

# HISTORIC DOWNTOWN HATTIESBURG



**TH**  
*downtown*  
HATTIESBURG, MS

# WALKING TOUR

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# HISTORIC DOWNTOWN HATTIESBURG

**I**n 1868, Captain William Harris Hardy, lumberman and engineer, conceived the idea of building a railroad from Meridian to New Orleans. While on a survey trip in August of 1880, Captain Hardy stopped to rest on the north side of Gordon's Creek and spread a map of Mississippi on the ground. Believing a railroad from the Gulf Coast to Jackson would be beneficial, he drew a line through the virgin pine forest intersecting the New Orleans and North Eastern Railroad and decided to locate a train station here. The City of Hattiesburg, first known as Twin Forks then Gordonville, received its final name in honor of Captain Hardy's wife, Hattie.

In 1884, the City of Hattiesburg was incorporated, and the railroad was completed from Meridian through Hattiesburg to New Orleans. Northern investors saw the commercial value of the virgin pine and quickly bought up cheap timberlands. The completion of the Gulf and Ship Island RR in 1894 from the coast to Jackson ushered in the real timber boom. The line made Hattiesburg a railroad center, giving way to the nickname "The Hub City."

After a period of rapid growth (1890-1930), Historic Downtown had several movie theaters, an opera house, an opened air theatre and a public library. Of these, the Saenger Theater and the historic library have survived. The Hub City Historic District, established in 2019, reflects Hattiesburg's evolution from depot stop to the regional center of Southeast Mississippi.

By 1920, Hattiesburg had become Mississippi's fourth largest city. The area's prosperity led to the creation of Forrest County in 1908 with Hattiesburg serving



**DAVIDSON BUILDING, CIRCA 1929**

as the county seat. In 1912, the city became home to Mississippi Normal College, now the University of Southern Mississippi, and Mississippi Woman's College in 1911, now William Carey University.

The Hub City Historic District retains a number of architecturally significant buildings. Architectural styles range from turn-of-the-century row buildings to Classical Revival banking institutions, Commercial Prairie office buildings, and an Art Deco post office. The city's center is defined by its combination of cohesive setting, local institutions, and range of architectural styles, conveying a distinctly urban sense of time and place within a mostly rural state.

The source of the region's wealth was finite. By 1915, large areas of timber were cut out, and companies began dismantling their sawmills. The demands of World War I provided an artificial stimulus, but lumbering reached a low ebb in the 1930s. Hattiesburg survived due to its role as regional center and shipping point. Experiments with reforestation and the oil industries supplied the city's economy with new incentives. The reactivation of Camp Shelby in World War II and the expansion of the University of Southern Mississippi also made significant contributions to the city's economy.

# HISTORIC DOWNTOWN HATTIESBURG WALKING TOUR



## 1. HISTORIC TRAIN DEPOT – 308 NEWMAN ST.

Built in 1910, the depot was acquired by the city and restored in 2007, as an Inter-modal Transportation Center servicing Amtrak and the South-East High-Speed Rail Corridor. The depot provides space for public gatherings, making it once again a center of civic activity. It is the last surviving depot in downtown. Two retired train engines reside at the station. One is the Bonhomie & Hattiesburg Southern No. 300, built in 1925 and retired in 1961.



## 2. SPIRE (WILLMUT GAS BUILDING) – 315 MAIN ST.

Formerly serving as the Bonhomie and Hattiesburg Southern R.R. passenger depot, the two-story brick Italian Renaissance building was built in 1931. It has a hipped clay tile roof and wood rafter tails at the eaves. This building served as the Willmut Gas Company, owned by W.S.F. Tatum, until it was sold in 2012 and is now owned Spire Energy.



## 3. KRESS BUILDING – 500 N MAIN ST.

Kress was an important part of the downtown commercial scene for many years, serving as the “five and dime” store on Main Street. Built in 1930 in the Art Deco Style, this three-story, tan brick building has intricate glazed terracotta at the cornice between each bay. The store closed in 1975, and after renovation in 1983, the building housed the Deposit Guaranty National Bank and more recently the Regions Mortgage Center.



