Brief History of the City of Fayetteville by: John W. Lynch

Both Fayetteville and Fayette County are named for the Marquis De Lafayette, a French nobleman who aided Washington during the Revolutionary War. Fayetteville, Georgia was established on March 28, 1823, then becoming the county seat of Fayette, which had been created two years prior. The land for the town was purchased from Mr. James M. Post for $800. Mr. Larkin Bell laid out the town lots, and #20 was the first lot sold for $20 in 1823. (It is now a public parking lot across from the NE corner of the courthouse.) A jail was soon built in 1824, and construction of the courthouse began in 1825.
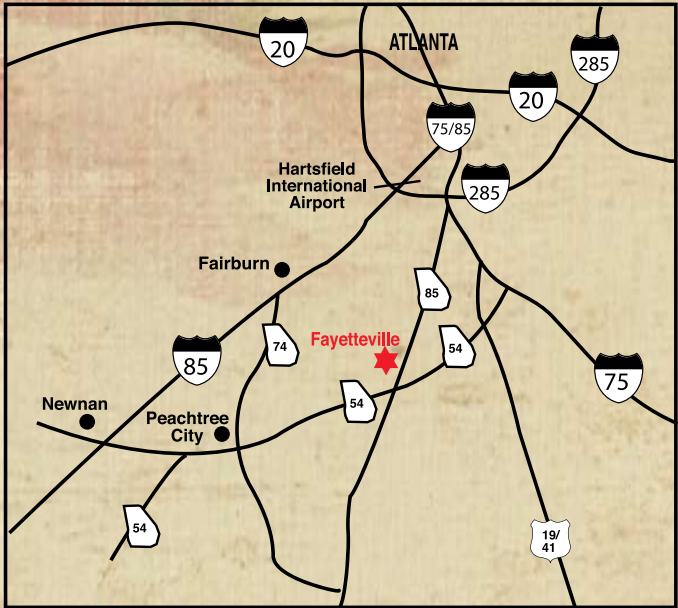
The courthouse square looked quite different during that time. There were only five roads accessing the courthouse: Zebulon Road (now Lee Street), McDonough Road (South Jeff Davis), Decatur Road (Hwy 54 East), Carrollton Road (Hwy 85/92 North), and Newnan Road (Stonewall Ave). Surrounding the grounds was a zigzag rail fence that was utilized to secure horses and horse-drawn buggies and wagons. Watering troughs were built and used on all four sides.

In 1849, the town of Fayetteville had grown to include a wooden jail, two schools, three stores, five groceries, and several mechanic shops. There was also a Masonic Lodge, a printing shop, and a division of the Sons of Temperance, which most likely used one of the churches to hold its meetings. These buildings, along with several residences dotted the town at widely spaced intervals which allowed room for gardens, outbuildings, and a few servants' quarters. Fayetteville grew considerably from the time it became incorporated up until 1860. Around the courthouse square were the homes and businesses of the Blalock family, the post office and a tavern. Holliday and Ware was the town's largest mercantile establishment. The wooden jail sat to the north, and just a block east was the impressive two-story home of Mial M. Tidwell, who was a well-known attorney. The home later became the Burks Hotel (location of the current Holiday Inn Express). Just west of the courthouse, still standing, is the striking two-story Greek revival home of the Holliday family built in 1855.

One of the most tumultuous events to happen in Fayetteville took place in the early morning of July 29, 1864. On this date, a large force of Union cavalry under the command of Gen. Edward M. McCook occupied the town and proceeded to loot homes, harass civilians, steal valuables, and vandalize private property. Lawyer Tidwell, who devised a tactic to divert the troops' attention from the courthouse, by all accounts, saved it from being torched.

After recovering from the war and reconstruction, Fayetteville again began to grow and prosper. This growth was largely fueled by the railroad which ran from Atlanta to Fort Valley via Fayetteville. It began operating in 1888 and continued for 50 years. Most of the store buildings that exist today around the courthouse square were built in the late 1890's and early 1900's. The first bank in the county was "Farmers and Merchants" that opened downtown in 1898 and was owned by the Blalock's. The first downtown telephones were installed in 1900, as were the first gas lamps. Electricity lit up Fayetteville in the 1920s.

In 1939, the railroad ceased its run through town and the tracks were removed. The first paved road was laid in approximately 1938 stretching from Hwy 54 at the courthouse to Jonesboro. Around 1940, the paving was extended to Newnan. No other roads in either Fayetteville or Fayette County were paved until after World War II. In the 1950's, the businesses around the square included a movie theater, a jeweler, grocery store, bank, pharmacy, clothing store, variety store, restaurant, post office, tire store, furniture store, barbershop, and hardware store. By 1960, the population had increased to approximately 1400. That number continues to grow, as we currently stand at nearly 14,000 and counting.

Main Street Tourism Association
240 Glynn Street South
Fayetteville, Georgia 30214
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Historic
Main Street
Fayetteville, GA
Walking Tour

CULPEPPER HOUSE: Originally built by Amherst W. Stone in the 1840's, and later home to the Robert Holliday family, relatives of "Doc" Holliday. The Culpepper family moved here after WWII. Mr. Culpepper was a school teacher, lawyer, and influential state representative. He helped to create and bring GA85 into Fayetteville.

