

Columbus Circle

A Walking Tour of
Special Syracuse Places



• Columbus Circle •

Stop 1

St. Paul's Cathedral (1885)

St. Paul's is the Cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of Central New York. Designed by Henry Dudley of Brooklyn, the Cathedral is a traditional Gothic style building characterized by pointed arches and windows. The mighty spire constructed of Onondaga limestone soars 200 feet into the air and is topped with a seven foot cross. A carved inscription and spire dedication can be found on the Fayette Street side of the spire. Step inside to be transported to Victorian England as you are surrounded by a fine example of Anglican interior of glazed brick and intricately carved woodwork warmed by stained glass windows, including one fashioned by the famed Tiffany Company.

Walk South along Montgomery St. On your left are the Onondaga Historical Association building 311 Montgomery St. built in 1895 and the Onondaga Historical Association Museum (formerly NY Telephone Co. Building) at 321 Montgomery St. Both are examples of Second Renaissance Revival architecture. The OHA Museum houses the vast collection of the Association.

As you reach E. Jefferson St., on your right is:

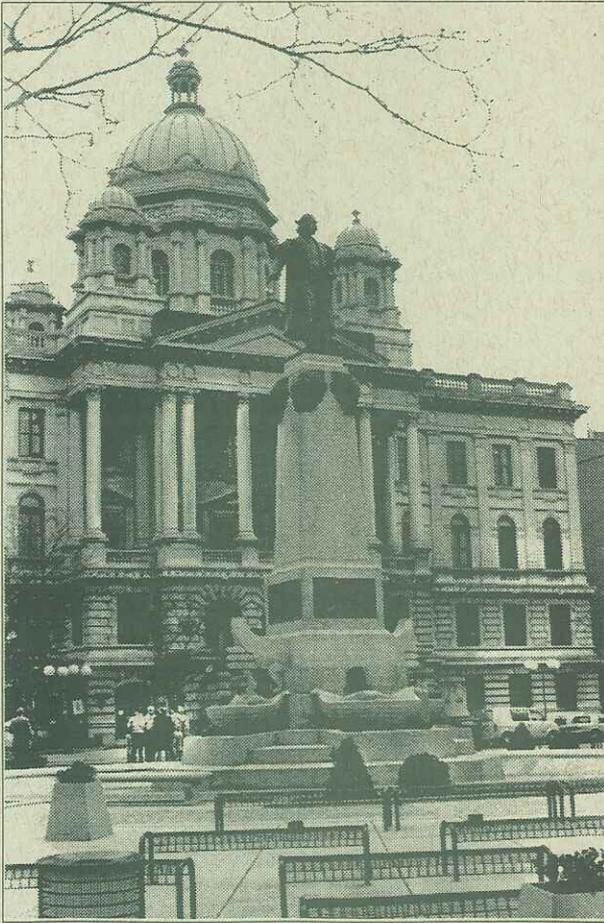
Stop 2

Columbus Center

(former First Baptist Church, 1911)

Notice the difference between Columbus Center and its immediate neighbor to the left across Jefferson Street, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Both are in the Gothic Revival style which flourished around the turn of the century. The Cathedral's rusticated stone walls convey a sense of weightiness which contrasts sharply with the smooth terracotta tile facades of Columbus Center. Syracuse architect Gordon Wright designed the church. Its main tower, modelled after the tower of Canterbury Cathedral in England, was hit by lightning in 1981, which prompted the removal of its spires. This structure is unique in that from its inception, it has combined religious and commercial functions.

On the opposite side of Montgomery St. is:



County Courthouse and Columbus Monument

The Columbus Circle area is a center of civic, cultural, and religious life in Downtown Syracuse. This short tour leads through a compact area with some examples of fine architecture, including several buildings designed by Syracuse architects. There are interesting associations of old and new; and there has been a conscious attempt to create a pleasant pedestrian environment along parts of the route.

