**History**

Montclair was founded by Azariah Crane in 1694. Known as Cranetown, it remained a small, pastoral agricultural village with English and Dutch architectural precedents for the next 100 years. The Old Road was laid out in 1705 along parts of present day Glenridge Avenue, Church Street and Claremont Avenue running from Newark up and over the First Mountain at Crane’s Gap. George Washington’s Continental Army was encamped on the slopes of Montclair for three weeks in October 1780 near present day Valley Road and Claremont Avenue. The James Howe or “Slave” House (1775) and the Old Stagecoach House (1767) are the only remnants in the area that survive from that period. With the construction of the Newark and Pompton Turnpike (present day Bloomfield Avenue) in 1806, the sleepy village became a commercial center, allowing the establishment of several mills and other small industries. Around the intersection of the Turnpike and the Old Road (now known as Six Corners) the nucleus of the town grew. Church Street was named after the large Presbyterian Church, which dominated the corner with Bloomfield Avenue before being removed to allow for construction of the Hinck Building in 1921.

**Architecture**

The majority of the buildings in Montclair Center were constructed as commercial structures with brick, stone, cast stone or terra cotta facades. The buildings are typically 1-3 stories high with flat roofs. The few surviving frame structures have peaked roofs. The tops are emphasized by the use of design elements such as cornices, parapets, mansards and balustrades. The facades are divided by trim and other detailing such as recesses and panels that add texture and life to the walls. Almost all buildings are built to the property line, with very few setbacks. Most were built directly abutting each other using a common, or party wall construction. Street lighting began in Montclair on October 1, 1873, when 111 gas lamps were placed on the principal corners of the downtown. The later fuel stations and parking lots are intrusions in this otherwise uniform streetscape.

The architecturally eclectic mix of downtown buildings we see today were largely built between 1885 and 1937, and reflect the town’s period as a prosperous commuter suburb. The buildings are mixed-use with ground floor retail storefronts divided into bays. There is generally a bulkhead, plate glass window, and a transom. The doors are centered or to one side with a base and transom similar to the glassfront. The wall or blade signs are at the transom level and the shed awnings span one single bay, not several. Historically most awnings were retractable, not fixed in place. The windows have at least two panes per opening. They were often mullioned creating multiple panes. The doors and windows have simplified revival trim or surround detailing, even on the later mid-century Moderne style structures.

**Acknowledgements**

Walking is the #1 activity for getting the recommended amount of daily physical activity. Walking with friends and colleagues helps you to stay motivated and to continue walking as a life-long health behavior. Join a Walking Group Today!

Montclair Historical Society
MontclairHistorical.org

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AN ARCHITECTURAL WALKING TOUR OF THE TOWN CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
1. INCHQUIN PROPERTIES (1930), 18-22 Church Street, Art Deco Style. Eight bay building with 2 story central entrance. Can be identified as the predominant architectural decoration style with bronze detailing around the fenestration.

2. HINCK BUILDING (1921), 31 Church Street, Mission Style, Architect: William Lehmann. Significant example of the Mission style design. The building is constructed of red and white adobe brick. Lehmann’s drawings are at the New Jersey Historical Society in Newark.

3. HALL BUILDING (1925), 22 South Park Street, Collegiate Gothic Style, Architect: Holmes & Von Schmid. Handsome dark red brick commercial building with large store fronts. The building features a tower with rounded arches, a continuous stone balustrade and leaded glass window panes. There is a 2-story octagonal bell tower at the west side.

4. CLARIDGE APARTMENTS (1928), 39-51 Church Street, Renaissance Revival Style. Six story corner apartment and mixed-use building with commercial space at the street level. The lofty architecture employs buff-colored bricks with extensive use of terra cotta for the architectural detailing.

5. WEDGEWOOD BUILDING (1926), 22-28 Church Street, Art Deco Style. Eight bay building with 2 story central entrance. Can be identified as the predominant architectural decoration style with bronze detailing around the fenestration.

6. CHRIST CHURCH (1911), 68 Church Street, Unitarian Church (1911). This block-long commercial building of granite and glazed terra cotta provided unity and period space at the street level. The lofty architecture employs buff-colored bricks with extensive use of terra cotta for the architectural detailing.

7. UNITARIAN CHURCH (1905), 67 Church Street, Renaissance Revival Style. Building features a tower with rounded arches, a continuous stone balustrade and leaded glass window panes. There is a 2-story octagonal bell tower at the west side.

8. CARNegie LIBRARY (1904), Church Street and Valley Road, Prairie Style, Architect: John G. Howard. Andrew Carnegie donated $40,500 for the construction of Montclair’s first purpose-built free public library. Designed by a prominent California Architect, it is one of the few Prairie style buildings in Montclair. (Original site of #19).

9. OLD PRIMARY SCHOOL (1860), 22 Valley Road, Italianate Style, Montclair Board of Education Building. The oldest extant school building in Montclair, it was built by a prominent California Architect, it is one of the few Prairie style buildings in Montclair. Designed by a prominent California Architect, it is one of the few Prairie style buildings in Montclair. (Original site of #19).

