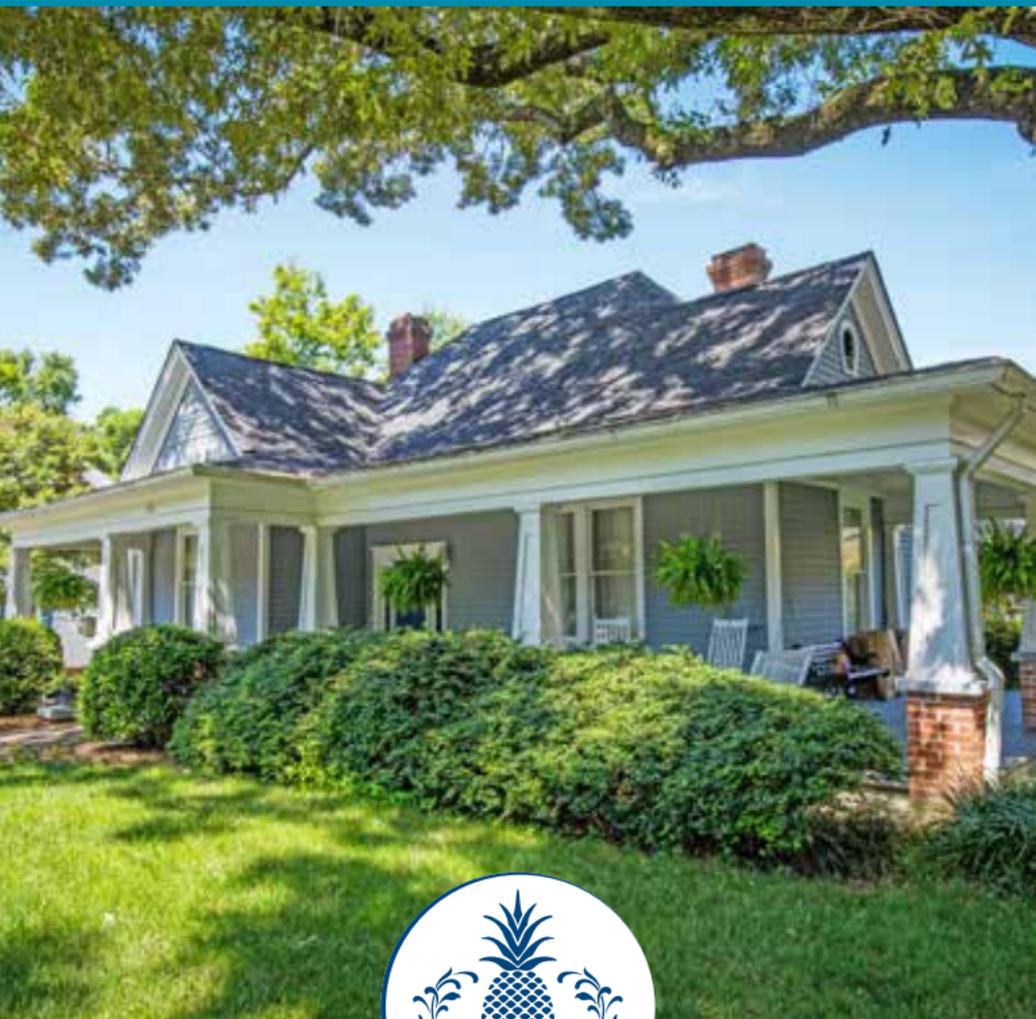




WALKING TOURS OF

HISTORIC NORCROSS

HOMES



www.NorcrossGa.net

A BRIEF HISTORY AND TOUR MAP

Readily accessible from major highways, yet tucked quietly away, Norcross, Georgia is a charming antidote to modern suburbia. With a rich variety of well-preserved historic homes and an authentic turn-of-the-century downtown, Norcross turns back the clock to simpler times and small-town American life.

In 1869, Atlanta entrepreneur J.J. Thrasher purchased 250 acres around the first stop along the proposed Richmond-Danville rail lines. A year later, Norcross was established and soon became known as “Atlanta’s favorite summer resort,” with visitors coming north from the “big city” to relax and enjoy local amenities.

