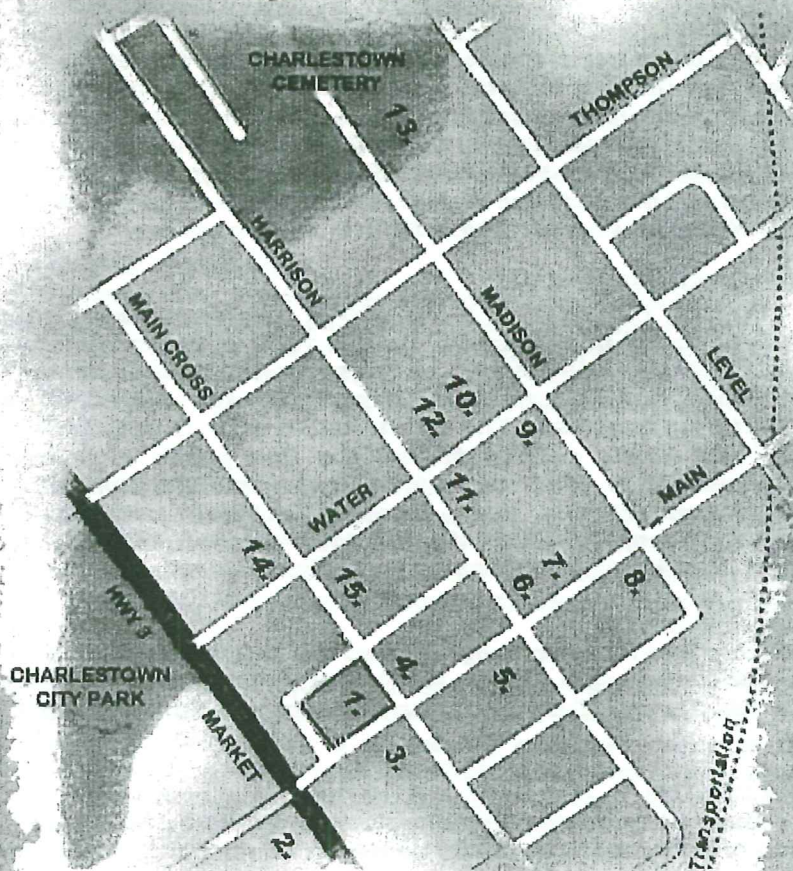


Historic Charlestown



Walking Tour

1. CHARLESTOWN SQUARE

Site of two Clark County Court Houses 1817-1850 and 1850-1878; Charlestown (Court House) School 1878-1917; the first jail 1819; the first hotel 1820; and Jonathan Jennings School 1918-1965. The interior of the square was named Jennings Plaza in the 1960's and today features a gazebo and Veterans' Monuments.

2. INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF ODD FELLOWS LODGE

This building was the meeting place of the Charlestown Lodge of the International Order of Odd Fellows organized in 1851 and anchored a brick commercial block on the south side of the Square.

3. JOHN HAY HOUSE

This corner is the site of the John Hay House. John Hay, whose family included Ann Gilmore Hay, the first wife of Jonathan Jennings, and Andrew Hay, the town physician, was a town founder and surveyor. In 1811, Jonathan and Ann married and left the square on horseback for Washington when Jennings was elected to Congress. The Andrew Hay House and the Victorian Stalker House were built on the site after the Hay House was razed. Chase Bank is now on the corner.

4. OPERA HOUSE/CITY HALL

Now City Hall, this building is the oldest commercial structure in continuous use in Charlestown. Built in 1870, it featured an opera house or public meeting space on the second floor above a variety of dry goods, confectionary, and department stores as well as a manufacturing business. The Opera House with its stage, 16 foot ceiling, and ample seating hosted the first public high school commencement in 1890, basketball games, motion pictures and magic lantern shows, town meetings, church services, and agricultural events. In 1997 the building became the Charlestown City Hall, housing the city's municipal offices.

5. MASONIC LODGE

The Blazing Star Masonic Lodge #3 was the first established in 1816 as the third lodge in the Indiana Territory. Its members met in various sites around town. Today this site is the home of the Blazing Star Lodge.

6. USO CENTER

Now a community center, this structure was built by the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis as a USO center for World War II service men and women.

7. DOWNS HOUSE

Built by Thomas Downs in the early 1800's, it is one of the three houses in Charlestown listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Now owned by the Charlestown Historical Society, it is home to a museum.

8. HAMMOND HOUSE

Rezin Hammond, a pioneer Methodist preacher and town postmaster owned this house. He preached the first sermon delivered in Indianapolis and married Jonathan Jennings to his second wife, Clarissa Barbee.

9. BOYER HOUSE

This house was the home of the William Boyer family. He and his sons operated a blacksmithing forge on the property.

10. RESIDENCE HOTEL

Built by Ward Watson as a private home about 1917, it became a hotel and restaurant in the 1940's during the World War II Boom.

11. OLD JAIL

This federal-style residence served as a jail at one time. Tales of prisoners housed on the upper floor whose escape route landed them in the middle of the jail keeper's dining room table are part of local folklore.

12. COOMBS/WATSON HOUSE

Site of the Green Tree Tavern, a log building on the old stage road where Jonathan Jennings' election and marriage to Clarissa Barbee were celebrated, it was razed to build the Watson House circa 1900. Ward Watson was an attorney, a judge of the Indiana Appellate Court, and a State Senator. The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

13. JONATHAN JENNINGS MEMORIAL

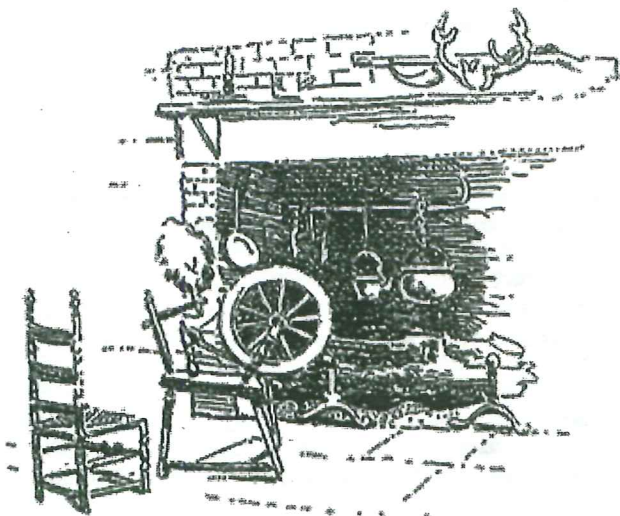
The monument commemorates Jonathan Jennings, first Governor of Indiana, who resided in the Charlestown area from 1811 until 1834. Markers were placed by the Blazing Star Masonic Lodge in memory of Jennings' two wives, Ann Gilmore Hay and Clarissa Barbee in 1982.

14. METHODIST CHURCH

Built in 1854 at a cost of \$3,000, the Charlestown Methodist Church is the oldest church standing in Charlestown. Indiana Methodism had its start in 1802 when a pioneering preacher came to the Indiana Territory from Kentucky. The Bethel Meeting House, likely the first Indiana Methodist church, was built of logs about 3 miles from Charlestown about 1809.

15. BEELER HOUSE

It is the only residence still standing on the square after Urban Renewal tear-downs in the 1960's. Owned by the George Beeler family who operated several dry goods establishments on the square, the house was restored by the Charlestown Architectural Preservation Society.



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Charlestown historical materials**

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