

Greenville's Augusta Road

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So what is Augusta Road and how did it begin? The name originates as an 1830's trade route from Greenville to Augusta. Goods, livestock, and produce alike were transported along the route. There was no four lane super-highway just a dirt path meandering from one city to the next. As a result, businesses and homes began to spring up. Banks, pharmacies, inns, and supporting businesses were built along Augusta. The Greenville-Columbia Railroad built a depot, hence homes being built in the "Depot-Green" area. In the 1870's Dr. Thomas T. Earle opened a pharmacy on the triangular plot of land at the north end of Augusta. The Pharmacy remained open until 1888, and in 1890 R.E. Allen, Henry Briggs, and Walter Gassaway organized the American Bank. The bank prospered and as a result Olin Jones, the same architect who designed the Greenville County Courthouse four years earlier, was hired to design a new Beaux-Arts style building we see today. In 1920, the bank reorganized itself as the American Building and Loan Association with Bennette Geer as president (he was also president of Judson Mill). As the West End began to decline in the 1930's, the bank decided to close this location. In 1980, the Legal Services Agency renovated the building for its use.

The Ellison-Cureton House was built in 1888 by Jacob Cagle for Greenville merchant, Thaddeus T. Ellison. It is in the Queen Anne style of architecture. A native of Laurens, Ellison not only resided on Augusta, he also conducted business having a furniture store at the intersection of South Main and Augusta. Ellison sold the home to Anderson farmer James W. Dickson. His wife later deeded the home in 1919 to her son-in-law Peter Frank Cureton. The residence was passed down to their daughter Josephine upon her parents deaths. Now, a tremendous amount of stories and lore surround the house and Miss Josephine after her death.

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Above we see Violet Hill. This 1908 photograph shows the Tandy Walker family seated on the front steps. The two-story, foursquare, columned Greek revival home was built at the north end of Augusta. Situated on a sloping hill, the house was later owned by the Cleveland family. It was Mary Cleveland who named it Violet Hill. The home later became the location of the Mary Cleveland School, and the site is now a part of the Greenville High School campus.

Located at the intersection of Vardry and Augusta Streets, a cottonseed oil company was founded by Otis Prentiss Mills and was in operation from 1872 to 1953. O.P. Mills also had his grand home situated on Augusta along with one of his other businesses, Millsdale Dairy. Mills is most obviously noted for Mills Mill. Organized in 1895, the mill opened in 1897 with 8,000 spindles. The village included a community building, school, and church. The mill even employed a full-time English gardener to landscape the mill and surrounding village. During World War II, Mills Mill had government contracts for war related materials, and guards were posted around the building.



Depot Green refers to the area surrounding the Greenville and Columbia Railroad Depot, built in 1853. Seen at the bottom of the previous page is the J.C. Milford home located at 706 Augusta Street, the third house on the right after passing Dunbar Street heading south. The brick structure included a slate roof, stone porte-cochere, covered front porch, and chimney. During the 1860's other prominent Greenvillians built homes around "Depot Green" including Greenville's first physician Dr. Richard Harrison, H.C. Markley owner of Markley Carriage factory, J. M. Sullivan owner of Sullivan Hardware, and H. P. Hammett, president of Piedmont Mill.

Birnie Hill was built in 1847 by Professor Kern on Augusta Road at the location of present day Lewis Plaza shopping center. In 1861 the property was sold to James Birnie, whose daughter married local druggist J.O. Lewis. Lewis was an equestrian and had a large stable constructed on the property full of horses. It was the Lewis family who named the home Birnie Hill. The home was later moved to its present location on Aberdeen Drive and has been converted to an apartment house that is still in use today. The large covered front porch has been removed.

Seeing the opportunity to purchase a large tract of land far out in the country on Augusta Road, father and son Archibald Clinch and Francis Odom moved their sandwich shop away from their West End, Augusta Road location to this new rural site. At this point, Augusta Road was only a dirt road. Construction of the building cost \$1200 and was to be completed in two weeks. After the financial constraints of the Great Depression subsided, more funding became available to the Greenville County Library System allowing more service in the branches. A new branch was opened on a lot owned by L.O. Patterson, at a cost of \$24.50 through funding from the WPA (Works Progress Administration), and was probably the smallest branch in the country, thus giving it the name "So Big". Dimensions of the building were 6 feet long by 4½ feet wide by 7 feet tall. Inside there were 42 feet of shelving with a built in desk and folding chair.

