



1. Begin Here 3:13

<https://bit.ly/3IKlfGq>

Hello and welcome to the Nashville Parthenon. This audio tour describes the architectural exterior of the Parthenon, Nashville history, and classical Greek art. We encourage you to listen to each section, look closely, and follow the prompts to dig deeper and learn more. Narrators Wesley Paine, Director Emerita, Katie Petrole, Director of Education, and Jennifer Richardson, Education & Curatorial Assistant, will share the highlights and details of the Parthenon's architecture, with special features by additional staff members to share their favorite aspects of the museum. We hope you enjoy the most iconic museum in the city-- the Nashville Parthenon.

“Hello, I’m Wesley Paine, Director Emerita of the Parthenon. The Architecture Tour will guide you through the outstanding architectural achievements of the Athenians in the 5th century BCE, or Before the Common Era, as seen here on the Nashville Parthenon. We invite you to join us as we explore this impressive structure and discuss its ancient architecture, from the smallest decorative detail to the significance of the sculptures. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Parthenon, and I hope you enjoy your tour.”

Look around you. Before it was Centennial Park as you see today, this land was the site of the 1897 Tennessee Centennial Exposition. For six months, it was transformed into a fairground with giant buildings, impressive displays, musical performances, and carnival games. While Lake Watauga and its neighbor, the Nashville Parthenon, are the only physical reminders of this international event, the celebration of culture, art, and beauty live on. For more information about the 1897 Exposition, we invite you to explore the exhibit focusing on the Tennessee Centennial inside the museum.

The Architecture Tour is divided into several sections, each with our recommendations for the best viewing location. The sidewalk graphics will orient you in the right direction.

The first section, “East Side,” outlines and identifies key architectural terms, plus the east pediment and the Doric frieze sculptures.

The next section, “South Side,” explains the Parthenon’s optical illusions and proportions, perfect for listening while you transition from the east to the west end of the building.

The third section, “West Side,” covers the west pedimental sculpture, plus details of the colonnade and the base of the Parthenon.

The “Architectural History” section covers almost 2,500 years of Parthenon history. It can be listened to anywhere, perhaps while resting on the steps of the Parthenon, enjoying the view near Lake Watauga, or exploring Centennial Park.

After the Conclusion, you may choose to “Continue Your Adventure” with bonus content about the park and the 1897 Exposition.

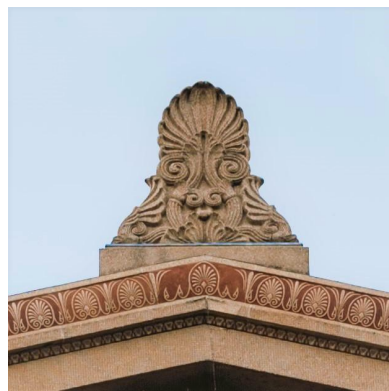
You are welcome to replay content at any time, or you can choose to explore at your leisure using the convenient Architecture Tour Index.



2a. FACING EAST SIDE 0:20

<https://bit.ly/3ywBplh>

Use the sidewalk graphics to find your way to the east side of the Parthenon where we begin the architecture discussion on the short side of the building, closer to Lake Watauga. Stay on ground level, where you can see the museum entrance and have a seat on the benches or in the grassy circle. We’ll discuss the architectural features in order from top to bottom.



2b. ROOFLINE 1:16

<https://bit.ly/3itAHWs>

The best place to view the roofline is the short side of the building near the grass and benches at the east end of the Parthenon. At the very top and corners, acroteria decorate the structure. Nashville Parthenon Assistant Director Lauren Bufferd describes them further:

Acroteria are the ornaments mounted at the apex or corners of an ancient Greek temple. The Nashville Parthenon has a palmette in the center and gryphons at its four corners. The Classical Parthenon in Greece had a much more elaborate, decorative palmette in the center, and carved winged Nikes at its corners. Every so often when I come to work, I see a hawk perched on that center acroterium.

As Lauren pointed out, the four corners of the Nashville Parthenon roof feature gryphons. Gryphons are part-eagle, part-lion mythological creatures, and you can see copies of the gryphon acroteria up close inside the museum.

The roofline on the long sides of the Parthenon has a few interesting details. Notice the ends have a lion head spout, an artistic way to drain water away from the building. Along the entire length of the north and south sides, antefixes in the shape of palmettes decorate the ends of the roof cover tiles.



2c. PEDIMENT 0:35

<https://bit.ly/3CohTzX>

The pediment is the large triangle shape above the columns. This triangular frame can be found in Classical architecture throughout the ancient Greek world. You might notice that houses or buildings in your neighborhood have pediments, as well.

Pediments may be undecorated, without sculpture inside the gable, or decorated to include sculptures as seen here. Initially, Greek temples had matching pedimental sculpture but by the Classical period, when the Parthenon was created, it was standard to use each end of the temple to tell a different story.



2d. EAST PEDIMENT SCULPTURE 6:25

<https://bit.ly/3CrZQc7>

Take a moment to review your location before we discuss the sculpture of the east pediment. The east end is the short side of the building with the museum entrance, closer to downtown Nashville and Lake Watauga. Use the sidewalk graphics to orient yourself and find a spot where you can view the entire east pediment of the Parthenon.

The east pediment features a series of figures who have important roles in ancient Greek religion. We will identify the Greek gods and goddesses on display, starting with the central three figures, then expand to identify the deities from left to right.

Located at the top center of the east pediment is Nike, the Greek goddess of victory. You might recognize the word Nike as an athletic brand today. Key symbols to help identify Nike include her wings and the laurel wreath she extends towards her neighboring goddess.