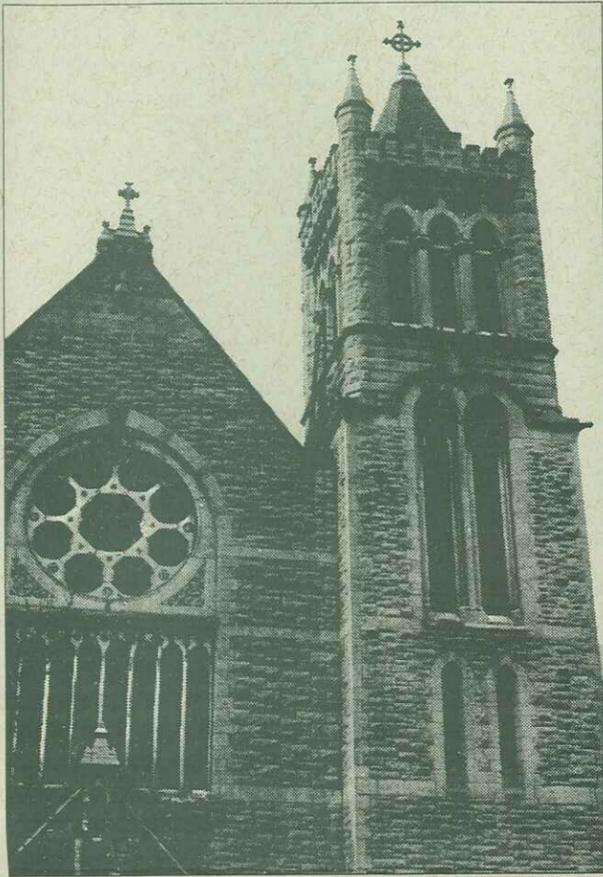
Begin the tour at the UCP Visitor Center at the Erie Canal Museum, 318 Erie Blvd E. Walk west along E. Water St. to Montgomery St. Turn south on Montgomery St. and walk to the corner of E. Fayette St. On the southwest corner is:

— **Stop 3** —

Carnegie Library Building (1905)

The site of the Carnegie Library Building, at the junction of Montgomery Street and the Circle, has a long history of occupancy by educational facilities. A one story schoolhouse was succeeded by the Putnam School that housed the books which are now the nucleus of the Public Library collection. During the early years of the nineteenth century, the Circle was often referred to as "Library Circle". The present structure was funded by Andrew Carnegie and was the City's first Public Library building. Syracuse architect James Randall designed it in the Beaux-Arts Style, named after the leading school for art and architecture in Paris. The library's steel-frame structure is faced with Indiana limestone. The round-arched entrance on Montgomery Street is flanked by colossal columns. The sculptured medallions and heavy keystones above the window, are typical features of the Beaux Arts style. The library collection has since moved to the Galleries of Syracuse.

The massive stone church across E. Jefferson St. from Columbus Center is:



— **Stop 4** —

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, originally St. Mary's Church, is located on the west side of the statue of Columbus. Architect Michael O'Connor of New York designed the Gothic Revival structure. The sanctuary, designed by regionally prominent architect Archimedes Russell, was constructed in 1903. Russell also designed the two 1906 towers. When the square Jefferson Street tower was added, it was discovered that the building's foundation could not support the 30,000 pound weight of a cast iron bell and so an electric carillon was installed.

Notice the handsomely carved main doors with sculpture above. A circular rose window, lancet windows and pointed Gothic arch windows with stone tracery ornament the church inside and out. The interior features splendid stained glass windows, as well as fine carvings and moldings reminiscent of medieval craftsmanship. A quiet color scheme repeats the shades of the Botticino marble used in the sanctuary and conveys a feeling of spaciousness. The ornamental ceiling trusses, the ribbed sanctuary ceiling, and the fact that all openings have pointed arches, features typical of nineteenth century Gothic Revival churches.

Leave the nave through the side entrance and visit the 1958 Baptistery, designed by local architect James Curtin. The interior walls of this small space are covered with ceramic mosaics by the artist Nicholas Vergette. Behind the Cathedral on Onondaga Street you can see the 1914 Bishop's Residence, carefully designed by Syracuse architect James Randall to harmonize in style and material with the cathedral. Its placement on an almost triangular site and careful landscaping have created an intimate green space within the setting.

