

WALK! ENTERPRISE (Historical Long Version)

**-BEGIN YOUR WALK AT THE HISTORIC RAWLS BUILDING ON SOUTH MAIN STREET-**

**The Rawls Building.** 1903, 1928: Built by Captain Japheth Rawls in 1903, historically called the McGee Hotel and the Enterprise Hotel, it was the first hotel in Enterprise. The third floor and the two wings were added during a 1928 remodeling. The actual “front” of the building faces towards the railroad as the early customers were passengers debarking at the Railroad Station. The Rawls Hotel/Building was once the only building in town that had heated grates and electric lights. Note the interesting woodwork (chestnut) and the stained glass inside the Rawls. The Rawls now houses a restaurant, Bed and Breakfast, and professional offices. The Rawls Building is on the historic register. *Interesting but not confirmed: Rawls is said to have two friendly ghosts that roam the third floor. One plays a piano when there is no piano.*

**-EXIT THE RAWLS BUILDING ONTO MAIN STREET AND TURN LEFT-**

**108S Main. 1900, Pea River Historical and Genealogical Society.** Society is a repository of historical documents on Coffee County as well as a small gift shop that carries Boll Weevil and Enterprise gifts. **106 S. Main. 1898, The Martin Drug Store.** The building was built by R. B. Martin and remained in the family until 1983. The building and the contents were sold to Landmark Park. The contents will be housed in the replica of the drug store. The building contains its original floors, ceilings, built-in shelving, and cabinetry as well as ornamental woodwork.

**-VIEW THE BOLL WEEVIL MONUMENT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE INTERSECTION OF MAIN STREET AND COLLEGE STREET-**

**The Famous Boll Weevil Monument.** The only monument in the world that glorifies a pest.

The inscription reads:

“In profound appreciation of The Boll Weevil, and What It Has Done, As The Herald of Prosperity Monument, Was Erected By the Citizens of Enterprise, Coffee County, Alabama”

**HISTORY:**

*The Boll Weevil infestation came from Mexico to Texas in 1892 and slowly began working its way east towards Alabama destroying the cotton crops along the way. In 1910, the weevils crossed into Alabama and arrived in Enterprise in 1915. In 1916, the cotton crop in the area was almost completely destroyed and farmers faced bankruptcy. John Pittman, a Coffee County agent, pushed for farmers to look at peanuts as diversification and a possible solution. At that time peanuts were mainly grown in Virginia South Carolina and North Carolina.*

*In 1915, H.M. Sessions, an Enterprise banker and businessman, investigated the possibility of peanut production in Coffee County. Sessions went to the Carolinas and return with seed peanuts. He also purchased a peanut picker to harvest the crop. Sessions then convinced a prominent farmer, C.W. Baston, to grow the peanuts by promising to pay \$1 for every bushel. Baston harvested 8,000 bushel that year. By the end of the next year, there were 20,000 acres planted in peanuts. In 1917. most farmers were*

*planting peanuts and Coffee County produced more than a million bushels. This was the highest county yield in the nation. The local newspaper stated that almost every vacant building was used to store peanuts. In addition the farmers were able to use peanut hay for their livestock.*

*By 1919, Coffee County produced more peanuts than any other county in the county and the Wiregrass was one of the three prime peanut-producing areas of the nation.*

*In recognition of the Boll Weevil and what it meant to the local economy, Roscoe P. (Bon) Fleming ordered the monument, paid half and asked the community to pay the rest. The monument was dedicated on December 11, 1919. The original monument had a fountain flowing from the top. This was replaced with the image of the Boll Weevil in 1949. The Boll Weevil Monument is on the historic register.*

**-TURN LEFT ONTO WEST COLLEGE STREET-**

*(Your walk will be down West College Street to the College Street Elementary School on the left, cross over to the other side and come back to the Boll Weevil Monument.)*

**108 West College: The Sessions Peanut Processing Plant, 1913,1932.** Originally used as a livery, the building was transformed into a peanut shelling facility in 1917. Façade now dates to around 1945.

**106 Railroad The Railroad Museum, 1903, 1916:** The Railroad Museum has a fine collection of Indian artifacts, early 20th century medical equipment, farm implements, and other historical items.

