

# Downtown Binghamton Pokemon & History Tour

By Kate Ellenberger ([www.heritechconsulting.com](http://www.heritechconsulting.com))

## 1. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Peacemaker's Stage

The MLK Jr. Promenade and Peacemaker's Stage are named after the famous civil rights activist. The stage was actually built at the approximate location of the Knickerbocker Building, the headquarters of the New York Ku Klux Klan during the 1920s.

If you walk from the stage toward the entrance of the promenade, you will find a memorial marker for the July 22nd, 1913 Binghamton Clothing Company Fire. Although it was not as deadly as the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in New York City, the deaths of between 115 - 125 workers in Binghamton added to the pressure on New York government officials to strengthen building safety codes.

## 2. American Civic Association Memorial

This memorial is a remembrance of one of the deadliest mass shootings in US history at the American Civic Association on April 3rd, 2009. Fourteen people, English students and teachers at the center, were killed in the shooting, as well as the shooter. It has been said that the shooter was motivated by the difficult circumstances he faced as an immigrant to this country, a topic still at the forefront of political debates right now, 8 years later.

## 3. Confluence of the Chenango & Susquehanna Rivers

The confluence of the Chenango and Susquehanna rivers has long been a significant place for inhabitants of this region. Archaeological excavations that preceded construction projects at the Binghamton University Downtown Center and the Roberson Museum have shown that indigenous people inhabited the confluence area for at least 5,000 years (likely longer), utilizing the diverse resources available where water meets the land. The confluence has both utilitarian and spiritual significance to indigenous peoples to this day.

## 4. Binghamton University Downtown Center & Archaeological Sites

The land where the University Downtown Center now stands has been used nearly continuously since the early 19th century. In 1989-1990, then 2005-2007, the Public Archaeology Facility at Binghamton University excavated materials left behind by several generations of people using the site. (This is done to avoid the destruction of archaeological sites by construction.) In the early 19th century, the block was made up of households, indicated archaeologically by personal items such as toothbrushes, kitchen materials, and even two well-preserved photographs. In the 20th century, the area became more commercial, subdivided for rental properties at first, then used for factories. Interestingly, one of the buildings on this block was owned by William Bingham, the first mayor of Binghamton! You can learn more about what was found here by visiting the University Downtown Center lobby where there is an exhibit on the cultural materials uncovered here.

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## 5. Gorgeous Washington Street Historical Marker

This sign marks the block that has been the focus of city beautification activities by the Gorgeous Washington Street Association. Since 2000, the group has worked with local business owners and organizations to revitalize the community through art. You can thank this organization for the popular monthly First Friday Art Walk, which debuted in 2004. Public art has become popular throughout Binghamton, now including mosaics along the river promenade and murals throughout the city.

## 6. Universalist Society Historical Marker

This marker celebrates the creation of the first Universalist society in the area in the 19th century, with the first church built in 1891. Participants in Universalism would have believed in religion as a universal human quality, emphasizing principles of inclusivity, acceptance, and striving for reconciliation between humanity and the divine. Our local Universalist society moved from this location to Front Street in 1929, then settled in their current location in the 1950s and 60s, according to their website.

## 7. Security Mutual Building

The Security Mutual Building was built in 1904, designed by Truman I. Lacey, the same man who designed the Kilmer Building. Although parts of the building are being systematically remodeled by its current owners, the two-story lobby is still lined with opulent Italian and Turkish marble in an elaborate style called Beaux-Arts. Sculptural details and large features make the space feel huge yet ornate.

## 8. Waldron Building

The Waldron Building is another late 19th-early 20th century building in the Court Street Historic District, across the street from the Security Mutual Building. It is part of the Court Street Historic District, a group of buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## Interested in learning more? Check out these local history resources:

Community Archaeology Program at Binghamton University ([cap.binghamton.edu](http://cap.binghamton.edu))

Treasures of the Tier Blog ([nyslandmarks.com/treasures](http://nyslandmarks.com/treasures))

Clio - Your Guide to History (App available for Android or iOS, many landmarks in Broome County)

New York State Museum - Free NYS Archaeology Books ([nysm.nysed.gov/publications/record](http://nysm.nysed.gov/publications/record))