In 1847, the Reverend Albertus C. Van Raalte led a small group of Dutch immigrants to an isolated spot near the eastern shore of Lake Michigan where they carved their home, now called Holland, out of the wilderness.

Many of Holland’s early settlers lived to see their fledging “colony” devoured by a fire that swept through the community on October 9, 1871 – the day after the great Chicago fire. The fire destroyed over 300 buildings and years of hard work.

Though most of Holland’s earliest buildings are gone, the city still boasts a number of historical structures documenting the economic prosperity that began in the 1890s and continues to this day.

Holland’s buildings are a testimony to its conservaive heritage – no mansions or skyscrapers, just an array of sturdy yet distinctive homes and businesses, reflecting virtually every architectural style from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Take one step into the past with a walking tour of historic Holland, Michigan.

Van Raalte Tour

The first stop on the tour, 119 West 11th Street, is built in 1870. It features dormer windows, pointing to a Second Empire architectural style, rare in Holland. A small Queen Anne (a small Queen Anne home) was built between 1902 and 1909. If you see this house, go back at 115 West 12th Street for a view of another unusual window, this one diagonal.

Washington School, 156 West 11th Street – This two-story building dates from 1865 and is the finest example of Italianate architecture in Holland. The building was constructed out of necessity in 1911 after Holland’s fire of 1871. The existing church was built in 1894; it was rebuilt after being destroyed in the fire of 1871.

119 West 11th Street – Note the dingle siding and sunburst design on the front gable of the house. Built around 1895, the house at 113 West 11th Street has an unusual oval window in front, characteristic of the little surprises found throughout the historic district.

The Coatsworth House, 236 West 9th Street, was built in 1862 and was the home of Dr. John Coatsworth. The house is an example of the Italianate style, characterized by a high porch and a double-story entrance.

The Cappon House, 228 West 9th Street, is a Queen Anne Victorian style house with a distinctive gable roof and a porch that extends over the sidewalk.

Turn left on River Avenue to return to Centennial Park. For those who would like to continue, Centennial Park is the first stop on the Van Raalte Tour (see other side).

119 West 11th Street

225 West 11th Street – Built in the late 1870s, this two-story Victorian was constructed using Waverly Stone.

222 West 12th Street – The “Princess Anne” (a small Queen Anne style house) was built between 1902 and 1909. Note the detail on the square corner tower and Waverly Stone foundation.

209 West 12th Street – This massive Victorian dates from the late 1890s and features a wrap-around porch of Waverly stone.

203 West 12th Street – Built in 1906, the Queen Anne house has curved bay windows on both stories and a belfry tower, with the front half remaining open.

197 West 12th Street – A rare example of a Victorian style house, the house at 192 West 12th Street offers a fine example of Veneklasen brickwork, a local building material used throughout the historic district. The Tudor Revival house at 189 West 12th Street was built in 1935.

193 West 12th Street – This house contains elements of both Georgian Colonial and Federal Revival styles. It was built in 1912 and destroyed by fire in 1915. The church was dedicated in 1997 and features an open environment filled with natural light and stained glass windows.

284 Maple Avenue – This was built in 1883 and purchased in 1926 by Bernard P. Donaldson of a glass company that became one of Holland’s largest employers. This was the first house in Holland to have electricity.

135 West 12th Street – Built in 1927, this Mediterranean style house was designed by Donald J. Lake, who also designed Peoples State Bank at 36 East 8th Street.

131 West 12th Street – This American Colonial home was built in 1925 for Gerrit Doremus, a State Representative whose grandparent were among the earliest Dutch immigrants.

121 West 12th Street – A modest one-story house, this is a fine example of Italianate architecture. It was built in 1873 with salvaged timbers from Third Reformed Church’s frame, which was demolished by a windstorm during construction following the fire of 1871.

159 West 12th Street – An unusual keyhole-shaped louvered glass window can be seen on the west side of the distinctive Queen Anne home. Look back at 115 West 11th Street for a view of another unusual window, this one diagonal.

Third Reformed Church, 111 West 11th Street – The original church was among the many buildings destroyed by the fire of 1871. The existing church was dedicated in 1874. It was renovated in 1968.

99 and 97 West 12th Street – This duplex was built in 1916. Usually owner-occupied, such duplexes took advantage of dwindling space by allowing two middle-class homes to be built on one lot.

84 West 11th Street – This Queen Anne-style house was built between 1902 and 1905 by William Garrod, manager of the Waverly Stone Co. Mr. Garrod used Waverly stone for his foundation.

70 West 11th Street – A graceful porch and dormer tower are the most striking features of this house. It was built in the 1890s by John C. Post, a lawyer who apparently committed suicide in the house in 1903.

66 West 11th Street – George W. Browning, secretary and manager of the Ottawa Furniture Manufacturing Company, built this house between 1894 and 1898. The many windows work together to present a balanced appearance.

Washington Boulevard Historic District

The Washington Boulevard Historic District was established in 2001 and encompasses 187 properties along Washington Avenue between 8th and 16th Streets.

230 Washington Avenue – Arched slender windows identify the house as Italianate, a style typically seen in a more orange variation. Next door, at 232 Washington Avenue, a Queen Anne, a late-Victorian style characterized by an upsurge of gables, turrets, bay windows, and porches.

221 Washington Avenue – This modest one-story home is built in 1865, and is one of the few elegant homes in town that survived the 1871 fire. The small manor roof is a distinctive trait of French Second Empire architecture, a rarity in Holland.