**301 W College FolkVictorian/Craftsman, 1904 The Jesse Rawls House, 1904.** This house was originally the home of the Jesse Rawls family. Rawls family, an early businessman in the City of Enterprise. Members of the family still own the Rawls Warehouse on Main St.

**307 Mid 20th Century Vernacular, 1940**

**309 Craftsman Bungalow, 1925**

**401 Enterprise Junior High, Portion of the gym is original to old School.**

**501 Craftsman Bungalow, 1925**

**Elementary School: 1919, 1929**

**504Folk Victorian pyramidal, 1910**

**500 Folk Victorian/Queen Anne, 1905**

**408 Folk Victorian, 1910**

**406 Folk Victorian, 1904 404 Folk Victorian, Dr, James Grimes House, 1899**

**402 Craftsman Bungalow, J. B. Bevis House, 1915**

**400 Craftsman Bungalow, Warren House, 1915**

**310 Folk Victorian, 1911**

**306 Folk Victorian, 1910**

**304 Ranch, 1945**

**302 Colonial Revival, 1945**

**-RETURN TO MAIN STREET AND TURN LEFT ONTO NORTH MAIN STREET-**

*Commercial block built in 1900s, 101, 103-5, 107, 109-11, 113-15, 117, 119, 121-123*

**201 Rawls Warehouse, 1919, 1959,** Free standing store Behind Rawls beside Railroad tracks, Rawls Cotton Gin, 1910-25

**-CROSS OVER MAIN STREET AND RETURN TO THE BOLL WEEVIL MONUMENT-**

**North Main Street 202**

*Store, 1904 Commercial Block, built in 1900s with exception 112, 110, 1910, 118, 116,114,112, 110, 108, 106*

**104 Building** with much of historic fabric. Served as a dry goods and a drug store with doctor’s office on second floor. (Infilled windows)Prior to addition of modern facades, most of the building downtown resembled this building. 100 Farmers and Merchants Bank, 1908. Now WVVL radio, the building has the three original vaults intact.

**-TURN LEFT ONTO EAST COLLEGE-**

*Commercial Buildings built in 1910s with the exception of 123, 125, 1945, 105-111, 113,115,119,121,123,125*

*History dictates that this was once the African-American business area. Also, the popular Andrews Sweet Shoppe was housed in the Andrews Gift Shoppe. At one time East College Street had a medium. The Post Office/Public Library was once were the Regions Bank Stands and the old courthouse was where the new courthouse now stands. The library clock is on the corner and the old doors dating back to 1940 are located at the Enterprise Ledger Building on Edwards. The doors contain thirteen stars representing the thirteen states in the woodwork at the top of the doors.*

*Coffee County Court House. (Public Bathrooms available during hours of operation) A new structure. Courthouse has an old table brought to Coffee County on an ox cart. Also, houses memorial plaque to honor Coffee County WWII military servicemen killed in action.*

**-TURN RIGHT (SOUTH) ONTO SOUTH EDWARDS STREET AND PROCEED TO DALEVILLE AVE.-**

*Note: Enterprise Library Building on 101 E. Grubbs Street, 334-347-2636 (Public bathrooms available during hours of operation) (Some information not confirmed) Built in 1960 by the Henderson family for the Enterprise Bank Co. The building was sold to Regions bank in the 1980s. Regions Bank offered a property swap to Enterprise Library in 1991. After 2 1/2 years of renovation, the library moved to the building where it is housed today. Interesting fact: During the renovation an old horseshoe was found leading many to believe that this area was once a stable or blacksmith shop. (Peggy Samuels)*

**South Edwards Street**

**107 Early 20th Century Vernacular, 1915**

**109 Colonial Revival, 1925**

**202 Colonial Revival, 1930.** According to family tradition, Robbie Sessions created the family recipe for peanut butter in her own kitchen. “Golden Craft” was the first peanut butter brought on the market in 1932. It was so popular that the company began producing 80 cases a week (Shoffner 1996:103,138)

**203 Folk Victorian, 1900, Edwards House**

**205 Craftsman/Col Revival, 1905, Martin House**

*(Turn left from South Edwards (after Citizens Bank) onto Daleville Avenue. Travel down left side of the street until Highland Avenue intersects Daleville Avenue. Cross over to the other side, and return to South Edwards.)*

