CENTRE’S HISTORY
Consistently ranked among the nation's top 50 leading undergraduate institutions, Centre College is also among the oldest. The Kentucky Legislature chartered Centre on January 21, 1819. Some of Kentucky’s most important citizens sat on the first board of trustees, including future abolitionist James Birney and surgical pioneer Ephraim McDowell. Isaac Shelby, a Revolutionary War hero and the state’s first governor, was Centre’s first board chair.

The College opened its doors in the fall of 1820 with a single building—Old Centre—a faculty of two, and a student body of five. There are now approximately 1,400 students and 136 full-time faculty members. The 178-acre campus includes 72 buildings and spreads across four of Danville’s six historic districts. Two buildings are listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places; 13 others are included in National Register districts.

Centre began a residential program in London, England, in 1990, followed by a second program a year later in Strasbourg, France. A Latin America program, based in Mérida, Mexico, began in 1998. The College also maintains popular residential programs with universities in China, England, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Spain. No wonder U.S. News & World Report consistently ranks Centre among the top 15 in the nation for percentage of students who study abroad.

Centre alumni include two U.S. vice presidents, a chief justice and an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, at least 13 U.S. senators, and others who have achieved prominence in all walks of life. Their loyalty toward their alma mater is legendary. For more than 30 years, Centre has set national records for alumni giving.

And what of Centre’s name? Certainly it reflects the College’s location in the middle of the state. However, no one knows if Centre’s founders intentionally selected the spelling they did or simply used one of two choices equally common in 1819.

CAMPUS TOUR
The walking tour will take about 45 minutes. Begin at Old Centre (1820). The first building of the College, Old Centre is listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places and included in the Smithsonian Guide to Historic Places. The six-column Greek Revival front portico and wings were added to the original Federal building in 1841, while the back (west) portico came nearly a hundred years later, in 1940. Over the years, Old Centre has included classrooms, student rooms, a dining hall, and a grammar school, as well as a law school (1894-1912) and library. During the Civil War, first Confederate and then Union troops used the building as a hospital before and after the nearby Battle of Perryville. Old Centre now houses the offices of the president, vice president for academic affairs, vice president for college relations, and the Admission Welcome Centre.

Now cross Walnut Street. The first building you will come to is Franklin W. Olin Hall (1988). Olin Hall was built with a $3.5-million grant from the F.W. Olin Foundation of New York City. It houses chemistry, computer science, math, and physics programs. In the foyer is a Foucault pendulum, which demonstrates Earth’s rotation.

From the front steps, look left to see Palace of Memory (2000), a granite and earth-mound outdoor sculpture by Maine artist Tom Chapin, commissioned by faculty, staff, and friends of the College to mark the new millennium. Hidden on the face of the sculpture is a series of inscriptions: “a shorthand version of what it is that Centre is remembering,” says the artist.

As you leave Olin you will see several residence halls to the right. Directly past Olin is Breckinridge Hall (1892), named for Reverend Robert J. Breckinridge, one of the founders of the Danville Theological Seminary (which built Breck Hall) as well as a leading advocate for public school education in Kentucky. Although Centre and the seminary were independent institutions, they enjoyed close ties until the seminary moved...
to Louisville in 1901. A 1908 fire destroyed much of the original building. The building is supposedly haunted; the Breck ghost was particularly active in the 1970s.

Next to Breck is Nevin Hall (1968). Nevin Hall traditionally housed first-year men only but became co-ed in 2015. The building also houses the Residence Life Office, which moved to Nevin in 2012. Hugh Nevin, its architect, was a trustee who designed eight Centre buildings.

Beyond Nevin is The Quad (1962). This group of three residence halls (Stevenson/Vinson House, Cooper/Ganfield House, and Lamotte/Tyler House) was built to house Centre’s six fraternities. Although the fraternities moved to new quarters in 1995, the area is still sometimes called the Old Fraternity Quad.

Located between Nevin and Young, is the Buchanan Outdoor Classroom (2013), named for Donald D. Buchanan, Class of 1983. Adjacent is the Wunsch Outdoor Classroom (2010), made possible by Peter E. Wunsch, Class of 1977, and named for his aunt, Elsie Wunsch. It features stadium seating and the motto of Centre’s current president, John A. Roush: “Do Your Best. Be Your Best. No Regrets.”

Continuing on your path, you will come to Young Hall (1970/2010). The building was named for two Centre presidents, John C. Young and his son William Young, Class of 1859. Young Hall is home to the programs in behavioral neuroscience, biochemistry & molecular biology, chemistry, psychology, and biology. The new building stands in front of the site of the first Young hall, which was built in 1909. A two-story addition added 40,000-square-feet in 2010. This LEED gold-certified space is dedicated to research and instruction in the sciences and contains a natural history collection.