216 Washington Avenue – This house was designed by Donald J. Lake, who also designed Peoples State Bank at 36 East 8th Street.
**Centennial Park**, located between 10th & 12th Streets and River & Central Avenues was built to commemorate the nation’s centennial in 1876. Its focal point is the Los Angeles area’s oldest surviving public building in Holland was built in 1883-84 and served as both City Hall and a fire station.

**Pillar Church**, 57 East 8th Street – The church’s first pastor was Albert Van Raalte, Holland’s founder. Built by members of the congregation between 1844 and 1846, it is one of the few buildings to survive the disastrous fire of 1871. It also is one of the oldest churches of Greek Revival design in Michigan. Some of Rev. Van Raalte’s personal effects are on display in the lower level of the church and can be viewed during church office hours.

**06 East 10th Street and 53 Graves Place** – Compare the two Hope College buildings on either side of College Avenue. To the east is Voorhuis Hall, built in 1902, and to the west is Van Wylen Library built in 1908. The brick work and window treatment of the library complement the Flemish architectural elements of the older building.

**116 East 10th Street – Van Vleck Hall** is the oldest building on Hope’s campus. Built in 1879-80 under the direction of the Reverend Dr. John Van Vleck as the Holland Academy, this building was the forerunner of Hope College.

**Greefs Hall/Winslow Chapel, 265 College Avenue** – This two-story building features the heavy stonework and massive presence characteristic of Romanesque Revival architecture. Built in 1892, the building underwent extensive “adaptive” renovation in 2008-2009 that preserved the character of the building, yet modernized it to meet the current needs of the campus.

**Dimnent Chapel, 277 College Avenue** – Located on College Avenue, north of Greefs Hall, this building was built in 1927 and is a fine example of Gothic Revival architecture.

**24 East 13th Street – Winslow Memorial Seminary Chapel** is an excellent example of Colonial Revival architecture. The seminary is affiliated with the Reformed Church in America.

**57 East 8th Street** – As you move from the residential district, note the ornamental woodwork on the front gable of this Queen Anne house. This Victorian residence was built in 1897.

**42-24 East 14th Street – This row of management/professional houses was built in the early 1920s. Though fairly late, these homes have none of the ornamentation associated with Victorian architecture.**

**345 East 13th Street** – This three-story building functions as a residence, but was built in 1890 and was owned by Hope College, it is used for student performances, lectures, musical performances, live theatre and a season film series.

**54 East 12th Street – A trio of late Victorian brick houses on River Street serve as an example of the period.**

**40 East 12th Street** – The unpretentious symmetrical style of this Dutch Colonial Revival house evokes the pragmatic sensibilities of Holland’s founders yet it is not overwhelmed by the large Victorian homes to the west.

**14 East 12th Street** – Introduced in southern California’s bungalow style popular in the Midwest during the 1920s with one minor change: the front porch is virtually a universal characteristic of bungalows in Holland, evidence that early residents proudly acknowledged the climate differences between California and western Michigan.

**2 West 12th Street – A low, double-frame bungalow with a gabled roof and dormers with Palladian-style window at the top of this Victorian house capitalizes on the house’s proximity to Central Park.**

**22 West 12th Street – Among the most architecturally appealing homes in Holland is this brick house on the west side of College Avenue.**

**219 West 12th Street – This square, brick, gable-fronted house is one of the earliest in Holland.**

**4 South River Avenue – The entire downtown area remains snow-free in the winter thanks to over 125 miles of plastic tubing that runs beneath the streets and sidewalks and recycles the warm wastewater from the water treatment plant, giving Holland the largest municipally run snowmelt system in the country.**

**77 East 8th Street** – This building was designed for the Michigan Bell Telephone Company to reflect Holland’s heritage. Note the decorative cornice and the three-story brick residential tower above the window. These homes were built in the late 1890s and were heavily influenced by Holland’s Dutch heritage. This area received its designation in 2010 and was named after Gerrit Kooij, son of one of Holland’s founding fathers and the developer of this property.

**18, 26 and 36 East 12th Street** – A row of two-story brick homes on River Street serve as an example of the period.

**Von Raalte Farm**

Though not within walking distance, consider ending your tour with a drive to Von Raalte Farm, originally the home of Benjamin Van Raalte, third child of Holland’s founders. The farmstead was built in 1867 following Benjamin’s return from the Civil War. The remaining 46 acres were purchased by the city in 1985; they are being preserved as a memorial to the Van Raalte family. A Civil War Marker is held on the grounds each fall. (To reach the farm, head south on River or Central Avenue to 36th Street turn left on 16th.) The farmhouse was built in 1876-1878 and can be viewed during the season.

**Centennial Inn, 8 East 12th Street** – This structure shown as how one building can be adapted for many uses. Built in 1889 for Dr. Henry Knott, prominent physician and one of the few Dutchmen ever to be elected mayor, the building served as the city’s first hospital in the 1890s, a Hope College fraternity house in the 1930s, and for the next 50 years as the Little Netherland Museum. Today it is an inn.

Choose from Two Tours

The **Cappon Tour** focuses on the architectural and socio-economic diversity of Holland’s historic neighborhoods.

The **Von Raalte Tour** features a mix of commercial, religious, academic and residential buildings.

Both tours begin and end at Centennial Park and last approximately 1 hour.