**Daleville Avenue Residential Historical District**

*The district includes fourteen houses that line both sides of Daleville Avenue. This street is perhaps the largest and most ornate homes in Enterprise. It was nicknamed “Silk Stocking Avenue” as, it was said, only those living on the street could afford silk stockings. Interestingly, Highland drive was once affectionately known as “the boot”. The residential district were once homes of leading businessmen, H.M. Sessions, Lewe Sessions, and Will Henderson.*

**Daleville Avenue Daleville Ave. History/type**

**105 Folk Victorian, 1900**

**201 Henderson/ Session House, Colonial Revival, 1903**

**203 Lewis House, Folk Victorian, 1906**

**205 Sherling House, Queen Anne, 1903:** Includes a unique, large, diamond shaped window with four panes of different colored glass.

**301 Queen Anne, 1900**

**303 Queen Anne, 1900:** the interesting feature of this home is the tower with round four-light windows and a conical roof topped with a finial There is a similar home built by the same builder with the same identical tower at 500 West College.

**307 Col Rev/Italianate, 1900**

**313 Bungalow, 1935**

**436 Craftsman Bungalow, 1935**

**430 Early 20th Century Vernacular, 1920**

**428 Craftsman Bungalow, 1935**

**306 Folk Victorian, Craftsman Pyramidal, 1920**

**300 Colonial Revival, 1936**

**206 Folk Victorian, 1900**

**204 Lewe Sessions Jr., Tudor, 1900**

**202 Craftsman Bungalow, 1926**

**200 Folk Victorian, 1904, Peacock House**

**-RETURN TO MAIN STREET VIA EDWARDS TO CHANCEY STREET-**

**217 S. Main First United Methodist Church, Gothic Revival, 1903,04**

The spiritual development of Enterprise began as early as 1882 when church services were held in the school building. During the summer of 1883, services were moved to a “brush arbor” on the corner of Main and Lee Streets. Donations were raised to build a church building and land was donated by John Henry Carmichael. By 1893, the original church building was outgrown, the building torn down and moved across the street. The present building was erected in 1903-4.

**RETURN TO MAIN STREET VIA EDWARDS TO CHANCEY STREET.**

**CONTINUE RIGHT TO VIEW THE CARLISLE HOUSE AT 401 S. MAIN**

**401 S. Main Folk Victorian, 1898**

**Proceed back to Rawls.**

**We hope you enjoyed WALK! ENTERPRISE**

# WALK! Enterprise Historic Downtown

# Self-Guided Tour



Find Out More!



[www.VisitEnterprise.com](http://www.VisitEnterprise.com)  
[www.enterprisealabama.com](http://www.enterprisealabama.com)  
[www.buyenterprise.com](http://www.buyenterprise.com)

## History of Coffee County

Historically, the Wiregrass area was considered of poor sandy soil and was not developed as well as other fertile areas of the state. However, the nutritious grasses that grew under the pines did attract settlers that used the land for grazing livestock. Most of the early settlers came from Georgia or South Carolina and were generally middle classes that had no slaves.

After the 1814 removal of the Creek Indians, the area's population increased prompting the formation of the State of Alabama in 1819 and increased settlers in the Enterprise area.

In 1819 an improved road was cut through the region bringing more people, but they could not legally occupy the land. It was surveyed in 1922-3 and offered for sale by the federal government. Coffee County was a part of many other counties until 1841 when there were enough settlers in the western section of Dale County to warrant the formation of Coffee County. (The County is named after General John Coffee, who served under Andrew Jackson during the Creek campaign). Elba, located on the Pea River, was chosen as the seat of government.

## Downtown History of Enterprise

In the early 1800's Enterprise was nothing more than cross roads. Nearby settlements and towns were Clintonville, Haw Ridge and Daleville. William Alberston was the first settler in the Enterprise area with 160 acres. Alberston, a township trustee, sold another 60 acres to Ben Howell, who in turn sold in to John Henry Carmichael. On November 2, 1881. The site of the first home is on what is now Main Street across from the Rawl's Building. The first school house was located at "Heath's Crossing" near Ouida and Daleville Avenue

Originally, the section of the Geneva-Clintonville Road that ran through town was known as Carmichael Street. Carmichael divided and sold his lots, donated land for the first Methodist church and cemetery and built the first store on the southeast corner of College and Main. Carmichael also had the local post office in his house.