As the automobile became more accessible and affordable, Greenville quickly met the consumers' needs. At the north end of Augusta, service stations, auto supply stores, and new and used car dealerships lined the

streets. Car makers such as Ford, Mercury, and Cadillac had stores in the area. Located at 400 Augusta Street, Claussen's Bread and Cakes Bakery was built in 1930 for the sum of \$200,000. The two story, 42,000-square-foot, triangular building sits on 2.5 acres. It was built as a replica to its sister plant in Columbia.

As Greenvillians began to construct homes in the Augusta Road area, supporting businesses began to spring up to support their every need. Pharmacies, supermarkets, hardware stores, and beauty shops alike opened for business along the road. Built at the corner of University Ridge and Cleveland Street, the Tuten-Mart was developed by the Ralph O. Tuten Realty Company in 1946. The building was comprised of a luncheonette featuring hostess ice cream, the University Beauty Shop, and a drug store. The left side of the shopping center was occupied by a Piggly Wiggly grocery store, and later became the home of the Eight O'clock Superette. The building was later raised to make way for a new structure for the Eight O'clock.

While R.M. Caine was stationed in California during World War II, he came across a new style shopping center never before seen in the South. After his time in service, Caine came back to Greenville and built this new concept in the heart of Augusta Street. Named for the Lewis family, whose home once stood on the land, the Lewis Plaza was the first of its kind in the South. Instantly becoming a shopping destination, the Plaza as it has informally been known, was comprised of a variety of establishments. Stores such as the Plaza Pharmacy, Sutton's Shoes, Crane's, Scott and Merritt, Bihari's Delicatessen, and Rose's Five-and-Ten were repeatedly patronized by the residents building homes in the area.

A good many "full-service" service stations once dotted Augusta Road. On Augusta Matheney's (later Herndon's) Esso Station was at the intersection of Augusta and Main, and a little south was Dean Brothers at the corner of Otis and Augusta. At the intersection of Cleveland Street and University Ridge were three service stations; Mike Siegel's, Texaco Oil, and Border's Gulf. Border's Gulf is still in operation today as Seymour's British Petroleum.



During the 1940's, traveling circuses would put up their big tops on the driving range at the corner of Augusta Road and Potomac Avenue. The Circus would typically feature a variety of wild animals and side show acts. Animals such as camels could be seen grazing in the field that made up the golf driving range on Augusta Road. And while the show was in town, the circus would entice patrons by having a parade along Augusta. Seen here are elephants walking and holding trunk to tail in front of Slater's Cash Grocery.

Will T. Dunn, doctor in veterinary medicine, purchased 6.5 acres of land at the south end of Augusta Road and built his veterinary clinic and family residence. The Augusta Road Animal Hospital was state of the art having been constructed solely of concrete and steel, and was escape-proof and vermin-proof. It was equipped with radiant heat pipes underneath the floor and cooled by a sprinkler system on the roof in order to keep the animals from getting sick from conventional air-conditioning. Dr. Dunn practiced from 1936 until his death in 2000, making him the longest-practicing veterinarian in the state.

With Greenville's textile boom, Greenville had an influx of new residents as well as its current ones being able to afford a newer or larger home. As a result, Augusta Road neighborhoods began to be developed on once sprawling farmland such as Cagle Park, Alta Vista, Millwood, Kanatenah, and Traxler Park. Post World War II brought further development along the south end of Augusta with neighborhoods such as Marshall Forest and Pleasant Valley. The last full scale neighborhood development would be Chanticleer now celebrating its 50th year.

