
A Day in Brownsville

Take a step back in time to surround yourself in the fascinating history of Brownsville. Dating back to the 1700s, Brownsville was the last supply stop for pioneers traveling west on the National Road. Due to the town's central location near three early transportation "highways", the Monongahela River, the Monongahela Railway, and the National Road, the region experienced an economic boom and Brownsville eventually emerged as a ship-building center.

To reveal much more of the area's history, start your day with a visit to the historic [Flatiron Building](#)ⁱ, which houses both the Heritage and Visitors Centers. Located at 69 Market Street, the Heritage Center tells the stories of the westward expansion and the industrial era of coal and river transportation in the community and region. While here, do not miss the opportunity to visit the [Frank L. Melega Art Museum](#)ⁱⁱ, which exhibits the works of Melega, relating to local history, as well as ever-changing visiting exhibitions of contemporary artists.

Brownsville boasts two historic districts and five individually listed sites on the National Register of Historic Places. Visit and experience a few of them for yourself. Beginning at the [Nemacolin Castle](#)ⁱⁱⁱ, located at 136 Front Street. Built in 1789 by Jacob Bowman, this crowned gem stands proudly on the hillside overlooking the Monongahela River. To learn more about this remarkable site, tours are available on Saturday and Sunday from noon to 5 pm, \$8 for adults and \$4 for children ages 12 and under, in addition to special events and tours that occur throughout the year.

Leave your vehicle parked at the Castle, and take a stroll through the Northside to view marvelous architecture of historic homes. From Front Street, walk four blocks on 5th Avenue until you reach the intersection with Church Street. Turn right onto Church Street, where it is impossible to miss the green patina steeple of St. Peter's Church, located at 118 Church Street. This Gothic Revival church was built in 1845, and was constructed much larger than necessary as it was intended to be the future official seat of the bishop. Recognized as the first established Catholic parish in Fayette County and the oldest continuously operating parish in Western Pennsylvania, St. Peter's is believed to be the location of the first Christian service of any kind offered west of the Allegheny Mountains. St. Peter's is listed on the National Register of Historic places and has the PA historic designation. The cemetery surrounding the church has been showcased by "Ripley's Believe It or Not" for being the only cemetery in existence with heated graves. To view other historic churches continue down Church Street.

After this walk around the Northside, head back to your car and drive into downtown to enjoy a hot meal. Pass the Flatiron building and stop at Fiddle's Confectionary^{iv}, tucked under the Intercounty Bridge, at 101 Bridge Street. With a red checkered floor and classic diner stools, it is easy to see why this retro diner has been a town favorite since 1910. Fiddle's serves a great breakfast throughout the day and All-American classics for lunch. The hotdogs are a local favorite!

Work off your full stomach by taking a walk to the Brownsville Riverside Wharf Park. This wharf is site of the 1813 launch of the Enterprise. Designed and built in Brownsville it was the first steamboat to travel to New Orleans and return on its own power. This park features a boat ramp with easy access to the Monongahela River. The boat ramp is steep, so be sure to inspect the site before you drive to the put-in, especially if you have a large boat. It is only a four and a half mile trip downriver, to the next boat ramp in California, PA. For those yearning to experience the river firsthand we recommend this scenic paddle trip.

The Wharf also provides an excellent fishing spot, but if you desire a more remote location, Redstone Creek is only one mile upriver on the eastern river bank. To access this tributary of the Mon by vehicle continue on Market Street, and make a slight left onto Albany Road until you reach the creek. If your idea of fun involves less exploration and more relaxation, the Brownsville Wharf and adjacent Central Park have benches and green space for lounging on the river bank.

Walking along Market Street away from the wharf, you will reach the Dunlap Creek Bridge, which happens to be the first cast iron metal arch bridge in the United States! Dedicated on July 4, 1839, the bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark. As you walk along Market Street take note of the outstanding architecture, which surrounds you. These mostly vacant buildings now serve as reminders of the commercial and residential grandeur that was once present in downtown Brownsville. Snowdon Square, to your right, is a short and pleasant walk to view the historic library.

After an exciting day of exploring Brownsville, Paci's Lounge & Dining Room^v, located at 384 Old National Pike, West Brownsville, is an appetizing final stop with some interesting history. During the heyday of the National Road, Malden Inn, the stone building next to Paci's, was a popular stop for westbound pioneers to rest overnight. A stable was built next to the Inn to house the horses, coaches, and Conestoga wagons. Paci's Lounge and Dining Room now occupies the stable and offers a wide range of dinner entrees, daily specials, rotating craft beers on tap, and an impressive selection of bottled beers, wines, and spirits. After solid meal, rest assured knowing you witnessed a bit of past and present day Brownsville.

ⁱ Flatiron Heritage Center & Visitor's Center

69 Market Street, Brownsville, PA 15417

www.barcpa.org

724-785-9331

ⁱⁱ Frank L Melega Art Musuem

69 Market Street, Brownsville, PA 15417

www.melegaartmuseum.org

724-785-9331

ⁱⁱⁱ Nemacolin Castle

136 Front Street, Brownsville, PA 15417

724-785-6882

www.nemacolincastle.org/

^{iv} Fiddles Confectionary

101 Bridge Street, Brownsville, PA 15417

724- 785-2020

^v Paci's Lounge & Dining Room

384 Old National Pike, Brownsville, PA 15417

724-785-7113