Millionaires' Row

In the late 1800's, West Fourth Street was the crown jewel of Williamsport, when this city was home to more millionaires per capita than anywhere else in the country. It was the lumber business and the lumber barons that contributed to the boom in home and church construction. Read on and learn about the rich heritage and elegant homes still found in Williamsport.

Park Place
The Makers of Millionaires' Row

Peter Herdic
Williamsport's premier entrepreneur, Peter Herdic, arrived in the city in 1853 and soon after began his real estate ventures on farmland west of Hepburn Street. Herdic was already involved in the lumber business and on his way to becoming a millionaire when he built his Fourth Street home. Eventually, he owned part of nearly every business in town, including the water works, gas works, newspaper, the Susquehanna Boom Company and the Herdic House Hotel. He was the third mayor of Williamsport. Herdic declared bankruptcy in 1878, but quickly started on the path toward rebuilding his wealth. He's known for his philanthropy and also for being the inventor of a horse-drawn carriage called "the Herdic", the forerunner of the taxicab.

Eber Culver
Eber Culver was originally from Ithaca, New York. Culver came to Williamsport to work with Peter Herdic on building homes for West Fourth Street. Culver designed many residential homes and public buildings using a wide variety of architectural styles common to the Victorian Era.
The following is a summary of the homes and buildings that make up Millionaires' Row
(For more information on the historic district preservation, visit www.preservationwilliamsport.org)

The A. D. Hermance House - 405 West Fourth Street
This house was designed and built in 1855 by Eber Culver for A. D. Hermance, a New York State native who operated the Rowley-Hermance Company. The Rowley-Hermance Company manufactured woodworking machinery. This 20-room building is an example of the Richardsonian-Romanesque style of architecture. The lot was originally the side yard of next-door neighbor Peter Herdic, who sold the land after going bankrupt in 1878. The interior features beautiful cherry and oak hand-carved woodwork by famed craftsman Giovanni Ferrari.

The Peter Herdic House - 407 West Fourth Street
The Peter Herdic House has a long and varied history. Built in 1854, it was the home of one of Williamsport's foremost lumber barons, Peter Herdic. The house changed hands several times, but remained a single family dwelling until 1957. In 1957 the house was converted to apartments and an addition was built to house a TV repair shop. In 1977, a fire destroyed portions of the house and for several years, the house stood empty and its future looked bleak. The Millionaires' Row Historical Homes, Inc., a group created to save historical properties, bought the Peter Herdic House, and began renovation to get the property into a condition to sell. In 1983, the Preservation Fund of PA bought the house, with the understanding that Richard Lundy would buy it from them and restore it. The extensive restoration took ten months, and in November 1984, Marcia and Gloria Miele opened the Peter Herdic House restaurant. Recognized by the Bureau of Historic Preservation as the top renovation project of 1984, the house is among the finest examples of the Italianate style of architecture in the State. Its distinctive architectural features includes ornate plaster moldings and arches, acanthus columns and a mahogany stairway that curves three floors to a cupola.

The Lemuel Ulman House - 411 West Fourth Street
Built in the mid-1800s, this house was designed by Eber Culver for clothier Lemuel Ulman. Built on land that had once belonged to Peter Herdic, the house still contains some of the original furniture and gaslight fixtures.

First Baptist Church - 420 West Fourth Street
This Church was originally constructed around 1860; designed and built by church member Eber Culver on land donated by Peter Herdic. After being destroyed by floods, the original building was torn down in 1898. Soon after, a new foundation designed by Culver was laid, but the church wasn’t dedicated until 1914, after he died. The church, built from mountain stone, is an example of Romanesque style architecture. The lead glass windows are by Young and Bonawitz.
The Hiram Rhoads House - 522 West Fourth Street
The Hiram Rhoads House is yet another house designed by Eber Culver in the late 1880’s for Hiram Rhoads, the man who first brought the telephone to Williamsport. This building is an example of the Queen Anne style, a design that Culver stated in his autobiography, was probably the most successful in his career. This house has many notable features such as an upstairs bathtub which is encased in mahogany, a solid pecan floor in the living room, and the most magnificent chandeliers in Williamsport.

J. M. McMinn House - 528 West Fourth Street
This home was built in the mid-1800s by John McMinn, a city engineer. Originally a simple Victorian frame house. It was later remodeled into the Colonial Revival style in 1889. McMinn was one of the original publishers of the West Branch Bulletin, the forerunner of the Williamsport Sun-Gazette.

William V. Emery House - 535 West Fourth Street
The Emery House was designed and built by Eber Culver in 1888 for William Emery, a partner in the Emery Lumber Company. Yet another example of Queen Ann features. This house replaced the original built in 1865.

The Smith-Ulman House - 634 West Fourth Street
Built in 1870 for lumber dealer Henry Smith. This house is the largest example of the Victorian Second Empire style surviving in Williamsport. The mansard roof, arched doors and tall windows mark this style. The house is now used as the Annunciation Church Rectory. The original carriage house still stands behind the building and is now used as a private clubhouse.