The plaza in front of the Cathedral is:

— **Stop 5** —

Columbus Circle

Columbus Circle has been known at various times as St. Mary's Circle, Court House Circle, and Library Circle. It has been called Columbus Circle since 1934 when a bronze statue of Christopher Columbus was erected there. This statue was sculpted in Italy by Renzo V. Baldi and financed by Syracusans of Italian descent. The figure faces west, the direction in which Columbus sailed. The statue is surrounded by the city's largest fountain, designed by regionally-known architect J.D. Baum. In 1992, in commemoration of the quincentennial of Columbus's first trans-Atlantic voyage, the monument was completely restored. A brochure about this monument is available at the Visitor Center. Once a quiet residential area, Columbus Circle now reflects the city's civic, religious, and cultural life. Columbus Circle is one of the

City's most attractive and heavily used open spaces. The Columbus Circle-Montgomery Street area is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the buildings immediately surrounding the circle form a Preservation District of the City of Syracuse.

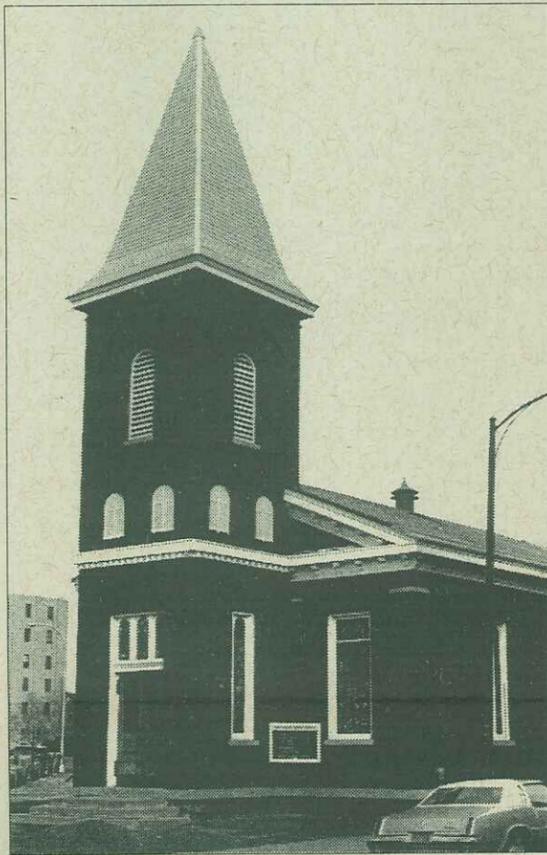
On the Northeast corner of E. Onondaga & E. Jefferson sits:

— **Stop 6** —

First Gospel Church (1874)

The First Gospel Church, formerly the Wesleyan Methodist Church, is the oldest church building in Syracuse. The small brick structure now seems overwhelmed by its neighbors, reminding us that the scale of the buildings around Columbus Circle was considerably smaller during the mid-nineteenth century than it is now. The "old village church," as it was once called, was originally built in the style of a Greek Revival meeting house with triangular pediments and symmetrical rectangular windows. The upper part of the tower with its round-arched openings and the stained glass windows are later additions. During renovations in 1994, African-style artwork was found on the cellar walls lending credence to the theory that this building was a stop on the underground railroad.

Across E. Jefferson St. from the First Gospel Church is:



— **Stop 7** —

Fourth Onondaga County Courthouse (1907)

The Beaux-Arts Style employed for the Carnegie Library Building also was used for the Fourth Onondaga County Courthouse. Syracuse architects Archimedes Russell and Melvin King designed the building to replace the Third Onondaga County Courthouse at Clinton Square. There, space allowed for a large sweeping staircase, a typical Beaux-Arts feature. With the change of location to Columbus Circle the stairs were fitted into a smaller area. This may explain their steep ascent. Here, as in the Library, Indiana limestone serves as facing for the heavy steel beam construction. Stand back and look at the symmetrically organized main facade with its ornamentation in the best Beaux-Arts tradition: round-arched doors and colossal columns carry a triangular pediment surrounded by a large copper-covered dome and four smaller domes. Step inside if you are here on a weekday, and enjoy the richly decorated main lobby. In 1906 the walls were decorated with four murals depicting legendary as well as historical episodes in Onondaga County. The artist, William De L. Dodge, followed a national trend in relating murals in public buildings to local history. The Gustave Gutgemon murals on the stair landing of the second floor symbolize law and justice. In 1915, former president Theodore Roosevelt was a respondent in a libel suit. He testified for 9 days. The chair from which he testified is on display on the 4th floor.

