

DON KNOTTS

WALKING AND DRIVING TOUR

Morgantown
magazine

WESTOVER

MORGANTOWN

A

C

B

D

E

M

J

F

G

I

H

F

WALNUT STREET

K

L

NOTE The privately owned properties on this map appear here through the gracious consent of the property owners. Please respect their privacy.

BEECHURST AVENUE

HOLLAND AVENUE

UNIVERSITY AVENUE

FIFE AVENUE
WILLEY STREET

SPRUCE STREET

DON KNOTTS BOULEVARD

HIGH STREET

COBURN AVENUE

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Don Knotts lived in Morgantown from the time he was born in 1924 until he moved to New York City in 1948, with the exception of his World War II service in the Army, 1943–1945. He visited many times later in life to see family and friends and to be celebrated by his proud hometown.

A good place to start for the complete driving tour is the home in Westover where Knotts' family lived when he was born, site A. A walking tour of only the downtown sites could start at Phi Sigma Kappa fraternity, site E—the pay parking lot in the block of North High Street above Willey Street is convenient—or, for less challenging terrain, park anywhere downtown to visit sites F through J.

A. HOME AT BIRTH: 82 *Jefferson Street* in Westover. The family gave up the Knotts family farm outside Morgantown before he was born and moved here.

B. CHILDHOOD FAMILY HOME: 2147 *University Avenue* (no longer standing—it would have been on the lot occupied by Seneca Hall). When Knotts was about 5, the family leased a large house here and rented rooms to boarders. He grew up here with his parents and the older and younger of his three brothers, Ralph and Earl.

C. The former **SENECA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**, 313 *McLane Avenue*. Knotts attended elementary school here, a few blocks from the family home.

D. WEST VIRGINIA AND REGIONAL HISTORY CENTER at West Virginia University's Wise Library, 1549 *University Avenue*, 6th floor. The library's holdings, including Don Knotts' manuscripts and scripts with hand-written notes as well as showbills, honorary plaques, photographs, and audio recordings, are available to researchers by appointment. wvrhc.lib.wvu.edu

E. PHI SIGMA KAPPA FRATERNITY, 672 *North High Street*. Knotts was a member. The character Barney Fife took his name in part from nearby Fife Avenue, which intersects North High just uphill from here.

F. METROPOLITAN THEATRE, 371 *High Street*. This grand theater opened just days after Knotts was born in 1924, and he performed on its stage. A bronze sculpture, plaque, and star in front of the theater now celebrate his career in comedy and acting.

G. MONONGALIA COUNTY COURTHOUSE SQUARE, corner of High Street and Chancery Row. Don Knotts was presented with keys to the city here during Don Knotts Day festivities, June 1, 1963.

H. WARNER THEATRE, 147 *High Street*. Knotts worked as an usher at the Warner Theatre when he was in high school, and his Warner Bros. film *The Incredible Mr. Limpet* had its regional opening here in 1964.

I. MORGANTOWN HISTORY MUSEUM, 175 *Kirk Street*. The museum has a permanent exhibit of local and career Don Knotts memorabilia and holds an archive of Knotts artifacts, available to researchers by appointment. [@morgantownhistory on FB](https://www.facebook.com/morgantownhistory)

J. DON KNOTTS BOULEVARD, *South University Avenue* was renamed to honor the comedian in 1998.

K. MORGANTOWN HIGH SCHOOL, 109 *Wilson Avenue*. Knotts attended MHS 1938–1942. He formed a vaudeville group called The Radio Three with his friends Richie Ferrara and Jarvie Eldred.

L. Former site of **RAESE'S GROCERY**, 260 *Green Street*. After Knotts graduated from high school, after his first brief attempt to make it in New York and before he started at West Virginia University in the fall of 1942, he plucked chickens in the stockroom here.

M. ELSIE KNOTTS' HOME later in life, 732 *Louise Avenue*. Knotts bought this home for his mother in the mid-1960s, when his film career took off. She lived here until she died in 1969.

POINTS OF INTEREST OUTSIDE THE TOUR MAP

BEVERLY HILLS MEMORIAL GARDENS, 1290 *Fairmont Road*, 3.3 miles from downtown Morgantown. Knotts' father, William Jesse Knotts; mother, Elsie Luzetta Moore Knotts; and eldest and third brothers, Ralph Louis and William Earl Knotts, are buried here, as well as other relatives.

KNOTTSTVILLE, WEST VIRGINIA, 30 miles from Morgantown. This is no longer an incorporated town, but there's a Knottsville Methodist Church, a Knottsville Road, and a Knottsville Cemetery. Don Knotts' great-great-great-great-grandfather James Absalom Knotts II, 1746–1835, a Revolutionary War soldier, is buried there.

Former **FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH** at 1206 *Byron Street* in Wheeling, West Virginia, 80 miles from Morgantown. Don Knotts and his first wife, Kathryn "Kay" Metz, were married here in 1947. Ms. Metz's father served as pastor at the church.

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