

Proceed up Linwood Avenue to Argyle

44 Linwood Ave. (adjacent to the new Linwood Park) was constructed in 1910 for Joseph S. Pearce. Known at the time as “Woodlynne,” it is a large Tudor Revival home with a carriage house. It has recently been restored by its new owners.

Turn left on Argyle Road

St. Colman’s Roman Catholic Church, Lancaster and Argyle Founded in 1907, the church was named after a fifth century Irish Monk. The construction of the church was inspired by French and English Gothic architecture. It was completed in 1926.

Across from the church is the **Lower Merion Township Administration Building at 75 E. Lancaster Avenue**, built in 1926. In 1900, Lower Merion became a First Class Township

Other Ardmore Highlights...

North America’s oldest skating club, the **Philadelphia Skating Club and Humane Society**, is located in Ardmore on Holland Avenue, 2 blocks west of Ardmore Avenue.

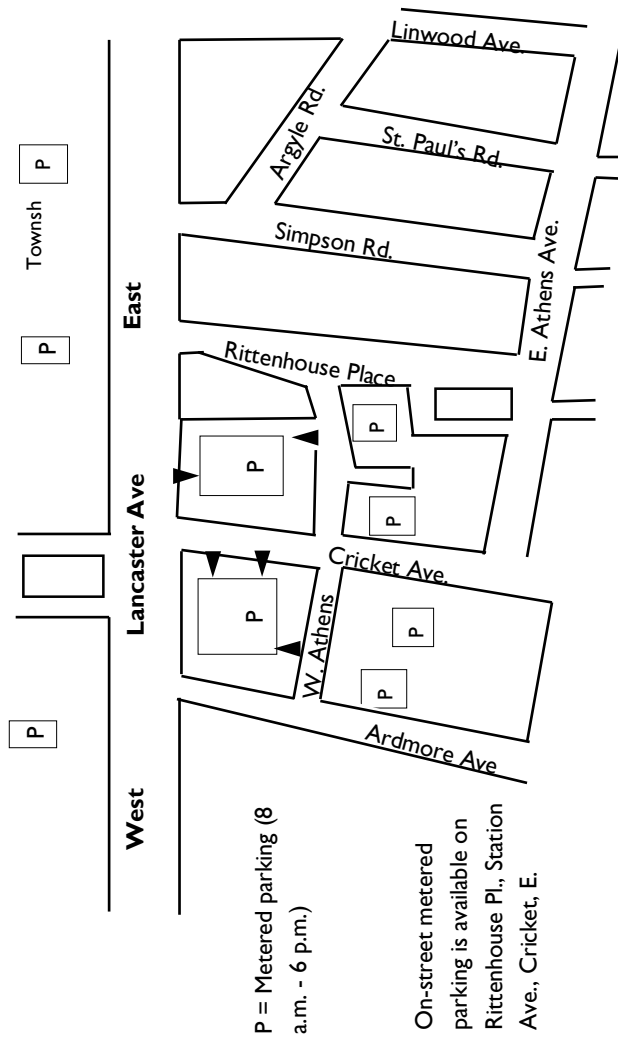
Zion Baptist Church, Greenfield and Spring, one of Ardmore’s three historically African-American churches, was established in 1894 and has a unique history. The congregation decided to move an existing building from Lancaster Avenue, near the Trolley Terminal, to the site at Greenfield and Spring. This became the chapel (later destroyed by fire) and the current church was built in 1899.

Suntop Homes, a four-unit dwelling designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, 1939, is at the corner of Sutton and E. Spring Avenue. (Sutton is west of Church Road.) When constructed, Wright envisioned multiple units of low-cost, standardized system for single family living. The construction of the homes was called the “Ardmore Experiment.” Only one set of four was finished. Each unit rented for \$55 a month. The modern architecture was extremely unique in the community at the time. The houses feature wood, brick and glass.

St. Paul’s Cemetery, founded 1765 by the German Lutheran Church, includes the tombstones of war veterans who fought in the American Revolution. The stone structure within the cemetery is the German schoolhouse, built in 1789.

Suburban Square, one of America’s first shopping centers, was begun in 1926. The Times Medical Building, at the center of the square, is an example of Art Deco architecture.

