

WALKING THROUGH HISTORY

COTTON AVENUE DISTRICT



A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF HISTORIC SITES IN MACON, GEORGIA



Horse-drawn flour cart, ca. 1900–1920. Courtesy Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives.

MACON HISTORY

Macon was founded on the banks of the Ocmulgee River, growing out of the 1806 frontier trading post Fort Hawkins. The fort was named in honor of Benjamin Hawkins, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southeast territory south of the Ohio River for more than two decades. Prior to the establishment of Fort Hawkins, Native Americans had inhabited the area for as many as 10,000 years.

The city of Macon was chartered as the county seat of Bibb County in 1823 and named in honor of the North Carolina statesman Nathaniel Macon. City planners envisioned “a city within a park” and created a town of spacious streets and parks.

Macon thrived thanks to its location on the Ocmulgee River and later, in 1843, the railroad brought economic prosperity. In 1836, Wesleyan College was founded making it the first college in the United States chartered to grant degrees to women.

Macon was defended three times in the Civil War before surrendering late, leaving its historic districts intact. After the war, the textile industry fueled Macon’s economy.

Today, Macon is a city of diverse cultures, beautiful architecture, an exciting music heritage and thriving arts and educational opportunities.

ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Although no street in the tour area is named Cotton Avenue today, the area you are about to explore still carries this name. Cotton Avenue was the primary conduit for cotton bales coming from the farms into Macon. The gentle downhill slope of this road made it ideal for carts taking the bales down to barges on the Ocmulgee River, where they could be easily transported, and it was due to this thriving agricultural economy that many businesses sprang up during the 1800s.

In the midst of the twentieth century, Jim Crow laws forced African Americans to establish separate business districts. Cotton Avenue became one of those districts and grew into a major center for business with entrepreneurs working as everything from barbers and shoemakers to lawyers and dentists.

This district is under greater development pressure than almost anywhere else in Macon-Bibb County. Because of the large number of people in the area on a daily basis, this area meets the mathematical criteria most national companies use to decide where to build next. In less than two years, two sites on this tour were demolished for just this reason. But the district is not vacant. With its slightly smaller, but architecturally significant buildings, the Cotton Avenue district is ideal for many locally owned businesses, including the Black Pages and H&H Restaurant. The district's potential is simply waiting to be uncovered by sensitive developers.

The Cotton Avenue District is best explored on foot, and this brochure is designed to help you do so. Start with breakfast or lunch (or perhaps both!) at the famous H&H Restaurant (Site 1) before visiting the rest of the area. The sites are numbered in a suggested route, and the symbols next to some entries offer more information about other exploration opportunities.



The site is sometimes open to the public.



