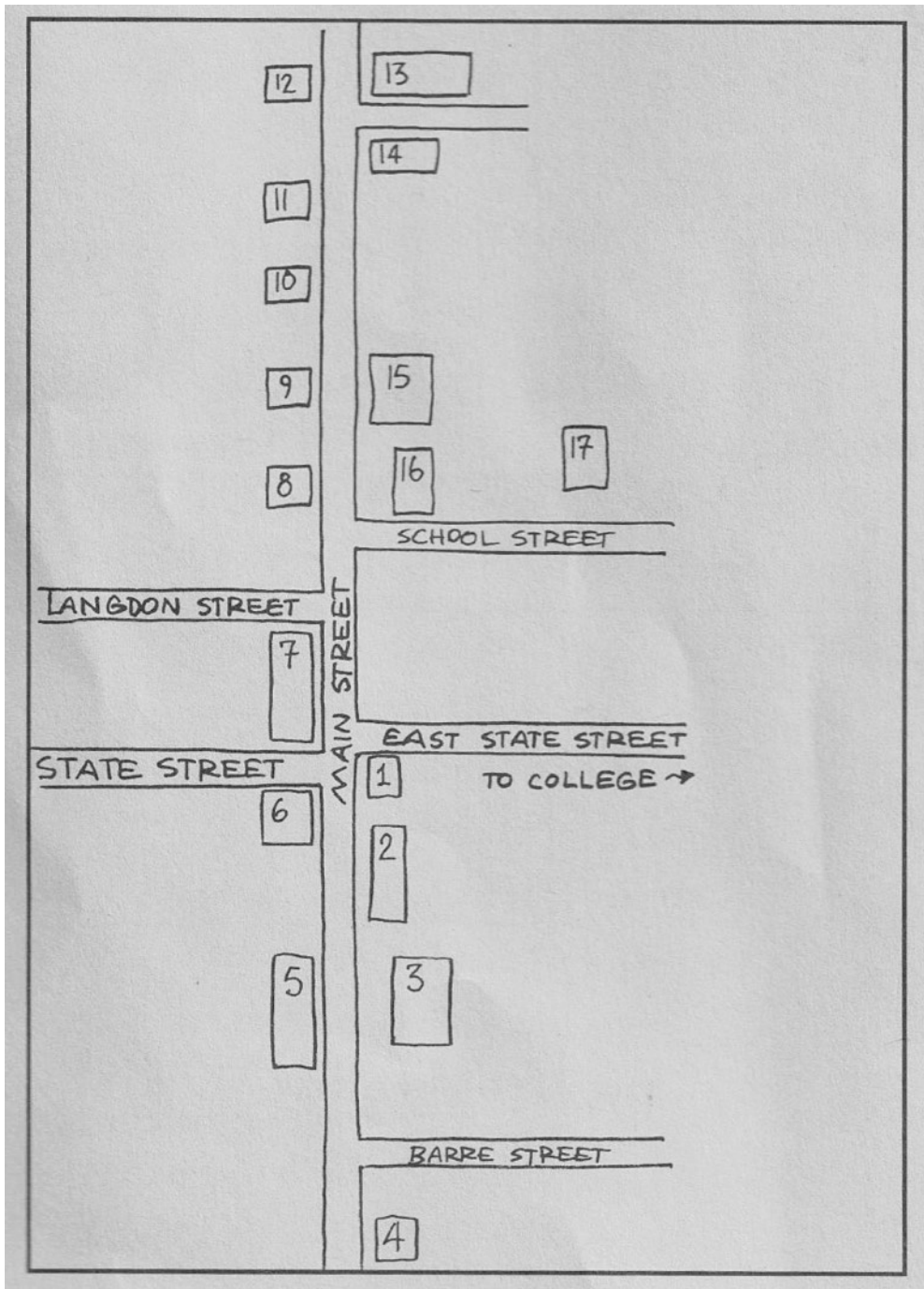


Montpelier Walking Tours - Main Street Tour



Based on Montpelier Heritage Group Tours

1. Willard Block, 81 Main, c. 1840

This building has features of both the Greek Revival and Federal styles in vogue around 1840. Built of brick laid in the Flemish Bond pattern, it has cornices decorated with a delicate, single strand of dentils. The triangle of the gable is repeated twice in a relief pattern in the brick. The windows have granite sills and lintels. The extended first floor store fronts date from a later period.