The Ardmore Business District





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Walking Tour of

Historic Ardmore



Lancaster Avenue, Ardmore. Early 1920s

The Ardmore commercial district has played a pivotal role in the economy of the Lower Merion region since its development in the early 19th century. In 1811, Dr. James Anderson named the area “Athensville.” The name was changed in 1873 to “Ardmore,” which is Gaelic signifying “high grounds or hills.”

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How to take this Walking Tour

Some of the buildings mentioned are not on this map. You may want to visit them if you have additional time. Here are a few other suggestions:

- Most businesses would be glad to have you stop in and ask questions of the proprietors on what they know of the history of their buildings. Many business owners have been in town for years and love to share what they know with visitors.
- Churches may be open for viewing (and resting!)
- Please respect the privacy of our residential neighbors.
- Ardmore has 44 restaurants and over 200 businesses. A copy of the *Ardmore Dining Guide, Business Directory, and Guide to Antiques and Resale Shops* is available at the Ardmore Initiative office.

This tour was first created in 2003 for the then Ardmore 2000 Business District Authority, now The Ardmore Initiative and was updated in June, 2011. The Ardmore Initiative works with Lower Merion Township and community organizations to improve the appearance of downtown Ardmore and ensure a vibrant mix of businesses in its historic district. For comments or questions, call 610-645-0540 or email info@allaboutardmore.com.

We give special thanks to Lower Merion Township, Jerry Francis and the Lower Merion Historical Society, Jean Wolf of Wolf Historic Preservation, and Tom Hayden of the Merion Fire Co. of Ardmore.

W. Lancaster South Side

Starting at the intersection of Anderson Avenue and Lancaster Avenue, look across the street towards your left, then walk west:

2 W. Lancaster Avenue This 3-story store/apartment building, built with an Italian Renaissance flavor, boasts nice bay windows and iron balconies.

6 W. Lancaster Avenue was the former Ardmore National Bank, which had its official formal opening reception on June 6, 1925. Originally the bank had a symmetrical neo-classical façade; however, the lower level of this building has been altered over the years for commercial use. It is currently the home of Swain Tours.

8-10 W. Lancaster Avenue is an unusual example of an early 20th-century Art Deco theatre with the movie house portion still intact. This was the former Palace Theatre, which was one of the most locally famous older buildings in downtown Ardmore. This building was originally a single-story vaulted structure, constructed between 1913-1919. The movie house was later added above. Admission then was 10¢ and 25¢-35¢ on Vaudeville nights. The theatre lasted only until Woolworth's arrived in 1922. It currently houses PartyLand.



The Palace Theater, at 8-10 W. Lancaster Ave in the early 1900's

14-28 W. Lancaster Avenue, known as "Colonial Row" because of its Colonial Revival rooflines, was built between 1900-1908 as a single complex. To a great extent, this block symbolizes the downtown Ardmore district.



Lancaster Avenue's south side, between Anderson and Ardmore, 1911-1922

30-38 W. Lancaster Avenue was built between 1925-1926 and was home to the Ardmore Theatre. Note the concrete parapet inscribed with "Ardmore," the urns, and the sunburst window. Electric bulbs once illuminated the cornice work. Their sockets remain. Currently housing the Philadelphia Sports Club, this building has been a historical as well as social landmark in Ardmore since its erection. If you go inside the lobby, you can still get a sense of the original theater lobby.

42 W. Lancaster Avenue is an excellent example of an early-20th-century commercial building. Architecturally, it is in fine condition and it retains its original historical appearance. The Bell Telephone Company constructed this building ca. 1908 as a telephone exchange.

At the corner, cross and turn left down Ardmore Ave.

Ardmore Avenue

As you proceed down Ardmore Avenue, you will pass a nice block of commercial buildings on your right and Craftsman style apartment buildings on your left. Ardmore's **Masonic Lodge**, built in 1917, is on the left on the corner of Ardmore and Athens. Across the street is the **Ardmore Post Office**. The Ardmore House, subsidized apartments for seniors, now stands on the site of the old **Ardmore Ave. School**.



Ardmore Avenue School built in 1875, destroyed by fire and re-built in 1900, served Ardmore students until 1963.

St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 36 Ardmore Avenue, across from the post office, was built by Furness & Evans in 1887. It contains 3 Tiffany Studio windows.

