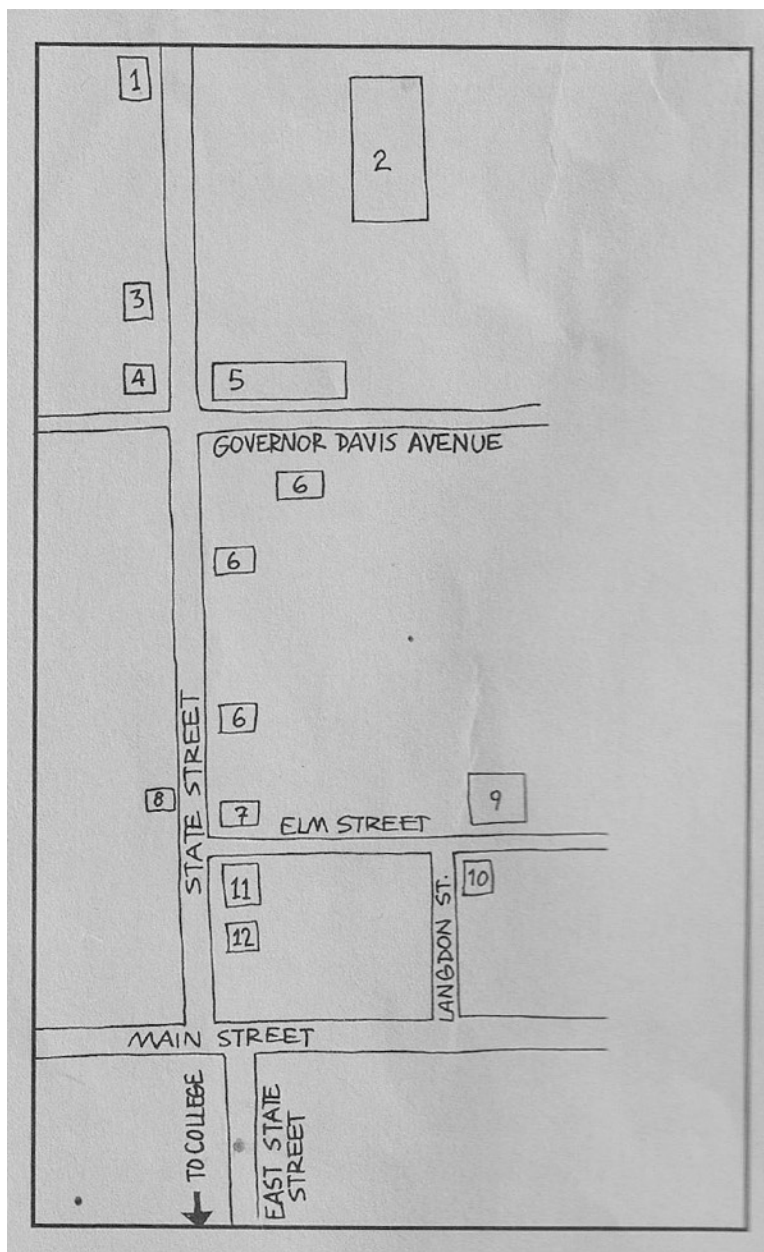


Montpelier Historical Society Walking Tours State Street Tour



Montpelier Historical Society
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Based on Montpelier Heritage Group Tours

1. Edward Dewey house, 128 State, 1889-90

This building is pure Queen Anne, with different roof lines, assorted windows, and varying textures. Dewey was a merchant before rising to the presidency of national Life Insurance Company. The home was designed by George Guernsey and later moved 350 ft. from the site of the State Office Building to its present location. Presidents Taft and Coolidge were entertained here.

2. Vermont State Capitol, 1836 and 1859f

Between 1778 and 1808, Vermont had no permanent seat of government, and its legislature met 47 times in 13 different towns around the state. In 1805, Montpelier was established as the permanent seat of the legislature, contingent on the town erecting suitable buildings and conveying them and the land to the State by September, 1808. Subscriptions and pledges were made, and the land was donated by Thomas Davis, son of Jacob Davis, the first permanent settler of Montpelier. The first wooden State House, "whittled out of use" by representatives' pocket knives, was replaced in the late 1830s with a Barre granite building designed by Ammi B. Young. It looked similar to the present Capitol, but was smaller. In January 1857, fire destroyed the Capitol so that reconstruction was necessary, with only the Greek Revival portico remaining. For the third time, Montpelier raised the funds. Architects Thomas W. Silloway and Joseph R. Richards designed the exterior and interiors, respectively. Standing on a small rise with a spacious and carefully landscaped approach, this Renaissance Revival building combines dignity of purpose with grace and beauty. Ceres, the goddess of agriculture, stands atop a gold-leafed dome.

