

Downtown Tulsa Self-Guided Historic Walking Tour



The historical Central Business District of Tulsa offers a meaningful account of the downtown's early years and the opulence and wealth of the oil barons of the '20s. Their infatuation with Art Deco produced some of the finest examples anywhere of Zigzag skyscrapers, the Streamline style of the '30s and the Classical style of the Great Depression and the New Deal.

Tulsa developers and builders have maintained many of these architectural treasures through effective management and often through creative adaptive reuse of buildings which might otherwise have outlived their usefulness. Newer structures now dominate Tulsa's skyline, including the 52-story Bank of Oklahoma Tower designed by Minoru Yamasaki.

This GUIDE lists fifty significant buildings and places within the core of the downtown area, noting locations on the suggested Walking Tour Map. Historical building names are used for identification with current names or principal occupants contained in parenthesis. The following letters are used to identify particular significance:

NR Building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places
OL Building has been listed on the Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory
AD Building noted for Art Deco significance and design
LB Lobby of Building is a must see

1 The **Mayo Hotel** (1924) 115 W. Fifth, was once the tallest building in Oklahoma. Built by Cass A. and John D. Mayo, the 600-room hotel was patterned after the Plaza in New York and hosted such notables as Charlie Chaplin, Mae West, Charles Lindbergh and Bob Hope, and was for many years the home of financier J. Paul Getty. The building has been structurally stabilized and is used for special events. **NR OL**

2 Known as the **Pythian Building** (1930) 423 S. Boulder, it was originally called the Gillette/Tyrell Building. The three-story structure was to be crowned by a ten-story hotel, which was never built. The banded rock along the base is "rainbow granite" which is a metamorphic rock called gneiss and was mined in Minnesota. The lobby's intricate plasterwork, wrought iron, colorful tile work, and mosaic floors combine to create one of Tulsa's most elaborate art deco interiors. **NR OL AD LB**

3 The blonde brick **Mayo Building** (1910/1917) NW corner of 5th and Main, was the last building built by John D. and Cass Mayo and was constructed in two stages. It has retained its three-story-high vertical advertising sign and typifies major office construction of the time.

4 The **McFarlin Building** (1918) 11 East Fifth, was built by Robert M. McFarlin, co-founder of McMan Oil Company with his nephew James Chapman. The building predates the Art Deco era. It has classical molding details including key fret, egg-and-dart and bead-and-reel motifs. The first tenant was the Halliburton-Abbott department store. **NR OL**

5 A cartouche with a carved "S" at the roofline of the **Sinclair (Thurston) Building** (1919) SE corner of 5th and Main, is the clue that this structure was built by oilman Harry F. Sinclair. It was the original headquarters of the billion-dollar oil company he founded.

6 The **Public Service Company of Oklahoma (TransOk) Building** (1928) SW corner of 6th and Main was constructed as a Zig-Zag art deco style public utility building and displays impressive exterior illumination. **NR AD**

7 Also a Zig-Zag public utility building, the **Oklahoma Natural Gas Company Building (Noble)** (1928) 624 S. Boston, is constructed of reinforced concrete, enclosed with buff tapestry brick and Indiana limestone. **NR AD**

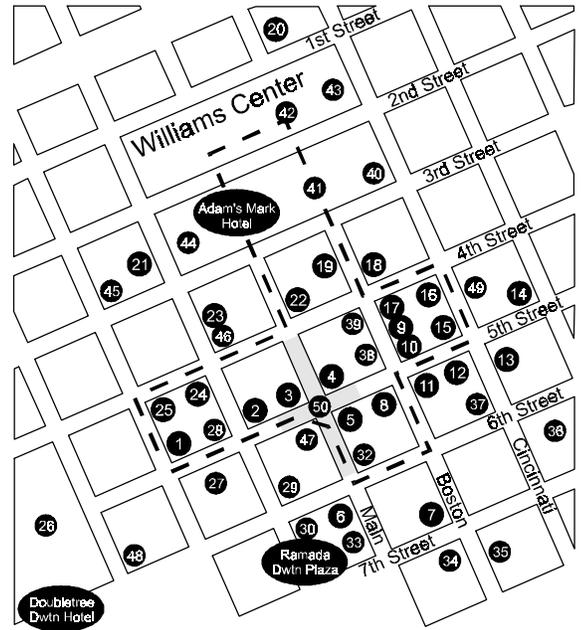
8 The illuminated dome of the **Thompson Building** (1923) SW corner 5th and Boston, was known as one of Tulsa's "three skyline musketeers" in the mid-1920's. The original structure was only as tall as the lighter colored band in the building's midsection.

