

SEAWAY GRAND PLAZA HISTORICAL TOUR

BEGIN THE JOURNEY

1. BEGIN YOUR TOUR FACING THE FRONT DESK IN THE MAIN LOBBY OFF PEARL STREET.

The centerpiece is a captivating panoramic **painting** titled “**Grand Reflections**” by local artist Mark Wilkens, featuring the city skyline from the Grand River circa 1997. The room’s atmosphere is enhanced by the addition of graceful mahogany arches and a vaulted gold leaf dome ceiling during a 1998 renovation, mirroring the elegance of the original Pantlind wing with its English Adams Architecture.

2. NEXT, TAKE THE STAIRS ACROSS FROM THE FRONT DESK TO THE 2ND LEVEL.

Once you reach the top, peer over the railing for a picturesque view of the **Rendezvous Lounge**. This modern haven exudes an ambiance ideal for savoring craft cocktails, fine wines, premium beers, and delectable light fare in the evening. On weekends, live entertainment adds a harmonious backdrop, elevating the overall experience.

3. NEXT, HEAD EAST (LEFT FROM FACING THE RAILING) TOWARDS THE LOBBY WITH THE CHANDELIERS.

4. NOW, YOU ARE STANDING OUTSIDE OF THE IMPERIAL BALLROOM DIRECTLY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RAILING.

If unlocked, go inside and experience Edwardian splendor of the **Imperial Ballroom**, where your gaze is drawn to the distinctive gold leaf design adorning the walnut ceiling. Originally housing the Old National Bank from 1853 to 1916 and later transformed into the Michigan National Bank from 1953 to 2000, this space underwent a majestic renovation in the year 2000, evolving into the regal ballroom it is today. Look up the book “The Mayor, the Maestro, and the Mansion” by Carol Dodge, sold in our Plaza Essentials Gift Shop.

SPLENDOR & DRAMA

5. NOW, OVERLOOK THE PANTLIND LOBBY.

At the railing, admire the reconstructed original hotel section. Above, three **grand chandeliers**, imported from Czechoslovakia and fashioned from Austrian crystal, shine brilliantly. The two end chandeliers measure 11.5 feet in length and 8.5 feet in diameter, while the central chandelier is 10 feet long and 8.5 feet in diameter, weighing around 4,000 pounds. Hidden beneath velvet caps are support chains and automatic lowering devices. Interestingly, all heating and air conditioning ducts are discreetly tucked within the ring between the chandeliers and the ceiling.

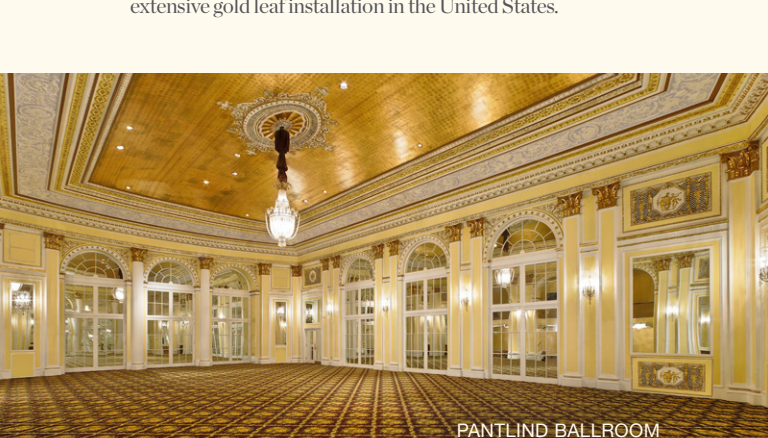
6. TO YOUR LEFT, YOU WILL NOTICE THE PANTLIND BALLROOM.

Elegant art-deco wall sconces grace the sides of a brief staircase leading to the landing of the **Pantlind Ballroom**, concealed behind mirrored doors. This ballroom showcases exceptional and intricately designed plasterwork moldings. Its domed ceiling, adorned in resplendent gold leaf, houses an awe-inspiring chandelier, one of the original fixtures of the ballroom.

HISTORY & LEGACY

6. NEXT, GO DOWN THE FIRST SET OF STAIRS TOWARD THE FIRST FLOOR, TURN RIGHT, AND STAND AT THE RAILING THAT OVERLOOKS THE FOUNTAIN.

Gaze at the **domed ceiling**; you’ll observe the painstakingly applied tissue-thin gold leaf. This meticulous craftsmanship extends across more than 7,000 square feet of ceiling space, rendering it the most extensive gold leaf installation in the United States.



DID YOU KNOW?