## 4. BANK OF COMMERCE – 519 MAIN ST.

The original building built in 1907 has been replaced by a smaller landscaped courtyard. The point of interest here is the surviving elements of the original façade, a giant order round-arch entrance with keystone surmounted by decorated pediment and monitor cornice.



## 5. MONTAGUE, PITTMAN & VARNADO – 525 MAIN ST.

Built in 1903 as the Hawkins & Company Building, this three-story brick row building has a raised parapet at the primary facade. Facade is stuccoed and scored to appear as stone units. Segmental arched windows are slightly recessed between pilasters with corbel tables placed between the second and third floors. This building still serves as an office building, including residents focused on law, journalism, and fashion.



## 6. U.S. POST OFFICE – 115 W PINE ST.

As one of 32 post offices constructed in the state with Public Works Administration funds during the Great Depression, it was built in 1934 in the Art Deco Style by Juan G. Landrey and Rathbone Dupuys. The exterior building material is limestone with a granite-clad foundation, which rises to the main floor level. The stairway is flanked by two large limestone abutments, upon which rest two free-standing lantern standards.

The lobby contains a polychrome marble floor arranged in long bands, marble wainscoting, several decorative, cast metal panels set into the wall, a stenciled ceiling design around the perimeter, and seven octagonal ceiling light fixtures. Three permanent cast metal tables on marble bases grace the lobby's entrance. A passageway above the entry vestibules has decorative metal grillwork on the balustrades.



### **7. FORREST TOWERS – 128 W PINE ST.**

Forrest Towers was built in 1929 in the Art Deco Style as The Forrest Hotel. The building is noted for its stylized decorations, including chevron and lozenge moldings, volutes, and giant eagles on the corners of the top floor. The Forrest Hotel was originally built as an economic development package, along with the Saenger Theater, to attract rail travelers to spend time in the Hub City.



### **8. OLD FEDERAL BUILDING – 200 W PINE ST. (NR)**

Built in 1910 in the Italian Renaissance Style by architect James Knox Taylor, the symmetrical façade of Calcutta Gold marble features a recessed entry and full-height columns. The roof is low-pitched in the classical mode and has wide overhangs with decorative brackets.

Serving as the first U.S. Post office until 1935, the building was remodeled in 1939 and was used by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi until 1974. It now houses the Hattiesburg Municipal Court. This building is listed individually with the National Register of Historic Places.

In front of the building is the marker where Captain William Harris Hardy, founder of Hattiesburg, picked the location of Hattiesburg's railroad station and named the town in honor of his wife, Hattie.



### **9. HATTIESBURG CITY HALL – 200 FORREST ST.**

This Neo-Classical Revival government building was built in 1923 by noted architect Robert Emmett Lee. Serving as City Hall, it is a three-story brick building on a basement of stone blocks. The windows have stone sills and pedimented cornices. The front entrance at the east facade has an impressive two-story pedimented portico supported on Doric columns; however, the original building had a matching façade of an even grander scale on the south façade.



### **10. SAENGER THEATER – 201 FORREST ST. (NR)**

Built in 1929, the Hattiesburg Saenger Theater is an elegant, 1000-seat movie palace built in Art Deco Style. First renovated in 1976, it still houses one of few remaining original Robert Morton Theatre Pipe Organs, which were used during the silent movie era. The Saenger underwent a \$3.5 million restoration in 2000. The building is listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places.



### **11. THE DAVIDSON BUILDING [REGIONS BANK BUILDING] – 130 W FRONT ST.**

Originally built as a department store in 1931, it also served as a USO. The First Federal Bank renovated it in 1961 before Magnolia Federal Bank altered it again in 1970. The building is slated for renovation to its historic appearance and will be converted into residential and commercial space.



### **12. CONEY ISLAND - 400 MAIN ST.**

Coney Island has been a family run restaurant in Downtown Hattiesburg since it's started in 1923 by a Greek immigrant, Arthur Fokakis. Arthur got his start selling fruit from a pushcart at this location. Before long he leased the property and built an open-front fruit stand, eventually he added on to build the café as it stands today. The restaurant has been in operation by the same family since 1923.