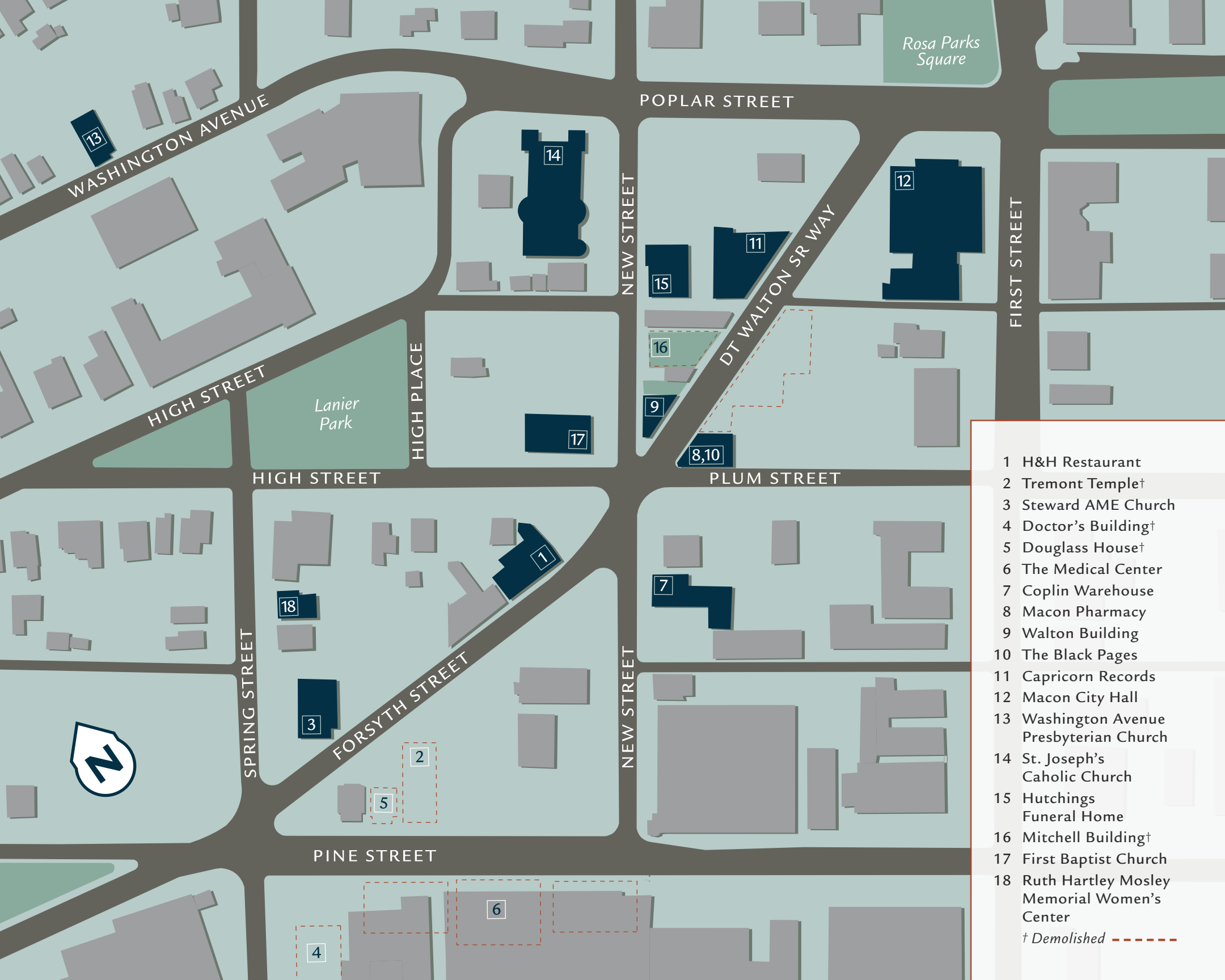
A Georgia Historical Marker is on the premises.



The site houses an active business.



The structure on the tour has been demolished.



- 1 H&H Restaurant
- 2 Tremont Temple†
- 3 Steward AME Church
- 4 Doctor's Building†
- 5 Douglass House†
- 6 The Medical Center
- 7 Coplin Warehouse
- 8 Macon Pharmacy
- 9 Walton Building
- 10 The Black Pages
- 11 Capricorn Records
- 12 Macon City Hall
- 13 Washington Avenue Presbyterian Church
- 14 St. Joseph's Catholic Church
- 15 Hutchings Funeral Home
- 16 Mitchell Building†
- 17 First Baptist Church
- 18 Ruth Hartley Mosley Memorial Women's Center

† Demolished - - - - -

1

H&H RESTAURANT

807 Forsyth Street



In 1959, Inez Hill opened H&H Restaurant with her goddaughter and cousin Louise Hudson. Recording up the street, the Allman Brothers Band supposedly pooled their money together to share two meals at H&H one afternoon because that was all they could afford. “Mama” Louise felt sorry for the boys and brought them their own individual meals and told them to pay her when they had the money. Partially remembered for being an integrated band during a time of racial tension and segregation, the Allman Brothers Band is also remembered in this spot, making the restaurant a landmark of both food and music history.