As you continue toward the next building, you will see The Flame (1969). The 11-foot, 2,000-pound bronze sculpture by Belgian artist John Somville and alumna Dottie Smith, Class of 1969, symbolizes the lamp of knowledge on Centre’s seal. Smith donated The Flame in honor of Centre’s 150th anniversary and in memory of her father. “Running The Flame” is a popular campus tradition. (Ask a Centre student for an explanation of this late-night activity.)

The next building is Crounse Hall (1967/2005). Centre trustee George P. Crounse and his wife, Eleanor, were generous and loyal benefactors of the College. The front and main section of Crounse Hall is occupied by Grace Doherty Library, originally built with the help of a $1-million grant from the Henry L. and Grace Doherty Charitable Foundation of New York City. In addition to the library, Crounse Hall includes classrooms, faculty offices, and Vahlkamp Theater (a 170-seat movie theater and lecture hall). In 2005 “The College Centre” (a multi-million-dollar expansion of Crounse Hall and Sutcliffe Hall) created a state-of-the-art academic and athletic complex.

Just past the College Centre Arch is Sutcliffe Hall (1915/1962/2005), which was built in 1915 as the Boyle-Humphrey Alumni Gymnasium. The original name recognized an earlier athletic facility that honored two donors from the Class of 1866 as well as acknowledged gifts from alumni. In 1962, the building was dramatically expanded and renamed to honor then-board chair Elbert Gary Sutcliffe, Class of 1917, and his wife, Edith McClure Sutcliffe, Class of 1912. The building was expanded again with the 2005 College Centre project (see above). Sutcliffe includes three gymnasiums, the Buck Fitness Center, athletic offices, and the Hall of Fame Café featuring Sandella’s Flatbreads.

Behind Sutcliffe Hall is Farris Stadium. Built in 1923, the facility is used for varsity and JV football. In addition to the football field, there is a six-lane rubberized track, which was upgraded in 2009. The track is available for walking and running when the field is not in use. The press box was dedicated in 2006 and
named for Centre alumnus Herb McGuire, Class of 1957. Next to the football field is Gary Wright Field, used by the baseball team and named for Gary Wright, Class of 1964. Beyond these two facilities are the South Campus Field and the Softball Field, both built in 2012. The South Campus Field is used for field hockey and women’s lacrosse, and also acts as a practice field for men’s and women’s soccer and men’s lacrosse.

To the left of Sutcliffe is Old Carnegie (1913). Built as the College library (the industrialist Andrew Carnegie provided $30,000 toward its construction), the building served that purpose until the construction of Doherty Library in 1967. It currently houses the Center for Global Leadership and the Center for Career & Professional Development, as well as the Evans-Lively Room, a special-occasion dining room named for two prominent trustees from the Class of 1943, James H. Evans and Pierce Lively. Old Carnegie is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Walk along the path between Old Carnegie and Sutcliffe Hall, then cross College Street. On the right is Boles Natatorium, named for Ewing T. Boles, Class of 1916. The facility, home of the swimming & diving teams, contains the Johnson Pool, named for Craig W. Johnson, Class of 1975.

Straight ahead is the Norton Center for the Arts (1973). Each year, the Norton Center offers a variety of entertainment. Past shows have included ZZ Top, Yo-Yo Ma, Mummenschanz, touring plays, Parsons Dance Company, Harry Connick Jr., Dolly Parton, Broadway musicals, Gregg Allman, world-renowned symphony orchestras, and the Punch Brothers, to name a few. In October 2000, vice presidential candidates Dick Cheney and Joe Lieberman faced off in the Norton Center for the year’s only vice presidential debate. Centre hosted the vice presidential debate again in October 2012, this time with Joe Biden and Paul Ryan. It became the third most-watched VP debate in history. When it opened, the Norton Center building was called simply the Regional Arts Center or RAC (which is why drama students are still occasionally referred to as “Rackies”). In 1982, it was renamed in honor of Jane Morton Norton of Louisville, a Centre trustee and arts patron. The 85,000-square-foot complex was designed by the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and includes the 1,470-seat Newlin Hall, named for Chauncey Newlin, Class of 1925, a New York City lawyer and chair of the Centre board. The hall was renovated in 2010 with new seating, expanded restrooms, and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. At the back of the complex is the intimate 370-seat Weisiger Theatre (named for Emma Weisiger, Class of 1875) and Grant Hall, which includes classrooms, studios, and offices for drama and music faculty.