To the left of Nike, the large seated figure is Zeus, the Greek god of the sky and thunder, and ruler of the 12 Olympian gods.

To the right of Nike, the large standing figure is Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, strategic warfare, weaving, arts and crafts, and more. She can be identified by her helmet, armor, spear, and shield.

Now that you can identify these three central figures, we will discuss the gods on the left side of the pediment.

To the far left, there is part of a figure filling the corner. This is Helios, the god of the sun. Key symbols to help identify Helios are the four horses. Together, Helios and his chariot of horses move the sun across the sky each day.

Next to Helios and his horses is the lounging figure of Dionysos. The Greek god of theater, festivals, parties, wine, and revelry. He is shown reclining with his club resting against his shoulder.

The two seated figures next to Dionysos are Persephone and Demeter. Persephone is the Greek goddess of spring and queen of the Underworld, and her mother Demeter is the Greek goddess of grains, harvest, and fertility. While usually shown with bundles of grain or a pomegranate, on this pediment they are seated together signifying them as the most famous ancient Greek mother-daughter duo.

To the right of Persephone and Demeter, the standing figure is Iris, the Greek goddess of rainbows and a messenger of the gods. She has outstretched arms holding a fabric cloak. She is often seen with wings.

The seated figure to the right of Iris is Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea, horses, and earthquakes. Poseidon can be identified by his full beard, bare chest, and the trident held in his right hand.

Seated against the leg of Poseidon is the small figure of Hebe, the Greek goddess of youth and cupbearer to the gods.

Standing behind Hebe is Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, passion, and beauty. In later art, Aphrodite is often portrayed with her peplos, a typical Greek gown, fallen to her hips.

Leaning away from the central group is Hephaistos, the Greek god of the forge, blacksmiths, carpenters, and artisans as indicated by the axe held in his left hand.

Now that you can identify the three central figures and those on the left side of the pediment, we will discuss the gods on the right, moving from center to corner.

To the right of Athena, the standing figure is Ares, the Greek god of war, who can be spotted by his helmet, the sword in his hands, and the shield leaning against his leg.

To the right of Ares, we find Artemis, hair swept up into a bun and a quiver of arrows at her left shoulder. The arrows are an important attribute since she is the Greek goddess of animals and hunting. Her twin brother is Apollo whom we will see in a moment.

Next to Artemis is the large seated figure of Hera, accompanied by her peacock. Hera is the wife of Zeus and the Greek goddess of marriage and childbirth.

Hermes can be found standing to the right of Hera, leaning over her shoulder. Hermes is the Greek god of travel, messages, thieves, trickery, and commerce. Key symbols to identify Hermes include his winged cap and shoes and the caduceus he holds. The caduceus is the winged staff with two snakes weaving around it, a symbol of trade and travel.

The seated figure to the right of Hermes is Apollo, the Greek god of music, dance, poetry, knowledge, and prophecy. Apollo's identifying symbol is the musical instrument, called the lyre, held at his side.

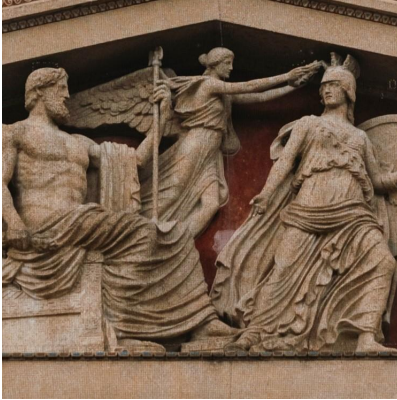
Ganymede, the small figure next to Apollo, is a human cupbearer to the Olympians. Known for his beauty, Ganymede was a Trojan prince who was offered eternal youth and immortality as compensation for his service to the gods.

The identities of the three seated figures next to Apollo and Ganymede are still debated by scholars. The sculptors of the Nashville Parthenon pediments, Belle Kinney and Leopold Scholz, followed the opinions of early archaeologists who thought they might be the Three Fates, goddesses in control of powers of destiny. Today, many archaeologists think these three figures are Hestia, Dione, and Aphrodite. Hestia is the goddess of the hearth and home, Dione is a Titan goddess and mother of Aphrodite, and Aphrodite is the goddess of love, passion, and beauty as mentioned earlier.

The figure in the right corner is Selene, the goddess of the moon and sister of Helios. Like Helios, Selene is often shown with four horses. She is responsible for moving the moon through the sky with her chariot.

2e. EAST PEDIMENT MYTHOLOGY 1:47

<https://bit.ly/3II1tN6>



Together, the architectural sculpture of gods and goddesses on the east pediment is a mythological masterpiece. Let's hear more from Curator Mark Medley:

The east pediment tells the story of Athena's birth. Zeus had long feared a prophecy that he would be overthrown by his own son. When he discovered that the goddess of wisdom, Metis, would soon have his child, he swallowed her. Assuming the prophecy had been avoided, Zeus turned his attention towards other divine concerns, not realizing that the baby now grew inside him.

Sometime later, Zeus had an unbearable, splitting headache. Offering to help, Hephaistos used his axe to chop open Zeus' head and relieve the pain. Out popped Zeus' daughter Athena, who was fully grown and armed for battle. This birth was a complete surprise, and the startled reactions of the gods are shown on this pediment.

What I really love about this pediment, too, is if you look at all the characters you can see no one knows who this is. They're all shocked and they're sort of going "Wowie Zowie!" and throwing their hands up in the air. And the only person who seems to know who she is, is Nike and Nike is calmly placing the victory wreath on Athena's head.

