Old Town Rock Hill, SC

Historic Walking Tour
In 1851, Rock Hill was just a railway stop between Columbia and Charlotte. By 1929, a prosperous, progressive city had emerged, with tree-lined streets and beautiful family homes, thriving businesses and artisans, even its own Opera House and the South's best known women's college. But most fascinating were the people who lived here. Explore our town's proud past — a past shaped by Southerners who weren't afraid to grow and change, to imagine a new world for themselves.

Take a step back in time and stroll through historic Old Town Rock Hill...

Tour length approx 1.25 miles Maps not to scale, locations are approximate

1. Historic Panels (803) 323-3201

2. Catawba Indian Nation (803) 323-3202

3. First ARP Church 201 E White St (803) 323-3203

Founded in 1895, the present sanctuary was begun in 1897. The church’s slate roof is original and is one of the few remaining slate roofs in the city.

4. Coca-Cola Bottling Company building 153 E White St (803) 323-3204 to 15: 1000, Mark Mauldin’s plant employed five people and put out fifty cases of Coca-Cola a day. The bottles were all washed by hand, and the workers had to mix the syrup and carbonated water themselves.

5. Cotton Trade (803) 323-3205

6. Train Depots (historic marker) (803) 323-3206

The town’s train depot was built on ground obtained from Alexander Templeton Black and Mrs. Ann Hutchison White. In laying the track, construction crews bumped into a rocky hill, hence our town’s name, Rock Hill.

7. Cotton Factory 300 Chatham Ave (803) 323-3207

Over 100 years ago, this steam-powered textile mill changed Rock Hill, transforming it from a strictly agricultural community to a home of industry. The Cotton Factory opened in 1881 with 100 workers making cotton yarn. By 1895, looms were in operation, and the mill was producing many kinds of fabric and cotton rope. Rock Hill’s population grew from 809 in 1880 to over 5,000 in 1900.

Continue your tour starting from the 1. Historic Panels.
13. Comporium Telephone Museum
117 Elk Ave • (803) 323-3213
Wander down Elk Avenue to find the Comporium Telephone Museum. This museum teaches visitors about the beginnings of the Rock Hill Telephone Company (now Comporium) and describes the important work done by installers, repairmen, and telephone operators. Admission is free.

11. HH White Building
132 E Main St • (803) 323-3211
This building was constructed in 1890 and is listed on 1894 maps as housing a barber shop, a post office, a drug store, and an armory. Over the years, the space has been used for church services, club meetings, dances, readings, lectures, and plays.

15. City / Village of Rock Hill
(803) 323-3215
As you continue down Main Street, note the Village of Rock Hill historical marker. Main Street itself was laid out on Alexander Templeton Black’s land by Squire John Roddey in 1851.

14. McCrory’s (former location)
135 E Main St • (803) 323-3214
On January 31, 1961, nine students from Friendship Junior College in Rock Hill came to McCrory’s and sat down at the “Whites Only” lunch counter, a consequence of segregation. Crossing 30 days of hard labor at the county jail over paying $200 fines, they became the first sit-in protesters of the Civil Rights Movement to be imprisoned. After the local media reported on what had occurred here in Rock Hill, the “ Jail, No Bail” movement swept through the South. Thanks to these young people, Civil Rights activists across the nation found a new way to protest social injustice.

10. Friedheim Building
113 E Main St • (803) 323-5200
Friedheim’s Store, run by brothers Arnold and August, opened in February of 1899, claiming to have the largest stock of goods in Upper South Carolina. The young ladies who came to Winthrop College would shop here, as would local merchants and farmers. Mr. Friedheim proved an important service to the people of Rock Hill, buying and selling cotton farm goods, buggies, farm tools, and fine clothing. His store was a place of dignity and charm, and it stayed open for over a century.

(803) 323-5209
Continued along N Dave Lyle Blvd, turn left onto E Main St

8. The Rock
(803) 323-5208
Continue your tour starting from the Hampton Inn and flip the page

Continue along N Dave Lyle Blvd, turn left onto E Main St

You Are Here:
16. City Hall
(former location)
191 E Black St
• (803) 323-3216
At the turn of the century, the mayor of Rock Hill had an office above a storefront on Main Street. In 1910, an official building was constructed in what is today a municipal parking lot. Located on Hampton Street, it was titled the “Municipal Building, Fire Department and Armory.” Later, when a larger space was needed, our current City Hall was built.

17. Black Street
(historic marker)
151 E Main St • (803) 323-5257
This historic marker honors Alexander Templeton Black. He created and sold 23 town lots along Main Street, fulfilling his dream to establish a town here. The other side of the marker describes General Wade Hampton and the 1876 South Carolina gubernatorial election.

18. City Hall (current day)
155 Johnston St • (803) 323-3218
This City Hall building was constructed in the 1970s. Inside, you can find one of the five “Civitas” statues commissioned by the Rock Hill Economic Development Corporation in 1989. Designed by artist Audrey Flack, the beautiful “Civitas” statue reminds us of Rock Hill’s textile history, as her clothing and hair look like billowing ribbons of fabric. The other four Civitas statues are located at the intersection of Dave Lyle Blvd and Gateway Blvd.

