

New South Boosterism in Douglasville, Georgia

Douglasville's *Historic Commercial District Founding Father's* walking tour presents information that illustrates the beginning stages of Douglasville's economic and industrial development. Douglas County was created from Campbell and Carroll Counties on Oct. 17, 1870. Located at a natural rise in the topography, Douglasville was originally known as Skint Chestnut, a name derived from a large tree used by travelers as a landmark, which was stripped of its bark so as to be more conspicuous. The Georgia General Assembly established the Town of Douglasville on February 25, 1875. An election was held on the first Saturday in March 1875, and a Mayor, treasurer, recorder, and marshal were chosen.

Douglasville was a "New South" railroad town that developed a dominant commercial district complemented by a cotton mill. The espousal of Henry Grady's New South ideology by a majority of Douglasville's businessmen, professionals, and politicians transformed the little farming village of Douglasville into a thriving town.

The New South vision created a new commercial orientation that reshaped the southern railroad towns, revitalized local economies, and created buildings that are still in use today. Before the Civil War, general stores stood at the crossroads of rural communities; storeowners went to the farmer. By 1880 farmers in need of credit and goods from merchants came to town. The rise of southern railroad towns and the farmers' shift to cash crop agriculture were mutually reinforcing trends that fostered a spirit of entrepreneurial boosterism among local businessmen and professionals. As railroads and diversified trade became integral elements of the South's economic renaissance during the 1880s, entrepreneurs with ties to their city's economy assumed key leadership roles. They embraced New South ideology and created an environment that welcomed investment and economic development.

The city of Douglasville, Georgia from 1880 to 1915, exemplified everything that New South boosters claimed to need to remedy the South's post-Civil War economic stagnation. Joseph S. James, a New South booster, local lawyer, and Douglasville's first Mayor, as well as, other local boosters worked hard to establish the railroad, banks, and commercial district, as well as capture northern investment capital to build industry.

Lawyers, bankers, farmers, merchants, teachers, preachers, doctors, public officials-any man who stood out among his neighbors, or whose economic position allowed him a little freedom of action, was likely to be requisitioned into service or to venture for himself. New South boosters pooled their resources to accomplish their goals. This is seen in the recruiting of the railroad, the building of the commercial district and cotton mill and other related enterprises in Douglasville. This tour will reveal not only the historical architecture of the buildings in Douglasville's Historic Commercial District, but will present a snapshot of how the town boosters actualized their vision of industry and enterprise.



Broad Street in Douglasville circa 1915

Douglasville's Commercial District Businessmen

The businessmen listed below correspond to the buildings on Broad Street featured in this tour. Douglasville's businessmen were not just entrepreneurs, active public servants and united in building and promoting Douglasville.

Raymond J. Duncan-Son of Napoleon B. Duncan

Paul D. Selman-Son of Dr. Joseph L. Selman

Thomas "Nat" Mozley-Mayor from 1936-37. His son, Harold, followed in his footsteps and was also elected Mayor in 1946 at the age of 28 making him the youngest Mayor in the U. S. at that time. He served as the Master of the Mason lodge thirteen times.

David W. Price-One of the Douglasville's first merchants and the first postmaster. He served as county treasurer in 1884 and as county coroner in 1912.

Samuel N. Dorsett-One of Douglasville's first merchants, co-owner of Dorsett, Price, and McEireath, co-owner of *The Weekly Star* newspaper, Douglasville's second postmaster, member of city council 1889, Superior Court clerk, and county treasurer. He was appointed to the committee that secured the establishment of a bank in Douglasville.

J.M. Roberts-Member of city council in 1894.

James A. Pittman-Tax collector in 1889, Superior Court clerk, co-founder of the *Douglas County Sentinel* newspaper, and appointed to a committee that aided in the building of a cotton and general storage warehouse in Douglasville.

Thos A. Duke-Elected city Marshal in 1894, city treasurer in 1896, and city council member in 1899.

Charles O. Dorsett-Manager of the Krom Lace Cabinet Company 1910.