In front of the Norton Center is Ex Astris (1978), a sculpture designed by Louisville artist Tom Lear. The name means “from the stars.” Closer to Walnut Street is the Haven Gillespie Fountain and Plaza (1973), a gift made possible by Audrey R. Gillespie in memory of Haven Gillespie (composer of “Santa Claus is Coming to Town”) and his son Haven Gillespie Jr., Class of 1933.

Across Walnut Street is the Presbyterian Church of Danville. Although long an independent institution, the College has historic ties to this church.

Cross College and Walnut streets, then walk along the front of the Campus Center (2009). This two-story, LEED silver-certified, 50,000-square-foot facility was a $15-million project, made possible by a gift to the College. The Campus Center includes Cowan Dining Commons, named for John Rice Cowan, Class of 1890, a physician and 18-year chair of Centre’s Board of Trustees. It also contains the Everyday Café. The second floor houses the Student Life Office and contains designated spaces for student organizations, meetings, and
gatherings. Throughout the building are other socializing areas, fireplaces, and a gaming area. The patio in front of the Campus Center is used each June for the stage of the Great American Brass Band Festival, an annual extravaganza that features bands from around the world—including Danville’s own Advocate Brass Band.

Cross Main Street at the light. Directly ahead of you are the North Campus Residence Halls (1962/1963). This three-building complex was built to house women students after true co-education finally came to Centre with the closing of the women’s campus on Lexington Avenue. Students moved into Acheson/Caldwell House and Cheek/Evans House (both facing Main Street) in January 1962. Yerkes House (perpendicular to Main Street) was not ready until October 1963. The buildings are named for people associated with Kentucky College for Women. Male students now live on some of the floors.

Behind the residence halls is the former soccer field. A new soccer field, located near the South Campus Field, is scheduled to open in fall of 2017. Overlooking the field are the Hillside Houses (1974), apartment-style student residences. Further up the street is Pearl Hall (2008). This 146-bed residence hall was made possible by a gift from Centre trustee Robert Brockman, Class of 1963. Pearl Hall has been LEED gold certified for its environmentally friendly design and construction. This was Kentucky’s first LEED gold award and is the highest LEED rating for any residential facility in the state.

To the right of Pearl is Stuart Hall (ca. 1915). It is named for John Todd Stuart, Class of 1826. The building previously served as a private residence, a funeral home, fraternity house, and the Centre bookstore and coffee shop. There is a highway marker from the Kentucky Historical Society in front of the hall commemorating John Todd Stuart, a friend of Abraham Lincoln who persuaded Lincoln to pursue a career in law. The building now serves as a residential facility for Centre students.

On the corner of Main and South Fifth streets is Ruby Cheek House (ca. 1860), which serves as student housing. For many years it was the home of Judge Samuel Cheek, Class of 1920, and his wife, Centre music teacher Ruby Moss Cheek, Class of 1929, who left the house to the College in her will.

Main Street will take you to retail shops, restaurants, banks, a post office, the Community Arts Center, the Centre Bookstore, and the Hub Coffee House & Café.

On the far corner of Main Street and St. Mildred’s Court is Overstreet House (1971). The residence of the College’s academic dean, it was built with a gift from James W. Overstreet, an electrical manufacturing company executive from Columbus, Ohio. At least two Centre presidents had lived in an earlier house on the site.

Also on St. Mildred’s Court are the St. Mildred’s Street Apartments. Rodes Apartments are named for Mary Cromwell Rodes, a cousin of Nelson Rodes, Class of 1954, whose family has sent six generations to Centre. Mrs. Rodes owned the apartments when Centre acquired them. Fox Hall was bought in the 1990s from Henrietta “Penny” Jackson, who said that St. Mildred’s Court grew up around this residence.

On the corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue is Craik House (1853). Centre presidents have lived in this brick Italianate house with its Greek revival portico (added in the early 1900s) since 1938. The College bought the house in 1937 with a bequest in honor of his class from Henry Craik, Class of 1890. The College’s 14th president, Robert L. McLeod, was the first president to move in. It is now home to Centre’s 20th president, John A. Roush, and his family.
Cross Maple Avenue to **Horky House (ca. 1850/2015)**. Centre’s admission and financial aid offices have occupied Horky House since 1992. In 2015, the admission office moved to Boles Hall while the College switchboard, human resources, and the finance office moved to Horky. Built as a private residence, it was purchased and remodeled with a bequest from Danville contractor John Horky, Class of 1932.

Next door is **Chenault Alumni House (1904)**. Built as a private residence, this Colonial Revival building served for 30 years (1932-62) as the chapter house for Phi Delta Theta fraternity. The College acquired it in 1979 and dedicated it in 1982 to the memory of banker and Centre benefactor Carroll C. Chenault Jr., Class of 1920. Currently, it contains the alumni and development offices.