Photo courtesy The Allman Brothers Band Museum at the Big House

2

TREMONT TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH

860 Forsyth Street



Tremont Temple Baptist Church served as a place of worship as well as an organization space for local African American businesses. Since the 1910's Tremont Temple has been a meeting location where preachers spoke on the importance of supporting black business. Tremont Temple was a physical marker of local African American history due to its



uncommon design, texture, and materials that are impossible to replicate. The congregation relocated, and the historic building was demolished in 2014 after numerous citizens and organizations worked to try and preserve the structure.

Photo courtesy Historic Macon Foundation

3

STEWARD AME CHURCH

887 Forsyth Street

A “beacon of light in a world of darkness [during] the 1960’s” is how Wanda West, a Steward African Methodist Episcopal parishioner, describes this place. Between the 1950’s and 80’s this nearly 200-year-old church hosted speakers including Dr. Benjamin E. Mays who spoke on the significance of *Brown vs. Kansas Board of Education*, Dr. Mary Mcleod Bethune on appreciating womanhood, and most famously, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to a crowd of 600 in the pouring rain.

Photo courtesy of Middle Georgia Archives



4

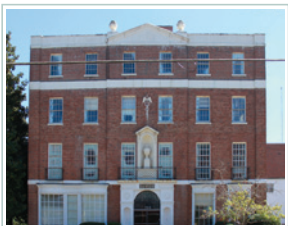
DOCTOR’S BUILDING

700 Spring Street



Completed in 1928, the Doctor’s Building stood directly between what was then known as the Macon Hospital and the Middle Georgia Sanatorium. The building was originally three stories, but McCowan Construction added a matching fourth story under the direction of Dennis and Dennis Architects. Even before this 1939 addition, the building housed 18 doctors, a dentist, x-ray facilities, and a medical library. The building was demolished in 2013 after it was determined that the building no longer met the needs of a modern medical facility. It was replaced with a landscaped area and surface parking lot.

Photo courtesy Historic Macon Foundation



5

DOUGLASS HOUSE

873 Pine Street



Mr. Charles Douglass, one of Macon’s foremost entrepreneurs and African American citizens built the elegant house that once stood here. Douglass had many businesses throughout town, but



perhaps the best known were his hotel and the Douglass Theatre, which still stands on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The house's demolition in November 2014 highlights the development pressure in the neighborhood. As a small silver lining, the loss of the Douglass House and Tremont Temple Baptist Church played a key role in creating a new appreciation for the entire Cotton Avenue area.

Photo courtesy Historic Macon Foundation

6 THE MEDICAL CENTER, NAVICENT HEALTH

818 Pine Street



Founded as the Macon Hospital in 1895, the Medical Center is one of the largest employers in the county. However when it opened, most people detested hospitals as cesspools where society's poorest members went to die. Not long after opening, the Macon Hospital served 126 people in a single year and only lost eight patients. These statistics convinced many of the individuals who had been against opening the hospital that it was a worthwhile facility. By 1908, the hospital had "modern" operating rooms, its own laundry facility, and segregated patient wards. The original brick building no longer stands, but the facility still operates today as The Medical Center, Navicent Health.



Photo courtesy Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives

7 COPLIN WAREHOUSE

624 New Street



This warehouse was home to numerous businesses throughout the 1890's and into the twentieth century. From Glenda's Hair Cove to Allen's Iron Company this warehouse has only housed mom and pop companies. Small business was the heart of the African American economic environment in towns

like Macon and throughout the nation during the segregated era that lasted more than half of the twentieth century. Companies such as Glenda's Hair Cove sustained the economic interest of African Americans within their communities for decades.

Photo courtesy Middle Georgia Archives

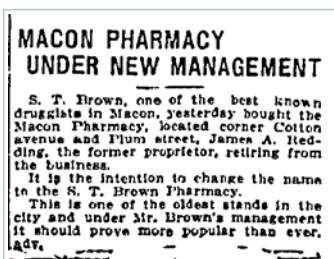
8

MACON PHARMACY

598 D T Walton Sr. Way

Built in 1914, this structure was originally the Macon Pharmacy, which had previously been open next door. By 1916, the Macon Pharmacy had moved on again, but the White Elk Water Company took up residence in this building. The Independent Cash Market moved in during 1920, but the property is more famous for also housing the Muecke Orchestra on the top floor at that time. The group would practice and perform on the second level. In 1986, the Macon Heritage Foundation assisted Alex C. Habersham, owner of the building, with the rehab of this structure by providing tax credit consulting services.

