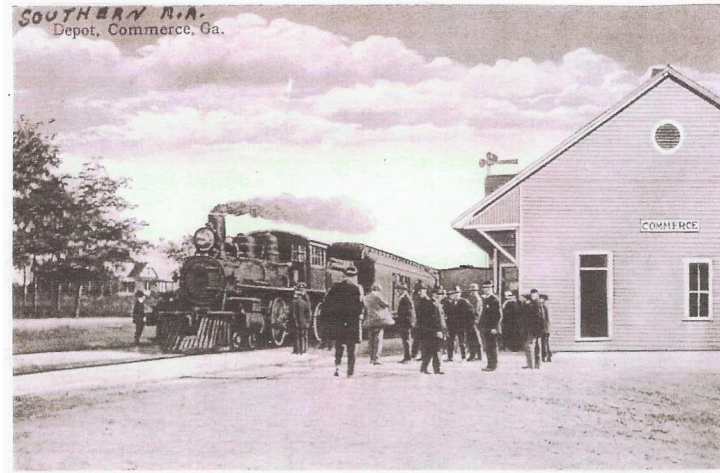


# Commerce

## A City on the Right Track



2012 publication of the Commerce  
Downtown Development Authority

## Preserving Our Heritage

Commerce works with history and historic preservation through its Main Street program and Downtown Development Authority. As one of 54 Main Street cities in Georgia, Commerce provides downtown revitalization within the context of historic preservation. For more information on the Main Street Program or the Downtown Development Authority, please visit our website at [www.mainstreetcommercega.com](http://www.mainstreetcommercega.com) or call 706-335-2954.



Commerce Cultural Center

Commerce Main Street Program and  
Downtown Development Authority  
1645 S. Elm Street  
P.O. Box 717  
Commerce, GA 305294

# Historic Commerce, GA.

## A Self-Guided Historical Tour





# Historic Commerce Walking Tour Map

We invite you to enjoy the history, architecture, and pleasant scenery of beautiful Commerce, Georgia and thank you for your interest in the historic treasures Commerce has to offer. As you stroll through the storied past and explore the present vibrancy of our town, please be aware of traffic at all times, especially when crossing Broad and Elm Streets whenever possible.

Approx. Walking  
Distance to next site

Site	Mile	Site	Mile
19	0.09	20/21	0.08
2	0.16	22	0.08
3/4/5	0.16	23	0.10
6	0.07	25	0.06
7	0.07	26	0.06
8A/8B	0.05	27	0.49
9	0.39	28	0.31
10/11	0.24	29	0.23
12	0.11	30	0.58
13	0.33	31	0.03
14	0.24	32	0.07
15/16	0.18	33	0.06
17	0.13	34	0.02
18A/18B	0.04		

Total Distance: 4.55 miles

## Legend

Commercial Downtown  
Historic District

Walking Tour Route

Historic Sites

Road

State Route

Railroad

Historic Site Reference List

1 - Commerce Downtown Development Authority, 1645 S. Elm St  
2 - Dr. Will B. Hardman House, 120 Pine St  
3 - E.B. Anderson House, 450 Little St  
4 - Spencer Park  
5 - Governor L.G. Hardman Mansion, 1557 S. Elm St  
6 - Cooper House, 1441 S. Elm St  
7 - Pleasant Owen Pittman House, 1373 S. Elm St  
8A - First Baptist Church of Commerce, 1345 S. Elm St  
8B - Family Fellowship Center

9 - Grey Hill Cemetery, Clayton & Scott Streets  
10 - Thomas Colquitt Hardman House, 1053 S. Elm St  
11 - R.L. Daugherty House - 1029 S. Elm St  
12 - Harmony Grove Mills, Inc.  
13 - Harris Waters Store, 12 Madison St  
14 - Harris House, 1052 S. Broad St  
15 - Little House (Robert House), 1284 S. Broad St  
16 - Burns House, 1304 S. Broad St  
17 - First United Methodist Church, 54 Cherry St  
18A - Seaborn M. Shankle House, 174 Cherry St  
18B - Shankle Family Cemetery, 174 Cherry St  
19 - Commerce City Hall, 27 Sycamore St  
20 - Commerce Cultural Center, 232 Cherry St

