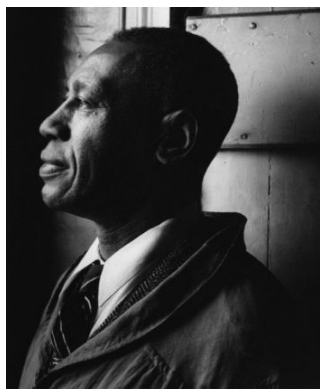




BRANDYWINE
RIVER MUSEUM
OF ART

HORACE PIPPIN IN WEST CHESTER



INTRODUCTION

One of the leading figures of 20th-century art, **Horace Pippin** (1888-1946) is known for his insightful, expressive and bold paintings of family life, history, religion and war.

Pippin was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania. His family moved away when he was three but he returned to West Chester in 1920 after serving in World War I as part of the renowned African-American regiment known as the “Harlem Hellfighters.” Despite a war injury that severely limited the use of his right arm, Pippin began teaching himself to paint in oil by 1930, using his left arm as a support for his right hand.

He was first championed locally by N. C. Wyeth and the art critic Christian Brinton in 1937, when he became the first African American to have his work accepted by the Chester County Art Association. His work quickly gained national attention, and entered major museums and private collections. Pippin died in West Chester on July 6, 1946.

This guide will direct you to some of the locations in West Chester that are associated with Horace Pippin's life and career. In most instances these are sites that can be seen directly in his work. While often viewed within the context of American folk art, Pippin was a self-proclaimed realist. His paintings were truly intended to show how he saw his hometown. By visiting these sites, located within a relatively small distance of each other, we can perhaps begin to imagine the artist's perspective as he painted.

Teachers College Powerhouse/ West Chester University

Now the site of West Chester University, the West Chester State Teachers College once featured a large smoke stack as part of its powerhouse. As depicted by Pippin, the smokestack sits forebodingly on the horizon in a stark winter landscape.



Teacher's College Powerhouse, Winter, 1937

Oil on burnt-wood panel, 9 ½ x 15 ½ in.

The Harmon and Harriet Kelley Foundation for the Arts



Teachers College Powerhouse, West Chester PA, ca. 1938

West Chester Courthouse

Painted in 1940, the original courthouse is a landmark in the town of West Chester.



West Chester Court House, 1940

Oil on canvas board, 22 x 28 in.

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia

Bequest of David J. Grossman, in honor of Mr. and Mrs.

Charles S. Grossman and Mr. and Mrs. Meyer Speiser, 1979

The Chester County Courthouse clock tower extends above much of the low-lying roofline of West Chester today, as it did in the early 20th century. There are two major differences between the location's appearance today and in 1940 when Pippin painted it. Most readily apparent is the presence of a tramline, which extended throughout the city in Pippin's day, although the artist chose to omit it in his composition. Included in the painting, however, is a tree to the right of the statue. While the tree has since been replaced, its distinctive shape can be clearly seen in the early 20th-century photograph.



The courthouse, present day



Chester County Courthouse, West Chester, PA (after 1915)

Gay Street

In *Harmonizing*, Pippin finds activity even in the sleepy spaces of his hometown, with impromptu singers breathing life into an otherwise empty scene. Thought to depict a location less than two blocks from the artist's house (near the corner of Hannum Avenue and Gay Street), the prominent pattern of the fence in the painting draws attention to the subjects while also connecting them to the streetscape.



Harmonizing, 1944
Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 in.
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Joseph and Enid Bissett, 1964

The photograph on the left shows another example of life on West Gay Street during Pippin's lifetime.



West Chester High School Band on parade in West Chester as part of Washington's Bicentennial, February 22, 1932.



Corner of Hannum and Gay, present day

Pippin's House - 327 West Gay Street

You will find Pippin's house on an unassuming block of West Gay Street. Pippin spent 26 years at his West Chester home after returning from WWI.



Horace Pippin's house, present day

In 1979, the house was dedicated as an historical site of Pennsylvania. Among those present for the ceremony were the Mayor, West Chester State Teachers College faculty and other important citizens of the day.