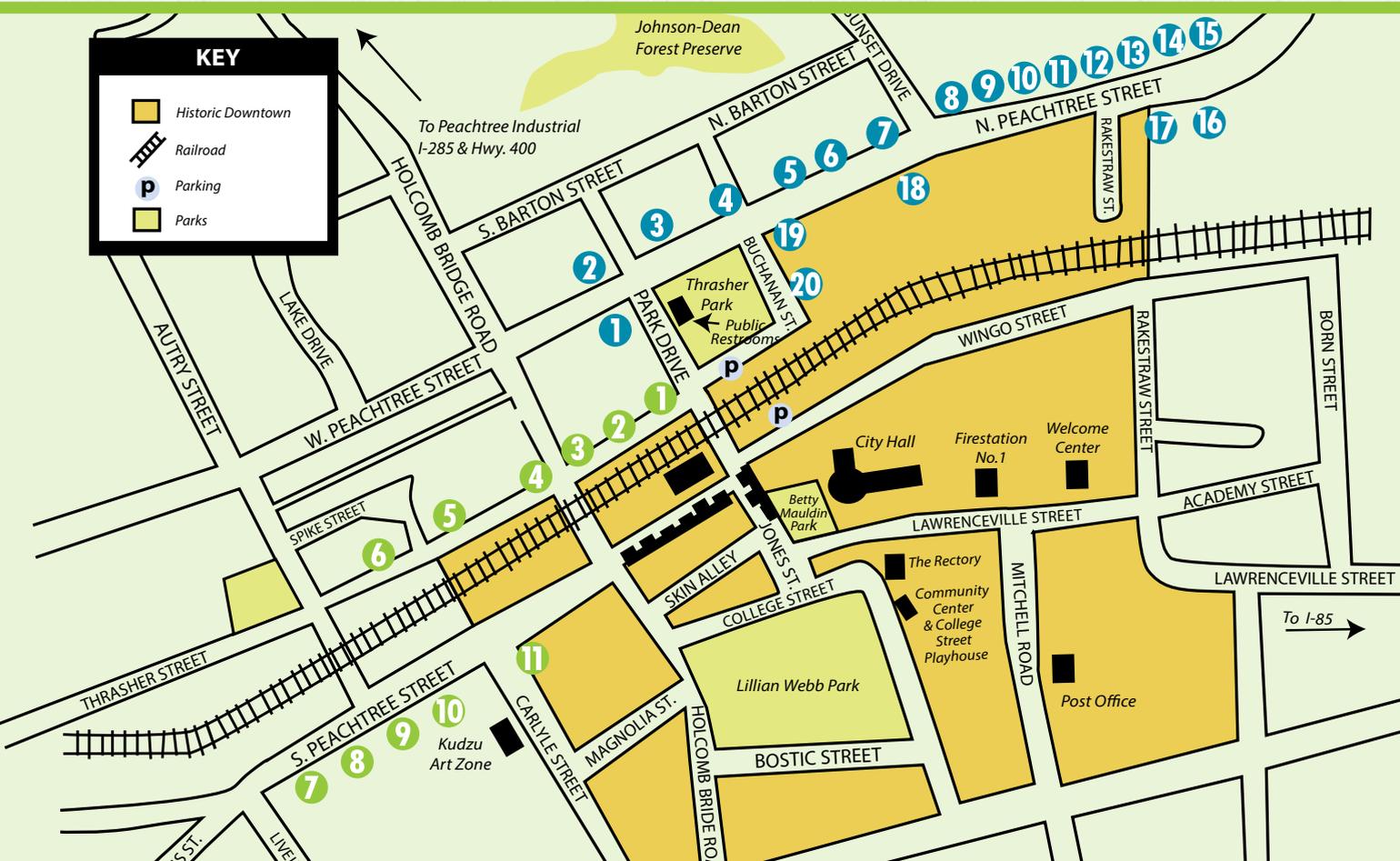
In that pre-automobile era, people got to know Norcross by strolling along its tree-lined streets; that continues to be an excellent way to experience Norcross today.

Enjoy your visit by touring the core of the 112-acre Norcross Historic District; Norcross is Gwinnett County’s second oldest city and its first placed on the U.S. Register of Historic Places.

The tour will guide you along two routes that originate from Thrasher Park, nestled next to the historic downtown. Enjoy one tour then return to explore local shops and restaurants. Then continue on the other tour, or make a return trip and enjoy more than one day of Historic Norcross!

The North Tour travels down North Peachtree Street and finishes back in Thrasher Park via Buchanan Street. The South Tour will guide you along Thrasher Street, crossing over the railroad tracks at Autry Street and bringing you back to the park along South Peachtree Street.

We hope you enjoy your tour. Visit the Norcross Welcome Center and Museum to see historic memorabilia and to get more information about this historic community.





1

1 STOP – CAIN HOUSE

97 Park Drive

Dr. Jack Cain's parents ran the Brunswick Hotel in the early 1900's – it was located where the brick building is now, at the corner of Park and Thrasher. He studied at nearby Oglethorpe University and Emory Medical School, returning to his home town to practice and live. He was beloved for the gentle and compassionate treatment he provided.

