A Historic Bike Tour of the North Side
Until it was annexed into the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny City was a separate municipality comprising most of what is now the Pittsburgh’s North Side. At its peak, about 130,000 people lived there, including some of Pittsburgh’s most prominent industrialists. The predecessor of the University of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Pittsburgh area’s first railroad line were all located in Allegheny City.

The first inhabitants of the area along the Allegheny River were the Seneca and Shawnee Indians. They blazed an east-west trail that began at the present-day neighborhood of Lawrenceville, crossed the river at Herr’s Island and followed the future alignment of East and West Ohio Streets.

An Act of the Pennsylvania legislature set aside land north of the Allegheny River to be given to Revolutionary War veterans as compensation for their service. In 1787, Benjamin Franklin appointed surveyor David Resnick to prepare a development plan for a town site across the Allegheny River from Pittsburgh. His plan for the proposed Allegheny Town included 102 acres set aside for common pastureland. This land later became known as North, South, East and West Commons, on which landowners were privileged to graze their livestock.
In 1828, Allegheny incorporated as a borough. It grew rapidly, from 2,809 residents in 1830 to 10,989 people in 1840, before it was incorporated as a city. It was settled by English, Irish, Scottish, Swiss and German immigrants. William Robinson was elected the first of Allegheny City’s 27 mayors.

The Pennsylvania Canal, which was the first major transportation investment linking Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, entered Allegheny in 1829. Allegheny's link to the west began with the opening of the Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad in 1851. The line first connected Allegheny and New Brighton, and then was extended to Chicago as the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad.

The canal and the railroad encouraged industrial development. The most well-known and longest-lasting of these enterprises was the Heinz Company which opened its North Side plant in 1889.

The end came in 1907 when the City of Pittsburgh officially annexed Allegheny City to become America’s sixth largest city with 521,000 residents. Yet, Allegheny City’s heritage lives on through the North Side’s distinctive neighborhoods, well-preserved historic structures and the beautiful West Park. Through this bike tour, visitors will understand the pride that Allegheny’s residents had in their city.
APPROACHING THE NORTH SIDE FROM DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH

From Downtown Pittsburgh, you can cross the Allegheny River and head north on three Pittsburgh bridges: the Roberto Clemente (6th Street), the Andy Warhol (7th Street) and Rachel Carson (9th Street) bridges. These bridges, affectionately known as the Three Sisters Bridges, conveniently link Downtown to the North Side from Fort Duquesne Boulevard. Since the Roberto Clemente Bridge provides a visually interesting gateway into the North Side and a chance to ride past the nationally renowned PNC Park, we will begin the ride there. Please be aware that on game days, this bridge is closed to motor vehicles and is transformed into a festive walkway to PNC Park.

The three bridges, built 1924-1928, are the only identical trio of bridges in the United States. All three are among the only remaining examples of large eye bar chain suspension bridges in America.

Pittsburgh’s Art Commission influenced the decision to select this design, and the American Institute of Steel Construction awarded the 6th Street Bridge a beauty prize in 1928. When the current 6th Street Bridge was built, its predecessor, comprised of two Pratt trusses, was floated down the Ohio River to Neville Island where it was used until 1994 when the steelwork became too brittle to safely keep the bridge in use. (NR)

THE TOUR BEGINS: WELCOME TO THE HISTORIC NORTH SIDE!

This ride begins by crossing the Allegheny River on the Roberto Clemente Bridge. Continue north on Federal Street, and you will see PNC Park, home of the Pittsburgh Pirates Major League Baseball Team, on your left. Turn right on General Robinson Street, and you will see the Andy Warhol Museum on the right where General Robinson intersects with Sandusky Street.
The building in which the Andy Warhol Museum is located was originally constructed in 1913 as the Frick & Lindsay Building, a machinery dealer. For much of its life, the seven-story building housed the Volkwein music store. With 273 Warhol films and 4,000 works of media—paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, sculpture and installation, it is the largest museum in the United States dedicated to one artist.

