

## Saturday Walking Tour

*This tour was offered in June, 2007, as part of the State Bureau of Tourism and Travel's free Saturday Walking Tour program throughout Alabama.*

**The tour begins in the parking lot behind Cullman County Museum, which is located at 211 Second Ave. NE:**

This area on Arnold Street and First Avenue East was the location of the early city Water Treatment plant. Huge storage holding tanks held water from nearby wells and later the Mulberry River. The base of one of those holding tanks was still there this year when construction began on the new Festhalle Market Platz (Cullman's new farmer's market.) It had to be removed before construction could continue. There was also a water tower. Now the city's water treatment plant is on Highway 278 and it gets water from Lake Catoma, which is fed by Eight Mile Creek.

The Cullman Economic Development building, on the south end of the parking lot, started in 1890 as the W.C. Boub Livery Stable and was considered the hub of local transportation. When traveling salesmen arrived on the train, they would hire a horse and wagon, and often a driver too, and make their sales calls. Farm boys would ride into town on a mule or a mule and farm wagon and hire a horse and buggy to take their sweethearts out for a ride.

Since 1924 the building has served, at different times, as City Hall, the fire station and the first location of the Cullman County Museum. Many people remember it as the Cullman County Library. The city restored the property for the Economic Development offices in 1993.

**Begin walking south on First Avenue Northeast to the Warehouse District:**

This area on First Avenue East was where many of Cullman's early businesses began. The building that houses Rumors Deli was the Peinhardt Building. Strawberries were brought in here by the farmers in the late afternoon and sold. Brothers Fred and Beck Peinhardt purchased the strawberries, loaded them on freight cars, iced them down and sent them north on the train with no destination. Then the brothers would get on the telephone and sell the strawberries "rolling." By telegraph, they would direct the railroad where to drop off certain rail cars. By mid-morning, restaurants would have "Fresh Cullman Strawberries," which were considered delicacies in many restaurants in the North and Midwest.

**Ratliff Wholesale Grocery was next to the Peinhardt Building.** They purchased produce and processed it during World War II by dehydration.

The **Mike Wagner Building** was known as Cullman Printing Company. Now it is Papettes Salon. Mr. Wagner would print up local death notices as they occurred and had them carried around town so everyone would know who died and when the funeral would be.

**C.A. Stiefelmeyer Home:** C. A. Stiefelmeyer's home was on this corner, Second Street and First Avenue East, where North Alabama Medical Associates is now. Mr. Steifelmeyer was the owner of the Steifelmeyer Store which was across Second Street. The house and yard were surrounded by a low wrought iron fence.

**Cross Second Street:** A hundred years ago, these next few blocks would have been bustling with people and commerce on a typical Saturday. If people hadn't come to shop or sell, they came to learn the latest news and see others.

**Stiefelmeyer Store:** Stiefelmeyer's sold groceries, men's clothing, women's clothing, housewares, etc. The store clerks made you a ticket of all the goods purchased, attached it to a wire and slid it to the central cashier. Your change was returned in the same manner. Only one location in the entire store handled money. It was known as Mr. Steindorff's office.

**Sterling Ice Cream Parlor** was owned by Luther and John Sterling; now it is Buettner Jewelry.

**Palace Barber Shop and Bath** was the next business. It was owned by Adam Turner and John Sterling. The patrons had their personal shavings mugs displayed along the wall. When they came in for a shave, the barber would use their mug to whip up the shaving lather before shaving them with a straight razor.

**Louise Grob Beauty Shop** is now Touch of German.

Adolf Veigl started the first bakery, **City Bakery**, in the building where Duchess Bakery is located. Adolf was also a bootlegger. Townsfolk said he sold bread out the front door and booze out the back door. When he sold you a bottle, he would give you a slap on the back with his floury hand. Everyone knew you had been to Mr. Veigl's. After City Bakery went out of business, Al Gasser, a city councilman, started Duchess Bakery in 1939. The current owner, Larry Bontrager, is the son of one of the bakers Mr. Gasser hired to run Duchess Bakery. Upstairs in the Duchess Bakery building was the office for Dr. J.C. Martin and later Lee Schollosser Photo Studio.

On the corner where Luyben and Boike now has a one-story building was the location of the **Hugh Brindley Grocery Store**, which was the best grocery store in town. He later moved the grocery store to the old Lyric Theater, which is now the parking lot behind AmSouth building.