21 - Sitticide Building, 225 Cherry St  
22 - Shankle-Bowden House, 160 State St  
23 - Commerce Civic Center, 110 State St  
24 - Commercial Downtown Historic District (See Legend)  
25 - Perry Law Firm, 1774 N. Broad St  
26 - Jay's Department Store, 1710 S. Broad St  
27 - Opera House, 1650 S. Broad St  
28 - Luke Davis House, 19 Homer St  
29 - Harbor House, 2280 N. Broad St  
30 - Nix Massey House, 192 Washington St  
31 - Community Bank & Trust, 1851 N. Elm St  
32 - Flood Building, 1819 N. Elm St  
33 - Commerce Drug, 1751 N. Elm St  
34 - Sanders Furniture, 1697 S. Elm St  
35 - Our Town Antiques, 1671 S. Elm St

## A History of Commerce

Commerce is located in Jackson County in the foothills of beautiful Northeast Georgia. Founded as "Harmony Grove," this historic town changed its name to "Commerce" in 1904.

One of the earliest white settlements in this area was established at Groaning Rock in 1784. Situated between the present day communities of Commerce and Center, Groaning Rock was the site of an early frontier fort. It was named for an unusual rock formation found there that was held sacred by the Cherokees who lived in the area. Another early white settlement in Jackson County was Yamtrahoochee, "Tumbling Waters," (Hurricane Shoals) that was also settled around 1785. The community at Hurricane Shoals consisted of a fort, houses, a school, a church, a grist mill, a trading post and an iron furnace. Iron for the furnace was mined near the present site of Commerce. This furnace remained in operation through the War Between the States.

Harmony Grove itself was settled in 1808. Eli Shankle and his wife Rebecca Hargrove camped near the Shankle Spring living for months under a brush arbor until he built a hewn pine log house. This house was one of the first buildings in town.

Harmony Grove was the crossroads from the mountain counties of North Georgia and North Carolina to the markets of Athens, Washington, and Augusta. Farmers bringing stock and produce to market would stop and camp at Harmony Grove which had ample springs and a pleasant climate. Between 1810 and 1900 these people began trading in Harmony Grove for items such as plow goods, stoves, and household utensils as well as clothing, shoes and other necessities not available in the mountain regions.

The agricultural economy of Harmony Grove included corn, wheat, potatoes, peas, sorghum and cotton. Apples, peaches, grapes, scuppernongs, figs and other fruit were also grown here. Milk cows, pigs, cattle and sheep were raised.

Agricultural products were the chief resource of Harmony Grove and Commerce through the early 1900's. From 1880 through 1910, Harmony Grove flourished as a cotton market receiving cotton from Jackson, Banks, Madison and Franklin counties. Around 1919 a commercial peach industry began in Commerce.

Harmony Grove officially incorporated on December 4, 1884, with W.A. Quillian as the first mayor.

The railroad came to Harmony Grove in 1876. This line, called the Northeaster, ran through Harmony Grove connecting the Athens line (Georgia Railroad) to the Gainesville line (Airline). The railroad routed through Harmony Grove, rather than Jefferson, largely due to the efforts of C.E. Hood and W.B. J. Hardman who guaranteed \$50,000 worth of stock for Harmony Grove. The depot was located on a tract of land (including Spencer Park) donated by C.W. Hood. In 1895, Southern Railway purchased the Northeaster line. Harmony Grove was one of the leading distributing communities of

Northeast Georgia with freight receipts exceeding those of similar sized towns on the Southern Railway.

Business began to spring up around the changing face of Harmony Grove. The railroad laid out the city and merchants took advantage of the frontage and exposure it provided. The railroad brought business and as the town grew, so did its need for services.

The "Northeast Georgia Progress", Harmony Grove's first newspaper, was published from 1875 until 1881. "The Harmony Grove Age" began publication in 1888. After its sale to Dr. W.D. Hardman in 1891, it was reorganized and renamed "The Harmony Grove Echo." In 1903, J.F. Shannon, its new owner, renamed the paper "The Commerce News." It remains in publication today.