Walk to the corner of Park Drive and North Peachtree and look across the street and to your left.



2

2 STOP – ORIGINAL NORCROSS BAPTIST CHURCH

97 Park Drive

The Norcross Baptist Church was founded in 1872 and the congregation built this building shortly afterwards. After 80 years, the church moved to a larger facility several blocks down on North Peachtree Street.

Cross North Peachtree Street – the next stop is on the righthand corner.



3

3 STOP – ROCHESTER HOUSE

17 North Peachtree Street

This striking brick house overlooking downtown was built in 1930 by Louette Johnson Rochester. She was the daughter of A. A. Johnson, whose family ran a retail store in Norcross for over 100 years. Several of Abe Johnson's children played musical instruments – Mrs. Rochester was the organist at the Norcross Baptist Church across the street for many years.



4

Walk north on North Peachtree Street.

4 STOP – NORCROSS WOMAN'S CLUB / LIBRARY

65 North Peachtree Street

The Norcross Woman's Club established the first library in Gwinnett County in 1907 and opened this structure as a dedicated library in 1921. It remained in use as a library until the 1960s, at which time the library moved to larger quarters, and this building reverted back to use by the Woman's Club.

Walk up North Peachtree to the next block.



5

5 STOP – BERNARD/BURNETT/ MORTON HOUSE

117 North Peachtree Street

In the early 1900s this was the home of J.M. Bernard, the town marshal, who took the laws then in place prohibiting the transport and sale of alcohol in Georgia seriously, and was called the "Terror of the Moonshiners." Later it was the home of Ray and Birdie Burnett Morton. "Miss Birdie" was a beloved first grade teacher, on the faculty at Norcross Elementary School for 40 years.

Walk to the next house.



6

6 STOP – MARTIN/FINDLEY HOUSE

135 North Peachtree Street

Andrew Augustus Martin built this one-story home for his family around 1890. Mr. Martin and his cousin Abraham A. Johnson had established a dry goods store on Jones Street in Norcross in 1885, but around 1899 the partnership was dissolved and each man then operated a separate retail store, the stores located a short distance apart. The house was sold in 1919 to John R. Findley, who was a "commercial traveler" (or more informally he might have been called a "drummer") – he traveled through North Georgia for many years as a representative of Sharp-Horsey Hardware Company, a wholesaler in Atlanta, selling to local hardware stores.



7

7 STOP – PHILLIPS HOUSE

161 North Peachtree Street

Attorney Dorsey and his wife Cammie Lee Phillips lived in this home for 60 years. Mr. Phillips was mayor from 1927 – 1932, and would walk from home to his office downtown in the Masonic Hall each day, many times accompanied by his dog Peanuts.

Walk to the end of the block and cross Sunset Drive to the next stop, on the lefthand corner of the street.



8

8 STOP – SUMMEROUR HOUSE

237 North Peachtree Street

Ben Summerour was a local farmer, cotton seed merchant and cotton gin operator. The Summerour family had originally emigrated from Germany in 1748, and for generations they had worked hard settling the North Carolina frontier, achieving success in the Georgia and California gold rushes of the early 1800s, and developing farming interests as far afield as Texas. As a result of his inheritance and his own hard work, Ben Summerour had the means to build this stately Georgian-style home in 1922.

Walk to the next two homes on the left on North Peachtree.



9

9 STOP – O. O. SIMPSON HOUSE

273 North Peachtree Street

Dr. O O Simpson built this home circa 1910. Dr. Simpson served as mayor and in the state legislature. He was one of the first owners of an automobile in the area, and was notorious as a bad driver.



10

Continue walking up North Peachtree.

10 STOP – NORRIS/ CLEMENT HOUSE

313 North Peachtree Street

The house was built by Mrs. Mary Norris, formerly of South Carolina, in 1908. Shortly after it was completed the house was the site of the wedding of her schoolteacher daughter Floy to Dr. Ben Clement, a local dentist “of marked ability and many sterling qualities.” The Clements lived here with her mother, and had one son. During the 1920s, Dr. Clement owned the Norcross Ford automobile dealership, which was located on South Peachtree Street, and served as mayor of Norcross.

Continue walking up North Peachtree.



11

11 STOP – IVY HOUSE

331 North Peachtree Street

Gaines Ivy was a descendant of Hardy and Sarah Ivy, the first European settlers to live in what is now downtown Atlanta. Gaines and his wife Louise lived in this home for over 60 years, and raised three children there. He ran a local retail store, served on the city council and as mayor.