TRAVIS HOUSE I: Built by Eugene "Cap" Travis in 1893, this house sits on original lot #51 as surveyed for the city in 1823. He owned and operated a local store. A daughter, Helen Harrell next lived here with her husband Norton. Later occupied by Mrs. Elizabeth Duke, a longtime schoolteacher, and daughter Beth.

HERITAGE PARK: With a fountain as its centerpiece, Heritage Park was built in 1996 by the Fayette Heritage Project as a tribute to Fayette County's rich history. A brick sidewalk honoring veterans from all branches of the military leads to the circle of stones which recount historic events of Fayette County.

HISTORIC CITY CEMETERY: Donated by the Bennett family in 1823, at the western most border of the city limits. The African American section was deeded in 1882 by a benevolent citizen. Many famous people are buried here including the Fitzgerald's, ancestors of Margaret Mitchell, author of GWTW. Over eighty Confederate Veterans are buried here.

HOLLINGSWORTH HOUSE: Built in 1906 by Colonel Waymon B. Hollingsworth, a prominent citizen and successful businessman of Fayetteville. He also built the "Hollingsworth Building" on the SW corner of Lee Street and Stonewall Avenue in 1900. Originally located near the First Baptist Church, it was moved to its current location in 1998.

BUSEY HOUSE: Built in the mid-1890's by John Brogdon, it replaced Mr. B.L. McGough's shop that was destroyed by the 1892 tornado. Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Busey lived here from the 1930's - 1960's. Mrs. Busey was a founding member of the Margaret Mitchell Library and often had the famous author as a house guest.

BENNETT HOUSE: Built by William Bennett (builder of Bennett's Mill) in 1840. It is the oldest standing home in Fayetteville, and still occupied by his descendants. Seven continuous generations of his family have lived here. The original smokehouse (now a carport) is still standing on the western border.

ARNOLD HOUSE: Built in 1910 (originally on Jeff Davis Drive) for John J. Arnold, a ticket agent for the Atlanta and Florida Railroad, which served Fayetteville from 1887-1939. Was later home to the John Hale family in the 1950's and early 60's. In 1966, Carl Mowell and son C. J. operated a funeral home there until 2006, when it was relocated to Burks Square.
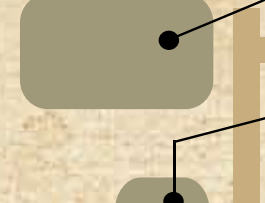
HOLLIDAY-DORSEY-FIFE MUSEUM: Built by Dr. John Holliday in 1855. It has ties to famous people such as "Doc" Holliday, "Mattie" Holliday, Governor Hugh Dorsey and Margaret Mitchell. It survived the War Between the States in 1864, a tornado in 1892, a fire in 1893, and more recent attempts to move or demolish it.

GOVERNOR DORSEY HISTORICAL MARKER: Dedicated in May 2006 and honors Governor Hugh Manson Dorsey, a two term governor of Georgia (1917-1921). Dorsey was born in Fayetteville in 1871 and attended the Fayetteville Academy on this very site.

HISTORIC CITY COLLAGE MURAL: Painted by Ed and Patsy Gullett in 1993. The mural depicts several local landmarks including Starr's Mill, Fayetteville's Train Depot, the Hollingsworth House, and the Holliday-Dorsey-Fife House. It was dedicated on May 22, 1993 by the Main Street Department and is here to welcome visitors to Fayetteville via historical art.

CITY HALL: Situated on the grounds of the famous Fayetteville Academy (1857) which Scarlett attended in Gone With the Wind, the present building was completed in 1938 to replace the former Fayetteville School, which burned in 1937. Afterwards, this structure became the grammar school, then later, a special needs school.

OLD COURTHOUSE: The oldest standing courthouse in Georgia, built in 1825. The clock tower was built in 1886; the clock added in 1909. Remodeled in 1965, a 3rd floor and basement were added. Fire bombed in April of 1982, it then underwent another facelift to repair damage to the clock tower and courtroom.

TRAVIS HOUSE 2: Built by Will Travis in the late 1800's, this house was demolished by a tornado on January 5, 1892. The tornado killed Travis but left his wife, Alice, and newborn baby girl unscathed among the debris. Several students from the Fayetteville Academy that boarded in the house were also unhurt. It was immediately rebuilt and is still owned by the descendants.

MARGARET MITCHELL RESEARCH LIBRARY: Built in 1948 by the "Library Ladies" (five former members of the Fayetteville Women's Club), with the financial aid and tireless support of famous author Margaret Mitchell. Mrs. Mitchell donated many books from her personal collection until her death in 1949. It is now the headquarters of the Fayette County Historical Society.

COURTHOUSE BENCH: At 58', this one of a kind bench is considered to be the longest courthouse bench in the world. The bench is made from a hand-hewn beam taken from the floor of the original 1825 building during remodeling in 1965.

HISTORIC TRAIN DEPOT/ WELCOME CENTER: Built in 1902 to serve the railroad stop in Fayetteville from 1887-1939. After the demise of the railroad, the building housed various businesses including a café and a furniture store. Originally located at the south intersection of Jeff Davis Drive and Lanier Avenue, and moved to its present location in 1986.

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