# HISTORIC DOWNTOWN WALKING



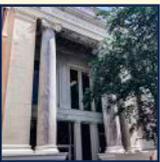
## 13. CARTER BUILDING – 501-509 MAIN ST.

Constructed in 1910, this six-story building was one of the first skyscrapers in Hattiesburg, containing elements of the Commercial Vernacular, Wright and the Prairie School styles. Originally built by a group of physicians for medical offices, this building retains the characteristic turn of the century elements, including flat and arched fenestration ornamented with dripstones and rock-faced masonry, and cast iron columns and cornices. It is named for John Prentiss Carter, who served as Mississippi lieutenant governor from 1904–08. In 1973, it was renamed the Faulkner Building after Lewis Edward Faulkner, owner of Faulkner Concrete. The building was renamed the Carter Building in 2013 when it underwent a \$13 million renovation to house multiple lofts on the upper levels as well as retail and office space on the first floor.



## BRASS FOOTPRINTS OF WES FAIRLEY

The brass footprints were installed in the sidewalk in 1903 as part of advertising campaign for a clothing store and a shoe store in the Carter Building. The 14" long foot prints belong to John Wesley Fairley. Fairley was born enslaved in 1840, joined the Union Army at the end of the Civil War, and went on to become a successful businessman and landowner. The store owner ran advertisements that a "mysterious giant" had walked downtown to successfully buy a suit and foot wear. When the City replaced the sidewalks in 1983, they carefully replaced the footprints in their original locations.



## 14. HATTIESBURG TRUST & BANKING CO. – 111 E FRONT ST.

A Neo-Classical Revival building built in 1907, this two-story row building features a stone finish, marble steps to recessed portico carried on giant order ionic columns of marble, and a coffered porch ceiling decorated with rosettes. The stone entablature consists of Ionic column caps, an architrave with three fascia, a frieze decorated on the edges with a layered leaf pattern and a carved stone name plate reading "Incorporated A.D. 1905" in the center.



## 15. ODDFELLOWS BUILDING – 119 E FRONT ST.

This building was named after The Hattiesburg Independent Order of Odd Fellows, which was a benevolent and non-denominational fraternity founded in England in the mid-1700s. All faiths were allowed into the Brotherhood. Having no formal place to worship in the city, the Order's many Jewish members used the building for gatherings from 1900 to 1920. Originally, the building only had two stories until architect Robert Emmett Lee completed a third level in four months without the help of any modern equipment.



## 16. AMERICA BUILDING [FORMERLY THE ROSS BUILDING] – 207 E FRONT ST.

Originally built in 1907, the America Building is a staple in the downtown Hattiesburg community and has been known by many different names in its 100-year history. The five-story corner building with round-arch corner entrances is embellished with cast-iron cornices with dentils and pillar capitals composed of geometric Wright/Prairie-Style motifs. Most notably, the building was the home to the famous Hub City Sign, erected on the roof in 1912. Part of Hub City Lofts, the America Building is now four floors of 1- and 2-bedroom apartments and commercial ground floor spaces.

# TOWN HATTIESBURG BIG TOUR



## 17. FORREST COUNTY COURTHOUSE – 630 MAIN ST.

This Neo-Classical Revival structure was built in 1905 and remodeled in 1922. The Courthouse is a three-story brick structure with stone trim, a raised basement, and main entrance at the second floor. The two-story balconied portico is supported by Ionic columns. It features stone trim at lintels, string courses, pilaster bases and capitals at cornice. For a time, it was customary to execute people in the courthouse in which they were sentenced. Between 1940 and 1955, approximately a dozen individuals were executed in this courthouse with a portable electric chair called "Old Sparky."