Originally the Sweet’s Hotel, this site was acquired in the early 1900s by J. Boyd Pantlind, who renamed it the Pantlind Hotel. After a 1916 renovation, it showcased English Adams Architecture by New York’s Warren & Westmore, designers of Grand Central Station and the Biltmore Hotel. Renowned for its hospitality and cuisine, it earned the title “One of the Ten Finest Hotels in America” by 1925.

6. CONTINUED...

As you gaze downward, a copper **tiered fountain** comes into view, adorned with an intricate pineapple-shaped spigot. In the pre-1920s United States, the pineapple held significance as a symbol of hospitality.

Further to the left, against the distant wall, hangs a magnificent wooden-gilded “**sunburst**” that graced the ballroom of the Palazzo Moroschini, an opulent Venetian palace owned by a prosperous merchant for over a century and a half. It’s worth noting that Dana Reeve, the spouse of Christopher Reeve, is a descendant of the Moroschini lineage. Beneath this splendid centerpiece, you’ll find an exquisite **Sheraton sideboard** dating back to the late 1800s, accompanied by an array of Duncan Phyfe and English Adams period furniture.

Take a moment to appreciate the black-green **marble railing** that encircles the sunburst—it convincingly mimics real marble. This balustrade, crafted from marbleized wood, serves as a splendid example of the nearly forgotten art of “faux marble,” meticulously hand-painted by Harvey Bolkema, a local artisan originally hailing from the Netherlands.

A QUIET CORNER

7. NEXT, CONTINUE WALKING PAST THE RAILING, AND UP THE STAIRS — AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS, TAKE AN IMMEDIATE RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER.

This serene **balcony** offers a perfect view of the intricate gold leaf ceiling. Notably, the balcony features an ornate cast brass railing. During the renovation, some of its original antique moldings and finials were lost or damaged. Fortunately, a skilled local artisan was able to recreate the missing pieces, preserving the Adams-inspired charm.

NAMES AND PLACES

8. CONTINUE ON AND MAKE A RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER WITH THE WALL PAINTINGS.

In the North Concourse, you'll find period furniture and a corridor featuring **oil paintings** depicting early Grand Rapids. The **Governors Room** is dedicated to Michigan's governors, while the Senator Arthur **Vandenberg Room** honors the esteemed U.S. Senator. Lastly, the **Lyon Room** pays tribute to Lucius Lyon, a prominent figure in Grand Rapids' history.

9. REACH THE END OF THE HALL PAST THE PAINTINGS, CONTINUE AROUND THE RIGHTHAND CORNER.

The concourse boasts the exquisite touch of Armand Merizon, a Grand Rapids artist celebrated for his captivating seascapes and sand dunes, with **four magnificent oil paintings** adorning the space. Adding to its allure, you'll find a collection of Queen Anne, Duncan Phyfe, and English Adams furniture dating back to the years 1916 to 1920. Overhead, the enchanting **Oriental crystal chandeliers**, which acquire a subtle gray patina over time, provide a striking contrast to the brilliance emanating from the three central lobby chandeliers. Just around the corner, the guest elevators showcase meticulously restored original **period cabs**, preserving the elegance of a bygone era.

BEAUTY & GLAMOUR

10. RIDE THE ELEVATOR DOWN TO THE 1ST FLOOR — OUTSIDE THE ELEVATOR YOU'LL NOTICE A BRASS MAILBOX.

Admire the intricately detailed yet fully functional **brass mailbox**. Then, make your way to the entrance of Ruth's Chris Steak House, formerly known as "The 1913 Room." This restaurant held the unique distinction of being the sole recipient of the AAA Five Diamond Award in Michigan for an impressive ten years.

Reflect upon the significant events of 1913, including the birth of President Gerald R. Ford, the debut of women publicly wearing silk stockings, the inception of the income tax, the laying of the hotel's cornerstone, which inspired the restaurant's name, "The 1913 Room."

11. NEXT, WALK OVER TO THE BOTTOM OF THE DOUBLE STAIRCASE NEXT TO THE FOUNTAIN.

The dual stairway is flanked by **floor lamps** that were originally gas torchieres but have since been wired for electricity. The original Verde Antique Italian **marble floor** and English Adams period wainscoting and furniture add to the hotel's charm. Notably, the hotel's first renovation was overseen by Dorothy Draper, Inc., a New York City interior design firm.

To the right of the stairs stands a dignified old **grandfather clock** with a fascinating story. In need of restoration, it was sent to the Howard Miller Clock Company, where a craftsman discovered it had been built by his own grandfather, as noted on an interior plaque.