The Athenians could have chosen any story for this prominent spot over the entrance to the temple of Athena. So, why this mythological scene?

The story connects the purely Athenian message of the west pediment with the broad statement about the order and organization of Greek gods. Creating a scene with Zeus, Athena, and the main Olympian gods sent a universal, Panhellenic message about the cosmic order of the Greek world.



2f. ENTABLATURE 1:30

<https://bit.ly/3irRwRE>

Entablature is an architectural term that includes the section from the bottom of the pediment to just above the columns. The entablature includes, from top to bottom, the cornice, frieze, and architrave, and is supported by the columns below it.

The cornice is the strong but narrow horizontal layer forming the baseline of the pediment. It protects the rest of the entablature and structure beneath it from rain. Below the cornice, there are repeating thin blue rectangles called mutules. Descending from the mutules, the small white cylindrical drops are called guttae.

The frieze is the section between the cornice and the architrave, and on some temples is carved with decoration and painted. In the Doric order, a frieze is made up of multiple architectural features which are covered in more detail after this entablature overview. The very thin red band beneath the triglyphs and metopes is called a taenia. Beneath each triglyph is a small rectangular tab called a regula, and each one features six guttae.

The architrave is the lowest section of the entablature, representing approximately the bottom third of this feature. This long, smooth horizontal beam rests above the column capitals and runs the width of the structure.



2g. DORIC FRIEZE: SCULPTURE: 1:43

<https://bit.ly/3xyWzEa>

The most eye-catching aspect of the entablature, the Doric frieze, consists of alternating triglyphs and metopes and wraps around the entire temple.

A triglyph is a set of three vertical pieces and shallow angled grooves in between them.

A metope is a square panel alternating with triglyphs. These metopes are decorated with sculpture and have a red background. There are 92 metopes on the Parthenon! Despite how small these squares look up high on the Parthenon, the metopes are almost four feet tall! On the Nashville Parthenon, all metopes feature sculptures of Lapiths and Centaurs. Director of Education Katie Petrole highlights these further:

“Metopes are my favorite feature in ancient Greek architecture, and here on the Nashville Parthenon there’s something really special about them because they are the best of the best-- preserved.

Unlike our museum here in Tennessee, on the ancient temple, the metopes were different subjects on all four sides. The metopes featured four themes: Athenians versus Amazons, Olympians versus Titans, Lapiths versus Centaurs, and the Trojan War.

On our Parthenon, the Lapiths versus Centaurs theme from the south side of the ancient Parthenon was repeated on all four sides because they were the best surviving examples of metope sculpture from the ancient temple. So, in 1920, the sculptors thought it wisest to include the most complete examples of metopes rather than any very damaged and fragmentary metopes.”



2h. DORIC FRIEZE: MYTHOLOGY 0:36

<https://bit.ly/3fGRQuh>

The story of the Lapiths versus the Centaurs, seen here on the metopes, was important to the Athenians, as it emphasized order over chaos. The Athenians identified with the Lapiths, a mythical tribe descended from Apollo and residing in northern Greece. In this battle of the Centaurs, known as the Centauromachy, we see the clash between rational Lapiths who are celebrating a wedding, and wild

Centaurs who burst in to abduct the Lapith women.

This same mythological story of the battle between Lapiths and Centaurs can be seen on the sandals of Athena Parthenos, the colossal statue inside the Nashville Parthenon.



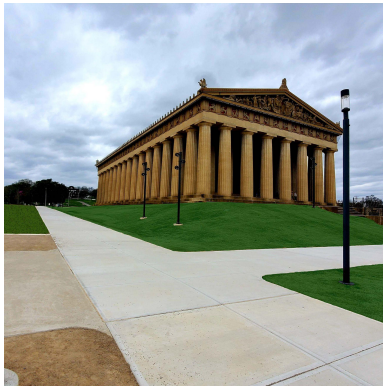
2i. COLUMNS 1:10 <https://bit.ly/3s0cdY8>

The columns are the vertical pillars supporting the entablature above them. There are eight columns on the east and west sides of the Parthenon, and 17 on the north and south sides, making 46 columns in total, without counting the corner columns twice. The columns are in the Doric order, one of the three main architectural styles in ancient Greece.

At the top of the column shaft is the capital which is formed by the abacus and echinus. The abacus is the flat slab at the top of each column, directly below the architrave. The echinus is the slightly flared molding between the abacus and the column shaft.

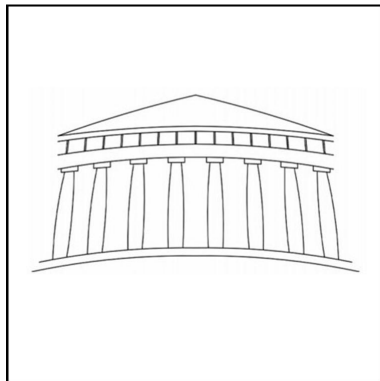
The column shaft is fluted, meaning the body of the column has vertical grooves. In typical Doric fashion, the column shaft lacks a decorative base.

While Doric columns might look like they narrow toward the top in a simple taper and are equally spaced apart, there are a few interesting refinements that trick your eye. These optical illusions are discussed in the next section.



3a. WALKING ALONG THE SOUTH SIDE 0:22 <https://bit.ly/3yyfjF8>

To continue your Architecture Tour, head towards Tennessee Woman Suffrage Monument, the bronze sculpture group of suffragists marching with banners. Before reaching the monument, turn right to follow the sidewalk that borders the Great Lawn. We recommend walking the length of the Parthenon's south side while listening to this section.