9 Built in the shape of an inverted "T", the **Atlas Life Building** (1922) 409 S. Boston has a 140-foot ground floor arcade that runs the entire depth of the building. The roofline includes a monumental Atlas supporting the globe. The pink and green vertical neon sign is a Tulsa landmark. **LB**

10 "Queen of the Tulsa Skyline" the **Philtower** (1927) 427 S. Boston, was the tallest building in Oklahoma when completed. Owner Waite Phillips, financier and philanthropist, donated the building to the Boy Scouts to endow a Ranch in New Mexico. Monogrammed doorknobs, brass elevator doors, travertine marble floor and a 25-foot-high vaulted ceiling with interlocking tracery adorn the lobby. The polychromed red and green tile roof still stands as a Tulsa landmark. **NR OL LB**

11 Built by Waite Phillips as a sister building to the Philtower, the **Philtcade (Amoco North)** (1930) 511 S. Boston, contains stylized foliage above the ground floor windows conceal birds, reptiles and mammals. The ornate lobby, designed in the shape of a "T" for Tulsa, has attracted national attention for its evident blend of Art Deco and Art Nouveau styles. **NR OL AD LB**

12 The Marion Corporation Building (**114 East 5th Street**) (1926) was designed by John Duncan Forsythe. In 1968, the sensitive renovation of the building won Donald H. Hann and Associates, Architects, an Award from the Tulsa AIA.