2. Blanchard Block, 67-77 Main, 1833-4 and 1890

This impressive block still dominates this section of Montpelier. It was the first and tallest example in town of this type of commercial architecture which remains a major component of so many "downtowns" in America. The architect, George Guernsey, designed attractive storefronts, as well as a full-sized auditorium, known as the Blanchard Opera House. Unusually fine musical entertainment graced the stage largely because it was located between Boston and Montreal and seated 800 people. The building was extended on the right to provide a larger stage and space for the Brooks Post G.A.R., but by 1910 the hall closed permanently, heralding the coming of the moving pictures. The upper floors are now all used for offices and apartments; little evidence remains of the stage and galleries.

3. City Hall, 39 Main, 1901-11

The Montpelier City Hall cost \$170,000 to build, and is in the Italian Renaissance style. Built with yellow brick and granite trim, it includes a portico with three large arches set against a frieze of carved granite. The arch is repeated twice over the central window and in the top section of the clock tower. Visit the displays of historic photographs inside.

4. Main Street Depot, 7 Main, c. 1880

This charming three-story building was an impressive depot for the Montpelier & Wells River Railroad and the Vermont Central, which connected the capital city to the White Mountains. Eight regular trains arrived daily as well as additional freight trains transporting lumber and granite. Built after 2 extensive downtown fires in 1875, it was an impressive three story building when most depots were one story with a cupola. The building features rounded windows topped with decorative cornices, granite keystones and intricate brick corbelling at the top. Most of the doors on the first floor have become windows, but the platform and roof remain.

5. French Block, et al, 32-64 Main, (across from City Hall), 1875

This block of buildings was built to replace a group lost in two disastrous fires earlier that year. The first fire in March started on the far right and spread to the next two buildings, going south, then moved across the back lots to State Street. Nine buildings were destroyed. The second fire in May began on Main Street and leveled

38 buildings. Reconstruction began almost immediately, with the largest block being built by James G. French. At first glance the blocks look quite similar. However, closer scrutiny reveals different kinds of corbelling below the cornice and varying window treatment. Note the cast metal heads topping off the windows on one building.

6. 2 State, 1826

This early Federal brick structure is the only commercial building of its type left today in the city. Note the parapet gables, raking roof, and twelve over twelve windows. It is fortunate that this building escaped the 1875 fires. Similar buildings on two of the other corners of this intersection were razed to make way for "progress;" this building was restored in the 1970s.

7. 90-98 Main Street and Langdon, 1900

This building was the cornerstone for James R. Langdon's urban development. This substantial brick edifice with its massive granite quoins and solid shape reflected the owner's position in the community. The inset portico features granite columns and other examples of fine stonework done by local craftsmen. The center and corner doorways, and right storefront window were enclosed in the 1970s. Built in the same brick and granite design are two other buildings around the corner on either side of Langdon Street. They were intended for retail use in the new shopping complex, and have large display windows. However, they repeat the cornice lines, quoins, and proportions, and read as a highly successful attempt at early urban planning.

8. Unitarian Church, 134 Main, 1865

This church is the oldest church still standing in Montpelier. The steeple incorporates the watchtower style of the famous architect, Charles Bulfinch, and the spire is reminiscent of the work of Christopher Wren. Featured are tall windows, interlocking blocks (quoins) at the corners which lend weight to the facade, and narrow clapboards. The door is simplistic with classical lines and curves. It was originally painted gray. Inside, the windows are hand-painted with a leaf-and-grape pattern. The organ and choir loft were moved to the front of the church in 1891. Thomas W. Silloway of Boston was the architect; the rear addition is recent.

