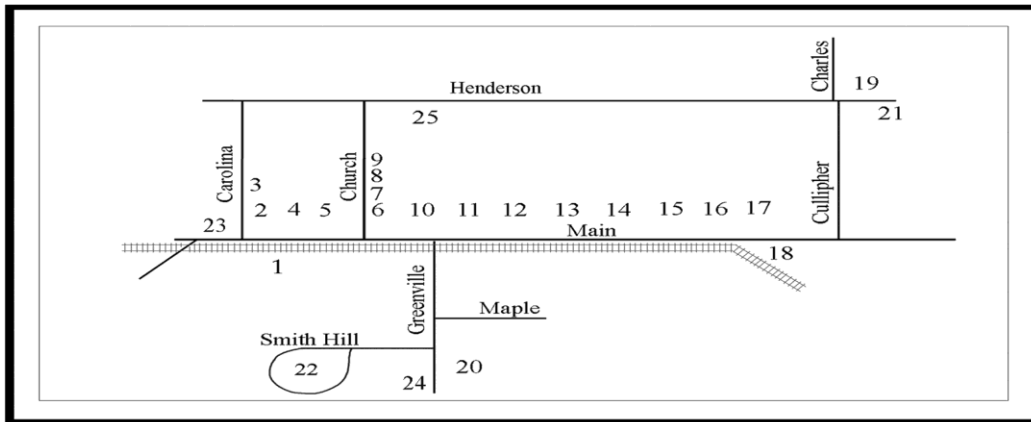


# Historic Downtown Saluda - A Walking Tour



Saluda's Main Street, the town's business district, was added to the National Register of Historic places in 1996 based on its unique historic and architectural character. Besides the business district, many other structures close to downtown are of historic interest.

The arrival of the Spartanburg and Asheville Railroad at Pace's Gap in 1878 was the immediate stimulus for the creation of the town of Saluda. Because this location was the terminus of the railroad for well over a year, entrepreneurs were quick to provide services for both railway workers and travelers. Retail establishments, hotels, boarding houses, and other support businesses quickly sprang up along the railroad. Real estate development followed quickly with many summer homes being built on the hillsides above the railroad. A long held belief in the health giving qualities of the mountain air was used by both the railroad and real estate developers to promote travel and tourism. The ease of travel provided by railways connecting Charleston, Columbia, Spartanburg, and the entire southeast accelerated the town's development.

In 1881, the town was incorporated as Saluda and by 1896, the year-round population had grown to 250. By 1910 the town boasted a population of 521, and by 1916 the town had a law office, bank, barber shop, two blacksmith shops, three building contractors, two dentists, two druggists, four general merchants, one hospital, eighteen hotels and boarding houses, four churches, two photographers, two doctors, two plumbers, a seminary, a power and light plant, and one undertaker. By the 1920s an increasing number of visitors were choosing to build vacation homes, further expanding the summer community.

The Great Depression of the 1930s crippled the town's growth and began a period of virtual stagnation which continued into the 1970s. Even the post-World War II economic boom, stimulated by the growth of paved roads and automobile travel, bypassed Saluda for the most part. Yet, this very stagnation was the town's salvation from the standpoint of architectural preservation. Today the town would be recognizable to a visitor of the 1920s. Beginning with the 1980s, the town has witnessed an economic revival due in part to its hometown quality reminiscent of a bygone era. The town now attracts day visitors, overnight guests, vacation home owners, and more year-round residents.

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Begin your walk on the west end of town at the corner of Main and Carolina Streets:

1. Norfolk and Southern Railroad: Arriving at Pace's Gap in 1878, the railroad was the primary reason for the eventual creation of the town of Saluda at that location. The railroad grade from Melrose, halfway down the mountain, is the steepest mainline grade in the eastern U. S. The early history of the railroad contains many stories of runaway trains and derailments. Despite technological improvements in braking systems, for safety reasons the trains were broken into sections at the foot of the mountain and in Saluda and with helper engines ascended and descended the mountain. Norfolk and Southern has "rail banked" this line until further notice.
2. Saluda Community Library, circa 1919: This structure with a stepped parapet roofline has provided commercial space for several business over the years, the most noteworthy being Martin's Tea Room providing light refreshments for residents and visitors alike. The building was donated for use as the new library by the Nolan Pace family and renovated with funds generated by extensive community support. The library opened in December of 2000.
3. Saluda Presbyterian Church, circa 1896: While originally functioning as a "community" church, the congregation allied itself with the King's Mountain Presbytery in 1914. Its vernacular Gothic Revival style is reflected in the two stage entrance tower, pointed arch windows, carved rafter ends, decorative eave brackets on the tower, decorative facing at the front gable peak, and a double-leaf entrance surmounted by a decorative triangular pediment. The interior has experienced considerable alteration but many elements of the original construction are visible.
4. Saluda Station, circa 1910: (Summer House and The Benke) The station was moved in 1983 from the railroad siding west of the highway overpass. In this stick style influenced building notice the flared hipped roof with eyelid vents, widely overhanging broad eaves, and German siding.
5. Saluda Realty and Estate Antiques, a non-contributing building: Originally a Gulf station, this handsome building was remodeled in 1985 to reflect the style of the depot next door. At the rear of this property are two businesses--Duck Alley, which was constructed and opened in 2008 and Salamander, which was originally constructed as a laundromat in the early 1970s.