One building south on Montgomery St. is part of the three building ONCENTER complex called the:

— **Stop 8** —

Civic Center (1975)

The Civic Center is a sixteen story steel-framed structure faced with brick. The architects were Malo & McAfee of Syracuse and Lebensold, Afflect & Nickol of Montreal. The Center underlines the Circle's civic and cultural importance. The external form of the building expresses its various functions: the tower houses county offices, while its lower wings contain two theaters and an 1800-seat concert hall. Its varying roof line reflects the diversity of scale in this area.

Walk east through the courtyard between the Courthouse and the Civic Center to see:

— **Stop 9** —

Everson Museum of Art (1968)

The Everson Museum of Art is internationally known for its collections of ceramics and American art. Over 8,000 works in open-storage galleries range from ancient Asian and American pottery to European porcelains and early American and glazed stoneware. This was the first museum commission of internationally known architect I. M. Pei, and a prize winning design. He worked in collaboration with the local firm of Pederson Heuber, Hares and Glavin. The structure is designed like an enormous sculpture in the form of a squared pinwheel and consists of four gallery blocks, expressed on the exterior as four windowless cantilevered boxes. They project over a platform which serves as an exterior sculpture court. Reinforced concrete with North Country granite was bush hammered diagonally to give the building texture and a warm rose-colored tone. Go inside and explore the galleries and enjoy unexpected vistas. The museum cafe, open to the public, makes a delightful setting for lunch; and the museum shop offers distinctive ceramics, art books, jewelry and gifts.

On the Southwest corner of Harrison St. and S. State St. is the second building in the ONCENTER complex:

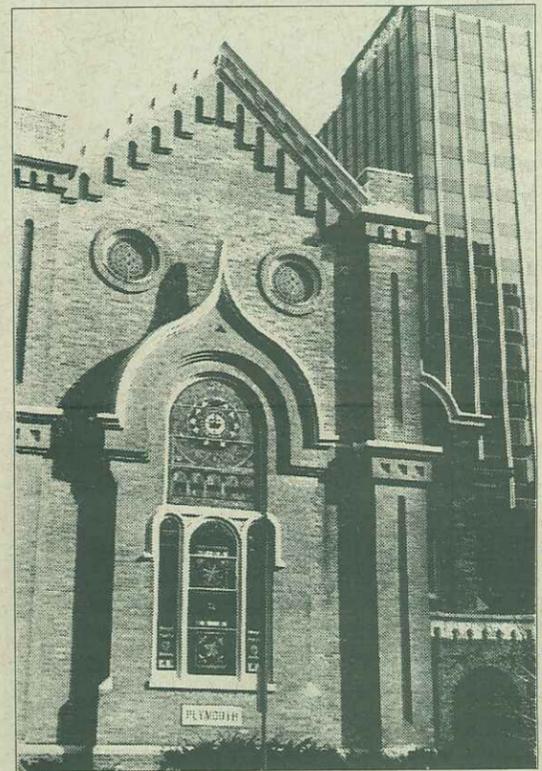
— **Stop 10** —

Convention Center (1992)

This large modern facility, designed by the Mitchel/Giurgola architectural firm of NYC, hosts conventions, trade shows, and sporting events. It has enclosed access to a 1,000-car parking garage, two exhibition halls, ballroom and banquet facilities, and catering services. There is a total of 280,000 square feet of meeting and exhibition space.

It is connected by an underground pedestrian concourse to the third building in the ONCENTER complex.

Across S. State Street from the Everson Museum is:



Left to Right: Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (Stop 4); The First Gospel Church (Stop 6); Plymouth Church and MONY Tower (Stop 14 & 12)

— **Stop 11** —

War Memorial Arena (1951)

The War Memorial designed by Syracuse architects Edgerton & Edgerton, is on the corner of Montgomery and Madison Streets. The building is dedicated to the men and women of Onondaga County who have served in the armed services. When it was completed, the War Memorial was considered to be an ultramodern structure as well as an engineering feat: the main hall which is 250' long, 138' wide and 60' high, was spanned by a roof of poured concrete that does not require interior supports. The building has a multipurpose auditorium with one of the largest ice rinks in the country, and it was designed to be used for all events from sports to concerts to trade exhibitions. This building was the site of much of the location filming of the movie *Slapshot* starring Paul Newman.

