

Historic Plymouth...*A Walking Tour*

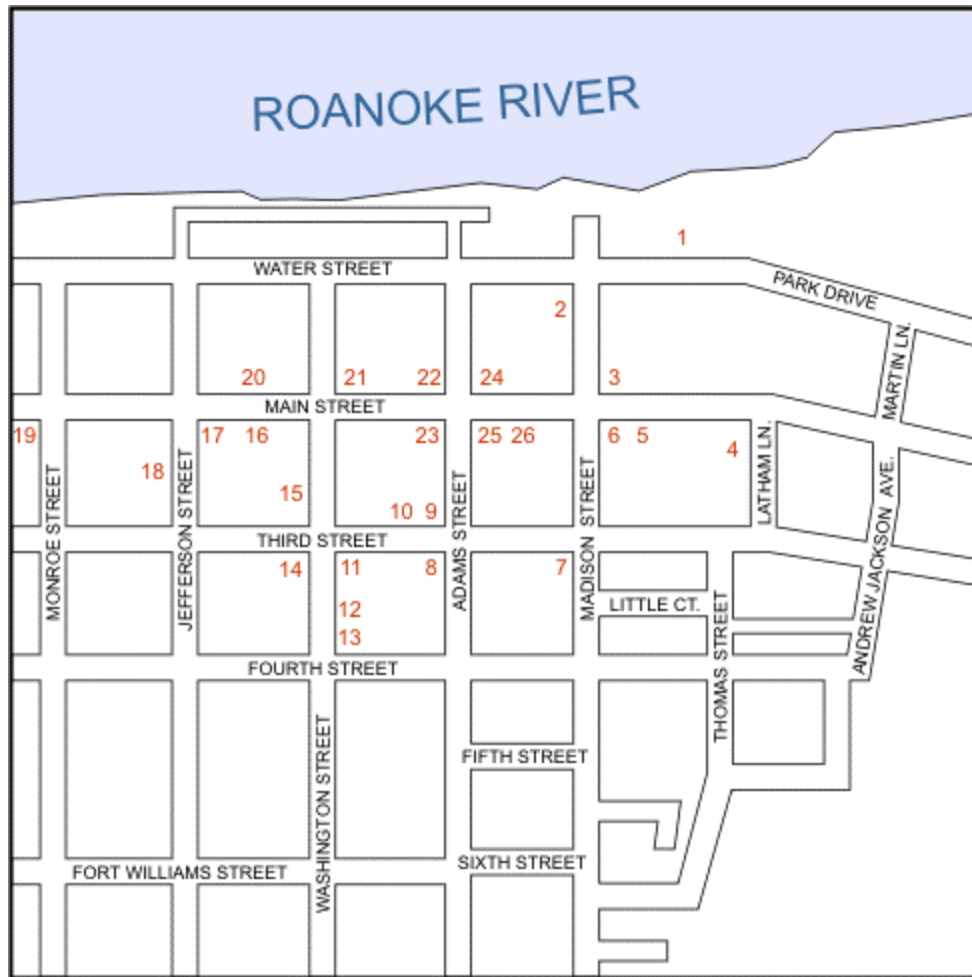
National Register of Historic Places

(See map and corresponding building list below)

The town of Plymouth, appearing to visitors as a slumbering oasis on the south bank of the Roanoke River, has played important roles in the history of the Albemarle region and in the Civil War. The Plymouth Historic District, comprising most of the town laid out in 1787 and largely residential in character, contains buildings that have housed the domestic, religious, educational, political, social, and business life of the town. Its early history is as a port on the Roanoke River and as a designated port of entry, with its own customs house and collector, on the Albemarle Sound. From its founding until the outbreak of the Civil War, hundreds of thousands of dollars of cypress shingles, lumber, and other wood products, as well as agricultural produce, was shipped from Plymouth north to Norfolk, Baltimore, New York, and Boston and to the West Indies. Because of its prominence as a shipping center in the antebellum period, the control of Plymouth was fiercely contested during the Civil War. The battles here are important chapters in the history of the war but surely the most important event was the sinking of the confederate ram "Albemarle" on 27 October 1864. Such was the extent of the Civil War destruction that, today, only five houses in the district and a portion of Grace Church survive from the period before the war.