6. Saluda City Hall, circa 1897: The decorative pressed metal façade with bands of “classical” detailing makes this building unique in Saluda. The building functioned as a general store and later as the Carolina Sate Bank which folded during the Great Depression. The old walk-in bank vault has been retained and continues to serve the city. Today, the left half of the building serves as the police department and the right half as City Hall.
7. Spring Park: Immediately behind City Hall, this spring was one of several which provided water for the town’s earlier residents. The spring was reclaimed and landscaped in 1980 and is maintained by the Saluda Garden Club.
8. Pebbledash Building, circa 1916: (Estate Antiques Annex) One of two pebbledash buildings in town, this structure has an exterior treatment that was popularized in Biltmore Village by the English architect Richard Sharp Smith beginning in 1896. The building has functioned at various times as a hardware and building supply store, a feed store, a cleaners and pressing club, a florist shop, and now an antique shop and residence.
9. Old Telephone Company, circa 1930: (Rising Man Traders) The Appalachian State Telephone Company operated from this building beginning with sixteen crank telephones. Ed Leland bought the company in 1936. In 1945, Mr. Leland converted the system to self-dial, making it the first in the county to use this technological innovation. In addition, the *Saluda Magazine* was published from this building between 1936 and 1938. This building is now a private residence.
10. The Purple Onion and Heartwood Gallery, circa 1930: Both of these single story structures sporting decorative brickwork on their facades have served a number of functions. For example, for many years, the Purple Onion’s space was a grocery store while Heartwood’s space served as a “pressing club”.
11. Thompson’s Store and Ward’s Grill, circa 1910: One of two identical Main Street buildings, this two-story structure and M. A. Pace’s were built for use as general stores at about the same time. This business was operated by the Lola Ward family at this location from 1941 until 2007 after moving from one half of the M. A. Pace building. The second floor has been restored and serves as a special events space. The façade exhibits a decorative panel and corbeled brick cornice typical of the era. The grill’s unique interior atmosphere is reminiscent of an earlier era. The grill serves as a gathering place, especially for early risers.
12. Old Post Office Building, circa 1910: (Mountain Life Realty and Evening Shade Pottery) Sharing many of the decorative brick features of the adjacent buildings, this structure served as the town’s post office for many years and then as the “new” telephone company office and is currently occupied by a real estate business, a pottery studio, and a private residence. For many years the second floor was the office of one of the town’s earliest doctors, Dr. E. M. Salley.
13. Saluda Grade Café, 1993, a non-contributing building: The original building was torn down after years of neglect. The current building was constructed with a careful eye to the details of adjacent structures. In addition to the café, the upper floor is utilized as an artist’s studio and a private residence.
14. Sterling Stones and additional shop space, circa 1920, a non-contributing building: This building lost its architectural integrity due to extensive alterations. The structure began life as the Princess Theatre in the 1920s. After closing its doors during the Great Depression, the structure was used as a gymnasium for Saluda High School.
15. M. A. Pace Store, circa 1910: This building is the most intact structure in the historic district. The shelving and most of the furnishings are original. The M. A. Pace business was operated by the same family from the building’s construction until the death in 2010 of Robert Pace, one of the city’s iconic figures. This general store was reopened in 2011 by Leon Morgan and his family. The second floor served variously as a doctor’s office, a meeting hall for the Woodmen of the World, a beauty parlor, and later a storage area.
16. Somewhere in Time and adjacent shop space, circa 1920, a non-contributing building: this structure was “modernized” in 1965 to accommodate a Western Auto store. Earlier the building housed a meat market and a Star automobile dealership.
17. Currently vacant, circa 1920: This building, although partially remodeled, features a façade with two recessed brick panels beneath a dentiled cornice and a stepped parapet along the roofline to hide the shed roof. At various times this building has been used as an insurance agency, a pool hall, a restaurant, a barber shop, a pharmacy, and a bakery.
18. Blue Gypsy Cafe, circa 1930: Opened in the 1930s as an authorized Standard Oil station, this small building was typical of the period with its distinctive raised architectural elements. The station closed in the 1950s and the structure was slightly remodeled at that time to create shop spaces.

*Additional buildings of historic interest located just outside the business district:*

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| 19. Church of the Transfiguration, circa 1889  | 22. Infants’ and Children’s Sanitarium, circa 1914 |
| 20. Saluda Methodist Church, circa 1882        | 23. E. H. Gaines Building, circa 1937              |
| 21. Summer Social Club and Library, circa 1900 | 24. Saluda Inn (Charlton Leland), circa 1914       |
| 25. Daddy Hart Building, circa 1925            |  |