Walk up North Peachtree.



12

12 STOP – KEADY/COCHRAN HOUSE

351 North Peachtree Street

This house was described as “new” when Dr. W. M. Keady sold the house in 1909 to Homer Christian of Atlanta. (Dr. Keady opened the town’s first drug store in 1900.) In 1913 physician Dr. James Cochran and his wife Cora purchased the home and lived there for the next two decades.



Walk up North Peachtree.

13 STOP – SKINNER HOUSE *369 North Peachtree Street*

Eb Skinner and his wife Mamie moved here at the start of the 20th century. Her father had been Principal Keeper of the State Penitentiary in the 1890s, and Mr. Skinner was a traveling salesman representing buggy manufacturers. Family accounts indicate that Mamie was a spirited and active woman (in spite of an injury sustained as a baby that gave her a lifelong limp), and that she did not shy away from challenges. It is said that when she heard that there were suspicious persons on the land she owned along the Chattahoochee River she grabbed her pistol, hitched up her buggy and rode out there on her own to confront them and run them off!



Walk up North Peachtree.

14 STOP – KEY HOUSE *387 North Peachtree Street*

Dr. Thomas Terrell Key served in the Civil War and lived here when he practiced in Norcross around 1900. His daughter Lola taught Sunday School at the Norcross Methodist Church for over 60 years. The house has heart of pine flooring that is several inches thick.



Walk up North Peachtree.

15 STOP – NESBIT HOUSE *441 North Peachtree Street*

Joseph and Minnie Medlock Nesbit built this home on a two-acre lot around 1904. "Captain Nesbit" was a conductor for the Southern Railroad, and they raised five children here. Minnie liked to entertain, and there are family stories of dancing guests in the large central hallway.



Look across the street and across from the Nesbit House.

16 STOP – RAY / PUETT HOUSE
442 North Peachtree Street

This home was built around 1906 by Thompson Ray, owner of the Southern Oak Leather Company, a major industry in the town. He also ran the town's first dairy, keeping the cows on the back of this property. Later Dr. William Puett lived in this home during his 35-year career in Norcross.

Walk on North Peachtree back towards Downtown Historic Norcross. On the opposite side of the street is the next house on the tour.



17 STOP – LUDIE SIMPSON HOUSE
410 North Peachtree Street

Ludie Simpson had a 35-year career as a teacher in the high schools in the Atlanta and Gwinnett region school systems. In 1971, she donated 239 acres of land that her family had owned along the Chattahoochee River to the Methodist Church. The area became the home of the Lodge at Simpsonwood, a Christian adult and family conference retreat center that is now a county park, on Jones Bridge Road.

Walk up North Peachtree Street, past Rakestraw Street and Sunset Drive, and look to your left.



18 STOP – GUS MCDANIEL HOUSE
126 North Peachtree Street

The McDaniel family were early settlers in Gwinnett, shipping the first bales of cotton out of the then-new Norcross railroad depot in October, 1870. Gus McDaniel and his family lived in this home, located in a former pecan grove, until 1961. Mr. McDaniel was Cashier of the Bank of Norcross, and was active in the Norcross Baptist Church and Masonic Lodge.



19

Walk to the corner of North Peachtree and Buchanan, cross North Peachtree Street and walk down Buchanan Street to the first house.

19 STOP – BUCHANAN HOUSE

98 Buchanan Street

Edward Buchanan was adopted by a Norcross family as a young boy. He learned to be a telegraph operator in the local depot and built these skills to become a millionaire stockbroker in New York in the early 1900s. At the height of his wealth in 1907, he built this home for his adoptive mother, and established plow and other manufacturing plants in the Norcross area as well. However, his fortune collapsed the following year, and he died a pauper in 1910.

Walk down Buchanan to where the street curves.



20

20 STOP – TOM AND DIXIE MCDANIEL HOUSE

60 Buchanan Street

“Miss Dixie” and “Dr. Tom” McDaniel built this house in 1908. Dr. McDaniel was a successful salesman of pharmaceutical products in the early 20th century, and his wife taught music lessons to the children of the town. This Victorian home is one of several in town that are based on the design originally used by Homer Jones when he built his home on Thrasher Street (that house is on the South Peachtree / Thrasher walking tour.)





1

Start at the stone columns at the entrance to Thrasher Park. Cross Park Drive and walk down Thrasher Street, past the brick building on the right, to the first stop.