ALLEGHENY COMMONS

Turn left at Sandusky Street. Continue north on Sandusky Street as it turns into Allegheny Commons East. Ride in one of the two left lanes. Continue north and follow the ring road as it curves left into Allegheny Commons North. Staying in the left lanes, continue west on Allegheny Commons North until it intersects with Federal Street. Allegheny High School is visible in the distance. The Allegheny High School was designed by architect Frederick Osterling and built in 1904 with a section added in 1937. (NR)

Moving from the ring road and riding south on the walkway, you will arrive at the Allegheny Library, photos of which illustrate the cover of this guide. Of Carnegie’s 1,679 libraries built around the country from the late 1880’s to 1919, the Allegheny Library was the first to be commissioned (the first was built in Braddock, PA). It was designed by architects Smithmeyer & Pelz and built 1888-1890. The library was built with an auditorium which was the home to the Pittsburgh Public Theatre 1974-99. The auditorium is now used by the New Hazlett Theater. (NR and CHS)

At the library, turn right and go past the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh. The Children’s Museum occupies the Allegheny Post Office (later the Old Post Office Museum) and the Buhl Planetarium and Institute of Popular Science (later Buhl Science Center). The Post Office, an Early Italian Renaissance structure built 1894-1897, was once the central post for Allegheny City. A 1960s urban renewal scheme proposed removal of the post office. The

TOUR ROUTE

Courtesy of David Wohlwill
Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation (PHLF) not only successfully prevented its demolition, but eventually acquired the Post Office Building for its headquarters until moving into its current Station Square offices in 1983.

The Buhl Planetarium and Institute of Popular Science opened in 1939. The Art Deco structure was adorned with six pieces of sculpture along the outside. It was a gift to the people of Pittsburgh from the Buhl Foundation in memory of its founder, Henry Buhl, Jr., an Allegheny merchant who was the co-owner of the Boggs and Buhl department store also located in Allegheny City. The Buhl Planetarium was the fifth such facility to be built in the United States. During World War II, it was used to train military personnel in celestial navigation. In 1954, the popular Miniature Railroad and Village opened in the Institute as a display of life in Western Pennsylvania during the early 20th century.

In the 1970s, it became apparent that the Buhl would need to be expanded and modernized in order to be an effective venue for science education. As the space around the Buhl was insufficient, a new location was needed. Eventually, a site along the Allegheny River near the West End Bridge was found and the new Carnegie Science Center opened in 1991. A new and improved planetarium and an expanded miniature railroad opened in the new museum.

In 1983, the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh opened in the Old Post Office Building and became its owner in 1991. The copper-domed rotunda provided an unusual and interesting space for the small museum. However, the building became too small a venue for the growing popularity and patronage of the museum. An expansion project began in 2000 that was dedicated to the adaptive reuse of the Old Post Office building and the nearby, vacant Buhl Science Center. It was determined that the classic Art Deco design of the Buhl Science Center would be joined with the Italian Renaissance design of the Old Post Office. A design competition was held, and a panel of judges from around the country chose Koning Eizenberg Architecture's proposal because it would preserve the historical integrity of these two buildings. The innovative and interesting design of the structure connects the two buildings and serves as entrance to the new museum.
Cross Allegheny Commons West onto Ridge Avenue. To your right is St. Peter’s Church built 1872-1874. Turn right on Arch Street and follow Arch Street north. To your left is the National Aviary which is America’s only independent indoor nonprofit bird zoo. It is home to about 600 birds of more than 200 species, many of which are threatened or endangered. While nearly every continent is represented, there is a particular emphasis on rainforest and wetland habitats. It was originally opened in 1952 as a plant conservatory with birds and eventually evolved into a bird zoo. Continue on Arch Avenue by turning right, and then making a left turn after passing Divine Providence Hospital.

MEXICAN WAR STREETS

From Arch Street, turn left onto North Avenue. Continuing west on North Avenue, when you reach Palo Alto Street, turn right. You are now approaching the Mexican War Streets Historic District, the site of one of the most successful historic preservation efforts in Pittsburgh.