John Luyben was a founder of **Luyben and Boike appliance store**. He was a large man with a booming voice who greeted customers so loudly that the whole block knew you were at his store. His voice matched his cornet, which he played as a young man while touring with a traveling circus. John Luyben was a descendent of William Richard, who was recruited by Col. Cullmann to help him run his various business interests.

After serving as Hugh Brindley's grocery store, the corner lot now occupied by Luyben and Boike was **Skipper and Eidson**, a fine men's clothing store. After it burned, Luyben and Boike acquired the property and added on to their business with the one-story addition. Hugh Brindley moved his business to where the Cullman Power Board is located today on Second Avenue East.

**Cross Third Street (Highway 278):** The two-story building which now houses the St. John law firm and other businesses was Thompson Brothers Store. The owners were Herschel and Carl Thompson. They sold men's, women's and children's clothing. Mamie Hoelscher was their Number One clerk. She was the daughter of the family that owned the Hoelscher Wagon Factory in west Cullman.

**Col. Johann Gottfried Cullmann's** house was in the approximate location of the vacant building that says Steve's Gym. Originally the house sat on a fourth of the block. Col. Cullmann laid out the town in one-acre blocks, which were divided into fourths. There are only five blocks left in Cullman that still have their original one-fourth acre lots intact. All the others have been subdivided or altered.

Across the street from Col. Cullmann's home was the first train depot. It had to be moved in 1912, when the L&N Railroad began lowering the train tracks to below grade level. Col. Cullman left money in his will to help pay for that project. There was also a water tower for the trains. After the tracks were lowered and viaducts or bridges were built across the track, the area where the tracks used to be was turned into parking lots and parks.

When it was first proposed to lower the railroad tracks, many people in Cullman protested that train passengers would not be able to see what a lovely town Cullman is.

After Col. Cullmann's home burned in 1914, the **Lyric Theater** was built on the site. Many people today remember it as Kuhn's Five and Dime. It also had a lunch counter. The manager was Red Crumbley.

Where Carter Waldrop Real Estate is was a produce store, which engaged in some bootlegging. Later it was the **Robert Schaefer Home Heating business**.

The Norwood family had the **Cullman Tribune** newspaper, the city's oldest continuously published newspaper, in the next building. Later it was owned by Henry and Edna Earle Arnold. Next was the **Mayo Beauty Shop and Barber Shop**. The two-story building was half **Ward Jewelry Store** and half a hat shop. Now that is Killer Bees Paint Ball. Upstairs were doctors offices and a hospital.

The building that is boarded up was the famous **Princess Art Shop**. It was a popular women's clothing store and sold finer dresses in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. It was owned by Mrs. Guthrey and later by her daughter.

The two-story brick building was the **Hauk Building** (now Cobb Building). It was owned by Louis Hauk and housed Grob Electric Company, then Kiddieland Shop and Star Billiard Parlor, which was owned by Red Barnett. Upstairs held the offices of dentist Dr. N.V. Culpepper, Abt Insurance Agency and Tax accounting office for over 30 years, also a chiropractor, Dr. Laughlin.

On the corner, where the Smith and Smith law firm is now, was **Peoples Drug Store**. It was owned by Philip Hartung. His mother, Julia Cullmann Hartung, was Col. Cullmann's niece. Philip Hartung was prominent in the state pharmacy association. Peoples Drug Store was a town landmark and continued under Philip Hartung, Junior, and its sale in 1955 to E.B. Turner. In addition to being a pharmacy, People's Drug also had an ice cream parlor. In warm weather, the tables and chairs for the ice cream parlor were moved outside so that patrons could watch the trains pass by while they enjoyed their ice cream.

**Cross Fourth Street:** On the left is the old **German National Bank Building**, now the Mary Carter Store. Col. Cullmann supervised the construction of the building. The cupola on top was built to watch for trains. It had a red light for police and firemen, and a light signal for trains. In 1914 a teller embezzled all the funds and fled to Germany and that was the end of the German National Bank. Later it was the Dee Robinson Hardware Store. The telephone company was also in part of Mary Carter. It contained a switchboard where operators worked, plugging and unplugging lines as calls were made.

A laundromat was one of the businesses that succeeded the German National Bank. The **Mary Carter Store** is owned by Raymond Young, who keeps the Mary Carter name even though the Mary Carter Paint Company closed many years ago. Mr. Young stocks everything from shoes to hunting and fishing supplies – the kinds of items you don't know you need until you see them and which you won't find at WalMart.