3b. OPTICAL ILLUSIONS 2:22 <https://bit.ly/3jBsKHi>

The Parthenon is more than meets the eye. The ancient architects Iktinos and Kallikrates understood how to design the Parthenon to appear perfect to the human eye. As a 1:1 scale replica, here at the Nashville Parthenon you can bear witness to the same architectural refinements, or optical illusions, that the people in ancient Greece saw over 2,450 years ago. Education & Curatorial Assistant Jennifer Richardson explains more.

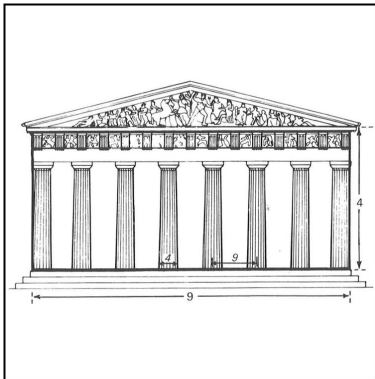
Upon first glance, the Parthenon may seem like a very simple structure, just some columns and a roof. However, the more you learn about the refinements that the Athenians included, the more amazing it becomes.

The original Parthenon was created during the Golden Age of Athens when logic, math, and reason reigned supreme. As they strove for perfection, the Greeks tried to balance this concept with the idea from their philosopher Protagoras that humans are the measure of all things.

So, while it is tempting to assume that all the horizontal lines of the Parthenon would be straight and all the vertical lines would be at a 90 degree angle, the ancient architects were advanced enough to realize a building designed in this way would never look perfect to our round human eyes. As perfectly straight as a line might be, our eyes will distort it. If the architects had designed the Parthenon with only straight lines and right angles it would appear to sag, in danger of collapse.

To create a perfect viewing experience for our human eyes, every horizontal line is curved to lift in the middle. Every column is tilted to slightly lean inward to prevent the sense that the building is looming toward you. The columns, which appear to taper steadily as they rise, swell about a third of the way up to convey their strength. The end columns are closer to their neighboring columns so that our round eyes view all columns as equally spaced.

Choose something with a straight edge, like a pen or your phone, and hold it up to the Parthenon to discover the curves and angles for yourself.



3c. PROPORTIONS 1:00

<https://bit.ly/3xv9M0M>

The Parthenon has long been regarded as one of the most perfect buildings of antiquity due to its mathematical proportions. The Parthenon has been extensively measured and found to have a consistent ratio of 9:4.

There is a popular misconception that the Golden Ratio was a design concept used by the Parthenon's architects. The Parthenon was built with extreme precision, with every architectural block designed to fit its exact position. While the result is a pleasing presentation similar to the effect of the Golden Ratio, the mathematical measurements do not replicate those proportions.

A recent scholar has suggested a connection between the key measurements of the Parthenon and the musical scale of Pythagoras, proposing a possible musical inspiration to the design of the Parthenon. While not yet widely accepted, scholarship like this shows that ancient architecture remains an interesting field of study full of new discoveries and interpretations.



4a. WEST SIDE 0:26

<https://bit.ly/3jAY5R9>

On the sidewalk level, we continue the architecture discussion on the west end of the Parthenon. The west end is the short side of the building opposite the museum entrance, farther away from downtown Nashville, and located closest to 27th Avenue North and the bronze John Thomas Monument statue. Find a spot where you can view the entire west pediment of the Parthenon.



4b. WEST PEDIMENT SCULPTURE 5:06

<https://bit.ly/3xv9PtU>

The west pediment features a series of figures who have important roles in ancient Athenian mythology. Unlike the figures on the east pediment, most of the sculptures seen here are without items that might indicate their exact identity. To complicate matters further, many of the sculptures have been lost or are badly damaged, leading scholars to continue the debate over who would have been included.

The west pediment of the Nashville Parthenon was created by Belle Kinney and Leopold Scholz based on the surviving sculptures, later drawings, and research in the early 1920s.

The female figure in the center of the west pediment is Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, strategic warfare, weaving, arts and crafts, and more. She is seen here in a dramatic pose, armed with her helmet, spear, and shield.

The male figure in the center is Poseidon, the god of the sea. He is holding his trident and the position of his body shows him to be in conflict with Athena. Look for the olive tree tucked behind him. This tree has symbolic connections to Athena, and not only supports the statue but also is a clue to the story these sculptures tell.

Now that we have introduced the main figures, let's move to the left corner.

The reclining figure is Ilissos, a river god. Ilissos is also the name of a river in Athens. The west pediment uses figures to represent rivers flowing around Athens to mark the location of the scene.

The figure holding a staff to the right of Ilissos is Kekrops, the founder and first king of Athens. According to some myths, Kekrops' lower body was a serpent.

The next four figures are Kekrops' children: The female figure kneeling next to him is his eldest daughter Pandrosos, and the seated figure is Herse. The small male figure standing next to Herse is Erysichthon, Kekrops' only son. To the right and behind Erysichthon is Aglauros. All three daughters are associated with dew.

The large figure next to the chariot wheel is Erechtheus, a legendary king of Athens. His clothing flows artfully away from his legs, and his arms are both raised, with one extended to rein in the galloping horses. Erechtheus was reared by Athena and was her charioteer. Some myths suggest he became a snake, a beloved symbol of the Athenians. Look for a small snake near the chariot wheels.

Behind the chariot, the standing male facing to the left, but with his arms to the right, is Hermes, the Greek god of travel, messages, thieves, trickery, and commerce.

Pairs of rearing horses flank the two main figures. The active, powerful animals create a sense of drama and urgency for the central scene. To support the enormous weight of the sculptures, each horse has a plinth, or large support base, beneath it. The plinths roughly resemble columns.