The development of the Mexican War Streets neighborhood began in 1848, when General William Robinson, Jr. plotted out the area shortly after returning from duty in the Mexican-American War. The streets were named after the war’s battles (Buena Vista, Monterey, Palo Alto) and its generals (Taylor, Sherman and Jackson). Initially, the land was used to stable horses and raise pigs, chickens and cows. Shortly after the Civil War, most of the structures currently existing were built.

Like other North Side communities, after 1900, the Mexican War Streets area experienced little new investment and had experienced significant decay by the 1950s. In the late 1960s, PHLF, naming the community “Mexican War Streets,” acted to reverse the blight and acquired various properties for restoration, sale or rental.

This program was the first in the nation to revitalize a mixed-income, integrated neighborhood. The Mexican War Streets Society and the Central Northside Neighborhood Council continue restoration and promotion activities. Architectural
types represented in the Mexican War Streets include: Italianate, Gothic Revival, Richardson Romanesque, Empire and Queen Anne. (NR District & CH District)

It’s worth taking a few moments to ride up and down several of the streets to see the impressive results of the dedicated homeowners. Proceed on Resaca Place until it intersects with North Taylor. From there, make a left onto North Taylor and then go down Resaca Place to North Avenue. Make a right onto North Avenue, and then go up Monterey Street to North Taylor, make a left, and then go down Buena Vista Street and back to North Avenue.

From North Avenue, we continue our tour and enter another faithfully preserved neighborhood, Allegheny West, and the adjacent West Park, a prime North Side attraction.

ALLEGHENY WEST AND WEST PARK

Allegheny West, once known as Lincoln-Beech, became Pittsburgh’s most exclusive neighborhood after the Civil War. Upwind and distant enough from riverside industry, the neighborhood provided a quiet retreat for the wealthy. The grandest homes designed in the most fashionable architectural styles of the late 19th century lined Brighton Road, Beech Avenue and Ridge Avenue which was known in the 1880s as “Millionaire’s Row.” Allegheny West was home to many prominent families such as the Carnegies, Jones, Laughlins, Scaifes, Kauffmans, Hornes and Darlingtons who remained in this neighborhood until the early 1900s when they and many of their wealthy neighbors began moving further from the increasing industrial activity. By the end of the 1930s, the wealthy residents had almost all gone and their grand homes fell into disrepair; many were turned into apartments or demolished. Through the persistent efforts of the Allegheny West Civic Council and assistance of the PHLF, the decline was halted, and Allegheny West’s collection of mid- and late-Victorian houses have been preserved for residents and visitors to enjoy. (NR District and CH District)

Adjacent to this neighborhood was the West Common. Like the rest of the Commons, it was originally intended for grazing, but other development such as the Western
University (predecessor to the University of Pittsburgh) and the Western Penitentiary encroached on this land. Additionally, the Ohio & Pennsylvania Railroad, which eventually became the Pennsylvania Railroad, sliced right through West Common.

By the 1860s, West Common was no longer used for grazing and this land was transformed into a beautifully landscaped park which was completed in 1876. Now known as West Park, it remains a major community asset with a lake, tennis courts, walking paths and monuments. Trains continue to rumble through the park, albeit on tracks which have been lowered in a cut. (CH District)

Make a left onto North Avenue from Buena Vista, and then enter West Park near the intersection of Monterey and North Avenue. Use the path along the left side of the lake to get to Ridge Avenue. Turn right on Ridge Avenue, and then turn right on West Ohio Street.

You will pass by Gus & Yia-Yia’s next to the tennis courts on the right as you ride alongside the park. Look for the orange cart and the striped umbrella. Weather-permitting, you can stop here for a refreshing break of icy balls, popcorn and peanuts. According to the slogan on the cart, Gus & Yia-Yia’s has been delighting North Side residents and visitors since 1934.

