

WALKING TOUR -  
SAT., NOV. 5, 2022

# THE BANJO GATHERING

LED BY KRISTINA GADDY  
AND PETE ROSS



1 MILE WALKING - VIEW THE ROUTE [HERE](#).

## Theaters

- 1 Assembly Rooms
- 2 Baltimore Lyceum
- 3 Baltimore Museum
- 4 Carroll Hall
- 5 Charles St Theatre
- 6 Front St Theatre
- 7 Holliday St Theater
- 8 Howard Atheneum
- 9 Maryland Institute
- 10 Oak Hall



## Musical Instrument Makers & Stores

- 1 Boucher
- 2 Eisenbrandt  
(Christian&Henry)
- 3 Hildebrandt
- 4 Levi Brown Factory
- 5 McCaffrey
- 6 Schmidt
- 7 Schumacher
- 8 Stenz

## Music Publishers & Stores

- 1 Benteen, later  
Miller & Beacham
- 2 Boswell
- 3 Carusi
- 4 Peters
- 5 Willig

Historic map used in the The Banjo In Baltimore And Beyond Exhibit at the Baltimore Museum of Industry.



Starting Point:

### **Zion Lutheran Church**

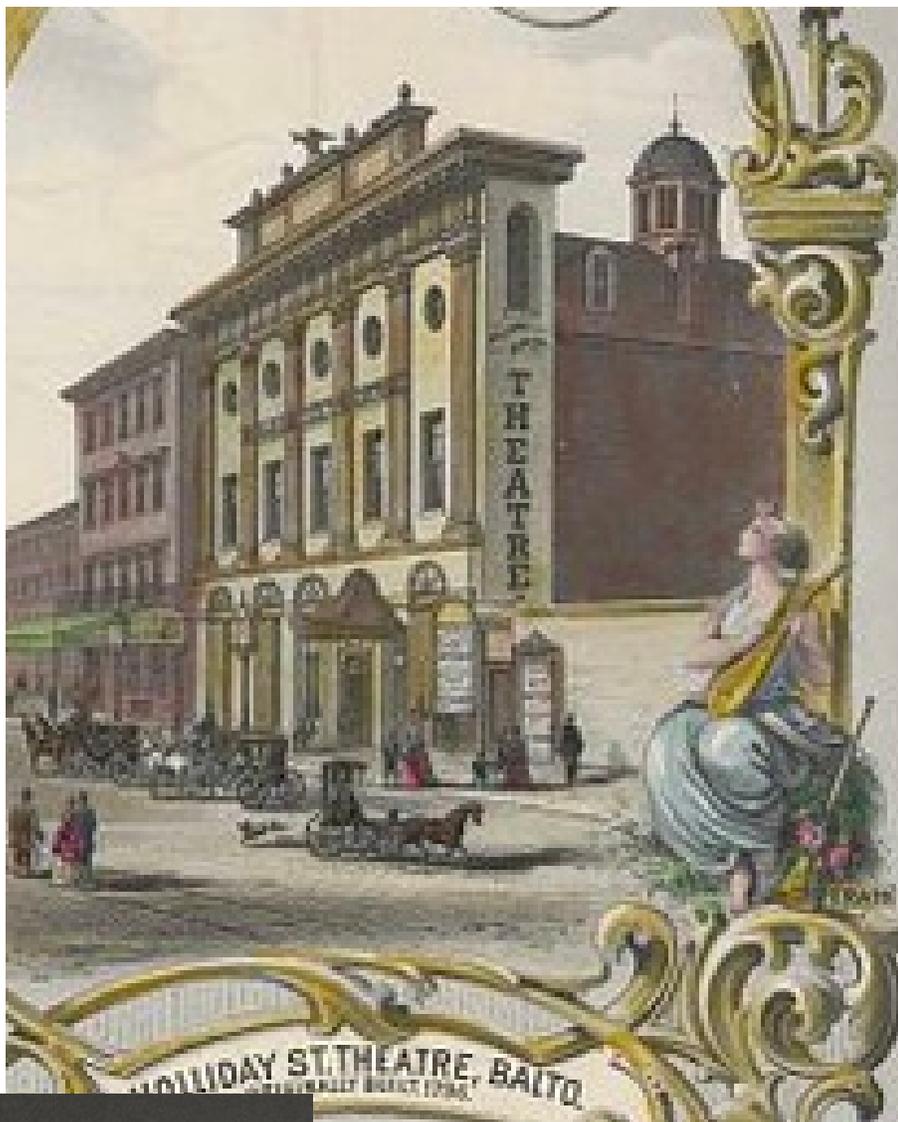
Founded in 1755 (pictured here in 1925); the oldest Lutheran church in Baltimore. When Lloyd Farrar was doing research into 19th century instrument manufacturers in Baltimore, he relied on church records from Zion. Retailers including Eisenbrandt and Hildebrandt were German, and even though Boucher immigrated from Germany, he was Catholic and did not belong to Zion.