In 1892, The Northeastern Banking Company was organized as Harmony Grove's first locally owned bank. C. J. Hood was the cashier and L.G. Hardman was president. In 1902, the First National Bank was organized. Dr. W.B. Hardman served as president and W.L. Williamson was cashier.

The Harmony Grove Mills, organized in 1893, was once one of the first and largest mills of its kind in Georgia. Mills were either a spinning mill or weaving mill, and it was unusual to have both located in one mill. The dual purpose of the mills allowed for the name of Harmony Grove Mills to be used instead of Harmony Grove Mill.

Fred E. Durst of Winder started the Commerce Overall Company in 1917, manufacturer of "Gander Brand" overalls. In 1925 he was joined by A.D. Harris and the National Overall Company. The National Overall Company was the largest overall plant under one roof in the world.

Commerce gained national recognition in 1927 with the election of Dr Lamartine Griffin Hardman to two terms as governor of Georgia from 1927 to 1931. Hardman also served as a member of the State House of Representatives from 1902 to 1907 and the State Senate from 1908 - 1910.

Dr. Hardman, a Commerce native, was a prominent physician and businessman. Lamartine was the son of Dr. W.B.J. Hardman, the first physician in Harmony Grove who began practicing in 1848. In 1899 Dr. L.G. Hardman built and subsequently operated the Hardman Sanatorium. The Sanatorium was one of the first small town hospitals build in Georgia.

The city once again received national recognition in the 1980s as the setting for the widely acclaimed novel, *Cold Sassy Tree* by Olive Ann Burns. This historical novel tells the story of a young boy growing up in a small Georgia town at the turn of the century. In 1985, Commerce was named a Georgia Main Street City. The Main Street Program is dedicated to economic development through historic preservation. The population of Commerce is approximately 6,400.



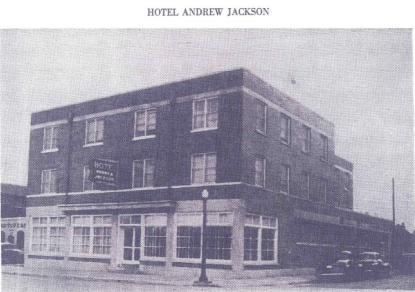
#29 - 2280 N. Broad St - Harber House: This Colonial Revival style was built circa 1900. The house was owned by Dr. John Castalaw and later by J. Harber, a local merchant. Two Harber families owned the home for over 50 years. The Richard family purchased the home in 1990 and operated the home as a bed and breakfast for 10 years. The home is now a private residence. The home still has all the original windows. There are 12-foot ceilings in the house and hardwood floors throughout the interior.



#30- 192 Washington Street - Nix-Massey House: Built in 1902 by John Morgan Nix. It is Queen Anne Victorian architecture with a wrap around porch and Gingerbread Trim. Wood for the original construction of this Nix house was cut from the Nix farm in Apple Valley, which was only four miles from Commerce. The Ed Massey family later bought the home and members of the family lived there for over 70 years until Mrs. Lydia Nix Massey died in 1978 at age 88. Jonathan and Cindy Finck purchased the house in 2003 renovating it for a year before moving into the home where they presently reside.



#31 - 1851 N. Elm St - Community Bank & Trust: Originally the Andrew Jackson Hotel, this building was constructed in 1948 by contractor Ralph Pardue. The hotel originally had 40 rooms, each with a private bath, a coffee room, kitchen, banquet hall and spacious lobby and cost \$250,000 to construct. On Aug 27, 1957 WJJC disc jockey, Bill Anderson, later a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, wrote his first hit “City Lights” from atop the Andrew Jackson Hotel where he rented a room.



Original



Current

#32 - 1819 N. Elm St - Hood Building: Built circa 1894, by C.W. Hood, this Victorian Era commercial structure served as the home of J.H. and C.J. Hood, dealers in General Merchandise and Northeastern Bank. The upper floor served as the Masonic Hall. Hood was noted in his front-page obituary as the “oldest merchant and the wealthiest and most prominent citizen” according to *The Jackson Herald*, January 20, 1910.



#33 - 1751 N. Elm St - Commerce Drug: In 1918, Dr. Bonner Durham opened the Commerce Drug Store. The drug store has an old fashion soda fountain and is still a local favorite for lunch.