- 13 **Trinity Episcopal Church** (1926) SE corner 5th and Cincinnati, has been on this corner since 1906. Completed in 1926, the current structure is an excellent example of gothic revival architecture. The garden courtyard is a particularly favored feature. Proportions emphasize the soaring vertical lines reminiscent of many European Gothic churches. An interesting feature is a stained glass window featuring evil world leaders of the 20th century, including Adolph Hitler.
- 14 The Southwestern Bell **Main Dial Building** (1924) Fifth and Detroit, is one of the intricate Zig-Zag art deco public utility buildings and a Tulsa landmark, particularly with its sensitive and intricate disguised transmission tower. **NR AD**
- 15 The **Tulsa Club Building** (1927) 115 E. 5th. The "club" was organized in 1923 and in 1926 the club and the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce built the building, which is now vacant awaiting renovation and reuse. It is a Tulsa exclusive treasure. **AD**
- 16 The neoclassic **Tulsa Municipal Building** (1919) 4th and Cincinnati, stood vacant for five years after city offices were moved to the Civic Center. This was one of the first buildings to be adapted for contemporary office use. A significant mural in the lobby depicts a Tulsa street scene in 1919. **NR OL LB**
- 17 Tulsa's first skyscraper, the 16-story Cosden (**Mid-Continent**) Building (1918/1984 ren.) 401 S. Boston, was one of the earlier reinforced concrete office structures in the United States and tallest west of the Mississippi. The facade is a Venetian Gothic terra cotta veneer. Oilman Josh Cosden made and lost two fortunes, but his million-dollar building symbolized oil boom attitudes and Tulsa's spirit of flamboyant growth. The renovation consisted of the addition of six stories to the original structure and 20 floors actually cantilevered over it for expansion and modernization. The lavish marble lobby contains Tulsa's skyline in stained glass on the east wall. **NR LB**
- 18 The earliest portion of the **Kennedy Building** (1916/1919) 321 S. Boston, was built by St. Louis developer S. Gallais. Pioneer Tulsa doctor Samuel Grant Kennedy, bought the structure and tripled its size, but left "Gallais" over the south entry. The lion-headed gargoyles above the doors once held rings in their mouths to support the original canopy. The 1980 renovation enclosed the original "C" shaped building creating a ten-story atrium and dramatic new lobby spaces, although leaving the lobby's original Italian and Vermont marble floors and walls. **LB**
- 19 The massive National Bank of Tulsa (**320 South Boston**) Building (1918) has continuously housed a bank since its opening. It was built in three phases through 1927 and when the tower was first illuminated in 1938, people 20 miles away reported seeing the light. Restored to its original condition, the ground floor banking lobby includes elaborate masonry and ceilings that are superb examples of the hand painted genre. They were hidden from view for 27 years prior to the renovation. **LB**
- 20 The **Tulsa Union Depot** (1931) 3 S. Boston, is an impressive example of Art Deco architecture and reveals the inspiration of machinery as a theme for the exterior geometric designs. The Union Depot was built as a joint venture by three railroads during the Great Depression. Passenger trains continued to stop at the landmark until 1967. Innovative renovation for reuse of the structure for office occupancy was completed in 1982 after the building had stood vacant for 14 years. **OL AD LB**
- 21 Built to house Tulsa's first permanent post office, the old **Federal Building** (1917/1931) 3rd and Boulder, occupied one third of the Boulder Avenue frontage until enlarged in 1931. A "private spy channel" beneath the ceiling of the main floor allowed the postal inspector to view the entire work force.
- 22 The facade of the refurbished **Reunion Center** (1919/1925) NE corner 4th and Main, reflects its 1925 appearance. Two-story stone arches, brick pilasters, and paired double hung windows with stone spandrels provide the building's vertical emphasis.
- 23 The impressive Boulder Avenue art deco facade of the **Newspaper Printing Corporation Building** has overlooked the City scene for decades and undergone numerous expansions and renovations. **AD**
- 24 Built by Waite Phillips, the **Beacon Building** (1923) SW corner 4th and Boulder, is remembered by many Tulsans for a beacon light tower (removed in 1976) that symbolized its long-time tenant, the Beacon Life Insurance Company and served as a aircraft navigational aid in the 1930's.
- 25 Built for I. S. Mincks, the **Mincks - Adams Hotel** (1928) 403 S. Cheyenne, is noted for having Tulsa's most elaborate and ornate rococo terra cotta facade. Mincks lost the hotel during the Depression. **NR OL**

26 Civic Center Plaza
 City-County Library
 Tulsa County Offices
 Police Courts Building
 City Hall
 City Council Chambers
 Convention Center

27 OneOK Building
 28 Petroleum Building (Grantson/Ad dot com)
 29 4th National Bank Building (NationsBank)
 30 Petroleum Club Building
 31 Cities Service (One Ten Occidental/OXY)
 32 Pepsico Place (ParkCentre)
 33 One&Two Main Plazas
 34 Masonic Temple (Bernsen Community Center)
 35 First Presbyterian Church
 36 Old Central H.S. (Public Service Company)
 37 ARCO (Williams Bros. Engineering)
 38 First Place/Bank One
 39 Sooner Federal Savings (400 Boston)
 40 Performing Arts Center (PAC)
 41 The GREEN at Williams Center

42 Bank of Oklahoma Tower
 43 Williams Technology Center (began construction 1999)
 44 Williams Towers I & II
 45 Wright Building
 46 Skelly (Franklin) Building
 47 State Federal Savings Building
 48 YMCA
 49 First Baptist Church
 50 Bartlett Square on Main

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 Downtown Tulsa Unlimited
 321 S. Boston, Suite 101
 Tulsa, OK 74103
 (918) 583-2617