The Earle farmhouse was purchased by Jacob Cagle along with its 39 acres in 1882. Cagle was responsible for building such landmark structures as the Lanneau-Norwood House, the Farmers' Alliance Cotton Warehouse, and the short-lived Greenville Opera House. The home originally faced Augusta Street but in 1926 it was renovated and moved to face Crescent Avenue as Cagle's son Jacob began to develop Cagle Park. Nearby Eagle Avenue was originally named Cagle, but was incorrectly recorded as Eagle in city documents and the name has remained. The same has occurred more recently with DeBrahm Court in Chanticleer. Just down Crescent Avenue, the Woodside house was designed by Willie Ward for textile magnate John T. Woodside and his wife, Lou Alice. Along with his textile business, Woodside would go on to build the Woodside Building on Main Street and the opulent Ocean Forest Hotel in Myrtle Beach. The stock market crash of 1929 took most of Woodside's holdings, forcing him to move from the home. During a renovation of the home in 1947, the house caught fire and was then made into a one-story home. In 2003, the home was restored to its original design.

In 1939 a swimming pool and skating rink were added to Cleveland Park. During integration, the pool was closed in 1964, and a seal exhibit was opened in its place. Later a rose garden replaced the seal exhibit, and then in 1988, the rose garden and skating rink were removed to make way for the present day tennis courts. Located adjacent to Cleveland Park, the Rock Quarry Garden was once the site of a Civil War quarry. In 1928, the newly formed Greenville Garden Club felt the city needed an arboretum. To raise funds, club members approached city officials with a proposal to beautify the abandoned rock quarry and submit the project to Better Homes and Gardens 1931 city beautification contest. Their argument was that even if they did not win, the city would still end up with a beautiful, new public garden. The city agreed and landscape architect Carter Newman designed the new park and William Coxe took the photographs for submission. The garden club won second place and enough money to build the arboretum at Reedy River Falls.

The David Elwood McCuen house was constructed in the 1920s on Augusta and its property, which included extensive gardens and a tennis court, encompassed most of the block between Faris Road and Augusta

Drive. Mrs. McCuen was an avid gardener and active in the Greenville Garden Club. She was also responsible for helping create the Rock Quarry Garden. The house was demolished in 1962 after her death and developed into the shopping center we see today. Many of the home's architectural elements found new life in the construction of a home off Parkins Mill Road.

Bible Presbyterian Church was built in 1941. Rationing during World War II nearly canceled construction because of the lack of iron to build the rafters. The two-story, clapboard building attached to the rear was later replaced with the Gothic-style, arched brick breezeway we see today. The church has also been the sanctuary for Augusta Street Presbyterian Church and currently, Paramount Park Baptist Church.

Organized in 1948 by members of Trinity Lutheran, St Michael was built on three lots purchased along Augusta Street in the Traxler Park neighborhood for \$6,000. The first service was held on Palm Sunday 1950 with the pews and carpet being installed right up to the time of service. In 1971, architects Craig, Gauden, and Davis were hired to design the sanctuary we see today. Trinity United Methodist Church was a result of the development boom along Augusta Road after World War II.

On August 25, 1947, a group of citizens wanting to establish a Methodist church met at Augusta Circle School. The newly formed congregation adopted the name Memorial Methodist, in honor of those who lost their lives in the war. In February 1948, the 95-member congregation began construction of a one story, flat-roofed, concrete structure at the corner of Country Club Drive and Augusta while at the same time conducting regular services at Augusta Circle School. The first service was held in the new building on September 19, 1948, and the name of the church was officially changed to Trinity United Methodist.

In May 1947, 23 members of First Presbyterian Greenville met to form a new church in the growing Augusta Road area. Among the members of the group, Dan W. Cochrane offered a parcel of land fronting Augusta Road. The group decided that once 100 individuals signed up for membership, it would apply for organization through the Enoree Presbytery. By July, the church had 101 members, and in August a tent was pitched on the southeast corner of the property, where the Enoree

Presbytery met to form the new church. The tent would continue to be used for worship, with services held in the evening during summer months. Snakes and neighborhood dogs would enter the tent, and the occasional lightning storm would pop the lights.

Through a federal grant of \$420,000 courtesy of the WPA, a Greenville Senior High was built. The three-story, yellow brick building was designed by the J. E. Surrine Company with a center courtyard. Completed on August 28, 1938, the modern high school welcomed 1,300 students in the 9th through 11th grades. The school was referred to as the senior high school, as the Westfield Street School had become the junior high school. A twelfth grade was first offered in the 1947-48 school year, and the 9th grade was then moved to Westfield Street. Students in the class of 1947 were offered the option of graduating or continuing on to the 12th grade.