Moving to the right of the central scene, the standing winged figure next to the horses is Iris, the Greek goddess of rainbows and a messenger of the gods.

Seated to the right of the winged figure is Amphitrite, goddess of the sea and wife of Poseidon. Her arms are outstretched, as she holds the reins of the wild horses, indicating her role as Poseidon's charioteer. Though hard to see, a sea creature is positioned near her feet.

Behind and to the right of Amphitrite, a seated woman is flanked by two very small figures. The woman is Oreithyia, daughter of Erechtheus and associated with mountain winds. She is between her two sons, Kalais and Zetes, who are referred to as the "wind brothers."

Next to Oreithyia and her children are two more figures, a son and mother. Melicertes, the boy, sits on the knee of his mother Ino, a water goddess, whose legs are outstretched in a lounging position.

Behind Ino, the seated figure is Thalassa, a personification of the sea. Despite her seated position facing forward, her head is turned toward the action in the center.

The seated male figure next to Thalassa is Kephisos, a river god. Kephisos is also the name of a river in Athens.

In the right corner is the reclining figure of Callirrhoe, a daughter of a water god. Pheidias, the artist in charge of sculpture at the Parthenon, cleverly designed reclining figures to fit in these awkward corners of the composition.



4c. WEST PEDIMENT MYTHOLOGY 2:28

<https://bit.ly/3Cq12Na>

According to the ancient traveler Pausanias, the sculpture in the west pediment represents the contest between Athena and Poseidon for supremacy in the region around Athens called Attica. This important competition determined which Olympian god became the patron deity of Athens. Situated amongst various legendary Athenian figures, Poseidon and Athena raced to produce astounding gifts for the city.

Poseidon, as god of the sea, struck the ground with his trident and up sprang a saltwater stream, symbolizing control and power of the seas. Athena, on the other hand, created the first olive tree which symbolized arts, crafts, industry, and production. Realizing the wisdom of Athena's gift and all that it could offer, such as products to sell or consume like olives and olive oil, plus shade and wood, the judges declared her the winner. Some tellings of this story name Kekrops, the left corner figure, holding a staff, as the presiding judge of this important battle. According to legend, Athena's olive tree is still on the Acropolis today.

The presence of other figures, such as Kekrops' daughter Pandrosos and King Erechtheus, show that this story took place on the Acropolis, thus illustrating the direct connection between this pediment and its location. Neighboring temples on the Acropolis are dedicated to Pandrosos and Erechtheus and emphasize the importance of these legendary figures in Athenian history.

The Athenians could have chosen any story to illustrate in this pediment; it's the first significant set of sculpture a visitor sees when ascending the Acropolis. So, why this particular scene? Let's hear from Parthenon Docent Ellen Green.

“As the patron god of the city of Athens, Athena protects and defends her namesake people. This scene shows her special relationship to the region, and in particular the city-state's deep connection to the goddess. The figures, whether god or mortal, emphasize Athenian history and identity as original inhabitants of this sacred rock.

From the highest hill in the center of the city, it projected the strength, power, and protection of the city-state. Whether from other city-states or foreign cultures,

travelers would have recognized the power and importance of the Athenian government and its people. This prominent structure, erected during the golden age of Athenian civilization in the 5th century BCE, represented the image and identity of the Athenian city-state.”



4d. COLONNADE 2:59 <https://bit.ly/3Cpeukl>

The section will focus on the colonnade, the covered porch area. Take a minute to move closer to the Parthenon. If you are able, climb the central steps and walk among the columns. Alternatively, choose a spot along the sidewalk where you can view the decorative details of the ceiling. We recommend moving toward one of the corners and looking down the long side of the colonnade.

The design scheme of the ceiling is based on surviving Classical Greek ceiling blocks. The ceiling of the colonnade is coffered or formed by decorative recessed panels. Each center panel features a yellow sunburst shape on a blue background, with a double border of a white egg-and-dart pattern on a red background which alternates with a plain border. A red meander, or Greek key motif, outlines each coffer.

To complete its decoration, the entire ceiling has a border of red and blue painted moldings, featuring a pattern similar to the classical egg-and-dart motif, with the egg in blue and dart in red.

Where the wall meets the ceiling, there is a molding of alternating blue and red horizontal shapes. After a band of undecorated space near the top of the wall, there is a second molding in white with red details at the top and center of the repeating pattern, and blue at the bottom.

This transitions into the white painted band in the location of the Ionic frieze. On the ancient Parthenon, the plain white feature you see here would have been sculpted and painted with vibrant colors.

A narrow red band is beneath this, followed by a sequence of small blue rectangles with six white guttae, or small cylindrical drops.

In addition to being a great spot for viewing the brilliant ceiling, the colonnade provides the best place to examine the columns and their optical illusions up close. Let's dig deeper and discover the unique features of the columns.

As you may have heard, the columns are not equally spaced apart. To see this for yourself, find a corner column and look up!

Visually measure the distance between the corner capital and its neighbor. Now, compare this to the distance between any middle column and its neighbor.

You can also measure the distance between columns at their base. How many footsteps apart is a corner column from its neighbor, compared to two columns in the middle of the long side of the Parthenon?

Being closer to its neighbors helps corner columns visually support a large amount of the weight above it.

In addition to their special spacing, the corner columns also lean slightly inward at a diagonal, compared to the rest of the columns that lean straight in toward the Parthenon walls.”



4e. BASE 1:47 <https://bit.ly/37oTHz8>

While the base of the Parthenon is visible from all sides, we recommend viewing it from the corner as we begin this section.

