

Historic Saluda Hike

Take a walk down Saluda's Main Street and learn about Saluda's beginning with the coming of the train in 1878 and the creation of the town of Saluda.

We are so fortunate in Saluda that our historic buildings have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources. As you walk down Main Street look for plaques designating which buildings have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Count how many you find on Main Street.

1. Beginning at the library parking lot, look across the street for the historical marker which reads "Saluda Grade, The steepest standard gauge, mainline railway grade in the US. Opened in 1878, three mi. long Crests here." Because brave men hammered up the treacherous side of Melrose Mountain, the small mountain village of Saluda came into being. Business people were quick to provide services for railway workers and travelers. Hotels, 25 boarding houses and many summer houses were built in the Saluda area. The long-held belief that mountain air promoted good health also brought many people to Saluda. The town was incorporated in 1881. By 1910 the town was prospering. The Great Depression of the 1930's crippled the town's growth. The town did not change much. Beginning in the 1980's the town has had an economic growth. It has a hometown quality of what life used to be like in the past.
2. Saluda Community Library has been used by several businesses over the years since it was built around 1919. One of the businesses was Martin's Tea Room. The building was donated for use as the new library by the Nolan Pace family and renovated with community support. Scott Bessent donated \$275,000 in honor of his father, Homer. The library opened in December 2000.

3. Across from the library is a small green building that was once used as a real estate office.
4. Saluda Historic Depot and Museum was purchased in 2016 to create a train and heritage museum. The Depot was built in 1903 by the Southern Railway to serve passengers. The Depot was originally located on Highway 176. Be sure to visit the museum to see train memorabilia and the diorama model of the 3 miles of the Saluda Grade.
5. The Saluda Stations building (next to the Depot) is not a historical building. It was originally a Gulf gas station built in the 1940's and remodeled in the 1950's. It was remodeled again in 1985 to match the Depot.
6. Salamander is not a historical building. It was a laundromat in the 1970's.
7. Saluda City Hall and Police Department building was constructed around 1897. The building functioned as a general store and then as the Carolina State bank which folded during the Great Depression. The decorative pressed metal façade (front) with bands of "classical" detailing makes this building unique in Saluda. Take a look inside and you can see the old vault.
8. Spring Park: Behind City Hall is a spring 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. Water from Spring Park comes from Crystal Springs. In the early days of Saluda before there was a modern septic system, Martha Ashely at Crystal Springs would release water from her pond to flush the town. During the Civil War both sides would use the spring to water their horses. Truce was declared when the horses were being watered by either side.
9. Pebbledash Building is located behind City Hall and the Police Station. This structure has an exterior treatment that was popularized in Biltmore Village. Pebbles were mixed with the mortar to create texture. The building has been used as a hardware and building supply, a feed store, a cleaner and pressing club, a florist shop and now an apartment and retail space.

The Pebbledash Building was also used as a 1920's movie set for the movie "A Tale of Bootlegging" filmed in Saluda in 2006 or 2007. The building was used in the jail scene and several residents were extras in the filming. Robert Pace was filmed in his store. Period vehicles were furnished by members of the Western Carolina Model A Ford Club. One scene involved a "building" being blown up. The slap stick comedy won Best Feature Film Award at a film festival in California in 2008.

10. The old Telephone Company was built around 1930 is now the Green River Brew Pub. The Appalachian State Telephone Company operated from this building beginning with sixteen crank telephones. This was where the operators worked.
11. The Purple Onion and Heartwood Gallery buildings were built around 1930. The Purple Onion space was a grocery store. Heartwood's space was used as a "pressing club." These were spaces where people could bring their skirts and suits to be ironed for a monthly membership fee.
12. Thompson's Store and was built around 1910 for use as a general store. Ward's Grill was started in the early 60's. This business was operated by the Lola Ward family at this location from 1941 until 2007. Charlie Ward died in 2008 shortly after he retired. It officially reopened in 2011 when cousin Clark Thompson and Judy Ward acquired the business. The second floor has been restored and serves as a special events place.
13. Old Post Office Building is now Mountain Life Realty/Mineral Spirits. Early records indicate that the first post office listed for Saluda began on May 7, 1878. Since Saluda was not chartered until 1881, the post office probably began under another name. It remained in this location until 1966.
14. McCreary Park is across the street from the Purple Onion. There is a Memorial for Lion Club members on the steps. Edward Cater Leland is honored here. Find out what he contributed to Saluda on this plaque.
15. Notice the cement street post across from McCreary Park. Street posts like these were used across the country but now are becoming a rarity. Look for them throughout Saluda.

16. Saluda Memorial Park honors service men and women who gave their lives serving our county. Stop by to remember and honor those from the Saluda area who made the ultimate sacrifice. Notice the stone water fountain that once provided drinking water on Main Street. It was moved to Saluda Memorial Park in recent years. Carved on the fountain is recognition to the Woodmen of the World who once cleared away the forest to provide for their families. Today the organization provides financial services for its members.
17. Saluda Senior Center is next to the McCreary Park and was used by the Saluda Fire Dept until the 90's when the SFD moved to its current location which used to be a yarn mill.
18. Azalea Bistro building was remodeled and renovated in the 70's. The original building suffered years of neglect. It was carefully rebuilt to match the existing buildings.
19. Princess Theatre was built in the 1920's and is now River Dog Run and Sterling Stones. The theatre went out of business during the Great Depression. The structure was also used as a gymnasium for Saluda High School.
20. M. A. Pace store was built in 1899. This building is the most intact structure in the historic district. The shelving and most of the furnishings are original. The M. A. business was operated by the same family from the building's construction until the death in 2010 of Robert Pace. The general store was reopened in 2011 by Leon Morgan and his family. The second floor has served as a real estate and insurance office, doctor's office, a meeting hall for the Woodmen of the World, a beauty parlor and later as a storage area.
21. Mewdlic's Tea Room is next to Somewhere in time which was built in the 1920's. The structure was "modernized" in 1965 to accommodate a Western Auto Store and a Star automobile dealership. In the 1980's they sold gas.
22. Standard Oil station opened in the 1930's and is now the Saluda Whistle Stop Pizza and Wings. A newer Esso station was built in the 1950's next door which is now the Green River Adventures. At one time,

as many as five service stations were located downtown. When I-26 was finished in 1976, highway traffic was diverted away from town.

23. The history of Saluda School can be traced back to 1922. During that year, the Saluda Seminary closed as a private institution and the school became part of the public school system. The original school was later torn down to build the current main building of the school. In the late the Works Progress Administration (WPA) built the first gymnasium in Polk County on the school grounds. Until 1974 the school served first through high school. Today it serves pre-kindergarten to fifth grade.

24. Little Park was donated to the Saluda Community by the widow and daughters of Robert Little, Jr. Robert Little grew up in Saluda and never lost his love of Saluda even though he moved away after high school to find work. This wooded lot next to Saluda School was his way of not really leaving the place that he loved most.