Continue back to the corner of Ardmore and Lancaster and head east

West Lancaster North Side

49-63 W. Lancaster. Directly across the street from where you are standing, you are looking at an excellent example of an Art Deco building, built in 1928. Note the colorful pattern that is repeated along the trim of this complex. The design contains geometric and floral leaf motifs. Each of the four corners features beautiful pillars.

21-27 W. Lancaster Avenue This row of 4 brick structures, with their peaked windows and steep gables, were built as a single block in a Tudor Revival Style in 1908.

It became known as the Henry Harrison block. The Harrisons were one of the oldest and most prominent merchant families in Ardmore, specializing in general merchandise and clothing. They ran Harrison's, the Henry Harrison block, principal department stores in town until it closed in 2003. The property was purchased and renovated by the Jr League of Philadelphia to serve as their headquarters and location of their Thrift Store.



1910

17-19 W. Lancaster Avenue is the important commercial Philip Harrison Building of 1922. Harry Harrison was the first Jewish merchant on the Main Line.

9-13 W. Lancaster Avenue was built about 1860, making it one of the oldest buildings in Ardmore. It served first as the Dutch Colonial residence of a Dr. Cloud. The first floor storefront was added on to the front of the house, perhaps in the 1920s.

1-3 W. Lancaster Avenue. A tasteful example of a brick commercial building, built around 1920. Note the alternation of brick and colored tile to create decorative bands.

East Lancaster Avenue

7 E. Lancaster Avenue is a fine example of a Classical Revival bank located in the heart of a downtown business district. Built between 1923 and 1925, the Merion Title and Trust Company was once Ardmore's principal bank. Note the four pilasters in the front and the unique sundial on the right side. It is dedicated to those who fought in World War I. Home to Primavera Pizza Kitchen since the early 1990s, you may look inside to see the restaurant's balcony seating area and unique murals. The bank vault downstairs is made available for private functions.



16 E. Lancaster Ave (Plaza 16) Step into the entrance facing the parking lot. You will find yourself in an interesting inner-courtyard, with a retractable roof. The atrium building is now used for architect and designer offices.

47 E. Lancaster Avenue (now Hu-Nan Restaurant) was once the Lower Merion Federal Savings and Loan. A plaque still bears the inscription. 1915-25.

If you have time...

Cricket Avenue, to your right, contains a nice mix of 1920s commercial buildings featuring original bay windows with wood decorative trim. 47-55 Cricket are some of the earlier residences on Cricket, 1881-1895.

13 E. Lancaster Avenue / 9-11 Station Avenue. This corner apartment building, home to Radio Shack, features recessed window areas and tripartite windows. It was originally called the Lincoln Apartments. 1913-1919.

Turn right down Rittenhouse Place

Rittenhouse Place was laid out by Harry J. Rittenhouse in 1926, when a building permit was issued for construction of a "business building and two family dwellings" on November 29, 1926.

52-56 E. Lancaster Avenue is at the corner of Rittenhouse and Lancaster. It originally had a twin building to the west (demolished in the 1960s for what is now a bank). This building and its twin undoubtedly created an elegant entryway into the generous new boulevard. Both this and 10-18 Rittenhouse Place, which feature French doors and iron balustrades, are good examples of 20th-century Spanish eclecticism.

15 Rittenhouse Place, housing the law firm of Haws and Burke, was constructed in 1940 and has been used for offices and apartments since then. Similar to the Christian Science Reading Room next door, it is a good example of a mid-20th-century commercial building.

49-51 Rittenhouse Place were the first buildings built on Rittenhouse Place.



This picture was taken at a Dog Show held in front of what was then the Main Line Chronicle newspaper offices at 51 Rittenhouse Place, 1927 - 28.

At the end of Rittenhouse, turn left down E. Athens.

You will now be touring a residential neighborhood of large late 19th/early 20th-century homes. If you have time...you may want to explore some of these residential streets on your own.

First Baptist Church, St. Paul's and Athens Ave. The Baptist community in this area built its first sanctuary on Cricket Avenue near Lancaster in the 1890s. By 1916, the church was surrounded by the business community's rapid growth. The Baptists sold the Cricket Avenue site and broke ground for the current set of buildings in 1924.

Linwood Ave. has many large homes. At the corner of Athens is **101 Linwood Ave**, built in 1890, a Princess Anne Victorian (in contrast to a Queen Anne because of the smaller circumference of the turret). Farther at **105 Linwood Ave.** is a Horace Trumbauer design from about 1900.