Walk to corner of Fayette St. and Holliday Street, former home of the **Holliday Street Theater**.

Opened in 1795, purchased in 1854 by John Ford (the very same who owned Ford's Theater in DC). "This theater is better known for the first public performance of Francis Scott Key's "Star Spangled Banner", our National Anthem," according to [cinematreasures.org](http://cinematreasures.org)

Ford was born in Baltimore on April 26, 1829, and at the age of 22, he began managing a Black-Face Minstrel troupe called Kunkel's Ethiopian Nightingale Serenaders (alternatively Opera Troupe).

1867 photo of Holliday Street Theater.





Ford's Opera House

**HOLLIDAY STREET THEATRE.—**  
**DELIGHTFULLY COOL AND PLEASANT!**  
**OPEN EVERY EVENING.**  
 Admission 25 CENTS. Gentlemen, unaccompanied by Ladies, to the dress circle, 50 CENTS.  
**GRAND MUSICAL,**  
**ETHIOPIAN AND**  
**TERPSICHOEAN SOIREEs,**  
**BY KUNKEL'S**  
**NIGHTINGALE ETHIOPIAN**  
**OPERA TROUPE,**  
 COMPRISING  
**HARRY LEHR,**  
**H. K. JOHNSON,**  
**W. H. MORGAN,**  
**W. PENN LEHR,**  
**GEO. M. HULL,**  
**E. T. HERMANN,**  
**F. E. BURGESS,**  
**GEO. KUNKEL, and**  
**MASTER FLOYD.**  
 Also the champion Baltimore ACCURDEONIST,  
**MR. LEVI BROWN.**  
 Doors open at 7 o'clock—Performance commencing at 8 o'clock.  
 Seats can be secured, daily, from 11 to 1, and from 3 until 5 o'clock, by application at the box office.  
**JOHN T. FORD, Agent.**  
 Jy 28-47

In 1854, just a few years after he started managing Kunkel's Minstrel troupe, he, Kunkel, and Thomas Moxley formed a partnership to lease the Holliday Street Theater in Baltimore and a second theater in Richmond.

Banjo maker Levi Brown (who had a banjo shop on West Baltimore street) played with Kunkle's minstrels at the Holliday Street Theater.

Ford was a successful business man: "Under his energetic management the establishment attained a degree of popularity and prestige never before known in the theatrical annals of Baltimore," the Sun reported in his obituary. In addition to the Ford's Theater in DC, he also operate Ford's Opera House, which was outside of the earlier music district as shops and theaters started spreading west.

Walk to 820 E. Baltimore Street. One of multiple locations of **William E. Boucher Jr.'s** shop. From 1849 to about 1878, he was on this block, first at 820, then at 830.

Boucher, Jr. was born in Hanover and followed his father to Baltimore to work in the music trades. Lloyd Farrar told Pete that according to family history Boucher Sr. was brought over here by George Willig to initially work in his shop. This isn't documented anywhere outside of anecdote though.



