

City of Harlem History

The beginning of Harlem ran along the Georgia Railroad and through the lives of two men who wanted a liquor free town.

In 1857, Andrew J. Sanders, one of the first graduates of the Medical College of Augusta, moved to the area and began selling his land for a dollar an acre. He also donated land for both churches downtown and a local school.

Around 1865, railroad engineer Newnan Hicks decided to quit his job when he was asked to work on a Sunday. He wanted to start a town that didn't sell liquor and decided to build a house near Mr. Sanders.

Harlem was founded on October 24th, 1870. It was named by a New York resident visiting relatives who thought the town resembled Harlem, New York, the New York City neighborhood. Due to its large oaks and good drinking water, Harlem became a haven for Augustans during the summer.

In 1913, Harlem had about 500 residents and boomed with numerous businesses, the Columbia Opera House, Hicks Hotel, a school, a newspaper, and ten passenger trains daily.

On August 24, 1917, a fire of unknown origin destroyed the Opera House and several buildings, causing \$60,000 in damage.

The town rebounded via the railroad. The Columbia Theatre ran the latest movies from 1949 to 1963. The Georgia Railroad Depot, built in 1896, was torn down around 1965.

Harlem today has about 3000 residents, and on the first weekend in October tens of thousands come to visit the downtown area for the Oliver Hardy Festival, held to honor the portly comedian who was born in Harlem in 1892

19. Jones- Woods House

Built c.1905, the Jones- Woods House exhibits elements of Craftsman style and is an example of the side hallway house type. Note the transom over the front door, the detailed wood shingles and circular window in the gable, and the three-sided bay window on the south elevation.

20. Barnsley-Moon House

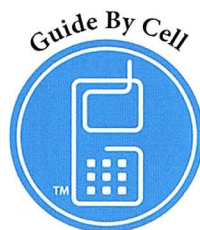
Next door and also built c.1905, the Barnsley-Moon house is an example of a Georgian house type, meaning it has a central hallway with two rooms on either side and an essentially square plan. The house has large, square columns covered with stucco and wood shingles in the gable.

21. Weeks House

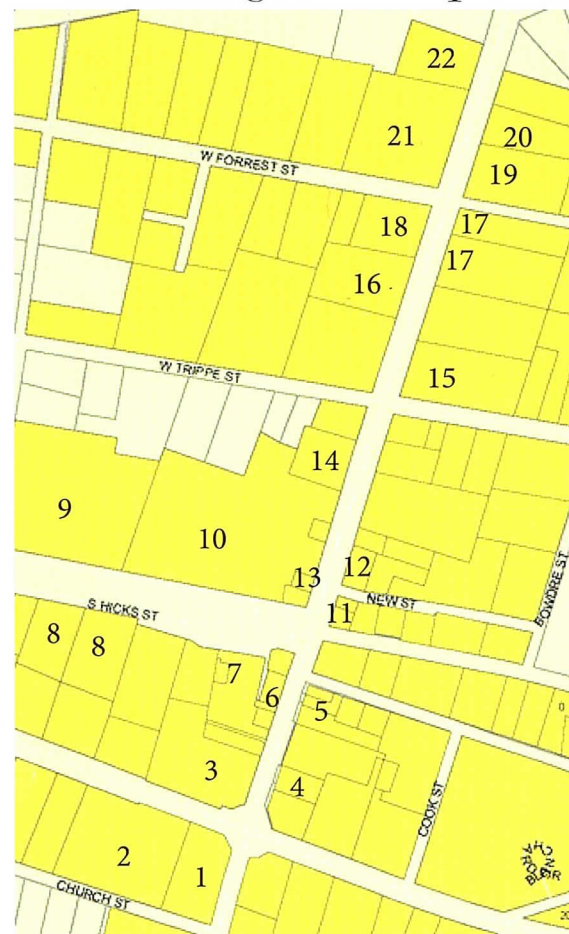
Built c.1874 for Harlem's first doctor, the Weeks House exhibits elements of Folk Victorian style. Note the "gingerbread" on the front porch (very similar to others we have seen on our tour), the beautiful diamond-patterned windows on the front façade, and the transom and sidelights on the front door. A large one -story addition dating to the early 2000's extends from the north side of the house. The Weeks House is also the home of the only bed & breakfast in Columbia County, Red Oak Manor.

22. Whiddon House

Built c.1948 with elements of Colonial Revival style, the Whiddon House is an example of a mid-century ranch house. Note the main entry stoop with columns, pilasters, a gable roof, and the two-car carport on the north side of the house.



Downtown Harlem Walking Tour Map



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Downtown Harlem Walking Tour

Birthplace of Oliver Hardy



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Walking Tour Sites

Please note that the number of the site corresponds to the audio tour information number.
Dial **706-760-2069** to begin the tour!

1. Harlem Baptist Church

Built in 1947, the Harlem Baptist Church exhibits elements of Neoclassical Revival and Colonial Revival architectural styles. Note the exceptional broken pediment over the front door, classic Doric columns, the intricate circular window in the gable end, concrete quoins on the corners of the front facade, and the large belfry.