12. NOW, HEAD TO THE SOUTH WALL OF THE LOBBY TOWARDS THE IMPERIAL BALLROOM.

Notice the expansive **Oriental screen** on the south wall, which, despite its antique appearance, was meticulously hand-painted with gold in China exclusively for this location.

13. WALK OVER TO THE FORD BALLROOM TO THE RIGHT OF THE ORIENTAL SCREEN.

PRESIDENTIAL HONOR

14. STAND IN FRONT OF THE WOODEN DOORS OF THE FORD BALLROOM.

The Gerald R. and Betty Ford Ballroom, dedicated to Grand Rapids' most esteemed resident, the 38th President, was initially known as the Continental Room. Its distinctive "Wedgewood Blue" paint was chosen for its striking resemblance to the famous blue and white English china. During a significant renovation, the room's original chandelier remained, but extensive work was done, including the restoration of intricate plasterwork, the reconstruction of pillars, and even the leveling of the floor. Many visitors are captivated by the optical illusion created by the circular ceiling, which imparts a sense of roundness to the entire room, despite its perfect square shape.

15. AND FINALLY, TO CONCLUDE THE PANTLIND LOBBY, MAKE YOUR WAY DOWN THE RAMP TOWARDS THE FRONT DESK.

This ramp links the "original" and the "contemporary" wings of the hotel. The **portraits** on your right are of Richard M. DeVos and Jay Van Andel, co-founders of the Amway Corporation and owners of the Amway Grand Plaza.



IMPERIAL BALLROOM

A NEW ERA

16. STEP OUTSIDE FROM THE FRONT DESK TO PEARL STREET.

Admire the clay sculptures gracing the exterior walls of the motor lobby. These captivating artworks were crafted by Don Reitz, who served as a Professor of Art at the University of Wisconsin from 1962 to 1988.

17. RE-ENTER THE BUILDING, TURN LEFT AND WALK TO THE END OF THE LOBBY, STOP IN FRONT OF THE KITCHEN BY WOLFGANG PUCK.

Across the Tower Lobby is our seven-story Atrium .

18. NOW PROCEED UP THE ATRIUM STAIRWAY, TAKE A RIGHT UP THE STAIRS

Next to the elevator bank on the left, you'll find a sizable **painting** by Paul Collins, a locally renowned artist with international acclaim.

19. FROM THE WEST CONCOURSE, TAKE A SLIGHT LEFT OVER TO THE CROWN FOYER.

As you step into the Crown Foyer, a notable **painting** by Paul Collins graces the right-hand side. To the left, you'll find the **Ambassador Ballroom**, the hotel's largest, complete with cutting-edge audio/visual equipment and overhead security observation panels.

20. AT THE END OF THE CROWN FOYER, TURN LEFT AND CONTINUE WALKING STRAIGHT TOWARDS THE SKYWALK TO DEVOS PLACE.

Before you reach the skywalk, on the left, you'll approach the Fine Arts Building, currently known as the Exhibitor's Building.

REMINDERS OF HALCYON DAYS

During Grand Rapids' reign as the "Furniture Capital," this building served as the primary exhibition center for the world's leading furniture companies. Observe the architect's ingenious approach in seamlessly connecting the hotel to the Exhibitor's Building while preserving its stunning Italian Renaissance-style facade.

21. GO DOWN THE STAIRWAY AND WALK TOWARD THE SHORT STAIRWAY AHEAD WHICH LEADS TO THE EXHIBITOR BUILDING'S THIRD LEVEL
(Or take the elevators on your right to the third level.)

Lining the halls are **portraits by Paul Collins** along with historic photographs of downtown Grand Rapids from the mid-1800's on. Included are photos of the original Pantlind Hotel, starting with its initial construction in 1913 and how it has evolved through today.

Heading West, you will pass the **Thornapple Room** on your right, the **Heritage Hill Room** on your left, and the **Grand View Rooms** are straight ahead.

22. AT THE END OF THE HALLWAY, A SHORT TURN TO YOUR LEFT BRINGS YOU TO THE DOORWAY AND UPPER LANDING OF THE FAMILIAR ATRIUM STAIRWAY.

Thank you for joining us! Conclude your tour and make your way back down to the main lobby.

SCAN TO TOUR
SPACES VIRTUALLY



@AMWAYGRANDPLAZA



AMWAY GRAND PLAZA

AMWAY GRAND PLAZA, CURIO COLLECTION BY HILTON

187 MONROE AVE NW, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503
1.616.774.2000 | AMWAYGRAND.COM