

Ten Must-See Buildings in Geneva

Introduction

These buildings are good examples for their category—house, public use, education—and represent interesting style choices for their time. Still in use, they are testaments to their construction and to Geneva's preservation instincts.

Smith Opera House, 1894

82 Seneca Street

The theater was built for live performances and public meetings by wealthy nurseryman William Smith. In 1921, the Schine theater chain renovated it into a movie palace. A marquee and vertical sign dominated the façade when it was the Geneva Theater. The exterior is restored to 1894, while the interior is restored to 1921.



The Armory, 1893-1917

300 Main Street

Many New York State armories were built in the 1890s when labor strikes and increased immigration raised fears of civil unrest. Built as a military presence in the center of town, it was expanded several times up to 1917; the final change was a large garage in 1959. It is still used for the National Guard decades after other units moved to modern buildings outside their villages and cities.

Octagon House, 1853

760 Castle Street



Orson Fowler pioneered this style, claiming that an octagon yielded more interior space per exterior linear foot than traditional shapes. This was an expensive high-style home with brackets, ornate iron railings, and a cupola. The owner may have believed Mr. Fowler's claims or perhaps he just

wanted something different. This is one of the best-maintained examples of an uncommon style.

Ashcroft, 1862

112 Jay Street

Designed and landscaped by Calvert Vaux, co-designer of New York's Central Park, this house originally had few neighbors. The wooden ornaments around the roofs and porches are Victorian features of the Gothic Revival.



Prairie Style House, 1914

380 Washington Street

Although the architect is unknown, this is an excellent example of the Prairie Style associated with Frank Lloyd Wright. A flat roof, wide eaves, and banks of windows contribute to a very horizontal look. Despite the different style, it is of the same time period as the houses around it.



Coxe, Williams, and Medberry Halls, 1900

Pulteney Street

As Hobart College expanded west of South Main Street, it may have been influenced by academic styles of the day and a desire to blend new and existing buildings. Jacobean Revival architecture had similarities to Gothic buildings but was more affordable for a college on a budget.

Post Office, 1906

67 Castle Street

Post offices of this era used classical elements to create imposing buildings. In the 1930s, Works Progress Administration (WPA) panels were added to the outside and a large mural to the inside. Like armories, many post offices have been moved into single-story modern buildings with better access for customers and delivery trucks.

Farmers and Merchants Bank, 1916

24-26 Linden Street



Like the Post Office, this bank was to impress customers with grandeur and security. The Geneva Savings Bank relocated in 1966 to a modern building at 27 Seneca Street. Once divided into two stories and small office spaces, the building has been returned to its original state and is now an event space.

Genesee Park Historic District

Genesee and Lewis Streets, 1840–1880

This corner includes two churches, a park, and a variety of house styles around it. As Geneva grew north from the lake, well-to-do families developed a neighborhood that was distinct from the south side of town.

YMCA, 1894, 1905

76-86 Castle Street

Designed by the Smith Opera House architects, the YMCA originally had a sloped roof with dormers. After a 1902 fire that left only the exterior walls, the structure was rebuilt with a flat third story. In 2000 the upper floors were renovated into accessible apartments for tenants with disabilities.