Advertisement from the Macon Telegraph



9

WALTON BUILDING

591 D T Walton Sr. Way

The Walton Building, and the street it sits on, is named for Dr. D. T. Walton Sr., a local dentist and prominent Civil Rights activist. This building housed the epitome of successful African American business in the area. Multiple businesses were housed in the building from the original Dewitt Walton dentist office to Dixie Tobacco and Candy. However, the building truly flourished thanks to the Dixon John Radio Service and J. L. Montgomery Home Art Supply bringing city wide recognition to the district.

Photo courtesy Middle Georgia Archives



**10**

THE BLACK PAGES

590 D T Walton Sr. Way



Founded in 1991 by Alex C. Habersham, The Macon-Middle Georgia Black Pages and Resource Guide is the perfect example of the Cotton Avenue District's renaissance. The publication serves as a liaison between minority businesses and local citizens. Habersham's aim is to improve the African American community economically through black consumerism of local business. This company not only produces an annual publication but also assists small local businesses with everything from marketing to website construction.

Photo courtesy Middle Georgia Archives

11

CAPRICORN RECORDS OFFICE BUILDING

535 D T Walton Sr. Way

Originally two buildings, this structure is made of a nineteenth century brick building and the concrete block Bibb Fish & Poultry Company. In the late 1960s, Otis Redding and the Walden brothers set up shop as Redwal Music Co. in the right side of the building, after sweeping the chicken heads out. This site, in a black business district, was picked intentionally since this was the first integrated office in Macon. At its height, Redwal, a R&B and soul producer, employed more African American musicians than MoTown.

However, Redding's death in 1967 left the brothers questioning whether or not they could continue without him. To move on, Capricorn Records was established, the genre of Southern

Rock was born, and these two buildings became one structure united by a sleek modern façade. A new owner started rehabilitating this structure in 2015, as part of the area's rebirth.



Photo courtesy The Allman Brothers Band Museum at the Big House

12

CITY HALL*700 Poplar Street*

Constructed in 1838, Macon's City Hall was originally built as the Monroe Railroad and Banking Company. After financial



difficulties, the building became a cotton warehouse. The building changed ownership several times between 1848 and 1860, when City Council purchased the property and moved its offices here. In 1864, the state capitol was relocated to this building after fleeing Sherman's March in Milledgeville. In 1904, City Council put additions on the building, including the prominent Art Deco frieze with "POLICE" on the First Street side. During the Civil Rights movement, City Hall was the setting for many protests, including a major sanitation workers demonstration in 1969. This space remains an active locale for free assembly.

Photo courtesy Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives

13

**WASHINGTON AVENUE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH***939 Washington Avenue*

This church is the oldest African American Presbyterian Church in Georgia. Its congregation formed in 1838, and they started building the first wooden structure on this site in 1869. The congregation selected the steep slope of this site intentionally so that the new church could have a basement. That first structure was completed around 1875. In 1904, the church remodeled the structure you see today in brick. The entire remodel reportedly cost \$8,000, which was paid in full upon the rededication of the building. Maconites have long associated Washington Avenue Presbyterian with its connection to influential African-American civic leaders in the city, just like other churches in this district.



Photo courtesy Middle Georgia Archives

14

**ST. JOSEPH'S
CATHOLIC CHURCH***830 Poplar Street*

With spires soaring 200 feet in the air, it is hard to imagine Macon's skyline without St. Joseph's. However, the building was only completed in



November of 1903. This congregation dates to 1841, and they worshiped in several other spaces, including the basement of this building during the 14-year construction period, before dedicating this sanctuary. The building features over 60 stained glass windows, white Italian marble carvings, statues, and altars, and beautiful columns from Georgia.