While not specifically mentioned by Pippin, his painting *West Chester, Pennsylvania* was likely inspired by the houses in his neighborhood on Gay Street. Even the tree in the painting appears to resemble that of the tree neighboring his home, seen in the dedication photo from 1979, but no longer in existence today.



Marker dedication for Horace Pippin on Gay Street,
West Chester, PA, June 9, 1979



West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1942
Oil on canvas, 29 7/8 x 36 3/4 in.
Wichita Art Museum, Kansas, Roland P. Murdock Collection

Everhart Park

Settled by Quakers, West Chester has a reputation of openness towards men and women of varying backgrounds and races. The town's Everhart Park shares a similar history. Even before its donation as a communal park in 1905, the Everhart family allowed the space to be used for religious and abolitionist gatherings.

The Park was also the site of Pippin's final painting and it would come to be known for its association with the artist.



Children playing in Everhart Park, West Chester, PA, ca. 1930

As a tribute to the life of Horace Pippin, the Friends of Everhart Park donated a red bench to replicate that seen in the painting. You can find it on the West Miner Street side. Interestingly, the color red was never actually used for the benches in this park but was instead the artist's own touch.

A block north of Everhart, you can find yet another dedication to the artist, Horace Pippin Park.



Man on a Bench, 1946
Oil on canvas, 13 x 18 in.
Collection of Daniel W. Dietrich II



ADDITIONAL SITES

Birmingham Meetinghouse



Birmingham Meeting House I, 1940
Oil on canvas, 22 x 36 in.
Myron Kunin Collection, Minneapolis, Minnesota



Birmingham Meetinghouse, present day

One of Pippin's favorite sites, the Birmingham Friends Meetinghouse appeared as a subject multiple times over the later part of his career. While the building dates to 1763, the land upon which it stands was first dedicated as a Quaker meeting site in 1690 and has remained in use since. The Meetinghouse served as a hospital during the Revolutionary War for the Battle of Brandywine, and the adjacent burial grounds contain the remains of fallen soldiers of both sides. The Brandywine Conservancy assisted in the establishment of the Birmingham Historic District, which includes the Meetinghouse, and has been involved in conserving the surrounding scenic and historic landscapes.

