With the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, Buffalo grew from a population of 2,000 in 1825 to over 4,000 by 1830. The city became a dense cluster of houses mixed with industry and commerce, suffering ever-increasing pollution, dirt, noise, and crowding.

The wealthiest residents looked to the green pastures of today’s 500, 600 and 700 blocks of Main Street. Mayors, politicians, and business tycoons built mansions ranging from modest brick and wood frame buildings to large marble-clad mansions. By mid-century, the elegant houses they built had transformed the area into one of the most fashionable neighborhoods of an increasingly cosmopolitan city.

However, by the late 1800s, commercial activity dominating the southern end of Main Street crept northward. When the city expanded its borders in 1854 to encompass much more than the scenic skyline, crime and filth took over. The city became a dense cluster of houses mixed with industry and commerce, suffering ever-increasing pollution, dirt, noise, and crowding.

For much more information scan the QR Code to the right or go to www.buffaloplace.com/history/theatre/residences.

The Marshall House

As a child, attorney Orsamus Holmes Marshall relocated to Buffalo from Connecticut with his family. He is remembered as one of the 1862 founders of the Buffalo Bills, the football team who documented early Western New York and Native American history. After retiring in 1863, Marshall purchased the home at 700 Main Street originally constructed in 1841. Marshall’s son Charles inherited the property and resided there until it was demolished in 1910 to make way for the current EMI Building.

The Pratt House

In 1848, buffalo-born Pascal Pratt established the Pratt & Letchworth Company which manufactured saddles and carriage hardware. He later founded the Manufacturers’ and Traders’ Bank (now M&T Bank), supported the Buffalo School of Architecture (now Buffalo State College), the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy (now the Albright-Knox Art Gallery), and was a driving force behind the Federal Law Enforced-designed Buffalo Park and Parkway System. Pratt built a substantial house at 736 Main Street in 1864. Shortly after his death in 1905, the house was demolished, giving way to the Aurora Building.

The Rich House

Gaius Barrett Rich, founder of the Bank of Attica, brought his banking business to Buffalo in 1840. His son Andrew was working as a humble dry goods clerk, but his father hired him, took a liking to him, and raised him to his bank president. In 1854, his father, Andrew Rich, built a substantial house on the east side of Main Street just north of Upper. He named the bank president until his death in 1870. The current site of 272 Main Street was made up to the two-story commercial block that stands today. The Bank of Attica ultimately merged with The National Trust Company in 1897.

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The Glenn Residence

Irish-born William H. Glennery lived an immigrant “rags-to-riches” story. Arriving in Buffalo in 1836, he worked as a worker until opening a small dry goods store in 1848. The William H. Glennery Company became a successful importer of fine china, glass and other merchandise. In 1877, Glennery hired prominent architect Richard A. Waite to design a new store at 249–253 Main Street, south of South Street. To the west of the building is Buffalo’s only remaining tall cast-iron façade. Glennery took up residence at 530 Main Street in 1855. After his death, his widow consoled to reside there until 1895 when, like other historic homes in this area, it was replaced by a commercial building.

The Dold Residence

Jacob C. Dold, Sr. came to Buffalo as a young boy from Württemberg, Germany in 1853. He founded a small butcher shop in South Buffalo in 1860 and, two years later, opened a meat packing plant at the Elk Street Market. Eventually, the Jacob Dold Packing Company expanded to include plants in Boston, New York, Providence and Liverpool, England among more than 30 branches. Dold lived at 692 Main Street from around 1888 until 1891. The property, nicknamed “The Holland,” an upscale boarding house, continued to be a home for the Buffalo Republican, was eventually demolished and is now the site of the two-story commercial Dold Building constructed in 1900.

The Sherwood House

The area’s greatest dwelling was built at 652 Main Street by businessman Merrill Bennett Sherwood. He established a brokerage firm in 1836 and became involved with Bancroft’s Bank, the most prestigious and notorious bank of the 1830s. When the Rathbun bubble burst in 1856, sherwood was one of many banks behind the Panic of 1857 that rocked the nation. As Rathbun’s agent, Sherwood had worked to pass Rathbun’s forged notes to struggling banks throughout the US and Canada. Originally, Sherwood lived in a handsome cottage on Main Street north of Chippewa Street, but in 1854 he replaced it with a three-story Italianate house reported as the city’s most lavish. Facing financial reverses, he sold the property in 1879 and it became “The Sherwood,” an upscale boarding house, until its demolition in 1902. Sherwood’s Buffalo Theater was built on the land it once occupied.

The Rip House

Henry Rip worked for the American Express Company, founded in Buffalo as an express mail service by Henry Wells, William G. Fargo, and John Warren Butterfield in 1850. When competing United States Express Company was founded in 1854, Rip was later hired as General Superintendent. He moved his family into a new home at 640 Main Street in 1865. After his death in 1863, the house continued as a family residence, but later became “The Holland,” an upscale boarding house most notably home to Maria de Ferranti, theater critic, playwright, promoter of classical music and founder of the Zeppa Club, an international women’s service organization. The building was supplanted by the five-story Otto Building in 1896.