## 18. FORREST COUNTY JUSTICE COURT – 700 MAIN ST.

Constructed in 1919 for Hattiesburg Masonic Lodge No. 397, the building was designed by local architect Robert Emmett Lee in a Neoclassical style. The Masonic Temple is three stories and over 15,000 sq. ft. Masonic legends trace the origins of Freemasonry back to the construction of King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. In 2003, the temple was designated a Mississippi Historic Landmark. Forrest County purchased the building in 2008, and it now houses the Forrest County Justice Court.



## 19. MAIN ST. UNITED METHODIST CHURCH – 712 MAIN ST.

This cornerstone building was first laid in 1907 with construction and fundraising completed in 1910. Main Street United Methodist Church was founded in 1833, making it the earliest Methodist church in Hattiesburg. The church is a one-and-a-half-story masonry structure built in Gothic Revival style that features stained-glass windows and wood panel interior.



## 20. MCLEOD-DEAKLE HOUSE – 802 MAIN ST.

Built in 1897, the McLeod-Deakle House is among the few surviving residential structures in the Hub City Historic District. It was built in the splendid Queen Anne style for John A. McLeod, Sr., pioneer merchant and banker. The house has not been altered since it was built, and many original furnishings remain. The house is noted for its stained and etched glass, interior woodwork and decorative exterior wood trim dripping with gingerbread scrollwork, curved porches and turrets. It is now home to Deakle-Johnson Law Firm.



## 21. MCLEOD BUNGALOW – 104 MCLEOD ST.

Built in 1925, this one-and-a-half-story frame bungalow has battered piers at the corners of the front porch, a gable roof with central gabled dormer with battered sides, rafter-tails, and brackets supporting extended eaves.



## 22. OLD HATTIESBURG HIGH SCHOOL – 846 MAIN ST.

Originally built in 1912, this building served as the white city high school until 1959. In 1921, the Jacobean style façade was added to the front of the original structure. From 1959 to 1989, the Hattiesburg Public School District's administrative offices were located here. In 2003, the building was listed as one of the ten most endangered historic places in Mississippi by the Mississippi Heritage Trust. It was damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and was set on fire in 2007. In 2019-20, a \$13.2 million renovation converted it into Preservation Crossing, a 74-unit age restricted, affordable housing complex.



**23. HATTIESBURG HISTORIC LIBRARY – 723 MAIN ST.**

Built in 1929-30 in Italian Renaissance style, this two-story brick building was reopened in the fall of 2000 as the Hattiesburg Cultural Center and is home to the Hattiesburg Historical Society and Museum and the Hattiesburg Arts Council.



**24. THE BOTTLING COMPANY – 126 MOBILE ST.**

Built in 1910, this building is a prime example of the continuing reconstruction of Historic Downtown Hattiesburg. Formerly a Coca-Cola bottling plant, it is a two-story brick free standing traditional commercial building with flat roof and parapet. The central bay projects slightly and contains an arched entrance on the first floor with double-leaf wood paneled and plate glass doors. A large bay to the left of the entrance contains a grouping of seven single-light plate glass windows over stuccoed bulkheads, topped by steel frame divided-light transoms.

**25. SMITH DRUG COMPANY – 604 MOBILE ST.**

Smith Drug Co. was founded in 1925 by Dr. Hammond Smith. This once-bustling pharmacy was a hub for families in the Mobile-Bouie neighborhood for 55 years with its soda fountain and retail store. In addition to medical supplies and services, Smith Drug Co. served as a key voter registration site during the civil rights era. The building was acquired by the City in late 2019 and is being restored by the Hattiesburg Convention Commission.



**26. EUREKA SCHOOL – 410 E SIXTH ST.**

The Eureka School served as the first school for African Americans in Hattiesburg, opening for the 1921 term. Construction began in 1918, and after the community could not decide on a name, the school was called "Eureka."

Eureka served grades 1-12 from 1921 to 1949 before turning into an elementary school from 1949 to 1987. Upon its closure, the campus became a community education center. The Eureka-Royal Street-Rowan Alumni Association supported this historic school and provided the early funding for an adaptive reuse plan for the building and site. The restoration of the Historic Eureka School began in 2006 and was completed in phases in the fall of 2018. The longterm plan is for it to be a civil rights museum, focusing on Hattiesburg's role in the movement, and an event space.