9. 136 Main, late 1860s

Relatively unchanged since it was built, this French Second Empire home was built by James French, a prosperous merchant. Soon after completion, his three wooden buildings on Main Street were destroyed in the great 1875 fires. He then built the French Block. The distinctive features here include the bell-cast mansard roof, supporting brackets, roof dormers, and heavy window cornices. Its projecting central section with Gothic windows towers above the mansard roof and encompasses the front door with a hood.

10. Brock House, 138 Main, 1876

This sturdy, yet graceful home of the Victorian era was built soon after the disastrous 1875 downtown fires, and the brick structure with slate roof reflected the mood of the day. James Brock, banker and businessman, included a slate mansard roof, granite foundation, with unusual metal window casings and a corner pillar - all to give the house strength. Its gabled dormers and corner tower lend grace. Inside, the ceilings are high and the woodwork is elegant. A ballroom was located on the third floor. Apartments and offices now occupy the house and rear carriage barn.

11. 140 Main Street, pre-1850

The original Greek Revival house had front porches on the first and second floors and a pediment containing two double-hung windows. Both porches had matching doors on the right side. In 1910, the second floor porch was removed and the door was replaced with a large window. Also added were the recessed porch in the pediment, the two dormers, the south bay window in place of a door, and the two-story brick octagonal solarium with deck and railing. Fine interior mahogany paneling and stained glass windows decorate this fine residence which is now used for offices.

12. 146 Main, 1832-1854

Yet another example of the Greek Revival style, this home features Flemish Bond brick, a front portico supported by fluted columns with Ionic capitals, and plaid stained glass windows surrounding the doorway. Built by a prominent merchant named Storres, it once was the garden site of 144 Main Street.

13. The Inn at Montpelier, 147 Main, c. 1850

Graceful, orderly, and symmetrical describe this brick home in the Federal style, with double chimneys, a handsome doorway with sidelights, and granite lintels accenting the windows. This simple appearance was altered and to a certain extent obscured when the imposing Classical Revival piazza was added in answer to a later and more extravagant taste. It is the work of an expert carpenter, with slender Corinthian columns in groups of three, and delicate spindles with strands of dentils on the porch cornice. The large apartment building at the rear of the house was originally a barn for this residence built by James R. Langdon (see Tour #2, #7).

14. 145 Main, c. 1817

Contributing to the charm and dignity of the gracious homes on Main Street is this early Federal, hip-roofed building. Fine details include the decorated frieze below the cornice, a lovely Doric portico, and raised corner and wall pilasters. The central chimney serves four fireplaces. It may indeed have been built earlier than 1817.

15. Methodist Church, 137 Main, 1874

The Methodist Church took 6-1/2 years to build and was completed at a cost of \$30,000. Some of the stained glass windows, as well as the 10 chimes, were added later. The largest Protestant sanctuary in the city, it seats 700 people, and when first built allowed ample room for students at the Methodist Seminary (See College Street Tour, site #4).

16. 135 Main, Kellogg-Hubbard Library, 1894-5

The library was built of rough granite blocks, and the two-story pilasters flanking the entrance are the same material. The columns flanking the portico and second story balcony are of pink North Conway granite, with a balustrade topping it all off. Inside, there is a generous use of oak and marble in wainscotting, stairways, and fireplaces. This Italian Renaissance library building was paid for by John E. Hubbard who had inherited a sizeable fortune from his uncle and aunt, the Martin Kelloggs of New York City. The library operated with an endowment fund until recently, and has always been free.

17. Prentiss House, 28 School, early 1800s

Like many early Montpelier buildings, this home was moved from its original location when the land was needed for another project, the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. Originally facing Main Street, this Federal home was later "modernized" by the

story extension on the west side. Prentiss was a prominent attorney and Chief Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court who became a state senator and raised 10 sons, all of whom became lawyers.