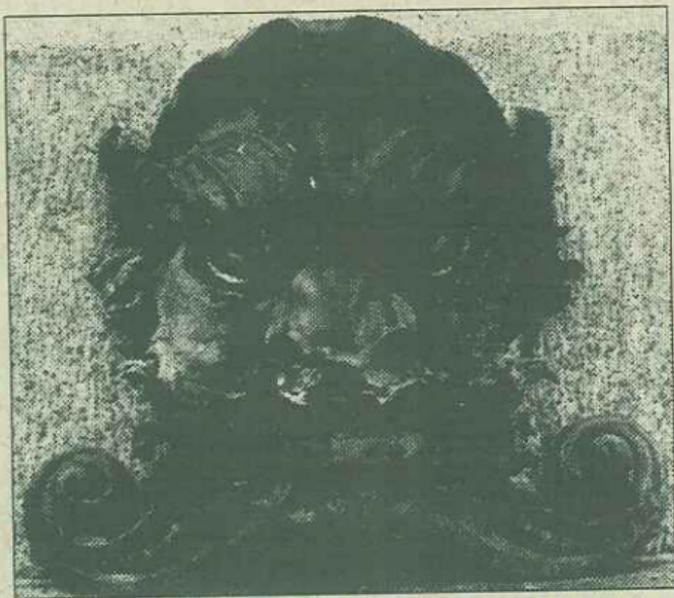
Walk north on S. State St., turn west on Madison St. On the corner of Madison & Montgomery is:

— **Stop 12** —

MONY Towers (1966, 1970)

These two towers have, in addition to office facilities, banking and commercial space on the first floor. Architects for the building were John Graham, Kahn & Jacobs. The structures sit on a platform which is raised above the sidewalk, thus changing the usual relationship between first floor and street level. This was a feature typical of urban development in the 1960's and 1970's. These steel, glass and concrete buildings are characteristic of the International Style which revolutionized architectural design in the 1920's.

Continue west along Madison St. to the five-way intersection with S. Warren and E. Onondaga Sts. At the tip of the small triangular park on your right sits:



Detail from the Columbus Monument

— **Stop 13** —

Korea-Vietnam Veterans Memorial

At the intersection of South Warren and East Onondaga Streets stands the Onondaga County Korea-Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Designed by Syracuse architect Kevan Kane and dedicated November 11, 1984, the abstract sculpture of polished red granite has a stepped base of five risers symbolizing the five branches of military service. Two triangular forms, representing the two wars, rise from the base and face each other. The triangles' abrupt termination reflects the lack of resolution of both wars, while the chamfering of the vertical edges represents conflict.

Just behind the Memorial sits:

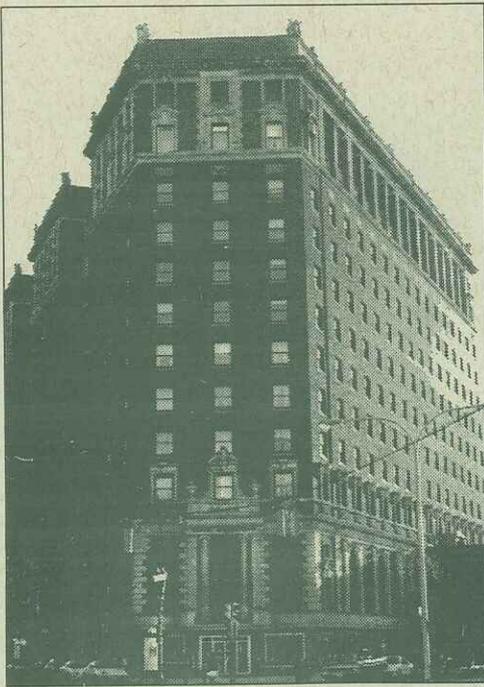
— **Stop 14** —

Plymouth Congregational Church (1871)

Plymouth Congregational Church stands at the junction of South Warren and East Onondaga Streets. In the 1870's it was the largest Protestant Church in Syracuse. The current brick church replaced an 1859 wooden chapel. Both structures were designed by regionally prominent architect Horatio Nelson White. A parish house addition, designed by Rochester architect Charles H. Carpenter, was built in 1930. The result is a picturesque massing on a limited triangular site.