After the war, trade was renewed and the town again prospered but tragedy struck again on 14 April 1898 when fire destroyed most of the commercial district. All of the buildings on Water Street, except the Hornthal-Owens Store, were erected after the fire when a town ordinance forbade the construction of frame business places. The houses lining the streets of Plymouth, with their expansive front porches and weather-boarded elevations, range from the handsome residences of the affluent merchants and landowners, through the dwellings of its professional men, managers, and salesmen, to the largely rental houses of the workers in the maritime lumbering and wood manufacturing plants and fisheries, clerks in the once-numerous Water Street stores, laborers, and servants.

Davyd Foard Hood
Architectural Historian



**Washington County Chamber of Commerce
Presents
Plymouth Historic District Walking Tour**

- 1. PORT O' PLYMOUTH MUSEUM** 302 Water Street c. 1923.
The Atlantic Coast line Railroad erected this brick station on this site where it had carried on railroad activities since 1889. It housed both passenger and freight operations until 1975 when the Union Station was built on Washington Street.

- 2. GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH** 107 Madison Street c. 1861, 1893.
Designed by the nationally prominent architect Richard Upjohn, the church was heavily damaged during the battle of Plymouth. Only the apse and tower were retained when it was rebuilt in 1893 to the design of C.J. Hartage of Rocky Mount.

After the war during reconstruction, twelve sycamore trees were planted by Grace Episcopal Church. Each was named for one of Christ's Apostles. Some years later during a particularly hard thunderstorm, lightning struck and killed the tree named Judas.

3. THE LATHAM-WARD-HAMPTON HOUSE 302 East Main Street c. 1870 and later.

One of the first dwellings built in Plymouth after the Civil War, this cross plan had a series of important owners beginning with the builder Louis Charles Latham who embellished its appearance. Dr. Wm. H. Ward, the second owner, was a major benefactor of Grace Church. It was acquired by Wm. Roy Hampton in 1917. Hampton's widow occupied it until her death in 1969. Portions of the Lindley Nursery Co. planting plan of 1920 survive.

4. THE LATHAM HOUSE 311 East Main Street c. 1850.

This Greek Revival style house was built by Plymouth's most prominent 19th century citizen, Charles Latham, who occupied this antebellum house until 1883. Until 1970, it was the home of his descendants who remodeled it in this Italianate mode.

Annie Norman, a devoted house slave for the Charles Latham family, moved to Mackeys after the war and regularly walked ten miles from her house to town to visit the Lathams. As she got older, she was known to refuse a ride home in the Lathams' newly acquired automobile, as she was afraid of it.

5. THE LOANE-OWEN HOUSE 303 East Main Street c. 1895.

Decorated with a wealth of Victorian sawn and turned woodwork, this house was built for Chas. D. Loane, one of Plymouth's major lumbermen.

6. BLOUNT-HAMPTON-BAILEY HOUSE 301 East Main Street c. 1895.

First known as the home of businessman Levi Blount, this house was later the home of his daughter, Loulie May Blount Hampton. As her father's heir and the widow of Wm. H. Hampton, she was a lady of considerable means. Mrs. Hampton effected many improvements to the home's interior decoration.

7. NEW CHAPEL BAPTIST 301 Madison Street c. 1924.

Designed by Rev. S.C. Copeland for his congregation, this Gothic Revival church is considered one of the boldest of the twentieth century twin tower styles.

8. THE METHODIST CHURCH 109 Third Street c. 1832, 1860, 1931 and later.

Organized in 1827, the congregation acquired the lots for this building site between 1832 and 1853. They erected a framed church. Used and heavily damaged during the Civil War, the church was replaced by the current building.

