many famous figures spoke here, including Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Abraham Lincoln, and Daniel Webster.</p>

Directions	Site or Building	Description
Walk west on Main Street	Wachovia Bank	<p>The Wachovia Bank standing in the center of the north side this block is the successor to a long series of financial institutions, being preceded by First Union, Core States, Meridian, American Bank, Peoples Bank, and the Montgomery Trust, which built a shopping arcade just to the east of the existing building. This precursor of the mall was joined by another arcade to the east called the Curren Arcade. Before the bank, the site was occupied by the stone mansion of Samuel Jamison, father of the aforementioned William Jamison.</p>
Look South	County Garage	<p>This site contained the Valley Forge Hotel, Norristown's premier lodging and best restaurant. It was preceded by the Washington Hotel, established as a stage coach stop.</p>
Look South	<p>The Pennsylvania Dept of Environmental Protection SE Corner Main and Swede Streets</p>	<p>This new Hancock Square development incorporates the former Philadelphia and Western Railway (Red Arrow Line) elevated station which served as the Norristown terminus of the high speed interurban trolley line to Upper Darby, and also as a station for the Lehigh Valley Transit interurban trolley line to Allentown (Liberty Bell Limited). The trolleys entered Norristown on an elevated bridge over the Schuylkill River (the tracks from Upper Darby now terminate at Swede and Lafayette Streets at the Norristown Transportation Center), stopped on a track suspended over the Swede Street sidewalk, and continued north on a bridge over Main Street, running on the level while the ground of Court House Hill rose up to meet the tracks.</p> <p>South of the P&W Building on Swede Street previously stood the boyhood home of Norristown's most famous war hero, Civil War General and Presidential candidate Winfield Scott Hancock, who was credited with winning the Battle of Gettysburg.</p>

Directions	Site or Building	Description
Turn North on to Swede Street	Court House Square Northeast corner Main and Swede Streets	This square is the last bit of Norristown owned by the University of Pennsylvania, all the other lots having been sold off in the 19th century. The rent was one acorn per year. The square contains several monuments of interest; note especially the central obelisk dedicated to Civil War General Zook and the 51st Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers. Farther up Swede Street is the 1932 Purple Heart Memorial to all Norristownian war casualties. Don't overlook the monument by Sassona Norton, erected in 2005, to the victims of the September 11 attacks.
Look West	NW Corner Swede and Penn Streets	Here stood the famous Rambo House Hotel, named after a family of Swedish settlers who preceded the English in Pennsylvania. This hotel contained rooms for professionals, a popular restaurant, and a bar popular with lawyers and politicians.
Look East	County Centennial Obelisk SE (former) Corner of Penn and Swede Streets	Here is the County centennial (1884) obelisk commemorating David Rittenhouse (1732-1796), the "American Newton" - certainly the most famous scientist from Montgomery County - who fixed a surveyor's benchmark near this point from which surveyors measured plots near and far.