2. Harlem United Methodist Church

This church, built in 1902, has elements of Neoclassical Revival architecture. The front Ionic columns are not commonly seen in Harlem and support an exquisite pediment with sunburst motif. The use of stained glass is quite extensive throughout the church. Note the five fixed stained glass windows above the double-door entrance.

3. Public Safety Building

Built in 1936, this building housed the Culpepper Ford dealership and in 2011 was acquired by the City of Harlem. It was subsequently converted into the Public Safety building with an addition to the west serving as the new fire station. This building has elements of Colonial Revival style. The bricks used in hardscaping the small public space in front of the building are repurposed and reused from the interior. Also note the Augusta Block bricks in the wall of the new addition. They were made less than a mile to the east at the Georgia Vitrified Clay Company.

4. Columbia Theatre

The Columbia Theatre, the first movie theatre in Columbia County, was built in 1949 in a Stripped Classical style and was in operation until 1963. The theatre was used to show movies and even had a balcony level. Over the years several modifications were made to the interior. In 2005 the City of Harlem purchased the building and restored the original marquee.

5. L.M. Conner Building

The Conner building was constructed in 1927 and is a great example of a typical commercial building from that era in a small Southern town. Note the storefront windows, recessed entrance, parapet, simple cornice, and the separate entrance to the upper story on the right side.

6. Masonic Building

One of the most prominent buildings in Harlem's downtown is the Masonic building, constructed in 1911. Note the Masonic symbol within the parapet on the second level and the beautiful brick detailing throughout, including the corbelling above the second-floor windows. It has traditional storefront windows on the ground level and retains decorative cast iron pilasters. The upper level was used as a Masonic hall for many years and was also a central gathering place for social events.

7. Oliver Hardy Monument

This monument is placed on the lot where Oliver Norvell Hardy, of the famous "Laurel & Hardy" comedic duo, was born on January 18, 1892. The Oliver Hardy Festival, started in 1989, commemorates Harlem's famous son and is one of the largest events in the Central Savannah River Area.

8. Phillips House & Park

The Phillips House is an exceptional Craftsman style bungalow, built c.1910. It was the boyhood home of Glenn Phillips. Born in 1901, Phillips served as Harlem's youngest mayor at 24 years of age, was a state representative for 28 years, a state senator for one year in 1937, and became the state revenue commissioner in 1947. Adjacent to the house is Phillips Park, which features a gazebo. Please stop and sit a while!

9. Newnan Hicks House

Built just after the Civil War, the Newnan Hicks House was the home of Harlem's founder, Newnan Hicks. The Hicks House is built in the Folk Victorian style and is a Georgian house type. Note the exquisite "gingerbread" detailing on the front porch and transom and sidelights around the front door.

10. Tracy-Luckey Company

The Tracy-Luckey Company has called Harlem home since its founding in a converted garage in 1937 and has grown to be one of the leaders in the pecan shelling industry. The company's current building was constructed in the 1950's. Inside is a state-of-the-art pecan shelling operation. Passersby are often treated to the wonderful smell of key lime, praline, and other candy coatings that they apply to their pecans. Their products are available at San Saba Pecans adjacent to the factory.

11. 203 North Louisville Street

This building is an example of a heavily altered commercial building constructed in the 1910s. Alterations to the building include a large roof addition and infill of window openings, but the original configuration can still be seen.

12. 211 North Louisville Street

This building is another great example of a commercial building and was built in 1922. Unlike the adjacent building, 211 North Louisville has remained in its historic form. Note the storefront windows, wooden bulkheads below the windows, brick sign paneling above each storefront, and the terra cotta coping visible along the roof.

13. 212 North Louisville Street

Built around the same time as the two previous commercial buildings, 212 North Louisville was once home to one of the dry goods stores in Harlem. Several longtime residents fondly remember going into the store and seeing a tall ladder along the wall on runners that was used to bring items from the high shelves. Note the excellent brick detailing along the parapet.

14. Laurel & Hardy Museum

The Laurel & Hardy Museum is the only museum in the United States dedicated to Oliver Hardy and Stan Laurel. The museum is one of the biggest tourist attractions in the City of Harlem and every year is visited by thousands of people from all over the world. The building was originally built as a U.S. Post Office, but was converted into the museum.

15. 315 North Louisville Street

Built c.1950, this building is an example of a motel built with a long, low form similar to the Ranch houses being built around the same time. Originally known as the Davie's Motel, its location was on one of the most popular routes south to Florida on Highway 221 before the advent of the interstate highway system. It served many a weary traveler as they made their way south for vacationing.

16. Hill House

Built c.1915, the house has elements of Neoclassical Revival style. Note the simple, yet elegant, square columns on the front porch and the dormer on the roof.

17. 365 North Louisville Street & Walton Memorial Library

Built c.1885 with Folk Victorian elements, this house and the Walton Memorial Library next door, built slightly later c.1890, are strikingly similar. Note the "gingerbread" detailing on the front porch, brackets in the eaves on the side of the house, and the transom over the front door. The library shares very similar detailing, although features such as the windows and doors were altered in the 1980's.

18. 380 North Louisville Street

This house, built c.1890, shows elements of Carpenter Italianate style. Note the bracketing in the gable, transom over the front door, and elaborate window surrounds on the first floor facade. Ionic columns were added when the front porch was altered in the 1990's