Brick veneer was added in 1931. Charles Latham and all four of his wives are buried here.

The Methodist Church was the center for social events during the war. On the evening of January 29, the amateurs of the congregation put on a vocal and instrumental concert. The house was crowded; about 800 were in attendance. The concert was not half over when we noted General Wessels and Naval Commander Flusser climb out a window near the stage. Presently, the adjutants of our brigade were wanted. The Eight Georgian Calvary was advancing.

—Captain John Donaghy, 1864

9. THE ZEB VANCE NORMAN HOUSE 106 Third Street c 1890, 1904 and later.

Used as a school on the south side of Third Street until 1902, it was moved to this site and fitted as a rental dwelling by Wm. L. Sherrod. In 1920, Zeb Vance Norman, one of Plymouth's prominent lawyers, bought the house and remodeled and expanded it. He lived here until his death in 1968.

10. WINDLEY-AUDBON HOUSE 302 Washington Street c. 1840, 1886 and later.

Still marked by the 1862 Civil War bullet holes, this house is one of only four surviving houses built prior to 1861. Probably built for Edmond Windley, it has been a residence to the Ausbon family since 1885.

Electric lights were installed at the major intersections in town. A single bulb hung from crossed wires topped with a metal shade. During warm summer nights, the boys got together and played baseball under them.

—Hermine Ausbon Ramsey

11. Ambrose Lindsey Owens house I 320 Washington Street c. 1904
Erected by Benjamin Nurney for Mr. Owens, this Queen Anne style house was the merchant/businessman's residence until he built a larger house at 206 East Main Street. Its handsome porch is one of the finest of its period.

12. PERRY-SPRUILL HOUSE 326 Washington Street c. 1883

One of Plymouth's finest buildings, this Greek Revival cottage was built for Theo. A. Perry. In 1895, Jeremiah C. Spruill, one of Plymouth's leading merchants, purchased the house which remained a family residence until 1985.

13. THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH 309 Washington Street c. 1916, 1947-48, 1967 and 1988.

This original Classic Revival style church occupies the former corner location of the Latham House Hotel. Having recessed entrances facing two streets, it has been remodeled and expanded in three major efforts. The congregation

was organized in 1866. It built a church two blocks to the west that is still marked by the old Baptists burial grounds.

14. THE CICERO JULIUS NORMAN HOUSE 213 Washington Street c. 1927.

One of the earliest important houses erected by the prolific Plymouth builder, Robert L. Tetterton. This brick bungalow is distinguished by its ceramic tile roof. Norman lived here but a few years before returning to his childhood home at 111 East Main Street which he remodeled and occupied.

15. THE HAMPTON ACADEMY 110 West Main Street c. 1902, 1905.

Erected through the beneficence of Plymouth native Dr. John T. Hampton and his brother Wm. H. Hampton, it was Plymouth's first brick schoolhouse. The structure was used as school until 1950.

16. DAVID O. BRINKLEY HOUSE 114 West Main Street c. 1914

One of Plymouth's leading businessmen of the 1880s built the Queen Anne style house in a most unusual material for its day—cement block.

Circuses came to town, and elephants marched right down Washington Street before our eyes. But the grandest moment for me was when Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show arrived. The nurse and I were strolling my baby sister in her carriage when Buffalo Bill rode along beside me on his white horse. He smiled and tipped his hat to me.

—Carolyn D. Brinkley

17. CLARK-CHESSON HOUSE 219 Jefferson Street c. 1810.

Plymouth's oldest surviving house was built by David Clark. It was later owned by Elijah Cornell who operated Cornell Ship Yard with his two brothers. His cousin, Ezra, founded Cornell University.

