



historic
OPELIKA
trail



Cover Photo by John Le

Welcome to Opelika!

We are so glad you've chosen to explore what makes this city a hidden gem in the heart of East Alabama. What you'll soon discover is Opelika's rich history and vibrant restaurant, retail and downtown environment. And, we think you'll agree that the people are charming and gracious.

We hope this tour will offer you a guide through historic Opelika. Please explore the key stops highlighted for you. There's a little treasure around every corner. We also hope you'll share your visit with your friends and family – and us – by using #myopelika and #beopelika. We know you'll cherish your visit to Opelika, and we look forward to making your experience unforgettable.



Penn Yonge House

1.



Spring Villa - 1474 Lee Road 148: This Gothic Revival home was built by Horace King, a freed slave who was of African-Catawba Indian heritage. He was one of the South's most famous bridge builders. This home was built on land featuring a clear 30 acre spring-fed lake. (Circa 1850)

German POW Camp

2.



Marvyn Parkway (Marker): This 800 acre World War II prisoner of war facility contained around 3,000 prisoners until it was disbanded in 1945. The first prisoners housed here were captured by the British and were part of General Erwin Rommel's Africa Corps. (Circa 1942)

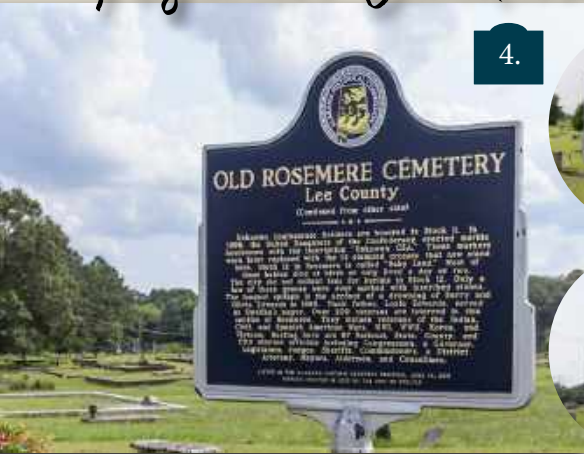
East Street School



3.

VFW Building - 505 Martin Luther King Boulevard: Opelika's only African American school until 1951, it originally had ten classrooms serving students from the first through tenth grades. (Circa 1910-1912)

Rosemere Cemeteries



4.



Auburn Street/Long Street: Markers define the three sections: Old Rosemere, 1869; African American Rosemere, 1876; and, New Rosemere. Buried here are more than 350 veterans who served in the Indian, Civil, Spanish American, both World Wars, Korean and Vietnam Wars. (Circa 1869)

Dr. J. W. Darden House

5.



1323 Auburn Street: Dr. John Wesley Darden was the first African American physician to treat patients in the area and his home became a social and political gathering center. Visitors included Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver and A.G. Gaston. (Circa 1904)

St. Luke AME Church

6.



1308 Auburn Street: In the 1880's, Bishop Henry McNeil Turner welcomed St. Luke into the African Methodist Episcopal Church. After several moves, the church was re-built while Rev. D. H. Bowen was pastor. Descendants of Opelika's founding leaders still attend here. (Circa 1912)

The Gingerbread House



405 South 9th Street: One of a few mid-19th Century Carpenter Gothic houses in Alabama, it resembles the Penn Yonge House at Spring Villa. It was built by John Calhoun Edwards and his wife, Sara Jane Griffin Edwards, who were one of Opelika's earliest families. (Circa 1865)

First Baptist Church



301 South 8th Street: A simple white frame house of worship with steeple and bell was erected under the leadership of Willis B. Jones, the first pastor. In 1881 a fire destroyed the church and a new brick structure was erected in 1885 at a cost of \$12,000. (Circa 1860)

The Confederate Monument

9.



301 South 8th Street: The monument, erected by the Robert E. Lee Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, is 30 feet tall and was carved from Georgia granite and Italian marble. The unveiling ceremony was preceded by a six block long parade. (Circa 1911)

Killgore Park

10.



Avenue B/South 9th Street: James A. and Ophelia Parker Killgore operated a grocery store from 1916-1944. They willed \$1,200,000 for a trust fund to provide Lee County high school graduates with college scholarships. Hundreds of students have benefited from their generosity.

Lee County Courthouse

11.



215 South 9th Street: The first courthouse was built in 1867 by former slave and renowned bridge builder, Horace King. In 1896 it was replaced with the current Neo-Classical courthouse along with winged windows combining both Gothic and classical elements. (Circa 1896)

Lee County Remembrance Project

12.



200 Block S. 9th Street: In partnership with the Equal Justice Initiative, Lee County Remembrance Project is a grassroots initiative that serves to research, educate, and commemorate the victims of racial terror lynchings in Lee County, Alabama from 1887-1950. Learn more: www.leecountyremembrance.org.

Museum of East Alabama

13.



