

Kelso Downtown Historic Walking Tour

Version 2020

In going through the number of materials at the Cowlitz County Historical Museum (CCHM) I came across a Kelso Centennial historic walking tour map from 1984. The downtown tour was funded by the City of Kelso Centennial Commission and designed by Ruth Ott, who co-authored "A History of Cowlitz County" in 1983. Although museums are closed, the streets in historic districts are not. This makes our community a larger-than life museum of architecture, place, and history. Of course, there have been a few changes in the past 36 years, so I walked the tour and made notes of changes to incorporate into the revised 2020 Kelso Historic Walking Tour. Most notably the current Allen Street Bridge completed in 2000 changed the landscape. With the weather getting nice the opportunity is here to get a little exercise, sun, and soak up some local history. This map and tour will be available online at the museum's website at <http://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/218/Museum> . There are 16 stops on the tour, however feel free to modify the experience to suit best to your abilities. I hope you enjoy this stroll down memory lane.

1. **Cowlitz County Historical Museum:** Start at the the CCHM parking lot located near the intersection of Fifth and Allen Streets. The CCHM was established in 1953 and operated out of the Administration Annex building up Fourth Ave until relocating to its present location in May of 1979. Please come back to visit the museum when it reopens to the public. *Head to the front lawn of the museum at Fourth and Allen Streets.*
2. **Monticello Black Walnut Tree:** This tree is a cutting from a tree planted on Darby Huntington's land after the flood of 1867. The original tree is believed to be along Tenant Way. Out of 100 cuttings taken from the original tree, only eight were successful. One was presented to each of the major cities in the county, and Kelso's was planted here. *Head north on Fourth avenue to the museum parking lot exit.*
3. **Oregon Trail Marker:** This maker was furnished by the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution. It was originally placed near the Cowlitz River on Pacific Ave. in 1916, however due to changes in the area it was relocated here. *Head north on Fourth Ave crossing Academy Street and going up to Church Street.*
4. **Former St. Mary's Catholic Church:** The Assembly of God church, was originally a Catholic Church, erected in 1925. It served as a Catholic Church until 1979 when the Kelso Assembly of God took possession after the new Catholic Church was built on east Allen Street. *Head west across Fourth Ave.*
5. **Cowlitz County Courthouse:** Crossing Fourth Ave heading south to Academy St., you may walk along the exterior of the Courthouse, now serving as the County Administration Building. The building is located on the Donation Land Claim of Peter Crawford. It is also the location of the first school house in Kelso. Kelso is Cowlitz County's fourth county seat. First was Monticello, then Freeport, and then Kalama. In 1922, Kelso won an election over Kalama and all county records were relocated. This

building was completed in 1923, and an addition was added to the north side in 1939. *Walking around the south face of the building, west on Academy Street and you will see your next destination at Third Ave and Academy.*

6. **First United Presbyterian Church:** The Presbyterian Church was first established March 15, 1888. It was then located at Seventh Ave. and Church Streets. In 1908 it moved to this location. In 1959 a new sanctuary was dedicated. The stained-glass facing Academy Street is from the original church. *Continue north on Third Ave to your next destination.*
7. **First United Methodist Church:** The First Methodist Church was built on Church Street in 1888. In 1929 a church was built here at Third and Cowlitz. That building burned in 1938 and was rebuilt in 1939 with several remodels since. In the last couple years, the Kelso Presbyterian and Methodist Churches have merged. *Cross Cowlitz Way and walk west out to the Peter Crawford Bridge. Walk to where you have a good view of the Cowlitz River.*
8. **Cowlitz Way-Peter Crawford Bridge:** This bridge was dedicated on September 13, 1952, and was given a double name because both names had equal support in the community. It answered a desperate need for better traffic flow across the Cowlitz River. At this location along the Cowlitz River, sternwheeler ferries carried freight and passengers up and down the river. *Return to Pacific Ave, walk north one block to Crawford. Turn left and walk west one block to next destination.*
9. **Peter Crawford Sign:** This commemorates the first donation land claim on the Cowlitz River. It was filed on December 25, 1847. Peter Crawford's home was built near here. In 1884 Peter Crawford platted the city, naming it after his home town- Kelso, Scotland. This sign was first erected in 1981 by the Cowlitz County Historical Society. *Go east one block, backtracking to Pacific Ave, and head about 5 blocks south along Pacific until you arrive at Oak Street. You will pass under stop #10 on your way.*
10. **Allen Street Bridge:** There were several Allen Street Bridges with the first constructed in 1904. In 1923 the second bridge collapsed resulting in the worst fatality bridge disaster in Washington State history. The current bridge you see (the fourth) was completed in 2000. If you walk over to First Ave you will see the remnants of a previous bridge approach now called Rotary Landing. It is accessible by the Cowlitz River Trail. Note: It is illegal and unsafe to cross the BNSF railroad tracks! *Proceed south to Oak Street.*
11. **Kelso City Hall:** Kelso City Hall was built in 1995. The previous City Hall was located kitty-corner from the CCHM, and was where the current Allen St. Bridge reaches street grade on the east bank. *Across the street is location #12.*
12. **Kelso Commons Mini Park:** Across from City Hall is a small park. This park was constructed on the site of Seattle First National Bank (originally the Cowlitz Valley Bank Building) when it was torn down. The park was a bicentennial project for Kelso, and was dedicated September 27, 1976. Heading east on Oak Street is the old Kelso Moose Lodge building. *Continue south on Pacific to 204 S. Pacific.*

13. **Masonic Building:** The cornerstone of this building was laid December 22, 1923. It was built by Kelso Masonic Lodge #94 F&AM. The building was completed April 4, 1924. It is the single best example of 1920's architecture still standing in Kelso. The combination of masonry with color ornamentation is unique. Masonic symbols are set in arcades.
Continue south on Pacific to Kelso Theater Pub.
14. **Kelso Theatre Pub and Backstage Café:** Operating nearly continuously under various names since the 1930s, the Kelso Theatre Pub is Kelso's oldest surviving theater and many aspects of the building have been restored to their original "Golden Age of Cinema" glory. The adjacent Backstage Café, now serving great Italian food, started out as a lunch counter serving the working men and women of downtown Kelso, as well as travelers on the Pacific Highway, which used to run through Kelso along Pacific Avenue.
Continue south along Pacific to Ash Street, then turn west toward South 1st Avenue.
15. **Kelso Train Depot:** This building opened in February, 1912. It was renovated in 1995. President Eisenhower was one of the dignitaries that stopped here on a visit in 1952. From the platform you can see the next stop which is across the river.
16. **Cowlitz County Hall of Justice:** The HOJ building was dedicated in December, 1975. The site of the hall is half in Kelso, and half in Longview. It costs two and a half million dollars to build back in 1975.
17. The tour has ended. The most direct way back to the CCHM is to travel east on Ash one block, up Pacific Ave, then take a right on Allen Street. It is about 6-7 blocks. Make a note of local businesses and storefronts along this tour. They will appreciate your support once they re-open.