Dr. Tomas R. Whitley-Doctor, devout Democrat, member of city council, city council treasurer and recorder, Mayor from 1899-1900, 1922, and 1930. He was appointed to take steps toward organizing a joint stock company for the purpose of building a large hotel in the town. In 1890, he was appointed to go to the Congressional and Senatorial conventions. He was a member of the state senate, and was one of the originators of the state pardon and prison commission in the legislature. He was an original investor in the Douglasville Canning and Preserving Company, influential in the construction of Bankhead Highway through the county, co-founder of the *Douglas County Sentinel* newspaper, and was co-founder of Douglasville College.

Lucius C. Uphaw-member of city council in 1894, state representative, Mayor from 1913-1914, and co-founder of the *Douglas County Sentinel* newspaper.

Dr. Francis Marion Stewart-Was a dentist, a Master Mason, Shriner, and served for many years on the school board.

Joseph L. Selman-Was Douglasville's first permanent druggist. He was also an investor in the Douglasville Canning and Preserving Company.

John P. Watson-Was appointed to a committee to help secure a charter from the legislature for the establishment



Thomas Mozley



Joseph L. Selman

Joseph S. James-Lawyer, devout Democrat, and Henry Grady supporter. He was elected Douglasville's first Mayor in 1875. He was instrumental in bringing the railroad and the cotton industry to Douglasville. He helped organize a joint stock company for the purpose of building a large hotel in the town and provided measures to secure the establishment of a bank in Douglasville. He was the President of New Century Cotton Mills, served on the board of directors for the Douglasville Banking Co., and Chairman of the Democratic Executive committee. In 1880, he was elected to the first of two terms as state representative, in 1886 elected to the state senate, and in 1893 was named U. S. District Attorney for Northern Georgia. He was co-editor of the *New South* newspaper. He was Douglasville's prominent booster and visionary.



Vander R. Smith-Cotton buyer, member of city council in 1908, Mayor in 1918, and owner of Kozylorium, Douglasville's first motion picture theatre. His career began in 1896 when he bought out the firm of grocers Theo and Charles O. Dorsett.

Robert J. Hutcheson-Served as the city attorney, Mayor from 1908-1910, judge of the Superior Court, and solicitor general of the Tallapoosa circuit, circuit judge, and state Senator.

Jackson Monroe Banks-Was a prosperous merchant in the Bill Arp area of Douglas County. He moved his business to Douglasville in 1913.

Zachary T. Dake-Was owner of the *Douglas County Sentinel* and Mayor in 1919.

Isaac M. Watson-Was county tax collector in 1879.

Robert Alexander Massey-Was a local lawyer, devout Democrat, and first editor of *The Weekly Star* newspaper. He was Mayor from 1880-81, county court judge from 1884-86, postmaster in 1888, and son of the prominent Dr. Robert J. Massey.

Charles O. Peavy-Was the editor of *The Weekly Star* and *The New South* newspapers. He was instrumental in calling an election, which successfully prohibited the sale of alcohol in Douglas County in 1885.

Young Vansant-Was a pioneer resident of what would become Douglasville and served as a member of city council in 1879, and donated the land that the County Courthouse is built on.

John T. Duncan-President of the Douglasville Banking Company, President of the Douglasville Canning Company, stockholder and secretary of the Lois Cotton Mills, President of Douglasville Hosiery Mills and Knitting Mills of Dallas, President of the Krom Lace Cabinet Company, treasurer of Douglasville College, and a Master mason. He served on the school board, city council, Georgia house of representatives, and state senate. He was Director of the U. S. Government Experiment State for 5th congressional districts from 1913-1923. He was connected in a financial way with almost every industry in the town. He was elected state Senator in 1904 and served as state representative of Douglas County from 1917-1918. He was appointed to the committee for a Farmers Union warehouse for cotton storage in 1907 and was an original investor in the Douglasville Canning and Preserving company.



Napoleon Duncan-Was appointed to a committee to facilitate the building of a cotton and general storage warehouse in Douglasville.

Researched and Prepared by Stephanie Aylworth 2008
City of Douglasville Main Street Manager
Mainstreet@ci.douglasville.ga.us



Setting the Stage:

The Development of Douglasville, Georgia's



Historic Commercial District from 1875-1915

A self-guided Walking Tour



1. J.R. Duncan Motor Company
In 1913, **Raymond Duncan** and **Paul Selman** obtained a dealership license to open a Ford Agency in Douglasville. That year, they built a large cream-colored brick building with half-corinthian columns. They sold Ford cars and tractors. According to a *Douglas County Sentinel* newspaper advertisement, a Ford Touring Car could be purchased for \$471.25 and a new Roadster could be bought for \$421.75.