Chestnut Grove Annex Cemetery

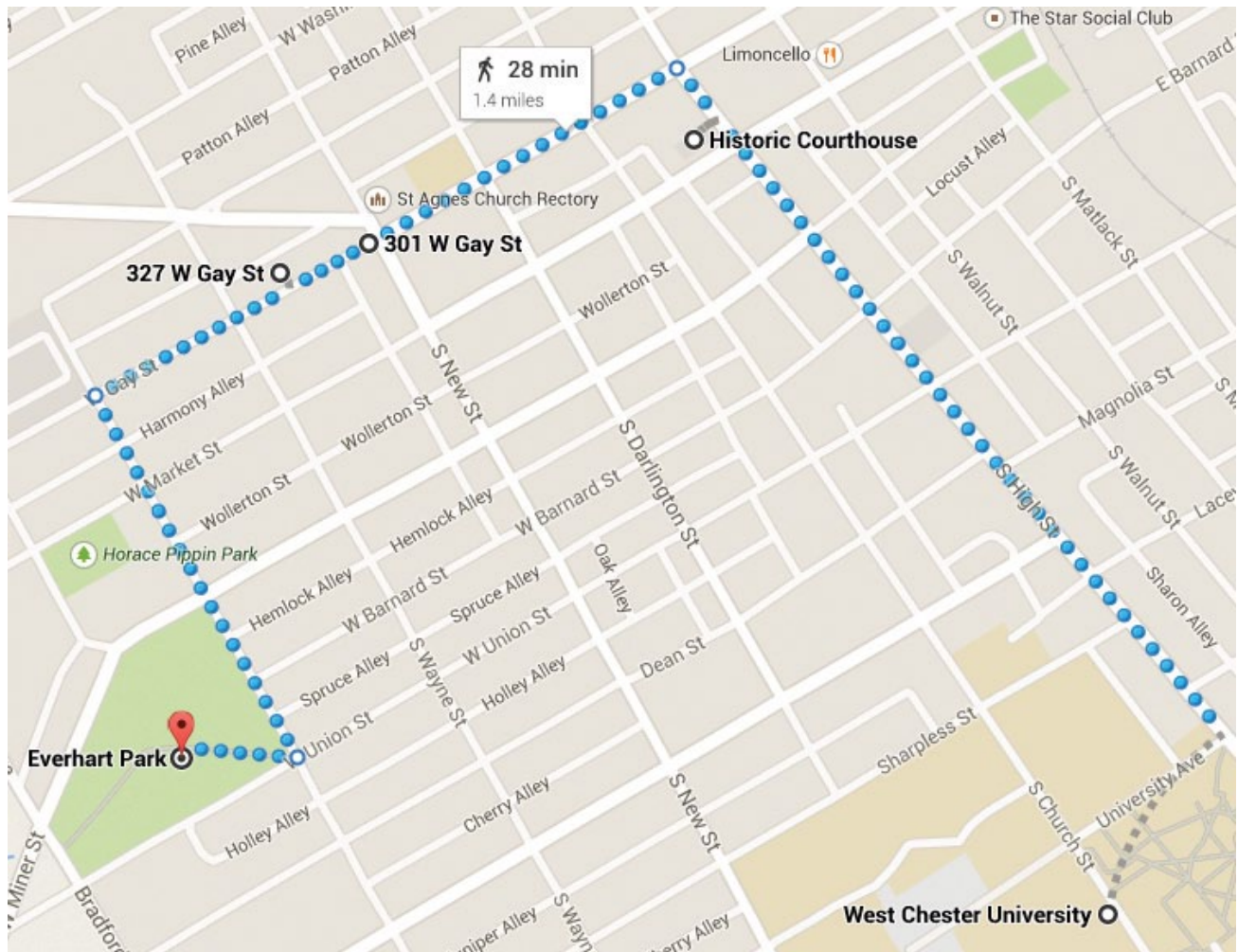


Gravesite, Chestnut Grove Annex Cemetery



Horace Pippin's grave is a short drive from West Chester in the Chestnut Grove Annex Cemetery. Founded in 1862, Chestnut Grove Annex Cemetery was used by African-American residents who were denied burial elsewhere. Pippin died in 1946 following a stroke.