The base of the entire structure consists of a large, three-stepped platform. The uppermost level of the platform, called the stylobate, provides support for the columns. The levels below the stylobate are called the stereobate and create a solid, level foundation to support the structure as a whole.

Now let's dig deeper and try out a test to discover the curve of the stylobate and stereobate for yourself.

I enjoy the subtle sloping of the building. It's hard to believe the Parthenon has no straight lines, but the entire structure has curved modifications to help our round human eyes see perfect horizontal and vertical shapes.

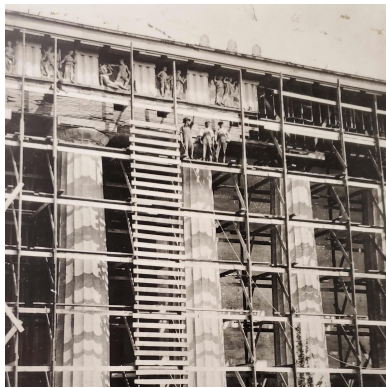
Even the base of the Parthenon has refinements. While it may look completely straight, and even feel level when walking on it, the center of each side is higher than the corners.

On the short sides, the middle is four inches higher than the corners. On the long sides, the middle is seven inches higher than the corners.

There is a way to discover the raised curve of the stylobate and stereobate with your own eyes.

To try this out: place yourself at a corner on ground level, where you can see the entire long side of the Parthenon. Your toes should be pointed at the stereobate, in the direction of the long side.

Lower yourself to be exactly eye level with the stereobate and look along the side. You might notice that the middle rise of this platform blocks some of the view! This is the result of the seven-inch curvature of the stereobate.



5a. ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

0:08 <https://bit.ly/2VzqbnG>

To enjoy this architectural history of the ancient Parthenon, we recommend finding a spot to rest comfortably or listening while browsing the colonnade.



5b. COMPARING THE TWO PARTHENONS

3:31 <https://bit.ly/3flTrQd>

While the ancient Parthenon is carved in stone, history is not. The Nashville Parthenon reflects progressions in archaeology and scholarship. The architecture of the Nashville Parthenon is to the same scale as the Athenian original; they are the same size down to the finest details and measurements. Today, as in antiquity, the east side is considered the front of the Parthenon. Despite the many similarities, there are a few interesting differences.

The ancient Parthenon was created for religious purposes as a sacred space for Athena. The Nashville Parthenon is not a temple; instead it was created as a public place to view art at the Tennessee Centennial Exposition. The building you see here today is the 1897 Parthenon, refurbished in the 1920s with an interior that recreates the Athenian temple.

In antiquity, Athenians would have seen dazzling colors on the sculptures and architectural elements. The iconic plain stone we see today was painted with rich, vivid colors. In contrast, only a hint of color is visible at the Nashville Parthenon. While brightly colored architecture is surprising to modern viewers, polychromy is not new for archaeologists. Recent research utilizing special lighting and new technologies has expanded our knowledge further, from identifying specific chemical compositions of colors to revealing elaborately painted patterns and details.

Parthenon Docent Ellen Green will discuss a few more key differences:

A difference can be found on the corner acroteria. In antiquity, you would have seen statues of Nike, or winged victories; here, you see gryphons, reflecting the scholarship of the 1920s.

The metopes on the ancient Parthenon had a different subject on each side of the temple. The north side, facing our parking lot, was the Trojan War. The south side, facing the Great Lawn, was Lapiths versus Centaurs. The east side, near our museum entrance, was Olympian gods versus the Giants. The west side, facing 27th Avenue North, was Greeks versus Amazons. In Nashville, the theme of the south side, Lapiths versus Centaurs, was carried around all four sides.

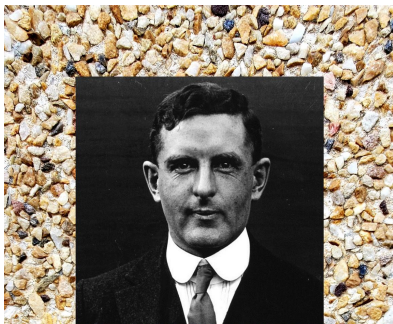
One major difference on the exterior is the Ionic frieze. While both buildings have the Doric frieze, the Nashville Parthenon does not have sculpture in the location of the Ionic frieze-- the uppermost part of the Parthenon walls.

In the 1980s, archaeologists discovered that the east wall of the naos had two windows, located very high up on the wall. Since the Nashville Parthenon was built in the 1920s, it does not include the windows.

Inside, the ancient Parthenon had a shallow reflecting pool to help illuminate the interior and the statue of Athena. The pool is not part of the Nashville replica.

The ancient Parthenon did not have a lower level, as we do in Nashville.

The ancient Parthenon was made of Pentelic marble from Athens, whereas the Nashville Parthenon is made of brick and steel-reinforced concrete. It is clad with the innovative John Earley Process architectural concrete in an effort to approximate the weathered color of the original marble.



5c. John Earley Concrete 2:07

<https://bit.ly/37spwqU>

Although concrete is a centuries-old building material, in use since the Romans invented it, little was understood--even as late as the early 20th century--about its chemical and physical properties. All concrete is made of cement for binding and sand and gravel, or pebbles, for strength, but builders used various recipes or ratios of these standard components and the results were not always of the same quality.

In 1916, John Earley, owner of Earley Studio which specialized in plaster and stucco work, became involved with the National Bureau of Standards' efforts to improve the quality of concrete. Among the results of his experiments was a formula for finish, or stucco concrete, based on the use of uniform pebble size, thus eliminating the tendency of the aggregate to clump and leave unsightly pits where there were no pebbles.