A banjo outside the former Boucher shop?

Walk to **Carroll Museums**. This area (unlike the surrounding area) has survived in-tact from the 1840s. Other places burned in the 1904 fire or have been re-developed.

Walk to corner of Baltimore and President street (east side). Looking to the north, you would have once seen the **Front Street Theater**.



c. 1864 - From Maryland Center For History and Culture

The **Front Street Theater** housed performances of many types between 1829 and 1904, including circuses, plays, and Blackface Minstrel Shows. William Minifie designed the building at 300-312 North Front Street. It was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1904.



Late 19th century? 18 Dec 1843 - *Baltimore Sun*

**Amusements.**  
**RAYMOND'S CIRCUS—FRONT STREET.—**  
**THIS EVENING, Dec. 18th.**  
The entertainments will commence with a  
**GRAND AMAZON ENTREE.**  
**HARVEST REAPING**, by Mr. SWEET.  
Mrs. CARROLL in a beautiful act of Equestrianism.  
Mr. HOYT, the king of Congo Melodists and Banjo  
Players, will introduce his **VIRGINIA BAND.**  
Mr. HIGHLANDER, as the Dying Moor.  
**STILL VAULTING**, by Messrs. CARROLL,  
SWEET and T. V. TURNER.  
T. V. TURNER, will throw a **BACK SOMERSET**  
from his horse while in full speed. d18-11\*

1839-1841 was a period when J.W. Sweeney was touring with circuses and not a Minstrel troupe. Pete helped Bob Carlin go through the Maryland Historical Society archives to research Sweeney performances in this and other theaters in Baltimore. There were rumors of a Boucher-Sweeney collaboration, and Pete was hoping to find a performance date and location that would support this notion, but he never did. But at some point, Sweeney did purchase a Boucher banjo, since the Sweeney banjo in Los Angeles has a Boucher pot. However, less than a year from the formation of the Virginia Minstrels in New York, we see Blackface Minstrel troupe led by Mr. Hoyt.



Pre-fire photo looking east on Baltimore street.