1 STOP – BRUNSWICK HOTEL WELL

The first thing town founder J.J. Thrasher did in setting up the town of Norcross was to build the two-story Brunswick Hotel on this corner. It opened in 1870, complete with wide porches and rocking chairs, and he then successfully marketed Norcross as a resort. This well is the only structure remaining from that landmark.

Walk down Thrasher Street to the next house.



2

2 STOP – CAIN / VERNER HOUSE

39 Thrasher Street

Sylvester and Maybelle Cain ran the then-adjoining Brunswick Hotel in the early 20th Century and lived in this home. Mr. Cain played trombone in the Norcross Concert Band, which gave weekly concerts at a pavilion in Thrasher Park, and Mrs. Cain ran a dry goods store on Jones Street for a number of years.

Walk down to 71 Thrasher Street.



3

3 STOP – MEDLOCK/SIMPSON HOUSE

71 Thrasher Street

This was the home of major local property owner and developer Riley Owen Medlock, and his wife Emma at the beginning of the 20th Century. Mr. Medlock died at the age of 48 in 1908 from a fall down an elevator shaft while on the way to his office in one of Atlanta's first skyscrapers. Later, this became the home of Grady Simpson, Norcross police chief for 32 years.



Walk down Thrasher Street, cross Holcomb Bridge Road and walk up the next block to Thrasher Street.

4 STOP – JONES/REYNOLDS HOUSE

186 Thrasher Street

Pioneer Gwinnett settler Thomas Hardaway Jones and his wife Susan purchased this land from Norcross town founder John Thrasher in 1870, building the house a short time later. He served as the assistant postmaster for the town for several years. Later this was the home of railroad conductor Henry Johnson Reynolds, a Southern Railway employee for over 50 years. His wife Estelle was active in many local civic organizations, including the Woman's Club and United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Walk down Thrasher Street to the next house.



5 STOP – JONES HOUSE

218 Thrasher Street

Railroad conductor Homer Jones and his wife Molly James Jones raised three sons in this hilltop Victorian gem. Homer had several brothers who fought in the Civil War (he was too young) and the Jones' three sons all built significant military careers, each achieving the rank of General or Colonel. The Jones' 25th wedding anniversary celebration in 1904 was described at the time as the biggest party in town history.

Walk down to 71 Thrasher Street.



6 STOP – LIETCH HOUSE

282 Thrasher Street

This home at the corner of Thrasher and Autry Streets was owned for many years by Dr Archibald "Arch" Lietch, who ran the town pharmacy during the early 20th century. His father owned a large farm a few miles out Stone Mountain Road and was an early investor in the Bank of Norcross.



7

7 STOP – DAVENPORT HOUSE
319 South Peachtree Street

Southern Railroad employee Jones Davenport moved from South Carolina to marry local girl Neppie Grogan in 1895. They raised a large family in this home, which they expanded to three stories.

Turn around and head back toward Downtown Historic Norcross on South Peachtree.



8

8 STOP – MEDLOCK/NORMAN HOUSE
297 South Peachtree Street

This is one of the older homes in Norcross, believed to pre-date the city's founding in 1870 (the fountain is a more recent addition.) The original deed was so old that the dimensions of the lot were measured in rods rather than feet.

Walk down to the next house on South Peachtree 225 South Peachtree Street.



9

9 STOP – WALL HOUSE
225 South Peachtree Street

This house was the home of Alabama native William Cornelius "Neil" Wall and his wife Mary in the early 20th century. Mr. Wall had come to Norcross in the 1880s and started a business with his father in law, John P. Webb, selling guano (a natural fertilizer) to local farmers. He later operated a retail grocery store in town, and then spent time as a traveling wholesaler of dry goods and related products. He also had a special formula liniment that he sold to Georgia farmers that helped keep their horses and mules in good health. The Walls and their two daughters lived here for over 30 years.



Walk down South Peachtree to the next corner, Number 213 South Peachtree Street is that house that is set back from the street on the corner.

10 STOP – COFER HOUSE *213 South Peachtree Street*

H.H. Cofer and family moved to this home in 1942; he ran the town's service station, located in the next block, until the 1960s. He served as a part-time deputy sheriff, was active in the local masonic lodge, and was a county champion in checkers.

Continue on South Peachtree, cross Carlyle Street and go to the next house on the corner.



11 STOP – MCELROY/CARLYLE HOUSE *173 South Peachtree Street*

This home was built by Eb and Sallie McElroy around 1900. Sallie was very active in the Order of the Eastern Star and Woman's Club organizations. The house was purchased around 1930 by Roy Carlyle, one of several major league baseball players who grew up in Norcross. In 1930, he hit the longest measured home run in professional baseball history, at 618 feet, in Oakland, California.







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