The Auguste Laedlin Home - 639 West Fourth Street
Probably designed by Eber Culver, this home was built in 1886 for Auguste Laedlin, a French immigrant who came to West Fourth Street to operate a confectionery shop at this address. The first floor contained an ice cream parlor, the second floor had apartments and there was also on outdoor eating area.

Annunciation Catholic Church - 700 West Fourth Street
Annunciation Church was designed by Amos Wagner on land donated by Peter Herdic. Built in 1886, the church took three years to complete and is an example of the Romanesque style of architecture. The rock and sandstone used to build the structure were quarried from the nearby town of Ralston. The church seats 1,000 people and has no center columns or steel structure.
The E. A. Rowley House - 707 West Fourth Street
The Rowley House was designed and built by Eber Culver in 1888, and is considered one of the finest examples of Queen Anne architecture in Pennsylvania. It was one of the first houses on the street to have electric lights, bells and a dumbwaiter. The home contains elaborately carved woodwork and remains in much the same state as it did originally, having only had three owners.

The Elias Deemer House - 711 West Fourth Street
Again, this home was designed and built by Eber Culver in 1887 for Elias Deemer, a lumberman. Another example of Culver’s Queen Anne style of architecture with 17 rooms and cherry woodwork.

The Weightman Block (The Herdic Block)
This entire block was designed and built by Eber Culver for Peter Herdic in 1870. Herdic had planned to make this the new business center of the city. It contained office space, an open opera house and even a fifth-floor penthouse. Herdic sold the block to William Weightman in 1878 after declaring bankruptcy.

Park Hotel - Park Home - Park Place, 800 West Fourth Street
Built in 1864 by Peter Herdic, the Herdic House Hotel was designed by Herdic’s good friend Eber Culver. Herdic told Culver to remodel the hotel after the finest ones in the country. This example of Italianate architecture originally had four stories and could house 700 guests. Herdic, being the business man that he was, convinced the Pennsylvania Railroad to relocate it’s station behind the hotel. The hotel became a retirement home for the elderly in 1940 and today the former hotel is privately owned and used as office space.

Parsons House - 829 West Fourth Street
Built by attorney and former Williamsport mayor Henry Parsons in the late 1880’s. An fine example of the Queen Anne style of architecture.
The Emery House - 835 West Fourth Street
Built in 1889 by William Emery, designed by Eber Culver. The Emery House is an example of the Richardsonian-Romanesque style of architecture. Notable feature are the pagoda-style fireplace in the entranceway and two chandeliers suspended from the 35-foot ceiling.

Trinity Episcopal Church - 850 West Fourth Street
Built in 1871 by Peter Herdic. Originally designed by Fred Thorn, construction was completed under the supervision of Eber Culver. Herdic not only donated the land, but the entire building to the parish. His father-in-law Judge John Maynard presented the church with a set of Cambridge Chimes, the first time these chimes were introduced in the United States. An example of Victorian-Gothic architecture. The mountain stone was quarried from nearby Bald Eagle Mountain.

The Johnson House - 901 West Fourth Street
Designed in 1890 by Amos Wagner and built for Henry Johnson, a state legislator from Muncy. Johnson moved to the city to help his six daughters find suitable husbands among the wealthy men of Williamsport. This home represents the Queen Anne style of architecture. The Johnson's were so please with Wagner's work they had him build a similar home next door on Maynard Street for one of their daughters!

The Foresman House - 912 West Fourth Street
This home was built in 1905 for Henry Foresman, a lumberman. An example of the Colonial Revival style of architecture. Modeled after a similar mansion in Emporium, Pennsylvania. The four main Ionic columns on the house are 74 inches around at the base and 18 feet high and there are 17 other small columns.

The Eutermarks - Harrar House - 915 West Fourth Street
Built for Lucy Eutermarks as a wedding gift from her parents in the early 1870's. Designed by Eber Culver in the Italianate design. The house was originally assigned 913 West Fourth Street, but the bride's parents thinking this was unlucky had the house number changed to 915!
Lost Homes of Millionaires' Row

The Million Dollar Mansion (the Fisher House) - 815 West Fourth
Eber Culver built this Italianate Style mansion in 1886 for Mahlon Fisher. Renowned still life painter, Severin Roesen would stay in this 20 room mansion and paint in exchange for room and board. The house was torn down in 1928 to make way for the YMCA.

White's Castle - 847 West Fourth Street
Built around 1855 for lumberman Robert Faries. The design was a mixture of Italianate, Moorish and Gothic architecture. Because of flooding, the house was built on a raised terrace at the rear of the property, unusual for that time. When Faries died, a fellow lumberman, John White, bought the house and the building became known as White's Castle. Following White’s death in the early 1900's, neighbor Roman Way bought the property and had the building demolished for he feared that the it was going to be used as a boarder, a euphemism for a house of ill repute.

The Way Mansion - Lycoming County Historical Society - 858 West Fourth
Built as a federal style farmhouse in 1840 for James Hepburn. Succeeding owners included Judge John Maynard, Peter Herdic and J. Roman Way. Under these many occupancies the house underwent various charges. The Lycoming County Historical Society bought the property in 1939 and opened its museum in 1941. In 1960, fire destroyed the building. The new Museum was completed in 1968.