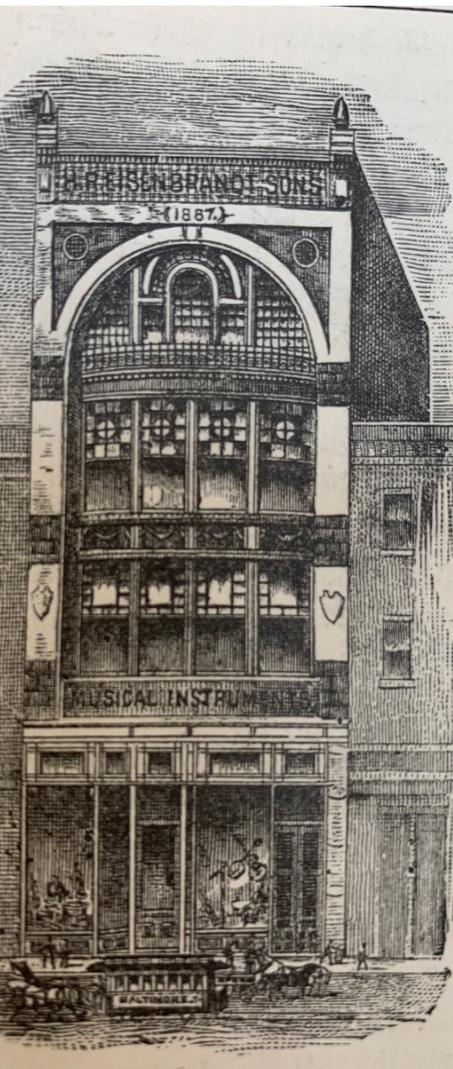
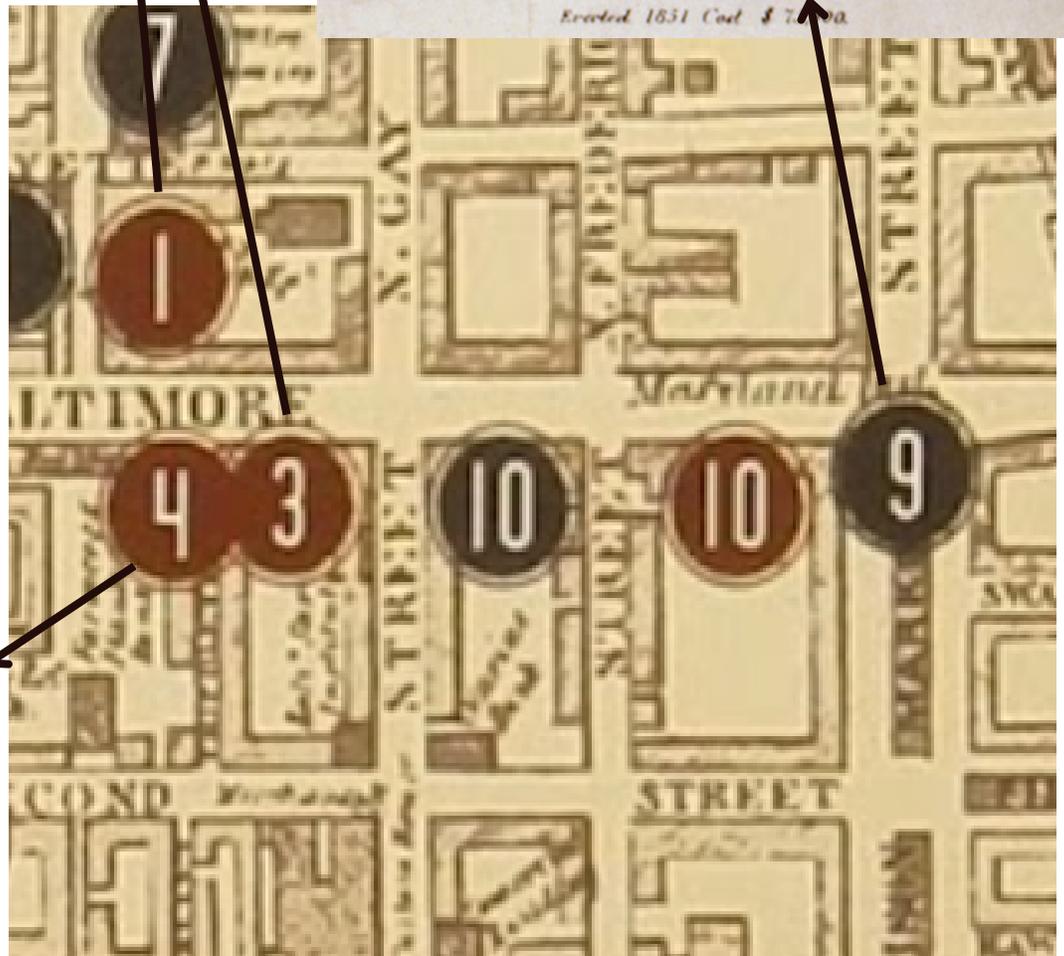
1920s photo of the 400 block of E. Baltimore street. Many of the historic theaters burned in the 1904 fire.



Walk west on **Baltimore street**. This was once the home of Baltimore's entertainment district.

The Mechanics Institute (now the Maryland Institute College of Art or MICA) held Mechanics' Fairs where Boucher would enter his banjos into contests.

Two of Boucher's later shops were on the 400 block of E. Baltimore Street. The last location is today's 2 O'Clock Club, which was once owned by burlesque dancer and banjo player Blaze Starr.



Eisenbrandt was another big name retailer in the area. Eventually his sons took over the business. We have an Eisenbrandt banjo-- that is to say, a New York-made Buckbee with his name stamped on it. This is an image of his store taken from a book on important Germans in Baltimore. Interestingly, he is included but Boucher is not.