3. Vermont Dept. of Agriculture, 116 State, 1891

Originally built as the fourth home office of the National Life Insurance Co., this Romanesque structure is of sandstone and Vermont brick. It is determinedly asymmetrical with 4-1/2 stories of varying heights, windows of different shapes and sizes, and a conglomeration of roof styles. Over the door is a semi-circular frieze of elaborately carved wood. The corner tower and 3-story bay in front, and the small turret to the rear break up the massive qualities of this fortress-like structure. Being a prosperous business, it was built with the latest of technical improvements including speaking tubes between floors and an elevator.

4. Vermont Dept. of Personnel, 110 State, 1870

Built for the Vermont Mutual Fire Insurance Co., Daniel Baldwin, one of the founders, had his first home on this site. Vermont Mutual constructed this elegant mid-Victorian with its steep mansard roof on the site. The modillion cornice, tall pedimented windows with brackets above and below, and the center entrance graced with a modillioned pediment supported by four Corinthian columns all contribute to the symmetrical proportions.

5. Pavilion Office Building, 109 State Street, 1971

This office building is a reconstruction of the exterior of the Pavilion Hotel of 1876. This earlier building in turn replaced the first Pavilion, built in 1807. All three stood on the same site. This spot on the corner of State and Gov. Davis Avenue was historically used as a tavern and hotel for legislators during sessions and by vacationers. The present modern building duplicates the historic exterior, and was built with modern building techniques. The bricks were made from 19th century molds and some of the materials from the old building, such as wooden verandah spindles and granite sills and keystones, were again reused. With its inviting piazzas and mansard roof, it is a striking example of Steamboat Gothic architecture. Visit the Vermont Historical Society Museum inside.

6. 107, 99 and 89 State, 1825-6, c. 1816, and c. 1810

All three of these buildings represent the vestiges of what State Street looked like in the 1820s, with stately, substantial brick homes. (107) The brick building behind the service station was built somewhat later than its high Federal style neighbors, yet it has many earlier Georgian features including the gables, whose raking parapets extend over the roof and include tall, paired chimneys, and the relatively steep roof pitch. The result is a structure of grand proportions. It was moved to the back of the site in the 1950s. Visit the interior to see the corner rosette style of the molding around the doorways. (99) The center building represents a more typical example of the Federal style with tall windows and a slightly inset doorway. The detailing - heavily dentilled cornices and a fanlight over the doorway - is also indicative of this period. In plan it represents an "I" house, with the front portion being one room deep and an ell added behind. (89) The building to the right resembles #99 very closely but was probably built slightly earlier. The similarity of the two may be due to the influence of Asher Benjamin, whose builder's guide, *The American Builders Companion*, contained many examples of details of this type. This was likely one of the first houses along the street.

7. Washington County Courthouse, 65 State, 1844 and 1880

This is the third courthouse for Washington County. The second was enlarged in 1879, but a fire the following year made a major reconstruction necessary. The Greek Revival structure has a ridged roof surmounted by a graceful clock tower. Local granite was used around the door and for the sills and lintels of the windows. During 1968-9, the interior was remodelled to a modern look. However, the wooden stairway has been left intact. Behind the courthouse stands a brick jailhouse.

8. Episcopal Church, 64 State, 1867-8

This Gothic church, built of Vermont granite, originally had a stone broach spire crowned with a finial. The spire was removed for reasons of safety, but the exterior otherwise has changed little, considering the fact that it has lived through a disastrous fire and the 1927 flood. The parish house was added in the late 1930s. The interior features a vaulted Gothic ceiling and rose window.

9. Jailhouse Common, 22-24 Elm, 1857

Can you see the change in brick type between the second and third floors? This building was originally a 2-1/2 story Greek Revival with pitched roof, built as the town jail. In 1911 it was made wider by two bays, taller by 1-1/2 stories, and the roof was flattened. Its appearance was changed from mid-century classic to early 20th century functional brick.

10. 4 Langdon, before 1853

This simple frame building with restrained Greek Revival details was originally located at the other end of Langdon Street - across the river and fronting on Main Street. Before brick became widely used for downtown architecture, most towns in Vermont boasted similar store buildings. James R. Langdon moved the building in order to create a small shopping complex on his private street. (See Main Street Tour, site #7)

11. 41-45 State, 1874

The site for this three-story building has always housed a prominent bank. This building has undergone many physical changes. Originally built of brick with little ornamentation, the mansard roof with unusual round dormers was added at the end of the century. Further modernization in the 1920s covered the first floor with stone blocks and replacement windows, at the same time reducing five entrances to two for a more dignified appearance.

12. Walton Block, 17 State, 1879

Stamped sheet metal ornaments and 8 cast iron columns adorn the facade of this Italianate business block. It is named after the owner, Samuel Walton, bookbinder and merchant. In 1967, this building was the first in town to be extensively rehabilitated, both inside and out, in keeping with the original architecture.