Another of Earley's innovations was the creation of aesthetically pleasing concrete. His idea was to detach the molds and forms while the concrete was still "green," or not fully set, and expose the pebbles by removing the light coating of cement with wire brushes. He continued to play with the thought that concrete could be beautiful and began to experiment with aggregates of finely crushed colored tile which could give the impression of a painted surface without the danger of the color washing away.

Both innovations are visible on the Nashville Parthenon. The architectural concrete, to use Early's term for the cladding, has exposed aggregate of Potomac River gravel, giving the building a warm honey color that approximates the weathered color of the Pentelic marble in Athens. The decorative elements of blue and red are made with concrete that use crushed colored tile as its aggregate.

In 1924, John Earley wrote, "Concrete is so wonderfully responsive that it has wondrous a spell around me and around the men in my studio. When the work is taken from the molds each morning and the colors are exposed, there is something so spectacular, so magical about it, that our enthusiasm never abates."



5d. ANCIENT PARTHENON HISTORY 3:23

<https://bit.ly/3iuxLZN>

Over 2,450 years ago, the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, was constructed to be a sacred temple to Athena. It was designed by architects Iktinos and Kallikrates, with the

sculptural program by Pheidias. Construction began in the year 447 BCE and continued for 15 years until its completion in 432. Made of marble from Mt. Penteli, approximately 10 miles away, the Parthenon featured a front room called the naos, and a back room known as the treasury. The project was funded by the city-state under the leadership of the Athenian General Pericles. Because it was a sacred space, most Athenians would not have entered the temple; instead any religious rituals would have taken place outside the Parthenon on an altar.

In the Late Antique period, about the third century CE, or Common Era, a Germanic tribe called the Herulians invaded Greece and ransacked Athens, setting the Parthenon on fire in the year 267. The statue of Athena was destroyed, and the marble sculpture was severely weakened. Repairs were made to the Parthenon and a new statue replaced the original; however, this replacement statue would not stand the test of time.

During the Byzantine period, the remains of the 3rd century statue of Athena were removed from the Parthenon when the building was transformed into a church, in about the 6th century. Following Byzantine tradition, Christians altered the structure of the temple. The roof was raised to add clerestory windows to allow in more light and the east porch was enclosed to become an apse, a semi-circular architectural feature, usually holding the altar. In this construction process, some of the central sculptures of the east pediment were removed and subsequently lost. The wall between the two interior rooms, the naos and treasury, was opened in three places to become doorways.

The Parthenon remained a Christian church for nearly one thousand years.

In the 1400s, the Ottoman Empire gained territorial control of Greece and converted the Parthenon into a mosque. During this Ottoman period, a minaret, or prayer tower, was built in the southwest corner of the porch.

In the late 17th century, the powerful city-state of Venice invaded, hoping to remove the Ottomans from Greece. The Ottomans retreated to the strategic high ground of the Athenian Acropolis, storing barrels of gunpowder in the Parthenon. On September 26, 1687, a mortar round fired by the Venetians from the top of nearby Philopappos Hill hit a weakened place in the Parthenon roof, igniting the gunpowder and destroying the Parthenon.

Under the rule of the Ottoman Empire once more, the ruins of the Parthenon were plundered by Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of Elgin, the British Ambassador to the Ottoman court. Lord Elgin convinced the Turks to sell him parts of the Parthenon in 1801, and in 1816 the British Museum purchased these fragments. They remain on view there today and are known as the Parthenon Marbles.

Since 1975, Greece has led an international coalition of archaeologists and scholars in conducting conservation efforts. This impressive restoration project aims to preserve the architectural remains of one of the most famous ancient monuments in the world.



5e. NASHVILLE PARTHENON HISTORY 3:48

<https://bit.ly/2VykuH0>

The Nashville Parthenon was built in 1897 to be the Fine Arts Building of the Tennessee Centennial Exposition. The cornerstone was laid in 1895 and construction of this 1:1 scale replica was finished by May 1, 1897.

The temporary structure was made of brick, wood, and plaster. It was meant to last the six months scheduled for the Exposition. This popular building represented the City of Nashville, long known as the “Athens of the South” due to its many educational institutions.

Rather than replicating the Parthenon interior, the 1897 Parthenon displayed over 1,100 works of art in a series of galleries that were lit with a large skylight by day and electrical lighting in the evening. The exterior featured sculpture in the pediments and metopes by George Julian Zolnay.

The Tennessee Centennial Exposition ended on October 31, 1897. The buildings, rides, and displays were relocated or dismantled until only the Parthenon remained, the centerpiece of the empty fairgrounds for the next 23 years.

By 1910, the Parthenon had fallen into disrepair, with crumbling steps and ivy climbing up the columns. Due to safety concerns over falling plaster, the City removed the deteriorated pediment figures. As the years passed, the empty structure served as a location for art exhibits and a backdrop for pageants, Greek plays, and suffrage marches.

The Parthenon was in extremely poor condition by 1920 and the City decided to reconstruct it using more permanent materials.

Nashville architect Russell Hart used the measurements of architectural historian William Bell Dinsmoor, among other sources, to create the replica you see today.

The exterior plaster was removed; the structure was reinforced and covered with concrete aggregate. This decorative finish was the invention of John Joseph Earley who was known as “the man who made concrete beautiful.” The exterior of the building was completed by 1925; the interior was finished in 1931.

George Zolnay, the artist who created the 1897 sculptures, returned to create the metopes. Sculptors Belle Kinney and Leopold Scholz, a husband and wife team, were hired to create the pediment statues. To ensure accuracy, casts of the Parthenon Marbles were ordered from England and they remain on display in the Nashville Parthenon's treasury. Belle Kinney Scholz also created a 4-foot-tall Athena statue to show her design for a full-size recreation; her maquette was on display in the naos until 1987.