**27. OSEOLA MCCARTY HOUSE MUSEUM – 310 E SIXTH ST.**

Oseola McCarty (1908-1999) was raised in Hattiesburg by her grandmother and aunt. They earned a living primarily by washing and pressing clothes. Oseola attended Eureka Elementary but dropped out in the sixth grade so she could care for her frail aunt and join the family laundry business. She lived a frugal life and saved the majority of her earnings.

In 1995, McCarty donated approximately \$150,000 to The University of Southern Mississippi as financial aid for college students. Her gift was a worldwide phenomenon, resulting in Oseola becoming USM's most famous donor. Her home was purchased by the Hattiesburg Convention Commission and relocated to the Sixth Street Museum District in 2019, where it is currently being transformed into a museum space to honor her legacy.

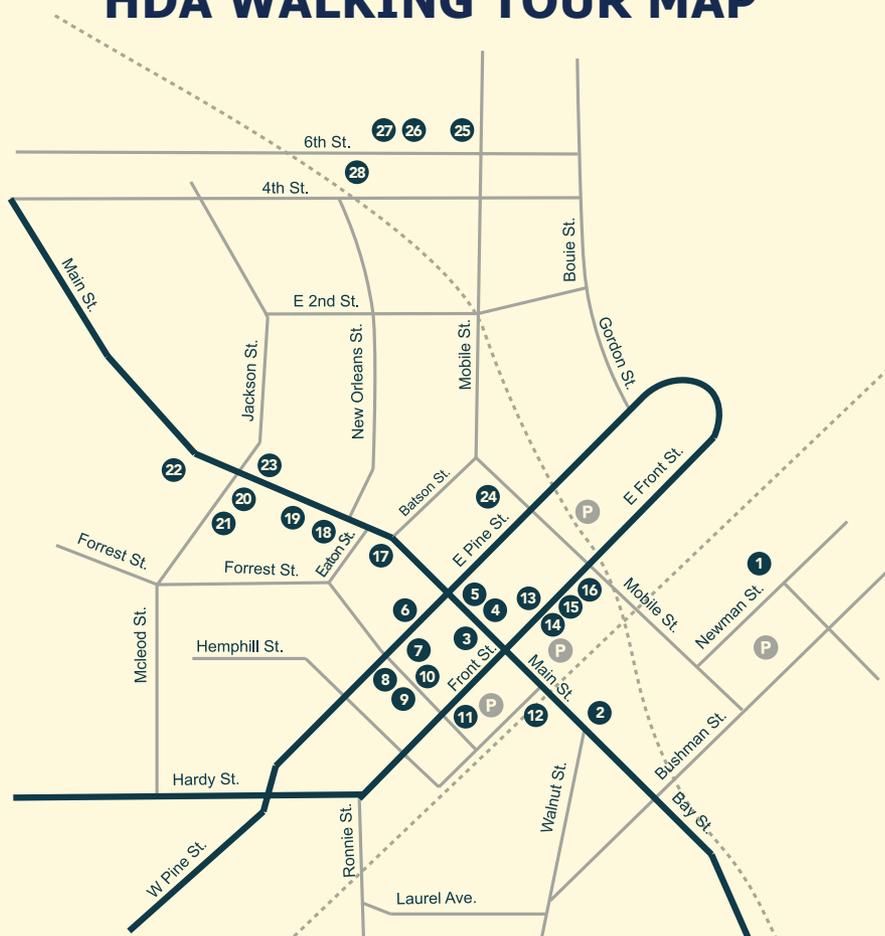
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## 28. AFRICAN AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORY MUSEUM – 305 E 6TH ST.

Opening on March 22, 1942, the Historic Sixth Street USO Club served African American soldiers during World War II. It was constructed by community volunteers. Placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009, it is currently the only surviving USO of its type. The USO is now home to the African American Military History Museum, which documents African Americans' contributions to wars throughout U.S. history.

## HDA WALKING TOUR MAP



Use the camera on your Smart Phone to scan this code for a virtual tour experience.

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