Original



Current

#34 - 1697 S. Elm St - Sanders Furniture: Mr. M.T. Sanders opened Sanders Furniture in 1913. The building dates back to the 1880s. The original building was 25 x 120 ft, three stories high and home to Shepherd Furniture and Funeral. The upper floor was used to prepare the body for viewing in the home. At a later date, the funeral business was moved to a different location and the furniture store grew to encompass three buildings. The building was remolded in the early 1960s to its present condition.



#35 - 1671 S. Elm St - Our Town Antiques: Original location of the A.D. Hood Garage, Radio Shop and Glass Replacement shop. In 1934, Mr. Jimmie Jarrells purchased the building and made it into the Roxy Theater. This structure contains two buildings at one time and in the 1940s the left side was a bowling alley. Around the end of WW II, Mr. Marshall Melvin opened a Firestone Store in this side of the building.



*Thank you for touring  
historical Commerce. We hope that  
you enjoyed the tour and  
invite you to visit us again.*

#1 - 1645 S. Elm Street - Commerce DDA: Built between 1910 & 1920 it is home to the Commerce Downtown Development Authority / Main Street Office. Originally the building was a service station known as the Lone Star Service Station selling first Texaco gas, later a Standard Oil Station and also a Sinclair Station, eventually becoming a taxi stand before becoming home to the DDA. Visitor information is available at this office.



#2 - 120 Pine Street - Dr. Will B. Hardman House: Built circa 1893 as a six room cottage, this home was remodeled in 1909 into a Neoclassical style dwelling. Dr. Hardman, a skilled surgeon, founded the Hardman Sanatorium with his brother Dr. L.G. Hardman. In the 1960s the home was restored by Rufus and Inah Pardue.

#3 - 450 Little Street - E.B. Anderson House: The original Anderson home was the small wooden home located on Oak Street directly behind this home. The original house was rolled back on the lot and the larger house was built. In 1910 Mr. Anderson made a large profit in cotton near Maysville and used the money to add the columns and porches to the house. The home was converted into a restaurant and later into a wallpaper school with students coming from around the world to learn the trade. After twenty years the school closed; it is now a private residence.



#4 - Spencer Park: C.W. Hood gave the land where the park now stands to the railroad around 1876. The J.E.B. Stewart Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy purchased the land from the railroad in 1941 and erected a marble cenotaph monument at the end of the park dedicated to the women and veterans of the War Between the States .



#5 - 155 S. Elm Street Governor L.G. Hardman Mansion: This Mediterranean style house was built in 1920 for L.G. Hardman. Hardman, was a prominent Commerce citizen who served two years as Governor of Georgia from 1927 - 1931. The election of 1926 between Dr. Hardman and John Holder is published as the only time in history that two people from the same county ever ran for governor in Georgia. The 1926 race for governor between John Holder and Dr. L.G. Hardman created a bitter political split between the neighboring cities of Commerce and Jefferson, the two largest in Jackson County. (It is said that the rivalry lives on in the athletic rivalries between the towns two high schools.)



#6 - 1441 S. Elm Street Jordan - Cooper House: Built in 1898, this Queen Anne Style home was the home of W. W. Jordan. Jordan was the owner of a furniture store and an undertaking business in Commerce.



#7 - 1373 S. Elm Street - Pleasant Owen Pittman House: This Victorian Era Eastlake style home was built circa 1884 by Pleasant Owen Pittman. Pittman was a farmer and builder from Banks County and served as one of the first directors of the Harmony Grove Mills. Pittman built a room onto the house each time they had a child (they had three) The house has remained in the family since construction.

# 8A - 1345 S. Elm Street - First Baptist Church of Commerce: Originally Harmony Grove Baptist Church. The Romanesque style brick building was built in 1896 - 1897 for \$9,250. The original Harmony Grove Church built in 1874 was a 40 x 60 ft wood rectangular building which was donated and moved to the Madison Street Church location prior to construction of the current church. Upon completion of the church, Pleasant Owen Pittman brought in trees from his farm in Banks County to plant in front of the church. The large shade trees provide a visual calling of the church and its desire to be rooted in Christ while reaching the community. The church changed its name in 1904 from Harmony Grove to Commerce First Baptist Church.