18. PICOT-ARMISTEAD-PETTIFORD HOUSE 302 West Main Street. c. 1815, 1850 and later.

With its commanding view of the Roanoke River, the oldest portion is the east three bays of the house. Erected by Dr. Julian Picot, it has been home to a series of distinguished owners. Robert Armistead purchased the house in 1844 and added the two-story block to the west gable end. In 1914, Reuben Pettiford, a brick mason and prominent Black citizen, purchased the house that remains in his family.

There is information of a mysterious escape tunnel in the Armistead house. Mrs. Staplefoot said that it ran diagonally across the street to the Ayers home and then on to the river.

19. THE HORNTAL FAMILY HOUSE 109 West Main Street c. 1870, 1930s.

This picturesque villa was built by Louis Henry Hornthal and remained home to his family until 1930. Always prominent in the social life of Plymouth, the house was sold by Louis Philip Hornthal in 1930 to “Cissy” Ayers, who added the two-story portico and leaded glass entrance. Hornthal moved to the newly-completed cottage built in the side yard in the shadow of the great house.

20. THE JACKSON HOUSE 102 East Main Street c. 1900.

Designed to address its corner location with porches on both streets, this late Victorian House was home for many years to Elmer and Ercel Beasley Jackson. It was reportedly built by his father, Wm. Jos. Jackson.

21. THE NORMAN FAMILY HOME 111 East Main Street c. 1898 and later.

Cicero J. Norman purchased this newly-built house in 189 for \$1,500. Here he and his wife raised five sons, all who played important roles in the life of Plymouth. In a Colonial Revival remodeling, the house was fitted with extraordinary twenty-four-pane sash windows.

22. THE JOHNSTON-WILLIFORD HOUSE 114 East Main Street c. 1890.

This was one of the earliest-known houses built by the local contractor, Wm. Jos. Jackson. It bears his signature-stepped eaves and was raised for Frank Rhodes Johnson whose descendants occupied it until 1990.

23. THE WASHINGTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE 120 Adams Street c. 1919.

In 1823 the county seat was moved from Lees Mill to Plymouth. A building site was acquired, and a courthouse was erected in 1824. Designed by Benton and Benton of Rocky Mount, this Classic Revival building was the fourth courthouse erected here.

Many disgruntled citizens showed their disapproval of tax increases and court judgments by burning down the courthouse.

24. THE LATHAM-BRINKLEY HOUSE 201 East Main Street c. 1883.

One of Plymouth’s most richly ornamented 19th-century houses, this Italianate villa was erected by Jos. A. Latham for his uncle, Charles Latham, and his fourth wife, Emily Polk. Surviving receipts record the purchase of the materials, including the many brackets used to enrich the house. These brackets were acquired primarily from Baltimore merchants. It remains a family residence and has a notable collection of camellias on its grounds.

25. THE AMBROSE LINDSEY OWENS HOUSE II 203 East Main Street
c. 1918.

Built on the site of the old Gaylord family house, the expansive late colonial revival dwelling with its handsome porch was the second residence built by Mr. Owens who, at his death, was the county's largest individual property owner.

In 1910 the Roanoke River froze over. It was quite a novelty. We were allowed to go down to the edge of the river with Papa and touch it, but could not stand on it. Mr. Weeks was far more daring and drove his two-door, open top automobile right across it.

Continued

Architectural Glossary



CHIMNEY

1. Cap
2. Architrave
3. Shaft
4. Base

CORNICE

5. Fasciae
6. Dentals
7. Panel
8. Bracket
9. Drop

WINDOW

10. Cap Fillet
11. Keystone
12. Lights
13. Sash
14. Sill

BLINDS

15. Frame
16. Slats

PORCH

17. Rail
18. Balustrade
19. Capital
20. Chamfer
21. Rosette
22. Plinth
23. Rail
24. Panel
25. Newel Post

DOOR

26. Panel
27. Molding
28. Rail & Stiles

29. Foundation
30. Corner Board
31. Clapboard
32. Roof