121 South 9th Street: Noteworthy collections at the museum include Roanoke Dolls, WW II POW Camp Opelika display, business history, early sound recording technology items, agricultural implements, firefighting tools, mercantile artifacts and a restored 1899 pump organ.

Bill Roberts Park

14.



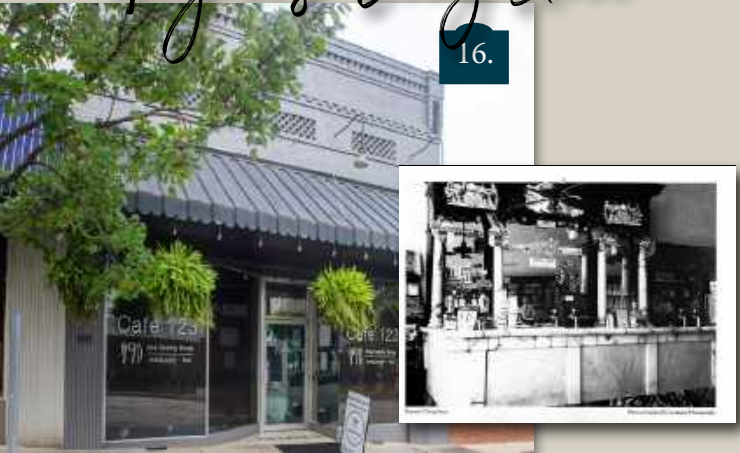
The “Frog”- 901 South Railroad Avenue: Bill Roberts was committed to revitalizing downtown Opelika. He worked to coordinate and finance the construction of a permanent home for the “frog” which is a critical device used to divert a train from one track to another during busy periods.

Old Passenger Depot



1032 South Railroad Avenue: By the 1920's, 24 passenger trains were stopping at the depot each day, including Southern Railroad's famous Crescent Sleeper Car. By 1970, passenger service ended. Opelika's Pre-K Academy now occupies the restored depot.

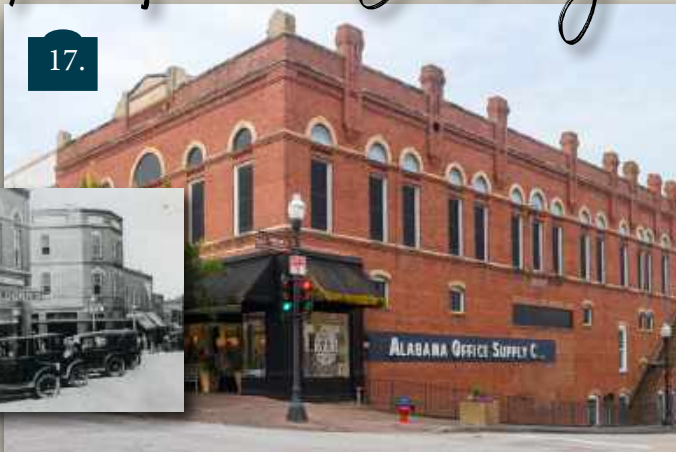
Haynie's Drug Store



123 South 8th Street: J. K. Haynie opened a pharmacy and soda fountain here and it remained operational until 1994. During the 1940's and 1950's, it was a "home away from home" for local teenagers. Café 123 now occupies the site of Haynie's Drug Store. (Circa 1907)

The Hudmon Building

17.



Hagedorn's - 201 South 8th Street: Originally established as a general store, Julius Hagedorn opened Hagedorn's Dry Goods Store which sold clothing, shoes and housewares in 1918. This vital Opelika business quickly became East Alabama's fashion center for the next 50 years. (Circa 1898)

First United Methodist Church

18.



702 Avenue A: With 22 members in 1837, the Lebanon Methodist Episcopal Church was the first religious organization in the area. In 1879 it was moved to its present location and eventually became Methodist Episcopal Church South – Opelika Station. In 1987, it was restored to its original beauty and became First United Methodist Church. (Circa 1879)

Federal Building



19.



U.S. Courthouse – 701 Avenue A: Designed by James A. Wetmore and originally used as a U.S. Post Office, the building reflects a Renaissance Revival exterior and Colonial Revival interior. It currently serves as the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama. (Circa 1915)

Whitfield-Duke-Searcy House



20.

601 Avenue A: This Queen Anne Victorian home was built by John Whitfield, owner of ALAGA Syrup and Whitfield Pickles. In 1902 the house was purchased by Judge Lum Duke whose daughter, Inez Duke Searcy, became Lee County's first female attorney. (Circa 1895)

Emmanuel Episcopal Church

21.



800 1st Avenue: Built of native fieldstone from the Clayton plantation north of the city, this is Opelika's oldest public building. It was consecrated in 1862, destroyed by a tornado in 1869 and laid with the present church's cornerstone on Easter, 1872.

William C. Davis Heritage House

22.



