

Capitol Hill Walk - Yellow Dots

○ Yellow dots
0.35 miles



If you drive to the location, you can park in front of Capitol Hill School or behind the Governor's Mansion, then begin or end your Walking Tour with a tour of the museum.

A short history of how Marshall, Michigan nearly became the state capital.

1 Capital Square • Marshall was established in 1830 and Michigan became a state in 1837. By the early 1840s, the new Michigan government had a plan: place the most important State destinations along Territorial Road, a route that linked Detroit to Chicago. The State university would be built in Ann Arbor, Jackson would get the State prison, and the State capital would be in Marshall. At that time, Marshall had a significant number of businessmen and politicians as citizens, so this plan made a lot of sense.

Marshall was so sure of winning the vote that a large area of land was set aside on the south side of town and named Capitol Square. Lots in this section were sold at fantastic prices in anticipation of the decision.

The Constitution of 1835 stated that a permanent location for the capital needed to be found by 1847. Twelve towns submitted proposals that their towns be chosen: Ann Arbor, Albion, Battle Creek, Corunna, Byron, Detroit, Dexter, Eaton Rapids, Grand Blanc, Jackson, Lyons, and Marshall.

The House of Representatives took a first vote in which Lyons received 30 favorable votes and was declared the winner, Marshall was short by one, receiving only 29 favorable votes. However, at the next meeting the vote was reconsidered, and an unnamed tract of land in centrally located Ingham county was chosen by a vote of 35 to 27. Additional votes were taken but the lead only grew stronger. Many names for the new Capital were considered, including Washington, Cass, LaFayette, Tyler, and others but in the end, Lansing was chosen.

The name honors Lansing, New York, the hometown of many of its original settlers. That town was named after John Lansing, Jr., a prominent American Revolutionary War figure.

2 612 S Marshall Ave. Governor's Mansion Museum, *Greek Revival, 1839* • James Wright Gordon was an early Marshall settler who ran for Lieutenant Governor of Michigan in 1840. He won, and when Governor Woodbridge left the Governors Office for the U.S. Senate in 1841, Gordon became acting Governor of Michigan.

Gordon purchased land across the street from the land proposed for the Capitol and built a large house intended as the official residence for the state's highest executive. This house has been referred to as

the “Governor’s Mansion” since its erection in 1839.

The dwelling never actually housed a governor in office, but it is a remarkable example of Greek Revival architecture, complete with high ceilings, original woodwork, and period moldings.

There are many hands-on opportunities for visitors to explore and touch artifacts from that period of American history. Guided tours provide insights into the mansion’s construction and the lives of those who once called it home, making it a fascinating stop for history buffs and curious travelers.

3 606 Washington St., Capitol Hill School Museum 1860 • This two-room schoolhouse served the city for 101 years, from 1860 to 1961. Inside the school, one room has been set up as a 19th century classroom where visitors can ring the school bell and write on slate boards while sitting at a desk.

The second classroom educates visitors on Marshall’s history as the originators of the American public school system, Marshall school history (including colleges that were once in the city), Marshall’s founding brothers, and how Marshall almost became Michigan’s capital.

The cloakroom entrance has children’s toys from yesteryear including a big-wheel bicycle and a doll that was carved with a pocket knife. This building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Historic American Building Survey.

4 720 Fair St. Houston School (pronounced “how-stun”) 1836 • Houston School was built in 1836 as a rural school house and in the 1950s rebuilt on C Drive South in Fredonia Township. It was moved to the fairgrounds in 2006. It’s a wood-frame structure painted white with an asphalt shingle roof. It has a belltower off the peak of the building but since it’s enclosed no school bell is visible. Two school bells are on display, however: one in front of the school and one on the side. The school was in operation until 1967.

5 720 Fair St. Floral Hall 1860 • Floral Hall is the oldest fair building in the state and underwent extensive restoration in 2011. The Calhoun County Fairgrounds website stated that Floral Hall was the “oldest eight-sided wooden structure in the state of Michigan” and notes that the wings were added at a later date. Designed originally for the display of flowers and farm produce, the building still plays a major role for this county fair.

Floral Hall was originally built and used during the

Civil War as the barracks for the First Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment. This regiment was called “Abraham Lincoln’s Own” because they were the first to arrive in Washington, D.C. after the start of the war.

6 720 Fair St. Calhoun County Fair Museum • A large collection of fair-related artifacts is located inside this museum, sharing the history of the Calhoun County Fairgrounds. The first Calhoun County Fair was held in downtown Marshall in 1839 to educate farmers on the newest farming technology. In 1845, the fair was held on the “Capital Hill” site.

7 720 Fair St. Lockwood/Avery Granary, *Italian Villa, 1853-55* • Isaac and Elvira Lockwood were among the earliest pioneers to settle in Marshall Township and this granary was built on their land. The granary retains all of its original bins, leather belts, and metal drive equipment, which originally would have been operated by a steam engine and later by a tractor. This unique and interactive exhibit showcases historic and modern ways to store, transport, and use grain. The granary was donated by the Avery family in 2020 and moved to the Calhoun County Fairgrounds.

8 720 Fair St. Old Maple Grove Church 1901 • The Old Maple Grove Church was built in 1901, at 18511 L Drive S in Homer, and moved to the fairgrounds in 2006. This building is a restored, historic rural church frequently featured on the Marshall Historic Home Tour and available to rent.

9 615 S Marshall Ave. Marshall’s First Log Cabin 1831 • In 1830, George Ketchum rode from Detroit along the new Territorial Road (present day Michigan Avenue), looking for land to claim. Although others reached Marshall first, he bought their claims with \$150 and two rifles. Ketchum’s claim was officially registered in October 1830. He returned to New York and gathered his brother Sidney, their family, and some friends, and returned to Marshall in April 1831.

George quickly built the first log cabin in Marshall here, a little distance from the river where the mosquitoes were terrible, about where the B.E. Henry Building stands today. It was 20x36-feet and 1 1/2 stories tall. He also built a sawmill on Rice Creek .

His brother Sidney built his cabin about where Oaklawn Hospital stands today, and also named the town after someone he greatly admired, Supreme Court Justice John Marshall.

In August 1831 the village plot of Marshall was officially declared and, as the first settlement in Calhoun County, Marshall was made the county seat.