2. Mozley's Meat Market and Grocery Store
Brothers Samuel and Thomas "Nat" Mozley opened Mozley's Meat Market and Grocery Store in this moderate sized brick building in 1914. Telephones were in use by this time and housewives were able to call in orders. The orders were delivered in a horse drawn wagon.

3. Farmers' and Merchants Bank
Douglasville's second bank, the Farmers and Merchants Bank, opened its doors May 1, 1907, two years after Douglasville's first bank, the Douglasville Banking Co. opened. The Farmers and Merchants Bank was part of a large banking chain known as the William system and was located on the corner of Broad and Campbell Streets with assets totaling \$25,000. The banks' significant architectural style is an example of the quality of buildings being constructed in Douglasville at that time. The round window above the door and the fan shaped windows were handmade German glass.



4. Dorsett, Price, and McElreath General Store and Cotton Warehouse
In 1879 **Dorsett, Price,** and **McElreath** General Store and Cotton Warehouse opened. This two-story building was one of the first permanent brick buildings in the commercial district. The business was sold to **Samuel N. Dorsett,** who was one of the first merchants in Douglasville and was co-owner of *The Weekly Star* newspaper. At the turn of the century, J. M. Roberts operated a hardware store out of this building.



5. Thomas A. Duke Drug Co.
Mr. James A. Pittman built this two-story brick building in the 1880's. Upon completion of the building, he sold the upper floor to the Douglasville Masonic Lodge. In 1886, it was sold to **Thomas A. Duke Drug Co.** Mr. Duke was a fierce competitor to the Hudson/Selman Drug Co. Mr. Duke died in 1902 and the business went bankrupt. In February of 1903 **Charles O. Dorsett** bought the building and the Drug company and operated the business with physician and druggist, **Dr. Tomas Rice Whitley.** The second floor housed Dr. Whitley's office and the Post Office. In 1909, the Masonic lodge moved to a new location on Price and Church St and in 1910 the Post Office relocated there also.

6. Upshaw Bros. General Merchandise Groceries & Fertilizer store
Brothers **Lucius C.** and **Herchel M. Upshaw** operated this business from 1891 to 1930 with receipts of over \$100,000 in 1909, second only to the Duncan Brothers. **Lucius C. Upshaw** was a very politically active man.

7. Stewart Bros. General Grocery Store
The orphaned Stewart Brothers, **Dr. Francis M. Stewart** and **Rader Stewart,** owned this business. Dr. Francis M. Stewart was a practicing dentist while **Rader** ran the store. They also owned and operated a successful grist mill in the county.

8. Hudson & Edge, Selman & Son
This two-story brick building was Douglasville's first drug store. It is the only building on Broad Street with a cast iron decorative front. It was built in 1865 by G. G. Hudson and Dr. J. B. Edge. Within the first year of business Hudson bought Dr. Edge's interest. In 1867, Hudson sold the business to **Joseph L. Selman** and it became Selman and Son Groceries Hardware, and Feed Stuffs. In March 1906, the Gainsborough Telephone Co. moved from the second floor of the Upshaw building to the second floor of the Selman building.



9. Douglasville Masonic Lodge
In 1909, the Douglasville Masonic Lodge together with Dr. James R. McKoy and R. E. James, erected a two-story brick building at the corner of Price Ave. and Church St. The lodge owned the second story and



McKoy and James owned the first floor. The first floor also housed the Post Office.

10. Douglasville Banking Company
Measures to secure the establishment of a bank in Douglasville were discussed and a committee consisting of **Joseph S. James, John P. Watson,** and **Samuel N. Dorsett** was appointed to take necessary steps to secure a charter from the legislature. Douglasville's first bank was chartered in 1886, opened in 1891, and moved to this location in 1904. This Italianate style building, built of Chattanooga pressed brick with marble trimming, is a beautiful example of quality both on the inside and outside of the building. **John T. Duncan** was president of the new bank. Original capital assets were listed as \$40,000.