Continue on West Ohio Street to Brighton Road. At Brighton, turn left. Proceed for a short length of Brighton where you will see a few grand homes before turning right onto Ridge Avenue. As noted above, Allegheny West was home to a number of very wealthy Pittsburghers. Vestiges of this wealth remain in the form of several mansions which are now part of the Community College of Allegheny County campus. Along Ridge Avenue (once known as Millionaire’s Row), make note of Jones Hall and West Hall, both now used by the Community College of Allegheny County, and Babb, Incorporated (formerly the William Penn Snyder House.) Byers Hall, also used by the Community College, will be on your left before turning onto Galveston.

(All structures are NR and CH District.)
Turn right on Galveston Avenue. Continue north on Galveston to Beech Avenue and then turn left. The shade trees’ ample canopy and beautifully restored homes lend a quiet elegance to this street. Calvary United Methodist Church, built 1893-95, will be on your left at Allegheny Avenue. This elaborate Gothic-style church, has beautiful Tiffany stained-glass windows.  (NR District and CHS)

At the intersection of Beech and Allegheny Avenues, turn right on to Allegheny Avenue. Proceeding to Allegheny and North Avenues, you will approach the Emmanuel Episcopal Church on your right. The church was designed by H. H. Richardson during the same time he designed the Allegheny County Courthouse. Although it was built 1885-86, the church seems relatively simple in design compared to other Pittsburgh churches built during this period. Delicate brick detailing, Tiffany windows, a laminated truss system, the steep gambrel roof, and a rounded end section significantly enhance the building’s appeal. Nevertheless, many of its neighbors derided the church as the Emmanuel the Bake Oven Church. Although the organ is still in place, it is not functional. A 1998 renovation restored the church to its 1892 appearance.  (NHL and CHS)

A left turn to West North Avenue brings you into Manchester. Manchester is one of Pittsburgh’s oldest neighborhoods and holds some of the city’s best examples of late Victorian architecture.

MANCHESTER

The neighborhood emerged in the 1830s with brass, iron, and steel production along the Allegheny River and prosperous residential development further back from the factories and mills. It was incorporated as a borough in 1843 and annexed to Allegheny City in 1867. From the 1860s until the early 1900s, it was one of Pittsburgh’s most affluent and desirable neighborhoods.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Manchester, with no new construction occurring, stagnated and subsequently entered into a period of decline. Early efforts in historic preservation saved many of the historic homes, churches and buildings that remain in Manchester from blight that began to wear down the neighborhood in the early 1950s.
In the 1960s, neighborhood groups were formed to address the problems of blight. By the 1970s, these efforts, along with initiatives of the PHLF and the City of Pittsburgh helped to stabilize the community by saving its architectural assets through combined, creative public and private preservation strategies that now serve as a model nationwide.

With fine examples of Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, Italianate, and Romanesque Revival architecture, Manchester also contains one of the city’s oldest National Register Historic Districts. This neighborhood is also the location of the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild and Bidwell Training Center, a multi-use facility offering job training, arts education and exhibitions and jazz concerts. (NR District & CH District)

Resume the tour by continuing west on North Avenue until you reach Chateau Street. Turn right on Chateau and continue north until you reach the intersection of Chateau and Pennsylvania. On the corner is a home that has been painstakingly restored to residential and office space by a lifelong Manchester resident.

Manchester developed as a comfortable residential neighborhood after its annexation. Some houses were detached and villa-like, but many were double houses, uniform row-houses, or houses set directly side by side. You’ll tour a sampling of the streets of Manchester to view the fine examples of the varied architectural styles.

Turn right on Pennsylvania Avenue. Note the home at 1414 Pennsylvania Avenue (c. 1872) on your left, a typical Italian villa with front tower, side wing set and a verandah facing the street. Turn left on Manhattan Street, and then turn right on Liverpool Street. Both sides of the 1300 block of Liverpool Street are fine examples of Victorian-era architecture. Note the great variety of building styles.
MAP OF TOUR ROUTE | POINTS OF INTEREST