#8B - Family Fellowship Center: Built in 1927 the Family Fellowship Center for First Baptist Church of Commerce was formerly the auditorium and gymnasium for Commerce High School.

#9 - Clayton & Scott Streets - Grey Hill Cemetery: Donated by C.W. Hood, this cemetery contains many historic monuments and Civil War markers and is the final resting place of Lamartine Griffin Hardman, former governor of Georgia.



#10 - 1053 S. Elm Street - Thomas Colquitt Hardman House: This house began as a six-room cottage circa 1893. In 1912 it was remodeled into a Neoclassical style dwelling. T.C. Hardman was an ordained Baptist minister who owned the Hardman Hardware store in downtown Commerce. Hardman wrote the *History of Harmony Grove - Commerce Jackson County, Georgia*. The home was converted and now serves as Ivie Funeral Home.

#11 - 1029 S. Elm Street - R.L. Daughtry House: This Neoclassical style house was constructed circa 1875. L.G. Hardman purchased the house in 1890. R.L. Daughtry, who owned a department store in Harmony Grove in 1902, lived in this house.





#12 - Harmony Grove Mills, Inc.: Organized and built in 1893, for the purpose of processing and producing cotton textiles. It was highly unusual at that time for both spinning and weaving to be completed in one location, thus an “s” was added to mill making it Harmony Grove Mills. The mills served various purposes over the years, including the manufacture of denim overalls and the earliest production of electricity in the city. The mill village created to house employees makes up a significant portion of the homes on the southeast end of Commerce today. The mill had been in operation under various corporations until the spring of 2004, when it closed operations and was sold. The building is still a major feature of the city.



#13 - 12 Madison Street - Harris - Waters Store: This is an early 20th century brick commercial building with decorative detailing and an original Coco-Cola advertising sign that was restored to its present condition. Home of I.H. Harris & Co., this store carried everything from general merchandise to “fancy groceries.”



#14 - 1052 S. Broad Street - Harris House: This Neoclassical style house was built circa 1908. A.D. Harris operated the National Overall Company in Commerce with Fred E. Durst of Winder. The company eventually became the Blue Bell Mfg. Co.

#15 - 1284 S. Broad Street - Little House : Constructed circa 1897, this Colonial Revival style house was the home of Mrs. Peyton B. Little. Mrs. Little moved from Banks County with her five daughters after her husband’s death, providing rooms for boarders in her house. The house is currently a private residence..



\*\* #16 - 13404 S. Broad St. .Burns House: Built in 1906 this Colonial Revival style house was the home of William B. and Emma Power Burns, the grandparents of novelist Olive Ann Burns. Their son, Arnold Burns, was the model for the character Will Tweedy in *Cold Sassy Tree*.



#17 - 54 Cherry Street - First United Methodist Church: Constructed in 1920, this Neoclassical style building, serves as the home of the First Methodist Church. Founded in 1843 as the Adalines Chapel it was later renamed Harmony Grove Methodist Church in 1874. The church was moved to its present site, where a one-room frame church was built and the name was changed to Harmony Grove Methodist Church. In 1903 under the ministry of the late Reverend G.M. Eakes, the church launched a building project using the old building as the main body. The building was completed in 1904. The name had become by now The Commerce Methodist Church, to accompany the town’s name change. This building was used until a campaign for the present edifice was begun in 1919 when the old church was torn down, a basement was excavated, and a modern cream brick structure was built in the early 1920s at a cost of approximately \$50,000.

\*\* #18 A - 174 Cherry Street - Seaborn M. Shankle House: Built in 1843 by Eli and Rebecca Shankle, this was originally a two-room cabin. In 1878, it was remodeled into the Italianate style home you see today. The Seaborn M. Shankle house was home to one of Harmony Grove’s prominent citizens, Olive Ann Burns, author of the widely acclaimed novel *Cold Sassy Tree*.



#18 B - 174 Cherry Street - Shankle Family Cemetery: This cemetery, surrounded by a Victorian style fence, contains eight marked graves of Shankles and Hoods dating back to as early as 1847.