714 2nd Avenue: A 1911 news clipping hailed the Davis Neoclassical house as being “one of the prettiest, not only in this city but in any city in the state.” The house, built for \$12,000, includes ashlar block stone foundations and a Spanish tile roof. It now operates as a bed and breakfast. (Circa 1912)

Fob James House



302 3rd Avenue: This Colonial Revival house was home to Alabama's 48th two-term governor, Fob James, who served as both a Democrat and Republican. He played Auburn football, was named 1955's All-American halfback and played for the Montreal Alouettes. (Circa 1945)

Municipal "Monkey" Park



Denson Drive/Park Road: The Rocky Brook Rocket, a miniature 1:16 replica train, was the park's first attraction along with Monkey Village. The Village habitat housed eight spider monkeys who provided entertainment to park visitors for almost 25 years. (Circa 1955)

Salem Shotwell Bridge

25.



Park Road: Southeast Alabama's last surviving covered bridge was originally built by Otto Puls over Wacoochee Creek. Town's lattice truss design, longleaf heart pine, white oak pegs and cedar shakes were used to build the 75-foot-long bridge. (Circa 1900)

Dallas B. Smith Armory

26.



601 7th Avenue: Named in honor of World War I veteran, Dallas "Dal" Smith, who was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Purple Heart and a Regimental Citation. The Lieutenant Colonel commanded the 3rd Battalion of the 167th Regiment. (Circa 1938)

Brownfield House



11 North 8th Street: Prior to the Civil War, this house was built by Dr. Brownfield, one of Opelika's first physicians. An example of the transition from Greek Revival to Victorian Gothic, it was restored by the Opelika Historic Preservation Society. (Circa 1850)

Denson House



400 North 8th Street: This Greek Revival home was built by Judge and Mrs. Nimrod Denson and anchors the Northside Historic District. Judge Denson's career included serving in the State's Senate and House of Representatives and on the Alabama Supreme Court. (Circa 1890)

William J. Samford House

29.



400 North 9th Street: This classic Victorian home was built by William J. Samford, Alabama's 32nd governor. A lawyer and the state's finest orator of the post-Civil War era, he also served in the U.S. Congress and Alabama's House of Representatives and Senate. (Circa 1890)

Lock House

30.



501 North 10th Street: This two-story, brick residence is an excellent example of Mission Revival style. Its design includes a hip roof covered with clay tiles, brackets under the eaves, curvilinear gable parapets and brick columns with decorative tile inlays. (Circa 1920)

St. Mary's Catholic Church



31.

402 10th Street: The Vincentians chose this site for the first Catholic Church in East Alabama because “no city of the South has better railroad facilities, is more convenient for transportation and has better connection with the surrounding country.” (Circa 1910)

West Point Pepperell Water Tower & Smokestack



32.

1st Avenue: Throughout much of the 20th century, the Pepperell Mill was Opelika's largest industry sparking population and commercial growth. The city's numerous rail connections and capital investment were incentives for locating the mill here. (Circa 1925)

Opelika's Early History

- 1832:** Creek Indian Nation cedes last of its lands east of the Mississippi to the United States; southern tip later becomes Opelika – a name likely taken from the Indian words “Opilu-Taka” or “Big Swamp”
- 1834:** Wealthy planters seek railroad charter from state legislature; two surveyors for the projected rail line from Atlanta to Montgomery – Charles Byrd and L.P. Grant – purchase 80 acres on each side of railroad; Grant establishes a land company and sells lots, donating a lot for each denomination to build its church
- 1837:** Daniel Bullard builds Lebanon, a Methodist Church of split logs and boards, two miles from Opelika
- 1839:** Postal service established
- 1848 - 1850s:** Railroad completed from Montgomery to Opelika; expansion to West Point in 1851 attracts trade to Alabama; churches move to Opelika in 1851; forms an important nucleus for the early growth of the village
- 1864-1865:** Opelika's government supply warehouses, depot, rolling stock, and railroads, are targets of Federal raiders Rousseau and Wilson
- 1870s-1880s:** Emmanuel Episcopal Church built in 1872; first street lights appear in 1877; business district replaces old wooden pavements with the first brick paving and the wooden sewers with brick sewers in 1886
- 1890:** South's largest interior cotton press- capacity up to 75,000 bales per year- and availability of warehouses on an important railroad, reduces freight cost for the area cotton growers and increases business in the Opelika commercial district; other industries contribute to steady growth and prosperity: a planning mill (1873) and furniture factory, iron foundry (1882), a knitting mill, and a lime works
- 1896:** Reflecting city's growing influence in region, a new courthouse is built; neoclassical revival building is designed by architectural firm of J. B. Ryan
- 1909:** Farmer's National Bank constructs new three-story brick building; two years later, architect James A. Wetmore designs new post office and Federal offices

Industrial and economic factors combine with prime location and create Opelika: the railroad capital of East Alabama.



trail map



CITY OF
OPELIKA

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

334-705-5155
www.opelika-al.gov



SCAN CODE
FOR DIGITAL
TRAIL MAP

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