11. McCarley Store #1
Mr. Joseph C. McCarley built this brick building circa 1909 and ran a five and dime store and a notions shop. In 1914, **Vander R. Smith,** a cotton buyer, purchased this building and opened the Kozytorium, which was Douglasville's first motion picture theatre that featured first run films.

12. McCarley Store #2
This 1915 brick building was the second of two stores built by Joseph C. McCarley. He sold a variety of novelties and notions. In a 1919 Douglas County Sentinel ad he advertises a Brownie #6 Kodak camera for the price of \$2.00.

13. Hutcheson Building
Circa 1915, Attorney **Robert J. Hutcheson** built this two-story brick building to house the U. S. Post Office and his upstairs law office. The Post Office was moved into the new building on the lower floor. Max's café was also on the first floor.



14. Banks Brothers Store
Jackson Monroe
Banks bought the Stewart and Watson General Merchandise business. In 1913, he built this brick store on Broad Street, and in 1916 his brother J. B. Gordon Banks joined the business.

15. Douglas County Sentinel newspaper
Built prior to 1895 as a bank, this brick building became a printing office and home to the *Douglas County Sentinel.* The *Douglas County Sentinel* became incorporated in April of 1905 by petitioners Thomas R. Whitley, Lucius C. Upshaw, and James A. Pittman. The capital stock of the corporation was \$800. The *Sentinel* was a weekly newspaper with a subscription rate of \$1 a year. T. A. Majors was the first editor and the first issue was published May 3, 1905. On April 26, 1905, under order of C. W. McGouirk, Sheriff of Douglas County, The *Sentinel* printed this notice, "The legal advertising heretofore appearing in *The New South,* will from this date be published in the *Douglas County Sentinel.* The *Sentinel* remains the legal organ for Douglas County today. **Zachary T. Dake** purchased the *Sentinel* in 1911 and owned it for close to 20 years.

16. Watson General Store
Brothers **John P.** and **Isaac M. Watson** operated a general store on the corner of Broad and Bowden. This two-story brick building also housed the *Weekly Star* newspaper, founded in 1879 by young attorney, **Robert A. Massey.** The *Weekly Star* was Douglasville's first newspaper to remain active beyond the publication of only a few issues. The *Weekly Star* editor, **Charles O. Peavy,** operated a barbershop in the Watson Store building. In late 1886, Joseph S. James began to appear as co-editor with Peavy and by 1891, the *Weekly Star* became *The New South* and was voice of the local town boosters.



17. Douglas County Courthouse
Douglas County was created from Campbell and Carroll counties on Oct. 17, 1870. In 1871, long-time resident, **Young Vansant,** donated 40 acres of Skint Chestnut land to aid in the development of what would become the town of Douglasville and the first County Courthouse. In 1871, a three-room wooden courthouse was built on what is currently Courthouse Square. In 1880, construction began on a new two-story brick courthouse, but because of the poor quality of bricks and mortar, the building began crumbling in a few years, and the courthouse was abandoned in 1884. What served as the courthouse for the next twelve years is unclear, but in 1896, a large two-story brick courthouse with a clock tower was completed on courthouse square. On Jan. 11, 1956, the courthouse was destroyed by fire. A new courthouse, designed by Southern Engineering of Atlanta, was dedicated in 1958.



18. Duncan Brothers Stores
Formerly a saloon hall, circa 1877, and the original location of the "Skint Chestnut" tree, **Napoleon. B. and John T. Duncan** moved into the Skint Chestnut building that was vacant after the 1885 prohibition act. The old Skint Chestnut building was torn down in 1901 to make space for the new one. By 1900, the Duncan Brothers had four department stores on the block. The large brick buildings stand on the west corner of Broad and today's Courthouse Square. The Duncan property extended down Pray to Church Street and included a cotton buyer's yard and fertilizer shed. The Duncan Brothers store was the largest one between Atlanta and Birmingham. John T. Duncan, made frequent buying trips to New York and other northern markets. The store would draw customers from Fulton, Paulding and Carroll counties.



Skint Chestnut
Douglasville was originally named Skint Chestnut for a skinned chestnut tree that was a crossroads land mark and a camping place for immigrants and Indians as they traveled from north, south, east, and west. This tree was located where the Duncan Brothers built their store.