Photo courtesy Historic Macon Foundation

15

HUTCHINGS FUNERAL HOME

536 New Street



This business dates back to 1895 when C. H. Hubbard hired C. H. Hutchings, Sr. as the manager for his undertaking business. Although Hutchings, Sr. left this partnership fifteen years later, he stayed in the funeral business. He and his sons opened C. H. Hutchings and Sons in 1910. In 1927, the business moved to a new building at the current location and has been added on and adapted to fit its needs ever since. Today, the business is still in the family with Sharon Hutchings and Starr Hutchings Purdue at the helm. The original structure pictured above is now the site for H&H Restaurant.



Photo courtesy Historic Macon Foundation

16

MITCHELL BUILDING

556 New Street



Although this space is empty today, it once was the site of an African American owned building that stretched through the block from New Street to Cotton Avenue. Originally constructed as the Knights of Pythian Temple in 1914, it was later bought by Dr. and Mrs. Clarence Mitchell. The Mitchell Building was one of the largest black-owned and operated office buildings in Macon. The first story contained retail, while the higher floors served as apartments and a hotel. After demolition, part of it was converted into a pocket park called Capricorn Park, accessible from the D T Walton Sr. Way side.



Photo courtesy Middle Georgia Archives

17

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

595 New Street

Both blacks and whites worshiped at First Baptist church over a century before the abolition of slavery. By 1839 there were almost 100 more African American parishioners than white in the church.

Due to lack of space the African American parishioners were

forced to worship in the parking lot of their former church until their congregation moved to this current location in 1897. The current building features high ceilings and stained glass windows. The church had grown to a size of 2000 before part of the congregation formed Tremont Temple Baptist Church. If you look closely, you will find more information on the front steps and cornerstone of this structure.



Photo courtesy Historic Macon Foundation

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RUTH HARTLEY MOSLEY MEMORIAL WOMEN'S CENTER

626 Spring Street



Ruth Hartley Mosley was born in 1886 in Savannah. After high school, Mrs. Mosley studied to become a nurse and served in many facilities, including the Georgia State Sanatorium in Milledgeville where she was the head nurse of “Colored Females Department.” After marrying Richard Hartley, they moved to Macon, and she returned to school in order to become a licensed mortician at the funeral home Mosley and her husband opened. After Hartley’s death, Mrs. Mosley married Fisher Mosley and became a public health nurse at Bibb County schools. Mrs. Mosley was a leader in Macon’s chapter of the NAACP, organizing sit-ins and serving as a founding member of the Booker T. Washington Community Center. Her legacy lives on today in her beautiful home through the work of the Ruth Hartley Mosley Memorial Women’s Center.



Photos courtesy Ruth Hartley Mosley Women’s Center

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AT ANY HISTORIC SITE IN MACON.



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Historic Macon's preservation success is not just the work of our staff, it's backed by an entire community. "Macon is Preservation" is an advocacy campaign that shows the diversity of preservation efforts in Macon and provides examples of how everyone can be a preservationist. Use the hashtag #maconispreservation to tell your preservation story.



HISTORIC MACON'S MISSION IS
TO REVITALIZE OUR COMMUNITY
BY PRESERVING ARCHITECTURE
AND SHARING HISTORY.

Historic Macon Foundation is a national leader in preservation and a role model for revitalization efforts throughout the country. Our innovative real estate tactics, state and federal tax credit consulting services, advocacy efforts with our Fading Five list of endangered places, educational programming, and low interest loan programs allow Historic Macon to transform our community and demonstrate the powerful impact of saving historic places. We've completed nearly 150 houses and kept 25,000 tons of debris out of the landfill. Since 2014 we've attracted \$5.8M in investments in our target neighborhood, Beall's Hill. Our work allows citizens to take preservation into their own hands. With the help of our community, we are proving that Macon is preservation!

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