1. THREE SISTERS BRIDGES
2. PNC PARK
3. ANDY WARHOL MUSEUM
4. ALLEGHENY HIGH SCHOOL
5. ALLEGHENY LIBRARY/NEW HAZLETT THEATER
6. CHILDREN’S MUSEUM OF PITTSBURGH
7. ST. PETER’S CHURCH
8. NATIONAL AVIARY
9. MEXICAN WAR STREETS HISTORIC DISTRICT
10. WEST PARK
11. ALLEGHENY WEST HISTORIC DISTRICT
12. COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY
13. CALVARY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
14. EMMANUEL EPISCOPAL CHURCH
15. MANCHESTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
16. 1414 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE
17. HEINZ FIELD
18. CARNEGIE SCIENCE CENTER
19. NORTH SHORE TRAIL
20. HEINZ FACTORY AND LOFTS
21. 16TH STREET BRIDGE
22. FORT WAYNE RAILROAD BRIDGE
The north side of the block contains nine identical double houses in the Second Empire style, all with delicately detailed wooden entrance porches. These form the most impressive house row in Pittsburgh and were built consecutively beginning before 1882. Across the street, the west end of the block begins with a solid five unit row house whose masonry detailing is similar. Two pairs of houses share very elaborate wooden porches with arched motifs and spindles.

Turn right on Fulton Street, and then turn left at the stop sign onto Pennsylvania Avenue. From there, turn right on Fontella Street, and then make a left onto Sheffield Street. Turn right on Bidwell Street, turn left on North Avenue, and then make a right on Allegheny Avenue. From Allegheny Avenue, cross Ridge Avenue, following the overhead sign which reads “North Shore.” After passing below the highway overpass, you will see Heinz Field, home of the Pittsburgh Steelers and University of Pittsburgh Panthers on your left and the Carnegie Science Center on your right.

NORTH SHORE TRAIL

Continue on Allegheny Avenue and follow the road as it curves left and turns into North Shore Drive. Just past the intersection of North Shore Drive and Art Rooney Way, veer off the road on the right and take the path to the North Shore Trail, part of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail system. The Three Rivers Heritage Trail is a wonderful pedestrian trail that runs along both sides of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio Rivers. Currently, the trail provides over 20 miles of mostly flat, multipurpose paths for riverfront riding, running, strolling and some in-line skating.

Ride along the trail which hugs the Allegheny River’s north shore past parks, buildings, memorials, Alcoa’s world headquarters, and under all Three Sisters Bridges. After passing beneath the 9th Street Bridge, look up and across the river to admire the Fort Wayne Railroad Bridge. It is a two-deck steel Pratt Pennsylvania truss bridge built in 1901-1904 by the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Railway which became a part of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The upper deck of the bridge was used by local and through passenger and freight trains. The lower deck was used by trains carrying produce to the Strip District. In 1918, the bridge was raised to accommodate steamboats.
on the Allegheny River. Norfolk Southern and Amtrak trains continue to use the upper deck, but the lower deck has been out of service since the mid-1980s. (NR)

The first bridge at this location was a wooden aqueduct which carried the Pennsylvania Canal into Pittsburgh. The Pennsylvania Canal, also known as the Main Line of Public Works, was completed in 1834. John Roebling, who designed the Brooklyn Bridge, built the replacement bridge in 1854 which was his first cable suspension bridge. However, by this time, a railroad was completed across Pennsylvania, and Roebling’s structure lasted only until 1857 when it was replaced by a railroad bridge. Continuing east along the Allegheny River, follow the path of what was once a Baltimore and Ohio Railroad line that served the many industries of the North Side. The most prominent and one of the longest lasting of these was the H.J. Heinz Company. Continue on the trail past the 16th Street Bridge until you see the Heinz Lofts parking lot on the left. Cross River Avenue to enter the parking lot.

H.J. HEINZ COMPANY

H.J. Heinz, a young German immigrant, started his horseradish bottling business in 1869. His business began in Sharpsburg close to his home but soon he and his partner, L.C. Noble, looked to expand their operation and moved the firm in the late 1800s to its current location on the North Side. In addition to its factories, that now bottled not only horseradish but pickles, sauerkraut and vinegar, the company maintained a 100-acre vegetable garden along the river. All of these products proved to be successful items on the market shelves, but none would boost sales in later years like their bottled ketchup which they began making in 1875. The large sign on the west face of the complex pays tribute to the ketchup made here.