Retrace your steps past Horky House and cross Main Street at the light. As you walk along Maple Avenue you will reach **Bingham Hall (1988)**. The residence hall was made possible by a $1-million gift from the Mary and Barry Bingham Sr. Fund, which the Binghams set up following the sale of their Louisville Courier-Journal newspaper to Gannett Company.

Turn and look across the street for a view of the **Old Centre Quad**. To the left of Old Centre is **Wiseman Hall (1940)**. It is named for Centre trustee Guy E. Wiseman, Class of 1885, whose bequest made the building possible, and originally housed first-year students. It remains a residence hall upstairs. The registrar’s office is on the ground floor.

Facing Wiseman is its mirror image, **Boles Hall (1997)**. Ewing T. Boles, Class of 1916, was a prominent Ohio investor and chair of the Centre Board of Trustees. The building houses the offices of admission and financial aid.

Between Old Centre and Wiseman Hall is **762 West Main (1940)**. It was originally used as a dormitory and dining hall. After construction of Cowan Dining Commons in 1962, 762 West Main housed the infirmary. It is now a residence hall, with Information Technology Services (ITS) on the ground floor. Between 762 West Main and Old Centre is a memorial garden and the **Columbarium (2000)** for special friends of the College.

As you leave the memorial garden you will walk along the **Benefactors Plaza (2008)**, which includes the names of members of Centre’s Lifetime Giving Societies. A fountain depicting the **Three Graces (2008)** is at the center of the plaza. The Three Graces represent the daughters of Zeus and Eurynome of Greek mythology and the aspects of the spirit of giving: gracefulness, peace, and happiness.

As you leave this area and turn left, you will reach the end of Maple Avenue. To the right is **Greek Park (1995)**. On the right side of Walnut Street are four student houses: 839 West Walnut (houses upperclass students, future home of Kappa Delta sorority), Kappa Alpha Theta, Kappa Kappa Gamma, and Delta Delta Delta. Houses for five of the fraternities and Alpha Delta Pi, Centre’s fourth sorority, are across the street: Sigma Alpha Epsilon, Phi Kappa Tau, Sigma Chi, Alpha Delta Pi, Phi Delta Theta, and Delta Kappa Epsilon.
Beyond the fraternity houses you can see the **A. Eugene Brockman Commons (2012)**. A $15-million project funded by the A. Eugene Brockman Charitable Trust, it features apartment-style housing for 124 upper-class students. This complex is LEED silver certified.

![Brockman Commons](image)

Behind Brockman Commons, you can see the **Jones Visual Arts Center (ca. 1930s)**. This green and white striped building was originally a warehouse for the Jackson Chair Company. After extensive renovation, it reopened in 1998 as the home of Centre's art program. The JVAC includes a state-of-the-art hot glass studio and the **AEGON Gallery**. The building is named for Louisville stockbroker Clarence Jones, Class of 1924, whose $3.25-million bequest helped fund the project.

![Jones Visual Arts Center](image)

Next is **Breeze House (ca. 1900/1997)**. Built as a private residence and later used as a boarding house for railroad employees, the building was renovated in 1997. It once held the communications and student life offices but is currently home to Beta Theta Pi fraternity. The name honors William H. Breeze, Class of 1945. A former Centre trustee, he returned to his alma mater after a career as an insurance company executive in order to serve as vice president for external affairs, acting president, and a number of other roles.

![Breeze House](image)

At the end of the street is the **Combs Center (ca. 1902)**, often called **The Warehouse**. It is named for Leslie L. Combs II, Class of 1925, a Lexington horse breeder, whose bequest helped convert a turn-of-the-century hemp warehouse into a modern student center in 1994. Original plank flooring, brick walls, and square oak columns that run from the basement to the third floor remain. The building houses leadership programs on the second floor and the communications office on the third.

![Combs Center (ca. 1902)](image)

Beyond the Warehouse you will see **Chowan**. Built in 2008, the 20,000-square-foot multipurpose building was originally a temporary dining facility while the original Cowan Dining Commons was demolished and replaced with a combination-dining hall and Campus Center, the hub of student life on campus. In 2010, Chowan was retooled to accommodate two tennis courts and a third playing area for volleyball, while remaining a space for large-scale activities, conferences, and catered events.

![Chowan](image)

Standing in front of Chowan is **The Rip (2011)**, a sculpture by Gary Bibbs, that was donated to Centre by Duane van Horn, Class of 1968. Van Horn commissioned the stainless steel artwork, which depicts a ripsaw in motion, in 1994 to capture and honor the art and spirit of woodworking.

![The Rip (2011)](image)

Walk back along Walnut Street to return to Old Centre, where you started the tour.