#19 - 27 Sycamore Street - Commerce City Hall: This Colonial Revival style building was constructed with a brick exterior and marble trim in 1936 by E.M. Williams of Monroe, Georgia for use as the city’s post office. The post office was the original home of a Philip Guston painting, which is hanging in the new Commerce Post Office. The building was purchased by the City of Commerce for its new city hall in 1997.



\*\* #20 - 232 Cherry St - Commerce Cultural Center: Built in 1911, (pictured on front cover) this Romanesque style structure served as the home of the Commerce Presbyterian Church until 1978. In 1987 the church was donated to the City of Commerce. Through adaptive reuse, the church is now the Commerce Cultural Center and is maintained by the Commerce Downtown Development Authority. It has been carefully renovated into a venue for the performing arts and is home to the Cold Sassy Players of Commerce and a second home of Savannah River Productions theater group.



#21 - 225 Cherry St- Siticide Building: Built in 1936 by Siticide Company, this small brick building was the manufacturing site of siticide. Perfected in 1890 by Dr. L.J. Sharpe, siticide originally called “parasiticide,” was the cure for “scabies,” a parasitic itch, or fondly known in local circles as the “itch”.

#22 - 160 State St - Shankle - Bowden House: Built in 1829, this Plantation Plain style house is the oldest home in Commerce. It was the home of James. W. Shankle, whose widow married James Bowden, and later was the home of Dr. W.B.J. Hardman.



\*\* #23 - 110 State St - Commerce Civic Center: The original structure was built in 1891 as the general store of Power and Williford, later Williford, Burns & Rice. A cotton warehouse in the rear was connected to the store in the 1920’s when the entire structure was converted into a textile manufacturing plant, Blue Bell Manufacturing Company. Blue Bell Mfg. was later sold to Wrangler, which sold the facility to the City of Commerce for \$1 for the Commerce Civic Center. The original building was the model for Grandpa Blakeslee’s general store in *Cold Sassy Tree*.



#24 - Commerce Commercial Downtown Historic District: Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1988, it is home to a fine collection of 19th and 20th century commercial and industrial structures. Properties in the Downtown Historic District on the walking tour consist of: #19, #20, #21, #23, #25, #26, #27, #31, #32, #33, #34 and #35.

#25 - 1774 N. Broad St - Perry Law Firm: The Perry Law Firm is the former location of Frederick H. Williamson’s Feed and Seed Store. Mr. Fred Williamson ran the feed and seed store for over 50 years. Mr. L.J. Sharp and Bro’s originally owned the building before 1895 as a drug store. Later, Kelly N. Sharp bought the building in 1895 and ran it as a feed and seed store before selling it to Mr. Frederick Williamson in 1947. Jeff Perry has owned the building since 2004. The building has been on the national Register of Historic Places since 1989.

#26 - 1710 S. Broad St - Jay’s Department Store: In April, 1933, Jay’s Department store originally opened in what was later Wright’s Hardware on State Street. In the late 1930s Harry and Rose Jay opened Jay’s Department Store in its present location in the right side of the present store. The left side was Myrtle Black’s Café. Around 1953 Jay’s incorporated the café into an expanded addition to the department store. Jay’s is presently owned by Terry Minish and is one of the two longest running independently owned stores in Commerce.



# 27 - 1604 Elm St - Opera House: Built circa 1900, the Opera House was called the Eli-Day Building for Mr. Ellis and Mr. Davis, builders. The Opera House was located upstairs and only operated as an Opera House for 10 years. In 1928, the streets were being paved and prison labor was used to do the paving. The prisoners slept upstairs on cots. The cots were in neat rows and most of the prisoners wore chains at night. A long chain was passed through a large ring on each prisoner’s leg shackles, the ends of the long chain went around a post where they were locked together.



#28- 19 Homer St. - Luke Davis House: Built circa 1884 as the Presbyterian Church of Harmony Grove, this structure was traded in 1910 to Mr. Luke Davis for the construction of a newer and larger church. Mr. Davis who received \$1,500 for the difference, added porches and dormers to the building when he converted it into a house. This home is currently a private residence.