The Heinz Lofts are a collection of buildings built between 1912 and 1931. Each building was named for its primary use; Shipping, Meat, Bean, Cereal and Reservoir, and now serve as alternative, urban living space. The buildings were renovated with strict consideration for the exterior which enabled the Cleveland-based developer, Ferchill Group, to receive a 20 percent tax credit on their $70 million development costs. In partnership with the PHLF, the
buildings hold a protective easement that will prevent any exterior alterations or unsavory additions for generations to come. (NR)

To return to Downtown Pittsburgh, get back on the North Shore trail and continue west. Use any of the Three Sister Bridges to enter downtown. Alternatively, you can enter onto Progress Street in the Heinz complex and ride west to 16th Street to go Downtown via the Strip District.

The 16th Street Bridge, comprised of three trussed-arch spans, was built by Allegheny County in 1923. It replaced the last standing covered wooden bridge in Pittsburgh which burned in 1919. The bridge architects were Warren and Wetmore who designed the richly ornamented Grand Central Terminal in New York. Their affinity for elaborate decoration is evidenced by the bronze spheres and winged seahorses which cap all four pylons near both ends of the bridge. (NR)

Although Allegheny City’s glory days are long gone, the many meticulously restored residences, churches and public buildings have brought new vitality to the North Side. While this tour highlights several key neighborhoods, there is much more to see and do in the twelve vibrant North Side neighborhoods. Whether you listen to some of America’s finest jazz musicians at the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild, admire the contemporary art at the Mattress Factory, take a leisurely stroll on Observatory Hill, shop the East Allegheny business district or revel in the joyous atmosphere at the Penn Brewery, you will enjoy a return visit to the North Side.
BOOKS


INTERNET

Allegheny City Society (An all-volunteer group formed to preserve, promote and interpret the history of Allegheny City and Pittsburgh’s North Side).  www.alleghenycity.org

Northside Leadership Conference (A community organization comprised of twelve North Side neighborhoods. The website has links to North Side neighborhoods, attractions and historical information).  www.pittsburghnorthside.com

Mexican War Streets Society (A non-profit organization founded to preserve the historic character of the Mexican War Streets and to promote the neighborhood through personal and community involvement).  www.mexicanwarstreets.org

Bridges and Tunnels of Allegheny County Compiled by Bruce Cridlebaugh, this is an authoritative source of data and historical information on the bridges of the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.  www.pghbridges.com
The Sprout Fund is a nonprofit organization supporting innovative ideas and grassroots community projects that are catalyzing change in Pittsburgh. Each of The Sprout Fund’s programs, Seed Award and Public Art, is designed to advance a community initiative from idea through dialogue to implementation, creating a critical mass of activity for positive regional change. Sprout believes a vital component to building healthy and vibrant communities is civic engagement: serving those who demonstrate the drive and the capacity to think creatively about their communities. With ongoing local support and continued appreciation by the communities it serves, The Sprout Fund will continue to provide an entry point for Pittsburghers to become involved and active in their communities and supports projects that have the collective power to shape culture and vision for the region. (www.sproutfund.org)

The Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh is a broad-based regional coalition of dynamic preservation leaders organized to ignite a new historic preservation movement in south-western Pennsylvania. YPA promotes the active participation of young people in the preservation of historic resources. YPA encourages all people to work together toward a common agenda to create more robust communities by using historic preservation as a tool for economic and community development. Give Life to History SM (www.youngpreservationists.org)

Bike Pittsburgh is Western Pennsylvania’s only cycling advocacy and awareness organization. It works to create a Pittsburgh that is increasingly safe, accessible, and friendly to bicycle transportation. Bike Pittsburgh’s vision is one of a strong, healthy, diverse and sustainable community that embraces the use of bicycles as a physically healthy, primary mode of transportation in the Pittsburgh Region. (www.bike-pgh.org)

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