Across the street is the **Weiss Cottage**. This is the oldest house in Cullman. It was originally a railroad section house, built in 1872. We will see its original location on Sixth Street later in our walk. Dr. Aldo Weiss, his wife and three children lived here. Dr. Weiss bought the house from the L&N Railroad in 1875. He advertised as a "Practical Physician and Accoucheur," which means lying-in or maternity doctor at a time when most babies were born without a physician in attendance. He kept goats in the basement, so many people called it The Goat House. Dr. Weiss and his family moved away in 1889. Judge S.L. Fuller and his wife, Evelyn, bought it. The house was donated to the city in 1976. Its relocation and restoration became a Bicentennial project for the City of Cullman Federated Women's Clubs and the Historical Society.

Back on the east side of the street, the tiny office in the back of the Mary Carter Store was the **Cullman Building and Loan Association**, the beginning of Cullman Savings Bank. It was organized along the lines of the Bailey Bank in the great Christmas-time movie “It’s a Wonderful Life.” It financed home ownership for many people who could not have afforded to own a home otherwise. It was open only on Saturday nights at first. Fred Abt remembers accompanying his father there as the elder Abt stopped in to catch up on news around town. Fred would grow tired and fall asleep on the floor, while his father talked with other men.

Later that was where **Imbusch Feed and Seed** was located. You can still barely see the name above the door. The other door led upstairs where there were apartments and other businesses. At one time there was even a hospital upstairs.

The next building was the **Cullman Ice Factory**, founded by the Hauk family, one of whose descendants is current Cullman City Councilman Ernest Hauk. On the fourth of July, cars would line up for two blocks to get ice to make ice cream. The Ice Factory was a delivery service and would bring a block of ice to your home or business. You would have a coupon book on the wall for the deliveryman to clip. The Hauk family lived upstairs. You could tell when they were making ice; puffs of steam came out of a vent pipe on the north side of the building. In later generations of the Hauk family, the building was converted to offices. Next to the Ice Factory, Louie Hauk built a cold storage locker where you could rent a locker to store frozen food. That is now the Jackson and Williams law firm.

**The Busy Bee Café** on the corner is the city’s oldest restaurant that is still operating. Its original location was on the corner of Third Street and Third Avenue where the Hagan Real Estate office is now.

**Cross Fifth Street:** Across the street, where the Allstate Insurance Company is now was one of Cullman’s early landmark businesses - **Werdt’s Store and Delicatessen**. It was owned by Herman and Clara Werdt. It was also a boarding house and saloon. The Werdts sold German sausages, homemade candies and fresh seafood when it was available. They had the first ice cream sold in Cullman. When a customer ordered ham, Mrs. Werdt would hold the meat against her body and use a large butcher’s knife to slice against her body. Customers watched in fascination to see if she would cut herself – she never did!

The dentist’s office behind Allstate was the George Graf home. He was the father of Louis Graf Sr., who had Graf’s Tin Shop.

The vacant lot held a two-story home with columns. It was owned by a family connected to the railroad.

The old Green family home on the corner is now St. John and Associates Engineering.

**Turn the corner onto Sixth Street and proceed to the corner of Sixth and Second Avenue: St. John’s Evangelical Reformed Protestant Church** was Cullman’s first church. It was established in 1874 on the west side of town. This was Col. Cullmann’s church. The church has had several different denominational affiliations. It was part of the Lutheran denomination when this building was put up. Now it is back to its original affiliation, which follows a Calvinist theology. Services were conducted in German until the 1930s.

The vacant lot north of the church, where the magnolia tree is, was the site of the **Dinkleburg Store**, also known as the Santa Claus store. Mrs. G.O. Dinkleburg operated a combination toy store, delicatessen and saloon. The beautiful magnolia tree was part of Mrs. Dinkleburg’s beer garden. Mrs. Dinkleburg endeared herself to her patrons by always packing a peppermint stick in with each pound of coffee.

Across the street, facing Fifth Street, is one of the oldest houses in Cullman. It was known as the Sutterer house. Now it is owned by the Harry Hackworth family. It has not been occupied for many years.