In 1889 Will Henderson opened the first cotton gin at the corner of Adams and Main Streets. Rev. Robert Henry Jackson Hildreth opened and operated a gristmill and sawmill on Harrand Creek, near the intersection on East Lee and Boll Weevil Circle. In 1890. Dr. W.W. Grubbs moved his practice to Enterprise when he married Mattie Carmichael in 1896. The first African Americans homesteaded Enterprise in 1880s-90s.

The Fleming, Grant and Johns families were among the first to settlers. The first African American Church was organized in 1800s in the Coppinville community on the Grant property. The oldest African American neighborhood was located around the area of Carroll and Watts when Elmer Goynes purchased the land from John Henry Carmichael.

Enterprise was incorporated in 1896 with a population of 250.

The railroad spurred development in 1896 when Southwestern Alabama Railway announced the construction of a line from Enterprise to Ozark. The first passenger train arrived on February 14, 1898. The railroad brought another population growth that was also aided by the opening of a federal land office in 1897. The office was in charge of selling 3,560 acres.

In 1898 a fire took most of the original downtown structures. The downtown area was then rebuilt with brick, most of the brick coming from the Rawl's brickyard. There are no structures that predate the city's incorporation. Early commercial buildings still standing include Martin Colley Drug that is still in pristine condition. Others are standing but have been modified or altered. The Carlisle House

on South Main built in 1898 and the Dr. Grimes house built around 1899 on 404 West College are two examples of early nineteenth century still standing.

In the early period of Enterprise the city relied on timbering and cotton for industry. The Enterprise Cotton Mill was located west of the railroad on Harrison and east of Rawls Street. Only the 120 foot smoke stack is left of this building. Surrounding the area are many mill houses. The facility produced cotton duck for products such as cement, cotton and fertilizer bags and tents. The mill later became the Enterprise Manufacturing Company. Enterprise had a mill village located just west of the railroad tracks. The village was laid out on a grid pattern and the houses were somewhat identical. No one is for certain how many mill houses there were. In 1954 the count was forty-seven and there are twenty-two of the original 1901 houses left. Known as "saddlebacks, one first type of house was designed for two families. The second was a house with a hip roof and a porch attaché that extends across the entire façade

Enterprise had two cotton gins. The Rawl's cotton gin is the only remaining manufacturing building from that time. It is located along the railroad tracks behind the Rawls Warehouse on North Main.

Other early industries included the Enterprise Cotton Seed Oil Company, the Enterprise Mills and Novelty Works and the Cloth Shoe Company. The mills and novelty works was a part of the Rawls family operation. The mill employed over 100 people and produced ornamental wood products such as moldings and scrollwork. Many Some older Enterprise homes still have porch columns doors and turned wood ornamentation that originated at the mill.

Amos Pollard who patented the idea opened the cloth shoe factory in 1911. (A pair of these shoes can be seen in the Railroad Museum)

The first Enterprise Public School was built on West College Ave. in 1905-6 on land donated by Jesse Rawls. The school burned in 1911 and only the gym is part of the original structure. African American students attended the Enterprise Academy in the Baptist Hill area. The first school was located east of the city cemetery. In 1906 Enterprise Academy burned and was rebuilt on Carroll Street. This school was replaced in 1929 with the addition of a new brick school and gym in 1944.

The first hospital, the Fleming Sanitarium was constructed in 1905 east of Main Street. It was a two-story building with ten beds. Unsubstantiated history claims this hospital to be the first in the State of Alabama. In 1907 the name of the hospital was changed to Coffee County Sanitarium.

The first brick power plant was built by Jesse Rawls on Adams Street next to the Railroad in 1901. This plant furnished the city's first electricity. The city purchased the plant in 1903.

Information accredited to Boll Weevils, Peanuts, and Air Power, New South Associates and those contributing to the architectural and historical survey of the City of Enterprise through a 2002 grant provided by the Alabama Historical Commission and the City of Enterprise.