10. OLD STAGECOACH HOUSE (1767), 46 Park Street, English Colonial Style. This early tavern was a significant Cranetown roadhouse. Horses were rumored to have been quartered in the cellar while weary travelers along the early “Turnpike” dined above. A clue to an even earlier origin of the house is the 5-1/2 foot high doorway in the exterior.

11. MULLEN’S LIVERY (1884), 475 Bloomfield Avenue, 3-story Italianate masonry building is trapezoidal in plan and designed by John Nolen in his 1909 Master Plan.

12. HILLSIDE SQUARE (1926), 8 Hillside Avenue, Georgian Revival Style, Architect: Charles Faulkner. Built as First Church of Christ Scientist, this warm-colored granite building became the site of the Montclair Palace, a historic music hall, built and designed by Walter Gropius.

13. HILLSIDE SCHOOL (1909), 54 Orange Road, Neoclassical Style, Architect: Starrett & Van Vleck. This four-story Madison Building was the first building in Montclair equipped with an elevator and features a spectacular skylit central atrium. The heavy masonry structure opened its doors in 1924 and currently houses the Montclair Film Festival.

14. MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM (1914), 3 South Mountain Avenue, Neoclassical Style, Architect: Robert Randolph Ross. Classical ornament and delicate relief distinguish this impressive building. The museum was founded by a local art connoisseur who came to Montclair in the early 1900s. It was opened in 1915 and is located on the site of the original mansion house of Thomas Alva Edison. The wooden back of the building dates from 1870. This portion of the building was renovated by Chase Bank using original light fixtures and period bank floor furniture.

15. BANK OF MONTCLAIR (1923), 22-28 Orange Road, Beaux Arts Revival Style with a Modernistic facade added in 1946. In early Cranetown days Peter Doremus opened the village’s first dry goods store on this site in 1853, and converted the present masonry building on the site in the late 1890s. This is the former site of the First Montclair Savings Bank, the earliest bank organized in town. It replaced an even earlier wooden hardware store.

16. MONTCLAIR SAVINGS BANK (1924), 411 Bloomfield Avenue, Neoclassical Style. One of several classically-influenced commercial buildings in downtown during the early 1900s. It is the third building on this trapezoidal corner site. The High Victorian Gothic styled Morris Building (1897) and housed the first Montclair Savings Bank, the earliest bank organized in town. It replaced an even earlier wooden hardware store.

17. MADISON BUILDING (1912), 427-429 Bloomfield Avenue, Beaux Arts Revival Style, Architect: Van Vleck & Goldsmith, The four-story Madison Building was the first building in Montclair equipped with an elevator and features a spectacular skylit central atrium. The heavy masonry structure opened its doors in 1924 and currently houses office space.

18. NANN’S FLOWERS (1924), 605-609 Bloomfield Avenue, Classical Revival Commercial Style. A well designed, marbled example of early twentieth-century commercial architecture. It is distinctive in the central business district for its fine Greek Revival style classical façade of brick, limestone, and terra cotta, with double columns and pediments.

19. MUNN’S TAVERN (1802), 17 Valley Road (behind municipal parking lot), Dutch Colonial Style. This early tavern was a significant Cranetown roadhouse. Horses were rumored to have been quartered in the cellar while weary travelers along the early “Turnpike” dined above. A clue to an even earlier origin of the house is the 5-1/2 foot high doorway in the exterior.

20. CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (1921), 46 Park Street, Georgian Revival Style, Architect: Shreve, Lamb & Harmon with Carrere & Hastings. This nationally significant church designed by famed architects was built of Romanesque sandstone and classical formal portico supported by Doric columns and a towering octagonal spire.

21. LOUIS HARRIS BAKERY (1903), 537-539 Bloomfield Avenue, Commercial Style, 3-story design consists of a classical facade of brick with decorative stone rosettes and a handsome cornice. The building was founded by a German immigrant, Louis Harris, with the slogan, “A Montclair business for Montclair residents operated by Montclair people.” One important panelized sign letter.

22. BANK OF MONTCLAIR (1923), 491 Bloomfield Avenue, Commercial Style, Architect: Thomas M. James Co. One of the handsome and designed by a well known New York architectural firm.

23. MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM (1914), 3 South Mountain Avenue, Neoclassical Style, Architect: Robert Randolph Ross. Classical ornament and delicate relief distinguish this impressive building. The museum was founded by a local art connoisseur who came to Montclair in the early 1900s. It was opened in 1915 and is located on the site of the original mansion house of Thomas Alva Edison.

24. AMERICAN NATIONAL BANK (1914), 475 Bloomfield Avenue, Beaux Arts Style, Architect: Van Vleck & Goldsmith, Superior example of the Beaux Arts commercial style classicism in architecture. Dr. Golden Goldsmith was a noted architect and educator.