**Cross Fifth Street: Christ Lutheran Church** was begun in 1920 as a spin off from St. John's. A young pastor at St. John's wanted to modernize and begin conducting services in English. Many people at St. John's got upset and they forced him out. He and his followers established Christ Lutheran. Until the 1960s it was known as Christ English Lutheran Church to denote that English was the language spoken in the church service.

The Eddlemans owned the building which now houses Handmades, on the corner of Second Avenue and Fifth Street.

Johnson Electric building was the **Nehi Bottling Company**. The John Cooper family lived upstairs.

Looking down Fourth Street is the old **Tennessee Valley Bank** building. It still has its name etched in stone. Thompson and Thompson law firm recently renovated the building and uses it for law offices. The Vincent Furniture location on Fourth Street used to be the **Ritz Theater**. Many people alive today remember going to see movies there.

**Cross Fourth Street:** On the corner, JMark Real Estate was a former grocery store, paint store and then **Cullman Savings Bank**.

**The Esther Opera House**, now Weissend Electric, held shows by traveling companies upstairs. It had a hoist in the back for raising scenery and other heavy items to the upstairs stage. The downstairs was an ice skating rink in winter and later, new and used car dealer. The Abt Insurance Agency and Tax Service was located in the tiny office on the north side downstairs from 1942 until 1950. Beside it was a barber shop with Nathan Smith and Gurney Legg.

Grob TV was the **Red Wing Café**, operated by Silas Reid., and then the Bud Sheats grocery store.

Across the street was the old **Parker Bank Building**. Now it's Rennard's Gallery. The small one-story building just south of what was the office of Drs. Harry and Dwight Fuller. Dr. Harry's son, Dr. Wayne Fuller, has his office a block north.

Southern Accents used to be the **Cullman Paint Store**. There was a boarding house upstairs.

Vincent Furniture on the corner of Second Avenue and Third Street was the **Thompson Brothers Furniture Store**. Herschel Thompson was one of the brothers.

**Cross Third Street: Parker Bank** moved to the corner where AmSouth is located. The local bank was later sold to AmSouth. Before the bank was built, however, this was a vacant lot for parking mules and wagons for customers who were shopping at Stiefelmeyers and other stores in the area. That was a time before there were many cars.

Midnight Properties was the **city's first post office**. It was built in 1913. Original antique fixtures, marble, heart pine flooring and elaborate moldings were all preserved by the present owners. Where pieces were missing, replacements were painstakingly crafted and expertly installed. The foyer has its original marble floor and windows for the postal clerks. The postal slots used for mail sorting are preserved in the back also. Many of the doors are original to the building. Where doors had to be replaced, antique doors were purchased and installed to look like originals.

The building that now houses Champ Crocker's law office was the **Joe Schmidt Saloon** in the days before Cullman became a dry county.

**Cross Second Street: Sacred Heart Church** was built in 1913. The present stone building replaced a smaller wooden structure. Col. Cullmann invited Catholics to colonize the area. In 1877, the first priest arrived. He spoke only German. He built a small log church and started a school. In 1887, Benedictine monks arrived from Pennsylvania and established St. Bernard Abbey. Benedictine sisters arrived in 1898 to teach in the school.

The cornerstone for the present Sacred Heart building was laid in 1913. The structure was finished in 1916. The church has outstanding stained glass windows which were made in Germany in 1916. When the First World War broke out before they could be shipped, they were buried in Germany to keep them safe. They were shipped to America after the war. The church was built to accommodate 500 worshippers, who stood throughout the services. The pews were installed much later. The story of the Sacred Heart building is also tied in with the German Bank. When the bank folded, the church lost money it had invested there. The funds were intended for clocks which were to be put in the steeples. The church had to change its building plans. The steeples were built a third shorter than planned and circular louvers were installed where the clocks should have gone.

The current Sacred Heart School building was completed in 1949. The first school building was built out of wood and was where the church's Family Life Center is located. The school was started in 1899 and is the oldest school in the Diocese of Birmingham.

The Cullman Power Board was the second location of the Hugh Brindley grocery store. It was affiliated with the Piggly Wiggly chain when it was sold to the city in 1990.

The next block is the beginning of Cullman's city center. **The Cullman County Library** has been in this location since 1967.

**Cullman City Hall** is in the last block. Across the street are the **Cullman County Museum** and the **Cullman City Building Department**. The city appreciates its rich and varied history, but is looking forward by offering free wireless internet service in this area.