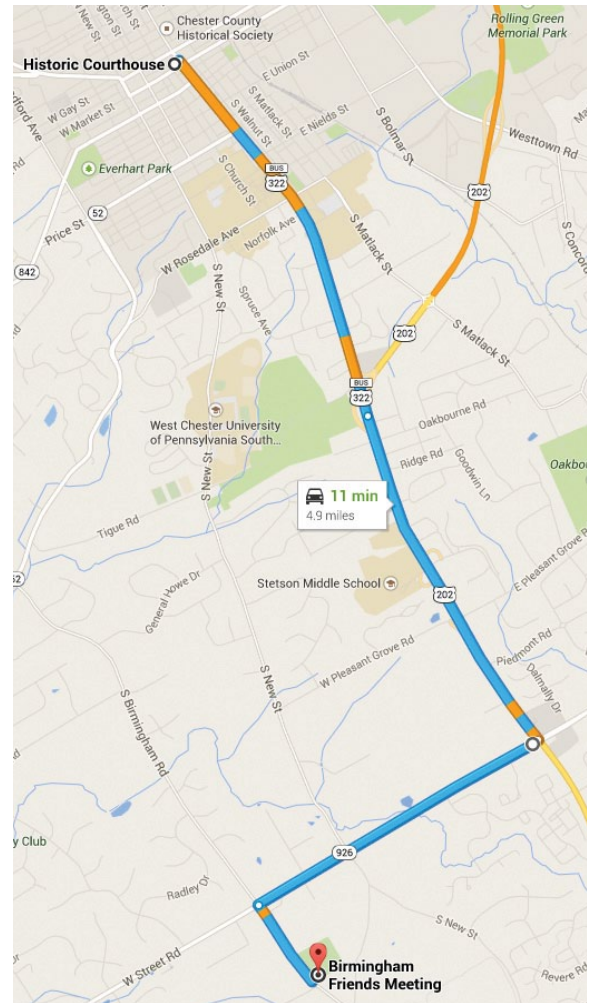
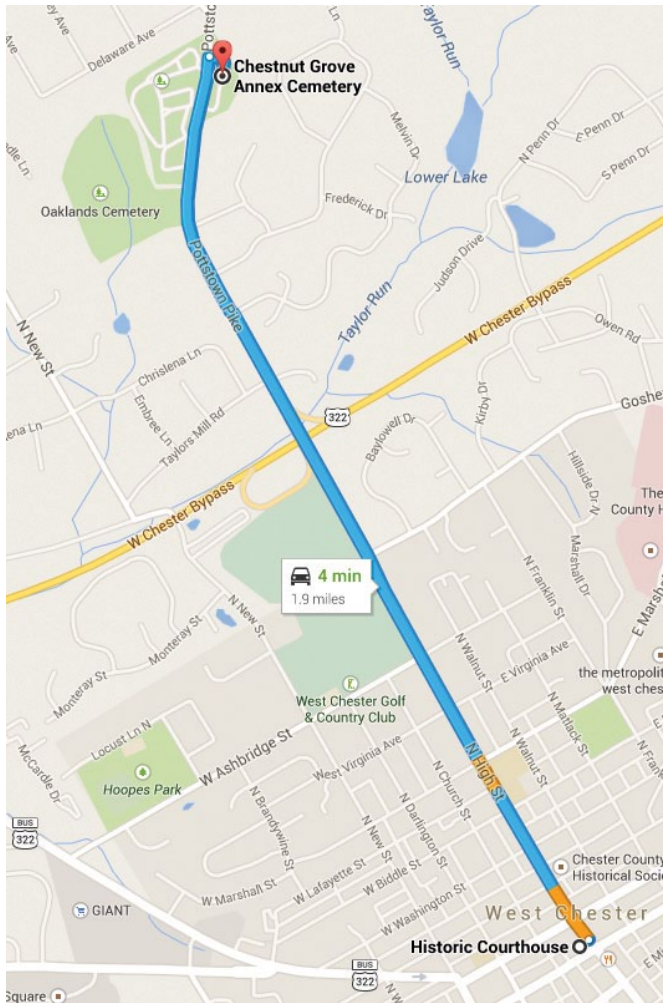
WALKING TOUR



Source: Google Maps

The above map corresponds to the order of the sites listed.

ADDITIONAL SITES



Source: Google Maps

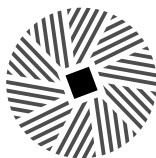
Directions to Chestnut Grove Annex Cemetery:

From the Historic Courthouse (West Chester Courthouse) head Northbound on N. High Street and continue straight onto Pottstown Pike. The destination will be on your right.

Directions to Birmingham Friends Meetinghouse:

From the Historic Courthouse (West Chester Courthouse) head south on North High Street South (Business Route 322) and continue straight onto Route 202. At the intersection of 202 and 926 turn right. Continue on 926 and make a left on South Birmingham Road. The destination will be on your left.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



**BRANDYWINE
RIVER MUSEUM
OF ART**



2015 Brandywine River Museum of Art

Researched in part with the Chester County Historical Society

Tour research and text

Mark Tajzler

Photography

Mark Tajzler

Biography

Audrey Lewis, Associate Curator, Brandywine River Museum of Art

Archival photography

Made possible thanks to the Chester County Historical Society and Pamela Powell

Exelon Foundation®



An Exelon Company

This guide was produced in conjunction with the exhibition, **Horace Pippin: The Way I See It**, on view at Brandywine River Museum of Art from April 25 through July 19, 2015. The exhibition is made possible by the Exelon Foundation and PECO. Additional support provided by The Davenport Family Foundation, Wyeth Foundation for American Art, and Dr. Benjamin Hammond.