Surrine Stadium was a joint project between the city of Greenville and Furman University with funding made possible through the Works Progress Administration. The first game was played on Halloween 1936 with Furman defeating Davidson College. The official dedication was held on November 14, 1936 with Furman beating the University of South Carolina. When Furman moved its campus in 1958, it ceased to play games there, and only Greenville High used the stadium. In 1981, a campaign was started to raise funds to purchase the property from Furman and transfer ownership to the Greenville County School District.

The Augusta Road area has three elementary schools. Donaldson School was named for Thomas Quinton Donaldson, first chair of the Greenville County School Board in 1886. The school was built in 1917 on land donated by Jacob Cagle to compliment his Cagle Park neighborhood. Construction was delayed for one year due to a lawsuit over the location of the school, which claimed it to be too far out in the country. In 1939, Albert Einstein was asked to speak to the Donaldson student body by Furman University scientist, John R. Sampey, whose daughter was in the fifth grade at the time. Einstein's advice to the student body was to learn "only what they could not find in books."

August 1922, Augusta Road residents did not live in the city and had to pay tuition to attend Donaldson School. Residents petitioned the

city's school board to open a new school within the area, and the motion was approved. Melville Westervelt was developing the Augusta Circle neighborhood on the former John Davenport 32-acre farm and donated a lot in Winyah Street for the school – and to boost sales. The school board approved the site in January of 1923 and the architectural firm Beacham and LeGrand was selected to design the school. Although the school is named Augusta Circle, the building was dedicated to Otis Prentiss Mills. In the 1950's Blythe Elementary created a school-wide volunteer project involving students and airman from Donaldson called Operation Deep Freeze. Children on the Donaldson AFB who attended Blythe gathered Christmas presents for Donaldson's C-124 crew to deliver to families living in the Arctic. With temperatures 20 degrees below zero, pilots would have to land supply planes on ice strips.

The Wilkins house was built in 1868 by renowned Greenville contractor Jacob Cagle for William and Harriett Cleveland Wilkins. The home fronting Augusta Street was designed in the Second Empire style, a popular Victorian style borrowed from the French during the reign of Napoleon III. An attached conservatory housed coleus plants that were brought out each spring and placed in rows of white and pink on each side of the front steps. A barn on the property housed two black horses and three cows, while peacocks strutted on the front lawn. William Wilkins passed away in 1895, and Harriett Wilkins lived another 35 years in the home until her death in 1930. In 1933, the home was leased by the family to R. D. Jones, who both resided in the home and used the main floor for his funeral business until the 1990's.

The home of Otis Prentiss Mills and Susan Cordelia Gower Mills was designed in the Queen Anne style of Victorian architecture and was situated on 300 acres that make up Otis, Prentiss, and Mills Avenues. As mentioned earlier, Mills was an entrepreneur, owning nearby South Carolina Cottonseed Oil Company, Mills Mill, and Millsdale Dairy. The dairy which raised Guernsey cows, sold milk, cream, and butter throughout Greenville County. A believer in education, Prentiss built two schools and a YMCA in his mill village. Due to his philanthropy in the community, the school board honored him posthumously by naming the Augusta Circle School after him.

The Williams-Earle House, known as Ivy Lawn or Holly Hill, originally

sat on 43-acres located on modern day Grove Road and situated along Brushy Creek. Construction began in 1820, and the current two-story, T-shaped building was completed in 1850. The Greek revival home was originally constructed by Dr. Thomas Williams, a prominent Greenville physician and landowner who also served in the state legislature. Richard Harrison Earle, grandson of Col. Elias Earle, purchased the property in 1880. The property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 1, 1982.

Brushy Creek was built in 1836 by Vardry McBee on an 11,000 acre tract of land he purchased from Lemuel Alston. The property included a gristmill, potting shed, log barn, and a well house. Considered by many as Greenville's founding father, Vardy McBee donated the land for the Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches in Greenville's downtown. In 1872, his son Alexander purchased the property, which then consisted of 672 acres. Along with being a banker and businessman, Alexander served as mayor of Greenville and in the state legislature.