Plymouth Church is a fine example of eclectic architectural practice. Its round-arched openings and corbel tables are Romanesque Revival features. The large ogee arch—a Gothic Revival element—is flanked by two bull's eye windows, giving the main facade a distinctive appearance. Handsome stained glass windows embellish the facades. This church was a leader in the Syracuse abolitionist movement and site of an underground railroad station. It was named after Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, whose pastor was active in the anti-slavery movement.

On the Southwest corner of the same intersection sits:

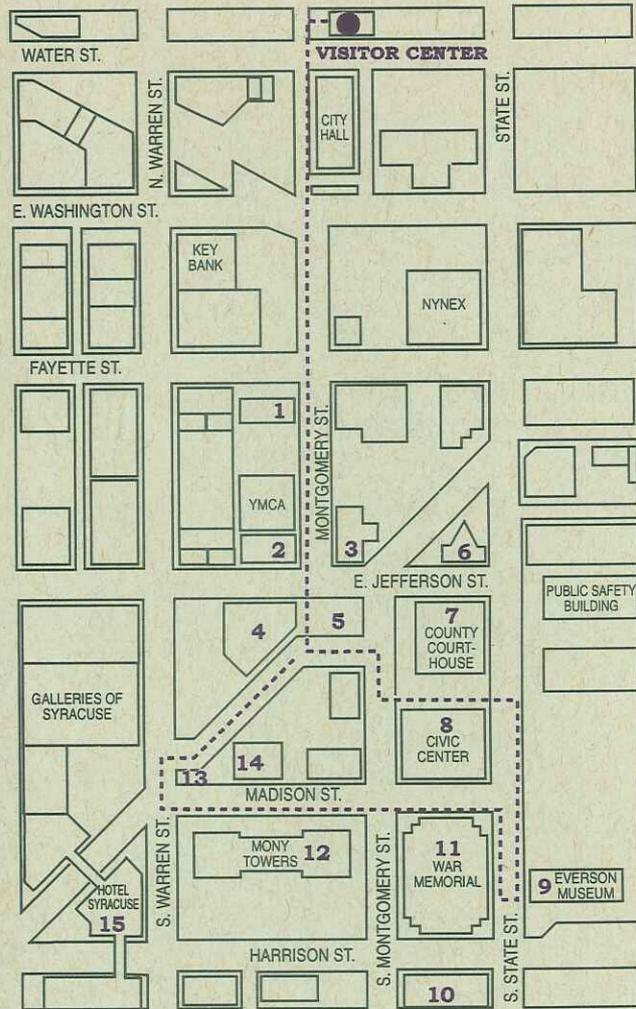


Hotel Syracuse

Stop 15

Hotel Syracuse (1924)

The hotel was designed by George B. Post & Sons, a New York firm that specialized in hotel construction. The firm has been credited with the standard American hotel plan which includes a bath in every room. In appearance, each of the three hotel towers resembles a classical column consisting of a base, shaft and capital. This three part division is brought about by the use of different materials and ornamentation: red brick is used for the plain shaft, while light sandstone surrounds the windows in the uppermost stories (the capital) and on the ground level (the base). Quoins and ionic columns frame round-arched windows, fluted pilasters carry balustrades, blind window-niches are surmounted by classical pediments and pictorial key-stones sitting above tall round-arched windows are flanked by garlands. Classical and Renaissance motifs enliven the facade. Such historical references, which one finds so often in tall commercial buildings of that period, help to give the building a human scale. In 1980 the Hotel Syracuse expanded with the construction of the Hilton Tower, completed in 1982, and designed by William Tabler of New York in cooperation with the local architectural firm of Gregory Ferentino & Associates. More recently, the interior has been restored to its original splendor and now includes 442 guest accommodations with 30 suites, four restaurants, a comedy club, and a florist.



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