19. McCosh House
224 E Black St • (803) 323-5219
The McCosh House is the oldest brick house still standing in Rock Hill. The interior contains the original woodwork and mantles and many of the original window sashes. This home was built in 1872 by Captain and Mrs. Reid H. McCosh, who moved to Rock Hill from Chester. In 1867, Mrs. McCosh helped to organize the First Baptist Church. The McCosh’s son, Edgar, died at the age of 14 and was the first person buried in Rock Hill’s new cemetery, Laurelwood. The home is classified as a late Victorian period cottage.

20. First Presbyterian Church
234 E Main St • (803) 323-3220
The church started as a mission in 1855 by the Presbyterian Church in Ebenezer. The present building dates from 1895. In addition to serving as a Presbyterian church, this building has also been involved in developing educational opportunities in the area. The first public school in Rock Hill was started through their efforts in 1888. Additionally, with Beverly Presbyterian, the church built the first Presbyterian High School in 1887. It became a public high school that is now part of the Winthrop building complex of Winthrop University.

Continue your tour starting from the

You Are Here:

Continue along Hampton St, turn left onto E Black St

16. City Hall
17. Black Street
18. City Hall (current day)
19. McCosh House
20. First Presbyterian Church
21. Turn around and proceed toward S Oakland Ave
22. Continue your tour starting from the

You Are Here:
The First Baptist Church of Rock Hill was founded in 1878. In 1918, the beautiful structure before you was constructed. Note the yellow brick and unique architecture. The building is modeled on the lines of a Greek Temple, and is very classical in appearance.

The McFadden Building was built in 1929 for City Motors, a Buick dealership. An architectural detail of note, look for a spoked wheel at the top of the building.

The Andrew Jackson Hotel (Guardian Building) was originally constructed in 1926 as the Andrew Jackson Hotel. Funded by local investors, the Andrew Jackson Hotel provided an example of the entrepreneurial character of the local people of Rock Hill. They wanted to give dignity to the thriving industrial area and create an elegant space for important visitors. In the late 1930s, many stars of early country and gospel music, such as the Monroe Boys, the Delmore Brothers, and South Carolina native Arthur Smith, recorded hit songs for RCA in sessions here.

The Tom S. Gettys Center, originally called The Federal Building, is formed of granite, limestone and brick. The inside has curving stairways and brass rails, and the courtroom itself has lovely walnut paneling and a 20 foot high, ornate plaster ceiling. Tom S. Gettys served as postmaster when this building was first used as a post office. He was also a school principal, an attorney, and a statesman. He served as a South Carolina congressman for the 5th district from 1964-1975.

The Citizens Building is a 5-story, steel-framed building. It was built in 1925, and, at that time, people said that it served as a major architectural statement. It was designed to impress, and to represent Rock Hill's success and modernity.
30. The White Home
258 E White St  • (803) 323-3230

This ante-bellum home, known as The White Home, was built about 1839. This modest farm, typical of the Piedmont area, went through five stages of construction in the years between 1839 and 1869. The farm was built by George Pendleton White, of Fort Mill, and his wife, Ann Hutchison White, of Nation Ford. They moved here as newlyweds, and over the years they transformed a one-room dwelling into the lovely, spacious home you see before you today. The White family influenced the development of the railroads, of downtown churches, and of schools in Rock Hill.

29. East Town Neighborhood  • (803) 323-3229

East Town Neighborhood was one of the first of Rock Hill. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, this area was full of lovely family homes. The neighborhood comprised of merchants, managers, bankers and other influential people who worked in the downtown businesses.

28. St. John’s United Methodist Church
321 S Oakland Ave  • (803) 323-3228

St. John’s United Methodist Church is Rock Hill’s first fully organized congregation. The congregation is now at its third site. The Methodist Church in Rock Hill was first organized in 1856, hosting services at a girls’ school, Pine Grove Academy. Later, the congregation moved from the girls’ academy to a building on Main and Caldwell streets. Then, in 1924, a cornerstone was laid for their third location, the building you see here today. This building has features of classical architecture, with Gothic Classic Revival influences.

27. Episcopal Church
140 Caldwell St  • (803) 323-3227

The Episcopal Church of Our Savior is the oldest existing church building in Rock Hill. The original wooden building from 1872 can still be seen in the central part of the nave, the chancel, and the sanctuary. Colonel Cadwallader Jones moved to Rock Hill from North Carolina in 1857, and his family began holding Episcopal Church services in their plantation home, Mount Gallant. In 1872, the Episcopal congregation purchased land from the White family and moved their church here, to downtown Rock Hill. The church was remodeled in 1908 with a brick veneer and stained glass windows.

26. Former Post Office / Library
325 S Oakland Ave  • (803) 323-3226

This Post Office building, originally located on E Main Street, designed under the supervision of James Knox Taylor, architect of our US Treasury. When it became too small to serve as a post office, the building was moved to the Oakland Avenue location on logs, then used as a library.

25. East Town Neighborhood

24. St. John’s United Methodist Church
23. Episcopal Church
22. Former Post Office / Library

Continue your tour starting from the 

Continue on S Oakland Ave, turn right onto E White St
Historic Tour Sponsors

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