The newly reconstructed Parthenon reopened to the public as a museum in 1931, an event described in the newspapers as having “the very deepest significance for Nashville.”

Over the next 60 years, the Parthenon remained a popular museum for locals and tourists to explore ancient architecture and American art.

By 1991, some of the architectural elements were cracking, rusting, and showing signs of damage. A comprehensive survey revealed evidence that improper drainage, untreated steel rods, and even birds were creating problems for Nashville's historic site.

A team of experts developed a preservation and restoration plan, and the resulting repairs were completed in 2001.

In 2015, Centennial Park Conservancy began organizing public Architecture Tours to help museumgoers learn about the Parthenon and its impressive refinements. Free education programs to celebrate the art and architecture of the Nashville Parthenon are ongoing.



5f. CONCLUSION 0:51 <https://bit.ly/3jBvSK4>

Thank you for joining the Architecture Tour. From identifying specific architectural details to discussing the significance of its sculpture, we hope you enjoyed learning about the Parthenon across two millennia, from the 5th century BCE to today.

While the main portion of the Architecture Tour is almost finished, you can “Continue Your Adventure” with the bonus content coming up next. We also recommend purchasing a museum ticket at the Front Desk to explore the interior recreation of the Parthenon, permanent collection of paintings, and temporary exhibitions. Alternatively, a walking path around Centennial Park will take you on a one-mile loop with information panels about the park's history along the route.

The Nashville Parthenon is owned and operated by Metro Nashville Parks and Recreation, with programming support from Centennial Park Conservancy.

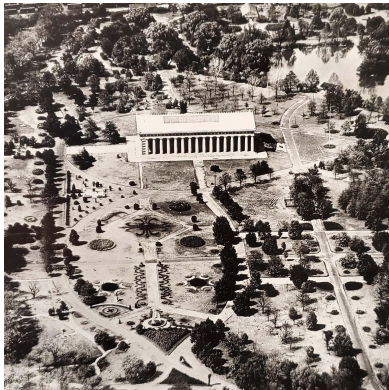


6a. CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE 0:26

<https://bit.ly/3IFRSGp>

And now it's time for our bonus content where you can hear the stories that we couldn't fit in the Architecture Tour.

You can also find fun content on the Nashville Parthenon YouTube channel, Nashville Parthenon Facebook page, Instagram @NashvilleParthenon, and Twitter @NashParthenon. Visit NashvilleParthenon.com to find more information on our hours ticket prices, education programs, and current museum exhibitions.



6b. CENTENNIAL PARK HISTORY 1:58

<https://bit.ly/3AkPVDh>

The park that currently surrounds you has changed extensively since the Parthenon was first constructed here. Prior to 1897, this land had been, successively, native land, a farm, the state fairgrounds, and a racetrack.

Though there were no known permanent Native American villages in the area, there were probably small Shawnee, Cherokee, and Chickasaw settlements until several years after the arrival of the first European settlers in the 1780s.

In 1783, this land was part of a 640-acre farm purchased for \$0.50 an acre by pioneers John and Ann Robertson Cockrill. Then, as now, it marked the northern terminus of the Natchez Trace.

It was used as a staging and assembly area during the War of 1812 and the Civil War, and later became first a fairgrounds and then a racecourse.

In 1897, once plans had been made to celebrate 100 years of Tennessee's statehood, the grounds were transformed into an elegant and temporary city of plaster with Classical

flair. Large expositions and fairs were highly popular in the 1800s and the Tennessee Centennial Exposition provided the perfect avenue to stimulate the local economy and elevate Tennessee's status internationally.

Once the six-month fair concluded, the plaster buildings were demolished except for the Parthenon. Exposition leadership called for the Parthenon to remain standing and devised a plan for the grounds to be converted into a public park. After extensive negotiations and arrangements, Centennial Park opened to the public in 1903.

Today, Centennial Park Conservancy works diligently to preserve, enhance, and share the Parthenon and Centennial Park. While the grounds continue to undergo improvements and periodic redesigns, Centennial Park has been Nashville's iconic setting for concerts, art exhibits, festivals, and the beauty of nature for well over 100 years.



6c. 1897 TENNESSEE CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION 1:47 <https://bit.ly/3jrwlZW>

The Tennessee Centennial Exposition was a six-month long celebration in the style of other World Fairs and International Expositions of its day. Donations to fund the Exposition poured in from the city, county, and state, as well as organizations and states outside of Tennessee for a grand total of \$1 million in funding. Adjusted to 2020, this would be the equivalent of slightly more than \$31 million.

More than 30 buildings were created to educate and entertain the 1.8 million people who came to the Tennessee Centennial Exposition from around the world. The Tennessee Centennial Exposition's central feature was the Parthenon, built to represent the City of Nashville.

The fairgrounds were incorporated into Centennial City, a temporary municipality that could serve beer in the otherwise dry city of Nashville. Centennial City had its own newspaper, power supply, police department, and fire department.

An area called Vanity Fair, sometimes known as the Midway, offered a splendid list of attractions for thrill seekers including a Giant See-Saw, a Palace of Illusions, Shoot the Chute, The Haunted Swing, and a Mystic Maze. For those unable to travel globally, cultural delights such as a Chinese Village, a Cuban-Spanish Village, the Streets of Cairo, the Moorish Palace, and a Venetian Canal beckoned.

A resounding success, the Exposition offered important educational and cultural experiences for its international audience.